tns
the next step
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High-risk jobs

Last week defence secretary Michael Heseltine and industry minister Leon Brittan slugged it out in a major public row over rival European and American bids to bail out the Westland Helicopter company (see pages 6 and 7). Meanwhile Westland's 11 000 workers were reduced to the role of passive spectators. Yet the unions fully accept that the future livelihoods of the Westland workers depend on the outcome of the clash of rival boardroom and government strategies.

The danger of allowing the fate of the working class to be decided between alternative commercial propositions was forcefully underlined in another area of government military expenditure last week.

The Vickers-Cammell Laird shipbuilding consortium won a defence ministry contract to build submarines worth £500m. This decision prompted celebrations at Cammell Laird's Birkenhead shipyard, threatened with closure only 18 months ago. The contract means that the Merseyside workforce, which has shrunk from 3000 to 1300 over the past couple of years, is promised a secure future into the 1990s. The workforce is now set to expand by between 500 and 800 in an area of high unemployment.

The other side

The other side of the Birkenhead celebrations was the cloud of doom cast over rival shipyards on Clydeside. Workers at the recently privatised Scott Lithgow and Yarrow shipyards now face a very uncertain future. At both yards work is running out and further contraction now seems inevitable.

Workers at Westland, Cammell Laird and Scott Lithgow have all taken industrial action over the past two years. Westland workers came out on strike in 1984 when management introduced computer aided design and insisted that staff must accept double day shift working or face dismissal. The white collar engineering union Tass subsequently negotiated a deal accepting shift working in exchange for a shorter working week. The union celebrated the deal as 'a landmark of British trade unionism' but workers were very reluctant to accept a major reorganisation of their working and social lives.

Workers at Cammell Laird occupied a rig under construction in the Birkenhead yard against the imposition of redundancies. After a prolonged struggle 37 workers were imprisoned for defying the courts. At Scott Lithgow workers took industrial action when the yard was privatised last year in an attempt to protect jobs and union rights.

In all three plants the trade union officials pursued a strategy which accepted that workers' future livelihoods depended on ensuring the viability of their employers. They channelled workers' militancy into support for their schemes of collaboration with the company. They repeatedly declared their commitment to the future prosperity of the firm and offered their cooperation with the bosses in their drive to secure new orders. Accepting responsibility for the viability of the firm, the union leaders were in no position to resist the concessions which employers demanded from the unions as a condition for reviving profitability at a time of considerable commercial difficulty.

The result of tying workers' job security to the employers' market prospects at a time of recession has been a steady loss of jobs and deteriorating working conditions. Even where jobs have been saved, this has been at the cost of sacrificing traditional restraints against super-exploitation. Particularly in the shipyards, workers have been forced to do a wider variety of jobs and to work flexibly to suit the minute-to-minute demands of the employers. A more general consequence of the unions' collaborative approach with the employers has been to erode the spirit of militancy which guided workers' initial responses to the employers' attacks.

Where workers once took direct action against the employers to defend jobs and working conditions, the unions now encourage them to get together with the employers to try to win new contracts or explore new markets or produce new products. As workers are drawn into the debate about the most favourable offer to save Westland or how to secure government defence contracts or export orders, they are forced to abandon any independent action to defend their own position. This approach spreads fatalism throughout the workforce as union officials make concession after concession to boost the employers' position and workers drift off down the road.

Their problems, our jobs

The steelworkers from the threatened Gartcosh plant in Scotland reveal the end result of the collaborative approach (see letters, page 11). The steelworkers' unions have accepted a long series of cutbacks and the introduction of new working practices to boost productivity at the plant. They stayed at work throughout the miners' strike in the hope that the bosses would reward their commitment by keeping the plant going. They are now reduced to marching cap in hand from Motherwell to London to plead with the Tory government to grant a reprieve to the plant.

This sort of desperate token action might save some face for the union officials, but it will not move the Tories or save workers' jobs. The only guarantee of jobs in Britain's declining manufacturing industry is workers' independent action. As long as the unions are choosing between different capitalist strategies for running industries workers will be the losers. The only way to ensure that workers' interests are safeguarded is to insist that jobs and conditions must be preserved under whatever scheme the employers and the government concoct to resolve their problems.

It is time the unions started leaving questions of contracts and markets and products to the employers and concentrated on issues of jobs and conditions and wages. Taking this independent line would break the suffocating embrace between the employers and the unions and unleash the anti-capitalist initiative of the rank and file.

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Dave Rourke (Jetztzeit)

Liverpool Militant leaders Tony Mulhearn (left), Derek Hatton (right), and minder (in the middle)

If you live in Liverpool, it's...

Just like a Labour council

MORE JOBS AND BETTER services were the Labour Party's promises to the people of Liverpool in the May 1983 local elections.

The newly elected left-wing council talked of the 'suspension of the traditional boss-worker relationship' between the council and its employees. Yet the experience of Liverpool's 31 000 council workers is that working for the left-wing council is little different from working under the previous Liberal regime. For that matter it is little different from working for Ford's at Halewood, or for any other local private employer.

Pay and conditions in Liverpool are the same as those of other councils, whether controlled by the Labour left, Labour right, or combinations of Tory and Alliance councillors. Terms of employment on the council are considerably worse than under most private employers. Local government contains one of the biggest pools of low-paid labour in Britain, and Liverpool's radical Labour council is no exception to this general state of affairs. Nor, despite the platform rhetoric, is the relationship between employer and workers much different from elsewhere.

Liverpool council has a record of industrial disputes much worse than most capitalist firms. For example, when Nalgo members at the city treasury department took action over regrading shortly before Christmas management reacted by suspending three employees. Liverpool's Labour council has acted as a traditional capitalist employer in a series of disputes since 1983.

What about services? Housing was top of the list of services that the Labour council promised to improve in 1983. Recognising that Liverpool has some of the worst housing conditions in Europe the council proposed 'an urban regeneration strategy to transform 17 priority areas'. Yet there are still 22 000 people on the housing waiting list, rents remain among the highest in the country and the standard of repair continues to deteriorate. The real figure for houses built is well below the council's claimed 3500, and the homes that have been finished were built by private contractors paying even worse wages than the council.

Liverpool councillors constantly boast of having created 1 000 'new' jobs. But these have been 'created' largely by reorganising council departments and holding open existing vacancies. In a city where there are more than 106 000 on the dole this is a mere drop in the ocean.

The failures of Liverpool council show that, at a time of recession, local government cannot defend jobs and services. But instead of exposing how local government operates as an integral part of the capitalist system, Liverpool Labour councillors continue to boast of its 'achievements'.

Today's Liverpool councillors sound just like Jack and Bessie Braddock, Labour's boss politicians in Liverpool in the fifties or Harold Wilson, who represented a Liverpool constituency before he became prime minister in the sixties and seventies. They too boasted of the Labour Party's achievements in building council estates that are already derelict or in channelling industries to Liverpool that have long since collected their government grants and disappeared. It's not surprising that the people of Liverpool have become cynical about Labour's achievements.

Behind the repeated denunciations of 'this Tory government' and its 'vicious cuts' Liverpool council operates just like any other local council. It proclaims its commitment to defend jobs and services and proceeds to implement the cuts by juggling with the figures and fiddling the books. Like other Labour councils Liverpool 'saves' money by creative accountancy and discreetly concealed cuts. Running down the direct labour organisation and the £3m 'unallocated cuts' agreed as part of the deal with the Swiss bankers are carefully presented as a progressive alternative to Tory cuts. But the consequences for the working class are just the same.

Unlike the district Labour Party the Liverpool working class cannot turn its back on reality. 'I don't know what will happen now, we'll have to wait and see,' said one council worker last week, summing up the attitude of resignation and demoralisation which stems from Labour's failed promises. In this respect too Liverpool council is just like the other Labour authorities throughout Britain.

There is one difference about Liverpool council. In other cities left-wing activists point the finger of blame at right wingers or soft left wingers like Sheffield's David Blunkett or the GLC's Ken Livingstone, who have gone over to the Kinnock camp and have capitulated even earlier than Liverpool to the threat of legal action. But in Liverpool it was the so-called hard left Militant council leadership that sold out to the Tories after two years of running the council in the traditional Labour manner.

Liverpool is different because it is the first clear test of hard left Labour politics in action. And it has conclusively demonstrated that for the working class there is nothing to choose between Labour right or left, soft or hard.

What's different about Liverpool?

Dave Rourke (Jetztzeit)

Kinnock the statesman

LABOUR'S WITCH-HUNT team has set about crushing the influence of Militant in Liverpool. But why has Neil Kinnock suddenly taken such exception to the Liverpool party leaders?

Between their election in May 1983 and September 1985 Liverpool's Militant councillors caused little concern to the party leadership. In July 1984, when Labour's local government campaign was launched in Sheffield, the Liverpool stance was hailed as an inspiration to other councils. Sheffield council leader David Blunkett declared that Liverpool's controlling Labour group was 'to be congratulated' for its role in promoting the united campaign.

Not only did Liverpool begin the campaign in line with other Labour councils, its opposition to the Tories collapsed in a similar way. At the first sessions of the Labour inquiry one of the key questions was, 'Why didn't you accept the Stonefrost report?' — the plan drawn up for Liverpool by the GLC's financial supremo Maurice Stonefrost. It was a difficult question to answer because Liverpool's final acceptance of a package of cuts prepared by a consortium of Swiss bankers bore a striking resemblance to the GLC's sell-out deal. The difference between Liverpool and the rest was measured in weeks — there was no difference of political principle.

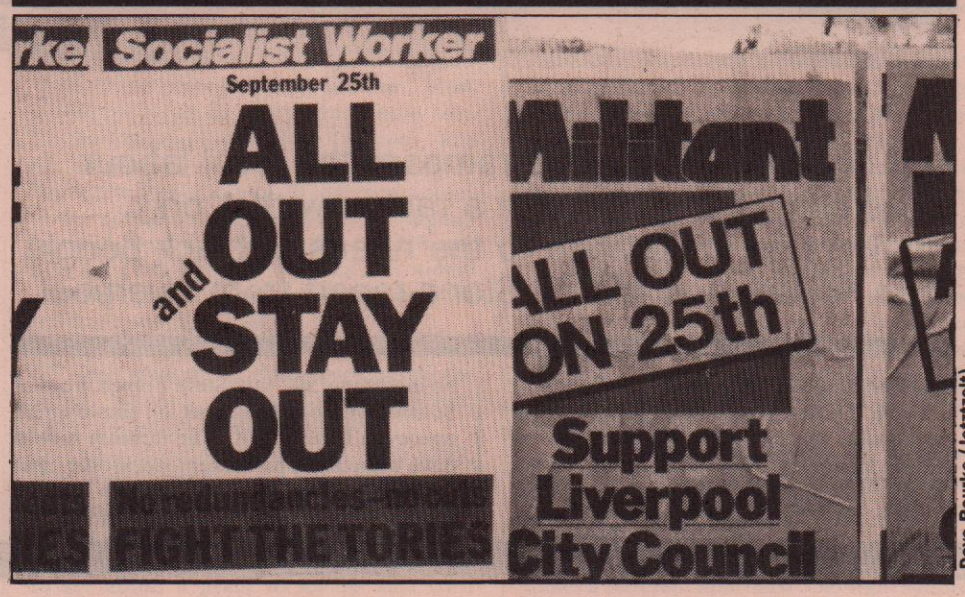
When the Labour leaders get into difficulties trying to invent a political distinction between Liverpool and other left-wing councils, they hold up the conspiratorial methods of the Liverpool councillors as their justification for sending in the heavy mob. Undoubtedly the bureaucratic links between the council, the district Labour Party and particular union branches and committees have provided the Liverpool council leadership with its power base. But this is not unusual in Labour councils, particularly when, as in the case of Liverpool, the Labour Party has traditionally lacked a solid base on the council. When Militant leader Tony Mulhearn emerged from the inquiry to reassure reporters that the Liverpool Labour Party had been run in the same way for the past 25 years, he was telling the truth.

In fact Kinnock's onslaught on the Liverpool council leaders has nothing to do with their politics or their methods. These are firmly in the finest traditions of municipal Labourism. Kinnock's witch-hunt against Militant is a task set by the British establishment for the Labour leadership to show its fitness to rule the nation by crushing a targeted faction of the Labour left.

Liverpool's Labour councillors became different shortly before Labour's 1985 conference when Kinnock needed to get his election bandwagon rolling down the middle of the British parliamentary road.

Next week 48 Liverpool Labour councillors appear before the high court under threat of surcharges and disqualification from public office as a result of last year's campaign against Tory cuts. As soon as the court case is over Labour's national executive inquiry into the suspended Liverpool district Labour Party will continue, probably leading to the expulsion of leading councillors from the Labour Party.

Liverpool councillors are receiving special attention, but Liverpool city council is not the only Labour authority to have come into conflict with the Tories. Sheffield, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Islington and Southwark all acted illegally by setting their rate after mid-April last year. Yet, while their climbdowns passed off quietly, Liverpool's capitulation has become the focus of national controversy. What is so special about Liverpool Labour council? asks *Andrew Calcutt*.



Dave Rourke (Jetztzeit)

The hard left's been had

FOR THE HARD LEFT — inside and outside the Labour Party — the fact that Kinnock is attacking Militant is reason enough to defend it.

For the past few months a main focus of left-wing activity has been a series of petitions, meetings and protests against the witch-hunt. But the fact that Kinnock is attacking Militant does not make Militant's politics any more progressive. Militant has only become an issue because of Kinnock's grovelling to establishment pressure. Yet the simplistic response of sections of the British left is to accept the issue at face value on the terms dictated by the Tories and their friends in the media.

The result is that the hard left has become preoccupied with an entirely artificial issue. At a time when the working class movement faces major challenges — mass unemployment, the attack on trade union rights, racism, the continuing war in Ireland — the left is reduced to intervening in a squalid internal faction fight between two wings of a party, neither of which offers any way forward for the working class. In falling for this Tory-organised diversion, the hard left has exposed not only its naivety but its sectarian preoccupation with strengthening its own position within the camp of Labourism, no matter how irrelevant the issues involved are to the urgent problems facing the working class.

The lessons of Liverpool

IN MARCH 1984 SOME 50 000 Liverpool people demonstrated their defiance of Tory government plans to cut jobs and services in a city that has already been hard hit by the recession and Tory cuts. Instead of mobilising this fighting spirit against the bosses, the Liverpool Labour Party has dissipated it and created widespread confusion and demoralisation in the city.

The past 18 months has provided a striking demonstration of the irrelevance of Labourism to the needs of the working class. We can learn some useful lessons from Liverpool.

- Labour councillors and MPs can achieve nothing on behalf of the working class and it is a sham to pretend that they can.
- Independent working class action is the only way to force the state to concede the jobs and services we need.
- The only real purpose in being a councillor is to expose the limitations of the council and use it as a platform from which to mobilise direct action.
- Defending the working class means confronting the politics of the Labour Party.
- When workers have thrown off the paralysing influence of all forms of Labourism we will be in a position to take on the Tories and win.

Blunkett the hypocrite

LED BY SHEFFIELD council leader David Blunkett and Labour Coordinating Committee front man Peter Hain, the soft left has effectively endorsed the witch-hunt.

Blunkett has played a mediating role between the Labour leadership and Liverpool council, urging caution on Kinnock while giving legitimacy to the clampdown on Militant. Hain has publicly taken Militant to task for opposing black sections in the Labour Party and for 'opposing feminism and positive action to extend women's rights in the party; attacking those who have campaigned for gay rights' and 'opposing British withdrawal from Ireland'.

This is rich! Militant's policies on all these issues are virtually indistinguishable from the Labour leadership of which Hain is an ardent supporter. Yet he seems to have little objection to the same reactionary policies when they are promoted, with much more damaging consequences, by Kinnock and the other Labour leaders. Other Labour left wingers are critical of Liverpool Militant leader Derek Hatton because of his flashy suits and they hint darkly at rumours of corruption. But Labour politicians who live in luxury and fiddle their expenses are nothing new — they are as much a part of municipal socialism as the smell of damp in council housing.

The soft left critique of Militant is sheer humbug. It is the sniping of Labour hacks whose concern is solely to advance their own standing in the eyes of the Labour leadership by sticking the knife into their erstwhile allies.

Neither the Sikorsky-Fiat US consortium nor the GEC/European group has yet made a bid to invest in the British revolutionary politics outfit, RCP Enterprises Inc. The company chairman told an emergency meeting of shareholders last week that rumours of a major government investment package guaranteeing continuous production of revolutionary propaganda for 'at least 25 years' were 'totally without foundation'.

As the chairman said grimly, 'We'll have to go on relying on our readers to support our plans for expansion in 1986'. He appealed to all supporters of *tns* to rush donations to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. He emphasised that cheques made payable to RCP Association would be 'particularly welcome'.

Blacks walk alone in Liverpool

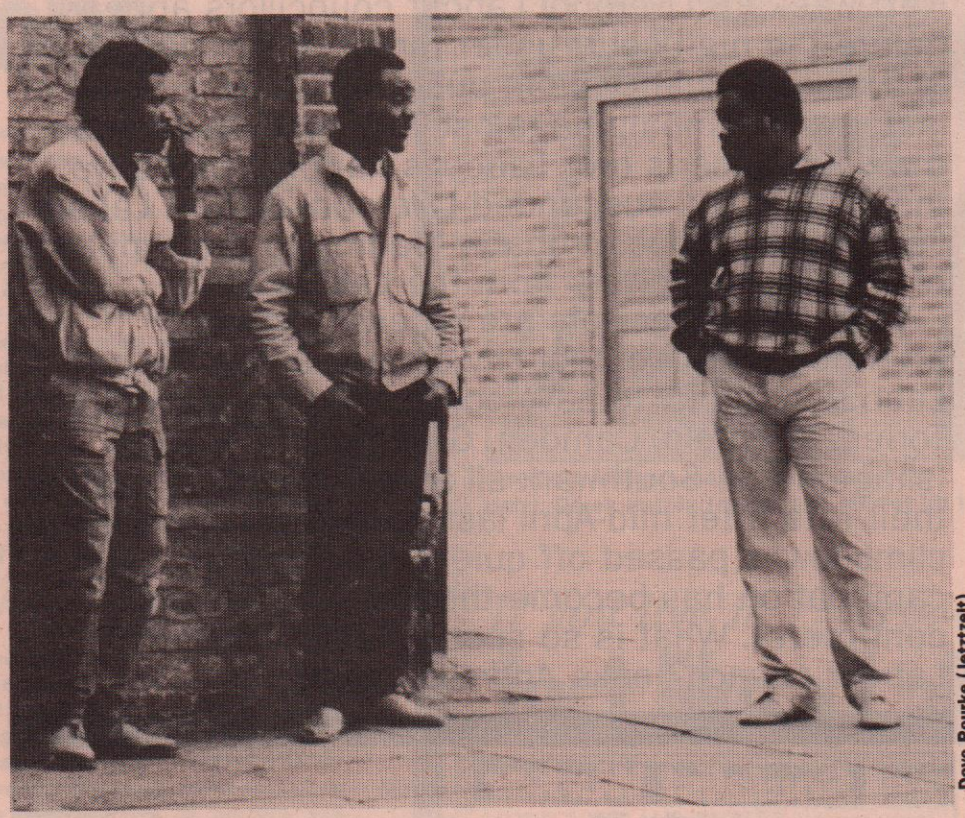
'This area's very defined, it's our area. Once you move over the border lines that's it, you become prey.' So when 21-year old Delroy Williams from Granby in Liverpool 8 goes out of the ghetto into the city centre he goes with his mates. For a city renowned for its friendly people and cosmopolitan character, most of Liverpool is less than home to its 20 000 black inhabitants.

'Once you start moving out of the area that's when you get attacked and harassed', said Delroy, 'because if you're black you're not meant to be there.' A colour bar still operates in many city centre pubs and clubs. Every black youth knows not to hang round St John's shopping centre if they want to steer clear of trouble from security guards and police. But the experience of racism is not confined to a bovver boy's boot in the face after the football on a Saturday afternoon or a policeman's truncheon on the back of the head after a Friday night out on the town. Discrimination and disadvantage are built into the fabric of black life in Liverpool.

To be black in Liverpool is to be invisible. The recently published Swann report on racial disadvantage revealed the indignities and frustrations of being born black in a racist society: 'Liverpool blacks do not only find it difficult to get work in the city centre, they risk insult or abuse in going there at all, and so their invisibility in the city's social life and power structure has become institutionalised.' Racial discrimination by both private and public sector employers is rife.

Shop work is a high status job in Liverpool these days. Take Littlewoods, one of the biggest employers. Go into the city centre shop and you might see one or, if you're lucky, two black faces. Pay a visit to Burger King or any other of the fast food shops and you won't see any. In Lewis's they don't have blacks behind the food counter. There are less blacks working in city centre shops today than there were in 1968.

You won't see many black faces among the council workforce either. Blacks are 12 per cent of the Liverpool population, yet they make up less than one per cent of council employees. The council boasts about taking on 20 black YTS trainees in a summer batch of 100. 'As far as I'm concerned that's no increase at all,' says Steve French, head of South Liverpool Personnel, an employment agency in Liverpool 8, 'The increase should have been in the permanent workforce.' But a council which is cutting costs to balance the books is unlikely to heed his advice.



Dave Rourke (Jetztzeit)

In a city where racism is rampant the local labour movement is embroiled in a race row that only confirms its irrelevance to the needs of black people. *Joan Phillips* and *Martin Stone* report from Liverpool.

Housing is the most visible feature of racism in Liverpool. Despite a century of living in the city, the black community is still confined to the worst housing. While the middle class has moved to the suburbs and the working class has moved to estates outside the city centre, blacks are still concentrated in Victorian slums and decaying terraces in inner-city areas like Granby in Liverpool 8.

Here two young blacks shrug their shoulders in response to questions about the future and bluster about 'going away'. They tell stories about being harassed by police on outings to the city centre. In the middle of Granby Street is the front line. 'This is Toxteth, not Croxteth, strictly ganja' the writing on the wall warns would-be dealers in smack. Here school-leavers Paula, Susan and Sensilina pass their day. They call themselves the Out of Hand Posse. They're also known as the VIP or Bubblers Posse (from a song by Aswad: 'I and I feel like bubblin'...'). A posse can be anything from a group of girls to a 20-strong gang of armed robbers. It is one way of feeling part of something.

Past Newton's Wine Market, the main off-licence, a large crowd is gathered outside the betting shop. George put in 20 years at Ford's — 'hell in Halewood' — and has many stories of racist abuse. But most of all he remembers his friend Babafeme Johnson, an elderly African, who suffered from a stroke and high blood pressure and who died two weeks after being taken into police custody one August night in 1978. Dozens of police smashed their way into his flat and took the old man to the police station in his bare feet and his nightclothes on a drugs offence. They later changed the charge to 'extracting electricity illegally'. But Babafeme Johnson was already dead.

There is no way out for the majority of Liverpool blacks. 'The ghetto goes with you wherever you go,' says Michael who's 32 and has never had a real job. And 20 000 Liverpool blacks know just what he means.

THE SAMPSON BOND AFFAIR

Neither council nor caucus

Through more than a year of racism and riots a row has raged in Liverpool between the Labour-controlled city council and supporters of the Black Caucus. The dispute is over who should have the job of principal race relations officer with the council. The council insists that its own man, Sampson Bond, should have the job. The Black Caucus insists that one of its number should have it. The council and caucus are deeply divided on this question. But both are united in their bureaucratic approach to fighting racism.

● **The council**

Like every local authority, Liverpool city council administers a racist system of local government. It has tolerated racist practices in employment and services for decades.

The council employs about 270 blacks in a workforce of 31 000. When it created 1000 jobs under the government-sponsored community programme in 1983 it took on less than 50 black people. The council has ghettoised blacks in the worst jobs in the council and the worst houses in the city. A recent report on race and housing admitted that the council's housing allocation system confines blacks to limited areas and gives them worse housing than whites. The council maintains gross inequalities in the provision of social services. According to a 1984 report by the Merseyside Community Relations Council nine blacks and 3000 whites get meals on wheels, 22 blacks and 4500 whites have a home help, eight blacks and 1400 whites have access to residential homes.

Like every Labour council in the country Liverpool has adopted equal opportunities policies and set up special committees to deal with the problem of racism. When Militant came to power in 1983 its supporters promised positive action to provide the black community with equal access to jobs, housing and social services. In a policy statement in August 1984 the district Labour Party promised to give 'top priority to securing greater employment opportunities' for black people and to 'take all necessary steps to improve the delivery of services' to blacks.

Almost three years later the black community is worse off than ever. Last July Sampson Bond admitted that 'the gross under-representation of black people in the council's workforce' is 'nothing short of a scandal'. But he blamed the unions, which control council staff recruitment through a system of internal advertising and nomination rights, for his party's failure to lead an effective fight against racism. The council unions *have* used their powers to exclude blacks from the council workforce. But they have done so with the full support of the council.

There are two reasons why the council cannot help the black community. First, it is inconceivable that a council, whose job is to provide the minimum level of services to the working class at the least cost to the bosses, could ever effectively side with the exploited and oppressed. Second, anybody who relies on the bureaucratic procedures and meaningless anti-racist gestures of the Labour Party rather than on direct action by the working class will never be able to lead a struggle against racism.

● **The Black Caucus**

The Black Caucus is a product of the post-riot race relations industry. It emerged out of the race relations liaison committee set up by the council in 1981 after years of pressure from the Merseyside Community Relations Council. It is now a broader coalition of black organisations from the Liverpool 8 area.

Until the Bond dispute blew up the caucus acted as a pressure group on the council, trying to push through positive action policies and win more grant-aided projects for the black community. After the 1981 riots the Black Caucus was drawn into a closer relationship with the authorities. It became integrated into the local state machine and removed from the concerns of the black community.

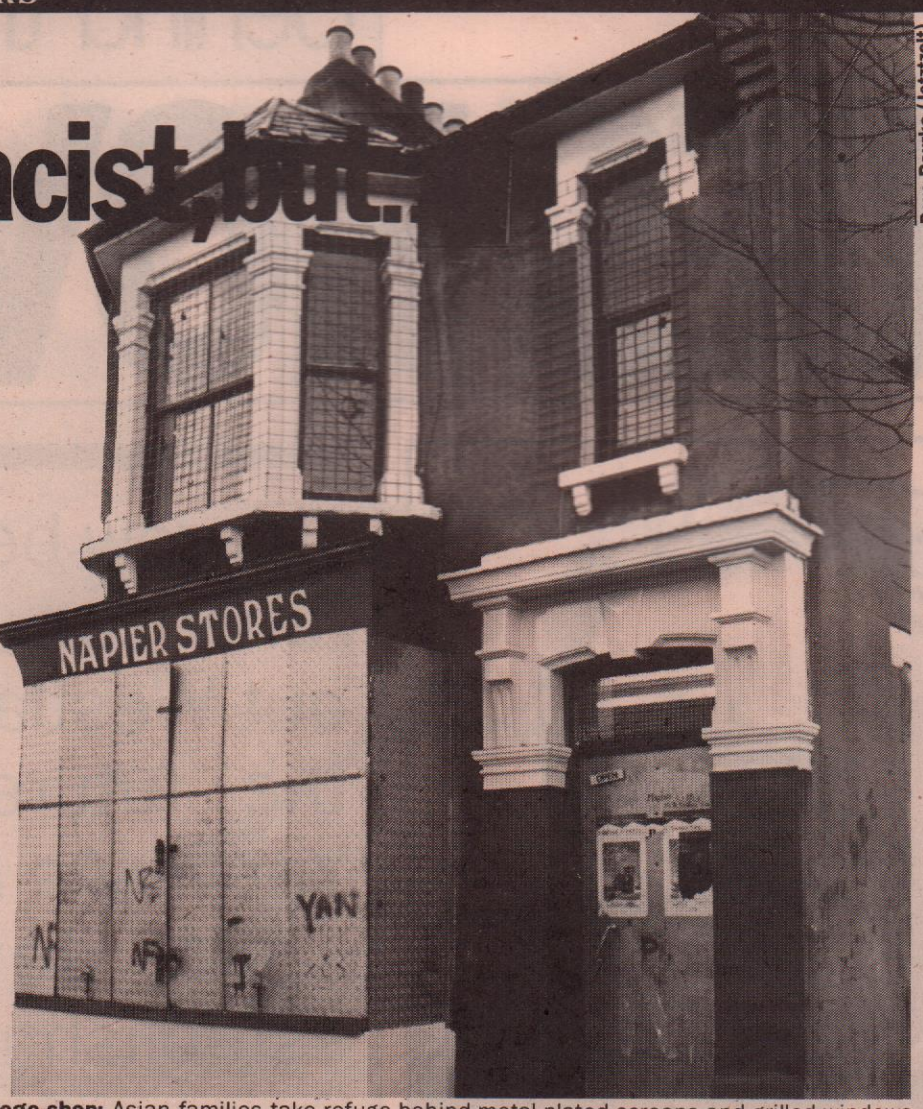
At the same time the Black Caucus developed a closer relationship with the Labour Party. The election of the Militant-controlled council in 1983 consolidated the Labourist orientation of the caucus. Many black activists joined the party they had once despised. This loyalty to Labour had both a political and financial basis. The Black Caucus shared Labour's reformist outlook and was dependent on the council for funding. But the two soon came into conflict when the council failed to deliver on its promises of jobs and grants. The first confrontation came over the council's decision to cancel the River Avon sheltered accommodation scheme for elderly blacks. The second came when the council ignored the caucus and appointed Bond as race relations chief.

The Black Caucus offers no way forward for the black community. Its members are more at home in council committee rooms discussing race awareness courses than on the streets organising action against racism. Its commitment to working within the system renders it incapable of defending black rights. And its reliance on the Labour Party has served to dampen black resistance to repression. The Black Caucus has spent the last year squabbling with the Labour council over the denial of a petty privilege, while blacks in Liverpool 8 have been hit even harder.

To defend black rights in Liverpool we have to fight the system that denies them and the party which supports it. We cannot expect anything from a system that is racist to its rotten core or from a party that puts loyalty to the system before the interests of the working class.

TALKING TO THE EAST ENDERS

'I'm not a racist, but...'



Dave Rourke (Jetztzeit)

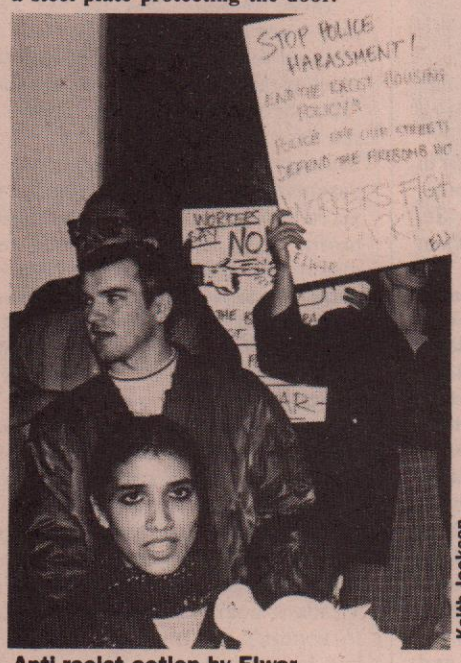
Siege-shop: Asian families take refuge behind metal plated screens and grilled windows

THE CRASH OF breaking glass was the first thing I heard when I stepped out of East Ham tube station last week. Out on the main road a youth stood with splintered fragments of a bottle at his feet as a car sped away. He kicked the broken glass away and strolled off, apparently little surprised by the incident. After all he was Asian, and this was East Ham High Street, the scene of two racist murders in recent years and of countless racist incidents. Racist attacks are part of everyday life.

Metal grilles and plated doors guard Asian-owned shops and many homes in East Ham. These are an essential precaution in an area long renowned for its racism. As long ago as 1919 West Indian soldiers were set upon by mobs of local whites. The infamous 'colour bar' was widespread, making it difficult for blacks to get work and housing. In the thirties Mosley's fascist blackshirts held huge rallies in the area. As recently as 1963 neighbouring West Ham council had a separate beauty contest for black and white women. In the seventies the National Front counted Newham as one of its strongholds and it can still pull a few hundred votes in elections in the area.

Local shopkeeper Chandrakant Randerwala arrived in 1981 after a five-month battle to buy a shop from the previous owner who didn't want to sell to 'coloured people'. Since then his battle has been even harder. The windows of his shop and home have been smashed and parking cones filled with flaming paper hurled in. Fireworks have been thrown through the shop doorway. One day a can of red paint was splashed over the entrance and fresh graffiti appears almost daily on the shopfront.

Today the shop looks like a police station in Northern Ireland with its thick metal plated screens and grilles protecting the windows and a steel plate protecting the door.



Keith Jackson

Anti-racist action by Elwar

Around Christmas there was a spate of racist attacks around Langdon comprehensive in East Ham. Bahinder, a Sikh student from Langdon, was cut with a screwdriver and his friend slashed across the back. In the same week Jaz, a student from nearby East Ham tech was travelling on a bus when he was slashed across the face with a knife. His friend was stabbed in the back. A local schoolteacher recounts how just before Christmas one of her pupils came to school with his father's big stick bearing the words 'Paki-basher'.

'It's terrible that people do that sort of thing,' says Sue from Market Street. 'The problem is that when blacks move in white people — some white people — won't let them live in peace. You hear about these petrol bombs all the time. There's one house round the corner, Asians live there, and they've had to protect all the windows with metal bars.' Many local people share Sue's condemnation of attacks on blacks.

Most white school students are also against racist aggravation in the schools. Arveen from Langdon says that, 'A few kids from outside come in and do it. That doesn't mean all the white kids think like that.' Most young people in East Ham have little time for the National Front. 'They're stupid,' was the assessment of Michael and Paul from Brampton Manor school. 'If they came round to my college they'd get their heads kicked in,' said Gerard. Even though the NF can pick up a few thugs in Newham it is widely regarded with open contempt and its hardcore support is tiny.

While many people in East Ham hate the NF, their attitudes to black people reveal the strong influence of the more mainstream racial prejudices of British society.

'You couldn't call me a racist,' said Mary, 'My best friend's a black.' 'But', she continues, 'it seems to me that the blacks get a better deal than us.' She tells the story of how she and a friend went down to Stratford to see about a grant to set up their own business, but an Asian and a black in the queue behind them got a grant and they didn't. 'They call it equal opportunities', she says, 'but it's all for the blacks.' Dave, who works for a clearing house in the City, reckons that there are now too many blacks in Britain. 'When I was at Langdon school there were hardly any Asians,' he said. 'Now my sister goes there and she says they've almost taken over. With three and a half million on the dole it's ridiculous to let any more immigrants in. I'm not a racist — it's just common sense.'

Rick, a 22-year old fitter from Flanders Road, thinks that blacks are lazy. 'It just depends on how much you want to get on. A lot of people are quite happy to stay on the dole, signing on every fortnight. And take the blacks I know, at work, they always take the easiest jobs, and show no interest in bettering themselves. That's not being racist, that's my own experience.'

The strength of commonplace racist attitudes in an area like East Ham provides a favourable climate for the more extreme racists of the National Front, even though most people reject their violent methods. The high level of unquestioned prejudice against blacks explains why the racists can carry on their campaign of violence with little fear of retribution within the community. It also helps to explain why the established anti-racist movement has been so ineffective in dealing with the problem of racist attacks.

The official anti-racist movement in East London has long focused on the fascists and ignored everyday racism. Anti-racist activists working for various bodies funded by GLC and government grants have been preoccupied with monitoring the activities of the various factions of the disintegrating National Front and its handful of active local members. They leave it to the police to deal with the fascists. And the police let the fascists carry on with their activities.

At the same time the anti-racist movement backs the local council's 'equal opportunities policy' and other official anti-racist initiatives. Newham council seems set to adopt a policy of 'positive action' by setting quotas of black workers to be employed in council offices. At a time when the council is cutting jobs and services all around such token gestures will bring little benefit to black people while further stirring up racial prejudices.

Labour's policy of sharing out shrinking resources can only deepen racial divisions as workers are forced to compete with one another for what's left.

East London Workers Against Racism takes a different approach. Our fight against racism in the East Ham area has been proceeding on two fronts. First, we are organising direct action to defend black people against racist attacks. This involves action around the schools and around Asian shops and homes that have been the targets of attack in the past. Our aim is to mobilise local people, black and white, to deal with a threat to the working class as a whole. More and more people are beginning to recognise our approach as an effective way to stop the racist menace.

Second, we are making a priority of challenging the everyday arguments that make racism respectable in East Ham. When people blame all the social problems of the area on the influx of black people, we argue that the problem is not blacks but the capitalist system that cannot provide jobs and decent housing for everybody. When people complain that blacks get a better deal, we show the facts of racial discrimination in every sphere of life in Newham and expose the hypocrisy of Labour's 'equal opportunities' and 'positive discrimination' policies.

Everyday racism is a much bigger threat to black people in East Ham than the National Front. Tackling the racist prejudices that are widely accepted by working class people is the key to stopping racist attacks.

When ordinary people reject not just the extreme racism of the NF but also the routine racism that allows the hardline racists to get away with their activities, the fascists will soon be isolated and contained. And the working class will be in a stronger position to wage a wider war against the divisive ideology of racism.

John Pearson

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

THE PUNCH LINE COMETH

Libya may have avoided the prospect of a full-scale US/Israeli invasion this week. But the American warships steaming towards the Libyan coast are a warning of what we can expect when the establishment starts a propaganda panic about 'international terrorists' abroad or 'enemies within' at home.

The rulers of the Western world have developed a strategy of creating scapegoats to justify wider repression. It begins as a public relations exercise, and ends up with a bit of physical exercise for the US marines or the British riot police. You set up Colonel Gadaffi of Libya as chair of International Terror Inc, and you've got a good excuse for military intervention in the Middle East. You create the general impression that British blacks are criminals, and it gets public opinion on your side for using tougher police tactics in the inner cities and beyond. And so on.

The campaign usually starts by ridiculing the target. Gadaffi was largely treated as a joke a few years back, when the Western press was full of 'mad colonel' cartoons about this oil sheikh who lived in a tent in his own back garden and made his people eat his *Green Book* for breakfast. Blacks in Britain were for a long time portrayed as comically lazy good-for-nothings, the butt of countless comedy routines of the 'Starring Jim Davidson doing his hilarious impression of "Chalkie White" ' type.

But as the pressure of the recession makes it more important for the West to take forceful action against its opponents, so it hots up the propaganda war against its chosen bogeys. The Libyan 'mad colonel' takes a turn for the worse and is branded a dangerous psychopath. Gadaffi has now been picked out as the primary force for terrorism on Earth and the major threat to peace in the Middle East. 'Lazy' blacks are depicted as turning their idle hours to making easy, illegal money. Today they are blamed for being behind every anti-social crime in British society, from drug-pushing to pimping and, of course, mugging.

Once these ideas have permeated the public consciousness, the establishment is able to back up its war of words with action when the need arises. So when Reagan finds that the Arab world is slipping beyond his control, he can drag out his old Libyan whipping boy to justify a display of America's military might in the Middle East. And when Thatcher discovers that British society is cracking up under the strain of the economic crisis, she can use the excuse of 'the black crime wave' for giving the police the powers and plastic bullets they need to hold her system together.

The lesson of all this for us is that it is too late to start sticking up for the system's scapegoats when the truncheons and torpedoes are already en route to the target. The establishment has already won the propaganda war by then, and isolated those chosen for sacrifice as a bunch of terrorists or muggers. Our rulers understand that ideas are important because they lead to action. We have to take the same serious approach to winning the battle for people's hearts and minds today, so that we can mobilise effective action against the offensive that follows tomorrow or next week.

Our message to the working class must be: When you hear the anti-Gadaffi, anti-black or anti-anybody jokes starting, don't laugh. Just get ready to feel the punch line on the back of your head.

Behind the Westland Helic

TORIES HOVER CL

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THE RT HON MICHAEL HESELTINE, MP...

The man who would be Winston Churchill, builder of Fortress Falklands, bully of Molesworth peace camp, and now...

LABOUR PARTY SPOKESMAN ON DEFENCE

THE WESTLAND SAGA may have exposed a split in the Tory establishment. But the way in which the Labour Party has simply taken sides with the Heseltine faction shows that the government faces little opposition outside its own ranks.

The Labour Party has played no independent role in the long drawn out Westland affair. Instead it has backed Heseltine and the Tory wets. On the economic issues at stake, Labour has supported the wets' plans for a European takeover of Westland involving British companies. Its only rider to the Heseltine approach has been that the Tories should go a step further and buy a slice of the Continental consortium themselves.

On the political and military fronts, Labour has stood up for Heseltine over his defence of the 'national interest' and the need for European cooperation in arms production. Labour MPs have denounced the government for selling out to the Americans and putting the views of Westland directors above the needs of the nation. Kinnock has tried to taunt Thatcher, asking how she could 'really think that the subjective preferences of a company are an adequate basis on which to determine national and defence interests important for the whole of our country'.

The Labour Party's approach spells disaster for the working class. It means leaving the welfare of 11 000 Westland workers in the hands of Tory wets to whom jobs and living standards come a very poor second to the needs of the British bosses. Heseltine may be a wet, but that has not deterred him from forcing through a privatisation programme to tighten the screw on workers in the naval shipyards.

Labour's political support for Heseltine's patriotic stand ignores the fact that 'the national interest' can only mean the interest of those who rule the British nation — the capitalist class. In backing Britain and Europe against America, Labour is giving defence secretary Heseltine a free hand to pursue the best interests of British imperialism around the world. Heseltine, the man who turned the Falklands into an armed monument to British militarism after the 1982 war and donned a combat jacket to supervise troops smashing up a harmless peace camp at Molesworth, needs no prompting to carry out that brief with brutal force.

The fact that her own defence secretary has become Thatcher's most dangerous opponent shows how the Tories have been given a breathing space by the failures of the Labour Party. Just over a year ago, the government had to resort to scare stories about the NUM's 'Libyan connection' to help win a real power struggle with the miners. Now — by pointing out that Colonel Gadaffi owns shares in Fiat, the partner in the US bid for Westland — Heseltine's camp is using the same ploy to smear Brittan in their row over the Tory pecking order.

The spectacle of Tories using Tory propaganda weapons against each other shows that their present problems result from the recession in their own system, and not from the miserable efforts of their political opponents.

The Westland crisis exposes better than ever that the Tories are weak enough to be toppled. But we will not succeed in getting rid of the Tories if we sit back and expect Tory wets like Heseltine to shoot down Thatcher for us. Leon Brittan will fly before that happens.

'I've heard of matters of principle, but *helicopters?*' commented one MP as the battle between Michael Heseltine and Leon Brittan over the future of Westland Helicopters blew up before Christmas. He was right to be sceptical. Such a split at the centre of political power does not occur just because of the threatened demise of a deadleg Dorset company. It stems from the desperate economic crisis afflicting all of British capitalism.

Anybody reading Fleet Street's coverage in recent weeks would think Westland Helicopters was second only to North Sea Oil in its importance to the British economy. Westland Helicopters has hit the headlines because the conflict over this one company sums up a broader divergence of views within the British establishment about how to cope with the recession.

On one side stand the prime minister and her allies like Brittan, flying the flag of 'Thatcherism'. They insist the government should take a non-interventionist approach to the economy, cut state spending and let 'the cold wind of economic reality' shake out the 'soft' sections of industry, so creating a slimmer, fitter British capitalism. On the other side stand the Tory 'wets' such as Heseltine and their supporters, who lack confidence in Thatcher's approach and fear its consequences. They want the government to intervene in the economy and spend some public money to cushion the impact of the recession and hold down unemployment. The row over Westland Helicopters has acted as a trigger to fire this debate back to public prominence.

Since Westland's financial problems came to a head in November, the two Tory ministers in the spotlight have backed opposing schemes for rescuing the helicopter outfit. Trade and industry secretary Brittan has insisted throughout that 'market forces must decide' and the company directors should be left to take their own decision. This amounts to support for the bid favoured by the Westland board from the American helicopter giant Sikorsky in partnership with Fiat of Italy.

Defence secretary Heseltine, meanwhile, has stressed the need for the government to get involved in the affair to protect 'the national interest' by keeping Westland under the control of Britain and its European partners. He has used threats, promises and persuasion to promote a rival rescue bid from a Continental consortium, made up of GEC, British Aerospace, and aerospace interests from France, Italy and West Germany.

Faced with this unprecedented ministerial strife, Thatcher has been forced to back Brittan to assert her authority over Heseltine and his followers.

Those pundits who like to believe what politicians say about themselves have been tempted to portray the Westland debate as an ideological struggle over the pros and cons of 'Thatcherism'. But despite all the mythology she has created around herself, Thatcher is no believer in ideological principles. She is a pragmatic politician who will do whatever is necessary to put British capitalism back in profit. It is difficult to detect much of an ideological clash between the US and European plans to rescue Westland. On paper they are very similar commercial propositions. Both would require the British government to shell out large sums of money on Westland Helicopters to keep the company going. The prime minister's position is based on a calculation of the best strategy for staying ahead in the power struggle within the British establishment.

The big issue for Thatcher is the authority of her leadership over the growing band of Tory wets and dissidents. When she wrote to the Westland board last week to give broad backing to Brittan's position, her stance was dictated less by economic considerations than by the need to discipline the arrogant Heseltine and his camp followers. She will not have missed the fact that former employment and Northern Ireland secretary James Prior, Heseltine's old ally in the cabinet, is now chair of GEC, the British firm most committed to the Euro-deal for Westland.

It may turn out that Thatcher has settled the war of words over Westland. But unfortunately for her, letters to directors are not enough to end the feelings of insecurity now influencing significant sections of the establishment. The backlash against Thatcher's hardline approach is building up among establishment spokesmen from bishops to BBC commentators. In their eyes, she seems to have provoked everything from inner-city riots to permanent mass unemployment without solving the basic problems of British capitalism. The crisis of confidence within the British elite has seen the government careering from one embarrassing 'banana skin' to another over the past 18 months. The public sniping between Brittan and Heseltine over Westland marks a new low in the coherence of the ruling class.

The Brittan/Heseltine set-to is without

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DEATH MERCHANTS BATTLE FOR MARKETS

THE MEDIA WOULD have us believe that the conflict between Sikorsky of the USA and the Continental conglomerate over which is to buy 30 per cent of Westland Helicopters is about tables of economic statistics. It is really about whose helicopter gunships are going to rape the third world on behalf of the Western powers.

Westland first went into crisis last spring, when the delay in an Indian government order meant the company could not bridge the gap between the tailing-off of its established products, such as the Sea King, and the birth of its new generation of helicopters in 1990. At that stage Michael Heseltine, GEC and the European helicopter manufacturers displayed no interest at all in rescuing Westland.

But by the autumn Westland had persuaded the world leader in helicopters, Sikorsky, that buying a share in the British concern could give the Americans a way into the UK and European markets for its prestigious Black Hawk machines. Suddenly Heseltine had GEC of Britain, Agusta of Italy, Aerospatiele of France and Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm of West Germany queuing up to get in a rival rescue bid. As one Fleet Street commentator noted, 'It is amazing what fear of an American incursion into Europe can achieve.'

The European powers have two concerns in collaborating against the American arms industry. First, as economic rivalry increases across the Atlantic, they want to keep competitive with the US armaments giants. Over the past decade, America has on average sold seven times more defence equipment to Europe than it has bought back. Second, as political rivalry between Western Europe and America hots up around the world, the Continental powers are increasingly concerned to develop their own defence capability outside the umbrella of Washington's control.

As defence secretary, Heseltine has promoted attempts to integrate European arms production, The most notable success has been the move towards producing a new European fighter aircraft to replace ageing Jaguars, Phantoms, Lockheeds and Buccaneers. Heseltine sees the crisis at Westland as an outstanding opportunity to bring the British, French, Italians and Germans together to rationalise the Western European helicopter industry, which has long suffered from having too many products chasing too few buyers. Westland is already involved in joint development of a naval helicopter with Agusta of Italy, and there are plans for further Continental collaboration on an anti-tank helicopter. Heseltine's camp has encouraged the Europeans to drop dark hints about scrapping these schemes if Westland accepts the Sikorsky offer.

While both sets of bidders have seen their chances of success rise and fall from one week to the next, it now seems likely that Thatcher's implicit support for the US offer will win the day at this week's Westland shareholders meeting. But the prime minister's decision to plump for Leon Brittan against Heseltine has to do with internal Tory Party politics, not international affairs. Whether he wins or loses this battle, there is an inescapable logic to Heseltine's view that the British authorities would do best to get more closely involved with Euro-defence developments, even at the expense of their American connections.

The British establishment still likes to waffle about its 'special relationship' with the USA. But in the harsh climate of a deepening world recession, Washington has no scope for sentimentality. Britain recently lost a huge US battlefield communications system contract to the French, and Reagan's promise to give Thatcher a slice of the star wars action involves no guarantee of how much work British industry will get. As the Western powers start sorting out the line-up for the next round of economic, political and eventual military confrontation with each other, Britain's rulers will have some difficult choices to make about where they stand.

The Westland affair reveals that Europe and America are bitterly divided over the buying and selling of helicopters. But they are still united in their commitment to use these war machines in the drive to keep the third world under their oppressive power.

Around half of the world's helicopters are sold to armed forces. The West puts them to good use against people fighting for their rights from Central America and Africa to the Middle East and Northern Ireland. Only this week, Britain has sent heavyweight Chinook helicopters to Ireland to help transport occupying troops around the Border areas where they dare not use the roads for fear of attack. And helicopters are not just for carrying military cargo. They are a deadly weapon system in their own right.

In the sixties and seventies, the people of a thousand ravaged Vietnamese villages learned that a Sikorsky helicopter armed to the blades makes a devastating gunship. A Westland machine can make the same mess of the third world at the British government's bidding. The havoc wreaked by helicopters in films like *Apocalypse Now* or *Rambo* is not an invention of Hollywood. It is the bloody reality that lies behind the parliamentary battle over the future of Westland.

precedent in modern British politics. The last time ministers openly aired such differences was during the Labour government's 1975 referendum on EEC membership, and then only with prime minister Wilson's agreement. Heseltine's call for the cabinet to intervene in the Westland affair invites comparison with figures like Lord Stockton, who have recently harped on about how government needs to give more of a helping hand to industry. But, as the publicity given to his Westland campaign indicates, Thatcher cannot ignore Heseltine's challenge in the same way as the gentlemanly protests of an ageing peer.

Heseltine has a history of opposition to Thatcher and has long been seen as her possible successor. He may appear as a maverick, often isolated within the Tory hierarchy. But as a contender for the Conservative Party championship and the darling of the blue-rinse and bowler hat brigade at Tory conferences, his patriotic efforts over Westland have given the protests against the hardline Thatcherite approach a higher profile than before.

The problem the anti-Thatcher faction faces is that it has no real answer when she asserts that 'there is no alternative'. The desperate plight of British capitalism requires the sort of desperate measures that Thatcher is pursuing. Thatcher, Brittan and Co may make the occasional concession with one eye on the next general election. But they cannot soften their economic approach without risking even greater disaster.

The tensions now surfacing within the Tory Party show that the strains of trying to run a system that is out of control are beginning to rattle the British establishment. All sides are struggling with the fact that British capitalism has lost the independent power to pull itself up by the bootstraps. Heseltine and Brittan are squabbling over different ploys to get other Western powers to buy time for Britain's only remaining helicopter manufacturer. Just as the Tories had to fight for a slice of Reagan's star wars programme in order to 'create' some jobs on this side of the Atlantic, Heseltine and Brittan hope to catch a few crumbs for Westland from Europe or the USA.

Whether Brittan or Heseltine and their rival backers succeed, or if they both finally fail, there will be another Westland soon, and another row as Britain's rulers become increasingly fearful about their future. The panic caused by the crisis in the helicopter industry shows the whole capitalist crew is ready for the chop.

Afghanistan

The no-hope war

Last week foreign secretary Geoffrey Howe declared that Britain will 'go on sustaining the pressure' on the Soviet Union to ensure that 'the people of Afghanistan will be allowed the right to choose their future and not to have to live forever either displaced as refugees or in subjection to a foreign occupation army'. On both sides of the Atlantic pompous anti-Soviet rhetoric about Afghanistan provides a convenient cover for Western plans to step up interference in Central Asia.

Since Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan on Christmas eve in 1979 the occupation has served as a focus for anti-Soviet propaganda in the West. The invasion and the bloody conflict that ensued appear to confirm Western prejudices about the 'evil empire'. The oppression of the Afghan people under Soviet occupation is a grim testimony to the brutal and reactionary character of the Soviet regime. But there was no expansionist plot behind the invasion. It was a response to a political crisis in the country which threatened to upset the strategic balance on the Soviet Union's southern frontier.

In April 1978 a coup by the left-wing Khalq faction in the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan toppled the military dictatorship of general Muhammad Daoud Khan and brought to power a radical government led by Nur Muhammad Taraki. The new government's land reforms and anti-clerical legislation provoked resentment among the country's predominantly Muslim peasants. In late 1978 armed insurgency began, led by landlords and ethnic leaders who traditionally controlled most regions outside the capital Kabul. By mid-1979 the country was virtually ungovernable as the rebels, backed by neighbouring Pakistan, plunged the country into civil war.

Soviet insecurity

The collapse of the regime in Afghanistan was a direct threat to Soviet security. Although Afghanistan had been under Soviet influence for more than 30 years, Moscow took little interest in the country's internal affairs. The Soviet leadership was concerned only to maintain the close military and economic ties which made Afghanistan a vital buffer against hostile influences in the region. Growing US influence over Pakistan, Iran and the Gulf, as well as the tensions between the Soviet Union and China, have made Central Asia an increasingly sensitive area since the sixties.

The outbreak of civil war in Afghanistan in 1979 revealed ominous signs for the Soviet leadership. It was confronted with the loss of a vital ally in a strategically important region. The upsurge of nationalist and Islamic forces on its southern frontier threatened to spill over to affect the Soviet Union's substantial national and Muslim minorities. When Western supplies began to pour into Afghanistan to sustain the rebels, the Soviet leadership reluctantly embarked on the invasion in a desperate attempt to contain these menacing trends.

Western politicians claim the invasion was an expansionist move, aimed at extending Soviet influence in the Middle East and exporting the Soviet social system into a defenceless neighbouring country. In reality it was a defensive action prompted by a real threat to Soviet security.

Today the Soviet leadership faces major problems in Afghanistan. After six years of warfare against the Afghan insurgents in the difficult geographical and climatic conditions that defeated an earlier generation of British invaders, the Soviet army has failed to restore control over the country. Soviet repression in Afghanistan has only heightened anti-Soviet hostility and strengthened reactionary influences in the region. The Soviet leadership is waging a war it cannot hope to win at a growing cost to its international prestige and security.

Despite massive superiority in terms of firepower and numbers the 120 000-strong Soviet occupation force and 80 000 troops of the Afghan army are unable to control the countryside. Guerrilla incursions into Kabul are frequent and outside the capital the government controls only the major urban centres and security zones surrounding them. To hold their own in these circumstances the Soviet forces have resorted to the familiar 'scorched earth' tactics pioneered by Western counter-insurgency forces. The butchery of at least 700 villagers during a raid in Kunduz province last March and similar atrocities elsewhere have created a profound hatred for the Soviet Union among Afghan people.

War without end: the Soviet invasion has only stirred up more insurrection

Because of the lack of economic development in Afghanistan the state was never strong enough to weld together a united ruling class and overcome divisions among rival ethnic groups and rural communities. But the Soviet intervention, far from stabilising Afghanistan, has plunged this stagnant peasant society into chaos. It is estimated that 500 000 civilians have died in the war and more than three million refugees live in camps across the border in Pakistan, where they are housed, fed and armed by the US government to carry on the war. Afghanistan's rural economy has been devastated. Farmers fleeing the war have deserted vast tracts of agricultural land. Even the previously rich northern provinces have reverted to a subsistence economy. Lack of raw materials and spare parts has brought textile production, Afghanistan's main industry, to a standstill.

The people of Afghanistan are paying a terrible price in the strategic conflict being fought out in their country. The Soviet Union is in a no-hope situation in Afghanistan. The continuing bloodshed creates tensions at home, provokes ever greater revolt in Afghanistan and ever wider conflict in the region, aggravating the very threats to Soviet security that the invasion sought to contain. In every respect the invasion has been a disaster for Moscow.

Since 1979 the USA has used the Afghan conflict as a pretext to reinforce American bases in the Indian Ocean and to step up military intervention in the Gulf, Oman and Pakistan. Supplying and training the Afghan rebels is the CIA's biggest operation in the world. The West has put diplomatic pressure on India and China to come together in a common front against the Kabul regime.

In recent weeks the West has stepped up the diplomatic pressure. Peace talks held under the auspices of the United Nations broke down in December when Pakistan, acting on US instructions, refused to accept that a condition for Soviet withdrawal must be an end to Western backing for the rebellion against the Kabul government. By insisting on one-sided peace moves by the Soviet Union the West ensures the continuation of a conflict from which it has drawn great benefit.

In December the US congress decided to invest another $450m in the Afghan resistance. Britain followed suit, donating £5m and supplies of medical equipment. The use of British-made blowpipe missiles in recent rebel attacks suggests new Western moves to intensify the military conflict. While they talk about peace Western leaders are preparing to use the conflict to gain a new foothold in the region.

We support the right of the Afghan people to self-determination. But Western intervention can only lead to further enslavement for the people of the region. Moscow's disastrous military adventure has strengthened the forces of reaction in Central Asia. Only the independent struggles of workers and peasants can achieve the liberation of the Afghan people.

John Johnson

The myth of Soviet imperialism

How the mighty fall: the myth of Soviet strength bears little resemblance to reality

THE NOTION OF THE Soviet Union as an aggressive and expansionist power is a key theme in Western propaganda. Moscow gets the blame for anti-Western movements from Central America through South Africa to the Philippines. Even some left wingers echo establishment condemnations of 'Soviet imperialism'. But the realities of Soviet foreign policy defy this myth.

Even a glance at the record of Soviet policy abroad reveals its conspicuous inability to dominate other countries. In a world which is largely dominated by a handful of Western powers, the Soviet Union stands out as the only major industrial nation whose influence beyond its own borders is weak and unstable.

Only 10 out of 122 nations voted with the Soviet Union in the United Nations debate on Afghanistan last December. For a country said to be powerful enough to subvert Western civilisation the Soviet Union possesses remarkably few reliable allies abroad. Outside its immediate Eastern European and Asian buffer zone, only Cuba and South Yemen remain as feeble symbols of Soviet influence in the Western world. Other allies like Angola or Libya gladly turn to Moscow for money and arms. But apart from using their friendship as a bargaining counter in diplomatic relations with the West, the Soviet Union gets little in return.

For a country that is said to be imperialist the Soviet Union is very badly off. Living standards in the Soviet Union are considerably lower than among Moscow's client regimes in Eastern Europe. Soviet allies invariably turn to the West, not the Soviet Union, to buy technology and attract investment. The backwardness and inefficiency of the Soviet economy mean that Moscow has little influence over its allies.

The Soviet state's limited leverage in the international arena is due, not to its own strength, but to the growing weakness and instability of the Western powers. The Soviet rulers are adept at exploiting tensions among the Western powers and in taking advantage of upheavals in the third world to seek new allies. Yet, contrary to Western propaganda, third world revolt is not caused by Soviet subversion, but by the accelerating decay of the capitalist order.

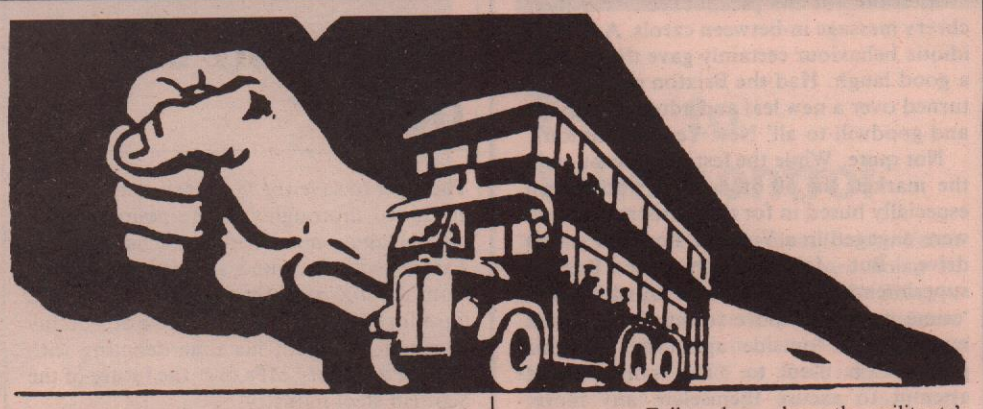
The myths of Soviet aggression bear little resemblance to the reality of Soviet foreign policy. Since Stalin's time Soviet leaders have consistently sacrificed anti-imperialist struggles to their own preoccupation with the survival of the Soviet system, and discouraged any activity which threatened to provoke Western hostility against the Soviet Union. Last year Soviet leader Gorbachev issued stern warnings to both Libya and Cuba to refrain from provocative anti-Western gestures.

The problem of Soviet foreign policy is not its allegedly aggressive character. It is rather the conservative, anti-working class influence that the Soviet bureaucracy exercises on international affairs, an influence which results from its desire to secure the survival of its own decaying social system — at any cost.

REVIEWS

LABOUR HISTORY

Mutiny on the buses



Ken Fuller, *Radical aristocrats: London busworkers from the 1880s to the 1980s,* Lawrence & Wishart £4.95

Written by an official of the Transport and General Workers' Union, *Radical aristocrats* is a fascinating account of the struggles of London busworkers over the last century. Trade unions first got on to the London buses in the stormy years before the First World War. Fuller describes the conflict between the 'red button' London and Provincial Union of Licensed Vehicle Workers and the conservative 'blue' union, the Association of Tramway and Vehicle Workers.

Unlike the blues, the red button union had elected officials, reported to members on the course of negotiations, and took key decisions at mass meetings. This democratic structure encouraged members to get stuck in and take on officials. In 1917 a sizeable militant minority supported 'Hendonian', a writer in the union journal who called for a workers' uprising inspired by Ireland's 1916 Easter Rising and the Russian Revolution.

A spate of union mergers in the early twenties gave officials the chance to tame the militants through tighter central control. The busworkers became part of the mighty TGWU under dockers' leader Ernest Bevin. Between the wars London busworkers fought the emerging union bureaucracy through rank and file pressure groups. While the union leaders shifted to the right after the defeat of the 1926 General Strike, rank and file groups led resistance to wage and job cuts.

Under the London Transport Board in the thirties, London was rocked by well organised bus strikes like the 1937 Coronation strike which disrupted the celebrations. Yet the busworkers failed to link up with tramworkers and the strike was lost. Bevin took advantage of sectional divisions to launch an inquiry into the busworkers' rank and file movement, suspending the busworkers' committee and barring militants from union office. The busworkers' rank and file movement revived, but under the influence of the Communist Party during the Second World War it backed the war effort and accepted restrictions on union rights agreed between the TUC and the government. Fuller shows how the militants' defeat let the bosses and the bureaucrats take control. In 1946 the London Transport authorities agreed to dismiss any workers who refused to join the TGWU and 147 busworkers were sacked. Since the forties busworkers have been unable to mount effective resistance to job losses and the reduction of services in the transport industry.

Fuller closes his book with a brief and evasive account of the post-war period. Unable to account for the decline of rank and file militancy, he concludes with a feeble appeal for London busworkers to recapture their radical traditions. But there is no going back to the old ways. While busworkers may gain some inspiration from the struggles of the past, they will need to overcome the legacy of sectionalism and collaboration with the employers to rebuild an effective union.

Joe Hall

BLACK AMERICA

The prisoner

John Edgar Wideman, *Brothers and keepers,* Allison & Busby £4.95

John Edgar Wideman's account of rediscovering his brother Robby after Robby was sent to jail for murder is a patchy work dealing with the experiences of black Americans in the decade after the civil rights movement of the sixties.

John, the elder brother, made good. He escaped from the ghetto by virtue of his success at school at a time when the American establishment wanted to draw some blacks into the middle class. He went on to become a successful novelist compared favourably with James Baldwin. Robby was not so lucky. Born almost a decade later he stayed on the street, got into junk and ended up doing time for wasting a fence his gang was trying to rip off.

Brothers and keepers grew out of the conversations John had while visiting Robby in the Pennsylvania state penitentiary. When Wideman allows his brother a word in edgeways a powerful vision of the despair of American blacks emerges. Robby is articulate and intelligent and his observations on the system that gave him no real hope are pithy and pitiless.

Much of the book's potency is diluted by Wideman's interjection of his own thoughts and feelings. Whatever he may like to think Wideman is not a typical young black American and the effect of his imposition of his own gloss on his brother's words is to distance the reader from the prisoner. Wideman constantly draws attention to himself and his own guilt at his desertion of the ghetto.

Wideman writes with conviction of the experiences and feelings of others but is unable to make his own feelings appear more than sentimentality. This flaw does not ruin the work but it constantly frustrates his generally rewarding efforts.

John Johnson

FILM

Freedom and the press

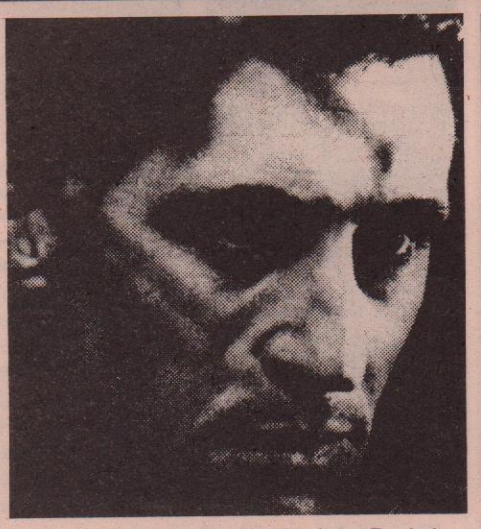
Defence of the Realm, **David Drury (director)**

The British press and the British secret services — a pretty unsavoury duo to start the new year with, even in the company of a political thriller.

The press in Britain presents itself as both guarantor and example of a free society, taking on the government and bureaucracy on behalf of the individual, able to do so because, well, that's the sort of society we live in isn't it? This pose is less widely accepted now, and in many ways the press does not even bother going through the motions. So supine and grovelling has it become that it is left to eccentric Labour MP Brian Sedgemore to excavate the mountain of dirt in the City of London while the national press devotes its massive resources to Derek Hatton's expense sheet or to new pictures of the Royals. We can welcome then a film which rakes a bit of muck over this particular institution.

Defence of the Realm tells the story of a young hack on a national daily who, with the careless sort of ruthlessness appropriate to a mindless servant, ruins a Labour MP with a sex and spies story. He then discovers that the secret services have used him to prevent the MP from raising embarrassing questions about an American air base and the death of a borstal escapee. He starts digging but it isn't until an older colleague is bumped off that he realises who the next victim is likely to be. His editor of course won't touch any of this.

As a thriller it is stylish and competent in all departments but inspired in none. It treads the same territory as the recent TV hit *Edge of Darkness,* but is shot in a more naturalistic mode. Instead of Troy Kennedy Martin's insistently fancy camera shots, Chandleresque rain, wanderings and silences, David Drury provides a more familiar and stable picture. Instead of psychological probing and existential pondering, Drury concentrates on the plot and gives us less spooks and more emphasis on the ordinariness of the circumstances. He is assisted in this by the use of a crowd of familiar faces — Bill Paterson, Fulton MacKay, Robbie Coltrane, Ian Bannen, Greta



Scacchi and at his considerable best Denholm Elliott. Even Beverley Anderson pops up, as a newsreader, to make us feel really at home. The star however is a newcomer, Gabriel Byrne, with a fine performance.

I don't think that this approach is necessarily doomed. There is much of interest in the observation of Fleet Street at work and the eventual confrontation between the journalist and the forces of the state is given greater force by its rather blank, unadorned directness. But the film does not fully succeed on its own terms. The plot and dialogue lack invention and are at times just thin. When the pace drags, as it does, the music tries too hard to crank up the tension and simply sounds portentous.

The film never achieves that formidable atmosphere of intrigue and corruption which pervades Franco Rosi's *Illustrious Corpses* and *The Mattei Affair,* Italian political thrillers of a decade ago, nor the subtlety of those films in the slow revelation of the iron fist. In *Defence of the Realm* we know too much, too early. We get more information every five minutes than Smiley would have sanctioned for an entire series. In the end too it pulls its punches with a somewhat equivocal ending.

There is a larger problem with this type of film. We invariably see a worthy liberal citizen (in *Edge of Darkness* a policeman, here a journalist, in the Rosi films a policeman and a journalist) slowly waking up to the facts of life about the state and big business and so on when he stumbles into a conspiracy or cover-up which offends his good nature. Our hero is always passive and bewildered and the state apparatus against him is always omnipotent with its tentacles and agents everywhere. I'm not saying I want to see films in which MI5 is routinely defeated, but I would like a protagonist who doesn't start out thinking life is a cricket match with George Dixon as umpire.

In this context the repeated revelation that things behind the scenes are very mean and very controlled, only has the effect of inducing helplessness. We are seeing this so often that it is being presented as normal, even acceptable. Less of a shock now, this state of affairs is even seen sometimes as rather funny. For example in *Yes, minister* on TV, now *Yes, prime minister,* the facade of parliamentary democracy is openly mocked as a big joke, really on the basis that there's nothing we can do about it anyway.

Pat Ford

Change channels

Red Herrings **(Thursday BBC2)** strikes me as a peculiarly apt title for this new series which aims to uncover what is hot in new political pop music in Britain. The adenoidal drone of Billy Bragg joins the nasal whine of Ken Livingstone to prove that if you set them to music the Labour Party's promises to youth still sound like old hat. To give a bit of weight to the proceedings this first programme includes footage of the avant garde band Test Department.

Futuristic fun of a different quality appears on the small screen in *Overdrawn at the memory bank* **(Sunday Channel 4).** In a state-of-the-art video from Canada data processor Aram Fingal is punished in futuristic fashion for breaking into the memory banks of his employers Nova Corporation and watching the banned film *Casablanca.* Less entertaining promises to be George Cole (Arthur Daley of *Minder*) in his new role as *Comrade Dad* **(Monday BBC2).** Cole plays a loyal party supporter in Londongrad in 1999, 10 years after a Russian take-over.

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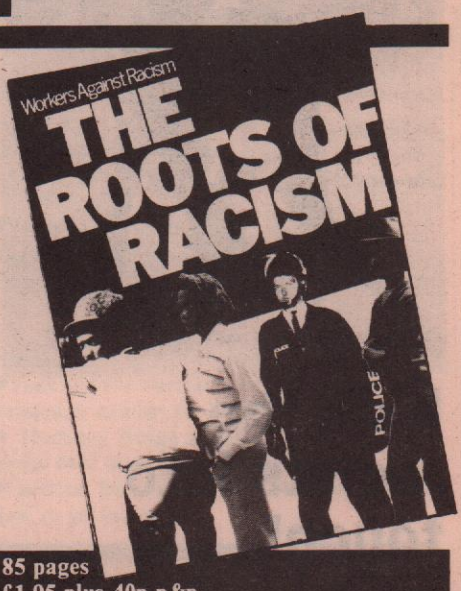

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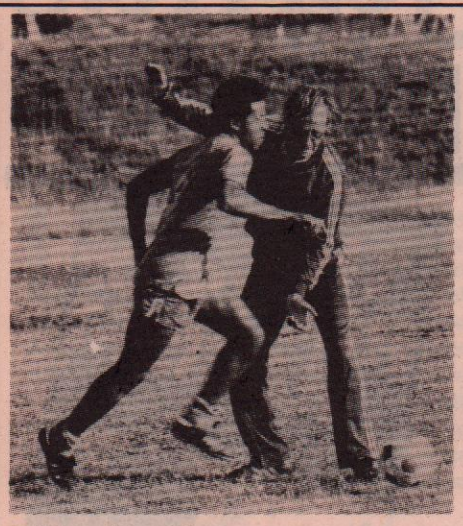
LETTERS



Kick the racists into touch!

Feelings are running high in Chapeltown at the moment, but it's not because football is back on the telly. It's about that institution of British society which infects every aspect of life in Leeds' black ghetto: racism.

In a crowded room in Chapeltown's Mandela centre, the local Sunday league football team and their supporters held a meeting to discuss a recent incident which has led to an indefinite ban on the team. The Mandela team is all West Indian, except for one white local lad David Snellgrove. David wasn't at the meeting though, because he is serving a 21-day sentence in a detention centre for hitting the referee during a game against another local team Farsley Celtic. The sentence is harsh for a minor offence which is common in small league football. Why?

David was used to the usual racist barracking his team got and to being singled out as the only white player. But when this particular referee called him a 'nigger-lover' David lashed out. This was Sunday afternoon in early December. The very next day the Mandela centre received a letter from the Football Association suspending them from the league. Many at the meeting said that it was almost as if the letter had been written before the game.

Anger in the meeting was aroused by the presence of a *Yorkshire Evening Post* reporter. His paper carried a front-page story on the incident which was slanted very much against the team and singled out David in a similar way to Farsley's supporters. Mitch, a local community worker, wanted redress and said that the article was not conducive to 'racial harmony'. Milton, another supporter, disagreed. He said that the *YEP* (a sort of Yorkshire *Daily Mail*) was a racist paper and that racist articles shift copy.

The *YEP* is not interested in putting our side. The local establishment *is* interested in painting Chapeltown as a crime centre. They will print any obscenity they like to build the local racist consensus. The local Labour council, which owns most of the league's pitches, complained limply to the FA and did nothing. Our job is to challenge their propaganda war against blacks with our own campaign for black rights. Join us.

Mark Collett
Workers Against Racism
Leeds

Brixton's festive cheer

I thought I'd write and tell you about the festive cheer that was brought to Brixton market over Christmas and the New Year by blaring carols and a stunning light show. What was the source of all this goodness? A police riot control van complete with loudspeakers, flashing lights and police constables trying to show that there's a friendly side to repression of the locals. 'Watch out for the pickpockets,' was their cheery message in-between carols. And their idiotic behaviour certainly gave the punters a good laugh. Had the Brixton police force turned over a new leaf and adopted a 'peace and goodwill to all' New Year resolution?

Not quite. While the festivities went on in the market, the 50 other cops who'd been especially bused in for the Christmas period were engaged in a Yuletide stop and search drive. But John Murry, the Brixton superintendent, hadn't come up with a new 'crime wave', or more scares about 'black muggers' or 'outside agitators', like his predecessor used to. The police don't attempt to excuse themselves any more. 'Officers are being encouraged to stop and search youths who appear to have no specific aim in mind,' were Murry's Xmas instructions.

Chris Black (Jetztzeit)

Black youths were, as usual, singled out for this harassment. From armed raids to stop and search the black community has been the central target for repression in Brixton. *tns* seems to be the only newspaper on the left that looks beyond a narrow criticism of the police to the roots of racial oppression and its legalisation by racist laws. Keep up the good work in the new year!

Sue Mills
Lambeth

You can't reform British repression

Last week SDLP leader John Hume met relatives of Robert Tohill, Gerard Steenson and Thomas Power — the three Irish republicans who were on hunger-strike in the Maze. Hume's advice was that they should give up their hunger-strike and look for justice at the British court of appeal. 'They have good grounds for appeal,' he said.

The courts may seem a civilized institution to John Hume, but the real nature of 'British justice' is well-known to republicans who've been held on remand for years on the word of supergrasses and convicted in Diplock courts where there are no juries to interfere with the execution of British interests.

Meanwhile Irish foreign minister Peter Barry also recommended an end to the hunger strike, although he added that, 'a lot of people were disturbed by a number of aspects of the supergrass trial.' Barry has made proposals to the new Anglo-Irish conference for judicial reform in Northern Ireland. He bases his proposals on the addition of two more judges to the single 'justice' who currently sits in a British Diplock court. So far the British government has raised no objection — why should it? According to Barry, British fair play matches the numbers of players representing the British establishment.

In fact the British establishment has always played dirty on the Irish people, and this judicial assault on republicans is no exception.

Martha Linecker
Liverpool

Gartcosh cop-out

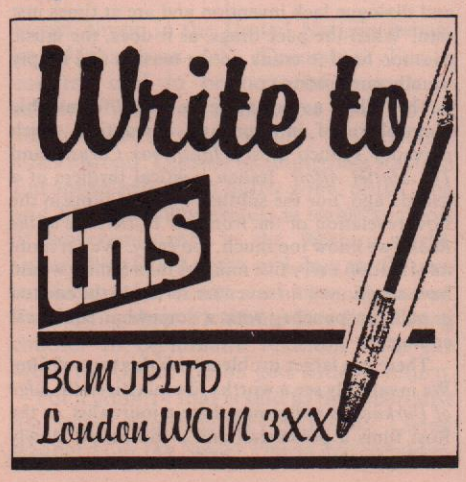
The fight to save the Gartcosh steelworks is grounded thoroughly in the politics of the official labour movement, but it has a special Tartan twist. Despite a strong commitment from the 700 workers to resist closure and fight for their jobs, union convenor Tommy Brennan has spent his time debating with Labour and Tory MPs over the future of the Scottish steel industry.

Instead of leading a fight for jobs the unions figure they can outwit the British Steel Corporation. The campaign to save the mill revolves around proving that Gartcosh is vitally connected with the Ravenscraig plant in nearby Motherwell. By exposing this 'vital link' union leaders and MPs argue that Gartcosh cannot close without Ravenscraig being 'seriously affected'. While workers stew silently at home the union leaders are hoping that the all-party select committee for Scottish affairs can convince George Younger (secretary of state for Scotland) to convince the cabinet to convince British Steel not to close Gartcosh.

Behind these bureaucratic manoeuvres lies an appeal to Scottish nationalism. The view that steel plants are closing, not because they are inefficient, unproductive, and loss-making, but because they are Scottish has been the main platform of the drive to 'save Scottish steel'. The most reactionary response has come from union leader Tommy Brennan who said it was 'an absolute disgrace' that 14 000 tonnes of Argentinian steel were headed towards Britain when 'young men from Scotland lost their lives fighting the Argentinians, and here we have Argentinian steelworkers helping to destroy the steel industry'.

The real danger of the Gartcosh campaign is the way it unites workers with the employers under a national banner. For Scottish workers it raises the false idea that the struggle to get what they need must be anti-English rather than anti-capitalist. But like our fellow workers in England we need an independent approach to fighting the bosses.

Andrew Quinn
Glasgow



STEPPING OUT

■

Nasty Nicholas Fairbairn, the Scottish Tory MP who lists 'loving women' as his favourite pastime in *Who's Who,* sprang to the defence of his favourite lady when he heard tell of a new record turned out by French singer Renaud, entitled *Miss Maggie*. The lyrics to this hit ditty, which I can only presume lose something in the translation, have Renaud revealing his ambition to become a dog so that he could 'pee on Mrs Thatcher as if she were a lamp-post'. Accompanied by a video of British riots, football hooliganism etc, it continues, 'There's no such thing as a hooligan, tart, idiot or killer — not even in Britain — apart from Madame Thatcher.' The record is rumoured to have the support of president Mitterrand. But Nasty Nick is not amused. 'It's quite clear', the Conservative Casanova observed of Renaud, 'that this piss-artist is just a guttersnipe.' Another triumph for the sophisticated wit of the British ruling class over the crudeness of Continental culture.

●

Then again, I suppose the French crooner can take comfort from not being called 'a self-advertising Jew', the label Old Nick Fairbairn was reported to have slapped on Saint Bob Geldof over the New Year. Fairbairn has since denied saying this, although the journalist who quoted him implied there might be another explanation for the MP not recalling what he said in the heat of the New Year celebrations: 'His speech was slurred and his train of thought was not particularly clever.' Could it be that Fairbairn is a 'piss-artist', and a 'self-advertising' one at that? You better watch it Nick or they'll be calling you a 'guttersnipe' ('Street Arab' – Oxford English Dictionary*). But I suppose you'd think that's better than being a Jew.*

■

The BBC screened a bizarre documentary this week called *Are you a racist?* which they set up by advertising for white racists and black victims of racism, then packing three of each off on a weekend retreat together to discuss their attitudes. One white woman was unimpressed by her experience with the BBC's choice of blacks, who she insisted were educated and not like the 'real' ones who, she suggested, mugged her everyday: 'They should have got people off the street. They didn't get the proper coloureds.' She concluded with the somewhat confusing assertion that she 'would faint' if she found a black person giving her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. So if you're black and you find a woman collapsed in the street, remember: ask if she's Mrs Joyce Cole from Peckham and if she is, leave her there. After all we don't want to frighten the poor love, do we?

●

Alright, own up, who's nicked the secret diary of Andrew Windsor, aged six and a half? (That's Prince Andrew to the monarchists among you.) According to the Irish Sunday World *(a paper of ill-repute that mixes topless pin-ups with columns by priests and a problem page that tells you to give up all 'bad personal habits'), the 'randy royal' has kept detailed descriptions of all his amorous adventures, including certain compromising photographs. Unfortunately the hot volume has mysteriously walked away from the locked draw Andrew kept it in at Buck House. The paper reports that the panic-stricken Queen has quietly offered a £500 000 reward for the diary's safe return (in an unpublished form). If you should come across this tome, please forward it to me and I'll return it, no questions asked – except perhaps, 'Could you make the cheque out to RCP Association please, Liz?'*

'HONEST' EDDIE VEALE

REPORTS

Dave Rourke (Jetztzeit)

Ken Livingstone's still trying to kid GLC workers that there's a job over the rainbow

GLC: countdown to closure

With less than three months to go before the abolition of the Greater London Council it is vital that workers at County Hall take pre-emptive action to stop the jobs auction that is already underway.

The Labour employers have made sure that every worker in every department seems to be in a different position from his or her fellow workers. Some workers have been told that their jobs are safe, others have been promised a transfer to the residuary body, others have been told they're going to another London borough, others have been persuaded that early retirement is the best option, still others have been advised to try for another job somewhere else. This strategy has spread confusion and created the impression that it's all over and nothing can be done to save our jobs.

Just before Christmas management issued a circular to manual workers in every department telling them that their jobs were safe and would be taken over by the residuary body (although there have been no cast-iron guarantees). Most workers did not really believe this, but in the absence of any alternative they clung to the idea that their jobs were alright. In reality all of us are in the same boat. For workers in 'safe' areas and workers in 'unsafe' areas the dangers and the problems are not all that different. None of us have any real job security, none of us can say that our wages and conditions are guaranteed.

The choice before us is to throw in the towel or to fight. The biggest danger is that the mood of resignation that now prevails will make the bosses' job easier. They will take advantage of the widespread feeling that 'it's all over bar the shouting' to dictate the terms of the closure and get rid of as many jobs as possible with the minimum fuss. Everybody knows now that the GLC will not be saved, but we can still save jobs. If we organise a fightback now we can make sure that the change-over takes place on our terms, not those of the employers.

● Consolidation

The employers are already merging different units and work areas, sharing out the work, shedding jobs and reducing services. We need to bring pressure to bear on the bosses at a local level to prevent the break-up of other departments and services. Our response should be: let them organise how they like, but let's make sure they don't organise us out of a job.

● Unfilled vacancies

The bosses are hoping to conceal the disappearance of jobs through the tactic of not filling vacancies and by simply ceasing to perform certain jobs. We should refuse to cover for vacant posts and 'stop the job' if temporary workers are sacked. Secretariat workers in the industry and employment branch showed how to do it before Christmas. Members of Nupe and Nalgo insisted that management recruit additional staff immediately and threatened to stop work on all word processors, keyboards and copying equipment. The staff were recruited straight away.

● Designation and direct transfer

The only jobs that have been declared 'safe' are those that have been designated for direct transfer to the London Residuary Body, the Inner London Education Authority or the successor bodies. None of the Labour Party schemes for joint committees of the boroughs or appeals to the Association of London Authorities have produced any jobs. This is why we must continue to fight for direct transfer of workers with their work without loss of pay or conditions.

● Forward funding

Workers in the women's committee and other departments are working like mad to speed up forward funding and make sure that local organisations get their grants before the GLC folds. This is a typical example of how the employers have been able to exploit workers' commitment to their service to their own advantage. NHS managers were able to rely on a similar loyalty from health workers in the 1982 pay dispute to undermine effective action. We should do everything we can to make sure that working class people do not lose out as a result of abolition, but not at the expense of our jobs.

The rank and file *Fight Back* campaign will be organising action around these principles and organising meetings to discuss the problems we face. If you would like more information or would like to get involved phone *Fight Back* on 633 4718, room 5, County Hall.

Don Milligan

Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

Come along!

Time to take control

Everybody's at it! Scab unions like the Union of Democratic Mineworkers are doing it, company unions like the EETPU are doing it, and now it's Nalgo's turn. All these unions are getting together with the bosses and giving up the right to strike. If we don't take matters into our own hands now we won't have any trade unions left in a year's time.

Hackney Nalgo officials are telling council workers to accept a selective no-strike deal in return for a management-controlled closed shop. They say it will win us more members and safeguard union organisation. But what good is a union which cannot organise effective action to workers whose jobs are on the line?

We need to stop the surrender and start fighting for our rights. This week union activists from all over London are meeting in Hackney to discuss the problems we've got and how to solve them. Come along and speak to activists from the NUM, Nalgo, the TGWU, the NUT and other unions.

● Time to take control
Thursday 16 January 7.30pm
Pembury Tavern
Amhurst Road
Hackney E8
Speakers
- **rank and file Yorkshire miner involved in the campaign against the UDM**
- **Hackney Nalgo member on what the no-strike deal means for council workers**
- **activist from *tns* on the TUC retreat and how to go forward**

● Smash the UDM
Protest against Frank Haynes, the NUM-sponsored, pro-UDM Labour MP for Ashfield in Nottinghamshire
Saturday 11 January 10am-12noon
Station Street
Kirkby-in-Ashfield

● Stop the UDM street meetings
Saturday 11 January 11am
Sheffield, Fargate
Leeds, Dortmund Square
Pontefract, outside town hall

● How workers can win in 1986
Scottish regional dayschool
Saturday 8 February 12-5.30pm
McLellan Galleries
Sauchiehall Street
Glasgow

● Beat back the racists
East London Workers Against Racism is defending a number of Asian families against racist attacks. We need to mobilise wider local resistance to stop the racists. Come to the Elwar activists' meetings and get involved.

● Newham
Thursday 9 January 7.30pm
Durning Hall
Earlham Grove
Forest Gate E7

● Hackney
Thursday 9 January 7.30pm
Pembury Tavern
Amhurst Road
Hackney E8

● How to root out racism
Public meeting organised by Brighton RCP with a speaker from East London Workers Against Racism.
Wednesday 15 January 7.30pm
Prince Albert
Trafalgar Street
Brighton

● No British solutions, troops out now!
Coventry public meeting
Wednesday 15 January 7.30pm
Elastic Inn
Lower Ford Street

● You're not recruiting us!
Colonel BJ Smith is visiting Sunderland Polytechnic to convince students why they should join the British army. RCP students will be visiting Colonel Smith to convince him why he shouldn't be there.
Wednesday 29 January 10.30am
Sunderland Polytechnic students union

● Preparing for Power
We're preparing now for our Preparing for Power annual summer school. Spend a week discussing, debating and enjoying yourself with the Revolutionary Communist Party in London from 25 July to 1 August. Plan ahead and book your holidays now. For further information contact Ann Burton on 01-729 0414.

● Revolutionary Communist Party students society
1985 saw more riots in Britain, more repression in South Africa, more British terror in Ireland, more moral panics to put down women's rights, more attacks on the working class and more cuts in our grants. But all we got from our president at NUS conference in December was more posturing.

In 1985 Revolutionary Communist Party students mobilised against the racists, organised direct action against apartheid, spoke out for Irish freedom, demonstrated for women's rights, campaigned against scab unionism in the coalfields and stood up for students.

We'll be back this year. Not impressed by student politics in the first term? Then join the RCPSS now. Ring Kerry Andrews on 01-729 0414 for more information.

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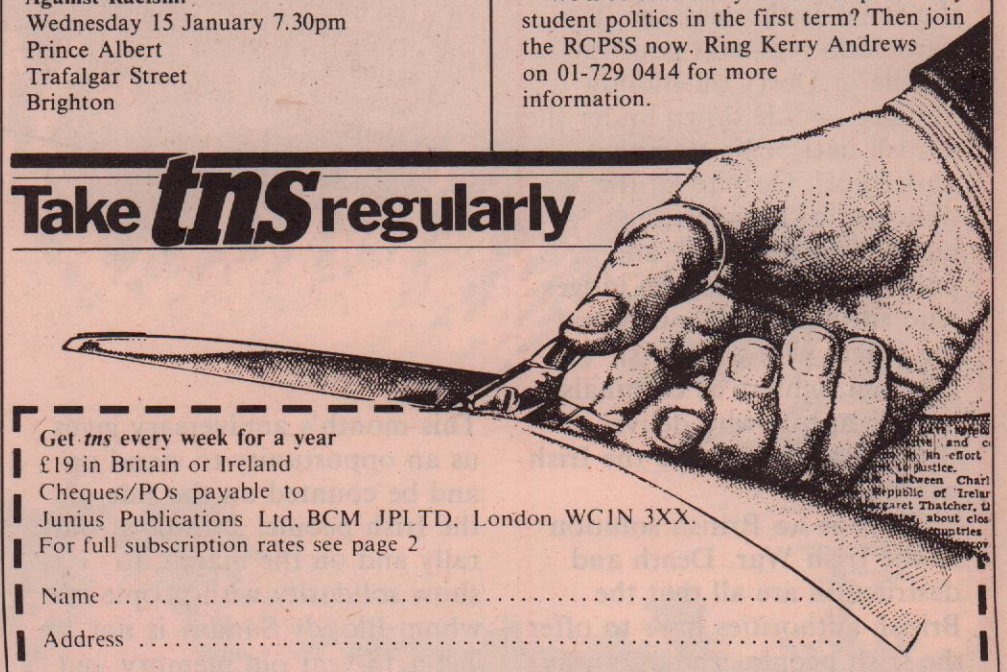

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IRELAND

This is the only British solution

Another Irish victim of a British plastic bullet in Belfast

This month brings the fourteenth anniversary of Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland. On 30 January 1972 British troops shot dead 14 unarmed Irishmen on a peaceful demonstration in Derry. Then, British repression in Ireland was an open and undeniable fact. Today, with the signing of Thatcher's accord with the Dublin government, the British authorities are posing as peace-loving diplomats and reformers in Northern Ireland. But behind the smiling mask of summit meetings and political initiatives, Westminster's real Irish policy still comes out of the barrel of a British gun.

Since the Anglo-Irish agreement was signed in November, the nationalist community in Northern Ireland has learnt that the new deal means more of the same old repression. They have seen 27 Irishmen jailed on the word of supergrass Harry Kirkpatrick. They have seen 18 leading republicans arrested in swoops by the security forces. And they have seen 550 extra British troops shipped in to help Thatcher keep control over Britain's oldest colony.

For those who want Ireland to be united and independent of Britain, the message of Britain's deal with Dublin is the same as the message the paratroop regiment gave the people of Derry on Bloody Sunday — 'Lie down under the British heel or be trampled underfoot'. Despite all the diplomatic charades, the gunmen of the Army and paramilitary police, the judges who sit in no-jury courts and the jailers who treat Irish freedom fighters as criminals are the agents who deliver 'British democracy' to the Irish people.

There is no British solution to the Irish War. Death and destruction are all that the British authorities have to offer the Irish people. The only way to bring peace to Ireland is to fight for the immediate withdrawal of British troops.

TROOPS OUT NOW!

Bloody Sunday demonstration

LONDON, Sunday 2 February

IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT

phone 01-729 0414

Rally for Irish freedom
NO BRITISH SOLUTION
Saturday 1 February 6.30pm
Manning Hall
University of London Union
Malet Street
London WC1

This month's anniversary gives us an opportunity to stand up and be counted on the side of the Irish people. Join us at our rally and on the march, to show solidarity with people for whom Bloody Sunday is not just a 14-year old memory, but a reminder of the risk they face every time they walk the streets of occupied Ireland.

The Irish Freedom Movement is holding three open discussions, starting at 7pm in the Oxford Arms, corner of Camden High St and Jamestown Rd (Camden Town tube)

- **Friday 10 January:** Will Paisley's by-elections wreck Thatcher's deal?
- **Friday 17 January:** How is the Irish War hitting the South?
- **Friday 24 January:** How can we build support for Irish freedom in Britain?

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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Address _____

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