

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No 47 May 1984

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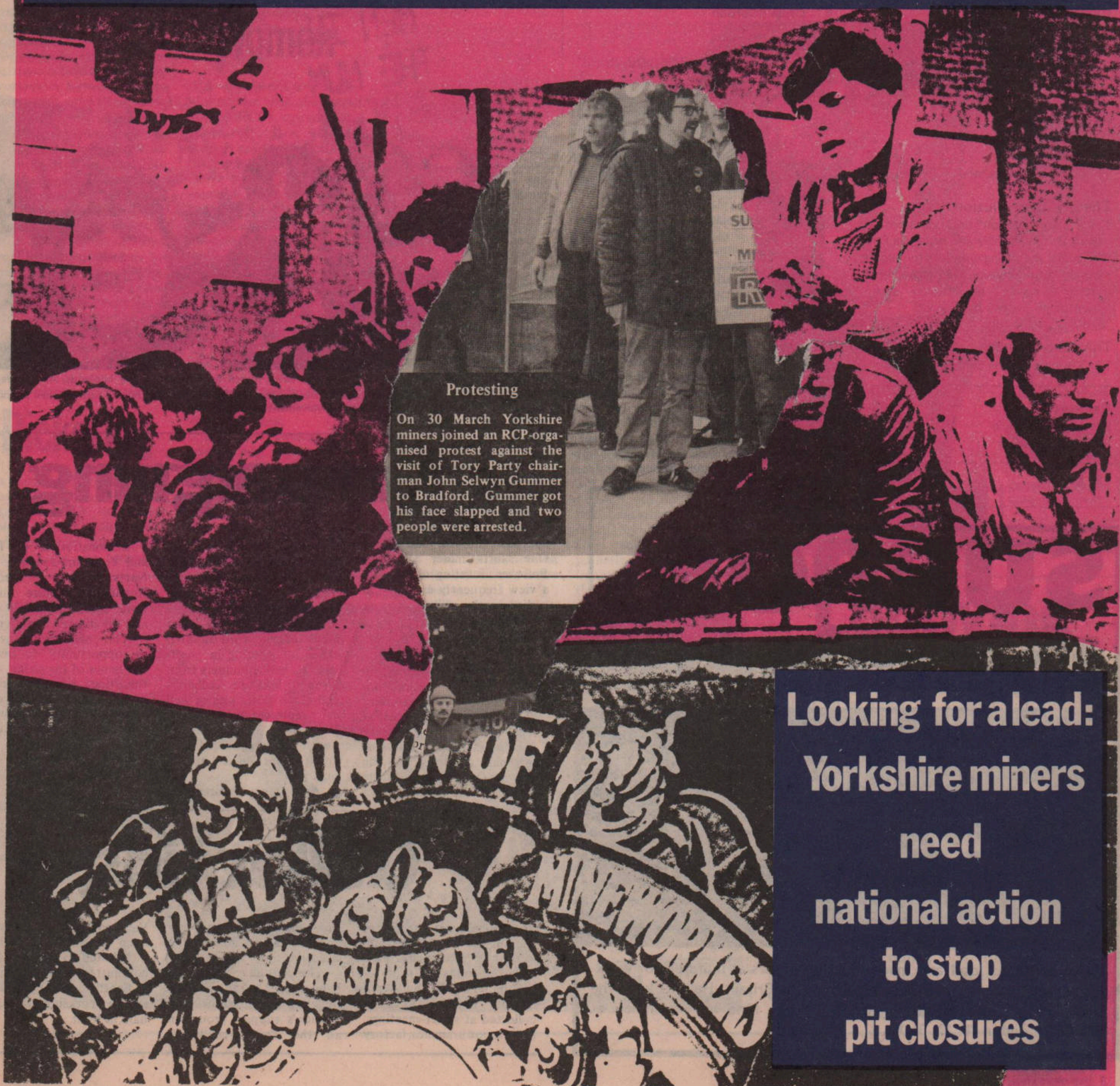
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happen
here p12.

Rank and file control the key All out to win

Protesting

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Looking for a lead:
Yorkshire miners
need
national action
to stop
pit closures



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On the march: the RCP's strike special sold thousands on pickets and demonstrations



Wives: Kent miners' wives march for support in the Midlands. At Keresley in South Yorkshire local RCP branches have helped form women's support groups and women's active involvement in the strike

campaigning

SUPPORT the miners!



We've collected food and money for the miners at hundreds of workplaces and working class estates throughout Britain. Help us keep the strike going. Rush donations to our fighting fund for the miners at BM RCP London WC1N 3XX

out a strategy for winning to come.

This year Preparing for even Yorkshire collieries be a week-long series of talks, and three Notts pits as well and debates, films and fun. There representatives from local on specialist courses cover Derbyshire, Scotland and debate on the the Bolshevik with Wales squeezed into regional divisions in to Marxism RCP meeting at a nearby union. One outcome of the meeting was closer links and a few days later after

between Yorkshire militants and the isolated Nottinghamshire strikers who have since formed an unofficial rank and file strike committee.

Shortly after the mass lobby of the April national executive meeting in Sheffield, around 80 miners from even Yorkshire collieries and three Notts pits as well and debates, films and fun. There representatives from local on specialist courses cover Derbyshire, Scotland and debate on the the Bolshevik with Wales squeezed into regional divisions in to Marxism RCP meeting at a nearby union. One outcome of the meeting was closer links and a few days later after

a demonstration of Kent and Yorkshire miners – and Notts strikers – through Nottingham, more miners came along to an RCP rank and file miners' conference.

The meetings provided an opportunity to discuss the issues of the strike – for the first time for many miners – and helped to overcome some of the barriers created by the national leadership's restrictive area by area strike strategy.

Collecting

To help prevent the bosses starving the miners into submission RCP branches have collected funds and food for the miners. By mid-April around £1500 had been collected at street meetings, trade union branches, factory

gates, in hospital canteens and bus garages all over the country.

These funds have been handed over to rank and file miners' organisations and women's support groups in all the major coalfields.

Vanloads of food collected from city estates have been distributed to strike welfare committees from Polmaise in Scotland, through Edlington in Yorkshire to Aylesham in Kent.

Supporting the miners

When the Coal Board announced a major programme of pit closures in March, the Revolutionary Communist Party recognised that a major confrontation between the working class and the employers was inevitable. From the beginning of the strike our members and supporters have been out actively mobilising solidarity with the miners. Our aim has been to make the miners' strike united and effective – and to win the widest and most active working class support for the miners' resistance to the Coal Board, the Government, the courts and the police.

Solidarity

In Bradford, Birmingham, Manchester and London RCP branches organised tours of local workplaces by striking miners. The aim was to do more than raise money – it was to win political support for the miners in their struggle against the Government.

Where possible we arranged mass meetings either inside or outside the workplace. The results ranged from offers of sympathetic action from railway workers in Birmingham, to help with picketing from Bradford engineering workers, to nurses at the threatened Thornton View hospital in West Yorkshire joining miners' pickets.

This solidarity work had wider consequences too. Some engineering plants in Bradford had their first mass meeting of workers for many years. Miners' experience in picketing was instrumental in pushing a strike by workers at the Moorlight electric light factory in Ashton-under-Lyne towards victory.

Picketing

In Scotland, Yorkshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire and the Midlands RCP supporters joined pickets at pits, power stations, docks and transport depots. We also helped to

organise women's flying pickets that penetrated police road blocks between Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire more effectively than the men's.

On 9 April a detachment of women from pit villages in the Doncaster area succeeded in blocking the entrance to Ollerton colliery in Notts and turning around many more scabs than earlier pickets had achieved.

Women

'Not just soup and sandwiches' has been the theme of the RCP's extensive involvement in women's support groups, especially in the Yorkshire area.

We have argued for women's active involvement in the strike – in collecting and distributing benefits, in picketing, and most importantly, in the committees that run the dispute. We have challenged the sexist attitudes displayed by many miners' pickets and demonstrations as prejudicial to the working class unity we need against the bosses. And we have challenged the union's attempts to keep women in a subservient role on the sidelines.

Already women have made a big impact in the dispute – in pickets of the Coal Board headquarters in Doncaster, in pickets of Nottinghamshire collieries and on demonstrations in Coalville, Leicester, and in Mansfield and Nottingham.



Up the miners: Manchester Massey Ferguson workers with local RCP candidate Dave Hallsworth in a factory gate solidarity rally



Protesting

On 30 March Yorkshire miners joined an RCP-organised protest against the visit of Tory Party chairman John Selwyn Gummer to Bradford. Gummer got his face slapped and two people were arrested.



Bob Radcliffe (reflex)

Lobbying

On 4 April 30 miners joined Sheffield's RCP branch in a lobby of the city's Labour council. We demanded a freeze on miners' rent and rates; transport for flying pickets; funds, facilities and nurseries; no restrictions on collecting money for the miners; and a halt to council support for the police until martial law conditions were suspended.

While the council expressed 'deep concern' it provided no practical assistance.

Shamefaced councillors contributed a few pounds to the miners' strike fund. The council later agreed to freeze rents and rates for the 2000 miners who live in the city. However, it has yet to agree to provide free school meals through the Easter holidays as other councils have done. We intend to keep up the pressure to win this and the rest of the miners' modest demands from what claims to be a socialist Labour council.

Winning all-out action

From Day One of the miners' strike the Revolutionary Communist Party has been campaigning to win support for an all-out national stoppage. To turn the union's area-by-area strike into a broader working class response to the employers' offensive, we have challenged the approach of the NUM leadership and the views of many militant miners who have tended to follow it spontaneously. As the NUM executive moved slowly towards a national strike in the sixth week of the dispute, some miners began to share our view that six hard and hungry weeks had been wasted. The message that only rank and file control over the strike at pit, area and national level could carry the strike forward was beginning to get across.

National action

'I realised by about the second or third day of the flying picketing that we needed to get beyond the area strikes and have a national strike' Yorkshire miner Danny Ostle told the miners' rank and file conference in Nottingham. The area strategy meant a lack of involvement at pit level in the militant areas, a lack of coordination among the various areas on strike, and a failure to take the arguments to miners in the moderate areas:

'I don't think we should be afraid of going down to Notts and having it out with them, in the welfare, around their homes if necessary, as well as on the picket lines.

'In fact because of the saturation policing it's easier to do it away from the picket lines. And you can get through the roadblocks if you're careful - I know because I've done it to go to Ollerton and we're already seeing some results in North Notts.'

The Coal Board launched an all-out national offensive with the full backing of the Government, the courts and the police. We argued that to meet this onslaught with tactics of limited action and delay was to court disaster.

The employers' extraordinary attack demanded an extraordinary response. Yet many miners defended the NUM's selective and divisive strategy. They argued that

under the NUM's constitution this was the only way to go about spreading the strike and that the President had no powers to give a lead for all-out action.

While MacGregor and Thatcher, the judges and the police made up the rules as they went along to suit their needs, the miners were prepared to be held back by the fine print of the union rule book.

We argued that to win this dispute we had to take the measures necessary to meet a concerted capitalist attack with a class-wide, nationwide response.

Rank and file control

The RCP has emphasised the need for mass meetings and representative, accountable strike committees, to ensure the mass of miners actively participate in the strike, and that strike leaders carry out the wishes of the rank and file.

We have seen that union leaders in the moderate areas and in other unions cannot deliver the support of their members for the

strike. Rank and file involvement and control is the only guarantee of united and effective strike and sympathy action that can force the Government to back down on pit closures.

Many rank and file miners have become frustrated by the disorganisation, delaying tactics and bureaucratic inertia of the NUM leadership.

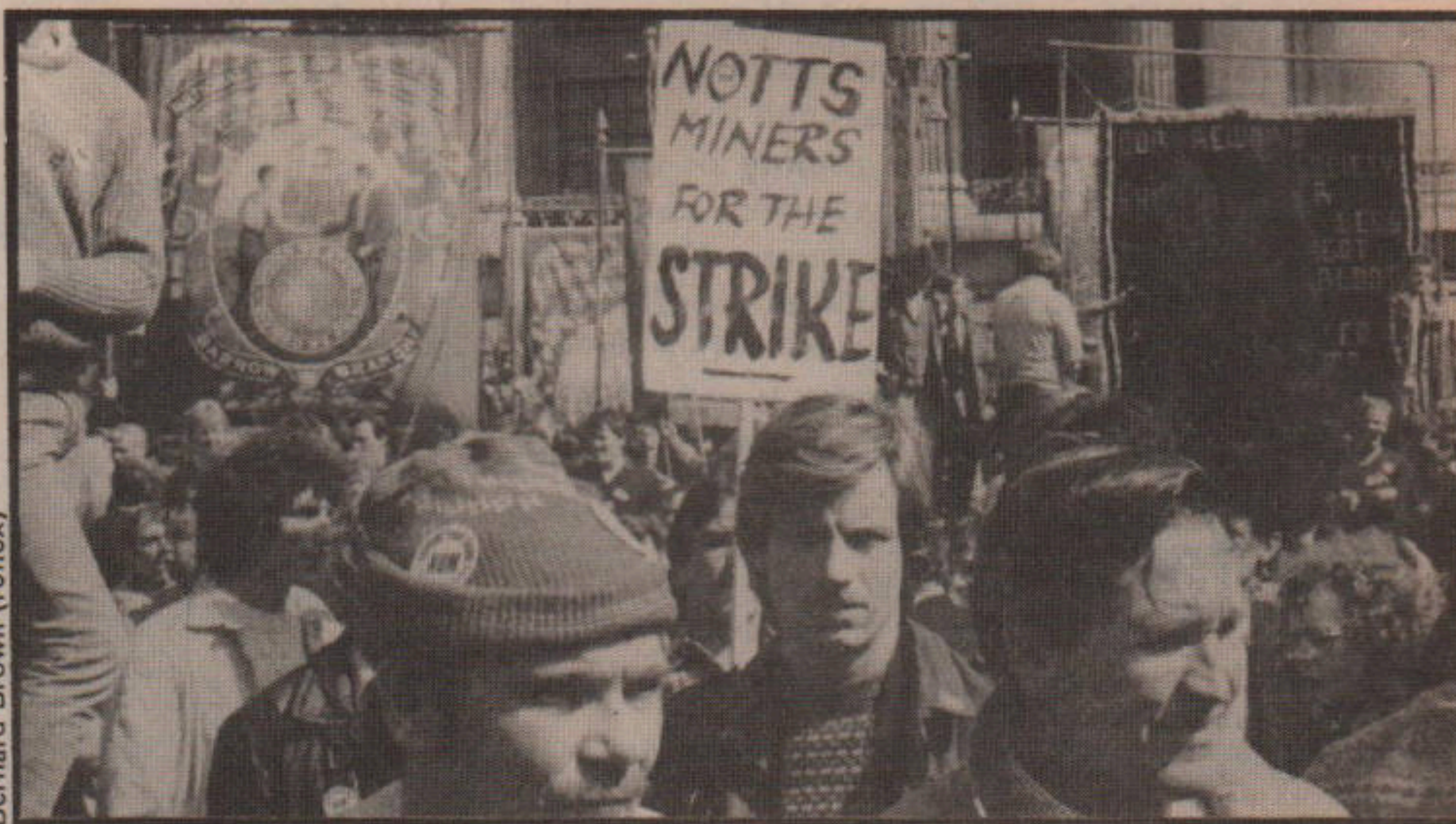
At the RCP's Sheffield meeting miners from Monktonhall in Scotland and from South Wales described how their local leaders refused to provide funds for transport to the lobby of the executive. The union leaders did not relish too much rank and file pressure, so the militants had to find their own funds for the dispute.

Miners from Hatfield in the Doncaster area explained how their attempt to make their strike committee more representative and active had met fierce hostility from the controlling clique.

Miners in the moderate areas face even greater difficulties. Geoff Poulter from Bolsover, a colliery in North Derbyshire whose miners are in the Notts NUM, explained their problems of isolation and financial hardship. He emphasised the importance of meetings of rank and file miners to clarify the issues, and made very clear that for them it was a fight to the finish.

Ballot campaign

The RCP's call for a campaign for a national ballot has proved the most controversial issue at our meetings. This is not because of any confusion between our call for a ballot campaign and the clamour from



Notts strikers are not scabs: isolated militants need national unity

all sections of the establishment for a poll. It is because the issue of the ballot most sharply divides those who look at the dispute from a narrow trade union viewpoint, and those who take a wider working class perspective.

The NUM has held back from calling a national ballot because it fears it cannot deliver the support of its members. The union has tried to win support by the backdoor methods of rolling area strikes, and more recently by manipulating the rules to reduce the majority required for strike action.

While the NUM's strategy may win short-term results it cannot mobilise the majority of miners, together with other workers, for a major showdown with the bosses and their state. To do that we have to get out of the committee rooms and campaign for mass support for all-out strike action. We have been calling for a ballot as the only way to involve the mass of miners, link up the activists and overcome regional divisions.

Most militants have been reluctant to take this bolder approach to the dispute. One Notts miner at our Bolsover meeting declared a view frequently expressed earlier in the strike: 'I can see what you're getting at, and I hate to say this, but if we go for a ballot, we'll lose'.

Our response was that this was to accept defeat before the battle had been properly joined. If we don't win majority support among the miners for the strike, then there is no way that we can make it bite. We have no alternative but to go on a vigorous campaign to win a ballot and then move on to win the strike.

At Sheffield the branch secretary of Dodworth pit asserted that miners in safe pits and safe areas had 'no right to vote away the jobs of miners in Kent and South Wales and Scotland and Yorkshire'. But, we argued, the area-by-area strategy effectively gave Notts miners and other

moderate areas a veto on the full national strike that was the only way to safeguard the jobs in every coalfield.

The only way to save jobs is to get a 100 per cent strike action - 80 per cent is simply not good enough.

Picketing out had been successful in spreading the strike from a few areas to the 80 per cent level. But it had not succeeded after three or four weeks in getting the rest out. The only way to do that, to win the unity vital to success, was to win a national ballot for all-out action.

The viability trap

Many miners argue that closing pits and running down the industry is unnecessary. They maintain that with reasonable subsidies and protection against cheap imports the British coal industry could be competitive. At one of our meetings a Yorkshire miner echoed Arthur Scargill's view that 'we produce the cheapest deep-mined coal outside South Africa'.

We pointed out that

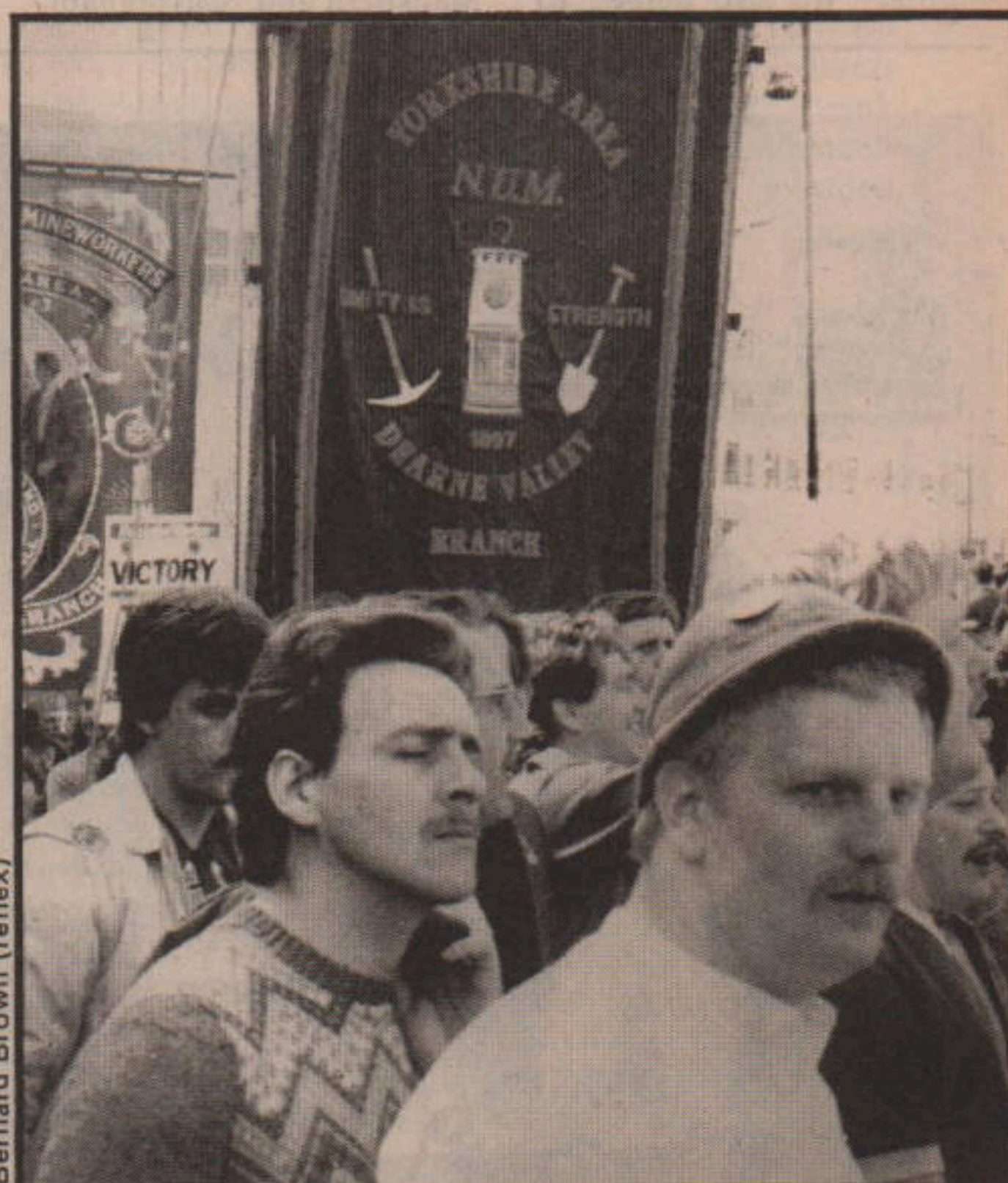
making the British coal industry viable at a time of capitalist recession means miners sacrificing their livelihoods.

Making British coal competitive on the world market with coal produced in South Africa means making conditions in Britain's pits like those under the Apartheid regime. And that, we argued, means 100 000 miners working like slaves in the 100 super-pits MacGregor and Thatcher are planning to leave open.

RCP supporters posed the question another way. Instead of asking - how can we make the British coal industry viable? - it's time British miners started asking - is capitalism a viable system for miners?

Instead of counting the pit closures and redundancies needed to let the Coal Board survive, we need to carry on fighting to keep every pit open and save every job, to make sure we survive the crisis. And we argued the need to extend that fight into a struggle for a better system - one whose viability does not depend on destroying workers' livelihoods and wiping out whole communities.

Fran Eden



Rock solid strikers: but Yorkshire miners need more than guts to win

TAKING CONTROL

A handbook for trade union militants

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

OUT
SOON
FROM
JUNUS

The left and the miners strike

Jesters at King Arthur's court

The miners' strike has confirmed the continuing decline and irrelevance of the British left. *Pat Roberts* examines its role in the strike.

In contrast to past miners' strikes the left has not even made a pretence of politically intervening in the current dispute. The political problems which the strike faces are simply ignored. The various left groups have kept quiet about the political divisions that limit the scope of the strike. They have ignored the crude nationalist policies of the NUM leadership and they are silent about attempts to justify the miners' case on the grounds of economic viability and profitability.

The collaborationist perspective of saving 'our industry' and making it more competitive are views that the left simply prefers to forget. Some factions have gone further. *Socialist Organisation*, for example, had no inhibitions about actually reprinting the arguments from the NUM pamphlet *Coal not Dole* in its special strike supplement.

Servile

Left-wing organisations that call themselves revolutionary are happy to accept the existing leadership and direction of the miners' strike. In this respect they are considerably behind many miners who are profoundly concerned about the way the strike is conducted and are all too aware of the implications of internal divisions and lack of political leadership.

Instead of facing up to the problems of the strike the left groups have taken on the roles of jesters and cheerleaders. Left-wing papers assure the miners that everything is all right — we need only more of the same. *Socialist Action* paints a picture of mass solidarity and support: 'Across the country, activists are building rallies, establishing labour movement committees, and organising factory tours. This kind of support, along with stopping the movement of coal, and preparing solidarity action, can win'.

Fantasy

Socialist Action prefers to ignore the real difficulties that stand in the way of winning effective solidarity action to stop the movement of coal. Instead it presents a fantasy world of mass support which is nothing short of deception. Miners who have gone to steel plants at Ravenscraig or Port Talbot or Scunthorpe and those who have been out on strike for weeks with little financial assistance will not be fooled by such idiotic complacency.

Big possibilities

To compensate for its polit-

ical irrelevance the left has opted for phrase-mongering. This is what *Socialist Organisation* means by leadership:

'A general strike could stop MacGregor's pit closures plan and rip up the anti-union laws. It can win this struggle. And it can do more. It can make it impossible for the Tories to govern; and the level of mobilisation involved would open up big possibilities beyond that. We should call on the TUC to organise for a general strike.'

A general strike could indeed open up 'big possibilities'. It can do this and it could do that. After a few pints anything is possible. While we are asking Len Murray to organise a general strike, why not call on Ian MacGregor to pay the miners' full wages into their strike fund? A few more pints will dim the memory of the collapse of the Triple Alliance and the internal splits in the NUM and make victory seem that much closer.

Cheerleaders

When it comes to cheerleading from the sidelines the Socialist Workers' Party takes first prize. The SWP has used the strike to pull its own forces together after a long period of downturn and decline. Party supporters have put up a lot of posters and distributed a lot of placards. At the same time they have gone to great lengths to tell the miners what they already know.

Paul Foot's speaking tour has turned the evasion of political argument into a fine art. Night after night audiences have roared with laughter as Paul Foot tore into Ian MacGregor, Ray Chubb and the Tories. This may have been very humorous, but it was criminally complacent.

Tact and discretion

Instead of offering a strategy the left has simply repeated the arguments that militants already knew by heart. *Socialist Worker*, *Militant*, *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Organisation* all declared that only direct action counts and balloting is irrelevant.

The left united in admiration for Arthur Scargill's strategy which was universally proclaimed as astute and the only way to win the strike. *Socialist Action* congratulated the NUM leadership on its div-

isive area-by-area strike strategy:

'The determination of the left on the NUM executive to base themselves on the areas where the jobs are threatened is absolutely correct.'

The left tactfully forgot to mention that after a twenty week overtime ban and six weeks into the dispute a national strike had still not been achieved. It ignored the problem that region-by-region action left the NUM leadership in total control without being accountable or responsible for the dispute. It evaded the lessons of the past which show that disputes conducted on an area basis almost always favour the right and prevent the emergence of a national focus.

The left kept silent about the negative consequences of the official strategy — in particular the strengthening of parochialism. The left's journalists looked the other way when striking Notts miners were abused and intimidated by Yorkshire miners at the demonstration in Nottingham on 14 April. Most importantly of all the left indulged and strengthened the illusion that flying picketing on its own represented the way forward.

Picket worship

Flying picketing is an important tactic for spreading the strike. But it is nothing more than a tactic — on its own it does not represent a strategy. It is not a substitute for winning the arguments and mobilising support. The left's worship of picketing is a symptom of its *economism* — its uncritical support for any action and its silence on the crucial political issues of the dispute.

Virtually every left group parroted the argument that 'no man has the right to vote on another man's job'. As an affirmation of the principle of no redundancies this statement is correct. But a principle is not an argument, much less a strategy.

Millions of workers have been voted out of their jobs in recent years and unless our class adopts a different strategy millions more will lose their jobs in the near future. Repeating *ad nauseum* that no one has the right to vote on another man's job will not confront the problem of winning unity against redundancies. In the miners' dispute this argument represents an evasion of the problem of forging a solid basis of mass support for the strike.



Scargill ascendant: the left carry the banner for the union bureaucracy

To win miners' support for the strike they have to be convinced by political argument, not confronted with breast-beating about principles. And ballot or no ballot, as long as the miners in Nottingham or anywhere else are not convinced that they should support the strike, then the strike will not be won.

Greek chorus

The left met the RCP's call for a national campaign to win a ballot for an all-out national strike with derision. As far as the left was concerned the course taken by the strike was good enough. The left's pathetic calls for more militancy and for spreading the strike had all the conviction of a chorus trying to give a Greek tragedy a happy ending.

Flattering militants does not help to win strikes. All that it can do is to create the illusion that the existing leadership of the NUM and the TUC can beat the Coal Board and the Government. This is exactly the conclusion the left has drawn. Every miner who has been out picketing power stations, docks and depots knows that until now solidarity from other unions has been more in the way of token gestures than anything real. Not so the left.

Paper solidarity

While steelworkers' leader Bill Sirs was telling miners to stop picketing steel works, *Socialist Action* was praising Sirs' union for its

magnificent efforts. *Militant* heaped praise on the transport and railway unions as well as on the steelworkers: 'The tremendous lead from the top — in the T&G, Aslef, NUR and ISTC to black coal movements should now be backed up by mass meetings in all areas'. Papers like *Socialist Organisation* also devoted their presses to making the Labour bureaucrats token gestures look good.

Telling militant miners what they already know is bad enough. But at least the militants are fighting hard to win the strike. Echoing the dishonest phrases of trade union leaders who have done nothing for the miners is simply sordid. It is worse than dishonest.

At a time when everyone can see that Bill Sirs is calling for scabbing and the other union leaders are hiding behind the rule book the left has launched a public relations exercise for the bureaucrats. The Triple Alliance of coal, rail and steel unions is a bureaucratic fiction — yet it is peddled as good coin by a left clutching at paper resolutions.

Rhetoric

We can understand the silence of the British left. Its disengagement from any political struggle stems from its subservience to the labour bureaucracy. All problems are swept under the carpet and centre stage is given over to bureaucratic manoeuvring. Even the perfunctory criticisms

that the SWP used to make of Scargill and the rest are no longer heard at its meetings.

All the old talk about rank and file action turns out to be pure rhetoric. Instead of politically fighting for rank and file control and action *Militant* now enthuses about the 'tremendous lead from the top'.

Many on the left shamefacedly agree with our criticisms of the labour bureaucracy. Yet they argue that now is not the time to raise these issues. They should remember Trotsky's warning to their predecessors during the General Strike of 1926:

'The conduct of the really revolutionary elements in the British proletariat and above all the communists is predetermined by this. They will uphold the unity of mass action by every means; but they will not permit even the semblance of unity with the opportunist leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions. An implacable struggle against every act of treachery or attempted treachery and the ruthless exposure of the reformists' illusions are the main elements in the work of genuinely revolutionary participants in the General Strike.'

The left groups have had their say in the 1984 miners' strike. They have indicated that they have more in common with Bill Sirs and Moss Evans than with the isolated militants struggling to establish rank and file organisation and action in Lancashire, Notts and Warwickshire.

Border warfare

Today, the British and Irish governments are together waging war against the republican movement:

Irish National Liberation Army chief Dominic McGlinchey passed over the Border and into the history books of cross-Border collaboration on 18 March, as the first ever republican extradited from the Twenty-six Counties to stand trial for political offences in the North.

Royal Ulster Constabulary man John Harrison of the crack anti-terrorist squad told Belfast Crown Court on 29 March that the facts about his December 1982 execution of two INLA volunteers in Armagh had been covered up to conceal undercover RUC operations against republicans in the Twenty-six Counties.

The New Ireland Forum's debate on the Irish parties' options for future Anglo-Irish relations has sparked conflict in Dublin over how far its report should pay lip service to nationalist traditions. But all sides agree on the need for more security cooperation with London.

Twenty-six Counties complicity in Britain's Irish War has exposed the spurious character of the Republic's neutrality and independence. For more than 60 years, British imperialists and the Dublin regimes they sponsor have sustained the lie that the Southern 'Free State' created by Partition in 1921 is really free. But as the war continues into the eighties, Britain's domination of the whole of Ireland is becoming increasingly difficult to disguise.

Threat

Anglo-Irish cooperation against the national liberation struggle has grown in response to the growing threat to establishment control on both sides of the Border.

In the Six Counties, the IRA's armed struggle has stretched the forces of the Crown. Ten members of the security forces had been killed by mid-April. Last month's attack on a Catholic magistrate in South Belfast showed the IRA's ability to strike back against British legal terror.

British troops on the streets of the Six Counties face open hostility and attack from increasing numbers of nationalists. In late March a soldier in the Queen's Regiment, which was recently granted the freedom of Belfast by grateful Loyalist officials, discovered that he was not free to wander nationalist West Belfast when he was critically injured by brick-throwing youths in Monagh.

Explode

As the cycle of British repression and nationalist resistance heats up in the North, the tensions created by the war threaten to explode over the Border into the Republic. At the end of 1983 2000 Irish police and troops fought running battles with a handful of IRA volunteers around Ballinamore in County Leitrim. The Irish security forces got back kidnapped supermarket boss Don Tidy. But they lost a police

cadet and an Army private — the first soldier to be killed in the Twenty-six Counties since the Civil War ended 60 years before.

Since the Ballinamore shoot-out Irish police have fought with Dominic McGlinchey and stumbled across republicans with a large cache of explosives in Dundalk. After moving South last winter, the Irish War seems likely to stay there.

Preference

Increasing support for the struggle against Britain is reflected in Sinn Fein's electoral successes in the North. Republican candidates are displacing the pro-British Social Democratic and Labour Party as the nationalist community's first preference vote.

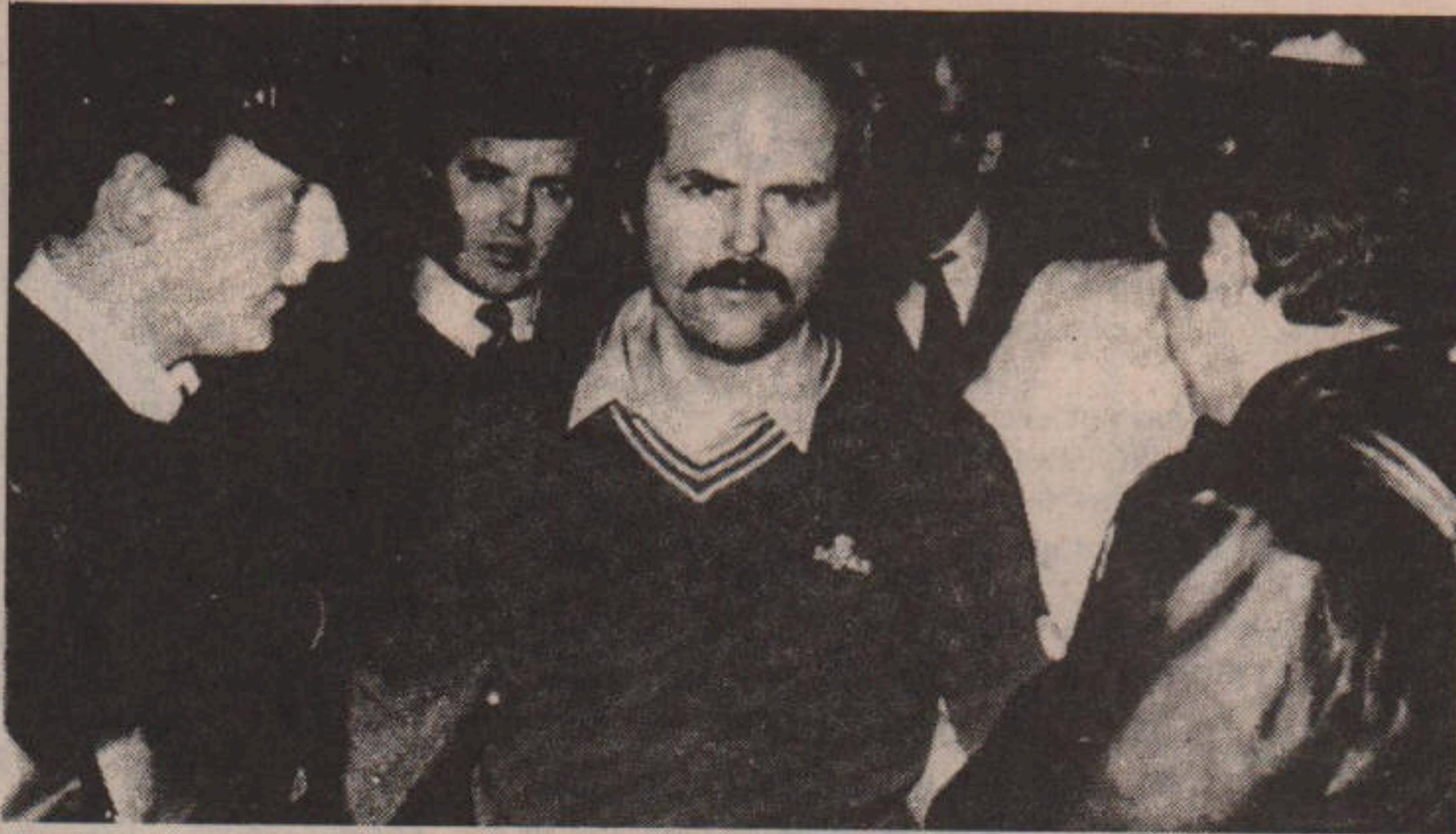
Last June, Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams was elected MP for West Belfast on a traditional republican ticket of abstention from the imperialist Parliament at Westminster. Sinn Fein has since scored further successes in council elections. Sinn Fein's Sean McKnight won a seat on Belfast City Council in March with almost 3000 first preference votes. The SDLP polled only 1040 — half its vote in the May 1981 election when Sinn Fein didn't stand.

Republican candidates have also increased their vote in Southern by-elections. In June Sinn Fein is contesting all four seats in the FEC elections in the Twenty-six Counties, while its Vice President Danny Morrison is challenging SDLP leader John Hume for his European seat in the North. The republican electoral challenge reflects the mounting instability of Irish political life.

Offensive

The crisis of British control in Ireland has forced the Twenty-six Counties regime to cooperate with Britain in a security and political offensive against the republican movement.

Free State forces have mounted huge operations in an effort to track down escaped IRA men after last September's 'Great Escape' in the North, and to catch Dominic McGlinchey and Don Tidy's kidnappers. But the weakness of the Twenty-six Counties state means its armed forces are often poorly trained.



McGlinchey in chains: the fruits of cross-Border collaboration

They are regularly outwitted by republicans.

The spectacle of Irish troops charging in the back door of republican hide-outs while IRA volunteers escaped out the front door, and of seven Irish policemen being left tied up and trouserless by Dominic McGlinchey prompted the British government to send James Prior to Dublin in January to sort things out.

Extradition

Prior met Irish justice minister Michael Noonan —

demands.

After his recapture on St Patrick's Day this year, a late night meeting of Cabinet ministers from the Fine Gael/Labour Party coalition decided to extradite him immediately. McGlinchey was rushed to the Border and handed over to the RUC within 18 hours of being picked up — even though he was wanted in connection with several offences in the South.

McGlinchey's extradition was a blatant admission of the South's subservience to

ities. In Britain, Sir George Baker's recent review of the Emergency Provisions Act stopped short of recommending the proscription of Sinn Fein. But Baker did float the idea of disqualifying 'parties which refuse to renounce the use of violence' from elections, and of encouraging targets of IRA attacks to sue Sinn Fein for compensation.

Crush

Ideas about proscribing Sinn Fein and strengthening the incitement to violence laws have been keenly debated in the Twenty-six Counties. Government ministers have broken off relations with all local councils and bodies which include Sinn Fein representatives.

Premier Garret Fitzgerald has warned that the ultimate legal sanction against anti-imperialists — Internment — could yet be introduced:

'No government can ever rule it out. A government that ruled out Internment would rule out the possible survival of democracy.'

Today, the 'survival of democracy' — British imperialist-style — in Ireland depends on crushing those who oppose Partition and British domination on both sides of the Border. The Southern establishment has done its best to help hold back the republican advance in the Six Counties. Its New Ireland Forum is a feeble attempt to rebuild the credibility of the SDLP's constitutional nationalism.

Destabilisation

British pressure on Dublin to move in against the republican movement is the culmination of progressive restrictions on the Free State's room to manoeuvre.

Before the Second World War, the South was allowed to assert its formal independence from Britain. During the war, the Twenty-six Counties could retain its neutral stance without threatening British interests. Even the declaration of a Republic in 1949 was not a problem for Britain, given the absence of the re-

publican threat.

Once the current war got underway, the Republic's independent stance was modified. In 1976, it passed the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act to allow trial in the South for offences committed in the North and Britain. Yet even then, the Twenty-six Counties establishment could stall on extradition and overt security collaboration.

In the eighties, formal Irish independence is fast becoming a thing of the past. The stakes for British imperialism in Ireland are too high to allow any concessions to 'green' politicians. Fifteen years of war in the North and the effects of the recession have destabilised the Twenty-six Counties, where more than 200 000 unemployed and a public debt of almost £5 billion have already necessitated increased state repression.

In this situation the potential for the war to spill over the Border and threaten the status quo throughout the whole of Ireland is immense. Increased collaboration between Dublin and London has only one aim: to end that threat by smashing the anti-imperialist forces in Ireland.

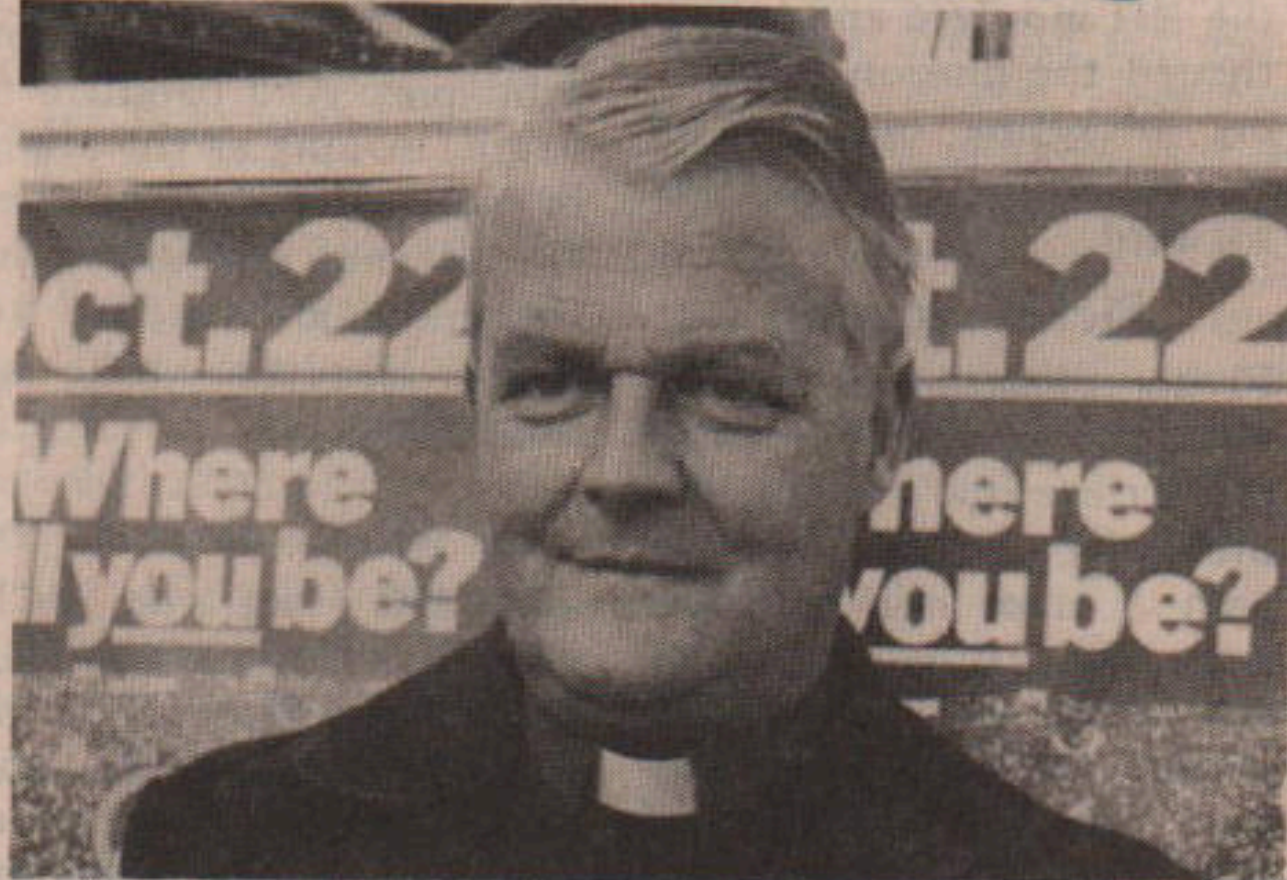
Fight

The Southern state seems well prepared for the battles to come. Three infantry battalions and a motorised squadron are permanently deployed in 11 military posts along the Border. The Irish army has grown from 8000 when the war began to 14 000 today, while defence spending has increased by 300 per cent in real terms. The Twenty-six Counties now has the highest police-population ratio in Western Europe — outside the North.

All of this hardware has been bought to back up Britain's war against the IRA. As the security correspondent of the *Irish Times* recently noted, the idea of external defence is 'simply irrelevant in the face of the potential threat to internal security'.

Despite this formidable machinery of repression, the spread of war to the South is a positive development. It gives anti-imperialists in Britain the chance to expose Dublin's collaboration and smash the myth that Irish freedom was won in 1921. And it holds tremendous dangers for British imperialism. For 15 years, Britain has kept control of Ireland by containing the struggle within the Six Counties. But it cannot do so forever. Recent developments bring closer the day when the Irish proletariat will take up the fight for national freedom, and break the stalemate in the Irish War.

Bruce Brit



Chris Black (reflex)

While the Irish establishment backs British terror, peace campaigners from the Irish Labour Party and Irish CND attack American imperialism. They plan to use President Reagan's summer visit to Ireland to assert Irish neutrality and warn against Ireland joining the US-dominated Nato.

The absurdity of opposing a mythical American occupation in a country occupied by British troops escaped British

CND leader Bruce Kent on a recent visit to the North. Kent denounced the 120 US bases in Britain as 'the greatest surrender of sovereignty ever allowed by one great power to another'. While Irish radicals and the British left oppose American threats to the sovereignty of great powers like Britain and its satellite Twenty-six Counties, Britain's bloody denial of the Irish people's sovereignty goes unchallenged.

the first time a security conference has taken place without the cover of economic or political negotiations. Within a fortnight the Rangers regiment — the Republic's SAS — was given responsibility for running 'anti-terrorist' operations.

The decision to extradite McGlinchey marks a new phase in Twenty-six Counties acquiescence to British

Britain. Now that it has opened the legal gate across the Border, the Twenty-six Counties establishment looks set to extradite several more republicans wanted in the North.

Clampdown

Alongside the joint security operations has come a concerted clampdown on republicans' political activ-

Political status now!

It is three years this month since republican hunger strikers Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Patsy O'Hara and Ray McCreesh died in the H-blocks. We supported their fight for political status. Today, we are campaigning for the rights of a new generation of Irish POWs.

'We demand, as of right, political recognition and that we be accorded the status of political prisoners. We claim this right as captured combatants in the continuing struggle for national liberation and self-determination. We refute most strongly the term 'criminal' with which the British have attempted to label us and our struggle.'

That statement from Irish republican prisoners was smuggled out of the H-blocks of the Maze prison in October 1980. Days later, seven of the prisoners began a hunger-strike in support of their demand for recognition as prisoners of war. Their protest ended inconclusively when Britain appeared to offer concessions.

The following March, with no concessions forthcoming, a second hunger-strike was launched. It was to last from the spring to the autumn of 1981. Before its end, 10 hunger-strikers were dead.

The hunger-strikers won massive support from the nationalist community in the Six Counties. The first of them, Bobby Sands, was elected MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone with more than 30 000 votes. After Bobby Sands' death on 5 May, 100 000 people marched behind his coffin.

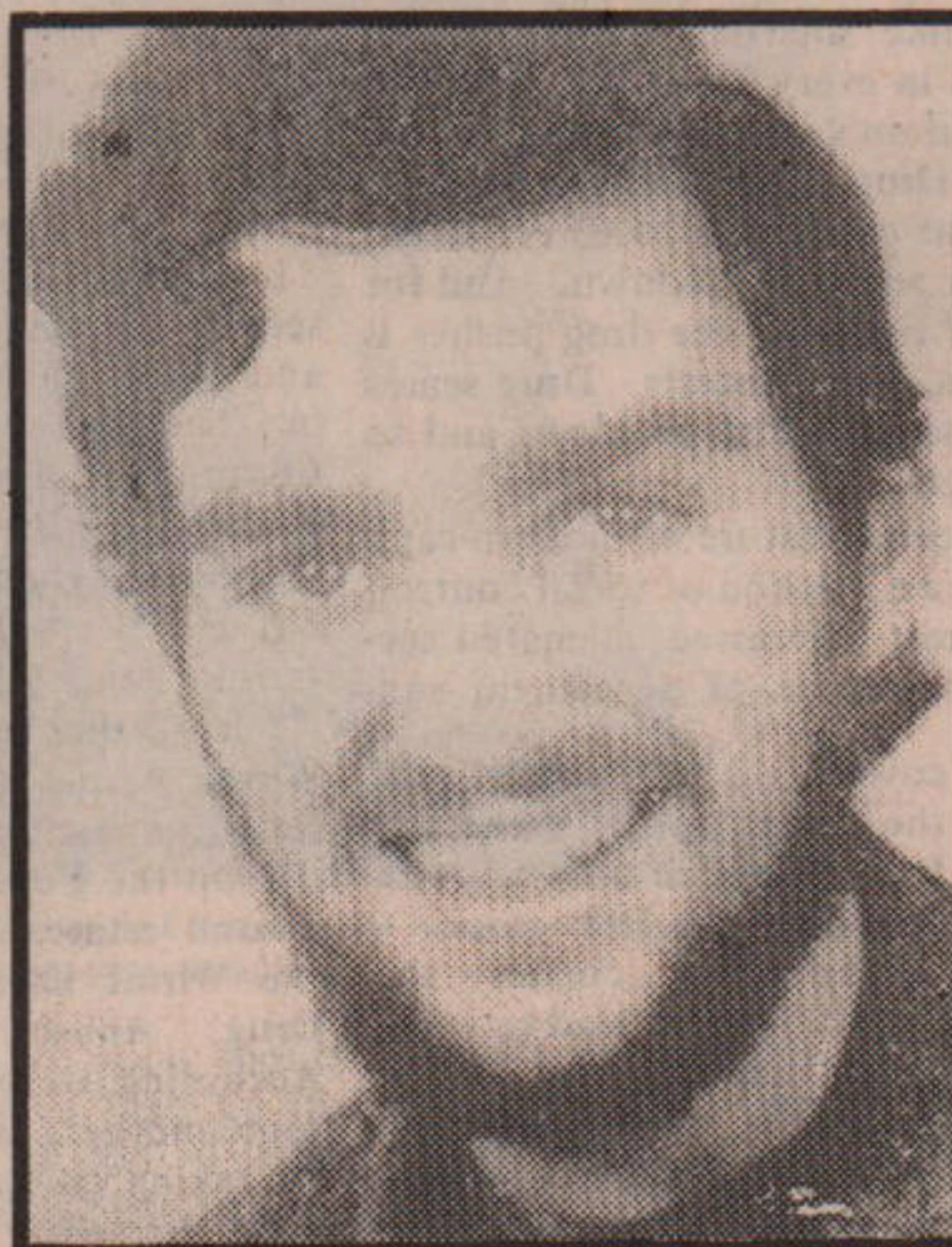
Every hunger-striker's death was followed by fierce fighting between British security forces and nation-

alist youth. Seven nationalists were killed by plastic bullets. The extent of support for the hunger-strikers proved to the world that Irish republican prisoners were not criminals. Yet Britain refused to concede their demands. The Tory government was prepared to murder 10 young Irishmen to sustain the myth that a war for Irish national liberation is a criminal conspiracy.

Just

On a recent trip to the Six Counties in support of women republican prisoners in Armagh jail, we spoke to Peggy O'Hara whose son Patsy was the third hunger-striker to die, on 21 May 1981. He was 24.

'The day Patsy was arrested I was out with his girlfriend. When we came back the British Army was all over my house. Two Special Branch men went



Two who died for Irish freedom: Bobby Sands and Patsy O'Hara

up my stairs and came down laughing. They arrested Patsy and said that the Special Branch had found a sock in my house that matched a sock found by a hand grenade. Patsy got eight years. He was brutally beaten up in Long Kesh. He was put 'on the boards' without bed or blankets for refusing an 'internal examination' with a mirror.

'When the first hunger-strike ended and they hadn't got the demands they were supposed to get, Bobby Sands and Patsy started negotiating over a second one. Bobby Sands was the officer commanding in the H-blocks

for the Provos, and Patsy was the same for the IRSP. They didn't go on hunger-strike to starve themselves to death like people think. They went on hunger-strike for their just demands.'

Courage

'I had it in my mind to save Patsy. One night near the end I was in with him, giving him water and holding his hand. I said to Patsy then I didn't care about anything else, I was going to save him. Patsy said to me "I'm sorry mammy we haven't won, please mammy let the

fight go on". Then I knew that if I'd taken Patsy off the hunger-strike, he would have gone back on it again. He wouldn't let me save him because he didn't want to let all the other young fellas down.'

'Our Patsy saw Bobby Sands and the other wee fellas dying. He knew what he was going to go through. So I think he was very brave. It takes courage. All them brave young fellas had to die because Margaret Thatcher wouldn't give them their rights. Some day I hope she goes through what I went through.'

Dumped

'They put Patsy into Bobby Sands' room to die. After he died, the RUC said they were taking him up to Omagh instead of bringing him home. In Omagh they phoned up the IRSP and said if they didn't come and get Patsy's body it would be dumped outside our door.'

'I went home and went into the house to see Patsy. Patsy had a beautiful face, he was a wild, wild handsome boy. But now his nose was broke and his face covered in cigarette burns. When I last saw him he hadn't any of those. They did it to him after he was dead. Even in death they couldn't leave him alone. One of the policemen who took Patsy's body up to Omagh was shot later. "Justice moves slow but sure" I said to myself when I heard.'

'Them wee fellas who died on hunger-strike laid the foundations for a big movement. Everybody here supported them, everybody felt it was their son. I'd say to the working class people in Britain, if they'd been born over here that could have been their son too. Our young fellas will go on fighting because this country belongs to us. The British people should realise that we're on the same side.'

Pressure

Mickey Devine was the last hunger-striker to die on 20 August 1981. The protest ended without achieving its demands. The British state claimed a victory. Margaret Thatcher announced that the hunger-strike represented the republican movement's 'last card'.

The prisoners had other ideas. The statement they released at the end of the hunger-strike made it clear that the fight would go on, and that not to fight would 'doom the nationalist population to subservience' under British rule. In the three years since Bobby Sands and Patsy O'Hara died, the republican movement has kept the pressure on Britain both inside and outside the prisons, with spectacular successes like last September's mass jail break-out, and the day to day military campaign waged by the IRA and INLA.

Freedom

Everywhere outside Britain, the hunger-strike, the election of Bobby Sands and more recent republican election successes exposed the lie that Irish freedom fighters are British criminals. The Irish Freedom Movement is fighting to kill that lie here. During 1981, we campaigned for support for the hunger-strikers' demands for political status, organising a march to the TUC conference at Blackpool to demand labour movement backing. On 5 May this year, our local branches will be holding public events throughout Britain to commemorate the 10 who died. Join us; ring Keith Tompson on 01-274 3951 for details.

Stop the Yard

IN DECEMBER and March Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist squad crossed the Irish Sea, snatched two nationalists from the streets of Belfast under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and flew them back to London's top security Paddington Green police station. Last month London Irish Freedom Movement supporters staged a demonstration outside Scotland Yard, to protest at Britain's legal terror against the Irish people.

Flair

The Irish prisoners, Tommy Quigley and Paul Kavanagh, now face a total of 16 explosives and firearms charges. Commander Hucklesby of the anti-terrorist squad has displayed the British establishment's usual flair for media management. Hucklesby has surrounded the prisoners with armed police and emphasised the 'seriousness' of their case, implying that Kavanagh at least is linked with the Christmas bombing at Harrods. Hucklesby hopes to sustain



Free the prisoners: putting pressure on the police

a lynch-mob atmosphere to ensure a conviction on flimsy evidence.

Terror

The Irish Freedom Movement is challenging the anti-Irish prejudice that Hucklesby and the media have created around Quigley and Kavanagh. Our 'Stop the Yard' protest on 6 April focused attention on police terror against the Irish community under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Outside Scotland Yard, where police used crash barriers to keep us back and a menacing line of black marias to keep us in order, IFM speaker Carol Taggart promised Hucklesby a hard time:

'The British police are

mistaken if they think that bringing Irishmen to Britain will make their job easier. There are people here who will shout long and loud against British terror.'

Quigley writes

Both prisoners are now being held on remand - Kavanagh in Wormwood Scrubs, Quigley in Brixton jail. Tommy Quigley has been writing to the Irish Freedom Movement about our work, his case, and the establishment's hypocritical manipulation of hysteria about 'terrorists'.

'That was great news about your Sheffield demonstration (against bans on Irish solidarity). I scanned the local papers to see if they would report it, but as usual they kept to their high standards of

reporting and said nothing. But the message got across despite them.'

'I really appreciated the next steps, they were a welcome change, the first real papers I have read since I was dragged over here. I look forward to more if that's possible.'

'I see some of the rags had a field day at my expense the other day, the usual "shock, horror" headlines guaranteed to whip up anti-Irish feeling and prejudice my case. It will do them no good.'

'And later in the year we'll have the spectacle of the world's most infamous mass murderer and terrorist Ronnie Reagan tramping round Ireland making a fool of himself and getting his shoes dirty. I was reading that he brings tons of sand everywhere he goes to block streets off in case the

Iranians try a suicide attack on him. God love the child it must be awful living in fear - terrible isn't it?

'What sort of reaction do you get when you talk to ordinary people about Ireland? It would be impossible to talk to some people in here about it. But this is not where you find your average person.'

'I hope all your plans are successful, all the best Tommy'

Support

The reaction of ordinary people to our campaign against British legal terror is becoming more and more positive. But we need still more active support to beat the media, free Kavanagh and Quigley, and stop the Yard.

Drug diversion

'Hooked on heroin — teenage epidemic hits council estates' scream the headlines. According to the Fleet Street dailies heroin is being handed out like smarties outside school gates and on run-down estates in every inner city. Worried parents are checking their children's eyes and arms for the tell-tale signs of drug abuse. Drug scares are a convenient distraction for an establishment concerned to divert attention from its responsibility for social breakdown. And for concerned radicals, the reviled figure of the drug pusher is an easy target at which to aim their protests. Drug scares serve to obscure the real cause of social problems and to divert the struggle against them.

Drug peddling has always been a feature of modern capitalism. For the state, drugs are a method of social control. They are used to keep the most oppressed, alienated sections of the working class in a state of permanent subjection. From Victorian rookeries to Thatcherite slums, drugs have been the constant companion of the working class. For the downtrodden, drugs are an escape from the horrors of everyday life under capitalism.

Opium den

The British establishment has 200 years experience as one of the world's biggest drug dealers. From the early years of the nineteenth century, Britain schemed to smuggle Indian opium into China to stupefy its people and destroy Chinese resistance to British expansionism.

The leading opium supplier was the prestigious British firm Jardine Matheson. By 1836 nearly 8000 tons of opium was being smuggled into China. But that wasn't enough for William Jardine. As the Chinese authorities struggled to keep the drug out, Jardine urged the British government to blockade China's ports and occupy neighbouring Hongkong.

Ruthless

The first Opium War had begun. On 21 May 1841 the British navy destroyed the Chinese naval fleet near Canton. In August Britain seized Hongkong. A year later, China was forced to pay out millions in reparations, open up five Chinese ports to foreign trade and cede Hongkong to the British 'in perpetuity'.

Further Chinese resistance prompted further threats from the British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston:

'These half civilised governments care little for words and they must not only see the Stick but actually feel it on their Shoulders before they yield.' For decades, opium continued to make up nearly half of all Chinese imports. Britain's ruthless prosecution of the opium trade undermined Chinese society and consolidated Britain's hold over the region.

Control

Today state control over the traffic in drugs is tight. From Third World production to delivery on the streets, the state regulates the supply and price of heroin, cocaine, cannabis and every other drug. In America, the mafia runs the drugs industry for its friends on Capitol Hill. In Britain the control is more

covert. The regulation of the local ganja trade by Brixton police only came to light after the 1981 riots.

Capitalism creates the conditions that lead to widespread demand for drugs. Recession, mass unemployment and poverty have encouraged the pervasive habit among disaffected youth of sniffing glue, butane gas and other more down-market drugs and solvents. The authorities are prepared to tolerate increasing solvent abuse — it is after all a more effective method of keeping working class youth down than the state's YTS containment schemes.

Pretext

The current furore about a drug epidemic has been carefully orchestrated by the establishment. In reality there is always a drugs 'epidemic'. Loudly quoted Home Office statistics about the extent of drug addiction are not worth the paper they are written on. The present hysteria about drugs has a twofold purpose.

While the state promotes and tolerates drug abuse among certain sections of the working class, it is concerned that it should not get out of hand. The object of the current anti-drugs campaign is to prepare the ground for a crackdown on drug offenders. Police action is not designed to get rid of the drugs trade, but to control it. The authorities are particularly keen to curb its criminal side effects such as burglary, shop-lifting and prostitution.

The broader context of the anti-drugs hysteria is the Tory government's moral rearmament exercise. The establishment wants to use the current drugs furore in the same way as it has promoted temperance campaigns in the past. By whipping up hysteria about drug addiction, the Tories hope to cohere a public consensus in favour of more stringent social control.

Moral rearmament legitimises wider police and state interference in the life of the working class. Drugs become the pretext for police raids on gay clubs in search of 'poppers' — amyl nitrate — and the extension of police stop and search powers in black inner-city ghettos.

Radical and community-based campaigns against drug addiction and drug pushers

are proliferating in response to the establishment-inspired hysteria. Last month, the Department of Health and Social Security dispensed a grant of £6m to be spread over three years for 51 rehabilitation and counselling projects in England and Wales and 13 ventures in Scotland. London's Community Drugs Project, Bradford's Bridge Project and Birmingham's Drugline have all been allocated substantial sums.

In Birkenhead in the Wirral — 'smack city' to the sensationalist press — families on the Ford and Woodchurch estates have set up the Wirral Parents Against Drug Abuse Campaign. According to one member, some mothers are suicidal or are taking valium — 'mothers little helpers' — to cope with their children's drug problems. The campaign has criticised the local council for its failure to respond to the local media's ridiculous claims that 85 per cent of youngsters in certain areas are on drugs. The campaign wants to lock up drug users for a six month 'drying out' period.

Repression

By singling out the drug dealer as the cause of increasing drug addiction, these campaigns set out to tackle the symptoms rather than the cause of the problem. Their demand for more concerted government action — including calls for restoration of the death penalty for drug pushers — legitimises increasing state repression and police harassment. They play the same role as the populist anti-mafia campaigns in Italy and America which have been turned into vehicles for the extension of police powers (see box on Ireland).

From Castlemilk and Easterhouse in Glasgow to Bermondsey and Peckham in London, the establishment is cultivating these campaigns to cohere a broad anti-drugs consensus. They provide the authorities with a radical cover in their bid to control all aspects of working class life.

Dope pushers are not the real problem. Capitalism creates the conditions that engender drug addiction, alcoholism and other social problems among the most oppressed workers, whom it can offer only a grim existence. The capitalist recession means mass unemployment, poverty and state repression which make drugs an attractive escape for thousands of workers. To point the finger at drug pushers is a distraction from fighting the real cause of working class degradation — the capitalist system. The real pushers are the respectable, pin-striped inhabitants of Whitehall. To deal with them we need to take on the system itself.

Andy Clarkson



Uppers for the down and out: drugs offer escape route from harsh reality

A drop of the hard stuff

According to Irish liberal opinion the entire drug addiction problem in Dublin is the responsibility of one family — the Dunnes. Since the Dublin establishment moved in to break up the Dunnes' extensive network, the media has created other drug fiends — 'Ma Baker' and 'the General' — to explain the prevalence of heroin addiction in Dublin.

Traditionally, alcohol has been the favourite Irish analgesic. The Catholic establishment's strenuous efforts to persuade young Pioneers to 'take the pledge' and abstain from the demon drink never made much headway. Today, however, with a pint of beer costing more than £1 in Dublin, the drugs trade is doing what the Catholic church was never able to do. A £5 shot of heroin is now a much more attractive proposition than a pint of Guinness to many impoverished youth.

Oppression

Britain's occupation of Ireland has ensured that the crisis has had a devastating impact on both the Six and Twenty-six Counties. Drug addiction has grown enormously in Dublin as unemployment has soared to 90 per cent in some inner-city areas.

The rise in drug abuse has induced the same re-

sponse from radical community groups as in Britain — but on a much bigger and more militant scale. The establishment response has been to clamp down on the campaigns as their protests have threatened to get out of hand and challenge state control of the drugs industry.

Concerned Parents Against Drugs (CPAD) groups sprang up in Dublin in early 1983. Social workers and community activists in St Teresa's Gardens, Crumlin organised local residents to evict the Dunnes from the flats. In other Dublin estates the pushers received the same treatment.

Gardai

When the drug dealers set up business in other areas and took to the streets the community activists demanded tough measures from the Gardai (Irish police). The force was condemned for its half-hearted approach to rooting out the pushers. Radical Dublin Central TD (MP) Tony Gregory, called for special courts to dispense tougher sentences for pushers.

At a time when the coalition government of Fine Gael and the Irish Labour Party is pushing for greater police powers in its new Criminal Justice Bill, the anti-drugs lobby is fuelling

the law and order consensus. In February the CPAD groups organised a 2000-strong protest march to the Dail (Irish Parliament) to demand the abolition of bail for pushers, confiscation of assets and stiffer mandatory sentences.

The anti-drugs campaigns have been backed by the liberal, socialist and republican press. But the establishment reaction has been hostile. Evictions, shoot-outs, kidnappings and militant demonstrations are a challenge to the state's control over the drugs trade. The Government has responded by accusing the groups of being infiltrated by terrorists, and arresting their leaders.

The CPADs have replied to the establishment offensive by pleading their innocence and redoubling their outbursts against the Dunnes and other Dublin pushers. The anti-drugs campaign is a diversion from the real problems confronting the Irish working class — the British occupation in the Six Counties, attacks on jobs and living standards, record unemployment and vicious state repression. Radical anti-drugs protests channel workers' energies away from fighting the real cause of every social evil in Ireland — British imperialism.

Racism in Europe

A case for action

Britain's most vehement anti-immigrant campaigner Enoch Powell recently called for 'concerted European-wide action on immigration'. But the European immigration authorities do not need any encouragement from Powell. In France and Germany, deportees are filling the prisons faster than the authorities can book seats for them on planes home. In the Netherlands a 13 year old boy was recently held for two weeks in a police cell while the authorities hunted down his parents. In Britain the Home Office is running down 'illegals', while giving South African teenage track-star Zola Budd a clear run to British citizenship. This month the Afia Begum Campaign Against Deportations and Asian women from the Sari Squad are going to Europe to throw down the gauntlet to Powell and his continental counterparts (see box). Gareth Evans looks at Europe's war against illegals.

Forty immigrants have been murdered by racists and police thugs in France during the past 18 months. Their deaths are the brutal consequence of the anti-immigrant hysteria whipped up by the far right's racist outbursts and by the Mitterand government's witch-hunt against illegal immigrants. Last August, the Socialist Party leader succumbed to right-wing pressure and drew the line between those immigrant workers 'who are part of the national reality' and clandestine workers 'who we must send back to where they came from'. Mitterand's statement gave the green light to the French riot police to evict immigrant squatters and deport them in their thousands.

Pressure

In France, unemployment can lead to the loss of a work permit, then withdrawal of a residence permit and ultimately deportation. Leaving your passport at home or being

involved in a traffic accident can be sufficient grounds for deportation. Social pressure on foreign workers is so intense that some are accepting pitiful offers of money to pack their bags and go home.

After the defeat of the Talbot strike at Poissy in January the Government stepped in with offers of 'reinsertion aid' for sacked immigrant workers to return to their own countries. In March Citroen got rid of nearly 2000 jobs by offering money to foreign workers to leave France.

Similar attacks on immigrants are taking place Europe-wide. The introduction of the Aliens Law in West Germany last September has made it virtually

impossible for foreign workers to bring their families into the country. Wives must now wait six years to join their husbands, and children over six are not allowed in. Unemployment benefit is cut off after six months, after which the work permit is withdrawn.

Integration

Foreigners are being deported from Germany because their houses are too cramped according to the official regulations. A Turkish couple were deported because they sent their children to Turkey for education — proof that they didn't intend to 'integrate' into German society. In some parts of the country a language test has been introduced for foreigners resident for 10 years, with deportation as the penalty for failure.

Pressure on this scale forced 32 000 foreign workers to accept derisory handouts of £2500 from the German government to return home last year. A further 30 000 are expected to leave in the first six months of this year. In Duisberg, Turkish workers at the Mannesman steel plant recently received written offers of repatriation money from the company in addition to the state offer. They were told that the sum would be reduced



Up against the wall: French police hunt for 'illegal' immigrants — it's happening all over Europe

by £350 for each month they failed to take up the offer. So far 900 Turkish workers have agreed to go.

Fightback

Immigrant workers are organising to combat these attacks. In Germany thousands have taken to the streets in protest against deportations and immigrant deaths in detention centres. In Poissy just outside Paris several thousand marched in February against the fascists who had smashed up the Talbot strike the month before.

Many immigrants have a precarious legal status and lack basic civil rights such as the right to vote. Increasingly, they are demanding equal legal and political rights to strengthen their position. By itself, however, the demand for civil rights cannot challenge the racist offensive. In Britain, the majority of blacks from Britain's former colonies have always had the right to vote and form their own political organisations. Sixty per cent of Britain's black population were born in Britain, and according to the law share equal status with white British people. But that has not prevented the establishment from stigmatising blacks as scroungers and criminals.

In France most immigrant and anti-racist organisations are demanding an automatically renewable 10 year work and residence permit. This has been a traditional demand for many years and was endorsed by Mitterand during his 1981 presidential campaign. On the face of it this demand would relieve immigrant workers of much of the insecurity they suffer. Most entered France on one year work and residence permits which can later be replaced by three year or 10 year cards. This means that many immigrants don't know from one year to the next whether they will be able to stay in France.

No solution

The problem with the demand for 10 year permits is that it implicitly accepts the division between legal and illegal workers which is the basis of the Govern-

ment's immigration policy. It does not oppose the work permit system which is the basis of the division between legal and illegal. This demand only legitimises the criminalisation policy which lays all immigrants open to attack.

The demand for amnesties is another popular campaign slogan among immigrant and anti-racist groups in Europe. This approach also fails to challenge the state's immigration controls. The Mitterand government introduced an amnesty that operated from mid-1981 to February 1982. To qualify, applicants had to prove that they had been in full-time employment for a year. Many illegal workers were sacked when they asked their employers to cooperate, others were too afraid to come forward.

The result was that only 153 000 out of an estimated 300 000 illegals applied for the amnesty. Of these, 23 000 had their applications rejected — some were deported, others kept their heads down and reverted to anonymity. The amnesty did nothing for more than half the illegals in France — and nothing for those who have entered the country illegally since then. What it did do was provide the Government with detailed information on the size, composition and location of the hidden workforce. This has enabled the authorities to pursue the ruthless hunt for illegals which is taking place all over France today.

Yearning

A recent pamphlet by Paul Gordon of the Runnymede Trust, *Deportations and removals*, discusses anti-deportation campaigns in Britain, including the Afia Begum campaign. It argues correctly that public campaigns which highlight the operation of the immigration laws are the only way to beat the Home Office. But Gordon then advocates 'radical changes in the system of immigration control' and proposes a moratorium on deportations, a new amnesty for illegal entrants and a 'new independent body to deal with cases involving

the exercise of discretion'. Gordon's approach represents a yearning for bygone days when deportations were fewer and governments could be prevailed upon to exercise compassion.

But in Britain and throughout Europe there will be no easy victories any more. In a Europe wracked by recession, governments can no longer afford to make concessions. This does not mean that victories are beyond our grasp. The Afia Begum Campaign Against Deportations has demonstrated another approach to fighting the immigration laws. For the past year the campaign has fought to stop the deportation of a young Bangladeshi woman, Afia Begum, and her baby daughter. This month the campaign is going to Europe with members of the Sari Squad to fight for Afia Begum's right to stay in Britain and to make the struggle against racism an issue in the June European elections.

Solidarity

The European tour is an opportunity to popularise the only realistic approach to challenging deportations — an approach that takes account of changing conditions and measures up to the scale of the racist offensive. Only a campaign that takes opposition to all immigration controls as its starting point can defend immigrant workers against state attacks. The Afia Begum campaign has successfully defended Afia Begum from deportation for over a year through resolute defiance of the Home Office and by building widespread labour movement backing for her case. The key to turning the tables on Powell and his European co-thinkers is to make the plight of immigrant workers in France and Germany a campaigning issue in the European labour movement. To defend immigrant workers and unite the working class, we need to transform the struggle against the immigration laws from an issue of establishment compassion into an issue of class solidarity.

Sari Squad hits Europe



Protesting against deportations: the Sari Squad in action

At the end of this month Asian women from the Sari Squad and other supporters of the Afia Begum Campaign Against Deportations are setting off on a week-long tour of Europe. They will be seizing the opportunity to make an impact on the European elections to be held in June, by highlighting the case of deportation victim Afia Begum and challenging the immigration policy of the European socialist parties.

In their manifesto the socialist parties, including the British Labour Party, say they will guarantee the rights of immigrant workers 'legally resident' in the EEC. But they also call for 'measures to eliminate illegal employment'. This is nothing more than a polite call for the removal of all illegal immigrants. The anti-racist delegation will be organising meetings and demonstrations with organisations in France, the Nether-

lands, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg. The tour will culminate in a march and rally at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 23 May.

If you would like to join the tour, help build support for it or donate money to finance it, contact the Afia Begum Campaign Against Deportations, Box 22, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 or phone Zoro Costello on 01-247 7848 or 274 2820.

Merseyside Militants

Militant-controlled Liverpool council is the loudest opponent of Tory attacks on council spending. This month, Militant is campaigning to strengthen its base in the local elections. Liverpool is Militant's stronghold, the 'spinal column for a Marxist tendency'. But how much backbone has the Labour council got?

'When we were elected last May we said that we are going to do the things we said we were going to do before we were elected last May.'

Standing on the rain-swept balcony of Liverpool's Town Hall on council budget day, Militant supporter and deputy council leader Derek Hatton repeated Labour's commitment to carrying out its election promises. Yet the reality of Labour rule in Liverpool is very different.

In May 1983, the Militant-controlled Labour Party gained 11 council seats to take control of Liverpool for the first time in a decade. Militant promised:

'No privatisation, a £2 rent cut, no spending cuts, a massive house repairs programme, 6000 new council homes, 4000 new council jobs, and no rate rises.' (13 May 1983)

A year later, Militant councillors are still shouting the odds about 'socialist policies'. Their actions, however, are at odds with their promises.

Rates and rents

Militant's promised £2 rent cut never materialised. Instead, council tenants were given a 'meagre' £16 redecoration allowance at Christmas. Liverpool's council housing remains the most expensive outside London.

Militant's commitment to 'no rate rises' has been altered to 'no massive rate rises'. The 29 March budget allowed for a rate rise of nine per cent.

Workers who can't afford to pay high rent and increased rates face the same harassment from Liverpool council as from any Tory local authority. In January the Allocation and Services sub-committee decided that people on supplementary benefit would have to 'pay off rate arrears' at 'double the weekly rates up to £1.35'. Far from giving them a rent cut, the Militant-controlled council is wringing rate arrears from low-paid workers.

The same committee would 'prefer to discontinue the use of distraint procedures', through which people in arrears have their property seized. Despite its avowed preferences, the committee merely recommended that a further sub-committee 'monitor' how bailiffs confiscate people's possessions.

Housing

Labour claims to have started 1100 of its promised 6000 new homes. But they are now called 'houses for rent', not council houses. Just as under previous Liberal councils, they are being built by private contractors

using the local pool of cheap labour — only now the council buys the house.

Militant's commitment to protect workers from the harsh conditions of privatisation does not extend to the 15 000 unemployed building workers battling for a job at any price in Liverpool. The 10 000 workers on the city's council house waiting list now queue for shoddy housing at high council rents instead of the same shoddy housing at high private mortgage rates. Those who are desperate enough to squat council property are threatened with forcible eviction.

Around 60 000 council homes in Liverpool need repairs. Labour has repaired some areas of housing at the expense of others. Thus, while maintenance workers are sent to Dovecot to install bathrooms, repairs in other derelict parts of the city go unattended. Solicitors in the Vauxhall community law centre regularly take the council to court over homes which breach public health and housing provisions.

Labour has cut off improvement grants for almost 25 000 private homes which lack basic amenities. Housing committee chair Ken Stewart admitted it was 'unfortunate' that no more applications could be considered 'unless the Tory government changes its policies'. Militant councillors who claimed that they would not put Tory cuts 'on the backs of the working class' have accepted their helplessness in the face of Tory restrictions.

Jobs and services

Militant's commitment to creating 4000 council jobs was pared down to a programme for 1000 jobs. Several hundred were created through Manpower Services Commission schemes, but new jobs dried up when the MSC stopped the money.

Militant boasts that the council makes up the MSC wages to 'trade union rates'. Yet for most council workers, union rates mean only that the official labour movement sanctions their employment at some of Britain's lowest wages.

According to one leading council shop steward, the national pay offer of 4.5 per cent will mean a real wage cut for many 'corpie workers' who will lose some of their supplementary benefit. Liverpool has shown no interest in raising that offer locally.

Militant councillors have



Militant's Derek Hatton (with the bouffant): compromises with the Labour leadership

developed close relations with the executive of the council workers' Joint Shop Stewards' Committee. Leading stewards have been recognised as negotiators and brought in to 'advise' council committees. Militant councillor Pauline Dunlop is pleased that the unions are 'coming to us and not taking strike action'.

'We had about 40 disputes in about five months. Although the trade unions haven't won all the disputes, because they have been dealt with quickly and are seen to have had a fair hearing they are happier.'

The stewards and convenors may be happier with their new status. Liverpool council workers have less to smile about. Typical of the deals negotiated behind closed doors was that covering TGWU members in the recreation department in February. With Militant's Pauline Dunlop in the chair, the disputes panel of the personnel committee agreed to consolidate the workers' bonus into their wage — on certain conditions.

First, the scheme had to be self-financing and thus could not involve any real wage rise. Second, the committee insisted that 'satisfactory guarantees upon the level of productivity and the flexibility of the workforce are embodied in an agreement with the trade union'. Dunlop also wanted a guarantee of no 'knock-on' claims from other workers.

Just what 'satisfactory guarantees' on productivity and flexibility mean became clear during the negotiations over conditions for Liverpool's dustmen. At a mass meeting in March, union officials listed the concessions they expected to make in return for bonus consolidation. The number of refuse wagons would be cut from 75 to 60. Starting times for some workers would be brought forward to 6am. A shift system would be introduced to force roadsweepers to work evenings. 'They are happier' says Militant.

While council workers have suffered deteriorating work conditions several of their convenors have joined Labour councillors on Liverpool Polytechnic's Board of Governors. This has done little to help students or Polytechnic workers.

The council insists that the union should become self-financing in running costs. Students' union officials say this is impossible without staff cuts. They have already had trouble meeting their wage bill because of non-payment of grant by the council.

Modest militants

The Militant-controlled council has failed to come up with the goods it promised the people of Liverpool. Militant has bowed to the dominant strain of Labour Party thinking, which tries to reconcile workers' needs with establishment account books. The council has accepted the limitations of capitalist administration. Despite their bravado about bankrupting the city, Militant councillors have tried to work within the anti-working class budget passed by the Liberals before last May.

Militant councillors stress the modesty of their request for £30m of the £120m the Tories have cut from Liverpool's grant. They emphasise that it is the Government which wants confrontation, not the council.

In other words, Militant councillors do not want to fight for the jobs and services Liverpool workers need. They have been forced to ask for a small increase in the Government grant in an attempt to balance the council's books. The council's January campaign bulletin made clear that, just like any other municipal authority, the council's aim is to manage the city in a businesslike fashion to give a minimum level of services as cheaply as possible.

'It needs to be stressed at the outset that expenditure is

being tightly controlled. No frivolous programmes are being approved. The issue is the provision of basic services.'

The council's limited aims mean that it has no interest in mobilising rank and file workers against the Government. It is relying on the Labour Party leadership for support. Neil Kinnock and Labour's front bench have repeatedly said that they will not back an illegal budget. Yet instead of exposing the Labour leaders' refusal to fight, Militant councillors have sustained illusions in Neil Kinnock.

Derek Hatton told the budget day demonstration against the cuts that he was 'disappointed' in Kinnock's failure to back the council. But he said he was 'confident' that the leadership would now support them. The next day, Kinnock gave his answer at a Salford rally. He repeated his call for the council to make enough savings to satisfy the Tories. The councillors knew the limitations of local government finances, Kinnock said:

'Distasteful, outrageous as those limitations are, they are unavoidable, and I think there are better ways of getting over the wall than trying to drive through it.'

Compromise cuts

Unable to break with the politics of the labour bureaucracy, Militant councillors have buckled under Kinnock's call for moderation. Since a coalition of Liberals, Tories and right-wing Labour rebels defeated the proposed illegal budget on 29 March, moves have been under way to come up with a compromise.

Tory minister Patrick Jenkin has said that he will not come up with £30m, but he is willing to look again at Liverpool's finances. Left-wing Labour Party bureaucrats have seized on this as an opportunity to resolve the dispute and avoid further embarrassment.

Members of the party

executive's new local government sub-committee pledged themselves 'to give all the support we can to resolve the present impasse', and get Liverpool out of its 'unique situation'. Militant councillors quickly fell into line.

While the Tories made it clear that any rethinking on their part would still mean cuts and big rate rises, Hatton welcomed signs that there was 'more positiveness' in the Government's attitude. If the Government was willing to 'leave us alone' he said, the council would 'willingly take part' in Jenkin's financial review.

By falling into line with what is acceptable to Labour's leadership, Militant councillors have abandoned the struggle to defend workers in Liverpool. Even their attempt to de-select one of the right-wing rebel councillors was ditched in the face of party executive opposition. As we go to press, the coalition of Labour rebels, Liberals and Tories is trying to pass a compromise budget. Whether it succeeds or not, spending cuts now seem inevitable. Meanwhile, Militant concentrates on building the Labour Party around the May council elections.

Workers in Liverpool who want to defeat the Tories need to challenge Militant's approach. First, we must reject ideas about working within the limitations of local government finances. We have to fight for the jobs and services we need, regardless of the consequences for the council's account books. Second, we need to give up relying on Neil Kinnock and start relying on the organised strength of the working class — starting with 30 000 council workers. Breaking with the betrayals of the Labour Party will be the first step towards breaking the back of the Tory attack on Liverpool.

Mick Hume

the next step

Scargill's soft centre

After six weeks of picket line battles every striking miner is asking the same questions. How are we going to get an all-out national strike? How can we stop the energy supplies to British industry and force the Coal Board and the Government to back down on their plans for pit closures and mass redundancies?

Above all, the problem is — how can we pull the mass of miners and other workers into action alongside the militants who have got the strike underway, spread it by flying pickets and begun to win wider sympathy action? The answer is — only by a different approach from that being pursued at the moment by the National Union of Mineworkers and its President, Arthur Scargill.

Arthur Scargill is immensely popular among militant miners and among activists in other unions. Unlike most trade union leaders, Scargill proclaims his commitment to the working class and his hostility not only to the Tories, but to the whole capitalist system. On television he communicates authority and conviction. He has a thorough grasp of the facts and argues his union's case clearly and forcefully. What a contrast to the servile and incoherent mumblings of Bill Sirs or Terry Duffy, or of the miners' former leader Joe (now Lord) Gormley. While other union leaders offer vacillation and compromise, Scargill promises to fight the system.

Yet Scargill has so far failed to deliver. Instead of giving a confident lead in the current dispute he has constantly lagged behind events. Many have congratulated Scargill on his clever tactics. But his reliance on the NUM's rule 41 to endorse area-by-area strike action in fact exposes a lack of decisive leadership. It has meant striking miners spending all their energies picketing out fellow miners instead of extending strike action to hit the power stations. Rule 41 has allowed the leadership to make official action already underway in Yorkshire, Kent, Scotland and South Wales. But it has also allowed Nottinghamshire and other areas to refuse to join the strike, and thus to undermine the effectiveness of the national campaign.

At the 12 April meeting of the NUM national executive in Sheffield, Scargill used procedural ploys to evade calls for a national ballot. And he declared his intention of changing rule 43 to reduce the majority required for strike action from 55 to 50 per cent. These were widely regarded as skilful manoeuvres that succeeded in wrong-footing the right. In reality it is rank and file pressure that has put the moderates on the executive on the defensive and made a national strike increasingly likely. Scargill's manoeuvres in fact reveal the leadership's weakness and lack of confidence in its ability to win a clear mandate of support from the miners for the NUM's strategy for fighting the Coal Board. The result of all these committee room manipulations is that miners had to go through six weeks of divisions and delays before the leadership even began to move towards an all-out stoppage.

Scargill's manipulation of the union rule book is no answer to the real problems facing militant miners. The central question is, how can we win the hearts and minds of the mass of miners and other workers for a full-scale confrontation with the Coal Board and the Government? This is where Scargill's

real weakness lies.

Scargill's aggressive style and fiery speeches appeal to a minority of activists. Many militants spontaneously identify with his attacks on the employers and the Government. But many miners and other workers are not immediately impressed by Scargill's posturing — they need to be convinced by argument. Yet behind Scargill's rhetoric lies a strategy that is simply not convincing. Scargill has won the hearts of the militant minority but he has not won the minds of the masses. And what is more, militants who identify with Scargill but lack his charisma cannot persuade their more moderate mates why they should follow his lead.

Many miners accept the view expressed by successive Coal Board chairmen and by successive governments, that the security of their jobs depends on the viability of the coal industry. They have watched the impact of the recession, the falling demand for coal from industry, the increase in foreign competition, the mounting stockpiles. Many miners — and many more workers in other industries — accept that the only way to make the British coal industry viable is by closing uneconomic collieries. They regret the loss of jobs and the destruction of communities, but regard these as inevitable and unavoidable. It is not surprising that Scargill has difficulty confronting these views because they have long been official NUM policy.

Scargill now attempts to counter this fatalistic attitude to pit closures by arguing that it is possible to keep pits open, save jobs and improve the market position of the British coal industry. He maintains that output should be raised to 150 million tonnes a year, not cut back to 97 million tonnes as MacGregor plans. He calls for higher state subsidies and investment, and protection against cheap imported coal to make the British industry viable. Scargill appeals for support for industrial action to press the Government to adopt this different policy for the industry. He presents this policy as 'the miners' battle for Britain' to save the coal industry and safeguard jobs for future generations.

Scargill's arguments just do not make sense to most people. Anybody can see that there is a basic conflict between miners' desire to save jobs and the bosses' drive to make the coal industry competitive. They can see that keeping open pits that lose money year after year is not in the best interests of any capitalist employer. It is obvious that subsidising miners to produce coal that industry does not need, at prices higher than the competition, is not sound financial policy for a capitalist government under intense pressure to curb its spending. This is why it is futile to rest our case on the viability of the coal industry.

MacGregor does not present his strategy for managing the coal industry in terms of what is good for the miners. He confines his attention to the measures required to make coal mining profitable. Yet Scargill constantly puts himself forward as the Coal Board's most enthusiastic salesman. His defence of the miners rests on his alternative management policy for the mining industry. But MacGregor does not need

Scargill's advice on how to screw profits out of miners. He knows that the only way to do it is by closing pits and putting miners on the dole. Scargill's fantasy of a high-output, secure employment industry is a dangerous diversion from the fight to save jobs in a declining industry.

We should rest our case on what is necessary to preserve miners' livelihoods. Why should miners who work in loss-making pits or in loss-making areas be deprived of their only chance to make a living, while miners lucky enough to work in 'economic' pits cling on? Miners in South Wales and Kent have to support themselves and their families just like miners in Nottinghamshire. It's time the NUM stopped pretending that what is good for the miners is also good for the British economy. It is clear that the survival of their system now depends on destroying our livelihoods on a vast scale. We have to make it equally clear that the survival of miners' jobs, the miners' union, our class, now depends on going on the offensive against their system. This means moving beyond Scargill's limited trade unionism to the broad anti-capitalist approach of the Revolutionary Communist Party.

The recession has raised the stakes and rendered the Scargill strategy obsolete. In the early seventies, Scargill's methods were effective. He led the miners in a battle for higher wages against the employers and the Tory government, and he won. The strikes were militant, but the capitalist system itself never came under threat. An appeal to trade union principles was sufficient to unite the miners and win widespread working class solidarity. Even sections of the middle classes and the establishment were sympathetic to miners' demands for better pay for their dirty and dangerous work.

Today's battle is fought on different terrain. The central issue is not how much miners get paid for their work, but the removal of the rights of tens of thousands of miners to work at all. The miners are up against not just the Coal Board and the Tories, but the full might of the British capitalist state. Today, appeals to trade union solidarity cannot unite the miners, never mind mobilise the rest of the working class. As the middle ground unites around Thatcher and MacGregor, militant miners need a fighting strategy that can mobilise mass support for their struggle against the system.

The Revolutionary Communist Party has been campaigning for a national strike since the current dispute began (see pages 2, 3, 4, 5). Our strike special *the miners' next step* has taken the arguments for all-out action on to hundreds of picket lines and demonstrations, to miners' welfare clubs and housing estates in all the major coalfields. If rank and file miners take matters into their own hands, as they are beginning to do in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, then we can prevent any further delays and disorganisation and spread the picketing and the sympathy action.

Moving ahead to win a national strike demands some immediate changes. We need to break from the past traditions of collaboration between the NUM and the Coal Board. We should throw out the *Plan for Coal*

Ironically, both MacGregor and Scargill still swear by this document. Drawn up between the NUM, the Coal Board and the Labour Government in 1974, the *Plan for Coal* indicates the union's agreement to productivity increases and pit closures in an expanding and modernising industry. Scargill clings to it in the forlorn hope of a return to expansion and good relations with management. MacGregor sees it as a weapon against the miners: he rejects the planned output targets as unrealistic, but takes advantage of the NUM's commitment to the industry, which undermines resistance to his rationalisation programme.

boycott colliery review procedures. From national, to area, to pit level, the NUM collaborates in numerous standing committees with the employers and the Government. The pit review procedures involve prolonged consultation about problems of geology and productivity and profitability that pave the way to closures and job losses. Even during the current dispute NUM officials are working on joint projects with management. To fight the bosses we need an independent union with no ties to the employers or the state.

A national strike requires a clear programme of demands. These must put to the fore resistance to MacGregor's closure programme. They must include the demand for a decent wage for miners — which, despite the five-month overtime ban, remains an outstanding issue.

no pit closures! no redundancies! With four million already on the dole we need to preserve every job. In cases of exhaustion we must insist on the redeployment of all jobs. We should also make sure that every miner who wants to retire early is replaced by a young worker.

a nationally agreed basic living wage. No miner should have to work overtime or rely on bonuses to make a living wage. We need to get rid of divisive area agreements and productivity bonuses. We must make sure that every miner gets a living wage, whatever the geological conditions. Miners disabled through work should be guaranteed the same basic wage for life.

To win a national strike requires the maximum mobilisation of miners, of women in the mining communities and other workers. This means mass meetings

Open meetings, full discussion and democratic decision making are essential to ensure the involvement of the largest possible number of workers in the strike. Regular mass meetings ensure that the rank and file is fully in control, and that the leadership is fully accountable.

strike committees. Committees which involve the most active militants in the strike as well as the official branch leadership are vital to give direction to the strike. Committees should include not only miners but also women and other workers engaged in sympathetic action.

The miners strike of 1984 has had a slow and halting start. It is now too important to the working class to be left under the control of its present leadership. With a different strategy and effective rank and file organisation it can still beat the combined forces of the British establishment.



For the first time in many years the conflict between the classes in Britain has come out into the open as a direct confrontation. The dispute between the miners and the Coal Board has turned into open warfare between the working class and the capitalist system. The Government and the employers are prepared to use all the resources at their disposal — the police, the courts and the law — to crush the miners' resistance. Their response shows what workers can expect if they stand up and fight for a decent life.

The economic disease of capitalism has no short-term cure. And for workers that means more sacrifices, more indignity and a future without hope. That is why anything less than the overthrow of the capitalist system can bring no lasting benefit to the working class. But can there be a revolution in Britain? Below, *Frank Richards* assesses the British revolutionary tradition. On pages 14 and 15 we examine how the British state has organised to contain the threat of revolution and review our future prospects.

BRITAIN HAS NEVER faced the prospect of a revolutionary upheaval. Unlike the ruling class of France, Germany, Austria or Italy the British establishment has never lost its grip on society. The British state has always retained the initiative and ultimately contained every threat to its rule. This relative stability has certainly boosted the confidence of the ruling class. It has also strengthened the conviction that a revolution could never happen in Britain. However, the history of the class struggle this century does not deliver such a simple verdict. It shows the omnipotence of the British establishment. But it also reveals opportunities for change and sometimes it gives us a glimpse of the hidden power of the working class.

The stable character of British capitalism stems from its unique historical position. Britain was the first capitalist power. It also enjoyed centuries of uninterrupted peace to develop its social and political institutions. Capitalism developed relatively smoothly over a long period of time, allowing the establishment considerable room to adapt to new circumstances. Change was introduced gradually. The state could thus anticipate social unrest and often pre-empt it, through a skilful combination of coercion and concession.

The myth of invincibility

The ascendancy of British imperialism in the nineteenth century allowed the accumulation of capital on an unprecedented scale. This plunder guaranteed a protracted period of prosperity for significant sections of British society. Some of this wealth even filtered down to the skilled sections of the working class, the labour aristocracy. While this group of workers benefited from the Empire, the rest of the proletariat experienced its exploitation in a less brutal form than its continental counterparts. Not surprisingly, class conflict in Britain was more muted than elsewhere. The trade unions developed a strong attachment to the capitalist system at a very early stage. The identity of interest which the labour movement developed with British capitalism limited the political development of the working class. Class collaboration was widespread and even workers on strike often proclaimed a misplaced loyalty to the industry which exploited them.

The extent of this collaboration was unique for the time. One German observer of British trade unionism, Schulze-Gaevernitz, noted the stability of class relations in Britain in 1906:

'This powerful position of the worker is not dangerous for Great Britain, for half a century of trade unionism and political training has taught the worker to identify his interests with those of his industry. It is true that he opposes the employer in questions of the level of wages, hours of work, etc, but externally he is at one with the employer in all matters where the interests of his industry are concerned. It is not rare for employers' organisations and workers' trade unions to act together on current economic questions.' (cited in Lenin, 'Notebooks on Imperialism', *Collected Works*, Vol 39)

These attitudes are prevalent today in even the most militant unions — the collaboration

of the miners' union with the Coal Board in campaigns for investment and import controls is well known. But early this century, this developed framework of collaboration was peculiar to class relations in Britain. The institutionalisation of this system of workers' cooperation with employers was of tremendous benefit to British imperialism.

Despite its privileged position, the British ruling class did not have things completely its own way. The years leading up to the outbreak of the First World War marked the decline of Britain as the leading economic power and brought an explosion of class conflict. In 1910, the miners, textile workers and shipyard workers fought major battles against their employers. During the next three years millions of seamen, dockers, railwaymen, cotton workers, miners and others went on strike. The wave of militancy shook the employers. But they were even more worried about the growth of a highly politicised shop stewards' movement and the increasing appeal of the policy of direct

action among sections of the working class. To make matters worse, this escalation of class conflict coincided with the extension of militant action by the suffragettes and the growing threat from the national liberation movement in Ireland.

For the first time the British ruling class was losing its grip. It had to use all its resources to ride the storm. In the end the arrival of the First World War, and the state's desperate campaign to foster patriotism and chauvinism, allowed the establishment to neutralise its opponents. A report to the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1917 recalled how foreign conflict had helped put down rebellion at home:

'The naked fact is that the country, the mother of free institutions, was four years on the brink of civil war. And if the Germans had not saved us the struggle would have raged not only between Catholic and Protestant Ireland but throughout Great Britain between class and class.' (RJ Scally, *The origins of the Lloyd George coalition*)

Events showed that the war could postpone but not eliminate the threat of working class action. The years from 1918 to 1921 saw the most coherent opposition to the rule of capital in Britain either before or since that time. A confident working class fought hard to consolidate its position. By 1920 the number of workers in trade unions rose to 45.2 per cent from 17.7 per cent in 1911. The Russian Revolution made a positive impact on militants, and the Government of

Can there

the day began to have nightmares about the spread of Bolshevism. The capitalist class was well and truly overstretched. Mutinies in the police (1918 and 1919) and in the armed forces often left the establishment desperately short of reliable troops to deal with working class unrest.

The ruling class only saved its neck with the aid of the official labour leadership. The British establishment avoided making a show of strength from a position of real weakness, and postponed the fight until the odds were in its favour. Important concessions were made to the trade unions. In return, the labour leaders were delegated responsibility for controlling their members. The union officials gave sterling service to the capitalists. Tory leader Bonar Law declared his gratitude to union organisation as 'the only thing between us and anarchy'.

When unemployment rose and the climate of economic insecurity forced many workers on to the defensive, the bosses launched an all-out attack. By the end of 1921 the capitalist class was back in the driving seat. During the next five years it completed the job of defeating the working class. The establishment emerged from the volatile post-war years with all its institutions intact. Although the bosses knew they were no longer invulnerable, the threat of revolution had receded into the background. But was this all inevitable?

Anatomy of defeat

The defeat of 1918-1921 cannot be blamed on the power of the capitalist class. While far from defenceless, the British state was not at all confident about the outcome of a showdown between itself and the mass movement of workers. The establishment's desperate turn to the trade union leaders for help indicated its weakness. Leading civil servants noted with anguish the difficulty of governing the country in the old way.

Yet while the establishment passed

'The failure of the British revolution is above all the failure of revolutionary leadership'

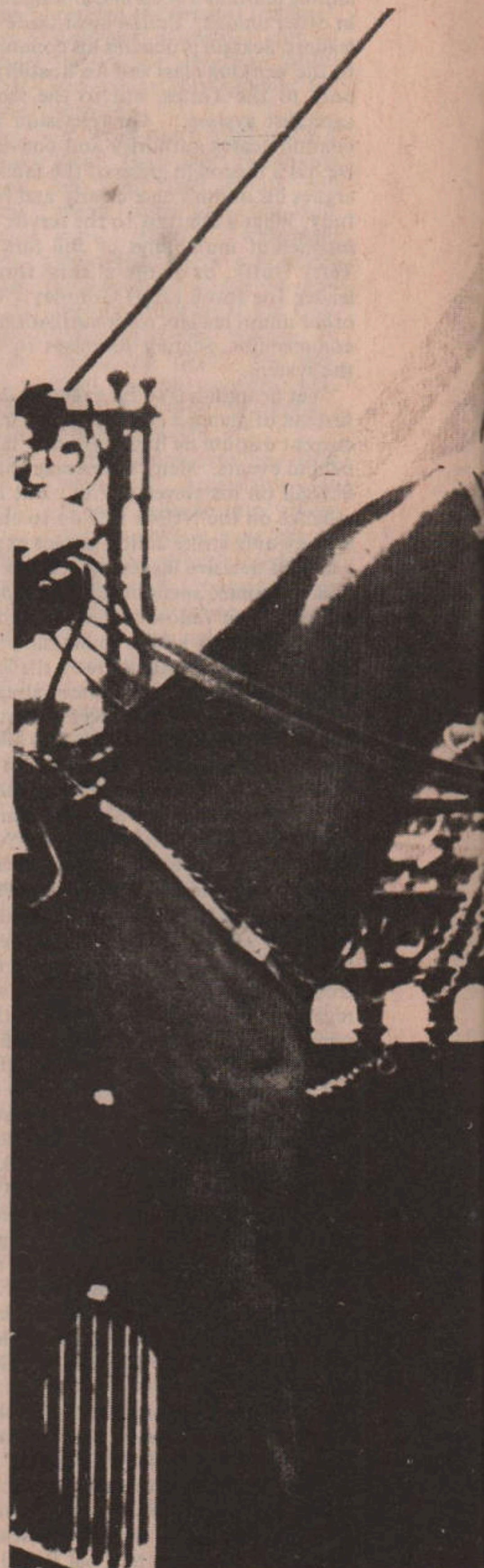
through a political crisis, the working class became a prisoner of its narrow brand of trade unionism. Trade union militants were well organised, and the shop stewards' movement — particularly in engineering — was a coherent force, but overall workers' outlook was far too limited. They saw class conflict primarily in terms of industrial disputes, and fatally underestimated the need to fight for a proletarian political alternative on every issue. Contemporary revolutionary groups reflected the narrow obsession of the British labour movement. As a result the prevailing sentiment of British nationalism was never challenged. Class conflict in industry coincided with class harmony on matters of foreign policy, the Empire and the problem of foreign competition. This enabled the ruling class to use the outbreak of the First World War to such good effect against its opponents at home.

The radical trade unionism that developed at the time presented considerable immediate problems for the employers. Yet it could not take the working class very far forward. Its sectional and parochial character meant it could not provide a strategy for taking power. Even the socialist groups of the years around the First World War suffered from the same political flaw. The left was so preoccupied with industry that it failed to champion the cause of women's emancipation. The well-organised suffragette movement developed outside the mainstream of working class politics and inevitably remained under

middle class influence. Similarly, the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland made only a marginal impact on the labour movement at a time when unity with Ireland's powerful liberation movement could have provided an irresistible challenge to the British state.

The defects of militant trade unionism became painfully evident during the radical years of 1918 and 1919. Soldiers returned from the front demanding far-reaching change and 'a land fit for heroes'. The army and navy were struck by widespread mutinies. Even the police went on strike in Liverpool and London. The few loyal regiments that remained spent much of their time quelling mutinies and policing the rest of the army. But these dramatic developments occurred in isolation from the labour movement. The British left made no attempt to influence the mutinous soldiers and sailors to forge a united revolutionary movement. Under these circumstances the defeat of the working class was only a question of time.

The working class lost because its militant leadership was fighting a limited battle over industrial issues at a time when the class war was about every issue affecting British society. This was an ideological confusion of catastrophic dimensions. Workers attempted to fight employers over pay and conditions while uniting with them against



Bosses' baton charge: they've got the guns — but we've

be a revolution in Britain?

foreign competition. The labour movement was thus left defenceless when the employers pointed out that to be competitive meant lower wages and worse conditions. As a result even militant trade unionists became reluctant to pursue their objectives fully, for fear they might undermine British capitalism's international position. Militant trade unionism proved incapable of sustaining its own limited offensive.

The central problem facing the workers' movement in the twenties was its indifference to the question of state power. The ruling class took the threat of working class action seriously and organised its forces through the state to deal with every eventuality. Plans were drawn up to respond to mass strikes and other emergencies. While the state geared up for war against the working class, trade union militants remained oblivious of a need to fight the state machinery. Even when the General Strike broke out in

1926 the union leaders argued that they were pursuing a legitimate industrial dispute. In contrast, Tory Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin characterised the General Strike as a threat to constitutional government and the state. The Tories threw all the repressive resources of the state into a war to defend the very existence of British capitalism. Yet the trade unions continued to operate as if they were engaged in a normal industrial dispute on a larger scale. A leading civil servant accurately explained the reason for the defeat of the General Strike:

'The General Strike could not succeed because some of those who led it did not wholly believe in it and because few, if any, were prepared to go through with it to its logical conclusion - violence and revolution.' (Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, volume 2)

The General Strike showed how far militant

trade unionism could go. It also showed its disastrous limitations.

The problem of leadership

The failure of trade union militancy strengthened the hand of the official labour leaders. It showed that the policy of militant direct action could not challenge the labour bureaucrats' all-rounded political approach. The defeat of the General Strike was used as an argument against direct action and militancy.

'Class struggle means more than going on strike. It means fighting for political leadership'

It seemed to confirm the view that patient work leading to the eventual election of a Labour government was the only realistic option that could benefit the working class.

The rank and file militants and socialists who eventually united to form the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) in 1921 knew that the Labour leaders could not be trusted to defend the interests of the proletariat. They were also aware of the necessity for revolutionary change. But in practical terms they could give no real meaning to revolutionary politics. Instead, they continued with the old perspective of trade union militancy while declaring a meaningless faith in revolution.

The CPGB was the first serious attempt to build a revolutionary party in Britain. As such, it marked a step forward. However, the CPGB never realised its original aim of establishing a revolutionary alternative in Britain. Despite its revolutionary rhetoric it was too steeped in the politics of the past. From the beginning, the CPGB failed to transcend its trade union traditions and ignored the broad political issues that really mattered. In particular, it ignored its responsibility for fighting British imperialism at home and abroad. In June 1923, the Executive Committee of the Communist International severely criticised the CPGB and stated that its attitude towards the anti-imperialist struggles in India and Ireland was 'reformist'.

Far from challenging the Labour leaders, the CPGB advocated what amounted to almost uncritical support for the Labour Party. Rather than fight for an alternative to Labour it argued fatalistically that the election of a Labour government was the best result the working class could expect. A November 1922 statement in the party's trade union paper *All Power* summed up this approach:

'Wise tactics demand that we should do our utmost to return the Labour Party to power. Nobody knows the shortcomings of the Labour Party better than we, but we must be prepared to temporarily overlook these shortcomings, and establish the political United Front. The Labour Party returned to power means a distinct break with the political past of this country: it means that the organised working class movement can have much more influence on future legislation.'

The CPGB confined its struggle for leadership to the philosophical plane. In practical terms, the Labour Party would lead and the CPGB would act as a pressure group on it. All that the CPGB could offer the working class was the vague promise of 'much more

influence on future legislation'.

The CPGB's failure to advance a revolutionary alternative to the Labour Party has stunted the development of working class politics up to today. Since the twenties the Labour Party has been given a clear run. The left has always been at pains to avoid confronting the hold of Labour over the British working class. Thus the question of revolution has remained an issue discussed only in academic circles, without any practical significance.

Redefining revolution

The pressure group politics of the early CPGB have become the bread and butter of today's left. Rather than challenging Labourism, British communism has become an adjunct of the Labour Party. In the beginning pressure group politics implied organisational dependence on the Labour Party. But with the passing of time it has meant political dependence as well. Over the years, various groups have entered the Labour Party to change it, only to discover eventually that it is they who have changed. The domesticated Militant Tendency is the latest in a long line of entrism organisations which have found that their existence is

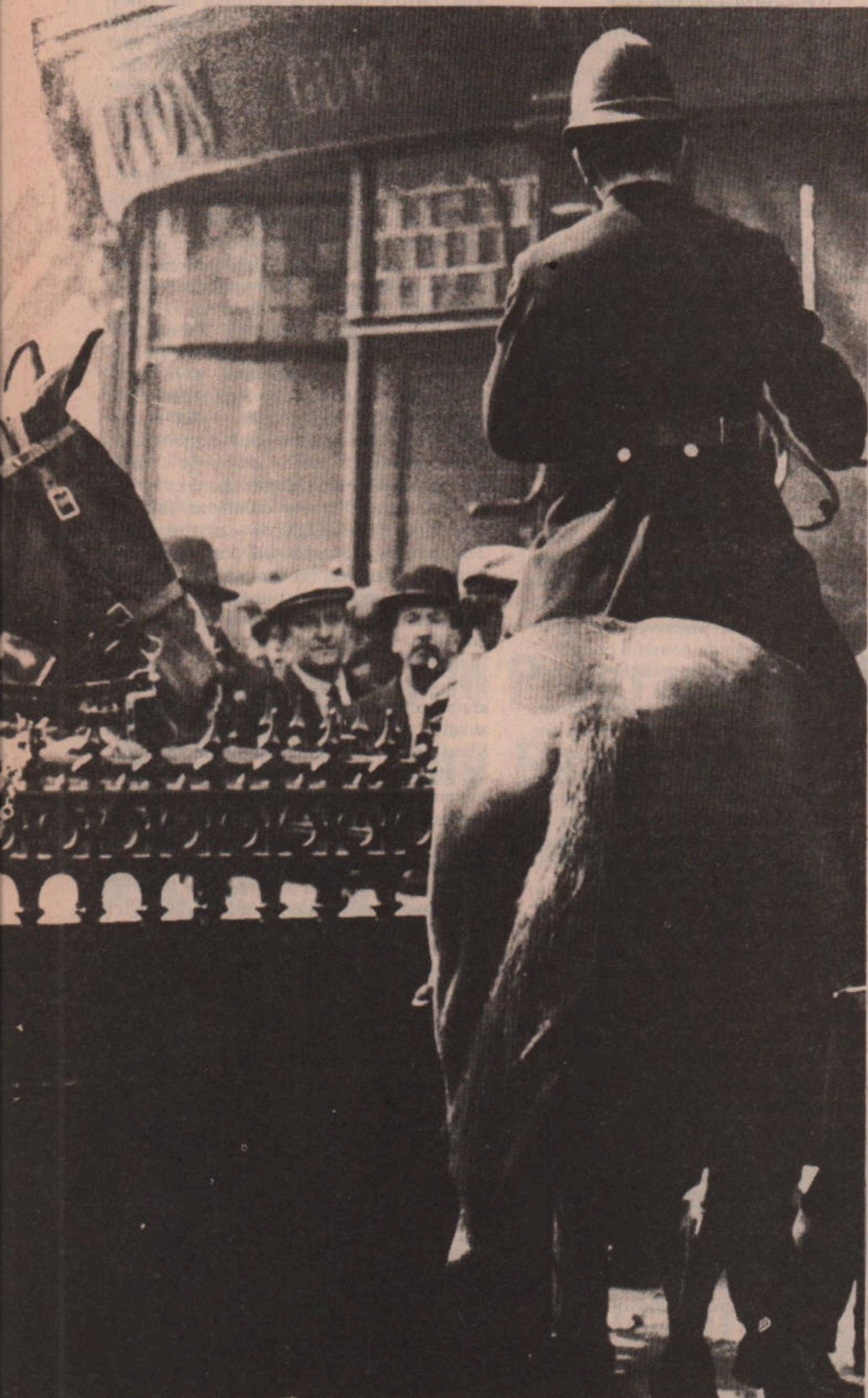
inseparable from that of the Labour Party.

The fear of organising independently of Labour has influenced what passes for revolutionary politics in Britain. The left has resolved the inconsistency of advocating revolution while calling for critical support for Labour by trivialising revolution. The CPGB and the numerous left-wing organisations that have emerged over the years have tended to opt for a half-way house - calling for militant action and demanding that the Labour Party leads it.

Just as the left has been too embarrassed to challenge Labour, it has also proved reluctant to raise 'unpopular' issues. The British left's appalling record on imperialism, nationalism, women's oppression and other non-industrial issues meant that the process of radicalisation which occurred during the Second World War lacked any progressive political focus. In effect revolutionary policies had been reduced to what was acceptable to the traditions of British Labourism. The struggle against capitalism was now confined to Parliament. In contrast to the post-war upsurge of 1918 to 1926, the initiative at the end of the Second World War was monopolised by the Labour government of 1945.

The very meaning of revolution had changed, to become an incoherent concept. Thus *Tribune*, the paper of the Labour left, could greet the election of the Attlee government with the headline 'Reflections on a revolution'. A year later it declared that 'the first session of the Labour Government's Parliament... did more revolutionary things to this country than the first three years after the 1917 Revolution did for Russia'. The fact that *Tribune* could get away with characterising the nationalisation of a few declining industries and the extension of welfare measures as revolution indicates the degradation that the term has suffered.

Since 1945 very little has changed. The failures of the early CPGB have not been corrected - if anything the left has regressed. We can now begin to see the reason behind the failure of revolution in Britain. The success of revolution can never be guaranteed. But if a revolutionary alternative is entirely absent it is hardly surprising that workers choose the only option that is open to them. While revolutionary politics are not on offer, the Labour Party can always carry on. And when Labour is in crisis as it was during the 1983 General Election, it will be the right wing which is the main beneficiary. The failure of the British revolution has got nothing to do with the soil or the climate or with culture. It is above all, the failure of revolutionary leadership.



we got the numbers - if we organise them

State and revolution

THROUGHOUT THE MINERS' strike, Home Secretary Leon Brittan has gone to great lengths to deny allegations that the police have been involved in undercover operations, phone tapping and the selective harassment and detention of militants. These denials carry little conviction. Historical evidence confirms that the state has always engaged in such activities during major industrial disputes. Cabinet minutes show that more than 65 years ago, in 1919, the security forces conducted an extensive surveillance operation of union leaders, monitoring their mail and conversations. A special Strike Committee was established, involving civil servants, military personnel and government ministers, to coordinate a plan of action against the working class. In April 1921 the plan was put into operation in anticipation of a major industrial dispute. When the threatened strike did not materialise, a senior civil servant recorded his conclusions:

'The Strike Committee (was) very sick. They had been waiting for two years to press the button. They had pressed it. The Strike Books had been issued from the secret banks where they had been concealed: the milk cans were rolling down to Devon and could not be stopped, the troops were steaming in ship and train from Ireland, from Malta, from Silesia to defend us from the men of life.' (Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, volume 1)

These arrangements – including the mobilisation of a volunteer force of former army personnel, university students and other middle class sympathisers – were made without recourse to Parliament, without the sanction of the law and without any publicity. Just as the state offensive against the miners today has involved the mobilisation of a national police force and the establishment of a special Cabinet committee, so too in the past the state has been ready to go to any length to defend capitalist privilege.

For the record

In the final analysis, the role of the state is to ensure the maintenance of capitalist power. That it does this with full backing from Parliament and the courts gives class coercion legitimacy. Court injunctions make the employers' offensive legal while flying pickets are branded as illegal. The employers can always find a law to justify repression. And if necessary the ruling class can resort to the Emergency Powers Act of 1920. Under this Act, the Government may proclaim a State of Emergency if it feels that the stability of the country is threatened. During a State of Emergency regulations by Order-in-Council have the full force of law. In other words, the Government has a free rein to do what it wants. The Emergency Powers Act has only been used against workers on strike. This is because a threat to the life of the country can only mean a threat to the rule of capital.

Emergency Powers in practice

31 March 1921	Coal
26 March 1924	London Transport
2 May 1926	General Strike
29 June 1948	Docks
11 July 1949	Docks
31 May 1955	Rail
23 May 1966	Seamen
16 July 1970	Docks
12 December 1970	Electricity
9 February 1972	Coal
3 August 1972	Docks
13 November 1973	Coal – Electricity

The state machine does not exist to serve the law. Rather the law exists to serve the interests represented by the state. In every important conflict, the government of the day is forced to put the state machine at the disposal of the



Cap in hand to Westminster: respect for the state still holds the labour movement back

capitalist class. Cabinet secretary Thomas Jones recalled the close affinity and co-operation between the Government and the employers in the days leading up to the General Strike in 1926:

'It is impossible not to feel the contrast between the reception which Ministers give to a body of owners and a body of miners. Ministers are at ease at once with the former, they are friends jointly exploring a situation. There was hardly any indication of opposition or censure. It was rather a joint discussion of whether it were better to precipitate a strike or the unemployment which would result from continuing the present terms.' (Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, volume 2)

This outlook is not confined to Tory ministers. Successive Labour governments have had no compunction about using the Emergency Powers Act and other forms of class repression against the working class. During the 1966 seamen's strike, Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson went on television to declare that it was 'a strike against the state – against the community'. In collaboration with the shipowners, Wilson organised a ruthless campaign to smash the strike.

Even if individual government ministers had scruples about state repression there is nothing they could do to stop it. State security – a polite term for the military organisation of capitalist interests – is not a matter for political debate. Thus, Labour spokesmen who recently criticised the Tories for sanctioning the acquisition of machine guns by the Metropolitan Police were shocked to discover that Labour Home Secretary Roy Jenkins first authorised their use as long ago as 1976. Jenkins was not in the least embarrassed when challenged during a radio interview: 'I am perfectly sure that Mr Callaghan when he was Home Secretary would have taken the same view'. Jenkins, like Callaghan, like any Home Secretary, has no real control over the machinery of class repression. Not that Labour ministers ever tried to control it. If anything, successive Labour governments have distinguished themselves by the zeal with which they have been prepared to put the boot in against striking workers. Under the leadership of Clement Attlee, the first post-war Labour government fought the dockers, using troops and special legislation. The last Labour government under Harold Wilson and James Callaghan despatched thousands of police to break the strike at Grunwick in 1977, and sent the army to smash the firemen's strike of the same year. Labour went on to threaten striking ambulancemen with the use of troops, and following the upsurge of industrial unrest during the winter of discontent in 1978/79, it devised a plan to cripple effective strike action by criminalising secondary pick-

eting. In all its essentials, the last Labour government's 'Concordat' with the unions prepared the ground for the barrage of anti-union laws implemented under Thatcher.

The state and the left

It is ironic that the British left and the official labour movement are more sentimental about the state than those whose interests it defends. The capitalist class accepts the state as a necessary evil. It has no illusions that Parliament can decide anything of importance: a whisper in the right ear is more likely to get things done. The ruling class treats the ramblings of the Labour left on the need to make Parliament more accountable with the disdain they deserve. One leading mouthpiece of the ruling class poured scorn on the left's loyalty to Parliament during then Labour leader Michael Foot's dispute with left winger Peter Tatchell over the role of extra-parliamentary action:

'What is touching about the latest re-run of the Cromwellian Putney Debates is the faith both Mr Foot and Mr Tatchell clearly share in the efficacy of Parliament as the source of political power. Few observers of the modern House of Commons are prepared to credit it with any higher status than as a periodic electoral college, remaining in uncomfortable permanent session, for whichever party is to head Britain's notoriously powerful executive.' (*The Economist*, 19 December 1981)

The leaders of the British labour movement have nurtured this naive belief for more than a hundred years. As a result, the state has not been seen as what it really is – the organiser of the enemy camp – but as the legitimate arbiter of social conflict. The British state has been able to do what it likes because its authority has never been challenged.

By agreeing to play by the rules of the game the British labour movement has become an upholder of the power of the capitalist state. When the state disapproves of particular forms of working class action it can point to the rules which the official labour movement accepts. Playing by the rules means the capitalist class dictating to the working class what action it can or cannot take.

In the thirties the militant National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) met with considerable hostility from the Home Office. The unemployed marches organised by the NUWM were the focus for police harassment and brutality. The NUWM leaders faced constant arrest and a hostile media kept up a stream of abuse designed to denigrate the marchers and criminalise the unemployed. The authorities were particularly concerned about the NUWM's readiness to defy the law and

its refusal to cooperate with the police. The state repression meted out to the NUWM stands in marked contrast to the experience of the Jarrow marchers.

The Jarrow march is the most celebrated unemployed demonstration of the thirties. This march, which mobilised 200 people, overshadowed a much larger one organised by the NUWM at the same time. One observer cogently explained why the Jarrow march was so successful:

'The (Jarrow) march organisers accepted the stringent conditions laid down by the police that they should not undertake a mass lobby but attend in small groups to individual MPs whose names had to be given in advance. Because the marchers were prepared to accept these conditions, the Home Office ruled that marchers would be allowed to have tea in the House. . . . Moreover, the Special Branch was encouraged by the "non-political" nature of the march. . . . One result was that the Home Office allowed Movietone News to take some film of the Jarrow marchers' rally in Hyde Park, when they had always refused permission to do this in the past. . . . The Jarrow marchers became a folk legend, and they did so at least in part because they obeyed the rules.' (J Stevenson, 'The politics of violence' in G Peele & C Cook, *The politics of reappraisal 1918-1939*)

The Jarrow marchers accepted the rules and acquired the reputation for 'dignified' protest. The success of Jarrow and the failure of the NUWM showed that respectability pays. The whole episode gave the state a free hand to dictate what protest is legitimate and what goes beyond the pale.

Throughout the post-war period protest became institutionalised. Today, most demonstrations are really ineffectual marches shepherded by police. When protests go beyond token actions the state and those who accept its authority are ready to denounce them as extremist. The mass pickets at Warrington late last year and the miners' flying pickets both received the 'extremist' treatment. The violence of the state is accepted as legitimate – but those who fight back against their exploitation are labelled as criminals and are disowned by the labour leaders.

The miners' strike confirms the irrelevance of the left's view of the state. The left greeted the full-scale mobilisation of state repression with indignant outbursts about the infringement of civil liberties. But the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party could not bring themselves to back the pickets. Rather than organise effective resistance to the state offensive, the Labour leadership sought a parliamentary debate on civil liberties. But state repression cannot be debated out of existence. As the experience of the past century shows, the power of the state stands in our way. And if the fight against pit closures can evoke such a ruthless response from the security forces, what can we expect when workers go on an all-out struggle to defend their livelihoods?

The ruling class has at its disposal a machinery that poses a mortal threat to our class. This threat is all the greater because the working class is not yet armed to meet it. Thus while the miners went into battle ill prepared, the employers, the police and the judiciary had everything worked out. While the miners were fighting an industrial dispute, the state was engaged in a war. This is a lesson which the working class ignores at its peril. The working class also needs to prepare for war. That is why the revolutionary perspective of fighting for state power is the only realistic option open to our class. In a situation where every major dispute raises the question of state power, revolution becomes a necessity for our survival. The miners' strike has shown that today any dispute about workers' livelihoods immediately becomes a struggle over who rules.

Future prospects

THE DEFEATS OF THE past weigh heavily on the left of today. Even the left outside the Labour Party is given to pessimism about far-reaching change in Britain. The introduction to the Socialist Workers' Party's major publication last year, *The revolutionary road to socialism*, sums up the left's fatalism:

'These are bad times for socialists. All around us are the signs of a world in crisis, yet men and women seem unable to do anything about it.'

The mournful introduction prepares the reader for the inevitable message that the revolutionary road has reached a dead end, even for the more left-wing of radical left parties. The experience of the last 80 years certainly gives little grounds for blind optimism. But if we are prepared to learn from mistakes, the experiences of the past can be a source of strength and even of inspiration.

Thatcher's class

In the eighties the bosses have scored a series of victories over the working class. They have defeated the unions, forced millions of workers on to the dole and devastated social services. The Tories also managed to humiliate Labour and win a decisive parliamentary majority in 1983. In the process Thatcher has acquired a reputation for being bold, resolute and unstoppable. Her handling of political problems from the South Atlantic War to GCHQ indicates that she is not an opponent to be underestimated.

Where does the capitalist class get this power from? British imperialism isn't what it used to be at the turn of the century. Britain has become a declining economy barely able to maintain the pretence of competitiveness with its rivals. The British ruling class no longer rules the world. Its power has declined in proportion to the decline of British capitalism. Five years of Thatcher cannot obscure the fact that the economy is in a mess and that the system is in crisis. Instead of power and confidence, the economic figures show a class

that is helpless and weak in the face of forces beyond its control. Establishment power in Britain today does not rest on a firm foundation. It is power which is entirely *relative* — the strength of the ruling class is above all based on the weakness of its opponents. Thatcher can look good against weak opponents. Next to a Michael Foot or a Neil Kinnock she will come off as a polished performer. But when confronted by more formidable forces — such as the miners — the ruling class becomes more circumspect and reasonable. The usual provocative statements and ultimatums that are the hallmark of the Thatcher approach were conspicuously absent during the first six weeks of the miners' strike. The miners' strike shows that even today the establishment cannot always have its way. In the end, the Government has to rely on its opponents' weakness to maintain its reputation for boldness and strength.

Thatcher's benefactor

The crisis of the establishment is more than matched by the paralysis of the official labour movement. Labour's defeat in 1983 marks a turning point; not because of Labour's continued electoral decline, but because of the manifest irrelevance of its policies to the eighties. The Labourist tradition which has weathered so many storms has finally come unstuck. It is still the dominant influence in the working class. But it cannot count on maintaining that monopoly indefinitely. Most importantly Labour's present programme lacks plausibility among workers. Therefore, the scope for its electoral success is limited. Until now the main beneficiaries have been the Conservatives. In the long run it may well be the working class that reaps the benefits.

For the first time since the revolutionary upsurge of 1918-21 the Labour Party faces a crisis of credibility. Even its most loyal supporters tolerate it as a matter of routine or because it is not as bad as the Tories. Others are more cynical



Leading the way: the RCP fights for unity under the banner of revolution

and quite prepared to look elsewhere for practical solutions. Every important event in the class struggle becomes another occasion for demonstrating Labour's irrelevance. The miners' strike is only the latest episode. The paralysis of the official labour movement during the strike is a source of acute embarrassment for the Labour Party's friends. It provides yet another crucial experience that can be used to expose Labour's pretensions to be the leadership of the working class.

The British political scene is far from depressing. The capitalist class is weak and relies on the political crisis of the working class to maintain its system. At the same time the forces which are responsible for this political paralysis — the Labour Party and the TUC — are themselves in a mess. It is clear that this form of cooperation between Thatcher and her labour movement benefactors cannot go on indefinitely. This is the time for new solutions — a time when campaigning for revolution becomes a realistic possibility.

Volatility

The breakdown of the old political arrangements is the penalty that the establishment has to pay for its failure to resolve the crisis. While everything remains intact for the moment, class relations have become more volatile than at any time since the war. This volatility is reflected in opinion polls which show sudden rises and falls in the popularity of certain parties. It is shown in the high incidence of last-ditch strikes which are doomed because they come too late, but which represent a desperate attempt to hit out. It is shown in the miners' strike which, despite the media's expectations, spread from area to area and evoked a sense of solidarity within sections of the working class.

As yet, this volatility lacks direction and carries no distinct political con-

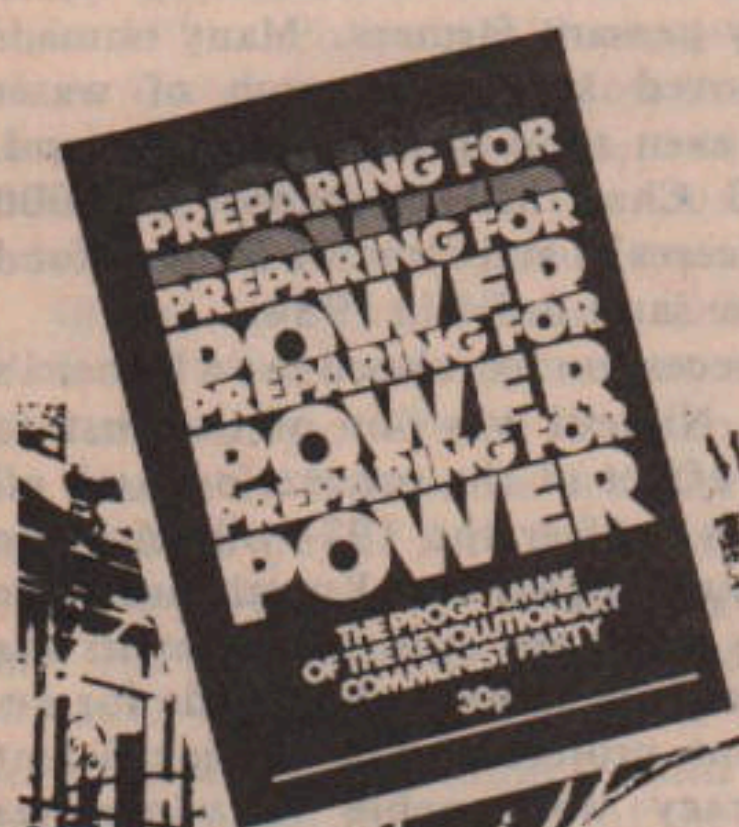
viction. It is symptomatic of an underlying unease and a loss of confidence in many of the old solutions and institutions. This volatility can go in any direction. It can set Yorkshire miners against colleagues from Nottinghamshire. It can turn the fury of pickets against journalists, or provoke street violence against immigrants. On its own this volatility will simply dissipate itself over a period of time.

Yet this volatility can provide the creative energy necessary to build a revolutionary movement. It leaves workers open to new possibilities and makes people more critical of the old ways. Today, many feel that they are unable to do anything about their situation. The apparent lack of any way out of a spiral of unemployment, cuts and coercion means that people are ready to listen to alternatives that they would once have rejected out of hand. Hence our confidence in the prospects for building a revolutionary movement today.

For the British left, 'these are hard times' and nothing can go right. When there is a low level of trade union militancy, they moan about 'the downturn'. When there is a miners' strike, they throw up their hands at the 'invincibility' of the Government, the police and the courts. Alone in Britain today, the Revolutionary Communist Party is optimistic about campaigning for revolution and serious about building a party to lead the working class to state power. That's why both our programme and our annual conference are called *Preparing for Power*. This year's *Preparing for Power* conference runs from 13-20 July (see back page for details). Come and join us for a week of debate about the way forward for the working class. The lesson of every struggle today is that it is never too soon to take the next step down the road towards the British revolution.

Helen Swift

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Africa's forgotten wars

In *Western Sahara* guerrillas of the Polisario Front fight a Moroccan army of occupation. In *Chad* troops loyal to French-backed President Hissene Habre confront Libyan-backed rebel Goukouni Oueddi. Further east in *Sudan* civil war between the Muslim north and the Christian and animist south simmers. In *Ethiopia* the military junta contends with secessionist forces in Eritrea and Tigre as well as Somali nationalists in the Ogaden desert.

In Africa today, the many varied guerrilla organisations and the regimes they struggle against range from Muslim fundamentalists to 'Marxist-Leninists'. What Africa's forgotten wars have in common is their underlying cause — more than a century of imperialist domination of the continent.

Wild frontiers

Africa's states were all artificial creations of imperialist oppression. Their borders cut across traditional ethnic and religious boundaries. These borders were fixed by the colonial powers in the scramble for Africa at the end of the nineteenth century.

At the conference of Berlin in 1884 the European powers negotiated the division of Africa. Incidents like the clash between French and British army units at Fashoda in the Sudan in 1898 demonstrated that what they could not agree on amicably they were prepared to fight over. The African people themselves played no role in the division of their continent — except as cannon fodder in colonial armies.

The imperialists' interest in Africa was principally strategic rather than economic. The imperialists did practically nothing to develop the economies of their African possessions. Between 1880 and 1936 investment in sub-Saharan Africa was negligible. Agriculture simply stagnated. According to a 1954 United Nations report more than 70 per cent of agricultural land was devoted to subsistence farming. Industrial development was minute. As late as 1960 South Africa was the only country in Africa where even 10 per cent of the population worked in industry. When 'decolonisation' arrived after the Second World War, Africans inherited an economically backward continent divided into states shaped to suit the colonial powers.

● *Western Sahara* suffered more than most from being annexed by Spain, a weak colonial power, in 1884. Spain's only interest in claiming control over the territory was to protect its fishing rights in the waters around the Canary Islands. The borders France and Spain imposed on the colony in the thirties were meaningless to the local population. According to Spain's 1974 census less than a million of the territory's 1.5m people live permanently within its boundaries. The rest carry on their traditional practice of herding and trading in Algeria and Mauritania. Under Spain little economic development

took place. As late as 1952 there were only 200 civilian workers in the entire territory. The Fosbucraa mining company only began production in 1974, almost 30 years after the discovery of one of the world's richest sources of phosphates. When Spain left the colony in 1976 it encouraged Morocco and Mauritania to invade and redivide the territory. The people's response to this new foreign imposition was to fight.

● *Chad* was formed in the sixties when France dismantled its West African Empire. Under the colonial administration Chad had been a single department so its 4.5m people — split into 11 major ethnic groups and 200 smaller ones — were expected to become a nation. Chad is also divided between the south, where Africans work French-owned cotton plantations, and the north where Muslim Berber herders live a nomadic life with their flocks. Almost 80 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings comes from the export of cotton from the southern plantations.

● Until 1956 *Sudan* was ruled by Britain in condominium with Egypt. The granting of independence prompted civil war between the mainly Muslim north and the African and Christian or pagan south. The south had been incorporated into British Sudan to protect Britain's control over access to the Indian Ocean. More than 17m of Sudan's 22m people are northerners, who control the national economy and political life. More than 14m of Sudan's people work in the agricultural sector and agricultural exports account for 90 per cent of the country's foreign exchange earnings. Economic development in the south was almost non-existent under the British. The majority of the southern population live in small villages, tending their herds as they have done for centuries.

● *Ethiopia* was never formally governed by foreign powers but its economy and its political development were directed from London and Rome as surely as if it had been. The British encouraged the Italians to colonise Eritrea to prevent French occupation in the 1880s and 1890s. At the same time Britain supported the Amhara Prince Menelik with money and weapons. Britain wanted Ethiopia as a buffer between its own possessions in Sudan, and Italian and French territories. The local economy was destroyed by the inflow of goods from Europe.



French paratroopers arrive in Chad: France's largest operation in Africa since the Algerian war

Eritrean industry fared better. A number of factories were established in the Italian colony and by the beginning of the Second World War a substantial working class existed in Eritrea. In 1962, under the auspices of the United Nations Menelik's successor Haile Selassie annexed Eritrea. Eritrea's four million people were forcibly incorporated into the Ethiopian empire which included the Amharas, Tigreans and Somalis, as well as almost 12m Oromo peasants in the south. The USA insisted on the annexation as it wanted to use Ethiopia's northern highlands as a base for its early warning radar and radio stations, to observe the Middle East.

Under imperialist domination the Ethiopian economy has stagnated. The country still depends for more than 60 per cent of its income on the sale of coffee from the Ethiopian hillsides. Although more than 80 per cent of its population depends on farming for its survival less than six per cent of the available land is under permanent crops.

Starvation

The world recession has devastated the backward economies of Africa. Between 70 and 90 per cent of Africans depend on agriculture for their survival. Most work a few acres of land and produce just enough to feed their families. The economies of African states are dependent on the export of primarily agricultural products to earn foreign exchange necessary to pay for vital imports — especially of food. The collapse of world prices for agricultural commodities has forced African governments to trim imports. The removal of food subsidies and the imposition of price rises on basic items of food such as bread and rice has provoked riots and fuelled secessionist tendencies within African states from Tunisia to Zaire.

The recession has brought to the fore weaknesses inherent in the economies of African states. Ever since colonial intervention turned common land into private property, African agriculture has suffered as its surplus produce is invested in more profitable industries and not ploughed back into the land. Even during the sixties when food production rose by two per cent a year, it failed to keep pace with population growth of 2.5 per cent. In the seventies this divergence was even greater. While food output stagnated at 1.5 per cent annual growth, population grew at 2.7 per cent. Holdings were subdivided into smaller and smaller plots insufficient to support those who worked them, and the soil was rapidly exhausted. African yields of cereals slumped. An African hectare produced less than 1000 kilograms of maize in 1979; the world average was more than three times as high.

Under imperialist domination traditional agricultural practices and traditions disappeared, fallow periods were abandoned and methods of soil improvement were lost. The result is poverty and mass starvation: almost two thirds of the countries officially recognised as poor by the United Nations are African.

● *Western Sahara* barely has an economy. Outside areas under Moroccan occupation traditional nomadic and pastoral ways of life have been interrupted by the war. Behind Moroccan lines production of phosphates has begun again but not on a scale sufficient to employ workers drawn into towns like Smara. Morocco itself has serious economic problems. The war costs around \$1m a day and the world price of phosphates, from which Morocco earns almost 40 per cent of its foreign exchange, has fallen by 30 per cent in the last two years. Morocco has amassed a \$12 billion foreign debt. When King Hassan ordered the removal of subsidies on bread and other basic foodstuffs in January Morocco's urban poor rioted and forced him to back down.

● In *Chad* the decline in the world price for cotton has wreaked havoc on the country. Lower rainfall over the last five years has caused the drying up of wells in the northern sector. Soil exhaustion in the south has allowed the desert to advance into areas traditionally cultivated by peasant farmers. Many nomads have moved south in search of water putting even more pressure on the land. In 1983 Chad had to import 260 000 tons of cereals, and expects to need food aid of the same order in 1984.

● The recession has closed in on Nimeiri's *Sudan*. Nimeiri was one of the first to feel the effect of the squeeze on Arab oil producers. After the 1974 oil price rise when Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had huge amounts of money to invest, Nimeiri was able to attract considerable funds for development projects. But the inefficient bureaucracy was unable to administer planned draining and irrigation projects. Last July the Government admitted that of the \$220m allocated to the south in the 1977-83 economic plan only \$45m had been spent. The decline in the price of cotton, the main export, has caused a fall in production from 1.2m bales in 1976 to 0.6m in 1982 and a loss in foreign exchange earnings.

Sudan's foreign debt is now \$7.8billion and the country has no way of paying. Sudan defaulted on its interest payments in 1982 and an IMF team provided a plan for austerity. Southern projects are now vital for Sudan's recovery, particularly the production of oil at Bentiu discovered in 1979. But in February the main concessionary, Chevron, announced the suspension of its operations in southern Sudan after guerrillas kidnapped expatriate

workers in Rub Kona. Other French and Japanese companies have also backed out of commitments in Sudan.

● *Ethiopia's* economy is in ruins. Agriculture makes up more than 70 per cent of Ethiopian exports. Coffee alone accounts for more than 60 per cent. Cyclical fluctuations in the price of coffee on the world market mean that Ethiopia's income varies wildly from year to year making planning impossible. Ethiopia's credit rating with international financial institutions is still high. The military government has sought to take advantage of this to start development projects with foreign investment. Western businessmen are to be attracted by promises of tax holidays and exemption from import duties. In particular the Government hopes to attract agro-industries carrying out the first stages of processing Ethiopian exports.

The Government has begun to impose high duties on imported goods. On top of a local inflation rate of 35 to 50 per cent such measures can only increase the immiseration of the Ethiopian masses. In the northern provinces prolonged drought has precipitated an almost complete collapse of the region's subsistence farming. Millions of people have been forced to leave their land to seek food from international relief agencies.

Repression and resistance

To contain the conflicts sparked by the recession in Africa local rulers have had to use more and more savage repression. They have been backed to the hilt by their imperialist masters. But the African masses have fought back. The multitude of different organisations fighting within each state reflect local experiences, but they all represent the native population's response to the exploitation and oppression forced on them by imperialism.

● Almost 100 000 Moroccan soldiers occupy the northern part of *Western Sahara*. Morocco has built a 10 foot high wall of sand around the northern third of the territory where the main phosphate deposits are. This wall, armed with barbed wire, US-supplied electronic sensors and automatic artillery emplacements, has failed to protect the Moroccan controlled sector from Polisario guerrilla raids. Morocco is reduced to making periodic sorties into guerrilla-held areas of the territory. In January, it took 25 000 Moroccan troops several days of bitter fighting to capture Amgala from a small Polisario force.

Polisario has won considerable support among the territory's settled population and managed to recruit among the well trained fighters of the nomadic peoples. This combination has allowed it to mount spectacular guerrilla attacks and to carry out more conventional military actions. Polisario defeated Morocco's ally Mauritania in 1978. Polisario's ideology owes much to the career of its leaders in exile in important Muslim centres, and the freewheeling lifestyle of the nomadic population. Although fighting a national war against another Muslim country, Polisario describes its struggle as pan-Arab.

● The instability of *Chad's* social composition makes it impossible for any one group to hold power for very long. The two current contenders fought together against the post-colonial military regime of Colonel Felix Malloum. Since 1979 Hissene Habre and Goukouni Oueddi have chased each other in and out of the capital Ndjamea. Whichever happens to be in power has had to use the same brutal methods to keep the masses under control. In the south the Sara people who work the cotton plantations have been subject to periodic raids and even aerial bombings.

● Despite its formal democratic structures *Sudan* is dominated by Jaafar Nimeiri who came to power in 1969 through a military coup. Nimeiri has remained in power for 14 years by playing off one section of Sudan's population against another. But in the instability created by today's recession, his attempts to forge alliances with local politicians in the south and with Muslim oppositionists in the north have become more and more erratic and less successful. In the north Islamic fundamentalists, strong among

the large student and urban population, have organised mass demonstrations against the Government. Even Nimeiri's own Ansari Muslim sect has taken up active opposition to the Government. Nimeiri has responded by arresting the leaders of the sect. Nimeiri's declaration of Islamic law last June was designed to head off opposition to the wave of arrests of prominent Ansari's. In the south, Nimeiri has resorted to more overt methods of repression. He began by exploiting divisions between Equatorial and Nilotic peoples in the region, offering provincial self-government to the three provinces which make up the southern region. His schemes have only succeeded in robbing moderate local politicians of their platform in the now defunct regional assembly. Without this layer the people have looked to more militant organisations for leadership. Anyanya II ('snake poison') called after the south's army in Sudan's first civil war, now has at least 5000 well trained and armed guerrillas. It demands total independence for the southern region. At least four other guerrilla organisations — espousing different ideologies and based on different sections of the population — are competing for the leadership of the southern people.

● *Ethiopia's* ruling military junta, the Derg, shot its way into power in 1974 when the famine in the north and the increasing success of the Eritrean struggle combined to topple the regime of Haile Selassie. The Derg's first task was to destroy the popular movement unleashed by the fall of Haile Selassie. In September 1975 the army declared martial law. Militarised labour units were created. The army instigated the 'red terror', declaring war on all workers' and peasants' organisations which refused to co-operate with military rule. Tens of thousands of students, workers and peasants were slaughtered. The new regime then drafted altogether 200 000 peasants into a national 'army' to crush the secessionists in Eritrea.

The Derg's military repression, backed by more than 10 000 Cuban soldiers and Soviet military equipment has provoked more intense resistance. A number of nationalist organisations operate in Eritrea. The most important is the Eritrean People's Liberation Front which controls up to 85 per cent of the territory. Its claims to be a Marxist-Leninist organisation are only to satisfy Chinese backers. In fact it is a nationalist organisation

which wants to develop the Eritrean economy independently.

The Tigre People's Liberation Front controls about 80 per cent of the province of Tigre. It demands self-determination for Tigre which, it argues, does not necessarily mean independence. In the Ogaden desert the simmering guerrilla war waged for 20 years by the Western Somali Liberation Front has already sparked conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977. It demands integration of the region with Somalia. Its main platform is religious, since the region's Muslims have suffered decades of discrimination at the hands of the predominantly Christian Amhara ruling class.

Arc of crisis

The imperialist powers main concern over the instability in Africa is the effect that African disturbances have on other volatile areas. The depth of the crisis affecting the continent means that imperialist powers can no longer stand at arms length and expect their local stooges to keep order. Increasingly, Western powers are called on to intervene in Africa themselves. The problem is that every time they go in they find it more difficult to get out. And in the crisis of the eighties, every local conflict between African factions threatens to blow up into an international crisis among the Western powers themselves.

● While *Western Sahara's* phosphate deposits may be Morocco's main reason for being there, its American and French backers are more concerned with the consequences of defeat for a Moroccan regime that has been their loyal ally in the region for decades. President Carter was alarmed to read a 1979 CIA report predicting Moroccan defeat and immediately approved a bankroll to keep up the Moroccan war effort. It is a policy that Reagan has carried on. Morocco's military credit rating is currently more than \$100m. Morocco has used this money to buy American Northrop F5 jets, helicopter gunships and a range of the most sophisticated modern weaponry. France too has supplied a good deal of arms. But neither the USA nor France is prepared to publicly back Morocco's claim to Western Sahara. Both fear hostility from other African states — almost 30 now support Polisario.

● France sent its troops into *Chad* last year after diplomatic pressure from the USA. France has tried to limit the con-

flict because direct involvement on the side of President Habre threatens to sour French trading relations with Libya. French efforts to reach a diplomatic settlement in Chad have foundered on the complexity of Chad's shifting alliances. French foreign minister Claude Cheysson managed to get both sides to agree to a meeting in Addis Ababa in January. The meeting lasted less than an hour. By the end of the month, French Mirage jets were bombing rebel positions in northern Chad. The downing of a French jet at the end of January brought a rush of reinforcements for the 3000 strong French force in Chad.

● In *Sudan* none of the imperialist powers are directly involved yet. But Nimeiri receives millions of dollars in military aid from America to deal with insurrection. In return, Nimeiri has agreed plans for the USA's Rapid Deployment Force to use Sudan as a base from which to intervene in the Middle East. The 'rebel' bombing of Omdurman by an unidentified plane in March, widely believed to have been arranged by Nimeiri himself, brought the arrival of an advance guard of American backed Egyptian army officers. Days later Washington sent two Awac early warning surveillance aircraft to the Egyptian border to bolster Sudan's defences. The USA is wary of becoming too deeply involved with Nimeiri. There are even suggestions that they have turned a blind eye to military conspiracies against him. Yet the USA cannot allow France or Italy to take advantage of the situation in Sudan. Bickering between the French and Italian governments over the award of a \$300m pipeline construction project to the Italian firm Snamprogetti in November, indicates the conflicts to come over the corpse of Sudan.

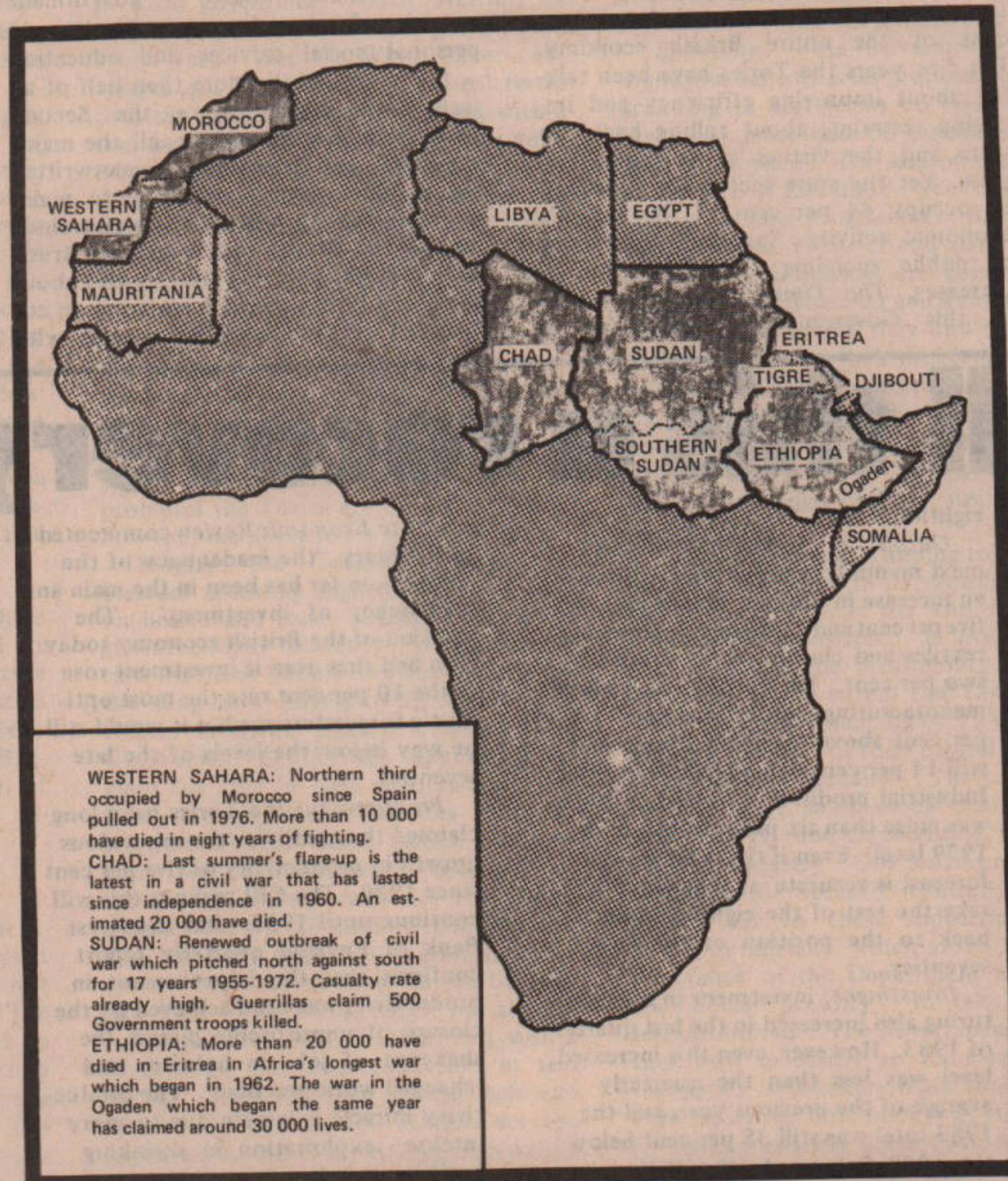
● In *Ethiopia* the imperialists are no longer content to let the Soviet Union hold the Ethiopian state together. The Horn of Africa is one of the most unstable regions in the world, adjacent to the vital oilfields of the Middle East. Until recently the Western powers were grateful to the USSR for sending its tanks and howitzers against the Ethiopian peasantry. Now they are vying with each other to expand their influence in the region. The USA has publicly instructed Siad Barre, Somalia's President, to control the Somali nationalists of the Ogaden. Both the USA and the EEC have lifted bans on famine relief for Ethiopia. The military government has been responsive to these overtures and has ordered Cuban troops to leave the country. As the Cubans leave the competition between the USA and the European powers to fill the gap may ignite an even more serious crisis in the Horn.

Barbarism

The consequences of imperialist domination are clear enough. In Ethiopia alone a million people are on the verge of starvation. In the continent as a whole 125 million people are close to death from starvation. Hundreds of thousands are displaced by war. There are a quarter of a million Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia and a further half a million refugees from Ethiopia in Sudan. Thousands of Chadians have fled across the border into neighbouring states, and the Algerian border is dotted with refugee camps full of Saharawis who have fled from their homes.

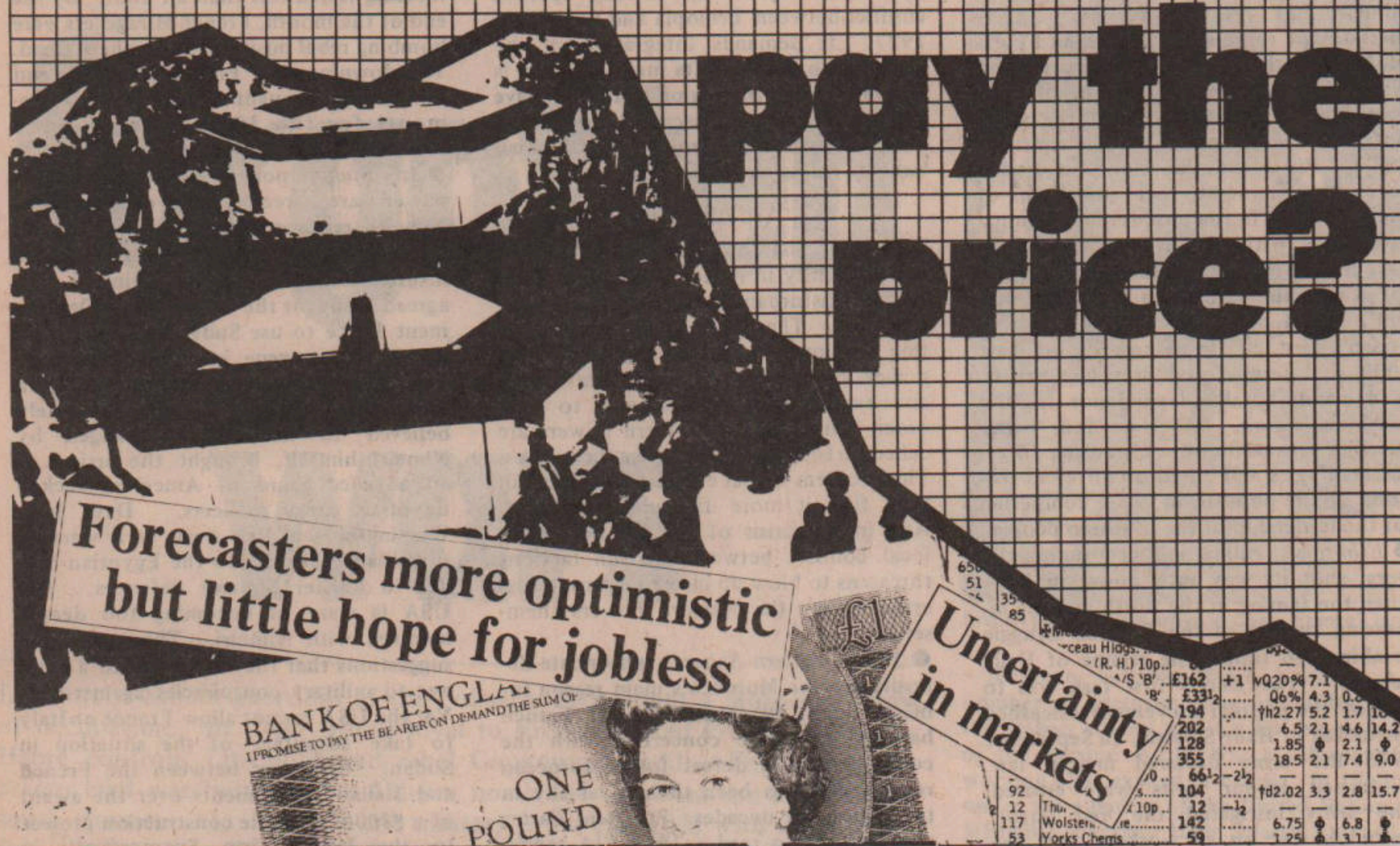
As the struggles between Western backed tyrants and the masses become more intense the region sinks closer to barbarism. Mustard gas and mortar fire are regularly directed against peasant villages in Eritrea and Tigre. The Sudanese army has instigated a scorched-earth policy in parts of the south. Africa's forgotten wars are drenching some of the poorest and most inaccessible parts of the world in blood. As long as imperialism dominates Africa barbarism will continue. The slaughter of thousands of Africans is part of the present world order. It is up to workers in the West to make common cause with the villagers of Eritrea and the nomads of Western Sahara to make sure the masses of Africa are not forgotten beneath the heel of imperialist oppression.

John Johnson



Public spending in crisis

Why should we pay the price?



The Tories and the employers eagerly greet the long-awaited economic revival, but their inability to control public spending reveals the forces pushing their system towards collapse. Phil Murphy and Tony Allen investigate.

'NOW IS THE TIME', directors' spokesman Walter Goldsmith told a businessmen's convention in January, 'to revive the radical zeal of 1979'. He urged the Prime Minister and her Chancellor of the Exchequer that 'to curb public spending is not something to be striven for with little hope of reward: it is the bedrock of the policy upon which the present Government was elected'. Yet it is a policy which Margaret Thatcher and her acolytes have consistently failed to achieve over the past five years.

This year's budget and public spending plans show the problem. The gap between the Government's expenditure and its income, which it has to make up by borrowing money — the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement — was planned at £8.2 billion. It now looks like reaching £10 billion. Last year's PSBR also overshot — by £1.5 billion. This year's excess has occurred despite the package of £500m cuts announced by incoming

chancellor Nigel Lawson last July and an extra £500m income from selling off shares in North Sea oil. Even the Treasury's ingenious fiddling of the statistics could not disguise the fact that state spending was out of control.

Every year since 1979 public spending has risen faster than the rate of inflation. In real terms public expenditure has grown by five per cent since the Tories took office. When Labour's chancellor Denis Healey handed over to Geoffrey Howe the public sector accounted for 40 per cent of the entire British economy. For five years the Tories have been talking about improving efficiency and imposing restraint, about rolling back the state and the virtues of private enterprise. Yet the state sector has expanded to occupy 44 per cent of the nation's economic activity. Surveying the record of public spending — and taxation — increases, *The Times* inquired recently 'is this Government in office or in

power?'

The Government's difficulties in curbing public sector expenditure are an indication of its wider problem of reversing the decline of British capitalism. The massive scale of the state's interference in the economy is a measure of the frailty of a system that boasts of its faith in the individual entrepreneur. A look at three major areas of public spending reveals why the state faces such difficulties in curbing its expenditure. Welfare, law and order and defence, and trade, industry, energy and employment together account for nearly three quarters of the total state budget of around £120 billion.

Welfare and warfare

The 'welfare state' — government provision for social security, health and personal social services and education — takes up slightly more than half of all state expenditure. Since the Second World War governments in all the major capitalist countries have underwritten the welfare services necessary to maintain an efficient, healthy and well-trained workforce. Since the recession struck Britain in the mid seventies, both Labour and Tory governments have tried to cut back on welfare spending — but with

limited success.

Education spending has been cut in cash terms, but in real terms it still shows a slight increase since 1979. A declining birth rate and falling school rolls have provided a pretext for the spending axe in education. But the growing health-care demands of an ageing population have made health service cuts more difficult to justify. Public sympathy and well-organised union and professional lobbies have helped to ensure a real spending increase on health of almost 20 per cent since 1979.

The most uncontrollable element in the welfare budget — and indeed in the whole sphere of public spending — is social security. Since 1979 unemployment has grown by two million, and the numbers of pensioners and those claiming child benefit and family income supplement have all increased. This year social security is expected to cost more than £35 billion — almost 30 per cent of total state expenditure and an increase in real terms of more than a quarter over the past five years.

The second big consumer of government revenues is the state's repressive apparatus. The police, the courts and the armed forces are vital to protect the British establishment from its enemies at home and abroad. At a time of growing social conflict at home and heightening international tensions, the Government has had no alternative but to pay out more and more money to ensure its own physical survival. Strengthening and re-equipping the police for riot control and mass strike-breaking on the scale recently seen in the coalfields has contributed to a one third increase in the law and order budget over the past five years. The equipment of Britain's military forces with the latest and most murderous technology, largely conventional rather than nuclear, has meant a real increase in defence spending by around one quarter since 1979. Between them the forces of state repression account for about 17 per cent of public expenditure.

Lame duck clinic

The third important area of state activity is its direct intervention in the economy. In terms of volume spending these areas consume much less than welfare and defence — less than three per cent of overall public expenditure. However, they reveal the extent to which the state is obliged to interfere directly in the capitalist economy to keep the wheels of the ramshackle profit-making machine turning.

The British state has long propped up vital energy-supply and transport industries that could no longer survive under private ownership. In more recent years these have been joined by industrial lame ducks — steel, shipbuilding, BL, Rolls Royce. The Government has itself attempted to promote new technology enterprises, such as ICL. State sponsorship is necessary since Britain's traditionally resourceful and dynamic entrepreneurs lack the resources or the

Call this a recovery?

Last month the Confederation of British Industry reported that its members are more optimistic than at any time since 1976 about their company prospects. It predicted that manufacturing output will grow by 3.5 per cent this year and four per cent next year. However, the CBI's forecasts are based on nothing more substantial than a survey of the expectations of its members and the inspection of the 'economic indicators from the last quarter of 1983 through rose-tinted spectacles. The employers are loath to admit that any improvement in the British economy must start from the bottom of such a deep trough that unless it is both substantial and sustained it will not even restore the economy to the feeble state it was in before it took the nose dive of 1979.

The real economy shows signs of continuing a sluggish improvement from the rock bottom of the early

eighties.

Output: in the last half of 1983 most manufacturing sectors registered an increase in output. Metals rose by five per cent and chemicals, engineering, textiles and clothing were all up by two per cent. Yet for 1983 as a whole manufacturing output was only 1.5 per cent above the 1981 trough and still 14 per cent behind the 1979 level. Industrial production overall in 1983 was more than six per cent below the 1979 level. Even if the CBI growth forecast is accurate, at that rate it will take the rest of the eighties to get back to the position of the late seventies.

Investment: investment in manufacturing also increased in the last quarter of 1983. However, even this increased level was less than the quarterly average of the previous year, and the 1983 total was still 38 per cent below the 1979 figure. As the *National*

Institute Economic Review commented in February, 'the inadequacy of the recovery so far has been in the main an inadequacy of investment'. The position of the British economy today is so bad that even if investment rose at the 10 per cent rate the most optimistic forecasters predict it would still be way below the levels of the late seventies.

Productivity: the Tories have long claimed the credit for the miraculous growth in productivity of five per cent since 1980. The CBI reckons this will continue until 1985. But the latest Bank of England quarterly report confirms that the improvement in productivity has been achieved by the closure of unprofitable plants, the shakeout of jobs in industry and 'changed work practices'. The productivity miracle is largely due to more intense exploitation in shrinking traditional industries, not to more

efficient exploitation in expanding new investment sectors. Now that there is little traditional industry left and little sign of any substantial growth sectors capable of leading an industrial revival, productivity can be expected to stagnate rather than increase.

Whatever their differing views on the scope of the British economic revival, the politicians and the economists and the businessmen all agree on one thing — recovery or no recovery mass unemployment is here to stay. The CBI expects a steady three million plus on the dole through 1985. The long range forecasters disagree only over the extent to which the number of jobless will swell into the late eighties. The message for the working class is clear — upturn or no upturn this system has got to go.

dynamism to develop technology independently. The Tories swept into office determined to curb state intervention in industry and set the beleaguered businessman free. The results have been uneven.

The Tories have sold off £3 billion worth of shares in state companies and other industrial assets — including ICL, Cable and Wireless and Britoil. They have ruthlessly cut labour costs throughout the nationalised industries. British Airways, post and telecommunications, gas and electricity have been made profitable. But coal, steel, shipbuilding and the railways remain a big drain on the exchequer — between them they lost £1.6 billion last year. The 60 per cent real increase in spending on energy since 1979 is largely accounted for by increased subsidies and investment in the coal industry. The cost of various Government schemes to control the unemployed and to organise the supply of cheap labour to industry has risen as the dole queues have lengthened. Spending on special employment measures has grown by more than 60 per cent since Thatcher took office. Thus while the Tories have managed to cut back on spending in trade and industry, they have had to spend even more on energy and employment. The weakness of private enterprise constantly prompts state intervention in the economy and makes its withdrawal very difficult. The pressures on the newly-appointed industry minister Norman Tebbit have proved so great that his colleagues have begun to ask whether the driest of the Thatcherites was becoming rather wet.

The problem of profit

Economic decline, rising unemployment and social and political instability all call for higher and higher spending of public funds. But the growth of public expenditure itself worsens the underlying economic crisis of British capitalism. State spending is financed by taxation which is largely a deduction from the profits produced by private industry and commerce. Even personal taxation in the end comes out of profits as workers tend to compensate for higher tax by winning wage rises that maintain take-home pay. The burden of taxation is thus transferred back to their employers. When profits are healthy employers are prepared to pay high taxes to finance the public services their system requires. But when profits in the private sector are languishing at record lows as they have done for the past decade, taxation to pay for public services becomes an intolerable burden.

The deficit on the government budget, the PSBR, imposes an additional load on private capital. Like any other debtor, the government has to pay back what it borrows. The state's debt repayments will consume a growing proportion of profits made in the private sector in the future. In the present the large scale of Government borrowing means that there is less loan capital available on the money markets for private capitalists. More competition for loans means a higher price for borrowing money — higher interest rates. Higher interest rates make it even more difficult for businessmen to acquire capital for profitable investment.

In its recently-announced plans for public spending over the next three years the Government has declared its commitment to bring its expenditure under control before the whole system grinds to a halt. But its over-optimistic assessment of the prospects for the British economy and its underestimation of the obstacles to curbing spending indicate little chance of success.

Wishful thinking

The Government has declared its firm intention to hold public spending constant in real terms. Its projections however rest on two very shaky foundations. The first is that the economy will revert to an annual growth rate of between two and three per cent after the zero average of the Thatcher years up to now. The hard figures give less grounds for anticipating such a bright short-term future for



Homes fit for heroes?: workers homes have to go to make way for capitalists' profits

British capitalism than does the wishful thinking of the CBI (see box). The second basis of Government forecasts is that inflation will decline from five per cent this year to 4.5 per cent next year to three per cent in 1986. Few people outside the Treasury take such a rosy view of the likely course of price rises. Most observers expect inflation to rise rather than fall, with serious consequences for the Government's spending programme. Even the all-party Treasury Select Committee has branded the Government's plans as unrealistic. The committee estimates a real increase in spending of 1.5 per cent this year alone.

The *Financial Times*' assessment of the public spending white paper was that 'it demonstrates a notable triumph of hope over experience'. It singled out spending in local government which overruns its target by between five and eight per cent every year. Yet the White Paper envisages a 13 per cent cut in real terms over the next three years, starting with a two per cent cut in cash terms this year. But even if the current rate-capping measures were fully implemented this target could not be reached. The three per cent cash limit on wage rises in the public sector has already been breached by a 4.5 per cent offer to local authority manual workers. The Government looks like having to keep revising its targets upwards, an old habit it keeps promising to break.

If we look at the three major areas of public expenditure we can see the problems the Tories are up against — and how they are likely to try to resolve them.

Welfare: the Government plans to increase spending slightly, in real terms, on health and social security. However, given the likely increase in need for health care for older people and for benefits for the long-term unemployed, spending is certain to fall far short of demand. The Government has already announced its plans for cuts in NHS services and jobs. Last month social services minister Norman Fowler made public ominous plans for 'a fundamental overhaul' of the social security system. The consequences for the 20 million claimants and the 80 000 staff who administer the system can only be more cuts in benefits and jobs. Education, which has already suffered heavy cuts, is threatened with a further 10 per cent reduction in real terms. More teachers on the dole and lower standards in the schools are the inevitable result. The onslaught on public housing is scheduled to continue — a 16

per cent cut in cash spending is planned for next year alone.

Law and order and defence: from 1986, the Government is planning to hold down expenditure increases on the armed forces, while spending on the police is maintained in real terms. The Government has not budgeted for any wars such as the one it recently conducted against Argentina. However, the instability of the world order makes it highly likely that Britain will be engaged in further military activity to preserve its interests overseas. Nor has the Government allowed for the cost of mounting regular police operations of the sort recently displayed in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere. Yet the likelihood of growing class conflict in Britain will force the state to finance the wider deployment of its coercive apparatus. The chances of keeping spending on repression down seem remote indeed.

Economy: the Government's most ambitious scheme is its proposal to reduce spending in real terms on trade and industry by more than 50 per cent over the next three years. The sale of state assets at the rate of £2 billion a year is a central feature of this programme. British Airways, British Telecom and parts of BL, steel and shipbuilding are being pushed to the front of Thatcher and Tebbit's shop-window. But even if they find buyers for all these old losers their problems will not be over. Indeed the state will have lost the enterprises that helped to balance the books while remaining saddled with the chronic loss makers. This is where the real cutting edge of Tory strategy is to be applied.

The Government is aiming to achieve a dramatic reduction in its subsidies — 'external financing' — to the remaining nationalised industries. It intends to do this by raising the profitability of these industries to the extent that they will be 98 per cent self-financing by 1987. Today only 45 per cent of their capital spending is generated internally. The candidates for this short, sharp shock treatment are the railways, and shipbuilding, steel and the coal industry. One leading economic commentator recently cynically characterised aid to these industries as an 'unhappy mistake' which arose 'from the reluctance of the Department of Health and Social Security to take on new responsibilities'. The Government's intention now is clearly to transfer tens of thousands of workers from those industries on to the dole queues in an attempt to make drastically slimmed-down operations profitable. Under careful direction

from the Cabinet, Coal Board boss Ian MacGregor is currently attempting to forge ahead with the process he began at the British Steel Corporation.

Confrontation

Every attempt by the Government to restrain public spending leads towards confrontation with the working class. Even if the economy stabilises to the extent the Government hopes it will, holding expenditure steady will mean cuts in jobs and services. The probability that the recession will deepen makes even wider attacks on welfare services and nationalised industries a more likely prospect. Privatisation is one stage in a process of forcing workers to pay the price for the crisis. This process begins with the closure of factories, mines and hospitals, the shedding of jobs and the restructuring of working practices, with the aim of raising efficiency and restoring profitability. It continues with the sale of shares or putting services in hospitals and town halls out to private tender. And it goes further with the shakeout of more jobs after privatisation — as in the Scott Lithgow shipyard under its new Trafalgar House ownership, or for Cambridgeshire school cleaners under Pall Mall contractors. The deterioration of pay and conditions goes hand in hand with the loss of jobs.

The Government is eager to turn its crisis of public expenditure into a crisis of working class livelihoods and living standards. We cannot afford to let them get away with it. The fightback against public spending cuts must begin with resistance to all attempts to rationalise and restructure public services and nationalised industries. We need to fight all attempts to make public sector enterprises more economic, efficient or viable at the expense of our jobs, working conditions and wages. Opposition to privatisation as a means of pushing through mass redundancies is one aspect of the broader struggle to defend living standards. It is not however the *only* issue on which to fight, as many trade union leaders with vested interests in public ownership seem to believe. Narrowing resistance to the cuts to opposition to privatisation often leads — as in the NHS — to acceptance of sacrifices in jobs and conditions in the hope of keeping the contractors out. But whether under public or private ownership workers need to keep every job and to preserve wages and conditions. 'Public or private — no cuts, no redundancies' should be our slogan.

They have a dream

Raymond Williams, *Towards 2000*, Chatto & Windus 1983, pp273, hbk £9.95
Perry Anderson, *In the tracks of historical materialism*, Verso/NLB 1983, pp112, pbk £4.95

"The guns, let us talk about the guns", *He Who Yawns said*. "We will", *Sitting Bull said*, "but first we must talk of the vision, *Guns without a vision are nothing*". (Martin Cruz Smith, *The Indians won*)

TODAY the gurus and pundits of the left are coming on very strong about the need for a new vision of socialism. Surveying the disarray of the working class throughout the world, they conclude that Sitting Bull was on the right track. Yes, of course, they say, what we need is a vision! These two authors both agree that if we are to progress towards socialism, then we need desperately to change our way of thinking about it. We need to set out in greater detail the forms that a socialist future will assume. Both writers have in the past conducted similar surveys: Raymond Williams in 1961 with *The long revolution* and Perry Anderson in 1976 with *Considerations on Western Marxism*. Now each of them takes his earlier work as the starting point for a fresh appraisal.

Anderson reviews recent writings, emphasising the left's failure to produce any theoretical advance in the area of a politics or a strategy which could lead to the overthrow of the rule of capital. In his earlier work, Anderson predicted that the philosophical, aesthetic and cultural focus which had characterised Western Marxism since the war would give way to a concentration upon the more concrete concerns of historiography and economics. He welcomes a 'renaissance of historical materialism' in these fields, citing the work of Mandel, Braverman, Miliband, Thompson, Hobsbawm and many others. He had also hoped that a revolutionary conjuncture of theory and practice would accrue from the upsurge of working class militancy between 1968 and 1974. Instead he has witnessed a 'crisis in Latin Marxism', generated he claims by the dual disappointment of Maoism and Eurocommunism. Anderson notes that as the challenges mounted by the Communist Parties of France, Italy, Spain and Portugal faded, then so too Sartre, Althusser, Foucault, Lacan and others fell silent, moved on or simply defected.

Retreat to idealism

To develop the kind of strategy that Anderson has in mind it is first necessary to identify the agency of historical change. Neither Anderson nor Williams shows any confidence in the traditional candidate for this role – the working class. Instead they put their faith in the invigorating effect of the utopian, prefigurative politics now fashionable on the left. In other words they opt for a politics whose essential emphasis is on how the future will be rather than on how we will get there. Anderson and Williams subscribe to the ideas of the pre-Marxist utopian socialists, who believed that society could be transformed by the will of enlightened individuals. The Marxist understanding of the transition to communism is based on the materialist analysis of the progressive development of the productive forces under capitalism, and the creation of a class which is capable of overthrowing capitalism and establishing communism. It is strange that Anderson adheres so strongly to the utopian philosophy when he devotes considerable space to criticising one particular form of the idealist method – structuralism.

Anderson's critique of the structuralists is in fact a telling one. They had applied to human society generally the analytical model developed originally by Saussure in relation to language. For Anderson, not only was the application fundamentally inappropriate, but also the model was distorted in the process of its application. Saussure's balance in his conception of the sign ('word') between the signifier and the signified (roughly the 'bare word' and the 'concept' into which each sign can be divided) gave way to a 'gradual megalomania of the signifier'. Extra-linguistic reality, which already had only an arbitrary relation to the sign (via the signified), now receded altogether. In post-structuralism, meaning itself was seen as completely unstable, strung out along and between shifting signifiers. Truth was an illusion.

Another crucial distinction which was abused was that between langue (language) and parole (speech). The basis of this distinction was that the laws or structures of language were the very conditions of possibility of speech. That did not mean, however, that those laws were the cause of any particular speech act, which is how the distinction was wrongly put to work in history and anthropology. The laws were presented 'as if' they caused certain events. Actual causality therefore did not get a look in, as indeed on a logical application of the model it could not – any analysis of

reviews

underlying laws could not be expected to explain particular developments. In this confusion history was seen, as Edward Said observed, as 'legislated accident'. Finally, the emphasis upon structures to the exclusion of all subjects, which was the hallmark of the school, led, ironically, to a total subjectivity as the post-structuralists set about deconstructing the structures themselves. They exposed the implication behind every posited structure – that is, the existence of a subject distinct from it, from which the structure is perceived. Attacking such a notion as metaphysical, they removed any possibility of the objectivity of the structures, or indeed any possibility of defining them at all.

Anderson argues that the structuralists were doomed to failure because they encountered a Marxism whose emphasis was mainly philosophical and which was crippled by the continuing disappointment of the Soviet Union. He fails to appreciate that Marxism which remains academic in nature and divorced from the class struggle will always be prey to idealism. Williams starts out on a different tack. Revising and extending his earlier analysis, he approaches the question of a transition to socialism by examining 'post-industrial society', democracy and representation and a number of other social issues. His method is to look at the world and depict the mess that he sees – lost opportunity, alienation, waste, crisis and war. He then goes on to describe how confused we have become, before urging us to change our ways of thinking and working now so that change will become possible.

Williams claims to share none of the illusions of the British labour movement in the ability of capitalism, effectively managed, to deliver the goods. But his own schemes for how we should proceed simply repeat the gradualism of his 1961 work, *The long revolution*. He calls for fixed term Parliaments, for proportional representation, for a 'relevant second chamber', for 'representative industrial councils' to work in parallel with local councils. Cable and satellite under local control will be used to foster 'real interaction' between people and communities.



Utopian blueprint

Williams and Anderson are at one in their near despair. They insist that we must change our attitudes and develop a blueprint for the future. In doing so, they are both seeking to recover the positive aspects of utopianism which they see as having been eclipsed by the advent of scientific socialism. The blueprint therefore must install the institutional detail missing from Marxism, but must compensate for what they see as that tradition's moral insufficiency. Both writers are convinced that the crucial resources for such a rehabilitation can be found in the women's, peace and ecology movements. The virtue of these movements is that they address questions about nature which are bigger than those dreamt of in the traditional philosophy of historical materialism. More than that, they are capable of articulating such vast concerns and advancing practical short-term objectives. These movements can

provide not only a credible alternative vision, but also a way of mobilising towards it, precisely because their practice seeks to embody the values that their hoped-for future will contain. Neither Williams nor Anderson provide any examples to back up their argument that the feminist, peace and ecology movements have provided a practical lead or a superior ethical dimension to the anti-capitalist struggle. Confronted with the paucity of examples, Williams is reduced to righteous admonitions, quoting the phrase 'actual people' at those who prefer the more scientific 'classes'.

Williams and Anderson arrive at a lame conclusion to the grand search for a strategy aimed at wresting power from the capitalist class. It is not as if either writer underestimates the enormity of the task. On the contrary, they are almost mesmerised by the might of the state. Williams, however, evades the question of class power almost completely. He blithely asserts here and there that before his proposals are implemented there is first the matter of 'breaking the arbitrary power of capital'. On how this will be achieved there is next to nothing. He is suspicious of the 'command structures' of the parties in the West, and of the economies of the East. When push comes to shove, however, he believes it is the 'existing political parties' and 'institutions' towards which all the libertarian currents should direct their energies. Anderson is more conscious of the shortcomings of such an approach. He includes a token acknowledgement that it is the workers, by virtue of their 'class capacity' who are the vital agents of change. But the real thrust of his book is in another direction. Anderson is not concerned to stress the importance of building an independent party expressing this 'class capacity' and giving effect to it. Instead, he favours the coming together of a 'various and plural bloc' of interests.

A question of leadership

Anderson notes in passing that the failure of the Eurocommunists to develop a successful strategy was connected with the way in which they retraced the revisionist path of the Second International. If he had developed this point he could have shown that the central feature of this path is a belief in the ability of the state to act in the interests of the working class. But in his survey of dozens of books from the mid-seventies onwards, Anderson does not even mention Santiago Carillo's *Eurocommunism and the state* (1977), which was a major statement of this revisionism. A discussion of this sort would have shown that much of the labour movement and most elements of the women's, peace and ecology movements display exactly the same sort of faith in the capitalist state. Just as importantly, such a discussion would have emphasised the need for an organisation capable of expressing the independent interests of the working class and capable of leading workers to the seizure of power. In 1981, in his *Arguments within English Marxism*, Anderson did consider these issues more directly. Then he referred to the 'cogency and realism of the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky'. In his new book, Anderson dismisses that tradition in a few lines for being fixated with the October Revolution and for having failed in Portugal in 1974. Anderson and Williams have no answers to the problems confronting the working class in the current crisis. They can only dream of a conflict-free future while the working class is up against it at present. But if there is a crisis of confidence, it is not really in the possibility of a better world: it is rather in our ability to get to it. It is the latter problem which both these books evade.

Pat Ford

A special relationship

Michael Farrell, *Arming the Protestants*, Pluto Press 1983, pp374, pbk £7.95

Arming the Protestants is a well researched and carefully documented account of the formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary (the Specials) and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) between 1920 and 1927. In this period the struggle for Irish independence assumed new dimensions and posed a major threat to British rule. The Specials played a major role in helping the British state defeat that threat. Michael Farrell's book gives us a valuable insight into how they succeeded.

The RUC and the Specials were formed

from the remnants of the Loyalist paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force as a Protestant security force to replace the mainly Catholic Royal Irish Constabulary in the North. The recent murders of Catholics in Armagh linking the Ulster Defence Regiment – which replaced the Specials in 1970 – to the paramilitary Protestant Action Force show that relations between the security forces and Loyalist death squads are still as close as ever.

Farrell's command over the minutiae of obscure government reports, parliamentary debates and long forgotten Cabinet minutes is impressive. Nonetheless, the main political thrust of his book is flawed. His argument is that an intransigent Protestant community in the north east of Ireland exercises an effective veto over any attempt by Britain to meet the Irish people's aspirations for freedom. Farrell elevates the Loyalist community to the position of an independent social dynamic in the struggle between Britain and Ireland. But the Loyalist establishment has never been anything other than the agent of imperialist interests in the Six Counties. By presenting Loyalism as an autonomous force, holding sway over Britain, Farrell inevitably ends up casting British imperialism in the role of a frustrated reformer, thwarted by extremists.



Farrell presents the plans to partition Ireland in 1919 as the initiative of the Loyalist leaders who 'were bending their energies towards securing Partition'. The Coalition government at Westminster, which devised the British strategy to partition Ireland, is relegated to the sidelines. Farrell scarcely mentions the passage of Britain's Better Government of Ireland Act in March 1920, yet this was the Act which established the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. Farrell's portrayal of the Unionist establishment as the prime protagonists in the plan to partition the country is surprising since one of the sources which he quotes extensively – Thomas Jones' *Whitehall Diary* – amply demonstrates the central role of the British ruling class.

Jones was the Cabinet secretary and an intimate friend of the British Prime Minister Lloyd George. His diary documents the debates that accompanied the formulation of Britain's strategy towards Ireland from the First World War to 1925. Jones' diary clearly shows that Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Churchill, Austin Chamberlain and Lord Birkenhead had no compunction about subordinating the demands of the Loyalist community to the overall interests of British imperialism. In September 1921 Lloyd George spelt out that he would tolerate no opposition from Ulster Loyalists to the Treaty settlement with the Free State:

'Men will die for Throne and Empire. I do not know who will die for Tyrone and Fermanagh. The feeling here for Ulster is not so strong as in 1913/14. Lbs feel a bit annoyed about Ulster, think them unreasonable, narrow.'

Tory leader Austin Chamberlain later reinforced Jones' account bears witness to the unity of the ruling class on this issue. Tory Leader Austen Chamberlain announced that he was 'not precluded from putting the greatest moral pressure on Ulster if the Treaty was satisfactory and vital to the Empire'.

Farrell is oblivious to the true relationship between the British state and its Loyalist allies. He concludes that the Loyalists have sustained an overriding influence on British strategy in Ireland up to today. Referring to the 1974 Ulster Workers' Council strike, which toppled Tory minister William Whitelaw's power-sharing Executive, Farrell argues that this was another assertion of Loyalist intransigence:

'Faced with ultimate Unionist refusal to dilute the exclusively Protestant character of

the state, the British government abandoned all serious attempts at reform and concentrated on crushing the IRA.'

In reality British Army participation in the strike confirmed that its objective was not antithetical to British establishment interests.

Farrell again depicts Loyalism as an autonomous force when he presents the formation of the Specials in 1920 as the initiative of the Loyalist establishment. They 'would be thoroughly committed to establishing the proposed Northern state, regardless of the whims of the government at Westminster'. Yet, as Thomas Jones demonstrates, the British ruling class needed no encouragement from the Loyalists where its own interests were at stake. Indeed, without British arms and funding, the Loyalists would never have been able to reactivate the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1920. By November 1920, the illegal armed UVF had become the legal armed USC.

Britain's sole purpose in arming and funding the Specials was to defeat the republican movement. Hence, when the Border settlement was finally resolved in 1925 and the republicans had been crushed, the British rapidly placed the force on a reserve footing despite Loyalist protestations. High levels of Protestant unemployment and the resistance of the Ulster establishment did not stop the British from dispensing with the Specials. From then on, they were mobilised only during periods of instability: in 1932 when the first nationalist Fianna Fail government was elected in the South, in 1956 during the IRA Border Campaign, and finally in 1968-9 during the civil rights campaign.

Farrell's confusion over Loyalism is best illustrated when he argues that the Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, which established the Irish Free State in the South, presented a problem for the Northern state:

'The antagonism or contradiction between the British government's two main objectives - fostering a "responsible" government in the South and sustaining the Northern Government - was becoming sharper.'

In reality there was nothing inconsistent about these two planks of British policy. Partition and the creation of the Irish Free State, by dividing the republican movement and guaranteeing British rule, was the only logical step for the British ruling class. Farrell misses the major contradiction that did arise out of the establishment of the Northern Ireland state. While Partition temporarily resolved the Irish Question for Britain, it also brought the national liberation struggle within the boundaries of the British state. Lloyd George remarked during the Treaty negotiations that 'we are only behind them (the Loyalists) to this extent that we cannot allow civil war to take place at our doors which would embroil our own people'. Today the Irish people are over the threshold and undermining the foundations of the British state. The British ruling class backs the Loyalists to the hilt, not because it is constrained by the 'Loyalist veto' as Farrell implies but because its very survival depends on winning the Irish War.

Andy Clarkson

The good time boys

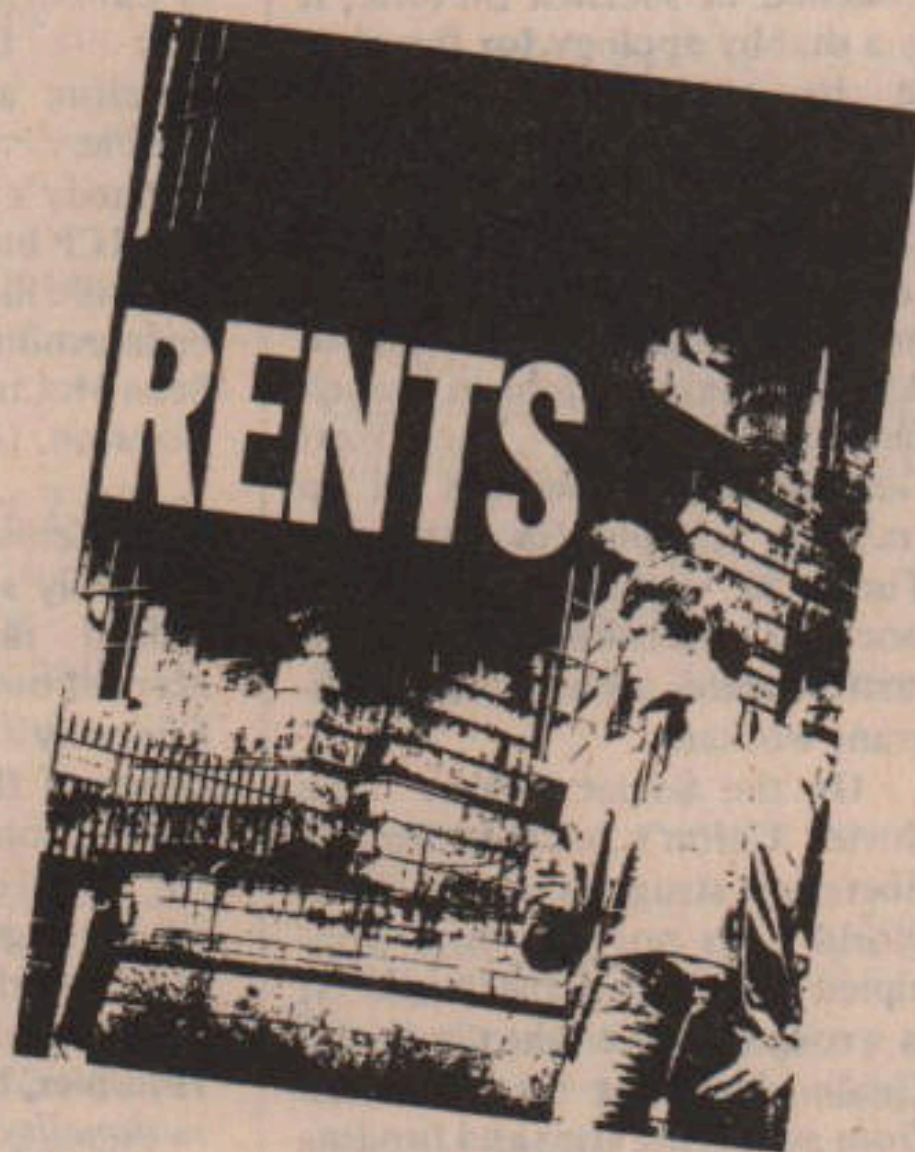
Michael Wilcox, *Rents*, Methuen 1983, pp47, pbk £1.95
Rents, Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

Rents was Michael Wilcox's first major success as a dramatist. Since it was first performed at the Traverse Theatre Club in Edinburgh in 1979, Wilcox has gone on to receive acclaim as a theatre and television playwright. Wilcox is gay, and *Rents* is about male prostitution in Edinburgh. *The Guardian* theatre critic described the play's first run at the Lyric as 'an important occasion'. *The Sunday Telegraph*, which still renders gay as 'gay', declared that *Rents* had 'a lot to say not merely about homosexuality, but about humanity in general'. The gay press has scrambled to find hyperbole gross enough to express their admiration for Wilcox's effort. In fact, Wilcox's play, which has just finished its run at the Lyric, has nothing to say about 'humanity in general' and precious little to say about homosexuality in particular.

Male prostitution is different. Like female prostitutes rent boys are reviled for trading in their own bodies, they run enormous risks of violence from clients and police, and like female prostitutes they do not choose their 'profession'. They are forced into it by want. Dennis Nilsen's murders of young gay men discovered last year in North London show the risks run by rent boys in London and other large cities. You have only to listen to the variety of regional accents among the boys in Piccadilly Circus or other gathering places in London to understand that they are there because they discovered that the streets of London were not, after all, paved with gold.

The boys who tout in such places are pursuing the only youth opportunities capitalism has to offer them. *Rents* touches on these issues; it would be difficult for anyone to write about male prostitution without mentioning them. Yet Wilcox studiously avoids what sets male prostitution apart from female prostitution.

The most striking thing about the rent boy is that in general he is tolerated on the gay scene. Of course at the first sign of trouble from the police he is ostracised, but day to day he is part of the homosexual subculture. The integration of prostitution into the gay subculture is a product of the oppression of homosexuals. The state does not differentiate between male prostitutes and other homosexual men. Chatting up and seeking trade are both 'soliciting for an immoral purpose'. The Wolfenden committee, whose 1957 report led to the liberalisation of the law in 1967, had as its terms of reference homosexuality and prostitution. Since the state does not distinguish between homosexuals and prostitutes it is hardly surprising that male prostitution has a special niche within the gay scene.



MICHAEL WILCOX
METHUEN'S NEW THEATRESCRIPTS

There are other influences which ensure the continuation of this relationship between the gay scene and male prostitution. The conventional gay scene was carved out in the fifties and sixties by its proprietors and their middle class clientele. Their values, their interests and their morality have left an indelible stamp on the gay scene even though working class gays are now its backbone. In conditions of absolute illegality middle class gay men were anxious to ensure their affairs were discreet. They wanted sex that was circumscribed by a precise cash relationship. For working class homosexuals, prostitution was, and sometimes still is for unemployed young gays, the only way of entering the gay scene. The generalised oppression of homosexuals ensures that however liberal society may appear, these forces continue to sustain male prostitution on the gay scene. The fall of the Queen's bodyguard Commander Trestail after the discovery of his relationship with a male prostitute shows the pressures on ruling class gay men. Poverty on the other hand, still forces young working class gays into prostitution.

Relax, don't think

Rents avoids all this. Indeed it colludes with it. Most critics have commented on Wilcox's ability to make such a desperate issue funny. It is bad form for gay artists to produce a novel, play or film about gays which is 'sad'. This is self-oppressive. For most gay artists this means celebrating the commercial gay scene. For others, like Wilcox, it means tarting up beyond recognition some of the most desperate aspects of homosexual oppression. Of course humour well used can open up a subject such as male prostitution and reveal new features. But Wilcox resists the temptation to do this. His humour is an evasion. His message to those concerned about homosexual oppression is 'relax'. Even the account by one of the rent boys of being threatened by a client with a knife is turned into a belly laugh for the audience.

The Lyric Theatre production of *Rents* was competent. All the actors were sufficiently professional not to disturb the smooth surface of the play. But it is the Methuen text which reveals the extent of Wilcox's retreat from the issues he raises. An appendix shows sections of an original draft which were dropped. A speech by Robert, one of the two rent boys in the story, has been cut out. It is the only speech where the issue of male prostitution is set within the context of a vicious capitalist society and a community of oppressed people. By itself it would have redeemed the rest of the play.

Rents isn't really about male prostitution at all. It is about the fantasies and failures of a middle aged polytechnic lecturer, as Wilcox was when he wrote it. While rent boys are

figures of fun and objects of lust, Richard, the lecturer who befriends them is sensitively drawn. It is his obsession with the two younger men that is the real point of the drama. In the end we are forced to the same conclusion as Richard - that rent boys are untrustworthy and best kept at arms length, they may be entertaining but don't get too involved. In short, Wilcox endorses the attitude of the gay scene to 'the rent'. You may get an opportunity to see a production of *Rents*. Go, but read John Rechy's *City of night* before you do.

John Johnson

Rent strike

Joseph Melling, *Rent strikes: people's struggle for housing in West Scotland 1890-1916*, Polygon Books 1983, pp115, pbk £5.95

MOST STUDIES of 'red Clydeside' have focused on the industrial agitation. Joseph Melling's *Rent strikes* examines the housing struggles of 1915. The most serious resistance to the landlords' profiteering was in Glasgow, where 25 000 tenants in Govan, Partick and Shettleston joined the protest. The massive street demonstrations eventually forced Lloyd George's coalition government to introduce the Rent Restrictions Act in November 1915.

Set against the backdrop of the First World War, the housing struggles in Glasgow did not escape the taint of patriotism. The Independent Labour Party, which played a leading role in the rent strike, encouraged chauvinist sentiments. Pat Dollan told working class women, who were at the forefront of the struggle, the landlords were 'unpatriotic... no better than the Huns... worse than spies'. Parkhead shop steward Davy Kirkwood told the authorities that 'if the nation is to have an adequate supply of the munitions of war, the workers must have adequate, healthy housing accommodation'.

The Independent Labour Party and the tenants' leaders constantly sought to curb workers' independent actions and redirected their struggles into demands for intervention by the wartime government. The Labour Party has always presented the 1915 Rent Act as a victory. Class pressure certainly played a part in its introduction, and the law provided some relief for workers. But influential sections of bourgeois opinion also supported the Rent Act. Glasgow shipyard bosses at Harland and Wolff campaigned for it. The right-wing *Glasgow Herald* declared that the Act 'may help us win the war'. After the war rent restriction remained in force. It was a factor behind the decline of the private housing sector from around 80 per cent of all housing provision in 1910, to 13 per cent today.

In the post-war period the Labour government opted for new and cheaper council housing provision. Shettleston Labour MP John Wheatley used the experience of 1915 to promote his 1924 Housing Act among Glasgow workers. The state had been forced to give in to the rent strikers. Now, Wheatley argued, it could be used to provide decent housing for all.



Marching for justice: Glasgow rent strikers

Melling ends by arguing that the 'complexity' of the rent strikes defies a 'simple class analysis'. He is convinced that the 'autonomous associations created by the Labour Party' won real victories for the working class in its struggle for better housing. Tenants of Glasgow's Labour council may reach a different conclusion. Many live in the same tenements that were the scenes of the rent strikes 70 years ago. The council's implementation of the new Housing Benefit system means that the rent strike is no longer an option for large numbers of unemployed council tenants on the broken-down estates of Easterhouse and Castlemilk. Working class people in West Scotland have yet to win the struggle for the housing they need.

Mike Wall

Long goodbye

Dorothy Gardiner and Katherine Sorley Walker eds, *Raymond Chandler speaking*, Allison & Busby 1984, pp271, pbk £2.95

WHEN RAYMOND CHANDLER died 25 years ago, *The Times* commended him as one of a handful of mystery writers who, 'working the common vein of crime fiction, mined the gold of literature'. *Raymond Chandler speaking*, a collection of his letters on himself, his writing, Hollywood, television, crime and cats, reveals something about the mind behind the goldmine.

Chandler's reflections on his Ulster Loyalist heritage, classical English education and chequered career will be new to many devotees for whom Raymond Chandler exists only as the real life Philip Marlowe, the private detective at the centre of Chandler's best work. But Chandler was not Marlowe. As his novels suggest and his letters confirm, Philip Marlowe was the man Raymond Chandler would have liked to be. In the incorruptible Marlowe, fast with a gun and faster with a caustic one-liner, Chandler created a character of such strength that even Hollywood, which the author held in contempt, could not spoil the effect. Films of novels such as *The big sleep* or *The long goodbye* brought Marlowe to life in the form of many different actors. Chandler's letters make clear who best portrayed his own image of 'P Marlowe, an alcoholic vulgarian who never sleeps with his clients while on duty'. Humphrey Bogart was 'the genuine article', Alan Ladd merely 'a small boy's idea of a tough guy'.

The Marlowe novels focus on crime and degradation in America from the Second World War to the end of the fifties. Chandler was obsessed with the ugliness of a world populated



'Bogey' as Marlowe: bound by contradictions

by junkies, drunks, pimps, pushers, mobs and murderers. His vivid portrayal of the grubby reality behind the American dream led some contemporary observers to read radical motives into Chandler's work. They would have liked to cast him in the same mould as communist crime writer Dashiell Hammett. Chandler was dismissive of such ideas. For him, Philip Marlowe was the embodiment of individual morality, not social dissent: 'Marlowe has as much social conscience as a horse. He has a personal conscience, which is an entirely different matter'.

Through Marlowe, Chandler railed against police corruption and those who ran society for 'the touch of a soft buck'. But he was equally scathing about socialists and communists. Chandler said that he could see 'hardly a hair's breadth' between monopoly capitalism and communism - both showed 'contempt' for the individual 'as a person'. In his novels, Philip Marlowe wants to see honest legislators and policemen protecting honest citizens, and clamping down on the gangsters and pocket-lining politicians who run corrupt administrative machines. Marlowe 'always marks high on insubordination'. But his protest is that of the petit-bourgeois individual, who harks back to an imagined golden age of decency and equality and objects to the excesses of capitalism in decline.

Raymond Chandler remains a giant among crime writers, the creator of the definitive private detective. The key to his success lies not in the technical detail of plot, which he made up as he went along. Chandler's gift was his ability to develop an idiosyncratic style through the 'American-English' patois which fascinated him, the quick-fire conversations between Marlowe, the brutal hoods, the bullying police, and the beautiful women who always end up as the guilty party. In Chandler's words, 'the really good mystery is the one you would read if you knew somebody had torn out the last chapter'. That quality sets Chandler apart from his imitators who pass for mystery writers today, whose books you would pick up only if you knew somebody had torn out all the chapters.

Moose Malloy

Letters



Question time

I have read the last four issues of *the next step* since buying it at a big demo here. I find your analysis of events, both national and international, really superb. I now understand what is going on in various places in the world, whereas before I was just confused by the reporting of events in the mass media. However, I will need a lot more convincing on some of your views. I would be glad if you would publish your answer to my questions and criticisms.

On Northern Ireland: I cannot accept that the people who plant bombs and kill non-combatants, innocent civilians, in the UK or in Northern Ireland are somehow waging a legitimate war of liberation. No way can the British working class be convinced that indiscriminate killings of civilians should be condoned, especially when they themselves are threatened. Also you seem to ignore the rights of the Protestants in the North – as though it was a straight fight between Britain and occupied Northern Ireland. Okay, so the Protestants have been the tool of imperialism I agree, but their fear of how they would be treated in a united Ireland is well founded. Of course a socialist Ireland would guarantee their personal safety and equality. But my view of the IRA is that it is a mixture of nationalists and socialists, but with some Irish-type fascists and psychopaths also. Every liberation struggle has this mixture, which means that there is no guarantee that real international-type socialism will come to power in Ireland after the British have left.

On immigration: you seem to be putting the view that every type of barrier to immigration be removed. This suggestion is ridiculous as the welfare state would collapse under the burden and fascism would flourish as workers fought for the

few existing jobs. We should be saying that all immigrants who are here must be equal citizens and only their families can be brought in. But most of all we must argue that only socialism organised internationally can ever deal with the desperate need that the people of the poor countries have in trying to get into the rich countries to find work and a better life. Only socialism could have the rich countries helping the poor to build up their economies, instead of exploiting them for profit. Only socialism would mean that people would have the opportunity to build a decent life in their own country and not have to leave their family and friends to seek work. We should explain to people that only by helping the Third World to reconstruct their economies can we ever find outlets for our own products and therefore our salvation is linked to theirs.

On the Soviet Union: while I agree with your analysis in general, I can't help remembering that they supply arms for most of the liberation struggles with very little obvious gain for themselves. Also, we can criticise the lack of real socialist-type democracy in the Soviet Union, but let us remember the saying: 'You can't have democracy in a beleaguered fortress'. Was there ever a time when the Soviet Union was not under attack, so necessitating that the decision making had to be taken into the hands of a few and sometimes one man. Democracy is too slow and cumbersome for a country on a war footing. Democracy would also allow the West to destabilise the Soviet countries.

Les Williams
Liverpool

the next step replies:

On Ireland: you argue that you would like to see a socialist Ire-

land yet you refuse to take sides with those who are fighting for Irish freedom. Our position is straightforward. We support the Irish people's right to self-determination and their right to fight for it. Our support is not qualified when IRA bombs go off on British streets, even if they result in regrettable civilian casualties. Civilian deaths are the unfortunate reality of every war – the responsibility for this lies not with those fighting oppression, but with the British state. We want to win British workers to the cause of Irish freedom because they have everything to gain from seeing British imperialism defeated in Ireland. To do this we need to convince them they are up against the same enemy as the Irish people – the British state – and have just as much interest in taking sides against it. We can win workers to this point of view – if we use arguments that appeal to their class interests. The question of the rights of the Protestants is a diversion from the central issue of the national oppression of the Irish people by British imperialism. The British state has always justified its rule in the Six Counties by claiming to defend the democratic rights of the Protestants.

On immigration: your objection to our demand to smash all immigration controls is shared by many people on the left. Like you, they are more concerned to protect Britain's economic interests than to fight the divisions that immigration controls enforce in the working class. According to your prescription, black non-Britons must wait for socialism some time in the distant future before they get their rights. We campaign against all immigration controls now because we have no interest in making British capitalism viable, but every interest in uniting the working

class in opposition to the British state. The argument that we should help reconstruct the economies of the Third World and export capital to labour rather than labour to capital has been around since the European countries closed their doors to immigration in the mid-seventies. Couched in socialist rhetoric, it is a shabby apology for the state in its repatriation measures. The socialist immigration minister in France, Georgina Dufoix is now offering 'reinsertion aid' and retraining to induce immigrants to return to Africa to take up jobs in French factories there. The West German government has set up training schools for returning Turks in Izmir. All these 'socialist' measures are used to justify state attacks on immigrant workers.

On the Soviet Union: the Soviet Union's backing for the liberation struggles of the Third World does not rest on a principled anti-imperialist basis. It is wrong to argue that the Soviet Union does not reap a return from supplying arms and funding to these movements. Any movement which poses a threat to the imperialist powers or weakens their hold on the backward capitalist countries is clearly to the Soviet Union's advantage. At the same time, it is always ready to sell out the guerrilla movements when the imperialists have got the upper hand. On the question of democracy in the Soviet Union: to retain soviet state power the Bolsheviks were forced to suppress proletarian democracy. The Soviet bureaucracy's suppression of democracy, however, is not motivated by a concern to defend proletarian power, but a need to destroy it. The Soviet bureaucracy fears the threat posed by the Soviet masses more than it fears the threat of imperialist intervention.

Catholic Marxist

Mick Kennedy's article on James Connolly (*the next step*, April) showed the importance of Ireland for socialists. But he missed one important point about Connolly's life and ideas. Throughout his life, Connolly was a devout Roman Catholic. Some of his most important writings – such as *Labour, nationality and religion* – tried to show that socialism and religion are compatible. What are Mick Kennedy's views on this? Does the RCP believe that a practising Catholic like Connolly can really be a revolutionary and a Marxist? Sean McClure
Royston, Glasgow

Mick Kennedy replies:

Connolly's Catholicism was indeed inconsistent with his Marxist outlook. In his writings, Connolly exposed the dependence of the Catholic Church in Ireland on British imperialism. He also recognised the appeal of its message of salvation in the next world for those denied their liberty in the present. However, his attempt in *Labour, nationality and religion* to counterpose Christian ideals to the practice of the Catholic hierarchy, and his insistence that faith was a matter of personal conviction, indicate his failure to embrace a fully 'materialist approach to religion.

For Marxists, all religion is a mystification of the real forces that move society and a dangerous distraction for workers whose destiny is to change the real world, not to escape from it.

Connolly's project of establishing proletarian politics in Ireland contained many flaws. His merit, compared with many who have since laid claim to his heritage, is that he made a very brave attempt.

March success

A Chara,
On behalf of the Crossmaglen Patriots Republican Flute Band (Wishaw) we would like to thank the Irish Freedom Movement for the hospitality given to us on the recent march in Sheffield. We were very pleased with the organisation of the parade, and look forward to marching with you again in the near future.
Yours in solidarity
Band Committee
Wishaw, Scotland

Women and medicine

I am very impressed with the RCP's revolutionary politics on Ireland, racism and many other issues. But I was very disappointed by last Thursday's meeting on women and medicine. Two areas concern me.

First, I felt the revolutionary focus of the meeting was absent. Issues – the Pill, abortion, government cuts etc – were dealt with piecemeal, without the broad political perspective: that women are not equal, that women's labour is not valued equally with men's, that women are not equally involved in social and political life.

I was also alarmed that the RCP's male workers did not seem to be significantly involved in the meeting. The question of women's oppression should concern all workers equally, just as anti-racist work is not confined to blacks alone. Is the RCP compromising its politics and being opportunist by organising meetings which seem to be aimed at bourgeois feminist individualists rather than active workers?

Second, I feel that it is necessary for a revolutionary party to develop its own critique of capitalist medical practice, otherwise it is not clear that capitalist medicine works in the interests of profit, the state, and the medical profession. There is a great deal of controversy within the medical profession itself about the effectiveness of various approaches and treatments. These arguments were not acknowledged in the meeting.

Just as the RCP has brilliantly understood Britain's war in Ireland and the problems of racism, reformism etc, it is essential that the same revolutionary understanding of women's oppression and the deficiencies of capitalist medicine is developed in order

to advance the revolutionary struggle.
Cathy Dyer
Hackney

the next step replies:

The meeting on women and medicine which you refer to was the last in a series of four forums held in central London. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss issues such as prostitution, the Pill, war and the unions within the context of women's oppression under capitalism.

There is nothing opportunist about organising meetings that deal with topics which have long been the traditional preserve of feminists. Our intention is to cut through the mystification of these issues by the women's movement and to demonstrate the Marxist approach to all issues of concern to the working class. The RCP has always argued that the question of women's oppression is a vital one for the whole working class. Our book *Real Freedom* gives a Marxist analysis of women's oppression under capitalism and outlines a working class strategy for women's liberation. The men in the RCP have made an equal contribution to our understanding of women's oppression and to putting our politics into practice.

Finally, we disagree that it is the job of a revolutionary party to develop a critique of capitalist medical practice. It is obvious to any worker who has had anything to do with the medical profession that it is not there to provide workers with the health care they need. The job of revolutionaries is to fight for a system that can provide workers with what they need, not to endow medicine itself with a revolutionary content.

Animal rights and materialism

I must question your materialist understanding of history in your statement on animal rights in the April issue of *the next step*. You appear to stray into metaphysics when you speak of humanity's mastery and 'ultimate control' over nature, endowing the human race with divine powers and a destiny outside of the natural world.

Historical materialism is surely the application of science to human society, and therefore should integrate with other areas of our scientific analysis of the world, such as biology, physics and ecology. Bourgeois ideology has influenced science over the last two centuries as it does most obviously today in the trendy 'ecological movement'. But the revolutionary process only gains from a rigorous promotion of scientific, materialist analysis of the world. Ecology should expose more of the workings of this world of which we are still a component, however conscious and autonomous we may claim to be of it.

Therefore why do you abandon this issue to the petit-bourgeois influences of the Friends of the Earth? Animals have no 'inalienable rights' and neither do humans; both spec-

ies, we learn from materialism, are ultimately matter in motion.

There is a reactionary element in much of humanity's activity in nature. Modern capitalist agriculture, which produces dust bowls and famines, is only one example of the destructive character of this activity which has developed a rich biosphere of species best able to adapt, diversify, integrate and survive.

The struggle for a communist society, for human development, is surely part of evolution, and must include a more constructive attitude to our ecosystem, unless of course you regard it as supernatural?

Martyn Elliott
Canterbury

the next step replies:

Martyn Elliott argues that communists should involve themselves in a struggle for animal rights because we are 'a component' of nature; both people and animals, 'we learn from materialism, are ultimately matter in motion'. This is not the historical materialism of Marx. It is the reactionary materialism of philosophers such as Ludwig Feuerbach,

whom Marx and Engels fought against 140 years ago.

The idea that humanity and nature are mere 'matter in motion', passively evolving, ignores the historical specificity of different forms of society and humanity's active role in the development from one to another (feudalism to capitalism to communism). Marx took a different view. In his *Theses on Feuerbach*, he attacked the old materialism for ignoring the role of conscious human activity in social change:

'The materialist doctrine, concerning the change of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself.'

A communist society will not come about 'naturally'.

Only man's conscious activity can overcome the natural barriers to development and the social barriers – ie capitalist social relations. This conscious approach to progressive change sets man apart from nature. As Marx notes in *Capital*, 'a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cell', but what distinguishes 'the worst architect from the best of bees' is that the architect 'raises his structure in his imagination before he erects it in reality'. Our task is to subordinate nature in the struggle to build a new world, not to see ourselves as part of an eternal natural world and respect its rights. With this understanding, we oppose animal liberation as an attempt to free part of nature from our control.

Write to...

the
next step

BCM JP LTD, London WC1N 3XX

Meetings

BRADFORD

Saturday 5 May 12-1pm
Remember Bobby Sands!
Tyrls

Wednesday 23 May 7.30pm
Is revolution possible in Britain?
Central Library, Princes Way

CARDIFF

Saturday 5 May 11-1pm
Remember Bobby Sands!
The Hayes Market

Tuesday 15 May 7.30pm
Disarm the militarists!
Speaker: James Wood
Room 3.29, Joint Student Union, Park Place

GLASGOW

Tuesday 1 May 7pm
Ireland's freedom fighters — from Wolfe Tone to Bobby Sands
Speaker: Mike Wall

Tuesday 15 May 7pm
Orange sectarianism in Glasgow and Belfast
Speaker: Mike Wall

Tuesday 29 May 7pm
The fight for solidarity in Britain
Speaker: Alex Fraser
All at Committee Rooms, Queen Margaret Union, University Avenue

BIRMINGHAM

Tuesday 1 May 7.30pm
Taking control
Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth High Street

Saturday 5 May 11.30am
Remember Bobby Sands!
Chamberlain Square

COVENTRY

Saturday 5 May 11-1pm
Remember Bobby Sands!
Belgrave Theatre

Wednesday 16 May 7.30pm
Women and the revolutionary party
Speaker: Kate Marshall
Hare and Squirrel pub, New Union Street

MANCHESTER

Saturday 5 May 10.30am
Remember Bobby Sands!
Rally on Ashton Town Hall steps, then a motorcade through Ashton, Oldham and Manchester
2pm protest against the PTA
Central Detention Centre, Crown Square

Thursday 17 May 7.30pm
Lessons of the miners' strike
Speakers from the Yorkshire picket lines and miners' wives committees
Old Dog, Old Street, Ashton under Lyne
Creche available (phone 061-330 7231)

BRIGHTON

Thursday 10 May 7.30pm
Marxism versus feminism
Speaker: Kate Marshall
Sussex University

SHEFFIELD

Saturday 5 May 11-1pm
Remember Bobby Sands!
Peace Gardens

Friday 11 May 7.30pm
Lessons of the miners' strike
Mailcoach pub, West Street

Friday 25 May 7.30pm
What is the RCP?
Mailcoach pub, West Street

SOUTH LONDON

Saturday 5 May 11am
Motorcade to Remember Bobby Sands!
Meet Brixton tube

Wednesday 9 May 7.30pm
Is revolution possible in Britain?
Speaker: Frank Richards
St Matthew's Meeting Place, Brixton Hill

Tuesday 29 May 9am
Committal proceedings for Tommy Quigley and Paul Kavanagh
Lambeth Magistrates Court, Kennington
Drop the charges!
Organised by the IFM



Activities

POWER PREPARING FOR POWER

Do you take the next step? Live in the North?
Then join other readers in Manchester and start fighting for revolutionary politics in Britain

Saturday 26 May, 10am, Sidney Building, Oxford Road
morning session

LESSONS OF THE MINERS' STRIKE
Mike Freeman



afternoon session
TAKING CONTROL — REVOLUTIONARY WORK IN THE TRADE UNIONS
Frank Richards



Creche and accommodation available.
Food and entertainment too. Don't miss it!
Further details — phone Dave Hallsworth: 061-330 7231

AFIA BEGUM CAMPAIGN AGAINST DEPORTATIONS

Contact ABCAD for more information:

ABCAD, Box 22,
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on 01-247 7848 or 274 2820



Members of the Sari Squad will be travelling through these towns in their special double-decker bus. They will hold street meetings, rallies, and street theatre accompanied by live music. Saturday 5 May: Camden, Brent, Islington; Saturday 12 May: Brighton, Bradford, Coventry.

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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

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No 47 May 1984

20p

The state seems powerful
because it is prepared for
class war

They can be beaten



Thousands of paramilitary police launch brutal attacks on miners' picket lines. The courts rule that police have the right to blockade county borders and turn back flying pickets. The DHSS harasses hard-up miners' families. Whether it shows its 'soft' face as the welfare state or its hard front as the Special Patrol Group, the state machine in the miners' strike has acted as nothing less than the organised violence of the ruling class.

To many people, the repressive power of the state seems unbeatable. For the Revolutionary Communist Party, that power could be matched and smashed by the organised force of the working class.

The key advantage the state has over the workers is not one of power. It is obvious that 20 000 police in the coalfields cannot match the strength of 184 000 miners, let alone of 22m workers. The real difference is one of preparation. Police have planned and run

their intervention in the miners' strike from a computerised centre in Scotland Yard, pinpointing the pickets' weak spots and moving in to exploit them. Meanwhile Thatcher presides over a secret Cabinet sub-committee set up to co-ordinate the politics behind the state's strike-breaking activities.

The state has geared up for war and the miners' leaders have been caught unprepared. Now they are relying on the militant tactics and political arguments which served them well a decade ago. But yesterday's solutions do not measure up to the problems workers face today.

The miners and the working class have the power to fight back and win. All they lack is preparation. Above all, this is a question of politics. That's why every year since 1979, the RCP has organised a summer conference — *Preparing for Power* — to discuss the vital questions of the day and to map

out a strategy for winning the struggles to come.

This year *Preparing for Power* will be a week-long series of talks, discussions, debates, films and fun. There will be a dozen specialist courses covering everything from the Bolshevik revolution and an Introduction to Marxism, to the

British revolution and a Marxist introduction to Ireland. Plus many extra sessions of general interest, film shows, great debates and dancing, all rounded off by a boat trip down the Thames. If you are interested in preparing for power, then *Preparing for Power* is a must.

PREPARING FOR POWER 1984

FRIDAY 13 JULY — FRIDAY 20 JULY

Polytechnic of Central London, New Cavendish Street, London W1

Send 30p to the address below for the conference brochure with full details of the week's events

	All week	Weekend
Employed/Student	£12.00	£5.00
UB40/Unwaged	£8.00	£3.00

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For details of accommodation, creche facilities etc, ring Kate Marshall on 01-274 3951