

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

1983: the
old order
crumbles
p12-15

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Striking back



the next step

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monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

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Pope John Paul II was right when he said that 1983 marked a 'transition from the "postwar" to a new "prewar" stage'. Famine went hand in hand with rebellion in the Third World. Debt became the commercial Exocet, softening up the backward capitalist world for more imperialist plunder. The USA and its allies fell out on every issue from the high rate of the dollar to America throwing its weight around in the Middle East and Central America. Meanwhile, the world wondered whether Andropov was dead or alive as the Soviet economy lurched towards a halt. We look at the break-up of the old order and show the urgent necessity for communism.

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THE PARTY OF
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British industrial decline accelerated in 1983 but the ruling class still came out on top. In this survey we look at how the Tories failed to manage the economy but managed to go on the offensive against women, blacks and the working class. We weigh up the balance of class forces and show how the working class can tip the scales in its favour in 1984.

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KEEP THEM BOTH FLYING!



SPEED IS Vital!

Patriotic war poster

Slump socialism

The Depression, the war and the working class

The last world recession ended in the Second World War. All the signs are that today's economic crisis is heading for the Third.

Slump socialism is a collection of articles from *the next step* on the class struggle in the twenties, thirties and forties. It shows how the failure of the labour movement to challenge British militarism and British imperialism led the working class to defeat in factories at home as well as on battlefields abroad.

At a time when Joan Ruddock is proclaiming CND's 'patriotism', *Slump socialism* is a timely warning of how patriotic sentiments led workers into the holocaust of 1939 to 1945. The pamphlet also surveys developments in the Labour Party, the Communist Party and the trade unions, and the formation of the welfare state.

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Patriotic anti-war protester

The unions and the law

In the last three months of 1983 employers launched a flurry of injunctions to block workers' industrial action. In the cases of *Shell vs TGWU*, *Robert Maxwell vs Sogat '82*, *David Dimbleby vs NUJ*, and *Mercury vs POEU*, recourse to the courts led to setbacks for the workers involved. The most significant conflict of recent weeks has been between *Stockport Messenger* proprietor Eddie Shah and the print union, the National Graphical Association. The Shah vs NGA dispute, which led to a broader confrontation between the official labour movement and the legislature, signals a new offensive by employers and the Government against the labour movement.

The outcome of the *Stockport Messenger* dispute, and of the conflict between the TUC and the state, was a hands down victory for Eddie Shah and Margaret Thatcher. The whole episode illustrates how the employers and their political representatives have adjusted to the world of recession, and the new balance of class forces brought about by mass unemployment, much better than the unions. Ten years ago the anti-union legislation of a Tory government was defeated by trade union militancy. Edward Heath's government finally collapsed in the midst of a miners' strike. Today the Tories are much more confident and the unions are much weaker. The Tories have almost five years of successes against the unions under their belts, a series of increasingly draconian anti-union laws on the statute book, and a landslide election victory only six months behind them. The unions can only report declining membership, setback after setback on the jobs and wages fronts, and the humiliation of their party at the polls. In the early seventies the Tory government stood aloof from the courts and the judges vigorously asserted their impartiality. Today the links connecting Tory Lord Chancellor Hailsham, Master of the Rolls Sir John Donaldson, the newspaper publishers and the employers' organisations are much closer and much more explicit. The ruling class is less concerned to disguise its use of the law as a weapon against the working class.

In 1984 it is vital that we break out of the defensive and defeatist response of the leadership of the labour movement to the employers' legal attacks. To defeat class laws it is necessary to take class action, to mobilise workers against the employers, their courts and their government. The roles of the NGA and TUC leaders in the *Stockport Messenger* dispute indicate that we must also go on the offensive against the obsolete structures and politics that at present hold the trade unions back.

Shah set up the printing operation for his weekly free newspaper in Warrington early in 1983 with the intention of destroying the closed shop arrangements customary in the industry. When members of the NGA went on strike to enforce a closed shop he sacked eight union members. When the NGA sought sympathetic action from journalists, Shah went to the courts to block it. When NGA pickets surrounded the Warrington plant Shah again got an injunction. When pickets defied the injunction and massed outside the plant to prevent delivery of the *Stockport Messenger*, paramilitary riot police sealed off the area and stormed the crowd. Shah returned to court and the judges began sequestrating NGA funds for contempt of court. Its assets frozen and some

£750 000 down, the NGA then sought TUC backing for a national strike to outface Shah and the courts.

Shah's action against the NGA was a direct attack on the rights of workers to organise in defence of jobs, wages and conditions. Supporters of the next step in the North West joined the Warrington picket lines at an early stage in the dispute. They were joined on the mass picket at the end of November by many more from around the country. RCP trade union activists gave full backing to solidarity action with the NGA. However, the NGA itself was not fighting to defend working class rights as a matter of principle. It was preoccupied with safeguarding the interests of the union bureaucracy.

The NGA symbolises much of what is rotten in the British trade union movement. It is permeated by a narrow sectionalism and, behind an appearance of militancy, a profound subservience to the employers. The object of craft unions such as the NGA has always been to protect their members' interests against the employers, but also against other sections of the working class. These attitudes are not confined to history. Writing in the December issue of *Print*, the NGA's official journal, general secretary-elect Tony Dubbins asserts the sectional response of the NGA to the introduction of new technology:

'The term "craftsman" commands a certain status in the industry, and in the eyes of NGA members sets them aside and apart from other non-craft people.'

The NGA's operation of the 'pre-entry' closed shop throughout Fleet Street and in other areas of the industry has always been used as much against other workers as against the bosses. It creates a Catch 22: you can't get a job unless you're on the NGA list, but you can't become an NGA member until you get a skilled print job. Traditionally the only way in is through apprenticeship or various backdoor methods which have ensured that women and blacks, not to mention unskilled workers, are kept out of 'the print'.

The Dubbins article in *Print* is also due to appear in the employers' 1984 *Newspaper Publishers Handbook*. Entitled 'Cooperation...the key to a formula for our future', it outlines the NGA's continuing collaboration with management in the introduction of new technology into printing at the expense of workers' jobs (through voluntary redundancy) and conditions (through 'flexibility'). The NGA leaders have long pleaded for a consultative role in bringing in the 'single key' computerised process that removes most of the NGA's traditional typesetting functions. Dubbins' central concern is not that print workers are under attack, but that the bosses are trying to ride roughshod over the bureaucrats:

'The atmosphere currently being generated by statements in the national press on the basis of "we intend to have single keying even if it means doing away with the NGA" is most unhelpful in assisting the national leadership of the trades unions to play a positive role, and is creating a "siege mentality" in some quarters of our membership.'

In a union which has long fought for its exclusive interests, the bureaucrats are now fighting to save their own skins.

The NGA's 100 000 members are now gravely threatened by new technology.

Only cut-throat competition among the barons of Fleet Street holds them back from an all-out assault on the union's 7000 members on the national press. The provincial newspaper publishers are pushing ahead with 'Operation Breakthrough' which aims to promote single keying at drastic cost to their 14 000 NGA members' jobs. The most immediate threat comes from the rapidly expanding freesheet sector — which includes Eddie Shah and his *Stockport Messenger*. The freesheets are well on their way to seizing a full 50 per cent of the provincial newspapers' advertising revenue. Although the freesheets only employ 3000-4000 workers they are pioneering new technology — and non-union operations in printing. Many, like Shah, will not even tolerate the post-entry closed shop customary throughout British industry. When Shah victimised his NGA members, the NGA leaders chose the *Stockport Messenger* as an issue on which to take a stand. But whereas Shah asserted his identification with the capitalist class by enlisting the courts and the Tory anti-union laws on his side, the NGA displayed no correspondingly class conscious approach.

Throughout the dispute the NGA leaders insisted that their aim was not to beat Shah or defy the courts, but simply to ensure a negotiated solution at Warrington. They welcomed the intervention of the government arbitration body Acas. The NGA took on a dispute against an employer of the eighties to safeguard the agreements and procedures of the sixties and seventies. The NGA had no intention of broadening the Warrington dispute into a real fight to defend jobs or trade union rights. It wanted to make a gesture to the printing industry that the NGA was no pushover. It ended up merely exposing the fact that it was living in the past. The extension of the dispute on to the national stage revealed that the entire official labour movement was looking backwards in a situation that demanded an aggressive assertion of working class interests against the employers and the courts.

The NGA's declaration of a 24-hour national print strike two weeks before Christmas to increase the pressure on Shah won the support of an influential section of the trade union bureaucracy. At a key meeting of a top TUC subcommittee two days before the strike, the NGA got the backing of the TGWU, a group of smaller unions including Ken Gill's Tass and Clive Jenkins' Astms, and of Nupe and the NUM, to win majority approval. None of the union leaders seriously considered leading industrial action in support of the print workers. Moss Evans for the TGWU made it clear that what he had in mind was a gesture of support for the NGA, not pulling the dockers out. Clive Jenkins wanted the TUC simply to declare its sympathy. The NGA's Joe Wade was well known to be less than enthusiastic about his all-out strike calls.

The left-wing union leaders, like the NGA bureaucrats, wanted to show their members that they were prepared to defend trade union rights. But, at the same time, they had no intention of taking on a fight with the Government. Having made their gesture they needed somebody to get them off the hook. Len Murray has been hailed by the establishment for his statesmanlike demeanour in recent months. He further improved his standing with the media

over his personal intervention to swing a specially convened TUC General Council meeting to call off the NGA strike hours before it was due to start. Murray was derided in the left press like a pantomime villain for his betrayal. But this was all part of the plot. He ought to have been congratulated for rescuing the NGA and the left bureaucrats from an exposed position. They would have been more discomfited if they had been obliged to go through with a strike which they did not want and which their limited objectives would have destined to ignominious defeat. In the event, Murray saved the day for the bureaucracy.

When Eddie Shah raised the stakes at the *Stockport Messenger*, the only appropriate response was to raise them further, to say that the working class should openly defy an anti-working class law and mobilise the forces necessary to reinstate the Warrington workers. But Murray proclaimed the rule of law sacrosanct and there was not one voice on the general staff of the labour movement to contradict him. For the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock and John Smith (who?) echoed the TUC's deference to the law that destroys a century of hard-won trade union rights. And the left proclaimed its irrelevance by holding its peace. Arthur Scargill and Eric Heffer waited until the NGA action was over before making speeches in support of it. The rest of the left endorsed the narrow strategy of the NGA and the TUC left and indulged itself in nostalgic memories of the great strike wave of the seventies. But the *Stockport Six* live in a different epoch than the *Pentonville Five*. Today the defence of workers' rights demands a systematic challenge to the fatal moderation of the entire labour bureaucracy.

In 1984 the labour movement must get up to date with bosses like Shah. The NGA leaders could have learned some useful lessons in their dealings with this new wave employer had they the wit or the class instinct to appreciate them. 'Every time we get to the winning post he moves it' exclaimed an irate Tony Dubbins at the height of the dispute. This is how workers should conduct their negotiations, always forcing the employers to their limit and beyond it. But the bureaucrats are so imbued with the spirit of compromise that they can only plead with the bosses to play fair as they put the boot in. Retiring NGA general secretary Joe Wade was equally outraged at Shah's unsportsmanlike behaviour:

'Every time the NGA declared peace, Mr Shah declared war and all the NGA's efforts to find a peaceful solution have been thwarted by Mr Shah who is evidently determined not only to win the dispute, but to destroy the NGA in the process.'

If workers give the employers the slightest breathing space they will exploit it to the utmost. The employers fight for victory. Only incorrigible losers and British trade union bureaucrats fight for peaceful solutions. The class struggle is a harsh teacher. It should have taught the leaders of the official labour movement that if you don't fight to win you can be certain that you won't win. It should have taught them that today, if you fight to secure reasonable agreements and decent compromises you will get smashed. The lesson of the NGA dispute for active workers in 1984 is that if you want to win you have to go all out for victory. To break our chains, we must be prepared to break their laws.

Liverpool conference pulls 300

'The British government is responsible for what the RUC, the no-jury courts and their paid perjurers have done to my son That was Teresa Moore's angry response to her son Pearce's 20 month imprisonment in Belfast's Crumlin Road jail on the word of a supergrass. It summed up the theme of the Irish Freedom Movement's 26 November northern regional conference on 'Fighting for Irish Freedom'. More than 300 people crammed into Liverpool Polytechnic students' union to debate the way forward for the campaign against British legal terror.

IN THE WEEK before the Liverpool conference, Pearce Moore had been released after Lord Justice Gibson threw out the evidence offered against him by supergrass Jackie Grimley. Teresa and Patsy Moore from Derry's Citizens Against the Show Trials campaign opened the Irish Freedom Movement conference by relating Pearce's story. Pearce was picked up by the RUC and accused of membership of the INLA and taking part in a military salute at the funeral of a hunger striker.

During his 20 month detention, Pearce was offered a new life in Hawaii if he would turn supergrass. He refused. The RUC told his mother, Teresa, Pearce could go free if she admitted membership of a proscribed organisation. She refused. As the trial approached, the police became desperate for Pearce to make a deal. It was obvious that petty criminal and psychiatric patient Grimley's testimony, a tissue of lies concocted with the RUC, made unconvincing evidence against Pearce and 17 other nationalists.

Cats and rats

Patsy and Teresa told the Liverpool conference that 'INLA informer' Grimley had lied his way into the British Army on three occasions, and then lied his way out of it again each time. Grimley pretended to be in Sinn Féin and the IRA before imagining he was an INLA member.

Grimley's evidence to the court was interspersed with bizarre anecdotes of how he shot a cat which interfered with his Sunday dinner. He finally blew the gaff when he admitted the RUC had given him names to which he added spurious crimes. Grimley implicated the Special Branch men who had paid him and allowed him to commit robberies in return for his services as a perjurer. Teresa Moore told the conference how the police 'ran out of that court like rats' as Grimley exposed the corruption and lies of the show trials.

Teresa and Patsy explained that seven supergrasses had now retracted their evidence and the use of paid perjurers to convict nationalists was under strain. But five of the six men cleared with Pearce were still in custody on the word of other supergrasses. More than 200 people were still locked up awaiting show trials. And even those freed could not relax. Patsy pointed to the case of Seamus Grew, released in late 1982 after a supergrass retraction and shot dead within weeks by an RUC execution squad. Expressing his fears for Pearce, Patsy Moore drew out the constant struggle against British rule which is daily life for the nationalist community of the Six Counties:

'If you beat them one way they will try and get you another way.'

After the Moores received a rousing ovation, Bootle Labour MP Allan Roberts arrived to give his views on the way to oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Act and campaign for Irish unity. Allan

Roberts tried to distance himself from the Labour Party's record on Ireland and present himself as an advocate of 'troops out'. But, as a number of contributors to the discussion pointed out, Roberts' approach bore all the hallmarks of Labour's pro-imperialist traditions.

Robert's opposition to the Prevention of Terrorism Act emphasised the Act's violation of civil liberties and played down the issue of the PTA's use in the Irish War. He identified the barrier to British withdrawal as the 'Loyalist veto' rather than the vital interests of British imperialism. He opposed the republican armed struggle as counterproductive. Roberts' theme was that, after a 'shift in direction' of government policy, the British state could become the vehicle for uniting Ireland. Irish Freedom Movement speakers observed that the treatment meted out to Pearce Moore was a better indication of what any British solution would mean in Ireland. Whether pursued by a Tory or Labour government, it would depend on crushing all nationalist resistance. For the Irish Freedom Movement, the struggle to win Irish unity and independence was a struggle to defeat the British state.

Practical problems

The conference's afternoon workshops discussed the practical problems involved in campaigning around Ireland. The workshop on fighting the PTA assessed Liverpool IFM's campaign to make Merseyside a PTA-free zone and the local work done in opposition to PTA detentions. The workshop developed into a frank debate around the IFM's strategy - which puts the war at the centre of our anti-PTA initiatives and concentrates on winning support from the organised working class. IFM speakers explained that we stress our support for anti-imperialist violence to confront the chauvinist consensus in Britain which backs the ruling class in the Six Counties. We explained that our orientation towards the working class has a practical foundation. No other section of British society has either an interest in opposing the state or the strength to fight it.

In a workshop on Yorkshire Irish Freedom Movement's recent trade union delegation to Ireland, labour movement activists discussed their experiences of trying to win working class support for the cause of Irish freedom. The conference noted the good use made of IFM propaganda - our handbook, *An anti-imperialists guide* and video, *The longest war* - to raise the issue of Ireland in union branches, Labour Party meetings, CND groups, students' unions, youth clubs and on the streets. We discussed our work in support of Irish political prisoners like Gerry McLaughlin, whose October release from Maidstone prison we marked with a mass early morning picket, and made plans to support the Christmas Eve picket of Wormwood Scrubs. The day after the conference the Irish Freedom Movement was back in action on the Manchester Martyrs commemoration march.

The Liverpool conference illustrated our success in building the Irish Freedom Movement in the north. But we have yet to establish the campaign on as secure a foundation in other parts of England, Scotland and Wales. Several supporters who attended the conference went home to set up local IFM groups. We want others who agree with our campaigning approach to consider doing the same and to get involved in building this month's Bloody Sunday march in Sheffield.



War zone walkabout: Belfast Sinn Féin organiser Joe Austin with IFM delegates

Union solidarity

'YOU ARE entering a war zone. Watch your step'. With that cheery farewell, the Special Branch at the Scottish port of Cairnryan saw off the Yorkshire Irish Freedom Movement's November trade union delegation to the Six Counties of Ireland. The delegation of 13 included members of the AUEW, ACTTS, NUT, Natfhe, TGWU and Ucat. We were stopped, searched and interrogated before boarding the ferry. Bradford AUEW branch secretary Dave Simpson was shocked by his first encounter with the British state terror which confronts visitors to Ireland: 'I didn't know whether I was in Britain or South America'.

Our first stop was in Belfast, where we talked to Irish trade unionists and republican activists about the poverty and repression over which Britain presides in the city. Our 'walkabout' down the nationalist Falls Road with Belfast Sinn Féin organiser Joe Austin was tracked by an army helicopter which hovered directly above us, stopping when we stopped to talk to people and following again when we moved on. We spent Saturday evening in Belfast at the Felons' Club, where only those who have done time for their republican activities can be members.

When the delegation moved on to Derry, the troops which patrol Belfast were nowhere to be seen. But the massive fortresses and armed police reminded us that we were still in occupied Ireland.

Loyal unions

In both Derry and Belfast the nationalist workers we met condemned the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the official labour movement in the Six Counties: 'Apart from the horror of the war, my most outstanding memory is of the republican trade unionists' anger at the role of the Northern Ireland Committee in supporting the British occupation', said Tom Richardson of Middlesbrough Trades Council.

Nationalist trade unionists explained how the Loyalist-dominated unions pose as the only 'non-sectarian' force in the Six Counties. But in reality, the unions act as extensions of the Loyalist Orange Lodges, ensuring that Protestants have privileged access to the few jobs left. 'Where can working class unity come from', asked one trade unionist we spoke to, 'while British rule makes one group

of workers join with their bosses to keep out another group of workers?'. It was clear that the working class could only be united once Britain had been kicked out of Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Committee supports British law and order in the Six Counties. Derry TGWU and Trades Council member Paddy Logue expressed the unique character of the pro-imperialist union leaders in the North:

'The NIC says there is "no ambiguity" in its support for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. In any country there's always an ambiguity in the relationship between the labour movement and the police force. But not in the Six Counties.'

The Northern Ireland Committee has traditionally formulated the British TUC's policy on Ireland - the 'Better Life For All Campaign' - which looks to Britain to provide jobs, housing and civil rights for the population of the Six Counties.

British solidarity

At the end of our stay in Derry we showed the Irish Freedom Movement video *The longest war* to a group of young people. We explained to them how we use the video to open up discussion on Ireland within the British working class, to win labour movement support for the Irish liberation struggle. Several of them were dubious about our prospects of success. Our unions have accepted the pro-British view of the Six Counties presented to 'them by labour movement leaders in the North. Delegates like Tom Richardson of Middlesbrough have plenty of first-hand experience of fighting British labour bureaucrats' support for imperialism in Ireland and the Malvinas. Along with Irish Freedom Movement supporters in British unions, Tom will be using the experiences of the delegation to win support for the Irish people: 'It is up to trade unionists who want to see Ireland free from British domination to prove those young men from Derry wrong'. Solidarity delegations can play a part in building that support. The Irish Freedom Movement will be organising other trips this year, beginning with one from North West England in February. But the real work begins when the delegates get home and start arguing the case for Irish freedom.

The myth of sectarianism

'Mad dogs' and Englishmen

Blood on a church floor in Ireland makes good propaganda in Britain. The killing last November of three Protestant church elders in the Mountain Lodge chapel, Darkley, County Armagh by the 'Catholic Reaction Force' was greeted universally as confirmation of British claims that the Irish War is a sectarian conflict between religious fanatics. The Royal Ulster Constabulary linked Irish National Liberation Army commander Dominic McGlinchey with the 'Catholic Reaction Force'. The RUC condemned 'Mad dog' McGlinchey as a 'blood-crazed psychopath who revels in shooting defenceless men, women and children'. But an examination of the 12 months leading up to Darkley reveals such shootings as the exception which proves the rule. The British notion of mad sectarian gunmen is a 14 year old myth which disguises Britain's war against the nationalist community in the Six Counties.

APART FROM THE deaths at Darkley, 69 people died in the Irish War in 1983 (up to, the third week in December). The armed forces of the British Army, Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Ulster Constabulary killed eleven. Eight more died at the hands of Loyalist paramilitaries. The forces of the Irish Republican Army and the Irish National Liberation Army accounted for 50 deaths. Let's take a closer look at who killed whom in 1983 to get at the truth behind press hysteria about Irish murderers.

British terror

Britain presents its troops and their local allies in Ireland as impartial peace keepers holding the line between the warring factions. Yet of the 11 people the 'peace keepers' shot dead last year, 10 were Catholics. Five republican Volunteers of the IRA and INLA were summarily executed by the forces of the Crown. British soldiers killed INLA Volunteer Niall McGonagle in Derry last February. The RUC killed McGonagle's comrades Brendan Covery and Gerard Mallen after an August shoot-out in Dungannon, County Tyrone. In December, the undercover assassins of the Special Air Services ambushed and killed IRA men Colm McGirr and Brian Campbell in their home town of Coalisland, County Tyrone.

As well as gunning down republican Volunteers, the army, UDR and RUC shot and killed five Catholic nationalists who had no connection with the armed struggle. Two of them were executed on the spot while allegedly running away from the scene of petty crimes. The other three were murdered for the crime of being out on the streets in the nationalist areas where they lived. At the end of July, 18 year old Martin Malone was shot at point blank range by a UDR patrol harassing a group of nationalist youth in Armagh. Ten days later, a British soldier shot dead Thomas Reilly as he tried to collect his dole in North Belfast. On 28 November, 80 year old Bridget Foster was killed when an RUC squad fired indiscriminately into a crowded post office while supposedly chasing 'masked raiders' in Pomeroy, County Tyrone.

The murder of innocent Catholics exposes the lie of British 'peace keeping'. In 1983 as in each of the last 14 years, the security forces fought a ruthless war of occupation in the Six Counties. Their single purpose was to crush nationalist resistance to British rule.

Loyal cohorts

The one Protestant killed by the security forces last year was a member of the Loyalist paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force. The UVF usually enjoys cordial relations with the army and police. The UVF member shot by the army last year was probably mistaken for a republican as



Joseph Craven: another Catholic victim of Loyalist death squads

he drove through Belfast carrying a gun. Another Loyalist — John Molloy — was shot dead on 12 December, in what seemed an internal feud between Belfast paramilitaries. For the rest of 1983 the Loyalist paramilitaries played their traditional role as auxiliaries in the security forces' campaign of attrition against the nationalist community. The Protestant Action Force, a UVF front, shot dead INLA Volunteer Joseph Craven in December as he walked to the dole office in Bawnmore on the outskirts of Belfast. It is highly unusual for Loyalist paramilitaries to shoot republican activists: they usually murder Catholics at random. The other six dead joined more than 600 innocent Catholics slaughtered by Loyalists since the civil rights movement of the sixties sparked off the paramilitaries' sectarian pogrom.

Loyalist ideology depicts every Catholic as a threat. Loyalist murder gangs deal with this 'threat' through random and often horrific brutality. Two of the Catholics killed by Loyalists in 1983 were battered to death. In April, John McConville was beaten to a pulp in Lurgan, County Armagh. On 25 November, 51 year old Daniel Rouse was attacked from behind with a hammer as he walked home past the Loyalist Gilpinstown estate in Craigavon. Rouse was beaten with such ferocity that he died with his hands still in his pockets. The other four dead were shot down in cold blood. In March, 23 year old James Hogg was shot in Armagh. In May, Loyalist gunmen killed Catholic milkman Trevor Close on his North Belfast delivery round. Armagh council worker Adrian Carroll was killed in November within yards of his home. On 12 December, Loyalists shot dead 18 year old Catholic Anthony Dawson next to a police station, in the nationalist Short Strand enclave within Protestant East Belfast. None of these six Catholic men were involved in the war. The fact that Adrian Carroll's brother Roddy had been murdered by the RUC in December 1982, was enough to make him a target for the sectarian thugs of Loyalism.

The Protestant Action Force claimed responsibility for three of the killings and a series of brutal attacks throughout 1983. Typical examples of the PAF's sectarian atrocities were the car bomb which crippled a 32 year old Catholic and his five year old son at Armagh's shopping centre in

March, and the April bomb attack on a Catholic family in Belfast in which a 25 year old man lost a leg. To shore up its tainted image as an even-handed police force, the RUC moved in on the PAF at the end of November. But the police action only underlined the security forces' complicity in the Loyalists' murder campaign. The 13 PAF members arrested and four charged with the murder of Adrian Carroll all turned out to be serving members of the Ulster Defence Regiment. The tradition of cross-membership between the security forces and the murder gangs is only the most obvious link tying Loyalist pogroms to Britain's occupation of the Six Counties. Every sectarian blow struck by the Loyalist killers is a bonus for British imperialism.

The war against Britain

The republican military campaign of 1983 stands in stark contrast to the indiscriminate rampages of the Loyalist gangs. The republican forces have always emphasised that their enemies are the agents of the British state, not Protestants. The IRA killed 44 people last year. Thirty six were members of the occupying forces. The IRA's strategy of selective assassinations eliminated 18 members of the RUC and its Reserve, 11 from the UDR and seven British soldiers. Five of the eight civilians killed by the IRA were associated with the war. None of these could be claimed as victims of sectarian attacks. The first civilian death last year was that of Catholic county court judge William Doyle, shot by the IRA in January for his part in railroading republicans into jail. In May, the IRA shot a British soldier's wife when she got in the way of an attack on her husband. In August, Derry businessman William Young met his end when he attacked an IRA Volunteer searching his premises for a reported army spy post. The following month James Truckle was killed in an IRA car bomb attack at his home in Portadown soon after he retired as a long serving captain in the Ulster Defence Regiment. In December, Official Unionist Party law and order spokesman Edgar Graham was assassinated by IRA men on his way to work at Belfast's Queen's University. Graham had been a staunch champion of the use of supergrasses and the shoot-to-kill policy against nationalists.

The other three civilians killed by the IRA last year were postman Alan Price (shot in February while delivering in Ballineak, County Fermanagh) James McCormack (shot at his Bangor, County Down home in April) and motor accessories dealer Sean McShane (killed in a Newry betting shop in October). All of them were mistaken for neighbours or work-mates who were members of the security forces. The 44 deaths at the IRA's hands last year resulted from its fight for Irish freedom against the British state, not from any sectarian campaign against the Protestant population.

The same was true of the six people killed by the INLA in 1983. Two of them were members of the security forces. Two more were INLA members shot as informers. The remaining two were civilians. The media presented these last deaths as occurring in 'unexplained circumstances'. But the civilians' close association with one of the shot INLA informers suggests that they too were executed as British agents.

Dogs of war

The November events at Darkley can only be understood against this background of another year of warfare between the forces of British oppression and the republican fighters for Irish freedom. The immediate responsibility for the Darkley killings remains obscure. The IRA and INLA both readily claim responsibility for their acts of war and even issue public apologies in cases of mistaken identity. Yet both have denied responsibility for Darkley.

The machine gun attack on the Pentecostalist worshippers is not the first time Catholics have killed innocent Protestants in the Six Counties. But such attacks are rare and always in retaliation for Loyalist atrocities. The best known took place in 1976, when 10 Protestant workmen were ambushed and killed at Bessbrook, South Armagh. It is less well known that five Catholics had been murdered by Loyalists in Armagh on the previous day. Similarly, the Catholic Reaction Force — as its name indicates — killed the Darkley churchgoers in response to the Protestant Action Force's two-year campaign of sectarian murder and maiming in the neighbouring counties of Armagh and Tyrone.

The death toll of 1983 demonstrates that the republican movement and the Loyalist paramilitaries cannot be equated. Sectarianism in Ireland is not a religious dogma which afflicts both communities equally. It is a feature of British domination carried out through Loyalist proxies. The Six Counties state which Britain has imposed on Ireland is based on systematic discrimination against Catholics and in favour of Protestants in jobs, housing and services. Institutionalised sectarianism is the British mechanism for maintaining Loyalist allegiance and nationalist oppression. Britain has encouraged Loyalists to vent their anger on the Catholic community which threatens their special relationship with British imperialism. As the leading opponent of British rule, the republican movement is the most consistent fighter against sectarianism.

In a secret end of year interview with the *Irish Sunday Tribune*, Dominic McGlinchey admitted responsibility for 30 killings and 200 bombings. But he condemned sectarianism and said that the only civilian he had killed was a police informer. The 'peace keepers' of the Ulster Defence Regiment who pose as the Protestant Action Force to carve up innocent Catholics would be hard pushed to say the same. The only mad dogs in Ireland are Englishmen and the rabid sectarians in the Loyalist death squads.

Mick Hume

End British terror!

The IRA's Christmas bombing campaign was the pretext for a wave of arrests under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The Irish Freedom Movement led the resistance to the media bigotry and police terror against the Irish community

War fever

WHEN AN IRA bomb blasted Harrods on 17 December, the Special Branch used the Prevention of Terrorism Act to raid Irish communities in Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester and London. Screaming headlines emphasised the threat Irish bombers posed to the Christmas revelries of decent British citizens. Londoners were warned to be on the lookout for suspicious Irishmen.

The police had paved the way for this outburst of anti-Irish hysteria by picking up West Belfast labourer Tommy Quigley in connection with the IRA's 1981 London bombing campaign. A joint Scotland Yard and RUC squad snatched Tommy Quigley on 2 December and flew him to London, courtesy of the RAF. He was held under the PTA at Paddington Green police station. 'Terror alert as man is questioned' howled the *Daily Mirror*.

Tommy Quigley was held in the special PTA cells at Paddington Green. Outside, the police encouraged the lynch-mob atmosphere by prowling around the prison carrying pistols and muttering darkly about the possibility of helicopter jailbreaks. When no helicopters appeared on the North London skyline, the press and police turned their venom against the Irish Freedom Movement's protests at Tommy Quigley's detention.

Irish Freedom Movement supporters cut through the hysteria surrounding

Quigley with pickets and protests around Britain. In London we held nightly pickets which warmed up the December evenings outside Paddington Green. On the first night the police tried to intimidate us off the street. On the second picket the constabulary was joined by an ugly collection of fascists and Loyalists waving 'Ulster' flags and placards. Meanwhile the gutter press seized upon the Irish Freedom Movement's support for the liberation struggle. The *Mail* quoted with horror Irish Freedom Movement organiser Phil Murphy's declaration that the bomb attack on Marines commander Sir Stuart Pringle (with which Quigley had been linked) was 'an act of war'.

Despite the efforts of the British state and the baying hounds of Fleet Street, our pickets went ahead — supported by several labour movement and Irish solidarity organisations. When Tommy Quigley was charged with conspiracy to cause explosions, we were outside Marylebone court in force. And when he arrived at Brixton Prison on remand we held a protest outside the jail. The Irish Freedom Movement is prepared for many more pickets over the year ahead. Christmas may come but once a year, but Britain's campaign of terror against the Irish will continue throughout 1984. So must the struggle against the PTA on the home front of the Irish War.



Smash the PTA: Manchester IFM demands the Moores' release

Conference speakers held

ON SATURDAY 26 November, Teresa and Patsy Moore from Derry's Citizens Against the Show Trials campaign addressed the Irish Freedom Movement's 300-strong Liverpool conference. A major theme of the conference was how to fight the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Two days later, the conference supporters had a chance to put their discussions into action when the Moores were picked up under the PTA on their way home through Manchester Airport. After the Irish Freedom Movement spent a day lobbying Liverpool MPs opposed to the Act and picketing Manchester police stations, the Moores were hurriedly released and shunted back to the Six Counties. But not before they had suffered the harassment reserved for those detained under the PTA.

The Special Branch picked up Teresa and Patsy as they tried to board the 4pm flight from Manchester on 28 November. Teresa was told she had no right to a phone call as she had not been arrested, merely 'detained' without charge under the PTA. When Teresa refused to give her date of birth, she was threatened with charges under the section of the Act which removes the detainee's right to silence and makes it an offence not to divulge information. Both Teresa and Patsy were interrogated about what had gone on at Liverpool, who they had stayed with in Manchester and who had taken them to the airport. They were photographed, had their fingerprints taken and the underside of their fingernails searched (for concealed explosives). After four hours of this, the Moores were driven off to Manchester's Central Detention Centre for the night.

Once incarcerated in the cells, Patsy was questioned again. When he refused to admit collecting money for the IRA his mattress and bedclothes were removed. Forty nine year old Patsy was left to suffer on the floor for the night. In another cell Teresa was subjected to similar maltreatment. The screws refused to let her have tablets prescribed by her doctor.

As soon as Irish Freedom Movement supporters in Manchester and Liverpool got wind of the Moores' arrest, we launched a campaign for their release. We contacted Labour MPs who had backed our campaign to make Merseyside a PTA-free zone for support. Bootle MP Allan Roberts, who shared a platform with the Moores at our Liverpool conference, protested to the Home Office and the Manchester police. Eric Heffer (Walton) Bob Parry (Riverside) and Bob Waverling (West Derby) all got on to Whitehall about the Moores' detention. Irish Freedom Movement supporters in Manchester took the fight for Patsy and Teresa Moore's freedom on to the streets. Despite pressure from the MPs and solicitors, the police refused to say where the Moores were being held. At lunchtime on Tuesday 29 November, our Manchester activists went into action anyway. We held a 30-strong picket of Bootle Street police station. By Tuesday evening, we had discovered the Moores were in the Crown Square detention centre. At six o'clock we launched a second picket outside the centre, this time of more than 40 people including supporters of Sinn Féin, the Labour Party and local trade unionists. By five past six the Special Branch had had enough. They sneaked Patsy and Teresa out of a back entrance, whisked them away to Manchester Airport and shipped them home to the Six Counties.

The Moores' case was typical of the way the PTA is used to terrorise Irish people resident in Britain or travelling across the Irish Sea. It is an attempt to intimidate them to keep silent on Britain's role in Ireland and thus isolate the war within the Six Counties. The Irish Freedom Movement opposes the PTA as a vital part of raising opposition to Britain's war in Ireland within the working class. Our approach can work. As Teresa Moore told us after her release, 'the campaign was definitely effective and the police really panicked'. In 1983 we panicked the police. In 1984, with growing support, we are out to smash the PTA.



Show our latest video on Britain's war in Ireland in your trade union branch, youth club or college. It includes extensive footage of war torn Derry and Belfast, and interviews with republicans and British trade unionists on their experiences of fighting for Irish freedom throughout 14 years of British occupation. Invitations for speakers are welcomed.

PLUS Irish Freedom Movement handbook

A guide for people in Britain who want to end the war in Ireland. Includes a section on war facts, a chronology of the struggle and a way forward for the solidarity movement.

Order from BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX

● Video: 35 mins VHS colour £5 to hire ● Handbook: pp138 pbk £1.95 + 50p postage

Residential social workers

Now let's change the union

The residential social workers dispute was approaching a messy end before Christmas after three months of industrial action. The acceptance of the shabby compromise of an 'independent' inquiry by the Nalگو leadership shows the urgency of transforming the union into a body that fights for the workers, instead of making concessions to the employers. Hackney Nalگو militant Mike Hope reviews the strike and its consequences.

RESIDENTIAL SOCIAL WORKERS are employed by local councils to run homes for children, old people and the mentally and physically handicapped. They have always been poor relations to other social services staff. They took industrial action to win a 35 hour week and better pay and working conditions.

About 25 000 residential workers are organised in Nalگو, but until the dispute began the majority had little contact with the Nalگو machine. This is partly because they work in small, isolated workplaces, but mainly because Nalگو has paid little heed to their interests. So why did Nalگو finally accede to demands for industrial action in September?

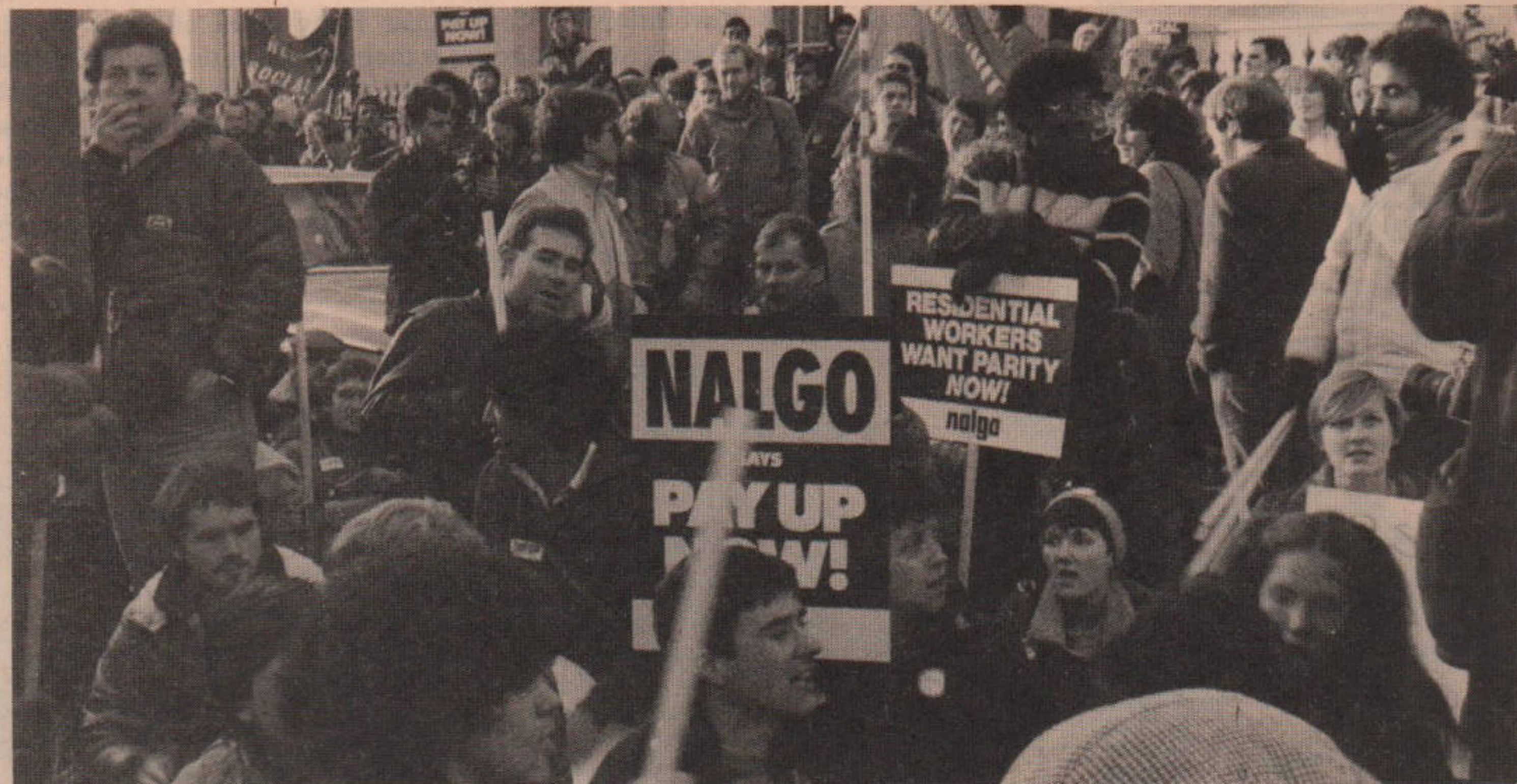
The Nalگو leadership was under considerable pressure from the residential workers. But self interest was the main driving force behind its decision to give official backing to a ban on overtime and new admissions to homes on 12 September. Nalگو is widely regarded as a Town Hall union for Town Hall staff — it has no residential workers on its 60-strong national executive committee. Nalگو's vigorous pursuit of the interests of senior grade local government officers reflects the composition of the committee. Of the 47 local government lay members on the executive, six have chief officer status, and all but 11 of the remainder hold senior and higher management jobs. All but nine come from professional occupations closely associated with the management functions of the Town Hall. The divisions in a union that contains both management and workers were thrown into sharp relief during the course of the three month long dispute.

The Nalگو headquarters at Mabledon Place has all the trappings befitting Britain's largest white collar trade union. Yet the Nalگو bureaucracy is weak and ineffectual. Nalگو fears that it is losing out to rival unions in local government. To have ignored the residential workers' claim might have provoked further desertions from its ranks. Yet Nalگو is far too closely tied to the local government employers to lead effective industrial action against them.

Leading from behind

When a union is in dispute with management, it is usual for it to break off all negotiations until the dispute is settled. Not so for Nalگو. Throughout the dispute the negotiating machinery remained intact — and so did the bureaucrats' friendly relations with management. The bosses received cordial invitations to attend the Nalگو President's reception half way through the dispute. The importance Nalگو officials attached to the residential workers' claim was indicated on the 7 December national strike day. The issue was the last item on the agenda at the National Joint Council talks in Belgrave Square. While Nalگو executive member Brian Gabb offered the police some friendly advice on how to control the demonstration outside the talks, inside it was sherry and quiche lorraine with the employers.

Nalگو's strategy was to devolve as much responsibility as possible to the branches, yet keep control through bureaucratic manoeuvring. At a national delegate conference on 11 October, Nalگو officials rejected calls for an all out strike



Lobbying the bosses and bureaucrats: Hackney militants lead protests outside the Nalگو/management talks

in favour of selective action organised at a local level. The bureaucrats warned militants that a national ballot for an all-out strike would not be carried because the more moderate sections of the membership would vote against it. At least with selective action, they argued, the militant sections could keep the dispute going. The bureaucrats' attempts to blame the more conservative members for the limited scope of the action were in reality an excuse for their own failure to give a lead.

The officials' strategy of selective action was ineffective. It merely isolated militants and allowed both Tory and Labour councils to go on the offensive. Councils took advantage of the dispute to push through reorganisations, sack militants, cut pay and worsen conditions. Strathclyde regional council threatened to suspend the closed shop after the local Nalگو branch threatened to kick scabs out of the union. Even if the vote is lost at the end of the day, it is always better to argue the case for all-out action than persist with selective action which is ineffective and ultimately demoralising.

Nalگو's attempt to defuse militancy and keep control by putting the onus on local branches almost backfired. On the initiative of supporters of the next step, Hackney became the first area to impose a strict 8am to 3pm work rota and a ban on sleeping-in and weekend work from the end of October. The bureaucrats responded by demanding a ballot. Hackney replied by threatening to throw the ballot papers in the bin. No ballot papers were sent. Not wanting to lose face, Nalگو gave official backing three days later. Lambeth, Southwark and other branches soon followed Hackney's lead. In early November, 2000 demonstrators invaded the London negotiations in Camden Town Hall, bringing the proceedings to a standstill. They followed this up with a two hour occupation of Nalگو headquarters. In angry exchanges with Nalگو officials and executive members, workers from Hackney and other branches barracked the bureaucrats for their failure to give a lead.

Terrified of losing control, the Nalگو bureaucrats changed their tactics. At the second national delegate conference on 17 November they again beat off calls for an all-out strike, but they agreed to ballot nationally to 'step up' industrial action by imposing an 'office hours only' regime. The national ballot was the last cynical gesture. Desperate to end the dispute before Christmas, the Nalگو leadership knew that its divisive tactics of the past

two months made a 'no' vote almost certain. The result announced on 15 December was an overwhelming majority against continuing industrial action.

In the closing stages of the dispute, the bureaucrats got together with the arbitration body Acas to work out a deal which could not even be deemed a compromise. A joint inquiry into pay and hours is all that Nalگو workers have achieved after three months of action. One Hackney worker argued that the final outcome could have been predicted from the start:

'As soon as you're talking about negotiations you're talking about compromise. There isn't a concept of negotiation without a concept of compromise. You make your claim and the boss either pays you or he doesn't. If he doesn't you go all-out.'

Labour sabotage

Most residential workers recognise that their union was a major obstacle in the fight to win the dispute. An even bigger problem was left-talking Labour councils which used Tory tactics to smash it. To distinguish themselves from Tory councils Labour authorities began by urging negotiations over local settlements. What was in reality an attempt to resolve the dispute in their own favour was presented in an anti-Tory wrapper. Revolutionary Communist Party supporters in Hackney and elsewhere argued strongly against Labour's divisive strategy. Hackney stewards took the arguments to other branches which were deliberating about whether or not local deals were acceptable. This confusion reflected the influence of left organisations with some supporters among Nalگو activists. The Socialist Workers' Party in Lambeth vacillated between arguing for all-out action and acceptance of local deals. The SWP's inability to argue decisively against local settlements was a measure of its lack of independence from left-wing Labour councillors.

The Labour councils showed whose side they were really on when they started threatening closures, suspensions and other disciplinary action. On 2 December Hackney council issued a letter to all residential workers informing them that by only working 8am to 3pm they were in breach of their contract of employment. Residential workers in Hackney responded to the council's threat to dock pay and commence with victimisations by voting for an all-out indefinite strike.

One of the Hackney strikers

told the next step that Hackney council's claim to be a radical employer was the 'biggest joke around':

'To me bosses are bosses, whether they're Tories or radical socialist councils. That means they're all bastards. I didn't expect this dispute to be easy, but then I didn't expect the level of hypocrisy that we've seen either.'

In Lambeth left-wing council leader Ted Knight attempted to weaken workers' resolve by threatening closures and victimisations. On 6 December he copied Hackney and sent out a letter telling his employees to get back to normal working or have their pay docked and face suspension. In Southwark, the left-wing Labour council called in the police Instant Response Unit to smash up and close down the Hollies children's home complex. The police were kept on standby for 36 hours while the council 'negotiated' with Nalگو.

Changing Nalگو

The residential workers dispute has highlighted the conflict between workers' interests and the whole structure of Nalگو and its relationship with local councils. Nalگو activists will have to tackle two key problems that the dispute has brought to a head.

First, we need to establish grassroots control over workplace organisation. This means enforcing 100 per cent trade union membership *ourselves*, instead of having a closed shop set up by council officials and union bureaucrats. The institutionalised closed shop is an administrative convenience for the authorities, not an effective instrument of collective organisation. Ending the sweetheart deals between Nalگو and the council also means breaking from all council-run 'campaigns against the cuts' which invariably disguise attacks on jobs and services.

Second, we need a union that represents workers — not one that also includes the bosses. The vertical organisation of Nalگو which brings together all levels of the workforce from clerk to chief officer is a barrier to any militant industrial action. Nalگو is a union virtually run by management. If it is going to be of any use to workers we have to kick the bosses out of our union. Once we get the union in our hands, then we will be able to take on management — and win.

Public Meeting

Friday 13 January 7.30pm

Reclaiming our union

Speakers from Hackney Nalگو, Roebuck Pub, 108a Tottenham Court Road W1

RCP after conference

The party of the future

Laura, Manchester

When I found out that my brother in law, who's a sound bloke, was really bowled over by RCP politics, I thought I'd better find out what it was all about. So I went along to the Preparing for Power conference last summer. I agreed with the



arguments, but I was worried about how it could all be done and how people could get involved, especially women. The party's ideas on dealing with women's problems were the first things I remember talking to my brother in law about. Housework and looking after kids struck me as the main thing that stops women getting into politics. So it's a really big problem for us to deal with.

I spend a lot of my time going round to see people who've bought *the next step* or heard about what we're doing and want to talk about our politics. That's great because I get to meet all sorts of people with all sorts of experiences. But it also shows up the practical problems people have to overcome before they can get involved. I go to see women with a baby to feed and put to bed, and a part-time evening job to go to. Or I might meet a man who works shifts and says he'd really like to know what the party's up to, but he's only around in the mornings. Obviously, they are going to have problems giving a lot of time to politics. The way the party is changing to cope with this is to get more involved with what those people are already doing. If people are using *the next step* in their local cuts campaign or union or whatever, then they're helping build the party and win their own fight at the same time. And we give them all the help we can to do that. Last week I met a girl in Manchester who was trying to do something about getting a nursery at her college. So I got on a bus and went up there with her to get a meeting organised. I think it's really important that we respond to what's going on locally like that, to make sure everybody who supports the party gets the most out of our politics and we make the most of our supporters.

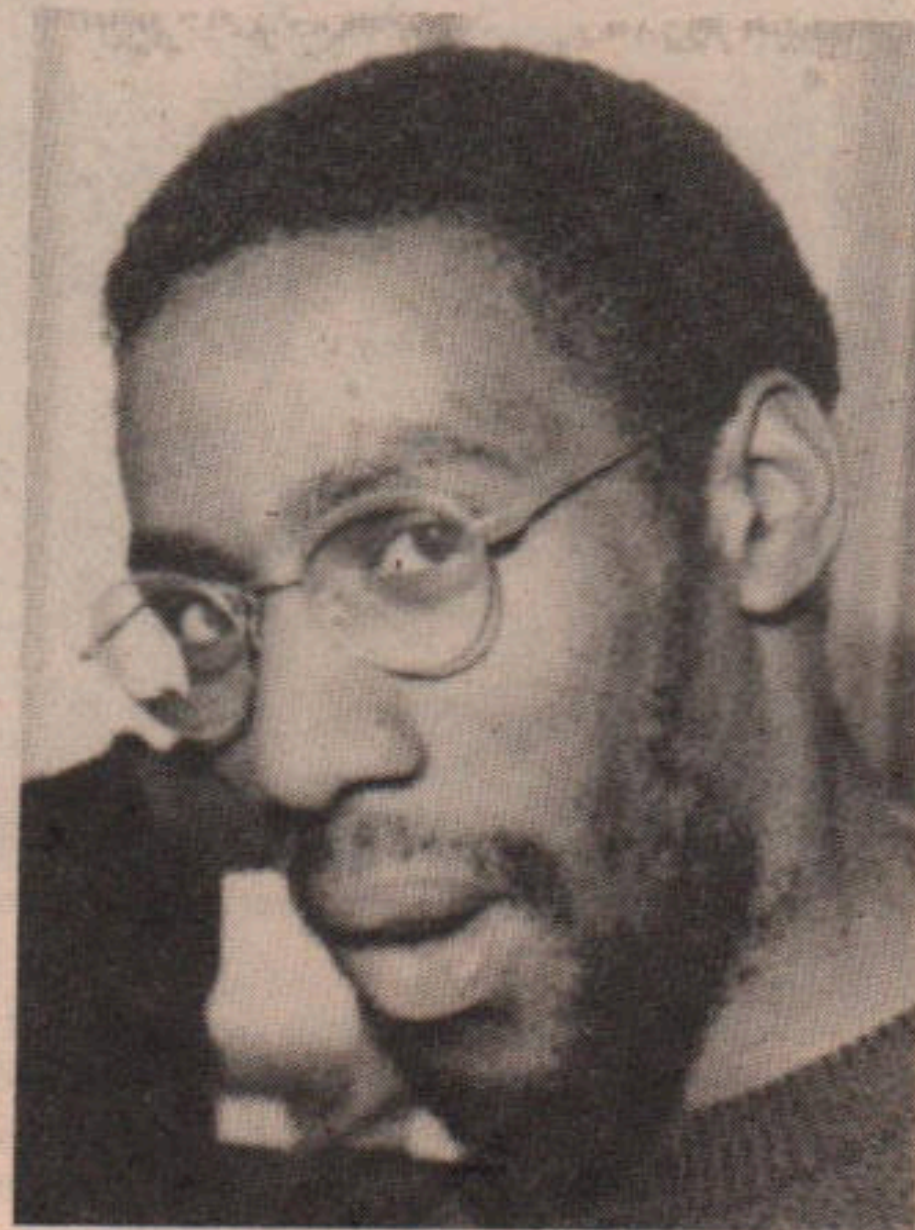
If we're involved in people's concerns like that, communism stops being just a nice idea that didn't work out in Russia. That's how I thought of it at first, and other people I meet sometimes think the same. You get round this by showing them we're not a hangover from 1917 or a bunch of dreamers. We've got the ideas for the eighties. People are starting to see the sense of ideas in action from the RCP.

Members of the Revolutionary Communist Party from all over Britain met in London at the start of last month for their second national conference. They adopted a new constitution, appointed a new General Secretary, and debated a new approach to turning the party outwards. But who are these people? And what do they do in the RCP? We talked to four people who became members shortly before the conference about how they got into the party, and what they get out of it. Opposite, our first General Secretary gives us her views on the party's results and prospects.

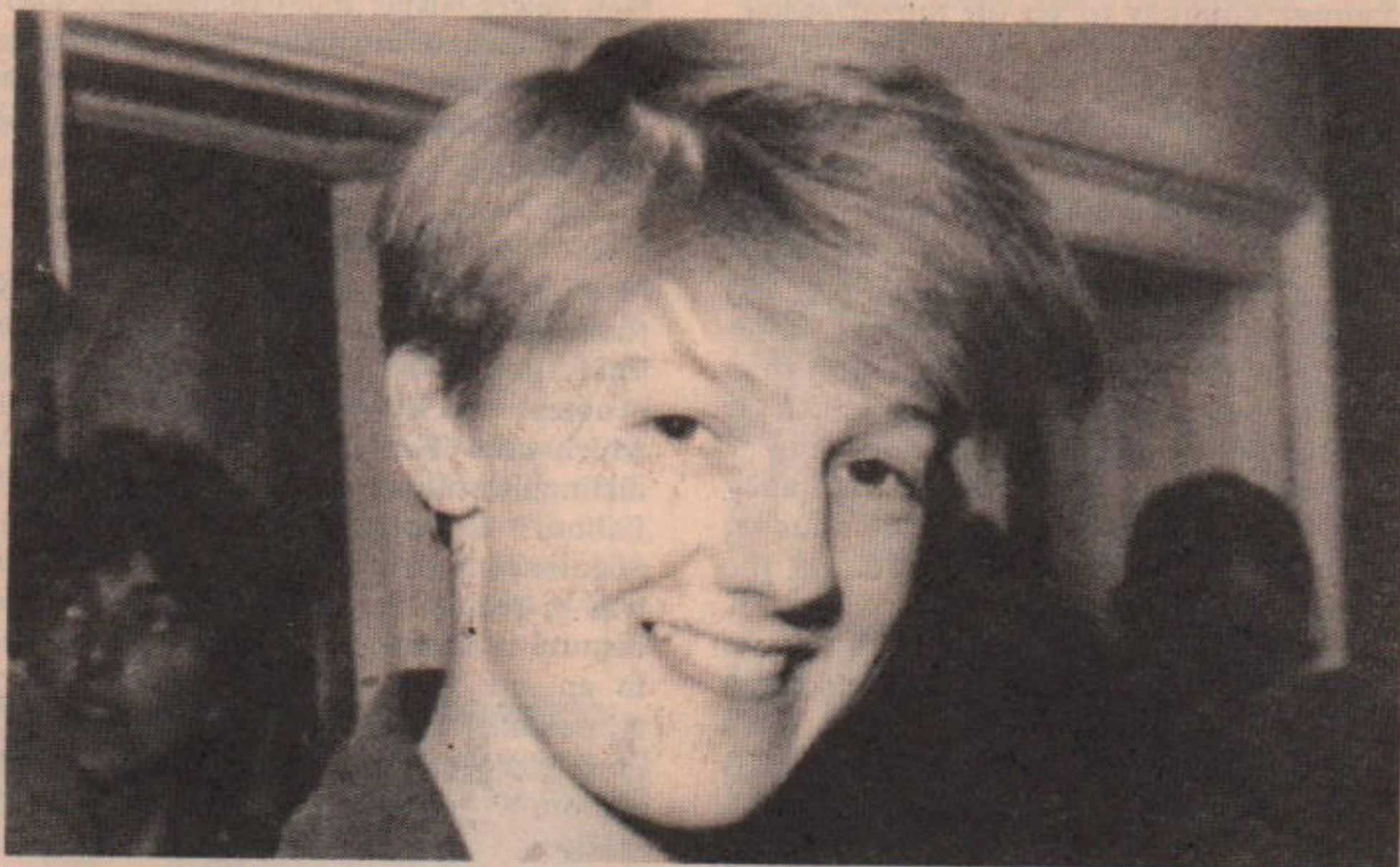
Clive, North London

If you try and sell *the next step* to black youth they tell you they're not interested in politics. But what they mean is they're not interested in what some bunch of councillors are doing on a police committee somewhere. Young blacks want to know what's happening in their street and what they can do about it. That's why I've found revolutionary politics have got a lot to offer West Indian youth. It's politics for action against racism, not just for some opportunist hustler to make a name for himself by telling the world how anti-racist he is at a public meeting.

I used to have some crazy ideas about setting up a non-capitalist black community somewhere. I didn't know anything about communism but I thought capitalism was something to do with whites. Getting involved with the RCP made me look at things differently. I went down on to the picket line at Britains. Seeing white people fighting alongside black strikers while the police attacked them all



opened my eyes a bit to the way things work. As I got more into the politics I saw that you couldn't divorce racism from the system, you couldn't just go away and set up a community independently because capitalism would still be there when you stepped outside. You've got to change things, and that needs politics.



Joanne, Birmingham

At first when I met someone from the party I thought communism was really mysterious, a bit 'naughty'. Now it seems like common sense. I've always been interested in Ireland because of my family connections, but I felt strongly about other things too. What I liked about the RCP was that it put a lot of things into words which I had always felt were right, but could never explain why.

I try to mix my work at college with what the party's doing. Raising RCP politics at college brings home to you how different they are. A lot of student politics is so boring, all bureaucracy and

beer. We make our politics imaginative, whether we're talking about Ireland or fighting the cuts. Last month we had 20 supporters delegated to the NUS conference; we held a fringe meeting with speakers from Ireland and made a real impact on a very dull event. And we try and get students involved in our other work. We've just started a West Midlands NHS 'Right to Fight' campaign against the health cuts. I didn't know a lot about this sort of thing but it's really good to go to the hospitals and talk to the nurses and ancillary workers about what we're doing.

I think there's such a lot of scope for the party this year that I just want to get on with it. I want to learn a lot more about Marxism too. Of course I still like to go out to parties and things. But I don't do it as often because I've found out that a lot of what I used to do 'for fun' was just filling in time. Now I've got a better sort of party to spend my time on.

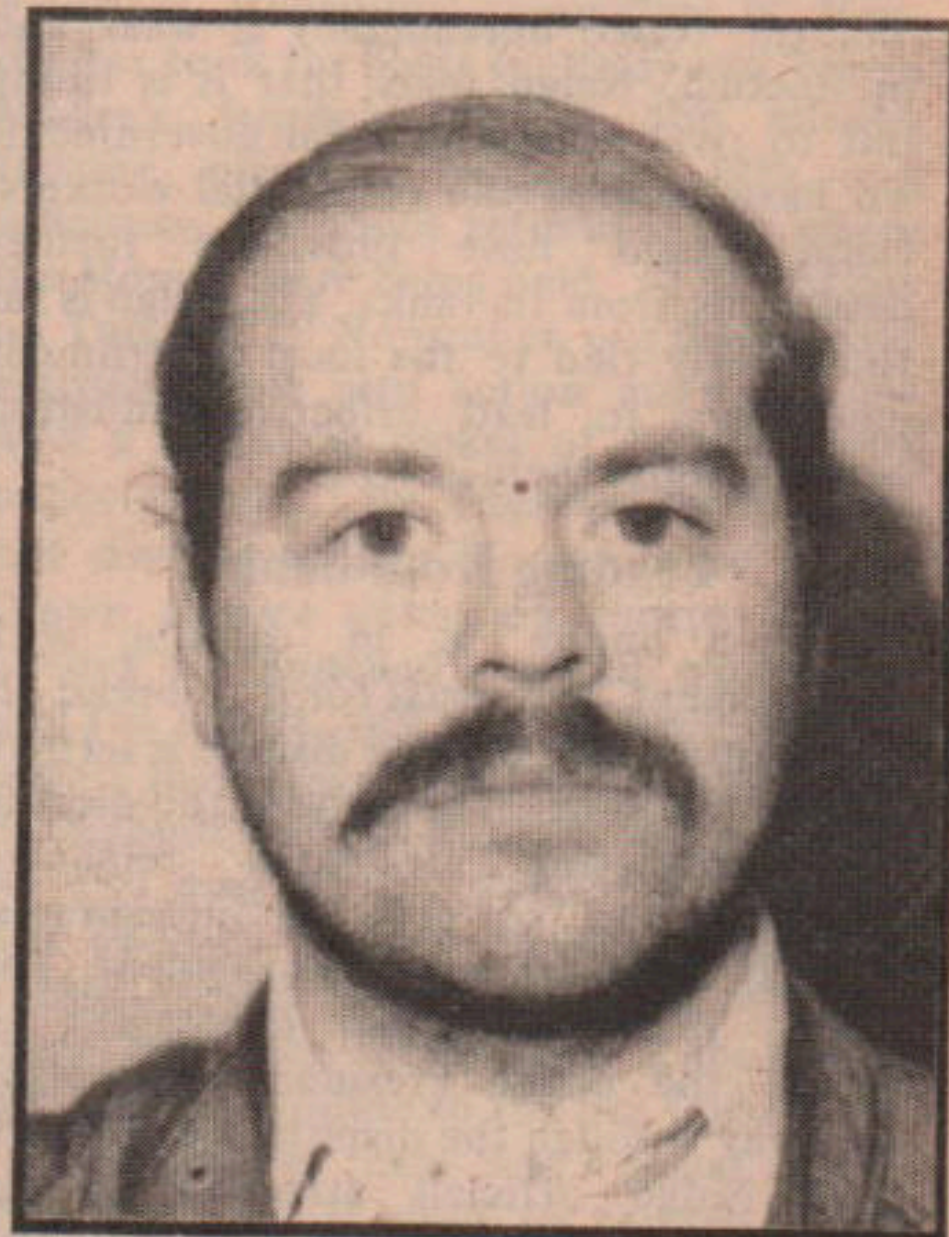
Les, Sheffield

I was at this meeting where some radical lecturer was going on about the 'morality of capitalism'. I got really annoyed and had a go at him. Anybody who has thought about it knows there's no morality in capitalism, it's just us and them. So I blew up, I couldn't take all that mind-dulling talk. After the meeting I got talking to a girl from the RCP. She seemed to think the same way as me, only a bit clearer. So I had a look at what the party was doing.

The RCP and Workers Against Racism were always out on the streets in Sheffield, selling papers and all that. Local politics is usually about sitting in town halls, which is all wrong to me. I've always been keen on real politics. I started going to quite a few different meetings to make my own mind up. After about two years of reading *the next step* and going along to things I thought 'I've got to stop messing around and do something decisive'. So I decided to join. You couldn't do anything decisive by getting caught up with other parties. I thought the RCP was the only one that had any basis in reality, it hit the nail on the head.

The Labour Party has had Sheffield stitched up for years. They've foisted all sorts on to the working class around here. I just couldn't swallow it. I'm never defensive when people ask me why we're against our 'socialist' council. I try and get people to question all the hot air about what Labour can do, but I think it's the work we do ourselves that's really important for people to see what's right about the RCP. It shows we're being effective when we hit a raw nerve about racism or unemployment and put the Labour Party under pressure. That's when people start asking the right questions about who's doing what.

You've got to show people we can



win. I just have a quiet chat with someone about anything that's going on in the world. If you've boned up a bit on a few things you can show people there's a different way of looking at their problems and get them to take the time out to come to a meeting or whatever. But I think the only way to get to grips with what needs to be done is to try out what we're saying by arguing it with working class people. You've got to get out and sell the paper. And you've got to be ready to question everything to make sure we're on the right track. That's what I did, and I'm sure we are.

New General Secretary

At the RCP's national conference in December, Kate Marshall was appointed as the first ever woman General Secretary of a revolutionary party. She spoke to *the next step* about the job, the party and the year ahead.

Why did the party choose this year's conference to appoint its first General Secretary?

The past year has seen dramatic changes in British politics — and important advances for the RCP. Over the last 12 months, really for the first time, we began to play a leading role in trade union action — in the NHS, the residential workers dispute, and in important strikes at Aire Valley Yarns and Hindle's in Yorkshire, and at Britains in East London. We also stood RCP candidates in the General Election and put down a useful marker for the future. The campaigns we sponsor — the Irish Freedom Movement and Workers Against Racism — have established themselves as the leading forces in Irish solidarity and anti-racist action in Britain. While the rest of the British left has retreated around a disintegrating Labour Party, we've emerged as an independent force.

Our growing experience of the class struggle is brought together in the programme, *Preparing for Power*, that we drew up in 1983. Our conference in December adopted a new constitution based on the new programme and our aim to turn the party outwards in 1984. We are now in a position to make a more active response to events, to think bigger and really get out and build the party. This is why the conference took the decision to appoint a General Secretary — to build on our past gains and push the party into a more interventionist role in the class struggle.

Already the growing response to *the next step* shows the potential resonance for our politics. We have now got to reorganise our working methods to bring them into line with our political development. We want to be able to involve people who are open to RCP politics as fast and as fully as possible in party activities and discussion. This is vital to extend our range of experience of working class struggles and to spread the influence of revolutionary communist politics. The job of the General Secretary is to make sure these plans get carried out.

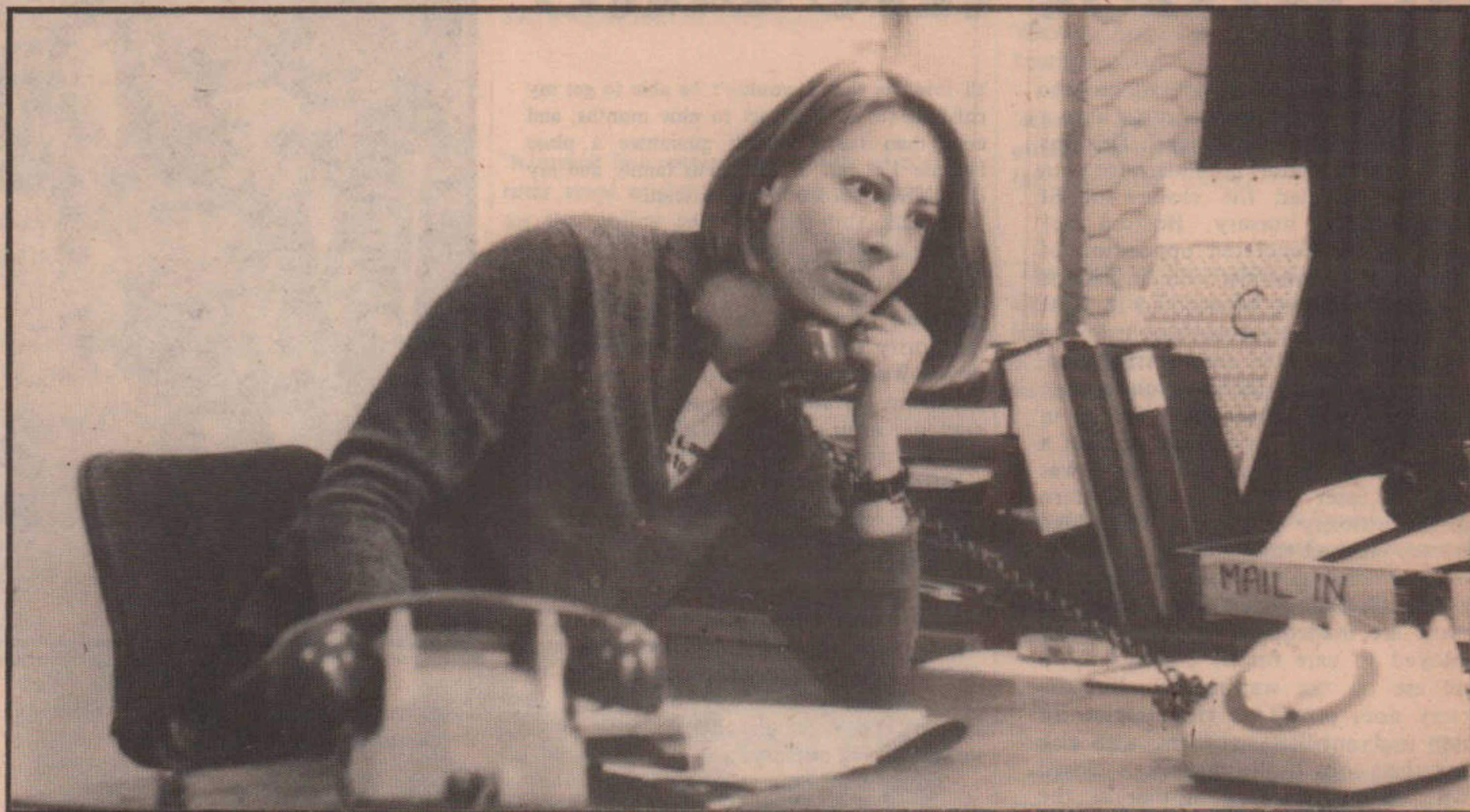
What sort of practical changes are you looking for?

The party is established nationally now in Glasgow, Cardiff and all the major English cities. We're getting a lot of enquiries these days from different people and places about what the RCP is doing, and how others can get involved in all this. I'll make sure all these are dealt with as efficiently as possible.

We have to overhaul our administration pretty drastically. A lot of methods we use to organise our work or distribute our propaganda to people and so on belong to the past. The problem is summed up by our national office. The place we've used for the past few years is just too cramped and inconvenient to cope with our expanding workload. We need a new office and new technology to reorganise our affairs. Obviously these changes are going to cost us a lot in terms of time and money. I'll try to motivate our supporters to help us meet the costs of making sure the party of the future is fit for the struggles of today.

You've talked a lot about the party being at a new stage. What are the main differences you've noticed between the RCP today and previously?

We're now a much bigger and more varied party than ever before. When we started off there were only a few of us, all of about the same age and from similar backgrounds. The early leadership laid all the



Kate Marshall: phone call every minute, demo every weekend, *the next step* every month

basic groundwork for the RCP's politics. But it could only develop our analysis and strategy up to a point because we didn't have enough experience of real struggles. So the people we tended to attract were small groups of individuals who could understand what we were driving at on an intellectual level. Now, we are better able to offer the working class answers to the problems it comes up against. I think that's both a cause and a consequence of the influx of new sorts of people into the RCP.

A lot of people joined the party last year. Our membership seems to get younger all the time, now we have a lot of 17 and 18 year olds around us. We have more working class members and a higher proportion of women and blacks. The greater variety of people with different backgrounds and jobs means we are in touch with a broader range of experiences, which helps us respond to outside events and key into what's new in terms of ideas and action within the working class. It also means we have a much better social life these days. We have to encourage people to bring their experiences into the RCP even more as we turn the party outwards. Newer people often see tired old problems from a fresh direction. At conference we decided to expand our political committee to get some new blood into the leadership. What our new organisers lack in political experience they make up for in their willingness to question everything, which can only be healthy for the party.

The other big change is in our propaganda. It is becoming much more responsive to current events. We have a monthly review which is getting bigger and better all the time and a lot of pamphlets, books and supplements. Presenting ourselves as a fully fledged national party puts us under real pressure to come up with answers to a wider range of questions. We want to establish *the next step* as the paper workers use to organise their struggles around, whether it's a strike or a campaign against war. That means building up a dialogue with the working class through the paper. We want our supporters to see *the next step* as theirs, to write and tell us what they're doing and what they think we should do.

Keying into what's going on will also put us under greater pressure to distribute our propaganda better and more quickly to where it can have the most effect. The party leadership can do that by consciously selecting the issues we make priorities in the paper and how we use our propaganda. But we need our sup-

porters to get more involved with the paper, using it to win arguments and influence events, selling it at work or to friends, spreading the RCP's influence beyond the party's present connections.

You're the first woman General Secretary of a revolutionary party. What's the significance of that?

It just shows that RCP politics can really fight for women's liberation. Just compare the RCP to other labour movement organisations in which women are excluded from the leadership. Our party has always had a majority of women on the political committee — and not through any false means like positive discrimination rules or any other sort of patronising liberalism. Our women leaders have won their place on merit, like everybody else. It's a good illustration of the point we've often made that women are not naturally withdrawn or docile. When we're training revolutionaries, everybody starts on an equal basis. Nobody has more than a partial understanding of politics and everybody is nervous. Confidence in your ability to win arguments

or lead struggles has nothing to do with sex. It comes as you understand RCP politics more fully and as you have to test their worth under the pressure of events. So women can become just as good as men, just as quickly. In fact, I have a personal prejudice that women make the best revolutionaries, because they have a broader view of all aspects of life at home and at work. The RCP is making a real effort to get more women involved in our work. The conference appointed a new women's organiser to make sure that happens.

What do you see ahead for the party and the working class in 1984?

The party is set to grow very quickly now, I'm really convinced of that. As for the class struggle, I'm not a crystal ball gazer. We don't just want to predict great events, we're out to make them happen.

If you want to find out more about the RCP and what we're doing in your area, ring Kate Marshall on 01-274 3951. Or write to her at BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

PREPARING FOR POWER

THE PROGRAMME OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY

After 1983 British politics will never be the same again. The Tories won the election, but they have failed to stop the decay of British capitalism. They have no clear idea of how to revive their decadent system except by cutting jobs and services and destroying workers' remaining rights. The Labour Party lost the election and has failed to provide any way of defending the working class against the Tories. The leaders of the Labour Party and the unions have no coherent strategy, and no idea how to restore their links with the working class.

In 1984 things can be different. Our programme *Preparing for Power* begins from resistance to the Tory onslaught and points the way forward to a different sort of society. Never has the bankruptcy of the capitalist system and its representatives been so apparent. Never has the irrelevance of the Labour leadership been so clearly exposed. The creation of a new party of the working class, committed to getting rid of the present system and establishing communism, is the only realistic alternative for 1984.

RCP

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Women against the cuts

'IT IS A different employment climate now. It is no longer necessary to have a creche as an aid to recruitment'. This was how Leeds hospital administrator Ian Donnachie justified the closure of St James' hospital nursery. He did not reckon on the concerted opposition of revolutionary communist women, parents and health workers, determined to fight this latest assault on women's rights.

In early November the district management team stated its intention to close the nursery on 23 December. Set up in the early seventies to attract staff at a time of labour shortage, the nursery was meant to cater for all Leeds Eastern Health Authority employees. The high fees have ensured that its main customers have been consultants' wives and administrative staff. The services provided by the nursery are inadequate. Nine nurses are employed to care for 63 children — 70 more are on the waiting list. But the nursery does provide a vital service for nurses and ancillary workers, who risk losing their jobs if the nursery is closed down. As one working mother at the hospital told us:

'Closure of the nursery would mean a lot of hardship for us because I have to go out to work to make ends meet. I'd have to give up my job and I just can't see how we could survive on my husband's wage alone. I've been to four or five council nurseries and they

all told me that I wouldn't be able to get my child in for at least six to nine months, and even then they couldn't guarantee a place because I'm not a one-parent family and my child is not at risk of being battered.'

On 18 November revolutionary communist women, Leeds Polytechnic women's group and hospital workers picketed the Leeds Eastern Health Authority to protest at the planned shut-down. We demanded 24-hour free nursery provision for all hospital workers and we argued against the Labour Party's schemes to save the nursery by making it self-financing. Labour MP Derek Fatchett and four Labour councillors on the health authority proposed an increase in the charges for full-time places from £25 to £35 a week. In response to Labour's commitment to keep the creche open at the expense of health workers' jobs and wages, the health authority decided to suspend the closure. It reconvenes in January to consider the viability of a self-financing nursery.

Some workers at the hospital are questioning the Labour Party's approach. One worker told us that as soon as you start asking workers to make sacrifices to fight the cuts, the fight is lost:

'That idea is not satisfactory at all because if you start comparing and deciding which cut is better than the other where do you stop? Next you'll be saying that to stop a children's



Signing on for the right to work: Leeds revolutionary communist women

ward being closed down, it's better to accept the closure of a geriatric ward instead.'

Revolutionary communist women and health workers have begun to show that there is another way to fight the cuts. We have visited every hospital in Leeds, winning support for our demand for more and better nursery facilities. On 13 December, parents and health workers attended our public meeting to work out

a plan of action. Many of them joined our picket of the health authority three days later, and are helping us to build trade union and public support for a mass picket of the health authority meeting on 20 January which will make a final decision on the closure.

To keep the nursery open and to get more and better services requires uncompromising resistance and, if necessary, strike action in every hospital in Leeds.

Jenny Morgan

Fighting to make it our union

IT IS RARE these days for workers to win against cost-cutting bosses. It is more exceptional for workers to win without union backing. Yet 14 women cleaners at Arnotts department store in Glasgow recently beat their bosses despite union leaders' attempts to undermine their fight. The women proved that even a small group of inexperienced workers can win if they take control of their own struggle.

On 7 November the 14 women cleaners received a letter from management telling them that their jobs were to go by 3 December. The cleaners' work was to be contracted out to a private

company paying 40 per cent less wages. The 14 women were being paid £1.80 an hour. The new contract cleaners were to get £1.10. The new arrangement was part of the parent company House of Fraser's drive to reduce its wage bill. House of Fraser, Britain's department store giant, owns Debenhams, Arnotts and a host of other concerns. The company is going through a major restructuring and may soon be sold off to Lonrho. Fraser employs a high percentage of women in badly paid jobs as sales assistants, cleaners and clerks. The traditionally docile union Usdaw — with 410 000 members, two thirds of them women and many of them

part-time — organises most of the Fraser workforce.

The women's immediate response to the attack on their jobs was to prepare for an all-out strike. They set up an action committee to organise the fight. As dues paying members of Usdaw the women expected full support from their union. They were soon disillusioned when one of the shop stewards was told by management that the Usdaw district official Pat McCormack had been present at the meeting which agreed the redundancies. The union denied this emphatically, but its subsequent role in the dispute only reinforced the women's suspicions.

How they won

The women, who worked from 8am to noon, organised protests outside the department store in their spare time. They were soon joined by Revolutionary Communist Party supporters. Left without union facilities, the women made their own placards and collection tins, petitioned customers, and addressed the public. The women's militancy impressed the public, but not the union. When management began to complain about falling sales and the police threatened arrests for obstruction, the union advised the women to stop their protests.

Two weeks into the dispute, the union still refused to give official backing for an all-out strike. It was clear to everybody that unless the women took immediate action, their jobs would definitely be lost. RCP supporters, who had been taking part in the protests and raising support for the cleaners in other workplaces, argued that the women had to force a showdown with the bureaucrats. We worked out plans for a protest at the union's headquarters, should the officials again refuse to defend the women's jobs. The women gave the union an ultimatum. They told Pat McCormack that with or without the union's support, the women would be out on strike the following morning and leaflets would be posted to every workplace in Glasgow to request

outside support. Within 15 minutes he arranged a meeting with management and shortly afterwards McCormack emerged with news that the redundancy notices would be withdrawn.

Preparing for the future

The outcome of the dispute was a victory for the women. But the women know that as soon as the Christmas and New Year sales period is over they can expect management to strike again. They are preparing themselves by involving other Fraser's workers in regular discussions to strengthen union organisation. They have drawn up a list of grievances, particularly concerning health and safety hazards in the store, to force the union to act. The women are also planning a fight for more cleaning staff to relieve some of the burden of their work — the result of chronic understaffing.

The women at Arnotts want to sort out their union too. The experience of the past month has made them determined to do away with the check-off system of deducting union dues. All the women said that they would prefer to see the union come down to the shop to get the money. This would provide the opportunity for regular discussions with officials and put them under pressure to take account of their members' interests. The women feel strongly about their position in the union as part-time workers. Under Usdaw's rules, part-timers are not entitled to the usual union benefits. Although their dues — at £1.48 a month — are not much lower than those paid by full-timers, they get very little for their money. Classed as 'Group C' members, part-time workers do not receive unemployment, sickness, death, disablement, strike or victimisation benefit. For a union which has a high percentage of part-time working members, this is scandalous. The women are incensed that their union should treat part-timers as second class members. They will be fighting to make Usdaw into a union fit for women workers to join.

Sabena Norton



Do you want to fight for women's liberation and against attacks on jobs, welfare benefits, nursery facilities and abortion rights? Then read Kate Marshall's analysis of women's oppression today and her strategy for winning real freedom.

Real freedom

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Patriots' corner

'Labour should be seen as a patriotic party, which in no way contradicts our internationalism.'

Former MP Stan Newens, explaining how Labour can oppose US Cruise missiles and support Britain's conventional forces (*Labour Weekly*, 15 July)

'I hope the British government will despatch a Task Force to get rid of the invaders from property which is part of the Commonwealth with the same speed with which Mrs Thatcher despatched the Falklands Task Force last year.'

Arthur Scargill's witty retort to the US invasion of Grenada (*The Guardian*, 28 October)

Tory traitors?

'The Tory government has done more to damage the Royal Navy than the Argentine Air Force.'

Michael Foot's eve-of-election attempt to out-Thatcher Thatcher (*Daily Mail*, 7 June)

'Mrs Thatcher is in danger of doing more harm to Britain's defences than Blunt, Burgess and Maclean all put together. If we sell off British Telecom to foreigners how are we to protect ourselves in wartime?'

Kim McKinley, UCW chair of British Telecom Unions Committee (*POEU Journal*, November)

If you can't beat 'em...

'I don't want low morale in the armed forces.'

Bruce Kent decides against CND groups in the army (*The Times*, 5 December)

Join 'em

'CND and the Labour Party should face up to this maturely. If some form of national service is the price that has to be paid for a non-nuclear defence policy, then so be it.'

(*Tribune* editorial, 8 April)

We only wanted to be loved

'The first person I saw in high office who remained humble, decent and still visibly loved by his fellow human beings.'

Ken Livingstone on why Pope John XXIII was the person who influenced him the most (*New Statesman*, 16 December)

Low-life polemics

'But it is no service to British or Soviet workers to portray socialist life as problem free. That is best left to the tiny sectlets that parasitise the reputation of the Soviet Union, and present themselves as though they sucked mother's milk from every boil on the posterior of socialism.'

(*Straight Left*, January)

Truth will out

'There is a sense in which Labour councils have accepted not only the deplorable cut-backs, but at least halfway have accepted the philosophy which lies behind them.'

Sheffield council leader and Labour Party conference star David Blunkett (*Labour Herald*, 18 March)

'We've been trying for 15 years to disarm the Provisional IRA.'

Labour's deputy Irish spokesman Clive Soley explaining what the left's dialogue with the republican movement is all about (*Labour and Ireland*, Vol 2 No1)

The art of the possible

'Roy Hattersley is more radical and more committed to the majority of party policies than were many of his predecessors from the right.'

Labour Coordinating Committee calls for left unity behind Labour's leadership (*Socialist Organiser*, 3 November and every other radical left paper)

'Kinnock is a rotten opportunist who at a later stage might prepare his own attack on the policy gains of the left. But to refuse to back him against Hattersley or Shore in the final analysis would be an ultra-left stupidity.'

(*Socialist Action*, 17 June)

Quotes of the year 1983

Ever wish you were better informed?

'After four and a half years the first revolution in the English speaking Caribbean is thriving in Grenada...The increasing solidity of the revolution internally, and its growing credibility abroad have undercut the threat from Washington.'

November's *New Socialist* hit the streets just as the US marines hit Grenada's beaches on 25 October

'I am confident that the Labour Party can win on June 9.'

Labour Herald reported Arthur Scargill's vote of confidence three days before Labour lost millions of others

'Tatchell's team are quietly confident.'

The News Line, 24 February — the day Peter Tatchell suffered a landslide defeat in the Bermondsey by-election

The real friends of the family

'Babies are expensive. If you give up your job, how can you manage without your income?'

(*Brides*, October)

'The pressure on young wives to go out to work devalues motherhood itself.'

(*Marxism Today*, October)

Law and order

'We believe that it is a fundamental democratic right to keep your own television for as long as you choose. We believe that under socialism crime will be illegal and we believe that crime is illegal now.'

Eurocommunist Pete Sheppard's contribution to the law and order debate at the Communist Party congress (*The News Line*, 16 November)

Rose-tinted spectacles

'Jesuits elect little-known Dutch academic to be their new leader.'

(*The Times*, 14 September)

'Jesuits elect radical chief'

(*Morning Star*, 14 September)

'Murray condemns political strikes and Scargill action.'

(*The Times*, 1 July)

'Murray backs action to defend rights outside Parliament.'

(*Morning Star*, 1 July)

'The truth of the matter is that in the last election, the Tories did not really win.'

Eric Heffer, who 'did not really win' only 6.3 per cent of the vote in the Labour leadership election (*The Times*, 14 July)

'We don't see the arrival of Cruise missiles as a failure for the Greenham Common movement.'

Greenham stalwart Susanna Bowyer (*Morning Star*, 28 June)

'For a council like Sheffield, or one like Lambeth, just go into any council office and you will feel the difference. In most boroughs you meet some haughty bureaucrat who obviously feels that the public simply exists to fit in with his or her plans. In Lambeth or Sheffield you generally find someone who thinks their job is to help you.'

(*Socialist Action*, 2 December)

Cop-outs

'I'm no Marxist — just a Labour Party member.'

'Red Steph' Grant of Socialist League and Cowley witch-hunt fame (*Daily Mail*, 16 August)

'Is the Labour Party trying to exclude from its ranks the people who can best defend it?'

Socialist Action editor Alan Freeman, protesting against Labour's refusal to let Tariq Ali be just a Labour Party member (*The Guardian*, 31 October)

'The National Economic Assessment can be read any way you like.'

Tony Benn on how a scheme to cut wages became a plan to redistribute wealth (*Socialist Action*, 22 April)

'Terror Act may be used against liberation movements.'

the next step protesting against the PTA's use against Irish freedom fighters? No, *Tribune* objecting to its possible use against South African or Middle Eastern movements

Marxist analysis

'Running is not, of course, the only sporting activity. There is swimming, walking, amateur football, tennis and so on and so on.'

Morning Star editorial on London's marathon (18 April)

The old order crum

Last year ended with the EEC on the verge of collapse over a budget row, Nato near the end of the line after European attacks on US foreign policy, and Western bankers waiting with bated breath for Third World debtors to default. Here, John Johnson reveals the crisis behind the recent upturn in the world economy. On the following pages we show how, while US President Reagan tries to unite Nato against the 'evil Soviet empire', the empires of the West are preparing to do battle for the right to establish a new world order.

THE US recovery seems to be leading the rest of the world's economies out of the trough of 1982. US gross national product was expected to show a three per cent increase for 1983, after a fall of almost two per cent the previous year. This dramatic

machinery and equipment, and put money in the bank — where high interest rates ensure a better return. Some companies have resorted to cutting back on their foreign investments to stave off collapse at home. In 1981/2 the USA became a net importer of capital and

uous form of words to conceal their bitter divisions.

While the German and Japanese economies are in better shape than the USA, and the rest of Europe suffers, Britain teeters on the brink of collapse. Pundits recognise that Britain's economic growth rate of three per cent in 1983 is likely to disappear this year. Britain's manufacturing base has collapsed since the late seventies. In 1983 Britain became a net importer of manufactured goods for the first time since the industrial revolution. Industrial output is still more than 15 per cent below its last peak in 1979. The duration and intensity of the recession

The German car giant Volkswagen builds more than 50 000 cars a year in Brazil for the local and Middle Eastern markets.

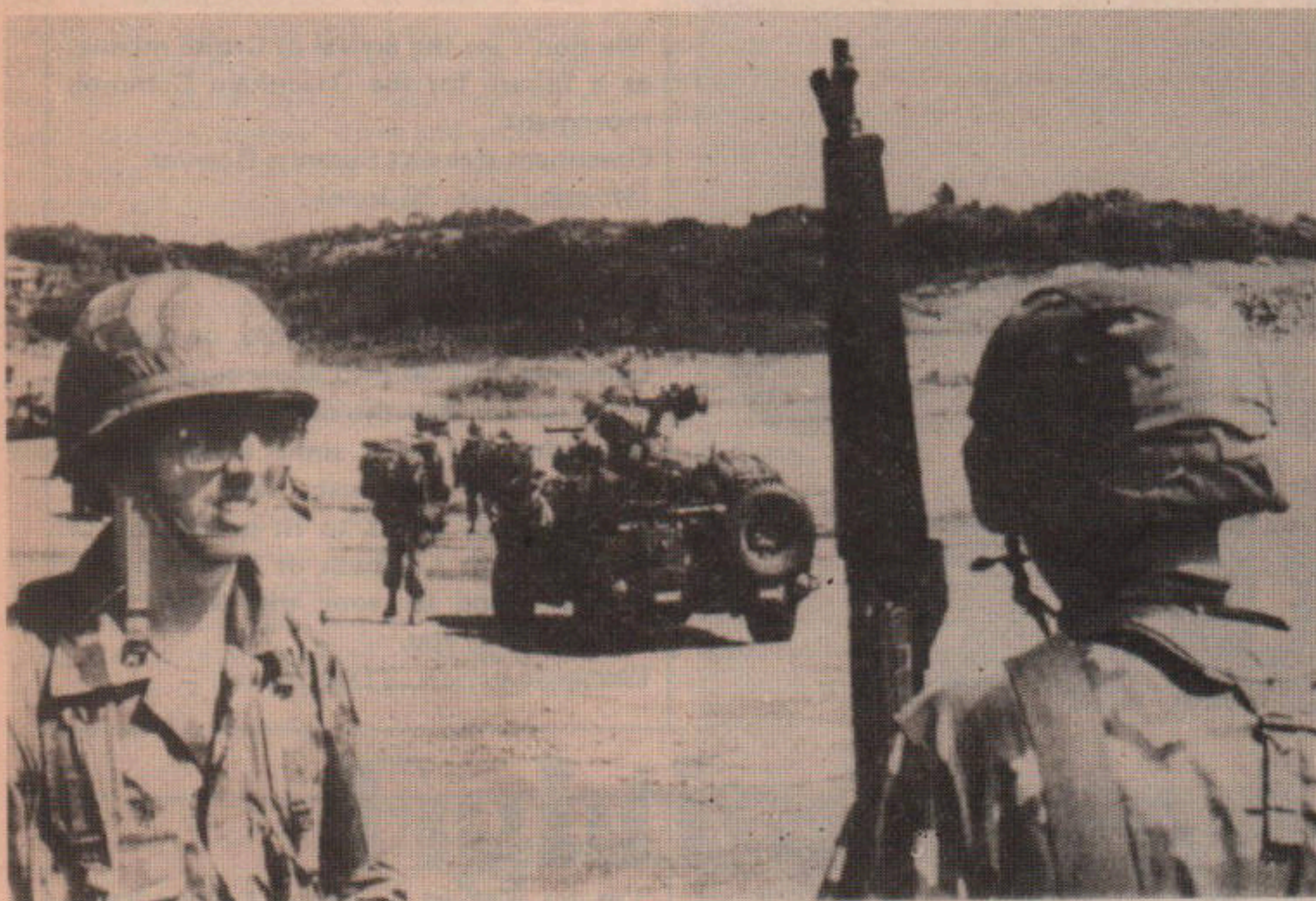
The markets of the Third World are vital to Western capitalists. West German, Japanese and American manufacturers compete for the \$20 billion Brazilian market. Britain's fourth largest export earner — the pharmaceuticals industry — unloads more than two thirds of its expensive and often untested drugs on African, Asian and Latin American slum dwellers. The US aluminium industry would collapse without Jamaican bauxite. Zambian copper, Namibian uranium and especially Middle Eastern oil, are vital to the imperialists' survival. To ensure their supplies of cheap raw materials and protect their markets and investments, the imperialists have stepped up their economic, political and military involvement in the Third World.

Marines go in where bankers fear to tread

Newly deindustrialising

The most backward countries in Africa, Asia and Central America are dependent on the export of unprocessed raw materials. The recession has brought them starvation. Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs) like Brazil, Nigeria and South Korea have found their subordination to imperialism reasserted through massive debts to Western bankers.

In the seventies the Newly Industrialising Countries recorded growth rates of seven per cent and more. Their rapid industrialisation and apparent immunity from the recession suggested that they had broken through the barriers imposed on them by imperialist domination. Rapid development in South Korea turned an area of paddy fields and near wilderness south of Seoul into an industrial belt of five million people in less



turnabout obscures the underlying weakness of the US economy. The current 'upturn' began from a trough well below the deepest point of previous recessions. When an economy hits the bottom, the only way to go is up. And the recovery has already begun to slow down. Unemployment has dipped from three per cent to 2.1 per cent but is not expected to fall below this figure during 1984.

The main impulse for the limited recovery has come from consumer and state spending. The Christmas craze for 'cabbage patch' dolls is one aspect of the five per cent growth in consumer spending during 1983. Government spending has helped buoy up production. Despite cuts, welfare spending cost the US government more than \$250 billion in 1983. The massive rearmament programme accounts for more than \$200 billion. But credit and government contracts are insufficient to sustain a recovery in the US economy. Indeed, they can exacerbate America's inability to compete in important sectors of the world market. High government spending means high government borrowing. In 1983, Government borrowing amounted to \$200 billion. Government borrowing forces up interest rates. This encourages foreign investors to buy dollars, keeps the dollar high in relation to other currencies, and makes American exports expensive and imports from its competitors cheap. Japan expects a \$20 billion trading surplus with the US in 1983. The projected trade deficit of \$60 billion would mean a balance of payments shortfall of \$30 billion for the USA last year.

The missing factor in the American economic recovery is investment. Overall investment is down 1.7 per cent since the third quarter of 1982, despite a surge of 7.4 per cent in the third quarter of 1983. Most investment has been in restocking to cope with consumer demand. Investment in the production of capital goods remains low. Average profit rates of 54 per cent reported during the year are misleading. Profits earned in 1983 reflect the weakness rather than the strength of the US economy. Firms have cut back on investment in new plant,

more than \$10 billion was repatriated from American overseas investments. When the world's leading imperialist power starts to behave like a Third World country dominated by foreign investment, the writing is on the wall for the other capitalist states.

Europe and Japan

Low profitability and low investment cripple every capitalist economy. Japan suffered least from the deepening of the recession in 1983. It retained its position as the fastest growing imperialist economy. Japanese productivity levels surpass all the other imperialist countries in certain key sectors such as steel, cars and machine tools, electrical and electronic goods. But even Japan has come up against falling profit rates and serious structural weakness. The *Economist* observed recently that Japan's roads, education system and services were little better than in some Third World countries. High government borrowing to cover growing deficits is draining capital from the private sector.

West Germany — the healthiest of the European economies — is beginning to feel the effects of the recession. While its exports are expected to rise in 1984, the rate of increase could fall to about half its current level. A boom in consumer spending kept order books full in the first half of 1983. But this trend had slowed down by the end of the year. Unemployment soared to almost nine per cent in November, the highest figure since the Second World War, and is expected to pass 10 per cent early in 1984. Most economists predict stagnating levels of investment outside a few dynamic sectors in the West German economy.

The recession threatens to tear the European Economic Community apart. At the Athens summit of EEC leaders in December, the wrangling over contributions to the budget exploded into a bitter row between Britain and West Germany on the one side and France and the agricultural economies on the other. The Athens summit was so acrimonious that no communique was issued at its close. The leaders of the 10 member states could not agree on a sufficiently innoc-



highlights the structural weaknesses in the economies of all the imperialist powers and demands a more direct response by the ruling classes. The three per cent fall in the real value of wages in the advanced capitalist countries in the period 1979-81 did its bit to cut labour costs. But profit rates have not recovered sufficiently to stimulate new investment. More savage attacks on the working class are the order of the day in all the advanced capitalist countries.

Fighting back

The USA, Europe and Japan have also had to turn to the resources, markets and investment opportunities of the Third World to try to offset economic decline at home. The US-Mexican border is dotted with thousands of component and textile factories which allow American and German businessmen to use cheap labour to produce goods for the US market. The young women who go blind after a few months working in the ill-lit electronics factories of Singapore are a vital component of Japan's computer industry.

than twenty years. Nigeria's capital Lagos developed so rapidly that the polluted atmosphere from the vast oil refinery has driven the Government out of the city.

The debt crisis has burst the bubble. In the seventies Western banks were prepared to make huge development loans to developing countries to build up their roads, railways and basic industries. Investors from Europe, Japan and the USA were attracted by this investment and by large working populations under repressive regimes. The NICs' crippling debt burden has halted their expansion in the 1980s. In 1983, Mexico announced that it could no longer pay the interest on its \$80 billion debt. Last year the Philippines and South Korea were added to the lengthening list of countries unable to cope with interest payments. Brazil has hardly been out of the headlines as its labyrinthine negotiations with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and private banks have lurched from one sticking point to the next.

International financial institutions have

bles

used the lever of debt to dictate economic and social policies in the NICs. This has underlined the NICs' dependence on imperialism. Ghana and Nigeria were recently ordered by the IMF to devalue their currencies, making imports more expensive and swinging the terms of trade to the advantage of Western exporters. The IMF has also demanded the elimination of food subsidies to lower the tax burden on companies. This makes investment more profitable and drives down workers' living standards still further. The IMF made a new loan agreement with the Brazilian government conditional on the passage of legal restrictions to keep wage increases 30 per cent below the rate of inflation. In Singapore, Japanese inspired company unions have been introduced to contain pressure for higher wages.

Trouble

Debt bondage has pushed the NICs into greater dependence on trade. Mexico's interest payments consume almost 80 per cent of its trade earnings. Before its payments were rescheduled, they totalled 20 per cent more than it could earn. World trade has shrunk under the impact of the recession, and the protectionist policies of imperialist countries have cut off the NICs from their main markets. Their domestic markets are dominated by Japanese, European and American manufactured goods. The NICs are being forced into greater reliance on the export of primary products to earn foreign exchange to pay the interest on their loans. President of the Bank for International Settlements Fritz Lutweiler recently called on debtors to hand over national assets and resources in exchange for partial write-off of their debts.

Workers fight the new raw deal in the Third World



Ronald Reagan: Mr President, where will you strike next?

The masses in the NICs are being forced to pay for the crisis. Harsher labour laws, lower wages and higher prices have made conditions in the factories and shanty towns of these countries almost unbearable. The masses in the NICs have fought against the austerity imposed by imperialist bankers and their local dictators. In Chile the army shot into crowds of students, workers and housewives protesting at the tenth anniversary of military dictator Pinochet's seizure of power. The Brazilian army and police fought a day-long battle with workers demonstrating against the imposition of the wages law in November.

The military dictatorships which have ruled the NICs for the last 10 years are too rigid to cope with the present crisis. They cannot manoeuvre in the same way as the developed political institutions in the advanced capitalist countries. Military rulers in Turkey, Venezuela and Argentina have already handed over to civilian elected governments in an attempt to forestall opposition. Brazil has elected a consultative assembly and General Figueiredo has promised to hand over to a civilian president next year. For the generals, the problem with liberalisation in the NICs is that a taste of formal democracy often prompts the masses to demand real freedom. The shaky democratic structures are unable to cope and the military has to step in again.

Famine

The problem of instability which haunts the NICs is an everyday reality in the destitute backward countries of the Third World. The least developed countries have suffered most from the effects of the recession. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that more than 150 million people in Asia, Africa and Central America are starving. The myth that famine is caused by nature was popular last year. In the summer *The Sunday Times* suggested that the famine in Africa and the floods in Asia which led to famine were the result of a cyclonic feature dominating the Pacific. In fact, the famine in

Africa is a 'natural' result of its position in the world division of labour, and its consequently low level of agricultural development. Of course natural disasters contribute to the misery of the Third World. But the main problem is the social disaster of imperialist domination. Floods in England damaged crops in the spring, but Lincolnshire is not littered with refugee camps full of starving children.

The boom in commodity prices in the post-war period masked the backwardness of Third World farming. While Zambia, for example, could sell its copper, it could earn enough foreign exchange to pay for food imports and compensate for the low productivity of its agricultural sector. The slowing down of industrial production in the advanced capitalist countries has cut the prices of raw materials. The backward countries of the Third World have been forced to cut back subsidies on imported food.

Drive to war

Whatever Western pundits say about the causes of the famine in the least developed countries, they agree on its effects. Last year the famine provoked riots and insurrection. In Bengal in north India Muslim tribesmen fought with immigrants from Bangladesh over wheat distribution. More than 30 000 died as a result. In Pakistan's Sind province in March, food shortages prompted the most serious disturbances since the 1979 overthrow of President Bhutto. Sinhalese squatters moving on to a few acres of land near a Tamil settlement provoked the worst inter-communal riots in Sri Lanka's history. Governments in backward countries from Pakistan and Sudan to Ethiopia and El Salvador have resorted to terror to try to maintain control. But their murder campaigns against the workers' and peasants' opposition have usually served only to exacerbate the conflict. The Western powers have had to move in to re-establish the conditions for profitable imperialist exploitation.

The fragile state institutions of the Third World are unreliable defenders of imperialist

Africa's hunger—the price of capitalist recovery

investments. During 1983 the Western powers began to take the affairs of backward capitalist countries into their own hands. Military intervention by European, American — and shortly no doubt Japanese — troops is the final guarantee of imperialist domination. US marines, French paratroopers and British squaddies have already gone in to prop up the feeble regimes of the most backward countries. The imperialists have launched another scramble for Africa, while the Middle East threatens to become the battlefield of the Third World War.

Africa is the world's most unstable continent. The imperialists have no local client state in north Africa capable of keeping order. Last summer, France's President Mitterand flew 3000 troops back to the former French colonies of central Africa to reassert imperialist control over Chad, the world's poorest nation. South Africa continued its terror campaign against its 'frontline' neighbours. The masses of Africa can expect more of the same in the year ahead.

America remains preoccupied with crushing revolts in the ravaged states of Central America and the Caribbean. The region is a vital home base which US imperialism cannot afford to lose control over. Last year, President Reagan gave massive economic and military aid to the pro-Western dictatorships in El Salvador and Honduras. Reagan sent three US fleets and thousands of marines to exercise on the border between the two countries as a threat to the radical Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. In October, America launched its invasion of Grenada and crushed the New Jewel Movement's attempt at independent economic development.

The importance of the oil and markets of the Gulf means that stability in the Middle East is another priority for American foreign policy. The tensions which tore Lebanon apart throughout the year called for direct interference from the West. Reagan moved in sections of his Rapid Deployment Force and dragged Italian, French and British contingents along with them. But US naval bombardments and air strikes in the Chouf mountains failed to solve the imperialists' problems. Western 'peace keeping' forces are likely to play a progressively bigger role in Middle Eastern affairs.

Up to now, the imperialists have baulked at the prospect of intervening in the NICs. The West is reluctant to take on a country such as Brazil with its 120 million people and relatively sound industrial base. The Western powers have been able to assert control through the mechanism of debt. But the growing resistance among the NICs' governments to Western-imposed austerity programmes, and sporadic rumours of a 'debtors club' being formed to stand up to the imperialists, indicate that more drastic measures may soon be necessary.

The imperialists' drive to intervene in the Third World is a consequence of the break-up of the old order. Britain, America, France and the other leading powers will become more rapacious in their military adventures as the collapse continues. But, as we show on the next page, their actions will become less and less united.

The Western Alliance

The sick man



Western leaders pressed their suits but failed to iron out their differences

It has been a difficult year for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. After twelve months of deepening rifts in the Western Alliance, Pat Roberts asks: How close is Nato to breaking up?

NATO CAN still hang together on some issues. There was unanimous condemnation of the Soviet Union for shooting down a Korean airliner in September. But disagreements over Lebanon, Nicaragua and Chad exposed the conflicts under the surface. And America's allies were less than wholehearted in their support for Reagan's stonewalling on the siting of Cruise and Pershing nuclear missiles in central Europe, which led the Soviet Union to storm out of the Geneva arms talks in November. The US invasion of Grenada provoked the worst public split in the Alliance since Britain and France tried to grab the Suez Canal in 1956.

The world recession and the consequent growth of national rivalries have taken their toll on Nato. Government strategists in Britain and France have begun to think about the unthinkable. In its annual report, published last spring, the International Institute for Strategic Studies openly questioned the future of Nato:

'Should European public perceptions of the level of the Soviet threat fall, American policies sound more belligerent, and economic tensions increase, the Alliance would face a severe predicament, and collapse would not be out of the question (although quite what form collapse would take is hard to predict).'

While the Institute was worrying about the mechanics of Nato's dissolution, some European politicians — like Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu — are wondering whether they should be in Nato at all. Papandreu told the Paris daily *Le Monde* in November that 'logically we should leave the Atlantic Alliance'.

Imbalance of power

The emergence of the United States as the dominant world power after the Second World War was reflected in the international institutions set up at the time. Nato, like the International Monetary Fund, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and the World Bank, was designed to regulate international relations under the tutelage of Washington. The durability of these institutions expressed the influence America's economic power exerted over the rest of the imperialist world.

There was no serious challenge to US hegemony until the late sixties. By then

Europe and Japan had recovered their economic strength and, in certain spheres, begun to surpass the USA. While West Germany and Japan surged ahead with new industrial growth and penetrated new markets, the USA's industrial base and market share declined. The world recession has turned the friendly competition of the sixties and early seventies into bitter rivalries in the eighties.

The USA has been forced on to the defensive. America is now desperately fighting to protect its position as the leading world power. To offset its economic decline it has exerted its political influence and flexed its military muscle. The main components of Washington's strategy are clear enough. President Reagan has upped anti-Soviet propaganda, increased American intervention in the Third World, and emphasised America's role as leader of the Western Alliance. Washington hopes to keep its rivals in line by hyping up Nato. The siting of Cruise missiles in Europe in 1983 had more to do with the assertion of American leadership of the West than with the arms race against the Soviet Union.

So far, Washington has managed to get its way within Nato. But the price has been high. Although Nato still functions, American strategy has failed to limit the growth of rivalries within the imperialist camp. In its 1983 annual report the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade admitted that it had failed to prevent the growth of protectionist rivalries:

'It was the original purpose of GATT...to strengthen governments against the particularistic pressures emanating from national economies. This purpose has almost been lost.'

The disintegration of GATT shows the fragility of the institutions established in the post-war boom. The Western Alliance does not exist in the competitive cut and thrust of the world market. It is only a matter of time before the economic tensions which divide its members begin to dominate the proceedings.

Nato tensions

America's partners do not share its enthusiasm for Nato. During the past four years European powers have been reluctant to join Washington's anti-Soviet offensive. European governments know that this campaign is also directed at whipping the Nato countries into line

behind America. During 1983 Nato members clashed over several important issues.

America's military build-up in the Middle East has been at variance with the approach of the European powers. In August Washington tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent France selling fighter aircraft and Exocet missiles to Iraq for use against Iran. Washington had no inhibitions about supplying the other side in the Gulf war. In Lebanon the differences were sharper still. Even Britain, America's closest ally, was disturbed by American strikes against Syrian positions in December.

In September the USA put pressure on France to intervene in the civil war between Goukouni Oueddi and President Hissene Habre in Chad, and to loosen its ties with Libya. The *New Statesman* warned that America's success could be short lived: 'French-American rivalry in Africa is becoming as much of a threat to peace and stability on the continent as East-West tensions'. It was Britain's turn to be humiliated when the American invasion of Grenada exposed the meaningless character of the Anglo-American 'special relationship'.

In November the tensions inside Nato were aired publicly over arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. The *Guardian* reported on the suspicions which had Nato members at each other's throats over the question of nuclear weapons:

'The disagreements between the USA and its European allies over what, if anything, to put on the table at Geneva as US missile deployment begins, emerged sharply last week at a Rome meeting of the Special Planning Groups, the forum used by Nato to consult over intermediate-range missile negotiations.'

Like other forums previously used by Nato powers to consult over military matters, the missile Special Planning Groups became an arena of conflict among the imperialists.

The greatest blow to Nato's cohesion was the German Social Democrats' November decision to reject the deployment of the new Nato missiles. Former Social Democrat leader Helmut Schmidt was one of the principal architects of the 1979 decision to deploy Cruise and Pershing in Germany. The breakdown of the German bipartisan consensus on siting the new generation of Nato missiles shows how much has changed in the last four years. In 1979 European Nato members supported the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles to

make America directly committed to the defence of Europe. Today former supporters of that decision voice their concern about 'Washington's finger on the button'. This growing unease with US military strategy was articulated by French President Mitterand in his speech at the November Franco-German summit in Bonn. Emphasising the need for European defence, Mitterand drew a sharp distinction between European and American interests:

'Friendship with the United States should not be confused with subjection. We cannot surrender the defence of our continent to an external country.'

Will it erupt?

Mitterand's call for European defence indicates the potential for Nato to collapse. But Nato still functions and the Western Alliance is intact. Some observers have attributed this to a common fear of the Soviet Union. But even they admit that the Nato partners are more preoccupied with the economic threat from each other. In December the *Financial Times* carried an article detailing the lengthening list of trade disputes between the USA and the European Economic Community, from European farm subsidies to steel imports. Talk of protectionism and 'fundamental misunderstandings' has already begun to cloud the economic relations between Nato members. Far from uniting in a common front with America against the 'Soviet threat', Nato members have been openly critical of America's posturing. They are too fearful of Washington's real intentions to fall quietly into line.

Nato still exists because there is no clear alternative to American management of international relations. The decline of the USA and the parallel rise of West Germany and Japan have disrupted the imperialist world equilibrium guaranteed for 40 years by America. This has created considerable instability, especially in the Third World where imperialist rivalries can be fought out with little regard to their cost. The increase in competition for raw materials, markets and profitable investments has unleashed a struggle to redivide the world. The main casualties have been the USA and Britain. But so far neither West Germany nor Japan, nor even France, have dared challenge American hegemony. None of the imperialist powers is strong enough to replace the USA. Although the USA has lost out to its rivals it is still the largest and most powerful imperialist economy. Its superiority in the military sphere is even more striking. In 1983 the USA spent more on weapons than the other Nato powers and Japan put together. In any case, America's chief rivals trust each other as little as they trust America. The rows over the EEC budget and the disputes which wrecked talks about a European defence force, show that the continental imperialists are in no position to present a united challenge to the USA.

The past year has underlined the trends towards Nato's disintegration. The Alliance only survives because it serves America's purpose and the other imperialist powers are not ready to take on Washington — yet. There is no going back to the days when Nato really meant something in world affairs. The growing divergence of interest among the imperialist powers cannot be solved within the framework of diplomacy. As economic stagnation and decay become more severe the rifts in the imperialist camp can only widen and deepen.

We welcome the sharpening of inter-imperialist conflict. We have everything to gain from quarrels between members of this gang of murderers and thieves. At the same time, the intensification of rivalries between the imperialist powers signals the dangers of militarism and war. The people of the Third World have been the first victims of the power struggles in the imperialist camp. But as 1983 showed, wars no longer stay 'local' for very long. It is only a matter of time before the existing balance of power is swept aside by a protracted world war. The task of overthrowing our imperialist masters is more urgent than ever.

The Soviet Union in a shambles

Andropov's planning fiasco



Not waving but drowning: as ailing Andropov misses the parade, the Soviet economy gets sicker

ANDROPOV took over at a time of deepening crisis for the Soviet leadership. In 1983 he launched a campaign against waste and corruption — and had the bonus of the best harvest for five years. Yet despite a slight rise in industrial production economic stagnation continues. Attempts to remove bottlenecks in key sectors only highlighted the chaos of the rest of the economy. Andropov's disappearance from public view reveals the profound internal problems of the Soviet system.

For years the Soviet bureaucracy has tried to compensate for low productivity in industry by the sheer mass of workers drafted into mines, plants and factories. The only results have been underemployment and inefficiency in some sectors and permanent labour shortages and production bottlenecks in others. The tremendous waste of manpower and materials has resulted in a decline in the resources available for investment. The cumulative effect of a decade of falling returns on investment is a persistently low level of output and productivity.

These symptoms of the crisis in the Soviet Union stem from the bureaucracy's inability to regulate the economy. The bureaucracy lacks the means to ensure an efficient distribution of labour, machinery and raw materials. Without the framework of workers' democracy there is no way to establish a planned economy. The working class is excluded from having any influence over decisions affecting Soviet society. Far from being involved in decisions about what needs to be produced where, Soviet workers are subjected to bureaucratic domination. Thus, despite the formal existence of a central plan the Soviet economy remains fragmented and chaotic.

Andropov's crusade

When he came to power, Andropov emphasised his determination to tackle the problems facing the Soviet Union. He made a series of hard hitting speeches pinpointing obvious defects in the economic system and promising to purge it of corruption. Andropov's populist approach was intended to evoke support for his regime among the masses. His message was clear enough: the problem was not the system but a few rotten apples. The Soviet leadership put the blame for the crisis on corrupt individuals and anti-social workers who shirked their responsibilities.

Andropov's anti-corruption message soon became a crusade. In a key speech at the beginning of his leadership, he noted the importance of imposing a sense of urgency and discipline among Soviet

Is Yuri Andropov dead? Whether or not he recovers from his mysterious illness, his attempts to reform the Soviet economy are as dead as Leonid Brezhnev, whom he replaced at the head of the Politburo in 1982.

workers:

'It is necessary to create conditions — economic and organisational — that will stimulate good quality, productive labour, initiative and enterprise. Conversely, poor work, sluggishness and irresponsibility should have an immediate effect on the remuneration, job status and moral privilege of personnel... We must wage a more resolute struggle against all violations of Party, state and labour discipline.'

This authoritarian message provided the background to the launching of a law and order campaign in January 1983.

Senior bureaucrats denounced a few corrupt officials, dismissed some from their jobs and even expelled a few from the Party. The main target of the law and order campaign, however, was the working class. Backed by highly publicised daytime police raids on bars, swimming pools and saunas the state media drew attention to the large layer of social parasites who were having fun while they should have been at work.

Andropov's focus on the problem of labour discipline was a response to the growing insubordination of Soviet workers. The serious and prolonged shortage of skilled and unskilled workers has strengthened the position of the working class. Factory directors are reluctant to discipline workers who take the line of the Russian proverb 'they pretend to pay me so I pretend to work'. The administrators know their workers can always find work in other plants. Changing jobs is one of the few ways in which a Soviet worker can hope to improve his position. The high labour turnover rate in Soviet factories is an additional problem for the bureaucracy. An article in *Pravda* in January 1983 illustrated the problem of enforcing discipline on the factory floor. After first docking his pay for being drunk at work the company decided to sack a milling machine operator called Barkhatov. The factory director then found he could not replace Barkhatov. The bureaucrat was forced to approach the machinist 'cap-in-hand' to offer him his old job back. But Barkhatov had found a new job, and he turned down the offer saying, 'I earned 250 roubles a month at your plant, but they're going to pay me more'.

In August last year, at the height of the law and order campaign, the bureaucracy promulgated a new law on 'stepping up work to strengthen Socialist Labour Discipline'. The new law penalised execu-

tives who failed to maintain discipline, imposed financial penalties and loss of holidays on workers for absenteeism and drunkenness, and made them liable for damage to tools and machinery.

The 'Socialist Labour Discipline' legislation had little impact. Directors faced with constant labour shortages had no way of enforcing the new code. But behind the inoperable labour law came increased state repression of workers. The bureaucrats' attempts to tighten the screw in every area of social, cultural and political life were apparent throughout the year. The threat of an even greater use of force to discipline the working class has been sufficient to persuade most people to keep their heads down and work a bit harder.

The experiment

The problem for the bureaucracy is that tighter control over the workforce can only have a limited effect on the economy. Repression is not an alternative to planning in a complex industrial economy like the Soviet Union. Early in 1983 Andropov signalled his intention to carry out a thoroughgoing programme of economic reform. He pulled no punches. In a new departure for the Soviet bureaucracy Andropov singled out transport, distribution and energy as priorities and he demanded results. The appointment of competent technicians such as new transport minister Mikhail Gorbachev was taken as evidence of the regime's determination to force through reform and increase efficiency.

Andropov's drive for change was blocked by the inertia of Soviet state institutions. The bureaucracy will go along with change as long as it does not disrupt existing power relations. Any real improvement in the organisation of the Soviet economy threatens to undermine the bureaucracy's power base. There are only two possible exits from the current seizure in the Soviet economy — the re-introduction of the capitalist market, or the establishment of workers' democracy. The problem for the bureaucracy is that either option means its own destruction.

Chance lost

Andropov came into office with no intention of challenging the foundations of the Soviet system. He had to modify his approach to avoid conflict. The terms of his compromise came to light at the July

meeting of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. Party leaders agreed to make a few targetted industries more responsive to the needs of the Soviet economy. The central state ministries of heavy machinery and electrical equipment have been targetted for the experiment, along with certain local industries in the Ukrainian, Belorussian and Lithuanian republics. The bureaucracy hopes to stimulate output by subjecting these sectors to market pressures.

The experiment is due to start this month. A special fund has been established to re-equip and redesign the firms taking part. The aim is to achieve substantial qualitative improvements in production and production techniques by increasing output in relation to investment and increasing labour productivity. On paper it looks fine. But it bears a striking resemblance to Brezhnev's abortive 1965 reforms. Experiments in isolated sectors of the economy are all that the bureaucracy can manage. As long as the trials last and funds and bonuses are allocated to the chosen industry, some improvement in performance can be expected. But any industry which does surge ahead will be held back by the mass of unreformed firms on which it depends for raw materials, components, services and transport. As many directors of past experiments have discovered, they cannot insulate themselves from the inefficiencies of the rest of the Soviet economy. Any gains will be artificial and temporary.

The implementation of the Central Committee's July resolution will be a half-hearted gesture designed to keep things ticking over. The initial enthusiasm generated by Andropov's appointment has evaporated. The bureaucracy no longer expects anything much from tinkering with economic reform. The retreat from the Andropov experiment is a major setback for the bureaucracy. It shows that the Soviet leadership has no strategy for dealing with the social crisis.

Andropov's failing health has come in the nick of time for the bureaucracy. His proposals for economic reform can be buried quietly. The bureaucracy can avoid the need to put forward plausible policies while it takes on the easier task of putting together a new leadership. At the beginning of 1984 the Soviet bureaucracy is back to square one. The only difference is that it has lost the initiative gained from the momentum of Andropov's campaign. It has wasted 12 months exhorting, reforming and repressing and succeeded only in compounding its system's problems.

Frank Richards



How they ruled in 1983

More bark than bite

Towards the end of 1983 media attention focused on internal squabbles within the Tory Party. Yet 1983 was a good year for the Conservatives. They won a landslide victory in the June General Election, and as Rob Knight shows, pursued their strategy to make the working class pay for the crisis.

'MINISTERIAL power to remove banana skins' was *The Guardian's* description of William Whitelaw's new post in early December. The appointment of Whitelaw to replace John Biffen as the coordinator of the Tories' public information policy was designed to curb the barrage of criticism levelled at the Government since the General Election. Cecil Parkinson's extramarital indiscretions, a lacklustre Tory Party conference, Margaret Thatcher's mishandling of the Grenada crisis and the Government's clumsy presentation of its public expenditure policy fuelled speculation that the Thatcher government was heading for trouble.

Fears that the Government was losing its grip were reinforced by inner-party feuding on a whole range of issues. When Thatcher attacked the US government over the Grenada invasion she was criticised by a number of Tory MPs. Fleet Street's most sycophantic Thatcherite — Paul Johnson — bewailed the fact that the Prime Minister was guilty of 'a huge error of judgement'. His former goddess became 'a very ordinary woman occupying a position where ordinary virtues are not enough'.

Public expenditure cuts opened further fissures in the Tory party. Rifts widened when social services minister Norman Fowler attacked Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson's call for drastic cuts. Government plans to abolish the metropolitan councils and close down hospitals met with opposition from Tory councils and local Conservatives. In early December former Foreign Secretary, Chief Whip and Leader of the Commons Francis Pym called for 'wiser and more sensitive political leadership'. A week later, Northern Ireland secretary and exiled 'wet' James Prior echoed Pym's calls for national leadership.

Down and down

These wranglings are deceptive. They are partly a consequence of the Government's 144-seat majority, and the arrival of 100 new Tory MPs at the House of Commons after the June General Election. But Margaret Thatcher has little cause for concern. The most striking feature of Cabinet and extra-Cabinet debate on public spending was its tameness. Compared to the heated discussions of two years ago when 'wets' and 'dries' were embattled over Government strategy, this year's debate resembled a polite disagreement at a vicarage tea party. The behind the scenes debates in the Tory Party are not about to tear it apart, nor are there significant forces within the party which offer any real challenge to the Government's strategy. Compared to the internal strife that characterises ruling parties in Europe or the USA, the Tory Party is remarkably harmonious. But what really makes the dissension irrelevant is the lack of an opposition party with the capacity to exploit the divisions to its own advantage. Thatcher's problems are not Pym or Prior and the incoherent 'wets'. They lie elsewhere.

The first problem for the Tories in 1983 was that the Labour Party's devastating defeat at the June election did not correspond to a positive popular vote for



Winners by default: the Tories faced the press but little opposition

Tory policies. It was this constraining factor which tempered the Tory attack on the welfare state and led to the media's post-election accusations that the Government lacked 'ideological thrust and strategic direction'. In the June election the Tories won 61.1 per cent of the seats, and gained a 144-seat majority, on 42.4 per cent of the vote — a fall of 1.5 per cent from 1979. It was the lowest real proportion of the vote received by any government with a safe parliamentary majority in British history.

In an interview in the *Confederation of British Industry's* journal *The Director* in September, Thatcher told the CBI what it wanted to hear:

'I shall be a radical Prime Minister for my second term of office because I am radically right.'

But Thatcher's strategy in the second half of 1983 indicated no radical departures. She simply continued the resolute approach of the previous four years. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Government's attempts to rescue the British economy from the throes of recession — its second major problem area.

Muffled groans

When 1983 closed, the Government and industry were slightly more optimistic about the prospects for recovery than when the year began. At least Thatcher did not have the CBI and the Institute of Directors hammering the Government. The climate has changed since 1980 when CBI chief Sir Terence Beckett promised a 'bare-knuckle fight' with the Government. The *Financial Times* noted that 'there has been a certain lack of verve in the CBI's recent sparring with the Government'. But while there might be less disagreement on fundamentals than in the early eighties, industry is far from satisfied with the Government's performance.

Recent Tory cheers about last year's consumer-based expansion and the confident forecasts of an upturn just around the corner barely muffled the British bosses' groans. The ruling class is aware that the economy is far from recovery. A CBI paper on economic prospects in October stressed that the limited recovery was fragile and patchy and that 'it will be some time before we even reach 1979 levels of production'. Worse still, the expansion of consumer spending which was the driving force behind the autumn 'upturn' caused a rise in imports and sent Britain's balance of trade into the red for the first time this century. Exports remain weak, production stagnant. Inflation and long-term unem-

ployment are still on the increase and there are no signs of new investment.

In its *November Review*, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) was even more pessimistic than the Treasury about the likely strength of the recovery in 1984. The National Institute predicted that output will be two per cent higher in 1984 than 1983, against the Treasury's forecast of a three per cent rise this year.

Industry's demands for government to reduce the tax burden and slash public expenditure became more insistent as the year progressed. The vagueness of the Tory General Election manifesto left open major questions about the proper balance between public spending and taxation. The new Cabinet's reluctance to tackle the problem reflected the Government's indecision about how far it could go without inciting working class disaffection. While the Tory Party conference at Blackpool in October deliberated the problem of what to cut, where and by how much, *The Times* railed against the 'quietists in the Cabinet' who were stalling on the cuts. It pointed out that the 'consolidationist' trend that had emerged at the conference — which included former 'radical' John Biffen — was gravely misled.

At the conference, John Biffen had hinted at the distinction between those seeking consolidation and those pressing for further radical changes. The 'consolidationists' included all the wets like Prior, Pym and Walker, but also spending ministers like Heseltine and Fowler keen to defend their departmental budgets. The 'radicals', led by the Prime Minister, Chancellor Nigel Lawson, trade and industry secretary Norman Tebbit, and transport secretary Nicholas Ridley, argued that tax cuts combined with a crackdown on public spending were vital to get the economy moving. *The Times* rightly pointed out that the quiet life approach of the consolidationists would not lead to anything like a quiet life. Delay and indecision in getting on with the job of reining back public spending did not avert criticism from the Opposition and succeeded only in putting the Government on the defensive. The *Financial Times* was quick to pick up on the inconsistencies in the Government's approach to the NHS:

'It is worse than useless to talk about cuts and then to add the invariable phrase "of course the health service is safe with us".'

In mid-November Chancellor Nigel Lawson pledged to reduce public spending substantially. It is clear, however, that the Tories are not about to dismantle pillars

of the welfare state like the NHS. Rather, they will continue the step by step approach which has already had considerable success in the civil service, where the 14 per cent staff cutback started in 1980 is on schedule to be achieved by April 1984. Now the Government has announced a further slimming-down operation of six per cent in the next four years from 630 000 to 593 000 by 1988.

A third problem for the Tories in assessing the scope for large scale attacks on the public sector has been the working class. The Tories recognise the potential for mass opposition if they proceed too far, too fast. Hence in 1983 employment ministers Norman Tebbit and Tom King pursued the cold class war approach of the last four years on the trade union reform front. King refused to commit the Government to a 'rushed and botched job' by outlawing strikes in the public services. Before handing over to King and moving up to a higher office, Tebbit summed up the Tories' strategy:

'Jim Prior and I have pursued a step by step approach, indeed we have tip-toed through the minefields — so far without treading on a mine. Indeed the only casualties so far have been on the TUC side.'

Home ground

The Tories dominated British politics in 1983. Throughout the year they chose the subjects to be debated and the terms of the debate. *The Sunday Times* noted the Tories' success in the sphere of ideology:

'The signal achievement of the Thatcher years has been the way the prime minister has moved the political battle on to her terrain. David Owen has discovered the radical potential of market economics and Neil Kinnock sounds more and more like a social democrat.'

The Social Democrats have moved to a 'social market' programme which echoes the Tories. In November the Labour Coordinating Committee's annual meeting agreed a resolution of 'long-term socialist aims' which endorsed an economy dominated by centralised planning 'but also accommodating a market mechanism in some areas' and admitting a 'small private sector'. Thatcher hit the nail on the head at the Tory Party conference:

'The Conservative Party has staked out the common ground and the other parties are tip-toeing on to it.'

The Tory strategy in 1983 was not to polarise society, but to shift the consensus of British politics to the right. The Labour Party's capitulation to the Tories on the issues of nationalism, law and order and family life is a measure of this right-wing shift. The step by step approach to disarming the working class continued in 1983 because Labour could offer no coherent challenge to the Tories. For the present the ruling class is marking time. But it has no long-term strategy for overcoming the crisis other than that of crushing the working class. The use of paramilitary police at the *Stockport Messenger* dispute, and Home Secretary Leon Brittan's plans to build 10 new prisons, indicate the direction in which the Tories are moving. Former head of Thatcher's policy unit Sir John Hoskyns recently warned of the Tories' inability to deal with the crisis and the 'social time-bomb' waiting to explode. The traditional leadership of the working class has abdicated responsibility for the battle. The RCP is determined to rally the working class around politics that can stand up to the Tories. When the time-bomb goes off the casualties must all be on the ruling class side.



Upwardly mobile bureaucrats: Kinnock and Hattersley

Labour loses its grip

All sections of the Labour Party have united in blaming the party's defeat in the June 1983 General Election on its failure to come to terms with the changing class structure of British society. Fran Eden looks at the changing composition of the working class and the myth of the well-off worker. The return of the Labour Party to the analysis and prescriptions of 20 years ago exposes its inability to rebuild a base in the working class of the eighties.

NEIL KINNOCK emphasised the need for the Labour Party to change direction throughout his summer-long campaign for the leadership. He insisted that Labour must shift its orientation from its traditional base in the male, manual, manufacturing working class towards a different section of society:

'We have given the impression that we are simply not attuned to the reshuffled class system since the fifties, to things like home ownership and taxation. We must convince the British people that we are in favour of success.'

It was apparent to all that industry now employed less than one third of all workers and manual workers were now outnumbered by white collar employees. It was less clear, however, what this meant for the Labour Party.

Peter Hain and Harriet Harman, key figures in the nominally left-wing faction behind the 'Kinnock for leader' campaign, made the new orientation more explicit. Writing in *Tribune* in July, they explained that 'Labour cannot afford to be only the party of the radicals and the poor'. To win elections Labour had to build a 'new popular coalition', including middle class and better-off working class people. Hain and his Labour Coordinating Committee colleague Nigel Stanley presented a strategy document to the new leadership on the eve of Kinnock's election, at the end of September. From close scrutiny of election returns and opinion

polls, they concluded that Labour had lost crucial support among professional and managerial employees, white collar workers and skilled manual workers. They suggested that Labour needed to appeal to the 'upwardly mobile' section of the working class. The quest for the 'upwardly mobile' worker has guided the Kinnock leadership through its first months in office.

Volvos and videos

Who are the 'upwardly mobile' workers? Our surveys of trends in employment and living standards (see box on this and the following page) show little sign of any workers moving upwards. There are jobs for electrical engineers and professionals. But the only openings for workers in Thatcher's Britain seem to be as footballers, night watchmen and hairdressers. A study of trends in incomes policy reveals little evidence to support Kinnock's notion of 'a new affluent working class'. Some middle class people have become more affluent over the past five years. According to Treasury calculations, a married man with two children on £44 500 a year (five times the national average wage) has had a real, after-tax rise in income of 54 per cent since 1978. For a worker on average earnings, on the other hand, the rise was 5.7 per cent. As every low-paid worker knows, 5 per cent of not much is not much of an increase.

Kinnock and Hain are impressed by the 'consumerism' of the working class. Every Labour politician is preoccupied with the impact of Volvos on mining communities, the consequences of video viewing for proletarian consciousness, and the effect of home ownership on workers' willingness to strike. Workers are much less impressed. The highest manual wage earner only takes home about twice as much as the minimum necessary for physical survival. To sustain this income a worker often has to toil and sweat for long hours. High earnings usually include overtime and productivity bonuses. Even white collar workers endure stupefying labour and managerial harassment. Many workers regard their cars and televisions

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Paying the price

Many people in Britain believe that despite recession and mass unemployment, workers who still have jobs have never had it so good. This rosy view underestimates the price workers are having to pay to maintain their living standards today, and the problems that are building up for the not-too-distant future.

The latest *Social Trends* provides a mass of statistics, generally demonstrating rising incomes and levels of consumption. It reveals that real disposable income — the amount people have available to spend — increased, taking account of inflation, by 12.5 per cent between 1972 and 1982. It shows that 14 million people took holidays abroad in 1982, one million more than in 1981. Purchases of videos, cars, televisions and other household goods have all increased over the past ten years. However *Social Trends* also reveals that real incomes have stagnated over the past three years after rising in the seventies, and that much of the subsequent increase in consumption has been at the expense of savings or through hire purchase and other forms of personal credit.

Social Trends, like many official and statistical surveys of living standards, provides only a partial picture. It lumps the whole of British society together and underestimates growing differences within society. It also fails to take account of the changing conditions within which people work to earn the wages to keep up their standard of living. Yet it is here that the most significant changes have taken place over the past few years.

In 1983 workers in general managed to win pay rises somewhere near the level of inflation. But they often made major concessions on working conditions in return for clinging on to a decent wage. The engineers' settlement shortly before Christmas is a good example. After months of negotiations, union leaders representing two million workers finally accepted a five per cent offer. They also agreed to participate in a working party with the employers with the objective of getting rid of 'restrictive manning practices', and introducing 'flexibility' between jobs and flexible hours. This means abandoning measures to protect workers against excessive exploitation, turning workers into compliant servants of management in the drive to raise productivity. The employers also aim to introduce secret ballots to undermine workers' capacity to take effective strike action. In short, the engineers have got a pay rise that barely keeps up with inflation and, in return, have agreed that their factories can be turned almost into slave-labour camps.

The engineers' deal follows a pattern of increasingly punitive productivity deals over the past few years. In the

sixties and seventies productivity agreements frequently made little difference to workplace organisation. They were often simply a way around incomes policy. Today they have become a brutal weapon against the working class. Up to now they have not generally been aimed at reducing wages — hence wage levels have been more or less maintained. They have, however, forced through major reductions in manpower and staffing levels and the restructuring of working practices. The result has been the destruction of effective workplace trade union organisation and much more intensive exploitation. Fewer workers are being forced to work much harder under more aggressive management and in worse conditions. Such productivity deals have spread in both manufacturing and, increasingly, in services. Over the past ten years the proportion of non-manual workers covered by such schemes has doubled, reaching 17 per cent last year.

The next stage is for employers to take advantage of the enhanced power that productivity deals have given them, and try to curb wages. In the meantime, some workers have begun to pay the price for maintaining wages at the expense of conditions — with their lives. After a slow decline for many years the number of deaths at work rose to 256 in 1982. Almost half were in manufacturing industry. The drive to tighten the productivity screw can be expected to claim more lives this year.

A number of other trends that emerged in 1983 could lead to a sharp reduction in living standards in the year ahead. More than one million workers in the NHS and BL, and in a number of smaller firms (British Oxygen, Hoover, Caterpillar, International Harvester), have made long-term pay deals. These established a fixed-rate wage rise for up to three years ahead. As inflation rises again — and prices are already moving up more rapidly — real incomes could fall far behind what workers need. Wage cuts as an alternative to job losses or closure received widespread publicity at the Hyster plant in Scotland and at ICI's Hyde plant near Manchester. Wage cuts have been used more for propaganda value in areas of high unemployment than in a systematic attempt to reduce living standards. But they are an ominous indicator of future trends. Nurses and London dockers agreed to make pay rises conditional upon agreement not to undertake industrial action. Politicians of all parties are talking about curbing the right to strike in key public services. The threat that workers may be denied the only weapon they have to force decent wages out of the employers and their state looms menacingly over 1984.

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as meagre compensation for drudgery. However much they increase their wages, they can never take home enough on Friday to escape the necessity of returning to work on Monday.

Deepening divisions

It is true that 60 per cent of British householders now own their homes. Workers have become owner-occupiers to escape high rents and get decent housing. It makes little difference to workers' consciousness if they pay rent to a council or landlord, or pay it in the form of mortgage repayments to a building society. Workers are more concerned about the fact that one in six homes are unfit to live in, than about forms of ownership. The new Labour leadership has decided to drop its resistance to council house sales. In any case few remaining council tenants can afford to buy their homes. Even if they had the money, they wouldn't buy the squalid housing on offer — housing provided largely by Labour councils.

Labour's approach draws attention to divisions in the working class that have been deepened by the recession. Its quest for a new social base from which to launch its own revival has produced little result; but it seems calculated to further divide the working class.

Wide divergence in pay settlements last year was concealed by the fact that

average wage rises kept abreast of inflation. Workers in the oil industry, some skilled engineering workers, and workers in gas, oil and electricity, got rises of 11 and 12 per cent. On the other hand, steel workers, local government manual workers and civil servants all got increases between nil and five per cent. This results from a conscious strategy by employers and the Government to take maximum advantage of market conditions to enforce the lowest possible wage rise. Employers and administrators have reorganised bargaining arrangements to strengthen their position, usually by introducing local bargaining and imposing local productivity deals. This approach has been followed both in private industry and in the public sector, where it has extended from steel and coal to the civil service. So while the better paid workers just about held their own, the lower paid lost out. The pool of those earning less than two thirds of the national average has swelled to more than four million.

The deepest and most dangerous division in the working class is between those with jobs and those out of work. The gulf in income between households headed by somebody who is employed and those headed by somebody on the dole now stands at more than £50 a week. As mass unemployment becomes chronic, the duration of unemployment increases. By last April around one million people had been out of work for

more than 12 months, half a million for more than two years, and a quarter of a million for more than three years. The cumulative effect of government changes in the rules for state benefits over the last three years has been to reduce the real value of unemployment benefit by more than £2 a week. Unemployment benefits in Britain are now a lower proportion of average earnings than in any other Western European country except Italy.

Unemployment statistics are likely to be upwardly mobile for the rest of the eighties. The Warwick Institute of Economic Research predicts a rise to 3.2 million by the mid-eighties, with a reassuring decline to 2.9 million by the end of the decade. The Cambridge Economic Policy Group is more pessimistic. It reckons on a rise to between 3.7 and 4.2 million by 1988. In the light of these grim admissions, Kinnock's advisers have questioned Labour's manifesto commitment to reducing unemployment to one million.

Further divisions present serious problems for the working class movement. The combined effects of recession and the Youth Training Scheme have set back the wages and conditions of young workers. Last year, adult pay rises were four times higher than those for boys under the age of 18, and three times higher than those for girls. Women and blacks have been ghettoised in low paying industries and in part-time work. The overall unemployment level for ethnic minorities in September of last year was 17 per cent (national average - 13 per cent). For black youth in inner-city areas it is nearly 50 per cent. The recession has sharpened regional differences. In the West Midlands, where industrial collapse has been most precipitate, earnings lag 13 per cent behind London levels.

Living in the past

Labour's orientation to 'upwardly mobile' workers scarcely relates to real changes in the composition of the working class. Kinnock's strategy is to play to the opinion polls and try to outdo the Tories' appeal to self interest. This will require careful market research followed by promises of tax cuts, material possessions and more home ownership. The LCC is currently working on this project. Unfortunately for the Labour Party, this sales pitch can only be made to a very narrow section of the working population. While Labour is making promises to the upwardly mobile few, the downwardly mobile many will become increasingly fragmented and demoralised and even more remote from the Labour Party.

It is illuminating to compare Labour's current attempt to overcome its decline with its previous effort, after the 1959 election defeat. A Tory landslide victory over Labour gave rise to a discussion

strikingly similar to the recent debates. *Must Labour lose?* asked two influential commentators; *Can Labour win?* was leading Labour intellectual Anthony Crosland's scarcely less pessimistic response. Crosland noted the decline of the traditional working class and its identification with the Labour Party. He bemoaned the effect of higher living standards and household goods on the political outlook of workers in the newer industries and among youth. He commented on the increase in owner occupation and the effect of the welfare state on social mobility. He concluded that Labour should shed its cloth cap image and try to relate to 'upwardly mobile' workers and the middle class. As Crosland put it, 'in a few years time half the population would be middle class in occupation and more than half would be middle class in aspiration'.

In the early sixties there was some scope for Labour's new strategy. There was still some steam in the economy, and Labour under Harold Wilson could project a dynamic, modernising approach to political problems. In the 1964 and 1966 elections Wilson succeeded in arresting what seemed to many to be an irreversible decline in Labour's fortunes. But Wilson's success only slowed the party's long-term decline in popular support. Wilson presented Labour as a 'natural party of government'. His government's attempts to make workers pay for the deepening crisis of British capitalism in the late sixties — and even more in the late seventies — further antagonised Labour's residual working class base.

Today there is little room for Kinnock to repeat Wilson's manoeuvre. The Labour leadership cannot pose as a credible alternative party of government because the ruling class is not convinced by its policies for reviving British capitalism. On the other hand, the party can put forward no convincing strategy to any section of the working class. The left is so compromised with the party's past betrayals, and so servile to the new leadership, that it has become isolated and irrelevant. At the end of 1983 the best Labour's 'hard left' could do was republish a toned-down version of the left programme of 1973. This mish-mash of promises of reflation and admissions of the necessity for austerity simply reveals the left's incoherence and inability to connect with the real problems facing the working class.

The recession is transforming and dividing the working class. The working class does not need a party that makes narrow appeals to particular sections to advance its sectarian preoccupation with its own survival. The class struggle in 1984 requires a working class party that seeks to unite the working class in defence of its class interests.

The jobs of tomorrow

What does the 'upwardly mobile' worker do for a living at the beginning of 1984? What will he or she be doing in 1987 or 1988 when Labour will once again be asking for workers' votes in a general election? In December the TUC presented a document for the consideration of the Cabinet ministers, top businessmen and civil servants on the National Economic Development Council, the top quango on which the TUC is still represented. The TUC's predictions were based on academic surveys carried out at Cambridge and Warwick universities. Their forecasts must have made grim reading for Kinnock's advisers searching for an 'upwardly mobile' constituency towards which to orient the new-look Labour Party.

In the 12 months up to June 1983 the long-term trends of declining manufacturing employment, and stagnating employment in the service sector, continued apace. Job losses were particularly heavy in metal manufacture, shipbuilding, mechanical engineering and metal goods production. Each shed more than 7 per cent of its workforce in the year. Substantial losses were registered in public utilities (gas, water, electricity), and in clothing and footwear. There was an increase in jobs in only one manufacturing sector — timber and furniture. A one per cent expansion here followed a contraction of 7 per cent in the previous three years. And employment in services, after peaking in 1979/80, has been dropping slightly over the past three years. However there are significant variations in the service sector. Last year jobs in transport and communications fell by 9 per cent, in distributive trades by 6 per cent, and in public administration by 4 per cent. On the other hand employment in banking, insurance and finance grew by 6 per cent, and held up in professional and scientific services. Economic forecasts suggest the acceleration of these trends into the eighties.

According to projections made by the Warwick Institute of Economic Research, electrical engineering is the only sector of manufacturing that is expected to grow from 1982 to 1990. This reflects the anticipated increase in demand for electronic capital equipment. The rest of British industry — especially textiles and clothing, metals and engineering — faces a gloomy

future. Prospects for the services sector appear somewhat brighter; public administration, professional and miscellaneous services are all expected to expand. However these projections merely extrapolate from existing trends. They cannot anticipate the effects of a further sharp fall in profitability throughout the economy — or of a financial collapse — on jobs in banking, insurance and finance. Nor can they predict the effect of successively more draconian cuts in jobs in the civil service and local government. The future for jobs in services could be much bleaker than present trends suggest. And these forecasts can see only decline for public utilities, transport and distribution.

The 'upwardly mobile' sections of the working class are no easier to identify if we look at the projected occupational profile of the national workforce of tomorrow. The Warwick figures predict changes in employment in 18 different occupational categories between 1980 and 1990. The 10 that are expected to contract include engineering craftsmen, both transferable and non-transferable craftsmen, skilled and unskilled operatives — the core of the traditional manual working class. The growth areas are in traditionally middle class jobs — managers and administrators, health professions, other professions, engineers and scientists, technicians and draughtsmen. The only real openings for working class people would seem to be in 'literary, artistic and sports occupations' — expected to grow by 26 per cent — and in the private security sector, for which a 25 per cent expansion is anticipated.

The future is already taking shape. Last September the Manpower Services Commission announced that despite a general long-term decline in job vacancies there were a few in select occupations that took a long time to fill. The growth points of the British labour market in 1983 were in jobs for electrical and electronic engineers and technicians, accountants, sales representatives, managers, vocational and industrial trainers, domestic housekeepers and ladies' hairdressers. This is the constituency in which Kinnock and his advisers will be marketing the Labour Party, with an appropriately designed image, in the late eighties.



Promotion prospects: even British football offers more job growth than industry



A year in the life of Margaret Thatcher's family



The High Tory window on life: Thatcher's set imposes family morality from above

Women workers suffered last year. In three crucial areas — pay, jobs and unemployment — women lost ground. Kate Marshall takes a look at family life under Mrs Thatcher's government.

THE LACK of any dramatic shift of women out of employment and back into the home has disguised the real deterioration in women's position. Many observers have commented that women have not done too badly during the past four years of Tory rule. In reality, the disproportionate burden of the recession carried by women has been hidden by their changing role in the labour market. In the last major recession women were driven out of what was seen as a temporary position in production. Today, when women constitute more than 40 per cent of the workforce, the recession has not displaced women on the same scale. But it has led to a sharp deterioration in their position in pay, job opportunities, part-time work and unemployment.

Women only

The most recent statistics from the 1982 *New Earnings Survey* show that low pay is standard for women manual workers. In 51 of the 53 industries quoted the majority of women workers earned less than £100 a week. Although pay differentials between men and women have stayed relatively constant over the last seven years, the gulf between men's and women's earnings is as bad as ever. In 1983 women workers earned 74.2 per cent of men's hourly pay compared to 75.1 per cent in 1976. This meant that, in terms of gross pay, men in manual trades got £146.60 a week compared to women's £87.90. Over all industries men received £167.50, women only £108.80. Although women's gross earnings *per hour* were about three quarters of men's, when we compare *weekly* wages women got only 65 per cent of men's wages because of lack of overtime opportunities for women. If we compare gross weekly earnings in the public and private sectors the situation is even worse. While non-manual women in the public sector grossed 64 per cent of men's weekly wages, women in the private sector got little more than half men's wages.

The recession has intensified the concentration of women in low-paid, women-only occupations. In manual employment the tendency towards women-only jobs is increasing. Sixty per cent of all female manual workers are employed in catering, cleaning, hairdressing and other personal services. This compares with just over 45 per cent in 1975. As women's employment in these areas has increased, other traditional low-paid women's jobs — for example in textiles and light electrical engineering — have declined under the impact of the recession.

This shift has occurred in the context of a general decline in job opportunities for women. There has been a fall in the number of women in full-time jobs from the pre-1979 level of 5.5 million to five

million in 1983. Part-time work, which was the main cause of expanding job opportunities for women during the seventies, is now beginning to level out.

About 86 per cent — 3.5 million — of all part-time workers are women. The Tory assault on working class living standards has pushed more women with dependent children out of the home into part-time jobs. About 30 per cent of women with a dependent child under four years are in employment, of whom three quarters work part-time. Seventy per cent of women with the youngest dependent aged 10 and over are employed and 59 per cent of them work part-time. At the same time, nursery facilities have continued to contract. Women who have had to go out to work to make ends meet have been forced to rely on friends, relatives and neighbours to care for their children.

Unemployment has hit young women particularly hard. During the last 10 years 350 000 fewer 16 to 19 year olds had jobs. The decrease was greater for girls (27 per cent) than for boys (21 per cent). But these figures are deceptive. Ever since the Tories changed the way the figures are compiled in November 1982, the official unemployment figures have included only those who are successful in claiming benefit at Unemployment Benefit Offices. Women no longer count as unemployed if they are denied benefit because they are assumed to be economically dependent on the men they are married to or live with. In this way five per cent of men (106 000) and 14 per cent of women (130 000) have been removed from the official jobless statistics.

Whether they were housewives, workers or unemployed, women were in the forefront of Tory attacks on working class living standards in 1983. The contradiction between the harsh reality of working class family life and the Tory government's rhapsodies about familial bliss was apparent to every working mother.

The morals of a Tory

There was a resurgence of pro-family ideology in 1983. In March, Thatcher's family think tank, the Family Policy Group, made clear its intention to shift the cost and responsibility for the family back to the individual. The Tories' drive to stir up prejudice against women and sex was only slightly tempered by the embarrassing revelations about industry minister Cecil Parkinson's extra-marital affairs in October. Tory ideologues glorified the family, while Tory attacks on the working class reduced family life to misery. Divorce rates rocketed as the pressures of mass unemployment, rising prices and falling living standards drove thousands of families apart. The number of one parent families has increased from 570 000 in 1971 to more than one million today. The Government reduced state benefits, removed mothers from the unemployment register and argued that support for one parent families meant 'subsidising illegitimacy and immorality'.

Although 'mother of ten' Victoria Gillick lost her case against the right of

doctors to give the pill to girls under 16 without parental consent in August, her comeback in November was backed by 200 MPs. Her appeal to the High Court against the ruling provided a focus for all society's reactionary forces. *The Daily Telegraph* came out strongly on her side: 'What remains of our civilisation is based largely on monogamy and the principle of parental responsibility'. The consensus behind Gillick was designed to impose a new morality to limit women's access to contraception.

In early December the Sex Equality Bill, which sought to combine and update the 1970 Equal Pay Act and the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, was defeated in the House of Commons by 198 votes to 118. Under Secretary of State for Employment Alan Clark, speaking against the Bill, said that it was impractical, expensive 'and in many respects alien to public opinion'.

Abortion rights too came under attack last year. The anti-abortion organisation Life took consultant gynaecologist Anthony Hamilton to court in September for alleged murder after an unsuccessful late abortion. And throughout the year a hysterical campaign raged in the gutter press against the supposed increase in sexually transmitted diseases. Herpes was the new horror story, AIDS was God's punishment for gays, and promiscuous women had only themselves to blame if they got cervical cancer. The media portrayed relatively rare venereal diseases as major problems endangering the fabric of society. Tory ideologue Roger Scruton sought to reassert 'modesty, restraint and chastity' ('When intolerance must triumph', *The Times*, 13 September).

No match

The Tory right wingers won all the arguments in 1983 because they faced no real opposition. The Tories' opponents fell back on liberal, medical or sociological arguments. The only effective reply to Gillick's anti-contraception campaign is to insist that the working class must fight for free and safe contraception for any woman who wants it. Last year only *the next step* took this view. Others defended contraception for youth on the grounds that it preserved the sanctity of family life. Caroline Woodruffe, chairman of the Brook Advisory Centres — the main agency under attack by the Tories — set the tone. Woodruffe explained that if Gillick won, 'the minority of girls in need of help would be deprived of it'. In other words, Woodruffe concedes that contraceptives need only be given to 'the minority' of disadvantaged and black girls whom the state wants to discourage from having children. Other voices raised in opposition to the right wing share many of the same prejudices. They are afraid to stand up against the system in defence of women's rights.

The liberals' inability to fight Tory attacks and ideology was demonstrated in last year's campaign to save the South London Hospital for Women from closure. The argument for keeping the hospital open as a service for women, by women, was that it provided 'choice'. The secre-

tary of Wandsworth Community Health Council pursued this approach:

'I condemn the Government for ending freedom of choice. They say they believe the health service should be more like Marks and Spencer — offering the consumer choice — yet they are removing the choice from the state sector.'

The campaign to stop the closure of the hospital argued that the facilities it provided were unique and should be saved, even if other hospitals — such as St. George's in Tooting — had to suffer. This approach won support from the Conservative National Women's Committee and Lady Howe, wife of Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey. But the campaign could not win the support of the working class or organise the action necessary to keep the hospital open. The only way the hospital could have been defended successfully was by fighting for workers' jobs and women's services, against the Tories and the cuts.

Cruise missiles arrived at Greenham Common last year, despite women's efforts to stop them. On one level the women at Greenham Common achieved some notable successes. Using imaginative tactics and a campaign of disruption, they managed to attract media coverage and keep the issue in the public eye. But, ultimately their strategy for winning peace is doomed to failure. To oppose the war drive requires more than a narrow attack on American nuclear weapons — it means taking on the system that creates them. The Greenham women's creative tactics would have been far better employed fighting against the wars that are going on today in Ireland, the Middle East and Central America. The only way women and workers could effectively fight nuclear and other weapons, was by standing with those fighting against British imperialism in 1983.

Another way

Fighting for peace, against cuts in women's jobs and facilities, and for contraception and abortion rights, can only be successful when carried out from a consistently working class perspective. During 1983 revolutionary communist women fought for anti-imperialist politics and an uncompromising defence of women's jobs and services, against the decadent, oppressive morality of the bosses. During International Women's Week we organised demonstrations and meetings in solidarity with the women fighting against imperialism in Ireland, the Middle East, Central America and elsewhere. Throughout the year we were involved in campaigns against cuts in abortion, nursery and health facilities for women in Wandsworth, Southwark, Islington, Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham. In Manchester and Coventry we campaigned against attacks on women's right to state benefits. At Britain's toy factory in East London, at Arncliffe in Glasgow and at Hindle Gears in Bradford, revolutionary communist women supported the struggles of women workers with the only thing that counts — working class politics.



British politics

Racism and the state in 1983

Tilting the balance

From the first day of the year, when the British Nationality Act came into force, 1983 saw the growth and consolidation of racism at all levels of British society. Yet as Joan Phillips argues, racism never became a controversial public issue.

RACE AND IMMIGRATION have long provided emotive causes for the British right. In the run up to the 1979 General Election, immigration featured prominently in the Conservative Party campaign. The Tory manifesto promised 'firm immigration controls' and party leader Margaret Thatcher made an infamous racist speech about her fears of the nation being 'swamped' by immigrants. The 1979 campaign established the Tories as the supreme party of racial and anti-immigrant prejudice. The Tories effectively squeezed out the National Front and the other far-right groupings. While many former fascists entered the Conservative ranks, the fascist organisations fragmented and declined. The June 1983 General Election confirmed their virtual disappearance.

It is a measure of the Tories' new-found confidence that they no longer need to make a big play of the racist card. In this respect the contrast between the elections of 1983 and 1979 is striking. In last year's campaign the issue of race remained in the background. The Tories even had the audacity to make a bid for the black vote. Their patronising slogan 'Labour says he's black, Tories say he's British' found little resonance, but it was significant that they even bothered to try to appeal to black people.

The Tories' low profile on race is the outcome of four years of hard work. Since 1979 the Government has managed to reduce immigration to an all time low, step up its internal policing of black people and pass through Parliament a comprehensive Nationality Act. With this record behind them the Tories face little pressure to demonstrate their racist credentials.

Apartheid — British style

The Tories have moved away from a preoccupation with regulating immigration to a direct concern with internal policing. Immigration control is still central for enforcing racial divisions. But after the implementation of the Nationality Act the Government had only to tighten up the rules. Thus immigration rules have been interpreted rigidly. A new computer run by the Immigration Service Intelligence Unit has files on more than 300 000 people to assist state control. In July, immigration minister David Waddington, announced that he was 'concerned about delays suffered by individuals'. He therefore intended in future 'to restrict the opportunities for MPs to intervene in immigration cases'. The tightening up of immigration controls through rigid enforcement is significant, but it is overshadowed by the build-up of repressive measures directed against the black people who already live in Britain.

Throughout 1983 the Government proceeded to extend racial discrimination and harassment in most important spheres of life. The control of immigration does not mean merely controlling the movement of people in and out of the country. It also means creating a category of second class citizens, identified primarily by skin colour, who are subjected to tight internal controls. In January 1983 the police launched a series of passport raids in London — more than 30 homes were raided. Similar attacks were carried



British Airways announce the departure...

out in the black community in the Midlands. Over the 12-month period the authorities issued 2000 deportation orders. The raids and arrests and interrogations were not simply about deportations. The aim above all was to create a climate of fear — to terrorise the black community as a whole. Immigration controls are by nature discriminatory — they put in question the rights of every immigrant. Controls turn every immigrant and even black people born in Britain into potential 'illegals'. Police raids are designed to make sure that every black family remembers its inferior and insecure position in British society.

'Fishing expeditions' — random raids by immigration police in search of 'illegals' — are only one aspect of the system of British racism. The system has more pervasive methods of intimidation. Home Office collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Security was stepped up during the year. A number of surveys have shown 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. Even the most mundane features of everyday life do not escape the eyes of the ever vigilant racist state. Thus in October it was revealed that it was customary in many parts of the country for black people to be required to produce passports when applying for marriage licences. It was only after considerable publicity — including questions in Parliament — that the London Borough of Camden apologised to an Asian woman who was asked for her passport before being issued with a marriage licence.

On the streets

Although racism was not a major issue in Westminster, on the streets and housing estates of Britain's inner cities it could not be avoided. Throughout the year black people faced the violence perpetrated by racist thugs. In the early part of the year the Walter Rodney bookshop in Ealing was twice attacked. In February an explosion seriously damaged the building in which the Croydon Black People's Action Committee was located. During the summer racist attacks occurred throughout the country, particularly in

the East End of London.

The press and the politicians kept up a propaganda barrage to back up the racial violence on the streets. The media, especially local newspapers, continually emphasised the 'criminal' character of West Indian youth. The release of tendentious crime statistics in March led the London Standard to headline 'FURY OVER BLACKS AND CRIME' in one of many similar racist features. Politicians of all parties hotly debated the problems of law and order, all accepting the labelling of the victims of oppression as a criminal menace to be contained or suppressed.

These attacks met with resistance from black youth. Despite scores of arrests, black youth maintained a lively campaign over police handling of the case of Colin Roach's death in the doorway of a police station in Hackney. In May, 35 people were arrested after violent clashes with police who were defending a National Front meeting in Tottenham. On 4 June, a policeman was stabbed and a police car was overturned in Brixton in response to intensified repression. And campaigns such as Workers Against Racism and the group supporting the Newham 8 demonstrated a determination to organise against racist attacks.

The balance of forces

However, despite some important anti-racist activities, the ruling class in general managed to retain the initiative. The establishment felt sufficiently confident to publish the Policy Studies Institute's critical report on the Metropolitan Police in November. This survey showed that racist attitudes and language were 'expected, accepted and even fashionable' in the police. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Kenneth Newman side-stepped the issue by arguing that the publication of the report showed that the police were prepared to clean up their own house. The media chose not to pursue the point.

The confidence of the ruling class stems from the lack of coherent opposition to its policies. The opposition parties — including the parliamentary left — have a long record of compromise on the race issue. Indeed many Labour controlled local councils are more interested in containing resistance to oppression than in fighting racism. The race relations industry and the ethnic politics sector have been given a great boost by left

dominated local authorities. The main contribution of various council backed quangos has been to defuse racial tension rather than defend black people. A West Midlands Labour councillor spoke up for his council's radical policy of funding community projects, on the grounds that it had been 'overwhelmingly successful in defusing the tension which created the street riots of 1981'.

The race relations sector represents the soft side of the British state. It co-opts and corrupts potential opponents and isolates the victims of racial oppression. The ruling class is consciously fostering this approach alongside its more violent tactics. In September the editor of *The Times* insisted that the community approach should continue while the riot police were kept on full alert:

'The fact that we have had two summers free from inner-city rioting should not be allowed to justify any dilution in the Government's commitment to an inner-city policy which was forced upon it by the events in Brixton, Toxteth and Moss Side.'

The more sober sections of the media emphasised the importance of a policy of containment to avoid social unrest. Ironically, this job is mainly carried out not by the Government, but by Labour run local councils in inner-city areas.

Since the Tories face no coherent challenge on race, the Government can determine the terms of the discussion. That's why there was no real political debate about racism in 1983. Racism thrived at all levels of British society — but since the Government called the shots public discussion was not about racism, but about policing, law and order, and black criminality.

Workers Against Racism

The key to putting the racists on the defensive is to challenge the legitimacy of immigration controls, and the right of the state to discriminate against black people. For the bosses the crucial division is between British people and foreigners; hence the need for immigration control. For us the crucial division is between workers (black and white) and British bosses. From a worker's point of view immigration control is nothing less than an attempt to divide our class. The assertion of the unity of class interests is the starting point for the fight against racism. This is where Workers Against Racism comes in.

The most important achievement of WAR in 1983 was to popularise the necessity for fighting immigration controls. As a result a growing number of anti-racists are no longer prepared to restrict their activities within a narrow legal framework, but are determined to fight racist laws by any means. The campaign of resistance against the deportation of Afia Begum is just one example. Supporters of this campaign are prepared to defy the law because they recognise that immigration legislation is inherently racist and anti working class.

The fight against racism cannot be effective if it is reduced to isolated responses to instances of attacks and harassment. To be effective we have to mobilise opposition against the institutions and laws that legitimise racism and make racial oppression respectable. That's why our objective has to be to smash all immigration controls. This cannot be achieved through legal reform. The British capitalist state can only be British. It is in its very nature to discriminate against the 'non-British'. Only the united power of the proletariat can get rid of immigration controls by organising against every manifestation of racist oppression.



Afghan rebels probe Soviet technology

Who's afraid of the Mongol hordes?

Andrew Cockburn, *The Threat*, Hutchinson 1983, pp338, hbk £9.95

David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the arms race*, Yale University Press 1983, pp211, hbk £7.95

Jonathan Steele, *World Power: Soviet foreign policy under Brezhnev and Andropov*, Michael Joseph 1983, pp287, hbk £14.95

WINSTON CHURCHILL once described the Soviet Union as 'a mystery wrapped in a riddle inside an enigma'. He did little to unwrap it. Once the Soviet Union had poured 20 million lives into defeating the German army the victorious imperialists had a new use for it. The Soviet Union was to be the guarantor of a weak and divided Germany. More than that, it was to become the Threat against which Europe would be united under US domination. Churchill was the most forceful and lurid exponent of this view. In a famous 1949 speech in Massachusetts he warned that Europe lay at the mercy of the Mongol hordes which unless checked would sweep across from the Russian steppes. The North Atlantic alliance was born. Nuclear weapons, developed to force Japan into submission, became the totem of US domination. Cockburn observes that they were used by Western governments 'to preserve an unbreakable link between Europe and the United States'.

'Such a link would only remain the lynchpin of the Atlantic alliance so long as nuclear weapons were portrayed as the sole means of keeping the Red Army at bay.'

Mongol hordes became de rigeur in every Nato salon.

Cockburn has two objectives. He spends most of his book debunking the myth of the Soviet threat on the evidence of Soviet emigres interviewed in New York. He shows, for instance, that out of 175 Soviet divisions only 58 are at full strength and ready for combat. The '5.8 million servicemen' of Nato literature turn out to include construction brigades, civil defence and border guards, political officers, troops on the Chinese border and so on. Once these are taken out it becomes clear that roughly two million Warsaw Pact troops confront about the same number of Nato troops in Europe — hardly enough for a blitzkrieg. Moreover, the Soviet army is composed largely of conscripts who serve for two years, with virtually no middle layer of NCOs. These conscripts are likely never to fire a rifle during a harsh training programme which consists of little more than square-bashing. Their leisure hours are spent hunting for eau de cologne and antifreeze to drink for lack of vodka.

Soviet backwardness is equally reflected in military technology. Soviet tanks are small because no engine has been produced powerful enough to drive a tank the size of an American model. The engine in the Mig-21 has to be sent away for overhaul every 300 hours because

Soviet industry cannot refine and machine the metals to withstand the extreme conditions inside a jet engine. There is even considerable doubt whether the complex fuse system on Soviet ICBMs would ignite if the military ever wanted to launch one in anger.

Military tactics are as much a problem as technology. Despite six months of preparation, the forces mobilised to invade Afghanistan were from Kazakh construction brigades who had never trained as soldiers. They took with them anti-aircraft artillery — but it was a year before they realised that the Afghans had no aircraft.

The new irrationalism

Cockburn's demystification of the Soviet threat is subordinate to another objective. He emerges from the book as an exponent of the new irrationalism of Mary Kaldor's 'baroque arsenal' or E P Thompson's 'exterminism'. In his view 'there is very little military rationale to be found in any of the activities of the superpowers' armed forces'. At the end of the day Cockburn shares the incomprehension of all those Soviet emigres with whom he ate pastrami in Manhattan cafes.

Holloway's book has the merit of debunking the myth of a military-industrial complex blindly dominating Soviet policy-making. He shows that while the High Command has played an active role in politics since the death of Stalin, it has always been the party which has called the shots — literally in the case of Beria's execution in 1953. It is the Politburo which makes the major decisions allocating resources between defence, consumption and investment.

Holloway tries to explain these decisions on defence spending in relation to Soviet foreign policy. He demonstrates the necessity for the Soviet arms build-up if the Soviet Union was to participate in international summitry and win concessions on trade and technology. The goal of strategic parity was central to the Soviet bureaucracy's search for security. Khrushchev speeded up the development of nuclear missiles and even attempted to bluff the United States into conceding the status of superpower to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was thus forced into wasting enormous resources which otherwise could have been used to strengthen the domestic economy. It was not until detente in the seventies that there was any significant economic pay-off.

What Holloway is not able to do is show the connections between the foreign and defence policy interests of the Soviet state and the internal dynamic of the society. The closest he comes is to point to the conflict between the bureaucracy's need for foreign technology and its fear of economic dependence. For all his realism he refuses to see the main drive to war stemming from the rivalries between the imperialist powers and joins Cockburn in calling for 'alternative' — i.e. more cost effective — defence policies for the West. The Soviet threat is only mitigated, not banished.

The most perceptive and informative account of Soviet foreign policy yet is *World Power* by the *The Guardian's* foreign correspondent Jonathan Steele. The book contains a sober account of the Soviet Union's minor forays into the Third World. However, this is secondary to Steele's explanation of the relations between the Soviet Union and Europe and America and their ideological reflection in anti-Sovietism. Steele ridicules the extreme anti-Sovietism of the US ruling class which sees a Red under every bed. In his view the Soviet Union has no 'master plan in foreign policy' but has spent the last 40 years in ad hoc improvisation. He cites Paul Warke, Jimmy Carter's chief arms control negotiator to explain why: 'in my negotiations, I had the feeling that the Soviets were more serious than we were... because they recognise their political system is infinitely more fragile than ours'.

Despite constant Soviet efforts, there was no serious movement towards political and economic detente with the West until 1969. On the Soviet side there was a strong economic motive. Soviet leaders therefore worked hard to obtain imports of technology and grain from the West.

The United States, on the other hand, looked more to short-term gains as the Soviet Union had little to offer economically. Soviet gains from the 1972 SALT I agreement were consequently limited. The agreement did not apply to new generations of nuclear weapons, so the Soviet Union still had to engage in a nuclear competition it could ill afford.

By the time of the next round of arms and trade negotiations in 1979 the United States had more pressing concerns. The SALT II agreement signed by Brezhnev and Carter was never ratified by Congress. Anti-Soviet rhetoric was now in demand to justify a new US arms

reviews

build-up. The fall of the Shah in February 1979 was the pretext for Carter to declare the Persian Gulf a 'vital American interest' and dust off the plans made by the Pentagon under Kissinger for a Rapid Deployment Force to operate in the region. The USA 'was falling back on the old bogey of a Soviet threat in order to reassert US leadership over increasingly independent allies in Western Europe and Japan'.

Soviet influence is at a lower ebb than at any time since the beginning of detente. However, the growing strains within Nato and between the nations of Western Europe indicate that there remains scope for the Soviet bureaucracy to engage in its traditional diplomacy to secure it a few more years of power. It is important to remember that its massive military machine is vital if it is to play that role.

Gareth Evans



Anti-garrotting gear

Class locations

Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooligan: a history of respectable fears*, Macmillan Press 1983, pp283, pbk £5.95

Hooligan is not just about street crime and violence. It challenges the prevalent assumption that 'after centuries of domestic peace, the streets of Britain have been suddenly plunged into an unnatural state of disorder that betrays the stable traditions of the past'. Starting with the riots of summer 1981 and the ensuing public order hysteria, Pearson takes us back in time through the Teds of the fifties, the 'original hooligans' and 'corner boys' of the Edwardian and late Victorian years, the 'roughs' of the mid-nineteenth century, the artful Chartist dodger of the 1830s and 1840s to the unruly apprentices of 'Merrie England'. He shows that contemporary complaints about the decline of the 'British way of life' have been echoed in every past generation. In every era we are consistently directed to an earlier, happier and more stable England. But if we go back in search of the 'golden age' we can find no time in modern history in which the decent British citizen was free from the threat of proletarian rowdiness.

The word 'hooligan' made an abrupt entrance into common English usage in the wake of a turbulent August Bank Holiday celebration in London in 1898. For the Victorian ruling class the most alarming aspect of the Bank Holiday disturbances was that they testified to fierce traditions of resistance to the police in working class areas such as Hoxton in East London, described by the *News of the World* as a 'low neighbourhood infested by a very dangerous class'. In one incident, a man described as a 'wooden-legged ruffian' kicked a policeman with his wooden leg. In the ensuing violent struggle the policeman found it necessary to unscrew the man's wooden leg as he wrestled him to the ground, striking him on the head with his truncheon. A crowd gathered and threw pepper at the police, causing such a commotion that it was only possible to get the one-legged prisoner to the police station with the assistance of 12 constables.

In a more typical case, when attempting a street arrest 'a hostile mob raised the cry of "Boot them" against the police'. In another, police attempting to separate a man and a woman who were quarrelling were 'set upon by a crowd of 200 persons, who called out "Boot them", and they were assaulted and kicked'. On another occasion at Alexander Park Race Day in 1898, which was said to be

'infested with a crowd of scoundrels and ruffians of the worst race-course stamp', when police arrested a pick-pocket 'the constables were surrounded by a crowd, who kicked them and brutally ill-treated them, and released the prisoner'. Pearson cites numerous instances of assaults on policemen who then found it necessary to draw their truncheons and fight their way out of a crowd.

'To think this is England'

'Hooliganism' was invariably portrayed as the result of an alien presence, as an 'un-British' phenomenon. Victorian England ingeniously disowned the British hooligan by giving him an Irish name. But Pearson's numerous examples show that in many working class neighbourhoods hostility to the police was a remarkably cohesive force. Mass resistance to arrest was common. Even murderers could be the object of local sympathy. An attempt was made to rescue William 'Fatty' Gould when he appeared at the inquest in the Redcross Court murder case. 'A savage mob' outside the court shouted their encouragement — 'Don't give way Fatty!'. Police informers were given short shrift. In one case, a suspected East End informer was visited by a crowd of workers who expressed their displeasure by burning effigies. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner's reports for this period give some indication of the extent of working class hatred for the police. Roughly one in four of London's policemen were assaulted each year — 3444 cases were reported in 1899, when the constabulary strength was 13 213 men and 1949 sergeants.

Pearson also describes more individualistic acts of hooliganism and rowdiness. He tells stories of gangs of 'roughs' waylaying cyclists and pelting them with stones. In one case a South London cowboy was brought before Lambeth court for lassoing cyclists — 'a kind of horseplay that must be stamped out at once' said the magistrate. The police were also urged to take action against young boys throwing stones or spitting from London bridges on boats and their passengers below. 'I find the spitting this year worse than ever', complained a gentleman in 1900.

Almost every aspect of popular culture came under fire at the turn of the century. The music halls, professional football, the 'penny dreadfuls', the rowdy presence of working class people at seaside resorts and even in public libraries — all were condemned by the middle class. The bicycle craze of the 1890s gave rise to respectable fears that workers would gain access to upper class preserves on a large scale. Learned authorities promoted the notion that the push bike was a health hazard causing 'bicycle face', 'bicycle hand' and 'bicycle foot' as well as the dreaded *Kyphosis bicyclistorum* or 'cyclist hump' which resulted if the handle bars were set too low. Evidence placed before the Physical Deterioration Committee even suggested that cycling was a threat to the nation's manliness, inducing varicose of the testicles 'from the pressure of the saddle'.

More grievous allegations were brought against the bicycling 'scorchers' who went too fast or too far — and barged into middle class leisure haunts. There were editorial fustings in *The Times* about 'the East End or suburban "scorcher", dashing along quiet country roads and through peaceful villages with loud shouts and sulphurous language, and reckless to life and limb'. Hit-and-run cyclists provoked heated confrontations in coroners' courts. When juries, containing cyclists, started defying the coroners' rulings and blaming the public for insufficient care, *The Daily Mail* launched an angry editorial broadside: 'There were cyclists on the jury, we read, and this fact was a grim sound...steps should be taken to put these people down'. The woman cyclist was an object of fearful contemplation, and there were snide allusions to the 'improper rational costumes' women were adopting to facilitate travel by bike, as well as their recklessness in traffic.

At times, Pearson seems to celebrate working class violence, but he always stops short of taking sides. This comes out clearly in his discussion of the Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica in 1865. The revolt was savagely repressed by Governor Eyre. Six hundred men, women and children were indiscriminately massacred, hundreds more were executed, and 1000 homes razed to the ground as Eyre's troops went on a three week orgy of hanging, torture, flogging and rape. In his observations on the 'morality' of working class violence in response to state oppression, Pearson does some fancy fence-sitting.

'Two wrongs do not make a right, although they must necessarily shift the balance in how we might approach such an inalienable moral precept as the "general belief that right and wrong are, after all, essentially distinct".'

In his final chapter Pearson draws out the historical lesson that 'friendly British bobbies' have never existed, and that the police have always been used as an instrument of class rule. Yet he can still advocate community policing 'to be built in the future', of a sort that is not 'founded upon the illusions of the past'.

continued on page 22

continued from page 21

Pearson's failure to take sides informs his ambivalent and pessimistic conclusions. While he exposes many of the illusions behind the current law and order debate, Pearson clings on to the middle class fear of working class violence that leads to widespread public approval for the repression of the rebellious youth of today.

Joan Phillips



Tamils forced to beg from tourists

Divide and rule in Sri Lanka

Satchi Ponnambalam, *Sri Lanka: the national question and the Tamil liberation struggle*, Zed Press 1983, pp273, pbk £6.50

WHEREVER THERE IS sectarian conflict in former colonies – Lebanon, Cyprus, Pakistan, East Africa – its roots can be traced back to the imperialist policy of divide and rule. Sri Lanka is no exception. Ponnambalam's book was written in the aftermath of last summer's anti-Tamil pogroms in Sri Lanka. The author is a Tamil – the founder of both the Tamil Socialist Front in 1969 and the Podu Jana (ordinary people's) Party in the late seventies. The book is an attempt to provide a 'materialist, historical' analysis of the Tamil national question. It provides a useful account of Sri Lanka's political history, particularly in the post-war period. A materialist account, however, it is not.

Britain acquired Sri Lanka in 1796 when it seized the island from the Dutch. The Sinhalese Kandyans put up the strongest resistance to colonial conquest. Accordingly, the new British administration encouraged the Tamils to act as a counterweight, selectively bringing them into the colonial and public services. In the wake of the conquest Britain opened up the highlands for export crops and imported indentured labour from the Tamil areas of south India to work the plantations. The 'Indian Tamils' worked – and still work – in appalling conditions for starvation wages. They are divided from the Sinhalese by race and from the 'Sri Lankan Tamils' by class. Last summer's anti-Tamil pogroms were the bitter fruit of the creation, maintenance and manipulation of these communal divisions by British imperialism.

Ponnambalam sees conflict in psychological and sociological terms. For him history is rooted, not in the class struggle, but in the wishes and desires of individuals. He attributes the oppression of the Tamils, not to the divisions created by imperialism, but to the character defects of the Sinhalese people. Ponnambalam's arguments have much in common with the British left's superficial analysis of the Irish War. For the Labour left, the problem in Ireland is that the Loyalists are holding the British people to ransom. For Ponnambalam, Sinhalese nationalists play the same role in Sri Lanka. In Ponnambalam's analysis British imperialism is a benevolent force. Before independence in 1948 there was little conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese because 'they were held together by a common master who was strong and impartial'. The main indictment of imperialism is that it failed to face up to its moral responsibilities:

'The British government is guilty of the gross betrayal of a million people who had toiled and produced the wealth for the British to rule the colony.'

History depicts imperialism in a less flattering light. When Britain granted independence to Sri Lanka in 1948 the indigenous bourgeoisie was very weak. The economy was stagnating. Like most backward capitalist countries, Sri Lanka exported a few agricultural commodities – tea, rubber and coconut – and imported just about everything else, including the bulk of its food and all manufactures. Deteriorating terms of

trade meant an ever increasing debt burden, rising inflation and greater immiseration.

Faced with mounting working class militancy, the Sri Lankan ruling class used the divisions created by imperialism to its advantage. From the disenfranchisement of the Indian Tamils to the colonisation of Tamil areas, the installation of Sinhalese as the official language and organised pogroms, the state launched a violent offensive against the Tamil population. The failure of the United National Party's 'open-door' economic policy – designed to encourage imperialist investment – in the late seventies resulted in savage cuts in working class living standards and the destruction of working class organisations. The UNP used anti-Tamil chauvinism to win support for these measures. The result was last year's pogrom.

The role of the working class leadership in supporting anti-Tamil chauvinism has been shameful. Even by Stalinist standards of class collaboration, the Sri Lankan Communist Party has had an abject history. It supported the imperialist war effort and at independence it backed the UNP, the party entrusted by the British with safeguarding imperialist interests. When the Communist Party discovered that combatting anti-Tamil sentiments was electorally unpopular it adopted a 'Sinhala-only' policy. The main 'Trotskyist' party – the Lanka Sama Samaja Party – was only a few years behind the Communist Party in its capitulation to Sinhalese chauvinism. In the seventies both parties, as members of the United Front government, were instrumental in crushing working class militancy and enforcing the oppression of the Tamils.

Ponnambalam is unable to provide any real critique of the left because he shares its belief in using the bourgeois state to create a 'properly organised socialist society'. The problem with the CP and the LSSP was not their failure 'to unmask the real class character of the new rulers' in the United Front government as Ponnambalam would have it. Their real failing was that, like Ponnambalam, their politics were not fundamentally different from those of the bourgeoisie.

Kenon Malik

Sporting politics

Garry Whannel, *Blowing the whistle: the politics of sport*, Pluto Press (Arguments for socialism) 1983, pp117, pbk £2.50

THE MOST ESTEEMED sports commentators of the quality press have often turned their hand to other aspects of civilisation. Neville Cardus would wax lyrical, turn elegiac and become rhapsodic as cricket correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, or as the paper's music critic. More recently John Arlott's mellifluous radio commentary was complemented by his wine column in *The Guardian*. As Garry Whannel implies, the striking feature of this idyllic world of sport is not so much that politics is missing, but the absence of any element of reality at all.

The general air of fantasy in sports commentary was well illustrated in a recent television appearance of C L R James. Now in his nineties, West Indian James once also wrote for *The Guardian* on cricket. He also collaborated with Leon Trotsky on matters of American and Caribbean politics and has written many books on history, politics and literature. He told his late night chat-show audience and spellbound studio guests, including former England captain Mike Brearley and half the *Race Today* editorial collective, about the sight of Wally Hammond walking out to bat in a test match in the late thirties. For James this spectacle represented not only the epitome of English civilisation but one of the most sublime moments in his long life.

Whannel rejects the 'all human life is there' school of thought on sport and places himself firmly in the rival academy of concerned liberal opinion. Not for these people of principle Arlott's acclaim for Graham Pollock's cover drive: 'does it reflect or enhance life?'. Pollock is South Africa, South Africa is apartheid and 'the sporting isolation of South Africa has been a highly successful political campaign'. It has certainly allowed the nations of the West to make moralistic gestures against South Africa to placate guilty liberals at home. Trade with and investment in the apartheid regime has carried on apace.

There is no need to get your pea stuck in the whistle to make the point that sport and politics are inseparable. From Adolf Hitler's apoplexy over Jesse Owen's triumph at the 1936 Olympics to Jimmy Hill's frothing about violence on the terraces every Saturday, it's pretty obvious. International sport has long been ritualised warfare. When the contest moves from stadium to battlefield sportsmen are expected to play their part. Generally they do their patriotic duty, but sometimes they renege. Muhammad Ali's eloquent explanation of his refusal to join the US army in Vietnam was that 'no Vietcong ever called me nigger'.

But whether they serve or not there is no getting war or politics out of sport.

Whannel tries to develop an 'overall socialist attitude to sport' by challenging the aesthetic orthodoxy with bourgeois sociology. *Blowing the whistle* contains some good anecdotes but lacks any substantial analysis of the place of sport in modern capitalist society. The aesthetic school of Cardus and Arlott, Brian Glanville and Geoffrey Green has at least the merit of writing better reports.

Alan Harding



Deposed emperor Haile Selassie

The unknown revolution

Rene Lefort, *Ethiopia: an heretical revolution?*, Zed Press 1983, pp 301, pbk £6.95
Ryszard Kapuscinski, *The emperor*, Quartet Books 1983, pp164, hbk £7.95

ETHIOPIA'S 1974 revolution passed almost without comment in the West. Yet half a decade later the revolution in Iran generated a mass of literature and was the topic of discussion in left-wing circles in Europe and America. Lefort tries to explain why the Ethiopian revolution was ignored. He dismisses the notion that ignorance of conditions in Ethiopia was an excuse. For almost a year before the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie Western journalists had been reporting the famine in northern Ethiopia and the political situation in the country. For almost 30 years Ethiopia had been America's policeman in the Horn of Africa, patrolling the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It had the largest army in Black Africa and played a key role in American strategy in the region. The capital Addis Ababa was the headquarters of the Organisation of African Unity. There was no shortage of information if the left had wanted to find it.

Lefort's explanation of the left's reluctance to discuss the Ethiopian revolution comes very close to the truth. He argues that although the Provisional Military Action Committee, the Derg, claimed to have made a socialist revolution, it promulgated a cardinal heresy. The Derg asserted that the army could make a socialist revolution and safeguard it until the working class was sufficiently mature to claim it. The horrific consequences of this position put the Ethiopian revolution out of bounds for Western left-wing analysis. At a time when the Stalinist left was getting used to Eurocommunism and the rest of the left was enjoying the early seventies boom in militancy, they did not want to tackle the hard political question of social upheaval in the Third World. The Soviet Union's embarrassing switch of allegiance from the Eritrean national liberation struggle to the Ethiopian state, and the mass slaughter of peasant, worker and student activists by the Derg posed awkward questions for all sections of the left.

The silence surrounding the Ethiopian revolution is an indictment of the left's opportunism. The slaughter of nine out of 10 activists and the street battles between the army and the revolutionaries defied the left's narrow understanding of imperialism. That the Derg overthrew the brutal Selassie I regime and became an ally of the Soviet Union was enough to stamp it with anti-imperialist credentials as far as *Militant's* South African sister paper *Inqaba ya Basenbasi* was concerned. Cuban army engineers replaced Americans in defending the borders established at the end of the Second World War. This hid the continuity between the old and the new regime. Even the money to finance the Ethiopian army continued to flow in from America. The Soviet Union's contribution has been minimal. The domination of the country's agriculture by coffee plantations controlled by US giants like General Foods was barely interrupted by the revolution. The left's belief that imperialism was restricted to formal political control meant that it was incapable of penetrating the substance of imperialist domination. Understanding Ethiopia's backwardness as a product of imperialist domination, and its consequences for the revolutionary movement, remains beyond the grasp of the left to this day. As a contribution to ending this silence, Lefort's book is welcome.

Like Lefort, Kapuscinski is a journalist celebrated for his reporting of the Third World. His project is more limited than Lefort's. The result is, however, more satisfying. His book is simply a collection of interviews with survivors from Haile Selassie's court. Kapuscinski sets out to 'recover pictures doomed to destruction' and make an 'exhibition of the old art of governing'. He succeeds admirably. The words of the courtiers, ministers and functionaries convey not just the suffocating ritual of the palace but also the absolute necessity of this method of rule.

One of Kapuscinski's informants asks: 'How do you reform without everything falling apart? How do you move something without bringing it all tumbling down?'. Although he does not deal with the post-revolutionary regime directly, Kapuscinski's informants suggest the likely outcome of any revolution not able to obliterate the old regime and build a new Ethiopia. It is no surprise to learn that the chairman of the Derg – Mengistu – now occupies the same place as the old emperor inside the same ritual of court life. Only the personnel and titles have changed.

Kapuscinski's main strength is the way in which his informants' fear of the uprising against the emperor reflects its obverse – the enthusiasm of the population. One dignitary expresses his outrage during the early stages of the revolution when it was impossible for him to walk the streets of Addis without being searched by every beggar who saw him. Kapuscinski's is a remarkable book. From what appears to be an odd angle he gives a stunning impression of a country in revolution.

John Johnson

A triumph of the will

Alan Reeve, *Notes from a waiting-room*, Heretic Books 1983, pp203, pbk £3.50

ALAN REEVE broke out of Broadmoor psychiatric prison in August 1981. A year later, Christmas 1982, he shot his way into the headlines, killing a Dutch policeman in a raid on an Amsterdam off-licence. His autobiography surveys almost 30 years inside Britain's barbarous penal system and his struggle against it. Heretic are to be congratulated for printing what other publishers refused to touch. Reeve's book highlights the limitations of personal experience in formulating a political response to oppression.

Reeve's description of his early life and his career in a variety of borstals is a good account of the emotional annihilation of workers under capitalism and the state's response to those who crack under the strain. Reeve's account of his estrangement from his soldier father and his self-effacing mother shows an acute perception of the tension between suffocating closeness and terror of separation inherent in the form of family life foisted on the working class. Reeve's attempt to resolve this tension in petty defiance of authority graduated into acts of anti-social violence and murder. The state's answer to the violence generated in the social relations it protects is more violence. From his early teens Reeve was treated to an intensifying regime of brutality.

Reeve fought back against the thuggery of the borstal screws and the brutal hierarchy they cultivated among the prisoners to keep order in the prisons. By the time he reached Broadmoor he began to see the need for a broader opposition to the prison system. His own resistance became a focus inspiring other prisoners to resist the barbarity of the 'nurses', and doctors' attempts to restrain prisoners with drugs. Reeve developed agitational work inside the prison designed to disrupt the smooth administration required by the authorities. The Broadmoor Gay Liberation Front and the Revolutionary Action Committee of Broadmoor were able to win concessions from the authorities. Home Secretary William Whitelaw twice refused to release him because of his political activities, even though his applications were backed by prison governors and psychiatrists. But the political strategy evolved by Reeve depended on the heroism of Reeve himself.

Reeve was confined by the narrow perspective of fighting back against his oppression. He admired liberation movements like the Irish liberation struggle because they were a problem for the state. He identified with Maoism, transmitted to him through the gay movement, because of its stress on the heroic individual. But he could not go beyond mere oppositionism to an understanding of the need for a class struggle against the forces behind the prison system. His association with other prisoners was merely an appendage to Reeve, the spanner in the works. The denouement of this strategy in a Dutch psychiatric prison is no surprise.

Alex Simms

Activities



Meetings

- 17 January ■ Why capitalism has reached the end of the road
- 24 January ■ Their state — and ours
- 31 January ■ Seeing through ideology
- 7 February ■ The working class lives!
- 14 February ■ Communism — the realistic alternative

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Introduced by Frank Richards

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Thursday 19 January
The day after...will women be oppressed after the revolution?

Thursday 26 January
Porn and prejudice: the roots of sexism

Thursday 2 February
Women and the new morality

Thursday 9 February
Fighting for real freedom



Victory celebrations outside Southwark Crown Court: the magistrate dismissed all charges against the Sari Squad, arrested in a protest for Afia Begum outside Home Secretary Leon Brittan's house in August

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In 1983 Workers Against Racism led the fight against immigration controls. We won massive support for our campaign to stop the deportation of Afia Begum and defended many other blacks facing deportation and harassment from the British state. We organised physical defence for black families under attack by racists and fascists, and went on the offensive against police brutality. Workers Against

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In 1984 we intend to go much further, but we need your support. We have branches in London, Coventry, Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford and Glasgow. If you want to find out more,

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Yorkshire Irish Freedom Movement

Sheffield 10.30am 28 January

Supported by Joan Maynard MP

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What's in it for Britain?
From civil rights to anti-imperialist war
Britain's machine of terror
What about the Protestants?

Afternoon

Sex, drugs and religion in Ireland
Whatever happened to the Irish working class?
From Wolfe Tone to Gerry Adams
Building the Irish Freedom Movement

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Transport to the conference leaves on
Saturday 28 January from:

MANCHESTER: 8.30 am Manchester
University Students' Union, Oxford
Road

LIVERPOOL: 7.30 am opposite Rock-
ford wine bar, St John's Rd, Liverpool 1

LEEDS: 8.00 am Dortmund Square

BRADFORD: 9.00 am Norfolk
Gardens

BIRMINGHAM: 8.00 am Colemoor
Row

COVENTRY: 8.00 am Harry Shaw's
Cafe, Podmeadow

GLASGOW, CARDIFF, TEESSIDE,
BARNSELY: see *the next step* sellers
for details

LONDON: Transport leaves on Friday
27 January, 6.30 pm York way, Kings
Cross

Meetings

Yorkshire Irish Freedom Movement
No more Bloody Sundays!

SHEFFIELD

Wednesday 18 January 7.30 pm
Vestry Hall
Cemetery Road

ROTHERHAM

Monday 23 January 7.30 pm
Angel Hotel
Bridgegates

BARNSELY

Wednesday 25 January 7.30 pm
Victoria Hotel
Sheffield Road

DONCASTER

Thursday 26 January 7.30 pm
see *the next step* sellers for venue

BRADFORD

Wednesday 25 January 7.30 pm
Central Library

