the next step

No 39 September 1983 review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p

TORY CUTS IN THE NHS

Labour can't fight

The Unions won't fight

TOGETHER WE CAN STOP THE ROT

the next step

No. 39 September 1983
monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

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15 Reagan's war games

American advisers train government forces in El Salvador to show that the USA is still the world's number one superpower. Many view Reagan's military manoeuvres in Central America as using a sledgehammer to crack a nut. But at least it shows that the USA can still swing a sledgehammer – and given its recent decline that's what counts.

In a special feature on Latin America we look at the struggles of the masses against the poverty and oppression enforced by imperialism and its local agents in El Salvador and Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. We examine too the continuing grip exerted by the imperialist powers over newly-industrialised Brazil and Mexico through the credit system. Finally, we commemorate the tenth anniversary of Pinochet's bloody triumph over Allende's Popular Unity government in Chile, by emphasising the urgency for working class solidarity against imperialism throughout Latin America.

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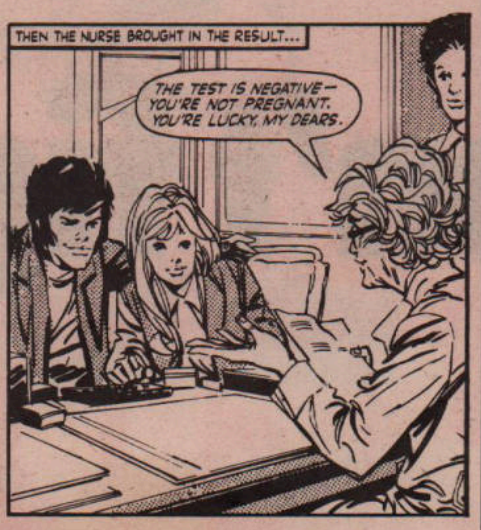

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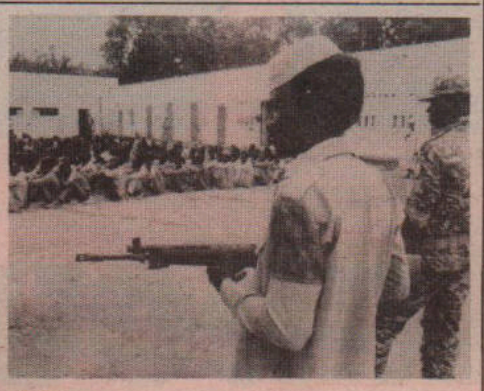

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Fight for the Right to Fight!

Hindle's Strike
c/o A.U.E.W.,
2 Claremont
Bradford
11.8.83

To all trade Union Members

We would be very pleased and honoured if you could send a small delegation, in support of the Hindle Strikers, to Blackpool for the T.U.C. conference, displaying the union to which you belong. As you know we are currently fighting for the basic fundamental trade union rights. We regret we can not assist you financially on the journey, on the 5th of September.

Yours sincerely,
STUART FIRTH.

While Norman Tebbit moves ahead with his attack on trade union rights, our union leaders are crawling over one another in the scramble to get in on talks with the Tories. The 'left' wants to limit cooperation with the Tories to the unions' role in policing the unemployed. The 'right' wants to go all the way and help Tebbit to dismantle workers' basic rights.

Workers at Hindle Gears in Bradford have been standing on picket lines for the past six months fighting for their basic trade union rights (see page 9). All workers should back their picket of the TUC in Blackpool on 5 September. They need to force their union leaders to fight – and so do we.
Join them!

Picket the TUC Blackpool Monday 5 September 12noon-2pm

the next step

Fourteen years on

Fourteen years ago the Labour Government sent British troops into the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. Commemorating this anniversary last month, *The Daily Telegraph* boasted of the 'gallantry', 'skill', and 'restraint' which will make 'the campaign' which began in August 1969 'one of the proudest chapters in Britain's military history'. It urged the present Government on to a final solution: 'the time has now come for the Government to impose its own settlement by deciding that Ulster shall be governed in all respects as part of the Kingdom'.

While the Tory *Telegraph* presented the hard face of British imperialism, the Labour *Daily Mirror* put on the soft face. It regretted that 'since the violence began, more than 2300 people have died and well over 20000 have been injured'. In phoney anguish the *Mirror* asks 'how long will this go on?' Its answer is – indefinitely: 'We should have left years ago and let the Irish sort out Irish problems. However long that decision is put off, it will have to be taken one day – because there is no alternative'.

In recent years the *Mirror* has delighted radical opinion by using the anniversary of the British military occupation to call for the withdrawal of troops. The word 'withdrawal' was significantly absent this year. Like many liberal critics of British rule in Ireland, the *Mirror* has come round to the recognition that Britain has no alternative to Direct Rule in the Six Counties. Hence it postpones relief for its bleeding heart to 'one day' in the indefinite future.

While Labour's war-weary wets sit back the Tory Government gets on with 'imposing its own settlement' in Ireland. Its latest tactic is the use of 'supergrasses'. Confessions achieved by advanced brainwashing techniques, massive bribes and offers of protection for life have led to more than 200 people being rounded up and effectively interned for up to 18 months before summary trial and conviction. Preliminary hearings have been suspended, removing any possibility of cross-examination of the supergrass who is often the sole prosecution witness. There is no jury and a single judge who is often a former Unionist politician.

The use of supergrasses in this way in Britain would, according to *The Guardian* be 'an outrage against English standards of jurisprudence' (9 August). 'However', in Northern Ireland, 'since there is no choice in the matter, any sense of outrage has to be choked back hard'. When it comes to Irish affairs the choke reflex comes easily to British liberals. They have also choked back that usually widely spewed up 'sense of outrage' in response to the policy of selective assasination. Eight republicans have been murdered by shoot-to-kill squads in the past 12 months. And it is not only republican volunteers who are at risk – for some trigger happy soldiers and policemen any nationalist will do. Since the General Election in June five young Catholic men have been shot dead by British forces in the Six Counties. The fatalities include two republicans, one man engaged in a robbery and two who made the mistake of being out on the streets in the areas where they live in British-occupied Ireland. In 14 years the Irish people have learned a lot about British 'gallantry', 'English standards of jurisprudence' and the value of liberal outrage.

For 14 years the British left has put its faith in the notion that the British ruling class would sooner or later come round to the view that its own interests would be best served by a military withdrawal from Ireland. Hence it has regularly pointed out the cost of the war in terms of international prestige, dead soldiers and taxpayers' money. And it has greeted opinion polls showing that most British people want an end to the bloodshed as evidence of popular approval for the withdrawal of the troops. This view rests on a misunderstanding of the British presence in the Six Counties and an underestimation of what will be required to remove it. The Six Counties is under military rule to contain the threat posed by the Irish republican movement to the very integrity of the United Kingdom. For as long as that threat continues, the troops will not be withdrawn.

This is why through 14 long years there has not been a glimmer of support for the 'withdrawal' option within the ruling class. Popular distaste for the brutalities of the war is greatly exceeded by public loyalty to the British state and acceptance of its justification for keeping troops in Ireland. The *Mirror*'s abandonment of its half-hearted call for withdrawal reflects the absence of any establishment support for this course of action.

Britain justifies its occupation of the Six Counties on the grounds that its soldiers are simply trying to keep the peace between Catholics and Protestants. The myth of withdrawal corresponds to the popular view that the armed forces would really rather be out of it, but stay on out of a sense of responsibility to prevent strife. But the only strife in Ireland is that caused by Britain's domination, past and present. Britain had divided Ireland and its people and built a regime in the Six Counties based on systematic discrimination against Catholics in jobs, housing and all areas of social life. Britain stays because it is the only way it can prevent the tensions it has created in the Six Counties from exploding throughout Ireland and into Britain itself.

The myth of withdrawal helps to preserve the image of the occupation forces as reluctant peacekeepers. The left presents the underlying theme of British policy as a desire, not to preserve the oppressive structures of the 'United Kingdom' – but to withdraw from Ireland. This is a service the left has provided to the British establishment for the duration of the war.

The left has consistently condemned the armed struggle of the national liberation movement. It sees the military campaign against the British forces, not as a vital necessity for the nationalist people, but as a factor which can only delay 'withdrawal'. The left's view is that this process can best be advanced by negotiation and by the British government coming up with a package of measures to resolve the conflict. The British state – the cause of the problem – is always presented as the force which can bring about a solution. The latest scheme is Tony Benn's programme for withdrawal outlined in July, which envisages a British-imposed agreement backed up by British aid and United Nations troops. What really matters is that Benn continues to denounce the IRA's military campaign and to direct the labour movement towards some British-devised solution. This approach has stifled the emergence of any broad campaign in solidarity with the national liberation struggle *against* the British state.

The last Labour Government used the myth of withdrawal to considerable effect against the republican movement. Over the summer Labour's former Northern Ireland minister Merlyn Rees caused some controversy with his revelation that the Government had 'seriously considered' the possibility of withdrawal in a cabinet sub-committee between 1974 and 1976. It became clear that what happened was, as *An Phoblacht/Republican News* put it, 'not so much a consideration of withdrawal as a determination to reject withdrawal as a solution'. However, what were reported at the time as the British Government's 'scarcely concealed aspirations to withdraw from Ireland' (*Irish Times* 18 October 1975) were taken seriously by republican leaders – with damaging consequences.

Former IRA leader, now Sinn Fein vice president, Daithi O'Conaill revealed that negotiations between Provisional Sinn Fein and the Labour Government on 'devising measures of British disengagement from Ireland ' had taken place between February 1975 and the following autumn (*Irish Times* 21 July). During this period the IRA agreed to a suspension of military operations. West Belfast Sinn Fein MP Gerry Adams recalled that the British took advantage of the truce to inflict a serious setback on the IRA under the guise of the 'Ulsterisation and criminalisation' strategy:

> 'The wind-down of the IRA's armed struggle allowed the British to introduce criminalisation against the most confused background possible. They were able to withdraw some regular army units, transfer more duties to the RUC and UDR and probably came nearer at that time to defeating the republican struggle than at any time during the last 14 years.' (*An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 21 July)

Labour's talk of 'withdrawal' was no more than a bluff to disguise a renewed offensive against the nationalist people.

Today it is Labour's left-wingers Tony Benn and Ken Livingstone who are talking about 'setting a date for withdrawal' of British troops from Ireland. Their intentions may be different from those of Merlyn Rees and Roy Mason but the consequences could be equally damaging, as Gerry Adams recent visit to London revealed.

Adams' aim in coming to Britain was 'to talk to British people' and 'penetrate the wall of misinformation' around the Irish War. The visit could have played a vital role in rallying popular support for the anti-imperialist struggle by allowing large numbers of people to hear the republican message at first hand. But it did not fulfil this objective because Adams' Labour Party hosts had different aims. For them the visit was less an opportunity for the Sinn Fein leader to talk to British people, and more a chance for Labour politicians to give Adams a good talking to.

Adams' visit was confined to central London. He was allowed to address only one public meeting in a tiny hall from which more than half the people who turned up were excluded for lack of space. Adams could have filled big halls in every city in the country. His visit could have enthused thousands in the cause of Irish freedom and given a major boost to Irish solidarity activity in Britain. Instead it was turned into a propaganda stunt for a small faction in the Labour Party. The only practical consequence of the visit was a return invitation to Adams to a fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference.

Yet the Sinn Fein visit served its purpose for its organisers. They are not concerned with building a popular movement for Irish freedom in Britain. None of the MPs or councillors who sponsored the trip is involved in practical Irish solidarity activity. Labour left-wingers are well-known for occasionally criticising the British government on republican platforms in Belfast, and for regularly denouncing the IRA when they are at home in Britain.

Sitting next to Adams at the opening press conference of his visit, Livingstone explained that 'the only way we are going to stop the killing is by talking'. But what did Livingstone want to say? In the presence of his Sinn Fein visitors Livingstone became reticent. However, the *Morning Star* obligingly explained that 'before the visitors arrived Mr Livingstone's press office had said that the GLC councillors would want to tell the Provisionals' leader that the bombings were counter-productive'. At the later public meeting Islington MP Chris Smith was prepared to say what Livingstone puts in press statements directly to Adams' face. He told him that 'armed struggle is not the appropriate response to the very genuine and real repression which is suffered by the people in Northern Ireland'. The Labour left's message to Sinn Fein is – 'give up the armed struggle against Britain and we will push for a policy of withdrawal'.

After 14 years of torture and terror, and despite the supergrasses and the shoot-to-kill squads, the nationalist people remain committed to the cause of an independent and united Ireland. The British state remains equally committed to the existing set up of the United Kingdom. The unrelenting brutality of the British government forces in the Six Counties means that the republican movement has no alternative but to fight for Irish freedom. The Labour left's distinctive contribution is to claim that it can win by talking what the army has failed to achieve by force – the pacification of the nationalist people. The irony is that whereas Rees and Mason openly admitted their loyalty to British imperialism, Benn and Livingstone pose as friends of the republican movement. The record of the Labour Party over more than half a century shows what false friends Labour politicians have always been to the Irish liberation struggle. The Labour left's condemnation of the armed struggle against British rule confirms its loyalty to the party's pro-imperialist traditions.

'In Britain you can't be a socialist if you condone, support or ignore the continued colonial stranglehold which the British government maintains over our country' said Gerry Adams in London in July. The Labour Party, from right to far left, has been guilty of all three in large measure over the past 14 years. In Britain being a socialist means supporting the right of the Irish people to national freedom – *and* supporting their right to fight for it. While Labour holds out the chimera of a British withdrawal the Irish Freedom Movement leads the way in mobilising support for the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland and resistance to the British state at home (see page seven). After 14 years it's time British socialists got the message; the British government will never withdraw from Ireland until it is forced to do so.

Asian women join the fight for Afia Begum's right to stay

'Sari squad' challenges deportation

Breaking their chains: the sari squad after the police cut short their protest

THE YEAR-LONG campaign against the threatened deportation of 20-year-old Afia Begum and her baby daughter has reached a crucial stage. On 7 July the home office told Afia to get her baggage together and report to HM Immigration Office at Heathrow Airport. She was given two hours notice of her removal from Britain on a flight to Dacca. She is still here, and the fight goes on. On 15 August, a 'sari squad' of Asian women chained themselves to the railings outside Home Secretary Leon Brittan's house to protest against Afia's deportation. One of the squad, Sharmila Kumari, spoke to Workers Against Racism about their demonstration and the state's reaction to it.

'We chained ourselves to the railings outside his house in Pimlico, protesting against the attempted deportation of Afia Begum and her two-year-old daughter Asma. The treatment we received at the hands of the police and the courts shows the Home Office is determined to clamp down on anybody who takes direct action to defend blacks against Britain's racist immigration laws.

'Police cut our chains and dragged five of us away to Rochester Row police station. They put us in a tiny cell that stank of urine. They stripped off our saris, searched us and abused us. One of the squad was thrown, practically naked, into a room full of policemen. They were doing their best to humiliate us. They wouldn't let us use a phone or see a solicitor. Four of us were locked up all night at Bow Street police station. When WAR and the GLC Women's Committee turned up and demanded to know why we were being held, an Inspector Pridge said he'd been given a "directive" not to grant bail. He wouldn't say more, except to suggest that if we were let out we might go back and do it again.

'Next day they had us up in the Horseferry Magistrates Court charged with "behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace". We were all bound over to keep the peace for a year. If we put a foot wrong during that year we'll get an automatic £1000 fine. The solicitor told us that a peaceful demonstration like ours normally warrants £150 at the most. The courts obviously think that the threat of a really heavy fine will stop the squad making any more protests. It's a crude attempt to scare us into giving up the fight against immigration controls. The state is out to silence anybody who challenges their right to deport people like Afia Begum.'

The heavy-handed treatment that was handed out to the 'sari squad' is just one aspect of the Home Office's clampdown on campaigns like WAR's year-long fight for Afia Begum. The Government is trying to restrict all demonstrations against Britain's racist immigration laws – whether they come from Asian women or Labour MPs.

Legal attack

At the end of July, Home Office Minister David Waddington wrote to all Members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords outlining various proposals regarding immigration appeals. Waddington is concerned that 'as a result of successive rounds of representations, perhaps by a number of different Members, people with no real claim to be here can spin out their stays'. What he proposes is that in future only constituency MPs will have the automatic right to make representations on behalf of their constituents. He also proposes a further restriction on the right to gain delays in deportation proceedings pending further representations.

The accession of David Waddington as minister with special responsibility for immigration in January and the appointment of Leon Brittan as Home Secretary in June signalled the determination of the Tory Government to take a harder line on immigration. Recent statistics show that fewer people were accepted for settlement in Britain in 1982 than in any year since the 1971 Immigration Act came into force; and fewer people from the New Commonwealth were accepted for settlement since control on Commonwealth immigration was introduced in 1962 (Control of Immigration Statistics United Kingdom 1982).

While the Home Office has managed to cut down on the number of settlements, it has not been quite so successful in pushing through as many deportations as it would like. In 1982, 1986 deportation orders were made; David Waddington hopes to improve on this in 1983. The number of 'illegal entrants' detected during 1982 was 1260 (of whom 540 were detained in custody), compared with 990 in 1981. Of these, 610 were removed or 'deported voluntarily'.

Illegal defence

Afia Begum has defied the Home Office by refusing to recognise its right to deport her. She is now deemed an 'illegal overstayer' with no recourse to further appeals and is liable to be picked up and detained by the immigration authorities at any time.

Afia Begum is an 'illegal' because she is a widow. Shortly after she received entry clearance to join her husband Abdul Hamid in January 1982, he was killed in a slum tenement fire in East London. Her husband's death meant that she lost her right to live in Britain permanently. After receiving temporary leave to sort out her husband's financial affairs, Afia received her first removal order in September 1982. She has received four removal orders in total, three of which were suspended after vigorous campaigns by WAR and other organisations.

Only absolute defiance of the Home Office and a massive public campaign can win Afia and her daughter the right to stay in Britain for good. The demonstration by militant Asian women outside Leon Brittan's house shows the sort of action that is needed and stands as an example to the wider labour movement. For further information and details of activities contact Joan Phillips on 01-274 3951. Rush donations to:
Afia Begum Defence Campaign
c/o Box 22
136, Kingsland High Street
London E8

We're blacking Britains

TWO HUNDRED workers have been on strike at Britains toy factory in East London since the end of July. Most of them are Asian, many are women. They are all in the Transport and General Workers Union.

The strike is over their compulsory fifty-hour working week. The workers want a one-hour reduction without loss of pay. But this very modest demand is proving difficult to win because management know there is a lot more at stake than just one hour a week.

Britains' workers have endured long unsocial hours, constant speed-ups and strict regimentation for years. The TGWU started recruiting there in 1970 but has never encouraged its members to take industrial action to improve their pay and conditions. Everything was left up to the local official, *Morning Star* supporter Tom Knowles, and a few shop-stewards. This arrangement suited management just fine.

Now the workers have decided that cosy chats between the union and management lead nowhere. Despite opposition from the mainly white skilled workers – and the threat of unemployment in an area where more than a thousand workers were recently made redundant at Lesneys toy factory – they have come out on strike.

The bosses are deeply alarmed. And so is the TGWU official. Used to a quiet life, he got particularly worried when he saw that Revolutionary Communist Party supporters were involved in organising effective picketing, blacking at the docks and protests at toy shops. He used the well-worn tactic of threatening to withdraw official backing and cut off strike pay if the 'outsiders' did not go.

But the majority of strikers were not willing to succumb to this blackmail for long. They are going flat out to get support, official and unofficial, from the labour movement. The example of the National Union of Seamen workers at Dover, who were willing to black Britains' products when TGWU officials in the docks would not, shows the potential for a direct appeal to rank and file workers.

The fate of the Britains strike hangs in the balance. The bosses are trying to exploit divisions between the men and the women, and the local official is continuing to issue threats. Everything depends on the strikers' determination to run things themselves, rather than 'leave it up to the union' as they have for the past 13 years.

Help them win by

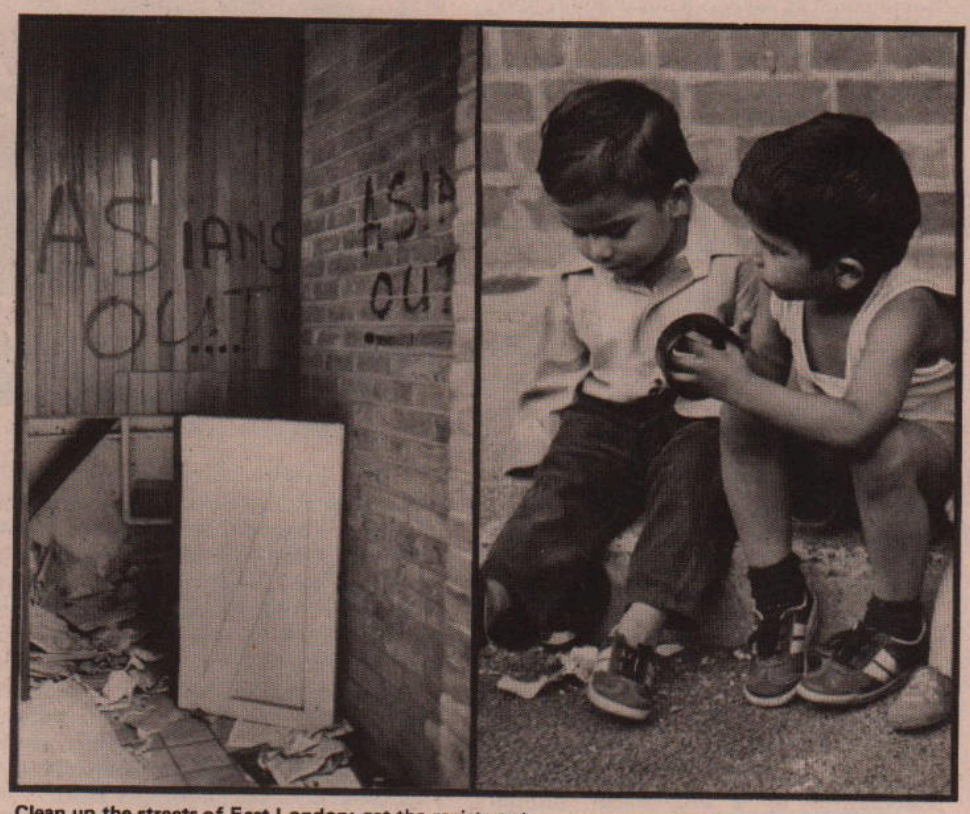
- donating generously to the strike fund
- joining the 24-hour picket line at **Britains Ltd, Blackhorse Lane, Walthamstow, London E17**
- blacking Britains products

Send donations and messages to
BRITAINS STRIKE COMMITTEE
205 Fore Street
Edmonton
London N18
Phone 01-274 3951 for details of transport to picket line.

Strikers at Britains toys have had enough of the bosses' games

ELWAR fights Labour's backlash

SUMMER is always high season for racist attacks in East London. This year has been no exception. The Asian community in Tower Hamlets is under siege. The racist onslaught is a consequence of the local and Greater London councils' apartheid-style housing policy. Unable to oppose the reaction they helped to create, the Labour councils are putting their best efforts into obstructing East London Workers Against Racism's campaign against the ghettoisation and harassment of Asians.



Clean up the streets of East London: get the racists out

'This situation will explode'

Housing officials in Tower Hamlets had been expecting trouble. It arrived in July, in a letter from the Tarling Street Tenants' Association accusing Asian families on the estate of 'throwing urine soaked mattresses into the forecourt' and 'subletting'. The letter concluded:

> 'In this estate we have had little racial tension, but we are aware that this situation will explode one of these days. We are often told that these flats are hard to let; this we do not believe but the more Asians move in, then it will become a fact, and we think that we have more than our fair share of these people now.'

Three weeks later a Tenants' Association member and his family attacked a young Asian woman on Tarling Estate. She was repeatedly punched in the face, thrown to the ground and kicked. When members of East London Workers Against Racism went to the Tenants' Association meeting the following evening demanding action, we met with a torrent of racist abuse. The chairman Charlie Sainty, a Labour Party member, asked what we were doing about all the 'black muggers' and 'illegal immigrants' and accused us of helping Asian families to squat flats on the estate illegally. Sainty was concerned that ELWAR might upset the cosy relationship between the Labour Party and local racists. He got on to Leman Street police station. Within minutes, the police were giving the young woman who had been attacked some 'friendly advice' about avoiding ELWAR.

Another Asian family nearby had its new GLC flat smashed up and daubed with racist graffiti. The message on the wall – 'ASIANS OUT, NF' – was too cryptic for the council. It could only see that the flat was 'damp'. The Ahmed family are still waiting to be rehoused. Tower Hamlets council and the GLC have remained oblivious to these attacks. They cannot deal with the racist backlash because they helped to create it.

Decades of decay

Tower Hamlets is one of Britain's poorest boroughs. Within it Spitalfields E1, the heart of East London's Bangladeshi community, is a disaster area. Male unemployment is 22 per cent. Bangladeshi male unemployment is half as high again. In areas like Whitechapel, more than 70 per cent of Bangladeshis are unemployed.

Tower Hamlets council has been Labour-controlled for decades. Its record on jobs and housing is grim. More than 80 per cent of Tower Hamlets' residents live in council property. Tower Hamlets council controls 20000 dwellings. Another 30000 are at present run by the GLC. Spitalfields is the most overcrowded ward in the most overcrowded borough in Britain. One in ten residents has to share a room. A quarter of all households lack at least one basic amenity – hot water, inside toilet or bath. Asians suffer the worst. Nearly 80 per cent of those on the housing list are Asian. Of those statutorily overcrowded, 95 per cent are Asian and 89 per cent of those lacking two or more basic amenities are also Asian.

Sowing the seeds

A stroll around Spitalfields reveals the virtual apartheid in housing the local council and GLC have created over 30 years. More than 60 per cent of Tower Hamlets' Asians live in E1. They are concentrated in run down pre-war estates. Some, like Boundary, were built in the 1890s. Modern estates are almost totally white. Bangladeshis have been allocated only 1.5 per cent of tenancies on the ten newest GLC estates. The segregation of whites and Asians around Cable Street, the scene of the recent trouble, is blatant. Shadwell Gardens has 170 times as many Bangladeshis as the Exmouth Estate, less than 400 yards away.

Last summer, the GLC admitted that its housing allocation policy had discriminated against Asians for more than 20 years. The GLC promised that Asians would now be offered their 'fair share' of homes on the newer estates. One year later, little has changed. A few Asian families have been offered homes on new estates like Royal Mint Square, but the ghettoisation continues.

However, after decades of preferential treatment, indigenous East Enders are not prepared to countenance even a token change in council policy. Last year racist tenants barricaded Nayor Ali and his three children out of their new GLC council house on Glamis Estate. Residents from Royal Mint Square lined up across the road to stop Asian families moving in (see *the next step*, July/August 1982). The backlash has been gathering momentum ever since.

Labour complicity

Tower Hamlets council publicly condemns the racists' excesses. In private it has colluded with them for years. When the council started moving Asians on to Tarling Estate in 1976, it promised the Tenants' Association that five per cent was the maximum quota of Asians who would be moved in. Today, the Tenants' Association is controlled by racists who complain of being 'swamped'. And Labour Party figures like Charlie Mudd are adamant that they don't want any more 'Pakis' on their estates.

GLC hypocrisy

The racists in Tower Hamlets are at least honest. The 'socialists' at County Hall are hypocrites. The GLC is preparing for its showpiece anti-racist year in 1984. The council has staged a few radical public relations exercises to shore up its credibility, which has been strained since ELWAR exposed GLC attempts to persuade Nayor Ali to move out of Glamis Estate when he was under siege last summer. The GLC is holding out on the proposed transfer of 30000 homes into Tower Hamlets council's control because the local body's allocations system is 'not satisfactory'. The GLC has also put its extensive network of quangos into operation. The Housing Committee and Ethnic Minorities Committee have produced a ream of reports on housing in E1. Predictably, their proposal is for yet another team of ethnic advisers. The new 'Race and Housing Action Team' will get a budget of £39000 and a crack at developing 'positive racial awareness programmes' for housing staff, and ethnic monitoring of housing allocations.

The GLC's ideas for dealing with racial harassment on its estates include distributing a few sympathetic leaflets in 'appropriate languages' and taking racist tenants to court. Even these moderate plans remain 'under discussion'. The only action the council seems capable of pursuing consistently is giving in to the racists and moving the victims of attacks back to the ghettoes.

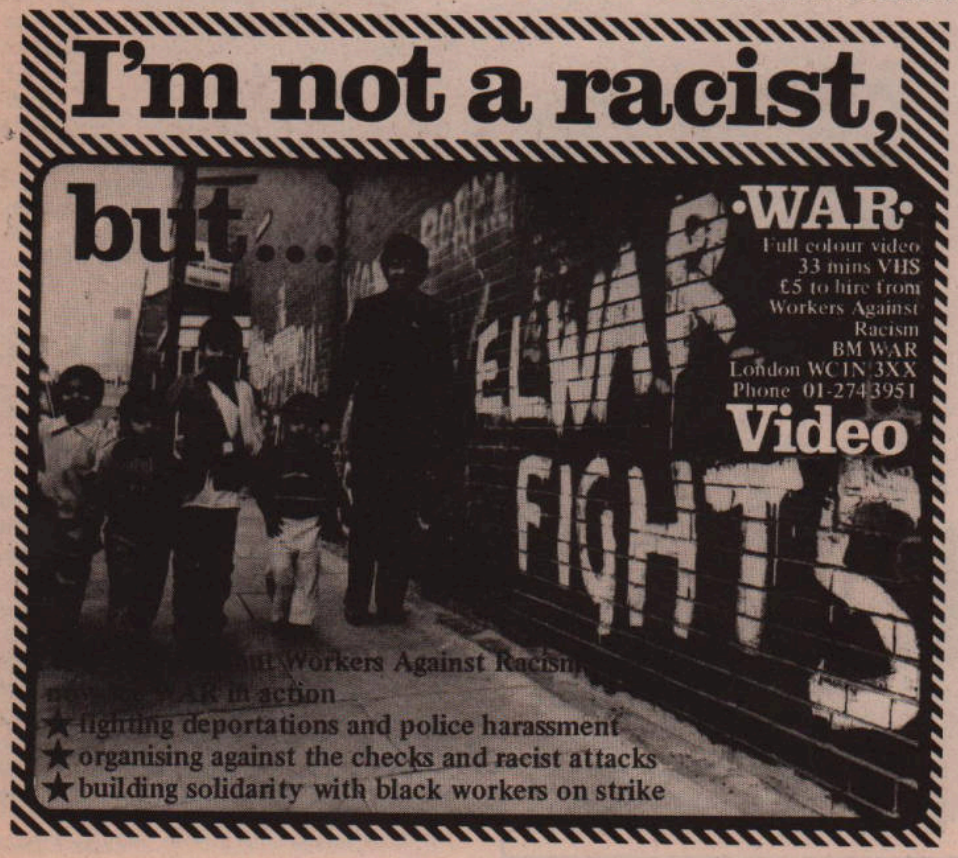
ELWAR blows the cover

Both the Greater London and Tower Hamlets councils know that Cable Street will explode one day. To keep the lid on they don't mind accommodating to racists. What they cannot put up with is ELWAR. Because we have openly condemned the racists, organised the defence of Asian families under attack and called meetings to bring the issue out in the open, we have been labelled as 'provocative'. The Labour councils attack ELWAR because we threaten to blow the cover on their record of discrimination against Asians and collaboration with racists. District housing officer John Morris almost suffered a seizure when we called at his office to put pressure on him over the Tarling Estate attacks. The councils will go to any lengths to avoid confronting the problems of racism.

Our approach might provoke the odium of Labour Party hacks in Tower Hamlets and County Hall. But our tactics are realistic – and effective. When Asian families are attacked by racists we organise workers from the area to defend them. Labour argues that we only aggravate the situation further. We say the problems won't go away unless they are confronted.

Neither do we believe that nothing can be done to stop the backlash. Hard-core racists are only a vociferous minority in the community. On some estates they hold key positions in the tenants' associations, many of which are unaccountable to the tenants. We have done a lot of hard canvassing on every estate in the area and met many local people who are ready to defend the right of Asians to live there. With them we have been fighting to overcome the divisions created by the Labour councils and to organise workers in the East End to get the housing we need.

Joan Phillips



Homes fit for rebels

The fight for decent housing for the nationalist people of the Six Counties cannot be separated from the struggle against the source of the housing problem – British imperialism.

HOUSING has never been far from the centre of the Irish War. In the late 'sixties the Civil Rights movement took off from protests against sectarian discrimination in the allocation of council housing under the Stormont regime. Between 1969 and 1971 Loyalist pogroms led to 60000 people – 80 per cent of them Catholics – moving homes into secure ghettoes. After Internment was introduced in August 1971 the nationalist population launched a rent and rates strike which within weeks involved 52000 households.

Since the late 'seventies residents of the squalid Divis and Moyard flats in Belfast have campaigned aggressively for their blocks to be demolished and people rehoused. They have presented dead rats to the housing authorities (there are more rats than people in the Divis flats). When these protests were ignored, members of the Divis Demolition Committee set about destroying the flats themselves. Earlier this year there were angry demonstrations after four-year-old Jim McGivern drowned in an open sewer in the Moyard flats area. And the pogroms continue: after this year's Loyalist 12 July parades Catholic families were driven out of their homes in Ballynahinch, County Down and Donemana, County Tyrone.

Slums with a difference

The housing in the Six Counties is some of the worst in Europe. The old housing stock is damp, crumbling, and overcrowded. Estates jerry-built in Belfast in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies – Divis, Moyard, Beechmount – are literally cracking up. The Divis flats are semi-derelict; in the Moyard estate sewage seeps through manholes into the street. Everywhere there are problems of condensation, poor ventilation and insulation and enormous fuel bills.

Residents of every British inner city area can tell similar stories of rats, dampness and housing authorities who won't do repairs. However the extent of poor housing is even greater in the Six Counties. The grim conditions of the estates of Belfast and Derry correspond to the high levels of unemployment and poverty that British domination has always enforced on the Irish people. The recession has made a bad situation even worse. But this is a difference of degree – the most important aspects of housing in the Six Counties have no parallel in Britain. The crucial difference is symbolised by the presence, at the top of the multi-storey Divis tower block, of a permanent British Army base.

The 'taint of sectarianism'

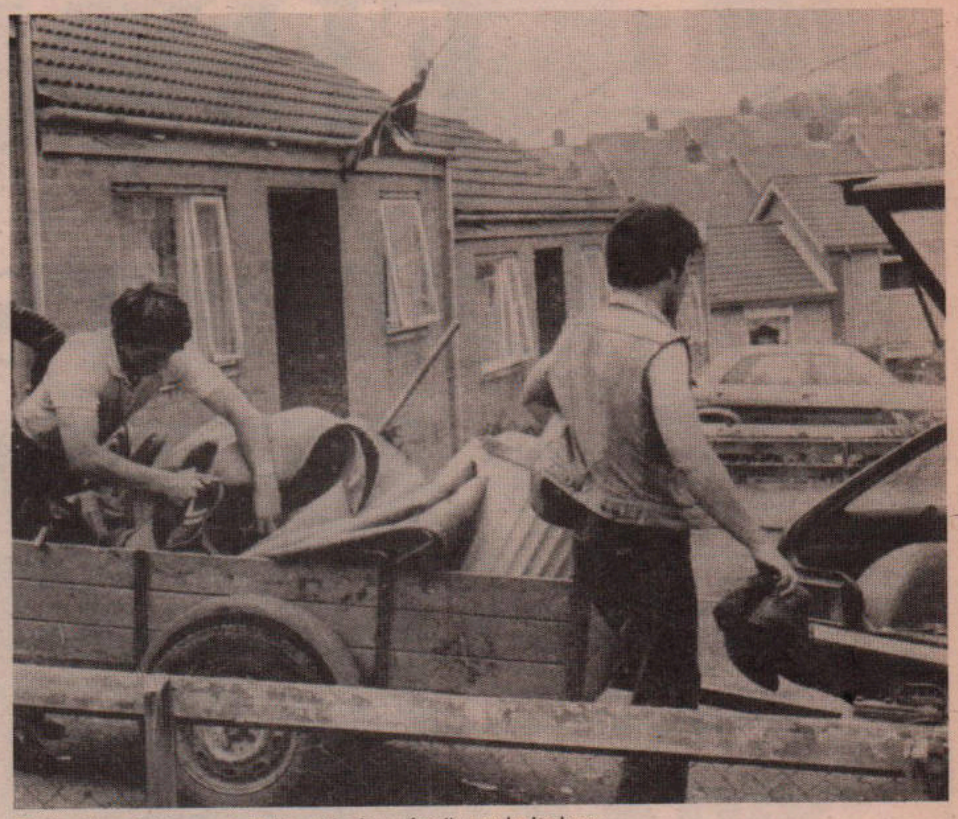
The Six County state is based on the denial of democratic rights to the nationalist people. Sectarian discrimination permeates every aspect of housing as every other aspect of life in British-occupied Ireland. For the first 50 years of the Northern Ireland state, housing policy was in the grip of local councils which were under virtually exclusive Unionist control. Because there was a restricted local government franchise and the tenancy of a council house brought with it votes, housing allocation was an intensely political issue. In marginal areas the allocation of a handful of houses could swing the balance of power on the council. Loyalist-controlled councils in areas with substantial Catholic populations developed two strategies to deal with this problem. Some councils such as Dungannon simply allocated all their houses to Protestants. Other councils simply refused to build any houses at all. Indeed public sector housing in the whole Six Counties remained negligible.

After the Second World War there was a steady increase in public housing provision. Embarassed by some of the excesses of local council bigotry, the Stormont regime set up the Northern Ireland Housing Trust in 1944 to build housing 'free from the taint of sectarianism'. Between 1944 and 1971 nearly 200000 new homes were built – 55000 by the Housing Trust. But the 'taint of sectarianism' remained.

Much of the new housing was concentrated in largely Protestant areas where industrial investment was preferentially directed. Between 1945 and 1967 Loyalist local authorities in Fermanagh built 1048 houses: 18 per cent went to Catholics and 82 per cent to Protestants. In the city areas the authorities resolved the problem of improving the appalling conditions of Catholic housing without altering the political balance by building high density housing in nationalist areas. This resulted in massive majorities for nationalist representatives in a few wards without altering overall Loyalist supremacy. The Creggan estate in Derry and the Divis and Unity flats and New Lodge Road developments in West Belfast are a product of this 'sixties strategy. The result was even more overcrowding. A survey of the Divis flats in the late 'seventies revealed an average of 7.9 people per flat; the total population of the flats was twice the officially admitted figure.

Direct discrimination

After the British military intervention in 1969 the Government removed control over housing from local councils and Stormont and set up the Northern Ireland Housing Executive under the direct control of Westminster. But discrimination was an inseparable feature of the Six County state, not the personal property of the Loyalist officials who enforced it. Discrimination has continued under the Housing Executive. It has built more new housing in the Six Counties and it has provided more housing for Catholics. But its activities have been conducted within the framework established over 60 years of Partition.



Fleeing Loyalist terror in Ballynahinch: a family packs its bags

The British Army's operational requirements have had an increasingly important role in housing policy. New estates in Belfast have been provided with reinforced pavements to bear the weight of armoured vehicles. Street layouts have been organised around a cul-de-sac plan that provides only two exits from an estate. This enables the army to seal off an entire area very quickly and to pursue suspects more easily. Check points, army forts and ghetto barriers complete the encirclement of the nationalist areas.

Housing politics

The nationalist people have often turned the housing developments in which they have been forced to live to their own advantage. In the early 'seventies ghettoes were turned into 'no-go areas' for the army and police. 'Free Derry' defended itself with petrol bombs thrown from the tops of Bogside tower blocks. The Divis flats have provided bases for many republican attacks. Direct action campaigns – from rent and rate strikes to calls for demolition – have long been part of nationalist resistance to British rule.

Most nationalists identify the fight for decent housing with the struggle against the British occupation. The early Civil Rights movement campaigned for decent housing within the structures of Stormont. It was rapidly clubbed of the streets. Since then the people who live in the nationalist areas have generally blamed their housing conditions on British rule. While they have been prepared to force what concessions they can out of the authorities, they have identified with the broader solution to Ireland's social problems through the national liberation struggle.

Politicians in the Social Democratic and Labour Party and in the Worker's Party (formerly Official Republican Movement and Republican Clubs) have separated housing – and other 'bread and butter' issues – from the struggle against British imperialism. They have sought to pursue reforms in housing policy through the channels of local government, the Housing Executive and informal contacts with government officials. This approach has produced results for a few individuals with specific complaints. But it has done nothing to resolve the major problems of bad housing and discrimination. The advocates of this reformist strategy have been forced to condemn the armed struggle as an obstacle to their efforts to win concessions through negotiations.

However the Provisional Republican Movement's turn towards electoral activity has awoken hopes in the British establishment that it can steer the movement into reformist housing politics. This objective has prompted Housing Executive officials to meet with Sinn Fein representatives while the authorities have recognised the Sinn Fein advice centres. The Government hopes that it can encourage republicans to give up the gun by offering concessions and consultations on housing matters to Sinn Fein representatives.

Her Majesty's servants

The Labour left in Britain has put itself forward as the vehicle to accelerate the British state's integration of the republican movement. Prominent Labour spokesmen have encouraged the republican movement to abandon the armed struggle and pursue 'normal' political methods. Tony Benn recently identified the 'real problems of the province' as 'mass unemployment, bad housing, poverty and social deprivation' (*The Guardian* 18 July). The presence of 30000 armed representatives of the British state in 'the province' does not even merit a mention as a problem. Ken Livingstone wants Sinn Fein to give up the fight and develop along the lines of the Labour Party in Britain. He is pleased with progress so far: 'the new leadership of Sinn Fein has emerged over the last four years and has developed a full programme of social and economic reforms akin to that of the British Labour Party' (*Which way to withdrawal?* 1983).

The problem for British imperialism and its humble servants in the Labour Party is that they cannot guarantee decent housing for all in the Six Counties. Stagnant British capitalism lacks the resources, and sectarian discrimination in housing is vital to the very existence of the Six County state. Only the triumph of anti-imperialist forces in Ireland can provide good housing without the 'taint of sectarianism'. The demise of the Workers' Party in the Six Counties stands as a warning against any separation of housing from the national liberation struggle.

Clare Foster

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Terror unlimited

FOR THE LAST nine years Irish people in Britain have lived under the constant threat from the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. Under a new law to be debated in Parliament in October the 'temporary provisions' for terrorising the Irish community are going to be made permanent.

On Saturday 23 July *Seamus Reid*, a 41 year old father of four from Belfast, became the 5640th person to be held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. He came over from Belfast to Liverpool on his first visit to Britain to buy a taxi for his father's firm. After six days of detention and interrogation in the city's Bridewell prison he was served with an exclusion order and dumped back in Belfast. His crime? He came from republican West Belfast and had been interned for a short period more than a decade ago.

The PTA

Between 29 November 1974 and 30 June 1983 more than 5600 people were detained under the PTA. Of these 295 were excluded from Britain (mostly to the Six counties) and 104 were charged under the PTA. Approximately 88 per cent of people arrested under the PTA were released without charge or exclusion order. The purpose of the PTA is to terrorise anybody – especially anybody Irish – who opposes Britain's war in Ireland in Britain itself. The Act has worked so effectively over the past decade that it is now being extended. The Prevention of Terrorism Bill, published in July and due to be enacted in the next parliamentary session, takes account of the Jellicoe inquiry which reported in February on the existing legislation. It also accommodates the feeble criticisms of the PTA made by civil liberties lawyers and Labour MPs.

The PTB

The new Prevention of Terrorism Bill
- lists *proscribed organisations*: the IRA and the INLA are banned – it will be illegal to be a supporter or even to dress like one
- bans *collecting money*: it will be against the law to give or accept money intended for terrorist activity
- allows *arrest and detention*: suspects can be picked up and held without charge or trial for 48 hours – which can be extended for any period up to seven days on the nod from the Home Secretary
- removes detainee's *right to silence*: 'withholding information' carries a maximum penalty of five years inside and an unlimited fine
- allows *exclusion orders*: detainees can be kicked out of the 'United Kingdom'.

What's new?

The new Prevention of Terrorism Bill may seem remarkably similar to the old PTA. Indeed it is virtually identical. But certain features have attracted widespread comment.
- '*Permanent provisions*'?: the old PTA was 'temporary' the new one will lapse after five years – when it does it will be replaced by a similar law. The new Act will still require annual renewal by Parliament.
- '*International terrorism*': the powers of arrest and detention can be used against 'foreign terrorists' as well as 'Irish terrorists'. In fact this is not a new provision. Nor is it very important. It is a nuisance to the authorities when Middle Eastern factions fight out their differences around West End hotels and embassies. But it is no threat to the British state. Indeed sometimes it can be turned to considerable propaganda advantage as the SAS raid on the Iranian embassy in 1980 showed. It is a different matter when the republican movement brings its mortal threat to the British state to the heart of the metropolis. The PTA – and the new PTB – have got to be anti-Irish because it is from Ireland that the real danger to the British state comes.
- *Variable detention*: under the PTA people could be held *either* for 48 hours *or* for seven days. Under the new PTB the Home Secretary can specify any period up to a full week. Detainees will still have no right to see a solicitor.
- *Fairer victimisation*: the new Bill makes some minor changes in the procedures for exclusion. These are trivial modifications to create a semblance of fair play. They may appease the civil liberties lobby but they will make little difference in practice to PTA victims.

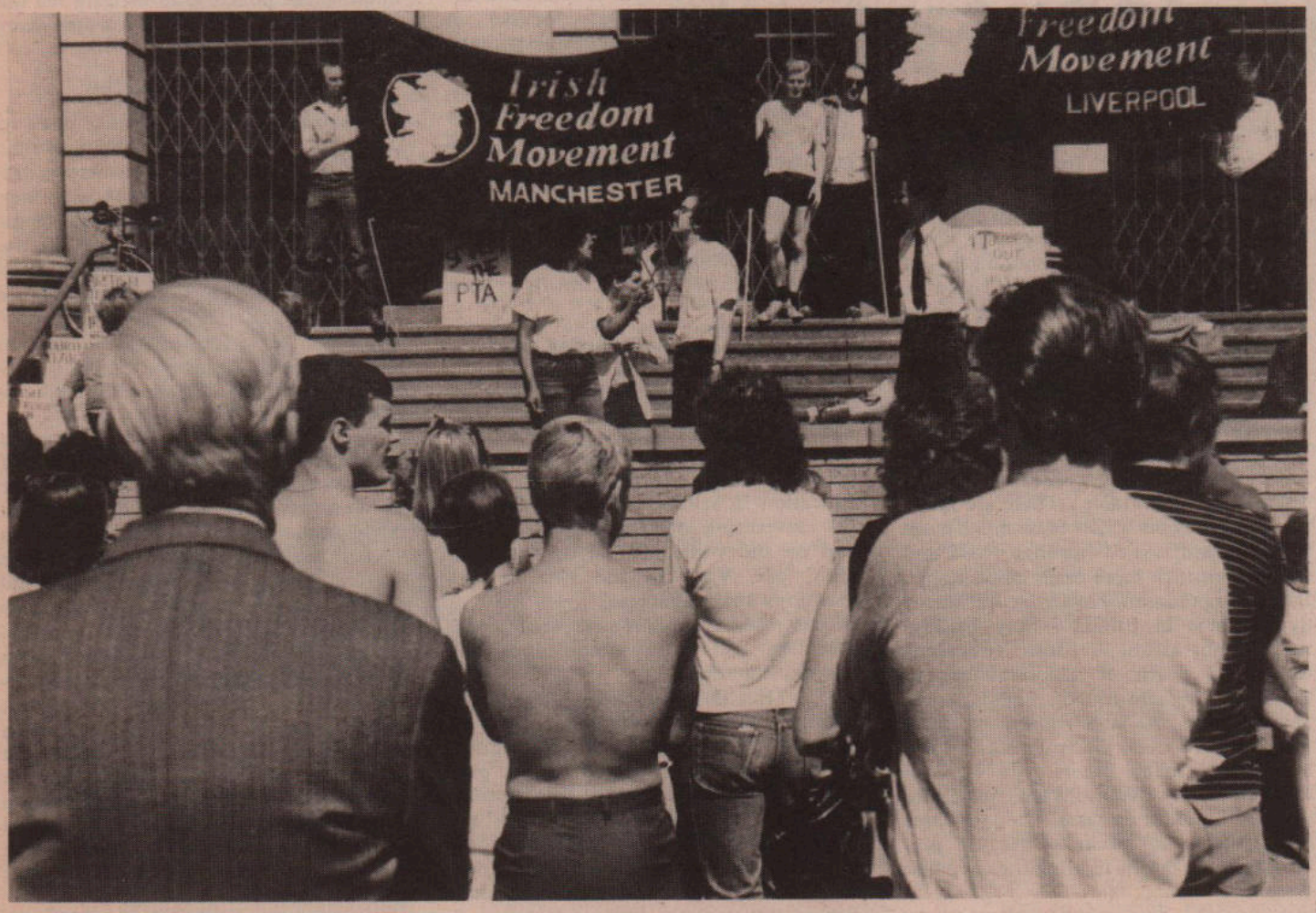
The PTB promises to continue the intimidation of Britain's Irish community conducted under the PTA. During the General Election campaign the Labour Party pledged to repeal the PTA and replace it with legislation which is more effective in combatting 'terrorism'. Labour left-wingers have crticised the PTA on the grounds that its violations of the civil liberties of Irish people are unjustified and even counter productive. But they share the concern of the British state to curb the activities of the Irish liberation struggle. We can be sure that their opposition to the new PTB will prove as ineffectual as their resistance to the old PTA.

Fighting the PTA/B

Immediately on finding out about the arrest of *Seamus Reid*, Liverpool Irish Freedom Movement launched a campaign for his release. Nightly pickets were held outside the prison. The campaign won the support of the local Labour MPs Alan Roberts, Eddie Loyden, Terry Fields and Bob Parry – all of whom contacted the Home Office demanding Reid's release. Abercrombie Labour councillor Jimmy Rutledge, himself a former PTA detainee, joined the pickets as did a delegation from the TGWU 612 unemployed branch.

Meanwhile in Folkestone Kent IFM activists were campaigning for the release of another PTA victim – 31 year old *Paul Watson*, an ex-prisoner also from Belfast. He had been working abroad and stopped in England en route home solely to pick up his wages from his British-based employer. The Special Branch stopped him at passport control. Three carfulls of armed police escorted him to Canterbury prison. After four weeks in custody, he was found guilty of breaking a previous exclusion order and deported to the Six Counties the same day. The IFM held noisy pickets outside his court appearances, supported by local trade unionists despite sustained harassment from Folkestone police. Whether it happens in the Atlantic seaports of the North-West or the Kent towns of the Channel coast, we will continue to protest against the state's harassment of Irish people in Britain.

The IFM campaign for Labour councils to declare their areas PTA free zones is gathering momentum around the country. Unlike similar gestures against nuclear weapons or apartheid, a commitment to oppose the PTA could have practical consequences. Councils could give legal and financial assistance to PTA victims, expose the harassment of Irish people under the Act and take sanctions against the police for implementing it. For information on anti-PTA activities in your area, contact Phil Murphy on 01 274 3951.



Manchester IFM: street theatre against the PTA

Civil rights activist fined

Detained: Finbar O'Doherty

Founder member of the Derry Civil Rights movement Finbar O'Doherty has been fined £250 for refusing to provide information to the police when he was detained at Manchester Airport under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in January. At the time Finbar was travelling to attend the Bloody Sunday demonstration in Leeds. Manchester Irish Freedom Movement supporters picketed the airport detention centre overnight. The police told Finbar that 'a bunch of commies are outside in the middle of a snow blizzard demanding your release'. Messages of support and contributions towards the fine and costs will be forwarded from *the next step* to Finbar in Derry.

500 protest against the PTA

More than 500 people supported the IFM's 13 August national Day of Action against the PTA. To mark the fourteenth anniversary of the British Army's invasion of Ireland we staged street meetings and street theatre from Ashton in North Manchester and Coventry in the West Midlands to Brixton in South London. A motorcade raced around North London holding instant meetings in the streets and shopping precincts. Labour Party and Sinn Fein supporters turned out in support of IFM branches' demand to 'make the PTA unworkable'. The only people who objected to the events were a lot of police, a few shopkeepers – and the Labour councils in Leeds and Sheffield. Sheffield's Labour council has a reputation for being anti-war. In the same week that the council marked the anniversary of the destruction of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, its Environmental and Planning Committee banned the IFM's protest againt the Irish war from Sheffield's Peace Gardens.

The Labour council has been trying to get Sheffield IFM's celebrated play 'The Hunger Striker' off the streets for months. This time the council told the IFM that it had consulted the police and agreed that the IFM play and rally would be banned from the Peace Gardens 'in the interests of the people of Sheffield'. In the interests of the working class of Sheffield and the people of Ireland, the IFM decided to go ahead with the rally. Council leader David Blunkett went on local radio to condemn the IFM. Police arrived on the day of the rally to enforce the Labour council's ban. But the play went ahead successfully, followed by speeches from IFM and Sinn Fein supporters and from the national youth organiser of the Labour Committee on Ireland.

Leeds Labour council imposed a similar ban on the IFM rally. This time the local constabulary managed to break up the meeting, but not for long. The combined efforts of left-wing Labour councils and police could not stop the IFM protesting against the PTA. Nor will they in future.

Gays and AIDS: fact and fiction

"'GAY PLAGUE" sets off panic' declared a Sunday newspaper headline in June: *The Observer* reported that the United States Health Department had made AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) America's number one health priority and warned of its spread to Britain. Behind the media-inspired concern about AIDS lurks a deepening anti-homosexual prejudice on both sides of the Atlantic. Gays are increasingly identified not as potential sufferers from a lethal disease, but as a source of contamination to society.

AIDS is characterised by the collapse of the body's immune (defence) system. This renders the sufferers susceptible to certain virulent infections usually seen only in patients whose immune system is depressed by drugs or serious illness. The first case of AIDS was noted in New York in 1979. By July of this year 1831 cases had been recorded in the USA of whom 684 had died. The first case in Britain was reported in December 1981. So far 14 cases have been diagnosed and 4 have proved fatal. AIDS is a fatal and incurable condition.

Fact and fiction

AIDS is a *syndrome*. This means that it is a description of a group of clinical features which appear to belong to a common disease entity. The cause and explanation of the common features remain obscure. So far the most important clues to the nature of AIDS seem to come from the social characteristics of its victims: the so-called 'four Hs'. In both Britain and the USA more than 70 per cent are *homosexual* men. The rest are users of *heroin* (or other injected drugs), people from the Caribbean island of *Haiti*, or sufferers from the inherited blood clotting disorder *haemophilia*, who need regular transfusions of blood products. These epidemiological features have led to speculation that AIDS is caused by a virus similar to the one that causes serum hepatitis. This is transmitted by body fluids (blood, saliva, semen etc) and is relatively common among gays and junkies. But no causative agent, virus or otherwise, has yet been identified in AIDS sufferers, and no protective immunisation is available.

These are the basic facts about AIDS. There is no hard evidence to link AIDS to the use of 'recreational' drugs such as amyl nitrate by gays, to promiscuity, to particular forms of sexual behaviour, or to blood transfusions. Yet newspapers are full of such speculations. The only thing that can be said definitively about the syndrome is that it particularly affects gay men and that it is highly malignant. Urgent research is clearly required to discover the cause and hopefully both curative and preventive measures. But this is not the direction in which the AIDS panic is moving.

Moving rapidly from esoteric medical hypotheses to down-home bigotry, American newspapers have proclaimed AIDS to be God's well-deserved punishment for 'perverts'. The Rev Greg Dixon of the Moral Majority, America's most influential anti-gay, anti-women lobby, issued an apocalyptic prophecy:

> 'If homosexuals are not stopped, they will in time infect the entire nation, and America will be destroyed.'

The AIDS scare is being turned into a campaign against gays. In the USA reactionaries are demanding that homosexuals be excluded from food-handling jobs, despite the absence of any evidence that AIDS can be transmitted in this way. In Britain there have been demands that gays be excluded as blood donors.

'Give it up'

AIDS is being publicised on an international scale to curb homosexual activity and reinforce the sexual norms of bourgeois society. In the USA gays are being further isolated and pressed to curb their sexual activities. In Europe this is combined with injunctions to shun American gays, or even visitors to that contaminated continent. The AIDS panic is not concerned to sympathise with gays as the victims of a deadly illness, but to blame them for its incidence and promote prejudice against them as a potential source of infection. Homosexuality has been identified, not as an apparent factor in the spread of the disease, but as its prime cause.

The best parallel with this response to AIDS is the British Government's method of dealing with an epidemic of venereal disease in the armed forces in the nineteenth century. The 1864 Contagious Diseases Act allowed for any woman 'said to be a prostitute' to be forcibly examined; if she refused, or was discovered to have VD, she could be imprisoned for three months. Men were not affected by the Act. Gays are not yet being locked up as a result of the AIDS scare, but they are certainly being targeted and vilified.

The *British Medical Journal* recently summed up the views of the British establishment on the subject of AIDS:

> 'Ironically, despite all the uncertainties, this disease (like genital herpes, which has also attracted much attention in the American lay papers) is essentially preventable. The abandonment of promiscuity, homosexuality, and drug abuse could eventually stop both these diseases in their tracks – though that is hardly likely to prove an acceptable solution.' (5 March)

The *BMJ* recognises that it may not be 'an acceptable solution' that gays give up their sex lives, but it is manifestly an acceptable argument for a respectable journal to advance. The *BMJ* would be hardly likely to advance the equally absurd notions that sports injuries could be prevented by the abandonment of sport, or that traffic accidents could be avoided if people stopped driving cars or walking on the street. Nor would the *BMJ* propose the abandonment of heterosexual behaviour as a means of preventing VD. But the medical profession is happy to add its weight to the anti-gay response to AIDS.

It is also significant that the *BMJ* singles out AIDS as a disease which is 'essentially preventable'. There are many medical problems which cause much more suffering and loss of life than AIDS and which are much more easily preventable. Every year thousands of old people die of hypothermia in Britain simply because they cannot afford fuel bills. Thousands too suffer death or serious injury in accidents in factories, on building sites and on farms because employers' greed for profits overrides safety considerations. Miners and many others who work in dusty or smoky conditions are chronically disabled by chest diseases. These diseases get virtually no publicity because preventing them means fighting the capitalist system.

Jenny Graham

Pills and soap

MOTHER OF TEN Victoria Gillick hit the headlines when she took her local health authority to court. She sought to prevent doctors from giving contraception advice or prescribing the pill to girls under the age of sixteen without parental consent. Her case was backed by the 'responsible society', a campaign of middle class moralists whose aims include the 'prevention of distress caused by sexual behaviour'. Gillick lost her case, but the bandwagon of reaction goes rolling on.

Every year around 4000 girls have abortions before their sixteenth birthday. It is illegal to have sex with a girl under the age of 16. Victoria Gillick's case was that the doctors who prescribed the pill to under 16s were 'aiding and abetting unlawful sexual intercourse'. The Gillick case failed because it threatened the rights of the medical profession. Doctors jealously guard their rights to choose who is entitled to go on the pill, have an abortion, or be allowed to die. The judges can trust their medical colleagues to act in the best interests of the system, so Mr Justice Woolf rejected Gillick's plea.

Women are the real losers. The Gillick case was another in a series of ideological blows. It reinforces the view of schoolgirl pregnancies as a problem of crime and law and order. Public debate focused on naughty children and irresponsible parents. A society that provides neither adequate advice to prevent unwanted pregnancies, nor satisfactory facilities for terminating them, nor sufficient resources for young mothers to support babies they have, entirely escaped blame. The real problems facing working class girls and women are pushed aside in a chorus of Home Counties accents discussing the virtues of family life among those who can afford to have ten children.

No sex – by order

The 'hang murderers, flog criminals and keep children in the dark about sex' brigade have already damaged women's rights to contraception. Their propaganda campaigns have led to the curtailment of sex education in schools and restrictions on the advertising of contraceptive advice and on the availability of the 'morning after' pill. Many of the 100000 plus abortions that take place every year in Britain result from ignorance about contraception and the widespread use of unreliable methods.

The Health Education Council and Family Planning Association's efforts to educate young people about contraception are under constant attack from the propurity lobby. As a result of this pressure the Government has banned two FPA booklets. It is illegal to advertise contraceptive brand names on television. Even the Durex racing car cannot be televised. Earlier this year the Independent Broadcasting Authority banned a public information film on contraception which it felt contravened the code of advertising practice which rules that pre-marital sex cannot be explicitly condoned.

Good morning oestrogen!

The 'morning after' pill is a course of four oestrogen pills that can be taken up to three days after sex to prevent pregnancy. Whilst it may cause some nausea and vomiting, it is a highly desirable alternative to the trauma of abortion. The authorities' failure to popularise this form of contraception results in part from the pressure of the anti-abortion campaigners.

Anti-abortionist Dr Adrian Rogers claims that this pill is a 'do-it-yourself abortion'. John Smeaton of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child agrees that:

> 'women are being conned into thinking it is a contraceptive, when in fact it is a form of abortion . . . we want to know whether the Abortion Act really permits it . . . It could act on the unborn baby – and we are talking about unborn babies.' (*The Sun*, 10 May)

Founders of anti-abortion group Life, Jack and Nuala Scarisbrook, have asked the Birmingham police to investigate the use of the 'morning after' pill by the pregnancy Advisory Service.

Right against the state?

The anti-abortion groups bring cases to court not to win, but to stir up public prejudices against women's rights to contraception and abortion. Although they purport to challenge the state and the legal system, their real effect is to intensify the ideological attack on the working class. The ruling class is happy with the law as it stands and as it is mediated by doctors' prejudices. As a DHSS spokesman said, referring to the morning after pill, 'a doctor can prescribe the pill if he thinks it is the right thing to do' (*Daily Star*, 2 March).

For us contraception and abortion are social, not moral issues. Contraception and abortion are necessary for women, and the labour movement must fight to make them freely available. But even where women do have legal rights they are not free to exercise them. Restricted advertising and availability, as well as hospital cuts, help to deny contraceptive and abortion services to the women who need them most. Reactionary moral crusaders legitimise legal restrictions and government cuts. We should reject all discussions on the viability of foetuses or the date life begins. Nor do we have any interest in defending doctors' rights to decide on our futures. We fight for workers' control over the facilities we need so that women can begin to have genuine choice about their own destinies.

Kate Marshall

Fighting redundancies

ON 23 AUGUST the leaders of the long battle for jobs at Laurence Scott and Electromotors in Openshawe, convenor Dennis Barry and rank and file militant Dave Hallsworth, spoke at a street meeting outside the Salford factory of Ward and Goldstone where closure threatens 500 jobs.

An RCP leaflet called for action against the bosses' plans, explaining that 'mass redundancies may be a realistic decision for management but such massive job losses would be a disaster for us':

'If the employers are determined to shut the works down then we have to be even more determined to keep our jobs. A "slimmed-down" plant means hundreds of redundancies. It means an increase in productivity so that one worker is doing the work of two, and tighter discipline on the shop floor.'

Dave Hallsworth, recently RCP election candidate in the Manchester area, commented on the fact that the workers had been given 90 days notice of closure:

'This period is intended to test out the workers' response. Are we prepared to fight or will the closure be a walk-over? Our concern can only be for our jobs, our right to work and our right to fight. The management's interests are 100 per cent opposed to ours. The unions are supposed to be on our side. But Dougie Daniels of the AUEW says that "neither side wants to escalate the dispute". He's trying to find a middle way – give and take (we give and they take). He wants a gentleman's agreement to trade our jobs for redundancy money. The unions prefer the quiet life. But at Ward and Goldstone there is no civilised "middle course". It's a bare knuckle fight with the bosses.'

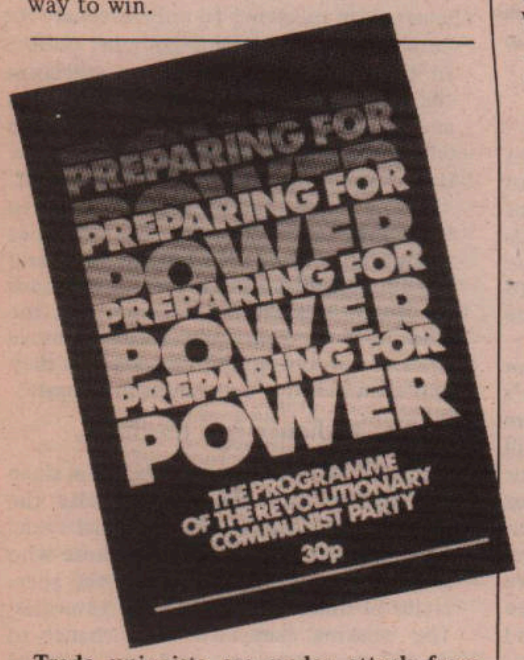
Our leaflet put forward the following plan of action.

We have to start off by opposing *all* redundancies in principle. No job can be saved unless we use our combined strength. But how can we unite if only half of us have got jobs to go to? Say no to voluntary redundancies, natural wastage and redeployment.

We must reject the plans which the board of the buyers have put forward to decimate the workforce. Competing on the market, profit and loss calculations are the bosses' problems not ours.

If the cables division isn't viable without redundancies and speed ups, then it is up to the bosses to find subsidies from the state or within the group.

The company can be forced to concede. We need solidarity from other Ward and Goldstone workers in Skelmersdale, Todmorden, Leigh and Hindley Green, and the working class as a whole, for blacking, pickets, and the non-movement of stacks and machinery. This is the only way to win.



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Hindle's the workers fight on

WORKERS at Hindle Gears engineering factory in Bradford have now been on strike for six months over their demand for a living wage. The strikers have used a range of imaginative and militant tactics including an occupation and secondary picketing. Their wives have joined the pickets and organised other activities in support of the strikers.

Unfortunately the strike has been sabotaged at every stage by the engineering workers' union, the AUEW. Speaking at a meeting organised by the RCP in Leeds last month, one of the wives angrily denounced the union. She declared that they had no intention of allowing it to sell out their struggle.

However, the union's failure to give any sort of lead has taken its toll. As the bosses have adamantly refused to negotiate, some of the workers have drifted back to work, some have taken redundancy pay and others have moved on in search of new jobs. Yet a hard core remains on the picket lines and support from the local labour movement is growing all the time.

The AUEW has behaved like a company union throughout the dispute. After delaying the issue of strike pay for weeks, the officials have used the workers' dependence on £12 a week to restrain militancy. Any effective blacking or publicity around the strike has been organised by the workers themselves, not the union. The minute an injunction was served on the occupation, the AUEW District Secretary withdrew official support and pressed the workers into ending it. Next the bosses informed the union that the workers were engaged in secondary picketing and that the pickets included wives, friends and RCP supporters as well as Hindle's workers. The officials despatched a special AUEW solicitor from Manchester to read the riot act to the workers.

When scabs supported by management produced a spoof strike bulletin in an attempt to weaken morale, they blamed 'the lefties' – not the union – for carrying on the dispute. The mock 'question and answer' appeal to the workforce went like this:

Hindle's stikers' wives: ready to take on the TUC

'Q: Why haven't our trade union officials settled the dispute?

'A: Because we wouldn't let them and tied their hands. The lefties told us we would win. They were wrong.'

No, they were right. One of the problems is that the workers have not tied the betraying hands of the bureaucrats sufficiently tightly. Many workers are prepared to fight the bosses and to defy the law to do it. But they are being held back by their loyalty to the union.

The officials' constant undermining of militancy has strengthened divisions and encouraged the passivity of the more conservative workers. As a result some of the workers have become disillusioned and pessimistic about their chances of victory. The steady pile up of bills and rent arrears has increased the pressure on the strikers. But the strike can still be won – if the workers take it into their own hands and defy the restrictions imposed by the officials.

RCP supporters in Bradford, Leeds and Manchester have been mobilising solidarity for the strikers, especially among trade unionists and especially in the AUEW. We have fully supported the mass lobby at the TUC at Blackpool on 5 September at which Hindle's workers and their wives intend to let AUEW chief Terry Duffy know just what they think of him. This will be followed by a demonstration in Bradford on 10 September, starting from Denby's dye factory (where workers were victimised a few years ago). Join us and fight for the right to fight.

A win in Wandsworth

Gardeners in the London borough of Wandsworth returned to work in mid-August after a three-week strike. They succeeded in forcing management to drop a new piece-rate scheme which would have meant a reduction of wages to between £45 and £60 a week. They have still not won recognition for their union, NUPE, which they joined shortly before coming out on strike. The strike was a vindication of militant tactics and a warning against the danger of restricting the defence of jobs and conditions in local government to campaigns against privatisation.

The 39 Wandsworth gardeners work for a private contractor, Pritchard Industrial Services Ltd. Pritchard's moved into Wandsworth's Tory-controlled council after a bitter dispute last year in which dustmen ran tight picket lines; bosses and scabs were intimidated and scab dustcarts firebombed. Although Pritchards has since lost the refuse disposal contract to Grand Metropolitan, another cowboy outfit, it still runs the old parks department. For the gardeners the summer strike was an all-out fight to defend their right to work at a decent wage in decent conditions and be members of a union. They were fed up of having to work compulsory overtime in all weathers without shelter, protective clothing or proper footwear. They resented not having paid holidays, sick-leave or pensions. The new piece-rate system was the last straw.

However for full-time NUPE officials Ian Scott and Dave Benlow and the local Labour Party, the strike had a different purpose. They tried to use the gardeners' action to regain some of the prestige they lost through their betrayal of the dustmen in 1982. They also aimed to use the strike to attack the Tory council and advance Labour's case against privatisation. They opposed privatisation, not centrally because of its attack on workers' livelihoods, but because of its inefficiency and poor standard of service to ratepayers. As Scott explained during last year's dispute, 'after all for the past few years we have cooperated with the council in making savings which have included the loss of 1500 jobs' (*Wandsworth Call*, strike bulletin).

Supporters of the Revolutionary Communist Party on the Wandsworth picket lines argued for a different approach. Whether the gardeners were employed by the council or the contractors, their jobs and conditions should come first. Council workers have no interest in saving ratepayers money, only in making sure they have enough to live on. The only guarantee of a decent wage is fighting for it. Trying to persuade Tory councillors that direct labour is more efficient than contractors simply invites the council to make the cuts instead of the private firms. This has been the experience of workers in many areas – notably Birmingham. Our strategy was to broaden and intensify the action and put some real pressure on the council.

Many of the gardeners saw the logic of our arguments. We suggested that they should form their own strike committee, kick out the scabs and start some aggressive picketing. Our intervention was influential in winning a 24 hour walkout of the dustmen in protest against their own low wages and in solidarity with the gardeners. The officials watched in dismay as the workers chained the depot gates and refused to let anybody cross the picket lines. They fraternised with the police and denounced RCP supporters for 'antagonising' the scabs and giving the strike 'a bad name'.

In the end it was militant action that prevented another setback to Wandsworth workers. If they continue to put their faith in their strength, rather than in deals between union bureaucrats and council officials, then they will go forward to further victories. State control of services is no guarantee of workers' living standards, but workers' control of picket lines is!

Left in the lurch

'Downturn' for whom?

The trade unions are on the defensive and many workers are sceptical about the capacity of their organisations to defend their interests. The decline in union militancy has led sections of the British left to draw pessimistic conclusions about future prospects. We do not share their notion of 'the downturn' and we are not waiting for an economic upturn to strengthen the position of the labour movement.

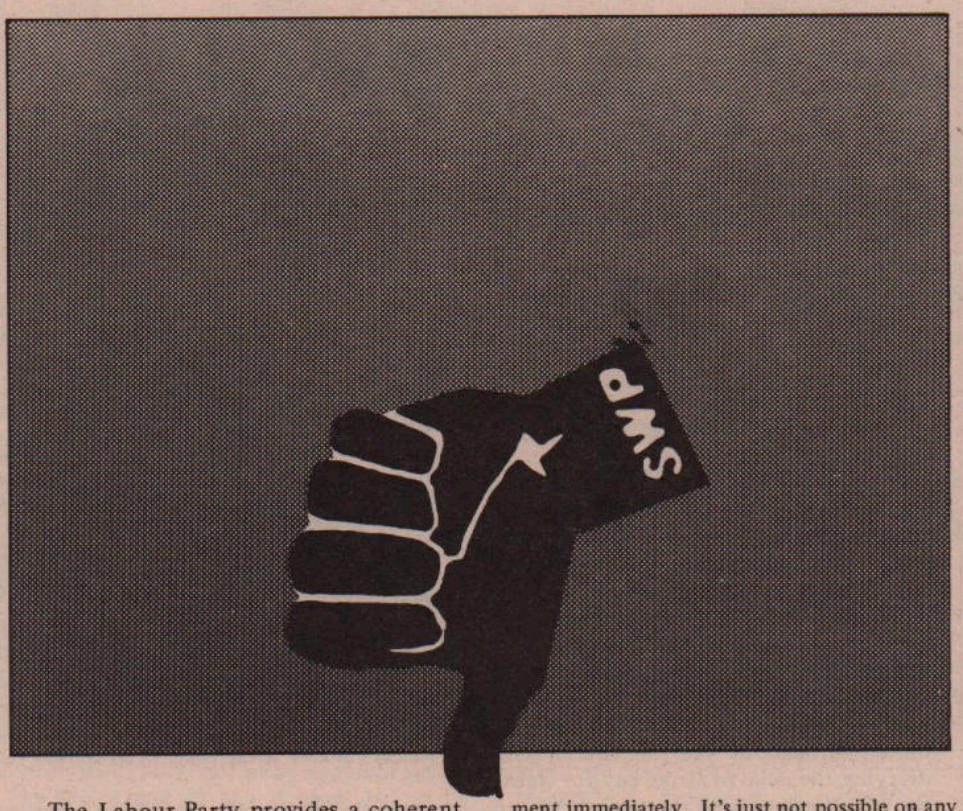
THE LEFT sees the decline of workplace trade union organisation over the past five years as the consequence of the recession. In one sense this is true. Mass unemployment and the climate of austerity have limited the scope for negotiation and strike action. An atmosphere of insecurity is not conducive to shop floor militancy. But it would be wrong to see the erosion of union power as an inevitable consequence of the recession.

The fruits of collaboration

The decisive factor in changing the balance of forces in industry has been the politics that prevail on the shopfloor. Trade union membership and workplace organisation expanded rapidly in the 'sixties and 'seventies in a framework of close cooperation with employers and the state. From TUC leaders to the shop stewards the unions were enmeshed in a wide range of committees and quangos alongside management and government officials. There was a spectacular increase in the number of union representatives involved in various state-sponsored institutions. The consequence of this institutionalisation of the trade union movement was that the politics of class collaboration came to influence hundreds of thousands of workers.

In the 'sixties it appeared to be quite possible for a union official or a shop steward to sit on a productivity council or a joint consultative committee with the bosses – and still lead strikes against them for higher wages. Indeed the rising scale of militancy in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies suggested that the unions had become very powerful. As long as the economy expanded the trade unions were effective organisations for defending workers' living standards. But when the economy went into recession the heady days of union power came to an abrupt end. Workers now paid a terrible price for the policy of collaboration that had become accepted without question over the post-war period. Union leaders and activists accustomed to linking wage demands to rising output, productivity and profits could not escape the consequences of the crisis of British industry. Indeed most union officials assumed that their future and the livelihoods of their members depended on making industry viable again. This led the trade union movement to assume responsibility for British industry – from workplace to national level. During the last Labour Government the official labour movement's commitment to making the sacrifices in jobs, wages and conditions necessary to save British capitalism was enshrined in the Social Contract.

The spirit of the Social Contract sapped militancy. In a recession only those whose commitment lies with the independent interests of the working class can consistently advocate militant tactics. The decline of militancy is not the result of a psychological crisis of confidence, but the consequence of a political outlook which leads workers to shoulder the burdens of the capitalist class. Once workers accept that their interests are linked to the profits of their bosses they have accepted the economic arguments for redundancies and wage cuts.



The Labour Party provides a coherent expression of the ideology of class collaboration in industry. The influence of Labourism in the working class prevents it from acting and fighting as an independent force. Today the decline in union militancy goes hand in hand with the fragmentation of the labour movement. While the Tories and the employers are resolutely united, the working class is divided along sectional, racial and sexual lines. Isolated from the unions, the unemployed are the latest victims of the Labour leadership's class collaboration.

Doom and gloom

For revolutionary communists the decline of trade union militancy is not a cause for pessimism. In its heyday the combativity of industrial militants was restricted to a narrow range of issues immediately related to bargaining within industry – wages, working conditions, etc. Capitalist society itself was never challenged on any broader front. One militant, now nostalgic for those days, recently recalled that 'although it was very easy to build strong shop organisation it was almost impossible to argue socialist politics at work' (*Socialist Review*, July). The result of this indifference to politics was that workplace militancy simply complemented the bureaucracy's collaborationist approach.

The declining effectiveness of strike action today means that many workers are forced to look for new solutions. The collapse of the Labour Party shows that for thousands of workers the traditional answers are just not good enough. Today there are less strikes, but much greater openness to revolutionary political arguments. For the first time since the war we are living in a time when building a revolutionary party is a real possibility. But just at the moment when it has become possible 'to argue socialist politics at work', the activists of the past decade have given up the attempt.

The left does not share our optimism because its survival is intimately connected with the prospects of the labour bureaucracy. The Socialist Workers' Party has invented the theory of 'the downturn' to substantiate its claim that nothing can be done at present. The downturn philosophy reveals the sense of fatalism that prevails on the left. As a leading SWP activist argued recently, the class struggle must await an upturn in the economy:

'We cannot rebuild the shop stewards movement immediately. It's just not possible on any sizeable scale in the present period; it will only become possible as the upturn develops and workers' confidence returns.' (*Socialist Review*, June)

Politics becomes mere commentary as socialist 'activists' study the business press in anticipation of a capitalist revival.

The downturn philosophy leads to passivity and the abandonment of the crucial task of fighting Labourism. Indeed it absolves Labourism of its responsibility for the present predicament of the working class. The simple equations boom = militancy, recession = passivity render the question of what sort of *politics* influences the working class superfluous. This mechanistic analysis is pursued to its logical absurdity by the Militant Tendency. In its *British Perspectives 1983* Militant promises that the future 'boom in itself will reawaken the confidence of the working class which will take their revenge for all the insults and all the pressure that has been heaped on them by the bosses in the difficult period of the recession.' If the capitalist boom provides the answers it is not at all clear why workers should want to overthrow the capitalist system. Militant and the SWP have not yet drawn this conclusion – but others have.

The Second Coming

The source of the fatalism that imbues the labour movement is Len Murray and his colleagues on the General Council of the TUC. The TUC leadership understands that its survival depends on the restoration of economic expansion and a return to full employment. Its advice to trade unionists is therefore straightforward – keep your heads down and pray for an upturn. Murray's comment on Labour's election defeat was 'sooner or later the economy will pick up and the Tories will have to talk to working people and their representatives'. But the working class cannot afford Murray's 'sooner or later' timescale. While Murray and his cronies are crawling along to Norman Tebbit more jobs are being cut, more militants victimised and working conditions made worse and worse. An upturn in British capitalism is unlikely to come for a long time. And it can only come through Tebbit and his supporters inflicting a defeat of historic proportions on the working class. That is the precondition for an upturn in capitalist profits. Yet the British left is prepared to stake the future of the labour movement on the prospects for a revival of British capitalism.

The left cannot face a basic fact of life – there can be no return to the militancy of the 'sixties and 'seventies. The capitalist crisis has gone too far to allow the working class to recapture the ground it has lost. Since the left has lost all hope of winning workers to an anti-capitalist outlook it has put all its money on the coming boom. Impatiently watching for signs of the Second Coming, the SWP has discovered 'mini-booms' in a number of industries. SWP leader Tony Cliff has argued that recent strikes at Ford, Tilbury docks and BL's Cowley plant were the result of new investment and expansion in those sectors. Commenting on the strike at Cowley in April, he concluded that 'the extra employment of some 1400 workers followed investment of £250 million, and without the success of the new Maestro, there would not have been a rebirth of confidence among the workers' (*Socialist Review*, June): Cliff is not alone. His co-thinkers in Militant have drawn the same lesson. 'Now, even without an increase in employment, as the example of Fords and British Leyland indicates, even an increase in orders will be sufficient to re-awaken the confidence of the masses to move into action' (*British Perspectives 1983*).

As it happens the strikes at BL, Ford and Tilbury had nothing to do with any mysterious rise in confidence. They were all desperate, last-ditch attempts by demoralised workforces to resist further humiliation. The mood of the strikers was summed up in the slogan 'enough is enough'. Speculations about 'mini-booms' and increases in orders ignore the devastation of workplace organisation and the problems involved in rebuilding it.

The passive perspective of the SWP and Militant assumes that a new boom will spontaneously awaken the working class. If this is so what is the justification for the existence of these organisations? In fact the British left has no justification for existing separately from the Labour Party – a point Militant at least appreciates. Those who await the Second Coming are in practice tolerating the continued domination of the working class by the labour bureaucracy. In effect they are allowing the patterns of capitalist investment to dictate the future of the working class.

To argue that class confidence will emerge on its own is to underestimate the task of fighting for anti-capitalist politics in the workplace. Labourism still grips the active sections of the working class and as long as it continues to do so the employers will retain the initiative. Now is not the time to sit around and wait. There is much that needs to be done to strengthen our class for the struggles ahead. The crisis of the Labour Party and the unions indicates that the old solutions no longer command the support of the working class. But workers will not move towards revolutionary politics unless they experience their effectiveness in struggle.

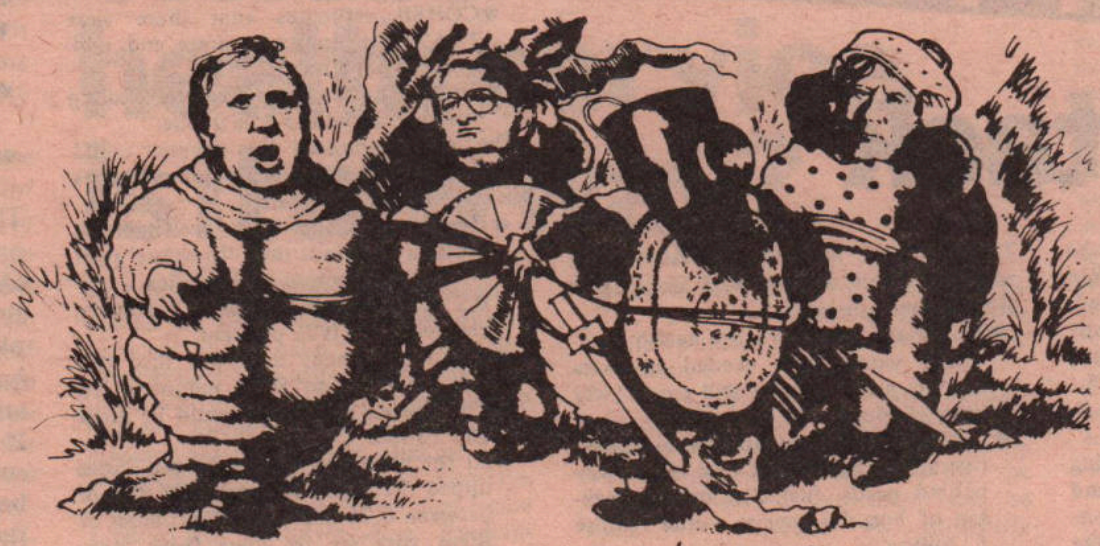
A chance in a lifetime

Let those who dream about a boom sleep on. We are not prepared to base the future of our class on the capitalist cycle. The downturn exists only for those who see the class struggle through the spectacles of union officials of the 'seventies. The working class now has a chance to assess its traditions and its existing institutions. It is a chance that comes only once in a generation. Revolutionary communists will be out to make sure that a new movement of militants will emerge from this experience, ready to take its place at the centre of the struggle against capital.

Pat Roberts

Labour's menu for the future

Filleted haddock



"WE MUST HAVE A BIT OF A FIGHT..' SAID TWEEDLEDUM

The squabble for the leadership of the Labour Party expresses the problems that led to its humiliation at the polls in June rather than any potential to resolve them.

THE TERMS of the discussion among the rival candidates for the Labour leadership seem clear enough. Right-wing contenders Roy Hattersley and Peter Shore and their supporters argue that Labour lost the General Election because its policies were seen as irrelevant and unconvincing by millions of voters. Left-wingers Eric Heffer and Michael Meacher and their camp-followers maintain that the manifesto of June 1983 was sound. The problems were those of leadership style, party organisation and policy presentation. For the right, new policies are required to restore Labour to its former status as an alternative party of government. For the left, new leadership will suffice to turn Labour into a campaigning party that can rally mass popular support and win future electoral victories.

This presentation of the debate disguises how far Labour's right wing has succeeded in dictating the terms of the General Election post-mortem and the extent to which the left has conceded. The pattern established in the months before the election has now become entrenched. The right declares its position and, in true recognition of its lack of an alternative programme, the left succumbs. Whoever wins the titles of leader and deputy leader at the party conference in October, the Labour Party is set to continue on the course which led to the June debacle.

Right on the attack

Shore and Hattersley have defined the issues in the leadership debate virtually from the minute the polls closed on 9 June. They went straight onto the offensive against the left. Hattersley's campaign statement summed up the argument. 'The potential voter who lives next door', he wrote, 'wants Labour to look like potential government, not a protest movement or pressure group, not a collection of warring factions, not a debating society or a museum of exotic and extreme minority opinions'. The policies of the left that did the damage were unilateral disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC.

Hattersley repudiated 'the notion that we might give up our protection if others did not do the same' and asserted his loyalty to NATO. Shore, once the leader of Labour's chauvinist anti-European lobby, joined Hattersley in advocating the pursuit of British interests within the framework of the EEC. Both candidates too rejected the left's stand against the sale of council houses. They affirmed Labour's respect for the values of home ownership.

Hattersley went further in drawing out some of the other themes in Labour's election manifesto. Labour should stake its claim to lead the nation out of recession by boldly declaring its commitment to wage cuts and austerity as a means of achieving this goal. Hence Hattersley proclaimed his faith in incomes policy and insisted on the need to be 'wholly frank about the pace of potential economic recovery'. Realism about the depth of Britain's crisis demanded 'honesty about future spending programmes':

> 'Of course, an increase in public expenditure is an essential feature...But we cannot meet the immediate demands of every pressure group.'

Hattersley's message was clear: Labour's programme means sharing out the sacrifices necessary to save British capitalism among different sections of the working class.'Austerity socialism' was apparent between the lines on every page of Labour's election manifesto. Hattersley's bid for potential prime ministerial respectability forced the logic of Labour's programme out into the open.

Left in retreat

The left squirmed through the summer. It much prefers the weasel words of conference resolutions and manifesto commitments to Hattersley's blunt speaking. It revels in the ambiguities and contradictions of Labour Party policy that allow it to endow Labour's pro-capitalist programme with anti-capitalist potential. Back in June incomes policy was disguised as a bland agreement between the unions and a future Labour Government. Tony Benn presented it as a vehicle for trade union control over government: but four million lost votes later the gloves were off and Hattersley was standing for 'the hard truth'. The left was on its back.

Heffer is the left's standard bearer for Labour's top office. 'The party must build itself into a mass campaigning party', his personal manifesto insisted. But how? Heffer could only recite the tired litany of CND activists, ecology campaigners, feminists and blacks, all of whom 'must now become an integral part of the party'. But why should any of these groups link up with a party which cannot even sustain the support of its traditional constituency? The left has no answers to the problem of Labour's disintegrating working class base.

Meanwhile the left has given in to the right on all the key issues in the leadership contest. Meacher's statement simply ignores unilateral nuclear disarmament and the EEC – the left's major causes only three months ago. Heffer blusters vaguely that Labour's policies on nuclear weapons 'are correct', but his only specific point is to propose 'working within NATO' as the way forward. Once a strident anti-European, Heffer concedes that 'the issue of Britain's membership of the EEC cannot now be a central question, certainly not in the forseeable future'. The left has also thrown in the towel on council house sales. And on Shore and Hattersley's outspoken declarations of Labour's anti-working class economic policies, the left is silent.

The left covers its accommodation to the right by attacking the failures of Jim Mortimer's election machine and the betrayals of the parliamentary old guard of Callaghan and Healey. But it accepts the ban on factional rancour in the leadership election: this means the left will not so much as squeak as it gets trampled over. As the campaign has proceeded the prospects for different candidates have waxed and waned, but the right's programmatic supremacy remains unchallenged.

Haddock or Kinnersley?

Neil Kinnock has rapidly emerged as the favourite to succeed Michael Foot. He is favourite because he is the favoured candidate of the majority of the trade union leaders. In the early stages of the campaign his name was often bracketed with that of Hattersley (either Haddock or Kinnersley according to taste). This was the bureaucracy's 'dream ticket'. This choice simply reflected the panic of the union chiefs. They had to face up to another onslaught from Norman Tebbit with 30 per cent less members since the Tories came to power. The political party on which they had put all their hopes – and a lot of their dwindling reserves of cash – had crashed at the polls and left them defenceless. In their fear of the future the barons took refuge in the patterns of the past. Foot-Healey had been the 'balanced leadership' of recent years; why not Kinnock-Hattersley, Foot's protege and a firm Healeyite, for 1988?

Unkind commentators observed that Foot-Healey had not proved such a successful combination that a repetition was so desirable. But weightier considerations raised doubts among the casters of block votes about the advisability of sticking to tradition. Hattersley alienated trade union support by his explicit calls for wage curbs and cuts in public spending, stirring memories of the Social Contract and the 'winter of discontent' under the last Labour Government. It was one thing to reject CND and approve the EEC, but the union bureaucrats could not go along with such openly anti-working class policies. Hence Hattersley slipped steadily behind Kinnock in the race for the leadership, and even became doubtful for the position of deputy.

Hattersley continued to draw support from the more right-wing unions – the engineers and communication workers – and from the parliamentary party. But Kinnock won the backing of the more radical (and larger) TGWU and NUPE, as well as the bulk of the constituency delegates. And Meacher steadily advanced as a serious contender for the deputy leadership, winning the early endorsement of NUPE and the post office engineers. The old parliamentary leadership threatened to decamp en masse in the direction of the SDP if Meacher defeated Hattersley. But the old guard failed to swing the union leaders behind Hattersley's anti-union platform. A secret meeting of senior union chiefs at the end of July failed to secure unity around the Kinnock-Hattersley ticket.

The fact that the right felt sufficiently confident to draw the line at the harmless Meacher indicates how far the rot had gone. Before June Meacher had been just a junior lieutenant of Tony Benn. Because of Hattersley's unpopularity he may yet win the deputy leadership. But in policy terms the Bennite left has been routed. The cringing postures struck by the 'hard left' throughout the leadership debates indicate the unchallenged domination of the right.

Leading the retreat is the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, an amalgam of parliamentary careerists and Eurocommunist and radical left entrists. According to *The Guardian*, it 'has become a positive fountain of good sense'. Its post-election bulletin had 'diagnosed the central defect of Labour's approach in language which could almost have been borrowed from Mr Peter Shore' (3 August). An LCC conference in July called for the abandonment of opposition to EEC membership and council house sales and for a positive 'alternative defence strategy' for British imperialism.

Other radical left factions have followed their time-honoured tactic of choosing 'the lesser evil' all the way to supporting Kinnock for leader. *Socialist Organiser* recommends voting 'with gritted teeth' for 'the fake-left Kinnock against the open right-winger Hattersley' (23 June). Gritting the teeth is a radical left speciality and 'fake-left' postures are always preferred to honest statements of the reactionary consequences of Labour Party politics. The witch-hunted *Socialist Action* makes out that *not* to vote for Kinnock would be 'an ultra-left stupidity' (17 June). Accepting the horizons of the Labour Party as the limit of their politics has led the entrists into supporting a consummate opportunist who not only concedes to the right (discreetly) on all key issues, but who also fully supports the witchhunt against the left inside the party. Labour's entrists never learn that getting down on your knees is no way to prevent people kicking you in the teeth.

Labour's leadership struggle confirms the decay of a party that has fed off the British labour movement for too long. It reveals a corrupt and cynical right wing and a spineless and unprincipled left. The whole sordid charade is a compelling advertisement of the need for a real alternative to the Labour Party.

John Dowling

NHS

Tory attack

THE Government's critics have decried the latest cuts as irrational. The *Guardian* blustered about 'spuriously rationalised, random butchery'. The Tories are certainly butchers. But there is nothing random about their carve-up of the NHS.

Profits and Health

The NHS is largely financed by taxing the bosses' profits. In the 'fifties and 'sixties, when profits were high, capitalists were prepared to pay up for the services their expanding system needed. In today's crisis, as profit rates fall, heavy taxation has become an unacceptable drain on the capitalists' dwindling resources. From the bosses' point of view, cutting state spending is necessary to unburden the profit-producing sectors of the economy.

For a stagnant capitalist power like Britain the public expenditure problem is a crucial one. Director general of the Confederation of British Industry Sir Terence Beckett recently warned that 'the future of free enterprise in this country is at stake' in the fight to curb state spending. But the ruling class is not calling for an abrupt end to state intervention in the economy. Government contracts for industry and aid to exporters are vital for capitalism in crisis. The axe has to fall selectively, on services like education, social security and health, which have grown beyond the bosses' means. The health service is expected to spend £14.5billion this year. When new Chancellor Nigel Lawson announced his emergency savings package of £1.15 billion in July, it was inevitable that the NHS was in for a hiding. The proposed NHS cuts are a rational response to the crisis of British capitalism. The working class is being forced to pay for the crisis with its jobs, its living standards and its health. Here's what the Tory attack means.

Tory claims to have maintained real spending levels on the NHS since 1979 are just fancy bookwork.

- *Before* the latest cuts the health authorities would have needed an extra £130m just to stand still from 1982 until 1984.
- Capital spending on hospital buildings, operating equipment etc lags way behind needs. Just clearing the backlog of hospital repairs would require £2 billion.

Closures

Cash limits on current spending mean closures of hospitals and wards.

- In May the DHSS announced that since 1979, 8000 NHS beds had been cut, 109 hospital closures had been approved, and six new hospitals failed to open.
- Health unions estimate that 2500 NHS beds are unused.
- The new cash restrictions make things worse. In London and the South-East alone, 31 more hospitals are due to shut.

Charges

Higher charges for NHS services from dentistry to drugs shift part of NHS costs from the bosses on to the working class.

- Prescription charges went up by 600 per cent from 1979 to April 1983.
- Routine dental charges rose by 170 per cent over the same period.

The percentage of family practitioners' costs covered by charges rose from 6.5 per cent to 11.5 per cent. The rest of that cost, and the cost of the hospital sector, still have to be paid for from taxation revenue. Cutting this bill means attacking the health workers directly.

Jobs and wages

'Manpower costs' account for 70 per cent of the NHS budget. Until now, the Tories have cut jobs indirectly through natural wastage and productivity increases. More and more trained health workers are unable to find jobs.

- COHSE estimates that there were 17,673 unemployed nurses and midwives in September 1982.
- Student nurses are deliberately failing exams to avoid the dole queue.

The cuts announced this summer could mean the first compulsory redundancies in the NHS for 30 years.

- Health authorities have been given 8 months to reduce their 'frontline' staff – nurses, doctors, paramedics – by 0.5 per cent and ancillaries – porters, cleaners – by 0.75 per cent.
- The Government concedes that this will mean up to 8000 redundancies. The unions claimed it could be more like 20000.
- At the beginning of August the Tories upped the stakes to total staff cuts of between 0.75 and 1 per cent; most of these cuts are to come from 'non-medical' staff – everbody from ambulancemen to nightporters.

'Overstaffed' regions will be subject to even bigger cuts. The health authorities have until mid-September to come up with plans to lose these jobs. Any cuts above those requested will be 'especially well received'.

Health service workers have always been badly paid. Over the last 3 years NHS pay has fallen further behind.

- In 1980 and 1981 nurses' pay rises were well below inflation.
- The two-year deal which ended the 1982 dispute gave nurses a pathetic 6.5 per cent for last year and 4.5 per cent for this.
- Ancillaries do even worse: in 1982 most of them earned less than the official poverty-line wage.

End of the NHS?

From selling hospitals to sacking cleaners, the Tory approach to rationalising the health service is clear. The only question remaining is how far they will go. Thatcher is launching a long-term review of the welfare state. Many health workers fear that the Government will scrap state health care altogether. This is not a realistic option. Private medicine could not survive without the back-up it gets from the NHS in staff training, facilities and indirect subsidies. The private health insurance firms are already in serious financial difficulties and recently had to increase their premiums. The last thing they want is the entire working class dumped on them. The Government has also found limits to the practicability of privatising services within the NHS. While engineering and building services are now more than 30 per cent privatised, outside contractors have penetrated only two per cent of NHS domestic and cleaning services.

The Tories know that some form of state-financed health care is still the cheapest, most efficient way of keeping the working class in reasonable health Margaret Thatcher's pre-election declaration that she had 'no more intention of dismantling the NHS' than she had of 'dismantling Britain's defences' reflected this recognition. As health Secretary Norman Fowler explained, the Tories' 'unequivocal' commitment to some form of NHS is soundly based 'on a policy decision taken after a very thorough review of alternative methods of financing' (*Guardian* 25 June). Hard-headed state economists agree that the NHS remains good value for money. Britain spends less per head on health than any other leading capitalist nation. Reformists often point this out as the system's main fault. But it is this quality which recommends the continuation of the NHS to the ruling class. The aim now is to make that cheap system cheaper still. How far they can go in cutting services and sacking workers depends on how much resistance they meet from the working class.

Put politics first

NALGO exemplifies everything that is wrong with the health service unions' approach to fighting the cuts. Opposing the privatisation of health services was a central theme of NALGO's anti-cuts 'Put People First' campaign earlier this year. The campaign cost £1m – the biggest ever launched by a British union. It involved 130000 paper hats, 250000 small balloons, one very large balloon, 80000 carrier bags, 300000 beer mats – and a lot of lousy politics.

'The NHS is our greatest national asset. Let's keep it that way'. This was the slogan around which the campaign against the health cuts was organised. NALGO boss Geoffrey Drain appealed for a 'renaissance of the spirit which gave rise to the pioneering activities of the post-1945 years'.

Health services cannot be saved by simpering appeals to public opinion and employers, with a working class bit tacked on to appeal to union members. The NALGO campaign failed because workers outside the health service are not interested in defending the NHS for its own sake. What active workers from all sectors are looking for is the sort of political lead that can fight the cuts and win. A survey of workers' response to NALGO's material revealed a general impression that 'they presented no argument or way forward...they certainly presented no new ideas or information nor presented any challenge' (*The Guardian*, 25 March).

No contest

The politics of the union bureaucracy present no challenge to workers' intellects or to the bosses. Nobody knows that better than the bureaucrats themselves. NALGO's leaders have no illusions in their ability to fight privatisation. That's why they backed an unsuccessful motion at this year's conference calling for the union to begin organising in the private sector. The NALGO officials' 'principled' defence of the NHS is just a cynical exercise in self-preservation. If it fails, they are more than willing to try other avenues of escape.

'Put People First' managed to win a hot-air balloon race in Gloucestershire but failed to build a fight against the cuts. Anti-cuts campaigns need less hot air, less razzamatazz and more of the sort of politics that can give a lead to health workers looking to put the working class first.

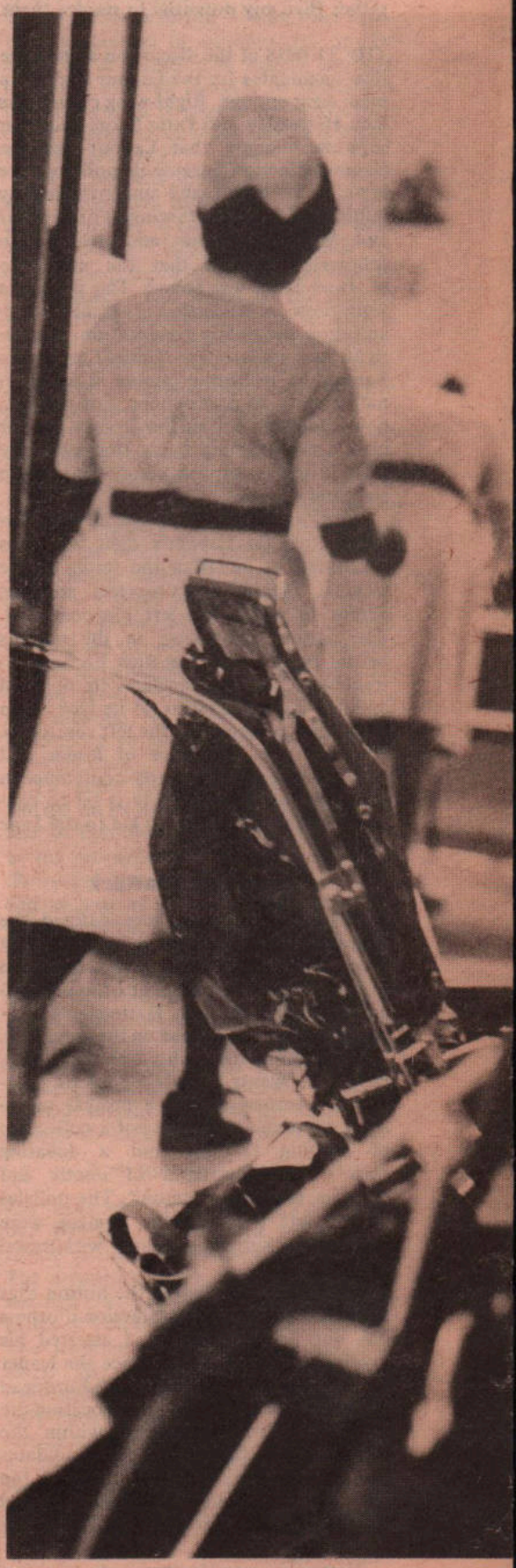
Defend our jo

The Tories are turning the heat on the National Health Service. Social Services Secretary Norman Fowler has

- **announced NHS growth will be held down to ½ per cent a year into the 'nineties**
- **demanded cuts of £140 million in health spending**
- **introduced plans for the first compulsory NHS redundancies since the 'fifties.**

The government is only beginning its attack on services and jobs. But the opposition is already crumbling. The Labour Party leadership whines about Thatcher's broken election pledges and secret manifestoes. But Labour has always accepted the principle of a health service at a price British capitalism can afford. It cannot challenge the logic of the Tory cuts. The health union leaders are reduced to begging for more consultation about where the cuts should be made.

Workers in the health service are facing an unprecedented assault on jobs and conditions. Workers outside it face even longer waiting



Value for money: efficiency for them means more queues for

bs, not their system

lists for operations and an even shoddier service. Resistance to the latest cuts is overshadowed by the memory of last year's nine-month battle for better wages. Health workers were betrayed by their union leaders and many remain sceptical of their capacity to lead opposition to the Tories.

The biggest obstacle to an effective defence of NHS jobs and services is the myth of 'our' welfare state promoted by the Labour Party and the trade unions. The bureaucrats urge workers to support the principle of a health service run by the capitalist state to provide health care on the cheap. They do not propose that workers take action in defence of working class living standards. As Mick Hume shows in this special feature, the NHS is not 'ours' – and fighting the cuts is not the same thing as defending the welfare state. Indeed rejecting the bureaucrats' identification with state-run services is a vital part of uniting the health workers and the rest of the working class against the Tory cuts.

Whose health service is it anyway?

PLANS to open a private nursing home have shaken the South Wales mining town of Tredegar. Local Labour Party and union activists have been affronted by this whiff of privatisation in the home town of NHS founder Aneurin Bevan and the parliamentary seat of his heir, Michael Foot. Hundreds of miles north in Cumbria, NUPE officials have declared their region a 'no-go area' for privatisation. Wherever it is threatened, privatisation has been identified as the public sector unions' enemy number one. The unions have subordinated the protection of workers' jobs and services to the principle of defending a health service run by the capitalist state. The defence of 'our' NHS provides no basis for a united working class anti-cuts campaign, because the NHS is not 'ours' to defend. From its inception, the NHS has served the interests of the capitalist class.

Illusions

The NHS was set up in 1948 by the first majority Labour Government. Ever since, reformists have peddled illusions in its socialist character. The establishment of a health service 'free at the time of use' is held up as an historic victory wrung from the bosses by a militant working class. The notion of the socialist NHS as the price of the 'post-war settlement' between labour and capital, enforced by a radical Labour Government, still retains a powerful influence over militants in the health service. But it is a myth.

First, the NHS is a capitalist not a socialist institution. This is apparent in every aspect of the service. It was introduced after the war as part of the reorganisation of welfare services to provide the levels of health, education and living standards required for the reconstruction of a modern capitalist economy. Hence the NHS has always concentrated on hospital care for the acutely ill. The aim is to get them back to work fast. It has also put resources into maternity and child care to ensure a high quality of new recruits to the labour market. The NHS has provided custodial care for those who make no contribution to the bosses' profits – the mentally ill, the handicapped and the elderly – as a necessary part of keeping society stable. They have been maintained in conditions resembling those in a Victorian workhouse – indeed often in the same buildings. It is a grim reflection on what they understand by the word 'socialist' that Labour leaders can use it with pride to characterise the NHS. 'Free at the time of use' is not a socialist principle. It is an administrative convenience.

Second, there was no great struggle over setting up the NHS. The British working class came out of the Second World War not strengthened by the victory of British imperialism and its allies over Germany, but politically defeated by its own ruling class. Far from fighting for major concessions, the labour movement was willing to accept more of the wartime sacrifices made in the national interest. There was broad agreement between Labour and Tories on the need for a state-run health service as part of the post-war restructuring of British capitalism. If the Tories had won the 1945 election, Tory right-winger Winston Churchill would have set up an NHS just as smartly as Labour's left-wing health minister Nye Bevan eventually did.

Health on the cheap

The only principle in the capitalist NHS is to provide a basic service at as low a cost as possible. This is what the drive for 'efficiency' in a health service run by the ruling class means. It has been pursued with equal vigour by Tory and Labour governments.

The Labour Government cut back the proposed spending on the NHS before the service even opened. The 'Appointed Day' had hardly passed before Nye Bevan was moaning about the pill-guzzling British public. Within three years Labour introduced prescription charges on false teeth and spectacles. The Tories later imposed charges for drugs. Harold Wilson's Labour Government in the 'sixties made a great deal of its abolition of prescription charges, but quietly reintroduced them two years later.

Building programmes have suffered repeated cuts. Health centres and District General Hospitals were planned to be the backbone of the new NHS. There are still few health centres, and only one District Hospital was built in the first 17 years of the NHS. Most people's experience of the NHS is still of shabby, overcrowded and ill-equipped local surgeries, and ramshackle hospitals cobbled together from old workhouses and prefabricated extensions. The best that could be said of Friern Barnet Psychiatric Hospital in North London when it was proposed for closure in July was that it had been 'the most modern hospital in Europe' – when Prince Albert cut the red tape in 1850.

The most important part of the state's drive to increase efficiency in the NHS has been understaffing and poverty-level wages. From the 'fifties onwards black, Irish and women workers were brought in and paid peanuts. Doctors were imported from the Third World to staff the most unpopular specialities and practice in the least desirable inner-city areas. Now medical unemployment is on the rise, doctors' organisations are demanding tight immigration controls and even repatriation for immigrant doctors. The 'discovery' that immigrant doctors do badly in certain exams and the campaign against deputising services – which rely heavily on black doctors – are all part of this racist drive.

As in any enterprise run on capital's behalf, making the NHS more efficient means raising productivity. The average stay in hospital for acute patients was cut from 12.4 days to 8.3 days between 1966 and 1981. Patients are now routinely thrown out of hospital beds before they have recovered. The myth of the socialist NHS which must be defended in principle is a grotesque cover for a capitalist state health service which has kept those who work in it in poverty and those who use it in a parlous state of 'health'.

Bureaucrats for the NHS

The union leaders are the only section of the working class with a real interest in defending the principle of public ownership of the health service whatever the cost to workers. State management of health services has given union chiefs a prestigious position in the NHS. The Whitley Councils have allowed them broad consultation. They have gained a large number of seats on regional and area health authorities. When the administration of the NHS was reorganised in 1974, to bring more professionals into health management, as many union full-timers as solicitors were appointed to the new English authorities.

To preserve their status, the health union leaders and their allies in the Labour Party have accepted the drive for efficiency in the NHS. They have presided over the rundown in services, productivity increases and non-filling of vacancies. They have kept their members wages at poverty level. When health workers have fought for a decent rise, as during the 'winter of discontent' of 1978-79, the union leaders have failed to give an effective lead. No sacrifice of workers' conditions or services has been too great for the bureaucrats to make if it will protect their niche in the NHS.

The union leaders have tried to sell the working class the idea that public sector health care is a good thing. Now that the Tories privatisation plans and moves to dismantle the Whitley Councils are threatening the union barons' position, they are attempting to mobilise that sentiment behind their 'defend our NHS' slogans. Protecting the principle of public ownership has been elevated to a religious crusade. NUPE's Bolton area officer summed up the unions' public approach last month when he condemned the planned sale of the town's Newlands geriatric hospital as 'this sinful act'.

Cutting both ways

Despite health workers' experience of low wages and poor conditions, the bureaucrats' outlook remains the dominant one within the unions. Nurses and ancillaries have come to identify their interests with the NHS. Many militants have developed a commitment to the principle of state management.

Rank and file COHSE members tried to get their June conference to give a blank cheque of support to any members taking action against privatisation. The motion was withdrawn under pressure from the union executive, whose opposition to privatisation does not stretch to giving advance backing to industrial action which might get out of their control. But despite their militancy, active health workers' commitment to their leaders' ideas on defending the NHS is dangerous. In reality, they do not face a choice between being protected by the state or ravaged by the private sector. They are under concerted attack from both sides. For example, the threat of privatisation

(Continued page 14)

Sick ideas

'Restoration of a sick person to health is a duty of the state...prior to any other.' *Beveridge Report*, 1942

'The primary responsibility for his own health falls on the individual. The role of the health profession and of government is limited to ensuring that the public have access to such knowledge as is available about the importance of personal habit on health.' *Prevention and Health: Everybody's Business* DHSS 1976

When the NHS was set up the state had to take on the responsibility of maintaining a healthy national workforce. Today British capitalism has four million more workers than it needs and it cannot afford to look after the sick. Hence the current emphasis on self-help health – 'eat yourself fit', 'sport for all' etc. 'Community care' is another aspect of this austerity ideology. It means that hospitals are shut down and the burden of care shifted to individuals, usually women, in the home. Former psychiatric patients just tramp the streets.

Nice girls don't strike

has been used effectively to drive health workers' wages and conditions down to more competitive levels. But it is the NHS management which has used the threat and done the driving. Cuts in the health service can be made equally well in the name of private sector profitability or public sector efficiency.

Both right and left wings of the official labour movement are committed to increased efficiency in the NHS. Ken Livingstone's *Labour Herald* calls on the Labour leadership to 'show that the Tories' cuts are not motivated by any urge to increase efficiency and cut out waste'. But that is precisely what motivates the Tories. It is because the principle of capitalist efficiency also motivates the Labour Party that it has always proved so ineffectual in defending NHS jobs and services. Increased efficiency under capitalism can only mean attacks on the working class. The recent NHS/DHSS study of auditing in the health service recommended the National Coal Board's efficiency drive as the model to be copied in the NHS. Hundreds of thousands of redundant miners can testify to the reality of what cutting out waste in the state sector means. NHS workers' acceptance of the need for efficiency in 'our' service leaves them open to attack from the state. Defending the public sector against the private means siding with one of our assailants against the other.

'Popular' fronts

The political perspective of the anti-cuts campaigns has won little support from workers outside the NHS. Workers whose contact with the NHS is as consumers know all too well what efficiency drives in the health service mean in terms of reduced services. To many workers the letters NHS are a grim reminder of hospital waiting lists 750 000 long, and hours of hanging around in scruffy outpatients departments. The majority of workers are more likely to be insulted than inspired by the suggestion that this seedy system is 'ours'.

The only people outside the NHS who have responded with enthusiasm to the unions' call are middle class radicals organised in parastatal quangos around local government and the Community Health Councils. It is these liberals who have perpetuated the myth of workers' sentimental attachment to the NHS. Where they have led the anti-cuts campaigns, (such as the Central Manchester 'Save a Saint and Two Royals' attempt to oppose the closure of 250 beds and loss of 600 jobs at three hospitals), they have tried to appeal to the 'popularity' of local facilities. But the NHS is not particularly popular with the many workers who have bitter experience of its third-rate facilities. As a result, the campaigns to 'save our NHS' have failed to involve the working class beyond a few sympathetic signatures on petitions.

The way forward

The trade union bureaucracy's campaign against privatisation is the latest in a line of soft targets – hospital pay-beds, the NHS drugs bill – which the unions have used as a distraction from their failure to fight governments in defence of jobs, conditions and services. Health workers must reject their leaders' diversionary approach and get down to the real job in hand.

- Oppose all government cuts and efficiency drives. The working class needs every job and service we've got.
- Oppose privatisation as a threat to jobs, conditions and services, not as a meaningless principle.
- Refuse to defend the NHS as 'ours' because it isn't. Opposition to cuts can only be effective if we recognise that the state doesn't need privatisation to attack the health service. It has always been more than capable of doing that itself. Fighting the cuts has the potential to unite the working class and win, if we are clear that we are defending health services not because they are 'ours', but because they are something which can be forced out of 'them' – the bosses and their state.

THE TORIES are out to deny half a million health workers the right to strike. The new pay review body being set up to cover nurses and paramedics will include a 'no-strike' clause. Workers who go on strike will be shut out of any new round of pay rises. Instead of fighting this denial of basic trade union rights, the health union leaders are hoping to bargain over the terms of the attack.

A Tory Concordat?

The TUC unions have complained about the way the 'no-strike' plans were foisted upon them without warning. But the union bosses have no objection to such arrangements in principle. They were more than willing to accept a general 'no-strike' agreement under their Concordat with the last Labour government. From the unions' point of view, the most important part of that pact was the guarantee of consultation it gave them. They are open to the Tories' 'no-strike' clause if a similar arrangement can be made.

The TUC has been pushing for a 'no-strike' deal in the NHS which would give them the right to negotiate for a couple of years, while the Tories have been busily dismantling the consultation procedures. The union leaders have sought to persuade the Government that the way to avoid industrial action in the health service is to give the bureaucrats more of a say in decision making. In return, the unions offer to police the workforce. The TUC Health Services Committee was set up in 1971 to ensure trouble-free industrial relations in the NHS. This approach has become more central to the bureaucrats' plans since their humiliation in the 1982 dispute and the Tories' subsequent announcement that the new pay review body would have no direct union involvement.

The health union bureaucrats have tried to gain public support for their conciliation through sentimental appeals about the nurses' special role as society's 'carers'. The unions have manipulated health workers' commitment to patients' welfare by arguing that strikes in the health service make the sick suffer. The TUC's private sales pitch to the Tories has been more down to earth. The unions have presented a long-term negotiated pay deal to the Government as a sure way of getting more work for less money with no aggravation. A confidential TUC memo to the Tories in January argued that new bargaining arrangements were needed 'to ensure fair pay for NHS staff – smooth industrial relations in the NHS; improved morale amongst NHS staff and consequently raised commitment to the NHS; and, most importantly, uninterrupted and improving preventive care and curative health care for the British people' (*Public Expenditure and the NHS*, TUC Health Services Committee, 27 January).

Sentimental sell-out

The TUC has paved the way for Thatcher's 'no-strike' clause. The Government's new restrictions can happily co-exist with the TUC's commitment to 'uninterrupted...health care'. The only disagreement is over whether a 'no-strike' clause should be imposed or discussed first. The TUC says that bans on strikes in the NHS are unnecessary since the unions always 'exercise voluntary self-restraint' over disputes in essential services. The unions have advised the Tories to negotiate, rather than legislate, such strikes out of existence:

> 'If workers in essential services are not to exercise their right to strike they are entitled to demand fair wages and conditions and effective arrangements for resolving disagreements which would make it unnecessary for them to resort to industrial action.' (*Industrial Action in Essential Services*, TUC 26 May)

The TUC's response to all Tory attacks is reduced to 'ask, and it shall be given'.

Divided by 'loyalty'

Whether or not the TUC succeeds in persuading the Tories to talk, the consequences for nurses' rights and wages will be dire. The unions will try to sell any deal to their membership as a recognition of their special place in health care. For nurses, accepting this argument means throwing away their defence against the state's offensive. The Tories have used the unions' own emphasis on nurses' dedication and loyalty to divide the NHS workforce and press for more sacrifices.

The Government has split health workers by drawing a distinction between the caring professionalism of the Royal College of Nursing and the 'strikemongers' in COHSE and NUPE. The RCN is a professional body posing as a trade union which represents 220 000 nurses. It has endorsed the Tories' division and tried to restrict the new pay review to qualified nursing staff who are 'honour-bound' not to strike. Thatcher rejected this idea but pursued the spirit of it in her attempt to ban nurses' strikes and her declaration that 'people ought to stay at their posts if they are dealing with essential services and not exact very large charge for it'.

The state and media have used the same tack to label health service militants as 'uncaring' and try to create an anti-union atmosphere amongst nurses. The case of a senior nursing assistant who scabbed during last year's dispute and was chased out of Southampton General Hospital by angry NUPE members, recently hit the front pages of the gutter press as a tirade against the 'selfishness' of health service strikers. A nurse at the West Cheshire Psychiatric Hospital who was secretary of an active COHSE branch during the dispute has been convicted of dishonestly obtaining tablets worth 8p and stealing margarine. The judge called her an 'evil influence in the hospital'. The health unions' allusions to the spirit of Florence Nightingale are being used to criminalise and condemn militant health workers as inhuman bullies who 'don't care' about their patients.

Unite and fight

Faced with a back door ban on strikes, a spate of victimisations and threats of more real pay cuts to come, the union bureaucrats continue to compromise and crawl. They are discussing plans with the Tories which will further divide the NHS workforce by giving differential pay rises to different groups of ancillary workers. In response to Tory jibes that they couldn't control their ancillary members, COHSE has changed its rules to put strict limits on types of industrial action which can receive official backing.

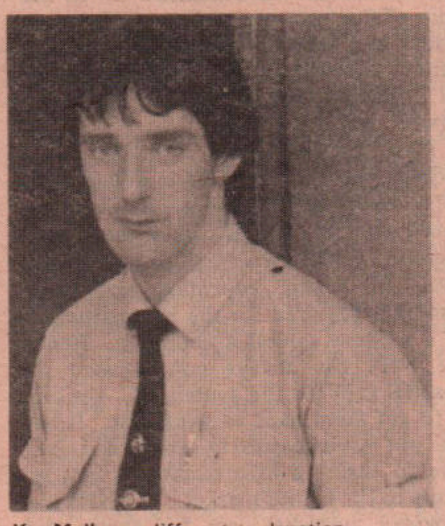
The problem for health workers of all grades is not trade unionism but trade union leaders. To oppose attacks on their wages and right to strike, health workers – and particularly nurses – must reject the idea that their caring role makes them a special case. Such an approach can only leave them open to sacrifices 'for the sake of the patients'. Nurses can only defend their conditions and the services they work in by identifying themselves as part of the working class and overcoming both the RCN's professionalism and the TUC unions' grovelling appeals for consultation.

- No to 'no-strike' clauses – fight for the Right to Fight.
- Break off union involvement in Whitley Councils, health authorities and all consultation machinery.
- For industrial unionism in the NHS. Support the formation of Joint Committees of workplace representatives from all sections to challenge the sectionalism of the health service unions.

View from the wards

Two very different explanations of past defeats and views on future prospects are current among local health union officials. The majority view is that the workers are backward and demoralised and not prepared to fight the cuts. An ASTMS branch secretary for the Queen Elizabeth maternity hospital in Birmingham put it straight:

'The last NHS industrial dispute was lost primarily through the apathy of the workers...If we call for industrial action now against these cuts none of the staff will come out and where will we be then?'



Kev Mulley: a different explanation

Not all health union activists share this pessimistic outlook. One who doesn't is Kev Mulley, a recently-elected shop steward from the 700-strong COHSE branch at the Jessop women's hospital in Sheffield. Mulley has a different explanation for workers' lack of interest in the union campaigns: 'Any dispute we've had that's not been solid is because of the role officials have played'. At his hospital the unions have allowed management to push through plans to halve domestics' hours and pay. When Mulley suggested resisting this attack, he was told to 'stop rocking the boat'.

The union officials have shown their contempt for the rank and file by not calling a branch meeting for a year. Their only interest is in protecting their own position:

'At Jessop's COHSE and NUPE officials are at loggerheads continuously. They don't seem interested in fighting for the working class. They are more concerned about the size of their branches.'

'We'll make the decisions'

Mulley is equally unimpressed with those stewards who blame members' indifference for everything. It is not surprising that workers have little time for representatives whose main concern is talking to management:

'Stewards at Jessop's have been happily educated on union and TUC courses with the automatic say-so from management. In return the bosses expect – and get – the conciliatory approach. It's workers who lose out.'

The experience of the 1982 dispute showed Kev Mulley that workers need a different approach from the past tradition of collaboration:

'The strike taught us what we had to do. Union members were really angry. If it had been left to us we could have escalated the action, the support was there but the union wasn't. After a long, miserable dispute we have to start again, we don't have any choice. Only this time *we* have to make the decisions, we can't wait for the officials.'

HANDS OFF LATIN AMERICA!

From Mexico to the forests of El Salvador, the masses of Latin America face machete-wielding murder squads and helicopter gunships. Workers must support any resistance against American or German, French or British interference in Latin America.

We support any government which refuses to pay the debt ransom extracted by Wall Street and the City of London. Right-wing juntas in Argentina and Brazil and the radical regimes of Cuba and Nicaragua all deserve labour movement backing against Western intervention. Guerrilla movements whether led by left wingers or Christians merit support as long as they are fighting imperialism and its local allies. The theme of these three pages is that imperialism is responsible for every murdered peasant or 'disappeared' worker in Latin America. Avenging them is the responsibility of the working class.

Nicaraguan army unit: ready to fight American intervention

Dollars, death squads and dictators in...

REAGAN'S WAR GAMES

El Salvador is not Vietnam. In South East Asia in the 'sixties the USA fought to defend the imperialist world order, and lost. In Central America in the 'eighties it is fighting to prove that it can still play that role. This time, the USA cannot afford to lose. The stakes are much higher – and the consequences for the masses of Central America could prove even worse.

LAST MONTH a white-suited American embassy official was spotted lurking around the besieged Presidential palace in the middle of a Guatemalan coup. Between now and next February, 19 US warships carrying 16000 military personnel and 140 fighter planes will cruise around El Salvador and Nicaragua. Four thousand American troops living in tents on the border between Honduras and Nicaragua will be keeping them company and taking part in the largest battle exercises ever held in Central America. Ronald Reagan's 'crusade against communism' in Central America is threatening to become a major conflagration.

Nobody in the American ruling class takes seriously Reagan's declarations that his aim is to thwart Castro's or Andropov's designs on Central America. Cuba has enough trouble finding a market for its sugar without trying to export its revolution. Cuba already costs Moscow $3 billion a year. The Soviet Union cannot afford another Cuba. Both Andropov and Castro gave enthusiastic backing to the July peace proposals for El Salvador from the Contadora group – Mexico, Venezuela, Columbia and Panama. So what's Reagan really crusading about?

Proving ground

US imperialism intervenes in Central America to compensate for its decline. At the economic level, the USA's position as the world's leading imperialist power has been challenged by Japan and West Germany. America is increasingly forced to use its political and military superiority to defend its spheres of influence overseas. More than 40 per cent of US armed forces are now stationed abroad to do just that. Reagan has chosen Central America as the battleground on which to prove that, despite the defeats in Vietnam and Iran, America is still the power not to be fooled with. As he told the annual meeting of the American Veterans of Foreign Wars:

'Let me say with all the conviction I can muster, America would not be America if we abandoned the struggling neighbours of our own hemisphere.' (*The Guardian*, 16 August)

The 'struggling' neighbours are the latest group of reactionary regimes which the USA has backed to control its 'own' backyard. Central America has been Uncle Sam's backyard since the 1898 Spanish –American war. American troops have moved around the region with impunity. American military might has stood behind the succession of vicious dictatorships which have ruled the region. Under the eagle the landowning classes have hung onto political power and the masses have lived in poverty and terror.

Ravaged

The world recession has ravaged Central America. All the economies of the region are dependent on the export of cash crops. Coffee provides 50 per cent of the export trade of El Salvador, 40 per cent of Guatemala's and in Nicaragua and Costa Rica, 20 per cent. Around one third of Nicaragua's export earnings come from cotton. Honduras is the original banana republic and it is still run by the American fruit companies. The falling prices of these basic commodities on the world markets have meant rapidly declining earnings and equally rapidly rising debts.

In the cities unemployment runs at 40 per cent. More than 65 per cent of the rural population own no land. While handfuls of immensely rich landowners and entrepreneurs lord it over Central America, the masses of peasants and workers live under constant fear of starvation and disease. Over the past five years oppressed people throughout the region have taken up arms to fight the system that condemns them to such a wretched existence.

The corrupt and brutal regime of Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua fell to the movement of the Sandinista guerrillas in 1979. Since 1979, civil war has raged in neighbouring El Salvador between the right-wing government and the forces of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. So far 35000 people have died, the vast majority at the hands of the government forces and their allied death squads. The conflict between anti-imperialist mass movements and reactionary regimes sustained by US imperialism threatens to engulf the whole region from Guatemala, through Honduras even to Costa Rica.

There is no middle ground in Central America. The workers and peasants have no choice but to rebel. The ruling class has no choice but to meet rebellion with the terror of the El Salvador death squads and the genocide which wiped out 2500 indians last year in Guatemala. There is no place for a middle class in the economy and no scope for the conventions of bourgeois democracy in politics. Western commentators have labelled El Salvador's Major 'Bob' D'Aubuisson a fascist psycopath and his FMLN opponent Doctor Zamora a communist. In fact both are rather ordinary bourgeois politicians working in extreme circumstances. *The Times* recently observed that in Britain Zamora would either be a Tory wet or in the SDP.

Guns do the talking

The American response to the upsurge of anti-imperialist struggles since the late 'seventies has been to provide its client states with the military hardware and expertise necessary to crush resistance. Since Reagan took office in 1981 counter-insurgency in Central America has become a crucial aspect of American foreign policy. Proclaiming a stand against communism, Reagan has made victory over the workers and peasants of some of the world's poorest countries a key test of US political and military authority.

Instead of containing the conflict, US intervention has led to even greater insurrection and the extension of the war. America has had to commit more and more resources to shoring up the regime in El Salvador. Having identified Nicaragua as the source of the trouble in the region, the USA has backed the anti-Sandinista Contras fighting a guerrilla war against Nicaragua from within Honduras. What began as a stand in El Salvador has turned into a movement towards the occupation of the entire isthmus by American troops, weaponry and CIA 'advisors'.

American intervention has provoked criticism from other governments whose countries could be destabilised by the conflict. Sections of the American ruling class around the Democratic Party have complained that the USA is playing world policeman at the expense of its domestic interests. All of these lobbyists propose a political solution for Central America.

The Reagan administration understands that there is no room for a negotiated settlement in Central America. During seven hours of discussion with Mexican President Miguel de la Madrid in August, Reagan refused even to pay lip service to de la Madrid's Contadora peace initiative.

In April Congress denied Reagan almost half of his requested aid for El Salvador. In June it voted to stop 'covert' aid to the Contras. The Democrats got Reagan to appoint a roving ambassador for Central America and to set up an all party commission on the region under former foreign affairs fixer Henry Kissinger. None of this will alter the course of American policy. The 'independent' Kissinger has always advocated full US backing for military repression in Latin America. While Congress voices its disquiet over recent developments, the state presses ahead with its war. Congressional restrictions on arming the Contras are ignored under cover of the Honduran exercises and got round by encouraging Israel to sell them captured PLO weapons. Guatemala is also legally barred from access to US arms. But the new regime of General Mejia Victores has been promised guns 'of American origin' in return for training El Salvadoreans in counter-insurgency. Meanwhile, three fleets and thousands of troops close in.

Reagan's military solution may be his only option. But it will not be an easy one. The USA's Central American allies are despised, demoralised and incompetent. US advisors were recently 'encouraged' to find El Salvador army units shooting at each other in the dark, because it at least proved that some of them were prepared to fight at night.

In contrast, the workers' and peasants' resistance is undaunted. The 1200 Contras who recently entered Nicaragua on a massacre mission suffered 100 losses in 10 days. In El Salvador, the guerrillas killed or wounded over 20 per cent of the total government forces in the year ended July. There will be no quick or clean end to Reagan's war games in Central America.

Riots in Brazil, strikes in Mexico as the...

DEBT MOUNTAIN TREMORS

Sao Paulo shanty town: poverty and backwardness in 'newly-industrialised' Brazil

Rioters in Sao Paulo recently fought a three day running battle with the Brazilian police. In Mexico strikes and mass demonstrations have led to clashes with the police and army. Tony Allen takes a look at the crisis in Brazil and Mexico.

IN THE 'seventies Brazil and Mexico were the pride of Latin American capitalism. While 'de-industrialisation' swept through Western Europe, the USA and even Japan, Brazilian and Mexican industry grew at the rate of seven per cent a year. Brazil now has a massive industrial sector producing capital and consumer goods. Its car output is expected to outstrip Britain's by the end of the decade. With its huge mineral reserves and a population of 125 million it is Latin America's economic and political giant. Brazil now challenges the USA for markets and investment outlets throughout South America. Mexico is the world's fourth largest oil producer, and ranks among the top 20 steel-producing nations.

The Brazilian and Mexican economic miracles have led many of the sub-Marxists of the British left to coin the phrase 'sub-imperialism' to define them. But behind the impressive statistics lie huge debts and international rescue packages that enforce the subordination of Brazil and Mexico to the imperialist world order.

Growing up on a leash

Mexico and Brazil have developed as annexes of the advanced capitalist countries. Along Mexico's border with the USA, 600 foreign companies employ 130 000 low-paid Mexicans in 'off-shore' production for the US market. Brazil is West Germany's largest external production base, essential for the German car industry and nuclear programme.

By 1981 foreign companies had invested $9.8 billion in Mexico. More than two thirds of this came from American companies. Less than 10 per cent came from West Germany and less than six per cent from Japan. In Brazil where foreign investment is much higher ($17.5 billion in 1981), US capital is less dominant; by 1981 it formed just over 30 per cent of all foreign investment, against West Germany's 13.1 per cent and Japan's 10 per cent. Foreign investment in the two countries is a fraction of total investment. In Mexico it makes up four per cent. But it is concentrated in the dynamic manufacturing sectors of the economy.

The Mexican and Brazilian states have had to intervene extensively in the economy to create the conditions for profitable foreign investments. Mexico and Brazil have borrowed to build roads, provide energy supplies and maintain basic industries. In 1982 the World Bank made a $1.4 billion loan to the Brazilian government of which $240 million will be spent on roads to open up the North West of Brazil for agricultural and food processing investment.

The Mexican and Brazilian economic miracle rests on the intensive exploitation of the working class. To maintain profitability wages have been kept at rock bottom. Child labour is common in both countries. Living standards in Brazil are less than a quarter of those in Britain. Industrial development in Brazil and Mexico has been won by fusing 19th century capitalist labour practices with 20th century capitalist technology.

Both countries have needed political repression to maintain stability. The army has ruled Brazil for twenty years. In Mexico the Institutional Revolutionary Party has been in power for more than fifty years. It has often turned to the army to suppress opposition. Censorship, torture and random military actions against working class and peasant communities have been necessary to control the masses.

Who pays the piper

'Newly Industrialised Countries' such as Brazil and Mexico have achieved a certain level of development within a new international division of labour. Unlike other backward capitalist countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America they are no longer totally dependent on the sale of a narrow range of mineral ores or foodstuffs. Such countries are at the mercy of the international commodity markets. The NICs, however, have a broader economic base, some modern industry and a bigger domestic market; they have more room to manoeuvre. But the credit system keeps them subordinate to the world economy. Debt is the chain that binds the NICs to Wall Street and the City of London.

Between 1973 and 1982 Brazil's foreign debt rose from $24.6 billion to $86 billion. Mexico's rose from $40 billion in 1979 to $80 billion in 1982. As world trade shrank and the price for Mexico's oil stagnated both countries were faced with crippling debts and soaring interest rates. They had to borrow more just to pay the interest on previous loans. A one per cent rise in interest rates now costs Mexico $850 million a year in extra repayments. Brazil's arrears now stand at $2 billion. To pay their debts both Brazil and Mexico have reverted to the role of backward capitalist countries. They depend on trade for their survival. To service their debt this year will take more than each country's trade earnings.

Both countries have to plead with the International Monetary Fund for more help, and to agree to its terms. They must implement the IMF's programme of food price increases, wage cuts and controls on spending to cut the masses' living standards and increase the rate of exploitation. They must open their economies to greater penetration by foreign capital. The Brazilian Government is still borrowing to build the infrastructure necessary for foreign capitalists to exploit the Amazon basin. They must even agree to use their armies to fight for imperialism. The US Government has promised more sympathetic consideration for Latin American debtors prepared to give military assistance to crushing anti-imperialist movements in Central America. Brazilian troops are helping to prop up the regime in the former Dutch colony of Surinam and some have already arrived in Honduras.

Brazil is the only country in Latin America powerful enough to challenge US hegemony. Despite US plans to use Brazilian soldiers on a wide scale in Central America, there are already signs of tensions in relations between the region's declining superpower and its precocious protege, for example over the Caribbean Basin project. Brazil's debts are so large and its economy apparently so strong that some commentators suggest it might decide to go it alone and default on its repayments. President General Figueiredo has publicly opposed the austerity measures demanded by the IMF. But for the time being the imperialist banking system still holds the whip hand. A Brazilian official recently pointed out that the banks would not even have to use military force to bring the Brazilian government to heel:

> 'If my country ever defaulted its ships and aircraft everywhere would be seized by our creditors, as would any goods we tried to export.' (*Sunday Times*, 17 July)

The feature of Brazil that many radicals point out as evidence of 'sub-imperialism' – its military machine – only underlines its subordination to imperialism.

Grave diggers

Figueiredo and Mexican leader Miguel de la Madrid have condemned IMF plans in the hope of placating the workers who have to bear the brunt of the crisis. Industrial development has created a large working class in both countries. Workers faced with massive repression have built trade union organisations and political parties. The state in Mexico and Brazil now looks to these institutions to transmit the message of austerity to workers.

In the first eight months of 1982 almost a million Mexican workers were laid off. Unemployment now runs at more than 15 per cent. Around 40 per cent of the labour force have only temporary or part-time work. Prices double every year and millions of Mexicans face starvation. Last year the threat of strike action forced the Government to grant wage increases in line with inflation to unionised labour. In Brazil 10 million people are unemployed. The value of wages for the poorest workers has fallen by almost a third. In July the Government announced that future wage rises would be held 20 per cent below the rate of inflation.

The bankers' austerity package for Brazil and Mexico has begun the process of liberalisation. Trade unions are being encouraged to organise for the first time in twenty years. The Government hopes that the bureaucrats can help contain working class pressure. But the union leaders are already hopelessly compromised. Their acquiescence to government anti-crisis measures has robbed them of most workers' support.

The working class in Brazil and Mexico is already on the move. The riots in Sao Paulo in April and the mass strikes in July are likely to be repeated. Cardinal Aldisio Lorscheider voiced the fears of the Brazilian ruling class and the anxiety of Western bankers in July: 'If the economic policies are not altered, a social revolution is inevitable'. Reagan's plans to implicate Brazil and Mexico in his Central American war risk introducing a volatile force into the conflict – the power of the new Latin American working class.

No to chauvinism!

Only 12 months ago the British left was divided over the best way of *not* fighting British imperialism when it went to war against Argentina. While the Labour leadership urged Thatcher on into the South Atlantic bloodbath, the Labour left pleaded for the United Nations to reimpose British rule over the Malvinas. The radical left retreated into the old myth of 'Argentine fascism' or discovered that it was 'sub-imperialist' to justify its refusal to stand up against British militarism. Now all are united against *American* imperialism.

In July Labour's deputy leader Denis Healey wrote to Reagan to warn him of the difficulties of containing the conflict in Central America. New left wing Islington MP Jeremy Corbyn wrote to *The Times* to protest at Thatcher's slavish loyalty to American strategy in the region. He appealed to the labour movement to assert an independent British policy in the region. *Tribune* editor Chris Mullin urged European arms suppliers to do business with Nicaragua so that 'the Sandinistas do not become too dependent on Cuba and the Soviet bloc'. He would prefer them to become dependent on Europe, best of all Britain. The radical left adapts to the prevailing mood with strident denunciations of Reagan and US expansionism.

The left is united on Central America because it is easy to reconcile opposition to US imperialism with support for British imperialism. Hence many supporters of British action over the Malvinas oppose American interference in El Salvador. But sooner or later, the USA's drive to assert its world leadership position will lead to conflict, not with impoverished peasants, but with major European powers. The left's vulgar anti-Americanism will soon turn into the chauvinism so evident during the South Atlantic War. Our main enemy is always at home.

Ten years after the Chilean coup...

THIS TIME LET'S WIN!

What has a Santiago slum dweller got in common with a middle class Chilean housewife? Why are Chilean trade unionists and bosses linking arms against Pinochet? Judy Harrison examines the dangers ahead as Chilean workers take to the streets after ten years under the junta.

ON 11 SEPTEMBER 1973 the radical government of Salvador Allende was overthrown in a US-backed coup in Chile. A military junta was installed with General Augusto Pinochet at its head. Only now are there signs that Chilean workers are beginning to recover from the defeat inflicted upon them ten years ago.

Coalition and compromise

Allende's Popular Unity government was an electoral coalition of the Communist, Socialist and Radical parties. It took office in September 1970 after a wave of strikes and land seizures brought down Eduardo Frei's Christian Democratic government. Popular Unity's election programme was not very far to the left of the Christian Democrats. Both promised land reforms and nationalisation. But the workers' and peasants' recent experience of the Frei government, which had ruthlessly suppressed their struggles, gave Allende the highest popular vote. However his party failed to win an overall majority in the parliament.

Compared with other Latin American countries, Chile had a liberal political system. It also had a strong labour movement, built on the early struggles of the copper miners. These features led many left-wingers, inside and outside Chile, to claim that Allende could escape the fate of his numerous radical predecessors throughout the Third World. The common view was that Chile's 'democratic traditions' would protect Popular Unity from violent overthrow. Allende himself emphasised his confidence in the 'professional character' of the armed forces. This view was emphatically echoed by the Chilean Communist Party.

From the day Allende first took office the Chilean bourgeoisie and its imperialist backers were making preparations to overthrow him. They were ready to oust him by peaceful means if possible, by force if necessary. The Popular Unity government posed a threat to native and foreign capital in Chile. This was not because of the modest reforms it proposed to introduce, but because of the aspirations and revolutionary energy it threatened to unleash among the exploited and oppressed. When Allende redistributed some land and completed the nationalisation of the copper mines begun under Frei, the bourgeoisie was not unduly alarmed. The bosses were being generously compensated. What really worried them were the actions of landless peasants, and workers organised in local 'cordones' (factory committees). They began forcibly expropriating farms and factories and arming themselves to defend their gains.

Popular Unity, frightened of 'provoking' the bourgeoisie, tried to halt the process of expropriation. Allende had given a constitutional undertaking to his parliamentary opponents that he would not tamper with the church, judiciary, the press or, above all, the army. He promised that no 'dual' organs of state power would be allowed. And he stuck to his word. Government forces conducted punitive raids, rooted out the arms caches and imprisoned subversives. Socialist and Communist Party cadres helped the Government to preserve order.

Meanwhile the bourgeoisie was conducting a campaign of economic sabotage against the regime. The world bankers refused to extend credit to Popular Unity. The price of copper was allowed to fall to an all time low, starving the country of export earnings (60 per cent of which came from copper). At home truck owners and influential employers launched a series of 'bosses strikes'. By 1973, with the economy in chaos, the ruling class was ready to crush Allende.

'The restoration of order'

The coup that overthrew Popular Unity was not based on a mass fascist movement. Pinochet's regime has never had a significant social base. It had to take power through the massacre and torture of hundreds of thousands of workers. It succeeded because Popular Unity let it. The potent image of Allende going defenceless to his death, while bombs rained down on the Moneda Palace, sums up the entire 'Chilean experiment'. It was an experiment at the expense of the masses who put their trust in Allende.

The imperialist powers made little attempt to disguise their relief when Allende was ousted. The British bourgeoisie has charted Pinochet's progress with admiration. Sometimes Fleet Street has expressed mild distaste at the junta's more repressive excesses. But there remains a firm consensus that its 'main achievement has always been the restoration of order after the chaos of Allende's Unidad Popular' (*The Times*, 17 June 1983). After one of his many cordial meetings with the junta in Santiago, top Tory Cecil Parkinson reminded critics that 'we never actually broke off commercial relations with Chile' (*The Times*, 30 July, 1983).

British and foreign capital flooded into the country after the coup and generous loans were extended. In common with other newly industrialised countries, Chile experienced a 'mini-boom' in the 'seventies. As the crisis began to bite in the imperialist countries there was a rush to invest under the highly profitable conditions created by the junta.

Chile soon became a laboratory for Milton Friedman's 'Chicago Boys' who pursued monetarist policies that drew mock gasps of awe from Western pundits. Chile achieved high annual growth rates – still seven and eight per cent in the late 'seventies. Western bankers greeted a Chilean 'economic miracle'. More recently the junta's international friends have been getting nervous. Since 1982 it has become clear that Pinochet is in deep trouble. The price of copper has dropped to its lowest level since the Great Depression. The loans have dried up and finance minister Carlos Caceres is desperately trying to reschedule Chile's $3.4 billion foreign debt to stave off national bankruptcy. Already 30 per cent of the population is out of work. Inflation is at crippling levels and the peso has been devalued, driving real purchasing power down even more.

Lessons unlearnt

Chile's economic collapse is shaking its political structures. Mortal enemies of Popular Unity, who helped Pinochet trample the masses underfoot, have become leaders of a movement against the junta. Former fascist party leader Eduardo Diaz and the ex-president of the industrial employers' federation have joined forces against Pinochet. They have linked up with truck-owners and farmers' and middle class housewives' organisations to call for a 'restoration of democracy'.

General Pinochet: a decade of terror

Now all but the most wealthy can be counted among the regime's opponents. In recent months there have been four, increasingly militant, days of action against the junta. On 11 August army raids on the industrial belts led to scores of deaths and more than 2000 detentions. Clandestine workers' organisations that have survived the past decade have begun to raise their heads. Abroad, amongst Chilean exiles and all class conscious workers there is hope that a new era is opening up.

Recent protests testify to the enormous courage and potential of the Chilean masses, who are determined not to suffer another decade of darkness. But the present situation also raises the spectre of a tragic re-run of the Popular Unity experience. The Socialist and Communist party leaders have learnt nothing from the Allende years. Since the coup 'Popular Unity in exile' has done little more than issue statements about the need for unity with all bourgeois 'progressives'. Now it is the Christian Democrats, not the left, who are calling the shots in the opposition movement. They have even excluded the Communist Party from the alliance against Pinochet, confident in the knowledge that its support has been severely undermined in the unions. The response, from CP General Secretary Luis Corvalan, has been to call plaintively for an alliance that 'excludes no-one' from the left – or from the right.

Ten years ago this conciliatory, class collaborationist approach led the working class into a disaster from which it is only now emerging. Yet this is the path along which the Socialist and Communist parties, and even the far left, are dragging the working class in Chile today.

Never again

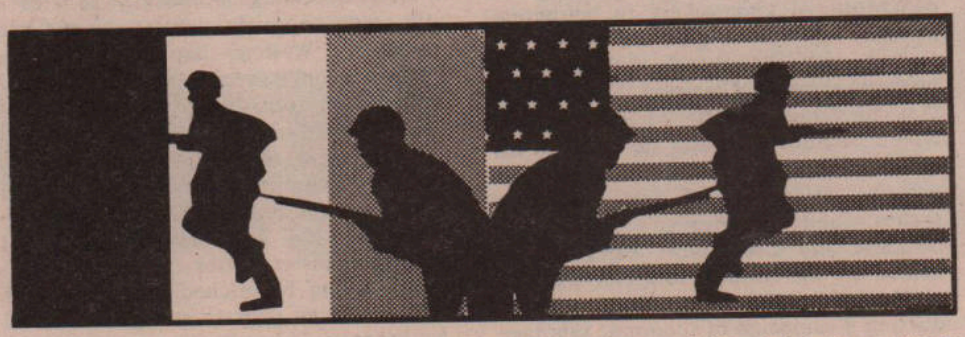
The Chilean revolution is still to be made. Workers everywhere owe it to the Chilean masses to build the maximum international solidarity on their behalf. But our obligations do not stop there. If we let them, the reformists and Stalinists will inflict many more Chiles on the workers' movement. The conclusion drawn by all the official Communist parties after Chile was that the left had gone 'too far, too fast' and provoked bourgeois reaction. Italian Stalinist leader Enrico Berlinguer developed this theme in his *Reflections on Chile* shortly after the coup. He used the Chilean experience to justify his own party's 'historic compromise' with the Italian bourgeoisie. British Eurocommunist Dave Purdy recently told the Labour Coordinating Committee's post-General Election conference that an incomes policy would be necessary to stop future socialist governments facing excessive wage demands – of the sort that 'helped bring down' the Popular Unity government a decade ago.

The Berlinguers and Purdys are already waiting in the wings, ready to call for workers to make sacrifices. Let's commemorate the tenth anniversary of the coup by resolving never to give them the chance.

"Where are our husbands?" Women in Santiago demand to know the whereabouts of those abducted by the regime

Reagan's other war game

Chad and Libya and France and America



Since the end of June, the central African country of Chad has been torn by war. Former president Goukouni Oueddi, backed by Colonel Muammer Gaddafi of Libya, is attempting to regain power from President Hissene Habre, whose regime is supported by the USA and France. The war in Chad is a clash between the most advanced military hardware of the West and the desperate poverty of the Third World. Phosphorous bombs flatten oasis mud towns, while soldiers in rags and rubber sandals fight over endless stretches of desert, in temperatures so hot that heat-seeking missiles have trouble distinguishing between aircraft and air.

There are two battles being fought over Chad today. One is the dispute between the leaders of two factions of the ruling elite over who should occupy the capital of Ndjamena. The other is the conflict between the USA and France. Presidents Mitterand and Reagan have both sent military aid to Habre. Both have condemned Gaddafi for his intervention on the side of Goukouni's rebels. But their common front disguises a real conflict of interests between France and the USA. The French have tried to keep Chad's war at a low key, while the USA has gone all out to turn it into a major international incident. The impoverished people of Chad are the real victims as the imperialist powers shape up for a new carve-up of the Third World.

THE 'ALLIES' ARE back in Africa. There are 3500 French troops on active service in Chad. There are 5500 American troops on exercises next door in Sudan. But there is little camaraderie between the two armies. The Paris and Washington governments only hear about each other's movements through press bulletins. President Mitterand refuses to answer President Reagan's transatlantic notes. Such tensions between Western powers are not caused by desert wars in Chad alone. There are much broader issues at stake. The bickering over Chad is the latest in a lengthening list of disputes between Europe and America – the Siberian pipeline, American interest rates, steel and textile quotas. It signals the fact that Africa has become a major focus of imperialist rivalry.

The 'franc zone'

France was among the first imperialist powers to stake its claim in Africa. It did not grant its central African colonies independence until the 'sixties. Successive French governments established a firm financial and political hold over their former possessions in Africa. The 'franc zone' still binds the currencies of 11 central African states to the French franc. This financial network is only the most gentlemanly method of control France has exercised in the region. It has regularly sent in the troops when required to maintain suitable conditions for imperialist exploitation.

Until the mid-'sixties, France kept a substantial military presence on permanent standby in Africa. In 1964 there were 23 000 French troops in 40 garrisons. By 1981 that number was down to 6 700 in only 6 countries. The French army has gone, but not very far and not for good. Since the 'seventies, the French have organised a crack intervention force of 27 000 marines and paratroopers ready to return to Africa when needed.

The recession has brought renewed competition among the imperialists for markets and sources of raw materials in the Third World. France's supremacy within the 'franc zone' has been challenged by other Western powers. To maintain and extend its hold in Africa, France has diversified its trade and investments away from the traditional franc bloc. Africa now ranks second, after only the EEC, as France's principal export market. In 1981, it took $7 billion worth of French goods. Less than 25 per cent of those goods went to the 'franc zone'. The newly industrialising Nigeria has provided a healthy market for the French in a traditionally British sphere of inflence. Nigeria has become France's second most important trading partner in Africa. French exports rose threefold between 1975 and 1980. Investment has followed them; the Peugeot plant in Nigeria makes France the only Western car producer in Africa.

The trend for France to diversify its interests in Africa has accelerated under Mitterand's socialist government since 1981. The recession has forced French capitalists to seek new markets and sources of raw materials. Under the left-wing cover of 'breaking links with colonialism', Mitterand's socialist government has increased trade with African states outside the 'franc zone'. The most rapidly expanding markets in Africa for Mitterand's France have been in Angola, Congo, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa – and Libya. Rising French trade with Libya is one element in the recent tensions between France and America over African policy. French exports to Libya rose by 253 per cent between 1977 and 1981, while trade in the opposite direction increased by 180 per cent.

Oil and guns

Since 1981 most imperialists have reduced their trade with Libya. Even Italy, Libya's closest European partner, has publicly complained about the poor terms of trade offered by Gaddafi. Yet French interests have continued to expand. There are two reasons for this. The first is France's wish to free itself from dependence on oil from the unstable Middle East. By 1981, around 16 per cent of French oil imports came from Africa. This is planned to reach 30 per cent by the end of the decade. Elf Aquitaine, the French state oil company, already extracts 85 per cent of its oil in Africa. This year Libya expects to shift considerably more than the 2.3 million tonnes it sold France in 1982.

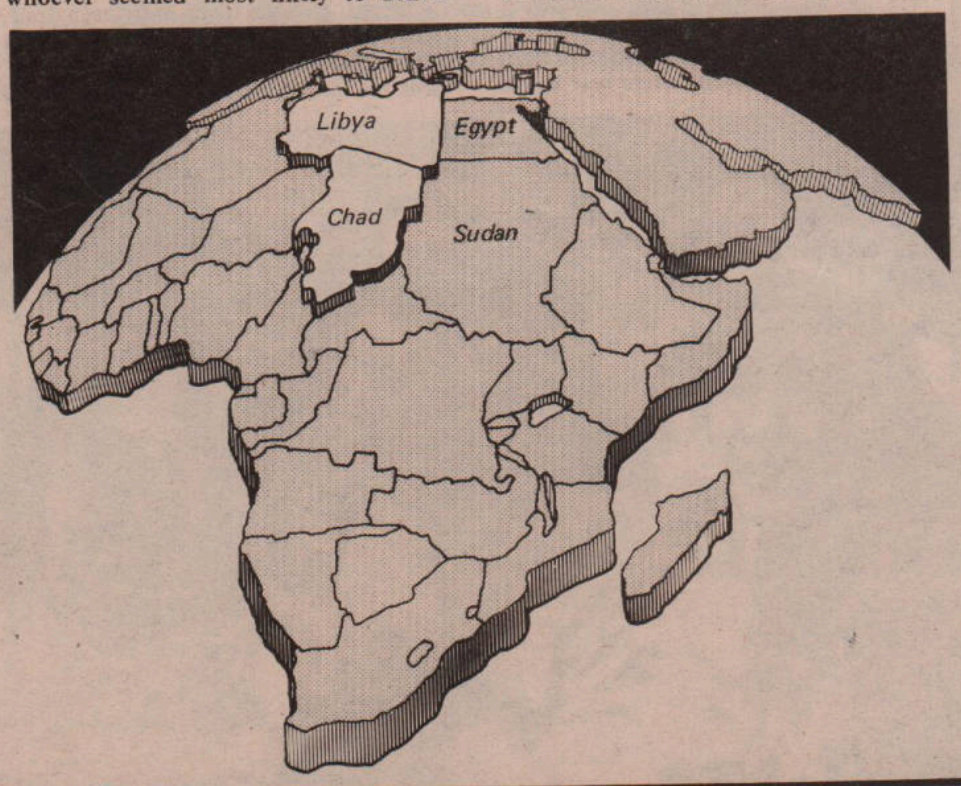
The second reason is arms. Gaddafi has

French firing range

Civil war is endemic to Chad. The country was created by France during the imperialists' scramble for Africa at the turn of the century. Its borders were determined by arbitrarily drawing a line around the 500 000 square miles of territory left over after the division of the richer areas among the European powers. Chad contains an unstable mixture of nomadic Muslim herdsmen in the parched North and Christian or animist black cotton-growers in the damper South. There is no reason for its existence as an independent country. The military might of French imperialism created it and it has been held together by the regular application of French force.

Since it gained formal independence from France in 1960, Chad has been constantly torn by internal conflict. The shifting allegiances of the 11 major ethnic groups and 192 smaller ones which make up its four and a half million people have ensured that it remains ungovernable.

French troops remained in occupation of the North of the country for four years after 'independence'. They were back again in 1969, in 1979 and again this year. When the troops are absent, France maintains a steady flow of military aid to the warring factions. There has never been any ideological motivation behind France's choice of which side to back in Chad. In a war between ethnic leaders such as Goukouni and Habre, there are no political differences. France has simply backed whoever seemed most likely to deliver firm government. In 1979, 2 500 French troops opposed both Goukouni and Habre when they challenged the government of President Malloum. In 1982, French aid was poured in to support President Goukouni against Habre's rebels. When Habre turned the tables on Goukouni in June of that year, Mitterand changed horses and became Habre's ally.



France has treated Chad as little more than a Foreign Legion firing range. It has no manufacturing industry and depends entirely on exports from French-owned cotton fields. The primitive techniques used, and the near-impossibility of exporting anything 1 500 miles to the coast through a country with no railways and few surfaced roads, has kept the cotton sector in a feeble state. The increasing turmoil of the war since the late 'seventies has left it in ruins. This year Chad's proposed budget was a paltry $110 million. Its estimated income is only $10m. A quarter of a million Chadians are close to starvation.

Chad can only survive through aid and credit from the West. But few financiers are willing to lend money to a country with no prospect of ever repaying it. France has regularly had to reschedule the debt of $13m towards which Chad has been unable to pay anything since 1978. The main contributors of aid are France and its EEC allies. These handouts serve only to bring Chad further under French control and prolong its miserable existence.

cut back drastically on his spending programmes on construction and industry. But his increasingly desperate attempts to extend Libyan influence in Africa, and the fear of domestic unrest, have ensured continued growth in Libyan arms spending. This is a natural market for the French. The French armaments industry is the third largest supplier in the world, with an annual turnover of around $12 billion in 1982.

The complementary relationship between Libyan oil and French arms has led to left-wingers like Jean-Pierre Cot, a cabinet minister in Mitterand's early days, pushing for closer relations with Libya.

Since the beginning of 1983, meetings between Libya and France have reached foreign ministry level. In April Libya agreed to repay its $137m debt to France, despite its falling oil revenues. French arms sales to Gaddafi have continued to boom. France is now the second biggest supplier to Libya. Gaddafi has traditionally bought Soviet arms, but their miserable performance in his foreign interventions have made Gaddafi more interested in high quality Western hardware. Libya's airforce already flies French Mirage III, V, and F1 fighters alongside its Soviet Migs. Now Gaddafi has expressed a particular interest in France's Crotale and Exocet missile systems. Talks opened earlier this year on the planned sale of 20 Mirage 2000s – valued at $500m – and Super Etendards.

Closer trade ties between Libya and France have dictated the French view of Libyan foreign policy. French government ministers have bent over backwards to stop the current war becoming a conflict between France and Libya. Mitterand's advisers have emphasised the view that Chad's is a 'war of chieftains' and should be treated as such. Hence Mitterand refused to send troops into Chad until six weeks after the fighting started. President Habre has railed against the 'mercantile pro-Libyan lobby' within the French government. Paris has maintained contact with Tripoli throughout the fighting. Mitterand's preference is for a quietly negotiated settlement which will leave his relations with Gaddafi intact. But his plans have been upset by the bellowing intervention of the USA.

Enter America

Africa has never been high on America's list of priority regions. The continent has been carved up among older European imperialists. America has traditionally regarded it as having little strategic importance. None of the 40 mutual aid and defence agreements America has signed around the world are with African countries. The arrival of the crisis, however has sparked off a new interest in Africa within the American ruling class. Under President Reagan, American businessmen have been organised into mass trading trips to Africa.

Despite the recent improvement in trade, America's prime interest in Africa is strategic. The USA is fighting to preserve its position as leading imperialist power and to hold the rest of the Western powers in line behind it. The USA has identified the Middle East as the priority area to be kept under control. It has been searching Africa for bases from which it can launch its Rapid Deployment Force into the Gulf if the situation threatens to explode. Reagan has poured military aid into countries such as Kenya, Somalia, Oman, Sudan and Egypt. Stores to accommodate thousands of RDF troops have been established in these states. The recent exercises held in Sudan and Egypt are the largest ever in the region. The US navy frequently cruises down the coast of North Africa.

The USA has had to find a 'Soviet surrogate' to justify its drive to militarise its relations in Africa. Gaddafi's threat to stability in the region and apparently erratic behaviour have made him the obvious candidate. When the US Air Force shot down two Libyan Migs over the Gulf of Sirte in 1981, Reagan's plan to deal with the Libyan threat and to turn Gaddafi into Africa's equivalent of Cuba or Nicaragua was well under way.

American imperialism has gone to great lengths to build up Gaddafi's image as 'the mad colonel'. In 1981 and 1982 Reagan applied the pressure necessary to get Exxon and Mobil to withdraw their Libyan oil operations. US aid and trade to Libya has collapsed. American oil purchases from Libya fell from 572 000 barrels a day in the first half of 1981 to 47000 barrels a day in the first half of 1982. Exports to Libya have dried up.

The propaganda campaign to create Gaddafi's evil image has continued apace. American officials worked behind the scenes to stage a walkout of delegates at last year's conference of the Organisation of African Unity. This charade prevented Gaddafi becoming President of the OAU and endorsed the Western view of him as the deranged terrorist of Africa. The American press has been full of scare stories about Libya's roving hit squads. At one stage it was suggested that Reagan himself was the target. The USA has staged show trials of people charged with gun running for Gaddafi. Gaddafi has even been labelled as potentially the world's first terrorist with 'the bomb'. In March 1982, Reagan banned all Libyans in the USA from studying nuclear physics! By setting Gaddafi up as a threat to the world order, Reagan has tried to force other NATO powers to support America's role as policeman in North Africa and the Middle East.

Frictions in Chad

America has portrayed the latest war in Chad as a Libyan plot. 'The Colonel strikes south' declared *Newsweek*. The USA wants a Western victory, but has no intention yet of involving its own forces in Africa. Reagan has stressed that Chad remains in France's sphere of influence, and has called on Mitterand to 'fulfil his responsibilities'. But France's developing relationship with Libya has made it an unwilling partner in America's international intrigue. As *The Times* put it, 'France does not share the American fixation with driving Gaddafi into the sea' (23 August).

France's final decision to send in the paratroopers was more a grudging acceptance of its responsibility for stability in its former colonies than a concession to American pressure. The weakness of the Chadian government has meant that the French troops have gone straight into the frontline. But they are there as a lever to allow Mitterand to get Libya to accept a compromise – such as the partition of Chad. Mitterand remains unenthusiastic about America's efforts to create a cold war climate in the heat of North Africa.

The military intervention in Chad shows the shape of things to come. The poverty and war which have dogged Chad are spreading throughout the Third World. Western militarism will become more rapacious as the tendency towards collapse accelerates. The dispute between France and America foreshadows military manoeuvres of a different scale. Today French troops and American 'advisers' are on the same side in Chad. Tomorrow they may be opposing each other in another part of the backward capitalist world. However the tensions resolve themselves this time, one thing is certain; there will be more slaughter and starvation at the imperialists' hands as the second scramble for Africa gets underway.

Mick Hume

America's African bogey

Libya is rich in oil while Chad is destitute with cotton. In 1980, Libya's average income per head was $11 901 – 100 times higher than Chad's $120. But Libya's wealth is a recent acquisition. Like its neighbour, Libya was a creation of the imperialist division of Africa. The ruled maplines of its borders with Egypt and Chad reveal the artificiality of its birth. Libya was an Italian colony from before the First World War until after Mussolini's defeat in the Second. Its internal regime and relations with its neighbours were dependent on the balance of Western powers in Africa. General De Gaulle's Free French Army re-entered the Second World War by invading the Italian colony of Libya from the French colony of Chad.

In 1951, Libya was established as a monarchy run by a puppet king. British and American troops remained in the country to ensure good order. In 1954, the World Bank awarded Libya Chad's current title of the world's poorest country. The change in Libya's status came with the discovery of oil. The unrest created by the corrupt monarch's waste of oil revenues allowed Gaddafi and his clique of army officers to take power in 1969.

Gaddafi has been a problem for the imperialists virtually since he came to power. He began by expelling foreign troops and nationalising the oil industry. Today, 70 per cent of Libyan oil production is controlled by the state. Gaddafi has used the oil revenues to stabilise his domestic support and to try to broaden Libya's influence. His populist programme has kept him in power through social reform and foreign policy bravado. Gaddafi's interference in the affairs of his neighbours has been a constant worry to the West. Posing as the successor to Egypt's Nasser as the messiah of a Pan-Arab/African nationalism, Gaddafi has tried to merge Libya with Egypt in 1971, Tunisia in 1974, Syria in 1980 and Chad in 1981. He has financed guerrilla movements in several African countries, supported coups such as last month's in Upper Volta and earlier this year played host to the hardliners in the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

None of Gaddafi's activities pose any real threat to imperialism. None of his proposed mergers has come off, and his interventions in the region have more often been military disasters for Libya. But in the context of African and Middle Eastern instability, Gaddafi's radical nationalism presents a threat to the imperialist order in one of its most sensitive areas.

Western commentators have dubbed Gaddafi 'the mad colonel' because of his erratic policy shifts at home and abroad. But Gaddafi's unpredictable exploits are not caused by any personal megalomania. He has simply responded to the impact of the world crisis on the Libyan economy. Gaddafi has attempted to use Libya's oil wealth to develop manufacturing industry. The first prerequisite of this was to build an economic infrastructure of transport, communications and basic industries. Gaddafi launched into an ambitious programme of multi-million dollar developments for steel and chemical plants. The imperialist powers, starved of orders from their own declining industries, moved in for a share of massive construction contracts. The competition between them for Gaddafi's favours ensured that they were incapable of uniting against him.

Gaddafi: more a scapegoat than a zealot

The collapse of oil prices brought a swift end to Libya's economic miracle. Oil revenue fell from $20 billion in 1980 to $14 billion in 1981 to an estimated $8 billion in 1982. Building projects were cancelled and imports from the West slumped. European governments began limiting the amount of export credits granted for sales to Libya, as Gaddafi quickly developed a bad reputation for welching on his debts.

Libya's failure to industrialise has exposed its real status as a backward capitalist country dependent on the sale of one raw material – oil – for 99 per cent of its exports. The first real cracks are appearing in Gaddafi's support in Libya. His survival depends on his ability to exploit the divisions among the imperialists to boost his status. His current intervention in Chad is an attempt to do just that.

Back to Africa: French paratroopers board the flight to Ndjamena

reviews

South African Premier P W Botha

The Great Trek to the stock exchange

Dan O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, Cambridge University Press 1983, pp 281, hbk £22.50

TODAY SEVEN GIANT corporations control more than 80 per cent of all listings on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Ranked second amongst them is the SANLAM complex – the giant Afrikaner controlled finance conglomerate. SANLAM stands as a monument to the success of Afrikaner nationalism. It refutes the commonly held belief that the Afrikaner nationalist policies of apartheid were simply the product of irrational racial prejudice. *Volskapitalisme* ('people's capitalism' – the nationalist term for Afrikaner capital) is a well-researched analysis of the relationship between the emergence of Afrikaner capital in the 1940s, and the development of Afrikaner nationalism until its electoral victory in 1948.

O'Meara's empirically rich analysis centres on the struggle of the displaced Afrikaner petit-bourgeoisie to transform itself into a capitalist class. The defeat of the independent Boer Republics at the end of the Boer War in 1902 established British domination over the whole of South Africa. British imperialism transformed South Africa into the world's leading diamond and gold producing nation. The British built political oppression into the structure of the economy. Pre-capitalist African societies were ruthlessly destroyed and blacks were forced to enter into the wage labour/capital relationship. Britain's primary concern was to maximise surplus value extraction. It was of little concern that the plunder of South Africa prevented the growth of the national economy. However, the penetration of capitalist social relations transformed South African society.

To increase the productivity of the mining industry, Britain imported skilled white labour. At the same time, the development of capitalist agriculture under a small stratum of Afrikaner land owners forced a mass of poor white Afrikaners off the land into the burgeoning cities. Unskilled and uneducated, the Afrikaner proletarians entered the labour market on equal terms with blacks. Afrikaner workers saw the blacks as a competitive threat and in turn were themselves seen as a threat by skilled white artisans. The small Afrikaner petit-bourgeoisie which emerged in the cities in turn resented the 'Hoggenheimers' – the British mining capitalists, who they saw as the major obstacle to their progress.

Until the 'thirties, Afrikaner landowners sought a compromise with Britain, the provider of the bulk of their markets. The thrust for a radical Afrikaner nationalism opposed to British imperialism was formulated and developed by the Afrikaner petit-bourgeoisie. Changing material conditions, however, made for a convergence of different sections of Afrikaner society. Petit-bourgeois intellectuals in the Afrikaner community articulated the aspirations of the 'inferior' Afrikaner masses in the economy. The most important expression of this movement was the formation of the Afrikaner Broederbond (brotherhood) in 1918.

The Broederbond's role was expounded by its 'political commissar' L. J. Du Plessis in the Bond's theoretical journal *Koers* in 1933. He called for a government 'fully committed to South Africa's economic independence'. This, he argued, was the only way to break imperialism's 'octopus grip'. The Bond acted on three levels to achieve this.

First, Afrikaners had to achieve 'economic independence', otherwise political independence would mean nothing. The Bond's overriding aim became to transform the Afrikaner petit-bourgeoisie into a bourgeoisie through the savings of Afrikaner workers and farmers. This was the basis of the Economic Movement of the 1930s and the growth of SANLAM. Second, Afrikaner workers had to be directed away from class institutions like the trade unions and brought under the control of the Afrikaner nationalist movement. The Bond knew that the workers could provide a mass electoral base through which it could gain state power. And third, the movement required a 'purification' of Afrikaner ideology – one that could draw the diverging class interests together. 'Christian Nationalism' emphasised the unity of the Afrikaner people by harking back to the experience of the 'Great Trek', when the Afrikaner farmers left the Cape en masse to escape from British domination.

The irony of Afrikaner nationalism is that the eventual success of the 'purified' Nationalist Party had less to do with the persuasiveness of Afrikaner ideology than with the changing patterns of imperialist domination. The structural changes in the South African economy during the war years drew white workers, threatened by increasing black employment, towards the Nationalist Party. The Afrikaner nationalists promised 'apartheid' – increased job protection and domination. White workers' material interests drew them towards Afrikaner nationalism.

The SA bourgeoisie wins the war

The Second World War was the salvation of Afrikaner nationalism. By opposing the war drive, the Nationalist Party could disassociate itself from the Government's austerity measures. The Nationalist Party projected itself as a radical alternative and exploited every grievance of white workers to enhance its credibility. As black labour was increasingly utilised, it stirred up the fears of white workers. As the white trade unions betrayed their members by accepting 'no-strike' clauses in strategic industries, the Nationalist Party moved in.

Capitalist agriculture rallied to the Nationalist Party. Farmers were attracted by its offers of more rigid influx controls to maintain the supplies of black labour to their farms. By the end of the war, the Government had lost the support of most sections of the capitalist class. The field was open for the advance of the Nationalist Party. The Government's clumsy attempts to defuse growing social conflict and rising black militancy only strengthened the appeal of the Nationalists. By 1948 they were set for an electoral triumph from which they never looked back.

O'Meara's conclusion aptly sums up the significance of the inauguration of the apartheid era:

'Apartheid was much more than a policy to advance the interests of NP supporters...it in effect secured the interests of the entire capitalist class, enabling all capitalists to intensify the exploitation of African workers and so raise the general rate of profit.'

Apartheid helped South African capitalism to develop in the 'fifties and 'sixties at a rate second only to Japan. The Nationalist Party's victory was not so much the end of the long march of the Great Trek frontiersmen as the beginning of a new era of South African capitalism. Ruthless oppression and rigid racial discrimination made South Africa an imperialist power in its own right within 30 years.

The end of the nationalist road

O'Meara's analysis is a timely contribution to understanding the nature of South African capitalism today. It makes clear that apartheid and its attendant brutalities were objective requirements of capital accumulation in South Africa.

O'Meara's book destroys long-cherished radical myths. It deals a blow to the casual use of labels like 'fascist dictatorship'. These labels may satisfy the liberal prejudices of people who dream of the possibility of transforming South Africa into a bourgeois democracy. *Volkskapitalisme* reveals that South Africa has already experienced its 'national' revolution. The Afrikaner petit-bourgeoisie has succeeded in building itself into a fully fledged bourgeoisie which hobnobs with English capitalists – the old 'Hoggenheimers'. Together they have extended capitalist social relations into every corner of South Africa. They have now reached the highest corridors of power as well as the top of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. The inescapable conclusion to be drawn from O'Meara's book is that the struggle for power for black workers in South Africa begins where Afrikaner nationalism has ended. Today the struggle in South Africa is no longer to make a national democratic revolution but to overthrow capitalism and establish the dictatorship of the working class. *Volskapitalisme* should be studied closely by all those concerned with making the South African revolution.

Charles Longford

Stop worrying: love the Eurobomb

Eurochauvinism on the rise

Fred Halliday, *The Making of the Second Cold War*, Verso/NLB, 1983, pp280, £4.95.

New Left Review editorial board member Fred Halliday dismisses some of the more vulgar notions arising from the recent deterioration of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. He succinctly demonstrates that the Soviet Union is no military threat to the USA and that it is not a major force in the Third World. He rejects the idea that the new aggressiveness of American foreign policy is a result of the prejudices of Ronald Reagan: it is a direct response to the declining prowess of US imperialism. Yet Halliday accepts the prevailing bourgeois and radical view that rivalry between East and West is the major source of the drive towards a Third World War.

Halliday's method is impressionistic. He takes at face value the appearance that conflict among the major capitalist powers has been superseded since 1945 by East-West tensions. And the title of his book indicates his assumption that international relations today are guided by the same forces as they were in the late 'forties. Hence he asserts that 'Cold War II developed like its predecessor Cold War I from the breakdown of relations between the major capitalist states and the USSR'. In fact the new Cold War has different origins and, potentially, much more dangerous consequences.

The USA launched an intense ideological attack on the Soviet system from 1947 onwards as a central part of its drive to consolidate its global hegemony. The Americans raised the spectre of the Soviet menace to unite Western Europe under the NATO umbrella. The Second World War had shown the USA to be the world's strongest capitalist power: the Cold War ratified US supremacy over its erstwhile allies. As US control was firmly established and the world economy entered its sustained post-war expansion, the Cold War gradually faded.

The new Cold War, the growing hostility between Washington and Moscow since the late 'seventies, takes place in a much changed world. The onset of the recession has exposed the stagnation of the US economy and its inability to compete with the rising powers of Europe and Japan. This has forced the USA to attempt to reassert its political and military authority over its rivals. Hence Reagan has revived the rhetoric of anti-Sovietism which helped to forge the Western alliance in the first place. The Russian bogey is used to justify American rearmament and the USA's insistence on the priority of political alliances (where its power is greatest) over economic matters (where its weakness is most apparent). The new Cold War rages in a world racked by crisis and instability. The first Cold War demonstrated US strength, the second exposes its weakness. Then the USA was in control, today nobody is in control. The chaos of American foreign policy reveals the disintegration of the world order established after 1945.

Halliday is so captivated by images of rival superpowers that he denies the evidence of strife in the Western camp. 'For all the rhetoric on trade and currency rivalry', he writes, 'this economic inter-imperialist conflict finds relatively little reflection in politics and strategy'. But even before Chad and El Salvador, what about Afghanistan and the Siberian pipeline, Lebanon, Namibia and Argentina? Today the Western powers still go to great lengths to paper over the cracks in their alliances, but every international issue brings them closer to the surface. Halliday's narrow emphasis on the East-West cleavage has reformist political consequences. Instead of pointing out the urgency of the labour movement mobilising against the burgeoning militarism of every Western power, he lends support to the formation of a European bloc as the way to stop the Third World War.

In the 'fifties and 'sixties Labour left-wingers advocated unilateral nuclear disarmament as a way Britain could give 'a moral lead' and set an example to the world. Today they have broadened this approach into the European Nuclear Disarmament campaign – a nuclear-free Europe is now presented as the solution to superpower rivalry. Halliday endorses this strategy and endows an 'independent' Europe with a much broader progressive economic and cultural role in the Third World. These are reactionary illusions. The notion of a rapacious imperialist power like Britain setting an example to anybody was offensive enough 20 years ago. Today it is a manifest absurdity. The British navy has recently returned from an orgy of imperialist savagery in the South Atlantic and its forces are constantly on the rampage in Ireland. French paratroopers have invaded Chad; they have scarcely been out of action in some African country since 1945.

Radical support for an 'independent Europe' is even more dangerous given the emerging lines of conflict between Europe and the USA. Halliday envisages a two-stage process. First, an independent Europe acting as a force for peace between the Soviet Union and the USA. Then, a socialist Europe sponsoring 'a new pattern of international politics' among Western, Eastern and Third World countries. But an independent capitalist Europe could never be a force for peace. Even if Germany, France and Britain could resolve their own squabbles they would have to do battle with the USA (and Japan) in a new carve-up of the Third World. Indeed this struggle is already underway. Reformist movements for peace through an independent Europe will be transformed overnight into chauvinist campaigns to defend the European fatherland against the Yankee enemy. This process too has already begun. Those who follow Halliday's first stage will never reach the second: his scheme directs them, not towards a socialist Europe, but straight into World War Three.

Fran Eden

The mines: still barbarous

A dog's life

David Douglass and Joel Krieger, *A miner's life*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, pp 118, £4.50.

A miner's life is a powerful counter to National Coal Board propaganda about life in Britain's mines. Dave Douglass is now a branch official at Hatfield Main Colliery and a member of the Yorkshire Area Executive Committee of the National Union of Miners. He followed his father and his grandfather down the pits. The book's main strength is the way it draws on Douglass's own experience to give a graphic

account of miners' working conditions.

The NCB's journal *Coal News* tries to present a picture of mining as a modern, dynamic, highly mechanised and, above all, safe industry to work in. This book sets out to correct the view that mining has lost its 'raw and bloody edge'. In the mid 'seventies Doncaster NCB production manager told a television interviewer that working in the mines was no worse than being in London's underground. Yet in 1973 alone almost six hundred serious injuries were reported to the NCB. The pressure on the workers since the introduction of individually calculated bonus systems means that nobody stops work unless they get knocked unconscious. Routine safety procedures are ignored as miners fight for every penny of their wages.

Working underground

The dangers of explosions, subsidence or collapse of the shaft are ever present. Miners still suffer from the traditional pit diseases. Between 1951 and 1971 17000 miners died from pneumoconiosis, a crippling condition caused by specks of coal dust lacerating the lungs. Around 600 new cases are reported every year. Miners frequently work chest-deep in water fouled with their own shit. An NCB medical officer made himself a laughing stock when he appeared on television and admitted that toilet facilities down the mines were 'not all that they could be'. In fact there are no toilets in the mines. The workers have to relieve themselves where they are. Douglass and Krieger make clear the reality behind the Coal Board's attempt to disguise the pit props behind the facade of a modern factory or by carefully landscaping a mine's setting. Underground, miners still work in wet, filthy and noisy conditions, often on their backs, cutting out coal with an awkward cutter. The rhythm of their work is dictated by the movement of a conveyor belt.

In the age of the microprocessor the increase in productivity in the coal industry owes little to the introduction of new technology. In 1967 when a member of the royal family attended the opening of Bevercote Colliery, heralded as the most advanced in the world where all the coal would be cut by remote-controlled machinery, Coal Board officials had to send to a nearby mine to get some lumps of coal to put on the conveyor belt. The new machines kept breaking down.

Increased output has been achieved at the expense of the workers. New productivity agreements introduced over the last nine years have set miner against miner, made the mines even more dangerous to work in and isolated militants. The cost for the miners has been enormous.

Militancy

Douglass and Krieger give a stirring account of the past militancy of the mineworkers. And they point out that the limited gains of the 1974 miners' strike were won as much against the National Union of Mineworkers' leadership as against the management. Ironically, though the authors acknowledge that every miners' victory has been won through the determination of the rank and file, they blame miners themselves for the current downturn in militancy. They explain it by the miners being corrupted by the incentive schemes.

The book's main weakness lies in its unwillingness to criticise the union which under the left-wing leadership of Arthur Scargill sees the interests of the workers as identical with the interests of the industry. It has been unable to fight for miners' wages and working conditions because in the end, like the Coal Board, it believes in the future of coal. Its only alternative is to hope for the return of a Labour government which will carry out a more humane reconstruction of the coal industry. But miners have been screwed by Labour and Tory governments. They have been sold out time and again by their union leaders.

A miner's life is a good read. It shows just how barbarous workers' conditions are even in the advanced capitalist world. *the next step* is now regularly sold outside some of the pits mentioned by Douglass and Krieger. This book gives a picture of what goes on inside. The two combined could deal a hefty blow against both the NCB bosses and their NUM collaborators.

Bob Radcliffe.

Critical crisis

Terry Eagleton, *Literary theory; an introduction*, Basil Blackwell, 1983, pp 244, £4.95.

OVER THE LAST decade a critical war has been raging in the academic literary world. Now, as part of a desperate attempt to assert traditional values, teachers who concentrate on 'theory' are being kept out of jobs. Two things emerge from this. First, the academic establishment is determined to play its part in the general advance of reactionary ideology. Second, it is profoundly insecure about the intellectual justification for its own existence.

For Terry Eagleton, the role of the literary institution is to sustain the assumptions and attitudes which help keep the ruling class and its system in power. It transmits those moral values which might otherwise escape the members of a society founded upon exploitation. On one level the institution itself has never denied this. It was established in the second half of the nineteenth century when it became apparent that religion was losing its grip. That would not do, and Matthew Arnold knew why: 'the middle classes, remaining as they are now, with their narrow, harsh, unintelligent and unattractive spirit and culture, will almost certainly fail to mould or assimilate the masses below them'. In the early years of the twentieth century Professor George Gordon took up the theme: 'the Churches...having failed, and social remedies being slow, English literature now has a triple function: still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all to save our souls and heal the state'. In a symposium in the *Times Literary Supplement* last December Professor George Watson emphasised the relevance of this approach to modern problems: 'now is the time to say what it is (the reason for teaching English). We who profess literature are teaching some of the art by which, in a post-industrial age, Britain may hope to survive'.

On another level however, it has always been of central importance to deny that there is anything political or theoretical about either literature or criticism. Literature is simply out there, like a bunch of daffodils. It is what great writers have written, so we should read and study it to learn the eternal truths and beauties it contains. Literature gains added potency as an ideological force when it is seen as a natural phenomenon. This complements the strength it derives from its appeal to emotion and experience.

The politics of literature

Literary theory blasts English literature out of the hands of the professors and into history. Eagleton provides a guide to the whole field of modern literary theory from the Romantics through Arnold, Leavis, Eliot, the New Criticism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, reception theory, structuralism and semiotics, post-structuralism and deconstruction to psychoanalysis. Intended for those with little or no knowledge of the subject, it is a feat of explanation and argument, and it is comprehensive, accessible and witty into the bargain. Eagleton makes no attempt to provide a pseudo-neutral description. He demonstrates how all theories of literature are political, relating them to the social forces which produced them. He quotes J. M. Keynes' point that those who dislike 'theory', claiming to get along better without one, are simply in the grip of an older theory themselves. He shows how most of the theories of criticism (especially those which claim not to exist) underwrite the grip of bourgeois ideology.

The separation of literature from history has its roots in the Romantic privileging of the categories 'art' and the 'aesthetic'. They became mysterious matters of private experience and literature, as one of them, became a fetishised object. Eagleton points out how this process involves the extrication of art from 'the material practices, the social relations and ideological meanings with which it is always bound up'. This separation is necessary for art to be seen as a liberalising, humanising influence, as a refuge from the harsh, alienated world of capitalism. Its aim was to soften that world, not to challenge it, to provide moral authority for its rule, not to question its existence.

Most of the theories surveyed in this book repeat or reinforce the Romantic dislocation of art from reality. Whatever their differing purposes, they all attempt to bracket off (Eagleton's favoured term) social reality and concentrate attention elsewhere. Hence they focus on the poem itself, a tradition, an organic society, eternal verities, the imagination, the structure of the human mind, myth, language, the unconscious, whatever. These are said to be what literature is really all about.

It may seem strange that it is the structuralists and the post-structuralists who are now being threatened by the Academy. The liberal humanist tenor of that institution has remained essentially unchallenged since its foundation. But it has needed to sharpen up its image from time to time to remain effective. Thus in the 'thirties F.R. Leavis' influential journal, *Scrutiny*, ousted the amateurish, dilettante approach. From the 'fifties onwards the more rigorous, scientific methods were made welcome. They are not welcome now. Whatever the shortcomings of the structuralist approach it did represent a demystification of literature. It did this through its emphasis on the constructedness of human experience. And there was no reason why their method (unconcerned as it was with content) should not be applied to comics and adverts as well as to the literary 'greats'.

Discourse theory

Eagleton's purpose is to pursue the logic of the insecurity that pervades contemporary literary criticism. For him literature has no reason to exist as an academic discipline. There is no unity or coherence in the myriad of methods (linguistic, historical, intuitive, sociological and so on) which are brought to bear on the object 'literature'. Indeed there is no unity or coherence in the object itself. The syllabus is carefully selected, but that has more to do with the purposes of the selectors than with the books they choose.

Having buried the 'literary', Eagleton would develop a study of sign-systems and signifying practices. He proposes a cultural studies or discourse theory which is similar to the 'cultural materialism' espoused by Raymond Williams. This would take on board everything from the Muppets to Moby Dick, from Dryden to Goddard. It would be both a practice and a science of those discourses. The aim would be to see how they are constructed to achieve certain effects, and the objects and methods chosen would depend upon what we wanted to *do*, politically, at any given time. It's a long way from Matthew Arnold, and it is worth noting Eagleton's acknowledgement of the contibution of the Soviet theorist Mikhail Bakhtin (published as V. N. Voloshinov in the late 'twenties).

It is necessary to take issue with some of Eagleton's points. In a brief reference to the work of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse he appears to agree that the current drive to war is an expression of a death wish which is fed by the alienation of modern life. The drive to war as an effect of competition in the age of imperialism is not mentioned. It is a significant omission because he similarly, but more extensively, divorces the specificity of women's oppression from capitalist social relations.

He champions feminism, identifying links between its political potential and the more useful insights of post-structuralism and psychoanalysis. However his sharp critique of these aproaches makes it difficult to explain his enthusiasm for feminism or to see that link. Indeed he identifies in post-structuralism a retreat from any concern with what language *does* and criticises its exponents for their libertarianism, scepticism and nihilism. Yet it is with these that the development of the women's movement is more correctly associated. Eagleton however, for reasons that are not altogether clear, grafts on to his discussion a pious celebration of 'socialist feminism'. He indulges the individualist ideology of the women's movement, notably when he claims that it has redeemed the notion of 'lived experience' from its empiricist connotations.

And what, finally, about the nature of the proposed discourse theory? In a discussion of important objects of study Eagleton refers to the culture industry (television, popular press, film, etc) as a field where the task will be primarily a defensive and provisional one. In a sense this remark applies to the whole project insofar as it remains confined within the ideological institutions of bourgeois society. Eagleton is the first to acknowledge the relation of those institutions to the rest of society but his approach suggests a lack of urgency. He refers in one place to 'any future socialist programme', but is silent about mobilising against capitalist society in the present. His fatalism is common to many radical intellectuals of the 'seventies who have made their way into the Labour Party in the 'eighties.

That said, *Literary theory* should be read as widely as possible. Written from a daunting intellectual isolation and the slenderest native tradition, it is a mighty contribution to our understanding of the role of literature and ideas in the class struggle.

Pat Ford

Hidden from History

Sex and class in women's history, edited by **Mary P Ryan, Judith L Newton and Judith R Walkowitz**, History Workshop Series, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, pp 270, £4.95.

Sex and class in women's history will be bought mainly because of the word 'sex' in its title. It isn't only the bourgeoisie that uses sex to sell its wares; feminists do it too.

Some of the articles in this collection are about sex. 'Class and gender in Victorian England' by Lenroe Davidoff is a curious tale about A J Munby, a rich Victorian pervert, and Hannah his maid-cum-mistress. 'Freud's Dora, Dora's hysteria' is a critique of Freud. According to Maria Ramas, Dora was a repressed lesbian. Freud could not understand this because of his own fantasy that she fancied Herr K, a child molester. John R Gillis' article on 'Servants, sexual relations and the risk of illegitimacy' describes how difficult servants' sex lives were, and how as a result, some of their offspring ended up at the London Foundling Hospital.

Only one article in the collection deals with the working class: '"The men are as bad as their masters": socialism, feminism and sexual antagonism in the London tailoring trade in the

Fun times: Victorian pervert and assistant

1830s', by Barbara Taylor.

As the title implies, Taylor agrees with the standard feminist view that sexism is strongest in the working class. Superficially, this is true – male workers often see women as a threat to their jobs and wages. The example of the London tailors bears this out. As long as they are forced to compete for jobs, workers are always divided. It takes political struggle to unite them. But male workers have the potential to be won over to a revolutionary strategy for women's emancipation; bourgeois men do not.

The article does not dwell on the tailoring trade. Its main purpose is to resuscitate the Utopian Socialists who intervened in the 1834 strike around the demand for equal pay. The followers of the pioneering English socialist Robert Owen recognised that women were unfairly treated. They called upon male trade unionists who opposed the unionisation of women to be 'charitable' and 'just'. But Owenism couldn't explain why the working class was divided, nor develop a strategy to unite it. The Utopian Socialists accepted the privatisation of housework; they opposed the exploitation of women in the factories because it 'unfeelingly tore (women) from the maternal duties of a parent, and unjustly encouraged (them) to compete with men in ruining the money value of labour'. Owenism primarily represented the interests of skilled craftsmen who objected as strongly to the introduction of unskilled workers (many of whom were women) as they did to the 'parasitic capitalists'. They dreamed of a new world based on craftsmen's cooperatives.

Utopian Socialism was an important development in the early nineteenth century. It set itself against capitalism in favour of a more equal society. It rejected the system and recognised women's inferior role. But given the early stage of development of the working class, the Owenites did not recognise it as the revolutionary force in society. Hence they were limited to a moral critique of existing relations, and a belief that humanity would need to be 'born again' before the new society could be achieved. Taylor, perceiving a precedent for the conciousness raising and ideological concerns of today's feminists, gives the thumbs up both to their idealism and their anti-working class prejudices.

In its time Utopian Socialism was a step forward. By the late nineteenth century it had been superceded by Scientific Socialism. Marx and Engels identified exploitation within capitalist social relations and saw the seeds of socialism developing within the old society. The increasing socialisation of production, which dragged men, women and children into the factories, raised the level of development of the productive forces, and created a mighty working class was seen as progressive by Marx. At last socialists could go beyond moral critiques to a conscious strategy for transformation.

In 1983 the Labour left is rediscovering the Utopian Socialists and upholding their humanism, alternative plans and moral fervour. Taylor adds feminist reasons to the revival:

'Lacking any scientific theory of the historic role of the proletariat, they (the utopian socialists) lacked also that principled basis from which to reject female claims, which was later to be developed with such verve by Marxist anti-feminists.'

Backing Owen against Marx in retrospect is like favouring the flat earthers and divine creationists over Copernicus or Darwin. Taylor's mission is to proclaim the progressive aspects of Owenism in the 1830s to justify today's reformist feminism.

Kate Marshall

Letters

MIRROR COMMENT

An age

THE LABOUR PARTY

Racism in Dewsbury

On Sunday 24 July racists rampaged through the Asian community in Dewsbury's Savile Town district. At about 3 pm four white youths in a Ford Capri rammed into two cars driven by Asian youths and beat up the occupants of one of them. The attack was reported to the police and they were given the car's registration number. As usual they took no action. Later that evening five Asian youths were set upon by a gang of 20 whites armed with iron bars. They were walking past the 'Scarborough' a notoriously racist pub which operates a virtual colour bar. A young Muslim priest, Umar, was badly beaten up and now suffers from a loss of memory. At 4 am the police raided the home of three brothers Zafar Iqbal, Mohammed Safier and Mohammed Mahroof. All three were arrested.

As news of the attacks and the arrests spread through Savile Town the next day, a spontaneous demonstration of several hundred youths marched on Dewsbury police station to demand the release of the three. On 30 July a 700-strong demonstration supported by Leeds, Sheffield and Bradford branches of Workers Against Racism marched from Savile Town to Dewsbury. As we entered the town centre we were met by 200 white youths singing 'Rule Britannia' and chanting 'we are the whites'. They tried to attack the march, but were fiercely resisted.

Savile Town is an Asian ghetto. It was once a prosperous textile area with many wool mills; today it is a wasteland. Unemployment runs at 40 per cent and at more than 80 per cent among Asian youth. Gangs of white youths frequently abuse and intimidate residents. Asian school children are frequently attacked. Asian houses are broken into and racist slogans daubed on the walls and windows.

So far the Asian community has fought back alone. But it is time workers in West Yorkshire stood up for our brothers and sisters in the communities under siege. A good start would be a sea of trade unionists with banners outside Dewsbury Magistrates' Court on 6 September when Zafar Iqbal, Mohammed Safier and Mohammed Mahroof are due to appear.

Alison Lawrence
Leeds

The working class and the media

So, 'the working class lives!' (editorial, *the next step*, August). That may be fair enough as a physiological observation. But as a political analysis it leaves much to be desired. You seem to have forgotten that 'the working class lives' in the *real* world, totally dominated by the capitalist class. Workers are under a constant barrage of pro-capitalist ideas from the education system, the advertising business and – most importantly – from the mass media. *Of course* the left issue 'tirades against the media'. To do otherwise would be to ignore one of the most powerful weapons in the hands of the ruling class. Yet the RCP dismisses the idea that the media might have something to do with the Labour Party's decline as merely 'the apologetic analysis of the Labour leadership'. Your myopic sectarianism has scaled new heights.

Workers receive their ideas and information from television and the press. The BBC is a self-confessed arm of the state. 'Independent' television is about as independent as the Bank of England. Fleet Street is controlled by millionaire press barons. The only two papers which supported the Labour Party in the election – the *Mirror* and *Morning Star* – are both in decline, while the arch-Tory *Sun* gobbles up more and more working class readers. On top of this daily dose of reaction comes the special effort which big business is prepared to pull out at election time, culminating in Saatchi and Saatchi posters and £20m worth of Tory lies and slander. How can you suggest that this has no effect on working class consciousness?

Workers are being taught to accept the Tory system and its ideas. It's no accident that Labour's most devastating electoral defeat in years came in an election more dominated than ever by opinion polls and media smear campaigns. The labour movement simply cannot compete with this massive propaganda machine. The best we can do is to unite behind one daily paper and begin the process of exposing the Tory media's lies. The RCP's alternative of ignoring the impact of the media and sniping at the Labour Party can only help ensure a further decline in working class support for Labour's ideas. We will be left with a millenium of Tory rule. With the way they are savaging wages, the NHS etc, it will soon be physiologically inaccurate to claim that 'the working class lives'.

John Fowler
Clapham

the next step replies:

Under capitalism, the mass media reflects the interests of the capitalist class. That is inevitable. John Fowler's problem is that he assumes it to be equally inevitable that workers will accept the media view.

To argue that the labour movement 'simply cannot compete with this massive propaganda campaign' is to accept that revolution is impossible, and that workers will always be under the influence of bourgeois ideology. Our approach is very different. It is an insult to the working class to suggest that it believes whatever is in the *Sun* or *Daily Mail*. If that were so, how could John Fowler explain the contrast between the situation today and that of the early 'seventies? In 1972 and 1974, the gutter press were unanimous in condemning the planned miners' strikes and predicted that miners would 'vote No' to industrial action. But the miners struck and brought down the government. The fact that miners in the 'eighties seem to accept media views on the inevitability of closures and job losses does not mean that the working class is less intelligent today. Bourgeois ideas have resonance amongst workers because the union and Labour Party leaders have imbued the working class with a sense of capitalist reality. The politics of linking jobs and wages to profits and productivity, which lay behind the militancy of the 'seventies, leaves workers defenceless in the recession. The *Daily Mirror* and *Morning Star* have declined because the bureaucracy they represent 'simply cannot compete' with the capitalist system's need to attack the working class. Calls for the left to unite behind them – or the TUC's planned daily paper – only reinforce the politics of class collaboration within the labour movement.

***the next step* is the paper which can handle the arguments of the *Daily Express* and the *Morning Star*. The barrier facing us is not the competition from the capitalist media, but the still limited scope of our distribution network. The prerequisite of expanding it is getting more people selling *the next step* on their estates and in their workplaces. We are gratified by John Fowler's belief that our approach 'can only help ensure a further decline in support for Labour's ideas'. As for the 'millenium of Tory rule', the only guarantee against it is to join the fight for working class politics.**

'Sari squad' shows the way

I saw the television and newspaper reports of the 'sari squad' chaining themselves to Leon Brittan's house. They were wonderful! They were an example to all deportation campaigns, so many of which are just lifeless committees. A few years ago, I was involved in a campaign against the Home Office's threat to deport my aunt. Our committee never came up with any ideas as imaginative as the 'sari squad'. Most of the things we did were boring – and ineffective. There were some committed, angry people in the campaign. But the whole thing was run by some tired liberals who got us bogged down in the legal technicalities of my aunt's individual case. They wrote endless begging letters to right-wing local MPs, and refused to let us do anything 'provocative'. I am convinced that this approach put many people off. My aunt was eventually deported with little fuss. I know several similar campaigns which have been run since then, but my experience of our committee has made them unattractive to me.

The 'sari squad' and WAR have shown that campaigns against deportation don't have to be like this. Your fight against all immigration controls, and apparent willingness to do whatever is necessary to win, is exciting.

I think your success in involving white trade unionists, Asian women and everyone else, proves that your approach can work. Congratulations to the 'sari squad' and every success to WAR's fight for Afia Begum.

Shabana Alam
Nottingham

Massacre in Ciskei

In the early morning of Thursday 4 August, troops of the Ciskei security forces opened fire on hundreds of bus boycotters waiting to board a train in Mdantsane township near the Eastern Cape city of East London People fleeing across the veld were shot in the back. The local hospital reported five dead on arrival and 27 wounded. Eyewitnesses put the death toll as high as 15 with many more wounded. On the following Monday troops again opened fire on people waiting to board a train at Fort Jackson – number of dead and wounded unknown. In Britain the incidents passed unnoticed.

The shootings at Mdantsane happened on the 18th day of a bus boycott which has been a focus of popular resistance in the 'independent' Ciskei homeland. Workers commuting to factories in East London had been using trains and taxis instead of busses to avoid a 10 per cent increase in fares. The boycott is a time-honoured and often successful form of struggle in South Africa. Ciskei police refused to comment on the shootings 'because of a state of emergency' which had been imposed. But then little explanation can be expected from what has come to be known as one of the most murderous and corrupt arms of the South African apartheid regime.

In South Africa itself trade unionists have suffered a string of 'mysterious' and fatal car crashes. In March two organisers of the infant National Union of Mineworkers, Teboho Noko and Paul Leboea died in a crash near Welkom, Free State. A National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union organiser died along with his companion after a 'brake failure'. Black Municipal Workers Union President Joe Mavi died in a crash last year near Ventersburg, Free State. Reverand James Gaure of Mdantsane, a lifelong teetotaller, died in an accident in June last year after being elected Chairman of the Anti-Apartheid Border Council of Churches. A post-mortem claimed that he had over the legal limit of alcohol in his blood. The General Secretary of the African Food and Canning Workers' union found that three of his car tyres had been tampered with.

The silence of the international press over the Mdantsane massacre and the murder of black trade unionists shows that they are prepared to buy South Africa's new clean image. We must make sure they are not allowed to get away with it.

Moses Dube
Botswana

Labour evicts Chilean families

Lambeth council's Labour leader, Ted Knight, is a loud opponent of the Chilean junta. No doubt this month's tenth anniversary of Pincochet's coup will see Knight making fine speeches about democratic rights in Chile. Meanwhile, his council is busy denying the democratic rights of Chilean exiles in London.

There are many homeless Chilean families in London who have fled their country to escape Pinochet's terror. Our Springfield Tenants' Association in Lambeth has been helping some of them squat empty council flats on our estate. The local Tories have attacked us for aiding the Chileans. The leader of the Tory group on the council recently appeared in London's *Standard* demanding that I should be evicted from the estate. We don't expect anything else from the Tories; at least they're honest. But instead of defending the Chileans' right to live on Springfield, the Labour council has given in to the right-wing pressure. While Lambeth council's Housing Committee chair, Hazel Smith, has been soaking up publicity on the solidarity delegation to Nicaragua, the council has been quietly evicting Chilean families who have suffered terrible persecution at the hands of the junta. The few Chilean families who have been given legal tenancies on Springfield have, along with the black tenants, been put in the worst housing available.

The Springfield Tenant's Association are fighting to stop the evictions and expose the Labour council's hypocrisy. Along with Workers Against Racism, we will be staging public protests in support of the Chilean families' rights. And we intend to go on squatting them on our estate. We urge all workers who are serious about showing solidarity with the Chilean people to join us.

Terry Stewart,
Secretary
Springfield Tenants' Association

Decay in the valleys

South Wales has always been regarded by the Labour Party as the bedrock of its safe seats. But the bedrock is cracking. The Labour Party and the trade union leadership have always used the conditions of the South Wales working class as a basis of winning support. Their inability to do anything to improve these conditions over the last 60 years, particularly since the start of the recession, has caused a decline in Labour's support. The climax of Labourism in South Wales came in 1966 when they won 60 per cent of the vote. In the recent General Election its share slumped to 37 per cent.

Housing conditions in South Wales are appalling – not just in the 'dying' valleys. Rhondda's Labour council admitted in 1976 that one quarter of its houses were not fit to live in; it regarded the fact that half of them had an indoor toilet as an achievement.

Labour and the union leaders have allowed the workforce in the mines to shrink from 270 000 in the 1920s to 23 500 today. The steel industry has also been decimated. The trade union leaders prefer to negotiate with the bosses and the Tories rather than fight for jobs. The result is 17 per cent unemployment in the region and nearer 39 per cent in some areas.

Given the state the unions are in it is hardly surprising that bosses in South Wales are more confident than ever. In August at the Nova Knit company in the Rhymney Valley the bosses had the factory stripped of its machinery and made workers redundant while they were still on their holidays. With such a spineless leadership of the labour movement it is no wonder South Wales workers have deserted their traditional party.

Kevin Brookes
Cardiff

Vote Labour or else!

Before the General Election a motion came up at the trades council at which I am a delegate calling for support for the Labour Party. I argued against this on the grounds that the Labour Party's programme was anti-working class. This was reported to the TGWU regional secretary who has now sent the following letter to my branch secretary:

Dear Ms. Carey,

I have had raised with me the alleged stance by the 9/988 Branch delegate to the Leeds Trades Council in opposing and voting against a resolution re the Thatcher Government and the vital necessity of a return to a Labour administration.

The terms of the resolution requested that every Union member should actively work to secure the return of a Labour Government.

I am not only rather surprised, but I am concerned to have it said that a T.G.W.U. Branch opposed at a Trades Council such a resolution which was in line with the policy and spirit of all the Constitutional Committees of the Union declared prior to the General Election. I have to advise you that it is not acceptable for individual branches at Trades Councils to go directly against the stated policy of the Union and I would want this fact drawing to the attention of your membership.

Yours sincerely,
Michael J. Davey
REGIONAL SECRETARY

As a matter of fact my branch has no policy of voting Labour. And it's time the TGWU nationally adopted a policy of defending its members rather than supporting a party that consistently betrays their interests.

Ian Peart
Leeds

Activities ★ RCP ★ Meetings

Preparing for Power

FROM 16 TO 22 JULY more than 600 people attended the Revolutionary Communist Party's 'labour movement conference for the 'eighties'. Between Frank Richards' opening session on 'Marxism since 1945' and Judy Harrison's closing plenary 'And now lets prepare for power' there were more than 70 lectures, workshops and debates. It was an appropriate celebration of the Marx centenary and a very useful preparation for the struggles ahead.

Meetings

BIRMINGHAM
Wednesday 14 September 7.30 pm
Defend Qurdit Begum, Jujhar Singh – No Deportations!
Digbeth Civic Hall

SHEFFIELD
Wednesday 21 September 7.30 pm
Public Meeting
The carve up in Lebanon
Speaker: Inez Landa
Sheffield Centre Against Unemployment
Bridge Street

LEEDS
Thursday 22 September 7.30pm
Public Meeting
The National Health Service
Trade Union speakers
See local press for details

MANCHESTER
Thursday 29 September 7.30 pm
Public Meeting
Law and Order
Speaker: Alan Harding
The 'Millstone' Pub
Thomas Street, off Tibb Street

Irish Freedom Movement

LONDON
Thursday 15 September 7.30 pm
IFM Activists group meeting + Video – *The Longest War*

Thursday 29 September 7.30 pm
IFM Activists group meeting
All meetings at the 'Wheatsheaf' Pub
Rathbone Place, W1
(nearest tube: Goodge Street/ Tottenham Court Road)

LIVERPOOL
Tuesday 4 October 1.00 pm
Lobby Merseyside County Council
Make Merseyside a PTA-free zone!
Metropolitan House
Old Street

SHEFFIELD
Thursday 15 September 7.00 pm
IFM Activists group meeting
The 'Brown Cow' Pub
The Wicker

BIRMINGHAM
Monday 5 September +
Monday 19 September
IFM Activists group meetings
Phone 01-274 3951 for details

National speaking tour

10th Anniversary of the Chilean coup

COVENTRY
Wednesday 7 September 7.30pm
The Hare & Squirrel Pub
New Union Street

BIRMINGHAM
Tuesday 6 September 7.30pm
Digbeth Civic Hall
Digbeth

SHEFFIELD
Wednesday 7 September 7.30pm
Centre Against Unemployment
Bridge Street
Sheffield

MANCHESTER
Thursday 8 September 7.30pm
Britons Protection
50 Great Bridgewater Street, M1

BRADFORD
Thursday 8 September 7.30pm
Textile Hall
Westgate

LEEDS
Tuesday 6 September 7.30pm
Chapeltown Community Centre
Reginald Terrace
Leeds 7

LIVERPOOL
Thursday 8 September 7.30pm
The Dolphin Pub
Canning Place
L1

LONDON
Friday 9 September 7.30pm
Holborn Library
Theobalds Road
London WC1

GLASGOW
Friday 9 September 7.30pm
Woodside Hall
Glenfarg Street
Near St Georges Cross

Anti-imperialist solidarity: RCP pickets Chilean Naval Attache, London

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IMPERIALISM OUT OF CENTRAL AMERICA!

Demonstrate

10th Anniversary of the coup in Chile
London Sunday 11 September
12.30 Clerkenwell Green
Further information 01-274 3951

RCP
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