# VICTORY TO THE PALESTINIANS!

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**After the Alliance: Time for a real opposition — See pages 8 and 9**

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly 22 January 1988 40p



Pandora Anderson



John Sturrock

## STOP THE ALTON BILL

# REAL FREEDOM FOR WOMEN

Women are under pressure from the 'Fergie Factor'. The media celebrations over her pregnancy endorse the Tory campaign to force every woman to accept the role of obedient mother and housewife. Liberal MP David Alton's Bill to restrict access to abortion, which comes up in the commons this week, is another attempt to keep women in the chains of domestic slavery.

Unlike the Duchess of York, most women don't have access to state-financed nannies and a multi-millionaire mother-in-law. They cannot have children and keep up a round of holidays in the sun and weekends on the ski-slopes. Instead, their role as child-rearers and skivvies in the home brands women as cheap labour in the workplace and second class citizens in society. And things are getting worse. Hardly a week now passes without the authorities using women's position in the family as the excuse for further insults and attacks.

- Nurses and women ancillary workers are starting to take strike action against Tory cuts in the health service. The Tories have had to drop their first attempt to slash nurses' wages. But Margaret Thatcher has made it clear that the nurses don't deserve decent pay because, she says, most of them are young women who are only working to fill in time before they go off to get married and have children. Any nurses who do as Thatcher suggests will join the millions of women who now have to care for the sick, the young and the elderly at home, to make up for Tory cuts in health and welfare services.
- Last week two British courts ruled that women must either be faithful wives who should submit to their husbands, or unmarried hussies who are fair game for any man. Mr Justice Owen announced that a 12-year old rape victim could be described as 'asking for trouble'. And a bench of magistrates in Gwent acquitted a man of committing indecent assault on his wife, after deciding that the defendant — who had tied the woman up, tormented her for 90 minutes with a vibrator and forced her to have sex — was 'only trying to save his marriage'.

Women are the first victims of the Tories' attempt to impose their reactionary morality. We should respond by fighting back for women's right to full equality. Control over pregnancy lies at the centre of women's position in the family and society. The lack

(continued on page 2)

◆ *ABORTION RIGHTS*

# AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, AS LATE AS NECESSARY

**ON Saturday thousands of people joined local demonstrations around the country to oppose the latest legal attack on access to abortion. Liberal MP David Alton's Bill to cut the legal time-limit for abortion from 28 to 18 weeks comes up for its second reading in the house of commons this Friday. There is a lot of talk about Alton accepting an eventual compromise of a 24-week limit. Whether the parliamentary wheeler-dealers cook up such a deal or not, our attitude remains the same. We oppose all attacks on abortion rights, and demand that every woman has access to abortion facilities as early as possible and as late as necessary.**

## TERRIFY

**As the day of the commons debate approaches, the anti-abortion lobby has been busy creating a climate sympathetic to Alton's offensive against women's rights. The newspapers are full of opinion polls purporting to demonstrate solid public support for his Bill. On Sunday the press printed eulogies to Robert Carver, the Oxford student who last year used the law and the media to try to force his former girlfriend into abandoning her planned abortion. He lost in court, but apparently won the battle to terrify the woman out of her rights; she was too traumatised by the press witch-hunt to go ahead with the abortion.**

**The baby is now living with the smug and self-righteous Carver, while the reluctant mother has dropped out of college and gone into hiding to recover from her ordeal. As ever, the moralists have proved willing to destroy a woman's life in order to bolster their reactionary crusade against abortion rights. If the Alton Bill becomes law there will be many more women driven to despair by unwanted pregnancies.**

## DAYSCHOOL

**The forces backing Alton even include some leading figures on the left of the Labour Party such as like Ronnie Campbell, a member of the Campaign Group of MPs and a practising Catholic. It is going to take a big and militant campaign of resistance to defeat the all-party anti-abortion lobby. Last Saturday's local demonstrations were a start. The two London marches against Alton this Thursday will be the next step. To take the campaign further, we need to work out a clear strategy for action. That is the aim of the dayschool on women's rights organised by the Revolutionary Communist Party this Sunday.**

**The slogan initiated by our supporters, for the right to an abortion 'As early as possible, as late as necessary' has now been taken up by many in the Fight the Alton Bill campaign. It is a demand which we need to popularise as widely as possible in the decisive weeks ahead.**




Pandora Anderson

'David Alton on yer bike, we will fight for women's rights.' Last Saturday 700 women's rights campaigners marched, sang and chanted their way from Clapham Common to Brixton. The South London march was one of many anti-Alton protests all over Britain.

# REAL FREEDOM

**Continued from page 1**

**of such control condemns women to unpaid drudgery inside the home and an inferior status outside it. That's why we must prioritise demands to alleviate the burden of child-bearing and child-rearing — for free 24-hour nurseries, free and safe contraception, and free abortion on demand.**

**The campaign to stop Alton's anti-abortion Bill should provide a focus for everybody who wants to liberate women from their oppression today. The Revolutionary Communist Party's dayschool on women's rights this Sunday will be discussing the best way to beat the 'Fergie Factor' and fight for real freedom.**

◆ *TEBBIT BRANDS NURSES*

# NHS: the moonlight zone

Speaking in Weybridge last week, former Tory Party boss Norman Tebbit accused nurses of cheating the National Health Service by moonlighting as agency nurses when they are supposed to be off-duty. 'How many nurses', he asked, 'now use the extra time off from a shorter working week, which we have given them, to moonlight — working at the hospital down the road whilst the nurses from that hospital are moonlighting at the first?'

**The answer is that nearly all nurses are moonlighting.**

They do it because the pittance they receive for a full-time job in the NHS is not enough to live on. If they need a pair of shoes or a new coat, they must take extra work to pay for it.

Sarah, a final-year student nurse at Middlesex Hospital in central London, explained why moon-lighting is so common: 'You can guarantee that 75 per cent of NHS nurses do agency nursing on the side, or they've got some other job going. I have three jobs myself. I am a nurse on a ward. Sometimes I do agency work in a geriatric hospital, which for students is also low-paid. I also work in a health food restaurant on my days off. I did have another job washing up in a restaurant, but I've just packed it in because it was so bad.

## SEVEN-DAY

'Nurses will do anything we can get our hands on. You end up doing a seven-day week. You work for a whole month without a day off, because you can't afford not to. £4500 is the NHS rate for a student nurse. In London that means you can't go out and you can't buy clothes. You can just about buy your food! All you want is a normal life where you've got enough to pay for your train ticket in the morning, and a sandwich at lunchtime. But you won't get that on NHS pay.'

Health service managers know that moonlighting is the only way anybody can afford to be an NHS nurse. Bloomsbury health authority recently issued a circular to nursing staff which stopped short of trying to ban after-hours working. Instead, managers warned nurses not to let it interfere with professional standards. They don't mind if nurses are working their fingers to the bone when 'off-duty', so long as they are bright and chirpy on the ward next day.




NURSES NEED TO UNITE WITH OTHER HEALTH WORKERS

**Tebbit's speech was designed to undermine public sympathy for nurses at a time when health workers are beginning to get organised in opposition to low pay, miserable working conditions, and health service cuts.**

Two weeks ago 39 night nurses at North Manchester General Hospital took strike action against government plans to end unsocial hours payments. The department of health and social security backed down and agreed to review its proposals. When management withdrew their meal allowances, blood transfusion workers in Sheffield, Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh took disruptive action to get them back.

In Edinburgh last week, more than 2000 hospital staff, including members of the no-strike Royal College of Nursing, joined a day of action against low pay and cuts. Next day 150 ancillary workers came out at Gogaburn Hospital near Edinburgh. On Monday, thousands of health workers marched in protest against privatisation of hospital services in the Glasgow area. As we go to press, 30 staff at Hill End Psychiatric Hospital have been on strike for five days in protest against the suspension of two union representatives. Thousands of London's health workers look set to take part in a city-wide day of action in February.

The willingness of desperate nurses and other health workers to take to the streets has caught the government on the hop, and threatened the prospects of Thatcher's blue-eyed health boss John Moore. Favourable media coverage has helped them. But that won't last for ever.

**If the conflicts continue, the authorities will follow Tebbit's lead and start raking up the dirt in an attempt to isolate health workers from wider support.**

Management are already trying to exploit the division between health service professionals and ancillary staff. To counteract this, we need a strategy to fight for decent pay for all health service employees, whether they work in a technician's white coat or a cleaner's overalls. Building for coordinated action across union lines must be our first priority.

MARCH AGAINST ALTON
Thursday 21 January
**12 noon:**
Assemble for National Students' Demonstration, at University of London Union, Malet Street WC1. March to Victoria Embankment.
**From 6.30pm:**
Assemble for Women's Torchlit Procession at Lincoln's Inn Fields. March to Victoria Embankment.

DAYSCHOOL

## FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**Date: Sunday 24 January**
**Place: Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19 (Archway tube)**

**Registration starts at 9.45am**

SESSIONS INCLUDE:
Women and the family — the root of the problem • The rise of the moral right • Health and ethics (led by woman doctor) • Marxist theory of women's oppression • The way to fight
Transport from major cities available, along with free creche and accommodation.

Registration costs £4 waged/£2 unwaged
For further details, contact Janice Bryan on (01) 729 0414

the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party weekly No 3 Editor: Mick Hume

# PALESTINE

**There can be no prospect of peace in the Middle East until the Palestinian people have achieved self-determination. That is the central lesson of the renewed unrest in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.**

**Support for a Palestinian homeland has been asserted by all shades of political opinion in Britain during the past few weeks. After his well-publicised confrontation with an Israeli colonel in a Palestinian refugee camp, even Tory foreign minister David Mellor announced that 'there has to be self-determination for these people, and the violence we have seen in recent weeks will continue as long as this state of limbo is here.' But Palestinian self-determination is an easy phrase, which means very different things in the mouths of different people. For Mellor, the Tories, the Labour Party and much of the British left, it means creating some sort of autonomous zone for the Palestinians alongside Israel. For us, it means the destruction of the Zionist state of Israel and the unification of the entire Palestinian nation.**

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**Israel can only exist by oppressing Palestine. It could not have come into being at the end of the Second World War without driving the Palestinians off their land and robbing them of their national rights. It could not last a day if the Palestinians achieved democracy. The Israeli state is an unstable and artificial entity which has survived for 40 years through the systematic use of violence and discrimination against Palestinians. To secure the borders it imposed on a hostile Arab world, Israel has had to launch an endless round of wars, invasions and raids against neighbours who harbour or sympathise with the Palestinians. The permanent war footing on which Israel stands is not simply the result of over-zealous government policy; it is the only possible way of life for a state whose name is synonymous with oppression in the Middle East.**

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**The current wave of Israeli repression in the occupied territories fits into a well-established pattern. The idea of a Zionist state on Palestinian soil was endorsed by the United Nations in 1947, after the British colonialists handed over their Palestinian mandate to the international body. The UN proposed the partition of Palestine between independent Jewish and Arab states — much the same idea as British politicians claim to support today. But there could be no compromise between the Zionist settlers and the Palestinians, who both sought sovereignty over the same area. Before Israel even came into existence in 1948, the Zionists were expelling hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes. As soon as Israel was created it went to war with the Arabs, quickly occupying an area far larger than that designated by the UN, and killing off any idea of a Palestinian homeland.**

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**From 1948-66, Palestinians caught within Israel were subject to military law.They had been converted into an oppressed minority within their own land. Other Palestinians were dispersed throughout the Middle East. Yet the very existence of these people outside Israel's control, and their proud identification as Palestinians, presented a threat to the stability of the Zionist state. In 1967 Israel attacked its Arab neighbours and occupied the rest of Palestine, seizing the West Bank from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. It immediately began creating settlements of Israeli zealots, to cut off the West Bank from the wider Arab world. They are still there today, outposts of Israeli power backed by the state (see page 5).**

**In 1973 Israel went to war with its major Arab neighbours again. In 1978 Israeli forces invaded Lebanon to crack down on Palestinian strongholds. They have maintained a presence there ever since. In 1982 Israel launched a full-scale invasion of Lebanon to drive out Palestinian freedom fighters. The Israelis bulldozed through to the suburbs of Beirut, and presided over the massacre of thousands of Palestinians by Christian militias in the refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila. And between all of these acts of Israeli barbarism, there have many short and bloody raids on Palestinian camps and targets as far away as Tunisia.**

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**Today, Palestinians who have lived all their lives within the Green Line of pre-1967 Israel are still denied equal rights. They cannot own any of the 90 per cent of the land which is controlled by the Jewish National Fund. They are not entitled to the same welfare benefits as Israeli Jews. And they suffer harsh discrimination in the job and housing markets. Those who eke out an existence in the occupied territories fare even worse under Israeli rule. They are used as a pool of cheap migrant labour, shipped behind the Green Line and out again each day to do the dirty work of Israeli society. They are subject to a pass law system on the South African model. No Palestinian from the occupied territories can spend a night behind the Green Line without a pass. If caught there without one, Palestinian workers face up to a year in an Israeli jail. On top of this discrimination, Palestinians in the occupied territories suffer the attentions of Israel's 'iron fist' security policy, which has inflicted so much death and injury over the past six weeks.**

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**The political and economic viability of the Israeli state depends upon the continued subjugation of the Palestinians. The panic caused by the spread of the recent protests behind the Green Line reflects the mortal threat which the Palestinians pose to the existence of every part of Israel. The Western states are well-aware of this fact. America and Britain have propped up Israel as their local policeman in the Middle East. They need Israeli guns to maintain their influence in the region. Thus Thatcher and Reagan have no hesitation in condemning Palestinians who resist Israeli oppression as 'terrorists'.**

**The support of Western statesmen for Palestinian 'self-determination' must be understood in this context. The West's much-hyped Middle East 'peace process' is designed to divert the Palestinian struggle into seeking some sort of sham homeland, probably under the auspices of Jordan's King Hussein — himself responsible for the massacre of many Palestinians in the Black September of 1970. The aim of these British and American initiatives is to reconcile the Palestinians to the existence of the Israeli state. They are trying to persuade the oppressed people that their prison in the West Bank and Gaza could become a Palestinian 'nation'. Yet while the state of Israel stands, Palestinians can be nothing more than a subject people.**

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**We should not fall for the outpourings of sympathy for the Palestinians from the hypocrites of the British political establishment. When it comes to the question of Israel's survival, they are all ardent Zionists. David Mellor was typically quick to qualify his criticisms of Israeli tactics by declaring himself to be 'a candid friend of Israel'. Anybody who wants to see freedom for the Palestinians can be no friend of the state which lives on their backs. When we say 'Self-determination for the Palestinian people', we do not mean it as a public relations gesture or a diplomatic trick; we mean it.**

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*US TRADE FIGURES*

# Holding their breath

Figures announced last Friday showed a drop in the US trade deficit for November. Euphoric financial commentators announced this as a crucial first step towards solving the economic imbalances which are destabilising the world economy and upsetting relations between the capitalist powers. Yet the very fact that the leaders of the Western world held their collective breath for a week awaiting the release of a single statistic confirms that the economic crisis is beyond their control. It shows how governments now share the feverish concern with short-term trends, normally confined to spivish market speculators.



WORRIES ON WALL STREET

## 'STRENGTH'

With the December figures still to come the 1987 US trade deficit stands at $159.1 billion. The November deficit of $13.2 billion represents a fall of $4.5 billion on the previous month's record high. Few expected an improvement of this scale.

**The week prior to the announcement was dominated by efforts to prepare the markets for another crisis.**

Ronald Reagan kicked off with a speech in Cleveland, Ohio claiming that the deficit is a 'sign of strength' and proof of worldwide confidence in the US economy. This carried little conviction even among his own staff. Other commentators tried to calm speculation by arguing that the inefficiency of the US census bureau (which compiles the trade figures) and 'seasonal factors' make the numbers meaningless anyway. The attitude quickly changed to an unconvincing pose of told-you-so confidence when the surprise fall was announced.

The US markets had good reason to be relieved by Friday's fall in the monthly trade deficit. A run on the dollar caused by bad trade figures would mean heavy financial losses for currency speculators and portfolio investors. For holders of dollars and dollar bonds it would mean a further fall in the real value of their assets. Shareholders stand to lose if the US authorities raise interest rates to defend a falling dollar. Money moves out of shares in response to higher rates of interest elsewhere.

## ABSENCE

The widespread panic about one month's trade figures might be an accurate reflection of the world view of New York money-men. Such an outlook, however, is not the stuff of which effective government policy is made. The fact that it has now spread to the corridors of Western power betrays the absence of any genuine government initiatives to tackle the deep-seated problems now apparent in the world economy. Since the October crash, Western rulers have made great show of economic cooperation, particularly in baling out the USA. But the outcome of the talks held between Reagan and his Japanese counterpart Noboru Takeshita before the trade figures were announced exposed the limits of these attempts at staging a united rescue operation.

The leaders of the two biggest capitalist powers announced a dollar rescue plan allowing America to use special drawing rights (SDRs) from the International Monetary Fund. These are a form of international reserve currency available to 'problem countries'. America will swap SDRs for yen to replenish its declining foreign currency reserves, which will allow more central bank intervention in the money markets to protect the dollar.

## FRICTION

The agreement is supposed to be a cooperative venture, yet it serves to emphasise the tensions prevailing among the major capitalist nations. Nobody believes that it is anything more than a short-term palliative. More than $100 billion will be needed in 1988 to support the dollar at its present level. The deal allows for only $9 billion. The fact that only two world powers were involved shows a growing conviction in the US establishment that a 'group of two' should run world financial affairs. This rankles among European spokesmen, who concentrated their fire on a concession allowing US construction companies exclusive access to Japanese building projects. And recriminations continue between the USA and Japan. While Reagan was applauding the concession on construction projects, his own trade representative Clayton Yeutter condemned it as inadequate and threatened retaliation.

**The instability and friction which dominate economic debate today reflect the fact that, whatever happens to the US trade deficit this month or next, recessionary pressures are on the rise.**

Europe faces a particularly lean time in 1988. European producers cannot afford to lose markets to US rivals exploiting a lower dollar. Behind the claims about successful adjustment policies is a familiar story — the manoeuvres by each power to ensure somebody else pays the price of a collapsing capitalist order.

**Tony Kennedy**



PETER BILLIERE WITH THE SAS IN ADEN, 1964: NOW HIS METHODS WILL BE USED AT HOME

*TORIES INCREASE STATE POWERS*

# THATCHER'S SECRET ARMY

**The Tories are taking advantage of the lack of external opposition to tool up the state security services for the real battles to come at home and abroad, reports Andy Clarkson**

Around 80 Conservative MPs rebelled last Friday against the government's attempt to crush Tory Richard Shepherd's Bill to reform the Official Secrets Act. These dignified dissidents are about the only parliamentary opposition that Thatcher has to contend with these days. The government, however, is in no mood to relax its drive to increase the repressive powers of the state. Shepherd's proposed alterations to the Act didn't amount to much. Yet they were sufficient to provoke the first-ever example of a government imposing a three-line whip instructing Tory MPs to kill off a private member's Bill.

## BUGGED

Thatcher intends to introduce new legislation to 'reform' the Official Secrets Act herself later this year. But this will be to strengthen state censorship, not reduce it. The Tories' aim is to redefine national security to permit MI5 and the Special Branch to monitor those elements considered likely to challenge 'the government's defence and foreign policies' (*Independent*, 11 January). In practice Britain's political police have often bugged and burgled groups such as CND and Irish solidarity campaigns, as confirmed by former spy Peter Wright in *Spycatcher*.

**But these underhand operations are now to be made official state policy.**

The Tories are to beef up MI5 still further through the appointment of a new director to replace Sir Anthony Duff, blamed for bungling the Peter Wright affair. Patrick Walker has been promoted to take Duff's place, over the heads of several more senior MI5 officers. Usually MI5 chiefs come from K Branch — which deals primarily with countering Soviet espionage. Over the last few years, however, it has been superseded by F Branch, which is responsible for the domestic surveillance of British radicals, trade unionists and other pressure groups. Walker is MI5's first-ever boss from F Branch. Similarly, Peter Imbert, the new Metropolitan Police chief, spent 15 years of his career inside Special Branch and Scotland Yard's Anti-Terrorist Squad. These appointments indicate Thatcher's growing concern with internal security and politicising British policing.

The government's new defensiveness about criticisms of its foreign policy is revealing. Publicly the Tories pretend that Britain's overseas role is about pursuing peace and freedom throughout the world. What have they got to hide about its future intentions? One recent military appointment provides a clue.

## TERRORISTS

Lieutenant-General Peter de la Billiere has been made General Officer Commanding of the South-east Military District. Billiere has seen action with the terrorists of the Special Air Service in Korea, Malaya and Oman. Between 1978 and 1983 he was director of the SAS regiment. He was then sent to command land forces in the Falklands until 1985. Billiere's appointment to such a senior post is the first for an officer who has no experience commanding any unit in the British army of the Rhine, where the majority of Britain's troops are currently deployed.

Billiere's new position gives him command over Britain's rapid deployment force — 5 Airborne Brigade based at Aldershot. Billiere's experience in covert SAS operations around the world is just what the government needs to run out-of-area military operations in the third world. With new government powers to censor criticisms of its foreign policy on the way, and a former SAS man in the driving seat of Britain's overseas intervention forces, the signs are that Thatcher is preparing for a more aggressive approach to keeping the Union Jack flying in areas like the Middle East.

## DIRTY

Billiere's appointment also gives him powers 'to provide aid to the civil authorities' in the event of unrest within Britain. Thatcher doesn't seriously expect the polite rebels in her own party to remain her only opponents at home for long. Over the last few years the militarisation of Britain's state machinery has proceeded apace. Greater censorship powers and state surveillance are just part of the picture. The police nowadays operate like a Continental para-military force. And where they can't cope, the Tories can call in the SAS 'Counter Revolutionary Warfare Wing'. This terror gang was used to smash a Peterhead prison siege last October — the first time the SAS had been sent in to quell a civil disturbance in Britain. With Billiere's appointment confirmed, these armed forces will come under the direct control of an old SAS hand in such a crisis.

**While public attention focuses on little parliamentary disputes about private member's Bills, the Tory government is getting the state ready for the real struggles ahead.**

They are moving away from all the old conventions about non-political policing and set-piece military operations, towards the new tactics of systematic surveillance and dirty fighting. We have to match their innovative preparations for the battle over Britain's future. A few dozen Tory wets will not provide any protection from the masked men and MI5 agents of Thatcher's secret army.

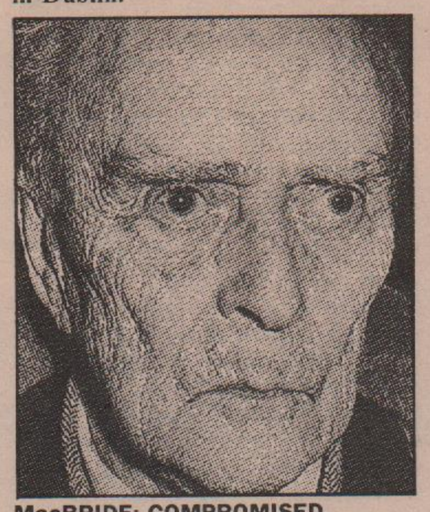
*SEAN MacBRIDE*

# Rebel turned statesman

**The death last week of Amnesty International founder and former IRA leader Sean MacBride was met by much hypocrisy on both sides of the Irish Sea. The establishment in Dublin and London praised to the skies a man who their predecessors had hunted and imprisoned when he fought for Irish freedom.**

**In MacBride's latter years, world powers East and West showered him with decorations for his work oiling the cogs of international diplomacy as the chair of Amnesty International and the United Nations commissioner for Namibia. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (1974), the Lenin Peace Prize (1977) and the American Medal of Justice (1978). Yet according to his obituary in *The Times*, the British authorities viewed the young MacBride as 'a sinister and ruthless extremist' during his IRA years. So how did he ever come to be so honoured?**

**Sean was the son of John MacBride, executed for his part in the Dublin Rising of Easter 1916, and indefatigable republican Maud Gonne. He fought in the Tan War for Irish independence from Britain between 1918-21, and was first jailed by the British at the age of 14. When the Partition Treaty was signed in 1921, the republican movement split and civil war soon broke out between supporters and opponents of the deal with Britain. MacBride backed the anti-Treaty forces, and was persecuted by the British-backed Free State regime in Dublin.**



MacBRIDE: COMPROMISED

**Yet MacBride, like most of his generation of republican leaders, eventually grew to fear the masses and reached an accommodation with British imperialism. After a brief stint as IRA chief of staff, he accepted the limitations of the Twenty-six Counties state in 1937 when Dublin premier Eamon de Valera (another former leading anti-Treatyite) passed a new constitution. By 1946 MacBride was fully involved in the internal politics of Britain's Southern Irish satellite state, and formed the shortlived Clann na Poblachta — known as 'Partition party number three'.**

**In 1948 MacBride became a statesman as the South's foreign minister. In office, he combined republican gestures in public with private advances to the imperialists. MacBride rejected Nato membership, only to seek a bilateral military agreement with the USA. He piloted through the South's formal declaration of an Irish republic in 1949. The Labour government in London, however, was unimpressed and assured the British establishment that Dublin remained under its influence. According to British cabinet minutes, while MacBride was declaring that Ireland had finally broken free of Britain in 1949, he also held a secret meeting with Northern Ireland premier Lord Brookeborough at Stormont Castle, the symbol of Unionist power on Irish soil.**

**MacBride fell from office in 1951, after he broke with health minister Noel Browne who had dared to introduce a state-funded maternity welfare service against the wishes of the Catholic hierarchy. MacBride told the Dail (Irish parliament) that he was 'bound to give obedience to the rulings of our Church and of our hierarchy'.**

## NICHE

**As a former foreign minister with increasingly conservative views, he niched on the international diplomacy circuit. The Great Powers tried to use his radical credentials in posts where he could exert a restraining influence over left-wing organisations, national liberation movements and human rights groups. MacBride also tried to apply this approach to the renewed struggle in Ireland after 1969. He insisted that the conflict in the North should be seen as a war rather than a 'law and order' problem, and upheld the right of IRA prisoners to political status. But he refused to support the armed struggle against Britain, and called on republicans to pursue more 'constitutional' methods. In 1977 he tried to arrange a ceasefire agreement including the IRA and the Loyalist paramilitary gangs.**

**MacBride's last initiative showed how far he had lowered his political horizons since his militant youth. His MacBride principles are designed to combat sectarian employment practices within the Northern Ireland state, by persuading US financiers to refuse to invest in companies which won't hire more Catholics. This scheme portrays the American ruling class, which has terrorised oppressed peoples around the world, as a potential force for progress in Ireland. It captures the compromised and confused outlook of a man who gave up the anti-imperialist struggle for a seat in the cabinet rooms and conference halls of the old order.**

***Jackie Reynolds***


**Irish Freedom Movement Rally**
**NO MORE BLOODY SUNDAYS!**
**Speakers: Mick Hume and Derry activist**

**7.30pm Friday 29 January**
**Caxton House, 129 St John's Way**
**London N19 (Archway tube)**
**Followed by a benefit disco**
**Admission (rally and disco) £3/£1.50 unemployed**

EYE-WITNESS REPORT FROM THE WEST BANK

# ISRAELI SETTLERS ON PALESTINIAN SOIL

**Daniel Nassim and Carol Meghji report from the Israeli settlements whose inhabitants rob and terrorise Palestinians in the occupied West Bank**

*Tour Vaaleh* is not a name you will find among the holiday companies in your high-street travel agents. It is a tourist firm with a difference. It arranges government-sponsored tours around the Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, in the hope of convincing Jewish visitors to emigrate to these colonial outposts on Palestinian soil. For the visitors, the *Tour Vaaleh* sight-seeing trips are cheap — 10 shekels (£3) a head. But the Zionist settlements which they visit have cost the Palestinian people their homes, their land and their rights.

'It's safer than New York City. At least here you know who the bad guy is.' Pinhas Hayim is the *Mazcir* (manager) of the El David settlement in what he calls 'northern Judea' and what we call occupied Palestine, taken by the Israelis during the 1967 Six Day War. He manages according to one simple rule: if they're Palestinians, they're bad. 'You have to *respect* and *suspect* the Arabs at the same time,' he says. To Pinhas Hayim 'respect' means be aware of the dangers from hostile Palestinians. About five minutes drive from El David is the Palestinian village of Zaatera. The people of Zaatera have good reason to resent the settlers of El David, who have built on land stolen from the Palestinian village.

## LICENCE

For the 68 000 Jewish settlers on the West Bank, 'suspecting the Arabs' means having a licence to harass every Palestinian. Heavily armed settlers often enter Zaatera 'to ensure everything is in order'. They boast about forcing 'PLO terrorists' to leave their homes.

**The Israeli authorities have done all they can to make it easy for the settlers to pick on Palestinians.**

For example, the number plates of cars belonging to Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza are conveniently colour-coded for easy harassment by settlers and the Israeli army. West Bank number plates are blue and Gazan ones grey. They also have a code letter in Hebrew to indicate the town of registration. Settlers have standard Israeli yellow number plates.

Even during relatively quiet periods El David has two or three reserve soldiers on permanent duty, prowling the settlement with Uzi submachine guns dangling from their side. They are on *miluim,* a month or more of military reserve duty done by every Israeli male up to the age of about 55. At night the settlers do their own guard duty. Palestinians could be forgiven for not noticing the difference; last week two settlers shot dead a 16-year old Palestinian youth in Beiten village near Ramallah.

## OUTPOST

The presence of the soldiers exposes the lie that the settlers are freelance religious fanatics. El David can only survive with massive support from the Israeli state. The road which leads to El David was purpose-built by the authorities after the settlement was established in 1982. The 19 families who live in temporary caravans inside El David's wire-surrounded compound also benefit from heavy state subsidies of rents and mortgages. 'It's economical to be out here,' says Pinhas Hayim.

El David is a purely political outpost of Israeli power in occupied Palestine. There is no economic rationale for the settlement's existence. Most of the inhabitants work in Jerusalem. The settlement itself only controls a few hundred pistachio and olive trees, taken from the Palestinians.

**Israel has expropriated more than half of the land in the West Bank for exclusive Jewish use.**

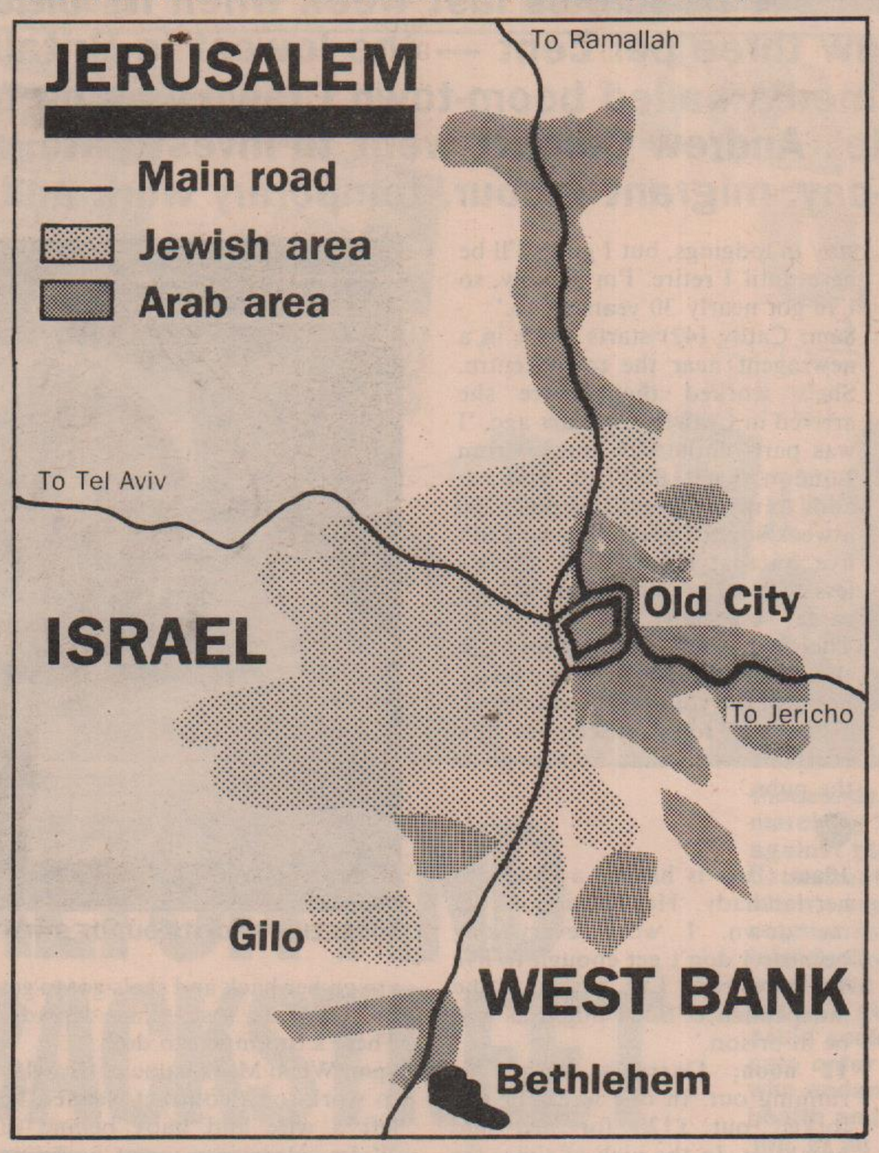
Pinhas Hayim boasted that the settlement would soon expand to 130 families in permanent housing, and invited us to come and join them. To listen to his sales pitch, you would think he was flogging time-share villas in Spain. We declined his invitation to join the jolly throng of Israeli oppressors.

The Jewish settlements, Israeli flags fluttering in the wind, are perched strategically on the hill-tops of the West Bank. From there they can keep a close eye on the Palestinian towns and villages in the valleys below. Leading settlers try to convince the *Tour Vaaleh* day-trippers that they get on well with their Palestinian neighbours. In Tekoa, El David's bigger parent settlement, legal professor Dr Eduardo Recanati joked with the tourists that his settlement did not even need a fence. He neglected to mention the rolls of razor wire on the hillside around the settlement. Recanati said it was so safe in Tekoa that he had even forgotten the ammunition clip for his sub-machine gun on last night's guard duty.



Daniel Nassim

WHILE ISRAELI TROOPS PROWL THE BORDER BETWEEN THE WEST BANK AND JERUSALEM'S OLD CITY, ISRAELI SETTLERS PUSH FURTHER INTO ARAB AREAS (SEE MAP)




After the Israelis occupied the West Bank in 1967, the site on which Tekoa now stands spent 10 years as an Israeli army camp. When the troops moved out, the armed Israeli settlers moved in. They got permission to take over as Israel's local agents from Shimon Peres, then the defence minister, and now the leader of the Israeli Labour Party who makes hypocritical noises to the Western press about protecting Palestinian rights.

It was a Labour government which began the process of settlement in 1967, establishing the Gush Etzion block in the centre of the West Bank and sponsoring a line of settlements along the Jordan valley — surrounding the Palestinian population of the West Bank with a ring of Jewish settlers. At the same time, fortified Jewish settlements sprang up to encircle Arab East Jerusalem. Since then, the Jewish-only suburbs of the ancient city have been extended to the edge of the Arab town of Bethlehem in the south and Ramallah in the north. 'Bethlehem is practically a suburb of Jerusalem' boasted tour-guide Bruce, a resident of Tekoa.

Gilo is the largest and southern-most suburb of Jerusalem, which looms over Bethlehem. According to Bruce, it was 'built on territory that was liberated from Jordanian occupation in 1967'. In other words, the land was occupied by Israel in 1967, and it has since been turned into a settlement to police the local Palestinians. One Gilo settler explained the purpose of the suburb: 'Gilo was built to serve as a buffer between Jerusalem and *Bethlehem and all that lies behind it.*' It sounded as if she was talking about some biblical plague arriving from Bethlehem; in fact she was referring to the Palestinian population of the southern half of the West Bank.

The settlement tour ends in Jerusalem. The Old City, also captured in 1967, is divided into four quarters: Armenian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim. Today Jewish settlers are invading the Old City as they have the West Bank proper.

**The Jewish quarter is strikingly different from the other areas.**

It is far more affluent than its neighbours. As you enter Israeli soldiers search your bags. But the Israeli settlers are not satisfied with their rich enclave. They are now spreading well beyond the confines of the traditional Jewish quarter. Several *Yeshivot* (religious seminaries) have been established in the Muslim quarter. Armed students, some in traditional black Jewish garb and others wearing Israeli army surplus anoraks, regularly beat their Palestinian neighbours. The Jerusalem settlers are defended by the paramilitary border police rather than the army. They patrol the narrow alleys wielding clubs and carrying automatic rifles.

## SIEGE

Another threat to Arabs has recently arrived in the Muslim quarter. Ariel Sharon, Israel's hawkish trade and industry minister, has bought a house in the area, setting an example to other settlers. Sharon's home is instantly recognisable by the *Menorah* (traditional Jewish candelabra) on the top — and by the electrified metal grille on the windows. His house-warming party was attended by scores of Israeli dignitaries including the prime minister Yitzhak Shamir. Since Sharon arrived, the Israelis have drafted an extra 300 police into the Muslim quarter. They maintain a permanent checkpoint next to Sharon's house, and take every opportunity to harass the local population.

The settlers, backed by the iron fist of the Israeli state, have altered the geography of the entire West Bank to suit their purposes. They have dubbed this area of Palestine as 'Judea and Samaria', and littered it with Israeli roads, Israeli towns, and exclusively Jewish tracts of land. All of the major Israeli political parties have supported the settlement programme in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. The Zionist state of Israel has annexed both areas in everything but name.

Yet the settlements can only survive as garrisons under siege. They are a testament to the imposed and unstable character of Israel's rule over the Palestinian people.

**A policy of changing place names and erecting barbed wire fences cannot suppress the Palestinians' desire to be free of their Israeli oppressors.**

As the battles of the last six weeks have shown again, the violence of the Israeli army and the settlers only sparks more determined resistance among the Palestinians. Jewish visitors invited to join the settlements may start out as tourists; but once esconced in the compounds, they join the ranks of semi-official Israeli terrorists.

# Jobs, but no homes

**THOUSANDS of unemployed people have 'got on their bikes' to Crawley from around Britain and Ireland. Hundreds more are arriving to fill the vacancies at Gatwick airport's second passenger terminal, due to open in March. But most of Crawley's new starters can hardly afford to keep a roof over their heads.**

**Jobs on offer include assembly work, driving, part-time cleaning and catering, and office temping. Few pay more than £120 a week gross, and many employers offer less than £75 after stoppages. Housing is scarce, and low-paid workers are forced to compete for accommodation with a smaller number of better-paid newcomers. House prices have spiralled so that anyone earning less than £12 000 a year doesn't stand a chance of a mortgage. Private rented accommodation is hard to come by and so expensive even well-paid air hostesses share five-to-a-house like students.**

**Council houses are like gold dust. The borough council's stock of 12 000 properties is full, and the Labour council refuses to defy Tory restrictions on new house building. All Crawley's workers need decent housing, whether they are newcomers or second or third generation 'Crawleyites'. But the council would rather close the gates to outsiders than lose sight of the 'neat and tidy new town' it always planned for.**

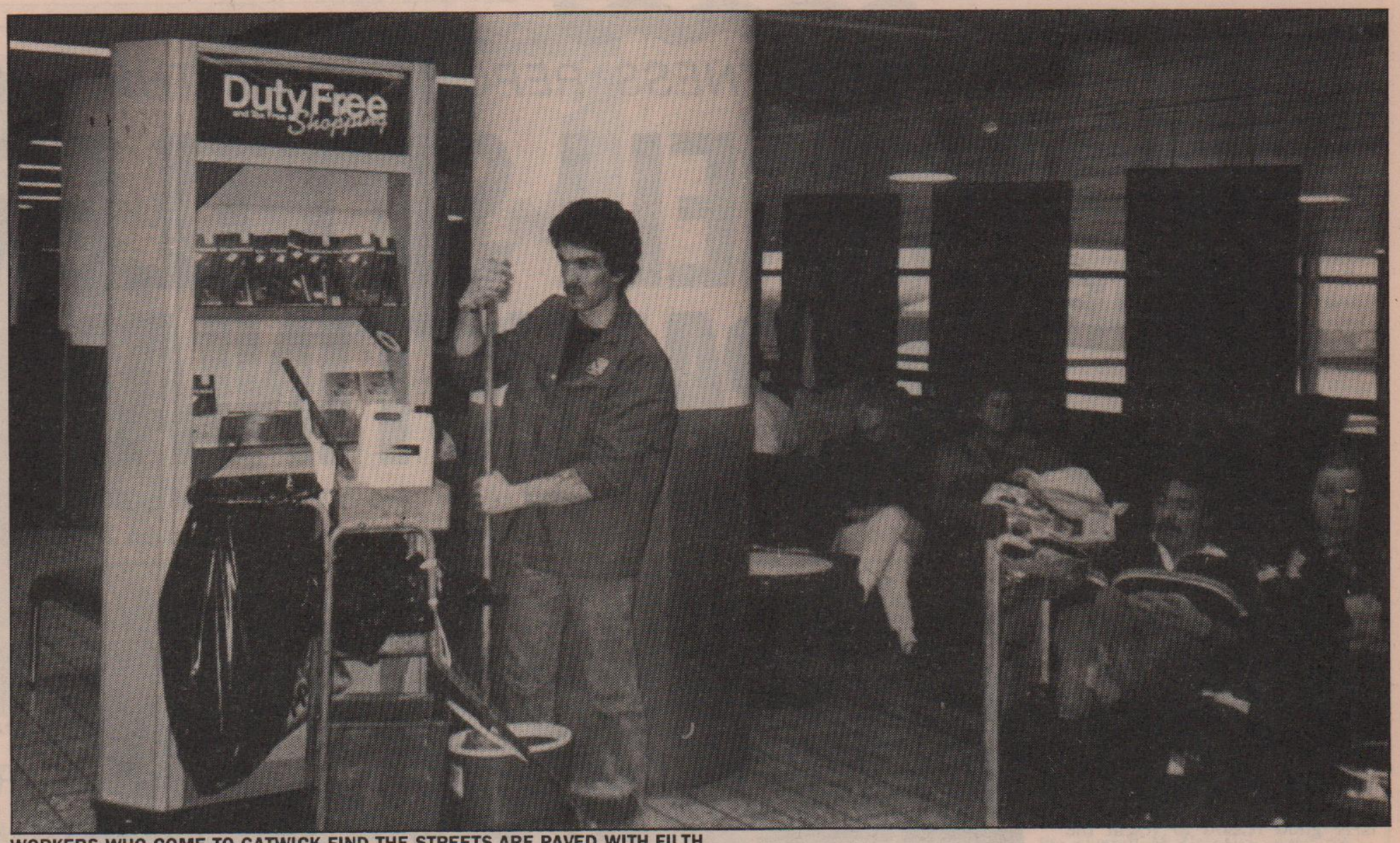
**Squeezed out of the private rented sector and barred from council housing, some 'immigrants' from the North are sleeping in their cars or in the departure lounge at Gatwick. Many more have been forced into expensive digs, which account for at least half their wages. In boom-town Crawley they can 'have a new job for a New Year'. But they can't have a home to go with it.**

**Crawley's 'success story' shows that even when it claims to be booming, the capitalist system wrecks the lives of the people who have to work in it. Crawley's mini-boom is likely to be shortlived in any case. The Tories claim it is proof of the resurgence of the British economy. In fact, the peculiarities of Crawley's accelerated growth confirm Britain's overall decline as an economic power.**

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**The expansion of nearby Gatwick airport, now the second busiest in the world, is the single most important factor in Crawley's mini-boom. It generated service sector jobs and drew new companies to the area. The fact that most of the new arrivals are involved in electrical engineering and electronics sounds impressively hi-tech. But many of Crawley's electronics companies are small outfits using a few low-paid workers to turn out cheap, consumer-oriented products such as hearing aids. Some of the more sophisticated ones are foreign-owned firms making up kits from other people's technology. MEL is the largest single employer in the area, producing up-market communications systems. It is a subsidiary of Dutch-owned Philips Industries. Most of the bigger British manufacturing companies survive on fat defence contracts handed out through the British government.**

**Crawley's burst of economic activity is dominated by the service sector, reliant on foreign technology, and propped up by British state spending. In all these respects, the Crawley mini-boom is like the rest of the British economy: weak and vulnerable to the impact of the approaching international economic recession.**




WORKERS WHO COME TO GATWICK FIND THE STREETS ARE PAVED WITH FILTH

Andrew Calcutt

*BEHIND THE HYPE ABOUT BOOM-TOWN CRAWLEY*

# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN 'ECONOMIC MIRACLE'

**Crawley in Sussex hit the headlines last week when its official unemployment rate dropped below three per cent — the lowest in Britain since the early seventies. The media hailed boom-town Crawley as proof of 'Thatcher's economic miracle'. Andrew Calcutt went to investigate, and found a grim picture of low-pay, migrant labour, temporary work and homelessness**

**12 midnight:** Steve is asleep on the overnight work bus from Liverpool, en route for Crawley. He, and all the other occupants, have just signed on for a two-week stint as cleaners at Gatwick airport. They will receive £2.50 an hour, and shared accommodation. It's hardly a living wage; but they are the lucky ones. There is a long waiting list of unemployed people who want to board this bus.

**2am:** George is not so lucky. After working all day as a builder's labourer in Crawley, followed by an eight-hour cleaning shift at Gatwick, he has kipped down in the airport lounge. For the third night running, the police move him on. Exhausted, George walks up and down the airport concourse. Two months ago he came to Crawley with the intention of getting enough money to start a business back home in the Midlands. Now he decides to give up both his jobs, and take the next train home.

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**4am:** Gloria wakes up when her baby starts crying. She is fed up with being trapped in the home, but there's only one council nursery in Crawley. 'There are plenty of jobs and plenty of child-minders. But I can't get a job that would pay enough for one.'

**7am:** Dave never wakes up without remembering the day he came down from Stockton-on-Tees: 28 October 1980. For more than seven years, he has lived in lodgings. As a handyman/forklift truck driver, he takes 'home' £100 a week — nowhere near enough to get a mortgage. 'The council don't want to know you. I don't want to stay in lodgings, but I guess I'll be here until I retire. I'm 36 now, so I've got nearly 30 years to go.'

**8am:** Cathy (42) starts work in a newsagent near the town centre. She's worked there since she arrived in Crawley 20 years ago. 'I was part of the new intake from London. I get £2.20 an hour. It adds to my husband's wages. £200 a week sounds good but you can't live on that round here. There's less to do here now than when I came, especially for the kids. There's nothing here except shoe shops. The dance hall is closed. Some of the youth clubs are closed. There's a roller disco but not everyone wants that. So they go to the pubs.'

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**10am:** Tina is having a row with her landlady. 'Her restrictions get me down. I work every day because I don't get enough to live on otherwise. I've earned some independence. But I might as well be in prison.'

**12 noon:** Darren's money is running out. In one week, he has forked out £120 for bed and breakfast. In the nick of time, the Citizens Advice Bureau provided him with a list of cheaper accommodation (£40 a week plus bills). He hopes he'll be fixed up by tonight. He will take a driving job at £2.75 an hour, even though his accommodation bills will eat up more than half his pay packet.

**2pm:** 'You don't get much and you work hard for it.' Teresa and Jackie have just started their cleaning shift at Gatwick. A new starter asks Jackie to take her downstairs to the office. Jackie says she's sorry but management



SQUEEZING PROFITS OUT OF SWEATED LABOUR

Andrew Calcutt

are on her back and she's got to get on. 'We've lost time already. There's too much to do.'

**4pm:** When Mark came to Crawley to work for a contract cleaner, he left a wife and baby behind in Wales. He wants to set up home here. But a council official has just warned him that 'this isn't the place to come.' There's no hope of a council house.

**6pm:** Gerry slams the door of the transit which has brought him back 30 miles from a Crawley building site to his bedsit in Kentish Town, North London. The site is not unionised, and Gerry works on the lump — £30 a day, cash in hand, no questions asked — and no compensation or benefit if he breaks a leg.

**8pm:** Ray and Tony are sitting in BJs bar on Crawley High Street. They came out with enough money for three drinks each. They say days off from their cleaning jobs at Gatwick are just 'dead days' in the lifeless boom-town.

**10pm:** 'Day and night, management always keep tabs on you. They even look to see if you give out extra milk sachets.' Carmen works for one of the fast food franchises in Gatwick village. She is tired of listening 'to announcements for people landing from exciting places, when I'm stuck here all night'.

**12 midnight:** George lies awake in bed in his parents' home in Birmingham. He knows he'll have to go back to Crawley soon. It's the only place where he can get work.

## BLACK PEOPLE AND THE LEFT

**SUPERINTENDENT** Bill Ganley made a successful bid for his 15 minutes with an 'off the cuff' remark about black people being responsible for 99 per cent of crime in the Harlesden area. Inevitably, much was said. But what was of most interest to me was the response of that mass of people called 'the black community' of which I am a member. Not surprisingly, it was not uniformly critical of what Ganley said because after all, we, 'the black community', are not uniform.

The assumption that we are all churned out with factory-preset politics and aspirations has served only to undervalue our capacity to achieve. The left and the right are constantly telling us what we must think. We are told our struggle is just part of a class struggle; we are told that we must unite; and we are told that we must be separate to survive.

◆◆

There are black people in the Conservative Party and black people in the Labour Party, and they all no doubt passionately believe that their choice is the right one. The Tories promote self-reliance and individuality. Their ethos appeals to many black people who feel that the Labour Party has merely fostered an attitude of dependence. Labour had, until recently, managed to present an image that led many black people to think that they were the only hope for us. But the Black Sections fiasco made it a little clearer that Labour could not help us. And of course for years many of us have not voted because we do not believe it makes the slightest bit of difference — we now have four black MPs yet the *Sun* is still allowed to print and Ganley can say what he likes about black people.

When we move away from party politics to 'street level', we find that things are not well. Those of us who work in so-called community groups are no more united than anyone else. Many such groups claim to speak for 'the black community'. Everywhere you turn there is a meeting or a campaign going on. Yet when I go I see the same faces, or no faces at all sometimes, looking a little more fed-up each time. There is a sense of despair haunting the left like a persistent ghost.

Some people say things are not as bad as that. If so, why are the murderers of innocent black people still serving in the police force and in No 10 Downing Street? Maybe people just do not care anymore. Maybe most people feel that all they can do is look after number one. Or maybe the left needs to take a long, hard look at what it believes in and how it goes about getting its message across.

**David**
**North-west London**

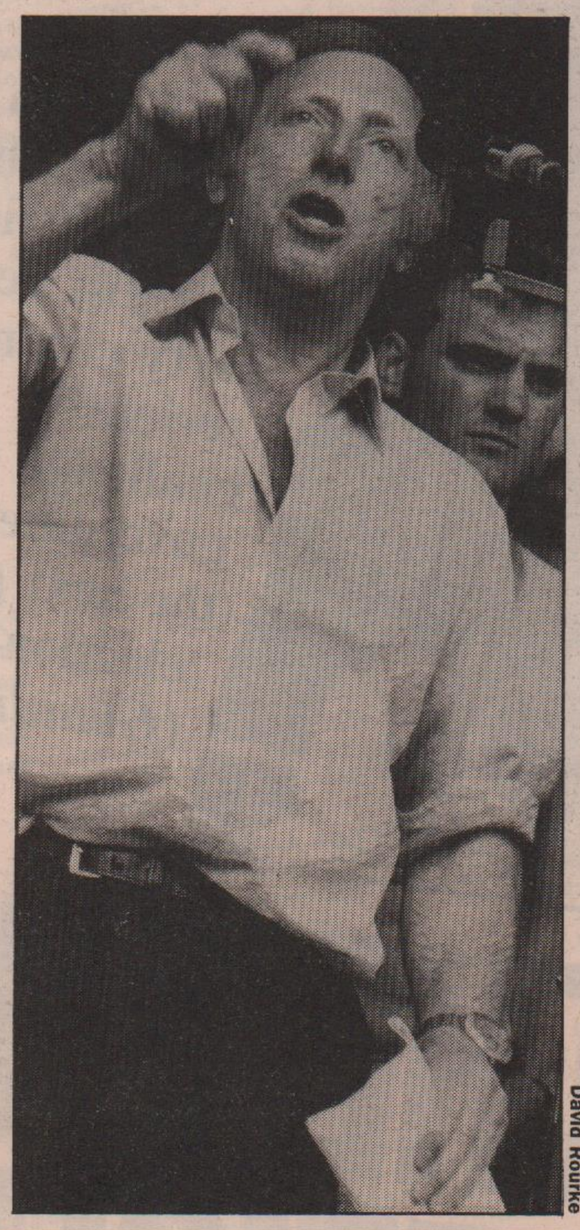
# SCARGILL: 'OUR ONLY OPTION'

**BRITISH COAL** and the UDM are doing everything to disrupt the NUM election At Bolsover they have forced us to hold the ballot in the bus shelter. At Cotgrave we have been pushed out of the foyer, whereas the UDM are still allowed to ballot at the pit.

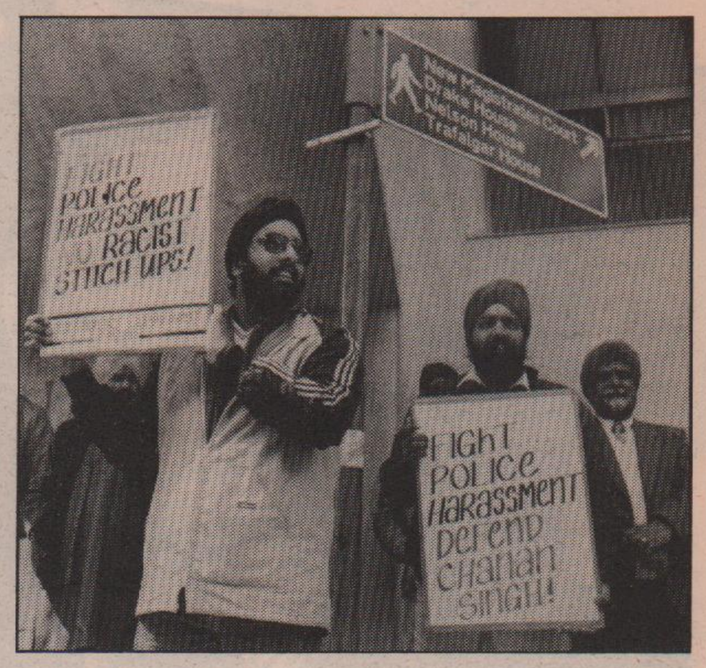
I agree with your call for a vote for Scargill. It is the only option for the Notts lads who stuck with the strike to the end. Scargill will win easily in Notts because all of us in the NUM are committed. We know he's been beaten by management, and they know it too. Yet if we voted for Walsh that would be saying that everything we've done in the past was wrong.

Scargill was put in with a huge majority (70.3 per cent). He promised everything and the rank and file believed it. But in the next ballot, on pay, Scargill was defeated, mainly due to an 80 per cent vote against him in Notts. If Scargill had got the support it would have been like Saltley Gates — we could have lived off the reputation for 10 years. So it is not Scargill's fault that we lost out. It is the fault of the membership. I hate to blame miners, but they are not the praetorian guard. Some bottle out when it comes to the crunch.

**Dave**
**Cotgrave pit**



David Rourke




David Rourke

## CHANAN SINGH WINS

**I AM** writing to tell you about the successful outcome of a campaign covered in the pages of *tns* last year, and supported by members of Workers Against Racism in Bristol.

Two years ago there was a fight between myself and my brothers and a group of racists, which resulted in a number of serious injuries. Typically, no charges were brought against the racists. But my father, Chanan Singh, was charged with malicious wounding. There was no proof that he was present at the incident, but as leader of the Sikh temple he was implicated on the assumption that Sikhs carry ceremonial swords — to the pub!

After two years of great distress and expense, and a lot of campaigning by the Sikh community, the Campaign Against Racist Laws and Workers Against Racism, the case was finally thrown out of court before Xmas. There wasn't enough evidence for the trial to last more than a few hours — let alone the week-long proceedings which the police were eagerly anticipating.

I wish success to others in their campaigns against racism.

**Shamshair Singh**
**Bristol**

## SPYING ON THE HOMELESS

**I READ** in *tns* recently of Camden council's repatriation of homeless Irish families. Since then, I have learnt that Lambeth council is deploying special 'snoop squads' to visit bed and breakfast hotels late at night (10pm-12 midnight) or early in the morning (5-7am). Their task is to check that rooms which the council is paying for are being slept in by the homeless person(s) they've been allocated to. If a room is found unoccupied, the booking is cancelled. Questions are asked later.

Meanwhile, the people concerned are on the streets again, looking for accommodation.

This policing by council officials is another attack on the homeless by yet another 'caring' council. No doubt Lambeth councillors would justify it by saying that their budget is being cut and that they have to ensure that money spent is well-spent. But in colluding with the Tories against homeless people, they are showing us what they really are — Tory stooges.

**Health visitor**
**South London**

## EXPOSE TOKENISM

**YOUR** paper has a record of pointing out that token left-wing gestures at best do no good and at worst create the space for a backlash. In the context of the *Clause 28* attack on lesbians and gays, you should point out that the shortcomings of lifestyle politics/positive images and all that have allowed the right to make gains among working class people.

In the past, you have argued that just because the Tories say one thing, it does not mean we have to say the opposite. It is still the case that fighting for lesbian and gay rights means taking on the self-obsessed left as well as the raving right.

**Christopher**
**Crouch End**



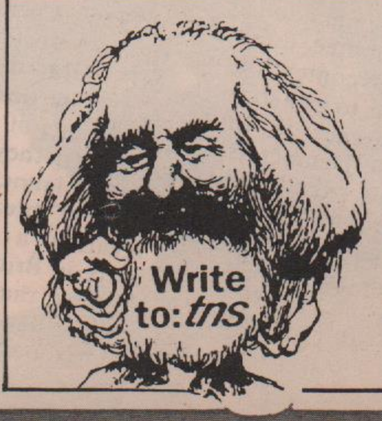

Pandora Anderson

## ALTON AND BACKSTREET ABORTION

**AT Fight the Alton Bill meetings, a number of women have opposed David Alton on the grounds that his Bill would mean that women will be forced to return to backstreet abortions. The prospect of untold agony in some grimy basement is a frightening one. But the fear of backstreet abortions does nothing to counteract the popular idea that women are best as mothers, and that anything else they do should play second fiddle to that role. Even if we managed to get thousands of people marching in sympathy against the return of backstreet abortions, Alton's supporters could counter this by introducing more repressive legislation 'for our own good', eg, they could seek to place a care order on any woman who endangers her own health and threatens the 'life' of an unborn fetus. It may sound far-fetched, but in California today that is what the right are trying to do.**

**If we don't go on to the offensive and convince people that women should have the right to control their own fertility, society, and especially doctors, will make it extremely hard to achieve abortions up to 18 weeks, let alone 28 weeks.**

***Suke Carey***
***Oxford***




**Write to *tns***
***BCM JPLTD,***
***WC1N 3XX***

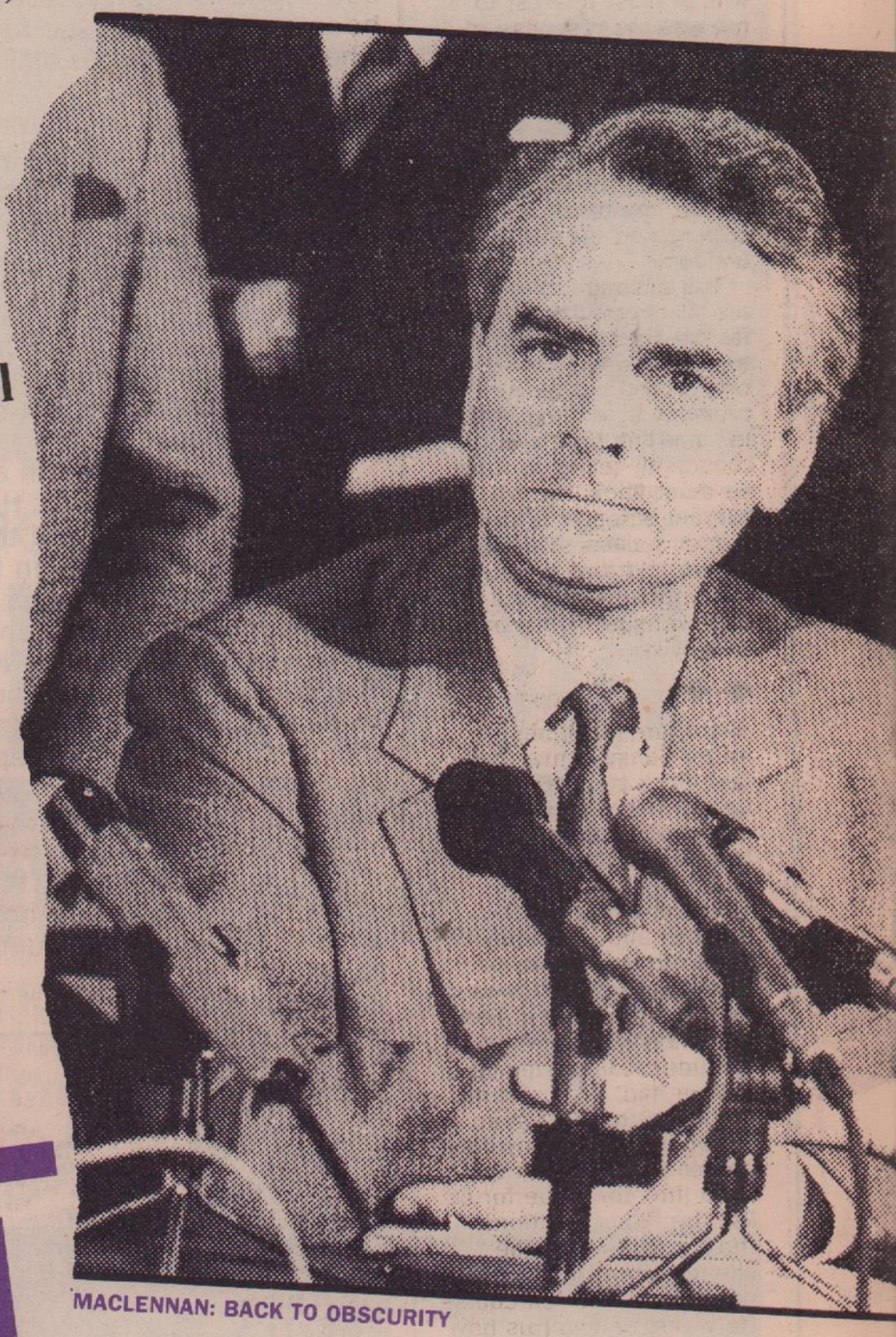


STEEL: LIGHTWEIGHT AND LOSER

**'Yesterday's chaotic events...bode ill for the emergence of a convincing opposition to third-term Thatcherism.' (*Independent*)**

**'It is hard to see how any merged, cobbled up, or indeed how any defiantly separatist centre party can now seriously challenge for government in the next general election.' (*Guardian*)**

**'As things now stand government can reasonably forward to a fourth term, the only serious oppos coming from within its ranks.' (*Financial T*)**



MACLENNAN: BACK TO OBSCURITY

## ALLIANCE IN CRISIS, LABOUR IN LIMBO

# THE END OF THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

**In a common mood of despondency and ill-co exasperation at the extraordinary ineptitude o leaders David Steel and Robert Maclennan, t writers of Britain's most influential dailies las pronounced the merger project a dead duck. Mike Freeman assesses the significance of the demise of the Alliance**

The leaders of the Liberal and Social Democratic parties have worked feverishly since Thursday to rescue their merger project. But, as the *Guardian* observed, 'There aren't many second chances in politics.' The policy document 'Voices and Choices for All', drawn up for the proposed new party and approved by David Steel and Robert Maclennan, shocked many Liberals and some Social Democrats with its enthusiasm for Trident missiles and nuclear power, its suggestion that VAT be imposed on children's clothes, food, fuel and newspapers and its call for an end to mortgage tax relief. In a series of frantic meetings on Wednesday the document was rapidly abandoned and a special committee established to draw up a less contentious platform of platitudes to give some programmatic coherence to the 'Social and Liberal Democrats'. The proposed new name and constitution had provoked a split on the negotiating committee even before the major policy debacle. Steel and Maclennan are trying hard to cobble something together.

The substantial body of Alliance supporters in the media has already rallied to help resuscitate the merger project. But everybody agrees that the leadership careers of these two uncharismatic political lightweights are likely to be shortlived. While the merger fiasco given a temporary boost to David Owen's anti-merger SDP rump, the electoral prospects of any of the centre party fragments, alone or in combination, now appear dim.

### FINISHED

Black Wednesday marked the culmination of trends towards the disintegration of the Alliance since its poor performance in last June's general election, when its share of the vote fell from 25 per cent in 1983 to 23 per cent and it returned to Westminster with its number of MPs reduced from 27 to 22. We can draw three conclusions from the events of the past six months.

First, they confirm that the project launched by the Alliance in 1981 of 'breaking the mould' and creating a new middle ground force in British politics is finished. Second, the demise of the Alliance shows that the strategy of reviving the Labour Party by turning it into an 'SDP Mark II', or by pursuing the quest for pacts or deals with the Alliance, is doomed. Third, the woeful ineffectiveness of all the mainstream opposition parties confirms the urgency of building a real opposition to the Thatcher regime as it pushes its offensive ahead on every front.

**The Alliance has proved a fairly shortlived political phenomenon.**

As a formal pact between the Liberals and the Social Democrats it lasted from 1981 to 1987, but its origins go back to the mid-seventies. In the two general elections of 1974 the Liberals won 19 and 18 per cent of the popular vote, a dramatic advance on their seven per cent share in 1970, which had been a typically poor post-war performance. After four years of Edward Heath's Tory government, many traditional Conservative voters registered their protest by voting Liberal. The SDP emerged out of the tensions that mounted in the Labour Party through the late seventies and erupted after its 1979 defeat. As the left consolidated its position in the party, the right was thrown on the defensive as a result of the unpopularity of the Labour government's public spending cuts and wage controls. The affinity between the Labour right and the Liberals was demonstrated in the Lib-Lab pact in 1977 and 1978, through which David Steel helped to keep James Callaghan in office.

After 1979 the Labour right took much of the blame for the cuts, for the industrial unrest of the 'winter of discontent', and for letting Margaret Thatcher into Downing Street. Under the leadership of Tony Benn, the left stepped up the pressure on the Labour Party machine. When the left succeeded in getting its constitutional reforms through at conferences in 1980 and 1981, David Owen, Shirley Williams and Bill Rodgers — all former Labour ministers — linked up with Roy Jenkins, the most senior figure from the earlier Wilson administrations, who now returned from a spell as president of the EEC, to launch the SDP. The 'Gang of Four' rapidly joined David Steel's Liberals in a provisional electoral pact which was consolidated as the 1983 general election approached. Backed by a sympathetic media and encouraged by by-election successes, the Alliance won a share of the vote just two per cent lower than Labour's in 1983. The prospects for a major breakthrough at the next election appeared promising.

In the event the Alliance promise failed to materialise. Despite a spectacular by-election victory for the SDP in Greenwich only a few months before the 1987 election, which fuelled speculations about a major realignment of British politics, when June came the Alliance was squeezed between the two old parties. The votes had hardly been counted before Steel and Owen started a public squabble about the way forward for the Alliance and plunged both parties into a period of protracted internal strife. The result has been a split in the SDP and the merger talks between the remains of the

SDP and the scarcely less fractious Liberals that culminated in Black Wednesday. Of the original 'Gang of Four' only Owen and Williams remain in active politics — and they are bitter enemies on opposite sides of the SDP split. Maclennan emerged from 25 years of obscurity as a right-wing Labour MP to fill the gap left by the departing Owen last summer. He seems set for an early return to his former low-profile role.

**The Alliance was a product of the impact of the early phase of the recession on the British middle classes.**

## CLING

It expressed the response of many professional, managerial and white-collar workers to the emergence of economic insecurity, social polarisation and class conflict. These sections of society disliked the policies of austerity and confrontation first attempted by Heath in the seventies, and pursued with much greater consistency and determination by Thatcher in the eighties. They also rejected what they regarded as the militant extremism of the Bennite left in the Labour Party.

In face of cuts in expenditure on welfare services, rising mass unemployment, violent strikes and inner-city riots, many middle class people sought to cling on to the policies and methods that had prevailed in the years of post-war expansion and stability. Their heroes were Keynes and Beveridge, the inspirers of the welfare state, both Liberals whose programme was taken over by Labour and accepted for 30 years by the Tories. In the crisis-ridden seventies Thatcherite Tories began to question the post-war consensus and turned to the dogmas of monetarism, while the Bennite left promoted the more radical state interventionism of the Alternative Economic Strategy. The Liberals, the Labour right and then the SDP tried to cling on to old orthodoxy.

## DEAD-WEIGHT

For all their claims to be radical innovators, the founders of the SDP had a remarkably old-fashioned outlook. Their early wrangle with the Labour Party over their decision to name their think-tank after the historian RH Tawney, whose legacy many Labour politicians regarded as their own, revealed their deep roots in the same dead-weight tradition. Unfortunately for them, they lacked the secure base of electoral support that has kept the Labour Party going, despite its decaying roots.

**The problems of policy that disrupted the merger process last week are not simply the results of personality conflicts, but go back to the emergence of the SDP in the seventies.**

The right-wing Labour politician and writer Anthony Crosland formed a link between Keynes and Beveridge and today's SDP. In his influential writings in the fifties, Crosland redefined socialism to mean acceptance of the capitalist system, rejection of class and a woolly commitment to freedom, equality and compassion. In the climate of expansion that prevailed in the post-war decades, he believed in expanding public spending and he rejected wage controls and anti-union legislation. Yet as a minister in the Wilson governments in the seventies, Crosland came around to accepting all these measures. When he finally abandoned resistance to Denis Healey's welfare cuts in 1976 he declared that 'this is nonsense, but we must do it.' Owen and Maclennan and the rest have tried to adapt Crosland's pragmatic approach to the even more difficult climate of the eighties.

Owen's classic formulation of the SDP programme as embodying 'toughness and tenderness' was an attempt to adjust the politics of the fifties to the conditions of the eighties. On the one hand, Owen was keen to appeal to voters influenced by the values of 'popular capitalism', by displaying a robust commitment to the free play of market forces. On the other, he wanted to appeal to traditional Labour sympathies for the caring services. But the image of the good doctor as a composite of Thatcher and Kinnock lacked conviction. The SDP's 'social market' policies appeared irrelevant to both capital and labour.

It was the strain of trying to reconcile a commitment to capitalism with a concern for ordinary people that created such difficulties for the team which drafted 'Voices and Choices for All' last week. The effect of nearly nine years of Thatcher rule has been to shift the terms of this debate decisively to the advantage of the capitalist camp. The feeble Maclennan has been under particular pressure to deter any further defections to the Owen camp by showing that he can be even tougher than the doctor. Hence the thrust of the document was to show that the new party would not hesitate to take harsh measures in the interests of British capitalism. At the same time, it included all the token references to decentralisation and popular participation that are required to appease the community activists on the more radical wing of the Liberal Party.

**'Tough and tender' became vicious and vacuous and the document had to be abandoned.**

## DIVERGING

The policy problems of the Alliance reflect the instability of its base of electoral support. One recent survey shows that Alliance voters are concentrated in the salaried (professionals and managers) and in the intermediate classes (clerical and sales workers and foremen) (Anthony Heath and Sarah K McDonald, 'Social Change and the Future of the Left', *Political Quarterly*, September/December 1987). But these are heterogeneous social groups with often sharply diverging interests and attitudes.

Many Alliance supporters are public sector professionals, such as teachers, lecturers, local government workers, who are usually trade union members and also own their own homes. The outlook of these people tends towards the 'tender' aspect of Owen's policies and may well be in line with some of the more radical views of the Liberals on issues such as nuclear weapons, nuclear power, community politics. Many other Alliance voters work in the private sector, in industry and services, and are unlikely to be trade union members. Their views tend towards the 'tough' end of the Owen spectrum, especially on matters such as the economy, defence, and trade union legislation.

## TENSIONS

While both Labour and the Tories have heartlands of electoral support, the Alliance lacks a strong base of support in any social class. Its supporters may be alienated from the other parties, but they have little to unite them — and the Alliance has failed to project a single unifying policy theme. The social tensions in the Alliance are evident in the contrasting character of their activists. Rosie Barnes, MP for Greenwich, a successful public relations consultant and an abrasive Owenite, typifies the yuppie image of the SDP. It is difficult to see much common ground between her and Michael Meadowcroft, former Liberal MP in Leeds and a prominent figure in the merger talks. He is a veteran community activist with sympathies for nuclear disarmament and British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

**The Alliance has reached the end of the road because the British establishment does not at present need a Tory Party Mark II and because Owen and Steel have failed to displace Labour as a force that can win the support of the working class.**

The British middle classes lack the cohesion necessary to sustain a centre party like the Alliance. The effect of continuing economic instability has been to intensify the polarisation along class lines which originally provoked the emergence of the Alliance. The major beneficiaries of this process have been the Tories, who have dominated British politics over the past decade largely because of the ineptitude of the contenders for the title of opposition party. However, Labour too has benefited from the alienation of increasing numbers of voters from the Tories in circumstances where the Alliance failed to win their allegiance. This ensured that Labour survived last June as the major opposition party.

## PINK

'You can win an election with a pink flag and you can win an election with a pink rose, but you cannot win an election with an ear trumpet.' Thus spoke Tony Benn last week, commenting on the launch of Kinnock's 'Labour listens' campaign. As a matter of fact, Kinnock conclusively demonstrated last June that a pink flag and pink rose and a slick campaign are not enough to win an election. Yet the 'Labour listens' events are another stage on the Labour leadership's drive to prolong June's disastrous attempt to win support for Labour by making the party more acceptable to middle class public opinion.

More than six months after the election defeat Labour politicians can take no great satisfaction from the demise of the Alliance because their entire strategy is based around adopting Alliance-type policies. In intellectual Labour circles the post-election debate still centres on the terms of any future pact with the Alliance (see Bob Jessop and others, 'Popular Capitalism, Flexible Accumulation and Left Strategy', *New Left Review* 165, September/October 1987). The collapse of the Alliance can only come as something of a disappointment to Labour's myopic strategists.

## RANCOROUS

As long as Labour politicians are preoccupied with drawing up their own version of 'Voices and Choices' — something similar is likely to emerge from the policy review now in progress — then the pundits are right that the only effective parliamentary opposition to Thatcher will come from the Tory backbenches and the house of lords. The only alternative on offer from the left is John Prescott's rancorous tour of the country campaigning for the deputy leadership against Roy Hattersley by offering cut-price party cards to union members. This seems unlikely to generate the sort of mass resistance to the government that is so desperately needed.

This is how we assessed the prospects for the Alliance shortly after it was formed:

**'The vagaries of the British electoral system may give the SDP-Liberal Alliance some short-term prospects. But the dynamics of the class struggle in Britain will soon consign the SDP to the dustbin of history.' (*the next step*, November 1981)**

Our prognosis has been fully vindicated by events. The vigorous implementation of a coherent capitalist programme by successive Thatcher regimes has drastically eroded the middle ground on which the Alliance tried to found a new party. The fact that the Labour Party has decisively abandoned its working class base, in an attempt to revive its electoral fortunes on similar foundations to the Alliance, means that we can extend our grim prognosis to Labour.

## RESISTANCE

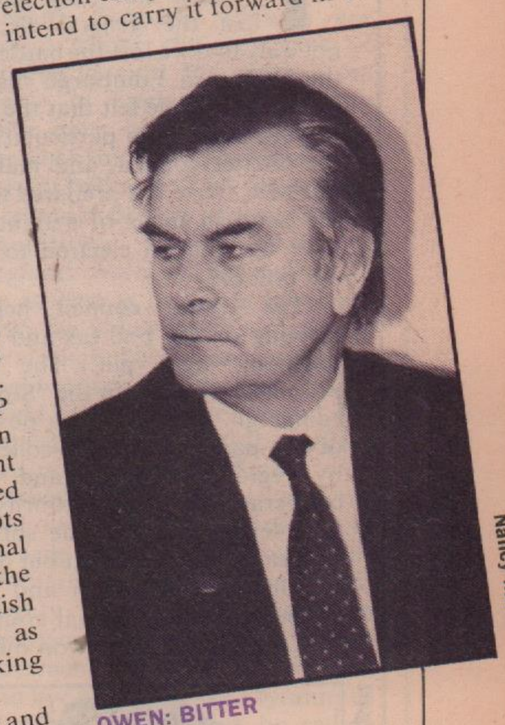
At a time when trends towards recession are accelerating throughout the capitalist world, further class polarisation is inevitable. Yet the traditional party of the British labour movement has rejected any attempt to challenge the capitalist system from the point of view of the working class. It has abandoned any concern to represent working class interests in favour of an appeal to the middle classes. Labour may survive as an SDP Mark II, and it may even win an election if some major accident befalls the Tories. But it has moved too far from its working class roots to be able to play its traditional role as mediator between the labour movement and the British establishment. Labour's days as the party of the British working class are over.

The collapse of the Alliance and the incapacity of Labour to offer any resistance to the Tories underline the urgency for a real opposition movement. The broad lines such a movement must follow are clear. At a time of capitalist crisis it must be clearly founded on an anti-capitalist programme, one which articulates the connection between resistance to attacks from employers and the government and the struggle for a better form of society.

**The potential social base of such a movement is also clear — the working class.**

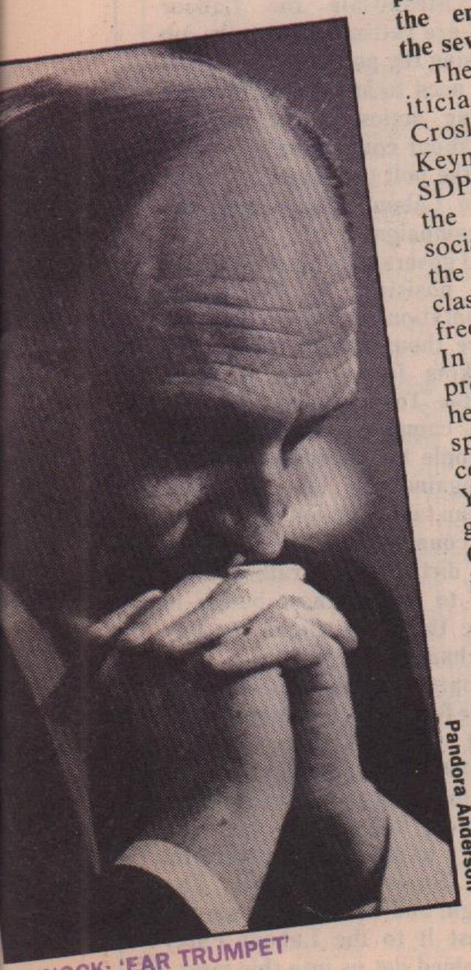
Although there are significant divisions and conflicts within the working class, which must be combated as a priority, the tendencies towards crisis also expose the common interests of workers in fighting the capitalist system. When we have built a powerful working class movement, then we can sway the middle classes to our side, on our terms. Any other strategy makes the working class the victim of the notorious instability of the middle classes and their tendency towards compromising with capitalism.

The Revolutionary Communist Party was founded in the same year as the Alliance. We celebrate the demise of the Alliance this week and look forward to the demise of the Labour Party. But finally defeating Labour is a task we cannot leave to either the incompetence of the Labour leadership or even less to its enemies on the right. This is a task we must accomplish ourselves in the process of building a working class alternative to Labourism. We began this task through *The Red Front* initiative in the general election campaign in 1987, and we intend to carry it forward in 1988.



OWEN: BITTER

Nancy Morton



KINNOCK: 'EAR TRUMPET'

Pandora Anderson



Before Xmas left wingers in Edinburgh held a conference which agreed to campaign for five demands:
1. Regional Labour parties to instruct their councils to refuse to cooperate in its implementation;
2. District Labour parties to instruct their councils to refuse to cooperate in its implementation;
3. All Labour councils to refuse to prosecute non-payers;
4. All trade unions to refuse to cooperate in its implementation;
5. Tenants' groups, anti-poll tax unions, residents' associations, community groups and Labour parties to organise locally for collective non-payment in their areas and to urge non-collection by the councils.

Labour councillor Tony Kinder explained the campaign's approach.

# *TWO VIEWS FROM THE SCOTTISH LEFT* HOW TO SMASH THE POLL TAX

**Tony Kinder is a Labour member of Lothian regional council, involved in a new left-wing initiative against the poll tax. Derek Owen is vice-convenor of the Scottish Federation of Socialist Teachers, and a member of the Smash the Poll Tax Campaign initiated by RCP supporters in Glasgow last year. Carol Taggart spoke to both about the way to stop the Tory tax**

'The conference on 13 December was called because not only had we lost the general election, not only had we lost the battle over the budget in Edinburgh district, but many people felt that the local Labour leadership particularly on the district council, and many of our MPs, were not prepared to use the Scottish locus of a fightback after the general election to beat the poll tax.

'The trades council held a meeting on the poll tax and three positions were put. The right proposed support for the "Stop It" campaign. The left put a position of non-payment and non-collection by regional councils and non-cooperation by local authority and civil service unions. The soft left supported non-payment but didn't call for non-collection and non-cooperation by regional councils. The soft-left position won out.



Carol Taggart

TONY KINDER

'Lothian regional council is recruiting people to collect the poll tax and to prepare the poll tax register between April and October. The existing position of the Lothian regional Labour Party and therefore of the regional council Labour group is not one that we should oppose the collection of the poll tax. No member of Lothian regional council supports the poll tax. What divides us is how we should defeat it. But there is also no member of the Lothian regional council Labour group who would go against the instructions of the regional Labour Party. So the real debate isn't within the group. It is in party branches and constituencies. That is the level of people we have to persuade that it is possible to successfully mount the campaign not to pay, not to collect and not to cooperate with the poll tax.

'When the regional Labour Party, against my best wishes, decided to go along the road of the first stages of implementing the poll tax, I was not very happy. We had the choice. We could either vote against the Lothian regional Labour Party, which in my mind meant resigning from the council because I'm a delegate to implement their policy; or we could live to fight another day. So sure am I that we will build up a mass campaign of opposition to defeat the poll tax that I'm prepared to stay as a member of the council and to fight another day.

'We think we've been very successful. There is more and more support for the principles around which we organised the conference. I think a further example of the success we're having is that the right wing in the Labour Party feel the need to manufacture a local-based "Stop It" campaign, the purpose of which is to head off meaningful organisation against the poll tax.

## CUDGELS

'We don't have any petit-bourgeois impatience with the pace at which the working class movement picks up the cudgels in order to fight and win the battle. We recognise that, with the lack of confidence prevailing among many sections of the working class, both in work and out of work, what people need is their confidence built up so that they can successfully defeat the poll tax. That isn't done by merely raising the banner of illegality and saying please flock to it. People have got to believe they can actually win on the question of the poll tax, and that takes a whole process of learning how it is possible to win.

'The left in Edinburgh, in posing a strategy that could effectively stop the poll tax, is calling the tune for the March Scottish Labour Party conference. Every delegate knows that unless we openly advocate a campaign of non-payment, non-collection and non-cooperation then the poll tax will go ahead. It is my view that as the campaign against the poll tax increases in strength and looks more and more likely of winning then so will Lothian regional Labour Party reassess its position and perhaps advise members of the council to alter the position towards one of non-cooperation and therefore non-collection of the poll tax. But these are all battles that exist in the future and I have every confidence that we will arrive at the position where the poll tax is not implemented in Lothian region.'

The Smash the Poll Tax Campaign was set up last October. The three principles of the SPTC are:
1. Break the Tory law: we must first and foremost refuse to comply with poll tax legislation, and defend those harassed by the state for non-implementation or non-payment;
2. A working class campaign: the campaign must be based on working class resistance. It will involve community groups, the unemployed, housewives and trade unionists in united working class action against the poll tax;
3. United action by council workers and the community: council workers are in a position to block implementation of the poll tax, if they have the support of the rest of the working class who will have to pay it.

Derek Owen spoke about the campaign and opposition to the poll tax in Glasgow.

'Non-payment and non-implementation of the tax are necessary to defend the working class. The Smash the Poll Tax Campaign believes that only action by the working class itself can stop the poll tax. The approach of Tony Kinder's group, focused on lobbying Labour Party bodies, cannot beat the Tories.

'The official Labour Party campaign, "Stop It", is a token gesture which exists not to stop the poll tax but to stop effective action against it. At a recent trade union meeting in Glasgow the proposer of a motion to affiliate to "Stop It" concentrated on condemning the "irresponsibility" of calling on Nalgo to "incite" its members to take illegal action against the poll tax.

'The Labour Party's Scottish spokesman, Donald Dewar, says he doesn't want to commit the party to a campaign of non-payment because of the possible consequences of it for jobs and services and the potential hardship which could come for individuals who end up in debt. This is just a hypocritical excuse for doing nothing. If the Labour leadership is so concerned about causing hardship to council workers and the community, then why are Scottish Labour councils cutting jobs and why are they setting up the machinery to impose the Tory poll tax on Scottish people?

'Strathclyde regional council has just finished advertising for officers to set up and maintain the poll tax register. The administrative officers who will run the canvass are required to be "of determined but tactful disposition". If people don't cooperate with the Labour council's "tactful" snoopers, the police will be used to back them up. We cannot expect Labour leaders who will use the law against workers like this to take a stand against the poll tax legislation.



Carol Taggart

DEREK OWEN

'Then there's the soft left. The Labour Coordinating Committee held a conference on the poll tax in Glasgow on 16 January. One item on the agenda was the "feasibility of civil disobedience via a non-payment campaign". Edinburgh district councillor Paolo Vestri, who chaired the conference, argued that the "threat of non-payment adds to the problems of implementation". But the LCC can't scare the Tories off by making an empty "threat" to support non-payment. The left in the councils tried a similar bluff over rate-capping; the Tories called their bluff and the opposition crumbled. The LCC have already refused to endorse non-implementation of the tax by regional councils, which signals that they are not serious about effective action.

'The fact is that the Labour leadership and the councils have proved willing to carry out the cuts and implement the poll tax procedures at the Tories' bidding. They have put the Labour Party's "responsible" reputation and its position in local government before the interests of working class people. Tony Kinder's group has recognised some of the problems with Labour's existing approach. But they are still bogged down in the old ways. The focus of Kinder's group is on pressurising the councils and the Labour Party. It is planning lobbies of a local government conference (at which the star attraction is Neil Kinnock), the Scottish Labour conference and Lothian regional council. This is a waste of time — and worse, it can only demoralise and demobilise working class opposition to the poll tax. Kinder says workers need to have their confidence rebuilt. But we cannot do that by turning them into a stage army, which stands around as spectators while the campaign centres on bureaucratic manoeuvres in the council chamber and the constituency meeting.

## RESIGN

'Tony Kinder says he is confident that the campaign inside the Labour Party will succeed eventually — in other words, "It'll be alright on the night." Meanwhile the Labour councils are getting on with the job of imposing the poll tax. My view is that we need to switch the focus to organising action in the working class. Labour councillors who want to stop the poll tax ought to resign from the Labour groups and help such a campaign.

'Local government workers are in a key position to block the implementation of the poll tax, and there are thousands of others who are looking for a way to avoid paying the Tory penalty. The left needs a campaign to argue with these people for coordinated direct action against the law. And that must mean taking action *against* the Labour councils who are doing the Tories' dirty work, rather than refusing to oppose these bodies in the hope that they might one day have a change of heart.

'The battle against the poll tax is not in the future. A campaign of non-payment will not materialise in April 1989, when the poll tax comes in. The time to organise resistance is now, before the Tories have the machinery in place. That is the aim of the Smash the Poll Tax Campaign, and we are not prepared to entrust it to the Labour Party which helped get us into this mess.'

SCOTS AGAINST THE TORIES

# 'NO MANDATE' MEANS NO ACTION

**Should we argue that the Tories have 'no mandate' in Scotland? In edited extracts from a new book, *Is There a Scottish Solution?*, Mick Hume and Derek Owen examine the consequences of this popular left-wing position**

The 'no mandate' argument arises out of the Tories' poor electoral performance in Scotland. Left wingers claim that this means that they have no right to implement their policies north of the border. In these circumstances, the argument continues, the only democratic alternative for Scotland is a devolved assembly. Devolution was supported by parties which won around three quarters of Scottish votes in June 1987.

**For the Labour Party, the 'no mandate' argument is a weak and dangerous ploy.**

Labour has not won a majority of English votes since 1951. Does this mean, ask the Tories, that Labour is admitting it had no mandate in England throughout the 11 years of Labour governments in the sixties and seventies? This embarrassing observation is one reason why the Labour leadership has fought shy of using the 'no mandate' argument in the past. Neil Kinnock and Donald Dewar are wary of relinquishing Labour's right to form a future British government on the strength of its Scottish seats for the sake of a majority in an Edinburgh assembly. The fact that many leading Labour figures have finally set aside their doubts and plumped for shouting 'no mandate' reflects their recognition that their party is unlikely to win power in Westminster in the foreseeable future. Thus for Labour, 'no mandate' is an sign of defeatism and pessimism. What does it mean for the Scottish working class?

## ARMCHAIR

The 'no mandate' argument is not really an argument at all. It is an assertion that most Scottish people don't much like Margaret Thatcher or many of her policies. It offers slogans for armchair anti-Tories, instead of strategies for action. 'The Tories have no mandate for the poll tax in Scotland,' declared a delegate at Labour's special Scottish conference in November. 'People in Scotland do not want it.' This is hardly news to the Tories; nor will it shake them from their course. They are not interested in what working class people want, and they cannot be shamed in this way into dropping policies which they consider necessary for British capitalism. Scottish workers can take up the 'no mandate' argument, turn their backs and refuse to recognise the Tories' right to govern. But Thatcher will go on governing regardless. The British establishment has never allowed pleas about mandates to interfere with its actions.

In recent years, left-wing opinion poll watchers have pointed out that a majority of British people opposed the siting of Cruise missiles, supported the existence of the Greater London Council, were against apartheid and thought that Britain should withdraw from Northern Ireland. Yet the government has welcomed the missiles, abolished the GLC, backed PW Botha's racist regime in South Africa and prosecuted the war in Ireland. The British ruling class only defers to 'the democratic wishes of the people' when it suits its purposes, or when it is forced to do so. The 'no mandate' approach of arguing that the Tories are not playing fair will not force them to do anything. They do not care about the rules, only about *who* rules. They will do whatever is necessary to ensure that they remain in control, whether they have a formal mandate or not.

## WORKPLACE

Take a workplace situation as an example. If an individual employer decides to make hundreds of workers redundant, and they vote to reject his scheme, he clearly has 'no mandate' to implement it. But he is unlikely to comply with the workers' wishes. He will fight them to force the sackings through, and if necessary bring in outside help from the police and courts to help him win. The workers cannot win by sitting at home saying 'we don't want it'. Their only hope is to organise to win outside support of their own to resist the employer's redundancy package. That is also the approach the Scottish working class needs to beat back the Tory government's attacks.

**Parroting 'no mandate' in response to each new Tory offensive reduces working class activists to echoing the existing state of public opinion, instead of mobilising militant resistance.**

'No mandate' is a slogan for no action. What if the Tories did have the left's treasured mandate, and had won 51 per cent of Scottish votes? Would that mean that socialists were obliged to submit to the poll tax, accept spending cuts and put up with the militarisation of the police? Our attitude to such formal expressions of democracy should match that of our enemies. Even if Thatcher won 90 per cent of the vote, socialists would still have a responsibility and a right to fight for the real interests of the working class.

The lack of responsiveness of the ruling class to the needs of Scotland is an argument for challenging the British state. Setting about that task is a far more positive use of workers' energies than pursuing the utopia of a mandate for our aims. In the immediate term, who gets what in society is decided by the struggle between classes, not on the basis of percentage points in a poll. The 'no mandate' approach threatens to waste an opportunity for Scots to give a lead to other workers.

Using the anti-Tory vote in Scotland as a justification for an assembly to administer local Scottish affairs amounts to a retreat from the field of battle. It means saying: 'We have the most coherent base of opposition to the Thatcher government; therefore we are going to opt out of the battle *against the Tories in Britain, and* concentrate on Scottish issues.' This is a shabby abdication of the role which recent events have given the Scottish movement in the struggle against the Tory government. It flies in the face of everything we should have learned about the way a group of workers can win.

**Scotland is not the only place in Britain with a proud tradition of militancy.**

Areas such as South Wales or Yorkshire can also claim to have led the British working class in important confrontations. Yet to win lasting gains, workers from the militant areas need to mobilise support from more moderate workers elsewhere. When militant areas have fought in isolation, they have often suffered defeat. The miners' disputes of 1972 and 1974, for example, were won through all-British action. Militants toured the country picketing and winning solidarity. In 1984, Yorkshire and Scotland were the first areas to declare the miners' strike official. But the failure to organise a rank and file campaign to fight for nationwide support helped to consolidate divisions among the miners, particularly in Nottinghamshire. The go-it-alone attitude of the militant areas helped to isolate them from moderate areas and undermined the potential for vital solidarity action. The result was that the strike failed to stop the national economy, the miners drifted back to work, and the union suffered a heavy defeat.

## ISOLATION

If the most left-wing regions of Britain adopted the 'no mandate' attitude and turned inwards to look after local matters, it would mean the best militants retreating into splendid isolation. Again, it is worth contrasting this to the approach of the British establishment. It is unimaginable that the ruling class would keep its strongest forces at home while battles raged elsewhere. When one part of its system is under threat, the state moves in to prop things up. During the miners' strike, the Tories did not leave the country coppers of the mining areas to battle alone; they sent their first-class thugs from the Metropolitan Police into Yorkshire, and moved the hard men from the Scottish cities out to the pit villages. The capitalists do not divide the power of their state into sectional or geographical pieces. They wield it as one weapon against the working class, and they always ensure that their sharpest blade is at the cutting edge. By contrast, the 'no mandate' approach of separating Scotland from British politics *means locking up our battle-*hardened Scottish brigades in their barracks, cut off from workers elsewhere.

The ruling class fears the prospect of fighting on more than one front at once. The Thatcher government has taken great care over the past nine years to pick out its targets and tackle them one at a time. The early introduction of the poll tax in Scotland, for example, is an attempt to limit the extent of opposition to this exploitative measure, by picking off the Scottish working class before imposing the tax in England and Wales.

**If we respond with arguments like 'no mandate' or 'Scotland is special', we walk into the Tories' divide-and-conquer trap.**

Many Scottish workers are cynical about the prospects of winning support for action from people in England, whom they think have been bought off by Thatcherism. But we should be wary of falling for Tory hype about a yuppie culture down South. Conditions in the North of England, Wales and the inner cities are at least as bad as in Scotland. Even the South-east is not merely the stronghold of estate agents and stockbrokers which the media would have us believe. Indeed, the majority of the British working class now lives in the South.

Many of these workers do vote Tory or Alliance. But the trend towards moderation among the Southern working class stems largely from their negative experience of the official labour movement. They are still workers, who live under the same tyranny as all those who survive by selling their labour-power. They are always just a week away from the dole and the breadline. It would be foolish to allow the image of relative prosperity to obscure the fact that every worker from Ipswich to Aberdeen shares an interest in challenging exploitation, whether they recognise it today or not. Let's not forget how recently the media assured us that young miners and their families were now too preoccupied with their mortgages, cars, and Spanish holidays to go on strike. Shortly afterwards those men and women became the shock troops of the fiercest class battle Britain had seen for 60 years.

## OPPOSITE

Slogans such as 'no mandate' mean Scottish workers turning their backs on the rest of Britain and standing alone. But Scots cannot afford to write off such a large and powerful group of potential allies as the English working class. Instead, activists from a militant area like Scotland need to develop a strategy which can win others over to the anti-Tory cause. 'No mandate' may sound good in speeches; but it can do nobody but the Tory splitters any good on the battleground of modern British politics.

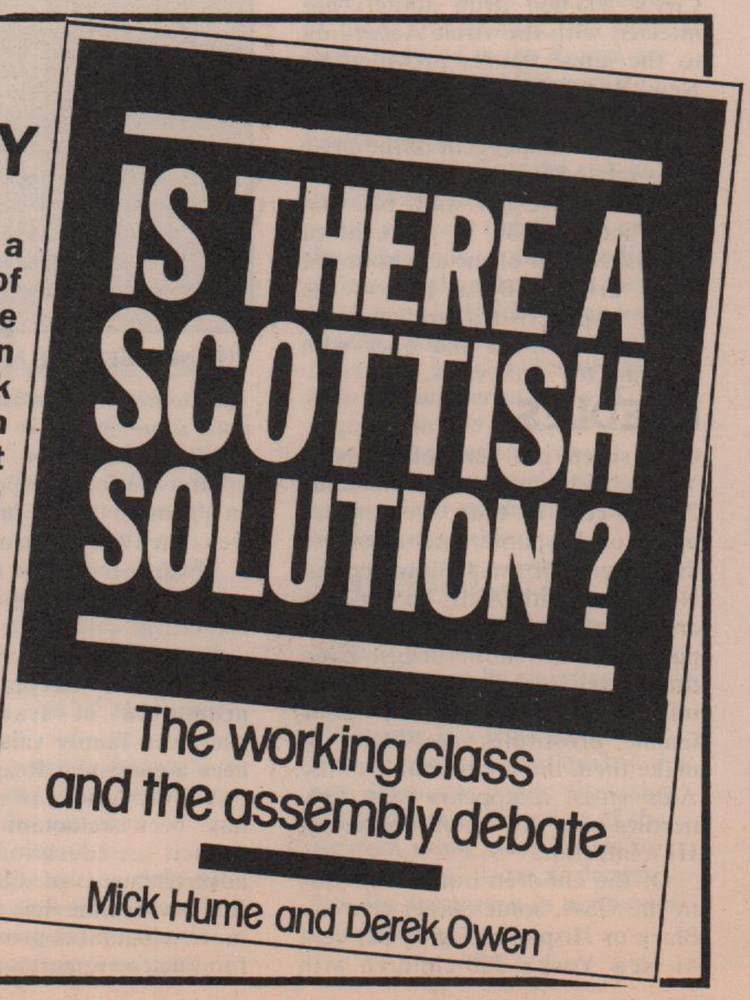
**The 'no mandate' argument is the precise opposite of the attitude which the Scottish working class needs.**

It is divisive, and a recipe for docility. Scottish people cannot afford a political leadership which sits back and repeats 'Scotland says no' while the Tories get on with imposing their policies. No matter what election results and opinion polls say, we do not accept that the ruling class has the right to exploit or oppress workers in any part of the British isles. Our objective should be to seek to maximise active opposition to the Tories on every front.


OUT ON FRIDAY

Can the campaign for a devolved assembly solve any of the serious problems facing the Scottish working class in Thatcher's third term? This book examines the arguments for an assembly from a Marxist perspective, and points out the problems with the campaign's approach. It identifies the best way for Scots to take on the Tories today.

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# PANICS AND AIDS ACROSS

## 'One in 61 New York babies born with Aids' typical of the media on both sides of the Atlantic. panic and Dr Michael Fitzpatrick heterosexual spread

In *War!* — a new US film release — a planeload of Americans crash on a Caribbean island that is being used as a training camp for international terrorists. The survivors soon learn of the terrorists' plans to send a special brigade of alluring men infected with Aids to 'spread their charms' among the unwitting US population. This may be the kind of sick fantasy to be expected from a low-budget outfit like Troma Films (which brought us the classic *Surf Nazis Must Die*). But in a country which has had an old B-movie actor for president for the past seven years, reality often mirrors bad cinema.

Not to be outdone, the American press scooped Hollywood with its recent allegation that Aids was originally spread throughout the USA by an 'international terrorist' of a type — a gay French-Canadian airline steward, Gaetan Dugas. *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Randy Shilts makes this claim in his new book, *And the Band Played On*. Apparently Dugas, dubbed 'patient zero', was identified by 40 of the first 248 Aids cases as the source. Shilts claims that Dugas continued to have an average of 250 sexual liasions a year until he died in 1984, in the full knowledge that he carried the contagious disease.

**Aids scare stories abound in the American media.**

Under the headline 'Aids bank bandit busted', Rupert Murdoch's *New York Post* recently reported the arrest of drug addict David Hodge, who was known for telling bank clerks that he had 'Aids and nothing to lose' while pulling off his record 29 bank jobs in six months. Again, the *Post* tells of the 'Killers in our midst', when three young brothers returned to their Florida school amid protesting parents. The most calculated shock stories, however, warn heterosexuals of the danger of contracting the Aids virus. Typical are the 'Samantha sweats it out' stories — Sunday magazine accounts of the worries of young white heterosexuals.

### 'DOOMED'

When Dr Harold Jaffe, chief epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control, told the third international conference on Aids last June that there were no signs of a major or rapid spread of Aids among heterosexuals he got virtually no press coverage. 'For most people,' said Jaffe, 'the risk of Aids is essentially zero. Is the disease going to sweep into the heterosexual population, like Africa? I don't see it.'

The *New York Times* put a small item on the speech on page 17; on its front page was the story of insurance companies' plans to reduce life assurance for those refusing to take Aids blood tests. The *New York Post* and the *New York Daily News* didn't bother to cite Jaffe at all, but did manage to report on the 'doomed dentist' who contracted Aids from a patient.

The *Los Angeles Times*, however, endorsed Jaffe's assessment:

'Aids is not spreading at the anticipated rate among non-drug using heterosexual Americans. As a consequence, there is a growing consensus among leading medical scientists that the threat of Aids to the wider population, while serious, has been exaggerated.'

### FACTS

What are the facts about Aids in the USA? There is undoubtedly a serious epidemic. Up to the end of 1987 nearly 50 000 Americans had developed full-blown Aids and half of these were dead. The USA contains more than 70 per cent of the world's reported cases. More than 90 per cent of US Aids sufferers are gay men and intravenous drug users. The rest include recipients of contaminated blood transfusions — mainly haemophiliacs — and infants of Aids carriers — mainly of drug users. The proportion of heterosexual cases *declined* between 1986 and 1987, from 6.8 per cent to 4.3 per cent.

**It appears that the *rate* of infection is slowing, both outside and within the high-risk categories.**

Screenings of millions of military applicants, blood donors and sexually active heterosexuals over two years showed no increase in the incidence of Aids (*Journal of Commerce*, 23 June 1987). According to the CDC, whereas New York and California have the highest incidence of Aids, New York ranks near the bottom in the growth rate of the disease. In October the CDC reported that the spread of the virus had slowed dramatically among homosexual men in San Francisco.

### POVERTY

The spread of Aids among blacks and Hispanics in poverty-stricken inner-city areas is a distinctive feature of Aids in America. The ghettos of New York and Los Angeles house recent immigrants from third world regions with significant numbers of Aids cases, such as the Caribbean. In addition the extreme poverty of US inner-city areas and the prevalence of drug abuse leads to public health conditions not far removed from those of the third world. Though they make up just 17 per cent of the population, blacks and Hispanics account for 39 per cent of the nation's Aids cases. Another chilling statistic is that one black dies in the USA of Aids every two hours (*Wall Street Journal*, 4 November 1987).

The shockingly high incidence of HIV antibodies (not Aids) in babies born in New York is closely related to the high level of drug abuse in the decaying inner-city areas. More than half of New York City's 200 000 drug addicts are infected with the virus. According to the latest figures provided by New York City's department of health, intravenous drug users now account for 53 per cent of the city's Aids-related deaths since 1982, while homosexual and bisexual men account for 38 per cent of deaths. Not all of those who shoot drugs are equally at risk — the more impoverished addicts who share needles are the ones who contract the Aids virus.

### NEEDLES

Only seven per cent of all New York's Aids cases are women, but 73 per cent of these women are black or Hispanic, and most are drug users. Of the 1200 women in New York with Aids, 90 per cent are either drug users or have sexual partners who shoot drugs. Even though venereal diseases and other infections picked up by poor female prostitutes are likely to make them more vulnerable to the Aids virus, it appears that dirty needles are the main avenue of HIV infection.

Of the children born with Aids in the USA, some 80 per cent are black or Hispanic. Eighty per cent of New York's 220 children with Aids are the offspring of a drug user.



THE NEW BEDSIDE MANNER FOR SUSPECTED AIDS VICTIMS IN THE USA

What has been the Reagan administration's response to Aids? In general the president has welcomed the panic about Aids as a diversion from controversies over Irangate and the financial crash.

**It has provided a convenient vehicle for stepping up the promotion of traditional all-American family values which has been a consistent Reagan theme.**

Yet the American establishment has been reluctant to endorse explicit sex education or the open advertisement of condoms. The Reagan regime has proved even more reluctant to provide adequate funding for research into Aids and for care for Aids victims.

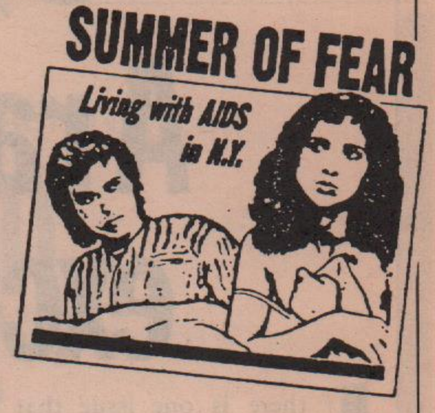
The administration's policy on Aids is widely recognised as being in chaos. The chairman of the president's Aids commission, Dr Eugene Mayberry, and the vice-chairman, Woodrow Myers, have both resigned, complaining about factional squabbling on the board of 13 that advises on the 'medical, legal, ethical, social and economic' implications of the disease. Civil rights and public health groups have filed law suits, charging that the commission does not represent those sections of American society which are currently bearing the brunt of the Aids epidemic.

Those campaigning for more government funds for Aids are often inclined to exaggerate the risk and thus to increase public anxiety. Yet they have undoubtedly exposed the cynicism of an administration which likes to stir the panic but refuses to finance research and treatment. Speculating that by 1991 New York hospital costs of treating Aids will run to $2 billion a year, a *New York Daily News* editorial argues that the Aids commission is underfunded and understaffed: 'The Challenger commission spent $3m investigating the deaths of seven people. The Aids commission, in effect, is spending $950 000 investigating the deaths from Aids of 24 070 Americans.'

The public debate over Aids in the USA is often reduced to an

*REPRESSION IN THE USA*

# THE ATLANTIC




## proclaimed the *Independent* last week in a headline On these pages **James Malone** reports on the American Aids assesses the risks of in Britain

argument about whether the nation's young people should be urged to abstain from sexual activity or be encouraged to use condoms. The churches, in a remarkable display of ecumenical unity which stretches from Judaism through diverse Christian denominations to Islam, preach abstinence and proclaim homosexuality an abomination. When some liberal clergymen in cities under particular threat from Aids have accepted the need for some sex education and advice about condoms, the hardliners have rapidly clamped down. Last month, Cardinal John O'Connor caused a furore over his refusal to allow instruction about condoms in Aids education programmes in schools, hospitals and youth programmes of the Archdiocese of New York, despite the qualified approval of the mention of the evil rubbers by his fellow bishops.




**PRESS SCARES KEEP THE POT OF PREJUDICE BOILING**

### ABSTINENCE

William Bennett, the US education secretary, has published 500 000 copies of an education handbook on Aids for high schools. His message is that abstinence is the only solution. 'Promoting the use of condoms can suggest to teenagers that adults expect them to engage in sexual intercourse,' says Bennett. While school officials are hostile to measures to prevent Aids, they are happy to promote the Aids panic. The New York board of education recently bought 1.5m pairs of disposable gloves, at a cost of nearly $50 000, for every school in the city as a 'safeguard' against teachers catching Aids.

The great condom debate reached the floor of the senate in October, when Jesse Helms, conservative Republican from North Carolina, held up an explicit safe sex comic book produced by the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York. Helms denounced the use of federal funds for such groups, and the senate agreed by 94 votes to two that federal funds for any educational efforts must stress abstinence and cannot promote homosexuality or drug abuse. America's traditionally prudish television networks are still refusing to broadcast condom adverts.

### MANDATORY

**The government-sponsored panic over Aids has legitimised an increase in state repression.**

A major controversy has erupted over whether or not people should undergo mandatory testing for the Aids virus. Last May, Reagan announced his decision to institute mandatory testing for all those applying for permanent-residence visas in the USA. Democratic presidential hopeful Michael Dukakis, governor of Massachusetts, has allowed insurance companies in his state to impose HIV tests. Illinois and Louisiana have made the test a requirement for couples who want to marry. The Methodist Hospital in Houston, Texas has instituted tests for all who enter. The American Medical Association has endorsed mandatory testing of prisoners and would-be immigrants.

### DETENTION

It seems that government propaganda has convinced many to accept mandatory testing. A poll in *New York Newsday* in June revealed that large majorities (over 70 per cent) of New Yorkers would favour requiring tests for Aids of couples planning to get married, people working with food in restaurants, people going into the armed services, patients entering hospitals and immigrants who wanted to move to the USA. *Newsday* reported that the results resembled those of nationwide polls.

There is a continuing clamour for compulsory detention of carriers of the Aids virus. In California last year, proposals to introduce quarantine regulations, Proposition 64, were defeated. Yet senator Helms still advocates quarantine: 'We did it back with syphilis, we did it with other diseases and nobody ever raised a question about it.' So far, nationally, there have been only a handful of individual quarantine orders, mostly against male and female prostitutes. But since 1985, nine states have amended their old quarantine laws or passed new ones empowering health officials to isolate people with Aids who 'endanger other people's health' and 'only as a last resort'. North Carolina's new law enables officials to limit indefinitely the 'freedom of movement or action' of people with a communicable disease. Nevada's laws have provisions for charges of attempted murder against prostitutes who continue to work after learning they are infected with Aids.

**Discrimination against Aids victims is widespread.**

Employees lose jobs, children are turned away from school, people lose health insurance. But whether people hear stories about 'Aids bank bandits', 'killer kids' or doctors with Aids, the main victims of discrimination are those whom the public blame as the source of the disease — gay men.

### SODOMY

American homosexuals lost a key legal case in June 1986 when the Supreme Court ruled in Bowers v Hardwick that the constitutional right to privacy did not extend to homosexual relations. The Supreme Court upheld a Georgia sodomy law forbidding all people to engage in oral or anal sex, saying that it could be used to prosecute such conduct between homosexuals, even in the privacy of their homes. The court did not say the same law could be enforced against heterosexuals.

In Massachusetts, a Bill to prevent discrimination against homosexuals in jobs, housing, credit and public places, first introduced to the state legislature in 1973, was stalled yet again in December. A bloc of conservative legislators, fundamentalist Christians and Catholics opposes the Bill on the grounds that it amounts to official approval of homosexuality and will thus contribute to the spread of Aids.

### SLEDGEHAMMER

'Queer-bashers' in America have put the establishment's anti-gay message into action. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force reports that incidents of anti-gay violence increased from 2042 in 1985 to 4946 in 1986. Witnesses at the trial of 17-year old Terry Kerr for the murder of Harry Wayne Watson in Kalamazoo, Michigan last year said that Kerr had bragged about killing a 'fag' by smashing his head with a sledgehammer. The jury found Kerr not guilty on all counts, and the trial judge, in an unusual move, denounced the verdict, saying Kerr deserved to be convicted of first degree murder.

**The fact that Aids in the USA mainly affects gay men, blacks and Hispanics is reflected in the re-assertion of traditional anti-gay and racist prejudices in all discussion of Aids.**

This situation highlights the fact that combating Aids means fighting the oppressive conditions which allow it to spread in these sections of society. While demanding more resources for all aspects of Aids, resistance to the Aids scaremongering, and the climate of reaction and repression which it encourages, must be the top priority for the American left.

# New York scare hits Britain

**'THE high proportion of babies born with Aids in New York shows that the disease is now as great a threat to Western society as it has already proved to be in Africa — and as much of a danger to heterosexuals as it is to homosexuals.'**

**This is the extraordinary first sentence of a front page article entitled 'Risk facing heterosexuals accelerates' in last Thursday's *Independent*, written by medical editor Oliver Gillie.**

**The high incidence of HIV antibodies (not Aids!) in New York babies shows that the virus is a serious problem among the impoverished drug abusers who are concentrated in the city's ghettos. Gillie's first conclusion — that this demonstrates the convergence of the pattern of Aids infection in the West with that in Africa — does not fit the evidence. In New York, the vast majority of Aids victims acquire the virus through homosexual contact or through sharing contaminated needles. In Africa, it seems that heterosexual contact, often with prostitutes, is probably the most important route of transmission.**

### DIFFERENCES

**A major conference on Aids and sex in Bloomington, Indiana last month revealed an expert consensus radically different from the judgement of the *Independent's* medical editor: 'The meeting highlighted, yet again, the profound differences that exist in the pattern of HIV transmission in Africa and North America.' (*The Lancet*, 2/9 January, 1988)**

**Dr Donn Des Jarlais, a New York authority, particularly pointed out that among more than 10 000 cases of Aids reported in the city, only 20 could be attributed to infection acquired from prostitutes.**

### UNSUPPORTED

**Gillie's second conclusion is equally unsupported by the epidemiological evidence — particularly in Britain. A detailed breakdown of British Aids cases, published in the *British Medical Journal* before Xmas reveals the true extent of the risk of heterosexual spread ('Surveillance of Aids in the United Kingdom', *BMJ*, 5 December 1987). The authors survey all cases of Aids in the United Kingdom up to the end of August last year. A total of 1012 cases included 32 in which the virus was believed to have been contracted heterosexually. Of these 10 were foreign residents who acquired Aids abroad and simply came to Britain for treatment. The remaining 22 cases included 15 (five men and 10 women) who were believed to have contracted Aids overseas, mainly in Africa. This leaves a total of seven people, five women and two men, who are believed to have contracted Aids through heterosexual contact in Britain.**

**The survey gives further details on how the unfortunate seven acquired HIV infection. The five women included 'a prostitute, the wife of a haemophiliac patient, one who had African partners, one whose partner was bisexual, and one whose partner was a drug abuser'. The two men included one 'who had many partners' — no details are given about the other. In other words virtually all of the handful of people who have contracted Aids heterosexually in Britain have been the sexual partners of those in clearly identifiable high-risk categories.**

### WOMEN

**The British survey breaks down the 22 indigenous heterosexual cases by year of presentation. The first case was in 1982, there were four in 1982, three in 1983, four in 1985, six in 1986 and four up to the end of August last year. These figures would not suggest an accelerating risk of heterosexual transmission.**

**Later in his article Gillie concedes that women make up only three per cent of Aids cases in Britain. 'But', he continues, 'among those who are known to be infected with the virus, but do not yet have the disease, the proportion of women is considerably greater — eight per cent, showing that the disease is spreading among heterosexuals.' Here Gillie confuses two quite distinct things — a higher incidence of HIV infection among women and heterosexual transmission.**

**Most women who are HIV positive acquired the virus through using contaminated needles to inject drugs. Some were infected by blood transfusions, and some of those included in the figures are female babies of HIV positive mothers, usually drug abusers. Like many commentators desperate to inflate the risk of heterosexual transmission, Gillie lumps all these together to create the impression of an impending heterosexual epidemic. In fact the incidence of HIV infection among women, acquired heterosexually in Britain, is not significantly higher than the number of cases of Aids acquired in this way. The American experience would suggest that an accelerating heterosexual spread in Britain is highly improbable.**

### PREJUDICES

**The fact that a respected medical journalist in a reputable newspaper can be so influenced by the prejudices generated by the Aids panic is a frightening indication of the irrationality that now dominates public discussion of the disease. The crisis of the Western ruling class is now so profound that it can no longer face the truth even in matters of epidemiology.**

DEBATING IMMIGRATION CONTROLS

# WHICH WAY AGAINST RACIST LAWS?

**The Tories have won support for their immigration policies and prompted many on the left to rethink their own attitudes. In the latest issue of *Marxism Today*, the theoretical journal of the Communist Party, Dave Cook, Fiona Mactaggart, Bernard Misrahi and Habib Rahman argue for a new strategy on immigration. We print edited extracts, together with a reply from Kenan Malik of Workers Against Racism**

## A race to exclusion

If there is one issue that has struck fear in the left it is surely immigration. It is time for a rethink and a new strategy....

That so little headway has been made in the arguments over immigration owes a great deal to the strength of British racism, but it also stems from the left's anachronistic frame of reference on the issue. The task now is not to try and reverse history, but to outline principles for a non-racist, non-sexist policy that start from the reality today....Our starting point is the right of any government to define its citizenship (nationality law) and who is entitled to come into the country to live (immigration policy). Some people involved in anti-racist politics oppose all such controls. This is an understandable viewpoint given past experience. It is hard to believe that non-discriminatory alternatives could possibly exist.

### HYPOTHETICAL

Yet this approach is wrong. To argue that the rights of British citizenship should apply to everyone in the world, which is what the 'no controls' position means, is to fly in the face of all reality. The 'no controls' position is no use when it comes to effective politics. Instead of focusing on racism and injustice in existing law, on which the government is vulnerable and against which powerful allies can be won, the argument is switched to hypothetical questions about whether Britain can cope with a major increase in population. This is where racists want to take the argument. It is why most black people's organisations have rejected the 'no controls' position. In the face of human anguish caused by the present laws, utopianism is a luxury they cannot afford.

The right to citizenship is a fundamental human right. Nationality confers the basic rights of citizenship, including the right to live in a country, to leave it and return....The 1981 Nationality Act...consolidated the racial discrimination of previous immigration Acts into nationality law. In its place, we need a new law of citizenship and the 1948 Nationality Act, suitably amended, could provide the foundation. It will have to establish a single category of citizenship guaranteeing equal rights for all those who hold a British passport. Under the 1948 Act, the principal qualifications for nationality were either birth in British territory or by a British parent. These principles, which have been shattered by subsequent laws, need to be re-established....

Once it is clear who is entitled to a single category of British citizenship the job of working out the principles on which a non-racist immigration policy could be based is much easier. People should either be full citizens of Britain or not. Those who are...would be free from immigration controls. Immigration policy for those who are not British citizens should be clear and applied consistently, regardless of race, without hidden rules imposed by immigration officials....

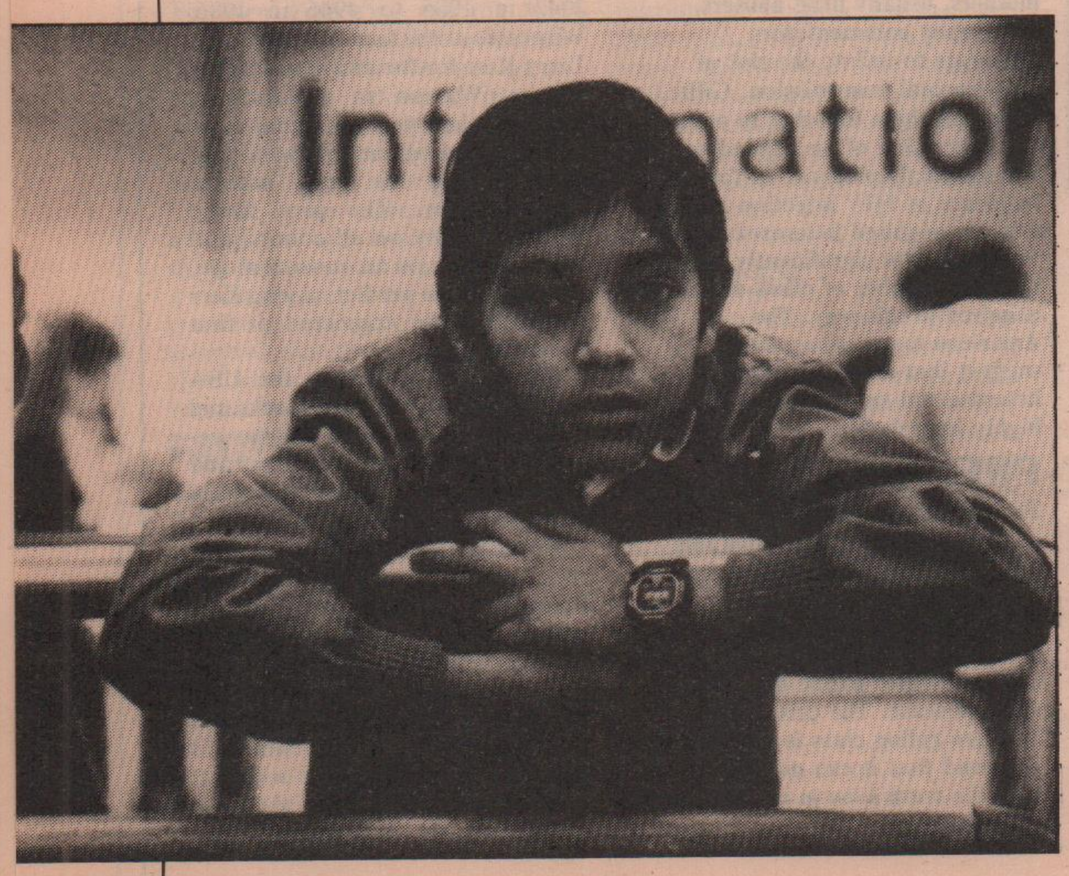
Controls should go no further than the point of entry. An amnesty would be important to give illegal residents an opportunity to break out of the fear and exploitation which dominate their lives....In order to break out of the framework of seeing everything in terms of exclusion and control, responsibility for immigration should be taken away from the home office, Britain's ministry for *internal* affairs. The home office cannot be both the guardian of civil liberties and the main agent for excluding and hunting down immigrants...

### HUMAN

Recently, campaigns against deportations have mushroomed. Churches are giving sanctuary. Schools have campaigned against the expulsion of parents of their pupils. Some trade unions, notably Nalgo, have organised demonstrations to resist the deportation of their members.

What is particularly important about these is the support they have won from white people. This has been done by focusing on the impact of racist laws on individual human beings....They have argued that it doesn't have to be like this, highlighting the contribution that those under threat make to the lives of their communities....The campaigns show the popular support that can be won for the cause of racial justice. This is a lesson which the left desperately needs.

**(Reprinted from *Marxism Today*, January 1988)**




## A flight from reality

Cook, Mactaggart, Misrahi and Rahman urge us to 'rethink' our 'anachronistic' ideas on immigration and to embark on a 'new strategy'. Yet their main proposal seems to be to replace the 1981 Nationality Act with the 1948 Nationality Act. If our task is 'not to try and reverse history', then surely we should forget about dusting off 40-year old parliamentary Acts.

**The main concern of Cook et al appears to be to pour scorn on those anti-racists who oppose *all* immigration controls.**

They argue that such a position (which is upheld by Workers Against Racism) flies 'in the face of all reality', plays into the hands of racists and prevents 'effective politics'. Instead, they support a policy of non-racist immigration controls.

### 'SWAMPING'

The *Marxism Today* article argues that opposing all immigration controls helps the racists, by switching the argument to 'hypothetical questions about whether Britain can cope with a major increase in population'. In fact the Tories did not need any assistance from anti-racists to make scare stories about immigrants 'swamping the British way of life' the centrepiece of their propaganda. Whether we like it or not, the British authorities' attempt to brand black people as an alien threat to us all is the focus of the immigration debate. The one response really guaranteed to aid the racists is to agree with them that the government has the right to decide how many immigrants British capitalism can 'cope with'. Yet Cook et al appear proud to declare their support for this position: 'Our starting point is the right of any government to define...who is entitled to come into the country to live.'

The *Marxism Today* authors are looking at immigration through the eyes of the British government. From this perspective, opposing all immigration controls does indeed 'fly in the face of all reality'; but so does proposing non-racist controls. The British ruling class needs racist immigration regulations to protect its system. Immigration controls exist to police the flow of labour from the third world, and to keep out immigrant workers for whom the declining British economy no longer has any use. Immigration controls are also the foundation stones of racism within Britain. They legitimise the treatment of blacks as second class citizens by the government, the police and employers. They are a vital aid to the establishment in dividing the working class, and providing black scapegoats against which the white population's anger over social problems can be directed.

From the point of view of the working class, however, it is unrealistic to believe that we can defend our interests by accepting the need for some sort of immigration control. Such an approach can only mean siding with the government against immigrants. It implies an acceptance of the idea that foreign workers are to blame for problems such as unemployment and bad housing in Britain. This is a crucial political concession, which will seriously impede the ability of the working class to take on the establishment at home. Over the past nine years we should have learnt something about the way the Tories use anti-immigrant feeling to divert attention from the responsibility of the capitalist system for our problems.

**What you consider to be a realistic policy depends on which side of the class divide you are looking from.**

For the British state, it is only realistic to have racist immigration controls. The Tories understand this. The home office tried to block a CRE investigation of the immigration service on the grounds that, *by definition*, immigration controls are discriminatory. For the working class movement, it is only realistic to oppose all immigration controls and to refuse to tailor our demands to what our exploiters say their system can afford. That is why our starting point is the opposite of Cook et al — we *reject* the right of the British state to interfere in the lives of working class people and to tell them where they can or cannot live.

### CONSEQUENCES

The *Marxism Today* writers refuse to accept that there are only two realistic attitudes to immigration, and go off in search of the non-existent third way of non-racist immigration controls. But having conceded the racists' central point — the right of the state to police immigration — their own proposals have reactionary consequences.

Under the law proposed by Cook et al, those born in British territory or to British parents would qualify for a British passport and be 'guaranteed equal rights'. Presumably, then, those of us unlucky enough to have the wrong parents or be born in the wrong place, will be ineligible for equal treatment. Sounds very familiar. They also argue that responsibility for immigration should be removed from the home office since it cannot be 'both the guardian of civil liberties and the main agent for excluding and hunting down immigrants'. Since when has the home office been the defender of our liberties? And would the authors accept immigrants being 'hunted down' so long as some other government department takes responsibility for it?

### WISHFUL

Far from being a 'new strategy', the proposals from Cook et al smack of the tired old politics of wishful thinking: 'We wish the government wouldn't be so racist, we wish it supported anti-racist laws, we wish it would defend the rights of black people, we wish it would defend civil liberties.' Their naive trust in the anti-racist potential of the racist state results in nothing more than a radical version of 'firm but fair' controls.

**It is not surprising that Thatcher has won support for her racist policies when the left can provide no alternative.**

Finally, Cook et al argue that opposition to all immigration controls prevents 'effective politics' and that 'most black people's organisations have rejected the "no controls" position' because it is a 'luxury they cannot afford'. Yet many prominent anti-deportation campaigns — Muhammed Idrish, Metso Moncrieffe, George Roucou — have been fought, and won, on the basis of opposition to all deportations. In the recent case of George Roucou, a campaign of having out the arguments against immigration controls in union meetings and workplaces convinced 1500 white manual workers to down tools and demonstrate against his deportation. The pressure of support for George forced the immigration authorities to back down. It is strange, isn't it, how 'ineffective politics' can produce such effective results.

At the same time black groups know they can expect little support from the left. This has often forced them to adopt a pragmatic approach to opposing deportations. But it is disingenuous for Cook et al to use the consequences of the left's past failures to justify a continued refusal to fight racist laws.

FATAL ATTRACTION



# HOLLYWOOD'S LAST ONE-NIGHT STAND

*Fatal Attraction,* **Adrian Lyne (director)**

**As the most successful American film of last year ($130m since September) opens in Britain, the controversy is already well underway. Is it misogynist? Is it a good thriller? The *Sun* and the *Mirror* got straight to the point, headlining respectively '*Fatal Attraction* will kill one-night stands' and 'Is this the end of one-night stands?' Not satisfied with the periodic revivals of Aids scares, Hollywood obviously wants to play its part in terrifying errant husbands back into the home.**

**Young New York lawyer (Michael Douglas) with beautiful adoring wife (Anne Archer), cute daughter and dream home has a weekend affair with an editor (Glenn Close) from a publishing firm. Being the very model of the beautiful, assertive career woman she makes the running. Her only use for the kitchen sink is as a perch for after-dinner sex. When he tries to resume happy families, however, she is revealed as lonely, insecure and hysterical. Suicidal gestures give way to vindictive pursuit as she demands that their relationship continue. She is revealed as insane, obsessed and pregnant to boot. She sets about destroying his marriage like a professional homebreaker. First she boils the pet rabbit, then kidnaps the child and finally gets the knife out for the homemaker herself.**

***Fatal Attraction* is breathtakingly obnoxious. All the more so because it is competently compulsive as a thriller, contains an exceptional performance from Glenn Close and derives not inconsiderable power for its theme on account of its single-mindedness and simplicity. In this it resembles Brian de Palma's recent film *The Untouchables* which is similarly confident and blatant, similarly unencumbered with any qualms or qualifications of its reactionary theme.**

**Not only is the independent woman set up to be revealed as an insecure and psychopathic harpy, but significantly the object of her hatred is the institution of the family quite as much as the man himself. She cannot bear to look at the family photo-portraits which litter his office (and in the final shot the camera closes on such a picture in the hallway of their home). When she peers through the window at the family around the fireside as the little girl gleefully receives a white rabbit from Daddy, she turns away to throw up in the bushes.**

## SHAMELESS

**Excuses for the film will no doubt be made by those who claim that it is a send up or that the studio spoilt it by changing the ending. The truth is as uncluttered as the film. From start to finish it is a shameless exercise in misogyny and reaction. The *Sun* and the *Mirror* saw what it was about straight away — bolstering the family by cutting out those one-night stands.**

***Pat Ford***

THATCHERISM IN PERSPECTIVE

# THE POLITICS OF DECLINE

**Peter Jenkins,** *Mrs Thatcher's Revolution: The Ending of the Socialist Era,* Jonathan Cape, £12.95

Peter Jenkins has used the notebooks he kept for 20 years as a political journalist to produce a thorough, first-hand examination of the rise and consolidation of the foremost politician of our times. He also writes usefully on those Margaret Thatcher has vanquished — Tory wets, the Labour Party and the SDP (his own party until recently). As you might expect from a former *Guardian* columnist and associate editor of the *Independent* Jenkins is unable to draw his valuable information and insights to a decisive conclusion.

He begins well by debunking the idea of a post-war consensus as anything more than a set of political conventions based on the maintenance of full employment and welfare provision. The middle classes returned to the Tory fold in the early fifties and in 1957 chancellor Peter Thorneycroft introduced an orthodox Thatcherite financial policy. The conventions, articulated in the writings of Labour's boom-time guru Anthony Crosland, depended on the continued growth which the British economy could not deliver. 'By the time of his death in 1977, Crosland's world was closing in on him' writes Jenkins, 'it foreclosed on Croslandism.'

Although he is personally familiar with Thatcher's brusque style ('get a hair-cut' to chancellor Nigel Lawson and 'a poor dear with nothing between his ears' on her chief ally Ronald Reagan) he does not fall into the trap of claiming that she revamped British society for want of something to occupy her powerful personality. He knows she is 'a consequence as much as a cause' whose 'revolution' was a response to Britain's decline. Helmut Schmidt, while West German premier, put that more pointedly to Jenkins: 'Britain is no longer a developed nation.'

## POPULIST

Writing about the way Thatcherism works, Jenkins is equally perceptive. He identifies Thatcher's populist touch as the ability to provide fundamental political certainties in a period of economic instability, and cites the popular focus on law and order, as the first overwhelmingly successful product of the Thatcher method. This was one of the issues which Thatcher used to 'redefine decline as a moral issue'. According to Jenkins, the question of union power is the most significant issue to have been 'gone over' in this way.

Jenkins can now see that Labour is en route for irrelevance, but it didn't look that way at the start. In the mid-seventies, he and many other commentators believed that Tony Benn's brand of fundamentalism was stronger than Thatcher and her new model Tories. Yet Thatcher came to occupy the foreground, whereas Benn, despite 'the glint of destiny in his eye', was banished to the political fringe. Jenkins still doesn't clearly see why. When the recession arrived and broke the old rules of British government, Benn's Labour Party and the labour bureaucracy were too embedded in the methods and ideas of the past either to serve the establishment or to challenge it. They could not play the role for our class which Thatcher proceeded to play for hers.

Jenkins is left with the assumption that the future will simply mean more of the past, that the Tory agenda will work itself out until 'the post-socialist society will be characterised by a majority of haves over have-nots. It will be a two thirds, one third society...(in which) not only the poor but the "working class" are political minorities.' He appears in this prophesy to have forgotten his own misgivings in an earlier chapter about Tory claims of an economic miracle in Britain. He writes as if the recession, one of the most important characters in his book, has left the stage of history. In reality its big scenes are yet to come. More importantly he appears to confuse the death of the 'socialist era' (ie, the Labour Party in its prime) with the death of the working class, a confusion assisted by an apparently narrow understanding of what the working class is. The future is not given. Whether Mrs Thatcher's 'revolution' turns out to be the first wave in a tide of reaction or the last gasp of a crippled British establishment will depend most of all on what the working class has to say about it.

**Andrew Calcutt**



**THATCHER HAD THE BOTTLE LABOUR LACKED**

BEST-SELLING BLACK NOVEL

# LIFE'S NOT LIKE THE COSBY SHOW

**Toni Morrison,** *Beloved,* Chatto and Windus, £11.95

Why is Toni Morrison's latest novel a best-seller, especially in the States? The black feminist writer has featured in magazines and talk shows from coast to coast, and she is said to have been offered a chair in Afro-American literature at Princeton University. She is of course justly famous for earlier books such as *Tar Baby* and *Song of Solomon,* but at first glance you might think her work would not be well-received in many quarters. Central to it is an affirmation of black culture and the tenacity in particular of black women in a racist and sexist society. Her prose is lush and seductive, rich in African folk motifs and the traditions of rural black American story-telling and song.

## SACRIFICE

*Beloved* tells the story of an escaped slave Sethe and her sacrifice of her baby daughter to prevent the child being sent into slavery. Nineteen years later, the daughter re-appears as the ghostly 'Beloved', and the novel turns on the relations between mothers and daughters and lovers, and the possibility of personal redemption.

The first clue to the uncomplicated pleasure which white middle class readers have been able to take in the story is the absence from it of white people. The world of white racism is only atmospherically and symptomatically present: in the intricate scar on Sethe's back and in allusions to some liberal whites, the Garners, or the evil 'man without skin'. Secondly, Morrison's handling of myth and magic, in which ghosts appear and holiness is materialised as a vast, sumptuous feast of turkey and fruit pies, produces a vision of black America which appears to be both benign and exotic, and which presents black experience as alluring and non-threatening.

## FAMILY

Most importantly the book dwells on the strength of family ties. In this respect *Beloved* stands in marked contrast to Morrison's earlier (and much better) novel *Sula,* which relentlessly demonstrated how black women suffer on account of their gender, race and class and did not imply that a restitution of the family would rescue them from their subjugation. Her latest novel, however, clearly satisfies the powerful longing in contemporary American culture for the recovery of the ordering values of family life. Toni Morrison may not have intended this reading of her work. She emphasises the support and reinforcement provided by this family as part of an attempt to depict black Americans as free and proud in spirit.

## RACISM

But Morrison cannot choose the way her book is received, and received differently in black and white America. The USA is divided by racism. In Boston, where I live, as in most major cities, a no man's land separates white and black neighbourhoods. White Americans know black Americans mainly through image and anxious rumour. US television's most popular show, *The Cosby Show,* presents a weekly fantasy of black family life, a myth of middle class respectability that has even less to do with reality than most TV. In 1950 just over five per cent of white children were born to unmarried mothers, by 1985 the figure was 17 per cent. For black births the figures are 17 per cent in 1950 and 56 per cent in 1985. In this context, *Beloved* can only contribute to the complacency of white America. For those who would rather be challenged than comforted by Morrison's vision of the experience of black women, leave this and read *Sula.*

**Annie Jay**

thenextstep

*IRELAND AND PALESTINE ARE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES*

# ISRAEL USES BRITISH TACTICS

**March for a British withdrawal**

Saturday 30 January

Assemble 12.30
Whittington Park,
Holloway Road
London N19



**The hypocrites of the British establishment criticise Israeli terror against the Palestinians, but use the same tactics themselves against the nationalist community in Northern Ireland**



THE Israeli forces now brutalising Palestinians in the occupied territories learnt the essential rules of state terrorism from the British authorities. The 'iron fist' policy with which Israel administers Palestine is still based on the British Defence (Emergency) Regulations of 1945, which the imperial statesmen at Westminster used to put down resistance when *they* occupied the area. And such British brutality is not a thing of the past. For almost 20 years, British governments have used violence and victimisation against nationalists in Northern Ireland. The methods which Britain uses against those fighting for Irish unity and independence match those which Israel employs against Palestinians who dare to demand their freedom.

• *'ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION':* In the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israelis can hold Palestinians without trial for six months — and then get the detention extended. In Northern Ireland, the British call their version of this concentration camp law 'internment without trial'.

The authorities in Northern Ireland imposed internment on the nationalists during every decade from the twenties to the seventies; the last time was from 1971-75, when 25 000 Irish people were held in cages without charge or trial. Since then, the British have modified the law. Now nationalists are held for a week without charge under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. At the end of that period of detention and interrogation, many Irish people are accused of some trumped-up charge, which enables the authorities to hold them for months (and sometimes years) awaiting trial.

• *DEPORTATIONS:* British commentators have joined in the widespread criticism of Israel's deportation of Palestinians accused of leading the unrest in the occupied territories. Everybody agrees that the Israeli action is 'against international law'. But it is in tune with British law. The Prevention of Terrorism Act has allowed the British authorities to deport Irish people who they accuse of 'terrorism'.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act gives the British government the power to 'exclude' Irish people from Britain — that is, to kick them out of their homes and back to Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland. The authorities do not have to give any reason or provide any evidence to justify their action. Being Irish in Britain, like being Palestinian in Israel, is considered crime enough.

• *MILITARY COURTS:* Palestinians accused of taking part in anti-Israeli protests are dragged before a military court, where Army officers hand out harsh punishment on the basis of little or no evidence. In Northern Ireland the authorities observe the formalities of holding trials in a civilian courtroom and dressing up the judge in gown and wig. But the 'legal process' is much the same as the Israeli model.

Irish people accused of being republican activists are tried in Diplock no-jury courts. A single judge, often a former leading member of the Unionist Party, deals out long sentences on the basis of 'confessions' extracted under duress, or on the uncorroborated word of police officers and their paid informers. Once convicted, republicans are branded as criminals and held under a harsh regime in the H-Blocks of the HM Prison the Maze.

• *ARMY BRUTALITY:* Many people will have been shocked by the television pictures of Israeli troops beating Palestinians off the streets, shooting indiscriminately into crowds and even attacking mosques. Yet the major difference between this and what happens in Northern Ireland is that the camera crews are usually conveniently absent when the British forces go on the rampage.

The British forces of occupation in Northern Ireland number 30 000 — including troops, the paramilitary police of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, local auxiliaries and the SAS. Enoch Powell has accurately described these armed men as 'a killing machine'. They have committed countless acts of brutality against Irish nationalists. This month marks the anniverary of Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972, when British paratroopers shot dead 14 unarmed demonstrators in Derry city. In the years since then the Army and RUC have fired off countless thousands of rounds of ammunition and plastic bullets at Irish nationalists. And the British statesmen who cried 'sacrilege' when the Israelis attacked a mosque last week don't take offence when the RUC frequently opens fire on and baton charges mourners at republican funerals in the Catholic graveyards of Northern Ireland.

The Palestinian struggle against Israeli oppression is a just fight for freedom which we should support. But we must not allow the posturing of British politicians to blind us to what these same authorities are doing just across the Irish Sea.

At the weekend, when the eyes of the world were on occupied Palestine, there was another round of shootings in Northern Ireland. Loyalist gunmen shot dead a Catholic civilian in another sectarian attack on those identified as the enemies of the Crown, the RUC shot a nationalist after a car-chase, and the IRA shot dead two members of the Ulster Defence Regiment. Such violence will continue for as long as Britain occupies any part of Ireland.

If you are opposed to oppression around the world, join us on the Bloody Sunday commemoration march next week. Let's remind people in Britain of the Israeli-style occupation which our government presides over, and demand the immediate withdrawal of all British forces from Ireland.