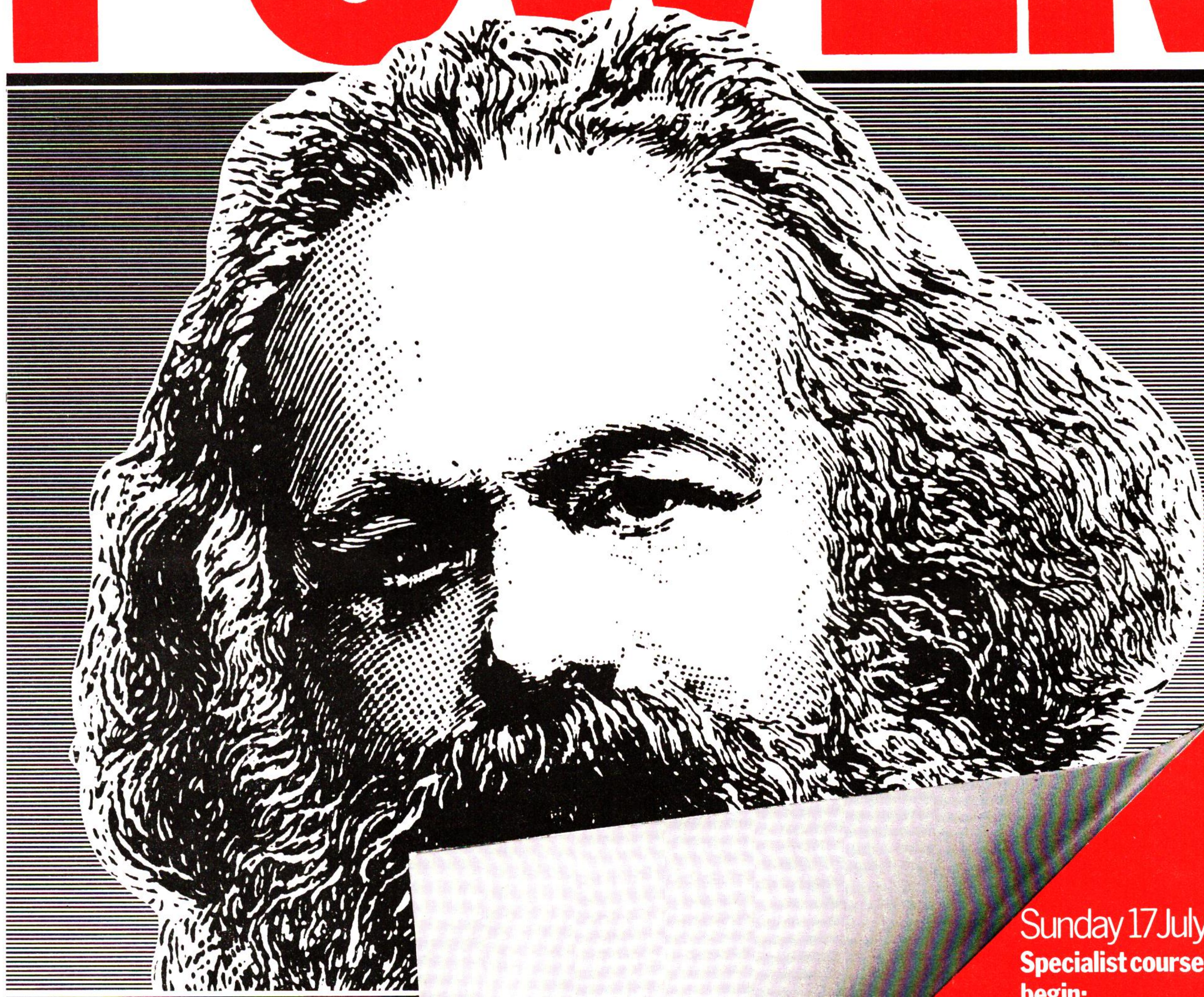


A LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE FOR THE 'EIGHTIES

PREPARING FOR POWER



A week of discussion
and debate, politics
and polemics

16-22 July
Polytechnic
of Central London
New Cavendish St.
London W1

Saturday
16 July

**Marxist celebration
of the Marx Centenary**

A full day of workshops and special sessions on Marxism after Marx. An evaluation of the theories and politics of the giants of the Marxist tradition – Lenin and Trotsky – and the dwarf – Stalin; revisionists from Bernstein and Bauer to Althusser and Poulantzas; political economists of neo-Ricardianism, under-consumptionism – and capitalist collapse; British Marxists from the tragedy of Hyndman and Morris to the farce of Hindess and Hirst; Marx on women, Marx on Ireland and Marx on the transition to communism.

Sunday 17 July
**Specialist courses
begin:**

SERIES OF SIX WORKSHOPS ON

- Introduction to Marxism
- Racism – what it is and how to fight it
- Women – oppression and emancipation
- Imperialism in Africa
- The British working class today
- Ireland – the longest war

**OTHER SESSIONS RUNNING
THROUGHOUT THE WEEK**

- Soviet Union and Eastern Europe
- The working class in the West
- Revolutions betrayed
- Issues in British politics: left, right and CND

PLUS: DEBATES featuring stars of learned journals
pub rooms and
street corners

**AND: FILMS, MUSIC AND
ENTERTAINMENT**

PREPARING FOR POWER

KARL MARX CENTENARY

The theory of proletarian revolution

Karl Marx died on 14 March 1883. A hundred years later his name is known throughout the world. Millions of workers see in his doctrines their theoretical weapon for the struggle for emancipation. A century after his death Marx is still hated and feared by the capitalist class – and for good reasons. No single individual has contributed more to the cause of proletarian revolution than Marx. A hundred years has passed since his death yet he continues to haunt the enemies of the working class.

MARXISM is the theory of the proletarian revolution. Bourgeois theoreticians try to smooth over conflict and sing the hymns of harmony and stability; Marxism articulates the antagonism between the classes. Many theoreticians before Marx wrote about the class struggle but he was the first to demonstrate 'that class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat'. In other words, Marx demonstrated that the class struggle was not some episodic and aimless occurrence but the historic agency of social change.

Marx showed that working class power is not an unrealistic utopia but the logical outcome of the class struggle within capitalism. The relevance of Marx's theory is indicated by the fact that in every generation since his death a new group of bourgeois ideologues is assigned to refute it. It is not only the capitalist establishment that fears Marxism. Social reformers whose aim is to make a few minor modifications in the oppressive structures of capitalist society see Marx as a threat to this project. Often they are the most vociferous in dismissing Marxism as irrelevant. Thus the foreword to a recent collection of articles entitled *Exterminism and Cold War* edited by the *New Left Review* claims that the nuclear age has made Marxism irrelevant. Ironically, while Marxism is dismissed as out of date, the pre-Marxist utopian socialists come in for strong recommendation: 'The resources of that utopianism will need to be drawn upon and developed again, if socialism is to confront with any realism the universal threat of a military explosion that would annihilate every class'.

Marxism has survived its bourgeois condemnations and its reformist revisers for the simple reason that the class struggle cannot be argued out of existence. Every 'definitive' rejection of Marxism has been refuted by the realities of capitalist society. The triumph of Marxism will be decided on the same plane – in the heat of the life or death struggle between classes. Our task is not to celebrate the individual, but to develop Marxism in relation to present day conditions. We aim to make Marxism a guide to action for millions of workers.

Throw away the icons!

The bitter enemies of Marxism in the capitalist class pose few problems for us. Bourgeois ideologues can make only superficial criticisms and their views consistently fail to capture the popular imagination. A much greater danger comes from the attempts to subvert Marxism by those in the labour movement who claim to uphold his heritage. During the past century there have been numerous attempts to turn Marx into a harmless liberal. Many 'Marxists' have sought to reconcile Marx's theory with capitalist realism, ridding his theory of its revolutionary

content. Lenin condemned those who celebrated Marx only to repudiate Marxism:

'During the lifetime of great revolutionaries the oppressing classes relentlessly persecute them, treat their teachings with malicious hostility, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaign of lies and slanders. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to surround their names with a certain halo for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping them, while at the same time emasculating the content of the revolutionary doctrine, vulgarising it, and blunting its revolutionary edge. At the present time, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists in the labour movement concur in this 'revision' of Marxism.'

Marxism has long been a harmless icon in Britain. At British universities students learn about Marxism as a series of trite formulae; a great revolutionary is portrayed as a clever academic. A journal entitled *Marxism Today* publishes articles which advocate incomes policy, demand that law and order and nationalism become part of the left's programme and urge political alliances with Liberals and other middle class parties. While *Marxism Today* muses about class alliances the other 'Marxists' put class collaboration into practice. So-called 'Marxists' inside the Labour Party are busy preparing for the next general election, projecting a version of Marx after their own image. Thus the much-feared Militant Tendency rejects the need to smash the capitalist state. It proposes a 'peaceful road to socialism' and implies that Marx too was a parliamentary cretin.

This degradation of Marx expresses the desire of the British left to narrow the horizons of the working class. It is our job to destroy this caricature of Marxism and degradation of working class politics by rescuing the revolutionary content of Marx's theory.

Living Marxism

To defend Marxism we have to develop it. Too often, even communists have fallen into the trap of treating Marxism as a dogma that explains and proves everything. Marx's collaborator Engels warned of this stagnant scholastic approach shortly after Marx's death:

'All history must be studied afresh, the conditions of existence of the different formations of society must be examined in detail before the attempt is made to deduce from them the political, civil-law, aesthetic, philosophic, religious, etc, views corresponding to them. Up to now very little has been done in this respect because only a few people have got down to it seriously.'

Marxism has to be developed and tested in light of new developments. Otherwise revolutionary theory will be left behind by social experience. Lenin emphasised this point in his introduction to the Bolshevik programme in 1899: 'We do not in any way regard Marx's theory as something final and inviolable, we are convinced on the contrary, that it only laid the cornerstone of science which socialists *must push* further in all directions, if they do not wish to be left behind by life.'

Lenin's exhortation is particularly relevant today. The capitalist world is in a state of flux. All the old assumptions about economic prosperity have been shattered by the recession. No social class or institution is left untouched: the working class has undergone major changes. Without Marxist theory it is impossible to understand these events and to keep ahead of the rapid shifts in society. That's why we have organised **Preparing for Power**, a week of discussion and debate about Marxism and working class politics today.

No time for complacency

The creative development of Marxism requires familiarity with the categories and concepts of Marxist theory. Thus we have organised a specialist course and a series of workshops under the title 'Introduction to Marxism'. For those already familiar with Marx's work there will be more challenging workshops explaining different aspects of revolutionary theory.

Theory cannot be developed in a vacuum. We have to know what is going on in the world and be able to identify problems to work out the solutions from a working class point of view. Many of the workshops are designed to examine the present stage of the class struggle in Britain and abroad. A six-part course will look at the British working class while other workshops will examine class relations in Europe, the USA and elsewhere. There will be a choice of more than 16 workshops on the present stage of the recession, imperialism and liberation struggles. Our presentations of these subjects will avoid technical jargon so that even the least experienced participants can learn and take part in the discussion.

Marxism is not simply about theory – it is above all about how to fuse theory with the class struggle. That's why so many of the workshops will be given over to a discussion of the major political questions of the day. From a six-part course on the oppression of women to a series of discussions on the arms race – from the problem of housing to living on the dole. The choice is yours!

Despite the films, music and other events the aim of **Preparing for Power** is not to entertain. There is no time for complacency. The crisis facing the working class is a test for all Marxists. What's at stake is not some academic debate but the survival of the working class – indeed of humanity. But ideas are important – revolutionary theory is a weapon that will tilt the balance in favour of workers and the oppressed. A hundred years after Marx's death, **Preparing for Power** is a fitting celebration of his ideas and his politics – a call to arms on the side of the working class.



Lenin unveils the Marx and Engels memorial in Moscow in 1918: the Bolshevik revolution the year was the best commemoration



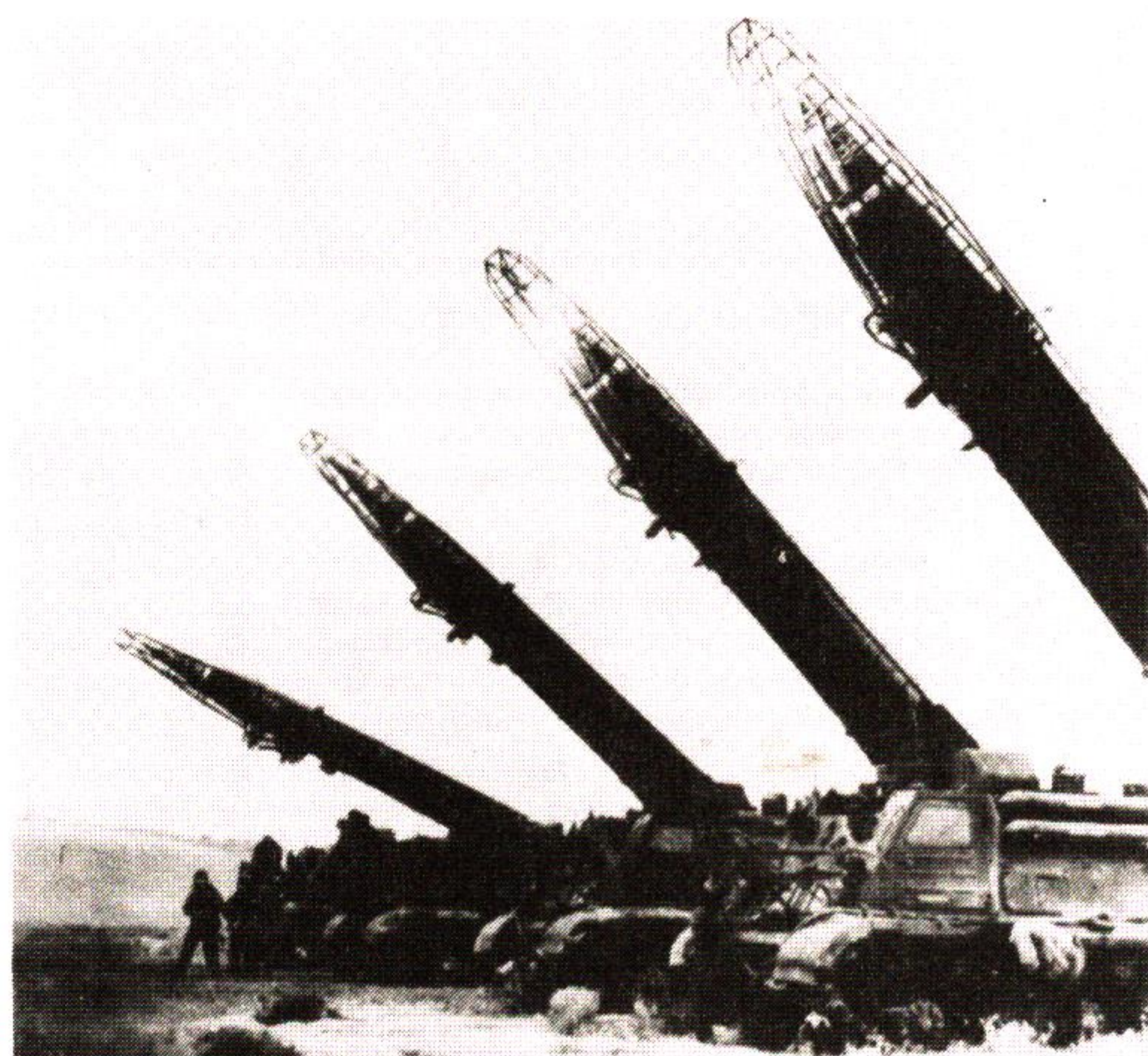
Lenin with Trotsky, who later carried the Bolshevik tradition in the struggle against Stalinism in Union and the Comintern

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Other sessions

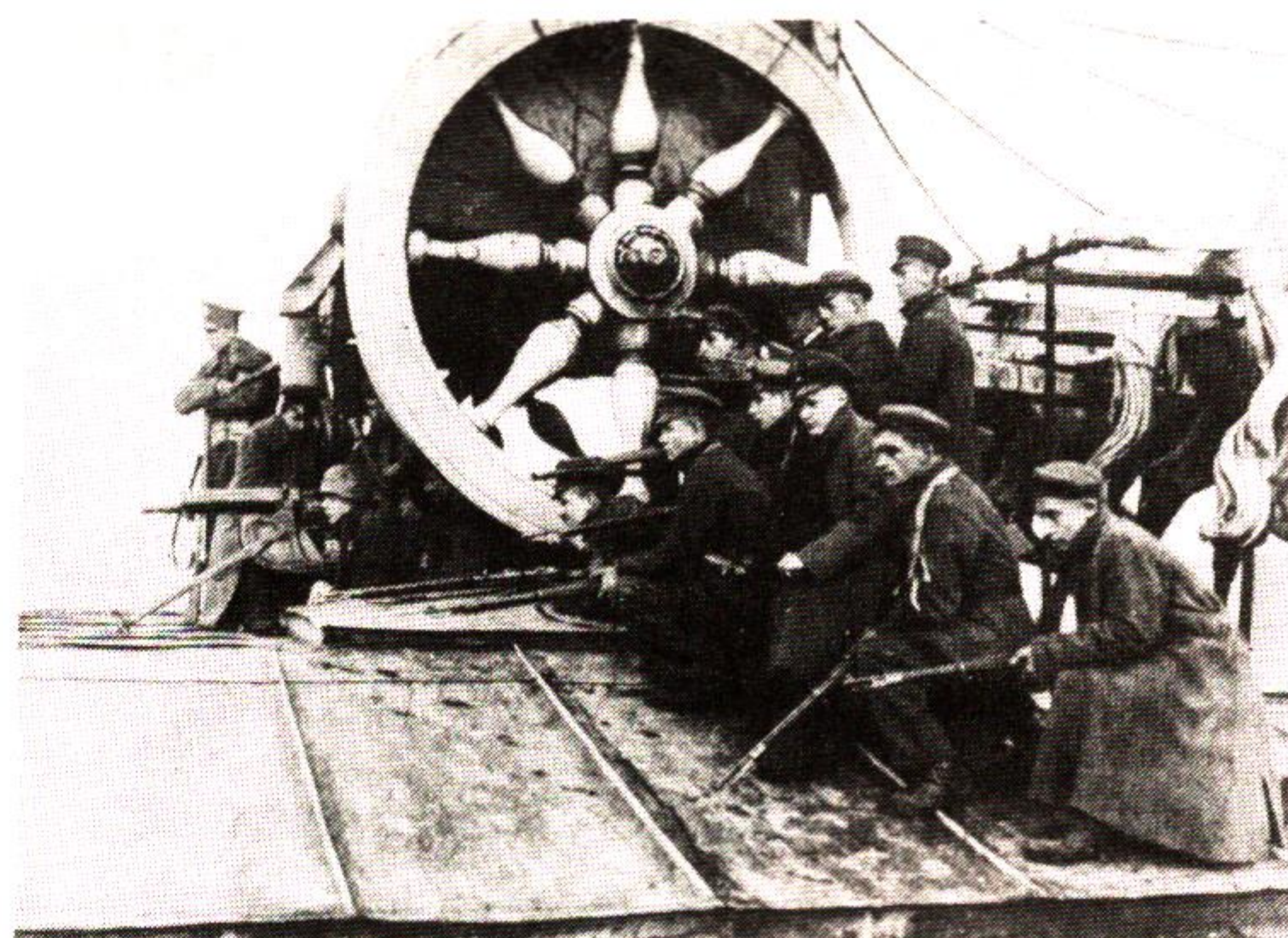
Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

- New directions for Andropov?
- The national question in the Soviet Union
- Poland after Solidarity
- Women under Stalinism
- The strange history of the theory of state capitalism
- Moscow vs Washington — the new Cold War



Revolutions betrayed

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



Revolution in Germany 1919

The working class in the West

- Crisis for the communist parties
- The new social democracy
- The peace movement
- Racism in the car factories
- Reagan's domestic difficulties
- Can Japan's workers rise again



Saturday 16 July Marxism after Marx

Opening plenary –

- Marxism since 1945: humanism, structuralism – and beyond
- The Marxism of the Second International: revisionism and social democracy
- The Marxism of the Communist International: from Lenin to Trotsky
- Was Stalin a Marxist?: No
- Is there a British Marxism?: Not quite
- Developments in the Marxist theory of crisis: Grossman and Mattick – the missing links
- Marxism and women: Engels and after
- Marx on Ireland: from the IRB to the IRA
- Marx on the transition: workers' control means workers' revolution

PLUS – Marx's London – an early morning walk around the places where the great man lived and worked.



Spreading the revolution: Lenin meets Italian revolutionaries 1920

In the week Series of six workshops

Sunday 17 July – Friday 22 July

● Introduction to Marxism

If you think 'the fetishism of commodities' is what goes on in sex shops or that 'abstract labour' is what people do in institutions of higher education, then this course is for you. Or if you're fed up with selling your labour-power and simply trying to get the best price for it, and you want to know how to get rid of the whole wage system, then it's for you too.



● Imperialism in Africa

Africa is sinking into starvation and chaos. The British press hypocritically condemns the brutal mass deportations from Nigeria; but these result from the artificial borders Britain and France have imposed on Western Africa and the recession throughout the imperialist world which demands barbaric solutions in impoverished Africa. From the Horn to the Cape and Morocco, this course will survey imperialist strategy, the African ruling elites and the struggles of the masses.

● Racism – what it is and how to fight it.

Many people believe racism is a problem of attitudes, which are deeply ingrained and spontaneously reproduced, in the heads of working class people. We think racism is a product of capitalist society, promoted in the labour movement by generation after generation of Labour and trade union leaders. This course examines racism and anti-racism today.



● The British working class

The aim of this course is not to provide history lessons or to discuss 'the downturn'. The object is to confront the real problems arising out of the impact of mass unemployment, the changing structure of the working class and the weakness of its political (as distinct from trade union) traditions. The integration and neutralisation of shop stewards; the incorporation of activists into local government and other state quangos; the paralysis of the TUC and the influence of radical reformist politics are some of the issues we will be dealing with.

● Women – oppression and emancipation

The debate between feminism and Marxism initiated by Kate Marshall's *Real Freedom* will continue at *Preparing for Power*. So will discussion of the family, the unions, abortion, employment and unemployment, women and peace, women and war, and women and the revolutionary party.

● Ireland – the longest war

The war in Ireland has now been going on so long that many people becoming involved in revolutionary politics can scarcely remember when it started. This course will review the history of Britain's longest war in Ireland. It will also examine British strategy, military, political and ideological, the republican movement in Ireland and the solidarity movement in Britain.



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Issues in British politics



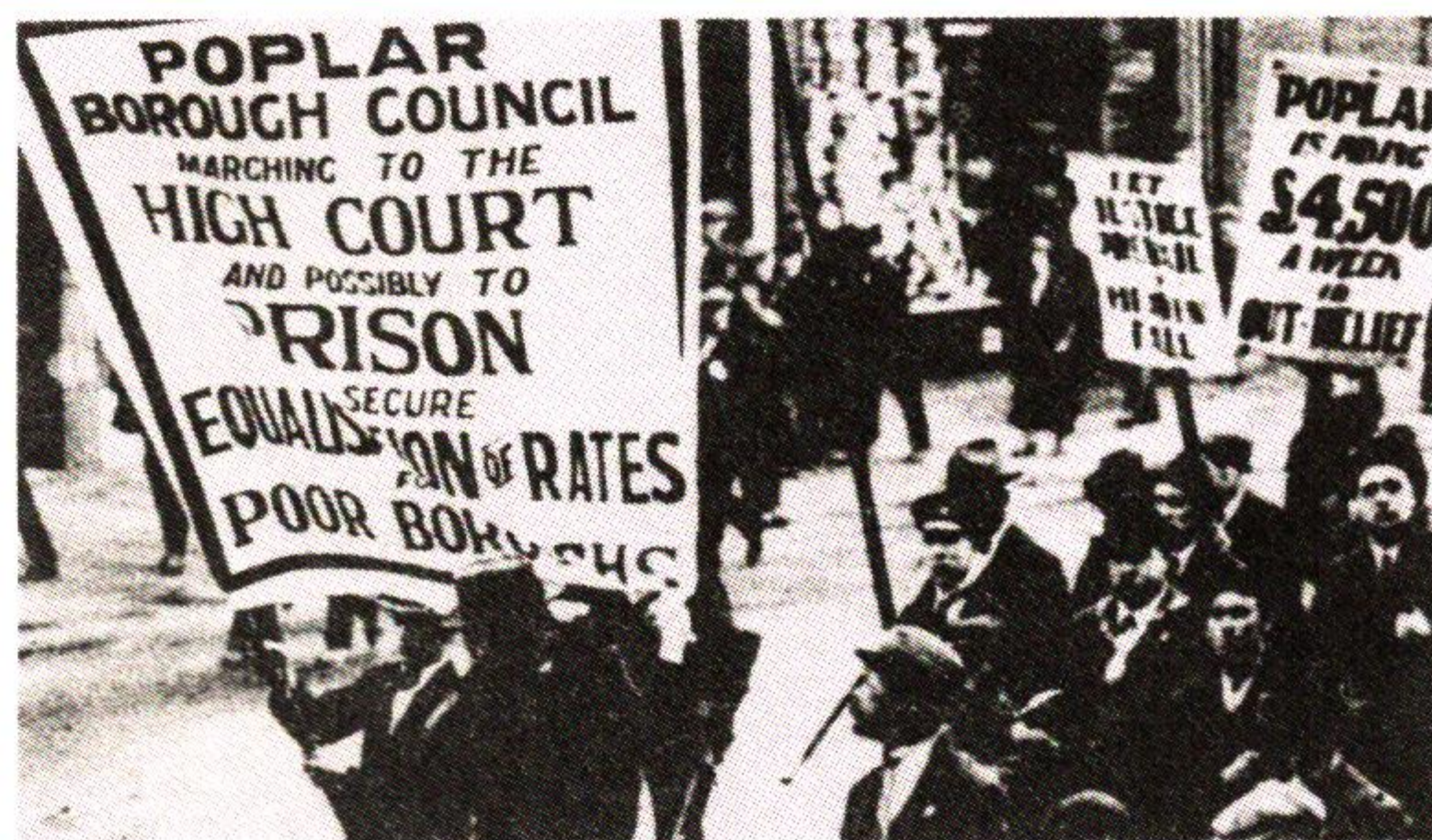
● Who's afraid of Maggie Maggie? The myth of Thatcherism



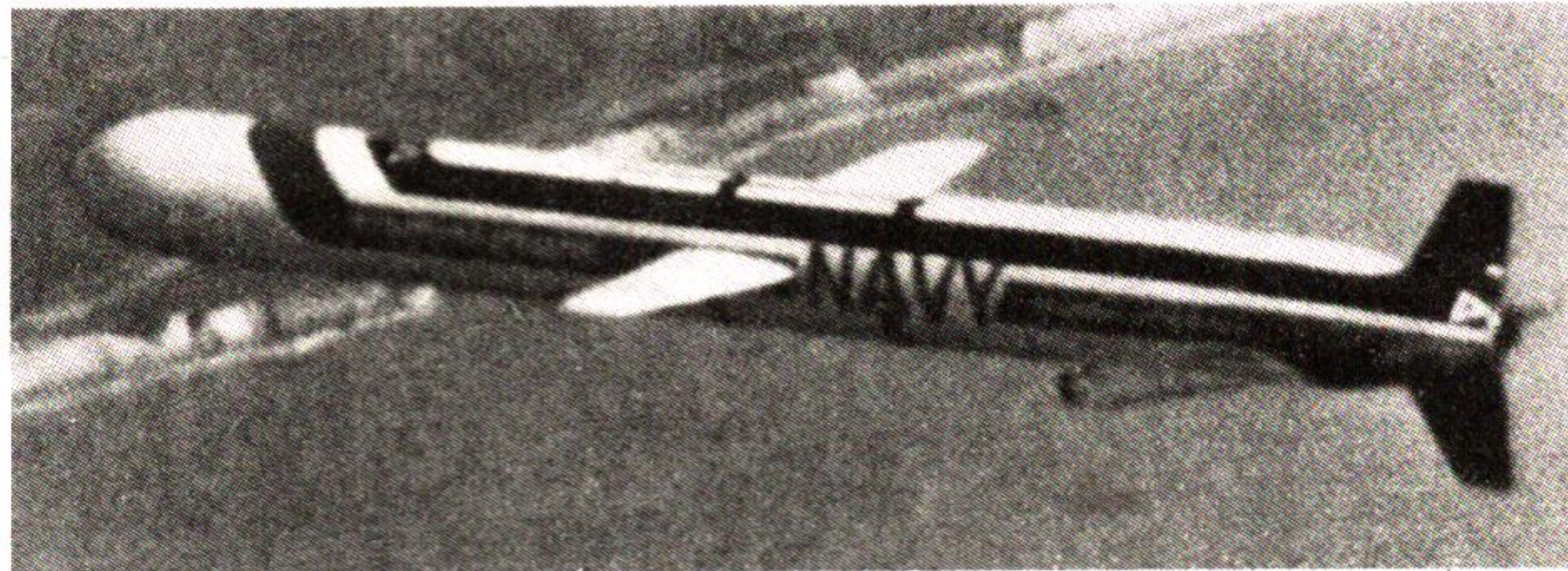
● Who's next for a GLC grant? How the left became one big quango

● Police prepare for civil war; left calls for community accountability

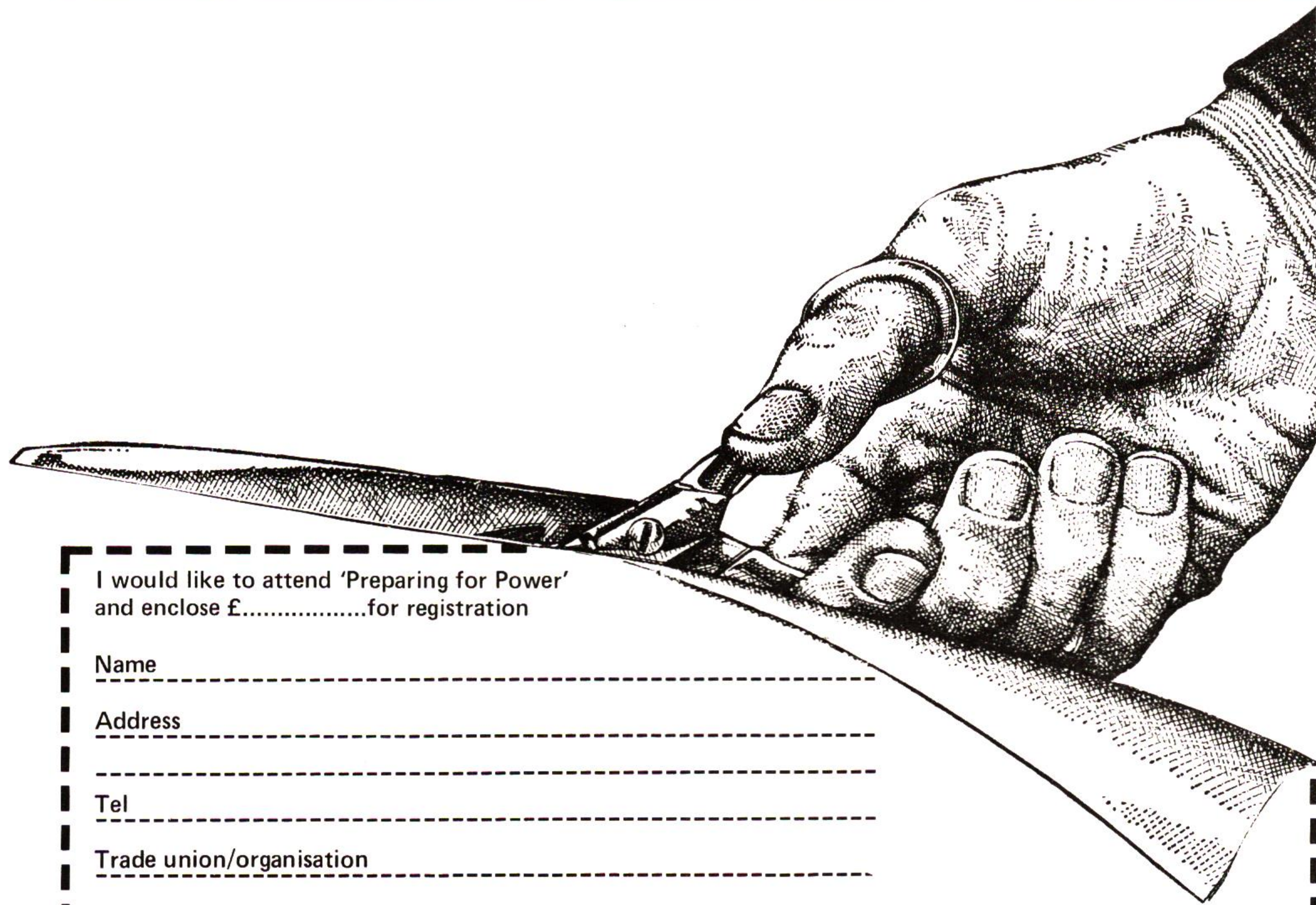
- Fighting for gay rights
- Life in a socialist republic – the Sheffield experiment
- Will the real Labour left stand up?
- De-industrialisation and depression – the West Midlands experience
- Which way in the general election?
- Unemployment and the job creation fraud



● A short history of British socialism



● Fighting militarism – or protesting about American missiles?



I would like to attend 'Preparing for Power' and enclose £.....for registration

Name

Address

Tel

Trade union/organisation

Accommodation

☐

Creche

☐

Registration fee: Before 30 April – £8.50 or £5.00 UB40
After 30 April – £10.00 or £6.00 UB40

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

Tell us something new!

Thousands of people are taking on the capitalist system in their own way, day in day out. Many activists have important experiences which they have little opportunity to share with others. We want to overcome the isolation of individual militants and bring them together to exchange ideas and formulate problems and solutions together.

Preparing for Power provides a chance for you to let others learn from your experience. Many workshops will be run by veterans of industrial disputes, anti-racist campaigns, solidarity work and other aspects of the class struggle. Now is your chance to come and argue things out and assess past victories and defeats. Write to us, let us know your interest and we'll make sure that *Preparing for Power* really does help to prepare the working class to seize power. We can't afford to wait for another Marx centenary!

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