

the next step

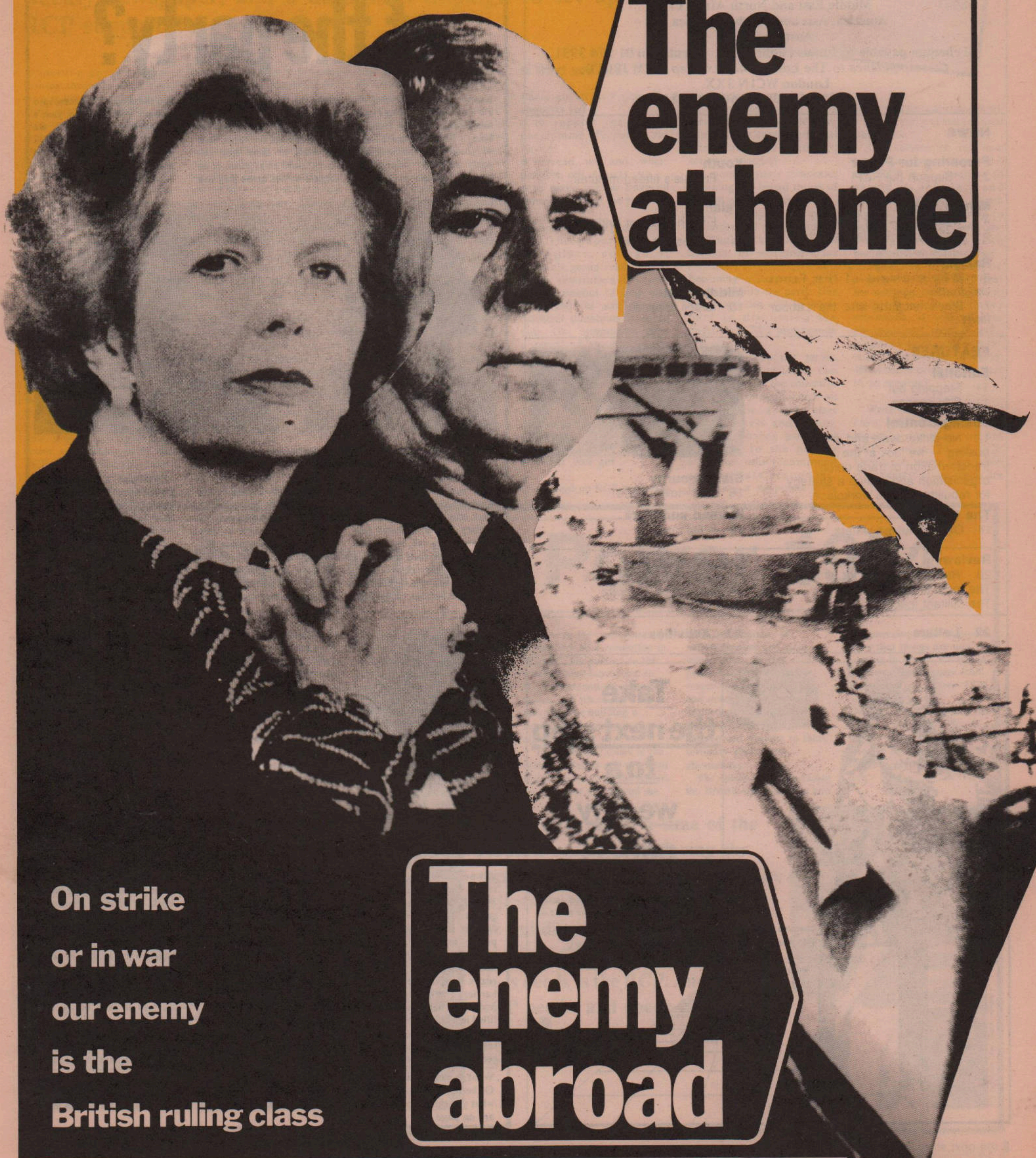
review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

No 50 August 1984

20p

Spies,
moles
and the
left p16,17

The miners' strike and the Falklands factor



**The
enemy
at home**

On strike
or in war
our enemy
is the
British ruling class

**The
enemy
abroad**

the next step

No. 50 August 1984

monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party

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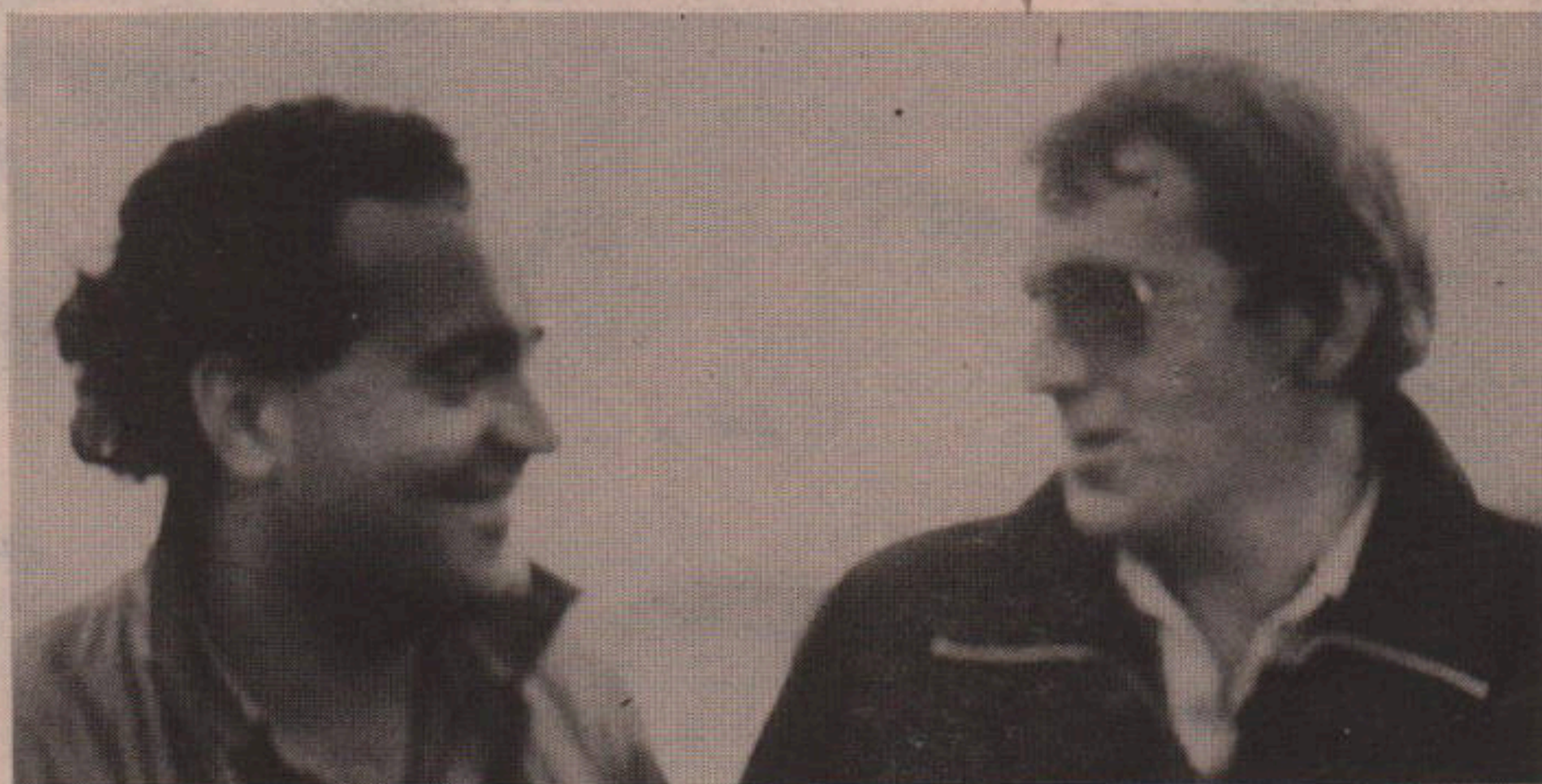
What do you think of the party?

Every year, *Preparing for Power* brings together hundreds of people from all kinds of backgrounds. Some of them are longstanding party stalwarts. Many have recently come across the

party for the first time.

They want to know if the party is the right one to change things for them. And we want to know how the party could make more of an impact on the areas they live

and the people they come into contact with. At this year's *Preparing for Power*, we spoke to some new faces about the conference and the party.



Mick and Graham, South Yorkshire miners

MICK: 'The way I see it the RCP and the striking miners want the same thing. Miners have only got to look at the history of our industry and union, look at the times they've seen their comrades dying for their rights, to know things have got to be changed from the bottom to the top,

and soon.

'That's what I mean by the RCP being the miners' best friend. The establishment would really worry if they saw how an organisation like the RCP can relate to workers' needs, not just saying "strike now" but showing the way forward.

'Political motivation and guidance, that's what's needed. That's why you're so ridiculed in the media and so on. Because what the people at the top really fear is workers led by revolutionary ideas. But they can't stop it. It must happen soon.'



Mari, Sheffield

'I got my RCP supporter's card as soon as they came out this week, but I know the card itself doesn't mean a lot. What it says to me is that I've got to stop making excuses for not identifying with the party and start getting involved in what's going on. I think *Preparing for Power* really knocked down all the barriers I've tried to use as a reason for not doing much. It filled in a lot of gaps that have worried me. I've got to start taking the party's job more seriously.'

Jo, Coventry

'I really got a lot out of *Preparing for Power*. The most important thing for me is the way the RCP pay so much attention to convincing people of the political arguments, educating them. I've been around organisations before where they try to get people involved by saying "Look we've got this great social on Friday". That's just fooling people into supporting a party, and it won't work. I've become an RCP supporter because I agree with the party's politics. Now I want to learn a lot more about them.'



Nigel, Leicester

'I went to a *Preparing for Power* session on utopian and scientific socialism that showed me what's wrong with the way I've just objected to the worst things about society without understanding how it works or what the alternative is. Hopefully becoming an RCP supporter can change that. I think in this environment, at the conference, it's easy to see clearly what the party's trying to do. But what matters is how things look outside, in the environment workers live in. I want to try out the party's approach to changing things in practice.'

What do you think of the RCP? Write to Kate Marshall at BM RCP WC1N 3XX and let us know. Or better still, go along to the nearest supporters' group to find out what we're up to and tell us what you think we should be doing in your area. Full details of where and when the groups meet are on page 23.



Take the next step to a weekly paper!

Last month we launched a £25 000 fund drive to go weekly and raised £2500 on the spot. Let's have more of the same this month! Rush contributions to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.

£25 000



£15 000

Cheques payable to RCP Association

£7500

£2500 July

the RCP!

At the Revolutionary Communist Party's annual *Preparing for Power* summer school in July, the party announced two major initiatives: a fund drive to turn *the next step* into a weekly newspaper, and a national campaign to set up local RCP supporters' groups.

By setting up supporters' groups throughout Britain, we aim to involve the RCP in more workers' struggles, and involve more workers in the struggle for a revolutionary party.

Following our last national conference in December 1983 we set about turning the party outwards. Our objective has been to turn the party into a combat organisation, by intervening more directly in industrial and political conflicts and winning workers to identify with the RCP.

Our intervention in the miners' strike has helped to push these plans forward. The party's reputation is now established on a firmer base than ever. Our influence spreads far beyond the confines of our membership. Now we want to consolidate that influence, to bring people who sympathise with the politics of *the next step* into an active relationship with the RCP, often for the first time.

Every day, the party meets people of all ages, men and

women, workers with jobs, students and unemployed people who want to know more about what the RCP is doing and why.

Our national office receives a steady stream of letters and phone calls from all kinds of people in all kinds of places asking how they can get more involved in the party's activity.

These are our potential supporters. We want to unite them around RCP politics by organising them and their activities in supporters' groups.

● Where the groups are

Our branches in towns and cities in England, Scotland and Wales are setting up supporters' groups wherever the party is active, and in places where as yet we have no branch.

● **workplaces** In many factories and offices where *the next step* has been sold regularly groups of workers have learnt from experience

how crucial a clear political direction can be in day to day workplace struggles.

Organised supporters' groups can be a powerful weapon in the fight to rebuild workers' organisations and revitalise the unions, and can broaden the party's influence among militants.

● **estates** Housing estates have long been a key area of RCP work. Bringing together our regular readers into estate supporters' groups can give us a vital base in the community. It will ensure we are in contact with those, especially women, whose family commitments make involvement elsewhere impossible. Successful estate groups are already being set up in Bradford, London and elsewhere.

● **colleges** The RCP has had groups of supporters in many colleges and universities since it was founded. Now we want to get students organised in a wider network through a major drive when the autumn term begins.

● What you give

Becoming an RCP supporter commits you

● to support the party's programme, *Preparing for Power*

● to read, use and, where possible, sell *the next step*

● to make regular financial contributions to the party.

Supporting the programme and the paper in your workplace, college or women's group really means using revolutionary communist politics to help you win. And the size of your financial donations is up to you. Our supporters have committed themselves to donations from as little as 50p a month from someone at school to an average of around £5 a month for people at work. This regular income is a valuable contribution to building the party.

● What you get

Every paid-up RCP supporter

can take advantage of

● regular supporters' group meetings, normally held every week, where current political issues are discussed and activities planned

● a monthly party newsletter outlining the broad thrust of current party activity

● the full support of party resources and propaganda to back up any local activity in defence of working class interests.

Becoming a supporter gives you a stake in the party. Our supporters can take an active part in discussing the direction of RCP propaganda and activity.

Being a supporter means that your experience can become part of the collective experience through which we aim to raise working class consciousness and action. You can bring political problems to the party's attention and recommend appropriate responses. Becoming a supporter gives

you a way into practical work with the party around shared objectives.

The success of the new supporters' groups is crucial if the RCP is to continue to extend its influence and become a real force in British politics. They will allow us to extend a dialogue with the working class through which our movement can advance.

There is a place for everybody who wants to fight for working class interests in building a revolutionary movement. If you want to play your part, then become a supporter and join us in the struggle to win a new world. What better cause could there be to support?

Write for your supporters' card, enclosing the first monthly donation, to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Details of where and when your nearest group meets are on page 23.



Preparing for Power 1984

On Friday 20 July, only hours after Margaret Thatcher warned Tory MPs against the threat from the 'enemy within', a shipload of revolutionaries sailed under the shadow of the Houses of Parliament and docked at Westminster Pier. 'The RCP dances on water' disco boat-trip down the Thames brought this year's *Preparing*

for Power summer school to a close.

Preparing for Power 1984 involved more than 500 people in 150 workshops over eight July days.

The plenaries and specialist courses covered workers' struggles from the Chartists to the miners' strike of 1984. Workshops revealed the Marxist approach to everything from football to

fascism. This year's evening entertainments included films, music and poetry, a survey of the news in the press and on television, and a lively contest of revolutionary mastermind.

Yet despite their diversity, every session concentrated on one issue: how to prepare the working class to take power into its own hands.

This theme was pursued by Frank Richards in his keynote

address to the conference, 'Can there be a revolution in Britain?' He pointed to the trends which have come to the fore around the miners' strike, and which show the potential for building a revolutionary party in the eighties.

The economic crisis in the mining industry and the Coal Board's assault on the miners have further discredited the

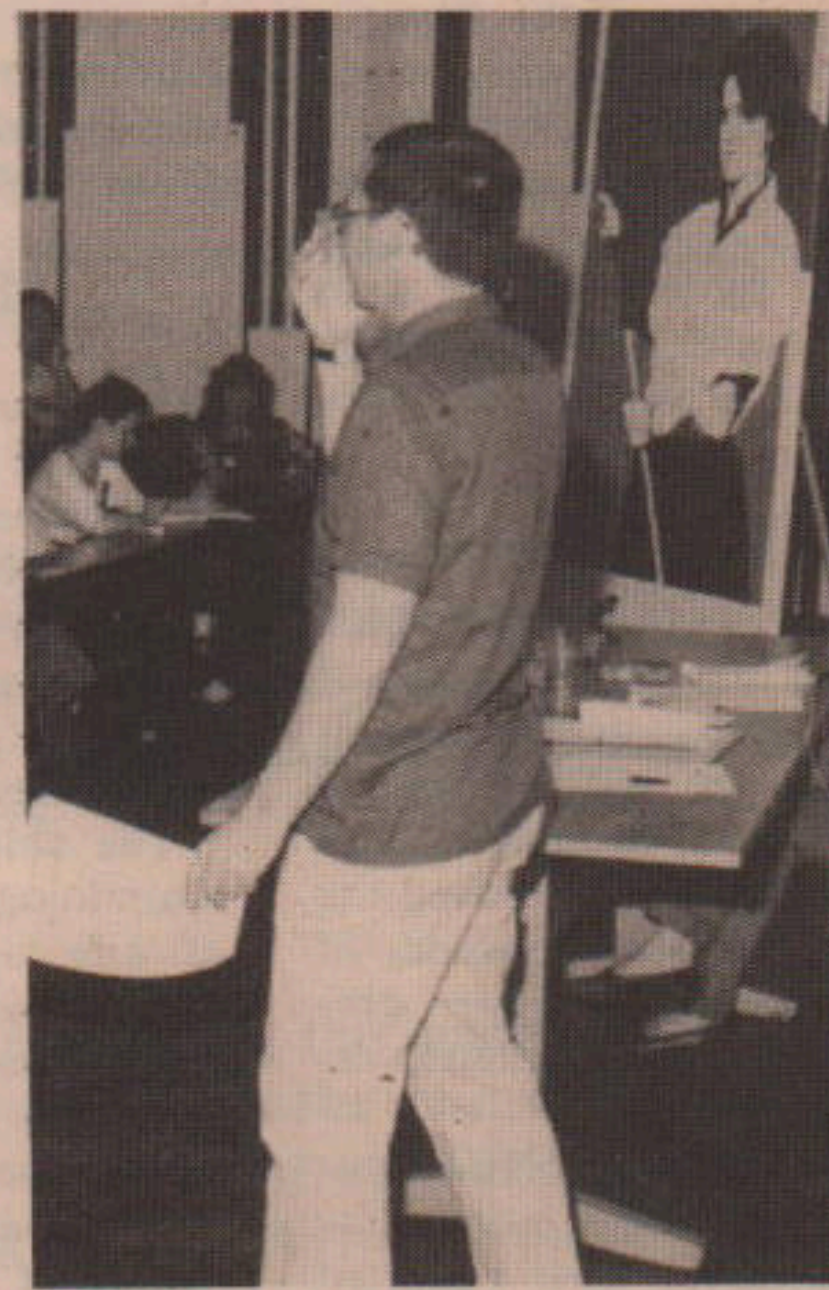
left's old solutions of nationalisation and state intervention. Battles with the police have undermined respect for the bosses' law and order. The apparent limitations of traditional forms of trade union action have forced workers to think seriously about new alternatives.

The deepening crisis facing the British establishment and

the emerging signs of revolt show that things are now running in the RCP's favour. That was the message from *Preparing for Power 1984*. The Revolutionary Communist Party is still the party of the future. But as the parties of the past fade into the background, the future is getting closer every day.

'We are living at a time of the greatest social crisis facing the capitalist system. Never have the objective conditions been better for building a revolutionary party. Because today, what the working class needs is the RCP. And what the RCP needs, and needs fast, is you.'

Frank Richards, Conway Hall.



Photographs Chris Black (reflex)

Their coal - our jobs

Negotiations between the Coal Board and the miners' union have broken down over rival interpretations of the grounds on which pit closures can be agreed. However the NUM leadership tries to get around it, the extraction of coal 'beneficially', or 'economically', or 'profitably', in capitalist Britain necessitates fewer miners working harder in a smaller number of pits.

One of the most curious features of the miners' strike is that both Ian MacGregor and Arthur Scargill swear by the *Plan for Coal*. It does not matter that they each have a different understanding of the broad plan for the industry agreed by the employers, the unions and the government back in 1974.

As long as the debate is conducted around what constitutes an economic pit and what output target is realistic for the British coal industry the miners are playing according to rules drawn up by the employers. The rules are designed to ensure that the bosses win.

Dashed

The popularity of the *Plan for Coal* is based upon the widely held belief that it represents a commitment from the Coal Board and the government to an expanding industry. This has no foundation in reality.

The NUM executive's *Submission on colliery closures* to a House of Commons select committee in December 1982 recognised that the *Plan for Coal*'s dreams of expansion were dashed almost as soon as it was written:

'It must be emphasised that the *Plan for Coal* was a plan for the expansion of the industry. While it recognised that there would be some exhaustion of recoverable reserves, it was a plan for steady expansion of deep-mined capacity to 120 million tonnes by 1985. While output increased from 98.7 million tonnes in 1973-74 to 116.9 million tonnes in 1974-75, since 1975 there has been a decline in output.'

The NUM itself charted the decline in coal output in the late seventies. While output fell productivity rose. Insofar as it was a plan for expansion, the *Plan for Coal* expanded the exploitation of the miners.

Under the area incentive schemes introduced in 1978 as a key feature of the *Plan for Coal* programme, output per man shift rose sharply after a period of stagnation. The 'colliery review procedure' ratified by the *Plan for Coal* became a device for pushing through a pit closure programme.

Faith

Despite the past decade of productivity deals and pit closures the NUM executive continues to declare its faith in a plan that has paved the way to tens of thousands of redundancies, deeper divisions and more intense exploitation.

At first sight the NUM's attitude appears irrational — the executive itself admitted that the *Plan for Coal*'s targets

had already been abandoned in 1975. In fact, Scargill's advocacy of the *Plan for Coal* is consistent with the recent traditions of the NUM.

For the NUM leadership, making the coal industry more efficient — rather than pursuing the class struggle more aggressively — is the only way to defend miners' jobs and livelihoods.

Like Joe Gormley before him, Scargill sees the implementation of the *Plan for Coal* as a means of achieving both an expanding industry and higher living standards for his members. Like Gormley too, Scargill has co-operated with the Coal Board in closure after closure at both area and national level.

Collaboration

The habit of collaboration has become so deeply ingrained that a few days before the present strike began newly elected NUM general secretary Peter Heathfield pleaded with MacGregor to maintain the methods of collaboration:

'I urge the Board to join us publicly in putting pressure on the government to secure coal's vital place as the essential energy bedrock of our nation's industrial hopes.' (*The Miner*, February 1984)

Even when the strike had erupted the NUM executive could not bring itself to break off links with the Coal Board. At an angry meeting on 6 March Scargill denounced MacGregor's 'butchery' of the pits and broke off routine consultation procedures at national level. Yet he agreed to work out a joint agenda with the Coal Board to take to the government on coal conversion schemes, research and related matters (*Financial Times*, 7 March).

Profits

Experience shows that collaboration does not pay. For the exploited it does not make sense to collaborate with the exploiters because this can only mean cooperating over the terms on which exploitation takes place.

The sole purpose of the coalmining industry, like that of any other industry in capitalist society, is to increase the profits of the capitalist class. The Coal Board is in business to make profits, not to provide miners with a livelihood.

Operating pits 'beneficial-

ly', or 'economically', or 'efficiently' means making them successful in screwing profits out of the miners. As in any other industry, new sectors are opened up if they promise higher returns, and older sectors are closed down if they no longer make a profit.

The capitalist class is not sentimental about coalmining. When Coal Board managers make decisions about where to invest in new pits and where to close down old ones, questions about the effect on miners' jobs and their communities do not enter into their considerations.

The bosses justify every decision on one simple criterion — does it make a profit or not? The fact that coalmining is a nationalised industry does not make it an exception to this rule.

Class struggle

It can only be self-defeating for trade unionists to link their livelihoods to the state of their industry. This means allowing the laws of the market and the account books of the employers to determine our living standards. But the capitalists do not make their decisions according to the consequences for workers — so why should we care about them?

Whether any industry is prosperous or in decline is irrelevant to the needs of workers. All workers need the basics of life — food, housing, clothing — regardless of their employers' profit ratings. The NUM should frame its demands according to what miners need, not according to the state of the British coal industry.

Trade union concern about 'our industry' can only benefit the employers. What impresses the bosses is not logical arguments about how they could run their industry more efficiently but how hard workers fight to make them pay decent wages.

Only the class struggle can force the employers to give back some of the wealth to those who create it. If miners wait until British coalmining is efficient before demanding a better standard of living they will be waiting for a long time. For as long as miners base their case on the economics of coal production, they are putting their lives in the hands of their exploiters.

Miners have nothing to gain from collaborating with the Coal Board. In fact, collaboration limits their capacity to take action in defence of jobs and living standards.

Pipe dreams

The NUM executive argues its case against pit closures on the grounds that closures do not make economic sense. In every speech Scargill insists



Soft centre: miners' leaders like Mick McGahey haven't the stomach for fighting the system

Chris Black (reflex)

that 'Britain produces the cheapest deep-mined coal in the world'. The NUM's *Submission on colliery closures* in 1982 summed up the union's economic arguments:

'It is a central theme in the case put forward by the NUM that even if considerations of energy policy and the need for self-sufficiency in fuel resources are ignored, the cost to the government and to the country of undertaking massive manpower reductions in the coal industry is greater than the cost of providing financial support to the National Coal Board on a scale which would transform the finances of so-called uneconomic pits.'

The NUM's 'central theme' is not the welfare of miners but the savings that the government can make through keeping pits open. This is not

an argument that can convince hard-nosed capitalist accountants. Their first concern is to make nationalised industries profitable — irrespective of the burden on social security payments. If they find these costs becoming too high they will cut the dole — not invest in loss-making coal.

Disaster

The consequence of the NUM's approach is that miners' living standards become a secondary issue. But it is disastrous for miners to make their livelihoods and the future of their communities dependent on what makes economic sense for the government and the Coal Board.

What if it could be proved that concentrating mining in a handful of superpits and closing down the rest was a

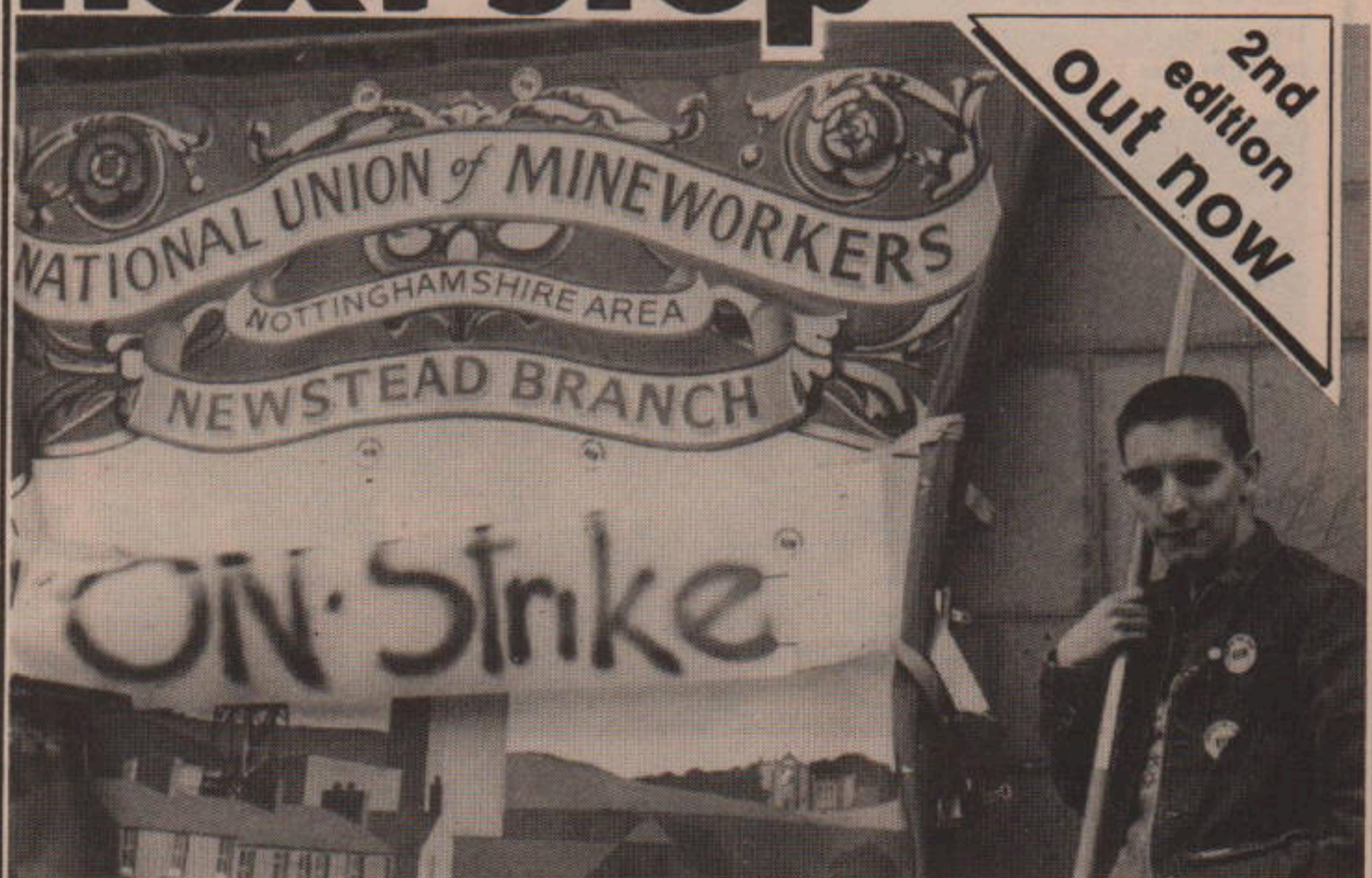
sound economic proposition? Should miners sit back and say 'yes, this looks like a good way of raising efficiency and saving money, carry on'?

The union leaders devote all their energies to trying to prove that keeping pits open makes economic sense, or that it is in the national interest. They have forgotten that they are supposed to be fighting to safeguard miners' living standards.

The best case against pit closures is that miners, like all workers, have a right to work and to have a decent standard of living. Whether or not maintaining pits and jobs helps either the Coal Board or the government to balance their books is irrelevant to miners' need to preserve their livelihoods. Confusion on this vital principle leads to compromise, and to the betrayal of miners' interests.

The miners' next step

Frank Richards



2nd edition
out now

The article on this page has been adapted from the RCP's pamphlet on the miners' strike, now available from Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX at 50p plus 20p for postage (10 or more post free)

Fighting the Falklands factor

'We have seen that the spirit of the South Atlantic, the real spirit of Britain, is kindled not only by war but can be fired by peace. If the lessons of the South Atlantic are learned then they have to be learned by us all. Nobody can afford to be left out!'

Margaret Thatcher, July 1982

'Having fought the enemy without in the Falklands, the Government has to fight the enemy within which is more difficult to fight and more dangerous to liberty. The miners' strike is an attack on democracy and the rule of law. The country must stand firm and militancy must not win!'

Margaret Thatcher, July 1984

The Tories have stepped up the propaganda war against the miners. They have raised the stakes in the dispute by insisting that the strike is not merely an industrial conflict but a political challenge to the British government and the British people.

In a speech at the end of July, Margaret Thatcher drew a parallel between the threat to Britain from Argentina over the Falklands in 1982 and the national danger resulting from the miners' strike two years later.

Thatcher aims to unite the British people against Arthur Scargill and the miners just as she so successfully mobilised public opinion against General Galtieri and the Argentinians in 1982.

The strength of patriotic sentiment in Britain — not least in the labour movement — makes Thatcher's appeal for unity a powerful weapon against the miners.

On the home front the Falklands War was a major victory for the Tory government. Before the war the government was fighting a losing battle against economic decay and industrial collapse. It faced a series of challenges from health workers, railway workers and others.

The opinion polls registered the public's consistently low regard for the government. Yet once Thatcher sent the task force to the South Atlantic she never looked back.

Despite their 1983 landslide election victory the Tories are still in a relatively weak position today. The decline of the pound and the jitters on the Stock Exchange reflect the government's inability to arrest the decline of the British economy.

Thatcher's talent for standing on banana skins simply indicates how many are strewn across her path. When the dockers joined the miners on strike in July the government decided to resort to the tried and trusted formula of Falklands fever.

Capitulation

The Falklands factor is a powerful weapon because it exposes the weakness of the labour movement. The leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC are highly vulnerable on this flank.

During the South Atlantic War not a single Labour MP or faction of the Labour left upheld Argentina's right to occupy the Malvinas or supported resistance to the British task-force.

While the Labour right loyally backed British militarism, the left called for the war to be pursued by economic or diplomatic measures. The labour movement's capitulation to British jingoism over the war leaves it vulnerable to Thatcher's renewed Falklands offensive.

In 1982 the Revolutionary

Communist Party stood alone in supporting Argentina against Britain. In the next step and in our pamphlet, *Malvinas are Argentina's*, we condemned Britain's barbarous assault on another country.

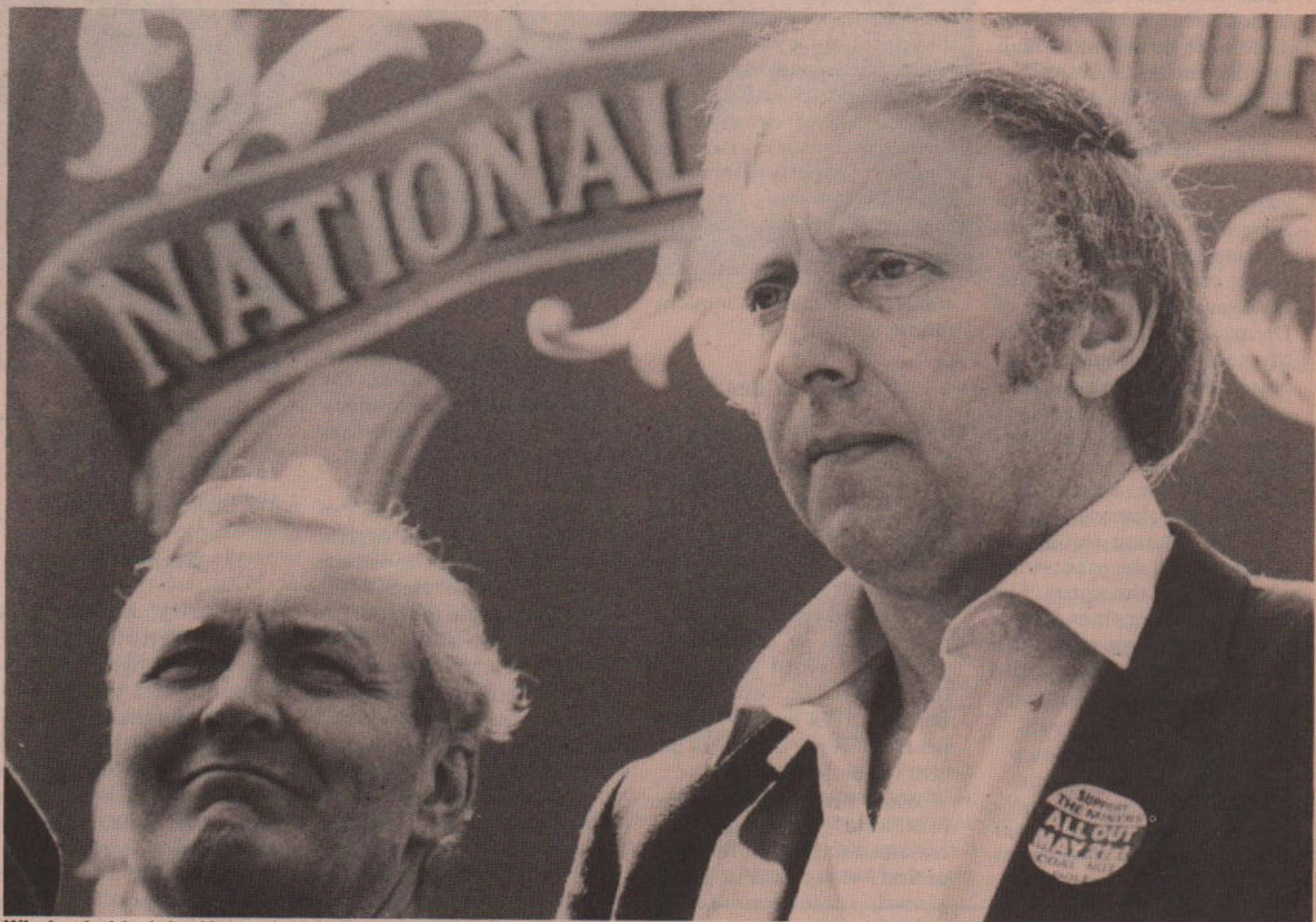
We rejected attempts to justify the British invasion on the grounds that the junta in Buenos Aires was fascist. Its repressive and reactionary features were largely a legacy of British and American domination.

Throughout the war we emphasised that our enemy, the enemy of the working class, was at home — the British state. Our stand in 1982 puts us in a strong position to fight the Falklands factor when it is used against the miners in the current dispute.

The Tories are not afraid to widen the miners' strike into a broader issue of class power. They are confident in doing this because they know that the leaders of the Labour Party and the unions will back down in the face of this wider offensive over the miners' strike just as they did over the Falklands War.

Slur

Labour leader Neil Kinnock rejected Thatcher's parallels between the miners' strike and the South Atlantic War as a slur on the miners and a disgrace to the government. He



Who's afraid of the Union Jack?: Tony Benn said British chauvinism whipped up against Argentina was 'one of the most frightening things' he'd seen. When the Tories beat the jingo drum against the miners, the left runs scared again.

insists that the miners' strike is not a political conflict but merely a routine industrial dispute.

This response is consistent with Kinnock's condemnations of miners' pickets and his efforts to press the NUM leaders towards a negotiated solution which could only mean defeat for the miners.

Miners on the contrary should welcome the Tories' resort to the Falklands factor. By linking 'the enemy within' and 'the enemy without' Thatcher has clarified the

class conflict at the heart of the dispute in the coalmining industry.

Taking sides

The dispute is not merely between the miners and the Coal Board, but between the working class and the capitalist class. The British establishment went to war with Argentina to protect its class interests and now it has declared war on workers at home.

The miners' struggle can go forward by taking up the Tory challenge. We are all Argentinians now. Miners and all workers have every interest in taking sides against the British ruling class whether its repressive

activities are conducted in the South Atlantic or in South Yorkshire.

Fight the enemy abroad — the Malvinas are Argentina's! Fight the enemy at home — support the miners!

Mike Freeman

Propaganda war

● Thatcher says that the miners' strike is a threat to freedom. It is a threat to the freedom of the bosses to exploit workers and then to throw them on the scrap heap of mass unemployment when exploitation is no longer sufficiently profitable.

● Thatcher says the miners' strike is a danger to democracy. It is a danger to a democracy that upholds the right to scab but cannot guarantee millions the right to work.

● Thatcher says that the miners' strike imperils the rule of law. It is a challenge to a legal system that allows police to impose a state of siege in the coalfields, to smash picket lines and brutalise striking miners.

● Thatcher says that the miners' strike is political. It is political in the sense that the strike brings into question a system that can only survive by closing down collieries and putting tens of thousands more workers on the dole.



Class war: the miners' strike is a battle between workers and the state

Revival of the French right

Who's afraid of the Front National?

In June Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National won more than 11 per cent of the vote in the European elections and 10 seats in the European Parliament. The Socialist and Communist Parties suffered heavy losses.

The Communist Party decision to resign from the left-wing coalition government confirmed the increasing fragmentation of the French left at a time when the right is on the move. But is Le Pen really about to unleash fascist bands on to the streets of France?

After years in the political wilderness Jean-Marie Le Pen made his mark on the political scene when he won more than 11 per cent of the vote in a Paris constituency during the 1983 municipal elections.

Front National candidates have also won substantial support elsewhere. In September 1983 FN general secretary Stirbois won nearly 17 per cent of the vote in the Socialist Party stronghold of Dreux. Two months later the FN notched up nearly 10 per cent in the Communist Party-controlled working class suburb of Aulnay-sous-Bois near Paris.

The Front National's recent success comes after 11 years of isolation among the remnants of the right-wing movement of the sixties. For Le Pen, it is the pinnacle of a 30-year campaign to build a popular base among the shifting forces of France's large middle classes.

Enter Le Pen

Le Pen's political career began in a party founded by Pierre Poujade 30 years ago. In 1956 Le Pen was one of 52 deputies elected on the list of Poujade's Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans (UDCA) — a small business-

man's and artisan's party.

Poujade had been a member of the youth movement of Doriot's fascists before the Second World War and a supporter of the Vichy regime set up under the German occupation. Poujade built his own party in the early fifties by exploiting the fears of small shopkeepers and artisans whose livelihoods were threatened by France's transformation into a modern industrial society.

Poujade is dead

The France of Pierre Poujade has long since passed away. Le Pen's supporters bear only a passing resemblance to the Poujadists of the fifties.

The petit-bourgeois layers of peasantry, artisans and small shopkeepers collapsed in the sixties as President de Gaulle succeeded in restructuring French capitalism. Between 1954 and 1978 they fell from 31 per cent to 14 per cent of the population.

While proportionately the industrial working class remained stable over the same period, there was a rapid growth in the number of public employees, teachers and other members of the new middle classes. It was these people who brought Socialist

President François Mitterrand to power in 1981. They have since drifted rightwards under the impact of Mitterrand's austerity programme. But as yet, the Front National has failed to unite them behind its programme for national revival.

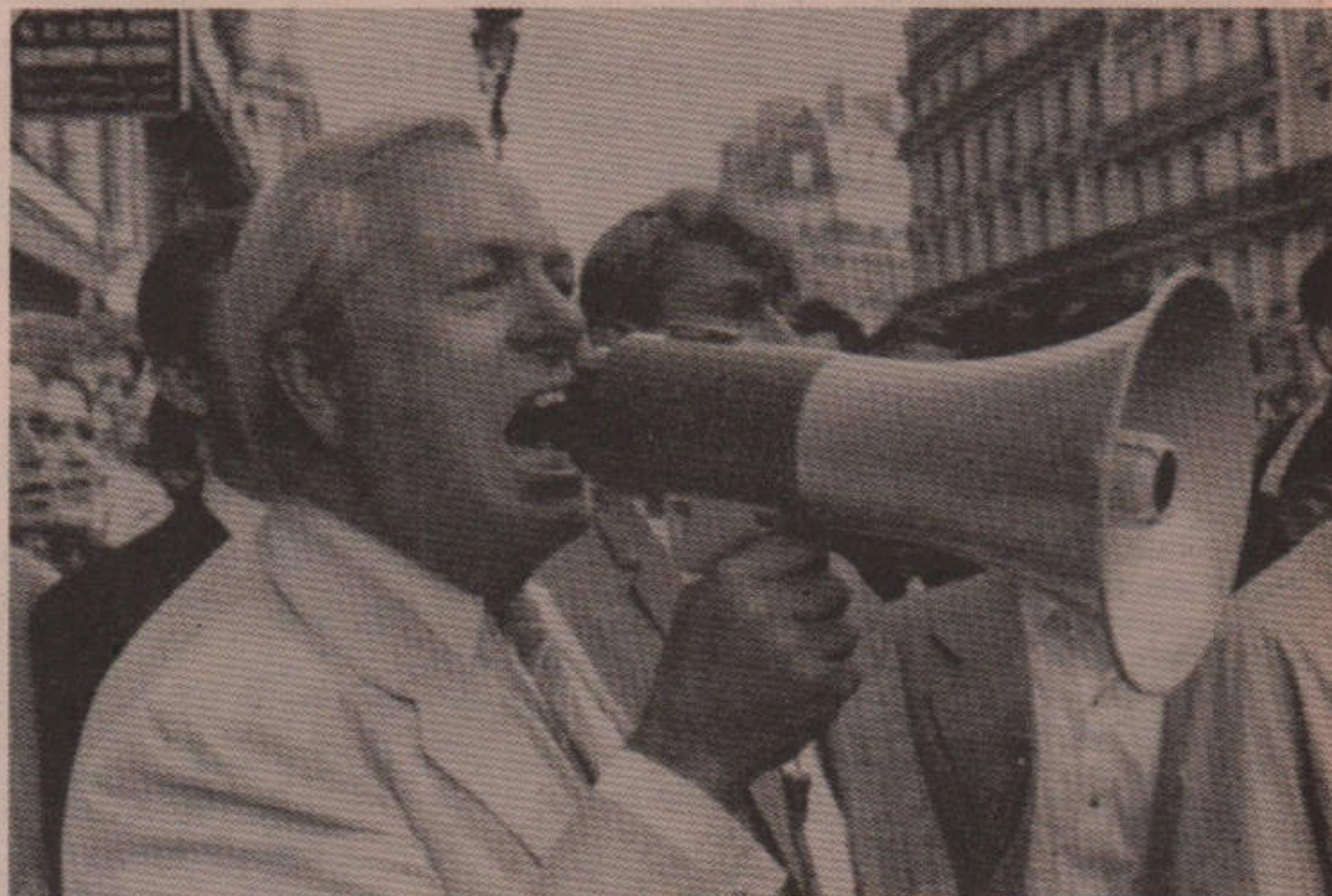
Bedrock

The European election results reveal that Le Pen's bedrock of support is among the million former French settlers of *Algérie Française*. They settled in southern parts of France after being forced to leave Algeria in destitution after independence in 1962.

The FN won 17 per cent of the vote in Lyon, 21 per cent in Marseilles, 23 per cent in Nice and Toulon and 24 per cent in southern Corsica. The embittered former colonists rallied to Le Pen who has championed their interests for decades.

From 1958 to 1962 Le Pen was a paratrooper in Algeria and was known as one of the most ruthless torturers in the war. Throughout the sixties he supported the outlawed OAS (Secret Army Organisation) which brought terror to Algerians in France and tried to assassinate de Gaulle for making peace with Algeria.

Le Pen's support is not confined to the south, however. His party also did well in some northern urban areas, including working class districts such as Aulnay-sous-Bois, Sevrans and Villeurbanne. Here the FN probably took votes from the Com-



Little Sir echo: Le Pen amplifies nationalist message popularised by French left

munist Party, then the junior partner in Mitterrand's increasingly unpopular coalition government.

Mainstream

Generally, however, the Socialist Party lost ground to the conservative coalition of Simone Veil and Jacques Chirac; and the conservatives — especially the Gaullist Chirac — lost heavily to the FN. The voting patterns indicate that, far from mobilising a real fascist movement, Le Pen is simply winning support for his more radical defence of issues long championed by the respectable French right.

Le Pen's recent book

Frenchmen first sets out his political programme. In many respects there is little to distinguish it from the approach of the right-wing Gaullists of Chirac's RPR. Chirac's denunciation of Arabs as 'delinquents' in the March elections last year was every bit as violent as Le Pen's anti-immigrant fulminations. On the right's other favourite issues — the death penalty and the defence of private education — there is little to choose between the two men.

Nevertheless, Le Pen made headway against Chirac in June by attacking his election alliance with the 'liberal' — and Jewish — Simone Veil. The extreme right has never forgiven Veil for sponsoring the Bill which legalised abortion.

Even on the immigration issue the FN's politics are not that distinctive. When the socialists and communists came to power in 1981 they denounced voluntary repatriation measures and granted amnesties to 130 000 'illegals'. But faced with an explosion of racial tensions and desperate to push through its industrial restructuring programme with minimum resistance, the government has reintroduced voluntary repatriation and is deporting 200 immigrants a week.

Le Pen's party is clearly within the mainstream of French politics. It is very different from the British National Front. As a result of its political isolation, the British party adopts spurious anti-capitalist rhetoric to appeal to the working class. The French FN limits its economic programme to attacking the political bureaucracy and the civil service. It even calls for more power for Parliament to control the administration. Le Pen has set his sights on the presidency in 1988.

Left chauvinists

The charge of 'fascist' against Le Pen originates with the socialists and communists who ran the government in coalition up to July. It is not difficult to see why. Over the last three years the left has

presided over an austerity programme and an increase in unemployment without parallel since the fifties.

By dubbing Le Pen as a fascist the socialists and communists have tried to turn to their advantage the same chauvinist sentiments on which Le Pen's politics breed. The Communist Party in particular has tried to check its terminal decline by glorifying its past traditions of fighting against German and native fascism.

The revival of the far right in France reflects the growing discontent among the middle classes with the socialist government. For the moment most of the big capitalists are happy to leave the management of the crisis to Mitterrand. Last year company profits were up 17 per cent as a result of the government's tax measures — it was the middle and working classes which paid.

According to the *Financial Times* some Paris stock-brokers have suggested that if the right-wing opposition returned to power tomorrow 'the Bourse (stock exchange) would probably fall — out of the market's fears that the right would be less successful than the left in preserving industrial peace at a time of mounting unemployment' (4 July). French workers' traditional organisations have become the big capitalists' best friends. While their middle class supporters look to the right for salvation, militant workers are looking for a party which can match the FN's determined approach.

Opportunities

Le Pen's success reflects the radicalisation of French politics. Alongside the dangers this presents, it opens up opportunities for the working class. More important than the FN's electoral success was the collapse of the Communist Party's vote. The decline of the Communist Party and the discrediting of the Socialist Party clears the way for new working class organisations to be built.

Gareth Evans

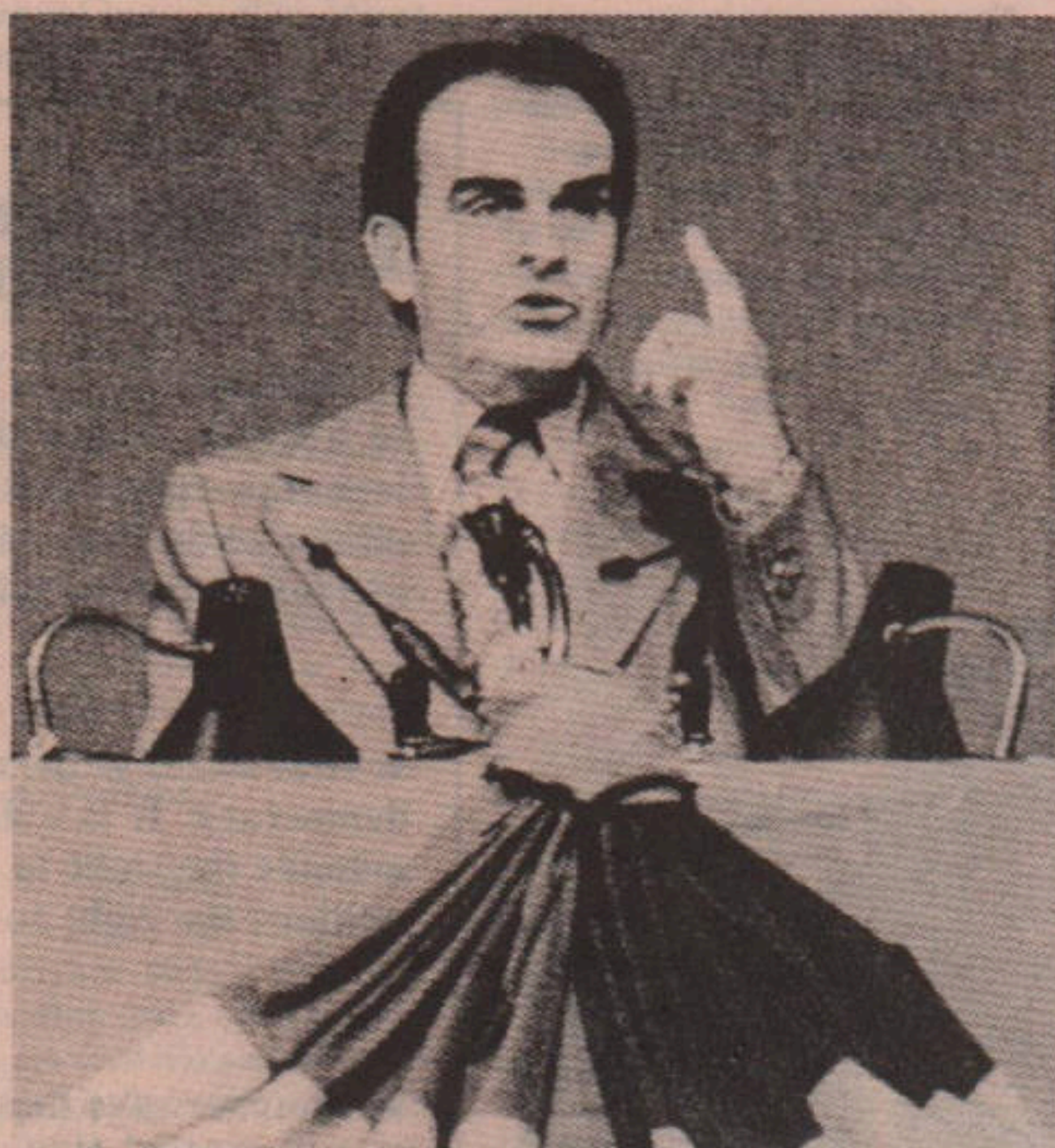
The true nationalists

The French National Front, like the British organisation of the same name, is best known for its racist demagoguery. 'Two million foreign workers equals two million unemployed' has a familiar ring.

But French racists did not have to look to Britain to find a name for their party. As it happens, the name 'Front National' has been used before — by the French Communist Party. This was its all-class front organisation which fought for the defeat of the German army of occupation in the Second World War. Identification with the interests of the French nation is a feature common to all parties from the Communist Party to the party of Le Pen: each interprets it differently according to its 'base of support'.

Oppression

French communist and socialist leaders today speak of the 'so-called National Front', implying that it does not represent the true interests of the French nation. While the French communists and socialists have only on occasion



CP boss Marchais' red flag has blue and white stripes

expressed the same virulent racism as the extreme right, they have been no less determined in their defence of French imperialist interests.

Communist Party leader Maurice Thorez told the oppressed peoples of France's colonies on the eve of the Second World War that the decisive question of the

moment was the struggle against fascism. Their interest lay 'in their union with the French people' and not with national independence.

At the outbreak of the Algerian independence war in 1954 the Minister of the Interior announced that Algeria was 'part of France':

'From Flanders to the Congo there is only one nation, only one Parliament. That is the Constitution, and that is our wish.'

That minister was François Mitterrand. In a recent television interview, Le Pen defended the army's use of torture in the Algerian war as necessary to defend French interests.

Terror

The street violence of Le Pen's supporters is minimal compared to the violence of the French state against the people it oppresses in the Third World — in Chad, Lebanon, the Antilles. The same terror is increasingly being applied at home, first against blacks and now against the whole working class.

It is the government of the 'left' — not Le Pen — which controls the riot police who smash up blacks in the Minguettes suburb of Lyon and steelworkers in Lorraine. French workers must set about building their own organisations to defend them from Mitterrand's attacks.

Black sections and the Labour Party

Run Kinnock run!

'A minefield' said Labour leader Neil Kinnock, 'a retrograde step' said his deputy Roy Hattersley, 'ghettoes' declared shadow Home Secretary Gerald Kaufman.

This was the Labour leadership's initial response to the current campaign to set up black sections in the Labour Party. Since June, however, Labour has come round to the idea that black sections might be to its advantage.

A compromise solution is on the cards at this year's Labour Party conference in October. But why has this issue provoked such a heated debate?

The demand for black sections was raised in the aftermath of Labour's June 1983 General Election defeat. Labour stood six black candidates, five of them in seats with a substantial Tory majority and no prospect of victory.

The sixth, Paul Boateng, was the candidate for Hertfordshire West, a Labour marginal. Boateng had only the remotest chance of winning. But when his campaign team deserted him and refused to canvass, his defeat was assured.

Representation

At the 1983 Labour Party conference black delegates protested at Labour's failure to field black candidates except in a few no-hope seats. They argued that the party's structure militated against black representation and demanded more black parliamentary candidates.

Labour's executive committee tried to assuage criticisms from black party activists by convening a working party chaired by Jo Richardson to look into the matter. Six months later the working party had still to hold its first meeting when the controversy over black sections broke out in April.

'Our corner'

While Labour prevaricated black activists in the party began to get organised. Black sections were set up in constituencies all over the country.

Leading black Labour figures like Paul Boateng, Jim Thakooridin and Ben Bousquet, all of whom stood in the last General Election, were prime movers behind the campaign for black sections.

This June, more than 200 Labour Party black activists met in Birmingham to establish the framework for national, regional and constituency black sections.

According to Westminster North constituency Labour Party black section the aim of the campaign is 'to fight for our corner and get a fair share of the policy cake'. Far from seeking to undermine the party, the campaign is committed to recruiting more blacks to Labour, pressing for more black representation on committees and more black candidates for Parliament and local government.

Dilemma

Given the moderate aims of the campaign why did Kinnock denounce black sections as 'a terrible departure from the values of a democratic socialist society'?

The Labour leaders are haunted by a lingering fear that black sections could provide the left with a base to organise. The rancorous debate over reselection of MPs in recent weeks indicates the Labour right's continuing

determination to stifle the left.

Kinnock's fear of the left gaining influence is only a partial explanation for his initial resistance to separate black groups within the party. The Labour leaders are aware that those involved in pushing for black sections are more concerned with advancing their own positions within the party than advancing the cause of the left.

Electoralism

More importantly, Kinnock's uneasiness over the question of black sections reflects the tension between Labour's desire to hold on to the black vote and its conviction that black candidates are an electoral liability.

Labour has always been identified as the party which receives the support of Britain's black community. About 80 per cent of black people who do vote, vote Labour.

Supporters of the campaign for black sections link black electoral support and loyalty to Labour to a demand for more black representation. Kinnock has no objection to recruiting more black support. After its disastrous showings in the last two General Elections Labour needs every vote it can get. But it draws the line at buying black votes by giving blacks more power within the party establishment.

Kinnock would be happy for Labour's black members to conduct a Jesse Jackson-style registration campaign among the black community. More than 30 per cent of blacks do not vote, and many are not even registered.

While Labour is keen to recruit more blacks to the party and attract more black voters it cannot deliver the goods when it comes to promoting more blacks to prominent positions within the party and standing more black candidates for Parliament.

Labour's bureaucratic structures can only provide careers for a few middle class blacks prepared to accommodate to the party machine and endorse its policies. And Labour's historical accommodation to racism means that it is not prepared to risk standing black candidates in safe Labour seats in case they lose.

The controversy surrounding the selection of the prospective candidate for the safe Labour seat of Battersea North before the 1983 General Election reveals Labour's capitulation to the racists.

In 1982 black Lewisham councillor Russell Proffitt was selected as prospective MP for the constituency. In the run-up to the 1983 General Election, however, former Battersea South MP Alf Dubs decided to challenge Proffitt's nomination. Dubs won the nomination and Proffitt lost



Labour's tokenism: if you want this party to fight racism, you've got a problem

the chance to become the only black to stand in a safe Labour seat.

Compromise

Kinnock's predicament is that he needs to offer something to Labour's black members to retain and increase the black vote. At the same time, he fears that the formation of black sections will only increase the pressure on the party to field more black parliamentary candidates. And given that there is not a single constituency with a big enough black vote to ensure victory, this is something that Labour is not prepared to

contemplate.

With 20 motions calling for black sections at the Labour Party conference in October it will be difficult for the Labour leadership to continue outright opposition. Moreover, the women and youth sections of the party already have automatic rights of representation. To deny the same rights to the party's black members would be interpreted as blatant discrimination.

Labour community affairs spokesman Denis Howell has thus been despatched to meet members of the black sections' steering committee and work out a compromise.

Politics

The trouble with Labour Party black sections is not, as *Militant* argues, that they are divisive, but that they avoid confronting the real problem. Their objective is to change the structure of the Labour Party to allow more black participation and representation. The problem with the Labour Party for blacks, however, is not its organisation but its politics.

For decades the Labour Party has courted the black vote to its electoral advantage. Meanwhile, it has given full support to immigration

controls, endorsed the state's criminalisation of black youth and done nothing to effectively challenge racial discrimination.

With the exception of *Militant*, every entrant group on the Labour left has welcomed the campaign for black sections as a means of encouraging more black participation in the party. Yet they have consistently failed to challenge the Labour Party's abysmal record on fighting racism.

No change

For the Labour Party, black sections could secure a larger turnout of the black vote and the chance to appear progressive in its commitment to combatting racism.

For blacks, the Labour Party offers a few jobs for middle class blacks prepared to live with its anti-working class policies. But black sections won't change Labour's policies on race and immigration.

The Labour Party has nothing to offer blacks who want to fight back against racism and the system that sustains it. Fighting racism requires a party prepared to take on the system and politics that put workers' interests first. Workers who want to build a real anti-racist movement know where to find us.

Joan Phillips

The case for solidarity

common denominator.

Loyalty

The PSI report shows that black workers, men and women, are more likely to be unionised than their white counterparts — 56 per cent of blacks and 47 per cent of whites. They are equally likely to attend union meetings, yet very few black trade unionists hold any kind of union post.

Black workers have retained a remarkable loyalty to the trade union movement which has given them very little in return.

Discrimination against black workers has been part of the British way of life since the main period of black immigration in the fifties. Far from fighting it, however, the unions have learned to live with it. They have gone along with racist colour bars and have done little to defend their black members.

Pressure

Some unions such as Nalco have come under pressure from their black members to take more decisive action to

challenge racist practices. They have responded by implementing positive action policies, industrial language training and recruitment programmes to encourage more black participation. These give the impression that the unions are concerned about racism without them actually doing anything about it.

Well over half of Nalco's members are organised in local government, which is notorious for its low percentage of black employees. For example, an estimated 7.6 per cent of Liverpool's population is black, but blacks constitute only 0.9 per cent of council workers. Many Nalco branches have negotiated agreements that jobs will be advertised internally. This restricts the number of external recruits and reinforces existing employment patterns.

Pressure from the Nalco black workers' group for more union representation and more positive action resulted in the establishment of a race equality working party in 1982.

The committee's report

and recommendations were endorsed at this year's Nalco conference. The conference decided to recognise black groups within the union and place more emphasis on black representation on committees and at conferences.

But the problem with Nalco's positive action policies is that they avoid confronting the real issues. Nalco stalled on the question of internal advertising, recommending a policy of 'concurrent advertising' but leaving it to the branches to make their own decision.

The left argues that internal advertising gives the union some control over recruitment. In reality the union has no control, and the practice militates against the employment of more blacks.

Union activists should reject the sham of token gestures and positive action. They are a worthless substitute for a real commitment to challenging oppression.

Every measure to involve more black workers in active participation in the union is vital. But the only guarantee of winning the allegiance of black workers and uniting the working class is concerted action against every racist attack — whether from the immigration authorities, the employers or the police.

Colin Brown, Policy Studies Institute, *Black and white Britain*, Heinemann Educational books 1984, pp 331, pbk £8.95, hbk £22.50

Frankie's fifteen minutes

Producer Trevor Horn summed up the success of pop band Frankie Goes To Hollywood: 'kids want to buy records by people they want to mate with. . . . The Frankies looked to me like raw lust of a very healthy variety'.

There's nothing new in the idea that teenage sex sells records. Who can remember the last chart record that did not deal with sex? Former punk rock critic Julie Birchill reckons it was the Singing Nun.

All that was new about Frankie's first single *Relax* was its more explicit references to sex. Printing the lyrics on the record sleeve earned it a BBC ban. Radio One disc jockey Mike Read, after playing the song for six weeks, noticed they included words like 'suck' and 'come' in compromising positions.

The ban earned Frankie's record company Zang Tumb Tuum a lot of money. *Relax* rode high in the charts for half a year and was number one for several weeks. It is the 12th best selling British single ever.

The band's follow up, *Two tribes*, according to publicity manager Paul Morley 'the first genuine protest song of the last eight years', also reached number one. It sold the other old standby of the record industry, 'teenage rebellion', ridiculing the tribal mentality of superpower confrontation.

Down the tube

The Frankie phenomenon is built on contrived controversy. Tee-shirts with slogans like 'Frankie says arm the unemployed' and 12-inch singles with Lenin picture sleeves link the group with rebellion.

Disco mixes of *Two tribes* feature a Ronald Reagan soundalike repeating gibberish. And an out-of-work actor reads instructions, lifted from the government's *Protect and survive* guide to life during wartime, on what to do with the dead after a nuclear strike.

The current prominence of the revved-up eroticism of the Frankies, and last year of candy-floss transvestite Boy George of Culture Club, is the record industry's response to the collapse of its market. If outraged editorials and radio bans help shift units then the record companies are interested.

Bands are simply vehicles for promoting records. To capture the youth market the record companies have intensified the marketing of sex and rebellion. But the contraction of the youth market means that the music has to appeal to a wider audience if it is going to sell. Market-profile raising risks — outre clothes and risqué lyrics — are in, creative risks are out.

Generation games

To sell records the record companies have always concentrated on the two immediate concerns of youth: sex and resistance to authority.

The Beach Boys and the Everly Brothers, Chuck Berry and David Bowie spoke to the frustrations and sexual fears and hopes of young people moving out of their parental homes and coming under pressure to found their own

families.

Groups like the Who and the Rolling Stones deliberately sought a reputation as wild men to appeal to the anti-authoritarian sentiments of youth.

The record companies were happy that young workers who resented the discipline of the labour process bought thousands of records by bands they felt expressed their own hostility to the established order.

Boom town mods

In the fifties and sixties young people's rebellion could be contained by the market. During the boom average weekly wages for the under 25s rose twice as fast as those for adults.

In 1964 a mod who offered to pay a £75 fine with a cheque was seized on by newspapers as an example of the affluence of young people. The story was still being repeated four years later even though the boy admitted he did not even have a bank account.

Young workers' wages were always lower than those for adults. Even during the sixties under-25s accounted for barely five per cent of consumer spending. But their spending was concentrated in areas like entertainments and fashion which gave them a high visibility.

Under-25s bought more than 40 per cent of records, 28 per cent of cinema tickets and almost 30 per cent of cosmetics.

The importance of youth in these markets stimulated the development of musical, mass-produced fashion, and film styles designed to appeal specifically to young workers.

Let down by trade union leaders and the Labour Party who maintained the apprenticeship swindle and kept wages for young workers low, youth identified with their



Frankie goes to the bank while Lenin turns in his mausoleum: record companies put new wrappers on the same old song about 'mad warmongers', and palm it off as this year's thing for angry young men

role in the market. They saw themselves standing outside what passed for working class politics in Britain.

Into the gap

Mass unemployment has made turning rebellion into money more difficult. Around a third of Britain's under-25s are on the dole. Out of £25 a week there isn't much to spend on records.

Record sales have slumped. From an 89m peak in 1979, sales of singles fell to 73.8m last year. Album sales have slipped from 92m units in 1975 to 54.4m last year. In the first six months of this year singles sales were down 12 per

cent and albums six per cent compared with the same period last year.

The record companies have tried pegging prices. Album prices should be around £8.50 to have kept pace with inflation. They have stagnated at £5 for the past four years.

Marketing is the key to the survival of the record industry. Chains like Our Price have mushroomed in the feverish struggle for a diminishing market.

But the main emphasis is on gimmicks as Brian Yates of Arista records explains, 'the gimmicks were all around before: the difference now is that, such is competition, every record company is using

them'.

The companies are even resorting to selling the same item over and over again. The Thompson Twins' *Into the gap* album sold more than 600 000 copies. To sell the third single cut from the album the company released it in three different shapes which fitted together to form a picture of the band.

Getting the increasingly rare record buyer to purchase more than one copy of the same record is one way of keeping the market high. The Frankies' *Two tribes* is available in 17 different disco mixes for much the same reason.

Dead ends

One of the gimmicks adopted by the record industry is politics. Frankie Goes To Hollywood's marketing strategy features graphics and slogans drawn from Futurism, a radical art movement of the 1920s.

The video for *Two tribes* shows a fight in a dust bowl between Reagan and Chernenko. Other bands like the Smiths, Bronski Beat and Madness have adopted radical postures.

But the freshness of the bands and the danceability of the music is a poor cover for the worn out old ideas in the songs. Madness' idea of political commitment is to get involved in Greenpeace. Saving the whale is hardly a radical departure from past liberalism.

Frankie's analysis of the Cold War is no different from that of the Labour Party or CND. War is the irrational

product of tribal antagonisms between Washington and Moscow. The only difference is that Frankie Goes To Hollywood is a good deal more exciting than Neil Kinnock or Bruce Kent.

We can agree with the manifesto sent out by Frankie's promoter with the company's first single *Into battle with the art of noise*:

'The singles we release will not teach you anything you can apply to the obvious problems of life.'

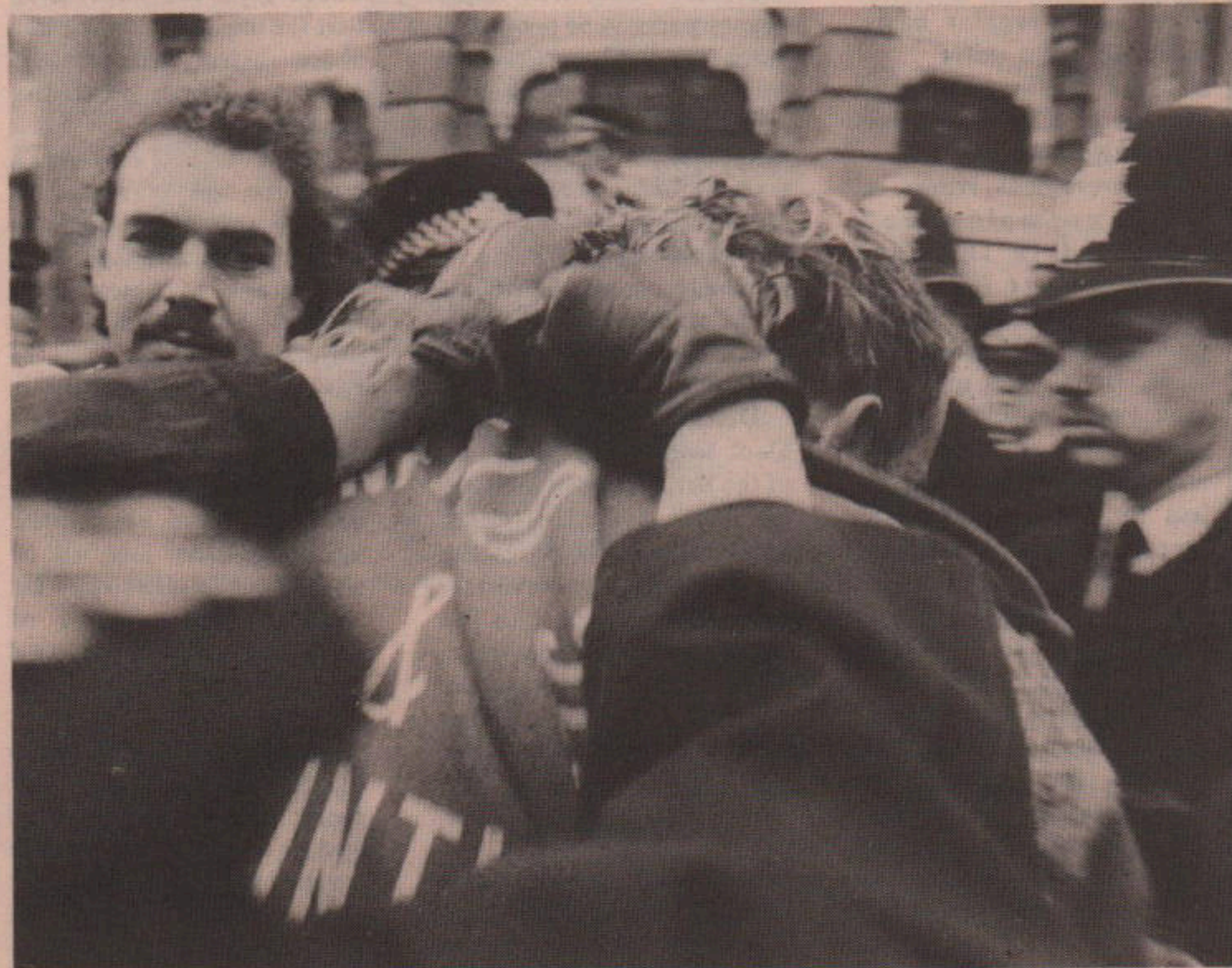
Fighting future

The Frankies can't show the way to defend young workers, but then they never said they could. Today's new wave entertainers are the most dynamic exponents of stale radical politics. But the music and musicians aren't the problem; the dead end politics and politicians are.

Campaigns like Stop the City show the potential for mobilising working class youth against the exploitation and oppression the establishment calls 'a future'. To win a real future, however, young people's anger needs to connect with the power of the working class for a struggle against the capitalist system and its local protector, the British state.

If you like the Frankies' music, fair enough. But don't take them too seriously because they don't take themselves seriously at all. When it comes to deciding our attitude to 'radical' rock stars the 'stuff politics, let's dance' crew is not far off the mark.

John Johnson



Fistful of collars: youth can't fight the state by running amok in the City

August 1969 - why the troops went in



In August 1969, British Army guns replaced Loyalist police batons as the state's hammer to crush the nationalist rebellion

Fifteen years ago this month a Labour government sent British troops into Northern Ireland. Mick Hume explains why they're still there.

On 14 August 1969, the Home Office said British troops had to be sent into Derry because the Royal Ulster Constabulary was unable to keep warring Protestants and Catholics apart, and Catholics in Derry were exposed 'to the prospect of looting and danger'.

In June 1984, *The Economist* remembered the invasion as an 'honourable' and 'temporary' move to 'secure civil rights for an oppressed community'.

The establishment's version of the 1969 events is widely accepted within Britain. But it is a myth. Far from securing civil rights for Irish Catholics, the British state's aim was to enforce their oppression.

British rule in Belfast.

Second, Northern Ireland's fusion with the British state through Partition meant that a threat to Westminster's control there challenged its right to rule anywhere in the United Kingdom.

Legitimacy

The British ruling class could not retain its government institutions intact within Britain if its state machine was smashed in the Six Counties. Such a setback would do irreparable damage to public respect for the establishment's authority. In other words, by threatening the break-up of Northern Ireland, the movement for Catholic civil rights called into question the legitimacy of British capitalists' class power. Loyal to the state, the Labour government had to put it down.

Labour statesmen were aware that the very existence of the Six Counties was at stake, and that they could make no concessions on the legitimacy of the British state. On a trip to Belfast at the end of August 1969, Home Secretary James Callaghan emphasised that he was not there 'in any sense to discuss the Border' which divides Ireland:

'The Border will remain as long as the Parliament and people of Northern Ireland wish it to remain. That is as flat and as unequivocal as I can make it, and any policies that are pursued derive from that beginning.'

Any British policy would begin not from the Catholics' rights, but from the need to maintain Partition and British rule, by force of arms if necessary.

Dynamite

The arrival of British troops followed widespread unrest across Northern Ireland, as a movement demanding an end to discrimination against Catholics met bans and baton charges from the Loyalist Parliament at Stormont Castle and the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

When Britain moved in to restore order in August, the Labour government used its power against the civil rights movement. The demands for 'one man, one vote, one man, one house' etc might seem to have posed little danger to British interests. But in the context of Northern Ireland, they were political dynamite.

The partition of Ireland in 1921 created Northern Ireland as a province of the United Kingdom with an inbuilt majority of Protestants.

Their loyalty to Britain was ensured by institutionalised discrimination, giving them a privileged status over the Catholic, nationalist minority. This had two crucial consequences for the events of 1969.

In a repressive regime built on religious sectarianism, Catholic demands for civil rights struck at the foundations of the Six Counties state. The Labour government could not grant such demands without signalling the collapse of

Pretext

British troops were finally sent in when Stormont's authority had all but collapsed in street battles sparked off by Loyalist sectarianism.

Westminster's pretext for using troops centred on reported clashes between the Loyalist and nationalist communities in Derry, and stressed the Stormont government's request for military assistance.

Both reasons were flimsy excuses for the reassertion of imperialist power in Ireland. The 'Battle of the Bogside' in Derry was fought not between religious communities but between nationalists and the Royal Ulster Constabulary — the representative of the British state.

Although the Northern Ireland government did ask for troops at 3.30pm on Thursday 14 August, Westminster had already decided to order it to 'request' the army if it had not done so by 5pm. The issue in 1969, as today, was the nationalist threat to British rule. No other consideration entered into British plans.

The Home Office announced the invasion as a 'limited operation'. Troops would be back in barracks by the weekend. But Whitehall

knew it could not deliver on that promise.

During July, the Ministry of Defence had constructed nine versions of what might happen when the army went in. Each one ended with a prediction of an 'unstoppable escalation' in the numbers of troops involved. The British establishment was ready to use whatever coercion was necessary for as long as was necessary to keep the lid on the Six Counties.

Façade

Sending in the troops posed serious problems for the British ruling class at home. It made embarrassingly clear the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland, and threatened to provoke opposition to the state within Britain. Labour sought to disguise its occupation of the Six Counties behind a political façade of local democratic reforms.

Instead of closing down Stormont and imposing Direct Rule from Westminster as had been expected, the government pushed through reforms which kept the 'local democracy' of Stormont's sectarian structures intact. The most blatant aspects of Loyalist discrimination were outlawed, the RUC was disarmed and its infamous

auxiliary wing, the B-Specials, was disbanded.

Labour's reforms did not change much. The RUC was soon rearmed, the B-Specials became the Ulster Defence Regiment, and discrimination continued through alternative channels. But the measures allowed Britain to present its invasion as a democratising mission and head off any large scale protests at home.

Two-pronged

Since 1969 every British government has pursued the two-pronged strategy developed by Harold Wilson's Cabinet: a real policy of military coercion coupled with a search for a non-existent 'political solution'.

The strategy has been refined and updated to meet new nationalist challenges. But all British statesmen remain committed to controlling the Six Counties and containing the mortal threat to the British state posed by the Irish War.

British strategy has failed to stabilise Ireland. The difference between August 1969 and August 1984 is the republican movement's emergence as the defender of the nationalist ghettos.

The IRA barely existed in 1969. Nationalists defended themselves against Loyalist

mobs and police with petrol bombs, bricks and catapults. Even the British Army was initially seen by some as a potential protector. But when troops first stood by as Loyalists burnt down nationalist districts, and then went on their own offensive against the nationalists, everybody knew whose side they were on.

Ironically, Britain's token reforms accelerated the process of polarisation. The removal of the B-Specials and the worst electoral gerrymandering revealed the nationalists' root problem as modern British oppression, not outmoded Loyalist institutions.

The IRA grew into a national liberation movement based on the firm support of the most downtrodden ghettos. Today, the republican movement continues to thwart Britain's attempts to crush opposition to its rule. Its struggle means the issue of Ireland poses a graver threat than ever to the British state.

But if Britain has failed to coerce the Irish, it has convinced much of the British people of the establishment's case. Organised opposition to the Irish War is now at an all-time low.

Fairy tales

The British left blames the strength of the state's propaganda machine for the consensus backing Britain. In fact the left itself is largely to blame. It has been the worst victim of British propaganda.

The left has swallowed most of the government's diversionary political initiatives as real alternatives. It has become bogged down in the fairy tale world of political solutions, and failed to challenge the everyday reality of military terror in the Six Counties.

When the troops went in, the most radical elements in British politics saw some progressive role for the imperialist forces in Ireland. The International Socialists, forerunner of today's Socialist Workers' Party, promoted illusions in the neutrality of the armed forces. It described the invasion as 'a temporary breathing space' for the nationalists (*Socialist Worker*, 21 August 1969).

Throughout 15 years of war the left has followed *Socialist Worker's* lead. Instead of winning workers to oppose the British state it has looked to the imperialist state itself for a progressive solution in Ireland. The left even heralds Labour — the government of 1969 — as the vehicle for ending the Irish War.

This month, the Labour Party left is marching in London to call on the government to introduce 'a just and lasting peace' in the Six Counties. Its march promises to be among the smallest yet. There is no future in lobbying the British establishment to grant the Irish people justice.

For the Irish Freedom Movement, the lesson of August 1969 is that Britain will never withdraw until it is forced out. Our aim is to build a movement in support of those fighting to drive back across the Irish Sea the visitors who overstayed their welcome 15 years ago.



Victory to the Palestinians!

Whose backs are to the wall in the West Bank?: Israeli troops are in occupation, but Palestinian resistance still dogs Zionist politics

The inconclusive results of last month's elections in Israel reflect the inability of any political faction to come up with a solution to the problems caused by the conflict between the Zionist state and the Palestinian people.

After four decades of war and conflict, the Palestinian question remains at the centre of Israeli politics. The formation of the Zionist state in 1948 and the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland created a permanent source of tension and bloodshed in the Middle East.

The Israeli occupation of surrounding territories — the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of the Jordan river in 1967, and southern Lebanon in 1982 — has deepened Palestinian resistance and Arab hostility.

In addition, the cost of maintaining the Zionist state's enormous machine of military repression has contributed to a deepening economic crisis.

The failure of either main contender — Likud or the Labour Party — to win an overall majority in the Knesset (parliament) indicates that neither had a convincing solution to the problems facing Israel.

Uncompromising

Under Menachem Begin Likud first came to power in 1977 and won a landslide victory in 1981. Likud's support comes from the Sephardic Jewish immigrants from southern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. They constitute 90 per cent of Israel's slum dwellers and more than half the total population. Their position at the bottom of the social

ladder, in competition with the Arab and Palestinian

masses in Israel, makes the Sephardim receptive to Likud's anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab rhetoric. Likud is also supported by much of Israel's private enterprise sector.

Likud is identified with the most intransigent and uncompromising nationalist stance on all issues. On

Lebanon, Likud insists that the continuation of the Israeli occupation is vital to prevent any resurgence of Palestinian resistance.

Repression

On the other occupied territories, Likud asserts Israel's claim to both banks of the Jordan and calls for

Terror

The 25 members of the 'Jewish underground' now on trial in Israel planned to plant bombs under five Arab buses in the West Bank, timed to explode at the height of the rush hour to kill hundreds of people. This project was only one example of the terror and harassment Palestinians face on the West Bank.

The Israeli-occupied West Bank of the Jordan is where the conflict between the Israeli state and the Palestinian people finds its sharpest expression. The 650 000 Palestinians who live on the West Bank have faced 18 years of terror from both the Israeli army and the Jewish settlers.

Since 1967, the Zionist state has set up 149 settlements in the West Bank and around Jerusalem. The 30 000 gun-toting settlers have confiscated between 50 and 60 per cent of the land by uprooting farmers' fields and

laying claim to water supplies.

The bulk of the Palestinians and Arabs are forced to make their living by working as casual labourers on Israeli construction sites. Others scratch a living off the pieces of land they have retained.

The 'Jewish underground' trial has brought the West Bank terror out into the open. The members of the 'Jewish underground' are also members of Gush Emunim — the main settler movement. This group was responsible for bomb attacks on the West Bank mayors sympathetic to the Palestinian cause in 1980.

In 1983, an Arab stabbed a Jewish student in the market place in Hebron. In response Zionists opened fire on a crowd of students at the local Islamic college, killing three and wounding 33.

The total of 124 terror attacks between March 1979 and mid-April 1984 does not

include official state terror in the West Bank. Mass arrest and imprisonment is commonplace: 200 000 people (almost one third of the population) have passed through Israeli jails. Some 1600 people — including several Arab mayors — have been deported since 1967.

The Israeli government encourages settler terror. The fate of two 18 year old Palestinians caught hijacking an Israeli bus illustrates the stance of the authorities. The Palestinian youths were beaten to death by Israeli soldiers.

After 18 years of occupation, today there are more and more Israeli soldiers on the streets, tighter restrictions on personal movement, higher fines, longer jail sentences and tighter press censorship. But no amount of Zionist repression can crush the resistance of the Palestinian people.

outright annexation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Likud backs the relentless extension of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and gives implicit support to the repression of the Arab and Palestinian inhabitants, by terrorist methods if necessary.

Likud has lost popular support over its inability to prevent Israel's economic collapse. It has also drawn mounting criticism for its handling of the war in Lebanon which has already cost 600 Israeli lives.

A combination of political and personal problems led to the premature retirement of Likud's charismatic leader and his replacement by the lack-lustre Yitzhak Shamir. However, Likud's hard line enabled it to hang on to enough popular support to win 41 seats in the election. Likud's continuing strength, together with the influence of the predominantly right-wing splinter parties that now hold the balance of power, ensures that it will play a major role in the future direction of Israeli politics.

Exclusive

The Labour Party led by Shimon Peres won 44 seats in the elections. Labour is Israel's natural party of government. Labour established the exclusively Jewish state in Palestine in 1948 and ruled until 1977.

The Labour Party's major instrument for building the Israeli state has been the Histadrut, a financial and business institution which incorporates the trade unions to maintain exclusive privileges for Jewish workers.

The Labour Party's base of support is the Ashkenazi Jewish immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe and who now control the Israeli state's bureaucratic, political and economic structures.

Labour was the biggest beneficiary of the demise of Likud and Begin. The Labour Party keyed into war weariness over Lebanon and called for the withdrawal of Israeli troops within six months.

Labour's ties with the unions meant it was seen as the party to deliver the wage cuts required to deal with the 400 per cent inflation ripping apart the economy.

'Soft'

In the final event the polls suggesting that Labour was heading for a clear victory were proved wrong. As in the 1981 elections, there was an eve of poll swing to Likud. Likud successfully portrayed Labour's West Bank policies as 'soft'. Labour called for a freeze on the number of Israeli settlements and indicated a willingness to talk with Jordan over the future of the West Bank. It also condemned the Israeli terrorists on trial during the election (see box).

In fact, Labour's conciliatory stance is largely illusory. Peres made clear that Labour had no intention of letting go of the occupied territories. He asserted that the Jordan valley was 'an essential security belt for Israel in the East'.

Labour opposes the forcible annexation of the West Bank for pragmatic reasons, not on principle. As Peres put it, 'to incorporate 1.4m Arabs against their will... will simply endanger the future destiny and character of Israel'.

Bloody

Ever since they sponsored the formation of the Israeli state, the Western powers have used Israel as their policeman in the Middle East. Today relations between the USA and Israel remain very close. However, American financial and military backing, and European acquiescence in Israel's bloody expansionist wars, have put the West's growing economic and political links with the Arab world under serious strain.

Since 1967, successive American Presidents and European leaders have proposed a negotiated Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories and tried to resolve the Palestinian question.

After Israel had further extended its borders to include bits of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan as well as Egypt, Reagan had another go. The Reagan plan proposed token autonomy for the Palestinians in the West Bank under the overall control of Israel. The Reagan Plan was rapidly shelved when Begin refused to slow down the settlement programme.

Today the imperialist powers have noted the similarity between the Reagan Plan and Labour's strategy on the West Bank. Likud's aggressive nationalism was seen in the West as a threat to any prospect of a negotiated 'peace'.

A few days before the election the *Financial Times* commented that 'a decisive win for Labour would be in the best interests of Israel and the Middle East', meaning that it would be in the best interests of Britain and the Western Alliance.

No compromise

Despite Western enthusiasm for Labour's alternatives, the irreconcilability of Palestinian demands and Israeli interests means that neither Likud nor Labour can afford to compromise on the Palestinian question. The long history of Labour rule in Israel shows that it is prepared to use any means necessary to ensure the survival of Israel.

The Labour Party refused to allow the 750 000 Palestinians who had fled in 1948 to return. A Labour government launched the 1967 Six Day War, razed whole villages to the ground and expelled 70 000 Arabs from the Golan Heights. Labour established 90 settlements in the West Bank and Gaza and around East Jerusalem. The Labour Party, with the exception of one MP, supported the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Imperialist support for Labour in the elections shows only the West's desperation. No imperialist 'peace' plans negotiated by any government in Israel can ever bring stability to the Middle East as long as the Palestinian people are denied their freedom.

Daniel Nassim

the next step

Stepping out

This is the fiftieth edition of *the next step*. Our first edition back in December 1979 contained 12 pages and had a print run of 4000. Over the past year a 24-page paper has achieved a steady circulation of 14 000-15 000. The growth in the size of *the next step* and its readership has paralleled the steady increase in the membership and influence of the Revolutionary Communist Party. Most copies of *the next step* are sold by hand on the street. They are sold by members and supporters of the RCP at workplaces and on estates, on picket lines and demonstrations — anywhere there is an audience for working class politics. We sell only a few hundred copies each month through bookshops and subscriptions. The editorial in the first issue of *the next step* outlined a clear conception of our target audience:

'This review is written for those who are actively committed to defending the working class and for those who realise the need for new political solutions. We believe that this still small section of the working class must be united around a programme that reflects the experience and interests of the international proletariat.'

The publication last year of our programme *Preparing for Power* was a measure of our progress along the lines laid out at the end of 1979. The growth of the RCP and the development of our programme were made possible by our day to day participation in the class struggle. This activity was guided by the themes pursued in *the next step*. At the same time, the content of the paper reflected our deepening experience of political conflict. *Preparing for Power* was first published in May 1983 before the General Election. It has sold nearly 20 000 copies in its first two editions. An updated third edition is in preparation.

The emphasis on *the next step* as a means of extending the dialogue between the RCP and the working class has been central from the beginning. The editorial in the first issue concluded with an appeal:

'We ask our readers to share their experiences with us and assess our arguments in relation to the political problems that come up in day to day struggles. In this way a vital discussion of working class politics will emerge and

the next step can become a living force in the class struggle.'

Two new publications from Junius featured elsewhere in this issue illustrate how far we have advanced towards fulfilling this perspective.

Taking Control, our handbook for trade union activists, is based on the experience of supporters of *the next step* in industrial disputes and trade union affairs. Through our close involvement in a series of important strikes from Laurence Scott through Heathfield and Hindle's to the health workers' dispute we have been able to identify the key political problems facing activists. Discussions and arguments with militants have helped to clarify the issues, and enabled us to develop a strategy to begin rebuilding in the unions. The active participation of supporters of *the next step* in the class struggle in industry and their feedback to the paper has helped to give it a growing reputation for in-depth reporting and analysis of trade union matters. It has made it possible to produce *Taking Control* and to pursue more systematically an anti-capitalist offensive in the unions.

The miners' next step, our pamphlet on the miners' strike, is the product of our intervention in the strike. From the beginning our argument for an all-out national strike, against the NUM leadership's conservative area-by-area approach, brought the conflict between two distinctive strategies out into the open. Our approach justified the miners' fight against pit closures by the need of all workers to safeguard jobs and preserve living standards, irrespective of the state of the industry in which they work. By contrast, the NUM leadership tried to justify miners' actions according to the economic interests of the British coalmining industry. The conflict between these two strategies underlies all the tactical issues of the dispute — the question of the national ballot, the problem of the Notts miners, the difficulty of winning effective sympathetic action.

The miners' next step draws upon the experience of supporters of *the next step* in arguing for our position in the coalfields and in other areas, on picket lines, demonstrations and in meetings. The debate generated around *the next step* over the past six months has helped to sharpen our propaganda. The first 5000 copies of *The miners' next step* sold out in 10 days.

The success of *the next step* and other RCP publications should not however distract us from the serious problems we face. The gap between the hard core of RCP activists and the thousands who make up the readership of *the next step* remains too wide. Our relationship with the bulk of our readers remains remote and passive. The development of the RCP and *the next step* is impressive by the shoddy standards of the British left. But it remains far too slow when measured against the task of getting rid of rotten British capitalism before it destroys us all.

We have recently announced two important steps to push forward the party and the paper. We are setting up a network of supporters' groups around the country. And *the next step* is going weekly in 1985. The aim of RCP supporters' groups is to draw readers of *the next step* into a more active relationship with both the party and our paper. We have found through our work in the unions, in Irish solidarity and anti-racist activity, in fighting for women's rights, that there is a growing recognition and respect for RCP politics. We want to turn broad sympathy for our approach into more active support. We want to involve more people in discussing the perspectives put forward in *the next step*, in sharing their experiences with us and in taking the working class movement forward.

A weekly paper will allow us to develop a more immediate relationship with political events. The miners' strike has brought home particularly forcefully the difficulty of intervening through a monthly review in a struggle which is in a constant ferment.

A weekly paper will enable us to move further towards realising the goals put forward in our first issue. To make *the next step* 'a living force in the class struggle' it needs to be able to respond rapidly to events. It must provide active workers with a distinctive proletarian outlook on political issues as they are happening — not two or three weeks later. A weekly paper can become an *organiser* in a way that is difficult to achieve with a monthly. This is not, as it is often perceived, a technical matter of providing detailed practical instructions. It is a matter of outlining in easily comprehensible terms a clear political perspective on current events that can act as a guide to action.

In four years *the next step* has come a long way. The first few issues had no photographs, no colour, no book reviews and covered a relatively narrow range of subjects. Recent issues have overcome these limitations, but we still have a long way to go. To become a real workers' paper *the next step* needs to become both more popular and more profound. We want to make the Marxist approach as accessible as possible to workers who are encountering it for the first time. At the same time, we want to challenge our more politically experienced readers, as Lenin put it, to give them something to chew on:

'The popular writer does not presuppose a reader that does not think, that cannot or does not wish to think; on the contrary, he assumes in the undeveloped reader a serious intention to use his head and aids him in his serious and difficult work, leads him, helps him over his first steps, and teaches him to go forward independently. The vulgar writer assumes that his reader does not think and is incapable of thinking; he does not lead him in his first steps towards serious knowledge, but in a distortedly simplified form, interlarded with jokes and facetiousness, hands out 'ready-made' all the conclusions of a known theory, so that the reader does not even have to chew but merely to swallow what he is given.' (*The Journal Svoboda*, 1901)

Our aim is to make *the next step* more popular — but not to ape the vulgar style of radical journalism from Lenin's time up to the present day.

Making *the next step* into a real organiser of the working class depends on us and partly on you, our readers. If you are reading *the next step* for the first time and you would like a closer look, take out a subscription (details page 23). If you read *the next step* regularly and you sympathise with the RCP's approach, get in touch and become a supporter (details again on page 23). Whether you agree or disagree with *the next step's* line on anything, write and tell us about it — or just let us know how the class struggle looks from your angle.

If you can afford to make an investment in the future of the working class then make a donation to our 'take *the next step* to a weekly' fund (details page 2). When we wrote in issue number one that 'we want active workers to take the next step with us' — we meant it. We still do.

Silly season

The official labour movement approaches its annual conference season in a sorry state. The Tories cannot solve any of Britain's economic problems but they've got both the TUC and the Labour Party on the run. Inside the beleaguered institutions of Labourism the right is ascendant and the left in a retreat approaching a rout.

The only sign of initiative within the TUC comes from the electricians, whose pursuit of no-strike deals with Japanese firms has embarrassed other union leaders (see pages 12 and 13). The electricians' leaders have made clear their determination to press on regardless. The

TUC fixers are hoping to sweep the whole affair under the Congress carpet.

The TUC leaders will be hoping for a low-key Congress where their 'new realism' strategy of compromise with the Tories is criticised but endorsed. There will be the usual rhetorical denunciations of Tory anti-union laws, and the usual fudged refusal to fight them. There will be much talk of unity around the miners, if the TUC has not managed to get them back to work before September, and around the unlikely figure of Norman Willis, the likely successor to Len Murray.

The Broad Left will be outside calling for a 24-hour general strike in support of the miners. This would mean elevating to

national level the sort of local days of action that have helped to dissipate militancy over the past few months. Under the best leadership such an action would be an empty gesture. Under the leadership of Murray or Willis a 24-hour general strike would be a farce.

Under Neil Kinnock the Labour Party has capitulated to every demand of the gutter press. It has condemned the miners' pickets and adopted a patriotic defence policy. This follows much current military opinion in recommending the replacement of obsolete nuclear weapons with more sophisticated conventional weaponry. The CND party now proposes *higher* spending on arms and upholds the Nato alliance.

Kinnock has humiliated the left. For three years from 1979 to 1982 the left's energies were consumed by three issues. One was conference control over the manifesto which it never achieved. Another was a procedure for the reselection of MPs which Kinnock overturned last month. The third was the electoral college for election of the party leader — which produced Neil Kinnock.

The official labour movement has long been an encumbrance to the working class. It is now becoming an embarrassment. The working class cannot afford to leave its future in the hands of leaders who have too much at stake in the present to fight for the future.

A handbook for trade unionists TAKING CONTROL

Union leaders have offered no-strike agreements in the civil service (GCHQ) and accepted them in foreign-owned companies. The rot caused by collaboration with the state and the employers has gone so far that American-style union-busters face little resistance in Britain. The second section of our new handbook for trade unionists, *Taking Control*, looks in detail at workplace organisation. It examines the tradition of the shop stewards and explains how their role has been transformed since the onset of the recession. Here, *Taking Control* author Mike Freeman looks at the emergence of company unionism and the row over no-strike deals. We also reproduce selected extracts from *Taking Control* on how to begin to rebuild in the workplace.

'THE BOSSES can hardly believe their localised successes', commented a recent report describing the discreet advance of the union-busting activities of the Legal Protection Group, a firm of management consultants with 7500 clients employing 250 000 workers. The Legal Protection Group specialises in advising companies in banking, computers, services and especially in engineering, how to replace trade unions with workplace staff associations. Given traditional perceptions of the strength of trade unionism in Britain, the union-busters anticipated fierce resistance. Yet the report notes that 'they are finding penetration of individual factories and offices quite easy' (*The Guardian*, 2 March).

One project manager describes how the management of an engineering plant employing several hundred workers told the unions that the closed shop was finished:

'They gave three months notice, and expected quite a bit of trouble. But the workforce didn't seem to mind. There had been redundancies in other factories, and they didn't feel the union had done much to protect them.'

Taking advantage of many workers' loss of confidence in their unions, employers are getting rid of closed shops and shop stewards and enforcing no-strike agreements. Firms partly or wholly owned by American or Japanese companies, and plants opening up in high unemployment areas with major government backing, have given a lead in the establishment of company unionism. The response of the unions has been to bargain away jobs, conditions and union rights in return for token recognition.

● Last month workers at the Hitachi plant in South Wales finally agreed to accept drastic changes in terms and conditions. The employers have already pushed through 500 redundancies and now insist on cutting all unions, except the electricians', out of negotiations. In return for exclusive recognition, the electricians' union has agreed to a management veto on shop stewards, wage fixing by company diktat, and proposals for speed-ups and flexible working. The union has also accepted arbitration procedures that effectively rule out strike action.

● In March a consortium of local councillors and union leaders succeeded in persuading the Japanese motor company Nissan to site its new British plant at Washington New Town, Tyne and Wear. One factor that attracted the Japanese investors to the North East was that 'the company's advisors were surprised at the number of single union agreements in local large factories' (*The Guardian*, 14 May). Several unions have offered what amount to no-strike agreements for the privilege of becoming the company union for Nissan's first few hundred workers in Britain.

The electricians' union — the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union — has been the most forthright in its pursuit of no-strike deals. Its success has made the other unions envious. Last month the EETPU launched the first promotional trip by a British trade union to Japan with a view to winning recognition agreements from firms considering setting up plants in Britain. The union has also sent out its glossy brochure to 500 British firms claiming that the EETPU is 'the most responsible, realistic, representative and modern trade union in Britain today'. The electricians' leaders are aiming to set up an extensive chain of company unions in the new technology sector. To increase its appeal to employers, the EETPU has established a range of hi-tech training courses for shop stewards, largely financed by the employers.

They're all at it

The EETPU has won exclusive membership rights in return for abandoning trade union rights in a growing number of companies — Toshiba (Plymouth), Sanyo (Lowestoft), Inmos (Newport) are only the most widely publicised. Resentful at being squeezed out by the EETPU's aggressive sales pitch, other unions have complained to the TUC, denouncing the electricians' betrayal of trade union principles. The electricians' leaders have not been slow to point out that this is just sour grapes. As South Wales EETPU official Wyn Bevan said of his Hitachi deal, 'if other unions had been offered it, they wouldn't have turned it down'. Commenting on the proposed no-strike deal at Nissan, local TUC official Tom Burlinson offered to bet his next month's pay packet (a not inconsiderable sum) 'that every major union in the country has signed deals like this'. Indeed Burlinson's own union — the general and municipal workers' — has actively pursued company union status in a number of firms, notably at the Aiwa hi-fi company in Gwent. The supposedly left-wing Transport and General Workers' Union has done similar deals — for example at Continental Can in Wrexham.

Empty shells

Company unionism means the end of effective workplace organisation. It is the end of 10 years of management efforts to undermine the independent role of shop stewards. Employers began by drawing shop stewards away from the rank and file by involving them in consultation and participation procedures. They gave stewards time off the job and special facilities. As a result stewards became more concerned about the company's problems of productivity and profitability than with workers' problems of wages and conditions. The deepening recession demands that unions are reduced to an even more subservient role.

Union officials have become isolated from rank and file workers and too dependent on the bosses to be able to provide an effective defence of workplace organisation. They have become accustomed to recruiting union members en bloc through agreements with employers. The closed shop is enforced by agreement between union officials and management, not by rank and file initiative. Union dues are deducted from wages by the company — through the check-off system — and paid direct into the union bank account. When the employers now announce that they are withdrawing the concessions they have made in the past, the unions can only plead for mercy. They can only offer cooperation in delivering more sacrifices in workers' living standards, working conditions, and union rights, in the hope that the union can cling on to recognition and badly needed subscription income. On the other hand, they can — like the EETPU — try and sell their services as a scab union to firms where unions are currently not recognised. In either case workers are left with a mere shell of trade unionism at a time when strong organisation is more vital than at any time for many years.

Fighting back

To defend workplace organisation today it has to be rebuilt on different foundations. The offices and institutions which have grown up over the past 10 or 15 years have been built on a common commitment with management to corporate survival, economic efficiency and higher productivity. Workplace representatives have been complicit in mass redundancies, the imposition of harsher working conditions and the removal of traditional protections. Shop stewards have ended up helping to create the conditions that today make them irrelevant to workers and dispensable to management.

Many workers have become despondent about the prospects for fighting the bosses and cynical about their unions. Many shop stewards have either become errand boys for the employers or another statistic on the unemployment register. Workers need workplace organisation that is based on a commitment to defend jobs and conditions, not company viability or public service efficiency. This demands a decisive break with the collaborative practices of the past.

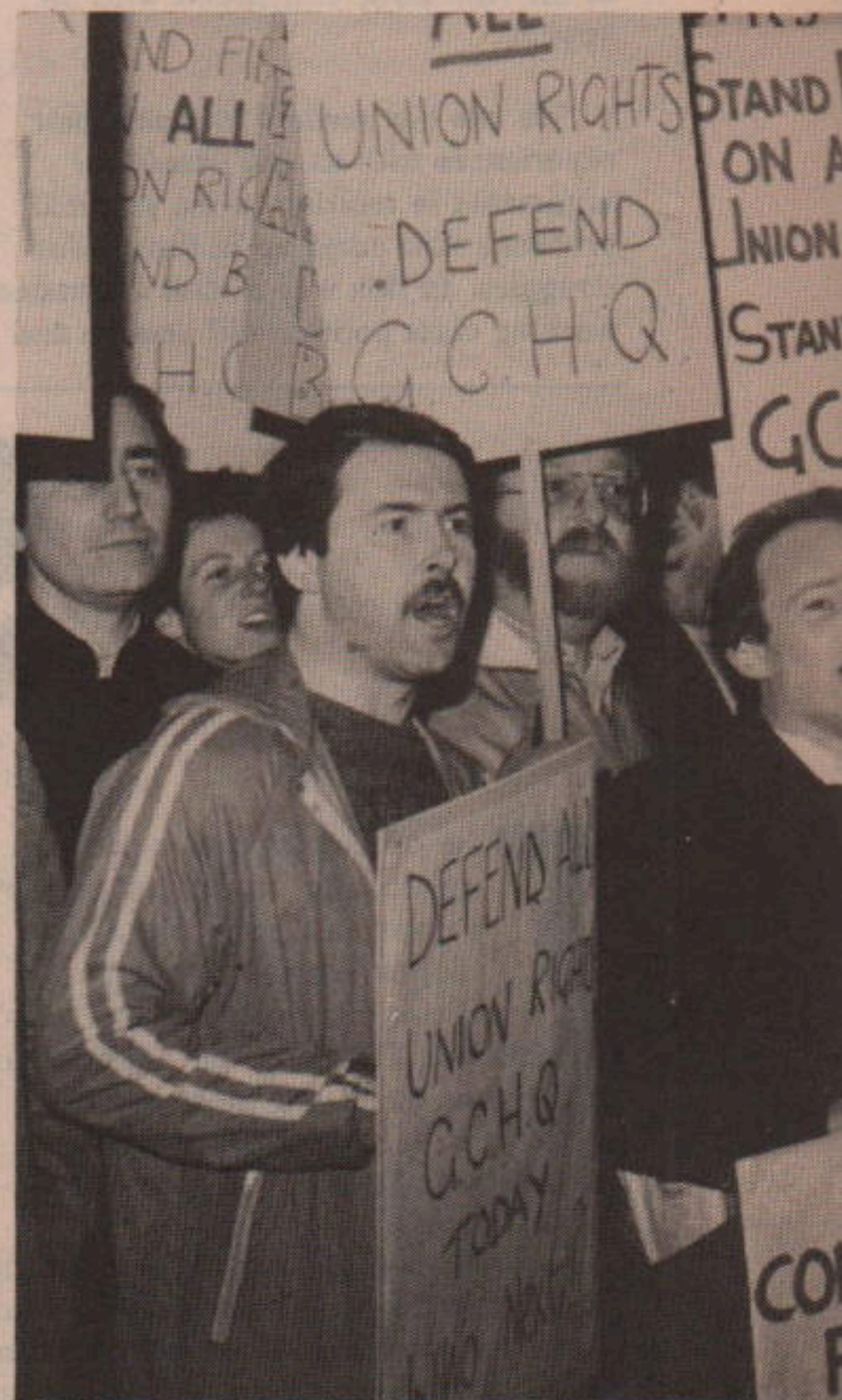
● **Independence:** the shop stewards we need must be independent of the bosses. Their job is to safeguard workers' interests, not to concern themselves with the employers' problems of competing, making a profit, or raising state revenues. Taking an independent stand requires the establishment of an independent organisation. This means breaking off all formal ties, withdrawing from all standing committees and repudiating any written agreements with management that are disadvantageous to workers' interests. Shop stewards can meet employers when the occasion demands to present the workers' case and negotiate. Any further contact can only advance the employers' aim of pressing workers to accept responsibility for management's problems of profitability and productivity.

● **Solidarity:** one of the most serious political weaknesses that has undermined trade union organisation and workers' unity is the failure to fight for the interests of black and women workers. Workers must reject the union leaders'



After Japan, Britain: Japanese-style company unions

token positive discrimination gestures and struggle to end trade union complicity in discriminatory employment practices. Black and women workers don't need token gestures — they need unions that fight discrimination and oppression. Workers must make special efforts to ensure that women and black workers can play a full role in the union. This does not mean setting aside token seats on equal opportunities committees. The problem is not getting women and black workers to join the unions — it is making the unions fit for them to join. When the unions start fighting for free



Fighting for the right to fight: civil servants rebelled

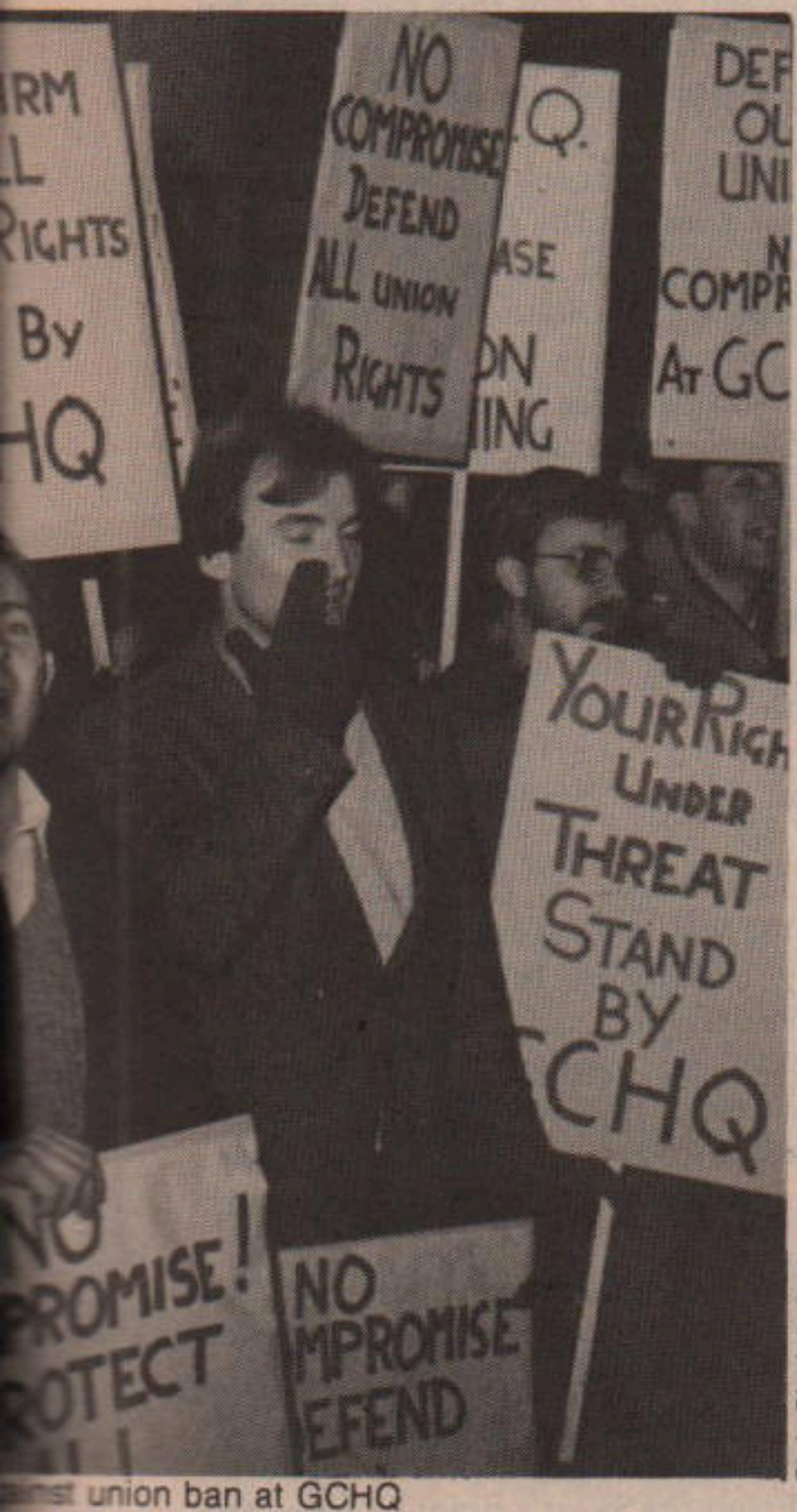
ding in the workplace



and brutal shopfloor discipline pose a real threat to British workers in the eighties

abortion on demand and free all-day nursery facilities, and against discrimination (both inside and outside the workplace), immigration controls, police harassment and racist attacks when they will be something for the employers to reckon with.

● **Industrial unions:** in the past, joint shop stewards' committees and union combines have failed to overcome sectional divisions between workers in different unions in the same industry or service sector. Industrial action is often undermined by rivalries among different unions in the same workplace. Health workers are constantly embroiled in squabbles between Cohse and Nupe. Every time car workers go on strike, solidarity is dissipated by conflicts between members of the transport workers' union and the engineers. Action on the railways has been weakened time and again by disputes



union ban at GCHQ

between Aslef and the NUR. These irrational divisions help to perpetuate union bureaucracies and disorganise the working class. We need union organisation along 'industrial' lines. A single organisation for all workers in an enterprise, industry or branch of the public sector is the only sensible arrangement from the point of view of the working class. We can move towards this goal through rank and file bodies in every workplace that cut across bureaucratic divisions.



Sign of the times: steel unions support bosses' campaigns to tie workers' jobs to corporate profits

● **Reject check-off:** to ensure control over workplace organisation workers should repudiate the check-off system. Shop stewards should maintain close contact and regular discussion with workers through regular dues collections. The end of the check-off system would also give workers direct access to the resources necessary to fund industrial action.

● **100 per cent trade union organisation:** the closed shop is now under attack. Although it served a useful function in the past in stabilising workplace conflict, many employers now feel sufficiently confident to get rid of it. The trouble is that in its present form of a union-management agreement signed between

employers and union officials, rank and file workers have little stake in defending the closed shop system. Yet the defence of workers' interests in the workplace depends on maintaining strong, and wherever possible, 100 per cent, trade union organisation.

Active workers' response to the attack on the closed shop must be to reject union membership agreements and fight to establish closed shops under rank and file control. This means that militants must convince their workmates of the necessity for collective organisation. Having convinced the majority, they will be in a position to use collective pressure on a minority of free-riders. If necessary, traditional sanctions may be required to maintain unity in the workplace. A closed shop established, controlled and enforced by workers will be easy to defend against the employers or the Tories. A bureaucratic closed shop, based on a pile of membership cards and paper agreements, will collapse at the first push.

● **Mass meetings:** it is of vital importance that shop stewards are closely accountable to the workers they represent. The government and the bosses are promoting the widespread use of secret ballots in elections for union officials and in decisions over taking industrial action. Some large employers, such as BL and BSC, have balloted their entire workforces over corporate plans for the future.

These measures are presented as the most democratic expression of workers' views. In reality, they are devices to minimise the influence of militants — and to maximise the pressures on the mass of workers who are demoralised by unemployment and past union betrayals. The secret ballot is a means of strengthening the influence of the employers disguised as an extension of democracy.

The employers and the government prefer ballots because they allow every worker to vote in the isolation of his own home. It is at home where the pressures of the bosses' propaganda, supplemented by media campaigns, are greatest and the views of activists can scarcely be heard. Some trade union leaders prefer secret ballots for the same reason as the employers — they weaken the influence of militants.

Mass meetings, on the other hand, are much

more democratic. They can be held at or near the workplace and can be called in immediate response to a dispute with management. Mass meetings allow the issues to be thoroughly thrashed out among the workers on the spot. They allow apologists for the employers to be confronted by militants. They enable the more active workers to convince the more passive and inexperienced workers of the need to take on the employers.

Pressures of tradition and habit, and concern about maintaining the family income, always bear down heavily on the mass of workers. Workers are always reluctant to risk loss of income and even livelihood in strike action. Mass meetings and the maximum possible democratic discussion and debate are vital to raise workers' consciousness of the need for collective action. This is why the direct election



No-strike deal salesman: EETPU boss Chapple

of representatives and decisions over industrial action should be taken at mass meetings of all the workers involved. Attempts to weaken genuine workers' democracy by ballots approved by bosses and bureaucrats must be firmly rejected.

To ensure the accountability of union representatives to the workers, negotiations with employers should take place in public. Workers should have the right to replace their representatives at regular mass meetings if they are dissatisfied with their performance.

● **Workers' business:** employers should be forced to allow shop stewards to carry out their union duties in the company's time. But 'facility time' should be under workers' control — not the employers'. It is not a matter of how much time shop stewards spend on union work but what they do in this time, whether the time is spent on employers' problems or workers' problems. Today many shop stewards and convenors spend hours every week discussing questions of productivity, company performance, sales, investment etc. No wonder employers are willing to pay for trade unionists to devote their energies to sorting out management difficulties.

Workers need to make sure that their representatives spend their employers' time on workers' business, dealing with the problems of saving jobs, securing conditions, maintaining wages. Fighting for stewards to be given time to do real union business is an essential part of defending workers' interests. We need to redefine 'facility time' as time for organising the workers — not a perk from the employer for participating in industrial relations.

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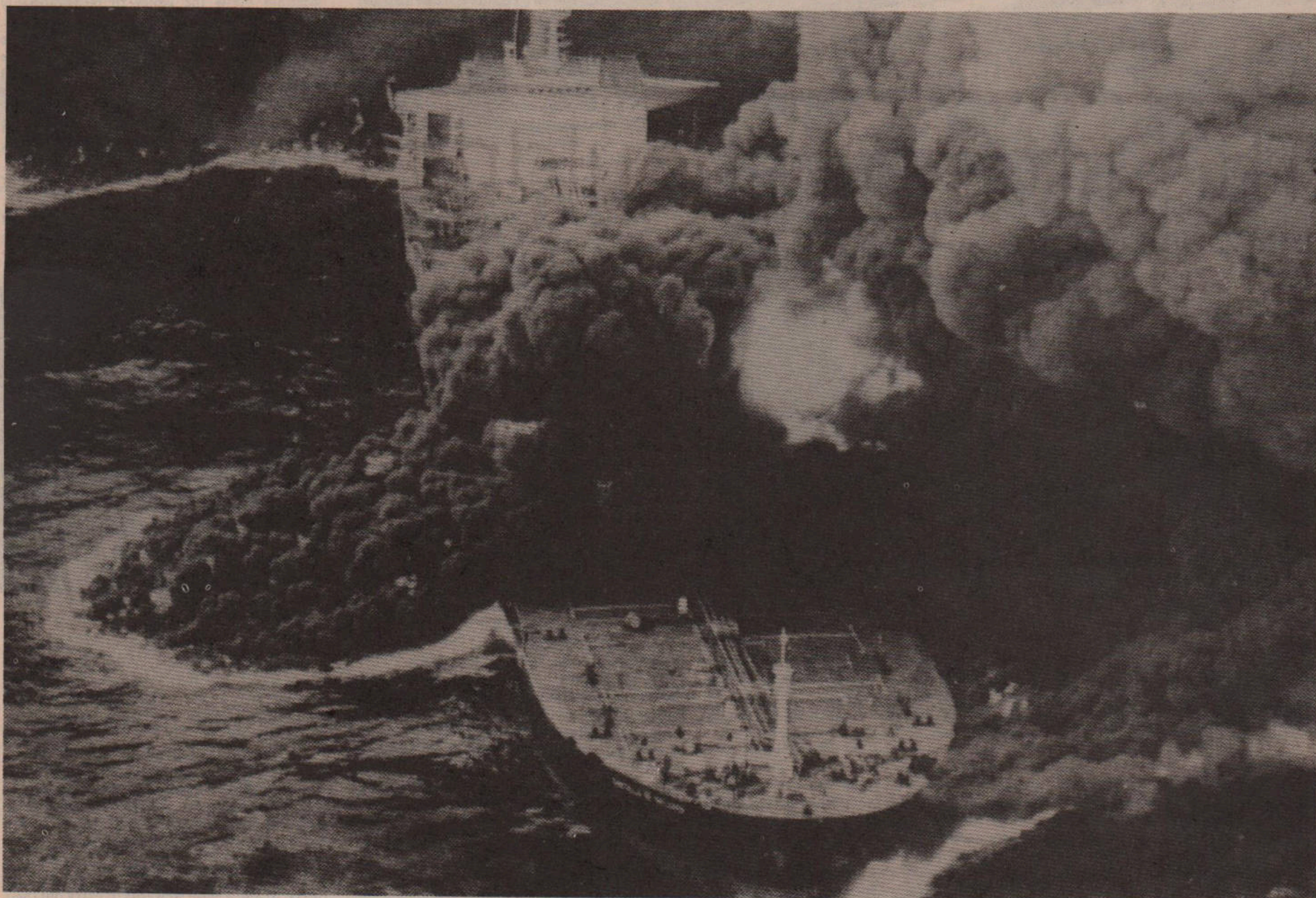
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The Gulf War

Oil on troubled waters



In May and June, the Gulf War exploded back into Western press headlines. Iraq's attempt to widen the conflict with Iran by bombing oil tankers in the Shatt al-Arab waterway raised fears that the four year old war was finally about to close the Straits of Hormuz and cut oil shipments. Lloyds of London pushed cargo insurance rates up 50 per cent and oil prices leapt on the Rotterdam spot market, as rumours spread of American warfleets steaming into the Gulf to keep the Straits open. Yet after the initial panic, the imperialist powers calmed down and sat back to watch the war continue. *Inez Landa* explains why the West is not sweating over the Gulf War — yet.

TWO FACTORS account for the lack of heat under Western statesmen's collars over the latest outbreak of fighting in the Gulf. First, a glut of oil is currently flooding the world's markets. Second, the war is still a local affair which does little damage to the West's vital trading interests in the Middle East. Indeed the conflict between Iran and Iraq has allowed the imperialists to tighten their grip on the Gulf states.

A decade ago, in the aftermath of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Arab members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) imposed an oil boycott on Israel's American allies and quadrupled crude oil prices. Opec's new-found ability to cripple advanced industrial societies sent shock waves through Western capitals. European and American commentators blamed the 'all-powerful' oil sheikhs for the world's economic ills. Yet 10 years later, in March 1983, the Opec countries were in such dire straits that they were forced to implement the first price cut in the organisation's 23 year history. Today, Opec members continually undercut official prices to grab a bigger share of the shrinking world market for oil. The last decade has shown that far from controlling the world economy, the oil producing countries of the

Middle East are themselves dominated by the global capitalist system. Like other underdeveloped capitalist countries dependent on the export of a single commodity, they are tied to the needs of the imperialist powers. As the West has cut its demand for oil in the recession and diversified its sources in a drive to cut costs, so Opec's standing has declined. The importance to the West of oil brought through the Gulf has fallen with it.

The Opec share of the capitalist world's shrinking oil market fell from 67.4 per cent in the mid-seventies to 44.6 per cent in 1982. The oil shipped through the Straits of Hormuz has lost its position as the lifeblood of Western industry. The proportion of the major industrial economies' oil passing through the Straits is down from around half in the early seventies to less than 20 per cent today. This decline has not affected all the imperialist states equally. While America has cut its dependence on the Gulf shipping lanes to just three per cent of national oil needs, Japan still looks to the traditional oil trade for half of its supply. But the Western powers have united to ensure they can all survive a disaster in the Gulf. President Reagan has stockpiled 400 million barrels of oil for a rainy day, to be distributed to his

allies through a recently signed emergency sharing scheme. If the 7.8 million barrels a day coming through the Straits were cut off by the war, alternative supplies are available from numerous countries desperate to sell their oil. These include Nigeria, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia (through its extensive pipeline system), Indonesia, Mexico and the Soviet Union. Any move by Iran or Iraq to close the Straits could still spark a panic on Western money markets. But with an estimated three months' supply stored among the advanced industrial countries, it would not cause a repeat of the chaos of the 1973-74 'oil crisis'.

Arms bonanza

Since their oil supplies are fairly secure, the Western powers are happy to let the bloody war in the Gulf drag on at its present local level. Indeed the conflict has had its advantages for the imperialist club. Since Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran in September 1980, the conditions of war have allowed the imperialists to draw both radical Gulf regimes back into the mainstream of the established world order. Weapons sales from the West and its proxies have kept both sides armed to the teeth. And the economic strains of four years of fighting have forced the Gulf combatants to make peace with the West in return for foreign credit and oil sales. Hussein has been obliged to play down his overtures to the Soviet Union, while Khomeini has lost sight of his goal of an independent Islamic republic (see box).

Arms sales to the Gulf combatants have reached record proportions. American commentators have dubbed the conflict 'Milo Minderbender's war' because the

propensity for Western powers to arm both sides at once brings to mind the gun-toting activities of the *Catch 22* character. Most Western powers have taken a strictly neutral attitude to the later stages of the Gulf War, seeking to sell what guns they can while not upsetting the finely-balanced contest. Only France is heavily committed to one side — Iraq. Seventy per cent of Iraq's military imports still come from the Soviet Union. But France supplies the sharp end of Iraq's arms needs, such as the Super Etendard-Exocet missile combination, used to good effect in recent forays over the Gulf. Iraq currently accounts for some 40 per cent of French defence contracts. Meanwhile, some British arms consultants train Iranians to use anti-aircraft systems, while others teach Iraqis to fly fighters.

Iran has had some difficulty buying Western guns on the open market. Along with Syria and Libya, Iran is accused by Reagan of sponsoring 'state-backed terrorism' in the Middle East, and is formally barred from buying arms from America and many of its allies. But the propaganda war against Iran is only a cover to justify imperialist intervention in the region. Western arms salesmen do not allow such diplomatic manoeuvres to interfere with their trade. Iran has been able to buy their wares through the back door, from Western satellites such as Israel and South Korea.

The Gulf War arms bonanza has proved a sizeable bonus for the imperialists. But they have had to do some careful calculating to make sure their commercial endeavours do not backfire by allowing the war to get out of control. From the West's point of view, the most endearing feature of the Iran-Iraq conflict is its restricted character. As long as

it does not spill over into the wider region around the Gulf, they are content to see the bodies pile up on battlefields reminiscent of the First World War. Each imperialist power has tried to make use of the local unease caused by the war to further its interests in the crucial markets of the Middle East.

Staking claims

The Middle East ranks only behind Europe and North America, as an export market for the major industrial nations. Oil revenues gave the region's rulers money to spend on development and the backward character of their home industries forced them to import what they could not produce themselves. Manufactured goods and food have flooded into the Middle East from Western states desperate to find foreign outlets to help them climb out of the depths

of recession. The huge Saudi Arabian market has assumed particular importance. Between 1975 and 1982, the value of Saudi imports more than trebled. While trade with the Middle East expanded, the pattern of its distribution among the advanced countries shifted away from the USA, the region's long-standing guardian. America's share of the Saudi market has declined from 25 per cent to 18 per cent over the past decade. Last year Japan displaced the USA as the number one exporter to Saudi Arabia.

The tensions surrounding the Gulf War have encouraged competition between the imperialists for influence in the region. Since America's puppet the Shah of Iran was deposed in the revolt which brought Khomeini to power in 1979, other Arab states have been loath to lean too heavily on US power. They have rejected American attempts to establish bases in the region and

frowned upon Oman for cooperating with Reagan's military build-up. No Arab ruler has wanted to be closely associated with the stream of Middle East peace plans coming out of Washington. America's withdrawal from Lebanon earlier this year underlined doubts about its reliability as the policeman of the region.

Arab oil states have sought to widen their circle of imperialist friends, and have found no shortage of Western handshakes. Saudi Arabia tried very hard to buy West German Leopard tanks last year, despite the ban on German arms sales outside Nato. France has used its base in Iraq to press for more say in Middle Eastern affairs. Japan has made considerable inroads into areas under American influence, seizing control of the Middle East's booming car markets and doling out substantial loans. In June, Tokyo staked a claim to political influence with a

failed attempt to mediate between Iran and Iraq. Even Britain, the weakest of the industrial powers, increased its exports to the Middle East by 19 per cent a year in 1981 and 1982, and by 15 per cent in 1983.

But despite the conflict between the Western nations over trade, they remain united on the need to prevent the Gulf conflict spilling over into countries whose stability is vital to all of them. Ironically, this shared concern about security has allowed the USA to re-establish itself in some of the Gulf states. The recent Gulf bombings sent Arab statesmen searching for armed assistance. America's overwhelming military superiority, with aircraft carrier task forces prowling near the Straits, made it the number one candidate. Formerly 'neutralist' states such as Kuwait began criticising Reagan for his failure to intervene more actively. While they did not ask directly for America to send in the marines — a risk Reagan is reluctant to take in an election year — the Arab states moved closer to US defence plans. America's endeavour to gain base facilities for its Rapid Deployment Force (now renamed the US Central Command) is much closer to achieving its aims. This trend was confirmed by the joint US-Saudi operation which shot down two Iranian fighters in June.

Watching game

Far from being a sign of strength, however, the Arab nations' ultimate reliance on declining American power indicates the region's instability. Today the USA would be hard pressed to resolve a wider conflict in the Middle East. And as long as the Gulf War continues, the potential for a broader explosion exists. The imperialists may be content to allow the local war to continue as a backdrop to their search for influence. But war is unpredictable. Noting with dismay that some US money men welcomed the war's adverse effect on Iraqi and Iranian oil exports because it allowed oil producers like Nigeria and Mexico to pay off more of their debts to the West, one American commentator summed up the imperialists' precarious position:

'A world economy that depends on a hideous war to maintain it must have something seriously wrong with it.'

The recession has exposed what's 'seriously wrong' with the imperialists' system. It has undercut their ability to contain the tensions created by their domination in the Third World. The days when America could police the Middle East via its satellites, the Shah of Iran and Israel, are gone. Today the West has to rely on manipulating a war to protect its interests in the Gulf. Its strategy could backfire at any time.

The Arab states are acutely aware of the threat to their rule posed by any larger conflagration in the Gulf. Falling oil revenues have forced them to cut back on consumption at home. Opec's current trade account was turned around from a surplus of \$61 billion in 1981 to a deficit of \$30 billion in 1983. Subsequent cuts in imports threaten to ignite Opec members' unstable societies. Most Gulf dictators preside over volatile populations made up of many different Arab nationalities. Since 1979 they have been terrified that Khomeini's message of militant Islamic rebellion could spread through the Middle East. Thus the Arab powers have backed Iraq to the tune of \$30 billion. But the Iraqis have been unable to put Khomeini down. Today, the rulers of the Middle East and the West continue to watch for any sign that the Gulf War might spark off a wider outbreak of unrest. If Iran suffers a heavy setback, remarks top US pundit Vahan Zanyan, 'the retaliation scenarios are very juicy'. Juicy retaliation scenarios are one way of putting it. A full scale Middle East bloodbath is another. The imperialists' complacency over the Gulf War could be short-lived.

For the time being, however, the West can only gain by watching the war continue. The losers are the masses of the Gulf. Casualties in the war of attrition have already reached hundreds of thousands. The spectacle of 12 year olds being slaughtered in 'human wave' attacks may be of little concern to the imperialists. But it is a bloodbath workers in the West must act to end, by opposing Western attempts to tighten the stranglehold on the Middle East.

Iraq and Iran in crisis

President Hussein of Iraq and Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini have used the war to unite their divided peoples behind their regimes. But both have been forced to buy their continued rule at the cost of closer ties with imperialism.

Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime came to power in Iraq through a 1968 military coup. Saddam combined internal repression with an attempt to develop the Iraqi economy free from direct Western domination. In 1972 he nationalised the imperialist-owned Iraq Petroleum Company to provide funds for an ambitious programme of industrialisation. Abroad, he signed a 15 year military and economic treaty with the Soviet Union and sided with Libya against Western peace initiatives in the Middle East.

Saddam's radical gestures did not discourage growing links with imperialism, as oil revenues flowed in from 1975. In the mid-seventies Western powers pushed the Soviet Union down to seventh place in the ranks of Iraq's trading partners. The launch of a full-scale industrial development scheme in 1981 had imperialist interests queuing up to get into Iraq. Between 1979 and 1981, the share of West German contractors' foreign earnings coming from Iraq soared from two to 40 per cent, while British exports rose by almost half. France became more heavily committed still to Iraq's future, sending \$5 billion in loans and 6000 engineers to aid Saddam's expansion plans.

At the height of Iraqi prosperity, Saddam launched his attack on Iran. His aim was to further Iraq's claims as the major power in the Middle East and prevent Khomeini's rebellion spreading among Iraq's own large Shiite community. But Saddam had fatally underestimated Iran's capacity to resist. Four years later, Iraq's attempts to 'internationalise' the conflict by bombing the Gulf indicate its desperation. The war has cut off Iraq's major oil outlets and slashed exports from more than three million barrels a day to around 0.6 million barrels. Revenues are down to less than a third of pre-war levels.

Go West, Saddam

The collapse of oil revenues has accelerated Iraq's turn to the West to finance its war effort and keep vital imports moving. To stave off collapse, Iraq has accepted \$30 billion from reactionary Arab regimes, \$7 billion from France, \$3.5 billion from Japan and credits from America and West Germany. Last year Britain extended a credit package of £250 million to protect its second biggest Middle East export market.

The war and recession have wrecked Saddam's dreams of independent development. But the nationalist sentiments generated around the struggle with Iran have allowed him to extend his base of support at home away from his own clan. Even the oppressed Kurds have agreed to a ceasefire in return for



Fastest gun in the Middle East: Iraq's Saddam Hussein inspects his Western technology

a say in the war government. But the national peace Saddam has established remains precarious. The president still prefers the safety of his palace to the streets of Baghdad where he sees assassins on every corner.

The war has led to a dramatic about turn in the policies of Khomeini's Islamic republic of Iran. The mullahs in Iran came to power in 1979 promising to kick out the 'satans' — the imperialist powers which had backed the Shah — nationalise trade, Islamicise the banks, pass a land reform, and launch a massive housing and social services programme. They sought to reduce Iran's reliance on oil revenues, cut back on imports, and build up indigenous Iranian industry. Yet the recession and the added pressures of waging the war with Iraq forced an abrupt U-turn in late 1982. By then, industry was operating at 40 per cent of capacity, an exodus of skilled and professional personnel had created serious bottlenecks in the economy and oil exports had dropped to about a fifth of their levels under the Shah. The mullahs were scraping up money for their foreign exchange reserves by auctioning crown jewels and gold in Switzerland. When the costs of war damages and military expenditures began to build up, the mullahs ditched their convictions and switched to an economic strategy no different from that of the Shah.

Return to the fold

Oil exports were doubled to some two million barrels a day, bringing in revenues to finance Iran's mushrooming imports. This year, the effects of the war have forced Iran to halve output again. But Khomeini's price cuts make Iranian oil an attractive buy which will still earn his regime some \$15 billion this year. The switch towards greater reliance on oil was accompanied by easing controls on the private sector, welcoming imports, putting greater emphasis on management and efficiency in industry and encouraging the return of expatriates and Western business enterprises. In 1983, trade delegations from Italy, Britain, Japan and West Germany signed new bilateral trade

agreements. Imports from West Germany rose to \$1.4 billion as Iran became the most important growth market in the Middle East.

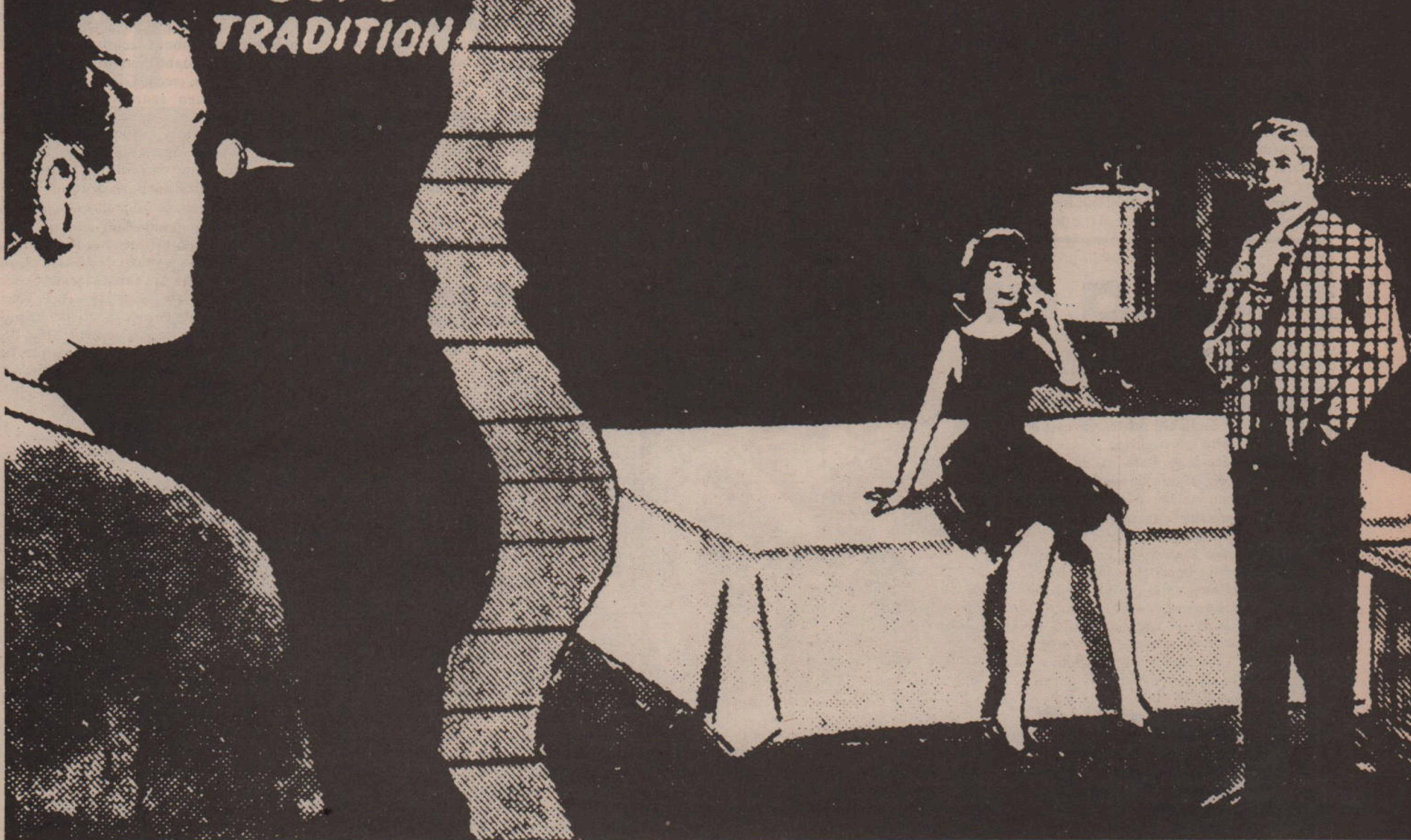
Iran is a very attractive proposition for imperialism today. It has paid off all previous debts and built up substantial foreign exchange reserves. Iran's international financial credibility has been totally restored. Khomeini has launched an ambitious \$170 billion development plan which will require considerable foreign expertise and investment. America's strictly neutral stance in the Iran-Iraq war is maintained to ensure that Iran's return to the imperialist fold takes place on the West's terms.

The Islamic fervour whipped up around the war has proved crucial to stabilising Khomeini's rule in Iran. But the country is still bitterly divided. Crack units of Revolutionary Guards have been diverted from the front line to deal with rebellious Ghamshadai tribes in Baluchistan and Kurds on the northern border with Iraq. Although opposition guerrillas have been mercilessly put down, the potential for popular unrest still exists. It has been underlined by the economic hardship brought on by the war. Iran's improved standing with Western bankers has been bought at the cost of impoverishment for the masses. Iran has already blocked imports of 110 'non-urgent' items, creating shortages of consumer goods. A section of Iranian mullahs is openly voicing doubts about continuing the war while Iran's economic base suffers. Their protests have helped postpone the long-awaited Ramadan offensive by the reported half million troops massed on the border with Iraq. But Khomeini still needs the national sentiments mobilised around the war to guarantee his survival.

Iran's advantage in the war has been undermined by its internal difficulties, its problems in buying arms, and the superiority of Iraq's air power. Neither side is capable of a decisive blow to end the conflict. The First World War-style bloodshed in the field seems set to continue, while the imperialists use the levers of trade and credit to draw their oppressive net tighter around the masses of Iraq and Iran.

IN THE
JAMES
BOND
TRADITION

THE MOLEHUNTERS



Burgess and MacLean, Philby and Blunt, and more recently Michael Bettaney and Roger Hollis, have all provided a useful service for the British establishment. For 30 years the moles have been a constant source of public concern, diverting attention away from real social problems and on to enemies abroad and subversives at home. Carefully fostered public paranoia about Soviet penetration of the security services helps to legitimise the extension of the state's repressive activities to deal with the real threat to the system from the working class. *Andy Clarkson investigates.*

THE LATEST outbreak of mole fever took place at the height of the miners' strike. In the same July week in which Margaret Thatcher denounced the miners as 'the enemy within' Granada Television's *World in Action* featured revelations about treachery perpetrated on behalf of the enemy without — the Soviet Union. A former chief MI5 molehunter alleged that 'intelligence-wise it was 99 per cent certain' that Sir Roger Hollis, MI5 director-general from 1956 to 1965, had been a Russian spy. Granada's revelation had in fact been revealed (and widely publicised) three years earlier in Chapman Pincher's best selling *Their trade is treachery*. Yet this did not prevent the regurgitated tale from receiving the big splash treatment customary for mole stories.

In the opening weeks of the miners' strike the media's attention was fixed on the Old Bailey trial of Michael Bettaney. Bettaney was a one time admirer of Hitler who was apparently converted to socialism by his active service in occupied Ireland. He was finally sentenced to 23 years in prison for trying to pass secrets to the Russians. This eccentric former member of North Coudson Labour Party and incompetent would-be double agent was held up for public chastisement and ridicule.

The media has been working overtime to unite the nation against the traitors in our midst. The Bettaney case came at a convenient time for the Tories. Hollis, who has been dead for 10 years, had to be dug up specially for the occasion. Meanwhile the

state's repressive apparatus, with the assistance of its special security services, launched an unprecedented assault on the miners. It is significant that there is little evidence that the whole cast of villains from Burgess to Bettaney ever did any real damage to British imperialist interests.

James Bond, anti-terrorist

The public preoccupation with the state's security services poses a two-fold challenge to the labour movement. It is a political threat in that scare stories, and the endless stream of novels, plays and films about moles and spies, help to galvanize chauvinist sentiment. They reinforce the notion of left-wing politics as an alien conspiracy to subvert national security, as a menace not merely to the ruling class but to the whole British people. Mole hysteria also raises an organisational threat to the labour movement. It creates a climate of opinion sympathetic to more surveillance and more monitoring, more spying on and prying into the activities of trade unions and left-wing organisations.

An editorial in *The Times* following the release of the Hollis story illuminated the purpose of the whole carry on from Le Carre through James Bond to Smiley and C15. The target is not only the 'Russian spies' but also 'anti-democratic groups' at home:

'Britain needs a successful and efficient security service with high morale not just to stop the breeding of a generation of

Chernenko's Englishmen, but to catch terrorists and to monitor anti-democratic groups on the extreme right and extreme left.' (23 July)

History shows that the balance of repression always falls heavily on the 'extreme left'.

The Times continued, pointing out that 'penetration' by moles had 'seriously tarnished' the 'public and parliamentary image' of the security services. To restore this image it recommended a 'string of necessarily private successful operations' and 'a permanent arrangement for political oversight' through some sort of senior parliamentary select committee. Again history provides many chilling illustrations of the sort of 'successful operations' that would be required to restore the confidence of *The Times* in the intelligence services (see opposite). Any arrangement for political oversight would merely provide a means of promoting a broad consensus of support for more intense repression.

The British left is an easy prey for the security forces. It is ironic that the left's leading authority on state security — investigative journalist Duncan Campbell — echoes the approach of *The Times* to the problems of the intelligence services. Here is the opening paragraph of his book on the subject:

'Oversight of the burgeoning international security and intelligence apparatus is a considerable problem for democracy. Vast sums are swallowed on intelligence collection, yet the agencies systematically fail to foresee important crises. There is a clear case for public and parliamentary scrutiny.' (*Phone tapping and the security state*, New Statesman Report, 1981)

The left-wing whistleblowers on state security constantly confuse the repressive and the representative machinery of the state. The state's repressive apparatus is directly accountable, not to Parliament, but to the ruling class which is fully in

control of its activities. The state's representative body — Parliament — exists to ensure the widest possible public approval for the broad policy measures enacted by the government on behalf of the ruling class.

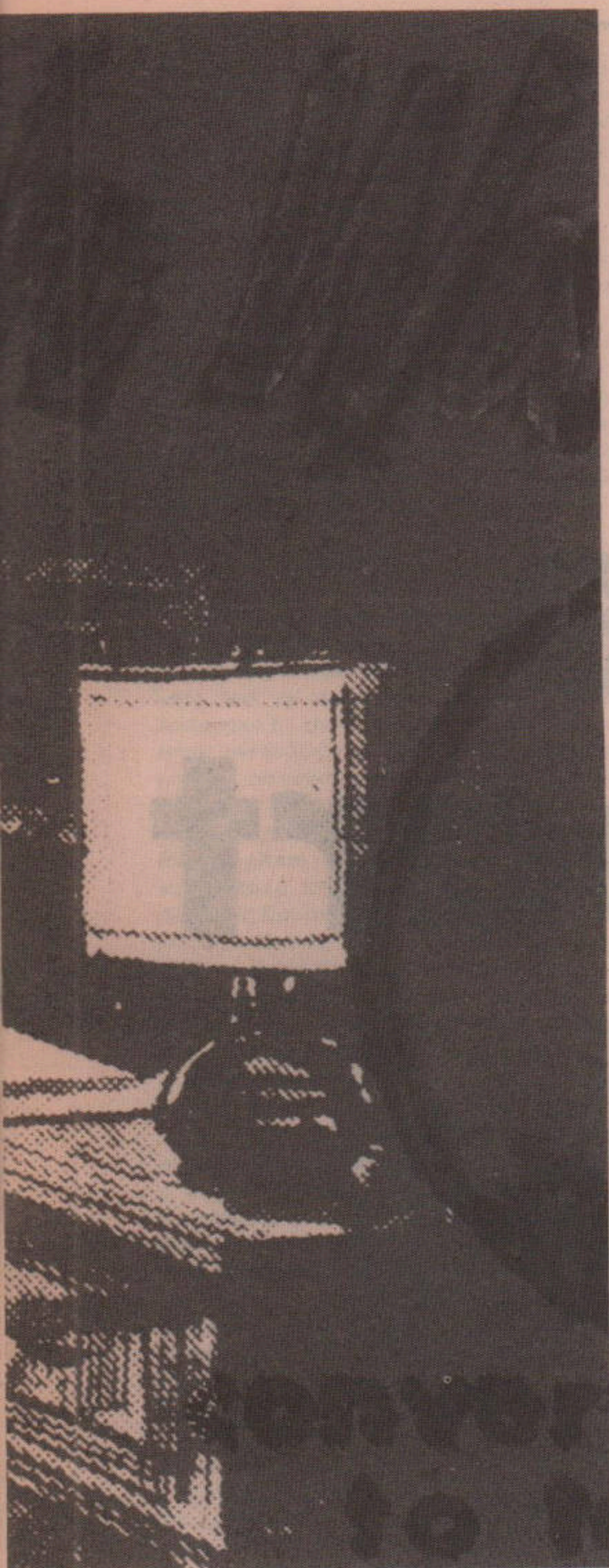
In response to the Bettaney case Miranda Ingram drew out the logic of Campbell's *New Statesman* critique in *New Society*. She described MI5 as 'a protector of our democracy against those who threaten it'. In her view the security service had 'a valid role to play', but should be seen to be 'a body that is truly representative of the British people'.

Campbell analyses in great detail the growing technological sophistication of the security services. He draws attention to how much this costs the ruling class, questions its efficiency in defending national security, and calls for greater accountability of the intelligence system to Parliament. He accepts the legitimacy of state repression directed against the Soviet Union or the IRA but warns of its use against 'the public'.

Parliament's only rôle in relation to the security forces is to rubber stamp their demands, and to agree every year to foot the bill for their activities. When the left pleads for more public accountability for the security services it exposes only its own naivety. When it expresses concern for the efficiency of the security forces and approves of the repression of Soviet spies or Irish republicans today the left endorses a machine of terror that will be used tomorrow against the labour movement.

Left wide open

In addition to its political capitulation on the issue of state security the left makes it easy in practice for the intelligence services to penetrate labour movement organisations. The loose standards of organisation and membership that prevail among British left groups provide ideal conditions for secret policemen. Strangers can easily attend not only public meetings but branch meetings of



many left-wing organisations where a wealth of information can be collected. Demonstrations and other public activities are so badly organised and stewarded that they can easily be taken over by uniformed, not even plainclothes, policemen. The British left's notorious affection for pub gossip and lengthy telephone conversations provides intelligence gatherers with more valuable material.

Many radical individuals in trade union bodies, women's groups, anti-nuclear groups and other left-wing campaigns assume that because they are not seriously trying to smash the state then the state is not seriously preparing to smash them. They should study history, especially the events in Germany and Spain in the thirties when threatened ruling classes crushed all labour movement and radical organisations. It is futile for left wingers to put their faith in parliamentary accountability and legal protections of what Campbell calls 'our traditional liberties'. Instead left wingers should tighten up their own organisations and prepare to defend their rights against all forms of state repression.

Learning from the Bolsheviks

The history of the revolutionary movement provides some valuable lessons in how to deal with the secret police. In pre-revolutionary Russia the Bolsheviks faced one of the most extensive networks of spies, double agents and *agents provocateurs* in Europe — the Tsarist Okhrana. Yet it could not prevent the Bolsheviks from seizing state power. After the revolution the voluminous files and records of the Okhrana fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks. In his fascinating survey of the archives Victor Serge noted that 'the legions of informers, provocateurs, hangmen, policemen, civil guards, Cossacks, judges, generals and priests' could not 'deflect the unswerving course of history' and save the Tsarist autocracy. In 1917 'the omniscient police of the Empire

watched impotently as the world of Tsarism plunged into the abyss'. The hatchet men of a crumbling regime could not defeat a revolutionary party based firmly on the vanguard of the working class.

In 1920 Lenin warned the international communist movement of the danger of *agents provocateurs* being sent by the bourgeoisie into the ranks of the newly formed communist parties. He advised that 'a skilful combination of illegal and legal work' was 'one of the ways to combat this danger' (*'Left wing' communism, an infantile disorder*). Lenin gave the example of the Tsarist agent Malinovsky who became a member of the Bolshevik central committee in 1912. He also became a deputy in the Duma (Tsarist Parliament) and edited a legal Bolshevik newspaper:

'While, with one hand, Malinovsky sent scores and scores of the finest Bolsheviks to penal servitude and death, he was obliged, with the other, to assist in the education of scores and scores of thousands of new Bolsheviks through the medium of the legal press.'

That Malinovsky 'did not cause still greater harm' wrote Lenin, was 'due to the correct balance between legal and illegal work'. To gain the Bolsheviks' confidence he was obliged to make a considerable contribution to disseminating legal propaganda while betraying the Bolsheviks' underground activities. He even gave speeches written by Lenin in the Duma. After the revolution he was shot.

The Bolsheviks also had to deal with the problems of suspicion and recriminations caused by rumours of police penetration and false accusations of spying and betrayal. Often the atmosphere of mistrust fostered by secret police activity was more damaging than the work of the spies themselves. The Bolsheviks insisted on the careful investigation and substantiation of allegations against any individual and vigorously combatted rumour-mongering and slander:

'It is necessary, as the condition of any victorious struggle against real provocation — and slanderous accusation of members is playing the game of provocation — that no-one should be accused lightly, and it should be impossible for an accusation against a revolutionary to be accepted without being investigated.' (Victor Serge, *What everyone should know about state repression*, 1924)

'These are simple rules', wrote Serge, 'which should be observed with inflexible vigour'.

Workers against the state

The left today could learn much from the Bolshevik approach. It has become commonplace for British left groups to accuse their political opponents of being police agents without producing evidence to substantiate such allegations. They are also often hasty in attributing incidents — such as the recent attacks on police stations in coalmining areas — to *agents provocateurs*, again without producing any hard evidence. The bosses are the only beneficiaries.

Just as the Tsarist Okhrana was not as all-powerful as it seemed, so MI5 and MI6 are not as incompetent as they often appear. The British security services are undoubtedly overburdened with upper class twits, the product of aristocratic inbreeding, public schools and Oxford and Cambridge. But the secret services have vast resources and technological expertise. They are a serious menace to the working class movement. Yet like the Tsarist secret police, the British security services are constantly corrupted by their commitment to preserve a decaying social order.

The commitment of working class revolutionaries to the replacement of this decadent system reduces the vulnerability of the communist movement to the activities of individual traitors and agents. 'The action of such parasites', observed Serge, 'has very little power against the vigour and moral strength of the proletariat'. He concluded that 'the more proletarian the revolutionary movement, the more clearly and energetically communist it is, the less danger it will face from *agents provocateurs*'. A highly class conscious workers' party is the best guarantee against the bourgeoisie's secret police.

British bulldogs

The British state developed its first fully fledged spy network to deal with the Chartist movement in the 1830s and 1840s. This was the first working class challenge to the established order. The ruling class mobilised hundreds of private soldiers, local postmasters, magistrates and journalists to provide intelligence to enable the government to contain the Chartist threat. Even before a national police force was established the authorities built up an efficient system of agents and informers. One account sums up the state's success in penetrating the Chartists:

'As 1839 drew to its close, spies in the pay of the authorities were penetrating deeply into the confidence of the Chartists in almost every district where the movement remained alive. Birmingham was a nest of them.' (FC Mather, *Public order in the age of the Chartists*)

Overzealous agents caused some problems for the authorities. Police spies regularly embellished their accounts to guarantee their continued employment. *Agents provocateurs* would go too far in fomenting plots and acts of rebellion. In 1848 Metropolitan Police spy Thomas Powell admitted drawing up plans to assassinate policemen, manufacturing weapons to cripple cavalry horses, causing arson and casting bullets. Only the creation of a permanent professional organisation of spies with the formation of the Special Branch in 1884 established firm centralised control.

The Special Branch

The Special Branch emerged out of a detachment of the Royal Irish Constabulary which was sent over to London to tackle the Fenian dynamite campaign in the early eighties. The Special 'Irish' Branch soon dropped the 'Irish' from its title and was attached to the Metropolitan Police's Criminal Investigation Department. It specialised in tracking down Irish rebels, continental anarchists and other political subversives who were considered likely to attack members of the Royal Family or the government. Trained in the use of small arms, all Special Branch members either spoke a foreign language or were able to use shorthand. Russian speaking Herbert Fitch spied on the Bolsheviks in London in 1905, by hiding in a cupboard or pretending to be a waiter.

In the years leading up to the First World War the Special Branch was involved in trying to infiltrate groups of rank and file trade union militants and organisations of women fighting for the vote — in both cases with some difficulty. During the war police spies became more deeply involved in militant trade union activity and in the suppression of German and Jewish 'aliens' in Britain. After the Russian Revolution Bolshevism became the overriding menace to the British way of life. A number of left-wing British groups came under close surveillance by the Special Branch under its new director Sir Basil Thomson. Military espionage agents active in the unions were directed to distinguish carefully between responsible trade union leaders and rank and file militants:

'The army must not make the mistake of approaching the officials of a union or federation of unions as though their existence was illegal or even antagonistic to the national welfare. When they are directly or indirectly involved in the apparent cause of violence and disorder, it will nearly always be found that their own authority has been usurped by irresponsible communists, anarchists or

local hot-heads out for personal advantage or plunder only. . . . Intelligence officers must beware of prying into *bona fide* trade union organisation work and membership as though they were exploring a conspiracy.' (K Jeffrey and P Hennessy, *States of emergency*)

In the twenties and thirties the Communist Party and the movements of the unemployed were under constant harassment by the security forces. The party's King Street headquarters was raided repeatedly. In 1921 party secretary Albert Inkpin was sentenced to six months hard labour for sedition. In 1924 two Special Branch members were discovered taking notes beneath the stage of a London theatre during a CP central committee meeting. In 1925 the Special Branch rounded up virtually the entire leadership in the run-up to the General Strike. Tons of party files, papers and propaganda were confiscated in raids around the country. At subsequent trials of leading communists the state prosecutors made extensive use of notes taken by Special Branch officers at public and internal meetings. Repression continued, in a lower key, up to the Second World War.

The role of the Special Branch has declined since the thirties, as MI5 has taken over more and more of its activities. Today the Special Branch is a front organisation that provides a legal cover for the more covert sections of the repressive apparatus. It still carries out some surveillance functions while others have been delegated to the Diplomatic Protection Group, the Drugs Intelligence Unit, the Illegal Immigrants Intelligence Unit, the Special Patrol Group, and D11 — the police assassination squad.

MI5 moves in

The origin of MI5 — the Security Service proper — lies in the Boer War at the turn of the century. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office established Section H, which offered cash in exchange for information about the South African rebels. In 1906, the Committee for Imperial Defence set up an intelligence service, which took over Section H's files. Its foreign section was MI6 — the Secret Intelligence Service — with responsibility for the pursuit of British interests beyond the boundaries of the Empire. Within the Empire, in Britain and Ireland, MI5 was formally given responsibility for internal security. However it was not until the Second World War that it consolidated its grip over the Branch, which was relegated into a servicing role for MI5.

The Security Service today is a national organisation, 5000 strong and operating out of Curzon House in Mayfair. It has agents serving in the remaining colonies and with overseas British forces. Its contingent in the Six Counties (run via the Director and Coordinator of Intelligence at Stormont Castle) is responsible for obtaining information on assassination plans, mainland bombing campaigns and Loyalist infiltration of the RUC and UDR (MI6 is responsible for intelligence operations in the Twenty-six Counties).

The Security Service is run by a network of Cabinet committees under Sir Robert Armstrong and Sir Anthony Duff, permanent Cabinet secretaries. The Special Branch provides a public front for the Security Service, collecting information, making the arrests, appearing in Court, etc. The promotion of a clandestine spy system to replace the obsolete Branch is a measure of the vulnerability and decline of British imperialism.

Women and work



A life apart

Most women continue to work despite the recession. This has encouraged the view that their position in the labour market has improved. And media scare stories about the break-up of the family have fuelled the belief that women's domestic role is being eroded. *Helen Swift* argues that these two myths have obscured the real deterioration in women's position in the recession.

'WOMEN'S PLACE REALLY IS AT HOME' declared the *Daily Express* in response to a recent government report on women and employment. The rest of the gutter press echoed this imperative, reflecting the pressure on working women to take their domestic responsibilities more seriously. Yet, however much the Fleet Street tabloids may resent it, women continue to work in large numbers.

The number of women who work outside the home has increased dramatically since the seventies. But the picture of progress for women, enhanced by the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts, has disguised the grim reality of women's work. Recession and mass unemployment have prepared the way for the creation of a dual market for labour. In the primary labour market, managers, supervisors, and skilled workers are guaranteed regular employment at reasonable rates of pay and a good chance of special training. They may also receive extensive benefits and perks — a good pension scheme, private medical insurance, long holidays and good sick pay. In the secondary labour market, employers recruit workers who are more likely to be unskilled or semi-skilled on a casual or temporary basis. They receive little or no training and worse pay and conditions than the core group of workers.

Increasingly, women are coming to make up a substantial section of this emerging secondary labour market. Their traditional occupations give them all the qualifications they need to enter this vast pool of insecure, badly paid, unskilled and dreary jobs. Women workers are likely to be:

- part-time, low-paid with poor conditions
- homeworkers or outworkers
- temporary, short-term, subcontract, agency workers.

Room at the bottom

The recession has accelerated the concentration of women in low-paid, women-only occupations. Three service sectors account for nearly 70 per cent of women's jobs: 33 per cent do clerical work; 23 per cent are in catering, cleaning and hairdressing; and 13 per cent are in health, education and welfare services, the 'caring' professions. This compares with just over 45 per cent in 1975. Women are also predominant in the footwear, clothing and leather trade, in the declining textile industry, in retailing and in the professional and scientific services. Low pay is standard for women workers in these industries. Women manual workers earn only 65 per cent of men's weekly wages.

Nearly half of all women workers now work part-time. The typical part-time worker is a married woman in her early thirties with young children. She is more likely to be a cleaner in a hospital than a supervisor in a private firm. Last year, of the 263 000 new jobs created, 213 000 were for part-time women workers. Employment secretary Tom King welcomed this growing trend towards part-time work as indicative of the 'increased flexibility' of the labour market. For 'flexibility' read exploitation. As the number of part-time workers has increased employers have tried to introduce



Chris Black (reflex)

As workers and wives, women's lives are the worst the bosses can offer

further cuts in hours to deprive part-time workers of legal rights. Nearly half of all part-timers do not receive sick pay and very few benefit from pension schemes. About 40 per cent are not covered by employment protection legislation and are vulnerable to lay-offs and sackings.

Part-time work is often seen as advantageous for women because they can combine it with their family responsibilities. In fact, part-time work only reinforces women's inferior position in society. It allows women a poorly paid, insecure job at the margins of the labour market, while perpetuating their position as child-rearers, house-cleaners, food-preparers and nursemaids inside the family. The expansion of part-time work has the general effect of lowering working class living standards and weakening trade union organisation.

The growth of homeworking is another feature of the emerging secondary labour market. A 1981 official survey showed that there were 1.7 million homeworkers in England and Wales — three quarters of them employed by service sector industries. Women workers, especially black women, are consigned to long hours of super-

exploitation in this most backward sector of the capitalist economy.

A key finding of a recent official study was that outwork establishments are doing markedly better on average than firms in the same industry not relying on homeworkers:

'The flexibility provided by these types of labour can of itself be a significant factor in a firm's expansion or in its ability to ride through the recession.' (Catherine Hakim, 'Employers' use of homework, outwork and freelances', *Employment Gazette*, April 1984)

There are obvious cost advantages to firms using homeworkers. Women working at home provide their own electricity and often their own tools and machines, and they pay the rent and rates. Outworkers suffer the worst pay and conditions of any workers. They are not covered by health and safety regulations, receive no holiday or sick pay and can be laid off when trade is slack. Increased productivity is the most obvious gain, and homeworkers are their own taskmasters. Most homeworkers are on piecework, with rates as low as 23 to 26 pence an hour or £9.20 to £10.40 for a 40-

hour week. Many women work into the early hours of the morning when the kids are in bed to earn a pittance. Even when homeworkers are timeworkers, which is usually the case among new technology workers, productivity gains are considerable. One firm, ICL, declared that 25 hours' work in the home is equivalent to 40 in the office — a 60 per cent productivity increase.

Homeworking is the most backward and oppressive sector of the economy. Homeworkers generally have very heavy family commitments that prevent them even from getting a part-time job. They are isolated from fellow workers and most lack any access to trade union organisation.

Sweating it out

Women workers have always played a major role in the textile and garment industries and the sweated trades. Many of these jobs have been lost as these industries have been decimated by the recession. In thousands of small sweatshops and factories around the country, however, women are open to a wide variety of sharp practices by ruthless employers. A recent report by the Birmingham Low Pay Unit revealed widespread instances of illegal underpayment, flouting of health and safety rules, sexual harassment and racial discrimination. With unemployment running at more than 16 per cent in the Midlands, women are being forced to accept increasingly degrading work and conditions. One 16 year old machinist in a leather goods factory was offered £10 extra in her wage packet in return for sex. A 23 year old disc operator worked 37 hours a week for £58.46. To earn a bonus she had to surpass 81 000 key depressions a day, receiving 16 pence for every extra thousand.

Women's concentration in the service industries has afforded them some protection from the worst effects of the recession, which has seen the greatest job losses in manufacturing. But as the Tories step up their attack on the public sector — in the health and civil services and in education — women are bearing the brunt.

Women make up well over half of Britain's teachers, yet they have always been ghettoised at the bottom level of the teaching profession. In 1982 75 per cent of women teachers were on the two lowest pay scales. Now women teachers are being forced out in massive numbers or forced to make do with part-time work, as administrators use 'falling rolls', 'standards', 'vocational training' or 'restructuring' as excuses to slash jobs. The large scale involvement of women teachers in secondary, junior and infant schools in the recent strike action over pay indicates their response to the government squeeze on education.

In the health, catering and cleaning services women are in the forefront of the fight against cuts and privatisation. Women hospital workers, school dinner ladies and cleaners have been involved in sustained campaigns to defend their jobs, wages and conditions. In the civil service women are in the front line of moves to close down Job Centres and streamline the DHSS and get rid of thousands of civil service jobs. Even in the traditional women's domain of clerical work job losses and the prospect of more temping and freelance work loom large. The introduction of large computers, word processors and microcomputers — even on a modest scale — has led to redundancies, more part-timers and more short-term and subcontract staff. The biggest losses have occurred in large scale clerical operations among women workers. Littlewoods in Liverpool reduced staff from 1400 to just over 500 and in Preston by 50 per cent after the introduction of new technology. Empire Stores, the mail order company, cut its payroll by two thirds.

Keep it in the family

The quality bourgeois papers applauded the recent government report detailing women's role in the labour market. *The Times* pointed to the continuing segregation of the job market but argued that 'there are limits to the extent to which society should attempt to meddle in disparities of this kind'. The mouthpiece of the establishment is keenly aware that women's inferior position in the labour market reflects their subordinate position in the family. This is something

which the capitalist class has no desire to alter by 'meddling' with further equal opportunity legislation: 'if women voluntarily choose to gravitate towards tasks and company they find congenial, and part-time work which fits in with their pattern of life, that is their affair' (*The Times*, 1 June).

The employers have no objection to women being exploited at work, but it is their role as unpaid domestic slaves at home which they are most concerned with. The press thus reserved its real applause for the report's findings on women's attitude to their role in the family:

'Most married women believe their place is in the home. . . . They see their main role as looking after the home and children and regard working simply as a way of paying for "essentials".'

Women's work in the home ensures that workers are fit for work every day, year in year out, generation after generation. The crusade by employers and government to reassert the centrality and sacredness of the family is intended to ensure the continuation of this essential service.

The establishment and its acolytes in the media keep up a constant stream of dire

warnings about the break-up of the family and the loss of moral values. This is designed to cohere a public consensus that women's true place is in the home fulfilling their maternal responsibilities. Last month's Warnock Report on test tube babies upheld the sanctity of child-rearing within marriage and warned against allowing 'single mothers, lesbians and male homosexuals' to have children. Contrary to establishment fulminations and popular belief, however, the family is not about to disappear. In fact, the recession has served only to reinforce family life and women's inferior position within it, as economic dependence forces them to maintain relationships.

The decline in the marriage rate and the increase in the divorce rate have strengthened the view that the nuclear family is on the way out. The number of marriages has been falling since the early seventies and the number of divorces doubled from 74 000 in 1971 to 148 000 in 1980. However, these statistics mask important social trends. People are much more likely to remarry today than they were 10 years ago. The proportion of marriages where one or both partners had been married before increased sharply from 20 per cent in 1971 to 34 per cent in 1981. And according to the *General Household Survey*

1982, a remarkable 71 per cent of women aged between 18 and 49 were legally married and living with their husbands. About 10 per cent of single women and 20 per cent of separated or divorced women were living with men. The cohabitation figures are undoubtedly higher, but concealed by an understandable reluctance by women to come forward and risk losing social security benefits. Whether they are married or single, most women are still forced to live with men merely to survive. The nuclear family may no longer be endowed with the same legitimacy as it was 20 years ago, but it remains an enduring institution.

Double shift

Going out to work has not relieved Britain's 8.5 million women workers of any of the burden of domestic work. Most women work two shifts — one for meagre wages outside and another averaging 29 hours unpaid work in the home. And the recession has turned what was always the most enervating drudgery into a nightmare. Divorced mother of three Barbara Hewitt was sacked in June from her job as a barmaid in a social club for taking a night off. Her boss accused her of spending more time having affairs than working. Forty year old Barbara had little time for affairs. She spent more than 40 hours a week doing heavy foundry work and six nights a week and weekend lunchtimes pulling pints at the social club. Barbara worked 70 hours a week for £90 and more than 20 hours looking after her home and three kids for nothing. Like thousands of other 'supermums' she suffered from exhaustion. But the price of a night off was losing her job.

The recession has increased women's burden in the home in a hundred different ways. Mass unemployment and falling living standards have led to greater pressure on women struggling to eke out a meagre subsistence. The number of families where both husband and wife are working has declined over the last few years. Many families are now forced to rely on supplementary benefits to get by. More than half of these are in debt or behind with bills and run out of money before the end of the week. More than half lack basic items of clothing such as a warm coat or change of shoes. A recent *World in Action* documentary showed how unemployed families in Birkenhead are forced to live off a massive refuse tip. Mrs Florence Baker is forced to go on weekly forays to the tip for clothes and furniture because her husband's £50 a week state benefit is not enough to maintain their five children.

Women have paid the price in more toil for the government assault on the welfare state. Cuts in the health and social services have had a devastating impact on the elderly, the mentally handicapped and the physically disabled — and the women who are forced to look after them. Entire geriatric hospitals have been closed down and mental hospitals are some of the hardest hit. The Tories justify closures and cuts by arguing that the elderly and disabled will be better cared for in their own homes. 'Community care' has become the watchword for closure. The closure of Bradford's Thornton View geriatric hospital was justified by the district health authority as being 'not only entirely consistent with the "care in the community" initiative but an essential feature of it'. In 1983 the TUC estimated that 250 000 women act as unpaid nurses at home for the sick, old and disabled. The real figure is undoubtedly much higher.

The capitalist class does not only benefit from women working in the home free of charge to reproduce and replenish the labour force. It also gains from the effect of domestic work on women's position in the labour market. Because of their role in the family women do not compete on equal terms with men on the labour market. And when they do go out to work they are forced into the most backward and marginal sectors of the economy to work in oppressive conditions for paltry wages. Women's oppression, at home and at work, traps them in a vicious circle. The burden of domestic work prevents women from playing a full role in production. And their second-class status at work undermines their position in the home.

•Department of Employment, *Women and employment: a lifetime perspective*, HMSO.

The limits of tokenism

Since the seventies the trade unions have attempted to integrate women into their ranks. Yet they have never attempted to challenge women's subordinate position in the home and at work. Pressure from their growing female membership has forced them to adopt policies intended to take account of women's needs. More often than not this has meant calling for the insertion of spurious 'equal opportunities clauses' in collective agreements and urging employers to recognise the merits of 'positive action' in eliminating 'bias'. Many unions have followed the TUC's lead in setting up equal opportunities committees and reserving special seats for women on their committees. And union guidelines on sexual harassment at work are all the rage.

No amount of positive action and token gestures can compensate for the unions' failure to fight seriously for women's rights. The TUC and the unions have never used their industrial strength to fight for an end to discrimination against women, for equal pay or for nursery and abortion facilities. Today, when women put themselves on the line to defend their jobs, wages and conditions, the unions fail to take the action necessary to win.

● Women cleaners at Barking Hospital in East London have been out on strike for more than 20 weeks in protest at their employer's attempt to make drastic cuts in wages and conditions. At its annual conference in May their union, the National Union of Public Employees, voted for national industrial action to support the strike. Months later the Barking women are still waiting for this support to materialise.

● In an ongoing anti-privatisation fight at Hammersmith Hospital women workers have been in the forefront of the struggle to defend jobs and conditions. Their union officials have got together with management to work out a deal involving the reduction of full-time domestics from 128 to 102, with early retirement accounting for 17 of the job losses.

● Women nursery workers in Islington and Bolton have been in dispute with their Labour council employers over regrading, pay and staffing levels. Their union, Nalگو, has sought to limit the action to selected departments and has

been more concerned to preserve its relations with the Labour councils than sanction the action the women need to win.

● Women workers in Tower Hamlets council's social services department recently came out on strike in support of 50 library service workers, suspended for their opposition to library closures and cuts. Nalگو officials, anxious to maintain good relations with the Labour council, told the workers that they couldn't win, recommended a return to work with the suspensions still in force and threatened to cut off strike pay if the dispute continued.

Despite all the difficulties of organising part-time workers and despite their family commitments, women workers have demonstrated their determination to fight for their jobs. What they lack are unions prepared to fight with them.

The creation of a pool of secondary employment threatens to deepen existing divisions in the working class. The fight against this segregation of the labour market is a vital aspect of the fight for women's rights and the broader defence of jobs and living standards:

- to maintain decent jobs, workers must insist that employers take on all workers on the same terms, at the same rates of pay, and on the same conditions;
- the privatisation of public service employment must be fought as part of the process of cutting jobs and enforcing harsher conditions;
- workers must fight for the full participation of women in the national workforce, and for the facilities to make this possible. This means campaigning for free all-day nurseries and better social welfare and health services to relieve women of the burdens of family life;
- workers must fight for full-time work for everybody who needs it and prevent the substitution of part-time for full-time jobs;
- workers must fight for the abolition of all forms of outwork and for women's full participation in the labour market. They should block any attempt to replace existing workers with freelancers. The fragmentation of the workforce can only undermine workers' cohesion and collective organisation.

A man for all seasons



John Carvel, *Citizen Ken*, Chatto & Windus 1984, pp240, pbk £2.95, hbk £8.95

HOW DID THE SUN'S 'most odious man in Britain' manage to come second only to the Pope in the BBC's Man of the Year competition in 1982? John Carvel's *Citizen Ken* charts Ken Livingstone's rise from being a little known London borough councillor to become one of Britain's best known and most popular politicians. At times, he moves beyond the tendency to reduce County Hall politics to the personality of its leader and reveals how the Labour local government machine works.

On Thursday 7 May 1981 Labour took control of the Greater London Council. On Friday 8 May Livingstone deposed the moderate Andrew McIntosh, who had led the party to victory, to become the new Labour GLC leader. 'Red Ken crowned King of London' screamed the headlines in *The Sun*. No matter that the new administration set out to implement exactly the same manifesto policies to which McIntosh was committed, for *The Sun*, Livingstone's victory meant 'full-steam-ahead red-blooded socialism for London'.

Room at the top

Carvel gives the inside story of the first leg of Livingstone's rise. He points out that those who have come to regard Livingstone as a populist politician should remember that 'the roots of his climb to power lie in an ability to emerge at the head of a very small pack'. Livingstone joined Norwood Labour Party in 1968 when everybody else who considered themselves socialists were deserting Labour for the International Socialists and other left-wing causes. Active party members were at a premium: by his second branch meeting Livingstone was chairman and secretary of the Young Socialists. By his third he was membership secretary and on the executive committee. In May 1971 he was elected to Lambeth council. Livingstone began his political career as a Labour Party moderate; he even supported Labour's decision to send troops into Northern Ireland in 1969. On the Lambeth backbenches, however, he teamed up with left winger and future council leader Ted Knight and began his move from the centre to the left of the party.

Livingstone first achieved recognition among the left when he took part in the revolt against spending cuts pushed through by Reg Goodwin's Labour GLC administration in 1975. In 1978 Livingstone left Lambeth and joined Camden Council as housing chair. Here, according to former Camden Labour leader and stolid Tribune Roy Shaw, Livingstone tried to boost his left-wing reputation by playing to the gallery — 'the left-wing gallery, the trade union gallery, whatever gallery would help him at any particular moment'. Livingstone would put forward proposals, knowing that they would not be accepted by the Labour group, so that he could then blame the right — and bolster his left-wing credentials.

Livingstone began seriously to cohere a base on the Labour left in July 1978 when he became a founder member of the Socialist Campaign for Labour victory — an amalgam of left-wing groups, dedicated to the return of a Labour government. When Livingstone and other groupings split from the SCLV in late 1979 to regroup around the new voice of the London Labour left — *London Labour Briefing* — the campaign to win the GLC for the left wing began in earnest. In a period when the left was reeling from Labour's defeat in the 1979 General Election, Livingstone set about building a core of left-wing activists to prepare for the battle for the GLC in 1981. Through a lot of hard work and committee room manoeuvring, Livingstone had arrived at the position in 1980 where he managed to come a very close second to Andrew McIntosh in the Labour GLC leadership contest.

By the time of the election in May 1981 Livingstone had established a weighty political network. Through *London Labour Briefing* he had formed links with many of the left activists in the constituencies. Through his position as chair of the GLC's transport working party and his role in drawing up the Labour manifesto, he had established better contacts with the unions.

reviews

Through his skilful committee room manoeuvres at County Hall he had attracted vital support from the old guard GLC Labour centre. By election day he had pieced together the alliance which was to deliver him to power.

Life at the top

Within a month of taking office Livingstone was urging the Labour group to oppose a London Transport workers' pay claim. He mobilised the centre and the right to win the vote against about a dozen councillors on the left who said it should be conceded in full. Within less than a year the Labour group had unanimously passed a budget plan for the new financial year which accepted a string of defeats on its manifesto commitments. 'Good housekeeping', compliance with the law, opportunism and pragmatism have been the hallmarks of the Livingstone administration. Yet despite its failure to implement its manifesto and its attacks on council workers' living standards, the GLC — and Livingstone in particular — have survived and even increased their popularity. Two issues — London Transport fares and the Tory threat to abolish the GLC — reveal how they did it.

The Livingstone administration arrived very quickly at what Carvel calls 'a compromise with political reality'. After only six months in office the council faced financial chaos as a result of the Tories' new grant system and environment secretary Michael Heseltine's Local Government Finance Bill. The GLC Labour group was faced with the choice of surrender to the government's call for cuts, resignation, or confrontation and defiance. As the house journal of the London Labour left *Labour Herald* put it, 'there is no way in which Labour councils can balance their books under the proposed new system without either making impossible cuts or domestic rate increases'. In public Livingstone declared that the Labour group would carry an illegal budget rather than give in to the Tories. But in private he had already worked out a compromise budget. This kept Labour's pledge to cut fares, but jettisoned nearly every other manifesto pledge and involved a massive rate increase.

The Law Lords' judgement outlawing the GLC's Fares Fair policy saved the day for Livingstone. The council could put up a show of opposition to the ruling, push through the budget and blame the Tories. Livingstone argued that Labour should remain in office, refuse to put up the fares and defy the law. It was evident from the start, however, that the Labour group never seriously intended to flout the law. As Livingstone acknowledges in *Citizen Ken*, it 'was not a sustainable long-term strategy' for a left-wing council determined to stay in office at whatever cost.

At the crucial vote the Labour group split 24 to 21 in favour of illegality, but Livingstone knew that enough Tory and Alliance members would be forced to vote against to avoid being surcharged. The Tory disarray masked the complete capitulation of the Labour group. Livingstone's closest colleagues were convinced that he was bluffing when he said he wanted to win the vote and defy the law. Labour deputy GLC leader Illyd Harrington summed up Labour's dilemma:

'Some of us had to make decisions to obey the law to sustain the administration. . . I think Ken was opportunistic because he knew that the law would have to be obeyed, but he knew other people would see to it that it was done. He was in a hell of a position: the darling of the left. He had no option but to vote with them. I understand that.'

The left's showpiece defiance didn't last long. In February it unanimously voted through a new budget accepting the fare increases and other manifesto defeats. The second Livingstone administration got down to the art of the possible. Like Reg Goodwin whose spending cuts he rejected in 1975, Livingstone chose in the end to 'buckle down, stay in power and make the best of it'.

Livingstone's capitulation to the Law Lords' judgement had two consequences. First, it scaled down the cost of Labour's programme to manageable proportions. Second, Livingstone's campaign against it gave him the best possible issue to win support for his policies and rehabilitate his popular image. The successful campaign to reverse the transport fares judgement kept Livingstone in the public eye and the GLC's prolific advertising campaigns gave the council the appearance of a vigorous fighting machine.

Courting popularity

The second issue which has allowed Livingstone to consolidate his base of support on the left and engage his populist talents is the Tory

government's 1983 election pledge to abolish the GLC and the six metropolitan counties.

In 1983 Livingstone toured the country during the conference season lobbying anybody who would listen, from the Tories to the CBI and the Liberals. In a bid to galvanise popular support behind the GLC, he even overcame his aversion to royalty and invited the Queen to open the Thames Barrier in early 1984. When she accepted the invitation Livingstone declared that Her Majesty fully supported the GLC against the government's abolition plans. His attempt to entangle the Queen in politics caused a furore in the media, but didn't harm Livingstone's public profile. In June, the Livingstone administration discovered that the House of Lords was democracy's best friend, when it temporarily scuppered the government's attempt to push through the abolition proposals.

The GLC's anti-abolition campaign is designed not to defend jobs and services but to save Labour's institutions and revive and popularise the Labour Party. Livingstone and his fellow Labour councillors are willing to accommodate to any anti-working class politician or institution if it will save their own skins. But the only way you can unite with institutions like the House of Lords, which is currently urging more coercive attacks on the trade unions, is by dropping any effective defence of workers' jobs and services.

Citizen Ken shows that Livingstone got where he is today because of his ability to manipulate the Labour Party machine to the advantage of the left. He has managed to achieve a measure of popularity but it doesn't run very deep. Livingstone has mastered the art of appealing to the public on broadly populist issues — but he cannot give the working class what it needs. The GLC's campaigns might stir the sympathies of the middle class quango activists who have been brought on to the council's payrolls over the past few years. But Labour's appeals to 'save local democracy' have little resonance among workers who have suffered Labour's third-rate services and experienced first hand Labour's willingness to follow the dictates of 'good housekeeping' by attacking jobs and services.

Carvel devotes pages to speculating about Livingstone's subjective desires and intentions. This is fair enough in a book that attempts to reveal the real Citizen Ken. But as Carvel's book proves, good intentions aren't much use to the working class if they are bound by the politics of Labourism. To preserve its niche in local government, Labour is forced to sacrifice workers' interests to balance the books. Livingstone's strength lies in his ability to combine a pragmatism in the administration of local government with an opportunistic flair for popular campaigning. The lesson of three years of Labour GLC rule is that the figure that stalks County Hall in a safari suit is no friend of the people.

Joan Phillips

The roots of racism

Peter Fryer, *Staying power: a history of black people in Britain*, Pluto Press 1984, pp632, pbk £9.95

PETER FRYER has spent the three years since the 1981 riots tracing the history of black people in Britain since Roman times. *Staying power* is not only an excellent presentation of the facts, it also attempts to distinguish between the historical presence of black people in Britain and the specific period at the end of the nineteenth century when racism became a social force.

Racial prejudice is an old English tradition. Fryer locates the origin of hostility towards black people in the eighteenth century when the slave system constructed by Britain began to fall apart. Since the end of the Middle Ages the tentacles of English mercantile capitalism had reached out to the far corners of the world to establish an immense system of plunder for the primitive accumulation of capital. The notorious 'Triangle Trade' between England, Africa and the West Indian sugar colonies resulted in the mass slaughter of black slaves. The ports of Bristol and Liverpool thrived on the slave system. Soon, retiring plantation owners returning home were bringing back black slaves. By the eighteenth century there were 10 000 black 'servants' in Britain.

As industrialisation allowed capitalist accumulation to accelerate, the colonial system of monopoly, plunder and slavery became outmoded and fell out of favour with the establishment. Radical anti-slavery campaigners like William

Wilberforce and Granville Sharp were in the forefront of the industrial capitalists' offensive against the slave-owners. The slave-owners justified their activities by arguing that blacks were little more than animals and ought to be treated as such. The eclipse of slavery came in the 1830s and the number of black people in Britain declined. However, by the end of the century the growth of imperialism and national rivalries spawned more sophisticated variants of the old slave-owners' arguments and made racism a real force in British society. Fryer lists the eminent establishment figures who fostered the growth of chauvinist and racist ideas. They constructed elaborate pseudo-scientific theories to prove black people's 'natural inferiority' and thus Britain's 'natural right' to oppress them.

Fryer's account of the main period of black immigration into Britain after the Second World War is disappointing. For Fryer, racism is an irrational hangover from the past days of slavery and Empire:

'Long after the material conditions that originally gave rise to racist ideology had disappeared, these dead ideas went on gripping the minds of the living.'

Fryer locates the origins of nationalism and racism as a social force in the rise of imperialism at the close of the nineteenth century. Yet he fails to recognise that imperialist expansion and national oppression are not just by-products of Empire building but a necessity for the survival of the capitalist system. Racial oppression and the system of immigration controls which enforces it thus remain inherent features of capitalism in decay.

Nationalism and chauvinism were transmitted to the working class through the medium of the labour leaders and have remained a powerful divisive force in the labour movement ever since. *Staying power* pays scant attention to trade union complicity in colour bars and discriminatory practices. Because he sees racism as irrational, Fryer fails to put forward a strategy for mobilising white workers in a concerted fight against the racial divisions which dog the working class movement.

Andy Clarkson

Poacher turned gamekeeper



Michael Crick, *Militant*, Faber & Faber Ltd 1984, pp242, pbk £3.95

MOST JOURNALISTIC ACCOUNTS of the British left tend to be shallow, ill-informed and given to cheap sensationalism. Michael Crick's *Militant* avoids this approach. It is on the whole a well-informed account of Militant's rise from an obscure collection of individuals into one of the more influential trends on the Labour left.

Crick recognises that Militant's success is due above all to a high level of organisation and perseverance. Militant's ability to manipulate the bureaucratic structures of the Labour Party has allowed it to dominate the Labour Party Young Socialists and ensured the election of two of its members to Parliament in the 1983 General Election. This may not seem much to show for 30 years of hard work. Nevertheless, as Crick points out, Militant has been more successful than any of its entrust competitors.

Militant myth

The book's main weakness is that it is written from the point of view of the Labour right and therefore cannot but misassess the politics that Militant represents. Time and again Crick assures us that Militant differs from the rest of the Labour left. According to the author, Militant adheres faithfully to Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. He argues that 'Militant is committed to revolutionary change and believes that change cannot be achieved through parliamentary democracy'. This view of Militant is widespread inside the Labour

Party. Indeed many of Militant's own members believe that they have joined a revolutionary party.

In fact, Militant long ago repudiated the tradition of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. This is evident in Militant's renunciation of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the necessity for revolutionary violence. Militant opposed the Leninist principle of revolutionary defeatism and refused to call for Britain's defeat in its war with Argentina over the Malvinas. These ruptures with the Marxist tradition are not only of theoretical significance. Militant's record of practical work demonstrates a consistent approach to working within the system. This was evident in the way Militant-controlled Liverpool council recently caved in and passed Tory cuts in local government spending on to the working class. In the unions, Militant bureaucrats are simply bureaucrats. Even when Militant controls a union — such as the bakery workers — it is impossible to detect any revolutionary impulses.

Crick recognises Militant's pragmatism and preparedness to compromise. He argues that 'for reasons of diplomacy Militant will lie low for a while after the intense period of the Foot leadership'. However, Crick believes that Militant is only biding its time and at the appropriate moment will burst forth waving the banner of revolution. Crick fails to understand that after decades of compromise, pragmatism ceases to be a tactic and becomes a way of life. The lesson of history is that it is not the entrists that change the Labour Party but the other way around.

Climbing the ladder

Despite his political prejudices Crick cannot but admire Militant's ability to manipulate the bureaucratic channels of the Labour Party. Crick outlines the methodical manner in which Militant has mastered machine politics. He envies Militant's success in wresting control of the Merseyside machine from the Labour right. And he is clearly troubled by Militant's encroachment on the trade unions. In this respect Crick shares the British left's respect for Militant's record. A number of left-wing organisations — Socialist Organiser and the Socialist League — hope to emulate Militant and carve out a place for themselves inside the Labour Party bureaucracy.

There are good reasons why neither Crick nor the British left question Militant's model of party building. The longstanding weakness of the British left has been its evasion of the struggle to build an independent revolutionary party. Instead, it has reduced political activity to winning positions and influence within the existing structures of the official labour movement. Within this tradition, organisational and technical considerations dictate the presentation of politics. That is why the British left conducts so much of its discussion at the level of tactics. The left has always been so engrossed in tactical considerations that it has lost sight of its original aims. Militant's organisational subordination to the Labour Party has led in time to its political subservience.

Given that Militant's approach is so much a part of the left's traditions it may appear surprising that it receives so much attention. This is simply because Militant, both because of its own good organisation and because of the decline of the Labour Party, has become bigger and more successful than any earlier attempt at entrism.

Why Labour needs Militant

Crick fails to deal satisfactorily with one crucial question. Why has Militant been allowed to grow? Why has the British Labour Party been more tolerant of organised entrist factions than its counterparts in France or Germany? Crick puts it down to a series of historical accidents:

'If Militant could ever have been killed off, it was when it was small. That opportunity was lost in 1975, when Reg Underhill's first report on the tendency was virtually ignored.'

Crick paints a picture of lost opportunities and crass errors. The reality is different. It is a testimony to the Labour Party's adaptability that it could live with organised left-wing factions. This has been one of the Labour Party's enduring strengths. Former Labour minister Richard Crossman explained just how his party uses its entrists:

'The Labour Party required militants... politically conscious socialists to do the work of organising the constituencies. But since these militants tended to be "extremists", a constitution was needed which maintained their enthusiasm by apparently creating a full party democracy while excluding them from effective power. Hence the concession in principle of sovereign powers to delegates at the Annual conferences, and the removal in practice of this sovereignty through the trade union block vote on the one hand, and the complete independence of the Parliamentary Labour Party on the other.'

Crick cannot admit the main lesson of the Militant experience. The Labour Party needs something like Militant, just as this much-maligned left-wing group needs the bureaucratic machine of Labour for its survival.

Frank Richards

Women and revolution



A young Alexandra Kollontai

Linda Edmondson, *Feminism in Russia 1900-1917*, Heinemann 1984, pp197, hbk £16.50

Alix Holt ed, *Alexandra Kollontai: selected writings*, Allison & Busby 1984, pp335, pbk £4.95

IN THE EARLY YEARS of the twentieth century, movements demanding women's rights sprang up throughout Europe. Every national movement fighting for women's suffrage was divided between those demanding the vote only for middle class women in recognition of their increasingly prominent role in society and the professions, and those demanding universal suffrage as part of the struggle for a better life for working class women. These two books illustrate that only the Russian workers' movement was strong enough to wrest the initiative from middle class feminists and win real gains for working women.

The Russian road

Linda Edmondson's book provides some valuable insights into the antagonism that existed between the Russian feminist movement which developed among the educated women of the middle class and the Workers' Group of working women organised by the social democrats. The feminist movement was obliterated by the Russian Revolution. Edmondson argues that it was the 12 year campaign for women's suffrage conducted by the women's movement that forced revolutionaries to take up the question. In reality the fight for women's rights was a central part of the Bolshevik Party's programme long before the 1917 revolution. Allison & Busby's selection of Alexandra Kollontai's writings illustrates the role of Russian women in the struggle for socialism.

Alexandra Kollontai was the only woman to be elected to the central committee of the Bolshevik Party. As Commissar of Public Welfare in the new Soviet government she played a major role in drawing women into the task of socialist reconstruction. This was a natural continuation of her work prior to 1917, when she devoted her energies to mobilising working class women in support of the revolution.

From the 1880s onward more and more women were drawn into the cities to work in intensely exploitative and dangerous conditions. Their domestic work in the home made it very difficult to participate in political activities and meetings. Nevertheless, women did not hesitate to throw themselves into the strike wave that marked the 1905 revolution. Kollontai recognised that special measures had to be taken to involve working class women in the revolutionary movement. While she recognised the importance of the demand for universal suffrage, she was concerned to expose the limitations of the bourgeois feminist campaigns:

'The working woman is first and foremost a member of the working class... (she) must not and does not forget that while the aim of bourgeois women is to secure their own welfare in the framework of the society antagonistic to us, our aim is to build in the place of the old outdated world a bright temple of universal labour, comradesly solidarity and joyful freedom.'

From 1905 Kollontai fought hard to make the struggle for women's rights a central concern of the workers' movement. She was aware that in the absence of revolutionary leadership the field would be left open for the feminist movement.

The revolution of 1917 provided Kollontai with the opportunity to prove that socialism alone could lay the basis for women's liberation. As Commissar for Social Welfare she introduced maternity protection, daycare and nursery facilities, collective dining rooms, and other measures to free women from their domestic role in the family. The problems facing the revolution constantly frustrated the Bolsheviks' aims. A large section of the working class was destroyed, first in the war with Germany, and subsequently in the Civil War. The problems encountered in developing the productive forces of the new society made it virtually impossible to fulfil the needs of women and other workers.

Kollontai's contribution

Alix Holt has provided useful biographical and historical information to supplement Kollontai's writings. However, her exclusive preoccupation with the question of women's emancipation leads her to emphasise Kollontai's least significant contribution to the Russian Revolution. Kollontai's personal interest in exploring the nature of relations between men and women has been lauded by the feminist movement as a major theoretical contribution to the 'personal is political' politics that has consumed it over the past decade. In fact Kollontai's writings in this area are often confused and disjointed, and were written when she was least involved in the revolutionary movement. Kollontai's real contribution to the revolution was as an organiser and agitator. She was able to inspire thousands of workers to fight for the revolution and to defend its gains. Her writings are well worth reading for an understanding of why communism offers the only path to women's liberation.

Wendy Ellis

Immigration: the legal limits

Stephen Castles, Tina Wallace & Heather Booth, *Here for good*, Pluto Press 1984, pp259, pbk £7.50
Françoise Gaspard & Claude Servan-Schreiber, *La fin des immigrés*, Seuil 1984, pp216, pbk 69 francs

ON THE CONTINENT racism has become so respectable that it passes almost without comment. These two books show how the left's capitulation to nationalism and chauvinism has prepared the way for the rise of the right. They also demonstrate that the left has accepted the terms of the debate set by the right on the immigration issue and can only object to its excesses with moralistic and liberal arguments.

Castles, Wallace and Booth chart the main patterns of European immigration in the post-war period and the increasingly harsh restrictions on immigration being imposed today. In Germany the post-war regulations introduced to control a system of temporary migration and promote flexibility in the labour market remain in force. The 1965 foreigners' law states without a hint of irony that 'foreigners enjoy all basic rights, except the basic rights of freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of movement, and free choice of occupation, place of work and place of education, and freedom from extradition abroad'. By 1975 there were more unemployed foreigners in Germany than employed. They can now be deported if they become unemployed or are convicted of a minor offence.

In contrast to Germany, Britain and France imposed citizenship on immigrants from their colonies. But today the legal position of immigrants in Britain and France is precarious. Under the Nationality Act the possibility of obtaining British citizenship has been greatly restricted and is subject to tests of language and good conduct. 'Non-patrials' (blacks) can now be deported for criminal offences.

The left and legality

Castles is confident about the prospects for an anti-racist movement in Germany. Foreign workers have played a leading role in strike movements since the sixties, most recently in the metalworkers' dispute. They have demonstrated against discriminatory social security legislation and demanded better schools and voting rights. According to Castles et al a broad movement, centred on the Green Party, is now active around these demands for civil rights.

However, the Greens' programme has little to offer foreign workers. The Greens call for full rights for immigrants only after eight years of legal residence. They acknowledge the need to close the national labour market and insist that their policy would not lead to an increase in immigration.

Françoise Gaspard is more honest about the left's failure to combat racism. As the socialist former mayor of the Paris suburb of Dreux, defeated last year by a right-wing coalition, she should be. She admits that her party has back-pedalled on the promises it made to immigrants in the 1981 election. She also points out that racism can pay off for the left in electoral terms. Last March Paul Mercieca, the Communist mayor of Vitry who in 1980 took a bulldozer to knock down a new immigrants' hostel, was re-elected with a big majority.

Gaspard devotes much space to explaining how beneficial immigrants are for France and discussing how best to integrate them. Her greatest concern is that racism costs money. Foreign contracts are being lost because overseas governments object to the way France treats its immigrants. Gaspard is equally worried about the damage which young immigrants could do to French society. She warns that the ghettos must be improved or France will face riots as in America in the sixties and Britain in 1981. Her solution is to demolish the shanty towns and slums and disperse their inhabitants. This is the same approach as the

local Labour council followed when it broke up the Front Line in Brixton in November 1982.

Neither book shows how Europe's 16 million immigrants can be defended. Castles simply indulges in wishful thinking at the end of a thorough and well researched book. Gaspard tries to win back some credibility for the flagging French Socialist Party. Neither is prepared to challenge the ideas of legality and illegality that lie at the heart of the state oppression of Europe's immigrant communities.

Gareth Evans

women's
Voice



Women on the sidelines

Tony Cliff, *Class struggle and women's liberation*, Bookmarks 1984, pp272, pbk £4.50

SOCIALIST WORKERS' PARTY leader Tony Cliff's book on women has a clear purpose. It sets out to justify the SWP's decision to relegate the struggle for women's rights to the sidelines.

The SWP wound up its regular women's journal — *Women's Voice* — in 1982. The SWP declared that this was necessary to integrate the party's work on women into the day to day work of the organisation. But the disappearance of *Women's Voice* didn't lead to the integration of work on women into the party's everyday work. Instead the issue was dropped altogether. While the Tories stepped up their offensive against women through cuts in health and social services and a crusade to reassert a reactionary Victorian morality, the SWP chose to turn its back on the issue.

Class struggle and women's liberation makes two points. The first is that middle class feminism — are not in the business of fighting for the working class. Making this simple point takes up 10 chapters of a 15 chapter book. This is not a reflection of Cliff's verbosity, but also of the SWP's obsession with attacking the feminist movement while failing to offer a coherent alternative.

What is Cliff's alternative? This brings us to his second point. Cliff explains that the problem today is not so much fighting the conditions that tie women to the home, but getting women into trade unions. Cliff asserts that the paramount problem facing working class women is their isolation from the 'collective strength' of the trade union movement. For Cliff and the SWP, women's role in the home is not something to which revolutionaries should pay too much attention. Cliff has something better to offer working class women than a preoccupation with their domestic toil:

'For an oppressed group to fight back there is the need for hope. And that is to be found not in the isolation of oppression — the housewife trapped in the home... but in the collective strength of the working class.'

The SWP's advice to women is 'join a trade union and start hoping'. This is hardly a convincing strategy for thousands of women who have been joining and fighting in unions for decades without experiencing much of the collective strength of the working class. Nor is it much inspiration for the millions of working class women excluded from the workplace through lack of childcare facilities and lack of suitable jobs.

The SWP's attitude to the unions best exposes its inability to defend women's rights or advance the interests of the working class. Cliff reduces women's oppression to a trade union issue. The real problem, however, is not getting women workers to join trade unions, but getting the unions to fight for women. Women need unions that fight for abortion rights, nursery facilities and against the discriminatory practices that channel women into the most menial and worst paid jobs.

Cliff's polemics against feminism are ironic. The middle class women's movement has always thrived on the feebleness of left-wing organisations in combatting women's oppression. In absolving the SWP of any responsibility to fight for women's rights, Cliff gives the advantage to the women's movement.

Ann Burton

Write to . . .

the next step

BM RCP London WCIN 3XX

The right to fight

Like McCartney (Letters, July) I believe that the IRA should have the right to take up arms against British soldiers. But I disagree that because the Irish are murdered by those soldiers the British working class should also be murdered.

McCartney states: 'the Provisional IRA does not deliberately single out members of the public for execution unlike the Crown forces'. How can killing indiscriminately be a virtue?

I have yet to hear the reason why killing British civilians is more important in the struggle for liberation than gaining their sympathy and support.

Robin Kelly
Birmingham

the next step replies:

The IRA has never made a virtue out of indiscriminate killings or civilian deaths. The overwhelming majority of its attacks are directed against military and political targets. However, the distinction between IRA bombings which result in the deaths of British soldiers and those which result in regrettable civilian casualties is one which the British left has created for itself.

The British state and the British public do not distinguish between an IRA bomb under an army bandstand in Regents Park and one planted among shoppers outside Harrods. Both provoke the same response: a wave of British terror against the Irish community. British socialists who support the Irish people's right to take up arms against British imperialism should do likewise and make no distinction. To do otherwise means accommodating to the establishment's anti-Irish hysteria and rejecting the chance to break British workers from their identification with the British state.

The right to self-determination means the right to fight for it. Our job in Britain is to win the support of British workers for Irish freedom, not to counsel the Irish people about how they should conduct their fight. If 'unconditional support' for Irish freedom means anything, it means standing firm against the British state when Irish bombs hit British streets.

Racists routed

The last week in July saw further attempts by the far right to organise in Bradford. On Saturday 21 the British National Party held a rally at the Tyrls under the watchful eye of the local police. The police later denied having prior knowledge of the planned rally. As the media and local politicians kicked up a fuss about the police failure to inform the council and get the rally banned, Bradford Workers Against Racism took action to get the racists off the streets.

The British National Party followed up its badly attended rally with a paper sale in the Broadway shopping precinct. The next Thursday lunchtime the National Front moved in to try to get a piece of the action. They were beaten off the streets by Workers Against Racism members and supporters, and their propaganda was destroyed.

The reappearance of the British National Party and the National Front follows months of

increased racial tension in Bradford on local estates and in schools. On recent weekends black youths have been attacked on the streets by racists. A climate of racism has been encouraged by Bradford politicians like Labour councillor Norman Free who recently opposed the city's Asian community's right to eat Halal meat. Racist headmaster of Drummond Middle School Ray Honeyford has blamed the black community for the 'decline in education standards'.

Bradford Workers Against Racism has been organising local workers to fight back against these efforts to turn blacks into scapegoats for rising unemployment and falling living standards. We will continue to resist the accommodations of both the Tory and Labour establishments to the respectable racism that allows the far right a foot in the door. And if the fascists dare to peddle their filth on the streets again we will give them the same treatment as last time.

Workers Against Racism
supporters
Bradford

Militant climbdown

Militant-controlled Liverpool council has proclaimed its new budget as 'an overwhelming victory over the Tory government' (*Militant*, 13 July). Liverpool Labour leaders and the union bureaucrats might be happy with it, but talking to Liverpool council workers you hear another story. When Militant council leader Derek Hatton told the workers that the Tories had been forced to give in and make concessions on the budget they were sceptical. Only 300 Labour stalwarts were inspired enough to attend the 'victory' march to the council.

In March Liverpool's Labour group proposed a £261 million budget and refused to cut jobs or services or to increase the rates 'excessively'. On 11 July the Labour group passed a budget increasing the rates by 17 per cent and cutting the council's £2 a week 'decoration allowance', which only gave council tenants £36 in 14 months anyway.

The budget worked out between the Liverpool Labour leaders and Tory environment secretary Patrick Jenkin was £16 million lower than Labour's proposed March budget — which was parsimonious enough to begin with. The 'concessions' wrested from the government amounted to just over £5 million granted under various urban aid programmes and £1.5 million to pay off debts on demolished houses — something the Tories have conceded to all councils. The Tories are allowing the council to 'borrow' a further £13.6 million to pay for housing repairs. And the council leaders are claiming another £40 million in government grant in return for their acceptance of the new budget.

The budget isn't much for Liverpool workers to celebrate. It means an average £58 a year rate increase for most Liverpool householders and the prospect of another big rate increase next year to pay off the interest on the government loan.

Thousands of Merseyside workers gave full backing to Liverpool council's pledge to stand up to the Tories and fight the cuts. Many have not been

fooled by Labour's declarations of victory and have become cynical about the council's commitment to defend jobs and living standards. The lesson of the Liverpool climbdown is that you can fight the Tories but not if you accept their constraints on local government spending and set out to balance the books.

Liverpool workers need a fighting alternative to Labour's acceptance of spending cuts and rate increases. The Revolutionary Communist Party has put forward an alternative budget and an alternative strategy for taking on the government. Its basic premise is that we need to fight for jobs and services whatever the cost and whatever mess it makes of the account books.

John Beecham
RCP supporter
Liverpool

Prisoners of war

The Irish Republican Prisoners of War Campaign Committee was launched in London on 8 February. The campaign is organised around the following principles and demands:

'We recognise that the 41 Irish Republican Prisoners of War and the 13 innocent Irish people held in English gaols are imprisoned as a result of the state of war which exists between Britain and the Irish people and that a full resolution of that conflict will have to take into account the position of these prisoners. However, even in the midst of this conflict we believe that there is a duty on the British authorities to treat the prisoners in accordance with the minimum standards of human decency. This is a principle which is recognised in all conflicts and we demand that Irish prisoners are treated the same. For this reason we endorse the campaign of the Irish Republican Prisoners of War Committee for five simple demands which encompass the bare essentials for the decent treatment of political hostages until the war itself can be resolved. We therefore demand:

- Repatriation on demand, to gaols in Ireland
- Release of prisoners framed by the British police
- An end to solitary confinement and special control units
- Release of Patrick Hackett on medical grounds
- Abolition of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.'

Further information about Irish prisoners and the campaign is contained in a pamphlet, now available for 50 pence (including p&p) from the IRPOW Campaign, Box No. BM 6191, London WC1 3XX

Lukacs and literature

After reading Budavari's review of Lukacs in *the next step* in July I felt something ought to be said about Lukacs' aesthetic studies. In *The meaning of contemporary realism* he effectively sets up a

boxing match between modernism and realism, with the latter emerging as the incontestable victor.

One of the book's most obvious failings is that it tends to lump together, under modernism, a group of writers who do not necessarily have that much in common. When he comes to James Joyce Lukacs criticises his work for depicting reality as static, the religio-political struggles which form the backdrop of *Portrait of the artist as a young man* leading nowhere for the hero of the novel.

But surely even this is useful: it tells us of the crisis of the young writer living in a society caught firmly in the stranglehold of the middle class of its time (Joyce himself has spoken on this). It also attempts to define the civic role of the artist in all this.

Here is Lukacs' definition of the realist mode: 1 interaction of the 'inner' world of the subject and his 'outer' social reality. 2 character as social 'type'. 3 the application of a certain version of the reflection theory of literature (base and superstructure).

Lukacs' argument rests on the claim that the narrative thrust of a realist novel in this sense will inevitably demonstrate a history in flux, and reveal the dialectical relationship that exists between individual and society. Such a work will then challenge the reader to question the foundation of that society.

The argument founders largely because Lukacs fails to consider the way in which literature is received in society, particularly an advanced capitalist one. The most political art can be co-opted and defused by the very society it purports to question. Rolled over, if you like, and assimilated by the monolithic liberal-humanism prevalent in most of our universities.

Lukacs thought that modernism (a literature which concentrates mainly on the subject and the extent to which his/her idealism is affected by the sense-data to which it is prey) will lead to the destruction of literature. Liberal-humanism, with its ability to take the sting out of anything, will make a much cleaner job of this.

With the work of Samuel Beckett Lukacs' method comes completely unstuck. Whilst the bourgeois critics make much of such concepts as 'the meaninglessness of life' the 'human condition' (one of the more sophisticated formalists even talks of the *echo principle* in his work; whatever that is) — Lukacs says that the depiction of people on a stage trapped in a situation from which it is not only impossible to escape, but futile to even make the attempt, is false.

But it is not, surely, a case of a work transmitting a 'message' which is then passively received as 'truth' by the audience. This is a kind of determinism. The same work might well shock the same audience into actively opposing such a situation in real life. In the end it is not what literature *does*, so much as what is *done* with it.

Yet despite these criticisms Lukacs remains one of the most challenging critics. I, for one, cannot think of any other critic, Marxist or bourgeois, who puts his case so rigorously. But in the light of his determinism a study of the relation between his aesthetic studies and his active politics might prove revealing.

Trevor Wadlow
Coventry

Eye-opener

I am a 24 year old striking miner, but up until the past few months I have tried to keep as far away from politics as possible. I have always had left-wing views but I have never until now wanted to be part of an active political group.

The strike has just given me the final push I needed to want to express my views actively, and I feel I can do this with the help of the RCP. Your pamphlet *Preparing for power*, 2nd edition, has really opened my eyes as to what a state our country and the world are in. The sooner the working classes band together to smash capitalism and imperialism the sooner we can start working on a better life for everyone.

Please could you send me any information you can on my local RCP group and more of your views and plans.

David
West Yorkshire

Count-down to closure

I came along to some of the sessions on women at last month's *Preparing for Power* conference and really enjoyed the discussions. I would be interested to hear your views on the occupation of the South London Hospital for Women which now faces closure.

The occupation began at the end of June. It has been supported by a number of people working three-hour duties and all-night shifts, organised by the occupation committee. Many staff supported the occupation at the beginning, but all of them have now been transferred to other hospitals in London — mainly to St George's in Tooting. The Association of Midwives also voted to support the occupation in early July.

Doing a rota duty was a very confusing experience. The administrative staff were not allowed to enter the building but not everybody on duty knew the staff. On 26 July the committee organised a lie-in, for women only, after 18 members of the committee had been named in an injunction banning the protest.

The occupation has been unsuccessful in that it has failed to stop patients leaving the hospital, but the equipment is still there. Now that all the staff and patients have been transferred nobody is very clear about what we should be doing. We have just decided to continue occupying the building in the hope that enough women will turn up to keep it going and possibly set up a women's centre with voluntary doctors on the site. A lot depends on what the Wandsworth District Health Authority decides to do.

Priscilla Rogers
Wandsworth
South London

the next step replies:

The lack of a strategy for fighting the closure of the South London Hospital for Women is not something peculiar to the present occupation. A clear direction was missing from the start. The campaign to save the hospital began in earnest more than 18

months ago when the Wandsworth District Health Authority voted for closure. Administrators reckoned that this move would save £12 million — enough to begin further construction at St George's Hospital in Tooting.

The campaign argued that the hospital should be saved because it provided 'freedom of choice' and a unique facility for women. It even argued that St George's had already had enough money spent on it and could do without further improvements. GLC women's committee chair Valerie Wise offered £2.5 million to keep the women's hospital open.

Supporters of *the next step* who got involved in the campaign in its early stages argued that we should fight the closure not just because the hospital offered a 'unique facility' for women but because we needed to fight all cuts and all redundancies in the health service. We also opposed the divisive argument that the South London should be saved at the expense of St George's.

Only if we were clear about what we were fighting for could we hope to win the support of workers in both hospitals for the action necessary to stop the closure. Arguments about 'freedom of choice' won the approval of the Conservative National Women's Committee but they failed to mobilise workers behind the campaign. And the GLC's offer to bail the DHSS out led the women up the garden path.

The biggest losers from the failure to keep the hospital open are the temporary workers at St George's who were sacked when the staff were transferred from the South London. A determined fight to get them taken back on permanent contracts would be the best way of recouping some of the losses of the campaign.

An empty plate

I read the article 'All mouth, no action' in the June edition of your paper. The title said everything there is to say about my union, the National Union of Public Employees. I am a school dinner lady — or rather was until I got the sack last Friday along with more than 600 other women.

Our employer, Hereford and Worcestershire County Council, has decided to scrap the school meals service at 89 schools. Private catering firms are taking over 24 schools and the council says it's doing us a favour by giving us the chance to 'become 'self-employed' and take over the catering at the other 65 schools.

What this means is that the council will carry on paying rates, heating, lighting etc for the first two years and we'll carry on slaving. But we'll be paying for the food and getting our wages out of whatever profits we get from charging the kids.

A lot of my mates will probably go along with all this because they need the money. But it will mean a pay cut of more than 30 per cent. The worst thing is that our union has given up without a fight. The officials are even talking as if we didn't want a fight. Their only action has been to condemn the private firms because they will be more concerned to make a profit than provide nutritious food for the kids. All I can say is what about our jobs!

Betty Chandler
Hereford

Meetings



Activities

RCP SUPPORTERS

The RCP has set up supporters' groups in the following towns: London, Coventry, Birmingham, Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield, Rotherham, Bradford, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Portsmouth. They will meet at least once a month. They are specifically for **RCP supporters**, but if you haven't joined yet and would like to know more please come along. You can get a card and get involved at the meeting. We will try to help out with transport and baby-sitting.

LONDON

Phone Kate Marshall (274 3951) for more details.

BIRMINGHAM

The supporters' group meets **every other Wednesday**, from Wednesday 8 August, 7⁰⁰pm
Room 4, Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth

CARDIFF

The supporters' group meets **every Thursday**, 7³⁰pm
Four Elms Hotel, Elm Street (off Newport Road)

MANCHESTER

Ashton RCP supporters are meeting **every Tuesday**, from Tuesday 14 August, 7⁰⁰pm
Albion Public House, Penny Meadow, Ashton

COVENTRY

The supporters' group meets **every Tuesday**, 7³⁰pm
Barras Green social club, Coventry Street

LIVERPOOL

The supporters' group meets **every Tuesday** from Tuesday 14 August, 7³⁰pm
Swan Public House, London Road/Seymour Street, L3

LEEDS

The supporters' group meets **every Thursday**, 7³⁰pm
Trades Club, Savile Mount (off Chapeltown Road) buses from Briggate

PORTSMOUTH

see sellers of **the next step** for venue details

SHEFFIELD

The supporters' group meets **every Thursday**, from Thursday 2 August, 7⁰⁰pm
Red Deer Public House, Pitt Street

ROTHERHAM

The supporters' group meets **every Wednesday** from Wednesday 1 August, 7³⁰pm
WEA Corporation Street, Rotherham

BRADFORD

The supporters' group meets **every Tuesday**, from 7 August, 7³⁰pm
Fox and Goose Public House, Canal Road

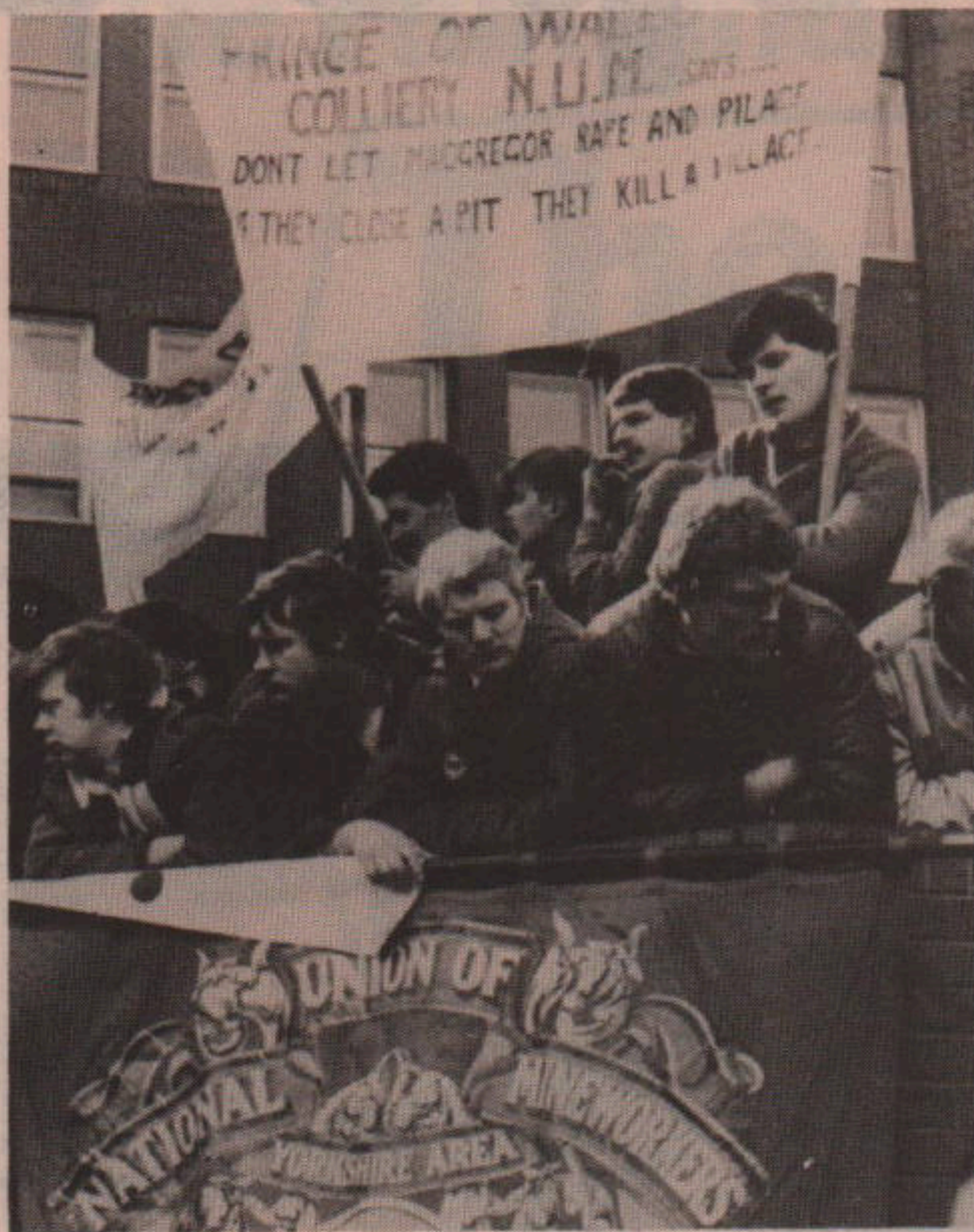
GLASGOW

The supporters' group is meeting on Wednesday 8 August and Tuesday 21 August, 7³⁰pm
Room 2, Langside Hall, 5 Langside Avenue, Shawlands Cross, G 41

EDINBURGH

The supporters' group meets **every Monday** at 7³⁰pm. For venue details see sellers of **the next step** or write to Box 1, 43 Candlemaker Road, Edinburgh

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GLASGOW

Monday 13 August 7³⁰pm
Room 3, Langside Hall, 5, Langside Avenue, Shawlands Cross, G41

MANCHESTER

Thursday 2 August 7³⁰pm
Star and Garter Public House, Fairfield Street, M1

LONDON

Thursday 2 August 7³⁰pm
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (Holborn tube)

EDINBURGH

Tuesday 14 August 7³⁰pm
Crosswinds Centre, Tollcross

LIVERPOOL

Tuesday 7 August 7³⁰pm
Small Committee Room, Haig Buildings, Maryland Street

LEEDS

Thursday 9 August 7³⁰pm
Leeds Trades Club Savile Mount (off Chapeltown Road), Leeds

SHEFFIELD

Thursday 9 August 8⁰⁰pm
Victoria Hall (opposite Crucible Theatre)

CARDIFF

Thursday 9 August 7³⁰pm
For details see sellers of **the next step**

COVENTRY

Tuesday 7 August 7³⁰pm
Barras Green Social Club, Coventry Street

The miners' next step

Miners' delegate conference fringe meeting

Thursday 9 August 12 noon
The Grapes Public House
Trippet Lane
Sheffield



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British terror**

Troops out now!



In August 1969 British troops invaded the Six Counties of Northern Ireland to put down the nationalist community's revolt against the terms of British tyranny. Fifteen years and more than 2300 deaths later, 30 000 armed servants of the British Crown backed by armoured cars and helicopter gunships are still bogged down in a war against the nationalist people and their defenders in the Irish Republican Army.

When the British Army first arrived in Derry and Belfast, the Home Office announced that its commander had orders 'to take all the necessary steps' to 'restore law and order'. The troops would be 'withdrawn as soon as this is accomplished'. But restoring British law and order on Irish streets means crushing the nationalist community's struggle to escape the heel of British domination. Despite all the 'necessary steps' of murder, torture and terror which the British have taken over the past 15 years, the nationalists fight on for their freedom. Today, the Home Office's conditions for withdrawing the troops are further from being met than

ever. The Irish War has become a fight to the finish.

Establishment commentators are fond of pointing out that statistics show a marked decline in conflict since the early seventies. But behind the graphs and tables, the gunmen and terrorists of the British Army and its Loyalist allies continue to wage bloody warfare against the nationalists. Military terror remains their only solution to the Irish problem which haunts the British ruling class.

On 9 July in the House of Commons, Tory Northern Ireland secretary James Prior dismissed the negotiated solution proposed by the established Irish parties' New Ireland Forum. Prior blamed 'history' for the problems besetting the nationalist community. The history of Britain's occupation and endorsement of Loyalist sectarianism is at the base of the nationalists' suffering. But that history is still being made, day in day out, in the war zones of Northern Ireland, as the events of one week last month confirmed.

As Prior spoke in Westminster the

Loyalist 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' murder gang brutally carved up Catholic nationalist Anthony McAtarsney in Belfast. Three days later the traditional 12 July exhibitions of Loyalist sectarianism ended with mobs rampaging through nationalist areas in Ballynahinch, County Down while Loyalist police stood by. Loyalist marches in Derry provoked days of running street battles between nationalist youth and the security forces.

On 13 July the SAS assassins of the British shoot-to-kill squads were on murderous form. They gunned down IRA volunteer William Price in cold blood in County Tyrone, and left his body where it fell for 10 hours as a warning to those who might follow him. The IRA's statement after the killing warned 'those who will undoubtedly claim the death of our comrade as a "victory" for the Brits':

'They and their British masters should have realised after 15 years of war that there remain many men and women of the

calibre of William Price, who have the courage and determination to continue the struggle for Irish freedom.'

On the day Price was buried, while hundreds of riot police attacked his funeral entourage, the IRA blew up two Ulster Defence Regiment members at Castlederg, County Tyrone. The invaders who arrived in August 1969 on a 'limited operation' cannot crush the unlimited nationalist resistance to British rule.

Britain's one real victory over the past 15 years has been its success in confining the war to Northern Ireland. The nationalist community has fought for its freedom alone. The Irish Freedom Movement is campaigning to end that isolation. British workers have every interest in supporting the fight for the defeat of their own ruling class. They have no interest in allowing the Six Counties to remain a British slaughter house. Join us in the struggle to make the fifteenth year of British terror the last.