

the next step

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NOW WE KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT TORY DEMOCRACY

THEY WANT TO BAN ALL STRIKES

Chris Beresford



The hypocrisy of Tory sermons about democracy in the unions has never been starker. First they tried to sabotage industrial action by ordering secret ballots. When workers continued to vote in ballots for strike action they changed the rules again. They came up with a code imposing new shackles on unions balloting for action. When underground workers followed to the letter these restrictions and voted for a strike they changed the rules again. One judge out-voted 12 000 tube workers and called off the strike. When tube drivers organised unofficial strike action they decided to change the rules again. The government is now thinking of banning wildcat strikes. It is clear that all their talk about defending democracy in the unions is nothing but a cover for defending dictatorship in the workplace. (Continued on page 2)

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BANNED

It is obvious that the government makes up the rules about strike ballots as it goes along to suit the interests of the employers. After insisting for years that a strike called without a ballot was a breach of democracy, the government compelled the unions to hold ballots for strike action under the 1984 Trade Union Act. But when this failed to deter workers from voting for action in defence of jobs, wages and conditions, the Tories decided to make it more difficult to hold a legal ballot.

In 1988 they published a new statutory code designed to hinder, disrupt and prevent votes for strike action. The code stipulates that unions must exhaust procedures before balloting: this is designed to delay the action and demoralise the workforce. It specifies that unions should hold postal not workplace ballots: this is aimed at securing a low turnout of less than 70 per cent, which the government can say is unrepresentative and which the courts can use as an excuse to quash the result.

The code says that unions must inform the employers that they are holding a ballot; seek their views on who can be balloted; get their approval for the wording of the ballot; tell them the ballot result and give them good warning of any industrial action to be taken. To cap it all the code recommends that unions should organise ballots at a time which would be the least damaging to 'good industrial relations'. It could just as well have advised the unions to save themselves all the bother, because even if a ballot returns a majority for industrial action, the odds are that the courts will ban the strike anyway.

As with many of the government's anti-union measures, the legal status of the code is deliberately vague. In the end it does not matter whether or not it is a legal statute, so long as it reinforces the anti-union climate in which the judges make their rulings. Thus, although it is not enforceable through the law, the courts will attach considerable weight to its provisions when deciding whether industrial action is lawful.

This was the case in the recent court ruling against the ballot for strike action on the tube. When workers voted by a majority of 7:1 for industrial action, the judge declared that the wording on the ballot paper was confusing. The employers also suggested that the vote for action was dubious, because although 88 per cent of those who voted were in favour of a strike, only two thirds of the workforce had participated.

The motto of the Tories when it comes to the law is: heads we win, tails they lose. It has now got to the stage where it is impossible to organise a legal strike. Some workers have come to the conclusion that the only way to defend their jobs and conditions is to organise unofficial action: their union leaders have given up organising anything that might be deemed illegal. This is what happened on the underground, where tube drivers set up their own action committee to coordinate strike action. This is a positive development which has terrified the Tories. So after the transport strike this week, they announced plans to outlaw unofficial industrial action.

At a time when they are snatching away our rights by the fistful, the Tories have the gall to pose as champions of individual liberty. But it is becoming clear that the individual freedom they uphold is the freedom of the employers to exploit the working class in any way they see fit. If the Tories get away with banning all strikes it will mean that workers will be deprived altogether of the right to fight against insufferable terms and conditions.

They have the police, the courts and the law on their side. We have our ability to come together and fight for our rights. And all the anti-union laws in the land will never be a match for the collective power of the working class. As they prepare to outlaw all strikes, we must prepare to fight by our own rules.

Editorial

19 May • No 16

Editor: Joan Phillips

CHINA

FOR ONCE the cameras of the world media were focused not on the charismatic Mikhail Gorbachev, but on the groundswell of protest which coincided with his arrival in China. A handshake between the leaders of the Soviet and Chinese Communist parties ended the 30-year rift between the two countries. But while the historic Sino-Soviet reconciliation was taking place in Beijing, history was being made in the city's Tiananmen Square, where extraordinary student demonstrations overshadowed the summit.

The pace of developments and the scale of unrest indicates that the bureaucracy is completely out of touch with the mood of the people. The possibility of things sliding out of control is considerable, given the paralysis which has gripped the authorities. The directionless and uninspired Chinese Communist Party seems to be incapable of making a decisive move to quell the disturbances. Anything could happen in China now.

It appears increasingly unlikely that the ageing leadership of Deng Xiaoping will be able to come up with a solution to the crisis. The question is whether a faction of the bureaucracy will come forward to put itself at the head of the protest movement and defuse it. Or whether the bureaucracy will be able to ride the storm by making further concessions to the students and their supporters. Whatever happens in the short term, the bureaucracy is aware that the issue at stake is its own survival.

LUKEWARM WARRIOR

TO A WORLD which has waited impatiently for five months for the fruits of his foreign policy review, George Bush's keynote speech addressing the new era of US-Soviet relations was a flop. The purpose of the policy review was to provide the flagging American administration with an image of dynamism, and George Bush with an incisive riposte to Mikhail Gorbachev's skilful diplomacy. But when the big day came the big idea failed to materialise, and Bush lost his chance to regain the initiative against Gorbachev.

On the eve of the presidential address the Soviet leader's announcement of further arms cuts once again caught Bush off guard. Gorbachev pledged to scrap 500 short-range nuclear warheads, retire 40 000 tanks, 47 000 artillery pieces and 42 000 armoured vehicles, and withdraw one million Soviet troops from the European front. This flair for upstaging the Americans has always given Gorbachev the advantage, making Bush's look inflexible with his militarism-as-usual pose.

Bush's script did not allow for this development, and he trotted out the familiar demands for further concessions: respect human rights; renounce the Brezhnev doctrine; get out of Eastern Europe; tear down the Iron Curtain; stop aiding and arming third world states; and fall in behind US plans in the third world. Bush said he was not convinced that the changes made by Gorbachev were permanent, but in an effort not to appear too dismissive he stated his desire to see perestroika succeed.

The speech revealed the USA's reluctance to declare a ceasefire in the Cold War, and quickly acquired the label *status quo plus*. The theme of the address was supposed to be the need to move beyond the post-war policy of containment of the Soviet Union. But there was only a nod towards the idea of reintegration in a speech whose central message was that the Soviet Union was still a threat. For 40 years anti-Sovietism has allowed the USA to marshal its Nato allies and justify its foreign interventions. It is little wonder that Washington is loath to give it up.

At the same time the US leaders do not want to appear totally unresponsive to the changes in the Soviet Union. They know that old-style anti-Soviet propaganda is more likely to alienate than appeal to their European allies. Yet the reflex hardline response is coming to the fore as they become ever more frustrated by Gorbachev's diplomatic successes. In response to the Soviet leader's latest proposals, national security adviser Brent Scowcroft could not contain himself. He complained that they were intended to create problems and divisions within the Western Alliance. This was the first time

that a US spokesman has been upfront in accusing the Soviets of trying to split Nato.

America will be hard-pressed to maintain the fiction that East-West tensions are the biggest threat to the post-war order. Today the divisions within the Western Alliance are the source of major tensions among the imperialist powers. With just a week to go before the Nato summit in Brussels, a compromise on short-range nuclear missiles is still not settled. Indeed, West Germany's chancellor Helmut Kohl has seized on Gorbachev's latest arms reduction initiative as a vindication of his stand against modernising the Nato arsenal.

It is notable that just one initiative by Moscow can make Washington's blueprints look dated. Yet the crisis of American foreign policy is not the product of Soviet diplomacy. It stems from the USA's decline as the leading world power, and it cannot be resolved by a think tank.

PANAMA

PANAMA IS a classic case of an artificially manufactured crisis. The US campaign against the Panamanian strongman General Manuel Antonio Noriega is an attempt to strengthen the government's hand by scoring a foreign policy success. George Bush is hoping to improve his image as a resolute leader by throwing his weight about against a soft target, in much the same way that Margaret Thatcher earned her reputation as the Iron Lady in the conflict with Argentina in 1982. By whipping up chauvinist fervour against the Noriega regime, Bush aims to rally popular support behind his floundering administration.

The US crusade against the Panamanian dictator has been running for three years. It acquired fresh impetus during the presidential election campaign last year, when US politicians were eager to pose as strongmen. Ronald Reagan accused Noriega of turning the country into a cocaine warehouse, and issued a warrant for his arrest on drug-running charges. When Noriega ousted Panama's president Eric Delvalle, the USA had another excuse to move against the general. Reagan put the squeeze on Noriega by imposing economic sanctions, and threatened further action if he refused to step down.

Bush has gone out of his way to find a new focus for the anti-Noriega campaign, accusing the general of defrauding the opposition of an electoral victory through ballot-rigging. He has raised the stakes in the confrontation by despatching thousands of US troops to Panama, and issuing an unprecedented call for the armed forces to instigate a coup against Noriega. His decision to put the aircraft carrier USS *America* and its battle-group on full alert is aimed at fomenting a mood of bellicose patriotism among the American public.

Banging the drum against Noriega might seem to be a good move for a president who has been branded as a wimp, but it could well backfire if Noriega refuses to budge. After turning the conflict into a test of his resolve, Bush will end up with egg all over his face if he blows it. Thatcher's prestige as an invulnerable adversary derived from her military victory over Argentinian General Galtieri. There are formidable difficulties involved in Bush inflicting such a defeat on General Noriega however. A military intervention by the USA is not out of the question. But if Bush ordered an invasion it would destabilise the entire region. Yet, if he fails to deal decisively with Noriega, it will be a humiliation from which it will be difficult to recover.

WHO NEEDS THE LABOUR PARTY?

IT IS NO longer possible for anybody to pretend that Labour is a socialist party. Today the leader of the Labour Party is proud to say that his aim is to make capitalism work more efficiently, and to embrace a programme which is hard to distinguish from that of the Tory Party. 'The capitalist system is the system we live in', declared Kinnock, 'and we have got to make it work more efficiently, more fairly and more successfully in the world market-place'. By transforming itself into an unashamedly pro-capitalist party, Labour hopes to convince the middle classes that it can be trusted to do all the right things if it gets elected. But what use to the working class is a party which is committed to running a system which survives at our expense?

There are some people who would argue that all this does not matter, that all that matters is getting rid of the Tories. This has been the response of many activists in the Labour Party. Their argument is that

it is necessary to do anything to get the Labour Party back into government, and that it is irrelevant what policies are adopted to realise this ambition. Even those who find it hard to stomach the new policies have nevertheless accepted them as an uncomfortable fact of life.

There are plenty of other people, however, who have been repelled by what is happening in the Labour Party. There is a widespread appreciation that the rot has gone too far. Thousands of people have had enough of the Labour Party. The danger is that they will draw only negative conclusions from their experience and give up on politics altogether. Our aim is to provide an alternative political focus for all those who want to fight the system which Neil Kinnock is committed to defend. In by-elections in Glasgow Central and Vauxhall the Revolutionary Communist Party will be standing candidates against the Labour Party. Our message is: don't let them get away with it, stand up for the working class and fight back with the RCP.

STRIKE!

IT IS TIME to stop messing about with overtime bans, 24-hour strikes and selective action. These forms of industrial action have caused considerable disruption on the tube, buses and railways. But they are not going to force the employers to give us what we want. Everybody knows that this sort of activity is ultimately a waste of time. It is all right if all you want to do is make a statement about how angry you are. But it is not an effective strategy for defeating the attacks on jobs, wages and conditions which confront workers in all sectors of the transport system. So far the action has had the character of a sit-down protest in the middle of a road: it has been token and temporary.

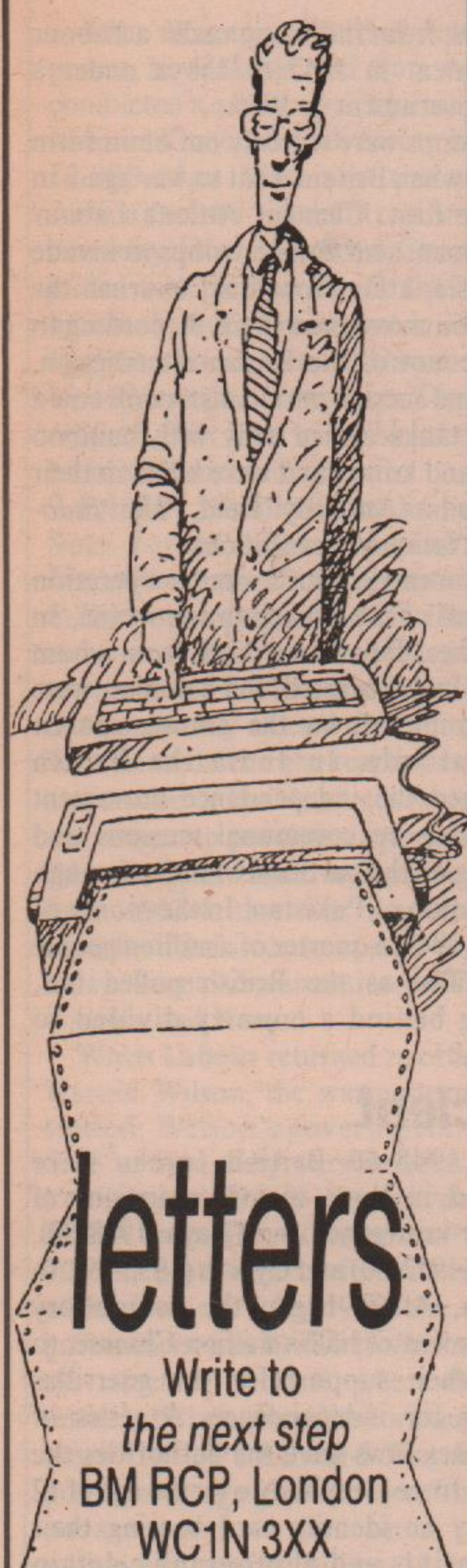
It is time to start getting serious with an all-out strike across the transport network. This is the only sort of action that is going to create the havoc that will bring a swift victory. Everybody always goes on about how difficult it is to win today. It is impossible to win if all you do is protest for a day. If we do not fight to win nobody is going to do us any favours and concede defeat. But if we set our sights on stopping everything that moves we are in with a fighting chance of success. If something on this scale is to happen it has to be organised by the rank and file, because it certainly won't happen on orders from our union leaders. It can only happen if there is coordinated action across the rail, bus and tube system: it is up to activists in these sectors to get together, set up a joint strike committee and hammer out a united strategy. If we did this then nothing could stop us.

HILLSBOROUGH

THE FIRST evidence submitted to the inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster confirmed that the cause of the tragedy was the policing tactics used to control fans. Detective Constable Stephen Fowler was off-duty, and was caged in the suffocating terraces with the rest of the Liverpool fans. He told how the police treated dying fans as hooligans, and the rush to escape the crush as a pitch invasion. He saw police officers pushing fans back over the fencing and into the crowd, as if they were scum who should be herded about like animals.

Two days before the inquiry opened, the media had been endorsing the same prejudice after the Crystal Palace v Birmingham match at Selhurst Park. An escape for survival by Birmingham fans crammed into a tiny terrace was translated into a pitch invasion by media hacks eager to refocus attention on the scourge of hooliganism (see page 7). After Hillsborough the authorities found it difficult to cover up the fact that the tragedy happened because of the anti-hooligan campaign conducted by the government and the policing measures which resulted from it. In a bid to turn the debate around they twisted the truth about what happened at Crystal Palace on Saturday and denounced as scum fans who fled on to the pitch to avoid being crushed.

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WE BACK SILCOTT!

WINSTON SILCOTT became the centre of attention in Wolverhampton town centre last week when the local paper, the *Express and Star*, raged 'Communist Students Join Row Over Killer' on its front page.

We had written a reply to a letter from the president of Wolverhampton Polytechnic Student Union (WPSU) who had called the LSE students' brave stand a 'depraved and insulting act' and claimed he spoke for all student unions. We said that Winston Silcott's election as honorary president was an inspiration to all those who wanted to fight racism. We also wrote that he was a victim of police intimidation and was tried and convicted by the media. The *Express and Star* obviously thought this was great headline news to further its usual racist propaganda.

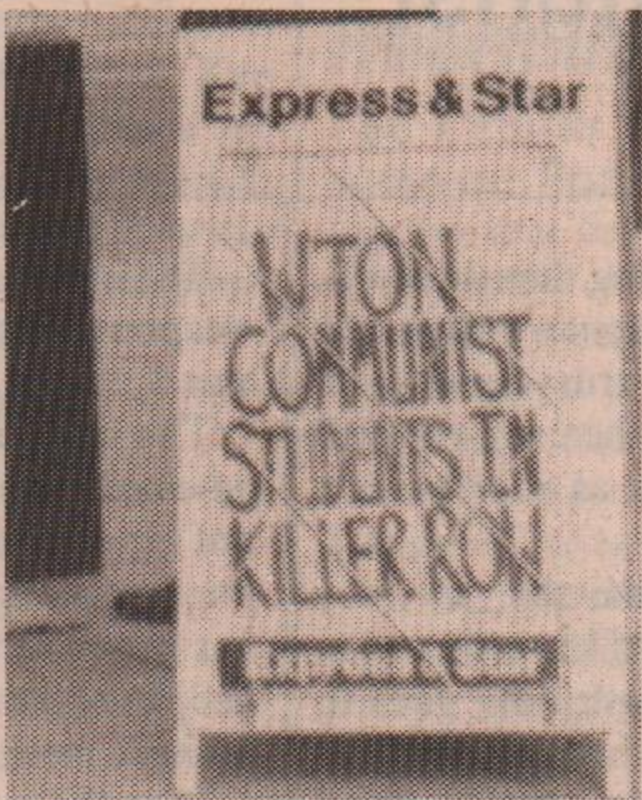
The president of WPSU now feels free to imitate the police force he likes to defend. Last week he closed a disco at the poly claiming there had been a 'stabbing'. All he really wanted to do was get rid of all the 'new faces' who have started to go there—local black youth.

We are calling on WPSU to support students at the LSE and SOAS by making Winston Silcott an honorary member of our union. We also want a vote of no confidence in the president who was acting outrageously outside his mandate. The fight against

racism concerns all students. How can we do anything if we have a president who publicly calls Winston Silcott a murderer and bans black youth from the college?

The Revolutionary Communist Society knows which side it stands on. There is a murderer still on the loose in Wolverhampton—his name is PC Hobday who was responsible for the brutal death of Clinton McCurbin in broad daylight two years ago. There was plenty of evidence against the police but the court returned a verdict of 'misadventure'. That's the kind of justice black people get in British courts. And that's why Wolves students must fight for the freedom of Winston Silcott and defend LSE students from the outrageous attacks they have been subject to.

Krysia Rozanska
Wolverhampton



IMPERIALISM OUT OF AFGHANISTAN

GRAHAM BISHOP is wrong to argue that we should call for a Soviet return to Afghanistan (letters, 12 May). Far from defending the country against imperialist intervention, this would create the basis for even more Western interference.

The Soviet invasion of 1979 gave a massive boost to the most backward sections of Afghan society. Anti-communism could flourish in a country occupied by the troops of an avowedly socialist state. The West took

advantage of this situation by backing the mujahideen guerrillas.

If Soviet troops re-invaded only the mujahideen and the forces of imperialism would benefit. Once again the competing guerrilla groups would have a common enemy to fight against. As it is the divisions between the different rebel groups have been exposed by the Soviet withdrawal, and have proved an obstacle to imperialist designs in the region.

Factional disintegration

along Lebanese lines can only be avoided if Afghanistan is free from foreign interference. Both the West and the USSR have their own reasons for promoting factional divisions. Only the Afghan masses have an interest in a united fight against the Najibullah regime.

Self-determination for the Afghan people means just that: the right of the indigenous population to decide its own future.

Daniel Nassim
Hammersmith

TRANSPORT: IT'S OUR FIGHT TOO

I WORK in the NHS and have just been informed by my bosses that in the event of a public transport strike, any deficit in the hours I work will be made up from my annual leave or as unpaid overtime.

It was enlightening to discuss this with a Nalgo rep. Apparently the management's solution is reasonable because it isn't their fault if there's a transport strike and they shouldn't have to bear the brunt of any inconvenience or financial

loss. I was also told that workers who choose to live several miles from their workplace have only themselves to blame if they lose out.

This is yet another example of where the union bureaucrats' loyalties really lie. They share management's headaches about the inconvenience of a transport strike, instead of supporting the transport workers whose conditions are under attack.

In a society where even the unions fail to address class issues, it is not surprising that many working class people will blame striking transport workers for their frustrating journey to work and for any loss of leave or pay. Clearly we cannot rely on union leaders to point out that the bosses are our enemies, and the transport workers' struggle is *our* struggle.

Laura Russell
North London

STUDENT UNION BIGOTS

AT Bradford University this week when a woman student told the student union president that she had just been sexually attacked, he asked her if she had had 'a good grope' and told her she couldn't expect anything else because she was dressed 'provocatively'.

A motion of no confidence in the president, which was discussed at a 500-strong general meeting, fell by 11 votes. The chair decided there

was 'no time' for a recount. The attempt by some students to call an emergency general meeting next week has been blocked on constitutional grounds.

These events are in stark contrast to the way the NUS dealt with the election of Winston Silcott at the LSE. At the LSE, they found the constitution flexible enough to organise another general meeting and a secret ballot to try to get him removed as

honorary president.

What good is a union that will close ranks round a bigot that would make Judge Pickles proud, but will use all its powers to crush a positive anti-racist initiative? What we need is a political union based on equality for all and which fights to defend its members.

Louise Bradford

The working class

TRANSPORT WORKERS STOP THE CITY

IT'S ALL OR NOTHING

Pete Bush says transport workers have nothing to lose and everything to win by taking united indefinite strike action

London hadn't seen anything like it since the 1926 General Strike. The city's transport system choked up when tube drivers, bus crews and railworkers took action on Monday. The third day of action by tube drivers left seven trains out of 300 on the tracks. They were joined by bus crews on the first of their fortnightly strikes, which took virtually every bus off the road. And the work-to-rule by railworkers forced BR to cancel one train in 10.

The authorities were desperate to play down the significance of the strikes. Reports on the action were relegated to the end of news bulletins. The police stressed that traffic into London was flowing normally and there were no hold-ups. According to the London chamber of commerce nine out of 10 workers got to work yesterday. The authorities tried to maintain a façade of normality in order to sustain the fiction that the transport strikes don't hurt. The truth was different.

The idea that London could operate normally without a transport network is patently ludicrous.

The roads were empty because the majority of

workers decided to take a long weekend or were told to stay at home. As one reporter pointed out in an unguarded moment, there was far less traffic on London roads than on a normal Monday. Anyone who saw commuters rush for the first Orpington train in two hours at Victoria station would have realised that this was no normal Monday evening. And if the strikes caused no problems, why is the government thinking of introducing a new law banning unofficial action?

The immediate cause of the strikes is London Transport's refusal to meet pay demands. Tube drivers are demanding an extra £64 a week to operate driver-only trains. Bus crews have put in for a 15 per cent rise; London Transport is offering half this. But the issue isn't just about pay: it's about the reorganisation of the transport network in preparation for privatisation.

Much of the tube system has already been sold off. Now London Transport is forcing through its business plan, which means tearing up agreements on grading, conditions and pay. LT has set up Action Stations where the main operating criterion is profitability. The buses are suffering a similar attack. On 1 April London's bus system was split into 11 units. Each unit is effectively an independent company responsible for making a profit on its operations. This reorganisation could have a devastating impact on the unity of the workforce. 'This is our last stand', said one driver from Tottenham garage. 'Next year we will have local wage bargaining. They've brought in this legislation so that we're all divided up.'

The changes have already taken effect. On Monday, buses kept running out of Walthamstow garage in east London, because the workers there had already agreed to a local pay deal. 'I heard the drivers all wanted to come out with us', said one striking driver, 'but legally they can't because they've settled. They'll get done for secondary action'.

The bus reorganisation means making crews work harder for less. Most London buses are now one-person-operated. At the same time the value of take-home pay has fallen. 'For the last five years', said one driver, 'we've had pay rises in line with inflation. But they've also made all these changes so that we've had a drop in our living standards. They've changed the driving licence. Before you couldn't get a PSV unless you were over 25. Then they dropped it to 21 and now it's 18. They've lowered the age so that they can devalue the job and pay us less.'

The bus crews have taken heart from the action of the tube drivers. 'Everyone here is very positive after the tube strikes', said a Norwood driver. 'It made us very optimistic about what we could do.' But while many have drawn inspiration from the tube strikes there is a reluctance to take matters into their own hands and go all out for victory.

The dispute has the flavour of a protest born out of desperation, rather than a battle to humiliate the bosses.

Many workers realise that the TGWU's strategy of fortnightly one-day strikes will lead us up a blind alley. 'I'm not too keen on this one day a fortnight', said a driver. 'It doesn't really get us anywhere. The next one is on a bank holiday which is really stupid.' But many are worried about taking all-out action. 'I'm not sure how long we'll be able to hold out', said one. But if all transport workers came out it would be a very short strike indeed. We'd have the City on its knees in a matter of days.

Many drivers are worried about taking any action that might be illegal. But we won't win anything if we limit ourselves to staying within the law. The law



Pandora Anderson

Who are they trying to kid? Anyone with eyes could see that London came to a standstill on Monday

is a tool of the employers to ban us doing anything effective. The injunction stopping the NUR calling a strike, despite 90 per cent of its members voting for it in a ballot, shows that the Tories couldn't give a toss about democracy. And now there's talk about outlawing unofficial strikes. Staying within the law means accepting Tory dictates.

Most bus workers recognise the importance of coordinating action with underground staff, but few reckon it can be done. Some assume that the union bureaucrats must have already got together; most don't have any faith in the union leadership, but can't see unity across transport coming about. It's vital that workers in the different sectors get together. And we're going to have to organise the action ourselves. We need delegations from bus garages going to tube depots and tube workers visiting the garages. This could lay the ground for an all-London strike committee across all sectors and unions.

Monday's strike showed what's possible. Now we need to go all out to win. We need:

- **Unity across the workforce:** we must set up a strike committee involving workers in all transport sectors and all unions.
- **Rank and file control:** we need mass meetings involving all transport workers where we can decide how to pursue our struggle on our terms.
- **Our own rules:** we won't win anything if we limit ourselves to doing only what the Tories allow us to do.
- **All-out action:** we can bring London to a standstill and the bosses to their knees if we all came out together.

IF YOU WANT PEACE, FIGHT AGAINST WAR

Linda Ryan explains why we need an anti-militarist movement and not an anti-nuclear lobby

At the centre of all the recent discussion about defence is the assumption that a policy of nuclear deterrence is the key to preventing war. According to this view it is necessary to maintain the balance of nuclear power because it has succeeded in keeping the peace for 40 years. The corollary of this argument is that any moves towards nuclear disarmament will heighten the danger of international conflagration.

This theory of nuclear deterrence as an essential mechanism for ensuring world peace has informed the debate about the Labour Party's new defence policy. The Tories have argued that the new policy destroys the credibility of the nuclear deterrent, because while Neil Kinnock has

pledged to keep it, his party has refused to say whether or not it would use it.

Kinnock has abandoned the Labour Party's policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament in favour of a policy of negotiating away Britain's nuclear weapons in superpower arms talks. This move was designed to rebut Tory accusations that Labour was soft on defending Britain, and improve its image as a party that could be trusted to run the establishment's military machine.

Yet Bryan Gould's statement that the party had no intention of keeping a nuclear deterrent either to use or deter has provided the Tories with fresh ammunition to fire at Labour. Tory defence minister George Younger ridiculed this position, saying that there was no point having the weapons without the resolve to use them: 'To arm yourself with a deterrent which you then say you will not use would be about as effective as a feather duster.'

Kinnock is still vulnerable to Tory accusations that he would leave the nation defenceless. The backlash only goes to show that no matter how many concessions the Labour Party makes along the road to rearmament, the establishment will only demand that it makes more. Yet while attention has focused on the inconsistencies of the Labour Party's confused policy presentation, nobody has raised an eyebrow at the inconsistencies of the Tories' nuclear deterrence argument.

The idea that the possession of nuclear weapons is a defence against the threat of war is absurd.

The nuclear stockpiles which every advanced capitalist nation possesses are not a monument to peace but a symbol of imperialist aggression. This aggression has been exercised forcefully against the peoples of the third world by conventional military means.

Over the past 40 years nobody has died in a nuclear war, but millions have perished in bloody conventional wars. Britain has played a prominent part in many of these military conflicts, waging war on every continent of the Earth. Since the Second World War, Britain has been involved in almost 50 foreign inter-

ventions, from Indonesia under a Labour government in 1945 to Libya under a Tory government in 1986.

Its troops were scarcely out of uniform in 1945 when Britain went to war again in the Far East. Clement Attlee's Labour government sent British troops to invade Indonesia, a Dutch colony, to crush the liberation movement there. According to one account of the British intervention, young Indonesian nationalists confronted British tanks armed only with bamboo spears and knives and were killed in their thousands (Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian National Revolution*).

Britain carried out a similar operation on behalf of the French in Indochina. In both cases, Japanese troops, from whom Britain had 'liberated' the colonies, were used to put down the revolts against imperial rule. In India the British sabotaged the independence movement by stirring up communal tensions and insisting on the partition of India through the creation of Pakistan. In the month of August 1947, a quarter of a million people were killed as the British pulled out, leaving behind a country divided to this day.

Efficient

From 1948-60 British forces were involved in three major campaigns of counter-insurgency: in Malaya (1948-60), Kenya (1952-60) and Cyprus (1955-59). In Malaya, Attlee began the compulsory resettlement of half a million Chinese, to break their support for the guerrillas fighting for independence. A series of emergency laws gave the authorities the right to force everybody over the age of 12 to carry an identity card bearing their fingerprints and photographs; detain suspects for up to two years without trial; search without a warrant; control movement; organise curfews; and impose the death penalty against those found carrying weapons and ammunition.

British troops killed 6000 guerrillas and 3000 civilians in 12 years of atrocities.



Hands up for a non-nuclear Britain: the Mau Mau in Kenya would have been hard-pressed to notice any difference

After Winston Churchill returned to power, he took his lead from Attlee and conducted a savage war against the Mau Mau in Kenya. British forces butchered 12 000 Mau Mau and threw 73 000 Africans into concentration camps. Anthony Eden succeeded Churchill and joined with the French and the Israelis to invade the Suez Canal zone in 1956, after Egyptian leader General Nasser nationalised the canal company. The British reduced Port Said to rubble with a naval bombardment and air raids.

Britain's humiliating withdrawal from Suez forced Eden out, and Harold Macmillan came in. He continued Eden's military campaign against the EOKA movement in Cyprus. Macmillan sent troops into British Guiana to oust a democratically elected government, into Kuwait to defend the reactionary regime against the radical Iraqi government, and into Oman to put down a popular revolt. Alec Douglas Home was prime minister from 1963-4: that was long enough to send British forces to crush coups in the independent African nations of Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.

When Labour returned to office under Harold Wilson, the warmongering continued. Wilson's government sent the SAS to fight dirty wars in Aden, Borneo and Oman. Denis Healey described British barbarism in Borneo as 'the most efficient use of military force in the history of the world'. In 1969 the Labour government sent British troops back on to the streets of Ireland, where they have terrorised the nationalist community ever since. In 1972 Edward Heath's Tory government gave the order for British paratroopers to fire on a peaceful nationalist march, killing 14 people in what became known as Derry's Bloody Sunday.

Butcher

Between 1974-79 Labour governments led by Wilson and then James Callaghan pursued Britain's war in Ireland. Under Callaghan, Britain was exposed to the world as a torturer for its treatment of republican suspects in the Castlereagh interrogation centre. One Labour Northern Ireland minister is still remembered by the nationalist community as Roy 'Butcher' Mason because of his use of SAS assassination squads.

Margaret Thatcher's Tory government has maintained Britain's war record into the eighties. In 1982 she despatched British forces against the Argentinians, who had asserted their legitimate right to the Malvinas. In the course of the Falklands conflict, Thatcher ordered the sinking of the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano* with the loss of 365 lives. In the same year her government endorsed the Royal Ulster Constabulary's shoot-to-kill campaign against Irish republicans. In 1986 Thatcher gave the go-ahead for British-based American bombers to attack civilian targets in the Libyan cities of Tripoli and Benghazi.

Britain's record of imperialist butchery since the war shows how fatuous is the claim that a policy of nuclear deterrence has allowed peace to prevail for 40 years.

Far from bringing peace the policies of the imperialists have inflicted a toll of death, starvation, destruction and misery on countless millions in the third world. Anybody who is serious about achieving peace has a responsibility to expose the warmongers of the West, and to oppose every act of conventional warfare and imperialist aggression.

Naive

Yet supporters of unilateral nuclear disarmament have rarely questioned any of this. While British forces have massacred millions using conventional weapons, anti-nuclear campaigners have focused narrowly on the potential threat to peace posed by Britain's nuclear arsenal. Instead of campaigning against all forms of British militarism, they have campaigned for a non-nuclear defence policy as the best way to defend British interests.

By accepting that the defence of Britain is a legitimate concern, the unilateralists have endorsed the nationalist consensus which has been mobilised behind all of Britain's foreign interventions. And by campaigning for an alternative defence policy, they have justified the need for a non-nuclear arsenal. The Labour Party

has taken this approach to its logical conclusion, by building up Britain's conventional weapons.

Now that the Labour Party has abandoned its policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament the left is up in arms. But the policy never meant anything in the first place. Only the left was ever naive enough to believe that a Labour government would implement its disarmament pledge. It is inconceivable that a major world power such as Britain would voluntarily renounce its nuclear capability as long as its rivals continued to possess nuclear weapons. Such a move would not only be contrary to all historical experience, it would also go against the record of every Labour government.

The leaders of the Labour Party have supported every act of British militarism from the Boer War to the Falklands War.

They played a prominent role in mobilising popular backing for Britain in two world wars. And as we have seen they have led many of Britain's foreign interventions in the third world over the past 40 years, and have been unswerving supporters of British imperialism in Ireland over the past 20. When Ken Livingstone swore to 'fight to save the party we love' from embracing nuclear weapons, he was pledging his allegiance to a party with a bloody record of support for conventional warmongering.

'No matter how many unilateral arms and troop reductions Gorbachev announces, the West will not respond in kind'

The Labour Party is also the party of the British nuclear bomb. When Neil Kinnock foisted the new pro-nuclear defence policy on the party a fortnight ago, Tony Benn demanded to know if this meant that Britain was going to have a Labour bomb. In fact Britain has had a Labour bomb since the 1940s. Clement Attlee's government launched the programme to build Britain's independent nuclear deterrent in 1946-7. Harold Wilson's government stationed Polaris missiles in Scotland in the sixties in flagrant breach of Labour's manifesto commitment. James Callaghan's government paved the way for the arrival of US Cruise missiles on British soil.

Slavish

For the Labour Party the most important thing is to prove how deeply it is committed to the defence of Britain. Neil Kinnock has been trying to get Labour's defence policy into patriotic shape since unilateralism became a test of its loyalty to Britain in the 1983 general election. In the past Labour tried to deflect Tory attacks on its defence policy by stressing that its proposals for unilateral nuclear disarmament implied approval for massive conventional rearmament.

Today Kinnock has put the Labour Party's cards on the table and made public its credentials as a warmonger.

Labour's slavish devotion to the defence of Britain is palpable in every paragraph of its defence policy document. The starting point of the new policy is not new: the defence of Britain is a prime responsibility of any government. The document states that the Labour Party is determined that in the 1990s and beyond Britain shall be properly defended.

The first priority is to ensure that 'our armed forces must be efficiently and effectively trained and equipped to deal with any challenge to Britain other than might confront her as a member of Nato'. The document notes that although Britain is no longer a major colonial power, it still has interests to defend in dependencies outside Europe. This commits the Labour Party to pursuing the Fortress Falklands policy, and responding with ruthless aggression against any threat to British concerns.

Anticipating and responding to any threat to Britain itself is the second priority for Labour: 'Even if such a threat

is remote, we cannot nevertheless plan for defence by discounting it.' In fact no major power has declared war on Britain for 40 years. But this fact is irrelevant to Labour's defence policy. The defence of an imperialist power such as Britain invariably means the capacity to attack its enemies. It is this capacity which the Labour Party is concerned to protect and extend: 'Our forces must have what they need when they need it and of the quality necessary to fulfil their obligations.' The document commits the Labour Party to defending Britain by all means necessary.

The third priority is to strengthen Britain's defences through making a contribution to the Nato alliance of imperialist powers. This commits Labour to maintaining the Royal Navy's role in the east Atlantic, the deployment of the RAF in European bases, the amphibious capability of the Royal Marines and the British Army of the Rhine stationed in West Germany. The document pledges the Labour Party's commitment to membership of the alliance, and its continued contribution to Nato defences.

Rearming

The Labour Party has called its document 'Peace in our changing times', arguing that developments in the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev have opened up the possibility of world disarmament. It is ironic therefore that this process of superpower diplomacy should have provided the pretext for the Labour Party to embrace the bomb.

In fact the climate of chauvinism and militarism which has shaped the Labour Party's new pro-nuclear policy indicates that the real trend is towards war not peace.

Despite all the talk of dramatic breakthroughs on disarmament, the dynamic is in the opposite direction towards bigger arms stockpiles. The West's lack of interest in genuine disarmament is apparent in the way Washington and London raise the stakes each time the Soviet Union makes a concession. It is a certainty that no matter how many unilateral arms and troop reductions Gorbachev announces, the West will not respond in kind.

The intense competition among the Western powers ensures that there can be no real moves towards world disarmament. Each capitalist power is rearming to put some military weight behind its economic efforts in the battle for survival and global supremacy. Today the West needs increased firepower to keep a grip on the third world. Tomorrow it may need to sort out Nato's internal disputes in a third world war.

A study of current wars by researchers at the Santa Barbara Peace Resource Centre in California shows that peace is not breaking out all over as a result of the new superpower diplomacy. They compiled a list of contemporary conflicts, of which there were 32 wars in progress in 1988. There were eight in Asia, 11 in Africa, five in Latin America, six in the Middle East. Under the region entitled 'other', they mentioned Britain's war in Ireland (*The Nation*, 9 January).

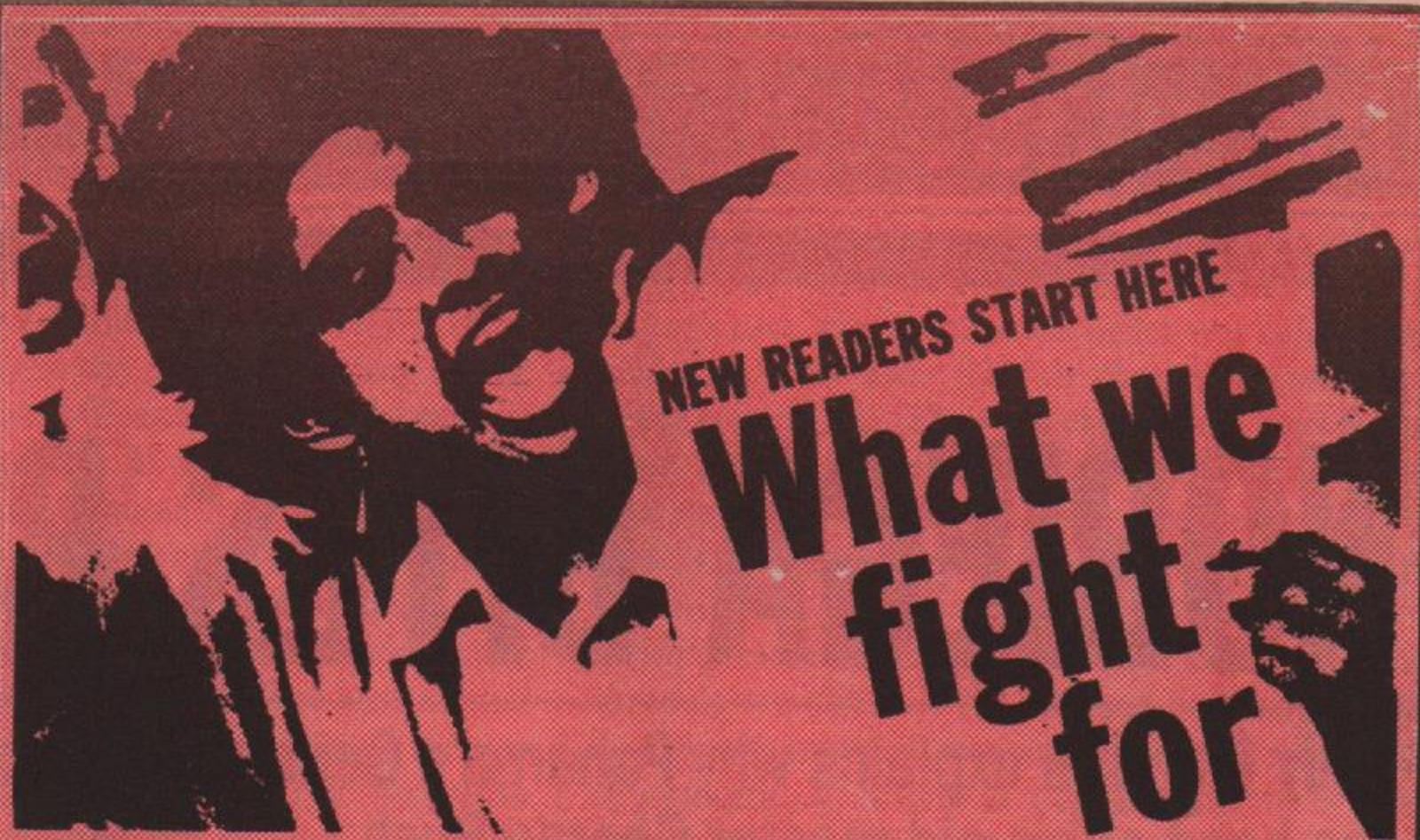
Conventional

In a world in which war is a daily reality for millions in the third world and a growing threat everywhere it is vital that the working class in the West takes a stand against militarism. In Britain that means challenging the policies of the Tories and Labour, which seek to unite people behind the flag and against foreigners.

The Revolutionary Communist Party does not accept that the defence of British interests is a legitimate concern for the working class.

The interests at stake are those of British capitalists, not of ordinary people. Our interests lie in uniting with all those who suffer at the hands of imperialism against the capitalist class which benefits from militarist adventures.

If we want peace we have to oppose all forms of militarism. Today, when conventional warfare is a lethal threat to millions, it makes sense to focus our energies on campaigning against this expression of Western militarism. Our role is to oppose the conventional wars being fought by the imperialist powers today, especially those that are fought under the banner of the Union Jack.



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

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

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

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

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

The British state exists to protect the wealth and privilege of the capitalist class. The RCP aims to destroy the state, which maintains the conditions for exploitation. We believe that the state cannot be used for progressive ends. Any attempt to use the 'soft' side of the state, such as local government, inner-city partnership, or police authorities, lends legitimacy to the entire state apparatus. It can only strengthen the authority of the capitalists' coercive machine.

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

The class struggle is inextricably linked to the struggle against imperialism. The RCP supports all anti-imperialist struggles. Workers who live in the imperialist heartland

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

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

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

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

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

If you would like to discuss these issues further, please write to: RCP, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or phone (01) 375 1702.

PANAMA

NORIEGA BITES BACK

Andy Clarkson explains why Panama's General Noriega has bitten the hand of his old master George Bush

Ronald Reagan's failure to oust Panamanian strongman General Manuel Antonio Noriega last year made him the butt of many a joke among the inhabitants of the Central American republic. They laughed about how the leader of the most powerful nation in the world had been humiliated by the tinpot dictator of their tiny country: 'Have you heard that Noriega and the White House have made a deal? Reagan has agreed to quit his post in January.' If George Bush follows in Reagan's footsteps and fails to deal decisively with Panama, the USA will be an even bigger laughing stock.

Nothing better illustrates the crisis of US imperialism than its inability to impose its will on a former colony in its own 'backyard'. As its formidable economic power has waned over the past decade, the USA has relied increasingly on military might to make its weight felt. Yet after the recent events in Panama, every country in the world is asking why, if America truly is the policeman of the world, it can be pushed around by an upstart dictator.

The issue at stake in Panama is the USA's credibility as a world power.

At the turn of the century US president Theodore Roosevelt spelled out America's policy in Latin America: 'Talk softly and carry a big stick.' He set an example for his successors by taking Panama from Colombia by force in 1903 so that the USA could build the Panama Canal. To keep the canal safe for US imperialism the Americans rigged every subsequent election held in Panama. General Noriega is a graduate of this school of American diplomacy.

As an agent for the CIA from the early seventies, Noriega smuggled drugs, ran arms and carried out assassinations on order from Washington. As long as he was eating out of their hands, Noriega's US masters could find no fault with the Panamanian gangster. But as soon as he was obliged by domestic pressures to bite the hand that fed him, the USA denounced Noriega as a drug-runner and tried to drive him out of office. This dramatic transformation in relations between America and Panama was the result of the impact of the world recession on the

Central American republic.

The world recession of the early eighties hit the Panamanian economy hard and provoked a militant response from the masses. Noriega was forced to resort to anti-imperialist gestures to deflect popular protest away from his regime. This set him on a course of conflict with Washington, which decided unwisely to make his downfall a test of US decisiveness.

But while Reagan and Bush have talked loudly about getting rid of Noriega, so far they have held back from wielding a big stick against him for fear of destabilising the entire region.

Bush has accused Noriega of rigging the election

results and stealing power from the opposition. But Washington is not to be trusted as an impartial upholder of the democratic process in Central America. In March the US congress observer team declared that El Salvador's elections, won by the death-squad party Arena, were conducted freely and fairly. Team leader senator Mitch McConnell dismissed fears that the killing of 17 civilians by the army was responsible for the low turnout and Arena's victory:

'To say that the democratic process was marred because of [the deaths] is a conclusion none of us is disposed to make. The real story is that, despite the violence, democracy works.' (*New York Review of Books*, 18 May)

When its stooges carry out the election-rigging as in El Salvador, Washington declares that it is in the best democratic tradition. But when an anti-American regime goes to the polls as in Panama, the USA is the first to denounce the elections as undemocratic.

US politicians cited an opinion poll to back up their claim that opposition leader Guillermo Endara should now be considered Panama's head of state. In fact far from being the champion of the Panamanian people, the opposition is the creature of US imperialism. Andrew Gilmour of the Centre for

Strategic and Policy Studies in Washington has confessed that the CIA spent \$10m on funding the opposition election campaign. After failing to manoeuvre the opposition into power, America airlifted 2000 US troops into the canal zone to intimidate Noriega. This act of military blackmail does not count as interference in the democratic process of course.

Bush's pious lectures about democracy in Panama are the height of hypocrisy. Former assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs Elliott Abrams has admitted that Bush's anti-Noriega measures have nothing to do with restoring democracy in Panama. On the contrary they are designed to encourage a coup in the 15 000-strong Panamanian defence forces. The influential American magazine *Newsweek* has confirmed that the US drugs enforcement agency still has ties with this outfit.

Get him out

The irony is that it was through the narcotic rackets run by the DEA that Noriega attained such immense wealth and power as head of the Panamanian defence forces after 1983. The Americans are now trying to cultivate a rebellion in the general's former power base. Last weekend Bush called for a 'popular rising', but made it clear that he expected the PDF to take the lead in ousting Noriega: 'I would love to see the PDF get him out.' He promised that the USA would have good relations with the Panamanian people and the PDF if the general was deposed.

Washington aims to replace one troublesome dictator with another who will do its bidding.

The USA is having to scratch about looking for a replacement for Noriega because it dare not intervene directly against him. If America invaded, or even reneged on the 1977 treaty which commits it to hand back the Panama Canal in 1999, the chances are that every Latin American country would side with Panama. South of the Rio Grande there has been a muted response to the US president's appeal for a united front against Noriega. The fact that Bush has to request Latin American permission before he can think of using a big stick against Panama is a telling sign of the decline of US power.



Noriega: the Panamanian gangster has turned against his White House godfather

NICARAGUA

ORTEGA'S MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

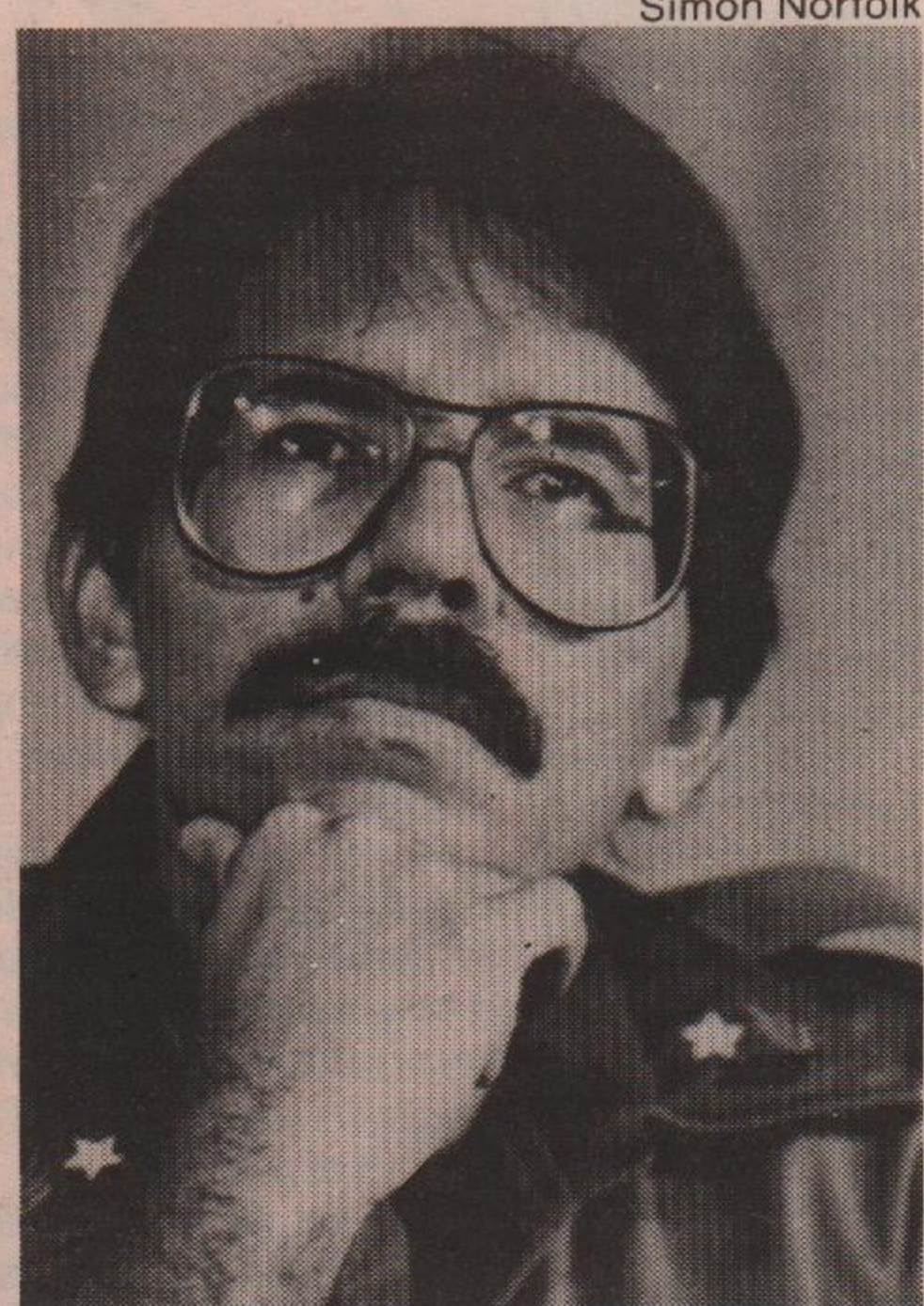
Nicaragua's president Daniel Ortega flew back home from his European tour of 10 countries with just enough dollars to save the economy from collapse. He was after \$250m to keep the country afloat while his economic reforms take effect. Ortega anticipated that economic aid would be forthcoming from France, Italy, Spain, West Germany, Ireland and the Scandinavian countries. But his biggest hopes were invested in his British visit.

The Nicaraguan leader was looking to Margaret Thatcher for political support rather than financial sustenance. His aim was to neutralise Thatcher's hostility to improved relations between Europe and Nicaragua. Ortega also wanted the British prime minister to act as a go-between with the USA, which refuses to listen to the small Central American country. His mission failed miserably in achieving this central goal.

Courting the West

Nicaragua has gone out of its way to show its commitment to Western-style democracy. The Nicaraguan economy has been ravaged by the US-backed Contra war, starved of economic funds and devastated by Hurricane Joan. Inflation is running into five figures and there is no money in the banks to pay the interest on the foreign debt to gain access to new credits. The economy is now at breaking point thanks to the West. Yet Ortega has made further concessions to Western demands.

In February Nicaragua signed the Central American peace treaty for a negotiated settlement to the conflict in the region. Ortega agreed to hold elections in February 1990, open up the media to his opponents and set free about 2000 members of



Simon Norfolk

the hated national guard, whose record of torture under the former dictator Anastasia Somoza is notorious. He has imposed IMF-style austerity measures, cutting the public sector budget by 28 per cent, and axing the jobs of 11 000 state employees who have been told to go to the countryside to pick coffee.

Ortega hoped that all these measures would

convince the USA of his commitment to democracy. He was wrong. Now he hopes that by mustering European support he can put pressure on America. The USA is determined that he shall not succeed. According to Nicaraguan sources Ortega's visit to each country was preceded by a phone call from Washington warning them against attending the Stockholm conference to discuss aid for the country.

US warnings fell on deaf ears in France, where president François Mitterrand promised to increase economic aid. President Felipe Gonz lez of Spain gave full support to Nicaragua's economic and political reforms, and promised to find the economic aid in cash payments. Although they might seem generous in their offers of aid, we can be sure that there is not a trace of altruism in these gestures. Nicaragua is trying to overhaul its economy to suit the West, and countries like Spain and France aim to make the most of the opening.

Cold shouldered

Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany refused to unfreeze his blockade of economic aid to Nicaragua. But Thatcher's frosty reception for the visiting president made Kohl's refusal seem positively hospitable. She echoed the Contra line in blaming Nicaragua's problems on the Sandinistas. Ignoring the government's austerity measures and political concessions, Thatcher declared that she was not encouraged by its economic performance and had considerable doubts about its commitment to democracy. This was rich coming from somebody who spent last week ingratiating herself with visiting Nigerian dictator General Babangida who took power in a military coup.

Stefanie Boston

Revolutionary Communist Party Regional Dayschools

COMMUNISM AFTER GLASNOST

The Western media are gloating over recent developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The message behind *glasnost* seems to be 'bring back the market—communism does not work'.

We are organising discussions around the country to counter this celebration of capitalism. The aim is to provide a forum for a critical assessment of developments in the East, and their consequences for us in the West.

Discussions on:

Marx and communism
Soviet Union • Eastern Europe
Third world • Is a revolution possible today?

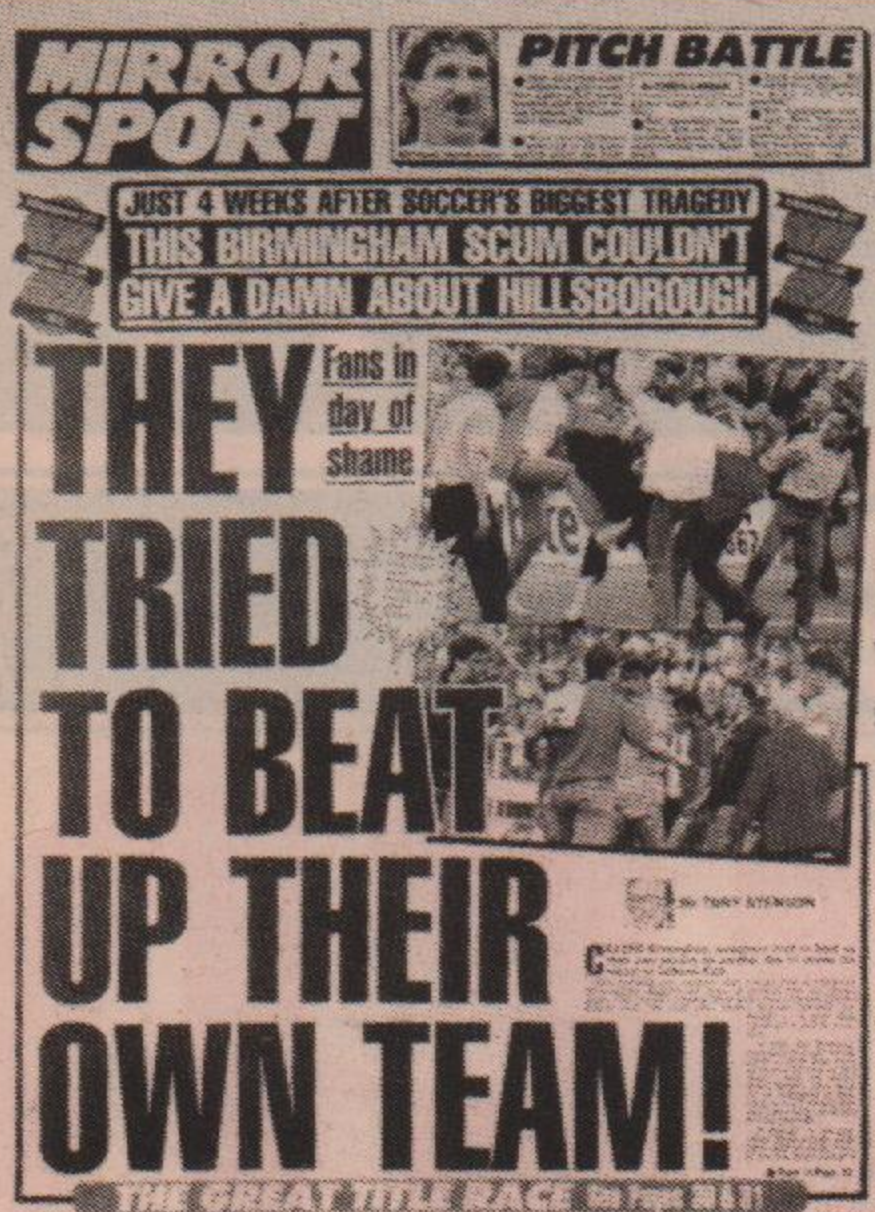
Newcastle Region

Saturday 20 May, 1pm
Tyneside Cinema, 10 Pilgrim Street

Northern Region

Saturday 27 May, 11am
Manchester Polytechnic, Mandela Building,
Oxford Road, Manchester

For further details ring
(01) 375 1702



You'll never see the truth by looking in the Mirror

RETURN OF THE HOOLIGAN PANIC

Was it a coincidence that, according to the police and the media, large-scale football violence reappeared on Saturday, just two days before the inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster opened? How convenient for the authorities who want to focus the post-Hillsborough discussion on hooliganism rather than the policing of football matches. It was all a bit too much of a coincidence, and a little too convenient to be believed.

Most of the hysterical media coverage of Saturday's trouble focused on the Crystal Palace v Birmingham match, where 'crazed' Brummies were said to have invaded the pitch, attacking Palace fans and even trying to beat up their own players. 'This Birmingham scum couldn't give a damn about Hillsborough' declared the *Mirror*; unlike Maxwell's paper of course, which cared so much about the 95 deaths that it tried to use them to boost its flagging circulation by raising its cover price and pledging to donate the extra 2p to the disaster fund.

The Birmingham supporters who travelled to London for Saturday's match were a rather strange example of 'scum'. Many of them were wearing fancy dress (vicars' outfits being particularly popular) for a long-planned carnival occasion: their team had already been relegated, it was their last match in the second division, and they were determined to make the most of it. Before the game they mingled with Palace fans, without any trouble arising, in pubs around Selhurst Park stadium.

When this larger than usual contingent of Birmingham fans arrived at the ground, however, the police packed them into a tiny section of the terracing.

A Hillsborough-style crush resulted. The only difference was that, because the fences at Selhurst Park were lower than at the Sheffield stadium, people at the front of the crowd were able to escape on to the pitch instead of being asphyxiated. The so-called pitch invasion was really a desperate attempt at self-preservation.

Birmingham fans spilled on to the pitch when Palace scored their first goal. They needed to score four more to stand a chance of automatic promotion to the first division. Some Palace supporters were infuriated by what they mistook for an attempt by Birmingham fans to disrupt the vital match. Fighting ensued, the police staged a cavalry charge and the media had a field day.

But the cause of the trouble, as at Hillsborough, was the policing tactics which treat football supporters as scum to be caged, even when they are dressed as vicars. Many of the injuries sustained at Selhurst Park were cracked ribs, which you get from being crushed on an overcrowded terrace, not from exchanging a few wild punches on the pitch.

The authorities want to use the distorted reporting of this and other incidents on Saturday to create the

right atmosphere around the Hillsborough inquiry. By turning the spotlight back on to hooliganism, they can distract attention from the true causes of the 95 deaths—the government crusade against football supporters and the repressive policing and security measures which result from that.

They can thus turn the disaster they caused into an argument for an even tougher crackdown.

We have argued all along that the panic about football hooliganism is a political ploy used to excuse the introduction of the methods of a police state. While the media concentrated on Selhurst Park last Saturday, unreported events back at Hillsborough were providing dramatic confirmation of our case.

Hillsborough is the home ground of Sheffield Wednesday, and on Saturday they were playing Middlesbrough in a vital relegation tussle. But because the Leppings Lane end of the ground, where the Liverpool fans died, has been closed for the duration of the inquiry, Middlesbrough were given only 1500 tickets for the match rather than the 6000 they requested.

The police warned that Middlesbrough fans without tickets might cause a repeat of what happened at the FA Cup semi-final. They used this excuse to set up road blocks on the route into Sheffield, to stop any car which they decided was carrying football fans.

Anybody with a Teesside accent who could not produce a ticket was refused entry to the city.

This sort of restriction on the right to drive down a motorway was last seen during the miners' strike of 1984, when police stopped carloads of pickets and turned them back. Then, it sparked criticisms from many who pointed out that this illegal police action was an unprecedented attack on civil liberties. On Saturday, however, the same operation was carried out without a whisper of complaint, because it was executed under cover of the hyped-up panic about the threat from football hooligans.

The threat to our rights and safety comes from the systematic increase in the powers of uniformed state agents, not from skirmishing by a few football fans in fancy dress.

Mick Hume

DEPORTED FOR USING A PHONE

Samira Elaadouli discovered last week that, for a black person, the price of a few phone calls is deportation. Moroccan-born Elaadouli was maid to the Duchess of Argyll whose social skills didn't extend to so much as boiling a kettle of water. In return for skivvying day and night in the duchess's £20 000-a-year penthouse suite in Mayfair's Grosvenor House Hotel, she was paid the royal sum of £30 a week—which is less than even John 'I can see no poverty' Moore pays out to claimants.

But when Elaadouli had the temerity to use the duchess's phone to ring home she was hauled up before a crown court judge, and charged with 'stealing electricity'. Judge Anwyl-Davies accused her of 'taking advantage of your benefactress'. He sentenced her to three months imprisonment, fined her £600 costs and recommended that she be deported back to Morocco.

MINISTER FOR POVERTY

Social security minister John Moore abolished poverty last week, claiming that everyone in Britain is 'affluent'. So the next time your £69 income support runs out before the end of the fortnight, remember you're not feeling the pinch of poverty: you're just facing up to a spot of inequality.

According to Moore, poverty 'in the old absolute sense of hunger and want' is dead. He acknowledged

that in Victorian times, when the basic minimum supper was 'eight ounces of bread, two ounces of cheese and a pint of vegetable broth', poverty existed. Today, however, even the poorest section of the community enjoys an 'affluence beyond the wildest dreams' of the Victorians. 'It is hard to believe that poverty stalks the land', he added, 'when even the poorest fifth of families with children spend nearly a tenth of their income on alcohol and tobacco'.

In fact the inequality which Moore celebrates is so profound as to reduce claimants to the bare animal existence allowed by the Victorian poor laws. Income support scale rates are based on the minimum nutritional needs required for survival. Just two pounds a week is included for so-called 'luxuries', listed in the department of social security *S-Manual* as tobacco or confectionaries or a television.

Moore wants to bury poverty because he knows that Tory policies are creating more immiseration. His own department has just published figures showing a drop in the value of benefits over the past three years. A couple with three children on income support who got 47.2 per cent of average earnings in July 1986 now get 41.1 per cent. The glossy new campaign to promote family credit, the government's miserly handout to families living on poverty-line wages, is itself an advertisement for the poverty which prevails in Thatcher's Britain.

One eminent Victorian, Karl Marx, said of the poor laws that poverty was so widespread that the British had made it into an institution. Whatever the Tories would have us believe, it is an institution that is very much with us today.

James Heartfield

Simon Norfolk



The John Moore philosophy: less means more

HADRIAN'S WALL AND THE HOME OFFICE



The Hussains: cheated by British justice

The home office is going to destroy our whole family life. Babar Hussain, a 29-year-old from Pollockshields, Glasgow, speaks with anger at the threat Britain's racist immigration laws pose to him and his family.

Babar came to Britain from Pakistan in October 1983 to attend his sister's wedding. The following September he married Roheela, who has lived in Glasgow all her life. The government has refused to accept his relationship with Roheela, calling it a 'marriage of convenience', and is now set to deport Babar, whatever the cost to himself, Roheela and their three-year old son Zohaib.

In August 1988 the government changed the law to

exclude the right of appeal on compassionate grounds for anyone who hasn't lived here for seven years. In Babar's case, the deportation order was deliberately held back until after the rule change to ensure any appeal would fail. 'They just cheated us', says Babar. 'They are dealing with us very cruelly because they just want to kick me out.' For a system intent on attacking black people, compassionate grounds do not exist.

Supporters of the Hussains have set up a defence campaign to publicise the case and build support for it. A public meeting was well-attended and a picket of immigration offices at Glasgow airport is being organised. But the most important thing is to win working class support for the right of the Hussains to stay in Britain. In the forthcoming by-election in Glasgow Central, the Revolutionary Communist Party candidate Linda Murdoch will be doing just that in her election campaign.

'If I was not black', says Babar, 'there would be no problem in getting a permanent stay in this country. These laws are made for black people. They are racist. They just throw us away.' In January the murder of a black student by racists in Edinburgh exposed the myth that racism does not exist in Scotland. And the treatment of the Hussains proves that Hadrian's Wall is no barrier to state racism.

Sean Anderson

POLICE TERRORISTS TURN UP IN STOKE-ON-TRENT

David Rourke



An Irish accent response unit

The residents of Hartshill in Stoke-on-Trent found themselves in the middle of a paramilitary police operation last week. Roads were sealed off, houses evacuated, armed police patrolled the streets and a helicopter hovered overhead. A house in Wilfred Place was surrounded and 40 officers in SWAT riot gear and armed with rifles smashed down the front door. Others in blue overalls used dogs to carry out an inch-by-inch search of the house.

Why the hysteria? Two men with Irish accents were 'acting suspiciously' in the town centre. The pair were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Hartshill turned into a set for *Rambo*. The national press ran front-page stories linking the men with the bombing of Tern Hill barracks in Shropshire in February and last December's discovery of a 'bomb factory' in Clapham, south London.

In fact, Staffordshire police had to admit that they had nothing at all on the two men, but wanted to make sure 'no subversive activity' was involved because of the 'nationality' of the men. In other words if you are Irish you are fair game for the police. As their landlady pointed out 'they stuck out because there are not many Irish people in this area'.

For months now the authorities have used ever-more ludicrous stories about an IRA gang on the run to whip up a climate of fear. From Clapham to Farnham to Stoke-on-Trent, the police have launched paramilitary operations to terrorise the public and maintain the hysteria. As last week's operation showed all it takes is two men with Irish accents to bring armed police on to the streets of Britain.

HOME OFFICE HOUNDS KURDISH REFUGEES

400 Kurdish refugees fleeing persecution, torture and death are being treated like cattle by the British government

SNATCHED

When the refugees arrived at Gatwick airport last week, the cells were already full of immigrants. Immigration officials reluctantly gave the Kurds temporary permission to enter the country. They told Hackney's Turkish community that it was their responsibility to look after the new arrivals. Since then the refugees have been sleeping on floors, tables and corridors in community centres in the borough.

One refugee explained why he was forced to flee Turkey and seek political asylum in Britain: 'The army was running riot through my village. Soldiers were ordering old people to strip naked and run through the streets. Three of my friends were arrested, locked in solitary confinement and tortured. Kurds are forbidden to speak Kurdish, listen to Kurdish music, or identify themselves in any way as being Kurdish. My brother has been sentenced to hang because he was a member of the banned Kurdistan Workers Party. He was just 19.'

Immigration officers have so far interviewed 20

refugees—and sent 12 back to Turkey. They asked the Kurds whether they had been involved in 'political activity'. Fearing that they would be kicked out of the country as troublemakers, they all said 'No'. The officials told them they had nothing to fear, and put them on the next plane back.

The government has put pressure on the Turkish authorities and airlines to prevent more refugees coming to Britain. The Turkish government has promised to take 'all necessary measures' to stop Kurds leaving the country. That can only mean even greater repression for the Kurdish people. And the government here has announced plans to impose even greater restrictions by demanding visas from anyone coming from Turkey.

The Kurds have every right not only to come to Britain, but to live here in decent conditions. We defend the right of the Kurds to stay in this country, not simply because they are refugees fleeing terror, but because we support the right of all workers to enter Britain freely.

Simon Norfolk



Simon Norfolk

ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FIGHT BACK

Asquad of immigration officials and uniformed police swooped on a clothing factory in Dalston, east London, last Wednesday and arrested 10 Turkish workers. The raid is the latest in an official crackdown on illegal immigrants. But this time the authorities failed in their bid to send them packing on the next plane out of Heathrow. The Turkish community marched down to Dalston police station and forced them to release the 10 men.

Over the past year the government has taken an increasingly hard line against immigrants. The home office has set up a new police squad based at Heathrow whose job is to hunt down the estimated 30 000 illegal workers in this country: 1988 was a record year for deportations, with 1388 people being sent back, a 50 per cent increase on 1987. The Turkish community has

been singled out for special treatment by the immigration squads.

In March police raided a Dalston clothing factory, arrested 40 Turkish workers and immediately deported nine. Such raids are now a way of life for the Turkish community in east London. But the response of the Turkish community shows what can be done if we stand up for our rights. A 4000-strong protest march was the angry reaction of the local community to the earlier raid. The response to the latest attack was dramatic. Within minutes the Turkish community centre announced the police action over its tannoy and urged people to march down to the factory. Some 300 people took to the streets, picking up 100 more as they left the factory to march to Dalston police station.

'The police became very nervous', says Mustafa Kasacein from the Turkish community centre.

'After a long talk with our leader they released the workers. They put no preconditions and the workers are back in our community. The police backed down because of the big picket.' After this humiliation the police have been concerned to make sure it does not happen again. 'A chief inspector came down to our community centre', said Mustafa. 'He said he understood the anger, but the police had to stop illegal immigrants and it was in the best interests of the community centre to help the police stabilise the situation.'

But the Turkish community is not about to help the police harass its own people. 'I work with Turkish immigrants all the time', says Mustafa. 'I must hear of about two cases every day. An interpreter told me that they were working from 7am to 7pm every day of the week to deal with all the workers that the immigration workers bring in.'

Last Friday I know of three illegal immigrants who were arrested. One political refugee was sent back to Turkey almost immediately.

'The police in Dalston have also been stepping up their surveillance of the Turkish community. Turks walking in the street have been stopped and searched to prove they are not illegal. We need a big political campaign to beat the police, including the trade unions and political parties. Otherwise the police will get away with their treatment.'

The Turkish community's action last week showed how we can stop the immigration snatch squads. We need to ensure that the police face the same response every time they threaten a worker with deportation.

Nigel Lewis

HOUNDED

HASSAN is a Turkish worker who came to Britain in 1983 because his wife needed medical treatment not available in Turkey. He obtained a one-month temporary visa. When his wife's treatment became extended, he got a job as a building worker to support them. Under Britain's racist immigration rules he was now deemed an illegal immigrant and hunted down like a common criminal. Last month, the immigration snatch squads caught up with him.

'I was working on a building site in Gravesend when a squad of plain clothes immigration

police arrived on site. They had been tipped off that illegal Asian workers were employed there. When I could provide no details of my identity, they arrested me on the spot and took me to the police cells.

'The police tried to force me to sign my own deportation—they said it would be very bad for me and my wife if they had to compulsorily deport me. I said I would not sign and demanded a lawyer. They asked me "Who the bloody hell do you think you are?" and became very angry and intimidating. They removed my shoes from me and forced me into a filthy, damp cell.

'Then they sent me to Harmondsworth. The guards there were just as inhuman as the police. They told us the fence around the camp was electrified so we could not escape and refused us our rights to phone our families. My wife was in a state of deep shock. She had been to the police station but they refused her any information. They even challenged her to provide

details of her own right to be in Britain!

'The police in Britain might not torture and murder workers as they do in Turkey, but they are just the same. They tried to make me feel inhuman and worthless so they could deport me, and lied to me and my wife. We are now under threat of deportation.'

KEMEL is a 24-year old student. A journalist in Turkey, he was tortured for his political activities. Two weeks ago he took a job in a restaurant to support himself.

'On my third day at work, three immigration police came. They took the names of all the workers and checked them off on a list. They couldn't find us on any of their lists but they became suspicious about me because I had no identification on me. They arrested me and bundled me off to Kennington police station. I was kept there for four days. When I asked for a solicitor, they said "Yes, but first you must tell us

everything". They even filled out a deportation order in front of my eyes.

'My passport was at the home office so I could not prove my right to be in Britain. Because I had no work permit, they said I was working illegally and would be deported. When I kept asking for a solicitor they became very angry and abusive. A duty solicitor was eventually sent to my cell but only spent 10 minutes with me. He said he would ring back in three days!

'I was moved from Kennington to a prison called the Lambeth Holding Centre where the police refused all of us toilet facilities and threatened us with truncheons. After four days the police had to release me. If I had not demanded my rights, I am sure that I would now be back in Turkey. Something has to be done to stop what happened to me happening to other workers. When I was in prison in Turkey they tried to treat me like an animal. Now they are doing the same in Britain!'