tns
the next step
Revolutionary Communist Party weekly • 16 August 1985 • 30p

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REVOLUTION

-it could happen here

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tns

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Victories on the political levy?

The declaration of the results of the ballot on the political levy in the electricians' union this week is expected to bring to 10 the number of unions voting to retain their political funds. These results are causing the Tories some concern, as the Labour Party celebrates successes that appeared beyond its reach only nine months ago when the new Trade Union Act became law. But are these victories for the Labour Party?

The answer is — yes and no. The results do reflect a significant anti-Tory swing among trade union members since the 1983 general election. Then only 39 per cent of trade unionists voted Labour, and Labour's support among white collar and skilled workers was even lower. The fact that the white collar union Apex voted by 73 per cent to 27 per cent to retain the political fund is particularly significant in a union in which 31 per cent of members already contract out of the levy. The engineers' five to one 'yes' vote is also significant since the defection of skilled workers was a key factor in Labour's defeats in both 1979 and 1983. The results confirm opinion poll evidence of mounting dissatisfaction with the Tories. They also suggest that the response of many of Labour's lost supporters to five years of Thatcher is to return to the Labour fold.

On the other hand, given the character of the union campaigns to save the political levy, a vote for the political fund cannot be equated with a vote for the Labour Party. If the Tories' original objective was to widen the gulf between the unions and politics, rather than to bankrupt the Labour Party, they too can claim some success from the ballots. At the outset of the campaign the union leaders recognised the lack of enthusiasm for the Labour Party among union members. Their response was to downplay the Labour Party connection in their propaganda around the ballots.

'Threatened traditions'

A specially established union team, formally independent of both the Labour Party and the TUC, coordinates the whole operation. Its propaganda makes out that the issues in the ballots are the rights of unions to conduct campaigns, to affiliate to bodies like CND, or to lobby parliament. Publicity material implies that the traditions of British parliamentary democracy are threatened if the unions' political funds are lost. As we have shown in past issues of *tns* this is nonsense; under the Act, the only issue in the ballots is funding for a political *party,* in practice for the Labour Party.

Last week's claim by engineers' leader Gavin Laird that his union 'emphasised the close links between the AUEW and the Labour Party' is disingenuous. The coordinated union campaign operates at two distinct levels. It issues propaganda for activists and propaganda for ordinary union members. It issues separate pamphlets, leaflets and even videos aimed at these different target audiences. For the activists the Labour connection is emphasised — their commitment to the Labour Party can be taken for granted. For the ordinary members, the workers whose support for Labour is in doubt, the propaganda emphasises 'the right to a voice in parliament' and keeps very quiet about the Labour Party.

Laird refers to the June special edition of the union journal which featured the political levy issue and highlighted the union's commitment to the Labour Party. It is no secret that the AUEW journal, packed as it is with detailed accounts of the daily activities of the union's divisional organisers and turgid articles by senior bureaucrats and Labour politicians, does not enjoy a vast readership among ordinary union members. It falls into the category of propaganda for the activists.

It is significant that the part of the journal most likely to be seen by a rank and file engineer — its front cover — carries the headline 'The right to opposition cost this country a lot — don't throw it away'. Behind an image of a modern engineering worker stand Aneurin Bevan, the post-war hero of the Labour left, and Winston Churchill, former Tory prime minister. Far from highlighting the links with the Labour Party, the AUEW campaign highlighted the official labour movement's calculated identification of the political levy with a commitment to British patriotic traditions. It showed the union leaders' readiness to redefine the political objectives of the unions in terms that would be acceptable to any Tory.

Break the links

The labour bureaucrats' low-life propaganda may have won them some victories over the Tories in terms of safeguarding Labour's supplies of union money. But as long as the union leaders are campaigning to reinforce workers' identification with the traditions and institutions of British democracy, the Tories have performed a considerable service for the establishment. In the short term the Labour Party machine may be strengthened. But the Tories have succeeded in pushing the labour movement further to the right and in further depoliticising the working class.

The course of the political levy ballots so far confirms the need to step up the campaign to expose the union leaders' cynical strategy. Our aim is to win wider support among trade unionists for breaking the link with the Labour Party and setting up an independent political fund to be used according to workers' requirements. The new programme issued by the Labour Party and the TUC last week confirms Labour's pragmatic commitment to running British capitalism. The unions' attachment to this programme restricts the scope of independent action to defend workers' interests now. If a Labour government was ever elected on this platform the unions would be tied to an even more catastrophic version of the last Labour government's social contract. Indeed the capacity to deliver trade union acquiescence to austerity measures is one of Kinnock's electoral trump cards.

Paying the political levy to the Labour Party is not just a waste of money. It perpetuates a paralysing division of labour between the unions and the Labour Party. It depoliticises the unions and allows the Labour leadership to impose its middle class political outlook on the working class movement. This is the exact opposite of what we need. We need politicised trade unions and a party that fights unequivocally on the side of the working class. Breaking the links between the unions and Labour is a crucial step in advancing the cause of the working class.

Publisher Revolutionary Communist Party, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX © copyright
Printer Morning Litho Printers Ltd (TU), 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16.

Annual subscription rates ● Britain and Ireland £19 ● Europe £24 ● Middle East and North Africa £26 America, Asia and Southern Africa £27 ● Australasia £32 ● Libraries, institutions £30
All cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd.

Circulation 01-729 3771. *Newsdesk* 01-729 3771. *Correspondence to* The Editor, *the next step,* BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX. ISSN 0144 350 X 16 August 1985. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.

Republican soldier killed in Derry

Death of an Irish freedom fighter

The appearance of banned Noraid spokesman Martin Galvin in Derry last Friday hit the headlines as a one-off event. But the occasion at which Galvin appeared — the funeral of an IRA volunteer killed in action — is a tragic event that has become all too familiar to the nationalist people in Northern Ireland over the past 16 years of the Irish War.

The IRA volunteer whose coffin Galvin and Martin McGuinness carried for the cameras was 21-year old Charles English from the fiercely republican Bogside district of Derry. He died near his home three days earlier, when his rocket launcher blew up in his face during an attack on a Royal Ulster Constabulary patrol.

Charles English was typical of the Irish men and women who take up arms against the Crown forces in Northern Ireland. He was young, working class and popular. He was known as a gamesman locally because of his sporting prowess. He was a young man who, in a different time and place, would have had everything to live for. Yet he was prepared to risk his life as part of a small guerrilla army, often using home-made weapons to fight against the 30 000 gunmen of the sophisticated British war machine.

Charles English might have been an ordinary 21-year old, but he lived in extraordinary times in an extraordinary place. The experience of living under the British heel in the occupied six counties of Northern Ireland taught him that he had no choice but to fight, if he and his people were to achieve the basic rights and freedoms which people in Britain take for granted.

Charles English died near Free Derry Corner, almost in the shadow of the Rossville flats. When he was five-years old, in August 1969, the boys of the Bogside not much older than him stood on top of those flats and rained down petrol bombs to protect their community from rampaging Loyalist mobs led by the Royal Ulster Constabulary. That anti-Irish pogrom had been sparked off by a peaceful movement demanding civil rights for Irish people. It taught Charles English's neighbours that peaceful protest would get them nowhere.

Charles English died within a stone's throw of the Bloody Sunday memorial, erected by the people of the Bogside to commemorate the 14 Irishmen gunned down in cold blood by the terrorists of the British paratroop regiment in January 1972, when he was still a young boy. The massacre of the unarmed marchers united the Bogside as one behind its defenders in the IRA.

Charles English's own family has suffered more than its share of grief at the hands of the British forces terrorising their community. In April 1981 his elder brother Gary, aged 19, was on the streets of Derry when local youths took on the RUC in support of the republican hunger-strikers who were demanding the right to be recognised as prisoners of war. He was not involved in the fighting. As Gary English and his friend Jim Brown (18) crossed the road an RUC landrover hurtled towards a group of rioters. The Loyalist police didn't let a little thing like two young Irishmen stop their charge. The landrover mowed them down, then reversed over Gary English, tearing his body horribly and killing both. The killers in Crown uniforms were released by a British court on a charge of 'careless driving'.

After Gary English's killing the boys' father, Michael, became a leading member of Silent Too Long, an organisation uniting the relatives of more than 600 Irish victims of British/Loyalist terror since 1969. He toured Britain with the Irish Freedom Movement, to get the reality of life in Northern Ireland across to British people.

The suffering endured by his family and friends at the hands of the British forces explains why Charles English joined the IRA, and why he was crouched behind a wall with a rocket-launcher last week; to strike back at the British terrorists who have brought death and destruction to Ireland. He died standing up to the British gunmen and fighting for his freedom.

Hundreds of Bogsiders walked behind Charles English's coffin and wept at his graveside on Friday, in recognition of the fact that the armed men and women who live and fight in their streets are their only defence against British terror. The people of areas like the Bogside remain solid in their support for the Irish liberation struggle and their opposition to every aspect of British law and order in Ireland. They refused to let police or troops close enough to the funeral to arrest Galvin. The sight of eight Irish women, arms linked across the road, holding back 40 armoured RUC landrovers summed up the spirit of the Irish people in the wake of Charles English's death.

The English family is one of many that has been torn apart by the British occupation. Michael English's sons would still be alive today if Ireland was free, united and at peace. Our job in Britain is to support the Irish people in their struggle to bring that situation about. For now, the death of an IRA volunteer is a cause of celebration for the British authorities. We want to make it a tragedy that will strike terror into their hearts, by building a movement that can bring British workers on to the streets demanding revenge every time an Irish man or woman falls victim to the British killing machine at work on Irish soil.

Mick Hume

IRELAND

Tories, Labour, BBC, they're...

United against the IRA

The continuing row over the dropped documentary featuring Irish republican Martin McGuinness has caused a constitutional crisis in the BBC, and provoked last Wednesday's strike which stopped almost all news broadcasts and put the BBC world service off the air for the first time. But all sides in the argument remain united in wanting the British authorities to win the propaganda war against the IRA.

The government first pressurised the BBC governors to scrap the *At the edge of the Union* documentary about McGuinness as part of the Tories' attempt to counter the propaganda success recently achieved by the Irish republican movement.

The election of Sinn Fein representatives who give public backing to the IRA has proved to the world that the armed struggle for Irish freedom has popular support among nationalists in occupied Northern Ireland. In Britain, this success threatens to undermine the image of Irish freedom fighters as isolated criminals — an image the British authorities have cultivated to consolidate public approval at home for their war in Ireland.

The Tories have tried to re-create anti-terrorist hysteria in Britain in order to limit the damage done by the republican victories. The ban on the McGuinness documentary is one of many government measures designed to reaffirm the republican movement's outlaw status.

The decision of the BBC board of governors to go along with home secretary Leon Brittan's request and drop the programme brought howls of protest against censorship from BBC management, broadcasting unions and the Labour Party. Yet the impression that the Tories have suffered a major setback in provoking such opposition is misleading.

The republican movement has certainly got a lot of publicity out of the government's clumsy handling of the affair. But that is no thanks to the Tories' official critics. While disagreeing with the ban, they all agreed with Brittan on the need to keep the message of Irish freedom out of British politics. The consequence of this is that, despite all their blundering, the Tories have won the key debate on the programme among British public and political figures.

Last Wednesday, the day *At the edge of the Union* should have been broadcast, Brittan met BBC chairman Stuart Young and director-general Alasdair Milne. Milne emerged blustering that he had regained control of the BBC from the governors and the government, and that the programme would be shown. In fact Milne had accepted that the documentary should not be broadcast until after Christmas, and that even then it needed 'amending'. The amendments will include more footage of IRA violence, to emphasise McGuinness' supposed 'terrorist' connections, and changes to play down the republican movement's electoral success. The finished product will be just the kind of sanitised, anti-republican piece which the British authorities expect their broadcasters to produce.

The opposition to the ban voiced by the Labour Party leadership has been just as ineffective as BBC management's protests. Neil Kinnock wrote to Thatcher last week, objecting to the government's interference in BBC affairs. But he added an obligatory patriotic rider to his note. 'Obviously', declared Kinnock, 'there can be no reasonable person among those who have voiced criticism of these actions who has anything but loathing for terrorism and determination to defeat violence.'

The Labour leader's main concern is to improve his credentials as a 'reasonable' British politician who 'obviously' hates Irish freedom fighters. His dispute with Thatcher is over the best tactics to be pursued in silencing the republican movement. But having accepted the Tories' starting point, Kinnock cannot offer any effective alternative to the punch-line of their anti-Irish policy.

Even the thousands of workers who took industrial action against state censorship last Wednesday were influenced by the narrow outlook of Kinnock and Milne. BBC journalists and technicians who spoke to *tns* on the picket lines were at pains to point out that the dispute was not about the Tories' attitude to Ireland. It was simply a protest against government interference at the BBC.

Ken Barker, a broadcasting industrial council member for the NUJ at Broadcasting House, summed up the view of the strike organisers. 'We've avoided the issue of Ireland', he told us, 'in fact we've gone out of our way to put the content of the programme at one side. In the BBC, with 1000 journalists, we recognise there are differing political views. What we discussed is the principle.' All Barker asked was that the Tories be consistent in their repressive attitude to the Irish, and not request the BBC to keep elected representatives off the air. 'If the government had the courage or determination to proscribe Sinn Fein there wouldn't be these problems.'

The unions' focus on the 'principle' of resisting government pressure cannot protect either their own members or the Irish people from the Tories. The government objected to *At the edge of the Union* specifically because it gave an unacceptably kind view of the Irish republican movement. As with every past instance of government interference in broadcasting, it was prompted by the crucial issue of the Irish War.

By avoiding the question of Ireland, the unions have ignored what the ban was all about. Barker's idea of banning Sinn Fein as a solution to the conflict 'of principle' draws out the negative consequences of this attitude. It endorses the idea that Irish republicans are criminals, and legitimises the British authorities' right to proscribe their opponents — including their right to ban TV programmes that offend the establishment.

The lesson of the ineffective opposition offered to Brittan is that you can't fight Tory bans on Irish republicans if you support the Tory campaign against the republican movement. The only way to challenge government censorship is to uphold the Irish people's right to speak out for their freedom within Britain. That means dismissing the notion that Irish freedom fighters are British criminals, and battling to silence the real voice that whips up violence and hatred in Ireland — the voice of the British ruling class.

Fiona Foster

REVIEW: AT THE EDGE OF THE UNION

A question of balance

It is not surprising that the BBC board of governors stepped in on government instructions to stop the BBC from broadcasting its now notorious documentary on Northern Ireland. Paul Hamman's production of *At the edge of the Union* (his eighth film on Northern Ireland and, he says, 'the most depressing'), displays a serious lack of balance in dealing with the Irish War.

The programme depicts Gregory Campbell, a councillor representing Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party in Derry, as a cold and austere man consumed by hatred and bigotry for the representatives of the nationalist community. It shows Campbell fondling his government-issue revolver and loading it with bullets before he goes out to a constituency meeting. He seems to relish the prospect of turning his firepower on his political enemies. His speeches seem to consist largely of strident demands for more shoot-to-kill murders by British forces and threats that Loyalists will take matters into their own hands. His house is fortified like a Northern Ireland police barracks and he goes to church in his armoured car with a full military escort.

By contrast, Martin McGuinness, a councillor representing Sinn Fein in Derry, appears as a softly spoken and reasonable opponent of the British occupation of Ireland. Under pressure he admits with pride to having played his part in active resistance to the occupying forces in his home town in the seventies. But he does not glorify violence, regrets that anybody should lose their life in the course of the war and lays the blame for all the casualties squarely at the door of the British state. On the public platform McGuinness pays tribute to those who have given their lives in the struggle for Irish freedom with a restrained dignity. Away from the public eye McGuinness is portrayed as a relaxed and affectionate family man.

But things are all upside down! Loyalists may be a bit eccentric but they are supposed to be the upholders of decent democratic values and patriotic principles in Northern Ireland. Republicans, especially ones said to be IRA chief of staff, are supposed to be blood-crazed pyschopaths or at least criminal thugs. The lack of balance in *At the edge of the Union* does not lie in the production of this programme but in the way in which the Irish War is traditionally depicted on British television screens. Do not adjust your set — the fault is in the reality of the British occupation of Ireland. Don't sink into the producer's depression either — his show reveals where the hope for peace lies.

Mick Kennedy

IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT MARCHES AGAINST BRITISH TERROR, LONDON, SATURDAY 10 AUGUST

'It was a grand march and a great day all round,' was how one member of the Rising Sons of Ireland flute band summed up Saturday's Irish Freedom Movement march through south London. Supporters of Irish freedom from all over Britain marched behind the band from Limavady, County Derry, on the demonstration which marked the fourteenth anniversary of the introduction of internment without trial in Northern Ireland and demanded 'British troops out of Ireland – Irish prisoners out of jail'. At the Brixton rally that followed an Irish Freedom Movement speaker gave the message of the march: 'Whatever the Tories and their BBC lie machine say, the real terrorists in Ireland are the gunmen in British uniforms.'

EVENTS

Race rows hit council unions

Labour bosses can't fight racism

Several recent disputes have highlighted the problem of racial divisions among local government workers and the failure of the unions to devise a strategy for fighting racism independently of their Labour council employers.

Racism was the issue at the centre of two strikes in Islington and Hackney in recent weeks. Both disputes revealed problems that are common to most local council unions.

- The Islington race row began in April when a personnel sub-committee of the council found three workers in the housing department guilty of racial harassment. The sub-committee reprimanded all three, cautioned one and suspended another on full pay. Nalgo members voted to take action against the council's 'too late, too light' reaction. The union adopted a policy of non-cooperation, demanding that the council should not allow the racists to work with the public in the neighbourhood housing offices. Finally 440 Nalgo workers came out on strike when the council sent one of the racists to do just that.
- The Hackney strike started when the council suspended a white fitter for calling a council courier a 'black bastard'. Half the direct labour force walked out in protest. Union officials demanded solidarity from other council workers on the grounds that management had no right to make arbitrary suspensions and workers had no right to cross union picket lines. The Nalgo black workers' group condemned the strike and called on the council to sack the fitter. The strike crumbled and finally ended when the council's industrial relations panel received a letter from the black courier explaining that he had just returned from holiday, that he had never made a complaint against the fitter and that he did not wish to pursue it, as such arguments were commonplace. Management withdrew the suspension and the strike finished with the stewards claiming victory.

Strikes at Islington, Hackney and elsewhere have exposed the unions' failure to fight against racism in an effective and consistent manner. Town hall unions have always tolerated job discrimination against blacks and failed to challenge the chauvinist traditions of the British labour movement.

Workers lose out

On rare occasions the unions have even taken the lead in mobilising against black workers. Refuse collectors at Westminster threatened to go on strike if the council employed blacks. Manual unions at Southwark have rejected the council's ethnic monitoring scheme and devised their own racist questionnaire. Union officials usually keep their heads down and pretend that racism is not an issue. In Hackney, union officials backed away from confronting the problems and argued that the strike was not racially motivated, although the divisions were evident on the picket line.

The unions' failure to seriously confront the problem of racial divisions among their members has had two consequences. First it has allowed Labour council employers to manipulate a divided workforce to their own advantage. Second it has encouraged black workers to look to their Labour council employers to give a lead in the fight against racism.

The employers have gained from the unions' failure to fight for black rights. Black workers have been the immediate victims of this lack of solidarity. But the working class as a whole has been the real loser. In countless disputes the employers have played one section of workers off against another. The first consequence of the unions' failure to root out racism in their own ranks is a workforce which stands divided before the employers' attacks.

The cynical attitude of many black workers to their unions is understandable. For years they have listened to labour movement rhetoric about fighting racism while suffering the reality of discrimination and racist attacks alone. It is not surprising that they should look to the left-wing Labour councils for something better. A few years ago some blacks began organising black workers' groups within town hall unions like Nalgo and putting pressure on the Labour councils to do something about their problems. Now nearly every Labour borough boasts a host of equal opportunities and positive discrimination policies.

These policies have made little difference to the vast majority of black workers whose chances of employment or promotion fall outside the scope of the councils' token gestures. But they appear to be more than the unions have ever done. As one black activist put it during the Hackney dispute: 'Why should we stand on a picket line to be insulted by fellow union members? The unions have done nothing for us, at least the council appears to be more progressive in its policies.' Given the failure of the unions to take up the struggle against racism this attitude is understandable. But the tragedy is that black workers now look to the council employers, the local arm of the state, to fight racism.

The problem is that one section of workers has acquiesced to racist attacks and another section has put its faith in the bosses rather than fellow workers to solve its problems. The left has compounded the dilemma.

In Islington the Socialist Workers' Party has gone even further than Nalgo in calling on the council to deal with the racists. Last week's *Socialist Worker* stated that 'the demand needs to be raised that racists be sacked'. The flip side of the SWP's subservience to the council is its inability to take on the racists where it matters: in the unions. Thus its members were not so outspoken in the Hackney case. Like the union stewards the SWP preferred to ignore the racial divisions in the strike and pretend that it was a dispute over management victimisations. Even though black workers were subject to the same racist abuse in Hackney as in Islington, the SWP did not demand that the racists be sacked. Indeed it did not even mention the strike in its paper.

There are two arguments against leaving the anti-racist struggle in the hands of the Labour councils. One is that they are incapable of fighting racism effectively. Another is that to do so is to abandon the only people who have a direct stake in the anti-racist struggle: the working class.

How to fight

Fighting racism is not a matter of having good intentions. It requires an understanding of the roots of racism and a programme that is founded on the interests of the working class. The Labour Party lacks both. Labour politicians share the common prejudice that the working class is the most racist section of British society. Thus left-wing Islington councillor Keith Venness told SWP members that they were 'not living in the real world' if they thought that sacking racists was a solution to the problem: 'It would mean sacking 4000 people. Most white working class people are racist.' Venness thinks that the working class is racist, yet he thinks that sending racists on a racial awareness courses where they are told to be nice to black people is a right on thing to do.

Not only is Labour incapable of challenging the roots of racism, its positive discrimination policies can only worsen racial divisions. Every Labour council has given up the fight to defend jobs and services against the Tory cuts. There is nothing wrong with giving workers equal access to jobs and services. But the left-wing councils are only heightening racial divisions by claiming to favour blacks at a time when they are cutting jobs and services across the board. Rather than fight for every worker's right to work, the councils are denying some at the expense of others.

The left's demand that the employers should get rid of the racists is not just naive. It is an abdication of responsibility for forging an anti-racist current in the unions. The SWP's strike bulletin asserts that 'racist intimidation must be halted. The council must act...Socialist Workers' Party members have argued that they (the racists) should be sacked.' Of course racism must be challenged. The question is who is going to do it.

These examples show that there is great confusion among union militants, black workers and the left about the best way to fight racism in the workplace. But if we follow three basic principles there is no reason why we cannot go forward:

- Stop pretending that racism is not an issue: unless we confront the problems of racial divisions head on we will never unite the working class against the bosses.
- Stop backing off in the unions: we have got to tackle the problem of racial divisions wherever they emerge. We must root out the racists in our own ranks and organise independently of the bosses.
- Stop relying on the council: the employers cannot fight racism because they are part of the system that sustains it. The working class is the only section of society with a stake in fighting racism and the system.

Joan Phillips

Asians fleeing last week's racist firebomb left a trail of blood and broken glass

Rout the racists

'The flames were everywhere and the family was trapped inside with the man screaming to Allah, just screaming for somebody to come and help him.' (Sury Farnoudi, Electric House tenant)

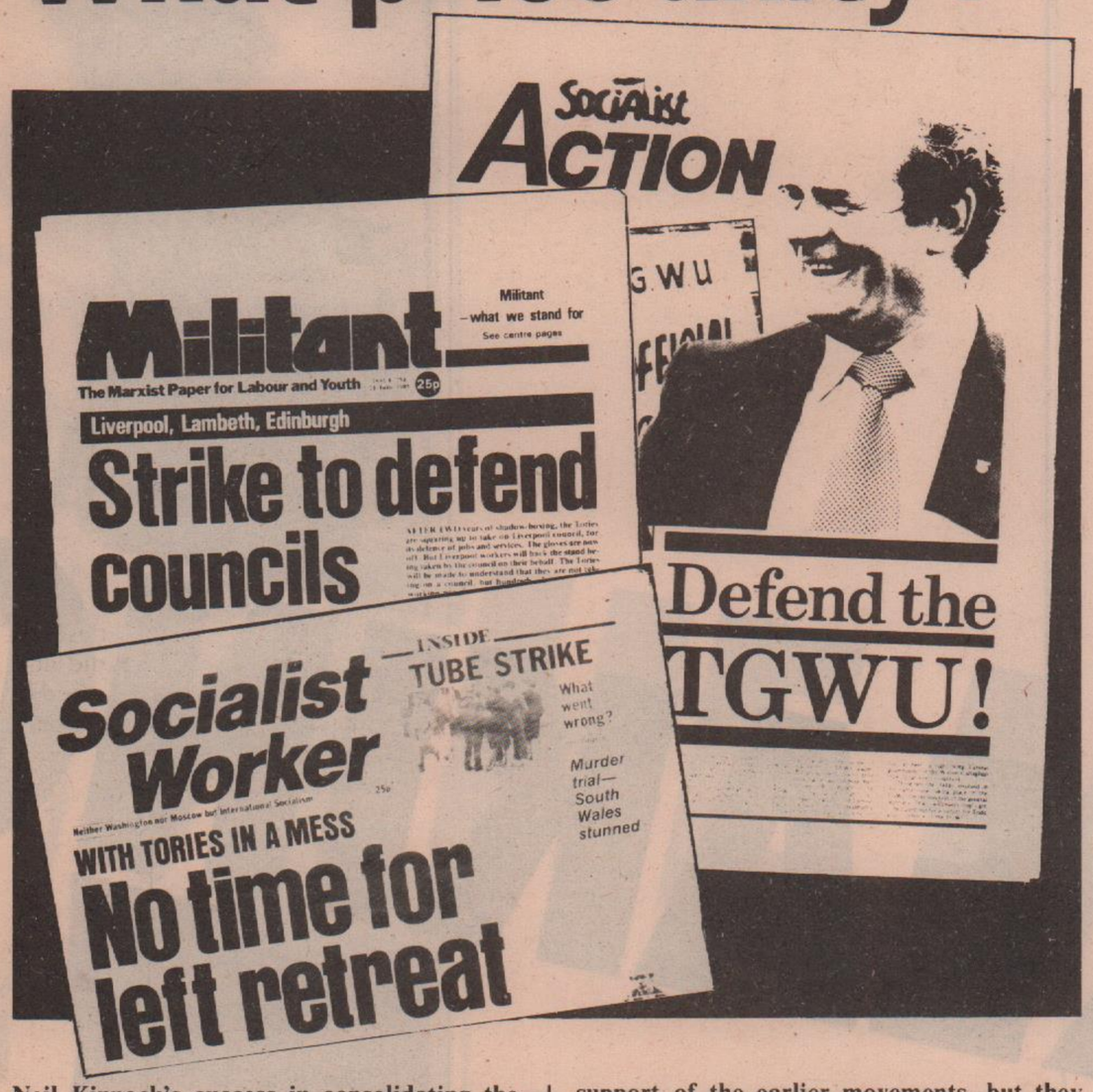
Electric House is a crumbling council tenement block just off the busy Bow Road in Tower Hamlets. Last Thursday racist thugs turned it into a death trap. They poured petrol into the building and set it ablaze. All but two of the families on the estate are Bengali. An Asian family of nine was burned out.

East London Asians are facing a virtual pogrom. Four weeks ago the murder of pregnant Shamira Kassam and her three children in another racist firebombing in Ilford hit the headlines. In the weeks before the Kassam murder racists launched arson attacks on Asian families in Custom House, Limehouse, and on the Bethnal Green estate. A few days after the Ilford fire racists burned down a halal meat shop in Green Street, Newham. Last Saturday two Asian men were in hospital after an arson attack on a terraced house in Leyton where 15 Asians lived in rented rooms.

Last week a spokesman for East London Workers Against Racism said that it was time to get organised to stop the rising flames of racist violence: 'The only way to prevent such tragedies is to organise workers in East London against the Labour council's racist housing policies and the racist firebombers. ELWAR will take whatever measures are necessary to defend black families from racist attacks.'

Kenan Malik

What price unity?



Neil Kinnock's success in consolidating the Labour Party around his shift to the right has provoked a flurry of unity initiatives on the far left. Everybody wants unity, but the real problem is how to advance the cause of the working class, not how to arrest the decline of the old left.

The left's papers are full of open letters, interviews and exchanges of opinion among individuals and organisations about how the left can regroup its forces. The Socialist Workers' Party has appealed for unity with Militant, union boss Ken Gill still hopes that the fragments of the old Communist Party can be reunited and left-wing professor Ralph Miliband has called for the left to unite in a new socialist party.

Miliband well sums up the left's prescription of its dream party:

'What is needed, and has been needed for many years, is a socialist party that would bring together a lot of different people, with many different concerns and passions, men and women, young and old, black and white, blue collar workers, white collar workers, and many others who would be working in an organisation that was open, democratic and no doubt disputatious, totally committed to the struggle against capitalism, sexism and racism, and to the struggle against the global counter-revolutionary crusade conducted by the USA and its allies.'

No doubt many existing groups will recognise themselves in this description. Its themes have long been the common currency of the left outside the Labour Party. The fact that Miliband is discreet enough not to single out the USA's particular ally Britain as a focus of anti-imperialist struggle for his new party places it firmly within the opportunist traditions of the British left.

support of the earlier movements, but they have fully shared their political weaknesses. The result has been that they have shared a similar fate. The 'socialist unity' drive of the late seventies is a good example.

Older readers may remember an organisation called the International Marxist Group. It was active in the unions, in Irish solidarity and anti-fascist activity, in the women's movement and among students in the seventies. It could mobilise substantial numbers of demonstrations and international solidarity rallies. It published a weekly paper which kept changing its name — from *Black Dwarf* to *Red Mole* to *Red Weekly* — which had a wide readership. The demoralisation resulting from the wage and welfare cuts carried out by Harold Wilson's Labour government after 1974 hit the left hard. Trade union supporters, never very numerous, drifted away. The IMG's response was to launch its 'socialist unity' campaign in 1977.

The IMG changed the name of its paper again, this time to *Socialist Challenge*. The name was taken from the book of the same name by Labour left MP Stuart Holland, a major influence on the evolution of the left alternative economic strategy, which Labour had adopted as the basis of its programme in 1973. *Socialist Challenge* was declared no longer the property of one faction, but as a paper open to all contributors committed to the realignment of the left. In the same spirit *Socialist Challenge* promoted 'socialist unity' candidates in local council and parliamentary elections.

The IMG aimed to unite the left, but on the basis of anger at the betrayals of the Labour leadership, rather than a programmatic alternative to Labourism. It never produced a critical evaluation of the left alternative economic strategy which led directly to Wilson's wage-cutting social

became increasingly preoccupied with the internal affairs of the Labour Party. It soon became just another Labour left pressure group.

In 1981 *Socialist Challenge* lent a helping hand in Tony Benn's unsuccessful campaign for the deputy leadership. In 1983 the IMG decided to enter the Labour Party en masse and renamed its paper *Socialist Action*. This paper is now largely filled out with interviews and speeches and articles by Labour Party politicians and trade union bureaucrats. Trying to achieve socialist unity without challenging the politics of Labourism resulted in the IMG drowning in the Labour Party swamp. For all practical purposes the organisation no longer exists.

Miliband's proposed new socialist party is destined to drift down the same road as 'socialist unity', if it is ever launched. Its commitment to 'take seriously the context of bourgeois democracy' in practice reduces the question of winning political power to achieving a parliamentary majority. But even if Miliband's party won a majority in parliament, the state would still be under the control of the generals, the police chiefs and the top civil servants. In fact Miliband's party is unlikely ever to be confronted with this problem because he subordinates its political strategy to the electoral ambitions of the Labour Party. Miliband takes the view that 'activists and revolutionaries do have to work for the return of a Labour government'. But why form an independent party if you want Labour to win in elections?

Miliband's alternative to Labour is an organisational, not a political one. This is the common failing of the British left over the past 60 years. It is fully shared by parties such as the SWP which remain formally outside the Labour Party.

For the SWP the only hope for the left lies in linking up its feeble forces in one organisation. Its recent open letter appeal for unity with Militant admits that 'we have had all manner of differences in the past'. 'But', it continues, 'all this pales before the tasks and opportunities we now face.' Political differences now come a long way second to the quest for organisational survival. But downgrading politics inevitably means that the strongest political force in the labour movement — Labourism — will continue to hold sway.

Reject Labourism

Because the left needs a united organisation to save it from the assaults of the right, political differences are a thing of the past, of no immediate consequence. A recent SWP internal bulletin, issued in an attempt to clear up the widespread confusion created in the organisation by the unity initiative, explains that 'what is posed by the swing to the right in the unions and the Labour Party is the need for a political pole of attraction in opposition to Kinnockism'. 'That', concludes the Central Committee, 'would be best provided by a united political organisation.'

The SWP offers a pole of opposition to the Labour leadership but has nothing to say about the political basis of this opposition. In fact the main justification for its appeal to Militant is that 'we are the two biggest groupings on the left', with the implicit admission that they need to get together to halt their decline. But as the next general election draws nearer the pressure on Militant to succumb to the Labour leadership will grow even greater. Instead of uniting the far left, the SWP will end up tailing Kinnock all the way into Downing Street.

The left's unity drive evades all the real issues. The working class does not need

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

SHOCK HORROR

It was 'terrifying' said Tory energy secretary Peter Walker. It sent a 'shudder of horror' through the nation, said employment minister Tom King. It meant 'big brother Britain' said the *Sun*. It would bring 'vicious tax penalties' which would 'hit thousands' said the *Daily Mail*.

What was it that threw the Tories and their press hacks into such a froth last week? It was the publication of the joint Labour Party/TUC programme, *A new partnership – a new Britain*. 'If you want Arthur Scargill to run the nation you will only have to vote Labour in the next election,' proclaimed Walker. Tory party chair John Selwyn Gummer, Thatcher's other poodle, agreed: 'It was the most extreme left-wing programme ever proposed by the Labour Party in Britain.'

The twin themes that Labour's new programme would mean handing state power over to the union barons and the introduction of a stream of extreme socialist measures ran through the speeches of Tory ministers and the banner headlines in the tabloid press.

In the more sober up-market papers wiser counsels prevailed. 'Modified Reaganomics' commented the *Financial Times*. It congratulated the Labour Party on 'coming out from its past', for being 'more pragmatic' and avoiding any commitments to re-nationalisation or to the repeal of anti-union legislation. *The Sunday Times* commented on a 'noticeable drift back to the centre compared with Labour's 1983 manifesto'.

The question that often arises when the tabloids go over the top is this — are the top Tories and their friends in Fleet Street stupid or merely cynical? The truth lies somewhere in between. There are undoubtedly some politicians and journalists whose anti-working class prejudices are so strong as to incapacitate them from any sensible judgement about even the respectable official labour movement.

But it would be foolish to underestimate the ability of senior Tories and newspaper editors to make a shrewd assessment of Labour's pathetically moderate programme. At the same time they appreciate the value of keeping up the pressure on the Labour leadership by raising the old bogey of union power and labelling its policies as extremist. The Tories too have their electoral problems and they need to do everything they can to discredit the opposition.

By mobilising public opinion against Labour's 'extremist' programme the top Tories and the tabloids unwittingly provide a service for the party. When the *Daily Mail* raises the threat of Labour's tax proposals to people with holiday villas on the Algarve, it starts to appear to many workers as their sort of programme. There

Thatcher counts the British establishment's blessings: a Labour Party that supports the system and trade union leaders who support the Labour Party

THE MOULD

within which is more difficult to fight and more dangerous to liberty. The miners' strike is an attack on democracy and the rule of law. The country must stand firm and militancy must not win.'

At the time Thatcher's declaration of war was met with injured bewilderment by Labour politicians. Instead of recognising the statement for what it was, the Labour left pleaded with Thatcher that she was not playing fair. In South Wales, Labour politicians even took it upon themselves to parade miners' families whose sons had given their lives fighting for Britain in the Falklands or in Northern Ireland.

Thatcher's instincts proved correct. The miners lost because the leadership of the working class demanded fair play instead of fighting a class war. However, Thatcher's victory came at a high cost. The bosses' victory exposed the vacillation and the ineffectiveness of the leaders of the trade unions and the Labour Party. The TUC and Labour leaders who have guarded the front line against social upheavals in the past cannot be relied on to be so effective in the future. The miners' strike undermined the carefully fostered political arrangements that have made Britain famous for its conservatism and consensus.

It is not only the case that Labourism is exhausted. The institutions that have regulated the relations between labour and capital for 40 years have given way to more direct forms of class domination. This is why the Thatcher government is more and more inclined to use the language of class war. As the miners who have faced their employers' provocations in the aftermath of the strike have discovered, fair play is strictly for SDP/Liberal Alliance luncheon parties.

The new forms of political control exist only in embryo. The old stability of consensus is no more, but before it can be replaced by a new stability, class relations in Britain must go through a more volatile phase. The class struggle cannot escape taking a more directly political form. The main casualty of the erosion of the foundations of stability has been the Labour bureaucracy. Labour can still influence the working class, but in conditions of mounting class war Labour's white flag of surrender will not be able to hold back workers' resistance for long.

The inevitability of more intense class conflict creates new scope for politicising the class struggle. The essential ingredient that has been missing from the class struggle since the Second World War is class politics. Liberalism in the guise of socialism has kept the class struggle in Britain within the bounds clearly defined by the trade union and parliamentary leaders. The heritage of Beveridge and Keynes has ensured that the element of proletarian independence which is expressed in every struggle has been contained within the horizons of the capitalist system.

The intensifying class war provides the basis for the growth of a revolutionary movement. But not directly! A revolutionary movement cannot arise directly from the class struggle, but only through politicising it. This requires reversing the process through which the British ruling class has influenced the outlook of the labour movement. It demands a political approach that is based entirely on the independent interests of the working class. It demands not Keynes or Beveridge but Marx.

We are not alone in attempting to politicise the class struggle. In its own way the ruling class is doing this all the time. It chooses issues of terrorism, football hooliganism, drugs or baby battering to forge an all-class unity against its opponents. Even the Labour Party is desperately trying to influence the class struggle. It may lack convincing policies but it is still able to appeal to the mood of passivity by urging moderation until the next Labour government.

What chance do revolutionaries have against such formidable opponents? Our approach begins from developing the active side of the working class response to the current situation. The differences that count inside the labour movement are not fine distinctions between different brands of Labourism, but the gulf between those who want to fight back and those who do not. The people who want to fight are very much in the minority but they express the active element within the working class. At present much of their activism is no danger to the capitalist class. This is partly because activists are isolated and lack political direction. It is also partly attributable to the fact that many of those who want to fight back have been drawn into the ineffectual campaigns — such as the rate-capping circus — organised by the Labour bureaucracy.

We are confident that Marxism can connect with the aspirations of active workers. This is not a matter of faith, but because Marxism provides an outlook which corresponds to the desire to fight back. It also provides the only alternative to Labour's defeatist approach. Kinnock is right to say that the alternatives on offer from the Labour left are a fantasy. The assumptions of Labourism from right to left all lead inexorably down Kinnock's road. For Marxists who recognise only workers' interests it is Kinnock's course that is a fantasy.

Common sense tells workers that, given the realities of capitalist society, there are no economic alternatives to the policies of the Thatcher government. Marxists point beyond this instinctive recognition to the political solutions that the crisis demands. In capitalist society discussion of economics presupposes the relation between exploiters and exploited. No matter what economic policy emerges the exploited must remain what they are — passive objects of exploitation. The solution to unemployment, low pay and falling living standards does not lie in the sphere of economics. Nor can parliament change things fundamentally because, whatever party has a majority at Westminster, the capitalist class would still have all the power. Thatcher has been fighting the class war to preserve the power that allows a small group of capitalists to control society. Workers' interests can only be advanced by seizing this power.

The real issue in our society is not who has the best policy to fight inflation or bring down interest rates, but who rules. Everything that matters is decided in the sphere of power politics. In the miners' strike Thatcher and MacGregor made the coal board's 'right to manage' a central issue. The NUM leaders characteristically evaded this issue by talking about the economics of coalmining. The result of the NUM avoiding the question of power was that the initiative — and the power — remained in the hands of the employers.

Any working class strategy that claims to be realistic has to confront the political power of the British establishment. To ignore this problem is to rely on the generosity of the capitalist class, a course of action which has always proved disastrous. Instead of pleading for mercy like the Labour leaders we need a serious strategy for taking control over the resources of society. We need power so that we can establish a society in which decisions about the allocation of resources are determined by the interests of the majority rather than by the laws of profit.

Kinnock's road is the real fantasy for it imagines that the capitalist market can be operated to the benefit of the majority of people in society. In his flights of fancy Kinnock even imagines that a Labour government could play a progressive role. In the real world it is those who have the power who make the decisions. As everybody saw in the miners' strike, in capitalist Britain it is the state machine that enforces the power of the capitalist class.

The question of power, which is so well understood by the British establishment, needs to be popularised in the working class. This is what we mean by politicising the class struggle. This is not some artificial intervention in an imaginary conflict. The question of power is given by the relation between the two main classes in British society — it is thrown up every time workers come out on strike or when any victims of oppression take direct action against their oppressors. Nor is it a prescription of extremism for its own sake. Our advocacy of fighting for power does not mean that nothing can be gained until after the revolution. The working class can achieve results in the present if it organises itself into an independent force.

The secret of Britain's stability has been the integration of the labour movement into the system. That's why the ruling class dreads nothing more than workers who are organised independently. Workers whose loyalties are only to their class will remain indifferent to appeals for patriotism and sacrifice. The Falklands factor which operated with such devastating consequences in 1982 would be exposed as a third-rate propaganda ploy.

The British ruling class fears a working class movement that thinks for itself and needs no middle class experts or benevolent advice from a Keynes or a Beveridge. The bosses will go to any lengths to frustrate the expression of proletarian independence. We can win back the independence the establishment has hijacked by spreading the recognition of the importance of independent working class initiative. It is the responsibility of revolutionary communists to ensure that every active worker is inescapably drawn towards this recognition.

INTERNATIONAL

Turmoil in Uganda

The legacy of British rule

The first task of lieutenant general Tito Okello in the aftermath of the recent coup in Uganda is to reconcile the various factions tearing the country apart. The coup that brought Okello to power was the culmination of a decade of mounting chaos. The new regime is now attempting to restore order through the established techniques of terror and intrigue. Looting and atrocities, round-ups and pogroms against the Asian community have become commonplace. The prospects of peace and order in this troubled former British colony appear bleak.

Speaking in London last week, Amadi Omwony-Ojwok, a spokesman for the Ugandan National Liberation Front, demanded the release of all detainees, the dismantling of concentration camps and the withdrawal of troops to barracks. He told *tns* that his organisation was appealing to all Ugandan organisations 'not to be tricked but to unite and fight for a genuine settlement' through an international conference. The legacy of British rule in Uganda explains why there is little hope for stability in one of Africa's potentially most prosperous countries.

The British occupied Uganda in 1893. Fertile land and a favorable climate made it a suitable site at first for cotton plantations and later for coffee production. Churchill dubbed Uganda 'the pearl of Africa'. In more recent years Uganda's copper deposits have become an important national asset. The British colonised the region, together with neighbouring Kenya and Tanganyika (now Tanzania). They imported workers from India to build the railways and staff the administration. From the earliest days missionaries smoothed the process of colonisation. As the chiefs of different ethnic groups were 'converted' by different Christian denominations, sectarian religious conflicts compounded ethnic divisions.

Divide and rule

The British authorities cultivated the support of the Baganda ethnic group in the area around the capital Kampala, which soon became the most developed region. Protestant missionaries converted the Bagandan chiefs who were used as stooges by the British. But the Bagandans made up only one fifth of the Ugandan population and the authority of the Baganda chiefs was not secure even among their own people. Catholic missionaries made headway among groups hostile to the Bagandans and even among Bagandans unsympathetic to their chiefs. The ethnic and religious divisions fomented by the colonists have had a lasting and malign influence on life in Uganda.

In 1962, Britain pre-empted the emergence of a nationalist movement, such as it had faced to its cost in Kenya, by handing over power in Uganda to a coalition of Bagandan chieftains and Protestant notables from other ethnic groups. The leader selected as the figurehead of the new regime was Milton Obote, a Protestant from the northern Langi group. Obote's Ugandan People's Congress succeeded in mobilising wider support by playing on popular hostility to the traditionally conservative role of the Baganda chieftains. In 1964 he kicked them out of the coalition and two years later suspended the constitution and declared himself president.

Obote now increasingly took up the anti-Western rhetoric of 'African socialism' to rally support for a more independent stand against continuing British influence over the country. By the early seventies Britain had had enough. Just as Obote was about to inaugurate his 'common man's charter' which would have nationalised 60 per cent of Uganda's economy, a British-backed coup installed army commander Idi Amin as Uganda's ruler. It was a move the British came to regret.

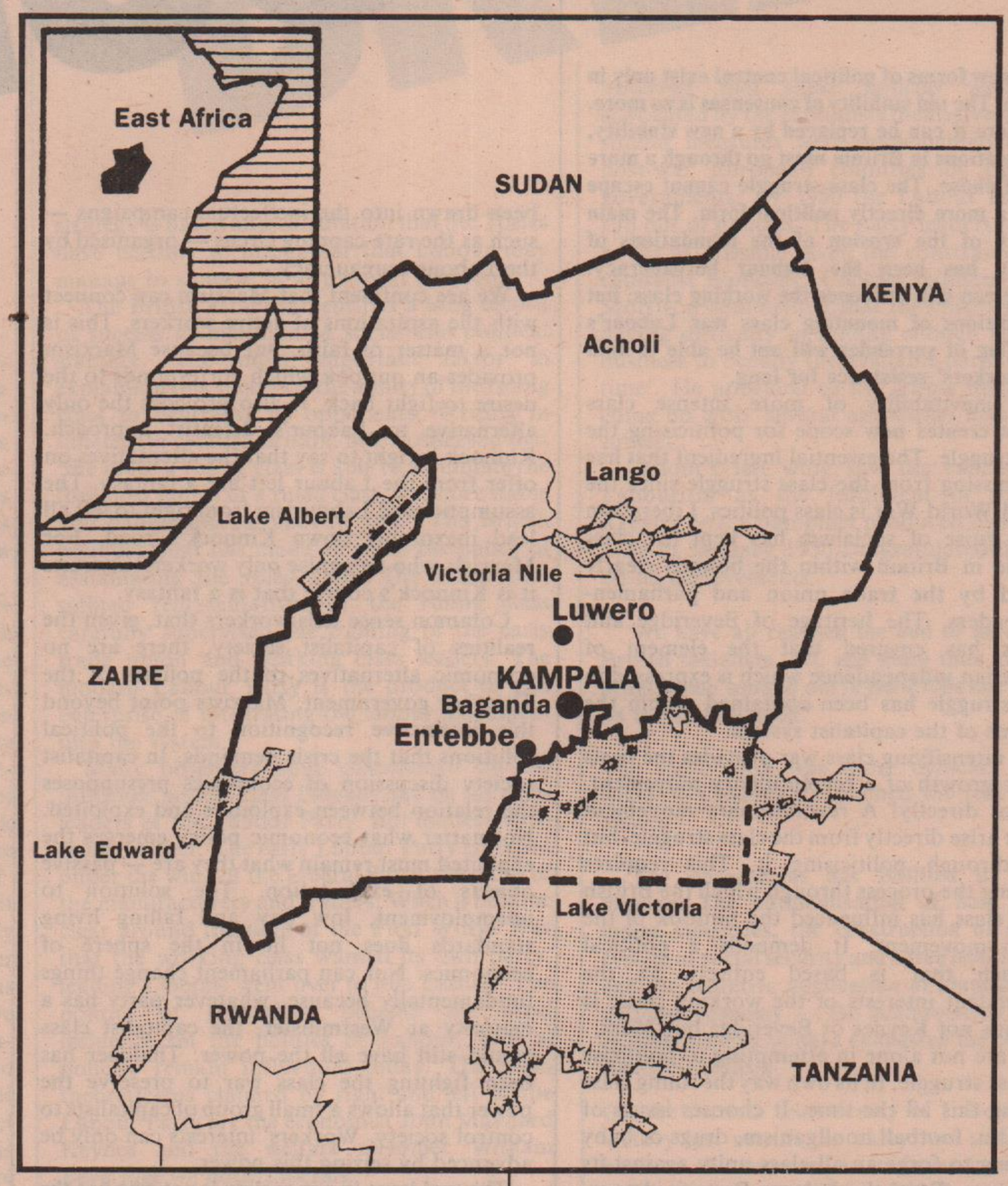
Amin came from the small Kakwa grouping linked with the Nubians across the border in Sudan. To secure his rule Amin took full advantage of the ethnic divisions that British rule had already intensified. As he had no base in Uganda outside the army, Amin had to purge the army of its predominant Acholi and Langi influences. In particular he made the Asians, who had become a substantial trading community, into the scapegoats for all the country's ills. In 1972 he horrified his British masters by expelling 20 000 Asians, many of whom went to Britain. Amin offended Britain in other ways too. He became a convert to Islam and championed the Arab cause in the Middle East. Even worse, Amin nationalised all foreign enterprises in Uganda. As far as London was concerned he had to go.

While he lasted Amin served a useful purpose for the British establishment as a target of racist propaganda. For the British press Amin's personal peculiarities became the explanation of all the failures of black Africa after a decade of decolonisation. In fact Amin was a corrupt dictator of the sort the British had installed in countries around the world. He was trained by the British, installed by the British and he used British techniques of exploiting ethnic divisions to consolidate his rule in Uganda. He was supported by the British until his pursuit of his personal ambitions ran into conflict with British requirements in east Africa. In the end he was removed by a British-backed invasion by Tanzanian troops in 1979. The combined effects of the world recession, Amin's economic mismanagement, Western sanctions, civil war and invasion reduced Uganda to ruins.

The British at first attempted to form a new coalition government. But it soon became clear that the anti-Amin coalition could not contain the rivalries within the ruling elite. Obote returned to power in Uganda in May 1980 from his exile in Tanzania. Six months later Commonwealth observers ratified the results of rigged elections favouring Obote. In return a chastened Obote obediently followed British dictates in running the country. In 1982 he introduced special measures to encourage private investors and dismantled many of the 97 parastatal concerns that dominated the economy. Britain, the country with the biggest foreign investment stake in Uganda, was the biggest beneficiary. The British government authorised a Commonwealth military force to help rebuild the army and a private British security company, Falconstar, was contracted to train a 5000-strong 'special forces' unit.

But Obote proved unable to stabilise the country. He antagonised the powerful Baganda forces who rallied around former defence minister Yoweri Museveni. After the dispersal of Amin's forces the main concern of Obote's army became to contain the revolt of Museveni's National Resistance Army operating in the Lowero 'triangle' just to the north of Kampala. Last year resistance to the Obote regime grew and reports of atrocities committed by Obote's British-trained army began to leak out of the country. According to US government estimates between 100 000 and 200 000 people have been slaughtered in this war since 1981. At the same time Obote antagonised Acholi elements in the army, who felt that they had borne the brunt of the fighting, by promoting Langis over their heads. Tensions mounted, frequently resulting in outbursts of shooting in Kampala.

Goodbye Milton Obote (left), hallo Idi Amin, goodbye Amin, welcome back Obote, farewell once more Obote, come in Tito Okello: Britain has presided over a series of coups, leaving Uganda bitterly divided



Uganda disintegrates

Earlier this year Amnesty International reported that conditions for political prisoners were worse than they had been under Amin, whose atrocities had been widely exposed in the British press. In June foreign office minister Malcolm Rifkind was forced to call on the Ugandan government to mount an inquiry into the allegations. Last month's coup — led by Acholi elements in the army under Okello — cut this process short.

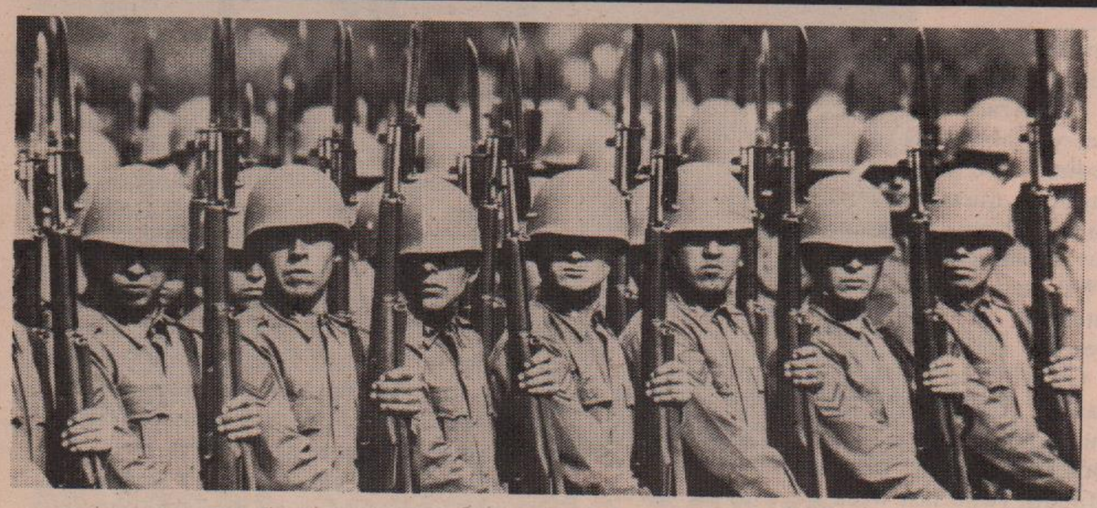
The significant feature of last month's coup was that it was the first change of government to take place in Uganda outside of Britain's control. Obote's attempts to keep control over Uganda unleashed forces that his regime could not contain. During the past few months large areas of the country have come under the control of rebel forces and the army has been racked with internal conflicts. The even greater problem for the Western powers and their other stooges in the region is that Britain can no longer step in to sort things out. It now lacks either the economic strength or the political authority to influence events as Uganda disintegrates. The fear that the mounting chaos in Uganda might spread to its already insecure neighbours in this economically and strategically crucial region is causing considerable concern in the corridors of power in London and Washington.

The biggest problem for the new military rulers is to make a deal with the Bagandan guerrilla forces under Museveni who played the key role in destabilising Obote. There is already a danger of conflict breaking out in the bush. Whatever arrangements the new regime establishes, the biggest problem facing the Ugandan people is further Western interference of a diplomatic, economic or military kind. For almost a century Britain has ruled Uganda and its influence has reduced the country to its current plight. When British politicians wring their hands about the barbaric events that are now taking place throughout the African continent, we should let them know that the real barbarians are in the West and sooner or later they will be called to account for their crimes.

Andy Clarkson

REVIEWS

CHILE BEFORE PINOCHET



Burning illusions

Antonio Skarmeta, *I dreamt the snow was burning,* Readers International, £4.95

First published in Barcelona in 1975 *I dreamt the snow was burning* captures the passion and the doomed fervour of the Chilean working class movement in the last days before the military takeover in 1973.

Skarmeta unfolds his tale set during the political crisis of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government — the first popular socialist government in Latin America. His carefully understated style expresses the Chilean workers' confusion and growing sense of foreboding at the military's role in political life. In the background the army is already preparing its blows against the workers' movement.

Skarmeta's central character Arturo stands for the experience of the whole Chilean working class under Allende. A youthful peasant, Arturo is sent to the city by his grandfather to find work. Arturo's own ambitions are to become a football star and to get laid. Nothing in the city matches up to his expectations. Instead of overnight success Arturo gets an education in the dangers of political life in the city.

Arturo befriends a left-wing militant called 'Fats'. When 'Fats' is beaten up by a fascist street gang Arturo does nothing to help. He lapses into self-pity and sees the incident as a means of fulfilling his second ambition by playing on the sympathy of another militant Susannah.

Susannah is a vivid portrayal of the real tragedy of Chile. A young, attractive militant, she fights hard for her politics and is not above kicking Arturo in the balls to cool his ardour. She displays her weakness, however, when she gives in to Arturo's self-pity after the assault on 'Fats'. Like the Chilean left Susannah shows compassion when she needs resolve.

I dreamt the snow was burning is a rich and thoughtful novel. The personal concerns of the main characters are complemented by Skarmeta's sensitivity to the wider concerns of Chilean workers and the left. In a brilliant dialogue among a group of engineering workers who have just occupied their factory he articulates the concerns of many Chilean workers at the effectiveness of their tactics. 'Tell me', one of the workers demands, 'if you really believe this thing is gonna be sorted out by working, that we're gonna win out with voluntary work and marches?'

This conversation assumes even greater poignancy set alongside Skarmeta's euphoric description of a mass demonstration in support of Allende. Immediately after it the army controlled the streets.

Charles Longford

A FAMILY FILM

Breaking up is hard to do

Paul Cox (director), *My first wife* (15)

Life in Melbourne is very comfortable for John, a classical music DJ. Ah, but he's not yet aware of the darkened, rushing trains which are spliced ominously into the introduction to his film. He's certainly not aware that his wife Helen is having an affair with his friend. When she suddenly tells him she's moving out he falls apart. Shock and sorrow turn quickly to anger and hate and then to despair and nervous breakdown. Helen remains strong and is only moved to compromise by his blackmail, by a sort of bitter pity and by the mounting pressures upon her.

'So what?' it might be appropriate to ask. The whole film is preoccupied with the charmless problems of the middle classes, seen overwhelmingly from the man's point of view. There is much however of interest in the film, not least outstanding performances from John Hargreaves and Wendy Hughes.

I wouldn't want to spend a night in a pub with either John or Helen, let alone 10 years of marriage. He's smug and boring, she's sulky and dull. Their confrontations, shot in long unrelenting takes, are convincing and disturbing. Cut into the story are interludes and images such as snatches from the past, home movies of their wedding, the trains. There is too an insistent theme, a piece of classical music — something he *can* relate to. These devices give richness and depth to both the context and the evocation of the crisis. They are carried by a refreshingly direct approach to the main issue by director Paul Cox.

The same techniques were used to much more powerful effect in his earlier *Man of flowers,* and by comparison his latest film is a disappointment. The fetishistic *Man of flowers* and his friends may have been less normal than this pair, but they were much nicer. Cox says that his films generally explore the isolation of modern man. Here he focuses on man's inadequate emotional resources when it is the woman who does the walking. If the men's group tone sounds dodgy so is the direction taken by Cox's exploration.

'We must love one another or die,' quotes John from his sick bed. Well, fair enough John. But like John, the other powerful presences in the film — his daughter and his dying father — expressly emphasise that it is in the family and in a recognition of duty that this love should be nourished. Got that Helen? The film closes with the child between each parent being led hand-in-hand from her grandfather's burial.

Compare *My first wife* with Wim Wenders' *Paris, Texas,* another film about a man who couldn't cope, also set in the new world by a European (much has been made of Cox's Dutch birth and his Russian cinematographer Yuri Sokol). Wenders' film, despite its final loss of nerve, confronts more bravely personal isolation in the face of fractured relationships. He displays a surer grasp than Cox of the problems of the family and the pressures upon it, and he knows too that after break-ups like this there should be no going back.

Pat Ford

REBEL AGAINST APARTHEID

A militant in exile

Nancy Harrison, *Winnie Mandela: mother of a nation,* Victor Gollancz, £8.95

White South African journalist Nancy Harrison's biography of black South African Winnie Mandela is a moving account of one family's war with apartheid. Harrison shows how Winnie Mandela's opposition to the South African regime led to harassment, brutality, separation from her husband and children, and finally banishment.

Harrison's account turns on the personal aspects of the Mandela story. But the Mandelas are no ordinary family. The name Mandela is virtually synonymous with the struggles of black people in South Africa. Winnie's husband Nelson is leader of the banned African National Congress and the world's most famous political prisoner currently serving a life sentence in the prisons of the South African regime.

Winnie, who married Nelson in 1958 during his trial for treason, is herself an international political celebrity. The South African government packed Winnie Mandela off to internal exile in Brandfort in May 1977. The regime hoped to suffocate her opposition in the tiny settlement in the middle of the staunchly Afrikaner Orange Free State. When the order banishing her arrived even Winnie did not know where Brandfort was. Her exile has put Brandfort on the map. Earlier this year US senator Edward Kennedy visited her in Brandfort accompanied by the world's press.

Internal exile was the climax of a vicious police vendetta against Winnie which Harrison recounts in harrowing detail. After the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela in 1963, Winnie continued to speak out against the regime. The government responded by banning her — restricting her to the magisterial district of Johannesburg, forbidding her to enter educational establishments, and forbidding her to meet more than one person at a time. During the 14 years until her banishment she faced repeated dawn raids on her home, house arrest, and intimidation.

State harassment of Winnie Mandela has continued. A week ago her home in Brandfort was raided again. Through it all Winnie has refused to be intimidated into surrender to the regime. She is contemptuous of the offer of a free passage to live in the nominally independent 'black homeland', the Transkei: 'How dare a racist, fascist, minority settler regime offer me passage out of the very country it stole from me.'

Harrison's biography focuses on the personal tragedy of the Mandela family and, by extension, on the tragedy of South African blacks. The daily rituals of brutality meted out to Winnie Mandela are the common experience of those she speaks for in the black townships of Johannesburg, Capetown and other South African cities.

Unfortunately Harrison does not go beyond an account of the courage and sacrifices of the Mandelas, and thousands of other South African families, to look more closely at the political strategy of the movement against apartheid.

Jenny Graham

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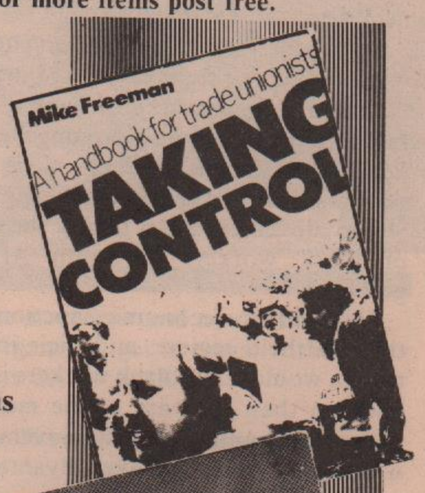

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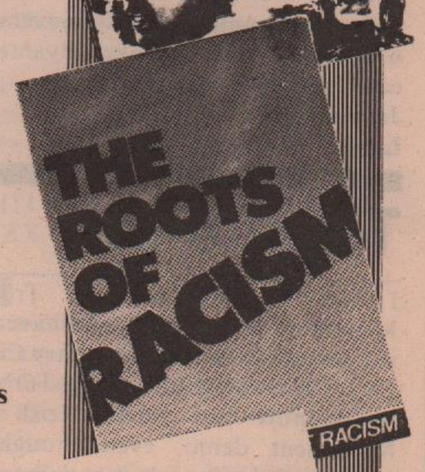

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LETTERS

Sanctions and South Africa

John Pearson's article 'Western sanctions don't work' *(tns* 15) was informative, but told us what is blatantly obvious already, that Western imperialists will do nothing for the working class in South Africa or anywhere else.

Socialists should oppose calls for sanctions against South Africa, when those demands ultimately mean interference by Western imperialism. But surely there is another consideration, and that is the effect economic sanctions (if they worked) would have against the black workers in South Africa. Weakening South Africa's economy even more would ultimately mean the Botha regime stepping up its repression of black workers. We all know that in a crisis it is us, at the bottom of the pile, who get it in the neck first and foremost.

In Sabena Norton's article on page two, it was pointed out the weakness of the African National Congress, and the lack of any real revolutionary vanguard among black workers. Sure, black workers have become politicised during the recent struggles but as yet no movement exists to give the militancy of black workers in South Africa any guidance.

Demands for economic sanctions against the apartheid regime, and their implementation, would leave black workers in a worse position than they are at the moment, as, without an anti-capitalist movement, they would be unable to take advantage of an economic crisis in the country.

James Alex
Leeds

Troops out

I have recently left the Troops Out Movement in Brighton, and have become a supporter of the Revolutionary Communist Party. This was prompted by TOM's refusal to support last week's Irish Freedom Movement demo, even though it fully supported the demo's two demands.

Richard Stanton, Brighton Labour councillor and TOM member, had recently caused an outrage when he was quoted as saying that the Brighton bombing was 'an act of war'. We in TOM felt that this publicity was a problem (as did Brighton Labour Party which feared the damage to its electoral prospects, promptly distanced itself from Stanton, and censured him). We had deliberately avoided the whole issue of the Grand Hotel bombing, keeping a low profile until 'things settled down' again. This was not untypical of TOM!

The Troops Out Movement believes that by presenting the severity of British state repression in Ireland, eg plastic bullets, strip searches and the shoot-to-kill policy, a broad based withdrawal movement can be built from this appeal to common liberal sentiment and morality — the same sentiment and morality that motivates the anger and outrage in response to republican bombings! Campaigning around the Prevention of Terrorism Act, TOM concentrates on the denial of civil rights rather than the real intentions of the terror act, which is to criminalise Irish people. By presenting 'the facts', TOM expects to create spontaneous support for Irish self-determination.

As was reported in *tns* 16, the Irish Freedom Movement had arranged a public debate with Brighton TOM. We saw this as a great opportunity to present the IFM's arguments to a large audience. Unfortunately TOM pulled out, one of the reasons being that Richard Stanton has undertaken not to speak on behalf of TOM in public, as demanded by Brighton Labour Party!

With this political approach to the Irish issue, TOM will never build an Irish solidarity movement. This can only be done by taking sides in the Irish War. Only when the British working class realises that it has every interest in opposing the British state, can real support for the Irish liberation struggle be achieved.

Chris Griffiths
Brighton

NUJ and Ireland

On Wednesday 7 August the Irish Freedom Movement supported a picket of the BBC protesting at the banning of the Martin McGuinness film. The National Union of Journalists were there too holding a one-day strike, as they explained to us, not over the particular ban but the principle of journalistic freedom. They told us that our presence might associate them with the IRA and damage their claim to the right to freedom of the press. So keen were they to appear 'objective' in the eyes of the public that they suggested to the police that we should be removed. The police complied, threatening to arrest two protesters who held a banner calling for 'Troops out of Ireland'.

The NUJ are wrong to think that the ban was a general criticism of their 'objectivity'. It was quite clearly intended to prevent republican views being heard on British TV. By themselves encouraging the police to silence the demand for Irish freedom on the streets of London, the NUJ officials are complicit in the British state's distortion of the Irish War. What price journalistic freedom, if bought at the price of conformity?

Carolyn Price
North London

Socialist bans

On Wednesday 7 August myself and a friend went to a Socialist Workers' Party meeting in Pontefract. We went to hear Tony Cliff reassure himself that workers 'can beat the Tories?' We knew the answer to Tony's daunting question. That's why we left the Labour Party and became RCP supporters, but we wanted to hear what the leader of the SWP had to say for himself. We also intended to raise our march for Irish freedom among people there.

On arriving we were told that we were banned from all SWP 'public' meetings an the grounds that we were not 'progressive'. Other left-wing organisations such as Militant (who last week were on the streets of Leeds shouting 'smash the IRA') and even 'progressive Tories' were not banned. I was accused (all seven and a half stone of me) of being a disruptive element in their meetings, and told that the bouncers at the pub had been warned about us and would remove us if we went in. We would expect the SWP to steward their own meetings, but to ask paid thugs to do their dirty work is something else.

As I've never spoken more than a couple of sentences in any of these meetings before, it was obvious that we as people were not banned but the politics we represent were; those of revolutionary communism.

Linda Joyner
Pontefract

Not 'our' boys

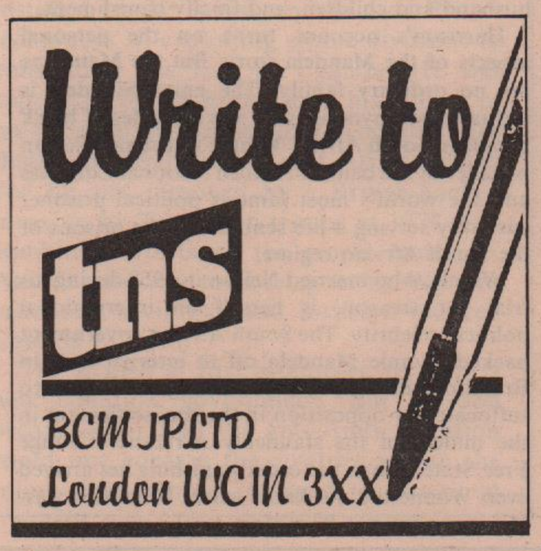
Two weeks ago under the heading 'No more heroes' you published a letter concerning an ex-soldier's experience in Northern Ireland. It pointed out rightly the hypocrisy of the media in its portrayal of the current war. IRA bombings are taken out of context and presented as the work of a small fanatical group bent on mindless violence. Yet the atrocities of the British Army and its Loyalist allies are ignored.

He also talked about the divisions in the working class in Ireland and asked how we can overcome them. The divisions between the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland will always exist as long as Britain oppresses Ireland. Protestant loyalty to the crown was fostered by successive British governments through a series of measures designed to discriminate against Catholics and maintain Protestant supremacy.

However the letter, in highlighting the rough deal British soldiers receive is in danger of capitulating to the chauvinism of the 'Bring the boys back home' school of thought. This approach is perfectly compatible with a pro-British (and anti-Irish) outlook, since it plays upon workers' nationalistic sentiments viz-a-viz concern for the safety and well-being of 'our boys'. But it does nothing to defend the 'well-being' of the Irish — not their right to fight back against the British military machine.

Our emphasis should be different and one which takes an explicitly anti-British stance. Until workers stop rallying behind the Union Jack they will continue to be slaughtered in ruling class wars that are not their own. It is in our own interests to take sides with the Irish in their struggle for national liberation against Britain.

Pandora Anderson
Bradford



STEPPING OUT

Today's National Front supporters seem a rather muddle-headed Master Race. Fifty NF fans turned up at Saturday's Irish Freedom Movement march carrying 'Ulster is British' placards and Union Jacks. When 20 of our stewards explained that they'd made a silly mistake and come to the wrong march, the Pride of Britain's Youth all ran away dropping flags and lumps of wood. One kindhearted Scottish steward made strenuous efforts to give the NF their piece of timber back, but they didn't seem to want it. Somebody even displayed the dropped Union Jack at our apres-march party that night so the owner could claim it, but nobody came forward. (This was just as well as the flag was soon burnt in a tragic accident.) Why do the young British patriots suffer this loss of memory? Perhaps it's because they put their heads through glass windows, as one did on Saturday. Or perhaps it results from imbibing 'certain substances' found in another's pocket at Kennington nick. I ask you, is this any way to rebuild an Empire?

Then again, maybe the fascists were confused by speaking to the ***Sunday Mirror*** *reporter. Her piece said the march was for Irish freedom and against internment, but that the marchers were '1500 Ulster Loyalists'. I used to think Fleet Street journalists were slick operators who deliberately confused their readers about Ireland. But after talking to this woman, I realise that the hacks genuinely don't know their Andersonstown from their* ***Eire Nua****.*

The National Association of Probation Officers has just joined the TUC and sent its first motion to next month's conference. Being a bit green, Napo thinks the TUC discusses political issues, and its motion calls for a campaign for gay and lesbian rights. The TUC barons are not taking this from the Johnny-Come-Lately probation officers. They are leaning on Napo to withdraw the offending motion, published in the preliminary agenda. Will it make the final list? Or will it suffer the short print-run which traditionally befalls motions that might upset the TUC stalwarts? Watch this space.

Fight apartheid the TUC way! Last month's meeting of the TUC's international committee discussed how to get the South African subsidiary of a British firm, BTR, to recognise black trade unions. The confidential minutes record the conclusion: 'It was pointed out that some British unions might have investments in BTR and it was suggested that they should put pressure on the company as shareholders.' So, if I've got the TUC line right, Britain shouldn't invest in apartheid but it's alright for British unions to invest in the British companies that sponsor apartheid, because that's the best way to fight apartheid in Britain. OK? Right brothers, next business from the July minutes: 'Central America'. Maybe if we bought a few shares in the Contras Corporation, we could stop them killing Nicaraguans..

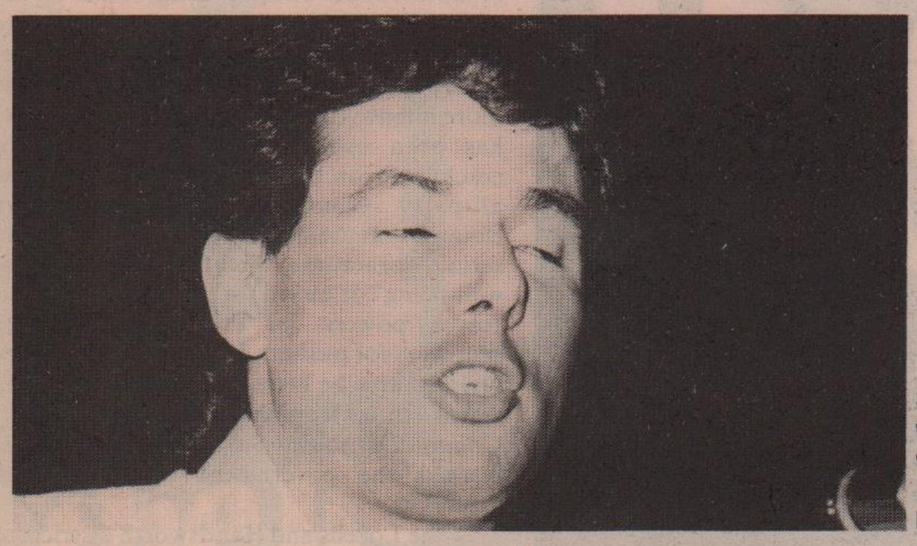
A two-way mirror has just been installed the wrong way round at Brighton police station. It was supposed to let the cops watch the ne'er-do-wells. Instead, it allows suspects to observe the local law combing their hair and pursuing their other personal habits. Who dunnit? 'We are not sure whose fault it is, but we are certainly looking into it', quipped a police punster. Maybe he was talking about the Brighton bomb. Latest figures show Sussex police have spent £860 000 looking into that one, but they're still 'not sure whose fault it is'. Our advice to the forces of British law and order: if you really want to know, look in the mirror.

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.

REPORTS



Sparce fare for Liverpool workers from Militant's Derek Hatton

Militant cooks the books

Militant-run Liverpool council is struggling to make savings that can help spin out the housekeeping money in its shoestring budget. Militant's recipe for council administration in Liverpool is the same fare as that served up by past Liberal and Labour leaders, only spiced with Militant's special variety of hypocrisy.

For starters there is the traditional non-filling of vacancies, garnished with a proposal for early retirement involving lump sum payments of up to £12 000. It sounds generous, but it saves the council three yearly salaries of £10 000 plus superannuation and insurance payments.

Making a little go a long way is Militant's speciality. The Labour bosses have hinted at 20 early retirements in the administration side of the council's building and maintenance department. Militant calls this rationalising overheads. It really means caving in to Tory measures to make direct labour organisations profitable at the expense of jobs and services.

Militant told the last meeting of the joint shop stewards' committee that it intended to 'muddle through' the rest of the financial year. Liverpool workers will not like what's on the menu.

The council has imposed stringent expenditure guidelines for 'emergencies' only. Emergencies do not include paying the travel expenses of social workers or providing pens for office workers. They do include commissioning a report to discover how much it would cost the council to make all 30 000 workers redundant. The Militant regime has not seen fit to tell the unions the result.

It is not an emergency to move a young woman with a small child into a property in Norris Green with no gas supply when gas is the only source of cooking and heating. The guidelines also cater for getting around paying out the council's much-vaunted decoration allowance. It will be paid sometime. But if the council can hold out long enough there will be less pensioners around to be paid. Still, as Militant leaders say, the council has to slow down expenditure because to let the money run out would be 'irresponsible'.

Add up all this and more in the way of technical adjustments and unexpected windfalls and a reduced payment to superannuation funds and you get about £10m of savings. But this still leaves a large gap to fill. The clever money is on £20m of capitalising revenue expenditure. Militant's leading chef Tony Byrne describes this as 'a bloody disgrace'. But this has not stopped Militant doing it in the past. It's a simple dish for a radical cook. It means paying day-to-day maintenance expenses out of capital funds for new housing stock.

This brings us to the magic figure of £30m. In the wonderful world of local government finance this would slash government penalties, give the council £90m and overcome the budget crisis. Militant serves Kinnock and Liverpool workers pick up the tab.

Alan Harding

Southend slum scandal

For Asian families living in Tower Hamlets, being bombed out of house and home by racist thugs is just the beginning of their problems.

In July Rusmom Ullah, his wife and five children were burned out of their flat on Bethnal Green estate. Racists took the stuffing out of an old settee, doused it with petrol, set light to it and pushed it through a back window in the flat. Today the Ullahs are one of 20 families dumped in bed and breakfast accommodation in Southend by Tower Hamlets Labour council.

The families got no help with removal expenses and two men have lost their jobs because they are no longer in travelling distance of their workplace. Many families are not receiving social security payments and are literally starving. Tim Rathbone of Tower Hamlets homeless families campaign told *tns* that Tower Hamlets council was to blame: 'They refused to accept responsibility for paying rent, nor did they make it clear who should be paying it.' Social security staff demanded to know if the families had 'just got off the boat'.

The families were placed in Southend by Merendase Property Services Ltd, which acts as a servicing agent for a number of hotels. The company receives a 15 per cent commission for placing homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation. One of the Merendase directors, Martin Pharoah, owns five of the hotels managed by the company. Not only does Pharoah receive rent for the families, he gets a commission for 'placing' them in his hotels.

The other company director is Dave Poulten, until December the housing welfare officer for Southend council. While working for the council he was able to pass on homeless families to his friend, Pharoah. Today, Poulten's previous employer is proving very helpful in touting for business for Merendase. Some people have hinted at possible collusion between Tower Hamlets council and Merendale. Despite being offered commission per room, the council insisted on paying commission per head. Why should the parsimonious council want to pay out more?

The dirty dealing in Southend underlines the Labour council's sordid record when it comes to housing homeless Bengali families. The council has let them burn to death in squatted slums and rot in miserable bed and breakfast hovels rather than provide them with the permanent accommodation they need. It is high time East London workers got together to put the corrupt landlords in Patriot Square out on the streets.

Kenan Malik

Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

Come along!

paid ad

Build the Irish Freedom Movement

The publication of the second edition of the Irish Freedom Movement handbook, *The Irish War,* and the success of last week's London demonstration, have confirmed the IFM's status as the leading force in Irish solidarity work in Britain. Now is the time to spread the influence of the IFM and reach new audiences with the message of Irish liberation.

To this end, IFM supporters around the country are organising viewings of the banned BBC film *At the edge of the Union.* We will be discussing the issues raised by the film and working out a strategy for building the IFM in the months ahead. Be there! (Ad from Journalists for Irish Freedom.)

Bradford
Thursday 15 August 7.30pm
Central Library
Liverpool
Thursday 15 August 7.30pm
Braddock Lounge
University Students' Union
Pontefract
Thursday 15 August 8pm
Blackmoor Head
Sheffield
Thursday 15 August 7.30pm
The Mailcoach
West Street
Leeds
Friday 16 August 7.30pm
Trades Club (off Chapeltown Road)
South London
Saturday 17 August 3pm
St Matthews Meeting Place
Brixton
Hackney
Tuesday 20 August 12.30pm
Hackney Town Hall
Wednesday 21 August 7.30pm
Duke of Clarence
Clarence Road E5
North London
Wednesday 21 August 7.30pm
Hampden Community Centre
Ossulton NW1
Brighton
Thursday 22 August 7.30pm
Springfield Hotel
Springfield Road
Glasgow
Thursday 22 August 7.30pm
AUEW Hall
West Regent Street
City Centre
Manchester
Thursday 22 August 7.30pm
Black Lion
Chapel Street
Newham
Thursday 22 August 7.30pm
Theobald Room
Durning Hall
Earlham Grove
Forest Gate

●

Solidarity with black workers in South Africa!
The apartheid regime is starting its fourth week of intensified terror under the cover of the state of emergency. While black resistance to apartheid remains unbowed, blacks in South Africa need the support of British workers.

On Saturday 31 August the Revolutionary Communist Party is organising a day of solidarity action, meetings and street theatre in Manchester. Join our Manchester day of action against apartheid! Ring 01-729 0414 for details, and watch this space!

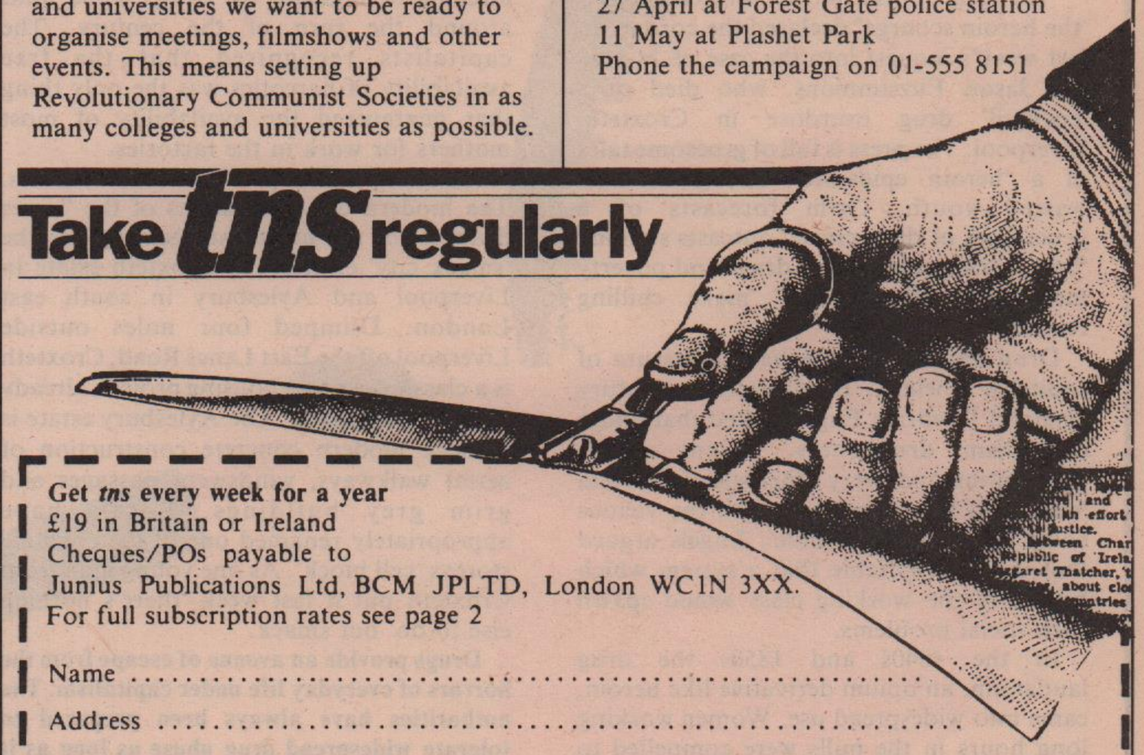
●

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 getting organised, get in touch with Ann Burton on 01-729 0414.

●

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.

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



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Capitalism

HEROIN SCREWS YOU UP.

'We are after you,' declared Thatcher last week, announcing a major crackdown on drug dealers and addicts. In the nineteenth century Britain launched the opium wars to subdue the Chinese people. Today the British establishment has created a panic about heroin abuse to declare war in the inner cities.

'The future of the nation' is threatened by 'the heroin scourge' declared the coroner in last week's inquest into the case of 14-year old Jason Fitzsimmons, who died of a 'cocktail' drug overdose in Croxteth, Liverpool. The press is full of gruesome tales of a 'heroin epidemic' among Britain's wasted youth. Grim forecasts of a generation of drug-crazed outcasts stalking 'bare, torn streets where drugs and poverty meet like vile brothers' make chilling reading.

Drug abuse has long been a feature of capitalist society. In nineteenth century England Friedrich Engels noted that under capitalism drunkeness, opium abuse, prostitution and every other social problem 'ceased to be a vice for which the vicious could be held responsible'. Engels argued that it was inevitable that a system which brutalises the working class would spawn such social problems.

In the 1840s and 1850s the drug laudanum, an opium derivative like heroin, came into widespread use. Women working long hours in the mills were compelled to leave their children at home or in the care of a nurse. The result was the widespread use of narcotics to drug young children and babies to sleep. Druggist shops in the 'lower districts' stocked supplies of 'baby's mixture', 'mother's quietness', 'child's cordial' and 'soothing syrup' — all sweetened preparations of laudanum. The resulting stupefaction of children undoubtedly contributed to high rates of infant mortality. The authorities made no attempt to regulate the drugs trade until around the turn of the century. The capitalists recognised that the free availability of narcotics was the only thing that guaranteed the availability of most mothers for work in the factories.

Heroin is the drug of Thatcher's Britain. The modern day equivalents of the 'lower districts' of the nineteenth century are the 'smack city' estates like Croxteth estate in Liverpool and Aylesbury in south east London. Dumped four miles outside Liverpool off the East Lancs Road, Croxteth is a classic post-war housing project, already nearing dereliction. The Aylesbury estate is a more modern concrete construction of aerial walkways, windswept passages and grim grey buildings. Locals have appropriately renamed one of the concrete storeys 'cell block'. As one young man from Croxteth put it last week 'there's nothing else to do' but smack.

Drugs provide an avenue of escape from the horrors of everyday life under capitalism. The authorities have always been prepared to tolerate widespread drug abuse as long as it remains under their control. So why have they suddenly decided to make an issue out of 'the heroin scourge'?

One thing is certain: it is not because of any dramatic increase in the incidence of drug abuse. The statistics are notoriously unreliable, although a figure of 50 000 addicts is widely quoted. Even official reports, like the recent social services committee report *Misuse of drugs,* are forced to admit that 'the scale of the problem is uncertain'. This gives ample scope for the press to invent figures or to extrapolate from unrepresentative and unreliable surveys.

Anybody reading the papers would think that half the country's youth are on heroin and that thousands are dying. A recent report in the *British Medical Journal* noted that around 100 addicts die every year. Around 100 000 die every year as a result of cigarette smoking and several thousand die from alcoholism. At least 1500 people die every year as a direct result of their work. Yet the press and the politicians do not choose to focus on these killers.

The heroin scare serves two purposes for the ailing capitalist class. It helps to rally the nation in support of traditional family values. And it helps to justify the increased powers which the police, courts and army need if Britain's rulers are to keep a grip on society.

Tory radical Digby Anderson blames the 'heroin epidemic' on the 'lack of discipline and moral relativism in schools'. Tory MP Ivor Stanbrooke blames Britain's 'long-term religious and moral decline' for the drugs plague. Others have pointed to the collapse of family authority, the growth in the number of one-parent families and the decline of 'positive leadership' in schools. Last week the press blamed Jason Fitzsimmons' father, himself a former heroin addict, for not setting a proper example to his family. A spate of stories about baby addicts being born to junkie mothers has fuelled the Tory drive to restore the sanctity of motherhood. The anti-drugs furore is part of the Tories' broader crusade to promote family values and put women in their place.

The drugs scare has served as a pretext for more intensive policing in inner-city areas. It has been used particularly to justify a crackdown on the black ghettos. A recent all-party Commons committee report claimed that the heroin epidemic is 'the most serious peacetime threat to our national well-being'. It called for increased stop and search powers for the police and life sentences for pushers. It urged that the army and air force be brought in to deal with 'the warlike threat from the hard drugs industry'. Committee chair Sir Edward Gardner wanted the government to hang drug dealers.

In the Lozells and Handsworth districts of Birmingham the police have used the drugs scare to raid black pubs and to step up harassment of local youth. In May police staged a major drugs raid on the Villa Cross pub in Lozells. They did a repeat performance at the end of July. Three hundred police surrounded the pub in a paramilitary-style operation and lifted scores of young blacks.

In Brixton the local police consultative group has helped to popularise the idea that the black community is the source of the heroin epidemic. It has approved major anti-drugs raids and called for even harsher measures against the pushers. After a recent raid in Clapham the group complained that the police were too selective in their anti-drugs action. They demanded to know why 'other drug selling centres dealing in hard drugs were left alone' and why there are still 'no-go areas' on 'the front line' of Railton Road. Many local people suspect that the answer is that the police are themselves complicit in the drugs trade.

Heroin war

The present drugs furore heralds a major assault on the inner cities. 'It's war' declared the gutter press in response to the appointment of former anti-terrorist chief Colin Hewitt as head of the new national drugs intelligence unit. The *Mirror* commented that Hewitt was 'the right man for the job' because 'quite literally, he has been in charge of the safety of the realm'. His brief is to use the same terror tactics against working class inner-city areas as he used against the Irish community in his last job. 'He is a man who *knows* where the bodies are buried. And he'll dig them up.' So far the drugs panic has been very successful.

A host of community-based anti-drugs campaigns are calling for stiffer penalties for drug dealers and more police action. The royal family, pop stars and television celebrities have all lent their support. Princess Diana recently backed a two-hour special show called *Drugwatch* which featured 100 celebrities urging viewers to say 'no' to drugs. The Thompson Twins have recorded a 'haunting song' called Doctor Dream which warns of the horrors of drug addiction. In the autumn the BBC plans to turn the popular *Grange Hill* programme into a vehicle for the Tories' anti-drugs campaign.

Respectable soft drugs users have also got in on the act. A new campaign, 'cannabis users against heroin', has the slogan 'A spliff a day keeps the dragons away'. In Edmonton in north London the National Front has organised anti-drugs vigilantes to target black people as the culprits for the heroin epidemic.

Dope pushers are not the real problem. Capitalism creates the conditions that give rise to every social problem that afflicts the working class. Drug addiction is the inevitable result of a system that survives on the degradation of the working class. The only way to rid the working class of drugs and degradation is get rid of the system that deals them out.

Writing more than 100 years ago, Engels dismissed the charitable work of middle class radicals who attempted to save the working class from sin through anti-drink campaigns. He argued that the only way the working class could escape the brutalisation of the capitalist system was by 'cherishing the most glowing hatred, the most unbroken inward rebellion against the bourgeoisie in power'.

Joan Phillips