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Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly 22 April 1988 40p



A PALESTINIAN WOMAN IS BEATEN BY ISRAELI THUGS FOR DEMANDING FREEDOM FOR HER PEOPLE

HANDS OFF PALESTINE!

HANDS OFF IRAN!

US IMPERIALISM and its Israeli allies are on the rampage against the peoples of the Middle East.

• *On Saturday,* Israeli agents pumped 100 bullets into Abu Jihad, military commander of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, in a raid on his Tunis home. Then Israeli troops shot dead at least 15 Palestinians and wounded more than 100, during protests in the occupied territories. These were the latest bloody blows which the Israeli state has struck against the oppressed Palestinian people in an attempt to put down the four-month uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

• *On Monday,* US warships and helicopters attacked Iranian oil platforms, boats and frigates in the Gulf. This is an escalation of the US intervention in the Gulf, where its battle armada has been making intimidatory moves against Iran since last year.

The USA and other Western powers are behind the upsurge of violence. They helped create the state of Israel by robbing the Palestinians of their homeland. They support and arm Israel today as their local agent in the Middle East. During his recent 'peace mission', US secretary of state George Shultz insisted that Washington backed Israeli rule on Palestinian soil. And that rule can only be exercised at the point of a gun. The bullets which riddled Abu Jihad's body were bought with US dollars.

The USA has been trying to reassert Western control in the Gulf since the fall of its other main Middle Eastern stooge, the Shah of Iran, in 1979. First the USA tried a helicopter attack on Iran in 1980, then it encouraged Iraq to start the Gulf War. When these aggressive tactics failed, Reagan tried to buy off Ayatollah Khomeini's regime in the infamous arms-for-hostages deal. Since that scam was exposed in the Irangate scandal, the USA has returned to gunboat diplomacy to bring Iran to heel.

The British government is on the side of the oppressors in these conflicts. Thatcher has condemned the PLO as 'terrorists' who must be defeated, and sent British warships to back US piracy in the Gulf. We should oppose all such imperial adventures, demand the immediate withdrawal of Western forces, and support the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, as the only path to a just peace for the masses of the Middle East.



CAPITALISM CAN CUT BENEFITS, BUT NOT DOLE QUEUES

SOCIAL SECURITY CUTS

WHY THE TORIES WANT US TO SUFFER

The government's wide-ranging reforms of the social security system came into force last week. It is clear that they involve substantial cuts in the paltry living standards of millions who receive state benefits. Opponents have condemned the Tories' callous treatment of the poor and underprivileged. Reciting cases of impoverishment and suffering can pull on heart-strings, but provides no basis to resist a government that now boasts about its anti-working class crusade to save British capitalism.

The Tories have failed to solve the problem of state spending.

Thatcher came to power with grandiose promises to slash a spending bill that absorbed 43 per cent of national income in 1979. Apostles of monetarism insisted there was no hope for British capitalism as long as this mammoth drain on its resources remained. Yet by 1982 state spending was eating into almost 47 per cent of national income. The government gave up promising to cut spending, and began to advertise its tax-cutting and privatisation policies instead.

SLOWDOWN

The economic upturn which took off in 1983 allowed the Tories to sustain a convincing counter-crisis strategy without tackling state spending. Renewed growth automatically raised tax revenues. Together with growing receipts from privatisation after 1984, this enabled the Tories to reduce state borrowing and claim to be a government of fiscal discipline. But state spending as a proportion of national income did not fall below the level inherited from the previous Labour government until last year — hardly a testimony to financial rectitude.

Broader economic trends lie behind the renewed determination to cut spending. The imminent slowdown in the British economy promises to close options for raising more revenue. Last month's budget estimates on government tax receipts for 1988/89 assume four per cent growth for the British economy this year. But this has already been revised downwards after UK manufacturing output fell three per cent in February. The frequency with which policy-makers revise their sums shows that they do not really know what will happen to the British economy. Nevertheless, they recognise that growth is slackening, and that they must cut back the burden of state spending on profit-making.

There are good capitalist reasons why the benefits system should be the main target of the Tory cuts programme.

This year's social security bill of £48.5 billion — covering the unemployed, low-paid, sick disabled, aged and others — is a third of all government current spending. Furthermore, despite the cost, the capitalist class derives only marginal economic returns.

EXPLOITABLE

Sixteen per cent of the social security bill goes to the registered unemployed. This money contributes to maintaining an available reserve of exploitable labour-power. More than two thirds of benefits, however, go to the sick, disabled and elderly — most of whom are incapable of rendering any economic service to the employing class. The admission by Tory ministers that the British pensioner has joined the list of legitimate targets for attack says more than treasury statistics ever could about the parlous state of British capitalism.

Along with the aged, the young will suffer from the new benefit rules. Unemployed youth between 16 and 25 years of age face cuts in dole and rights to housing benefit. Jobless youth are an obvious target for cuts in welfare benefits. They can be pressurised to stay on at school, compelled to stay at home with their parents, or forced to migrate to find low-paid work.

As the state abdicates responsibility for welfare provision, working class families — especially women — are expected to find individual ways to care for the young, the old and the sick.

Tory ministers are not afraid to admit the hard-nosed capitalist logic behind the benefit cuts. Junior social security minister Michael Portillo has said that the 'burden' of more old people in Britain is one 'which we don't believe we can support'. He advised people approaching retirement to 'make their own provision.'

MORALITY

Against this, leading opponents of Tory policy question the morality of the Thatcher regime. The official opposition hangs on to the coat-tails of Church of England clerics in calling on the government to show some compassion. We need to see the Tories for what they are — a government trying to push through the measures essential to avert capitalist decline — and to organise accordingly. The millions who will suffer from the benefit cuts are not isolated individuals. They are members of working class communities. The only solution is to organise to get rid of those who get rich by scrounging off the wealth that we produce.

Tony Kennedy

SCOTTISH LOCAL ELECTIONS

SMASH THE POLL TAX!

Both the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish National Party have made the poll tax the focus of their May local election campaign. But both have shown that they have no intention of defying the Tory law.

Last week the SNP announced that it saw next month's district elections as a referendum on the poll tax. The party withdrew from the Scottish TUC's cross-party campaign against the poll tax because of its refusal to consider a strategy of non-payment. The SNP promised to lead a new non-payment campaign if it received a mandate in the elections. The SNP's 'leave it to the people' approach postpones the fight against the poll tax to a future which will probably never come.

DEDUCTION

Where the SNP already has council seats it has made clear that it won't defy the law. In Angus district council the SNP agreed with Labour that illegality was not an option for opposing the tax. In the Grampian region SNP councillors voted with the Tories to appoint poll tax collectors and to arrange for the deduction of the tax from social security benefits.

Meanwhile, the Labour Party has continued its legal moves against the tax. On Tuesday the Labour Party's 'Stop It' campaign took Jack Wood, Strathclyde region's poll tax registration officer, to court. The campaign argued that there should be no more canvassing for the poll tax register until the courts had established the legality of using postcards to speed up the registration process. The case was thrown out of court.

The irony is that Labour-controlled Strathclyde council *employs* Mr Wood to collect the poll tax. Even as the court case was going on, Labour councillors were meeting with Jack Wood. Council leader Charles Gray said he was in complete sympathy 'with the position of Mr Wood and his staff because of the laws they are obliged to implement'. For the Labour Party the feelings of the scabs who will collect the tax are more important than those of the workers who will pay it.

DEFIANCE

The anti-poll tax campaigns of both parties are a cynical exercise to cover up their complicity in already implementing the Tory tax. We need to organise a mass working class campaign of defiance linked to a campaign of non-implementation by council workers. That's the message of the Revolutionary Communist Party candidates in the Glasgow district elections. To smash the poll tax we must:

- **organise collective resistance**
- **break the Tory law**
- **build a united campaign of council workers, community groups, women working in the home and the unemployed**
- **organise against the snoopers**

ELAINE MURDOCH in Partick Ward and DEREK OWEN in Crosshill Ward will be using the election campaign to popularise this message and to begin building working class resistance to the tax. If you want to smash the poll tax, get in touch with the campaign at: PH8 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow.

Carol Taggart



Pervais Khan

HANDSWORTH, 1985: POLICE HARASSMENT IS STILL THE ISSUE

HANDSWORTH PEOPLES CAMPAIGN

Police off our backs

THE Handsworth Peoples Campaign is standing two candidates in the May council elections on a platform of opposition to cuts in jobs, services and social security benefits, and resistance to the poll tax, police harassment and all forms of racism. A recent police clampdown on the black community, conducted as a two-day drug cleanout, confirmed the importance of making opposition to police harassment the focus of the election campaign.

Members of the Handsworth Peoples Campaign have themselves been subject to racist police harassment dressed up as action against drugs and crime. In August last year campaign member Rob was arrested and charged under the Public Order Act, after daring to ask police what they were doing prowling around the Handsworth Single Homeless Action Group Centre. By the time the court case came in December the police had dreamt up some elaborate stories. They accused Rob of being a trouble-maker and working in a centre used by other lawless elements. The police lies were too much even for the judge to accept and the case was dropped. But the police have not dropped their vendetta against Rob.

They put his workplace under surveillance, and began to harass other members of the Handsworth Peoples Campaign. On 6 April Paul and Keith were surrounded by police as they got out of their van to get a couple of patties at the fish and chip shop on Villa Road. Keith was caught in a cul-de-sac, and police claimed to have a ganja bag which he was supposed to have dropped. The two were held for eight hours in Thorn Hill police station and strip-searched twice. When Paul asked what he was there for, the police replied — 'with hair like yours, what do you expect?'

Stefanie Boston

**** The names in this article have been changed.***



Pandora Anderson

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: LIZ CURTIS, TONY BENN, OLIVER DONOHUE (CHAIR), MITCHEL McLAUGHLIN, JOHN FITZPATRICK

600 AT HAMMERSMITH IRISH MEETING

TROOPS OUT

Hammersmith town hall was packed last week as Sinn Fein councillor Mitchel McLaughlin, Labour leadership candidate Tony Benn and John Fitzpatrick of the Irish Freedom Movement spoke out against the British occupation of Ireland. The fact that the meeting went ahead was a victory over Tory councillors who tried to ban it and gutter press journalists who vilified it as a terrorists' convention. The fact that it attracted and inspired more than 600 people was a big bonus.

All the speakers agreed that British troops should leave Ireland, although some differed about how this could be achieved.

TRAGIC

Tony Benn started with a proposition all could agree with. 'This meeting is about how we can bring peace to Northern Ireland.' He pointed out that every British initiative has failed, and that 'the best, and only real contribution that Britain could make to end the violence in Northern Ireland, with all its tragic loss of life, would be for parliament to enact legislation that would fix a date when Britain would end its jurisdiction.

'Then the government should open talks with all sections of all communities to discuss how best the transfer of power could be achieved. It is a tragedy that the Labour Party in parliament should have re-adopted a bipartisan policy by supporting the Anglo-Irish agreement which has absolutely failed.'

Benn suggested that his own Northern Ireland (Termination of Jurisdiction) Bill provided the best way ahead: 'Recently members of the Campaign Group presented a bill that would terminate British jurisdiction in Northern Ireland on 1 January 1990, to open up the possibility of talks about what would follow.'

'TRAITOR'

John Fitzpatrick, speaking for the Irish Freedom Movement, demanded the immediate withdrawal of British troops. 'Nobody here needs convincing that the Irish people are denied their democratic rights. Nobody here needs convincing that the nationalist communities of the Six Counties contain freedom fighters and not terrorists.'

He argued that ordinary people in Britain should support the Irish freedom struggle.

'Earlier this week in this town hall I was accused by a Tory councillor of being a traitor to my country, because I sent a letter of solidarity to the relatives of the republicans killed in Gibraltar. Does he seriously believe that I owe my allegiance to Queen and country and Her Majesty's government and army? To me, Her Majesty's government is the political wing of the SAS, UDR and RUC. As a trade unionist in Britain I owe my allegiance to working people everywhere, to all those struggling against oppression. Our movement has values which a Tory councillor will never understand, and they include "The working class has no country" and "An injury to one is an injury to all." '

DECISIVE

Fitzpatrick argued that many people in Britain had underestimated what it will take to end the Irish War. 'Britain will never be persuaded out of Ireland, it will only be forced out. No British government has ever considered pulling out for more than a split second. Even if parliament agreed, it still wouldn't happen, because the British state proper — that is, primarily the police, the Army and the civil service — would not stand idly by. They are determined to keep control.' Fitzpatrick noted how, just before the First World War and again in 1974, British Army officers had refused to obey government orders which they believed would undermine British state control in Ireland.

In this context, argued Fitzpatrick, 'The only force we have which is capable of standing up to the British state, the only force which is capable of providing decisive assistance to the Irish people, is the working class in this country. That's where our solidarity campaign must be based and directed.'

Fitzpatrick argued that we could win working class support for Irish freedom by appealing to people's self-interest, because 'the Irish people and ourselves have a common enemy in the British state.'

BLOODSHED

Derry Sinn Fein councillor **Mitchel McLaughlin** stressed that the Irish people do not welcome the prospect of more bloodshed. 'Unlike Thatcher, Irish people deeply regret all deaths. We do not want this war, but it has been forced upon us by the fact that Britain resolutely refuses to disengage from our country. Britain imported violence into our country and the resulting opposition to Britain is a direct result of Britain's imperial adventure.'

For McLaughlin the British atrocities and the killings of recent months are symptoms of the injustice of Britain's continued occupation. 'The primary issue, the one on which socialists cannot be ambivalent, is that Britain has no peaceful role in Ireland. For most Irish people there is something obscene about Thatcher and her cronies waxing moral about the deaths of two soldiers in Ireland. The woman who sanctioned the sinking of the *Belgrano* who supplies weapons to reactionary regimes, who supports apartheid, who established death-squads in Ireland, who approved the US bombing of civilians in Libya and who has presided over the most anti-working class regime in memory is hardly a person to be taken seriously in matters of morality.'

THROATS

The Derry councillor touched on the problems of building a solidarity movement in this country, and the arguments about the armed struggle. 'Many in Britain have such an inflated and hypocritical notion of their own democratic system that it sticks in their throats to have to admit that their government is as oppressive, as violent and as ideologically corrupt as any tinpot Central American dictatorship.

'Whether Britain cares to admit it or not the tactics of the IRA are exactly similar to those employed by any other national liberation organisation.

'Resistance is the same in every occupied country and no one on the outside has the right to criticise the methods of freedom-loving peoples. In Ireland, like other forms of struggle, the armed struggle is about achieving the political demands for national self-determination and a 32-county Irish republic.'

Liz Curtis from Information on Ireland also spoke.

Elaine Grey

POLICE RACISM AS PHOTO-OPPORTUNITY

Using sledge-hammers and crowbars 60 officers from the elite PT18 squad of the Metropolitan Police took 60 seconds to storm a house in Clapton Way, East London, last Thursday. Though they raided the 'shebeen' at 5.38am, they brought the bleary-eyed press hacks along to record the raid. Blinded by powerful Dragon lights, the 70 occupants were forced to the ground and restrained with the latest in 'handcuffs' — plastic wire that cuts into wrists. Inside, some cannabis and cocaine were discovered.

Twenty black youth were eventually arrested, and five of these were later charged — one with a weapons offence and the others with possessing drugs. The next day, the newspapers screamed that one was the 'Godfather of the Black Mafia', and 'the top Yardie in Britain'. Chief superintendent George Crawford told the press that 'the local community, both black and white, will applaud our actions.' By manipulating fears of Yardie gangsterism, and turning a stage-managed raid into a media event, the police hoped to legitimise higher-profile policing within the black community. Their aim is not to crack down on drugs, but to prepare public opinion for more violent police action against black youth.



SNAP: POLICE TERROR BECOMES A MEDIA EVENT

The police might claim that they are acting on public concern about drug-pushers. But the racist motives behind their aggression are revealed by contrasting the Hackney raid with another drugs story that made the papers on the same day.

Steven King, a 19-year old white youth from Teignmouth in Devon, had allowed his parents' detached seaside home — 'Pippins' — to be used for the supply and use of drugs while they were away on holiday last August. King and seven of his friends admitted possession of drugs like cannabis and LSD, plus criminal damage and theft. A sword and knives were recovered. King was put on probation for two years and fined £100, while his friends were fined an average of £60. Even the state prosecutor made allowances for the high-spirited behaviour of King and his friends. Christopher Bennett informed the court that while the accused were 'hedonistic youth with a shocking disregard for property... they could not be blamed for everything'.

Compared to Hackney's blacks, King and his middle class friends got off lightly. Indeed, the police had only become involved in Devon when King's own parents had returned from holiday and called them in. There is no mileage for the establishment in publicising state repression of rich white kids.

SKULLS

The true purpose of the police raid/photo opportunity was to pave the way for the sort of action against black youth which the Met's elite squads are really trained for. PT18 members are chosen for their strength. As Crawford put it, 'We go in to intimidate.' Many of the unit are former paratroopers. They are based at the Public Order Training Centre in Hounslow, which houses the Met's anti-riot training facilities. To prepare for their big performance in front of the press the PT18 unit rehearsed the assault 10 times on a mock-up of the Clapton Way house. When not occupied in breaking black skulls, the PT18 members are training 5000 police officers to use plastic bullet guns and other riot gear.

Andy Clarkson



The working class in Britain and throughout the West has suffered a series of setbacks in recent years. These setbacks have strengthened those who argue for moderation, 'realism' and a strategy of defensiveness. The Revolutionary Communist Party takes a different view.

We believe that these setbacks are the responsibility of the old parties and union machines of the official labour movement. In Britain the Labourist tradition has exhausted itself and can no longer relate to even the most modest aspiration of the working class. The exhaustion of Labourism in no way undermines the potential of the working class to change the world.

The RCP is committed to the construction of an independent working class movement. Only a movement which recognises that the interests of workers are irreconcilably opposed to those of the employers can fight effectively in the struggles ahead.

◆

For the RCP, working class politics cannot be reduced to trade unionism or the affairs of the workplace. Workers must take a stand on every issue and express an independent point of view if we are to liberate ourselves. The fatal flaw of British Labourism is that it restricts workers' horizons to economic matters, while it allows the employer class to monopolise political debate. Workers must define every problem from our point of view and fight for the rights of every section of society if we are to constitute a politically independent class.

While the RCP supports the fight for real reform or improvements in the lives of working class people, we believe that no durable gains can be won within capitalism. The RCP argues that the overthrow of capitalism provides the necessary precondition for the liberation of the working class and of society as a whole.

The British state exists to protect the wealth and privilege of the capitalists. The aim of the RCP is the destruction of this institution which maintains the conditions for exploitation. We believe that the state cannot be used for any progressive ends. The attempt to use the 'soft' side of the state — local government, inner-city partnership, police authorities — simply legitimises the state as a whole and thereby strengthens the authority of the main coercive instrument of the capitalist class.

The RCP believes that workers have no nation. British workers share the same interests as the exploited in other countries. British workers have nothing in common with the employers and must resist the appeals of patriotism and chauvinism. As internationalists we recognise that the enemy is at home. Since Britain remains an imperialist power around the world, the only international role it can play is that of the oppressor.

The class struggle is inextricably linked to the struggle against imperialism. The RCP supports all anti-imperialist struggles. Workers who live in the imperialist heartland have a special duty to back those fighting against the British oppressor. Thus we fight for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and for Irish self-determination. We opposed Britain's colonial war in the South Atlantic, and support the return of the Malvinas islands to Argentina. We oppose British and Western interference in the Middle East. We support the destruction of the Zionist state in Palestine and of the apartheid regime in South Africa. We uphold the same principles in every struggle against imperialism. The RCP is a fervent opponent of all forms of British militarism, nuclear, and 'non-nuclear' alike.

The RCP believes that the fight against oppression is central to the construction of an independent working class movement. Workers must defend the oppressed if we are to fight for our own liberation. This is why the RCP is wholeheartedly committed to the fight against racism. The struggle for the emancipation of women is another fundamental issue for the working class. We unreservedly oppose any form of discrimination against lesbians and gays and call for the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Workers must take a stand on these issues, not out of altruism, but because it is in our class interest to fight for the fullest extension of democratic rights.

◆

Workers need combat organisations capable of defending our interests. The existing organisations of the labour movement are singularly unsuited for this task. The RCP believes that the Labour Party is a bosses' organisation that should be fought and exposed. Despite its working class constituency the Labour Party has always followed the dictates of the capitalists. Whenever Labour has been in office, it has always betrayed the hopes of workers. The RCP is against giving any electoral support to Labour. Workers need a party that is 100 per cent our own and only responsive to proletarian interests.

The existing trade unions are heavily bureaucratised and incapable of representing the aspirations of their members. The RCP argues that rank and file trade unionists should fight to take control of the movement. Trade unionists should organise across the workplace and industry and demand that we run our own affairs. Rank and file committees organised on an industry-wide basis could ensure that the unions truly belong to their members.

The RCP's aim is social revolution in Britain and internationally. We believe that this perspective is no less essential in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union than in the West. Only the working class has the capacity to liberate humanity. Our job is to contribute practically to the realisation of this objective.

PARLIAMENTARY TROUBLE-MAKERS

NO POLITICS OR PASSION

The tribunes of the Tory Party reported with relish that Militant MP David Nellist had 'ruined' the Labour Party's attack on the government's social security changes last week by getting thrown out of the commons. In their enthusiasm to recount how Labour's left wing had scored another own goal, the media omitted to say that Nellist had been thrown out of the House without even having uttered a word of reproach to the government. All he had managed to do was try nine times to interrupt Tory John Moore's lame defence of the social security cuts — without success.

It is ironic that the media should get so excited about a performance which can best be described as silly. Today's parliamentary left has got none of the instincts, guts, anger or style of its predecessors. In the past MPs like Victor Grayson, the independent socialist from Colne Valley, or James Maxton, one of the 'Red Clydesiders', electrified the house of commons with their passionate attacks on the establishment.

Nellist's performance last week was wholly out of character.

In his five years as the allegedly firebrand MP for Coventry South-east, this was the first time he had managed to hold the attention of the House. Grayson had such contempt for parliament that he hardly ever went there during his period as MP from 1907-10. But he made a bigger impact with the three speeches, eight questions and three interventions that were the sum of his three-session parliamentary career than Nellist will in a lifetime.



'PATHETIC': NELLIST

David Rourke

The issue at the centre of controversy last week — poverty — is one that has always motivated the parliamentary left. The Clydeside MPs who were elected in 1922 were angry about the injustices inflicted on working people and capable of denouncing capitalism in a way that shames many on the left today. Their disruptive tactics made a dramatic impact. In a famous outburst which got him barred from the house of commons in 1923, Maxton accused the Tory government of being 'murderers' when they moved to cut off free milk to Scottish children. By contrast, Nellist cannot get it together to call the Tories anything.

Today's left is so subservient to parliamentary procedure that it does not dare put a foot out of place. Nellist explained apologetically that he had not expected to be 'named' by the Speaker. Grayson had nothing but scorn for convention. He caused a sensation on one occasion when he rose from the benches to demand that the question of unemployment should be debated immediately. After eight requests for him to sit down or leave Grayson said he was willing to leave 'because I feel degraded in a company that will not consider the unemployed'. But he was back the next day to force the issue on the House once again. To a chorus of voices shouting 'order', Grayson replied 'I will not give order in a chamber that starves the people wholesale.' When the chairman of committee named him for disobeying the orders of the chair, Grayson responded 'You may name me, you cannot shame me.' On his way out Grayson urged other MPs to walk out, denouncing parliament as 'a House of murderers'.



'PASSIONATE': GRAYSON

There is no great political distinction between left-wing Labour MPs over the generations. But the parliamentary radicals of the past had class anger in their hearts.

Even a committed parliamentarian like Aneurin Bevan had more fire and feeling than the whole of the left put together today. The one-time MP for Mid-Ulster, Bernadette Devlin, cannot be put in the same bracket as the Labour left. She was rendered speechless by the lies told by home secretary Reginald Maudling after British paratroopers shot dead 14 Irishmen in Derry on Bloody Sunday 1972. So she strode across the house of commons and smacked him in the face.

All the left can do today is make noises at the Tories. They would never dream of having a go at Labour leaders for their craven accommodation to the government. Neil Kinnock has often been seen nodding approvingly at Nellist's speeches. This is a far cry from somebody like Grayson who refused to bow to the Labour leaders. White with rage after nobody on the Labour benches would back his challenge to the government on unemployment, he told them 'You are traitors to your class. You will not stand up for your class. You traitors.'

Speed the day when we have representatives who can expose the parliamentary charade with Grayson's passion, and who have the revolutionary politics to go with it.

Joan Phillips

HARRY McSHANE

No mean fighter

HARRY McSHANE, the last of the Red Clydesiders, died on Wednesday 13 April at the age of 96. He was buried in Craigton cemetery, Glasgow, on Saturday, surrounded by 400 comrades. McShane's passing is particularly poignant given the present political scene in Scotland. An activist and class fighter all his life, McShane stood head and shoulders above the leaders of the labour movement today. Born into a Catholic family in 1891, facing discrimination at every turn, he rose to become a skilled engineer, and a skilful organiser of men.

Involved in the Glasgow shop stewards' movement during the First World War, McShane attached more importance to the anti-war movement. He stood alongside internationalists like Lenin and fellow Clydesider John MacLean, who argued that the working class has no country and, therefore, no reason to butcher one another for a cause that was not their own. The 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin had a profound effect on McShane, who agitated for Irish freedom among British workers throughout his life.

CRUTCH

McShane joined MacLean's Tramp Trust Unlimited which travelled Scotland propagandising on issues such as the fight for Irish freedom and spreading support for the Bolshevik Revolution. In time McShane became the crutch on which MacLean leaned as pressures on the two revolutionaries increased. Jail sentences affected the two leaders in different ways. The years he spent in prison mulling over the defeats that followed the war made MacLean pessimistic about the prospects for revolution. He refused to join the new Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920, and instead declared the need for a separate Scottish Communist Party and Scottish independence. McShane finally broke with MacLean over his nationalist ideas, and stressed the need for a united all-British party.

COMMITTED

McShane was a committed, if critical, member of the Communist Party of Great Britain for three decades, playing a prominent part in the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the inter-war years. After a series of disagreements McShane finally left the party in the fifties, but he did not give up the struggle against the system. At the age of 62 he went back to work as an engineer at Harland and Wolff shipyard, and continued his political activity in the union, the trades council and the peace movement.

McShane remained a champion of his class to the end, but the long experience of defeat left its mark. Last year he declared his conversion to the sectional cause of Scottish nationalism, as he came to see a local Scottish assembly as a way forward for the working class. It was a mark of the decline of the Scottish labour movement from the days when the Red Clydesiders took on the police in George Square on Bloody Friday, 1919, and forced the government to send tanks into Glasgow to defend capitalism against the revolutionary anger of men like McShane.

Derek Owen

the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly | No 15 | Editor: Mick Hume

IMPERIALISM OUT OF THE MIDDLE EAST

AS VIOLENCE BREAKS out in the Middle East again, we must take sides with the Palestinians and Iranians under attack from the USA, Britain and Israel.

Western statesmen and media commentators try to sell us simpletons' explanations of the cause of the Middle Eastern conflicts. They talk of 'Arab terrorism' or 'Muslim fanatics'. They claim that US attacks on Iranian targets in the Gulf are a one-off response to the collision between an American frigate and a mine. They tell us Abu Jihad, assassinated by Israeli forces on Saturday, was one of the shadowy figures responsible for 'orchestrating' Palestinian unrest in the occupied territories. These explanations serve to remove events from the broader context in which they occur, and to disguise their true cause — imperialist interference in the Middle East.

Conventional wisdom has it that Western imperialism ended in the third world when the old colonial flags came down and those of independence went up. But this confuses colonialism (the direct military occupation of a country), with imperialism — the economic and political division of the world between oppressed and oppressor nations. In the Middle East, the US-led Western powers have maintained their domination over the masses without resorting to colonialism — through controlling local economies, manipulating religious and ethnic divisions and sponsoring client regimes.

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When their authority is challenged, the imperialist states have been ready to intervene militarily in the Middle East. Sometimes they have done so by using proxy forces, as in Israel's wars against the Palestinians and its Arab neighbours. Sometimes they have launched covert operations, as in the 1985 car-bomb planted in Beirut by an ex-SAS man on CIA orders, which killed 73 people in an attempt to assassinate a Muslim leader. And sometimes the Western powers have intervened directly, as in the joint US/British air-strike against Libya in 1986, and the current US/British/French naval expedition in the Gulf.

Today's most prominent conflicts in the Middle East result from the Western powers' latest, and most desperate, attempt to reassert their authority in the region. It is significant that the fighting is taking place in Palestine and the Gulf. This reflects the problems which the USA is having with the two states which traditionally formed the pillars of its power-structure in the Middle East — Israel and Iran.

The state of Israel celebrates its fortieth anniversary this week. It was created in 1948, with Western support, on land stolen from the Palestinians, and has survived ever since by denying the Palestinian people their right to national self-determination. Israel has received immense political, economic and military backing from the USA. In return, it has acted as the guarantor of Western interests in the region. Iran was the other top US agent in the post-war Middle East. In 1953 the American and British secret services sponsored a coup which ousted Iranian premier Mossadegh and reinstated the Shah as Iran's ruler — on their behalf.

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Through the sixties and seventies, while the USA retained almost unquestioned global power, the Washington-Israel-Iran arrangements worked well for the West and kept the Middle East enslaved. But the arrival of world recession, the decline of US power and the subsequent upsurge of popular resistance have shaken things up.

The Shah was toppled by a popular insurrection in 1979, and replaced by the radical Islamic regime of Ayatollah Khomeini. This delivered the single biggest blow to imperialism in the Middle East since the Second World War. Since then, the USA has tried several different tacks to win back its influence over Iran. It encouraged Iraq to attack Iran in 1980. But this only increased instability by beginning the long Gulf War, which in turn entrenched Khomeini's position inside Iran. Since then the Western powers have tried to contain the Gulf conflict by selling tonnes of arms to both sides. Meanwhile, the USA attempted to make overtures towards Iran in the arms-for-hostages deal. Since this backfired, Reagan has returned to rattling his sabre at Iran and giving more open aid to Iraq, in an attempt to bring Tehran back under Washington's influence. This week's clashes in the Gulf are the consequence, not of an Iranian mine, but of an American campaign to undermine Iran's independence.

The last few years have also exposed the limitations of Israeli power. Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 to drive out Palestinian guerrillas based there. It presided over the massacre of thousands of Palestinian refugees in Beirut camps, but was then driven back by Shiite resistance. When the USA led a Western military force in to police Beirut in 1983, it too was blasted out by the Shiites. Israel has been forced to retrench its position. Now it is faced with a new upsurge of Palestinian resistance in the West Bank and Gaza, which it occupied in 1967. The latest clashes are not simply about the death of one PLO leader. They reflect the increasingly violent methods which the weakened Israeli state must use to preserve its existence against the fury of Palestinians who can sense a change in the mood of the Middle East.

Every aspect of Western policy, whether economic, military or diplomatic, is directed towards the end of securing domination. Thus Tory minister David Mellor could go to the occupied territories earlier this year, and complain about the excesses of Israeli terror, in an effort to win Palestinian support for a Western solution. Yet this week Mellor the diplomat became a warmonger again, defending US attacks on Iran.

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Of course the Western powers do not announce their Middle Eastern policies as 'imperialist interference'. Thatcher and Reagan both dressed up the latest assaults on Iranian targets in the Gulf in democratic language, talking of the need to protect 'the freedom of the seas' and to exercise 'the right of self-defence'. But the 'freedom' they seek is their freedom to commit acts of piracy in the third world. Thatcher showed no such concern for navigational freedom when she threw a 200-mile exclusion zone around the Malvinas islands and sank the *Belgrano* for daring to come near it. Reagan displayed the same attitude when his agents mined Nicaraguan harbours. The 'self-defence' which the imperialists exercise is the protection of their exploitative interests across the globe.

Imperialism is responsible for the problems and the suffering in the Middle East. It follows that the defeat of the Western powers and their Israeli agents holds out the only hope of peace and progress there. This is why we must take sides with the Palestinians and the Iranians against the oppressors. There is no room for fudging in this conflict.

We must support the Palestinian people's right to complete national self-determination. This does not mean encouraging them to settle for some sham homeland alongside Israel. While the Zionist state stands, Palestinians can never be free. Its destruction is the precondition for their liberation. We cannot allow Palestine's fight for freedom to be corrupted into a Western-sponsored 'diplomatic settlement' designed to preserve the interests of the imperialists by saving Israel.

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In the Gulf, we must defend the Iranians against US/British aggression. Many people are wary of taking such a stance because of the reactionary character of the Khomeini regime. But even in his worst moments, the Ayatollah cannot match the imperialists for sheer barbarism. If the Western states succeed in pulling Iran back under their power, it can only lead to even more backward and vicious measures against the Iranian people. We should take sides against imperialism in the Gulf, not because there is anything progressive about Khomeini, but because a defeat for the Western powers would be a step forward for the masses they seek to enslave. If the USA, Britain and the rest of the imperialist gang regain control over the region, it will seriously set back the prospects for real progress against all of the oppressive regimes in the Middle East. Our demand must be for the immediate withdrawal of all Western forces from the Gulf.

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The rising tide of violence in the Middle East shows how imperialism is dragging the world into a dark age of death and destruction. We cannot afford to stand by and expect to be spared the consequences. Taking a stand against imperialism in the Middle East is not a question of being charitable to the third world. It is in the direct interests of ordinary people in Britain and the West to support the struggle against the governments and ruling classes which dominate us all. The force which holds down the British working class is not an Islamic republic, but the British state. Our enemy is not in Tehran. Our enemy is at home.

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a week in the IRISH WAR

• *Monday 10 April:* Senator Joe Kennedy, realising that attacking Britain was the way to get publicity in Ireland, told a crowd of 400 people in Wexford that 'the British have no right occupying the North of Ireland.'

• *Tuesday 12 April:* Northern Ireland secretary Tom King criticised the moderate nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party for holding talks with Sinn Fein. Meanwhile, the *Irish Times* reported republican sources expressing anxiety that the SDLP's true motive for participating in the talks was to 'cause disunity in our ranks'. The Royal Ulster Constabulary's annual report revealed that 1987 had seen the highest level of republican attacks on Crown forces since the hunger-strike year of 1981. In all, 93 people died in war-related incidents.

• *Wednesday 13 April:* Two RUC detectives were injured, one seriously, when IRA volunteers ambushed them near Armagh town. The IRA later claimed that the two detectives were involved in the assassination of eight volunteers in Loughgall in May 1987. After the Loughgall ambush, Crown forces claimed that they had wiped out the IRA in East Tyrone. The volunteers who carried out the attack on the detectives were members of the East Tyrone brigade of the IRA. Despite numerous raids and weapons seizures by Crown forces, the Derry brigade of the IRA attacked an RUC patrol with armour-piercing blast bombs.

Renegade republican Dessie O'Hare was sentenced to 40 years imprisonment in Dublin for kidnapping dentist John O'Grady last year. In his speech from the dock O'Hare wished that his actions would 'reverberate until bloody war is waged against the Northern British and their Southern allies'.

• *Thursday 14 April:* In a speech in Glengormley, Peter Robinson, heir aspirant to Democratic Unionist Party leader Ian Paisley, voiced Loyalist frustration at being ignored by the British. Like a spoiled child threatening to leave home, he said the Loyalists would have to start thinking about independence if the British continued to ignore their proposals for devolution: 'They have had the outline of the Unionist proposals since January without a squeak or a squawk.' In an ominous warning to nationalists, he said 'We've nothing left to concede, all we can do is fight to claw something back.' An IRA active service unit attacked an RUC patrol with a 'drogue bomb' near Omagh in County Tyrone. The armour-piercing grenade failed to explode.

• *Saturday 16 April:* The RUC published its officers' code of conduct. Attempting to square the demands of the criminalisation policy with the reality of waging war against the nationalist people, it delicately points out the RUC's dual role of 'providing a service similar to that of other police forces in the UK and at the same time, protecting the state from periodic armed and violent subversion'. The Stalinist Workers Party opened its Ard Fheis (annual conference) in Dublin, trying to distance itself from its violently anti-republican paramilitary wing.

Mark Reilly

FRENCH ELECTIONS

CHIRAC PLAYS THE RACE CARD

This Sunday French electors go to the polls in the first round of the presidential elections — Kenan Malik reports on how racism has emerged as a major issue in the campaign

'Gagnez avec l'outsider' ('win with the outsider') proclaim the election posters for Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the Front National and the far-right candidate in the presidential elections. Le Pen is an outsider with no chance of entering the Elysée Palace, but he has played a central role in influencing the political tenor of the election campaign. 'The key to the presidential election' admitted Alain Juppe, campaign manager for Jacques Chirac, the prime minister and leading right-wing candidate, 'is the Front National electorate.' As the main candidates compete for votes from racists, immigration has become a major issue in the campaign.

PITCH

At an election rally in Lyons last Thursday Chirac, leader of the Gaullist Rassemblement Pour la Republique (RPR), raised the temperature of the campaign by making a pitch for the far-right vote. He warned that a vote for the presidential incumbent Francois Mitterrand was a vote for immigration. 'What France can expect after 1988 if the socialist is re-elected,' Chirac told his audience, 'will be a return to the easy immigration of the years between 1981 and 1985 with the right to vote for foreigners.'

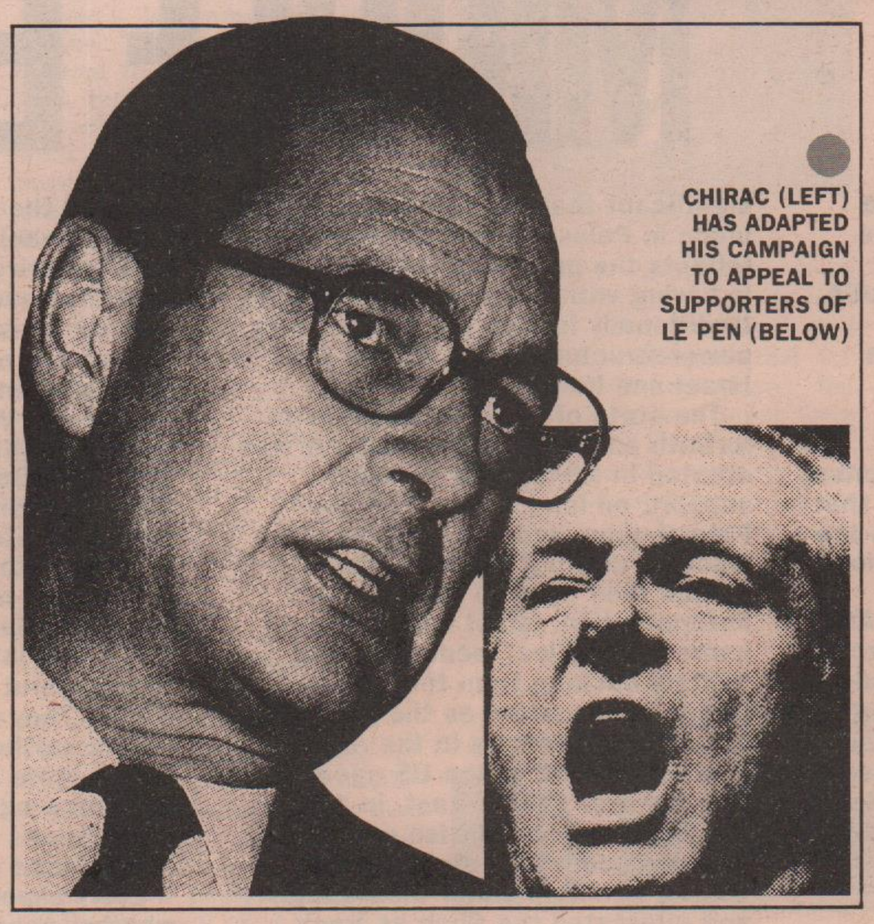
In a direct appeal to Le Pen voters he added that 'those who reproach us for not having done enough since 1986 to fight against crime and illegal immigration should think about this before 24 April.'

Mitterrand campaign aides hit back the following day by accusing Chirac of 'twisting' the president's ideas. Mitterrand, they said, would never give the vote to foreigners as long as Frenchmen opposed such a measure. The reason for this acerbic exchange, and for the emergence of race as a major factor in the election campaign, lies in the political arithmetic of the presidential race, and in particular, Chirac's need to win the support of Le Pen voters in the second ballot.

CONTENDERS

Under the French electoral system the winning candidate must receive more than 50 per cent of the vote. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority in the first ballot, the two leading contenders fight it out in a second ballot two weeks later. Mitterrand and Chirac face different problems in achieving a majority.

Mitterrand is comfortably in the lead in the opinion polls with around 35 per cent of the vote. Supporters of the other left-wing candidates are certain to transfer their votes to the president in the second ballot. However, the combined vote of the left is only around 48 per cent. Mitterrand has to win support from the right if he is to retain power. He has therefore distanced himself from the Socialist Party and projected an image of being a statesman above politics.



CHIRAC (LEFT) HAS ADAPTED HIS CAMPAIGN TO APPEAL TO SUPPORTERS OF LE PEN (BELOW)

Mitterrand claims to be in the tradition of Charles De Gaulle, and argues that he is the only politician capable of maintaining 'La France Unie'.

This strategy appears to have been successful. Opinion polls predict that Mitterrand will receive between 52 and 55 per cent of the vote in the second round. Chirac's sudden resort to using racism as an electoral weapon, however, has forced Mitterrand to abandon his statesman-like pose and start grubbing around for racist votes.

Chirac has a fight on his hands. The right-wing vote is split between three candidates. In addition to Le Pen, Chirac also faces former prime minister Raymond Barre, who is supported by the centre-right Union Democratie Française (UDF). Chirac, with around 25 per cent of the total vote to Barre's 15 and Le Pen's 12, should win through to the second ballot for a showdown with Mitterrand. His chances in the run-off, though, are not so certain.

Barre has already declared his support for Chirac in the second round and his supporters are expected to transfer their vote to the prime minister. Le Pen, however, has refused to endorse any other candidate. In an opinion poll published in *Le Monde* last week, only 26 per cent of Le Pen voters wanted to see Chirac installed as president, and 17 per cent plumped for Mitterrand.



THE MITTERRAND GOVERNMENT CRACKED DOWN ON IMMIGRANTS

COURTED

Chirac has long recognised the electoral threat posed by Le Pen, and has courted his supporters accordingly. Last September he argued that 'Le Pen's voters hold views that are very close to those of the present majority.' His hardline interior minister, Charles Pasqua, has introduced a series of draconian measures to deal with 'immigrant crime'. At the same time Chirac has been careful not to alienate middle-of-the-road voters. Until last week's speech, Chirac had avoided making race an issue in the campaign.

However, his failure to close the gap on Mitterrand and his lacklustre appeal to Le Pen supporters persuaded Chirac that he had no choice but to play the race card.

The political arithmetic of the presidential contest has forced the candidates to say where they stand on immigration, but the political climate established in France in recent years explains why racism should have become the decisive issue. Le Pen's influence on the eventual outcome is the result, not of the technicalities of the French electoral system, but of the adaptation of all political parties to racism. As Le Pen points out 'I say aloud what others think in private.'

Over the past decade Le Pen's message of 'France for the French' and his openly racist platform have won wide support. Le Pen came to prominence in 1983 when his Front National ousted the socialist administration in Dreux, a small town near Paris. The following year the party made a major breakthrough in the European elections, gaining 10 per cent of the vote. In the parliamentary elections of March 1986 the Front National again won 10 per cent of the vote and 33 seats in the national assembly. In Marseilles, once a socialist stronghold, a quarter of the voters supported Le Pen.

ADAPTED

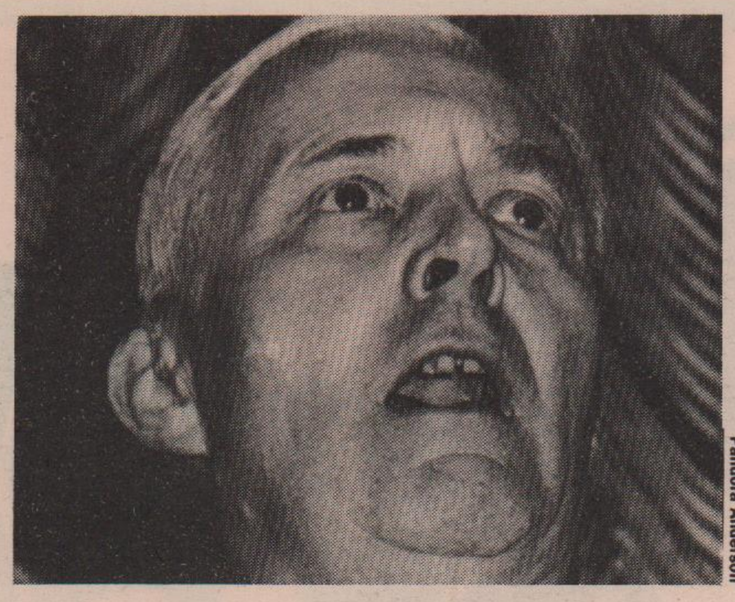
All political parties have distanced themselves from the more extreme aspects of Le Pen's platform while adapting to his racist policies. Chirac denounced Le Pen's statement that the holocaust was a 'minor detail' in history, but his 1986 assembly election campaign differed only in detail from Le Pen's. In dozens of local councils Gaullist and Front National representatives cooperate openly.

The leaders of the Communist and Socialist parties have been more vocal in their attacks on Le Pen. Over the past year the PCF has made strenuous attempts to recruit immigrant workers and cut an anti-racist image. But it was the racist policies of the joint Socialist-Communist administration which ran France between 1981 and 1986 that paved the way for the rise of Le Pen.

The Mitterrand government's response to the growing success of the Front National was to denounce Le Pen's 'nazi' policies — while introducing even tougher curbs on immigration.

After Le Pen's win at Dreux, Mitterrand's immigration minister Georgina Dufoix expelled 3500 immigrants held in French prisons and announced a comprehensive package of anti-immigrant measures. Communist Party leader Georges Marchais welcomed the measures and argued that they 'constitute the first step for solving this problem'.

Chirac's use of the race card shows what a powerful hold racism has on French society. So long as the left continues to adapt to racism, politicians like Le Pen will continue to pull the electoral strings.



Pandora Anderson

TONY BENN'S SOCIALISM

THE RCP'S REFUSAL to support Tony Benn's bid for the Labour leadership is less revolutionary than it sounds. Your arguments against Benn — that his politics are outdated, that the left has had its day, and that it is impossible to revive socialism in the old labour movement — echo the arguments of Kinnock and the right.

What's wrong with looking to the past for answers? All socialists need to learn the lessons of the past and apply them to today. Even the RCP looks to the past with its constant reference to Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. Tony Benn's strength is his ability to use the experience of movements from the Chartists to CND to show the way forward for socialists today.

Far from being backward-looking Benn and Heffer are reviving the spirit of socialism in very difficult conditions. Their campaign provides the focus around which socialists can rally and rebuild the movement. As the Chesterfied conference showed, socialists are not short of ideas. What we need is to turn those ideas into a living campaign.

While the RCP keeps asserting that 'socialism is dead', Benn is getting on with the job of buiding an alternative to the Tories. As *tns* argued last week, 'It would be unrealistic to declare the RCP as an alternative to the Tories: real alternatives are forged in the heat of the struggle.' You're right — and that's why Benn will lead a socialist renewal, while the RCP sits on the sidelines echoing Kinnock.

Dave Murray
Liverpool

STOPPING POLL TAX SNOOPERS

FOR OVER A WEEK now households throughout Scotland have been receiving their poll tax registration forms. Special snoopers have been employed to ensure that no name is left off the list. But the registration drive has not been going as smoothly as the authorities have been making out.

In Barrhead and Neilston the snooper was met by a crowd with a megaphone announcing her arrival and letter-boxes were blocked so she couldn't deliver the forms. Similar action has taken place in Govanhill. In Glasgow's West End a snooper was frightened off by protesters and left behind a package of forms and other material which showed that large numbers of people had been abusive and torn up their forms.

Many people are willing to take action against the poll tax. But that action is still uncoordinated. Simply failing to fill in registration forms will not stop the poll tax. The Tories can get their information through other means. And isolated resistance will simply allow the authorities to identify the militants in every street.

What we need is collective resistance to the poll tax. People who want to fight must get together and work out a collective response. Unless we do that all the anger that people are showing now will be wasted.

Fran
Glasgow



TOO HARD ON KING

I FEEL that Alan Harding's assessment of the life of Martin Luther King was a little harsh. It's true that King's moderate Christian outlook towards black civil rights allowed the state to manipulate both King and the movement. But in 1968, before his murder, King had begun to understand that the whole nature of the civil rights movement was changing. He realised that the future of black civil rights was connected to the broader-based fight for economic justice against the capitalists of the United States and indeed the world.

As Alan wrote, King died while defending the pay and conditions of sanitation workers. It was then, after he had made the transition from civil justice to economic justice, that he became a serious threat to corporate America and so was murdered. None of us know what direction King would have taken if his career had not been cut short, but he cannot be dismissed as someone who shifted his political stance merely to protect his position at the head of the civil rights movement.

Mark
West Yorkshire

RACIST AT WORK

DHSS WORKERS at Hither Green, South London, came out on strike last week over the employment of Malcolm Skeggs, a well-known fascist, in a local office. Two years ago Lewisham council sacked Skeggs, then a council employee, after pressure from Nalgo, the local government union. Now the CPSA is backing a similar campaign for Skeggs' dismissal.

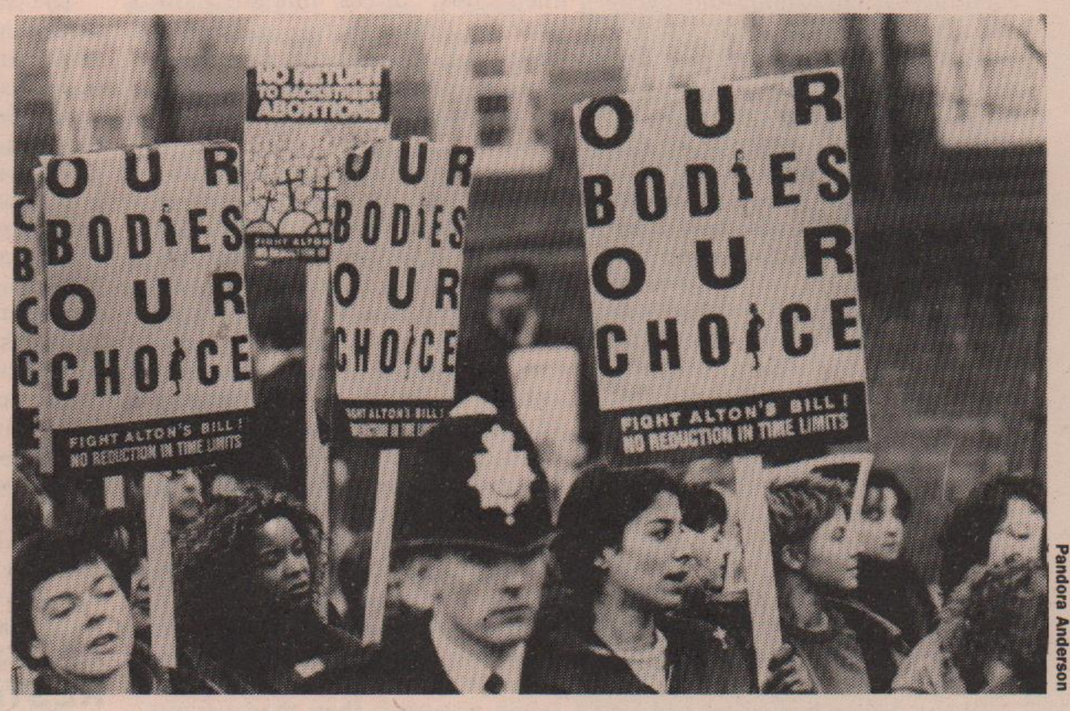
The willingness of DHSS workers to take action against a racist like Skeggs is a positive step. But calling on the employers to sack him is a dangerous move. Giving employers the power to dismiss workers — even if they are racist — simply makes it easier for them to attack all workers. The workers who called on the council to sack Skeggs two years ago are now facing the sack themselves. Lewisham council is set to dismiss 700 to 800 workers in the next 12 months as part of its cuts programme.

It is also pointless looking to management to take the lead against racism. It's true that Skeggs' views on black people are abhorrent. But do we really believe that bosses at the DHSS who have introduced race checks and other discriminatory measures have the interest of black people at heart? The only way to deal with racists in the workplace is for workers to take direct action against them. No matter how many times filth like Skeggs emerge from their holes we need to ensure that workers — not management — deal with them.

Sean Thomas
South London

Write to *tns*, BCM JPLtd, London, WC1N 3XX





Pandora Anderson

WALKOUT FROM FAB

WE HAVE BEEN attending Fight Alton's Bill campaign meetings in Bristol. At the beginning lots of women came along but by last week's meeting there was only a handful. Four of us wanted to discuss the disappointing turnout both at these local meetings and at the national demonstration in March and to work out how we could reverse it.

The rest of the group were not interested. They wanted to talk about how we could celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act. When we argued that it's not possible to fight for women's rights by defending an act that did not give women the right to abortions we were met with abuse. The others said we should be kicked out of the group if we did not defend the '67 Act. We found this ridiculous given that we made up half the meeting.

The attitude of the group showed why FAB has failed. In the end we walked out of the meeting because it was clear that it was not interested in discussing a strategy to beat Alton. We intend to fight for women's rights not by building a statue to David Steel but by opposing all restrictions on abortion rights.

Kaylib Chavez
Bristol

SOUTHERN STRUGGLES

I WORK in an insurance office in Bristol and every Saturday for the last month I and a few of my friends have been going to show solidarity with Bifu workers at Sun Alliance who are fighting for union recognition.

The bosses there have been very heavy-handed and will only accept a minority staff association which has no independence from management. The level of anger among Bifu workers is very high but they have received little support from their union. They are acutely aware of the political problems facing them in winning the dispute and in convincing other workers to support them in view of management's ruthless attitude. However, the failure of Bifu to support them has made them increasingly isolated.

Despite what people think even workers in the relatively prosperous South have been forced to fight back against the employers' all-out offensive. In my experience of talking to people at work it is becoming increasingly clear we will only succeed by building a radical new alternative to the sort of labour movement organisations we have at present.

Dan
Bristol



WE

THE TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME

PROG

Fifty years af
was written by Leon Tr
Frank Richards looks at wh
Transitional Programme repre
and its relevance fo

The Transitional Programme, which was adopted at the founding conference of the Fourth International in September 1938, was completed by Leon Trotsky 50 years ago this month. It is clear from his writings that Trotsky considered the programme as his movement's 'most important conquest'. Over the past 50 years it has become the definitive document of the Trotskyist movement. To this day most organisations which locate themselves in the Trotskyist tradition accept the Transitional Programme as their major programmatic statement.

From its inception the Marxist movement has stressed the importance of developing a coherent political programme. The fundamental problem facing those concerned with developing a revolutionary programme is the apparent mismatch between the day-to-day struggles of the working class and the fight for proletarian power.

The classic expression of this problem was the minimum-maximum programme of Social Democracy which took shape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The minimum-maximum programme divided the activities of the party between the day-to-day struggle for social reforms within capitalism (the minimum) and the propaganda struggle for socialism (the maximum). This separation of the immediate struggle from the final goal meant that the fight to build a new world had no practical expression in the activities of the social-democratic parties.

In the end, Social Democracy justified its practice by evolving a theory which contended that the gradual accumulation of reforms would eventually lead to the transformation of capitalism into socialism. The logical corollary of this standpoint was the idea that socialism was inevitable, and organising the working class for the struggle for power was unnecessary.

LENIN

Many revolutionary critics of the the minimum-maximum approach understood that Social Democracy had made its peace with capitalism. The Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg argued that 'our programme would be a miserable scrap of paper' if it could not direct the action of the proletariat 'at every moment' towards the road to socialism. Despite her valid criticisms, however, Luxemburg failed to elaborate an alternative to the minimum-maximum programme.

Lenin provided the solution to the problem posed by the minimum-maximum approach.

In April 1917 he outlined a programme which overcame the division between bread-and-butter struggles and the fight for the seizure of power. The theoretical basis for this solution was Lenin's analysis of imperialism. Lenin characterised imperialism as an epoch of transition, dating from around the turn of the century, in which capitalism could no longer fulfil consistently the elementary aspirations of the working class. In the age of imperialism there is a basic contradiction between the needs of capital and the interests of workers which provides the objective foundations for revolution.

While the theory of imperialism provided the scientific basis for Lenin's programme, the practical experience of pre-revolutionary Russia provided the impetus for the codification of a new perspective. The decay of capitalism acquired its most acute manifestation in Russia. Lenin grasped the solution. Rather than counterposing the partial struggles of workers to the fight for socialism, Lenin demonstrated that the two are inextricably linked.

According to Lenin, the consistent defence of the immediate interests of workers provided the point of departure for posing the question of proletarian power. The main slogan of the Bolsheviks — 'Bread, Peace and Land' — was in itself modest. But in the course of pursuing these demands, workers came to see that their realisation required the overthrow of the system.

The programmatic innovations made by the Bolsheviks during the course of the Russian Revolution offered a solution to the minimum-maximum problem. The solution was a revolutionary programme based on a system of transitional demands.

Unlike minimum demands, transitional ones do not restrict workers' struggles to limited objectives, unconnected to the fight for socialism. Nor are transitional slogans maximum demands which promote goals remote from the everyday experience of the working class. Transitional demands are based on the premise that a decaying capitalist system cannot fulfil even the most elementary needs of the working class, and that in this situation the fight for the defence of living standards can lead the proletariat to an awareness of the necessity for revolution.

The experience of the years from 1917 to 1921 confirmed the relevance of Lenin's approach.

In many parts of the world, especially in Europe, working class resistance put the question of revolution on the agenda. The only thing that saved capitalism was the absence of revolutionary parties based on a coherent programme.

The Third Congress of the Communist International in 1921 attempted to codify the experience of the previous four years. The *Thesis on Tactics* provides the clearest exposition of the programmatic solution to the minimum-maximum problem:

'If the demands put forward by the communists correspond to the immediate needs of the broad proletarian masses, and if the masses are convinced that they cannot go on living unless their demands are met, then the struggle around these issues becomes the struggle for power.'

CONTROL

As the *Thesis on Tactics* suggests, the revolutionary significance of transitional demands is based on the fact that they are *defensive in form* and *offensive in content.* Thus workers who see the need to defend their class over specific issues, but who are not yet convinced of the practical necessity for revolution, can learn the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat through the experience of struggle.

The defensive form of transitional demands is of critical importance.

The mass of workers will engage in struggle only if they believe that their own direct interests are at stake. Through the experience of struggle this defence of working class interests is transformed into an offensive against the capitalist class.

Another key feature of transitional demands is that they raise the question of working class control. Transitional slogans do not merely put forward demands, they suggest that the working class has to work out what it is fighting for and organise in such a way as to achieve its objectives. For example, the demand for a 'sliding scale of hours', addressing the problem of unemployment, is not simply a demand for work-sharing. It is a demand which requires trade unions and other proletarian organisations to decide how work is to be divided up. Committees of workers' representatives would regulate the distribution of work, while ensuring that the average wage remained the same as it was under the old working week.

The question of control is emphasised in the *Thesis on Tactics:*

'Concrete slogans that express the economic need of the working masses must lead to the struggle for *control of industry* — control based not on a plan to organise the economy bureaucratically and under the capitalist system, but on factory committees and revolutionary trade unions. Only the creation of such organisations and their coordination within the different industries and areas makes possible the organisation of a unified struggle of the working masses.'

Transitional demands thus raise the question of workers' control and contain a perspective for the creation of proletarian organisations through which this control can be exercised.

The death of Lenin and the ascendancy of Stalin in the mid-1920s transformed the Communist International into a reformist movement. The degeneration of the international communist movement was expressed in its programme. By the late twenties the national communist parties had abandoned the transitional perspective and replaced it with the old minimum-maximum programme.

Trotsky's great achievement was to retrieve the historic gains made in the revolutionary phase of the Communist International. His Transitional Programme is a restatement of Bolshevism. Under the banner of the Fourth International Trotsky fought to continue the revolutionary tradition through a new generation of class fighters organised around his Transitional Programme.

RESTATEMENT

The Transitional Programme is very similar in its construction to the *Thesis on Tactics* discussed previously. Trotsky added new observations on the problems of fascism, Stalinism and the impending world war. But in all essentials the Transitional Programme differs little from the *Thesis on Tactics.*

The main departure made by Trotsky from the *Thesis on Tactics* was to emphasise the need to link specific transitional demands to each other, and present a 'system of transitional demands', to use his words. Trotsky was concerned that an overall programmatic perspective should inform the struggle for specific objectives, and therefore stressed the links between various demands. Given the abandonment of this perspective in the past, Trotsky was right to insist that revolutionaries should never forget the relationship between specific demands and their relationship to the transitional programme.

The Transitional Programme is a valuable restatement of Bolshevism for revolutionaries today.

However, its programmatic importance is open to question. The main problem with the Transitional Programme is that it is a restatement of past gains rather than the product of distilled experience.

Revolutionary programmes cannot be written by individuals in the same way that articles can be scribbled off by journalists. Programmatic development is always the concrete expression of the experience of struggle and engagement with the working class. The best that can be said of the Transitional Programme is that it is based on the experience of the Bolshevik movement. As the discussions which preceded its publication indicate, the document was the work of one man — Trotsky. Sometimes published under the misnomer *Discussions on the Transitional Programme,* in reality these were educationals in which Trotsky explained the subject to his supporters.

LIMITATIONS

The Transitional Programme is a piece of propaganda that demonstrates a particular approach rather than a real programme. Trotsky's correspondence reveals the literary, as opposed to the practical-political, character of the programme. In one of the preparatory discussions in *The Founding Conference of the Fourth*

NEED A GRAMME FOR TODAY

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International, on 20 March 1938, Trotsky proposes the following: '1) transitional demands; 2) the question of democracy; 3) war; 4) manifesto on the world situation'. The fact that Trotsky literally created a programme out of nothing accounts for the limitations of the end product.

Trotsky had no choice but to write a programme. The Left Opposition to Stalinism was too isolated to engage in the kind of experiences that would have provided the foundation for a revolutionary programme. No criticism can be attached to the literary propaganda produced by Trotsky.

Our criticism of Trotsky is that he confused his followers who mistook his document for a real programme.

Trotsky contributed to this confusion. Trotsky understood that a system of transitional demands only made sense from the perspective of mass work. The Fourth International was in no position to engage in mass work. Unfortunately Trotsky gave credence to this perspective when on 30 August 1938 he argued: 'Henceforth the Fourth International stands face to face with the tasks of the mass movement. The Transitional Programme is a reflection of this important turn.'

Trotsky was too realistic to believe that mass work was an immediate option. Given his scattered forces, such a perspective was at variance with reality. Trotsky must have hoped that events would soon put mass work on the agenda. Unfortunately his followers were less discriminating and viewed the Transitional Programme as a perspective of immediate relevance for the class struggle.

Lenin's major discovery was that a programme must always be concrete. A programme is not an anticipation of the future, but the summation of revolutionary trends in the present. Unable to devise a concrete programme, Trotsky sought to fill the gap by writing something for the future. In one of his last statements on the Second World War, Trotsky wrote that 'our transitional demands will gain great popularity.' In effect, Trotsky was saying that his demands were not transitional at all.

SACRED

Trotsky characterised transsitional demands as a bridge 'stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat'. This is an admirable way of summarising the subject. This conception is fundamentally different from the one above, where Trotsky tried to argue that his transitional demands would 'gain great popularity' in the future.

This idea of a programme-in-waiting is at odds with the basic premise of a revolutionary programme. If Lenin had argued in 1914 that the demand 'Bread, Peace and Land' would gain great popularity in the future, history would commend him for his foresight and not for his transitional demands.

For all its flaws Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Programme is a valuable restatement of the experience of the revolutionary movement. The present generation of revolutionaries would do well to study it.

One of the tragedies of the Trotskyist movement is that it has come to regard the Transitional Programme as a sacred text. Those sections of the movement which identify with the views of Trotsky have simply adopted this document in its original form and sought to apply it to today's conditions. Others who are less complacent take the programme as their starting point, but suggest that it should be concretised or elaborated.

Such a dogmatic approach makes sense only from the point of view of organisations which fail to distinguish between a revolutionary programme and a written text. A programme is the product of a collective experience of struggle. Only this experience of struggle — in both its theoretical and practical aspects — provides the basis for a programme that is truly transitional, and not just a piece of paper.

TODAY

Some advocates of the Transitional Programme argue that it is based on the objective tendencies of the imperialist era, and therefore has an enduring relevance. In a general sense it is undoubtedly true that the programme is based on the objective trends of the epoch. However, any specific moment in the history of capitalism cannot be reduced to the general trends of the epoch.

Over the past 50 years there have been many cycles of upturn and downturn, boom and depression, periods of social upheaval and of stability. No single programme can have relevance for all these periods. To have an appreciation of the nature of the epoch is not sufficient; revolutionaries must work out the specific trends in operation at any one time and the appropriate programmatic solutions relevant to the period.

The confusion about the relevance of the 1938 programme reveals a depressing failure to come to terms with the strategic tasks at hand.

Today revolutionaries are in no position to fight for transitional demands. Such demands are only relevant for mass struggles and, at this stage, Marxists lack the authority to engage in this work.

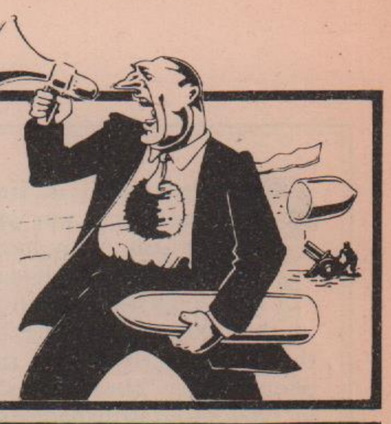
The first task facing the Revolutionary Communist Party and other revolutionaries is to win the most advanced section of our class to the banner of Marxism. It is not possible to jump over this stage and begin mass work.

Unless the most militant and conscious workers are organised around a proletarian programme it will be impossible to influence a wider layer of workers. The basis for a real transitional programme will evolve only through the interaction between the workers' vanguard and the rest of the working class.

For the RCP the question of the programme is critical.

The main problem that needs to be solved today is the elaboration of a programme that can serve as a focus for the minority of workers who want to fight. We call this a programme to build a proletarian vanguard. Our immediate aim is to break a section of workers from the dominant political influences which shape the labour movement. Through this process a new leadership will be created — one that stands 100 per cent for the independent interests of our class and one that can eventually offer a revolutionary alternative for the whole of the working class.

the propaganda war



Sacrificing Zola

IT'S THAT TIME of year again. Liverpool are about to be crowned champions, the heavy roller is out at Lords, the Mars Bar masochists have run themselves silly round Tower Bridge. And it's time to go Zola Budd-bashing.

Last Friday, the International Amateur Athletics Federation accused Budd, the South African-born, British passport-clutching runner, of breaking the spirit of its rules by attending a sports meeting in South Africa. It asked the British athletics authorities to 'consider' banning her for a year. And if Britain won't consider it? Then the IAAF will 'consider' banning Britain from the Seoul Olympics.

Ever since she was spirited into Britain four years ago by the *Daily Mail*, Budd-bashing has become the favourite sport for anti-apartheid protesters. Black African statesmen first took it up as a soft way of attacking British complicity in apartheid. The British left soon cottoned on that it's a lot easier to bash Budd than to bash British bosses who are backing Botha.

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What most upsets anti-apartheid protesters is that Budd should run in *British* colours. Just as they consider that British trade with South Africa besmirches Britain's good name in the world, so they believe that Budd in a red, white and blue vest demeans the Union Jack.

For the British establishment the latest bout of Budd-bashing is a problem. They are outraged that a bunch of 'tinpot dictators' could presume to push Britain around like this. 'No country in the world', thundered the *Sun*, 'can be allowed to dictate to Britain over sport or anything else.' And most definitely not 'an unholy, black-dominated alliance'.

On the other hand the establishment agrees that Budd is not worthy of being British. Not, mind you, because of her affection for her apartheid homeland. That would make her eminently fit to wear red, white and blue. No, they consider Budd to be an unfit emissary because she has proved to be downright useless as an athlete and has shown herself to be less than enamoured of the British way of life.

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Budd was flown to Britain in 1984 by her friends on the *Daily Mail*. She was the *wunderkind* of world athletics, the barefoot waif who promised to gain glory for a nation whose sportsmen seem to win as few medals as Neil Kinnock wins elections. To ensure that Budd could run for Britain at the Los Angeles Olympics the authorities whisked her through Heathrow immigration and into British citizenship with greater speed than she has since achieved on the track. Budd has been a great disappointment. Aside from tripping up Mary Decker at the 1984 Olympics, she has failed to make a mark. Lord Rothermere did not fly her 6000 miles to keep getting beaten by a bunch of foreigners.

And it's not just that she is a loser. Budd made it clear that she didn't consider Britain as home and kept flying back to the veldt at every opportunity. 'She is no more British than Dr Fu Manchu', stormed Tory MP Robert Adley last week. Adley, chair of the all-party parliamentary British-South Africa group, added that 'she has consistently cocked a snook at Britain' and 'abused her British passport to further the political and pecuniary ambitions of her sponsors'. The *Independent* accused her of regarding the Union Jack as a 'flag of convenience'.

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The *Daily Telegraph* summed up the establishment dilemma. 'The question is whether we should give up the Seoul Olympics on Zola Budd's account...or sacrifice Zola Budd on the Olympics' account.' It went on: 'We do not like the tactics that have been used to confront us with this dilemma. But taking all things into account, [in particular the fact that Budd will win nothing in Seoul], Miss Budd's career is the smaller sacrifice.'

In fact, both the British ruling class and the Budd-bashers have got it wrong. Who better to wear the Union Jack than a racist loser? There could be no better symbol of a nation which has rampaged its way around the third world, stamped on black rights and done its utmost to maintain white supremacy in Pretoria, and which now survives on the returns from its parasitic foreign investments.

Whether or not Budd runs for Britain will make no difference to black people in Britain or in South Africa. The British ruling class might be willing to sacrifice Budd to be able to compete in Seoul, but it has no intention of sacrificing its stake in Botha's bloody regime.

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And as black footballer Cyrille Regis has discovered, Lord Rothermere's services are reserved for whites. Regis, a striker with Coventry City, will be ineligible to play for England in this summer's European championships, because 25 years is not long enough for a black person to become British. Regis came to Britain in 1963 and took out a British passport in 1977. Under the new Nationality Act he had to apply again for British citizenship. Unlike Zola Budd, though, black people have to wait up to 18 months to be declared fit to wear British colours.

Kenan Malik



Jim Collins

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN BRITISH FORCES AND IRISH NATIONALISTS CANNOT BE ENDED BY COMPROMISE

IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT DAYSCHOOL

TIME TO END THE IRISH WAR

On Sunday the London Irish Freedom Movement held its 'Time to end the Irish War' dayschool. Here we reprint extracts from Mick Hume's opening plenary speech on British strategy

The conflict in Ireland is the longest war which the British Army has fought this century. It is also the longest-ever confrontation in the 700-year struggle between the British Crown and the Irish people. Since "the troubles" began in 1969, seven British governments — three Labour and four Tory — have pursued various strategies which were supposed to end it. They have tried all of the tricks learned through a century of Empire-building, and achieved nothing.

On the military/legal battlefield, British governments have used everything short of Cruise missiles in the attempt to defeat their Irish enemies: CS gas, rubber bullets, plastic bullets, lead bullets, armoured cars, Chieftain tanks, Chinook helicopters, public massacres like Bloody Sunday, private executions like the Stalker affair shootings, internment without trial, no-jury courts, computerised surveillance, crude torture, strip-searches, supergrasses and the SAS. In the political arena, British governments have supported one sham "democratic" institution after another in an effort to stabilise the occupied Six Counties — the Protestant Stormont parliament, the power-sharing executive, the Convention, the Ulster Assembly and the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Today we can see these two strands of British strategy being pursued alongside each other again.

The shootings in Gibraltar and the dismissal of the Birmingham Six case are followed by another round of political initiatives and talks with the Unionists and the moderate nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party. Yet for all of these British twists and turns and tactical manoeuvres, the war continues. After 19 years of struggle, the British state is no nearer to pacifying Ireland than it was when the Labour government sent the troops on to the streets that Thursday afternoon in August 1969, and promised that they would be back in their barracks by the weekend.

There are two basic facts about the Irish War which ensure that it continues, and which dictate the pattern of British strategy. First, British imperialism cannot win. And second, it cannot afford to lose.

ROCK

One week last month, anybody with a television set will have seen a dramatic display of the reason why the British authorities cannot win the Irish War. You will have seen the republican people of West Belfast chase a well-armed Loyalist murderer out of Milltown cemetery, and then disarm two British soldiers who threatened another funeral three days later. Those people are the rock on which every British attempt to win the war is dashed to pieces. Their bitter resistance to British rule, and driving aspiration for freedom, ensures that no British government can impose its will in Ireland.

Against opposition of this sort, the usual tactics which the Tories have used to defeat their mainstream opponents at home are useless.

The Tory government cannot frighten the republican people into submission by threatening them with the law, as it has done, for example, with British trade union leaders. Thousands of Irish nationalists have complete contempt for British law, as the symbol of foreign power, and are more than ready to confront it. The most dramatic example of this in the Thatcher years was the hunger-strike for political status in 1981, when 10 republican prisoners of war died rather than accept being branded as criminals by Britain. The sacrifice they were prepared to make in the struggle to expose the lie of British law and order can best be illustrated by one fact. If they had buckled under to the British legal system, worn convicts' uniforms and served their time, those 10 hunger-strikers would not only be alive today: all but one of them would be free.

Neither can the Tories simply abolish republican resistance through a stroke of their legislative pen, as they have abolished troublesome bureaucratic British bodies like the GLC. At the moment the government is discussing the introduction of a non-violence oath for local government elections, to try to dispose of the embarrassment caused by Sinn Fein councillors. When this idea was pushed last year, the people of West Belfast responded immediately by electing two more republican representatives to the city council. The spirit of Irish resistance is real and popularly based; it cannot be wished away by paper-pushing at Westminster.

In these circumstances, the British government can only attempt to defeat Irish republicanism through military force. Yet the existence and resilience of the IRA, as the armed expression of the demand for Irish freedom, ensures that this is not a viable route to victory for Britain. Last year the British authorities scored their greatest-ever success against the IRA, when undercover troops and police staged an ambush at Loughgall and shot dead eight republican volunteers. Last week the IRA replied by shooting two of the detectives involved in that operation.

From time to time over the past 19 years, various ministers have been stupid enough to predict the imminent defeat of the IRA.

Every time they do so, you can almost here the experienced Sir Humphreys of the civil service groaning "No, minister, no", as they await the spectacular military reply which the IRA invariably sends to such displays of misplaced British arrogance. More realistic representatives of British imperialism have long been aware that they cannot win. Go right back to April 1970, when the nationalist people of Ballymurphy estate in Belfast staged the first-ever riots against the British Army. Labour home secretary James Callaghan announced that petrol bombers would be shot. He also conceded, however, that "some problems you cannot solve, you have to live with. This is one I think we have got to live with." At the moment when the contradiction between British imperialism and Irish nationalism first exploded into violent confrontation, the British rulers recognised that they could not crush the nationalist community.

Many people have tried to point out to British governments over the years that, since they cannot win, surely the sensible thing to do would be to get out? This underestimates what is at stake for the British authorities in the Irish War. They cannot afford to admit defeat and withdraw from there, for fear of the repercussions over here. For the Irish War is being fought out within the borders of the British state itself.

The British ruling class is paying the price for its past strategy of integrating Ireland into the "United Kingdom". The Six Counties come within the direct jurisdiction of the British state. This means that the war in the North of Ireland is unlike any other colonial struggle. It threatens not just the government's international prestige, but its national power base — the British state. The guns of the IRA are pointed straight at the heart of the British Empire. As Harold Wilson once said, the war is not in Britain's backyard, it is in the front room.

And as Margaret Thatcher discovered at 3am one October morning in 1984, sometimes it even enters the hotel bathrooms of the British war cabinet.

To withdraw from Ireland and dismantle the state would do irreparable damage to the power of the British establishment throughout the "UK".

Because the British state is not divisible; you cannot destroy one part of it and expect the rest to remain intact. Suppose the striking miners had driven the police out of Yorkshire and seceded from the state. Does anybody imagine that the Tory government would have been able to ignore this defeat for the state and carry on lording it over the rest of us regardless? It would have caused an unprecedented political crisis. And the same goes for a defeat in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland, which are ruled by the same state as the rest of the "UK". It would strike a mortal blow against the British establishment.

COLLAPSE

The British authorities understand that they cannot afford to have their state defeated and dismantled in Ireland. That is why they sent the troops there in 1969. There is a popular misconception that the troops went in to separate warring religious communities. In fact the Loyalist mob which attacked the nationalist Bogside district of Derry in August 1969 was led by the Royal Ulster Constabulary — the local armed wing of the state machine. The RUC was defeated by the Bogsiders, nationalists elsewhere rose up in support, and the Unionist regime at Stormont was in danger of losing control. Thus the Labour government was faced, not with a sectarian conflict, but with the impending collapse of British state authority in Ireland under the impact of nationalist resistance. That was why the troops went in, and that is why they remain there still.

The British government cannot win the Irish War, but neither can it afford to lose. So what can it do? The answer has become embodied in a strategy known as "containment" — a combination of military and political measures designed to hold the conflict down at what one British minister called "an acceptable level of violence". This involves fighting the campaign on three fronts — Northern Ireland, Southern Ireland and Britain itself.

HONED

Within the war zones of the North, the British seek to limit the effectiveness of the republican movement through a hardline campaign of coercion. And in the rest of Ireland and in Britain, the imperial authorities seek to stem any support for the republican struggle by political manoeuvres designed to portray the IRA as isolated trouble-makers and Britain as an even-handed peacemaker. In other words, the containment strategy means waging a dirty little war on one front while trying to disguise it on the other two. The Tory government has taken this strategy to new lengths over the past nine years.

Within the core republican areas of the North, the Tories have honed their military strategy to deal with the more efficient IRA of today.

This has meant a higher profile for the SAS. It has also meant reorganising the entire British Army along SAS lines, with more emphasis on surveillance and selective assassination. The Royal Ulster Constabulary has undergone a similar transformation, and now has its own elite execution squads. The result has been an increased emphasis on shooting-to-kill in the last few years, beginning with the six killings in Armagh in 1982 which have since been at the centre of the Stalker affair.

The latest shoot-to-kill campaign differs from earlier ones in that it is directed more professionally against known republicans. About two thirds of those shot dead by the British forces since 1982 have been IRA or Inla volunteers. By contrast, more than half of those killed by the British forces since 1969 were uninvolved nationalist civilians. The British authorities now use the death-squad rather than the court to deal out "justice" to Irish republicans. Last year the number of republican suspects charged with taking part in the armed struggle fell to its lowest for years, while the number killed rose to a near-record level.

POPULAR

This ruthless approach has brought some military success for the British state. But it also has negative political ramifications. The experience of up-front British oppression over recent years has hardened republican support in committed nationalist areas. The big and determined turn-outs at IRA funerals are just one manifestation of this. The cohering of public support for the IRA brings increased political pressure to bear on the British state within the Six Counties. It also embarrasses the British authorities outside of the North, suggesting to more people in Ireland, Britain and around the world that "the troubles" are a conflict between a colonial power and a popular liberation movement.

To combat this threat to containment, the Tories have brought the other strand of their strategy into play — the "political initiatives" designed to re-isolate the republicans and restore Britain's credentials as a force for democracy.

One part of this Tory political ploy is the continuation of the criminalisation campaign begun by the last Labour government, branding republicans as gangsters, terrorists and all-round men of evil to discredit their struggle as a criminal conspiracy. The other side of it is the pretence of searching for a "political solution", to give the impression that the British government is doing its best to bring peace. To this end the Tories set up the Ulster Assembly in 1982 and signed the Anglo-Irish agreement with Dublin in 1985. Their current "talks about talks" with the constitutional parties in the North have the same diversionary aim.

The problem the British authorities face, however, is that these paper political initiatives cannot do away with the reality of oppression. They cannot suppress the tensions inherent within the the sectarian state of Northern Ireland for long. Thus each British initiative contains the seeds of its own destruction. And the effectiveness of each successive stratagem within Ireland is becoming shorter and shorter-lived.

The most successful British political initiative was partition in 1921. It divided the republican movement, created the impression of a democratic settlement, and effectively ended large-scale resistance to British rule for almost 50 years. Contrast this to the criminalisation policy of the seventies.

In 1976 the crackdown which accompanied the Labour government's withdrawal of political status for republican prisoners did severe damage to the resistance movement. Gerry Adams later admitted that this was the closest Britain has come to defeating the IRA. Yet just five years later, the hunger-strikes against criminalisation sparked an explosion of public support for the IRA and the beginning of republican electoral success. In 1985 the Tories tried to put the lid back on by promising reforms under the Anglo-Irish agreement, which helped to undermine republican support. Only two and a half years later, according to polls, 81 per cent of Northern nationalists are disenchanted with the deal and say that it has made no difference to their experience of British rule.

EXHAUSTED

In objective terms, it ought to be harder now than ever before for the Tories to keep up containment and disguise the true character of the war. As each political initiative becomes exhausted, the credibility of Britain's self-styled image as a force for progress sinks lower among nationalists. It should also be harder today for the Tories to pose as neutral umpires refereeing local conflicts between the nationalists, the Loyalists and Dublin. Events over the past 19 years have shown how British imperialism is the most active player in the conflict, pulling together the Loyalist community and the Southern state in a combined effort against the Northern nationalists.

It is now clear that the Loyalists are British agents, and not an independent community.

British claims that they would correct the anti-Catholic discrimination of the old Stormont regime have been fully exposed. Protestants continue to have privileged access to jobs, housing and power in Northern Ireland. In return, the Loyalist militias of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment have become the frontline of the imperialist British forces in many parts of the Six Counties. And the Loyalist paramilitaries launch sectarian attacks, like the recent murderous assault on the republican funeral in Belfast, which play a useful role for Britain in terrorising the nationalist community. When Margaret Thatcher says "I am a Loyalist," nobody should be left in any doubt about the relationship between the Protestant community and the British war effort.

SUBJECTIVE

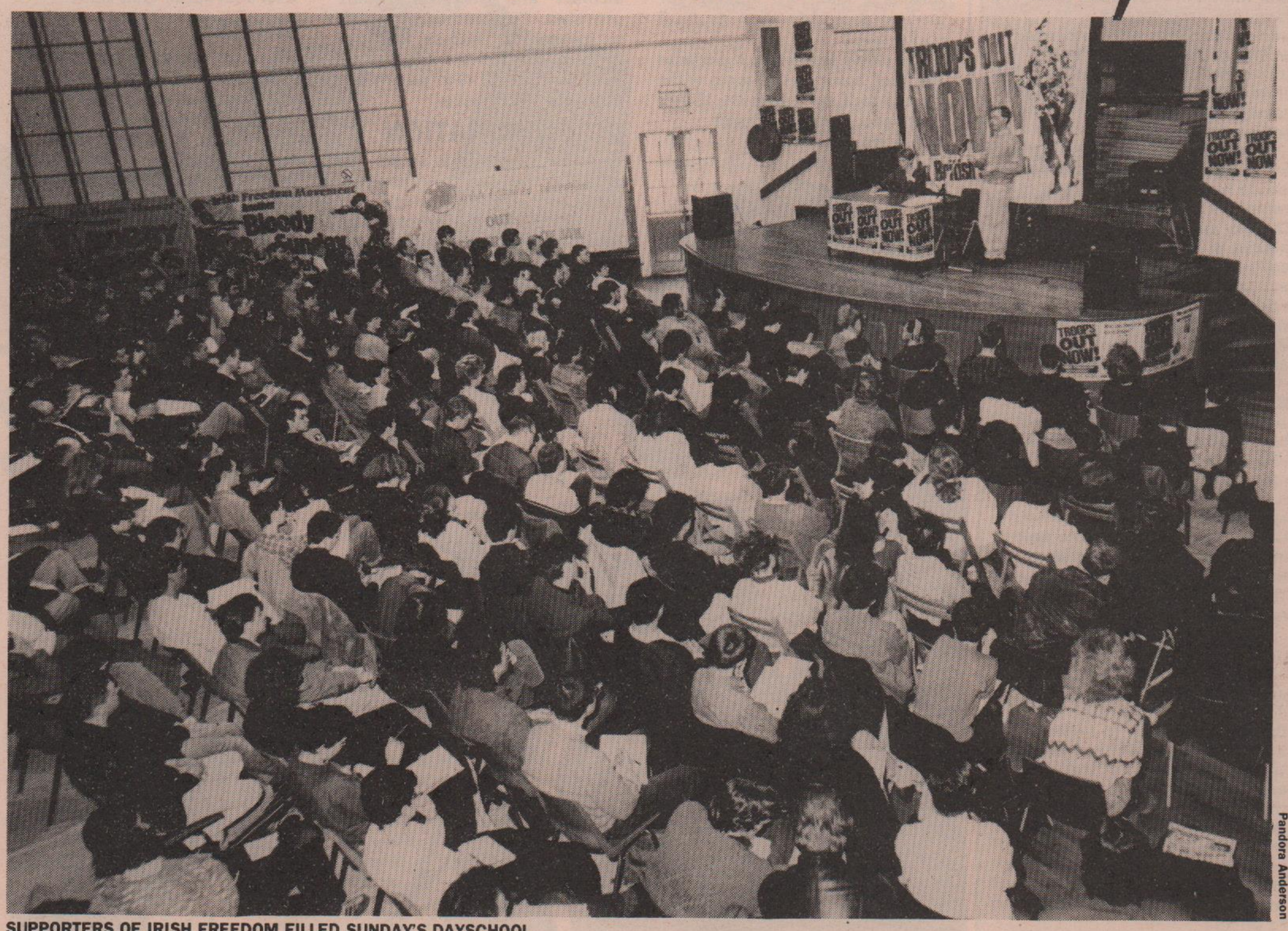
It's a similar story with the Southern Irish state. For more than 60 years Dublin governments have tried to pretend that they are independent from Britain. Yet today it is clear that the Republic is still a British satellite, operating under London's influence as part of the British war machine. In 1969 the Dublin government sent troops to the Border and said it would protect Northern nationalists. Today, under the security arrangements of the Anglo-Irish agreement, the pretence is over. The thousands of Irish troops patrolling the Border work hand-in-glove with the British occupation forces against republicans. In 1970 Charles Haughey was accused of running guns to the IRA. Today as Dublin premier, Haughey launches joint operations under the direction of the British secret services to intercept tons of IRA arms.

The contradiction about British strategy which we have to grapple with is this: at a time when all objective factors suggest that the truth about the Irish War should be clear, many people in Britain and elsewhere in Ireland are as confused as ever about events in the North. Ideas about religious conflicts, British peace-keeping and IRA "terrorism" still dominate the debate over here. This is due to purely subjective factors; the lack of a political movement in Britain — and indeed in the South of Ireland — that can hammer home the truth about the Irish War and the reasons why ordinary people should support the struggle for Irish self-determination.

Building such a movement in Britain is the task to which the Irish Freedom Movement is committed.

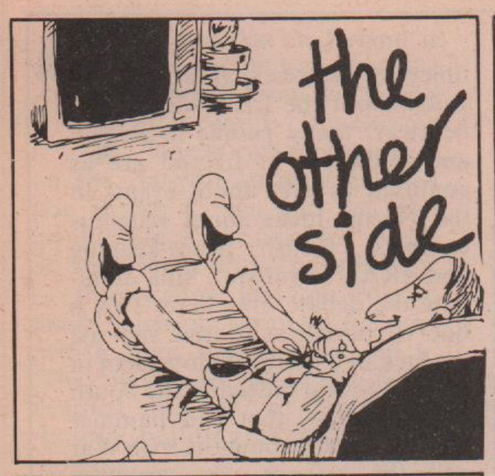
The lesson of surveying British strategy should now be clear. British imperialism is not in the position of strength in Ireland which the over-confident pronouncements of Tory ministers might suggest. It is trapped in a cycle of oppression and resistance, fighting a rearguard action to save its skin. Its containment strategy is at full stretch. It is no nearer to defeating the nationalists than it was 19 years ago, and its task of disguising the truth about the Irish War is becoming harder. The one thing in Britain's favour is the lack of active opposition in Britain and the South.

Too many people in Britain who are concerned about Ireland focus on the wrong problem. They indulge in windy debates about whether the Northern nationalists are doing something wrong — "should they have killed those two soldiers at the funeral, shouldn't they put down their guns and talk?" Let's be clear that the nationalists are the least of our problems. Their determined resistance is the guarantee that British imperialism cannot bulldoze its way across Ireland. Their ability to strike fear into the hearts of the British establishment — as evidenced by the panic reaction to the deaths of those two soldiers — should be a cause of inspiration, not of regret, to the rest of us. Our job is to address the real problem of their isolation, by campaigning to create a movement for Irish freedom that can break through the political wall which the British state has constructed to contain the Irish War.



Pandora Anderson

SUPPORTERS OF IRISH FREEDOM FILLED SUNDAY'S DAYSCHOOL



BLACK AND WHITE

A BLACK MAN walks into a b&b. 'Sorry, love' says the landlady, 'nothing at the moment.' Minutes later a white man calls. 'A room? This way.' The black man applies for a pub job. 'Sorry,' the landlord tells him, 'the job's just gone.' It mysteriously reappears when the white man walks in. The black man tries to enter a night-club. 'Sorry,' the bouncer tells him, 'couples only.' A few minutes later the white man, single, breezes in.

Each was a scene from *Black and White*, a BBC documentary on racism in Britain. Two reporters, one black, one white, spent two months travelling around Bristol with a television camera peeping out of a briefcase.

The prejudices of those doing the filming were as revealing as the prejudices of those being filmed.

Tim Marshall, the white journalist, concluded that 'Britain is not a "wholly and deeply" racist society.' Geoff Small, the black reporter, was taken aback that it was so. 'I never doubted I would be discriminated against,' he wrote 'but at that time I would have been reluctant to guess how bad it would be.' What particularly upset both was that the 'nice' people were often the most racist. 'I would never have suspected,' laments Small.

There is a deep-seated prejudice in Britain, especially among middle class journalists, that racism is the product of small-minded individuals. Small and Marshall expressed this favourite prejudice to perfection. They were incensed at the attitudes of landladies and night-club bouncers, but they largely ignored the official racists who make petty racism acceptable.

If they had bothered to dig a bit deeper in Bristol itself they would have discovered that racism is institutionalised from the top down. When young blacks in St Paul's resisted police racism, the authorities accused them of being wanton criminals. When Chanan Singh was attacked by racists in a Bristol pub, the police charged him with malicious wounding. When black activist Kuomba Balogun got a job, home secretary Douglas Hurd forced his employers to sack him. When Kamaljit Singh was refused a job because he wore a turban, the government-sponsored Commission for Racial Equality refused to help him. When Ahmed Chowdhury flew into Bristol airport last Thursday, immigration officials refused him entry.

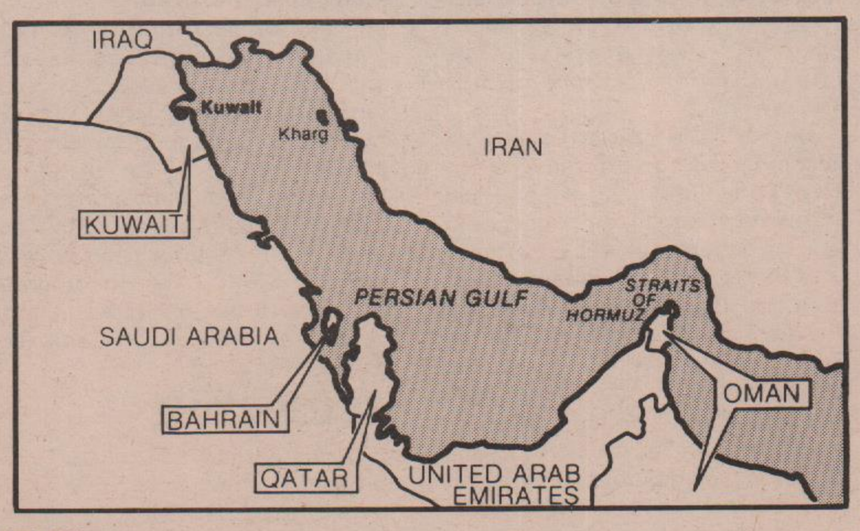
Britain is a wholly and deeply racist society because officialdom designates black people as a problem. Where does the problem start? With the 'nice' landlady in Ashley who turns away blacks? The 'nice' receptionist at the employment agency who bins the application forms? Or the 'nice' officials at Bristol airport who mark blacks down as second class citizens, and the 'nice' men in the home office who tell them that it's alright to do so?

Claudia Jones

KUWAIT

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

Daniel Nassim explains why the West's favourite sheikhdom has become a focus for unrest in the Middle East



Kuwait seems to attract more attention than it deserves given its stature in Middle Eastern politics. The hijacking of Kuwait Airways flight 422 has brought the tiny oil-rich state into the news. The Archbishop of Canterbury's special envoy, Terry Waite, was kidnapped in Lebanon while negotiating a deal involving the same 17 prisoners the hijackers want released from Kuwaiti jails. Last year Kuwait made the appeal to the USA to start its reflagging operation in the Gulf, precipitating the build-up of Western gunboats in those war-torn waters.

It is not immediately obvious why Kuwait should be embroiled in such conflicts. Oil wealth has made it one of the richest countries on earth: its citizens pay no taxes, enjoy heavy government housing subsidies, and pay nothing for medical care, education or local phone calls.

On closer inspection it becomes apparent, however, that many of the forces which are pulling the Middle East apart centre on Kuwait.

Among the country's vast pool of migrant workers are thousands of Shiites radicalised by the experience of the upheavals in Iran. Some 400 000 members of the Palestinian diaspora are now living in Kuwait; and Kuwait City is only 100 miles away from some of the fiercest fighting in the Iran-Iraq War.

At the top of Kuwait's rickety social structure is the Al-Sabah family which has ruled the Emirate since 1752. Three members of the 1200-strong clan are among the hostages aboard the hijacked KU422. The Kuwaiti Emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, rules supreme, while his close relatives dominate key government positions. Most of Kuwait's 700 000 citizens are relatively privileged. As well as the Al-Sabahs, a handful of merchant families control business life. But even ordinary Kuwaitis enjoy high incomes and generous welfare provision. To encourage Kuwaitis to have more children the state gives couples $7000 when they get married and $140 a month for every child they have.

DISCRIMINATION

Kuwait's massive oil wealth has played a vital role in sustaining this archaic system. Although still considerable, oil earnings have fallen to less than half the record $17.7 billion set in 1980. Luckily for the Kuwaiti regime, returns on an estimated $85 billion worth of foreign investments have helped cushion the effect of falling oil prices. Investment earnings of $6 billion in 1986 probably exceeded oil revenues. But oil wealth alone has not been sufficient to stave off unrest. Indeed, the importation of migrant labour to man the oil industry has had a destabilising effect on the regime.

More than a million migrants easily outnumber Kuwaiti nationals. The economy could not function without this massive foreign imput, yet expatriates are barred from owning property and denied most of the benefits available to Kuwaitis. The 1985 census revealed that Kuwaiti nationals make up 19 per cent of manpower needs, while migrant workers contribute 81 per cent. The largest communities are Palestinian, Egyptian and Iranian. There are also growing numbers from South and East Asia. Some 30 per cent of non-nationals were born in Kuwait.

A combination of privileges for Kuwaiti citizens and discrimination against migrant workers has helped keep the country on an even keel since the Second World War.

When oil production started in 1946 Britain was the ruling power in Kuwait, and it took advantage of its colonial rule elsewhere to bring Indian labourers into the country. When Britain left Kuwait in 1961 its rulers were confident that the pro-Western Al-Sabahs would keep control of their former colonial possession. Although it is too small to play much of a regional role, Kuwait remains the West's favourite Gulf state.

SHIITES

The status quo is now threatened by domestic strife. Kuwait's large Shiite population, radicalised by the experience of Iran in the past decade, is a particular source of turmoil. After the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979, thousands of Shiites joined anti-American demonstrations on the streets of Kuwait. Since then the Shiite community in Kuwait has been angered by the way the West has targeted Iran and inspired by Shiite resistance to Western intervention in Lebanon. In December 1983 17 members of the pro-Iranian Dawaa Party, whose release was demanded by the KU422 hijackers, bombed the American and French embassies in Kuwait, killing five people and injuring 37. In 1985 Shiites were involved in a near-miss assassination attempt on the Emir, and have since been involved in bombings of Kuwaiti oil refineries and seaside cafes.

While migrant workers have been at the forefront of Shiite unrest, Kuwaiti citizens have also been involved. The authorities have reacted swiftly and brutally, deporting 26 000 Shiites in the year following the assassination attempt on the Emir. Whole Shiite neighbourhoods have been bulldozed and their residents kicked out of Kuwait — at the rate of 600 a month last year.

In contrast to their failed attempts to contain the unrest among Shiites, the authorities have been fairly successful in smothering Palestinian militancy. Kuwait's rulers have taken care to give vocal support to the Palestinian struggle. They donate large sums to the PLO on the condition that it does not interfere in Kuwaiti affairs. While this quid pro quo has worked well in the past, there are signs that some Palestinians are becoming sympathetic to radical Islam.

The Kuwaiti regime has not managed to seal itself off from the Gulf War between Iran and Iraq.

At the same time as it confronts growing dissent from indigenous Shiites, Kuwait faces the prospect of the Gulf conflict spilling over within its borders. For almost eight years Kuwait has looked on nervously at its larger neighbours fighting it out at enormous cost to human life. The regime has supported Iraq right down the line, as a bulwark against Iranian expansionism and the spread of radical Islam. Over the past two years the prospect of an Iranian breakthrough has frightened Kuwaiti rulers and brought Western forces into the Gulf.

Kuwait's rulers have done everything possible to insulate themselves against the Gulf War. They have pumped money into Iraq to keep it fighting in the war, and doled out generous helpings of aid to moderate Arab regimes in the region. Kuwait was instrumental in getting Egypt, disgraced by its 1979 peace treaty with Israel, accepted back into the Arab fold at the November 1987 Arab summit.

GULF WAR

Iran's steady advance in recent years has made Kuwait desperate for the West to intervene directly in the war. The Western powers have their own reasons for weighing in against Iran, but Kuwait's pleas provided a convenient pretext for getting stuck in. Western leaders are also concerned about securing their own oil supplies and Kuwait's massive investments abroad.

If Kuwait fell it would have a destabilising effect on the whole region.

Kuwait became especially anxious about the Gulf War after Iran's capture of the Fao peninsula in February 1986, and its renewed offensive against vessels travelling to and from Kuwait. In autumn 1986 the Kuwaiti regime started making overtures to the USA, but Washington was at first reluctant to get bogged down in another no-win situation in the Middle East. Several factors led the US rulers to change their minds.

The embarrassing Irangate revelations of October 1986, in which the USA was shown to be involved in covert arms deals with the Islamic republic, put pressure on Washington to mend relations with the Arab regimes. In February 1987 Iran looked set to take Iraq's second city of Basra, a development which raised questions about the future balance of power in the region. The following month the USA agreed to start reflagging Kuwaiti tankers.

Kuwait is well and truly caught in the middle of the havoc wrought by Western intervention in the Middle East.



US PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES

SPLITTING NEW YORK

Politicians set Jews against blacks in this week's New York Democratic primary — James Malone reports

As we go to press it looks like front runner Michael Dukakis will be the winner of the New York primary to select the Democratic Party's nominee for president. But his victory will have been won at the price of deepening divisions between the party's black and Jewish supporters in the city. The New York campaign seemed to avoid issues like the economy, jobs and benefits. Instead, attention was focused 5700 miles away — on Israel.

Jews make up 10.6 per cent of the population in New York state, but they cast a quarter of the votes in the Democratic primary.

To win this block vote, candidates usually try to outdo one another to prove their support for Israel. This year, attacking black candidate Jesse Jackson was seen as the way to woo the Jewish voter. They have not forgotten the time when Jackson referred to New York as 'Hymietown', nor the time when he embraced PLO leader Yassir Arafat in front of the TV cameras. Ed Koch, the notoriously racist and loudmouthed mayor of New York, last week made sure nobody forgot. 'Jews and other supporters of Israel', he said, 'would be crazy to vote for Jackson'.



APOLOGY: JACKSON

Dukakis made the obligatory pro-Israeli statements, but refrained from accusing Jackson of anti-semitism. He didn't really have to — there are plenty like Koch to stir things up. In a last-ditch effort to stay in contention, Tennessee senator Albert Gore joined Koch on the anti-Jackson bandwagon. Gore commended prime minister Yitzhak Shamir's vicious handling of the Palestinian uprising in the West Bank and Gaza. But when Gore toured the predominantly Jewish area of Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, the voters didn't think he could deliver. 'Dukakis has a better chance of beating Jackson,' said housewife Blanche Wachs. 'That's enough for me.'

Jackson apologised for his 'Hymie' remark and said that if he was elected he would not negotiate with Arafat. Jackson has always insisted that he supports the right of Israel to exist, and refers to Israel as the 'centre of democracy in the Middle East'. But Jackson's appeal for forgiveness did not fall on sympathetic ears.

Jackson's views on Israel have no bearing on his support in the black community.

Hundreds of blacks followed Jackson down the garbage-strewn sidewalks of Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard in Harlem. Blacks make up a quarter of the Democratic Party's primary voters in New York. Jackson is likely to have taken nearly all black votes this week. 'Koch has so alienated blacks and Hispanics,' explained Jackson organiser Wendell Foster, 'that anything he says against Jackson only adds fervour to Jackson supporters.'

The Democratic Party hierarchy found the Jewish-black conflict useful as a way of undermining Jackson. But if it goes too far this split holds some dangers for the Democrats. The Democratic Party's traditional coalition of Jews, blacks, and organised labour around big-city machines has been fragmenting for some years. Today the Democrats need every Jewish and black vote they can muster. Indeed Jackson's job is to ensure that blacks vote for this openly pro-capitalist party, even though it accepts the deep-rooted racism in US society which ensures that he is unelectable.

THEME

In the city where subway vigilante Bernhard Goetz was hailed as a hero for shooting four young blacks, and where a Howard Beach mob murdered a black youth last year for daring to walk 'their' streets, the issue of racism did not get a mention in this week's primary campaign. But the tensions between Jews and blacks were the underlying theme of every debate.



MICHAEL DUKAKIS LOOKS SET TO WIN, BUT THE WORKING CLASS WILL BE THE LOSER



LOUIS FARRAKHAN'S NATION OF ISLAM HAS DIRECTED BLACK ANGER AGAINST JEWS

JEWS v BLACKS?

Jimmy Breslin, New York City's most renowned journalist, said the primary contest whipped up 'the most outrageous and unbelievable flurry of race-baiting and religious name-calling' since the nineteenth century. The sectional politicking created an ugly atmosphere and reopened old wounds between the Jewish and black communities.

For over a century US rulers have manipulated ethnic and racial divisions to keep the working class divided. But conflict between Jews and blacks is much more recent. In New York it dates back to the late sixties. The 1967 teachers' strike was one of the most intense racial conflicts ever to hit a major Northern city.

At the time more than 50 per cent of students, but fewer than 13 per cent of the teachers, were black or Hispanic. Moves by New York state to give local school boards more decision-making power were opposed by 19 Jewish teachers in a predominantly black district in Brooklyn. The teachers protested against the hiring of black principals from outside the city. When the 19 were transferred out of the district Albert Shanker, the leader of the United Federation of Teachers, called a strike.

Blacks and Hispanics rallied behind the school board. The conflict led to racist and anti-semitic outbursts on both sides. Leslie Campbell, a black radical and coordinator for the African-American Teachers Association, caused uproar when she read an anti-semitic poem over the radio. Some 11 000 out of 55 000 UFT members tried to keep the schools open, and in the end the courts forced the local board to reinstate the teachers.

QUOTAS

Jews and blacks were to be at odds throughout the seventies over the introduction of affirmative action programmes. The riots of 1968 prompted the US government to spend money on job creation schemes and establish employment quotas for blacks. Outspoken Jewish groups opposed the quota system, a move which brought condemnation from Jackson: 'Jewish resistance to affirmative action and minimum quotas of inclusion for blacks into law, medical and other professional schools — which Jews historically viewed as a means for their own exclusion — has put black and Jewish interests in conflict.'

Traditionally Jews and blacks had cooperated in the face of the racism and anti-semitism of American society. Both groups believed that by sticking together they could limit the pressure from the right. Before the teachers' strike Jews and blacks formed a liberal bloc inside the Democratic Party. Jews were prominent in the black civil rights movement of the sixties, providing funding for organisations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. Jewish machine politicians used to deliver a solid bloc of black and Jewish votes for the Democrats.

TENSIONS

By the late sixties the civil rights movement had reached an impasse. The emergence of a militant black power movement split both the black opposition and the traditional Jewish-black bloc. Jewish businessmen and shopkeepers were much more involved in the black ghettos than any other section of white society, and the inner-city riots exacerbated Jewish-black tensions. The black radicals refused to follow the traditional political machine which Eldridge Cleaver referred to as the 'Jewish mafia', and would have nothing to do with the Democratic Party. Middle class Jews felt threatened by measures which would have blacks competing with them. The heavy concentration of the two minorities in New York City heightened the underlying conflict. This conflict helped to accelerate the fragmentation of the fragile coalition that to this day makes up the Democratic Party.

Black-Jewish relations reached a low-point during the Democratic campaign of 1984, when Jackson's adviser Louis Farrakhan caused a furore with his outspoken anti-semitism. Farrakhan's Nation of Islam draws its support mainly from the most downtrodden blacks who have little faith in middle class black politicians. His ambition to found a black business empire based on black beauty aids and toothpaste is hardly the stuff to inspire the masses. But his hostility towards Jews, who have often served as the mediating link between the black community and white society, is part of a message aimed at giving black people something immediate to vent their anger against.

LUMPING

Many commentators have argued that Jews and blacks have much in common because they have both faced the prejudice of American society. By lumping racism and anti-semitism together they fail to see what is specific about the experience of blacks and Jews, and the prejudices which keep them apart. While anti-semitism has the potential to become a significant force in US society, racism is the overriding problem of the moment. Racism is all-pervasive in the USA, promoted and backed up by all the agencies of the state. As a social group blacks are systematically excluded from employment and discriminated against in every walk of life. This is the most important barrier to the development of left-wing politics in the USA today.

When politicians stir up tensions between blacks and Jews all workers suffer. The US establishment encourages workers to think of themselves first and foremost as members of a particular ethnic group rather than as members of the working class. Unless these crippling divisions are fought, the working class will lose every important contest in the class struggle.

C Desmond Greaves, *Liam Mellows and the Irish Revolution,* Lawrence and Wishart, £7.95

IRISH REPUBLICAN
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LIAM MELLOWS

Liam Mellows has long been regarded as one of the founding fathers of left-wing Irish republicanism. His Notes from Mountjoy at the height of the civil war in 1922, are often cited as evidence of the continuation of the socialist tradition in Irish politics after Connolly's death. In fact, although Mellows is often identified as the leading radical in the Sinn Fein of his day, Connolly's influence on him was marginal. He joined the middle class Irish Volunteers rather than the Citizen Army, and commanded the Volunteers in Galway during the 1916 Easter Rising.

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After the defeat of the Rising, Mellows escaped to the USA where he organised support for the Irish cause. His return to Ireland coincided with the last phase of the war of independence and the truce between the IRA and Crown forces. The great value of C Desmond Greaves' biography, first published in 1971 and now out in a second edition, is that it contains a detailed account of developments in the working class in Ireland and how they related to the national struggle in the period up to 1922.

The destruction of British rule unleashed forces which threatened the fabric of capitalism in the whole of Ireland. Workers in the towns, inspired by the Russian Revolution, seized factories, mines and workshops. They ran up the red flag and declared soviets in several places. The Limerick Soviet was the first in April 1919. Greaves describes what happened: 'The trades council declared a general strike. Fourteen thousand workers downed tools. No goods were moved nor services rendered without a permit from the trades council....The entire administration passed into their hands, with the mayor and Sinn Fein councillors following them in everything.'

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In the countryside, peasants taking advantage of the breakdown of British law and order seized land and divided it among the landless. These side-effects of the war against Britain threatened the Sinn Fein leadership's programme of building an independent Irish capitalism. Measures were taken to restore order. Republican courts and police returned land to the landowners and broke up picket lines. In many cases, middle class Sinn Fein supporters supported the British in restoring order. With each passing month it was becoming obvious that the middle classes were too weak to control an explosive situation. As Greaves puts it: 'They feared imperialism and they feared the people. But they decided that they feared imperialism less.'



So they called a halt: 'The chambers of commerce passed their resolutions. Country merchants, cattle-dealers, manufacturers great and small took up from their natural superiors, agrarian and financial, the cry for order and for the peace which alone could assure it.' As Dail Eireann assembled to discuss the partition Treaty in December 1921, claims Greaves, 'republican police and Black and Tans were arresting Wexford farmworkers on strike for trade union recognition'.

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As the middle classes deserted the Republic en masse and supported the Treaty, republican forces hesitated, trying at all costs to avoid civil war. Mellows' dawning interest in the working class can be traced from the fall of the republican headquarters at the Four Courts in Dublin, the first engagement of the civil war. After he was captured by the pro-Treaty forces he noticed the demeanour of the citizens. 'The workers weren't with us', he confided to Peadar O'Donnell. This realisation of the isolation of the anti-Treaty forces made Mellows rethink his strategy.

The fact that Mellows could be identified with Connolly says more about the destruction of working class politics after the Easter Rising than it says about either of the two men. Whereas Connolly sought to train the working class for leadership of the liberation movement and to maintain at all costs the independent interests of the working class, Mellows sought to win over the workers to a middle class programme when it had become obvious that its formulators had abandoned it. This he made clear in his famous Notes from Mountjoy: 'The programme of democratic control (the social programme) adopted by the Dail coincident with the Declaration of Independence, January 1919, should be translated into something definite. This is essential if the great body of workers are to be kept on the side of independence. This does not require a change of outlook on the part of republicans, or the adoption of a revolutionary programme as such.'

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Greaves mistakes Mellows' concern to bring social and economic issues to the foreground for a real understanding of the role which could be played by the working class. It is, however, impossible to judge how he might have developed had he lived. In December 1922 Liam Mellows was executed by the pro-Treaty forces who betrayed the Republic, in one of the most brutal and bitter acts of the entire Irish struggle.

Mark Reilly

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Wall Street, **Oliver Stone (director)**

Nobody can accuse Oliver Stone of not being topical. *Wall Street* appeared in the States hard on the heels of last year's Black Monday Crash. When I saw it in New York a few weeks ago, it was still profitably tapping a bullish anti-yuppie mood. And now, on the eve of its release here, the real Wall Street appears as if it is about to oblige again. The Dow Jones index dropped 101 points in one day last week.

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Bud Fox is a young, squeaky-clean stockbroker trying to make it in the dizzy turmoil of New York's financial district. To be a 'player' in Manhattan, where the rents scrape the sky, he has to borrow money yet again from his dad, a shop steward who repairs planes for one of America's many foundering airlines. When Pop tips off Bud that the Federal Aviation Authority is about to clear the airline's name over flight safety, and blame its suppliers instead, the young Fox knows he's on to something. With the help of insider information of this sort, he has soon got himself high up the greasy pole; and as we all know, what goes up must come down, especially on the stock market these days.

Coming from the director of the excellent *Salvador* and the disappointing *Platoon, Wall Street* contains few surprises, dramatically or politically. Nevertheless the pace is agreeably frenetic, the characters credibly reptilian. The film's weakness, most evident in its denouement, derives from its perspective of Democratic Party populism.



MICHAEL DOUGLAS: GEKKO BY NAME AND NATURE

FINANCIAL FILM
INSIDER TRADING

Fox (Charlie Sheen) uses his tip-off to earn Gordon Gekko (Michael Douglas) a lot of dough: Gekko, a financial raider modelled on the infamous Ivan Boesky, buys shares in the airline cheap, sends a coded message to the *Wall Street Journal* that they're about to rise, and cleans up. Douglas gives a fine performance as the cynical entrepreneur, telling Fox to cut his ingratiating sales rap, buy a new suit, and wake up to the hard, impersonal realities of the money market. America, he blithely informs his protegé, is not a democracy — it belongs to those with private jets. In a climactic speech to the airline's ambivalent shareholders, he sways his audience by telling them that the greed for which he is notorious represents nothing more than the exercise of market forces. They can't fault his logic: in the dictatorship of the rich, avarice is not immoral; it is just how things get done.

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Even after the Crash of 1987, this kind of directorial message is still strong stuff in Reagan's America. But while the share price displays are exciting and bristling, and the hi-tech interior of Gekko's 'war room' intriguing, the end of the film is more than a little lame. As the government's watchdog, the Securities Exchange Commission, gets on Fox's trail, he also falls out with his upright union-man dad, (Martin Sheen), who knows that Gekko plans to dismember the airline in the pursuit of quick bucks. And a decent British investor (an hilarious cameo by Terence Stamp) appears on the scene to complicate the denouement.

For all Stone's insights into ruthlessness at the top, he cannot, in the end, refrain from a purely moral indictment. For him, Gekko's vice is 'short-termism' — getting into and out of a business for money, rather than ploughing funds into plant and employee training. Yet this narrow critique of banking capital embraces not only the Democrats and Neil Kinnock, but the *Wall Street Journal* itself. None of them recognise that given the low profitability of US capital, each investor can only afford to think short-term.

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To portray a British capitalist as, by contrast, a far-sighted provider of resources is absurd. The absurdity is underlined by the fact that what he is offering the workers here is tougher working conditions and a 20 per cent wage cut, in exchange for the promise of a job, and a hope and a prayer for the future. This is the reactionary Democratic world of progress through 'give-backs' — the social contract-style deals pioneered by Chrysler's Lee Iacocca under the Carter administration of the seventies. Inadvertently, therefore, Oliver Stone confirms that radical Democrat thinking offers no alternative to the rapacious employers behind George Bush.

Like the decline of American capitalism, *Wall Street* is fast-paced and entertaining. As Gekko observes, everybody on 'the Street' has some kind of inside data to sell: there are no honest capitalists.

Gemma Forest

SUPPORTERS SHOULD BE PREPARING FOR POWER

WORK IS ALREADY well under way for our Preparing for Power conference 1988. Early ticket sales indicate that this year's conference should be our best yet. Already over 350 people have bought their tickets, well ahead of the registration figure for this time last year. This means that the conference will not only be bigger but also better informed — because people have registered earlier, hopefully they'll have had the chance to find out more about the Revolutionary Communist Party before they arrive.

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Several courses at Preparing for Power are designed for people who are, as yet, relative strangers to the discussion of revolutionary politics. But while the summer school provides an excellent introduction to the politics of the RCP, it is even more rewarding if people attending have experienced the party's work and found out about the courses and sessions they want to attend beforehand.

This year we are running a wider variety of week-long courses than ever before. Some are specifically designed for people who are unfamiliar with left-wing politics. Others assume a degree of familiarity with the subject under question. If you plan to attend the courses for 'non-beginners' you'll need to do some reading beforehand. For that you'll need one of the reading lists that will be issued with the full conference brochure. This makes early pre-registration a must for those who want to get the maximum benefit from the high-level introductions. The earlier you register — the longer you have to prepare.

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The second advantage in registering early is that it's cheaper. The cost of registering increases as the conference gets closer.

If you've already registered and decided which courses you want to follow, don't sit back and wait for July to come around. There is plenty you can do to contribute to the success of the conference.

The main job is to get even more people to come along. The obvious people to get along are your friends, workmates and even your relatives. It's important to talk to them about the summer school now, before they book their summer holiday in Spain. Every year we have dozens of people writing to our national office asking for information about events later in the year because they'll be away for Preparing for Power. Catch your mates before they commit themselves to anything else. If you already sell them copies of *tns*, you should have no problems explaining why London is the place to be for the last week in July. If they are unfamiliar with the RCP then sell them a copy of the paper and explain that Preparing for Power is *'tns* in the flesh'.

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Your local branch will already be planning how to publicise the conference more broadly. They'll be organising stalls to promote the conference at colleges, major local workplaces, at social events, and local festivals (there are lots of these in the spring) — even in town centres. Postering in bookshops, community centres and radical venues should already be well under way. But you probably know good places to poster that other supporters haven't discovered. If you can help, get in touch and phone **(01) 729 0414.** We need all the help we can get.

Anne Burton

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For tickets, or for a free programme with full details, write to Preparing for Power, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Or ring us on (01) 729 0414. Cheques payable to RCP Association.

REVOLT ON THE CLYDE

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Sunday 15 May 1pm-7pm
Govanhill Community Centre Daisy Street

RCP PUBLIC MEETINGS

BUILDING A NEW OPPOSITION

CARDIFF: Wednesday 27 April 7.30pm. The Comet, Meteor Street

LIVERPOOL: Thursday 12 May 7.30pm. Trade Union Centre, Hardman Street

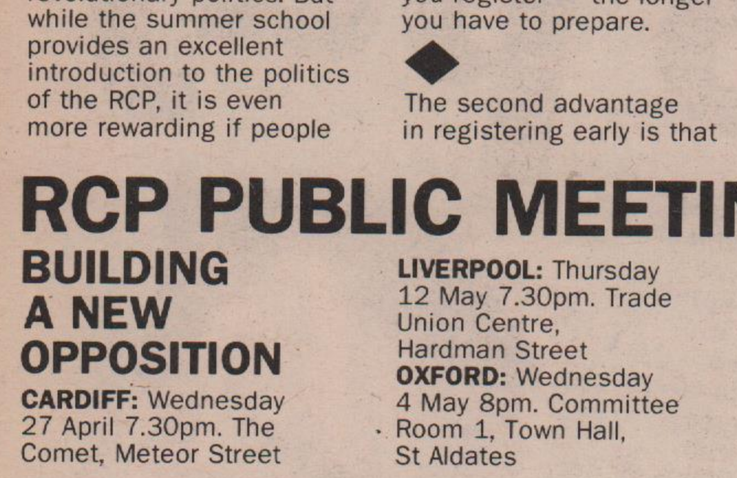
OXFORD: Wednesday 4 May 8pm. Committee Room 1, Town Hall, St Aldates

SHEFFIELD: Friday 29 April 7.30pm. SCCAU Centre, West Street (opposite The Limit).

WAKEFIELD: Saturday 23 April 2pm. Unity House, Westgate

ALL-LONDON RCP SUPPORTERS' MEETING

Thursday 21 April 7.30pm
Friends House
Euston Road



WOMEN AND THE NEW MORALITY

GLASGOW: Monday 25 April 7.30pm. Policing the Family. Hillhead Library, Byres Road.

NEWCASTLE: Thursday 28 April. Open forum — Their Morals Not Ours, Fight for Women's Rights. Education Centre, Trewhitt Road, Heaton.



TAKE SIDES IN THE IRISH WAR

DURHAM: Tuesday 26 April 7.30pm. Video show: *The Funeral of Larry Marley.* Durham University, Room 143, Elvet Riverside.

GLASGOW: Thursday 21 April 7.30pm. Organised by the Irish Freedom Movement. Govanhill Community Centre, Daisy Street.

NEWCASTLE: Wednesday 27 April 7.30pm. Lonsdale Pub, Lyndhurst Avenue, opposite West Jesmond Metro.

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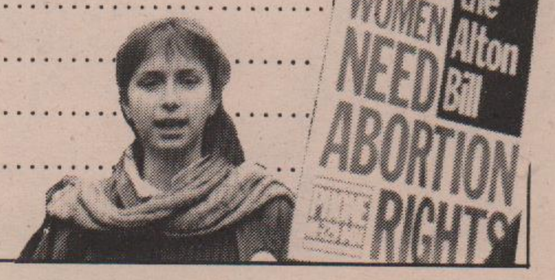
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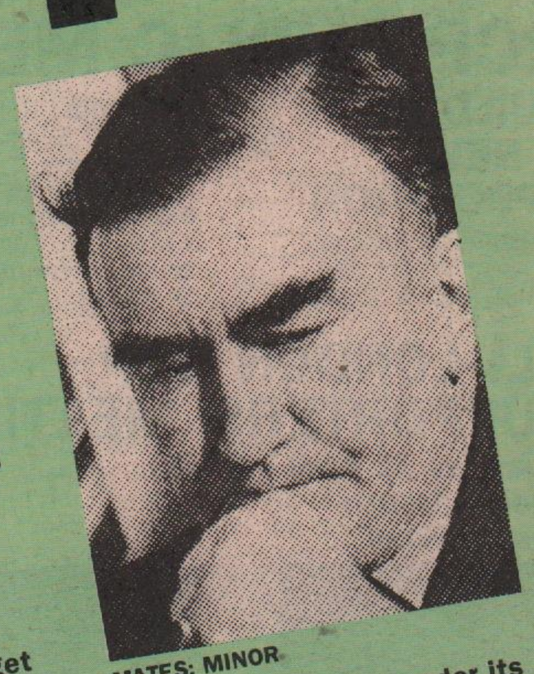
THATCHER: RUTHLESS

THIS SESSION of parliament has been the toughest test of Tory resolve yet, as the government faces growing dissent over its brutal policies. The trouble is that all the pressure on Thatcher is coming from critics in her own party worried about the effect of her policies on the government's standing, rather than from an opposition movement channelling the anger of ordinary people in an onslaught against her government.

Monday's revolt by backbenchers against the poll tax showed how Tory dissidents have hijacked the opposition to the government. Conservative MP Michael Mates' amendment to the poll tax legislation would have made little difference to the millions of working class people who will be expected to pay it. Yet the Labour leadership instructed its MPs to give their backing to Mates as if he were the people's saviour. A motley alliance of Tory wets, Ulster Unionists, Democrats, Owenites and Labourites cut the government majority down to 25.

The Labour Party's support for Mates' minor adjustments to the community charge shows that it has accepted the poll tax law in all its essentials. In Scotland Labour-controlled councils are already preparing to implement the tax. Neil Kinnock's idea of building an opposition movement to the poll tax amounts to clinging on to the coat-tails of reactionary Tory politicians whose concern is defending the party which is implementing it, not the people who will suffer it.

On every issue, from the Tories' poor-bashing budget to their punitive social security changes and their niggardly new health charges, the Labour Party is content to form the shadow of an opposition. These days Labour MPs are to be heard echoing the nit-picking criticisms of Tory backbenchers and the appeals for charity of Church of England bishops. But Labour's bid to become the Tory Party's conscience cannot save the working class from becoming the government's kicking post. We need a new opposition,



MATES: MINOR

one which will fight under its own colours and which is as ruthless in defending our class as Thatcher is in defending hers. We will never win if we pin our hopes on a party which pretends that the way forward against the government lies with has-beens on the Tory backbenches. But if we put our trust in our own people and begin to organise their anger against the class of parasites which is bleeding them dry, we can stop the poll tax and begin to make the Tories pay.