

tms
the next step
Revolutionary Communist Party weekly • 9 August 1985 • 30p

Ireland: why Britain stays p6,7

South Africa: the history of the ANC p8

The BBC and the IRA p3

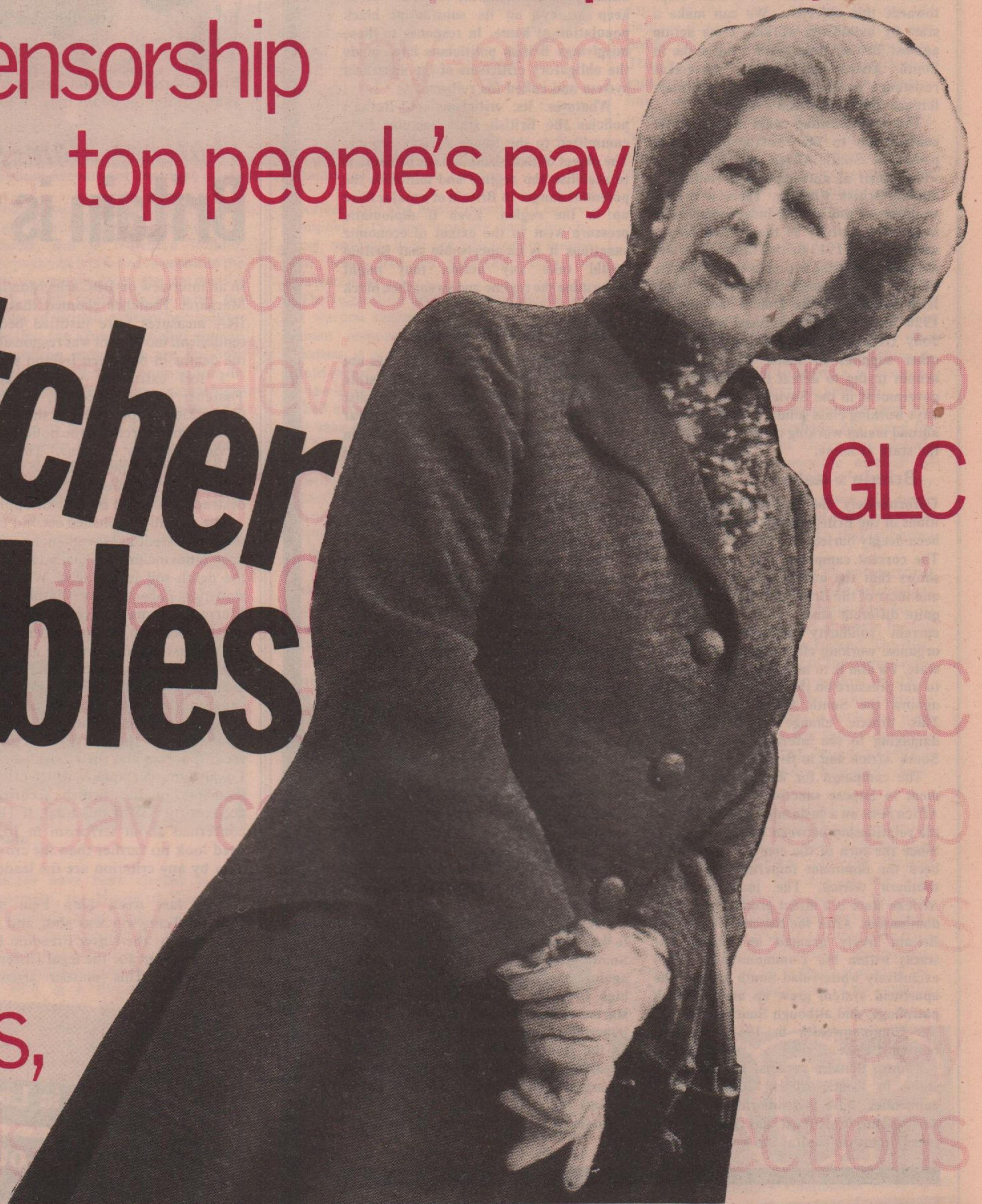
The end of the recovery p4

16

pay, television censorship, Opinion polls
television censorship by-elections

top people's pay

Thatcher stumbles



GLC

by-elections,

We can bring down the Tories

Sanctions and South Africa

The biggest contribution that we in Britain could make to the struggle against apartheid in South Africa would be to bring down the British state. The British ruling class is the biggest overseas investor in South Africa and one of the regime's most powerful backers. Its overthrow would strike a body blow at the South African establishment and give a powerful boost to the fight for black rights.

Yet we recognise that the overthrow of capitalist power in Britain is not an immediate prospect. We also recognise that urgent measures are necessary given the current state of emergency and the scale of state terror in South Africa. If we cannot immediately help the workers of South Africa by bringing down the British state, we can at least take some steps towards this objective. We can make a start by mobilising working class action against British firms with a big stake in South Africa and labour movement resistance to British government interference in South Africa's affairs.

This sort of action could make a useful contribution to the resistance of black people in South Africa and mobilise a wider spirit of anti-imperialist solidarity among British workers. There is a long tradition of this sort of independent anti-imperialist activity in the British labour movement. In 1913 British railworkers and dockers took strike action to undermine the British government's attempts to crush Irish workers in the Dublin lockout. In 1920 London dockers refused to load the Jolly George, a ship carrying arms and other supplies to assist the right-wing armies trying to defeat the revolutionary government in the Soviet Union. In those days working class solidarity with workers abroad meant working class action against the state at home.

Britain's stake

Unfortunately the anti-imperialist traditions of the British labour movement have been deeply buried over the past 60 years. The current campaign over South Africa shows that the anti-apartheid movement and most of the British left have adopted a quite different strategy. The objective of current solidarity activity is not to organise working class action against the state. Its aim is to mobilise public opinion to put pressure on the state to take action against the South African government. This drastic change of direction is damaging to the interests of workers in South Africa and in Britain.

The campaign for the British government to impose sanctions against South Africa rests on a basic misunderstanding of the relationship between the two regimes. Since the turn of the century Britain has been the dominant imperialist power in southern Africa. The modern South African state is a direct product of British domination. After the Second World War Britain freely granted an independent status within the Commonwealth to an exclusively white-ruled South Africa. The apartheid system grew up under British patronage, and although South Africa left the Commonwealth in 1961, relations remained close.

Today Britain retains an enormous stake in South Africa. Many British companies have subsidiaries in South Africa and investment has increased in recent years as capital has been exported

from low-profitability Britain to reap the benefits of the high returns guaranteed by the super-exploitation of the apartheid system. Investment, trade and military links ensure a secure alliance between Pretoria and London. President Botha's state visit last year showed the intimacy of Britain's ties to apartheid.

Yet relations between Britain and South Africa are strained. The British government is concerned about the instability in South Africa's black townships and is not confident about the capacity of the regime to contain it. The British authorities are also embarrassed by the overt racism of the apartheid system and the televised barbarities of their close ally's police force.

Britain has to maintain relations with black regimes around the world as well as keep an eye on its substantial black population at home. In response to these misgivings British politicians have made the obligatory criticisms of the apartheid system and called for reforms.

Whatever its criticisms of Botha's policies the British state remains fully committed to the South African regime. The object of British diplomatic pressure is to stabilise the regime and minimise the potential danger to Britain of a major flare up in the region. Even if diplomatic pressure went to the extent of economic sanctions it is inconceivable that Britain would take any action that might undermine the regime and strengthen black revolt.

Break British bosses

The campaign for sanctions just does not make sense. How can an imperialist state be expected to play an anti-imperialist role? As we showed last week, similar campaigns in the past — over Abyssinia in 1935, over Zimbabwe after 1965 — have always been ineffective. Imperialist powers do not destabilise their allies or their stooges. They only bring down regimes such as that of Allende in Chile which threaten Western interests.

The campaign for sanctions hands over the leadership of anti-imperialist solidarity activity to the imperialist state. The flaw in this approach is not only that the British government will fail to carry out this progressive mission. The danger is that the sanctions campaign will give the anti-apartheid rhetoric of British politicians some credibility in the eyes of workers both in Africa and in the West. In reality the only objective of any interference by Western politicians in South Africa would be to reconcile the masses to the continuation of imperialist domination, perhaps in a modified form. The left's uncritical support for British interference in Zimbabwe helped to ensure the transition to a pro-Western regime at the expense of the masses who are still paying the price.

The only solidarity action that is likely to have any positive effect on events in South Africa is working class action against the British capitalist class. It is high time the British labour movement started to take its own initiatives against imperialist oppression, instead of relying on the state to fight for workers' rights. Breaking out of the futile campaign for government sanctions into direct action against the state would strike a blow for freedom in South Africa and in Britain.



British terrorists claim another victim: John Downes killed by a plastic bullet at last year's anti-internment rally in Belfast

Thatcher blames IRA, but...

Britain is to blame

In an interview on BBC television last week, Margaret Thatcher claimed that her anti-IRA measures were justified because the republican movement was responsible for all the deaths in Northern Ireland since 1969.

'I feel extremely strongly about it', Thatcher gushed sincerely, 'we have had nearly 2500 people killed by those terrorists, in the armed forces, in the police, the prison service, ordinary civilians.' This is an oft-repeated British lie. It aims to blame those fighting for Irish freedom for the death and destruction caused by British oppression.

The recently published second edition of the Irish Freedom Movement handbook (see page nine) includes a detailed breakdown of the death toll in the Irish War. Based on statistics collected by Father Raymond Murray of Armagh, it records a total of 2412 deaths between August 1969 when the troops first invaded and the end of 1984.

Most of the people killed in the Irish War, as in most wars, have been ordinary people caught up in the conflict. Yet the majority of the 1401 civilian fatalities — 820 — have resulted from the activities of the British security forces and their Loyalist allies. The Loyalist murder squads, which often include members of the British security forces, account for 538 of this total. If Thatcher is concerned about terrorism in Ireland she need look no further than the crown forces who by any criterion are the leaders in the field.

Only last week Sinn Fein supporter Frankie Tennyson was shot and seriously wounded by 'the Ulster Freedom Fighters', an illegal front for the legal Ulster Defence Association. This murder attempt took

place only days after UDA leader John McMichael predicted more Loyalist attacks on republicans. The latest attack was unusual in that the Loyalist gangs usually murder any Catholic selected at random, rather than known republicans. Republican military activity has resulted in a total of 581 civilian deaths. These include victims of bombings, people caught in cross-fire or riots. The figure also includes politicians and informers who have been assassinated by the republican movement.

In the directly military conflict the republican movement has killed 703 members of the security forces. This remarkable achievement against overwhelming odds is underlined by the fact that more republicans have been killed by 'own goals' (109) than by the British forces (99). The score between the Loyalists and the security forces is even at 14 each, but 27 Loyalists have died as a result of 'own goals'. This brings the total dead in the armed forces of both sides up to 966. Adding 45 people whose deaths remain unexplained gives an overall total of 2412.

Thatcher's attempt to blame 'IRA terrorists' for all 2500 deaths in the Irish War is a cynical evasion of the real responsibility for all the death and injury and destruction in Ireland. The majority of the deaths are the direct responsibility of the British forces and their Loyalist allies. The rest are the indirect responsibility of the British state, because the British occupation is the source of all Ireland's troubles. The only way to stop the slaughter is to fight to get the troops out now.

March in London this Saturday 10 August!

Troops out of Ireland!

Prisoners out of jail!

• March from Jubilee Gardens to Brixton, followed by rally

• Assemble 1pm Saturday 10 August

Organised by the IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT
Ring 01-729 0414 for further details.

IRELAND

BBC ban row

'Running scared of the IRA'

The government is running scared of the IRA,' declared former BBC director general Sir Hugh Greene, after pressure from the Tories prompted the BBC to drop Wednesday's documentary featuring leading Irish republican Martin McGuinness. The national crisis caused by one 45-minute television programme illustrates the government's problems in containing the Irish War today.

The banned programme, *At the edge of the Union*, is a 'day in the life' study of two members of the Ulster Assembly from Derry, during the run-up to Northern Ireland's council elections in May. It contrasts Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein, a leading supporter of the IRA's fight against British rule in Northern Ireland, with Gregory Campbell of the Democratic Unionist Party, a virulent opponent of the IRA and upholder of the Union with Britain. Those who have seen the programme describe it as 'low key'.

When Margaret Thatcher and home secretary Leon Brittan leant on the BBC governors to override their management committee and drop the documentary, many observers criticised the Tories for going over the top in taking such exception to an 'unexceptional' programme. The government certainly handled the affair clumsily. But from the point of view of the British establishment, Thatcher and Brittan did the right thing in getting the programme dropped.

The makers of *At the edge of the Union* may protest that they were innocently producing an interesting look at the everyday lives of prominent figures in the Irish War. But such programmes are unacceptable to the British authorities. In presenting Irish republicans as ordinary human beings, they undermine the public image of people like Martin McGuinness as crazed killers — an image which British governments have spent the last 10 years perfecting.

No platform

The British authorities are well aware that the propaganda war is a vital part of their battle to keep control of Northern Ireland. British strategists have long accepted that they cannot win the military struggle against the IRA. When Northern Ireland secretary Douglas Hurd forgot himself last week and claimed the IRA was 'on a losing hand', republicans replied in traditional fashion by bombing Belfast and Ballynahinch. The British establishment's more modest aim is to contain the threat from Ireland by exerting enough force to keep IRA resistance at 'an acceptable level', and by preventing the spread of sympathy with the Irish liberation struggle within Britain.

To this end, Labour and Tory governments have spent the past decade convincing British people that those who fight back against the crown forces occupying Northern Ireland are 'gangsters', 'terrorists', or just 'murdering bastards'.

One aspect of this propaganda campaign has been to deny Irish republicans a platform in Britain, ensuring the authorities and their friends in Fleet Street have a free hand in dictating how people see events in Ireland. Since 1974 successive governments have used the Prevention of Terrorism Act to keep republican speakers out of the country. Sometimes this has meant slapping exclusion orders on republicans before they even get out of Ireland. This happened when the Tories banned a Sinn Fein delegation including McGuinness and Gerry Adams in December 1982. More often republicans have been arrested at ports of entry to Britain and shipped straight back across the Irish Sea. The Prevention of Terrorism Act also outlawed the IRA, providing the legal framework for keeping IRA spokesmen off the British TV and radio networks.

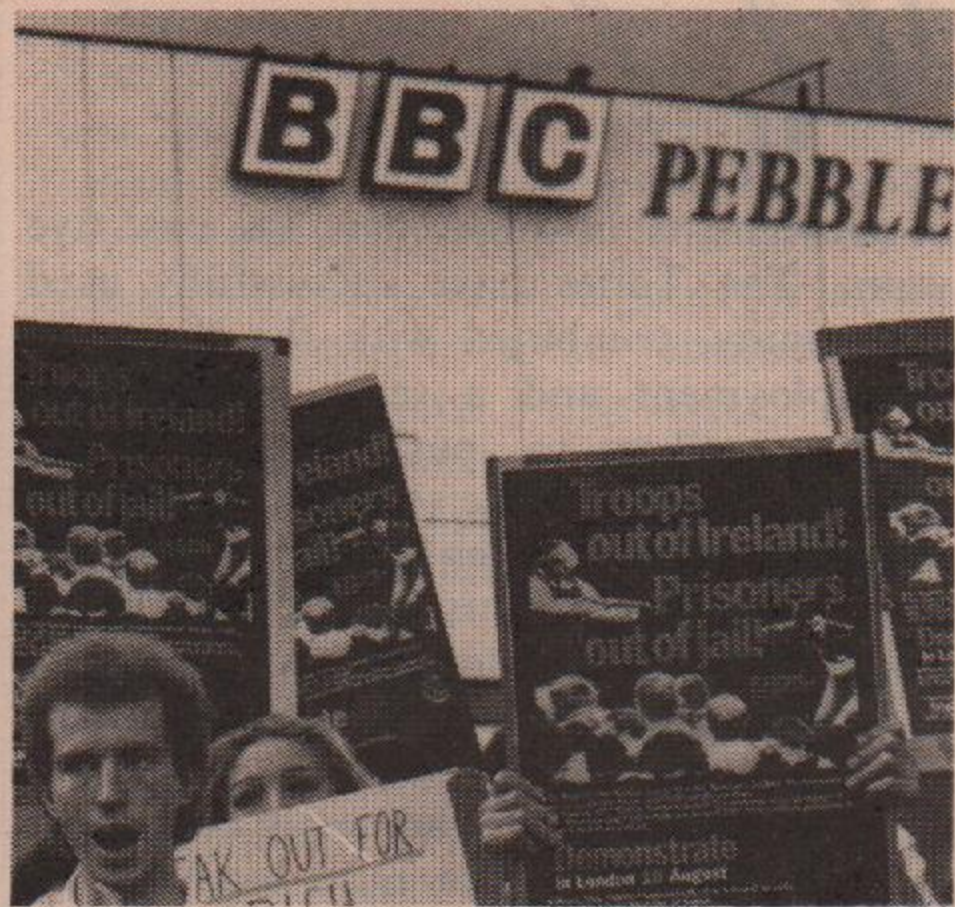
Within Britain the authorities' campaign to brand the Irish liberation movement as a



Irish Freedom Movement protests against television censorship in London...

criminal conspiracy has enjoyed considerable success. Support for the IRA has been barely visible. But in Northern Ireland, British propaganda has failed to separate the republican movement from the nationalist community. Irish people faced with the brutal reality of British military occupation appreciate that the armed men and women of the republican movement are the only effective defenders of their communities. In the eighties they have become increasingly open about giving their support to the IRA and voting for its political wing, Sinn Fein.

Since 1982, Sinn Fein's triumphant return to the electoral arena coupled with the IRA's continued campaign have made it difficult for the British authorities to sustain their propaganda success.



Birmingham...

Republicans have been elected to the Ulster Assembly, the House of Commons and local councils on an explicitly pro-IRA platform. This has exposed the lie that the armed struggle against Britain is the work of isolated psychopathic gunmen. It has shown that the IRA is a flourishing national liberation movement with solid support among Irish workers. It has also given elected republicans fresh opportunities to gain access to the media, to present the case for Irish freedom to the British public and to show up the government's lies. This is where the *At the edge of the Union* row began.

The series in which the programme was due to appear is called 'Real lives', and depicts people from various walks of life going about their day-to-day business. The appearance of Martin McGuinness in the programme indicated that he is just an Irishman, with a 'real life' distinct from the one created for him by British propagandists. His business just happens to be fighting to free his country from British rule.

A preview of the junked programme appeared in this week's *Radio Times*, printed before the BBC governors decided to drop it. In the article producer Paul Hamann

describes both McGuinness and the Loyalist Campbell as 'young, working class, churchgoers, teetotal. Both are affectionate family men who live in constant fear of assassination.'

The suggestion that Irish republicans are not warped sadists, but ordinary men and women responding to an extraordinary situation, is one that the British authorities would rather not have broadcast. Worse still for the Tories, it becomes clear from the few leaked extracts of the documentary that the real 'man of violence' exposed by the film is not McGuinness, who is labelled IRA chief of staff, but Campbell, the Loyalist defender of British democracy in Ireland.

McGuinness comes across as intelligent, rational and no lover of violence. 'Republicans don't glory in death,' he says, 'we believe that the only way the Irish people can bring about the freedom of their country is through the use of arms — if someone could tell me a peaceful way to do it I'd gladly support them, but no-one has done that yet'. And he has a solution to the conflict: 'Take the British presence away and there will be peace in Ireland. I believe that.'



and Manchester

In contrast, Campbell seems to revel in the prospect of killing his Irish opponents. This is no innocent politician under threat from dark, undemocratic forces. Campbell is a potential target for republican attacks because he loudly supports British/Loyalist assassination campaigns. He tells how he narrowly avoided an Irish National Liberation Army bomb in December, but it is left to his wife to explain that this happened shortly after he declared that 'Christmas' had 'come early' when two republicans were killed by shoot-to-kill squads in Derry. 'You either be killed by the IRA or kill them', Campbell announces, 'and I want to see them dead.' Campbell's vicious vision of a 'solution' in Northern Ireland reflects the reality of Britain's current shoot-to-kill campaign against

republicans a little too explicitly for the Conservatives' comfort.

The BBC governors were forced to agree with the Tories that this was not the sort of propaganda they should be producing on Northern Ireland. Lady Faulkner, the retiring governor for Northern Ireland, declared herself appalled that the film should portray McGuinness as 'domesticated, sanitised and a rather likeable sort of chap'. She said the ban had been imposed because the programme gave 'a distorted view' of what republicans were like. She meant that it had gone too far in exposing the 'distorted view' of Irish freedom fighters popularised by the British establishment.

The ban on *At the edge of the Union* is one aspect of the Tories' attempt to limit the damage done by the increasing success and public profile of the republican movement. They have also tried to blacken the name of republicanism by broadcasting non-existent links between the IRA and an 'international terrorist conspiracy', dreaming up IRA 'seaside bombing campaigns' and declaring that elected Sinn Fein representatives are 'bombers by night'. The press has played its part, setting up first McGuinness and now Adams for assassination as the IRA chief of staff.

The government's critics complain that this strategy is counter-productive and will only further alienate nationalists in Northern Ireland. One feature writer last week suggested that banning McGuinness 'also denies a platform to the people who elected him as their democratic representative. To do this is to invite a widespread rejection of the democratic method.'

But what Thatcher understands and her critics do not is that anybody who voted for Martin McGuinness in Derry has *already* rejected Britain's 'democratic method' of running Ireland. In McGuinness' words, they 'don't believe winning elections will bring freedom to Ireland. At the end of the day it will be the cutting edge of the IRA that will bring freedom.'

The aim of Thatcher's anti-terrorist campaigns is not to convert Irish nationalists to the cause of British imperialism, but to consolidate crucial support at home for the state's terrorist activities in Ireland. The BBC ban is the logical outcome of the Tories' need to unite the British nation against the IRA. Unfortunately for Thatcher, the pressure from the Irish War today is such that even when she gets it right, her tactics backfire. Thus the row over the ban has given the IRA more publicity than any 'balanced' documentary.

The current interest in the Irish War gives us an opportunity in Britain to get across the message that the Tories want silenced; that Irish freedom fighters are not British criminals. That is the aim of the Irish Freedom Movement's march on Saturday (see page 2). If we can get that message across and win British workers to support the Irish against the British authorities, the government will not only be running scared of the IRA. It will be running scared of the working class as well.

Mick Hume

RCP

The Revolutionary Communist Party needs hard cash to take the message of revolutionary communism to a wider audience. In the months ahead we have plans to extend the circulation of *tns*, launch a new theoretical journal and publish more books and pamphlets. We need your help to succeed.

We have launched a special appeal to make sure we have the money to keep the propaganda flowing from us to you. Please send contributions to Special Appeal, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques/POs payable to RCP Association.

EVENTS

British economy

The crisis the Tories can't beat

Chancellor Nigel Lawson wrote to Tory MPs last week to tell them that the government's 'undoubted economic success' was being obscured by the persistently high level of unemployment. Lawson's problem is that, while he is still promising jam tomorrow, even some of the Tories' closest supporters are losing confidence in the government's capacity to deliver the economic success Thatcher and her ministers have been promising since 1979.

Last week the Confederation of British Industry, the organisation of Britain's bosses, announced that its survey of more than 1500 manufacturing companies suggested that the pace of economic recovery was faltering. 'The first half of the year has been a good one for manufacturing industry', said CBI leader David Wigglesworth, 'but business is now revising its forecast of growth downwards, faced with continued high interest rates and the consequent depreciation of the pound.' The CBI survey is based on soft data and it is designed to put pressure on the government to modify its economic policies in favour of big business. But whatever their subjective impressions or short-term objectives, the outlook for British capitalists is indeed bleak (see box).

The announcement of another increase in the level of unemployment — to 3.2m or 13.4 per cent of the working population — on the same day as Lawson's 'light at the end of the tunnel' letter to Tory MPs only underlined the fact that the government is out of control of Britain's economic decline. For the first time in five years unemployment has become an issue in British politics. It has been taken up by Tory wets and disgruntled businessmen as a symbol of the government's failure to arrest the decay of British capitalism. The rising unemployment figures are the clearest indication of the shallowness of the government's much-vaunted recovery.

The road to ruin

Since 1981 the British economy has been going through a sluggish recovery out of the deepest recessionary trough in modern times. The economy has expanded, but slowly. Growth has taken place mainly in services — in insurance and hairdressing and fast food — and in North Sea oil.

Manufacturing began to pick up again last year after the collapse of 1979-81, but output is still 10 per cent below 1979 levels. This is why recovery has not reduced unemployment.

The next phase of recession now opens with the economy further down the spiral to ruin. Each successive wave of recovery becomes a more prolonged failure to pull the country back to the point at which the last recession struck.

The Tories get the blame for Britain's economic plight but it is not really their fault. The government, despite the claims of both ministers and their critics, has little control over interest rates or exchange rates, or for that matter over the rate of inflation or the money supply. These factors reflect the deeper crisis of profitability of British capitalism and its declining competitiveness on the world market. The Tories have done their best to boost capitalist profits and improve Britain's economic indicators by cutting public expenditure and pushing down wages. Yet in both areas the government has run into difficulties resulting from the recession itself and from the exigencies of British politics.

Despite election pledges and repeated platform promises to slay the public spending dragon, Thatcher's government is spending more now than it was in 1979. 'With the exception of council housing', the *Economist* complained last month, 'not one substantial spending programme has fallen in real terms under Mrs Thatcher.' The Tories have fought hard to squeeze budgets



The British lion: in terminal decline

— especially in local government and the civil service. But as long as the unemployment rate is rising, so too will the social security bill. As long as British industry cannot survive independently it will rely on state subsidies. Selling off assets like British Telecom or now British Gas may help to balance the books in the short run. But it does not solve the long-term problem — the weakness of the British private entrepreneur.

The Tories' attempts to make cuts have come up against powerful institutional barriers. Local councils, in Tory shires as well as in Labour inner cities, have defended their vested interests against the central government squeeze and delayed the implementation of cuts. Norman Fowler's tentative measures to reduce social security benefits provoked a storm of protest from child welfare, pensions and housing groups, and some were declared illegal in court, without even saving the government much money.

The Tories have made inroads into workers' living standards. 'Most parts of the public sector have had a cut in real pay under the Thatcher administration,' concluded one expert last month from a detailed survey

of movements in wages over the past five years. The Tories have successfully used cash limits, combined with the threat of unemployment and a series of victories against strikes to push down wages, especially in the public services. In the civil service wages have fallen between 3.5 and 6.5 per cent behind price rises since 1980. In the health service wages are down 3.6 per cent for nurses and 9.6 per cent for ancillary workers over the same period.

Meanwhile in the private sector employers have responded to the mild recovery by conceding an average increase in real wages of more than 11 per cent. The government is determined to discourage higher pay rises in private firms by refusing to take any action that might help to bring interest rates down and take the pressure off profits. Yet the

government's failure to get rid of the wages councils which fix the wages of 2.7m low-paid workers shows the obstacles to the Tories' more radical policies.

Many big companies want to keep the wage councils. They have used the system to control wages for 70 years and they are afraid of cowboy firms moving in and undercutting them. Both the CBI and the TUC agree. Hence after five years the Tories have succeeded only in trimming the councils and removing 500 000 young workers from their control. Their more ambitious wage-cutting plans have so far been frustrated.

To solve the problems of the economy the government needs to go much further in cutting both public spending and wages.

Yet its tentative attempts to do both have already made it the most unpopular government for years. They have provoked rebellions of Tory wets and harsh words from the CBI. As the general election approaches the Tories are already being torn apart between the economic requirements of British capitalism and political expediency.

Thatcher claims to be committed to radical austerity policies, yet she wants to take the credit for higher state expenditure on the health service. At the treasury Lawson is both pro-cuts and pro-public spending. Fowler is for austerity and compassion in the social security system. The Tories' slump in the opinion polls indicates public disillusionment with government policy. Thatcher blames 'poor presentation' for the government's current unpopularity. But even the best public relations money can buy cannot package the disintegration of British capitalism as an election winner.

Wishful thinking

The Labour Party has a similar problem of presentation. All the television stars and pop videos marketed by Kinnock's Walworth Road team cannot turn the party's 'jobs and industry' campaign into a credible solution to Britain's economic crisis. The latest policy document in Labour's campaign proposes to finance industrial growth and job creation by persuading British investors to put their money into Labour's investment bank rather than into more profitable outlets overseas. Labour hopes to achieve this defiance of the basic laws of the capitalist market, not by formal controls, but by an indirect system of tax penalties.

The central ingredient of Labour's economic policy is wishful thinking. It ignores the fundamental problem of low profitability that is the central barrier to investment in Britain. In tackling these problems the Labour Party has no alternative to the austerity policies of the Tories — and everybody knows it. Hence it accepts that mass unemployment is here to stay, that public spending economies are unavoidable and that a wage-cutting incomes policy is essential. Once Kinnock got into office it would not take long to find out how much Labour's programme would cost the working class.

It took French socialist president Mitterrand less than 18 months to make the transition from Bennite to Thatcherite. Kinnock has less ground to cover, and he has Healey and Hattersley to lead the way. The muddle of both Tory and Labour economic policy reveals that there are no economic solutions to the crisis of British capitalism. Insofar as the Tories have a problem of presentation it is in getting this message across. Saving British capitalism means dismantling the welfare system, cutting the dole and forcing down wages — all on a scale that has so far scarcely been contemplated. Getting this message across is Labour's historic speciality. We must make sure that this time they don't get away with it.

Helen Swift

END OF THE RECOVERY

● Growth

After last year's US-led surge in the Western economies, growth is now flagging. This year economists predicted a growth rate of 3.5 per cent for the British economy, the best for a decade. Even this figure is artificially inflated by the revival of the coalmining industry after the year-long strike. Without this boost the true growth rate would be around 2.5 per cent, still well behind the USA, Germany and Japan.

● Investment

Investment in new plant and machinery rose by 14 per cent in 1984. After four years of decline much of this went on the replacement of obsolete plant. Much too went into the introduction of new technology into the service sector. Despite a surge of investment in manufacturing in the first quarter of 1985 it is expected to rise by only seven per cent this year.

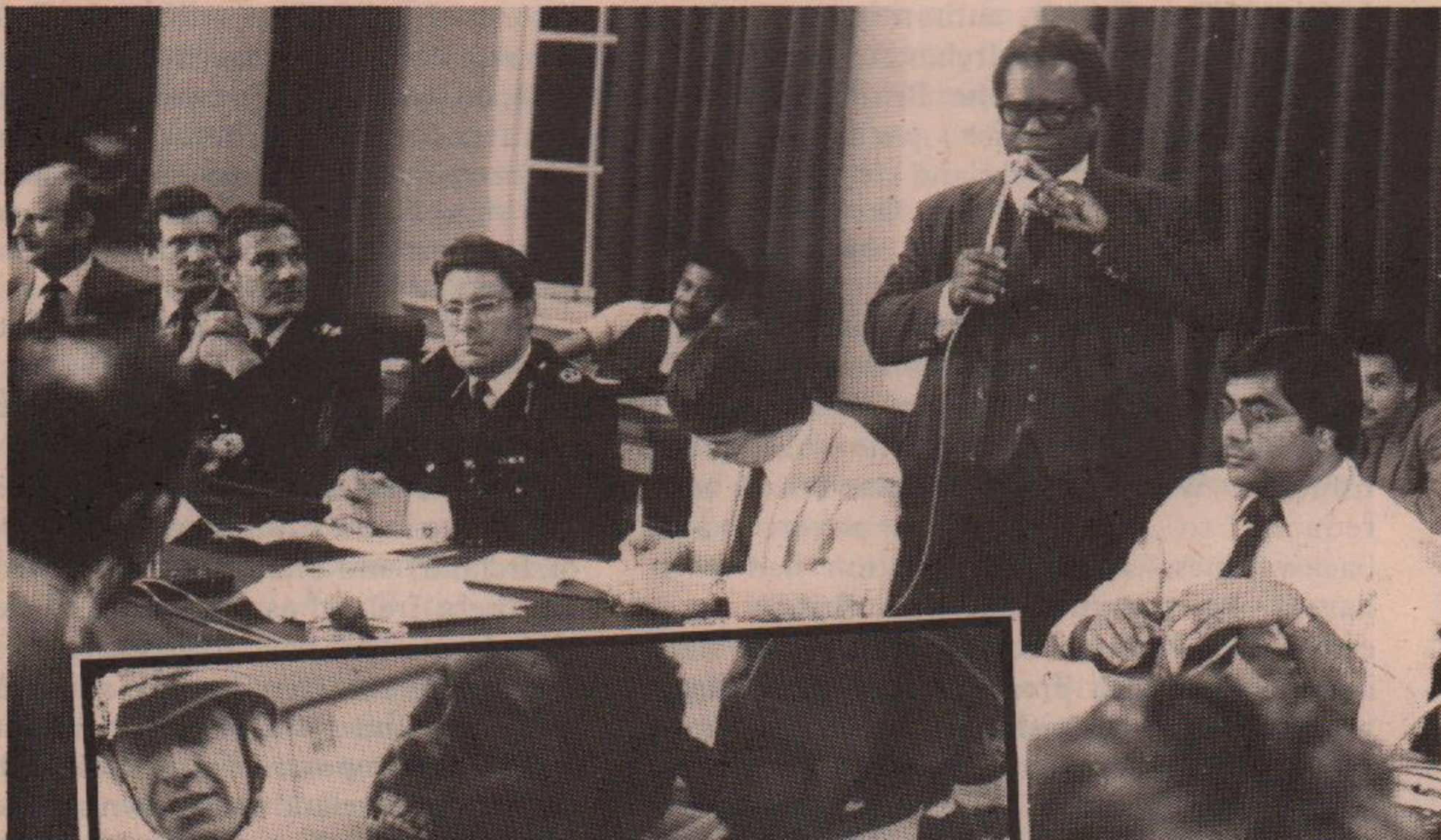
● Productivity

The higher productivity of British industry is one of the Tories' proudest boasts. Productivity in manufacturing has risen by an average of six per cent a year over the past three years. However productivity growth is expected to slow to 4.5 per cent this year as the scope for shaking out labour and closing down obsolete plant declines.

● Profits

The profitability of British industry as a whole has been boosted in recent years by North Sea oil. Excluding Britain's oil industry, last year's rates of return on capital invested reached an average of 7.5 per cent. Now the oil is running out and profits are being squeezed by high interest rates. The anticipated decline in productivity 'implies much less rapid growth of profits from 1986 onwards', according to a recent report of the London Business School.

Where have all the riots gone?



The Scarman recipe: consultation-strangulation



The Special Patrol Group's swamp of Brixton in 1981 provoked eight days of fierce rioting between black youth and police. But when the same heavy mob was drafted into Streatham last week to clamp down on a 'crime wave' there was hardly a murmur of resistance.

Tension between black youth and the police constantly threatens to erupt into violence. Trouble simmers on the streets of Hackney where relations are at breaking point. In Liverpool 8, where police cars have been ambushed on successive weekends with iron railings and bricks, local cops talk of 'gratuitous violence against the police'. But the conflict is sporadic and there seems no reason to revise metropolitan police commander Kenneth Newman's assessment last summer that 'the police are maintaining order against considerable odds'. How have the police managed to maintain the upper hand?

Judging from newspaper headlines the front line of conflict between the police and the black community seems to have shifted from the streets to the committee rooms of the various local police consultative and liaison quangos.

The battle now rages in Lambeth town hall between two community/police committees vying for official recognition. In Southwark councillors have threatened to sue the police for their failure to 'consult properly' with the council. Lambeth, Southwark and Hackney councils have refused consultations with Newman, on the grounds that the police are not sufficiently accountable. In Manchester the chair of the police committee recently accused the police of a 'like it or lump it' attitude. Similar conflicts rage on Merseyside. To understand the present conflicts we need to look at the relations established between the police and the consultative committees in the aftermath of the 1981 riots.

The Brixton riots in 1981 were a revolt against the build-up of police harassment in the area. The spread of rioting to other inner-city areas was a shock to the British establishment. It soon became clear that the Tories' hardline policy against black youth was a recipe for all-out war in the inner cities. Frantic discussion took place at all levels of the establishment, as the home office, police and local councils worked out how best to keep the lid on black revolt. Lord Scarman was enlisted to chart a new approach to community relations.

The 1981 Scarman Report has become the establishment blueprint for policing the inner-city ghettos. It put forward a two-pronged strategy for quashing black resistance.

Scarman took it for granted that repression would continue to play a central role in suppressing black revolt. The riots had exposed the inability of the police to deal effectively with a sustained challenge to law and order. It was time to tool up to meet the threat of wider disorder in the crisis conditions of the eighties. The Tories lost no time setting up new riot squads and arming the police for the battles to come. Instant response units, plastic bullets and water cannon made up the new arsenal of repression. But the lesson of the riots was that brute force was not enough to hold the anger of black youth in check.

Repression was only one side of the Scarman strategy. Much more important was Scarman's plan for developing a new 'social contract' between police and public in the fight against 'crime'. The aim was to win a solid consensus of support for law and order, the better to isolate rebellious black youth and legitimise police terror.

Scarman advocated the 'multi-agency approach' to policing, pioneered by former chief cop John Alderson. The idea was to involve the public — teachers, social workers, youth leaders, councillors, churchmen, tenants — in the fight against crime. This would enable the police to 'penetrate the community in a multitude of ways'. The job of community constables was to build links and establish intelligence networks to make it easier to target individual 'trouble-makers'. Scarman seemed to offer a more diplomatic form of policing. In reality repression was to hit harder, but it was to be more selective.

The police/community consultative committees, initiated by Tory ministers William Whitelaw, Douglas Hurd and Timothy Raison, and made statutory earlier this year by home secretary Leon Brittan, have played a key role in developing the multi-agency approach. They have brought together Labour councillors, local dignitaries and representatives of the black community to help to undermine resistance to the police offensive. Local Labour politicians have done sterling service for the British establishment in isolating black youth from wider support by accommodating to the Tories' law and order crusade.

The new strategy has had considerable success. It has enabled the police to go in hard against anybody who causes trouble and ensure that resistance remains atomised and sporadic. Potential flashpoints are quickly identified by the surveillance units and neutralised with maximum repression by the low-key targeting squads.

The consultative groups have done a good

job in demoralising resistance in the black ghettos. 'We're mediating and broking in a divided community,' explains Brynley Heaven of Hackney police committee, 'some people are worried about the high level of crime; others about oppressive police action.' The consultative committees have popularised the notion that the major problem facing the inner cities is crime. In doing so they have turned the issue of racial oppression into a problem of law and order.

In Lambeth the community/police consultative group is composed largely of self-appointed middle-aged community and religious leaders. A leading member, local businessman George Greave, participated because he was 'in favour of anything that can be done effectively to reduce crime in the area'. His recently awarded MBE must have come as a pleasant bonus. The group's credibility within the black community and especially among black youth is minimal, yet it serves to rubber stamp every police raid and every crime crackdown.

Unfortunately, the radicals in the rival Labour Party-inspired police committee in Lambeth are motivated by the same desire for more effective crime control. Their battle is for increased accountability and consultation which, they argue, 'are essential for effective and sensitive policing'. Their criticism of the consultative group is that it has not 'involved the broader community' and that it had 'no detailed say in policing matters'. Because they accept that Brixton must be policed 'effectively', the police committee radicals are in no position to challenge the 'insensitive' treatment meted out to the black community.

When it comes to a confrontation between the police and young blacks they always endorse repression. Lambeth Labour councillors played a crucial role in the destruction of Brixton's 'front line'. Lambeth council is always ready to open the doors of council property for police surveillance when the preservation of 'law and order' is at risk.

The response of Hackney police committee to persistent friction between black youth and police on Clapton Park estate illustrates the role of left-wing Labour councils. The mayor of Hackney reports that 'very serious arguments have developed between the police and black people in the area'. The council fears 'a recurrence of the conflict that so nearly caused Clapton Park to become a flashpoint in summer 1984'. The police-sponsored neighbourhood watch scheme has failed in the face of local hostility, so a council-sponsored 'safe neighbourhood unit' has been introduced as a more credible method of reconciliation.

The police are now confident that they have got the upper hand. They are able to deploy the SPG in Streatham and Clapham with impunity. Fifty plain clothes detectives are now a permanent feature of Brixton life. Community policing schemes are now well established and nearly 1800 neighbourhood spy schemes are now in operation. 'Sector working parties', involving police, local residents and traders, and aiming to produce local crime prevention strategies, have just started in Brixton.

Selective repression coupled with a more direct relationship with the community have proved to be such a successful formula that the mediating services of the quangos are no longer required. As Greenwich police chief AJ Walker boasts, 'we have good liaison with many of Greenwich's departments like housing and social services, so we don't need to go through their police committees.' The council quangos have done their job. Now they are expendable.

The current quango conflicts are not about stopping the SPG flooding Streatham or the level of police harassment in Toxteth. They are about preserving the mediating role of consultative committees. Nor are they the real front line of racial conflict. Recent incidents in Liverpool 8 and elsewhere show that while black resistance is being effectively contained, it has not been destroyed.

John Pearson

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

BBC 'INDEPENDENCE'

'Independence is supposed to be what the BBC is all about. It is what its reputation rests on, at home and abroad. Where is that reputation now?' moaned the *Financial Times* last week. The establishment's biggest objection to the ban on the Martin McGuinness show was that it undermined the BBC's standing as a free and independent service, and made Auntie look like the government-run networks of Eastern Europe or the third world.

In fact the BBC has never been independent from the British ruling class. It exists to promote a distinctly British world view and to help consolidate a patriotic consensus among British people. The corporation's lack of autonomy has been clearest around the Irish War. In 1971, BBC head Lord Hill announced that 'between the British Army and the gunmen, the BBC is not and cannot be neutral'. The BBC has stuck to his word, consistently reporting the British version of events in Ireland and giving no publicity to republicans.

Direct government interference of the kind seen last week has generally been unnecessary because BBC chiefs have imposed self-censorship. The BBC schedules of the last 16 years are littered with scrapped 'advertised programmes' on Northern Ireland. When, a year ago this weekend, the BBC showed the Royal Ulster Constabulary's brutal attack on a Belfast anti-internment rally, executives told their newsmen to announce that the incarceration of hundreds of Irish people under internment without trial was 'a long time ago' and 'didn't last very long'.

Although the BBC has never been independent, the lack of obvious censorship on issues other than Ireland has allowed it to cultivate an image of objectivity and neutrality. This has helped governments to promote the idea that modern Britain is an open democracy, and to persuade people that state institutions are impartial. It has also given the BBC barons status as guardians of the truth rather than state stooges.

Problems of recession, war and social strife have forced the government to infringe the 'independence' of bodies like the BBC. Under Margaret Thatcher the Tories have increasingly politicised state institutions. This has exposed them as what they really are — weapons of the capitalist class for use against its opponents. The blatantly pro-bosses line taken by the 'independent' judiciary in the miners' strike is a prime example. This politicisation process has caused protests from establishment figures who feel their public standing is under threat. The Clive Ponting trial revealed the extent of disquiet among civil servants who are expected to lie for the government. The current protests from BBC management and its backers show that the same objections are being raised in Bush House.

The official labour movement has fallen in behind the establishment rebels.

Broadcasting journalists who announced they would strike over the McGuinness ban showed a healthy disgust at state censorship. Unfortunately their leaders, like NUJ executive member and *Newsnight* frontman Vincent Hanna, insisted that they shared the government's wish to crush the IRA and that the action was about defending the BBC's 'independent' role. But you cannot fight state censorship on Ireland if you agree that the message of Irish freedom should be kept out of Britain. The way to beat the Irish bans is not to uphold the spurious independence of a British state institution, but to fight against the state for the independence of the Irish nation.

On the morning of 9 August 1971 internment without trial came into force in Northern Ireland. British troops launched mass raids on nationalist districts of Derry and Belfast, dragging off anybody suspected of opposing British rule in Northern Ireland and of supporting the IRA's fight for Irish freedom. That day 342 Irish people were imprisoned, without charge or trial, in British barracks or on the prison ship *Maidstone*. Once under British lock and key they were subjected to torture and terror.

Fourteen internees were used as guinea pigs to try out the 'five techniques' of interrogation. They were hooded, made to stand flush against walls for hours, denied sleep, given little food and water and subjected to constant 'white noise'. Other internees were hooded and thrown backwards out of helicopters hovering a few feet above the ground, after being told they were flying high over Belfast. Many of the victims of the intensive campaign of British terror that followed internment were emotionally and mentally scarred for life.

The unbridled brutality of internment without trial stands in stark contrast to the methods of peaceful persuasion which the British authorities have traditionally used to deal with their opponents at home. Yet it is typical of the terrorist tactics British governments have used to keep control in Ireland.

The British establishment has always treated the Irish differently from any other opponents. At the beginning of 1972, the mass campaign against internment in Northern Ireland coincided with a national miners' strike in England, Scotland and Wales. The Tory government dealt with the miners through its long-established machinery of conciliation and compromise, cooking up a negotiated deal that granted the miners concessions to get them back to work. But the Tories made no concessions in Ireland. When 30 000 people

marched through Derry in a peaceful anti-internment march on 30 January 1972, British paratroopers acting on government orders opened fire killing 14 unarmed Irish demonstrators.

Even when the authorities have to use unaccustomed levels of force to put down British workers, the violence does not match that used in Ireland. Last summer's police assaults on mining communities with batons and snatch squads looked like friendly persuasion compared to the mass assault the Royal Ulster Constabulary launched on a peaceful internment commemoration march in West Belfast. The RUC sprayed plastic bullets into the defenceless crowd, killing Irishman John Downes and injuring many more.

Why have British governments which preach peace to their opponents at home maintained their terrorist approach to dealing with Irish nationalists? Why has every prime minister from Lloyd George to Thatcher dismissed the possibility of a negotiated, compromise solution in Ireland? The answer lies in the mortal threat the fight for Irish freedom poses to the British state. To explain this threat, we need to examine two problems: the unique character of Anglo-Irish relations, and the nature of the British state machine.

Interviewed on BBC television last week, Thatcher was keen to play down the prospects of dramatic progress towards an Irish solution emerging from current talks with the Dublin government. 'It is an age-old problem,' she moaned, 'it has dogged us for 400 years. It is not easy.' The problem of how to contain Irish resistance to the colonial occupation has indeed 'dogged' the British ruling class for centuries.

The problem has assumed a particularly acute form since 1801, when the Act of Union fused the whole of Ireland with the British state.

The Act of Union was passed in recognition of the fact that military terror was not sufficient to keep the Irish rebels under English control. Even the defeat of the United Irishmen's revolt in 1798, which left 50 000 Irish dead, failed to extinguish the flame of national revolt in Ireland. The British authorities moved to tighten their net around Ireland by bringing the island directly within the British system of government. The Irish parliament was abolished and instead Ireland elected 100 MPs to Westminster. A lord lieutenant was appointed as the formal head of the administration in Ireland.

The Act of Union ensured that Ireland's economic and social development continued under direct British supervision. This was about as successful as the administration of modern Ethiopia. Within 50 years Ireland had been reduced to a morass of poverty and backwardness and its population had been halved by famine. Yet the British state continued to enforce British control. The state institutions which presided over Irish affairs were not separate Irish agencies tacked on to the British government machine. They were fully integrated into the system centred on Westminster and Whitehall. By 1914 there were 26 000 government officials dealing with Ireland. Only 2000 were employed in specifically Irish departments, while the other 24 000 worked for 'United Kingdom' departments operating in Ireland.

The fusion of Ireland with Britain still dictates

the government's attitude to the Irish War today.

The Act of Union could not legislate the Irish liberation struggle out of existence. Although the imperial authorities succeeded in crushing a series of revolts in the nineteenth century, the movement for Irish freedom was revived by every new generation. It developed from a parliamentary lobby into an armed insurrection by the end of the First World War. But by incorporating Ireland within the British state, the Act of Union brought the battle for Irish independence into the heart of British political life. It converted Irish nationalism from an issue of foreign relations into a problem of domestic British politics. From 1801, the integrity of the central institutions of British government was on the line in Ireland.

The Act of Union was modified by the partition of Ireland in 1921. But the relationship between Britain and Ireland established by the union remains in force. Partition created a formally independent Irish Free State in the south (now called the Republic of Ireland) and established the six counties of Northern Ireland as a province of the 'United Kingdom'. This new arrangement only served to disguise the fact that the south of Ireland remained under indirect British domination. Even more importantly, the artificial province of Northern Ireland was drawn still deeper into the web of British government institutions. The Six Counties became as much a part of the British state as Yorkshire or Kent.

Partition imprisoned 500 000 Irish nationalists within 'the United Kingdom'. It ratified the denial of genuine independence to the three million people of the rest of Ireland who have remained under British control through London's stooges in Dublin. The denial of the right of the Irish to national self-determination has ensured virtually continuous revolt for the past 200 years.



Sixteen years after British troops invaded Northern Ireland in August 1969, the killing continues. Why can't Britain bring peace to Ireland? Mick Hume expands on a key section from the new Irish Freedom Movement handbook, *The Irish War* (see page 9)

16 years since
troops invaded, 14
years since
internment

Can Britain bring peace to the Irish

For the past 60 years the existence of a subversive community within the borders of the British state has posed an explicit threat to the stability of the United Kingdom as a whole. For the past 16 years the British capitalist class has been fighting for its life in the Irish War.

In the past, revolutionaries in Britain understood the particular importance of the threat from Ireland. After the British general elections of 1874, Frederick Engels celebrated the fact that 'both motive forces of English political development have now entered parliament: on the one side the workers, on the other the Irish as a compact national party'. The presence of dozens of Irish nationalist MPs in the House of Commons in the late nineteenth century, even as middle class lobbyists, underlined the frontline character of the Irish challenge to the British ruling class. In the hundred years since, the British establishment has had no choice but to use savage repression against the Irish to contain a fundamental challenge to its authority.

The fact that the Irish liberation war has been waged within the boundaries of the British state has made compromise impossible for the British authorities. To clarify this point, let's look more closely at the British state itself.

The state is the most powerful weapon of the capitalist class. It acts to repress the establishment's opponents, and to administer every aspect of public life. The state machine has two aspects. At root, it is the military organisation of the capitalist class. It stands on the bedrock of a body of armed men — the police and army — and a repressive apparatus — the courts, prisons and top civil servants.

The second aspect of the British state serves to disguise its essential character as the organised violence of the establishment. This is the democratic aspect of the state — its showcase of parliament, jury trials, and welfare departments. These bodies give the impression that the state's function is to serve the interests of all citizens, rather than those of a propertied and powerful minority.

The smooth running of British society depends on public acceptance of the legitimacy of the state. As long as British people allow the police, the courts, the department of health and social security and the rest to organise their lives and communities, the ruling class is happy. But any hint of people seeing through the charade of democracy and withdrawing their consent from the rule of capitalist law and order brings the stability of the system into question. Thus Britain's rulers are quick to crack down on any militant minority that temporarily says 'no' to the authority of the state, whether they are black youth in Brixton or striking miners in south Yorkshire.

The nationalist community in Northern Ireland poses a more fundamental problem for the Westminster establishment. The Irish liberation struggle is a constant and unequivocal challenge to the authority of British government institutions.

Every day of their lives, thousands of Irish people within the borders of the 'United Kingdom' dismiss the idea of British democracy. In a series of recent elections around 100 000 people in Northern Ireland have voted for Sinn Féin, the party that supports the armed struggle of the IRA against the British state. This 'enemy within' is a permanent source of potential inspiration to all those who find themselves in conflict with the British authorities. If the establishment were to admit defeat in Ireland, it would risk the spread of such anti-state sentiments and endanger the stability of the entire 'United Kingdom'.

It would be technically illegal for the British government to withdraw its forces from

Northern Ireland. Under British law, any citizen can apply to the government to restore order in part of the 'UK'. If the authorities conceded they were unable to impose order on the Irish people, they would be admitting their inability to carry out their constitutional obligations. This could only bring established power relations into question across Britain. Any victim of capitalist exploitation or oppression anywhere in Britain would only have to ask — 'if they can't run that corner of the country, why should they run this one?'

This explains why no British government has ever been able to negotiate an effective compromise with the Irish people. Trade unions and other groups seeking reforms can always be bought off. But there can be no compromise with a movement which poses a challenge to the very authority of the state. Thus every British statesman has had to shelve dreams of a peaceful solution to the Irish question and send out the state's terrorists to put the Irish down.

If we accept that the British authorities cannot bring peace to Ireland, the only way to end the war is to support the Irish people in their struggle to force the British state out of their country. Yet the notion that the British government could come up with a peaceful solution to 'the Irish problem' remains widespread in the British labour movement. Stuart Bell, the Labour Party's deputy Northern Ireland spokesman, recently outlined his party's proposals for bringing unity and peace to Ireland through negotiations with Dublin.

Labour's peace process would 'begin with the setting up of joint committees with senior civil servants to develop the political, economic and social harmonisation programmes that will be necessary to reunite the two parts of Ireland in peace and prosperity'. This process would be underwritten by the continued presence of British troops, who would not be withdrawn until 'those in both communities in Northern Ireland feel that they can commingle together in a sense of peace and security'.

Even if we believe that a party which has always proved an enthusiastic supporter of British terror is serious about bringing 'peace and security' to Ireland, Bell's scheme is a non-starter. It identifies the pillars of the British state which pose the major obstacle to peace in Ireland — the 'senior civil servants' and the Army — as being the agents for progress. Labour's belief in the sovereignty of parliament means it is convinced that an elected government could make the state machinery do its bidding in Ireland. The history of Anglo-Irish relations shows otherwise.

The real power in British society is invested by the capitalist class in the repressive base of the state, not in its parliamentary public relations department. Whichever party is in government, the survival of the capitalist class demands that the British state must rule in Ireland.

If Labour politicians try to impose an Irish settlement that is not in the establishment's

interests, the state will refuse to obey the government's instructions. Anybody who thinks this an outrageous slur on the traditions of British democracy should examine what happened last time a British government tried on such a scheme, during the Home Rule crisis before the First World War.

Between 1912 and 1914 Ireland was the major issue in British politics. Asquith's Liberal government was dependent on the support of the Irish nationalist MPs for its parliamentary majority. In return for their backing, the government attempted to pass a Home Rule Bill granting Ireland a limited degree of autonomy within the British empire. The Unionists in north east Ireland were determined to maintain the link with Britain. They organised to resist Home Rule, establishing a huge armed militia — the Ulster Volunteer Force — and threatening to set up a provisional government of their own if the Bill were passed.

The Liberal government insisted that its parliamentary majority gave it the right to override the Unionists and impose Home Rule. There is no doubt that, if the interests of the ruling class had demanded it, the British state could have dealt with the Unionist threat. But the senior figures in the British establishment and its state institutions had higher concerns than the parliamentary position of the Liberal Party. Their concern was to maintain the authority of the British state by keeping control of Ireland. Thus, far from bowing to the government's instructions, the ruling class and its armed defenders defied parliament and threatened a military coup to stop Home Rule.

The opposition to the government's Home Rule Bill was not led by any Loyalist loonies or rabble-rousing Orange clergymen. It was headed by Sir Edward Carson, soon to be a member of the British war cabinet, and Andrew Bonar Law, the leader of the Conservative Party, backed by assorted lords and generals. Bonar Law, head of the most respectable political party, was forthright in declaring how far he would go to defeat the government and maintain Ireland:

'In our opposition to them we shall not be guided by the considerations, we shall not be

restrained by the bonds, which would influence us in an ordinary political struggle. We shall use any means — whatever seems to us likely to be the most effective.'

More bluntly still, he declared that '*there are things stronger than parliamentary majorities*'. The stronger force Bonar Law had in mind was the real power of the British state, which would not bow to the government on Home Rule. For the question of Ireland was no 'ordinary political issue'. It was, and remains, a life and death struggle for the British ruling class. Bonar Law's words were no empty threat. When the government tried to call the Unionists' bluff by sending troops north from the Curragh barracks near Dublin, brigadier Hubert Gough and more than 50 other cavalry officers refused to go. The 'Curragh mutiny' was only ended when Gough was given assurances by Army chiefs and government ministers that the Army would not be used to enforce Home Rule. The body of armed men at the base of the British state had defeated an elected government's plans for a negotiated settlement in Ireland.

Watching from Europe, Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin noted the significance of the Curragh mutiny. It was 'an epoch-making turning point, the day when the noble landowners of Britain tore the British constitution and British law to shreds and gave an excellent lesson in class struggle'. The lesson was that the British ruling class will stop at nothing to preserve the power of its state by keeping control of Ireland.

The Irish people have learned that lesson the hard way over the 14 years since internment was introduced. They know they have to fight for their freedom. In Britain, the Irish Freedom Movement has learnt that lesson too. We put no faith in a negotiated British solution. We know there can be no peace in Ireland until the British state is defeated and forced out. This Saturday, 10 August, we will be marching in London to demand 'Troops out of Ireland, Prisoners out of jail' (see page two for details). Join us in building a movement that can support the Irish people in their struggle to bring peace to Ireland, by freeing it from the clutches of the terrorist British state.

in end sh War?



INTERNATIONAL

Struggle in South Africa

The African National Congress

As the state of emergency in South Africa moves into its third week *Charles Longford* looks at the history of the African National Congress, the leading force in the resistance to apartheid.

The ANC was formed in 1912 as the South African Native National Congress ('native' was dropped in 1923). Its formation was a response to the Act of Union of 1910, which consolidated Britain's control over South Africa after its brutal defeat of the Boers, the earlier Dutch settlers in the area.

The founders of the ANC were the products of missionary education — ministers, teachers, clerks, interpreters and small-scale traders. These black professionals worked within the system to improve the position of black people. Their objective was 'to formulate a standard policy on native affairs for the benefit and guidance of the union government'. They aimed to provide a mechanism through which the 'natives' could 'agitate and advocate by just means...for the removal of the "colour bar" in political education and industrial fields and for equitable representation of natives in parliament'.

The methods of the early ANC included 'constitutional and peaceful propaganda', deputations to the crown and other forms of legal protest. The organisation was modelled on the British parliament. It consisted of an upper chamber, in which the traditional chiefs and 'those of royal blood' sat, and a lower chamber, consisting of elected delegates. In 1913 a new Land Act reduced black land ownership to 13 per cent of South Africa and established the 'native reserves' (later to become the 'homelands'). The ANC response was to send a deputation to London to plead, in vain, for a better deal for blacks.

Over the next 30 years the ANC organised numerous delegations to London, but had little impact on life in South Africa. Meanwhile black workers were drawn in large numbers into the mines and the cities. The proletarianisation of the blacks led to strikes and to a wider questioning of the oppressive colonial system.

During the Second World War the government crushed militant strikes in the mines and introduced harsh repressive legislation. At the same time it tried to head off black anger by setting up 'native representative councils'. Pursuing its moderate approach the ANC backed the government's war effort and participated in the native representation councils. This policy caused growing conflict between the established leadership and a younger generation of activists who formed the Congress Youth League in 1944.

Black nationalism

The youth organisers included future ANC leaders like Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu. Their manifesto described the ANC and its leaders as 'a body of gentlemen with clean hands...an organisation of the privileged few...out of touch with the needs of the rank and file'. The old leadership was condemned for giving 'no positive lead' and for not proposing 'any constructive programme to enforce the repeal of all oppressive legislation'.

In the late forties the youth wing moved to oust the old leadership and to replace its moderate constitutional approach with a more militant African nationalism. This outlook was articulated by Anton Lembede, a young lawyer whose writings inspired generations of black activists. Lembede emphasised black people's common experience of racial oppression:

'The basis of national unity is the nationalistic feelings of the Africans...irrespective of tribal connections, social status, educational achievement or economic class....After national freedom, then socialism....Our immediate task, however, is not socialism, but national liberation.'



Nelson Mandela (right) is the focus of the aspirations of many who have fought courageously against apartheid; but the moderate approach of the middle class ANC leaders of the past (above) remains a danger to the liberation struggle

By appealing to the aspiration of all blacks to escape colonial domination, the black nationalists aimed to reach beyond the middle class circles of the old ANC leadership to the masses. Their long-term socialist goals reflected an orientation to the more radical black workers who had already shown their willingness to take on the state.

The establishment of an independent white supremacist South Africa and the beginnings of the modern apartheid system in 1948 pushed the ANC towards the young radicals. The adoption of the *Programme of Action* in 1949, which aimed at 'national freedom...from white domination and the attainment of political independence', committed the ANC for the first time to 'mass protests and passive resistance'. However, it was not until 1952, when Nelson Mandela was elected on to the ANC's national executive, that the old guard was finally defeated.

The campaign of mass defiance of the pass laws in 1952 and 1953 established the ANC as a force in South Africa. The ANC went ahead with its campaign of mass non-violent civil disobedience when the government spurned its 'genuine offer of cooperation on the basis of full equality'. When 1500 people had been arrested and 20 local organisers were sentenced to nine months hard labour, violence flared between blacks and police in Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg and Kimberley.

In East London, six whites and 50 blacks were killed as government buildings and churches were firebombed and smashed. The ANC recoiled at the violent confrontation with the state which its passive resistance campaign had unleashed. After the East London events, the ANC

deplored 'the ill-considered return to jungle law' and advised blacks to 'rally to the call of the ANC' which was 'conducting a non-violent struggle against racially discriminating, unjust laws'.

After the defiance campaign the state crushed all political protests and refused to contemplate negotiations or compromise. The ANC continued to defy all new discriminatory legislation. But passive resistance proved to be ineffective against the government's Native Resettlement Act, which removed the last vestiges of black home ownership in white urban areas. It also failed to stop the introduction of the blatantly discriminatory 'Bantu education' system. These failures spurred the ANC into re-examining its strategy.

The ANC radicals established close links with the Communist Party of South Africa. This staunchly pro-Soviet party had moved from its earlier accommodation to white racism to an accommodation with black nationalism. It now adapted the familiar Stalinist two-stage strategy of Third World development to the South African context; first win national independence and black majority rule, then advance towards socialism. In 1955 the ANC adopted the basic elements of this strategy in its *Freedom Charter*, the programme it still upholds today. With this programme it set about widening its base of popular support through the Congress Alliance.

Mandela explained the moderate objectives of the new alliance and the Charter: 'Whilst the Charter proclaims democratic changes of a far-reaching nature it is by no means a blueprint for a socialist state but a programme for the unification of various classes and

groupings among the people on a democratic basis.'

Mandela explained the ANC's view that the break-up of the financial and gold-mining monopolies and farming industries would 'open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class'. The new South Africa would be a country in which 'the non-European bourgeoisie' would have 'the opportunity to own in their own name and right, mills and factories'. Mandela predicted that 'trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before'.

The Kliptown conference which adopted the charter as its programme united the South African Indian Congress, the white Congress of Democrats and the South African Coloured People's Organisation. A year later, the South African Congress of Trade Unions joined the Congress Alliance. Meanwhile black workers were taking direct action against the state. In 1957, 50 000 workers boycotted the local bus services in Alexandra over a fares increase. After a three-month struggle they forced the government to introduce legislation requiring employers to subsidise transport costs.

Armed struggle

Workers' struggles provoked divisions in the ranks of the black nationalists. When the ANC's campaigns failed to make any significant impact on the government, some blamed the inclusion of whites in the Alliance. Tensions came to a head in 1959 when the Pan Africanist Congress was formed after splits in the ANC. The PAC agreed with the ANC's broad strategy, but it refused to admit whites to its ranks. In 1960, the PAC launched an anti-pass laws protest, modelled directly on the earlier ANC campaigns. PAC leader Robert Sobukwe called upon black workers to 'make this a most peaceful and disciplined campaign'. Unfortunately, the government did not reciprocate. At Sharpeville in March 1960 police shot dead 67 blacks.

As repression mounted after Sharpeville, the government declared a state of emergency and soon banned both the ANC and the PAC. Their leaders were arrested, forced to go underground or into exile. Throughout 1961 the ANC campaigned for a national convention, a forum which would bring blacks and whites together to negotiate a peaceful settlement. Prime minister Verwoed dismissed all the ANC's appeals, crushed every sign of resistance and declared South Africa a republic outside the British Commonwealth.

The ANC was pushed to the inevitable conclusion: 'If peaceful protests like these are to be put down by the mobilisation of the army and the police, then the people might be forced to use other methods of struggle.'

The ANC now formed an armed wing — Umkhonto We Sizwe ('Spear of the Nation') — and embarked on a series of acts of economic sabotage. The regime unleashed the full force of state repression. The entire underground leadership was arrested and Mandela and other leaders were convicted and imprisoned for life.

Their pleas that they were hoping to 'bring the government and its sympathisers to its senses...before matters reached the desperate stage of civil war' cut no ice with the apartheid regime. Backed all the way by their Western allies, the South African capitalists launched the decade of terror against black workers which built South African capitalism into a world power.

The ANC has been forced to drop the respectable image of its early years and recognise that armed force is the only way to hit back at the apartheid regime. Many of its supporters have made great sacrifices to win freedom for the black masses. Yet the danger remains that the moderate influences which prevailed in the ANC's early history may still hold back the liberation struggle.

REVIEWS

PERU



Poverty and power

Latin America Bureau, *Peru: paths to poverty*, LAB, £2.95

Peru's new president Alan Garcia began his term of office by warning the International Monetary Fund that he intended to keep Peru's debt repayments down to 10 per cent of the country's export earnings. The Latin America Bureau's latest special brief, written before Garcia's election, puts the new president's policy into perspective. It explains why Garcia, despite his anti-IMF rhetoric, has no alternative to forcing the Peruvian working class and peasantry to carry the burden of the country's debts.

Peru: paths to poverty maintains the high standards of research and clarity of presentation

COP TECHNOLOGY

Space-age policing

BSSRS, *Technocop: new police technologies*, Free Association Books, £3.50

Technocop is a well researched examination of the powers of the modern police force and its use of new technology. The book begins with an imaginary insurrection, describing methods the police use to intercept demonstrators, to pick up trade unionists and left-wing organisers involved, and to gain control of the situation. The technology used is not available — yet. *Technocop* goes on to show that police technology is much further advanced than most of us realise.

It describes the capabilities of the police national computer, which holds information on all driving licence holders, 'stolen and suspect vehicles', wanted criminals — and other 'suspect' people. Linked up to the computers of each local police force, this provides local police with access to a mass of information. The police plan a system which will allow any police computer to pass information to any other via the central data bank.

Police scientists are developing a camera that will 'recognise' people on a demonstration or picket line and check them against a file of 'faces'. There are already cameras on the M1 which can read number plates, check them against the 'stolen and suspect vehicles' file, and issue instructions to the nearest police car — all in a matter of minutes. Police interference with telephones is well documented. They don't just tap phones, they can cut off calls they prefer not to take place.

Technocop's authors are overwhelmed by this catalogue of police technology. But there is no need to despair. The most advanced surveillance equipment and enormous computer databanks have not been enough to crush the nationalist people in Northern Ireland. Their struggle shows that no amount of new technology or armed repression can keep down a rising backed by mass popular support.

Carolyn Price

associated with the Latin America Bureau. It cuts through the image of Peru as an independent parliamentary democracy to expose the way Peru is effectively ruled by an IMF dictatorship. The book traces the history of the exploitation of Peru by foreign capital, first under the auspices of Britain and later under US hegemony. The authors chart the resulting economic distortions and the destructive consequences for the Peruvian masses.

The best section of the book deals with the period from 1968 to 1980 when Peru was ruled first by the reforming military government of General Velasco Alvarado and then by right-wing General Bermudez who overthrew Velasco in 1975. Velasco's first act was to send soldiers to seize the holdings of the International Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of US giant Standard Oil. This raised high hopes of a decisive break with Peru's past. But as the authors point out, Velasco's nationalisation of this and other important industries aimed to stimulate economic development in the absence of a strong Peruvian

capitalist class. He also paid Standard Oil and the former owners of other nationalised companies handsome compensation.

Velasco's reforms failed to achieve sustained economic growth. Velasco borrowed heavily from Western banks to finance development but debt repayments began to eat into the country's export earnings. In 1973 Peru's earnings from exports spiralled downwards when the oil crisis sent import costs through the roof. Velasco was forced to go to Western banks to renegotiate Peru's repayments. In return they demanded austerity measures to make the Peruvian masses pay for the rescue of the Peruvian economy.

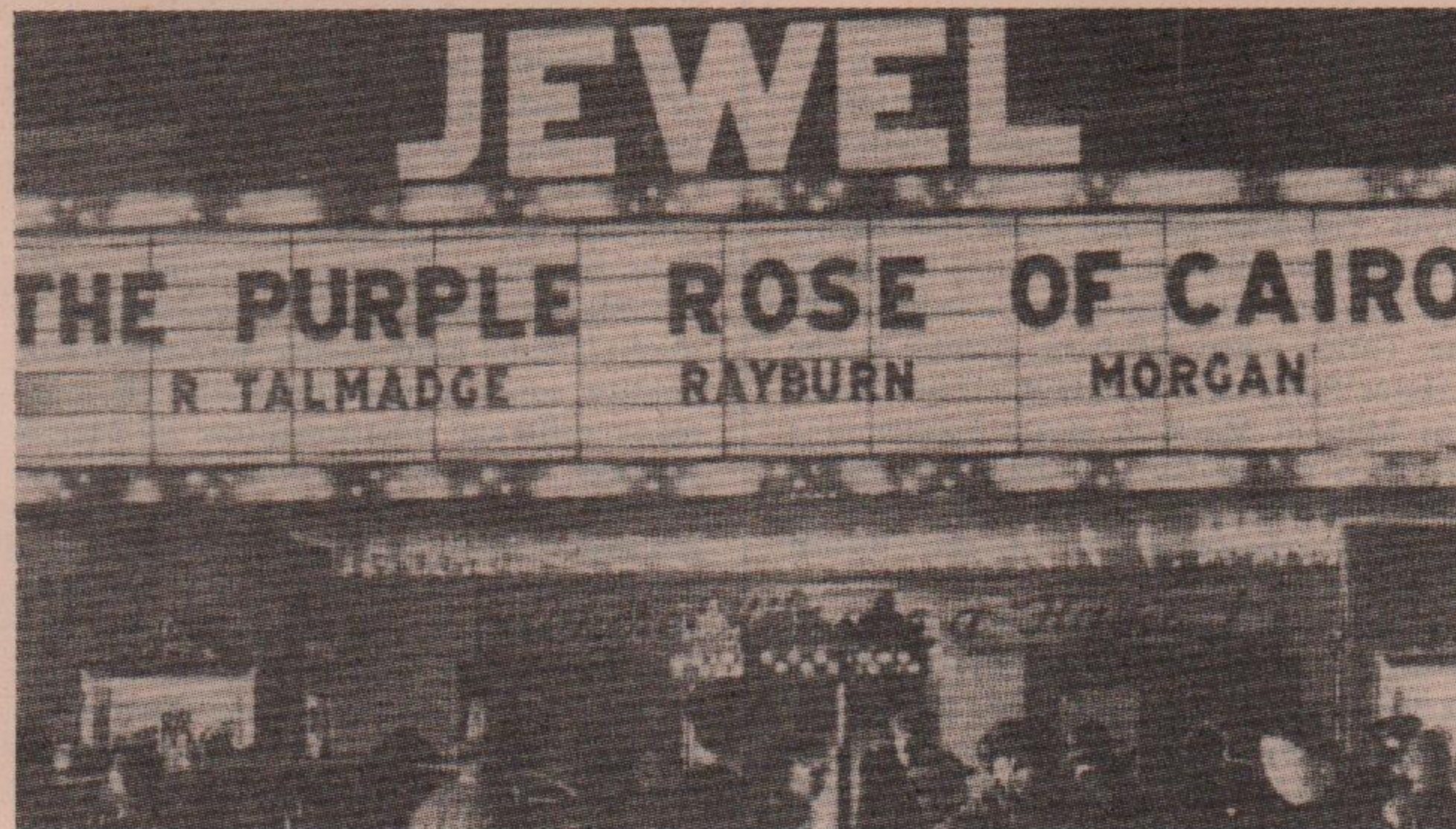
Peru: paths to poverty also throws light on the Peruvian working class and its organisations. It reveals how the Peruvian Communist Party, an organisation with significant working class support, was hooked by Velasco's reforms. Even when he began to tighten the screws on workers' living standards and trade union rights the Communist Party continued to support him, disarming working class opposition. The party continued this policy after the fall of Velasco. It backed Bermudez despite his violent anti-communist outbursts and his imposition of a state of emergency in 1976. The communist-backed trade union confederation, the largest in Peru, refused to support fishermen who came out on strike when denationalisation of the industry led to more than 10 000 sackings.

The Communist Party supported Bermudez and Belaunde Terry, his civilian successor, on the grounds that it was necessary to develop capitalism in Peru before socialism could be put on the agenda. The failures and betrayals of the Stalinists during this period led many workers to leave the party and its trade unions. Some joined the peasant-based guerrilla organisation Sendero Luminoso.

Peru: paths to poverty provides no serious critique of the Stalinist politics of the Communist Party. As a result the authors cannot explain the attraction of the Sendero Luminoso to a generation of worker and peasant militants who have become demoralised by the opportunist policies of the Communist Party. The authors end up putting their trust in 'parliamentary democracy' and capitalist development. The force that is absent from their perspectives, as it is from the schemes of the Communist Party and Sendero Luminoso, is the one force that can end the poverty of Peru — working class power.

Charles Longford

WOODY ALLEN



Screen idols

Woody Allen (director), *The purple rose of Cairo* (PG)

In 1930s New Jersey and on the wrong side of the tracks, the only escape for waitress Cecilia is via the silver screen at the local picture house.

Abused by her brutish husband and harassed by her boss at the dinette, she creeps off to marvel at the splendours and stars served up by Hollywood. She really gets carried away when one of the dashing characters falls for her (well, she's seen the film five times so he's noticed her) and steps down from the screen to whisk her off amid pandemonium in the cinema.

The rest of this entertaining film is taken up with her relationships with the character (who has only the stereotypic attributes provided for him by the scriptwriters) and with the actor who played him in the film from which he jumped, who arrives in consternation that the person he has 'fleshed out' is on the loose. Confused? So's Cecilia, and she has to choose which of the two to make a real escape with.

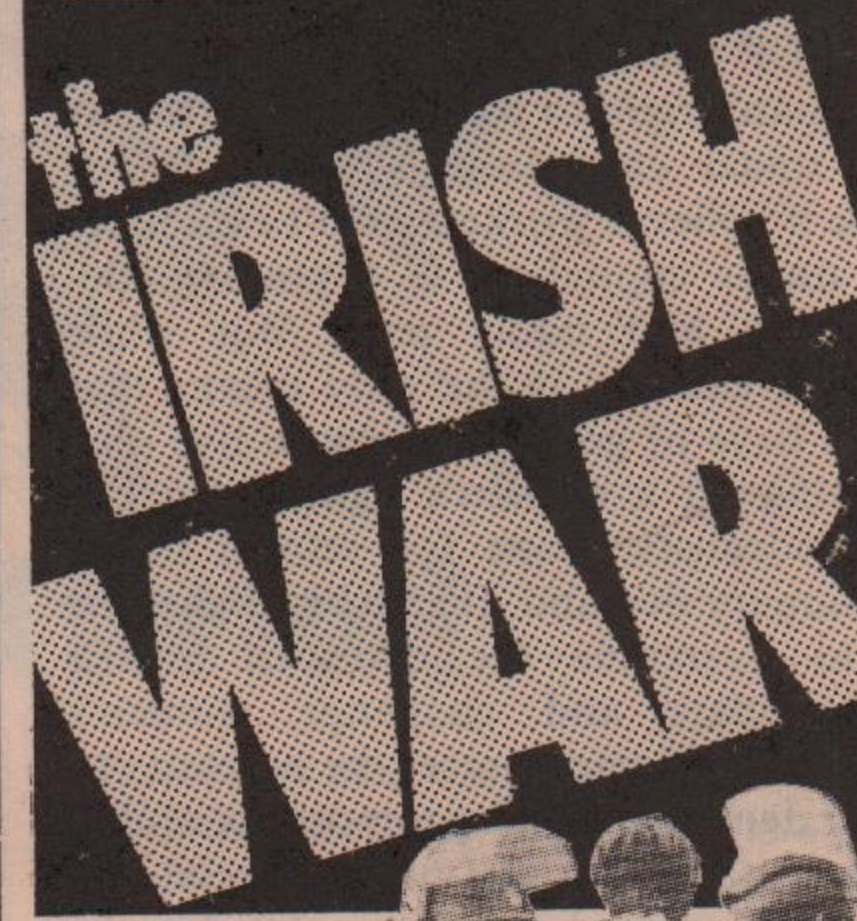
There is quite a tradition — in novels, on stage and screen — of fictional characters spilling out into the world. Allen uses the device to make a comedy. Much of his fun is at the expense of fiction, film and the industry. But his main focus is on the ambitions and fears of his real character Cecilia in the real world, as she struggles to keep her bearings. The focus is maintained by the tightly-controlled tone of the film, which never moves into slapstick or farce or into existential ponderings. It is maintained too by fine performances from Mia Farrow as Cecilia and Jeff Daniels as both of her suitors.

The film avoids the sentimentality of Chaplin's *City lights* but shares its breadth of vision and social conscience. Allen knows that out there it's a hard world — he sets the film during the depression. If everybody he sees is on the make and worried about their own percentage, then perhaps that is because they have to be. Allen's observations of them all are full of true affection as well as true wit. And he can't resist a bit of sentimentousness: 'Life is too short to worry about what life's about, let's just live it'. Allen knows too that in a hard world the cinema is just a consolation even if it is a consolation he, like Cecilia, loves dearly.

Pat Ford

junius publications

The Irish Freedom Movement
handbook



£2.95 plus p&p 60p

The expanded and updated edition of the Irish Freedom Movement handbook *The Irish War* is now available and selling fast. This review appeared in John Kavanagh's column in the Irish community weekly *The Irish Post* last week under the headline 'None better'.

'The Irish Freedom Movement was recently, and argumentatively, featured in our Letters' Pages — the point being made that it is a subsidiary of the Revolutionary Communist Party. But these exchanges in no way diminish the merit of the second edition, updated and extended, of the IFM's handbook titled *The Irish War*.

When I reviewed the first edition about two years ago I described it as "a tidy synopsis of what the North of Ireland is all about" and suggested that there was no better book of reference. I haven't changed my mind. The second edition is an even better production — 232 well-illustrated pages, produced to the high standard compatible with the quality of the next step, the weekly newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party which manages to encompass much of the world, praising and offending as it goes.

Mick Hume (presumably no relation of John's!) is the RCP's Irish expert and foolish would be any who would challenge his expertise. No editorship of *The Irish War* is acknowledged but presumably Mick has had more than a hand in it.

Grab a copy before it is sold out, because it's crammed with facts on everything related to Northern Ireland — its history, geography, politics and judicial and military goings-on and, perhaps most helpful of all, short profiles of most of the main activists, past and present, ranging from Gerry Adams and Peter Archer to Willie Whitelaw and Sir Arthur Young. There is also a comprehensive listing of all the involved political parties and organisations.

The Irish War costs £2.95. Seeing as you are not likely to find it in your local WH Smith, you had better order it from the publishers and, in doing so, add an additional 60 pence for postage. The publishers are Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX. The telephone number is 01-729 3771.

LETTERS

STEPPING OUT

Fighting the system

Paul Jollands (*tns* 14) takes pains to establish his socialist credentials with fine slogans about overthrowing the system and a dictionary definition of what communism is. But he doesn't seem to understand what the overthrow of the system entails for a revolutionary party.

The RCP doesn't advocate a living wage or a woman's right to work because it thinks labour under capitalism is wonderful or because it believes workers aren't exploited. Work under capitalism is degrading, dehumanising and badly paid. But while capitalism exists it is the only means that workers have of getting money to live on.

Fighting for a woman's right to work is not an idealistic hope for reform but a revolutionary demand. It also highlights the need to overcome the divisions in the working class and challenge women's oppression. It demonstrates the necessity to fight for demands which promote the ability of women to take a full part in social and political life instead of being isolated in the home and constrained by the lack of childcare and abortion facilities.

Workers have to see that capitalism is totally unable to meet even the basic needs of the working class and break with the pro-capitalist and collaborative traditions of the labour movement. This anti-capitalist consciousness doesn't come by reading dictionaries or sitting round talking about how nasty the system is. It will come about through the intervention of a revolutionary party in the day-to-day struggles of the working class to show that even fundamental rights cannot be won or defended unless as part of a struggle against the capitalist system.

The overthrow of the system will only happen when the working class has no illusions in capitalism or its state apparatus. Force and unity on basic issues *could* force the ruling class to grant concessions like free abortion or a living wage. Fighting around these issues with a revolutionary party which provides a political lead is the beginning of establishing a revolutionary consciousness.

Kathryn Evert
Sheffield

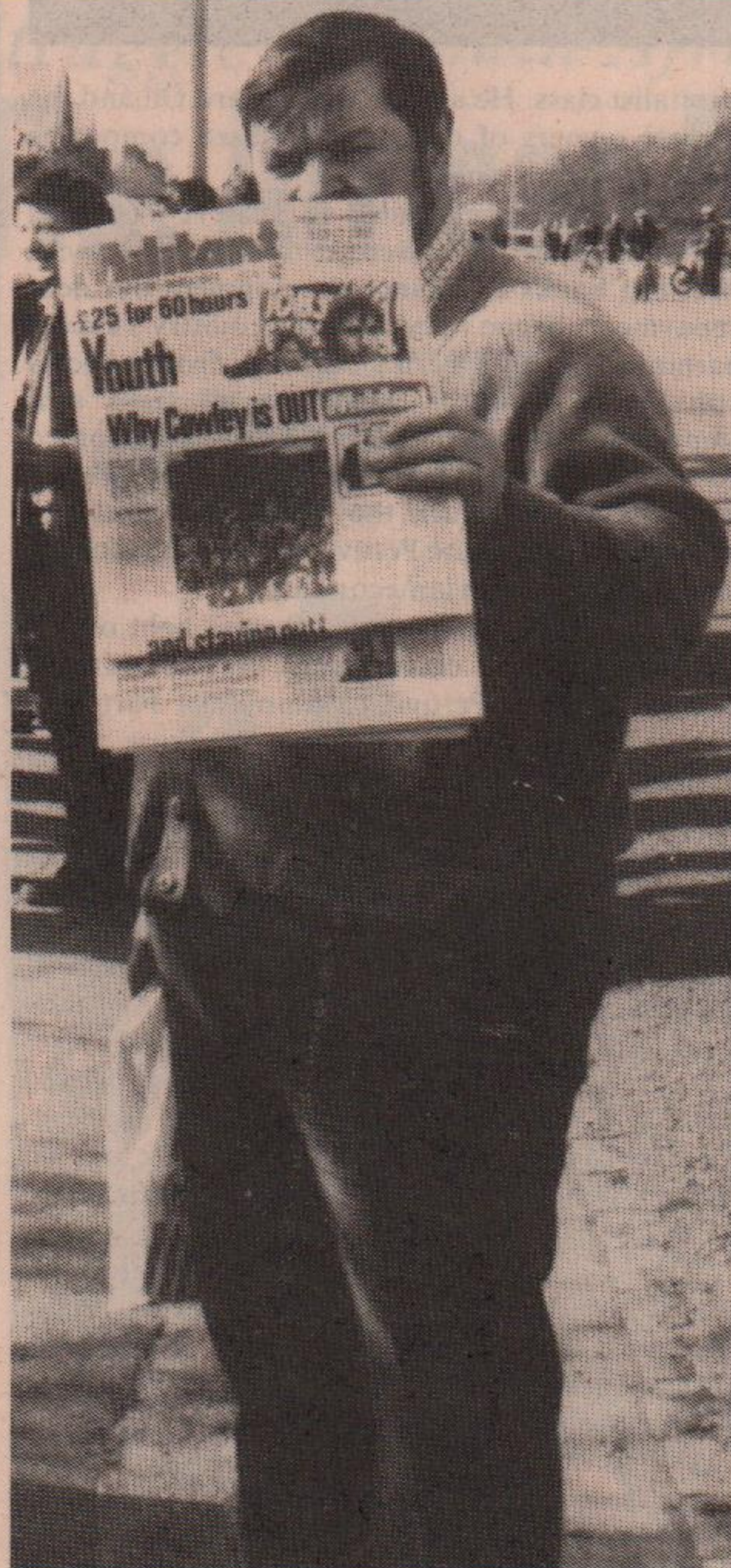
IFM blows Tory cover

Until recently a regular feature in the daily routine of Birmingham BBC's Pebble Mill studios was the broadcasting of a live show called 'Pebble Mill at One'. However, the BBC authorities, in their infinite wisdom, decided to replace this cross between 'Wogan', 'Where there's life', 'The travel show' and 'Khomiso Khan at Camden Lock' with the more stimulating 'Hokey Cokey'.

The decision, as it turned out, came just in time to save the BBC the embarrassment of having a live broadcast interrupted by demonstrators. On Wednesday July 31 outside Pebble Mill at one o'clock, supporters of the Irish Freedom Movement held a successful demonstration against the *other* decision made by the BBC board of governors, to ban the showing of the film featuring Martin McGuinness.

So Leon Brittan's attempted cover-up was not successful in the Midlands. The organiser of the demonstration made it clear to West Midlands radio that workers in Britain have the right to know the full facts of what is happening in Northern Ireland as a result of British imperialism, and that this type of censorship is typical of the way the ruling class deals with the Irish War. The views of the IFM were expressed to the local public and on the airwaves through lively chanting and speeches.

Matthew Fitzgerald
Birmingham



Militant's Marxism

In the build-up to the Irish Freedom Movement demonstration on Saturday 10 August we have had considerable success in raising support on the streets of Leeds through selling the new handbook *The Irish War* and getting people to sign our petitions supporting the fight for Irish freedom. We have also come across the usual assortment of anti-Irish bigotry. However, the most shocking example of anti-Irish prejudice was that displayed by the Militant Tendency in Headingley.

While some of our supporters were selling and petitioning for the demonstration one longstanding Militant member started to shout 'Get your Marxist paper: smash the IRA'. Other Militant sellers soon joined in. The obvious question arises — who needs the Tories when left-wing groups in the Labour Party rally behind the Union Jack? For Militant Marxism means condemning the Irish people for fighting back against British imperialism, in identical fashion to patriotic representatives of the British establishment.

For 16 years the Irish people have been let down by the official labour movement and its loyal adherents on the left. Militant is saying nothing different from the more consistent champions of British terror like Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley and Roy Mason. I wonder if these so-called Marxists ever wonder why Marx argued that support for the Irish liberation struggle was a central part of the struggle to make a revolution in Britain.

Sean Thomas
Leeds

Break the ban

Taking their cue from the Tories' ban on the BBC show featuring Sinn Féin councillor Martin McGuinness, the police have slapped a ban on supporters of Irish freedom in Hackney.

We had set up a stall selling books and papers telling the real story about Britain's 16-year old war in Ireland. Three policemen demanded to see our permits (available only from the police). They searched our bags and took our names and addresses. They told us that if they see us selling our 'filth' in

Hackney again they will arrest us.

The left have sold their papers in Hackney free from police harassment for years. But explaining that British troops are the real terrorists in Ireland is not the left's usual pastime.

Hackney Irish Freedom Movement will once again be taking the Irish war on to the streets this Wednesday in defiance of the police ban. We are appealing to Hilda Keane and other Hackney councillors who are already sponsoring our demonstration to support our right to protest on the streets of Hackney.

Fiona Foster
Hackney

Against the stream

I wanted to reply to Howard Fuller's letter (*tns* 15) about his disagreements with the approach of the Revolutionary Communist Party. His first point was that it is wrong for a revolutionary party to stand against the stream just for the sake of it. The logic of this approach is to argue that the RCP should call for a vote for Labour because it is not yet in a position to challenge the Labour Party consistently. The question is how is the RCP to get to the stage where it is in a position to challenge workers' allegiance to the Labour Party? It will not do this by telling workers to vote for the Labour Party — but only by exposing Labour's inability to defend the working class and demonstrating the effectiveness of revolutionary communist politics in practice.

For 50 years British left wingers have entered the Labour Party in the fatalistic view that it is impossible to build an independent revolutionary party. If they had all made the same decision as the RCP, revolutionary communism would be a much more influential force today. There is nothing to fear from being isolated from the forces that have held back the working class movement for 80 years. The only isolation we should fear is isolation from the working class: fighting for the independent interests of the working class is the only guarantee against that.

Howard Fuller's second point was that Marxism is a living ideology that inevitably gives rise to conflicting viewpoints on the left. Marxism is a living ideology in the sense that it is not a dead dogma. But it is not the political equivalent of a lucky dip. There are many different interpretations of Marx's writings, but there is only one Marxist method. If you are interested in the discussion circle approach to politics that has characterised the British left, the lucky dip approach to Marxism is the one for you. But if you want to change the world then Marxism provides you with a clear vision and a strategy to do so. We are not interested in perpetuating the confusion and lack of clarity that has dogged the left-wing movement in Britain. We want to use the power of Marxism to build a new society. As Lenin said 'the Marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true'.

Michael Everidge
Manchester

Write to

tns

BCM JPLTD
London WCM 3XX

What's all this nonsense about the BBC governors who trashed the terrorist talk show being British agents? Just because some are 'former diplomats' — MI5 operators — doesn't mean they're state lackeys. I don't know how you people could cast such aspersions on a BBC board which included that nice Lady Faulkner. Her husband was Brian, the noble Northern Ireland prime minister who introduced internment without trial in 1971 and died tragically when he fell off his horse in 1977. She is so unconcerned with British state affairs that she wanted to finish the meeting fast and get off to her retirement party. But I suppose you IRA lovers will even want to object that she was dining with close friends like Tory Northern Ireland chief Douglas Hurd, the Royal Ulster Constabulary chief constable and the general officer commanding the Army in Ireland. Shame on you.

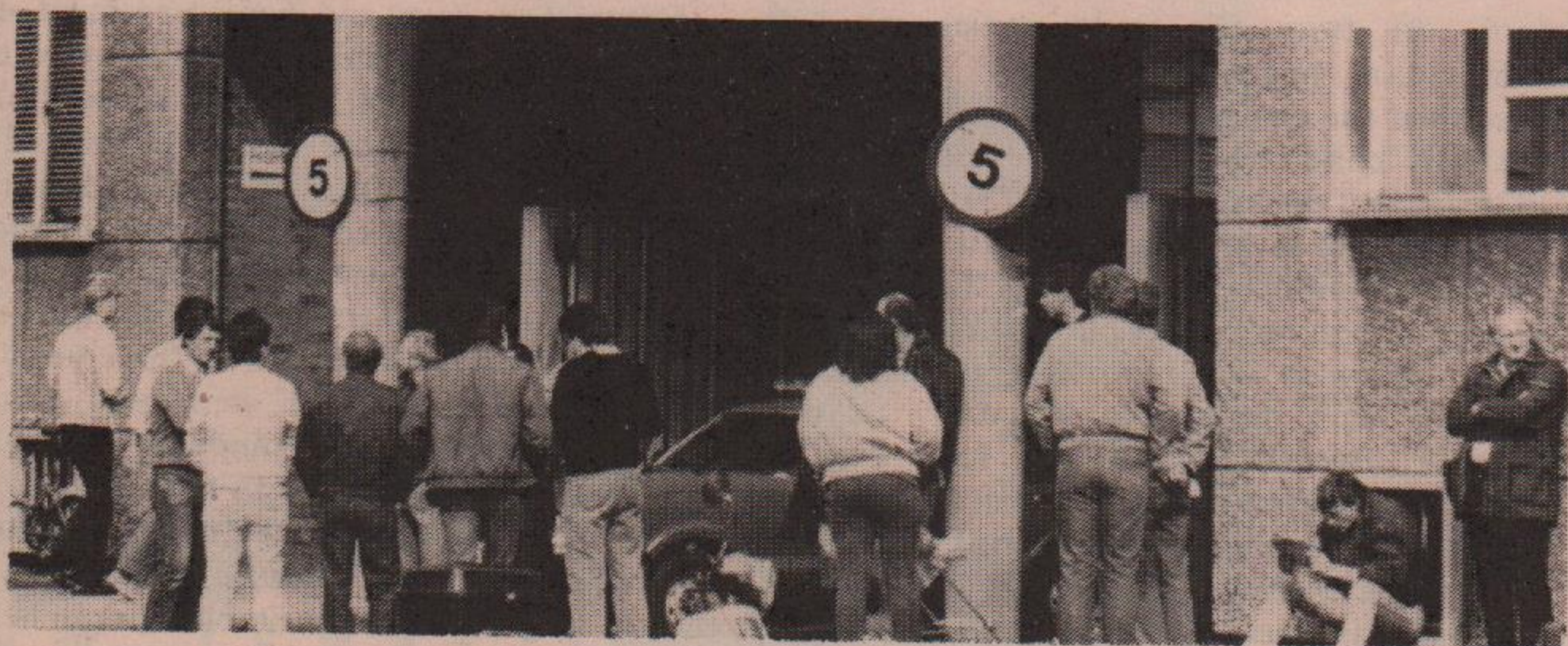
And another thing, who says the police are all anti-Irish racists? Last weekend Manchester Irish Freedom Movement's so-called 'Anti-imperialist motorcade' hit Chorlton, where they disembarked from the anti-imperialist lorry and chalked anti-imperialist pavement drawings, featuring British miners and Irish people fighting police. This caused a right kerfuffle, as police asked bystanders if they had witnessed the act of desecration. 'Yes,' said a blue-rinsed lady of Chorlton. 'I saw them. A crowd of hooligans, I think they were all dirty Irish tinkers.' 'Excuse me madam', chipped in the disgruntled constable 'but I'm Irish.' The republican cop then told her to clear off and let the anti-imperialist pavement artistes continue. I have forwarded his number to the relevant authorities.

Police are also investigating the truth about the topless woman who appeared among Labour MPs at an end-of-term House of Commons binge. The *Sun* claimed she was part-time kissoogram girl Laura Crawford-Buckley, who had gone to the commons to deliver a peck only to find herself plied with Pimms and thrust over a balcony by Labour MPs, whereupon her dress collapsed, triggering a security beam and bringing the police running. The *Sunday Times* insisted she was a vegetarian cyclist from Carlisle, invited to the parliamentary do after joining Labour's 'On yer bike' unemployment protest. Once there, she 'was taken ill, leaned over the terrace wall, is said to have lost a garment and was sick all over the security system'. This brought six armed policemen on the double. Whatever the truth, it seems clear that Kinnock's campaign to clean up the Labour Party's image has come not a moment too soon.

On the subject of cleaning up, the Communist Party of Great Britain's leadership is tightening up membership rules as part of its purge of dissidents. All members have to sign a declaration, swearing that they reject violent revolution and believe in such features of capitalist democracy as parliamentary elections, multi-party systems, etc. They'll be telling communists to vote Labour next.

While the government is running scared of the IRA, the Troops Out Movement is running scared of the Irish Freedom Movement. This week TOM in Brighton cancelled a debate with the IFM because they wanted a 'private debate' from which the public would be excluded. As well as wanting to talk to themselves, the leading TOM members are taking the usual crowd of old hacks on their annual holiday in Belfast this week. With Irish solidarity 'activists' like these, who needs the BBC board of governors?

REPORTS



Racism: divided we fall

'You can't open your mouth these days without management breathing down your neck,' said one middle-aged worker standing on a disorderly picket line outside the main offices of the direct labour organisation in Hackney. He was one of about 200 council manual workers who walked out on strike last week over the suspension of a white fitter after a row with a black council worker.

The strikers are adamant that the dispute has got nothing to do with racism. One worker told *tns* that this was the nineteenth suspension in as many months. He said that the issue at stake was management's right to discipline an employee without recourse to agreed procedure. The craft section decided that enough was enough and walked out in protest.

Another striker dismissed the fact that the fitter, a member of Tass, had called the black Nupe member a 'black bastard' as irrelevant. He explained that he often engaged in light-hearted racist banter with his fellow black workers who referred to him as a 'honkie'. To prove his case he claimed that about 50 black workers were supporting the strike.

The shop steward who has been organising the men agrees that the strike has no racial overtones. Like most of the workers on the picket line he avoided any mention of the row that led to the suspension and was embarrassed at the suggestion that the walk-out was racially motivated.

The Labour council and its race relations unit are also keen to play down the race angle and prefer to treat the strike as an ordinary sectional dispute. Wary of the explosive potential of the strike to unleash racial tensions among the council workforce, management moved fast to placate the unions with deals worked out behind closed doors.

Everybody, from the strikers to the unions to management, was keen to disguise the racist nature of the dispute. But you didn't have to stick around on the picket line very long to hear a stream of racist abuse about 'black monkeys' and 'sticking up for our people'. The DLO strike is no ordinary industrial dispute. Certainly the electricians have good reason to walk out after 19 arbitrary suspensions. But this is the first time that a suspension has led to a strike. It was prompted as much by the race row that led to the suspension as by the suspension itself.

The atmosphere at all the council depots is fraught. Ronnie, a black electrician, told *tns* that he has had to put up with more than 15 years of racist insults. 'The number of times stewards and management have said to me "why are you always causing trouble?" after a whole load of insults and ordering about. If you're black you have to be superhuman in your patience. You either keep your mouth shut or you explode.'

Ronnie explains that union stewards will do anything for a quiet life. 'Management and supervisors used to provoke black workers so they hit back and were then sacked. I've seen white union stewards go along with it as well. When you fight back they all close ranks.' Union officials have got so used to turning a blind eye to racist insults and attacks on black workers that they are incapable of challenging the damaging divisions in the council workforce.

A groundswell of ill-feeling is building up against the council. In common with other left-wing Labour councils, Hackney has

developed a radical race relations programme. In 1979 it adopted an equal opportunities policy. In 1983 it set up its race relations unit and instituted a positive discrimination strategy. Last year it established a recruitment target of 35 per cent of black council employees by December 1988.

At the same time the council has been freezing vacancies and pushing through redundancies. In this situation Labour's positive discrimination policies can only cause resentment. Last month the council provoked an outcry when it refused two white youths jobs as apprentice gardeners because the posts were reserved for blacks only. Rather than provide job opportunities for all workers, black and white, the council is pushing through cuts and telling workers that they must share out the few jobs available.

The workers in the direct labour organisation are right to take a stand against management interference in their affairs. But they have nothing to gain from tolerating racists in their ranks. All council workers are facing attacks on jobs and conditions. As long as they go along with attacks on black workers they will be in no position to mount an effective challenge to redundancies and disciplinary action.

Hackney council has virtually stopped building new houses and is now talking about selling off the few remaining building sites. The council has split the DLO from the rest of the manual workforce, and, as one worker put it, 'we're a sitting target'. The DLO is indeed vulnerable to attack. In 1982 the council made more than 300 DLO workers redundant: the majority were black. The council practices positive discrimination in redundancy as well as recruitment. Most of these workers have since been reappointed. But the unions' acceptance of this attack has exacerbated racial divisions and softened up the workforce.

The damaging consequences of racial and sectional divisions have already become apparent. Black workers in the DLO did indeed come out on strike last week against the suspension. But they didn't stay on the picket line. One black worker who turned up to support the strike stormed back to his own depot in disgust after listening to the racist outbursts of some of the strikers. A road cleaner standing near the picket line told *tns* that the strikers would not get his support because they had refused to back the road cleaners' strike a few weeks previously.

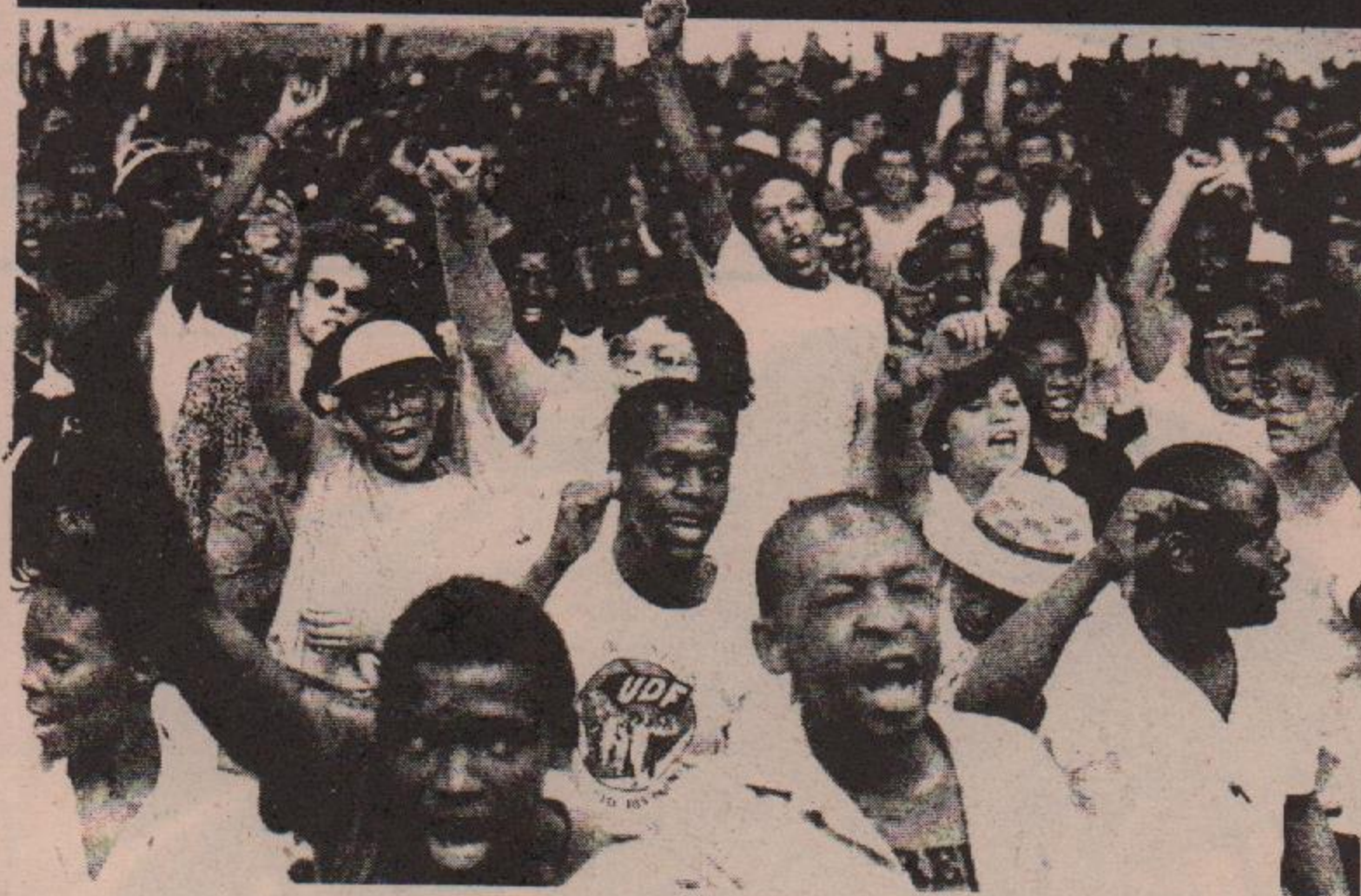
Union militants have a responsibility to challenge the racist attitudes that have come to the surface in the strike. To ignore them is only to shore up problems for the future. And by accommodating to racist prejudices among council workers now, the unions are helping to entrench the divisions that have undermined a united fightback.

Tony Powell



Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

Come along!



Smash apartheid terror!

Everybody from Tony Benn to Margaret Thatcher makes statements condemning apartheid. Even foreign secretary Geoffrey Howe concedes that Nelson Mandela should be released. This has encouraged anti-apartheid campaigners to demand action from the British government against the South African regime. But this approach can never work.

The British establishment has invested too much in the apartheid system to take action to cripple it. Appeals to the Tory government to impose sanctions against Botha have already fallen on deaf ears and are certain to fail. Real solidarity with

the workers and youth of South Africa demands action against apartheid's British backers at home. Come to the meetings to hear the latest assessment of revolt in South Africa and a strategy to help topple the apartheid regime in Britain.

Brighton

Thursday 8 August 7.30pm
Springfield Hotel
Springfield Road (London Road station)
Manchester
Thursday 8 August 7.30pm
Black Lion Hotel
Chapel Street

Fight for Irish freedom!

On the anniversary of the internment of Irish freedom fighters by the British Army in 1971, the Irish Freedom Movement is holding meetings and demonstrating on the streets (see page two) to mobilise opposition to Britain's 16-year war against the Irish people.

Sheffield

Thursday 8 August 7.30pm
Howard Hotel
Howard Street

Leeds

Thursday 8 August 7.30pm
Trades Club
Savile Row (off Chapeltown Road)

Liverpool

Thursday 8 August 7.30pm
Haigh Building
Liverpool Polytechnic

Student alert

When the new term starts in the colleges and universities we want to be ready to organise meetings, filmshows and other events. This means setting up Revolutionary Communist Societies in as many colleges and universities as possible. If you are a student and need some help organising a society get in touch with Ann Burton on 01-729 0414 and watch this space.

Witnesses wanted

The Newham 7 Defence Campaign is appealing to anybody who witnessed arrests on the following demonstrations to get in touch:
27 April at Forest Gate police station
11 May at Plashet Park
Phone the campaign on 01-555 8151

Become a Revolutionary Communist Party supporter

If you like what you read in *tns* become an RCP supporter. We meet weekly to discuss the issues in the paper and to plan action in the local area. Phone Fenna on 01-729 0414 or write to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or talk to *tns* sellers in your area.

For sale

Invaluable index for *the next step* monthly numbers 1-50. Includes:

- All articles from December 1979 to August 1984
- All reviews of books and films
- names of all featured national and international politicians, trade unionists and personalities

Send £1 plus 28 pence p&p to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques and POs payable to Junius Publications.

Take *tns* regularly

Get *tns* every week for a year
£19 in Britain or Ireland
Cheques/POs payable to
Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX.
For full subscription rates see page 2

Name

Address

Tel

Start my subscription from issue No.

tms



Press hypocrisy on battered babies

Blame the system, not the parents

The papers are full of grisly accounts of babies being bitten and burnt and battered to death. Parents and social workers and council authorities get the blame for the abuse of children in a society which refuses to provide adequate resources for childcare.

Baby battering is an ideal issue for a moral panic. Reports of systematic illtreatment and horrific injuries inflicted on defenceless children arouse strong feelings of revulsion.

Problems of definition and diagnosis and recording methods mean that there are no accurate statistics on the prevalence of child abuse. One authority estimated in 1976 that anywhere between 100 and 750 children were killed every year by their parents. As with problems like drug addiction and mugging, estimates of the incidence of child abuse are notoriously unreliable. All these emotive issues provide maximum scope for

subjective reporting.

One thing is certain — there is nothing new about baby battering. Infanticide was a widespread practice in nineteenth century Britain and it remains commonplace in many third world countries today.

Modern concern about baby battering took off from the early sixties when American professor Henry Kempe described the characteristic features of 'the battered child syndrome'. In Britain the issue first hit the headlines in 1973 following the murder of seven-year old Maria Colwell by her stepfather after a long history of cruelty. There have since been more than 20 major inquiries and reports into cases of children who have been killed by their parents, especially when they have been under local authority care. The most recent is the prolonged investigation into the case of Jasmine Beckford who was killed by her stepfather in Brent at the age of four.

There is no evidence of any increase in baby battering. An expert survey of child abuse in the *British Medical Journal* in January saw no reason to question the estimate made by a House of Commons select committee in 1976 that one in 10 000 children receive fatal injuries every year and one in 1000 suffer serious injuries. One recent survey in South Wales suggested a decline in serious injuries, although an increase in moderate injuries over the past decade. Yet the British papers have chosen to make baby battering front page news. The particular details of the Tyra Henry case, the major focus of press attention last week, explain why.

The facts of the baby Tyra case are now well known. She died at the age of 21 months last September as a result of a fractured skull and brain haemorrhage caused by her father, 20-year old unemployed electrician Andrew Neil. Tyra had lived with her grandmother until the electricity had been cut off and she moved back with her mother Claudette and Neil into their already overcrowded Brixton flat. One month later she was dead, with 57 bite marks and multiple bruises on her body. Neil was sentenced last week to life imprisonment for her murder.

Tory hypocrites

The Tyra Henry case did make horrifying reading. But the detailed case history or the post mortem description of any of the hundreds of babies who are killed every year would be equally shocking. Baby Tyra was singled out for the full media treatment because her case gave the press full scope to stir up a number of fashionable prejudices.

Tyra's parents were young and unmarried, 'pathetic moral juveniles' found guilty of 'promiscuous parenthood' by one national daily paper last week. They were also black and both parents' past criminal convictions and their informal family set-up were dragged in to fill out the racist stereotype. Britain's tabloids dubbed Neil 'the animal', 'the brute' and 'the cannibal'.

The case also involved two of the favourite bogies of the gutter press — social workers and Ted Knight's left-wing Labour council. 'A Lambeth child' was the only headline necessary in one angry editorial. Even though the inquest judge exonerated the social workers from all blame, the press — supported by Tory social services minister John Patten — wanted blood. Only weeks after the public pillorying of the social worker in the Jasmine Beckford case, social workers were back in the dock. Meanwhile senior council officers joined in the attack, threatening disciplinary action even before charges had been properly investigated. As the press homed in on Lambeth's race relations policies and social workers came out on strike in protest, Knight was forced to act as conciliator.

The media onslaught around baby Tyra has thrown social workers, Labour councils, black activists and the left on to the defensive and even into squabbles among themselves. But the British establishment has no moral authority to blame anybody for battering babies.

The main reason why British capitalists are not still slaughtering and maiming children on a large scale in mines and mills is because the working class movement organised to stop them. We should never adopt a defensive response to a system that was founded on child abuse.

The same system is today engaged in cutting back and closing down nurseries and

creches and other facilities that could drastically cut down on the illtreatment of children. Establishment concern about battered babies is hypocrisy. It is directed towards strengthening pro-family, anti-black, anti-social worker, anti-Labour council prejudices.

Contrast the court and media treatment of Andrew Neil to that received by Carol Grote who also went on trial last week accused of killing her child. Grote 'gently suffocated' her six-year old son Colin who suffered from cystic fibrosis. The court, recognising the mental strain she was under as a single parent struggling to care for a child with a terminal illness, let her off with three years' probation. The judge's view was that Grote's action was understandable and that she should not have been on trial at all.

The media agreed. It seems that a white woman who had her first child in wedlock at the age of 27 and did charitable work in her spare time is more deserving of public mercy than an unemployed and inarticulate, young, black and unmarried father. Yet the strains on both parents were evidently similar. In certain circumstances anybody could be driven to kill a screaming baby or a disabled child without being a 'murdering monster'. The public preoccupation with child abuse distracts attention from the circumstances that lead parents to illtreat their children. But it serves a wider purpose for the establishment.

The media focus on child abuse blames individual parents for their personal inadequacies. This absolves the state from responsibility for doing anything about poverty and unemployment, poor housing and welfare services. It reinforces conventional norms of family life and labels as criminals those who fail to meet the official requirements.

Media condemnations of social workers and local authorities help to justify increased state interference in people's lives. After the Maria Colwell case in the early seventies the number of children under care orders trebled. The recent case in Berkshire where the council has taken a baby born to a drug addict into care on the grounds that it was illtreated *before* birth indicates the trend. Social workers are being pushed into adopting a more coercive role in policing 'problem families'. Neighbours are encouraged to report suspected cases of 'non-accidental injury' to the authorities.

The focus on child abuse opens the way for the courts and the police and social workers and a host of other agencies to tighten their oppressive grip on working class life. On the other hand, a focus on the oppressive character of family life and the lack of facilities to ease the burden of childcare can turn the tables on the gutter press. This approach opens the way for working class action to end the brutalisation of children — and women — in the family, and the system that causes it.

Julie Peterson

Dear 'Woman',
I lived with my partner for a year before our wedding. At first he wasn't violent. As the wedding came nearer, the slaps and punches began.
I asked my Dad if I could return home as I was desperately unhappy. He said the neighbours would call me all sorts if I didn't marry, especially with me 'living in sin'. So the marriage took place.
The first two years were the worst. I was constantly telling lies to my friends and family about the bruises and cuts. I stuck up for him then because I loved him and thought things would improve.
Next I became pregnant and the violence continued. It seemed I had no one to turn to then, as I needed a husband for my baby's sake. I avoided hospital check-ups until bruises faded.
The violence has become worse. Only the other night he laid me on the floor and kicked me repeatedly in the ribs and stomach. Today my ribs ache when I breathe and I keep being sick.
Of course he apologised but he should never have done it, to my mind. Now I live from day to day. I will not sleep with him or show any affection.
At one time I got very depressed. I even wanted to end my life. Then I thought, why should I, for him? It's okay to say leave. I left twice and returned home. Without money all I can do is return.
I now have a part-time job. I put half my wage away. It'll take a year to save £700. Then I'm off.
Thank you for listening. I feel better already.
Mrs B. young wife from the South East

In the same week that the Tyra Henry case was the central preoccupation of the nation's daily papers the weekly *Woman* published the results of a special survey of violence in the home. The *Woman* survey revealed 'a shocking catalogue of domestic cruelty'. It suggested that 'a staggering three out of 10 women are in fear of their lives'. The *Woman* report noted the conclusion of an NSPCC survey that there was 'marital discord' in 57 per cent of cases of child abuse. The report detailed cases of physical and mental cruelty, broken bones, bruises and rape. It was ignored by the popular press.