

the next step

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review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p



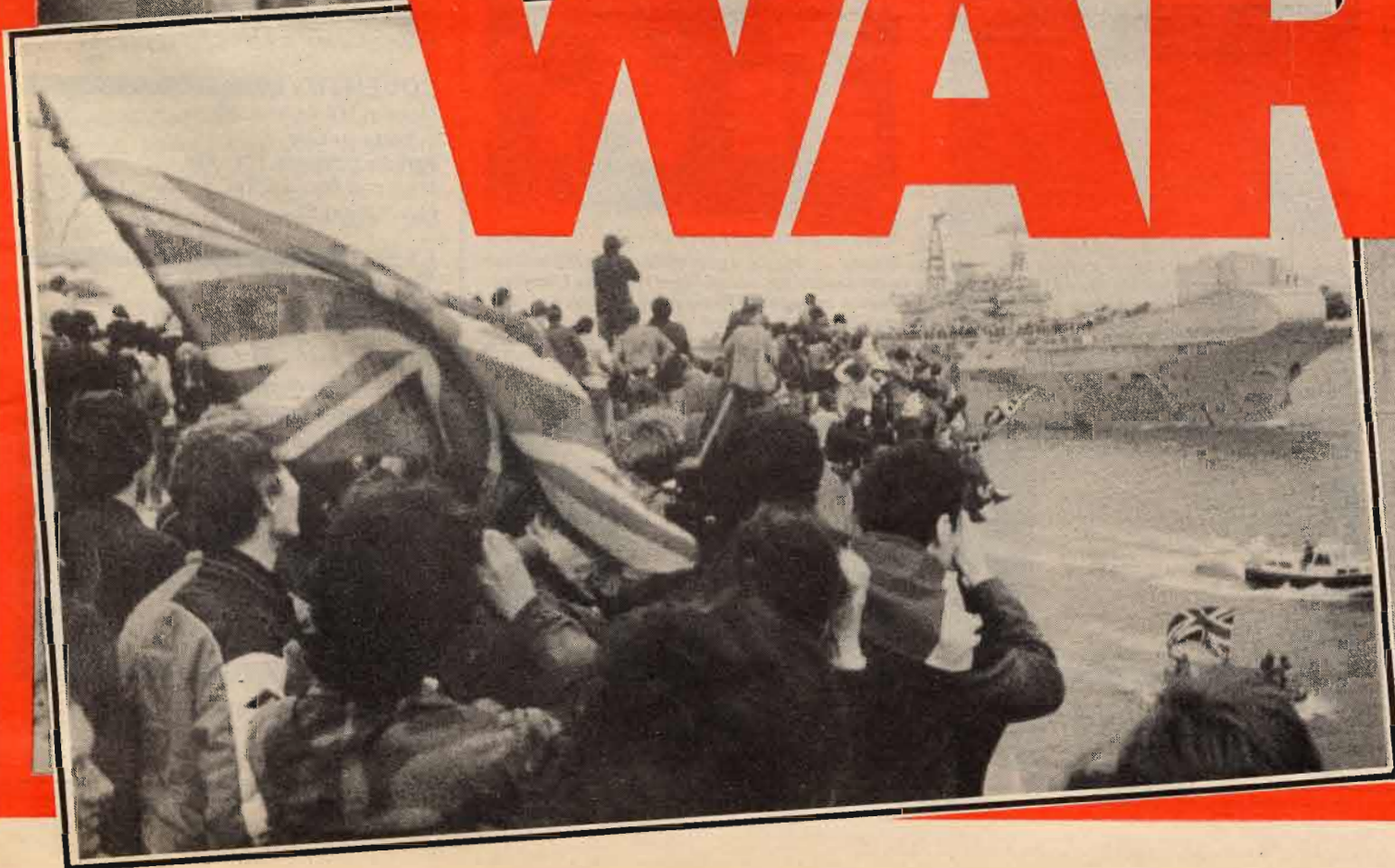
IF YOU WANT

PEACE...

FIGHT

AGAINST

WAR



Inside:
NVDA to disaster
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Women-take sides
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Fight the Irish arrests!

In recent weeks Irish Freedom Movement activists in West London have been subjected to constant harassment by uniformed and plain-clothes police. We have been prevented from selling *the next step* and holding street-meetings on the Irish War. To date, four people have been arrested, searched, fingerprinted and charged with obstruction. We are determined to resist this attempt to silence protest on Britain's war in Ireland. You can help by joining our regular street activities and by sending money to help us fight the charges.

Rush donations to:

The Irish Freedom Movement
 BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

You've read about us in *the next step*, now see us in action:

- in solidarity with black workers on strike
 - fighting police harassment
 - organising against the race checks
- Order the new Workers Against Racism video now to show in your trade union branch, youth club or college. Invitations for speakers welcomed.

33 minutes, colour — £5 to hire
 Write to:
 WORKERS AGAINST RACISM,
 BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX
 or telephone 01-274 3951

PTA week of action



'Any nation that oppresses another forges its own chains' — Marx's words on the leading banner (top) of the Irish Freedom Movement's centenary commemoration march from Highgate Cemetery. Phil Murphy lays a wreath after speeches at the graveside (middle). The week's activities included speeches to the public outside the High Court (bottom left) and a picket of Hammersmith Police Station (bottom right) against police harassment of Irish activists in the area. Similar protests were carried out by IFM groups around the country

RCP Activities

LONDON
 Real Freedom: the last two in a series of discussions on the fight for women's liberation and socialism

Thursday 7 April 7.30pm
The equal opportunities fraud: women and the unions
 Speaker: Helen Simons

Thursday 14 April 7.30pm
A woman's place: women and the revolutionary party
 Speaker: Judy Harrison

Camden Library, Compton Close,
 Robert St, N1 — near Warren St. tube
 Creche available

MANCHESTER
 Living Marxism
 Friday 8 April 7.30pm
The Marxist theory of capitalist crisis — its relevance today

Friday 15 April 7.30pm
The dictatorship of the proletariat — an outdated concept?

Friday 22 April 7.30pm
British Marxism — a revolutionary critique

Friday 29 April 7.30pm
Marxism and Labourism

Friday 6 May 7.30pm
Marxism, the working class and the revolutionary party

All meetings will be held in the Black Lion Hotel, 65, Chapel St, Salford
 £2 in advance for all five; or 50p per session

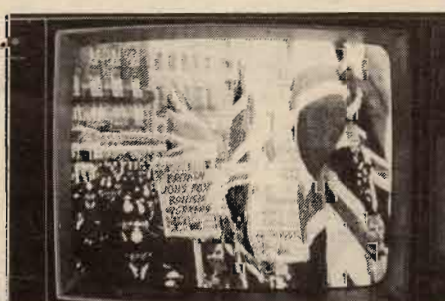
This Marx centenary series includes a guided tour of Marx's Manchester. For further details write to: Box 33, 164-166, Corn Exchange Building, Hanging Ditch, Manchester 4, or 'phone 01-274 3951

SHEFFIELD
 Friday 15 April 7.30pm
 Public meeting
Labour Party in crisis
 Speaker: Frank Richards
 Friends Meeting House, Harts Head

LIVERPOOL
 Wednesday 13 April 7.30pm
 Public meeting
Peace Camps: can they stop the drive to war?
 Speaker: Frank Richards
 McAusland Lounge,
 Old Students Union, Liverpool University,
 Mount Pleasant, Liverpool 3

COVENTRY
 Monday 18 April 7.30pm
 Public meeting
Police prepare for war
 Hare and Squirrel Pub,
 New Union St

LEEDS
 Thursday 14 April 7.30pm
 Public meeting
Labour Party in crisis
 Speaker: Frank Richards



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

Arthur Scargill and Ossie O'Brien: The credibility gap

MARCH was a good month for the British ruling class. The call of the leadership of the National Union of Mineworkers for strike action was rejected by the men at the pits – less than 40 per cent voted for industrial action. Employers in industry after industry reported that the unions were on the run and that 'realistic' settlements were being negotiated. In Parliament, opposition to the Government's budget was muted. Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition made only a pretence of protest – rambling on about the lack of compassion towards old age pensioners.

Unemployment haunts Britain – most people see it as the most important issue. But since the existing alternatives to the Government are seen as non-starters – unemployment is not a *political* issue. A credibility gap has opened up between the leadership of the official labour movement and the working class. Recent events in the coalfields give a clear expression to this trend.

Shadows over the pits

The Welsh miners' call for strike action was supported only in the pits of South Wales (68 per cent) and Kent (68 per cent). In Yorkshire (54 per cent) and Scotland (50 per cent) support was below the 55 per cent required for strike action. This setback is the latest in a series of defeated strike ballots. In January 1982, the NUM's call for strike action was supported by 45 per cent of the men. In November, only 40 per cent responded positively to Scargill's call for action for higher pay and against closures. In December 1982, a five-day underground sit-in at Kinneil colliery against the closure of the pit ended in defeat when the Scottish NUM executive refused to back the protest and accepted the closure.

These setbacks indicate not only an erosion of militancy but also the growth of sectionalism within the ranks of the NUM. The regions facing the greatest threat of closures – Kent, South Wales and Scotland – have been the ones most prepared to take on management. In contrast, the better-off members in the more productive areas have shown a marked reluctance to support calls for a strike.

The full might of Arthur Scargill's rhetorical powers cannot hide the fact that the defeat of the March strike ballot marks a real setback in the fight against pit closures. Last year the NUM executive pledged that it would not participate in talks with management about pit closures; after the announcement of the results of the ballot, Scargill changed his tune. He told the press that the NUM would lift its ban on consultations at all levels. This

opens the way for 'consultation' about the 70 to 90 pits that are on the National Coal Board's hit list.

Pinning the blame

Arthur Scargill had no doubts about who to blame for the fiasco. In his explanation of the defeat he pointed the finger at the union activists and to 'a tendency on the part of branches to put forward resolutions which, unfortunately, when the chips are down and the going gets rough, they are not prepared to translate into action' (*Financial Times*, 11 March). At first sight this explanation appears plausible – certainly the media likes to contrast the 'extremist' NUM leadership to the 'ordinary' miner. But Scargill's denunciation of NUM activists does the miners a disservice. Last December it was the national executive of the Scottish NUM that forced the miners at Kinneil to give up their fight. Workers at the Tymawr-Lewis Merthyr pit did not wait for a lead from the NUM executive – they took action on their own.

The blame lies elsewhere. The left wing of the NUM has a track-record that's no different from that of the right. Scargill's speech-making has been so much posturing. Since the 1974 Labour Government drew up the *Plan for Coal* in close collaboration with NUM leaders, 58 collieries have been shut down. Scargill's own Yorkshire fiefdom has experienced more closures than any other region – 19 pits were lost in the area. Since 1981 more than 23 000 jobs have disappeared in the coalfields. All this time, Scargill toured the country making wild gestures and empty promises. It is Scargill himself who is not prepared to 'translate into action' his words. While he was blustering about bringing the Government down, jobs were being quietly sold off in Yorkshire.

A problem of policy

It's not simply Scargill's personal track record that evokes scepticism. The NUM executive has pursued a policy which can only breed demoralisation among miners. Over the past decade the NUM leadership has developed a strategy of collaboration with the National Coal Board – a united effort to get the maximum resources for the mining industry. As a result, the NUM has been more concerned about promoting investment and protecting the markets of the NCB, than it has been about looking after its members. In the mid 'seventies this strategy was fairly effective. High oil prices and energy shortages increased demand and investment in coal grew. In recent years, however, the demand for coal has fallen and the industry is in decline.

After years of close collaboration with the NCB, the NUM has emerged as the main public spokesman for the coal industry. Indeed the union presents itself as the custodian of the best interests of the industry in the face of managerial incompetence, Tory Government attacks and international competition. The NUM has closely tied the interests of the workforce to those of the industry. Since for the NUM the future is guaranteed by state investments, rather than by rank and file action, the combativity of miners has been undermined. Moreover, the two sides of industry have been brought so close together that when conflicts occur miners often cannot see how to break out of this fatal embrace.

The NUM executive has simply ignored the contradiction between the interests of management and those of the miners. Over the past year NUM leaders have used every opportunity to emphasise the viability of the British coal industry. They have taken the lead in denouncing imports of foreign coal, the use of oil as an energy source and the nuclear power industry. Demands for more investment sound more hollow as British industry's energy consumption falls still further. Miners are sufficiently realistic to know that Scargill's demands for a new investment programme are a pipe-dream. They know that Scargill stands for a viable coal industry but they know that the coal industry cannot be made viable without pit closures, productivity deals and lower wages. Hence Scargill's credibility gap when he campaigns for industrial action against closures. The *Yorkshire Miner* and other NUM publications are full of denunciations of nuclear power and foreign coal. Instead of a strategy to fight for the independent interests of miners, the NUM gives lectures on alternative energy policies. In the end this can only demoralise the rank and file who are not offered an independent course of action.

The NUM's credibility gap has seriously weakened the power of the union. It has strengthened sectionalism and exacerbated divisions between pits that are productive – and therefore pay high bonuses – and pits that have no future. The lack of leadership has forced miners to look to their own immediate circumstances and get the best possible deal for their own pit. The workforce itself reflects the trauma of the recession. Less than half of today's miners took part in the 1972 and 1974 strikes. Many of the older men took voluntary redundancy, and the younger generation has little experience of militant struggle. Class instincts are weaker – the NUM leadership's investment strategy has made sure of that.

The paralysis of the coalfields in the face of a capitalist onslaught aptly summarises the crisis of Labourism. Scargill's credibility gap is simply a reflection of the same corrupting influence that afflicts every union and the Labour Party itself. The gap between Scargill's rhetoric and his ability to deliver the goods is particularly striking because the miners are generally seen as the most militant section of the labour movement. Others have simply stopped posturing. While the Labour leadership assessed the consequences of Scargill's defeat, the leaders of the civil service unions worked quickly behind the scenes for a face saving formula that would allow them to accept the Government's patronising offer.

Nothing to say

The profound crisis of Labourism was open to public view during the Darlington by-election campaign. In the past the Labour Party has claimed with great pride that it was the party of *issues* and not of *personalities*. In 1983 the Labour leaders are without issues – and they have no answers to any of the important questions.

In Darlington, the party distinguished itself by ignoring political issues altogether. Instead one Shadow Cabinet minister after another trooped down to Darlington to announce that their local candidate Ossie O'Brien was of sterling quality. James Callaghan spent a day telling anyone within hearing distance that Ossie was the best candidate he had seen in 10 years. Michael Foot, Denis Healey, Roy Hattersley and the rest lined up to have their picture taken alongside the famous candidate.

The Ossie O'Brien factor reflects an almost obsessive yearning for respectability. Tony Benn and the Labour left were not welcomed in middle-of-the-road Darlington. It was the party's way of saying that it was prepared to cringe, crawl and grovel to try to hold the machine together with its fragile leader in place. The leaders of the official labour movement have given up any more ambitious objective than ensuring their own survival. To guarantee their own positions they are prepared, like Scargill, to say anything, or like Michael Foot, to say nothing at all.

The month of March has provided many more convincing reasons for building a new labour movement. Never before has the need for a revolutionary alternative been so necessary even for the defence of the most elementary gains of the working class. From the pits of South Wales to Darlington, tens of thousands of workers are looking for answers. It is our responsibility to ensure that they get them.

Revolutionary Communist Party

The programme we need

THE PROGRAMME of a revolutionary party flows from its analysis of the prevailing material conditions and the rhythm of the class struggle. The programme provides a focus for the mobilisation of the working class in preparation for the destruction of the bourgeois state. Thus the programme is not a statement of general principles — rather it gives expression to the underlying contradictions of the capitalist system and points the way to the resolution of these contradictions from the point of view of the working class.

Transforming demands

A programme is not a manual with all the answers. It provides a strategic perspective for uniting the working class around the critical issues of the day. By its very nature, a revolutionary programme has a dynamic, changing character. It must incorporate the experiences of the working class, draw out the lessons and reformulate them in line with the independent interests of the working class. The class struggle itself throws up partial responses to immediate problems; the revolutionary programme takes these responses and transforms them into a consistently anti-capitalist perspective. Thus in 1917 Lenin rewrote the Bolshevik party programme in response to new developments. Until that time the programme never raised the question of workers' control. This demand was programmatically assimilated once Russian workers began to take over their factories and workshops. The motives behind the movement for control were diverse and complex — the Bolsheviks extracted the revolutionary potential from the movement, clarified it in their perspectives and codified it in their programme.

Many workers who do not see the necessity for revolution nevertheless engage in activities that threaten the rule of capital. In times of social crisis new organisations emerge and new demands are put forward. A programme must articulate the anti-capitalist aspirations behind workers' struggles and point out how these aspirations can be realised. It must outline a strategy for transforming spontaneous struggles into a conscious striving for power.

To be effective a programme must reflect the stage of the class struggle, the maturity of the proletariat and the strength of the revolutionary movement. If the programme fails to do all these things, then it will be doomed to irrelevance: it will become a shopping list of fine principles without consequences. The programme we need must confront the problem of establishing a proletarian vanguard. It must provide the means of uniting active workers and other anti-capitalist forces. A revolutionary programme has to act as a bridge between the struggles of today and the seizure of state power. Today, this means drawing active workers into struggles that will lead them to see the bankruptcy of reformist solutions. Fighting reformism must be given top priority, because unless we can weaken its influence no significant gains can be made.

“ A revolutionary programme has to act as a bridge between the struggles of today and the seizure of state power. ”

The working class has seen very few successful revolutionary programmes. Indeed, history provides us with mostly negative lessons and many examples of mistakes to avoid. The main problem we face today is that our programme can only be as strong



**OUR FUTURE—
IN OUR HANDS
VOTE EDEN**

Revolutionary Communist Party

Looking towards the General Election: the RCP's poster for the Bermondsey by-election

Within the next 12 months there will be a general election in Britain. The strength and confidence of the Tories stands in marked contrast to the feebleness and vacillation of the Labour opposition. Every opinion poll and election contest reflects the public perception of this contrast. The crisis of the existing leadership of the labour movement in the depths of capitalist recession reveals the urgent need for a new working class leadership. New leadership demands new politics, a new programme through which the working class can tackle the problems thrown up by the crisis in the process of creating a new order of society. In the next few months the Revolutionary Communist Party will be drawing up a programme appropriate to our needs today. Forthcoming issues of *the next step* will cover different aspects of our developing programme and discussion around it. We welcome our readers comments and contributions to this process of debate and clarification. Here Frank Richards outlines the elements of a working class programme for the 'eighties.

as our party. Yet it must be a programme with which the party can fight and extend its influence in the working class. The political influence of the RCP circumscribes its programmatic development.

The main error of past attempts to draw up working class programmes has been the inability of left-wing parties to overcome the 'minimum/maximum' problem. Thus many labour movement programmes have combined demands for 'minimum' reforms in the capitalist system with 'maximum' calls for socialist revolution. Often there was no connection between the two. More radical organisations have tended to emphasise maximum demands for socialism — in an irrelevant and ultimatic way. More often, opportunism has prevailed, and long-term objectives have been forgotten in the heat of immediate struggles for piecemeal reforms. Today virtually the entire British left falls into this trap.

We have succeeded in avoiding this mistake, not by raising impossible demands, but by fighting around carefully selected issues in such a way as to raise the consciousness of the participants and show the necessity for overthrowing the bourgeois state. Thus we have concentrated

on the Irish War, racism, women's oppression, with the aim of directing activities on these key issues in British politics in a coherently anti-capitalist direction.

A second, related problem is the need to overcome the gap between the existing consciousness of the working class and its objective tasks. At present, many essential objectives are seen as irrelevant by the large majority of working class people. In response to this state of affairs, the left has either narrowed its objectives to what is 'realistic' or withdrawn into preaching to itself. Our solution has been to relate to the most conscious section of the working class, to attempt to draw the more politically aware workers towards the pole of revolution.

The third problem concerns the content of the revolutionary programme. Because capitalism is an international system and the working class has no country of its own, a revolutionary programme must be internationalist in character: it must embody the experience of the working class around the world. However, while we acknowledge the need for a revolutionary international, we recognise that we are far removed from this stage of develop-

ment. Hence we have tried to solve this problem through our theoretical work and through our activities, both of which have an internationalist content. This has meant that the spirit of internationalism pervades our work — but we appreciate that as long as we only have the experience of a national party our programmatic development will be partial and one-sided.

Until now our recognition of all these problems has made us reluctant to issue programmatic statements. Past lessons and our own experiences have taught us the necessity for a cautious approach to programmatic development. In many ways these considerations still hold. We are in no position to fight around a programme of generalised slogans that can take us from where we are today to the socialist revolution. A piece of paper cannot give us the political capability to lead mass working class movements to the seizure of state power. But this does not mean that we have to stay still. We are now in a position to codify four or five years of important experiences, to draw out the lessons of these experiences for others and to expose our politics to the heat of the class struggle. We need a programme of action that is ahead of where the RCP is at present, but one that is organically linked to the stage that we have already reached. Our programme will be incomplete, but it will be one that can develop alongside the struggles of the working class.

Where we are at

What are the tendencies of social development, which a revolutionary programme must reflect? What tasks and forms of activity are appropriate for us in Britain in 1983?

The trends towards capitalist collapse are fully evident even to the most incorrigible sceptic. Even optimistic surveys that predict the elusive 'upturn' find it difficult to escape the hard facts. Thus *The Economist* recently boasted 'America is back in business' only to note that industrial investment fell by 3.8 per cent in 1982 and is likely to fall further still in 1983 (5 March). Industrial stagnation cannot be halted without the restructuring of capitalist relations on a global scale. But this process is fraught with tensions that must erupt into violent conflicts in both the national and the international arena. The world is gripped by a climate of crisis expressed in imperialist rivalries, the arms race, the chaos of the banking system and social breakdown. We are entering a period of chronic instability which will inevitably lead to intense economic and social conflicts.

The capitalist crisis and its social consequences have not yet created a political crisis for the bourgeoisie. The stability of class relations and the muted response of the working class to the crisis in the advanced capitalist countries: these are the most remarkable features of the present conjuncture. Never before has the world bourgeoisie faced a major depression with such a limited threat from the proletariat.

The low profile of class conflict is the outcome of a cumulative process of working class defeats. This has led to the near liquidation of proletarian ideology and the disintegration of the revolutionary movement. In every Western country, labour movement institutions have developed close links with the state and have fostered nationalist and reformist views in the working class. The absorption of labour institutions into the capitalist state is particularly striking in Western Europe. In Italy, the Communist Party is in the forefront of a state offensive against far-left militants, whom the PCI labels as 'terrorists'. In France, the Communist Party leads the attack against militant immigrant workers and fervently upholds the banner of French militarism. In Britain, the

Labour Party has become, more than ever, the party of the state; all its plans depend on state intervention rather than on the activities of the working class.

“The collaborationist course pursued by the official labour movement has engendered passivity and conservatism.”

The collaborationist course pursued by the official labour movement has engendered passivity and conservatism within the working class. This has dictated the response of workers to the recession — a mixture of frustration, anxiety and demoralisation. Where militancy and anger have broken through, the lack of a realistic alternative has been sufficient to dissipate it.

The institutions of the official labour movement have not, however, been left unscathed by the crisis. The bourgeois offensive to drive down workers' living standards has made many of the mediating institutions of the past irrelevant. The ruling class has pushed the labour bureaucracy to the side and has no intention of reviving the consensus policies of the post-war boom. The manifest trend towards dismantling social services and cutting public expenditure according to the needs of capital has limited the scope for the labour bureaucracy's schemes for state intervention. This hostile environment has exposed the labour bureaucracy to the harsh reality of market forces, and pushed it very much into retreat.

The official labour movement also faces the disintegration of its social base. Years of bureaucratic methods have made the unions too unresponsive to grass roots pressure. The labour bureaucrats can no longer claim to be able to 'deliver' their members' acquiescence to the deals they do with the employers and the government. Their policies seem increasingly out of touch with reality. Many workers find little to motivate or inspire them in their traditional labour movement parties; they continue to support them out of habit or as a lesser evil than the overt bourgeois parties. Other workers are driven away altogether — towards passivity and individual solutions. Millions of unemployed workers have become segregated and cut off from the mainstream of labour movement politics.

The political direction of the official labour movement is towards retreat and the narrowing of objectives. The more the recession deepens, the more concessions are made to preserve what's left of the official labour movement. This rightwards drift also influences the more radical parties of the working class. The left is characterised by its increasing moderation, its ideological disarray and its desperate search for new issues around which to win some popularity.

“The disintegration of traditional labour movement institutions also unleashes new and positive forces within the working class.”

Growing conservatism, however, is only one side of the process. The disintegration of traditional labour institutions also unleashes new and positive forces within the working class. The breakdown of traditional assumptions and the manifest irrelevance of left alternatives have opened up a space where new ideas and new solutions can get a hearing. Many of the most active and committed workers will want to cling on and defend their existing institutions. But they are also open to discussing and testing new alternatives. The revolutionary programme must be addressed to this section of the proletariat.



Marching for women's liberation: the RCP fights oppression from an anti-capitalist perspective

The alternative between reform and revolution has never been so sharply posed. Even on the most simple issue, the proletarian alternative marks a sharp contrast to the reformist solution. To many waverers on the left this confirms the impossibility of building a revolutionary movement. They exhort us to be more realistic, shift our focus towards issues which will have an immediate resonance. This pessimistic approach is unworthy of proletarian fighters and antithetical to the needs of the working class. The task of the programme is to pose the revolutionary alternative with the utmost clarity while drawing out its relevance to the present situation. For reformists the crisis becomes a reason to be 'realistic' and moderate: for revolutionaries the crisis demonstrates the necessity for a new society. For reformists the crisis must be overcome; for us it provides the justification for destroying the capitalist system. The programme must express this in the most compelling terms.

The direction we need

The programme must express the necessity for communism in terms which can indicate what needs to be done today. This cannot be done by projecting demands which gradually build up towards the seizure of state power. It can only be done by convincing the most active sections of the working class of the necessity for communism and of their key role in influencing the rest of the working class in that direction.

To draw workers to the banner of communism, the programme must not only outline the bankruptcy of reformist solutions but also argue the case for a realistic alternative. This alternative cannot be simply a shopping list of worthy objectives. Workers already know what they need for a decent life; what they don't know is how to get it. *This must be the main focus of the programme.*

The programme must emphasise the necessity of fighting for the distinct interests of the working class. Too often the independent interests of workers are reduced to the sphere of wage-bargaining. But the working class has vital concerns outside the trade union field — on civil rights, foreign policy, social and cultural issues. If proletarian interests are presented in a narrow way, the working class will lack the *ideological independence* to seize the initiative.

Class independence is not merely an ideological question. More than ever before, the independence of the working

class can only be realised if its political expressions are drawn out to their organisational consequences. Today labour movement institutions are so closely interwoven with state machinery that the reassertion of independent proletarian organisation becomes of critical importance. When parastatal bodies are seen by the left as having a leading role in fighting for women's rights or against racism, it is vital to reaffirm the importance of workers taking these issues into their own hands and building *their own organisation* to fight oppression.

“The labour movement has become so dependent on quangos that it has become vital for workers to build their own organisations.”

The programme must present a vigorous critique of municipal socialism, of state intervention in working class life. We have to explode these illusions peddled by state-backed unemployed projects and centres, community self-help and training schemes and benevolent quangos dealing with race relations, women, police monitoring, etc. The corrupting influence of these bodies must be linked to the labour bureaucracy's broad strategy of containment.

The struggle for class independence in the trade unions is of special importance. The programme should outline the necessity for the independence of unions from the state and for an end to trade union participation in the hundreds of tripartite state and parastatal bodies. The fight for class independence does not end in the struggle to separate unions from the state. Within the unions the programme must demonstrate the necessity for rank and file workers to take control of their struggles. As long as the conduct of strikes and disputes remains in the hands of the labour bureaucracy, workers will be relegated to the role of passive participants.

The establishment of effective defensive organisations by the working class will be ruthlessly fought by the Labour Party. For decades this party has encouraged solutions which depend on

the integration of the labour movement into the state. Even the left wing is committed to state schemes — and Labour's more radical policies are always implemented through some parastatal body. The programme must challenge these Labourist assumptions and argue the case for building an alternative political organisation. At present active workers, however critical they are of the Labour Party, see no alternative but to continue giving it support. The programme should directly address this problem and explain that active workers cannot afford to wait. An alternative suitable for workers will never materialise unless workers take responsibility for building it. Moreover, given the manifest incapacity of the Labour Party to defend the working class and its irrelevance to workers' day to day struggles, we cannot afford to postpone the fight for a real alternative.

Many militants agree with our criticisms of the Labour Party but are reluctant to draw out the organisational consequences. Many are trying to change the Labour Party, to democratise it, to push it in a left-wing direction, to enter it, to influence its policies, etc. These solutions are portrayed as *realistic* alternatives to building a revolutionary communist party. The programme must confront this point of view. It must explain the impossibility of turning the Labour Party into what it isn't and expose the utopian and self-defeating character of this course of action. The programme should also point out that left-wing critics of the Labour Party only end up propping it up, and giving the party a lifeline to the more radical sections of the working class.

“To forge real class unity, the working class must first be divided into those who want reform and those who are for revolution.”

Everybody pays lip service to the importance of working class unity. Yet the working class remains very much divided. At present the divisions in the working class are those promoted by bourgeois society. These divisions will persist as long as working class institutions remain under the influence of the ruling class. To forge real class unity, the working class must first be polarised between the two clearly demarcated wings of reform and revolution. Our programme should clearly outline the arguments for this demarcation process. It should be a programme of unification for active workers. It should emphasise that the very act of unifying workers committed to the overthrow of capitalism will divide the labour movement. But this will be a division effected from the point of view of the proletariat. It will be a starting point for overcoming the divisions imposed by capital. Real unity can only come about when the independent interests of workers are clearly posed through the struggle for working class power.

The process of unifying active workers necessitates a ruthless struggle against the divisive outlook that haunts the labour movement. The programme must insist on the primacy of the fight against the divisive prejudices of nationalism, racism, sexism and sectionalism. Only a consistent campaign against these views can free the proletariat from its ideological enslavement. The necessity for the RCP arises from the need to unify the working class. The RCP gives an organisational expression to the interests of the class as a whole. It recognises no special or sectional interests other than that of proletarian independence. The alternatives are a divided proletariat dominated by reformism or a movement unified through the common interest that every worker has in overthrowing capitalism. The task of the programme is to guide us towards making the latter a reality.

Reflecting on Bermondsey

The Bermondsey by-election at the end of February has already passed into history. A long-standing Labour stronghold – with a majority of almost 12 000 in 1979 – was turned into a crushing defeat by the Liberals who won by a margin of more than 9000. The by-election campaign was unprecedented in modern times for its rancorous conflicts, its personal smears and the high level of media attention. It was also the first parliamentary election to be contested by the Revolutionary Communist Party. Pat Roberts reviews the campaign and its consequences for British politics.

MANY COMMENTATORS have focused on the peculiarities of the Bermondsey by-election. Many have identified the bitter battle inside the local Labour Party as an important factor contributing to Labour's defeat. No doubt Michael Foot's earlier condemnation of local candidate Peter Tatchell did not help Labour's chances. Nor did the running of an independent Labour candidate, John O'Grady – supported by the retiring Labour MP Bob Mellish – give the impression of a united party, ready to challenge the Tories. When top party officials withdrew Tatchell's election manifesto because it had been printed by a company run by the Militant Tendency nobody was left in any doubt about the gravity of Labour's internal chaos.

Others, particularly right-wingers inside the Labour Party, have drawn attention to the unsuitability of Tatchell as a parliamentary candidate. They have blamed the 'Tatchell factor' for the defeat. Others still have pointed the finger at the smear campaign conducted by the press against Tatchell. The campaign of slanders and innuendoes did indeed play an important part in the campaign.

But Bermondsey was not really so peculiar. The Labour Party is not only fragmented in Bermondsey – it remains bitterly divided on a national level. Tatchell may have been an inept and lacklustre candidate – but that has never stopped many on the right wing of the party from being elected to Parliament. A press and television hostile even to official labour movement representatives was not so unusual in the past – and the media cannot be expected to play fair in the future. The establishment will always scrape the bottom of the barrel to defame individuals and manipulate prejudices for its own ends.

Nor is the result of the election such a surprise. In the May 1982 council elections, three independent Labour candidates supported by Mellish humiliated the official Labour candidates backed by Tatchell. Labour's share of the vote fell from 78 to 22 per cent. Clear signs of Labour's electoral unpopularity were already apparent nine months before the by-election.

Not so peculiar

Labour's landslide defeat in Bermondsey cannot be explained by the peculiar features of the election campaign. At the root of this defeat was the cumulative experience of the Bermondsey working class with the Labour Party. For six decades Bermondsey had returned a Labour MP and the local Southwark Council has been Labour controlled during living memory. People in Bermondsey recall that it was the Labour Government that closed the Surrey Docks in 1970. And they blame Southwark Council for the continuing decline in housing and social services. Everybody in Bermondsey has seen Labour's policies in action – and this experience has been far from positive.

The left has no new dynamic policy proposals to counteract Labour's poor record and reputation in the area. The media has focused attention on the

disputes that have wrought havoc inside the local party. But these disputes were more a squabble over who controls the party machine than disagreements on basic policy issues. O'Grady's Labour right wanted more of the same. His bureaucratic clique had run the council for more than a decade and saw the local party as merely a springboard to a comfortable career. In contrast to the 'Bermondsey mafia', the Labour left argued for a radical style of community politics – and aimed to transform the party machine to achieve this objective.

It is *style* not politics that separates the left from the right. During the campaign both Tatchell and O'Grady repeatedly reiterated their commitment to Labour Party politics. Tatchell made a special effort to distance himself from some of the more radical statements that he had made in the past. He withdrew his critical remarks about Parliament and evaded questions on Ireland and the oppression of gay people. In the end Tatchell ran his campaign on the call for 'houses with gardens' – something that O'Grady, or for that matter the Liberal candidate Simon Hughes, could not disagree with.

Labour's past record haunted Tatchell. His own policies were seen as more of the same – they lacked plausibility and could not generate enthusiasm among voters. Canvassers for the RCP reported on an all-pervading disenchantment with Labour – a cynicism bordering on demoralisation. At the beginning of the campaign, however, many voters were still prepared to vote for Labour, more out of habit than conviction.

In the past, Labour could have held on to the seat despite the alienation of its electoral base. But, together with the growing fragmentation of the Labour Party nationally, the war fought inside the local party drew attention to Labour's ineffectiveness. The long build-up of past dissatisfactions and the manifest incapacity of the party to lead any fight – at any level – against the Tories confirmed its irrelevance for the needs of Bermondsey people. Profound local disaffection provided fertile ground for the media campaign and the press was able to turn it against Tatchell.

The showdown

Not only did it lack any convincing policies, the local party also lacked the machine to fight back against the growing hostility of the electorate. The Bermondsey party proved to be an empty shell – a small core of activists around Tatchell with no roots in the area. Throughout the campaign the party had virtually no street presence. Labour's election meetings highlighted this problem – the audience was composed largely of radical left entrists drafted in from all over London, and students from the nearby South Bank Polytechnic. Tatchell's campaign was totally disorganised and incapable of mobilising local support. The small clique of middle class activists had difficulty in talking to local people and it was easy for the media and other candidates to inflame Bermondsey parochialism against 'outsiders'.

The elements of a Labour defeat were



The ghost of Labour's past Bob Mellish (above) haunted his heir apparent, Real Bermondsey Labour candidate John O'Grady (below). Labour's Peter Tatchell (right) carried the can for his party's fragmentation and its lack of appealing policies. The Liberal's Simon Hughes (below) a non-entity with a good PR man, picked up the pieces.



in evidence at an early stage in the campaign. But this alienation from the traditional ruling party of the area could not of itself turn into an election revolt. On the doorsteps many workers told RCP canvassers that they did not think much of Tatchell, but this would not drive them to vote for another party. Most people saw no positive alternative to the Labour Party. Neither O'Grady's 'Real Bermondsey Labour', nor the Liberals evoked any degree of enthusiasm. As for the Tories – most workers held them in contempt.

Since the election, much has been made of the performance of Simon Hughes and the local Liberal Party machine. According to the press, the fine record of the Liberal's community work in Bermondsey had finally paid off. In fact during the first half of the campaign virtually nobody had heard of Hughes: he came a poor third in last May's council elections. The much-vaunted Liberal community work, was very much the creation of the party's public relations officer, obligingly hyped up by the press.

Hughes' victory had nothing to do with active support for the Liberal Party. It was simply that the longer the campaign lasted the more the Labour Party's disintegration became evident. This disintegration, exposed mercilessly day in and day out by the campaign and the media, activated latent hostility towards Labour. In these circumstances the press was able to whip up the resentment further still. After an initial enthusiasm for O'Grady – soon dulled on the discovery of his limited base of support – the press turned to channel the anti-Tatchell vote in the direction of the Liberals.

The series of opinion polls published in the second week of the campaign did not create the vote against Labour. The polls influenced opinion only in the sense that they highlighted Labour's collapse and pointed its demoralised former supporters along with former Tory voters and others towards the

Liberal candidate. Workers in their thousands now decided that it was possible to vote *against* the party that had let them down so many times in the past. The Liberals won because they were able to take advantage of Labour's disintegration. But the thousands of workers who put their cross next to the name of Hughes voted not for the Liberals but against the Labour Party.

No more safe seats

In the past decade workers in solid Labour constituencies like Bermondsey have voted for their traditional party whatever the circumstances and whatever the papers have said. Often workers voted Labour, not out of any enthusiasm, but because they could see no alternative. They sent Labour MPs to Parliament as the lesser evil. The Bermondsey campaign showed that workers are not always prepared to accept the lesser evil.

The two-week campaign highlighted the tremendous political fluidity that now exists within the working class. Indeed the crisis of Labour and its organisational disintegration is itself an expression of this political fluidity. In the past the Labour Party was credited with a working class base that voted Labour out of the habit of a lifetime. While this was always a caricature, it did reflect the solidity of Labour's traditional electoral base. Today things are entirely different. The working class is in a state of flux, open to new political alternatives and solutions. This is what we saw in microcosm in Bermondsey. The campaign indicated that most people had no strong party allegiances and were open to argument and to abandoning old loyalties. Within just 14 days the mood of the electorate became more and more unpredictable and prone to dramatic fluctuations. The political consequence of this instability is that many things long taken for granted are now open to question.

The Bermondsey campaign exposed

Labour's new Irish policy

A second hand solution



Would you buy a used Irish policy off Harold Wilson? Ken Livingstone has.

In recent months different sections of the Labour Party have converged around a new policy on Ireland. On the left of the party, Ken Livingstone has been pushing for an open dialogue with Sinn Fein. On the right, Roy Hattersley led the Shadow Cabinet into voting for the first time against the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Labour's draft manifesto for the forthcoming general election picks up these strands and even proposes talks on how the unification of Ireland by consent can best proceed. These new proposals have been proclaimed as the beginning of the end of Labour's bipartisanship with the Tories over Ireland. Pat Roberts explains why this isn't so.

BIPARTISANSHIP does not mean that Labour agrees with the Tories in every respect on the conduct of the Irish War. While the two major parties share a commitment to the maintenance of British domination over Ireland, they have often differed over how this domination should be exercised. The Labour Party has often argued for reforms and the modification of the more brutal aspects of British domination.

Red Ken meets Merlyn Rees

Ken Livingstone's visit to Belfast has been depicted as a blow against bipartisanship. His supporters on *The News Line* complimented him for 'his courageous visit to the north of Ireland' (28 February). They thought it 'was courageous because it shattered the sickening so-called "bipartisan" policy adopted by the Tory and Labour Party leaders since 1969'. In fact previous Labour leaders, including the architects of bipartisanship, have been prepared to talk to Sinn Fein. In March and June 1972, Harold Wilson (who sent the troops into Ireland in 1969) and Merlyn Rees (the instigator of 'Ulsterisation' and 'criminalisation') held discussions not merely with Sinn Fein but with leaders of the Provisional IRA.

The Labour leaders (or for that matter their Tory counterparts) have no objections in principle to discussing and negotiating with the republican movement. Indeed this was one of the options held out by the 1974 Wilson Government. Labour's Northern Ireland Minister Merlyn Rees launched the policy of 'normalisation' in April 1974. The aim of this policy was to combine ruthless repression with attempts to make the streets of the Six Counties look as 'normal' as possible — by replacing soldiers with policemen and

generally making the military occupation as discreet as possible. The aim was to demilitarise the conflict and scale down violent conflict. To this end Rees proposed that the proscription on Sinn Fein should be lifted. He told Parliament that he hoped to encourage the republican movement away from violent military operations into 'normal' political activity:

'There are signs that on both extreme wings there are people who, although at one time committed to violence, would now like to find a way back to political activity. It is right to encourage this as much as possible. It is the counterpart of our action against those who use violence.' (*The Times*, 5 April 1974)

Rees' emphasis on encouraging 'political activity' as a 'counterpart' of repression has always been a feature of bipartisan policy. Its aim is to get the movement of resistance to operate politically as though Belfast were Birmingham or Newcastle. It is not necessary to add that 'political activity' would take place within the structures imposed on Ireland by British imperialism.

In a colonial situation, 'normal' political activity legitimises the institutions of oppression. The Dail in Dublin, the new Assembly at Stormont and even the structures of local government in Ireland have all been imposed by Britain. The very existence of these institutions represents the denial of national independence. That is why republican politicians have a long tradition of abstaining from participation in British institutions.

The aim of 'normalisation' was to allow the republican movement to campaign for Irish unity through the existing channels, while criminalising effective action against British imperialism. Many Labour politicians rhetorically support the objec-

tive of Irish unity, while denouncing those who fight for its realisation. When *The News Line* claims that 'Livingstone has shown his support for the national struggle in Ireland' (28 February) it means that he supports the long-term objective of unity. And like all other Labour politicians, Livingstone condemns the armed struggle, the only practical way of achieving Irish unity in the face of the British occupation.

Normalising the conflict

To justify 'normalisation' Livingstone tries to turn the republican movement into an Irish version of the Labour Party. He assures the British public that Sinn Fein is not a national liberation movement: 'While this was probably the case in the past, a new structure now exists and Sinn Fein is trying to break out of the simple nationalist mould' (*The Guardian* 7 March). According to Livingstone, 10 years ago Sinn Fein was a 'predominantly nationalist organisation'. But it appears that things have changed, and the republican movement has been born again in the true spirit of social democratic reformism:

'Out of these conditions the new leadership of Sinn Fein has emerged over the last four years and has developed a full programme of social and economic reform akin to that of the British Labour Party.' (*The Guardian*, 7 March)

Livingstone does not explain how a movement committed to national liberation has developed such programmatic affinity with the pro-imperialist Labour Party. But the message is clear. This is a 'normal' party whose leaders 'display a sense of realism' — the time is ripe for a deal.

Livingstone's revelations about Sinn Fein are not only patronising — they have a clear purpose. Like Rees in 1974, Livingstone is trying to demilitarise the struggle. He denounces the armed struggle and encourages normal political activity. Thus on returning from Belfast, he told the press that violence and bombs only put back the cause of Irish unity. The whole burden of his policy is to indicate that a 'normal' political approach by the republican movement will be rewarded in Britain.

Livingstone reckons his policy will work. As proof of his conviction that the republican movement can be demilitarised he points to Sinn Fein's recent electoral activity. He maintains that a 'debate is taking place within Sinn Fein about the scale of their electoral strategy and it is being won by Morrison and Adams' (*Labour Herald*, 4 March).

Fortunately, Livingstone's 'normalisation' has no more chance of success than that attempted by Rees. Relentless repression in the Six Counties provokes continuing resistance. The armed struggle is not just a policy option — it is a vital necessity for the nationalist community. Even if a few republicans accepted Livingstone's offer, their places would soon be taken by hundreds of other freedom fighters. As long as Britain remains in Ireland there can be no non-violent solution. Britain can no more pull out the Army than the nationalist people can give up their arms. Never in history has the relationship between oppressor and oppressed been resolved peacefully. Livingstone may not realise this, but the ruling class does. The *Daily Telegraph* understands that there is a war going on in Ireland and that it will not be settled around Livingstone's negotiating table:

'There is not going to be a "peaceful solution". The difference between the tame fanatics of the GLC Labour Party and the serious purposeful fanatics of Sinn Fein, is that the latter recognise this fact of life.' (8 February)

The Loyalist veto

In common with much of the British left Livingstone focuses attention on what he calls 'the Loyalist veto'. This line of argument sees the Loyalists in the Six Counties

as the main obstacle to Irish unity and British withdrawal. Livingstone argues that it is the 'Unionist parties who now defend the link with Britain', and the Loyalists 'were responsible for throwing away the chance to build a non-sectarian society' (*The Guardian*, 7 March).

The Loyalists are held responsible for sectarianism and blamed for all the problems of the Six Counties because of their determination to preserve the British connection. According to Livingstone, Britain's commitment to the Loyalist majority must cease: 'we cannot allow them the veto over moves which could end the tragedy of Britain's involvement in Ireland' (*The Guardian*, 7 March).

This argument shifts responsibility for imperialist domination away from Britain to its agents in Ireland. The problem is no longer identified as British imperialism but as Loyalist sectarianism. This scenario leaves out the fact that it was Britain that enforced Partition, created a Protestant majority in the Six Counties and established the Loyalist ascendancy. It is the height of absurdity to imply that Britain stays in Ireland out of a sentimental attachment to the Loyalist community. The British government is committed to stay in Northern Ireland to preserve the integrity of the United Kingdom and the stability of the British state itself. The Loyalists are Westminster's loyal servants; they do not determine British policy.

However, blaming 'the Loyalist veto' has a purpose. It diverts attention away from Britain's role and localises the problem. A war between British imperialism and the nationalist community is transformed into a local sectarian conflict. From this position it is only a small step to arguing that Britain has a progressive role to play in clearing up this sectarian mess.

Another British solution

And that's exactly the conclusion drawn by Livingstone. Rather than allowing the Irish people to determine their own future, the imperialist oppressor becomes problem-solver. Livingstone wants the British government to 'announce a planned withdrawal within two years and convene a conference of all northern and southern Irish parties to agree the constitutional guarantees that the northern Protestants will require' (*The Guardian*, 7 March). Livingstone will no doubt make himself available as constitutional advisor.

Livingstone's proposals amount to a policy of demilitarisation accompanied by British-imposed constitutional arrangements. He demands that republicans lay down their arms, become cynical politicians in the Walworth Road mould, accept the legitimacy of colonial institutions and place the future of their country in the hands of the British state. Thus Livingstone's scheme is a roundabout way of negotiating the struggle for national independence out of existence.

Livingstone's plan is a non-starter. The Irish struggle for national liberation can no more be negotiated out of existence than Irish freedom fighters can be turned into GLC hacks. Nevertheless Livingstone's 'normalisation' contains dangers for anti-imperialists in Britain. It appears as a positive alternative to existing policies. The fact that Livingstone has incurred the wrath of the establishment and the media means that many anti-imperialists think that he must be saying something progressive.

In fact, media hostility towards Livingstone is not due to any establishment fear that bipartisanship is about to be undermined. They realise that Livingstone is not making any substantial departure from long-standing party policy. The outspoken media reaction is rather part of a general campaign to discredit the Labour Party. The Tories know that they have the Labour Party on the run. They also know that every time they attack the Labour left, the party goes into a crisis and internal divisions go further still. Anti-imperialists must not allow themselves to get distracted by this Tory-Labour side-show. They must expose the latest in a long line of attempted British solutions to the Irish War that deny Ireland's right to national freedom.

Irish Freedom Movement handbook

This handbook is for people in Britain who want to end the war in Ireland. For more than thirteen years the war has raged in the cities, towns and villages of the Six Counties; its violent intensity has regularly spilled over the border into the Twenty-six Counties and across the sea to Britain. More than 2500 people have died, including more than 600 British soldiers and paramilitary policemen, more than 200 republicans and around 600 Catholic victims of sectarian attacks by Loyalists and British forces. Hundreds of non-combatants have been killed in more than a decade of bombings and shootings, rioting and repression.

One of the reasons the war has dragged on for so long is the absence of a powerful movement in Britain to stop it. Many people are sympathetic to Ireland's fight for freedom and suspicious of the official propaganda that justifies Britain's continuing occupation. But ignorance and confusion about the Irish War holds back any movement against it. The British media has concealed the truth about events in the Six Counties and obscured the issues at stake in the conflict. British politicians — right, left and centre — have nurtured a consensus that backs up every act of repression in Ireland and marginalises opposition to the war at home.

An anti-imperialist's guide to the Irish War provides people who want to end the war with the information and the arguments they need to counter the papers and the politicians and to win wider support for the cause of Irish freedom. It provides the answers to the questions that come up every time the Irish War is discussed. Why does Britain stay in Ireland? Why don't they just pull the troops out? What about the Protestants? Why can't a political solution work? We examine the Six County state and British strategy during the war to deal with these questions and many more.

The book contains a lot of information and analysis concerning Ireland, but its central focus is Britain. The real problem of the Irish War is the success of the British government in making its behaviour in Ireland acceptable to the vast majority of people at home. Thus we look closely at Britain's use of political initiatives and the legal process to give its rule in the Six Counties an image of respectability and fairness. We review the use of the law to label as a criminal anybody who opposes Britain's domination over Ireland. The Prevention of Terrorism Act is the extension to Britain of this strategy — of attempting to confer legitimacy on the British occupation by criminalising its opponents.

This Irish Freedom Movement handbook is more than a collection of useful facts and figures. It is a guide to action. Hence we include an outline of the way forward for anti-imperialists in Britain in solidarity with the Irish liberation struggle. Our conclusion is that the only way to stop the Irish War is by fighting in Britain for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

Send £1.95 plus 50p p&p to:
Junius Publications Ltd, BM RCP Ltd,
London WC1N 3XX.

*An anti-imperialist's
guide to*

the IRISH WAR

Irish Freedom Movement

Includes...

Compendium of War facts

- What happened when: a chronology
- Personalities of the Irish war
- Directory of organisations
- Irish prisoners in British jails
- Britain's machine of terror
- Information on Ireland: a bibliography
- Death toll in the Irish war

TUC wall of silence

In the March edition of *the next step* we reprinted a letter from the TUC which questioned the showing of the Irish Freedom Movement video on the Irish War 'No British solution' to a group of trade unionists at a meeting organised by Tameside Trades Council. The video, which has been shown extensively within the labour movement, has provoked wide discussion of the war among rank and file workers - a discussion which the TUC is determined to curtail. Below we reproduce the motion sent by the Trades Council to the TUC and the TUC's outraged reply.

Dear Mr Monks,

Thank you for your letter of 14 February. This was read to the delegate meeting of the Trades Council at its last meeting. The delegates moved the following resolution to be sent as a reply to your letter.

'This Trades Union Council will listen to and watch whatever we democratically decide to. If Mr Monks objects to this he is invited to attend our delegate meetings held on the fourth Tuesday each month at the AUEW offices, Margaret Street South, Ashton-under-Lyne from 7.30pm to 9.30pm where he can test the feeling of the delegates on the matter'.

Yours sincerely
Dave Hallsworth
Hon. Secretary

Dear Mr Hallsworth

Film on Northern Ireland

We received on March 4 your undated letter in reply to ours of February 14 about the showing of a film on Northern Ireland at the December meeting of Tameside Trades Union Council.

I asked you to provide a full report about the showing of the film but you have not done so. I find the response of your Trades Council to be irresponsible and not worthy of genuine trade unionists.

All trade union militants should resist the threat to discussion on Ireland implied in this letter. Get your union branch or trades council to view the IFM video and discuss the situation in Ireland. Contact Helen Swift BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.
WATCH THIS SPACE!

You and the Trades Council will not need to be reminded that the TUC and Trades Councils' Joint Consultative Committee take their responsibilities very seriously and make every effort to ensure that Trades Councils which wish to operate under the umbrella of the TUC act in a similar fashion.

If the present letter we have received from you is in any way indicative of how Tameside Trades Union Council wish to continue to operate and that this is to be the basis of its relations with the TUC, please let me know. In these circumstances, if and when your Council applies to have its TUC recognition continued for this year, its application will be referred to the TCJCC for consideration. No doubt you will let me know in due course the views of your council on this particular matter.

At this stage however I am simply asking you once again, as secretary of Tameside Trades Union Council, to reply fully to the points raised in my letter to you of February 14. In case you have mislaid this letter I enclose a further copy.

I have sent a copy of this letter to the Secretary of the Greater Manchester Association of Trades Council.

Yours sincerely
J Monks
Secretary
Organisation and Industrial
Relations Department

Unity in action

The divisions in the Irish solidarity movement in Britain continue to hamper its effectiveness. The Irish Freedom Movement replies below to a letter in *An Phoblacht/Republican News* (10 March) appealing for unity. We are in favour of unity around anti-imperialist politics.

FOLLOWING THE recent visit to Belfast by Ken Livingstone and Steve and Cathy Bundred, and their promise to build support in Britain for a British withdrawal from Ireland, many of us felt that at last there may be an opportunity for building a broad-based anti-imperialist movement in Britain.

However, having read the latest editions of *Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism, Troops Out* and *the next step*, which represent the three major Irish support groups outside of Sinn Fein, the prospects of a broad front seem much dimmer.

On March 12th, the Irish Solidarity Committee, along with the RCG, have organised a national demonstration in London.

On May 7th, the Troops Out Movement are organising a national demonstration under the slogan of 'Voices for Withdrawal'.

The following day, May 8th, the Irish Freedom Movement and the RCP, together with Sinn Fein (Britain), are mounting a national commemoration of the second anniversary of the deaths of the 10 hunger-strikers.

This division among the various support groups only serves to help our enemies.

Indeed, one is tempted to ask just how genuine are these people?

It must be disheartening for Irish POWs in English jails, who have played a major role in promoting a united Irish solidarity movement, to see their efforts come to nothing.

Surely if these groups are genuine in their support then they can at least unite behind the following demands:

- (1) A complete British withdrawal from Ireland.
- (2) Self-determination for all the Irish people.
- (3) Repatriation of Irish POWs from English jails.

These simple demands don't cut across any of the groups' individual ideologies and can therefore form the basis of a strong and united Irish solidarity movement.

Michael Doherty
PRO
St James's Martyrs Sinn Fein cumann
Belfast

The Irish Freedom Movement has political differences with the Troops Out current which was the dominant force in the solidarity movement in Britain in the 'seventies. We call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and for the Irish people to determine their own future. While TOM has often paid lip-service to these demands, in practice it has never campaigned around them. It has always preferred to campaign against particular aspects of British rule - Internment, torture, prison conditions, plastic bullets - rather than challenge Britain's right to rule directly. TOM sometimes talks about self-determination but supports calls for a British solution along the lines proposed by the Labour Party.

These differences can be thrown into sharp contrast by considering a recent statement by Ken Livingstone: in an interview in *Socialist Action* (19 March) he appealed for unity between Sinn Fein and the Workers Party in Ireland - together with the Irish Labour Party. Anti-imperialist supporters of Sinn Fein would dismiss out of hand any suggestion that they should unite with the pro-imperialist Workers Party. Why should our response to calls for unity with the pro-imperialist Labour Party and its camp followers be any different?

Whatever our differences with TOM and other Irish solidarity groups in Britain, we have always been prepared to unite with them in action in solidarity with the struggle in Ireland. The demands for 'a complete British withdrawal', 'self-determination' and 'repatriation of Irish political prisoners' indicated by Michael Doherty in his letter are for us an acceptable basis for demonstrations, protests, pickets etc. Indeed it is on this basis that we are co-operating with Sinn Fein (Britain) in the forthcoming May commemoration of the deaths of Bobby Sands and the other hunger-strikers (the date of which has been changed to 1 May). Now, in opposition to this demonstration, TOM and others in the Labour Party circle have called their own march around much more limited demands which amount to supporting, not the liberation struggle, but a new British solution. How can we unite with such a cynical betrayal of the cause of Irish freedom?

Mick Kennedy

IFM activities

BIRMINGHAM

Monday 11 April 2pm
Lobby the county council -
**Make the West Midlands a
PTA-free Zone!**
Chamberlain Square

Wednesday 27 April 7.30pm
Hunger-strike commemoration meeting
Troops out of Ireland now!
The Mermaid, Stratford Road,
Birmingham 11.
Organised by the H-Block hunger-strike
commemoration committee

LIVERPOOL

IFM 1 May Mobilising Committee meets
fortnightly on Tuesdays. See *the next step*
sellers for details

**Victims of the Prevention of
Terrorism Act in Liverpool:
contact the Irish Freedom
Movement.**
Phone 01-2743951

MANCHESTER

IFM 1 May Mobilising Committee meets
every Wednesday. See *the next step*
sellers for details

COVENTRY

IFM 1 May Mobilising Committee meets
weekly. See *the next step* sellers
for details

Remember the Hunger-Strikers! Freedom for the Irish people!

BIRMINGHAM

Sunday 1 May
Hunger-strike commemoration march
organised by Sinn Fein

Assemble Sparkhill Park 12.30pm
Stratford Road
March to the City centre

Conference

Saturday 30 April 10.30am
Irish Freedom Movement Conference

Imperialism in the age of Cruise

Plenaries on the war drive and
the Irish War
Workshops on women, the Middle East,
Latin America
Digbeth Civic Hall,
Digbeth, Birmingham
Registration £1 or 50p UBO
Creche available

I would like to attend Imperialism
in the age of Cruise.

Name.....
Address.....
Tel:.....
Organisation:.....

Cheques payable to RCP Association
Send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX
Enquiries: phone 01-2743951

LEEDS

Tuesday 12, 19 & 26 April 7.30pm
IFM 1 May Mobilising Committee meets

Thursday 28 April 7.30pm
Public meeting
**Remember the Hunger-strikers!
Political status now!**

Friday 29 April 7.00pm
IFM film-show
The Battle of Algiers

See *Leeds other paper* for venue details

NORTH LONDON

Friday 8 & 22 April 7.30pm
IFM 1 May Mobilising Committee meets:
Prince Albert Pub
Wharfedale Road
(Near Kings Cross station)

WEST LONDON

Friday 8 & 22 April 7.30pm
IFM 1 May Mobilising Committee meets:
Hammersmith North Labour Rooms
446, Uxbridge Road, W12
(Corner of Galloway Road, near
Shepherds Bush tube)

SHEFFIELD

Tuesday 12 & 26 April 7.30pm
IFM 1 May Mobilising Committee meets:
The Brown Cow, The Wicker



David Hoffman

ELWAR joins the protest over the death of Colin Roach: so far 84 people have been arrested after police attacks on demonstrations

Radical 'race relations'

Colin Roach, found dead at the age of 21 of shotgun injuries in a Hackney police station, in many ways personifies a whole generation of black people in Britain. He lived in a deprived inner city area; he was unemployed; he was a victim of police repression and had served time in a detention centre. Yet there is another, apparently paradoxical, side to the intensifying oppression of blacks.

Every time you open a local paper in East London, Brixton, Handsworth, Chapeltown or Liverpool 8 you read about special grants being made to projects for black people, councils proclaiming 'equal opportunity' and 'positive action' policies and new campaigns to 'monitor' racism and agitate for police accountability. It seems that for every aspect of state brutality against black people, the state provides some institution through which complaints can be made and protests channelled. Joan Phillips looks at the soft side of state racism and the contribution made by the Labour Party to maintaining it.

RACIAL disturbances in Notting Hill and Nottingham in the late 'fifties – and the spectre of large scale riots as in the USA in the 'sixties – encouraged successive governments to sponsor a number of bodies to absorb black unrest. When the recession made repression more intense and revolt more probable, the Labour Government passed the Race Relations Act in 1976. This Act incorporated earlier state race relations organisations into a central Commission for Racial Equality and numerous local Community Relations Councils.

The CRE brought together government functionaries, middle class blacks and labour bureaucrats. Its first chairman was old Etonian and former Tory MP David Lane. With his experience as Minister for Immigration at the Home Office from 1972 to 1974 and advisor to the Association of Chief Police Officers from 1975 to 1976, he was ideally qualified for service in a quango designed to mop up the mess caused by state-enforced racism. The trade union leaders had their own reasons for participating: they feared that growing competition in the labour market could upset stable industrial relations. As AUEW leader Bill Simpson, one of the first union officials to join the race relations industry, put it: 'Britain could be the scene of militancy among immigrants within 10 years unless race relations in industry improve' (Monty Meith, *Brothers to all men?*, 1972). Today the TUC has its own race relations committee

and a polished cabinet full of 'equal opportunity' policies. The committee's chairman AUEW-TASS general secretary Ken Gill is a commissioner at the CRE.

Losing touch

An official enquiry into the CRE in the wake of the 1981 riots found that much of its work was irrelevant to the needs of the black community.

The Tories objected to the CRE's expenditure because they felt it was not providing them with value for money. The CRE was so remote from black people that it was ineffectual in containing their anger when it erupted in the riots. This was particularly apparent at the level of the Community Relations Councils, financed jointly by the CRE and local councils.

There are now more than 200 CRCs in Britain. Their staffs of councillors, self-appointed black community representatives and do-gooders have a statutory duty to be 'non-sectarian and non-political'. Hence, while some CRC workers are committed to fighting racism, they are always compromised by their dependence on state funding. Their view that the state can be put to the service of the anti-racist cause dictates their response to racist attacks. They ask the police to defend black people and the council to rehouse them. Their response to police violence against blacks is to request that the police be made more accountable by having representatives on the CRC and other

similar bodies. But because the CRCs are so closely associated with the council and the police in areas where both are widely seen as agencies for enforcing racist discrimination and repression, the CRCs have become discredited in the black community.

In recent years the CRE and the CRCs have found their mediating role increasingly difficult to perform. One consequence is that they have been wracked by internal disputes. The CRE has come into repeated conflicts with CRCs which have attempted to relate to local conditions by adopting a more radical campaigning edge, and by appointing more radical anti-racist workers. Thus in 1980 the CRE set up a rival community relations body in Wolverhampton when the official CRC refused to ditch a worker deemed 'unsuitable'. More recently, a radical Brent councillor was turned down for the CRE-funded community relations post in Slough. A CRE official said they wanted somebody who was likely to 'acquiesce' and not 'argy-bargy with the executive'. At the CRE headquarters there has been incessant strife between senior (white) officials and black careerists who have pursued a series of legal actions alleging discrimination and unfair dismissal.

Riot reorganisation

The riots brought the crisis of the race relations industry to a head. The ruling class recognised that it needed a more effective means of dampening black resistance. The establishment knows that it cannot provide the jobs, houses and amenities that black people need. As *The Times* commented cynically on the appointment of George Young as minister for race relations last year, 'one is reminded of the Soviet Minister for (unobtainable) Fruit and Vegetables' (12 February 1982). The state has adopted a dual strategy. On the one hand, it has increased the numbers and improved both the training and equipment of the police for major riot control. On the other hand it has overhauled and extended the race relations industry to make it more flexible and responsive to black anger.

The Tories are keen to integrate a layer of respectable middle class blacks to help isolate the militants in the black community. Race relations minister Young

explained his approach last October:

'It helps if there are more black councillors, JPs, solicitors, accountants and other professionals. It is happening now, slightly faster with the Asian community than with the West Indians. It's not the whole answer, of course. The middle class will never absorb two million people... We've got to back the good guys, the sensible, moderate, responsible leaders of ethnic groups. If they are seen to deliver, to get financial support from central government for urban projects, then that reinforces their standing and credibility in the community. If they don't deliver, people will turn to the militants.' (*Sunday Times*, 10 October 1982)

Preventing trouble

The Tories may try to cultivate the black middle class but they have a limited capacity for integrating black militancy. That is a job for the Labour Party.

Ever since the riots, the Labour Party – especially in left-wing Labour councils – has moved into the sphere of race relations in an even bigger way than before. The backing for this intervention comes largely from the government's £270 million Inner City Partnership funds, managed by the Department of the Environment and distributed through local authorities. Councils have provided funds of their own – the GLC's £3 million ethnic minorities budget is the best known. With the state behind them, Labour councils have proclaimed 'equal opportunities programmes', set up new race relations and equal opportunities committees and provided funds for a host of community projects. Some of these are designed to save the council money by encouraging the 'community' to provide essential services by 'self-help' on the cheap. Others, like the police committees and police monitoring groups, aim to relate to black resentment and frustration at police brutality. These quangos try to divert young blacks away from resistance to the police into futile attempts to make the agents of state terror against blacks 'accountable' to the community.

The Labour approach helped to keep the black ghettos under firm state control last summer. A West Midlands Labour councillor recently defended his council's radical policy of funding community projects, claiming that it 'has been overwhelmingly successful in defusing the tension which created the street riots of 1981' (*The Guardian*, 1 February 1983). Labour's promise to the ruling class as a general election approach is that it can 'defuse tension' and disarm resistance in areas the Tories could never reach.

Hackney, where Colin Roach died, is in many ways a typical example of the way the state is ensuring that it stays on top of the black community. There is saturation policing of the areas where blacks are concentrated and an incessant round of harassment and intimidation. There is a Hackney Commission for Racial Equality, long established, tame and largely discredited. Then there is a plethora of newly-established institutions of more radical young blacks and more radical Labour and community politicians: the Hackney Black Alliance, the Hackney Black Peoples Association, the Community Alliance for Police Accountability. Some of these bodies contain individuals who really want to fight racism. But all are supported by state funds, from one source or another, and state control constantly restricts the scope of resistance to what is acceptable to the authorities. Even the Roach Family Support Committee has now received a GLC grant.

East London Workers Against Racism has been fighting racism in East London for longer than most of these quangos have been in existence. Our message is – get money from where you can, but don't rely on anybody but the working class to defend the black community from racist violence. That means breaking all links between the defence organisations and the state – whether the council or the police – and taking the campaign against racism into the working class movement.

GOOD TACTICS, DISA



Greenham: direct action OK; non-violence futile

Non-violent direct action

Non-violent direct action is one means by which the oppressed can protest against arbitrary authority. The experience of Mahatma Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King in the USA shows that it is the form of protest that is most acceptable to the ruling class. Mike Wall takes a look at Gandhi, Mick Hume at King and Helen Swift at the influence of their ideas on the peace movement in Britain today.

THE disarmament movement in Britain is renowned for its creative and innovative tactics. In the 'sixties the Committee of 100 pioneered 'direct action' methods: mass sit-down demonstrations, occupations of military bases and bunkers and exposures of defence secrets. More recently the Greenham Common protestors have captured the imagination of thousands through their 'embrace the base' demonstration, their prison 'break-in' and their court room antics. The labour movement, notorious for its dull demos and boring rallies, could learn a lot from the nuclear disarmers when it comes to campaigning tactics.

However in recent months direct action techniques have a new prefix - 'non-violent' - and have been elevated to the status of a central strategic commitment of the disarmament movement. 'Non-violent direct action', now sufficiently familiar to be widely discussed simply as NVDA, is proclaimed as the only legitimate way to challenge the establishment. Leading exponents of this approach - Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King - are celebrated on film, television and in the press.

State terror

The peace movement exists because we live in a violent society. In normal times this is more or less concealed, the violence that maintains society only comes to the fore when the status quo is threatened. The peace movement has revived in recent years because normal times are in the past: violent conflict is the order of the day abroad and at home as the capitalist system fights for its survival. Britain recently sent a war fleet to the South Atlantic to crush a threat to its interests from Argentina. Britain keeps an army in Ireland to terrorise people into accepting British rule. And it is

stocking up on conventional and nuclear weapons to cope with any other challenge to its imperial concerns. At home the British state has tooled up the police to deal with black rioters - or white strikers. The ruling class position is clear: it is prepared to use whatever level of violence is necessary to preserve its system. Where does that leave the peace movement?

The state has already turned its violence on the peace movement. So far it has been on a modest scale: Greenham protestors have been roughed up, arrested and some have chosen imprisonment to draw attention to their campaign. Any serious attempt to block the installation of cruise missiles at Greenham or anywhere else would undoubtedly be met by large scale police violence. The way the police dealt with strikers at Laurence Scott in Manchester last year with helicopters, horses, dogs, truncheons and full riot gear illustrates the sort of approach they would adopt. Faced with this sort of attack, NVDA simply means giving up: it is a surrender strategy.

Middle class mysticism

The use of any NVDA as a means of putting moral pressure on the state is ineffective because it assumes a consensus in society that does not exist. The British Government cannot be shamed into renouncing the weapons it needs to enforce its interests on its rivals. The only morality the ruling class recognises is its class interests. The bosses, the politicians and the generals are not open to persuasion by those who have no stake in their system and no desire to die for it. NVDA is a hopeless plea for the ruling class to accept the morality of the masses which is subversive of their system.

The Greenham women have tried to endow NVDA with mystical powers. This is nothing new (see Gandhi) and it is necessary because it is obvious that the approach has nothing practical to recommend it. One Greenham protestor claimed that NVDA could subvert the police:

'They became confused and felt foolish when faced with women who carry on talking and singing to them even as we are being manhandled and bruised. Eventually even the police must question their role in state coercion.' (*Morning Star*, 7 December 1982)

This is simply nonsense. If you sit down in front of a riot policeman he will walk all over you and question only your naivety about his role as enforcer of state coercion.

NVDA is a middle class strategy; it reflects the outlook of people who are in the middle. They are repelled by the barbarous and vicious features of capitalist society in decay, but they are not so repelled that they are prepared to fight for the overthrow of capitalism. They want to protest, but to keep protests within the limits of what is acceptable to the present system. Hence NVDA is the ideal means by which the middle class leadership of CND can restrict the scope of popular protests against militarism.

NVDA is no use to the working class. Workers are forced to fight against the system for their most basic rights. Pickets never have the slightest hesitation about using violence against scabs or police who have attacked them during strikes. Workers' preparedness to fight against those who use violence against them to preserve the capitalist order indicates in embryo the willingness of the working class to take power over society.

In 1867 Engels applauded London workers who declared their support for the Fenians; this was a 'splendid thing' because it was 'first, a violent and, secondly, an anti-English movement' (Marx and Engels, *Ireland and the Irish Question*). Indeed this sums up what's wrong with today's peace movement. First, it is non-violent, and therefore incapable of fighting even for its own limited objectives of stopping cruise. Second, it is anti-American, rather than being against British militarism - the enemy of the working class at home. Engel's advocacy of support for the Irish liberation struggle more than a century ago remains sound advice for those who want to fight for peace in Britain today.



Gandhi: 'a fake leader and a false prophet' - Trotsky

Mystical stooge

MAHATMA GANDHI was a barrister whose campaign of non-violent resistance played a key role in containing the revolt of the Indian masses against their colonial oppressors in the years leading up to the British withdrawal in the late 'forties.

Satyagraha

Gandhi came to prominence as a politician in the bourgeois nationalist Congress Party of India around the close of the First World War. His distinctive approach was expressed in the Satyagraha campaigns of non-violent direct action. Gandhi held that oppressors should be treated as equals who could be convinced of the 'truth' and justice of the oppressed people's cause. He refused to countenance the use of force by the oppressed. Only a display of moral superiority and a willingness to suffer could win. In fact Satyagraha only served to reconcile the oppressed to the continuation of their oppression.

In 1917, Gandhi led a campaign of indigo-growing peasants against British landlords in Champaran, Bihar. The indigo trade was in crisis and the peasants could not afford to pay their rents in cash. Gandhi made a deal claiming 'that as peasants and planters had still to live together in the future, a compromise was the best foundation for better relations' (J M Brown, *Gandhi's rise to power*). In Gujarat in 1918 Gandhi sided with the farmers against British tax officials. In Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat, Gandhi intervened in an industrial dispute in mills owned by one of his friends and patrons. He suggested a compromise wage settlement. His guidelines to the strikers included commands not to harass scabs, and never to use violence. He backed his case with a fast. This had the role of consolidating the strikers behind his approach - and of pushing the mill-owner into making concessions. He feared that Gandhi's martyrdom might lead to more unrest.

These three local campaigns were important in strengthening Gandhi's prestige in Congress. The recent Richard Attenborough film on Gandhi presents his rise to power as the result of his charisma, vision, and mystical qualities. The reality was different. Gandhi's campaigns and growing influence depended on groups of lawyers, traders, money lenders, village officials and sub-contractors. This section of society provided the basis for Gandhi's role in the independence movement. His usefulness to the Congress Party lay in his success in reaching and consolidating the support of the petit bourgeoisie. Gandhi's affectation of traditional dress and customs gave him a wide appeal to India's impoverished masses whose support he also won to the Congress Party.

Gandhi's methods allowed Congress to gain popular support through a form of limited opposition to Britain. At the same time his approach avoided the large-scale violence which could have threatened the vested interests of the Indian bourgeoisie. The Congress strategy was to apply controlled pressure on the British ruling class to persuade it to concede a measure of 'home rule' to the Indian bourgeoisie. Gandhi fitted Congress' needs well.

In 1919, the British drew up plans to suppress the growing independence movement in India. Congress adopted Gandhi's

ASTROUS STRATEGY

methods of dealing with martial law and repression. A day of fasting and prayer brought India to a near standstill. Gandhi, extended the Satyagraha to symbolic distributions of prohibited literature and offered no resistance when the British arrested him.

A revolution betrayed

Violent anti-British riots soon followed Gandhi's arrest. In Amritsar, nearly 400 Indians were murdered when the British troops opened fire on a mass meeting. In the ferment that followed the British were in danger of losing control. Gandhi's reaction to the violence was to undertake a penitential fast in his prison cell — and to issue calls for an end to the campaign of civil disobedience. The British released him from jail in order to spread his message. The *Oxford Modern History of India* sums up Gandhi's role as 'in a sense the government's best friend at that time'. Gandhi is credited with ensuring that 'resentment did not flame into insurrection'.

Congress initiated a policy of passive non-cooperation with the British administration from 1920 to 1922. This policy soon developed to the point where violence began to break out. Gandhi demanded the suspension of civil disobedience after an outburst of violence by him and his followers. The British arrested him.

Non-cooperation failed to force Britain to make concessions to the nationalist leaders. Gandhi's spell in prison from 1922 to 1924 bolstered his credibility and sustained his influence to use again another day.

The late 'twenties were marked by a resurgence of violence and class struggle in India. Gandhi rebuilt his career by harnessing the anti-imperialist sentiments of the masses to the Congress Party objective of a negotiated deal with Britain. When talks broke down he immediately launched another civil disobedience campaign against Britain's monopoly on salt manufacture. The British responded by arresting thousands of Indians, and every Congress leader except Gandhi. Peasants and Hindu youth provided the backbone of this campaign — but it was the middle classes and the businessmen who financed it. As repression intensified and the campaign led to violence, Gandhi again made attempts to dampen it down. Once the campaign had subsided and Britain had refused to reconsider Indian independence, Gandhi returned to the sidelines of Indian politics.

After loyally supporting Britain in the Second World War, Gandhi returned to public life in the ostensibly anti-British 'Quit India' campaign, in the last years of the war. The campaign was designed to undercut the radical approach of Chandra Bose, the founder of the Indian National Army. Bose was arguing for armed resistance to British rule and was picking up widespread support. Gandhi was once again called to the rescue of the colonial authorities.

Moslems and Hindus

Gandhi was shot dead by a militant Hindu in 1948. The partition of India to create the Moslem state of Pakistan had led to disturbances and riots throughout India. Gandhi's base of support had always been the Hindus. His approach to the religious divisions in Indian society throughout his career was guided by his respect for the force that sustained them — British imperialism. Gandhi's acquiescence to the partition of India was a fitting climax to 30 years of non-violent direct action. Some two million people were slaughtered as the price of restoring the imperialist order under formally independent regimes in India and Pakistan. □



King (with the smart necktie) on release from prison after the Montgomery bus boycott that established his prestige among American blacks

Charismatic mediator

MARTIN LUTHER KING and other middle class leaders of the Civil Rights Movement in America hit upon non-violent direct action as a mechanism for containing black workers' anger. 'Non-violent resistance,' declared King, 'provides a creative force through which men can channelise their discontent' (quoted in R F Williams, *Negroes with guns*, New York 1962). From the beginning, King's NVDA aimed at 'channelizing' black discontent into a 'creative' compromise with American imperialism.

The 'weapon of love'

Martin Luther King assumed the leadership of the spontaneous movement against segregation of public transport in Montgomery, Alabama in 1956. He organised a black boycott of all buses. While the city's blacks suffered constant racist abuse and assaults, King urged them to use 'the weapon of love' in return, to 'have compassion and understanding for those who hate us'. As racist violence increased, King and his allies worked hard to ensure that blacks didn't fight back. While blacks were being shot by snipers, King herded their families and neighbours into church to show them old films of Gandhi 'in action'. King motivated his political approach as a man of God — telling blacks that their suffering would be rewarded in heaven. Violence was the ultimate evil:

'Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.' (M L King, *Chaos or community?*, 1967)

Despite King's moderation, the success of the boycott, and his imprisonment during it, gave him the image of a radical fighter for black liberation. Blacks looked to him for leadership and, as a consequence, their movement was reduced to one seeking only legal guarantees for equality. The more farsighted politicians saw a role for King and his non-violent tactics in their plans for ensuring social stability. Thus the Kennedy family and the Democratic Party began to cultivate King as part of their attempt to revive the old black-labour-liberal coalition on which the party had been built.

The Democratic Party leadership and its capitalist backers shared King's dislike for the ultra-racist segregation laws of the deep South. They saw these measures as obsolete as well as an international embarrassment and an impediment to the

creation of the integrated labour market which capital required from the late 'fifties onwards as it moved South from the stagnant north-east. The bourgeoisie saw in King the answer to controlling the explosive situation which the breakdown of long-established racial barriers could create. The development and integration of a black middle class as a mechanism for mediating such conflicts was made doubly necessary by the trade union leaders' lack of credibility among black workers. And, in a situation in which violent reaction was inevitable, the tactic of NVDA was seen by the ruling class as the best available form for that mediation to take.

King and Kennedy

During the run-up to the 1960 presidential elections, King was to the fore in the student sit-in protests against segregation which spread across the South. Despite the efforts to restrain the protestors, King again went too far for the reactionary forces of Southern law and was arrested. Democratic presidential candidate John F Kennedy, personally intervened to get King released. This well-publicised action ensured that dissident blacks voted for Kennedy, and gave him a slim majority over Republican Richard Nixon. Once settled in the White House, Kennedy set about rewarding the black middle class with the civil rights bills they had agitated for.

But black workers could not be bought off so easily. It was becoming clear to militant blacks that the formal recognition of 'equal opportunity', which King sought, meant nothing to them. The effectiveness of NVDA in the face of racist murder squads was coming increasingly into question. The crunch came in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963.

King was one of the leaders of a campaign to desegregate public facilities and to end discriminatory hiring practices. With Federal government backing he won a number of minor reforms. The Birmingham racists' response to these token concessions was to plant bombs in the black districts. When the blacks rioted, police and Alabama state troopers rampaged through the ghettos, beating and shooting everything in sight. King himself had already left Birmingham, but he went on the air to reassure America that none of this brutality affected his agreement with the Birmingham authorities. When the violence subsided, a *New York Times* correspondent noted that

'respected business leaders' in Birmingham 'now know Dr King and his people are doing their best to prevent a God-awful revolution' (19 May 1963).

As racist violence increased in the mid-'sixties, King and his NVDA strategy lost credibility fast amongst black militants. In 1964 there were riots in Harlem, New York. In 1965 things got worse. While King condemned black resistance in the USA and upheld US imperialist repression in South East Asia, blacks increasingly turned towards the more militant Malcolm X (until his death in 1965), and Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panthers.

In 1967 King moved into opposition to the Vietnam War and became involved in black workers' struggles for jobs, decent wages and trade union rights for the first time. But the pattern of compromise through promoting NVDA remained unchanged — he condemned the Detroit riots as 'criminal'. In 1968, he went to Memphis to support a strike by black sanitation workers. The demonstration he led was attacked by the police; rioting followed in which a 16 year old black youth was killed. King washed his hands of the affair and left Memphis, only to be persuaded to return to stop the strikers getting completely out of control. On 3 April 1968 he led a second demonstration. His speech to the rally was to be his last, but its theme remained unchanged: 'it is no longer a question of violence or non-violence in this day and age', he pleaded with the workers, 'it is nonviolence or nonexistence'. The next day he was shot dead by a racist gunman.

Gone but not forgotten

King's murder ended any remaining illusions in NVDA among US blacks. Black ghettos erupted in 125 American cities and the state poured police and troops in to put down the rebellion. Even in death, Martin Luther King had a role to play for American capitalism. While 65 000 troops attacked black communities, killing 38 militants and arresting 15 000, the television stations broadcast films of King exhorting blacks to peaceful protests.

American imperialism instinctively realised that King's equation of violence with oppression and his promotion of NVDA as a liberating alternative posed no threat to the system. It cost black workers a lot of blood to realise the same. It is a lesson which needs to be well learnt by workers and oppressed peoples everywhere. NVDA is a middle class device used to pursue middle class aims. Working class violence is a revolutionary tactic used in pursuit of social revolution. For the oppressed the difference is one of life and death. □



SPD candidate Bjoern Engholm looks to the Greens for inspiration



The greening of Social Democracy

ON 6 MARCH, the conservative CDU/CSU Christian Democratic Alliance under Helmut Kohl won a landslide victory in the General Election in West Germany and immediately went into coalition government with the Liberal FDP. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) was humiliated; its electoral support slumped to 38 per cent — a 20 year low. What went wrong for the SPD?

Crumbling at the edges

First, the SPD lost much of the middle class support that kept it in power from 1969 to October 1982. The CDU made inroads into SPD support in the north, notably in big industrial cities like Bochum, Hamburg, Hanover and Frankfurt. While working class support for the SPD held up, middle class areas went to the CDU. The recession has pushed the liberal Protestant middle class of the north — long-standing supporters of the SPD/Liberal coalition — in a right-wing direction.

Second, the CDU also captured some of the skilled working class vote. Workers in newer industries in areas like Baden-Württemberg in the south proved receptive to right-wing propaganda about the family, the nation and individual initiative. The recent elections have confirmed the decline in SPD popularity apparent in local and Land polls for some years. The SPD survived for so long largely because the spectre of ultra-right Bavarian CSU leader Franz Josef Strauss as Chancellor was too much for many disenchanted SPD supporters. In 1980 this lost the CDU/CSU the election; by 1983 the electorate feared an SPD future more than it feared Strauss.

Finally, the SPD was torn apart on an issue of vital concern to the German ruling class — its attitude to nuclear weapons and the NATO alliance. As Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt was paralysed in the face of mounting opposition at the highest level of the SPD to his support for the installation of US cruise missiles in West Germany. The SPD's vacillation on this issue lost it support on the right to the CDU/CSU, and on the left to the Greens.

Rising Greens

The strength of the Greens in West Germany is unparalleled in any other European country. Having started off as an all-purpose protest movement, it has quickly become a formidable electoral force. Since the formation of the Green Party in 1980 it has won seats in many local and Land assemblies and now controls 5.6 per cent of the seats in the federal Bundestag. This is the first time since the early 'fifties that a fourth party has crossed the critical five per cent hurdle to enter parliament.

Are German people more preoccupied than others with the prospect of nuclear warfare? To some extent, yes. The widespread view that the next world war will be a form of nuclear confrontation between America and the Soviet Union in the European theatre, with Germany

The consensus that has preserved stability in West Germany for 20 years has collapsed under the pressures of the recession. Sabena Norton examines the fragmentation of the Social Democratic Party and the rise of the Greens.

as the main battleground, has naturally aroused more anxiety among West German people than elsewhere. It is also true that the memory of the mass destruction and horror of world war is particularly vivid in Germany which — along with the Soviet Union — sustained the largest number of civilian deaths.

However, in neighbouring France, where the effect of a European holocaust would be just as devastating, the anti-nuke protest is on a much smaller scale. And in Britain, where the environment is, if anything, more polluted than that of West Germany, the Ecology Party has no popular support. The pundits of the world press reckon that the German infatuation with nukes and environmental health reflects a deep-seated national psychosis. This simply exposes their own stupidity. But what is the real reason for the Greens' popularity in West Germany?

The Greens' success is a symptom of the weakness of working class politics — and even of the reformist labour bureaucracy — in West Germany. The Greens have been able to monopolise left-wing protest against ruling class policies because there has been no other force to the left of the SPD capable of providing an alternative. The recession and the threat of capitalist war have produced an all-class movement, petit-bourgeois and pacifist in outlook.

In the mid-'seventies the Greens did not exist. But militant youth protest against the right-wing social democratic government was turning into violent confrontations with the state over the siting of nuclear waste depots and military installations. Pitched battles were fought at Brokdorf and on the runway at Frankfurt Airport. The problem was that this militancy was directed towards moral outrage against the symptoms of an increasingly repressive capitalist society — not against capitalism itself. The pacifist all-class Green movement of today incorporated the anti-authoritarian energies of this angry younger generation.

The 'K-factor'

Not very well known outside West Germany is the role played by radical left organisations in building the Greens. For the left the issues of peace and ecology provided a welcome opportunity to break out of its isolation. In the mid-'seventies the so-called 'K-groups' — the Kommunistischer Bund (Communist League), the KPD (the Maoist Communist Party) and the KBW (the Communist League of West Germany) jumped on the youth protest bandwagon. After years of frustrated efforts to build working class support, the German left could not resist the attractions of the growing trend of middle class radicalism. Indeed the K-groups became a major vehicle

for building the Greens. In 1980 two of them announced their liquidation and joined the Greens at the founding conference of the Green Party.

Almost without exception the leading activists who have built the Greens into a major force in traditional centres of left-wing politics in Hamburg, Frankfurt and Berlin, are ex-members of one of the 'K' groups. While Petra Kelly epitomises the openly careerist middle class wing of this movement that has set its sights on parliamentary respectability, its popularity among more militant people owes much to the hard work of middle-aged ex-communists.

The period leading up to the elections fully exposed the reactionary consequences of this opportunism. It showed that the main beneficiary of the Green movement is the decaying SPD. Since last October the SPD has performed a dramatic turn towards the peace movement, in a desperate effort to grab radical votes and re-orient the party around a left reformist outlook.

Helmut Vogel, the SPD candidate for Chancellor in the elections, is a man with a long-standing reputation for anti-left witchhunts in his position of SPD leader in Munich. Overnight he turned into an ardent supporter of the anti-nuclear cause. In a cynical attempt to broaden its electoral base, the SPD leadership played every possible trick. Former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, chief architect of the European nuclear rearmament plans, discreetly retired into the background. His predecessor, the more radical Willy Brandt, in his time main architect of West German detente policies, was wheeled out to lend credibility to the party's sudden conversion to the cause of peace. Aged right-wing stalwarts like Herbert Wehner were put out to grass, and a whole flock of younger, trendier party functionaries was sent out to project the party's new popular image.

The revival of the SPD

The SPD has attempted to revive its image as a left-of-centre party by focusing on peace and ecology. The fact that it managed to attract 750 000 votes away from the Greens shows that it can do so with some success. However, the results of the recent Land election in Schleswig Holstein demonstrate the difficulties the party faces in erasing its past record. SPD candidate Bjoern Engholm, standing on a platform of support for alternative energy policies, the conservation of the North Sea coastline and for safe disposal of nuclear waste, managed to increase the SPD's share of the vote by two per cent. The party has taken the lessons of the General Election campaign to heart and is redoubling its efforts to radicalise and feminise its appeal.

The SPD's strategy for its period in opposition is twofold. The first objective is to destroy the Greens. This should not prove too difficult. Many Green campaigners are already streaming back into the SPD — a far more reliable vehicle for parliamentary success than the inherently unstable alliance of parish priests, nature freaks and frustrated leftists that makes up the Green Party.

The SPD's second objective is to rebuild its base in the working class. Last year, even before the elections, the SPD launched a major drive to revitalise its base in the rank and file. The vast army of party workers out leafleting and canvassing during the election campaign was a novelty for the SPD. In previous elections it has relied almost exclusively on the mass media. In some parts of the country, notably the recession-struck Saar and Ruhr, which include the vast majority of the country's unemployed, the SPD has gone some way in rebuilding a vibrant local party life. By far the greatest contribution towards the SPD's success in this field has come from the left. Concentrating on the Green issues, the left has allowed the SPD's vicious attacks on the working class during the previous government to pass unchallenged.

For a red future

The Greens have paved the way for the spirit of all-class harmony from which Kohl's new right-wing government hopes to benefit. During the election campaign the Christian Democrats were quite prepared to take on board many of the concerns that the Green movement reflects: the fear of war, distrust of Reagan, and environmental issues. By demonstrating responsiveness to the nation's anxieties Kohl was able to project the CDU/CSU as a party that cares. Already the new CDU/FDP cabinet has promised to combat the evil of pollution by means of new laws and state funds to purify the atmosphere, a convenient gesture to compensate for the government's brutal social and economic policies.

Kohl intends to project right-wing politics in a firm but populist leadership style — a style that has traditionally been the hallmark of German Christian Democracy. The CDU/CSU is in a precarious position. For the first time in post-war history West Germany is entering a period of serious class confrontation. Although the CDU triumphed in March, West German politics retain a degree of instability. For the time being Kohl's aim is to cohere a national consensus for economic sacrifice and to isolate working class militants. On the surface, the climate of national reconciliation that characterised the election campaigning of all parties appears to bode well for Kohl. But at the same time the crisis of the SPD and the inevitable disintegration of the Green movement opens the way for the development of real working class politics in Germany.



French carworkers on the march: but the unions won't fight racism

Migrants against Mitterand

A wave of violent strikes by black carworkers has produced a virulent racist backlash in crisis-torn France. In the municipal elections (see *Letters*, page 23) candidates from all the major parties struggled to outdo one another in anti-immigrant rhetoric. Ian Sinclair reports.

LAST JUNE Francois Mitterand's Government launched a major offensive against the working class. The aim was to drive down working class living standards by means of a wage policy and to step up the exploitation of workers through a trade union sponsored productivity drive. *L'Unité*, the Socialist Party's weekly, charted out the future for French workers in Socialist France:

'In the industrial effort all must compete: the employer, the manager, the banker, the worker. All united, all mobilised to ensure the resurgence of French industry.' (4 July 1982)

The Stalinist Communist Party (PCF) and its union, the CGT, were only too eager to play their part in the Socialists' austerity drive. In June, the Politbureau of the PCF appealed to French workers 'that their reaction to the government's efforts be positive' (*Le Monde*, 24 June 1982) and the party's Congress in September launched the 'battle for national production'. However, six months later the labour bureaucrats' strategy is in tatters.

'Ouvriers Specialises'

A wave of major strikes in the French car industry has scotched their plans. One of the most oppressed sections of the French working class, the unskilled North African production line workers in the big Citroen, Renault and Talbot plants in the Paris basin, has resisted the drive to make the working class pay the price for

the crisis of French capitalism.

Assembly line work in the car factories combines arduous labour with poor conditions and low wages. Boring, exhausting and repetitive, this work has traditionally been reserved for the black 'specialised worker' — the OS. Recently Citroen tried to find 1 200 workers to fill OS jobs at its fairly modern plant at Rennes in Northern France — a town with 10 000 men on the dole. Only 408 applicants turned up at the factory gates.

In the factories the OS have been subject to a vicious racist regime. At the Citroen plant in Aulnay — the centre of the current strike wave — the bosses have hired racist thugs to run the African shop floor. These white foremen are organised in a scab company union — the CSL. They enforce the systematic racial oppression built into French industry ever since workers from France's former colonies in North Africa were drafted into the factories in the early 'sixties.

For the OS, life outside the factory gates is little better. In France black workers have been virtually segregated from the rest of society. Most of them live in heavily policed ghettos on the outskirts of the cities. The slums to the west of Paris, at Poissy, Aulnay and St Germain, near the big car factories, contain some of the worst housing conditions in Europe. Here, private landlords and shopkeepers make extra profits out of the plight of the ghettoised workers while the police terrorise them. The conditions of the OS in the Paris region combine the worst features of capitalist corruption and brutality.

Fight-back

Since January, black workers have been fighting back in the factories. For most of the first three months of the year the Renault plants at Flins, and Billancourt and the Citroen plant at Aulnay have been on strike. The OS's militancy has put the Government and the union bureau-

cracy on the defensive. Paint shop workers at Flins, 85 per cent of whom are black, led a militant struggle for the national Renault workers' pay claim. Their 11 per cent settlement — plus bonus payments — broke through the Government's pay limit of eight per cent. The workers also succeeded in winning a 70 per cent compensation for the wages lost while they were on strike or laid off. This successful strike was a major blow for the Government's drive to restore the ailing French car industry's competitiveness. Renault, the nationalised car giant, was to be a model for the private sector in industrial relations and wage discipline. The militancy of the OS workers has shattered the Socialist Government's popularity among the employers, as it has proved unable to carry out its strategy to contain working class resistance.

The private sector Citroen plant has been in turmoil for the past three months. By the end of last year, opposition to the slave-labour conditions at the plant had reached the point where management claimed that 80 per cent of the cars leaving the track were sub-standard. The company set up a special workshop of white 'qualified' workers to curb the black workers' growing combativity and increase racial divisions in the workforce. The bourgeois press launched a racist propaganda campaign, accusing OS workers of sabotage.

Socialist counter-attack

By early February, the conflict had reached boiling point. The Citroen OS workers launched a strike for a wide range of demands, not only for better pay, but also for training facilities and access to skilled work. This sort of broad challenge to management was unprecedented. On 2 February violence erupted between the North African strikers and the white company union scabs, as a result of which 25 workers were hospitalised. Almost daily, the Citroen strikers massed in the streets of Aulnay for marches and rallies

to demonstrate their determination to win. Faced with this challenge, the Mitterand Government responded in a manner which sums up the harsh bourgeois realism that lies behind its socialist rhetoric. Labour Minister Jean Auroux was the first to come out with a torrent of racist abuse denouncing the strikers as 'terrorists' and mad 'Islamic fundamentalists'.

The theme was taken up in the French media which embarked on what one bourgeois Arab politician in Paris described as a 'wave of xenophobia and anti-Arab psychosis' (*Le Monde*, 29 February). Faced with increasing pressure from the right wing as a result of its inability to cope with the deepening crisis of the French economy, the Government seized upon racist propaganda to save its skin. It thereby added fuel to an already explosive climate of racial tension. In mid-February Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy joined the fray in a keynote radio address:

'The principal difficulties which remain are posed by immigrant workers, whose problems I don't fail to appreciate, but who, I must note, are stirred up by religious and political groups who are governed by criteria having little to do with French social relations.' (*Le Monde*, 29 January)

Government propaganda redefined the problem: a conflict between a section of workers and capital was turned into a racial conflict between the French nation and immigrants.

'Social realities'

The euphoria of May 1981, when the Mitterand administration took over, is now a distant memory. When the Socialists came to power they promised to reform the immigration laws and reduce racial tension. Today it is evident that racism in France is worse than it ever was — worse even than in the lifetime of the reactionary Giscard administration. On coming to power the Socialists implemented their promised amnesty for illegal immigrants, which turned out to be no more than a rationalisation of immigration regulations. Last October the amnesty was stopped — and now more than 20 000 black workers are due for deportation.

The 'reformed' immigration laws make entry for non-EEC nationals virtually impossible. To get permission to enter the country you need an invitation from a French resident, a dated return ticket and a letter of reference from the mayor of the town of destination. This legislation, passed amid national hysteria about Arab terrorists in the wake of the Jewish restaurant bombing last summer, is the most repressive race law in French history.

The French Government's racism graphically expresses the crisis of French society and the impasse facing the Socialist administration. It draws out the grim reality of the national anti-crisis policies which were supposed to bring about prosperity for all. Now that the utopianism of plans is being exposed by increasing poverty and exploitation, the Socialists are appealing to the most backward sentiments in an attempt to preserve class peace.

In the municipal elections in March this approach was employed to the hilt. In Marseilles the main election slogan of the left slate on posters splashed all over town, read:

'The right: twenty years of relentless immigration — the left: immigration under control.' (*Le Monde*, 11 March 1983)

This crude opportunism could not prevent a major setback for the left — in fact it only served to highlight the visible disintegration of a left reformist government that was held up as a model for socialists only a year ago.

The mounting combativity of immigrant workers in France on the one hand, and the growth of right-wing racist responses on the other, indicate the deepening polarisation of French society. It shows that the time is ripe for the French working class as a whole to wage a determined fight against their oppressors. If they are to fight and win, French workers must unite in building uncompromising resistance to the racists — especially those in the labour movement — who seek to divert them from their task.

THATCHER'S Family Policy Group, set up in July of last year, includes seven Cabinet ministers, John Sparrow from the Central Policy Review Staff (the Tories' 'think-tank'), the Prime Minister herself, and Ferdinand Mount. 'Ferdy' as his chums call him is an old Etonian, former journalist on the *Spectator* and the *Daily Mail*, who is now a personal adviser to Thatcher. In short, Mount is a professional Tory ideologue. His recent book *The subversive family* (Cape 1982) provides the theoretical underpinning for present Tory policy on the family.

Tory theory

For the bourgeois modern industrial society (capitalism) is the most advanced society imaginable, corresponding to the natural order of things. When he looks back into history, the bourgeois can see only his own reflection. Here the rational thinker, there the true individualist. When he looks to the future, he sees only the continuation of the present order. Mount is a true Tory theorist, an apologist for the status quo and a man determined to preserve it.

Mount's book argues that the basic institutions of capitalist society are eternal components of human life. The nuclear family can be found in every previously existing society; because it arises out of human nature, it will therefore always exist. Mount, however, gives this traditional conservative thesis a radical thrust.

First, Mount takes issue with the widely held view that the family helps to maintain the status quo. He believes that, far from being a stabilising influence on society, the family is 'subversive'. He reckons that the family has always 'undermined the state'. He even refers to 'the family's permanent revolution against the state'.

Second, he attacks religion and fascism as well as Marxism. For him celibate priests and monasteries, widespread homosexuality in the Nazi Party and the communist ideal of 'free love' are all part of the conspiracy to undermine the family.

Third, he argues that it is the working class and women, rather than the bourgeoisie and men, who are the main beneficiaries of capitalist society. A worker, he believes, has no time for religion, fascism or communism: he works 'to provide a better life for his family'. Similarly he claims that women are not downtrodden and oppressed. Why 'at times in the Middle Ages we are almost deafened by complaints of henpecked husbands and women asserting their right to choose husbands or lovers'.

Tory policy

Before we look further at Mount's zany theories, let's first look at the Family Policy Group proposals. Leaving aside the cranky ideas of a few upper-class twits, the document contains an ideological attack on women and a summary of policies already being implemented - privatisation, cuts in services, wages and women's jobs.

As far as capital is concerned those who are unable to work are a useless drain on society's resources. The Tories cannot afford to spell out this logic, although they are forced to implement it in practice. To win elections they need support from workers as well as from employers. Hence rather than launch an open class war they cover their tracks by maintaining that cuts in social services will improve the quality of life!

The Tories say that it is harmful for children to be taken away from their mothers, and so women are to be 'encouraged' to stay at home. The Tories will not provide more nurseries so that mothers can work, because they are too expensive, and there are no jobs for all the mothers who would come into the labour market.

The Family Policy Group also wants more 'family' involvement in looking after the elderly, disabled people and unemployed youth. Rather than pay allowances at a level which would allow these people to live independently, the Tories expect women to care for them as part of their unpaid domestic duties.

THATCHER'S FAMILY THINK-TANK



The nation's ideal family has no worries about the cuts

Real life soap opera

Last month the nation sat on the edge of its sofa wondering if Deirdre would pack in the petit-bourgeois Mike Baldwin and reconcile herself to dull do-gooder Ken Barlow. Predictably, Deirdre renounced candlelight dinners, vintage wine and Barry Manilow records for the sake of her family. 'My wife', said Ken firmly to Mike Baldwin, 'will not be seeing you again'. And that was the end of Coronation Street's most exciting drama in 20 years.

Last month the policies of Thatcher's Family Policy Group were revealed to be as banal as a television soap opera. The liberal press found many of them 'naive' and 'impractical' (*Guardian*), 'too silly' (*New Society*) or 'as insubstantial as an advertising man's puff' (Bel Mooney in the *Sunday Times*). Kate Marshall examines their family and ours.

Where they cannot cope, the document calls for 'more emphasis and encouragement to community-based services like day or short-term care'. The main recommendation for these services is that, like playgroups and childminders, they are the cheapest form of care that can be organised. 'Day care' means that women still have to look after old people at home in the evenings and through the night. And 'short-term care' is a euphemism for throwing the sick out of hospital as soon as they are well enough to be nursed at home.

To justify their barbaric policies the Tories talk about 'responsible, self-reliant behaviour by parents', 'service to the community' and the value of voluntary work. The Family Policy Group promises to 'review the power of the professions' - teachers, social workers and probation officers in particular. This fits in with Tory obsessions about 'incompetent teachers', 'busy bodies' and the horrors of bureaucracy. Many workers are only too well aware that the education their children receive is going from bad to worse. But for the Tories these problems result from *too much* state spending rather than *too little*! So the problem is best dealt with by increasing the power of the headmasters to sack 'incompetent' teachers! Similarly families who are on the receiving end of a probation or social worker often resent the intrusion. But as long as capitalism exists they will remain as important as the more obviously repressive arms of the state - the police and the prisons.

The Tory policy document goes on and on. Its plans to remove fiscal discrimination against mothers mean implementing taxation policies which discriminate against working mothers and

make it uneconomic for both parents to go out to work. Schools should 'provide preparation for marriage and parenthood': this means making childrearing an acceptable alternative to a job, specifically for girls. 'Developing homesteading for tenants of sub-standard housing' is the Tories' response to their own failure to provide decent housing.

Their freedoms and ours

What lies behind the Tory proposals is the bourgeois conception of freedom. Let people repair their own homes; allow people to look after their own relatives; encourage women to be with their children rather than feel they *must* work. Thatcher summed up the approach in her 1979 manifesto:

'The balance of society has been increasingly tilted in favour of the state at the expense of individual freedom... We have to reverse that process, to restore the balance of power in favour of the people.'

It is obvious that Thatcher is not talking about too much police power, attacks on trade union rights, or the powerlessness of the unemployed. She counterposes individual freedom to the 'power' of organised labour and state provision of welfare services. This view accurately reflects the outlook of the individual capitalist who resents the collective strength of the working class and the high cost of the welfare state (paid for out of his profits). The working class has no interest in this kind of freedom. It means being 'free' from a job, 'free' to do unlimited, unpaid domestic work, and 'free' to starve.

To return to Mount, we can see how hollow is his claim that the family is 'subversive'. His Family Policy Group

colleague, Tory minister Patrick Jenkin, defended the family at the 1979 party conference:

'The family... has been the foundation for virtually every free society known to history. It possesses strength and resilience, not least in adversity. Loyalty to the family ranks highest of all, higher even than loyalty to the state. It is no accident... that dictatorships, whether of the left or right seek first to devalue and then destroy the family.'

What free societies have been known to history? Is he talking about oriental despotism, Greek and Roman slavery or medieval feudalism? And surely the Nazis' policy of 'Kinder, Kirche and Koche' (children, church and kitchen) has much in common with the Tory schemes.

Mount's claim that workers, especially women, are the strongest defenders of the family does contain some truth. Asian parents divided by immigration controls, black South African families split by apartheid, and families separated by imprisonment, poverty or war have fought relentlessly against the laws and circumstances that keep them apart. But capitalism attacks the family in more subtle ways - by reducing the wages of the parents, by cutting state benefits and by causing social problems like unemployment, depression and violence.

Their family and ours

Compared to the bourgeois family which has good economic reasons for its existence (to pass the business and the property on to the sons) the proletarian family has none. It is therefore possible for it to be based on love. Women get married and do unpaid domestic work for love and to maintain some financial support while they are bringing up their children. Few women see this unpaid work as a contribution to the reproduction of the working class in the interests of capital accumulation. But that is what it is.

For Marxists there is nothing natural about the family as we know it. The changing forms of the family reflect the social forces which shape it in different periods. Mount disputes this thesis on the grounds that maternal instinct and monogamy are natural, the nuclear family universal and homosexuality unnatural. These assertions about 'nature' cannot account for the diversity of family life. Why do Indian and Chinese mothers kill their daughters? Why does the 'nuclear family' of Ancient Rome include half a dozen slaves? Furthermore Mount deliberately confuses natural inclinations and biology with social relations. Sexuality cannot exist independently of social relations of production. Sexual relations are affected by laws, morality and economic relations. Mount sees 'love' as the motor force of history. He would see the exceptional example of a white South African renouncing his class and racial privileges to marry a black woman as proof of the power of love. We would rather look at the vast majority of 'racially pure' marriages in South Africa to prove that love generally only comes into play between people of the same race, class, of a similar age, from the same background, religion and area. In most societies right up to the present day marriage has not been based on love, but on duty, responsibility, convenience, economic necessity, obedience, parental wishes, etc.

Capitalism attacks everything that is good about the family (comfort, close personal relationships, etc) through its attacks on incomes and social services. Communism on the other hand attacks those aspects of the family which hamper the fullest development of the individual and of society. We intend to destroy the family as an economic unit by socialising domestic work. We aim to do the reverse of the Tories. They want to shift jobs from the public to the family sphere and intensify the burden on women in the home. We want to reduce this burden to the bare minimum by transforming caring functions into jobs performed collectively by society. Only communism can liberate women and the working class and free the family from the Tories.



During the First World War feminist Emmeline Pankhurst backed the British bourgeoisie and the anti-Bolshevik Women's Death Battalion (above). Her daughter Sylvia backed the working class and the Bolsheviks in her paper (below). Which way will today's women's movement go?

Workers' Dreadnought

**Tells How to Get
THE
SOVIETS
in BRITAIN.**

**Plenty for all when we
Abolish the Capitalists.
Equality for the Workers.**

WOMEN: TAKE SIDES!

WHEN 30 000 women embraced the Greenham missile base in December, the media looked on benignly. This, they said, is a re-enactment of an age-old female ritual. Women's desire for peace is as old as the maternal instinct itself. The right-wing Tory press reprimanded the Greenham women for unwittingly playing into the hands of the Soviets. But generally the peace women have been treated chivalrously by Fleet Street, even when they break the law. Like naughty children, the story goes, they do not understand what they are getting involved in. The *Daily Mirror* gushed that their purity and innocence 'reminds you of nuns'.

Why women want peace

Peace camp founder Helen John reckons that the press has been inspired by the spirit of love and warmth at Greenham. She claims to have seen 'very hard-bitten reporters crying' at the December protest. Unfortunately there is a more insidious explanation for the sentimental slush they have been churning out.

Women have been leading peace movements since the onset of imperialist warfare. Their cause has always been portrayed as a typically feminine, emotional response to the harsh realities of a man's world. In fact women's desire for peace is eminently rational. Their confinement to the 'home front' in wartime gives them a special insight into ruling class hypocrisy.

In wartime women discover there is nothing natural about their roles as mothers and housewives. Forcibly separated, often forever, from their husbands, lovers, brothers and sons they are thrown bodily into hot, filthy munitions plants to work long hours at men's jobs. In wartime the sanctity of the family is suddenly forgotten. In the Second World War women had their children 'evacuated' hundreds of miles away, while their menfolk fought and died for Britain. Working class women huddled together with the infirm and elderly in air-raid shelters.

Women's right to go out to work and be exploited on equal terms with men was soon taken away from them when

On 8 March the RCP commemorated International Women's Day with a series of rallies dedicated to women fighting the imperialist war-drive — particularly the women incarcerated in Armagh jail for fighting British imperialism. Judy Harrison's speech to the London International Women's Day rally is reproduced below.

the war ended. After five years of destroying families, the ruling class suddenly re-discovered the virtues of family life — especially for women. Just when women needed jobs most — when many of their breadwinners failed to return home from war — they were driven out of the factories and back into the home.

Women have good reasons to fight for peace, and to be profoundly suspicious of all patriotic rhetoric. They know what role they are destined to play once the carnage begins. Their efforts are ridiculed by the ruling class because it fears the rot may spread to the male workers it needs for cannon-fodder. All the sexual stereotypes are wheeled out to convince men that only a muddle-headed female would oppose the imperialists' war-drive.

Sex or class?

The history of women's struggles for peace shows that it is fatal to conform to this stereotype. Whenever peace movements have been led by bourgeois women proclaiming that war is a male invention, that women are naturally the peaceful sex, they have been doomed to failure. For these women, campaigning for peace is a tactic, not a life and death question. Bourgeois feminists like British suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst were more than willing to drop their pacifist stance when they realised that the 'right to serve' their country might win middle class women the vote. Their class sisters in Germany and Russia drew the same conclusion. They signed up for the armed forces in their thousands, even disguising themselves as men, to serve their fatherland in the First World War.

The only peace movement that stood firm in 1914 was the one led by Bolshevik women workers in Russia. They had declared from the start that their enemy

was not men but imperialism. They were instrumental in subverting the armed forces by throwing themselves at the troops to stop them shooting down fellow-workers. On International Women's Day in 1917 Russian women workers rioted on the streets demanding an end to the war and food to feed their children. They sparked off the chain of events that culminated in the October revolution. Meanwhile Emmeline Pankhurst arrived in Moscow as an emissary from British Prime Minister Lloyd George. She threw her energies behind the Russian bourgeoisie's 'women's battalions of death', to defend the Winter Palace from the revolutionaries.

On International Women's Day we should remember the history of our movement and its enemies. The new women's peace movement faces all the old problems. The efforts of women fighting for peace will prove futile as long as the latter-day Ms Pankhursts remain in the driving seat. When former CND organiser Stalinist Sally Davison claims that Greenham proves that 'women of different political perspectives' can organise together around the fact that they are 'the caring sex' she is helping to confuse and immobilise the women's peace movement. Slogans like 'take the toys from the boys', the claim that Cruise and Trident are 'phallic symbols', mystical nonsense about women as earth-mothers — these are modern versions of the feminist rallying cries that were so easily dismissed by the bourgeoisie 70 years ago.

Women belong to classes, like everyone else. No amount of talk about sisterhood will prevent bourgeois women from siding with their class rather than their sex when the chips are down. Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi, Eva Peron, Golda Meir — these women

have not hesitated to use the most violent methods to suppress anyone who threatens the class they represent. Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, herself no pacifist, described how after the crushing of the 1871 Paris Commune 'the wild-raving women of the bourgeoisie exceeded even their bestial men in their bloody vengeance on the stricken proletariat'. The bourgeoisie has not become any less bestial in the century since. We should beware the soft-spoken bourgeois women who extol feminine virtues and claim that war is a male invention. When the class struggle heats up they turn out to be the most murderous of all.

Class war

Women who genuinely want to fight for peace have got to start by taking sides in the class war. They have got to decide who is the enemy — men or imperialism? With whom have they more in common — a male worker or a female boss?

These are the questions the female peace politicians want us to ignore. Women like CND leader Joan Ruddock and Labour MP Joan Lester see the Greenham movement as a source of mass support for the Labour Party. They are cynically manipulating the aspirations of tens of thousands of women, lying about the Labour Party's commitment to peace, past and present, and pandering to feminist prejudices to win the votes of the 'caring sex'.

We should tell them we care too much for our sisters languishing in Armagh's stinking jail to support the party that put them there. We care too much for the Argentine women who lost their men when the Belgrano went down to support the party that wants more gunboats built to fight 'conventional' wars.

Like the Bolshevik women in 1917 we should reject the overtures of the ladies of the bourgeoisie and tell them:

'You have not come here to defend our interests. You need our votes to defend your capitalist interests... You won't get them. We have learned how to struggle against you.' (Petrograd conference of women workers, 12 November 1917)



THE END OF A MYTH

The myth of the power of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries collapsed last month as falling oil prices precipitated public squabbling among the leading OPEC ministers. Often blamed as the cause of the recession, the oil sheikhs have become its victims. As Gareth Evans reports, nobody can now claim that OPEC is a threat to the imperialist order.

OPEC HAS NEVER operated as a cartel. A cartel is an agreement amongst the major producers of a commodity to carve up the market by establishing production quotas. This enables a cartel to set prices above or below market prices and to protect their profits and investments. Such an agreement existed between the seven major oil companies — Shell, BP, Gulf, Socal, Exxon, Texaco and Mobil (as they are known today) — from 1933 until the early 'seventies. This cartel kept crude oil prices low to minimise the taxes and royalties (ie rent) they paid to the oil-owning nations. The fact that the price of crude oil was low did not matter since they made their profits from refined oil products. Between 1948 and 1960 they succeeded in reducing the official 'posted' price of crude oil from \$2.20 to \$1.86 a barrel.

The great oil rip-off

In the 'fifties and 'sixties the average price of a tonne of oil in Europe was around \$10; to produce an equivalent amount of energy from coal cost around \$22. If the oil-producing nations had had the power to control the production and distribution of oil they could have pocketed the difference as rent. But from the establishment of OPEC in 1960 until 1973, the price of oil hardly changed. All that the OPEC countries could do was protect themselves against world inflation by raising royalties and taxes on oil companies. The formation and expansion of OPEC in the 'sixties was essentially a defence against the fall in the purchasing power of a barrel of oil by some 40 per cent over the decade.

In the early 'seventies the OPEC countries began to nationalise oil production so that by 1973 they controlled almost 60 per cent of production in their own countries. Today OPEC controls virtually all production, exploration and refineries in its own countries. It pays the oil companies for their capital and expertise with a proportion of the oil produced. It has also acquired 12 million tonnes of shipping. But it is still a long way from controlling the world oil market: the total OPEC share of world refinery capacity is 7.5 per cent and its share of world tanker fleet capacity four per cent.

Quadrupled oil prices in 1973 came about through the collusion of the OPEC countries with the oil companies. The latter were being hit hard by falling profit rates and needed to jack up prices for their products. Higher OPEC prices could be used to justify these price increases in the consuming countries. Moreover, higher prices were in the interests of US imperialism which imported less than a fifth of its oil from OPEC nations; Europe imported 85 per cent of its oil. Higher world prices increased the competitiveness of oil wells in Texas and Alaska. Five of the seven oil majors were US companies, so American capitalism benefited from the windfall gains.

OPEC's heyday

The revenues which accrued to OPEC in these years were enormous. From 1974 to 1978 OPEC ran a total trading surplus of \$175 billion. Most of this surplus was lent to foreign banks, or used to buy foreign government securities or industrial shares. According to the World Bank, the profits made on most of these investments were low or even negative; its conclusion was that the OPEC countries would have done better to leave the oil in the ground (*World Development Report*, 1981).

From 1975 the price of OPEC oil in real terms began to fall once more. At the same time OPEC imports shot up, so that by 1978 the trade surplus had been wiped out. But the subsequent oil price explosion of 1979-1980 when prices went up by 130 per cent was even less the result of OPEC demanding higher revenues than was the 1973 price increase. After the overthrow of the Shah, the Iranian economy plunged into chaos and oil exports dropped from 4.5 million barrels a day to around half a million in 1980. Suddenly some eight per cent of world oil exports had disappeared from the market and consumers without access to secure supplies rushed to build up

their stocks. The new high official price was sustained over the next couple of years with the connivance of the US-dominated International Energy Agency. The outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq helped to keep prices up.

At first OPEC finance ministers did not know what to do with their revenues. Their own economies were too backward to absorb much capital and OPEC revenues flowed into the coffers of Western banks and corporations. However, the oil ministers did not have to worry about what to do with their money for long. Demand for oil fell by five per cent in 1980 and again in 1981. By the end of 1982 OPEC was losing some 11 million barrels of output a day — more than a third of the average 1979 level — and in the first two months of this year OPEC output fell by a further five million barrels a day.

It is generally assumed that this fall in demand was caused by reduced demand from industry as a result of the recession. This reason in fact accounts for only about 30 per cent of the decline. Development of energy conservation and alternative energy sources (such as nuclear power in France) account for another 25 per cent. A further 15 per cent is the result of increased oil production by non-OPEC producers — Mexico, Alaska and the North Sea. Finally, another 30 per cent of the reduced demand is the result of the oil companies selling off their stockpiles with the aim of forcing OPEC — and the other producers — into cutting official prices. This was what precipitated the recent OPEC crisis.

The bubble bursts

Although the 'posted' price of Arab light marker crude oil has remained at around \$34 for more than two years, the collapse of demand has meant that more and more oil has found its way into the open 'spot' markets which now handle an estimated 20-30 per cent

of world oil. By last month the 'spot' price had fallen below \$27 — \$7 below the official price. Iran, the second OPEC producer after Saudi Arabia, has been selling its oil unofficially at around the 'spot' price for over a year and Nigeria recently knocked \$5.50 off its official price. Non-OPEC producers — particularly the North Sea and Mexico — have also dropped their official prices. The United States has cut its imports from Saudi Arabia by more than half and substituted Mexican oil.

The oil companies have been desperately trying to protect themselves from the effects of the recession. It is generally estimated that by 1981 they were losing more than \$1 on every barrel of oil they refined. Since then they have cut back refining capacity by 20 per cent and begun to invest in more profitable activities. Those companies which were not tied to Arab supplies — BP, Shell and Gulf — have increasingly bought on the open market: BP currently buys more than half its oil on the European 'spot' markets. But the four US majors which make up the Saudi Arabian consortium Aramco — Exxon, Mobil, Socal and Texaco — saw their net income drop 30-50 per cent last year. In response to this they have put pressure on Saudi Arabia to drop its price.

In the last decade the alchemists of Fleet Street transformed oil into 'black gold' — attributing to it quasi-mystical powers. Today once again the oil-producing nations stand clearly alongside the other backward capitalist countries which rely on the exports of one or two raw materials, subject to the vicissitudes of the imperialist-dominated world market. A handful of them — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Libya — still have some money in the bank — but not for long. Indeed, this year Saudi Arabia faces a budget deficit for the first time in its history.

The collapse of OPEC shows that backward capitalist countries cannot escape the clutches of imperialism by relying on the world market. After the 'OPEC decade' of the 'seventies all that the oil-producing countries have left is their subservience.

Extracts from the March issue of the Revolutionary Communist Party's South Yorkshire industrial bulletin

The battle in industry

Maggie out!

At the back end of April Margaret Thatcher plans to visit Sheffield to wine and dine at the annual Cutler's feast. Both the personality and the occasion will no doubt stir the hostility of the Sheffield working class. There is every possibility that she will be greeted with a huge protest and will not even manage to swallow her hors d'oeuvres.

Tories out!

The RCP wants to ensure the largest possible demonstration to show what we think of Thatcher and her class. We want to stem the bosses' offensive and advance workers' interests. That's why we see it as vital not merely to object to Thatcher but to voice opposition to all attacks on working class living standards and to express solidarity with all oppressed people. With blacks, who face daily harassment from the state; women, who are at the butt end of an offensive to drive them back into the home and perpetuate their domestic slavery; and with the Irish people in their struggle for national liberation.

All this may seem a long way from keeping Margaret Thatcher out of Sheffield but we believe the issues cannot be separated. At the moment the Tories are odds on for re-election. Not because workers are impressed with Tory politics — they are not — but because they have been given no alternative. The Tories are winning all the political arguments. Labour agrees that Britain should be made more competitive at the expense of our jobs. Labour toes the line on law and order at the expense of blacks. It goes all the way with the Tories on the need to suppress the Irish people. Until this political consensus is broken the Tories will get their way.

Labour out!

At the moment two committees exist to co-ordinate action — the 'Thatcher reception committee' and the 'Thatcher unwelcome committee'. Why two committees? A difficult question to answer. The 'reception committee' is determined to keep politics out of the mobilisation and this should stand in good stead with the 'unwelcome committee' which has the support of the Labour Party. The difference is how explicit is to be about making the event part of Labour's campaign for re-election. The 'unwelcomers' will make the running on this. The 'reception party' are more circumspect, but their silence will only endorse the Labour Party and they will end up doing all the leg-work.

Workers in South Yorkshire have no interest in supporting the Labour Party — Labour's politics cannot meet the requirements of the working class. We don't only need to get rid of the Tories, we need a working class alternative to replace them. Let's get out on the streets and confront Thatcher not with the tired, cynical arguments of Labour Party hacks, but with the revolutionary outlook of the working class.

Jobs down the drain

The following motion was passed unanimously by the South Yorkshire branch of the GMBATU on Wednesday 23 February. There were over 50 members at the branch; the average attendance before the dispute was 10. This was despite the workers having little or no notice of the sell-out and having to assemble from Blackburn Meadow, Aldwarke, Stocksbridge, Woodhouse Mill and Chesterfield.

'This branch expresses its disgust at the lack of guidance and leadership from our full-time officers since the committee of inquiry had been announced. Instead of giving us a clear indication as to whether the inquiry's report was binding and whether any new offer would be referred back to the membership, our full-time officers have huffed and puffed confusing the situation as much as the national water council, the media and the Government.'

'This branch demands that in the case of future strike action the membership must be consulted in good time if the strike is to be called off.'

'This branch demands that union rules be changed as regards full-time officers so that they come up for re-election every three years.'

What happened

Ian Drayton, a GMBATU steward, explains the mood of anger and frustration among waterworkers:

'Inside the branch the offer was unanimously regarded as rubbish. In particular it contained the usual bad deal for day workers. Without shift allowance, weekend pressure time and a good bonus they will be a long way from getting 12 per cent.

'Nevertheless the motion to return to work as recommended was carried by a majority of three to one. The shop stewards argued that it was unrealistic to stay out since there was not time to build a concerted response. The leadership had argued that it was in the best interests of the membership that the issue be settled. *The real reason* was that the rank and file were organising at all levels to take the dispute into their own hands. A good example of this was the militant picket of ACAS the Sunday before the dispute was called off. The bureaucrats had to head this off.

'The settlement is certainly not in the best interests of the membership. It is the first shot in a new offensive against jobs. Last year the introduction of a bonus scheme at the clean water site in Sheffield cost 164 jobs. Now plans are underway to change the terms of the bonus scheme. Under the old Productivity Payment Scheme a third of the bonus could be achieved for work at the normal rate. Under the proposed Water Industry Productivity Payment Scheme work at the fixed rate will get no bonus. This means speed-ups, danger to health and safety and in the end redundancies.

'This is what we now have to oppose. A national meeting of senior shop stewards has been proposed but no date has been fixed. The three branches in our own division, Barnsley, Sheffield Clean Water and South Yorkshire, will form a joint shop stewards committee with the support of the rank and file. This is in direct response to the failure of our leadership to implement our position on the strike:

- No retreat from the full claim
- No binding agreements
- All offers to be referred back to the membership.

'We learnt that you must go out and mobilise the widest level of support in the rest of the labour movement. We also discovered not only to be sceptical of the full-time officers, but that we should build our own national organisation so that next time we are ready to act.'

What we say

The waterworkers were poised to win their full claim. There is one reason and one reason only for the defeat of their strike — their own leaders. At every stage of the dispute they were more concerned to defend their position as negotiators than to advance the interests of their members. All the arguments that they put forward — that waterworkers were a special case, that they had co-operated in producing an efficient industry — were calculated to undermine the fight. In the end all this was not enough and they had to rush through a messy deal behind the backs of the workers.

The decision of the waterworkers in South Yorkshire to go back was repeated in isolation all round the country. We can make no criticism of the workers who took that decision in these circumstances, because they have looked at the situation honestly. They have not attempted to paint a sell-out as a victory. It is this honest appraisal that can be built on. What's more the vote of a quarter of the branch membership shows a determined capacity to fight.

To win struggles that they face the waterworkers will have to go a lot further than they have come so far. In addition to the re-election of officers, the demand must be for instant recall if the mandate of the branch is abused. Yes, push ahead with rank and file organisation.

But more importantly than any of this, the lesson must be learnt that the betrayal was not by a few individual class traitors, but by the politics they represent — Labourism, the politics of class collaboration. They accept that we must suffer to give British capitalism a chance. We know what that means. To build a strong rank and file needs unswerving working class politics. No more cuts in water services, no more redundancies, for a living wage on basic rates.

Cripple alliance

The Rotherham Trades Council Conference on unemployment on Saturday 12 February was attended by 50 delegates. It became a forum for the alternative economic strategy to defend British capitalism. One aspect of the plan is the role of the Triple Alliance of steel, rail and coal. But is the alliance to become a fighting body to defend jobs or is it to reinforce the negotiating position of the union bureaucrats? The arguments on the day give us the answer.

Backing Britain

Vice-President of the Yorkshire NUM Sam Thompson built the case for unity by attacking the ISTC, the NUR and his own members. But he was most appalled by the rundown of British industry. The Triple Alliance was intended to safeguard British industry. He complained about the export of capital and the loss of major contracts to foreigners. Does he really expect any capitalist to take a smaller profit when he can see a bigger one?

Thompson's points were hammered home by the president of Manvers Main Colliery. He reduced the problems of British capitalism to *marketing*. The solution was to make British industry *more competitive*. No, this was not the CBI conference, nor a government think-tank briefing. But it certainly was all concern for the state of British capital and no talk about fighting redundancies. To make the British steel, coal, ship-building and motor industries competitive; to enable British capital to market its products means thousands more workers down the road. The survival of British capital and the defence of workers' interests are incompatible.

Backing the working class

This note of reality was brought to the conference by the Revolutionary Communist Party. Every time workers have put the defence of industry and the country first, they have suffered. The road of economic nationalism is a road that ends in the deaths of millions of workers for the bosses' profits.

Many delegates were more concerned to fight the attacks on them and were not preoccupied with company balance sheets. It was the industrial power of the Triple Alliance that they wanted to unleash. For that to happen the political outlook of our present leaders must be driven out of the labour movement. We don't need these leaders blaming us for defeats which are the result of them putting profits before jobs.

Summing up, Sam Thompson tried to answer the RCP. It's not a question of revolution but of saving the coal industry he said. It's not a question of the coal industry but of the jobs, wages and living conditions of the working class. Capitalism can't guarantee them, only socialism can.

Comments on and contributions to the industrial bulletin should be sent:
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QUANGO CITY

Yesterday's rebels

Leeds has long been a stronghold of the women's movement. It has one of the best feminist bookshops in the country and an active Women Against Violence Against Women group. The fire-bombing and paint-daubing of sex-shops is a well-established local tradition. Yet the anger and determination of the early women's liberation movement has become tempered by the pursuit of campaigns for women's rights through the official channels ordained by the Labour Party. As the leading personalities and organisations of the women's movement have been incorporated onto the state payroll, the movement's perspectives have become increasingly restricted.

In collaboration with central government, the council has long sponsored women's self-help schemes as a welcome alternative to the state provision of vital services for women. Hence, through urban aid and Inner City Partnership funding, it has financed Women's Aid and the Rape Crisis Centre – to the tune of more than £10 000 in total this year. In September 1982 the Labour council expanded its intervention in women's issues, in parallel with other Labour councils around the country. The Women's Equal Opportunities Group brings together a circle of around 20 women activists. Most are employees of the council or its quangos. One is the editor of the council broadsheet *Civic News*; two work in the council's Department of Industry and Estates; another at the East Leeds Women's Workshop, a council-sponsored initiative. The local Trade Union and Community Resource and Information Centre (funded by the council and the government through the Equal Opportunities Commission) is closely involved. Several participants were one-time members of various left-wing groups, SWP, IMG, Big Flame: now they are mostly in the Labour Party.

The November 1982 conference of the new equal opportunities group showed just how moderate the feminists had become under their Labour masters. Of the 12 workshops scheduled, not one mentioned abortion rights and the session on childcare never happened. When RCP members put forward the demand for free 24-hour nurseries, we were accused of being unrealistic. The conference instead pleaded that the council introduce 'improved' childcare facilities. When we protested that free 24-hour nurseries had been one of the central demands of the women's liberation movement in the 'sixties, a veteran feminist summed up the prevailing mood:

'Who would have dreamt in those days that we'd be sitting here and debating how much money should be made available for small businesses set up by women? As revolutionary socialists we discussed 'correct' demands, like 24-hour nurseries. We've become more mellow, more realistic.'

'Realism' is the banner under which the women's movement and the labour bureaucracy march arm in arm today. Leeds' Labour council is very 'realistic':

- It provides no nursery facilities whatsoever for its own employees and local authority day nurseries cater for less than two per cent of all under-fives in Leeds.

- In February it raised nursery charges by 11 per cent – to bring in an extra £8000 in revenue; it also raised charges for home helps, meals on wheels and day centres for the mentally ill, physically

The class struggle in Leeds is contained and dissipated through a dense network of institutions supported by state cash hand-outs. For the local labour movement the way to fight for women's rights is through the council's Women's Equal Opportunities Group; the way to fight unemployment is through the TUC/Council/MSU unemployment centre; the way to fight against racism is through a host of 'community' quangos. For the RCP in Leeds the top priority is to convince active workers of the need to organise *ourselves* to defend our interests and to fight oppression independently of the state machine and its diverse appendages.

handicapped and elderly, hoping to make an extra £40 500.

- Last year the council, by far the biggest employer of women in Leeds, saved £4.3 million on its wages bill; the savings were made through large scale redundancies, notably of teachers. The Women's Equal Opportunities Group is simply an apologist for Labour's sordid record. The fight for women's rights in Leeds means rejecting Labour's 'realistic' approach – of accepting the sacrifices imposed by the capitalist recession. It means rejecting the quango approach, setting our sights on what we need, not what they say is 'realistic', and fighting for our demands ourselves.

Ann Grieves

Absent centre

Unemployment in Leeds, like everywhere else, has rocketed over the past three years. After a year of disputes over the composition of the management committee, the Leeds Trades Council Unemployed Centre opened its doors in January 1982. Its premises are on the ramshackle second floor of the council-owned Market Buildings. Funds for the centre and its six full-time workers are provided by the council and the government's Manpower Services Commission. The centre's workers have spent most of the first year locked in internal wrangles about whether they should work hierarchically or as a collective. Some unemployed people have dropped in for welfare rights advice or for social activities; few have attended regularly and conspicuously few women or young people have made use of the centre.

Politics out!

Any attempts by workers at the centre to campaign around issues affecting the unemployed have immediately brought them into conflict with their paymasters.



The dead hand of Labourism: the TUC tries to keep a tight grip on the unemployed

The MSC stipulates – No politics! – and the TUC enforces the state's will through the Stalinist-controlled Trades Council. In February the centre workers did take on a political campaign – against the DHSS Specialist Claims Control team, the dole snoopers' heavy squad. To their credit the workers defied the MSC and created quite a stir among the unions involved. However the dead hand of Labourism still reduced the scope of the campaign, which was based on defensive statements like 'we don't condone fraud, but... why aren't rich tax evaders being investigated?'. Alternatively they pointed out that the expense involved was not justified by the amount of fraud discovered. Fearful of being 'too political', the centre did not challenge the criminalisation of all the unemployed implicit in the use of the fraud squad.

Another current dispute surrounds the planned TUC Peoples' March for Jobs. A Trades Council motion supported the march and called on the Unemployed Centre to take the lead in organising the Leeds leg of the march. A Stalinist amendment to delete the centre's role on the grounds that 'the MSC would not agree to such a political activity' was accepted. Yet another controversy surrounds the centre's approach to Tebbit's Community Programme which aims to drive down pay and substitute part-time for full-time work. Although the centre workers' union – TGWU/ACTSS – has a policy of boycotting this Tory scheme, the Trades Council voted against this course of action. While the council has set to work with local union bureaucrats to devise a suitable Community Programme for Leeds, the unemployed centre has applied to the MSC to employ seven extra staff on the scheme.

Nothing to show

What is there to show for two years 'campaigning' against unemployment in Leeds through the institutions of the state and the labour bureaucracy with the politics of the Labour Party? Half-a-dozen jobs for well-meaning individuals prepared to accept low wages on a temporary basis – and a drop-in centre which only a tiny proportion of the unemployed use. Meanwhile the dole queues just get longer.

Ian Howarth

Race control

Over the past decade there have been recurrent revolts of black youth in Leeds, directed primarily against police harassment. Working closely with the police, the local authority has sponsored a series of 'community' organisations with the aim of controlling black unrest. Under the guise of fighting racism, the Labour Party has played an active part in promoting institutions which help to preserve the oppressive status quo in Leeds' Chapeltown ghetto.

In the 'sixties the council sponsored

the United Caribbean Association and the Barbados Overseas Association. The respectable middle class West Indians who ran these groups helped to set up the Community Relations Council in the late 'sixties to face the challenge of a radical black power movement. The leaders of this movement were soon integrated: today they are moderate community leaders.

Incorporation

State spending on 'ethnic minorities' in Leeds was stepped up after the 1981 riots – today it exceeds £500 000 a year. This money supports a variety of organisations, including Chapeltown Citizens Advice Bureau, Chapeltown Community Centre, Palace Youth Project, Harehills/Chapeltown Law Centre, Chapeltown Boys Club, Harambee Youth Hostel, West Indian Centre, Sikh Community Centre, Harehills Technology Centre, and Chapeltown Community Workshop Craft Centre. 'Community' grants of various sorts support a group of up to 100 people who act as mediators between the state and the black community. Their reliance on government revenues means that they are more dependent on the state than they are on the backing of their own community.

The Labour Party plays a key role in the process of creating a black middle class buffer to contain trouble in Chapeltown. When the Tories ruled the council – from 1976 to 1980 – they used to select a few community groups for grants and reject the rest. The Labour Party is much more committed to spending properly. Hence the Labour Council tends to accept most applications and to donate smaller sums to each. It also insists on strong council representation on management committees; it often writes constitutions for community groups to ensure firm control especially over political issues. This heavy-handed approach has inevitably led to conflicts with the self-appointed community leaders. But they have had to accept the old British adage – he who pays the piper calls the tune.

The Labour Party has also been much more aware than the Tories of the problem of defusing resistance to police brutality. While West Yorkshire police are tooling up to cope with large scale riots, the local Labour leaders have been promoting a police liaison committee in Chapeltown. This is regularly attended by community policemen, Labour councillors and black community leaders. It has recently expanded and spawned sub-committees on housing, education, employment, etc.

Do it our way

The problem for all these institutions is that they cannot deliver on their promises to achieve some relief in the oppression of black people. They cannot provide jobs, decent housing or get the police off the backs of the youth. Black politicians who participate in these schemes rapidly become discredited in their own community. Hence their limited usefulness when trouble flares up. Then the authorities simply send in the riot squads, all the better informed for months of useful community intelligence gathering.

The lesson for the labour movement is that racial oppression cannot be fought through state machinery with state money. In Leeds, Workers Against Racism has pointed the way by taking up instances of racism – deportations, race checks in the doles and hospitals – and by showing how workers can organise *themselves* to deal with them. This is the way forward for an effective fight against racism.

Gary Simpson

Israel Getzler: *Kronstadt 1917-1921: the fate of a Soviet Democracy*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp 296, hbk £25.

Carmen Sirianni: *Workers control and socialist democracy: the Soviet experience*, Verso Editions, London 1982, pp 437, pbk £8.95.

THE DEGENERATION of the Russian revolution and the consolidation of the anti-working class Stalinist bureaucracy was a major defeat for the international proletariat. It has provoked a reaction which sees Stalinism as the inevitable consequence of the revolution and which demands that working class power should be exercised along pluralistic and democratic lines. Eurocommunism was an explicit critique of the dictatorship of the proletariat and a celebration of a pluralist model of 'socialist democracy'. Even theoreticians like Ernest Mandel who saw themselves as Leninist and Trotskyist affirmed these values. Mandel noted that 'the Bolsheviks were wrong in 1921. They should not have banned the Menshevik Party; they should not have banned the anarchist organisations; and they should not have suppressed multiple states in elections to the Soviets after the end of the Civil War' (*New Left Review*, No 100).

The experience of the Soviet Union is enormously important for revolutionary communists today. These two studies raise many of the questions that need to be answered. Although Getzler and Sirianni adopt an anti-Bolshevik perspective, their arguments are coherent and challenging for any class conscious reader.

Proletarian power

The first trenchant critique of Bolshevik power was written by Karl Kautsky in 1918. The burden of Kautsky's argument was that the proletarian dictatorship was anti-socialist and anti-democratic. He hoped that the 'essential achievements of the Revolution will be saved, if dictatorship is opportunely replaced by democracy' (K Kautsky, *The dictatorship of the proletariat*). The merit of Sirianni's work is that it does not simply criticise Lenin and the experience of Leninism in action but extends the logic of his argument through a critique of Marx.

Sirianni believes that Lenin and Marx suffered from a 'productivist' and 'evolutionist' approach. What Sirianni means by those labels is that Marx put too much emphasis on material reality and too little on ideology: 'Material production becomes the sole and autonomous motor force of history'. As a result, Sirianni argues, Marx and Lenin have a concept of revolutionary transformation where primacy is placed on 'the development of the productivity of labour above all else'.

Although the terms 'autonomous' and 'non-autonomous' are foreign to his dialectical method, it is the case that Marx saw material reality as the determinant of social consciousness. The way people produce, the forms of social organisation and the existing material constraints determine the way people think and act. Marx's critique of utopian socialism was based on the belief that a better life could not be created through an act of will: it required the removal of the existing material constraints.

For Marx, human liberation meant overcoming want – the general scarcity of social resources. As long as society was forced to struggle for survival, as long as most of the time of society was spent in social reproduction, inequalities would persist and real changes could not be made. Marx saw in capitalism a social obstacle to the development of the forces of production and the elimination of scarcity. Once capitalism was destroyed, technology could develop without social constraints. Liberation would be assured when resources could be distributed according to need. Thus a communist society requires a level of productivity where scarcity is overcome; liberation means removing the constraints of necessity so that people can make real choices about what they do.

Sirianni is critical of this emphasis on increasing the productivity of labour as a condition for human liberation. In particular he objects to the pursuit of this approach by the Bolsheviks. Sirianni counterposes democracy to the drive to raise labour productivity. He takes Lenin to task for arguing that 'in the final analysis, every kind of democracy... serves production and is ultimately determined by the relations of production in a given society'.

For Marxists, democracy does not exist in the abstract. In a capitalist society, bourgeois democracy serves the aims of capital. Under a proletarian dictatorship it serves the interests

reviews



Lenin: right to crush the Kronstadt rising in 1921

Problems of working class power

of the working class. Moreover, the reality of democracy is always qualified by class interests and material conditions. When the capitalist class is weak or under threat it withdraws democratic rights and unleashes all the violence at its disposal as, for example, under fascism. In weak capitalist countries in the Third World today the bourgeoisie is too weak to allow even the formal trappings of democracy.

The degree of democracy under the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be determined in advance. It depends entirely on the degree of class coercion required to maintain the rule of the proletariat. In the case of the Soviet Union, famine, civil war and foreign military intervention forced the workers' state to deploy considerable coercion. In a different situation, coercion would be unnecessary and there would be more scope for participatory institutions. With the benefit of hindsight it could be argued that the Bolsheviks should have done things differently. But what cannot be questioned is the necessity for maintaining proletarian power even if it means putting society on a war footing.

Sirianni places democracy before the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is because he believes that class rule can be exercised democratically. He scorns Marx for defining the state 'solely in terms of class domination'. In fact it is to Marx's credit that he demystified the prevailing philosophy of the state and exposed its coercive role. Every state, whatever class rules, must ensure class domination. Sirianni wants a proletarian state, but only on the condition that it guarantees democracy. Unfortunately the only thing that the state can guarantee is class domination. Those who promise democracy under socialism are promising away the right of the proletariat to defend its class rule by whatever means necessary.

The harsh measures taken by the Bolsheviks were dictated by the harsh reality and not by an anti-democratic philosophy. It wasn't these measures that led to the revolution's future degeneration, but other forces that resulted in the disintegration and subsequent destruction of the Soviet working class. The experience of the Kronstadt mutiny highlights this problem.

The significance of Kronstadt

Opponents of Bolshevism use the Kronstadt mutiny as an illustration of the anti-working class character of Leninism. At first sight they appear to have a point. Kronstadt, an important naval base, had a long revolutionary tradition.

Kronstadt sailors and workers took an active part in defending the gains of the revolution. In March 1921, the Kronstadt sailors rose up in arms and demanded an end to what they called the 'Bolshevik dictatorship'. What happened in Kronstadt and why did a leading detachment of the forces of the revolution turn against it?

Getzler's study of Kronstadt provides many of the answers. It is well researched and well documented. Although Getzler is a strong supporter of the anti-Bolshevik rising, the discerning reader can extract an accurate account of the events.

The four-year war that followed the Russian revolution took a heavy toll on the proletariat. The ravages brought by the war decimated the most active sections of the proletariat, and the poverty and famine that ensued demoralised millions of workers. Kronstadt was particularly affected by the war. From the beginning, this stronghold of Bolshevism provided detachments of sailors to fight on the different fronts in Russia. According to Getzler:

'Communists were singled out by special mobilisations. On 1 August 1918, when workers born between 1893 and 1897 were conscripted, all Communists, regardless of age and occupation were called up... the motto being "All Communists to Arms".'

The war conditions created strains and tensions within Kronstadt. When in 1919 the counter-revolutionary White Army moved on Kronstadt, many officers and sailors, particularly those influenced by the Social Revolutionaries, defected. In one garrison – Krasnaia Gorka – the defectors murdered 30 leading communists.

Fortunately the White Army was defeated and the officers and sailors who deserted to their side were punished. The 1919 events were a sign of the times. As foreign armies stepped up support for the White Guards the intensity of the struggle escalated. Kronstadt became increasingly divided between those who supported the new regime and those who opposed it.

As the more active sailors and workers left for the front the more backward views of the petit-bourgeoisie began to hold sway. The Social Revolutionaries and the anarchists demanded more power to the local Soviet, the restoration of small property and free trade. These views found a resonance among the newly urbanised sailors. Getzler attempts to argue that the social base of the 1921 mutiny was the same as that of the 1917 revolutionary movement. He argues that between 1917-1921 the composition of the population of Kronstadt had not 'greatly

changed'. This view runs counter to what we know about Kronstadt – thousands of class-conscious fighters left for the front to be replaced by new peasant recruits, Getzler himself cites the survey carried out by Leonymous Yasinsky in October 1920. Yasinsky carried out a survey of 400 recruits and in Getzler's words many had come 'straight from the plough'. Yasinsky was 'aghast to find that these confident-looking, reasonably well-fed and dressed lads, including a few party members, were politically ignorant if not illiterate, worlds removed from the highly politicised veteran Kronstadt soldiers who had so deeply impressed him'.

These sailors proved only too susceptible to petit-bourgeois influences when, in the spring of 1921, the crop failure created economic insecurity and the prospect of a deterioration in living standards. There was only a handful of class conscious workers left in Kronstadt to counteract the effects of demoralisation and despair. Led by Social Revolutionaries and anarchists, the Kronstadt sailors demanded the restoration of free trade and the decentralisation of decision-making to the Kronstadt Soviet. Lenin correctly analysed the situation in Kronstadt: 'they do not want either the White Guards or our government'. However, in taking the middle of the road position against centralised Bolshevik power, the Kronstadt sailors were inadvertently aiding the cause of the counter-revolution.

The problem of democracy

Lenin had no hesitation in ruthlessly crushing the Kronstadt mutiny. Whatever its motives, the mutiny had strengthened the forces of reaction. Decentralised power in March 1921 would have meant the fragmentation of the revolution in the face of the concentrated power of imperialism. Kronstadt did not provide a model of a democratic alternative as Getzler argues. The mutiny expressed the difficulty of maintaining working class power in the context of a war and economic collapse.

Nevertheless the very fact that the mutiny happened indicates the basic problem of the Russian revolution. The spread of the petit-bourgeois influences corresponded to the erosion of the organised proletariat. During the years between 1917 and 1921, the revolutionary working class was effectively destroyed. The new state survived, but at a terrible price.

Even more ominous was the growth of a state free from working class control. Lenin saw that immediate steps had to be taken. The New Economic Policy was introduced to neutralise the peasantry and other small property holders. And Lenin began a campaign designed to increase proletarian control over the state. The theme of establishing institutions of workers' control to curb the power of the bureaucracy is reiterated time and time again in Lenin's writings. He warned that unless the proletariat controlled the state the revolution would degenerate.

Lenin knew that the preservation of working class power was not open to 'democratic' debate. But at the same time he understood that without the active participation of the proletariat, working class power could not be maintained. Lenin's plans for institutionalising workers' democracy were fought and defeated by the Soviet bureaucracy. Ironically the forces that inspired the Kronstadt mutiny also motivated the Stalinist ascendancy. War weariness, demoralisation and a rejection of the international revolution provoked the mutiny of 1921 – the same sentiments were also manipulated by the Stalinist bureaucracy to dispossess the working class. In different ways both were responses to the destruction of the most active sections of the working class.

'Democratic' critics of the experience are in reality objecting to the exercise of class violence. For Getzler, Kronstadt symbolised a democratic third road – neither a return to the past, nor the Bolshevik dictatorship. In the same vein, Sirianni counterposes 'a pluralistic socialist government that would respect democratic freedoms and civil liberties' to the Bolshevik model. In the years 1917-1922, the options were the dictatorship of the proletariat or the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. Sirianni and Getzler evade making a choice and opt for a non-existent democratic alternative. This is the choice that the working class will be faced with time and again. To their credit, the Bolsheviks fought tooth and nail for their class. The problem was not lack of democracy but the disintegration of the only force that could have consolidated the gains of the revolution.

Frank Richards

Marxism today?

A Callinicos, *The revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx*, Bookmarx, London 1983, pp 208, pbk £3.95.

THE CENTENARY of Marx's death has provided the pretext for a flood of new books on the founder of scientific socialism. Most of these books are not so much about Marx as about why Marx was wrong and why Marx is so out of date. In every generation since Marx's death a new batch of intellectuals has come forward to inflict yet another terminal blow on the author of *Capital*. Each valiant critic assumes that his devastating critique will somehow assume the status of a great epic to be faithfully recalled by future generations. Yet it is Marx that the world remembers, while his critics have become no more than bibliographical curiosities.

Alex Callinicos' book on Marx is a refreshing exception to this year's crop of trivia. Much of the book is written clearly and it provides a good introduction to the ideas of Marx. It is a concise account of Marx's approach to history and the class struggle. Even the difficult subject of Marx's method is presented in a way that is accessible to the new reader. Unlike the other books on the subject, Callinicos is able to show the relevance of Marxism a hundred years after the great man's death.

Our only substantial criticism is of the last chapter - 'Marx Today'. Here, Callinicos' commitment to the Socialist Workers' Party leads him astray. Bukharin's theory of capitalism which pervades so much of the SWP's analysis is used to explain present day development. The good thing about this chapter is that it is only eleven pages.

There are two good reasons why you should read this book. Up to the last chapter you have a very readable summary of the basic ideas of Marx. Second, you will note that there is no connection between the earlier chapters on Marx and the final chapter. What better way to express the relationship between Marxism and the politics of the SWP?

Pat Roberts

Beyond the myths

D George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, Croom Helm 1982, pp441, hbk £14.95

BOYCE'S book is extensively researched, well written, and - like most other bourgeois histories of Ireland - preoccupied with the nineteenth century republican movement. When it comes to explaining either the contemporary forms of Irish nationalism or its anti-imperialist content this work confuses rather than clarifies.

As we would expect from all but the most blatant apologist for imperialism, Boyce adduces Ireland's centuries old colonial subordination to Britain as a major factor in the struggle of Irish nationalism: 'In all its modes (nationalism) had been profoundly influenced by the power and proximity of Britain'. To his credit Boyce emphasises the political rather than the cultural aspect of Irish nationalist aspirations. But his use of the past tense in asserting the connection between Irish nationalism and British domination is no accident. The closer the book comes to the present day the more the role of Britain falls into the background.

While Boyce does a fair job in unravelling the mythology of old Irish nationalism he sustains the greatest myth of twentieth century Ireland - by presenting Britain's partition of Ireland in 1921 as a victory for the Irish people in their struggle for independence. The post-Partition divisions were healed and 'there gradually emerged something that had never existed in Ireland at any time in her history: a single nation'. Boyce does two things which will commend him to the bourgeois parties in the Irish Republic today. First, he presents the division of Ireland as a natural and accepted fact of life. Second, he perpetuates the myth that the Twenty-six Counties really are independent from Britain. Contemporary nationalism, explains Boyce, arises from 'the experience of living in a sovereign State, with its own institutions, local and central, its own police and armed forces, its own political parties, legislation and pressure groups'. The record of collaboration of such 'independent' institutions with Britain in common cause against the real inheritor of Irish nationalist traditions - the republican movement - is ignored.

While Boyce's treatment of the post-Partition

reviews

period is superficial, his treatment of the modern republican movement is simplistic. He explains its history in terms of personalities: 'Anyway, nationalists were individuals, and their beliefs and actions were often influenced by their personal experiences'. Boyce sees the successive leaders of the republican movement as the motor-force of the struggle for Irish freedom. He ignores the shifting balance of social forces which is the real factor in determining the changing forms and potential of the nationalist movement. Thus he explains the involvement of the working class in the Irish Citizens Army in the 1916 Easter Rising as somehow a consequence of the personal intervention of James Connolly. In fact, this reflected the emergence of the Irish proletariat as a growing social force, which decades later has the potential to be the decisive social force in Irish politics and in the continuing struggle against British imperialism.

Phil Murphy

Preludes to war

Geoffrey Barraclough, *From Agadir to Armageddon: anatomy of a crisis*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1982, pp196, £8.95.

IN 1911 the tranquility of the Edwardian summer was disturbed by an international crisis of titanic proportions: the Agadir crisis. On the evening of 1 July 1911, a German gunboat, the Panther, anchored off the Moroccan harbour of Agadir. Germany was resentful at being outmanoeuvred in North Africa by France which was about to establish a protectorate in Morocco. It was even more resentful that German imperialism had largely been excluded from the division of Africa. The German bourgeoisie was concerned to build a national consensus that would smother the rising militancy of the working class: it decided to make an issue of Morocco. For a period of over two months Europe stood on the brink of war.

Underlying the gentlemanly exchanges of the diplomats simmered a desperate struggle for influence, markets and power. When the fraught nerves were calmed by the slight adjustments of colonial territory that resulted, it could hardly be said that normal relations had been re-established. During the course of the crisis the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire had been accelerated; the national aspirations of the Balkan peoples had been inflamed; and international conflicts were no longer played out in colonial sideshows but on the European continent itself. The scene was set for the conflagration of 1914.

Accomplished bourgeois historian Geoffrey Barraclough has a purpose in attempting to unravel the Agadir crisis. He says he wrote the book to explain the arrival of the US Seventh Fleet in the Persian Gulf in 1979. This he says was 'our' Agadir 1911 and the examination of the analogy is at the heart of the book.

The war drive

The theme that emerges is the overwhelming rivalry between Britain, the dominant imperialist power, and its most powerful emerging competitor - Germany. This rivalry took place in the context of a general collapse in profitability and working class living standards and a wave of militant working class activity. Time and again Barraclough's material points him forward to an explanation of the conflict. Examining academic explanations for growing conflicts among the European powers over their colonial possessions, he accurately identifies the real problem as imperialism itself.

But then Barraclough obscures the issue. For him 'imperialism' is not the highest stage of capitalism characterised by the drive toward war and the desperate attempts of each national capital to grab a share of the market to offset the decline in profitability. 'Imperialism', for Barraclough is a state of mind: 'Wrapped up in its own affairs, busily promoting its own interests, the prisoner of its own assumptions, the European elite could not see beyond the end of its nose. But what elite ever could?'

Thus Barraclough is reduced to speculating on the myopia, perhaps congenital, of a ruling elite.

Barraclough is the victim of another prejudice. He believes today's war drive is the result of rivalry between the USA and the Soviet Union. To support this thesis he tries to press these two nations into the roles played by Britain and Germany in the early years of the century. He does not have much trouble getting the USA to occupy the seat once held by Britain. His troubles begin when he tries to equate the Soviet Union with Imperial Germany. He does not pursue the absurdity too far: it would prove difficult in terms of labour productivity, trade rivalry, export of capital and any other index of capitalist expansion. He cannot sustain his own analogy. And despite himself he is forced to conclude that the real problems lie in the imperialist camp itself:

'What we have instead is a struggle for wealth and power which is rapidly developing into a struggle of all against all, a struggle in which the United States is desperately trying to reassert the pre-eminence it enjoyed between 1945 and 1968, when it was the core of the international status quo. That is not far from the position of Great Britain in 1911, and is not, in the long run, likely to be more successful.'

Deathwish

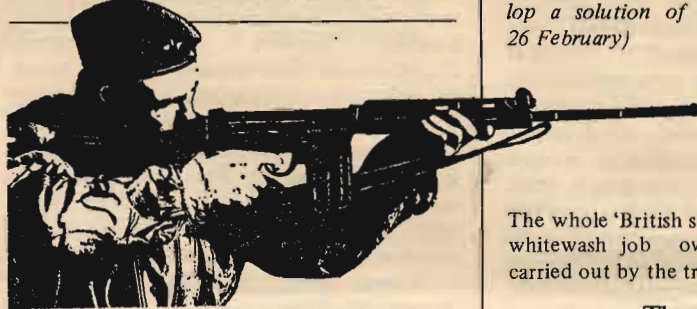
If you want to read a fascinating story well told, examine the corruption of bourgeois political life, and see how the bourgeoisie mishandles historical analogy - take a look at this book. Learn how the hapless bourgeoisie is a victim of circumstances beyond his control that are pushing him to his own destruction:

'In the end, it is the system that is at fault - the system to which they all (it seems) are bound by hoops of iron - and after seventy years of bitter experience there is no reason to think that it has changed or is likely to change. That is our tragedy.'

It may be their tragedy. We just better make sure they don't take us with them.

Alan Harding

The truth at last



A F N Clarke, *Contact*, Secker and Warburg, 1983, £6.95.

TONY CLARKE, former captain in the Third Parachute Regiment who served in Belfast in 1973 and Crossmaglen in 1976, has written a soldier's-eye-view of the Irish War. 'A contact' is 'an opportunity to shoot at anything on the streets, pump lead into any living thing and watch the blood flow'. The 'toms' (private soldiers) and their officers are constantly keyed up for 'a contact':

'A few kills would be nice at this stage. Good for morale. Ideal for injecting some new life into the jaded senses of the Company.'

No doubt Clarke uses a sub-Daily Mail journalistic style with a deliberate intention to shock and appall. But his account has an air of authenticity for anybody who has seen British troops in action in the Six Counties. It will ring true especially to the nationalist people whose 'contact' with the British state has largely been through Clarke and thousands like him over the past 13 years.

The 'natives'

Clarke communicates with feeling the soldier's hatred and fear of the Irish. In true colonial style, the British occupiers view the natives as a sub-human species fit to be treated like animals.

A Belfast house raid reveals 'an assortment of sweating humanity', living in 'sordid conditions of filth' and 'a stench of unwashed bodies and bedclothes'. In another house lives 'a timid woman with a couple of snotty-nosed brats'; 'the whole house reeks of stale urine'. Children on streets are 'urchins'. Around Crossmaglen real savages can be found in remote farmhouses:

'To say they lived in squalor would be understating it. Dirt was ingrained in their skin and fleas hopped around their clothes. Their teeth have completely disintegrated and their hair was matted into filthy knots.'

According to the traditional prejudice of the British ruling class, along with the poverty goes moral depravity:

'South Armagh, still light-years away from civilisation. Where barbarity and cruelty are the prime factors of a successful life. Where stealing and killing are as natural a part of living as breathing is to most of us.'

Having identified the enemy as a mass of backward and amoral barbarians, the British forces proceed to treat them as the Empire has always treated its colonial subjects.

The terror

Clarke rejoices in the callous brutality for which the Parachute Regiment are notorious. He went to Belfast with 'memories of Bloody Sunday and the cheers that followed and the myths and awe that grew up around some of the soldiers who claimed to have shot four or five apiece'. He details the day to day terror which the paras inflicted on the people of Belfast: an endless round of house wrecking, vicious beatings in the streets, exuberant ransackings of drinking clubs and casual gunfire in city streets. Back in the barracks 'the toms' keep busy pushing pins and broken razor blades into rubber bullets and filing down other bullets into dum-dums for maximum destructive effect. Others keep watch on every movement 24 hours a day from special observation posts. Occasionally they go beserk and start shooting passers-by at random.

Contact reveals the true face of British imperialism in Ireland. British politicians talk earnestly about 'bringing both sides of the community together' and 'working towards a political solution by consent'. Meanwhile goons like Clarke, 'trained to the eyeballs to kill', are making 'the contact' that counts with the Irish people. Clarke is dimly aware of the division of labour between the soldiers and the politicians:

'It does seem from a soldier's point of view, that there is a lot of whitewashing going on - a lot of sitting back and letting the soldiers develop a solution of their own.' (*Daily Mirror*, 26 February)

The whole 'British solutions' industry is one big whitewash job over the relentless coercion carried out by the troops in the Six Counties.

The mask slips

Why has the British establishment allowed its carefully constructed image of concern and fair-play in Ireland to be so convincingly blown in one short book? And why did the *Daily Mirror* give over its centre-page spread every day for a week at the end of February to serialising Clarke's blood-curdling tale? The discomfiting fact is that the British ruling class feels so confident about its hold on public opinion at home that it can afford to let the mask slip a bit without undue worry. One reason why it feels so secure is the left's past celebration of the *Daily Mirror's* calls for troop-withdrawal as part of a British-imposed solution. For the *Mirror* there is no conflict between its desire for withdrawal and its sympathetic presentation of Clarke's book: it was always clear that withdrawal could only take place alongside the defeat of the republican movement through military coercion. The left's endorsement of the *Mirror* approach only disoriented anti-imperialists who wanted to see the republican movement win. Ironically only weeks after the serialisation of *Contact*, the left is still using reproductions of the *Mirror's* calls for withdrawal to mobilise for its Irish protests!

Read *Contact* and find out in gory detail what any British solution means for the Irish people.

Mick Kennedy

Paisley blows the gaffe

AS I WRITE two helicopters fly overhead, a 'duck-squad' of British armed gunmen is passing the window, (unfortunately not heading for the nearest lake), and a spotter plane has just missed my television aerial. This is British-occupied Ireland from where I report an illuminating incident at the new Assembly.

The Unionist Assembly boycotted even by the tame collaborators within the Stoop Down Low Party (SDLP), has been discussing 'security', shorthand for 'repression' of nationalist malcontents. The Reverend Ian Paisley, astounded even the Official Unionists when he exposed personal threats made against him after he publicly opposed an SAS operation at Dunloy, County Antrim, some years ago. The circumstances were these. A young lad, John Boyle, on his way home from school decided to play in a graveyard. He discovered a number of rifles, returned home and told his father, who contacted the police and informed them of the find. Next day, the same young lad decided to approach the grave and see if the authorities had removed the rifles. On nearing the spot he was cut in two by heavy machine gun fire. This was certainly proof that imperialism is dangerous for your health, even if you are prepared to co-operate with it. He had walked into a Brit 'stake-out' where the aim is not to arrest, but rather kill the first native that comes into sight.

The Irish News (3 March) takes up the story. As this outrage had taken place in his constituency, Paisley had attempted to establish the truth of the matter. He immediately came into conflict with the Army misinformation department. Although happy at the security forces shooting republicans on sight, Paisley was concerned about the random shooting of children. Boyle could easily have been a Protestant. And, as Paisley put it at the Assembly, 'If this young teenager had been a Protestant there would have been a chorus of opposition'. Paisley's anger led him to reveal that the Army misinformation department had told a pack of lies. Two men were not seen in the graveyard as the Army had at first claimed but rather a lad with a large schoolbag for all to see. He welcomed the fact that the Army press officers had later changed their version of events. Then he went on, 'Afterwards I was approached by the Commander of Land Forces who warned me - a member of *Her Majesty's Parliament* - that if I made further statements about the matter the Army 'would take care of me'. Now what did they mean by that, I ask you? I can tell them that no commander-in-chief will keep my mouth shut'. Not for the first time, Paisley's big mouth has embarrassed his imperialist backers in London, by exposing British brutality and British lies in the Six Counties.

Fionn O'Foyle
Derry

Fighting race checks

A RECENT MEETING of the Sheffield Area Health Authority received officers' reports on the progress made trapping and charging black patients 'not ordinarily resident in the UK'. In the 12 weeks to the end of December 1982 thousands of black people were harassed to prove their eligibility for free health care, were passed to senior staff for intensive 'interviews' and eight were charged, netting £4000. Pleased with this progress, and the lack of opposition, the Authority decided to turn the screws on Fir Vale's black community. They decided that the procedure at Sheffield's Northern General Hospital should be tightened up 'due to the number of Asians attending the hospital'. The Labour councillors who represent the socialist republic's apartheid-free zone policy insisted that the minutes record that they had 'expressed concern'.

When Sheffield Workers Against Racism learnt of the AHA's success in implementing the racist checks we moved in with a two-pronged strategy. First, we organised a lobby of its next meeting and mobilised opposition in the local labour movement. Second, we

LETTERS

made sure the Labour Council did not get away with turning a blind eye to racism on its own doorstep. WAR supporters won support for the initiatives at the Sheffield health workers joint shop stewards' committee and at the Sheffield and District COHSE stewards' committee. Banners from COHSE Wadsley and Middlewood hospital joined 50 people on a lunchtime picket of AHA headquarters, demanding an end to all race checks in the National Health Service.

There were no Labour Party banners. A week before the picket, the Labour Party-inspired Health Care Strategy Group which has a 'watching brief' on the cuts in the health service considered the issue. One delegate demanded to know what could be done to stop WAR - and said nothing about stopping the race checks. The meeting recognised that the Labour Party was on weak ground because it had done nothing to fight the checks. A WAR supporter at the meeting was therefore able to win support for opposition to the checks and for pressing the Labour members of the AHA to propose that Sheffield take no further part in the racist scheme.

On the day half the WAR lobby packed into the AHA meeting. Every attempt to push the issue aside or justify the racist legislation was challenged. The Labour councillors had nowhere to go. They moved a motion that Sheffield stop operating the scheme. The motion fell - three Labour councillors and one trades council delegate were in favour; the rest were against; one Labour councillor abstained. While the Labour Party covers its tracks, WAR's campaign against the checks goes on.

Nita De Souza
Sheffield WAR

French municipal elections

AS YOUR READERS will be aware, France has just held its municipal elections. These elections are of greater significance in France than they are in Britain, and this year's have given a very clear expression to the balance of class forces in this country.

The municipals here are characterised by a higher turn-out than in Britain and take place in two rounds. This year the major battle line was drawn between the Government parties the socialist PS, and the Stalinist PCF and the oppositional forces of the right, Jaques Chirac's RPR and the Giscardian UDF. In fact the municipals became much more like a presidential election: for the first time, local politics were overshadowed by a debate on the Mitterand regime's national performance.

The main issues - raised by the right but discussed on the same terms by the 'left' too - were North African immigration, 'insecurity', law and order, etc. Given that the left spent all its time saying that it controlled immigration and street crime better than the right, it seems at first sight difficult to explain all the fierce polemics of the campaign. *Le Monde* concluded (15 March) that 'national cohesion' and 'national effort' were themes both of the socialist majority and the Gaullist minority. So why was there such a fuss?

The answer is that, though the French bourgeoisie has decisively opted for social democracy it is still sufficiently weak to worry about the PS/PCF 'going too far'. The patrons need Mitterand to keep the unions in check, but they need to keep him in check too. So there has been a revival of the right since the Mitterand government took power and this was reflected in the municipals. In Paris, Mayor Chirac's ultra-Gaullist RPR dominated the more moderate UDF in the campaign and at the polls. And although the veteran socialist Gaston Deferre scraped through in Marseille, there too the forces of the right made major gains through a racist campaign. (Marseille is where most blacks from North Africa first arrive in France).

The Government came out on top, but the employees and the middle class gave it a firm warning about its performance - particularly in the light of France's mounting trade deficit. As Chirac put it, 'the Government is now in a minority'. The workers, who showed their disgust for Mitterand's rightist policies by abstaining

by the million in the first round, eventually rallied to the government on the second. Thus the setbacks for the left were eventually limited.

What are the prospects in France now? There will be a reshuffle and a further turn to the right. The decline of the PCF continues: compromised by years in municipal government, it registered proportionally more defeats than the PS in the towns, and held on only in its bedrock areas (in Paris it was hit hard, and in Languedoc). The PCF is paying a heavy price for its leaders' role as the most loyal apologists for Mitterand's austerity regime.

As for as the radical left here, it is in a mess. At 2 per cent, the principal component of its vote was down by nearly 50 per cent on the last municipals. Pierre Lambert's Parti Communiste Internationaliste, a distant (and now hostile!) cousin of your own WRP, called on the Government to obey its promises. Alain Krivine's Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, which is linked to the Fourth International of Ernest Mandel, called for support for the Government on the second round. *Lutte Ouvriere*, an organisation led by Arlette Laguillier and a kind of more-intelligent version of your SWP, did best in terms of votes and did try to highlight the pro-capitalist nature of the Mitterand apparatus. But it refuses to mount a single-minded campaign against PS/PCF racism. Votes for it have more to do with sentimental attachments to May 1968 than conscious opposition to the Government.

What is badly needed in France is an organisation which will challenge the socialist/Stalinist Government not just on wages but above all on the issue of racism, which is currently the most powerful weapon the bourgeoisie has for dividing and disarming the working class.

In solidarity,
Jacques Dubois
Paris

Bermondsey

1

I WOULD LIKE to express my support for your party in standing against Labour in the Bermondsey by-election.

I suppose you could call me one of the 'great disillusioned', disillusioned, that is, with the Labour Party which I joined in 1973. I was glad that in this election at last I was able to vote for something I believed in. After years of apologising for the Labour Party's policies in government and its pathetic, not to say reactionary, performance when out of office, I could vote for Fran Eden with no reluctance. It's about time people stopped being so sentimental about the Labour Party, which you can guarantee will not fight - and started supporting the RCP - a real alternative.

Of course we don't go along with the capitalist press smears against Tatchell. But why should we continue to vote for him, or any other Labour candidate? Neither should we feel sorry for him or for Labour. We don't owe them any favours. I agree with your slogan - 'Fight back with the party of the future!'.

Alan Geddes
Bermondsey

2

I BOUGHT your paper when someone came around campaigning for Fran Eden in the election. I was quite impressed - by the paper and your manifesto. I have always voted for Labour before but I find your criticisms of them are true - especially about racism.

I am black and I work in the printing industry where I come across prejudice all the time. If you're black you're just expected to take second place. And the union does very little about it. I agree with you when you say that the Labour Party is a lot to blame for racism in Britain, with its support for immigration controls. We need a party that is prepared to say - get rid of all immigration controls and fight against discrimination against black people. I also very much agree with what you say about women and peace. I'm going to vote for Fran Eden instead of Peter Tatchell.

Myrna Grant
Bermondsey

3

SIX MONTHS AGO I bought *the next step* from a woman at Elephant and Castle tube and have read it ever since. It was great then to meet you all in Bermondsey. I'm only 17 so unfortunately I couldn't vote for you.

I used to think that CND was the thing to get involved in. But after reading your articles on war and peace I've changed my mind - though I think there are some good people caught up in it. Your articles on Ireland made me want to find out more - so I went along to your rally during the PTA week of action and learnt a lot.

But I like what you say about the Labour Party best. I think that quite a lot of young people who are interested in politics quite naturally look to the Labour Party. The first Labour Party meeting I went to was so boring that it put me off for life. Your paper and your party have convinced me that the days of the Labour Party are numbered. I hope I get the chance to vote for a revolutionary communist soon - and I hope thousands of others will do the same.

John Frizell
Bermondsey

4

PETER TACHELL'S defeat in the Bermondsey by-election was a real setback for the Labour Party, particularly for the left wing. Up against a concerted media offensive - and the combined attacks of most of the other 15 candidates - Tatchell didn't stand much of a chance. He lost. But what about your own performance? No one can deny that the RCP made an impact in Bermondsey. I saw your motorcade down Southark Park Road, dishing out leaflets and making speeches to bewildered shoppers. I even heard a Labour campaign organiser concede that Tatchell would have probably won if Labour had organised the campaign like you did! But you can't get away from the fact that Screaming Lord Sutch got more than twice as many votes as Fran Eden.

I voted for Tatchell because I thought that, despite my reservations about Labour's policies, it was important not to let the Liberals in and consolidate the right-wing backlash inside the Labour Party. On the eve of the election the National Executive expelled leading members of Militant. What will they get up to now? I can't see how your campaign can help the left win. In fact I can't see what good your work has done at all. We have to recognise that the left is on the defensive in today's situation and we can't afford the divisions and bickering which your campaign can only make worse.

Sheila Thomas
Bermondsey

Helen Swift replies:

The vote for Sutch just shows the bitter cynicism about politics that exists in Bermondsey after years of Labour rule. The point of our election campaign was *not* to help the left, i.e. the Labour left, win. The point was to put across to as many people as possible the fact that a revolutionary alternative to Labour can be built. We fight for the working class, not for the narrow concerns of the beleaguered Labour left. In Bermondsey we began to get our message across and learnt many valuable lessons doing so - see our assessment of the campaign on pages 6 and 7. Fighting the Labour Party will cause 'divisions'. But we *do* want to divide the working class from the party that breeds despair and disillusionment among workers everywhere.

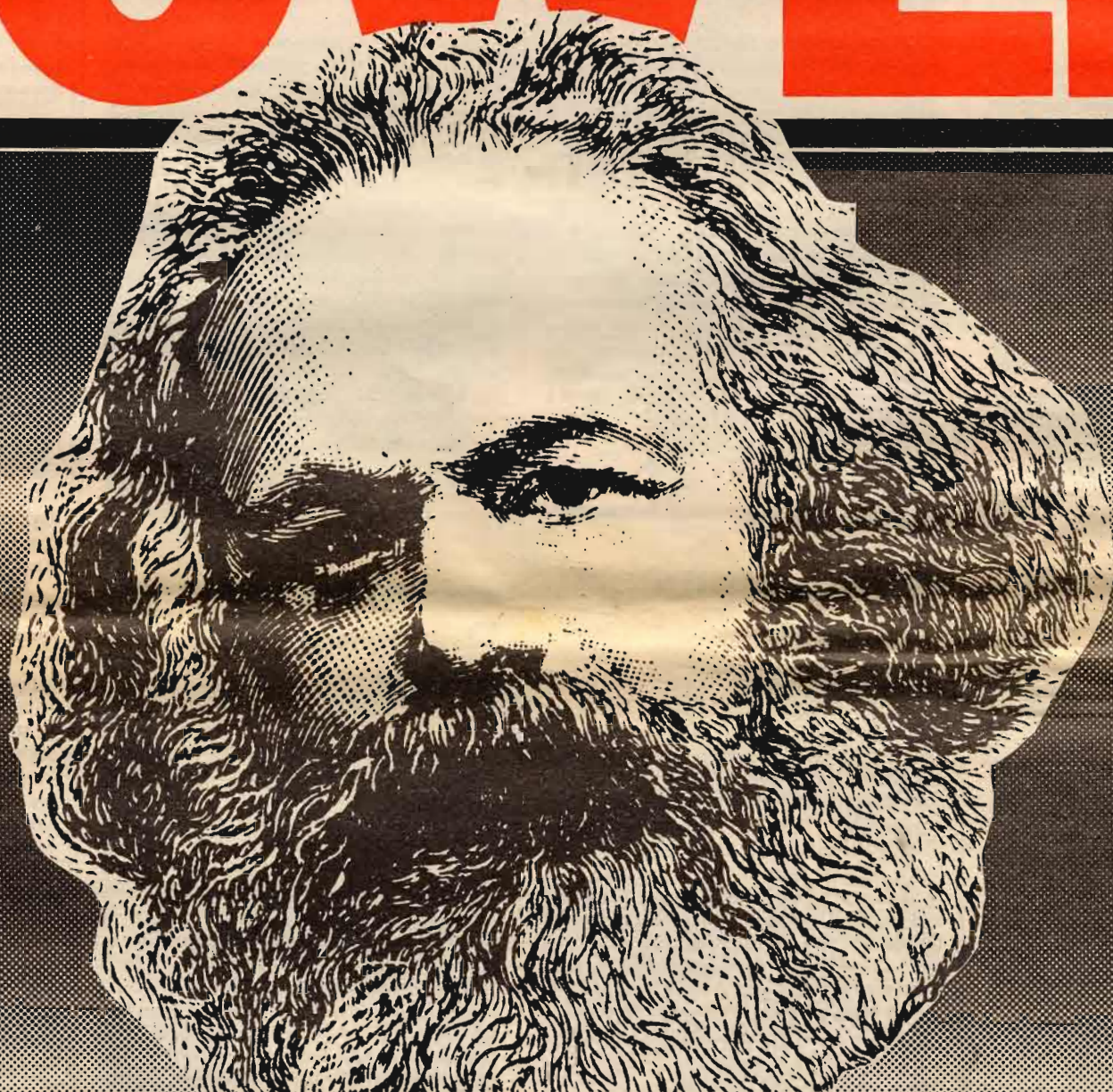
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● Is there a British Marxism? ● Developments
in the Marxist theory of crisis ● Marxism and
women ● Marx on Ireland ● Marx on the
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and emancipation ● Imperialism in Africa ● The
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betrayed: the Comintern, Germany, Spain ● The
working class in the West: communists
and social democrats; racism and peace ● Issues
in British politics: Maggie, cruise, quangos,
dole queues

The hundredth centenary of the death of Karl
Marx on 14 March 1883 has been
commemorated by an outpouring of prejudice
and ignorance from the establishment and
empty rhetoric from the official labour
movement. The intellectual light weights
of Fleet Street made no attempt to challenge
Marx's revolutionary critique of their system
and their society. Their best endeavours were
devoted to digging up the dirt on Marx's
personal life and scoffing about his carbuncles.
It became a mark of distinction for a journalist
to claim that he or she had never actually read
Marx. The media morons failed to destroy
Marxism during Marx's lifetime. A century
later, Marxism retains its vitality despite having
been denigrated and repudiated year in year
out by the best hacks the bourgeoisie can buy.

Pretenders

Marx has always suffered more at the hands of
those who claim to uphold his heritage than
from his bourgeois detractors. On the
centenary of his death many opportunists in
Britain claim his authority for their projects of
subordinating the working class to the
domination of the Labour Party and the
exigencies of the capitalist recession. Leading
Labour politician Gerald Kaufman has
redefined Marx's theory of surplus value to fit
Peter Shore's scheme for salvaging British
capitalism through a slight increase in public
spending and a big cut in workers' wages
in yet another incomes policy. On the left,
Scottish miners' leader Mick McGahey says
that he has learnt a lot from Marx, including
'of course, the theory of the national cake:
who controls the knife determines the size of

the slices'. Whatever this means, Marxism
definitely does not mean cutting miners jobs
in the interests of a fruitier 'national cake'.

Marxism has survived the venom of the
ruling class and the revisionists of the labour
bureaucracy because his revolutionary theory
reflects the reality of capitalist society. Marx
pointed out the tendencies of collapse in the
capitalist economy — a hundred years later
the capitalist world is manifestly approaching
a state of collapse. Marx lives today because he
articulated the interests of the exploited and
the oppressed in overthrowing the system that
dominates them. He provided us with the
theoretical tools we need to achieve the
liberation of society. The pundits have often
declared that the class struggle is obsolete,
exploitation an outdated concept and oppression
simply the product of old-fashioned ideas and
attitudes. But the experience of the working
class around the world has again and again
confirmed the relevance of Marxism, at no
time more forcefully than in today's recession.

Living Marxism

The most fitting celebration of the Marx
centenary is to develop his theory of proletarian
revolution to present day conditions. That is
the aim of *Preparing for Power* in July. We aim
to examine the political problems of the
moment in the light of Marxism. We intend to
make Marxism a guide to action for the
working class. That means sweeping aside the
bourgeois rubbish, tackling head-on the
reformist prejudices of the labour movement
and grappling with the key issues of world
politics in the 'eighties. Fill in the form
and join us.