

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No 44 February 1984

20p

Pornography
video nasties
and the Pill
p10

Cuts ↗

Privatisation ↗

Redundancies →

Productivity ↗

DHA lobby →

Closures →

Union protest →

Organisation →

Industrial action ↗

Occupation →

**Which way
against the cuts?**

the next step

No. 44 February 1984
monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

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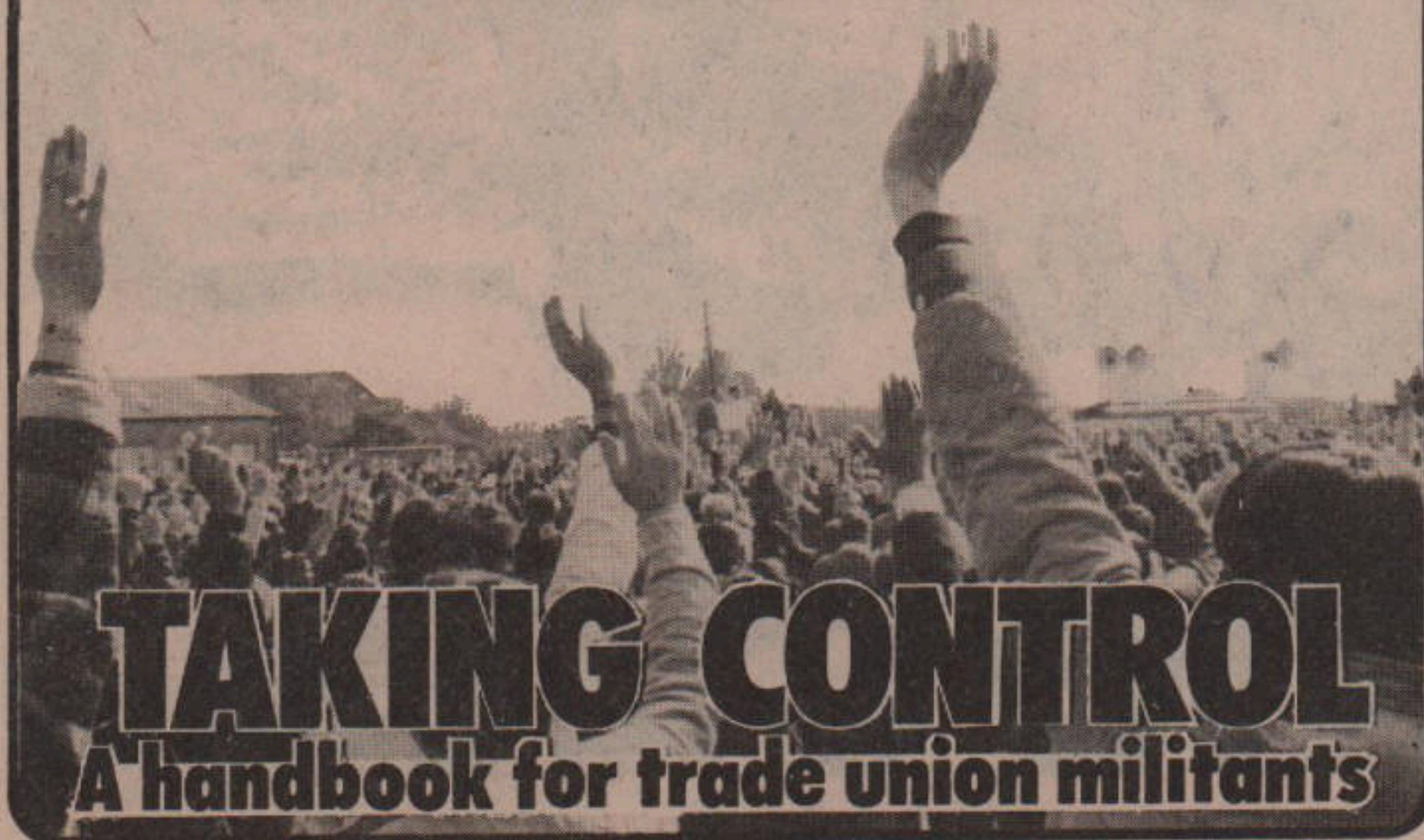
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TAKING CONTROL outlines a strategy for reclaiming our unions and rebuilding them as effective fighting organisations

OUT SOON FROM JUNIUS



TAKING CONTROL
A handbook for trade union militants

Noth

Violence erupted between French and immigrant workers at Peugeot-Citroen's Talbot car factory in Poissy, near Paris, in early January. The company's plans to get rid of 2000 unskilled, mainly immigrant workers provoked a strike and occupation before Christmas. In early January a commando squad of company scabs and fascists attacked immigrant workers occupying the factory. Riot police finished the job.

Peugeot's redundancy plans won full backing from Francois Mitterand's socialist/communist coalition government. The main trade unions — the Communist Party sponsored CGT and the Socialist Party sponsored CFDT — have generally collaborated closely with the Government. At Poissy, however, while the CGT went along with the redundancies, the CFDT tried to outflank its rival by siding with immigrant workers. Peugeot's company union, the CSL, led the racist scabs.

Immigrant workers from the factory told their story to Gareth Evans, as we report below. Opposite we look at the implications of Poissy for the British labour movement. On page four, we look at the background to the strike and examine how racism has become such a potent force in France today.

MOHAMMED pointed to a white worker of about sixty with hunched shoulders. 'That's my foreman. When I got into work yesterday I went up to say good morning as usual. He pulled a handful of bolts out of his pocket and began pelting me! He had his orders from the CSL, the company union'.

Half the black workers at Talbot came to France from Morocco in the sixties to do the dirtiest, worst paid jobs. The industrial bosses sent their recruiting sergeants to Africa to select the best workers.

'They chose men like you would choose donkeys. They herded us into a hall for tests. First the hands, to make sure they were calloused from hard work. Then we had to show how strong we were. They made you strip and inspected you all over. They made you build things with bits of metal and bolts.

'A few weeks later, more tests in Casablanca. They gave me a one-way ticket. After two and a half days I reached Poissy. I was taken to the dormitories where we all lived — tiny rooms with flimsy partition walls.

'The pay was terrible. Barely 40 francs a month more than I was getting in the phosphate mines. I wanted to leave right away. But I couldn't afford a ticket.'

At the time Poissy was little more than a village. The car plant has been owned by Ford, Fiat, Simca and Chrysler. Peugeot took over in 1978 and began manufacturing under the Talbot name.

'When you started work you were given your CSL card. That was the Talbot passport. Everyone had to join. Not only join, you had to vote for it. If you married and needed new accommodation, you had to show your CSL card — and buy bottles of Pernod for your CSL steward.

'Even the Moroccan social organisation was controlled by the CSL! The communist CGT union began to recruit secretly in the plant in 1979. If the CSL suspected a worker of being involved it would hide car parts in his bag and he would be arrested for theft at the gate and sacked. This went on until June 1982 when everything exploded.'

Lahcen explained what happened.

'One day a sacked Moroccan worker was selling mint tea in the parking lot. CSL thugs moved in and beat him up. The CGT militants, about a hundred of them, responded by going on to the floor of the factory with a banner. The CSL attacked them with clubs, fire extinguishers and hoses squirting a mixture of hot water and white spirit. Black workers went to the defence of the CGT. The CGT then called a strike which lasted a month. As a result it won recognition.'

So white and black workers united against the CSL?

'In a way. We wanted to break the CSL and some of the white workers did too. But

the white cégétistes were as racist towards us as ever. We just seized our chance — the first we'd had in 20 years.

'The majority of the CGT in the factory and all the leaders are white, though there are some black delegates. They have a lot to lose. We get 3500 francs or so a month (£300) — even the white shopfloor members get double that.

'And don't imagine that all the immigrants are united. There are still a lot of Arabs in the CSL. The man in the photograph holding a pistol which was in all the papers — he was one of them.'

How had the present strike begun? Ali took up the story.

'The company wanted to get rid of 2900 shopfloor workers. Nearly all were immigrants. Some black workers occupied the factory on 7 December and the socialist CFDT union called a strike.

'The CGT was never really against the redundancies. On 26 December they allowed cars out of the plant and we attacked them physically. Two days later they marched in Paris calling for negotiations while we were in the factory waiting for the riot police to arrive. On the day the riot police were sent in, the CGT attacked the CFDT for refusing entry to maintenance workers. The CFDT kept calling for no redundancies. It's hardly surprising black workers went over from the CGT to their side.'

So the CFDT is a better union?

'I didn't say that. The CGT got in first at Poissy. The CFDT had to run to catch up. They both manipulate us. The CFDT wanted a strike so it could win support from CGT. They both want to dirty the image people have of us.'

What happened on 5 January?

'There had been fighting in the plant the day before. Management staff had used tear gas to try to stop us getting into the paint shop. We drove them off and smashed our way past the CGT officials.

'The next morning we found all the white workers tooling up and waiting for us. There were scabs there who came from car plants all over Paris. Even from Rennes, more than 300 kilometres away. We barricaded ourselves in workshop B3, the assembly plant. The company refused to bring in coaches to evacuate us. In the end the CFDT called in the riot police.'

And the day after?

'The mayor of Poissy closed the town down for the afternoon and the CSL, the shopkeepers and the fascists demonstrated. 3000 of them. The unions kept well away. The CGT marched in the centre of Paris. We didn't go.'

During the strike the unions demanded money for sacked workers to go back to Africa. Did black workers really call for repatriation?

ing to lose



Bosses' gunman: the British media portrayed this armed CSL scab as a striker

'For me there is no going back. I have been here the best part of 20 years. But yes, there are a few who would go back if they were given 200 000 francs. If you are black and you lose your job you will never get another one. But there are more than four million foreign workers in France. They can't all go back. The unions and the politicians are playing on people's despair.'

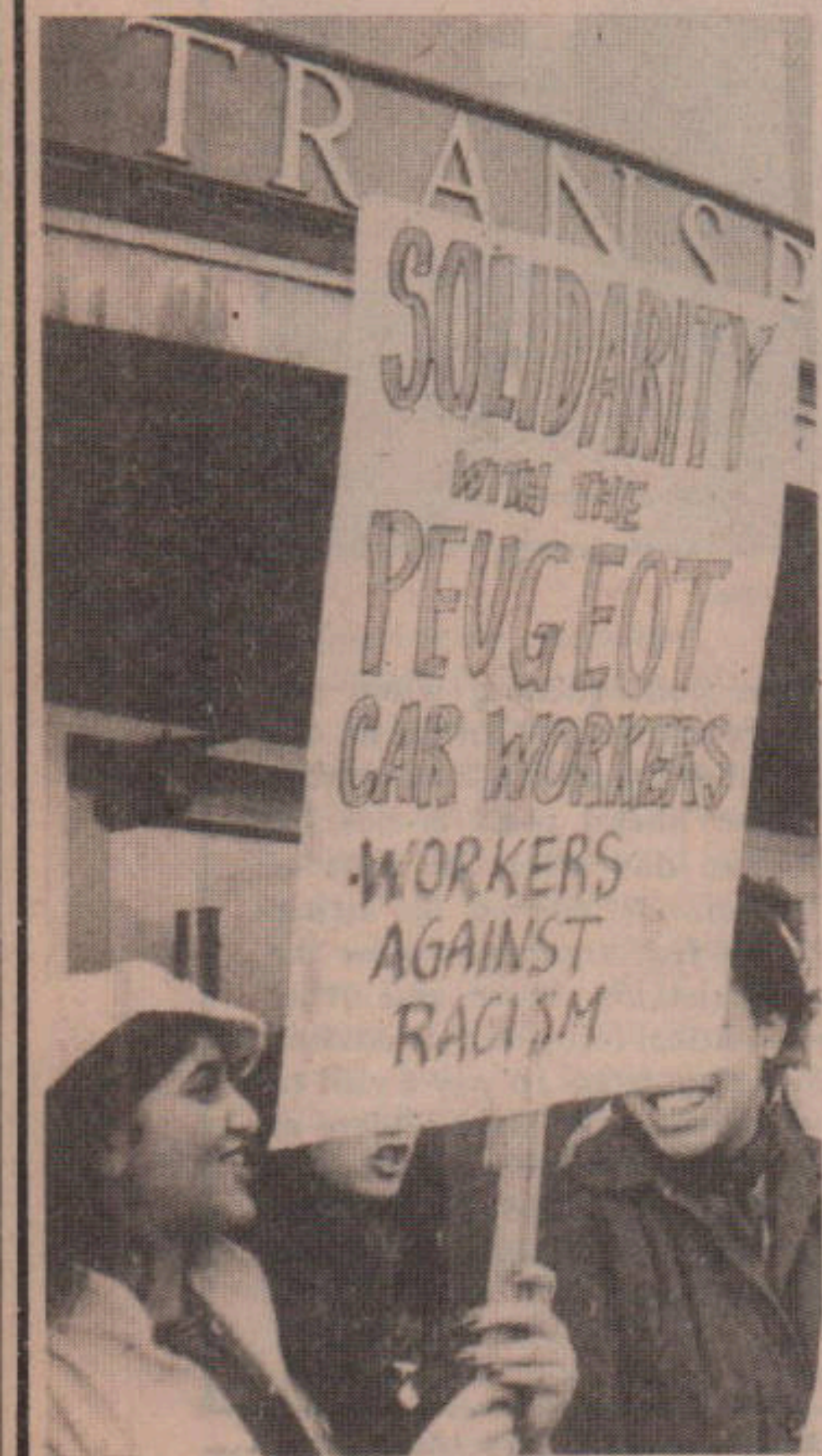
What will happen now?

'They will start taking people back a few

at a time. The CFDT won't fight any more.

'We are only workers. We know nothing about politics. People call us delinquents, wreckers and worse. We just want to be respected as workers. This town was nothing when we came here. It has been built on our backs. But now the Government, the unions, the ordinary people, the fascists — they just want to spit us out. What can we do except fight?'

Building solidarity



At Peugeot's Talbot plant in Ryton, Coventry Workers Against Racism mobilised opposition to the bosses and support for the Poissy strikers. Ryton workers condemned their union's offer to scab on French fellow workers. 'They love to go on about the French, or whoever, taking our jobs. But they never lift a finger to fight redundancies here'. We made our protests outside the TGWU headquarters in Coventry.

WAR has been touring the car plants, organising meetings with eye-witness speakers, and building support for the Poissy workers. Many labour movement bodies have already passed our solidarity motion. Join us — raise it in your trade union:

This branch/organisation

- condemns the attacks on immigrant workers at the Peugeot-Citroen car plant at Poissy

- declares its solidarity with the Poissy strikers

- deplores the offer by a TGWU official at Peugeot's Talbot plant at Ryton, Coventry, to take on the work of the Poissy plant

- urges the TGWU leadership to instruct its members not to handle Poissy work

- resolves to invite a speaker from Workers Against Racism for an eye-witness account of recent events at Poissy.

Warning signals

The strike at Poissy is a warning to the British labour movement of the way racial divisions undermine workers' struggles. Pat Fox, the TGWU convenor at Peugeot's Talbot plant at Ryton, near Coventry, said he was 'very glad that those type of scenes are not repeated in the United Kingdom'. But Fox's response to the Poissy strike confirmed that national and racial divisions are a potent force in the British labour movement.

Only 24 hours after the Poissy strikers had been smashed by company scabs, Pat Fox complained that the strike was threatening British workers' jobs.

The Talbot car assembly plant at Ryton is a subsidiary of Peugeot-Citroen. The factory is dependent upon the Poissy works for 90 per cent of its body pressings. These vital supplies were cut off during the strike, and 1400 workers from Ryton's 3000 strong workforce faced lay-offs. Fox denounced the Poissy strikers and offered to take on the work from France:

'We know we could accommodate it and we would be quite prepared to do so.'

Rather than offer to help the Poissy strikers by arguing for strike action or blacking at Talbot, Fox offered to help Peugeot-Citroen smash the strike.

The Peugeot workers in France were not the only victims of Fox's chauvinist scabbing. He was also prepared to sell out the 3000 workers at Ryton. Peugeot-Citroen wants to get rid of 7500 jobs in France. But it might settle for less if it could sell Talbot's Spanish and British operations. British Talbot's future depends on its Ryton factory assembling the new Peugeot 205 model. Rather than try to unite workers to fight the employers' threat to jobs, Fox and the TGWU want an alliance with the bosses:

'We are calling on the company to restore the faith of the people in Ryton with new investment and a new model.'

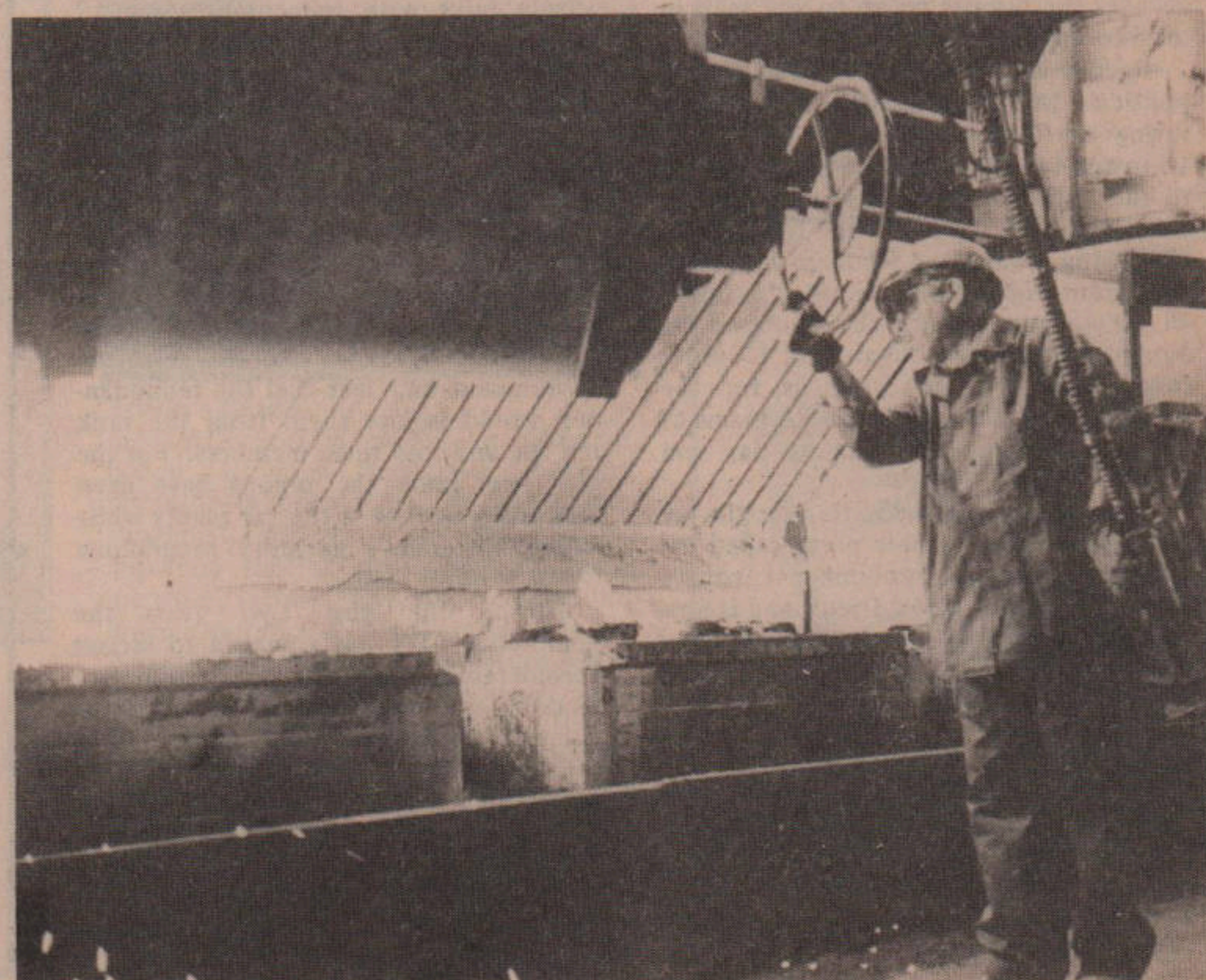
This strategy — of uniting with the bosses to demand new investment — has proved fatal

for thousands of car workers in the last 10 years. A recent TUC study concluded that past attempts at collaboration between the unions and the state to protect the motor industry 'have not worked well in practice'. In fact, the Ryder plan for British Leyland, and the planning agreement between Talbot's forerunner, Chrysler, and the last Labour government, worked disastrously. Ryton workers need no reminding that the Chrysler deal led to an 80 per cent job loss at Talbot. The BL workforce has been more than halved.

But the union bureaucrats have learned nothing from the last 10 years. The TUC report ends by calling for import controls and an immediate recovery programme for the industry. Uniting with the bosses to safeguard the future of the industry can only mean workers paying the price, in redundancies and rationalisations, for restoring profitability.

Trade union demands for import controls seek to unite workers and bosses against foreign cars. The call for import controls ties workers to their own bosses and divides car workers of different countries from one another. British union officials like Pat Fox urge their members to save their jobs at the expense of foreign workers. Taken one step further, this nationalist outlook labels all foreigners as a threat to the jobs of British workers. The British car industry provides a good example of how nationalism is translated into racism on the shopfloor. The unions' failure to challenge the ghettoisation of blacks in the worst, lowest paid jobs has fostered divisions between black and white workers and undermined the potential for unity in the fight for jobs.

Poissy highlighted the dangers of racial divisions in the working class. To avoid a repeat performance in Britain means challenging the chauvinist outlook of our union leaders. It means defending all workers, black and white — not at the expense of foreign workers, but at the expense of the bosses.



Heat and dust: black workers occupy the dirtiest, worst paid jobs in the foundries

The left crumbles



Fighting immigrants instead of bosses: French car workers at Poissy

THE MITTERAND government began its life committed to the rationalisation of French capitalism and increased state intervention in welfare provision. After his May 1981 victory Mitterand paid off some of his debts to his working class supporters. He shortened the working week, extended holidays to five weeks and raised the minimum wage. Today, the Socialist government is still committed to restoring French capitalism, but it has abandoned even the pretence of implementing social reforms. Mitterand and his colleagues know that restructuring and reforms do not go together. On the contrary, the Government's economic realism dictates a harsh programme of wage cuts, redundancies and tax increases.

The right on top

The Government's harsh austerity measures have demoralised large sections of its working class base. For the last six months unemployment has been rising by 30 000 a month and is accelerating fast. The Government has accepted the employers' rationalisation programme. Industry minister Laurent Fabius has given his backing to a restructuring plan which will cost over 200 000 jobs over the next year. The steel industry will lose 35 000, coal 20 000, shipyards 12 000, Peugeot 11 000, Renault 8000, and construction 100 000.

The unpopularity of the Government's rationalisation measures has enabled the right-wing political parties to go on to the offensive. The right has cleverly manipulated the fear and frustration born of economic insecurity in its campaign of law and order and extreme nationalism. The Mitterand regime has not had the courage to fight the right's strident anti-immigrant campaign. The Government simply protested that the left were the real patriots and ignored the right's racist offensive. With every retreat by the left, the far right took a step forward and became bolder. For the first time in decades the fascists began to win seats in local council elections.

Racism is now at the centre of French politics. In the municipal elections last spring the Communist Party (PCF) lost 15 towns and the Socialist Party (PSF) 16 to the right. In most cases, racism was the dominant issue. In towns like Tourcoing, Poissy and Roubaix with large immigrant populations, 'security' eclipsed all other issues. Since the elections the administrations of Roubaix and 17 other towns have set up 'councils for the prevention of delinquency' with teams of citizen vigilantes patrolling by day and CRS riot police by night.

Since the spring the extreme right has organised around a new party called the National Front. In September it won 16 per cent of the vote in Dreux and is now in charge of public security (see *the next step*, no 40). In council by-elections since, the Communist/Socialist coalition has lost control in four more towns of more than 30 000 people, with the National Front continuing to make significant gains. At Aulnay-sous-Bois, a town on the outskirts of Paris with a large Citroen plant and a large black population, the Communist Party lost control after 18 years.

The Government recognises that the growth of racism can only strengthen its political opponents. Yet it is powerless to combat it. Indeed its own rigorous defence of French imperialism paves the way for more extreme forms of nationalism. The Government's policy has always been to make concessions to racist pressures. But the right-wing offensive is not directed simply against the Government. Above all, it is aimed at the French working class. Racism not only distracts attention from the real problems facing the working class. It fragments the working class. The events at Poissy highlighted the way that racism influences the relationship between wage-labour and capital, to the bosses' advantage.

In recent years Peugeot-Citroen has proved remarkably successful in disciplining its workforce. In the last four years the company has managed to push through 65 000 redundancies in its European plants, 9000 of them at Poissy. Peugeot has launched a new restructuring programme to reduce the workforce at Poissy and its other plants by half.

Resistance to the employers' offensive in the car plants of the Paris basin has been militant. During the last two years pitched battles have been fought between strikers, scabs and riot police at Renault - Flins and Citroen - Aulnay. Unskilled, immigrant workers have led the fightback. They are the main threat to the successful implementation of the present round of redundancies in the car industry.

The Peugeot saga

The Government has come to see the current Peugeot redundancy package as the central test of its ability to carry through its restructuring programme. This is ironic in view of the left's traditional antipathy for this secretive, family-controlled firm which has fought to keep unions out of its plants. Nevertheless, communist employment minister Jack Ralite emerged triumphant from private talks with the company on 17 December. He had reduced by 1000 the original redundancy figure of 2900 and announced an 'exemplary agreement' which included schemes for retraining and redeployment - 'redundancy with a human face'. The Government's restructuring plans created major problems for the CGT and CFDT, the left-wing union confederations sponsored by the Communist and Socialist Parties. The unions were torn between support for the Government and fear that the redundancies would isolate them from the rank and file and lose them members. For the past two years the unions have been supporting strikes in the car plants while selling Mitterand's austerity programme to the working class.

During the past two years the communist CGT has managed to recruit considerable numbers of immigrant workers at the expense of the CSL, the company sponsored scab union. When the strike broke out at Poissy the CGT represented 42 per cent of the workforce. Confident that it could deliver up its members, the CGT accepted the need for redundancies. The CGT emerged as the strongest supporter of the Government negotiated package to end the strike. It

restricted its opposition to complaints that it had been excluded from the negotiations. Throughout the strike the Stalinist dominated union fought for a return to work and blamed outside agitators for the unrest.

The socialist CFDT was in a different position. It has also been closely associated with the Government's policies. But it has managed to maintain more organisational distance from the Socialist Party than has the CGT from the Communist Party. At Poissy it received only eight per cent of the vote at the last elections and has been losing ground to the right-wing union federation Force Ouvriere. Local CFDT officials therefore seized on the December strike as an opportunity to make gains at the CGT's expense. This brought the CFDT into sharp conflict with its own supporters in the Government. One union official said of fellow socialist Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy, 'when he says shit is jam everyone gets excited and says yes, it's jam' (*Liberation*, 7 January).

The CFDT's call for no redundancies was mere posturing. Rather than mobilise support for immigrant workers threatened with organised violence, the CFDT retreated. After riot police invaded the plant on 30 December the CFDT asked Peugeot to lay off the 1905 workers while negotiations took place. After violent clashes in early January local CFDT official Jean Pierre Noual stated that the lay-offs should continue 'for three months while terms for

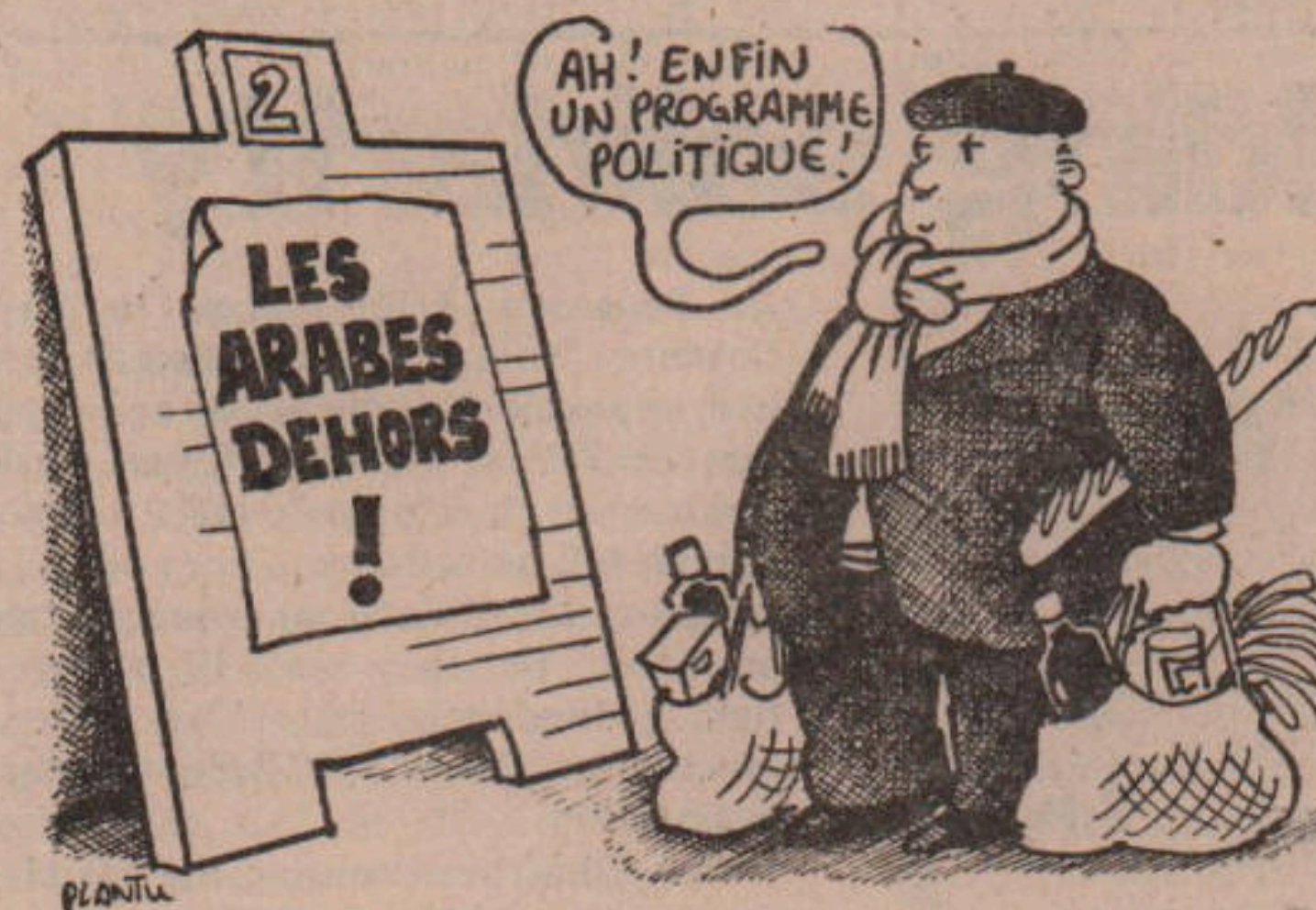
voluntary repatriation are discussed, and other measures for the social treatment of the surplus workers are taken' (*Le Monde*, 6 January). The CFDT distinguished itself by demanding more generous repatriation payments than those offered by the Government. In effect, the Peugeot bosses were given the green light to carry on with their redundancy programme.

A bitter blow

The immigrant workforce at Poissy fought alone. The union leaders ensured that immigrant workers remained isolated, and thereby inflicted a terrible blow against all workers in the car industry. Ten days after the fighting had subsided, Prime Minister Mauroy was in Senegal, offering to assist Senegalese workers at Poissy to return 'home if they wished'. The solution of 'socialist repatriation' worked out at Poissy provides a precedent for dealing with millions of other immigrant workers in the future. It divides the working class and strengthens the hand of the employers. 'Socialist repatriation' endows the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the right with legitimacy. What is at issue is not only the plight of millions of immigrant workers, but the future of the French working class. Immigrant workers have shown that they hold the key to the defence of the whole of the French working class. Never before has it been so urgent for class conscious French workers to break with their old organisations and join with immigrant workers in the fight for survival.

Gareth Evans

Socialist repatriation



'Arabs out!' 'A political programme at last!' (*Le Monde*)

'Send them back' has become the rallying cry of French bosses, desperate to solve the problems of French industry. All shades of political opinion have come out in favour of repatriation for immigrant workers. Myriad reports and stories have been published stressing the inability of the immigrant worker to 'adapt' to new circumstances. Since Africans cannot be 'retrained', the argument goes, it is only humane to send them back to their own environment. The right-wing paper *Le Figaro* put it more bluntly. It noted that the demand for voluntary repatriation 'could have

considerable consequences when the inevitable redundancies arrive in the shipyards, steel and coal' (28 December 1983). The liberal press is not far behind. The day after the riots at Poissy, *Le Monde* carried an article calling on the Government to close the doors to Pakistanis, Turks and other 'so called political refugees'. It advised government ministers to pay a visit to the Paris metro to see the problem at first hand. The left has feebly protested at the cruder racist proposals whilst preparing a more acceptable repatriation package.

Kinnock's first hundred days

Neil Kinnock took over the leadership of the Labour Party last October. After the party's biggest electoral catastrophe in modern history, Kinnock could only go forward. As the Tories have squabbled and the Alliance has faded, Labour's ratings have slowly improved. But what has Kinnock himself done to reshape the party's future? As John Dowling reports, it still looks very much like the Labour Party of the past.

Forward march with the upwardly mobile

On the eve of his election Kinnock joined Eurocommunist historian Professor Eric Hobsbawm on a fringe meeting platform. Kinnock endorsed the Professor's fashionable theory that a home-owning, video-watching, high-spending proletariat had deserted the party of horny-handed sons of toil like Foot and Benn, Hattersley and Healey. The only way forward lay, if not through an immediate alliance with the Alliance, then at least through a direct appeal to the narrow self interest of the middle classes. Kinnock's advisers have since guided him towards a policy of council house sales and a breezy image calculated to appeal to the 'upwardly mobile' petit-bourgeois. The mass of the working class meanwhile continues its downward movement under the burden of mass unemployment.

Farewell Bruce and Joan

On his first day as leader Kinnock's policy of 'talking left, while walking right' landed him in the sea on Brighton beach. Aply rescued by the dutiful Glenys, Kinnock's footwork soon grew more adept. Later that day he proclaimed his quarter century in CND as a suitable qualification for urging Labour's national executive to abandon its vote losing commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament. Under Kinnock the Labour Party has swung away from the unilateralism of CND towards a policy that ensures Britain's capacity to devastate its enemies. Kinnock dislikes Cruise and Trident, but wants to hang on to Polaris as a nuclear weapon with which to intimidate the Russians.



Hospital unity campaign

Kinnock's first speech pledged to unite the Labour Party, and the nation, in a patriotic campaign to save the National Health Service. Six weeks later the Labour Party acquired a second hand ambulance in which to tour the hospitals. With Kinnock at the wheel outside the Walworth Road HQ, Labour's NHS campaign began. On its first trip to the North East it broke down at Rugby. (Kinnock was later photographed on a milk float, but that was in a campaign against foreign French UHT milk). The NHS campaign does provide a focus for party activists but has little appeal among NHS workers who remember the cuts and closures of the last Labour government.



The same old song: Neil and Glenys Kinnock

Machine Politics

The first decisive act of Kinnock's new team was to rescue him from Brian Walden's probing style of political interrogation on *Weekend World* and fix him up instead on the trivial late night Channel Four chat show *Loose Talk*. Kinnock didn't fit in much better with Tracey Ullman and Pete Townshend but at least nobody asked him about Labour Party policy. To cope with any future embarrassment of this sort Kinnock has recruited a personal palace guard composed largely of yesterday's student politicians. Meanwhile real power in matters of policy stayed with the Shadow Cabinet, composed largely of yesterday's Labour politicians. Still desperate for parliamentary influence, the union leaders backed the formation of a new committee designed to run election campaigns. But Labour's cumbersome committees still look like a structure built for safety rather than for speed.



Tariq out — and Tony too?

Kinnock has remained consistent in his commitment to make the Labour Party acceptable to the gutter press. He backed the expulsion of Militant's leaders as demanded by Fleet Street and personally insisted on kicking out the harmless Tariq Ali. When Eric Varley deserted Chesterfield for big business, Kinnock let it be known that he was none too keen to see

Tony Benn back at Westminster. The Kinnock machine lobbied first for Joan Lester, then for a local candidate, then for Phillip Whitehead, but will now have to live with the lost leader of the hard left. However Benn's diplomatic silence through the NGA print workers dispute and other important issues show that he will serve Kinnock's project of putting the interests of the Labour Party before the interests of the working class. Meanwhile Kinnock has promoted John Golding (removed from Labour's national executive by his own union, the POEU, for his witch-hunting activities), to the Parliamentary front bench.



Britain's Reagan

In a little noticed speech on economic policy Kinnock acclaimed Reagan's retreat from monetarism. He propounded Reagan's policies of relinquishing monetary targets, cutting interest rates, increasing public spending and holding down taxation. Kinnock declared that a Labour government of the future would mobilise capital 'as it has never been mobilised in peacetime Britain'. He did not point out that Reagan's economic expansion is based on rearmament and war preparation. But we welcome Kinnock's perception that a war would provide the ideal conditions for introducing Labour's alternative economic strategy.

New statesman

Now that Labour has realised that there is no future for British capitalism outside the EEC and abandoned its withdrawal policy, Kinnock has become a European. He went to Brussels to attend the Socialist International, where he swapped traditional British anti-European chauvinism for traditional European anti-Americanism. Then he went to Paris, where he tried to rescue kidnapped lorry drivers, and to Athens, where he promised to return stolen marbles. And now he's off to the USA to meet the butt of Eurochauvinism Ronald Reagan. With the Euroelections coming up in June Kinnock is enthusiastic to promote Labour as a continental party.

Question time

Kinnock's long-winded questions in the House of Commons have become a bit of an embarrassment to his parliamentary colleagues. His garrulous attempts to assert authority at the despatch box have been savagely treated by the Prime Minister and have even been curtailed by a bored Speaker. When big issues intrude Labour's big guns leave poor Kinnock silent. On Grenada and Lebanon Healey did the talking while on home affairs Hattersley is the heavyweight. On the national stage Kinnock has established a firm reputation as what the *Daily Telegraph* summed up as 'an irredeemable lightweight'.

Cruising

Although no longer a unilateralist, Kinnock was there on the CND platform on 22 October at the close of the massive national demonstration. Yet he won more applause at the beginning of his speech than at the end. People wanted a lead from the Labour leader, but hearing nothing but the old platitudes their enthusiasm waned. Kinnock launched 1984 with a pledge to campaign against Cruise. But a party that is putting most of its policy emphasis into the search for alternative (non-nuclear) methods of fighting wars carries little appeal for people who really want to stop war.

No support for strikers

When the NGA printers fought running picket line battles in November outside the Warrington firm that has victimised union members and tried to use the courts and the police to crush the union, they did so without the backing of the Labour leader. When the law blocked the defence of jobs and conditions, the Labour leadership upheld the rule of law. While the Tories drove a coach and horses through a century of union rights, Kinnock sat silent. Kinnock wants to restore Labour's appeal to middle of the road middle class people who are hostile to trade unionists who fight to defend their rights. Kinnock wants to rebuild



the Labour Party as Harold Wilson's natural party of government. And that always was useless to the working class.

Policing the inner cities

'I freely admit that I hate, loathe and despise niggers. I can't stand them. I don't let it affect my job though'. This is what one police officer told researchers from the Policy Studies Institute which published its four volume report, *Police and people in London*, towards the end of last year. The report revealed the extent of racist and anti working class prejudice in the police force. Yet its findings solicited only praise and a few mild remonstrances from the establishment and the media. Joan Phillips explains why.

METROPOLITAN police commander Sir Kenneth Newman's response to the report — commissioned by his predecessor Sir David McNee in 1979 — was cool but unembarrassed. Despite its graphic exposure of police bigotry and corruption, Newman insisted that the survey did not reflect a 'crisis of confidence in the police'. Newman observed that only one group demonstrated extreme antipathy to the police — black youth. Scotland Yard's low key response stands in marked contrast to the defensive outbursts that characterised the police response to less damning criticisms two years ago. The difference between then and now is that two summers have passed without riots. The establishment is confident that the forces of law and order have got the upper hand in Britain's inner-city ghettos.

'Fissile material'

The authorities may be more sanguine about their ability to contain social unrest. But their leading spokesmen prefer to err on the side of caution. As *The Times* reflected, 'plenty of fissile material remains on the inner-city streets'. The PSI report underlines the continuing threat to social stability from volatile black youth. The report is well worth reading for it confirms that the race issue lies at the heart of policing strategy today. In many ways, the report is an establishment success story. It shows that half the battle has been won through the creation of a consensus in favour of law and order. But the PSI report also reveals that:

- relations between young West Indians and the police are 'disastrous'

Senior police chiefs have made much of new 'multicultural' courses and 'human awareness' training at the police training school at Bramshill. The results, documented by the Policy Studies Institute, are illuminating:

ABC of policing

'You must brief your constables: they must not say "Look at those monkeys!" even if they may think they look like that jumping up and down. We don't want to spoil everything with stupid remarks'

Police — community dialogue

'Fight racism — smash a nigger in the gob today'
Q: 'What's a racist? A: Someone who hates niggers more than is necessary'
'How many of these niggers actually fried in this barbecue at Deptford then?'

Criteria for a stop

'Well, the one that you stop is often wearing a woolly hat, he is dark in complexion, he has thick lips and he usually has dark, fuzzy hair'

- a majority of black youth accuse the police of using threatening and unreasonable pressure in questioning, excessive force on arrest, and unjustifiable violence on people in custody

- the police habitually exceed their powers of stop and search, particularly with young blacks.

Police and media alike brushed aside allegations of police racism, sexism, corruption and drunkenness. They argued that the report was not just a 'reasoned call for change', but 'part of a process of change already under way'.

The reason for this display of ruling class confidence is the success of its post-riot prescription for ensuring social peace. In the aftermath of the riots the ruling class pursued a two-pronged strategy to deal with any further outbreaks of disorder. First, the police were toolled up with plastic bullets, CS gas, riot gear, water cannon and Instant Response Units. This response was legitimised by sustained anti-mugging hysteria which labelled rebellious black youth as criminals. Second, the state promoted an elaborate machinery of consultation and liaison to incorporate a layer of black representatives and isolate the 'troublemakers'. Today, this strategy is steadily reaching its apotheosis in Kenneth Newman's 'multi-agency' approach to policing the capital.

A former head of the Met's Community

Relations Branch and the national Police Staff College at Bramshill, Newman is acclaimed as the thinking man's policeman. In a television interview about the PSI report Newman declared that racism in the police force would not be tolerated. Newman recognises that he is dealing with a long-term problem in the black ghettos, that blacks are here to stay and that the situation must be contained at a respectable level of violence. Newman appreciates that integrating a sizeable section of the black community into society is no longer a viable option for decaying British capitalism. Hence, he has set out to marginalise and isolate black youth by cohering a broad law and order consensus.

Social control

In Autumn 1981, the Senior Command course at Bramshill adopted a new programme, 'Policing Inner Cities' (PIC). Senior officers were sent to 'ethnic flash-points' in Hackney, Manchester and other urban centres. The aim was to co-opt all agencies involved in social control to the side of law and order. This approach had long been advocated by champions of community policing. At a Ditchley Foundation conference in 1977 former Chief Constable for Devon and Cornwall John Alderson summarised Newman's approach:

'Whereas preventive policing tends to put the system on the defensive, pro-active policing sets out to penetrate the community in a multitude of ways. It seeks to reinforce social discipline and mutual trust...it strives to activate all possible resources in support of the common good.'

Newman acknowledges that the police are not really concerned with preventing crime, but with maintaining social peace:

'It would be better if we stopped talking about crime prevention and lifted the whole thing to a higher level of generality represented by the words "social control".'

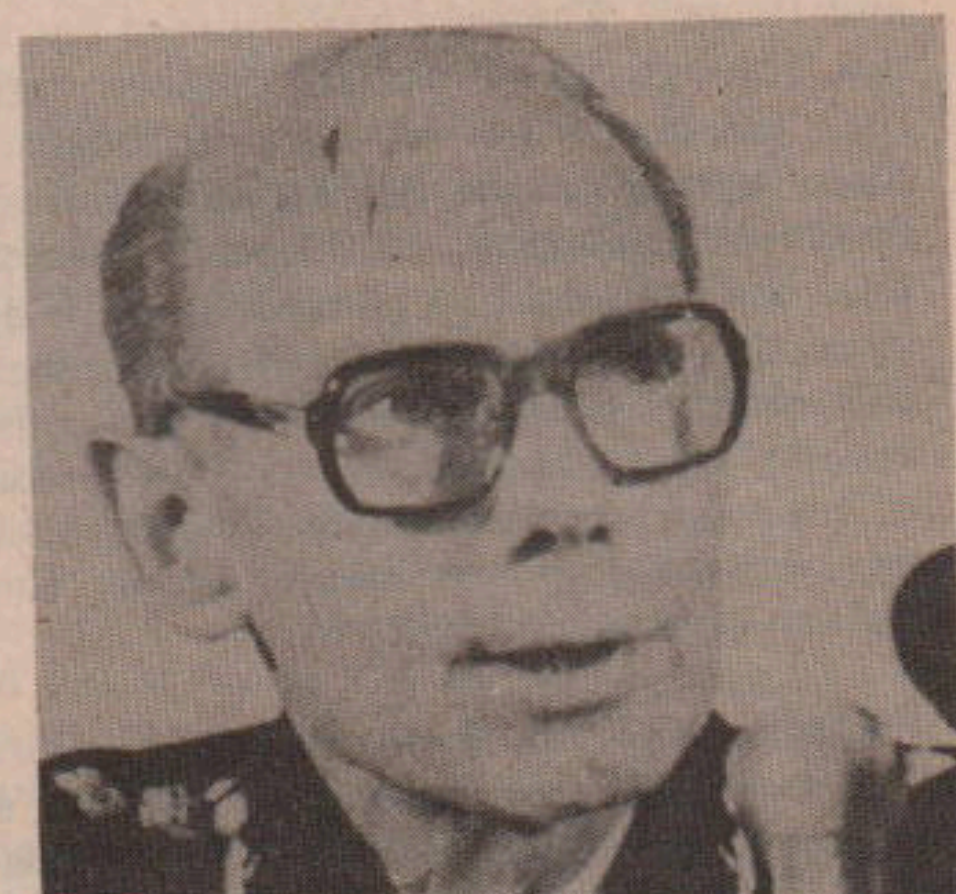
In line with this approach, an inter-departmental working group was set up in Whitehall early in 1983. It included senior officers from the Department of the Environment, the DHSS, and the Department of Employment, chaired by the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Home Office Sir Brian Cubbon. Its aim was to harness the work of the different departments towards a 'multi-agency approach' to combatting crime. The new approach focused primarily on the police and local government. Council departments were to be tapped as 'rich sources of information'.

At the same time, Newman was pioneering his corporate style of police management. This has three essential components: the use of police/community consultative committees 'as a vehicle for directing the overall strategy', the cooperation of police, public and local agencies in 'jointly tackling high crime locations' (ie black ghettos), and the

systematic use of surveillance, targeting and intelligence gathering. In summer 1983 Newman got together with prominent police strategists, sociologist Ian Becket and resource managerial expert Jim Hart from Scotland Yard, to formulate a new scheme which unites all these elements.

Accountable to the police

Under the slogan 'Let's beat crime together', Neighbourhood Watch was introduced across London in September 1983. Neighbourhood Watch has been the cornerstone of the Detroit police crime prevention crusade in the black ghettos since 1976 and now involves more than 4000 block clubs. Essentially, the aim of the scheme is to involve the public in the prevention and detection of crime. Residents act as the 'eyes and ears' of the police under the coordination of a local 'block leader'.



Police commander Newman

Neighbourhood Watch is at the centre of Newman's attempts to establish a new social contract between the police and the people. The public, he has argued, has an obligation to help the police in preventing crime. Workers in local government and other agencies have an additional responsibility 'over and above their responsibility as citizens'. This spy network has already been established in many areas in London, often without a formal Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Youth workers in Hillingdon are under instructions to cooperate with the police. Any information about crime must be passed to the police. Job descriptions for youth workers have included the obligation to report back on young people's activities, and to liaise with the police.

In many inner-city areas contacts between the police and local authorities are traditional and extensive, particularly in housing departments. Names and addresses of tenants are regularly given to the police, and left-wing Labour councils such as Hackney frequently allow the police to use council property for surveillance purposes. Newman has also been assisted in his crime crusade by Labour councils like Southwark and Camden which have given full backing to police liaison and alternative crime watch schemes.

The Labour left's acceptance of the need for effective policing has made it easier for the police to win approval for their schemes to criminalise and isolate black youth. The left drew the conclusion from the PSI report that police accountability is an urgent necessity if the police are to salvage their reputation. Our conclusion is that building a working class movement to combat police repression and the state's law and order offensive must be a priority in 1984.

Policy Studies Institute, *Police and people in London*. Volume 1, A survey of Londoners, David J Smith, £6.50. Volume 2, A group of young black people, Stephen Small, £4.00. Volume 3, A survey of police officers, David J Smith, £5.50. Volume 4, The police in action, David J Smith and Jeremy Gray, £6.50.



Helping police with their enquiries: consultation exercises cover up police terror

Delays and divisions

Workers' livelihoods are at stake in disputes in shipbuilding, mining and the motor industry. But the delaying and divisive tactics of their leaders are a barrier to effective industrial action.

Last month union leaders called off a national shipbuilding strike only hours before it was due to start. The strike was called in December, under pressure from rank and file workers determined to fight British Shipbuilders' moves for a major jobs shakeout, and its derisory £7 pay offer. The union sell-out has left the 60 000 shipyard workers divided and demoralised. Rather than rally workers in opposition to all redundancies as yard closures loom, the unions are leading their members down the slipway to disaster.

The shipbuilding corporation is struggling to keep afloat in the face of merciless worldwide competition and a shipping slump. In August last year BS launched its 'survival plan'. The new nine-point productivity plan is designed to jack up working practices to the efficiency levels of the Scandinavians and the Dutch.

The response of the 14-union Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions to the BS plan was to go along with it in the interests of the industry. As senior union negotiator Jim Murray put it, 'we are the first to recognise that change is necessary'. The only problem was selling the proposals to the workforce.

At mass meetings in the shipyards, workers voted to reject the BS deal and take all-out action. The unions responded by calling ballot after ballot. In a cynical gesture calculated to undermine the workers' militancy, the unions postponed strike action for a month. Most workers saw this for what it was — a delaying device to give the unions time to negotiate a compromise.

When the union negotiators emerged from the Acas offices, workers learnt that the strike was off and the productivity proposals were 'under discussion'. Scott-Lithgow union covenor Ronnie McNeil said 'we will sign any bloody thing' as long as BS guarantees the future of the yard. By backing down the unions had signed away the future of their members. Once described by the



Looking for action: shipbuilding workers on the Lower Clyde are ready to fight to save jobs

Scottish National Party as 'the jewel in the crown of Scottish shipbuilding', the Scott-Lithgow yard is facing closure and 400 redundancies, following cancellation of the £88 million Britoil contract in December.

To fight for jobs and win, a new approach is needed. In the Lower Clyde, RCP supporters went out and argued for it with shipyard workers. We argued that

the most important lesson of the last seven years is that union collaboration with BS management has won us nothing. We got a positive response from many workers who are convinced that there is no alternative but to fight back. Ronnie McLean, plater at Scott-Lithgow, told us:

'BS are saying that if we go on strike it's suicide. But if we don't go on strike it's suicide too.'

'Don't strike now!'



Farewell Ron Todd!: bureaucrats leave to campaign against imports, workers stay to face the bosses

Miners divided

The miners' overtime ban has lasted three months. National Coal Board chairman Ian MacGregor says it could last another 20 years and not harm the economy. Despite their support for the ban, most miners recognise that the damage it is causing the coal board is minimal. But, as the end of year revolt by North Staffordshire pit winders demonstrated, the damage it has inflicted on miners' unity is considerable.

In late October the NUM executive imposed a national ban on overtime in response to the coal board's 5.2 per cent pay offer. National Union of Mine-workers' president Arthur Scargill has contested the NCB's claims that the ban has only cost 3.6 million tonnes in lost production. He puts the losses at 5.5 million tonnes. Few miners believe Scargill's calculations. Yet the ban has scarcely dented Scargill's credibility. Indeed, it has allowed him to bolster his position by sustaining an aura of confrontation with the NCB. In reality, the overtime ban is an excuse for not fighting. An all-out strike would have been a far more effective response to the NCB's pay offer than the NUM's ineffective and ultimately demoralising tactics.

In late December, 40 North Staffordshire pit winders triggered off a split in

the union when they voted to defy the overtime ban from 7 January. When the winders attempted to resume overtime working, most were stopped by pickets. The winders were then suspended from the NUM after they staged a one-day strike against the ban. The pit winders' defiance was prompted by a big loss in earnings. The winders, who control the pit shafts, usually earn up to £120 a week in overtime.

Media attempts to exploit the pit winders' rebellion backfired. Claims that the overtime ban was crumbling were not reflected in support for the pit winders' scabbing. A *Sunday Times* survey revealed overwhelming opposition among miners to the revolt. Whatever reservations they might have about the impact of the overtime ban, most miners were outraged that the winders were prepared to scab.

The Staffordshire rebellion confirmed the union's inability to defend its members. Instead of uniting miners for strike action in defence of jobs and living standards, the overtime ban has led to splits and demoralisation. And while Scargill talks, the pit closures go on. The miners were clear in their response to the winders — but they have yet to deal with the real betrayers in the NUM leadership.

On 18 January at 2 pm the Thames Foundry canteen at Ford's Dagenham plant began to fill up. Workers had come to hear how the unions were going to fight the planned closure of the foundry in April 1985. They were to be disappointed. TGWU chief negotiator Ron Todd did not offer to lead a fight for jobs. Instead, he proposed a campaign to black foreign imports. The problem for Dagenham workers, however, is not foreign imports, but Ford bosses and their union leaders.

Dagenham has lost 7000 jobs since 1979. The foundry workforce has been halved. With every redundancy, the unions have blamed foreign workers, foreign imports and lack of Government investment, for destroying British jobs. Now they are denouncing the Germans for Ford's decision to close the foundry and import engine castings from Cologne.

Todd's call for strike action one month on from the news of the closure was a cynical attempt to demoralise the foundry workers. Anybody who calls a strike a month in advance intends that it should never take place. Todd's delaying strategy is a recipe for disaster. His call for import controls links British workers with Ford UK bosses against foreign workers, when our unions should be uniting workers against the bosses. Ford workers who want to fight for their jobs must reject these divisive tactics and unite to organise an all-out strike.

Bits and pieces

TUC reveals all

Most workers believe that the object of trade unions is to defend workers' interests. Not so according to the TUC. Launching their new policy document *Strategy for the future*, the trade union leaders provided a novel definition of the aims of trade unionism. They are to

'reassert the value of trade unionism, challenging any doubts held by workers, employers and the public at large in the changed economic and political climate, about the positive role of unions in resolving the inevitable conflicts of interest at work in order to maximise social and economic gains.'

It's official — workers fight employers, unions resolve conflicts.

NGA bows out, NUJ kicked out

On 18 January the National Graphical Association admitted defeat and officially ended its closed shop dispute with Eddie Shah's Messenger Newspaper Group. Within hours Shah had sent dismissal notices to seven NUJ members who had been refusing to cross the NGA picket. The fate of the seven journalists is a grim reminder that if you give the bosses an inch they will exploit it to the full. As soon as they pleaded with Shah for compromise and appealed to him for fair play, the NGA leaders had conceded defeat.

Fightback at Scott's

Liverpool RCP supporters have been picketing and mobilising support for an important strike by 400 workers at the Thomas Scott & Sons bakery. Scott's is owned by Allied Bakeries, a subsidiary of Associated British Foods. In early January the workers walked out when management attempted to sack 70 workers and increase the length of shifts. Workers occupied to close down the bakery, but were later ousted by a High Court injunction. The 24-hour pickets are continuing and no bread is being produced. The workers are confident of victory, despite the lack of enthusiasm from the bakery union.

The workers recently received an obscure message from bakery union general secretary Joe Marino saying only 'No action' in response to the bosses' latest pay offer. The bakery workers need more and wider action. We are arguing for solidarity blacking at the ABF plant in Glasgow and elsewhere.

Messages of support to Eddie Pritchard, District Secretary BF & AWU, 64 Priory Road, Anfield, Liverpool L4 2RZ

Spoil for choice

First Lawrence Daly, now Moss Evans. While Peter Heathfield succeeds early-retiring Daly in the NUM, the race is on for Evans' successor in the TGWU. Ron Todd, 56, is favoured by Evans, Len Murray and Henry Ford. George Wright, 48, specialises in sweetheart deals with foreign investors in Wales. Alex Kitson, 62, is the ageing stop-gap candidate of the left. Tod Sullivan and Larry Smith have already dirtied their tickets by sending out campaigning Christmas cards and briefing letters. Outsiders include Bill Morris who is black, George Henderson who is white and Brian Nicholson who represents a few remaining dockers. It's certainly hard to choose.

Business as usual

The IRA car bomb outside Harrods on 17 December sent the British establishment into a frenzy and the British left running for cover

The Irish Freedom Movement carried on the fight against British terror in Ireland

Between the Harrods bombing and Christmas, the Special Branch used the Prevention of Terrorism Act to go on a binge of dawn raids, searches with dogs, and detentions without charge. The political police were out to terrorise the Irish community and portray all Irishmen as potential 'terrorists'.

LONDON: PTA swoops in North and West London pulled four Irishmen into Paddington Green police station. One of them, 24 year old Christopher Bennett, was woken by a sledgehammer coming through his door followed by 10 police. He was whisked off to jail, abused, interrogated and held for six days. IFM supporters protested against the

detentions at Paddington Green. When our demonstration ended, only Christopher Bennett was still locked up.

BIRMINGHAM: Crossmaglen businessman Martin McAllister was picked up as his feet touched the tarmac at Birmingham airport. He was hustled along to the city's Steelhouse Lane police station because his cousin Jim is a Sinn Fein member of the Ulster Assembly. Birmingham IFM supporters picketed the jail on the day of McAllister's release. But he was only given a tight police escort to complete his business and then kicked out of Britain. That same day, Birmingham Special Branch raided Irish student Alan O'Dwyer. The local IFM



PTA prisoner: London IFM protest as another Irish victim is driven to jail

was soon back on the campaign trail demanding O'Dwyer's release.

MANCHESTER: Police bounced former Irish POW Gerry Small into their Central Detention Centre. Five days later, they bounced him back to the Six Counties. The press rewrote history to brand Gerry as 'the Birmingham pub bomber' - he was in police custody at the time the bombings took place. Explosives experts and tracker dogs were sent round to put the frighteners on Gerry's girlfriend Siobhan. Our Manchester supporters

organised a noisy protest outside the detention centre.

Stop press

NORTH WALES: Armed police surrounded a house in the coastal resort of Abergele on 19 January. The elderly couple living there were dragged off to answer questions 'in connection with' the Harrods bombing. Liverpool IFM supporters called a demonstration to protest at the arrests. The couple were released after two days of questioning.

Bans and bombs

Q: When does a left-wing Labour council leader and member of the party's national executive become more right wing than the Tories and the police?

A: When the Irish War comes to Britain. Sinn Fein called this year's Bloody Sunday commemoration march for 29 January in Sheffield. Following the Harrods bombing, city council leader David Blunkett spent the next month trying to ban the march and rally. Yorkshire Irish Freedom Movement spent the month building for the march, organising our regional 'Making sense of Ireland' conference in Sheffield on 28 January and fighting the council's hypocrisy.

The struggle in Sheffield began within days of the Knightsbridge explosion. Local Sinn Fein supporter and Bloody Sunday mobilising committee member Tony Kelly told listeners to BBC Radio Sheffield that he supported the IRA's campaign but regretted civilian casualties. Irish Freedom Movement organiser Alan Harding explained to Sheffield's *Star* that the bombings were part of the Irish War.

The local media went to town with 'march organisers back bombings' headlines. Council leader David Blunkett, bowed to the press hysteria and moved to bar the Bloody Sunday march from rallying in the City Hall.

Blunkett's reputation as a 'democratic socialist' made him sensitive to accusations of censorship. He explained that the situation was 'a unique one'. Such a ban would normally be out of the question, but this was 'not the case' where supporters of Irish freedom were 'talking about being at war'. The editors of Sheffield's right-wing local papers praised Blunkett's action. The *Star* sent its reporters on to the streets to gauge public opinion. They dug up a 75 year old war veteran who supported Blunkett and thought 'all rallies should be banned'.

Sheffield Irish Freedom Movement launched a campaign against the city council's attempt to restrict democratic rights to assembly and expression on the Irish issue. We fought our campaign on two fronts. First, we challenged

Blunkett's hypocrisy. His horror at the IRA bombing stood in stark contrast to his past willingness to share platforms with liberation movements, such as the African National Congress, which use similar tactics. Second, Sheffield's 'socialist' council now stood to the right of the Tory government's recent decision not to ban Sinn Fein. Blunkett's early efforts to get the march itself banned even went too far for the South Yorkshire constabulary.

Challenge the council!

Our supporters took on the press barrage and the council bureaucracy. 'Irish rally is banned' announced the Sheffield *Morning Telegraph's* first edition front page on 23 December. By the time the paper's second edition hit Sheffield's streets, things had changed. 'Irish rally in city will go on' the *Telegraph* conceded as the Bloody Sunday mobilising committee arranged an alternative venue.

A specially convened 4 January meeting of the council's policy committee passed a motion which drew out the reactionary content of Labour's actions:

'this committee agrees not to allow the hire or use of its premises by any individuals or organisations

a) who advocate, support or are involved in the taking of life of civilians of Great Britain, or
b) who are involved in promoting racist attitudes or activities.'

The anti-racist section provided a thin cover for the committee's real purpose of curtailing debate on Ireland. An amendment to the motion made the point explicit:

'The resolution passed by the committee was amended by the substitution of the words "civilians and members of Her Majesty's armed forces operating in Great Britain" for the words "civilians of Great Britain".'

The Bloody Sunday rally was an unacceptable affront to the Labour councillors' loyalty to the British state and its armed forces.

Irish Freedom Movement national

organiser Keith Tompson called on Sheffield Labour Party supporters to censure councillors who supported the bans. In reply, Blunkett warned that any Labour member or branch that tried to do so would be 'dealt with in the normal way' and 'disciplined by their constituency party'.

Blunkett claimed it was the Labour Party that was really 'fighting for proper debate and free speech'. He cited as an example the council's decision to allow Sheffield Troops Out Movement to use its premises for a meeting on 14 January. The debate surrounding that meeting is instructive. Blunkett first raised the possibility of banning TOM's meeting about supergrasses before the furore around Bloody Sunday blew up. TOM's response was to grovel before the council and the wave of anti-Irish prejudice:

'We share everybody's horror at the bombing. We want to distance ourselves from the Provos. Although people are identifying us with the IRA we are not involved in any way.'

Sheffield TOM subsequently withdrew from the Bloody Sunday mobilising committee because the march was linked with republican violence. This sort of 'solidarity' with the Irish liberation struggle is acceptable to Labour Party bureaucrats. The council allowed the TOM meeting to go ahead as a lesson to Sinn Fein and the Irish Freedom Movement, whom Blunkett denounced as 'beyond the pale'. We challenged Blunkett to a public debate on the issues involved. But he preferred to pursue his campaign to suppress democratic rights from the safety of the press columns.

As we go to press, Yorkshire IFM supporters are making final preparations for our 28 January conference and the following day's march. We have been out on the streets with petitions and questionnaires to prove that Labour's ban does not have the support of Sheffield workers. Some have been won to support the fight for Irish freedom against the British state. To win many more, we have to continue the fight for freedom of speech on Ireland against Sheffield's left Labour council.

NW England Irish Freedom Movement Trade union delegation to Ireland

Meet the people of Derry and Belfast who are fighting unemployment and British Army terror.

The delegation leaves on the evening of Friday 24 February and returns early on Tuesday 28 February. Transport is available from Manchester and Liverpool. The fee for each delegate is £40 (including transport costs) which can be raised from sponsoring organisations or personal contributions.



IFM

Write to Irish Freedom Movement,
BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX or
phone 01-274 3951 for further details

The right to fight

'It's war'

The *Daily Star*, calling for SAS reprisals in Ireland after the Harrods bombing in London

'This war is to the end'

The IRA, pledging to continue the bombing campaign in Britain. (*Republican News*, 5 January)

BRITISH TERRORISM is the one consistent theme which runs through hundreds of years of British rule in Ireland. Liberal, Tory and Labour governments have run Ireland under various constitutional arrangements from the 1801 Act of Union, through Partition in 1921, to Direct Rule since 1972. Whatever its political form, British rule has always rested on the terror of British troops and Loyalist murderers.

During the past 14 years of the Irish War, four British prime ministers, seven governments and six Northern Ireland secretaries have all introduced short-lived political solutions. The power-sharing Assembly of 1973, the Constitutional Convention two years later, and the 'rolling devolution' Assembly (currently collapsing) all came and went. But the troops stayed and the terror has continued.

On Bloody Sunday in January 1972, British paratroopers shot dead 14 unarmed civil rights demonstrators in Derry. Seventeen unarmed nationalists have been killed by British shoot-to-kill squads since the Assembly elections at the end of 1982. In the past two months alone almost 20 members of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been exposed for their part in sectarian murder attacks on Catholics. The British establishment is preparing for more terror to come. Last September, Tory minister Nicholas Scott said he would bring the Commonwealth Games to Belfast in 1994 - 10 years hence - if the Games' organisers promised to come 'irrespective of the security situation'.

The Labour Party maintains a common front with the Tories on Ireland. There are two themes to Labour's bipartisan approach. The dominant right wing gives

CND and the IRA

When Irish Freedom Movement supporters approach CND groups for support we are often told that CND is a 'single issue campaign' with no line on non-nuclear matters. Yet CND leaders had something to say about Harrods. They bowed to establishment pressure and cancelled Christmas peace marches to leave the police free 'to find the perpetrators of Saturday's appalling crime'.

Many CND supporters are sympathetic to Irish freedom. But when it matters, their movement lines up with the British state against the Irish. The fight for peace must begin now by opposing British imperialists' conventional wars. Victory for the Irish people means defeat for the British warmongers.

uncritical support to state terror. Labour's last Northern Ireland secretary, Roy Mason, is remembered as 'butcher' by the nationalists for his ruthless deployment of SAS assassins in the seventies.

The left in the Labour Party has adapted the traditional theme of terror. Labour left policy on Ireland has emphasised diplomacy and 'dialogue' with the republican movement as an alternative to military repression. But it amounts to little more than the pursuit of terror by other means. The content of this dialogue became clear last year, when Labour's deputy Irish spokesman Clive Soley led a delegation of MPs to the Six Counties. The Labour Party delegates put their cards on the table at a West Belfast meeting with Sinn Fein:

'They raised the question of an all-Ireland police force and asked what would be the minimum conditions for a Provisional IRA ceasefire.' (*Irish Times*, 22 September 1983)

'Terrorism' means the use of violence for political ends. As in all wars, both sides in the Irish War use violence to advance their political objectives. We support the goal of a united Ireland, free from British rule - so we support the right of the Irish people to fight for it.

The left has tried to achieve by force of persuasion what the British Army has failed to achieve by force of arms. Their common aim is to disarm the republican movement and impose a British solution in Ireland. Radical Labour spokesmen have encouraged the nationalist community to participate in the sham assemblies and forums that Britain has set up in the Six Counties. These institutions exist only to whitewash British terrorism. Yet the left has urged nationalists to take them seriously and get involved in the 'democratic process'. Labour left wingers want the nationalist community to submit to British terrorism without a fight.

'The cutting edge'

Responses to the Harrods bombing underlined the common ground shared by left and right in Britain on the Irish War. The establishment condemned the 'terrorist outrage' and called for more British terror. Tory backwoodsmen demanded a ban on Sinn Fein. The *Daily Telegraph* editor counselled the reintroduction of internment without trial in the Six Counties.

The left joined in the condemnation of the bombing. The Labour Committee on Ireland adopted the tone of a parish magazine editorial:



The other side of the Irish War: IRA bombs are a response to British terror

'The tragic deaths in London have shaken us all. Human life is irreplaceable. Misery and sorrow goes on.'

Socialist terrorists

Labour figures added their regret that the Knightsbridge deaths had helped to 'close off channels of communication' with the republican movement and set back attempts at a 'Livingstone-type dialogue' with Sinn Fein. The 'channels' the left was worried about were its own efforts to channel the republican movement away from the armed struggle and into electoral politics.

The British establishment called on the Government to send in the SAS, the

The Irish Freedom Movement supports Irish national self-determination as a basic democratic right. And we recognise such support must include the right to fight for self-determination. Our backing for the Irish people's national rights is unconditional. It is not altered by IRA bombs in London, even if they cause regrettable civilian casualties.

Fighting for Irish freedom

The British establishment responded to Harrods by condemning 'the use of violence for political ends'. Margaret Thatcher denounced violence as 'the negation of democracy'. Yet when the Tories sent a task force to the Malvinas in 1982, the armed forces' violence was hailed as a defence of democracy. British socialists decried the Harrods explosion as mindless violence. Yet when South African or Palestinian liberation movements use similar tactics, they are applauded as blows for freedom. Clearly, 'the use of violence for political ends' is not the issue. It is the political end being pursued which decides who is for or against the use of violence. British people and British socialists who condemn IRA violence are taking sides with the state against the Irish liberation struggle.

Anti-imperialists have to challenge the widespread approval for the British state's role in Ireland. Even Neil Kinnock dismisses President Reagan's claim that US troops in Lebanon are peace keepers. Yet the leadership of the labour movement accepts the establishment's view that British forces keep the peace in the Six Counties. And the Labour left's schemes for a negotiated political solution are based on the premise that the British state has a progressive role to play in Ireland.

The Irish Freedom Movement is out to break the consensus behind the state and win British workers to support Irish self-determination. That means confronting the question: who are the real terrorists? Irish freedom is a political end which has to be pursued through violent resistance to British terror. There can be no compromise solution to the Irish War. It is a struggle to the finish:

'When we put away our guns, Britain will be out of Ireland and an Irish democracy will be established in the Thirty-two Counties.' (IRA, *AP/RN*, 5 January)

Until Britain is forced out, British workers must support the Irish people's right to fight.

Eddie Veale

The Pill scare

Who benefits from scare stories that the most effective and safest contraceptive in human history causes cancer?

LAST OCTOBER *The Lancet* published two research papers which suggested that taking the oral contraceptive pill was associated with an increased risk of cancers of the cervix and breast. The first paper probably simply confirmed the association between cervical cancer, early age of starting sexual activity, and number of sexual partners. This link has been established for at least a decade. The second paper claimed that the strength of one of the components of the commonly used 'combined pill' — the progestogen — affected the risk of breast cancer. Other surveys have not confirmed this association, and the validity of the index of progestogen potency used in *The Lancet's* research has been widely questioned. Yet, despite the dubious authenticity of these reports and intense scientific controversy around them, they have given rise to a public panic.

'The vast majority of women currently on the Pill are, one way or another, increasing their chance of developing cancer' asserted the *Sunday Times* in one of the more sober press statements on 'the Pill/cancer' link. Thousands of women promptly threw their pills in the bin and opted for other methods of contraception or none at all. Within three months family planning and advice centres were reporting the consequences: 'hundreds of women in Britain have become unintentionally pregnant because of recent adverse publicity about the contraceptive pill' ('Births and abortions rise after Pill scare', *The Times*, 12 January).

Keep it in the family

Medical journals have been investigating and debating the side effects and dangers of the oral contraceptive pill since it became widely available 20 years ago. The risks of thrombosis, especially in smokers and women over the age of 35, have been carefully documented. These discussions have attracted some press comment, but nothing on the scale of the recent furore. Yet in the last few months of 1983 two particularly dubious reports have received massive nationwide publicity. Why? The Pill scare can only be understood as part of a much broader propaganda campaign to encourage sexual restraint in society. It follows last summer's moral crusade against the provision of contraceptive advice to children under 16, which in turn followed the great AIDS/herpes scares. The message, that sexual activity outside approved limits causes lethal diseases and corrupts the young, is at the centre of the drive towards a more repressive society. Women, together with homosexuals, have to bear the brunt of the latest moral panics. Propaganda against the Pill, and its consequences in a higher birth rate, reinforce the emerging eighties stereotype of woman as dutiful daughter, faithful wife and coping mother. The 'liberated

woman' image of the swinging sixties is now under attack from all sides. In today's recession the emphasis is on women staying at home to look after aged and infirm parents, working husbands and young children. Women are being pushed to the margins of the labour market and forced to take on the burden of a shrinking welfare state. The new morality corresponds perfectly to the new position of inferiority into which women are being forced.

Liberals, feminists and socialists have capitulated to the ideological offensive against women's contraceptive rights. Pundits from *The Guardian* women's page to *Cosmopolitan* have pontificated on the dangers of casual sex and the virtues of stable relationships, and discovered the 'new options' of celibacy and abstinence. Sixties swinger Germaine Greer now sounds like a convent-school teacher:

'If I ask young women, "Are you sure it's you he likes, and not just it?" I want them to be able to answer, "Absolutely".'

Spare Rib found *The Lancet's* ill-substantiated reports 'quite convincing'. 'Panic' was *Socialist Action's* advice to its women readers. But panic was just what the tabloid press set out to create — hundreds of unwanted pregnancies are the direct result.

Demand the Pill — or better!

Pregnancy can be disastrous for a working class woman. It may mean the loss of a job and an income and it will certainly mean a massive financial burden. Pressure to restrict the availability of the Pill comes at the same time as the restriction of family planning and abortion facilities as a result of public spending cuts. While the media rant about women and cancer, the government is further restricting the availability of preventive screening. In many parts of the country doctors are being discouraged from doing cervical smear tests to detect cancer early because of shortage of funds and trained staff. Mammography screening for breast cancer is currently restricted to four small areas of England and Scotland. The establishment is not concerned to stop women dying from cancer, it simply wants to stir up fear and prejudice to strengthen their bondage in the family.

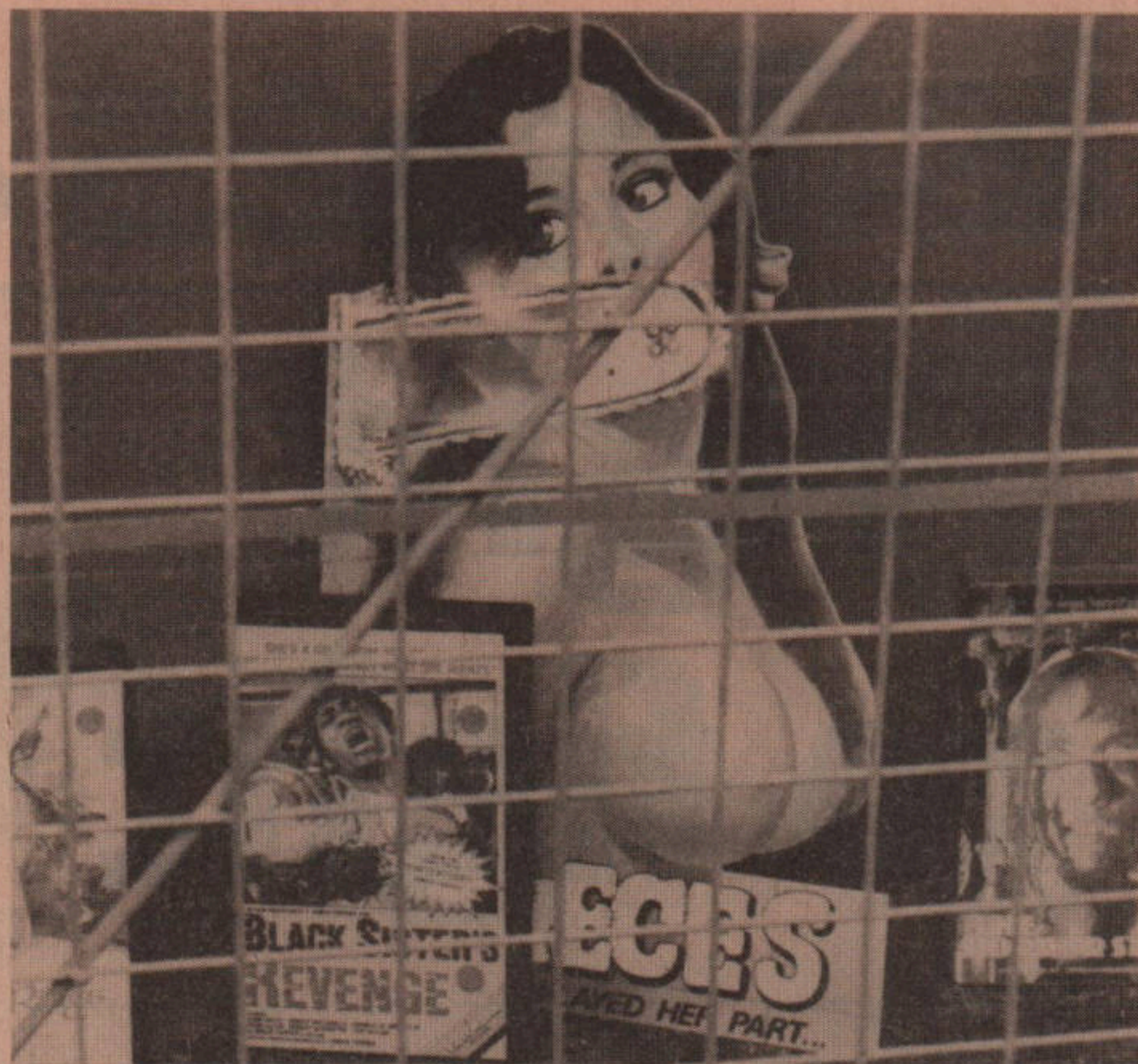
The Pill is two to three times more effective and reliable than any other method of contraception. As a drug that has been used by millions of women around the world for 20 years it has proved relatively safe, especially in its modern combined, low dosage forms. However it does cause considerable side effects and there are real grounds for concern over cancer risks. Further scientific investigation is urgently required. In the meantime the Pill is the best contraceptive we have got. It can continue to give working class women some relief from childbearing or other less desirable alternatives. Until we have a safer method of contraception we have to fight to preserve our right to the best currently available.

Jenny Graham

Safer than pregnancy

	Risk of death per 100 000 at risk	Odds
Car driving	17	1 in 6000
Walking in the street	6	1 in 17 000
Home accidents	3	1 in 33 000
Pregnancy/childbirth (UK)	10	1 in 10 000
The Pill (non smokers, under 35)	1.3	1 in 77 000
The Pill (smokers, over 35)	10	1 in 10 000

(From Ann McPherson and Anne Anderson, *Women's problems in General Practice*, OUP, 1983)



Nasty but not the problem: censorship won't stop capitalism mutilating women

Their morals and ours

The recent debate on the Video Recordings Bill in the House of Commons brought together left and right, feminist and anti-feminist, to root out the new 'video nasty'. Claire Reilly argues that state censorship must be resisted by women and the working class.

Over the past four years the number of video cassette recorders in Britain has rocketed from 100 000 to more than two million. One in five households now has a video, and a further two million are expected to acquire one by the end of this year. As videos cease to be the toys of the rich and become standard consumer goods the state is forced to legislate on what can and cannot be seen.

Graham Bright's Private Member's Bill sailed through its second reading last November. Its aim is to censor all supplies of video recordings. The only exemptions to its wide powers are videos concerned with sport, religion or music — the modern opiates of the masses. Even these are only exempt so long as they do not 'stimulate' or 'encourage' 'human sexual activity or acts of force associated with such activity', 'mutilation or torture', or depict 'human genital organs or human urinary or excretory functions'.

The major attack in the parliamentary debate was reserved for the irresponsible small shopkeepers, liberals and parents who have made the video nasty the regular fare of five year olds. A November survey by London's *Standard* revealed that five to twelve year olds are addicted to titles ranging from 'Nightmares in a damaged brain', through 'The evil dead' to 'I spit on your grave'.

Honour among thieves

The Metropolitan Police spliced together a horrific compilation of video nasties for an uncensored showing at Westminster. Scenes of multiple rape, torture, and warm monkey-brain eating had MPs vacating their seats in horror. Five year olds are apparently unmoved. The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, paediatricians and child psychiatrists agree that the tolerance of young minds to violence has been blunted and possibilities for imitative behaviour are endless. Labour MPs joined with Tories to condemn video nasties and demand their suppression by the state. They emphasised their concern with profiteering by video pirates and their distaste at the degradation of women in nasties.

We are no apologists for pornography profiteers and we have no desire to see their disgusting videos. But we are

strongly opposed to giving any support to the current drive to censor video nasties, for three reasons.

First, we oppose any measure that will strengthen the repressive powers of the capitalist state. The state often presents its increasingly authoritarian role as a progressive departure, designed to protect the vulnerable from danger. But the power of the state always bears down most heavily on the real source of danger to the rule of capital — the working class. For example, in the late seventies the Home Secretary banned a series of fascist demonstrations, ostensibly to protect black communities from provocation and violence. Liberals applauded his judgement. Then, in 1981, the government banned labour movement demonstrations all over the country for most of the year. By acquiring increased powers of censorship, the state will be equipped to control even further the dissemination of information and argument in society. Today the target might be pornographic videos; tomorrow it will be *our* videos and *our* papers and other publications.

Second, the state is incapable of banning video nasties even if it wanted to do so. The function of the capitalist state is to sustain a system based on exploitation and degradation. The government is simply a collection of well disguised robbers and thugs. The representation in the media of violence and brutality, especially against women and other oppressed groups, is an inevitable feature of a society in which such events are commonplace. The robbers and thugs have no moral authority over the pornographers and little commitment to suppressing them. Liberals (and Labour MPs) believe naively that banning media representations of the unpleasant aspects of life in bourgeois society will make society itself less bestial. Even more naively, they believe that they can trust the robbers and thugs to do this service for them.

The final point is that the whole debate about censoring video nasties is a distraction from the problems of dealing with the *real* nasties of life in Britain in 1984. The biggest nasty on the television screen, available nightly even to those without videos, is *the news*. But British MPs who are horrified by tomato ketchup videos have little to say about the real human blood being spilt in bucketfuls by British soldiers in Belfast, Beirut and around the world. They are outraged at scenes of women being chopped up on film but silent about the real cuts in jobs and services that are destroying women's lives.

the next step

Policing the world

Early last month, President Reagan's task man for Central America, Henry Kissinger, remarked that 'if we cannot manage Central America, it will be impossible to convince threatened nations in the Persian Gulf and other places that we know how to manage the global equilibrium'. Washington is not managing well at all. In Central America, it admits that it has lost the initiative against the El Salvador guerrillas. The world's policeman is bogged down in Lebanon and its Middle East policy has been torn to shreds. Its allies in Europe are beginning to sound less and less like allies. At home public support for key aspects of US foreign policy is wavering. America's erratic foreign policy course since the mid-seventies has accelerated into chaos over the past 12 months. What lies behind the rhetoric of Reagan and Kissinger and what are its implications for the working class movement?

The United States was once the dynamic leader of world imperialism. It is still the leader but it has lost most of its dynamism. The world's policeman is nearing the age of retirement. Its approaching senility has become increasingly apparent over the past decade. America's economic decline relative to its imperialist rivals has been well documented. Numerous articles in *the next step* have shown that what is at issue is not whether the USA will continue to decline, but which nation will replace it as the leading imperialist power. In the meantime Washington will do its best to hold on to its privileged role as the policeman of the world.

Reagan's failure to pursue a coherent and effective foreign policy is not due to his personal failings. It is due to the fact that Washington is forced to carry out its global role at a time when it is experiencing a downward slide. While its former allies are determined to assert their own national interests the USA is obliged to try to keep the whole system under control. The growth of imperialist rivalries means that Washington has less room to manoeuvre. Even anti-Soviet propaganda is no longer sufficient to hold sway over America's rivals in Europe. Tensions within Nato indicate that no international institution is immune from the pressures towards fragmentation resulting from imperialist rivalries.

Everybody can see America's overseas problems as Washington staggers from one foreign policy setback to the next. Yet some still claim that Reagan is doing well on the economic front at home. Presidential hopefuls in the Democratic Party start from this assumption, and hence seek to make Reagan's foreign policy the main election issue. The upturn in the US economy appears to confirm the validity of this assessment.

The US upturn has been bought at a high price. Through a massive injection of credit into the economy US capitalism has managed to enjoy a degree of growth. Consumer spending and arms production have been the main stimuli to expansion. The upturn has therefore a restricted basis. Investment levels remain

low and the structural problems of the economy have not been tackled. The US government has had to pay dearly for these limited gains. Last year's budget deficit was the biggest in American history and the proposed budget for 1985 projects record deficits close to \$200 billion for the next four years. This large scale extension of credit means that US capitalism is living on borrowed time. The limited scope of the upturn is all too clear to business economists who predict that the upturn will peter out by the end of the year.

The US upturn has had a negative impact on the rest of the imperialist world. America's huge budget deficit has strengthened the high rate of interest and brought capital flowing into the USA from abroad. This in turn has created a worldwide demand for the dollar and allowed Washington to limit the effects of its deficit by off-loading its currency to America's rivals. It is not surprising that the capitalist classes in Japan and Europe believe they are financing the US upturn by paying for overvalued dollars. The advantage of being the leading imperialist power is clearly shown by America's use of high interest rates to attract resources from abroad, and off-load dollars to limit the disadvantages of deficit budgeting. That's why all sections of the American ruling class are determined to do whatever is necessary to defend its role as the policeman of the world.

To preserve the *status quo* Washington has to embark on an interventionist foreign policy. No part of the globe can be regarded as outside America's sphere of interest. The massive Rapid Deployment Force and a rehailed navy aim to give US imperialism the ability to interfere throughout the world. This strategy inevitably heightens international tensions. This is very much to Washington's advantage as a climate of antagonism and conflict, particularly if it is directed against the Soviet Union, allows US imperialism to push its allies into line. That's why Nato remains Washington's favourite international forum. America remains particularly powerful in the sphere of top level military-political alliances. By giving Nato a wider role Reagan can hold off the rising powers of Europe and Japan.

Washington's straightforward strategy of using Nato to ratify the subordinate position of its Western allies makes sense. But it is not without its dangers. Activating Nato can bring short term advantages for Washington but it also runs the risk of exacerbating tensions among the imperialist rivals. In its survey of 1984 the *Financial Times* warned that Nato cannot long continue in the role it has filled since the Second World War:

'For more than 40 years the Atlantic Alliance has been the central fact of Western political life...Now, however in 1984, the cohesion of this grouping can no longer be taken for granted....On the more material questions of defence and economics, however,

it is by no means so clear that we are bound by a common interest.'

The other problem with Washington's strategy is that in its drive to interfere in every troubled spot in the world it can find itself in some very explosive and unpredictable situations. Reagan never dreamed that his task force in Lebanon would become such a hot issue. Yet as a result of US involvement in the 'multinational peacekeeping force', American policy has been compromised in other parts of the Middle East. A succession of initiatives involving Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Israel indicate that Reagan may have bitten off more than he can easily chew. The Kissinger report on Central America — with its recommendation that \$8 billion be poured into the region — shows how expensive it is to play with fire. The US strategy can certainly raise international tension but whether it can strengthen the global position of a declining imperialist power remains to be seen.

Until recently Reagan's election prospects looked bright. His predecessor Jimmy Carter lost the election because of his disastrous handling of foreign affairs in 1979 and 1980. In contrast Reagan has managed to convey a sense of purpose, and a convincing commitment to the reassertion of American power. In fact Reagan's foreign policy has been strong on hype but weak on results. In 1982, Reagan could not point to one success. Indeed, the one diplomatic success claimed in 1981, the Lebanese ceasefire, collapsed. Moreover in 1982 Reagan lost significant support for his rearmament programme at home as the nuclear freeze movement took off. And 1982 was a bad year for Washington's anti-Soviet campaign. Sanctions against Moscow succeeded more in dividing the imperialist camp than in uniting the West. The *Frankfurter Rundschau* called the US sanctions against the Siberian pipeline project 'the flop of the year'.

The balance sheet of America's foreign policy was even worse last year. True, Washington finally had a victory. But if the invasion of Grenada was meant to demonstrate the decisiveness of Washington nobody was very impressed. Within weeks of the celebration of this momentous victory Reagan was back to square one. Lebanon was becoming a growing embarrassment. When Democratic contender Jesse Jackson went to Syria and won the release of a captured US airman the embarrassment became painful.

To the American public Reagan's foreign policy has come to resemble a series of clumsy adventures. The increasingly strident rhetoric of Reagan and his advisers has strengthened the fear that American lives will be lost in unnecessary wars. Virtually all leading Democratic Party politicians have jumped on the peace bandwagon, forcing Reagan to make a series of conciliatory gestures.

The American opposition to Reagan's

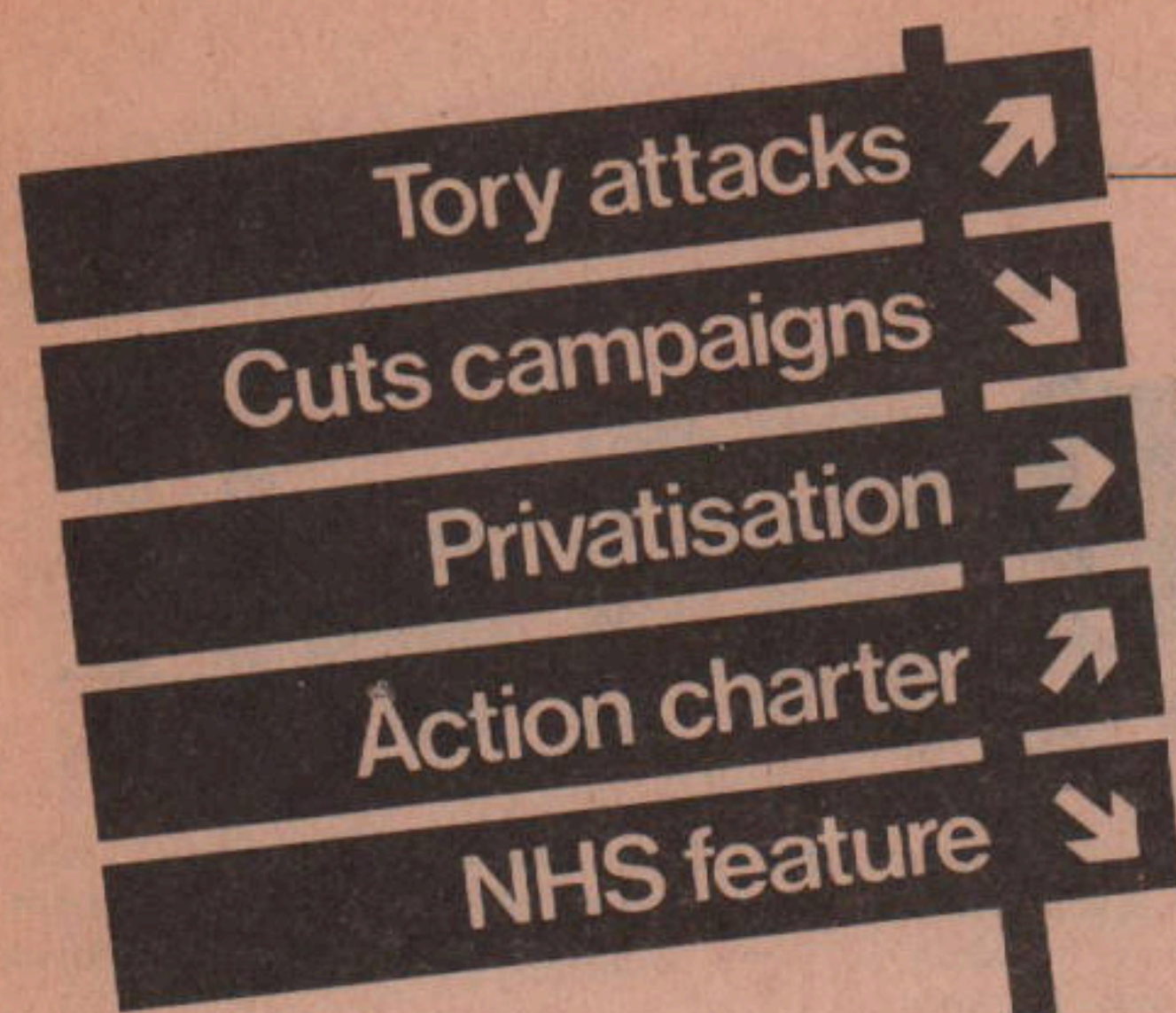
foreign policy is not a peace or anti-imperialist movement. None of the Democratic 'peace' candidates bothered to oppose the invasion of Grenada. The opposition is not to the essentials of Reagan's foreign policy but against its clumsy presentation and lack of success. That's why there is nothing to choose among them in the coming election. In itself the debate has little significance. It merely exposes the instability inherent in Washington's interventionist foreign policy.

Reagan's policy is not his own but that of the American ruling class. Any administration committed to the preservation of US power has no choice but to pursue an interventionist policy. There can be changes in emphasis and style but not in objectives. The American ruling class has set out on a road which leads directly to military confrontation. All the peace initiatives, whether in relation to the Middle East or Central America or whether about nuclear missiles in Europe, are simply designed to pave the way for further military activity. American imperialism is the number one danger to humanity. The other imperialist powers are less dangerous only because they have less resources for the pursuit of their ruthless ambitions.

The Stockholm peace negotiations follow on from the tradition established at Geneva. They are a three-ring circus designed to entertain fools and anyone else looking for a distraction from the real business of rearmament. The US administration does not mind playing this game because it leaves it free to conduct its grisly wars throughout the Third World. Nobody in Stockholm is counting the corpses lying in El Salvador, Lebanon or Angola.

The international proletariat should pay close attention to the statements and actions of the American ruling class. This is not because the American imperialists are any more belligerent or anti-working class than the rulers of Britain or Germany, but because the USA has so much influence over events around the world. Washington's foreign policies are not merely an American affair. They set the pace for a race which no imperialist power can afford to lose.

America will not give up the mantle of world policeman at the negotiating table. Changes at the top of the imperialist pecking order can only take place in an international bloodbath. Workers in Britain who want to stop the war drive must oppose every bloody US intervention around the globe. But we must recognise that the buck does not stop at Ronald Reagan's desk in the Oval Office. British imperialists will play their full part in the conflicts to come. Only those who fight for the defeat of their own ruling class have the right to be called internationalists. Our struggle is not to replace the policeman of the world with a substitute tyrant from Europe or Japan. It is to drive all imperialist policemen off the streets of San Salvador, St Georges, Beirut and Belfast.



Fighting t

**The National Health Service
is under attack from the Tories.**

**This special four page feature points
the way forward for the fight against
the cuts**

TORY CUTS in the National Health Service have killed patients and crippled hospitals. Six people waiting for open heart surgery died at Manchester's Wythenshawe Hospital in four weeks before Christmas. Down the road at Tameside General, nurses try to cope with carrier bags for aprons. Six year olds are dying in London because the Westminster Children's Hospital has run out of cash for bone marrow transplants. Everywhere, waiting lists grow longer and the old and infirm are foisted on their families as wards and hospitals close and nursing staff join the dole queue.

Tory attacks on NHS jobs and facilities take many different forms. Government cuts in spending and staffing have gone through alongside moves to restructure NHS management and privatise cleaning and laundry services (see pages 14 and 15).

Last July, social services secretary Norman Fowler announced cuts of £140m in health spending and staff cuts of up to one per cent, to include doctors and nurses as well as cleaners and porters. Fowler's knife work is now working its way through the system. Last month a national newspaper survey estimated the scale of the cuts to date

at £80 million in cash terms, and 5000 jobs.

In January Fowler tried to offset criticism of his cuts by giving £83m to 10 underfunded English regions. The increase will not even restore last year's cuts. It leaves nothing for growth and assumes health workers are due for wage rises well below inflation. The four Thames regions had their budgets frozen. Fowler was not specific about future requirements for efficiency or manpower cuts. But he made it clear that the Government would be looking for 'substantial and sustained' reductions. The attack on the health service is only beginning to bite.

The Tories want to professionalise NHS administration to pursue the cuts more effectively. Last year, the Government commissioned several reports on how the NHS is managed and how it could be streamlined. The investigation led by Sainsbury's Roy Griffiths was published in October. The Griffiths report was adamant that the health service is no special case. It is subject to the same capitalist economics as any nationalised industry:

'The NHS does not have the profit motive, but

it is of course enormously concerned with the control of expenditure. Surprisingly however it still lacks any real continuous evaluation of its performance...Businessmen have a keen sense of how well they are looking after their customers. Whether the NHS is meeting the needs of the patient, of the community, and can prove that it is doing so, is open to question.'

In the wake of Griffiths' indictment of NHS inefficiency, Fowler announced a new Health Services Board to be chaired by himself. General managers will be appointed for all health districts, with the power to overrule any district health authority opposition to cuts. Griffiths recommended that these management jobs should be given to experienced cost cutters from the civil service and private enterprise.

Fowler's new management team will preside over more attacks to come. Health workers are losing their jobs, other workers are losing health services, working women are gaining sick and ageing relatives thrown out of closed homes and hospitals. The Tory assault on the NHS threatens every section of the working class. We need a united working class response to stop the rot.



The NHS we know and love: people spend their lives h

A Labour

'THIS IS the crucial campaign for the party. It's the one where we speak for the people'. That was Labour Party deputy leader Roy Hattersley's call to Labour's December 'NHS Fightback' conference in Birmingham. Labour Party and trade union leaders have set up a national campaign committee against the health cuts, and sent a second hand ambulance on a nationwide tour with thousands of petitions and stickers. Rank and file union and Labour members have been involved in action against the cuts. But their leaders' concern is not the defence of jobs and services. Official labour movement bureaucrats have highlighted Government attacks on health services to win public sympathy and pull voters back from the Tories and SDP-Liberal Alliance. They are more concerned to save the Labour Party than defend the NHS.

Their gestures, our jobs

The leaders of the Labour Party and trade unions are campaigning, not to save jobs and services, but to preserve the principle of a

Taking on the Tories

Supporters of the Revolutionary Communist Party around the country have been actively involved in the fight to save NHS jobs and services.

LONDON: Plans to close the Highgate wing of North London's Whittington Hospital sparked angry protests against the local union's inaction. Our intervention won workers away from Cohse's ideas for co-operating with management. We argued for direct action and bringing the campaign under rank and file control. Domestic staff, porters and nurses at the Whittington adopted a programme of opposition to all cuts and redundancies and support for an action committee of workers and supporters to run the campaign. Management quickly reversed their decision to close the Highgate dining room.

BIRMINGHAM: Readers of the next step launched the West Midlands NHS Right to Fight bulletin. The bulletin has sold out around the region's major hospitals and sparked off a debate about how to fight the cuts. Our supporters have fully backed local shop stewards' lobbies and demonstrations against closures and job losses, while putting the case for upping the action, and arguing that all links

with management should be broken off. GLASGOW: Our supporters started the fight against Greater Glasgow Health Board's planned cuts of £6m by calling a demonstration outside the board's meeting which discussed the cuts. Campaigning and leafleting around the hospitals helped to build up support for action among health workers. Union bureaucrats at Glasgow's Western Infirmary had to give in to pressure from rank and file workers and back the protest. A half-day strike at the hospital freed more than 400 workers to support our demonstration.

MANCHESTER: Tameside Trades Council voted to take direct action against ward closures and non-filling of vacancies. Recent RCP election candidate and trades council secretary Dave Hallsworth led efforts to win support from the Labour Party's cuts campaign for an occupation of the district health authority. Local Labour leaders dismissed direct action as 'self-defeating'. Dave Hallsworth and other trades council members went ahead and disrupted the health authority meeting by calling on Labour councillors to oppose the cuts. We then went all out to build a 'no cuts, no redundancies' contingent for Labour's

local demonstration against the cuts.

LEEDS: Revolutionary communist women, Leeds Polytechnic women's group and local health workers are challenging the closure of the nursery at St James' Hospital. We protested at Leeds Eastern Health Authority and visited every hospital in the city. We won workers' support for our campaign to defend women's right to work in the NHS.

All our interventions and campaigns share a common approach to opposing the Tory cuts. We fight against all cuts and redundancies. The working class cannot afford to lose one job, ward or abortion unit. We campaign for rank and file workers' representatives to run the action. The health union leaders have proved their willingness to collaborate with management over cuts. We go out to build the broadest community support possible for the campaign. But we recognise that it is pointless to hold back health workers' militancy to win middle class support. Unity between workers inside and outside the NHS is vital if we are to stop the cuts. But such unity can only be built by arguing the unity of interests between sections of the working class. That means campaigning to defend health workers' jobs and the services all workers need.



Preaching from a converted ambulance: Labour p

he cuts



ing around in scruffy waiting rooms for the privilege of dying in a converted Victorian workhouse

ur saving device

state-run health service. For the Labour leaders, the state is the agency for all their plans to invest in, plan and control British society. The NHS is the proud heritage of past Labour governments. Today, it is the only measure of state control around which the Labour Party can hope to win popular support. For the union chiefs, state ownership provides vital backing for their role as negotiators and bargainers. Nowhere is this more crucial than in the NHS. The Whitley Council system of union representation has allowed union leaders an influential position within the NHS administration.

The bureaucrats have a vested interest in preserving a state monopoly on health care. Workers do not. Like any state institution — the police, the army, the courts — the NHS protects the interests of the British establishment. The NHS does not meet the needs of the working class either as workers or consumers. The system provides the employers with a workforce in a minimal state of health, through a poor 'health on the cheap' service notorious for its long waiting lists, crumbling

hospitals and crowded waiting rooms. It pays wages and maintains working conditions comparable with the worst sweatshops in the country.

Workers need to fight to preserve every hospital bed and every NHS job. The bureaucrats need only to make gestures of commitment to the institutions of the NHS. These gestures need to be public enough to identify the official labour movement with the NHS, but not so militant to distance them from middle class sympathisers. Instead of the militant working class action needed to challenge the cuts, the official labour movement has concentrated its campaign on humanitarian lobbies of district health authorities and patriotic calls to 'save our NHS' as a great national institution.

Labour leader Neil Kinnock sums up the bureaucrats' approach. In his appeal to the electorate, Kinnock the patriot states that this is 'not just Labour's fight' because the NHS 'belongs to the British people'. In his first parliamentary speech as Labour leader, Kinnock the humanitarian accused the Tories

Birmingham action

'How do you convince the members that we can win when our own regional officer is sitting on the authority that's making the cuts?'. That was one Nupe branch secretary's question following the betrayals by health union bureaucrats in Birmingham. Supporters of the next step who launched a West Midlands NHS Right to Fight bulletin have come up with some answers.

Labour movement action against the West Midlands cuts has been led by Central Birmingham Joint Shop Stewards' Committee. The stewards mobilised more than 250 workers to a recent lobby of the district health authority. But the stewards instructed their members not to disrupt the meeting, so that Labour Party members would be able to put their case. The Labour representatives called for a postponement in announcing the cuts and the lobby came to a confused end.

This inconclusive protest dampened workers' enthusiasm for similar action. Despite the stewards' efforts, less than 100 people turned out for another passive protest at the next health authority meeting. The shop stewards met afterwards in dejected mood. Proposals to organise hospital meetings, and to block the freezing of vacancies, did not get as far as a vote.

The Right to Fight bulletin has pointed

out the limitations of lobbying health authority members, no matter how sympathetic some authority members might be:

'Health authorities and cuts go together like bread and butter. The authorities are management bodies. Their job is to implement the decisions of national management — the Government. If we fall for this approach then management will use our weakness to its advantage.'

Right to Fight campaign supporters have argued for rank and file action against the cuts, and for breaking all links with management. Leading militants from the stewards' committee recently attended a meeting with management on proposed cuts at Birmingham Children's Hospital. The stewards felt that boycotting the meeting would allow management to by-pass them and expose their isolation from the membership. Yet women workers at the hospital whose jobs are threatened told our supporters they were demoralised by seeing their representatives at such a meeting. Some expressed their willingness to fight if they could depend on support. The militants could overcome their isolation by forgetting about passive protests and going all out for independent rank and file action against the cuts.

of 'using pain as an opportunity for commercial exploitation'.

Health and strength

The Labour bureaucrats' approach undermines the defence of jobs in the NHS. The notion that the NHS belongs to the British people leads logically to accepting the need for the service to be run efficiently. In reality, efficiency in a state health service means the same as in any other institution run on the bosses' behalf — getting rid of excess labour through job losses. Labour movement representatives in the NHS have proved incapable of consistent opposition to Tory manpower cuts.

The official labour movement's approach is equally ineffective in defending services. The bureaucrats are aware that their attempts to rally support for the 'caring' NHS have little resonance because of most people's bad experience of NHS services. In response unions like Nupe have drawn up 'users plans' aiming to appeal to workers' visions of how a democratically-run health care system might operate. Proclaiming that it is 'not enough' to defend the existing inadequate services, the union leaders urge workers to

campaign for the dream health service of the future. Yet in reality these schemes are a distraction from the failure of the union leaders to tackle the immediate problems. When they say it is 'not enough' to defend services, they mean: accept cuts in services — in return for a pipedream about the future. It may not be enough to insist on preserving all existing services, but it is a start in the fight for more and better.

The Labour bureaucrats' strategy of lobbying district health authorities can gain their campaigns some publicity. But it cannot fight the Tories. Whether or not the cuts go through is not a technical question of who votes for what at a committee meeting. It is a question of class power. Does the state have the power to sack cleaners and close hospitals? Or is the working class powerful and organised enough to resist the cuts and closures? That question can only be resolved through a struggle against the cuts. But any idea of struggle is far removed from the labour bureaucrats attempt to save their own skins, at the expense of health workers' jobs and the services the whole working class needs.

Mick Hume



ed taped speeches by party notables at the doomed South London Hospital for Women. Nobody came to listen

Hackney health

Hackney Health Emergency is an example of a campaign which won support from local churchmen and Labour councillors but restricted direct action by Hackney workers. The campaign to save St Leonard's hospital was lost as a consequence.

Last September, Hackney Health Emergency demonstrated outside the meeting of the City and Hackney District Health Authority due to decide on the closure of St Leonard's, and three other local hospitals, at a cost of 500 jobs. Nupe leader Rodney Bickerstaffe insisted that 'the health authority can stand up to Norman Fowler' because it had the support 'of the entire community'. Bickerstaffe saw no need for his union to stand up to the Tories with industrial action. And the campaign only won limited support from the community, who know the miserable facilities at St Leonard's — an 1860s workhouse. The demonstration was far smaller than those against the Labour government's cuts in the seventies.

Health workers and other demonstrators tried to force property-developing authority chairman Louis Freedman to vote the cuts down. Millionaire Freedman was butted and shoved until rescued from workers' wrath by Hackney's burly Bennite MP Brian Sedgemore, and the police. Health authority member and

Labour council candidate Steve Scott denounced the violence as 'shameful' and 'counter productive' because it would 'only harden the attitudes of those members who favour the closure'. Scott and the Labour Party condemned workers' protests because they might upset racehorse-owning health authority members such as Louis Freedman.

The health authority voted the closures through in December. Hackney Health Emergency's picket of that meeting was addressed by Labour council leader Anthony Kendall. Kendall was taking a break from his efforts to crush a strike by Hackney council's residential social workers. Kendall fought against the residential workers' claim for improved pay and conditions with the same cost-conscious approach which the Tories have used to attack NHS workers. The Hackney campaign accommodated to the political outlook of efficient managers such as Kendall and union mediators such as Rodney Bickerstaffe. Once the cuts passed the formality of the health authority vote, the campaign organisers passed the fight on to health workers. Hackney health workers remain unimpressed by this change of heart from a campaign which restricted their fight for jobs to publicity stunts outside the town hall.

How not to fight the cuts

The NHS trade unions have widely publicised their hostility to Government plans to privatise sections of the hospital services. Yet in practice the union leaders' response has been to try to compete with private tenders by offering major reductions in job levels and conditions to preserve direct employment by health authorities. The result has been staff cutbacks and worse conditions, whether under private firms, or more often, under existing NHS management. Confidential documents supplied to the next step by health union militants in different parts of the country expose the shameful collaboration of union officials in hospital cuts at local level. Feature compiled by Mike Freeman.

LAST SEPTEMBER the Department of Health and Social Security issued a circular (HC (83)18) to all regional and district health authorities on 'competitive tendering in the provision of domestic, catering and laundry services'. The September circular was ominously headed 'for action'. It asked authorities 'to test the cost effectiveness of their domestic, catering and laundry services by putting them out to tender (including in-house tenders)'. The circular insisted on the Government's commitment to making the NHS 'as efficient as possible' and getting 'better value for money'. It demanded details of proposed programmes by 29

February 1984, at the latest.

The health service trade unions immediately recognised a serious threat to health workers. Privatisation means fewer workers working harder in worse conditions. It means full-time jobs being replaced by part-time, worse holiday and sick pay arrangements, and an even poorer deal for women and disabled workers. The Tories abolished the Fair Wages resolution last year. Contractors are no longer obliged to maintain pay and conditions negotiated at a national level by the NHS unions. Shortly before Christmas the Government issued another circular instructing NHS administrators that they 'should not specify rates of pay or conditions of service for contractors' staff' (DA(83)40). More importantly for the union leaders, privatisation is a direct attack on the position of the unions in the NHS.

Threat to jobs and unions

The major companies looking for NHS contracts — Grand Metropolitan, Pritchards, Trust House Forte, Exclusive — are renowned for victimising trade unionists, employing non-union labour and undercutting union rates and conditions. Privatisation threatens to cut union membership and income and oust the unions from their role as mediators and buffers between NHS management and hospital workers.

The TUC's health services committee, which brings together the leaders of the dozen or so unions which organise NHS workers, has affirmed its opposition to privatisation. But the union leaders are dependent on the network of committees and quangos through which they collab-



Strike against privatisation: women cleaners in the Medway hospital group fought through December to save jobs. Now a combined private/in-house deal means 100-plus redundancies

orate day in day out with health service managers. They could not lead any large scale action against the authorities. Hence union resistance to privatisation has not taken the form of militant industrial action to defend living standards. Instead the unions have put forward a two-pronged response. On the one hand, they have pleaded that privatisation is not in the interests of NHS management. They argue that it will not save money or improve services. On the other hand, union officials have offered concession after concession to the authorities as an alternative to going private. They hope that even if jobs are lost and conditions deteriorate, at least the unions will preserve their status and their negotiating rights.

Guidelines to defeat

The health service union leaders have issued two sets of guidelines to local officials outlining their anti-privatisation strategy. The first emphasises the need to campaign against privatisation, not as a threat to workers' livelihoods, but as a danger to the health service. The union leaders warn that privatisation will undermine

- the quality of staff and services
- standards and effectiveness of care and treatment
- the flexibility in providing a 24-hour service

The bureaucrats try to outdo the Tories in proclaiming their commitment to standards and efficiency, pleading that the unions can provide a better service than the contractors. The campaigning strategy that follows is limited to lobbies of the district health authority, public protests and coordinating information among the unions. There is no mention of the urgency of defending jobs and conditions through organising industrial action by workers in the NHS and outside.

The NHS union bureaucrats fully appreciate that their humble pleading against privatisation is hopeless. The Tories are prepared to accept a deterioration in the quality of public health care in Britain if they can save money on the NHS. Realistically anticipating defeat, the health union chiefs brought out a second list of guidelines for use 'in the event of this battle being lost'. This 'raises issues relevant to the tendering procedure with the aim of keeping NHS services in-house'. The second document is four times as long as the first and clearly indicates the working approach of the unions to privatisation, behind the bluster of their public campaigns. It shows the union leaders' determination to secure their narrow bureaucratic interests, at the cost of their members' livelihoods.

The checklist on tenders urges union officials to 'press for full consultation rights at every stage of the process'. This follows a familiar preoccupation of union bureaucrats. They will collaborate in any attack on workers' rights, so long as their status is recognised by employers in a consultation process. The checklist advises union representatives to approach

the authorities to clarify and agree on the procedure for tendering and the precise specifications of the job under consideration. Under the heading 'manpower', the guidelines advise officials to check whether the specifications provide for union recognition, job training and health and safety protection. The document does not recommend that officials insist that job levels should be maintained in any circumstances. Under the heading 'wages and conditions', union officials are advised merely to inquire about what provisions are proposed. The final section urges union representatives to 'ensure that they have an opportunity to challenge outside submissions'. The union officials should make sure 'that health authorities are satisfied' on a dozen different points that they will get better value for money than from private contractors.

Competitive job sale

Union opposition to privatisation comes down to challenging the commercial viability of private tenders. In many cases the unions have found that the best way to compete with the contractors is to get together with local hospital administrators (whose own jobs may also be threatened) to submit an in-house tender to the district health authority. A document produced by Cohse's Welsh division, entitled 'Competitive tendering in the provision of ancillary support services in the NHS' urges health unions to ensure that 'the in-house tender always is the most competitive'. To make in-house tenders the most competitive, the unions are obliged to go some way towards accepting the reductions in staff levels, increases in productivity and setbacks in conditions that are proposed by the private contractors. In the Cohse document you can almost hear the bureaucrats squealing as they bite the bullet:

'Yes, we may have to re-think our attitudes on many matters. Yes, we may have to cooperate on improving the efficiency of some groups of membership. Yes, we may find ourselves in some dilemmas and having to make difficult decisions, but it is NOT, repeat NOT, any indication of failure on our part as long as we retain our ultimate objective by excluding the parasitical privatisation contractors.'

To keep the contractors out and preserve their stake in the NHS the union leaders are ready 'to make difficult decisions' that lead to redundancies and slave labour conditions for their members. The union leaders might say that this is not a 'failure on our part' but it would lead to serious setbacks for the working class.

Frying pan or fire?

The unions' anti-privatisation strategy points the way to disaster for health workers. We report (opposite) on how the unions' response to private tenders at Leeds General Infirmary paved the way for mass redundancies last summer. This was before the Government increased the pressure on authorities to privatise their services. New hospitals at Maidstone,

In-house unions

The inability of the NHS trade unions to put up an effective fight against privatisation follows a long history of collaboration with management. Union officials have been further integrated into the NHS machine through past measures to cut costs and raise productivity. The result is a servile bureaucracy and a despondent and divided membership.

Shop stewards in the NHS were largely a creation of administrators in the late sixties and early seventies. Under government pressure authorities attempted to curb NHS spending by raising productivity in hospitals. This required the introduction of work study techniques and the implementation of various incentive bonus and measured day work systems. The employers needed shop stewards to sell the new harder work deals to the workers. Full-time union officials were also required to play a bigger part in raising efficiency in the hospitals. A 'code of requirements' on measured day work systems outlined the joint approach. Whenever a new measured day work scheme was planned, union full-timers were to be included in work study teams. The code explained why it was important to involve workers' representatives in productivity talks:

'The application of a measured day work scheme may lead to a reduction in the number of staff required... Measures can be taken which include suspending recruitment as soon as the scheme is in operation, timing the introduction of the scheme as far as possible to take advantage of natural wastage, retraining and finding other comparable employment in the NHS for displaced staff.'

In the seventies the NHS was still expanding and most workers displaced by productivity schemes could be redeployed in different departments. The schemes,

however, encouraged workers to observe one another's performance levels and inform on those not pulling their weight. They also introduced group bonuses based on the output of a team of workers. If such a team is reduced by one member and the rest can increase their work rate to maintain output, then they can secure higher bonuses. The schemes thus offered badly paid workers a bonus increase at the cost of accepting job losses and higher rates of exploitation. By accepting such punitive and divisive schemes and supervising their implementation, union officials have spent the last decade co-operating in rationalisations and deteriorating conditions.

Under the banner of privatisation the health authorities are now tightening the screw still further. Union officials who have helped to jack up productivity now find themselves negotiating over mass redundancies. As the scale of the Government offensive mounts, the authorities are increasingly prepared to dispense with the union officials they have used to such effect to police NHS workers. This is why privatisation has thrown the union leaders into such a panic. Their only response is to try to save their own skins by giving even more away.

Many workers have become shop stewards and even lay officials in health unions because they wanted to fight to defend workers' interests. They have found that the structure and operation of NHS unions isolates them from rank and file workers and turns them into instruments of management strategy. The threat of privatisation and the potentially catastrophic consequences of the unions' response indicate the urgent need to transform the NHS unions from bottom to top.

Shakeout in Leeds

At the end of December two Leeds hospitals — Roundhay Hall Women's and Hyde Park Terrace Maternity — were closed down and their facilities transferred to the new Clarendon wing of the Leeds General Infirmary. The new wing's cleaning contract was given to Hospital Hygiene Services and 97 hospital workers lost their jobs. This defeat was the culmination of nine months of negotiations between unions and management.

Last April union officials discovered that domestic services in the new Clarendon wing were being put out to tender. The unions had not been consulted and they had not been involved in drawing up an in-house tender. However, management later acceded to union requests for discussion on the terms of the rival tenders. Officials were shocked to discover that half a dozen contractors had quoted prices almost half that of the in-house tender. An internal Nupe document takes up the story.

We initially could not understand why the direct labour contract was so out of step with the commercial contractors, bearing in mind that they had agreed to pay Whitley Council pay and conditions. Moreover, whilst the Trade Unions had not been involved in the preparation of the in-house tender, Regional Work Study had proposed staffing levels in accordance with national criteria which should mean that the tenders were comparable.

The answer to this problem emerged during negotiations and it was relatively simple. The Contractors were expecting their employees to work at 100 BSI performance and had set their staffing level accordingly.

Normally staff who work for the National Health Service, or most other public sector bodies, are expected to work at 75 BSI performance. Any greater level of work is 'rewarded' in terms of a bonus payment with a performance of 100 BSI being equated to a 33% bonus.

Private contractors were, therefore, simply exploiting labour in order to under-cut the direct labour tender which had been submitted on the basis of a 75 BSI performance.

In other words the contractors were expecting cleaners to work flat out at a work study assessed rate of 60 minutes per hour (100BSI). The customary NHS rate is 45 minutes per hour (75 BSI), with any faster rate compensated by a bonus. Nupe's first response was to move to meet the contractors by proposing reduced staffing levels consistent with a work rate of 85 BSI — with appropriate bonus. When this still left the in-house tender well out of the contractors' range, Nupe agreed to forego the bonus. Under the

sub-heading 'the dilemma' union officials explained how they slid down the slippery slope:

The Trade Unions were asked if they wished to resubmit a tender along similar lines. To consider such a step would mean negotiating less favourable terms and conditions for a group of health service workers than those working alongside them, which could perhaps open the door to further attempts by Management to worsen working arrangements for others.

In the event the Trade Unions agreed to submit a tender based on an 85 BSI performance (without the 13 per cent bonus which would normally be paid to staff).

This was done in an attempt to preserve all existing jobs at the same time as attempting to compete with the two private contractors.

The unions pleaded with the Leeds Western Health Authority that the in-house tender would provide the most efficient service and also save £30 000 in redundancy payments.

HEALTH CARE BY SENSIBLE LOGIC NOT POLITICAL DOGMA

The Trade Unions, along with Management, had agreed a formula that was not only compatible with the private firms, but in doing so had removed the GAMBLING element in turning to private contractors. Jointly, Management and Trade Unions could ensure that the new Wing would open smoothly. This would provide a service to the community with staff who were already trained and conditioned to hospital procedure and staff whose qualifications made them suitable in health and character to work in hospitals.

District health authority vice chairman Geoffrey Hickman admitted that the administrators 'were impressed by the cooperation and understanding which were evident from the negotiations between our officers and the staff side on the final in-house tender'. He conceded that tendering had been 'an extremely valuable exercise' in that it 'had resulted in a considerable saving against the original in-house estimate and demonstrated the importance of challenging some of our existing assumptions'. But at the end of the day there was no getting away from the bottom line. Hospital Hygiene Services — £193 691; in-house — £233 237. Result — contract awarded to Hospital Hygiene Services.

Rather than launch an all-out fight to save the jobs, local Nupe official Jim Stirton promptly wrote to the private contractor to seek negotiating rights for the union. The final bitter irony was that only eight of the previous hospital cleaners were taken on by Hospital Hygiene Services at lower rates of pay. The new conditions were so bad that within five weeks all eight had left their jobs.

NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES BLACKGATES HOUSE, BRADFORD ROAD, TINGLEY, WAKEFIELD

FROM BRO. J.E. STIRTON TO BRO. BOB JONES
H135/2994/JES/AG RLJ/PC

23rd August, 1983

Dear Bro. Jones,

Re: Privatisation of NHS Services - Leeds

Further to our correspondence concerning the above, I am writing to confirm the unfortunate outcome of the District Health Authority meeting on 19th July, 1983 when a decision was taken to offer a contract to Hospital Hygiene Services for the cleaning of the new Clarendon Wing of the Leeds General Infirmary.

Very simply, the contractors are able to under-cut our tender price by expecting their employees to work at a 100 BSI performance without any bonus payment (straight old-fashioned exploitation). However, this has serious implications for ourselves in negotiations since in order to compete on an economic basis we have to tender along similar lines.

The Unions have now declared themselves to be in dispute with Leeds Western Health Authority (see Appendix D) although I doubt whether anything can be achieved at this stage.

The Company which has been awarded the contract is Hospital Hygiene Services and I have written to them seeking negotiating rights.

I trust this outlines the situation within Leeds Western Health Authority but if you require any further information no doubt you will contact me.

Yours fraternally,

NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES CIVIC HOUSE, 20 GRAND DEPOT ROAD, WOOLWICH, LONDON, SE18 6SF

FROM BOB JONES - NATIONAL SECRETARY

TO BRO. J.E. STIRTON - AREA OFFICER

WHEN REPLYING PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE RLJ/LL

YOUR REFERENCE H135/2994/JES/AG

(Dictated on 26/8/1983)

2nd September 1983

Dear Bro. Stirton,

PRIVATISATION OF NHS SERVICES - LEEDS

Thank you for your letter dated 23rd August and for the enclosures, which I will study carefully.

I had previously received a copy of your letter to the Health Authority trying to invoke the Collective Disputes Procedure although, like yourself, I doubt whether you will be able to make any progress with this.

Also, I had previously directed the attention of the ASC Trade Union Side to the ability of contractors to undercut in-house prices by quoting for work at one hundred BSI performance without any bonus payment. The Side has not yet found an answer to this — perhaps there isn't one that is achievable — but I will be discussing the matter again with the Health Service National Committee on 1st September 1983.

Yours fraternally,

Bob Jones

Draft charter for NHS workers

The privatisation offensive and the unions' complicity in cutbacks requires an urgent response from health service workers. While the development of a full programme of action must await further discussion among active workers in the NHS, a number of points are already clear. For details contact the next step — address page 2.

We need to reject

- cuts in any form — natural wastage, voluntary redundancies, 'temporary' ward and hospital closures, schemes whether private or in-house that reduce jobs, pay or conditions
- collaboration with cuts: this includes the role of union members in drawing up tenders and specifications and union representatives in negotiating over them

MANCHESTER

Tuesday 7 February 7.30pm
Public meeting
Fighting the NHS cuts
Speakers from Tameside Trades Council, health unions, shop stewards
Old Dog Pub, 24 Old Street, Ashton

We need to withdraw our representatives from

- all state agencies introducing cuts — especially regional and district health authorities
- all permanent negotiating bodies in the Whitley system

We need to set up

- workplace committees of health workers representing all sections of the workforce
- union committees at district and regional levels consisting of lay representatives, not full-time officials

We need to fight

- to maintain jobs and services
- for a living wage for all NHS workers
- for unions that are united, accountable, effective

LIVERPOOL

Tuesday 14 February 7.30pm
Public meeting
Fighting the NHS cuts
Speaker Cathy Barratt
The Dolphin, Canning Place, Liverpool 1

Milton Keynes, Colchester and Huntingdon have cut back on the numbers previously employed in cleaning by starting off afresh with contract labour. Yet by last month only one in 18 hospitals which had put their cleaning services out to tender had changed from direct labour to a private contractor. The contractors' lobby accused the authorities of bowing to union pressures and keeping services in-house.

The way the unions have so far succeeded in keeping the contractors out is by making major concessions on staffing levels and work rates. These have often been negotiated informally at hospital level, between administrators and union officials through existing productivity and bonus schemes. The result has been redeployment and voluntary redundancy, higher productivity and harder work even before the services are put out to competitive tender. When they are, the in-house tender is often close enough to the contractor's to persuade the authorities that a changeover would not be worth the trouble involved.

A Nupe circular issued to shop stewards and branch secretaries before Christmas sums up the fatalism of the union bureaucracy:

'To begin with your members will probably think there is little the union can do. Some won't want to know. This is perfectly understandable. In the absence of a clear trade union alternative, the future offers either unemployment or sweated labour. To most of our members, the outlook must appear grim and hopeless.'

For hospital workers looking for an alternative from the leaders of Nupe the outlook must indeed appear grim and hopeless. While the union officials trade workers' jobs to save their own status, they are quick to blame the workers for not being prepared to fight. But the workers are prepared to fight. They are held back not by their fear of management but by their respect and loyalty for their union leaders. The draft charter (right) indicates a way forward to fight privatisation — and cutbacks under any other name.

Senile but vicious

Conflicts between French farmers and British lorry drivers over lamb and beef imports and rows about UHT milk, Beaujolais Nouveau and Golden Delicious apples do not herald the outbreak of cross-Channel warfare. Not yet. Britain and France are second rate imperialist powers, forced to compensate for their declining economic muscle with chauvinist posturing. But for the time being Anglo-French rivalries can be contained through diplomacy. Both countries can unite to terrorise the Third World. In the next step in December we examined Britain's global network of military repression. Here *Andy Clarkson* analyses British imperialism in the eighties, while *James Wood* assesses Mitterand's militarism in France.

THE RECESSION has made Britain's businessmen even more dependent on their stake in the world economy. Britain's reliance on foreign investment is a sign of the weakness of the home economy. British capitalists export their capital abroad because they cannot invest it profitably in Britain. It is not that British industrialists and financiers are unpatriotic. It is simply that they know that they can get a better return on their capital if they send it out of the country. For more than a decade the rate of profit in British industry has steadily declined, making investment in British factories less and less worthwhile. As a result manufacturing investment in Britain last year was 38 per cent down on the level of investment in 1970. Meanwhile capital has poured out of Britain to more lucrative outlets in North America, Europe and the Third World.

British holdings abroad have grown rapidly — from £32 billion in 1974 to £140 billion last year. The composition of this investment has changed. Direct investment has fallen from 37 per cent of the total 10 years ago to 28 per cent. Meanwhile portfolio investment has risen from 19 per cent to 27 per cent. Banking assets and government bonds have also grown much faster than direct investment.

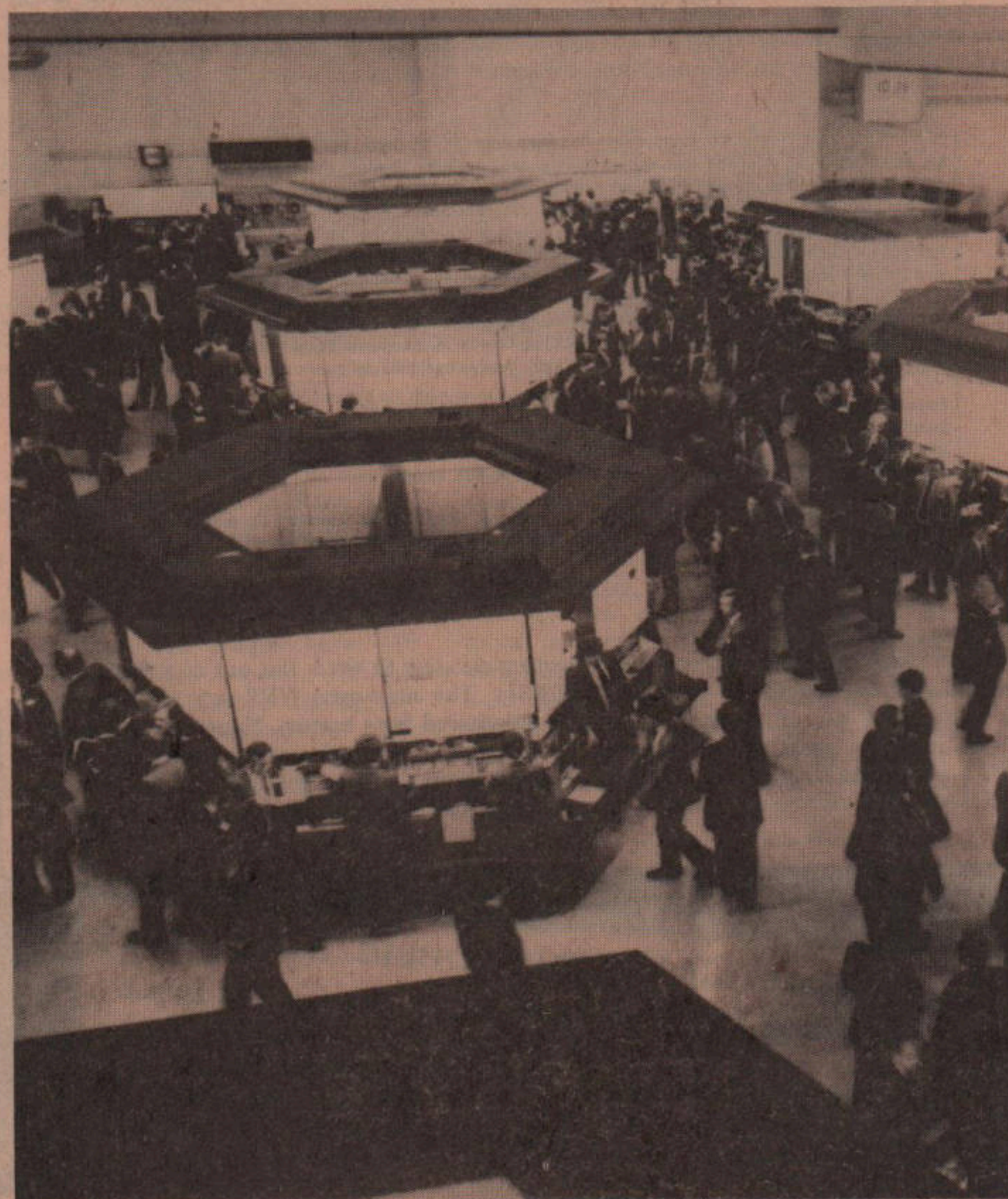
One source of increased portfolio investment has been financial institutions like pension funds and insurance companies. Since the Tory government relaxed exchange controls in 1979 these institutions have expanded their foreign assets by £10 billion. One City stockbroker recently celebrated the virtues of portfolio investments overseas for British financiers:

'This £10 billion addition to the nation's wealth is welcome, not only because it represents a tidy sum of money, but also because it has not required any serious productive effort. Debtor countries around the world should be drooling with envy.'

Making money without 'any serious productive effort' is a City speciality. London's role as a world financial centre allows British investors to cream profits from the labour of workers around the world.

Where the sun never sets

British investment has also become more parasitic in the sense that less capital now goes into productive manufacturing industry abroad. The bulk of direct investment in recent capital exports has been channelled into the service sector. Direct investment goes into banking and insurance and retailing. Investment in non-manufacturing projects now exceeds manufacturing investment in both the advanced and the backward capitalist countries. British imperialism thus creates an ever expanding army of 'coupon clippers' in the City of London while sponsoring less and less productive



Coupon-clipping in the city: London's stock exchange exploits the world through foreign investment

Britain's dependence on Third World profits has two important consequences. First, it will stop at nothing to defend its investments and spheres of influence. Second, Britain is forced into more intense rivalry with its imperialist competitors as they enter a bitter struggle for survival.

Rape and rivalry

Africa was once largely controlled by Britain, and British capital retains a major holding in that continent. Last year, more than 150 million Africans in 22 countries faced malnutrition and starvation through a combination of drought and agricultural backwardness resulting from imperialist domination. At least nine civil wars displaced five million refugees as local agents of the Western powers resorted to more and more brutal repression to contain mass resistance. British bankers relaxed after the recent coup when Nigeria's new military rulers promised to honour more than \$3 billion of unpaid debts. Nigeria is Britain's biggest export market in the Third World.

While British capitalists hide from the impoverished masses of the Third World behind friendly dictatorships, they face growing pressures from their fellow imperialists. In Singapore, once a British colony, Britain's share in foreign manufacturing investment fell to 16 per cent in 1980. Britain's rivals for spheres of influence are its imperialist partners in the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development — the USA, Japan, West Germany and France. All experienced a decline in domestic investment in 1982, which levelled off in 1983. But prospects appear bleak in 1984 and all of them are casting envious glances at one another's interests. Growing competition for investment outlets, trade and raw material sources is the driving force behind the rearmament programmes of the big capitalist nations.

The recession produces contradictory pressures in the revival of militarism. On the one hand, Britain has substantial banking and portfolio investment tied up in other imperialist countries and in joint arrangements with them in the Third World. Britain is united with its rivals against any threat to their system from the region. Attempts to find a common approach to resolving the debt problems of Third World countries demonstrate a concern to enforce collective imperialist interests. Western military alliances are there to impose these interests against any anti-imperialist movement. Britain retains an important role within the International Monetary Fund, the OECD and Nato in preserving financial, political, economic and military alliances among the Western powers.

When it comes to direct investment, however, the Western powers have more difficulty acting in concert because definite national interests more directly assert themselves. Trade wars, territorial disputes and diplomatic tensions all indicate the problem of containing inter-imperialist rivalry. When the fickle credit operations that currently maintain international economic relations collapse, the only wealth that will count will be material assets like industrial investments. Britain has to pursue any avenue for protecting and advancing its direct investments overseas — at the expense of its imperialist allies. When every other avenue is closed, Britain will be forced to go to war to secure its interests. So far, British imperialism has been able to play down its conflicts with other Western powers so that it can work with them to smash resistance in the Third World.

The peoples of Africa and Asia have shown their determination to fight imperialism. Our job is to assist their struggle by taking on the beast at home. British imperialism is still vicious, but it is a much weaker adversary today than at any time in its history.

British domestic and overseas earnings (£ billion)

	Gross domestic trading profits	Overseas interest, profits & dividends	Percentage
1978	25.0	5.2	20
1979	31.3	7.9	25
1980	32.4	8.4	26
1981	35.5	10.3	29
1982	38.4	11.0	29

Source: *National income and expenditure*, Central Statistical Office, September 1983

Britain's overseas returns amount to a third of its domestic income. Britain's capital exports take several different forms, but they have a number of common characteristics and consequences. Britain's plunder of the world in concert with a handful of other capitalist powers necessitates an active role in the violent suppression of anti-imperialist movements in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. It also leads to conflicts among the robbers themselves over the shareout of territories and loot.

UK Parasites International PLC

Last year British assets abroad totalled a massive £140 billion. This total is made up of a number of separate components. *Direct investments*, funds sunk into majority-owned or all-British subsidiaries, made up £40 billion in 1982. *Portfolio investment*, minority British shares in foreign-owned enterprises, followed close behind with £38 billion. The British government, and oil companies like BP, had £30 billion tied up overseas. British banks had overseas assets of around £32 billion.

industry abroad. But where is Britain's Empire today?

If we look at annual investment abroad, more British capital goes to other imperialist powers than goes to the Third World. The most important destination for British direct investment is the USA which receives more than £2 billion a year. In the Third World most British investment is channelled into former British colonies, notably in Africa and Asia. Direct investment flows have increased since 1975/6, but remain less than a tenth of the amount going to the USA in each case.

More than 80 per cent of Britain's stock abroad is in the developed world and the Newly Industrialising Countries. Britain has the largest share (22 per cent) of all non-oil foreign direct investment stock in the USA. Through its 1500 companies, Britain makes up more than half the \$30 billion worth of total foreign investment stock in South Africa. But the significant feature of British foreign investment today is that it is in the Third World that the biggest return on direct investment is to be found.

Alternative defence in action

The Labour left advocates an independent foreign policy and an alternative defence strategy for Britain. The socialist government in France has been actively pursuing this approach for the past two years. Here we examine the consequences.

France is Europe's odd man out. Unlike its EEC neighbours, it has no mass anti-nuclear movement. Yet it is among the world's most belligerent imperialist nations. French military expenditure is rising in tandem with that of the USA and Britain. France has set up a 'Rapid Action and Assistance Force' along the lines of the American Rapid Deployment Force and Britain's 5th Airborne Brigade, for swift intervention in the Third World. The 1983 defence budget planned a 24.6 per cent increase in spending on France's independent nuclear strike force. Francois Mitterand's socialist government has rearmed to improve France's international standing.

Carved up

France has always been a relatively weak imperialist power. French industry is poorly developed and France's economy is over-reliant on its banking sector. French agriculture remains notoriously backward. The problems of French capitalism have led to intense social conflicts and unstable governments ever since the revolution of 1789. France has had more than 20 prime ministers, and has twice experienced a virtual coup d'etat, since the Second World War.

Left out of the post-war carve up by its more powerful allies, France was forced to assert itself as an independent power in Europe. President De Gaulle withdrew France into a much looser relationship to Nato in 1965. During the post-war boom, France's economic dependence on its former colonies exposed its weakness compared to the other imperialist powers. The recession has made France even more aggressive in defence of its national interests abroad to compensate for the weakness of its domestic economy. Mitterand, France's first socialist president, has followed the independent imperialist traditions of his predecessors.

In recent months French foreign policy has taken confusing turns. Traditionally hostile to the USA, France was the EEC country most in favour of the installation of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe in 1983. Traditionally friendly with Russia, the French government has taken a strong anti-Soviet line over SS20 missiles, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and repression in Poland. Socialist Mitterand has formed a permanent joint commission on defence with German Christian Democrat Chancellor Helmut Kohl, despite the anti-German chauvinism that permeates French society. Behind all these manoeuvres lurks a consistent promotion of French imperialist interests.

Neither Washington nor Moscow

The French government could quite easily approve US missiles for Europe because none were destined for France itself. Mitterand was prepared to appear pro-American on Cruise and the 'Soviet threat' to counter what he views as a more immediate threat to France — the rise of the anti-nuclear movement in Germany and its increasingly nationalistic character. Mitterand went to the Bundestag in Bonn last year to urge the necessity for US missiles to counter Soviet SS20s. Social-democratic opponents of the US weapons listened in stunned silence. Mitterand is wary of US power over Europe. But he relies on the US-dominated Nato to contain any revival of Germany's national aspirations.

Apart from the issue of Cruise, French relations with the USA are as bad as ever. On the economic front, Paris has



Socialist Mitterand plays Emperor Napoleon: France retains ambitions to be Europe's top power

kept up a barrage of complaints about the dollar's high exchange rate, and high interest rates. France is the leading force in the current agricultural trade war between the USA and Europe over the EEC's Common Agricultural Policy. Mitterand's three devaluations of the franc since 1981 have failed to increase French exporters' share of the US market above 2.4 per cent. Mitterand blames America for his austerity programme.

Economic squabbles between France and the USA have extended into the political and military spheres. Mitterand upset Reagan by vetoing Japan's request to be associated by statute with Nato. He has established his own 'hotline' to Moscow in case of nuclear mishap. When he met Chancellor Kohl recently, Mitterand embarrassed Reagan by obtaining German support for his offer to act as an 'independent' arbitrator between the USA and USSR over nuclear reduction talks at Geneva. Mitterand has recently attempted to use France's nuclear arsenal as a bargaining counter against the USA's power base in Nato. Effectively invulnerable to a nuclear first strike, France's nuclear submarines will be able to reply to a nuclear attack with an additional 150 warheads. According to

the US military, France now has the capability to 'unilaterally inflict enough damage on the USSR to force it to launch a general war against the US' (*Armed Forces Journal*, USA, May 1983). The French government has already indicated that it wants a proper seat at the Geneva arms negotiations.

Mitterand has used anti-Soviet rhetoric to advance his bargaining position with the USA and Germany. It has also played an important part in domestic politics as a stick with which Mitterand can beat his junior coalition allies in the Communist Party. For decades the French Communist Party has been subservient to the Kremlin. Until recently it was the dominant representative of the French working class and, although it has lost support dramatically in recent years, it remains influential among blue collar workers. Hence anti-Sovietism has long been a weapon used by French governments against the Communist Party and the working class. Socialist Mitterand has not hesitated to take advantage of the new Cold War climate fostered by the USA to strengthen his position at home.

Yet Mitterand is not one to let ideology damage business. France has trading links with Russia that go back

before the 1917 revolution. Mitterand defied Reagan's injunctions against European firms participating in contracts for the Siberian gas pipeline in 1982. After spending 1983 criticising Soviet expansionism, the French administration ended the year by selling Leningrad a computerised telephone exchange denounced as 'militarily sensitive' by Washington.

Mitterand may now meet his German opposite number Kohl every six months to discuss defence matters. But relations are far from easy. Continual rows over the EEC budget reflect tensions between the stagnant French economy and a more dynamic Germany. Mitterand's defence minister Charles Hernu has indicated that France is preparing to resolve these problems in a more traditional manner. French reports have upset Germany by suggesting that Hernu's helicopter-borne Rapid Action and Assistance Force will make it easier for France to intervene there (*L'Express*, 17 June 1983). France is replacing the short-range Pluton with 300-kilometre range Hades missiles. These will put East Germany in range of French battlefield nuclear weapons for the first time. While war in Europe is a serious threat in the future, French militarism is already in action in several parts of the Third World.

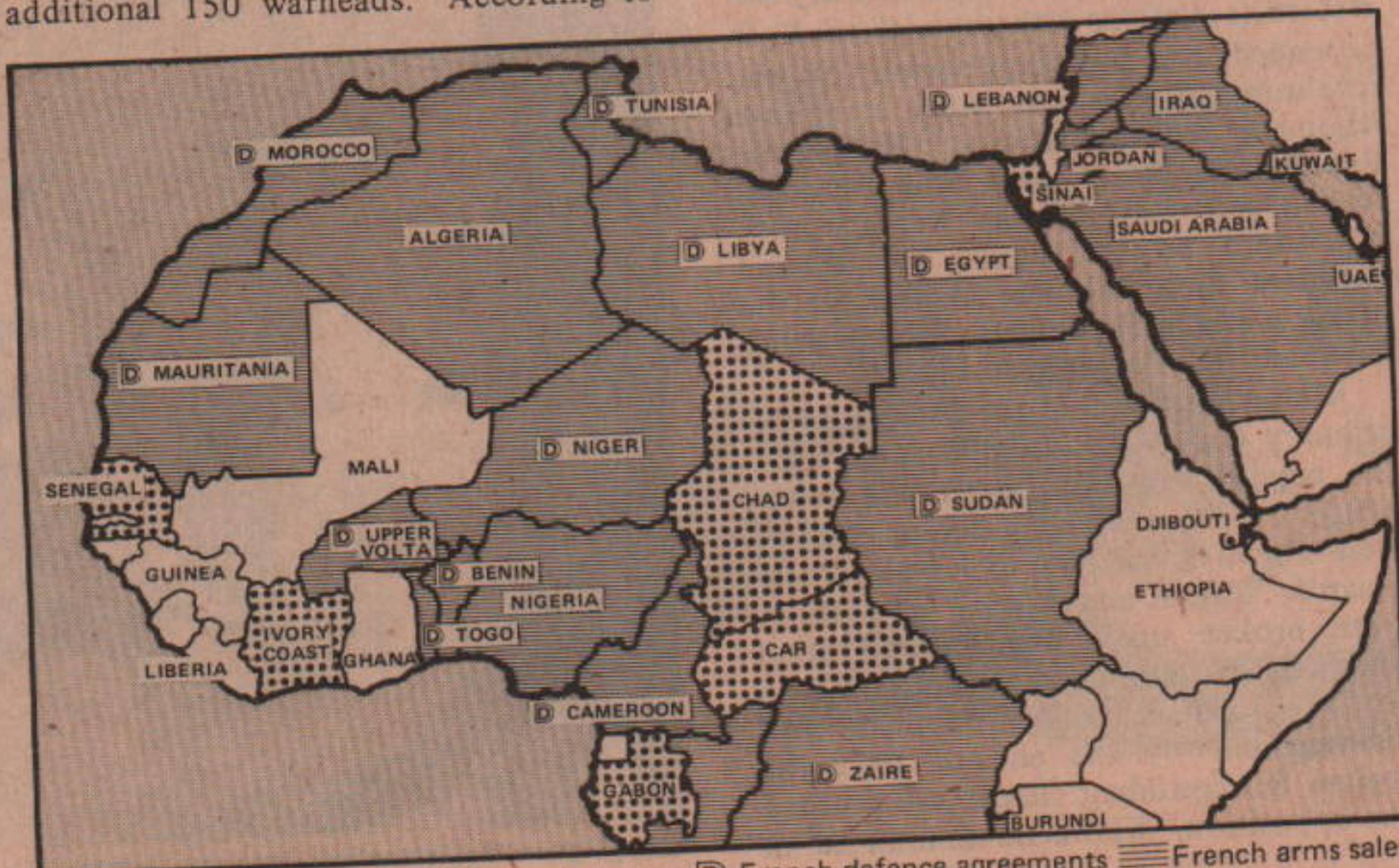
Keeping the natives down

France regards large chunks of Africa as its own preserve. In recent years, France sent paratroopers to safeguard its interests in Zaire, the Central African Republic and Chad (twice). The French African Community or franc zone is a collection of 13 West and Central African economies under French financial control. With its overall trade deficit rocketing from \$1 billion in 1975 to \$19 billion in 1980, France needs the franc zone. Its trade surplus with the area rose from \$0.5 billion to \$1.2 billion over the same period. More than half of French aid to Africa goes to French speaking countries. It is tied to purchases of French products. Even so, France's share of total franc zone imports fell by 8 per cent to 35 per cent between 1975 and 1982. In addition, France is heavily dependent on Africa for its minerals and raw materials. This is why Mitterand keeps thousands of troops on station in Africa, and others ready to intervene at a moment's notice. France also has a stake in the Middle East, and it is currently attempting to take advantage of the decline of US power in the region.

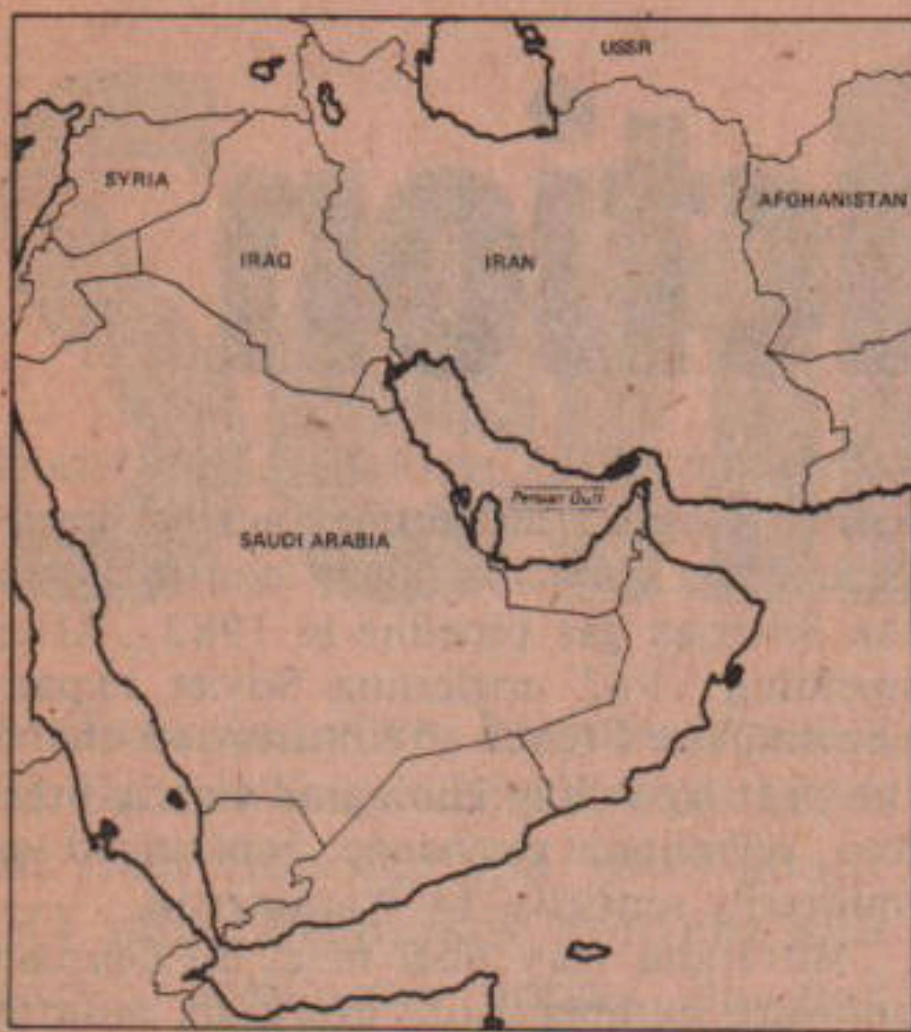
With the left at the controls of the French state, there is no scope for a CND-type 'peace' movement in France. Mitterand's only serious critic on the nuclear issue — the Communist Party (PCF) — is also his partner in government. The PCF has called for France's nuclear weapons to be 'counted in' as part of the West's armoury in the Geneva talks, to demonstrate France's responsible role in international affairs and prevent the Soviet Union from walking out of the talks. But such a blend of patriotism and Stalinism has little popular appeal. The PCF could only muster a few thousand at its national peace rally last year. Just before the Geneva talks broke up, Mitterand went on national television to warn the Soviet Union and the Communist Party:

'I am the cornerstone of France's deterrence strategy. My policy is the policy of France.'

The public reception was rapturous and a string of intellectuals and film stars previously associated with the PCF rushed to denounce it. In France, there is no mass anti-war movement because a reformist government — patriotic, nationalist, anti-American — is already in power. The French working class has proud anti-imperialist traditions. To re-establish them will require a political outlook that identifies French workers' main enemy as their own ruling class, not the governments of Washington or Bonn.



French militarism in Africa: ● French troops ○ French defence agreements ■ French arms sales



The West at war in the Middle East

The Middle East looks set to be the international hot spot of 1984. Recession has sparked conflicts between the ruling cliques of the oil-rich region. All of the imperialist powers are keen to restore order and increase their influence at their rivals' expense. Western troops patrol the streets of Beirut in war-shattered Lebanon. Western guns in the hands of boy soldiers kill thousands on the border between Iran and Iraq. *John Johnson* looks at two of the region's battlegrounds to show how the imperialists' drive to war is driving the masses of the Middle East towards destruction.

'IT'S ALMOST LIKE the First World War' was one US official's comment on the death toll of four years of war between Iran and Iraq. As long as they can prevent a Third World War from erupting in the oil-rich Gulf, most Western statesmen are prepared to watch the stalemate and the slaughter go on and on.

War began in September 1980 when Iraq invaded Southern Iran. A year later Iran drove the Iraqi army out and began a counter offensive. Since 1982 the war has settled down to trench warfare along the 900-mile border between the two countries. Iran's offensive against Haj Umran last autumn resembled the Battle of the Somme. Fighting over four square miles of territory cost almost 20 000 lives and left thousands wounded. Western estimates of numbers killed in the war range from 200 000 to 500 000. More than half a million people have been seriously injured, more than 50 000 prisoners of war taken, and hundreds of thousands of refugees driven from their homes.

War on the home front

Despite the carnage and cost of the war, both sides need to keep it going. Falling demand and world prices for oil have halted economic growth in Iran and Iraq. Rising unemployment and rampant inflation have sparked popular unrest. The Shah of Iran was deposed in 1979. His successor, Ayatollah Khomeini, has had to deal with further unrest. Iraq's President Saddam Hussein fears the revolt could spread across the border. Both dictators have tried to quell internal strife by uniting their restive peoples against an external enemy.

Since independence in 1926, factions within Iraq's ruling class have struggled for control of the army and government. Iraq's rulers are divided by traditional loyalties of family and clan. In 1970 the Takriti clan asserted its dominance. The ruling Baath Party led by Saddam Hussein is a vehicle for the Takriti clan.

Saddam has also had to deal with religious and ethnic divisions within Iraq. While the ruling class is Sunni Muslim more than 60 per cent of the population are Shiite Muslims. In the north the Kurds have fought a sporadic guerrilla war for independence from Iraq. In 1978 Saddam began a scorched earth policy in Kurdish areas. More than 600 villages were razed and a quarter of a million Kurds transported to refugee camps in Southern Iraq. The reverses suffered by Iraq in the war have forced Saddam to offer the Kurds autonomy in order to win their support for the war effort.

During the sixties and seventies, Iraq experienced some industrial development. The working class became a significant force in Iraqi society. Development was paid for from oil earnings and managed by the state. In the late seventies oil exports accounted for 98 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. Oil revenues

paid for machinery, motor vehicles and capital goods. Foreign construction and engineering firms took advantage of the Iraqi boom. In 1981, when state spending had already been hit by the expense of the war effort, government contracts worth \$23 billion were awarded to Western construction companies. The Iraqi boom faltered with the decline in oil prices and the reduction of demand for oil from the Western countries. Iraq's rulers were faced with a growing urban working class used to a relatively high standard of living, which would oppose the coming austerity.

The 1979 revolution in Iran presented Saddam with an opportunity to head off opposition and make a bid for more influence in the region. Saddam had long nursed an ambition to turn Iraq into a regional power. This was the motive behind his alliance with the Soviet Union in the early seventies. Until 1979, however, the USA relied on Iran to police the Gulf area. The overthrow of the pro-American Shah of Iran in 1979 left the USA without a watchdog in the region. Saddam Hussein stepped forward with the Iraqi army. He was confident of imperialist support for his invasion of Iran. Only six months earlier US President Jimmy Carter had ordered an abortive airborne commando raid on Iran to free American embassy staff held hostage in Tehran by militant students.

The Gulf states were terrified by the revolution in Iran. Like Iraq they all had substantial Shiite populations and they feared the influence of Shiite anti-imperialism on the workers in their oil production plants, refineries and construction works. The overthrow of the Shah was followed by a wave of demonstrations in support of the revolution in all of the Gulf states. The leaders of the Gulf states backed the Iraqi invasion of Iran.

After the revolution

After 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini had to secure his control over Iranian society and restore its relations with imperialism. Both depended on the suppression of the revolution. The war with Iraq gave Khomeini his opportunity. His Islamic Republican Party used the national feeling generated by the war to crush opposition to its rule. The Iranian president Bani Sadr was blamed for the invasion and initial defeats. In June 1981 Bani Sadr fled into exile in France.

Khomeini increased the Islamic Revolutionary Guards to 200 000 and purged the regular army of liberal and leftist officers. Women not wearing the veil were stoned by mobs led by Revolutionary Guards. Strikes and factory occupations were broken up. Kurdish and other nationalities fighting for autonomy in Iran's provinces were bombed into submission. By the end of 1982 the regime felt confident that it had crushed the opposition. Khomeini announced an

end to the random terror of the Revolutionary Guards and the worst excesses of the Islamic courts in an attempt to woo back almost three million middle class professionals and technical workers who had fled Iran during the revolution.

Control over wartime food rationing has allowed the Islamic Republican Party to reduce the influence of the small shopkeepers of the bazaar, once its major social base. With the allocation of scarce food supplies under the control of local mosques, the regime has been able to mount an anti-hoarding campaign against the bazaar. Last August the principal representatives of the bazaar in the Islamic government were forced to resign after Khomeini denounced their manipulation of food prices as being 'un-Islamic'. At the same time the Islamic courts threatened to shoot profiteers. With the bazaar's decline, the restoration of the pre-revolutionary social order is almost complete.

Shaking Satan's hand

All the imperialist powers initially backed Iraq's invasion of Iran. Today, most of them are satisfied that the Iranian revolution has been contained. Iran is the Gulf's major market and potentially the region's most powerful state. The West is keen to improve relations with Iran.

Khomeini has repaired Iran's links with the USA. Iran recently paid off \$470m of debt to the Bank of America. More than \$1 billion of Iran's disputed claims with American banks have now been settled. Khomeini has dealt with pre-revolutionary debts to US corporations. US exports to Iran doubled last year. Military electronic equipment made up a substantial part of the total. The USA is formally neutral in the Gulf war, so its military sales to Iran remain covert. This underhand arrangement suits Iran. Khomeini's anti-American rhetoric is useful in winning him support among Iran's masses. Accusations that Khomeini was

behind the recent Beirut bomb attacks on US marines are also good for his anti-imperialist credentials at home. This war of words does not interfere with improving US/Iranian trade relations.

Japanese, West German, British and American companies have returned to Iran. The Iranian market is worth almost \$1 billion to Japan, and this is expected to grow to \$2 billion within the next two years. West Germany exports more than \$1.4 billion worth of goods to Iran and Britain \$334 million. Britain's £150 million deal with Iranian car company Peykan keeps Talbot's Coventry factory afloat. Western commentators predict with some confidence that trade with Iran is likely to be the only growth area in the Middle East during the next five years.

Only France remains committed to Iraq. France stands to lose \$8 billion in debts and loans if Iraq loses the war. French imperialism is as 'overexposed' in Iraq as the USA in Brazil or Britain in Nigeria. France also hopes to take advantage of America's weakness to extend its influence in the Gulf. But France cannot replace the USA as the region's major power. French imperialists can keep the war going, but they lack the striking power to step in and end the war.

Ending the Gulf War would present the imperialists with even more problems than they face at present. More than a fifth of Western oil flows through the Gulf — any serious disruption of oil supplies would more than double world oil prices overnight and throw the West into economic chaos. The West accepts the current bloody stalemate in the war simply because oil supplies have not been seriously disrupted. The ruling cliques in Iran and Iraq are also content with the stalemate. Neither can hope to win, but the border war helps them contain opposition at home. The slaughtered masses of Iran and Iraq are the losers in the Gulf's forgotten war.



Carrying on: casualties mount in the Gulf War while the West watches

Bloodbath in Lebanon

'“Lebanon” is an artificial, post-colonial creation that will not last. Central authority has broken down irretrievably and can only be restored by an outside power' (*Newsweek*, 16 January). All the Western powers agree — but which of them can restore order in the Middle East?

REVEREND JESSE JACKSON returned triumphant from Syria last month after securing the release of captured US airman Lieutenant Robert Goodman, shot down over Lebanon in December. Jackson's rapturous homecoming highlighted growing pressures on President Reagan to withdraw American marines from Lebanon. Calls for withdrawal have grown ever louder since last October's suicide bombings at the Beirut headquarters of the 'multinational peacekeeping force' which claimed nearly 400 French and American lives.

The USA cannot pull out of Lebanon until it has crushed or contained local resistance to imperialist control over the region. Hence Reagan has to maintain a token of America's military might on the streets of Beirut while his ambassadors try to negotiate a new carve up of territory and spheres of influence among Lebanon's rival neighbours and warring internal factions.

All the Western powers attempt to conceal their pursuit of influence in Lebanon behind an affected concern for the safety of their fighting forces — or even more cynically, for the welfare of the Lebanese people. In Britain Labour leader Neil Kinnock hopes that the lives of British soldiers will not be 'unjustifiably endangered' while they are engaged in supporting multinational terror in Lebanon. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher echoes Reagan's warning that withdrawal would cause a bloodbath in Beirut. Meanwhile US heavy artillery and French air strikes deepen the bloodbath daily.

Imperialism at sea

More than a dozen men stand behind every soldier in the 100-strong British contingent in Beirut. They wait on a British naval task force in the Eastern Mediterranean that at times has been larger than that sent to the Malvinas in 1982. Thousands more troops with helicopter gunships and fighters are on standby at the British base of Akrotiri in Cyprus. The other powers in the multinational force are equally tooled up. A total of more than 100 000 soldiers, sailors and military airmen, stationed on the largest war fleet ever assembled, represents the might of imperialism. The West would like to use this huge armada to restore order in Lebanon. The Lebanese Shiites, Druze militia, the remnants of the PLO and even the Syrian army would be hard pressed to resist the full force of Western fire-power. The 'multinational peacekeeping force' is a symbol of the military might of the imperialist powers; it is also a sign of their weakness. Twenty five years ago the USA rode roughshod over local militias and the protests of its Western allies to stabilise a pro-US regime in Lebanon with 10 000 marines. Today the USA lacks the authority and the power to impose such a solution on a Middle Eastern country. The volatility of Lebanon and the dangers of wider Israeli, Syrian, Arab and even Soviet involvement hold the

imperialist war fleet at bay off the coast of Lebanon. Within the imperialist camp diverging interests dictate different approaches to the Lebanese conflict that pre-empt a decisive US intervention.

America, France and Italy each have around 2000 troops on Beirut's ravaged streets. As the global policeman, the USA has most at stake in the region of the world that seems the most likely to erupt into a third world war. France was the former colonial power in Lebanon and it seeks to take advantage of the decline of US influence in the area. Italy has important banking and commercial interests in Lebanon and Syria.

Despite its massive back-up the small British contingent of 100 troops is an accurate reflection of Britain's influence in Lebanon and the wider Middle East. Britain's involvement in the multinational force is simply a recognition of its wealth of experience in organising imperialist slaughter. Britain's main role is to assist American diplomatic initiatives. British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe's Middle East tour in January became an adjunct to American attempts to secure an imperialist settlement in Lebanon. Howe made a specially extended visit to the Syrian capital Damascus, once it became clear that President Assad wanted to put out peace feelers to Washington.

Security plans

So far there are no takers for British proposals to replace the multinational force with United Nations troops. The success of UN intervention depends on the acquiescence of the other imperialists to the USA's leadership. The decline of US influence over the other powers during the past 10 years has removed the basis for unity. The relics of past UN attempts at mediation in the region abound. About 300 UN observers still reside in Jerusalem, living out the fantasy that they are guaranteeing the 1948 ceasefire between Israel and Palestine. In southern Lebanon the 7000 soldiers of the 10 nation UN Interim Forces are still supposedly supervising the withdrawal of Israeli army units after their 1978 incursion into Lebanon.

None of the imperialists relishes the prospect of invading Lebanon. Apart

from the military problems involved, a full-scale Western invasion would upset the delicate balance of power between Israel and its Arab neighbours and risk plunging the whole region into a much wider war. A direct Western attack on Syria would also risk drawing the Soviet Union, its biggest arms supplier, into the Middle Eastern morass. Yet while Syria may trigger off World War Three, it could also offer the key to restoring imperialist stability in the region.

Syria's President Assad is keen to settle the Lebanon strife. Assad wants to prevent his neighbours' troubles from spilling over into Syria. He has moved 40 000 troops into eastern Lebanon and shown bravado against the American air-force. But Assad knows that his alliance with anti-American Druze and Shiite forces inside Lebanon could provoke conflict beyond his control. The Syrian government has thus become amenable to doing a deal with Reagan.

America has been searching for a diplomatic solution to its Lebanese problem. The latest 'security plan' on offer from America's Middle East troubleshooter Donald Rumsfeld and Lebanon's President Amin Gemayel provides for the division of Lebanon into three zones, policed by Syria, Israel and the Lebanese army. Imposing the plan would present the USA with further difficulties. Its success would depend on Reagan persuading Israel to continue its occupation of southern Lebanon. Assad would also want concessions from Israel over its 1981 annexation of the Golan Heights, captured from Syria during the Six Day War in 1967. Even if the USA could cobble a suitable package together, there would be no guarantee that the broken Lebanese army or Syria's forces could contain the armed factions in Lebanon. A US State Department official's comment on the security plan summed up the barriers to a negotiated settlement in the world's most volatile region:

'Everyone seems to want to do this. But this is the Middle East, remember.'

Israel is the traditional proxy of American power in the Middle East. But Israel is unable to play its past policing role in countries such as Lebanon. Israel

is suffering severe economic and political ructions. Inflation of 200 per cent and rising unemployment brought 70 000 government workers out on strike last month. The domestic crisis has been exacerbated by protests over Israeli casualties in southern Lebanon. Yitzhak Shamir's fragile coalition government is under pressure to withdraw Israel's 28 000 troops. Yet Israel cannot ignore the Arab and Palestinian threat to its existence. Israeli jets still launch pre-emptive strikes inside Lebanon; an Israeli air raid killed more than 100 civilians in the Bekaa valley last month. But the USA's Zionist ally now has only a limited ability to help out the marines in Beirut.

No exit

America's inability to resolve the Lebanon crisis has brought President Reagan under attack at home for his Middle East policy. The run-up to this year's Presidential election provides a sharp focus for the debate. In the aftermath of the Long Commission report on the Beirut embassy bombings, which called for an end to the emphasis on 'military options', Reagan's leading Democratic Party challengers have called for the marines to be pulled back. The Administration has made concessions to this lobby in its search for a diplomatic solution. But Reagan remains committed to 'aggressive self defence' in the Lebanon. He personally ordered the USS New Jersey to open fire on the mountains around Beirut with its massive 16 inch guns in December. His government could bow to demands for US troops to be pulled back to safer areas. More than 500 marines are already ferried from Beirut airport to their support fleet every night. But alterations in sleeping arrangements do not remove the threat US forces pose to the Lebanese masses.

Other powers in the multinational force have voiced disquiet over US policy. France and Italy have threatened to withdraw their forces. So far, however, America has been able to limit Western misgivings. France's President Mitterand has announced plans to transfer a quarter of French troops from Beirut. They will be at the ready if needed. Even Italian President Pertini, outspoken in his desire to get the Italian contingent out, has emphasised the need to calm Beirut before any Western evacuation. Britain remains committed to keeping its 100 troops in place.

The imperialists have no easy way out of the Lebanon crisis. They cannot simply pull out for fear that Beirut's chaos might spread across the Middle East. Yet they cannot move in to restore order without causing a broader conflagration. The present unsatisfactory compromise reflects the West's frustration. While thousands of tons of military metal float off the Lebanese coast, the relatively small imperialist forces on the ground remain vulnerable to guerrilla attack. Whatever the outcome of the imperialists' deliberations, it cannot benefit the Lebanese people. Sooner or later, the stalemate will be broken by further military intervention.



Digging in: no easy way out of Lebanon for the US marines



Clydeside leader John MacLean

How red was the Clyde?

Iain McLean, *The legend of Red Clydeside*, John Donald, Edinburgh 1983, pp 296, hbk £18.00

THE LEGEND OF RED CLYDESIDE is woven around the unofficial strike movements on the Clyde during the First World War. Promulgated in the main by veteran Communist Party leaders, the legend romanticises struggles that ended in bitter defeat. McLean's book sets out to demolish the myths.

Despite their limitations, the Glasgow engineering workers' struggles of 1915-19 marked a high point of independent working class activity in Britain. Compared to the revolutionary developments on the continent they were insignificant. Yet the strikes, mass demonstrations and the proliferation of revolutionary propaganda were a radical departure from normal trade union activity.

The Clyde Workers' Committee (CWC) was set up by militant engineering shop stewards in opposition to the official leaders of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE). The CWC took control out of the hands of the bureaucracy. During 1915 and again from 1917-19, the CWC organised a number of successful mass strikes over pay and against victimisation under the wartime anti-strike laws. In the course of these struggles a number of revolutionary leaders emerged – notably John MacLean and Willie Gallacher. Through the Socialist Labour Party and MacLean's anti-war section of the British Socialist Party, they exercised considerable political influence among large numbers of workers.

Why did the Clyde become 'red'? McLean does not even ask. Glasgow was a centre for heavy engineering, producing the bulk of armaments during the war. The shortage of skilled engineering workers encouraged militancy. The ASE leadership had lost credibility, both for its support for the state's wartime anti-strike regulations, and its failure to defend its members' interests in the pre-war period. Compared to England the working class in the West of Scotland was relatively young and hence less integrated into the official labour movement. This factor was underpinned by a distinct sense of Scottish identity. This expressed itself both in distrust for London based trade union bureaucrats and politicians, and in an ambivalent attitude towards British imperialism's war effort. All these factors contributed to the widespread influence of two distinctive political trends on the Clyde – the revolutionary syndicalism of the SLP and the anti-imperialism of MacLean.

McLean dismisses the Clydeside leaders as 'sectarians'. His main argument against the CWC is that it was a purely sectional, craft orientated, 'interest group movement'. He quotes at length from ASE records and gives extensive treatment to one strike at Lang's engineering in Johnstone where male workers struck against the introduction of women. The CWC had nothing to do with this struggle. None of the major strikes it helped organise were explicitly sectional. Indeed, the CWC's statement on dilution published in January 1916 indicates a broader non-sectional approach to the question.

A wasted opportunity

Sectionalism no doubt restricted the scope of working class consciousness and action. The CWC did not foster it. The problem was that the CWC's politics could not take workers beyond the partial and narrow perspectives of spontaneous strike action. This was most apparent in the attitudes of the Clydeside revolutionaries to the war. Only John MacLean consistently agitated for all-out opposition to the imperialist war. He called for the working class to wage class war at home. But MacLean did not fight to forge a clear, united stand on

reviews

this question among the Clydeside militants. His talents were unfortunately one-sided. He was an outstanding teacher and orator, but lacked any capacity for party organisation and political struggle. Thousands of workers came to listen to MacLean speak because his stand on the war struck a chord. But the leadership of the class struggle remained in the hands of the CWC.

The syndicalists refused to take a stand on the war because they said this would divide the strike movement. Finally in 1918, when even the Labour Party called for 'peace without annexations', the CWC adopted a pacifist position on the war.

The CWC's narrow approach to the class struggle, reflected in its stand on the war, limited the scope of the Clydeside struggles. Although many Glasgow workers were open to anti-imperialist politics, the CWC did not provide them. A unique opportunity to forge a real class leadership was wasted. The 'Red Clyde' militancy achieved no lasting gains for the working class. When the war ended the bourgeoisie felt confident enough to smash the Clyde movement. On Bloody Friday, January 1919, 10,000 troops were despatched to Glasgow to put down the last major strike of the Clyde workers. In the ensuing demoralisation and confusion the movement disintegrated. 'Red Clydeside' became a mere episode in the class struggle.

SDP academic McLean is not concerned to examine the reasons for the failure of the Clydeside movement. Nor is the book a faithful account of the course of events. It contains major historical inaccuracies and omissions. In his treatment of political figures such as John MacLean, the author substitutes character assassination for serious political appraisal. McLean's main contention is that, through reforms such as the 1924 Housing Act, the Labour Party achieved lasting gains for the working class in Glasgow. McLean's conclusion that the Clyde movement ended in divisions and defeat is valid. But his understanding of why this happened is limited.

Sabena Norton



Tony Benn: today's man, yesterday's politics

Labouring in the past

James Hinton, *Labour and socialism: a history of the British labour movement 1867-1974*, Wheatsheaf 1983, pp212, £5.95.

Paul Whiteley, *The Labour Party in crisis*, Methuen, 1983, pp255.

Jon Lansman & Alan Meale eds, *Beyond Thatcher: the real alternative*, Junction Books 1983, pp204, £3.95.

FROM DIFFERENT starting points James Hinton and Paul Whiteley end up at the same conclusion. It is that the way forward for the Labour Party lies, not in attempting to rebuild its proletarian foundations, but through forging an alliance with sections of the middle classes. The new Labour leadership will welcome these academic justifications for the orientation it has adopted pragmatically.

After a gloomy survey of the modern labour movement Hinton concludes that 'a further key to the possibility of a mass socialist politics lies with the environmental anti-nuclear and peace campaigns which bring working class politics together with a significant mobilisation of middle class radicalism'. These campaigns together with the women's movement, the Scots and Welsh nationalists and organisations

of ethnic minorities, 'may help the left to win over sections of the middle class electorate which would otherwise be lost to the SDP'. Whiteley plays for higher stakes. He concludes that Labour should team up with British industrialists against the financiers of the City of London: 'the possibilities for building alliances with industrial capital are immense after the years of monetarist destruction'.

Both Hinton and Whiteley present their strategies as new departures, but in fact they are nearly a century out of date. Both strategies owe much to the outlook of New Liberalism in the 20 years before the First World War. New Liberalism ultimately failed in its original purpose of securing a social base for the failing Liberal Party. Yet it has proved remarkably durable as an influence on the ideology of the labour movement.

New Liberal politics

It is ironic that Hinton should recommend the strategy of New Liberalism today because his history of the labour movement contains a critical assessment of its impact on the early Independent Labour Party. He notes that by the late 1890s ILP leaders were to be found working closely with New Liberal intellectuals to formulate an agreed programme of progressive reform. While many socialists were fighting for a better deal for workers, trade unionists and the unemployed, New Liberal civil servants such as William Beveridge and Hubert Llewellyn Smith were promoting measures of 'limited socialism' to pre-empt working class insurrection.

Through local government and their dealings with the unions the New Liberals helped to house train the emerging labour bureaucracy. Together with the more right-wing Fabians, the New Liberals influenced even the most radical of the early labour movement organisations, the Social Democratic Federation. The SDF referred to the role of its members in local councils as 'a phase in the class struggle against exploiters and not in any sense a petty affair of local government reform'. Yet, as Hinton shows, the process of constant deals and compromises with the Liberals (and the SDF's lack of a coherent Marxist alternative to radical Liberalism, which Hinton neglects) led to the ideological subordination of the labour movement to the more radical sections of the middle classes.

During the First World War leading New Liberal politicians Lloyd George and Winston Churchill played a key role in involving the leaders of the working class movement in the war effort. Their earlier measures of state intervention to provide sickness and unemployment benefit proved popular with the labour leaders. Such reforms and growing state recognition of the mediating role of the trade unions and the Labour Party helped to consolidate the labour bureaucracy. The further integration of the official labour movement into the system during the war was crucial in containing rising working class discontent. After the war a revitalised Labour Party emerged as a national force. Labour was capable of appealing to both workers and middle class voters in a way the Liberals could no longer match. Within a decade Labour had replaced the Liberals as the alternative party of government – but it had adopted the programme of New Liberalism wholesale.

While lacking a systematic analysis, Hinton's book provides valuable insights into the process of formation and integration of the British labour movement. After 1921, however, his account becomes pedestrian and after 1945 positively banal. Yet if only to refute his last chapter, his first six are well worth reading.

New Liberal theory

While Hinton is a historian, Whiteley is a political scientist. Any reader opening his book and finding the first half devoted to opinion polls, attitude surveys and 'theoretical models of voting behaviour' might be tempted to throw it away. Our advice is to turn to page 111, because there follows as succinct a survey of Labour's changing programmes from 1918 to the present as you'll find anywhere. The first few chapters are summarised in one sentence in the introduction. Labour's current crises 'all have a common origin in the failure of the Labour Party, particularly in office, to achieve its goals'. In other words, people won't vote Labour because they have been consistently let down by Labour governments (as well as Labour oppositions). The efforts of top pollster Professor Ivor Crewe and a computer are scarcely necessary to reach that conclusion.

Whiteley notes the 'strong anti-capitalist

tone' of *Labour and the new social order*, Labour's first formal programme written by Fabian Sidney Webb in 1918. Its tone and its detailed and ambitious programme of reforms were formulated in response to working class pressure. The labour bureaucracy came up with this radical alternative to revolution in a period of wars and revolution and intense class struggle throughout Europe. It has been downhill ever since. *Labour and the nation* in 1928 restated the 1918 programme in vaguer and more ambiguous terms, after Labour's first brief experience of government in 1924. After the second, disastrous, Labour government of 1929 to 1931, the party adopted *Socialism and the condition of the people* in 1934. As Whiteley observes, this programme openly endorsed the classical bourgeois economic outlook then being promoted in a novel modern form by Keynes. This approach, combined with the radical Liberal welfare measures proposed by Beveridge, formed the core of Labour's 1945 programme.

MANIFESTO OF THE LABOUR PARTY
GENERAL ELECTION 1966



TIME FOR DECISION

After the war the 'revisionism' of Anthony Crosland and others steadily removed all criticism of capitalism from Labour's manifestos. By 1964, Labour's appeal to the electorate did not even mention socialism. Then came the recession and Labour's swing to the left. For Whiteley, *Labour's Programme for Britain*, adopted in 1973, represented 'a decisive break with revisionism'. In a way it was. It harked back to the classical social democratic programme of 1918, with Clause 4, 'nationalisation under workers control' once again to the fore. Whiteley also breezily surveys the bleak record of successive Labour governments in the spheres of economic and social policy. He concludes by posing Kinnock's Catch 22. To win electoral success the Labour Party 'needs to prove that it can implement a successful economic strategy. Yet to implement a successful economic strategy, Labour needs first to win a general election. Whiteley's strategic alliance is his resolution of this conundrum. He proposes that Labour should drop those elements of its industrial strategy that might antagonise employers – such as demands for nationalisation and industrial democracy. The aim 'should be to try to recruit industrial capital as an ally against finance capital, which is the real enemy of the alternative economic strategy'. Whiteley's argument has the virtue of stating plainly the consequences of railing against the City. Attacking moneylenders and stock brokers as the cause of economic decline is the common currency of Labour politicians today, from Roy Hattersley to Ken Livingstone. Unfortunately for them, Whiteley's analysis is nearly a hundred years out of date. When the New Liberal economist J A Hobson put forward a similar strategy for the Liberals at the turn of the century the coalescence of industrial and banking capital into finance capital was already far advanced.

For the Labour Party today, inventing divisions in the capitalist class is simply a distraction from its inability to unite the working class. Whiteley's revival of Hobson's dogma indulged Kinnock's fantasy that Labour can ride back to power on an all-class coalition. But why should middle class people vote Labour when they have the Tories and the SDP-Liberal Alliance to choose from? And why should workers vote Labour when, as Whiteley concedes, it has always betrayed them and, as Whiteley advocates, 'it frames its policies to appeal to employers'?

Yesterday's men

Kinnock will find no answers to his dilemma from the Labour left. In the early eighties the left won control over the party's policy-making apparatus. The result was *Labour's Programme 1982*. According to the editors of *Beyond Thatcher*, a collection of policy statements from members and former members of the parliamentary 'hard left', 'that programme' and the 1983 manifesto *New hope for Britain*, were 'the left's response to the crisis Britain faces now'. The left's programme was in fact a watered down version of *Labour's Programme 1973*. That radical document paved the way for the governments of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan,

the Social Contract, cuts in services and wages and mass unemployment.

The British electorate was not impressed by Labour's *New Hope for Britain*. The contributors to *Beyond Thatcher: the real alternative* stumped the country telling people that the 1983 manifesto was Labour's most radical and progressive platform since *Let us face the future* in 1945. But workers remembered the Social Contract and the 'winter of discontent'. They recalled how ineffective the Labour opposition had been through four years of Tory rule. They remained unmoved by the left's visions of a Britain in which industry would be democratic, agreements planned, the police accountable and the army equipped with 'alternative' non-nuclear weapons. Through the promises of jam tomorrow they could see more familiar hints of austerity and wage curbs.

Not a whit abashed by their electoral humiliation, Tony Benn, Reg Race, John Tilley, Les Huckfield and Bob Cryer have teamed up with some union bureaucrats and a few hard left survivors (Holland, Meacher, Skinner, Maynard, Flannery) to recycle the same old mixed bag of dreams and devotion to British capitalism. *Beyond Thatcher* should really be called *Beyond Heath*. It belongs in the early seventies, the golden age of the Labour left. But those days are past, like the prospects for this programme and its advocates.

Mike Freeman



The unacceptable face of backward capitalism

Patriot game

Joe Joyce & Peter Murtagh, *The Boss: Charles J Haughey in government*, Poolbeg Press, Dublin 1983, pp400, pbk £6.50.

The Boss blows the lid off politics in the Twenty-six Counties of Ireland. The authors detail every scandal that rocked the short-lived Fianna Fail government of 1982. Premier Charles Haughey presided over a government whose Justice Minister Sean Doherty sanctioned phone taps on dissident politicians and journalists. Doherty intervened to stop prosecutions of favoured constituents. On one occasion, he even persuaded the RUC across the Border to arrest a man who was about to give evidence against his brother-in-law. Haughey's Attorney General lived for a time with a double murderer and then blithely went off on holiday as soon as the truth came out. Haughey himself tried to bribe one radical Dublin TD (MP) with more than £120 million for his constituency in return for his vote in the Dail (Parliament). Another Dublin constituency was given thousands of trees to line its roads during a by-election campaign, only to find them promptly removed the day after the vote.

The Boss exposes the close connections between the two main political parties – the traditionally republican Fianna Fail and the traditionally pro-British Fine Gael – and the gardai (police force). In Ireland, promotions over the rank of inspector need Cabinet approval. The result is distinct party factions within the gardai. In one incident, the present police commissioner Larry Wren took the precaution of putting a pistol in his pocket when he accompanied his Fine Gael Justice Minister Michael Noonan to interview two Fianna Fail police commissioners.

The Boss has unleashed a stormy debate in the Twenty-six Counties. Written from a pro-Fine Gael standpoint, its publication has added fuel to the campaign to prevent Haughey ever leading his party back into government. Yet for all the animosity between Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, they have a lot in common. The book reveals that the previous Fine Gael administration was not above bugging the phones of prominent journalists. Both parties eventually lost their mandates to govern when they attempted to impose stiff economic budgets. More significantly, both parties have eagerly pursued vigorous anti-republican measures. Cross-Border security arrangements with the British Army in the Six Counties have burgeoned regardless of which party has been in government. The coordinated security operation

initiated after the IRA's recent kidnapping of supermarket executive Don Tidey showed the extent of Twenty-six County collaboration with the British government.

Loyal republic

Charles Haughey's diplomatic relations with Britain suffered the occasional rupture, but his collaboration with the Thatcher government on security matters never faltered. *The Boss* details the crisis in Haughey's administration caused by his clash with Margaret Thatcher over the South Atlantic War. Haughey called for a ceasefire just as British troops prepared to invade the Malvinas in May 1982. The British establishment was outraged. Tory backbenchers demanded the withdrawal of Irish citizens' right to vote in Britain, while the gutter press launched boycott campaigns against Kerrygold butter and Guinness.

The feeble Irish ruling class shook under the impact of the British imperialists' wrath. Irish capitalists have always depended upon British protection. Their backward economic base renders them incapable of operating as an independent class. The threat of a freeze on Anglo-Irish relations over the Malvinas turned the Irish establishment against Haughey's government. Twenty-six Counties businessmen withdrew their backing for Haughey's leadership and invested in any Fianna Fail figure willing to stab his leader in the back.

Joyce and Murtagh document the witch-hunt against Haughey with relish. What they cannot explain is how Haughey was able to survive as Fianna Fail leader in the face of numerous attempts to oust him. Today, as the Fine Gael-Labour Party coalition government threatens to crash, Haughey stands ready to return to power.

The explanation for Haughey's survival lies deeper than his unsavoury personal characteristics which the authors dwell on. Fianna Fail politicians have always used their reputation as the anti-Partition party to exploit the Irish people's national sentiments. The hostile reaction to the joint security operations over the Tidey affair affirmed the continuing strength of Irish national feeling in the South. Haughey's anti-British posturing over the Malvinas helped him to mobilise working class support and retain his influence. Despite hysterical outbursts from the backwoods lobby, the British ruling class is content to see Haughey 'play the green card'. His radical republican rhetoric helps to contain Irish national feelings within the safe limits of Twenty-six Counties politics. And where it counts – on security issues – cooperation remains the order of the day. At the height of the Malvinas dispute, Haughey's Attorney General met his opposite number from Britain to discuss joint operations against the IRA.

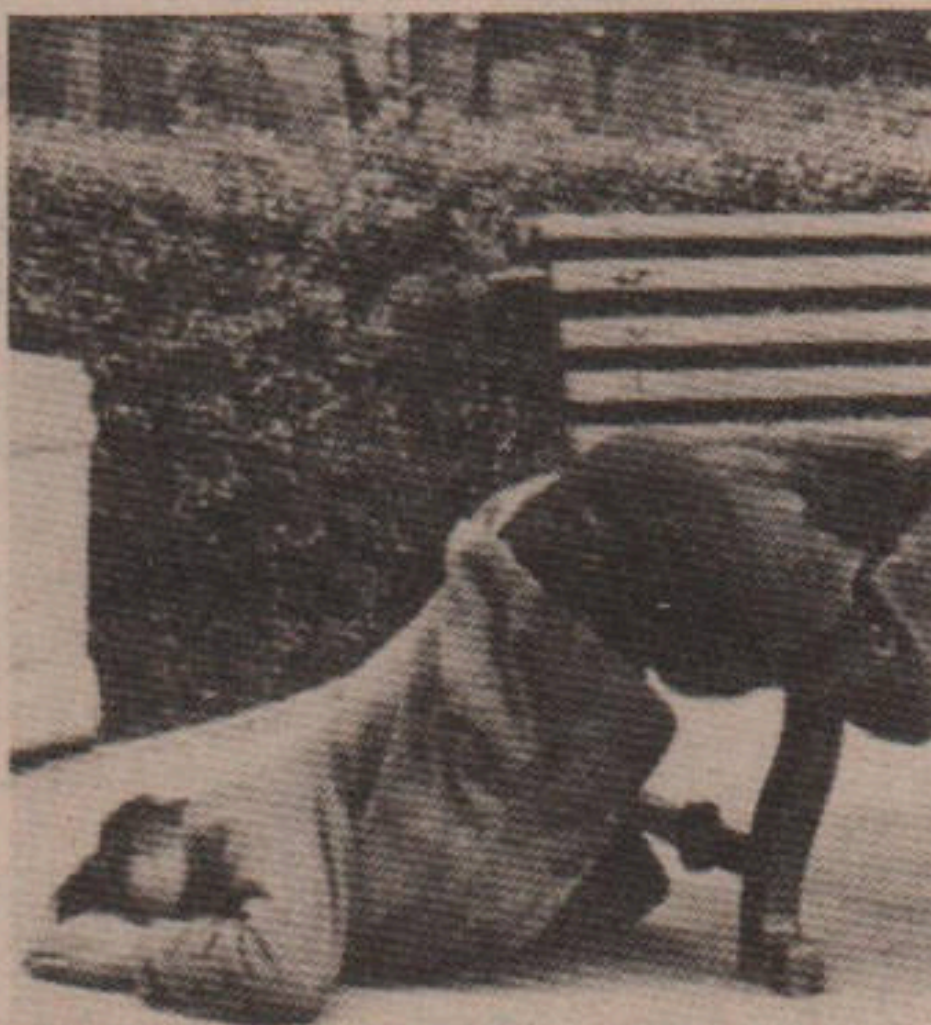
The British response to *The Boss* has been typically chauvinist. The media seized the opportunity to indulge its anti-Irish prejudices. *The Guardian's* man in Belfast David Beresford quipped that the South is 'a banana republic without the bananas'. British establishment spokesmen have always ridiculed the corruption and graft of the Twenty-six Counties as inherent to the Irish national character. A close reading of *The Boss* shows that the instability of the two ruling parties, the corruption, bribery and reaction, are the direct consequence of the oppression of Ireland by British imperialism.

Andy Clarkson

Decline and fall

Donald James, *The fall of the Russian empire*, Granada, pp504, pbk £1.95

FORMER PARATROOPER and one-time *Daily Telegraph* journalist Donald James has written a novel which is both entertaining and incisive in its portrayal of Soviet society. *The fall of the Russian empire* is a story of insurrection – a revolt by the Soviet masses, in particular the oppressed peoples of the national republics – against a parasitic bureaucracy. Based on extensive research on the Soviet Union, the result is better than most non-fiction studies.



Gorky Park 1984?

James' story interweaves fact and fiction. The death of Ukrainian nationalist leader Stephen X is based on the KGB's assassination of exiled Ukrainian nationalist Stepan Bandera in Paris in 1958. The founder of the Leningrad Free Trade Union Movement Joseph Densky is a more successful version of Vladimir Klebanov, the Ukrainian miner who formed the Free Trade Union Association. At his most perceptive, James envisages a possible alliance between a reunified Germany and the USSR or a Russian/Japanese pact – a feat that is beyond the capacity of most political commentators.

James' anti-working class instincts and his hero-worship of Russian nationalist Alexander Solzhenitsyn inform his conclusions. In James' fiction, prison *zeks* are the leading force in the anti-bureaucratic struggle. In reality, prison conflicts are of only marginal significance in the history of the class struggle. The novel's climax – open war between the government and the anti-bureaucratic forces – ends with the installation of a liberal, nationalist regime. The new regime's programme is modelled on Solzhenitsyn's vision of a reborn Russia: abandoned 'colonies' in the south and in Eastern Europe, close links between the Slav nations, the ratification of Russian control over the Siberian treasure chest and the revival of Russian Orthodoxy.

But the new Russia of Solzhenitsyn's dreams holds no gains for the working class. James' mistake is to draw too sharp a distinction between the bureaucracy and the liberal intelligentsia. His failure to appreciate the close links between the intelligentsia and the Soviet bureaucracy, and between the bureaucracy and its clients in the national republics is the novel's major flaw. But then James is no Marxist and his novel lays no claim to be a political discourse on the Soviet bureaucracy. *The fall of the Russian empire* is well worth reading for its often acute description of Soviet society.

Jackie Reynolds

Civil imperialism

Padraig O'Malley, *The uncivil wars: Ireland today*, Blackstaff Press 1983, pp481, pbk £7.95.

FROM HIS SEAT in the Centre for Policy and Public Interest at Boston University, Professor Padraig O'Malley has written a sophisticated version of the standard academic analysis of the Irish War. For O'Malley, the Irish War is a complex issue which does not lend itself to simple solutions – such as getting Britain out of the Six Counties.

O'Malley presents the war as a tribal feud which is sustained by the psychological prejudices of the rival communities. The Catholics 'feel' they are in a minority within the Six Counties, while the Protestants 'feel' they would be in a minority if Ireland were united. In fact the Catholics are an oppressed minority within the North, and the Loyalists



Terror treatment in West Belfast

would lose their position as a privileged minority in a Thirty-two County republic. O'Malley's analysis relies more on quoting from Yeats than investigating the forces at work in Ireland today.

Like most of his profession who have studied Ireland, O'Malley is more objective when dealing with the past. When it comes to the war today, his vision is blurred by pro-British prejudice. His liberal outrage is stirred by extremes of British oppression such as Bloody Sunday. But O'Malley's extensive interviews with the British establishment have convinced him that, on the whole, London rule is a good thing. Almost in spite of himself, O'Malley concedes that 'withdrawal, in short, could signal the break-up of Britain'. Academic analyses such as O'Malley's are part of the effort to ensure that this never happens. *The uncivil wars* gives an intellectual veneer to British terror in Ireland. It adds to the clouds of confusion with which Britain is keen to surround its bloody occupation of the Six Counties.

Phil Murphy



North of the border, below the breadline

Poverty and war in Scotland

Gordon Brown & Robin Cook eds, *Scotland: the real divide*, Mainstream Publishing 1983, pp251, hbk £5.95. Malcolm Spaven, *Fortress Scotland*, Pluto Press 1983, pp184, pbk £3.95.

The real divide is a harrowing description of the degradation of working class life in Scotland. More than 750 000 Scots – one in seven – are dependent on means tested supplementary benefit. And more than one million Scots are now living on or below the Government's own harshly defined 'poverty line'. This collection of essays, compiled by Livingston MP Robin Cook and Dunfermline MP Gordon Brown documents the despair behind the statistics and outlines a Labour Party strategy to overcome it.

The contributors to *The real divide* put forward their evidence of widespread deprivation as an indictment of the Tories. Their real concern is to promote Labour as the alternative party of government, promising a 'fairer distribution of wealth'. But Scottish workers can have little faith in Labour's five point programme to eliminate inequality and poverty. Successive Labour governments have presided over the decline of the Scottish economy. Since the thirties, Labour has been the major political party in Scotland. Labour holds 41 of the 72 Scottish parliamentary seats and controls all the important local councils. The victims of poverty who are the subject of this book are as much the victims of Labour policy as Tory rule.

Fortress Scotland avoids a narrow concentration on nuclear weapons in its appraisal of the military build-up in Scotland. Spaven analyses the place of Scotland's 200 and more military bases in Nato strategy, emphasises the importance of conventional weaponry and reveals the links between British and American war plans. Spaven's arguments contain two strands. First, he maintains that militarism is something foreign to Scotland. Second, he advocates an independent defence policy for Scotland.

Spaven contends that East-West tensions – not imperialist rivalries – are the locomotive force in the drive towards war. Militarism in Scotland is mentioned only insofar as it figures in US and Nato plans for East-West confrontation. Although Spaven does not present the Scottish military presence as entirely US-imposed, he constantly suggests that Scotland's independence is being threatened. But Scotland is not a colony – British or American. The history of British rule in Africa, Asia and Latin America is studded with the names of Scottish soldiers and governors. Ever since the voluntary Act of Union in 1707, the Scottish establishment has had the interests of the British state at heart. Much of the information in *Fortress Scotland* confirms this, and suggests that anti-militarists in Scotland must fight against Britain's wars today.

The foreword to Spaven's book, by a member of the Scottish CND, points in another direction – towards a 'truly defensive non-nuclear policy'. *Fortress Scotland* argues that Scotland should break free from Nato and work for a nuclear-free North Atlantic. Here, Spaven and Scottish CND meet the Scottish National Party. Since 1979, Scottish National Party members such as Billy Wolfe and Isobel Lindsey have played an important role in the peace movement. Today, the SNP takes a controversial stand against Scottish membership of Nato. This independent posturing has allowed the SNP to distance itself from the sordid record of British imperialism. But Scotland is too closely integrated into the British state to play an independent role in world politics. Scottish workers must challenge the notion that they can defend their independent interests without taking on British militarism at home.

Mike Wall

Letters

Nalگو: bosses' union

Mike Hope's article on the residential social workers dispute (*the next step*, January) outlines the sorry history of the sellout, but its conclusion fails to pinpoint some key problems. The conclusion contains two main points: end institutionalised closed shops and 'sweatheart' deals with Labour councils, and kick the bosses out of the union. I agree with the first point but it is almost irrelevant. There are over 400 local authorities but less than 20 union membership agreements - official closed shops.

The real deterrent to union organisation is the fact that the majority of Nalگو branches have negotiated check-off agreements whereby the employers collect subscriptions for the unions when they pay out salaries. Usually its all done on computer. This means that stewards, where there are stewards, often have no direct contact with their members.

'Sweetheart' deals are a major problem. Nalگو has been able to do deals with Labour and Tory councils to avoid having to rock the boat. However, it is true that deals with Labour councils are more pernicious. Nalگو branches are encouraged to fight the cuts in certain areas only to find that cuts are being imposed elsewhere. For example so-called left-wing Haringey council is now cutting after-school and child care services.

The second point in your conclusion is that Nalگو includes bosses and workers. This is not the real problem. The civil service unions are organised 'horizontally' but that hasn't made them any stronger. The article seems to imply that if there had been a residential worker on the Union's National executive, the outcome of the dispute would have been different. In any case the dividing line between boss and worker is impossible to draw. In some branches officers in charge of homes scabbed on the dispute. They are technically bosses but they are still badly paid. So far the better paid and right-wing local government officers have been better organised and managed to keep control of the executive. But they are such a minority of council workers that they are no real obstacle.

The real problem is that the Nalگو bureaucrats play the bosses' game of divide and rule. The residential workers dispute was restricted to the residential workers. Originally the action was very weak, an overtime ban which allowed councils to take on extra temporary workers, and a ban on admissions that allowed councils to put people in private sector placements. The action was not coordinated nationally and escalation was left up to the local branches. The only way the strike could have been won was by involving other sections of the union. Your article describes Hackney workers' attempts at escalation of the dispute, but does not explain why they did not take all-out action or involve other members of the branch.

The level of strike pay paid by Nalگو is another deterrent to effective organisation. Strike pay is 60 per cent of average earnings - more or less equivalent to take home pay. During the residential workers

dispute some branches had five or ten people out on strike for weeks. They weren't losing out and the branch had no incentive to resolve the issue. If there had been no strike pay the branches would have had to collect funds from members and tell other members what was going on. Within the branches groups of members became isolated and dispirited whereas action should have been coordinated and effective.

The dispute highlighted the sorry state of organisation - at all levels of the union. The Arbitration Conciliation and Advisory Service is carrying out a review of the residential workers claim - what the employers offered in the first place. No doubt the leadership will present its outcome as a victory and forget the history and the lessons to be learned.

Nalگو member,
Lambeth

Mike Hope replies:

If local government workers are going to win the wages and conditions they need, they have to ditch the cosy relationship between management and union officials which has developed over the past half century. It is true that the check off system, for deducting union dues from salaries, which exists in almost every local council, shows the closeness of management and unions. Whether a formal agreement on closed shop exists or not is beside the point. The union is a creature of the employers and not a weapon of the workers.

Workers only contact with the union is the deduction on their monthly pay-slip. The employers, on the other hand, have daily contact with union officials through joint committees. More important, they have effective control of union funds. In Hackney, when residential workers took action, the council ordered the finance department to scrap prepared pay-slips and make new ones docking pay. Normally adjustments are made the following month. Of course union dues were cut as well and the union had an unexpected drop in monthly income. This put officials under more pressure to strike a deal with the employers. As long as the union is paid for by the bosses, it can't fight for workers.

Practical considerations demand the expulsion of management from the union. During the residential workers dispute it was difficult to plan effective action because senior council officials were able to attend meetings. They were forewarned of every union action. They were able to identify militants and take action against them. Of course we cannot decide who to throw out on simple technical grounds. But in the course of a dispute it soon becomes clear who is with us and who is against. In Hackney, for example, at least three heads of residential homes were in the forefront of the action. They took a clear stand with us. Others stood firmly against us. A first step in claiming the union for workers would be to expel Chief Executives who run council departments. Hackney residential workers will be calling for this at this year's Nalگو conference.

May I first of all congratulate Kate Marshall on her appointment to the post of General Secretary to the Party. I personally enjoy her articles very much and I hope that she will continue to contribute to the review as before.

I have only been reading *the next step* since August and after, at first, being a bit sceptical of the way the review only seemed to be aimed at the more 'aware' members of society, I have settled down to reading it regularly with pleasant satisfaction.

In my opinion it is one of

the best, if not *the* best, 'leftist' periodicals. I list the things below about it which most please me:

(i) It comes out only once a month. Therefore the people at whom it is aimed have time to read and 'digest' it without becoming 'swamped'.

(ii) People who have only just become interested in politics do not suffer the kind of 'jargonistic overkill' so often associated with other political journals.

(iii) Every article re-examines the overall picture of its topic so that new readers are not left

with the feeling that they have missed out on something.

(iv) The articles are well written and quite balanced. And although they can be quite humorous at times do not do so at the expense of the serious themes running through them. Neither is this humour as 'wet' as some I have been acquainted with.

(v) I like the way that *the next step* stays away from the topic which seems to have totally possessed most other 'leftist' newspapers: that of comparing 'how many people were there from *your camp*' to 'how many people were there from *our camp*'. This is a level that is frequently stooped to by other movements notably the Socialists in Birmingham.

(vi) I also enjoy reading *the next step* book reviews very much!!

Of course, after this list of likes you know I must include a list of things I don't like so much. Here they are:

(i) Not enough Gareth Evans!

(ii) Why haven't you got any folders on sale large enough to hold, say, a year's issues of *the next step*?

(iii) Why isn't the RCP 'getting it on' in Birmingham?! By being slow to bite they're letting potential diffuse before they can concentrate it.

(iv) Why is *Racial oppression - how to fight it out of print?*

Suggestions? - Yes!

(i) Another series of meetings, similar to the ones on war, in Birmingham soon!

(ii) Could you get someone to relate the overall RCP politics to everyday life a bit more as a series of examples in *the next step*.

For example, at present miners at several pits throughout the country are on an overtime ban as a way of getting the Coal Board to agree to a suitable rise in wages. In such a case I feel *the next step* should point out in plain English that what the unions should be fighting for is a decent basic wage. Instead of fighting among themselves the miners should concentrate all their warring energies on the Coal Board management.

This is an example of the way that I feel that *the next step* could relate prominent news issues to RCP politics so that people who do not see themselves as political but as ordinary people wanting a decent life can be brought to feel that they too can identify with RCP politics and join in the fight at their place of work, within their unions or elsewhere. Keep up the good work. One in mind.

Chrissie Williams
Birmingham

Keep up the good work

RUC torture pregnant woman

On behalf of the Derry Irish Republican Socialist Party I wish to congratulate Kate Marshall on her appointment as General Secretary of the Revolutionary Communist Party, and wish her and the party every success in 1984, particularly in the field of Irish solidarity work.

I should like to draw your attention to the arrest and torture of Ms Anna Moore and her 19 year old pregnant daughter Jacqueline. Anna and Jacqueline Moore were arrested just before Christmas on suspicion of being involved in the Ballykelly pub bombing in December, 1983 which killed 17 soldiers

and civilians. Jacqueline was beaten up in front of her mother and the Royal Ulster Constabulary threatened her unborn child. After days of this treatment both women broke down and agreed to sign confessions implicating others in the Ballykelly bombing.

Both women have since denied their confessions through solicitors. But they are still being held in Armagh Women's Prison and are being denied visits by doctors. This is the reality of British justice - torture of pregnant women.

Fionnbarra O'Dochartaigh
Derry

Hackney's racist landlord

As a worker in Hackney Council's housing department, it came as no surprise to me that the Council for Racial Equality's three year investigation into racism and housing in Hackney showed that black families are forced into the worst slum housing by the council's racist housing policy. White families make up two thirds of the borough's residents, but they are seven times more likely to get a new council house than black families. Black families dumped in slum estates like Stonebridge do not need the Council for Racial Equality to tell them they have been discriminated against for years.

Council leader Tony Kendall went on television to say how 'shocked' he was at the extent of discrimination. In fact he has been aware of the CRE's findings since last June when it served the council with a 'Notice of discrimination'. Tony Kendall's bleeding heart is only on display because the report has now been made public.

Hackney Council and the CRE have cooperated to devise a 'solution' to the problem of racism in housing allocation. They have set up a system of ethnic monitoring. The council has past experience of ethnic monitoring. Two years ago the council set up a system of monitoring racist attacks on housing estates. The monitoring did not stop the attacks. Counter clerks in District Housing Offices have even advised victims of racist attacks not to fill in the monitoring

forms. They say the police and the racist assailant are often the first to be told that a complaint of assault has been made. Experiences like this mean that blacks in Hackney have no faith in the council's assurances that information obtained from ethnic monitoring in housing will be held 'in confidence'. The police and other state bodies have the power to demand such information. Given the council's willingness to allow the police to use empty council flats as observation posts on estates, black applicants for housing know that any information they give will find its way into police files. At a recent public meeting black tenants rejected ethnic monitoring as 'a load of crap'.

For the past 50 years the Labour council has been a slum landlord in Hackney. It has presided over conditions in which racism festers. More than half the council's housing stock is officially classified as 'unfit', in serious disrepair or in need of restoration. The council's racist housing allocation practice has encouraged divisions between black and white workers in the borough who are forced to compete for the few decent council houses left. I want to see direct action by council unions to fight against the council's racist housing policy. We have to force the council to provide decent housing for everyone in Hackney.

Hackney council housing
department worker.
(Name and address withheld)

Labour blocks nursery call

On 23 November last year Sheffield Council's 'equal opportunities panel' called for the city council to adopt a policy that

'All parents in the city have a right to accessible and flexible childcare provision which meets their needs for children under the age of five and for children of school age for after school hours and in school holidays.'

A few nights later, however, when the council's ruling Labour group met in secret committee to go through the minutes of the panel, the call was removed from the record. The resolution was referred back to the council's 'childcare provisions working party' for 'more discussion'.

Sheffield's Labour Council has several years of experience of shuffling the question of nursery provisions from one quango to another. The 'equal opportunities panel' is tailor made for the purpose. The council invited representatives from the local Department of Employment and trade union subcommittees like the 'women's employment forum' (an offshoot of the women's trade union subcommittee of the trades council) to join councillors for discussions of the council's equal opportunities programme. Similar panels were set up to discuss housing and unemployment. They are the Labour council's idea of injecting a bit of workers' control into council proceedings. They are controlled by local trade union leaders.

Labour's suppression of the embarrassing resolution follows three years of ducking and weaving in council committees by the Labour group. In 1981

Nalگو called for the provision of nurseries for council workers' children. The city council instructed the chief personnel officer to look into the matter and nothing more was heard until late 1982. Then, under pressure from Labour party members, the council agreed to put up the money to convert a suitable site into a staff nursery but the money for workers and running costs would have to come out of the parents' pockets. A few months later Nalگو pressed for funding for a development worker to find a suitable site for the nursery. The chief personnel officer assured them that his department could cope with the job. Nothing more was heard until the ill fated resolution of a few months ago.

Nursery facilities in Sheffield are hopeless. There are now 200 fewer places in full-time day nurseries in Sheffield than there were 40 years ago. Nursery schools in the area have spaces for a further 200 children but they are only open between 9.00 am and 3.30 pm, and children have to be over three to get in. There are some childminders but the average charge is £30 a week which is beyond what most women can afford to pay. Revolutionary communist women in Sheffield intend to cut through the council's devious bureaucratic manoeuvres and mount a campaign for the nurseries that women workers in Sheffield need.

Judy Smith
Sheffield

Meetings



Activities



Women's liberation

Anti-contraceptive campaigner Victoria Gillick wants girls under 16 who use the Pill to be taken into care. Soon they'll be back to locking unmarried mothers in psychiatric hospitals. Women hospital workers are faced with a fresh round of health service cuts. Revolutionary communist women are fighting back against these and other attacks on women's rights.

Glasgow conference

Kate Marshall, author of *Real Freedom*, chairs a special day conference

Saturday 25 February 10.30 am - 5 pm
(door opens 10 am)

Sessions include

- Sex and the family
- Dole snoopers and unemployed women
- Hospital cuts
- Women and trade unions

Govan Neighbourhood Centre
121 Langlands Road
(near Govan underground)
Cost £1 (50p UB40)

Creche, food and evening entertainment. Babysitters can be arranged. For more details and advance tickets write to Box 34, 488 Great Western Road, Glasgow 12 or phone 01-274 3951



GLASGOW

Wednesday 8 February 6.00 pm
Public Meeting
Women and revolution
Speaker Jenny Graham
Glasgow School of Art Students' Union, 167 Renfrew Street

Thursday 9 February 1.00 pm
Public Meeting
Women and revolution
Speaker Jenny Graham
Glasgow University Queen Margaret's Union, University Crescent

13 - 18 February 11 am - 6 pm
Exhibition
Women and revolution
Photographs, books, pamphlets, discussions
488 Great Western Road, Glasgow 12

SHEFFIELD

Friday 17 February 7.30 pm
Public Meeting
Fight for a woman's right to work
Sheffield Centre Against Unemployment, Bridge Street

Fighting for real freedom

Thursday 2 February
Women and the new morality

Thursday 9 February
Fighting for real freedom

Revolutionary communist women continue a series of public meetings on women's oppression and how to fight it. Every Thursday at 7.30 pm in Room 2F, Polytechnic of Central London Students' Union, Bolsover Street WC1 (Goadge Street tube)

PREPARING FOR POWER PREPARING FOR POWER IN YORKSHIRE

Northern readers of *the next step*! Come to Bradford for the day to talk about revolutionary politics in 1984!

Saturday 11 February
starts 9.30 am
Bradford Central Library, Princes Way

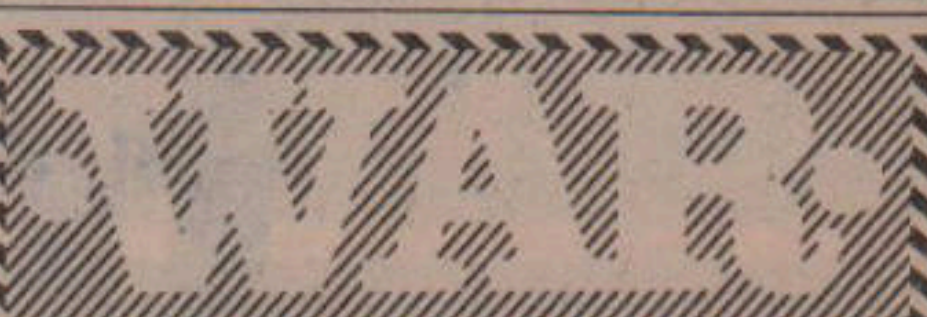
■ Morning session
Our plans for '84
introduced by Frank Richards

■ Afternoon session
Taking Control: our work in industry
introduced by Kate Marshall

Creche facilities, food, accommodation and entertainment.

PREPARING FOR POWER IN 1984

We will be holding our week-long summer school this year in Central London from 13 July to 20 July. For more information, send a stamped addressed envelope to:
Kate Marshall,
BM RCP London WC1N 3XX
or phone 01-274 3951



Deportation victim Afia Begum: Workers Against Racism is taking her case to the European Commission on Human Rights. For details phone 01-274 3951.

EAST LONDON

Tuesday 7 February 7.30 pm
Tuesday 21 February 7.30 pm
Stopping racial violence in London's East End. Meetings in Oxford House, Derbyshire Street (near Bethnal Green tube). For more details contact Farehk Afzal on 01-274 3951

COVENTRY

Tuesday 14 February 7.30 pm
Trade unionists speak on racism in the National Health Service and how to fight it.
Hare and Squirrel Pub,
New Union Street

BRADFORD

Wednesday 29 February 7.30 pm
Bradford's racist council
Room 4, Bradford Central Library, Princes Way

- 31 January ■ Seeing through ideology
- 7 February ■ The working class lives!
- 14 February ■ Communism - the realistic alternative

Frank Richards continues this series of public discussions of Marx's ideas and their relevance to the vital issues facing the workers' movement today. Every Tuesday at 7.30 pm in the University of London Union, Malet Street WC1



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Victory to the people of El Salvador!



Street death in El Salvador: right-wing murder squads won't stop US aid

The USA has pulled its marines out of Grenada — leaving behind 400 military policemen, 100 'psychological operatives' and 450 members of the Caribbean 'peacekeeping force'. Now, with the help of Henry Kissinger, President Reagan is trying to secure American interests in Central America through economic and political pressure and covert military operations short of a full scale invasion. But the people of El Salvador and Nicaragua fight on, determined to free their countries from imperialist domination.

The guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador have had three spectacular successes recently in their four year struggle against their US-backed dictatorship. Just after Christmas, they seized the command HQ of the Fourth Infantry brigade in El Paraíso, 30 miles north west of the capital San Salvador. More than 100 government troops died and 158 were taken prisoner. On New Year's Eve the FMLN struck again. Guerrillas captured and blew up the 'indestructible' Cuscatlan bridge spanning the Lempa river while its guards were preoccupied with seasonal celebrations. This was the last remaining link between the east and west of El Salvador after the destruction of the Golden Bridge last year. In mid-January the FMLN raided the prison in the provincial capital Chalatenango. Despite their intensive training by US advisers, figures released by the FMLN confirm the low morale of the government forces. The guerrillas killed or wounded 7282 soldiers in 1983, took 1757 prisoners and captured 3511 rifles. Official supplies are the main source of arms for the FMLN. The regular army now faces well-equipped guerrillas operating over wide areas of the country.

In the rest of Central America imperialist sponsored regimes and mercenary forces have suffered significant setbacks at the hands of popular movements. The radical Sandinista regime in Nicaragua successfully fought off a Christmas offensive by the Honduras-based, US-financed Contra guerrillas. Nicaraguan troops in Jinotega and Nueva Segovia provinces pushed the 3000 rebels back towards the Honduras border. In January they shot down a US military helicopter engaged in supporting the Contra operations. This feat exposed US complicity in the covert war along Nicaragua's northern border and provoked further US condemnation of the Sandinistas.

Kissinger to the rescue

American impatience with the setbacks to its authority in Central America has been growing steadily. Last year the Reagan administration used its display of military muscle against Grenada to good effect to intimidate Nicaragua. The threat of a US invasion pushed the Managua regime into sending home its Cuban advisors, into cutting back on its support for the El Salvador guerrillas and into pursuing more moderate policies at home. Last month US pressure succeeded in pulling the Contadora group — Panama, Venez-

uela, Colombia and Mexico — more into line with American objectives in the region. A 'peace plan' signed by these four, and by El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua, was watered down sufficiently to allow the USA to continue its proxy wars without interference. In the same week the commission on Central America, chaired by former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, finally produced its report.

Kissinger's report, which was endorsed by both major parties in Congress, proposed a strategy of economic warfare in Central America. It called for an \$8.4 billion, five-year development programme to bolster up friendly despotic dictatorships in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. The dollar flow will also aim to isolate and contain the radical regime in Nicaragua. The Kissinger Commission was divided only on how to deal with the notorious death squads associated with the government forces of El Salvador. Over the last three years semi-official death squads have massacred some 30 000 left wingers, trade unionists, and ordinary workers and peasants merely suspected of sympathies for the guerrillas. The mass murder campaign has caused both embarrassment and annoyance in Washington.

The death squads have caused embarrassment because gruesome atrocities have received world wide publicity, and annoyance because they have driven thousands of Salvadoreans into the FMLN. Death squads employed by big landowners have been engaged in terrorising peasant beneficiaries of land reforms promoted by the USA to stabilise the regime. Some have even threatened 'reprisals' against US advisers. Yet the US government recognises the need for the death squads' savagery to sustain its friends' precarious regime in El Salvador. The Commission was divided but Kissinger recommended that US aid should go ahead despite 'human rights' violations because of the 'military crisis'. Reagan backed Kissinger — 'American policy requires a growing heap of bodies in El Salvador.

American military interference continues to keep a high profile in Central America. The six month 'training exercise' by 4000 US troops in Honduras has been extended indefinitely. American military personnel regularly meet Contra chiefs in the Honduran border town of Las Trojes to coordinate supplies for insurgents inside Nicaragua. They also organised the planes and ships that harass the Nicaraguan port of Potosi in the Gulf of Fonseca, adjacent to El Salvador, and used a sea-launched missile to destroy the oil refinery at the Pacific port of Corinto.

Solidarity with anti-imperialists

Any setback to the US forces and their allies in Central America is a step forward for the masses of impoverished workers and peasants in the region. British workers have every interest in seeing Reagan humbled in El Salvador just as they have in seeing Thatcher defeated in Ireland or the Malvinas.