

Fight for the right to fight! p8,9.

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No 40 October 1983

20p

The softening
of the
Labour left
p17,18.

Britain... Malvinas

France... Chad

USA... Lebanon...



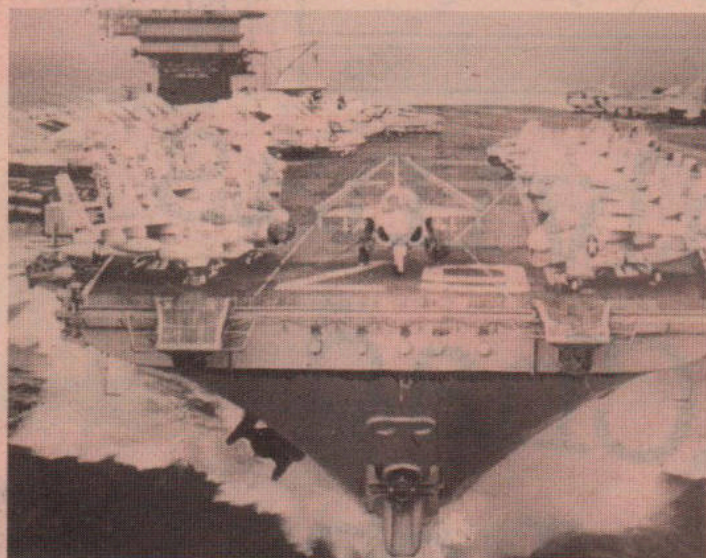
**Stop the
warmongers!**

the next step

No. 40 October 1983
monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

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12 A world at war

When Britain despatched its naval task force to reconquer the Malvinas last year, many commentators regarded this as an eccentric and irrational gesture — a throwback to the colonial past which was inappropriate to the modern world. Since then the deployment of Western expeditionary forces in the Third World has become almost routine.

Earlier this year the USA undertook massive military exercises in Central America in a clear warning to anti-imperialist forces in the area. Then France rushed paratroopers into Central Africa. And now the USA has sent its fleet to Lebanon and opened fire with its murderous artillery.

As the capitalist recession unleashes a new struggle to divide up the Third World, we look at the background to the conflict in Lebanon, and the results of war in Chad, and report our anti-imperialist activity on Latin America.

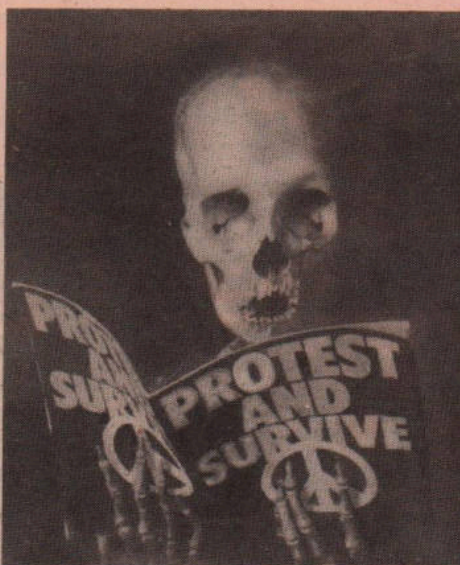
4 Racism
East End terror
Police frame-up
Fighting immigration controls

7 Unemployment
Policing the unemployed in Glasgow
Welfare benefits — the axe falls

8 Labour movement
Setback at Britains
Fight for the right to fight
Battle for NHS jobs begins
Hindle Gears — the legal limits
Nigg strike — a narrow victory



10 Ireland
Keeping the flag flying
Supergrasses are not cricket



15 CND and British militarism
The British peace movement took a hammering in 'the nuclear election'. In response CND has adopted the 'freeze' slogan for its 22 October demonstration. This shows that it is now prepared to accept Polaris in the hope that Cruise and Trident will be abandoned.



17 British politics
After Labour's collapse in June what is the future of the British left? We look at the perspectives of Peter Hain and Ken Livingstone, Militant MPs David Nellist and Terry Fields. And we ask — has the Communist Party reached the end of the British road?

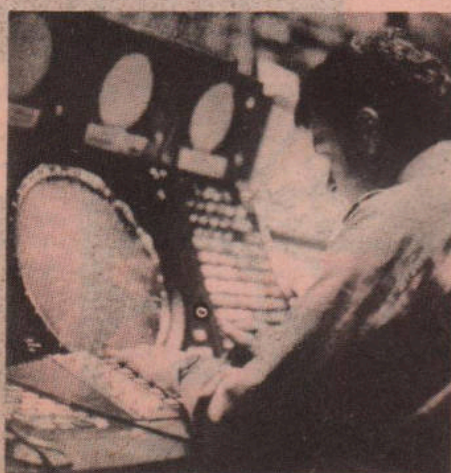
20 Reviews
Women: all in it together?
The personal and the political
A German tragedy
Can General Zia survive?
Missile madness

22 Letters

23 Activities

A series of public discussions on international flashpoints

The origins of World War Three



The world's superpowers are rearming for a new carve-up of the Third World. The USA raises the Soviet bogey to distract attention from conflicts within the Western alliance. The lights are going out all over the world. If we don't stop the capitalist powers they will take the planet with them in their unquenchable thirst for profits.

- 1 The USA, the Soviet Union and the collapse of NATO**
- 2 The scramble for the Middle East**
- 3 The threat to the USA in Latin America**
- 4 British imperialism — senile but vicious**

LONDON

Thursdays, starting 13 October, at 7.30pm, University of London Union, Malet Street WC1.

GLASGOW

Tuesday 18 October, then every Wednesday, starting 26 October, at 7.30pm, Patrick Burgh Hall, Burgh Hall Street, Partick, Glasgow G11 (near Partick station).

BIRMINGHAM

Tuesdays, starting 18 October, at 7.30pm, Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth Street.

SHEFFIELD

Tuesdays, starting 11 October at 7.30pm, Sheffield Polytechnic Students' Union, Conference room.

the next step

War clouds shroud KAL 007

Throughout September the tragic end of the Korean jumbo jet shot down over the sea of Japan by the Soviet Union has dominated the world's media. Despite all the press and television coverage, nobody will ever know the true story behind this controversial incident. Both Western and Soviet versions are riddled with inconsistencies. But the chain of events that followed the disaster reveals disturbing trends towards war.

Western newspapers worked themselves into a frenzy about the 'Soviet outrage'. American President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Thatcher led the chorus of hysteria in Washington and London. But their concern for human life is highly selective. When Israeli jets shot down a Libyan Boeing 727 in 1973 leading to the loss of more than one hundred lives, the Western response was muted. Nor are the politicians and pundits of Washington or London much concerned about the thousands of lives lost as a result of imperialist interference in Lebanon, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Angola or Mozambique.

The current wave of moral indignation is particularly hypocritical because it is the United States that is responsible for initiating and building up the war of intelligence that led to the destruction of KAL 007. For decades the American intelligence services have used their technological superiority to keep the Soviet Union under surveillance. On the night of the Korean airline tragedy an American RC-135 type spy plane was operating on the same flight path. However great the callousness and stupidity of the Soviet bureaucracy, its attack on the Korean plane was a defensive reaction to systematic provocation by American spy planes.

While confusion remains over who did what during the hours leading up to the demise of the Korean jet, there can be no mystery about who are the main beneficiaries of the incident. The imperialist powers have been able to use it to the full to legitimise their rearmament programmes. *The Times* commented on the immediate advantages to US warmongering around the world:

'For instance, who will resist the President's plans to deploy the MX missile and modernise the US nuclear defences when the adversary has shown itself capable of such cynical brutality? Will Congress sustain its hostility to the administration's policy in Central America? It was significant that a day after the disaster President Reagan announced he was dispatching 4000 more troops to the eastern Mediterranean to back up the beleaguered US peace keeping contingent in Beirut. Yet so far not a word of protest has been heard.'

While the Korean jet got all the publicity, behind the scenes the United States stepped up its involvement in the Middle East and Central America. As the Sixth Fleet massed off the Lebanese coast and began shelling villages in the Chouf mountains above Beirut the last thing on Reagan's mind was saving human lives.

The rising tension between the USA and the Soviet Union distracts attention from the real dynamic towards a new world war. The United States is in the middle of the most comprehensive rearmament programme in history. Since 1980 defence spending has increased by 57 per cent, to reach a staggering \$209 billion in 1983. The Pentagon's outlay on arms is expected to result in a defence budget of \$425 billion by 1988.

The USA's ambitious rearmament programme is the result of careful calculations by government experts in Washington. Rearmament is essential to stall the decline of American global power. American capitalism can no longer sustain its role as the guarantor of imperialist relations around the world. The stagnation of the US economy in recent years has rendered it vulnerable to competition from the more dynamic capitalist economies. Growing international rivalries reveal that the rise of Japanese and European imperialism over the past decade has been at the expense of the USA.

Washington can no longer exercise control over the world economy. Rearmament is part of a complex of policies designed to compensate for economic decline through diplomatic and military means. By flexing its military muscle the USA hopes to keep its imperialist rivals in check. America justifies its rearmament programme by the need to contain the Soviet threat.

That real tensions exist between Washington and Moscow is indisputable. But containing the so-called Soviet threat is by no means the most important preoccupation of American military strategists. Most of the increases in military spending have not been on nuclear arms. Next year only 10 per cent of the Pentagon's budget will go to strategic nuclear weapons. Most of the \$274 billion budget is earmarked for 'general purpose' forces – the most substantial allocations are to the Rapid Deployment Force and the navy.

The Rapid Deployment Force was set up in the wake of the Iranian hostage crisis to provide the USA with a highly mobile hit squad to deal with trouble in the region of the Gulf. From its original modest conception it has grown into an army 400 000 strong. The extension of the navy has been paralleled by the proliferation of bases in Africa and the Middle East. Even a cursory examination shows that these measures are primarily designed to bolster America's global power. They enable US forces and their proxies to fight limited wars in backward capitalist countries. It is not the Soviet menace but Lebanon and Libya, Iran and Iraq, Central America and Africa that motivate the arms build-up in Washington.

The growth of American military power is also a warning to its imperialist rivals in Europe and Japan. Bitter competition has exposed the fragmentation of the

imperialist world order. The last annual report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies warned that 'in 1982, the United States and Western Europe managed to split themselves apart spectacularly, and all that Moscow had to do was to sit back and benefit'. The world crisis of capitalism has unleashed forces that compel every imperialist power to rearm. According to long-established capitalist traditions, economic conflict will be resolved, not in the market place, but in the arena of war.

Nor is America travelling the road to war alone. In the short run the USA has the most to gain by militarising economic relations. But all the imperialist powers are committed to rearmament. In France the Mitterand regime has just embarked on a five-year defence programme which calls for a rise in defence spending of two per cent a year in real terms. French rearmament is explicitly designed to back up its claims to a share of the world market. In a number of global flash-points – Chad, Lebanon and Iran – representatives of Reagan and Mitterand have already been at one another's throats. Whilst the USA has been arming Iran, France has 'lent' Super Etendards equipped with Exocet missiles to Iraq. While French commentators berate Yankee militarists, articles in the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* have been denouncing the greed of French arms salesmen. In Africa rivalries are even more intense. As the *New Statesman* put it, 'French-American rivalry in Africa is becoming as much of a threat to peace and stability on the continent as East-West tensions' (16 September).

Behind the propaganda war against the Soviet Union lies the more mundane struggle to redefine the world. The main protagonists in the drama are neither Moscow nor Washington but a host of imperialist powers desperate to overcome the disastrous consequences of the world recession.

The orchestrated campaign against the Soviet Union legitimises the war plans of contending imperialist rivals. It is also a powerful ideological device for bolstering up domestic consensus. Denunciations of the Soviet threat serve to discredit those who would oppose the capitalist system. Anti-communism is directed at militants, aiming to isolate them from the rest of the working class. Shortly after the Korean airline episode a press campaign against Arthur Scargill's criticisms of Solidarity overshadowed proceedings at the annual TUC conference. The media stir up anti-communism to create a climate where the witch-hunting projects of the capitalist class can operate to forge a stronger national consensus.

The Cold War campaign has had considerable impact. Most workers accept the media version of the Korean airline tragedy. At the same time, scare stories about 'red moles' in industry have taken their toll. Many militants feel the heat of reaction and wonder when their

turn will come. Red-baiting is a powerful weapon in the hands of bosses determined to crush shopfloor opposition.

The establishment's anti-working class propaganda is strengthened by the dismal record of the Soviet bureaucracy. But the main blame lies with the British left. The left in Britain has never seriously fought for an internationalist foreign policy. It has often criticised the excessive brutality of British militarism abroad, but it has no tradition of serious campaigning against British imperialism. Successive British governments have pursued the ruthless plunder of Third World countries with little domestic opposition. In recent years the British war-machine has been able to pursue its objectives in Ireland and the Malvinas – generally with the tacit approval of the left.

Peace movements like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament have restricted their horizons to opposing particular sorts of nuclear weapons. They have ignored the more profound problems of British imperialism and British militarism. Indeed they have explicitly accepted the point of view that the pursuit of British non-nuclear defence is a worthy enterprise. Since the aggression of British imperialism mainly takes a non-nuclear form, CND and its followers have kept their peace.

Cold War propaganda and anti-communism find a resonance amongst workers because the ruling class is allowed to monopolise the sphere of foreign policy. The leaders of the labour movement are always ready to follow the Tories in denouncing the Soviet Union or Argentina or the IRA. Thus their enemies are widely accepted as enemies of the entire nation. We have no choice but to fight for a distinctive working class foreign policy. This is not because we are obsessed by some abstract principle of internationalism. It is essential if we are to thwart the drive towards war. The overseas adventures of British, American and French armies can only lead the world towards the abyss. The relentless drive for profits is pushing the major powers closer to a conflagration which could jeopardise the survival of humanity.

The fight against British imperialism will not only prevent the wars of the future. It will also expose Cold War ideology and destroy the crippling consensus that thrives under the banner of the Union Jack. Our enemy is not to be found abroad. The best way to counter the imperialist war drive is by popularising anti-imperialist politics in the working class. For us there is no Britain to defend. On one side there is the British ruling class whose remorseless drive for profits leads to the occupation of Ireland, war in the Malvinas and support for the racist regime in South Africa. On the other side there is the working class, battered by the recession. The defence of our class interests requires the defeat of our class enemies at home.

Bricks and bottles, knives and bombs Catalogue of terror

OVER THE PAST MONTH the black community in East London has been subjected to a barrage of racist violence. While local GLC-funded monitoring groups have been busy keeping their files up to date, East London Workers Against Racism has been out on the streets organising physical defence against racist attacks.

■ In early September, Asian medical student Dipak Amin was set upon by three skinheads near Brick Lane in Shoreditch. Dipak suffered a fractured spine leaving him temporarily paralysed, received multiple stab wounds to his face and body and had the initials 'NF' carved into his wrists. There was outrage in the local community when the police suggested that the act was a straightforward case of robbery. Detective Sergeant Frank Monti dared to venture that 'it may have a racial motive' but then went on to speculate about Dipak carving the initials 'NF' himself!

■ Ashof Ali and his family have lived under siege ever since they moved into their GLC flat in East India Dock. Cricket balls and bricks are the weapons used to terrorise the seven children. The latest attack was more serious. A large gas cylinder full of highly inflammable paint remover smashed through a window into a bedroom where three of the children were sleeping. It exploded on the wall over the bed. One of the children was hospitalised as a result. Many Asian families on the estate will not open their doors after dark for fear of being attacked by marauding bands of white youths. Just after the attempted firebombing of the Ali family, a young Bengali boy was chased into the road by a white youth and badly injured by a passing car. The estate is covered in racist graffiti - 'KILL ASIANS, NF' and 'THIS IS NOT A ZOO'.

■ Amie Jeng, Shegun Faponele and their 14-month-old daughter Donna narrowly escaped death recently when a petrol-soaked towel was pushed through the letterbox of their flat in Bow and set alight. The family awoke in the early hours of the morning to find the fire spreading down the passage. Their front door was more or less burnt down, the curtains destroyed, and the carpet badly damaged.

■ When Ali Armuss and his family moved into their flat in Mile End, they discovered that the racists had got there before them. Cans of paint had been thrown over the walls and the rooms daubed with painted slogans - 'PAKIS OUT - NF'. Other flats and houses recently allocated to Asian families have also been smashed up with axes and defaced with graffiti and National Front stickers - 'PUT WHITES FIRST'.

Monitoring mania

Several organisations who have put themselves forward as the vanguard of the anti-racist struggle in East London have been notable by their lack of response to the latest upsurge of racist attacks.

Tower Hamlets Association for Racial Justice - a 'radical' breakaway from the local Commission for Racial Equality - is the archetypal umbrella organisation. It provides a cover for a plethora of religious and labour movement bodies and con-

cerned individuals to express outrage at the scale of racist attacks, while they do nothing in practice to combat them. After years of 'monitoring', THARJ has concluded that both the local council and the GLC have operated a deliberate policy of ghettoising Asians in the oldest, most run-down estates in the borough while the better estates have been reserved exclusively for whites. THARJ's 'plan of action' in response to the increase in racist attacks is to support the creation of yet another committee - the GLC's showpiece 'Race and Housing Action Team' - whose role will again be to monitor, investigate and report. THARJ's answer to racial harassment is to 'support' the victims after the attack, to visit them, build up their 'confidence' and assist where appropriate with rehousing.

Another local GLC-funded organisation is the Community Alliance for Police Accountability which is a vehicle for the Labour left's campaign to make the police accountable to the community. CAPA devotes all its resources to monitoring racist attacks and 'police over-reaction'. It wants control of the police force, an independent complaints procedure, an independent prosecution system, dismissal from the police force for racist behaviour, and prosecution of racists when there is 'sufficient evidence' to get a conviction. CAPA believes that the police have a role to play in combatting racism and that the courts can be expected to defend the victims of racist attacks.

For workers defence

The difference between radical community organisations like THARJ and CAPA and East London Workers Against Racism is that unlike them, we do not look to the institutions of the state to defend blacks against racist attacks. We organise workers to take direct action in their defence. This means setting up groups of supporters who are prepared to come out and patrol the streets and housing estates in areas where the racists are active.

In Tower Hamlets, we have been sitting in with families who are experiencing constant harassment and patrolling the estates to prevent attacks. We have also been able to persuade local tenants to join us.

Three weeks after Amie Jeng was firebombed, she was still waiting for the council to replace her door. As soon as she contacted ELWAR we brought her along to a meeting of more than 300 local black people where Ken Livingstone, Paul Boateng and representatives from the GLC and Tower Hamlets housing departments were defending their housing record in East London. We managed to put them on the spot and embarrass them into taking immediate action to move Amie out of her burnt-out flat into a newer house nearby.

Only direct action against the racists can defend black people against attack. While THARJ and CAPA pursue the impossible task of winning the state to the side of the working class, ELWAR is mobilising workers to take control of their own defence.

Eileen McEvoy

For further information phone Kirk Williams 01-274 3951 or write to ELWAR, Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.



Narrow escape: Amie Jeng and baby outside firebombed flat

Frame-up

BLACK YOUTH in Hackney and Stoke Newington have been in the front line of police terror for many years now. On Saturday 10 September 18-year-old Terry Vital from Clapton became one of its most recent victims.

At about 9.30pm Terry was standing with his friend Errol Myers outside the Finsbury Park Tavern on Seven Sisters Road, waiting for a bus to Stoke Newington. They were approached by two police officers who asked for their names and addresses, which they gave. The police then asked to search the youths. Errol complied, Terry refused. The next moment, Terry was being bundled into a police van which had drawn up alongside the footpath. When he asked why he was being arrested he was told 'to be searched at the police station'.

Terry was taken to Holloway Road police station; the arresting officers told the desk sergeant that he was 'a suspected drug character'. The two arresting officers took Terry into another room and began to abuse him, calling him a 'cunt' and a 'flash bastard'. When Terry again refused to be searched one of the officers (N431) stood behind him, put his arms around his neck and kicked the back of his legs so that he fell back on to the floor. The other officer (N540) grabbed his legs and started kicking him.

Terry was soon lying in a pool of blood after being punched in the face by the officer holding his neck. Terry's left eye was badly cut and swollen and needed hospital treatment. The two police officers then began ripping his possessions from his pockets and in the process produced a black lock-knife which Terry had never seen before. The police then pulled down Terry's trousers and underpants and made him stand up. At this point the sergeant (N23) walked into the room, saw the pool of blood and Terry's badly

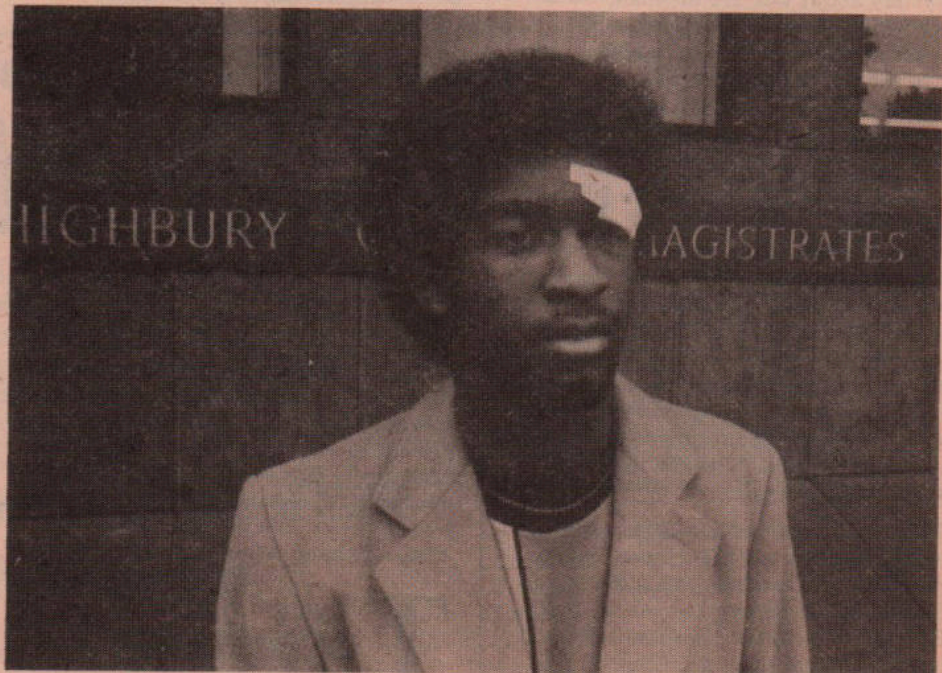
damaged face and in a well-rehearsed tone exclaimed, 'Don't tell me, he knocked his head on the chair'.

After spending an hour in the cells Terry received a visit from a doctor who tried to persuade him to have the deep cut over his eye stitched up. Terry refused. Before he was released he was subjected to further taunts and threats from the police. They told him not to bother complaining about his damaged eye. Just before he left the police station at 12.55am Terry was told to sign a paper listing his possessions; it contained the knife the police had planted on him. Terry refused.

The following Monday Terry appeared in Highbury Magistrates Court charged with 'possession of an offensive weapon'. He pleaded 'not guilty' and asked for a Crown Court hearing in front of a judge and jury. The hearing date has not yet been arranged. Terry, who works as a conductor for London Transport and is a member of the TGWU, told WAR members who went to court with him:

'Every Saturday night on my way home from my sister's I get harassed by the police. Once I was stopped and searched for "suspicious walking" - I was just running down the road to the shop. So this time I refused. I'm really angry about what happened to me that night - especially the frame-up. The police behaved like animals.'

Workers Against Racism is organising a legal and public campaign for Terry. The police in the Hackney and Stoke Newington area have got away with their reign of terror for far too long: we'll make sure that they don't get away with it this time. We will be asking for full backing from the TGWU in support of Terry and organising black and white workers in East London to demonstrate their opposition to police brutality and frame-ups. POLICE OFF OUR BACKS!



Terry Vital after his encounter with British justice

License to terrorise

Last month immigration police made a series of dawn raids on the homes of Asian families in the south of England in an unsuccessful bid to track down 20-year-old Afia Begum and her baby daughter who are scheduled for deportation to Bangladesh. The state's remorseless hunt for Afia Begum is a vivid illustration of the plight of black people in Britain today. Workers Against Racism has been supporting Afia Begum's fight to stay in Britain since she received the first of her four removal orders, more than 12 months ago. She has been declared an illegal immigrant because shortly after getting entry clearance to join her husband in January 1982 he was killed in a slum tenement fire in Brick Lane in London's East End. For Workers Against Racism the cause of Afia Begum and thousands of other immigrants who face similar measures of state repression is a vital issue for the labour movement.

EARLY ON Thursday 1 September, immigration officers swooped on two Indian restaurants in Chatham, Kent and another restaurant and family home in Ipswich. In Ipswich they forced their way in, interrogated the occupants and made thorough searches. In Chatham they arrested an Asian man 'on suspicion of being an illegal immigrant'. Twenty-one-year-old Saleh Ahmed, who was visiting his friend Israil Miah at his restaurant, was held for eight hours at Chatham police station. He was detained because he could not produce his passport. The police would not accept his medical or insurance cards as proof of identification.

Hunting down 'illegal immigrants' is widely accepted as a legitimate occupation for the police. It is simply another aspect of a broadening offensive against black people conducted under the full authority of the immigration laws.

PASSPORT RAIDS have become commonplace. Shortly before the General Election the Home Office admitted a series of major police operations over the previous nine months:

□ September 1982 - 18 people questioned in a raid on a West London hotel; two 'illegal entrants', two 'overstayers', four breaches of work permit conditions. Result - six prosecutions and one deportation.

□ January 1983 - 30 homes raided in the London area and 35 people interrogated; eight 'illegal entrants', 12 'overstayers', four working in breach of



Guess why these two brothers, pictured here with their mother and grandmother, won a reprieve from deportation. They were born in Barbados and neither their parents nor grandparents were born in Britain. But, as their grandma put it, they were 'British through and through', coming from 'a long line of tea planters and missionaries'. You can't get more British than that.

conditions. Result - 15 prosecutions, five deportations.

□ April 1983 - eight people questioned in raids in Birmingham; two 'overstayers', two working in breach of conditions. Result - one prosecution, three deportations (Hansard, 11 May).

PASSPORT CHECKS are now a widely implemented means of picking up 'illegal immigrants'. A survey recently conducted by Oldham Council for Racial Equality revealed that black people are often expected to produce passports to prove their immigration status when registering with a family doctor, attending hospital, signing on for social security or unemployment benefit, getting on the housing list, or enrolling at school or college. The DHSS was found to be a particularly important agency in enforcing race checks - they were reported in 63 of the 95 areas surveyed.

DEPORTATIONS are the next stage after 'illegal immigrants' are detected. In the last 12 months 1130 people have been rounded up as 'illegals' - many as a result of the use of checks, snoopers and informers. In the same period a total of 1860 people - including 'overstayers' and others - were ordered to be deported (Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 28 August 1983). If Tory immigration minister David Waddington's new proposals to restrict access to immigration appeals are implemented, the number of deportations is likely to increase dramatically over the next year.

MASS DEPORTATIONS are now threat-

ened for groups of workers brought into Britain when their labour was required, but who are no longer needed now that mass unemployment has created a ready pool of cheap labour. The National Health Service leads the way. Nurses recruited from Malaysia, Hong Kong, Africa and the Caribbean by the Newham Health District in East London are being sacked once they have finished their training. This leads to the denial of work permits from the Home Office and the expulsion of the nurses from the country after three years super-exploitation as students. So far up to 40 nurses have been affected and 200 more are threatened over the next three years. At the other end of the NHS hierarchy, doctors' organisations have united to demand the repatriation of overseas doctors and even stricter curbs on further entry into Britain.

The use of immigration regulations as a means of policing every aspect of the life of black people is backed up by press campaigns which portray young blacks as a menace to the decent values of British society. At the height of this summer's viciously reactionary media onslaught on gays (as child molesters), communists (as 'moles' in industry) and deviants of every sort, blacks were once again labelled as violent criminals. A street corner squabble over a few pence between black and white children in Brixton, during which a baby was alleged to have been threatened, was elevated into a national issue. It was featured in prime time television news slots and the pages of the tabloids. A robbery in South London in which two men 'with Rastafarian hair styles' were said to have slashed a baby prompted an orgy of press abuse of 'black muggers'.

The police took advantage of the furore to step up their surveillance of black ghettos under the cover of 'neighbourhood watch' programmes and specially designed youth training schemes. Meanwhile, (as documented opposite), racists official and unofficial went on the rampage.

Why does Workers Against Racism make such an issue of opposition to immigration controls? For four reasons:

TO EXPOSE the racist brutality behind the British state's public image of concern for racial harmony and justice. Tory Home Secretary Leon Brittan recently visited a Bradford mosque to proclaim his affection for black people. His immigration hatchet man Waddington announced only last month that the government is committed to 'a racially fair and just society in which black people have a sense of belonging to Britain with a common loyalty to Queen and country'. The reality of Britain's racist laws is the broken families of the 18 000 people in the Indian subcontinent awaiting a decision on settlement applications, the broken livelihoods of Newham's Asian nurses, the broken-down doors of Afia Begum's friends and relatives, and the broken bones of countless victims of police harassment and racial attacks.

TO CHALLENGE the complicity of the official labour movement in immigration regulations, and its complacency in the face of intensifying racial strife within the working class. Two years ago the TUC approved a 'black workers' charter' aimed at encouraging unions to take limited steps to cater for their black members. But even token measures like courses on race relations and minority language leaflets proved too much for most unions. Two years later more than half the unions affiliated to the TUC failed to reply to a questionnaire on progress along the lines of the charter. Only a dozen white collar unions had established special committees or conferences to consider the issue of racism in the workplace. Despite the fact that 60 per cent of all black workers are trade unionists only a handful of unions have black officials. Yet discrimination against black workers in employment in car factories, engineering works, local government manual departments and other sectors remains rife.

While the TUC condones racism in its own ranks, the Labour Party approves the operation of immigration controls at a national level. Labour fought the General Election on a manifesto which declared that 'we accept the need for immigration controls'. Left-winger Peter Hain in his post-election analysis indicates that a Labour government of the future would interpret the existing racist rules 'in a liberal manner' until it had time to proceed with 'the lengthy business of repealing and replacing' the legislation. The right of capitalist Britain to regulate the movements of the working class is unquestioned. As long as Labour fails to question that right it will be unable to defend black people against state repression or protect the labour movement from the damaging consequences of racial divisions.

TO ALERT active workers to the need to take a stand in defence of the rights of black people as a declaration of class solidarity against the capitalist state. In the recession the state leads the capitalist attack against the working class on all fronts. New legislation deprives trade unionists of long established rights; the police and the courts enforce the employers' interests on picket lines and the army stands by to deal with any more serious threat to the establishment. Every important struggle of the working class - for better wages or conditions, for women's rights or in solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles - soon comes into confrontation with the state. The black community in Britain has been singled out as the first target for the increasingly coercive exercise of state power by an increasingly desperate ruling class. Hence it is of vital importance for the interests of the working class as a whole that militants respond by making the issue of racism their top priority too.

TO FORGE working class unity against the capitalist offensive. The ruling class foments racial divisions in the working class to its own advantage. As long as workers blame blacks rather than the bosses for unemployment, bad housing and poverty, their system is safe. The capitalists can make sure that a divided working class cannot resist the measures of repression and austerity they need to enforce to resolve their crisis at our expense. When workers come together and reject those who point the finger at black people as the cause of the problems of British society, the working class will be well on the way to resolving them at the expense of the real culprit - the capitalist class.

The labour movement will only succeed in uniting the working class against the capitalist offensive when it takes up the fight against the use of immigration controls against black people. That is why Workers Against Racism demands your support for the campaign against the deportation of Afia Begum.

Zaro Costello



No race checks on the dole!

Join WAR's campaign to wreck the government's new scheme to harass black claimants. Order the WAR video and invite a speaker for your trade union branch, youth club or college.

See WAR in action ■ fighting deportations and police harassment ■ organising against the checks and racist attacks ■ building solidarity with black workers on strike.

Full colour video ■ 33 mins ■ VHS ■ £5 to hire from Workers Against Racism BM WAR London WC1 3XX Phone 01-274 3951 for further details.

WAR Video

Fascist win in France

ON 11 SEPTEMBER the socialist administration of the small town of Dreux was defeated by a right-wing slate which included members of the fascist National Front Party. This town, close to Paris, now has a fascist politician in charge of public security. The right-wing slate ousted the left by making racism the main issue of the election campaign.

Blaming the right

The defeat at Dreux was a stunning blow to the ruling Government coalition of Socialist and Communist parties. In 1977 the municipality elected a socialist administration and the new mayor Francoise Gaspard emerged as a symbol of the future hope of socialism. Six years later many of the workers who elected Gaspard switched their vote to the French National Front. So what went wrong?

The leadership of the Socialist (PS) and Communist (PCF) parties have been quick to blame the leading right-wing parties, the Gaullist Rally for the Republic (RPR) and the centrist Union for French Democracy (UDF) for uniting with the fascists. In a major speech on 14 September the leader of PCF accused the Gaullists of coming from the same family as the fascists. But condemnations of the right avoid the crucial question — why did thousands of workers switch their votes from the left to the National Front?

Racism in France has been on the increase for many years. More than 4.5 million immigrants have faced a campaign of hatred from virtually all sections of French society. Racist violence has become an everyday feature of life in the cities of Paris, Marseilles and Lyons. Armed racist thugs regularly attack groups of immigrants — sometimes with the approval of the local police. The response of left-wing parties to these attacks goes a long way towards explaining what happened at Dreux.

Racism and the French left

Throughout the past decade the policies of the PS and the PCF have strengthened nationalism in the working class. The left has constantly sought to instill a sense of popular patriotism into its rank and file. It aimed to appeal to all classes in an effort to win away the electoral base of the right. This strategy has made French chauvinism respectable in the working class. The PCF in particular has gone out of its way to popularise its own brand of militant nationalism. Thus in January 1981 the PCF sought to reverse its electoral decline by launching an anti-immigration campaign. Party chief Georges Marchais marched at the head of demonstrations against immigrant workers in Vitry. The local communist mayor took the initiative of bulldozing down a hostel occupied by immigrant workers.

This virulent anti-immigration campaign is not typical of the approach of the left. Reformist politicians understand that a racial explosion would benefit primarily the right-wing parties. Thus the left has tended to combine anti-racist rhetoric with anti-immigrant action. This mixture is well illustrated in a major policy document of the PCF. On the one hand it claims to defend immigrants; on the other it argues that 'the defence of these (immigrant) workers does not at all mean that we favour the arrival of new immigrants in France' (*Cahiers de Communisme*, February 1979).

In reality this opposition to immigration directly contradicts the defence of immigrant workers — indeed it implicitly portrays them as a problem. Instead of fighting for the free movement of all workers and for proletarian solidarity, the PCF gives the French state the green light to interfere in the life of the working

class. This divisive approach legitimises police harassment of immigrant workers and fans the flames of chauvinism.

The left's anti-racist posture is very fragile. In general it goes along with popular prejudice and labels the victims of racial oppression as the cause of racial tensions. Thus when earlier this year immigrant car workers struck against their racist employers the Socialist Government denounced 'the dark force of Islam' behind the strike. In Dreux Socialist politicians blamed immigrants for the existence of racism. Before the election, Mayor Gaspard identified immigrant crime as her main concern. She commented: 'You see, about thirty of these thugs is all you need to threaten to lose the municipality' (*Le Monde*, 8 September 1983).

No doubt Gaspard sees herself as anti-racist. But by going along with the view that immigrants are a problem she goes along with the criminalisation of immigrant workers. Politicians like Gaspard open the door to the fascists. The French National Front (NF) finds a resonance for its programme of repatriation because workers have already been educated to see immigrants as 'scroungers', 'criminals' and a threat to their economic security. The policies of the NF are simply an extension of the existing practice of immigration control. Their slogan 'Two million unemployed. Two million immigrant workers' says loud and clear what the socialists dare only whisper behind closed doors.

How not to fight racism

The restrained chauvinism of the PS and the PCF is no match for the more coherent racism of the right. In the March local elections the race issue dominated the campaign in many parts of France. The left strategy of ignoring racist propaganda did not work — many PS and PCF strongholds fell to the right-wing parties. Nor did the issue of race disappear after the election. Racist incidents mounted and the Mitterand Government was forced to take a stand on the issue.

The response of the left to these disturbing developments was not to launch a fight against racism, but to join the anti-immigration lobby and demonstrate that it too was patriotic. During July and August state harassment of immigrants was stepped up. As black tourists from Britain discovered, a colour-bar was implemented around French frontier posts. The immigration minister Georgina Dufoix announced that the Government had decided to expel most of the 3500 illegal immigrants in French prisons.

Four days before the first round of the municipal elections in Dreux, the Mitterand administration announced a comprehensive package of anti-immigration proposals. Socialist politicians boasted that the new measures would stamp out the employment of illegal immigrant labour. Public attention was drawn to new measures which allowed for the swift expulsion of immigrants — with no recourse to appeal.

The disastrous results of the first round of the Dreux election precipitated a panic atmosphere in the left camp. On 6 September PCF leader Marchais issued a statement to the electorate of Dreux. Pointing to the new government-sponsored anti-immigration package he argued that 'the recent measures taken by the Government constitute the first step for solving the serious problem' (*Le Monde*, 7 September 1983). The rest of the left trooped into Dreux — not to fight racism but to denounce the fascist National Front. A left-wing rally uniting PS politicians with a range of celebrities including the leader of the radical left LCR (the French section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth



Türken raus!

AFTER 13 months in police custody, Turkish immigrant KEMAL ALTUN escaped deportation by the German immigration authorities. On Tuesday 30 August, the 23-year-old former leader of the banned Turkish Revolutionary Student Group hurled himself to his death from a sixth-floor window at the Berlin courthouse where his case was being heard.

The tragic death of Kemal Altun unleashed a furore in Germany. Ten thousand people took to the streets of Berlin in a spontaneous protest. The Social Democrats accused the Christian Democrat Government of giving more credence to the Turkish military dictators than to its democratic opponents. But their denunciations of right-wing Minister of the Interior Friedrich Zimmermann for his harsh policy towards foreigners are sheer hypocrisy. The Christian Democrats are merely continuing the course charted by their social democratic predecessors.

Behind the shock-horror headlines that greeted Kemal Altun's death, the German authorities are pursuing a relentless drive against all foreigners. Welcomed in the 'sixties, when cheap labour was needed for the booming German economy, they have now become the scapegoat for rising crime and unemployment. Foreign workers who were recruited in their millions to work in the land of the economic miracle are now being offered £2500 for each adult and £350 for each child and a one-way ticket home.

The government has promised to reduce

the number of foreigners by half, to two million in the next five years. To leave no doubt about its intentions, immigration police have picked up dozens of 'illegal' Filipino workers from their homes and workplaces and put them on planes within hours.

Turkish workers, who make up a third of Germany's 4.5 million immigrant population, have been singled out for special attention. Dawn raids in the Turkish ghettos of Berlin, Frankfurt and other major cities have become routine. Until recently Germany was a magnet for political refugees. But in March 1983 the Federal Constitutional Court ruled that the right to asylum had 'no fundamental priority over the duty to extradite'. By August the number of applicants seeking asylum had dropped from 108 000 in 1980 to 11 400.

The case of Kemal Altun illustrates the government's determination to meet extradition requests from Turkey. Now, refugees are only guaranteed asylum if they are facing the death penalty. As in Kemal Altun's case, the Turkish authorities are now withdrawing serious charges against political opponents to ensure immediate extradition.

Immigrant workers are facing daily attacks. They must not be left to fight alone. Until the labour movement allies itself with them against their common enemy it will be incapable of defending itself against the attacks to come.

Bernard Braun

International) invoked the lessons of Nazi Germany. Two days later Dreux became the first French town with a fascist head of public security.

To the bitter end the French left refused to take up the racist challenge. Its abstract denunciations of fascism meant nothing to people who were concerned with the pressing problems of unemployment, inflation and economic insecurity. Those who voted for the NF did not vote for the restoration of Vichy France under the Third Reich. The NF presented a bolder, more decisive and a far more logical version of the message they have been hearing from their old parties.

A bitter lesson

The responsibility for the fascist victory at Dreux lies with the French left. For years the PCF and PS have peddled a cheap radical variety of chauvinism. They have now discovered that the right is far better at playing the chauvinist game.

Dreux highlights the dangers facing the French working class, particularly its immigrant section. Racism is so deeply embedded in French society that even the official labour movement is imbued

with it. As a result immigrant workers have become isolated — now they bear the brunt of the capitalists' offensive.

The fact that immigration could become the number one issue at a time of mass unemployment and reduction of living standards indicates the political disarray of the French labour movement. Instead of resisting their bosses, workers are at each other's throats. The results at Dreux above all mark a victory for the capitalist class.

Racism must be combatted at its roots. All attempts to control immigrant workers must be resisted. It is only when French workers unite with their immigrant brothers and sisters against the capitalist class and its state that the paralysis can be overcome.

It is easy for French leftists to denounce the NF. But the danger comes not from a still insignificant NF, but from the parties of the Mitterand coalition that have popularised chauvinism in the French working class. The fight against racism must begin with the struggle to liberate workers from the chauvinist influence of the PS and the PCF.

Pat Roberts

Policing the unemployed

FIGHTING UNEMPLOYMENT is a top priority for the working class. Yet escaping the stranglehold of the official labour movement is no easy matter. The experience of Castlemilk Unemployed Workers' Group in Glasgow shows the difficulties facing unemployed workers who attempt to organise independently.

Castlemilk Unemployed Workers' Group was set up in October 1982 to campaign for a local centre controlled by the unemployed. Its problems began when Glasgow Communist Party and Trades Council executive member Eamonn Monaghan contacted the group and suggested it join the Strathclyde Federation of Unemployed Groups. The group joined the federation in the belief that it would retain its independence.

Soon after the unemployed workers' group's delegates to the federation were given the trades council's 'draft' constitution for the running of the unemployed centre. The management committee of 12 was to be made up of six unemployed members and two delegates each from the district, regional and trades councils. The district and regional councils were empowered to close the centre in response to any 'unacceptable' activity. Another centre at nearby Cumbernauld was recently threatened with loss of funding for displaying a poster of the First World War Clydeside revolutionary leader John Maclean.

Bureaucratic straitjacket

Trades council recognition of the new unemployed workers' group was the green light required by the local authority before it would provide facilities for a centre. The group was now completely dependent on the goodwill of the trades council bureaucrats. But even this cast-iron and TUC-prescribed constitution was too loose for the trades council's liking. It added a clause disallowing any amendment of the constitution without the approval of the trades council and district council.

The unemployed group rejected the 'draft' and amended it to restore control of the centre to the unemployed and to remove the implicit ban on political activity. The group instructed its delegates to the federation to inform Monaghan that it would draw up its own constitution

to suit the needs of the Castlemilk unemployed.

At the group's annual general meeting in June, the secretary, treasurer and the three delegates to the Strathclyde federation were voted out for their failure to argue the group's point of view with the trades council. The five walked out, but not empty handed. They took the finance books and the key to the group's flat (on lease temporarily from the council) and refused to return them. Within days, the council had cut off funding to the Castlemilk group and the five budding bureaucrats had formed themselves into the Dougrie Unemployed Group.

Splitting the ranks

In an attempt to reverse the council's new hostility, the unemployed workers' group informed the trades council that it would accept their constitution, but under protest. But the trades council bureaucrats had already decided that the Dougrie defectors were a more compliant vehicle for keeping youth off the streets, and off their backs, in a house-trained leisure centre. Monaghan completed his manoeuvres by giving the Dougrie gang of five a mandate to proceed with the new unemployed centre.

The Castlemilk unemployed are victims of the bureaucrats' desire to hang on to their positions by helping the state to police the unemployed. The group is determined to fight for its right to organise the unemployed free from state and TUC interference. A successful picket was held outside the trades council meeting in September and a campaign has been launched to get local and national labour movement support for the group. The Castlemilk unemployed need your help. Send messages of support to:

Castlemilk Unemployed Workers Group
c/o Phil McPhee
7 Drakemire Drive
Glasgow G45

Send letters of protest, demanding the immediate reinstatement of the CUWG to the Strathclyde Federation of Unemployed Workers' Groups, to:

The secretary
Glasgow Trades Council
Trades Union Centre
Carlton Place Glasgow

Alex Farrell



Queueing for benefits: now the Tories aim to impoverish claimants still further

The axe falls

WHILE THE annual conference of the TUC was giving its unconditional support to the government's Youth Training Scheme, the Tories were laying plans for further attacks on the unemployed. They are out to make maximum savings with minimum resistance. Unemployed youth and other marginalised sections of the working class are first in the firing line. They are ready to stir up every prejudice about 'scroungers' and defrauders to weaken resistance to the brutal measures necessary for the survival of British capitalism.

No 'palatable solution'

The days when Tory 'wets' rebelled against government threats to cut welfare benefits are long gone. Ruling class concern about the possibility of riots has been tempered by the burden on state spending of maintaining four million people on the dole. As Tory financial spokesman William Clark put it, 'There isn't a palatable solution to this problem; but palatable or not, some action has got to be taken'. Unemployment benefit has already been cut by abolishing the earnings-related supplement in 1980, imposing a five per cent cut in 1981 and introducing taxation in 1982. Cutting it further might cause political ructions; it would also be financially unproductive. The Treasury estimates that it would only save £13 million for every one per cent cut in benefit — small beer when set beside the £120 billion public expenditure bill. The Tories have turned instead to cutting the cost of housing unemployed youth, pensioners and low-paid workers.

Housing benefit

The new housing benefit scheme is an important step in cutting welfare spending. In November 1982, local authorities took over responsibility from the DHSS for paying the rent and rates of council tenants on supplementary benefit. Rent and rates are now automatically deducted from supplementary benefit and paid directly by the councils themselves. The biggest saving to the state is in the DHSS wage bill — staff numbers have been cut by 2 400. The new scheme ensures that local authorities get their rent. It also denies workers the option of using their rent money to make ends meet and guarantees an end to rent and rate strikes.

The scheme entered a second stage in April this year when local authorities took responsibility for paying the rent and rates of private tenants on supplementary benefit. The system of rent allowances and rate rebates was reorganised at the same time. Taken together, these changes are a swingeing attack on those who live in inner-city flats and bedsits — the young, the elderly, single parents, blacks, Irish and the low-paid. Some claimants who are excluded from supplementary benefit — mainly pensioners — lost

up to 40 per cent of their housing allowance.

Labour movement criticism of the housing benefit scheme has concentrated on its inefficiency. More than 100 local authorities have been unable to cope with the changeover. Thousands of council and private tenants have been forced into arrears: some have been served with eviction notices. Calling on the Tories to 'make the system work' means allowing the state to pursue its attacks on the unemployed more efficiently.

Keep it in the family

The Tories have made sure that people who live at home are worse off. Deductions in housing benefits are made for 'non-dependants' — anyone over 16 living at home. New proposals to limit the amount of housing benefit considered 'reasonable' will force the unemployed to accept even worse conditions.

There are 721 000 people on the dole and living with their parents. Those aged 16 and 17 get £15.80 supplementary benefit a week. Those aged 18 receive £20.55 and a weekly housekeeping supplement of £3.10. The Tories would like to cut youth benefit to the miserable £13.15 a week now paid to unemployed parents for each child under 16. They are also considering chopping the £3.10 housekeeping allowance. Recognising that this would encourage unemployed youth to leave home, the Treasury is preparing to back up any cut in housekeeping allowance with restrictions on rent allowances for those not living at home.

Teenage screams

Picking off unemployed youth is the first step towards a more general onslaught on benefits to the unemployed. A recent editorial in *The Times* observed that cutting youth benefits was a short-term saving. However, 'it continued, the cuts would establish a precedent that was 'more important for the long run'. They would 'establish the violability of basic social benefits and do it for a group over which the political screams will not be too loud'.

Attacks on unemployed youth are used to soften up the working class for the real cuts to come. They are justified by popularising the notion that all unemployed youth are 'layabouts' who spend their time mugging old people and propping up street corners. 'They like it' was Margaret Thatcher's latest characterisation of British youth on the dole.

The housing benefit scheme, and cuts in rent allowances and other benefits to the unemployed, are an attack on the whole working class. Workers with jobs cannot afford to leave the unemployed to fight alone. The employed working class must unite with the unemployed to determine what benefits are needed — and fight to get them.

Anne Grieves

the next step, October 1983 7

POWER PREPARING FOR POWER

The world recession reveals that the capitalist system is rotten to the core. The survival of capitalism depends on mass unemployment and poverty in the West and famine and mass terror in the Third World. Today the superpowers fight to save their system abroad, while at home they are launching a full frontal attack on jobs, living standards and workers' right to organise.

The recession opens up prospects for a brighter future. Never before has the necessity for a new way of running society seemed so urgent. Never has the creation of a new party of the working class, to get rid of the present system, appeared a more practicable proposition. *Preparing for Power* begins from the need to defend the working class against the Tory onslaught and points the way forward to the establishment of communism.

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Setback at Britains

THE STRIKE AT BRITAINS' toy factory in Walthamstow is over. On Sunday 25 September the strikers voted by a narrow majority to end their two-month strike for a one-hour reduction in a compulsory working week of 50 hours. The strike has been called off despite the fact that management has not conceded this demand nor given any guarantees against victimisations.

At the final mass meeting TGWU district organiser Tom Knowles shrugged helplessly and said nothing more could be done. The senior shop stewards went along with this fatalistic line and collectively abstained from voting. As the strikers left the meeting the mood was one of bitterness and anger. Many workers threatened to rip up their union cards and denounced the TGWU for selling them out.

From the start it was clear that Britains would be a difficult strike to win. The 220 workers who came out on 29 July had never been on strike before. For the 13 years that Knowles had been their official he had done little to improve the atrocious hours and conditions of the predominantly Asian workforce. A cosy relationship between the shop stewards and the management has long prevailed in the factory.

Having decided to take industrial action, the strikers were immediately faced with a number of serious problems. There was a hostile response from 200 fellow-workers (mainly white and non-unionised) who continued to work throughout the strike. There were potentially damaging divisions within their own ranks, principally between the men and women, because the union had failed to acknowledge the women's demand for equal pay. And there were major difficulties in organising effective picketting and blacking, given the aggressive policing of the picket line. These problems could have been overcome with enough backing from the union. In the event, the TGWU's conduct of the strike undermined the unity of the workers at every stage.

East London RCP supporters got involved in the strike from the beginning and set about tackling the obstacles to winning the workers' demands. At our instigation the strikers began to organise the picketting of toy shops. Flying pickets were sent out to secure blacking, particu-

larly at the docks. We also urged the importance of an active strike committee and regular mass meetings to involve all the workers in the conduct of the strike. We helped to mobilise regular mass pickets. Knowles condemned all practical action to achieve victory as 'provocative'. When the police attacked the mass picket and arrested strikers and supporters, he blamed the RCP. But the workers unequivocally rejected this allegation.

It was no wonder that as the weeks went by and the union dragged its feet some strikers became demoralised. The women had been very militant at the start, staging sit-downs to block the factory gates. But they inevitably became discouraged when the union reprimanded them and they began to drift back to work. The men too began to waver. Financial hardship began to take its toll — a factor the union official exploited to retain control of the strike. Every time the more militant workers challenged the TGWU's do-nothing strategy, Knowles threatened to withdraw official backing and cut off strike pay.

In the end the union's tactics succeeded in containing militancy and undermining the workers' confidence. The majority of strikers were browbeaten into accepting a return to work.

Knowles was assisted in his efforts to dampen down militancy at Britains by the local Socialist Workers' Party, whose members occasionally appeared on the picket line. They stood and watched whilst striker after striker got arrested on the picket line — and then went away to write articles about 'badly organised' mass pickets! (See letter, page 22). Their role was to echo the statements of the TGWU official and implicitly endorse the union in blaming the problems of the strike on the strikers themselves.

The lesson of the Britains' defeat is not that we should tear up our union cards, but that we have to take over our unions. With leadership of the kind provided by the TGWU at Britains, difficulties and divisions were given maximum scope to grow and undermine the effectiveness of the strike. We remain confident that when workers can overcome the paralysing influence of their existing leadership, they will have no problem in taking on the bosses and winning.

Judy Harrison

Fight for the right to fight!

On 29 September the leaders of the Trades Union Congress met Tory Employment Secretary Norman Tebbit to discuss his latest proposals for weakening the capacity of the unions to defend the working class. At last month's TUC conference at Blackpool union chiefs talked of 'realism', 'reasoned discussion' and 'partnership' with the Government. In the desperate hope of preserving some of their standing in the eyes of the British establishment, the trade union bureaucrats are preparing to collaborate in further restrictions on the rights of workers to fight back against the system.

OVER THE LAST four years the Tories have advanced step by step to restrict workers' rights to organise to defend jobs, working conditions and living standards. And at every stage the Tory advance has been met with a retreat by the trade union leaders. The Government has introduced laws to curb the right to strike, by making it possible in a variety of circumstances for employers to sue workers for damages occasioned by industrial action. In this way the Tories have limited workers' rights to picket and to black products and essential supplies. They have also made it more difficult for workers to organise a closed shop to enforce their collective interests on an employer.

Rather than fight these measures, the bureaucrats have backed down. Their policy has been to prevent the use of the new laws by policing industrial disputes themselves. Hence the TUC has issued strict guidelines on picketting, blacking and the closed shop to keep union members in line. Union officials have used all their influence, and their control over the distribution of strike pay, to confine the scope of militancy within the limits declared legally acceptable by the Tories.

Two cheers for democracy

Encouraged by his success so far, Tebbit now plans further anti-union legislation. He wants to interfere in workers' organisations to impose new regulations on how unions should decide on strike action, elect their leaders and organise their funds for political purposes. Tebbit claims a crusading mission to make the unions more 'democratic'. Active trade unionists view Tebbit's schemes with the contempt they deserve as transparent attempts to make the unions even less democratic and effective than they already are under the labour bureaucracy. However, the TUC felt obliged to reply to Tebbit in a pamphlet, *Hands up for democracy*, which reveals that the bureaucrats are right

under the bosses' thumb.

Workers once joined unions because they wanted to fight the capitalist class, but the TUC has a different conception of their function:

'They work with employers to increase productivity, to sort out problems of work and to make industry more efficient.'

The TUC is concerned that Tebbit's measures will make it more difficult for unions to play this constructive role for British capitalism:

'Compulsory strike ballots could be counter productive as well — they could prolong a dispute and make it far less easy to resolve.'

The bureaucrats plead for the Tories to let them carry on in their humble role as junior partners in the exploitation of the working class:

'Unions can achieve most when they work with government and employers, playing a positive role in moving our country forward — when they can work towards common goals rather than being locked out from influence and involvement.'

It is in this spirit that Len Murray and the rest are crawling on their knees up the steps of the Department of Employment.

While the TUC talks to Tebbit in Whitehall, rank and file trade unionists are already feeling the effects of the heightening ruling class offensive against workers' rights. The climate of anti-union sentiment carefully fostered by the Tories' public airing of issues of 'union power' and 'union democracy' helps to isolate militants and leave them open to state attacks. Workers who go on strike today, as we document on these pages, face the threat of court action or the reality of police repression the moment they raise the stakes by militant action. The anti-union laws of 1980 and 1982 have scarcely been used because of the effectiveness of the Tories' ideological campaign and the capitulation of the bureaucracy. Journalists at the *Stockport Messenger* were the latest victims of these pressures last month. Threatened by injunctions against secondary picketting, they called off their action rather than risk prosecution and fines which the TUC made very clear it had no intention of paying. As the *Financial Times* commented, the threat of legal sanctions against unions 'has in some recent cases led to strong pressure from head office to call off — or not to start — unlawful action'.

The right to fight

The spectacle of the TUC leaders in talks with Tebbit as he proceeds in his onslaught against the working class provides a dramatic illustration of how far the labour bureaucracy has become a parasitic excrescence on the labour movement. A fight for trade union rights — for the right to fight in defence of living standards — must begin with a challenge to the union leaders' paralysing grip over our movement. Our campaign must begin with the demand that union representatives not only cease all talks with the Tories, but break off all relations with the capitalist state. That means pulling union officials off all the quangos and all the permanent tripartite negotiating machinery with bosses and civil servants at every level. The fight for the right to fight must be based on the defiance of all restrictions on the action necessary to win industrial disputes — against employers, suppliers, customers, scabs, police. It is on the picket lines and in workplaces — not in the committee rooms — that the battle for workers' rights will always be decided.

Mike Freeman



Tebbit: it's time we got him on the run

Statement by BRITAINS' strikers

We the undersigned, condemn the Britains' strike committee for refusing to recommend a continuation of industrial action. We believe our strike has been sold out and that TGWU official Tom Knowles bears the central responsibility.

K D KHAN
M BASHIR
M MANER
R ANWAR

Z IQBAL
G MUDDIN
A KHALIQ
R IQBAL

M ALI
W WILLOCK
J IQBAL

25 September

BRITAINS arrests fund

Seventeen strikers and supporters have been arrested in the Britains strike. The police have made a special effort to please local MP Norman Tebbit by enforcing four on the picket line!

■ The TGWU will not be paying the defendants' fines. Rush donations to ■
BRITAINS ARRESTS FUND, 19 Worcester Road, Walthamstow, London E17

Battle for NHS jobs begins

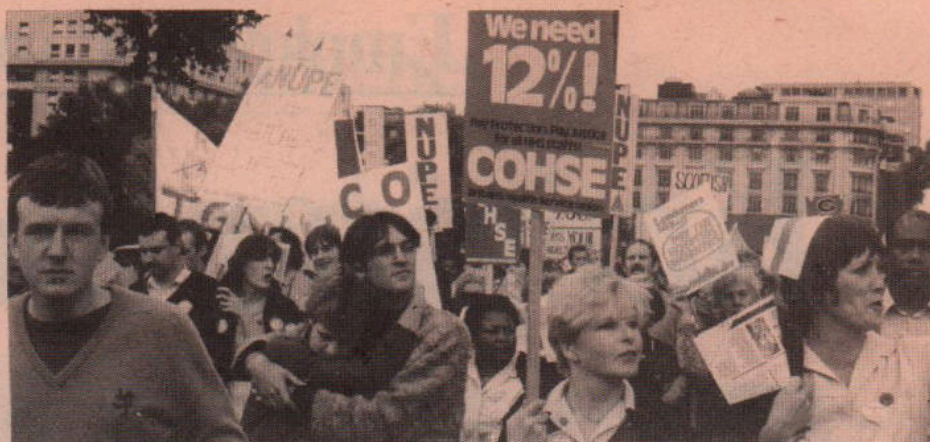
WHEN HEALTH MINISTER Norman Fowler spoke at a conference in Sheffield at the end of September he faced an angry crowd of demonstrators. On the previous day the Government had announced that regional health authorities had already agreed to more than 3000 of the 8500 job cuts the Tories plan to impose on the National Health Service this year. At the Sheffield conference, police were called to throw out RCP supporters for interrupting Fowler. Meanwhile NHS union leaders seem to be waiting for the NHS to collapse before they begin to mount a fight to save jobs. The best response NUPE leader Rodney Bickerstaffe could manage to the Fowler cuts was to bleat that 'it was a desperate situation in which the unions had not been consulted'. But now is the time to join the battle for NHS jobs before it's too late.

Making it efficient

Supporters of the RCP in the hospitals who have been discussing with workers on the wards, in the canteens and down in the boiler houses have found that health workers are ready to fight. This is despite last year's defeat and despite a lack of faith in their own leaders. They are not held back by their own apathy but by the dead weight of their trade union leadership.

Reports from all round the country reveal a common pattern. When cuts are threatened union leaders attempt to persuade management that consultation with the unions is the best way of making the health service efficient. Management, relieved that it faces no coherent opposition demanding no redundancies and no cuts, picks off section after section. The workers whose jobs and conditions have been sacrificed and those that remain discover that whether a saving is implemented through union cooperation with management or executed by the introduction of private contractors, the result is the same for them. Management has now become so confident of union complicity that it often appeals directly to the workforce. At Tameside General, for example, the domestics were lectured by their supervisor that unless they 'pulled together' then jobs would be on the line.

Leeds General Infirmary management decided to put laundry services out to tender. The union response was to get the existing workforce together and make an offer to do the job with reduced numbers at higher levels of efficiency. The union lost the contract to a private firm, but then told workers that management had agreed that the existing workers could reapply to the contractor and they would be re-employed. In the event not one of



Health workers: still ready to fight despite the betrayal of last year's strike

the 97 workers got jobs under the new regime.

The union officials have not only been ineffective, they have been downright cynical. The case of the Edgar Allen physiotherapy institute now threatened with closure in Sheffield is typical of many. The institute is housed in a Victorian slum — it is an appalling place in which to work or to receive treatment. The workers have no great affection for the institute, but they need their jobs, if not there then somewhere else. The unions have neither supported the demand for no redundancies nor opposed any reduction in bed numbers. They have done nothing except argue that the workers don't want their jobs at Edgar Allen.

Winning control of our unions

Anybody who has spent one day in a hospital knows that the formation of a united NHS union is a necessity to overcome sectional divisions. In every dispute NUPE blames COHSE, COHSE blames NUPE, and they all blame the workers. The picket against Norman Fowler on 23 September was organised by COHSE — it was ignored by the NUPE bureaucracy. Meanwhile NUPE's own lobby of the District Health Authority scheduled for the 3 October meeting when many of the decisions for the 1983-84 financial year will be made was being ignored by COHSE.

The RCP mobilised in the hospitals and in other workplaces for both these initiatives. We went straight to the workers in the hospitals. This did not suit the plans of many union officials and stewards. In the last issue of *the next step* we reported that militant stewards who suggested resisting attacks were accused of 'rocking the boat'. In Sheffield sellers of *the next*

step are accused by local bureaucrats of spreading rumours among the membership (about the possibility of fighting cuts?) and giving management ideas about what to cut next.

Fighting the cuts

To combat the cuts successfully we need to regain control of our own organisations and use them to fight for us, not for the officials. The union leaders cannot fight because they argue with the bosses that the health service must be 'efficient'. The limited scope of 'anti-cuts campaigns' around the country makes them an ineffective means of defending jobs and services. Whether they are led by the unions themselves, or by the Community Health Councils, or fronted by other quangos, the working class is dragged into 'defend the bureaucracy' initiatives. They all argue that Tory strategy is irrational and that labour bureaucrats can be trusted to organise a cost-effective capitalist health service. The preservation of the cosy niche in the state apparatus occupied by bureaucrats and professional committee men in the health service is incompatible with the fight to oppose all redundancies.

While bureaucrats fiddle the RCP has acted, arguing that workers should take matters into their own hands.

Serious discussion of tactics and strategy for action in the workplace and outside is the prerequisite for a successful struggle. Around the country — at the Whittington Hospital in North London, at Oldham and Tameside General, in Birmingham and Sheffield — groups of workers are discovering that if they put the working class first they can fight back.

Alan Harding

The legal limits

WORKERS AT HINDLE GEARS engineering company in Bradford have now been on strike for 28 weeks. In 1979 the company made 80 workers — more than half the workforce — redundant. In mid-March the remaining 70 workers decided that they'd had enough of 14 years on short time, machinery that dates back to the war and an average of £78 in their pockets at the end of the week. When management refused to negotiate their five per cent pay offer they precipitated the first industrial action in the 50-year history of the firm. Their response to the call for negotiations was to announce 35 more redundancies.

District AUEW official Henry Wilkinson boasted that he could 'close Hindles down with three phone calls'. More than six months later the Hindle strikers bitterly recall his words.

When the workers went into occupation Henry Wilkinson gave them official backing — until management got an injunction served. Wilkinson promptly withdrew official support. The men, with no legal advice and no previous experience, ended the occupation after four days. When the strikers picketed all the gates in the Hindle-Perkins complex where Hindle Gears is located, the bosses warned them that this was secondary picketing. The workers ignored the warning, but district secretary Peter

Walker called in a special AUEW solicitor from Manchester to tell the lads the score.

The workers at Hindle's have been prepared to take militant action to win their strike. The strikers' wives have played an active part, organising mass pickets and speaking at meetings. Revolutionary Communist Party supporters have been involved from early in the strike, organising blacking, secondary picketting and getting trade union support and donations. On 5 September we lobbied the TUC conference in Blackpool with the Hindle strikers and their wives to demand real union backing to win the strike.

The AUEW is now staking everything on the Industrial Tribunal hearing, described by district secretary Henry Wilkinson as 'the victory we've always looked for'. The militancy of the Hindle workers has been eroded by union officials who are more concerned about upholding the law than doing anything for their members. The strikers have also had to suffer lectures from Militant members who told them not to criticise the AUEW and the TUC at the Blackpool lobby and not to listen to the RCP if they wanted the union to continue 'supporting' them. After six long months of betrayals by the AUEW, the Hindle workers do not need lessons in good manners. What they need is a union that fights.



Pressure on the TUC: Hindle strikers with RCP supporters at Blackpool

A narrow victory

ON 11 AUGUST 2000 workers at the Highlands Fabrication oil platform yard at Nigg, Easter Ross in Scotland came out on official strike. Management sacked all 2000 workers and offered 1600 their jobs back if they accepted a '24-point' cost-cutting programme which was non-negotiable.

When the workforce returned after the summer break the company presented its proposals to withdraw

- subsidised canteen, laundry and free travel — workers would lose up to £20 on travel alone

- free orange juice (diluted orange squash), shower facilities and cooling-off sheds for about 300 welders working in extreme heat and dust

It was obvious that management had provoked the dispute to push through redundancies without having to pay compensation. But their plans were cut short by the militant tactics of the workers.

On Monday 29 August a mass picket stopped management reopening the yard. When the coaches full of re-employed workers appeared, flashing car lights and whistles brought nearly 1000 strikers from a nearby car park. The strikers overwhelmed the police and barricaded the road — only 15 to 20 scabs dared go in.

Meanwhile national officials Tommy Gray (AUEW), John Baldwin (AUEW), Willie Clydesdale (GMBATU) and

Daniel Carrigan (EETPU) were meeting with management in London. The deal they worked out was a return to work for all 2000 workers provided they accept a new '21-point' plan.

Although the workers rejected the deal, they had not rejected the outlook expressed most coherently by the union — that workers share a responsibility for their company's problems. As shop steward Rab Wilson put it:

'We are peaceful people trying to protect our jobs. We have had good management relations for 10 years. There are no moles here. We are not greedy boys asking for more, but the company has changed its tactics suddenly.'

It was these politics which led to the workers accepting the deal for a full return to work before negotiations began on the '21 points'. Like many disputes in recent years — from Gardner's in Manchester to Greening's in Warrington — the compromise settlement at Nigg was hailed as a victory by the left. Unfortunately, the politics of making sacrifices in the interests of the company, which went unchallenged throughout the dispute, will undoubtedly lead to further redundancies and attacks on working conditions in the near future. Only a resolute defence of jobs and conditions, regardless of the state of the company, can win real victories for the working class.

Employment in the Six Counties

Keeping the flag flying



Signing on in occupied Ireland: Catholics are three times as likely to be out of work as Protestants

The recent row at the Moy Meats factory in Charlemont, County Armagh over the flying of a Union Jack would be farcical if its implications were not deadly serious. The Moy affair is a stark reminder of the flagrant discrimination suffered by the nationalist community in the Six Counties under British occupation. It also gives the lie to the 'neutrality' of the official trade union movement. The unions in the Six Counties have been complicit in maintaining sectarian patterns of discrimination in employment for decades. In public, they refuse to take sides in the Irish War, but their support for the status quo puts them firmly on the side of the British oppressors and their Loyalist cohorts.

THE TROUBLE at the Moy abattoir began on 4 July. Protestant workers insisted on hoisting a Union Jack outside the factory in preparation for the 12 July demonstrations commemorating the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Catholic workers, who make up nearly half the workforce, objected and pointed out that this display of Orange triumphalism contravened an agreement between management and union stewards banning flags from being flown at the plant. Led by senior shop steward and former UDR soldier Tom Kerr, the Loyalists threatened to stop work if the flag was removed without their approval.

'Up the Brits'

Management took the flag down, but when the Loyalists re-erected it Catholic workers refused to work and the management declared a fortnight's holiday, hoping the dispute would fade away. However, on 25 July when the plant reopened the flag was still flying and nationalist employees again went home. The next day management sacked the entire workforce and closed the factory.

Three weeks later, the local branch of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (the Irish division of the British TGWU) had got together with management and worked out a compromise. Nationalist shop stewards were not consulted and played no part in formulating the proposals. These stated that management would erect a flagpole in the factory grounds and the Union Jack would be flown every year from 1 July to 14 July. A staggered holiday arrangement would allow those 'with strong objections to the flag to absent themselves during this time'.

To sustain the illusion that what had taken place was nothing to do with the war, ATGWU officials claimed that the dispute was caused by unspecified 'problems' within the workforce. Reducing the 14-year-old war in Ireland to a petty squabble, Northern ATGWU secretary

Ernie McBride declared that 'the lads will have to learn to respect each other's views' (*Irish Times*, 25 August). More than 10 weeks after the dispute began nationalist workers were forced to return to work for fear that they would be sacked if they held out for longer. They did not receive union strike pay and since the Department of Health and Social Security regarded the closure as a strike, they were not entitled to unemployment benefit either. Bitterly condemning the union's role in the dispute, nationalist workers declared the management/union proposals a blatant move towards the recruitment of a totally Loyalist workforce at the plant.

Jobs for the boys

Recent figures from the 1981 census confirm that there has been no improvement in the employment situation of Catholics since Direct Rule from Westminster was introduced in 1972. Catholics occupy predominantly unskilled or semi-skilled jobs and are three times more likely to be unemployed than Protestants (*Fortnight*, June 1983). A survey of Belfast's Citybus company revealed that '100 per cent of the most senior and highly-paid management positions are occupied by Protestants, while 86 per cent of lower management positions including foremen are Protestant' (*Andersonstown News*, 27 August 1983).

Even the Fair Employment Agency, set up by the British government in 1976 as proof to the world of its reforming zeal, has been unable to disguise the depth of discrimination. Not that it hasn't tried. In 1977 an investigation into the Ford Automobile plant uncovered widespread anti-Catholic discrimination. The investigation was soon transformed into a broad enquiry into the Belfast engineering industry by Northern Ireland Office industry minister and backstage magician Don Concannon. When the findings were eventually leaked last year they showed no improvement in employment prospects for Catholics throughout the 'seventies. Undeterred, the investigators urged readers 'to grasp the distinction between unlawful discrimination on the one hand and failure to provide equality of opportunity on the other'. But no amount of semantics can hide the institutionalised discrimination at the heart of the Northern Ireland state.

Across the divide

It has suited the needs of the official labour movement in Britain to obscure the cause of sectarian discrimination in the Six Counties. For the labour bureaucrats it is the result of religious feuding between two rival faiths, rather than British imperialist domination. Leading British Stalinist commentator on Irish affairs Chris Myant advanced this approach

in a recent series of articles in the *Morning Star*. In a roundabout way he blamed the British government for continuing discrimination, but his conclusion was not to demand an end to the British occupation but more British government intervention. After 14 years of war the Communist Party retains its attachment to the progressive potential of British imperialism.

Another myth perpetuated by labour bureaucrats in Britain is that of 'a powerful left grouping of Communists and Northern Ireland Labour members on the shop floor' conducting a valiant if unsuccessful struggle against discrimination (*Morning Star*, 12 September). The trade union movement in the Six Counties is organised through the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, but has very close links with the British Trades Union Congress. Around 80 per cent of trade unionists are in British-based unions. The Northern Ireland Committee has always attempted to disguise its role in the Six Counties' sectarian set-up by disclaiming any interest in politics. But its claim that 'sectarianism stops at the factory gates' carries little conviction. Sectarian outbursts and expulsions of Catholics from work may be exceptional. But it is the discrimination which prevents Catholics ever getting jobs in the first place which is the pervasive feature of life in the Six Counties. The unions' enforcement of discriminatory recruitment practices has been the most persistent expression of their subservience to the needs of British imperialism.

The big cover-up

The recent furore over discrimination at the Belfast aircraft firm Short Brothers has exposed the unions' commitment to eliminating discrimination as a sham. Short's was one of the companies covered by the Fair Employment Agency's survey of the engineering industry. With the decline of the shipbuilders Harland and Wolff, Short's is now the largest private employer in the Six Counties with more than 6000 workers. Situated next to the shipyards in Loyalist East Belfast, Short's has never employed more than a 10 per cent quota of Catholics in its workforce. After the FEA concluded that 'equality of opportunity' did not exist, management and unions put their heads together to decide how to rectify the situation.

The involvement of the union — an Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union branch run jointly by the Loyalist Ulster Defence Association and the Stalinist Communist Party of Ireland — was crucial since it controlled recruitment through the provision of union cards. This mechanism guaranteed an overwhelmingly Protestant workforce. Negotiations were soon cut short when the Northern Ireland Committee of the

Irish Congress of Trades Unions — also dominated by the Communist Party — refused to support a tentative non-discrimination agreement because it 'went too far'.

Meanwhile, moves were afoot on the other side of the Atlantic to block a US Air Force order of 18 transport aircraft worth £47 million from Short's because of its anti-Catholic discrimination. The campaign to cancel the order was led by the Irish National Caucus in the US Congress. The caucus cited a report by Father Brian Brady of the Belfast Association of Legal Justice which showed that 94 per cent of the skilled workforce was Protestant, as were 95 per cent of apprentices. Fearful of losing the order and of the wider repercussions for trade with the US, the British government moved its lie machine into gear. British diplomats in Washington placed a piece in the trade magazine *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, stating that Short's determined commitment to equal opportunities could not be doubted:

Its chairman and managing director Sir Philip Foreman, in an intensive search for Catholic skilled workers, once walked door to door in the Catholic Bogside, area of Belfast (sic), offering jobs.' (16 May)

Next, the unions entered the fray. The British government circulated a letter from Short's shop stewards 'categorically denying' a policy of religious discrimination. Since one of the stewards was Harry Patterson, a leader of the Loyalist Ulster Workers' Council strike which brought down the power-sharing executive in 1974, this made little impact. To counter the Irish National Caucus campaign, and in anticipation of a visit to the Six Counties by US trade union leaders of the AFL-CIO in July, the NIC ICTU redoubled its efforts and agreed to sign an Affirmative Action Programme between the FEA and Short's management. Then, in preparation for a series of visits by US politicians over August, the shop stewards at Short's agreed to take down the Union Jacks and Loyalist bunting which adorn the factory during the summer months.

The flags may have come down temporarily at Short Brothers but the Union Jack still casts its long shadow over the nationalist community in the Six Counties of Ireland. For Protestants, their material privileges in employment and housing reinforce their loyalty to the British flag and continued imperialist domination. For Catholics, the Union Jack at Moy is a reminder of the undemocratic and irreformable character of the Six County state. As long as it keeps flying it will reinforce their determination to fight for national freedom and sever the imperialist connection.

Phil Murphy

British terror and its legal niceties

Supergrasses are not cricket

The systematic use of traitors from the nationalist community, bribed and corrupted by offers of cash and protection, is the latest dirty trick in the sordid record of British barbarism in Ireland. And no British atrocity is complete without the accompaniment of a band of lawyers, priests and Labour politicians wringing their hands and pleading that the techniques of imperialist domination are just not cricket.

THE PHOTOGRAPH of Robert Lean and Gerry Adams on the front page of every British paper last month seemed to sum up the sense of triumph of the British establishment and confirm the worst fears of every friend of Irish freedom. The Royal Ulster Constabulary's latest supergrass and the Sinn Féin MP for West Belfast were pictured together less than three months earlier during the General Election campaign. The authorities immediately detained around 20 people, declaring exultantly that these included senior Belfast IRA officers Edward Carmichael and Ivor Bell. Adams told reporters that he expected to be the next to be picked up and charged.

Over the past two years more than 250 republicans have been interned after being fingered by a dozen informers. Belfast has now become the scene for a series of show trials of republicans which are scheduled to continue for months to come. So far there have been 60 convictions and sentences totalling thousands of years have been doled out. In the biggest trial up to now — that of 38 people from North Belfast set up by Christopher Black — the entire leadership of the IRA in the republican stronghold of Ardoyne was committed to prison this summer.

Shortly afterwards the trials of 70 people betrayed by Derry supergrasses Raymond Gilmour and Robert Quigley opened in Belfast. The Irish National Liberation Army has also been hit hard. In July Harry Kirkpatrick was sentenced to almost 1000 years inside after being convicted of five murders and 70 other 'crimes'. But in return for a list of names he is expected to be a free (and rich) man after a token spell (perhaps seven years) in an English jail. At the end of July the authorities claimed to have 42 INLA men behind bars in the Six Counties awaiting trial. Whatever the arguments about the truth of all the allegations nobody could deny that the republican movement has suffered some serious setbacks.

Conversion jobs

The use of supergrasses, or 'converted terrorists' as the RUC prefers to call them, in the Six Counties marks a major departure from legal practice in the rest of the 'United Kingdom'. In the 'seventies police in Britain used supergrasses to give evidence against gangs of armed robbers. The most famous was Bertie Small whose testimony led to 25 arrests. However the reliance of the authorities on the evidence of criminals to secure convictions caused disquiet in legal circles. In 1977 the Director of Public Prosecutions issued guidelines that effectively put a stop to supergrass trials in Britain. He recommended that criminals should be given immunity from prosecution for their own involvement in crime in return for evidence against their associates 'only sparingly'. And he insisted that there should be no further convictions on the evidence of a supergrass alone. Because of the unreliability of evidence obtained through bribery and intimidation, such statements had to be corroborated to be accepted before the courts. None of these strictures applies in Britain's Six County war zone.

The exposure of the widespread use



Robert Lean and Christopher Black: supergrasses who have squealed — and alarmed British liberals

of torture in the Six County interrogation centres of Gough and Castlereagh in the late 'seventies led to a change of tactics by the authorities. They substituted sophisticated interrogation techniques for the more overtly brutal methods of earlier years. Immense psychological pressures exerted on isolated individuals, sometimes facing their second or third term of imprisonment in an apparently unending war, began to produce results. Offers of large sums of money — several prisoners and informers who have later retracted their evidence have spoken of £50 000 and £100 000 — combined with protection and a new life abroad for the informer and his family started to erode the morale of some prisoners from 1980 onwards.

The rot began with Steven McWilliams, a petty criminal on the fringes of the republican movement. His evidence led to the imprisonment of North Belfast republican leader Martin Meehan in 1980. The influx of raw recruits into the republican ranks in the aftermath of the hunger-strikes seems to have accelerated the process. It may also have laid the movement open to professional spies, some of whom now pose as supergrasses although they have long been in the pay of the British state. The mass arrests began in early 1982; now after periods of detention of 18 months and more the trials are well underway.

The state has not allowed legal niceties to stand in the way of its determination to crush the national liberation struggle. Black was given immunity from prosecution despite his own evidence of involvement in assassination attempts on British forces. Kirkpatrick's seven years in an open jail in England seems a very reasonable deal for a man convicted of mass murder. Judges in the Six Counties have demonstrated almost total faith in the uncorroborated evidence of supergrasses, even when, as in the case of Black, their account is riddled with inconsistencies and contradicted by dozens of witnesses. The only instance where judges have doubted a supergrass came last year when Anthony O'Doherty gave evidence against Thomas McCormick, who was charged with murder and other serious crimes. But then McCormick was an officer in the RUC.

In British trials where informers have been used, judges warn juries to listen very critically to evidence provided by criminals and perjurers who have every interest in ensuring that their former comrades spend the rest of their lives inside. In the Six Counties, this is not necessary because there are no juries. On a number of occasions informers have retracted their evidence in court under the pressure of cross-examination in the presence of family and friends. This has led to the authorities being obliged to release

their republican suspects. They have two methods of dealing with this problem. The first is an ancient legal device known as a Bill of Indictment. When invoked this allows the case to go straight to trial and avoids cross-examination at the preliminary hearing where retraction usually takes place. This was used in the Black case and in the case of County Tyrone informer Patrick McGurk. The second is more direct. In September 1982 INLA informer Sean Mallon retracted his evidence and a number of people he had named were subsequently released. These included Armagh republicans Roddy Carroll and Oliver Grew. Three months later the RUC ambushed a car carrying Carroll and Grew's brother, Seamus: both were assassinated.

The British ruling class is at war in Ireland and it has no scruples about using the law as a weapon against the nationalist community. *The Times* recently commented on the peculiarities in the operation of the courts in occupied Ireland. 'The question has to be asked', it admitted, 'whether these abridgements of the judicial process amount to a travesty of justice'. Its answer — of course not: 'the palpable gains to security and public safety outweigh the exploitable material for disaffection from the regime'. In other words, if it helps the war effort, any violation of British standards of justice is just fine. This straightforward ruling class view is not shared, however, by some liberal critics of the British establishment.

Britain's loyal servants

The starting point of most current criticism of the supergrass policy is that it undermines respect for the rule of law in Ireland and therefore, respect for the rule of Britain. Lawyers have a professional interest in sustaining public confidence in the legal system. Hence criminal lawyers in the Six Counties have spoken out against the use of informers. They fear 'further alienation from the legal system' as a result of the judges' acceptance of manifest perjury in trials which have become an overtly 'political exercise' (*Irish Times*, 10 September). Liberal lawyers in Britain are also alarmed. The National Council for Civil Liberties-sponsored Cobden Trust has despatched Lord Gifford to Ireland to investigate:

'Whether and in what circumstances the interests of justice can be served by the uncorroborated evidence of accomplices in criminal trials in the United Kingdom

What particular considerations arise from the use of such evidence in non-jury trials in Northern Ireland

What consequences may the keeping of such accomplices and their families in protective custody have for their interests and the interests

of justice generally.'

The concern of these liberal critics is not the effect of supergrasses in undermining the anti-imperialist struggle but that their use may undermine faith in British justice and hence acceptance of British domination.

Another professional lobby with a strong interest in preserving British rule in Ireland is the Catholic clergy. Derry's Bishop Daly, well known for his strident denunciations of republicans, is not happy with the use of supergrasses to imprison them. He considers that it is 'bringing the law into disrepute'. Father Faul of Dungannon fears the consequences:

'The supergrass trials will fill the prisons with persons convicted by a deliberate perversion of justice, families will be enraged, the community further alienated from the law and from respect for the judges.... Violence will get worse after a short time, because the motivation for it will be increased by a sense of outrage and despair at the lack of fair play.' (*New Statesman*, 23 September)

The same concern for the best interests of British imperialism motivates its most abject servants — the British Labour Party. Left-wing chair of Labour's Northern Ireland group Martin Flannery grabbed the headlines with his statement that the supergrasses had led to 'show trials like those conducted by Hitler and Stalin'. But Flannery's worry was not that the trials would weaken the IRA but that they might strengthen it:

'The use of perjurers and self-confessed murderers is totally unfitted to the situation in Northern Ireland and, although a seeming short cut, it will result in a breakdown which will bring a large number of men and women into the IRA and the paramilitaries in the long run.' (*Irish Times*, 13 September)

The criticisms of supergrasses from lawyers, churchmen and British socialists are a complement rather than a challenge to the strategy. While the police and the courts put the boot in, the concerned liberals provide a public display of anguish over the victims' loss of confidence in British fair play and worry that they might respond in the only way possible — through the armed struggle. This has become a familiar theme over the long years of the Irish War.

Ever since the British occupation began in 1969 radicals have focused on the excesses of military brutality and abuses of the legal system in the Six Counties. But they have generally concentrated on the forms of British rule rather than opposing British rule itself. Hence they have demanded modifications to the machinery of British oppression rather than its destruction. Thus the British left mobilised against Internment in the early 'seventies and protested about torture and the treatment of prisoners in the late 'seventies. More recently they have denounced the use of plastic bullets and now they are uneasy about the supergrasses. But as long as the response to British domination in Ireland is restricted to particular aspects of its policy, it can be easily contained.

We utterly condemn the supergrass show trials currently taking place in Belfast. We condemn them, not because they may weaken British rule in the long term (though we hope they will), but because we fear that they may weaken the national liberation struggle in the short term. We appeal to British workers to protest against the show trials; not because they expose the sham of British justice and fair play (though we hope they will) but because it is the responsibility of the British labour movement to fight against all aspects of British rule in Ireland.

David Douglas



A world

'Peace keeping' - what peace?

During the 1976 civil war in Lebanon an American State Department analyst tried to identify the forces involved. He came up with three armies, 22 militias and more than 40 political parties. Internecine strife has continued virtually unabated ever since; over the past month it has reached a new peak of intensity.

THE US BATTLESHIP New Jersey cruised into the Eastern Mediterranean in the middle of September. It joined 12 warships of the American Sixth Fleet already stationed off the coast of Lebanon. Its 16 inch guns 'fire shells as big as Volkswagens' and can flatten artillery positions up to 23 miles inland. Before it arrived, US warships off Beirut harbour pounded positions occupied by Druze militiamen attacking the town of Suq al-Gharb, eight miles from the Lebanese

capital. Sightseers with binoculars can make out tattoos on the biceps of the sailors manning the massive aircraft carrier USS Eisenhower looming just outside Beirut. The US is ready for war. As well as the 1200 US marines dug into the Beirut airstrip 14 000 US troops are waiting for orders to land.

But the Americans are already falling out with the other members of the 'peacekeeping' forces. France and Italy have both canvassed proposals for a Lebanon divided into cantons each with its own militia. This would be the best way of undermining US influence in the country and would provide more scope for European meddling in Lebanese politics.

The British government has backed the US strategy of supporting Lebanese President Amin Gemayel's attempts to crush local opposition movements. This approach has

come under fire from right-winger Enoch Powell, who has condemned Britain's subservience to Washington, and from Labour's deputy leader Denis Healey, who called for a joint European strategy in the Lebanon.

Both France and Italy have hinted that they might unilaterally withdraw their troops from Lebanon unless Gemayel, and by implication his American backers, adopt a more 'flexible' approach. The US is committed to a war whose effect will stretch far beyond the borders of Lebanon.

A little war

Lebanon was carved out of the French territory of Syria and Lebanon at the end of the Second World War. Under French rule the capital, Beirut, and other coastal cities had developed as important commercial centres on the Eastern Mediterranean. There was almost no industrial development and agriculture remained at the same level as it had for a thousand years - herdsman with a few goats or sheep. A few Beirutis grew rich on the diamond trade but most lived in miserable conditions. When France came to withdraw, the problem was there was no local capitalist class on which to base a capitalist state. The imperialist solution was based on a rigged census conducted in 1936 which showed the Maronite Christians as the largest single community in Lebanon. The constitution for the new state, which led to civil wars in 1958 and again in 1976, was originally drawn up by the French. It guaranteed control of the presidency and command of the army to the Maronites. The French hoped that Maronite rule would guarantee the stability of the new state.

Western commentators and politicians invoke Lebanon's medieval history to explain the bitterness of today's divisions - and to justify intervention. Lebanon has a diverse population because its mountains have long offered a refuge to a myriad of ethnic and religious groups fleeing persecution. But the ferocity of the internal conflicts is the result of the domination of the region by imperialism. Imperialism has kept its hold over the area by maintaining ethnic divisions and by using the Maronites and the

In the last month the United States US troops now hold the line in Cent off the coast of Nicaragua threatening anti-Sandinista forces operating from forces backed by US reconnaissance miles inside Nicaragua - and they capital Managua.

America has forced France to ful More than 2000 French paratroopers Goukouni against the Libyan-backed strike aircraft and Mirage fighters h north of the country.

Meanwhile in the Eastern Mediterr its complement of 14 000 to mount a sit behind their sandbagged lines on the runway at Byblos, just north of the 84 combat aircraft based on the the mainland.

European and American troops ha Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean They have had the opposite effect. been drawn into the fighting thay h major international disputes. The w of all the neighbouring African states side French paratroopers. In Leban begun to disagree on the way forward stability of the entire Latin American

On these pages we look at the wo behind the drive towards a new worl in Britain can fight the war drive - by

Sunni Muslims to keep it under contro

Rapid deployment

Last year's Israeli invasion was direct against refugees of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, but it shattered the Lebanese state. The Druze who occupy the Chouf Mountains south-east of Beirut seized the opportunity to assert their right, if not to share of government in Lebanon, than at least to autonomy in their own districts. Twelve months later the Israelis have pulled back to a new front line along the Awa

Lebanon: who's who

MARONITE CHRISTIANS: Originally a Syrian mountain tribe, now part of the Roman Catholic communion. They make up 20 per cent of the Lebanese population. President Amin Gemayel and army commander Ibrahim Tannous are both Maronites. The 24 000 strong Lebanese army's officer corps is almost exclusively Maronite.

THE PHALANGE: Also known as Ktaib, the Phalange is the right-wing party based on the Maronite community. It was founded by Gemayel's father in 1936 after his return from the Berlin Olympics where he played in goal for the Lebanese football team. The Phalange controls 1000 standing troops and 15 000 reservists, armed by Israel and the USA.

SUNNIS: Under the French constitution this mainstream Muslim grouping which makes up 30 per cent of the population appoints the powerless deputy prime minister. Many Sunnis occupy lower ranks in the army but they have their own militia, the 5000 strong Mourabitoun.

SHIITES: One million strong, the Shiite Muslims are probably the largest group in Lebanon. They live mostly in the south of the country and West Beirut. Denied political power for 30 years, they have their own heavily-armed and well-trained Amal Militia.

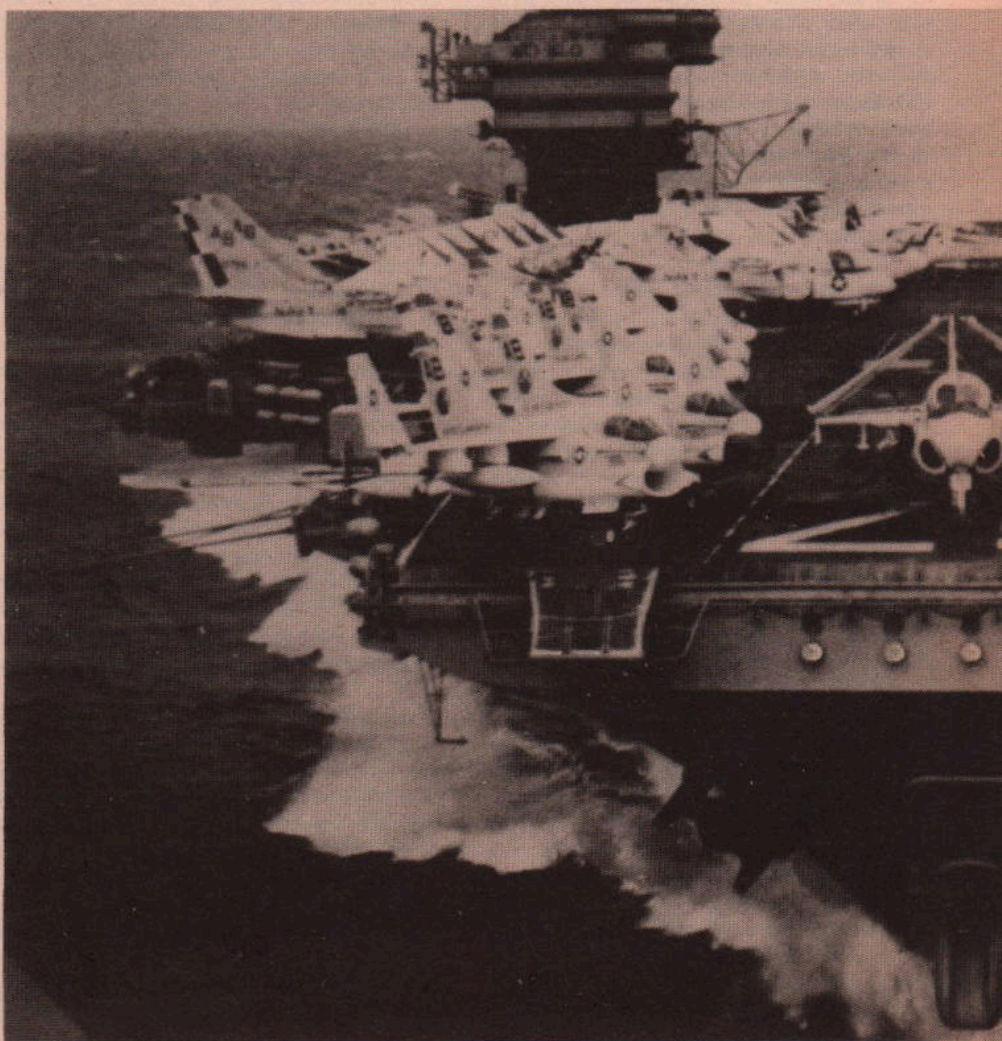
THE DRUZE: The Druze, 250 000 strong, live in the Chouf mountains south of Beirut. They formerly played an important role in Lebanese politics and their leaders resent being usurped by the Maronites. Their main political party is the Progressive Socialist Party headed by Walid Jumblatt. Estimates of the size of their militia range from 6000 to 30 000. During the last round of the civil war they maintained a neutrality sympathetic to the Maronite regime.

Fall-out in Chad

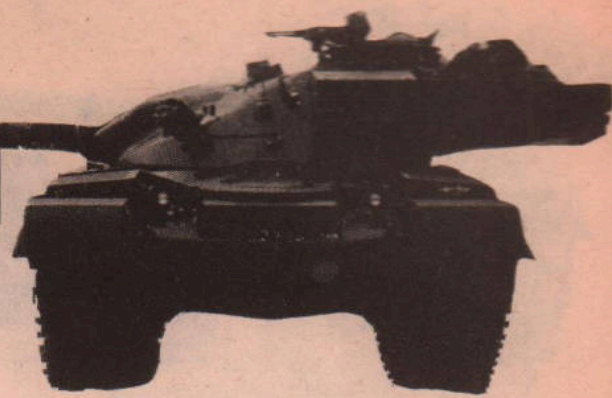
FRANCE HAS ACTED SWIFTLY to contain the desert war in Chad. More than 20 000 soldiers from Chad's two armies, from Libya, France and Zaire stare at each other across the Sahara. Only the vultures picking at the corpses lying outside Oum Chalouba's mud huts, and the rivers polluted for sixty miles around with fall-out from phosphorus bombs, testify that there is still a war on.

At the end of August French President Mitterand launched a diplomatic blitz designed to bring the war under control. Defence minister Charles Hernu flew to Chad's capital Ndjamena to warn President Hissane Habre that French paratroopers would not help him reconquer the North. French troops watched from their bunkers as the Chadian army launched operation 'Manta' against the rebel-held villages. Ethiopian President and acting head of the Organisation of African Unity Mengistu Haile Miriam was enlisted to arrange a cease-fire and peace negotiations.

So far France's diplomatic efforts have only managed to achieve a stalemate. Captain Thomas Sankara's coup in Upper Volta, vital in France's supply lines to Chad, underlines the risks France is running. As long as its soldiers remain in Chad they could be sucked into fresh fighting. And any escalation of the war could shake France's ties with its trading partners in the region. As long as its army stays in Chad France risks souring its relationships with Algeria, Nigeria, Cameroon and Egypt, not to mention Libya itself.



at war



gone on the warpath. More than 6000 America. A 19-ship battle fleet stands the Sandinista government and boosting neighbouring countries. Anti-government planes and artillery have penetrated 450 the used US-supplied planes to bomb the

its 'responsibilities' in Central Africa. have flown to Chad to support President pretender Hissane Habre. French Jaguar e knocked out Libyan positions in the

can the US Sixth Fleet stands ready with invasion of Lebanon. As the US marines Beirut's airstrip, US engineers are repairing Beirut. US Cobra helicopter gunships and SS Eisenhower will soon have a base on

been sent into Central America, Central bring local conflicts under their control. s European and American soldiers have made minor regional disturbances into n Chad has involved the representatives already Zairian troops are fighting along- the European powers and America have The conflict in El Salvador threatens the continent.

's trouble spots and examine the forces ar. We also show how the working class claring war on our own ruling class.

river. For the past eight weeks the Lebanese army and the Maronite Phalange have battled against the Shiite Amal militia for control of West Beirut under the watchful eye of French, Italian and British soldiers. In the Chouf the Druze have thrown the Phalangists out of more than 60 villages and begun the bombardment of the gateway to the capital, Suq al-Gharb. The Lebanese army is the only hope for survival of the Lebanese state. But the problem for the Western powers is that the Lebanese army is on the verge of defeat.

Before the Israelis left Beirut they supplied the Druze with weapons and secretly encouraged them to assert their control over the Chouf area. They also supplied Phalangist leader Major Haddad with guns, and encouraged him to carve out some territory of his own. The Israelis calculated that the best way to cover their withdrawal was to stir up conflicts among rival factions so that Syria would inevitably be drawn into the Lebanon morass.

In 1976 Syria intervened on the side of the Maronites to bring the civil war between the Shiites and Maronites to an end. Beirut is less than 50 miles from the Syrian capital Damascus and its trade depends on access to the Lebanese ports. Any unrest in Lebanon automatically threatens disorder in Syria, whose forces already occupy most of the northern Lebanon. It has been drawn into the present conflict both because it needs to contain the disorder and because it seeks a permanent recognition of its interests in the region. Syria's President Assad is anxious about the large and well organised Druze population in the mountains south of Damascus. He has stepped in to replace Israel as the chief supplier of arms to the Druze fighters in Lebanon in the hope that he can influence the course of events. So far Druze leader Walid Jumblatt has thanked him for the tanks, rifles and heavy artillery, but rejected the support of Syrian army units.

The Syrians are playing a risky hand. If the pro-Western Maronites succeed in reasserting their supremacy over Lebanon, Syria will lose out. But if Beirut falls to the radical Druze and Shiite militia and the Lebanese state is overthrown the Syrian ruling elite will be forced to intervene to curb a potential threat to its position. Not without reason have Western commentators speculated that Assad may yet find himself on the same side as the Americans.

Goodbye Begin

The United States pleaded with retiring Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin not to withdraw his troops from central Lebanon as his parting contribution to the region. But the Israeli invasion had achieved its ob-

jectives. The setbacks inflicted on the PLO allowed the Zionist regime to step up its settlements on the West Bank of the Jordan. The atrocities committed under Israeli supervision in Palestinian refugee camps in south Lebanon distracted attention from the routine suppression of the Palestinians within Israel itself. The Begin Government discovered that it was easier to get embroiled in Lebanon than it was to withdraw. But it knew that retiring behind the Awali river would drag the imperialist powers into the maelstrom of central Lebanon while they kept a safe distance behind newly-constructed bunkers. The plan has not quite worked as Begin intended. Palestinian freedom fighters are already returning to the lands occupied by Israel. They have the support of the region's one million Shiites. As the fighting around Beirut intensifies the Israelis may well be drawn into it once again.

The Israeli withdrawal certainly succeeded in drawing the imperialist powers into the Lebanon ferment. The US already has 1200 soldiers, Italy and France 2000 each, and Britain 100. As the Israelis prepared to withdraw, the American Sixth Fleet, fresh from its part in Operation Bright Star II, moved into position opposite the Lebanese coast. The French offered to send another 3000 troops, but the outbreak of war in Chad forced them to withdraw their offer.

Within two weeks, three American marines were killed in a hail of bullets coming from the Chouf mountains. That brought the US losses to four while the French death toll had risen to 14. British and Italian troops

also came under fire. The British, French and Italian governments gave their troops instructions to return fire. The USA first instructed the Marines to fire on anyone firing on them; then on anyone firing on the Lebanese army; then on anyone firing on French, British or Italian positions. The US also gave its marines permission to call for naval artillery support without further reference to Washington. When the Lebanese airforce made its first sortie for 10 years and three of its ancient Hawker Hunters were downed with rifle fire the US promised air cover to the Lebanese regime. Two of the Hunters landed at British air bases in Cyprus. Cyprus has already been rocked by large demonstrations opposing the militarisation of the island.

The US government's commitment to the Gemayel regime expresses its commitment to use its own troops to restore order in Lebanon. The Gulf is already torn by a war between Iran and Iraq which may drag on for some time. A war in the Eastern Mediterranean could spread throughout the region. The Middle East with its vast oil reserves and enormous markets is vital to the survival of the imperialist world order. The war in Lebanon demonstrates that the US can no longer guarantee this order through a string of client regimes. The War Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean shows that the US is prepared to abandon diplomatic manipulation to achieve its ends. It has no option but to use its military power.

John Johnson



Action against imperialism

FOUR HUNDRED PEOPLE joined the RCP contingent on the 11 September demonstration called to mark the tenth anniversary of General Pinochet's coup in Chile. Chilean squatters linked arms with strikers from Britains' toy factory. It was the biggest and noisiest section of the entire march.

It was also the most anti-British! At the rally in Trafalgar Square Labour MP Judith Hart and Communist Party General Secretary Gordon McLennan were content to denounce US imperialism. The RCP raised the role of Labour and Tory governments in shoring up Latin American dictators.

A week of action leading up to the march included

- a speaking tour round dozens of towns and cities
- pickets and torchlight vigils at embassies and military establishments
- a successful campaign on behalf of homeless Chilean families (see page 22)

These activities made a deep impression on anti-imperialist workers. By constantly raising Britain's role in the Malvinas and Ireland as well as Chile, we drove home the message — ENEMY NUMBER ONE IS AT HOME!



Elusive liberty

The ruling generals of Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Turkey and other Newly Industrialising Countries keep saying they have had enough of political power. All promise a return to parliamentary forms of government in the not-so-distant future. But can they deliver political liberty to the masses? In the first of two articles on the NICs, we show how the subordination of these countries to the imperialist order limits their progress towards democracy.

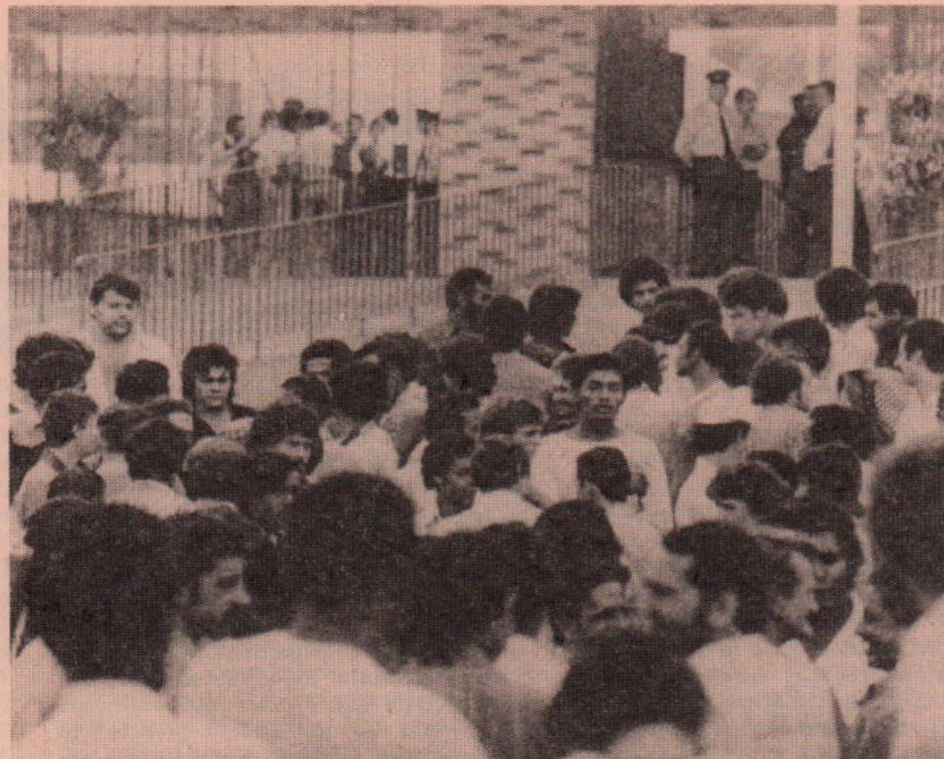
THE TURKS HAVE a word for it: *yumusama*. In Chile and Argentina it is *aportamiento* and in Brazil it is *la abertura*. What they mean is the elusive process of transforming a military dictatorship into a liberal democracy. In Argentina the army overthrew Isabel Peron in 1976; now elections are scheduled for the end of October, leading to a final handover of power in January 1984. In Turkey the army which has ruled since 1980 has called elections in November. After 18 years of military rule, Brazil's generals have promised to hand over power by 1985. Chile's General Pinochet has promised to end military rule by 1989. The procedures of democracy can offer a more effective means of containing social conflict than naked coercion. But in conditions of recession, austerity and revolt, democracy is a risky option. This is the dilemma facing the rulers of NICs around the world. The NICs have achieved a high level of industrialisation and economic growth over the past two decades. They took advantage of the expansion of the world economy in the 'sixties by opening up their borders to foreign investment. They hoped to establish industries that could compete on equal terms in the world market. Over the last five years the recession has dashed these hopes as the prices of primary products tumble and the markets of the advanced countries are closed off by protectionist measures. The 'Newly Industrialising Countries' are left with bankrupt factories, impossible debts and collapsing political and economic structures. They are being squeezed between the imperialist domination of their economies exercised through the debt system on the one hand, and working classes more confident and combative than ever before, on the other.

Not quite

Brazil has been returning to democracy under the 'guidance' of President Joao Figueiredo since 1978. The affable Figueiredo replaced the sterner General Ernesto Geisel as the recession began to bite. The generals who took power in 1964 had laid the foundations for the Brazilian economic miracle. A decade of savage political repression had allowed the generals to cut workers' wages by half. During the 'sixties and 'seventies Brazil enjoyed an annual economic growth rate of almost 10 per cent. But by the late 'seventies all this was coming to an end. The Arena party, the mouthpiece of the military, and the Brazilian Democratic Movement, the official opposition (also set up by the military) were torn by internal feuds in the face of widespread opposition from the masses. In the week that General Figueiredo took power Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest industrial city, was brought to a standstill by strikers.

The generals responded to this upsurge of working class pressure by making concessions in the hope of taking the heat out of the situation. They promised the return of elected governments and in 1978 they even held elections. Exiled popular politicians Miguel Arraes and Leonel Brisola were allowed to return to take part. Trade union leader Luiz Inacio da Silva Lula was allowed to form his own Workers' Party.

The most successful measure taken by



Brazilian car workers: working class militancy threatens the generals

the regime was the introduction of wage rises linked to the rate of inflation for the best organised sections of the working class. Pay settlements based on productivity deals also played a key part in defusing working class anger. And a more conciliatory approach to the leaders of the trade unions led many to identify with state policies. The success of the generals' strategy can be measured in the number of strikes lasting more than a week. At the end of the 'seventies there were about 120 such strikes each year. In 1980 there were less than 10.

Under the generals Brazil emerged in the 'eighties as a power in its own right. It could challenge the United States and Europe for markets not only in South America but also in the Middle East and Africa. In 1979 Brazil recorded a growth rate of more than six per cent. In 1980 it was eight per cent. But behind these impressive figures lay the nightmare of Brazil's foreign debt. More than half Brazil's export earnings are needed to pay for its oil needs. Yet its debt servicing obligations demanded more than two thirds. It was an impossible sum. President of the Central Bank Carlos Langoni resigned recently rather than accept the International Monetary Fund's plans for screwing the money out of the Brazilian masses. In 1981 Brazil's phenomenal growth rate finally collapsed.

The generals are faced with a 'zero-sum-game situation'. Unless they accept the terms of the IMF and risk confrontation with the working class they may have to go it alone and break with imperialism. There is support for this option within the ruling class and sections of the armed forces. Respected economist Celso Furtado argues that Brazil is rich enough in resources, has a large enough domestic market, and a wide enough industrial base to strike out on an independent course. Opponents of the IMF hark back to the nationalist policies pursued by President Jucelino Kubitschek who broke with the IMF in 1959.

Brazil's generals are more scared of the mass movement they would need to build if they tried to take on imperialism than they are of the harsh terms of the IMF. For the time being they hope that they can defuse any opposition to austerity programmes by their promise of political liberalisation and elections. Brazil's working class leaders are doing their best to calm things down for fear of jeopardising 'the return to democracy'.

Turkey and Argentina were always a

bit of a problem for the imperialist countries. They have been keen to keep a tight grip on these two large markets and lucrative investment outlets. Turkey's position at the eastern end of the Mediterranean has made it a key element in military strategy in the Middle East. Both countries have attempted to pursue independent national strategies. During the Second World War they both had the audacity to declare themselves neutral. In 1973 Turkey invaded Cyprus (which it got away with as it was not a direct challenge to imperialism). In 1982 Argentina invaded the Malvinas (which it did not get away with because it was a direct challenge to British imperialism).

Rebels

During the 'thirties and 'forties both used protectionist economic policies and heavy state intervention in the economy to build an industrial base. In 1978, 45 per cent of Argentina's gross domestic product came from industry. Turkey is the main grain producer in the Middle East and in 1982 industry's share of gross national product was greater than that of agriculture for the first time in history. Since the end of the Second World War both have been subject to periods of military rule.

The Turkish army has a habit of taking over the country every 10 years or so. Between 1961 and 1962 the army stepped in to crush the opposition of students and the middle classes to the economic policies of the Menderes regime. Between 1971 and 1973 it moved to suppress violent working class resistance. In 1980 the army took control as the working class took to the streets and the institutions of the state began to crumble. New governments were being formed every six months. Armed guerrillas of the left and right patrolled Turkey's streets, and in northern and western Turkey workers fought with the army and the police in a wave of factory and mine occupations. General Evren who led the coup announced that he intended to eradicate terrorism and restore order.

Now Evren has committed himself to holding elections in November. So far only three of the seven parties formed to contest the election have been ratified by the junta. The Nationalist Democratic Party led by retired General Turgut Sunalp is widely expected to head the poll. The other major contender — the Motherland Party — is led by former cabinet minister Turgut Ozal. Elections or no, the army

clearly intends to keep a tight grip on the reins of power.

The generals' plans to join the European Economic Community and restructure the Turkish economy demand tough measures. They have to impose a savage internal austerity programme and increase exports; they need to keep Turkey open for foreign investment and imports and cut back state expenditure. They have already had some success. In 1981 Turkey's growth rate had recovered to a healthy four per cent. Real wages have been cut by more than 40 per cent since 1977 and unemployment is running at 25 per cent. The generals are particularly proud of the 62 per cent increase in exports recorded in 1981. But they have not controlled social conflict: the daily toll of assassinations goes on unabated. The number of trade unionists being prosecuted gets larger. Even the middle classes are angry at the competition from foreign imports and are demanding a return to protectionist trade policies. The army knows that it cannot afford to change course. It hopes that the promise of a return to democracy will calm the opposition movement.

Pinochet in a corner

In Argentina the ruling class has been forced to move more quickly to restore democratic procedures. The mood of hostility to the military from all social classes means that the army will probably step down after the elections in October. But civilian government is unlikely to make much difference to the Argentine masses. Despite its thriving export-orientated agriculture and its own oil reserves, the economy is in a mess. Unemployment stands at 20 per cent while inflation soars above 300 per cent. Its foreign debt is \$38 billion. Argentina's attempts to borrow money have been snagged on British blocking moves at the IMF in the aftermath of the Malvinas war. All the parties contesting the general election have committed themselves to following the IMF's instructions.

Chile is so unstable that the ruling junta has postponed its promised transition to civilian rule until 1989 — in other words, indefinitely. Only 10 years after the stormy end of the Allende democratic government, the Chilean elite is wary of even giving the appearance of liberalising the regime. The militant traditions of the oldest and most politically developed working class in Latin America are a constant nightmare for the ruling class. The scale of the current economic collapse and political turmoil may mean changes in the junta. The generals may have to dump Pinochet who is closely identified with the disastrous policies of the last decade. But they have no intention of abandoning military rule in Chile.

Yet, at the same time, the experience of the Chilean junta reveals the main forces behind the sudden enthusiasm of soldiers in other NICs for a handover to the politicians. Working class opposition to austerity measures threatens the rigid structures of military dictatorships. Pressures from imperialist bankers and creditors are reducing the NICs' room for manoeuvre. Offering a gradual restoration of democracy buys time for the generals without costing them much. It allows them to enlist the support of opposition leaders in controlling the working class.

But the generals are running out of time and ideas. The working classes of Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Turkey are growing bigger and angrier. They are unlikely to be satisfied with sham elections organised by generals. The day when the imperialist powers will have to intervene directly in these countries to crush the working class is drawing nearer.

Inez Landa

CND prepares for nuclear war

Before the General Election the Labour Party's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament seemed to be a popular cause. But the campaign, and the result, revealed Labour's most serious miscalculation. The Falklands War helped to accelerate the readiness of the British public for major military engagements abroad. Opinion polls indicating a widespread fear of nuclear holocaust disguised a deeper commitment among the electorate – to British militarism, whatever the weapons its forces used. Labour's collapse in the shambles of its disarmament policy has prompted a major reassessment by Britain's peace movement. Stung by media criticisms that it was unpatriotic and defeatist, the movement has turned to emphasise its allegiance to defending Britain – even by retaining nuclear weapons

JUST NOW Michael Meacher plays a useful role in British politics. He lacks any distinctive politics of his own, but he needs to maximise his following in the labour movement in the battle for Labour's deputy leadership. Hence he is the ideal straw to hold up to see which way the wind is blowing. In August he abandoned Labour's pledge to get rid of the Polaris nuclear weapons system. This was the substance of his statement that a future Labour government should not carry out this aspect of party policy, but hold a referendum on the issue. And Meacher was reckoned the most left-wing of the candidates in Labour's leadership stakes. The rest had already capitulated, in one way or another, to the climate of realism created by the June defeat. Indeed it took Meacher almost three months to make the adjustment on Polaris that the old guard of Healey and Callaghan had already made during the election campaign.

Only 12 months ago supporters of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament swept the conferences of the labour movement – the individual unions, the TUC, the Labour Party. Even middle of the road Labour and trade union leaders spoke emotionally of unilateral nuclear disarmament and the expulsion of American bases from British soil. More radical activists talked of a British withdrawal from NATO and Europe-wide disarmament initiatives. Today the Labour left speaks wearily of working within NATO and the word 'unilateral' has disappeared from its vocabulary. Last autumn Greenham Common held the promise of protests that could capture the imaginations of feminists and pacifists and many more beyond Labour's traditional constituency. This autumn, Greenham Common is more likely to witness installation of Cruise than effective opposition to it.

In response to the traumas of the past year the official labour movement's approach has evolved in two related directions. On the one hand it has moved

towards the formulation of 'alternative defence' policies. On the other, it has taken up the proposal for a 'freeze' on further development of nuclear weapons by the superpowers.

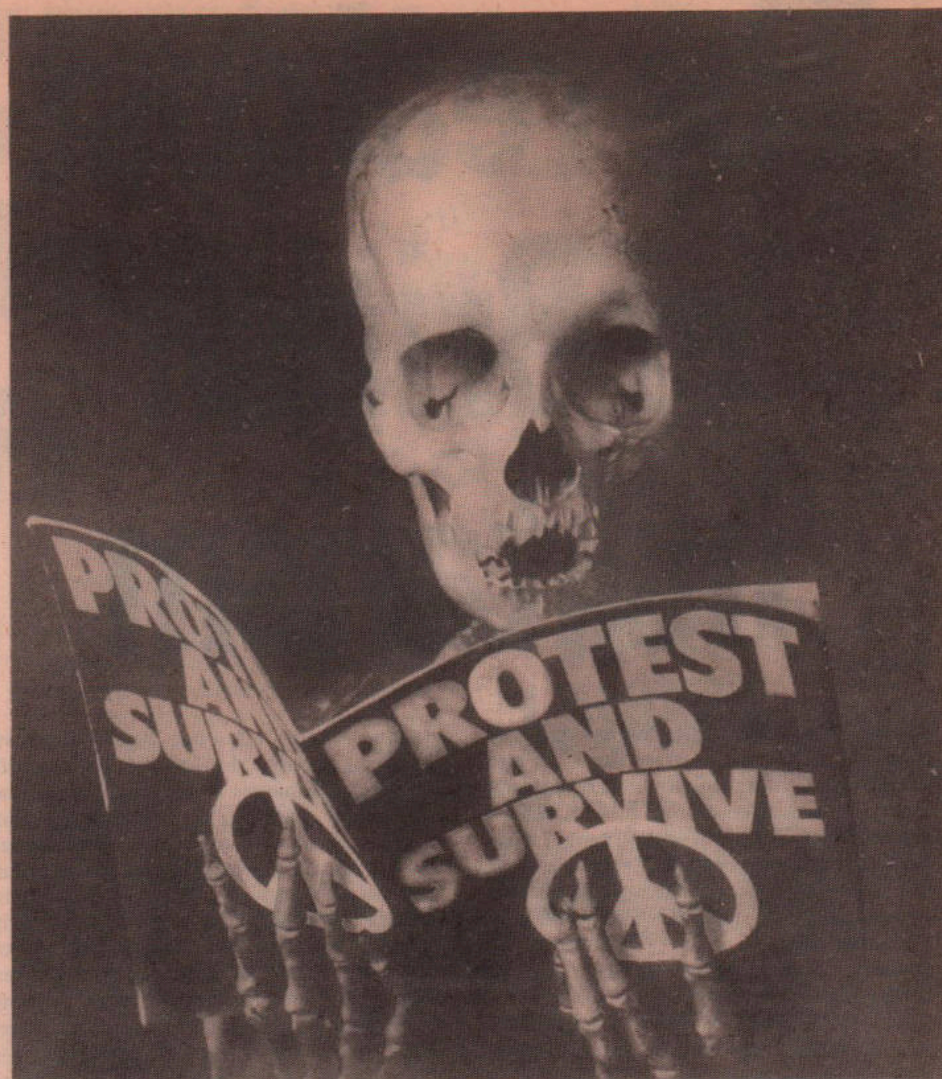
Alternative defence

The Tory propaganda attack on the disarmers has concentrated on the theme that their policies would leave Britain defenceless in an increasingly hostile world. Before the election, an outraged CND tried repeatedly to repudiate this smear on its national loyalties:

'But CND is *not* asking for Britain alone to have no military defences at all...Britain's defence should be really defensive, concentrating on our territory. There are several non-nuclear policies we could follow. We *could* simply decide to scrap nuclear weapons and make no other changes. We'd make a straight saving and still be mightily armed.' (*Nuclear disarmament starts here*, CND, 1983)

Nevertheless the Tory attack struck home. In the June post-mortem the leaders of the peace movement agreed that their public posture of being *against* Cruise, Trident and US bases, without having alternatives they were clearly *for*, laid them open to the Tory allegations. Hence they heartily welcomed the publication of the report of the alternative defence commission's *Defence without the bomb*.

The commission included some of the leading lights in the British peace movement – Labour's Dan Smith, transport union bureaucrat Ron Todd, Labour defence expert Mary Kaldor – as well as a member of the Lucas Aerospace shop stewards' committee, several academics, a Liberal, a Scottish nationalist and a bishop. Its brief was to devise 'alternative defence strategies' in view of their collective distaste for the deployment of nuclear weapons on British territory. Its conclusion was that Britain should pursue a 'high entry price' policy. This means a



The pamphlet that relaunched CND: 'freeze' brings it closer to war

combination of conventional military forces with a 'fall-back' strategy of mass non-violent civil resistance. This would ensure that any invader would be forced to pay a high price for trespassing on English turf.

The peace movement never questions the consequences of the concept of 'defence' for a country like Britain. Yet while the alternative defence commission has been deliberating, British armed forces have attacked Argentina, maintained the occupation of Ireland and participated in the rape of Lebanon. The 'defence' of an imperialist country means its right to use military might to terrorise other countries. Schemes for 'alternative defence' simply propose a different style of militarism. At the same time the alternative strategists present the defence of Britain (by alternative means) as a cause worthy of labour movement support. They legitimise British chauvinism and thus undermine potential resistance to the military adventures of British imperialism.

Freeze

It is but a short step from acceptance of the need to defend Britain with conventional forces to endorsing nuclear weapons. CND's promotion of the 'freeze' slogan for its national 22 October demonstration in London reveals that it has already taken this step. The 'freeze' proposal originates in the American peace movement. It is a call for bilateral agreements between the USA and the Soviet Union to halt the further manufacture, deployment and testing of nuclear weapons. For British CND it amounts to an acceptance of Polaris in the hope that the government will reject cruise missiles and Trident.

It was inevitable that CND's narrow focus on Cruise and Trident over the past year would lead to an even narrower orientation in response to the election debacle. CND is preoccupied with appealing to the masses whose views it considers to be expressed in opinion polls. In reality opinion polls simply reflect a public opinion moulded and manipulated by the ruling class. The result is that CND is obliged to restrict its programme to bring it into line with current bourgeois prejudices. General Secretary Bruce Kent explains the CND method:

'We are doing our best to broaden our base to involve people who are concerned about the freeze. There are a lot of people who may not have got into the precise arguments about Cruise, Trident and SS20s, but who see the urgent need to stop the escalation of nuclear weapons at all levels. CND should be reaching out to people who may not agree with us from A-Z, but do agree from A-K.'

The consequence of this method is that CND's demands have been frozen at 'A' – opposition to further nuclear weapons – while accepting the prevailing nuclear arsenals. For Ian Davison, a member of the CND executive and the Communist Party, progress to 'B' is postponed to the distant future:

'A wide need is felt for a reply in the medium term to the accusation that a non-nuclear Britain would be defenceless and perhaps the reply has to be well tested and developed before a nuclear weapon-free Britain becomes a prominent demand again.' (*Marxism Today*, September)

CND has been obliged to tighten up its machine to minimise internal resistance to its pragmatic policy developments. The leadership took advantage of the summer panic about 'Marxist moles' to purge radical left factions in CND. In June the Council installed four of its members on the executive of Labour CND with the power to veto any decision in conflict with the leadership line. In August it suspended the entire executive and officers of Youth CND and appointed an interim committee in its place.

The first clear indication of the new direction of the cause of peace in the labour movement came at this year's TUC at Blackpool. The composite resolution on disarmament contained no mention of Polaris, unilateralism, or the removal of US bases. These were dropped from an earlier resolution put forward by the transport workers' union at the insistence of the civil servants union. Even supporters of nuclear disarmament were anxious to stress their unshakeable commitment to British militarism. Printers' leader Bill Keys insisted that he 'was not suggesting that we adopt a position of isolation as a nation...of course countries have a right to defend themselves'.

Tribune has denounced as a 'fudge' CND's abandonment of unilateralism in favour of 'freeze' and has criticised its curbs on the Labour CND factions. This is rich from the paper that has long promoted 'alternative defence' policies and recently proposed the return of national service as an acceptable alternative to nuclear weapons (8 April). *Tribune's* pre-election issue included a jingoistic article by Labour's defence spokesman John Silkin proposing 'a strong navy and a properly equipped air force and army' to make Britain great again. Both CND and the Labour Party have pursued the logic of the fudge at the centre of their movement for disarmament. They started off by separating British militarism and its weapons – and they have ended up accepting both.

Fran Eden



Youth march for CND: but CND can't stop war

The real cost of British militarism

Britain has the third largest military machine in the world after the USA and the Soviet Union. But Britain ranks only sixth as a world economic power, behind Japan, West Germany and France. What Britain lacks in industrial performance it has to try to make up with superior firepower. Britain's massive nuclear and conventional arsenal is a symptom of its decline — not, as radical critics claim, its cause.

A RECENT PEACE STUDIES pamphlet by Malcolm Chalmers sums up the liberal assessment of Britain's arms spending. For Chalmers, British governments since the Second World War have attempted to 'retain international political standing through high military spending'. This has served 'only to accelerate economic and industrial decline' by diverting resources from industry and damaging the balance of payments (*The cost of Britain's defence*, May 1983). Chalmers points out that Britain's arms spending was higher than that of its economic rivals. He concludes that such 'excessive' spending could have no economic justification. Its motivation must have been political, based on the fact that 'the British state remained committed to an imperial role'. Chalmers' view is that Britain should have accepted its declining role in post-war international affairs as the economies of Western Europe and Japan recovered and left British capitalism behind. Instead of irrationally pouring money into defence, Britain could have withdrawn from the world arena and devoted its resources to strengthening its economy.

Irrational imperialism?

Post-war British arms spending has certainly been high. Chalmers' statistics show that the share of Britain's Gross Domestic Product which goes on defence — the 'military burden' — has consistently been higher than in any advanced capitalist nation except the USA. It is also true that arms expenditure pre-empt resources. Investing in weapon-production or using scientific personnel in the military sector leaves less resources for making cars, training engineers and raising productivity. But the adverse effects of arms spending are not due to irrational policy decisions. The build-up of Britain's defence system was not a 'policy' or 'decision' made by individual politicians. Militarisation has been imposed on the British ruling class by an irrational capitalist system whose locomotive force is competition. Liberal economists rightly point out that Britain emerged from the Second World War in a position of economic vulnerability. What they refuse to recognise is that despite this, Britain remained the world's second most powerful imperialist country with huge overseas holdings and investments. To protect its foreign interests, the British state has been forced to maintain a formidable military machine.

In 1950 British industrial output was second only to that of the USA. Britain accounted for 25 per cent of world trade in manufactures and 35 per cent of its exports went to backward capitalist countries of the Commonwealth and elsewhere. British imperialism only occupied this position of apparent strength by default. The USA had already edged Britain out of its spheres of influence in Latin America and the Middle East. The post-war recovery of the German and

Japanese economies put British interests under pressure throughout the world. Britain's domestic industrial base was weak and unsuited to the changed conditions of modern capitalism. The British ruling class had to rely on its overseas holdings to survive. The major issue for British imperialism in the 'fifties and early 'sixties became the reorganisation of relations with its colonies and former colonies to maintain profitable overseas trade and investments. The financial ties built into the Overseas Sterling Area allowed Britain to hold on to its former empire in conditions where open economic competition would have benefitted other powers. Military intervention was another method of ensuring British control.

Arms across the sea

Britain has been involved in 88 armed interventions in 51 countries since 1945. The scale of invasions necessary to shore up Britain's declining international status meant a steady rise in British armaments spending. Those who object that such spending was excessive in relation to the size of Britain's overseas holdings miss the point. The only valid comparison is that between military expenditure and what was necessary to secure Britain's survival as a capitalist power.

As the post-war boom progressed it underlined the relative decline of British imperialism. Low profitability on domestic investments encouraged a continual flow of capital abroad. Britain built up overseas assets second only to those of the USA. After 1960 a smaller proportion of Britain's foreign investment and trade went to its former empire. From 1962 to 1976 the share of Britain's direct investments overseas going to backward capitalist countries fell from 36.5 per cent to 21.8 per cent. Exports to the Third World dwindled from 32 per cent of total British exports in 1960 to 22 per cent in 1979. Faced with the decline in the economic importance of its colonies and the growth of national liberation movements across Africa and Asia, Britain conceded formal independence to most of its colonies. But British capitalism could not afford to give up all of these formerly protected markets. Britain kept a foothold by building up trade with the new regimes in the military hardware it had used against the national movements now in power in the Third World. Kenya, for example, gained political independence from Britain in 1963. Britain made sure of its continued role in Kenyan economic affairs by supplying arms and military expertise to the new state. Britain also sought to extend its influence through arms exports such as the sale of Chieftain tanks to the Shah of Iran. This strategy has ensured that Britain remains the world's fourth largest arms exporter. Today, the bulk of Britain's Falklands task force is on a world cruise demonstrating Britain's military wares to potential customers in the Third World.

The liberal argument that the military sector is 'politically' motivated and operates autonomously of the capitalist economy was untenable even during the boom years of the 'fifties and 'sixties. The level of British arms spending was clearly related to the economic decline of British imperialism. The radical left argument that military expenditure actually



BANG GOES ANOTHER KIDNEY UNIT.

Bang goes politics: NALGO's 'Put People First' campaign suggests that arms spending isn't in the interests of the British people — forgetting that militarism directly serves the needs of British capital

determines the growth of the economy has been demolished by the onset of the crisis. Through its theory of the Permanent Arms Economy, the Socialist Workers' Party attempted to prove that arms spending prevents crises by slowing down investment in industry and thus offsetting the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (P Binns, 'The new cold war', *International Socialism*, Spring 1983). By producing both economic collapse and soaring arms spending, today's recession has proved them wrong. Far from dictating the pace of economic development, arms expenditure is determined by the crisis and the threat to the international order that goes with it.

The acceleration of capitalism's decline in the late 'seventies has been accompanied by growing international instability. The imperialist powers have had to rearm to maintain control of their system. From El Salvador to the Lebanon, the economic and social collapse of the backward capitalist world means that Western gunships are needed to guarantee the conditions for profitable imperialist exploitation. Rising tension and competition between the major powers has led to the militarisation of international relations. The burden of rearming has fallen particularly heavily on those states with the largest overseas interests and the weakest economic base from which to protect them — Britain and the USA. Rising arms spending is clearly an unwanted burden — Reagan's massive defence bills have been attacked by everyone from union leaders to the IMF. But it is a burden which cannot be avoided if British or American imperialism is to survive the conflicts to come.

Jobs and bombs

Capitalist recession brings mass unemployment and the threat of a new world war. Britain spent £15.7 billion on defence in 1982. By 1984 military spending will have risen by 19 per cent since the Tories came to power in 1979. Unemployment has more than doubled over the same period. Groups like the SWP have concluded that these two developments are connected in some way. But their demand for 'Jobs not Bombs' is incapable either of opposing British militarism or of defending jobs.

Mass unemployment and militarisation are powerful weapons for capitalism in crisis. Unemployment disciplines the working class to accept lower living standards and lays the basis for the restoration

of capitalist profitability. It fragments the working class and threatens the proletariat's survival as a social force. Arms expenditure equips the ruling class to defend its world interests against its rivals. Militarisation fosters a climate of patriotism and militant chauvinism. It coheres public support for the bosses' offensive against the working class and foreign competition.

Unemployment and rearmament can only be effectively opposed as necessary consequences of the crisis, whose eradication requires the overthrow of capitalism. The radical left slogan 'Jobs not Bombs' implies that there is a solution *within* capitalism. By calling on the capitalist state to simply redistribute resources away from the arms sector towards job creation, it reinforces illusions in the ability of the state to resolve the crisis in favour of the working class. In reality, the state is attempting to resolve the crisis at workers' expense through lowering their living standards and preparing them for the slaughter of a Third World War.

The arguments of the liberal critics of British arms spending are preparing the ground for a historic defeat for the working class. Their tirades against Britain's 'irrational' arms spending are always qualified by support for a more rational defence policy and the economic resurrection of British imperialism. After condemning arms spending as a burden on the economy, Chalmers concludes that 'economic prosperity needs to go hand in hand with political and military security'. A recent TGWU pamphlet on converting military installations into civilian factories producing useful products begins by admitting that 'this country must of course make effective arrangements for its defence and the TGWU therefore accepts the necessity of much of our conventional defence expenditure' (*A better future for defence jobs*, May 1983). If workers accept these ideas they will be unable to oppose the sacrifices in working class living standards and lives necessary for the survival of British imperialism. The working class can only defend itself from the British state's defence policies by exposing them as war policies designed to resolve imperialism's crisis at the expense of the international working class. Defeating the British state and the system it protects is the only guarantee that British workers can look forward to jobs and not bombs.

Tony Allen

The thoughts of Ken Livingstone and Peter Hain

The softening of the left



As we go to press, Labour's post-election reappraisal continues in Brighton. Here we examine the response of two left-wingers who failed to get elected. On page 18 we look at two Militant MPs who succeeded. On page 19 we analyse the death agony of British Stalanism.

MOST OF THE Labour Party remains in a state of shock, uncertain which way to move to salvage Labour's chronically declining fortunes. Leadership heir-apparent Neil Kinnock has passed the summer unsure whether to adopt the statesmanlike demeanour of the SDP's David Owen or to go for a more radical image in the style of the Young Liberals. Should Labour try to appeal to the 'new middle class', the 'upwardly mobile working class' or to women and blacks, the low paid and the unemployed, pacifists and ecologists? Most Labour politicians simply do not know which way to turn — with the result that almost anything could happen at Brighton.

Two upwardly mobile Labour politicians with some ideas on the way forward for the party are Peter Hain and Ken Livingstone. Hain, self-appointed tribune of the soft left, gave the keynote address at July's Labour Coordinating Committee conference in Manchester. Last month he issued his perspective for the Labour Party — *The democratic alternative: a socialist response to Britain's crisis* (Penguin, £2.50). Hard-left Livingstone has been stumping around the party conferences arguing the case for saving the Greater London Council from the Tory axe. He has given his post-election assessment in a reflective interview with Tariq Ali, published in the summer issue of the *New Left Review* under the provocative title 'Why Labour lost'.

The big 'but'

Hain's book reflects the lack of a coherent strategy in the Labour Party today in its remarkable eclecticism. He borrows community politics from the Liberals, alliances from the Eurocommunists, social policy from the Fabians, incomes policy from Harold Wilson, foreign policy from Aneurin Bevan, and visions of a socialist tomorrow from cranky libertarians. Yet it is possible to discern themes in his rather turgid synthesis.

Like many on the Labour left, Hain is of the opinion that since the working class has clearly given up on Labour, Labour should abandon the working class. In his chapter on 'divided Britain' he is

careful to acknowledge the existence of the working class as a part of 'our society'. Indeed he is so careful that he repeats the point three times within a few pages. 'Class divisions are still very central to British society' he writes, and again, 'class does persist', and yet again, 'class divisions still figure significantly in Britain'. Each of the sentences following these assertions begins, 'But...'. The working class is still around, but class distinctions are less clear cut, 'ordinary people' are less class conscious. And what about women, blacks — and a new sociological category discovered by Hain, 'the ecology lobby'? Hain identifies the working class only to dissolve it into the mass of British people, a category long favoured by social democratic politicians. Hain seeks to replace the notion of Labour as a class-based party with the idea of Labour as a coalition of interest groups:

'Labour needs to construct a new form of class-based politics, by concentrating on specific class issues, rather than pretending that there is still a single, over-arching working-class consciousness into which the Party's policies can automatically slot.'

He then provides the usual list of such issues, reflecting the particular concerns of diverse sections of society, from trade unionists to pensioners, feminists to ecologists. In fact these are not class issues at all; they are just labelled as such as a gesture to Labour's traditions. And of course there never has been 'a single, over-arching working class consciousness'. In the past some socialists and communists have tried to forge such a consciousness through their intervention in the class struggle. Today's Labour left simply tries to 'slot' policies into workers' consciousness as it currently exists. And if the policies don't fit, they conclude that they must find some more suitable slot. Hence the quest for a new social base for Labour. However, Hain's energies are not confined to creating 'a new coalition for socialism', but extend to the consideration of 'the new Labour Party politics' appropriate to this alliance.

Hain's concern is to give the Labour left's traditional identification with state

intervention in industry and services a 'non-statist' and 'non-bureaucratic' interpretation. But this amounts to little more than the customary platitudes about extending democratic control, decentralisation and the need for popular participation. Behind these clichés borrowed from the Young Liberals or Tony Benn, Hain expounds the programmatic policies of Roy Hattersley and the Labour right.

Well-travelled roads

In his opening chapter Hain defines 'the radical socialism of the new Labour Party' by its readiness to give 'more than lip service to full employment'. By chapter four it becomes clear that Hain is not even prepared to pay lip service to full employment. He repeats Labour's General Election pledge to maintain mass unemployment indefinitely — that is, its promise to reduce the jobless to one million in five years. The same mood of sombre realism about the sacrifices the working class would have to make under a future Labour government pervades the chapter. He warns that 'whilst socialist policies can reverse Britain's decline, this cannot be done overnight'. And he cautions further that 'even the most radical Labour policies will not be able to insulate the economy from the impact of the world recession'. The message is clear — 'the radical socialism of the new Labour Party' is austerity socialism à la Mitterand, or in the style of Harold Wilson's social contract. To confirm the point Hain endorses incomes policy, insisting 'emphatically' that this would not be 'of the kind normally understood'. We understand — all Wilson's incomes policies were of just this kind, before they were introduced.

Hain's new-style Labour Party is not much different from the old-style Labour Party. He revives Bevan's concept of a 'non-aligned' foreign policy for poor little Britain 'trapped in the middle of the superpower rivalry'. And, in passing, he approves 'working inside' both NATO and the EEC. The only polemical passage in the book is a savage attack on poor old Militant, which Hain detests for stealing the lion's share of the Labour left's publicity. He concludes by endorsing the 'third road' between reform and revolution, a concept he seems to think was discovered by his LCC pal Geoff Hodgson, but is in fact as old as social democracy. As a measure of the drift of the Labour left to the right, Hain's book is revealing. But Labour supporters looking for a new direction won't find it here.

Curbing capital

Much of the Labour left has quietly accepted the verdict of the British establishment that its policies were at least partly to blame for the June debacle. Accordingly they spent the summer doing penance, and let the right get on with running the party and sorting out the new leadership. Not so Ken Livingstone. His paper *Labour Herald* went further than the rest of the left in criticising the inadequacy of the alternative economic strategy. 'Crucially', its post-election editorial asserted, 'the leadership failed to tackle the question of capital'. But how would Livingstone tackle this weighty question? Once he had satisfied his *New Left Review* interrogator on the burning issue of proportional representation, Livingstone outlined his approach on economic policy.

Livingstone proposes controls on the flow of capital and curbs on the City of London. So, as a matter of fact, does Roy Hattersley. And so (according to



Livingstone) do some members of the Institute of Bankers with whom he was recently in conversation. Clearly this proposition will not provoke a pre-emptive coup d'état by the finance capitalists. Second, Livingstone wants 'an extension of public ownership into the profitable sectors of the economy'. This has been Labour Party policy since 1957. Livingstone wants the state to get into information technology and rationalise British Telecom. But this is simply a return to the approach of the last Labour government — and that never tackled 'the question of capital'.

Livingstone's third proposal is for 'state monopolies based on workers' control and workers' self-management'. What this means he doesn't say and his interviewer is polite enough not to pursue the matter. Perhaps he has in mind workers' cooperatives of the sort sponsored by the GLC's enterprise board. When Associated Automation in Brent was a subsidiary of GEC it had a workforce of 400. When it was transformed by the GLC into the Third Sector 'cooperative', 280 jobs disappeared; now it has collapsed altogether.

Livingstone's final suggestion is a mass extra-parliamentary campaign led by Labour MPs, the unions and other activists to combat 'the hostility to public enterprise that undoubtedly exists'. But it will take more than a campaign to combat workers' scepticism about state intervention. Their hostility is a result of personal experience, not Thatcherite propaganda. Workers made redundant by British Steel, British Shipbuilders and British Leyland will take some convincing of the merits of nationalisation. Workers who have to rely on public transport, social security, state hospitals and schools have become cynical about Labour politicians who sing the praises of these third-rate services. Workers in London who see London Transport's cuts in jobs and services and the way the GLC undermines fights for jobs by setting up spurious cooperatives will be inclined to say — if this is socialism, forget it!

Labour's dead-end

Livingstone's hard-left postures do not stand up to close examination. The rest of his interview reveals his drift along similar lines to the rest of the Labour left. Like all the entrists left he advocates a vote for Kinnock for leader, after a token gesture of support for Heffer in the first round. He tries to hedge this with meaningless criticisms and conditions — which significantly do not include the reinstatement of the *Militant* editorial board. Like Hain, Livingstone dislikes the competition from Militant. Livingstone also shares with Hain the sort of rhetorical differences with the right that lead inevitably towards compromise. Neither Hain's soft face nor Livingstone's hard rhetoric provide Labour with a way out of its current mess.

Mick Kennedy

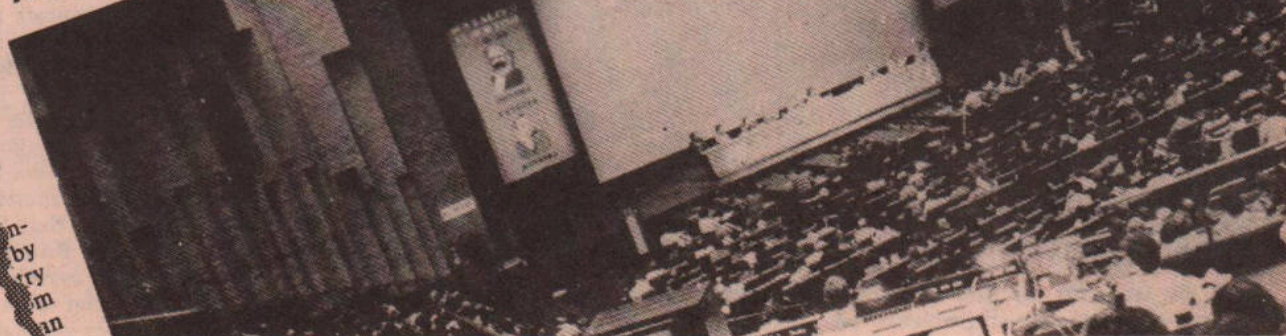


'Marxist MPs and councils - the socialist alternative'

The Militant myth

Brilliant success for Militant rally

By
Militant Reporters



IN RECENT years, Militant has emerged as a credible and legitimate section of the Labour left. At its national rally at Wembley Conference Centre on 10 September, Militant acclaimed its 'Marxist MPs' David Nellist and Terry Fields. Its speakers could hold up Liverpool as an example of a Militant-controlled 'Marxist' council. The rise of Militant inside the Labour Party cannot be denied - but what is the significance of its growing influence?

Militant's Marxism

Speaker after speaker at Wembley emphasised Militant's distinctive policies. In a major article assessing Labour's defeat at the last General Election, John Pickard stressed a now familiar theme in the columns of Militant's weekly newspaper:

'If the Labour Party had fought nationally with the same degree of organisation, with the same policy, determination and resolve as was demonstrated in places like Bradford North, Liverpool Broad Green, Coventry South East and Brighton Kemptown, then it would have been swept into government.' (*Militant*, 17 June 1983)

Pickard's message was that the election campaigns run by Militant supporters demonstrated a successful alternative to the Labour Party mainstream.

Behind the scenes, Militant is well known to be very critical of many Labour Party policies. In its confidential *British Perspectives* 1983, Militant describes Labour's programme as 'the dream world, the utopia'. In its internal publications Militant has no inhibitions about characterising Labour's manifesto as 'worn-out policies of the past that have been shown to be completely bankrupt'. However, its public criticisms in *Militant* are more subdued.

Indeed Militant appears to be very jealous about sharing its criticisms of Labour with the wider public. The electorate of Bradford North, Liverpool Broad Green or Coventry South East could be forgiven for failing to distinguish between the campaigns run by their Militant-backed candidates and ordinary Labour candidates elsewhere. 'Policies that have been shown to be completely bankrupt' were transformed miraculously in the course of the campaign into realistic solutions for the working class. Coventry candidate David Nellist insisted on this point. His election leaflet declared that 'Labour stands for a socialist society with a planned economy owned and run democratically by working people'. The return of a Labour government, he maintained, 'would mean the ending of unemployment, slum housing and poverty'.

For which Labour programme did the electorate of Coventry South East finally vote? Did they go for the 'bankrupt' policies described in Militant's *British Perspectives* 1983? Or did they put their cross on the ballot paper for the socialist planned economy outlined in Nellist's

election literature? Since the people of Coventry were not made privy to Nellist's inner thoughts we must assume that the result represented a victory for bankrupt policies rather than a mandate for closet Marxism.

A day in the life of a Marxist Council

The dominant influence of Militant on Liverpool City Council is well known. Militant supporters derive considerable inspiration from their very own Marxist council. Unfortunately the people of Liverpool have not yet had the chance to appreciate the difference between a Marxist and a non-Marxist local authority. We invite our readers to detect the Marxist philosophy behind the following resolution passed without opposition on Liverpool City Council shortly after the Militant takeover in May:

'That this City Council will:

- at all times honour and respect the office of H.M. the Queen and pledge their loyalty to the Royal Family
- at all times when occasion arises, rise to their feet, at the singing of the National Anthem
- represent the City in the fitting manner when Royalty visits the citizens of the City of Liverpool
- not support the idea of substituting the National Anthem.' (Minutes p468, May 1983)

When not pledging loyalty to the Royal Family our Marxist councillors are busy with more mundane matters. Education chairman Dominic Brady has strong views on progressive teaching methods. In September he promised that cuts in the education budget 'will be quick, sharp and painful but they must go ahead' (*Daily Post*, 9 September). Councillor Derek Hatton, Militant's leading voice in local government spelt out the Marxist council's austerity arithmetic:

'The clear message is the government has taken £120m off this authority since 1979. Additionally this year's budget called for 1500 redundancies, the clear choice is to fight for £25m to cover our policies.' (*Liverpool Echo*, September)

Hatton appears to be so taken with the originality and radicalism of this demand that he repeated it with a flourish at the Wembley rally. Negotiation for £25 mil-

lion is the defining feature of Marxism in Liverpool.

Even a casual observer can see that Militant's electoral success has nothing to do with its 'distinctive' policies. In Coventry and Liverpool Militant candidates ran, but it was the Labour Party that won. In effect, Militant is the Labour Party in Liverpool. Militant's success lies not in fighting for its policies in public, but in the ability of its supporters to advance inside the structures of the Labour Party at the expense of other left factions.

The real Militant

Our criticism of Militant is not that it says one thing in private and something different in public. The real problem is that Militant's policies (even the confidential ones) do not constitute an alternative to those of the Labour Party. Militant's perspective is not based on alternative policies, but on fighting more consistently than Labour's leadership for the Labour Party programme. It believes that the fight for this programme will show the masses the need for a socialist society:

'Marxists will demand the carrying out of the programme which has been put forward by the leadership. We will fight for the implementation of that programme. And at the same time we will be saying that our demand of a 35-hour week, a minimum wage, massive expenditure on the social services, and so on - adequate measures for the youth and unemployed - all demands which are put forward by the Marxists at the present time, cannot be implemented under capitalism. We will explain that only the transformation of society can result in the implementation of Labour's modest programme under present day conditions.' (*British Perspectives* 1983)

This perspective exposes Militant's lack of political independence. Policies which a few paragraphs earlier are labelled 'worn-out' and 'completely bankrupt' now become 'modest'; their implementation, however, would lead to the transformation of society.

Militant's perspectives illustrate its repudiation of any attempt to develop a Marxist programme. Militant's criticism of the Labour leadership's programme has no consequence, because it agrees to campaign around it anyway irrespective of its

failings. In one very important respect Militant is even more confused than the Labour leadership. The Labour leadership makes no claims that its manifesto is a far-reaching threat to capitalism. But Militant does. Nellist's leaflet for the June election proclaimed Labour as a revolutionary force in society:

'There are two real alternatives in the future. Those who defend the profit system of the monopolies, and the Labour Party which stands for a socialist society and the further development of mankind.'

We can now see the real role of Militant. It presents to the public as a socialist alternative a programme that it dismisses itself as bankrupt. Militant offers no threat to the Labour leadership. Rather it provides a left cover for Labour's reactionary policies. Militant's role is to appeal to the aspirations of workers and to channel their energies into Labour's election machinery. This is the real Militant that the public sees in Liverpool, Coventry and elsewhere. Militant may think that it is pulling a fast one on Labour's leadership. But in reality the Marxist moles are doing the labour bureaucrats a favour by winning wider credibility for their policies.

The working class would not benefit from the implementation of Labour's programme. Its policies are divisive and are designed to revitalise the capitalist system. Successive Labour governments have shown the consequences of this programme. Fighting for another version of the same will not lead workers to the conclusion that society has to be transformed. It will lead to demoralisation and the fragmentation of the labour movement.

Capitalism cannot be transformed by tricks and backstage manoeuvres. The immediate priority is to fight for policies that unite the working class against the capitalist system. This requires not secret criticisms, but an up-front struggle against the influence of Labourism in the working class. Militant has lost its way so badly that it has become a component part of British Labourism. In deciding to put loyalty to Labour before the interests of the working class, Militant has made the wrong choice.

Frank Richards

The Communist Party of Great Britain End of the British road?



After a year of incessant internal wrangling the Communist Party enters its 38th Congress next month in an advanced state of fragmentation. According to a recently published factional pamphlet, actual membership is little more than half the official figure of 15 000, itself a post-war low. The circulation of the *Morning Star* in Britain is probably less than the party's membership and its survival is constantly under discussion. How has the party founded at the height of the revolutionary upsurge of the European working class after the First World War reached this pathetic state after more than 60 years?

AT THE NOVEMBER Congress, CP general secretary Gordon McLennan will face an unprecedented challenge to his leadership of the party. In formal terms the fundamental division is between the Eurocommunists and the orthodox pro-Soviet wing of the party. The Eurocommunists are loosely grouped around *Marxism Today*, the party's monthly theoretical journal edited by Martin Jacques. The orthodox faction is fronted by *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater and industrial correspondent Mick Costello, formerly the party's industrial organiser. A smaller and even more pro-Soviet element supports the monthly *Straight Left*.

Traditionalists V Eurocommunists

The two broad camps in the CP are divided in terms of age, social origins and the strategy they put forward to save the party. However, as we shall see, they have much in common politically. The Eurocommunists tend to be young and middle class, generally employed in public service professions and quangos. They are often active in 'community politics', CND and feminist circles and see the future of the CP as a coordinator of diverse 'autonomous' movements. The constant use of the term 'broad democratic alliance' marks them out in inner party debates.

The traditionalists tend to be older and more proletarian. They are often trade union officials at various levels of the bureaucracy from workplace up to the General Council of the TUC. They believe that the CP can survive through maintaining its links with the bureaucracy, though they differ on the extent to which they think sales of *Soviet Weekly* can help to build the party. Using the phrase 'the leading role of the working class' identifies supporters of this tendency in the internal battles.

The extent of recent public conflict among leading party members has been greater than at any time in the history of the party. Internal debates have rarely been characterised by such acrimonious exchanges. The current round of squabbling erupted last September over an article in *Marxism Today* which criticised the incorporation of shop stewards into management procedures. Industrial organiser Mick Costello issued a strident condemnation of the article on behalf of the trade union bureaucrats in a statement to the *Morning Star*. He was subsequently rebuked by the CP executive committee which took the unprecedented step of siding publicly with the Eurocommunists against one of the party's leading traditionalists, a man with close links with both the Soviet and the TUC bureaucracies. Shortly afterwards Costello resigned his post 'for personal reasons'. His replacement by Eurocommunist Pete Carter — described by the *New Statesman* as a 'sexy, pro-ecology, pro-feminist building worker' — only intensified friction. A few months later the executive censured

Morning Star editor Tony Chater for appointing Costello as the paper's industrial correspondent without due consultation.

Battle for the Star

Last May it became known to the *Morning Star's* formal management committee, a body sympathetic to the traditionalists, that the CP executive was secretly circulating its own list of candidates for the forthcoming annual elections to the committee. The Chater/Costello faction at the *Morning Star* hit back by publishing a statement in the paper regretting that 'an outside body' — the CP executive — was seeking to take over the management committee, and putting forward its own nominees. Chater and Costello suspiciously viewed the executive's candidates — a bunch of geriatrics headed by retired editor George Matthews — as a sort of Trojan horse for the Eurocommunists. After a series of meetings around the country the orthodox wing triumphed in the elections in June. They have subsequently attempted to save the paper by securing agreement from the print unions to open up the presses to commercial printing work. The only apparent results of the print shop reorganisation have been constant changes in the shape of the paper and the colour of its masthead. Neither content nor circulation seem to have improved.

Scarcely had this battle been resolved when the CP's disastrous performance in the General Election prompted another round of internecine strife. The CP's 35 candidates won an average of just over 300 votes each. Within the week national election agent John Peck put the Eurocommunist view. The left 'would need to be involved in mass politics in a wide variety of fields' with the aim of building 'an anti-Tory alliance' among the 17.5 million people who voted for other parties and the 8 million who did not vote at all. Within days the *Morning Star* political correspondent Andrew Murray replied with the orthodox line. The CP's perspective should emphasise 'the development of the power and strength of the working class movement'.

A rancorous debate over the implications of the election result raged in the correspondence columns of the *Morning Star* throughout the summer. In an evident rehearsal for November, contributors divided into those who favoured pursuing

an opportunist alliance of the CP with middle class pressure groups and those who wanted an equally opportunist unity behind the trade union bureaucracy. The last letter published before Chater declared the debate closed at the beginning of September concluded with a vituperative attack on McLennan and a call for 'the consignment of such "leadership" to the dustbin'. The next blow came with the publication of a pamphlet signed by Charlie Woods, a CP member of 60 years standing, which made clear that the pro-Soviet wing of the party intended a direct assault on McLennan and his executive at Congress.

Disintegration and decay

The bitterness of the debate in the CP is a product of the disintegration of the party after a long period of decay. The party was formed in 1920, inspired by the example of the October Revolution in Russia and driven forward by the revolutionary militancy of the shop stewards' movement in Britain. But the young party soon fell victim to the setbacks inflicted on the working class as unemployment soared in the early 'twenties. The consolidation of reformism in Britain and the subsequent degeneration of the international communist movement under the influence of Stalinism took their toll on the British CP. It never developed an independent programme and came to rely on the Soviet bureaucracy on the one hand and the British labour bureaucracy on the other for its survival.

The CP reached its organisational peak at the moment when its loss of political independence was most apparent and most damaging for the working class — during the Second World War. The alliance of Churchill and Stalin against Hitler, and the total mobilisation of the official labour movement behind the war effort allowed the CP to win widespread support on the basis of patriotic anti-fascism. Membership reached 50 000 and it returned two MPs to Parliament in 1945. The onset of the Cold War in the late 'forties and the revelation of the repressive and bureaucratic character of the Soviet regime made the CP's links with Moscow, previously its greatest asset, into a liability. Membership and electoral support declined steadily through the post-war years.

The CP's decline was temporarily arr-

ested in the 'sixties and 'seventies by the upsurge of trade union militancy and student radicalism. The emergence of Eurocommunism in Italy, France and Spain in the mid 'seventies as a distinct 'national' and 'democratic' brand of Stalinist politics proved attractive to middle class radicals in Britain too. Many drifted into the CP which in turn became influenced by their individualist preoccupations — with feminism, ecology and peace. The new version of the CP's programme the *British Road to Socialism* adopted in 1977 revealed the influence of Eurocommunism in its tributes to the role of the 'broad democratic alliance' of all 'progressive forces' in the transition to socialism.

The recession shattered Eurocommunism. In countries where the CPs had some influence in the working class — France and Spain — the Eurocommunists' willingness to collaborate in capitalist austerity programmes led to a dramatic loss of support. To consolidate their traditional working class base most CPs turned back towards Moscow. The British CP was influenced by these developments and by the general drift of its petit-bourgeois constituency to the right. The rise of the Bennite Labour left attracted some Eurocommunists into the Labour Party; many simply pursued the logic of feminism and 'lifestyle' politics and dropped out. At the same time the crisis of the trade union bureaucracy in the face of mass unemployment and Tory attacks was reflected in the CP.

Two brands of Stalinism

Neither wing of the CP has anything to offer the working class. Both uphold the *British Road to Socialism*, each giving a different emphasis to its commitment to a national, democratic, reformist strategy. Both give broad support to the Labour Party's central economic policy — the alternative economic strategy. This points towards a programme of state-led capitalist revival which would inevitably mean a sharp fall in working class living standards. Indeed both Eurocommunists and CP traditionalists support the Labour Party. It is ironic that the most intransigent pro-Soviet faction in the CP, *Straight Left*, favours liquidation into the Labour Party.

Wherever it has influence today the CP is a force of reaction. In the trade unions its members provide a constant service for the bureaucracy against rank and file initiatives. On the People's March for Jobs, the CP organisers welcomed bishops and liberals and suppressed anti-Tory slogans. In CND the CP leads the peace movement further and further to the right, and co-operates in the witch-hunt against the left. It is a sad end for a party which made such a promising start more than 60 years ago. But the sooner it goes — and takes with it its tedious daily apologist for the Kremlin and Congress House — the better.

Mick Hume



Flash caps in Trafalgar Square: CP leader McLennan (right) with trade union fellow traveller



Hospital laundry: no lifestyle politics here

Women: all in it together?

Lynne Segal ed, *What is to be done about the family?*

Elizabeth Wilson, *What is to be done about violence against women?* Penguin Books in association with the Socialist Society 1983, pbk £2.50.

ACCORDING TO THE dust-jacket blurbs introducing a series of Socialist Society paperbacks, 'These short and simple books will deal with the central social and political issues of the day'. In the first we discover the issues Wendy Clarke considers central:

'Many women are facing the decisions over children, to have or not, by ourselves or with another; others are involved in buying homes and agonising over Highgate or Clapham; others are facing critical crisis points in relationships and orientations, socialist-feminist or feminist and socialist? And sex and sexuality is becoming a key question in our lives again.'

Oh yeah? Which women? There are seven contributors to Segal's collection. Five are college lecturers, one is a 'feminist journalist', the other a trade union bureaucrat. For women like these, Wendy Clarke may have identified the central issues. Working class women have more serious preoccupations.

Page one outlines the living arrangements, sexual orientation, and details of the offspring of each of the contributors. Long the norm in romantic fiction, such biographical detail is usually absent from political works. Here it substitutes for a method. Laying bare the experience of the writer is a technique popularised by modern sociology. The investigator puts his cards on the table, sets out his bias, prejudices and limited experience. This excuses inconsistency and empiricism, and allows for an infinite range of experiences. While it appears self-effacing, it is simply arrogant to serve up personal reminiscences as the 'thoughtful and stimulating' answers to 'important questions' which the book promises.

The great 'we'

The book's approach originates in the Women's Liberation Movement. A decade of personal politics read backwards produces a plethora of answers to the questions every right-on kid asks - 'What did you do in the WLM, mummy?' The answer is that 'we' went on Vietnam demos, 'we' found the IRA was 'macho, warlike paranoid and desperate', 'we' tried communal living, 'we' forced men to share the housework. No one would know from Segal's book that 'we' live in a class society which divides all individuals, including women, into us and them. The authors accept the founding prejudice of bourgeois sociology that 'our' society is an organic whole. Class is an incidental factor, not a fundamental division. As a consequence not only working class men, but working class women too, are underestimated. The WLM, even in its early days, put minimal resources into supporting the strikes of women workers. When women were strong, organised and fighting the system they were ignored by feminism. Working class women only appear in Segal's book as the beleaguered victims of their husbands' violence, rehabilitated in crumbling hostels by understanding middle class feminists.

What was dramatic about the criticisms (of the family) which came out of the '60s was that for a while, some of us used them to conclude that we must and could change things. We could begin immediately to change our own lives, if not the world'. In fact, the 10 000 communal

reviews

houses in the USA (and many fewer in Britain) didn't do much to 'change the world'. They just made the participants feel they were doing something useful by having endless meetings and discussing the politics of personal life in the local pub.

Looking back in a critical frame of mind, Segal and the others treasure the sisterhood and the experimentation. They regret the simplistic slogans of the WLM and the way they wrote off the Labour Party. All the contributors accept that the demands of the early WLM for free 24-hour nurseries, socialised domestic work and economic independence for women were unrealistic. It is an ironic consequence of the recession that the most important gains of the WLM are now seen as 'utopian'. These demands could have been used to involve working class women and men in the fight for women's emancipation. Instead the truly utopian side of feminism - the notion that to adjust your brain and open a commune was a strategy for changing society - is celebrated. This book can only be recommended as sad testimony to the mis-spent youth of angry young women as they reach a complacent middle age.

Making a break?

Elizabeth Wilson's book is much better. It is a sensible if over-subtle critique of feminism. But her critique is undermined by an inability to follow through the criticisms to a break with feminist politics. She gives undue credit to the WLM, Rape Crisis Centres and Women's Aid. But in looking at aspects of violence against women from a materialist standpoint she is forced to reject many of the prejudices of today's feminist movement.

Her first target is 'patriarchy'. She explains that the capitalist economy is organised on anti-patriarchal lines. Women and children are 'free' under the law to search for employment and sell their labour-power separately from the family. She explains that formal equality within the family and women's suffrage mean that women today are no longer under the tutelage of husband or father. Nor is the bourgeois family a patriarchal institution; the child is no longer supposed to fear and obey the father but to love him.

Her second target is biological determinism, the view that 'male/female differences are simply biological "givens"'. This reactionary belief means that nothing can ever change because of the eternal grip of aggression, jealousy, territorialism, maternal instincts etc. Radical feminists share this belief with right-wing ideologues like 'Naked Ape' man Desmond Morris. In tackling biological determinism Wilson challenges feminism's fundamental prejudice that men always have and always will oppress women.

The chapters on rape and battered wives are excellent. Wilson explains that in a society 'in which women are seen as anything rather than adult human beings', they will inevitably be raped and battered. She argues that rape is not something found in all societies as a function of male sexuality, but is historically specific. Therefore it can be eradicated by changing women's position in society.

Wife battering is explained as 'an exaggeration of how society expects men to behave'. Wilson demolishes the views of social workers like Erin Pizzey who note that battered women often return to violent men. 'If a woman possesses no independent income, has small children to look after and nowhere to live, she may actually be unable to leave at all, or may be forced to return after a short period because of the dearth of alternatives'. Thus while she thinks refuges are a good thing, she implicitly concedes their long-term uselessness.

The main point in the chapter on prostitution is borrowed from Engels. 'Not only is it, so to speak, the lavatory that makes the modern home hygienic, but it is also, in important economic ways, the other side of the coin to marriage'. Wilson destroys the link between pornography and male violence. She looks at societies where porn is illegal or doesn't exist. In some, violence against women is rife, in others non-existent. She therefore challenges censorship, while disapproving of pornography. This is fair enough. We object to pornography because it degrades the working class; we would never give additional power to the state to deny us access to whatever the ruling class may consider obscene.

Personal solutions

The chapter 'Feminists fight back' reveals the weaknesses in Wilson's approach. She endorses many of the personal solutions outlined in Segal - alternative social work and a narrowly conceived 'ideological struggle'. For example, she states that 'the "cure" for rape lies ultimately not in the individual but in the school and in the home where sexist attitudes are sown'.

But even with the most feminist parents and liberal schooling rape will continue as long as capitalism exists. All Wilson's solutions presume the continuation of capitalist society. She ends up arguing along with Segal and the Socialist Society that, 'If the Labour Party wishes to survive, it has to build a wider constituency'. Despite its reformist conclusions, however, this book is highly recommended.

Kate Marshall



The personal and the political

Emmanuel Reynaud, *Holy Virility*, Pluto Press 1983, pbk £3.50

THE 'anti-sexist men's movement' is a creation of the middle class radicalisation of the 'seventies. In Britain it consists of about 200 men who attend conferences, take part in consciousness-raising groups, run creches and read the *Anti-sexist men's newsletter* and books like *Holy Virility*.

This book belongs to the 'personal is political' tradition of the feminists. This statement has been open to several interpretations. One argues that what society sees as individual problems are in fact social questions: what needs to be changed is not the individual, but society. The second interpretation, which Reynaud adheres to, is that political problems can be resolved within the individual.

Reynaud locates the source of sexual divisions in men's inexplicable desire for 'power'. According to Reynaud, power is 'the ultimate aphrodisiac' and is to be found 'at the tip of the phallus'. Material gain is only its 'eternal alibi'. Men want power as 'an end in itself' because that is how they've been brought up. *Holy Virility* is the mirror image of bourgeois ideology. Reynaud leads us from the problems of the oppressed as individuals, not to the social relations which cause them, but to the psychology of the agents of oppression - in his analysis, men.

Overcoming oppression

The book accepts the feminist dictum that men are the cause of women's oppression. The problem then becomes how to stop being a man. Reynaud argues that all of humanity is trapped within the ideological constructions of *male* and *female*; men should fight against sexism, not out of guilt, but because sexism cramps the style of the individual:

'Only when these concepts (of male and female) have been eliminated will it be possible for each person to develop his or her potential as an individual.'

Reynaud's faith in the capacity of the individual to overcome oppression is touching. But women will not stop being oppressed as a result of men attending consciousness-raising groups. Women's position in society and the relationships between individuals are governed by capitalist social relations. The fact that one class owns and controls the means of production in a system based on profit means that the working class is forced to reproduce itself, free of charge, within the family. It is not ideology, but a social relationship which oppresses women and denies humanity its emotional and sexual potential.

Capitalism does not just act as a barrier to the fulfilment of the individual; it is also a barrier to the development of the productive

forces. Unless that barrier is smashed the potential for individual fulfilment will never be realised. Challenging bourgeois ideology and backward notions about masculinity and femininity is important: the working class must break with all the ideas that tie it to the bosses. But eradicating the divisions between the sexes requires more than just a description of their consequences. It means taking the means of production out of the hands of the capitalist class and destroying the system that creates them.

One of the heartaches of those involved in the anti-sexist men's movement is that, try as they might to be otherwise, they remain men. We say to them that the problem lies not in their heads, nor even 'at the tip of the phallus', but in the society that makes us what we are. Women's oppression is necessary to capitalism. By fighting for the things we need - free abortion and contraception on demand, free 24-hour nurseries, a woman's right to work - we can begin the fight to change society. Change that and we change ourselves.

Richard Tench

A German tragedy

Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the fascists? - the German Communists and political violence 1929-33*, Cambridge University Press 1983, pp 273, pbk

ROSENHAFT'S BOOK looks at the attempts of the German Communist Party in Berlin to organise anti-fascist activity in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties. With a wealth of documentary and anecdotal material it attempts to reconstruct the reality behind formal policy proclamations and party rhetoric. Although the book suffers at times from obscure sociological jargon and lacks a coherent analytical framework, it provides important insights into the causes of the KPD's collapse.

Four working class districts formed the backbone of the Berlin KPD in the Weimar period: Wedding, Neukölln, Friedrichshain and Zentrum. In late 1928, as the depression was beginning to take hold of the German economy, the Nazis launched a concerted drive to build a base in 'Red Babylon', as Berlin was called in National Socialist Workers' Party propaganda. None less than the future Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels was appointed to direct this battle on the home ground of some of the most advanced sections of the German proletariat. The Nazi intrusion gave rise to protracted and bitter struggles in the working class neighbourhoods.

Rosenhaft draws out a number of objective factors which facilitated the spread of fascist influence and presented major problems for revolutionaries. One problem, which receives little attention in most of the literature on the period, was the fragmentation of the working class. In the mid-twenties German industry underwent a process of rationalisation and restructuring which led to major social stratification. Closures of unproductive plants on the one hand and the concentration of production in new high technology and mass production units on the other deepened divisions between skilled workers in relatively secure jobs, the semi-skilled and unskilled, and a new mass of almost permanently unemployed casual labourers. These divisions were reflected in working class consciousness and organisation. The skilled upper layers of the working class tended to identify with the reformist politics of the SPD and trade union bureaucracy. The KPD drew an increasing share of its members and supporters from the poorest and least organised sections.

Controlling the youth

The depression which started in late 1928 accelerated these trends. By 1931 six million German workers were unemployed. In Berlin unemployment shot up to 32 per cent. The social composition of the KPD changed dramatically. In 1929, 50 per cent of its 135 000 members were industrial workers. By 1931 its membership had almost tripled, but only a tenth were workers. The majority of new members were unemployed and a significant number were youths. The influx of militant unemployed and youth introduced an element of instability in the party's rank and file. Rosenhaft cites statistics which show the high turnover in KPD membership: 44 per cent of delegates to the Berlin section congress of 1931 had been members for less than a year. A survey of Berlin KPD functionaries showed that out of a total of 24 party employees 19 had been in their posts for three months or less.

These developments in the KPD corresponded to the broad polarisation and volatility of German society in the depression, which the fascists used to their advantage. During 1929 the Nazis began to establish themselves in Berlin's working class districts, recruiting first among shopkeepers, pub landlords and low-



Berlin 1931: a proletariat betrayed

grade clerical workers, but extending their influence also among sections of the unemployed. Unlike the KPD the NSDAP had access to virtually unlimited funds provided by donations from ruling class circles. As Rosenhaft points out: 'In some areas the National Socialists were able to establish their own "labour exchanges", to promise jobs to their members as a result of their good relations with businessmen. More common was the provision of on-the-spot relief in the form of food and shelter - in its canteens and soup-kitchens and above all in the SA taverns that doubled as dormitories.'

Nazi activity in Berlin's working class neighbourhoods provoked a forceful reaction. Workers organised to beat the fascists off the streets. Street battles between fascists and class-conscious workers took place daily. The communist rank and file played the leading role in organising attacks on Nazi taverns, street patrols and other forms of physical combat, often in cooperation with social democratic workers. At leadership level, however, the response was far from decisive. Rosenhaft's documentation shows that the KPD leaders' anti-fascist strategy was a morass of bureaucratic chaos, sectarianism and political instability. It confirms that the leadership of the KPD undermined the anti-fascist resistance.

Other writers have documented the KPD's sectarian 'social fascist' policy, which meant that the social democratic SPD, far from being seen as a potential ally in the struggle against the Nazis, was itself presented as 'fascist'. This policy served to divide the working class and undermine the potential for united class action against fascism.

The 'social fascist' line also implied a complete underestimation of the threat fascism posed. Rosenhaft's study examines the motives and pressures underlying KPD policy. It shows that the leadership substituted shortsighted pragmatic reflexes for a political strategy.

The road to ruin

Anti-fascist violence was at the centre of KPD debate in the 1929-33 period. It is well known that far from organising effective combat against the fascist gangs the KPD leadership, in particular after June 1930, went out of its way to dissuade its rank and file from engaging in what it termed 'individual terror' against the fascists. Indeed in the latter part of 1930, the Berlin party entered a major crisis as the leadership disbanded the party's youth wing and expelled many militants for refusing to obey instructions not to attack the Nazis. The party's paramilitary wing, the Red Fighters' League (*Roter Frontkämpferbund*), was effectively put into cold storage, to be wheeled out only for Sunday processions.

Rosenhaft does not give a full explanation of the reasons behind this suicidal policy. But she does provide some clues. She identifies control over the membership as a major leadership concern at the time. Her sociological study of the Berlin KPD rank and file shows that the leadership faced a problem of control in the proletarian neighbourhoods. A large proportion of the membership and periphery of the party were unemployed youths who were attracted to it not by its political ideology, but by its militant reputation. Many were members of local youth gangs. Rosenhaft draws out the ambivalence with which the leadership regarded this layer. Uncritical admiration of the young 'rebels' and bureaucratic repression often went hand in hand. Thus the party daily *Die Rote Fahne* carried articles commending shoplifting expeditions (called 'proletarian shopping') and the tough discipline of the youth gangs as manifestations of good class spirit. Meanwhile district and national party officials would issue circulars against individual terror and 'ultra-left' radicalism.

Beating the fascists? provides many other examples of the KPD's vacillation and confusion. It is in her attempt to identify the problems that gave rise to this confusion that Rosenhaft runs into trouble. Whilst making some valuable observations - about the inability to politicise its volatile, youthful membership leading to bureaucratic repression and its ambivalence towards proletarian terror corresponding to its

analysis of fascism - the author cannot come to any coherent conclusion. Her final chapter argues that it was the Marxist concept of the proletarian vanguard party that led the KPD into disarray. Unable to provide any coherent explanation of 'what went wrong' the text winds up on a confused and pessimistic note.

The real problem with the KPD was its opportunism. The working class vanguard was paralysed because the communist leadership was not prepared to lead the way to class power - the only alternative to the fascist takeover. At a time when decisive action was needed, the party's leaders were absorbed by opportunist manoeuvres designed to enhance its short-term interest in extending its control and influence. From 1930 this found its most grotesque expression in the KPD's attempts to woo the Nazi rank and file by adopting nationalist rhetoric. *Beating the fascists?* provides many insights into this process of degeneration. Although it cannot provide a revolutionary critique of the KPD it is certainly well worth reading.

Sabena Norton

Can General Zia survive?

Tariq Ali, *Can Pakistan Survive? The death of a state*, Penguin Books 1983, pp237, pbk £2.95

WHEN Tariq Ali's book was first published Pakistan's Chief Martial Law Administrator General Zia ul-Haq was advised by his foreign minister to keep quiet about it. Instead Zia went on television and spent more than an hour condemning it. The result is that civil servants are now able to supplement their income by selling photocopied editions of the book on the black market. The military regime's rigid control of the press, radio, television, publishing and education means that Pakistani workers are starved of information and of criticism of the regime. No wonder they have snapped up badly xeroxed copies of the book so roundly denounced by the head of the army. But what will they find when they read it?

The Raj

Ali is on fairly safe ground when dealing with Pakistan when it was part of British India. He refutes the notion that the British developed any part of the Indian sub-continent. This is something not understood by many on the radical left. In a recent issue of the Socialist Workers' Party theoretical journal Barry Pavier argues that the British in India overthrew the feudal rulers that they found there and replaced them with an indigenous capitalist class (*International Socialism*, number 20). In other words the British did have a civilising mission in India. As Tariq Ali points out, the reverse was the case. The British found a land where the power of the old feudal classes was waning. In regions like Gujarat and Sind the merchant classes were showing signs of developing into a fully-fledged capitalist class. British armies defended the feudal power structure. Principalities and rotten military bureaucracies were saved by the British as the best way of keeping order. Direct British rule never covered much more than half the total land area of the region. They preferred to rule through a network of military and economic treaties with local rulers except where British domination might be threatened by competition from France or the Netherlands. The system of land tenure was maintained at the expense of agricultural stagnation and the immiseration of the peasantry. Local industries were wiped out by laws preventing the export of finished cotton and linen and by the import of cheap goods from Britain.

Ali shows how the British had little choice but to encourage religious and communal divisions within the sub-continent. In this they were ably assisted by figures such as Ghandi and 'father of Pakistan' Mohammed Ali Jinnah. There was no local capitalist class on which to base a capitalist state. As opposition from workers, peasants and the middle class grew, Britain was forced to seek a way of creating a social base for a politically independent state in the region. Its only recourse was to create a Hindu state in the centre and a Muslim state in the North West and North East. By the time the British granted independence to the region now called Pakistan there were only three factories of any size - all of them state-owned. But Britain's formula for solving this dilemma has hardly worked. By 1971 Islam could not hold together the two sections of Pakistan. East Pakistan broke away to form Bangladesh after a bloody civil war. In April this year rioting in Sind broke out as a result of tension between Sunni and Shiite Muslims.

Betrayals

Ali's description of the weaknesses of the mostly Stalinist left in Pakistan is also useful. He shows how the split between Moscow and Peking, which wrenched apart many Third World radical movements in the late 'sixties, precipitated the

collapse of the Pakistan Communist Party. But he rightly locates the origins of the decline in the 'thirties and 'forties when, under orders from Moscow, the Indian Communist Party opposed the national liberation struggle in the continent and became trusted administrators of the British war effort in the Pacific. They sent thousands of Indians to their deaths in the British army and they lost influence with the mass of Indian peasants and workers, allowing middle class leaders like Ghandi and Jinnah to steal the show. Nor were the British grateful for their services. After the defeat of Japan the party was outlawed and its leaders imprisoned or exiled. Indian Viceroy Mountbatten was preparing a deal with the more reliable nationalist leaders. Their behaviour during the war meant that the Communist Party's opposition to partition was ignored by the masses. In the orgy of bloodletting that accompanied the British handover to India's new leaders the Communist Party quietly split into three to take into account the changes dictated from London.

When he comes to discuss present-day Pakistan Ali reveals that he has little to offer the masses but more of the same. He gives good reasons why the working class should beware the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, the main opposition to the military dictatorship. The eight-party umbrella group is dominated by the Pakistan Peoples' Party founded by former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. And it still promotes the same political outlook which informed Bhutto's government between 1971 and 1976.

Bhutto came to power in the wake of the civil war and the Indian invasion which led to the independence of Bangladesh. His first act as Chief Martial Law Administrator was to order the army to open fire on strikers and demonstrators. In 1972 he sent the army to crush a wave of strikes and demonstrations. Two weeks of fighting between troops and strikers followed. While Bhutto was addressing a Karachi Chamber of Commerce dinner, warning them that the government was on the side of labour, his army was killing thousands of workers. Bhutto's last act was to declare martial law in the face of similar disturbances throughout Pakistan in 1976. He also appointed General Zia ul-Haq as Chief Martial Law Administrator.

Zia's Pakistan is the product of Bhutto's policies. The main difference is that Zia has more nerve than Bhutto had. Yet Ali offers little more than a return to Bhutto's politics. He rejects a violent struggle against the regime, echoing the call of the MRD for non-violent opposition. Having bitterly denounced Ghandi earlier in his book he implicitly endorses the strategy of MRD leader Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, the man now styling himself the Ghandi of Pakistan. Ali offers the same kind of 'controlled optimism' he offers workers in Britain. He wants to see a 'thoroughgoing social transformation' in both countries but he rejects the only method which can bring about such a transformation. Instead he peddles the same kind of illusions in a peaceful road to socialism that he would like to peddle as a member of Hornsey Labour Party - if the party's leaders would only let him in.

John Johnson



Dressing up against Cruise won't stop war

Mutiny from stem to stern

Paul Buteux, *The politics of nuclear consultation in NATO 1965-1980*, Cambridge University Press 1983, pp 292, hbk £22.50

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *World armaments and disarmament*, Taylor & Francis 1983, hbk £26

Philip Webber, Graeme Wilkinson & Barry Rubin, *Crisis over Cruise*, Penguin 1983, pp 112, pbk £1.25

Andrew Wilson, *The disarmament handbook of military technology and organisation*, Penguin 1983, pp 318, pbk £2.50

SINCE THE NUCLEAR AGE began, no other weapons have generated as much opposition as the Euro-missiles; or as many books. Penguin alone has made a mint from the market in anti-missile literature. Theatre nuclear weapons -

American-made tactical nukes for use in the European theatre - have been around for 30 years now. Why the rush into print over the last couple of years?

Death is a fascinating subject - especially if it is your own. The peace movement has been built on the fear of middle class people that they are about to be incinerated in a war between America and the Soviet Union. The publishing industry has been in crisis since the early 'seventies. In the wake of the rapid resurrection of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, publishing houses have discovered radical roots in the hope of turning over a few badly-needed bucks.

All four books contain much of the same information but the paperbacks are considerably cheaper. Penguin's two offerings are accounts of the killing capacity of the various nuclear weapons systems available to the superpowers. Both are suffused with the politics of CND. The blurb on the back cover of *Crisis over Cruise* blows the gaff. *Crisis over Cruise*, it reads, 'is aimed at people with no previous knowledge of nuclear weapons, but who might, one day, be their victims'. We are taken on a whistle-stop tour of the West's armoury of death. We are assured that all that stands between us and Armageddon is the 'will' of those brave enough to challenge the logic of nuclear defence. The authors assure us that Britain's military needs could be satisfied with a non-nuclear defence policy. But nuclear overkill is 'too much'. All three authors are respected scientists. The publishers pontificate: 'on issues such as these, scientists have a special responsibility to society'. Philip Webber has contributed an important study of photosynthesis. It's probably a good deal more useful than this study of nuclear warfare. It just goes to show that scientists are no better qualified to talk about militarism than pop stars about religion.

Andrew Wilson's *The disarmament handbook* is not a different kettle of fish. This one is supposed to allow us to 'come to our own conclusions about human and national survival in the nuclear age'. The conclusion that Wilson points to is - panic! The only hope Wilson sees is in the assertion of an 'ethical pacifism'. Wilson's definition of 'ethical pacifism' is revealing:

'Pacifism, to which the just war and just deterrence doctrines are vigorously opposed, can be seen to have a number of important variants - though philosophers, like many pacifists, would recognise only one, i.e. unqualified pacifism. Other, selective forms of pacifism, such as opposition to a particular war (e.g. Vietnam) or to nuclear weapons (nuclear pacifism), are not thereby less "honest". It is merely that they cannot be philosophically systematized.'

What this gobbledegook means is - don't worry, being scared to death by nuclear weapons does not mean you have to oppose British militarism. But the point is, you do. Both books see the build-up of nuclear weapons as an irrational policy option, rather than a necessity forced on the imperialist powers by the recession. In their struggle to survive, Britain, France, Japan, West Germany and the United States will use anything at their disposal. Unless the struggle against nukes is taken up as part of a relentless struggle against every aspect of militarism it will fail.

The real McCoy

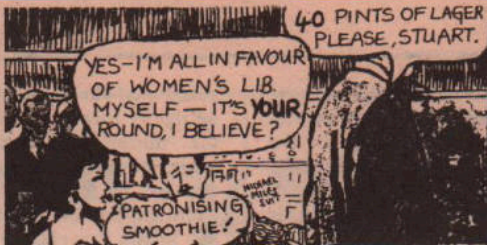
Anyone who wants to know about the militarisation of international relations should consult Paul Buteux's *The politics of nuclear consultation in NATO*. It is wordy and Buteux enjoys showing off his understanding of the technology of the arms race, but it gives a comprehensive account of nuclear strategy from 1952 to 1980. Most importantly it explains America's exasperation at the European peace movements. In opposition, Labour and European Social Democratic politicians have been posing as mentors of the peace movement. Five years ago when they were in government they were pleading with America for a more aggressive nuclear strategy.

In close succession, the floating of the dollar, a batch of import controls and the Watergate scandal all showed that America was not the power it had once been. In 1973 Henry Kissinger declared the 'year of Europe'. He called for Europe to stand on its own feet. The Social Democratic government in West Germany and the Labour Party in Britain panicked at the prospect of the US withdrawing from Europe. Now, 10 years into the recession, they have a different view. They appreciate that they are going to have to fight with the US for control of the resources of the planet.

The Stockholm Institute's report is an annual event. It provides a useful summary of developments since 1980 and should be read in conjunction with Buteux's study. It is chock-full of excellent statistics surveying the arms build-up over the last 10 years. It covers conventional as well as nuclear weapons and shows how British and French spending on arms has risen rapidly over the decade. It also shows how the arms trade ties countries in the Third World to the imperialist powers, and examines the burgeoning military blocs which straddle the globe.

James Wood

Letters



Free abortion on demand

I have read the short article by Kate Marshall on abortion and contraception in the last issue of *the next step*. I am opposed to the pro-abortion stand it takes, because this plays into the hands of the capitalist ruling class. They actively encourage abortion as a cheap and easy solution to the social problems they have created. Killing off unborn children is simpler than providing the alternatives that we demand.

Abortion is a social issue. The state, not the individual should be forced to pay for contraception, better education, more advertising etc. Fighting for these alternatives, from the 'morning after' pill to adequate care for 'unwanted children', will prove to be harder than getting more abortions. Once we've got them, although the need for abortion may never be completely eliminated, the demand for abortion will surely rapidly decrease.

But abortion is also a moral issue. Pornography is the media coverage of the working class of 'opposing' countries killing and maiming each other. Prostitution is 'our boys', bought by the

state, to parade in Northern Ireland and the Falklands with sub-machine guns and tanks, ready to kill any who dare oppose British imperialist rule. Abortion is just another means they have for mutilating the working class.

Abortion in our society is an unavoidable solution for many women. We must demand the 'morning after' pill and the earliest possible abortion for women who are in immediate difficulties. But abortion should never be seen as an ultimate cure to social ills. Unwanted pregnancies are caused by the state's deliberate attempts to keep people ignorant on the matter of birth control. We do not demand more bandages for accidents caused by faulty or dangerous machinery at work; we demand better machinery and more safety precautions. We must see the problems of birth control in the same context. We must demand adequate preventive methods as the prime solution, not bandages to bind the wounds caused by the state.

Angela Meekin
Oldham

Kate Marshall replies:

We are in favour of free abortion on demand, but we are not pro-abortion. Abortion is a risky and barbaric method of birth control. It is usually traumatic for women and health workers. Unlike the capitalists and their kind who fear bringing children into this terrible world, the working class has everything to live for. We are fighting for a future in which abortion will cease to be the only option facing thousands of women every year. Free 24-hour nurseries and better contraceptives will begin to eradicate the need for abortion.

Seeing abortion as a social question means putting it in the context of women's position in society. A woman's decision to have or reject an abortion is directly affected by her economic status and the availability and quality of contraception and nurseries. Looking at abortion as a moral question involves tearing it from its social context. Moral opposition always leads to a demand on the state to ban abortion, regardless of the con-

sequences for women with unwanted pregnancies.

We have always distanced ourselves from those who want women to have 'the right to choose'. We don't believe women 'choose' to have abortions any more than they choose to be ripped off by sweat-shop employers, live in a slum or wait for six years for an operation on the NHS. Our only concern is to survive, in order that we can fight to change things.

Angela Meekin is opposed to abortion because it is not an answer to major social problems. But nor is the fight for the right to work, to housing, to education etc. As part of the struggle for communism - the only solution to all social problems - revolutionaries fight for immediate objectives. Many of these are doubled edged. The right to work is conditional on owning nothing and involves the right to be exploited. The right to free abortion on demand is a necessary evil that we must champion until we abolish the system which makes abortion necessary.

Victory for Chilean squatters

We the Chilean community would like to thank you for all the support you have given us during our fight for housing on Springfield Estate, Stockwell. There is no doubt that without your support we would not have been housed by Lambeth Council.

Our situation here in England has been a difficult one after being forced to leave our homes in Chile because of repression against workers like ourselves by Pinochet's junta. We have

been living in different parts of Scotland and England in total isolation.

Being in exile is not easy. It is with the support of organisations like Workers Against Racism that the Chilean Community has received real solidarity here in England. We hope to be able to support WAR in every way possible and hope that the work you do continues.

Yours fraternally,
The Chilean community
Springfield Estate

'The council that cares'

Springfield Tenants' Association would like to thank Workers Against Racism for its support in the campaign to fight Lambeth Council's attempts to evict squatters from our estate. A young Chilean couple, the Urrea family, were living in overcrowded conditions so our tenants' association helped them to squat an empty flat on the estate. Although Mrs Urrea was expecting a baby, Lambeth - which describes itself as 'the council that cares' - began the process for the eviction of the couple. A fine way of caring to throw a pregnant woman on to the streets. Thanks to tenants and WAR the couple have now been given a tenancy.

On 31 August the tenants' association and WAR held a joint press conference to condemn

calls for my eviction as the association's secretary. The calls were made by Lambeth Tory leader Robin Pitt but the tenants' association are also angry at the ruling Labour Group's policies.

Lambeth council tries to blame the squatters for the bad conditions on the estate. In fact they are the result of deliberate policy decisions taken by the 'radical' council. They have run down refuse collection, repairs and other services on the estate. The tenants' association is prepared to fight the council until it provides decent housing for all tenants and we will resist their attempts to divide us. Squatters are not the problem. Squallor is.

Terry Stewart
Secretary, Springfield T.A.

'Sex beasts and muggers'

Over the summer I have been struck by the proliferation of 'sex beasts', 'muggers', 'red moles' and 'perverts' of every description who have vied with Royalty and motherhood for the headlines of the gutter press. One would hardly have guessed from reading the *Sun* or the *Mirror* that this was the summer when the US piled into Central America; when France and the US poured thousands of troops into Chad; when the Lebanon exploded; when Britain launched a new campaign to smash the IRA. No, as far as Fleet Street

was concerned, this was the summer of sex monsters.

Hysterical media campaigns are nothing new, but this summer's orgy was nothing less than a moral crusade to stiffen the backbone of the law and order brigade and win popular support for new repressive legislation: the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, the Prevention of Terrorism Bill and Tebbit's anti-union measures. Thank goodness for the next step.

Bill Covington
Haringey

*This letter has been shortened

Pakistan's loyal opposition

Workers in Karachi and other towns in Sind province have been demonstrating against the military regime of General Zia ul-Haq since 14 August. So far more than 150 have been killed by the army. Almost 5000 have been arrested. The riots have not yet spread to Pakistan's Northern province of Punjab. If they do not then Zia can ride out the storm.

The Movement for the Restoration of Democracy, now styling itself 'Save Pakistan', cannot understand why Punjabis have not taken to the streets against the hated military government. But then they could not understand why the riots in Sind happened in the first place. They called for a general strike and street demonstrations on 14 August. It is Pakistan's National day, most businesses and shops are closed and the streets are

more crowded than usual. The MRD's call was merely a publicity exercise. They were as surprised as anyone when there followed three weeks of riots in Sind.

They were caught off guard but they responded quickly. MRD politicians flew back to Pakistan to get arrested. There are two reasons why the MRD adopted this tactic. First they wanted to limit opposition to military rule to symbolic gestures with themselves as the focus. Secondly they want to get arrested so that they can talk to the government. I saw MRD leader Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi arrested. It was almost funny. He advertised beforehand that he was going to offer himself for arrest. A small crowd gathered and he began addressing them through a megaphone. The police came and removed his megaphone.

He had to run after them to persuade them to arrest him. As he was dragged away he kept calling to the crowd not to use violence. This would have spoiled his martyrdom. He is now detained in a government residence near Islamabad - having talks with Zia.

Jatoi is head of the Pakistan Peoples' Party founded by former Premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who declared martial law six years ago and appointed General Zia as chief of the army. Zia toyed with the idea of making Jatoi prime minister after executing Bhutto but decided against it.

The PPP is a landlords' party. The Jatoi family and the Bhutto family between them own two-thirds of the land in Sind province. They want to talk to the government about land reform - they don't want it. They are afraid that pressure

from the peasant farmers in Sind might force Zia to consider it. In April there were hunger riots in Karachi. They also want to persuade Zia to let political parties contest the local and national elections which he plans over the next 18 months. All they want is to have their interests guaranteed.

Neither the people of Punjab nor the people of Sind want a return to conditions in Pakistan under the Bhutto regime. But this is all the MRD offer. It is nonsense to suggest that Punjabis have less reason than Sindhis to fight the brutal military dictatorship of General Zia. They simply do not trust the MRD who have done all in their power to manipulate and diminish the struggles in Sind.

Mr A. Gidoomal
Karachi

Snoopers out!

When DHSS snoopers squads - officially known as Special Claims Control Units - arrived in Coventry on 5 September they didn't get an easy ride. Even before they landed, 40 people came along to support a vocal RCP picket outside Apollo House DHSS offices.

The snoopers squads are part of the state's arsenal against the unemployed. Every benefit office already has its own full-time fraud team. But hit squads of snoopers are fast becoming a favourite at Whitehall. Norman Tebbit spelt out why:

'The techniques require not so much the dogged pursuit of evidence looked for in normal fraud work but a lightness of touch in being able to confront claimants with a few suspicious facts which will lead the suspect either to declare work or otherwise leave the register.'

The snoopers' job is to arm-twist as many people as possible into giving up their claims. Their activities are used to criminalise the unemployed and divide the working class.

In street meetings and protests outside Park Court and Cheylesmore dole offices we have made it clear that we will

not tolerate any snoopers squads in Coventry. Our motorcades toured Tile Hill, Radford, Wood End and Stoke Aldmore estates putting across the message that claimants have every right to obtain a decent standard of living by every means possible. Our noisy demonstrations provoked the Coventry Telegraph to respond: 'Anyone defrauding the DHSS...or even thinking of doing so must be taking encouragement from the noisy left-wing campaign against its investigators'.

It isn't good enough just to object to the snoopers squads' methods as the local Labour Party does. Anyone who agrees that fraud is a problem will agree that there should be a fraud squad. If these squads are to catch anyone they must obviously use underhand techniques to harass and intimidate people.

Our approach is different. We defend the right of any worker in need of welfare benefits. Our first step must be to take a stand against the state's attempts to brand unemployed workers as scroungers and shift the blame for unemployment on to the working class.

Mary Harper
Coventry

Liberals and Ireland

As a trade unionist and life-long supporter of Irish unity I was heartened by newspaper headlines saying that the Liberals had adopted a radical new policy on the war in Ireland. In fact, in the traditions of liberalism these headlines were somewhat overstating the case. The word 'adopted' is a bit of an exaggeration. In fact the Liberal Assembly at Harrogate spent several hours shouting at each other about a resolution 'recommending' support for Irish unity.

But what was it about this recommendation that so curdled the blood of Liberal leaders? Perhaps it is the thought that it calls for the EEC to raise an army to take over from the British in the North of Ireland. Per-

haps Mrs Thatcher would be interested - it sounds like a good way of getting better value for money out of Common Market membership! It will not make much difference on the streets of Belfast and Derry. One army is pretty much like another.

There is nothing very new about this policy. It is the same mish mash of pro-Irish sympathising and respect for the reality of Britain's need to keep the trouble in Ireland under control. At least the Liberals debated the Irish war. It looks like this year's Labour Party conference is going to be too busy with the more pressing 'reality' of its decline to bother.

David James
Lincoln

The SWP and Britains

In the eight weeks we have been on strike at Britains' toy factory in Walthamstow, the support, both financial and political, we have received from the RCP has been invaluable in keeping the strike going. When the strike began none of us had any previous experience of industrial action. For most of us it has been a case of learning a lot quickly. One thing we learned early on was that leaving the dispute in the hands of our local TGWU official Tom Knowles was going to cause some problems. It took the union over a month to come up with strike pay. Knowles' short and infrequent visits to the picket line never informed us of anything or let us know how the blacking was going. He didn't even put up a fight when the police reduced our picket line to four. Given these problems I was annoyed to read an article in *Socialist Worker* that criticised one of our mass pickets for being badly organised. More than 10 people were arrested on the picket line for attempting to

stop scabs breaking the strike.

This kind of attack is uncalled for, especially when members of the SWP were standing idly on the sidelines as strikers, myself included, and RCP supporters were being dragged into police vans. There was nothing disorganised about the picket. The police wanted to stop us picketing and moved in to intimidate and arrest us. We were dismayed at this report of the strike in their paper; instead of criticising our strike it would have been more encouraging for us if the SWP had joined myself and other strikers and the RCP in the fight to win the strike.

While we were fighting to ensure that we took control of the strike, comments such as these which attack the most positive developments in our strike can only play into the hands of Knowles and company. He would much prefer it if we simply sat on the picket line and hope 'God will find us some solution'.

Zafir Iqbal
Britains Striker

Activities



Meetings

Workers Against Racism



Defend Afia Begum!

ON MONDAY 15 AUGUST a group of Asian women – the Sari Squad – chained themselves to the railings of Home Secretary Leon Brittan's house. They were protesting against the threatened deportation of Afia Begum and her baby daughter. Five of them were arrested and bound over to keep the peace for a year to the sum of £1000 each. The Sari Squad intends to carry on fighting for Afia Begum. More women are needed to take part in forthcoming activities. Come along to the next planning meeting and get involved! Next meetings Friday 7 October and Friday 21 October, 7.30pm County Hall, Chicheley Street, London SE1 (near Waterloo tube).

LONDON

Tuesday 4 October 7.30pm
ELWAR anniversary meeting
The battle of Cable Street
City of London Polytechnic
Coffee Lounge
Calcutta House 3rd floor
Old Castle Street E1

BIRMINGHAM

13 October 7.30pm
Public Meeting plus WAR video
No race checks on the dole!
Speaker: Fran Eden
Digbeth Civic Hall
Digbeth Street

Meetings

SHEFFIELD

Thursday 13 October 7.30pm
Public Meeting
Fight for the right to fight!
Sheffield centre against unemployment
Bridge Street

Wednesday 26 October 7.30pm

Public Meeting
The party of the future
The Swiss Cottage Pub
Newlands
Lincoln

COVENTRY

Monday 10 October 12–2pm
Picket Apollo House DHSS office
No harassment on the dole
Snoopers out, race checks out!
The Butts

Tuesday 18 October 7.30pm

Public Meeting
Lebanon, Nicaragua – imperialism out!

Commonwealth Club

Church Street
Leamington Spa

MANCHESTER

Monday 17 October 9.30am
Picket of Terry Duffy
Fight British bosses not foreign imports
Industrial Display Centre
Oldham

Thursday 27 October 7.30pm

Public Meeting
Women and the cuts
Millstone Pub

Saturday 29 October

Manchester women's right to work
campaign motorcade
Make the unions fit for women to join
Meet 10am Old Town Hall Steps, Ashton-under-Lyne
11am Mossley British Rail
12am Oldham Market

Irish Freedom Movement

Trade union delegation to Ireland

The Irish Freedom Movement is organising a series of regional delegations to the Six Counties for British trade unionists who want to stop the war in Ireland. The delegations are intended to give workers in Britain an opportunity to see first-hand what it is like to live under British rule. Tours of Belfast and Derry and meetings with trade union activists and anti-imperialists have been organised.

The next delegation will be taking trade unionists from the Yorkshire area. It leaves England on the evening of Friday 18 November and returns early on Tuesday 22 November. We would like as many delegates as possible to get sponsorship from their trade union branch. NATFHE member and secretary of Middlesbrough Trades Council Tom Richardson has already signed himself up for the November trip. As the fraternal delegate from the Trades Council Conference to the TUC Conference in Blackpool, Tom recently had a taste of the difficulties involved in raising the question of Ireland and anti-imperialist politics in general within the official trade union movement. Tom was physically ejected from his seat on the platform by TUC stewards for committing the outrage of wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with the slogan: 'British troops out of the Malvinas!'

Undeterred by this experience, Tom is convinced that there is a ready audience for anti-imperialist politics within the labour movement:

'I think the IFM delegation is a great idea. It is an opportunity for those of us who want to do something to end the war in Ireland. It will provide us with the arguments we need to convince other workers here in Britain that they should be supporting the cause of Irish freedom. When I come back I intend to speak at as many trade union branches as possible. I hope that many other workers will seize their chance and come with us.'

If you would like to join the delegation, or if your organisation would like a report-back, phone Phil Murphy on 01-274 3951. Further delegations are planned for the West Midlands, the North West and the South East. For further details write to: IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT BM RCP London WC1N 3XX



IFM Meetings

LONDON

Tuesday 18 October 7.30pm
IFM activists group meeting
Wheatsheaf Pub
Rathbone Place W1

LIVERPOOL

Monday 3 October 7.30pm
Public Meeting
Hands off Ireland - Hands off the Malvinas!
Dolphin Pub
Canning Place
Liverpool 1

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

Tuesday 4 October 7.30pm
IFM video screening

The longest war

Broadway Pub
Hatfield Nr. Doncaster

COVENTRY

Thursday 27 October 7.30pm
IFM video screening
The longest war
Commonwealth Club
Church Street
Leamington Spa

BIRMINGHAM

Monday 3 October and
Monday 17 October
IFM activists group meetings
Phone 01-274 3951 for details

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the next step

Fight for Irish freedom Smash the PTA!



Supporters of the Irish Freedom Movement in Liverpool: campaigning for an end to state harassment of anti-imperialists

LIVERPOOL Irish Freedom Movement's campaign to make the Prevention of Terrorism Act unworkable has been gaining increasing support in the city. On Monday 12 September we went along to lobby the Labour Group of Merseyside County Council to demand its support for the fight to make Liverpool a PTA-free zone. Already local Labour MPs Eddie Loyden (Garston), Bob Parry (Riverside) and Terry Fields (Broad Green) have given their backing.

Liverpool City Council, which has a slim Labour majority, recently opposed two amendments from the Tories and the Liberals which sought to nullify our resolution. Now the focus has shifted to the County Council which has the power to withdraw funding from Merseyside Police.

Irish Freedom Movement speaker Mick Hume addressed 34 councillors. He gave an account of the campaign's extensive work mobilising labour movement support for victims of the PTA and explained why they should support our attempts to abolish the Act. After a lively discussion some councillors asked questions about the political implications of the resolution – the withdrawal of funds to the Special Branch – and the effects of the abolition of the Act on the Irish War in Britain. The meeting eventually decided to refer the decision to the Police Working Group of Merseyside County Labour Party, but 10 councillors signed the petition.

Liverpool IFM is continuing its campaign and will be lobbying the full meeting of the County Council to ensure that the

debate continues and that we get some action soon. Join us!

Tuesday 4 October 1pm
Lobby of Merseyside County Council
Make Liverpool a PTA-free zone!
Metropolitan House Old Hall Street
Liverpool

PASS THE RESOLUTION IN YOUR TRADE UNION BRANCH:

'We oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Bill now tabled before Parliament. We believe that it is an attempt to suppress opposition to Britain's war in Ireland and will be used to harass and intimidate Irish people living in Britain. We support the Irish Freedom Movement's campaign against this legislation and for PTA-free zones in Britain.'

The terror continues

WITH ONLY a few months remaining of its statutory life, the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act is still much in use by the British state. The case of a young Irish couple – Patrick and Geraldine Lenaghan – detained and questioned while holidaying in Blackpool, illustrates its main role.

Throughout the nine years since its introduction by a Labour government, the PTA has been used to harass, intimidate and criminalise Irish people, whether living in or visiting Britain. Its victims now total nearly 5700, of whom more than 200 have been excluded and banned from setting foot in Britain.

To accommodate criticisms made by civil liberties activists, the government has introduced a Prevention of Terrorism Bill to replace the PTA. The new Bill:

- lists proscribed organisations, banning the IRA and the INLA
- prohibits the collecting of money intended for terrorist activity
- allows arrest and detention without charge for periods of up to seven days
- removes the right of detainees to silence
- allows exclusion orders from Britain or the 'United Kingdom'

A careful reading of the new Bill reveals that it does not differ substantially from the present legislation. Despite the explicit powers of arrest and detention for 'international terrorists', the new law continues to be anti-Irish because it is from Ireland that the main threat to the British state comes.

The Irish Freedom Movement in London will be protesting against the Bill when it comes up for its second reading in the House of Commons in November. As liberal criticism has grown over the past few years, more and more Labour MPs have been prepared to state their reservations about the PTA. In every case this has been prompted by concern about the PTA's infringement of civil liberties rather than support for the Irish freedom struggle. The parliamentary passage of the Prevention of Terrorism Bill gives Labour MPs the opportunity to make amends for their past anti-Irish record – we will be watching closely.



NEW VIDEO **The longest war**

Order the new Irish Freedom Movement video on Britain's war in Ireland to show in your trade union branch, youth club or college. The video looks at British military and political strategy over the last 14 years. It includes extensive footage of war-torn Derry and Belfast and interviews with republicans and trade union activists in Britain and in Ireland.

Invitations for speakers are welcomed.

35 mins VHS colour, £5 to hire. Write to:
Irish Freedom Movement, BM RCP London WC1N 3XX
or telephone 01-274 3951

Irish Freedom Movement Conference **Fighting for freedom**

Liverpool will also be the venue for this autumn's Irish Freedom Movement Conference on Saturday 26 November. Discussion at the conference will focus around opposition to anti-Irish laws and the use of the legal system to put down resistance to British rule, including the use of paid informers in the Six Counties. Workshops will cover: campaigning against the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, a report-back from the IFM labour movement delegation to the Six Counties and how to establish PTA-free zones. After a social in the evening, accommodation is available for those who want to stay overnight to attend the Sinn Féin Manchester Martyrs' Commemoration March on Sunday 27 November.

There will be transport to the conference from Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Glasgow, Birmingham and Coventry. If you would like to attend, fill in the form opposite.

Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act!

I would like to attend
the IFM conference
in Liverpool on
Saturday 26 November.

Please send registration details

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____
UNION _____
CRECHE _____
ACCOMMODATION _____
TRANSPORT _____

Return to the
Irish Freedom Movement,
BM RCP
London WC1N 3XX