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the next step
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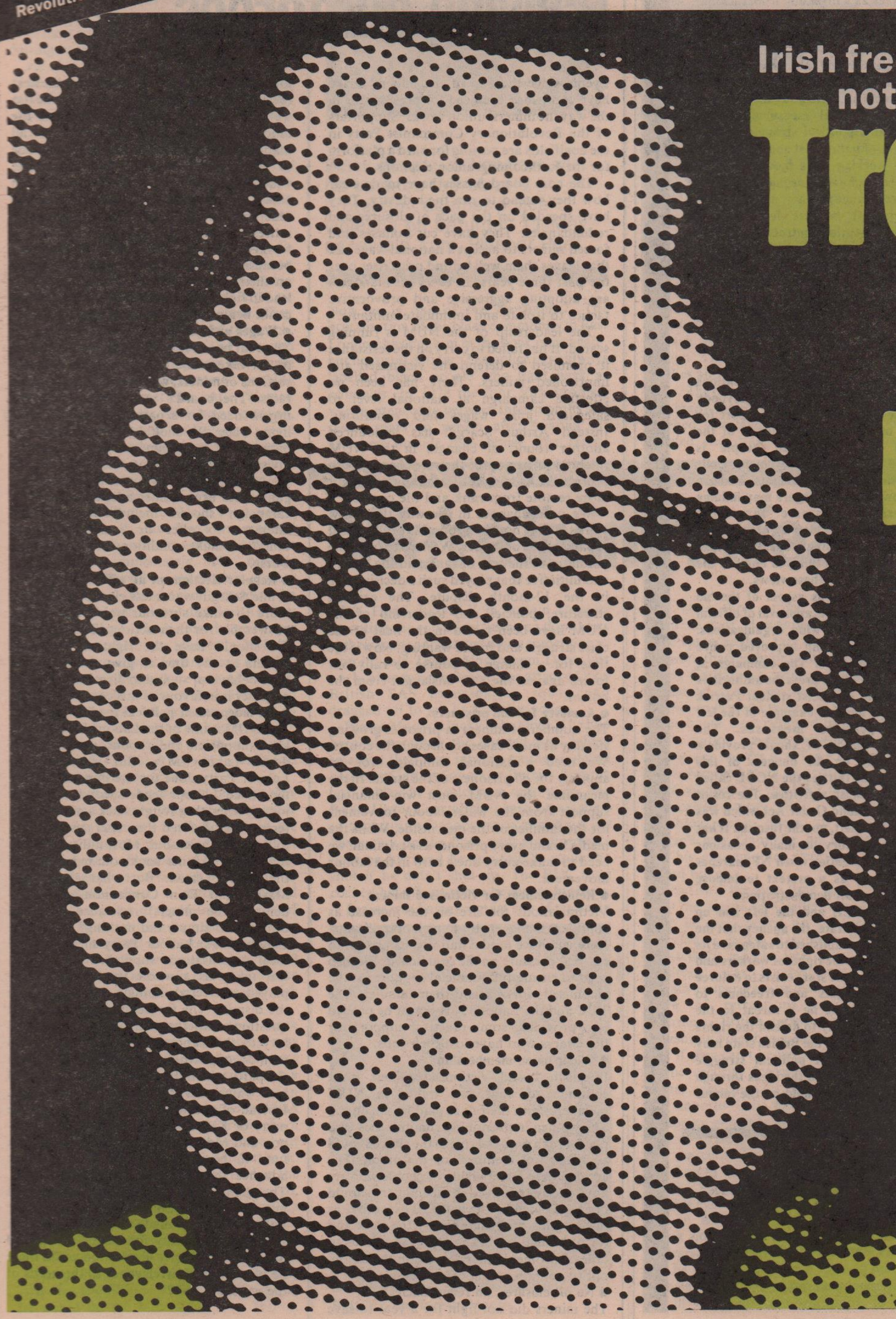

Irish freedom fighters are not British criminals

Troops out now!

"I was only a working class boy from a nationalist ghetto, but it is repression that creates the spirit of freedom. I shall not settle until I achieve the liberation of my country, until Ireland becomes a sovereign independent socialist republic."

Bobby Sands died four years ago this week after 66 days on hunger-strike. He fought as an IRA volunteer in the Irish liberation war and he led the prisoners of war in Long Kesh concentration camp in the campaign for recognition of their political status.

Bobby Sands - and nine more Irish prisoners - were murdered by a British government determined to brand Irish freedom fighters as criminals. Four years on the British authorities are still murdering Irish republicans.

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No platform?

The decision by last weekend's meeting of the National Council for Civil Liberties to give aid to individuals with extreme right-wing views will be widely condemned on the left, even though the NCCL stopped short of agreeing to advise the National Front. Many left wingers hold to the position that racists and fascists should be physically prevented from expressing their views. Some extend this 'no platform' position to include Zionist organisations and right-wing anti-abortionists as well as fascists.

The NCCL exists to promote the freedoms that the establishment proclaims in theory but denies in practice. It holds up the ideals that the spokesmen of the ruling class have been declaring for 200 years and pleads that the politicians and the judges honour their own principles of equality, liberty and justice.

The trouble is that the capitalist system contradicts the principles of its philosophers and politicians. They speak of equality but their profits depend on the exploitation of workers by employers; there can be no equality between exploiter and exploited. They talk about freedom but the prosperity of the British ruling class is based on the denial of any real freedom to millions of people in the Third World and the restriction of rights to women and black people in Britain. They insist on the principles of justice but what sort of fair play do striking miners or Irish freedom fighters get in the courts of the British bosses?

In reality rights in our society are decided by force. The coal board bosses imposed their right to manage the coal industry through a terror campaign by the riot police and the courts. The miners' only defence of their right to work was their union organisation, with some backing from other workers. Here is a fundamental distinction: employers' rights are enforced by the state — workers' rights are backed by collective organisation. The lesson of history is that workers, the unemployed, women, blacks have no rights in our society unless they fight together to enforce them.

The media often promote the concepts of individual freedom to undermine workers' collective organisation. Hence they uphold the 'right' of every individual not to join the closed shop. In the miners' strike they insisted on the 'right to work' of every scab who wanted to break the solidarity of the union. Following the logic of its commitment to the establishment's ideology of civil liberties, NCCL chief Larry Gostin supports the right to opt out of the closed shop. However his support for the right to scab in the miners' strike proved too much for the NCCL's trade union supporters and it was thrown out at the recent meeting.

The same narrow approach to civil liberties leads the NCCL leadership to agree to advise individual racists. The NCCL puts the abstract question of the rights of the ideal citizen before the real problem of defending the democratic rights of people who are oppressed by the system. Scabs and racists have the full weight of the British establishment behind them. They do not need the NCCL's advice on how to sort out the occasional squabble with their pals in the police force.

The left's 'no platform' response to the National Front is no better than the NCCL line. This approach targets the extreme racism of the fascists and proposes physical or bureaucratic measures against them. The problem is that the ordinary racism that extends way beyond the National Front and permeates most of British society, including the labour movement, is left untouched. Most black people have never had any contact with the NF. But they have vast experience of the day-to-day racism of British society, from employers, the police, the courts, schools — and from trade union officials and Labour politicians. Focusing narrowly on the NF serves as a diversion from tackling the wider problems of racism and chauvinism in British society and in the labour movement.

Left wingers should take whatever steps are necessary to defend themselves and other sections of society against fascist attack. But physical measures are no substitute for a political struggle against the influence of nationalist and racist ideas within the working class movement. The NF and other right-wing organisations can achieve a resonance for their policies (such as repatriation) because less extreme versions (immigration controls) are widely accepted. These views must be confronted politically in the course of mobilising workers' action in defence of the rights of black people. This does not mean debating with fascists, but it does mean challenging chauvinist notions — such as support for immigration controls — in the labour movement.

Zionists and anti-abortion organisations which pose no physical threat to anybody are a quite different matter. Support for the state of Israel and its denial of the rights of the Palestinian people is widespread in the labour movement. Calls for restrictions on abortion rights also have a big following. Left wingers may indulge their personal distaste for these reactionary points of view by breaking up meetings or suppressing student societies. Such measures do nothing to combat the growing influence of these views.

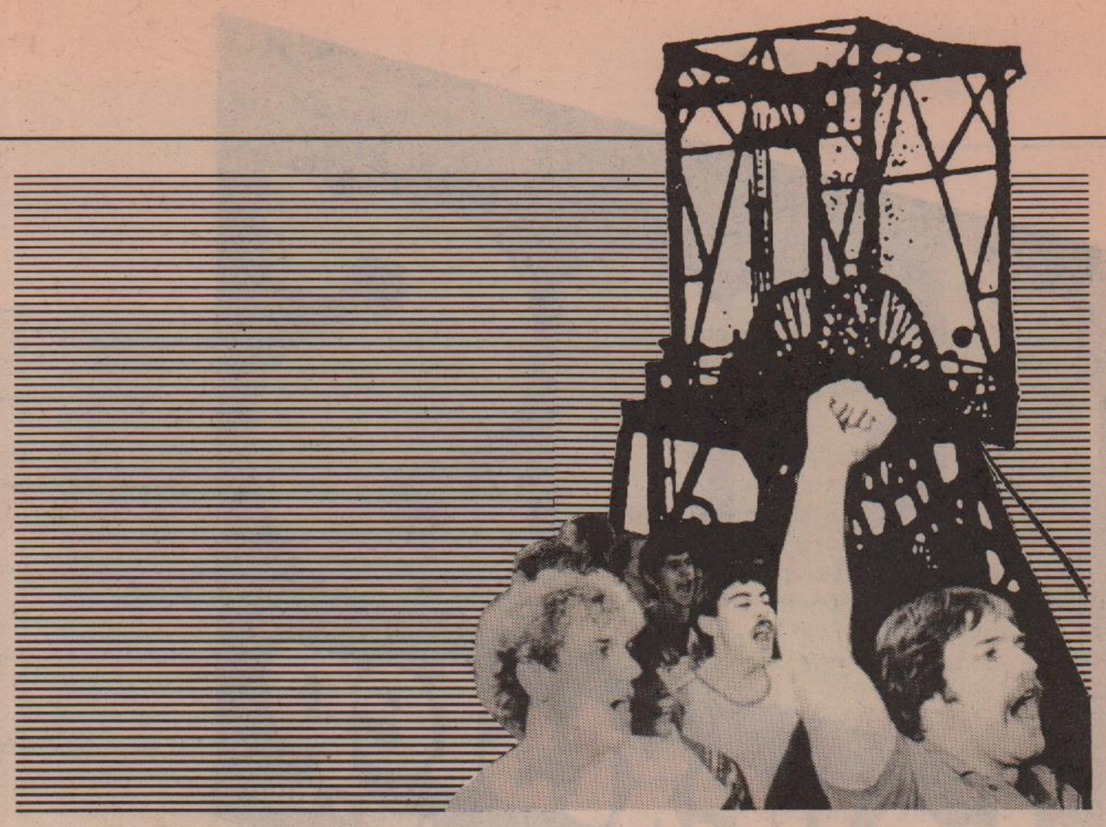
The most dangerous aspect of the 'no platform' position is its approval of official restrictions on right-wing organisations. Left wingers have long approved police bans on NF marches. The campaign at North London Poly to press the authorities into getting rid of fascist student Patrick Harrington is another example of the left inviting repressive measures. The experience of the NCCL should provide a salutory lesson on the dangers of this approach. In the thirties the NCCL called for bans on fascist activities. The result was the 1936 Public Order Act which was used against the left, not the fascists. It has been the same story on many occasions since the late seventies when NF marches have been used as a pretext to impose blanket bans on all demonstrations.

Both the NCCL and the left end up pleading with the state, the agency that the ruling class has established to safeguard its system, to protect the rights of workers and black people. But the state exists to enforce the denial of rights and freedoms to anybody who might be a threat to the system. The only way to defend the rights of those oppressed by the British state is by mobilising the widest political struggle against the system, and the ideas through which it maintains its hold on the labour movement.

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 3 May 1985. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.



Miners' elections

Rallying our forces

Events since the end of the miners' strike have confirmed the need for big changes in the way the miners' union works. Supporters of the Revolutionary Communist Party in the coalfields are putting forward a platform for the forthcoming union elections.

The coal board bosses have made clear how they intend to run the industry. They have speeded up the pace of closures and redundancies. They have cut bonuses and forced miners to accept a national wage rise that leaves them well behind price rises over the past three years. In every pit managers are adopting aggressive and provocative tactics to isolate and intimidate militants.

The leadership of the NUM is running scared. It has failed to carry on the resistance it promised to defend the victimised and imprisoned miners. There has been no effective campaign at national level to safeguard jobs, wages and conditions. Instead Arthur Scargill has announced another round of changes in the NUM rulebook. The aim of the rule changes is to protect the existing leadership by making it more remote from rank and file control.

We need changes in the way the NUM works — but not the proposals put forward to salvage the old order. We need to open the union up to the sort of rank and file energy and initiative that played such a decisive role in the 12-month dispute. The existing structure, policies and leadership of the NUM have been tested in the heat of the class struggle and found wanting. Now is the time for a change of course to rally our forces against the new onslaught from the bosses.

• Amnesty for the prisoners

The number of miners in prison is growing steadily as more cases go through the courts. We need a national campaign for an amnesty for *all* prisoners of the strike. In the meantime the NUM must win financial support from the wider labour movement for the families of the men inside. While the media brand every prisoner as a criminal, we need to make every one a hero in the labour movement.

• Reinstatement for victimised miners

Victimisations too are on the increase as confident managers try to pick off militants. Here again we need a national campaign to put real pressure on the coal board. We also need to ensure full financial support for the victimised workers and their families. The TUC and the Labour Party must be pushed into providing some practical support for the miners who have lost their jobs.

• Wider union membership

Imprisoned and victimised miners must continue to have full rights as NUM members, with their dues paid by the union. The women in the mining communities who played such a crucial role in the strike should be made full members of the union. The admission to membership of people who are not directly employed in the industry should not be decided by the national executive, as in Scargill's proposal, but by the rank and file at branch level. The object should be to unleash women's energies within the union, not to contain and control them.

• No pit closures, no redundancies

The miners did not fight for a year to save jobs only to see them disappear over the next few months. With unemployment on the rise we still need every job and it is up to the union to coordinate resistance against all manpower cutbacks. The first step should be to boycott the colliery review procedures which pave the way towards closures. In cases of exhaustion we should insist on the redeployment of all jobs. Every worker who retires early should be replaced by a young worker. Miners are taking redundancy because they are left to fight the coal board on their own. If the union gave a national lead in fighting job cuts then local resistance could begin to have some effect.

• Wages and conditions

The coal board is fiddling the bonus system to cut take home pay and divide different sections of miners, while it holds down basic rates. The board's manoeuvres show the urgent need for a nationally agreed basic living wage. We should begin to organise a nationwide campaign to get rid of the divisive area agreements and productivity bonuses, and put in for a basic rise that guarantees every miner a living wage. This campaign should include resistance to attempts to alter or extend shifts or otherwise make conditions in the pits even worse.

• Regular elections of all officials

While Scargill wants less elections, we need more to make sure our union leaders are answerable for their actions. The rank and file should have the right to recall its leaders at any time to give an account of their behaviour — and to dismiss them if the majority is in favour of this course of action.

• An independent political fund

The NUM is one of the Labour Party's most loyal supporters and it sponsors more than a dozen Labour MPs. But what has the Labour Party done for the miners? During the strike Labour leaders condemned the miners when they fought back against police terror, and devoted their energies to trying to negotiate a sell-out. Most militants recall that Denis Skinner spoke out in support of the miners' cause. But what about Roy Mason and Don Concannon who condemned the miners' resistance, and the others who simply did nothing? Individual Labour MPs, Labour Party members and local organisations supported the miners. But taken as a whole the Labour Party played an overwhelmingly negative role in the dispute. The forthcoming ballot on the question of whether to maintain the political levy to the Labour Party provides miners with an opportunity to make a break with the party which they have loyally supported but which has failed to support them. Instead of wasting money propping up the party of Kinnock and Hattersley, Concannon and Mason, the miners should set up a fund to be used for political causes that advance the interests of ordinary miners. The plight of the imprisoned and victimised miners is the most immediate example. The Labour Party has made clear that it does not support an amnesty for *all* the disciplined miners. What better illustration could there be of the party's irrelevance to the needs of the working class?

ACTION

Police attack blacks

Racist rampage in Newham

'They think they can treat us like animals, but we're not going to take any more of their shit,' said one battered and bloody victim of a police baton after black youth fought running battles with police in Newham, East London on Saturday. Violence flared when police attacked a demonstration called to protest against racist attacks and police frame-ups.

The Pryce family were marching to vent their anger against the racist thugs who murdered their 16 year old son Eustace last November. Thousands of black youth were marching to vent their hatred on the police who have put seven Asian youths on trial for hitting back at the racists.

As the angry marchers reached Forest Gate police station hundreds of police waded into the crowd to make arrests. Three young blacks were thrown on to the bonnet of a a passing car before being dragged into the police station. Pitched battles broke out between sections of the crowd and the special riot police. The demonstrators refused to budge from outside the police station until all those arrested had been released.

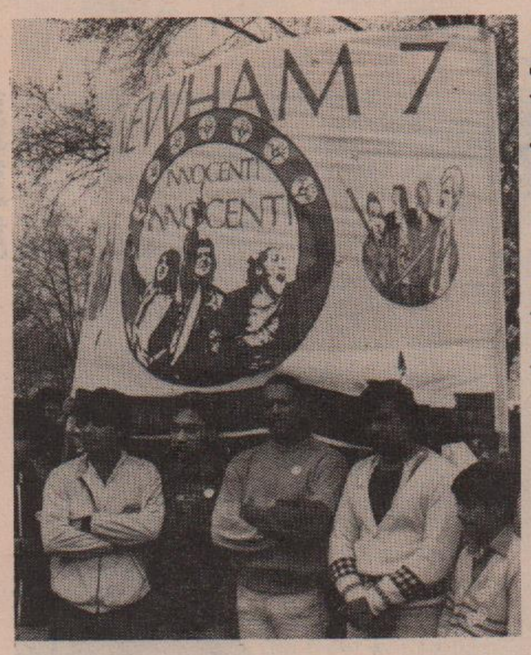
Police cordoned off the area and sporadic fighting continued through the afternoon and into the early evening. Police moved in to disperse the demonstrators just after six o'clock. One youth described the scene. 'They dragged people off the back of the truck, beat them black and blue and arrested them'. Next they began a pincer movement against the crowd: 'They started pushing people down the street like cattle. Women were screaming, kids were being crushed, some people fainted and several were injured.' Coachloads of police moved in to mop up the mess.

Racist violence and police terror are nothing new in East London. They are a brutal fact of life for the black community. Last November Eustace Pryce was stabbed in the back of the neck by a white youth. He died almost immediately. His brother Gerald was arrested by three plain clothes detectives who stood and watched the attack. Gerald was later charged with affray and refused bail. He is now barred from Newham and cannot see his family. Nobody has been charged with his brother's murder. Before Eustace Pryce there was Akthar Ali Baig, stabbed to death in East Ham high street (1980), Michael Ferreira, stabbed to death in Stoke Newington high street (1979), Ishaque Ali, stabbed to death in Tower Hamlets (1978), and Altab Ali, stabbed to death in Spitalfields (1978).

The Newham 7 are on trial because they stood up to the racist thugs who have made life hell for so many black families in the East End. They were arrested last April. It was a Saturday afternoon. An Asian family out shopping was attacked by a gang of youths. Sohail Butt, a partially disabled Asian youth, was dragged into a block of flats and beaten with a hammer. Parvinder Singh and Siegfried D'Souza were set upon in the street. Police arrested the Newham 7 for taking on the racists in a local pub later the same day. They were charged with conspiracy and affray.

Police showtrials against the black community in Newham are nothing new either. In 1982 eight Asian youths were arrested and charged with conspiracy after a series of racist attacks on Asian schoolchildren at Little Ilford school. Asian youths escorting children home from school were attacked by three men who jumped out of a passing car. The youths fought back. Within minutes the police had arrived on the scene and eight of the youths were arrested. One was beaten unconscious. The attackers turned out to be plain clothes police officers. The Newham 8 trial finished in December 1983. Four were found guilty of affray.

Parvez Khan was one of the Newham 8. After his acquittal in 1983 he declared that he would do the same again if he had to.



Photographs by Russell Osborne (reflex)

Black people in Newham will be back on the streets protesting against police violence on Saturday 11 May, assemble 1pm, Plashet Park

Now he is one of the Newham 7. The brutalisation of the black community in East London has put him in the dock once again, but he is still defiant. The police have always labelled black people who fight back as criminals. In 1978 the four Virk brothers were sentenced to between three months and seven years in prison after beating off attackers outside their house. The racists walked free. Every black person who resists can expect the same treatment.

Black youth in East London have had enough. They have seen too many of their families and friends scarred for life by racist thugs. They have been at the receiving end of too many police truncheons. They have watched too many of their friends being arrested and dragged through the courts. They have witnessed one racist murder too many. And they have fought back alone too often. Every worker has an interest in standing up to the racists and the police. Take sides with black youth on 13 May and picket the Old Bailey in solidarity with the Newham 7.

SAS RAIDS IN IRELAND

'We're living in fear'

'IT'S TIME PEOPLE in Britain stopped accepting the sort of things being done to us in their name and started doing something to stop it,' said Teresa Moore from Derry last week, after her son Pearse was attacked by a British SAS assassination squad and dragged off to jail by Loyalist police.

Pearse Moore is lucky to be alive. If he had been alone when the hooded SAS killers smashed their way into his mother-in-law's house in Gartan Square in Derry's Bogside last Friday he would be a dead man. The Royal Ulster Constabulary men who arrived to back up the troops made that clear. As Pearse lay on the floor with a policeman's boot on his head he was told he would be shot if he didn't shut up. The RUC thug cocked his rifle to prove he meant business.

Pearse was having a quiet cup of tea and a chat when three armed SAS men broke down the door. He was beaten up and forced to lie spreadeagled, face down on the floor for more than an hour before being dragged off to Castlereagh interrogation centre in Belfast on a seven-day detention order. His brother-in-law and two more men who lived in the house were detained in Strand Road RUC station under section 11 of the Emergency Powers Act. Ten RUC armoured landrovers and their 50 occupants were on hand to back up the SAS murder squad. Meanwhile more RUC raiders were smashing down doors all over Derry. Pearse's wife Gabrielle, his mother Teresa and his grandmother were also raided by armed police.

Jo Boatman (reflex)

Battling on: Teresa Moore

This isn't the first time that Pearse has seen the inside of Castlereagh. In March 1982 he was locked up on the word of supergrass Jackie Grimley. Pearse was released 19 months later when Grimley's 'evidence' was laughed out of court. Britain's supergrass system is collapsing in a wave of retractions and discredited informers. British terror teams have told Pearse and other beneficiaries of the collapse that if they can't be jailed they will be shot.

The security forces have been stalking Pearse ever since his release. Over the past two months they have stepped up their campaign of harassment. Pearse hasn't been able to go anywhere without being stopped and searched. Six weeks ago he was held for five days in Castlereagh and threatened with death. His mother has been expecting trouble ever since: 'We've been forced to live in fear. We never know what news the next knock on the door is going to bring.'

Pearse Moore was lucky this time. He may not be so lucky next time. The 40 men and women shot dead in Britain's latest shoot-to-kill campaign are testimony to what happens to Irish people when they find themselves alone with the executioners of the SAS and the RUC. The Irish people have lived on luck and courage for long enough. Teresa Moore knows that the the Irish will fight on for their freedom; but does not see why they should fight alone: 'We'll battle on of course, but support from new quarters would strengthen us'. The support that could really strengthen the Irish liberation struggle is that of the British working class. We have the power to unmask the British assassins who pose as the defenders of democracy in Ireland, and to make sure Irish nationalists like Pearse Moore are never left to face the Crown's hired gunmen alone.

This week Dennis Taylor won £60 000 by beating a police cadet lookalike at snooker. We have to take on the real thing without the financial rewards. Rush donations to our fighting fund at BMRCP, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to RCP Association. Special thanks this week to Joe Adams, South London

EVENTS

TGWU election

Stuff their ballot boxes

The Sunday Times last week rewarded Neil Kinnock for giving in to media pressure and calling for a re-run of the leadership election in the Transport and General Workers' Union. The paper reported that Kinnock's election as Labour Party leader was also rigged, by union chiefs who artificially boosted their block votes through paying dues to the party for more members than actually paid the political levy. Will Kinnock now offer himself for re-election?

The Sunday Times scoop has much in common with the revelations of ballot-rigging in the TGWU. The practice of 'over-subscribing' union members to the Labour Party ('discovered' by *The Sunday Times* in last year's report of the unions' certification officer) has been well established and common knowledge in the labour movement for decades. It was a subject of some controversy in the fifties when unions boosted their votes to swing key votes at the Labour Party conference. Similarly all the alleged electoral irregularities in the TGWU have been common practice in the union since its bureaucratic structures were set up by Ernest Bevin. These issues have only been made the focus of investigative journalism and extensive media attention now to discredit union procedures and pave the way for further state interference in union affairs.

The decision by the TGWU executive to organise a re-run of last year's leadership election means giving in to media interference in union affairs. Kinnock — and the elected general secretary Ron Todd — are so desperate to ingratiate themselves with the establishment that a few press smears are sufficient to panic them into jumping through whatever hoops Fleet Street sets in front of them. The aim of the TGWU scandal is not only to force a re-run of the election for general secretary. The press have taken advantage of the whole affair to cast doubt on any procedure of voting at workplaces or union branches. And they have re-opened the discussion of postal ballots as the only truly democratic method of voting. The defensive and apologetic postures of the leaders of the labour movement have helped to ensure that the media campaign has had some impact among workers.

But ballot-rigging is not the problem in the TGWU or any other union — and postal ballots are not the solution. The real problem is the lack of accountability of union leaders like Moss Evans and Ron Todd to their members. They are elected for life and once they are in office ordinary members have no real control over what they do. Virtually every leader of the TGWU in the post-war period has participated in incomes policies with Labour governments in defiance of the wishes of the membership and to their considerable cost. (The only exception is Moss Evans who, though he indicated at the last election he would do such a deal with a Labour government, never got the chance.)

Postal ballots would be even worse than the present system. They would allow voting to take place in the isolation of every worker's own home where the pressures of the employers can be most effectively brought to bear. They would make union leaders even more accountable to the employers and their media than they already are. Instead we need structures that allow the fullest possible debate within the workplace and the union. This is vital to ensure that the active workers can influence those who are more passive. The more union members are aware of all the issues from the point of view of the militants, the stronger the unions will be in resisting the employers' attacks on jobs and wages. Open meetings and discussions provide the only effective way of making sure that union leaders reflect the interests of the rank and file.

Chris Black (reflex)

Ron Todd hopes crawling to Fleet Street will win him sympathy — and votes

When the Tories talk about democratic procedures in the unions they mean the sort of procedures that allow them to put maximum pressure on individuals through the media. This fits into their wider project of weakening the unions' capacity to resist the employers. When we talk about union democracy we mean procedures that allow maximum freedom of discussion among workers together, because this will enable militants to make their fellow workers more aware of the need for collective action against the employers.

Members of the TGWU now face a straight choice in the new elections to be held next month between Ron Todd and George Wright, last year's runner-up. Todd is supposed to be left and Wright is labelled right, but it is difficult to see any difference in their records or their policies. In his years as chief negotiator at the Ford Motor Company, Todd has negotiated thousands of redundancies and steadily deteriorating wages and conditions. Wright has done his bit to encourage company unionism at greenfield sites in Wales through the Welsh Development Agency and the Welsh TUC. Both their election addresses are packed with platitudes about the need for 'vigorous leadership' and gearing up the union to 'meet the challenges of the 1990s'. Neither puts forward any policies for tackling redundancies or stagnating wages, or dealing with methods of intensifying exploitation in 1985.

Whoever wins the election, TGWU members will be left with a union whose bureaucratic procedures stifle rank and file activity and initiative. The current media debate about election procedures and any measures that emerge out of it can only make the union even more undemocratic and its leaders even less accountable. Activists in the TGWU should make no concessions to press interference, but fight to ensure that rank and file members are genuinely involved in union affairs and to make union officials answerable to them. The fight for a union that is in control of its members must go hand in hand with a fight for policies that can really defend members' interests.

Mike Freeman

NUT DISPUTE

Teach the bosses a lesson

'NOBODY THOUGHT WE had it in us to go on strike, but I think we've given them all a shock. We'll carry on until we get what we want.' Laura Taylor spoke to *tns* last Friday at a mass rally in Leeds during the sixth successive week of action organised by the National Union of Teachers. The teachers have given the Tories a real headache, but their anger has been contained by their union leaders and by the efforts of Labour-controlled education authorities to get them back to negotiations at any cost.

The teachers' action began in February when they rejected the government's four per cent pay and arbitration offer. The NUT demanded a 12.4 per cent pay rise and launched a campaign of disruptive action. The Scottish teachers' union, the Educational Institute of Scotland, decided at the same time to step up its strike campaign in pursuit of an independent pay review.

Teachers like Laura Taylor are angry at the steady erosion of jobs and living standards over the past five years. Teachers have taken a cut in real wages of 14 per cent since 1979, more than 30 000 have lost their jobs and another 6000 stand to lose them. But the teachers are even angrier at union leaders and Labour councils who have sabotaged effective action.

● Selective suicide

The NUT leaders began by urging their members to take six sanctions against the employers which would not breach their employment contracts. The object of the exercise was, in NUT leader Fred Jarvis' words, 'to get the employers to negotiate seriously'. Under pressure from its members to step up the action, the union extended the sanctions to include three-day rolling strikes in targeted Tory areas. This has meant that in certain areas some teachers have been on strike for three days every week for three months, while Labour strongholds such as Sheffield have been exempted from the action from the start. Mass meetings of teachers in Sheffield and other areas have voted for the executive to extend the strikes to their schools but have had no response.

The union leaders have tried to limit the action to avoid alienating public opinion. They have been careful to abide by the law and have balloted their members in accordance with the Tory anti-union legislation. 'I don't think my members would take action that meant breaking the law,' NUT president Gordon Green assured the country. But the 94 per cent pro-strike vote in response to Solihull council's legal action against the union summed up the teachers' willingness to take whatever action is necessary to win.

● Labour middle men

For the past few weeks Labour local authority employers have been doing their best to get the teachers to 'see sense' and resume negotiations with management. While other teachers' unions have been willing to go along with this, the NUT leadership has been forced to make gestures of defiance under pressure from its rank and file members. Last Tuesday the NUT used its majority vote on the teachers' panel of the Burnham pay negotiating committee to throw out the employers' offer of talks. Yet by Thursday the Labour bosses had got their way. They sent the heavy mob — a cross-party deputation from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities — to tell the NUT to think again about its decision to boycott negotiations. The union leaders gave in and agreed to preliminary talks before a full meeting of the Burnham committee.

The Tories have made it clear that any increase on the four per cent offer must be funded by local authorities. And Tory and Labour authorities alike have made it clear that they do not have the money to pay out any increase. Teachers must make sure that they do not pay the price for Tory cuts in public spending and Labour's failure to fight them. We cannot afford to let our anger be dissipated by ineffective action and leadership:

Jim Read (reflex)

Teachers' militancy has shocked the Tories

- Selective action offers no way forward. It is divisive and ineffective. Teachers must get together at area and national levels to work out a coordinated plan of action that can hit the employers where it hurts.
- Teachers have no interest in doing local deals with Labour councils. They want to play the role of arbitrators and get us back to work with the minimum disruption. And we have nothing to gain from sitting round a negotiating table with the employers until they give us what we want.
- A pay review for Scottish teachers which puts pay levels beyond teachers' control is not worth fighting for, as teachers in England and Wales can testify. No third party is better qualified than the teachers themselves to decide what wages they need.
- Union leaders must be held accountable to their members in any negotiations with management. All discussions must be made public and any decisions taken must be taken by the rank and file.

Helen Swift

DEBATING ABORTION

Embryo rights vs human rights

'DO EMBRYOS HAVE RIGHTS?' was the question debated by leading representatives of the anti-abortion lobby and members of the Revolutionary Communist Party at a packed public meeting in London last week. The speakers took up the range of issues raised by Enoch Powell's Bill to restrict experiments on embryos which is expected to fall in parliament this week.

'Yes', said gynaecologist Ron Norris of the World Federation of Doctors Who Respect Human Life. He knew because he was once an embryo. Emphasising the continuity between the fertilised egg, an embryo, a baby and an adult person, Dr Norris insisted that 'my rights began when I began, at my conception'.

'No', replied a general practitioner speaking on behalf of the RCP. In his experience as a doctor, he said that 'the real problems of human life were of infant mortality in the Third World and suffering and death from preventable diseases in the West'. He accused the 'pro-life' doctors of 'hypocrisy' in their 'narrow preoccupation with opposing abortion'.

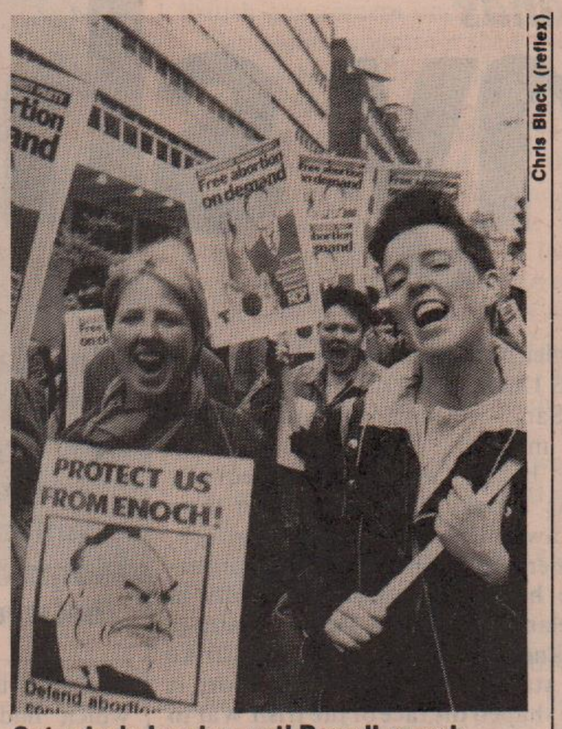
He rejected the notion that embryos were human beings with rights. What distinguished human life was its social character, 'something that could only really begin to develop after birth'. The embryo had a potential to develop into a human being, but that potential could only be fully realised in the development of the individual in society. 'By proclaiming a biological definition of human life', he concluded, 'the moralists seek to subordinate society to nature.'

'Communists', said the RCP doctor, 'stand for the fullest development of the potential of human beings in society — in face of both natural and social barriers.' He emphasised how medical science had developed its capacity to relieve suffering through 'a constant battle against ignorance, superstition and prejudice'. The moral guardians of the existing order had constantly striven to preserve the mystification of the workings of the human body, just as they had tried to present slavery, serfdom and the degradation of women as natural and inevitable. For doctors to support Powell's attempts to stir up traditional prejudices was 'to deny the progressive character of medical science and its capacity to improve the quality of human life'.

Debbie Sanders of Women for Life supported embryo rights. She spoke from her experience as a woman and made clear that she was a feminist who disagreed with Powell on every issue except embryo experimentation. She was opposed to embryo experiments for two reasons. First she did not trust the 'male medical profession'. Second she felt that women's bodies had been 'treated for centuries as somebody else's property', so they should not now 'inflict those power relations on embryos'. She raised the spectre of women's bodies and embryos being used 'as a laboratory' to investigate the possibilities of producing 'a master race'. Interfering with embryos would lead to discrimination against female babies, blacks and the disabled who would be preferentially aborted.

For the RCP Kate Marshall, author of *Real Freedom* and the forthcoming pamphlet *Moral panics and Victorian values,* focused on the question of rights. She emphasised that 'giving rights to embryos meant denying rights to women'. By elevating the status of the embryo the Powell Bill and its supporters were restricting women's right to prevent an embryo from implanting by contraceptive techniques, or to have it removed at any stage by abortion. This meant 'degrading women by subordinating them to their reproductive functions and restricting their capacity to participate in the wider life of society'.

Kate Marshall also took issue with the way many people — including many feminists — equate the right to have a baby with the right not to have a baby. 'In our society', she said, 'there is no need to fight for the right to have a baby — it is positively encouraged.' Women who asserted that right were 'pushing at an open door'. All the pressures are on people to get married and have a family. It is the right *not* to have a baby that is under attack and has to be defended. Abortions are difficult to get and contraceptive rights are being restricted. Many women have opposed the Powell Bill on the grounds that it will restrict research and treatment of infertility. But the authorities are not out to stop infertile couples from conceiving. Their object is to restrict contraception and abortion and ensure that the new reproductive technology (test-tube babies, etc) is regulated in such a way as to promote rather than undermine family life.



Chris Black (reflex)

Saturday's London anti-Powell march

The discussion continued with questions and comments from the floor for more than an hour after the platform speeches. Supporters of embryo rights asserted the human status of the embryo and questioned the RCP's emphasis on the social character of human beings. Others echoed Debbie Sanders' concern about the abuses of medical science in the same way that nuclear technology had been perverted. Several opponents of embryo rights insisted that the obstacles to the use of science and technology to enrich human society arose from the existing system, and the way it limited the use of new developments to its narrow quest for profits. The problem was not the technology but the control of society.

Others emphasised the wider context of the embryo rights debate in the drive to promote the family and family values, as a means of forcing women to do more work in the home and tightening social controls over the whole working class.

The final vote registered 17 in favour of embryo rights and 148 against, with one abstention. The RCP is holding a special conference in London on some of the wider issues raised by the new morality and its consequences for women and the working class movement. See page 11 for details.

Fiona Foster

ANTI-DEPORTATION CAMPAIGN

Stand with Muhammad Idrish

Russell Osborne (reflex)

MUHAMMAD IDRISH HAS one last appeal standing between him and deportation. Last week he decided to ask Birmingham Labour Party to give up a council seat, so he can stand in a by-election on a 'No more deportations' platform. An all-out campaign to get him elected could still force the Home Office to back down.

'I don't want people to feel sorry for me. I don't even talk about defeat.' Muhammad was in an optimistic mood when he spoke to *tns* last week about his fight to stay in Britain. Muhammad came to Britain in 1976 to study at Bristol polytechnic. He got married three years later, and applied for permission to stay for good. He was ordered to leave after his marriage broke down in December 1981. He has lost every stage of his legal appeal.

Muhammad has also appealed to labour movement organisations to take up his case. In 1983 he got his union Nalgo to pass a resolution supporting the campaign. This committed the union to organise a national demonstration, organise industrial action within Nalgo and to ask other unions in transport and customs not to handle the case if it came to the crunch. So far Nalgo has only held the march.

Muhammad is convinced that a well-organised election campaign is the best opportunity yet to put the Home Office on the spot and stop the deportation:

'We are going to ask Labour Party councillors, either county or city, to stand down to force a by-election. If they do then I would stand as an independent. I would hope that the Labour Party would not stand against me, but I can't be sure of that. We had a heated debate about this at our last campaign meeting — some of the Labour Party members weren't too happy. I think it's a good idea.'

At last Wednesday's regular campaign meeting a supporter suggested that Muhammad stand for the council. Barry Lovejoy, the campaign secretary, chair of Ladywood Labour Party and a *Socialist Action* supporter, denounced the idea as 'stunt-type politics'. Bob Smith, the campaign treasurer and Socialist League member tried to move 'next business' arguing that he had better things to do than listen to such nonsense. Lovejoy added that no elections were scheduled so that was that. When somebody suggested that we approach a councillor to stand down Lovejoy retorted that the only councillors likely to stand down were left wingers — so what was the point? Smith scoffed at the idea as 'infantile leftism'. Another entrist grouping, Workers' Power, didn't know whether to stand by the Labour Party or stand by Muhammad so it abstained.

The left's arguments expose its narrow preoccupation with securing positions and power for the Labour Party. Smith and Lovejoy put their loyalty to Labour before the needs of black people like Muhammad under attack from the state. In the same week Smith had written in *Socialist Action* that the labour movement had to make 'the political price too high' for the government to deport Muhammad. Ever since Muhammad's campaign took off three years ago left-wing papers like *Socialist Action* have declared their opposition to the immigration laws. Now that they have a real opportunity to make this mean something their only concern is that they do not damage the Labour Party.

Two years ago another immigrant worker facing deportation, Bakhtaura Singh, stood in Labour MP Clare Short's Ladywood constituency in the general election. He won enough votes to force the Home Office to reverse his deportation order. Black workers facing deportation should not have to ask the Labour Party for support — it should be given. Labour supporters in Birmingham should make up their minds to put defending black workers first, and support Muhammad's campaign.

Pat Hughes

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

CATTLE DRIVING AT CHELSEA

Mr Ken Bates, loudmouthed chair of Chelsea football club, has taken a lot of stick for erecting an electric fence to keep what he calls the 'scum' elements among his supporters off the pitch. Everybody agreed that Bates could not use electrified farm fencing to treat football hooligans 'like cattle'. But millionaire farmer Bates was only taking his lead from the politicians and policemen who criticised his scheme. They *all* make a profession out of treating young working class people like cattle.

Greater Manchester police commander James Anderton, chair of the police chiefs' committee on football hooliganism, told Bates that young fans were 'not cattle or prisoners of war'. Anderton knows a cow or a POW when he sees one. During the miners' strike he sent thousands of his mounted police into north Yorkshire to hunt teenage miners across fields in the best tradition of the wild west cattle round-up.

Tory sports minister Neil MacFarlane attacked the Chelsea fence as 'inhumane'. His government prefers the humane alternative of the 'short, sharp shock' centres, where youth who fall foul of the law are put through a punishment programme that would make the animal rights lobby squeal if it was tried on cows. The Tories' Scottish detention centre has killed two 16 year old members of the 'scum' brigade in the last two months, so who needs electric fences?

The Labour GLC led the left's attack on Bates, threatening to ban Chelsea matches and insisting that 'electrocuting people is not the way to combat football hooliganism'. Counting lamp posts is not the way to combat youth unemployment either, but that's what some 16 year olds do on the factory farm of the Youth Training Scheme. And the concerned councillors at the GLC are willing to employ YTS labour — youth whose £25 a week drudgery bears a striking resemblance to that of cattle chained up and fed on silage.

There are two things you can do with cattle — slaughter them or milk them. Sometimes the British establishment needs to slaughter youth it sends to fight its wars in the South Atlantic and Northern Ireland. At other times it wants to milk youth for all the propaganda they are worth, blaming them for the breakdown of capitalism. Young hooligans, teenage drug addicts and schoolgirl mothers have been scapegoated as the cause of the ills of British society. The Tories promote cracking down on juvenile delinquents as the way to solve all of the problems their system has caused.

Ken Bates and his electric fence will not halt the decline of the British way of life. As one gardener said last week, such devices are useful 'to keep pigeons off my peas and also to dissuade mice from digging up my newly sown broad beans', but even a Chelsea fan could work out how to deactivate it in five minutes. The important point is the law and order propaganda behind the fence, not the electric shock on top of it. Yet if Margaret Thatcher digs a hole, she can rely on the left to jump into it. While the Communist Party's *Marxism Today* seeks an alternative strategy for dealing with 'the goal end hard cases', Neil Kinnock backs the police drive against the hooligans. He reckons the yobs 'get a zing out of all this damned nonsense'. He has so far made no comment on the 'zing' factor in Bates' electric fence. Perhaps he is trying to work out how he can sit on it.

The Irish War after Bobby Sands

'Too many shooting

In May 1981 Margaret Thatcher said the hung which claimed the lives of Bobby Sands and ni the republican movement's 'last card'. Instead proved to be her last card, when the IRA bomb conference at Brighton to avenge the hunger-st impact of the hunger-strike has brought the co between the Irish people and the British state i

In a pamphlet published last week, top Tory adviser TE Utley claims that 'the very name of Bobby Sands will soon be expunged from the Irish memory; others have died on hunger-strike before, and they are equally forgotten'. As Britain's rulers cower in their bunkers and await the next republican attack, their spokesmen loudly insist that the hunger-strikers have had little impact on events in Northern Ireland. In reality Utley, Thatcher and the rest know that the 1981 hunger-strike for political status and the mass support it received have shaped the face of the Irish War in the eighties.

The hunger-strike which Bobby Sands began on 1 March 1981 was the culmination of the republican prisoners' fight for political status. The issue at stake was straightforward and fundamental. Were jailed members of the Irish Republican Army and Irish National Liberation Army criminals engaged in a campaign of murder and terrorism? Or were they freedom fighters waging a war of liberation against an occupying foreign power? The question could just as easily have been put as 'which side are you on in the Irish War?'

Unwilling to concede that their forces were 'foreign' or 'occupying' in part of the 'United Kingdom', the British authorities insisted that republicans were not political prisoners. 'There is no such thing as political murder,' decreed Thatcher when Sands first refused food. When he died 66 days later, Thatcher would only repeat that 'crime is crime'.

To Irish people, Thatcher was the murderer who had forced 10 of their young men to their deaths. They recognised the hunger-strikers as prisoners of war, jailed for defending their communities against the British Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary. They knew why Bobby Sands had joined the IRA to take up arms against the British forces: 'I had seen too many homes wrecked, fathers and sons arrested, friends murdered. Too many shootings and blood — most of it our own people's.'

Thousands of ordinary Irish men and women had seen too many British shootings and too much Irish blood to believe London's lies. They took to the streets in support of the hunger-strikers' right to political status. Youth rioted after every death. Women blocked streets with demonstrations of bin-lid banging. When Bobby Sands stood for parliament in April, more than 30 000 voters elected him MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. When he died, 100 000 followed his funeral. The graffiti, the wall murals and the ballads which add up to the voice of the nationalist community united behind one message: Irish freedom fighters are not British criminals.

The hunger-strike ended in October without achieving its demands. But the wave of support for the hunger-strikers had destroyed Westminster's attempts to drive a wedge between the republican movement and the nationalist working class. Anti-republican Catholic politicians whom Britain had sponsored were discredited by their opposition to the hunger-strike. West Belfast MP Gerry Fitt had made a career out of condemning the IRA and posing as the true friend of the Irish people. Now his constituents chanted 'Gerry Fitt is a Brit' and tried to burn down his house. Catholic church leaders who regaled their congregations with weekly warnings against the 'ungodly' IRA lost face through their efforts to persuade the hunger-strikers to give up on Britain's terms. When Bobby Sands died, the Irish people's last illusions in British-built and British-backed institutions died with him.

The British authorities had always combined selective terror against republican supporters with political attempts to win over the hearts and minds of less committed nationalists. The broad support for the hunger-strike undermined this traditional British strategy. Westminster tried one last spin of the old political initiatives wheel, setting up an 'Ulster' Assembly to prove to the world that the regime which had murdered 10 young republicans could still grant democracy to the Irish people.

The Assembly came unstuck from the start, when the republican movement stood candidates on an abstentionist platform and won five seats. This display of public support for republican 'men of violence' was the last straw for the British authorities. There was to be no more British diplomacy in Northern Ireland. The hunger-strike and the Assembly elections had proved that the Irish could not be reconciled to British rule through political persuasion. They would have to be forced to accept it through military repression. Over the last four years, the Thatcher government has tried to hammer the Irish opposition into the ground.

New-look British terror

The terror Thatcher has brought to Ireland since the hunger-strike matches the strategy Britain pursued during the early years of the war. Between 1969 and 1972, the Army had to adopt the classic methods of colonial rule to keep a grip on Northern Ireland. Hundreds of nationalists were rounded up and interned without trial in concentration camps. Others, like the 14 shot dead on Bloody Sunday in 1972, were gunned down in the streets. By the mid-seventies Britain had managed to construct a more subtle, if no less brutal, form of colonial rule. But the subtleties of British strategy could only be maintained while the nationalist opposition was in hand.

The increased pressure on Britain since the hunger-strike has prompted a return to the open coercion of the early years. The lesson of the popular support for the hunger-strikers has been grasped by all significant sections of the British ruling class. Astute commentators like TE Utley of *The Daily Telegraph* appreciate that the nationalist community is solidly against British rule.

Last year Utley noted that, 'Every device which the British government has used as a substitute for Internment has attracted as much hostility from the nationalist side as Internment itself. This applies conspicuously to the use of supergrasses and the deployment of the SAS.' The logic of Utley's case is clear: if every British stratagem is equally unwelcome to the nationalists, then Britain should forget about public relations exercises and go for the option which best guarantees British control. In his latest pamphlet, Utley puts the case for ignoring nationalist opinion and concentrating on security even more pointedly, 'A dead martyr is rather less dangerous than a live terrorist'. British imperialists have taken his point and emphasised the policy of out and out repression.

The Tories have announced their intentions of going further than Bloody Sunday. Despite the slaughter of Bloody Sunday in 1972, Tory home secretary Reginald Maudling admitted that the IRA would 'not be defeated, not completely eliminated, but would have their violence reduced to an acceptable level'. Current Tory Northern Ireland secretary Douglas Hurd accepts no such limits to British violence. He has declared that the government's aim is 'no longer to contain terrorism, or to achieve an acceptable level of terrorist violence, but to eradicate it'. Thatcher may not have ordered a mass killing on the Maudling scale. But her assassins have carried out a shoot-to-kill campaign which h Irish lives since Bobby

Shooting to kill is Imperialist armies fig ular liberation moven anything else. But the l both more systematic, previous British ass Northern Ireland shoo more than a policy. institution. The recent SAS commander to r confirmed the gove execution tactics. Th Ulster Constabulary with a division betwe force members and th — the RUC's Division and the Army's SAS.

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Enemy within

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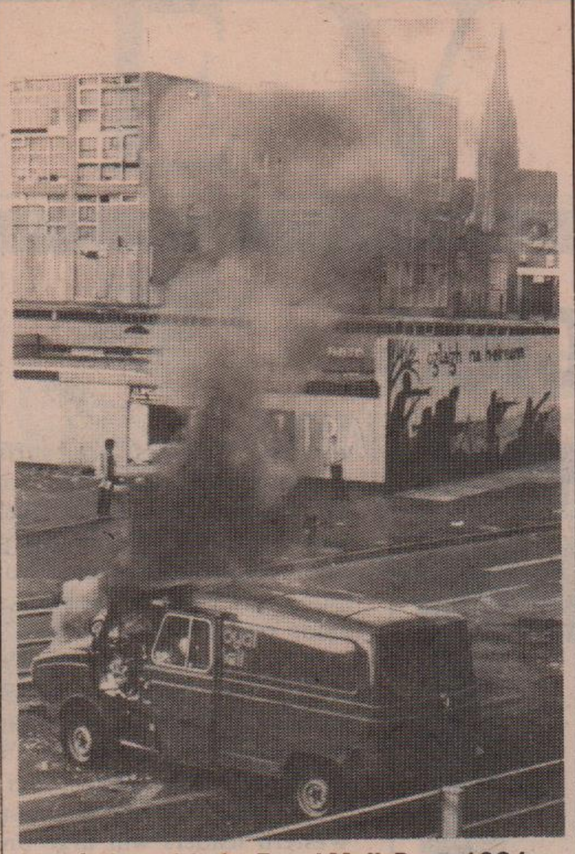


Jo Boatman (reflex)

Interfering with the Royal Mail: Derry, 1984

The harsh experience of the hunger-strike forced the nationalist community at large to identify itself as 500 000 Irish people held captive by the British state — literally a foreign 'enemy within'. Their acknowledgement of their alien status has made the armed defence of nationalist areas against British murder gangs more necessary and more popular than ever. The IRA's successes in striking back at the Crown forces, like the shoot-outs which nailed two SAS men last year, are celebrated by the nationalist community.

When the IRA mortar attack on Newry police station killed nine RUC men in February, British commentators were horrified to find nationalist bars in the area opening late to drink to the health of the mortar squad, while nationalist children jeered police at the RUC barracks next morning. Their horror was based on the realisation that thousands of 'UK' citizens welcomed such audacious attacks on the institutions of the British state. The British establishment's traditional aptitude for talking its opponents at home into submission is useless in the face of a resolute community which agrees with the IRA statement that 'the language of force is the only language the British government understands'.

Nationalist support for the armed defenders of their communities is reflected in big turn-outs for the funerals and commemorations of murdered republicans. Over the Easter week-end nationalists sealed off the village of Carrickmore in County Tyrone, parking their cars across approach roads to allow 16 uniformed IRA volunteers to lead a march to the cemetery and fire a salute over the graves of fallen republicans. Sometimes nationalists are even too pleased to see the IRA for their own good. Last week the SAS raided known republican homes in the Bogside area of Derry. Because the British assassins were masked, local people assumed they were republican volunteers and turned a blind eye. When the RUC arrived to back the troops up the Bogsiders realised their mistake and started raising hell.

Votes for 'men of violence'

The nationalist community has used elections to the Assembly and to Westminster to express its support for the republican struggle. The republican candidates who have fared best at the polls are those most closely associated with the war against Britain. Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein MP for West Belfast, was part of an IRA delegation which held talks with the Tory government in 1972, and was imprisoned in 1973 as a leading figure in the Belfast IRA. Sinn Fein Assemblyman Martin McGuinness joined Adams on the 1972 delegation representing the IRA in Derry. Republican Assembly representative and Euro-election candidate Danny Morrison has become famous for stating the republican movement will 'go forward with an armalite in one hand and a ballot box in the other'. But the hand which feeds the needs of the nationalist community is the one carrying the armalite rifle to ward off British aggressors.

Within Northern Ireland, the hunger-strikers won the battle to be recognised as political prisoners. Nobody is in any doubt why they were imprisoned or why there are still hundreds of Irish men and women under British lock and key. Yet in Britain the government managed to survive the hunger-strike by maintaining public support for the notion that Irish republicans are criminals. Here, the hunger-strike was a missed opportunity to expose the establishment's lies about the Irish War.

Britain — missed opportunities

British people who were prepared to fight for political status were isolated by the official labour movement's support for the Tories against Bobby Sands and his comrades. Labour Party leaders backed Thatcher in every parliamentary 'debate'. TUC officials took action against trade unionists who tried to organise support for the hunger-strikers. And *not one* left-wing Labour MP was prepared to stand up and be counted as a supporter of political status. Those who did express sympathy with the hunger-strikers avoided the question of the war, making humanitarian appeals for mercy and claiming the struggle was a technical argument about prison conditions. But when the Tories asked 'whose side are you on?' their equivocal opposition crumbled.

The Irish people learnt the lesson of the hunger-strike well, 'the language of force is the only language the British government understands'. We have to do the same. We need a movement in support of Irish freedom which recognises what the real issues are instead of evading them. We need to convince people that there is a war on in Ireland, there are two sides involved, and you have to take one. Are you on the side of the Irish people or the British authorities? Bobby Sands died waiting for the British working class to come up with the right answer to that question. Many more Irish men and women have died since in a hail of British bullets. The open character of the war since the hunger-strike gives us the chance to convince people in Britain of what is happening in Ireland — but only if we begin from a position of resolute support for the liberation struggle. Anything less would be a gift to Utley and Thatcher, and an insult to the memory of Irish freedom fighters like Bobby Sands.

Mick Hume

too much blood'

Chris Black (reflex)

Volunteers, one pace forward: IRA men march in memory of Ireland's dead

INTERNATIONAL

The Bonn summit

No economic miracles

Unemployment is rising and living standards falling throughout the Western world — and they call this the recovery! The leaders of the West meeting in Bonn this week have got to square their rhetoric with some hard realities.

For the past year Western leaders like Reagan and Thatcher have been boasting that the recession is over and that their economies are on the road to recovery. Their claims were not entirely without foundation. Since 1983 the pace of disintegration of the world economy has slowed. In 1984, after a decade of slump, there was a slight expansion in the world economy. In particular the USA achieved a respectable 6.8 per cent growth rate.

By the end of last year leading economists and politicians were feeling pleased with themselves. In December the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development — the host to the Bonn summit — took the optimistic view that 'the overall prospects for output and inflation now appear as good as, or better than, at any time since the watershed year of 1973'.

Was the world about to take off into another boom? We have a more realistic assessment of the prospects for the capitalist system. Two years of growth do not mean that the crisis is over. The present recession, like earlier periods of depression, goes through cyclical upswings and downswings. Since 1973 there have been a series of ups and downs in the course of the recession. But there is no mistaking the overall downward slide. In Britain, for example, last year manufacturing output was more than 10 per cent below its 1979 level.

The global recovery of the last two years was primarily due to the upswing in the US economy. The increase in American economic activity stimulated production in other parts of the world. It has been estimated that exports to the USA accounted for 22 per cent of the overall growth in West Germany and for 13 per cent of the growth in Britain. *The Daily Telegraph* noted last week that 'for the last two years, most countries have been enjoying a burst of growth thanks in large part to the willingness of Americans to buy foreign goods as if there was no tomorrow'.

Now tomorrow has come. The US economy has started to slow down and it can no longer afford to carry its huge $123 billion trade deficit. The much-vaunted US upturn was based on a massive injection of credit into the economy. Last year Reagan's government had a record $200 billion budget deficit. This year the USA is set to become the world's largest debtor nation. The American establishment fears the consequences of carrying such large deficits. Yet without further credit the US economy is in danger of grinding to a halt. The slowdown in the USA will limit the recovery prospects for the rest of the world. Only Japan has any potential for steady growth — and that is only for as long as the other Western powers are prepared to tolerate the flood of Japanese goods on to their home markets. These are the problems that the Western leaders are trying to sort out behind all the pomp and ceremony at this week's summit. No wonder things are tense backstage at Bonn.

The agenda

The Bonn summit aims to reconcile the irreconcilable differences between the three main blocs of the USA, Europe and Japan. The USA wants to cut down on its imports from Europe and Japan. It has already threatened retaliation against Japan unless it takes some steps to stop flooding the US market with cheap high-tech products.

Washington also wants European countries to reflate their economies to compensate for the slowdown in the USA. In other words, the USA wants Europe to fall further into debt so that American goods can find a growing market and help cut back its trade deficit.

'Work for all': militant European workers bar the way to capitalist recovery

Europe has not yet had the benefit of a US-style upturn. The rulers of West Germany, France and Britain are not yet ready to reflate their economies because they know this would have no beneficial effect on their ailing industries. It would simply raise demand for foreign imports. Governments in Europe are hoping for the opposite. Their dream is that tight money policies will encourage industrial recovery and lead to an increase in their overseas exports. But these hopes have little basis in reality.

The Japanese representatives in Bonn want to keep things more or less as they are. Last year Japan became the top exporter of manufactured goods and it runs a trade surplus in its dealings with virtually every Western country. It is in a good position to take advantage of its economic strength and grow at the expense of its competitors, particularly the USA. The only fear in Tokyo is that the Western powers might try to block Japan's menacing progress by closing their markets to Japanese goods and investment.

The conflicts among the Western power blocs cannot be resolved at the negotiating table. The best that the leaders of the West can hope for is that things do not get out of hand and that they can put together some short-term deal on trade. There is general agreement that the upturn is about to end and that some time in 1986 a new phase of stagnation will set in. The object of the Bonn summit is to prevent an eruption of rivalries which could only accelerate economic decline and make all the problems even worse.

Common purpose

Despite all their conflicts the Western powers are at one in their approach to the working class. One of the main themes to emerge in the background discussions leading up to the Bonn summit is the necessity to make the working class pay for the capitalist crisis. All the economic experts agree on the urgent need to tackle the 'rigidities' of the European labour market that are held to be one of the biggest barriers to recovery. By 'rigidities' they mean the resistance to their programmes of cuts and redundancies from the organisations of the working class.

According to the wisdom of the economic experts, the reason why Europe has fared relatively badly during the current upturn is because workers in Europe still have trade unions. Workers are sufficiently well organised to prevent the bosses reducing living standards to the level required to restore profits. Reagan has put particular emphasis on urging his European allies to follow his ruthless lead in crushing trade union resistance to austerity.

In fact Thatcher and Mitterrand and Kohl are no less ruthless than Reagan. Their problem is that they are up against labour movements that are better organised and more militant than their American counterparts. At the Bonn summit all the Western leaders will urge one another on into battle against the working class. Although they are bitter rivals over trade and investment, when it comes to the problem of labour they speak the same language. Their unity as exploiters will sustain the leaders of the Western world as they hide their antagonisms in smiles for the photographers and diplomatic communiques for the press.

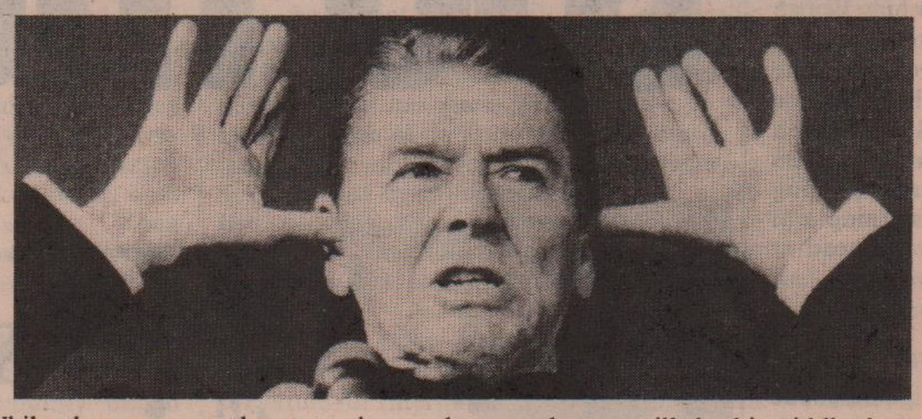
The real significance of the Bonn summit is as another call to arms in the international class war. The fact that this conference is unable to solve the crisis can only strengthen the resolve of the participants to find a temporary respite at the expense of the working class. The year ahead will bring further economic stagnation and a further build up in the offensive against the working class.

The Bonn debacle should also strengthen the determination of workers around the world. The working class holds the key to the future of capitalism. If workers accept what the bosses have in store for them — higher unemployment, growing poverty, more restrictions on our rights and freedoms — then the system may recover its unstable momentum for a while. But if workers refuse to accept what the thieves and charlatans at Bonn have to offer, then we can force them to pay the price for the decay of their rotten system.

Frank Richards

USA

Reagan's marbles



IN THE LAST fortnight a series of public relations gaffes and policy setbacks in Washington have led many commentators to question the judgement and even the health of the president. First came the furore over the planned visit to Bitburg with its Waffen SS graves; then the congress defeat on aid to the contras in Nicaragua; and now the prospect of being forced to compromise on his budget reduction package. But the problem goes further than Reagan's state of mind or the capacities of his advisers. Like Thatcher's banana skins, Reagan's proneness to stepping on marbles reflects the precariousness of establishment power politics.

The object of Reagan's visit to the German military cemetery at Bitburg was to promote the alliance between the USA and Germany on the fortieth anniversary of the end of their last war with each other. Germany's Chancellor Kohl was mortified at his exclusion from last year's D-Day commemorations. He was keen to take advantage of VE Day to affirm Germany's commitment to the Western alliance. The trouble was that there were 47 SS graves in among the conscript dead.

The leaders of the Western nations have never let the memory of the tens of millions of people they killed in the war interfere with their conduct of business as usual. But many of their victims find it harder to forget. Reagan's trip to Bitburg raised a storm of protest from American Jews and ex-servicemen, which his clumsy responses only exacerbated. While they prepare the new alliances for World War Three the rulers of the West still have to take account of the legacy of their last engagement.

Last week congress threw out Reagan's attempt to provide $14m in state aid to the right-wing contra guerrillas in Nicaragua, who he describes as 'the moral equal of our founding fathers'. Reagan's top official George Shultz drew a parallel between the popular Sandinista government in Nicaragua and the 'communists' against whom the USA fought its war in Vietnam. But if the Sandinistas were just like the Vietcong then should the USA pursue the same approach, go in there with the contras and try to bomb the Nicaraguan people 'back to the stone age'? This sort of talk alarmed congress on the tenth anniversary of America's defeat in Vietnam. For now the contras will have to rely on getting aid through clandestine channels, though Reagan has already put down a demand for a fresh $28m grant in September.

This week Reagan will be trying to get his scheme for cutting $52 billion off the $213 billion budget deficit through congress. His chances are not good. Reagan's plan is to increase spending on defence and cut spending on welfare. Apart from the impact on the poor the cuts will also hit middle class pensions and student grants and farmers' subsidies. Anticipating fierce resistance 'the great communicator' spoke to the nation on television last week. In a classic performance he told the people that 'the hour is late, the task is large and the stakes are momentous'. He told them that 'we stand at the crossroads' and that the time had come to make some 'hard choices'. But the old ham will have a hard time persuading congress to endorse drastic cuts that threaten America's social fabric.

Reagan's recent difficulties reflect the real problems facing the American establishment as it tries to adjust its domestic and foreign policies to the unstable conditions created by the world recession. Reagan has made some blunders, but the feebleness of the opposition in Washington gives him plenty of room to manoeuvre. His critics take advantage of his gaffes but they broadly endorse his pro-Nato, anti-Nicaragua, pro-austerity line. Reagan succeeded in getting his MX missiles plans through congress a few weeks ago and his star wars initiative has widespread approval. Like US capitalism Reagan may be a bit senile, but he is still very dangerous.

REVIEWS

GLC

THERE'S ONE LONDONER THE GLC IS TAKING TO THE CLEANERS.

For more information ring 633 4400.

Working for Labour

Francis Wheen, *The battle for London,* Pluto Press 1985, pbk £1.95

Francis Wheen tries to prove that GLC abolition is unnecessary. To support his case he quotes City accountants Cooper & Lybrand, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Cardinal Basil Hume.

If Wheen had bothered to ask me or anybody else who works for the GLC he would have got a less rosy view of life at County Hall. Wheen's informants on the GLC staff are drawn exclusively from the quango generation who earn in excess of £15 000 a year. But the majority of GLC workers take home just £65 to £87 a week.

Wheen can rave about the GLC 'working for London'. But working for the left-wing council is just like working for any other employer who wants more work for less money. For example, to avoid paying union rates or providing union conditions the GLC runs the South Bank 'culture complex' with cheap contract labour. The council wants to extend its use of contract labour to limit its direct responsibility for handing out redundancy notices and low wages.

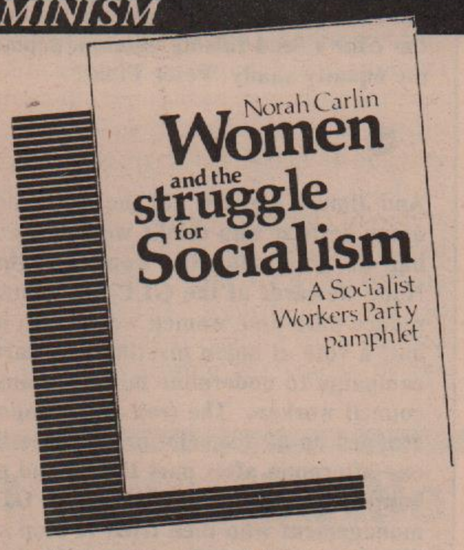
The Labour GLC has held on to the Victorian work practices at County Hall. Take the 'pay parade', where weekly-paid manual workers all have to stand around in silence waiting for their wages while an official with a clipboard barks out their surnames. Or Mr May, the braided head messenger and keeper of the signing-in boards, who waits in his basement cubby hole to pounce on workers who arrive late and have to humble themselves before him to sign in.

Wheen takes at face value the GLC's pride in its commitment to combatting racism and sexism. Wheen is dazzled by the array of committees, monitoring units and campaigns that the GLC funds. A walk down the corridors of County Hall or a quiet cup of tea in the staff canteen would have set this all in perspective. Those who clean the floors and serve in the canteen, working part-time for low pay, are all black women. The Labour councillors' commitment to fighting racism and sexism does not intrude on their prerogatives as employers.

Wheen's choice of business men and prelates to support his argument is entirely appropriate. The bishops and the bankers can be relied upon to put in a good word for the GLC. They understand the problems of employers.

Don Mallory

FEMINISM



Rearguard action

Norah Carlin, *Women and the struggle for socialism,* Socialist Workers' Party pamphlet 1985, 95p

'In the sixties', writes Norah Carlin, 'the slogan "the personal is the political" was a good one.' But she notes that more recently 'it has become an excuse for ignoring political arguments about class struggle because *only* the personal is seen as political'. In fact the women's movement's acceptance of this slogan in the past is the source of many of its current weaknesses. The fact that it was approved by socialists in the movement explains why they have been so ineffective in countering the movement's fragmentation and drift to the right in the eighties.

The early women's liberation movement set out to liberate women by fighting for a better society. 'No women's liberation without socialism — no socialism without women's liberation' was its founding slogan. In the seventies the movement retreated from its early demands for women's rights and took up the slogan 'the personal is political'. Feminists now defined as political the ways every individual woman tried to adjust her personal life to the realities of life in chauvinist capitalist society. The movement substituted individual survival strategies for a collective struggle with other social forces to change the world. The opportunist left, well represented by Norah Carlin's party, went along with this approach despite its negative consequences.

The women's movement rapidly fell apart into fragments according to the personal preoccupations of its different sections — lesbian and straight, black and white, disabled and able-bodied, etc. The women's movement's decline into a self-indulgent and destructive individualism has rendered it vulnerable to the right-wing offensive of the eighties. This is why Gillick, Warnock and Powell have found the movement in such disarray and confusion. Now some left-wing feminists in the SWP and in the old Communist Party are conducting a rearguard action to stop the rot. But as Carlin's defence of the personal politics of the past shows, the rot extends beyond the women's movement into the left itself.

When the women's movement was strong the left adapted to feminist prejudices. Now it is weaker the left's opportunism is directed towards its traditional sponsor — the official labour movement. Carlin concludes that 'women's fight has to be through the trade unions'. She criticises the women's movement for dividing women from men. But she ignores the real source of division — the labour movement's failure to fight for women's rights.

Wendy Ellis

TECHNOLOGY

Herbal remedies

W Faulkner and E Arnold, *Smothered by invention: technology in women's lives,* Pluto Press 1985, pbk £7.95.

Technology is oppressive and masculine, assert Faulkner and Arnold. And many in the women's movement and on the left would now agree with their fear of scientific progress. *Smothered by invention* looks back to a golden age when housework supplied all the needs of the family and when 'wise women' with a knowledge of herbal medicine were the nearest thing to doctors society had.

Technology, we are told, has squeezed women out of control over medicine — particularly over reproduction, at one time a sphere women controlled. The fact that this 'golden age' meant death at childbirth and incurable disease for countless women is not mentioned. Herbalism could not provide reliable means of contraception, treatment for gynaecological diseases or safe abortion. Women didn't work long hours spinning and brewing in their kitchens because they liked it, but because economic backwardness forced them to. The technology which Faulkner and Arnold distrust so much provides the basis for human control over nature and for improving women's lives. Women have every interest in the development of science. Instead of attacking technology we should fight the system which holds back scientific progress.

Carolyn Price

SCHLESINGER

Going to pieces

John Schlesinger (director), *The falcon and the snowman,* Orion Pictures 1985

The falcon and the snowman shows two individuals cut off from any means of dealing with the problems they face. Schlesinger's powerful film focuses on the disintegration under pressure of Chris (Timothy Hutton) and his cocaine-smuggling friend Daulton (Sean Penn). For Chris, the only way to prevent the US government interfering in the internal affairs of other countries is to sell secrets to the Russians, via the Soviet embassy in Mexico City. But he discovers that the Russians are as brutal, bureaucratic and manipulative as the Americans. The Mexicans are just brutal.

The other characters who appear in the film are merely foils for the agonising breakdown of Chris and Daulton. Schlesinger continues the theme which haunted his earlier films, such as *Midnight Cowboy,* of the individual unable to cope with circumstances beyond his control. Daulton's explicit crack-up sets off Chris's inner turmoil. All they have in common is a tendency to go to pieces under stress.

The falcon and the snowman is an absorbing film which reflects the impact of the recession on established liberals like Schlesinger. As the standards and systems they rely on break down, the world is becoming even more brutal and confusing.

The chances of individuals being able to mount any effective challenge to this is more remote than ever. For those whose status depends on promoting the values of middle class society, it is a time of despair.

John Johnson

INDONESIA

Results and prospects

Olle Tornquist, *Dilemmas of Third World communism: the destruction of the PKI in Indonesia,* Zed Books 1984, pbk £6.95

This book about the destruction of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and slaughter of more than half a million people in 1965-66 raises important issues for the left. The defeat of the PKI was a setback of historic proportions for the Indonesian masses. When Indonesia's rulers turned to crush the PKI, it exposed the bankruptcy of the official communist movement's strategy for building socialism through alliances with the national capitalist class. The lessons of this experience are important, not only for Indonesia, but for the working class in newly industrialised countries throughout Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Africa.

Tornquist's book provides a useful account of the development of the PKI, and his critical analysis of PKI strategy is instructive. Yet Tornquist fails to recognise the potential for revolutionary change in countries like Indonesia. His contention that there is only limited scope for the working class to take the lead in the anti-imperialist struggle underestimates the impact of capitalist development in Third World countries. Ironically Tornquist's pessimistic conclusions are not unlike those of the PKI, whose strategy he so convincingly criticises. Despite its academic slant, *Dilemmas of Third World communism* should be read by those interested in the problems of revolution in Asia.

Frank Richards

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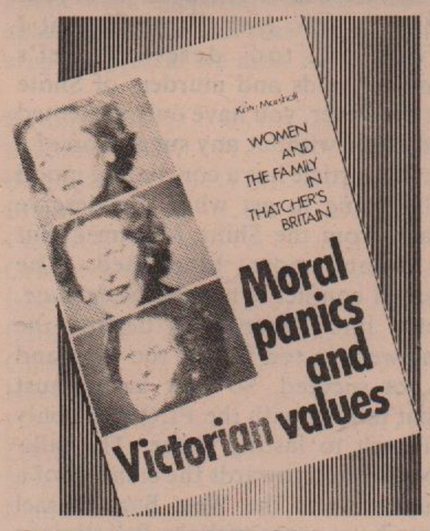
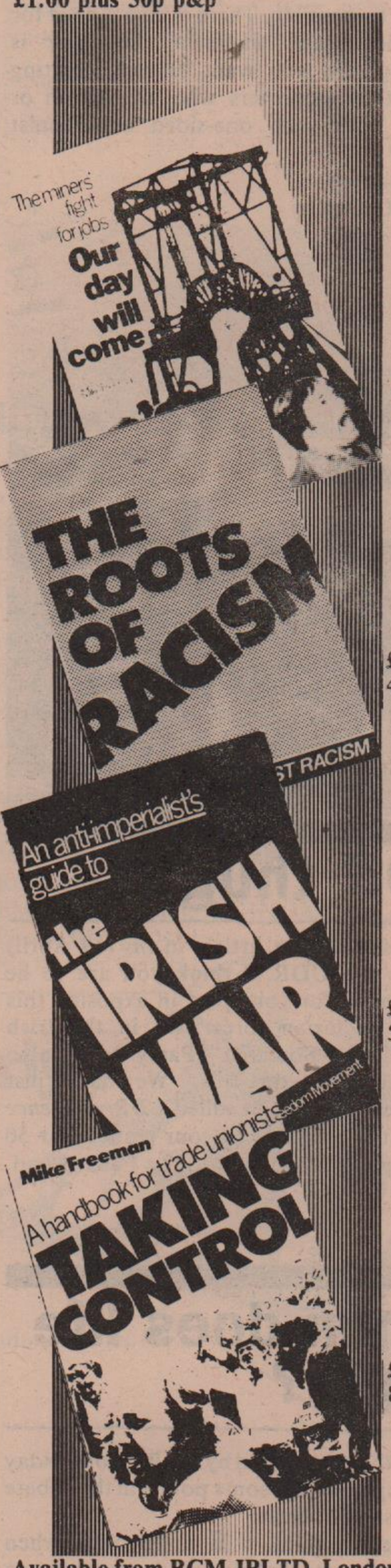


Out next week

AIDS and embryos, promiscuity and surrogacy, drug addiction and football hooliganism — these are some of the main preoccupations of recent press and television. Kate Marshall's new pamphlet draws out the common themes of the new morality. The promotion of marriage, motherhood and the family and respect for parental authority and law and order are the establishment's answer to the social problems of the eighties. *Moral panics and Victorian values* explores Tory hypocrisy and outlines a working class response. £1.00 plus 30p p&p



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LETTERS

Give peace a chance

I am a Jew, a Zionist and a sympathiser with the Palestinian cause. There is a lot in your article 'Israel's iron fist' (19 April) that I agree with. I too detest Israel's indiscriminate raids and murders of Shiite villagers. However, you have only presented the tragic affair without any suggestion of a solution. The article has a concluding mood of 'You're going to get what you deserve now Israel, from the Shiite Muslims!' But nobody wants more bloodshed. The Shiite/Israeli conflict is not the basic issue. Israel went into Lebanon to destroy the PLO. She went in too far for too long and she did not succeed. So now Israel must realise that talking with the PLO is the only practical path to lasting peace. The talks should be directed towards the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank. Israel would then be at peace with the Palestinians and would no longer interfere in Lebanon.

The article not only gives no solution, it also distorts facts. Israel is not 'a state artificially created to police the Middle East for the USA and Britain in 1948'. In fact, Israel had to fight the British to let the Holocaust survivors in from 1945 to 1948. Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people, finally established after centuries of oppression. Israel polices for nobody but herself. In this light it is even more tragic that Israelis are fighting Palestinians.

They should be helping them to find a homeland. Revolutionary communism needs as much national and international support as possible. There is also a need for it within Israel, where a class war is emerging. Do you want to risk isolating prospective supporters who are Jewish or Zionist with such one-sided anti-Zionist articles?

Barry Barnett
Sussex University

UDR thugs

I've just read the article in *tns* (19 April) about the UDR. I think you are to be commended for your part in exposing this bigoted sectarian force. We in the Irish Republican Socialist Party are also attempting to do this. We have just produced a pamphlet called *UDR: a defence force?* It is available to your readers for 50 pence plus p&p from 392, Falls Road, Belfast.

IRSP
Belfast

When does life begin?

After the debate held by the RCP on Friday 26 April we felt some points in the debate were less than clear.

While we think it is a sidetrack when fighting the attacks being made on women to enter into the debate about when life begins it is a necessary definition for us to have if we intend to openly debate with the other side.

We thought the definition 'a human being is distinct in that it can alter its environment' was not as clear as it sounds. This in no way defines human life as starting at the moment of birth because a baby aged one month is not capable of surviving independently, let alone of altering its surroundings.

The definition of a human being having rights when it can socially interact with others, again does not define life as starting at birth because a baby bonds with its mother way before its birth and social factors affecting the mother like tobacco and alcohol also affect the baby's development.

We think a communist definition of when a human being has rights is arbitrary. It is a definition we make purely to allow us to fight for what we need. And this definition can alter as society changes.

Dawn and Helen
Newcastle

Embryo experiments

'This house believes that embryos have rights' was the motion under discussion at the RCP debate in London last week. The title itself reveals a false premise — that rights exist in some absolute sense, independent of society. We are not born with rights. The notion of human rights is a social construct, not a biological one.

Nevertheless, the RCP was required to address itself in this debate to the issue of whether society should accord human rights to embryos. An embryo originates at the point of conception, which is precisely definable in biological terms. But, though living in the biological sense, an embryo is not a human being.

Those who define human life as beginning at the moment of conception defer the responsibility of making human judgements to nature and thus subjugate themselves to nature. This is a direct obstacle to social progress. Communists strive to subjugate nature to the needs of humans. The embryo rights issue is really a women's rights issue and this was made clear in the debate. However, the issue of embryo experimentation was treated rather flippantly. It is meaningless to state that scientific research is a good thing or a bad thing. Scientists are motivated by the challenge of nature, not society. Science is funded almost exclusively by the state and by industry. Whether scientific research is beneficial or harmful depends on how it is exploited by society.

Genetic manipulation of human beings by altering the genetic make-up of the gametes prior to embryonic development is not science fiction. It has already been done successfully in other organisms. If it is done it will be done for only one reason — to alter the final product, the human being.

Genetic manipulation may be carried out for medical reasons, but in this society who will benefit from these medical advances and who will be exploited in the attainment of such advances? In every sphere of our lives there is evidence that this society does not act for the benefit of the working class.

Commercialisation negates the beneficial effects of scientific research. Third World poverty has been exploited by the trade in kidneys for transplant to recipients in the West. Working class women are at risk from exploitation by the commercialisation of surrogate motherhood. Opposition to embryo experimentation is not in conflict with women's rights. Experimentation on embryos will not benefit the working class until the working class is directly responsible for the exploitation of scientific discoveries. Until then it will only entrench mankind in the corruption of capitalism.

Tony Brown
Clapton E5

Lessons from Sri Lanka

A common criticism levelled against Marxist parties is that they turn their guns against the traditional left parties instead of directing all their energies against the common enemy, the right. Attacks on the left over the miners' strike and, more recently, over the political levy to the Labour Party are construed as reactionary. The left is quick to point out that such criticisms only help the right.

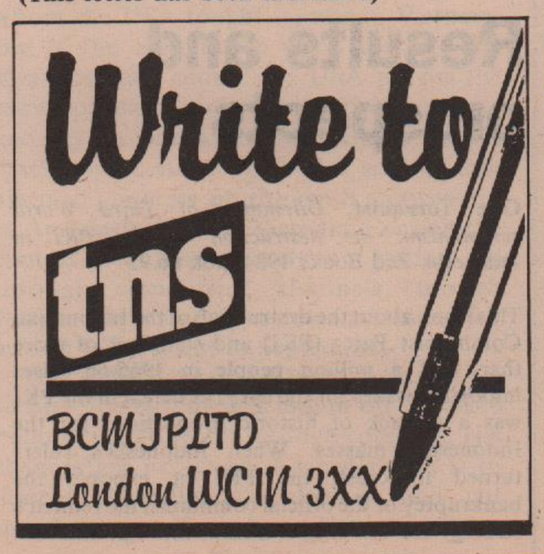
On the surface it may seem that Marxist criticisms of the left are little different from those of the right. But we criticise for different reasons. Sri Lanka, the country where I come from, is a good example.

Sri Lanka had two main parliamentary political parties, the United National Party (UNP), a right-wing party, and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the rough equivalent of the British Labour Party. During the early seventies the SLFP was in power. It had nationalised the post, the transport industry, the banks and the insurance companies. It had even taken over the tea and rubber estates. These 'progressive' policies caused some confusion among the left. The Lanka Samasamaja Party (LSSP) and the pro-Moscow Communist Party supported the SLFP. They argued that the UNP was the arch enemy of the people and to oppose the SLFP would be to play into the hands of the right. They said that they had discovered progressive elements within the SLFP and eventually joined it in a united front government in 1970.

The working class supported the united front and waited for it to deliver the goods. It waited and waited and then staged a number of strikes. The left alliance broke strike after strike and accused the workers of disrupting their socialist programme. Not one left candidate was elected in the 1977 general election. The right seized its chance and declared that the leftists were anti-working class. And it seemed to be true! The left has never recovered. The UNP took advantage of working class disaffection with the left, split the SLFP and did away with it as a viable opposition. The left had dug its own grave.

When Marxist parties support the 'left' parties during parliamentary elections as 'the lesser evil' they only give them credibility and confuse the masses. We must be resolute in our opposition to the left and make sure that it doesn't con the working class like it did in Sri Lanka.

T Subramaniam
Pontefract
(This letter has been shortened)



STEPPING OUT

The victory of the Ford women machinists' 17 year old claim for skilled status caused some crossed wires at the *Morning Star* last week.

On Tuesday — before the victory — the paper quoted Jimmy Airlie, left winger on the executive of the engineering union, condemning the women for trying to leapfrog his union's members at Ford. Airlie dismissed the machinists as 'not women but predominantly women' who were pursuing 'a sexual claim' (did he mean sectional?) which would lead to 'anarchy'. The *Star* quoted right-wing union leader Terry Duffy's 'full support' for Airlie's attack on the 'sexual' claim.

Two days later the women celebrated their win with a banner declaring 'Duffy and Airlie — you want shooting — you two faced ******'. This banner did not appear in the *Morning Star*. Instead it quoted Airlie 'welcoming' the decision and 'congratulating' the machinists he had been so keen to slag off two days earlier.**

The *Morning Star* report concluded by commenting that Duffy 'could give no satisfactory explanation' why he also welcomed the claim that his executive had previously opposed. No such explanation was required of Airlie, but then he's a member of the Communist Party and the *Morning Star* is the daily cover up for the left union bureaucrats.

The *Morning Star* has other problems too. Its racing correspondent, the mysterious Cayton, is rock bottom of the *Sporting Life's* table of tipster performance. This follows Cayton's dismal effort in the National Hunt season tipsters' table, from which he would have been relegated had he been a football team. Could this explain the increasingly hysterical appeals for money in the *Star's* fund-raising column, penned by the equally shady 'Peter Pink'?

And Jimmy Airlie is not the only trade union activist who thinks women are only half or 'predominantly' women. Right-wing Nupe stewards at the GLC are trying to reduce part-time women workers to having half a vote at union meetings, as part of a campaign to undermine militancy among council workers. The (rejected) proposal cropped up at a special branch meeting held one afternoon after part timers had gone home. The meeting was called by GLC management who then tried to stop some Nupe members getting in. Another democracy day, brought to you by the GLC.

As Eric Hammond was saying to Norman Tebbit while he was opening the electricians' new training centre the other day, 'what the EETPU does today the rest do tomorrow'. Did he mean no-strike deals — or the ballot-rigging for which the electricians were once notorious?

In the week we are remembering Bobby Sands, Birmingham's local papers remind us of a less heroic hunger-striker. Robert Relf, the racist busman who went to jail and on hunger-strike for the right to sell his house to 'an English family', has given up his nine-year campaign and conceded he will have to sell to blacks. Through those years he has had to drive 150 miles to work every day, because the local bus crews refused to work with him in solidarity with their black workmates. It's a pity the British labour movement doesn't always show such support for its members facing oppression. Bobby Sands was a member of the transport workers' union too.

REPORTS

Hollow victory at Colman's

On Monday 22 April 150 workers occupied Colman Fastener's engineering factory in Trafford Park, Manchester. Management had announced 38 compulsory redundancies. The redundancy list included the convenor, the shop stewards' committee and other activists. The bosses had originally asked for 51 voluntary redundancies, yet they refused all but 13 of the 24 volunteers and produced their own hit list of 38.

The occupation ended two days later after management conceded the union's demands. Everybody, from broad left candidate for the AUEW presidency John Tocher to the Socialist League convenor John Silverman and the Socialist Workers' Party chair of the shop stewards' committee Dick McGroggan, claimed the settlement was a great victory. According to the *Morning Star* it was the 'negotiating skills of John Tocher' which 'were a key factor in the victory'. 'We got everything we asked for,' celebrated John Silverman. The 'victory' involved 51 voluntary redundancies and a four-day week work-sharing scheme.

Jo Boatman (reflex)

John Tocher

Some Colman's workers felt that it might have been worthwhile holding out against *all* redundancies. Others felt this was unrealistic given the company's dire financial straits. But it was the failure of the shop stewards to put forward a realistic strategy for defending every job that led the workforce to accept the bosses' realism of redundancies.

The fact is that 51 voluntary redundancies are not any better than 51 compulsory redundancies. It all adds up to 51 job losses. And we have no responsibility to bail out the bosses when they are in a mess — that's their problem. All we are interested in is our jobs and our living standards. To defend them we need to link up with workers at the Sale-based sister plant Barber and Colman's, forget about profits and losses and fight for what we need.

David Osgood

Sinn Fein leader stopped

Thirteen people have been picked up under the Prevention of Terrorism Act at British ports over the past 10 days.

Last Friday Belfast Sinn Fein organiser Joe Austin was stopped by the special branch on his way to a debate at Glasgow University. Mike Lurgan from the Social Democratic and Labour Party, Austin's opponent in the debate, was also detained. The two were taken to the university under armed escort and hustled away again at the end of the meeting. Austin's harassment by the political police is part of British attempts to disrupt the republican campaign for next month's local elections in Ireland. Austin condemned the arrests as part of an ongoing campaign to silence opposition to the Irish War in Britain. 'But the attempts to harass and intimidate us have all failed,' declared Austin, 'we're here and we'll be coming back.' The British security forces had detained 11 others travelling from Ireland under the PTA during the course of the week.

- Three women who arrived in Stranraer with a party of schoolchildren were held for 48 hours. The children were threatened with being taken into care and then stranded.
- Three people were detained at Holyhead and released after 36 hours. One was rearrested on a minor offence and fined.
- Four men and one woman from Belfast were arrested at Stranraer and released the following day.

The PTA is part of the British war machine. It is used to bludgeon the Irish community in Britain and Ireland and silence opposition to Britain's war in Northern Ireland. The Irish Freedom Movement is campaigning to break the power of the PTA and build working class opposition to Britain's occupation of Ireland. The special branch told Austin that they would take him to the debate and then kick him straight back to Belfast. The only way to end the legal terror of the PTA is to fight to kick the British gunmen out of Belfast and every other Irish town and city.

Pit bonus battle

'Men like me could make another £30 a week in bonus', said one faceworker at Askern pit in Yorkshire last Saturday, 'but we've decided to stick together and get something worked out for all of us.' At a mass meeting at the pit on Saturday the men voted unanimously to reject a divisive bonus offer from management.

Last Friday management at Askern offered to pay bonuses to facemen only after a walkout over non-payment of bonuses the previous week. 'They're just trying to split men up and get them fighting against each other', said one Askern miner, 'but it should be the same bonus for everyone or none at all.' The offer will be discussed at an emergency meeting of the Doncaster panel this Thursday.

The same thing is happening all over the Doncaster area where nobody has been receiving any bonus since the end of the strike. Doncaster pits have the lowest productivity of any coalfield in the country and most are still producing little or nothing since the return to work in March. The coal board wants to introduce tonnage agreements at every pit to increase productivity and raise output.

NUM officials have been sitting down with management to work out local deals while ordinary miners are kept in the dark. Tonnage and productivity agreements have been finalised at Hatfield, Goldthorpe and Armthorpe pits, but union officials have faced difficulties persuading some of their members to go along with them.

The coal board is keen to introduce local productivity deals to cut basic wages and divide the workforce. Rank and file miners cannot afford to let them get away with it. The recent pay deal was a real blow to our living standards — this will make things even worse. We need to fight for a nationally agreed basic wage and an end to local productivity and bonus schemes. NUM officials should withdraw from local negotiations with management over productivity and demand that the national union lead a fight for the wages we need.

Terry Anderson

Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

COME ALONG!

Conference

Moral panics and women's rights
AIDS and the family, embryos and abortion, battered babies and the courts, hooligans and the police.
Plus evening social. Creche available.
Saturday 1 June 10am-5pm
Polytechnic of Central London
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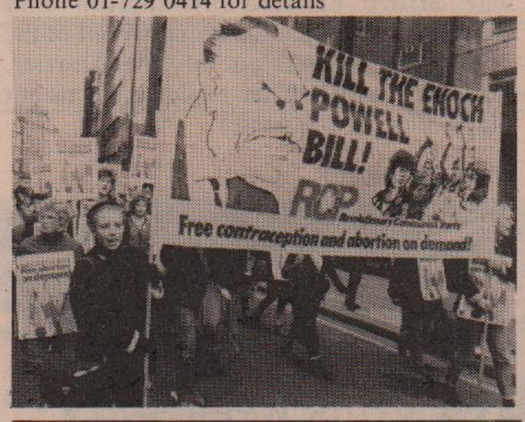
Phone 01-729 0414 for details



Demonstration

Enoch out of Manchester!
Friday 10 May
Manchester Business School Oxford Road
Rumour is rife that anti-women's rights campaigner Enoch Powell is in town this Friday. Powell's bodyguards are keeping the details top secret. We'll be there come what may. Phone 01-729 0414 and watch this space.

Meetings

Irish Freedom Movement rallies
REMEMBER BOBBY SANDS!

Leeds
Thursday 2 May 7.30pm
Leeds Trades Club
Savile Mount, Leeds 7

Manchester
Saturday 4 May 5.30pm
Manchester University
Students Union
Oxford Road

London
Friday 10 May 7.30pm
Central Library
Fieldway Crescent N5
(Off Holloway Road)

Supporters

Every week supporters of *tns* meet to talk about the paper and plan action in the local area. At present we meet in

Birmingham	*Thursday*
Bradford	*Thursday*
Brighton	*Thursday*
Bristol	*Thursday*
Cardiff	*Thursday*
Coventry	*Thursday*
East Kilbride	*Monday*
Edinburgh	*Thursday*
Glasgow	*Thursday*
Hackney	*Wednesday*
Huddersfield	*Thursday*
Leeds	*Thursday*
Liverpool	*Thursday*
Manchester	*Thursday*
Newcastle	*Wednesday*
North London	*Wednesday*
Nottingham	*Thursday*
Pontefract	*Thursday*
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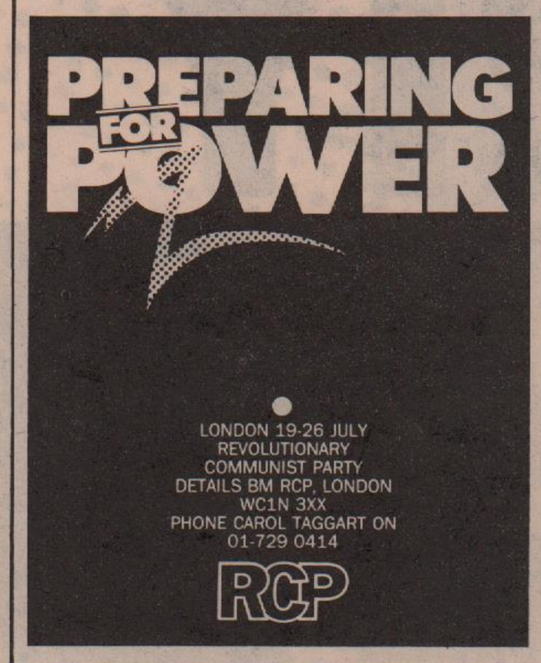

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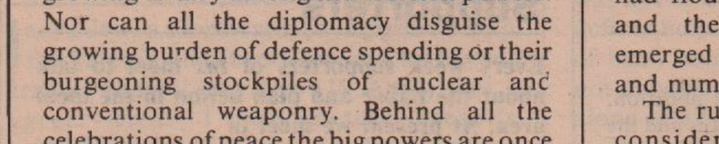
VE Day celebrations



WAR PARTY

This week's commemoration of 'forty years of peace' since the end of the Second World War takes place at a time when the leaders of all the Western powers are busy preparing for a third engagement

Thatcher and Reagan, Mitterrand and Kohl have declared a wish to celebrate VE Day in a spirit of 'peace, liberty and reconciliation'. But all their attempts to conjure up a spirit of harmony cannot conceal the growing rivalry among the Western powers. Nor can all the diplomacy disguise the growing burden of defence spending or their burgeoning stockpiles of nuclear and conventional weaponry. Behind all the celebrations of peace the big powers are once again preparing to go to war.

In May 1945 the German general staff surrendered at a small village on the outskirts of Berlin. After almost six years the war in Europe came to an end, leaving some 50 million dead. Through much of central and eastern Europe the countryside was devastated and towns and cities lay in ruins. Workers lucky enough to escape the butchery at the front returned home to food rationing and shortages of fuel, housing and clothing. In most countries military discipline in the factories continued for long after the end of the war. Whoever won the war the working class certainly lost. It was more divided and more exploited than at any time this century. A wave of patriotism, disguised as anti-fascism in the Allied countries, swept workers everywhere into the war effort on the side of their own ruling classes. This chauvinist sentiment virtually extinguished the spirit of international workers' unity that had flourished after the First World War and the Russian Revolution. Workers emerged from the war in 1945 battle weary and numbed by nationalist propaganda.

The ruling classes emerged from the war considerably strengthened. The vast destruction of the war went a long way towards resolving the international economic and political crisis which wracked the system during the inter-war years. The war effort boosted production and stimulated the capitalist economy out of the prolonged depression of the thirties. Rationing and harsher exploitation meant big profits for the bosses.

New order

The war established a new balance of power in the West. Since the late nineteenth century the world order had been in disarray as the dynamic upstarts Germany, Japan and the USA challenged the established but

declining powers of Britain, France and Russia. These tensions erupted in the First World War, but they remained unresolved. It took another round of even greater destruction to establish a new equilibrium.

The Second World War started as a conflict between the feeble alliance of Britain and France and their powerful rival Germany. There were sound economic and political reasons behind the British establishment's conversion to 'anti-fascism' in the late thirties. Germany and the USA were Britain's biggest competitors and a direct threat to British influence overseas. But Britain could not hope to emerge victorious from a military conflict with the USA. It could however team up with America, take on Germany and secure its future in an alliance with the USA after the war. The entry of the USA and the Soviet Union into the Second World War turned the tables against Germany.

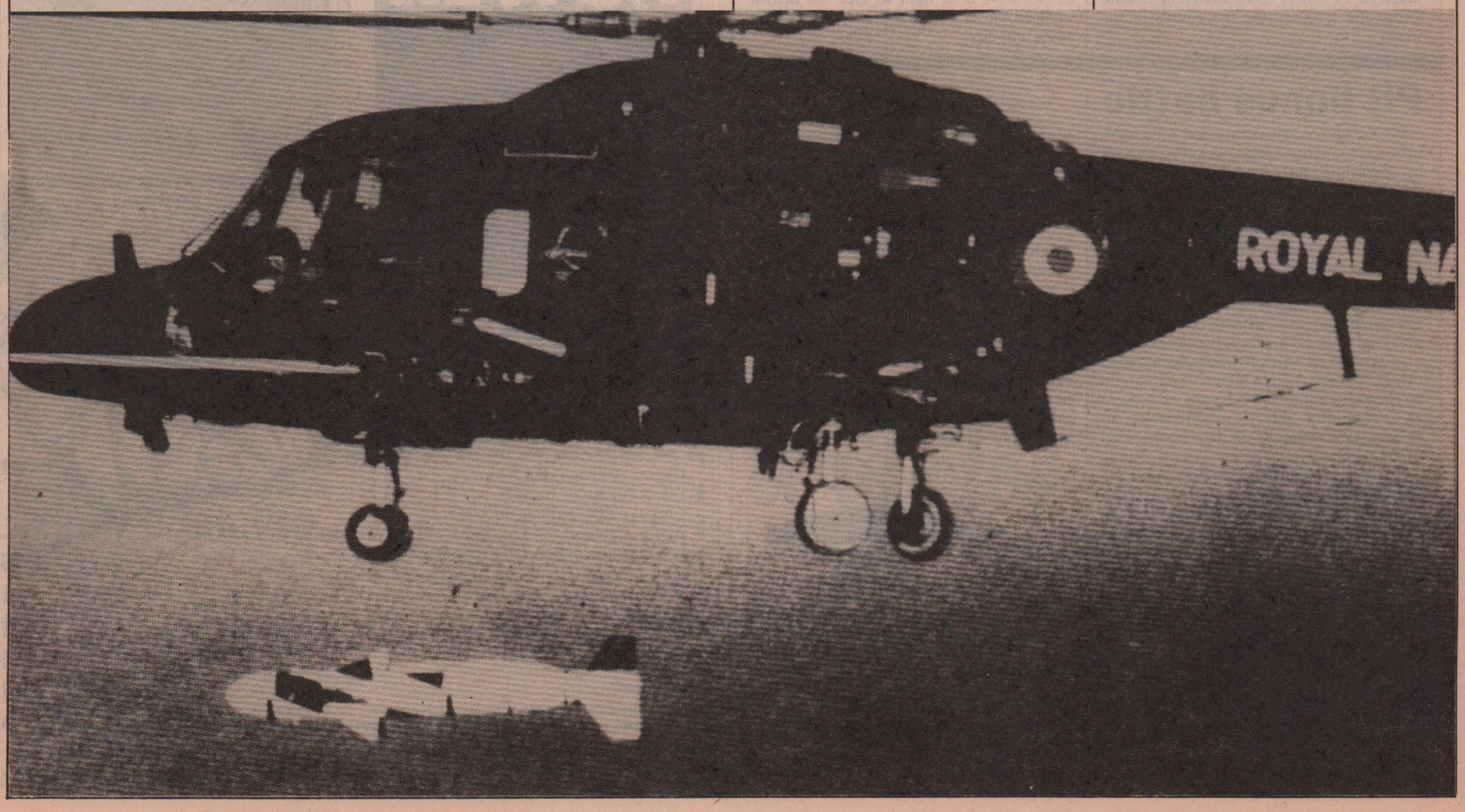
America's economic and military superiority ensured that its allies emerged on top. The long and bloody war between Germany and the Soviet Union on the eastern front played a decisive role in the defeat of Hitler. The American military victory provided the foundation for the post-war world order under US domination.

The Second World War paved the way for an unprecedented era of capitalist prosperity. The USA set up Nato and relations between the big powers were set on a firm footing. The 'forty years of peace' did not extend to the Third World which became the main sphere of modern warfare. Within five years of VE Day, the new Western alliance was baptized in the blood of millions of Korean workers and peasants. But in America and in Europe, May 1945 ushered in a prolonged period of stability in both home and foreign affairs.

Those were the days

Forty years on, the Western leaders are getting together to commemorate the day which symbolises the golden age of post-war stability. But the show of fraternity lacks conviction. The diplomatic turmoil over the arrangements for Reagan's trip to the Bitburg cemetery in Germany highlights the fragile state of Western relations. Behind the haggling over exchange rates and interest rates and the US budget deficit lurks the spectre of an open trade war among the big powers.

One country that will be missing from the VE Day celebrations is the Soviet Union. It has been excluded from the official Western ceremonies. Forty years ago Stalin was feted by American and British politicians but now the Soviet Union has become the bogey that helps to hold the troubled Western alliance together. As Western relations get more troublesome, raising the East-West temperature has become America's main method of pulling its allies together and justifying all the war preparations. Reagan's use of the shooting of an American soldier spying in East Germany to stir up East-West tensions, and Thatcher's provocative expulsion of Soviet diplomats from Britain, are signs of a growing anti-Sovietism. The Western alliance needs to promote the mythical Soviet threat to maintain its cohesion.

The main purpose of war anniversaries — last year D-Day, this year VE Day — is to provide a focus for rallying public patriotism. The commemorations of the end of the Second World War provide a welcome opportunity to whip up support at home for the latest war moves. While Reagan has his star wars programme and his MX missiles, Thatcher has trident and cruise and Mitterrand has his 'force de frappe'. Rearmament and militarism — and chauvinist sentiments — are on the rise in every Western nation.

Yet memories of the apocalypse of the Second World War have a sobering effect on the establishment. The ruling class does not relish the prospect of an upheaval which could destroy its system. Western leaders' desire to celebrate the occasion in a spirit of reconciliation reflects a nostalgic attachment to past stability. But the decay of their social order cannot be halted. The drift from diplomatic skirmishes and economic haggles towards military conflict is inescapable. Capitalism knows no antidote to war. Let's make sure we snuff out their lights before they launch the next armageddon.