

the next step

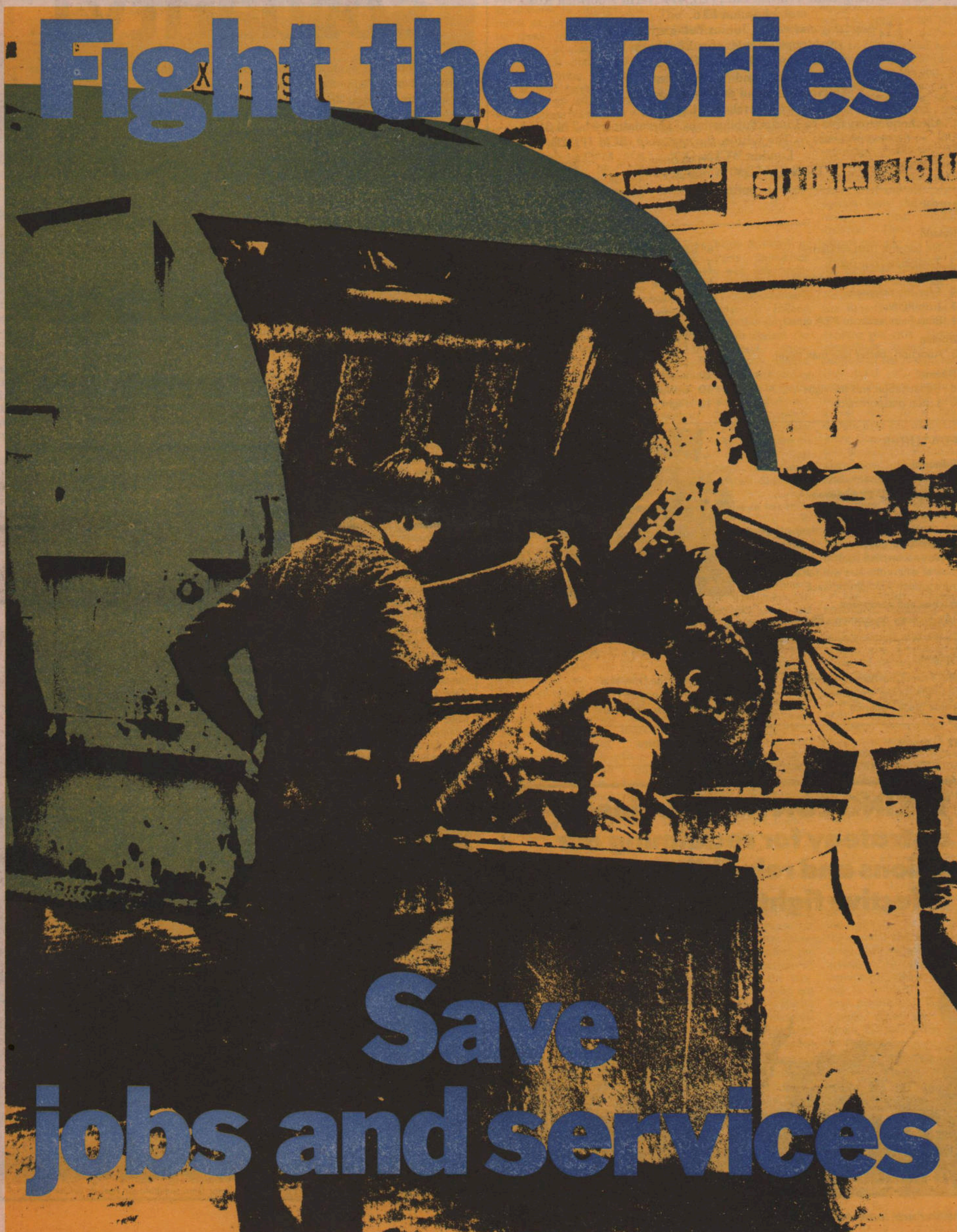
review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No 45 March 1984

20p

Attack
on abortion
rights
p5.

Fight the Tories



Save jobs and services

the next step

No. 45 March 1984
monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

Publisher Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX.
Printer Morning Litho Printers Ltd (TU), 439 North Woolwich Road,
London E16.

Typesetting and design Junius Publications Ltd (TU).

Subscription rates (for 12 months)

Britain and Ireland £5, Europe £8.50

Middle East and North Africa £10

America, Asia and Southern Africa £12

Australasia £13

All cheques payable to Junius Publications. Circulation 01-274 3951.

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London WC1N 3XX.

ISSN 0144-350 X March 1984

NEWS

Ireland

- 2 No bans on Irish solidarity!
- 3 Their state, our rights
- 3 Speak out for Irish freedom!
- 4 Free the prisoners
- 4 Irish POWs
- 4 Sinn Fein leader in PTA arrest

Women

- 5 Abortion: better late than never

Racism

- 6 Repatriation and the right
- 6 Luton passport raids

- 6 Sari Squad goes to Europe
- 7 Black workers in the NHS

Imperialism

- 8 El Salvador: Reagan's bloodbath
- 8 Lebanon erupts

Labour movement

- 9 Fight contractors and cuts
- 10 GCHQ: loyal servants
- 10 Scott's bakery strike
- 10 Strike for jobs, not Ford
- 10 Fight Ferranti

FEATURES

Editorial

- 11 A world we did not make
- 11 Farewell then Andropov

Defend jobs and services!

- 12 As the Tories prepare their offensive against local government, Labour has already reconciled itself to the cuts. We look at where the axe will fall and outline our strategy for fighting back.

Women and revolution

- 16 Trotsky on women's liberation



Imperialism

- 18 Apartheid expansionism

Reviews

- 20 From Chartism to Labourism
- Grenada: under the heel
- Inside black America

- Isolating the Irish War
- Police and people
- Middle class nightmare

22 Letters

23 Activities

No bans on Irish solidarity!

At the end of January, Home Secretary Leon Brittan banned the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration march from Sheffield. Twelve years ago British paratroopers stopped an anti-internment march in Derry by shooting dead 14 unarmed Irishmen. This year, Sheffield's Labour council stopped the march in memory of the 14 murdered on Bloody Sunday by asking the Home Office to ban it.

doran trade unionists took a collection in aid of the armed struggle against the US-backed dictatorship in El Salvador. Sheffield council's ban was not prompted by an aversion to violence, but by the council's loyalty to the British state and hatred of those who fight British oppression.

Last November, Sinn Fein (Britain) called the 1984 Bloody Sunday march for 29 January in Sheffield. An organising committee supported by labour movement and Irish solidarity organisations booked Sheffield City Hall for a post-march rally. Then came the IRA bomb at Harrods on 17 December. Sheffield's Tory press seized on the march to add to the general climate of anti-Irish bigotry whipped up by the media. Sheffield council leader and Labour Party national executive member David Blunkett gave in to the wave of hysteria and banned the rally from the City Hall.

The council's concern over the National Front demonstration was a weak effort to portray its grovelling before the British establishment as radical anti-fascism. Fascist sects threaten to attack the Bloody Sunday commemoration every year. Even when their opposition demonstrations have materialised, they have never succeeded in disrupting the march. A Labour council's ban achieved what the National Front can only dream of – silencing opposition to the Irish War.

On 4 January the council banned anybody supporting the fight for Irish freedom from their property. Three weeks later Blunkett joined South Yorkshire police chief Wright in applying to the Home Office for a ban on the march. Leon Brittan eagerly complied.

Irish Freedom Movement and Sinn Fein supporters tried to move the march to Bradford. An all-party coalition of Tory, Labour and Liberal group leaders applied for a ban without consulting their councillors. The march was barred from Bradford. A last minute attempt to reorganise the march in Chesterfield met a joint call for a ban from the local and North Derbyshire Labour councils. The Home Office slapped its third ban on the march.

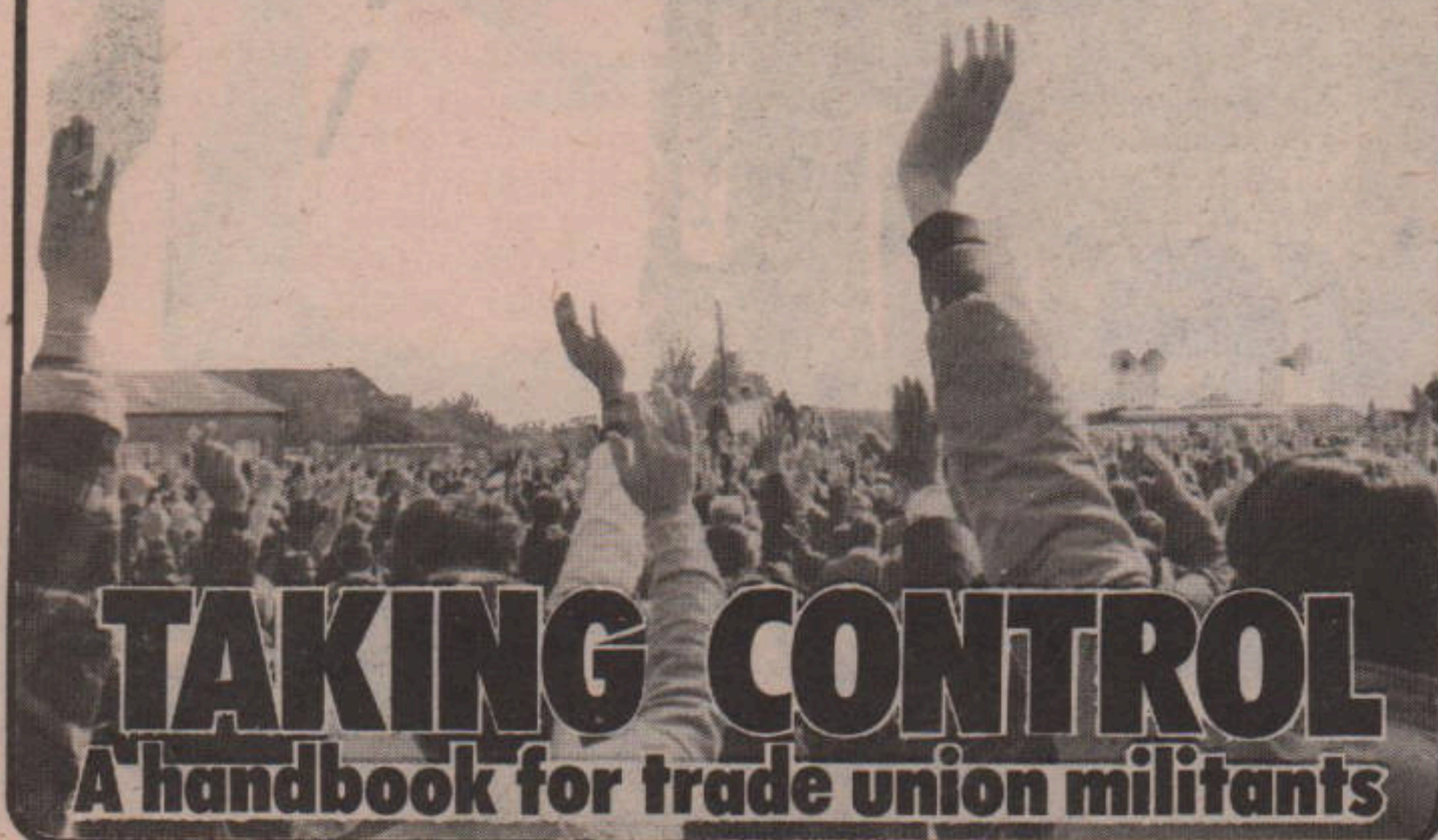
Chief constables usually have to cajole local authorities to agree to stop a demonstration. Yet in Sheffield it was the Labour council which put pressure on the police to go for a ban. Blunkett gave two reasons for his action. First he objected to the march organisers' refusal to condemn anti-imperialist violence. Second, Blunkett claimed the threatened National Front counter-demonstration could provoke a riot. Neither excuse justifies Blunkett's attack on democratic rights.

Sheffield Labour council objects to organisations which back the Irish liberation struggle and commemorate the dead of Bloody Sunday. Yet Blunkett has no qualms about opening council premises to the Tory Party, whose leaders presided over the Derry massacre. Neither does Blunkett condemn anti-imperialist violence that threatens powers other than Britain. On 20 January Sheffield Labour Party held a meeting – on council premises – at which Salva-

The opposition did not remain silent for long. On Saturday 28 January – the day after the bans were imposed – Yorkshire Irish Freedom Movement staged its regional 'Making sense of Ireland' conference in Sheffield. The conference had been called as a focus for building the Bloody Sunday march. Instead, the 300-strong meeting became a launching pad for a campaign against the ban. The conference called a demonstration against bans on Irish solidarity and attacks on the democratic rights of free speech and assembly for Saturday 3 March – in Sheffield. The victims of Bloody Sunday died for the right to oppose oppression. We will fight to defend that right.

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



IFM in Sheffield: the state stopped us marching, but not from speaking out against British terror



On the march: be there in Sheffield on 3 March!

Speak out for Irish freedom!

THE SHEFFIELD BAN is an attempt to suppress the rights of people who want to speak out against the British occupation of Ireland. It aims to stop people pointing the finger at the real culprit for the casualties at Harrods and all the other victims of 14 years of war in Ireland — the British state.

There is nothing new about attacks on our freedom to oppose British rule in Ireland. Former Irish prisoner of war Gerry McLaughlin of Sinn Fein opposed the ban as one more state attack on the Irish people's democratic rights:

'Sinn Fein has been banned or illegal for most of its existence. But we make it clear we'll be marching in Britain. We'll oppose this ban and we'll beat this ban.'

For ten years the rights of Irish people living in Britain have been curtailed by the Prevention of Terrorism Act. On the same day that Sheffield council leader David Blunkett called for Leon Brittan to ban the Sinn Fein march, the new Prevention of Terrorism Bill passed its third reading in Parliament. The Bill will become operative in mid-March when the old Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act expires. The new Bill makes permanent the existing ban on Irish people speaking out against Britain's occupation of their country. More than 5600 people have been detained under the provisions of the old PTA. There will be thousands more detentions if we allow the new Bill to go unchallenged. But bans and draconian laws are more than an attack on supporters of Irish freedom.

Any restriction on democratic rights is a blow against the working class, against women, against blacks, against peace campaigners, against any section of society which needs to protest and organise against the system. It is vital that we mobilise the widest possible resistance to any state bans on meetings and demonstrations. Support for the march has come flooding in from all quarters. Joan Maynard, Sheffield MP and veteran leader of the Labour left was one of the first to back the march against the bans. Maynard is president of the Labour Committee on Ireland and

The Irish Freedom Movement demonstration in Sheffield on 3 March has won broad support for the campaign:

Against — Sheffield Labour council's ban on Irish meetings and demonstrations

Against — The Tories' new Prevention of Terrorism Bill

has long been involved in Labour Party initiatives around the war. She sponsored the Yorkshire Irish Freedom Movement's 'Making sense of Ireland conference' in January and spoke out then against the bans in Sheffield. Clare Short, the recently elected Birmingham MP with strong family connections in South Armagh, soon added her support for the march. Short was a member of the Labour Party delegation to the Six Counties last summer that met Gerry Adams and other Sinn Fein leaders.

Jeremy Corbyn has built up a reputation for campaigning in solidarity with the peoples of Ireland and Central America since he was elected MP for Islington last June. He is no stranger to bans on Irish meetings. Only a fortnight before the Bloody Sunday ban Corbyn travelled to Grays in Essex for a debate on Ireland with the Irish Freedom Movement. When a crowd of 30 fascist thugs, bussed in from London, attempted to disrupt the meeting they were kept out by IFM supporters. The local police chief used this as a pretext to cancel the debate, despite protests from Corbyn and others at the meeting. While plans went ahead to reconvene the debate in Grays, Corbyn gave full backing to the march against the bans in Sheffield.

Other MPs who gave their support included Southall representative Syd Bidwell and Liverpool's Bob Parry, a prominent supporter of local Irish Freedom Movement initiatives against the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in the city. Other Labour MPs were not so forthcoming. Martin Flannery, MP for a marginal Sheffield constituency, declined and front bench

spokesman Clive Soley equivocated. Tony Benn was too preoccupied trying to become an MP in Chesterfield to take a stand against the suppression of democratic rights in the area. Ken Livingstone wrote in to declare his approval for the march against the bans. Livingstone emphasised the link between the GLC's campaign against Tory attempts to curtail democratic rights at local government level and the protests against bans and proscriptions on Irish solidarity activity. There was widespread backing for the Sheffield demonstration on similar grounds from Labour councillors who met in Nottingham a week after the Bloody Sunday ban to discuss strategy against rate capping and cuts. Some 40 councillors signed up in support of the march, taking the total of councillors against the bans past 60. In Bradford where the Labour group split in a heated debate over the original ban more than a dozen councillors backed the March demonstration. Local Militant leader and prospective MP Pat Wall spoke out against the bans. Peter Hain, adviser to Labour leader Neil Kinnock and prominent figure in the radical Labour Coordinating Committee, backed the Sheffield protest.

The Irish Freedom Movement appealed to a wide range of movements which would also be affected by any further restrictions on rights to organise and protest. Indications of support came from women's groups, international solidarity organisations, ethnic minority movements and race campaigns. Kwame Ture (formerly Stokeley Carmichael), the black rights campaigner recently expelled from Britain for urging British blacks to organise to fight back, called from the USA to give his backing to the march against the bans.

As we go to press the list of march sponsors is growing fast. It is vital that we mobilise the biggest possible demonstration in Sheffield on 3 March. We must show the council and the Government that we will fight any attempts to restrict our democratic rights to speak out in solidarity with the Irish people — or any other people who are ground down by the British state. Be there!

Their state, our rights

SHEFFIELD CITY council tried to justify its ban on the Bloody Sunday march as an attempt to stop fascist violence. In the 1930s, the National Council for Civil Liberties used the same argument to call for legislation to restrict demonstrations. Yet the history of the 1936 Public Order Act — which was used to ban the Sheffield march — shows that state bans have always hit labour movement and left-wing demonstrations.

The Public Order Act was introduced in the wake of street battles between fascists and left-wing workers. Under the Act police forces outside London can ask their local council to apply to the Home Office for a ban on demonstrations. Police chiefs in London can apply direct to Whitehall.

From the first, the Act was used to arrest anti-fascist demonstrators rather than Mosley's black-shirts. Over the past 20 years police have used the powers of proscription against peace campaigners, anti-imperialists, anti-racists, workers — anybody who challenges the establishment. Those who break bans have faced mounted police baton charges. Occasional bans on right-wing marches have always been turned against the left.

In 1960, a protest against rent rises in Camden became a riot when police broke it up and slapped a three month ban on demonstrations in the area. In 1963, 1967 and 1970, London protests against repression in Greece were banned and broken up. Police

added charges of riotous assembly and two Greek demonstrators were deported. Bans have been used to give a legal cover to police terror. In 1965, a protest against the Vietnam War was banned from London's Grosvenor Square without warning. Police simply waded into the crowd and broke up the march. Similar bans and brutality met anti-Vietnam marches throughout the sixties.

During the seventies, the left called on the state to restrict fascist marches. Yet the real effect of state interference in clashes between left and right was shown in 1974 at Red Lion Square and 1979 in Southall, when police baton charges killed anti-fascist demonstrators; first Kevin Gately, and then Blair Peach. When police complied with Labour councils' requests to ban fascist marches, they made sure the left did not benefit. Thus in February 1978, the Metropolitan Police applied for a ban on a National Front march in Ilford. The left was jubilant — until it became clear that planned anti-fascist marches were also banned.

If the police cannot use a council ban to suit their own purposes, they will ignore it. In October 1977, Tameside Council in Manchester applied to ban a fascist march. But police allowed National Front leader Martin Webster to march through Hyde in Tameside, while making sure anti-fascist protests were banned.

Irish solidarity marches have been frequent targets for state bans. The most

significant is the permanent ban on Irish protests in Trafalgar Square — the traditional venue for London rallies. The Trafalgar Square ban was imposed in February 1972, in response to a huge London demonstration protesting at the deaths on Bloody Sunday. Since 1972, the only event concerning Ireland allowed into Trafalgar Square was a rally staged by the pro-British 'peace people' in 1976. Police attacked anti-imperialist counter-demonstrators, arresting 14.

Annual Bloody Sunday commemorations have been threatened with bans on several occasions over the past 12 years. The march was banned from Coventry in January 1982 after the National Front threatened a counter-demonstration. The organisers moved the march to Birmingham. Police allowed a fascist gang to take over a roundabout and smoke-bomb coaches arriving for the march.

People who break bans on Irish solidarity have been left in no doubt as to whose side the state is on. During the 1981 hunger strike, the Home Secretary slapped a ban on all London marches. An Irish solidarity protest against the ban in Kilburn marched into a wall of riot police. Forty protesters were arrested. The Sheffield ban on the Bloody Sunday commemoration stands in this tradition of state terror. Whether proposed by radical Labour councils or police thugs, bans on demonstrations are used against those who challenge oppression.

MARCH AGAINST BANS ON IRISH SOLIDARITY! SHEFFIELD 3 MARCH

Assemble: Caborn Corner, Carlisle Street (Spital Hill) Sheffield, 1 pm

Transport details — see page 24

Free the prisoners

For as long as British forces have occupied Ireland there have been Irish political prisoners in British jails. Marx and Engels supported the Fenian prisoners, we support republican POWs today.

Letter from Brixton jail — page 23.

Last month Sinn Féin councillor Alex Maskey launched a republican prisoners of war campaign in Britain. He spoke to Irish Freedom Movement national organiser Keith Tompson about Irish political prisoners and about recent developments in Ireland.

WHAT ARE THE aims of the republican prisoners of war campaign?

The plight of Irish political prisoners in British jails deserves much wider recognition. In Britain they are branded as mad and evil men and women and they get appalling treatment in the prisons. Though conditions in Long Kesh are bad enough, at least our prisoners there have a sense of being in it all together, and they have widespread support in the nationalist community. Here the prisoners are isolated in the prisons and public opinion is strongly against them. What we are saying in our campaign is that Irish political prisoners are freedom fighters, not psychopaths.

What do you hope to achieve?

We want our prisoners to be treated as what they are — prisoners of war. The only reason they are in prisons in Britain is because Britain is at war in Ireland. They had the courage to fight in the most difficult conditions behind enemy lines in England itself and they have been punished by long sentences in terrible conditions. In a way the Brits recognise their special political status by the way they treat them — making them 'category A', putting them in solitary, moving them around all the time. Our demands are that they recognise the rights of our prisoners as prisoners of war. We want an end to the ill-treatment and the right to repatriation — so that Irish political prisoners can serve their time in Ireland.

How is Britain responding to Sinn Féin's electoral advance?

We've recently come through a series of attempts to criminalise the struggle — the supergrass was the latest. But our electoral gains — first during the hunger strikes in 1981, then in the Assembly elections in 1982 and in last year's general election — have dispelled the myth that the republican struggle has no support. Britain now has to counteract our growing popular resistance in Ireland. What it has tried to do recently is to bolster up the forces that could counteract Sinn Féin. Witness the recent statements by James Prior who has called on nationalist people to vote SDLP.

How is the SDLP trying to come to terms with Sinn Féin's success?

The SDLP leaders found themselves in a situation where, after a number of years in which they had no public opposition, they had become complacent. Now they find that Sinn Féin is getting support because the

majority of the nationalist people do not want Britain in our country. So when Maggie Thatcher or the Duke of Edinburgh come to visit the UDR barracks in Armagh — where soldiers have been charged with sectarian murders — they have to make anti-Brit noises. However, by doing that they are creating problems for themselves because they also want to reach some accommodation with the Loyalists.

Will the outcome of the New Ireland Forum help the SDLP?

Although it's difficult to predict the exact outcome of the Forum it is obvious that the British would like to see the SDLP as the main voice of nationalist opinion in the North. They can get on well with a docile force that will in no way attempt to bring about the removal of British troops or even raise the question of Britain's occupation of our country. The SDLP refused to campaign against plastic bullets or to support the hunger strikers, so obviously it's in Britain's interest to have a strong SDLP. The Forum is a part of that bolstering-up process.

What do you think about the bans on Irish marches in Britain?

Of course we are used to British bans — virtually all marches, apart from Orange parades, in Northern Ireland are illegal. This is obviously something you have got to fight. If democracy means anything people have got to stand up for free speech on Ireland.



POW campaign launched: Sinn Féin councillor Alex Maskey with former prisoner Gerry McLaughlin

Irish political prisoners

At present 54 Irish political prisoners are serving a total of nearly one thousand years in sentences in British jails. Of these 41 are recognised as freedom fighters captured in the course of military activity against the British state. The remaining 13 have been framed and falsely convicted on charges arising from bombings at Guildford and Woolwich and on the M62 motorway.

Irish political prisoners receive special treatment in British jails. All but a handful are 'category A' prisoners, kept in high security prisons. Many are also assigned to the special 'category AE' — those thought likely to attempt to escape — and subjected to even higher security. Irish prisoners have also been detained in special control units at Gartree

and Wakefield where sensory deprivation techniques are used. Some have spent years on end in solitary confinement.

Irish prisoners are moved regularly from one prison to another to inconvenience visiting relatives and to prevent them organising with other prisoners. Nevertheless Irish prisoners have been at the centre of revolts at Wormwood Scrubs, Hull and Albany prisons. Five Irish political prisoners — Michael Gaughan, Frank Stagg, Noel Jenkinson, Giuseppe Conlon and Sean O'Connell — have died at the hands of their British jailers.

One prisoner who has been particularly harshly treated is Patrick Hackett. Despite having lost an arm and a leg in a premature explosion, Hackett refused

for two years to wear a prison uniform, wearing a blanket instead. Although his physical condition has recently deteriorated, the authorities have refused to allow him proper medical attention.

The republican prisoners of war campaign demands

- the right to repatriation for all republican prisoners of war

- the release of prisoners wrongly convicted

- an end to the use of control units and solitary confinement

- the release of Patrick Hackett on medical grounds

- the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Support the prisoners' demands and the regular prison pickets! Details from the Irish Freedom Movement, 01-274 3951.

PTA arrest

Leading London Sinn Féin activist Jan Taylor was picked up under the Prevention of Terrorism Act just before Christmas. He told his story to *the next step*.

'I had been out selling republican literature on a Friday night. When I got back five Special Branch men were waiting at my flat. They had a search warrant for explosives. It was obvious from the lack of equipment for detecting explosives — for instance no dogs — and the way they searched the flat, without removing the floor boards, that they weren't really interested in explosives. They seemed interested to confiscate Sinn Féin literature, correspondence, cheque books, lists of prisoners and anything else that might give them information.'

'I had been stopped about a month previously on my way to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in Dublin. I was asked to sign a green card.

On this I put an old address, and within seconds they queried it after referring to the computer and discovering that I didn't live there any more. I then gave them my new address.

'Anyway they searched my place for about two hours and bundled up everything they wanted. They then said I was being arrested under the PTA for membership of an illegal organisation, funding an illegal organisation, and for acts of terrorism that have happened or were about to happen. The six interrogation sessions I went through indicated that they were more interested in finding out about other people I know, than pursuing the charges I was arrested for. Of course I refused to answer any questions of that kind.'

'When I returned to work three days after appearing in court I was suspended. Management said people were frightened to

work with me and so they would suspend me until my redundancy came up.

'I think it's very important that we give maximum publicity and protest about this sort of intimidation. If we are prevented from selling Sinn Féin calendars the next step will be to stop us selling our paper *Republican News*. This, together with the ban on our Bloody Sunday commemoration in Sheffield, Bradford and Chesterfield, gives the distinct impression that there is an attempt to drive Sinn Féin off the streets of Britain and away from its contacts with the Irish community. It was significant that while I was inside they asked what I thought would be the consequences of banning Sinn Féin. It seems that the government is looking for ways to ban Sinn Féin. They seem to be testing our strength.'



Abortion

Better late than never

The propaganda campaign against late abortions and the threat to introduce further legal curbs on abortion rights are part of a broader offensive to make women pay the price for the recession. The renewed attack on abortion rights — and abortion facilities — also exposes the collapse of the broad coalition of medical, trade union and feminist forces which successfully held off restrictive legislation in the seventies.

LATE ABORTIONS have become the subject of national debate at a convenient moment for the British establishment. Proposals for further restrictions on women's abortion rights fit in with the new climate of reactionary morality which aims to ratify and reinforce women's inferior position in society. Tighter controls on abortion also suit health service authorities for whom cuts in abortion facilities are a convenient way of making the savings demanded by reduced government budgets.

The church-backed anti-abortion lobby has seized on the late abortion issue in a renewed onslaught on women's rights. Last year one group of zealots succeeded in getting a gynaecologist charged with the attempted murder of a baby born alive after a late abortion. He was acquitted, but the propaganda campaign has continued and intensified. Now the anti-abortionists are pressing for measures to reduce the legal time limit for abortion from the 28th to the 24th week of pregnancy, or even earlier. Last month a top committee of gynaecologists and paediatricians, the doctors most closely involved in the

care of women and babies, announced that it was seriously considering supporting a 24 week limit.

Doctors' approval of tighter legal curbs on abortion has been justified by advances in medical technology. It has been widely argued in the media that improvements in neonatal intensive care have made the survival of babies born prematurely after only 24 weeks of pregnancy commonplace. The argument is spurious (see box). Exaggerated claims for medical technology are being used to justify doctors' acquiescence to the anti-abortion lobby.

Since last year's court

case doctors have come under intense pressure from the anti-abortion groups Life and Spuc, both of which have a substantial medical membership. The anti-abortion groups have encouraged nurses and other staff to inform on consultants who perform late abortions, threatening further trials and adverse publicity. As a result the British Medical Association's ethical committee is now considering a 24 week limit.

The publication last month of a national study *Late abortion in England and Wales* gave the anti-abortion campaigners another opportunity to push their case for restriction. Yet the report exposed the fact that the late abortion issue is a pretext for curbing abortion rights. It revealed that late abortions make up only a tiny proportion of the total. The most recent statistics show that out of a total of 167 797 abortions performed in England and Wales in 1982 only 102, or 0.06 per cent, were carried out after 24 weeks. Less than 2 per cent, around 3000, were done after 20 weeks.

The report examined the reasons for late abortions. In around a fifth of cases abortion was performed

because of a serious abnormality in the baby which could only be diagnosed after 20 weeks. In another fifth of cases the delay resulted from the inefficient procedures of the NHS. More delays resulted from understandable indecision and procrastination, especially in teenagers. Still more were caused by failures to recognise pregnancy at an early stage. For as long as all these problems remain unresolved, facilities for late abortion remain indispensable for women.

While the lobby for restricting rights to abortion in law gathers strength, NHS

women's movement. Well coordinated campaigns, including parliamentary lobbying and mass demonstrations, were successful in preventing the Bills from being passed. At that time it was a matter of defending the status quo — the 1967 Act which allowed abortion under certain conditions — against the anti-abortion extremists. Today the climate of opinion has changed and so has the balance of forces.

In 1984 the establishment has become much more sympathetic to demands to curtail abortion rights. Conditions of deepening recession

were sufficiently concerned to secure the affiliation of women to the unions to organise a national demonstration in support of abortion rights. Today the union leaders are much too preoccupied with securing their own survival to pursue the cause of women's rights.

The women's movement too has largely abandoned the fight for abortion rights. In the seventies feminist arguments remained on the moral terms dictated by the anti-abortion campaigners. Catholics asserted the right of the foetus to life, feminists asserted a woman's right to choose. So long as the adversaries of the women's movement were merely right-wing Tories and religious fanatics, moralism was sufficient. However, over the past couple of years the weaknesses of the feminist approach have been exposed.

From within the women's movement particular interest groups have challenged the feminist commitment to abortion. Black feminists have questioned the use of abortion — and sterilisation — as a device for controlling the black population. Disabled feminists have protested about the discrimination against the disabled implicit in aborting abnormal foetuses. Outside the women's movement the anti-abortion forces have steadily gained ground. Internally divided and confronted by the Government, the management of the NHS and the medical profession, the feminist campaigns to defend abortion rights have fragmented and collapsed.

No choice

For working class women abortion has never been a question of morality or choice. The endless philosophical debates about the moment life begins, or the stage of pregnancy at which the foetus becomes viable, are irrelevant to most women. Nor is abortion simply a matter of individual choice for women workers as it may be for middle class women. The fact is that pregnancy and childbirth can be a disaster for a working class woman, leading to loss of income or even a job. Abortion is thus an essential safeguard of women's right to participate in society. Abortion is a necessity not an optional extra.

Defending abortion rights in 1984 means taking on the system. Our fightback against the current offensive must begin by mobilising working class support for free abortion on demand. Women can't afford anything less and all workers have an interest in defending them against both legal attacks and spending cuts.

Anne Burton

Technofraud

The bionic baby remains a science fiction fantasy. Techniques of fertilisation have been perfected to produce human embryos from sperm and ova in test tubes. Methods of nurturing babies have made some advances in saving premature infants. Yet the technological barriers to sustaining a potential human being in any other place than a woman's womb between a week and six months after fertilisation remain enormous.

The main effect of higher standards of neonatal care has been to give babies born after 28 weeks of pregnancy a better chance. The mortality rate and the incidence of serious handicaps such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, mental retardation and deafness among babies born after 28 weeks have been significantly reduced by modern techniques. Before 28 weeks both mortality and the incidence

of handicap remain very high. Before 26 weeks the outlook is grim, even in the best centres. Science provides no justification for an earlier limit than 28 weeks.

Anti-abortionists constantly proclaim their commitment to the sanctity of the life of the unborn child. They are not at all concerned about the impact of the cuts on the quality of life of babies who have been born. A recent survey of neonatal intensive care found a nationwide shortfall of 60 per cent in the recommended number of cots, with only a third of centres having a full establishment of nursing staff. The moralists' interest in medical technology extends only as far as they can use it to justify curbs on abortion rights. They are not concerned with making the best technology available for all babies who need it.

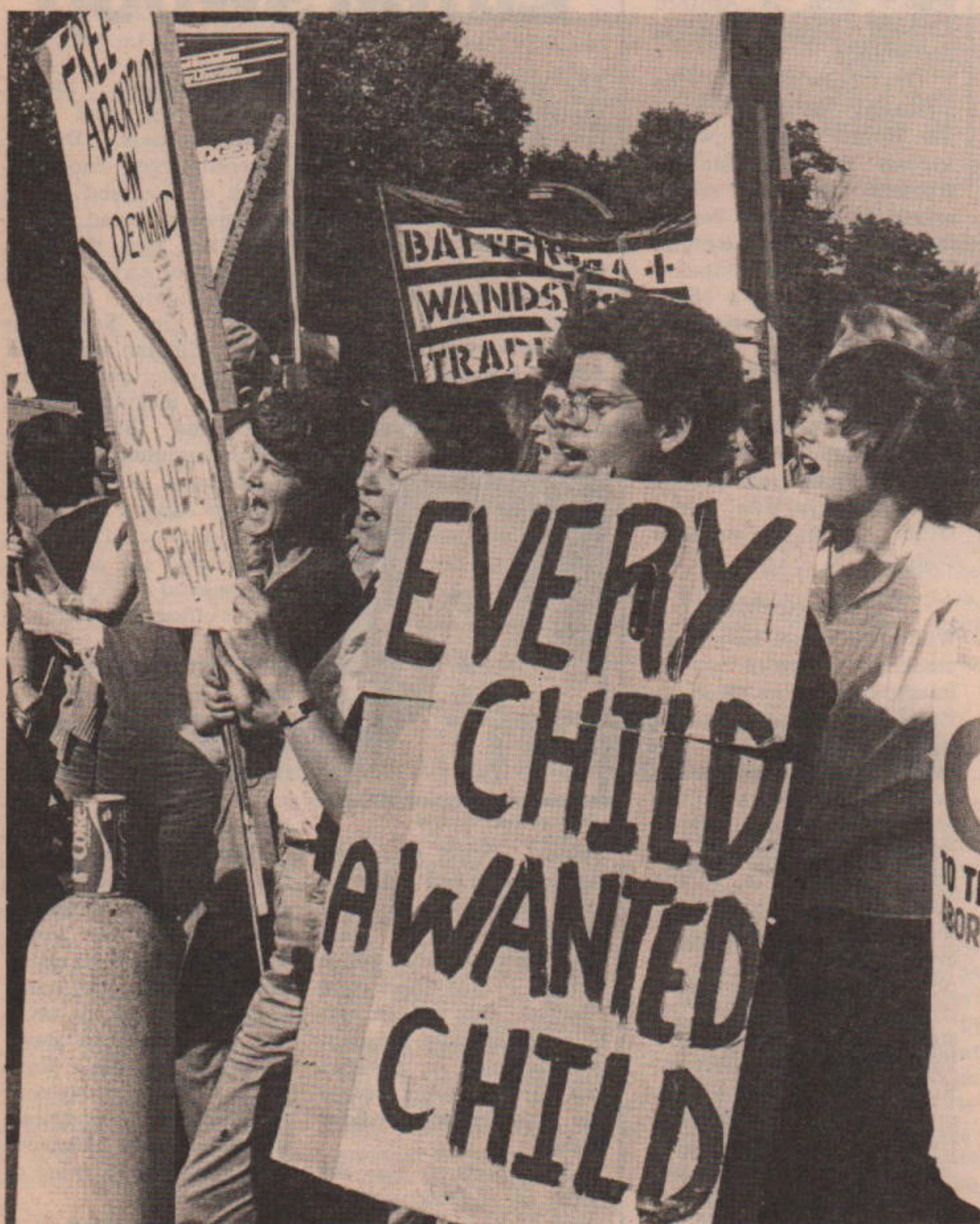
cuts are already denying abortion rights in practice. Over the past 10 years the proportion of abortions performed in the private sector has climbed steadily as NHS facilities have deteriorated. Since 1978 most abortions have been done privately. Every round of hospital cuts hits abortion provisions. The latest economy measures in East London for example threaten to close the area's only day care abortion service at Mile End Hospital.

Collapsing coalition

The mounting offensive against abortion rights has yet to come up against any effective resistance. In the seventies a series of measures to restrict abortion — the White (1975), Benyon (1977), and Corrie (1979) Bills — met concerted opposition from doctors' organisations, the official labour movement and the

sion require woman in the role of mother, shouldering the burdens of a shrinking welfare state. There is less demand for women's services on the labour market than there was when the 1967 Abortion Act offered women a degree of independence from family life. The coalition that defeated White, Benyon and Corrie has disintegrated.

The doctors are still concerned to preserve the professional control over access to abortion which the 1967 Act conferred upon them. But they are sympathetic to the Government's broad offensive against women and receptive to making NHS economies in the sphere of abortion facilities. They have signalled their willingness to compromise on abortion rights, so long as their status and income are not compromised. In 1979 the leaders of the TUC



Where are they now?: abortion rights are again under attack but the old campaigns have collapsed

Repatriation and the right

**'ENOCH POWELL LASHES QUEEN'
'REPATRIATION - TORIES SAY YES'
'TORY EXTREMISTS EXPOSED'
'KWAME TOURE BANNED FROM BRITAIN'**

IN RECENT WEEKS the front-page headlines in the daily newspapers have heralded a mounting ideological offensive against Britain's black community. And behind the headlines the Tory government has been turning the screw on thousands of black families. The immigration rules are being applied more stringently and black workers are under increasing pressure to vacate their jobs. The passport raids in Luton, Bradford and Birmingham in mid-January (see below) were on a scale unprecedented in recent years. The wholesale intimidation of Luton's Asian community indicates the direction in which the Home Office is moving. Many Labour Party supporters expressed outrage at immigration minister David Waddington's recent proposals for repatriating blacks. In fact, the Home Office was making only a minor adjustment to the repatriation provisions which have been in force for more than 12 years under section 29 of the 1971 Immigration Act. These provisions, which allocated small sums of money to immigrants returning home, have never been challenged by any Labour MP.

Few black people have

accepted the repatriation handouts: only 142 in 1980, 218 in 1981 and around 150 in 1982. The total amount handed out in 1982 was £101 000. Waddington's proposals aim to relax the conditions for access to this money. A poor employment record and 'failure to settle in Britain' is no longer a necessary qualification for a free ticket home. The previous earnings limit of £5 above supplementary benefit level has been raised to £20 above the official breadline.

These 'improved terms' are hardly likely to attract a flood of applications. The real intention behind the Home Office proposals is to fuel hostility against foreigners.

Powell-Proctor

The Government has been assisted in its anti-immigrant crusade by the periodic outbursts of Tory backwoodsmen. Harvey Proctor's calls for more extreme repatriation measures and Enoch Powell's vigorous defence of the British nation have promoted a climate in which the Tories can win widespread public approval for their racist measures. At the same time, the Government has been careful to distance itself from the extreme right's more outrageous proposals. Concerned to preserve the Conservative image as the party of the whole British nation, Waddington spoke out against Harvey Proctor's repatriation motion at the 1983 Tory Party conference. Similarly, when veteran repatriator Enoch Powell reprimanded the Queen for



Return of the repatriator: Enoch Powell hits the headlines again

showing more concern for the 'vociferous minority of newcomers' than for the 'great mass of her subjects', the Government maintained a respectable silence. But there was clearly a groundswell of support for Powell's bid to reopen public discussion on immigration, the issue over which he was sacked from Edward Heath's 1968 Shadow Cabinet. Waddington could probably get by without Powell and Proctor, but they perform a useful service for the Government in whipping up anti-immigrant prejudices.

There is no doubt that the Government has been toughening up on its approach to immigration, particularly from the Indian subcontinent.

Only 100 'primary immigrants' - people with no sponsoring relatives in Britain - passed through Heathrow from the Indian subcontinent in 1982. For those with sponsors, the rejection rate rose from 30 per cent in 1981 to a probable 40 per cent last year. Nearly 1500 people were deported in 1982, and some 1000 'illegal entrants' were held in detention in prisons such as Ashford Remand Centre pending deportation.

One indication of the increasing intransigence of the Home Office towards appeals on compassionate grounds was its recent refusal to allow the Pereira family to remain in Britain. The Pereiras are an Indian family living in a Tory village in Hampshire. The whole village has pleaded with the Home Office to let the family stay. Backing from bishops, letters to the Queen and extensive press coverage have all proved unsuccessful. The Home Office has still refused to budge.

Not the problem

While the Tories have been cracking down on immigration, the Labour Party has been conducting a sideline debate on the extent of fascist infiltration in the Tory Party. After the recent Young Conservatives' report on extreme right-wing infiltration, the Labour Party has been looking for fascists under every Tory bed. It is obvious that the extreme right has increased its strength in the Conservative Party since the last election. But the Tory backwoodsmen are not the problem - the Tories' consistent anti-immigration policies are. Yet rather than challenge the Government's vicious attacks on blacks, Labour

MPs have gleefully seized every opportunity to raise the fascist bogey. Bradford Labour MP Max Madden recently brought the House down when he accused Harvey Proctor of being a 'fascist toe-rag' (*Hansard*, 25 January). He would have been better employed building labour movement resistance to the recent spate of Home Office deportations.

The Tory strategy on race is not much different from Labour's. This is most apparent at the legislative level where the 1981 Nationality Act is in a direct line of succession from Labour's 1979 draft Bill. But even at local government level, there is not much to choose between them. The Tories have emphasised their commitment to uphold the interests of the British nation - blacks included. In some areas with a large black population, they have even managed to make gains at Labour's expense. In Brent, north London, the Tories recently gained control of

the council when black councillor Ambrozone Neil defected from Labour. The new chair of Brent's race relations committee is a black Tory, Sam Greenaway. After a recent trip to Tory run Bradford, Greenaway said that his visit 'confirmed my belief that good race relations is a vital part of Conservative philosophy'.

Clearly, at a time when the Tories are making headway against the Labour Party in places such as Brent, they are unlikely to adopt Enoch Powell and Harvey Proctor as their spokesmen. Behind the public assurances about maintaining good race relations the Tories are stepping up their offensive against the black community. The passport raids in Luton, described below, are just one example. As long as they can maintain a social consensus for their viciously anti-working class measures, the Tories will keep the Neanderthals confined to their caves.

Gareth Evans

Sari Squad goes to Europe

Afia Begum and her daughter Asma continue to defy Home Office attempts to deport them. They have been in hiding for over a year.

This month the campaign opens a new centre in Brick Lane, near the burnt-out house where Afia Begum's husband was killed in a fire. It will officially open on Thursday 8 March, International Women's Day. Asian women like Jyoti Raitathe, who has just been refused permission to stay in Britain, are already receiving legal and practical help from the Brick Lane office.

The Afia Begum Campaign is rapidly extending its work, encouraging other deportation victims to fight the immigration laws. But its first priority is to win Afia's case. In May, supporters are travelling to the European Court at Strasbourg to increase the pressure on the British government. The delegation will be led by the Sari Squad, a group of Asian women who have been involved in militant action on Afia's behalf. They will be meeting up with immigrant organisations in France and Germany and plan to address the Euro-Parliament.

To join the trip contact:
The Afia Begum Campaign Against
Deportations
c/o Box 22
136 Kingsland High St
London E8

Phone or drop in to the campaign centre at:
114a (top floor)
Brick Lane
London E1
Tel 01-274 2820/247 7848

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM NATIONAL ANTI-DEPORTATIONS WORKING CONFERENCE LONDON 26-27 May 1984

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM is convening a weekend-long conference for everyone active in the fight against deportations and the immigration laws. National and international speakers will address a wide range of workshops. Topics include

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- women and the Nationality Act
- workplace organisation against raids and race checks
- beating the immigration police
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For full details write now to:

Workers Against Racism (Anti-deportations conference), BM WAR, London, WC1N 3XX, or phone 01-274 3951

Luton swoop

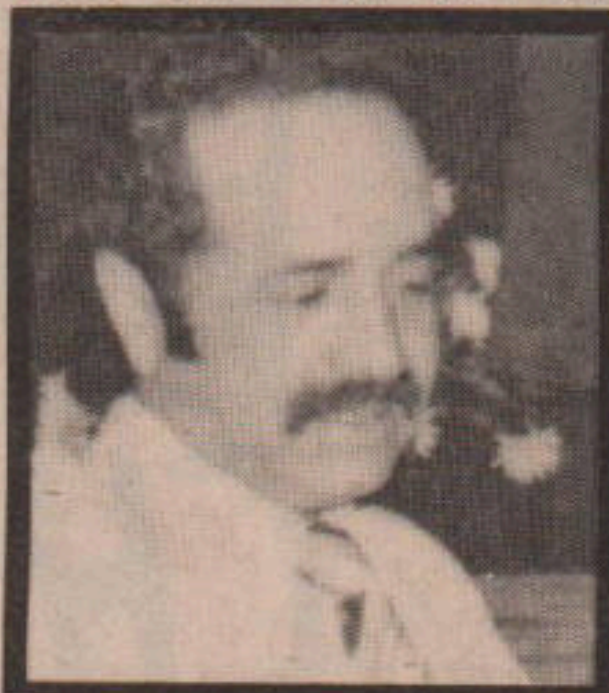
The real meaning behind the Home Office's 'voluntary repatriation' schemes became clear to Luton's black community when police squads swooped on their homes in the early hours of 17 January. For the next three days and nights dozens of Asian families were terrorised by Scotland Yard's illegal immigration unit. Up to 200 officers were involved in raids on more than 60

'passport-forging racket' operated by local community leaders. Deputy Superintendent Thomson-Smith of Scotland Yard's immigration squad confirmed later that the raids were part of a wide-ranging inquiry into 'illegals', initiated in September 1983. Similar raids took place in other parts of the country, including Bradford and Birmingham. Luton community worker Mohammed Rashid told *Workers Against Racism*:

'Every corner of the house was searched and possessions were smashed up. The Association's offices were raided by Scotland Yard after I rang up to find out the whereabouts of some community leaders. They gave the impression we were a group of passport forgers. One policewoman asked where the passports were being forged.'

The Luton raids were the biggest operation carried out by the immigration police for years. Their object was to intimidate and harass the Asian community, and to provoke public hysteria about 'illegal immigrants'. Until the labour movement mobilises its forces against the state's racist offensive, blacks can expect more of the same.

Farekh Afzal



Mohammed Rashid

homes. Police ransacked Asian homes and disrupted local businesses. At least 200 people were questioned at Luton police station - only three were charged. One woman who is eight months pregnant was detained in a police cell for 10 hours before she was released without charge.

The pretext for the raids in Luton was to crack down on an extensive

Black workers in NHS Stop the sackings!

Black workers are getting the boot from Britain's NHS hospitals. Health minister Norman Fowler recently announced that 1000 overseas doctors must go home next year. Overseas student nurses are being refused the work permits they need to complete their training. At the lowest end of the NHS hierarchy privatisation of ancillary services like catering, cleaning and laundries means mass redundancies — and deportations — for black hospital workers. *Pranesh Das and Pam Lawrence report.*



First to go: black nurses get the deportation treatment

Now things have gone one step further. More and more overseas nurses are not even getting the chance to complete their training. They are being refused the transfer from student to work permit status which they need to stay in Britain.

Second World War, it was well understood what role immigration would play. 'Who else', asked future Labour leader James Callaghan in 1946, 'is going to pay for the old age pensions and social services unless we have an addition to our

generally exempted from the entry restrictions in the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act. They were automatically classified as possessing skills 'likely to be useful in this country' and granted entry vouchers. Ancillary workers also continued to come in large numbers. The NHS was made an exception to the general restrictions on unskilled labour. Special work permit quotas were issued under the provisions of the Aliens Acts.

Filipinos expelled

The subsequent treatment of Filipino workers in the NHS sums up the changes in immigration policy since the mid-seventies. Since the enforcement of the 1971 Immigration Act, fewer and fewer work permits have been issued to unskilled NHS workers. The annual quota for resident domestics and nursing auxiliaries was cut from 2500 in 1976 to 500 in 1979, and has since been reduced to zero. A 1978 Department of Employment circular stipulated that applications for unskilled NHS work permits would in future only be accepted from European nationals.

In the same year a Filipino woman who had lived in Britain for five years applied to bring her children over. This proved a big mistake. The Home Office decided she should never have been let in at all, accusing her of misleading immigration officials about the ages of her children. More than 400 Filipinos have since been deported and thousands more pressurised into leaving. The mass expulsion of migrant workers from the NHS is already well underway.

The Home Office about-turn on immigration is not difficult to explain. For decades, whether under Tory or Labour administrations, there was little choice about recruitment policy in the NHS. The sheer scale of the service and its labour-intensive character meant that keeping down wage costs was a number one objective. This was particularly true in the ancillary sector, which expanded by 53 per cent from 1949 to 1974 and despite cuts still

Bleeding hearts

● West Midlands Regional Health Authority has just admitted that its equal opportunities policy is a complete flop. Only three blacks bothered to answer its latest round of adverts for administrative jobs. A spokesman complained that black people's aspirations should be higher. We blame the Health Authority. It may have had an equal opportunities policy since 1975, but it has been cutting jobs and services for much longer. As a result, black health workers' prospects have

never been lower. ● These days the major health unions all run 'racial awareness' courses, and issue glossy brochures to their officers on race relations. But things look different on the ground. 'The union never tells us anything' is the view of Asian women domestics, at Warneford General Hospital in Leamington. 'We're in COHSE but they never produce anything in our language. And union meetings are held at night when we're cooking for our families'.

At least one nurses' home in Bloomsbury, attached to London's University College Hospital, is closing as a result. More and more overseas student nurses in central London are having to pack up and leave. All this is a far cry from the sixties when health minister Enoch Powell recruited workers for the NHS from Britain's former colonies.

When the welfare state was established after the

population, which only immigration can provide in the years to come?'. Nowhere was this clearer than in the NHS. By 1948, the year the NHS was founded, selection committees for the recruitment of foreign health workers had already been set up in 16 countries.

Duty free

The open door policy continued right through the fifties and sixties. Doctors, dentists and nurses were

overseas doctors would only get permanent registration if, after five years, they had found senior registrar jobs. The problem for Britain's overseas doctors is that the vast majority are stuck in the most junior positions, with no hope of promotion. That means at least 1000 will have to go when the GMC ruling becomes operative next February.

The DHSS has recently discovered, in a report produced in conjunction with the British Medical Assoc-

iation, that at present growth rates the NHS will have 20 000 too many doctors by the year 2000. This widely publicised figure just happens to be the same as the total number of overseas doctors currently in Britain. Scare stories about 'incompetent' overseas doctors working in deputising services and failing language tests all help to create a climate conducive to kicking them out of the NHS and out of the country.

Broken eggs

'I know all about work permits. I came to this country from Morocco in 1967, on a 'Category C' employment voucher. I worked in restaurants and hotels, washing dishes, shifting carcasses — all the lousiest jobs. I got this job in 1971'. Abdesalm Sabar is the GMBATU Branch Secretary at St Mary's hospital, in Paddington. He works as a pastry cook. Like many migrant workers in the NHS he knows what it's like to be an illegal. 'The permits tie you down to one employer. I had to run away from mine to get another job'.

At St Mary's the entire catering staff bar two are black or overseas workers. It's the same in the laundry and amongst the domestics. There are no promotion prospects. Abdesalm has been stuck in a Grade 6 job for years, despite going on training courses and making endless applications for a more responsible post.

There is a lot of racial tension at work. A newly appointed white Head Chef insists on calling all blacks 'lazy bastards' and asking



Abdesalm Sabar

Abdesalm why he doesn't go home — 'no jobs in your country?'. Recently the dispute got physical, when the white chef attacked him and threw a box of eggs into his union office. Abdesalm points out that without collusion from management his assailant would never have got away with such conduct.

Abdesalm used to be a Nupe member. Once, after he had been off sick, management demanded to see his passport. They wanted proof that he had not been abroad. He refused, and complained to his union. The response? He was told there was nothing to be done — this was 'not a union matter'.

constitutes more than a third of the total NHS workforce. The best way to keep labour costs down is by employing large numbers of workers who are prepared to work unsocial hours in poor conditions, for low pay.

Privatisation strikes

Now the Government has decided that cutting the NHS wages bill is not enough. The Tories' privatisation plans are the culmination of a long series of attempts to reduce costs in the health service. Privatisation will hit black workers disproportionately because the sectors they are concentrated in — catering, cleaning, laundries — will be the first to go. A recent survey in one London hospital found that privatisation will mean the loss of a third of all the domestics' jobs, nearly all of them Filipino women.

In the past, NHS administrators could not find sufficient white workers to fill many ancillary jobs. As late as November 1982 immigration minister David Waddington admitted that 'a reduction in the number of per-

mits issued would not result in an equivalent saving of jobs for the resident labour force'. But things are changing fast. Large scale job cuts, not just 'natural wastage', are underway. Fear of unemployment is driving a wedge between different groups of health workers. In the last five years, 155 hospitals have closed down; 10 082 beds have disappeared. Over the last six months nearly 5000 NHS jobs have gone.

The Government has now officially sanctioned the victimisation and deportation of black hospital workers. Health service authorities are hoping that NHS trade unionists will remain indifferent to the expulsion of thousands of black workers from their ranks. Anti-racists in the NHS must stand their ground. Act now to stop racism destroying a united fightback against the cuts! DEFEND every health workers' right to a job. RESIST passport checks and withdrawals of work permits. INSIST on union backing for workers facing deportation.

Sending them back

'Every time I go for a job interview, they ask to see my passport'. Asian doctor at Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham.

Fewer and fewer black doctors today even get that far. As one East London doctor, Mark Ponnampalam, put it 'racism is really fashionable now on hospital appointments committees. If your name sounds black, it goes straight in the waste bin'.

Back in 1979 the General Medical Council ruled that

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Pam Lawrence, Workers Against Racism, BM WAR,
London, WC1N 3XX, or phone 01-274 3951.

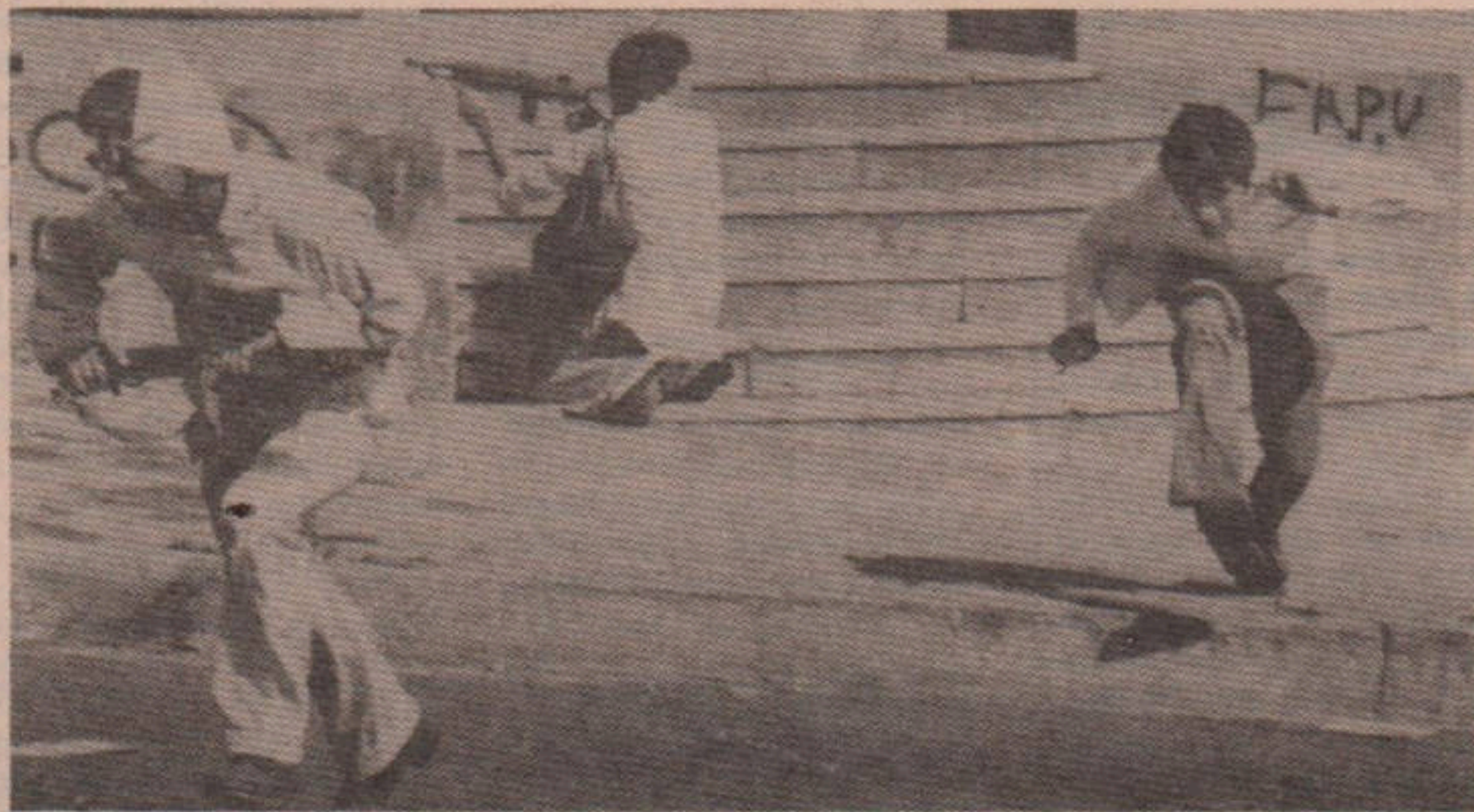
Reagan's bloodbath

Whoever wins the elections in El Salvador this month, the chances of Ronald Reagan winning his election in November will depend on how far he can avoid direct military intervention against the advancing anti-imperialist forces in Central America. Last year debate centred on whether US troops would attempt to regain control in Nicaragua; this year the question is whether they will have to invade to keep control in El Salvador.

'It's basically a pretty good record' commented US Secretary of State George Schultz in February on the recent 'human rights' performance of the El Salvador dictatorship. Last December Reagan's deputy George Bush sternly admonished the regime over the murderous activities of its semi-official death squads. He demanded a curb on the killings and threatened cuts in US aid unless the slaughter stopped. Washington demanded trials of Salvadorans accused of murdering US citizens and called for the deportation of 20 named assassins. The result was that one man — Captain Eduardo Alfonso Avila — was jailed on charges of killing two American union organisers and a Salvadoran land reform official. Three more army officers were posted to embassies abroad. And the death toll for December declined to 25 (from 56 in November). The final 1983 body count stood at 5500. 'Pretty good' said Schultz.

Vicious

Meanwhile Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, the godfather of El Salvador's death squads, is a front runner in the country's sham General Election scheduled for 25 March. Not for the first time, the authorities have temporarily restrained the most vicious aspect of imperialist rule in El Salvador. The wanton barbarities of the death squads have been a source of international embarrassment for the rulers of El Salvador and their American sponsors. Liberal opinion abroad has been upset by the murder of some 30 000 to 50 000 radicals, trade unionists and ordinary workers and peasants over the past four years of civil war. Concern has turned to outrage since the carnage extended to a handful of American advisers and missionaries in El Salvador. A more serious problem for the Reagan



Caught in the crossfire: anti-imperialist forces advance in El Salvador

administration is that the mass killings have only provoked more resistance from the masses.

Back in 1981 an American commentator observed that state terror was effective in suppressing popular revolt:

'The brutal killings by the army — victims sawed in half or placed alive in battery acid — have succeeded in traumatising the Salvadoran people into fearful passivity.'

Yet, despite three more years of brutal killings,

there is little sign of passivity among the Salvadoran people today. In recent months workers have taken over the People's Democratic Union which was originally set up by the American trade unions and financed by the CIA. The old leadership was kicked out and the union led a wave of strikes by state employees which brought the capital San Salvador to a standstill. The new union leaders publicly declared their sympathies for the underground guerrilla movement against the regime. Far from cowering the masses the death squads are driving more and more people to support the liberation struggle. Last year the rebels of the Farabundo Marti National

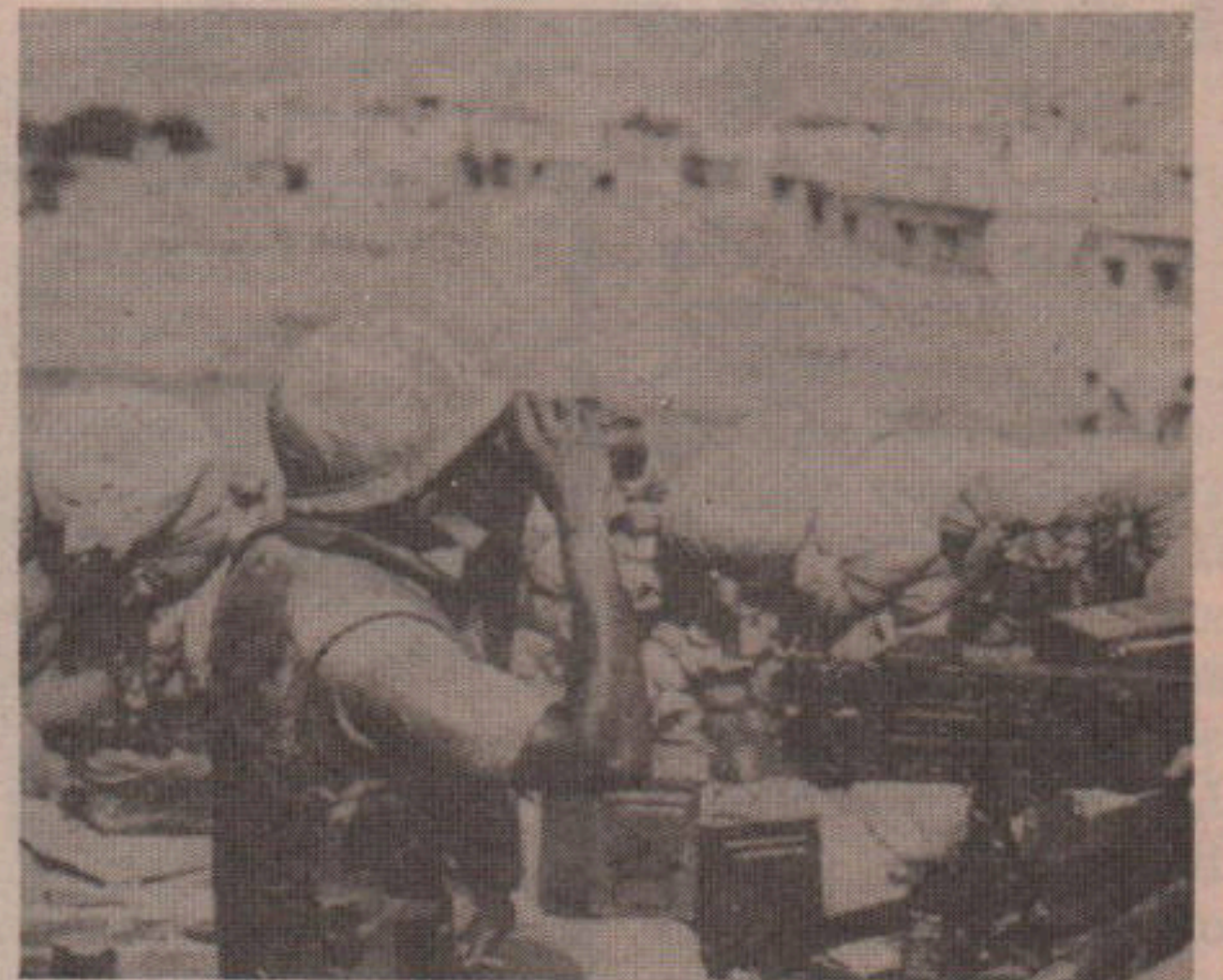
Liberation movement killed more than 7000 government troops. They now control around a third of the country.

The prominence of Major D'Aubuisson in Salvadoran politics reflects the regime's dependence on the death squads. Their clandestine activities may appall diplomatic visitors, foreign correspondents and Western liberals. They may drive some Salvadorans to join or support the guerrillas. But they are essential to the survival of a dictatorship which lacks any base of popular support. The regime's conscript army is notoriously lacking in commitment and performance, despite enormous US efforts to provide training and equipment. The death squads on the other hand 'represent a precise and extremely effective political instrument in the hands of the ruthless senior officers and influential civilians who direct them against all rival contenders for power' — in the words of a recent British newspaper account. D'Aubuisson — and the Reagan administration — appreciate that terror is the only thing that can sustain the rule of the Salvadoran military junta over its impoverished and disaffected people. To appease liberal critics Shultz

Lebanon erupts

'The withdrawal of the multinational peacekeeping force from Lebanon is a severe setback for Western diplomacy' (*The Times*, 9 February 1984). We welcome any setback for Western diplomacy. The removal of the multinational forces from Beirut represents a step forward for the people of Lebanon. But the imperialists have not given up, yet. The British force merely scuttled back to Cyprus, still within striking distance of Lebanon. The American marines have moved on to the US fleet off the Lebanese coast. The warmongers are not out of action yet.

On Sunday 5 February US President Reagan told listeners to his weekly slot on national radio that 'support for the Lebanese government is broadening among the different groups. And our efforts to strengthen the Lebanese army and its ability to keep the



US marines: out of sight, but still in action

peace are making sure and steady progress'. Two days later, after crisis talks with top generals in Washington and panic transatlantic phone calls to the governments of France, Britain and Italy, Reagan appeared in a television broadcast to announce he had ordered the redeployment of US marines out of Beirut and on to the American war fleet stationed off the Lebanese coast. At the same time he ordered the reinforcement of the fleet and gave the USS New Jersey instructions to fire at will on nationalist positions in Beirut's hinterland. But bombardment of positions outside the city cannot resolve the military struggle in Beirut.

The collapse of the Lebanese government within hours of Reagan's first broadcast, and the outbreak of civil war in Beirut signalled the end of US attempts to build a broad based government that could contain the disorder in Lebanon with US military support. The resignation of Muslim Prime Minister Shaffiq Wazzan and the nine-man Lebanese Cabinet was the cue for the army to split. Within two days nationalist militias, aided by deserters from the army, had liberated West and South Beirut. President Amin Gemayel, last year 'Duke of Beirut', found his Duchy reduced to the grounds of the

Presidential Palace. Army units loyal to the minority Maronite Christian regime joined Christian Phalangist guerrillas. Gemayel — and along with him America's hopes for a political settlement in Lebanon — were marginalised. The conflict has become a direct confrontation between imperialism and the Lebanese masses.

The maintenance of imperialist peace in Lebanon demands an orgy of military repression. More than a century of imperialist control has forced the Lebanese people to fight back against the misery imposed on them by foreign armies. The imperialists need peace in the area to prevent the struggle against imperialism spreading to more vital areas of the Middle East. Their obsession with Iranian involvement in Lebanon expresses their fear that the Lebanese civil war will set the whole region in turmoil. But the only peace they can bring to Lebanon is the peace of the wilderness. The only hope for real peace in Lebanon is the defeat of imperialism. The only hope for peace in the Third World is the destruction of imperialism by the masses in the Third World and the working class in the imperialist countries. That is why we say: Hands off Lebanon! Victory to the Lebanese people!

eagerly accepted some token gestures of atonement from the regime. And Reagan followed the recent advice of Henry Kissinger and stepped up handouts of cash and weaponry to the butchers of El Salvador.

Resistance

The recent success of the guerrillas in El Salvador and setbacks to US-backed counter-revolutionary forces in neighbouring Nicaragua have provoked further indirect US military intervention, not only in El Salvador, but also in Honduras and Guatemala. In Honduras the USA has embarked on three major military construction projects (two munitions storage dumps and a 'troop facility') worth \$8.7m. It has prolonged manoeuvres along the Nicaraguan border for as long as five years. The Reagan administration has authorised the supply of helicopter parts worth \$2m to Guatemala, breaking an embargo on military sales imposed in 1977 because of the regime's genocidal internal repression. To contain the rising anti-imperialist movements of Central America the USA is becoming more and more directly involved in turning the whole region into a battlefield.

The elections in El Salvador are a fraud designed to provide a democratic facade for imperialist coercion. D'Aubuisson's far right Nationalist Republican Alliance (Arena) faces the conservative Christian Democratic Party's Jose Napoleon Duarte and the reactionary National Conciliation Party of Francisco Guerrero. To register as a political party it is necessary to submit 3000 signatures to the authorities. For anybody to the left of the far right this would mean signing their own death warrant. Thus the election is not contested by the real opposition in El Salvador. As in the last election in 1982 this month's poll will be marked by enforced voting in government controlled areas

and boycotts in areas held by guerrillas.

D'Aubuisson observed early in the election campaign that military victory is the only way the regime can prevail over the guerrilla movement. Whether or not D'Aubuisson wins the election, Reagan will have to make sure the Salvadoran ruling class wins the war. The problem facing Reagan is that given the weakness of the regime and the growing strength of the guerrillas, he might have to send the marines in to achieve this objective. In election year at home, that could prove a very costly project.

Reagan may yet be dragged into the bloodbath his administration has created in Central America.

John Johnson



Fight contractors and cuts

In the February issue of *the next step* confidential trade union documents exposed union complicity in NHS cuts. Below, Mick Hume reports on a recent strike against privatisation in Kent. The experience of workers in Medway demonstrates that even militant anti-privatisation campaigns sacrifice workers' interests to defend union bureaucrats' privileges.

Last year Medway District Health Authority became the first in the country to put its entire domestic services out to tender, putting 300 jobs at risk. Five private firms submitted tenders for the contract which starts at the end of this month. The front runner was a new company, Exclusive Health Care Services. Medway's NHS managers entered the fray with in-house tenders for cleaning the six hospitals involved. These allowed for less dramatic cuts in hours and working conditions than the private bids. The NHS executives appealed to health service unions to back their tender. Left-wing Nupe area official Nick Bradley declared that he wanted 'nothing to do with it' because it accepted the principle of cuts. Backed by sympathetic Labour Party members on the health authority, Bradley started a campaign to 'keep contractors out' and maintain the existing workforce.

Striking back

In November Bradley took the unprecedented step of calling a strike against privatisation at All Saints Hospital in Chatham. Sixty seven women organised in Nupe and Cohse came out. Around 20 of them were quickly forced back to work by

family pressures. But 45 women stayed out for more than a month. They were on the picket line outside the All Saints morgue every day, they raised funds in the local labour movement and staged a demonstration through Chatham town centre.

The women were desperate to save their jobs. Many of them relied on their miserable wages as their only source of income. Yet the strike stayed under the Nupe officials' control. As a Nupe document about Medway produced in December made clear, the union's left-wing officials were as much concerned to preserve their status in the health service's Whitley

consultation machinery as they were to fight the cuts. That's why they sold the strikers short.

The Nupe document, 'Public Need not Private Greed', correctly identified tendering as 'a crude mechanism for competition' in which the bidder 'with the greatest willingness to cut staffing levels and reduce staff employment conditions' wins the contract. But Nupe's concern for its members' welfare was more than matched by its desperation to maintain the existing system of management/union consultation. This system of collaboration had been established through state control of health services and was threatened by privatisation. The document warned that privatisation held out 'a prospect of very poor industrial relations in the future'. It proposed that all tenders should be rejected and that Medway District Health Authority should appoint 'managers and supervisors — as specified in the in-house tender' to 'run and maintain the existing level of directly-employed domestic services'.

'No alternative'

Nupe was opposed to the in-house tender's cuts. But the union's primary concern was to ensure that domestic services remained 'directly-employed' so that union officials could keep their places on the state's Whitley consultation bodies. The in-house tender allowed for this. To get the in-house tender's proposed management structures agreed, the bureaucrats were willing to go along with its proposed attack on the workforce. Shortly before the health authority met in December to decide which tender to accept, Nupe and Cohse gave a commitment to make the in-house tender's harsh conditions work. This involved a cut of around 500 hours in the cleaning time at All Saints, and a similar cut at the district's other hospitals. It promised shorter hours, harder work and less pay for the women cleaners still on strike. But, declaring that they had 'no alternative', Nupe officials were prepared to go along with it to save their own positions.

No contest

Once the Nupe officials had accepted the principle of tendering, they had lost the battle against privatisation. They were now backing an attempt to outbid the privateers. The argument had shifted from one about whether there should be cuts in working hours, to one about how big the accepted cuts should be. As Nupe had originally predicted, the health authority meeting considered the bids on their commercial merits. Exclusive's bid to slash cleaning hours by 929 — almost double the in-house



Marching for jobs in Medway

tender's savings — carried the day at All Saints. The company won contracts at three other Medway hospitals. The remaining two cleaning contracts were won by in-house tenders.

Rather than step up the industrial action against the cuts, Nupe continued to back-track in the hope of saving something through negotiation. The strike at All Saints was called off just before Christmas.

In-house cuts

With their strike action scuttled by union manoeuvres, the All Saints cleaners now face a vicious attack. They have all been re-interviewed by Exclusive. The company has refused to announce how many will be made redundant, but up to 173 jobs are at risk in the district. It is clear that cuts in working hours will mean an end to full-time domestics at All Saints and speed-ups and wage cuts for the part-timers. One maternity unit has had its allotted cleaning hours slashed from 234 to just 69. Workers' rights to benefits will be hammered. Cleaners who previously qualified for six months full pay and six months half pay while sick, will now get only four weeks full money and four weeks half. This is the reality of privatisation in the health service. Yet the cleaners at the two Medway hospitals which won their case for in-house tenders with union support are not much better off.

The December health authority meeting awarded cleaning contracts at the Medway and St Barts hospitals to in-house bids. As at All Saints, union officials used workers' militancy to argue for maintaining state management of domestic services. Medway hospital is well

known for militant action. It played a leading role in the 1982 NHS pay dispute. The Nupe branch chairman threatened the health authority with a repeat of this action if it tried to privatise cleaning at Medway. The authority conceded and let the in-house tender through. The bureaucrats were well pleased with their successful defence of state management and the access it allows them to the decision-making process. Cleaners at Medway can be less pleased at the way their militant traditions were exploited to save the bureaucrats' status at their expense. The in-house contract involved

cuts of up to 500 hours and radical changes in working practices.

The Medway experience underlines two points. First, that health workers are prepared to take strike action to defend their jobs. Second, that the most left-wing officials are ready to hold back such action and accept cuts to defend their own position. Militant health workers like the All Saints cleaners can take on the contractors and the cuts and win, if they reject the bureaucrats' approach and fight with the politics outlined in our health workers' charter below.

Poached or scrambled?

Events at Medway highlighted the fact that the 14 TUC unions in the NHS are more interested in fighting each other for membership dues than fighting privatisation.

Despite concessions offered by Nupe and Cohse, the Exclusive contractors refused to recognise them and cooked up a sweetheart deal with the TGWU — exclusive rights to organise in return for union complicity in Exclusive's attacks on wages and working conditions.

There's a lot of it about. Last October Cohse's Welsh section noted with disquiet that contractors were stitching up closed shop agreements with the TGWU, the GMBATU and Ushaw at Cohse and Nupe's expense. However, Cohse admitted, 'to be totally fair' to the poaching unions, the contractors recognised them 'in a rather selective way as can be seen from the appalling pay and conditions (even by NHS standards) that these contractors give to their employees'. To be totally fair to Cohse and Nupe, all the unions are prepared to waive worker's pay and employment rights if it helps them get one up on their rivals in the recruitment stakes. Health workers desperately need organisations to unite them across union lines.

Militant NHS shop stewards at Canterbury are fighting for an independent organisation to oppose privatisation and cuts. They face union officials who want to stick to the quiet life on the District Joint Staffs Consultative Committee, where they sit alongside non-TUC scab unions and listen to management's plans for attacking their members. The full-timers have stressed the need for a 'pragmatic approach' to fighting privatisation. What this means was well documented in a paper on privatisation called 'The trade union approach' recently put out by neighbouring Eastbourne's joint union committee:

'The trade unions have always supported reasonable efforts to achieve the most effective and efficient use of resources and have accepted an obligation to cooperate with management in this respect. We believe most strongly that there are other better ways to ensure value for money than starting down the road to privatisation.'

While the bureaucrats search for ways to attack workers which will allow them to 'cooperate with management in this', NHS militants in Canterbury are getting their campaign to save jobs and services under way.

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 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 of union representatives in negotiating over them

ions, and of union representatives in negotiating over them

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, and effective

PREPARING FOR POWER IN 1984

We will be holding our week-long summer school this year from 13 July to 20 July at the Polytechnic of Central London, New Cavendish Street. For more information, send a stamped addressed envelope to:

Kate Marshall, BM RCP London WC1N 3XX or phone 01-274 3951

Loyal servants

On 25 January Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe announced that civil servants at the Government Communications Headquarters in Cheltenham had a month to give up their union cards and join a scab staff association, or collect their insurance cards and join the dole queue. Those who left their union would get a £1000 handout. Those who wanted to stay in both a job and a union faced forcible transfer to other departments. The Government claimed unions at Cheltenham were a threat to national security. The unions insisted they were not. The real threat to the security of workers' jobs and rights never became an issue.

The Cheltenham ban ranks GCHQ workers with soldiers and policemen as the only state employees debarred from union membership and rights. Union organisation is now at risk in other 'sensitive' security departments, and from there throughout the state sector.

Around 20 000 angry civil servants took spontaneous strike action in response to Howe's announcement. They closed 128 social security offices and hit several government departments. While workers struck against the attack on their organisations, establishment politicians and press protested at the Government's departure from normal procedure. Tory members of the Commons select committee and *Times* editorials accepted the need to prevent strikes at the spy centre. But they thought this should be achieved through a gentlemen's agreement with the unions rather than through Howe's rough-neck approach. The civil service union leaders agreed.

Insult

Civil service union and Labour Party spokesmen denounced the Cheltenham ban as an insult to GCHQ workers' patriotic credentials. Civil and Public Service Association chief Alastair Graham was incensed at this 'monstrous

slur on the trade union movement'.

'The First and Second World Wars would not have been won without the cooperation of the trade union movement.'

Labour left MP Dennis Skinner tried to taunt the Tories by pointing out that the average British traitor came from the playing fields of Eton or a Cambridge college rather than a shop stewards' committee. The unions claimed the ban on membership at GCHQ was a response to American pressure to quell opposition to the use of polygraph lie detectors in vetting security staff. CPSA journal *Red Tape* complained at the way Margaret Thatcher 'obligingly crushes' British unions so that 'another repugnant feature of the American Way of Life can be imposed on our society'.

No strikes, we're British

The labour movement's patriotic posturing crippled its opposition to Tory union-busting. The only effective response to the ban would

have been all-out action to disrupt key government departments. The spontaneous mass walkouts showed the potential for this to succeed. But the union leaders' avowed commitment to defending the state made hitting state nerve-centres like GCHQ with strike action out of the question. Civil Service Union leader John Sheldon explained that it was 'not an issue for industrial action' because:

'Geoffrey Howe will only jump up and say we're threatening national security.'

The CPSA's Alastair Graham told his members that 'above all we must do nothing which undermines public support for our stance' and asked them only to send telegrams to the Government. He withdrew the February issue of *Red Tape* for fear that its banner headline - 'It's fascism - Thatcher style' - would upset sympathisers such as Cheltenham's Tory MP. When the Tories claimed that past industrial action at GCHQ had threatened the security of the realm, the unions issued a long statement to prove how ineffective their action had been. The agenda for the civil service unions' day of action on 28 February did not include strike action.

Secure our jobs

The union leaders had no hope of defeating the Government. They merely wanted to convince the Tories to talk to them. As we go to press, the union bureaucrats are locked in secret talks with the Tories. Margaret Thatcher seems unlikely to save the unions' place at the negotiating table by swapping a no-strike agreement for a ban. But even if she concedes, the effect will be the same for workers in the civil service.

The bureaucrats got one thing right: the ban on unions at GCHQ raises far broader issues than those of trade unionism. It illustrates the dangers of nationalism in the working class. The British labour movement will be unable to defend workers' jobs and rights against state attacks, if it remains committed to defending the British state against foreign aggressors. Union leaders' patriotic kow-towing to the state has already cost 10 000 civil service jobs, with another 30 000 threatened, and wrecked recent pay campaigns. January's strike action by 20 000 disgusted civil servants showed that workers have the power to take independent action against the state. What they need to succeed is a political outlook which rejects notions of national security and concentrates on securing a better deal for workers.

Paul Foster



Uncivil servants: Cheltenham workers demand their rights

Solidarity with Scott's

For the past two months, RCP supporters in Liverpool have been backing the strike against redundancies by 400 workers at the Thomas Scott bakery in the city, a subsidiary of Associated British Foods. In February Scott's management upped the planned sackings from 70 to 200 and threatened to shut the bakery down if the workers didn't concede. At a mass meeting all but three of the Scott's workers voted to stay out. On the same day that the bosses formally closed the bakery, the national executive of the bakers' union moved to keep control of the strike. It announced a ballot for the end of February on extending the dispute to all the company's 57 plants throughout Britain.

Scott's workers have already seen how ineffective the union's solidarity action can be. On a recent trip to win support from Cardiff bakeries, they discovered that the Welsh workers had not even been told about the Liverpool



Bread line picket line: Scott's workers fight on

strike. The Scott's workers have now taken the job of winning solidarity into their own hands. They are organising delegations to plants from Glasgow to London. This is the strategy RCP supporters have argued for from the start of the dispute.

As we go to press the bosses have begun to move plant out of the factory. The union has undermined solidarity by refusing to sponsor delegations around the country. Yet the strike continues. Send messages of support to 64 Priory Road, Anfield, Liverpool 4.

Strike for jobs!

On Sunday 29 January TGWU negotiator Ron Todd told 7000 Ford workers to postpone action against the closure of the Thames foundry at Ford's Dagenham plant until he talked to Ford bosses about their long-term investment plans. Over the past 10 years unions at Fords have tied workers' pay and jobs to the state of Ford's profit and investment accounts. Since the recession hit Ford's profits, the unions have accepted responsibility for keeping the company competitive. They have accepted 7000 redundancies at Dagenham in return for investment. Their plan to fight the foundry closure follows this pattern of collaborating with management. A Joint Coordinating Committee leaflet at Dagenham set out three reasons why it may be necessary to strike to save the foundry:

'The need to strike is not for pay but for investment. The need to strike is not to damage Fords but to ensure its future AND YOURS. The need to strike is not to save someone

else's job but to save your own.'

The unions see workers' and bosses' interests as the same. They have become integrated into the management machinery, as one body plant militant explained:

'When there are any disturbances on the production line we're taken to the bosses' committee rooms where the stewards, not the management, are giving us lectures on the threat of Japanese cars coming into Britain. They tell us to work harder and produce more.'

RCP supporters inside and outside the Dagenham plant have argued that Ford workers must break off all union links with management productivity schemes and quality evaluations. Profits and competitiveness are the bosses' problems, not ours. Our concerns are jobs and wages. We need to reject discussion of Ford's future investment strategy, and start organising against their job-cutting tactics today. That means all-out action to defend the foundry jobs at Dagenham.

Fight Ferranti

Since 1970 Ferranti Engineering Holdings in Chadderton, Manchester has slashed its workforce from 3000 to 300. Now the bosses plan to close the plant altogether and keep on just 30 workers. RCP supporters have been down at the factory arguing for action.

Ferranti's bosses want men and machinery out of the factory as fast and with as little fuss as possible. They have set the closure date for the end of April and offered workers 12 weeks redundancy money. Their union - the AUEW - seems more concerned with arguing the toss over redundancy terms than with fighting the redundancies. Convenor Paul Gibson discussed redundancy pay with

the bosses, but was loath to call a mass meeting to discuss action with the workforce.

Ferranti workers know there are no other jobs to be had in their depressed area. Some have expressed a willingness to fight, but are unenthused by the AUEW's approach. One worker summed up their frustration:

'The steward told us to carry on working normally until we got our notice. Then they had section meetings - 10 blokes here, a dozen there, useless. The unions should be stopping the machines going out but they can't stand up to management. They came from management's office and read us the terms and said they're trying to improve on that. They never mentioned trying to fight the closure.'

The factory has recently been mysteriously decorated. The union needs a new look too. RCP supporters' bulletins at Ferranti's argued for an immediate mass meeting to let workers decide what action to take. We called on the workers to stop their representatives discussing redundancy terms and start organising to fight the sackings. Despite a positive reaction from many workers, the union responded by splitting up the workforce into further section meetings. We are still fighting for mass meetings. Rank and file control is essential - for action to throw out the contractors who are dismantling machinery.

the next step

A world we did not make

Labour's shattering defeat in the last General Election has induced a prolonged sense of alarm and even panic in the official labour movement. No sooner were the votes counted than the 'agonising reappraisal' was under way. Calls for a 'major rethink' were in fact demands for an orderly retreat. When TUC leader Len Murray stated last August that full employment was not necessarily desirable, it became clear that every principle of trade unionism was up for sale.

The new realism that pervades the inner circles of the labour bureaucracy is coherently codified in the TUC's draft policy document *Strategy for the future*. This document argues for a new sort of union movement, one that represents not the interests of workers, but all sides of industry:

'Unions have to demonstrate that they represent the views and interests of employees. And employers, and governments, have to take note of unions because they are the vehicle for winning the consent of individuals as workers for policies employers and governments wish to pursue and that need the cooperation of workers if they are to succeed.'

The TUC's new definition of trade unions as 'vehicles for winning the consent of individuals as workers for policies employers and governments wish to pursue' is far removed from the objectives of the workers who founded the unions to fight for their own interests against the employers. It is further removed than ever from the Marxist view, which insists that only a consistent struggle through the unions for working class interests, regardless of the consequences for employers and their state, can yield positive results.

The new realism of the leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC means that they have thrown in the towel without a fight. The class struggle has been reduced to a squabble over which of the employers' options should be accepted. At the Government's GCHQ spy centre at Cheltenham, the unions are prepared to give up the right to strike to preserve the

facade of trade unionism. In shipbuilding, union officials are ignoring the problem of mass redundancies, while raising hell about which private capitalist should take over the shipyards. In the hospitals and in local government the union bosses have instructed their members to participate in 'in-house tenders', and compete with private contractors instead of fighting for jobs. The list of concessions is endless.

The new realism is not only defeatist — it has a corrosive effect. Every concession made by the labour leaders further undermines the will to fight. In recent months, trade union and Labour Party dignitaries have abandoned even the pretence of taking on the Tories over issues that matter to workers. Gone are the days when even right-wing union bureaucrats felt the need to make speeches about 'fighting for the unemployed'. Today even the two Militant MPs sit in silence as the Labour leadership betrays the four million out of work, occasionally trying to save face by asking ineffectual parliamentary questions about YTS schemes. For the labour bureaucracy, the new realism expresses profound political paralysis. For the working class it promises a future of despair.

The official leadership of the labour movement has no solutions. For the time being it does not even pretend to have anything to offer working people. Both inside and outside Parliament, the Labour Party has been reduced to pointing out ways and means of slowing down or cushioning the impact of the capitalist offensive. The Labour opposition cannot even oppose the Tories — instead it cheers on Tory dissidents who dare to question the wisdom of government policy. Instead of exposing Thatcher's policies, the opposition seeks solace in the occasional scandal or minor backbench revolt, and prays for more banana skins under ministerial feet. The Parliamentary Labour Party from Dennis Skinner to Peter Shore is united in the hope that

some misdemeanour by Mark Thatcher might distract attention from their abject failure to put up any political resistance to his mother and her government.

The very fact that every meeting or conference of Labour activists ends with a call for a 'rethink' or a 'fresh approach' indicates the scope of their problem. Labour's traditional solutions have been discredited and cosmetic changes will no longer fool anybody. Half-hearted attempts to defend local government and save the NHS can barely inspire Labour activists, never mind galvanise the working class.

The Labour leaders' current malaise may well turn out to be a temporary phase. No doubt with the passing of time they will formulate new solutions. But time is a luxury that the working class cannot afford. The devastation of the capitalist crisis has got to be fought in the here and now, not postponed to the distant future.

The working class has no need to find artificial issues. The problems we face are all too real. To overcome the recession the capitalist class is moving towards a solution that requires the destruction of the working class as we know it and, quite possibly, through another world war, the destruction of society as we know it. The threat of catastrophe means that the stakes are high. Every stand taken by workers is now met by court injunctions and police violence, by the concentrated power of the capitalist class. From the Police Bill to the Employment Bill to the Prevention of Terrorism Bill every right is under question. The latest anti-working class law is only a prelude to the next.

In Britain in 1984 the conflict between the classes pervades every dispute. This conflict may be ignored but it will not go away. To ignore the class struggle is simply to accept defeat in advance. Class conflict cannot be postponed to the future — whether we like it or not it is the problem of today. At present the

contest is a very uneven one. The working class is weighed down by obsolete institutions and demoralised by its leaders. Above all it does not have its own strategy.

Until now the working class has been held accountable to a world not of its own making. Instead of waging a campaign for our class interests, the trade unions have proposed consultations about saving 'our' industry and 'our' services. The independent role of the working class has effectively been surrendered over decades of collaboration. In the past, economic expansion allowed the labour movement to escape the consequences of class collaboration. The recession shows the disastrous outcome of our loss of class independence.

Without our own strategy even the boldest leaders and the most resolute resistance cannot prevent defeat. That's why the Revolutionary Communist Party proposes a strategy of consolidating forces through demarcating the interests of our class from theirs, on every issue. Our day to day struggles will be dissipated if we do not clearly define our long term objectives. Nothing less than the destruction of the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression can create the preconditions for the liberation of humanity. Nothing less is realistic for those on the dole today, for those who will be made redundant tomorrow and for those whose exploitation will be intensified to meet capital's unquenchable thirst for profits.

The recession poses a stark choice that cannot be evaded. We can accept their terms of enslavement or stand up and fight. We can withdraw every time an employer announces more redundancies, every time the Government demands the surrender of more union rights or the courts issue another injunction. Or we can fight for our jobs and our rights, our dignity and our class. Which class will prevail? This is the question we are posed by history. It imposes a grave responsibility on those committed to making a new world out of the ruins of the old.

Farewell then Andropov

When Leonid Brezhnev died in November 1982 the pundits of the West proclaimed the end of an era. It wasn't. In the aftermath of Yuri Andropov's funeral and Konstantin Chernenko's accession, only the most naive commentators are holding out the prospect of change in the Soviet Union.

Andropov was portrayed as a man of considerable intellectual power with an ability to speak forthrightly on sensitive issues. It was often forgotten that Andropov's statements simply reflected the views of a Soviet bureaucracy that had come around to the recognition that something had got to change. Even the most conservative generals realised that the Soviet Union's economic decline was irreversible and that urgent steps were required to stop the rot. What distinguished Andropov and his

colleagues from their predecessors was that they were less secure and therefore more open to new options. However the bureaucracy can countenance neither of the two real options facing Soviet society. These are to revert to the capitalist market, or to establish a planned economy under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Both options would mean the end of bureaucratic privilege and the destruction of the bureaucracy as a distinct stratum.

Andropov was in every sense a man of the bureaucracy. The policy that he emphasised was a more systematic application of 'discipline' and official recognition of the power of the market in restricted areas of the economy. The authorities claimed that tightening up labour discipline was yielding results: output statistics registered some improvements in 1983. But the modest

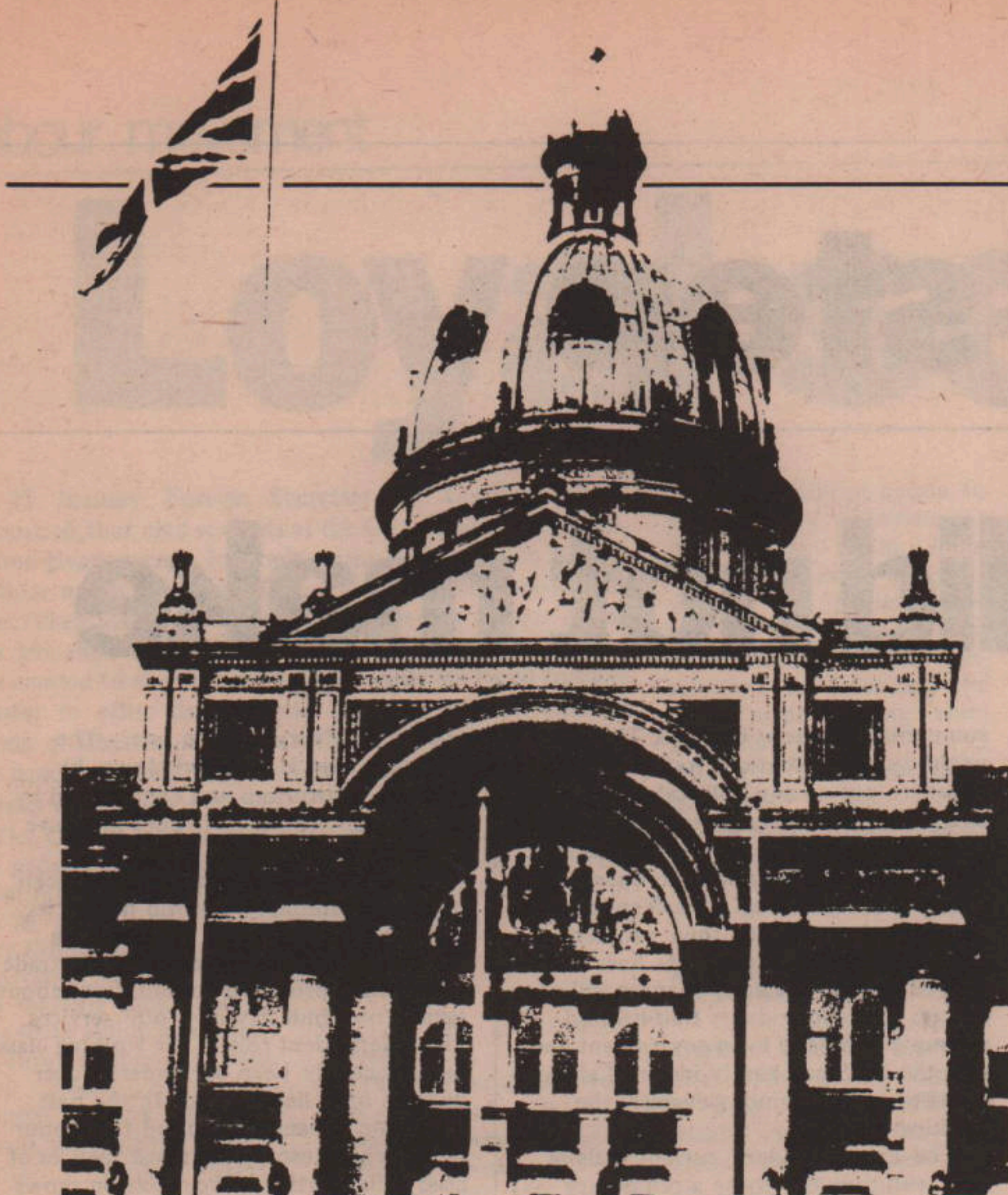
increases could not obscure the persistence of the structural crisis of the Soviet economy. Even before his death Andropov's discipline campaign had come to a standstill. Coercion and exhortation have only limited value in improving the performance of a modern industrial economy. Chernenko's speech on his acceptance of the post of General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party echoed the preoccupations of his predecessor.

'The question of organisation, order is a key, principled one for us. There can be no two views on this. Any slackness, irresponsibility brings to society not only material losses. They inflict serious moral damage.'

Like Andropov before him Chernenko is forced to reduce the crisis of Soviet society to subjective problems. As

bureaucrats they are more at home with giving orders, tightening the screw and blaming failures on their subordinates, than explaining the crisis of the Soviet system. It is a sign of the times that such subjective and anti-materialist rhetoric can be taken as having even the remotest connection with Marxism and Leninism.

The Soviet bureaucracy has profound differences with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. But it is also an enemy of the international working class. Despite his humble origins, Chernenko achieved power through his active involvement in the destruction of working class power in the Soviet Union. The working class in the Soviet Union and abroad sheds no tears for Andropov. This former head of the secret police died of natural causes. The destruction of the Soviet bureaucracy will require the revolutionary energy of Soviet workers.



Local government under attack

Tories mean business

The character of the Tory attack on local government jobs and services reveals the Government's recognition of the drastic measures necessary to get British capitalism out of recession. The outraged response from Tory councillors and some Tory backbenchers, from the Labour Party and the Alliance and some press commentators, simply exposes their failure to come to terms with the new crisis conditions. While Thatcher's team sharpens its axe for the eighties, the old guard from Ted Heath to Ted Knight pleads for a return to the consensus politics of the past.

ALL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE is a drain on private profit which must be curbed, whatever the cost to people's lives and livelihoods. Environment minister Patrick Jenkin recently put the Tory offensive on local government in the broader context of the state's counter crisis strategy:

'The government is committed to improving efficiency in all sectors of national life. A major element in our strategy is a determined attack on the "national overhead". This means looking critically at the roles and structures of public sector bodies like the Civil Service, the National Health Service and local government.'

In Thatcher's Britain, employment and welfare, consensus, consultation, and democratic rights must all be sacrificed to the goal of reduced public spending and higher private profitability. For British capitalism there is no alternative. For the British working class there is no alternative but to recognise that the fight to defend council jobs and services means taking on the system itself.

Financial stringency and centralised control are the twin goals of current Tory measures against local government. There are three major sources of council income — central government, business rates and domestic rates. As council services have expanded over the years, the proportion of costs borne by the national exchequer in the form of the rate support grant has steadily increased. Although the rate support grant has been squeezed down over the past decade by nearly 15 per cent, it still finances more than half of local government spending. Rates on business premises provide another fifth of council income, and rates paid by householders about the same. However rate rebates, and wage-earners sharing houses, mean that only a third of local electors pay full rates. Less than 10 per cent of council income accrues from various charges such as council rents, bus fares, etc.

The bulk of council funds comes from taxation, either on incomes at the national

level, or on property at the local level. Council revenue is a deduction from the surplus value generated by capitalist enterprise. It is a drain on capitalist profits that the capitalist class has every interest in keeping to a minimum — especially at a time of declining profitability. As Chancellor Nigel Lawson put it recently, 'there is no essential difference between rates and taxes'. He demanded 'improved practices on economy, efficiency and effectiveness' to ease the burden of council spending on private profits.

Local councillors have traditionally represented the interests of local businessmen. Their central concern has always been to provide essential services at the lowest possible cost. As central government has been obliged to pay out more and more to uphold council services, the meanness of the local burghers has been compounded by the parsimony of the Treasury. Further, the growing bulk of the rate support grant has been accompanied by tighter central control over local spending. The history of recent local government reorganisation is one of persistent attempts to impose professional managerial efficiency and centralised authority on council expenditure. The latest Tory measures are a move further down a familiar road in response to deepening recession. The Tories' plans include

- **rate-capping**, which gives the government powers to penalise 'high spending' councils and to regulate the expenditure and rate levels of any local authority
- **abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils and the Greater London Council**, and the transfer of their functions to borough and district councils and statutory joint boards with responsibility for the police, fire, public transport and, in inner London, education.

The Tories' central aims in imposing financial austerity and tight discipline on local government are underlined by plans to remove responsibility for public transport from councils to state boards. The encroachment of the Manpower Services Commission over areas of education and training traditionally undertaken by local authorities is another aspect of the centralising drive.

The Tory measures are drastic. Targeted 'high spending' councils will be forced to reduce cash spending by six per cent — a cut in real terms, allowing for inflation, of 11 or 12 per cent. But even councils which have been frugal in the past will be held to a three per cent cash increase, which amounts to a real cut when inflation is taken into account. Taking all councils together, the proposed spending cuts in the next financial year are of the order of seven per cent. The Tories have calculated that moving any faster would cost more in redundancy payments than it saves on wages and services. They will certainly carry on the hatchet work into the eighties. Meanwhile the cuts proposed so far are the most draconian in the history of

local government.

'The party is over'

'Rate-capping' and 'abolition' are the culmination of a direct attack on council spending initiated by the last Labour government. Recognising the signs of impending crisis in 1974, Labour environment minister Anthony Crosland observed that 'the party' was over in local government. He indicated that the Labour government would try to ensure that council workers, council tenants and people who relied on council services would shoulder the burden of the coming recession.

Less than two years later, Chancellor Denis Healey imposed cash limits on central and local government spending. Public spending was cut back by 2.5 per cent in 1976-77 and by a further 7 per cent the following year.

Most of Labour's cuts were in *capital* expenditure (funds for building projects, plant and equipment) rather than in *current* expenditure (on wages and day to day running costs). Between 1974/75 and 1978/79, Labour cut capital spending on education by 42 per cent and on housing by 18 per cent. The casualties were thousands of building workers, employed directly by councils or

Where the axe

Policing and education are among the oldest of local government functions, and they still account for the lion's share of day to day spending. In the mid nineteenth century, businessmen in the burgeoning towns and cities of the industrial revolution set up and financed local constabularies to protect their property — and, when necessary, to deal with striking workers. The upkeep of Britain's 120 000-strong police forces today costs around 10 per cent of local authorities' current expenditure. Education has been organised through local government from the late nineteenth century in response to industry's demands for a highly trained workforce. Almost half the total local authorities' budget (48 per cent) is now spent on schools and colleges — mostly on wages for 400 000 teachers and 350 000 secretaries, cleaners, canteen staff and caretakers.

The capitalist recession breeds riots; literacy is deemed scarcely necessary for a life on the dole. Britain in 1984 therefore needs more policemen and less teachers. Hence, while local authorities are obliged by central government to increase spending on the police, they are also forced to cut back on education.

Many of the functions originally performed by local councils to provide the framework for industrial development in local areas have been taken over by national institutions. Before the Second World War much health care was organised at local government level; now it is mostly provided through the NHS. The DHSS has taken the provision of dole and other welfare benefits away from local bodies. Gas, water and electricity — once the products of municipal enterprise — are now the responsibility of national corporations. Yet local authorities have maintained and extended a wide variety of services, to fulfil their function as the local tier of the state apparatus.

Council social services departments

provide home helps, meals on wheels, homes for old people and children, and services for the chronically sick, disabled and mentally ill. Personal social services employ 200 000 people and spend 9.5 per cent of council revenues. Maintaining roads costs about six per cent of total spending and council housing another four per cent. Almost a third of all householders in Britain are in council tenancies. Council roadworks and construction employ around 100 000 people.

The remaining council services each account for three per cent or less of local authority expenditure. These include running the buses and other forms of public transport. Councils employ 40 000 dustmen and 30 000 firemen. They also run libraries, museums and art galleries; parks, swimming pools and sports facilities. Planning, the administration of this complex of services, and the maintenance of a vast array of buildings, from the Royal Festival Hall to the meanest council estate, make up the functions of local government.

The local state, like the national state, has expanded the range and scope of its activities to support the ailing capitalist economy. Today around £20 billion — one quarter of all public expenditure — is spent in local government. The councils' workforce has grown from 1.5 million in 1963 to 2.5 million 20 years later. Council services are necessary to maintain the economic infrastructure and the social fabric that support capitalist enterprise at a local level. Council services are also useful to the working class. They provide desperately needed jobs, and workers need more and better — not less and worse — of the facilities that councils provide. The only local state amenity that is useless to the working class is the police force which exists to enforce capitalist law and order. While services are being dismantled, the police force is being expanded and re-equipped to safe-



Nobody's fooled: Labour's record won't inspire Lambeth workers

by contractors, and the deteriorating fabric of council estates and public buildings. When the Tories came to power in 1979 Labour had cut capital spending to the bone. The Tories had to turn the knife to carve into expenditure on jobs and services.

Two key components of the Tory strategy for reviving British capitalism on which the Thatcher government was elected in 1979 were reducing public expenditure and cutting taxation. Given the feebleness of the British economy, both have proved much more difficult than the Tories anticipated. Nowhere have the Tories' objectives proved

will fall

guard the system from the wrath of the working class.

Now local government jobs and services are facing an unprecedented attack. Over the past four years of Tory government, spending cuts have reduced the council workforce by 83 000, some four per cent of the total. The victims so far include 30 000 teachers, 20 000 building workers employed in council direct labour organisations and 7 500 refuse collectors. This is only the beginning. Tory plans to abolish the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils aim to get rid of 9 000 jobs at a stroke. The Government's rate-capping proposals imply a real cut in overall council spending of about seven per cent next year. According to a joint government/local authority report, even a five per cent reduction would mean a cut of up to 160 000 jobs, including 60 000 teachers. Other areas threatened with major job losses include libraries and museums, social services and transport. The Tories seriously intend to decimate local government employment — and fast.

Chancellor Nigel Lawson made clear that the Government's plans do not stop at getting rid of thousands of jobs, closing schools and allowing roads and estates to become even more dilapidated. Pointing out that two thirds of councils' current expenditure goes on wages, he recently urged administrators to take a hard line against pay rises. At the end of January they refused to increase a three per cent pay offer to 900 000 council workers. Wages are now lower in real terms than they were five years ago. Local government retains one of the biggest pools of low paid employment in the country. Lawson also urged council managers to use privatisation or the threat of privatisation to force workers to accept job losses, harsher working conditions, and still worse pay. Workers have no option but to fight back.

more difficult to achieve than in local government. At first the Tories attempted to use the rate support grant as a lever against the councils. The Labour government had already squeezed central state support for council spending from 66.5 per cent in 1975 to 60 per cent in 1979. Over the past four years the Tories have pushed the grant down to a level of 52.8 per cent this year, and aim to reduce it to slightly more than 50 per cent next year. The majority of councils of all political complexions have complied to some extent with pressures to raise efficiency and economise. After reaching a peak of 2.5 million in 1979, staff levels overall have been reduced by 83 000 or 4.2 per cent. Wages have been held down and working conditions have deteriorated. However, progress has been too slow for the Tory Cabinet — last year employment in local government rose slightly.

Apart from the difficulty of making substantial inroads into council spending, the Government faced an additional problem with several radical Labour authorities. While most councils acquiesced to grant cuts by rationalising services, these authorities responded by raising the rates to make up lost revenue. Indeed there has been a general trend for rates to rise faster than inflation as a result of the pressures on council spending. The rises have been most dramatic in left-wing Labour controlled councils. Rate rises enabled councils to spend above the spending limits established by the Government. Last year the total overshoot was £771m, nearly 4 per cent of council expenditure. Three quarters of this sum was spent by 16 Labour authorities.

The Government was angered by massive rate rises because they were a local Labour defiance of central Tory diktat. It was even more concerned because high rates meant an intolerable burden on local enterprise. Back in 1974 Thatcher had promised to abolish rates altogether and substitute some different form of local taxation. By 1979 she had appreciated that this was impracticable. But her government was still determined to 'set the entrepreneur free' from the burden of taxation. Yet Tory attempts to curb council spending were leading to more, not less taxation on business. Before the 1983 election the Tories decided to trim the local authorities' budgets — and clip the wings of Labour councillors who failed to comply.

In his 'Briefing for cabinet ministers on local government policies', environment minister Patrick Jenkin outlined the Tory case:

'High local government spending and taxing threatens the Government's economic strategy. They increase the burden of taxation which we are committed to reducing. Our tight control of public expenditure can be undermined by over-spending in so substantial a sector of the economy. High rates feed into costs, fuel wage demands and put our anti-inflation policy at risk.'

Jenkin links the problem of high rates directly to the problem of low profitability. In the 'question and answer' speakers' notes prepared for his Cabinet colleagues, he asks 'aren't rates only a small proportion of industry's costs?'. The Answer: 'Rates may be only a small proportion of industry's costs, but in terms of profits, rates can make all the difference'.

Living in the past

'Rate-capping' and 'abolition' are the measures necessary to curtail council spending. Yet the Government's plans have run into opposition, not only from the Labour Party, but also from the Tory ranks. Tory councillors are alarmed at the scale of the proposed cuts that will affect not only profligate Labour inner-city boroughs, but also the responsible Tory shires. Tory councillors have always stood for economy in council administration. But they have also prided themselves on a degree of local autonomy and a paternalistic concern with the welfare of their communities. The new plans will turn councillors into mere local agents of nationally imposed cutbacks.

The widespread view of Tory councillors is that the Government's assault on councils is being conducted with a bludgeon rather than with the rapier required to deal selectively with a handful of troublesome Labour boroughs. This view is shared by much of the Tory press. The pages of *The Times*, the *Financial Times*, *The Economist* are full of detailed criticisms of the Thatcher-Jenkin proposals. They do not demur at the Government's objectives, but they would prefer a more sophisticated approach. They want consultation rather than confrontation, and yet another inquiry into the structure of local government finance and the question of rate reform. But they are living in the past. Thatcher and Jenkin know that they have little time to save British capitalism from terminal decline.

The Tory councillors have some support among another bunch of yesterday's men — the dissident former ministers now languishing on the Westminster back benches. The parliamentary revolts against the Government's rate-capping proposals and further rate support grant cuts have excited much press comment and intense Labour Party hopes. But what was striking about the backbench revolts was how insignificant they were. When it came to the votes only a dozen or so Tory MPs opposed the Government and a few more abstained. While former ministers like Ted Heath and Francis Pym opposed the Government, virtually none of the new intake of Tories voted in at the last General Election went against the Government. The new Tories of the Norman Tebbit school are more in tune with the ruthless spirit of the eighties than are the older generation of 'one nation' paternalists.

Thatcher and her acolytes have made it clear that they are prepared to ride roughshod over opposition to their local government policy. They will not be deterred by councillors with vested interests, disaffected backbenchers, pompous press columnists — or the Labour Party whose opposition to the Government cuts is posed in the same terms. Labour's executive committee condemned the proposals as 'undemocratic, unworkable and expensive'. It called for a 'thorough and independent review of the entire finance and structure of local government'. Labour's pleadings will cause Thatcher little difficulty.

'Good housekeeping', *New Statesman* commented at the end of January, has always been a 'basic principle of Conservative local government thinking'. Within weeks, Labour GLC leader Ken Livingstone boasted that 'good housekeeping' at County Hall would mean a 7.5 per cent cut in rates after two years of big rises. Labour's assimilation of the ideology of good housekeeping is at the centre of its inability to defend jobs and services in local government. Good housekeeping means making council spending dependent on what the capitalist system can afford. It means accepting that whether or not workers have council jobs and council services depends on the level of profit generated in private industry.

Good housekeeping

Labour served its apprenticeship to the British establishment in local government, learning and proving it had learned the rules of good housekeeping. Today, the Tory Chancellor proclaims the doctrine of 'economy, efficiency and effectiveness' to justify the offensive on council jobs and services. The leader of the Labour left in local government can only plead that the Tory plans are not an effective means of achieving these objectives — he cannot challenge the objectives.

Until now Labour councils have had two options when faced with government demands for spending cuts. They could cut services or raise the rates. In practice most councils did a bit of both, but generally the more left wing, the higher the rate rise. Although high rate rises impose a greater load on local industry they also place a heavy burden on working class home owners and tenants. Two thirds of domestic rate-payers receive no rate rebates, and not all of these are members of the suburban middle classes. The great debate — cut services or raise rates — was a debate over different ways of making workers pay the price of the capitalist crisis. By removing the option of raising the rates the Tories have now put an end to that debate. The alternatives now facing Labour councils are to cut services or take on the Government. As we reveal in the following pages, the Labour Party has already rejected the fighting alternative.

Helen Swift

Defend jobs and services!

There is an alternative to surrender. It begins from a rejection of the ideology of good housekeeping. That is the key to challenging the whole rationale of the Tory attack. The capitalist class needs to impose austerity conditions on local councils to save its system. The working class needs to preserve jobs and services to guarantee its survival. We must reject the Tory trinity of 'economy, efficiency and effectiveness' in local government. Those are their problems of getting services on the cheap. Our problems are to make sure every job is safe, that wages and conditions are maintained and services, at the very least, do not get any worse. Workers need to combat all spending cuts and all measures to make cuts easier by centralising state control.

Council workers must be in the front line of resistance. Any attempt to reduce jobs or services should be met with industrial action. Such action demands the mobilisation of council workers around coherent class defiance of the Tory offensive. It requires the reorganisation and reorientation of the trade unions in local government, which at present operate as an extension of management, not as fighting organisations of workers. In countless disputes over the past few years,

in town halls, refuse collection depots and social services departments, council workers have shown that they are prepared to challenge management. But they are held back by the suffocating ideology of public service and good housekeeping and by a trade union leadership that works hand in glove with the bosses.

The defence of council jobs and services is not just the concern of council workers — it involves the whole working class. Workers will move into action against Tory attacks on local government when two conditions are fulfilled. The first is that council workers themselves get organised and take action. The second is that workers' solidarity must be won on the basis of a common class identification of their interests as workers with council employees, against the Tory attack on behalf of capital. Workers will not get actively involved in a fight against the state through a vague sympathy with town hall clerks or dustmen, still less to 'save' some bureaucratic institution that dispenses shoddy services and poor excuses. But they will take action to defend jobs and services they know are vital to the working class, against a Government they know is determined to smash working class living standards.



Living with the cuts

The object of official labour movement campaigns against rate-capping and the abolition of the Metropolitan County Councils and the GLC is not to fight the cuts in local government but to survive them. Joan Phillips reports on how the Labour Party and the TUC are going along with reductions in council spending while making a show of opposing the Tory offensive.

DEBATE at the Labour Party local government conference at Nottingham last month centred on the law. Labour leader Neil Kinnock emphasised that Labour councils' resistance to Tory attacks must remain within the law. Once the latest Tory measures — rate-capping and abolition — reach the statute book, councillors have a responsibility to stay in office and make the necessary cuts. The aim of every Labour council should be to 'do its utmost to mitigate the impact on services and jobs'. GLC leader Ken Livingstone disagreed:

'We have to say we will not cooperate in any way, shape or form with rate-capping or abolition. If that puts us outside the law, then it is the laws that are wrong, and we have a duty to fight them.'

Livingstone's militant stand won handsome applause. But it is empty rhetoric. In reality there is not even a debate about whether councils should break the law because the Labour left has already decided that it is not a realistic option.

Labour fatalism

In the same week as the Nottingham conference, *Labour Herald*, the paper of the left-wing Labour councils, edited by Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight, carried an editorial entitled 'After it's law'. It outlined the realistic assumption that parliamentary opposition to the Tories' anti-council legislation would fail and that the package of austerity measures would shortly become law. The question was — what next? The first point was that 'there is no way that Labour councils can afford to concede in advance that they will be prepared to make whatever cuts the Tories demand'. The key phrase here

is 'in advance' — the Labour council leaders are talking about a negotiating position, not a position of principle. It leaves open the possibility of making concessions to Tory cuts at some later stage. Labour starts, not from the position that all jobs and services must be defended, but from the position that concessions in working class living standards are negotiable.

The *Labour Herald* editorial proceeds by expounding the view that 'the only way Labour can resist the Tories' efforts to force down council spending and dismantle local services is by mobilising the strength of the local trade union movement and the support of the local communities in defence of council services'. However, the Labour left council leaders have no confidence that Labour councillors will be able to mobilise resistance against the cuts. Anticipating this eventuality, Livingstone and Knight put forward the 'majority opposition' option. Where Labour councillors control councils they should resign en masse and wash their hands of the cuts. They should go into opposition against a minority council leadership from the other parties and let them wield the axe:

'It cannot be ruled out that it may be necessary for Labour council leaders to explain to local trade unionists that they cannot usefully remain in office to defend local services, and that only the organised strength of the trade unions can prevent the cuts going through.'

But what about breaking the law? Clearly Livingstone's talk of councils defying the law is for the hustings, not for the sphere of practical policy. When it comes to strategy the Labour councillors' only suggestion is that they should give up and

pass the buck to the unions.

In fact *Labour Herald*'s 'majority opposition' strategy was widely rejected at Nottingham. And, when *Labour Herald*'s editors returned to the theme 'Defiance and the law' a week later, they too had forgotten the only clear-cut line of action they had recommended in the previous issue. They now seemed obsessed with the need to conform to legality:

'The first important decision, therefore, that the Labour Party must take is that the fight against rate-capping goes on even if the Rates Bill becomes law. It has certainly not been shown that such a fight is unlawful. Trade union action in defence of jobs and conditions of service has not (yet) been declared against the law. Labour councillors faced with the rate cap have a number of options for non cooperation with the cuts. Not all of them are unlawful either.'

It is significant that Livingstone and Knight are here considering only the legality of trade union action. Discussion of the options open to Labour councillors is confined to those that are lawful.

A special background paper prepared for the Nottingham conference devotes pages to consideration of various methods of 'creative accounting' to get around the cuts. These include 'use of renewal and repair funds', bringing in 'next year's balances', 'accounting for arrears', 'commitment accounting', 'tapping superannuation funds' and so on. The document admits that 'the total impact of any number of devices suggested below is likely to be quite small in relation to the authority's overall budget'. At the same time, *Labour Weekly* produced a special supplement which detailed the 'horrendous' consequences of any attempt by Labour councils to resort to 'illegal borrowing' to offset Government cuts. Bankruptcy, the appointment of commissioners and punitive surcharges would be the inevitable results of a line of action implicitly repudiated as irresponsible. Meanwhile a group of left-wing Labour councils in London were considering, not defying the law to fight the Tories, but trying to use the courts to challenge the legality of the Government's curbs on council spending.

The broad lines of Labour's strategy that emerge from the discussions around the Nottingham conference can be briefly summarised:

- The Tory rate-capping and abolition proposals will shortly become law
- The Labour leadership's position is that Labour councils should obey the law and make the cuts
- The Labour left councils are in favour of defying the law in theory, but in practice believe that mass resignations, municipal bankruptcy and confrontations with the Government are impracticable
- The Labour left councils believe their only hope lies in mobilising trade union and community resistance to cuts
- The Labour left councils believe that when popular resistance and creative accounting fail, Labour councillors should make the cuts. This is the conclusion towards which *Labour Herald*'s rejection of cuts 'in advance' inexorably leads

That the Nottingham debates were so much hot air can be seen from the fact that six months previously, at another conference in Liverpool, left-wing Labour councillors had already conceded the inevitability of making cuts. The leader of the left-wing London Borough of Brent, Martin Coleman, argued that 'Labour councillors would have no option but to stay in office and try to persuade people that cuts were the fault of the

Conservative Government' (*The Times*, 17 October 1983). Ted Knight and other left-wing council leaders did not dissent from this fatalistic response to the Tory attack even before it had begun. Labour's bluster about defying the law is a pathetic gesture to disguise the fact that it has already given up the fight against cuts in local government.

Cut today, fight tomorrow

Indeed the cuts have already begun. The following Labour councils have recently announced major austerity packages in response to Tory pressure:

● **Newcastle — £12m** Council leader Jeremy Beecham has announced that 1300 of the council's 18 000 jobs are at risk. Redundancies threaten teachers, administrative, clerical and manual workers. Schools and social services face major cuts

● **Cleveland — £9m** Labour group leader Sir Maurice Sutherland has declared 500 redundancies and cuts in education and social services

● **Wakefield — £4.5m** Labour leader Sir Jack Smart has ordered compulsory redundancies and closures of six libraries, an old people's home and two nurseries. When staff and parents occupied the nurseries, the Labour council went to the courts to secure their eviction — but the occupations continue

The Wakefield case is significant because Sir Jack Smart is also chair of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. This brings together the big city councils, and is a leading force in the protest campaign against the Government's rate-capping and abolition proposals. In the hypocrisy of his campaigning against Government cuts while making cuts in his own council, Smart personifies Labour Party policy on local government.

The national Labour Party response to the only council which has so far attempted to make any stand against the Government — Liverpool — reveals the hollowness of its anti-Tory posturing. As a result of a series of Government measures, Liverpool City Council, elected in 1983, faces a major cut in funding. Council leader and *Militant* supporter Derek Hatton has spelt out the alternatives of raising the rates by 200 per cent or sacking 5000 workers, nearly a fifth of the council's workforce. The council has declared its refusal to take either option and its intention of defying the Government. Every statement from Labour's national leadership emphasises the danger of individual councils being picked off in isolation and urges maximum unity among Labour councils. The practical consequence of this advice is to delay any action until spring 1985 when Labour leaders anticipate that as many as 20 Labour councils will be in the firing line.

But workers threatened with redundancies and reduced services now in Liverpool and elsewhere cannot wait 12 months for the Labour leadership. In the meantime, Labour's senior spokesmen have made it clear that they will not back Liverpool or any other council which fights to defend jobs and services. Labour's environment spokesman Jack Straw declared last month that 'the parliamentary leadership could not promise open ended support without knowing what action Liverpool might take'. Sheffield Labour leader David Blunkett, who is also council spokesman on Labour's national executive, said last month that 'there will be a great deal of sympathy for Liverpool'. 'But', he continued, 'the other left-wing authorities are not in the same position as Liverpool so there is no



Coming to terms with the cuts: Ken Livingstone rejects the fighting alternative

Working together

Since the advent of left-wing Labour administrations in Hackney and Camden, Labour councillors and trade union bureaucrats have built up well-established patterns of collaboration. This cosy relationship is now being threatened as Labour comes under increasing pressure to cut services and adopt tougher measures against its employees. The bureaucrats are being by-passed; now Labour councils have to attack their employees directly.

Nalگو is Britain's largest white-collar trade union. It has a lot to lose from the Tory attack on local government. Well over half its members work in this sector. Last year, while Nalگو's total membership declined slightly, the number of local government members rose slightly to just short of 50 000. The Nalگو bureaucracy in local government is largely the creation of the Labour Party. Ever since the winter of discontent in 1978/79, Labour councils have tried to pre-empt rank and file revolt by integrating a core of union activists. Today's town hall bureaucrats date from this period. Left-wing Labour councils have attempted to build the Whitley negotiating structure right down to the departmental level. Before the early eighties there were scarcely any full-time union officials in local government. Today, in Hackney and Camden, every union bureaucrat spends at least 50 per cent of his time on union business. As the bureaucrats have burgeoned, so too has the machinery of collaboration.

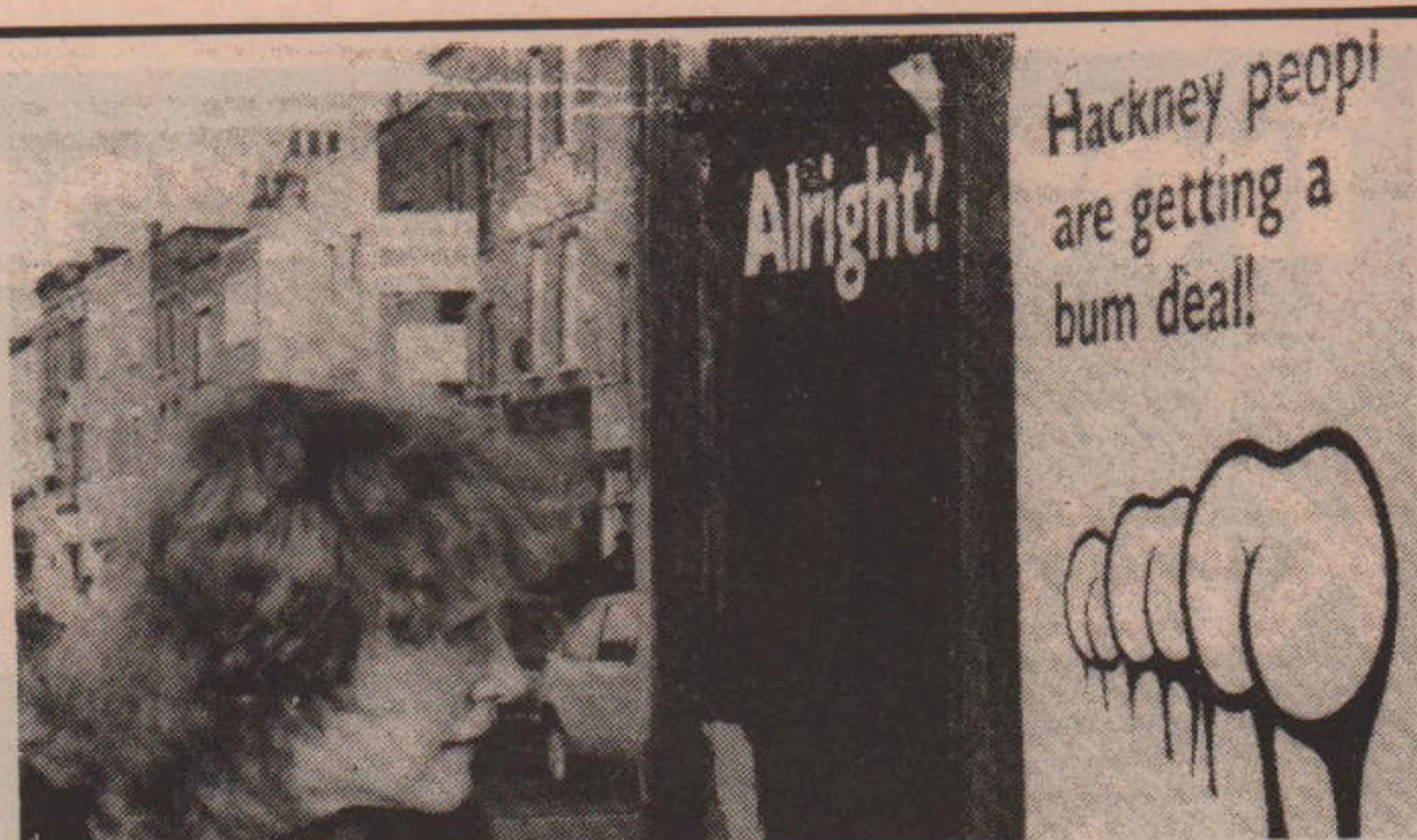
Hackney and Camden are both typical of Labour councils which combine radical rhetoric with attacks on their employees. Both have used their influence with council union officials to negotiate punitive local agreements and win acceptance for their cost-cutting measures. Often

council officials are prominent members of the Labour Party and the local Nalگو branch. In Hackney, for instance, Richard Shields is both a Nalگو steward and a founder of the Labour Party workplace branch. Last year he was appointed by the council to supervise its decentralisation plans — cuts by a longer name.

Faced with the Government's swingeing attack on council expenditure, Hackney and Camden Labour councils are attempting to rally workers' support for their anti-cuts campaigns. But the experience of workers in these boroughs gives them little incentive to heed the bureaucrats or defend their Labour employers.

Hackney workers discovered that there was little progressive about their socialist councillors during the course of the three month long residential social workers' dispute. As Labour threatened victimisations and closed homes, Nalگو officials sought to bring the dispute under control, urging workers to 'unite and fight the Tories'. As some of the lowest paid council workers in the country, Camden council's employees are not enthusiastic about the Labour administration's socialist credentials. And their experience of Labour's industrial relations policy has left them even more cynical. Last year Camden closed two children's homes, encouraged workers to scab on the water workers' strike, and was involved in two regrading disputes with town hall typists and with council storeworkers. The council refused to negotiate the claims while strike action continued, but the disputes ended quickly when Nalگو and Nupe negotiated settlements. Neither the typists nor the storeworkers got their full claim.

Hackney and Camden are both at the top of the Tories' hit list of high-spending Labour councils. Hackney



An insult to Hackney workers: Labour's campaign poster

claims it needs to spend at least £96m in the coming financial year — the Government's spending target is £78.9m. Labour councillors must make the choice between defying the Government by doubling the rate demand or cutting services by a quarter and jobs by 1600. Camden's budget is £123.5m, the Government's target £101.6m. The choice facing the council is a 20 per cent rate increase or massive cuts in jobs and services. Both councils are on course for making cuts. Camden's position of 'no redundancies' has already been modified by council leader Phil Turner:

'We are not going to cut services for which a need exists. But there will be reductions where need for services has disappeared.'

Redundancies aren't far away. Camden has already announced a cut of £3.7m in departmental budgets at the town hall and the closure of two more children's homes.

As Labour councils press ahead with their rationalisation plans, the scope for consultation diminishes, causing trouble for the union officials. Hackney Nalگو bureaucrat Tommy Douras failed to win acceptance for

the council's draft agreement on decentralisation. Now veteran Communist Party and Nalگو executive member Ivan Beavis is facing similar problems. If the union officials don't succeed, the council will be forced to bypass the negotiating procedure and impose the changes unilaterally. In Camden, the bureaucrats are already squealing about not being 'consulted' on the closure of the children's homes.

Joint council and union campaigns against the Tory cuts invariably disguise attacks on jobs and services. In Hackney, supporters of the next step and other activists have passed motions rejecting the council-run campaign. A meeting of Hackney Nalگو voted instead for a joint union campaign, based on resolute opposition to all redundancies and cuts in services. Nalگو officials have always relied on the patronage of Labour councils to maintain their niche in local government. Years of collaboration have left them isolated from their members. This situation provides local government workers with the opportunity to take matters into their own hands and rebuild the unions into fighting organisations to defend jobs and services.

Andrew Matthews

way they can take the same stand'.

Unity for the Labour Party means joining together to put off any action against the cuts, and standing firm by constitutional and financial proprieties that make cuts inevitable. 'We are not going to stab them in the back' was Blunkett's final, almost prophetic, statement on Liverpool. Given the Labour leadership's clear declarations of its intention to betray Liverpool, *Militant's* plea that 'the ranks of the movement are looking for a positive and unambiguous statement from the national executive committee and the parliamentary Labour Party' was either naive or cynical. Labour leaders anticipate that a rebellion by a handful of right-wing Labour councillors will scupper Liverpool's rebellion and get both them — and Hatton — off the hook.

Sham democracy

We have seen that Labour council leaders place great emphasis on the importance of mobilising trade union and community resistance to the Tory offensive on local government. However, the object of these campaigns is more to revive and popularise the Labour Party than to fight the cuts. Yet the record of the Labour Party in local government makes even this limited objective difficult to achieve.

As employers, Labour councils are just as bad, if not worse than Tory councils. They maintain the same low wages and poor conditions. Labour councils are often more effective than Tory councils in using their links with the unions to restrain militancy. Council workers are prepared to fight for jobs, but they are sceptical of campaigns run by bosses, especially when these are used to win acquiescence to cutbacks (see box). As providers of shoddy services, Labour councils are deeply unpopular among working class people. Jerry-built council estates, waiting lists for flats, nurseries, old people's homes, and bureaucracy are most people's experience of 'the council'. Many Labour councillors have become

conscious of the low esteem in which council services are held since they have been forced, generally for the first time, to solicit public support. This has led to patronising campaigns to 'raise workers' consciousness' of the good works performed on their behalf by the council. Blunkett, who personifies this approach, writes of the need for councillors to 'stimulate and organise the process of understanding within their own communities'. They will find it difficult to make people understand why Labour councils have condemned families to the squalor and seclusion of tower blocks, why they still put old people in workhouse homes, and why there are no nurseries for their children.

The record of left-wing Labour councils in past campaigns against the cuts has disillusioned many workers. For the past five years they have vacillated between making cuts and raising rates, generally doing a bit of both. In London, Lambeth has shown the way. In July 1979 Ted Knight proposed a cuts package of 4.5 per cent, but this was overturned by the local Labour Party. Nine months later the council raised the rates by 49 per cent, and a year after that introduced a 10 per cent cut in services. Now Lambeth town hall carries a banner 'Lambeth services — well worth defending', but Lambeth workers do not want to know. 'Fortress Islington', the most left-wing council ever, elected after the mass defection of the old guard Labour Party to the SDP, followed the Lambeth line. In July 1982 the Labour group voted against any rate rises; the following spring it put the rates up by 30 per cent. Now local people are awaiting announcement of the cuts.

Outside London, Labour councils have generally implemented cuts in response to earlier Government austerity measures. Greater Manchester Council, now threatened with abolition, has cut its workforce by more than 5000 over the past three years. It has put many of its directly employed manual workers on to

short term contracts so that it can easily get rid of them at short notice. Not surprisingly it is having difficulty rallying sympathy for its campaign against abolition. In Scotland, where the cuts have already gone further than in England and Wales, Labour councils have gone along with cuts after a short-lived gesture of defiance at Lothian. Last year Lothian made cuts worth £12m and Glasgow, £6m.

Labour's campaigns are more likely to stir the sympathies of the sort of middle class quango activists who populate council chambers and constituency offices than they are to mobilise the working class. The campaigns' twin themes are the defence of economic efficiency and local democracy.

West Yorkshire County Council leader John Gunnell, one of the leading campaigners against abolition, bases his defence of the existing structure of local government on its economic merits. 'The metropolitan counties', he declares, 'have achieved the economies of scale for which they were created'. West Yorkshire itself has streamlined administration and got rid of 1200 jobs. 'If a more effective, more efficient, less costly and equally accountable structure can be provided' then Gunnell would be all for it. But 'this hotch potch of councillor quangos and committees' — which would remove his office — he reckons does not fit the bill. The Metropolitan County Councils have commissioned the management consultants Coopers and Lybrand to make an independent assessment of the Tories' plans. These arguments may appeal to the middle class radicals who have been brought on to council payrolls over the past decade. But they don't appeal to workers. Labour's commitment to efficiency means job losses, low wages, higher productivity and cheapskate services. Workers need every job, with decent wages and conditions, and we want services according to our needs, not according to the miserable penny-pinching dictates of the capitalist state.

'Defend local democracy' is the other clarion call of the Labour Party. But workers know that local democracy is an even bigger sham than parliamentary democracy. Revolutionary workers will always oppose any attempt by the state to restrict democratic rights. We are in favour of the widest extension of democracy in national and local government. The more democratic the system, the greater the opportunities to expose the inability of the capitalist system to guarantee workers a decent life. The Labour Party's rhetoric about local democracy is simply an attempt to defend its vested interest in preserving a stake in the local state apparatus. Labour councils are neither democratic nor accountable. The Labour Party will have a hard job convincing workers of the value of fighting for the privilege of voting every four years for a council that treats the working class with contempt.

Labour and the state

The Labour Party's campaigns against the Tory offensive are a measure of how irrelevant the official labour movement has become for the working class. In the hope of reaping some wider electoral advantage, Labour substitutes appeals to middle-of-the-road public opinion for effective action to save jobs and services. Yet by narrowing the focus of its campaigns to appeal to dissident Tories and wavering supporters of the Alliance, Labour renders itself marginal to the needs of the working class. Workers need action not public sympathy. Labour's long quest for respectability, intensified by its recent General Election humiliation, leads it to sacrifice working class interests to retain its allegiance to the state. That is why, at the end of the day, Labour would always rather make cuts than fight the state. It is also why in today's recession, workers' continuing loyalty to the Labour Party is the Tories' most powerful weapon against the working class.

Trotsky on womens liberation

Kate Marshall outlines Trotsky's approach to women's liberation



Women fighting for their rights today are often asked – ‘what about Russia?’. Both conservatives and feminists argue that the position of women in the Soviet Union proves that Marxism is irrelevant to women and that socialism will not emancipate them. Anybody can see that women in the Soviet Union lack basic amenities, use abortion as a method of birth control, and have to queue for hours for shoddy goods and basic foods. The position of women in the Eastern bloc is indeed unenviable to most women in the West.

Leon Trotsky was one of the leaders of the 1917 revolution in Russia. He continued to uphold the banner of revolutionary working class politics through the twenties and thirties as the revolution was betrayed under Stalin. His writings express a Marxist understanding of the links between women's liberation and socialism and between women's oppression in the Soviet Union and the degeneration of the revolution.

Trotsky wrote little about the oppression of women under capitalism. He shared the common Bolshevik position, developed from the materialist tradition established by Marx and Engels, that socialist revolution was necessary to free women from their conditions of servitude in Tsarist Russia. Writing shortly before the revolution, Lenin summed up the link between restrictions on women's rights and capitalism:

‘In most cases the right to divorce will remain unrealisable under capitalism, for the oppressed sex is subjugated economically. No matter how much democracy there is under capitalism, the woman remains a “domestic slave”.’

Under Tsarism men were allowed to beat their wives, whose obedience was commanded by law. In some rural areas women wore veils and were forbidden to read or write. All women had to ask their husband's permission to travel, trade, study or work. Divorce was prohibitively expensive and required extraordinary proof. Women's wages in the towns were

about half men's. For Lenin and Trotsky, women's emancipation depended on the overthrow of Tsarism and the development of socialism in Russia.

‘The position of women is the most graphic and telling indicator for evaluating a social regime and state policy’ (Trotsky 1938)

The Bolshevik position

The Bolsheviks considered that the oppression of women was rooted in women's economic inequality, especially in their roles as housewives and mothers. The tasks of the revolution were therefore twofold. First, the new order would grant full legal and democratic rights to women. Second, it would begin

to abolish domestic work, thus freeing women to get fully involved in society and weakening the grip of the family.

The emancipation of women was a key part of the programme of the Russian Revolution. The Bolshevik programme promised equal political rights and universal suffrage. It stood for the separation of the church from the state and for a free secular education for all children. It held that women would be freed from dangerous jobs and all night work, given maternity leave and free medical care. It also established the right for women to breast feed their babies during working hours and for the appointment of women factory inspectors to ensure that women's working conditions were improved.

In its early legislation the Soviet state fulfilled its commitments to women's rights. Its laws were the most progressive in the history of the world. On divorce and abortion it guaranteed every woman the right to leave her husband and termin-

to women's emancipation. To be free women needed better education, social services and superior health care. To provide these things society had to be more productive. To make society more productive women had to be involved in every way in industry, in agriculture, in services and in decision-making. Drawing women in to play an active role in society demanded improvements in what Trotsky called ‘morals’ and ‘culture’. This included all facets of life, from working conditions in factories and farms to customs, the law, religion, art, science, literature, design and philosophy.

Culture and society

In the early twenties Trotsky explained the connection between culture and productivity:

‘The slightest success in the sphere of morals, by raising the cultural level of the working man and woman, enhances our capacity for rationalising production, and promoting socialist accumulation. This again gives us the possibility of making fresh conquests in the sphere of morals.’

Trotsky recognised that given the poverty and backwardness of Russia progress would be slow. In his view there were two reasons why it was essential to move forward on the political and ideological fronts. First, it was vital to ensure that limited resources were directed in such a way that ordinary workers in Russia and abroad would immediately appreciate the benefits of the revolution. Second, preparing the ideological ground would help to move the revolution ahead once the basic economic difficulties were resolved. In other words, Trotsky's attention to questions of women's emancipation was part of a continuing class struggle to advance the revolution. The dead weight of capitalism – and capitalist prejudices – still exerted a powerful, negative

ate an unwanted pregnancy. However, as Lenin and Trotsky argued, legal and political equality does not mean social equality. For women to achieve their liberation in the real world as well as on the statute books required economic development and a political struggle against every barrier to freedom.

Trotsky linked increased productivity

influence on the development of Soviet society.

When feminists repudiate Marxism, claiming that it puts everything down to economic factors and neglects ideology, they miss the point. The experience of the Russian Revolution shows that taking state power is only the first step to women's liberation. It is a vital step to take because women cannot be free under capitalism. Under a workers' state, however, the struggle for women's liberation continues alongside the broader struggle to raise the level of production and of culture. In 1923 Trotsky noted that 'politics change rapidly, but morals cling tenaciously to the past'. Because the Russian workers were used to treating women as family slaves, Trotsky urged communists to take drastic measures to confront the old ideas:

'In our traditional views, concepts, and conditions there is much that is truly thick-headed and that needs to be smashed with a battering ram.'

Progress in changing attitudes would have important practical consequences in drawing women out of the narrow confines of the home. It would also indicate how far the revolution had gone in clearing out the superstitions and religious prejudices that flourished around the family hearth.

Acid test

The French socialist Charles Fourier, writing early in the nineteenth century, argued that any society could be judged by women's position in it. Engels congratulated him on the discovery. Trotsky applied this maxim in his assessment of the Russian Revolution in 1925:

'The most accurate way of measuring our advance is by the practical measures which are being carried out for the improvement of the position of mother and child. This index is very reliable; it does not deceive. It immediately shows both the material successes and the cultural achievements in the broad sense.'

The break-up of the family by revolution and war led to experiments in collective organisation of household tasks and new living arrangements. But once the Stalinists seized control of the revolution these gains were reversed. 'Guided by its conservative instinct', wrote Trotsky, 'the bureaucracy has taken alarm at the "disintegration" of the family. It began singing panegyrics to the family supper and the family laundry, that is, the household slavery of women'. In 1936, in *Revolution betrayed*, Trotsky examined the progress of the Soviet Union on the 'problem of problems' — the transformation of women's work in the home into the work of society. He noted that although women had initially appreciated

Leon Trotsky was born in 1879. At the age of 26 he became president of the St. Petersburg Soviet during the defeated revolution in 1905. In 1917 he returned to the same city to lead the Bolshevik insurrection. Following the revolution Trotsky organised the resistance to the forces of reaction both inside and outside the country. He created the Red Army, an effective, politically conscious army of the working class, to defend the revolution. During the Civil War Lenin, who led the Bolshevik Party and the new Government, gave Trotsky a free hand as supreme military commander.

After Lenin's death Trotsky led the fight against the degeneration of the Russian Revolution under Stalin. But he was outmanoeuvred by Stalin, expelled from the Communist Party and finally, in 1927, deported from the Soviet Union. Trotsky never returned to Russia.

At the age of 17 Trotsky was

introduced to Marxism by Alexandra Sokolovskaya, who was in her late twenties. When he was 21, and in prison for political activities, they married and were exiled together. She had two daughters in the next two years, then urged him to leave her and join Lenin in London, where he was working on the paper *Iskra*. Trotsky always regretted the separation, appreciating the difficulties facing a single mother.

Trotsky met Natalya Sedova during his stay in Paris in 1903. They never married but stayed together until his death. Natalya was politically active, militant and vivacious. While Trotsky was in prison in the year following the 1905 revolution, his first son, Lev, was born. Sergei, the second, was born in 1908. The family was close, but beset by tragedy. Friends and visitors remarked on the strong affection binding the couple and the boys, and the major part Trotsky took in child-

care and household tasks. This increased in later years as Natalya pursued her artistic and political interests.

The new laws passed after the revolution allowed either partner in a marriage to take the surname of the other, or retain their original name. Trotsky took the name of his wife, Sedov, and their two sons took the same name. Of Trotsky's four children only one survived him. In 1928 his first daughter Nina died of consumption (tuberculosis) at the age of 26. In 1933 his second daughter Zinaida committed suicide in Berlin, following the news that her Soviet citizenship had been revoked by Stalin. Trotsky's son Sergei died in Paris in 1938 in suspicious circumstances. Trotsky believed he had been poisoned by Stalinist agents. Two years later Trotsky himself was murdered by a GPU agent at his desk in Mexico.

the benefits of collective childcare, they were soon put off by the poor quality of state provision. Children caught infections in state nurseries. Clothes sent to socialised laundries were stolen, or torn. As soon as rationing was ended in 1935, workers resumed their old habits of eating their main meal at home rather than in communal restaurants. For Trotsky the retreat to the home was less a condemnation of the socialist system than a fair comment on the poor altern-

eration of women is unrealisable on the basis of "generalized want".

But the bureaucracy went 'infinitely further than iron economic necessity demands'. Because it failed to organise production under the control of the working class it could not root out scarcity or shortage. Instead it threw millions of workers into obsolete production and encouraged women to make up for the absence of consumer goods by their own toil. It returned to the capitalist system

abortion, and not force her into the "joys of motherhood" with the help of a foul police interference in what is to every woman the most intimate sphere of life.'

Trotskyism today

Trotsky upheld the cause of women's liberation against the Stalinists because the gains women made after 1917 symbolised the possibilities of socialism. The reversal in women's position during the thirties was a key measure of the defeat of the Russian Revolution at the hands of Stalin. Today only Trotskyists can defend the necessity of workers' power as a precondition for women's liberation. We are not forced to issue apologies for the Soviet bureaucracy's assault on women's rights. But neither do we side with feminists who merely describe the obvious — that the Soviet Union has not liberated women — and thereby justify their own accommodations with capitalism. By rejecting revolution as the first step to women's emancipation, feminists condemn women to domestic toil and exploitation under the capitalist system.

Trotsky fought against Stalinism and feminism because he put the interests of working women to the fore. The fight continues today against Stalinists and feminists who put forward a 'feminist incomes policy', housework-sharing and job-sharing as a means to redistribute resources within the working class. Women who want not a larger slice, but the whole cake — read Trotsky!

'There are no limits to masculine egotism. To change the conditions of life we must learn to see through women's eyes' (Trotsky 1923)

atives offered by the bureaucracy.

Nobody expected a 'happy life' the day after the revolution. The working class knew that its society was too poor and uncultured to change rapidly. Trotsky was only being realistic when he noted:

'The real resources of the state did not correspond to the plans and intentions of the Communist Party. You cannot "abolish" the family; you have to replace it. The actual lib-

of women's free labour in the home as an alternative to replacing the family and organising production. Rather than improving its inadequate abortion facilities it took the road of prohibition, and, as in other spheres, made a virtue out of necessity. Trotsky condemned the bureaucracy for its betrayal of women:

'These gentlemen have, it seems, completely forgotten that socialism was to remove the cause which impels woman to

Revolution and liberation

Marxists cannot prove that socialist revolution will liberate women. We can however prove, both theoretically and empirically, that women will never be free under capitalism. The continuation of capitalism relies on women's work in the home. Women's unpaid labour reproduces workers' capacity to work day in day out, year in year out, generation after generation. Capital has no interest in abolishing the burden of housework that keeps women down, but every interest in maintaining the division between the sexes that it enforces. If we look at the position of women in capitalist societies around the world over the past century we see a remarkable uniformity. There are differences in degree, but everywhere women face household drudgery and act as a reserve labour force.

We can also explain how socialist revolution could liberate women. Under socialism economic development will no longer be restrained by the narrow goal of making profits. The economy will be organised and planned according to the needs of society. A socialist society would not

have to rely on women's privatised domestic toil. It could organise proper childcare facilities and ways of providing people with food, clothing and shelter to relieve women of all these tasks. A socialist society would have every interest in treating women as equals and sweeping away all the sexist drivel that reinforces women's oppression under capitalism.

Marxists do not postpone fighting for women's liberation until after the socialist revolution. Indeed Marxists are the most consistent fighters for women's rights in capitalist society. This is because we have no stake in the existing system and everything to gain from overthrowing it. The Revolutionary Communist Party demonstrates its commitment to women's liberation in practice — in fighting the Tory cuts, employers' attacks, bourgeois morality, labour movement chauvinism, working class indifference. No, we cannot at present prove that workers' revolution will bring about women's liberation. But, in the course of the class struggle, we will prove it.



Campaigning for jobs and nurseries in Leeds: our fight for women's rights is a fight against the capitalist system

Apartheid expansionism



The tanks roll in: South Africa steps up the offensive against its northern neighbours

OPERATION ASKARI, the invasion of Angola by several thousand South African soldiers in December, was the latest and the largest scale excursion of the Pretoria regime over its northern frontiers. The main targets of these assaults have been the radical governments of Angola and Mozambique, both established in the mid-seventies after long struggles against Portuguese colonialism. South African attempts to frustrate the liberation movements at the time failed. Pretoria has subsequently used every method from internal subversion to external coercion to undermine the independence of its northern neighbours. Since Zimbabwe became independent in 1980 and SWAPO intensified its struggle to liberate Namibia, South Africa has

South Africa's recent invasion of Angola had two objectives. The first was to crush SWAPO, the organisation fighting to free Namibia from South African occupation. The second was to subordinate Angola to South Africa's growing regional empire. The terms of last month's ceasefire indicate that the massive military might of the apartheid regime has inflicted a setback on the SWAPO forces. Yet Pretoria's troops failed to overcome Angola's defences, and they sustained high casualties in the attempt. The anti-imperialist struggle of the black masses of southern Africa remains a mortal threat to the tyranny of apartheid.

stepped up hostilities against Angola and Mozambique.

South Africa has sponsored the wrecking activities of Jonas Savimbi's Unita guerrillas in Angola and MRN mercenaries in Mozambique. It has also

launched a series of raids:

- Operations Smokeshell (June 1980), Protea (June 1981), Daisy (November 1981), were all directed against SWAPO bases in southern Angola
- The bomb attack on oil, rail and port

installations at Beira (December 1982) and air raids on Maputo (May and October 1983) aimed to destabilise Mozambique

South Africa's aggressive policy is partly designed to contain the internal threat to the regime from the African National Congress by attacking its bases abroad. The air strikes on Maputo were a direct response to an ANC bomb in Pretoria. But South Africa's expansionism has a broader purpose. It is an attempt to resolve the problems of recession in South Africa by subordinating the whole region to its rule.

Exporting the crisis

Since the Second World War South Africa has developed into a modern capitalist

Contact with the West kills

'Africa is an integral part of a global political arena, and this administration has no intention of adopting a unilateral self-denying ordinance when Western strategic interests are at stake'. So says Ronald Reagan's man in Africa, Chester Crocker. When it comes to the crunch in southern Africa, the Reagan administration had no qualms about dropping past anti-apartheid rhetoric and backing apartheid expansionism. South Africa's drive to subordinate its black neighbours fits in well with America's concern to stabilise capitalist relations world-wide.

The apartheid state has been enlisted as America's African gendarme. The US-led 'contact group' of imperialists with a stake in southern Africa — including Britain, France, West Germany and Canada — has effectively endorsed the South African occupation of Namibia. Its policy of 'constructive engagement' accepts the pretext offered by South Africa, of the presence of Cuban troops in Angola. Both America and Britain

refused to support the United Nations vote to deplore the South African invasion of Angola in December.

On the contrary, America's UN ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick viewed South Africa's pre-Christmas ceasefire offer as 'a major new step in the arduous process of trying to resolve southern African problems peacefully'. She presented South Africa's cynical manoeuvre as a 'delicate' and 'hopeful' process. America played a key role in advancing South Africa's diplomatic objectives by arranging talks with Angola in the former Portuguese colony of Cape Verde in January. Chester Crocker mediated between the protagonists, secured the month-long ceasefire sought by South Africa, and now hopes to supervise the settlement of Namibia's future in further talks.

All the imperialist powers are up to their necks in the apartheid bloodbath. When South Africa ran into financial problems in 1982 it had no trouble securing an immediate \$1.1 billion loan from the US-dominated Inter-

national Monetary Fund. Total foreign investment in South Africa amounts to \$30 billion. Britain accounts for half the total. Anti-apartheid sentiment among British businessmen has not stopped them almost doubling direct investment in South Africa over the past decade. Socialist France has also swallowed its moral outrage and sold two 900 megawatt nuclear reactors to South Africa. Now it is providing the processed fuel to service these plants and is considering offering two more.

Even though South Africa is not a member of Nato, its military power is substantially underwritten by the Western imperialists. The recent espionage trial in South Africa revealed the extent of British and American connections with the South African murder machine. Information from the secret Silvermines underground tracking station at the Cape is forwarded to America and to Britain. Indeed the USA partly funded its construction. French Mirage jets

enable the South African air force to wipe out villages and refugee camps far beyond its borders.

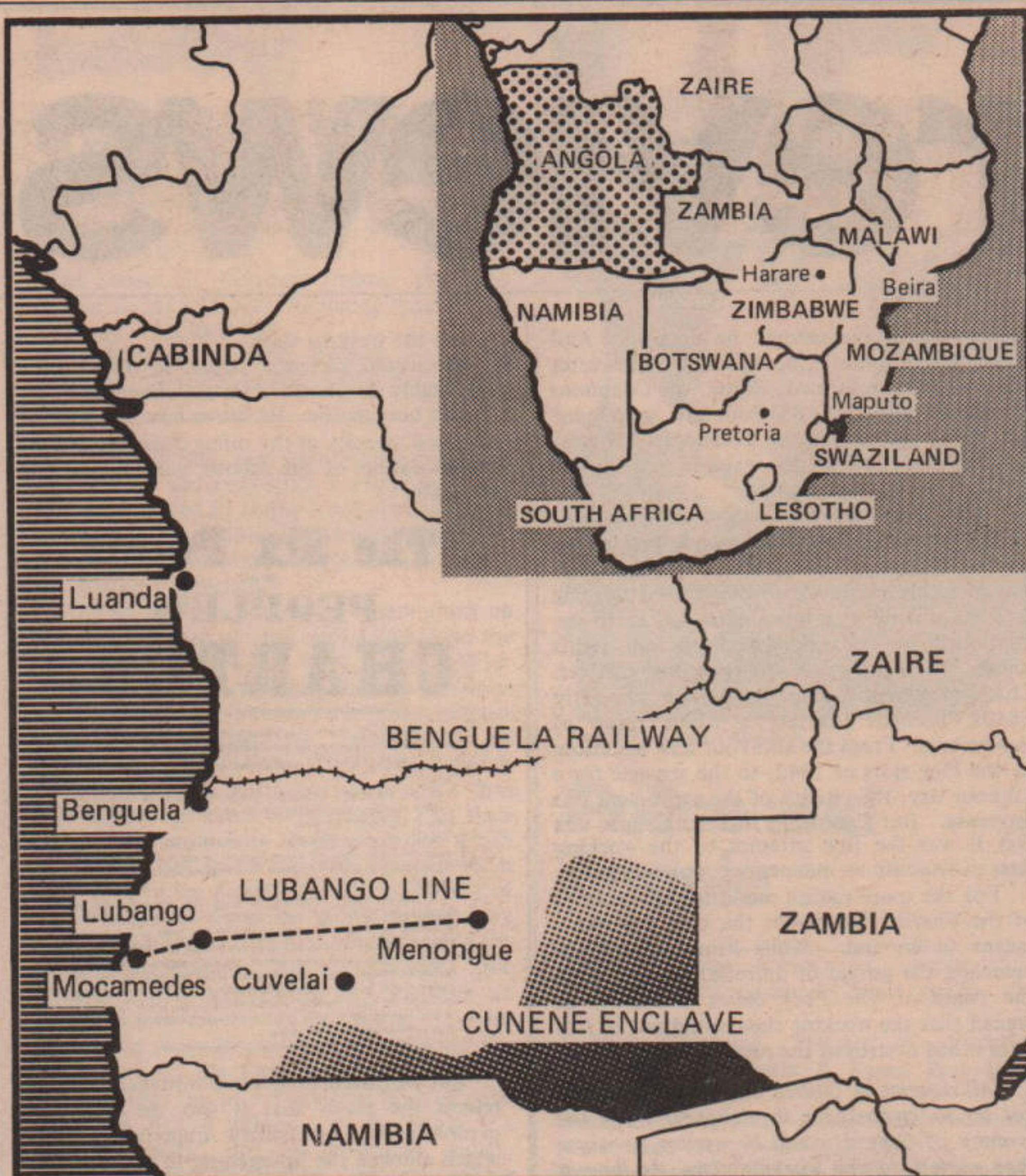
While all the imperialists back South Africa, its invasion of Angola revealed some significant divisions in the Western ranks. America was obliged to go out on a limb in support of the South African action as the 'contact group' virtually collapsed. Early in December, French foreign minister Claude Cheysson requested that the group 'be put to sleep, being unable to carry out faithfully its mandate'. France condemned the US/South African alliance against Angola. France has massive investments and interests in black Africa. It wants to undermine American influence throughout the continent. It took advantage of the Angola invasion to upset the USA's grand plans. In the new scramble for Africa's spoils, the imperialists are beginning to fall out amongst themselves. That can only be to the advantage of Africa's masses.

economy. The high rate of exploitation made possible by the apartheid system encouraged both domestic and foreign investment. However, declining profitability has hit South Africa like every other capitalist country, forcing it to export capital abroad. The countries of black Africa now account for almost half of all South Africa's external investments. Given the instability of most African regimes and the universal hostility to the apartheid state in black Africa, South Africa's reliance on its neighbours is a high risk strategy. Yet the precarious state of the South African economy means that its rulers have no alternative but to look north. South Africa's aggressive military strategy follows from its need to turn southern Africa into a secure sphere for investment and trade.

Sanctions and sabotage

Trade follows a similar pattern to investment. In 1982 South Africa imported goods worth R329m from black Africa, three quarters from Zimbabwe. According to official figures exports amounted to R926m. The true level is widely acknowledged to be at least 50 per cent higher as many transactions take place under the counter. Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, the three countries of the Southern African Customs Union, are almost completely integrated into the South African economy. All rely on South Africa for more than 80 per cent of their imports; in Lesotho's case it's a massive 97 per cent. Customs duties are a major source of government revenue — 71 per cent in Lesotho, 60 per cent in Swaziland and 37 per cent in Botswana.

Namibia is also firmly in the economic grip of Pretoria. The South African government contributes half the total revenue of the Namibian administration — mainly for the war against SWAPO. Most of the rest is provided by three mining companies: De Beers Consolidated Diamond Mines, TSUMEB and Britain's Rio Tinto Zinc. The combined investment stake of these three companies



amounts to more than Namibia's gross domestic product.

South Africa has used sanctions and its control over transport as well as military methods to tighten its stranglehold over the region. In 1979 South Africa's black neighbours — Angola and Mozambique; Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland; Malawi and Tanzania; Zambia and Zimbabwe — set up the Southern

African Development Coordinating Conference in an attempt to break out of their dependence on the apartheid state. These nine countries have a combined population of 65 million, in comparison with South Africa's 30 million. Yet South Africa's GDP of \$85 billion is almost four times as big. South African power has made it impossible for the black nations to go it alone. Zimbabwe, potentially the strongest of the group, has borne the brunt of South African sanctions. When Rhodesia was under white rule, South Africa cooperated closely in its economic development. When Robert Mugabe took over from Ian Smith and his stooges, Zimbabwe became a focus for the other black nations in the region and a potential threat to South African economic hegemony. Pretoria immediately abolished the preferential trade agreement it had maintained with white Rhodesia. To undermine the tourist trade it ordered all travellers to obtain visas for visits to Zimbabwe. The South African authorities sabotaged exports of tobacco from Zimbabwe by withdrawing locomotives at harvest time.

South Africa has used its controls over the regional railway network as a key weapon in its expansionist strategy. In October 1982 the state transport service was earning R213m from SADCC members in freight charges alone. At any one time, 7000 South African rail trucks were moving on foreign rail systems and up to 1500 foreign trucks were on South African rails. South Africa has taken advantage of inferior breakdown and repair facilities in the region to lend its trains and thus extend its control even further. At present South Africa has 27 locomotives on loan to Zimbabwe, 12 to Zaire, 10 to Zambia and seven to Mozambique. At the same time, MRN and Unita guerrillas and regular South African forces ensure that little or no traffic can use the railway from Zimbabwe to the coast through Mozambique, or the Benguela railway through Angola. Thus Zairean and Zambian copper, tea from Malawi and tobacco from Zimbabwe, must all go to the sea via South Africa. One month after the raid on Beira, South African rail tariffs increased by 15 per cent.

Angola and Mozambique have been increasingly drawn under South Africa's economic control. Angola's economy depends heavily on oil and diamonds. While the American Gulf Oil company controls the Cabinda oil fields, the Lunda Norte diamond mines are run by the South African firm De Beers. South Africa keeps diamond producers in

Angola (and in Botswana and Zaire) in line through its international monopoly over the distribution of diamonds. It also encourages theft by buying up supplies from smugglers. Mozambique has less natural resources than Angola and the combined impact of recession, South African destabilisation and drought have reduced the country to famine and destitution. One third of its 12 million people now face starvation.

South Africa has ravaged its neighbours but it has yet to overcome its domestic slump. In the first three quarters of 1983 the gross domestic product of South Africa fell by 4.5 per cent. The recent drought has so far cost an estimated R1.5m in lost foreign exchange earnings. Inflation and unemployment are rising, and high American interest rates are forcing down the price of gold — still a significant factor in the South African economy. Continuing crisis at home means more terror abroad — hence the invasion of Angola.

Terror strikes Angola

Back in 1975 the Angolans defeated Unita and an amateurish South African force with Cuban help. The South African Defence Force was subsequently rearmed and rejuvenated to play a major role in foreign affairs. Since August 1981 it has maintained a permanent base in Cunene province on the Angola/Namibia border, from which it has supplied and supported the Unita guerrillas. To keep Unita at bay the Angolan government has acquired the services of a force of 25 000 Cubans. Last October the Angolan government launched a major offensive against Unita. The South African-backed forces suffered a serious defeat in Mussende province in mid-November and they were pushed back elsewhere as well. In response South Africa secretly despatched an invasion force in early December. The force included 10 000 troops and four units of heavy artillery and tanks, backed up by 100 fighter aircraft. Following heavy fighting before Christmas, South Africa offered Angola a ceasefire, and at the United Nations it proposed to withdraw its troops from Cunene province. Only when Angola rejected this offer did South Africa publicly announce that its forces were already deep inside Angola. It offered the pretext that it had invaded to prevent a SWAPO invasion of Namibia.

The South Africans succeeded in destroying SWAPO's base at Cuvelai, but failed to breach the regular Angolan defences which stretch from Mocamedes on the coast through Lubango to Menongue inland. By early January the invaders had been forced to withdraw to their enclave in Cunene. At the end of the month they offered to disengage 'completely' from Angola.

Gunpoint diplomacy

After the slaughter, talks. South African premier P W Botha aims to drive representatives of black Africa to the negotiating table where he hopes to dictate the terms of their subordination to his continental ambitions. He has recently forced Mozambique's Samora Machel to accede to 'good neighbourly relations', while South African-sponsored mercenaries raped and pillaged in the countryside, and people starved on the main streets of Maputo. Last month Botha greeted 'a very promising climate' for talks about the future of Namibia, created by his bloodbath in southern Angola. Botha hopes to use his increased leverage against Angola to press SWAPO into discussions with South Africa's stooges in Namibia about the terms of an imperialist settlement in the long disputed territory.

But Botha cannot win at the negotiating table what he failed to win on the battlefield. South Africa's attempt to bully Angola into expelling its Cuban allies failed at the Lubango line in January. And although SWAPO suffered a serious setback in Angola, its forces are fighting on in Namibia, as they have been fighting for the past 18 years. Diplomacy will not resolve the conflicts between the apartheid regime and black Africa. South Africa's military might will only give it a temporary respite from the growing wrath of the African masses outside and inside its borders.

Andy Clarkson

Workers on the rise

While South Africa terrorises its neighbours, the black working class at home has launched a strike wave on a scale not seen since the seventies. By mid-January 20 000 black workers had stopped production in car assembly plants, supermarkets, refineries and mines. At AEI — one third British-owned, and the largest explosives manufacturer in South Africa — 8950 workers came out on strike. The fact that the strike was fully legal did not prevent the bosses from imposing widespread dismissals to coerce the workforce back into the plants. Barlow Rand, one of the biggest South African conglomerates, has negotiated recognition agreements for 42 unions over the last three years. Nevertheless it suffered 10 strikes in the space of six weeks last year.

The latest spate of industrial action has deeply alarmed the apartheid establishment. Given the parlous state of the economy, the stoppages were a serious threat to the regime. Yet what really unnerved the authorities was the underlying political character of the disputes. Barlow Rand chairman Rosholt recognised that 'the conflict between private enterprise and some of the union groupings is unfortunately very basic indeed'. Strikes for higher wages and better conditions in South Africa rapidly extend into full scale confrontations with the apartheid state.

Until 1974, South Africa claimed a rate of return on investment that was one of the highest in the world. By 1976 the rate of return on investment had fallen to 8 per cent, from levels of 19 per cent in the late sixties. The recession forced the capitalists to cut working class living standards. Harsher exploitation unleashed a wave of black

militancy which culminated in the Soweto uprising. Taken aback by the vigour of the working class response, the South African state was obliged to mix coercion with attempts to integrate at least some sections of the black community. The regime modified some of the more blatant aspects of apartheid and agreed to recognise black trade unions. The bosses attempted to raise productivity and resolve labour shortages by training blacks to take over jobs traditionally performed by white workers.

South African capitalism sustained a temporary reprieve between 1979 and 1982 when gold prices recovered. The black working class took advantage of this partial recovery to close wage differentials with white workers. From 20:1 in 1979, they fell to 5:1 by 1982. The number of black trade unionists grew by a quarter of a million over the same period. This process halted in 1982 as the recession returned with a vengeance. Detentions of black trade union leaders were again stepped up. The torture and murder of union activist Neil Aggett in 1982 indicated the increasingly coercive approach of the regime to the trade unions.

Black living standards are now declining at a rate of more than four per cent a year. However, growing poverty and unemployment have never been a barrier to working class protest in South Africa. The past success of South African capitalism has produced a powerful social force in the black working class. Undiminished by apartheid, undefeated by state repression, the workers are the best hope for upsetting South Africa's reign of terror at home and abroad.

In the shadow of the bourgeoisie



Punch lampoons the physical force Chartists

Theodore Rothstein, *From Chartism to Labourism*, Lawrence and Wishart 1983, pp365, pbk £6.95

THE REPUBLICATION OF Theodore Rothstein's 1929 classic work on the early British labour movement is to be welcomed. Long out of print, *From Chartism to Labourism* spans the period from the birth of the first proletarian movement in the 1830s to the defeat of the working class in the First World War. Despite its weaknesses, Rothstein's analysis of Chartism and his account of the birth of the labour bureaucracy in the heyday of British imperialism is well worth reading.

Theodore Rothstein lived through the process which he later attempted to make sense of. Hence, while his insights are often illuminating, his analysis reflects the weaknesses of the socialist movement in which he played a full part. A refugee from Tsarist Russia, Rothstein came to England in 1891. He immediately threw himself into political activity, joining the Hackney and Kingsland branch of the Social Democratic Federation in 1895. Rothstein and his wife Anna were the mainstays of the minority anti-imperialist group within the SDF. They challenged the chauvinistic stance of SDF leader H M Hyndman during the Boer War. In the years up to 1914 the Rothsteins fought a consistent battle against the strong social chauvinist current within the British labour movement. When war broke out in 1914 Rothstein adopted an uncompromising anti-war position. When the British Socialist Party, formed in 1911 from the remnants of the SDF, took an equivocal stance, Rothstein resigned.

Rothstein was a prolific writer. He edited and contributed to numerous socialist journals and pamphlets before the First World War, including the central organ of the German Social Democratic Party, *Neue Zeit*, and the more left-wing *Leipziger Volkszeitung*. He conducted an infrequent but friendly correspondence with Lenin. When the Bolsheviks started their daily paper *Pravda* in 1912, Rothstein became its London correspondent. After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 Rothstein became the official Soviet representative in Britain. He played a major part in the 'Hands off Russia' campaign and in the long prelude to the formation of the British Communist Party. In August 1920 he left for the Soviet Union where he lived and worked until his death in 1953.

Rothstein emphasises that the factors which led to the defeat of Chartism decisively influenced the class struggle in Britain for the next half century and more. Rothstein's book has four strengths. First, if his assessment of the Chartist movement is more limited in scope than more recent studies, Rothstein's grasp of the class struggle is more incisive. Second, he has a clear appreciation of the importance of Chartism as the first independent working class movement. Third, his recognition of the strength of the bourgeoisie and the weakness of working class politics informs his explanation of the movement's failure. Finally, while his understanding of the process through which the labour bureaucracy was integrated into the state in the last quarter of the nineteenth century is incomplete, it surpasses most studies of the period.

Sounding the tocsin

In a sense, the Chartist movement dates not from the 'Six Points' of the People's Charter in 1838, but from the moment the 1832 Reform Bill received the Royal Assent. The capitalist class won its decisive victory over the landed aristocracy with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. But the 1832 Reform Bill handed the bourgeoisie the reins of power. While the Bill secured only a modest extension of the vote (initially from 435 000 to 652 000 electors) it ensured that the interests of the industrial bour-

reviews

geoisie would thenceforth be decisive. And there was no mistaking the new tone after 1832. The reformed House of Commons introduced the hated 1834 Poor Law, sanctioned the transportation of the Tolpuddle labourers in 1834 and launched the struggle to break the nascent general trade unions.

There is a direct connection between 1832 and the rise of Chartism. Once in power, the bourgeoisie set its face against further reform. The working class, which had gained nothing from its alliance with the middle class reformers, continued the struggle for democratic rights under the banner of the People's Charter. Chartism, which reached its peak in the early 1840s, brought together a whole range of movements. From the anti-Poor Law agitation, to the Plug riots of 1842, to the struggle for a 10 hour day, the vitality of the movement was immense. But Chartism's real significance was that it was the first attempt by the working class to establish an independent political party.

For the more radical working class sections of the Chartist movement the vote was but a means to an end. While Bronterre O'Brien preached the gospel of universal suffrage from the pages of *The Poor Man's Guardian*, he argued that the working class would not be free until it had destroyed the rule of capital:

'All reforms in Church and State which did not go to emancipate the labourer from the tyranny of Capital would be useless, or worse than useless to the working class...As long as the labourer's existence depends upon the capital of others, so long must he continue a pauper and a slave...There is but one remedy. It is to upset the whole system. There is no reforming it by parts.'

While the moral force wing of the Chartist movement led by William Lovett was prepared to collaborate and compromise with middle class radicals, the physical force school led by Feargus O'Connor, Ernest Jones, George Julian Harney and Bronterre O'Brien maintained a rigorous independence.

By 1848, Chartism was all but dead. Most historians attribute its demise to leadership quarrels. Rothstein locates the movement's problems in the immaturity of the working class and working class politics. The continental revolutions of 1848 marked the awakening of the European working class. In England, 1848 marked the retreat of the proletariat. After the demoralising failure of the Chartist demonstration at Kenilworth on 10 April the bourgeoisie moved in to smash the Chartist movement by eliminating its leaders. But as Rothstein argues, the movement had already foundered. British capitalism was still too immature for the development of consistently revolutionary working class theory and organisation.

The year 1848 signified the defeat of independent working class organisation and politics in Britain. For the next 50 years and more, the working class was to walk in the shadow of bourgeois ideology, under the political domination of the Liberal Party:

'It was a blow from which the revolutionary movement in England did not recover for generations, and to this day the English bourgeoisie is enjoying the fruits of its victory in 1848. True, this was not the only conquest which has sustained the English bourgeoisie; even more brilliant and important was the subsequent victory on the ideological front by means of timely economic and political concessions which gradually reconciled the working class to the capitalist order and fastened around its neck the yoke of bourgeois ideology. But even this second victory was rendered possible only as a result of the first, which had broken the revolutionary backbone of the proletariat, and made the working class soft and pliable in the hands of its artful conquerors.'

The roots of opportunism

Rothstein describes the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a period of political stagnation for the British labour movement. The period was characterised by a repudiation of class politics and a narrow concentration on trade unionism. Rothstein meticulously documents the integration of the trade union leaders into the state apparatus. He details the careers of John Burns, Keir Hardie and Ben Tillett, from trade union militants to staid establishment figures. He describes the development of consultation procedures and an elaborate machinery of arbitration and conciliation. What Rothstein is unable to do, however, is to provide a convincing explanation of how bourgeois ideology came to exert such an influence

within the working class.

Rothstein correctly points to the strength and highly developed class consciousness of the British bourgeoisie. He shows how the political skill and sagacity of the ruling class fostered the incorporation of the labour bureaucracy into the state.

The Six Points OF THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER.

1. A vote for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
2. THE BALLOT.—To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
3. NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament.—thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.
4. PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency, when taken from his business to attend to the interests of the country.
5. EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of large ones.
6. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot, no party could buy a constituency under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituents as now.

But Rothstein makes two mistakes. First he rejects the thesis that it was the unrivalled predominance of British imperialism alone which allowed the bourgeoisie to make concessions to certain sections of the working class. Significantly, Rothstein never refers to Lenin's *Imperialism*. Rothstein contends that it was the progressive decline in the prices of commodities 'which assuaged the distress among the working class, blunted its militancy against the employers, and promoted and consolidated the policy of opportunism with all its logical consequences'. Second, Rothstein fails to distinguish between the leaders of the labour movement, who were drawn closer and closer into the 'aristocratic embrace' via factory inspectorships and seats on the Board of Trade, and the working class which gained little from the triumph of British imperialism. Rothstein fails to grasp the intricate process by which the highly skilled, craft sections of the working class — the labour aristocracy — assumed the leadership of the labour movement. It was through the mediation of these labour leaders that bourgeois ideology was transmitted to the working class.

With the formation of the Labour Party in 1900 the consummation of the alliance between the labour leaders and the state was almost complete. The fragmented Marxist organisations outside Labour's orbit were too weak politically to challenge Labour's influence. The upsurge of working class militancy before the First World War and the challenge it posed to the labour bureaucracy seemed to offer the working class a glimmer of hope. But the unofficial revolt failed to transcend the narrow confines of spontaneous strike action. Still in the shadow of the bourgeoisie, thousands of workers lined up behind the bosses to defend Britain in the imperialist war, sent to their slaughter by the patriotic leaders of the labour movement.

Joan Phillips

Grenada: under the heel

Chris Searle, *Grenada: the struggle against destabilisation*, Writers and Readers 1983, pp164, pbk £3.95

Fitzroy Ambursley and Robin Cohen eds, *Crisis in the Caribbean*, Heinemann 1983, pp276, pbk £6.95

THE INVASION OF the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada by 6000 American troops last October had long been predicted. Chris Searle's book, published after the invasion but written before, is concerned primarily with the threat to the island from the USA. Searle gives an anecdotal account of Grenada under the New Jewel Movement. His failure to analyse the movement leads Searle to predict the survival of the New Jewel regime in Grenada, an assertion dramatically refuted even before his book appeared in the shops.

Crisis in the Caribbean explains some of the background to the invasion. The articles in this collection point to some of the common problems facing Caribbean regimes committed to independent economic development. Fitzroy Ambursley's chapter on Grenada describes the

frustration of the New Jewel government's plans. Ambursley points out that the new regime was concerned to avoid a showdown with imperialism and simply wanted to encourage foreign capitalists to contribute more to the development of the island. The New Jewel government enlisted foreign capital to build the Point Salines airport to try to expand the island's tourist industry. But it could not promote the development of agriculture or Grenada's industrial base. Foreign capitalists were not interested in building factories on such a small island, with almost no skilled workers. Even the workers needed to build the airport had to be shipped in from Cuba and other countries. The state was too poor to promote much development. This failure to make economic progress prompted the power struggle between Prime Minister Maurice Bishop and his deputy Bernard Coard which developed during the summer of 1983. While the struggle remains obscure, it is clear that both were keen to attract more foreign capital. The dispute was over how to achieve this. The overthrow of Bishop and the establishment of military rule in Grenada provided the USA with an excuse to invade. The USA needed a victory to recover its standing as a military power. US president Reagan was confident that the marines would get a quick and favourable result in Grenada. He predicted that they would be in and out within a week.

Into oblivion

It is a measure of US decline that the invasion of Grenada was not as simple as Reagan expected. Fierce resistance from the islanders and Cuban workmen prevented the marines from taking full control for nearly a week. A month after the invasion there were still 4000 troops on the island 'mopping up'. More than 1000 US troops now form part of a permanent garrison on the island.

The occupying forces face serious problems. Although there is no organised resistance movement, the islanders have developed tactics to irritate the invaders. People report that arms, or Cuban soldiers, are hidden in inaccessible parts of the island's hills. When the troops get there they find nothing. Marines recently shot a flock of bats they disturbed when entering a cave in search of a Cuban 'cell'. Clearly the USA cannot rely on the 'gratitude' of the islanders.

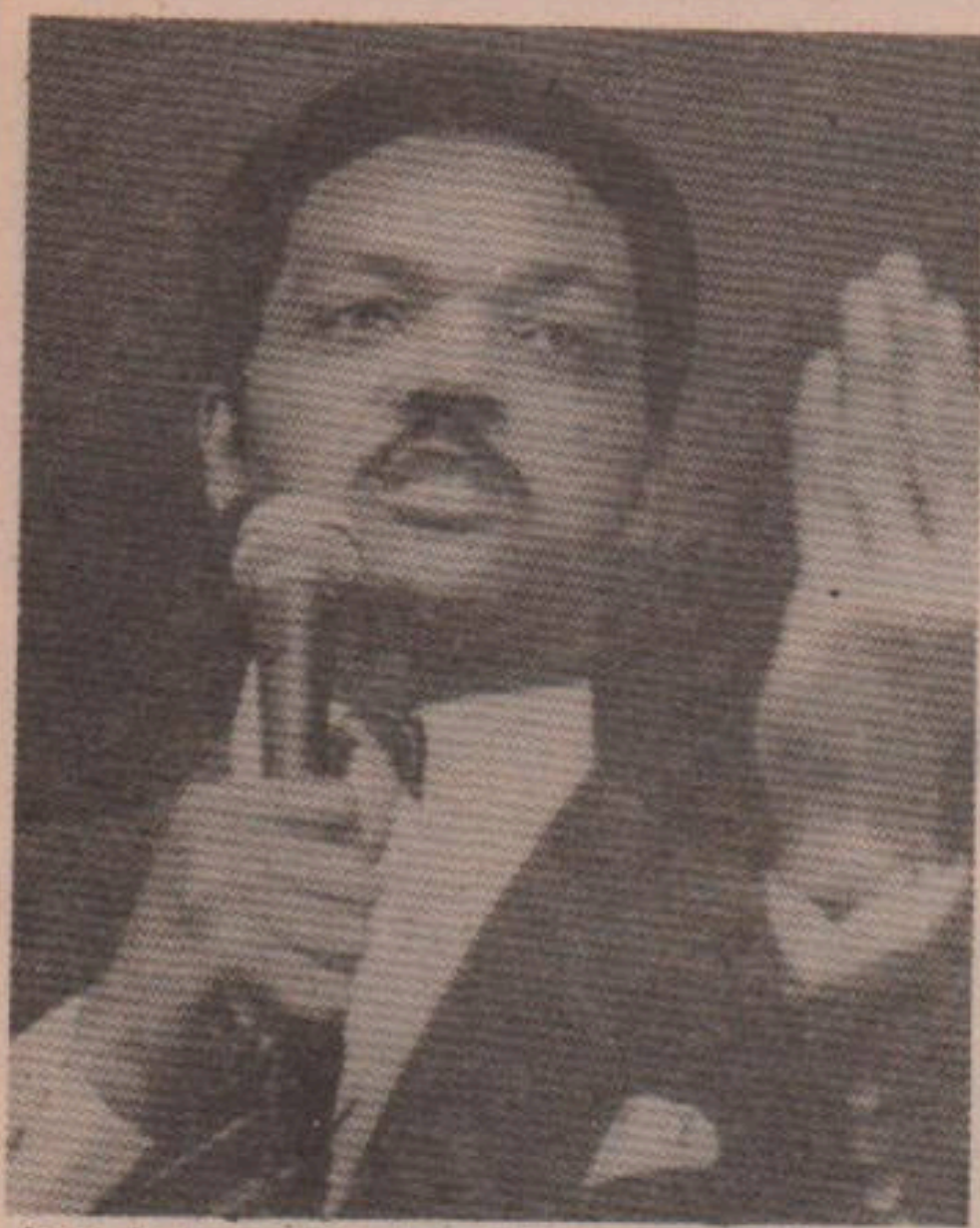


Maurice Bishop: victim of imperialism

A more pressing problem for the USA is how to establish some form of political framework for Grenada. After the invasion the USA appointed Governor General Paul Scoon as head of the island's government. Scoon and his American backers confront serious problems in trying to hold elections on the island. Eric Gairy, who ruled the island before the New Jewel Movement ousted him in the 1979 coup, returned to Grenada in January. Gairy is remembered as a brutal puppet of the USA. But apart from the New Jewel Movement, which has begun to reorganise itself after the invasion, Gairy's Grenadian United Labour Party is the only political grouping on the island prepared for an election. The USA needs to hold elections on the island to justify its invasion. But a Gairy victory or a win for the NJM would be embarrassing. Scoon's team has reluctantly promised elections in November.

Despite the local difficulties, the USA achieved its broad objectives from the invasion of Grenada. Opponents of US policy in Central America and the Caribbean took note of the warning. Nicaragua's Sandinista government, itself facing US backed guerrillas operating on its northern border, quickly adopted a conciliatory approach to the USA. For the USA the invasion of Grenada has served its purpose. In the words of one official, Grenada 'is now sinking gradually into the oblivion we reserve for our friends'. For a time the people of Grenada were at the centre of the confrontation between imperialism and the masses of the Caribbean. Now they have been consigned to the oblivion of misery and military repression that imperialist countries reserve for people of the Third World under pro-Western dictatorships.

John Johnson



Jesse Jackson: frustrated Democrat

Inside black America

Manning Marable, *How capitalism underdeveloped black America*, Pluto Press 1983, pp343, pbk £5.95

MANNING MARABLE is a prominent American academic. Last year he left the National Black Independent Political Party to become vice-chairman of the new Democratic Socialist Party, a predominantly white liberal coalition. He claims to have written 'a revolutionary critique of the integral social classes that constitute the national minority or nation' of black Americans.

Marable outlines the various solutions put forward by middle class blacks in response to their oppression. But he refuses to recognise that all of them have been compatible with the interests of the ruling class. In the 1960s racial segregation in the southern states was becoming a costly business which threatened to unleash social upheaval. The Rockefellers and the Kennedys used Martin Luther King to front a desegregation campaign which opened up new outlets for business investment. From Booker T Washington's 'Separate but Equal' compromises with white businessmen in the late nineteenth century, to the national separatism of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association in the 1920s, to King's calls for integration, the independent interests of black workers have been jettisoned by the collaborationist approach of the black middle class.

The politics of impotence

Today the black activists of the seventies have settled for a utopian dream of socialist transformation in the future, while accommodating to the system in the present. Marable's 'democratic socialist' turns out to be a frustrated Democrat. Marable may not back black Democratic Party presidential hopeful Jesse Jackson's blatant support for American imperialism. But nor will he condemn him. Marable's criticism of Jackson's Coca Cola boycott to force the company to employ blacks is that it didn't work. The real problem with Jackson's approach is that it doesn't seek to mobilise the working class - black and white - against racism.

Reading the British press it would seem that most black Americans are running for Mayor - Harold Washington in Chicago, Andrew Young in Atlanta, Wilson Goode in Philadelphia. The reality is different. American blacks suffer racial violence and oppression on a scale unknown even in racist Britain. The proportion of blacks permanently out of work has risen from eight per cent in the mid sixties to more than 20 per cent today. Racial polarisation has reached the point where sheriffs lead posses to carry out 'legal lynchings'. The role of black middle class politicians is to undermine black resistance. It was Andrew Young who headed off mass protests against the random killings of black youth in Atlanta. It was Harold Washington along with Jesse Jackson's PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity), who attempted to crush a city-wide school strike in Chicago last October.

Marable is unable to offer any defence against the attacks which he documents. He reflects the discontent of intellectual, middle class America. Because he is black in a viciously racist society he aspires to a world where all will be equal. But Marable doesn't even believe in his own utopia. He sees racism as something eternal which will have to be combatted under socialism too. As for black and white working class unity, Marable feebly calls for white labour to 'engage in extensive self-criticism'. Marable's politics and the social group they represent are incapable of defending American blacks from the wholesale oppression they suffer.

Zaro Costello

Isolating the Irish War

Tom Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics*, Gill and Macmillan Dublin 1983, pp244, pbk £7.50

John Darby ed, *Northern Ireland: the background to the conflict*, Appletree Press Belfast 1983, pp272, pbk £4.95

W D Flackes, *Northern Ireland: a political directory*, Ariel Books BBC 1983, pp 323, pbk £3.95

ALTHOUGH they deal with different parts of Irish history and geography, Garvin's book and the essays edited by Darby share some common ground. Both assume that events in Ireland today can be understood without reference to the 'British connection'.

Garvin makes some useful observations on the changing face of Irish nationalism from the eighteenth century up to the Tan War of 1919-21. But when that war ends, Garvin's problems begin. He assumes that the Twenty-six Counties Free State created by Partition is an independent Irish nation. The Border, Britain's occupation of the North and today's IRA thus fall outside his terms of reference. This leads Garvin into confusion. He ponders over which 'model' of bourgeois sociology or politics is applicable to the South. But the peculiarity of the Twenty-six Counties is not covered by standard academic categories. Partition and the direct domination of the Six Counties have allowed British imperialism to maintain an indirect domination of the South. Garvin details the way British influence shaped the institutions of the Twenty-six Counties state, but dismisses this as a 'hangover' from colonial days. Yet British influence in the South is a modern reality, not an historical oddity. Garvin attempts to analyse Irish nationalism outside the context of Anglo-Irish relations. By endorsing the British view that Ireland is independent he denies the national character of today's war in the Six Counties. The 'model' Garvin needs to understand the Twenty-six Counties is Lenin's analysis of imperialist domination. Irish nationalism is still evolving in the struggle against that domination and for self-determination.



Border patrol: Britain's dividing line

Northern Ireland: the background to the conflict shares all of Garvin's problems but none of his merits. John Darby's introduction to the collection of essays establishes that it is only concerned with the internal politics of the Six Counties. Direct Rule from Westminster and British troops on Irish streets amount to an 'external dimension' which is not central to an understanding of Northern Ireland. All the contributors portray the British state as a neutral institution which can play a progressive role in changing the North's 'sectarian relations'. Only Bill Rolston's piece on reformism and sectarianism dismisses the idea that Britain seeks to combat sectarianism. Rolston sees a major barrier to British reforms as the 'technocracy' which administers the system. Rolston's 'technocracy' is better known as the British state. Whatever the subjective wishes of reforming British politicians, the state machinery ensures the continuation of the institutionalised sectarianism on which British rule in the Six Counties rests. By ignoring the crucial issue of British oppression and blaming Irish extremism for the war, the contributors to Darby's collection condone further British interference in Irish affairs.

W D Flackes' *Northern Ireland: a political directory* also isolates the Six Counties from its political context. But here, that isolation is the book's strength. Free from the confusions of academic analysis, Flackes presents a rigorous catalogue of the facts, faces and places in the Irish War. His revised work is an invaluable aid to those more interested in what goes on in the Six Counties than in what goes on in the minds of sociology lecturers.

Eddie Veale



The long arm of the law

Police and people

Louise Christian, *Policing by coercion*, GLC police committee support unit, pp223, pbk £1.50

Carolyn Steedman, *Policing the Victorian community*, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1984, pp215, pbk £8.95

Harris Joshua & Tina Wallace, *To ride the storm*, Heinemann 1983, pp221, pbk £6.95

Paul Gordon, *White Law: racism in the police, courts and prisons*, Pluto Press 1983, pp159, pbk £3.95

Policing by coercion is the fruit of Louise Christian's research for the GLC's police committee on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. It gives a concise account of the new powers enshrined in the Bill, now passing through the committee stage en route to the statute book. Christian is concerned to prove that the Police Bill is based on 'a philosophy of coercion and not of consent'. Labour's campaign for democratic control of the police rests firmly on this assumption. For the Labour left, accountability is not just a procedural constitutional matter, but the 'basis on which consent for the exercise of police power is secured'. The accountability lobby has found sustenance in the notion that the police force was established under popular control. Only democratic accountability can restore local control and win back public support for the police.

Carolyn Steedman's book on the formation of English provincial police forces in the middle years of the nineteenth century is a refutation of this thesis. Steedman shows how the police force was introduced to deal with a growing working class. The landowning gentry resisted the introduction of modern policing as an encroachment upon its traditional prerogatives. But the industrial bourgeoisie, which needed a more effective method of curbing working class unrest, prevailed. One of the first exponents of police 'professionalism' Major General William Cartwright wanted to see 'a wholesale system of ordering and disciplining communities'. Written from a pro-police standpoint, Steedman's book exposes the police as an instrument of class rule, abhorred by the Victorian working class. She graphically conveys the extent of working class resistance to the introduction of the new police force which continued well into the twentieth century.

To ride the storm deals with the 1980 riot in Bristol. It analyses the responses of the legal system, the role of the media and the reactions of various government agencies. The authors' aim is to prove that the growing authoritarianism of the state benefits neither the establishment nor its victims, black youth. Increasing coercion can only provoke more Brixtons, Brixtons and Toxteths. They end by citing community policing advocate John Alderson: 'There has to be a better way than blind repression'. Their alternative, which the state has put into practice over the last two years, is more consultation and liaison between the police and the black community. After two years of this prescription, blacks are more isolated and vulnerable than ever before.

Paul Gordon's *White Law* is defined by its emphasis on 'the ideology of racism'. In common with Joshua and Wallace, Gordon deplores the 'ingrained popular racism of British society'. Like them, he dismisses the potential for building an anti-racist movement in the working class. Because they reject the working class as the only social force which has an interest in fighting racism, these concerned liberals are forced to rely on the racist state to mitigate racial oppression.

Colin Brown

Lest darkness come

Charles Maclean, *The Watcher*, Penguin Books 1984, pp333, pbk £1.95

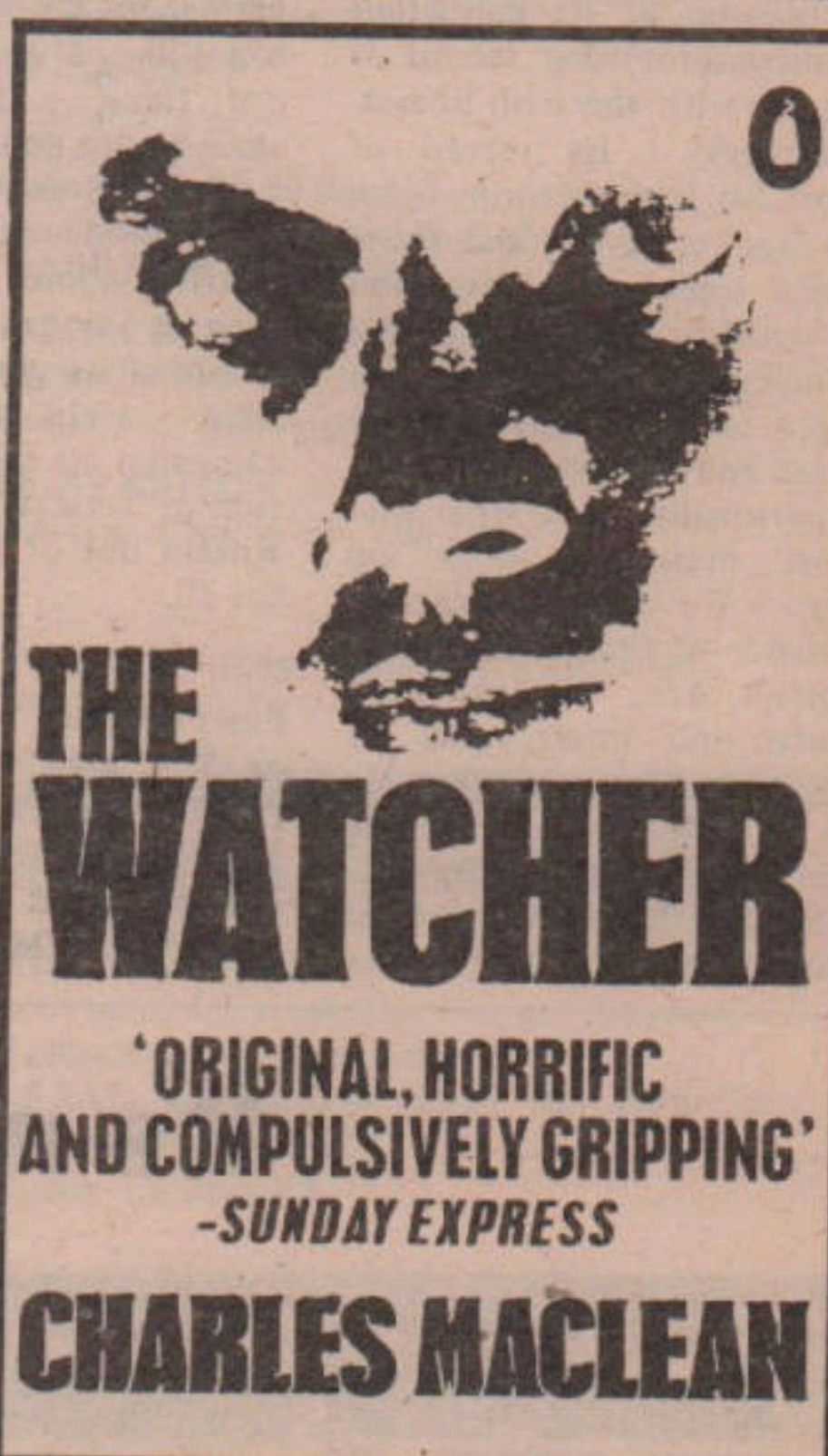
'SENSATIONAL, shocking and deeply disturbing, *The Watcher* will take you to the brink of madness' is the warning on the advertising blurb for Penguin's latest bestseller. Insomniac Paul Newman read it and stopped sleeping altogether. 'Not a book for bedtime' advised Piers Paul Read. *The Watcher* has received rave reviews on both sides of the Atlantic. It riveted the reviewers, but none of them could seem to make sense of it. *Publishers' Weekly* announced that it 'defies categorisation'. The *Good Housekeeping* reviewer was 'hypnotised', 'spellbound' and 'haunted for two sleepless nights and many waking moments'. All found it original, horrific and compulsively gripping. Why?

When 33 year old Martin Gregory leaves the office where he works as a computer sales executive on the eve of his wife's birthday his nightmare begins. He prepares a surprise for his wife - a present wrapped in a white box - so shocking that it defies explanation. Nearby he leaves the message - 'Out of their misery'. From the moment of Martin Gregory's breakdown the reader is taken on a journey into the mind of a very ordinary man on the verge of fragmentation.

Middle class nightmare

The Watcher is a contemporary journey into the heart of darkness, the story of a man so consumed by an overwhelming sense of guilt that he can carry on only by making a total break with reality. At the beginning of the novel, Gregory's psychiatrist Dr. Somerville tells us that: 'If one can only discover where to look, there is an explanation for everything'. But the reader's desire to discover a rational explanation for Gregory's breakdown is constantly frustrated. Maclean's manipulation of the reader is perfect. Martin Gregory tells his own story. We also read extracts from his diary. But we also read Dr Somerville's reports on his sessions with the patient and the transcripts from the tape recordings of Gregory's regressions under hypnosis. All yield conflicting explanations for Gregory's actions. Maclean opens the door, only to close it again.

Maclean's novel is not merely a virtuoso portrayal of obsession and madness. The cause of Gregory's psychosis is never made explicit. But the novel's central theme is clear.



Penguin chiller heads the bestsellers

Gregory's world is a world without hope. Man is inherently destructive and the world is an irrational place of war, famine and disease. The massive burden of guilt which Gregory bears is for all of suffering humanity. In his nightmare visions of chaos and destruction, certain images recur: torrential rain, storms, flood, and the bodies of innocent children corrupted by plague. *The Watcher* suggests that man can transcend the ignominy of modern civilisation only by pursuing an individual quest for truth. Gregory's flight from reality expresses the middle class fear and revulsion at the anarchy and war unleashed by the capitalist system. This is what makes it compulsive reading for every petit-bourgeois individual engulfed by the horrors of the modern world.

Joan Phillips

Letters

Freedom leap



Nude protest



Pill scare



Irish prisoner speaks

On 2 December 28 year old labourer Tommy Quigley was seized by a joint Scotland Yard and RUC snatch squad in Andersonstown, West Belfast. Tommy Quigley was flown to London and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act at Paddington Green police station 'in connection with' the IRA's 1981 London bombing campaign. While armed police in bulletproof jackets patrolled Paddington Green, the Irish Freedom Movement held daily protest pickets.

On Thursday 8 December we demonstrated outside Marylebone Magistrates Court when Tommy Quigley was charged with 'conspiracy to cause explosions'. A week later, the IFM organised a national day of protest, centred on a march around Brixton Prison where Tommy Quigley is being held. Below we reprint his recent letter to the Irish Freedom Movement.

Dear Irish Freedom Movement, Thank you for your letter and support. It was much appreciated and very welcomed. I was

surprised and heartened by your picketing outside the court, especially the first day when I was taken from Paddington Green. It was good to know that I had not been condemned by the whole population of England. From what I had just seen that morning in the papers it seemed that my trial was over and they had already found me guilty. The only thing that I am guilty of, is of course the fact that I am Irish, and any Irishman will do when they need a showtrial. I hope the press gives as much coverage when I prove my innocence as they did when I was kidnapped from my own country.

At the minute I have settled in and I am keeping my spirits high. I'm still going to court every week, which seems to be greatly annoying the cops for some reason. I'm also pressing them to have the trial as soon as possible, and they are trying to delay it for as long as they can. They know I have nothing to fear in court and their only hope is that anti-Irish feeling will convict me, but unfortunately for them I can quite easily

prove I am innocent.

Your conference sounds really good and very interesting I hope to hear more about it. I read in the paper about Sheffield council's decision. I was a little surprised and a bit disappointed but sooner or later the message will get across. I wonder will they ban your demonstration on 3 March. I hope you will understand if I don't make it in person, but I will be thinking of you and I will look forward to hearing all about it. I'm hoping soon to get some papers from home. I get very little news from Ireland except what little there is in the English press, and after reading these English papers I can understand why most of the people here know next to nothing about the situation at home.

Well, I'll sign off now. I hope everything goes well with your plans for the future, and I will look forward to hearing from you. All the best

Tommy Quigley
'A' section
Brixton Prison

Leap for Irish freedom

On 24 March I will be performing a sponsored parachute jump on behalf of the Irish Freedom Movement. I have decided to give the IFM my backing in this way because of its consistent and uncompromising record of solidarity with the Irish liberation struggle. Its record of support for Irish freedom fighters, prisoners of war and those detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, has been exemplary in winning British workers to the cause of Irish freedom and self determination.

I personally know what that support means as does my family. We have had ample experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. I have been detained and interrogated 11 times since its inception in 1974. The Irish Freedom Movement and its predecessor the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign have

been at the forefront of the fight against my detentions.

I have chosen this time to back the campaign to highlight the introduction of the new, permanent Prevention of Terrorism Bill. The Bill means only one thing - increased terror against Irish people in Britain.

I therefore urge all of you, both inside and outside the British labour movement, to sponsor my great 'leap for Irish freedom' as generously as possible. Help build a fighting campaign to smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act and drive Britain out of Ireland once and for all.

Peter Grimes
ex-POW, Britain
(Rush sponsorships to BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques and postal orders payable to IFM)

Winning strength

I went along to the Preparing for Power dayschool in Bradford on 11 February. I really enjoyed the discussions - and I got a lot out of them. In the morning Frank Richards talked about the Labour Party and the so-called lefts. In the afternoon Kate Marshall spoke about what the unions mean for the working class today. She made me realise what the unions are really up to.

I think what the RCP is doing is really positive. The dayschool really made me think about reformist politics that have been hanging around for years without gaining anything for the working class. It also gave me practical arguments I can use in everyday struggles. I think the RCP has the politics to win the class struggle.

Sarah Leach
Bradford

It's no joke

Glasgow newspapers are trying to turn a current dispute into a sexist joke. Life models at Glasgow School of Art are fighting for improved conditions and pay. The first stage in the action is a ban on modelling nude.

In 'art', the naked human form is idealised and exalted. What a contrast with the humiliation and degradation suffered by art 'students' models, forced to pose nude for hours on end in cold and dirty classrooms! Models are rewarded with aches, pains, potential arthritis and £62 per week.

Life models at the Glasgow School of Art decided to change the situation. Their fight for a £115 weekly wage is the first action to challenge the local authorities' derisory three per cent pay offer. The transport

workers' union nationally have rejected this offer in words, but have done nothing to fight for any improvement.

The Transport and General Workers' Union steward for the life models explained the situation:

'While the union leaders are sitting round the negotiating table, many manual workers like us are taking home wages you can't survive on. We decided we could not wait. We drew up our own wage claim based on what we need to live on and what we considered decent working conditions. We do the job so we decide. We presented our claim to the TGWU asking for automatic backing and to the GSA management demanding an immediate response. Management delayed. The TGWU asked us to postpone our action

indefinitely on management's behalf. We said no way. Our action goes on.'

Under pressure from the workers the TGWU has publicly promised to give their action full backing. But the TGWU has also given management private assurances that it won't support the dispute.

Already the workers have the support of the student body at the Glasgow School of Art and of 17 art-school models in Edinburgh. Management have threatened to sack any models who don't work normally but with increased support and continued determination, the models can win their claim and overcome attempts by union officials and the tabloid press to undermine their action. Sue McNeil
Glasgow

Slum landlord

Hackney Labour council may be a racist landlord (*the next step*, February), but it's also a slum landlord and a union-bashing employer. Tenants on the estate where I work in Hoxton welcomed the setting up 10 months ago of an 'area base' for housing repairs and services. We thought it would speed up repairs and services. But the office workers in the base had to send the job tickets to the town hall to be processed and the repairs seemed to take even longer to get done. Shop stewards and tenants' representatives asked for more local control, but what we got was more managers and supervisors. In frustration and anger, we decided to take action to short circuit all the delays and excuses.

Tenants and BTOs (Building

Trades Operatives) moved in and occupied the area base. Hackney building workers are also angry at the council's preferential policy of giving plumbing, electrical and carpentry work out to private tender. We set about issuing our own job tickets and sorting out all the outstanding repairs with whatever materials we could get hold of.

As soon as the councillors realised that they could be legally charged for this work, they did everything in their power to smash the occupation. They tried to get us to sign documents accepting responsibility for the work done. This meant that we would be culpable for anything that went wrong. The council decided to pay the men's wages, but not the shop stewards'. Labour councillors

sent senior housing officials to smash their way into a repair depot early one morning after we had occupied it the night before. When we read some of the documents we found there, we realised why they were so keen to act quickly. The documents revealed evidence of corruption - we are seeking legal advice about what to do next. Meanwhile, we have to face battalions of supervisors and personnel officers before we can negotiate with the council.

The action of Hackney tenants and council workers alarmed the bureaucrats at the town hall. We showed what could be done with real local control over council services. Most of all we showed that council officials are a hindrance rather than a help when it comes to providing services for the community.

The whole affair shows the emptiness of the council's rhetoric about 'serving the community'. The Labour council has been preaching the gospel of decentralisation to Hackney workers ever since the last elections. It promised more effective services and more democratic control. But I think people are beginning to realise what a sham it all is. As the council's patronising and insulting poster put it: 'Hackney people are getting a bum deal' - a bum deal from the Labour Party. What the council really means by decentralisation is more local control by it over us, the workers and tenants on the estates. As soon as we start taking real control, Labour will stop at nothing to divide and attack us.

An angry BTO
Hoxton,
East London

Khomeini enemy of the West?

I read with interest your article on the war between Iran and Iraq (*the next step*, February). I thought it a pity that you were unable to dwell on the way the Khomeini regime is attempting to play off the imperialist powers against each other.

The Khomeini regime in Iran is hoping to win international respectability. The official organ of the ruling party *Peykan* admits its regret at neglecting the 'international' aspect of the revolution. Settling debts with the USA is an important part of this process. But the decline of America and the relative dynamism of other powers, espec-

ially Japan and West Germany, has given the Iranian regime some scope for manoeuvre. Khomeini feels free to denounce the USA while publicly welcoming representatives of other imperialist powers into Iran.

Khomeini plays on the hatred the Iranian masses still feel for the USA because of its support for the Shah. He has prostituted anti-imperialism into anti-American showbusiness to cover up his own cosy relations with the imperialist powers.

Samad
London

Sperm control

I think Jenny Graham is right to suggest that the latest Pill scare is part of the ruling class strategy to encourage sexual restraint (*the next step*, February). But I wonder why you don't raise the whole question of the sexism inherent in what is known as Birth Control. Why is it never called Sperm Control? Why doesn't the RCP emphasise that if contraception is an issue for the whole working class then it must be something that men too concern themselves with?

There is a lot of research being done on a safer contraceptive for women as this would

obviously be extremely profitable for the company that discovered it. But the drug companies are reluctant to develop contraceptives for men because of men's attitude. Many men think of vasectomy as on par with castration, and hormone pills as emasculating. Few men would put up with the discomfort of an 'Intra-Penile Device' if one were invented. So yes, let's 'demand the Pill or better', but that 'better' ought to include an advance on the sheath for men.

Susie Watson
Wandsworth

Jealous of WAR

There has been a lot in the news recently about racism inside Birmingham Labour Party. It's all true. I have been a member of Small Heath Labour Party since last August. I joined hoping to change it from the inside. Some Asians had formed a pressure group to put candidates forward for councillors' posts. But it didn't work, the names never got short-listed. Despite all the talk about positive action for blacks, the Labour Party's too scared of losing white votes to make a move.

Although they do nothing

themselves, the Labour Party is very jealous of other people's campaigns. Local MPs like Roy Hattersley and Dennis Howell do their best to try and undermine WAR's work, fortunately without success.

I'm resigning from the Labour Party. It's too bureaucratic and does nothing for black people. I'm working with WAR because it means what it says and gets something done.

Pervase
Small Heath
Birmingham

Berlin terror

I was very interested to read about the struggle against the racists by immigrant workers in Poissy (*the next step*, February). But the racist violence Gareth Evans wrote about is not confined to France. Most people must have read about the six prisoners who burned to death in a Berlin prison while awaiting deportation. What people don't know is that tragedies like this happen regularly. In September 1982 about 30 prisoners awaiting deportation tried to commit suicide together in one of Berlin's humiliating prisons. Last year 36 prisoners were forced to linger in cramped, squalid jails for nearly a year waiting to be deported. What lies behind this is a repressive and racist policy that has gone on for years.

Berlin's growing squads of immigration police are regularly briefed to round up foreigners. These foreigners are then put in overcrowded prison cells or flown back to their country of origin. Hundreds of people from Sri Lanka have already had this experience.

I very much hope the *next step* keeps up its good work in exposing the attacks on immigrant workers in Europe and at home.

Monica Wegerer
West Berlin

Meetings



Activities

Women's liberation



LEEDS

A series of three meetings on women's oppression

Wednesday 14 March

Porn and prejudice: should we ban video nasties?

Wednesday 21 March

Does Leeds Labour Council fight for women's rights?

Wednesday 28 March

Dole snoopers in Leeds: women under attack

For details of venue and times of meetings contact sellers of *the next step* or phone 01-274 3951. Creche facilities available. Baby sitting can be arranged

CENTRAL LONDON

Four forums on women's oppression.

Thursday 1 March

Prostitutes and policing

Thursday 8 March

From Greenham to Armagh — women and war

Thursday 15 March

Problems at work — can the unions fight for women?

Thursday 22 March

Pills and politics — women and medicine

These forums will be introduced by revolutionary communist women, and will all take place at the Polytechnic of Central London Students' Union, Bolsover Street, WC1 at 7.30 pm. Baby sitting available — phone Ann Burton 01-274 3951

NORTH LONDON

Wednesday 7 March 7.30 pm

Fight for a woman's right to work — no cuts in child care in Islington
Islington Central Library Small Hall, Fieldway Crescent N5

SHEFFIELD

Friday 23 March 7.30 pm

Fight for a woman's right to work
Sheffield Centre Against Unemployment, Bridge Street

Stop the strip searches! Political status now!



Solidarity with the Armagh women

Over the weekend of 9-12 March a delegation of revolutionary communist women is going to Armagh jail. Armagh is where captured republican women soldiers are imprisoned. Protests are organised annually to show that we will not go along with the British state's attempts to criminalise Irish freedom fighters.

CENTRAL LONDON

Thursday 8 March 7.30 pm

IFM activists meeting

University of London

Union, Malet Street, WC1

LIVERPOOL

Thursday 15 March 7.30 pm

Report back from Armagh

Polytechnic Students'

Union, Haigh Buildings

Maryland Street

BRADFORD

Wednesday 14 March 1pm

Report back from Armagh

University of Bradford,

Communal Building

HANDS OFF!

A series of five forums to discuss what drives the Western aggressors and how Western aggression is driving the Third World towards destruction. Every Tuesday at 7.30 pm, Room 1F, Polytechnic of Central London, Bolsover Street, WC1 (Goode Street tube)

13 March **Bloodbath in Lebanon:** when will the marines go back to Beirut?

20 March **Can Africans eat microchips?:** investment and starvation in the Third World

27 March **Dollars and Death Squads:** war in Central America

3 April **The Allies fall out:** the Western Alliance breaks up

10 April **Who elected Ronald Reagan as world policeman?:** American imperialism and the Third World War



ASHTON UNDER LYNE

Thursday 15 March 7.30 pm

Bloodbath in Lebanon

Albion Hotel, Penny Meadow

LIVERPOOL

Tuesday 27 March 7.30 pm

Fight local government cuts

AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant

BIRMINGHAM

Wednesday 28 March 7.30 pm

What is imperialism?

Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth

BRADFORD

Wednesday 28 March 7.30 pm

Fight for the right to fight!

The Star Pub, Westgate.

Afia Begum campaign - national speaking tour



THURSDAY 8 MARCH

LONDON

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
OPENING OF NEW CAMPAIGN CENTRE
RECEPTION FROM 12.30-2.30 at
114a BRICK LANE E1

BIRMINGHAM

Evening meeting city centre

FRIDAY 9 MARCH

WOLVERHAMPTON

Lunchtime meeting at Polytechnic

COVENTRY

Evening meeting city centre

SATURDAY 10 MARCH

MANCHESTER

Hulme Library, Hulme Walk, 2pm, music — food — entertainment

SUNDAY 11 MARCH

BRADFORD

Scout Hut

St Pauls Road

Manningham 2 pm

MONDAY 12 MARCH

SOUTH AND WEST YORKSHIRE

Tour of factories, bus depots, hospitals

TUESDAY 13 MARCH

CARDIFF

Students' Union

University

Park Place 12.30 pm

South Riverside Community Centre

Brunel Street 7.30 pm

WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH

BRISTOL

Lunchtime meeting at University

BRIGHTON

Evening meeting city centre

More information from 01-274 2820 or 247 7848

ELWAR East London Workers Against Racism

Two brutal stabbings in East London in one week. One nearly proved fatal

Bengali families thrown out of squalid bed and breakfast hotels. They were put there by Tower Hamlets Labour Council

These are the issues **EAST LONDON**

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM is dealing with week in, week out. To get involved in ELWAR's campaign phone FAREKH AFZAL on 01-274 3951 or write to ELWAR, c/o Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8

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Join the RCP!

If you would like to join the Revolutionary Communist Party or would like to know more about our activities, publications and politics please write to



The General Secretary
BM RCP
London WC1N 3XX
or phone
01-274 3951

Kate Marshall will
answer all enquiries by
return of post.

the
next step

Speak out for Irish freedom!



MARCH AGAINST BANS ON IRISH SOLIDARITY!

Against — Sheffield Labour council's ban on Irish
meetings and demonstrations
Against — The Tories' new Prevention of Terrorism Bill

SHEFFIELD SATURDAY 3 MARCH

Assemble: Caborn Corner, Carlisle Street
(Spital Hill) Sheffield, 1 pm

Transport to Sheffield leaves on Saturday 3 March from:
LONDON: 8.00am York Way, Kings Cross. COVENTRY: 10.00am
Harry Shaw cafe, Pool Meadow, Fairfax Street. BIRMINGHAM:
10.30am Colmore Row. MANCHESTER: 10.30am Manchester Poly
Students' Union, Sidney Building, Oxford Road. LIVERPOOL:
10.00am St John's Lane, Liverpool 1. BRADFORD: 10.45am
Norfolk Gardens. GLASGOW: 7.30am George Square. LEEDS:
10.30am Leeds Trades Council Club, Savile Mount. CARDIFF:
phone 01-274 3951 for details

March against bans on Irish solidarity!