

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No 48 June 1984

20p

**Miners
at
war**

Nothing to lose - all to win

There are no holds barred in the miners' strike. The establishment has thrown the rule book out of the window. The Coal Board and the Government are willing to do whatever is necessary to crush the miners' union. They have unleashed a wave of state terror against the miners. Police operations on a scale unseen for 50 years have become an almost daily occurrence in the mining communities of Notts and Scotland.

There is no law in the miners' strike. Police do as they like on the picket lines: running strikers down on horseback, arresting them by the hundred, charging them with whatever comes to mind.

There are no limits to the miners' strike. Police operations extend far beyond the picket line. Away from the TV cameras, police launch paramilitary raids on Notts mining communities, beating isolated militants through the streets and kicking their way into strikers' homes. Meanwhile, secret police infiltrate pit villages to target and knock out the militants.

The state is not just out to win an industrial dispute. It is determined to smash the strike, and finish the

miners once and for all.

Warfare

Faced with this scale of attack, striking miners have nothing to lose by giving as good as they get. We need to be as ruthless in defence of our jobs as the bosses are in defence of their interests.

It is clear that narrow trade union tactics cannot match the bitter class warfare the state is waging against us. The issue of class power cannot be resolved simply through pickets and demonstrat-

ions. We need to raise the level of our response to match the state blow for blow.

The employers are defending their right to run their industry as they see fit. Miners are defending their right to the jobs they need to live. Between equal rights, force decides.

Who rules?

Today most of the force on show is with the state. But the latent force which can swing the balance is the untapped power of thousands of miners and millions of workers in other industries. In a political struggle with the state, that force can win even bigger battles than the miners' dispute.



Chris Black (reflex)

Miners against the state: the strike can unite the working class in a political battle with the police, the courts and the Government

Ten years ago, in the middle of a miners' strike, Tory Prime Minister Ted Heath said the dispute demanded answers to the

question: 'Who rules?'. Today that question is posed more sharply still. Workers who are dominated and exploited by the

capitalist class have nothing to lose by rising to Heath's challenge. We have everything to win.

**Afia Begum
kicked out -
the fight continues p2,3**



**A spectre
is haunting
Europe p12,13**



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NEWS

Racism

- 2 Afia Begum — they took her away
- 2 Deportation countdown
- 3 A battle lost — a war to win

Miners' strike

- 4 Three wasted months
- 4 Ravenscraig: winning unity
- 5 Striking out
- 5 Outcast women
- 6 Labour and the miners
- 6 RCP election success

Imperialism

- 7 Summit's up with Reagan
- 7 CND meets ET
- 7 Smash Apartheid!

Ireland

- 8 The cause of Labour — or the cause of Ireland?
- 8 IFM action
- 9 War reports: Baker and the Forum

Women

- 10 Part-timers under attack
- 10 Abortion in Scotland

FEATURES

Editorial

- 11 A few home truths
- 11 Internationalism

Class struggle in Europe

- 12 Workers divided

Miners' strike

- 14 Has Britain become a police state?
- 15 The fight for a national strike

Imperialist war moves

- 16 Target Libya



Labour and the EEC

- 18 Breaking up is hard to do

Reviews

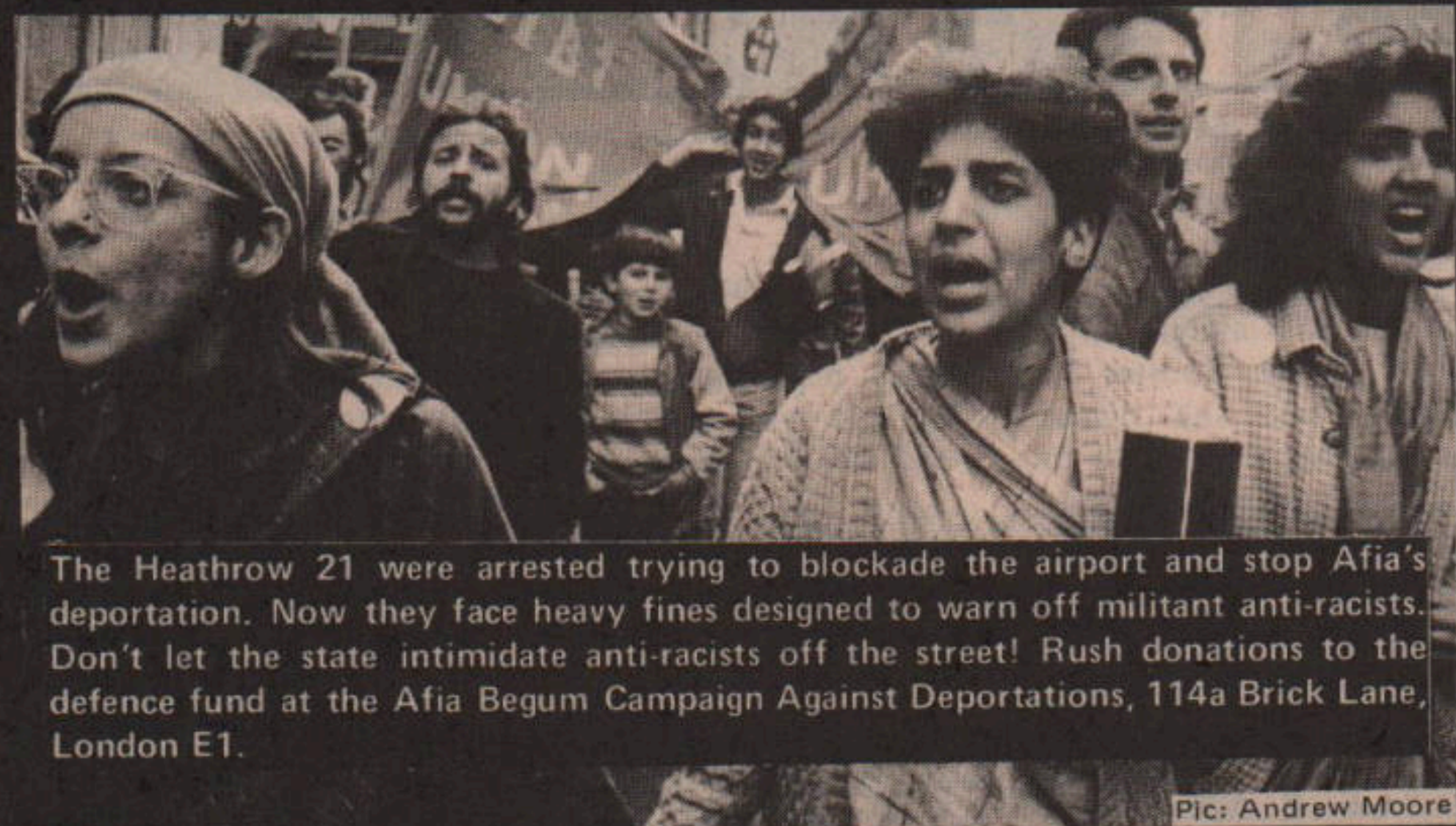
- 20 Workers' defeat — Labour's opportunity

Liberals in England, war in Ireland
India: things fall apart

22 Letters

23 Activities

Support the Heathrow 21



The Heathrow 21 were arrested trying to blockade the airport and stop Afia's deportation. Now they face heavy fines designed to warn off militant anti-racists. Don't let the state intimidate anti-racists off the street! Rush donations to the defence fund at the Afia Begum Campaign Against Deportations, 114a Brick Lane, London E1.

Pic: Andrew Moore

Afia has been deported but the Afia Begum Campaign goes on, fighting for the rights of all victims of the immigration laws. Join us! Drop in at 114a Brick Lane, or ring 01-247 7848.

THEY TO

Deportation countdown

THURSDAY 3 MAY

6am: Five immigration police drag Afia Begum out of her bed in an East London hideout and off to Harmondsworth detention centre, near Heathrow.

6pm: Hundreds of protestors march from 111 Brick Lane, where Afia's husband died in a fire more than two years ago, to vent their anger on the local 'community' cops.



Brick Lane blockade: Afia's supporters stage sit-down protest

FRIDAY 4 MAY

12 noon: Protests continue all day outside the Home Office and at Harmondsworth. Tory minister Waddington turns down MPs' appeals for a last-minute reprieve.

6 pm: Five hundred demonstrators hold another vigil, and march through Brick Lane with a message: 'Be at Heathrow tomorrow — Afia is due to be deported at 10am'.



Hats off to Afia: helmets fly as Heathrow police wade in

SATURDAY 5 MAY

8 am Heathrow: Two hundred demonstrators throw Terminal Three into chaos for half an hour as they try to stop the flight. Police move in, arresting 21. Afia is forced on to the plane. Sari Squad members dodge immigration police to board with her.

12 noon Amsterdam: As the plane refuels Afia tries to alight, demanding temporary asylum in Holland. Dutch immigration police take the unprecedented step of boarding the plane to stop her.



This way out Mrs Begum: immigration police force Afia on to Flight BG004

Press Association

OK HER AWAY



A battle lost-a war to win

AFTER A TWO YEAR fight to remain in Britain — the last 14 months spent in hiding — it seemed inevitable that Afia would win. The campaign mounted in her defence was gaining new support throughout Europe as well as in Britain. Its success inspired others to follow suit and take a stand against deportation.

But Afia's campaign was defeated. Home Office minister David Waddington decided that enough was enough; Her Majesty's Government could not tolerate such flagrant defiance of the immigration rules. The embarrassing prospect of bad publicity for Britain in Europe finally forced his

hand.

Waddington calculated that when it came to the crunch the 75 Labour MPs who had lent their support to the Afia Begum Campaign would do nothing to obstruct the course of justice. Waddington guessed right.

Angry

When the moment came, a defiant fight was waged by Afia's supporters in East London.

Two nights running, the Brick Lane area echoed to the sound of hundreds of angry demonstrators marching through the streets. Local police who tried to stop them were shoved aside.

Throughout Britain demonstrations and protests were held the instant that news of Afia's arrest arrived. More than 50 Asian women disrupted the 3 May local council election count in Birmingham. In Liverpool a Tory rally was broken up by Afia's supporters.

The campaign's office was packed out, with crowds flowing into the streets, as women's groups, black organisations and anti-racists from round the country poured into Brick Lane to offer their help.

Muscle

But the forces the campaign could muster were not enough to stop Waddington

in his tracks. The violent scenes at Heathrow were unprecedented — but insufficient to stop the plane leaving.

Airport workers were asked to take action to delay the flight. They tried, but more as a gesture of solidarity than in the belief they could do anything.

In short, the campaign had not generated enough working class backing — did not have the muscle — to defeat the Home Office. And when the crunch came, that was the only way to win.

Pitiful

The battle was lost but there is a war to win. The

campaign has not ended with Afia's departure. Throughout the month of May public debate raged between Waddington and the Afia Begum Campaign over our demand, 'Smash all immigration controls!'

Traditionally it is the racists who initiate discussion about immigration. Now the tables are turned and it is the anti-racists who are establishing the terms of the debate.

Waddington has been put on the defensive. In a pitiful article in *The Guardian*, he justified immigration controls on the grounds that Britain is 'one of the most densely populated countries

in Europe'.

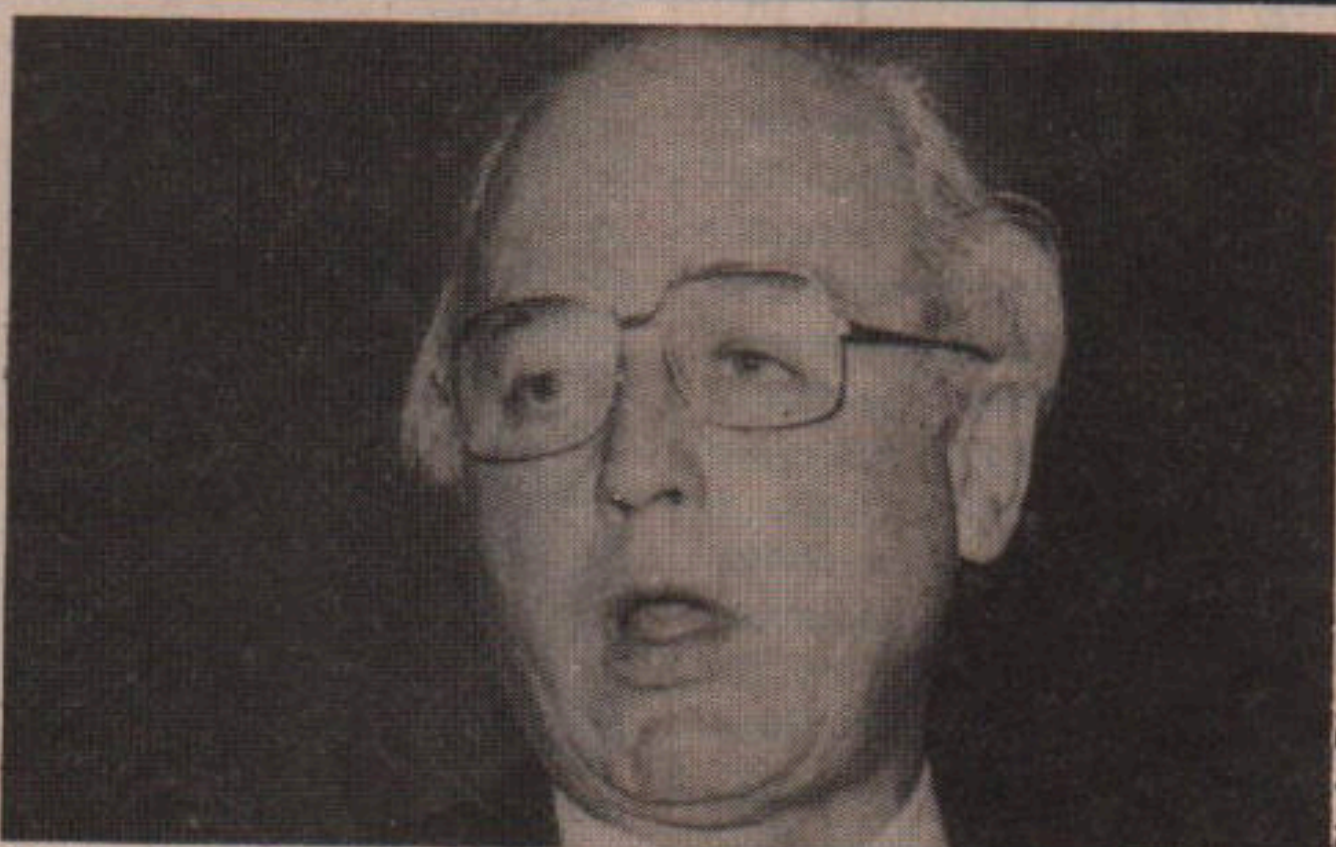
The campaign has opened up a debate which anti-racists cannot afford to lose. If we win the arguments against immigration controls, then links will be forged with new allies in the working class in the struggle to make these racist laws inoperable.

Resistance

To win we have to make immigration controls a public political issue. That's why the campaign is taking its fight to Europe and not letting Afia be erased from the public memory. That's why we intend to fight every deportation and build resistance to all controls on immigration.

'We live in one of the most densely populated countries in Europe... the country simply could not support all those who would like to come here.'

('Repatriation minister' David Waddington, *The Guardian* 14 May)



On the defensive: David Waddington

'Surely you are not suggesting that any illegal immigrant who wants to can come to these shores?'

'Yes. That is precisely what we are suggesting.' (The Sari Squad's Rezia Begum, Radio 4, 15 May)

To the workers of Europe

On Wednesday 16 May, 30 Asian women set off from East London for a week-long tour of Europe. This was their determined message to enthusiastic audiences in Paris, Amsterdam, Bonn, Frankfurt and Strasbourg:

'We have come to Europe to seek your support for our sister, Afia Begum, who was deported to Bangladesh on 5 May. Like millions of foreign workers throughout Europe, Afia was an illegal entrant. When she arrived in Britain in 1982 the Home Office declared her entry certificate invalid — because her husband had been killed in an East London fire.

'Afia went into hiding and defied the immigration authorities for two years before they finally arrested and deported her.

'This courageous woman has inspired thousands of victims of Britain's immigration laws to fight for their rights. And she is determined to continue her struggle. Afia wants you to fight for her right to enter an EEC country, from where she can campaign to be reunited with her family in Britain.

'Will you help her? We are under no illusions about your governments. We know that from Mitterand's France to Kohl's Germany, thousands of foreign

workers are being driven out of their jobs and homes.

'We know that when Afia was deported immigration police throughout Europe cooperated to make sure she could not get off the plane before it reached Dacca.

'We know that the demand by Britain's racist bigot, Enoch Powell, for 'concerted Europe-wide action' against illegal immigrants is fast becoming a reality.

'But this is all the more reason for you to support us. We must match the solidarity displayed by our rulers with our solidarity — the solidarity of workers.

'We must defend every foreign worker in Europe from the witch-hunt their employers and governments are unleashing. We must defend the women of the immigrant communities who bear the double burden of sexist and racist immigration laws.

'This is our message to the workers of Europe. We have not come to beg mercy from the politicians and the lawyers. We know our real allies, our only hope lies with you. Let this tour be the first step to building the solidarity we need. Fight for Afia's right to return — and all foreign workers' right to stay!'



Sari Squad departs for Europe

Three wasted months

As we go to press, the miners' strike is in its tenth week. After nearly three months on strike 80 per cent of miners are still out and determined to win. Yet victory seems further away than ever (see also pages 11, 14, 15).

More than 40 pits are still working and coal, oil and electricity are still getting through to industry. The Coal Board and the Tory government, backed up by the police, are taking advantage of this disastrous situation to increase their attacks. We need to take drastic steps to prevent serious setbacks as the bosses move in for the kill.

Andy and Wayne, two young miners from Armthorpe, Yorkshire, spoke to Joan Phillips about the strike, the problems they face, and the measures necessary to resolve them.

Why is this strike so important?

Wayne: We're fighting for a future. In the seventies it was about wages. Now we're fighting for jobs. I'd sooner lose maybe seven or eight hundred pounds now, than lose 35 years work because I know one thing — if these jobs go, there'll be

none anywhere else in Doncaster.

Andy: If you lose this one you lose your union. They're really going to kick you. The union's going to get walked all over. I mean now they knock on the manager's door and walk in, but if we lose this they're going to have to knock and wait for them to say "come in".

So, how are you going to win it? What are the problems?

Wayne: We'll win it by stepping up the picketing and getting support from other workers — power workers, railway workers. We've got to be even more militant and use different tactics like the French lorry

drivers. We need more men on the picket lines. There's only about 100 men here picketing out of about 1200 — we need to get the others involved too.

We need to get the Notts men out. They're not all scabs. What good is it standing on the picket line and shouting 'scab'? You've got to have the political arguments with them to persuade them to come out.

But how could you get a national strike without a national ballot?

Andy: We're not against democracy. But we've already had our votes in our areas, why do we need another one? And why should another man be able to vote you out of a job?

Problem is now you can't get near them to talk to them because of the police. We did at first. Places like Ollerton were more or less closed down in the first few weeks. Now, I think you've got to go round the welfares



Two steps back: NUM leaders have restrained miners' action

and talk to them there. We've got to try to get to speak at their branch meetings — if they'll have us — and get delegations of Yorkshire and Scottish miners, cause that's the only way you're going to get them out.

What sort of leadership do you think you're getting? Is the strike effective?

Andy: No, they don't know what's happening on the

ground, there's no coordination. You need to elect delegates from your pit to send to an area committee to coordinate action with other areas. The rank and file have got to get organised. Wayne: Up here, when we made our decision in our branch to go picketing in Notts we had Sammy Thompson from the Yorkshire executive telling us we couldn't.

But we'd made our decision and told him where to go. We've got to get organised and take control. Like the A1 stoppage — that was our idea and they didn't like it. Andy: I think the reason why people think that the miners have got a lot of muscle is because in the last two strikes they had they won. And I think that's why our union — our union leaders — just thought that automatically miners would strike. And it just showed they're not militant like that, it's a myth, it's got to be worked for. And when there's no grassroots organisation it just doesn't work.

Who makes all the decisions here, is it just the branch committee?

Andy: we just get our orders from Barnsley. They just come and say "be here at a certain time in the morning". We get here in the morning and they tell us where we're going.

Wayne: Doncaster panel meets every week and our union men go there and they've give them a few bollockings. And not only ours, there's a lot of other branches done the same.

What about the Labour Party? Do you think it's given you enough support?

Andy: Well they're not for the working class are they? They're not for the working class but they claim to represent us. But we know they're not. I mean, it was them that gave us the incentive scheme with Tony Benn in 1978. I watched Neil Kinnock on the telly the other day and everything he said about the Tory government in this strike was exactly true. But everything he said, he'd do it himself if he was in power. They all pee in the same pot. By pursuing a policy of vacillation and moderation, the NUM leadership has undermined the potential to take the strike forward. The problems discussed by Andy and Wayne highlight the major weaknesses of the union leaders' strategy: its inability to overcome the divisions between miners in different areas and to involve the mass of striking miners in action; and its failure to organise effective strike action and solidarity from workers in other industries.

National ballot

While recognising the problems of regional divisions

Winning unity

The collapse of solidarity action at the Ravenscraig steel works in Motherwell, Scotland, was a serious blow to the miners' strike. The divisions within the Triple Alliance of coal, steel and transport unions over the blacking of coal supplies to Ravenscraig reflect the bankruptcy of the union leaders' strategy.

Responding to the NUM's appeal for blacking, steel union leader Bill Sirs declared that he was not prepared 'to see the steel industry crucified on someone else's altar'.

Echoing Sirs, Ravenscraig convenor Tommy Brennan summed up the political outlook which unites the miners' and steelworkers' unions, but which prevents them from joining together in a fight for jobs:

'They are fighting for the future of their industry, but remember we are doing exactly the same for ours.'

Many Ravenscraig workers who identified with the miners' fight against pit closures were not so sure that their leaders were right. In a plant union meeting on 9 May half the workers were in favour of coming out to support the miners.

Branch officials quickly defused this idea and it was not put to the vote. Rank and file steelworkers at Ravenscraig wanted to support the miners, but their instinctive sympathy could not by itself challenge the bureaucrats' arguments that the miners' action was threatening their jobs.

Confusion

The response of the miners' union only added to their confusion. In early April

Scottish NUM president Mick McGahey announced that two trainloads of coal would be allowed into the plant daily to keep the furnaces going.

Ravenscraig needs 900 tonnes of coal to keep the furnaces working. The two trains began by bringing in 2600 tonnes a day, and then the trains got longer.

Rank and file miners demanded action from the NUM leadership to block the coal supplies. On 27 April the Triple Alliance cut back the supply to one trainload a day — enough to keep the furnaces going but not enough to continue production. The steel union demanded more coal, but did not get it. It ended by cooperating with BSC management and agreeing to accept deliveries by road.

From 2 May onwards, scores of lorries began bringing coal into Motherwell. On 4 May, the rail unions put an end to the train deliveries. But card carrying members of the TGWU continued to drive their lorries through the picket lines.

Mass pickets outside the plant failed to halt the lorries in the face of a large police presence, and on 11 May the NUM caved in and agreed to recommence the train deliveries.

The confusion at Ravenscraig is a direct consequence of the union leaders' political strategy. Bill Sirs and Arthur Scargill are not that far apart. Both share a commitment to fight for the future of their respective industries. The only difference is one of presentation.

Whereas Sirs grovels before the British Steel Corporation and urges his members to make sacrifices

to safeguard the industry, Scargill threatens the NCB with industrial action to win more investment in coal.

But whatever their tactical differences, the political strategy shared by Sirs and Scargill has the same disastrous consequences for steelworkers and miners.

Thousands of steelworkers have lost their jobs over the last few years. In 1981 Ravenscraig narrowly avoided the axe when the Government withdrew its closure plans. In return the union agreed to productivity schemes and changes in work practices to help get the industry back on its feet.

Four years ago it took 10 man hours to make a tonne of steel — now it takes four. But bending over backwards to raise productivity and help the bosses hasn't secured Ravenscraig workers' jobs.

Threats

In April, British Steel Corporation Chairman Robert Haslam announced plans to get rid of 15 000 jobs in steel and close down two of BSC's five integrated steel plants. Ravenscraig is high on the hit list. The proposals are part of the BSC's long-awaited corporate plan which Haslam hopes will take the BSC 'to the ultimate goal of achieving a fully commercially viable steel business'.

Steel union leaders have used the threat of closure to justify their scabbing to the miners and to their own members. Ravenscraig convenor Tommy Brennan argued that if the steelworkers supported the miners they would be cutting their own throats.

In reality, the union leaders are cutting steelworkers' throats by putting the interests of the industry before their responsibility to support the miners. The bureaucrats' arguments just do not make sense to many workers who have done their bit to make the industry profitable during the last three years, and still face the threat of redundancy.

Jobs first

The only way that steelworkers will be able to look forward to a future at Ravenscraig is by fighting for what they need and forgetting about the state of the employers' account books.

The Ravenscraig fiasco has exposed the weakness of the NUM's approach to the miners' strike. Miners' leaders have experienced difficulties in convincing steel leaders to take solidarity action, because their arguments about defending the steel industry are in accord with the NUM's commitment to coal.

Future

Throughout the miners' strike the NUM has emphasised that it is fighting for the future of the British coal industry.

Scargill says he wants a production target of 200m tonnes, more investment in existing and new pits and an end to coal imports.

Ian MacGregor also maintains that he is fighting for the future of British coal mining. But he understands that under capitalism coal mining is subject to the laws of the market and profit. That's why he's pushing for a

high volume, low-cost industry with a future capacity of 100m tonnes.

About 80m tonnes of output is already profitable or within reach of being profitable. But just over 20m tonnes of output is a chronic loss-maker. To make the industry viable means cutting back on uneconomic, loss-making pits. MacGregor's first step is to reduce the loss-making capacity by about 4m tonnes to 97.4m tonnes in the coming year and reduce manpower by 20 000.

Cloud nine

Scargill is famed for his ability to churn out tables and statistics on the economics of the mining industry. But his insistence that the industry can be made profitable without closing pits and slashing jobs is just not on. Profits in coal require higher productivity, redundancies and pay curbs.

Instead of trying to be a better businessman than MacGregor, Scargill ought to be fighting for his members' welfare. The economics of coal are MacGregor's problem. It has nothing to do with what miners need to live on. Whatever the state of the pits, miners still need jobs to pay for food, housing and the other necessities of life.

It is suicidal to base the cause of the miners on the economic viability of coal production. The miners' case is independent of the NCB's attempts to balance its books. It is based on the right to work and the right to live. Only if these rights are fought for as inviolate can workers be united.

Joan Phillips

Striking out

During the past month the Revolutionary Communist Party has gone all-out to build support for the miners' strike, on the streets, on working class estates and in workplaces in England, Scotland and Wales.

Solidarity

In Birmingham's Selly Oak and Dudley Road hospitals RCP supporters have instituted regular food collections for strikers' families at Keresley pit in Coventry. Our street meetings outside the city centre supermarkets attracted large crowds and generous donations of food from shoppers.

In Leeds, our early morning factory gate collections gave us the chance to discuss the strike with engineering and other workers as well as raise money for Yorkshire miners. We made contact with the Upton miners' wives group and organised a stall for them at Leeds Trades Council's May Day festival.

In London, Bradford and Manchester we took striking miners on a tour of the cities' workplaces and arranged meetings between miners and enthusiastic workers.

RCP supporters were on the scene when local strike

leader Colin Dixon and his 16 year old son Darrell were pulled out of their car in the centre of Ollerton and arrested. Colin and Darrell were manhandled into a waiting police van and Colin's arm was badly hurt, requiring hospital treatment.

Fighting harassment

With Colin's father and another miner we chased the van through police roadblocks all the way to Mansfield police station, where angry Ollerton miners joined us in a picket.

As a leading strike militant, Colin Dixon was already a marked man, and this was his third arrest since the strike began. On the way to Mansfield the police van radioed the police station with the message: 'assignment over, we're on our way'.

After vocal protests from local miners Colin was released on strict bail conditions. But he is still subject to intense harassment. On 4 May he was stopped twice by the police; once on his way to court to get permission to visit his mother's grave, which is next to NCB property; and again at the cemetery.

This is the treatment miners have come to expect

from the bosses' army of occupation in Ollerton. The RCP will continue to resist police attempts to harass and frame strike activists.

In Leeds, RCP supporters have also experienced harassment from the police. Our 'support the miners' motorcade through the city centre was constantly stopped by the police and its occupants threatened.

Local miners have given their backing to six supporters of the next step, arrested on a working class estate while arguing for solidarity with the strike.

Pickets and meetings

RCP supporters have joined miners' picket lines in Notts, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire and at the Ravenscraig steel plant in Scotland and attended demonstrations in Barnsley, St Helens, Mansfield, Cardiff and elsewhere.

On 9 May we held a meeting in Cole Street Working Men's Club in Scunthorpe which brought together rank and file miners and steelworkers. On 17 May, miners from the North Notts and North Derbyshire area came to our Mansfield meeting to discuss the problems of the strike and how to begin extending rank and file control.



Bob Radcliffe (reflex)

On the march, but out of the running: miners' wives have no say

Outcast women

From the start of the miners' strike the Revolutionary Communist Party has argued that it should be controlled by the people whose livelihoods depend on its outcome—rank and file miners and their wives.

Women in the mining communities have got involved in the dispute in large numbers. But the Labour and trade union leaders have made sure that their role has been confined to servicing the strike, rather than having a say in the running of it.

Supporters of the RCP have been involved in women's action groups in the Midlands, Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Kent, and Scotland. At Hatfield in Yorkshire, Keresley in Coventry and elsewhere our supporters proposed that women should be represented on the strike committees with the men. And we argued that there should be regular mass meetings to facilitate open discussion and to guarantee an accountable leadership.

Many miners were happy for their wives to join women's committees. But they drew the line at women sitting on the strike committee. Only NUM members should be allowed this privilege, they argued. We pointed out that women in mining communities had as much stake in winning the strike as any NUM member. And they were just as willing to fight for it.

Enthusiasm

Our arguments got a good response from many women who were keen to do more than just cook dinner for picketing miners. In April, RCP supporters joined women from Edlington and other Yorkshire villages on a women's picket at Ollerton pit in Nottinghamshire. We got through the police roadblocks and turned back several cars and a score of Ollerton miners. We also made contact with the wives of striking Notts miners, and the Ollerton women's group was established within a week and began regular women's pickets.

Women at the Polmaise colliery in Fallin, Stirlingshire, decided to set up a miners' wives organisation after RCP supporters visited the miners' welfare. The Polmaise women have played a dynamic role in winning support for the strike.

On 20 April five women

went to Glasgow with the RCP to address students at the university and the School of Art and collect money for the strike. The following week a dozen women joined an RCP street meeting in Glasgow's Argyle street that raised almost £400 for the strike.

Clampdown

The NUM bureaucracy has encouraged the spread of women's support groups—but on its own terms.

The union leaders recognise the importance of having the women on their side in a strike beset by divisions and discord. At the same time, they have consciously sought to restrict women's activities.

Betty Heathfield, wife of NUM general secretary Peter Heathfield, arrived in Staveley to keep her eye on the women's action group. She caused ructions in a meeting called to discuss social security when she tried to get the women to centralise all their money to Chesterfield before having it channelled back again.

Stifled

Like the union bureaucrats, Betty Heathfield discouraged left-wing sentiments and advised women to stick to cooking, distributing food and giving advice on welfare rights. Some women left the group after it became clear that any independent action would be stifled.

It was the same story at Keresley in Coventry. By the end of the first meeting the group had decided to do a sit-in at Bedworth dole office, march to Nuneaton and demand free school meals for miners' children from the council.

At a meeting the following evening, however, organised to make placards for the demonstration at Bedworth, Labour Party councillor Irene Jones took the chair and pretended that the first meeting hadn't happened.

Soup kitchen

Jones told the two dozen women that she was there to set up a soup kitchen and if they wanted something else, then they should look elsewhere.

When the meeting broke up in confusion a group of women decided that they wanted to set up a women's strike committee to pursue some of their original ideas. Again this was quashed and a women's committee was established, dominated by

Labour Party women.

The Labour Party and the trade union officials have constantly tried to narrow the scope of the Keresley women's involvement in the strike. When the women decided to join the 4am picket line after the Easter break to make sure that there wasn't a mass return to work the strike committee told them not to bother.

The consequence of the NUM and Labour Party's bureaucratic manoeuvrings is that women have been excluded from playing a role in the strike. Their traditional domestic role has been reinforced rather than challenged.

Throughout the strike, women have had to cope with their childcare and domestic responsibilities on a magnified scale, many spending several days a week in the miners' welfare, cooking for picketing miners.

Several women's groups have responded angrily to the union's attempts to control their finances and through this, their activities.

In Edlington, the action group fought hard to keep itself financially independent and in Church Warsop, in Nottinghamshire, the women's group refused to let branch officials inspect its books.

Control

The mass turn-out of women from all over the country at the 12 May Barnsley demonstration and the picket line arrests of Ann Scargill and other miners' wives illustrate women's determination to make the strike win.

Arthur Scargill told the Barnsley marchers that they were witnessing a 'new phenomenon': 'our women are not just helping the men in the kitchen—they're with the men on the picket lines'.

But women have a lot more to offer than an enthusiasm for picketing. Free from the influence of the NUM rule book, they have the potential to change the direction of the strike. But the NUM leaders who now applaud women's militancy have excluded them from any role in the running of the strike on which their livelihoods depend.

When miners challenge the bureaucracy's attempts to stifle women's creativity and imagination, they will be one step nearer to reclaiming their union for the rank and file.

Fran Eden



Supporting the miners: RCP supporters march in Mansfield

continued from page 4

and lack of rank and file control, Andy and Wayne argued against a national ballot. But a campaign for a national ballot led by the rank and file to win all-out strike action could have overcome the problems of passivity by involving the mass of strikers in the running of the dispute. It also provided the only basis for overcoming the regional divisions that have prevented a national strike and crippled effective action.

The failure to address these problems means that the strike has lost its momentum. The divisions have become entrenched and the potential for achieving unity through a campaign around a national ballot for all-out action has been wasted.

As the strike enters a new phase we need to ensure

rank and file control at a local level to counter the Coal Board and the Government's attempts to smash us. We need:

- **regular mass meetings:** these are necessary to get more miners involved in the strike and to end the 80-20 per cent split between the passive majority and the active minority.

- **strike committees:** the day-to-day running of the strike must be in the hands of those whose livelihoods depend on its outcome—rank and file miners, women and workers in other unions.

- **an accountable union:** we need a union that is accountable to the miners and the working class. For years the NUM has worked closely with the Coal Board, cooperating in the day-to-day management of the industry. We need to put an end to

the union's involvement in the extensive network of consultation committees and procedures and break off all links with the employers and the state.

- **a living wage:** we need to carry on the fight for a nationally negotiated wage equal to the rising cost of living, an end to divisive area incentive schemes, a six-hour day and early retirement (with immediate replacement) on full pay.

The conduct of the miners' strike has exposed the union leaders' inability to lead an effective fight for jobs and the folly of leaving our future in their hands. Although increasingly difficult, it is still possible to reverse this trend and take the initiative. But this depends on taking control of the union from leaders who are not able to lead us.

No politics, please

'This argument, this battle, this strike, is not an ideological strike. It is not about revolution, the nature of society or overturning the government. The strike is about the coal industry. The strike is for industrial objectives and not for political objectives.'

(Roy Hattersley, *Weekend World*, 29 April)

Keeping politics out of the miners' strike has been the overriding concern of the Labour Party leadership. Labour spokesmen have insisted that the battle between the miners, the Coal Board and the Government is nothing more than an ordinary trade union dispute.

Labour's disavowal of the political nature of the miners' struggle is only partially motivated by a desire for electoral respectability. More important for Labour's leaders, the strike threatens the long-established division of labour between the Labour Party and the TUC.

Division

The Labour Party was set up by the trade union leaders in the early years of the century to take politics out of the workplace and into Parliament. The role of the trade unions was to deal with economic struggles over wages and conditions, and no more.

For a party committed to maintaining the status quo this division of labour was the best means of keeping the working class out of politics and the system out of trouble. Politics was to be the preserve of politicians, trade unionism the diet of the working class.

The dilemma facing the Labour Party is that today this division is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. The recession has brought class conflict into the open. Compelled to make ever more swingeing attacks on jobs and living standards, the bosses have had to resort to the police and the courts to force the working class into submission.

In a battle which neither side can afford to lose, every trade union struggle threatens to raise broader political questions – about the police, the law, the system, and the efficacy of traditional trade union methods. Labour's response to the miners' strike reflects the crisis this has engendered within the official labour movement.

Bad timing

The miners' strike couldn't have come at a worse time for the Labour Party. Under Neil Kinnock's leadership Labour has been fighting to rebuild its shattered electoral base and project itself as a united, credible alternative to the Tories.

On the eve of the May council elections Labour's deputy leader Roy Hattersley

observed that the miners' strike posed grave electoral dangers for the party. And *The Times* commented that 'the group that stands to lose most from a sharper politicisation of the dispute will be those who aspire to lead a Labour Party with pretensions to constitutionality'.

Too hot to handle

In the early weeks of the strike Kinnock's tactics were to say as little as possible or ignore the strike altogether. The Labour leader rejected three opportunities for an Opposition Day session on the dispute and set his face against calls for an emergency debate in Parliament.

Labour's silence on the matter provoked ribald comments from the media and anger from striking miners. One Kent miner warned Kinnock of 'a mutiny': 'He's the captain of the ship but he doesn't give a toss about us, all he cares about is votes'.

When Labour MPs did venture out of their cocoon to make minor forays into parliamentary debates, it was only to call for conciliation or to condemn the violence and intimidation of mass pickets.

In a debate on pit closures on 12 March, Labour's energy spokesman Stanley Orme pleaded with Tory energy secretary Peter Walker to 'intervene and bring both sides together' in 'meaningful discussion'.

Keep it legal

Anxious to distance the party from any action that might alienate public opinion, Labour leaders repeatedly condemned violence, intimidation and mass pickets. At the earliest opportunity Labour home affairs spokesman Gerald Kaufman stuck the boot in against the miners' flying pickets:

'We condemn all violence in all circumstances. That includes... violence in pursuit of industrial disputes, even when it occurs among people who feel impotent in the face of the destruction of their jobs.'

At a speech to the Scottish TUC, apparently in

'support' of the miners, Kinnock began by pressing for an initiative to end the strike, echoing right-wing union bureaucrat Terry Duffy's call for Thatcher to intervene and bring both sides together. He emphasised that the trade union movement had never 'sought, adopted or encouraged the use of intimidation', and denounced picket line violence and illegal action.

On the fence

By early April, the Labour Party was coming under increasing pressure to get off the fence and say where it stood on the miners' strike. Kinnock repeatedly undermined attempts by Labour left wingers to press for an emergency debate in Parliament.

Kinnock eventually resolved his predicament by announcing a 'safe' subject for debate – the erosion of civil liberties through the extension of police powers. Even then, Labour leaders were terrified that they would be unable to restrict the debate to this congenial territory.

Rather than mobilise labour movement resistance to the state offensive against the miners, the Labour Party preferred to debate the infringement of civil liberties that it implied. But it still refused to take sides with the miners against the bosses and the state.

But even Kinnock's lukewarm utterances were too much for Labour right wingers such as Peter Shore and Gerald Kaufman, who clearly disapproved of his 'support' for the strike.

While the Labour leadership hedged its bets, the Labour left refused to challenge the party line – or lack of it. Asked what he thought about the party's disappearing act every time it was confronted with the strike, Tony Benn backed Kinnock to the hilt:

'I am concerned to do the job that I was elected to do and not to criticise others. If solidarity is the order of the day, it means solidarity with the party as a whole and its elected leadership.'

'It is vital that nothing that is said or done now should weaken Labour as the alternative to Thatcher.'

Crisis

The increasingly bitter character of the miners' strike

has thrown the crisis of the official labour movement into sharp relief. After nearly two months of pretending that the strike wasn't happening the Labour leadership was forced to take it more seriously.

The TUC's inability to play any role in the dispute and the increasing fragmentation of the miners' union compelled the Labour Party to step in as a surrogate for the national trade union bureaucracy. The Labour leaders dreaded the consequences of the break-up of the miners' union – a bastion of Labour Party support for more than 70 years – more than it feared the odium of the media. No matter how much the Labour leadership might loathe Arthur Scargill, it cannot afford to stand back and watch the disintegration of the official labour movement.

In late April the Labour Party executive voted in favour of a weekly levy of constituency party members in support of the miners; a

paper resolution, but a gesture nevertheless. Prominent Labour Party spokesmen became less guarded about commenting on the dispute.

Gestures

At the same time, the Labour left began to devote more resources to the strike. The left's community activists got involved in collecting money and food and helping out at miners' welfare clubs. Their token gestures of solidarity were designed to restore some of Labour's lost credibility with rank and file miners.

Labour's sudden switch from stubborn silence to restrained support indicated a desire to back the miners without offending the middle class electorate. As Roy Hattersley pointed out in a television debate, Labour's rhetorical commitment to the working class should not be taken at face value:

'None of us should have our rhetoric held against us... I mean, speeches to

mass audiences are not like Dead Sea Scrolls that you analyse word by word.'

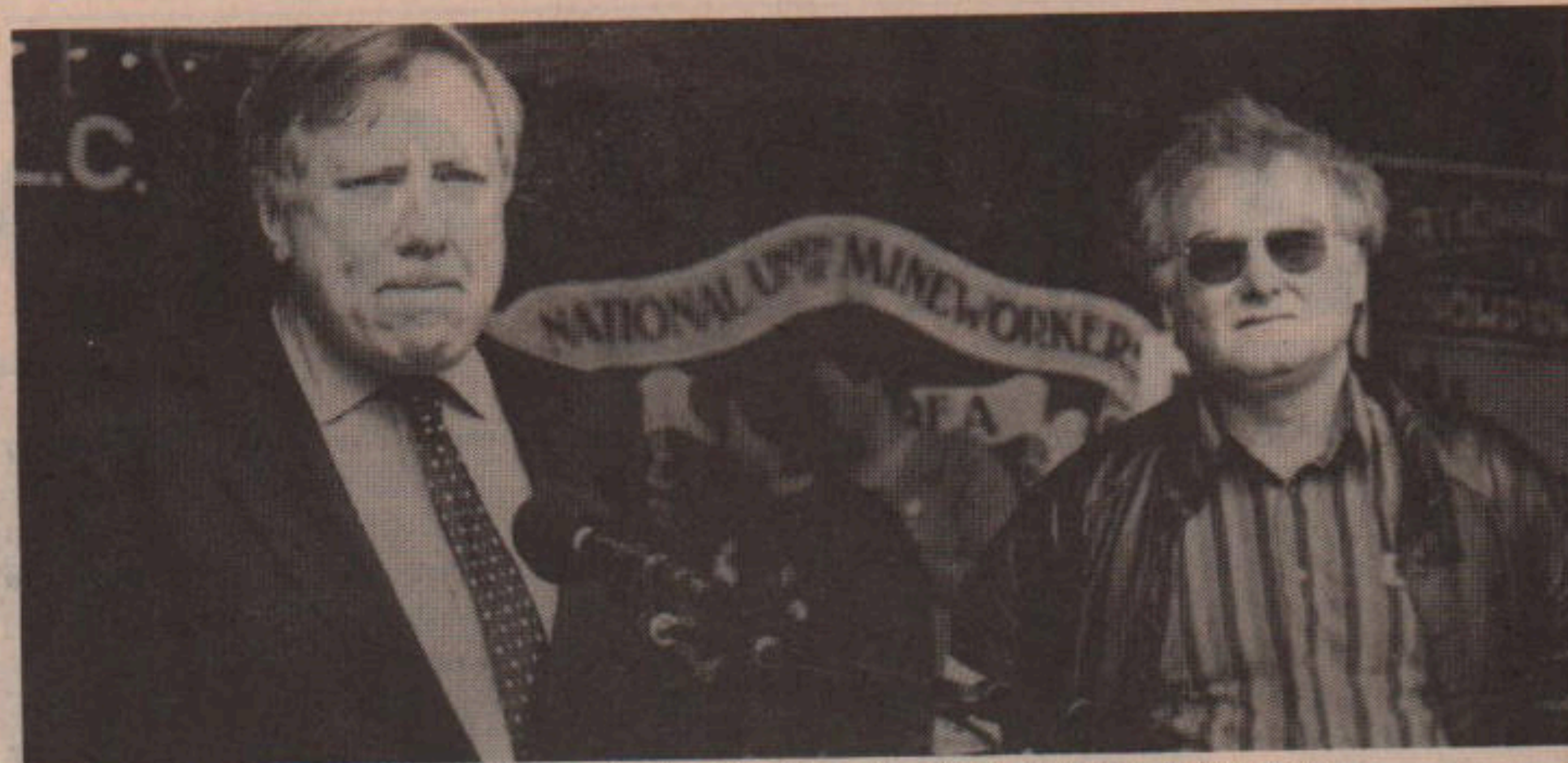
Opportunities

For the Labour Party the politicisation of trade union disputes is something to be feared and fought against. For the Revolutionary Communist Party, it is a welcome and positive development.

The scale of the capitalist offensive means that today even the most mundane struggle over wages and conditions cannot be resolved at the bosses' expense by traditional trade union methods.

This means that workers are looking for answers that the Labour Party and the trade union leaders cannot give them, and are more open to political alternatives. And it means that the potential for developing a coherent working class response is stronger than ever before.

Nasreen Khan



Speaking no evil: tight-lipped Hattersley fears backing the strike will cost Labour votes

Chris Black (reflex)

'It is political. It's not just to shut the pits down – it's to defeat the working class as well, that's why it's so important to the Government. That's why they'll do everything in their power to see we don't win.'

(Yorkshire miner, Armthorpe, 27 April)

Election success

Building support for the miners was a central feature of the RCP's local election campaigns in Ashton under Lyne and in Bradford.

Dave Hallsworth, who stood as the RCP candidate in Ashton at last year's General Election, contested a seat on the council in St Peters ward and won 135 votes.

He visited strikers at the local Moorlights factory with miners from Hatfield in Yorkshire and organised factory gate meetings at Massey Ferguson in Trafford Park.

The RCP election team combined doorstep canvassing on working class estates with food collections for the miners.

The election campaign gave us the opportunity to press our demand for an unemployed workers' centre, funded by the council and run by the unemployed.

Having agreed to the centre nearly two years ago, the council is still 'looking for sites'. Labour council leader Roy Oldham told us 'it's no good complaining about the



Ashton: RCP won four per cent of the vote

delay'. We will be complaining, however, in July in a demonstration outside the Town Hall with the local unemployed.

Eileen McEvoy, RCP candidate in Wibsey, Bradford, got 90 votes. We held factory gate meetings at Renolds and Metal Box and raised money for Yorkshire miners.

We also arranged for striking miners to visit the nurses at Bradford's Thornton View hospital, which is threatened with closure, and for the nurses to go to the miners' rally in Sheffield.

We demanded free all-day nursery provision on the massive Buttershaw estate, and a lively campaign is now under way. And we argued that workers must oppose attempts to fuel a climate of anti-immigrant hysteria by defending Bradford Asians' right to eat Halal meat.

In Ashton and Bradford workers were keen to discuss the miners' strike and the other political issues. And 225 of them showed that they preferred revolutionary politics to the tired arguments of the Labour Party.

Top US gangster in London

(and a French one, and an Italian one, and a British one...)

This month, Ronald Reagan is in town for the West's annual economic summit. Reagan's visit has provoked protests from opponents of his bloody wars in Central America and the Middle East. But he is only one of the seven imperialist pirates who will sit down in London to discuss the division of the booty of the Third World.

Just how to divide that booty has caused considerable friction between the European powers and America in the run-up to the summit.

● **Trade:** shrinking world markets and industrial collapse have sparked fierce competition and prompted moves towards protectionism in every Western capital.

More than 100 legal controls to protect American industry are pending in Congress. Current tensions over transatlantic trade centre on new technology and subsidies to old steel and agricultural sectors.

● **Finance:** the Third World debt crisis tops the summit agenda. European powers rail against America's high interest rates, which threaten the stability of Western banking by pushing Third World debtors towards default, and deprive investment-starved Europe of capital by attracting Continental cash to US banks. 'You don't print money any more, you import it' was former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt's attack on American statesmen earlier this year. The near-collapse of the huge Continental Illinois bank of Chicago last month did nothing to re-

lieve these tensions.

European capitalists are also furious at Reagan's unitary taxation, which impedes their attempts to set up shop in the USA.

● **Defence:** economic competition is spilling over into military matters. Reagan has tried to stop European hi-tech sales to East Europe because they could aid the Soviet defence build-up.

Tearing

Conflict over America's role as the West's military policeman has prompted calls for independent Continental cooperation on rearmament — 'Eurodefence'. Dormant defence bodies like the Western European Union and Nato's Eurogroup have re-emerged.



The gang's all here: imperialist bosses are in London to share out the loot

Emergent technology — ET — is a bone of contention between Europe and America. As a sophisticated system of conventional weaponry, ET is an attractive alternative to nuclear armour. But, as *The Economist* noted, Nato's headache is how to 'get the new equipment into the field without tearing itself apart'.

The snag for Europe is Washington's control over ET. Mitterrand of France, Kohl of West Germany and Thatcher of Britain don't like the idea of spending \$10-\$30 billion tooling up Europe with American hardware. They are pushing hard to open up a two-way transatlantic arms trade.

Arguments about military technology reached a head in May over plans for a Nato frigate to be built by all member countries. The Pentagon produced a list of last-minute qualifications to safeguard America's 'intellectual property' while allowing the US defence department access to Europe's technical know-how.

The American conditions were withdrawn after a barrage of European protest indicated that Continental imperialists were no longer willing to accept Washington's dictat. 'Three years ago, the Europeans would have accepted (the qualifications) without a murmur', moaned one US official, 'but there is a very different spirit now'.

Clash

Europe's 'very different spirit' towards America merely reflects the very different world the imperialists are attempting to control in the eighties: a world

wrecked by recession where the survival of one capitalist power depends on the defeat of another.

The debates dividing Socialist Mitterrand, Tory Thatcher and Republican Reagan at the summit are not about 'socialism vs imperialism' or 'good vs evil'. The question is only whether the policeman of Third World countries is to be a Washington cop, a Paris gendarme or a London bobby.

Upstarts

Europe and America are divided over who gets the biggest share of the take, but united in their determination to keep the Third World under imperialist domination.

Britain is as keen as anybody to meet the challenges facing imperialism today. Last month's defence White Paper set a budget of £17 billion — the biggest per capita arms bill in Western Europe. And Thatcher will be pushing an international anti-terrorist code — directed against Third World upstarts — at the 'economic' summit.

Thieves

As economic and political competition among Western powers becomes sharper, the road from the summit is downhill towards the Third World War. But it is a road the imperialists will travel together.

Every Western politician is a warmonger. Ronald Reagan is only the most rapacious because he has the most to lose. Our job is not to differentiate among the gang of thieves assembled in London this month, but to oppose them all.

Smash Apartheid

On 2 June PW Botha becomes the first South African premier to set foot in Britain since Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of Apartheid, came in 1961 to rally support against South Africa's expulsion from the Commonwealth.

South Africa is still banned from the forums of world diplomacy. But Botha's visit to Thatcher is the latest step in the apartheid state's reintegration into the imperialist fold.

Trappings

South Africa's ostracism from the international club has always been a formal affair. It has not interfered with massive Western investments in industry and mining there, nor with regular exchanges between Western governments and the apartheid regime.

But today even the trappings of isolation — such as the sporting boycott — are dispensable. While Botha is in Britain, an English rugby team takes the field in South Africa.

Intervention

The West's new cordiality towards Pretoria has nothing to do with Thatcher and Reagan being racists (which they are) or Botha being a liberal (which he isn't). It is prompted by the effects of recession in Southern Africa, and South Africa's position as the continent's only imperialist power.

The underdeveloped

economies of Southern Africa are torn by drought and stagnation. The potential for social upheaval is immense.

The West needs a local policeman it can rely on to control the region. As one establishment journal observes, 'regimes may fall, and outside intervention be invited'. It made clear who the West is relying on to intervene:

'South Africa is the only power in the area with the wealth and strength to prevent this process degenerating into starvation and civil war.'

Pretoria's recent successes in shooting and bullying its black neighbour states into subservience has encouraged Western imperialists to open their doors to Botha.

Liberation

We condemn Botha's visit to London and give full backing to the liberation struggles in Southern Africa. Thatcher's warming relations with the Pretoria regime indicate that British imperialism is a vital Western prop on which apartheid terror rests. Building an anti-imperialist movement in Britain would be a mighty contribution towards liberation in Africa.

As the imperialist club unites to maintain oppression, so the international proletariat must unite against it. Together, workers in the West and the struggling African masses can smash the apartheid state.

CND and ET

For CND, 'Ronnie Ray-gun's' Cruise missiles are the gravest threat to peace and life in Britain. The peace movement has promised 'the biggest civil disobedience protest since the sixties' when Reagan is in London on 9 June.

CND has long argued that British imperialism should get rid of nukes and stick to conventional defence. The rise of Emergent Technology systems has convinced CND leaders that it is now practicable to dump nuclear weapons and still defend Britain.

A recent CND brochure extolled the virtues of non-

nuclear defence by calling on Britain to 'refuse Cruise' in favour of a 'computerised fire barrier in Central Europe'.

This enthusiasm for conventional weaponry is not confined to CND. Imperialists—from all Western powers—have always used them to murder and oppress their way around the world. Since CND started in the fifties, nobody has been killed in a nuclear war. But hundreds of thousands have died in imperialist-backed wars fought with cruder versions of the conventional weapons CND now applauds.

Some of the West's wars (From the start of CND to 1983)

War	Deaths
East Timor/Indonesia	250 000
Philippines	100 000
Iran/Iraq	100 000
Lebanon	80 000
El Salvador	30 000
Chad	20 000
Namibia	8 000
Ireland	2 200
Malvinas	1 800

Some of these wars have been raging almost since CND began. All of them are still going on. If you want peace, fight against today's wars—whether they're sponsored from the White House or Downing Street.

The cause of Labour -or the cause of Ireland?

On 3 May the Labour Party swept the Tories out of office in Birmingham. The very next day the new Labour council tried to sweep the Irish Freedom Movement off the city's streets. Newly elected right-wing Labour leader Dick Knowles withdrew council facilities for the Irish Freedom Movement's 5 May commemoration of the death of Bobby Sands (see box).

Knowles used the threatened National Front counter-demonstration as an excuse for his ban. He thought it 'a pity' that, in a clash between such 'undesirable elements', there might be damage 'to the statue of Joseph Chamberlain, and might be possible contamination of water in the fountain'.

The real motivation for Labour's attempted ban had little to do with the prospect of grubby fascists being dunked in the fountain, or of swastikas being scratched on the monument to a nineteenth century British imperialist. Knowles' concern was to defend the British imperialists of the eighties and insulate Birmingham from the message of Irish Freedom.

For once, Labour's right wing was taking a lead from the left. Back in January radical Labour council leader and party executive member David Blunkett had banned the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration march in Sheffield.

Blunkett too blamed fascists for the ban. But his action was a response to hysteria whipped up around the IRA bomb at Harrods before Christmas, and the refusal of local Sinn Féin and Irish Freedom Movement supporters to comply with his demand to con-

demn this 'outrage'.

Strange

At first sight it seems strange that Labour's attacks on anti-imperialists are coming at a time when the party, through the Labour Committee on Ireland, is at the forefront of what remains of the left's Irish solidarity movement. Stranger still, left-wing solidarity activists have effectively backed the bans. The same people who herald the advance of the LCI also uphold Labour's assault on supporters of Irish freedom.

When the Irish Freedom Movement launched a campaign against Blunkett's attack on democratic rights, the steering committee of the Troops Out Movement wrote to assure him of their support. 'We accept and share', affirmed TOM's national leaders, 'your criticisms of the Revolutionary Communist Party and Irish Freedom Movement and their conduct around this demonstration'. 'However', they pointed out, 'the public

at large' had seen the ban 'as a denial of the right of people to commemorate the events of Bloody Sunday'.

TOM advised Blunkett to 'circulate' his position to 'relevant organisations'. Shortly afterwards, the Labour Committee on Ireland gave up two pages of its paper to allow Blunkett to set forth his reasons for the Bloody Sunday ban.

Cover

Both TOM and the LCI have accepted Labour Party bans on Irish solidarity at the same time as they are stepping up their own activity on Ireland. This apparent contradiction reflects the two sides of Labour's approach to the Irish War today.

As the Irish War nears the end of its fifteenth year the British establishment is increasingly keen to stamp out all opposition in Ireland and at home. British terror has been stepped up in the Six Counties, and the 'temporary provisions' of the Prevention of Terrorism Act made permanent to further these ends.

Labour Party bureaucrats have accepted the dictates of the establishment. They have acquiesced to repression in the Six Counties and cracked down on opposition in their localities. But such undemocratic behaviour leaves them vulnerable to



Ken Livingstone presumes to tell the Irish to give up their fight for freedom

attack.

To cover its flank, the Labour Party has allowed the LCI to take on a more active public role. It has been able to do so because the Irish solidarity activists who stood for Parliament against Labour leaders in the seventies are now loyal party members.

The party leadership and the LCI have established a working division of labour. The LCI has been given some room to manoeuvre. In return, its leading members have concentrated their energies on casting Labour as a potentially valuable friend of Ireland.

Decline

The Labour Committee, on Ireland claims to be the 'new face' of Irish solidarity work in Britain. Yet it numbers a lot of old faces among its leading members. Virtually the entire leadership and activist core of the Troops Out Movement is now in the Labour Party. Many members are local councillors or local party officials. In 10 years all that has changed is the name of the organisation.

TOM's merger with the Labour Party stems from the failure of its approach to solidarity work. TOM has been in decline almost from the moment it was formed

in the early seventies. Its demise was due to its fear of challenging public opinion and organising against the imperialist consensus that influences all sections of British society.

Rather than confront this consensus TOM looked for a way around it by appealing to 'middle ground' sentiments. TOM specialised in evading the cause of the war and sought support on marginal and dubious issues like the cost of the war to the British taxpayer, the erosion of civil liberties and the unnecessary use of violence. But as the war escalated, the search for a middle ground proved elusive and TOM's support dwindled. When the republican hunger-strike of 1981 polarised opinion in Britain, TOM all but shut up shop.

That same year the Labour left won a party conference commitment to eventual Irish reunification. The promise of 'freedom tomorrow' has a long tradition in the Labour Party. It is a typically cynical ploy, given Labour's support for repression today. But it was enough to inspire the rump of TOM. Irish solidarity activists joined the Labour Party and the new Labour Committee on Ireland.

The Troops Out Movement now exists only on

paper, producing a little-read bulletin (with 53 British subscribers). All activity is channelled into the Labour Party, through the LCI. And its demands have been cooked up to suit the taste of its hosts in the labour bureaucracy.

Block

Motions to this year's LCI conference indicate how far to the right the old solidarity movement has moved. The motions are grouped under two headings: 'organising to win the block votes', and 'deepening the dialogue'. 'Organising to win the block votes' sums up the LCI's attitude to solidarity work within the labour movement. Labour left wingers regularly raise Ireland at union branches and trades councils. But their obsession with paper resolutions means that influencing union bureaucrats takes priority over winning rank and file trade unionists to the cause of Irish freedom. It need not be said that the LCI does absolutely no work on the streets of British working class communities.

Aware that opposing British imperialism is not a popular idea among British labour bureaucrats, the LCI's union lobbyists avoid the central issue of the war.

Removed

The Labour left has organised a series of labour movement conferences for tiny audiences of solidarity movement and union leaders. Each successive conference has been further removed from the reality of events in the Six Counties.

When seven nationalist protesters were shot dead by plastic bullets during the hunger-strike of 1981, Labour was silent. Two years later, in the middle of an RUC/British Army shoot-to-kill campaign which murdered a dozen nationalists with lead bullets, the LCI held a conference—against plastic bullets. When the furore over Britain's use of supergrasses was at its height last year, Tony Benn joined Ken Livingstone on the platform of another conference to 'speak out' against nothing in particular, and support 'peace through democracy'.

IFM action

Three years after Bobby Sands died on hunger-strike, the 5 May anniversary of his death was marked by protests throughout Britain and Ireland. In Lurgan, County Armagh, a crowd of local nationalists stormed the RUC station. And in London and Birmingham, crowds of local Irish Freedom Movement supporters confronted police harassment and state bans.

London: an IFM motorcade festooned with flags and huge pictures of Bobby Sands raced from Brixton in the south to Kilburn in the north, taking the case for Irish

freedom — in speeches, leaflets and papers — to hundreds of Saturday shoppers. Despite police harassment throughout (our driver was locked in a police van, interrogated and breathalysed in Camden Town) the motorcade won support wherever it stopped.

Birmingham: our Bobby Sands commemoration was threatened with being banned by the new Labour council and attacked by fascists. But our protest rally and march into the city centre went ahead. Labour boss Dick Knowles suggested we hold our demonstration in Lands

End. Irish Freedom Movement speakers promised Knowles we were in Birmingham to stay.

Manchester IFM supporters toured Ashton and Oldham with labour movement speakers, and protests were held throughout Yorkshire. Now the struggle moves on to the 29 May protest at Lambeth Magistrates Court, when Irish prisoners Tommy Quigley and Paul Kavanagh are put on trial, and Sinn Féin's 3 June picket of Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight. Three years after Bobby Sands' death, the fight for the rights of Irish POWs continues.



Birmingham IFM remember Bobby Sands

Little room for manoeuvre

THINGS ARE HOTTING up inside the occupied Six Counties. Two recent reports – the Baker Review of the Emergency Provisions Act, and the New Ireland Forum report – point to the pressures that are turning the heat on British imperialism.

Sir George Baker's review of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act is a succinct summary of current British strategy.

Criminalisation

Baker notes that the Government wants to 'end terrorist crime' through the 'application of the law':

'This is called by some the policy of criminalisation (horrible word). This means that terrorists are already criminals and will be treated as such regardless of their motives. They will not, for example, be prisoners of war as they would like.' Baker prefers his jargon a trifle less vulgar, but his report endorsed the legal terror of criminalisation.

The EPA's powers – summary arrest, no-jury Diplock courts, convictions on the word of supergrasses – have put hundreds of republicans behind bars.

In May, 10 reputed republicans were sent down on the word of a supergrass: one, James Doherty, got 315 years and 10 life sentences. Meanwhile, the biggest supergrass trial to date got under way, starring self-styled INLA informer Harry Kirkpatrick. Baker's recommendation is for more of the same.

Support

While the EPA's 'conveyor belt' system of justice carries more republicans off the streets and into the H-Blocks, the notion that the Irish liberation struggle is a criminal conspiracy is being undermined by the growth in electoral support for Sinn Féin.

Baker's report suggested Britain could put a stop to this by changing the law so as to emphasise Sinn Féin's links with 'IRA terrorism'. But Sinn Féin's



Keeping it hot in Derry: nationalist resistance drives British imperialism into a corner

support in the nationalist ghettos rests on precisely that link with the liberation struggle.

No legal manoeuvre can reconcile the nationalist community with British oppression. Britain has to resort to overt repression in an effort to crush republican resistance.

Baker notes Britain's concern 'to create the conditions in which the RUC no longer require the support of the Army in enforcing the law'. To create these 'conditions' Britain must first smash the IRA. The IRA's increased activity during recent months shows, however, that this goal is further away than ever.

Smouldering

From mid-March to late April, Derry RUC logged more than 300 petrol bomb attacks on police in the city. Many involved the new 'super job' petrol bombs – glass sweet jars holding a gallon of fuel. These can instantly cover RUC or army vehicles in flames, eating up oxygen and stalling engines.

ling engines.

On 8 May the IRA in Derry used their new missiles to attack two British Army landrovers. Their smouldering occupants were forced into the line of sniper fire. Private Neil Clarke was shot – the third Brit killed by the IRA this year.

At the end of March, military police sergeant David Ross was blown up by a 200lb bomb as he drove round the outskirts of Derry. A month later a similar attack backfired. IRA volunteer Richard Quigley was killed by a concrete block thrown 60 yards by the bomb he had detonated next to two British Army jeeps in Foyle Street, Derry. Quigley was the fourth volunteer to be killed in action since January.

Away from Derry, the IRA killed three members of the security forces – two Ulster Defence Regiment men in County Tyrone and a Territorial Army officer in Newry, County Down – within the space of five days at the beginning of May.

Days later, on 18 May, massive explosions killed two RUC men near Camlough, County Armagh, and two British soldiers at Enniskillen, County Fermanagh.

Inescapable

The IRA's continuing fight for freedom made Sir George Baker's endorsement of the EPA a foregone conclusion.

The continuation of the war, Baker explained, had driven him to 'the sad but inescapable conclusion' that the 'incidence of terrorist crime is such that there is little room for manoeuvre'.

'Little room for manoeuvre' neatly characterises Britain's problem in Ireland today. The New Ireland Forum, the latest attempt to find a negotiated political solution to the war, was doomed from the start.

Cosmetic

The Forum began as the establishment Catholic parties' response to the rise of Sinn Féin in the North. It was an attempt to come

up with a cosmetic initiative to restore credibility to the Social Democratic and Labour Party's constitutional nationalism in the Six Counties.

The Forum report warned that constitutional politics were 'on trial' in Ireland: unless 'a framework' for the SDLP could be found, 'more extensive civil conflict' was inevitable.

The report put forward three options for this framework: a unitary Irish state, a federal Ireland, and a scheme for joint authority over the North between Dublin and London.

Southern nationalists' rhetorical insistence that the unitary state was the Forum's preferred option brought predictable howls of condemnation from British and Loyalist spokesmen, who made clear that British rule was not negotiable.

More sensitive elements of the British and Loyalist establishments noted positive developments in the report. The Irish parties had conceded that unity could only come with Loy-

alist consent – ie never. And alongside half-baked ideas about joint tourist boards, the plan for joint authority proposed increased cooperation with Britain on security. This is the only sort of joint operation which interests Westminster.

The cooperation Britain already enjoys from the South in its war against the republican movement was illustrated last month, in revelations about SAS assassins operating in the Twenty-six Counties during the seventies. More of the same is likely to be top of the agenda for Margaret Thatcher's proposed talks with Irish premier Garret FitzGerald this summer. Winning the war against the IRA is the only solution they have to discuss.

War

There can be no negotiated political solution to the conflict in the Six Counties. The *Daily Telegraph's* John O'Sullivan recently put all the hot air about the Forum's political solutions in perspective. British policy, he noted, is divided into two parts. The 'formal public policy' is the search for a negotiated compromise. This cannot be found: 'parties with directly opposed views on the very existence of the state cannot share power'.

'The real British policy', O'Sullivan continued, 'emerges by default'. 'The everyday business of governing' continues:

'A factory here needs a subsidy; a new road is demanded in this district; the Army is asking for a new form of anti-riot gear. Ministers take these decisions almost automatically.' While the talking shops come and go, the British state machine gets on with the job of running its war in the Six Counties. That is the division of labour between the New Ireland Forum and Sir George Baker. After almost 15 years of the Irish War, the British state has no room to do anything else.

Eddie Veale

The Cause of Labour (cont)

This year the LCI's campaigns have reached new heights of absurdity. While the war intensifies (see above) the big issue for the left is opposing the manoeuvres of a handful of Stalinists who want Labour to set up 'shop' in the Six Counties.

Escape

Labour left wingers will admit that these talking shops are inadequate. But they are 'a start'. In fact they are a barrier to effective solidarity work in the labour movement. Paper initiatives around peripheral

issues provide an escape route for union bureaucrats. 'Our union doesn't need to support your campaign for "Troops out now"', they can tell anti-imperialists, 'we're sponsoring the LCI conference against plastic bullets'.

Talking

The LCI wants to 'deepen the dialogue' it has begun with Sinn Féin. Leading LCI figures like Ken Livingstone have met republicans in Belfast and brought Sinn Féin speakers to Britain. This has been hailed as a great

advance for the solidarity movement. But 'dialogue' in itself is neither a good nor a bad thing. What counts is the content of their conversations with Sinn Féin.

In its meetings with Sinn Féin the LCI has condemned the national liberation struggle and advised republicans to give up their guns in return for negotiations. The LCI wants the republican movement to concentrate on electioneering and 'community politics'.

Ken Livingstone even claims that Sinn Féin has 'developed a full programme of social reform akin to that

of the British Labour Party'. Far from changing Labour into an anti-imperialist party, the LCI is trying to convert a national liberation movement to Labour's pro-imperialist traditions.

Fear

The LCI's acquiescence to attacks on anti-imperialists is the flipside of its loyalty to Labour.

In his recent interview with the LCI about the Sheffield Bloody Sunday ban, David Blunkett summed up Labour's worries about the Irish war:

'My view of the situation was affected by my concerns about the Irish Freedom Movement. I think they use the issue of Ireland to pursue their avowed aim of smashing the Labour Party.'

What really worries Blunkett is not the Irish Freedom

Movement, but the Irish liberation struggle's potential for exposing the hypocrisy of his party.

The IFM's 'avowed aim' is to win support for the Irish people's fight against the British state. The Labour Party's 'avowed aim' is to defend the state on which its plans to govern Britain depend. That's why bureaucrats like Blunkett hate Irish freedom fighters and cannot stomach anti-imperialist movements on their doorstep. Having made their peace with Labour, the Irish solidarity activists of yesterday have to go along with its bans and proscriptions on anti-war activity.

Demands

The LCI's pretensions to be the leading force for Irish solidarity in Britain are groundless. The tired clique

of TOM members at its core has given up the basic demands of a movement for Irish freedom.

The woolly motions on 'eventual British withdrawal' which they put to Labour conferences never raise the demand for 'Troops out now'. And the negotiated British solution they propose through 'deepening the dialogue' with Sinn Féin goes against the anti-imperialist call for 'Self-determination for the Irish people'.

For us the demands 'Troops out now' and 'Self-determination for the Irish people' are not negotiable. We will carry that message to where it counts—among rank and file workers. And as in Sheffield and Birmingham, we will not allow Labour politicians to drive anti-imperialists off the streets.

Mick Hume

Nupe support

All mouth, no action

AT ITS ANNUAL conference in mid-May the National Union of Public Employees voted for national industrial action to support the strike by 90 women cleaners at Barking Hospital in East London. Yet in the same breath as he approved this strategy, Nupe's assistant general secretary Ron Keating admitted the 'difficulties of putting our action where our mouth is'.

Keating wasn't exaggerating. Nupe would like to use the Barking strike as a showpiece to tout its defence of its women workers. But the union leaders know that they cannot deliver the goods.

Front line

Nupe has 700 000 members — two thirds are women and half are part-timers. Most are hospital ancillary workers, cleaners, catering staff and council manual workers in the front line of the attack on the public sector.

Women make up 85 per cent or 3.5m of Britain's army of part-time workers. The growth in part-time work was the main cause of expanding job opportunities — mainly in the service sector — for women in the seventies.

Today, 40 per cent of all female employees work part-time in low-paid, women-only jobs. But even these limited opportunities for women to supplement their family income are now being drastically curbed.

Across the country, public sector employers are tearing up contracts of employment and national agreements. Thousands of women workers are being given ultimatums to accept cuts in hours and pay or get the sack.

Under pressure

Nupe is under pressure to resist this offensive as its membership is being decimated. But the union leaders are more concerned to protect their relationship with the employers and the state, and to preserve their consultation and negotiating machinery, than to defend their members' interests.

Behind all the rhetoric about fighting private contractors at the Nupe conference in May, the union bureaucrats set out to sabotage rank and file action against privatisation.

A motion calling for a national campaign against privatisation was opposed by the union leaders. And so was a resolution demanding a TUC boycott of all

Government consultation bodies, including the National Economic Development Council. The Nupe leaders are so bound up with the state that they cannot contemplate severing links with its machinery of collaboration.

To cover their backs, the union bureaucrats made excuses about their failure to authorise industrial action. The national officials stressed the problems involved in persuading their members to support the women at Barking Hospital. They blamed other public sector unions — Cohse and the GMBATU — for obstructing campaigns against privatisation.

Nupe bureaucrats blame their members and other unions for their own failure to give a lead. In reality, the union leaders are too closely tied to the state to lead a fight for jobs against it.

Disastrous

The union leaders' reliance on the state means that they look to the courts and other mediating institutions, not to the rank and file, to defend jobs and conditions.

This strategy has had disastrous consequences for women workers in the public sector as several recent disputes involving school dinner ladies in Birmingham, Hertfordshire and East Sussex indicate.

From 1979 to 1983, part-time jobs for school dinner ladies fell by more than 11 per cent and full-time jobs by more than 55 per cent. Now local authority employers are moving in for the kill.

● **Birmingham:** 5500 staff were sacked and offered new contracts involving cuts in pay and hours, abolition of holiday retainer (half pay during holidays), abolition of laundry allowance and free dinner. Union High Court action in March blocked the council pending judicial review. In mid-April, the courts ruled that the council acted unconstitutionally but said that it could reintroduce the cuts scheme by following the correct legal procedures.

● **Hertfordshire:** from March 1976 to September 1983 the council slashed 4000 jobs. In March 1984 the council offered new contracts to 4100 staff involving a 17 per cent cut in pay, reduction in hours and elimination of holiday retainer. Staff were given until 6 April to accept the contracts. The unions applied for a

judicial review. On 16 April the High Court ruled that the council had every right to reduce wages and change conditions of work to make economies.

● **East Sussex:** in March the council decided to dismiss its 1800 school meals staff and offer them contracts involving a 20 per cent wage cut and inferior terms. Nupe again applied for a judicial review and again the courts decided in the council's favour.

● **Somerset:** the council abolished the retaining fee. The staff's appeal to an industrial tribunal was unsuccessful.

● **Merton:** 350 staff were sacked in spring 1983. Private contractor Sutcliffe Catering took on 240.

The unions' strategy of defending jobs and pay through appealing to the courts was doomed to failure from the start. The judges were not likely to grant something which the unions were not prepared to fight for themselves.

But the Nupe and GMBATU bureaucrats haven't given up yet. They are now considering the possibility of an appeal or referring individual cases to industrial tribunals claiming unfair dismissal.

Meanwhile, GMBATU members in East Sussex have been advised to sign the new contracts. And the union side of the National Joint Council is trying — through committee room procedures — to challenge local authorities which breach the National Joint Council Agreement.

The unions are more concerned to preserve the national negotiating machinery and stop councils abrogating national agreements than to organise workers against the cuts.

Showpiece motions such as the conference decision to back the Barking women, and legal bluster about 'unreasonable behaviour' cannot defend women workers' jobs.

The only way that the women at Barking hospital and school dinner ladies nationwide can secure their jobs is by organising solidarity action from their fellow Nupe and GMBATU members and from workers in other unions. Instead of relying on the state to protect women's jobs and conditions we have to rely on workers' strength to defend them against the state's offensive.

Claire Gilmour
and Debbie Palmer

Abortion in Scotland



Family christening group? No, underground anti-abortion cell in Scotland

Innocents abroad

'Glasgow's miles better' say the grinning bubble men on advertising hoardings all over Glasgow and London. For women in need of an abortion, Glasgow's miles worse.

A rotten bloc of the church, the state and the medical profession makes Scotland in general — and Glasgow in particular — an abortion-free zone.

● More than 1000 Scottish women were forced to travel south to expensive English abortion agencies last year for want of facilities in Scotland.

● Glasgow's well-equipped Western Infirmary refuses to consider abortions because of its consultants' prejudices. ● Anti-abortion agencies in Glasgow have been given parastatal status with support from local councils and government bodies.

● Leading Labour Party figures are prominent campaigners against abortion. Top consultants in the West of Scotland are renowned for their anti-abortion attitudes. While NHS hospitals such as Glasgow's Western Infirmary won't touch abortions, all of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service's cases are referred south to England.

These prejudices are self-perpetuating in a medical profession where young doctors' careers depend on echoing their consultants' opinions.

Innocents

Bigoted opposition to abortion is not confined to doctors. A broad consensus covers almost every section of the Scottish establishment.

Anti-abortion agencies such as Life and Spuc have public offices in Glasgow. Alongside these well-known campaigns, the Society of the Innocents (Glasgow) pursues an insidious war against abortion.

The Innocents use religion to support their campaign against women's rights.

With messages of goodwill from the Pope, they have set up an 'interdenominational pro-life cell movement'. This is essentially an underground network of anti-abortion agents.

The Innocents claim more than 150 operating cells. Teenagers have been recruited into cells in scores of schools in the West of Scotland. Members are given responsibility for 'keeping a sensitive watch for any pregnant woman, married or single who may be in need of pro-life cell support'. Cells press women to follow through unwanted pregnancy to birth rather than have an abortion.

Intrigue

The Innocents' efforts to police women's lives are not only supported by the government of the Vatican City. Labour Party — controlled Strathclyde Regional and Glasgow District councils and the Manpower Services Commission, all provide grants for the Society, effectively backing its anti-abortion intrigue.

The Labour Party Lord Provost of Glasgow, Dr Michael Kelly, is the man who instigated the 'Glasgow's miles better' campaign to give the city's tarnished image a new gloss and attract investors to Glasgow. Another of Dr Kelly's pet projects is already plastered all over Strathclyde public transport: advertisements for the Society of the Innocents.

While prominent individuals in its ranks are in the forefront of the anti-abortion campaign, Labour as a party has tried to dismiss the issue of abortion in Scotland as 'divisive'. Strathclyde regional Labour councillor Katherine Adams summed up the party's fears:

'The Labour Party of course has never been able to take a stand because of strong religious feelings on either side.'

Labour cannot 'take a stand'

in defence of abortion rights for fear of alienating reactionary sections of its support.

Unity

Revolutionary communists in Glasgow have no such fears. For us, fighting for every woman's right to free abortion on demand is not divisive. It is vital if we are to lay the basis for real working class unity, by giving women the chance to get involved in the movement instead of being tied to the home.

The anti-abortion consensus in Glasgow endorses women's role as wives and mothers.

Reactionary prejudices which tie Scottish workers to the church and state offensive against women's rights can only benefit the establishment, preparing the way for further cuts in women's jobs and health facilities.

Revolutionary communists have begun to challenge this consensus by campaigning for free abortion on demand.

We have organised lobbies of the Labour council to demand an end to its support for anti-abortion agencies, and support for extending abortion facilities. And we are fighting against the medical profession's veto on abortion in the West of Scotland.

On 5 May, we organised a lively counter-demonstration to a Life march through Glasgow. We will continue to campaign against those who use religious bigotry to justify women's oppression. No bishop, doctor or Labour councillor has the right to dictate how working class women organise their lives. When Scottish workers take up the fight for abortion rights, we will be closer to building a movement which campaigns for workers' right to control how we live. That's the way to make Glasgow miles better for all of us.

Jenny Graham
and Kerry Dean

the next step

A few home truths

We are witnessing some of the most significant working class struggles in more than a decade. The miners' strike in Britain, the occupation of Citroen factories by French carworkers, and the strike and lock out of German metalworkers indicate the international dimensions of the present upheaval. In country after country hundreds of thousands of workers are prepared to resist the employers' offensive. Yet despite this determination to fight back, unless the conduct and leadership of these struggles change the workers involved will be defeated. In every instance the strike movement has been monopolised by union leaders who cannot or will not take the measures necessary to win (see pages 4-7 and 12-13). Nowhere is this clearer than in the miners' strike.

It is always unpopular to criticise and sow doubt about the likely outcome in the midst of a struggle. But to ignore real problems would be to evade responsibility for the future of our class. As matters stand at present, we are faced with a miners' strike that could go on for a considerable period of time, but one that cannot be won by its existing leadership with its existing strategy. It is clear that such an outcome would not only represent a crushing blow to the miners – it would also have a devastating impact on the entire British working class. To speak plainly is not to be defeatist but to face facts as they are, and not as we would like them to be. This is particularly important now – for it is still possible to alter the course of the strike and avoid defeat.

The ruling class is prepared to sit this one out for as long as is necessary. By turning the screw the establishment hopes that the gradual impoverishment of striking miners will take its toll. By building up and intensifying police operations and victimising militants, the bosses hope to demoralise the pickets and deter anybody else from supporting the action. While this is going on, the Government can sit back and pontificate about its 'non-involvement' in the dispute. The Tories plan to keep a low profile and not to initiate any negotiations until they are sure that significant groups of miners are hungry, demoralised and vulnerable. In the meantime, MacGregor has been

assigned the task of probing for weak spots. He is trying to appeal to local and regional differences, make deals here and there, and set one group of miners against another.

The bosses have made all the running. Instead of building political support for the miners, the Labour Party has cast itself in the role of honest broker. Stan Orme and Neil Kinnock have been discussing with Scargill and MacGregor to see if there is any common ground for negotiations. The rest of the Labour front bench has been appealing to Thatcher to preside over negotiations. Asking Thatcher to mediate in the dispute is like asking the general of an opposing army to see the point of view of both sides in a war. Labour leaders may want to play this 'disinterested' mediating role, but Thatcher has made clear where she stands.

The miners do not need mediators. They need 100 per cent support from the labour movement. However, matters go much further. The leaders of the official labour movement are not simply unreliable 'friends'. Their search for compromises and mediation, best illustrated by Kinnock's agenda for negotiation, represents the open road of betrayal. Negotiations under present conditions – with coal moving relatively freely and more than 40 pits working – mean that miners would be negotiating from a position of weakness.

It is essential that miners reject Labour's attempts to open sell-out talks between the NUM and the Coal Board. Miners should tell Kinnock and the rest in no uncertain terms what is expected of a party that miners have helped finance for decades: not fence-sitting but full support – in deeds, not words.

Since labour movement leaders cannot be trusted, the miners must appeal to other sections of the working class directly. This is crucial to carry the struggle forward. The fiascos at Ravenscraig and Port Talbot show that behind-the-scenes negotiations between union officials lead only to stalling and face-saving compromises. In terms of closing down industry and making the miners' strike bite, these deals have been 100 per cent useless.

The miners' strike has lost its momentum. As a result it has become more difficult to win the support of other sections of

the labour movement. After almost three months the initial wave of support has subsided and much enthusiasm has been lost. Under the influence of their own leaders, workers who at first wanted to do something positive have been pushed to the sidelines as passive observers.

Hundreds of thousands of workers still want the miners to win. But this support has to be mobilised. The only people who can activate the tremendous potential that still exists for winning new allies are the miners themselves. It is essential that delegations of miners visit rail, transport and power workers to address them directly. It is necessary to bypass the rules and approach activists in other industries for practical support.

The divisions among miners have become more entrenched. Many strikers have now given up hope of getting the Nottinghamshire miners out, and argue that the struggle must continue without them. But the fight to win the Notts miners must not be given up. Whether we like it or not, as long as 40 pits are working victory becomes a remote prospect.

The NUM leadership made a grave mistake by backing away from a national ballot at the outset of the strike. Scargill's refusal to consult the rank and file showed that he lacked confidence in the cause of the miners, and in his ability to convince the mass of his members. Rather than organising a campaign to win the support of the Notts miners, Scargill simply wrote them off. The tragedy is that in the early stages of the strike a ballot could have been won – and the strike could have received considerable support from Notts.

During the first six weeks of the strike, the RCP argued vehemently for a campaign to win a ballot for a national strike. We argued that the Notts men were misguided and influenced by the most backward of leaders, but that they could not be ignored. Although there are many class traitors among the Notts NUM (not least in its leadership) the Notts miners cannot be dismissed simply as scabs. Even today Notts miners at work are refusing to take on the lucrative extra work resulting from the strike and are keeping to the NUM's overtime ban.

The failure to mount a campaign in the Notts area means that those at work have become increasingly set in their attitude to the strike. Today, it is no

longer possible to win a ballot for an all-out strike. The reason for this does not only lie with the Notts miners. The failure to close down all pits has prevented the strike from moving forward. While the strike should have been closing down power stations in its second week, miners were still preoccupied trying to stop pits from working in the second month of the dispute. This drawn out conflict has strengthened the passivity and fear of those striking miners who are not involved in the picketing.

Many strikers blame the Notts men for the existing state of affairs. But they should be blaming the NUM leadership. Today the Notts leaders stand side by side with Scargill, yet only a few weeks ago they were doing their best to sabotage the strike. McGahey has changed his mind about picketing Ravenscraig more often than Scottish pickets have had hot dinners. And Scargill himself only got directly involved in the dispute in its sixth week.

Scargill has promised that this strike could go on until December. This may well happen. But a protracted strike lasting for months cannot benefit workers. With every month strikers become more impoverished and more desperate to survive. The longer a dispute, the more it tends to lose its dynamism. That's why successful actions have always been ones where workers marshalled all their forces quickly and went for the kill, forcing the employers to give in. Long disputes like the 1926 miners' strike produce martyrs and victims – short strikes like the ones in 1972 and 1974 lead to victories.

We have one last chance to win. To do that miners have to escalate their action, approach other groups of workers, and take control of the dispute themselves. More effort must go into Nottinghamshire. Many who are still at work will not be swayed by arguments. But there are those who will be and others who can at least be neutralised. This is the only way to minimise the influence of the hard core of scabs.

The miners are no longer only fighting pit closures. They are also confronting the state – the police, the courts and Parliament. At present these forces represent a major threat to the strikers. But by challenging the state, the struggle against that threat can become a focus for uniting wider sections of the working class and the oppressed. We have nothing to lose, and all to win.

Internationalism

Internationalism is a word often used but a principle rarely honoured by the official labour movement. Yet our discussion of the European working class highlights basic similarities between class relations on the Continent and in Britain. Whether at home or abroad, the struggles of our class have been hijacked by union bureaucrats whose interests are at variance with those of the rank and file. Many of the struggles taking place are being manipulated to strengthen the prestige of the fat cats in the union bureaucracy.

At Citroen in France, the communist union leaders have organised a strike and occupation to improve their bargaining position at the expense of other union

federations. What is despicable is the union leaders' use of immigrant workers for their sordid ends.

Immigrant workers are the most militant section of the French working class. Despite racist attacks and a Government-sponsored campaign to deport them, immigrant workers have fought back time and again. At Citroen the union leaders are using immigrant workers as strike-fodder. Less than a day after the strike began, union officials indicated that they were prepared to compromise. Far from wanting to defend immigrant workers, many union leaders accept repatriation as a 'solution' to their problems – so long as they get better financial compensation.

This cynical betrayal comes at a time when black workers throughout Europe face racist attacks. In recent local elections in Rotterdam, a racist party demanding the repatriation of immigrants received 10 per cent of the votes and won eight seats. The European tour by the Sari Squad comes at just the right time. The racist offensive across Europe has to be fought on a Continent-wide basis. Anti-racists and working class militants have to overcome their national parochialism and give top priority to fighting the growing attack on blacks and immigrant workers.

The struggle of the international working class is the theme of this year's *Preparing for Power*, a week-long public conference organised by the Revolutionary

Communist Party. This unique forum for getting educated and sharing practical experiences will bring together miners from Britain, anti-racists from Europe and activists from every sphere of struggle.

If you are tired of rhetoric, easy solutions, and evasions of unpleasant truths, but haven't got all the answers, you should be there too during the week 13-20 July (see page 23 for details).

Internationalism may be a familiar word. But it is an almost forgotten political outlook within the working class. For revolutionary communists, internationalism means fighting for the defeat of our own ruling class. *Preparing for Power* is a conference for everybody who wants to get into that fight.



Continental class stru



Plant closures and police strike-breaking are not confined to Britain. Throughout Europe, employers have gone on the offensive against the working class. They have forced through austerity measures to restructure basic industries, throw millions of workers on to the dole and reduce real wages. Anti-working class laws have been passed to limit the right to strike and to weaken the unions. Regions like the steel-producing area of Lorraine in France, the shipbuilding city of Bremen in Germany, and towns like Cadiz and Sagunto in Spain have been devastated in the process. But the working class has fought back — shop-floor militancy is on the increase and strikes have broken out in industries across the Continent. *Frank Richards* examines the different aspects of the class struggle and outlines the main problems facing European workers.

The extension of austerity measures has intensified a wave of working class protest throughout Europe:

France

There were more than 200 000 redundancies last year. It is expected that another 400 000 workers will lose their jobs by the end of 1984 — taking the total number of jobless past 2.5m. Last year French workers faced a real cut in their wages. This year the Socialist government is trying to hold down pay settlements at five per cent. These policies have had a major impact on the unions. The CGT — the largest union federation — has lost about a third of its membership since 1975. Of those still in work only one in five are in a union.

Strikes have erupted throughout French industry during the past three months. The most bitter dispute is in Lorraine, where 30 000 steelworkers face the prospect of unemployment. A one-day General Strike in Lorraine on 4 April was solid — virtually every sector was shut down. Since then pitched battles have been fought between steelworkers and police. On 20 April steelworkers barricaded the main highway in Ardennes and only dispersed after police fired on them with tear gas. In early May, mainly immigrant carworkers occupied Citroen factories in Aulnay-sous-Bois, Nanterre and Levallois in protest at proposed job losses. Public sector workers organised days of action during May.

Italy

In Italy there are 2.4m unemployed — 10.2 per cent of the working population. Led by Socialist premier Bettino Craxi, the Government has turned the screw on the working class. The object of the attack is the automatic wage-indexation system, which guarantees pay rises in line with inflation. The Government's attempt to reduce these rises for a second time led to the largest proletarian demonstration in post-war Italy. Over 700 000 workers demonstrated in March against the Government's pay curb. A strong sense of anger and frustration is still prevalent on the shopfloor.

Spain

In Spain 18 per cent of the workforce is unemployed — 2 335 000 workers. The Socialist government has put the boot in hard against the working class. Prime Minister Gonzales has stepped up repression

under the guise of new anti-terrorist laws. Gonzales has used the state machine to attack workers in dispute. The capitalist class scored an important victory at the end of March at the INI state steel company in Sagunto, where a work-in against the closure of a blast furnace was defeated after 230 employees were sacked. In Madrid a strike of Metro workers was broken up by troops.

Yet Spanish workers are far from defeated. In the first quarter of this year there were three times as many strikes as during the same months of 1983. A one-day General Strike at Vigo in Galicia in February attracted over 300 000 supporters. On May Day workers stayed away from the Bilbao rally addressed by Prime Minister Gonzales. More than 100 000 of them attended a rival parade in Madrid.

Greece

The Socialist government has pursued a vigorous austerity programme. Last year's pay curbs have been complemented by anti-strike legislation which makes Thatcher's employment laws look moderate. With a rate of inflation above 20 per cent living standards are falling fast. Despite the Government's attempt to clamp down on rank and file militancy, workers, especially in the public sector, have struck back. Led by those in the public sector, there have been more than 200 strikes since the beginning of the year.

West Germany

West Germany has one of the most domesticated trade union movements in Western Europe. But with 2 253 000 — or 9.5 per cent — on the dole, thousands of former moderates are turning into militants. Rank and file pressure has forced the union leaders to act. A campaign for a 35-hour week organised by IG Metall, the metalworkers' union, has received widespread support. After months of token strikes, the printworkers struck in April. The violence used against the printers' pickets in Stuttgart, Offenbach and Cologne only drew more support for the strikers' cause. A metalworkers' ballot for an all-out strike in May showed an overwhelming majority in favour of action. Unless it is sabotaged by the union bureaucrats, this strike promises to be Germany's most bitter and protracted dispute for decades. The employers responded to the strike with a series of lock outs.

Workers divi

THE OUTCOME OF the present wave of working class protest is far from clear. Militants in Europe face formidable obstacles:

- **No combat organisations:** The European working class has no political parties it can rely on to fight for its interests. This problem is not unique to the Continent. British miners have come to understand how little they can expect from Labour, the party they help to finance. European parties which have their base in the working class are often in the forefront of the employers' offensive. Socialist presidents and prime ministers in France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Greece boast of their realistic austerity measures. The communist parties are not much better. They often vow to resist the attacks. But their opposition is restricted to declarations, carefully couched so as not to rock the boat. Even this facade of militancy won't work for the French Communist Party (PCF) while it remains the junior partner in the Socialist Party-dominated coalition government.

The absence of working class parties that are prepared to fight creates immense problems for militants. It means that groups of strikers are often left to their own devices and threatened with isolation. The end result is that protest action is never transformed into a clear political strategy. Like the British miners, European workers often end up fighting on the narrow plane of trade unionism when the bosses are fighting an all-embracing class war.

- **Ineffective unions:** Continental trade union organisation is weak. The number of unionised workers is falling and shopfloor organisation is virtually non-existent. The union leaders have been playing a cautious game. Like their British counterparts, union leaders on the Continent have been reluctant to wage a struggle against redundancies and pay curbs. Instead they have opted for

face-saving measures designed to maintain their credibility with the rank and file. Yet rank and file pressure has forced the union leadership to take action of sorts. In Italy, the upsurge of mass protest against the Government's pay curb caught the union leadership unawares. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) dominated union federation — the CGIL — moved in fast to take the lead and thus retain control over the protest. In Lorraine the same thing happened. The French Communist Party's union leaders had to organise the action for fear of losing an important base of support.

Reformist union leaders have been able to divert industrial action towards diffuse symbolic gestures. In France a whole series of days of action involving separate groups of workers have been organised. These have had the effect of dissipating the struggle. Steelworkers demonstrated alone in Paris. On 4 May workers from Renault in Paris marched on their own. On 11 May, the CGT organised an ineffectual day of action for public sector workers. And on 24 May the railway unions organised their protest. In West Germany the union leadership is even worse. Instead of fighting redundancies when they happen and fighting for higher pay, the DGB, the West German union federation, has organised a campaign for a 35-hour week. This is a cynical move designed to retain control over the rank and file and to strengthen the position of the union bureaucracy. Workers are being used as fodder to give union bureaucrats more clout in their relations with the employers. Thus after months of token action, German metalworkers have voted for an all-out strike, only to see their union leaders indicate that the objectives of the campaign are all negotiable. Three days before the launching of the strike, IG Metall chair Hans Mayr promised that his union would 'try initially to limit the strike damage to avoid jeopardising further negotiations'. With union lead-

uggles



ided

ers like these, West German workers will need to rely on their own strength to gain any positive results.

Fatal divisions: As in Britain, European workers are deeply divided. But unlike here, European workers are often organised in separate trade union federations which spend more energy fighting each other than the employers. This is a particular problem in Italy, Spain and France. Two Italian union federations — the CISL, close to the Christian Democrats and the UIL, linked to the Socialist Party — supported the Government's attack on automatic wage-indexation. The communist-backed federation, the CGIL, opposed it. Only the capitalist class profits from such divisions.

In Spain, the Socialist Party's federation, the UGT, has been used to undermine workers' solidarity. In the public sector wage negotiations the UGT asked for a pay rise of eight per cent while the Communist Party-influenced CCOO demanded 10 per cent. The Socialist Prime Minister has been able to use the UGT's loyalty to isolate militant trade unionists and keep wage settlements down. The situation in France is even more terrifying. On May Day, the working class was presented with the spectacle of three separate parades organised by different union federations. The small number of demonstrators showed that the traditional occasion for a display of working class solidarity and strength had been turned into a day of disunity and demoralisation. To make matters worse, these divisions represent no real differences in outlook. In France, union leaders jealous to reserve their institutions have launched publicity campaigns to stress their distinctiveness. The socialist CFDT has declared its commitment to a shorter working week, while the communist CGT has argued for opposition to the Government's austerity plan. Neither of these rhetorical objectives

The party's over

During the past 10 years socialist and communist parties in Europe have moved steadily to the right. They have become compromised and find it difficult even to pay lip service to their old radical promises. British workers familiar with the vacillations of the Labour Party will be surprised to discover that the Labour left is far more radical than socialist and communist parties on the Continent. These European parties are going through an unprecedented crisis. At stake are their basic identities as parties.

Austerity socialism

The socialist parties have emerged as the establishment's preferred party of government in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. Socialist governments in these countries have been assigned the task of restructuring the capitalist system and winning working class acquiescence to the harsh austerity measures that necessarily follow. Until recently they have been very successful in pushing through these policies. But they have become so involved with the running of the capitalist system, that they now risk losing their working class electoral base. As a result the socialist parties are faced with a crisis of identity and of ideology.

Most socialist parties have attempted to compensate for their lack of working class appeal by trying to gain middle class support, or by shifting attention to diversionary issues such as nationalism. Greek premier Papandreu has been the most consummate practitioner of this approach. Every time he is in trouble with workers, Papandreu organises a gesture against the Turkish threat to Greece, or gives a speech denouncing US imperialism. But such blatant opportunism can only go so far. It cannot solve the socialists' underlying problem.

The Italian Socialist Party has become almost indistinguishable from the establishment parties. Its only distinguishing feature is the regularity and vehemence with which its leader Bettino Craxi denounces communists and trade union militants. Craxi has decided to go a step further and reorganise the party as a genuine pro-capitalist movement. Under the label of 'new socialism' Craxi wants to organise a party which can attract support from all classes in Italian society. The three day Socialist Congress in Verona on 11 May was designed to give the party the necessary facelift. The party's central committee was replaced by a national assembly of 400 members. Why? To show the world that the elimination of the 'old-fashioned Marxist structure' represented the party's commitment to middle class values. Such clever gestures are unlikely to give the Italian Socialist Party any real coherence and identity.

End of socialism?

The meanderings of the French Socialist Party are particularly instructive. The Mitterrand government is pursuing a policy roughly in line with that of the Thatcher administration in Britain. Party leaders don't know how to reconcile this with past election promises, nor what to put forward as policies for the future. Socialist Party publications are full of articles with headlines like 'What has gone wrong?', 'Where are we going?' and 'The crisis in the Party'. The reason for this introspection is straightforward. As the Mitterrand government pursues the ruthless policy French capital requires, it becomes increasingly difficult to give the term 'socialist' any meaning.

In an interview with *Liberation* on 10 May—the third anniversary of his

election victory — President Mitterrand explained just where he is heading. Mitterrand made it plain that he wants nothing to do with the 'old style' socialism. After rambling on about social justice he denounced the twin evils of 'economic liberalism' and 'collectivism'. Since economic liberalism existed for only a brief interlude in nineteenth century France, the aim of his statement was clearly to indicate that state intervention in the economy and social life had gone far enough. With one sentence Mitterrand distanced himself from a founding principle of French reformism. Mitterrand did not simply deprecate the traditions of his party, he also outlined a new approach. Why, he asked, should 'modernisation, enterprise, and innovation' be monopolised by the right? Mitterrand answered his own question. The objective of modernising the capitalist economy, he announced, should be the policy of the Socialist Party. For all practical purposes this has long been the policy of his party, but Mitterrand finally had the good grace to admit it.

One step behind

The communist parties of Europe are not far behind. The seventies saw the evolution of the strategy of Eurocommunism. The aim of Eurocommunism was to win respectability for parties that were once revolutionary. To prove they meant business, communist parties in Italy, France and Spain joined their socialist colleagues in a joint effort to make austerity acceptable to workers.

Eurocommunism has been a disastrous failure. By distancing themselves from their radical traditions communist parties simply lost their distinct identity and their appeal to the militant sections of the working class. At the same time the middle classes weren't interested in these new, respectable left-wing parties. They already had the socialist parties to serve their interests. As a result the Eurocommunist parties lost much of their electoral base to the socialists. In Spain the PCE was virtually destroyed as an electoral party. Its membership plummeted from 240 000 in 1977 to less than 60 000 today.

Since Mitterrand's election to office, the PCF has ceased to be the dominant party of the working class. French communists have lost credibility through their frequent political turns and their participation in the Coalition government. During the past year the PCF has lost

local council elections in areas that have voted communist en bloc for more than 50 years. The most recent blow has been at Noisy-le-Grand in the 'Red Belt' around Paris. On 6 May the PCF lost control of this council; the right-wing Gaullist candidates gained 53 per cent of the vote in this working class area.

To reverse their decline the communist parties have begun to adopt more left-wing rhetoric. Even the PCE, which used to make the British Labour Party look positively revolutionary, has begun to speak the language of the class struggle. In their desperation communist politicians have even reverted to the Stalinist postures of the past. Thus after years of bitter denunciations of the Soviet Union, the PCE has rediscovered the old virtues of the 'Moscow line'. The Italian and French parties have not gone so far, but they have moved to adopt a more strident proletarian tone.

The new militancy of the communist parties does not represent any change in their political outlook. What they have done is to appeal to the sense of bitterness and frustration that workers feel towards their socialist governments. It is a calculated manoeuvre to re-establish the communist parties as distinct alternatives to the socialists. Until now they have not been too successful. The PCF faces a major credibility gap. Its attacks on Government cuts and redundancies ring hollow while four communist ministers continue to sit in Mitterrand's cabinet.

Nevertheless there is a danger that, in their desperation, militant workers will forget the past and look for solutions from the alternative, left-wing party of the ruling class: for that is what the communist parties have become. It is a danger that must be avoided, if the European working class is to find answers to the problems that it faces.

The difficulties faced by the socialist and communist parties are not temporary. They indicate that these parties are either going to transform themselves or face disintegration. The signs are that the socialist parties have opted for transformation, while the communist parties remain immobile and face the prospect of slow disintegration. Workers should shed no tears for these parties. Instead, it is not too soon to begin to build parties that will provide the European proletariat with an effective weapon against the capitalist class currently wreaking havoc across the Continent.



No red necktie for Mitterrand: French socialists want to drop 'old style' reformism

mean anything for rank and file workers who suffer attack after attack while their leaders try to outmanoeuvre each other.

One important problem that has paralysed the European workers' movement has been the employers' special offensive against immigrant workers. The employers know that racism is prevalent in the unions and that immigrant workers are often isolated. In France, the Government and the

employers have exploited this division to pick on immigrant workers. The French establishment has worked out a scheme which combines redundancies with repatriation. In April Citroen announced that 409 immigrant workers had 'agreed' to its redundancy/repatriation package. When Michelin announced 4000 job cuts it expressed a wish to avoid too many compulsory redundancies by inducing im-

migrant workers to go home. France is not unique. Immigrant workers in other European countries face similar problems.

The difficulties faced by European workers highlight their lack of political leadership. There is no organised leadership waiting in the wings, and the European proletariat is faced with the prospect of its old political parties disintegrating under the impact of the recession.

**POLICE
TERROR**

The new Bill, the Old Bill and the miners

Has Britain become a police state?
Or was it ever anything else? *Helen
Swift* investigates.

ON MINERS' PICKET lines and working class estates around Britain, the state is gearing up to police the crisis. Many on the left blame the extension of police activity on Thatcherism gone mad. In reality what we are seeing is an approach to policing which is both rational and necessary for a capitalist class determined to maintain its domination over society. Policing is conducted on two levels — the ideological and the operational. During the past month we have had plenty of evidence of how the establishment is using both to its advantage.

Social control

As Metropolitan Police chief Kenneth Newman likes to point out, policing is about 'social control'. Social control cannot rely simply on coercion. Effective control requires public support for — or at least acquiescence to — the rules of the game. The present propaganda churned out on behalf of the police and repeated *ad nauseam* by establishment figures is designed to consolidate a broad consensus behind law and order and the police. Every time there is a debate about the police, law and order problems are emphasised and the real social issues are pushed out of sight.

The Police Bill currently going through Parliament represents an encroachment on basic democratic rights. It has rightly provoked considerable concern and anxiety. Yet, as the miners' dispute shows, the police do more or less what they like anyway. The present Police Bill's provisions for increased powers of search, arrest and harassment will simply legalise what is already an everyday part of police practice. The real significance of the Police Bill is that it helps to consolidate a climate of reaction, to justify the increase in repression.

During the month of May the ruling class manipulated the consensus around law and order to good effect. The Libyan embassy siege provided a golden opportunity to justify increased police action. A minor event was blown up into front-page news for weeks. Day after day, the population was bombarded with one message — there are new dangers facing society, and the police stand between decent folk and the breakdown of civilisation. Typically, the police were presented as the *victims*, lacking protection against the heavy odds that they face.

For weeks the miners' dispute was overshadowed by endless investigations into the 'tragedy' of St James Square. All this effort paid handsome dividends. By the middle of May the establishment could present the repression of miners' pickets as an unfortunate response to pit-head violence. The opposition parties were no match for this offensive. Leading Labour politicians simply rambled on about the threat to civil liberties and demanded respect for the law. The ruling class brushed Labour's feeble protests aside. Labour leaders who had demanded more protection for the police after the Libyan embassy affair were in no position to expose police brutality against miners.

Even those like Tony Benn who took exception to the attacks on the miners' civil rights were victims of their own illusions. There is nothing sacred about civil rights in Britain. So long as everything is stable society can enjoy as much civil rights as it wants. But civil rights are always subordinate to the capitalists' right to exploit and oppress. That's why the right to strike is always circumvented by laws and regulations, whereas the right to

scab exists without any qualifications and enjoys the full support of the state. Criticising the excesses of the police does not challenge the prejudices backing law and order. The only effective opposition to police terror is one that argues that the miners have the right to take any measures necessary to defend their livelihoods, regardless of the law.

Class war

So far more than 2700 miners have been arrested by the police. During the early weeks of the strike, they were charged under public order offences like 'obstruction' and 'breach of the peace'. With the passing of time, the police pressed more serious charges. On 15 May 57 miners were charged at Mansfield with rioting — an offence that has an unlimited sentence. The law as such is irrelevant. Most of the time there is no relationship between the circumstances of arrests and the subsequent charges. The establishment's interests dictated that the 292 Scottish pickets travelling in six coaches to the Ravenscraig steel works, had to be arrested. Since they could not be charged with 'travelling in a coach', the police announced that they had been forced to 'reassess tactics' in the light of increased 'pit violence'.

The police can do what is necessary to defend the capitalist class. They can get on with the job while politicians and the judiciary interpret the law to suit the occasion. Thus when it was discovered that the police were using undercover operators and *agent provocateurs* on picket lines, Home Secretary Leon Brittan was far from embarrassed:

'Exception has been taken to the use of police officers in plain clothes. The purpose of that is simple and wholly legitimate: it is to enable the police to identify those who are engaged in or threatening violence.'

Coercion is a 'wholly legitimate' exercise for the establishment. Brittan's forthright defence of his case indicates that he will stop at nothing to secure the concerns of his class. Thus the police can control the movement of pickets on the motorways, tap telephone conversations, detain miners and photograph them for later reference. Special CID squads are now prowling pit villages in 'high intimidation areas'. And magistrates willingly provide bail conditions to stop miners picketing.

The public face of policing is only part of the story. Covert police operations reveal the more insidious aspects of class domination. The media went to great pains to publicise the 'right to work' demonstration by Notts miners in Mansfield on 1 May. What went unreported was the massive police operation designed to deter striking miners from entering Mansfield for the counter-demonstration. Police used three foot long batons to drive 800 strikers out of town, and chased iso-

lated groups of miners across fields. Just to get the message home, the police tied a miner to a tree and used him as a punch bag.

During the rest of the week the police rampaged through several Notts mining villages. Houses were raided and individual militants intimidated. One branch official had his arm broken before he was locked up. Even more brutal tactics were used against Scottish miners. On 8 May at Hunterston coal terminal in Ayrshire, mounted police charged the picket line and trampled miners underfoot.

Police harassment has not been confined to pickets. Workers organising collections for the miners have been harassed and arrested under trumped-up charges. Dozens of the next step supporters have been detained in Yorkshire. In Leeds, our supporters were told that they faced immediate arrest if they organised more food collections.

Class power

The miners' strike has highlighted the real role of the police. Many on the left who are rightly disturbed by these events have been thrown into confusion. There has been much speculation about new police tactics and moves towards a police state. The escalation of police activity does not mark any qualitative departure from the

past. Whenever class conflict went beyond the boundaries of a narrow industrial dispute, the police were prepared to use whatever tactics they deemed essential. Compared to the police riots which met marches of the unemployed in the thirties, the forces of law and order today are operating on their best behaviour.

To understand the potential for police brutality it is more useful to examine the everyday experience of black youth in the inner-city areas, or better still to look at the violence applied against the nationalist community in the Six Counties of Ireland. In these situations class coercion can proceed uninhibited by rules and regulations.

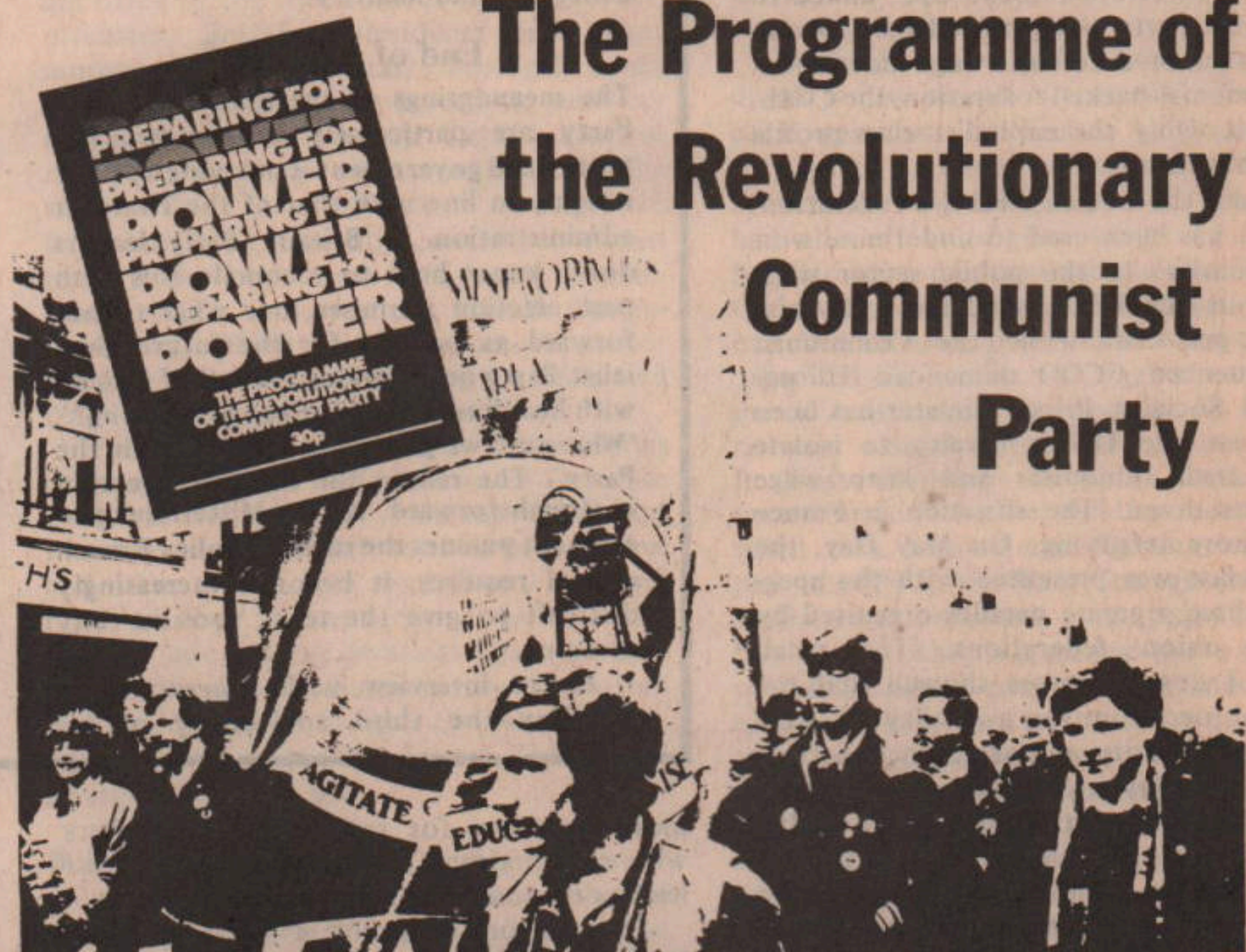
Rather than worry about a 'new style' of policing, we should consider ways and means of organising our class against the violence of the state. We can be sure that the employers will take every measure necessary to enforce their control, without regard for fair play or civil rights. Our only defence is the power of our class. The better our organisation, the more ruthless our determination, the more we will be able to defend our hard-won gains. Real rights are never given away by parliaments and courts — real rights are those that have been fought for and wrested from the state through struggle.



Dixon of Dock Green need not apply: police have stepped up terror to deal with the crisis

Bob Radcliffe (reflex)

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Real problems demand real solutions. Pat Roberts explains the revolutionary communist approach to the miners' strike.

The fight for a national strike

FROM DAY ONE it was clear that the miners' struggle was not an easy one to win. The problems were formidable. While the miners were unprepared, the establishment's attack was based on a carefully planned long-term strategy. While the miners were divided the Coal Board, the Government and the Police were firmly united behind the common objective of smashing the NUM. While the miners were fighting a defensive industrial dispute, the bosses had launched an all-out class war. And while the miners had limited resources and practical support the Coal Board had the full power of the capitalist state at its disposal.

Every dispute in the class struggle raises political problems which, if ignored, inevitably bring defeat in their wake. What has united all sections of the British left during this dispute is their evasion of the problems facing the miners. Instead the left has opted for empty sloganising and dishonest, or at best, over optimistic, reporting of the conduct of the dispute. The left simply called for 'victory to the miners' or argued to 'step up the action' and 'stop all coal'. The more isolated sections of the left demanded a General Strike. Others, like the Socialist Workers' Party, called for more picketing.

The slogans all sounded fine. The problem was that they were wishful abstractions that simply begged the question. The real problem was not stepping up the picketing. The problem was more fundamental—how to win the mass of miners to actively participate in the strike, and how to heal the divisions between the different coalfields. Those who are active in a strike do not have to be convinced of the need for more picketing. And those who are hostile or have a passive attitude to the strike are only bemused at calls for more pickets. Slogans for action may come from the heart, but they remain abstract demands because they do not address the real problems facing the strike.

If you are going to speak simply from the heart you might as well go the whole hog and demand a General Strike. Better still, it doesn't cost any more to ask for socialism. Sometimes when times are hard communists have no choice but to advance objectives which they know are unrealistic, but which nevertheless give an indication of what they would like to see. But to portray such proposals as realistic

alternatives for a group of workers in struggle is to replace the real world with the world of fantasy.

In fighting for a national strike, the Revolutionary Communist Party is the only party that has attempted to go beyond the plane of abstract sloganising and address the real problems facing the miners. From the outset the RCP identified a number of key problems that had to be confronted if the strike was to be won.

- **The problem of regional action:** relying on an area-by-area strike deprives miners of a centralised leadership and a national focus.

- **The picketing out strategy:** as a tactic, flying pickets are an essential component of effective trade union action. But they are a tactic, not a strategy. Flying pickets alone cannot be a substitute for a political campaign to unite the workforce.

- **Divisions within the NUM:** the differential area incentive schemes mean that divisions among the miners are considerable. This was clear on the first day of the strike. It remains a profound problem to this day.

- **The politics of collaboration:** the NUM leadership has put forward a policy which equates the fight against pit closures with the saving of the coal industry. Every NUM publication justifies the miners' case on the grounds that the industry is efficient and viable. Rather than simply fighting for the interests of miners regardless of its consequences, the NUM wants workers to take responsibility for an industry that is not theirs. This preoccupation with the concerns of the employers can only be to the detriment of the miners.

- **The bureaucratic conduct of the struggle:** bureaucratic control characterised the conduct of the strike from the beginning. The twenty week long overtime ban that preceded the strike was designed

to show the world that the NUM leadership was at last doing something to protect its members. Once the strike began the officials were in full control. The rank and file were used as picketing fodder. Behind the scenes negotiations with the bosses of the steel workers' union typified this approach. It meant that the potential power of the miners was never activated.

These problems were highlighted during the first six weeks of the strike by the refusal of Scargill and his colleagues to take responsibility for the fight. During this period the dispute was conducted on a regional basis which ensured that regional differences would be consolidated. It also meant that the NUM bureaucracy could retain control without being responsible or accountable to rank and file strikers. Scargill preferred this course of action to the organising of a national strike—because a national strike required a national ballot. And Scargill knew that a national ballot could not be won through bureaucratic dictat. It could only be won through a mass campaign based on anti-capitalist politics.

Fighting for unity

In this situation, the Revolutionary Communist Party adopted the position of organising a national campaign to win a national ballot for an all-out strike. Our approach was straightforward. Regional action is doomed to defeat, and can only exacerbate parochial tensions. A campaign for a national ballot would necessarily politicise the dispute. It would force all militants to address the question of why the miners were divided. Since unity cannot just be declared but has to be fought for, campaigning for a ballot had the potential to make militants adopt policies that would provide the basis for unity. The dead end of the NUM's economic arguments about the viability of the coal industry would have been exposed. The NUM's commitment to making the coal industry a going concern has deepened divisions between miners in uneconomic pits in South Wales and productive collieries in Notts. A united NUM can only come about if it declares that all miners have one interest, and that their interest is at odds with that of the NCB. For all miners have to live, regardless of the profitability of their pits.

The second reason why the RCP adopted this position was because a campaign for a national ballot for an all-out strike was the most practical way for the rank and file to take control over the strike. The exercise of bureaucratic control depends on keeping the rank and file fragmented from region to region and from pit to pit. This isolation gives the NUM leadership all the power it needs to control the strike. It can take all the credit and blame others for failures. The bureaucrats' scheme has worked with remarkable success. The lack of progress in the dispute is not blamed on the NUM leadership, but on other groups of miners. A campaign for a national ballot would have involved delegates of militants organising mass meetings at the pitheads. It would have involved discussions to convince the less militant areas, and it could have overcome all the isolation and passivity. In rejecting the idea of consulting all miners, the NUM wrote off a section of its members and ensured that the strike could make no real headway.

The position the RCP adopted was designed to address the real problems faced

by the miners. It was universally condemned by the British left. Their argument was simple. The Tories and MacGregor want a national ballot, therefore the RCP is just as bad as they are. Thus according to the misnamed Workers' Revolutionary Party, the RCP's policy is 'no different from Thatcher's or that of the capitalist press' (*The News Line*, 19 April). Alex Callinicos of the SWP repeats this powerful argument:

'It comes as some surprise, then, to discover that these ultra-revolutionaries actually agree with Neil Kinnock (and Ian MacGregor and Margaret Thatcher) in calling for a national strike ballot. Yet there it is in black and white in the RCP's "strike special".' (*Socialist Review*, May)

It is obviously easier to find the RCP guilty through association with Thatcher than to challenge the substance of our arguments. This method of debate may serve the purpose of bolstering the confidence of SWP members, but it simply evades the problems of fragmentation and disunity in the coalfields. The failure to address—or even recognise—the central problem of the strike means that the SWP is reduced to wishful thinking dressed up as militant rhetoric.



Rearguard party: SWP tails Scargill

The make-believe left

Callinicos calls the RCP's position abstract propagandist. Callinicos feels strongly about this point, for he cites 'Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov' on his behalf. Unfortunately, Plekhanov—or for that matter Callinicos—has nothing to say as to why a campaign around a national ballot is abstract. All that Callinicos can say is that such a ballot would be lost. How something abstract can be lost is something that the philosopher Callinicos has not yet explained. He will have to do better than cite Plekhanov to solve this one.

The SWP's alternative of 'encouraging organisation and initiatives from below' and 'more picketing' is abstract precisely because it does not relate to the political problems that prevent more miners participating in and controlling the strike. Resounding declarations cannot change the outcome of the strike. On the contrary, they imply that the strike can be won without a change in its political orientation. That's why *Socialist Worker* is reduced to making technical suggestions—better organisation of picketing, more rank and file involvement etc. These suggestions, helpful as they are, prove irrelevant unless the rank and file are won to a course of action which is politically independent from that of the NUM leadership. The RCP's strategy in contrast offers not simply technical, but political solutions.

The evasion of real problems places the left on the side of those who will profit from leaving the conduct of the dispute on its present course. The SWP has muted its old criticisms of Scargill. Instead, *Socialist Worker* now tells him how to consolidate his leadership of the strike. It believes that asking Scargill to set up strike committees constitutes a powerful critique of the NUM leadership! The rest of the left has followed suit. Till the last day of the strike they will demand more action, more picketing, more solidarity. Anything goes so long as it does not challenge the policies of the NUM leadership.

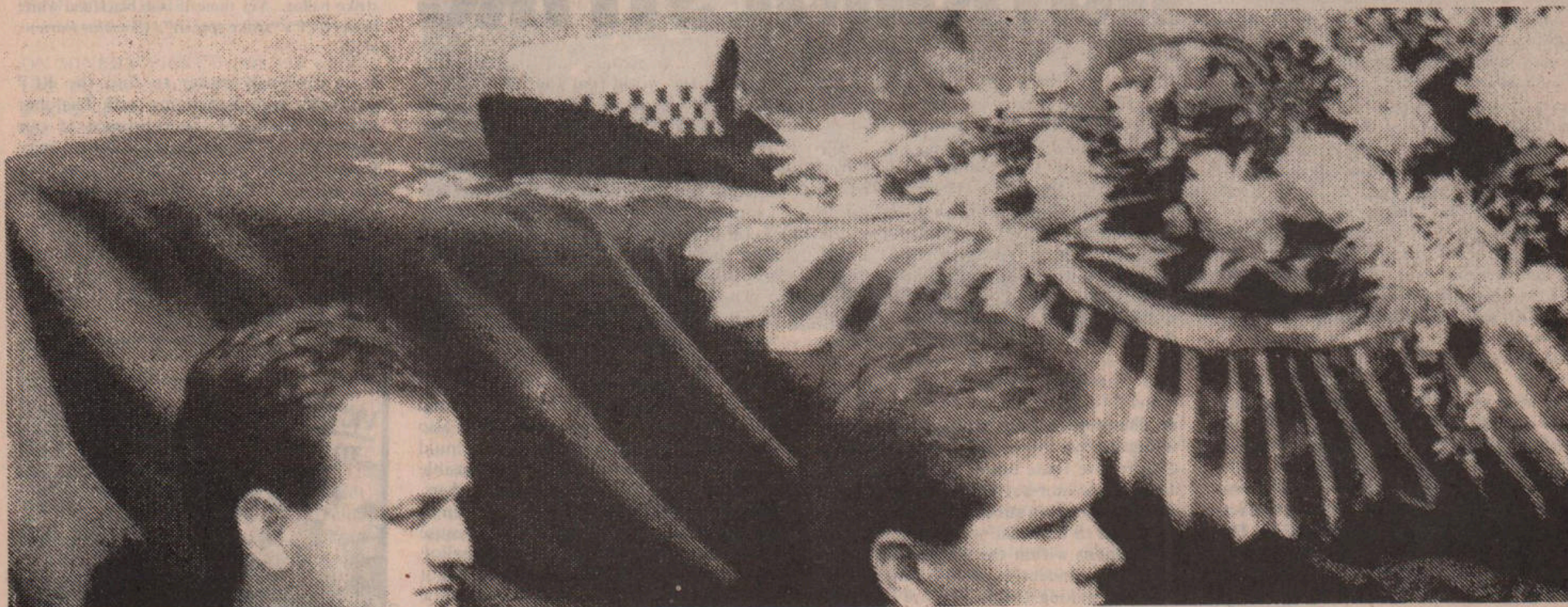
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Target Libya



Whose funeral?: the West used WPC Fletcher's death to further its plans to send Gaddafi to an early grave

The Libyan embassy siege in April and the diplomatic war which followed it enhanced Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's reputation as the world's number one megalomaniacal terrorist. But, as *John Johnson* shows, the myth of 'the mad colonel' is an imperialist ploy to disguise the West's carve-up of Africa and the Middle East.

THE SHOOTING OF policewoman Yvonne Fletcher by a machine gunner in the Libyan embassy in London in April triggered a wave of anti-Libyan jingoism in the press and in Parliament. The Government took advantage of the climate of hostility fomented by the media to intensify its harassment of foreign students resident in Britain. Dozens of Libyans were expelled from the country and others were turned away at air and ferry ports. Home Secretary Leon Brittan announced that he would require good evidence that the presence of any Libyan in Britain was 'conducive to the public

good' before they were permitted entry. He also announced that he was considering measures to limit the right to demonstrate of foreigners resident in Britain.

Ever since he came to power in a military coup in 1969, Libya's leader Muammar Gaddafi has been a target for the invective of Western politicians and press. He has been depicted as the leader of 'international terrorism', responsible for fomenting instability as far afield as the Philippines, Central America and West Africa. The governments of Sudan and Egypt blame Gaddafi for the growing opposition within their borders. Just

before the US invasion of Grenada last October, a Caribbean statesman claimed that Libya was channelling more than \$1m through its Mexican embassy to 'finance terrorist organisations in the Caribbean'. Washington leads the anti-Libyan crusade. Reagan has declared an unofficial war against Gaddafi, and the FBI is carrying out an investigation into allegations that Libya has tried to influence American affairs by giving money to black nationalist groups. This well orchestrated campaign against Libya is not restricted to propaganda and media manipulation. In 1981 the US Sixth Fleet conducted exercises in Libyan-claimed waters in the Gulf of Sirte, shooting down two Libyan jets in the process.

Europe's soft underbelly

Western hostility towards Libya has little to do with international terrorism.

It stems from the fact that Libya has upset too many imperialist plans, particularly in the Middle East.

The key to Libya's prominence in world affairs is its position in North Africa, on the edge of the Middle East. Its common border with Egypt, the chief Arab power in the Arab-Israeli conflict, makes Libya of vital concern to American strategists. Its position at the apex of France's sphere of influence in northern and western Africa means that Libya also preoccupies French politicians. Libya has become a focus for the struggle between America and France, as Washington tries to bolster its flagging influence over Europe and Paris leads the call for European independence.

Libya has long been a pawn in the imperialists' carve-up of the Middle East and North Africa. In 1912 Italy took control of the territory at the behest of Britain. Britain wanted to create a buffer between its Egyptian possessions and French territories in western Africa and keep France at arm's length in the Middle East. During the Second World War Libya was the focus of Italian ambitions to invade Egypt, and De Gaulle's Free French forces hoped to establish their challenge to German imperialism by invading Libya. At the end of the war Britain occupied the former Italian colony to thwart French ambitions in North Africa. But after stormy debates in the United Nations, Britain was forced to recognise the independence of Libya and accept American troops into the territory alongside its own occupation forces. This confirmed Britain's replacement by America as the leading imperialist power in the Middle East.

Irritant to imperialism

The discovery of oil in Libya in 1961 made the country an important area for foreign investment and gave the local middle class an opportunity to assert its interests. It also had an unsettling impact on the oil industry. The late discovery of Libyan oil allowed newer oil companies to break the virtual monopoly of the established oil corporations — the 'Seven Sisters' — in the Middle East. An unprecedented 14 companies, including the Italian state oil firm AGIP, bought concessions. This new found wealth gave the aspiring Libyan capitalist class considerable power.

Diplomatic dirt

'There is no lack of precedents for the use of embassies as bases for the surveillance, intimidation and even elimination of dissidents.' (*The Times*, 18 April)

Tory MP for Buckingham George Walden's comments at the height of the Libyan embassy siege are apt. Embassies have always been used as agencies for the control of students and exiles from the parent country. In the past, Britain has turned a blind eye to the activities of the Libyan people's bureau in hunting down opponents of the Gaddafi regime, as it has not wanted to jeopardise Britain's economic interests in Libya. As Walden makes clear in his article, Britain's outrage over the shooting in April was caused by the killing of a British police officer. The 11 Libyan oppositionists injured in the incident were barely mentioned in press accounts of the siege.

Libya's is not the only embassy which Britain has allowed to carry out acts of terrorism against dissidents.

The Turkish embassy has provided backing for the fascist 'Grey Wolves' in their campaigns against left-wing students in Manchester, Birmingham and London. The Iraqi embassy has established a network of 'cultural' organisations which control the political activities of Iraqi students in this country. Embassy officials organise poetry recitals to which all Iraqi students are invited. Those failing to attend or failing to clap at the right moment can have their grants withdrawn and face deportation back to Iraq. To supplement these gentler pursuits Iraqi consular officials in Manchester have been known to attack opponents with chains and iron bars.

But Britain has little to learn from Third World embassies. British embassies in the Third World organise terrorism against whole countries. Libya itself has been a victim of British attempts at destabilisation. Before Gaddafi came to power in 1969, Britain and the USA had already decided to ditch the Sennussi King Idris. They persuaded the commander

of Libya's armed forces to seize power and forestall a more radical regime replacing the monarchy. Within a few months of Gaddafi's coup, the British embassy was at it again. During negotiations over the withdrawal of British forces from Libya, senior military officers in the Libyan government were encouraged to oust Gaddafi. They almost succeeded.

The Western press has always been highly critical of Gaddafi for his support for Idi Amin in Uganda. Gaddafi's association with the Butcher of Kampala has often been taken as sufficient proof of Gaddafi's own insanity. Yet Amin's brutality was precisely the quality the British were looking for, when the Chief of Staff of British forces in East Africa summoned Amin in his nightclothes and instructed him to prepare to replace Ugandan president Obote in a coup. The centre of operations for 'Amin's coup' in Uganda was the British embassy.

The closure of the Suez canal after the Six Day War between the Arab states and Israel in 1967 left Libya and Nigeria as the only sources of quality oil east of Suez, close to the major importers in Europe. Libya had a 2000 mile advantage over Nigeria, and the start of the Biafran war blocked all exports of oil from Nigeria. By 1969 Libya was exporting 150m tonnes of oil a year, an increase of 225 per cent in three years, making it the third largest oil exporter in the world.

The benefits of oil went into the hands of a tiny Libyan elite, fronted by a puppet monarch. This provoked unrest and the growth of a popular nationalist movement which eventually allowed Colonel Gaddafi to seize power in a 1969 military coup. His regime has been an irritant to imperialism ever since. Within a year, Gaddafi had closed down all American and British bases in Libya. His nationalist crusade enjoyed widespread support. One international commentator recently noted its importance in consolidating Gaddafi's support at home:

'The removal of the discredited *ancien regime* was in itself enough to predispose most Libyans to the new rulers. Their nationalist achievements — the expulsion of foreign bases and settlers, their militant and successful extraction of higher prices from the oil companies and their forceful advocacy of the Palestinian and anti-imperialist causes — exhilarated a people long fed-up with the old regime's deference to foreign powers.' (*Third World Quarterly*, January)

This was bad news for Western interests. A radical regime in Libya would serve as an unsettling example to the surrounding region. And to make matters worse, Gaddafi's rise coincided with the beginning of America's decline in the area. France immediately began to exploit this new situation. Other European powers soon followed.

Western rivalries

France saw the expulsion of the US air force from Libya as an opportunity to gain new sources of energy and a larger share of the growing Libyan market. Before the American troops had quit the country, France announced a deal to supply Libya with 100 Mirage jets and Maitre 530 air to air missiles. To underline its success in getting one up on the USA, France agreed to train Libyan pilots and support crews at the soon to be abandoned American Wheelus airbase.

France's relations with Libya have not been free of conflict. Libyan ambitions in the region — particularly in Chad — have threatened French interests. But Libya's position between France and its former African Empire has enhanced French efforts to keep on the good side of Gaddafi. Thus between 1981 and 1983 French imports of oil from Libya quadrupled. Libya now supplies about five per cent of France's oil needs. Other Euro-

pean powers — Italy and Britain — have also sought to extend their economic ties with Libya.

Washington never forgot its humiliation in Libya. And the growth of Europe's economic stake in the region is a painful reminder of the decline of American power. Washington has tried to use the threat of a radical regime in Tripoli as an excuse for limiting the influence of its imperialist rivals in the area. This is the basis for the anti-Gaddafi campaign.

America has sought to pull its European rivals into line behind its pursuit of Gaddafi. For the past five years the USA has been trying to galvanise the Western powers to join its campaign to destabilise Libya. Throughout this period America has operated an economic boycott. American firms are forbidden to carry out business with Tripoli. At the end of January Reagan passed a memorandum to top government departments urging them to 'take a lead in preparing a strategy for developing a sophisticated, discriminating and serious multilateral export control approach to Libya'. In other words, America wants to persuade its allies to starve Libya into submission.

Reagan has not restricted his measures to economic warfare. America has boosted its role in Egypt, Sudan and Somalia, citing the threat from Libya as justification. As well as providing assistance to Libyan opposition groups America has exercised direct military pressure. The US navy regularly sails inside Libyan waters. Until now these measures have failed to win European support. Indeed, American provocations were criticised at a Nato meeting of foreign ministers in 1981. That's why the London embassy siege was a godsend for America. It has provided another excuse for imperialist intervention in Libya.

Fight British chauvinism

The international campaign against Libya is part of a wider plot to assert imperialist control over the Middle East. The campaign has nothing to do with terrorism. It is about oil, markets and investment. Every anti-imperialist must be on guard and be prepared to expose and resist this sordid campaign against Libya. The wave of anti-Libyan chauvinism whipped up around the embassy siege aims to secure British workers' acquiescence to imperialist intervention against Gaddafi and increased repression of foreigners in Britain. By comparing Gaddafi to former Argentinian president Galtieri, and linking him with the IRA, the British media has sought to encourage the chauvinist sentiments mobilised behind Britain's wars in the Six Counties and the South Atlantic. Our approach to the conflict between the West and Libya must be the same as our approach to the battles for the Malvinas and Ireland: to take sides against British imperialism, and reject the British establishment's attempts to blame its victims for its own crimes against the masses of the underdeveloped world.

Inside Gaddafi's Libya

Gaddafi is often dubbed 'the mad colonel' because of his unpredictable shifts of policy. Yet Gaddafi's 'irrational' actions are only a response to the pressures from the imperialist powers and the instability of Libyan society.

Gaddafi's objective is to promote economic development in Libya and secure his own regime. In order to pursue this objective, he has exploited the divisions and weaknesses within the imperialist camp. He used the advantages of Libyan oil and the disunity of the oil companies to achieve higher prices and higher production in the early seventies, and later forced the oil giants to accept nationalisation of 70 per cent of the industry during the oil crisis of 1974.

Gaddafi's military threat is a myth. He has built up the Libyan army. But most recruitment is merely to absorb the excess Libyan population, excluded from the highly skilled jobs created in the oil industry and the construction boom in the seventies. Although Gaddafi has imported a quantity of military hardware, most of his army is incompetent to use it. In 1973, two years after taking a delivery of French jets, Gaddafi complained that the planes were still sitting idle in their hangars: 'we have Mirage planes, the biggest air force in North Africa and the most modern planes, but these have no pilots. There are no pilots'.

Libya's attempts at establishing closer relations with its neighbours have included proposed mergers with Egypt in 1971, Tunisia in 1974 and Syria in 1980. All of these efforts were made to strengthen Libya's weight in the international arena. Libya's small and fragmented population — less than four million in a territory seven times the size of Britain — means that on its own it is too weak to participate in international affairs and resist the pressure from imperialism.

Libyan support for Third World liberation movements is mostly rhetorical. It is designed to shift America's preoccupation with destabilising Libya. Libya's backing for Sudanese rebels and for Egyptian opposition — first to President Sadat and now to his successor Mubarak — is a reaction to the growing military presence of America in those countries. Sudan and Egypt are important bases for the Rapid Deployment Force, key to any American intervention in the Middle East. Libya's involvement in the Lebanon conflict was also designed to cause as much difficulty for the USA as possible.

By the Green Book

As well as being a response to imperialist pressure, Gaddafi's foreign policy serves to cohere support for the regime at home. Libya's native population is deeply divided between the cities of Tripoli and Benghazi on the Mediterranean coast. The rest of the country is occupied by the traditional Arab tribes of the Sahara desert, themselves split into a dozen factions. On top of these traditional divisions there are hundreds of thousands of foreign workers, many of whom are from Europe, but most hailing from Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey. They constitute at least 35 per cent of the country's workforce. The only national institution the regime can rely on is the army. But Gaddafi has survived a number of challenges from disaffected groups within the army and has tried to broaden his popular base. He has done this by setting up revolutionary committees answerable directly to himself, and by skilful manipulation of the anti-imperialist and democratic aspirations of the masses. His *Green Book* promotes notions of democratic institutions and socialism within Libya and exhorts the Libyan masses to make a determined struggle against imperialism. Gaddafi himself has officially retired from public life, adopting the style of a bedouin and living in the Azizia barracks in Tripoli. But he retains the reins of real power in Libya.

The survival of the Gaddafi regime during the past 15 years has rested on its

ability to broaden its base of support. To counter imperialist pressure Gaddafi has mobilised the lower sections of Libyan society against the old elites and the privileged. From 1978 onwards the regime limited private wealth and organised a redistribution of resources through the state sector. Welfare rights were extended and progressive social policies implemented. These measures, more radical than those attempted in any other Arab country, evoked considerable support for the regime particularly from the younger generations.

However, these policies have been seriously undermined by the decline in Libya's oil revenues. Libyan exports slumped from 1.7m barrels a day in 1982 to little more than a million in 1983. The foreign exchange oil brings in has fallen from \$15.7 billion in 1981 to \$9 billion



Gaddafi: fighting domination, not derangement

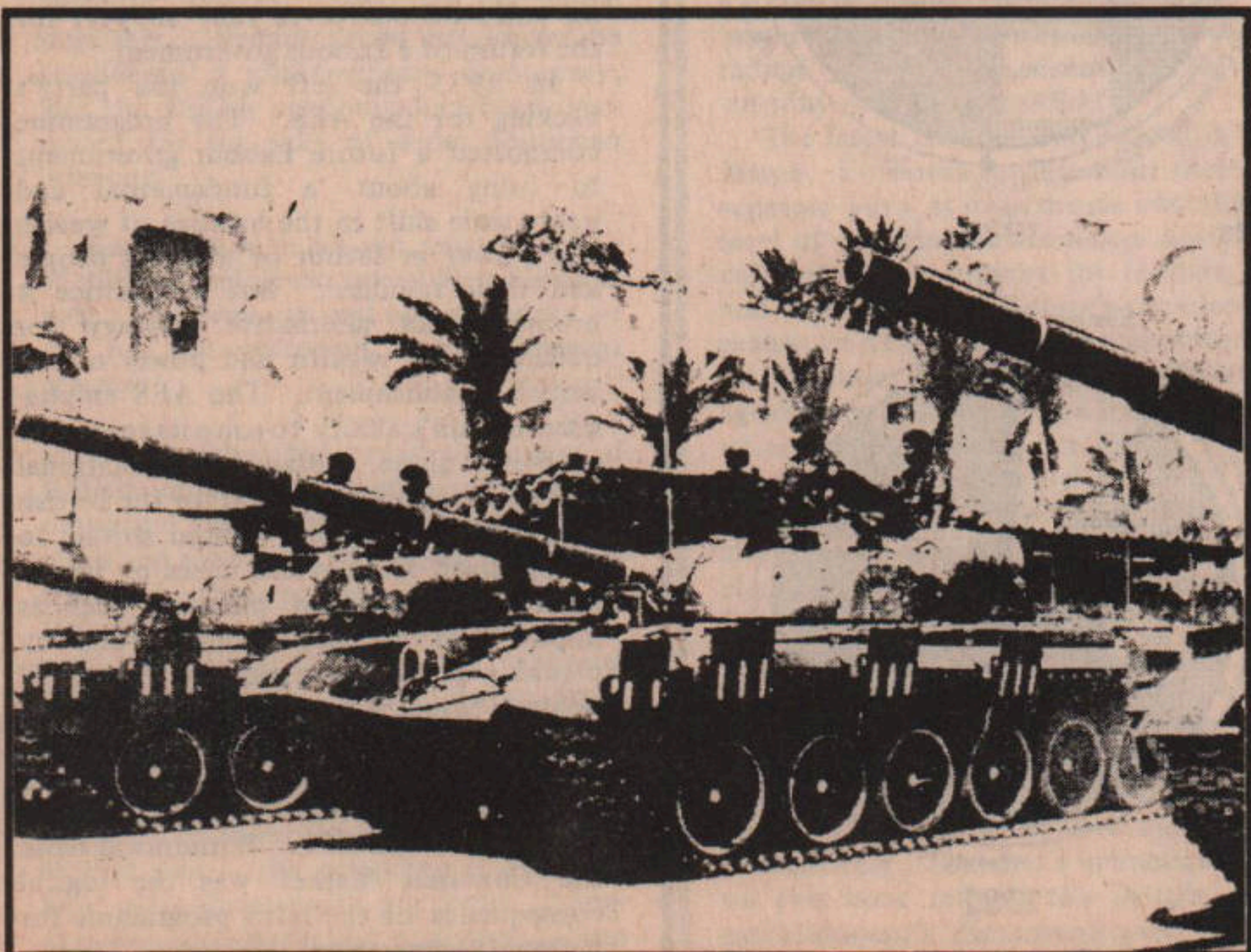
in 1983. With falling revenues, Libya has been forced to draw on its reserves to finance the building of its vast prestige projects, such as the irrigation works in the Sahara desert and the massive industrial complex at Ras Lanuf.

Food imports have been slashed to try to conserve foreign exchange. There have been riots in Tripoli and Benghazi as a result of food shortages at the 'people's supermarkets' opened in 1979. Foreign workers have had their rights to remit part of their salaries to their home countries curtailed.

Imperialism, not insanity

Gaddafi's vendettas against foreign-based dissidents are motivated by his fear of the impact they may have on the increasingly unstable situation inside Libya. The armed attack on military barracks in Tripoli in May shows that all the elements of violent social upheaval exist within Libya today. Gaddafi's gun-running to Europe and his bombing and shooting of his opponents is evidence of his growing difficulties at home. The threat from the exile community is enhanced by the support given to it by the USA and by Britain.

Gaddafi's policies are not irrational. Nor are they dictated by Gaddafi's 'insanity'. They are forced on Libya by imperialist pressure. In the past Gaddafi has been able to play off imperialist rivals against each other and attempted to pursue a strategy of economic nationalism. This strategy has reached its limit. Economic fragmentation and imperialist pressure have had a devastating effect on Libya. All the signs indicate that the imperialist-inspired campaign of destabilisation will be escalated. The collapse of Gaddafi's strategy explains his so-called unpredictable stance in world affairs.



Tanks in Tripoli: Gaddafi rearms in response to imperialist pressure

Labour and Europe

Brexit

Up is

down

Tony Benn and Roy Hattersley 'think the same' about the EEC, declares the Labour Party's literature for this month's elections to the European Parliament. Today, Labour's left and right are together campaigning for Europe. Yet for the past 10 years opposing the EEC has been the defining position of British socialists. So what's changed?

RADICAL stalwarts have accused Labour's left spokesmen of 'fudging a principle' by dropping the call for withdrawal from the EEC. In reality, the only principle which has ever guided the left's approach to Europe has been the need to defend the interests of British capitalism. The move from opposition to acceptance of the Common Market reflects the shifting focus of British interests in the years since the Treaty of Rome established the EEC in 1957.

The Treaty of Rome created the EEC against the background of post-war reconstruction of European capitalism. Its provisions set up a framework of institutions and agreements which would allow Western Europe to make the most of the prevailing economic boom: a European customs union, free movement of labour and capital within the community, a common tariff against external imports, funds for education and infrastructural projects, and an association between French and Belgian colonies.

Continental communist and social democratic parties were initially suspicious of the EEC. They saw it as an American-inspired imposition on European freedom. By the late fifties, however, the continuing boom had convinced most of Europe's left that the Common Market was beneficial to their national capitals. Social democratic organisations such as the German SPD became ardent fans of the EEC.

While West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands joined together, Britain stood aloof. Despite its displacement by America as the world's leading imperialist nation, the British establishment carried on the pretence that it could still operate as an independent power. Britain still had the Commonwealth, close trading relations with the countries of the European Free Trade Association, and its 'special relationship' with the USA. What need had British capitalists to embroil themselves in Continental affairs? Britain's illusions in its 'own status' were soon shattered by the shifting balance of power between the imperialists. By the advent of the sixties, Britain's economic position had declined sharply against its European rivals. The British establishment had been politically humiliated by its unsuccessful attempt to capture the Suez Canal from Egypt in 1958. In 1961, America's President Kennedy told Tory Prime Minister Harold Macmillan to forget any ideas about a special relationship and get into the Common Market.

A humbled Macmillan accepted Britain's weakened position and applied for entry into the EEC. Although its efforts to join the EEC were to be thwarted for 10 years by the veto of France's General de Gaulle, from 1961 onwards the British establishment saw its future bound up with European cooperation. Always a bit slow on the uptake, the Labour Party took a bit longer to reach the same conclusion.

The best for Britain

Labour opposed early Tory attempts to take Britain into the EEC. At the 1962 party conference, right-wing Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell made his famous rallying call to defend Britain's past traditions of glorious isolation from Europe and control over its former colonies. Entry into the Common Market, Gaitskell warned the party, would mean 'the end of Britain

as an independent European state', 'the end of a thousand years of history', and 'the end of the Commonwealth'. Gaitskell's speech earned Labour its reputation as an anti-Europe and chauvinist party. A Danish minister who attended the conference told pro-Market German SPD leader Willy Brandt that he 'felt throughout Gaitskell's speech as if the doors at the back of the hall might open at any moment and Queen Victoria come striding in'. Yet Gaitskell's rhetoric was misleading. Labour was certainly chauvinist and committed to defending British interests to the last. But it was not opposed to Europe on principle. The byword of Gaitskell's speech was 'if'. 'If' certain conditions were met, Labour would back British membership of the EEC. But the terms had to be right for Britain.

'Getting the terms right' has defined the Labour leadership's approach to Europe. In the beginning, the terms Labour wanted were a guarantee of continued close relations with the Commonwealth. By the mid sixties Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson's attitude changed as the pattern of Britain's

trade and investment shifted away from the Commonwealth towards Europe, and as America forced Britain into an increasingly subordinate role. Accusing the USA of putting Britain into 'industrial helotry', Wilson applied to join the EEC in 1967, only to be thwarted by de Gaulle's 'non'.

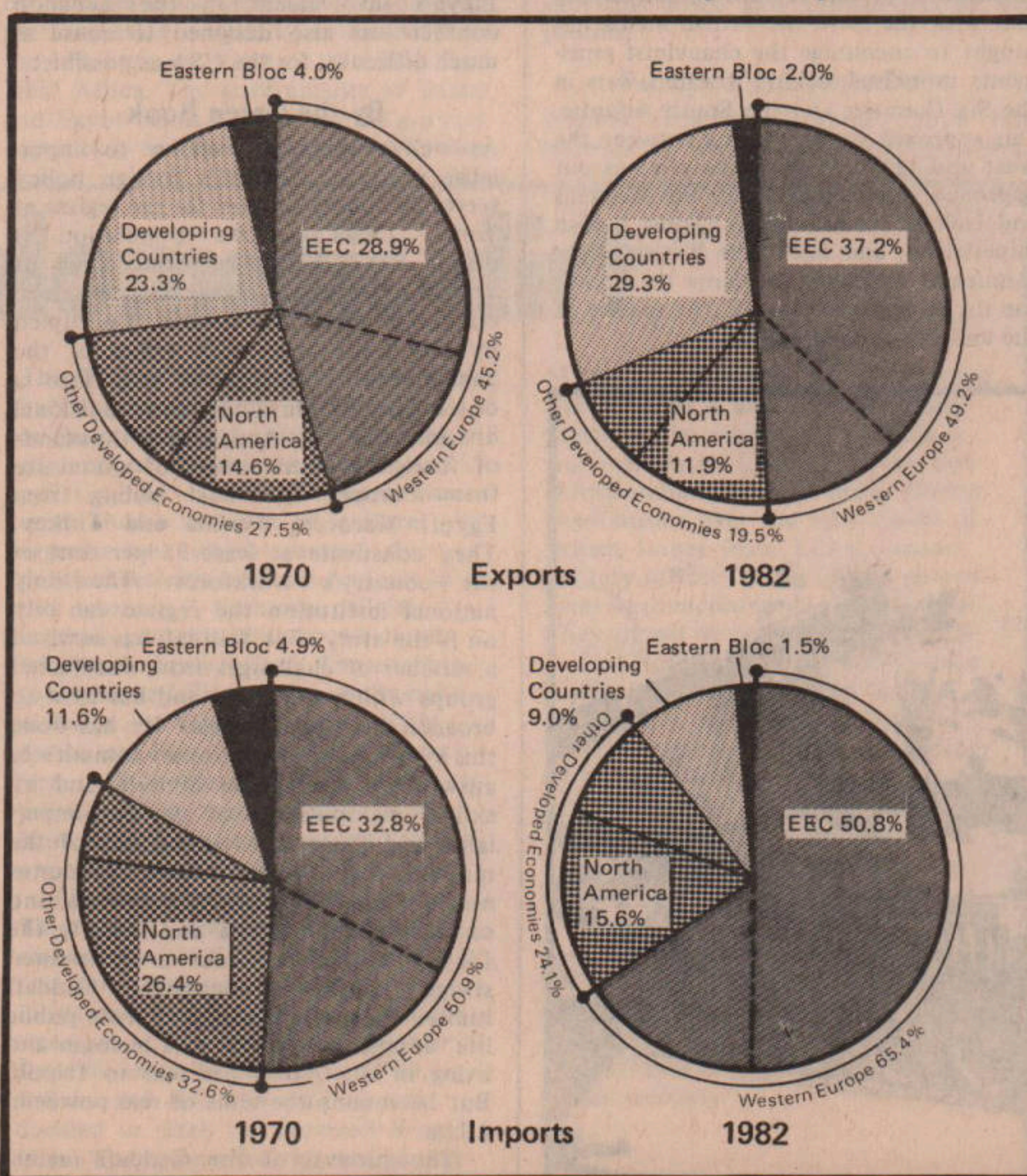
Since Britain joined the EEC in 1973 the Labour leadership has turned its attention to securing reforms in Britain's contribution to the EEC budget and the Common Agricultural Policy. In 1974 the new Labour government renegotiated the terms of British membership. The following year Wilson gave full backing to the 'vote yes' lobby in the referendum on EEC membership. Both Wilson and his successor James Callaghan accepted that EEC membership was vital to protect British capitalism during the recurring crises of the seventies. They sought only to get the best possible deal for Britain from its Common Market partners. The Labour left, however, had other ideas about how to get the British economy back on its feet.

A national solution

The left wing of the Labour party has distinguished itself from the right by pursuing a more chauvinistic defence of Britain's position as an independent power. The Left's opposition to the EEC was expressed in its promotion of the Alternative Economic Strategy. The AES was an attempt to formulate a national solution to the crisis of British capitalism. The left blamed foreigners for the problems besetting the British economy and sought to mobilise public opinion behind the Labour Party's chauvinist defence of British interests. The Left hoped to use its anti-EEC stance to rally support for the return of a Labour government.

In 1973 the left won the party's backing for the AES. The programme committed a future Labour government to bring about 'a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families'. But in practice it promoted an alternative strategy for defending the wealth and power of the British establishment. The AES emphasised Britain's ability to solve its economic problems alone. Blaming international finance and foreign capital for the British crisis, the Labour left wanted Britain to isolate itself from world crises by implementing protectionist measures such as import and exchange controls and by planning its national economy. The AES' political thrust was to galvanise chauvinist opinion in defence of British sovereignty, which the left claimed had been infringed by everybody from American multinationals to the EEC. Withdrawal from the Common Market was the logical consequence of the left's programme for national regeneration.

Throughout the seventies, friction



Britain's trade has shifted towards Europe and made EEC membership vital for British capitalism

within the EEC over trade and the budget contributions grew at the same time as the left advanced within the Labour Party. Withdrawal from the Common Market became a popular demand within the official labour movement. Opposition to the EEC became the defining characteristic of a socialist. The more vociferous your attack on Europe, the higher your credibility in labour left circles. Even a member of the Labour Party old guard such as Peter Shore, renowned for his advocacy of wage restraint, earned a left-of-centre reputation for his defence of Britain's independent interests against the EEC.

The left campaigned for a 'no' vote in the 1975 referendum on Britain's membership of the EEC. Seven Labour Cabinet ministers, including Tony Benn and Michael Foot, broke with the leadership line and issued a statement declaring that continued membership of the EEC would be 'markedly unfavourable' for the economy. 'But the real disadvantages' they warned, were 'political'. A shift of power to Brussels would undermine the legitimacy of Westminster. The Cabinet rebels implored the British people to ignore those who warned of the dangers of withdrawal:

'A far greater disadvantage to our legitimate economic interest, to the continued unity of the United Kingdom, and to the practice of democracy in this country arises from our continued membership of the EEC.'

The left's call to safeguard the independence of British imperialism struck a chord with the remains of the Empire loyalist lobby. Enoch Powell, who had supported Labour in the 1974 elections because of its commitment to the EEC referendum, echoed the left's sentiments. Powell condemned British entry as 'a declaration of intent to surrender this country's sovereignty, stage by stage'. Elsewhere, however, the Labour left failed to mobilise public support for its chauvinist campaign. The referendum result showed overwhelming support for the EEC, and the Labour government fended off successive attempts to turn the party officially against the Common Market. But after Labour's defeat by the Tories in the 1979 General Election, the anti-Marketters got their second wind.

In defence of the realm

The years of the first Thatcher administration revitalised the campaign against the EEC. The arrival of full-blooded recession accelerated the collapse of Britain's industrial base and ruined its ability to compete for the markets of the world. With the senility of British imperialism fully exposed, the Labour left redoubled its efforts to win public support for its strategy to resurrect Britain's lost independence. Blaming Britain's problems on the IMF, America and the EEC, Tony Benn cohered the left's appeal to restore Britain's national identity in his 'Britain is a colony' thesis of 1981. For Benn, the EEC had developed into a supra-national state with absolute control over its individual members. Britain could no longer be considered a parliamentary democracy, and the British economy had been decimated for the sake of wider European interests:

'Britain is now in law and practice a colony of this new embryonic federal West European state. The economic and industrial price we pay for that abdication is now becoming apparent.'

In a year when the brutal defenders of British imperialism crushed uprisings by oppressed black youth in Britain's inner cities and murdered 10 republican hunger-strikers in the occupied Six Counties of Ireland, Benn bemoaned Britain's 'colonial status' and called for a 'national liberation struggle' to free Britain from foreign domination.

Out of government and in need of a policy facelift, the Labour leadership was prepared to adopt the left's anti-Common Market line — the same line it had long kept off official party platforms. Long-standing anti-Marketeer and new Labour leader Michael Foot saw the advantages

for Labour's internal stability and public popularity. Opposition to the EEC provided Labour with a distinctive policy with which to present itself as a more loyal upholder of the Union Jack than the Tory government. It could also unite the party's left and right, and smooth the divisions opened up by the deputy leadership contest between Benn and Denis Healey. Labour's 1981 conference was the pinnacle of the withdrawal campaign's achievements. Conference voted to commit the next Labour government to pulling Britain out. Such was the apparent enthusiasm for the new campaign that even boring John Silkin, less than a week after being pushed into last place in the deputy leadership poll, brought the house down with his appeal to delegates to 'unite against the Market today'.

But even as the applause rang in Silkin's ears, anti-Marketters were already getting cold feet, as we noted at the time:

'The irony is that some of the EEC's opponents take the maintenance of the interests of British imperialism so seriously that they are beginning to have qualms about withdrawal. Because Europe now accounts for about half of Britain's trade, pulling out obviously poses problems. Already Labour is embarking on "detailed studies" of what an exit from the Common Market would exactly entail.' (the next step, November 1981)

Even as Eric Heffer put the party position on withdrawal to the 1981 conference, he distanced the leadership from the 'Little Englanders' within the party and made clear that Labour had 'always supported' the principle of a looser, wider European alliance. In the two and a half years since then, Labour's 'detailed studies' have drawn out the logic of Heffer's reservations and concluded that the future of British capitalism is bound up with that of Europe. The left has gone along with this development. The motivation for its change of heart is consistent with that which lay behind its former hostility to the Common Market. In the past, it seemed that Britain's interests could best be served by keeping out of Europe. The acceleration of the recession, however, has persuaded the left that British capitalism is in need of friends in Europe.

Europe vs America

In recent years two developments have brought home to left-wing economists and politicians the futility of arguing for a British withdrawal from Europe. First, the deepening of the crisis on a world scale has made it clear that there is no national road back to recovery. Second,

Labour has found no popular resonance for its anti-European sentiments. As the 1983 General Election confirmed, the Tory monopoly on patriotism and chauvinism remains intact.

In 1973 the Labour left could blame the Arabs for the oil crisis and point to North Sea oil as the British way out of the recession. Today, when the crisis affects every capitalist country and is crippling every sector of industry, such partial explanations cannot get a hearing any more. The left's old answers to the crisis lack credibility. Result: radical economists have taken up the call for a Europe-wide counter-crisis strategy, to be implemented at the expense of Europe's major competitor — American imperialism.

As early as the spring of 1982, Euro-communist economist Bob Rowthorn set out the left's case for European unity. Evincing a concern to promote a 'socialist Europe', Rowthorn pointed out the importance for British capitalism of retaining its EEC links, which were and would remain 'the central feature of our existence as a trading nation'. With the election of socialist President Mitterrand in France, Rowthorn claimed, it was only natural that the left should switch to a pro-Europe stance, and 'odd that anyone on the left in Britain should still think of us going it alone'. What had been adopted as Labour's radical policy departure only six months previously was already reduced to an 'oddity' by those left-wingers who followed the fortunes of British capital. Rowthorn called for more European cooperation against America, including a 'complete takeover' of US multinationals, followed by their 'democratic administration on an all-European level'.

A year after Rowthorn had set the terms of discussion, a group of European socialist economists produced *Out of crisis: a project for European recovery*, which went still further in articulating the need for a Continental counter-crisis strategy. Significantly, *Out of crisis* was edited by left-wing Labour MP Stuart Holland, one of the architects of the original Alternative Economic Strategy. Holland's introduction assured his readers that the left's new argument was 'essentially simple': 'one country's imports are another country's exports'. A Europe-wide policy of public spending and reflation could invigorate trade to the benefit of all the capitalist powers. Holland aimed to mobilise everybody from the 'managerial class' to migrant labourers behind this scheme. The left had not dropped its national, all-class approach to resolving the crisis; it had merely taken it on to a wider European stage to cope with the reality of the

recession.

The second motive behind the Labour left's alliance with Europe was a pragmatic response to developments in British politics. The anti-EEC campaign had tried to whip up nationalist support for Labour. But by the summer of 1982 it was clear that the left's appeal to popular prejudices could not compete with the patriotic consensus the Tories had cohered around the South Atlantic war. The 'Falklands Factor' allowed Margaret Thatcher to focus chauvinist sympathies more clearly; it also forced Labour Party left wingers to revive old xenophobias. In desperation they latched on to anti-Americanism, and began talking about the need for Britain to be part of a neutral Europe, standing between the 'superpowers'.

The enemy is at home

Since Labour's defeat last June and Neil Kinnock's takeover as party leader, withdrawal from the EEC has become a forgotten dream. Under Kinnock the Labour left has finally come round to understanding what the British establishment knew in 1961 and the Labour right had accepted by 1967: in Kinnock's words, 'Britain's future, like our past and present, lies with Europe'. Today the talk is not about pulling out, but of getting 'a square deal from the Common Market and a new deal for Europe'. In other words, the left's opposition to the EEC has been narrowed to 'getting the terms right'. (The establishment press has expressed surprise at Labour's European spokesman Robin Cook's call for 'a new Messina' — a summit to redefine the EEC framework. But Cook and Kinnock are in tune with the left's traditional approach to defending British interests. They have merely adapted Labour Party policy to suit the facts of life for British imperialism in the eighties.)

Despite the protestations of Labour's hard left fragments, there is no socialist principle of withdrawal from the EEC. The debate over British membership is between two alternative strategies for regenerating British capitalism. Today the 'in' lobby is ascendant. Tomorrow, as rivalries between the European powers hot up, the 'out' lobby may well win out. If it does, we can be sure the Labour left will change tack again to keep in step. British workers need a different approach. How British bosses arrange their trading relations is their concern, not ours. We cannot allow debates over the EEC to distract us from the fight against British capitalism. In or out of the Common Market, our enemy is at home.

John Dowling and James Wood

Community politics

Recent ructions over Britain's contribution to the EEC budget have shown Neil Kinnock to be nothing more than a wet Tory. Kinnock's demand for a 'square deal' for Britain is only a more radical presentation of the Tories' current strategy in Europe.

The latest EEC summit folded in March. European leaders went their separate ways, at loggerheads over the level of spending on Common Agricultural Policy support for farmers, and over the size of Britain's promised rebate on its budget payments.

Common Market spending on agriculture has long been a major bone of contention within the EEC. It currently soaks up two thirds of all EEC expenditure. The \$14.2 billion allocated to farming this year stretched the Community's budget to the full. Even that figure is likely to be almost \$1 billion less than actual expenditure. All the member states are agreed on the need to reform the complex agreements by which money is allocated. But Britain alone insists that any reforms must save money immediately. Thatcher's intransigence on this issue reflects the British establishment's discontent over the

vast amounts of EEC cash paid out to French farmers. At the March summit Thatcher curtly advised the Market to 'put its house in order' before embarking on any discussion about raising expenditure.

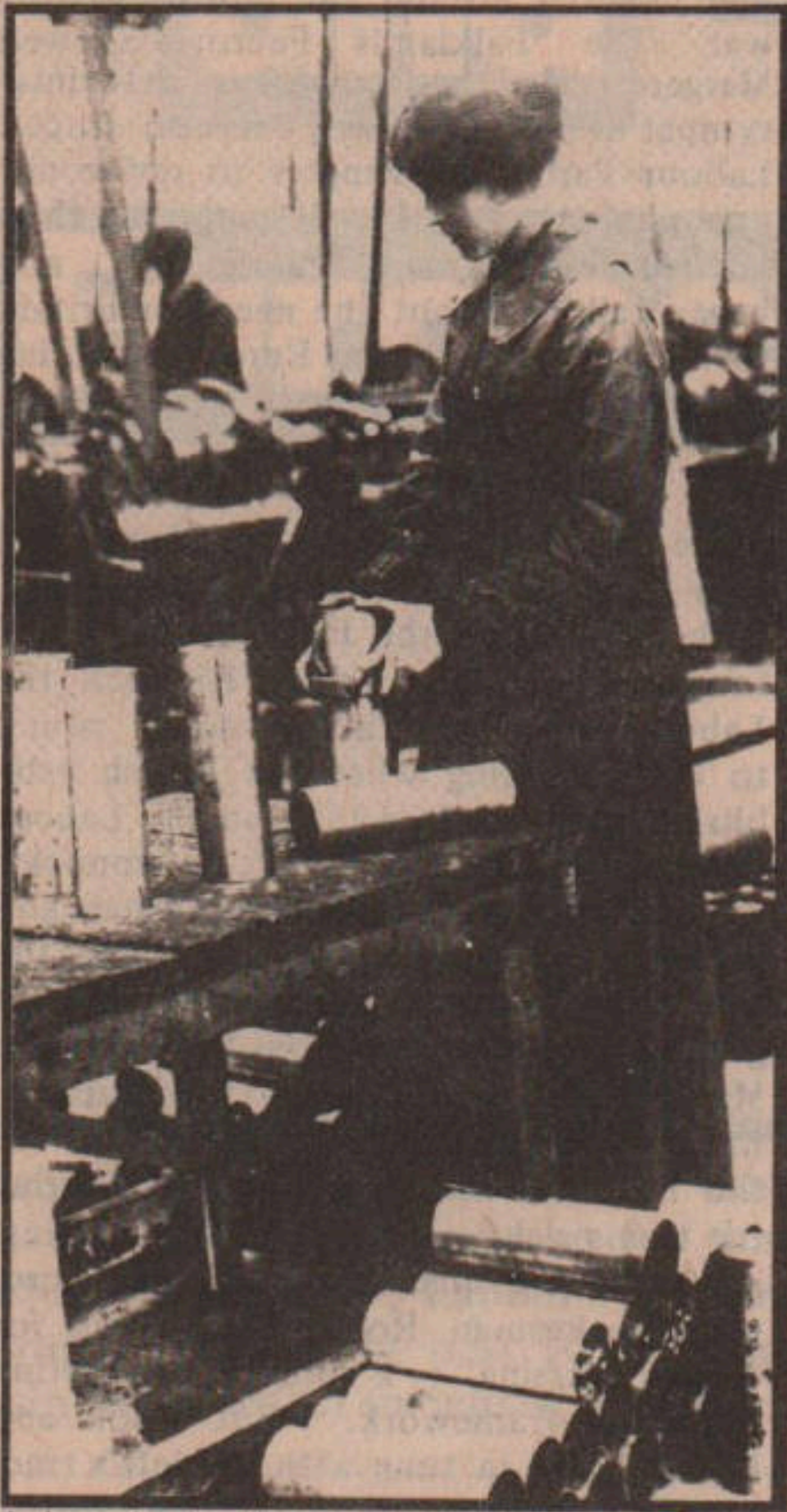
The 'order' the Tories have in mind is one where Britain pays less into and gets more out of the EEC. At present, Britain contributes 21.1 per cent of the budget and receives only 13.4 per cent of EEC revenue. Thatcher wants Britain's contribution cut by three quarters. The best offer so far from Britain's partners is a 50 per cent reduction. In the heated debate about these figures in March, France and Italy vetoed a previously agreed rebate of £450m to Britain.

The Tories stormed back to London threatening to withhold all British contributions until the £450m was paid. Anxious to avoid a serious rupture with Britain's European partners, a coalition of spokesmen from all sections of the British establishment told Thatcher to calm down. As the voice of British business, *The Economist*, noted, Thatcher has got her priorities right. The British Prime Minister may be 'a British nationalist

first, a European second', but 'she is European enough to believe in the necessity for a strong Europe, caught between a Russian adversary and an American ally whose support cannot be counted on forever'. Moves to find a compromise are under way. This month's EEC summit is likely to be stormy, but there is no danger of Britain jilting its European partners.

The Tories are not interested in breaking up the EEC. Like Kinnock, Thatcher is fighting hard to 'get the terms right' for Britain. Labour's call for 'a wider Europe' is in line with the free trade agreement which came into force this year between the EEC and the remaining members of the European Free Trade Association. The only difference between Labour's patriotic policy for 'a socialist Europe' and the Tories' ruthless defence of British interests is one of presentation. Both sides of the House of Commons are British nationalists first, Europeans second, but 'European enough to believe in the necessity for a strong Europe' to combat international competition.

Workers' defeat — Labour's opportunity



Labour backed Britain while workers slaved

Julia Bush, *Behind the lines: East London Labour 1914-1919*, Merlin Press 1984, pp254, pbk £5.50

Ross McKibbin, *The evolution of the Labour Party 1910-1924*, Oxford 1983, pp261, pbk £6.95

Robert Griffiths, *SO Davies: a socialist faith*, Cromer Press 1983, pp311, hbk £9.75

Dick Geary, *European labour protests 1848-1939*, Methuen 1984, pp195, pbk £4.25

'HOW DID THE LABOUR PARTY break into the existing two party system?', asks Julia Bush in her study of the rise of Labourism in East London during the First World War. Labour's breakthrough was indeed dramatic. Before 1914 it had only one or two MPs — by 1924 13 of the area's 14 seats were occupied by Labour politicians. Bush points to the emergence of a 'new political leadership' and the steady build-up of grassroots organisation with strong trade union links before and during the war as the answer to her question. However, she neglects the wider context of working class defeats that paved the way for Labour's electoral advance, in East London and nationwide, in the inter-war period.

Wartime partnership

Bush's local researches provide some insights into the pre-1914 labour movement and its response to the First World War. Her findings challenge the myth that the war provoked a deep rift between jingoist and pacifist Labour leaders.

Although East London's industry was backward and its workers impoverished, it contained most left-wing factions as well as some organisation of both the traditional craft unions and the new unions of the unskilled. The Social Democratic Federation, later the British Socialist Party, had several branches and an active membership in the area. The British left has always held it up as a model of sectarian revolutionary fervour. The Independent Labour Party was also strong in East London. It is generally identified as the forerunner of the mainstream Labour left. However, as Bush observes, there was little to separate the local BSP and the ILP in practice. Indeed there was a considerable amount of overlapping membership and joint activity on the ground. In their propaganda both advocated improved welfare services rather than social revolution and both were 'working towards independent working class representation in parliamentary and local bodies'. In their political outlook, Bush concludes, both were 'basically reformist'. The consequences of this convergence became clear during the war when, as Bush notes, 'long established habits of cooperation and the urgency of immediate practical issues blunted the edge of sectarian politics'.

The outbreak of war did lead to a division of opinion in the East London labour movement. On the one side local trade union leaders

reviews

such as Will Thorne and Ben Tillet took a staunchly patriotic, pro-imperialist stand. They backed Britain all the way against Germany and supported the formation of the National Socialist Party as a breakaway from the BSP. On the other side the prominent East London ILP leader George Lansbury took a pacifist stand against the war. A small faction of largely Jewish immigrant socialists adopted a revolutionary anti-war position, which was also supported in East London by Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation. While a small minority of socialists campaigned for the defeat of British imperialism, the vast majority either supported Britain or adopted Lansbury's middle of the road pacifist view.

Bush shows that after a brief wave of jingoist fervour, with attacks on immigrant shops and anti-war protests, most socialists abandoned active opposition to the war. Socialists like Lansbury, who had long campaigned for peace and against war in general, agreed to suspend anti-war activity the moment a real war broke out. As Bush puts it, with unintended irony, 'the majority of socialists had acknowledged in August 1914 that the present time was unsuitable for direct propaganda on the war question'. Anti-war socialists continued to work closely on day to day issues with pro-war socialists. By the end of the war Lansbury even went to the lengths of pleading — successfully — on behalf of the jingoist Thorne with East Ham socialists who had refused to endorse him as their parliamentary candidate. Lansbury acknowledged Thorne's virulent patriotism but claimed that he fully supported 'Labour and socialist principles'.

The 'Labour and socialist principles' held in common by Lansbury and Thorne were a commitment to 'ensuring equality of sacrifice' among British people while the inter-imperialist conflict continued. Pacifist socialists joined patriotic trade unionists on committees set up by the Government to integrate workers' representatives into the war effort. While some workers were marched off from recruitment centres on Bow Road and East India Dock Road to the slaughter in Europe, others were driven like slaves in factories at Old Ford and Silvertown.

Workers were less enthusiastic than their leaders about the 'equality of sacrifice' on which Labour insisted in Britain's hour of need. Many took industrial action to prevent falling living standards and deteriorating working conditions during wartime. Socialist leaders, pacifist as well as patriotic, were hostile to such unofficial action. As Bush concedes, 'rank and file trade unionists were sometimes more sympathetic to strikes than well known socialist opponents of the war and the Government'. Labour's pacifists did not dare to oppose the war, so they ended up collaborating with the bosses to force workers to pay for Britain's imperialist ambitions.

Bush takes a positive view of the official labour movement's role in subordinating the working class to Britain's war machine. She comments enthusiastically that 'the Government's appreciation of Labour's special importance and expertise in certain matters began to permeate down to local government'. And she notes with evident approval that trade union leaders 'could be found hobnobbing with ministers and generally being taken into the Government's confidence'. Bush is sharply critical of Sylvia Pankhurst who intransigently opposed both the war and the patriotic union leaders. On the other hand, jingoist officials like Thorne and Tillet are complimented on their 'astute pragmatism' and their toughness 'at the negotiating table'. The Labour bureaucrats were able to win certain concessions and to advance their own careers, as a direct result of the pressure of rank and file militancy on employers and on the precarious wartime coalition government.

Labour's rise

At the close of war the working class still presented a serious threat to the capitalist order in Britain. Yet workers' attempts to establish shop stewards' committees in East London on the Clydeside model came to nothing. The war had further weakened the revolutionaries while strengthening the labour bureaucracy. In 1919 the combined forces of the state and the executive of the engineering workers' union smashed the East London Workers' Committee.

Within a couple of years mass unemployment had returned to East London and the rest of the country. The post-war wave of unofficial strikes had been contained and the employers were in a position to go on the offensive. Major national strikes, notably by

the miners, railway workers and engineers, were crushed and the Government launched a new wave of terror in Ireland. The Labour Party was the major beneficiary of the defeats suffered by the working class from 1914 to 1921. Its advance began in local elections and continued in parliamentary elections, greatly assisted by the extension of voting rights in 1918. With every setback to workers' attempts to make their own future by taking on the employers and the state, Labour's project of subordinating the working class to British capitalism and making itself an alternative party of government gathered momentum.

Behind the lines is essentially an apology for the emerging labour bureaucracy. Yet its focus on the class struggle in one area in a critical period does reveal some of the real forces at work, despite the author's prejudices.

Ross McKibbin's study of the electoral rise of the Labour Party considers the same question with which Bush begins, but on a national scale. Its publication in paperback is welcome. McKibbin emphasises the significance of the expanded franchise brought about by the 1918 Representation of the People Act. This meant that in the General Election of that year 80 per cent of people were voting for the first time. McKibbin also draws attention to the central importance of the trade unions in providing the Labour Party with an organisational base in local areas and a link with the working class.

Unlike Bush, McKibbin is not influenced by any particular loyalty to the labour bureaucracy. He shows how the Labour Party was able to take advantage of the war to develop its local and regional organisation, to strengthen the central control of the executive and tighten up its administrative apparatus. His analysis of Labour's adoption of its 1919 programme, including the celebrated Clause Four statement of socialist objectives, reveals how the party was moving away from the working class to seek electoral respectability.



Social pacifist: ILP leader George Lansbury

The new constitution gave unprecedented bureaucratic control to the union leaders. The block vote system was consolidated and trade union representation on Labour's executive increased — by the end of the war this included the four leading jingoists from the right wing of the TUC. Clause Four, McKibbin concludes, 'was inserted in a constitution that confirmed the triumph of the unions and the defeat of the socialists'. The Labour Party became a vehicle for the trade union bureaucracy, not a mass organisation of the working class. McKibbin explains why the left has no excuse for complaining about the betrayals of its party:

'If it is objected that it has not secured the cause of socialism or even the "true" interests of the working classes, the answer is that it was never designed to do so.'

McKibbin's detailed survey of by-elections and local elections, trades councils and party institutions, throws much light on the developing strength of the labour bureaucracy in this period. He is right to conclude that 'by the end of 1924 the Labour Party was recognisably the same party that we know today'. However, like Bush he ignores the broader context of working class defeats on the political front at the outbreak of war, and on the trade union front at its close, which allowed the bureaucracy to forge ahead. One man whose

life story encompasses the defeats of the British labour movement in the twentieth century, and their consequences, was the Welsh socialist SO Davies.

SO Davies went to work in the pits at the age of 12 in the last years of the nineteenth century. He later succeeded in getting a university degree under the auspices of the non-conformist church and became an official in the miners' union in 1918. In 1924 he became vice-president of the South Wales Miners' Federation, a post he held until he was elected MP for Merthyr 10 years later. He espoused every cause of the Labour left from the thirties until his death in 1972. After the war he became a strident Welsh nationalist and a constant critic of the Labour leadership. He was expelled from the parliamentary party from 1961 to 1963 for his stand against nuclear weapons, and in 1970 the national executive backed a local move to oust him as parliamentary candidate. SO Davies stood as an independent and won a crushing majority over the official Labour candidate.

The key moment in Davies' political career was the conflict between the miners and the Government between 1919 and 1921. As miners' agent for Dowlais he campaigned vigorously against acceptance of the Sankey Commission by which the Government tried to buy time to hold off the miners' demands in 1919. But the moderate miners' leaders recommended acceptance. When the Government reneged on its promises the momentum of the struggle had been lost. This setback set the scene for the major defeat of 1921, the collapse of the Triple Alliance and the imposition of wage cuts and longer hours throughout the coalfields. Membership of the South Wales Miners' Federation fell by half between December 1920 and December 1921. The defeat of 1921 was compounded in 1926 when the General Strike ended with further wage cuts and victimisations of militants. Within a year, a scab miners' union was gaining members in South Wales and miners were joining the first of the hunger marches to London.

Griffiths gives some flavour of the bitterness of the miners' defeats, of the hardship and poverty of the twenties and thirties and the repression carried out by employers, police and courts. Yet he fails to do justice to the sense of betrayed aspirations of the South Wales miners who preferred soviets to nationalisation at the end of the First World War and firmly intended to pursue the example of the Russian Revolution in Britain. South Wales miners formed close links with the Bolsheviks and played an active part in the Red International of Labour Unions. Yet by the mid-twenties the miners' hopes were crushed in one aspect of a wider defeat from which the British working class has yet to recover.

Davies refused to join the Communist Party when it was formed in 1921, sticking with the ILP. However, he visited the Soviet Union in 1922 and he remained a Communist Party sympathiser for the rest of his political career, later loyally following every twist and turn of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In 1937 Davies moved from South Wales to London and followed the Labour left in emphasising international issues at the expense of challenging British capitalism at home.

Increasingly isolated from his proletarian origins, Davies became more and more of a maverick. Griffiths gives undue credit to Davies' post-war pursuit of the petit-bourgeois fantasies of Welsh nationalism. Nothing expresses better the consequences of the defeat of the working class movement of the early decades of this century, than SO Davies' retreat into the parochial obscurantism of the Welsh nationalist revival in the twilight of his years.

Workers' rise, Labour's defeat

McKibbin makes the point that the British Labour Party was 'the rock upon which European social democracy was already building its fortress against Bolshevism' before the end of the First World War. Dick Geary's survey of the European labour movement helps to put the class struggle in Britain in the broader context of the international post-war revolutionary upsurge. This book is now available in paperback to a wider readership.

Geary is better at dismissing various superficial theories of labour protest than he is at providing a coherent analytic framework himself. However, he provides a useful brief introduction to the emergence of trade unions and political movements in Europe. He also gives some insights into the particular factors that have made the British labour movement one of the least successful at endangering the rule of capital. The early and organic development of British capitalism, the continuity of governmental institutions, the relative reluctance of the ruling class to resort to repression, the stability of the middle classes and their moderating influence on the labour movement are all part of the explanation.

These four books all illustrate in different ways how the Labour Party's rise is the other side of the coin to workers' defeats. When workers rise again the Labour Party will be an early casualty.

Mike Freeman

The strange death of liberal England



Brits hammer Ireland, Curtis hammers BBC

Geoffrey Bell, *The British in Ireland: a suitable case for withdrawal*, Pluto Press 1984, pp119, pbk £2.95

Liz Curtis, *Ireland: the propaganda war*, Pluto Press 1984, pp336, pbk £5.50

David Reed, *Ireland: the key to the British revolution*, Larkin Publications 1984, pp436, pbk £3.95

THROUGHOUT 15 YEARS of the Irish War, liberals in Britain have tried to build a movement to help stop the bloodshed. Frustrated by failure, they have admitted their inability to convince British workers of their case and looked instead for ready-made audiences willing to support their cause. These three books by prominent members of various failed Irish solidarity groupings, show the miserable end to which this strategy has brought their movement today.

Geoffrey Bell's *The British in Ireland* is the latest addition to Pluto's 'Arguments for socialism' collection. Like the rest of the series, it is an argument for the Labour Party. Bell believes that Britain should quit Ireland. But things are not that simple: the Irish question is a 'complex' one requiring complex answers. For Bell, the establishment's argument that a British withdrawal could provoke a civil war between warring religious factions 'can neither be conclusively proved nor can it be disproved'. Bell avoids coming down decisively on the side of the Irish people against Britain. The armed struggle 'may not be acceptable behaviour' to 'outsiders', 'but surely it is understandable'. Bell reduces British socialists' responsibility to unconditionally support the struggle for Irish freedom to a question of liberal sympathy.

For Bell, the Labour Party is the place to build on that sympathy. Bell bemoans the fact that popular support for Britain's war against Argentina showed 'just how deep are the roots of national chauvinism in the British working class'. 'The strength of this prejudice', he wails on, 'makes socialism hard to imagine in Britain'. This is the defining outlook of a radical liberal. Workers are too reactionary to be won to opposing the British state, so let's forget about them and look elsewhere. 'Looking elsewhere' invariably means confining Irish solidarity work to an internal debate among Labour left wingers.

Bell accepts the conditions of working within the Labour Party, and lowers his horizons to what is acceptable to the official labour movement leadership. He dismisses the demand for 'Troops out now' as a thing of the past. Bell is keen to take account of 'the realities of the eighties'. The reality of the eighties is that the British establishment is more committed than ever to controlling Ireland. In these conditions, Bell recognises the Labour left's impotence: the final demand in his 'programme for withdrawal' is for 'the calling of a 32-county constituency assembly to set the terms and time scale' for Britain to pull out. But what happens between now and the calling of such a talking shop? And how long will this 'time scale' allow before Britain withdraws? Bell's new programme bears a striking resemblance to existing Labour Party policy: Irish independence in the long term, negotiations in the medium term, continued British occupation in the short term. In giving up the demand for 'Troops out now' and refusing to take sides in the war, Bell and the left have condemned the Irish to further British oppression.

Liz Curtis is a leading member of the rump of the Troops Out Movement. Her book, *Ireland:*

the propaganda war, has been acclaimed by left-wing critics because it fits in perfectly with the left's preoccupation with the media as the source of establishment power.

What the papers say

Curtis details the way in which the British media has distorted events in Ireland to back up the military and discredit the republican movement. Her book is punctuated with quotations such as ITV chair Lord Aylestone's remarks on the 'independence' of independent television: 'Britain is at war with the IRA and the IRA will get no more coverage than the Nazis got in the last war'. Such attempts to denigrate republicans are standard practice for British gutter journalists. Fleet Street has always depicted the victims of British imperialism as blood-crazed psychopaths and criminal thugs to justify British barbarism around the globe. This is not the cause of British oppression but only one reflection of it. Yet for Curtis, the media is the central problem. She imagines that if people knew the real facts about events in Ireland, they would call for an end to the conflict. But facts alone cannot build an anti-imperialist movement. If British workers remain convinced of the need to crush the republican movement, they will support British rule no matter what excesses Curtis can expose. The real problem is the political one of how to break workers from their allegiance to the British state. That means winning working class support for the Irish people's right to self-determination — and their right to fight for it.

Curtis ignores this problem because she is not talking to the working class. Her chosen audience is middle class 'public opinion', whose liberal outrage she hopes to stir against the 'double standards' of the British media. The only progressive forces she can identify are a handful of radical journalists — 'a few determined souls who have been willing to brave the establishment's wrath'. The only advice she can offer to those concerned about the Irish War is that it is 'worth phoning the broadcasting companies to complain about — or praise — programmes'. While increased repression is the strategy of the British establishment, 'Ring up the BBC' has become the rallying cry of the Troops Out Movement.

It is patronising rubbish to suggest that British workers believe everything they read in the press or see on the television. What binds the working class to the British state is not *The Sun*, but the influence of Labour Party politics, which portray the state that murders Irish nationalists as a force that can benefit British workers. Far from challenging the grip of Labour, Curtis endorses it. The British people, she claims, control government policy in Ireland through elections to Parliament. The implication is clear: to alter Britain's role, change the government. Irish nationalists who have suffered at the hands of recent Labour governments are unimpressed by the chorus of liberal approval for this strategy.

Marx, Stalin and Livingstone

In *Ireland: the key to the British revolution*, David Reed has produced a theoretical analysis based on a crude misinterpretation of Marx's writings on Ireland. Reed notes that Marx changed his position on Ireland, from one of believing that Ireland would be freed in the British revolution to one of believing that there would not be a British revolution until workers took up the fight for Irish freedom. For Reed, two factors influenced Marx's change of mind. First, the British working class lost its 'revolutionary drive' and a section of it — the 'labour aristocracy' — was permanently bought off by imperialism. Second, the Irish national movement assumed 'revolutionary forms'. This apparently led Marx to conclude that the stunted British proletariat could not make its revolution without the assistance of Ireland. From this, Reed concludes that today's 'revolutionary forces' from which a solidarity movement must be built lie outside the organised working class, among black youth and prisoners.

Marx never held the views attributed to him by Reed's rewriting of his work. He changed his view of the importance of Ireland through developing an understanding of the influence of chauvinism in the working class. Marx identified the unity of British workers and bosses against the Irish as the biggest barrier to the development of an independent working class movement. He did not see this as the insuperable, material problem Reed suggests, but as a political problem which revolutionaries had to confront by arguing the case for Irish freedom within the British working class. The inability of liberals like Reed to take up Marx's challenge leads them to dream up theoretical justifications for dodging the issue.

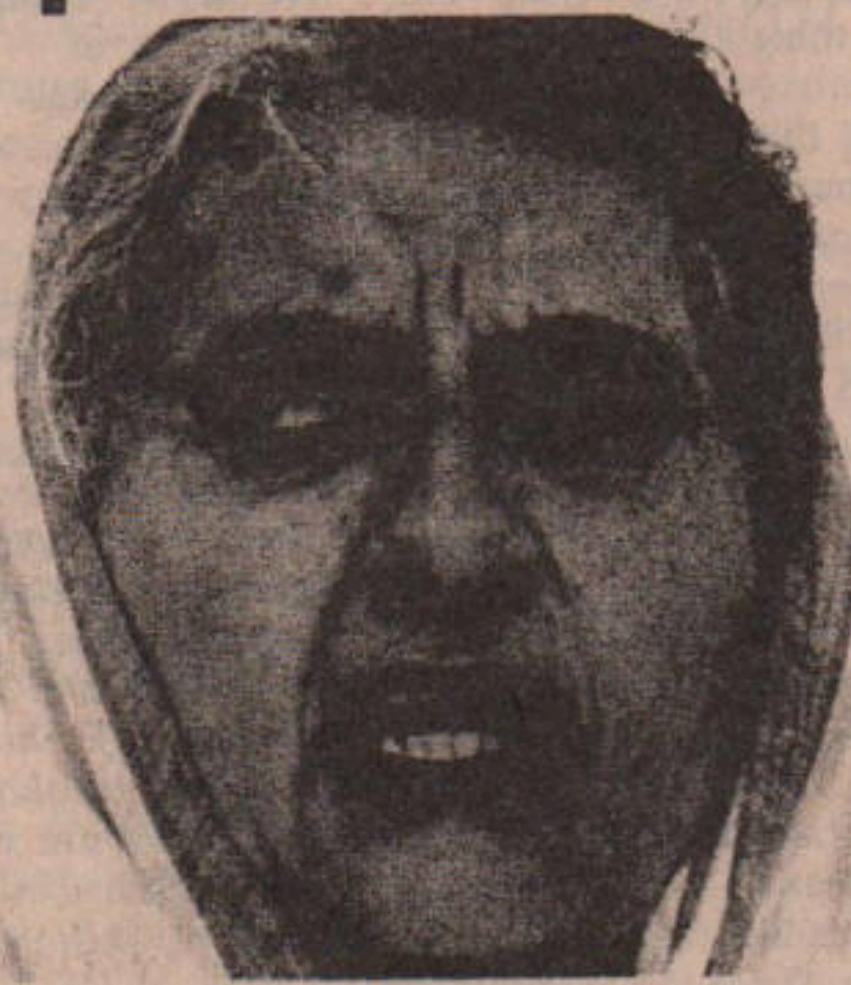
It is absurd to confine efforts to build a solidarity movement to isolated black youth and those incarcerated in prisons. Behind his turgid Stalinist rhetoric, Reed accepts this. Like Bell and Curtis, his real audience is the Labour left. Reed repeatedly asserts that 'British imperialism cannot play a progressive role in Ireland'. Yet he accommodates to Labour

left figures such as Ken Livingstone who propose a progressive British solution for the Six Counties. Reed's only criticism of the Livingstone trend is that it is 'numerically weak'. The logic of this argument is that socialists should build support for the Labour left's attempts to settle the Irish War on Britain's terms.

In writing off the working class, liberals in Britain have written off the prospect of building an effective solidarity movement and of defeating British imperialism. We reject their approach, but welcome their admission of their own irrelevance to the fight for Irish freedom.

Mick Hume

Things fall apart



Left's confusions let Gandhi survive

Sumanta Banerjee, *India's simmering revolution: the Naxalite uprising*, Zed Press 1984, pp327, pbk £7.95 hbk £19.95

THE HOMELAND OF MAHATMA GANDHI is ready to erupt. India's Indian government presides over a country where separatist tendencies are violently asserting themselves in the provinces of Punjab and Kashmir. War with Sri Lanka over the position of its minority Tamil population is a growing threat. Nearly 1600 miles of barbed wire is being used to fence off Bangladesh. In March, Indian police massacred 600 striking dock workers and their families in the port of Paradip, Orissa state. The prospects for revolution are ripening, yet India's 'revolutionaries' are split into myriad sects, unprepared to meet the challenge. In his comprehensive account of the Indian insurrections of 1967 to 1972 Sumanta Banerjee charts the changing fortunes of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). Banerjee's critical appraisal of the period and the influence of Maoism — a radical form of Stalinism — attempts to draw the lessons of the failed uprisings to prepare the Indian left to face the renewed capitalist offensive.

Three major problems confront the Indian revolution. First, although India achieved formal independence in 1947 it is still an economically backward country, dominated by imperialism. This lack of development is best reflected in the stagnation of Indian agriculture. The second problem is the social weight of the working class. The great majority of India's 700 million population are peasants: industrial workers make up less than 10 per cent of the total. Finally, Indian society is bitterly divided into separate groups: religious, racial and caste. The partition of India, which divided the subcontinent into India and Pakistan in 1947, continues to undermine the class struggle.

Looking for friends

Since independence, the Indian communist party has faced difficulties in winning mass support for its programme. India's formal independence and its tradition of elected government meant that the CPI's programme for a democratic revolution (as opposed to socialism) did not achieve much resonance among the Indian masses. The CPI attempted to overcome this problem by describing India as a neo-colonial state and the Indian bourgeoisie as *comprador* — ie a section of Indian society whose interests are intimately bound to imperialism. Like every Stalinist party in the Third World, the CPI's defining characteristic has been its relentless search for a progressive section of the national bourgeoisie which will stand up to the imperialist powers, ally itself with the masses and develop Indian capitalism as the first stage of the revolution. Every split in the CPI has been motivated by a disenchantment with the failure of this strategy, and the search for an alternative section of the bourgeoisie to pursue the democratic revolution.

During the thirties and the Second World War, as it gained influence within working class trade union organisations, the traditionally pro-Soviet CPI sought to ally itself with the nationalist Congress Party. In a reaction to its

successful incorporation into the Congress Party and also to Soviet leader Khrushchev's calls for peaceful co-existence with the West, the CPI split and a new section, the CPI (Marxist), was established in 1964. The CPI(M) quickly accommodated to 'progressive' elements within the national bourgeoisie and began angling for power in the states of West Bengal and Kerala.

Sickened by these compromises with the bourgeoisie and stimulated by the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution' of 1967, Charu Mazumdar and his followers split from the CPI (M) and began the struggle to organise another party. The new CPI (Marxist-Leninist), formed in 1970, based its programme on the recognition that India was 'neo-colonial', the state was made up of the large landlords and 'comprador-bureaucrat capitalists' and the Indian government was a lackey of US imperialism and 'Soviet social-imperialism'. The CPI (ML) argued that the task of the party was to lead the 'People's Democratic Revolution', the main content of which was to be the agrarian revolution and the abolition of feudalism. Mazumdar defined all sections of the national bourgeoisie as *comprador* and put his faith in the rural peasantry and the urban petit-bourgeoisie. The role of the working class was subordinated to these 'revolutionary' elements. Mazumdar advised the urban working class to leave the cities and fight the landlords alongside the peasantry.

Mazumdar was unable to politically challenge the Congress Party's grip on the peasantry; rejecting political campaigns as reformist, he advocated execution of the landlords to gain peasant support. The Maoists made the most impact among the despised aboriginal tribes and scheduled castes. The CPI (ML) made no attempt to counter the prejudices whipped up by the Congress and other establishment parties among the ordinary Hindu peasants against these oppressed sections of Indian society. Nor did the party try to combat the ethnic divisions among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs across the subcontinent.

The struggle of the peasantry against the landlords is an omnipresent feature of Indian society. Usually, these campaigns are isolated and sporadic. In 1967, however, the intervention of the CPI (ML) and radical students from the Calcutta colleges precipitated a coordinated series of local land struggles from one end of the country to the other. The spark was lit in Naxalbari on the North-East Frontier. The Maoists spread the Naxalite uprising to the forest tribes of Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh. By 1970, the guerrillas claimed to have liberated 8000 square miles and half a million people in Andhra Pradesh. In 1970, the Calcutta slums erupted in response to a police assassination campaign. Pitched battles were fought in the streets with the paramilitary police. On 12 August 1971, 100 youth were butchered at Baranagar, Calcutta. Altogether, some 1800 Maoists were killed: 100 were slaughtered in prison riots. By 1973, 32000 CPI (ML) activists were being tortured in prison. Mazumdar was murdered in prison in July 1972.

Lessons unlearned

The Indian left has never recovered from the 1972 defeat. Nor has it made any serious attempt to assess the Naxalite experience and the reasons for its failure. The only criticisms are condemnations of Mazumdar. Liberals have denounced his 'addiction' to violence and his authoritarian methods. But rarely has Mazumdar been condemned for making concessions to the bourgeoisie. Despite his previous denunciation of the whole of the bourgeoisie as imperialist collaborators, Mazumdar warned his members against alienating the business class in Calcutta:

'We should remember that, all businessmen are not our enemies. On the contrary, after the establishment of a liberated zone, these business communities will get in touch with us in their own business interests... the majority of the business community will come with us. They are a large part of the national bourgeoisie.'

Banerjee's critique is to be welcomed as a serious attempt to deal with the Naxalite experience. However, his assessment of the Indian Maoists is limited. Banerjee's condemnation of their adulation for China is less a critique of Stalinism than a dismissal of 'foreigners' and their ideology. And while he acknowledges that the CPI (ML) 'underestimated the contribution of the working class', Banerjee continues to elevate the peasantry as a revolutionary force in India. But the clearest lesson of the Naxalite experience is that no section of the Indian bourgeoisie — from the business class, to the urban petit-bourgeoisie, to the peasantry — can lead the struggle against the capitalist system. The working class is the only social force which has a direct interest in destroying bourgeois society, and which is capable of winning the poor peasantry to the cause of revolution behind its political leadership. This is the precondition for bringing India's simmering revolution to the boil.

Andy Clarkson

Letters



Prison letter

Irish labourer Tommy Quigley has been held on remand in Brixton Prison since he was arrested under the PTA by a joint Scotland Yard/RUC snatch squad in Belfast last December. Charged with 'conspiracy to cause explosions', Tommy's trial begins on 29 May. The Irish Freedom Movement will be demonstrating outside Lambeth Magistrates Court from 9am.

Below we reprint extracts from Tommy's latest letter, including details of his wife Geraldine's arrest under the PTA after visiting him in April.

When they arrested Geraldine they were asking her questions about things she had written in her letters to me. They went out of their way to try to intimidate and degrade her. They also hoped it would discourage her and the rest of my relatives from visiting me. But Geraldine and my mother came over again last week. She was very distressed at the time, but she was back on her usual form by the time of the visit.

So the Forum Report is out at last. It was leaked that much it was hardly worth reading — we had already heard all that was in it. I don't think it will be able to save Hume though. I heard he and Morrison had a real slanging match on Ulster TV, but I didn't find out what was said by the pair of them. The cracks started to appear in their consensus as soon as Haughey opened his mouth. Nobody seemed to get excited in this country about it.

The reaction in the Free State was completely different. The press there treated it as the event of the century. I would like to have seen the way it was put across on the TV. I have not seen a TV since I was lifted and the news is the only thing I miss it for.

I was looking at the Baker report myself. It's amazing what a change of name can do for you: 'The Protection of the Peoples Act'. Swap 'Protection' for 'Oppression' and they will have got it right. Sick isn't it.

You are right the St James Square incident came at a very convenient time. It was a good distraction from the miners' strike. But if they hadn't had that they would have invented something else.

Did you see that creep Elton John in Poland? He wasn't doing any stunts like that when he was in South Africa the other week. And now Maggie has invited Botha. Maybe she is looking for hints on how to control her 'non-whites'.

By the way, thanks very much for the Easter card. Whenever I go to court I see the RCP posters all over the place supporting the strike. The longer it goes on, the more bitter it will get. I was reading about some of the similarities this strike has with the 1926 strike, but I've every confidence that this strike will not end the way the 1926 one did.

Tommy Quigley
'A' section
Brixton Prison

Trotsky, Ireland and animal rights

There are a couple of points I have to raise from the April issue of *the next step*.

Firstly, in the article on James Connolly, we have the RCP (Trotskyist) covering up for Trotsky's complete misunderstanding of the national question and its relation to the working class struggle for socialism. He wrote:

'An all-Ireland movement such as the nationalist dreamers had expected failed to materialise. The Irish countryside did not stir. The Irish bourgeoisie, and likewise the higher and more influential stratum of the Irish intelligentsia, held aloof. There fought and died only the workers of Dublin, together with some revolutionary enthusiasts from the petit-bourgeois intelligentsia. The basis for national revolution has disappeared even in backward Ireland.'

It was Trotsky who called the Easter Rising a 'putsch'. Lenin alone understood the real significance of the Rising. The quote from Lenin you use is directly attacking Trotsky, but you refuse to state that.

Secondly, I feel that your position on the question of animal rights is completely reactionary. Of course our concern is the suffering and oppression of millions of people around the world. However, vivisection is not helping to alleviate their burden. Only about one per cent of all vivisection is car-

ried out for human need. The rest is for things we do not need, such as cigarettes, make-up etc. This part of vivisection is used solely for the purpose of making profit — and therefore part of the capitalist system. Animals are treated barbarically in vivisection centres for the purpose of human greed. You are very naive to think that capitalists or vivisectionists want to alleviate the burden of the oppressed people over the world! The capitalists want to keep them suffering and starving so they can continue to make profits out of them.

I would like to point out that I wholeheartedly support the right of Asians in Bradford to eat Halal meat. In this case, the animal is killed for food. Very different than killing one to produce a new kind of hair spray or something like that. I also support the IRA/INLA and the immediate withdrawal of British troops from the Six Counties.

I look forward to you printing this letter and answering the points I have made.

Sean O'Hara,
Bradford

the next step replies:

The interests of the working class are not served by covering up for Trotsky or anybody else. As it happens,

the article on James Connolly makes no mention at all of Trotsky. But you introduce an old Stalinist myth that Trotsky called the Easter Rising a 'putsch'. The quotation from Lenin which you refer to attacks 'K.R.', who happens to be Karl Radek not Leon Trotsky. Trotsky misunderstood the real significance of the Rising but he did not condemn it. As you must know, since you cite from his article, Trotsky refers to the Irish rebels as the 'heroic defenders of the Dublin barricades'.

In later years Trotsky corrected his errors and came to understand the importance of the struggle for Irish independence. As his statement in 1921 indicates, there can be no doubt where he stood:

'The British socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy — such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy if not with a bullet.'

Under capitalism, vivisection, like anything else, is carried out solely for profit. A system that treats human beings with the utmost barbarism obviously has no concern about how it treats animals. On this we are in agreement. Where we disagree is whether or not we should be against experiments on animals. We believe that vivisection is unobjectionable. Through such experiments humanity learns about life and develops products that it needs. Unlike you we do not presume to decide for others whether make-up or hair spray or anything else is necessary.

Animal rights is an absurdity. It is an absurdity that you implicitly realise through your selective approach to these rights. According to you, animals have the right not to be killed for make-up but have no rights when it comes to our stomachs. Next time you bite into your hamburger, pause for a moment and ask yourself whether the animal you are eating died in the knowledge that its rights had been fully realised.

Strategy

The May issue of *the next step* will doubtless be very controversial among the rest of the left. But I thought it was the best issue I have ever read. The miners' strike has shown in the clearest possible way, the division between the 'socialist left' and the communist approach of *the next step*.

The radical left — *Socialist Worker*, *Socialist Action*, *Militant* etc — are so relieved that a strike is actually happening that they have no wish to rock the boat and criticise its conduct. The left are willing to make jokes about MacGregor and Thatcher, but they are terrified of attacking the disastrous strategy of the British labour bureaucracy. This is consistent with the way they attack American imperialism but keep silent about the crimes of British imperialism, especially in Ireland.

It seems that these groups are quite happy to see workers' control pass over to the NUM executive. If the NUM bureaucrats achieve their objective of getting MacGregor round the negotiating table they will doubtless stitch up some compromise deal. And without doubt, the left will call this a victory.

The only victories we can expect from the radical left approach are for the union bureaucrats, who strengthen their strategy of knocking on the boss's door until he lets them in for some 'meaningful dialogue' about how to sell their members down the river. By restricting workers' aspirations to a pit here, a steel plant there and six per cent next year, the radical left make Scargill and Sirs' approach appear revolutionary. They allow Liverpool's Militant council to assume the mantle of Bolshevism simply because it pays some workers the minimum union rate.

The strategy of *the next step* is a great deal more difficult than the simplistic and dishonest solutions of the radical left. But unlike them, it offers to do more than slightly delay the crushing of our class. The time for sitting back and allowing events to take place out of our control is over.

Simon Johns
South London

Organising the unemployed

The headline of *the next step* — 'Wasted youth... need a fighting future' was only a foretaste of the clumsy patronisation which characterised the article on youth unemployment. In this latest edition of the RCP's paper the vanguard read how:

'For today's youth, unemployment is a personal calamity... Unemployed youth do not make an impact on public consciousness because they are at home. Because their only experience of adult life is the dole or a state training scheme, and their only social intercourse with the television, they are isolated from the labour movement and prone to cynicism and demoralisation.'

Having discussed the nature of unemployed youth's (i.e. our) plight, *the next step* goes on to reveal 'what we need' (who is this we?):

'It is up to the employed, organised sections of the labour movement to lead the struggle to defend the unemployed... workers... have the power to transform the forgotten youth of today into the class fighters of the future.'

Gosh! Golly! Have you got plans for us! Thanks for letting us know. Actually we are a little confused as to why you occasionally sell your paper outside the dole office since our role in your scheme of things is apparently that of being led (and thereby transformed). It is not altogether clear what we are expected to do other than watch telly and wait for the initiative of the vanguard to trigger the 'organised employed' into leading us.

Frank Richards in his review of Mattick says:

'Critics... always condemn the notion of a vanguard party as elitist. What they are rejecting in reality is the task of fighting to give a lead. A world without leaders under capitalism means a world full of passive observers, waiting for someone else to make a move.'

Accusations of 'elitism' miss the point. Not only are we all apparently condemned to be passive observers unless leaders stand up, but those of us that reject the stance of vanguard leadership for ourselves are accused of cowardice. Like other groups that the RCP deigns to regularly pontificate to, the unemployed youth are and have been organising ourselves and fighting our enemies for reasons that are only too plain to us. Telling us we are impotent cripples until given outside help from the brave, outspoken leaders is not going to impress us. We are not waiting for you to make a move — much as you need to believe that. We don't reject your politics from fear of being leaders, heroes and martyrs, but because being led is clearly not the cure for passivity and apathy.

If you wish to write about us in such an ignorant and condescending manner — like so much 'high' meat that needs cooking — you would do better to keep your papers to yourselves and not stand around near dole offices.

Eight unemployed
Islington, North London

the next step replies:

Your letter implies that you are quite satisfied that the unemployed are organising effective resistance to state attacks. Yet never have the unemployed been as isolated as they are today. Groups of unemployed people are attempting to fight back against attacks on social security benefits, harassment of claimants and so on. But the vast majority of the unemployed are not organised at all. At the same time, the official labour movement has made no attempt to campaign for the unemployed. Nowadays it can't even repeat its past cosmetic exercises such as the People's March for Jobs. To deny that there is a problem here means reconciling the unemployed to their present situation.

Your comments about 'leaders' and 'elitism' miss the point. Nobody is condemned to be a passive observer anymore than someone else has a natural right to lead. Leadership means fighting not just as an unemployed worker but as an anti-capitalist worker. It means not just responding to individual experience but to the experience of working people as a whole. As fragmented units — skilled and unskilled workers, unemployed, women, blacks etc — we will never win against a

united capitalist class and its state. We can only be successful if we approach every struggle from the point of view of the entire working class and the oppressed. Responding to one particular employer or one instance of oppression is not enough. That is the justification for our approach.

It is not patronising to be realistic about the difficulties the unemployed face in defending themselves. It is not a matter of the unemployed being inherently non-combative, but a matter of social power. The unemployed are forced into a fragmented and isolated existence. For most, it is a struggle just to survive. Although the employed are also divided in many ways, by virtue of their position in production they are better able to defend themselves. The employed are stronger because they have something to fight with.

We demand that the employed take up the cause of the unemployed and organise with them because they have every interest in fighting the divisions that unemployment causes in the working class. We want workers to fight for jobs whatever the cost to the system, so that we may rid ourselves of it altogether.

Write to...

the next step

BCM JP LTD, London WC1N 3XX

Unique

I am very impressed with the work of the RCP, as I've followed issues of *the next step* and read various publications of yours (*Revolutionary Communist Papers*, *An anti-imperialist's guide to the Irish War*, *Real Freedom*, among others). As a graduate student of political economy at the New School, I recognise the significance and uniqueness of the RCP and its theoretical work. Revolutionary politics do follow from Marxian economics. Since there is no comparable party in the States or anywhere else, I look forward to going over to the UK in the future (if I can get the cash). In the meantime, I await the next issue.

JM Morton
New York

Bang on

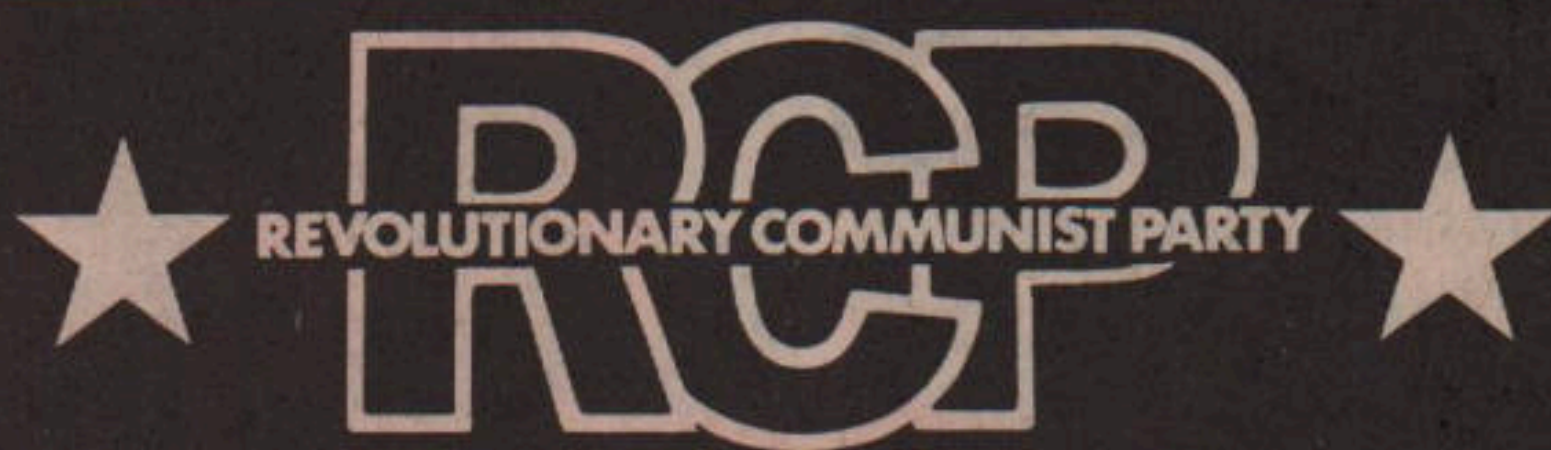
Your paper remains excellent and the policy adopted on the miners' strike is courageous and bang on.

I think you would strengthen the argument if you put more emphasis on Marx's theory of crisis, which obviously underlies all RCP politics — but which isn't explicitly stated in recent issues of *the next step*. What about a series popularising Marx's *Capital* and explaining the basic categories.

Enclosed £50 cheque.

V. Phillips
Todmorden
Lancashire

Meetings



Activities

SHEFFIELD

Friday 1 June 7.30pm
Gaddafi — loony or hero?

Friday 8 June 7.30pm
Ronald Reagan comes to town

Friday 15 June 7.30pm
Today's police state

Friday 22 June 7.30pm
The class struggle in Europe

All at Mailcoach, West Street

MANCHESTER

Lobby the council for an unemployed workers' centre!
Tuesday 3 July 4.30pm
Ashton Town Hall
Wellington Road

BIRMINGHAM

Thursday 7 June 7.30pm
Ronald Reagan's war drive
Digbeth Civic Hall
Digbeth
Wednesday 20 June 7.00pm
the next step supporters group. First meeting of new group to discuss the June issue
Old Bull's Head public house
Digbeth

NORTH LONDON

Thursday 7 June 7.30pm
Whose world, whose economy, whose summit?
The RCP and Reagan's visit
Roebuck public house
Tottenham Court Road
(Warren Street e)

SOUTH LONDON

Wednesday 13 June 7.30pm
Ronald Reagan comes to town
St Matthew's Meeting Place
Brixton Hill SW9
(Brixton e)

IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Tuesday 29 May 9.00am
Free Tommy Quigley and Paul Kavanagh!
Protest at Lambeth Magistrates Court
Renfrew Road, SE11

Sunday 3 June 1.00pm
Picket of Parkhurst Prison
Isle of Wight
(organised by Sinn Fein)
Ring 01-274 3951 for transport details

PREPARING FOR POWER is an annual conference organised by the Revolutionary Communist Party. This year it will be held at the Polytechnic of Central London between 13 and 20 July. The main attractions each year are the specialist courses. You should choose one in group 1-6, and a second course in group 7-12. Each session will be introduced by the convenor, except where mentioned.



PREPARING FOR POWER 1984

Week-long conference of the Revolutionary Communist Party
Friday 13 July — Friday 20 July 1984

Polytechnic of Central London
New Cavendish Street,
and Marylebone Road (Saturday 14 July only)

1. Introduction to Marxism.

(convenor Frank Richards)
Historical materialism
Scientific socialism and the critique of political economy
Marxist theory of ideology
Paris Commune (Kate Marshall)
Marxist theory of the party

2. Problems of everyday life.

(convenor Alan Harding)
The problems of the individual
Bourgeois morality and sexual freedom
Media and culture
Work and the sale of leisure (Dave Hallsworth)
Growing up and youth culture (John Johnson)

3. Problems of the British revolution.

(convenor Kate Marshall)
What's special about the British Labour Party?
The limitations of the British left
Working class action in post-war Britain (Keith Tompson)
Scottish nationalism (Mike Wall)
Building a revolutionary party today

4. Imperialism in the eighties.

(convenor Inez Landa)
Imperialism in a world of recession
South Africa (Charles Longford)
Middle East
Latin America (Charles Longford)
Sub-Saharan Africa (Andy Clarkson)

5. Ireland — myth and reality

(convenor Keith Tompson)
James Connolly and the 1916 rebellion (Mike Freeman)
The changing face of the Irish War 1969-1984
The significance of the UWC strike 1974 (Andy Clarkson)
The struggle in the Twenty-six Counties (Phil Murphy)

The anti-imperialist movement in Britain 1969-84

6. Marxist economics.

(convenor Sabena Norton)
The origins of capital and the social relations of capitalism
What is surplus value? How the working class is exploited (Helen Simons)
The theory of capitalist crisis
State intervention, credit and inflation (Tony Allen)
What is imperialism?

7. Taking control

(convenor Mike Freeman)
Who is the working class?
What is the labour bureaucracy?
Employment and unemployment
Wages, bargaining and shopfloor organisation
Trade unions and politics

8. Making sense of the Soviet Union.

(convenor Frank Richards)
Russian Revolution — problems of building a new society (Phil Murphy)
The rise of Stalinism
Soviet industrialisation and the Great Purge
The national question in the USSR (Andy Clarkson)
Where is the Soviet Union going?

9. Sex, feminism and women's liberation

(convenor Ann Burton)
Two theories of women's oppression
How women spend their leisure time (Cathy Barratt)
Family life and sexual oppression
Sexist myths and their roots in society (Carol Taggart)
The women's liberation movement in Britain — has it a future?

10. Racism and immigration.

(convenor Judy Harrison)
From immigration to repatriation — Britain and Europe
Bradford: a case study in British racism (Eileen McEvoy)
Racism and the black response — the US experience (Zaro Costello)
Three strategies for fighting racism — reformist, separatist and communist
Racism and fascism — the German experience

11. The world economy

(convenor Phil Murphy)
How the world economy was formed (Tony Allen)
How international is capital?
State intervention and the world market
World banking and finance (Tony Allen)
Prospects for the world economy

12. Inside America

(convenor Mick Hume)
The unique class structure in America
Race in American politics (Gary Simpson)
US imperialism and its rise
The working class in post-war America
Assessing the Reagan administration

If you are interested in attending Preparing for Power please contact Kate Marshall, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 01-274 3951.

New brochure includes details of all sessions, evening events, entertainment, creche, accommodation, convenors, agenda and reading list. Please send 30p for the brochure or £12 (£8 UB40) to register for the week (free brochure included with ticket). Make cheques out to RCP Association. Weekend or part-time tickets also available.

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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

The Western leaders' summit is a thieves' kitchen to carve up the world

Crush world terror!

Reagan's wargames are only the beginning

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN is in London this month for the tenth annual economic summit. While Reagan smiles at the massed Western press, his agents slaughter the oppressed masses of the Third World.

In Central America, US troops are digging in for a long stay in Honduras, as Reagan pours millions of dollars into the region to back the murderous dictatorship in El Salvador and undermine the radical regime in Nicaragua. In the Middle East, Reagan has pulled out of Lebanon, but he is preparing to send a warfleet to the Gulf, as the Iran-Iraq war threatens to cut off oil to the West. Behind Reagan's diplomatic posturing at the summit, helicopter gunships and machete-wielding death squads are the reality of America's international relations in the eighties.

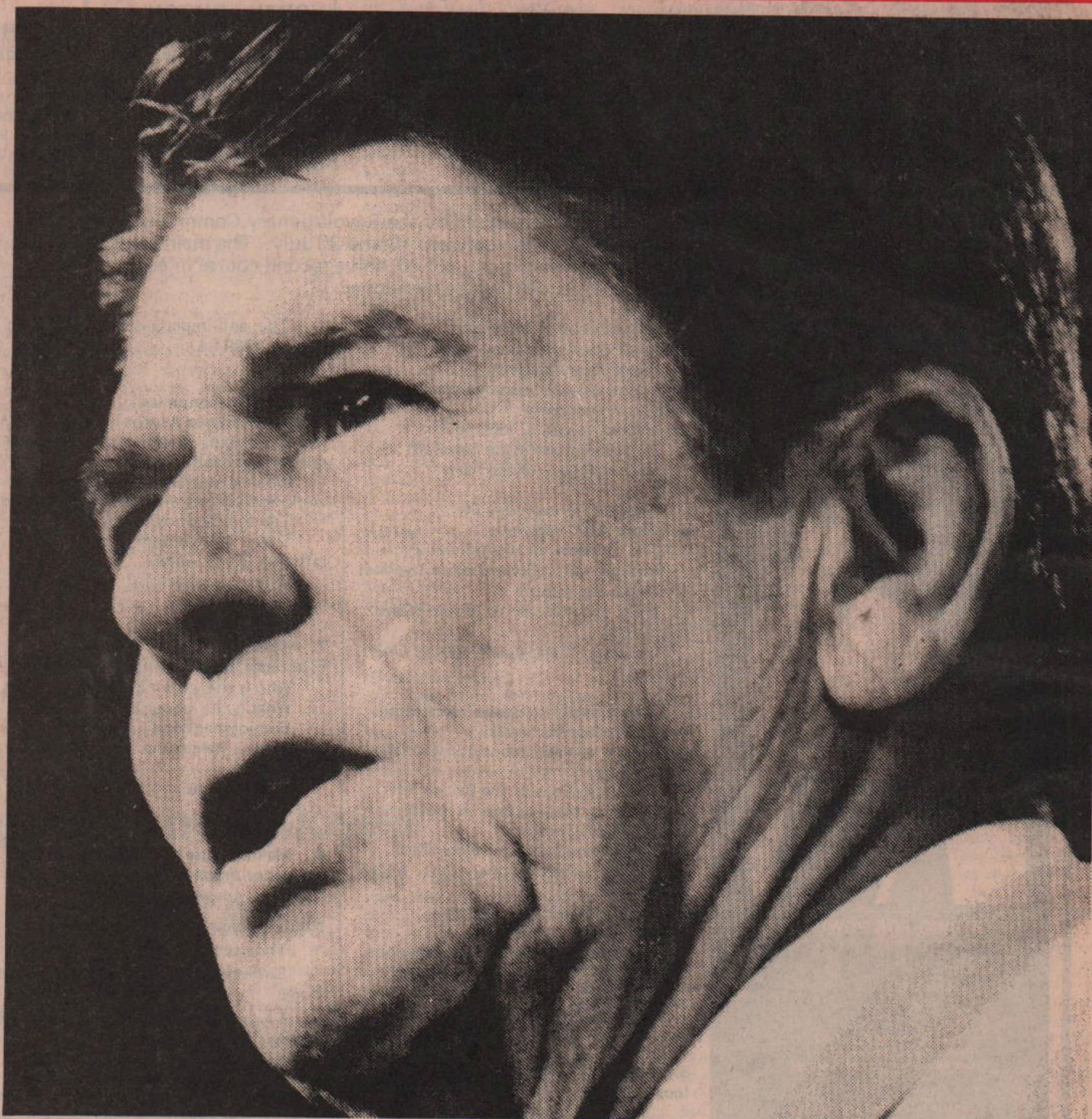
But Reagan is not alone. Every Western politician assembled in London this month is prepared to go to any lengths to protect imperialist power. Thousands of French troops are embroiled in Chad and throughout Central Africa. Millions of tons of British armour reinforce Fortress Falklands, and more than 30 000 members of the Crown forces continue Britain's bloody occupation in the Six Counties of Ireland.

The debates at the summit are not just about economic issues. They are about power. The pressures of recession have forced the imperialists into fierce competition over their spheres of influence. Now the question is: which of them is to be the dominant power holding sway over the Third World? It is a question which can only be answered in an international conflagration.

The West's leaders will be taking a day off this month to visit Normandy for the fortieth anniversary of the Allied invasion during the Second World War. Then it's back to the serious business of preparing for the next imperialist confrontation.

The imperialists are preparing for war. We must begin preparing a movement to stop them. We need a movement which is not just anti-American, but anti-imperialist: a movement prepared to fight for the defeat of every imperialist ruling class — starting with our own. We need a movement which does not just oppose individual weapons, but takes on the capitalist system which is driving the world towards war.

If we are to build that movement, we need to work out our strategy now. The Revolutionary Communist Party's annual summer conference, *Preparing for Power* aims to map out the way forward for the working class. *Preparing for Power* is a week of education and entertainment, running from 13-20 July. Its courses, debates and discussions cover every aspect of imperialism today and workers' struggles against it. Turn to page 23 for full details. If you want peace, come to *Preparing for Power*. Stopping the warmongers means preparing ourselves to take their place as the class that controls the world.



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

PREPARING FOR POWER is a week-long series of discussions, debates, films and fun. There are a dozen specialist courses (see page 23) plus many extra sessions of general interest, film shows, great debates and dancing, all rounded off by a boat-trip down the Thames.

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

Make cheques payable to RCP Association,
send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

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



PREPARING FOR POWER 1984