the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No 49 July 1984 20p

Notts miners – scabs or scapegoats? p12,13.

Prepare for power

PREPARING FOR POWER 1984
FRIDAY 13 JULY – FRIDAY 20 JULY
Polytechnic of Central London
New Cavendish Street, London W1

Preparing for Power 1984 is the Revolutionary Communist Party's fifth annual summer school. It is a week-long series of talks, discussions, debates, films and fun.

This issue of *the next step* carries details of the dozen specialist courses, covering everything from the Bolshevik Revolution and an Introduction to Marxism, to the British revolution and the roots of racial oppression.

There are extra sessions of general interest – Lessons of the miners' strike, Women and fascism, Revolution and creativity, Workers' control, Rearmament, Life after the revolution – 30 in all.

For the evenings you can take your choice of film shows, great debates and dancing, all rounded off by a disco-boat trip down the Thames.

Preparing for Power is an education of a different kind. It is organised for trade union militants, campaign activists, unemployed workers, members of left-wing parties and people who want to know more about the RCP. Its courses, debates and discussions cover every aspect of workers' struggles – at home and internationally – in the eighties.

The recession has brought class conflict into the open. Compelled to make ever more swingeing attacks on jobs, living standards and workers' rights, 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 struggle raises the broader question of which class will win. To unite and win, the workers' movement must come to terms with the question of class power.

The power of the capitalist class depends on keeping the working class confused and demoralised. But if we start to prepare *now* and plan our strategy there is nothing that can match the power of the working class.

Come to *Preparing for Power* to discuss the way forward for the workers' movement: the lesson of every struggle today is that it is never too soon to prepare for power.

Introduction to Marxism

For many people, Marxism seems a remote and incomprehensible dogma, which offers no answers to today's problems. This course tells you everything you ever wanted to know about Marx and Marxism – and why it's got all the answers.

Problems of the British revolution

Many people think that the British working class hasn't got what it takes to make a revolution. This course sets out to prove the doubters wrong.

Problems of everyday life

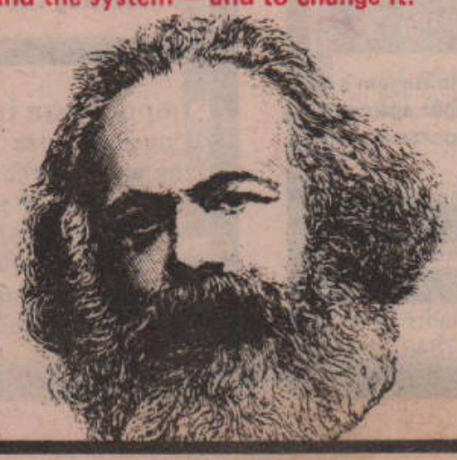
What is culture? Our morals or theirs? Who am I? This course looks at the way capitalist society shapes everything we do – from getting up in the morning to what we do when we go to bed.

The world economy

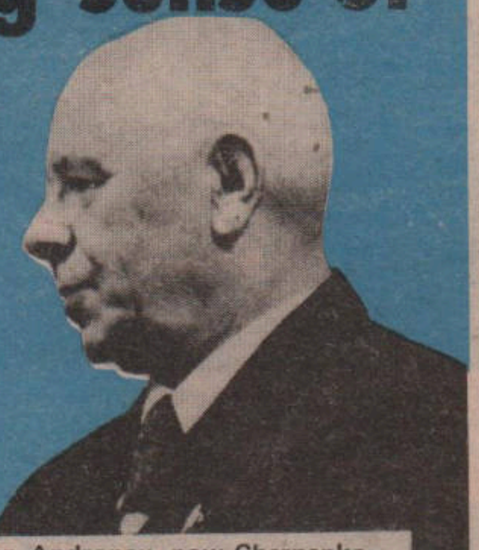
Slump and stagnation in the West, starvation and terror in the Third World. From dwindling profits in the Western world to debt mountains in the Third World, this course examines how the world economy works and how the capitalists worldwide are trying to stave off the trends towards collapse.

Marxist economics

In the sixties most radicals threw their copies of *Capital* out the window. Together with every academic economist, they scorned Marx's theory of crisis – until the recession forced them to eat their words. This course is for everybody who wants to understand the system – and to change it.



Making sense of the Soviet Union



First Brezhnev, then Andropov, now Chernenko. Two Soviet leaders follow each other to the grave in quick succession – and Chernenko looks like he hasn't got far to go. Is the Soviet Union moribund? This course looks at what drives it and where it's going.

the next step

No. 49 July 1984
monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

Publisher Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX.
Printer Morning Litho Printers Ltd (TU), 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16.
Typesetting and design Junius Publications Ltd (TU).
Subscription rates (for 12 months)
Britain and Ireland £5, Europe £8.50
Middle East and North Africa £10
America, Asia and Southern Africa £12
Australasia £13
All cheques payable to Junius Publications. Circulation 01-274 3951.
Correspondence to The Editor, *the next step*, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX.
ISSN 0144 – 350 X July 1984

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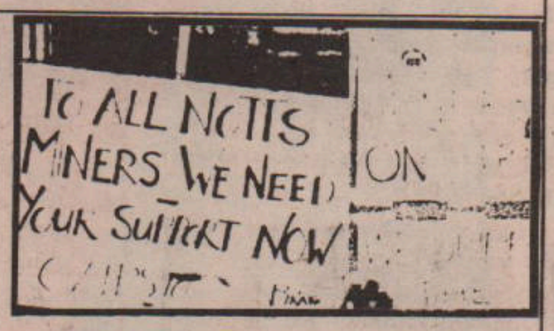

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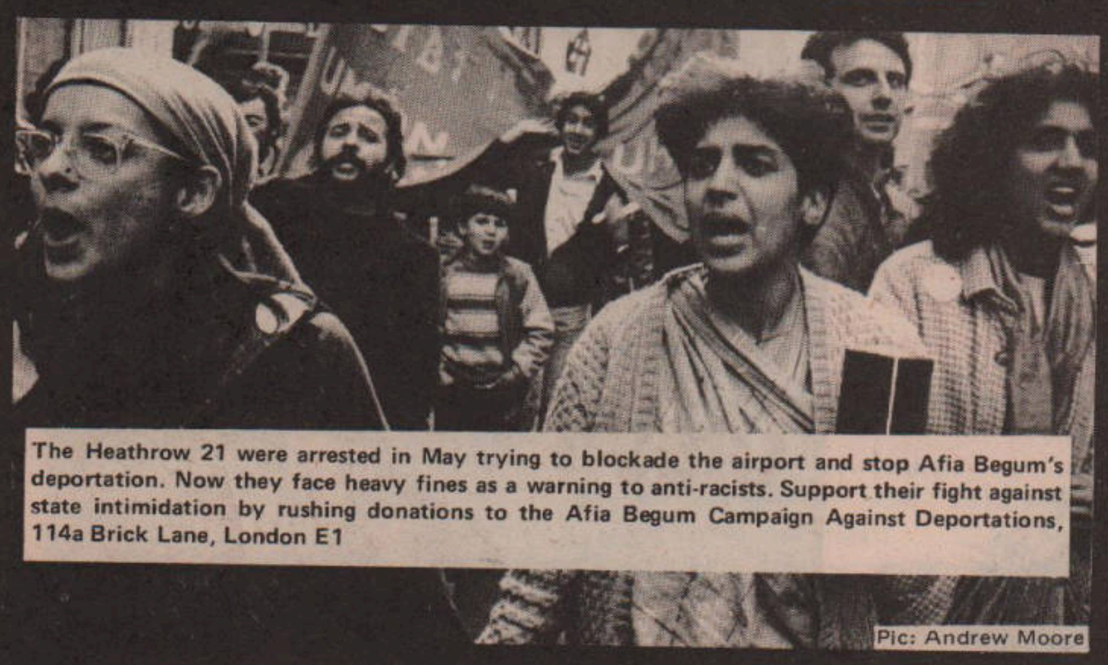
Support the Heathrow 21



Pic: Andrew Moore

The Heathrow 21 were arrested in May trying to blockade the airport and stop Afia Begum's deportation. Now they face heavy fines as a warning to anti-racists. Support their fight against state intimidation by rushing donations to the Afia Begum Campaign Against Deportations, 114a Brick Lane, London E1

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.

Preparing

Polytechnic of Central L

Introduction to Marxism

Frank Richards introduces a series of five discussions on everything you ever wanted to know about Marx and Marxism:
- historical materialism
- scientific socialism and the critique of political economy
- the Marxist theory of ideology
- the Paris Commune
- the revolutionary party

Problems of everyday life

Youth and age, health and disease, sex and relationships, working and having fun – course convenor *Alan Harding* takes a fresh look at these and many other everyday problems:
- the problems of the individual
- bourgeois morality and sexual freedom
- media and culture
- work and the sale of leisure
- growing up and youth culture

Marxist economics

To take on the system we need to understand how it works. *Sabena Norton* turns capital inside out:
- the origins of capital and capitalist social relations
- what is surplus value? How the working class is exploited
- the theory of capitalist crisis
- state intervention, credit and inflation
- what is imperialism?

Making sense of the Soviet Union

Sixty years ago Joseph Stalin and his supporters turned the tide against socialism in the Soviet Union. *Frank Richards* charts the course from the Russian Revolution in 1917 to reveal the forces at work in the Eastern bloc today:
- Russian Revolution – problems of building a new society
- the rise of Stalinism
- Soviet industrialisation and the Great Purge
- the national question in the USSR
- where is the Soviet Union going?

Problems of the British Revolution

Many people who would like to see a revolution think that it could never happen in Britain. *Kate Marshall* looks at the problems and explains why they're wrong:
- what's special about the British Labour Party?
- the limitations of the British left
- working class action in post-war Britain
- Scottish nationalism
- building a revolutionary party today

The world economy

The world at your finger-tips – *Phil Murphy* dissects the world economy:
- how the world economy was formed
- how international is capital?
- state intervention and the world market
- world banking and finance
- prospects for the world economy

Inside America

Why is anti-Americanism so strong in the British labour movement? Why is anti-capitalism so weak in the American labour movement? Course convenor *Mick Hume* pursues these questions and asks a few more:
- the unique class structure in America
- race in American politics
- US imperialism and its rise
- the working class in post-war America
- assessing the Reagan administration

Imperialism in the eighties

Convenor *Inez Landa* shows how war, terror and starvation in the Third World are the work of the West – and how we can help to stop imperialist intervention:
- imperialism in a world of recession
- apartheid expansionism
- crisis in the Middle East
- what's at stake in Latin America?
- exploring sub-Saharan Africa

g for Power 1984

ndon, 13–20 July

Preparing for Power is an education in itself. For the past four years the Revolutionary Communist Party's summer school has been the place to catch up with the Marxist view of every important issue.

When the first *Preparing for Power* conference opened, there was no President Reagan, there was only just a Prime Minister Thatcher, and nobody had heard of Neil Kinnock. But we saw them coming.

Time and again over those four years, events have proved the analysis presented at *Preparing for Power* correct. Our first conference identified the trend towards bitter Western rivalries and bloody imperialist interference in the Third World. That was before the wars in the Middle East, the South Atlantic and Central America or the rows over international trade and debt took off.

Exposed

The 1981 *Preparing for Power* conference took place while the Labour left was on the crest of a 'Tony Benn for deputy' wave. We expected its success would be short-lived. Labour left wingers didn't believe us (and still don't). But many workers have since been made aware of the limitations of the Labour Party's radicalism.

Last year's conference course on the British working class exposed the left's dream of a return to the strikes of the early seventies, pointing out that the collapse of the official labour movement machine made seventies-style militancy impossible to recreate. The unions' paralysis in the face of the Warrington NGA dispute, the union ban at GCHQ and the miners' strike has underlined our analysis.

Struggles

This year's *Preparing for Power* aims to set the scene for the struggles to come. It's not a question of making predictions or crystal-ball gazing. But by dissecting the events of the year behind us, we can point the way ahead for the workers' movement and outline what needs to be done *now* to prepare for the future.

On the march: the Revolutionary Communist Party takes to the streets

All of this makes the Polytechnic of Central London a very interesting place to be between 13-20 July. *Preparing for Power* 1984 will centre on the struggles of the international working class (see opposite for course details). We welcome anybody with an interest in ending the blight of oppression and exploitation which grinds down the masses around the world.

We cannot change the world in a week of discussion and debate. But we can clarify our ideas. For the other 51 weeks of the year, the Revolutionary Communist Party will be out on the streets putting those ideas into action. Join us at *Preparing for Power*. And when it's all over for another year, join us in preparing for power.

In conference: opening plenary, *Preparing for Power* 1983

Ken, 20, bank clerk, New Cross, London

'I've been around CND but left because its ideas were so limited – sort of sterilised politics for the masses. I'm going to *Preparing for Power* to learn about politics that show we can really change things. I've spent too long sitting back and letting other people think for me. Now I want to get educated, get out and get fighting.'

Sean, 20, miner, South Kirby pit, Yorkshire

'There's been a lot of problems in the strike – lads not coming on the picket line. Everybody talks about them a lot, but nobody comes up with any answers about how to sort them out. Arthur Scargill seems too busy juggling figures about how big an industry mining's going to be, instead of working out how to get all the miners to help save what pits we've got now. I think the RCP's got it right, saying the big issue is our jobs, that's all we should worry about. But I find it hard to get the message across to some other miners on strike. I'm going down to *Preparing for Power* to clear up some questions and sort out the arguments to use on the picket line.'

Michael, 18, unemployed, Edinburgh

'The RCP has only just started up in Edinburgh, so until a few weeks back I thought me and my mates were the only communists in Britain. I've always thought that people like Lenin were sound men. I know the Soviet Union's not communist, but I want to find out what it is. What I'm really interested in is how we can make a British revolution. To help put the message across, myself and some mates have formed a band called Iskra. Obviously, we won't change the world just by singing songs. I'm going to London to find out how the party thinks we *can* do it.

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Join the RCP

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY

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

East London Bengalis under siege

Racists out!

Families in fear: Asians under attack in Bow need workers' defence, not social work

Chris Black (reflex)

Racists like the sun on their backs. As temperatures soared in June, the thugs went on the rampage against Asian communities throughout Britain.

Racist fire-raisers murdered an Asian youth and maimed seven others in a High Wycombe attack. And the anti-Asian terror that is always a part of the great British summer returned to the streets of Tower Hamlets.

A dozen Bengali families on the East London borough's Teviot Street and Aberfeldy Street estates are under seige:

- racists used dogs to savage one 60 year old Bengali and iron bars to whip his wife
- Bengalis have been stoned outside mosques and their children beaten up on the way to and from school
- whole families are imprisoned in their homes. Even there, they face window-smashing mobs trying to break down doors to get at them.

East London Workers Against Racism has been down on the estates to confront the attackers and challenge the racist onslaught at its root cause – the apartheid-style housing schemes of Labour's Tower Hamlets and Greater London councils.

Indigenous

For years, Tower Hamlets council and the GLC have operated a simple housing allocation policy in East London: whites have the right to half-decent housing, Asians have the right to what's left.

Newer estates were reserved for 'indigenous East Enders'. Thousands of Bengalis were crammed on to derelict, garbage-strewn estates in Spitalfields, E1.

Two years ago, investigations revealed that Bengalis held only one per cent of all 'desirable' tenancies in Tower Hamlets. The Labour administrations responded by funding quangos on race and housing and moving a few Asians on to newer estates.

All of this came to nothing. In May, the GLC's Anti-Racist Year Housing Working Group admitted that there had been 'almost no progress in opening up the better estates in E1 to Bengalis'. A new report shows that, over the past two years:

- the GLC made 1000 housing allocations on 19 better estates in E1 - only seven per cent of them to Asians.
- even the few Asians housed on decent estates got the worst tenancies.
- those on the homeless list are targetted into rotten ghettoes – and well over half of the homeless are Bengali.

And the councils' attempt to move a handful of Asians on to new estates has broken down in the face of racist opposition.

Clashed

The councils' token integration plans have been upset by fierce resistance from racist tenants appalled by Labour's attempts to undermine their status as an East London ascendancy – a position the party granted them in the past.

The hardcore racists have tried to force incoming Bengalis off their estates. East London Workers Against Racism supporters clashed with racist tenants on the Glamis and Royal Mint Square estates in 1982, and the Tarling estate last summer. Meanwhile, unable to confront the racist backlash their policies have created, the Labour councils have gone along with it and herded beleaguered Asians back to the Spitalfields ghettoes.

Dumping

Today the Labour councils have given up any pretence of creating 'multi-racial housing' on the newer East London estates. This year Tower Hamlets council has displayed its contempt for isolated and homeless Asian families by shoving them on to the most run-down, all-white estates with reputations for racism.

The violence which erupted last month on Teviot and Aberfeldy estates was a direct consequence of Labour's dumping policy after years of pandering to the racists' demands for 'exclusive' estates.

Ducked

While the right-wing Tower Hamlets council has laid the Asians open to murderous attacks, the left-wingers who run the local race relations industry have ducked the fight.

The GLC's Race and Housing Action Committee and the GLC-backed Community Alliance for Police Accountability have got together with the police to set up an 'incident book' on the Teviot Street estate, so that all parties can document future attacks. Meanwhile, CAPA has encouraged Asians to move out and tried to arrange transfers. None of this can stop the racist terror:

- the left's call on the *police* to 'do something useful' in Tower Hamlets offers Bengalis no solution. East London's Asian community knows from long experience what encouraging police to take an interest in their affairs means: a free hand for local racists whom the police 'cannot identify', and a crackdown on Asians who the police are very keen to identify as 'illegals' and potential deportees.
- the Labour left presents *monitoring* racist attacks as the same thing as fighting them. It is of little comfort to Bengalis to know that somebody is counting the bricks that sail through their windows and taking note of the streets their children are being hounded out of.
- CAPA's call for Asians to be *transferred* off dangerous estates gives in to the racists' demand for all-white 'no-go' areas. The only 'alternative accommodation' awaiting Bengalis who move out is the council's workhouse-style homeless centres – or the overcrowded slums of Spitalfields.

Unite

Supporters of East London Workers Against Racism have been around the estates fighting for a different approach:

- *workers' defence, not police terror.* Black and white workers need to organise themselves to defend Asians under attack and reject all cooperation with uniformed racists.
- *no to 'no-go' areas.* We need to mobilise white tenants to defend Asians' right to live on the estates, and to drive out the racists – not move out the Bengalis.
- *fight for the housing we need.* Workers in East London must be united against the Labour councils' grim housing record if we are to win decent homes for all.

We are campaigning with Bengali families on the Aberfeldy Street estate in a fight for their rights. And we have been busy on other estates in East London, helping Asians move in and facing down racist opposition. Join ELWAR's fight to clean up East London and sweep the racists off our streets! Ring ELWAR on 01-274 3951

Farehk Afzhal

Sari Squad hits Europe

At the end of May, shortly before Europe's rulers gathered in France for the fortieth anniversary of the D-Day landings, 30 Asian women from the Sari Squad invaded Europe for a week-long assault on the 'guardians of Western democracy' and their racist immigration laws.

The Sari Squad toured the Continent to raise support for Bangladeshi widow Afia Begum, kicked out of Britain days earlier.

'Undesirables': Sari Squad rocks Strasbourg

The Sari Squad tour hit Paris, Amsterdam, the Hague, Bonn and Frankfurt before reaching Strasbourg for the European Parliament debate on Afia's deportation. When the Sari Squad arrived in Strasbourg the French police had the crash barriers up in readiness for the 'undesirables' they had been warned to expect. The Sari Squad had made themselves undesirable in the capitals of Europe by arguing the case for opposition to all immigration controls. Their presence in Strasbourg was particularly undesirable to Tory Euro-MP Lady Elles.

Condemned

Lady Elles can't abide people who complain about immigration rules. Educated in London, Paris and Florence, she has never experienced any unpleasantness at customs desks.

When the European Parliament debate on Afia looked like going against her, Lady Elles forgot her finishing school manners and took to vulgar heckling. The Tories rustled up enough support to defeat the motion calling on Britain to let Afia return. But the Parliament passed a resolution condemning the deportation as 'callous and showing the racist and sexist nature of the United Kingdom immigration laws'. The Sari Squad returned to Britain having put the Tories further on to the defensive in the continuing debate about immigration controls.

Defiance

In a parliamentary debate with Leyton MP Harry Cohen on 11 June, repatriation minister David Waddington pointed out that he had deported Afia but shown lenience to Hampshire's Pereira family – whose campaign obeyed the law with the support of the village establishment – because 'nobody can allege that Mr and Mrs Pereira tried to defy immigration control and went into hiding and made it clear that they were going to try to beat the control'.

Waddington's attempt to blame the campaign against immigration controls for Afia's expulsion was a cynical move to disguise the Government's racism. Waddington and his fellow Government ministers were in no doubt about the challenge that the Afia campaign posed to the immigration laws. His point about the legal limits of anti-deportation campaigns is an attempt to intimidate anti-racists who are prepared to go to any lengths to fight the immigration laws.

But we will not be scared off by Waddington's threats.

Preparing for Power
special course
RACISM AND IMMIGRATION

Racism has always been a problem. But in the eighties it threatens to become a plague. Course convenor *Judy Harrison* argues that racism cannot be fought by appeals to reason – only by the power of the organised working class:

- **from immigration to repatriation – Britain and Europe**
- **Bradford – a case study in British racism**
- **racism and the black response – the US experience**
- **three strategies for fighting racism – reformist, separatist and communist**
- **racism and fascism – the German experience**

Plus many more sessions of special interest to anti-racists, See page 20 for further details or phone Kate Marshall on 01-274 3951

March with Labour or with Ireland

Taking sides

'Tribune: Do you support the Republicans' armed struggle in Ireland against the British forces?
Ken Livingstone: No.' (11 May 1984)

As the fifteenth anniversary of Britain's military occupation of the Six Counties draws near, the leader of the extra-parliamentary left explained his views on the Irish War.

Complaining of past media misrepresentation, Livingstone sought to clarify his position:

'What I have said at every stage is that I am opposed to every act of violence, whether that is a member of the Irish National Liberation Army letting off a bomb and killing people who happen to be in the area or whether it is a British soldier who eventually loses his temper, and under provocation fires a plastic bullet and kills a child.'

Let's look at Livingstone's statement more closely.

Condemnation

On the one hand, Livingstone condemns the violence of the republican movement. He depicts fighters for Irish freedom as callous and random murderers who let off bombs and kill people 'who happen to be in the area'.

On the other hand, Livingstone regrets the violence of the British Army. He views British soldiers more sympathetically than Irish freedom fighters. He presents the violence of the occupying forces as responsive and almost accidental. Soldiers only kill people when they 'eventually' reach the end of their tether and 'under provocation' lash out with fatal consequences.

The day to day reality of the Irish War contradicts Livingstone's assessment. Last month Lord Justice Gibson freed two police assassins who shot on sight three republicans at a road-block in South Armagh in November 1982.

The violence of police shoot-to-kill squads is a carefully planned and clinically executed part of British military strategy. Gibson commended the police killers for 'their courage and determination in bringing the three deceased men to justice, in this case the final court of of justice'.

Targets

The military activities of the republican movement are the response of the nationalist people to the British occupation. The targets of the IRA and the INLA are soldiers and paramilitary police officers. As in any war civilian casualities sometimes result from the actions of both sides.

There was nothing random about the selection of the 14 British soldiers and seven policemen killed by the liberation forces in the first six months of 1984. And the republican soldiers are no more callous than they need to be to take on the enormous machine of British repression in Ireland.

Livingstone's carefully selected phrases reveal how even the most left-wing Labour leaders take sides with the British establishment against the Irish people. His apparently even-handed opposition to 'every act of violence' disguises his endorsement of British terror in Ireland.

Livingstone's comments on the freedom fighters indulge the popular British stereotype of the psychopathic republican terrorist. His understanding approach to the murderous British forces confirms the widespread view that the soldiers are doing their best in difficult circumstances to bring peace to the streets of Belfast and Derry.

Labour's British solution

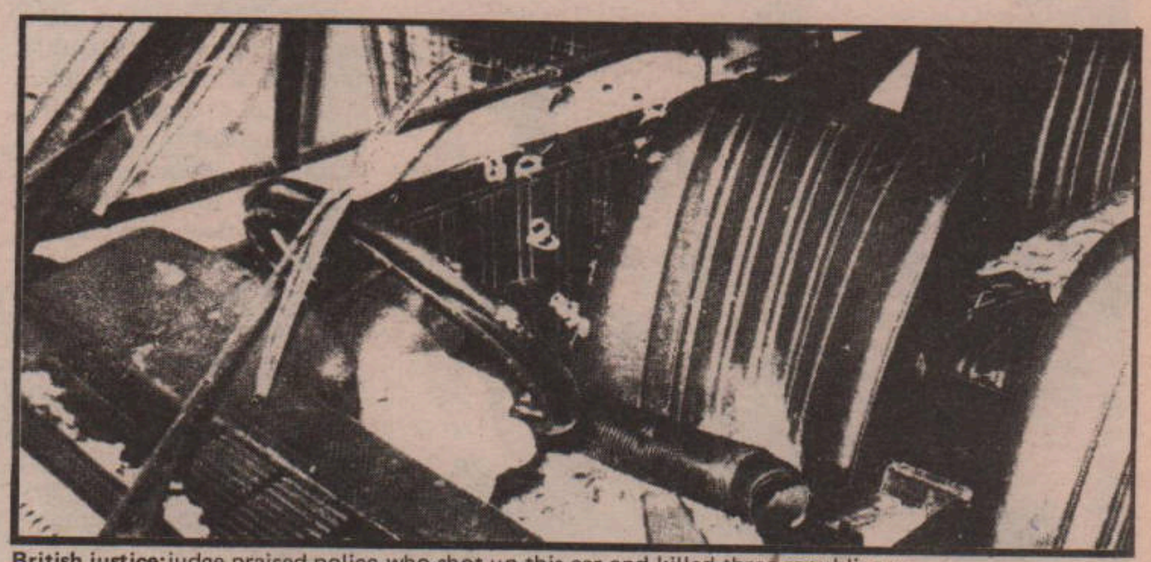
Livingstone declares that he wishes 'to see a political solution and negotiations between the warring factions'. But there are only two 'factions' at war in Ireland – the republican movement and its supporters and the British state and its agents.

The only political solution that could follow from any negotiations that take place before the military defeat of the British forces in Ireland would be a British-imposed solution.

Livingstone's condemnations of the armed struggle of the republican movement and his pandering to anti-republican prejudices indicate that he would favour such a solution. Indeed this has been the consistent position of the Labour left for the last 15 years.

Subservience

Three years ago Labour's cringing subservience to the Tory government's stand against the H-Block hunger-strikers provoked widespread criticism of the party from Irish people and anti-imperialists around the world. The left has been trying to restore Labour's image on the Irish issue ever since.



British justice: judge praised police who shot up this car and killed three republicans

The main activities of Labour left wingers have been to go on sight-seeing tours of the occupied territories and to invite Sinn Fein speakers to attend Labour Party meetings. The left has used these occasions to express sympathy with the victims of British barbarism in Ireland. Labour politicians have also publicly condemned the IRA and pressed republicans to abandon the armed struggle in favour of electioneering.

Yet when it comes to electioneering in Britain, links with Sinn Fein are the last thing the Labour Party needs.

Dialogue

Last month Euro MP Richard Balfe, a follower of the Livingstone line on Ireland, invited Belfast Sinn Fein leader Joe Austin to speak at his election rally. When the Labour leadership got wind of the plan it promptly banned the meeting.

Neil Kinnock announced that he was 'utterly opposed to any such relationship with Provisional Sinn Fein'. He assured the British public that 'there was nothing in the traditions or the policy of the Labour Party that justifies such relations'. Kinnock follows the traditional Labour Party policy on Ireland: 'British Army – all the way'.

The Labour left remains committed to its 'dialogue' with Sinn Fein. But it understands the Labour Party's need to project a patriotic image at election time.

Balfe proclaimed his loyalty to the Labour Party – and showed Sinn Fein the door. After inviting Joe Austin to Britain he was allowed to address only one tiny poorly advertised meeting in North London.

Austin strongly advised people to 'think hard' about voting for Labour Party candidates who did not have 'a good position on Ireland'. In fact, it does not require much hard thinking – no Labour Party candidates have 'a good position' on Ireland.

The most left-wing Labour Party candidates – people like Livingstone or Balfe – remain staunch supporters of British rule in Ireland.

Taking sides

Sympathisers with the cause of Irish freedom in Britain can take sides in commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of the occupation and the thirteenth anniversary of Internment.

Labour Party supporters are marching in London to appeal to the state that has brutalised Ireland for the last 15 years to impose a political solution that will bring 'a just and lasting peace'.

Supporters of the Irish liberation struggle against British rule are marching in Sheffield on 5 August. The march has been called by Sinn Fein and is supported by the Irish Freedom Movement and many other organisations. This demonstration, unlike the one in London, is also supporting the demands of Irish political prisoners in Britain.

This August take sides against British imperialism in Ireland. Take sides too against Labour's hypocrisy in Britain. Take sides with the Irish national liberation struggle!

Mick Kennedy

Free the prisoners!

POW Tommy Quigley

Since Irish nationalists Tommy Quigley and Paul Kavanagh were lifted off their native Belfast streets by joint RUC/Scotland Yard snatch squads, the Irish Freedom Movement has been campaigning for their release.

On 29 May London IFM supporters held a lively demonstration outside Lambeth Magistrates Court. Inside the court, Quigley and Kavanagh were committed for trial at the Old Bailey, charged with involvement in the IRA's London bombing campaigns.

The state is out to get a conviction at all costs. It has orchestrated a media campaign against Quigley and Kavanagh, and tried to intimidate those campaigning for the Irish political prisoners.

The IFM demonstration on 29 May was confronted by armed police. Two Irish women supporting our protest who went into court were strip-searched and abused by police. Irish Freedom Movement supporters in contact with Tommy Quigley have been interrogated by the Special Branch.

But the prisoners' spirit remains unbroken (see Tommy Quigley's letter, p19). And the IFM's determination to carry on the fight for their rights is undaunted. Ring 01 274 3951 for further details of the campaign.

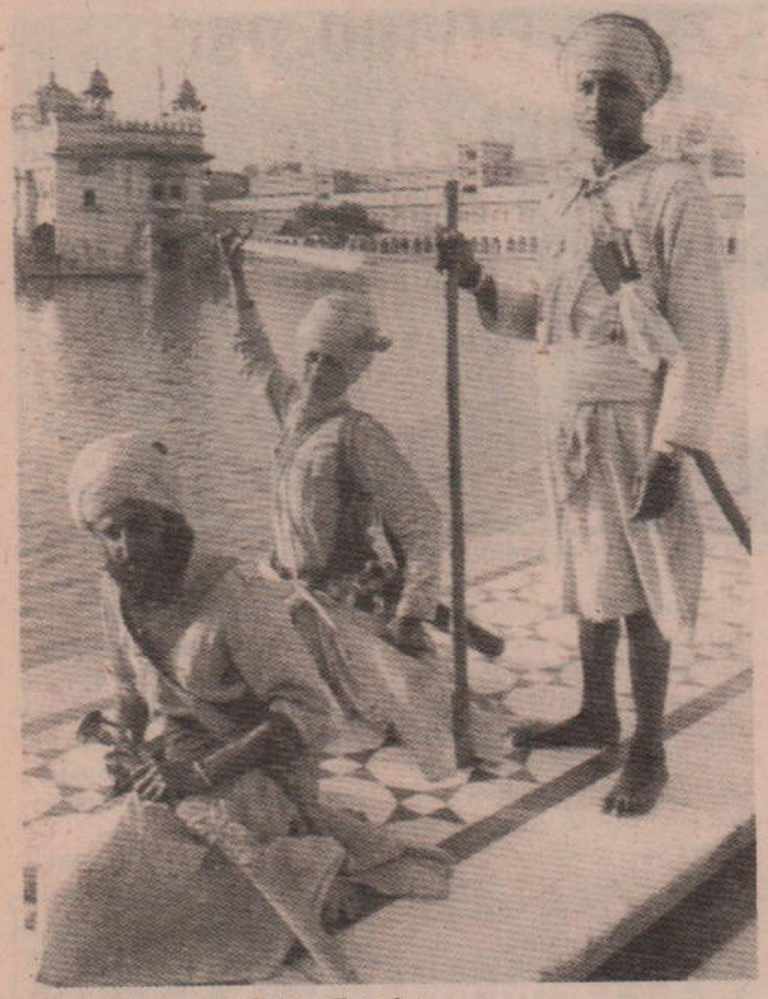
Preparing for Power
special course
IRELAND – MYTH AND REALITY

The Irish have been fighting British rule for generations. In Britain the issue has been deliberately distorted and confused, and misunderstood. Course convenor *Keith Tompson* surveys the struggle for Irish freedom and examines the prospects for building solidarity with the Irish cause in Britain:

- **James Connolly and the 1916 rebellion**
- **the changing face of the Irish War 1969-1984**
- **What was the Ulster Workers' Council strike in 1974?**
- **the struggle south of the Border**
- **the anti-imperialist movement in Britain**

If you want more information about the course or would like to come to *Preparing for Power*, fill in the form on page 20 or phone Kate Marshall on 01-274 3951

Punjab - the end of India



Bhindranwale at the Golden Temple

On 3 June the Indian army stormed the Golden Temple at Amritsar in Punjab, the holiest shrine of India's 14 million Sikhs. More than 700 Sikh militants were killed, including fundamentalist leader Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

The assault was the climax of two months of rioting between Hindus and Sikhs which left at least 400 dead, and led to 100 000 government troops occupying Punjab and imposing a round the clock curfew and a total news blackout.

The recession has rekindled forces of disintegration always just below the surface of Indian society (see box). Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi ordered the desecration of the Golden Temple to demonstrate her determination to quell the instability which is ripping India apart.

The road to Amritsar

Punjab is India's richest state. Its wealth is based on agricultural development in the sixties and early seventies. In 1981 the province earned 58 per cent of its income from farming which employs almost 60 per cent of the workforce.

Punjab had better roads and local markets and some farmers were able to take advantage of government support projects, government credit and subsidised seed fertiliser and farm machinery.

In 1972 Punjab had 1020 tractors for every 100 000 hectares of cultivated land; the Indian average was 104. Food production soared and during the seventies Punjab accounted for India's surplus of rice and wheat and still supplies half India's production of these grains.

Poverty

The collapse of Punjab's 'Green Revolution' has sparked off the current conflict. A series of dry years has reduced yields. At the same time, government policies have lowered prices to cheapen food supplies in the cities.

More than 20 per cent of small farmers and 31 per cent of marginal farmers, who work for a wage on the larger farms as well as working their own plots, live below the poverty line. Thousands of landless labourers, who make up 40 per cent of the rural workforce, have been thrown out of work. Many have moved to the towns where they join the urban unemployed, industrial workers, and graduates seeking non-existent local government jobs.

Manipulation

The richer farmers have manipulated the misery of rural and urban workers in Punjab to fight the merchants who buy their produce, usually acting as middlemen for the government. The majority of the region's farmers are Sikhs. Almost 70 per cent live in the rural areas.

Hindus, on the other hand, are concentrated in the towns, where they work in industry, local government and commerce. In Amritsar, the Sikhs' holiest city, more than 90 per cent of the inhabitants are Hindu.

The richer farmers, who make up only 20 per cent of the rural population but own 80 per cent of the land, have used religion to win the backing of the poor for their campaign for a better deal from the government and its middlemen

Divide and rule

The Sikh farmers party, Akali Dal, has been able to carry on its sectarian crusade and win popular support because of the tradition of communal politics cultivated by the British and continued by the ruling Congress Party.

In 1908 the British instituted separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims and suggested establishing a separate role for Sikhs. Lord Mountbatten, the last British governor of India, toyed with the idea of creating a separate Sikh state in Punjab.

Congress, the party of India's industrialists, has manipulated local divisions to secure agreement for its programme of industrial expansion, or at least to paralyse opposition. It has played up to the ambitions of local cliques. During the 'Green Revolution' it encouraged Sikh regional identity to unite the masses behind the expanding capitalist farmer class in Punjab.

In the recession, when the state is no longer able to promote development projects, Congress has resorted to granting more power to local government to secure social peace.

Return of the Sant

Congress strategy has come unstuck in the recession and exploded in Punjab. Akali Dal was able to exploit the fears of Punjab's Sikhs to mobilise them behind the demands of the big farmers.

Akali Dal's principal demands are for the raising of the maximum acreage of land tenure from 17.5 acres to 30 acres, more government subsidies and higher prices. Its leadership is made up of representatives of the large farmers.

The Sikh farmers' party won popular support in the countryside by blaming the influx of Hindu farm labourers during the agricultural boom for high rural unemployment and demanded that they be deprived of the right to vote. It blamed unemployment in the towns on the Hindu 'monopoly' of local government jobs and the anti-Sikh policies of the central government. Akali Dal argued that greater local autonomy would end the tyranny of the Hindus.

Sowing divisions

The response of Indira Gandhi's Congress Party to the growing support for Akali Dal, which formed the provincial government in 1977, was to foster communal divisions in the province. During the period of Akali Dal rule local Congress bigwigs tried to engineer splits in the party by bribing prominent members.

The Congress leaders fostered splits in the Sikh community, promoting modernising sects such as the Nirankaris, and fundamentalist leaders – particularly Bhindranwale. Zail Singh, now Indian President, supplied Bhindranwale with money, turned a blind eye to the rampages of his supporters, and backed his unsuccessful bid for a seat on the committee which administers the Golden Temple.

At the same time, Congress politicians supported and took part in Hindu revivalist organisations such as the Surakhsha Samiti movement. In 1982 and 1983 Surakhsha Samiti was responsible for burning Hindu shops in Sikh areas and Sikh shops in Hindu areas.

Before the storm

During the restored Congress government of Punjab after 1980, Chief Minister Darbara Singh continued to promote Bhindranwale as Akali Dal carried on its agitation for more autonomy. The success of Bhindranwale's supporters in winning over large sections of the urban unemployed, particularly unemployed students, forced Akali Dal to ratchet up its demands and activities.

In late 1982 both Bhindranwale and Akali Dal leader Sant Longowal took refuge in the Golden Temple to avoid arrest. Outside the Temple bloody clashes between rival Sikh gangs and between Sikh and Hindu vigilantes careered out of control.

In May this year, the bitter violence in Punjab along with the escalating unrest in the rest of the country forced Gandhi to act. But the storming of the Golden Temple has not solved Gandhi's problems.

Within days of the assault dozens of mutinies by Sikh troops had been reported, the most serious at Ramgarh in Bihar state involving 600 men. More than 15 per cent of the Indian army is Sikh and an even higher proportion of the officer corps. Almost 2000 Sikh peasants were arrested trying to march on Amritsar from Punjabi villages.

Tragedy

The assault on the Golden Temple indicates that Indira Gandhi is prepared to use the army to crush the disturbances within India. But the impact of the crisis in the Punjab shows that this may not be enough. The tragedy of Punjab and India, and Mrs Gandhi's greatest advantage, is that the anger and hatred of the peasants and workers is directed against the wrong targets.

Kenan Malik and John Johnson

Chaos and carnage

In the last two years the pace of communal violence in India has quickened. In 1983 more than 400 clashes between Hindus and Muslims were reported. No region of the subcontinent has escaped.

Last year jungle tribesmen rampaged through Assam killing at least 3000 settlers from West Bengal. In West Bengal, Congress Party and Communist Party supporters have been slaughtering each other for months. Maoist groups in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh wage a bitter guerrilla war against the police. In Tamil Nadu, Tamils are up in arms at the crushing of a Tamil rebellion in Sri Lanka.

In Kerala, Hindu revivalists fight bloody street battles with Communist Party supporters. Almost 30 000 peasant demonstrators were rounded up in Karnataka state in January. Hindu-Muslim clashes in May in Bhiwandi and other suburbs of Bombay, India's largest industrial centre, left more than 150 dead and razed Bhiwandi to the ground.

Tinder box

The recession has shattered the artificial Indian state. Congress, the party which has ruled India for most of its independence, has continued the British policy of divide and rule. It has cultivated local power bases and manipulated ethnic, religious and caste rivalries to neutralise opposition and pit different sections of the peasantry and working class against each other.

The Indian working class and the peasantry are split. As much as half the population exist outside the cash economy, while hundreds of thousands starve in the slums and shanty towns outside the main cities.

India is a tinder box and the recession has put a match to it. Economic growth slumped to less than two per cent last year and hundreds of thousands of workers and small peasants have been ruined. The absence of any national opposition movement to Indira Gandhi's Congress Party means that many have turned to regionalist and sectarian movements for answers.

Fight divisions

After years of manipulating India's fissiparous tendencies, Congress itself is beginning to disintegrate. The defection of Gandhi's daughter-in-law Maneka, and the victory of her party, the Sanjay Manch, in May's local elections in Uttar Pradesh, Congress' power base and Gandhi's home state, is only the most public of the Congress Party's internal squabbles.

India's workers should welcome the disintegration of Congress and fight for real unity of the exploited and oppressed, and against the divisions fostered by imperialism and its Congress stooges.

'Putting down' the rebels: Indian troops shoot wounded Sikhs

The collapse of solidarity

The miners' fight for jobs has won widespread sympathy – but failed to generate effective solidarity action from key groups of workers:

- *power workers* have crossed miners' picket lines with their unions' blessing since the strike started in March
- *transport workers* have moved convoys of coal across the country. Some waved union cards as they drove through the pickets outside Scotland's Ravenscraig steelworks
- *railway workers* from depots like Shirebrook in Notts have kept coal moving in vital areas
- *steelworkers* have opposed blockades of the Ravenscraig and Llanwern plants, cooperating with management to bring coal in.

Groups of militant workers here and there have taken action in support of the miners. But their efforts have been swamped by the willingness of the majority to continue working.

The dozen Shirebrook train drivers who refused to move coal last month could have little impact while three times as many continued taking coal trains out. Such isolated action has inevitably been ineffective.

The struggle in the steel industry illustrates the militants' problems in pulling other workers out.

Damage

Many rank and file steelworkers sympathise with the miners' cause. But their unions have endorsed solidarity action only so long as it does not damage the position of the British steel industry. This approach makes it impossible for militancy to win majority support for action which would inevitably jeopardise British Steel's market prospects.

The steel unions believe that protecting the British Steel Corporation from disruption is crucial to protect steelworkers' livelihoods. Union leaders like Bill Sirs always insist that they are not just fighting for jobs, but are campaigning for the future of the industry.

Many militant steelworkers accept that the security of steelworkers' jobs depends on the stability of the British Steel Corporation. A resolution passed at June's Iron and Steel Trades Federation conference underlined how steelworkers' allegiance to the steel corporation makes support for the miners impossible.

The resolution pledged support to the miners, but demanded that they 'recognise the precarious state of the British steel industry'. British Steel could suffer 'irreparable harm of a mechanical or commercial nature' if pressure on coal supplies was stepped up.

The ISTC resolved to continue giving the NUM 'moral and financial support'. But it opposed attempts to stop steel production, for fear that British steel could lose its share of the market.

No contest

The British Steel executive who addressed the union conference made clear that any further rundown of production would be 'managerially unacceptable'. The choice presented to steelworkers was clear: support management's plan for covporate survival and keep production up, or oppose management, cut back output, and back the miners. For a union boss like Bill Sirs, there was no contest. At the start of the strike in March he had announced that he was 'not prepared to see the steel industry sacrificed on somebody else's altar'.

As the leader of one of the parties to the Triple Alliance of coal, steel and rail unions, Sirs has regularly declared his sympathy for the miners. But last month the gloves were off, and Sirs came out fighting as a bosses' man. The union, he said, 'must abide by management's decision'.

Rank and file steelworkers have been squeezed between a commitment to supporting the miners and a commitment to their own industry. Although their instincts are to take action, the political outlook they share with their anti-strike leaders has meant they are unable to convince other steelworkers of the case for solidarity. The militants remain isolated, and the blast furnaces keep producing.

The steel unions' explicit collaboration with their employers at the miners' expense has made them the butt of attacks from left-wing union leaders. But the ISTC's commitment to the industry its members work in is shared by every union – including the NUM.

Divisions

Throughout the strike, miners' leaders have declared they are struggling for an expanding British coal industry. They appeal for their bosses to be protected from foreign competition by heavy investment and stiff import controls.

The collaboration of the miners' union with the Coal Board is codified in the joint union/management *Plan for Coal*. But this approach has divided them from other trade unionists who share a similar commitment to safeguarding *their* industries. The issue of coal imports brings this division into sharp focus.

In February Coal Board boss Ian MacGregor expressed concern that production lost as a result of the NUM overtime ban might create an opening for cheap foreign coal:

> 'We have been having some battles with the Poles, trying to persuade them not to take advantage of the position in our industry. In this Mr Scargill and I are on the same side.'

Today, in the middle of a bitter strike, Arthur Scargill and Ian MacGregor are still united against coal imports. But Bill Sirs and British Steel Corporation boss Robert Haslam are united in a commitment to keeping the steel furnaces burning with coal from anywhere.

Steel unions and management have kept the Port Talbot and Redcar plants running at full production throughout the strike by importing foreign coal. This has provoked bitter rows between the NUM and the ISTC.

Because the miners' union supports the British coal industry, it opposes foreign coal. Because the steelworkers' union supports the British steel industry, it welcomes cheap coal imports. The unions' loyalty to their respective industries has created unity between the NUM and the Coal Board, unity between the ISTC and the Steel Corporation, and division between the steelworkers and the miners.

Empty gestures

The miners' leaders have proved unable to overcome these divisions and win effective support from the steelworkers – or from other unions with similar commitments to other sectors of industry. Instead, the NUM chiefs have been left making empty gestures.

Miners' leaders have responded to pressure for action from rank and file members by calling steel blockades and setting up ritual conflicts at the Orgreave coking plant.

These gestures are meant to provide a focus for the anger of rank and file miners and to save face for the miners' leaders. They serve only to divert attention from the NUM's inability to mobilise action where it really counts – at the power stations.

Even in steel, the miners' leaders have made little attempt to win rank and file support. In May, Revolutionary Communist Party supporters set up a meeting between rank and file miners and Scunthorpe steelworkers. When the local press reported it as an official miners' meeting, the vice-president of Yorkshire NUM declared that his union had 'never made any attempt to talk to Scunthorpe steelworkers'.

While NUM leaders make empty gestures, the left-wing union leaders sound off with even emptier rhetoric. Every three or four weeks throughout the strike, transport workers' leader Moss Evans has called for 'all-out' action to stop coal and close the power stations. Nobody has taken any notice and the lorries have continued rolling.

Kent miners, looking for practical backing around the South-East have found that transport union officials are 'unavailable' for weeks at a time. Left-wing officials in the TGWU fear that too close an association with striking miners, might endanger their champion Ron Todd's chances in the union's leadership elections.

Chris Black (reflex)

Toothless wonders: Scottish NUM boss Mick McGahey and traindrivers' chief Ray Buckton have made sure blacking doesn't bite at the Ravenscraig steel works

Unity

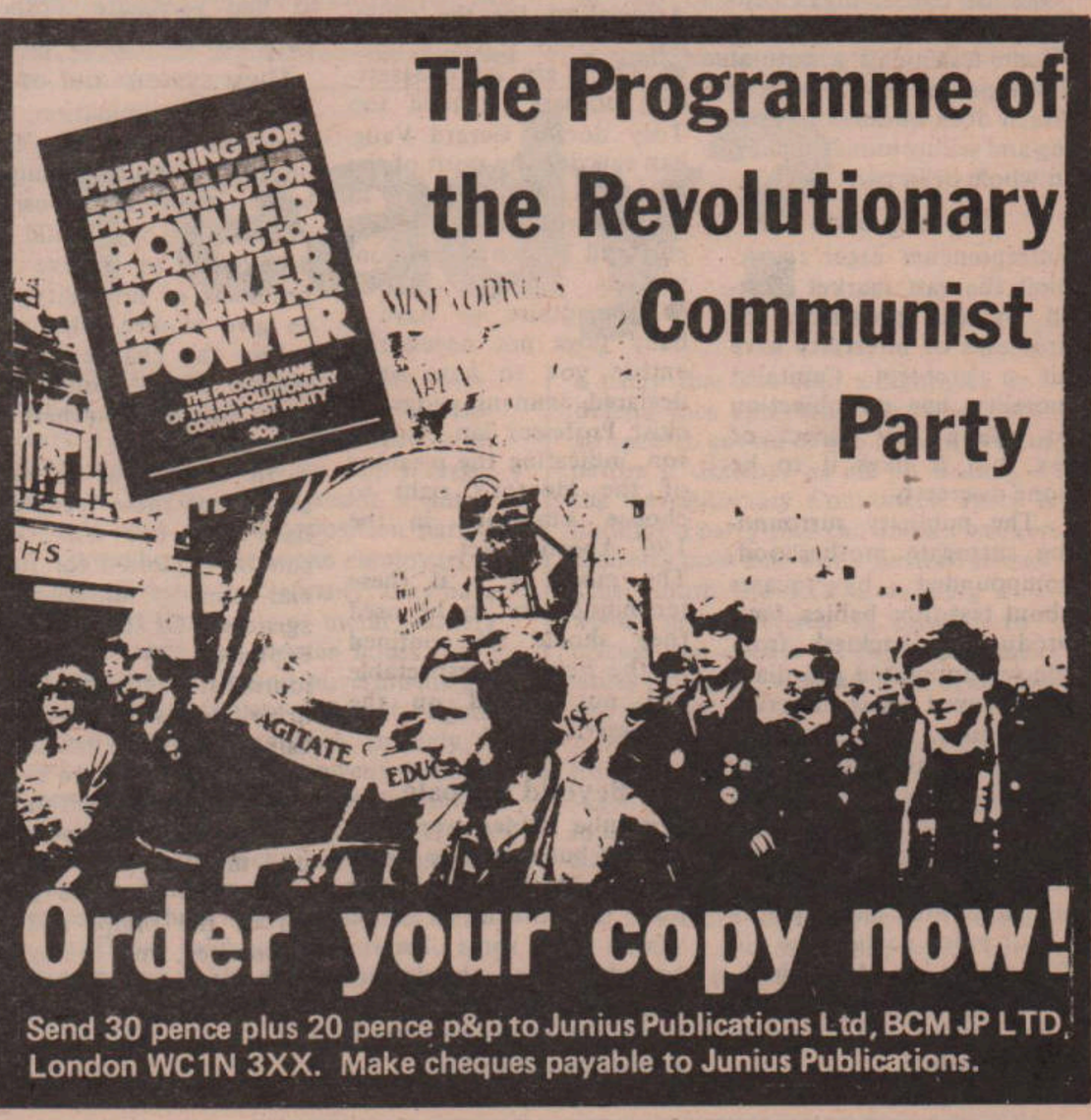
Behind the militant talk of solidarity action, the official labour movement leadership has turned its back on striking miners in favour of collaboration with the employers. Union militants need to reject their leaders' approach if we are to unite workers behind the miners.

Tying workers' jobs to the fortunes of their industry can only spell disaster. Miners' leader Arthur Scargill is the most militant exponent of this approach. Yet under his leadership 30 000 miners' jobs have gone – with thousands more threatened – to keep the Coal Board's head above water.

Steelworkers have paid an even higher price for defending their employers' market position. And the BSC executive addressing their union conference last month made clear that, despite Sirs' grovelling, one of the big steel plants would have to close if the industry is to survive and compete.

Union leaders' romantic allusions to past traditions, or Scargill's calls to repay past favours to the miners cannot win solidarity action with striking miners nor unity in the working class. The only way to win real unity among workers in every industry is by renouncing any concern for the bosses' problems and fighting for every job regardless of the state of the industry.

Mick Hume



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Surrogate mothers and test-tube babies

Money and morality

Womb for rent: capitalism turns babies into commodities

Under capitalism everything has its price. Americans can select a Third World wife from a catalogue for the cost of an airline ticket, a visa and a marriage licence. British men can hire women's bodies on every street corner at prices held down by the ready supply of unemployed and impoverished women. Foreigners have long been able to buy babies on a Third World black market from mothers who take cash to save their infants from starvation.

It is no surprise that some enterprising capitalist has now come up with a new service combining the marketing of women's bodies with new techniques of artificial insemination.

A British agency now offers women's bodies at £6500 a time for the purposes of conceiving, carrying and delivering a baby. 'Womb-leasing' is a natural development in a society which does business in buying and selling human beings, in whole or in part.

Moral panics

Entrepreneurs eager to exploit the vast market created by the prevalence of problems of infertility have hit a problem. Capitalist morality has no objection to selling any aspect of sex, but it likes it to be done discreetly.

The publicity surrounding surrogate motherhood, compounded by scares about test-tube babies, have produced a backlash from the self-appointed guardians of approved codes of sexual behaviour.

The moralists are on the march. They have seized on one issue after another to create a climate of opinion that reinforces approved sexual norms. Moral panics about video nasties, the pill for under-16s, late abortions, herpes and AIDS, have been stirred up to keep society in line.

At the same time, the popular press is full of celebrations of the latest stage of Princess Diana's reproductive achievements. For the media women's only fulfilment is as mothers; infertility is to be pitied, sexual deviance to be shunned.

The undeserving

In May, the press announced that a woman who had borne test-tube quadruplets at the Hammersmith Hospital in London already had four children prior to being sterilised. When the newspapers revealed that Jannie Smale was also working class and unmarried the reaction was ferocious:

- It was 'very unfair' that 'someone in Jannie Smale's position should take preference over someone who is childless,' said Brenda Holloway of the National Association for the Childless.
- 'There are more deserving mothers,' echoed top Tory doctor Gerard Vaughan reviving the spirit of the Victorian Poor Law, in keeping with his party leader's well known moral convictions.
- 'The desire to have a baby does not necessarily entitle you to have one,' declared eminent gynaecologist Professor Ian Donaldson, indicating the meaning of the 'doctor's right to choose' enshrined in the 1967 Abortion Act.

The moral is – if these techniques are to be used they should be confined to the rich and respectable and not wasted on the undeserving poor.

Beyond the pale

Test-tube babies were bad enough but surrogate motherhood at any price was just too much to take. 'There are some lengths to which you should not go,' commented British Agencies for Fostering. Others were more outspoken:

- Christian campaigner Lady Lothian suggested that present techniques could have been used by the Nazis to force surrogate Jewish mothers to carry 'pure bred Aryan embryos'.
- The Queen's gynaecologist, Sir John Peel, warned grimly of 'horrific consequences' and 'concentration camp abuses'.

Meanwhile, the anti-abortion agency Life called in the police to investigate Doctor Robert Edwards following his success in growing a human embryo in a test-tube for 13 days.

Under growing pressure from a bandwagon of religious and medical prejudice, the Government set up a special inquiry. The committee, under Dame Mary Warnock, is expected to recommend restrictions on experiments on embryos and to ban surrogate motherhood agencies.

Their system and ours

Artificial insemination, egg donation and in vitro fertilisation are all techniques with considerable positive potential. They could be developed to relieve the problems of infertility and to give women who want babies the chance to have them. They would also make surrogate motherhood unnecessary.

In society as it exists at present these techniques have only two uses. They can be exploited for financial gain by unscrupulous agencies. Or they can be exploited by bigots and journalists as part of their drive to strengthen the values of the traditional family and women's subordinate position within it.

To realise the potential of modern reproductive technology we have to get rid of the pimps and the hypocrites, and the system that sustains them both.

Kate Marshall

Nursery strike

For the last three months 150 nursery workers at Islington council in London have been on strike. They have widespread support among parents and other council workers. But the left-wing Labour council has refused to meet their demands and their union – Nalgo – has failed to mobilise the all-out action they need to win.

Labour's radical 1982 council manifesto promised that 'the day care services should not only cater for the needs of parents and children but also ensure that childcare workers are adequately paid'. Yet the new council has consistently failed on both fronts.

The authorities refused for six months even to discuss the nursery workers' demands. They want a 20 per cent increase in staff, a single wage scale to cover all workers, and a substantial rise above the current £83 a week basic. When the council finally refused to meet these demands in April, the nursery workers came out on indefinite strike.

'We can't afford it'

Council leader Margaret Hodge explained that childcare was not a priority. She blamed the workers for the disruption to services and claimed that 'we have put an offer on the table which we consider in the financial circumstances to be reasonable'. Left-wing social services committee vice-chair Kathy Bundred agreed – 'We just cannot afford to give the strikers what they are asking for'.

Social services chair Carol O'Brien took the argument further at a public meeting organised by the local RCP branch. 'Why should ratepayers take the burden of funding all working mothers?' she asked. She claimed that 'women often feel that provision for all-day care means that the council feels that they are inadequate mothers'. There is little danger of this in Islington as the council provides full-time nursery places for only 10 per cent of the available population of 10 000 children.

The council leaders' 'we can't afford it' is the familiar cry of Labour politicians telling workers to put up with austerity conditions demanded by Tory government cutbacks. Their 'women don't need it' argument shows how feminist councillors are prepared to subordinate women's interests to the harsh terms of the crisis.

Restrictive action

Close relations between council leaders and Nalgo officials have stood in the way of effective trade union action against the employers. The strike had been going for six weeks before the union organised a token 24-hour strike by other council workers.

Three months into the strike the union held a ballot in selected council departments, including housing and social services. The ballot, which asked the workers whether they would be prepared to come out in support of the strike, returned a slight majority in favour of sympathetic action. This was followed up by a request to the Nalgo executive committee to call for all-out action.

The strike committee argued that a selective ballot was the only way to win backing for the strike, whereas a ballot of the wider membership had little chance of winning. But the union's approach of restricting the scope of the action to the traditionally more militant departments does nothing to advance the nursery workers' cause. The strikers need the broadest possible support – from fellow workers and parents – to make the strike effective and hit the employers.

All-out action

The Islington dispute is an important strike in defence of women workers' jobs and their right to childcare provision. It is also a tremendous opportunity for building wider opposition to the council's austerity measures. Rather than rely on the union leaders, the strikers and their supporters should put their faith in the rank and file and argue the case for solidarity action in every council department.

Only by going to the workforce directly and convincing fellow workers of the need for their support will the strikers win all-out action. And only through an all-out strike will the nursery workers bring the dispute to a speedy and favourable conclusion.

David Douglas

Preparing for Power
special course

SEX, FEMINISM AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Women are being kicked out of their jobs twice as fast as men. They are the main victims of cuts in public spending on health and social services. And they are in the frontline of the Tories' drive to reassert a reactionary Victorian morality. Course convenor *Ann Burton* gives the Marxist view of women's oppression and how to fight it, in what promises to be a lively debate:

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- **the women's liberation movement – has it a future?**

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the next step

Power plays

Since they went on the attack in 1979, the employers have held the initiative. They have won every important battle and tilted the balance of class forces in their favour. Yet they have not succeeded in making the working class accept the drastic solutions necessary for the revival of British capitalism.

The weakness of the British economy has held back the employers' offensive and forced them to continue relying on the Labour Party and trade union leaders to keep control. The patterns of collaboration built up over decades cannot be dismantled overnight without the risk of serious social unrest. Fears of growing economic and political instability force the ruling class to tread carefully.

The vacillation of the ruling class is apparent in its handling of the miners' strike. The Government and the Coal Board provoked the dispute, marshalled their forces and went in for the kill. They responded with a wave of police terror to the miners' attempts to organise effective picketing. At the same time, they have been careful to keep their options open.

The Government has not provoked any major confrontation. It has avoided stirring wider sympathy for the miners by using its employment laws to bankrupt the miners' union or imprison its officers. The bosses remain uncertain whether to go all-out to smash the miners and their union or to settle for a compromise. A compromise solution would represent a major setback for the miners but would allow the union leaders to retain a measure of credibility. An all-out victory for the employers would have a devastating effect on trade unionism and it would be a serious blow to the working class. A compromise on the Tories' terms might save some face for the labour bureaucracy but it would inevitably mean the loss of tens of thousands of miners' jobs.

After the outcry over its ban on trade union membership at GCHQ Cheltenham the Government has tried to project an image of moderation. It has worked carefully to isolate the miners from other sections of workers. Tory leaders have spoken cautiously to avoid raising the temperature and spreading the action. The Government has settled with the railway workers, allowed the teachers to go to arbitration and paid over the odds to the nurses. And although rank and file miners have been brutally assaulted by police on picket lines, the Coal Board has assumed a moderate and reasonable public face. It has even allowed press leaks suggesting that the employers are divided over negotiating tactics. Some journalists have even speculated that the miners are winning the dispute.

Unfortunately, the miners are not winning. The object of the bosses' softly softly approach to the dispute is to push the miners into negotiating from a position of weakness. But there are obstacles to a compromise solution. Neither side can afford to lose face and the strike is too volatile to allow the negotiators to get away with a straightforward sell-out. The Government has no objection in principle to starving the miners into submission. This strategy could bring considerable rewards for Thatcher – Scargill's head on a plate and widespread demoralisation among workers. But it is a high risk strategy. The miners' conflict could flare up and spread. And as long as the strike continues, the Government has only limited room to manoeuvre with other sections of the working class.

The TUC and the Labour Party have got even bigger problems than the Coal Board and the Government. The paralysis of the TUC has been mercilessly exposed. Len Murray has shown himself incapable of supporting workers in struggle – he could not even please the bosses by sabotaging regional days of action effectively. After three months of empty rhetoric the union leaders have more or less admitted that they are incapable of delivering sympathetic action in support of the miners.

The union leaders are consumed by fear. They are afraid of strike action that leads to picket line violence, threats of legal action and anti-union ranting from the tabloid press. At the same time, they fear the consequences of a major defeat for one of the most powerful sections of the trade union movement. They have no great love for Scargill but they sense that if he is smashed, they too will suffer. Like the Government, the TUC leaders know there are now only two ways of resolving the miners' strike. They naturally prefer a face-saving compromise, regardless of the cost for the miners.

The Labour Party's role in the miners' strike has grown as the TUC has retreated even further. It now plays a central part in pushing for negotiations and compromise. At local level party activists have been busy organising support committees and building up working relationships with militants. This work has been invaluable for the Labour leadership, which can now use the party's links with the strikers to boost its role as a mediator.
The Labour Party is isolated from the immediate pressure of rank and file miners, yet it is identified with the cause of the strikers. This places Neil Kinnock and his acolytes in a good position to preside over a compromise. The Labour leaders can cajole the NUM executive into signing the 'best possible' and 'most realistic' deal – and with luck still retain some standing with the rank and file.

Any compromise formula drawn up through negotiations can only be on the terms dictated by the employers behind closed doors. This is inevitable because the miners are negotiating from a position of weakness. The strike has lost its momentum and the militants, although they remain determined to win, are having no impact on the economy.

The NUM executive has no strategy beyond 'wait and see'. Scargill's threat to stick it out until winter is not so much a strategy as an admission that the strike has reached an impasse. The NUM leadership devotes its energies to organising symbolic pickets at Orgreave or Ravenscraig or Scunthorpe. Scargill's tactics are designed to hold the active strikers together and prevent a drift back to work by the passive majority. Solid loyalty to Scargill among militant miners prevents them from seeing the turn the strike has taken. The strike's failure to hit energy supply and industrial output has turned the battle between the miners and the bosses into committee room wrangles between Coal Board and NUM executives. The miners have no independent voice – they have become pawns in the negotiations. Unless the pattern changes there is a danger that post-strike demoralisation will have a devastating effect on the strikers.

One of the most important contributions that revolutionaries can make at the present stage of the miners' strike is to ensure that the policies and posturing of the NUM leaders do not go unchallenged. There is no future for miners in the endless routine of talks, setpiece confrontations and televised slanging matches. We should demand that the NUM leaders give a full account of their negotiations to the rank and file, expose their complicity in secret deals, and prepare militants for the likely outcome of talks with the Coal Board.

The miners' strike is one battle in the continuing war between the classes. At every stage in the dispute the Revolutionary Communist Party has fought for the best possible result for the miners and the working class. We have constantly emphasised the urgency of pushing the action to the limits and mobilising the maximum support and involvement of miners and other workers. It is not negotiations but the demonstration of class power that is needed to save pits and miners' jobs. The will to fight is there and it has been demonstrated with courage and resourcefulness time and again during the strike. But the miners' militancy has been constantly thwarted by bureaucratic policies that direct it towards token gestures.

Up to now the miners' strike has not altered the balance of class forces in Britain. But it could. If the bosses win hands down the working class will be seriously weakened. If on the other hand, the miners, even at this late stage, took matters into their own hands, they could limit the damage the bosses aim to inflict on their ranks. They could also begin the process of turning their union into an organisation that leads miners in real combat against the bosses, instead of using them as cannon fodder in compromise negotiations.

Are you ready?

The European elections revealed two things. First, the policies of austerity and rearmament being pursued by governing parties in every country are unpopular. Second, the leading political parties of the labour movement are unable to provide a credible opposition.

- In Germany, Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats lost ground. But so too did the main opposition party, the Social Democrats. The beneficiaries of the impotence of the traditional party of German workers were the anti-nuclear, middle class Greens, who won seven seats in the European Parliament.
- In France, Premier Francois Mitterrand's socialists lost popular support. But the party which has long enjoyed the backing of French workers – the Communist Party – received its lowest share of the vote for 50 years. It ended up on a par with the racist National Front which has taken votes from the communists by outdoing them in chauvinist and anti-immigrant prejudice.
- In Italy, the Christian Democrats lost their majority by a whisker to the communists. But the sympathy gained by the Communist Party, on the sudden death during the election campaign of its leader Enrico Berlinguer, is unlikely to sustain it for long in the absence of any policies for defending workers' living standards.
- In Britain, voters registered their disapproval for the policies of the Thatcher government. Yet even though Kinnock's Labour opposition recovered from its General Election low point, it remained well behind the Tories. It would have done much worse in terms of seats if the electoral system did not discriminate so effectively against the SDP/Liberal Alliance, which won almost 20 per cent of the vote but no seats. The SDP's by-election success at Portsmouth is a reminder that in large areas of the country, Labour is not considered a serious opposition party.

Throughout Europe the employers are on the offensive. In Germany, they have locked out thousands of metal workers over demands for shorter hours. In France, the Mitterrand government is encouraging a ruthless shakeout of jobs in manufacturing industry. In Italy, the bosses are trying to prevent workers from having guaranteed wage rises in line with inflation. In every European country governments are stockpiling conventional weapons, installing US missiles or developing their own alternatives. The recent D-Day celebrations show how they are preparing public opinion for military adventures in the future.

Everywhere workers desperately need a party that can lead a fightback to defend jobs and wages and begin the struggle to get rid of the present system before it destroys us all. In Britain, the Revolutionary Communist Party is building a party that can defend workers' interests now and win a better future. This month the RCP is holding a week-long conference in London to discuss and debate all the important issues facing the working class in Britain and abroad.

Preparing for Power is about preparing for power. One reason why so few people voted for labour movement parties in the European elections is that traditional workers' parties have given up any attempt to fight for a different sort of society. But never has the urgency of building a revolutionary party been so great or the prospects so favourable. Are you ready to prepare for power? Join us on 13 July.

Mike Freeman

A handbook for trade unionists
TAKING CONTROL

THE DEFEAT OF THE NGA print union over the closed shop at the *Stockport Messenger*, the ban on trade union membership at the Government's Cheltenham spy centre and the massive state offensive against the miners – three events within six months which mean that trade unionism in Britain will never be the same again.

The 1984 miners' strike began as a fight to save pits. Yet within weeks it erupted into a wider conflict between miners and thousands of police backed up by the full force of the law. The miners have endured a nationally coordinated paramilitary occupation of the coalfields and assaults on picket lines by riot police on horseback and on foot. Striking miners have been subjected to phonetapping and intelligence gathering. They have been exposed to plain clothes investigators and agent provocateurs. They have been stopped at road-blocks, arrested in thousands, detained, beaten, charged with riot, fined and even imprisoned.

The miners and beyond

The state's onslaught on the miners raises new problems for trade union activists. But state repression is not the only problem that militants face. The miners' strike has highlighted problems shared by workers in many industries. Militant miners have found that appeals to fellow miners to honour traditional trade union principles – 'don't cross picket lines' – have often fallen on deaf ears. Many miners fear the consequences of strike action for their own future, in a country where four million are already on the dole. Many miners have crossed picket lines because they remain unconvinced by the militants' arguments. The fact that such divisions have come to the fore among the miners – the most militant section of the British labour movement – underlines how far-reaching this problem has become. The isolation of union activists from their fellow workers is one important problem that *Taking Control* tries to address.

Miners have discovered that resounding declarations of support from other union leaders are not worth the paper they are written on. At the start of the strike, the steel, rail and transport union leaders all pledged total solidarity with the miners. The steel union leaders then backed away from this pledge and insisted that the main steel plants must be kept in operation. Other trade union leaders played the same game and the miners were left to fight alone. The miners' strike has underlined the limitations of official labour movement solidarity – something which raises problems for workers in all sections of industry.

Many miners eager to organise effective picketing at pits, steel plants and power stations have become frustrated with the poor organisation and coordination of the strike action. They have been angered at the lack of involvement of the majority of striking miners in much of the picketing and other activity. They have also become irritated at the dissipation of the energies of miners and sympathetic workers in other unions in fruitless lobbies, demonstrations and 'days of action'. Like workers in many other industries, miners have found their union leaders strong on rhetoric and gesture, but less impressive when it comes to organising action that will really hit the employers.

Militant miners have been disgusted at the role of the party which they have financed and loyally supported for the best part of a century. The Labour Party has been more concerned to mediate between the union and the employers than to give its wholehearted backing to the miners. Indeed, when police in overwhelming numbers have brutally assaulted miners' pickets, Labour's leaders have been the first to denounce the violence – of the miners.

Time for a new approach

It is time to face up to the problems of the eighties and to take measures appropriate for our time. The recession has left its mark on trade union organisation. Mass unemployment has decimated the ranks of the unions. The aggressive approach of the Tory government has shattered the trade union leaders' confidence. Rank and file militants have found that the proven methods of the past are no longer effective in rallying support or mobilising action in defence of living standards.

The disintegration of trade union organisations and traditions from national to workplace level has isolated and discouraged many workers who can see the urgent need to resist the employers' attacks. Many militants want to fight, but lack the arguments to win the support of their workmates. Often, even a well organised group of activists does not know what is going on in other local workplaces, never mind in other industries. *Taking Control* is written for them. Its aim is to enable militants to overcome their isolation through a discussion of recent experiences and through outlining a strategy for a successful fightback against the employers and their government.

Taking Control is based on the experience of supporters of *the next step* who have played an active part in the class struggle in British industry over the past five years. *Taking Control* is based on a series of discussions with trade union activists organised over a three year period. These discussions were followed up by a survey of workplace organisation and practices undertaken by the Industrial Department of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1983. This survey involved interviews and discussion around a basic questionnaire. It covered a wide range of workplaces in industry and services, private and public sector – a total of 148 establishments in all. This provided sufficient information to enable us to avoid the danger of drawing conclusions from limited sources. *Taking Control* presents the general experience – though workers in specific industries or services may find that trade union practices operate in a modified form in their workplace.

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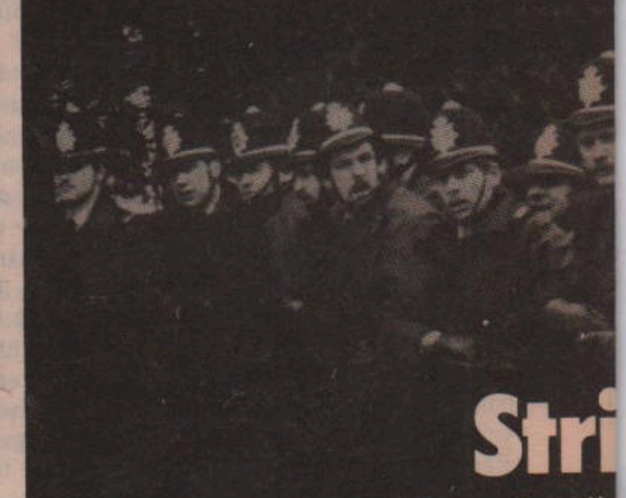

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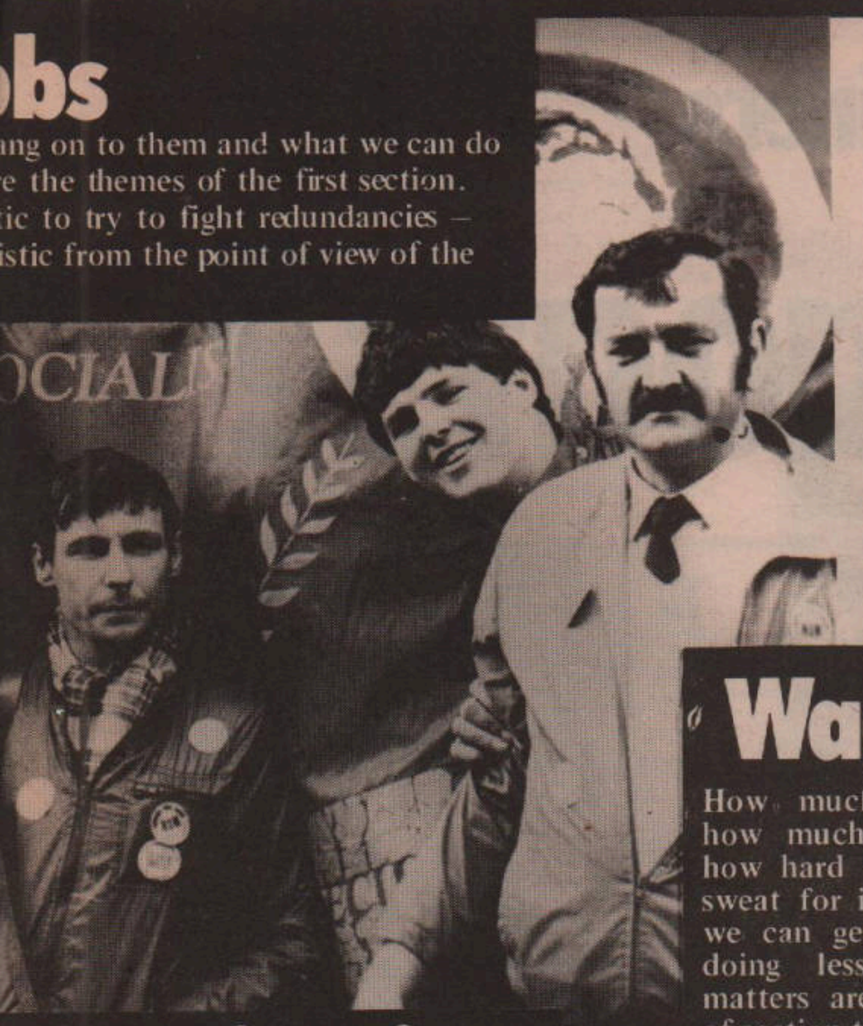

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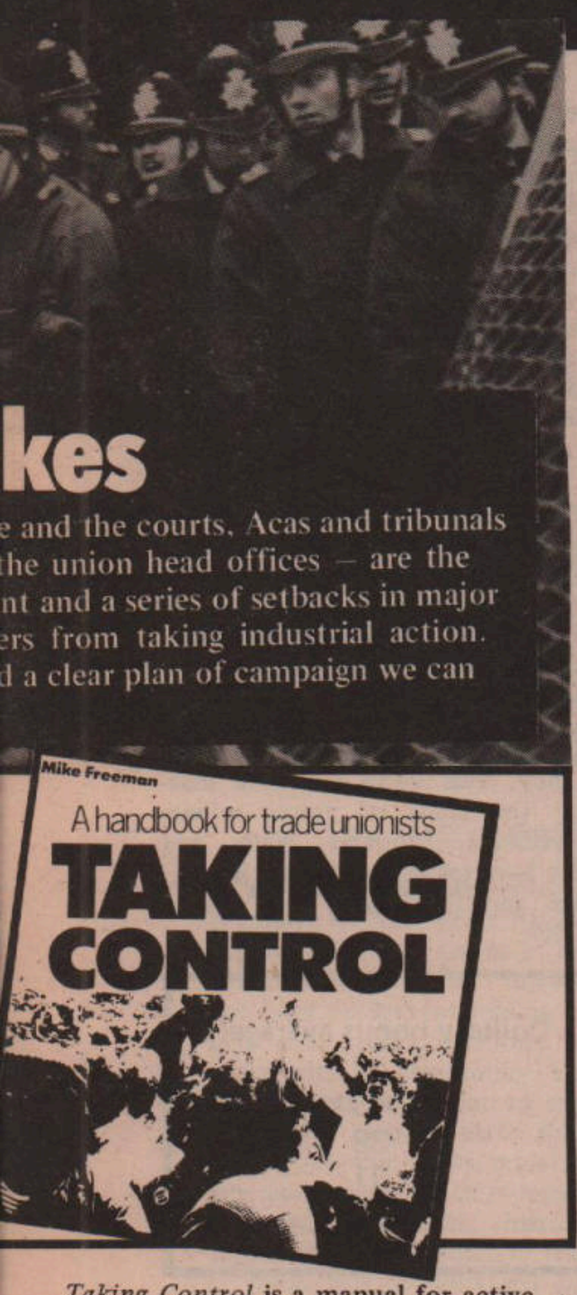

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Taking Control is a manual for active trade unionists. It is organised according to the broad issues which trade unionists come up against day in day out. There is an immense variety of workplace practices, particularly in areas such as wage bargaining, productivity and conditions. The examples we have selected illustrate general patterns. We have also drawn from official and academic sources and surveys. We have tried to balance the necessity for thorough discussion with the need to be concise. Historical detail has been included only insofar as it throws light on current issues. Each chapter deals with particular problems that we have encountered again and again. Each concludes with practical proposals on how we can stop the rot, rebuild our organisations and regain lost ground.

Wages

How much we get, how much we need, how hard we have to sweat for it, and how we can get more for doing less – these matters are the focus of section three. It also considers the related issues of productivity, terms and conditions and health and safety.

The unions

The unions have become remote and bureaucratic and speak a language of rules, agreements and procedures that seems to have little relevance to the vast majority of workers. Union leaders are aloof and out of touch, more at home on committees and quangos than in the factories or offices, schools or hospitals where their members work. We need unions that represent their members and are accountable to them.

Taking control

The final section examines how the unions have stood up to the test of five years of Tory rule. It reviews the TUC/Labour Party double-act and proposes a different direction for trade union funds and workers' energies.

Taking Control is written as a guide to action. Workers may find particular sections more relevant to their immediate situation than others. We welcome the views of active workers on its contents and their experience of how our approach works in practice. The columns of *the next step* are open to continue the discussion of the class struggle in industry as it develops over the coming months.

Photographs: Chris Black (reflex)

Their ballots or ours? Who controls the closed shop – and the funds? How to strike to win. How to fight redundancies. *Mike Freeman* explains how we can get a grip back on the unions:

Preparing for Power
special course
TAKING CONTROL

- **who is the working class?**
- **what is the labour bureaucracy?**
- **employment and unemployment**
- **wages, bargaining and shopfloor organisation**
- **trade unions and politics**

Turn to page 20 for further details about *Preparing for Power* or phone Kate Marshall on 01-274 3951

The Nottinghamshire miners

Scabs or scapegoats?

Frank Richards explores the traditions of the Notts miners and argues that they are not so special. Their conservatism is only an extreme form of the collaborative approach that has characterised all sections of the miners' union since nationalisation.

Notts miners for the strike: no less militant, but from an area more strongly influenced by the moderate traditions of the NUM

Joe Boatman (reflex)

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE MINERS have never been noted for their militancy. They have long had a reputation for moderation and sectionalism. The Nottinghamshire coalfield has traditionally been one of the most prosperous and productive sections of the mining industry. On many occasions the Notts miners have broken ranks with their colleagues in the course of a strike. In 1893, in the middle of the first national strike called by the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, they returned to work leaving their fellow miners in a vulnerable situation. Again in the 1926 General Strike the Notts miners returned to work, thus ensuring that the strike would be defeated. Following the miners' devastating defeat in 1926, Nottinghamshire became the centre of the infamous Spencer union. Led by Labour MP George Spencer, the Notts miners were organised into a breakaway company union.

In recent years these conservative traditions have again come to the fore. In the 1983 General Election many Notts miners voted for the Tories or the SDP/Liberal Alliance. The Labour Party couldn't even win Sherwood – a constituency which contains 13 collieries and little else but mining communities. In the regional strike ballot at the start of the present dispute an overwhelming 73.5 per cent of the Notts miners voted against all-out action.

As the strike has progressed the divisions between the Notts men and miners in other coalfields have become even more pronounced. In early May thousands of working miners confronted thousands of striking miners outside the union's Nottinghamshire headquarters after a 'right to work' march in Mansfield organised by non-strikers. They were kept apart by ranks of police. The Nottinghamshire Working Miners' Committee was set up soon after the Mansfield confrontation. With full backing from the Coal Board and the Tories, it aims to put maximum pressure on those Notts miners who are still on strike. Committee members have taken over the functions of left-wing union officials involved in the strike. In a number of pits – Blidworth, Thoresby, Cresswell and Ollerton – the right-wing committee men have taken control of the union. The strike-breakers scored some important successes in the June elections for branch officials and inflicted defeat after defeat on long-serving union representatives.

Everybody has their own opinion on the peculiarities of the Notts miners. Journalists, academics and miners have put forward a now familiar litany of reasons to explain their conservatism. Many of the explanations seem plausible and have received widespread public acceptance during the course of the strike. But do they really make sense? Let's look at the three main arguments.

'A different breed of men'

Many miners and their supporters have expressed the view that there is something intrinsically different about the make-up of the Notts miners. They argue that, unlike miners in Scotland, Wales, Kent or Yorkshire, the Notts miners have no backbone and lack the will to fight.

This opinion, which has been given wide credence in the mining communities, is not confirmed by history. It is true that Nottinghamshire lacks the militant traditions of the left-wing South Wales area. But in numerous instances the Notts miners have demonstrated a determination to fight and to fight hard.

During the 1920 strike over wages, Nottinghamshire was more militant than 16 other districts which voted for acceptance of the Lloyd George government's offer. During the 1921 lockout, Yorkshire and Northumberland voted for acceptance of the employers' offer – Nottinghamshire rejected it. The Notts miners stayed firm even though they had less to gain from the strike than other more badly paid districts. The Notts miners fought back in the face of the most intensive police provocation experienced in any coalfield.

More recently, the Notts miners have shown their readiness to take militant action to defend their jobs and living standards. They played a full role in the national strike in 1972. And along with Derbyshire in 1973, they took the lead in implementing the overtime ban which eventually resulted in the successful 1974 national strike.

History shows that there is nothing inherently different about the Notts miners that sets them apart from their fellow miners in other parts of the country. In fact, there is no such thing as a 'Notts miner'. Throughout the twentieth century successive waves of migrants have come to make up the workforce of the Notts coalfield. A recent study of the coal mines opened up in the eastern part of the county beneath Sherwood Forest reveals that most of the miners were immigrants from Scotland, Wales, Durham and Yorkshire (Robert J Waller, *The Dukeries transformed*, OUP, 1983). This tradition has continued in the post-war period. In the fifties miners from clapped-out pits in Scotland, the North-East and elsewhere packed their bags and moved to Nottinghamshire. In the sixties the NCB operated an Inter-Divisional Transfer Scheme which assisted the transfer of miners from North to South.

Far from being a race apart, most Notts miners are related by blood to those who work in the pits of Scotland, Durham and Wales. It is true that they do not have the long and stable traditions of the mining communities of South Wales. But then neither do the Kent miners – and this has not stopped them going on strike.

'It's the money'

Many militants believe that miners in Nottinghamshire are strike-breaking because they have been bought off by high bonuses. Under the area incentive scheme introduced in 1978, a considerable portion of miners' wages depends on the output of their pit. This method of payment is clearly divisive, which is why the last Labour government and the Coal Board were so keen to introduce it, against the wishes of the majority of miners.

Tales abound of miners in Nottinghamshire earning hundreds of pounds a week in bonuses. Many groups on the left have taken up these tales to explain the conservatism of the Notts miners. One organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Group, has even invented figures to show that the Notts miners are a privileged and hence reactionary section of the working class (see *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism*, May 1984). While dishonesty is a way of life for the RCG, many others genuinely believe in the myth of the millionaire miners.

NCB Area	Average bonus on faces (£)	Colliery bonus average(£)
North Yorkshire	61	48
Barnsley	56	43
North Notts	52	38
South Notts	42	31
South Wales	32	22

Take-home pay has been higher in Nottinghamshire than in other mining areas. Compared to miners in South Wales, those in Notts are doing quite well. However, the area incentive scheme has not opened a goldmine in Nottinghamshire. Before its introduction, pits in Nottinghamshire were already working at high levels of productivity and have thus experienced difficulties in raising output. In the first few years after the introduction of the productivity scheme, many Notts miners received high bonuses. But during the past five years this has tapered off and regional differentials have narrowed. The table above, taken from the *Incomes Data Services* of May 1984, explodes the myth of the labour aristocrats of Nottinghamshire. The figures – from the last week in April 1983 – reveal major differences in area bonuses. But if the bonus rate is the main factor behind Nottinghamshire's conservatism, why are miners in the better off North Yorkshire and the militant Barnsley areas on strike and worse paid Notts miners still at work? The 'high bonus factor' doesn't explain why miners from high bonus pits at Selby in Yorkshire and Bilston Glen in Scotland came out once the strike started. There is simply no direct correlation between the level of bonus payments and miners' militancy. Moreover, it is not true that the Notts miners can look forward to a secure future. Many Notts pits are about as secure as a row of condemned houses – Sutton, Blidworth, Babbington, Mooregreen, Newstead, Pye Hill – all are loss-makers under threat of closure.

The high bonus argument is also favoured by the ruling class and the media. For years the ruling class has claimed that young miners with mortgages, cars and videos will not follow the path of militancy. This myth has been shattered by thousands of young miners from Yorkshire, Scotland, Wales and Kent, who have taken on the Coal Board, the police and the courts in a win or lose all battle.

'Spencer's men'

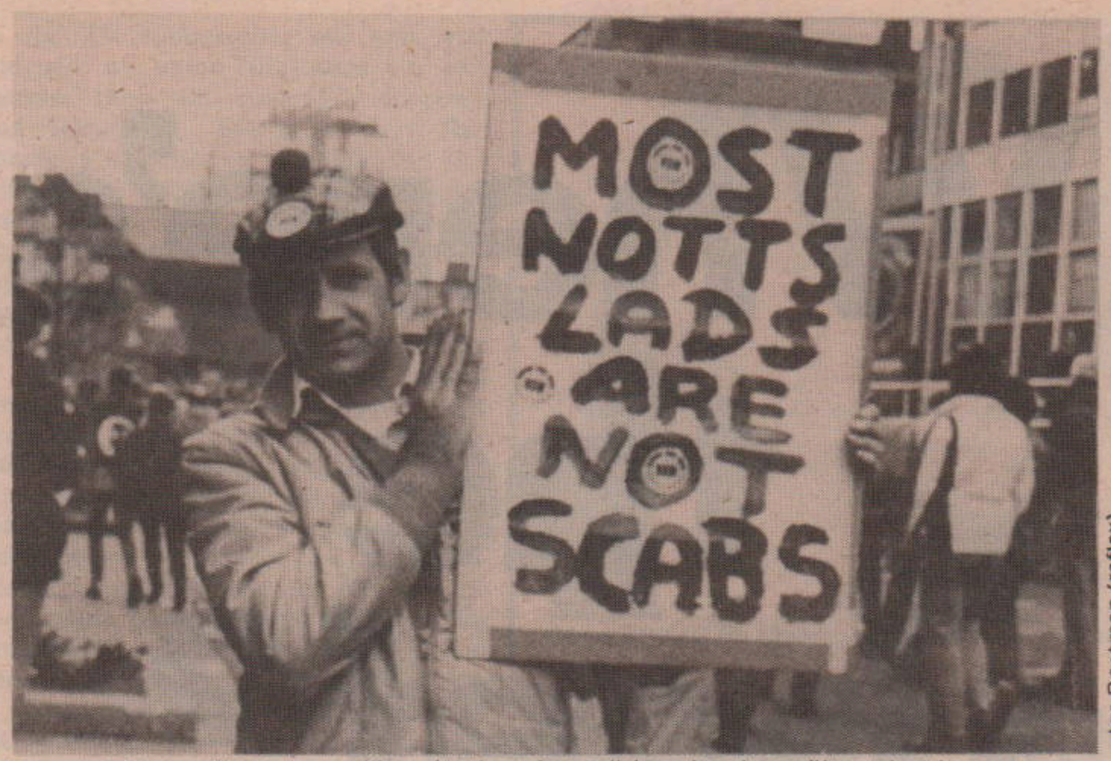
Probably the most plausible popular explanation for the anomaly of the Notts miners is the historical tradition of Spencerism. Academics and journalists have argued that Nottinghamshire's long history of cooperation has encouraged a moderate outlook in the mining communities.

The breakaway Spencer union had considerable influence in Nottinghamshire. But the strength of company unionism wasn't due to the Notts miners' natural proclivity for moderation. The Spencer union derived its strength from the enormous power of the Nottinghamshire mine owners. When the new

coalmines were opened in the twenties, the employers were able to establish a form of industrial feudalism. They had complete control over everything that went on in the mining villages. Troublemakers were kicked out of work and hounded out of the villages. The employers also used subcontractors – the butties – to pay and supervise the miners. The butty system was an extremely repressive form of labour control which put the miners at the mercy of the subcontractor.

The idea of a separate company union was most popular among the butties. In the aftermath of the 1926 miners' strike the employers and the butties went on to the offensive. When demoralised miners returned to work they were given the ultimatum of giving up their union cards or their jobs. Active trade unionists were victimised. Led by the Bolsover and New Hucknall companies, the employers dismissed hundreds of union men. At Wellbeck colliery all the men were locked out in 1928 and membership of the Spencer union was made a condition of re-employment. In one pit alone – Annesley – 200 miners were sacked for refusing to join the Spencer union in 1929. Spencerism was strongest in the new pits that were opened in the twenties. At Blidworth, Clipstone, Bilsthorpe, Ollerton, Harworth and Thoresby, the employers made sure that the Spencer union could run a virtual closed shop.

Company unionism had little grassroots support. In 1928, at the height of the Spencer offensive, the TUC organised a ballot to test the views of the Notts miners. The results showed that 32 227 supported the TUC-affiliated Nottingham Miners' Association, and only 2533 voted for Spencer's union. Despite the ballot result, the employers were able to impose their will on the miners and break the union. But this had nothing to do with Notts miners' liking for company unions. It was the outcome of a protracted struggle, in the course of which hundreds of miners were victimised and run out of the county. The miners never accepted Spencerism. In the thirties, after a bitter strike at Harworth colliery, they managed to defeat it.



Joe Boatman (reflex)

True: but Notts militants have a bigger battle against collaboration than militants in other areas

'The old policy of identity of interests between employers and ourselves should be abolished, and a policy of open hostility installed.'

South Wales Unofficial Reform Committee, The miners' next step, 1912

Two sorts of politics

If we simply look at Nottinghamshire in isolation we will never discover the real reasons for the region's conservatism. Nottinghamshire has historically been the most prosperous mining region. It enjoys geological conditions that are advantageous for coalmining. Yet the county's geology is similar to that of Yorkshire – it tells us little about the specificity of the Notts miners' traditions. The above account of company unionism has indicated that, historically, one important and distinctive feature of the coalfield was the pervasive power of the mine owners. This tells us about the repressive conditions experienced by miners, but it does not explain their sectional and cautious outlook.

To understand the peculiar position of the Nottinghamshire miners we must examine the main political influences on the British mining community. There have always been two distinct approaches to trade unionism in the mining community: the policy of industrial collaboration and the policy of class struggle.

For most of its history the miners' union has been dominated by the politics of industrial collaboration. Until the end of the First World War many of the miners' leaders were Liberals. The early union leaders – Alexander MacDonald, John Normansell, Thomas Burt and William Crawford – believed in improving the lot of their members through co-operation with the employers. Like their modern day successors, they believed that miners shared a responsibility for the well-being of the mining industry. The union leaders justified claims for higher wages and better conditions by pointing to the employers' profits and proclaiming their commitment to the industry.

Spencerism is only an extreme form of industrial collaboration. In 1948 Spencer explained his point of view:

'I have always made it a cardinal point of policy to show that by a joint effort with the management material benefits will result to the worker.'

Despite his right-wing views, Spencer was not that much out of line with the mainstream of the National Union of Mineworkers. In the same year, NUM general secretary Arthur Horner argued at the union's conference for collaboration with the Coal Board: 'we can say to the Board, "you have done well, but we will continue to help you do much better" '. Unlike Spencer, Arthur Horner was a man of the left. A leading figure in the Communist Party, Horner believed that collaboration with the Coal Board would guarantee miners' jobs and livelihoods.

The collaborative policies of the leaders of the miners' union were diametrically opposed to the combative approach associated with the Unofficial Reform Committee based in South Wales. In its historic 1912 pamphlet, *The miners' next step*, the Unofficial Reform Committee advanced a policy which stressed miners' independent interests. It noted that there can be nothing in common between the exploiter and the exploited, and argued that any gains for the miners could only come about at the expense of the bosses' profits. *The miners' next step* took a hard line against the leaders' policy of industrial collaboration. Its first demand argued the need for independent working class politics:

'The old policy of identity of interest between employers and ourselves should be abolished, and a policy of open hostility installed.'

The tradition represented by *The miners' next step* had considerable rank and file support up to 1926. The setbacks inflicted on the miners in the early twenties and their defeat in the 1926 General Strike undermined industrial militancy. Industrial collaboration became the dominant outlook in the miners' union. These developments had serious consequences in every coalfield, Nottinghamshire included.

Notts politics

During the First World War radical ideas gained considerable influence among Notts miners. A group of anti-capitalist miners led by Jack Lavin propagated the policies of *The miners' next step* in the Mansfield area. Based at Wellbeck colliery, Lavin established a branch of the Socialist Labour Party, which in 1920 became a branch of the Communist Party. In the early twenties left-wing miners united to form the Mansfield District Committee. This committee had considerable rank and file support in about 10 pits. When the union leaders ordered a return to work in 1926, the rank and file at Wallaton, Wellbeck, Sherwood, Newcastle, and Bentinck collieries passed resolutions condemning them.

The employers' offensive was successful in destroying the influence of the left. For at least a decade the policy of collaboration – in the extreme form of Spencerism – prevailed.

Outside Nottinghamshire, the miners' union too was becoming increasingly conservative. The leadership of the national union felt threatened by Spencerism and moderated its policies to meet the approval of the mine owners. This conservative approach had a major impact in Nottinghamshire. When Notts miners rebelled against Spencer and fought to build the Miners' Federation in their region the miners' leaders were pleased. But instead of helping the Notts miners to get rid of Spencerism once and for all, the union leaders advised them to unite with Spencer's company union. The result was that in September 1937, the two groups united to form the Nottinghamshire and District Miners' Federated Union. The President of this new affiliate to the Miners' Federation was none other than George Spencer!

'We can say to the (Coal) Board, "You have done well, but we will continue to help you do much better".'

NUM general secretary Arthur Horner, 1948

When the Miners' Federation became the National Union of Mineworkers in 1945 not much had changed. The leadership of the NUM prided itself on fighting not only for its members but also for the mining industry. This policy of collaboration had a divisive impact on the miners. Instead of class unity, miners developed close bonds with the local companies and, after nationalisation, with the local division of the National Coal Board. The inevitable consequence of this collaborative approach was to heighten sectionalism.

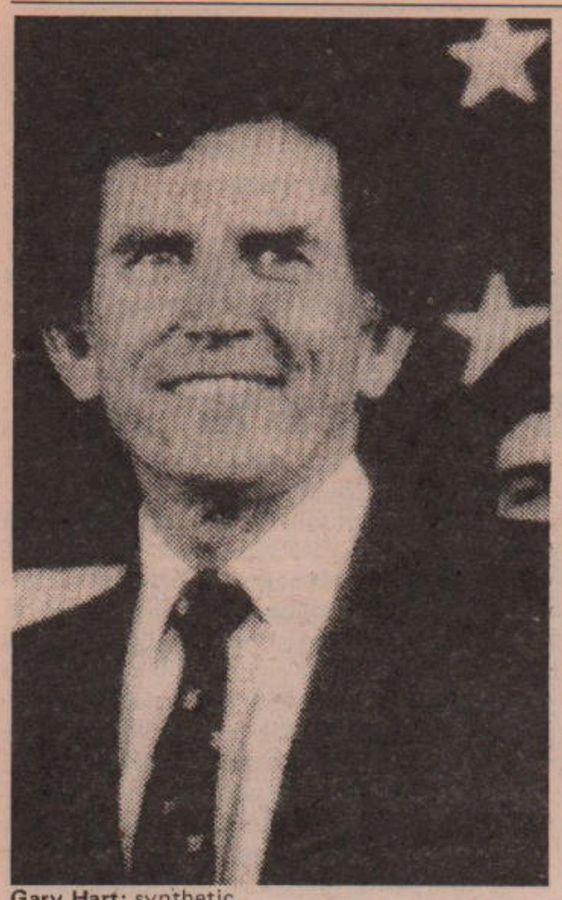
Sectionalism developed stronger roots in Nottinghamshire than in most other regions because there was more scope for collaboration. The profitability of the Nottinghamshire coalfield meant that employment was stable, overtime opportunities were plentiful and wages relatively high. Most issues of conflict were easily smoothed over by local union leaders eager to establish good relations with the employers. The Notts union leaders were far from being Tories. When Spencer and his colleague Coleman retired in 1945, their places as full time officials were taken by Dai Ley and Harry Straw – both members of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party was influential on the NUM executive. But Communist leaders were bureaucrats first and Communist Party members second. At the 1966 special NUM conference, only the Notts leaders spoke out against the proposal to move away from district to national negotiations. It was Joe Whelan who put the case for Nottingham and argued the divisive case against national agreements.

Joe Whelan, who was a prominent figure in the Communist Party and leader of the Notts miners in the seventies and early eighties, sums up the peculiarities of the region he represented. Nottinghamshire miners are no different from miners elsewhere. But industrial collaboration has different effects in different regions. Class collaboration exacerbates divisions and strengthens sectionalism. This sectionalism overrides party ties and union loyalties. This narrow parochial outlook influences all the mining regions. That's why last year miners in many pits were reluctant to come out in support of their colleagues who faced pit closures in South Wales and Scotland. That's why at the outset of the current strike, miners at some of the 'super pits' were reluctant to strike.

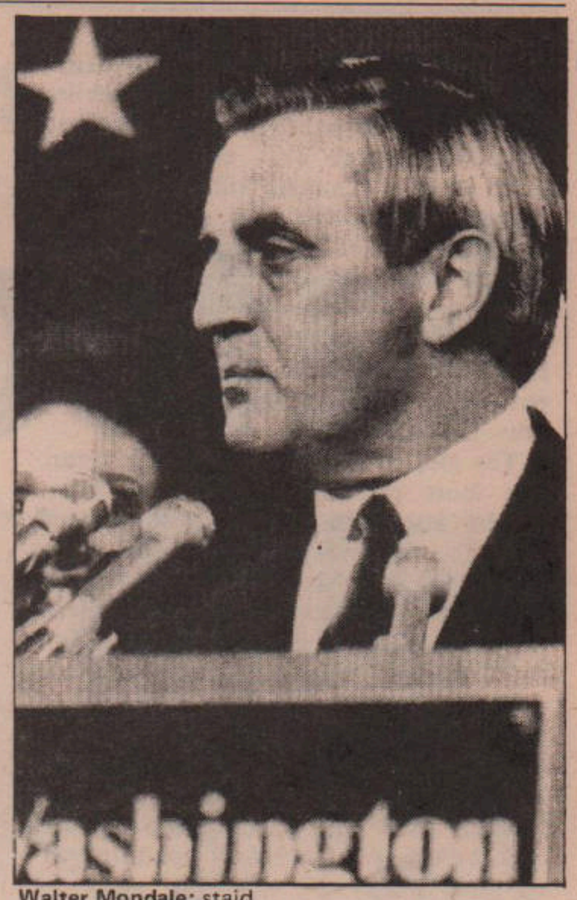
Joe Whelan belonged to the same political party as Scottish miners' leader Mick McGahey. On most subjects they were in complete agreement – what divided them was not ideology but sectional interests. Given the unstable industrial climate in Scotland, sectionalism is quite consistent with outbreaks of militancy. In Nottinghamshire industrial stability has strengthened the network of collaboration – sectionalism in the region takes the form of moderation. In Nottinghamshire many miners look for solutions through co-operation with the Coal Board. In Scotland miners have learned that their future depends on fighting the Coal Board. Unfortunately, both wings of the movement are politically tied to the Coal Board. The 1974 *Plan for Coal*, which the miners' executive accepts as its statement of principle, is based on industrial collaboration. Left-wing miners' President Arthur Scargill and the rest of the NUM executive never tire of repeating that they are not just fighting for their members' jobs, but also for the future of the British mining industry. The Notts miners refuse to fight on the same grounds. The only difference is that the Notts miners believe that the future of the mining industry can be better safeguarded through industrial peace rather than through strikes.

The only difference between Nottinghamshire and the other regions is that as a result of its peculiar experience, collaboration and sectionalism are more entrenched than elsewhere. But the problem lies not so much with the Notts miners as with the leadership of the NUM, which perpetuates the policy of industrial collaboration through its advocacy of the *Plan for Coal*. Until the miners resurrect the traditions of *The miners' next step* sectional divisions will continue to plague the NUM, and the Nottinghamshire coalfield will continue to undermine national action.



Gary Hart: synthetic

Where's the beef?



Walter Mondale: staid

'Where's the beef' – a hamburger chain's advertising jingle – has become the catchphrase of the lacklustre contest for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination. As Walter Mondale prepares to take the nomination at this month's party congress, *Mick Hume* looks at what lies behind the crisis among the Democrats.

'I don't see how either of them can win' was how one American commentator summed up the dull contest for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination between former vice-president Walter Mondale and Senator Gary Hart. Since the selection process began in February, both the staid Mondale and the synthetic Hart have signally failed to capture America's imagination. The third candidate to last out the long course to this month's nominating convention, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, has made two distinct contributions to the campaign. First, he has mobilised black voters on an unprecedented scale while Mondale and Hart have attracted pitifully low white support. Second, his 'charisma' – an ability to string half a dozen sentences together – has underlined the mind-dulling mediocrity of the two major protagonists. Four months before the election proper the Democrats' challenge to President Reagan already looks doomed.

The lack of public enthusiasm for both Mondale and Hart reflects the Democrats' inability to put together a coherent alternative to Reagan's strategy for salvaging American capitalism. Like Reagan's Republicans, the Democratic Party is a loyal servant of US private enterprise. Its spokesmen have had trouble distinguishing themselves from Reagan's austerity programme to revive American business. This has led many radical commentators to label US democracy as a 'one party system'. But there are important differences between Democrats and Republicans. The Democratic Party's particular problems spring from the disintegration of the coalition on which its past power depended.

Catch-all coalition

The Republican Party is often called the 'GOP' – the Grand Old Party of

Where's the Labour Party?

The traditionally non-political American Federation of Labor-Committee for Industrial Organisation (AFL-CIO) has thrown its diminishing weight behind Democratic presidential contender Walter Mondale, in a desperate effort to compensate for its declining status, and stave off the employers' offensive against trade unionism.

Since coming to office in 1981, Ronald Reagan has launched an all-out assault on union organisation. In his first year he smashed a strike by America's air traffic controllers by sacking all 11 000 and dragging their leaders away in chains. This year, legal and arbitration decisions have allowed employers to lie about bankruptcy as an excuse for tearing up union contracts, and transfer work to non-union labour without consulting the union leaders. This has encouraged the boom in 'runaway firms', which are shifting their bases to southern states where 'right to work' laws prohibit effective union organisation.

The growth of hi-tech industries in the 'Sunbelt' of the South-West has passed the unions by. Unions managed to organise only two million of the 35m jobs created nationally between 1960 and 1980. Private union-busting consultants have joined in the attack. Some employers have had dramatic success in breaking union shops. After 50 years of high pay and unionisation the meat-packing industry has reverted almost overnight to non-union sweatshop conditions. When the unions have organised strike action, federal and local governments have had no compunction about using police and the National Guard to break picket lines.

The openly pro-business American union chiefs are helpless in the face of this attack. Decades of collaboration with employers, corruption and witch-hunts against militants have left them with a shrinking membership based in the declining industries. The proportion of private sector workers in unions is down from 26 per cent in the early seventies to just 16 per cent today. Far from taking on the employers' offensive, the unions have sought closer identification with the bosses' problems. Union negotiators have accepted huge wage cuts in return for profit-sharing schemes and corporate shares. Unions have rejected industrial action in favour of million dollar media campaigns and useless consumer boycotts against intransigent employers. Militant initiatives are confined to chauvinist campaigns to protect US capitalism from foreign competitors – such as union-sponsored expeditions to smash up Japanese cars.

The labour bureaucrats' economic weakness has forced them to turn to presidential politics for protection. Since the thirties, politics for the union bosses has meant backing the Democratic Party. Then, President Roosevelt helped the union leaders to contain rank and file militancy by organising new industrial unions from the top down, and establishing a limited machinery of consultation. Now they are relying on Mondale to keep intact Roosevelt's system of collaboration. The US labour bureaucrats' dependence on an overtly establishment politician to defend workers' organisations highlights the historical weakness of the official labour movement in America.

Workers divided

Unlike their British counterparts, American union leaders have never had a tame Labour Party to safeguard the bureaucrats' political interests. The modern American working class was formed out of a flood of immigrants, divided along ethnic, religious and national lines. Their political affiliations were distorted by competition between different groups for better jobs and housing. Irish-run political machines controlled the city ghettoes and kept Catholic immigrants loyal to the Democrats. 'Native' Protestant workers tended to vote Republican.

The divisions within the working class allowed American employers plenty of scope for playing off one group of workers against another. While the Irish formed the backbone of the union bureaucracy, Italians, Poles or Jews could be used to scab on each other. Through a combination of brutal coercion and token concessions, employers were able to deal with the working class directly, going over the heads of union chiefs. They had little need of the institutionalised mediation through reformist politics which developed in Western Europe. American union leaders were never given room to play a role in government on the British model.

At the same time, the fragmentation of the working class meant that there was no real political pressure on the union bureaucrats. They were not forced to set up a parliamentary wing to insulate them from dangerous political issues. There is no American Labour Party because American capitalism could survive without one. Union leaders have relied on their tense relationship with the anti-working class Democrats to provide a limited political influence.

A rotten bloc

Since Reagan's election, the AFL–CIO under the leadership of Lane Kirkland has tried to move the Democratic Party closer to the working class, and win back credibility among the 40 per cent of trade unionists who voted Republican in 1980. Accusing Reagan of starting 'a revolution', the labour leaders have staked their all on getting a Democratic 'friend of labor' into the White House. Everything is subordinate to the campaign behind Mondale. At the end of last year, while strikers at the Greyhound bus company fought scabs and police, Kirkland could only accuse the employers of being 'short-sighted' and call for 'more solidarity within union ranks for greater political activity than ever in 1984, to return fairness and progress to the federal administration'. But even if Kirkland succeeds in giving Mondale a leg-up into the Oval Office, there is no hope of 'fairness and progress' for the working class. The bureaucrats are demanding more consultation and cooperation from a Democratic administration and the employers. But the only consultation which interests the bosses is along the lines carried out by the big car manufacturers, where union concessions over wages and conditions in return for 'job security' have been followed by mass redundancies. The capitalist Democrats hold out little more hope. During the national Greyhound strike and the ongoing bitter struggle at the Phelps copper mines in Philadelphia, union leaders have appealed for Democratic Party support to resolve the disputes. Democratic mayors and governors have sought to resolve them in favour of their own class, by sending police and troops against the strikers.

Union support for the Democrats' attempts to revitalise American capitalism can only perpetuate the divisions within the working class. It is 50 years since the American left gave up trying to build a revolutionary party and fell in line behind Roosevelt's New Deal. Yet today there is a desperate need for a political struggle to unite the working class against Ronald Reagan, Walter Mondale and Lane Kirkland.

American politics. Its roots lie in the Northern capitalists' victory over the Southern slave-owners in the nineteenth century civil war. Ever since, the GOP has stood for American stability and success, drawing its support from big business, conservative middle class voters and the farming communities of the Midwest.

In contrast, the Democratic Party has been a catch-all coalition of disaffected sections of US society. For most of this century, and particularly for the past 50 years, the Democratic Party has tried to hold together a fragile coalition of Southern 'Dixiecrat' racists, West Coast liberals, blacks from the inner cities, and traditional labour movement supporters.

The Democratic Party's role for the US establishment has been to integrate these volatile forces into the mainstream of American life at times of national crisis. Thus Democratic Party Presidents sought to unite the nation when they took America into the First World War, the Second World War, and the invasions of Korea and Vietnam. Democrat-led administrations have initiated short-lived exercises in state intervention to contain uprisings of the working class and the oppressed. In the Depression of the thirties, President Roosevelt's New Deal provided cash for welfare and public works and allowed trade unions a measure of public respectability. This proved crucial in restraining a wave of working class militancy. And when America's post-war prosperity began to fade in the sixties, President Kennedy's New Frontier and President Johnson's Great Society served a similar function. Their hyped-up programmes of redistribution, regeneration and civil rights helped to dampen down the fires of black revolt in the inner cities.

The Democratic Party's ability to keep America's disaffected masses in line has been important for the survival of the US establishment. But it has been no easy job for an openly pro-capitalist party to meet the aspirations of the oppressed. The Democrats' political ragbag of warring interest groups, battling for the biggest share of a limited cake, contains inherent tensions which have often stretched the party to breaking point. In the recession of the eighties, they threaten to tear it apart.

Since the end of the post-war boom, the US establishment has had little room to compromise with opposition interest groups. The Democrats' base has fragmented as the component parts of their coalition fight against each other for what's left. Increasingly bitter divisions have caused the Democrats to lose three of the last four presidential elections. Their single victory – with Jimmy Carter in 1976 – was due more to public disgust at Republican President Nixon's corruption than anything positive the Democratic Party had to offer. In the 1980 election the party almost collapsed. Some unions sponsored Reagan, blacks refused to vote, and middle class electors backed the Republicans under the pressures of the new atmosphere of austerity.

Today, the Democrats are struggling to reconstitute their all-class alliance. But the barriers they face are immense. The harsher the economic conditions get, the more different interest groups tend to look after their own at the expense of Democratic unity. The current debate over an immigration bill highlights the tensions and infighting among the Democrats' supporters. Right-wing trade unions who want American workers' jobs protected from illegal immigrants back the bill, but pro-Democratic Hispanic leaders oppose it. The primary campaign has further exposed the party's deep divisions. Each of the three candidates had his own constituency. None of them had the politics to win wider support.

Yesterday's men

Walter 'Fritz' Mondale had the support of the party bosses, and endorsements from such venerable institutions as the AFL-CIO – the US TUC – and the National Organisation of Women. He could afford to outspend his opponents in the TV commercials war and, with the aid of union organisers, to outcanvass them on America's doorsteps and telephones. Yet after Gary Hart sprang a surprise by winning the first primary in New Hampshire, Mondale had to battle all the way to the finish. He won, but failed to extend his support beyond the traditional Democratic punters.

Mondale emphasised his standing as a statesman, a former vice-president from Jimmy Carter's administration who promised a return to the security of the heyday of Democratic liberalism. His appeal to yesterday's values – 'a fairer America' – won support from the unemployed, pensioners and more traditionally-minded blacks. His alliance with the union bosses around demands for protecting America's traditional industries from foreign competition struck a chord among some embittered, hard-hit workers. But Mondale's approach also exposed him to accusations of being outdated, in the pocket of 'special interests' and tainted by the failures of the Carter years. Hart's unexpected challenge indicated the limits of Mondale's support.

Before his shock victory in the New Hampshire primary, Gary Hart was an unknown senator from Colorado. Hart tried to use this to parade as an 'outsider', untouched by the corrupting influence of Washington – a common role for aspiring newcomers ever since the Watergate scandal of the seventies. Emphasising his 'new ideas' and 'youth', Hart presented himself as the natural successor to the legendary John F Kennedy. He won support among West Coast intellectuals, Hollywood stars, college graduates and young upwardly mobiles – 'Yuppies'.

But Hart's new ideas – slowing rearmament and putting industry back on its feet – had too much in common with Mondale's old ideas for reviving US capitalism to attract the wider support he needed to win. Hart's youthful image was undermined by revelations that he had lied about his age. His novelty value soon gave way to speculation about his intelligence. Hart raised doubts on this score by his naive assertion that he would only shoot down a Czech plane in US airspace if the airforce was sure the occupants were wearing uniforms rather than business suits. Mondale could ridicule the superficial character of the Hart alternative, but only by exposing his party's lack of any credible counter to the hardline Reagan approach.

While Mondale took much of the traditional Democratic support among union members and the poor and Hart cornered the market in aspiring middle class Democrats, Jesse Jackson pulled out the black vote (see box). The Democrats' liberal, labour and black coalition lay divided among them. The candidates' inability to broaden their appeal and unite the diverse interest groups puts the prospect of Mondale – or anybody else – pulling the party's base together further out of reach than ever.

No alternative

Mondale will have the assistance of the party machine to pull the campaign together. But the Democrats' machine is not the force of old. Trade union leaders have less and less influence over workers. And the city 'boss' politicians of the past are long gone. In cities such as Chicago, local Democratic officials were too busy squabbling among themselves to lend Mondale much assistance in the primaries.

The battles within the Democratic Party look likely to continue on the floor of this month's congress. Party organisers have tried to avert dissension by producing an election platform with no specific commitments. This is all fair game for Reagan once the campaign proper begins. And even if the Democrats were to 'fluke' a win in November, their lack of a clear political approach means they would be forced to continue Reagan's efforts to resurrect US power at the expense of workers and the oppressed.

Sweet nothings for blacks: Jackson chatting up Democrats can't bring freedom

Where's black power?

The Reverend Jesse Jackson's campaign to build a 'Rainbow Coalition' of blacks and other oppressed groups has been the one success story of the Democratic primaries. Across the country, he won 21 per cent of the popular vote. This unprecedented support for a black presidential candidate has been heralded as a great leap forward for black Americans. In fact, Jackson's success reflects how far the black revolt of the sixties has been contained and channelled into harmless electoralism.

When black inner-city ghettoes erupted in riots in the sixties, the American establishment adopted a two-pronged strategy to deal with them. On the one hand, it used armed police and troops to crush the rebellions and assassinate leading black militants. On the other hand, it developed programmes of 'affirmative action' to provide a few jobs and integrate a section of the black leadership into the system. The strategy succeeded in heading off the black revolt.

Recession put an end to affirmative action. Thousands of blacks quickly lost their new jobs as employers – such as New York City – faced drastic spending cuts. Today, real unemployment for blacks stands at around 33 per cent – 80 per cent for black youth in the inner cities. All that is left of the establishment's original strategy is police terror. Shootings and beatings are now the everyday experience of black communities. Resistance such as the recent Miami riots has been on a much smaller scale than in the past, and has been mercilessly put down.

Within the system

The crushing of independent black militancy has made many blacks pessimistic about the prospects for progress through violent upheaval. In desperation they have turned to the electoral process, which appears to offer the only practical way forward. Here they have found a growing body of middle class black politicians.

Black 'community leaders' who were street activists 15 years ago have lowered their sights, working within the system to suit the harsher economic climate, and joined the Democratic Party. Today, there are more than 6000 elected black officials in America. Black mayors run four of the country's six biggest cities. Jesse Jackson's candidacy for President is the logical next step in taking black resistance off the streets and into the city halls and Congress. In 1984, the old 'integrationist versus separatist' argument has been reduced to a disagreement about whether blacks should support Walter Mondale or Jesse Jackson.

Jackson's relations with Mondale and the Democratic Party leadership have been uneasy. Party bosses have recognised Jackson's potential for mobilising black voters behind the eventual Democratic candidate. But they are aware of the danger of letting Jackson go too far, and provoking a racist backlash. Last year, the party almost lost its safest mayoralty – in Chicago – when white voters deserted its black candidate in favour of a Republican racist.

The tensions caused by housing black radicals and hardcore racists – 'boll weevils and cotton' as Jackson calls them – within one party have been exacerbated by his association with Black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan. Farrakhan raised some electoral eyebrows by threatening to kill a black journalist who reported Jackson's anti-semitic remarks. But Jackson himself has declared his loyalty to Democratic Party traditions, acting as peacemaker between Mondale and Hart and declaring that he is 'running because there are more people locked out of the Democratic Party who are its natural constituents than are locked into it':

'So I'm running to defend the poor and make welcome the outcasts and to deliver those votes that are stuck at the bottom. I think that is the salvation of the Democratic Party, the democratic process, and for the soul of America.'

Far from causing trouble, Jackson aims to save the party by diverting black protests into the 'democratic process'.

False messiah

Jesse Jackson never had a chance of getting near the White House. But if he had, things would have been little better for blacks. Black mayors who share his political outlook have pushed through savage cuts which white politicians would have had difficulty getting away with. Jackson's own Operation PUSH, a black business lobby which spreads the dream of capitalist success among black youth, has helped provide a radical screen behind which black politicians pursue the dictates of the US establishment at workers' expense. When black teachers and caretakers struck recently against black Chicago mayor Harold Washington's cuts, PUSH lambasted the strikers for 'challenging black power'.

Like Harold Washington and the rest of the black politicians' club, Jesse Jackson is a middle class, pro-capitalist politician with neither the will nor the ability to alleviate black oppression. But for the American left, he is the messiah. Left-wing organisations fall into two groups: those who support Jackson, and those who would support him if he ran as an independent. They ignore his programme and applaud 'the movement' he has mobilised. But Jackson's success in winning support for his mission to reconcile black workers to their oppression makes a critique of his politics all the more urgent.

The crash of '84

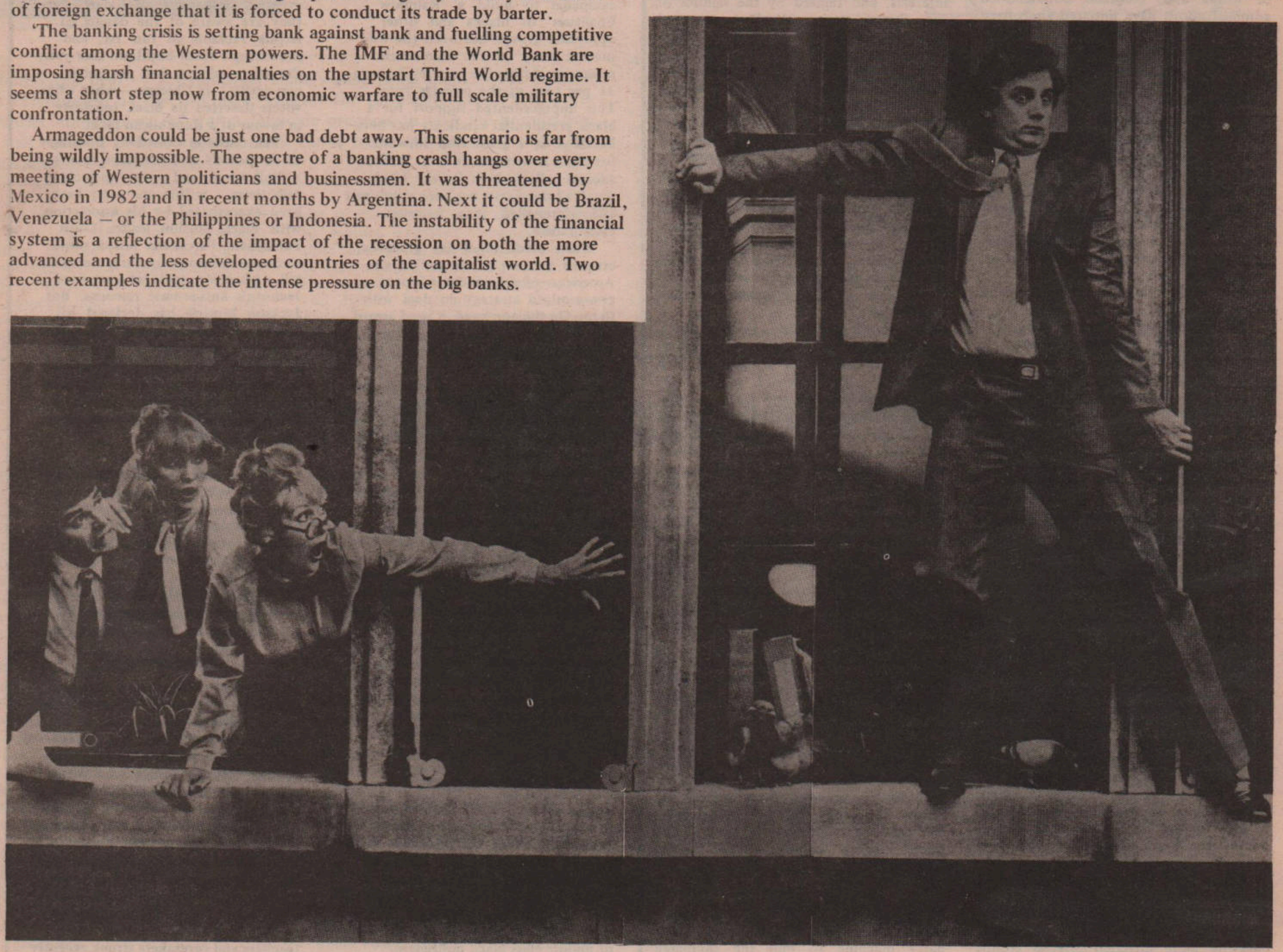
It could happen this month or next month. The reports would go like this:
'One of the major Newly Industrialising Countries in Latin America has finally gone over the top. It has told the bankers of the West to forget their demands for more interest or repayment of loans. The shock waves are reverberating through the world financial system.
'The Bank of America, Citicorp and Chase Manhattan as well as Lloyds and the Midland, are on the verge of collapse. They all have big stakes in Latin America. Now they have been forced to declare that a large chunk of their loans are 'non-performing'. Share prices are plummeting and shareholders are in a state of panic. Depositors are rushing to withdraw their funds before the doors finally close.

'The global inter-bank market, which normally keeps large volumes of short-term loans circulating rapidly, has slowed right down. Every bank is fighting for its own survival. Credit is drying up and entrepreneurs looking for loans have to accept punitive interest rates and fork out big risk premiums. The wheels of trade – normally oiled by credit – are grinding to a halt. Businesses of every sort that rely on loans to stay afloat are going bankrupt overnight. The debt default has plunged the West into a recessionary spiral.

'The default is having even more catastrophic consequences in Latin America. The West has already declared a credit embargo and trade sanctions. The USA, Britain and other EEC countries are seizing asssets, impounding exports and blocking imports. The guilty country is so short of foreign exchange that it is forced to conduct its trade by barter.

'The banking crisis is setting bank against bank and fuelling competitive conflict among the Western powers. The IMF and the World Bank are imposing harsh financial penalties on the upstart Third World regime. It seems a short step now from economic warfare to full scale military confrontation.'

Armageddon could be just one bad debt away. This scenario is far from being wildly impossible. The spectre of a banking crash hangs over every meeting of Western politicians and businessmen. It was threatened by Mexico in 1982 and in recent months by Argentina. Next it could be Brazil, Venezuela – or the Philippines or Indonesia. The instability of the financial system is a reflection of the impact of the recession on both the more advanced and the less developed countries of the capitalist world. Two recent examples indicate the intense pressure on the big banks.



The threatened collapse of the Chicago-based Continental Illinois bank in May illustrates the dangers to major banks from the weakness of the economy at home. The eighth biggest bank in the USA, Continental Illinois was not a victim of any international defaulter. It had to write off a series of loans to America's declining energy supply and traditional manufacturing industries. The US government was obliged to bail out Continental Illinois with a package of $7.2 billion put together with 28 other banks.

Paul Volcker, America's top banker, summed up the philosophy behind the rescue plan:

'When safety and soundness, broad confidence in banking institutions and continuity in the provision of money and payment services are at stake, competition alone cannot be relied upon to achieve these goals.'

So much for the Reagan regime's faith in private enterprise. Last year there were 48 banking failures in the USA and the system cannot afford too many more.

Less than one week after the Continental Illinois rescue, rumours began to circulate around the financial centres about the security of Manufacturers Hanover, the USA's fourth largest bank. Manufacturers Hanover is Argentina's biggest Western money lender with loans worth $1.3 billion outstanding at the end of the first quarter of 1984. For the past two years Argentina has experienced a wave of bankruptcies, banking crises, mass unemployment and wage cuts. This year's desperate bid to expand the economy has produced an inflation rate of 570 per cent. Warning signals that Argentina's rulers might not be able to meet their scheduled interest repayments sent a shudder through the boardroom of Manufacturers Hanover – and beyond. If the bank received no repayments for its outstanding loans it would be forced to declare that more than half its loans were 'non-performing'. Within days billions of dollars would be wiped off share values in the stock markets of New York, London and other financial centres as the panic spread. Again the big league politicians and bankers

The dimensions of debt

Total Third World debt is expected to reach $812 billion this year:

- **Argentina, Brazil and Mexico together account for a third of the world total**
- **some 21 countries make up 85 per cent of the total**
- **debt obligations make up between a third and half the annual economic output of the main debtor countries**
- **debts for the major Latin American countries are between two and four times bigger than total exports**
- **debt servicing – capital repayments and interest charges – can take the bulk of export earnings; in the case of Brazil the proportion is 100 per cent**

Through the mechanism of credit, Western bankers exert a stranglehold over the Third World.

went fast to the rescue. Let's look more closely at the debt problem in the West and the Third World.

A fragile recovery

It may seem paradoxical that the banking system is so volatile at a time when the American economy is supposed to be leading the world out of recession. In fact, the debt problem reveals the limited character of the US recovery and the persistence of recessionary trends. Last year industrial output in the USA grew by three per cent and investment expanded by more than eight per cent. This recovery is based on a number of short-term factors rather than any real restructuring of the economy. Rationalisation, destocking, cutting wages and expanding consumer credit have all played their part. However, the most significant factor in the American revival has been the enormous increase in Government spending, especially in the military sphere. Four key features of the US upturn expose its fragile basis – the massive budget and trade deficits, high exchange rates and interest rates.

● The *budget deficit* – the gap between government income and expenditure – is heading for $200 billion this year. Like any other business, the government has to fill this gap by borrowing money. Because of the enormous volume of the government's business and the scale of its borrowing, it takes a major share of the available credit. This pushes up the rates of interest at which every other punter – in America and abroad – borrows money.

● The *trade deficit* – the gap between exports and imports of goods – has grown to a current level of around $12 billion a month. American industry cannot compete with Japanese cars and televisions, European machine tools and Third World steel and textiles. The US upturn has produced a flood of foreign imports and a further decline in domestic manufacturing.

● *High interest rates* are the price the system has to pay for an upturn based on massive private lending and public spending. High interest rates attract large volumes of foreign money into Wall Street in search of a quick return. This cash helps to compensate for the trade and budget deficits. However it also pushes up interest rates abroad and the exchange rate of the dollar. A one per cent hike in US interest rates raises Latin America's debt-servicing costs by $1 billion. The ten per cent rise in US interest rates since January has wiped out all the recent restructuring measures worked out in painstaking negotiations between the debtor countries and the Western world.

● The *high exchange rate* of the dollar is propped up by high interest rates. The high dollar makes US exports even less competitive and pushes US manufacturers further down the road to ruin. High interest rates make less credit available to beleaguered factory owners in the North East or entrepreneurs trying to open up new plants in the South West. The combined effect has produced a wave of bankruptcies.

The debtors' burden

Argentine President Raul Alfonsin recently wrote to the IMF indicating his reluctance to introduce policies of deflation and austerity as a condition for rescheduling the country's repayment of overdue loans. The American press criticised Alfonsin as an ungrateful scrounger and as an irresponsible custodian of US funds in Argentina. In Britain *The Economist* scornfully dismissed the 'can't pays, won't pays' of Latin America who met in Colombia at the end of June. The Western prejudice that 'we are now the prisoners of the debtors' is absurd. It does, however, show the growing awareness in Washington and London that the easy credit policies of the past have only postponed a day of reckoning that seems to be drawing nearer by the day.

In the sixties a number of Third World countries took advantage of the growth of the world economy to expand and industrialise. The Newly Industrialising Countries – NICs– attracted substantial direct foreign investment, especially in the industrial sectors. When profits slumped across the Western economies in the seventies, the banks looked to the NICs. They loaned masses of cash to pay for imports from the West and financed investment programmes. The NICs' debts only became a problem because of the global effects of the recession. The contraction of trade, the slump in commodity prices and the rise in interest rates combined to make it impossible for Third World countries to repay their debts.

The world recession has ravaged Third World economies that are heavily dependent on a narrow range of agricultural products, minerals or other raw materials. The NICs' fragile industrial sectors have been squeezed between the rising protectionism of the world market and the declining demand of depressed domestic economies. Though Third World countries can no longer afford to service their debts the Western banks keep on lending them money. The creditors have no more promising outlets for surplus cash and they are prepared to go to great lengths to string their debtors along.

Even when some countries are threatening to default there are still fortunes to be made out of moneylending in the Third World. The IMF figures show that last year Third World countries repaid $115 billion in net interest payments to the West. A World Bank spokesman revealed that over the last two years there was a net transfer of funds of $28 billion from the Third World to the Western banks. The flight of money capital from Latin America – 'negative resource transfer' – has reversed traditional patterns over the past couple of years. The bankers also extract hundreds of millions of dollars as the costs for renegotiating debt repayments and organising new loans.

Despite the fact that they did not cause the recession, Third World countries are being forced to pay for it. In the more stagnant economies of countries like Sudan or Tanzania, debts are not at a level likely to shake Manufacturers Hanover if they had to be written off. Here IMF 'adjustment programmes' bring the impoverished masses down further by cutting food subsidies and restricting imports. Repaying debts ensures famine, disease and death for tens of thousands every year.

In the NICs servicing the debts is a colossal burden. Draconian cuts in public spending and reductions in wages are the IMF's conditions for further loans – or for more time to pay. Last year Mexico cut real wages by 20 per cent and economic output slumped by five per cent as a result of the terms of the 1982 rescue package. At the recent summit of Western leaders in London, Margaret Thatcher congratulated the Mexican regime on its 'strenuous efforts'.

Debt divisions

The London summit concluded with a joint declaration on the debt problem. The leaders of the big seven Western powers agreed to undertake 'case by case' negotiations to extend the periods for repaying loans. 'Multi-year rescheduling' is an attempt to forestall a major default and any consequent banking crash. It is also, as a senior US official made clear, a device for imposing discipline:

'It will not be across the board, but only for successful countries... it will be an important reward and incentive for successful conduct.'

The Western leaders agreed on the need for tough measures against Third World debtors – but on little else. The summit exposed conflicts within the Western alliance on the debt issue.

French President Francois Mitterrand forcefully expressed the common dissatisfaction of European governments with US economic policies, particularly its high interest rates. High US rates tend to force up the cost of credit worldwide, depressing growth in other Western countries. The summit leaders endorsed 'the central role' of the US - dominated IMF in disciplining the Third World. However, they also called for closer cooperation between the IMF and the World Bank, in which Japan has been challenging American supremacy. Both Mitterrand and Germany's Chancellor Kohl are promoting the EEC-financed European Investment Bank. When it comes to the prospect of sharing out losses rather than parcelling out the booty, every imperialist power looks first to its own interests.

The differing spheres of influence of the major world powers lead to divergent responses to problems of debt, behind the harmonious united front displayed at Lancaster House. In terms of trade and direct investments as well as loans, each Western nation has its own favoured Third World areas. The USA dominates Latin America, Japan has its 'yen bloc' in South East Asia, and the EEC countries look to Africa and the Middle East. European politicians can afford to be complacent about Reagan's problems with Argentina and Brazil. They are more sensitive about events in Africa and even more so in the Gulf.

The divergences among the Western powers make all the difference when the going gets rough. The USA's rivals are already quietly gloating over its Latin American debt problem. America's embarrassment gives them room to manoeuvre elsewhere. While a blow to the credit system would hurt them too, the Europeans and the Japanese could calculate that the USA would suffer more. Reagan cannot count on his conference pals to bale him out when the debts go bad and banks crash. When the bankers start jumping from Wall Street windows, spending on rearmament may turn out to be less irrational than many of the President's critics at home and abroad seem to believe.

Tony Allen

Balancing act

'To apply austerity we need to have the political space and we haven't got that at the moment' declared Adolfo Canitrot one of Argentina's senior negotiators at its June showdown on debts with the IMF. This statement sums up the predicament of ruling factions throughout Latin America.

On the one hand, the politicians, businessmen and generals of Argentina, Brazil and the rest aim to intensify capitalist exploitation at home to secure their position in an unfavourable world economic climate. On the other hand, they have to contend with the resistance of the powerful working class movements created by industrial development.

In the pursuit of national economic development, Latin American rulers have to establish a stable working relationship with the Western powers – and their bankers. The recession and the debt crisis it has created have put these links under great stress. Yet Latin American leaders' defiance of terms for debt repayment does not mean that their regimes have become anti-imperialist. Argentine Central Bank governor Enrique Garcia Vasquez emphasised to the IMF that Argentina still wanted to pay its foreign debts and was not interested in forming a debtors' cartel. The Colombian finance minister told the June Latin American economic summit meeting that – 'we are seeking a consensus on ways to pay our foreign debt, not on ways to avoid paying it'.

Crisis and instability

The problem is that the West's terms for economic cooperation are drastic cuts in public spending and living standards that threaten serious instability in Latin America. Last November Brazil's President Figuereido attempted to meet IMF terms by imposing a decree limiting wage rises to 80 per cent of the rise in the cost of living. A wave of strikes, demonstrations and riots forced the Government to back down – although it succeeded in fixing wage rises below the rate of inflation.

The ruling classes of Latin America are being squeezed between the imperialist bankers abroad and mass resistance at home. In response to these pressures the regimes are fostering nationalist sentiment against the IMF and the USA. 'Out with the IMF' is a familiar wall slogan in Brazil. In Peru and Chile unpopular pro-IMF finance ministers have been replaced by more patriotic officials. This approach is designed to strengthen the bargaining position of the Latin American regimes with the Western bankers. The spectre of working class unrest in Argentina convinced one top European banker last month that to accept wage cuts would 'destroy' President Raul Alfonsin.

Posturing against 'Yankee bankers' helps to deflect the blame for poverty and repression away from the local ruling class and to distract attention from its complicity in IMF austerity programmes. The necessity for austerity puts a premium on democratic forms of government in Latin America. As the *Financial Times* recently explained, democratically elected governments can claim a popular mandate for the austere policies required to meet their 'foreign obligations':

'It is vital that whatever sacrifices need to be taken by Brazil in order for it to meet its foreign obligations, be imposed by a president who enjoys the support of the broadest possible sector of the population. It would be a recipe for instability if an austerity policy were to be imposed on an unwilling country by a head of state chosen in a way that most Brazilians found unacceptable.' (18 April 1984)

Pressure for Brazil to return to at least token democratic government – *la abertura* – comes from the imperialist powers. They are also concerned to safeguard Alfonsin's relatively popular regime in Argentina. However, the profound social tensions unleashed by the recession make democracy a risky proposition for the ruling class. In Brazil the working class is strong and militant – but it faces rampant inflation, mass unemployment and food shortages. After three months of riots and street fighting earlier this year, following Congress' refusal to allow direct elections, the return to democracy has once again been postponed. As one moderate politician put it, the country is divided into 'those who can't sleep because they are hungry and those who can't sleep because they worry about what the hungry may do'.

Bargaining counter

The militancy of the working class throughout Latin America is being exploited by the local ruling class as a bargaining counter against the imperialist powers. Latin American workers must make sure that they are not used as pawns to fight the imperialists solely for the benefit of their own rulers. Opposition to imperialist domination must go hand in hand with the struggle to unseat the ruling class at home. When the masses of Latin America take to the streets to realise this objective no Western imperialist will be assured of a good night's sleep.

Charles Longford

reviews

The road from 1917

1956: Hungarians revolt against Stalinism

Istvan Eorsi ed, *Georg Lukacs, record of a life: an autobiographical sketch*, NLB/Verso 1984, pp204, pbk £4.95, hbk £15.00
Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller, *Hungary 1956 revisited: the message of a revolution - a quarter of a century after*, George Allen & Unwin 1983, pp174, hbk £15

GEORG LUKACS' political and intellectual career spanned more than six decades of the twentieth century. During most of this period Lukacs was closely associated with the communist movement. As an intellectual, he had few equals in the international communist movement. But Lukacs wasn't simply a theoretician: in 1919 he was a leading representative of the briefly established Soviet Republic in Hungary. For the next 25 years he lived in exile in the Soviet Union. Although Lukacs remained aloof from active politics, his influence as a theoretician was still considerable. In 1945, after the installation of a Soviet puppet regime, Lukacs returned to Hungary and became one of the most coherent apologists for the new order. Despite his long association with Stalinism, Lukacs joined the Imre Nagy government thrown up by the 1956 Hungarian revolution. After a brief period of imprisonment, he returned to his theoretical work which he pursued until his death in 1971.

Istvan Eorsi has done an excellent job collating into an autobiography a series of interviews that he and Erzsebet Vezeres conducted with Lukacs from 1969 to 1971. What emerges is more than an autobiography. The interviews provide important insights into the intellectual history of the official communist movement.

Lukacs – the man

Lukacs was a remarkable man. His influential works on philosophy and aesthetics are testimony to his profound rigour and creativity. But Lukacs, the Marxist, is more problematic. There appears to be a fundamental inconsistency between Lukacs' theoretical independence and his slavish adherence to the shifts and turns of Stalinism. *Record of a life* goes some way towards resolving this puzzle. What emerges from the interviews is a man who above all was an intellectual. Even as a party activist Lukacs never transcended the narrow social experience of the intellectual. There is one exceptional period in Lukacs' life. The powerful impulses unleashed by the revolutionary upsurge of 1917 to 1921 forced Lukacs to come to terms with the problem of working class power. His writings of the period represent an important contribution to revolutionary politics. His article 'Towards a methodology of the problem of organisation', published in English in *History and class consciousness*, is the most complete theoretical elaboration of the problem of the party to this day. The fact that Lukacs subsequently denounced his writings of this period says more about his later career than about the status of this work.

The decline of the revolutionary upsurge had a profound impact on Lukacs. The rise of Stalinism and the international defeats of the working class engendered a profound conservatism within the official communist movement. Lukacs was no exception. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Lukacs was too rigorous a theoretician to reject communism. At the same time, he was too much of an intellectual to fight for an alternative to the dominant Stalinist doctrine. Lukacs resolved this dilemma by opting out of active politics, seeking refuge in his studies and making peace with Stalinism. In one sense, Lukacs personified that modern phenomenon – the fellow traveller.

But Lukacs was too rigorous also to be a fellow traveller. He fully justified his evasions on theoretical grounds. His argument was straightforward – in the thirties Stalin represented the lesser evil. Thus Lukacs had no inhibitions about supporting Stalin's show-trials on the grounds that 'Stalin was the only existing anti-Hitler force'. He denounced revolutionaries like Trotsky who criticised the purges, arguing 'you must not forget that Trotsky's ideas simply could not be reconciled with the Stalinist policy, which was the only one to hold out any hope of resisting Hitler'.

Lukacs' reservations about Stalinism were secondary to his overwhelming belief that this was the best possible alternative. From this period onwards Georg Lukacs became the theorist of proletarian defeat. Despite an intellectual radicalism and theoretical brilliance, Lukacs became reconciled to Stalinist *realpolitik*. This *realpolitik* was presented by Lukacs as the necessary evil that best captured the objective laws of history. Many of his critics accuse Lukacs of justifying terrible means to achieve positive ends. Lukacs himself liked to portray his evasions in this light. In reality, Lukacs did not simply justify terrible means, he also ended up serving terrible ends. Lukacs lost sight of the revolutionary objectives that he originally fought for. After his return to Hungary in 1945 his horizons were limited to choosing the most rational system available within the constraints set by the bureaucracy. The questions of working class power and of genuine proletarian democracy had little practical interest for him.

Lukacs' last major political intervention, during the 1956 Hungarian revolution, represented the practical application of the outlook that he developed during the previous decades. He joined the provisional government that was thrown up by the revolution. But his role was that of a reformer rather than that of a revolutionary. He was most concerned that the revolution should not get out of hand. Just before his death he noted:

'Authentic Marxism is the only solution. Hence, in the socialist states Marxist ideology must provide a critique of the existing state of affairs and help to promote reforms which are becoming ever more urgent.'

For Lukacs authentic Marxism did not go beyond platonic criticisms of the bureaucracy. Lukacs rejected the consequences of Stalinism while accepting its substance. Until his last days he lived with the illusion that bureaucratic domination in Eastern Europe could be overcome through reforms. Thus, despite his justification of Stalinism, Lukacs' political journey ended with a modified version of Eurocommunism. This was a sad end for a brilliant theoretician, a former revolutionary, and the most elegant apologist for Stalinism. Lukacs also bears an intellectual responsibility for the disillusionment and pessimism of those he influenced.

Lost disciples

Lukacs' pupils Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller share much of their mentor's pessimism and none of his revolutionary impulses. Their book *Hungary 1956 revisited* is not about the 1956 revolution as such. Instead, it puts forward the political outlook that dominates Eastern Europe's dissident democratic-liberal intelligentsia. Feher and Heller have nothing positive to say about Stalinism and clearly distance themselves from Lukacs' *apologia*. But influenced by the experience of the bureaucratic regime in the East, they reject not only Stalinism but also the tradition of Bolshevism which they see as its root cause.

There is no need to question Feher and Heller's anti-bureaucratic sentiments and democratic convictions. But unfortunately their views are limited by the narrow horizons of the Hungarian intelligentsia. Their liberal-democratic aspirations express the intelligentsia's yearning for individual freedoms. As individuals, Hungarian dissidents have demonstrated a capacity for sacrifice and heroism. But their narrow political outlook and social insignificance doom their efforts. The authors of *Hungary 1956 revisited* express this isolation and social irrelevance. Like Lukacs, the authors betray a lack of confidence in the working class and, one senses also, a mistrust.

Feher and Heller correctly argue that the 1956 revolution represented a progressive movement with important lessons for the Western left. This is the book's strong point. Unfortunately, the writers cannot help but reinterpret the revolution from the elitist point of view of the intelligentsia. They welcome the revolution but they would prefer it to have been a peaceful bloodless affair. This fear of mass action and class violence was widespread among the intelligentsia during the days of the revolution. Many intellectuals who had criticised the pre-revolutionary regime, drawn up petitions and organised discussions and debate were shocked when the masses took to the streets.

Feher and Heller never recovered from this experience. Yet one of the most positive features of 1956 was the determination of the Hungarian working class to take matters into its own hands. Hungarian workers might not have been as erudite as Feher and Heller, but they knew that petitions and orderly protests would yield no positive results. Feher and Heller are at pains to dissociate themselves from revolutionary violence. In a patronising way they explain that in Gyor a crowd had become violent against the secret police only after they were shot at. The implication is that the poor misguided souls were not that bloodthirsty. Elsewhere they condemn the shooting and public execution of hated secret policemen and Stalinist bureaucrats and characterise it as the *'manhunt of the mob'*. To make their position absolutely clear they claim that a 'manhunt is a fascist action'.

Feher and Heller are well aware of their irrelevance to the 1956 revolutionary process. Recalling their role they state: 'we signed all *impromptu* documents drawn up by intellectuals in protest against these manhunts and lynchings, actions which of course saved nothing except the calm of our conscience'. The authors were not merely calming their conscience – they were distancing themselves from the revolutionary actions of 1956. Fortunately, the bloodthirsty mob did not listen to their civilised ramblings. So why do Feher and Heller like the 1956 Hungarian revolution so much? Basically because they rediscover in the 1956 events the steadying hand of the intelligentsia.

Enter Bibo

As far as *Hungary 1956 revisited* is concerned, the best thing about the revolution was a man called Istvan Bibo. In fact, the real purpose of the book is to extol Bibo's virtues and to popularise his views to a Western readership. The participants in the revolution might be forgiven for not knowing much about this man. As the authors indicate, Bibo was a man 'unknown to all except the elite'. Nevertheless, Feher and Heller assure us that Bibo is 'perhaps the greatest post-war leftist (non-doctrinaire socialist) political theorist of Eastern Europe'.

We are not sure about Bibo's greatness but we are certain that he is the greatest discovery of the Hungarian intelligentsia. Since the seventies the dissident circles in Hungary have made Bibo their theoretician and posthumously awarded him the title of a visionary. Bibo's career was uneventful. A product of the Hungarian intelligentsia, he leaned towards the populist movement in the pre-1945 period. In the post-war period, he played a fairly minor role around the Peasant Party and held various insignificant positions in the newly established bureaucracy. His claim to fame was his inclusion in the coalition government of Imre Nagy a few days before Soviet troops crushed the Hungarian revolution. In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet invasion Bibo issued a memorandum which appealed for international aid and justified the position of the Nagy Government. After the revolution he was imprisoned and released in 1963. He died in 1979.

The posthumous rediscovery of Bibo is understandable. Bibo was a man with a reputation for independence and integrity. Unlike many of his colleagues, he took great personal risks and took a stand in 1956. He thus serves as a model of what the dissolute Hungarian intelligentsia would like to be. Furthermore, compared to his colleagues', Bibo's writings are a model of coherence and clarity. Bibo's popularity says more about his admirers than about the man himself. Bibo's coherence and clarity are in the service of political pragmatism and compromise. It is the art of the possible that impresses the Hungarian intelligentsia so much.

The themes that run through Bibo's writings are the fear of fascism and the fear of the proletarian dictatorship. For Bibo (as for Feher and Heller) the proletarian dictatorship is synonymous with the Soviet bureaucracy. What Bibo opts for is a democratic 'third way'. Of course, there is nothing original in this conception and Western readers are familiar with the hundreds of books devoted to this subject. But what Bibo does is to apply it to Eastern Europe and propose reforms without upsetting the interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy. This is the message that is eloquently presented in his 1957 document 'Draft of a compromise solution of the Hungarian question' (Istvan Bibo, *Osszegyuztott Munkai*, volume 3).

We have no desire to enter into a confrontation with Bibo's ideas. What we find objectionable is that Bibo's elitist theories have become an instrument for justifying the narrow outlook of the Hungarian intelligentsia. For Feher and Heller, Bibo becomes the means for robbing the 1956 revolution of its revolutionary content. Feher and Heller have left Lukacs for Bibo. This change of mentor sums up the sad trajectory of Eastern Europe's dissident intelligentsia.

Ferenc Budavari

Trade union handbooks

Arthur Marsh and Victoria Ryan, *Historical directory of trade unions, volume 2*, Gower 1984, pp379, hbk £23.95
Arthur Marsh, *Trade union handbook: a guide and directory to the structure, membership, policy and personnel of the British trade unions*, Gower 1984, pp415, hbk £28.95
Henry Phelps Brown, *The origins of trade union power*, Oxford 1983, pp320, hbk £15
John McIlroy, *Strike! how to fight and how to win*, Pluto 1984, pp228, pbk £5.95

EVER WONDER WHAT became of the Walsall and Bloxwich association of bridle bit forgers and filers? Or the Redditch fish hook makers trade protection society? The *Historical directory of trade unions* tells you everything you could possibly want to know about workers' organisations in engineering and shipbuilding, coalmining and iron and steel, agriculture, fishing and chemicals. It includes useful historical surveys of the development of trade unionism in each of these industries.

Arthur Marsh's handbook is a useful reference book on British unions. It includes basic statistics on union membership, density in different industries, past growth and recent decline. It provides a directory of trade union offices and officials, and details of union structures and organisation. The bibliography of 'official trade union histories' is a bit thin – for example, the section on the miners excludes recent books by Malcolm Pitt and Vic Allen.

Phelps Brown's rambling survey of industrial relations over the past century reflects the preoccupations of the seventies more than the eighties. Even the Tories don't talk about 'trade union power' these days. Phelps Brown's discussion of the 1906 Trade Disputes Act explains how the state established a secure legislative framework for trade union activities. Yet he mentions the Tories' recent demolition job on this system for the voluntary regulation of industrial conflict only in passing. He is illuminating on employers' organisations and on the integration of the unions into the British establishment. But his proclivity for invoking 'the British character' to explain the behaviour of both bosses and workers, and his emphasis on changing 'attitudes' as the way to social harmony, reveal the prejudices of an elderly professor increasingly remote not only from the working class but also from reality.

John McIlroy suffers from similar weaknesses to Phelps Brown. His guide to strikes could have been written at any time in the past 20 years. To illustrate his arguments, he freely chooses examples of strikes from the sixties and seventies without any recognition of the distinctive problems of the eighties. For McIlroy a strike is a strike is a strike. He confines his attention to the organisational and tactical aspects of industrial action and ignores the political barriers that stand in the way of effective action.

Strikes! provides a full page of detailed instructions on the requirements for a strike committee, down to 'a big filing cabinet' and 'arrangements for tea, coffee and light refreshments'. British workers have been running strikes for around 200 years, evidently without reference to this handbook. In 1984 militants have little difficulty in organising a strike. The problems they face are in winning the support of the majority of their workmates, in mobilising sympathetic action, and in getting around the restrictions and obstructions imposed by trade union officials. On these decisive questions of *strategy* McIlroy is silent.

Our advice is – check out Marsh's books in a library, but leave Phelps Brown and McIlroy to their university seminar rooms.

Helen Swift

Write to . . . .

the next step

BM RCP London WC1N 3XX

Letters

Pro-life prejudices

Jenny Graham and Kerry Dean completely miss all the points in their article 'Innocents abroad – abortion in Scotland' (*the next step*, June). It is not reactionary for some workers inside and outside the health service to oppose abortions, it just makes economic sense in a time of 'cuts' to avoid unnecessary operations. What Jenny, Kerry and Glasgow friends should be doing is campaigning for free *contraceptives* on demand for men as well as women at doctors' surgeries and family planning clinics. They should also join the campaign to get contraceptives advertised on TV and to allow all types of contraception training to be included in the secondary school curriculum.

Doctors and nurses as workers are right to discourage expensive and dangerous (mentally and physically) operations when durex would have done the job. Too many workers and unemployed believe they have the right to abuse their bodies, whether with cigarettes, dangerous driving or high cholesterol, low roughage diets and expect the health service to pick up the pieces. Why should they? Idiots who have for years ignored their doctors' advice to diet and give up smoking get free arteries, heart pumps and hearts. Other twits who are too embarrassed to discuss contraception or too drunk to think about it expect workers who know better to end a life at any late date the mother/father/boyfriend chooses.

Abortion is *not* a form of contraception. If a woman has been raped or sicked-up the pill and not noticed, of course she should have the alternative of abortion. But how many women wanting abortions have really tried to find a method of contraception that suits their relationship? If women have enough control of their lives to get into relationships or marriage they should be prepared to take responsibility, with their partner, for contraception rather than do nothing about it, then expect the state to solve the problem. Men may not like durex much but most will use them if the alternative is not getting their leg over. Abortions can leave mental scars for months or years, pregnancy sets a nine month hormone programme in action which you tamper with at your own risk.

As an unmarried mother of two I didn't use contraception, because I wanted children and was prepared to make the sacrifices necessary. I have since had an ectopic pregnancy which was terminated in Edinburgh as soon as it was diagnosed. Now I use "a cooperative method of Natural Birth Control" sometimes called the Billings or Rhythm. It means I need to know when it is safe not to use durex and when we have to. The doctor happily provided a chart book for me to write dates in to find out the cycle.

So women and men, educate, control your own lives where you can, especially in intimate bodily matters, like contraception and diet. There are libraries which are free, it's not impossible even under Thatcher, even with kids and bad public transport. Get your hubby sterilised!

Ecology Party
Lothian's Euro candidate
Scotland

the next step replies:
Opposition to abortion rights for whatever reason you might like to dream up *is* reactionary. It is reactionary because it denies women the right to control their own bodies and reinforces their subordinate role as wives and childbearers. By denying women the right to abortion, you deny them the right to work and participate fully in society.

It 'makes economic sense' for the establishment to cut abortion and health facilities for women at a time when public expenditure is being squeezed. But it makes no sense for the working class who need these facilities which are already in short enough supply. What is 'unnecessary' for the ruling class and the medical profession is a matter of extreme necessity for working class women who stand to lose their jobs and income through lack of abortion facilities. Yes, we want contraceptives – and better contraceptives – to be free and widely available for all women and men. But that won't stop women needing abortions.

Every single argument you put forward is backward and anti-working class. You use economic (abortion is expensive), medical (abortion is dangerous) and moral (workers should be 'responsible' and not behave like 'twits' and 'idiots') arguments to justify your own prejudices against abortion. You finish by urging workers to 'control your own lives' yet in the same breath you tell them that there are limits to how far they can go.

You wanted children and were 'prepared to make the sacrifices necessary'. Other women don't want children or can't afford to have them. Why should they 'make sacrifices' and accept the inferior role that capitalism assigns to them. All workers have an interest in fighting for free abortion on demand as part of the struggle for a better system and against the oppression of women.

Classroom politics

In recent issues of *the next step* space has been devoted to the state attacks on the public sector in general. But there has been little written about the consequences for education in particular. The recent salaries campaign by the teachers' unions should provide them with an opportunity to locate their plight in the wider politics of the recession.

The employers' offers are the latest illustrations of a general reduction of money flowing into education. This has led to a pattern of poorly maintained, overcrowded classes, lost jobs and an increasing pool of supply teachers competing for a diminishing budget for such employment.

The two main unions, the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers represent about three quarters of all teachers. Having rejected the 4.5 per cent increase offered by the employers, their campaigns rely heavily on pressurising for arbitration and an appeal to obtain a 'fair deal' for professionals.

The presentation of such objectives, to a Government which has no intention of guaranteeing that more money will be available and which sees the demand for professional status as an excuse to pay low wages now, with the promise of future restructuring, is doomed to failure.

Our pay claim stands in the wider context of a fight for more money to be spent on pupils, for the security of our jobs and against the onslaught this government is making on other sections of the public services.

The welfare state is no longer servicing the interests of the economy and accordingly is being progressively run down. In boom years a fit, well-housed and educated workforce was both necessary and affordable. During global recession such expenditure on 'unproductive' and 'unnecessary' services becomes increasingly dangerous for the security of profit.

Although we hear discussion of the threat to 'our' welfare service, it never has been 'ours'. Finance has ebbed and flowed from the public sector in direct relation to economic necessity and today's policies are no exception. We cannot expect by right satisfactory health care, adequate housing or education for its own sake.

If we accept the 'common sense' of cuts, redundancies, overcrowded classrooms and low pay, we join negotiations to cut our own throats.

We have to confront the increasing power of the Manpower Services Commission. In Gwent, 500 teachers face dismissal for not signing poor contracts which their LEA declares are not open to consultation.

We have to support Nupe in its continuing campaign against privatisation of its members' jobs. All jobs must be defended, and consequently we need to identify closely with the miners' struggle. There are, therefore, apart from our pay claim, still many issues for which we must organise and other sections of the trade union movement for which we should demonstrate our solidarity.

Dave Buck
National Union of Teachers
Canterbury Association
*this letter has been shortened

Picket line politics

What has happened to the revolutionary stance of the RCP? Do you really consider the closet vote of the ballot box superior to picket-line politics, the latter, incidentally, backed up by an 80 per cent majority? It is important to learn from history. In 1979, the miners' incentive scheme was implemented in defiance of the results of a national ballot. In 1984, scab miners would not strike even if a national ballot instructed them to.

As a tactic to secure unity among miners a national ballot would be ineffective and if it went against strike action the strike would be lost. It would also be a slap in the face for all miners who have seen through the democratic farce of ballot box politics and are fighting because they have no choice.

Caroline Newby
Leeds

the next step replies:
In every working class struggle revolutionaries have a responsibility to put forward demands that confront problems facing workers and that raise the question of *control*. By calling for a national ballot the RCP was the only organisation on the left which sought to address the problems of the miners' strike – the regional divisions, lack of unity and lack of rank and file control – and outline a realistic strategy for winning the dispute.

From the start the NUM leaders backed off from a national ballot for all-out action. They sensed that they did not have the political arguments to convince the waverers in Notts and elsewhere that they should be out on strike. A campaign led by the rank and file around a national ballot for a national strike would have forced militants to question *why* the miners were divided and to question the effectiveness of the NUM leaders' moralistic appeals to 'think of future generations'. It thus had the potential to challenge the broader political problems facing the miners *and* to involve the mass of miners in the conduct of the dispute.

In the early stages of the strike, a campaign for all-out action led by rank and file miners could have swayed thousands of Notts miners to join the strike. That opportunity was wasted. By failing to fight for a national strike the NUM leaders have allowed the divisions among miners to deepen and the strike to settle into dull routine. The NUM leadership's bureaucratic control of the strike has not been challenged and a large majority of striking miners have played no role in the dispute.

If you think that the miners are on to a winner by following the present leadership, then 'picket-line politics' are fair enough. If you think that the NUM's area-by-area strike strategy is a recipe for failure, then you need to put forward a coherent alternative that can challenge the union leadership and point the way forward for the miners.

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 has still not been told when his trial will begin. On 29 May the Irish Freedom Movement demonstrated outside Lambeth Magistrates Court while Tommy appeared inside for the committal hearing.

Below we reprint extracts from his latest letter, which begins with an account of IFM organiser Keith Tompson's expulsion from the courtroom.

No doubt Keith will have been telling you what happened to him. Just as we found out who he was they went and threw him out. I thought the cop was going to have a heart attack. The old fool went blue in the face with rage. I appreciate him being there and the same to everyone who turned up that morning – I was able to see everybody on my way in.

The latest photos I've seen in the papers concerning the miners' strike are looking more and more like photos from Belfast and Derry. All that's missing is the plastic bullets and tear gas. If they could get away with it they would use them, but at the moment it wouldn't go down too well with the great British public. Not to worry though, it will not take the media very long to condition them to accept plastics, as soon as the powers that be think it is time they need them.

I've been watching the deportations with disgust, but I won't expect much out of the European Court. I always thought it was a joke, but I never realised just how big a joke and farce it was until I started reading the case histories. When it comes right down to it, we just don't have any rights.

With a bit of luck the trial might be in October. You never know, it could be before that – the sooner the better. I hope they don't try and drag it out for as long as they can – we hope to push it and get it done. I'll not know for sure when it is until a few weeks from now.

I see Ronnie has been enjoying himself with his wee mate Maggie. If that loonie gets re-elected we can all say goodnight – he'll definitely kill us all this time.

It's good to hear everything went so well and I hope you have even more success in the future.

All the best,
Tommy Quigley
'D' Wing
Brixton Prison

Freedom fighters are not terrorists

I was very much impressed with the May issue of *the next step* – the first one I have read. However, the main reason I am writing is in reply to Les Williams' letter.

Williams states that 'I cannot accept that the people who plant bombs and kill non-combatants and innocent civilians in the UK or in Northern Ireland are somehow waging a legitimate war of liberation'. Does he therefore suggest that the Provisional IRA turn to a political solution and renounce the right to take up arms against imperialist Britain? I would like to point out to Mr Williams that Sinn Fein tried this in the all-Ireland elections in 1918. They received over 70 seats in the Dail (Irish Parliament) which was a large majority, only to have an Orange state imposed on them by a pro-British minority.

Regarding the deaths of 'innocent victims', Williams fails to remember, or tries to forget, 'innocent victim' Carol Ann Kelly aged 12. Carol was brutally murdered by a British Army plastic bullet while returning from the shops with a carton of milk for her mother. What about Stephen Geddis, also shot dead by a British Army plastic bullet, or the hundreds of 'innocent victims' of British colonialism who have been murdered in the occupied North?

The Provisional IRA does not deliberately single out members of the public for execution, unlike the Crown forces (ie Bloody Sunday). As to the 'fascists' and 'psychopaths', he must surely be referring to the 'fascist' RUC who uphold Orange rule with their shoot-to-kill policy and the 'psychopaths' of the SAS whose murder of nationalists both North and South of the Border receives official praise from both London and Dublin.

The oppressive measures used in the North of Ireland today are only a foretaste of what will be seen in ghettoes like Brixton and St Paul's in the near future. No doubt when a child in Toxteth has been shot in the head by a plastic bullet Mr Williams will be the first to denounce it. But it seems that as long as Thatcher and her warlords confine these killers to the streets of Derry, Belfast or Armagh Mr Williams will continue to support the imperialist British war machine by his one-sided statements.

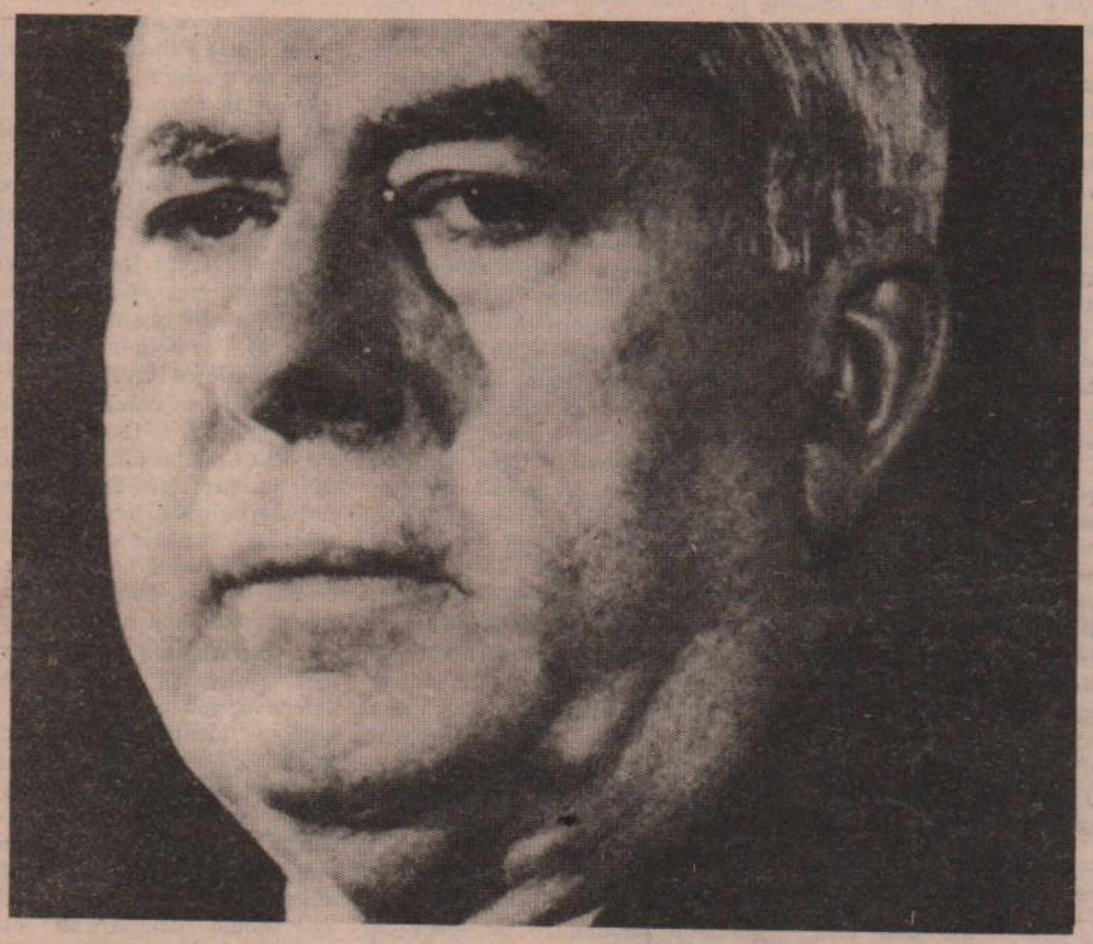
This is 1984 Mr Williams, not Christmas Day 1917, when opposing armies played football and exchanged photographs in no man's land.

Tony McCartney
Govan
Glasgow

the next step
review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No room for compromise

What is there to talk about?



'Your President talks continually of keeping the strike going indefinitely until he achieves "victory" .... this will not happen, however long the strike lasts.'
Coal Board boss, Ian MacGregor, 21 June

Chris Black (reflex)

'We are not going to talk about pit closures or redundancies with the Coal Board. . . . we are on our way to victory.'
Miners' President, Arthur Scargill, 7 June

Ian MacGregor and the Government have no room for compromise in the miners' strike. Ever since the strike began, MacGregor has made clear his intention to close 20 pits and axe 20 000 miners' jobs — at whatever cost. To guarantee the survival of the British coal industry he needs to shut down uneconomic pits, slash jobs and inflict a crushing blow on miners' livelihoods.

Militant miners need no convincing that this is a win or lose all battle. To defend their jobs they know that they cannot afford to give an inch to the bosses. Tens of thousands of miners have matched MacGregor's resolute approach through four months of bitter struggle.

The interests of the Coal Board and the miners are irreconcilable. They've got nothing to talk about. Yet within a few weeks in late May and early June, the miners' leaders met the employers around the negotiating table no less than four times.

Miners' President Arthur Scargill has constantly proclaimed his determination to stop pit closures and defend jobs. But his willingness to enter into negotiations with the enemy camp contradicts this commitment. If Scargill says he is fighting against *all* pit closures and redundancies, then what is there to talk about?

Negotiations spell disaster for striking miners. In any battle peace talks are the signal that one side has got the upper hand and the other is negotiating from a position of weakness. Negotiations never win or lose battles — they merely set down the terms on which one side will be defeated.

Ultimately it is a question of power: the outcome of every struggle between the classes depends on which side can muster the strongest forces. Unfortunately, the potential power of tens of thousands of miners and other workers has been dissipated by the union leaders' bureaucratic conduct of the strike and their failure to lead effective national action.

Miners have nothing to talk about with the bosses — but they urgently need to talk about the problems the strike has confronted and the strategy necessary to take on the bosses and win. This month's *Preparing for Power* conference provides plenty of opportunities to discuss the miners' strike and to hear miners talk about their experiences. Five special sessions will discuss past traditions and present problems:

- the miners and the working class: an historical perspective
- lessons of the miners' strike
- *the miners' next step* 1912:what happened to class combat?
- the home front — women and the miners' strike
- Welsh miners — the break-up of a community.

Come to *Preparing for Power* to discuss the way ahead for the miners.

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	All week	Weekend
Employed/student	£12.00	£5.00
UB40/unwaged	£8.00	£3.00

Special reduced rates for striking miners (phone Kate Marshall on 01-274 3951)
Make cheques payable to RCP Association
Send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

Registration:	Friday 13 July, Polytechnic of Cental London New Cavendish street	5pm—9pm
	Saturday 14 July, Polytechnic of Central London Marylebone road	9am—9pm
Sessions start:	10.30am	
Transport available:	from South Yorkshire, Midlands, Wales, Scotland, Brighton, Portsmouth and many other towns and cities.	

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PHONE KATE MARSHALL ON 01-274 3951 OR WRITE TO: BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

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