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the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party • 14 March 1986 • 30p

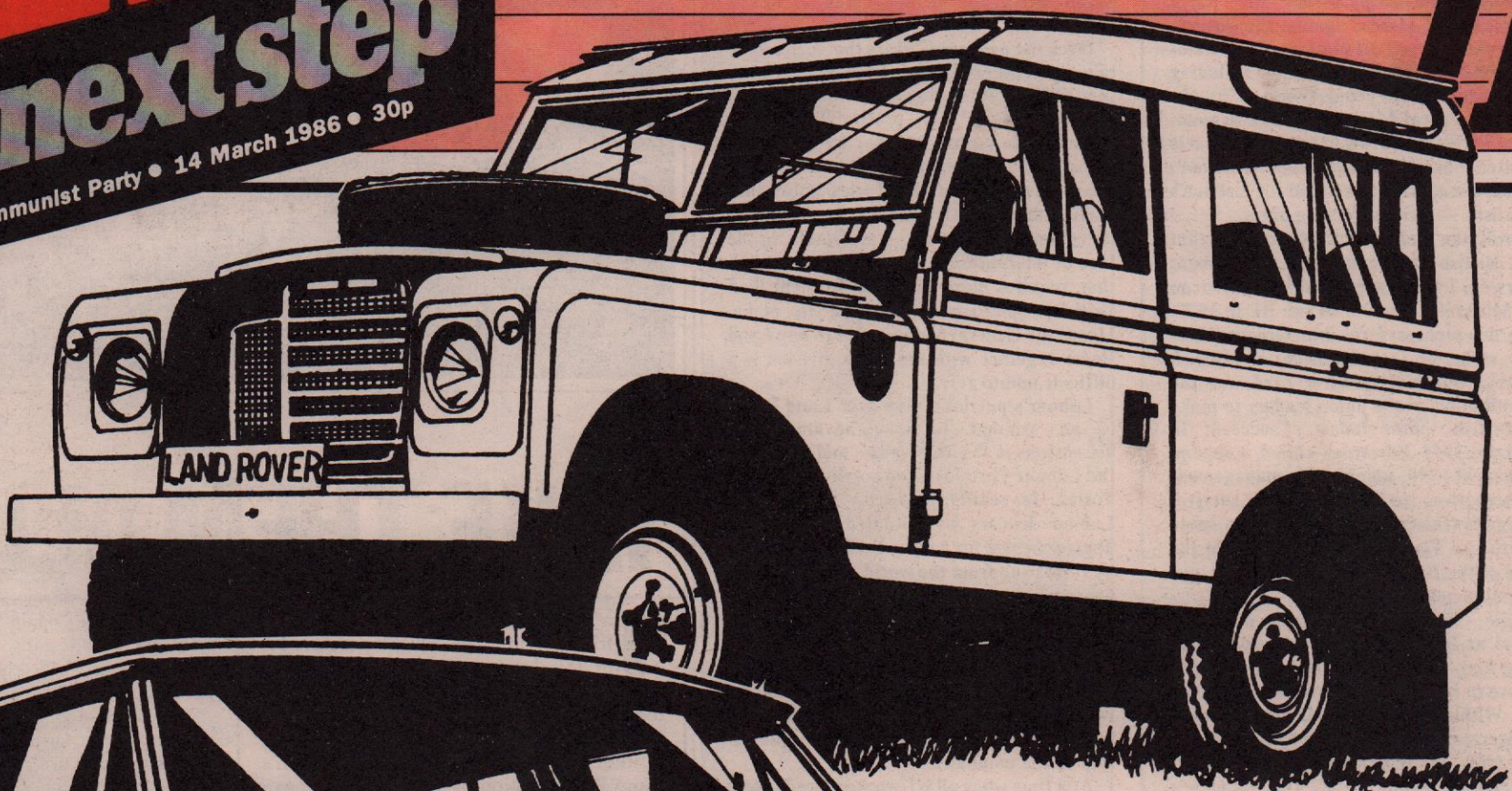
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*Whether the boss is
British or American*

Our jobs come first

JOBS COME FIRST

Our patriotism is one that holds that our values are not for sale to anyone at any price at any time,' said Labour leader Neil Kinnock at the Scottish party conference in Perth last week. The Labour leadership has joined the campaign, launched by former Tory Party leader Edward Heath, against the government's plans to sell off sections of the state-owned motor company BL — including Land Rover and Leyland Trucks — to the US firm General Motors. Kinnock denounces the Tories for having 'a patriotism that is forgotten when the cheque book is waved'. But there is a price to be paid for Labour's patriotism — by the working class.

It was the last Labour government that took British Leyland into government ownership. Labour appointed South African boss Michael Edwardes to run BL in 1977. Edwardes pioneered the MacGregor/Murdoch style of management in British industry. But his strongest card was the determination of the union leaders to make the British motor industry succeed. In February 1978 Edwardes called a special meeting of 700 union and management representatives to announce his survival package for the company: 12 500 jobs would have to go. For declaring his faith in the future of the British motor industry, he won a standing ovation.

Eddie McGarry, a prominent union official at BL, backed the Edwardes plan, saying that 'this could well be the last chance we have to resurrect the fortunes of Leyland cars'. Within weeks the BL factory at Speke on Merseyside was closed with the loss of 3000 jobs. In September 1979 Edwardes launched his second phase. The company's fortunes had continued to decline, and it now needed to close 13 plants and sack 25 000 more workers.

In 1980 Edwardes followed up his early successes by imposing tighter discipline and flexible working practices — again the unions helped to neutralise resistance. When the bosses' harsh terms provoked a riot at Longbridge in November 1980, management responded by victimising a number of

militant shop stewards. By the early eighties the employers enjoyed a free hand to dictate the terms to the BL workforce. Labour's patriotic commitment to the British motor industry cost the working class some 30 000 jobs under the last Labour government and paved the way for the loss of another 50 000 since.

Over the past seven years the Tories have taken over where Labour left off. They have tightened the screw on all BL workers in the desperate quest for profitability. They succeeded in pushing Jaguar back into the black, and promptly pushed it back into the private sector. But the Tories know that making much of BL — its trucks and buses, its volume car division — profitable, in the face of international recession and competition, requires more capital investment than British capitalists can afford to make. Hence the General Motors offer to buy Land Rover together with the truck division is a difficult one to refuse.

Labour's patriotic ploy over Land Rover is an attempt to take advantage of dissensions in the Tory ranks, and to project the Labour Party as more patriotic than the Tories. In reality it merely exposes the Labour leaders as outdated chauvinists. Their schemes for saving British capitalism by retreating from the world economy make no sense from a capitalist point of view. Much worse, from the point of view of the working class they point to disaster. Labour's patriotic approach to BL has already plunged tens of thousands of workers in the West Midlands into a life of misery, and it has shattered union organisation in the company.

At a time when all BL workers need to pull together to defend jobs regardless of who owns the company, the Labour and trade union leaders are busy waving the Union Jack on behalf of British bosses fighting a rearguard action to save the company from their US competitors. Kinnock's patriotic posturing is a pathetic attempt to steal Thatcher's clothes which leaves the labour movement defenceless.

LIVERPOOL AND LAMBETH

The high court decision to surcharge and disqualify 81 councillors from Liverpool and Lambeth over last year's rates campaign is a direct attack on the labour movement. It fits into the recent pattern of injunctions against industrial action and sequestrations of union funds. The British establishment is mobilising the full resources of the state to crush any attempt to fight back. The exclusion of elected representatives from political office on the decision of a high court judge is an outrageous restriction of democratic rights.

The labour movement must mobilise the widest resistance to the state offensive against its representatives and its union organisations. This battle cannot be won through the courts, but only by direct action to force the government to back off. Unfortunately the actions of the left-wing Labour councillors have done much to obscure the issues at stake and to undermine resistance to the Tories.

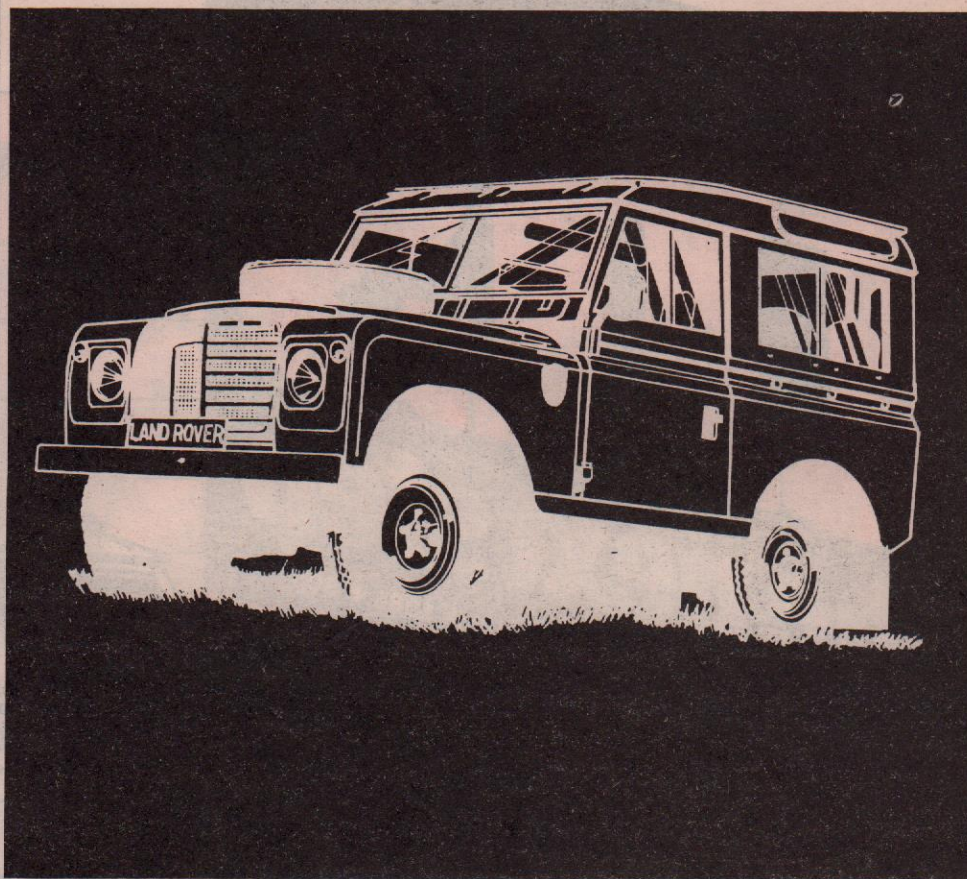
In every Labour council — Liverpool and Lambeth included — cuts in jobs and services are now proceeding apace. Labour's rate-capping campaign was a fiasco: councillors are now being penalised for making token gestures which were ineffectual

in stopping cuts in local government spending.

The commitment of the entire Labour Party — from Kinnock through Livingstone to Hatton — to balancing the council books, ensured that the rate-capping campaign collapsed as soon as it came into conflict with the agency that ensures all the books of capitalist society balance: the state. Ambivalent from the start about defying the courts, council resistance rapidly collapsed. The main outcome of the campaign was to confuse and demoralise thousands of council workers and others who were prepared to fight the government. It is not surprising that there is now little sympathy for the councillors in their own areas.

The Labour leaders' decision to set up a hardship fund for the councillors is an appropriate gesture. They should solicit contributions from all the Labour politicians and quango activists who applauded the rate-capping campaign last year. But people who want to fight the serious threat to the whole working class from the courts should put their money, and their energy, into campaigns that can unite the working class in defence of rights and living standards, instead of causing division and confusion.

DEFENDING JOBS IN BIRMINGHAM



TAKE THEM ALL ON

I'm fed up of all this "Keep Leyland British" stuff. The last thing we need is for this lot here to buy it — they're nothing but bastards. Personally as long as it's not them, I don't care who gets it.' That's how one worker sums up his attitude to the proposed buy-out of BL's Land Rover section by British managers to prevent it falling into American hands.

Whoever ends up owning BL, they will attack our jobs and rights

Although the 'Keep Leyland British' campaign has not won universal approval among workers at the Land Rover plant at Solihull, it has won widespread support in the Birmingham area. The campaign was launched last month by local trade union leaders, with the backing of the anti-union Birmingham *Evening Mail*. All the local MPs — Tory and Labour — have scrambled on to the bandwagon, together with the Labour council and other local dignitaries. Opposition party leaders and former prime ministers have flocked to the city to wave the flag for a British BL.

Sid Platt, regional representative of the TUC, expresses the common sentiment of the supporters of a British take-over: 'The government must be warned that the people of the West Midlands are angry that the best of their industry is about to be sold off lock, stock and barrel to an American multinational.' While local union leaders have been collecting signatures in support of British bosses, BL bosses have been demonstrating the virtues of British ownership to the workforce.

In the past five years more than 1500 jobs have disappeared at Land Rover, and 290 more redundancies were announced last week. At BL's Unipart section down the road management has adopted Murdoch-style tactics to intimidate its workforce. When Unipart workers voted at the start of the month for strike action in support of a pay claim, management pledged to sack anybody who refused to work.

The appointment of Graham Day as the new BL chief should leave no doubt about the employers' strategy. Day forced through 20 000 redundancies at his last job as boss of British Shipbuilders, and he has plans to shake out more jobs at BL and introduce

Japanese style 'flexibility'. He insists that 'job security has got to come from the sales market' and that 'change is the key to survival.'

Given the record of BL's British management it is not surprising that many Land Rover workers are cynical about the union leaders' campaign for a British buy-out. Birmingham supporters of the Revolutionary Communist Party have been selling *ms* at the Solihull plant since the take-over controversy broke last month. Our aim is to turn cynicism into active resistance.

Our leaflets have stressed that whatever the nationality of the owners of any section of BL, profitability will be their sole concern. Their profitability depends on fewer workers working longer and harder for less money.

While Land Rover workers are divided in their attitudes to the rival bids for ownership, they are united in their concern to preserve jobs, working conditions and living standards. Instead of getting involved in the bosses' boardroom squabbles, we need to let them know that whoever takes over the company we are not prepared to accept job losses, flexibility or lower wages.

The first line of battle is inside the unions. For 10 years the unions throughout the BL chain have sacrificed jobs and working conditions to make BL profitable. Now that workers at the Land Rover plant are faced with a new threat, the union officials are chasing different managerial options instead of organising resistance. One worker sums up the widespread frustration with the unions: 'The union knew about this ages ago but they've done nothing about it. Nobody has a clue what's going on. They called a meeting a week back to get us to endorse the British option. Most people voted for it because that's all there was on offer. But I know loads of people who couldn't really give a damn if it stays British or not. There will be job losses in the end whoever takes over.'

The union leaders have given the workforce one option — backing British bosses against American bosses. But taking sides with the capitalists is no alternative for workers. We need a strategy that puts workers' interests first, and mobilises rank and file workers to fight any further rationalisation or productivity plans at BL. Our leaflets are recommending:

- a boycott of the 'Keep Leyland British' campaign;
- urgent meetings of rank and file workers in all the unions involved, to discuss the dangers of any take-over and to thrash out plans for resistance;
- determined opposition to all redundancies.

Helen Simons

Racism

EAST LONDON DAYSCHOOL



WORKERS AGAINST RACISM SUPPORTERS JOINED CPSA MEMBERS ON MONDAY TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST JOB CENTRE RACE CHECKS

LINING UP AGAINST RACISM

It was the first War meeting Ruth had been to. When she left she was planning how to strike against racism — immediately. Ruth works at Hackney job centre, one of 150 offices where the department of employment is trying to carry out race checks. As from last Monday, job applicants are to be 'visually assessed' and classified according to their colour. But not if Ruth, with War and her fellow trade unionists, can organise to stop it. At the dayschool, Ruth explained how her branch of the Civil and Public Services Association voted 2:1 to take action against the scheme, but 'the CPSA officials made a deal with management — to carry out the race checks so long as there were posters in the offices, publicising the survey.'

Since then Ruth and other job centre workers have taken direct action, with War supporters picketing to back them. On Sunday, the day before the action began, Ruth described how she felt: 'People are reluctant to come out because there's no union backing. We're facing intimidation, and suspension without pay. We welcome the War support.'

For some people, Paris is 'the city of romance'. For Albert, who was born there, it is a city of racism. 'Because of my Algerian father', he explained, 'France says I'm not French. But I'm not Algerian — I don't

speak Arabic. I've had to endure racism throughout my life, even under Mitterrand's socialist government. Take their slogan, "Produce French" — it means: "Employ French and employ white".'

More than 200 people came to Sunday's Workers Against Racism dayschool in East London. Andrew Calcutt spoke to some of them who want to help War pull racism up by the roots

Now living in London, Albert met War during a demonstration at Waltham Forest college, where the principal is a committed racist. He was impressed by War's rejection of GLC-style anti-racism, which 'changes street names instead of black people's

oppression'. Tim, who's in Nupe, was equally dissatisfied with the GLC campaign. He has studied it thoroughly — he works in the GLC bookshop.

Why is it that War can run racists off the streets, when other campaigns are running out of steam? In his introductory speech, Alex Farrell explained why War is unique. He pointed out that last year's riots were caused by police repression. But by citing drugs, 'tribalism' or unemployment as the cause, many 'socialists' and 'anti-racists' tried to re-define the riots. This allowed the British establishment to set the terms of the debate around 'law and order'.

Only War saw the significance of police repression, and the role of the British establishment as the driving force behind it. War also recognises that all workers have an interest in fighting racism — the campaign exists to show why, and how, it can be done.

In the 'Roots of Racism' session, one of three afternoon workshops, a War supporter commented: 'To fight racism, which can't exist without nationalism, you need to be up-front anti-British — and that's what I like about War. It points out that Britishness is the basis for white workers' exploitation as well as black workers' oppression.' Yet how was national chauvinism, and racism, conveyed from the bosses to workers? Another War supporter ex-

plained how the leaders of the labour movement acted as a transmission belt, driven by the desire to protect their negotiating role in society.

Some people in this session argued that slavery, not nationalism, lies at the root of racism. But Kunle, who led the discussion, replied that modern racism only emerged after the 'emancipation' of the slaves, as the most convenient means for capitalists to qualify their superficial equality between 'citizens', according to the system's requirements.

In one of the other workshops, more than 40 participants supported the call for workers' defence, as the only way to defend blacks against racist attacks. This weapon could drive racism off our housing estates. Everyone agreed we need the police off our streets. The debate centred on how to achieve this.

It was this session above all that impressed Louise, who's a 'serious' funk music fan and, like Ruth, a CPSA member. 'Racism', she said, 'is a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week thing. But War says, "We're not going to wait any longer." ' Chloe, who teaches handicapped adults at a further education college, was equally enthusiastic. She wants to help set up a War branch in her home town. 'The sessions I went to made things a lot clearer to me,' she said. 'Now I want to get involved.'

BLACK MEANS ILLEGAL

Many black people at the dayschool spoke of positive discrimination as 'patronising', 'cosmetic' and 'divisive'. Patricia described how a building society she worked for kept her in the front office as bait to attract black depositors, but refused to consider her for training or promotion. Sandy thought it was 'horribly ironic' that he was allowed to join the housing co-op in Brixton, whereas his white friends were not. According to one War supporter, 'positive discrimination means re-adjusting the misery quotas.'

But immigration controls were the most significant talking point of the dayschool. Alex Farrell pointed out that since 1962, when a Labour government introduced the commonwealth immigration act, every black in Britain can be suspected of being an illegal immigrant, to be searched and harassed accordingly. He added: 'Since the sixties British racism has become more sophisticated, to the extent that people now applying to come here have to waive their entitlements to all state benefits as a precondition for entry. In any case, immigration controls show that all black people are here on sufferance, to meet the needs of the bosses' labour market — which at the moment are zero'.

DRAWING THE POISON

'Immigration controls also contribute to white workers' acceptance of black workers' oppression, by giving the green light to the idea that blacks are the problem. But the problem for us is the bosses' system. We'll be able to beat it when we can deal with immigration controls — not before.'

According to Omar, a student at North East London Polytechnic, this victory could be close at hand. As the conference hall emptied after the final session, he said: 'I came down here to see a real alternative to the methods used by the system and the unions. We have the basis here — now all we need is to make it a mass movement.' Omar is right: War is the real alternative. But War supporters recognise that the fight against racism will not be an overnight sensation.

The methods of 'the system and the unions' have worked well — for the British establishment. Racism is now embedded deep within the official labour movement, where every day it causes more damage. To draw its poison, we require political clarity before all else. After Sunday's dayschool 200 more people are looking for ways to make War the leader in the fight against racism. They will not be disappointed.

RCP

Eddie Shah's *Today* has got full colour, big names — and SDP politics. *tns* has got the arguments workers need to win — now we need to make it bigger, brighter and better. Rush donations to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to RCP Association.

CROWN POLICE CAN'T DEFEND THE IRISH

In Northern Ireland today, a Crown policeman's lot is not a happy one. Not only have the Royal Ulster Constabulary got to contend with an IRA campaign of gun, bomb and mortar attacks on police fortresses, but now, in the heat of the Unionist campaign against the Anglo-Irish agreement, the RUC is under fire from its traditional supporters among the Loyalist community.

Loyalist leaders insist that the RUC has become the 'tool of Dublin', imposing the terms of the Anglo-Irish agreement against the will of the Protestant population in Northern Ireland. The recent 24-hour Loyalist strike against Thatcher's deal with Dublin produced some widely-publicised clashes between Loyalist protesters and police. And last week, the Democratic Unionist Party released a recording of a meeting of RUC officers, where police complained about the pressure they were under to confront Loyalists.

Despite the publicity given to clashes between the RUC and Loyalist gangs in Northern Ireland, the police remain a bulwark of British rule over Irish nationalists

This is today's big debate in Northern Ireland: does the accord mean the sectarian RUC, more than 90 per cent of whose members are Loyalists, is being reformed 'to serve all sections of the community'? Police chiefs and British ministers insist it already is impartial. But the nationalists who were beaten and burnt out of their workplaces by Loyalists during the day of action, while RUC patrols stood by, will tell you otherwise. The British media made much of the clashes between police and Protestant rioters in Belfast, and replayed film of the RUC arresting Loyalists in Derry time and again. But a closer look shows these scenes were not all that they seemed.

Take the day's events in Derry. The RUC did nothing about the intimidation of nationalists trying to get to work on the Protestant Waterside of the city. Loyalist mobs put two nationalists in hospital, by ramming their van from both ends and then kicking them from pillar to post. Meanwhile the RUC allowed masked Loyalists wielding pickaxe handles to gather on the bridge leading across to Derry's nationalist City side.

SAME OLD STORY

The pictures of police restraining Derry Loyalists, which were shown on every news bulletin, only occurred when a crowd of nationalist youth gathered to take on the Loyalist bully-boys.

Even then the RUC saved their best efforts for the nationalists, driving their armoured landrovers through a crowd who committed the cardinal offence of flying an Irish tricolour flag. An hour later, while Loyalists continued their terror tactics, the RUC launched another motorised attack on nationalists in the city, mounting pavements and firing plastic bullets.

It was the same story elsewhere. In Belfast, where clashes between police and Protestants did occur, the RUC also let Loyalists break through the 'peace line' dividing the city, to attack nationalist residents with bricks and petrol bombs. In Lurgan, County Armagh, RUC officers



THE RUC LET ARMED LOYALISTS OCCUPY DERRY'S MAIN BRIDGE

watched Loyalists stone nationalist women workers in a local factory and set fire to the workshop. The police even threw terrified women seeking protection out of their vehicles. And in County Fermanagh, the RUC was nowhere to be seen as Loyalists, some reputed to be Ulster Defence Regiment members, pursued two nationalists in a 20-mile car-chase before beating up both. One man turned back at a Loyalist road-block asked an RUC patrol in attendance why they weren't opening the road as they had said they would. A policeman only shrugged and said, 'There's plenty of other f...ing roads in Fermanagh.'

At the end of this 24-hour catalogue of Loyalist intimidation and police complicity, RUC chief constable John Hermon announced that his men had 'done their duty'. And he was right. Anglo-Irish agreement or no, the RUC remains a British police force in Ireland.

Its job is to enforce Westminster's rule by repressing the nationalists who want to see Ireland free and united.

The tensions now rising within the RUC

about the occasional clashes with Loyalists reflect the two aspects of the Anglo-Irish accord. The real content of the deal is a tightening of security against the republican movement, with more coordination between security forces North and South of the Border against the IRA. The RUC is all in favour of this aspect of the agreement. As reported in past editions of *Ins*, police interrogators have boasted to arrested republicans about the new powers and repressive apparatus they expect to get as a consequence of the London-Dublin security pact.

The other aspect of the Anglo-Irish deal is the window dressing of reforms, and of a new 'consultative' role for Dublin in the affairs of Northern Ireland. It has riled the Loyalist politicians, excluded from the negotiating process. And it has led to moves like last year's police re-routing of Loyalist marches away from nationalist areas, which forced the RUC to tussle with their neighbours on Protestant parades. This is what the publicised police dissidents are complaining about. They are all in favour of

a security clampdown on supporters of Irish freedom, but they're unhappy about paying the political price for it.

Despite the RUC men's misgivings, the British authorities cannot completely ditch the public relations exercise of 'reforms' under the Anglo-Irish agreement. That would make it obvious to all that the accord was only about undermining the republican movement, and would discredit the deal in the eyes of most moderate nationalists. So the RUC will have to make a few more token gestures towards 'impartial policing', especially during the Loyalist marching season that starts this month. And a militant minority of Loyalists will take them on. 'Reforms' like re-routing marches are superficial and irrelevant to the real issues in the Irish War. But such rituals of Loyalism are important to hardline Protestants, in confirming their superior status over Catholics in Northern Ireland.

BRITISH VIOLENCE

The hypocrites of the British establishment have condemned the Loyalist mobs who came out on the day of action, and said that they will not tolerate such violence. That's rich, coming from the politicians and officials responsible for the real violence in Ireland today.

The RUC is a Crown police force whose commanders, the agents of the British government, are willing to allow Loyalists to run riot through nationalist areas, so long as the television cameras are focused on a few Protestants throwing bottles at the police elsewhere.

The British media highlighted the fact that four RUC men were hurt when they finally escorted the besieged women workers out of their Lurgan factory. But local nationalists know the RUC better than to believe such propaganda. In 1982 police gunner murdered six nationalists around Lurgan, as part of a strategy dictated by the British government.

IRELAND'S DEFENDERS

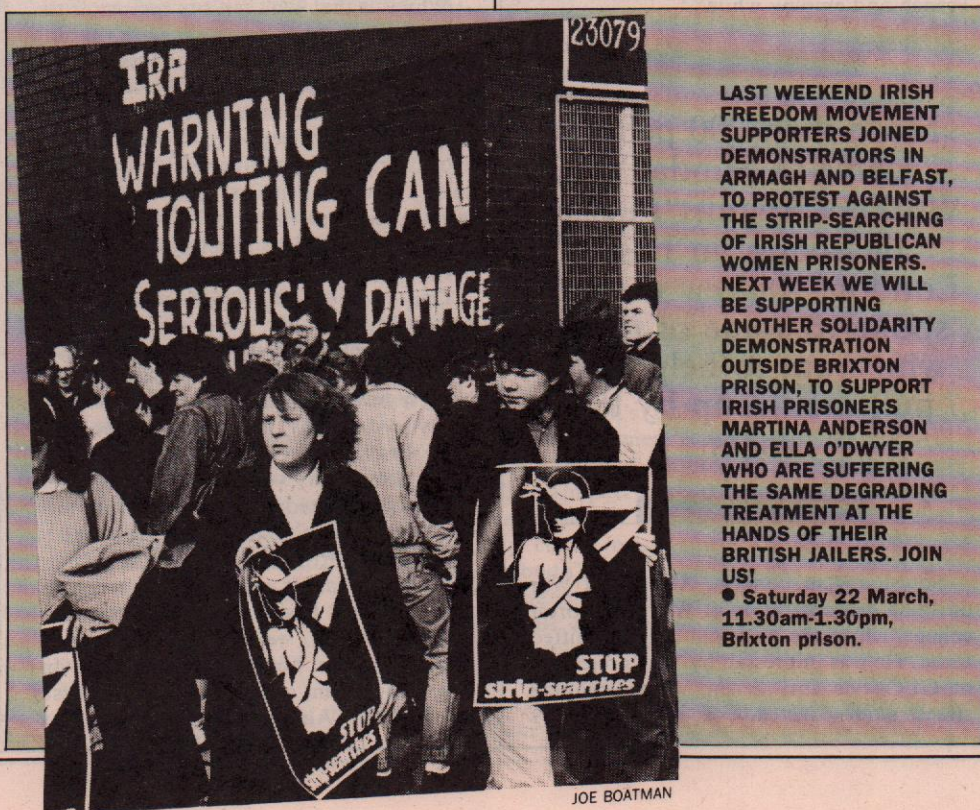
What about the British Army, whose strength in Ireland had supposedly been increased to counter violence around the 24-hour strike? The extra troops, or the original ones come to that, were nowhere to be seen as the RUC watched Loyalists attack nationalists all day. The Army's only intervention in any incident was in Derry, where troops in riot gear fired plastic bullets to disperse nationalist youths on the edge of the Bogside. Irish people may have had to contend with armed bullies at road-blocks for one day. But their roads are blocked every other day by British Army checkpoints, manned by men whose weapons are much more deadly than any lump of wood.

Nationalists living in the Irish war-zones know they cannot rely on the RUC, the Army or any other arm of the British state to protect them from rampaging Loyalists.

Whatever trouble happens between the police and Protestant demonstrators does not alter the position of those oppressed by the British presence in Ireland. The hard-pressed nationalists will continue to look to the IRA men who patrolled their streets during the 24-hour strike, and the youths who drove Loyalists out of a nationalist estate in Enniskillen and British troops out of the Bogside, to defend them against Loyalist mobs and policemen alike.

STARTS NEXT WEEK: THE BORDER WAR

Mick Hume's three-part series of exclusive reports from the republican strongholds of 'Bandit Country', where British soldiers fear to tread and locals call the IRA 'the Army'.
Part One: 'Crossmaglen — Brits' graveyard'



LAST WEEKEND IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT SUPPORTERS JOINED DEMONSTRATORS IN ARMAH AND BELFAST, TO PROTEST AGAINST THE STRIP-SEARCHING OF IRISH REPUBLICAN WOMEN PRISONERS. NEXT WEEK WE WILL BE SUPPORTING ANOTHER SOLIDARITY DEMONSTRATION OUTSIDE BRIXTON PRISON, TO SUPPORT IRISH PRISONERS MARTINA ANDERSON AND ELLA O'DWYER WHO ARE SUFFERING THE SAME DEGRADING TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF THEIR BRITISH JAILERS. JOIN US!
• Saturday 22 March, 11.30am-1.30pm, Brixton prison.

JOE BOATMAN

THE LEFT RETREATS BEFORE KINNOCK



ET TU, BLUNKETT?

UNDER THE WITCH-HUNTER'S SPELL

At Bournemouth last October Kinnock took on the left. He condemned the 'grotesque chaos' to which Liverpool's left-wing council had reduced the city, denounced Arthur Scargill and declared open war on Militant. In earlier years the left would have fought back. It would have promoted its campaigning work in the Anti-Nazi League, the People's Marches for Jobs, CND or the miners' support groups.

The striking thing about Neil Kinnock's purge of Militant is the muted response of Labour's left wing, writes John Pearson

At the very least the left would have flooded union branches, trades councils and conferences with outraged protests against autocratic leadership. It would have replied to Kinnock's assertion of his prerogatives as leader with campaigns to make the party more democratic and the leader more accountable.

But under Kinnock's leadership the party has steadily drifted to the right, and the left has become isolated. The left has softened to the point where it is no longer capable of even defending itself.

Militant first came under fire in 1981, when the media seized on the issue as a stick with which to beat the newly appointed Labour leader, veteran left winger Michael Foot. Concerned to project a moderate image, the leadership set up an inquiry which found Militant guilty of being a separate organisation within the party. In February 1983 the national executive duly expelled the five members of the *Militant* editorial board.

Militant's reply to this assault from the party leadership set the tone for its response to subsequent witch-hunts. It issued a few statements of protest and organised a few public meetings, but then called a halt to resistance. By the time the 1983 conference ratified the expulsions, Militant had long accepted the leadership's terms for staying in the party. It came to an informal arrangement: if the leadership limited its purge to the big five, then Militant would not make a big fuss about the witch-hunt.

For a while Militant's compromise with the leadership seemed to pay off. In 1983 it gained two MPs and control of Liverpool council. It obliged the party bosses by

refusing to join other left factions in organising against the Labour leadership. But this peace could not last. The 1983 conference elected a new party leader, and before long Kinnock needed to demonstrate his authority over the party. Through 1984 the miners' strike buoyed up the left and stayed Kinnock's hand. But once the miners were beaten, the way was clear for Kinnock to put the boot in. Since 1983 more than 50 left wingers — not all Militant supporters — have been expelled from the Labour Party.

The soft left has played a typically hypocritical role in the purge. At Bournemouth last October David Blunkett, the leader of Sheffield council and a prominent figure on the soft left, made a conciliatory gesture to Derek Hatton — and offered his services to the party leader in the drive against Militant. 'We must cease the purge mentality,' said Blunkett, as he set about purging Militant. He was so opposed to the purge mentality that he threatened to resign if his Sheffield council colleagues refused to kick out a harmless local Militant, Paul Green.

The rest of the soft left follow the Blunkett line. Protesting their hostility to witch-hunts, they join in the witch-hunt against Militant.

'We're against purges, but here's a dossier of evidence for a purge of Militant,' declared supporters of the Labour Coordinating Committee and *Tribune*. When the executive voted to take steps towards the expulsion of 16 members of the Liverpool party, the soft left played a key role in swinging the vote by two to one in Kinnock's favour.

EVERYDAY STORIES

The soft left's evidence against Militant falls into two categories. First is the revelation that Liverpool Labour Party is run in an undemocratic and bureaucratic manner — just like every other local Labour Party. Tales about packing meetings, manipulating resolutions and intimidating political opponents are everyday stories in the world of the Labour bureaucracy. Yet the left has not produced a dossier on right-wing intrigue in Roy Hattersley's Birmingham constituency, or in Peter Shore's in East London. Nor has the left inquired into the dubious trade union delegates who took part in the recent reselection of right winger John Gilbert — one, Gilbert's wife, an Earl's Court fashion designer, is the delegate for the GMBATU quarryworkers' branch.

The second category of complaints against Militant focuses on the high living and smart dressing of Derek Hatton. The rest of the left has a particular dislike for the man *Socialist Organiser* calls 'Flash Harry'. This is strange because the left seems to have little objection to the lavish lifestyles long enjoyed by the party leadership. And the left

has never criticised dapper Hackney MP Ernie Roberts for his sartorial elegance. But the trendy left prefers its representatives to wear kickers and jeans and carry a filofax. The soft left heroes shun fashion, dress down in public and spend their ample supplies of quango cash on tickets for the opera. Much of the distaste for Hatton is little more than old-fashioned middle class snobbery.

While more and more left wingers have decided that 'we've got to draw the line somewhere', and gone over to support the Kinnock line, Militant has sounded another retreat. Even in Liverpool, it's hard to find a Militant paper seller on the streets because supporters are so afraid they might be the next to go. Immediately after the executive decision on expulsion, Militant leaders announced that they would summon a meeting of the banned District Labour Party the following day, in open defiance of Kinnock. In the event the meeting was discreetly turned into a private rally called by the Labour group of councillors. At last week's Scottish Labour Party conference in Perth, Militant supporters could be seen applauding a speech by general secretary and witch-hunter-in-chief Larry Whitty. Copies of *Militant* were even more difficult to get hold of than Eddie Shah's *Today*.

AN INTERNAL SQUABBLE

Militant is the victim of its own parasitic relationship with the Labour Party. It relies on the Labour machine for its survival.

This means that it is forced to pay any price to cling on to the diseased body of the labour bureaucracy. It must accept every humiliation at the hands of the party leadership, while hoping that it will stop short of kicking every Militant paper seller out of the party.

One of the most telling indications of the left's retreat from important political issues is the Socialist Workers' Party's preoccupation with the Militant purge. Ever since the Labour conference six months ago, the SWP has made the internal squabble of another party the central focus of its propaganda and activity. At a time of unprecedented attacks on the working class, mounting racism and attacks on women's rights, the SWP devotes its resources to defending one variety of Labourism against another. Instead of trying to build a party by giving a lead in the real struggles of the working class, the SWP has reduced its horizons to 'building a socialist alternative to Kinnock' and picking up a few disillusioned Militant supporters.

The retreat of the left before Kinnock reflects its irrelevance to the working class. The crumbling of the hard left confirms the need, not for an alternative to Kinnock, but for a real alternative to the Labour Party.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

Today

The first issue of Eddie Shah's new daily paper was fronted by a full-colour photo of the Queen. Readers were informed that this picture of Her Majesty in Australia had been 'transmitted in seconds down a telephone line on a Israeli-made Scitex scanner machine'. The Scitex was at work again the next day, with a picture of Princess Diana filling the page one slot. On Thursday it brought us a portrait of Bob Geldof. By Saturday *Today* was scraping the Royal barrel with a picture of Princess Michael of Kent, but the nation's new daily paper was on its way.

Today is fiercely committed to the bland and uncontroversial journalism characteristic of British provincial newspapers. When the editor declared in the first issue that '*Today* will be independent of any political party', he meant it would be safe and inoffensive. The Royal family and folk heroes, like the values of enterprise and success which *Today* cherishes, are above politics. Eddie Shah, a self-made man who never ducks a challenge, is a symbol of the spirit of *Today*.

For *Today*, independence means not pushing any particular establishment line too hard, while the editorial board carefully reviews and balances the different options. This sort of independence is soon exposed when *Today* tries to affect a social conscience. The most critical article in the first week was entitled 'Soccer drink plan for the bosses only' which questioned the class prejudice displayed in the official ban on alcohol from the terraces, while allowing it in the directors' boxes. What appeared to be the most left-wing article of the week — 'Leyland for the workers' turned out to be a statement of support for the British managers' bid to buy out the company.

It was not long before the prejudices of the British middle classes began to seep through *Today's* pages. On Friday it revealed its cloven hoof — and its already well developed penchant for the journalistic cliché — with headlines such as 'Toytown Trots pay the price' and 'Why the comrades were caught red handed'. By Sunday it was frothing about the 'madness' of 'freakish people' on left-wing Labour councils who outraged 'common decency'. It offered a picture of Arthur Scargill with a one word caption: 'megomania'. The front page of the same issue featured the views of David Steel and David Owen on BL, in what was little more than an Alliance promotional poster.

Today revels in the success stories of today's Britain. Fashion designer Bruce Oldfield — headline 'rags to riches' (geddit?) — is the sort of independent man *Today* admires. Or take Dr John Rae, headmaster of Westminster public school, a man inspired by another symbol of British enterprise, Laura Ashley. For Rae, as for Ashley, 'challenge is the driving force'. Just consider what Rae has had to go through: 'As a staunch defender of the public school system, he earned Labour's loathing — yet, as a liberal thinker, educational reformer, and a fully paid up member of the SDP, he managed to offend the Tories who paid his wages.'

This only goes to show that enterprise and independence is but a step away from the receipt of an SDP membership card. *Today* does not want a clear political identity because it does not want to take responsibility for the ruthless measures necessary to keep British capitalism in business. That is why it is so independent. It wants to enjoy the fruits of exploitation, while others get on with the unpopular job of propping up the system.

Some Yorkshire people are still paying the price of the miners' defeat, as the courts continue to claim their victims. Last week a Yorkshire video shop owner, who tried to offset the crippling effects of the strike on his trade by forming an 'adults only' porn club, received a heavy fine. A 19-year old youth, who told a policeman that 'the boot is on the other foot now the miners' strike is over' before putting his boot into the policeman's car, was sentenced to six months' youth custody. A butcher was fined for selling meat by price rather than weight — a practice preferred by miners during the strike, and carried on in face of the hardship that still prevails.

Throughout the Yorkshire coalfield, miners got together last weekend on the anniversary of the end of their battle for jobs. How had the strike changed their lives and their attitudes?

'A HATRED FOR THE POLICE THAT WILL REMAIN FOREVER'

'We were all shocked, we'd only been used to one policeman in this village,' recalls one elderly resident of Fitzwilliam, a pit village which saw some of the worst police violence of the miners' strike. For many miners the experience of police terror has faded altogether: two miners at one North Yorkshire pit — one a picket-line regular — have taken redundancy and joined up. For others, memories of baton charges and pitched fights have become tales to tell their children. But for a significant minority the experience has left an enduring bitterness.

'There is a hatred for the police that will remain forever,' said one young miner who is still suffering the effects of a police beating.

'I don't think for a moment that every miner supported the use of violence against the police at Broadwater Farm, but there is more awareness of what the police are than ever before.' What about the death of PC Blakelock? 'Hard lines. Hard lines for him. If they go round smashing people's doors down with hammers, they can't cry about it when they get some back. People don't take to the streets for nothing.'

His mother remembers the scene as though it was yesterday. 'My son was running away from the police when he fell down. While he was down they knocked hell out of him. They broke his shoulder and his jaw. He had 15 truncheon marks down his back and head injuries besides. He's been off work since. He's still going to hospital.'

His wife described what happened the night the police rampaged through the village. 'They were after certain people. When they came they went mad, smashing the place up. People in the way got knocked around, but the ones they wanted were taken away. The police in riot gear surrounded the house. His mother's 71, so they called her an "old bastard". We had to go into hospital one at a time with a police escort. I said, "What do you think I'm going to do?" My husband didn't even know where he was, he kept asking, "What's this on my back?" When I found out they were truncheon marks I was so mad I stormed out to tell the television, but not much of it came out.'

The family put in an official complaint, 'not expecting any justice, and not getting any'. The police complaints officers said that the police officer in charge of the operation that night was 'of rank': 'I thought yes, rank rotten, they lied up to their teeth.'

One community policeman still lives in the village. During the raid that led to a riot he was seen pointing people out to the snatch squads. His windows have been broken many times since, and his house paint-bombed. One morning he woke to find there was nothing left of his garden: the trees had been dug up and replanted in the old folks' gardens. The metal grilles on the windows of the local police station were taken down after the strike, but soon had to be replaced. In a few nights in the summer of 1984 many Yorkshire miners learnt more about the police than in all the preceding years — and they have not forgotten.

'THE FURTHER YOU GOT FROM THE KITCHEN, THE MORE YOU COULD SEE'

'Things will never be the same again,' was a phrase on the lips of many women who played an active role in the dispute — but how deep did the changes go for the women of the mining communities? 'Maybe 10 miners at every pit have really changed,' says Pat. 'The atmosphere used to be great. We got treated as equals, but now it's gone back to how it was. During the strike it'd be, "You women should get a holiday in Spain after all this is over, you're doing a

great job." Now you'd be lucky if they bought you a half.'

Pat says the strike opened a lot of women's eyes, but things didn't go far enough. 'The main role for the women during the strike — never mind "we're not going back to the kitchen sink" — was the kitchen sink. We went from one kitchen sink to a bigger one.'

When women got the chance to play a bigger role they made the most of it. 'I went picketing. In the riots the women changed into jeans and got on with putting up the barricades. The further you got from the kitchen, the more you got to see what was really going on. As for affiliating to the NUM I can't understand why we'd want to. We wouldn't get a vote and we'd just come under the rule book.'

One woman canteen worker at a colliery said she thought the strike had been 'a waste of time'. 'We knew we were beaten after six months, it shouldn't have gone on for a year. What did it get us?' She said she was right behind the strike and the union, but believes the miners were fighting a losing battle from the start. 'Maggie Thatcher was prepared to bring the country to its knees to beat the miners, we would never have won even if we'd stayed out for two years.'

A young miner standing at the counter interrupted: 'We had to fight, we had no choice about it, I'd do it again tomorrow.' Another miner's wife said, 'The strike really changed me and made me political. I hardly used to go out and I didn't go anywhere without my husband. But there was no stopping me once I got involved.' Janet says that a lot of the women who got involved have dropped out now, some have joined the Labour Party, and some are carrying on with the support group which has become more and more like a charity. 'I'd do it again, but I'd do it different next time. I wouldn't stay in a soup kitchen for a start. I'd be out organising and arguing with people.'

'THERE'S NO "SOCIAL COSTS" UNDER THIS SYSTEM'

'There's a feeling of despondency now,' said one young miner, 'even people who were militant in the strike are wanting to get out of the industry.' Since the strike ended one Yorkshire miner in four has taken redundancy — 13 000 have gone and eight pits have closed. Nationwide, more than 30 000 jobs have disappeared and nearly 30 pits have shut down. Many miners see no future down the pit, and have decided to get out while they can.

The union's reliance on the colliery review procedure has contributed to a fatalistic attitude towards pit closures. In November the men at Kinsley Drift voted by five to one to fight closure. But the campaign against closure is flagging as everybody waits for the result of the review panel at the end of March. Having had little direction from the union the campaign organisers are putting their faith in local churchmen. The NUM leaders' strategy of pleading for mercy from the review panel has deepened the divisions. Many miners blame fellow miners for not fighting, just because they have voted to accept closure before the review procedure has run its course.

The real responsibility lies with the NUM leaders who have failed to organise resistance at

THE MINERS

OUR DAY V

While the media gloat over the employers' victory the miners look back with a mixture of pride and bitterness at the jobs they lost. Joan P...



SACKED MEN FROM SOUTH KIRKBY STILL SURVIVE BY STANDING IN THE PIT LANE, COLLECTING

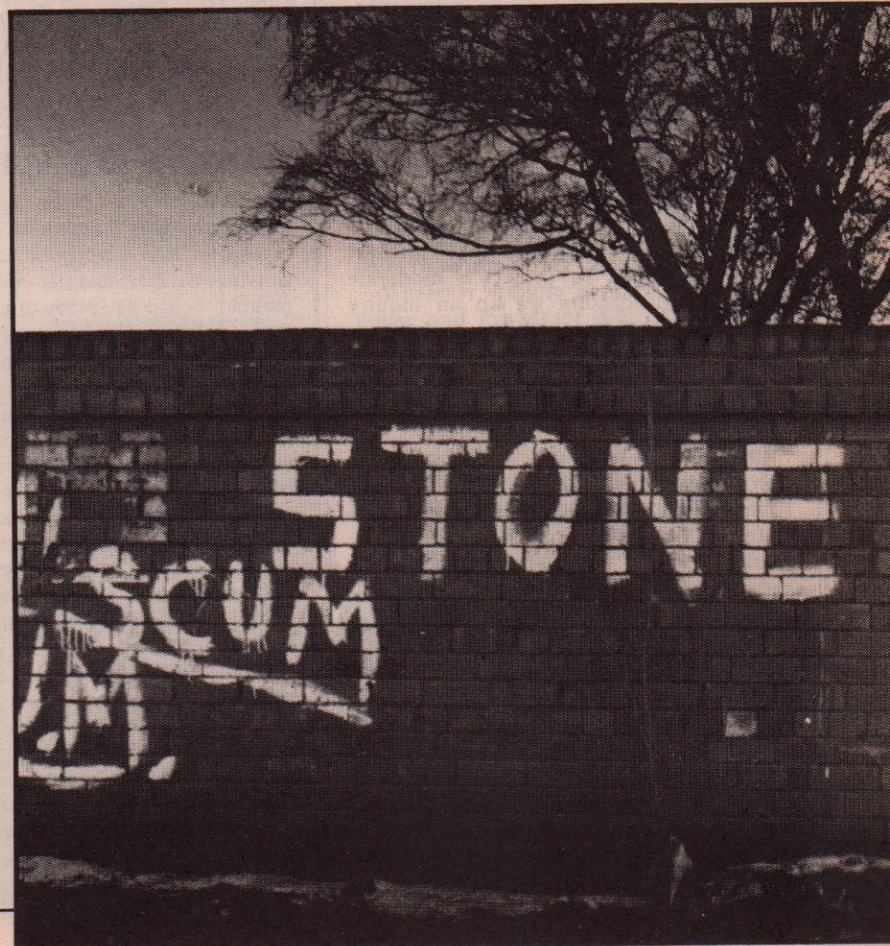
national level, not with those who have been left to fight alone. But the bureaucrats have not had it all their own way.

At a recent meeting in Barnsley a Houghton Main miner told a union official that it was useless trying to persuade the bosses and the review panel that the 'social costs' of closure were an argument for keeping unprofitable pits open. 'There's no such thing as "social costs" under this system,' he said, 'the bosses aren't in it for our welfare, they're in it for their

profits. We've got to look out for ourselves and fight again.'

HYPOCRISY CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH

'Smoking can damage your health,' reads the sign outside the pit-head baths at Kellinge colliery. But the main threat to miners' health is the relentless drive to raise productivity since the strike ended. Mining has always been



ONE YEAR ON

VILL COME

actory and the union leaders lick their wounds,
e and bitterness to the 12-month battle for
illips reports



CASH FROM THEIR OLD WORKMATES

dangerous work. In the pit villages it is common to see men stopping to catch their breath every few yards. In the clubs you can see men, old and not so old, gasping and coughing and spitting blood into handkerchiefs. Now, after more than 15 years of decline, the accident rate is rising. Last week the coal board sent a 'safety special' bulletin to every miner, giving grim statistics of deaths and injuries. In the past two months 21 men have died as a result of accidents. The message from area director

Albert Tuke is 'look after your own safety'. Many miners find this hypocrisy difficult to stomach.

'They're telling us to cut corners to boost productivity one minute, and pretending to be concerned about rising accident rates the next,' said one.

A young miner at one of the area's most profitable pits is now laid up in bed, with metal pins in a leg shattered in a pit-head accident. He has a wife and four children, but he won't work

for a year and compensation is not guaranteed. Just before Christmas his uncle was killed in one of the Selby 'superpits' and two of his workmates had similar accidents in the same week he did. His wife says she's not surprised. 'They're forcing up production like mad. Something has to give.' As always, it is the miners who have to give — with their bones and blood.

'Somebody's going to get killed down here soon,' said an angry face worker at Prince of Wales colliery. 'There's a 10-inch air gap between the top of the water and the roof. We've got two clapped-out pumps, if one gives up the whole place will flood in minutes.' At some pits the board has abolished sick leave. When a miner hurt his arm and sent a sick note he was told 'sick is absent' and 'absenteeism won't be tolerated'. Threatened with the sack, he went back to work early — and made his injury even worse.

Many union officials are going along with the drive for productivity at all costs. One Yorkshire area official welcomed the 'opportunity to increase productivity as it means better bonuses for the men'. But productivity increases are paid for with broken bones and wasted lives. The area council has accepted the board's ultimatum on incentive schemes as a basis for pay negotiations — schemes that can only make conditions worse down the pit. Area president Jack Taylor says that the NUM's record in Yorkshire of pursuing industrial injury claims 'is second to none'. Taylor can tell that to the men who have lost arms and legs to satisfy the coal board's quest for profits.

'THEY'VE BEEN LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES'

At the end of February Kevin Russell, a miner sacked after the strike, was reinstated. He didn't get his own job back and he has lost all the benefits of years of working in the industry. But at least he has a job: more than 500 of his fellow miners have been permanently victimised, and a dozen are still in prison.

Mick Jinks was prosecuted for breaking a coal board window at South Kirkby, and was subsequently sacked. Joe Henry lost his job for shouting at a scab. In all six were sacked at South Kirkby — and only one got his job back. Every Friday the sacked men stand with their collecting buckets at the top of the pit lane.

'I wrote and told Arthur Scargill about them lads standing collecting money at the pit gate,' said one local woman. 'It's humiliating for them to have to do it, the union should pay them a wage.'

Rob Andrews is one of 24 sacked miners in Nottinghamshire. These men feel the isolation even more. They have to rely on the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers — not their own union — to represent them and finance their industrial tribunals. Some of the Notts men accuse the NUM leadership of turning its back on them. At a recent benefit for the sacked men at Creswell, local NUM leader Henry Richardson made a speech without once mentioning the victimised miners. One of the sacked men leapt on to the stage and criticised the union leaders. He got a standing ovation from the assembled miners and harsh words from the union officials.

David Gaunt from Shirebrook was 18 when he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for burning buses used to transport scabs. His father Trevor thinks he deserves a medal, like all the other prisoners of the miners' strike. 'They ought to be treated as special prisoners because that's what they are.' Many miners and their families think that the union has shrugged off its responsibility for defending the jailed men. 'I don't think there's enough being done,' said one woman who writes regularly to the prisoners.

What about Jack Taylor's campaigning work for the jailed men? Two Houghton Main miners laughed bitterly and said, 'If we could find him we'd dig him up.' The real indictment of the NUM leadership is that nobody seems to know how many miners are still inside. 'In my opinion they've been left to their own ends. Let's not forget, they are political prisoners, no matter how much the union shies away from it. It says a lot for the state of the movement that it can let all those miners rot in prison.' It's up to ordinary men and women to take up the fight for reinstatement and freedom for the victimised and imprisoned miners who have been all but forgotten by the union leaders.

THE MINERS' NEXT STEP

'They've picked on the wrong people this time,' said one miner when he heard about police harassment of supporters of the miners' next step campaign in Yorkshire. 'You were the people who had the bottle to stand up at the beginning for what you thought was right. And it turned out you were right — when you said that a national ballot was the only way to unite the miners and that the Scargill strategy couldn't win. You were prepared to take an unpopular line then, and that's stood you in good stead since.'

Over the past 12 months the miners' next step group has won a growing reputation for standing up to the coal board, the union bureaucrats and all their allies. Inspired by the rank and file movement of the past, we have sought to popularise the classic 1912 line:

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

We have campaigned against both the new-style collaboration of the UDM, and the old-style collaboration of the NUM leaders.

In our bulletins and at our many meetings we have argued that the miners can only go forward if they break all the old connections with the employers and re-establish a fighting union. This means:

- **boycotting the colliery review procedure:** we should expect nothing from the bosses that we cannot get through fighting
- **throwing out the Plan for Coal:** we should ditch the document and the ideas which have tied miners' livelihoods to the profitability of the coal industry
- **ending the check-off system:** we want to run the union in our own way, not through a cosy arrangement with the bosses
- **taking control:** we need to reorganise the NUM from pit level upwards to make it a fighting union, accountable to the rank and file.

The miners' strike did not stop the bosses' closure programme. But it had a dramatic effect on the outlook of many people in the mining communities and beyond, who lost all respect for the employers, the courts and the police. Some too learned that they could not trust the leaders of the labour movement.

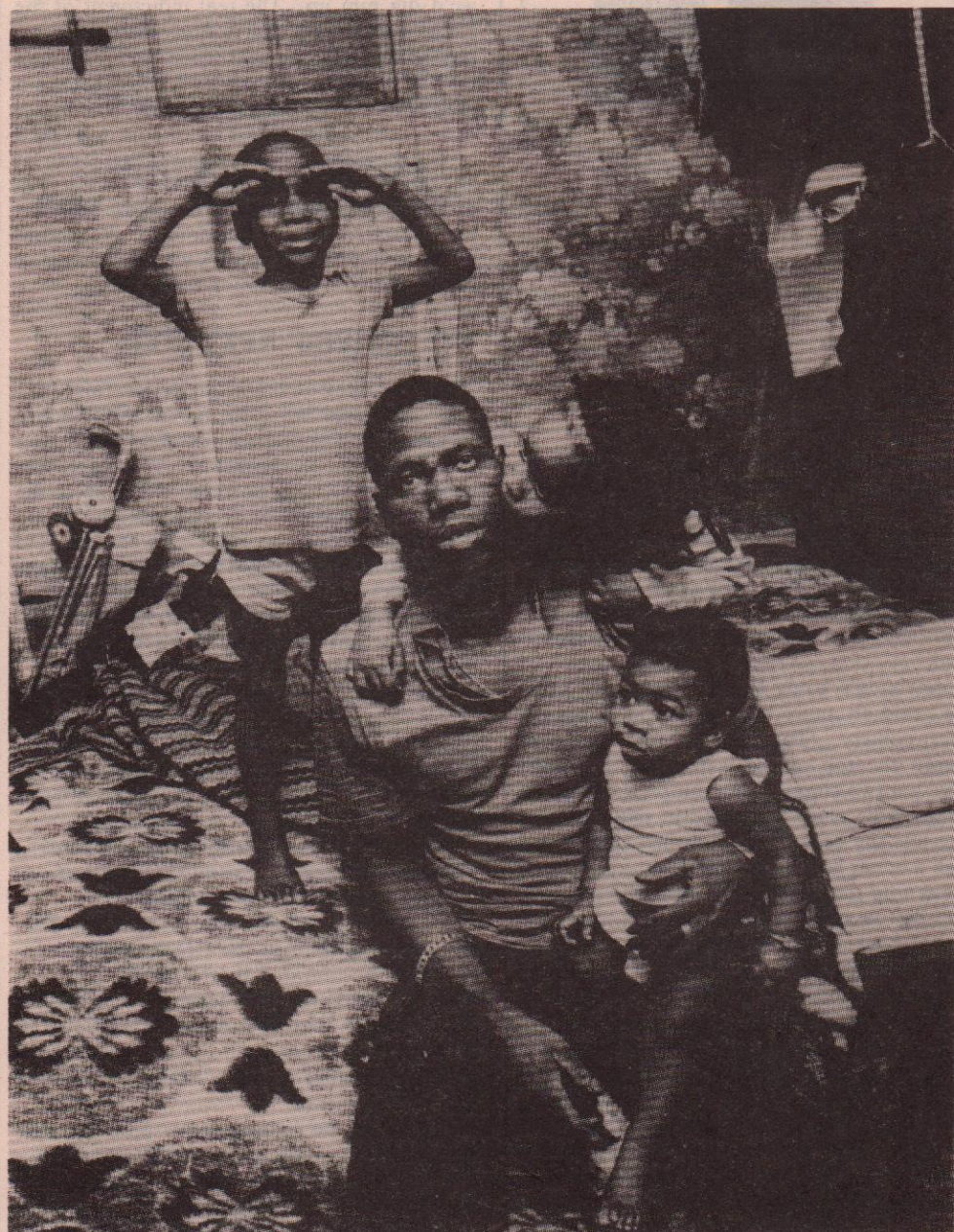
One woman sums up a view that has become widespread in Yorkshire since the strike. 'My family collected thousands of pounds for the NUM in the strike. So when some of our lads got into trouble with the police we naturally thought the union would help us out in court, which they should have done. But, oh no, they didn't want to know. Yorkshire president Jack Taylor said, "Knackers to them, they're just a bunch of hooligans anyway." It was weeks before my sons told me because they know I'm a fiery bugger. I thought I'm not standing for that and wrote to him: "For your information Jack Taylor I've brought five sons up and there's no way I brought them up to be hooligans. But perhaps you think your role is better served going to brass band concerts with colliery managers than defending your members. Such behaviour will put loyalty to the NUM in jeopardy. I'll finish this letter by reiterating your words — knackers to you Mr Taylor."'

When the miners have a leadership worthy of the courage and determination they displayed during the strike — and since — then we will be able to settle the scores still outstanding from the miners' strike of 1984-85.

(Additional material from Toby Banks, Terry Anderson and Jennifer Rathbone)



BLACKS DON'T COUNT



THIS VITRY 'HOTEL' IS UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION — OK FOR BLACKS

Last Saturday around 30 black workers assembled in a community centre in a working class district in the fifteenth quarter of southern Paris. They had come not to talk about the elections, but about how to avoid deportation, after the authorities refused to renew their residence permits. A community worker reported on his unsuccessful appeal to the Socialist minister for deportations: 'The worst thing is the guys we spoke to won't even be there in a couple of weeks.'

But the common view was that no post-election change of government personnel was likely to make much difference — all the major parties take an anti-immigrant line.

'Before Mitterrand got in, in 1981, the Socialists promised to help immigrants,' said Mamadou who helps run the centre. 'At first it looked like they meant it. People who were illegal were allowed to register — get "regularised" as the Socialists called it. But since then things have got steadily worse. The whole regularisation thing was a con. The people here are mostly people who registered then. Now the government won't

renew their permits.' Zaidi, a north African, agreed: 'Before, it was OK if you had a job. Now they make problems all the time, no matter what you do.'

Thousands of workers like Zaidi have been trapped by the government's new immigration laws. Mamadou explained: 'Under the new rules you don't get a job unless you have the proper one-year or 10-year permit. But you also don't get the permit unless you have a job. So what are people meant to do? If you're black and unemployed, you've had it. The whole situation is just a nightmare for us.'

The rapidly growing French National Front has made racism the central plank of its election platform. But racism is far from being the exclusive preserve of the far right. The Socialist government has authorised a clampdown on all black people in France, particularly on the one million-plus north African immigrants concentrated around Paris, Lyons and Marseilles.

Under Mitterrand, government policy has given the green light to racial prejudice throughout French society.

Down the road from the community centre there is a 'foyer' — a glorified barracks, provided by the social services department to house single blacks. Residents are squeezed into bunk beds, two or three to a tiny room. According to the opinion polls, housing is the number one problem. Government spending cuts have created an acute shortage of accommodation. But black people face more than the usual problems in finding adequate housing. Carlos Bravo, a leading anti-racist activist, says that local councils often refuse to house immigrants. 'It's not exactly legal, but they get away with it anyway. Usually they just

say they're full up — even when everyone knows they've got lots of empty flats.' In many districts on the outskirts of Paris — most run by Socialist or Communist councils — discrimination is rife.

Left-wing councillors have turned housing into another focus of racism. The argument often used to justify discrimination in housing is that keeping the number of immigrants down is necessary for 'social peace'. The Communist Party bears a particular responsibility for popularising the view that blacks are a problem. Its chief complaint in recent parliamentary debates on race and immigration has been that blacks are concentrated in districts with Communist councils. The consensus that blacks are best kept out means that many black people are forced to live in squalor.

RACIST JUSTICE

In a 'hotel' in Vitry on the outskirts of Paris, 72 adults and 33 children are housed in 37 rooms. There is no hot water or heating. But the private landlord charges £160 a month for each room. The residents' campaign to persuade the council to rehouse them has failed. But they may soon be evicted by the health board, which has declared the place unfit for human habitation. If they are evicted the families will be on the street. That means more trouble from the immigration authorities — residence permits are not extended unless you can provide evidence of suitable accommodation.

In their election manifestos, both the National Front and the right-wing RPR call for blacks to be excluded from some welfare benefits. But the Socialist government has already effectively implemented such policies in housing and other social services. The Socialists have paved the way for more drastic measures under the right-wing regime which is certain to rule France after this week's assembly elections.

In one afternoon last week, a small magistrates court in a sub-district of Paris dealt with 15 immigrant offenders. The sentences indicate the kind of justice immigrants can expect in France:

● Konate, a 26-year old man from Mali, was sentenced to six months imprisonment followed by six years banishment from France, for possession of hashish.

● Benamon, a 19-year old Moroccan, got three months in prison and three years banishment for carrying false papers.

● Turquia, a 29-year old Algerian woman, was banished for one year for not living where she was registered.

Mitterrand's government has adapted the law to make deportation the catch-all punishment for immigrants who are petty offenders.

The up-market French daily paper *Le Monde* recently remarked that 'thanks to repatriation the growth of unemployment has slowed down'. According to official figures, last year alone 45 000 immigrants were repatriated under redundancy schemes run jointly by the government and employers.



The murderer of 19-year old Wahid Hachichi got a five-year sentence, of which two years were suspended. The judge considered the killer's claim, that Wahid was attempting to steal his car, served as an 'extenuating circumstance'. There have been more than 100 racist murders in France in the past four years.

In the French car industry, where most production lines are manned by immigrant workers, repatriation has become central to rationalisation schemes. Plans to shed up to 20 000 jobs in the next five years rely on removing most of the workers not only from the car factories, but also from the country. Citroen has announced 800 redundancies at its plants at Clichy and Nanterre. The company declared that 'assuming that all the immigrant workers accept repatriation, that leaves only 300 workers to re-train'.

Repatriation has provided employers with a useful weapon, to divide the working class and pre-empt resistance to the shake-out of jobs.

Mitterrand's repatriation policies expose the real meaning of the left's nationalist programme for regenerating French industry. By promoting a racist response to industrial decline, the left itself has become the executor of the right's 'French jobs for French workers' policy. The unions' acceptance of this divisive approach shows how far the rot has gone.

RACISM AND THE LEFT

In the final weeks of the election campaign all parties have toned down their racist propaganda, in the hope of winning more middle of the road floating voters. But racism has become a key factor in French political life. By adapting to the chauvinist and racist prejudices of the French establishment, the Socialists have supplied the right with a powerful political weapon. Mitterrand's party is likely to feel the consequences at the polls next week.

But the damage is not only to the Socialist Party. The policies of the Mitterrand government have accelerated the fragmentation of the working class itself. While immigrant workers have been at the sharp end of attacks both from official agencies and from the racist gangs, the mainstream labour movement has also suffered. Unions which have long turned a blind eye to discrimination against immigrants have proved equally ineffective in defending blue-blooded Frenchmen. As unemployment climbs, union membership has plummeted

and living standards have stagnated.

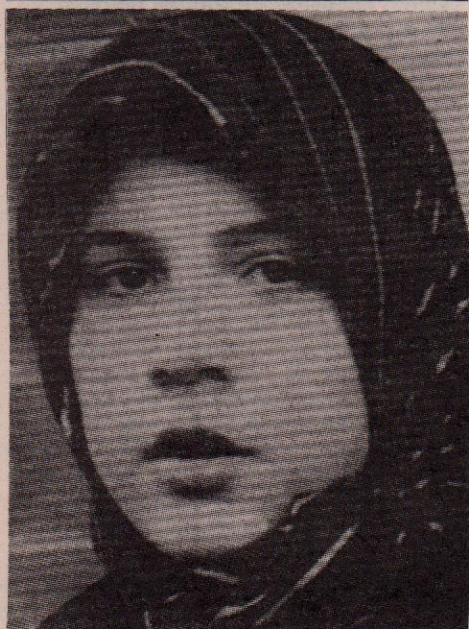
There has been little resistance from the left to the rising menace of racism in France. The interview in last week's *ms* with Lutte Ouvriere, the largest far left group in France, revealed its underestimation of the importance of racism. The French left, like its British colleagues, prefers to avoid racism, treating it at best as a question of civil rights. Racism is regarded as marginal to the class struggle, as an issue which can safely be left to black groups and middle class liberals.

As a result anti-racist activity has become isolated from the working class — the only force that can really challenge racism.

The role of racism in the French elections confirms the urgent need for a working class anti-racist movement in France. A movement which took on the pervasive influence of racism over the labour movement, and rallied working class action in defence of the rights of immigrant workers, would not only deter the racists — it would greatly strengthen the whole of the working class.

A new consensus unites right and left in France: black people are its victims. Sabena Norton reports from Paris on the run-up to Sunday's elections

junius publications



Kate Marshall, *Moral Panics and Victorian Values: women and the family in Thatcher's Britain.*

Rape in a vicarage, a 12-year old Iranian child bride in Manchester, an 8-year old prostitute in Wolverhampton — it has been a good week for Britain's sex-crazed media, for the guardians of the nation's morals and for politicians eager for any pretext on which to introduce more repressive legislation.

While the Lord Chancellor calls for tougher punishments for rape, a judge cuts sentences imposed on a dozen paratroopers — 'fine young men and good soldiers' — who gang raped a young woman. In a society which treats women like property, as child-bearers and child-rearers, and as objects of sexual gratification, the establishment will never be able to protect women against rape. Harsher laws will mean more state repression for everybody, while 'fine young men and good soldiers' will always get off the hook.

Kate Marshall's pamphlet takes on the moralists and puts forward the cause of women's liberation. Still only £1.50 plus 40p p&p from Junius Publications, address below.

Also available from Junius

The Roots of Racism, is what we need to fight a system that stirs up racial prejudice over a sleazy childbride story and, within days, uses it to justify tightening up the immigration laws.

£1.95 plus 40p p&p.

Taking Control, Mike Freeman's handbook for trade unionists, is vital reading at a time when the traditions of the labour movement are proving more and more ineffectual against employers like Murdoch.

£2.95 plus 85p p&p

The Irish War, the Irish Freedom Movement handbook, has all the background on the strife among the 'Ulster' Loyalists, as well as motivating solidarity with the nationalist struggle.

£2.95 plus 85p p&p

Black blood on British hands, Charles Longford's survey of South Africa, shows that even though Frank Bruno can despatch Jerry Coetzee in seconds, the British labour movement has a long way to go before delivering the knockout to the apartheid system.

£1.50 plus 60p p&p

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ETHIOPIAN FAMINE

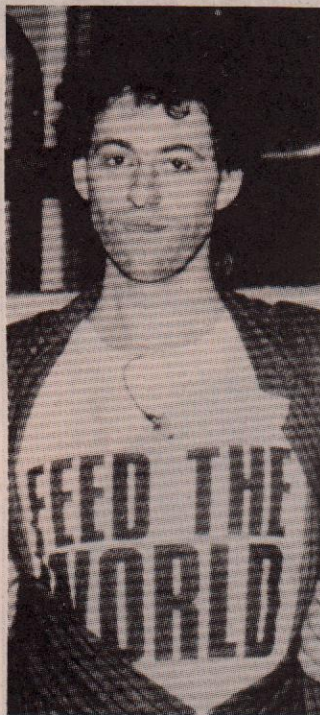
Saint Bob lashes out

David Blundy and Paul Valley,
With Geldof in Africa,
Times/Band Aid, £5.95

With Geldof in Africa demonstrates through photographs (by Frank Herrman) and words (by Blundy and Valley) that the Sahel famine is no natural disaster. In Timbuctoo, Mali, Geldof was told that the desert advances 20 miles southwards every year, slowly burying the town. Less than 10 miles away, a development project pumps 4000 gallons of water every second from the Niger into a network of irrigation channels, to allow the cultivation of rice. The technology exists, but as the project engineer explains, the country cannot afford to use it more widely.

It sticks in the throat when Geldof denounces African leaders who enjoy comfortable lifestyles while their subjects starve. Western businessmen and politicians may be more discreet in enjoying their wealth, but they carry a much greater burden of responsibility for the devastation of Africa.

Focusing on corrupt black politicians lets the system of Western domination off the hook. Most African economies produce cash crops for the world market, and only the cash crop sector has an incentive to



modernise. Food production is left to small farmers relying on neolithic technology.

When Geldof lashes out at whoever happens to be in front of him he often misses the point. The bureaucrats of the EEC are to blame, not because they refuse to ship European food mountains to Africa, but because Western governments are ready to use guns to enforce an international order which makes it impossible for Africa to produce enough to feed itself. Geoff Kendall.

MORE MORAL PANICS

Dear Victoria

Valerie Riches, *Sex and Social Engineering,* Family and Youth Concern £1.00

Victoria Gillick, *Dear Mrs Gillick: the public respond,* Marshall Pickering £2.25

The Family in Question, Diana Gittins (editor), Macmillan £5.95

Dear Mrs Gillick tells of the tribulations (and the trials) the author endured in her campaign to restrict the provision of contraceptives to young people. She presents herself as a tireless and inspired (by you know who) campaigner. Her campaign diary, which quotes extensively from letters of support from 'worried parents', spiced with a few poison pen letters, illustrates the growing influence of her style of sanctimonious moralism among politicians, the professions, the media and the wider public.

Valerie Riches is one of the brains behind Gillick. Her group, Family and Youth Concern, is dedicated to stop what she sees as a conspiracy 'to spread amorality that is destructive to the state and the family'. Both Gillick and Riches quote extensively from discredited studies which claim to prove a connection between sex and cervical cancer, and to reveal the dangers of contraception and abortion. Their concern for the 'future wives and mothers of society' reveals their view of what a woman's place should be. The Family in Question is an

assessment of the 'crisis of the family'. In her wide-ranging historical and sociological study, Gittins argues that there never has been such a thing as the family, simply diverse arrangements in which people carry out childcare, domestic work and sexual activity. She concludes that the family itself is not in crisis, but the ideology of the family is, because it no longer fits reality. But why now?

Because of her superficial view of the family as an institution sustained by ideology, Gittins fails to see how changing forms of family life over the past 200 years have been moulded by the demands of the capitalist economy. The remarkable feature of the modern family is not its diversity, but its uniformity, which results from its role in nurturing labour for capital, day in day out, year after year, generation after generation.

The crisis of the family corresponds to the more wide-ranging crisis of modern capitalist society. The family — and especially women — bear much of the strain of unemployment and welfare cuts. The establishment turns to the family to play an even more important role in holding together a disintegrating society. The crisis of the family is not at root a crisis of ideas, but a crisis of a social system. We need to take on Gillick, Riches and their sponsors, not only in the realm of ideas, but in a political struggle for women's liberation and for a society that can change the form of family life, by freeing women from their role in reproducing labour power for capital. Wendy Ellis

KUROSAWA MEETS SHAKESPEARE

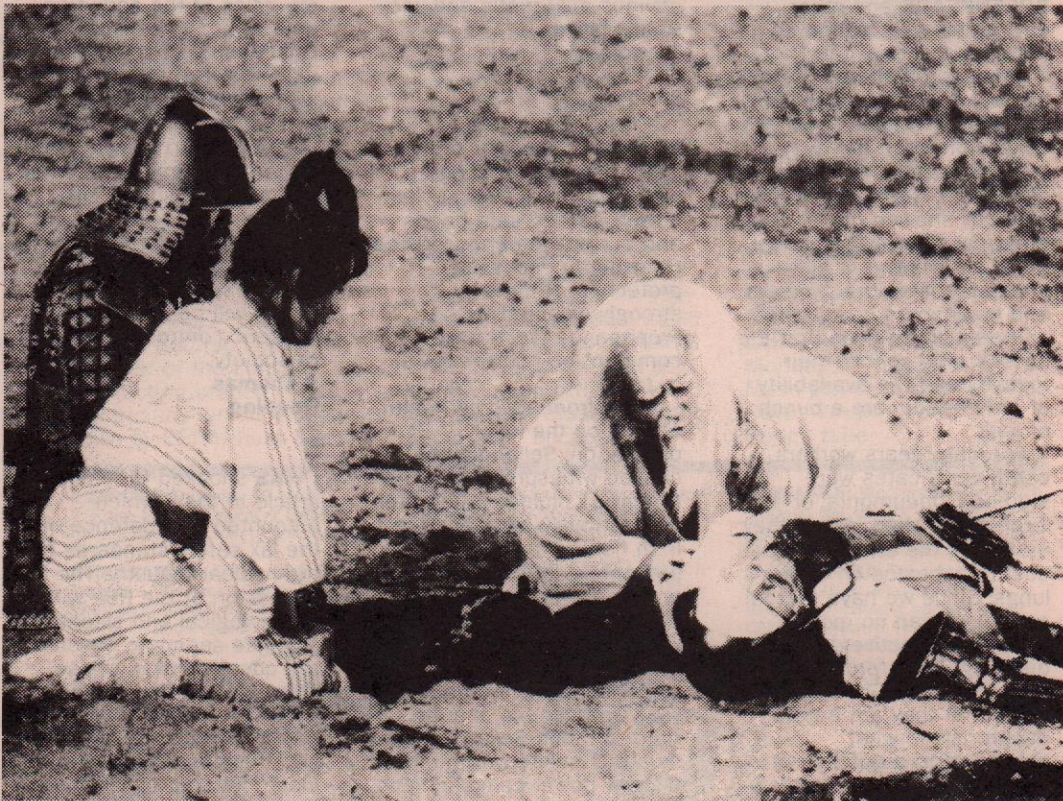
'Cheerless, dark and deadly'

Ran, Akira Kurosawa (director)

King Lear is a play about an individual and a society unhinged utterly by foolish pride and rapacious greed. It is set in ancient Britain but it aches with the tensions of seventeenth century England. Shakespeare felt that the stable moral systems of medieval society were vanishing, in a world where self-interest was the end and competition the means. The bonds on which society depends were being rent asunder, and Shakespeare gives us a terrifying glimpse through the fabric. Beyond society there is nothing, nothing but personal and political chaos.

Lear is a fitting piece for the great Japanese director Akira Kurosawa to choose to end a career that has spanned over 40 years and included such films as *The Seven Samurai*, *The Throne of Blood* (*Macbeth*), *Dersu Uzala* and *Kagemusha*. His title *Ran* — meaning 'chaos' — indicates the clarity with which Kurosawa has grasped and portrayed one of the main themes of the play. The film preserves its structure without following it literally, transposing the action to medieval Japan with its feuding Samurai lords.

The Great Lord Hidetora, in a gesture careless of his own history and the forces at work around him, abdicates and divides his kingdom between his three sons, but banishes the one truculent enough to confront him with his own stupidity. The older brothers lose no time in turning on their father, and the family proceeds to tear itself apart. The Edmund figure is here represented by Lady Kaede, wife of the oldest brother, but also avenger of her own family, previously wiped out by the



Great Lord. She is the immediate agent of destruction and Mieko Harada gives a performance of seething power.

Typical is the electrifyingly erotic moment when she licks the cuts she has just opened with her dagger on the throat of the second brother. The sub-plot of the original is for the most part abandoned, but there is a superb Fool played by Peter, a Japanese transvestite star.

The uncluttered centrepiece is the steady disintegration of Hidetora himself, played with all the necessary authority and bewilderment by Tatsuya Nakadai. As in the original, this is no domestic tragedy but an upheaval on a monumental scale. As you might expect from Kurosawa, it is played out on vast landscapes, against massive sullen castles and in titanic clashes between the armies of the competing factions. The grandeur and sombre beauty of nearly every frame provide a suitably majestic setting for the trauma and madness which engulf the

forsaken lord, and deepen the pathos of his decline.

He sits for example at the still centre of a ferocious battle which is at first accompanied only by Toru Takemitsu's score. The carnage without the sound is as vivid and compelling as a dream. By the time sound bursts upon the scene Hidetora, unable to comprehend his sons' treachery or the death of all his men, has gone mad. He is able only to stumble out into a desert of black volcanic ash, a truly blasted heath.

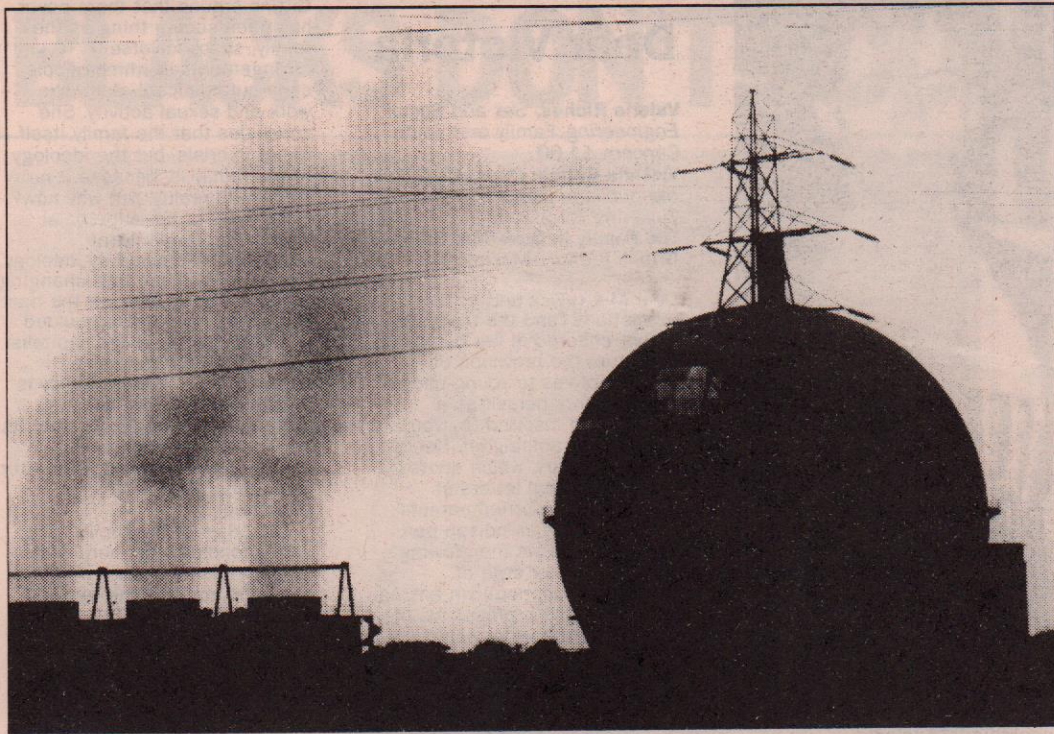
At the end of *King Lear* someone says 'All's cheerless, dark and deadly' and it's difficult to argue with that. Kurosawa makes it seem even worse. In the play Edmund is the disruptive, destructive figure, but his upstart ambition and iconoclastic vigour undoubtedly represent particular social forces. No such sense of historical complexity relieves *Ran*, where Edmund's role is displaced by the revenge theme (embodied in Lady Kaede and reinforced by the reference to

Hidetora's previous misdeeds). Here the characters are locked even more deeply into a timeless tragedy of human folly and wickedness, and the film is the weaker for it. Significantly too, the youngest son has nowhere near the redemptive potential expressed so dramatically by Cordelia.

The overwhelming visual splendour of Kurosawa's style perhaps does not permit the subtleties which can be developed in Shakespeare's verse. Certainly the film is at its weakest with the dialogue and in those scenes where the old man rambles on until he finds some reason in his madness. These depend upon a teasing verbal dexterity and specificity of allusion which are squeezed out by Kurosawa's art. But if it's relentless pessimism you want, you'll rarely do better than this. At the end we are left only with the bleak and bitter flute of a blinded youth stumbling on the edge of a precipice. Pat Ford

LETTERS

WRITE TO: *tns*, BCM JPLTD, LONDON WC1N 3XX



NUCLEAR POWER — YES PLEASE/NO THANKS?

GREENPEACE and other environmental groups who were the target of the Propaganda War (*tns* 9) do, I agree, let their single issue campaigns become an obsession when the overriding problem is the capitalist system. While you correctly showed the irrational side to the Sellafield scare it is quite understandable that workers and neighbours have fears and prejudices given that the bosses, who control their industry and the availability of information, are a bunch of liars.

For many years workers' death certificates were stamped 'pneumonia' or 'bronchitis' when in fact they died from the effects of coal dust or asbestos on their lungs. Since we have no real control we can no more believe radioactive discharges are 'probably harmless' than Greenpeace's claim that they are a great health risk. In what amounted to a defence of the nuclear industry's safety record under capitalist control, you didn't make fair comparisons. Surely the same drive for productivity and profits effects Namibian uranium miners, who supply the nuclear industry in this and other countries with its raw material, to a greater extent than even British miners.

The generation process at coal and nuclear fired power stations is basically the same. But the potential dangers are quantitatively different. The worst possible accident at a coal fired station would flatten the place. Whereas the worst imaginable nuclear accident could lay waste a huge area of the countryside. Under communism risks in all industries would be reduced, but not eliminated. The main difference would be that workers would have the greatest possible control,

and knowledge of the risks involved.

Until we put an end to capitalism, and gain that control and the knowledge that goes with it, surely we can only speculate about the advantages of nuclear energy over other forms, which have lacked technological investment or progress because — unlike nuclear power — they offer no obvious militaristic end-use.

Danny Lloyd Pontefract

AS a new supporter of the RCP I have come to agree with your views over nuclear power: safe in safe hands and a management prepared to invest in necessary protection. However, I strongly objected to the Propaganda War's poxy comment on nuclear power in *tns* 9.

Apart from adverse health effects on the local population, Sellafield has caused widespread damage to marine biology in the area and seriously damaged the Irish fishing industry. In the present situation where profits erase the safety of the environment and of the workforce, nuclear power is definitely a no-no.

From a detached point of view Greenpeace is quite right to taboo Sellafield. This must be isolated from anti-nuclear power campaigns as a whole. It is not anti-scientific because Greenpeace put forward an alternative, hydro-electric power, which is surely a commendable application of high technology.

Don't forget, however, that Greenpeace are not planning a revolution and so sets its aims on manipulating the system as best as possible.

Sharon Kinsella Pontefract

YOUR article on nuclear power in *tns* 9 did much to dispel the humbug surrounding the well-publicised radiation leaks at Sellafield. While workers are killed and maimed every day on building sites, down coal mines, on farms and increasingly on YTS schemes, left wingers and middle class liberals spend their time

worrying about the radiation levels of herrings.

Of course, inadequate safety regulations are flouted in nuclear power stations but moral indignation is a sure way of doing nothing to improve standards of safety for workers. The horrific levels of fatalities in the pits in the nineteenth century were only reduced by the struggles of the early trade unions, not by closing collieries or by government inquiries. The incomparably less harmful effects of nuclear power cannot be averted by turning our backs on this outstandingly cheap and efficient source of energy.

Fighting for better working conditions now prepares for the day when real health and safety will be guaranteed by workers' control of the whole of society.

A Thomas Reading

I WAS shocked to read an article in *tns* 9 which amounted to a defence of the lax safety standards of the nuclear industry. The obsession of the RCP with technological and scientific advance seems to obscure the question of in whose interests science is being used. The benefit of nuclear energy is seen not by the working class in cheaper electricity...but by the bosses in the increased profits made by the electricity board.

You can say that there have been no definite fatalities in the nuclear industry. This isn't because of its 'undeniably superior record of safety' but because the effects of radioactive contamination don't show themselves until years later with genetic abnormalities in children and diseases such as cancer.

Nuclear power has tremendous potential for solving our energy needs, and it could be made safe, but not while it's in the hands of capitalists whose only concern is profit. It is undoubtedly reactionary to oppose scientific advances, but to put scientific advance before the health and safety of workers is just as bad.

Gareth Richings Liverpool

tns GROWS ON YOU

I GO to the market at South Elmsall every week and more often than not I'll buy a left-wing paper. About a month ago I saw *tns* for the first time and bought it just for a change from the usual stuff I read, (the *Miner*, *Socialist Worker*). It surprised me to read such hard words about the Labour Party, and I was annoyed at first. I said as much to your sellers the next week and had a bit of a row about it. But they persuaded me to buy it again, and I read the feature on the elections with interest.

The same week my local Labour MP, Alec Woodall, was deselected and started moaning about not being allowed to die in office or retire with honour. I thought this was really pathetic, but to make it worse all kinds of others started to take advantage of the incident and slag him off for being pro-police during the miners' strike. As I remember none of these people were any better themselves and were just trying to get a bit of easy credibility, not least some union officials.

I'm not sure about all of your ideas but I am interested in your idea of a working class alternative to the Labour Party. I'm now considering voting for you if you stand a candidate in Hemsworth.

tns reader Leeds



NO MAIL MILITANCY

LAST week post office workers received a union leaflet outlining rationalisation plans at the PO. The plans are to reduce the workplaces by reorganising the PO into four businesses — mail, parcels, counters and National Girobank. Management are aiming to cut jobs through voluntary redundancies and avoid any militancy.

As far as I know, the union has made no response to this announcement. Judging from their antics over blacking the *Sun* bingo cards, where the union was rolled over by the courts without a fight, there won't be one now either. The bureaucrats are so scared of having union funds seized that they are incapable of doing anything but what the employers want.

The highly centralised structure of the union, which gives all power to the executive council, makes it difficult for rank and file workers to organise action. However, this must be done as the collaborators' interests are totally incompatible with those of the working class.

Postman Willesden SDO

STEPPING OUT

Graffiti spotted in a dirty little public toilet, opposite the Official Unionist Party headquarters in Belfast; 'Ulster Says No', then underneath, 'but the man from Del Monte, he say yes!' So that's why they call them 'Orangemen'.

A footnote to the mass media adulation poured on 'leading peacemaker' Olof Palme, after the Swedish premier and 'international diplomat' was shot dead. Under Palme, Sweden had a defence budget of \$4 billion. It spent one third of a billion on military research and development — more than Japan and Italy put together. And he built up a conscript army for which 58 000 people are eligible. Palme certainly did not discriminate on the grounds of race, colour or creed. He exported surface-to-air missiles to both sides in the India-Pakistan conflict, sold arms to anybody in the Middle East, and came close to clinching an aircraft and submarine deal with communist China. So that's what they mean by 'an impartial mediator in international affairs'.

Militant paid tribute to Palme last week. The eulogy concluded that, 'The massive demonstrations in honour of Palme show the potential for uniting workers on a programme of fighting the bosses' wage-cutting policies.' In fact, Palme was rather good at uniting workers against 'the bosses' wage-cutting policies' when he was alive. He introduced the wage cuts — and provoked the first mass strikes in Sweden for years.

Margaret Thatcher is to meet an Afghan guerrilla leader responsible for killing civilians, through bombing Kabul airport and attacking the city with rockets. A Downing Street Man-in-a-Suit assured the Guardian that the Afghans are 'only trying to resist an invader and win back their freedom. The prime minister has a degree of sympathy with the Afghan cause, inasmuch as they're trying to rid their country of invaders, which you cannot say of the ANC and PLO.' Of course, you can say it of the IRA. But not in front of Guardian readers.

Stop Press: NUM agrees to management lockout at Kellingley colliery! At the last meeting of the pit's joint union-management committee, a union rep raised the most pressing issue for every miner. He 'complained of damage being caused to wooden toilet seats, and asked if they could be replaced by either metal or plastic ones'. The coal board spokesman present rejected this invitation to give miners the cold steel, and instead suggested that 'the best thing would be to keep all but one of the toilets locked, and the men would have to request a key from the bath superintendent'. The NUM men appeared to accept this outrageous proposal for more management interference in miners' affairs. Once again, it seems our union reps are only interested in pursuing their own preoccupations — in this case a strange fetish about 'rubber boots', which they raise at every meeting.

Speaking of mining matters, I recently reported on a retired collier turned hotelier who offers free holidays to miners, and whose latest invitation to a Yorkshire pit carried the rider 'No branch officials this time.' After I published the item, the officials in question approached my informant and said that while they favoured freedom of information, 'some things just shouldn't be made public'. Like the fact that they told him that, I suppose.

EDDIE VEALE.

THE PARTY PAGE

DEADLINE FOR NEWS AND REPORTS: MONDAY 9AM 01-729 3771

Why it's got to be War

From the Labour left to the Tory centre, hundreds of politicians, union leaders, churchmen and quango-members profess their opposition to racism. They also oppose Workers Against Racism, because it tackles the menace of racism head on. Last week Workers Against Racism stepped up nationwide anti-racist resistance.

● **Nottingham:** During the recent Swamp operation in Nottingham's Hyson Green and Radford districts, police strip-searched black youth in the street.

Black community leaders called for a meeting with police chiefs, 'to identify what is good policing'. But on the streets of Nottingham, War supporters have argued that 'good policing' — five-a-side football matches and 'community liaison' — provides the police with the information they need to plan their terror tactics.

● **Birmingham:** A different reality, the report on Handsworth commissioned by West Midlands County Council, concludes that the government should enforce an anti-racist strategy. But the government's strategy is to enforce law and order, and attack black youth. 'Plastic bullets or the army?' home secretary Douglas Hurd asked recently, backing chief constable Geoffrey Dear's new strategy for policing Birmingham. Through street meetings and mass protests, War has voiced an unequivocal reply: 'Police off our streets.'

● **Leeds:** Racist attacks happen every day in south Leeds. The council's main response has been to stage Asian cultural evenings at the Kashmiri Welfare Centre in Beeston. War has

responded by arguing for workers' defence against racists.

● **Sheffield:** The attack on Bob Titus by Sheffield racists prompted formal complaints by local MPs Joan Maynard and Martin Flannery. But one of Titus' neighbours had a better idea. He used a hammer to intimidate the six-strong racist gang. Sheffield War aims to ensure that Titus' neighbour doesn't have to fight alone.

● **London:** On Monday the department of employment tried to introduce ethnic monitoring at London job centres. The civil service union CPSA refused to endorse action against the scheme, despite the decision to block it by CPSA members. East London Workers Against Racism organised pickets at Hackney and Fulham job centres. As we go to press, workers at these job centres are taking action against the scheme.

● **London:** At Morpeth school in Bethnal Green, patrols by East London Workers Against Racism have put a stop to racist attacks on Bengali students. On nearby housing estates where racist attacks are rife, supporters are going door to door promoting workers' action against racists. Elwar's work has been criticised by union officials in Waltham Forest council, whose newsletter recommends 'providing a stall at the annual festival for racial harmony' as an alternative tactic.

● **The labour movement:** On the streets, in trade union branches, in colleges and conferences, War opposes the immigration laws and challenges the prejudices that make racism

respectable in British society. War supporters have sold thousands of copies of the campaign handbook, *Roots of Racism* (see page 9 for details).

Cap-in-hand, most anti-racist campaigns politely ask the British establishment to be nice to blacks. But War means what it says. Every worker has an interest in fighting back against the oppression of black people, under a system which offers no future to any of us. War stands for workers' direct action, to deal with a threat to the whole working class.

War campaigning

BRISTOL: Friday 14 March 7.30pm, Public meeting, Stop racist attacks!, Speaker from East London Workers Against Racism, St Werburgh's Community Centre, Horley Road, St Werburgh

NORTH LONDON: Saturday 15 March 10.45am, Police off our streets!, meet Nag's Head, Holloway Rd

NOTTINGHAM: Saturday 15 March 11am, Police off our streets!, meet corner Gregory Boulevard/Radford Rd

SOUTH LONDON: Saturday 15 March 11am — Wreck the race checks!, meet either Brixton, Prince of Wales or Peckham, Sainsbury's, Peckham Rye Lane

GLASGOW: Saturday 15 March 11am, meet Victoria Bar, Victoria Road, Govanhill

NEWCASTLE: Saturday 15 March 10.30am, meet Monument, city centre

EAST LONDON: Sunday 16 March 3pm, War estate canvasses, meet either Upton Park tube or Bethnal Green tube.

Get involved in action against dole race checks and school defence rotas in East London; phone Alex Farrell on 01-729 0414

BIRMINGHAM: Tuesday 18 March 2pm, City council are meeting to discuss Handsworth riot reports. They all want more policing, we say: Police off our streets! Protest: town hall, Chamberlain Square

WEST LONDON: Tuesday 18 March 7pm, Police off our streets estate canvass, meet Hammersmith Broadway tube (District Line)

BRADFORD: Wednesday 19 March 7.30pm, Public meeting, Racism — what it is and how to fight it, Checkpoint, 45 Westgate



DAVID ROURKE

Support the print workers

While print union leaders carried on pleading for mercy from Murdoch, Revolutionary Communist Party supporters in north London convened a public debate on 'the crisis in our unions'. Speakers included two of the militants locked out by the Laing corporation, and currently threatened with jail for picketing; a supporter of the *Fight Back* campaign against GLC job losses; a member of the London contracting branch of the electricians' union, closed down by EETPU boss Eric

Hammond; and a few Yorkshire miners, supporters of the miners' next step campaign.

One of the Laing's lockout five explained that if fighting for the right to work meant breaking the law, they had to defy the courts. The terms of the injunction against them makes it illegal even to speak at meetings — their presence in the room could be considered as contempt of court! A GLC worker told of how union officials at County Hall refused to fight job losses, 'because it

would be illegal'. A Yorkshire miner warned against productivity deals agreed between unions and management, that had contributed to a higher rate of accidents in the pits.

In the discussion everyone agreed on the need to break the law — and to break the grip of the bureaucrats. Some speakers thought militant tactics like bigger mass pickets, backed up by rank and file organisation, would be enough. Others stressed the need for a wider political challenge to the leaders of the labour movement. The print dispute has exposed the grave limitations of traditional militancy, and underlined the urgent need for changing the direction of the unions. As one speaker said, 'We already know how to organise a picket line — what we need is a strategy that can break militants away from dead end policies.'

As the print dispute stagnates under the direction of the union leaders, RCP supporters have been joining the picket lines, arguing the need for a strike committee of workers in all the unions involved, for a concerted effort to close down Wapping and for wider solidarity. Around the country 'Boycott the Sun' protests have raised the issues involved in the print dispute with a wider audience.

PROTESTS ON SATURDAY 15 MARCH:

LIVERPOOL: meet 11am, WH Smith's, Church St, city centre

EDINBURGH: meet 11am, Menzies, Princes St

COVENTRY: meet 11am, WH Smith's, Hertford St

LAING'S LOCKOUT FIVE: Monday 17 March 7.15am, Mass picket of Laing site at Hayes Wharf, London Bridge tube

NEWCASTLE: Wednesday 19 March 7.30pm, the miners' next step campaign meeting, The Brigantine, Ferry Street, near South Shields metro

HUDDERSFIELD: Thursday 20 March 7.30pm, Public meeting, Revolution: could it happen here? CSB 218 Theatre, Huddersfield Poly

LANCASHIRE: Saturday 3 May, Regional RCP dayschool, Liverpool, Phone Fenna on 01-729 0414 for details



COVENTRY: Thursday 13 March 7.30pm, Is meat murder? Debate on animal rights, Elastic Inn, Lower Ford St

HUDDERSFIELD: Friday 14 March, Danger — Kinno at work. Neil Kinno promises austerity under the next Labour government, we're

planning an austere reception for his visit to Huddersfield Poly. Phone 01-729 0414 for details of time and place

SOUTH LONDON: Tuesday 18 March 2pm, We need free nurseries, Lobby of Inner London Education Authority, County Hall main entrance



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tns



BOTHA ENDS STATE OF EMERGENCY, BUT

THE KILLINGS GO ON

Last week South African president PW Botha lifted the state of emergency and released 300 political prisoners. A happy British foreign office said Botha's moves would 'help to reduce tension and encourage the prospects for dialogue'. Britain and the other powers who profit from apartheid need Botha to make gestures of conciliation, to distract attention from the barbarous repression in South Africa's townships — repression which will go on, with or without a state of emergency.

'NORMAL' TERROR

Three weeks ago up to 80 blacks were shot dead by the security forces, during rioting after a funeral procession in the black township of Alexandra. The state of emergency may have been lifted, but the people of Alexandra still live under army occupation. Botha's latest reform means only that the powers the police enjoyed in 36 magisterial districts under the emergency will soon be extended to the rest of the country. By amending the Internal Security Act, the government intends to enshrine these powers permanently in law.

Botha's attempt to 'normalise' conditions in South Africa only confirm that what is normal under the apartheid system is terror and repression.

Black South Africans have had little to laugh about over the last year. But events surrounding the resignation of white liberal Dr Frederik van Zyl Slabbert from parliament, three weeks ago, have provoked great mirth in every beer hall, factory

canteen and mine shaft.

Slabbert, leader of the liberal Progressive Federal Party, denounced the South African parliament as a 'playground', and the reaction of white politicians to the crisis as a 'grotesque ritual of irrelevance'. Slabbert had apparently seen the light after a meeting with Botha, which convinced him the regime would not introduce any real reforms. He declared that the only chance for change in South Africa was 'extra-parliamentary action'.

The formal lifting of the state of emergency will make little difference to South Africa's besieged blacks

Behind this astonishing pronouncement lay a shrewd political calculation. Like many white liberals, Slabbert believes stability can only be restored in South Africa through negotiations with representatives of the black majority. He decided to invest in his political career, by setting himself up as the mediator for future arbitration between the apartheid regime and the black opposition.

But Slabbert's plans were rudely disrupted by the crafty premier Botha. Botha

published the taped copy of their conversation, to dispel any illusions blacks may have had about Slabbert's extra-parliamentary antics. The transcripts revealed the real Slabbert strategy.

At one point in the conversation Slabbert advised Botha on how to 'draw the teeth' of the black liberation movement, the African National Congress. He assured Botha that ANC leaders he had met in Lusaka were more reasonable than the 'swartjies' (a derogatory Afrikaans term for blacks) in South Africa's townships. Slabbert told Botha that much could be gained by exploiting rivalries between the ANC and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, leader of the Zulu-dominated Inkatha movement.

NOTHING TO CHOOSE

The publication of the tapes, coming just after he arrived in London to promote his role as a radical opponent of apartheid, was a big blow to Slabbert. Even the moderate Buthelezi was forced to distance himself from Slabbert, dismissing the Botha-Slabbert meeting as a discussion between two white bosses.

The Slabbert affair and the lifting of the state of emergency have exposed the reality of the situation in South Africa. First, there is no scope for reforming the barbarous system of oppression. Second, there is nothing to choose between hardliners like Botha and liberals like Slabbert. Both want to see South African capitalism maintained — Botha by brutal repression tempered with cosmetic changes, Slabbert by undermining

the armed struggle of the ANC and the militancy of the black working class.

For all their disagreements about tactics, the two wings of the South African establishment appreciate that their future can only be guaranteed by defeating the black masses.

Black workers in South Africa know only too well that the survival of South Africa as a British and Western investors' paradise now depends on more oppression, not less. British bosses continue to live off the butchering of the black working class. Our job remains to expose and challenge Britain's complicity in apartheid.

Charles Longford

RCP

If you like what you read in *tns* become an RCP supporter. We meet weekly around the country to discuss the issues in the paper and to plan action in the local area. Phone Fenna on 01-729 0414 or fill in the form below.

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