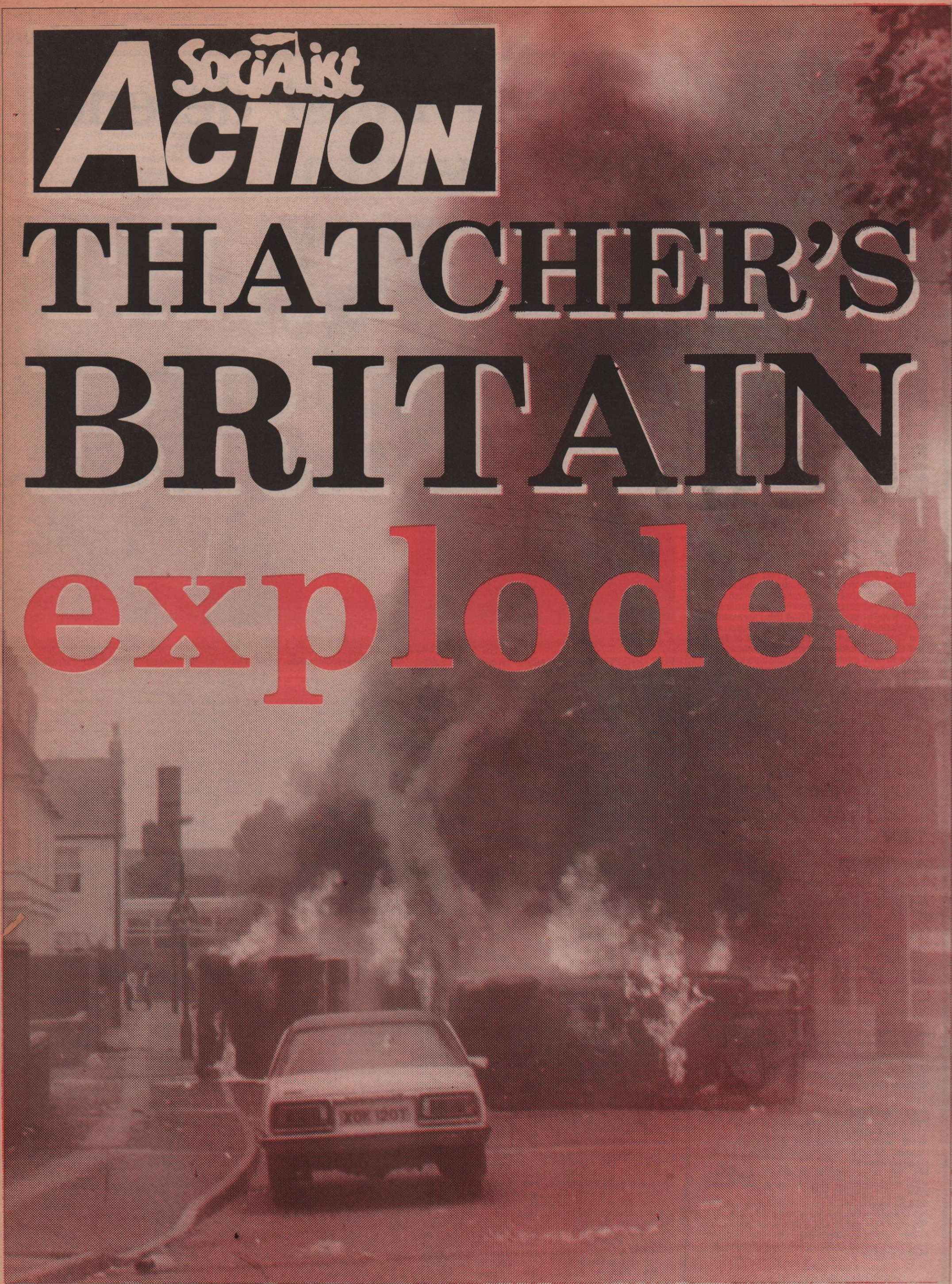


**Socialist
ACTION**

**THATCHER'S
BRITAIN
explodes**



Socialist ACTION

Kinnock fails another test

DESPITE THE claims of Tory and Labour politicians alike, the uprising in the Lozells area of Handsworth last week had nothing whatsoever to do with hooliganism, criminality, or divisions within Birmingham's black community. It had everything to do with the double oppression black people face in Britain today.

Handsworth suffers some of the highest unemployment and worst social and environmental conditions that exist in this country. Within that, black people — and especially black youth — suffer most of all. They are at the bottom of even Handsworth's miserable pile.

That is because they are black — because the racism which is rife in British society means they have the highest unemployment, worst housing, poorest environment, and least social and cultural facilities of the lot. From every point of view, black people have the least to lose from striking out against the system.

It is these facts, and not those of which Thatcher and the Labour leadership made such racist play, which explain what happened in Handsworth last week. Unemployment, poverty, and racism are the everyday conditions which created the potential for such an uprising; police harassment was the immediate spark that lit the Handsworth fire.

It was entirely predictable that the Tories, the police, and the media would respond as they did — claiming that a 'small minority' of 'criminal elements' instigated the sacking and burning of commercial premises, and that this represented 'racial tension' between Birmingham's Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities. The goal of Thatcher and her friends is to push the whole weight of the British crisis onto the shoulders of the working class — to blame them for its existence and to make them pay its costs. But why did Labour Party leaders echo so faithfully the self-same sentiments?

It is because Neil Kinnock has set himself, and the Labour leadership, on a course of proving to the ruling class that Labour is a safe bet in government, that Labour is just as able — and just as ready — to manage the crisis and blame the victims. That is why Kinnock, Hattersley, and Rooker cried 'criminal' and howled for more police repression just as loud as Douglas Hurd or Geoffrey Dear. And that is why those same Labour politicians made hardly a mention of the real causes underlying Handsworth, or the real solutions to such uprisings.

But it isn't just black people who lose out by Labour's stance. The working class as a whole is the poorer for it. By blaming the victims instead of naming the culprits, Labour's leadership further encourages the racist divisions that exist within the working class and, at the same time, undermines the struggles of all those — black and white — who are prepared to take on the real enemy: the Tory Party and its allies. Kinnock reinforces the 'law and order' drive of Thatcher and the increase in the repressive forces that goes with it. That is why support for Handsworth's black community, especially those youth who face the immediate and vicious reprisals of the state, is a crucial task for the whole labour movement.

The position of Kinnock and his kind cannot be left unchallenged. It is the responsibility of every Labour Party activist and every trade union militant to demand that the organised labour movement champions the cause of the Handsworth black youth. And it is the task of the leaders of the left to speak out against the path Kinnock has chosen.

Editor: ALAN FREEMAN

Published weekly except two weeks in August and the last week of December.

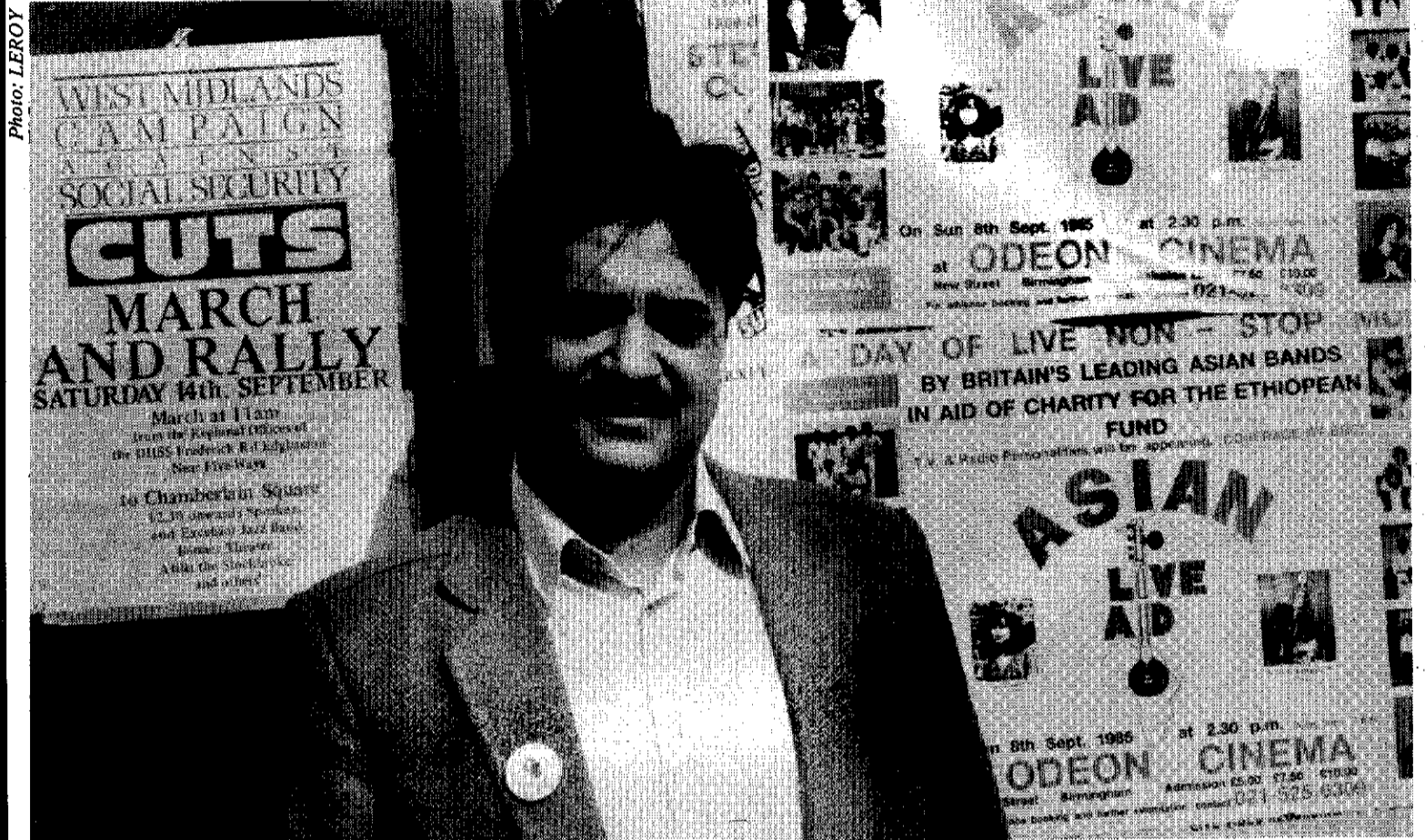
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Send all material for publication (including advertising) to Socialist Action Editorial at the same address.

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Labour must defend black youth



Birmingham councillor Amir Khan: 'People like Jeff Rooker and Roy Hattersley don't have a clue what is happening'

THE RESPONSE of leading labour movement figures to the events in Handsworth last week has justifiably enraged many Afro-Caribbeans. No sooner had the flames died down than MPs and councillors were appearing on TV and in the press blaming 'criminal elements' and demanding tough action by the police.

'Organised gangs of thugs' was how Lord Mayor Frank Carter described those involved. While Edwin Shore, chair of the West Midlands police committee, promised full support for the police 'in tracking down and punishing the culprits'.

Labour MP Jeff Rooker's reference to a 'barbarous attack of criminality' on breakfast TV on Tuesday was denounced by Afro-Caribbeans representatives. As one journalist put it: 'You couldn't tell the left puritanical from the right repressive.'

This tendency to see the revolt in 'law and order' terms confronts the Labour left and trade union activists with an enormous task. The labour movement has to understand the real causes of what occurred and defend the youth involved from the severe repression they now face.

Poverty

Thankfully some Labour representatives did focus on the unemployment, poverty, racial oppression, and police harassment affecting black youth. In a number of cases these people are lending support to initiatives aimed at organising defence of those arrested and combatting the danger of a division between the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities.

Why then did people like Rooker and Hattersley

fall at the first fence? Amir Khan, a Pakistani councillor for nearby Sparkhill, argues that they just don't know what the problems confronting black people are.

'People like Jeff Rooker and Roy Hattersley haven't got a clue what is happening. I think the Labour Party is doing a very dishonest job in the black community, in that the district council have come out with nothing.'

Goals

'I have argued for the last six months that something must be done about the appalling housing and other conditions. This is a clear message to both Labour and the Tories: 'look if you're not going to be serious, then we will be''.

The business-as-usual stance of the Birmingham district Labour Party was evident at its meeting on Wednesday night. Little time was given to discussing the revolt, and many councillors were hostile to a clear position of defending black youth.

However an emergency resolution was passed which did identify the root-causes of the problem as the economic and social impoverishment of the area. In particular it highlighted the poor housing conditions; the run-down services, education and community facilities; racism and discrimination; police harassment and the non-implementation of

the Scarman recommendations.

More significantly, it rejected the view that the primary cause was 'a small group of criminals' and condemned the statement of the West Midlands chief constable 'advocating the availability and use of rubber bullets by his police force'. An amendment condemning violence and aimed at weakening the response of the local parties was voted down. Party activists have to take this further — by committing their wards and constituencies to support the defence campaign that has now been set up.

The first response of the trade union movement came from the officers of Birmingham Trades Council. They argue 'the major reason for the riot is youth unemployment' and rejected the view, supported by 'some Labour spokesmen', that it is simply an issue of 'law and order'. The letter goes on to invite representatives from 'relevant organisations, especially the community and ethnic organisations in the area' to a meeting to discuss a proposed 'Jobs for Youth' march in Handsworth. The Trades Council Resource Centre has sent a message of solidarity to the defence campaign and is offering assistance with research and the production of literature.

Unity

Of particular concern to labour movement organisations in the area is the unity of the black community itself. Reactionary figures in the Asian community have sought to ferment divisions by accusing Afro-Caribbeans of a racially motivated attack.

This lie has found predictable support from the pages of the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail*. It also feeds on a real air of confusion and despondency amongst Asian workers and youth that the Asian shopkeepers are keen to exploit.

In response the Indian Workers Association called a meeting last Saturday. Attended by members of the Asian, Afro-Caribbean and white communities it discussed the real course of events and the issues involved.

That meeting decided to organise a press conference to squash the suggestion that the events were a 'race riot' or 'tribal', as some sections of the press have argued. A mass meeting is also planned to take the debate up in the broader community.

The problem with all these responses however, is that at the moment they are restricted to the best organised and most class conscious groups. It is essential that these groups now begin to take up the discussion with confused sections of the Asian and white working class.

The greatest danger coming out of the Handsworth events is that they will be exploited to sow divisions in the working class. Of paramount importance in this will be the response of the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

It is these organisations — dominated by white workers who enjoy the better jobs, better facilities, and better opportunities compared to blacks — where the real fight has to be taken up. It is the racism in these organisations — not the actions of black youth —

which are the real obstacle to working class unity.

If black anger expresses itself in ways 'alien' to the British labour movement it is because the organisations of the labour movement have never given more than token attention to racial oppression, discrimination, and police brutality. That's why black self-organisation within the labour movement is a demand that must be met.

Racism

Only by breaking with racism and with the 'scoundrels' who claim to speak for the working class as a whole while making adaptations and concessions to the racism in its ranks can white workers defend their own interests by unifying the class. During the miners' strike real progress was made. Money from Handsworth helped boost the funds of miners from Warwickshire, Notts, Staffs, and South Wales.

Anyone who collected on the Soho Road knows that it came from the pockets of black people. Miners toured the Sikh temples and Afro-Caribbean churches arguing their case, and in the course of this began to understand the issue of black oppression for the first time.

Miners rallied to the support of Muhammad Idrish who was faced with deportation. They joined the picket line at Kewal Brothers where Asian women were fighting for union recognition and decent rates of pay.

It is these examples that the working class has to follow today. And that means defending black youth.

THE GOVERNMENT and the press have attempted to portray the uprising in Handsworth as an outbreak of 'criminality'. They have tried too to exploit the tragic death of two Asians, claiming that last week represents a clash between the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities. In all this they have been supported by the Labour Party leadership.

But what took place in Handsworth has nothing to do with 'criminals' or clashes within the black community. It was a direct product of the policies pursued by the Tory government. A product of mass unemployment, social oppression and an utterly racist police force. The responsibility for the deaths of Kaffamali and Amir Moledia lies at Thatcher's door.

The entire labour movement must defend the black youth who are now under vicious attack. That is why Socialist Action is devoting four pages to what took place in Handsworth — and the reaction to it.

MICK ARCHER and CAROL TURNER report from Birmingham. RAGHIB AHSAN provided much of the background material in our coverage.



Demolition work in Lozells Road after the fire

Photo: ANNETTE SANDY/HELEN CARR (TURC)

Why Handsworth exploded

GEOFFREY DEAR, chief constable of the West Midlands, is angry at the suggestion that the police are to blame in any way for the events on Lozells Road last week. 'Some people have got to face up to the fact that there is a substantial element of blame to be attached to some young people who get a distinct kick out of causing pain, and suffering, and hurt to others in society. There are some social commentators who far too quickly seek to excuse what is sheer criminality, sheer hooliganism, and destructive anti-social behaviour. The rioters of Handsworth were utterly blameworthy.'

Not surprisingly Dear is prepared to take the necessary measures. Questioned about plastic bullets Dear said he 'wouldn't shrink' from using them, although he was 'reluctant' to issue tear gas to his men.

His response was to be expected. More alarming was the way Labour politicians echoed it. Jeff Rooker MP called it 'a barbarous attack of criminality' before he even visited the area.

Labour councillor Sardul Marwa, who is also chair of the city's race relations committee, described the deaths as 'cold blooded murder' and demanded that somebody be charged. Roy Hattersley claimed there was 'no justification' for what had occurred.

In reality of course there was every justification. Black youth are the most oppressed section of society. Not only do they face higher unemployment and social deprivation than that faced by all working class youth, but they also face racist oppression and discrimination as black people.

It is this which explains the disproportionately high levels of unemployment in areas like Handsworth — and even in these communities black youth come off worst.

Of 1434 school leavers in Handsworth this year only 99 found jobs. Only eight were Afro-Caribbean.

The much lauded urban aid spent on the area has done nothing to change these basic facts.

Improvements to houses, roads, and water mains, have been carried out by white contractors employing white labour.

High unemployment, social deprivation, and racial oppression, are what make Handsworth explosive — not its alleged 'volatile racial mix'.

In the '70s these conditions were aggravated by systematic police harassment of black youth who were all viewed as potential criminals, an image of the area reinforced by a racist press.

Relations between the police and the black community went from bad to worse. This led to a change in tactics in 1978. The Lozells Police Project launched in that year introduced 'community policing' to the area for the first time. Its stated aim was: 'to encourage people living in the area to participate with local agencies in solving the problems of the community.'

In reality the project sought to bring voluntary bodies in the area under the influence of the police, through their control of its £50,000 a year grant.

Through community projects the police sought

to change black youth's view of the police while expanding their own knowledge of what was going on in the community. Superintendent David Webb, who headed the project, became a regular figure at parents evenings and cultural events.

Harassment

From its inception the Lozells police project increasingly penetrated the community. Youth clubs, employment projects, residents associations, the Handsworth carnival, and self-styled 'community leaders' all enjoyed financial support in exchange for police involvement.

Behind the media image of community policing however harassment and brutality to black youth continued. The community policing myth was shattered in July 1981. In the aftermath of uprisings in other cities youth took to the streets of Handsworth.

Sixty police were injured in the battle that ensued, and fifty arrests were made. Despite these figures the events were considered tame compared

to elsewhere for which community policing claimed the credit.

Lord Scarman wrote: 'future historians may well say the nation's battle for policing a multi-racial society by consent was won on the Soho Road and in the back streets of Handsworth.'

It is undoubtedly the case that 'community policing' played some part in containing the youth uprising in 1981. But there never was, nor will there be, any hope of it eradicating unemployment, poverty, or racist oppression.

Superintendent Webb understood this. As he told the *Guardian* last Wednesday: 'There is nothing the police or the various agencies can do in relation to unemployment or facilities, but what we do try to do is to keep all the groups talking to each other.'

Webb openly admitted this meant building up 'a network of community leaders.' But as the crisis facing the black community deepens the capacity to control the situation in this way is undermined.

Out of the velvet glove

of community policing comes the iron fist of state repression. The events on Lozells Road hammer this point home.

The previous Thursday evening a public meeting occurred in the Lozells area organised by a number of predominantly white residents associations. Some of these have received support from the police project. Called to discuss a campaign against 'drug pushers' in the area. It was attended by Jeff Rooker and Labour Lord Mayor Frank Carter.

No effort was made to directly involve representatives of the Afro-Caribbean community. Nevertheless black activists did attend and reported that speeches overwhelmingly pointed the finger at Afro-Caribbeans.

Raids

More frequent raids were already taking place against popular haunts like the Acapulco cafe and the Villa Cross pub. Demands are now being raised to close them down.

While no one denies that ganja was sold and used in the community — a situation known to the police, and tolerated by them for their own reasons — an attempt was being made to blame Afro-Caribbeans for the introduction of cocaine and heroin.

As the *Soho Star* reported in its September issue: 'One resident leader warned that growing anger at pushers selling heroin and cocaine openly in Birmingham could lead to vigilante groups taking the law into their own hands.'

Significantly, in a statement issued by the Afro-Caribbean community on 10 September, they state that white residents at this meeting threatened to burn down the old Villa Cross bingo hall — which was due for conversion into an amusement arcade to prevent it becoming a 'drugs den'.

It was a fire started in this building that first brought the fire service and large numbers of police into the area. Given the character of the meeting, and the allegations being made, it was inevitable the Afro-Caribbean community

would conclude they were under attack.

The responsibility for this lies with those who organised the meeting and fuelled its racist accusations.

Even more ironic is the 'bewilderment' of the police and media that the Lozells Road revolt took place the day after the Handsworth carnival where, according to one report 'costumed dancers jived and boogied with police officers'.

In fact many youth saw the annual event as a tokenist gesture that gave them a good time one weekend in the year, while condemning them to unemployment and poverty for the rest.

Whether 'community policing' can survive this second upset remains to be seen. Today the police are pursuing two lines. While Dear and others talk about a return to 'normality', a murder investigation is underway in which assistant chief constable Tom Meffen has pledged: 'there will be no stone left unturned.'

Scores of youth are up on charges including burglary, assault, possession of an offensive weapon, criminal damage, theft, and public order offences.

When the events are officially declared a riot even more serious charges may ensue. Meanwhile it seems certain additional arrests will be made.

Police pressure has been applied to staff at the nearby Dudley Road Hospital to disclose the names and addresses of youth seeking treatment on or around the date of the revolt.

Social security staff reportedly are interviewing youth who failed to sign on at their usual times. Cops are quizzing kids about any new possessions they might have acquired.

Community policing has us all under surveillance again.

● **The Afro-Caribbean community is fighting back and needs your support. Handsworth Legal Defence Campaign can be contacted at: 104 Heathfield Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, or phone 021-554 0026/554 2747. Money is urgently needed to mount a defence campaign and should be forwarded to this address.**

Lozells defence campaign

SINCE MONDAY night the black community in Handsworth has begun to organise. Each night since then the defence campaign for the 257 youth who have been arrested has met.

PHIL MURPHY is an Afro-Caribbean Birmingham city councillor, involved in the defence campaign. He explained his view of events and what sort of campaign was needed.

A combination of reasons caused the revolt in Lozells Road this week. Unemployment is one facet. There is also the question of people's political consciousness.

When Douglas Hurd came to visit Handsworth young people showed they were completely opposed to him: he represents the state and they were complaining against the state.

I don't think it's a coincidence either that the situation in South Africa should be taking place now and there should have been a riot, a reprisal, in Handsworth.

Also young people were unhappy about the way the police had been treating them. Obviously too there was an oppor-

tunistic element: people who wanted to steal.

Essentially what happened in Handsworth was a combination of political consciousness and deprivation. To say that it's just the actions of a 'criminal minority', as the press has, is not to understand what was happening.

Birmingham city council has done very little indeed for black people in Handsworth — for example in terms of helping to create jobs. The leadership of the council are talking about the 'appalling events' in the Lozells area, and crying crocodile tears. They are downright hypocritical.

In my 18 months as a councillor, I have found a complete lack of interest. I

would accuse them of being responsible in terms of not doing anything before this.

White politicians like Dick Knowles (leader of Birmingham city council), Jeff Rooker, and Roy Hattersley are forever frightened that if they are seen associating with the problems of black people the so-called white backlash might take place and they might lose votes.'

Youth

Their reaction to the events in Handsworth is sheer political opportunism, meant to reassure the white electorate. They are not prepared to understand the problems and to allocate the kind of resources they can within the system they work in.

There's a great danger of young people, whether they participated or not, being arrested, taken into court, and denied the justice they have a right to.

So the first reaction of the black community must be to ensure that there is defence of young people. We feel that the police and the government are going to crack down hard on a few individuals.

Propaganda

Also we feel it is necessary to explain politically to the black community what is happening. They are also influenced by the media's propaganda. So we are going to organise in such a way that explains to the community the consequences of what is happening and the need for their support.

The defence campaign must also begin to overcome the confusion between Afro-Caribbeans and Asian communities. The first thing to recognise is that two members of the Asian community died. All of us have got to say that is regrettable. But I

**Clare Short
MP for Birmingham
Ladywood**

I'VE spent the whole of the day (Tuesday) talking quietly to lots of different people. The older white, West Indian, and Asian people said on every street corner: 'If they had jobs it wouldn't happen. They'd all be in bed tired. They'd have some possessions of their own, some pride and some dignity so to speak.'

People were dreadfully upset by the deaths, but their feelings are that unemployment is the precondition that creates a sense of desolation and hopelessness, the willingness to run riot.

Looting is attractive when you've got nothing. On top of the unemployment and poverty, black youth experience the all prevailing racism that leaves them right at the bottom of the heap. They've got no chance to go anywhere.

The spark was the heavy policing, that was what all the young people were saying. They're being hassled and they got angry. And decided they were going to demonstrate that they weren't going to be pushed around.

A lot of commentators are trying to present it as some fundamental conflict between the Asian and West Indian communities in Handsworth. That is not true, and it is deeply mischievous.



Opposite the Villa Cross pub where the Monday clashes began, the bingo hall was later burned

Blaming the victim

THE media response to Birmingham was strikingly racist. The tabloids were at pains to imply that the rioters were animals and to identify black people with crime. As always a special mention must go to the *The Sun* which excelled itself on Friday with a feature entitled '20 things you never knew about Rastas'. Almost every 'fact' was a lie. The quality press chose to seize on the idea that the riots were 'anti-Asian'.

The media had to pretend that Handsworth had nothing to do with racism, oppression, unemployment, and the political harassment of black people. As far as they are concerned the events are just pure criminality.

Everyone did their best to play down the idea that the riots might have any political content — still less that they might be the inevitable response to racism, oppression and police harassment.

But what's going on is that any form of resistance to the state is now dubbed 'criminality'. Pickets, demonstrations, any type of resistance are being step by step labelled as criminal by definition.

White Labour politicians led the pack in trying to depoliticise the riots. Neil Kinnock called them 'tribalism'. Jeff Rooker talked about 'barbarism'. Roy Hattersley and Robin Corbett dismissed them as mere criminality. The Lord Mayor of Birmingham talked about criminals maddened by drugs.

But I'm sure that Maggie Thatcher wouldn't have dared to go to Handsworth. She said she would have gone except that she had another engagement. The truth is that there is nothing the police could have done which would have protected her.

The white Labour politicians — notably Rooker, Corbett and Hattersley — colluded with an apolitical and racist analysis.

It is no coincidence that Kinnock, Hattersley, Rooker, and Corbett are bitter opponents of black sections. They don't want black people to organise autonomously in mainstream politics. And when, in desperation, our young people riot they are



Photo: GM COOKSON

By Diane Abbot, Black Section National Steering Committee

written off as criminals.

We just can't win. If we organise peacefully through constitutional structures, we get smashed; then when young people riot, we get smashed and told we ought to use peaceful and constitutional means.

Hattersley and Rooker depend on black votes to return them to parliament, but with attitudes like theirs it could be argued that they have no business representing the working class in general and the black working class in particular.

Black people and Labour Party members in Birmingham should take note of Hattersley, Corbett and Rooker. They are following a Thatcherite line, saying that these insurrections are just pure criminality. People should draw the obvious conclusions. It seems these people aren't fit to represent the working class in the Midlands and the black working class in general.

But while the attempt by the media and white politicians to paint the black working class of Birmingham as sub-human is obviously racist it is also a traditional tactic of the British ruling class.

First you subject your under-class — black, white, or Irish — to brutalising poverty and systematic oppression. Then you turn round and say that the reason these people are poor is because they are brutalised and sub-human.

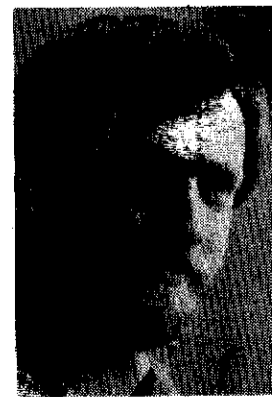
And that motif — blaming the victim — ran through all the comment on the riots.

**Jeremy Corbyn
MP for Islington North**

THE press and media reporting has been overwhelmingly racist and pro-authoritarian state in its analysis of the events in Birmingham.

I believe the contrived reaction in rejecting the very obvious social deprivation of inner Birmingham is a prelude to some very vicious Law and Order legislation to be introduced this session.

It is essential that no socialist should be entrapped into repressive arguments when the real issue is the inner-city poverty of Thatcher's Britain.



Jeremy Corbyn

ty advanced recently by the growing black sections movement are taken seriously and real changes made, further uprisings are bound to follow.

Comments the media didn't invite

**Amin Ladha
Relative of the brothers
who died in the post
office fire**

THE blame for these deaths lies squarely with the state, but some of my family don't understand that. They feel very hostile towards Afro-Caribbeans. And that goes for a section of the Asian community in Handsworth.

When I arrived in Birmingham I went to a meeting of what has now become the defence committee to express my solidarity. I did that because I realised that a section of the black community was falling into the trap of regarding the events last week as a race issue, an attack by Afro-Caribbeans on Asians. Therefore I wanted to go along and show solidarity and tell the truth both as a member of the family and as a member of Britain's black community.

It was an uprising of black people, Asian and Afro-Caribbean, against police repression and harassment that black people face everywhere in this country. Afro-Caribbeans are facing the same sort of oppression as we are. Asian people are treated just as Afro-Caribbeans are: as second or third class citizens — when they try to get decent housing, or a job for example.

It shouldn't be seen as a riot by black youth, but an uprising by the black community; not as an attack by Afro-Caribbeans on Asians, but as an attack by black youth on property and against the police.

**Paul Boateng
PPC for Brent South**

MRS Thatcher's tired old 'theme on a truncheon' was readily taken up by the Tory press as the stock response to Handsworth.

IN THE week following the Handsworth uprising the media have not only sought to brand the affair as criminal, but have instigated one of the vilest campaigns of racism witnessed in a long time. Socialist Action invited those people whose views the media didn't feature to make their comments on the Lozells Rd uprising known.

Tough talking, more police, stiffer penalties, and plastic bullets are as redundant as the images of carnival and community policing conjured up by the press as the backcloth to the disturbances.

They hold out no hope to black and white people in Handsworth. When the ravages of fire are removed, as they were in Brixton and Toxteth, the deprivation of this government's policies on the inner cities will continue.

Attempting to drive a wedge between Asian and Afro-Caribbean, however well orchestrated, will not disguise the grim realities of what Thatcher's 1980s have meant for Handsworth.

The Labour Party's response could do with the minimum of rhetoric and more work on developing and communicating practical policies on policing and crime, equal opportunity and urban renewal.

The black community has a vital role to play in

this. Birmingham city council, the party nationally, and a future Labour government need to create the means by which this might be done now.



Joan Maynard

**Joan Maynard
MP for Sheffield
Brightside**

ITS amazing we haven't had more riots when I think of what people are facing; when so many people have been unemployed over a long time, and have no prospects of work, they

can no longer take pride in their job or even any job.

The inner cities are very deprived in relation to housing and amenities, and it is particularly damaging to black people who suffer even greater deprivation. It's simply inevitable that sooner or later such events will occur.

What's needed is not more policing — this is simply a way of requesting



Russell Profitt

more repression. Calling for plastic bullets is hopeless. We've seen what plastic bullets do in Northern Ireland. They don't contribute to the solution. They injure and kill. We need to deal with the basic problems, not step up the repression.

Seeing the riot shields out brought to my mind the miners' dispute, Grunwick, and the NGA dispute. It frightens me, because I can see a clear connection. The government is using the repressive forces to deal with its opponents. Its attitude is that anyone who doesn't agree with its policies should be put down.

I believe the Labour

Party should advocate socialist policies to deal with unemployment and deprivation. It's no use trying to resolve these problems under capitalism.

**Russel Profitt
PPC for Lewisham East**

HANDSWORTH again highlighted the fact that current political approaches to tackling racism and dealing with the needs of black people are not only futile but hopelessly outdated. The time for change is now long overdue.

In my view, it is not only counter-productive, but trite and facile, to see Handsworth as 'racial rivalry' between Afro-Caribbean and Asian, or even black and white. In truth, it is a demand for action in favour of the disadvantaged — the vast proportion of whom are black — from those who, in general terms, are at an advantage — the vast majority of whom are white — recognising that unless responses are made on the basis of equal and full participation, only lip service is being paid.

Such individuals, including Labour Party leaders who have benefited from the old community relations and the 'godfather' style of operation, seem disinterested in finding proper solutions, and increasingly, are being seen as irrelevant.

Let there be no mistake, unless the demands for power sharing and equali-

Photo: LAURIE SPARHAM (JFL)

Photo: GM COOKSON

Photo: LEROY

AS SOON as the events in Handsworth last Monday evening were known, members of the Labour Party black section national committee converged on Birmingham to find out first-hand what was going on. We reprint below a statement issued by

SHARON ATKIN and AMIR KHAN on behalf of the national committee on the Tuesday after the uprising, together with the response of HASSAN AHMED at the end of the week.

Black section speaks out

'Time is running out'

THE RECENT events in Handsworth, Birmingham have provided stark evidence that much-vaunted 'improvements' in the living conditions of black people in Britain's inner cities since the uprisings of 1980, 1981 and 1982 have been no more than synthetic and cosmetic.

The Labour Party Black Sections are horrified at the deaths that occurred and we offer our condolences to the bereaved families. The Tory government stand indicted of criminal neglect of Britain's black communities. So do Labour politicians who collaborate with oppression by calling for heavier policing to solve the problem.

Labour-run Birmingham is a 'partnership' authority which receives a few extra crumbs from the government. The petty cash which has come to the area in this way has made no impact on urban decay, bad housing and a local economy which makes it an exception to be employed if you are young and black.

Seventy one per cent of black youth aged between 16 and 20 are out of work because of the Tories' vicious and divisive economic policies. The right-wingers who control Birmingham City Council with the connivance of community godfathers have allowed themselves to

be manipulated by Thatcher.

Proportionately more money is lavished on leafy suburbs like Edgbaston than the inner city ghettos of Handsworth and Sparkbrook. Yet we have heard hardly a word about these inequalities from Labour deputy leader Roy Hattersley, MP for Sparkbrook, and Shadow housing spokesman Jeff Rooker, MP for Perry Barr, which covers part of Handsworth. It was Rooker who called instead for more police.

We oppose the politics of 'containment' which mean more slush funds for 'community projects' run by the godfather mafia and heavier policing. Black Sections stand for the politics of power sharing.

We demand that black people, alienated from participation in mainstream politics because of past sell-outs like the passing of racist immigration laws, must be given a real stake in the political structures of this country. What is needed

are not bigger and badder police riot squads but policing by consent and under democratic control.

We do not need more police drug squads. We do not need special police units set up to combat the evils of race attacks made on black people by fascist thugs. And we need a determination by local authorities, spearheaded by Labour, to evict racist tenants, not move the victims to even worse housing.

Time is running out for the bankrupt politicians who oppose black rights in Britain, while mouthing platitudes about their opposition to apartheid in Azania. We must and will be allowed to speak for ourselves about how best our needs and aspirations are to be fulfilled. Handsworth is a warning of the Fire Next Time in Brixton, Toxteth, Bradford, Southall, Leicester, Moss Side, St Pauls, and every other inner city area unless black Britons receive our fair slice of the economic, political and social cake.

Sharon Atkin, Chair Black Sections National Committee

Amir Khan, Black Section organiser in Sparkbrook, and Birmingham City Councillor



Cars are overturned for barricades as black youth protest Douglas Hurd's visit

For black unity

THE LABOUR Party black section responded immediately to the uprising in Handsworth last week. They have issued a press statement highlighting the real causes of the events in Birmingham and calling for black unity against the institutional racism of British society.

To make this point, on Friday a black section delegation laid a wreath at the Lozells Road post office where two Asian brothers died in the fire of Monday night.

HASSAN AHMED, chair of Nottingham East black section, came with a delegation from Nottingham black section. He told Socialist Action:

ON Monday when we first heard of black people standing up to the miseries of their life in Handsworth, some of us came immediately to Birmingham to get first-hand reports. From the very first we realised that the police and the Tories, and even the leadership of the Labour Party, were all trying to use this issue, trying to play it as West Indian against Asian.

We were very concerned because we knew that it was only by standing united that we could win. Those people who died were not attacked by black youth as Asians. It happened because of the frustration of black young people — because of unemployment, because of the police attitude towards them and policing in the area.

The black youth were attacking those shops, not attacking Asians. In that particular area there are more Asian shops than any others. What the media failed to report was that Asian youth took part.

When we were laying the wreath we were saying that black people should be united; we were saying that the blame for those people who have died in the riots goes to the police, and the state, and to the leadership of political parties, and not those black youth.

One important message that Handsworth has brought home — and after Brixton this message came out — is that young

black people are not going to put up with this situation anymore. Since those four years nothing has happened, no real efforts have been made to change the root-cause of the problem and do something about it.

Handsworth has sent a strong message that black people, and especially youth, in this country are not going to put up with these appalling conditions anymore. Something will have to be done. And if people think that just by pleasing a few god fathers in the black community and creating a few more community centres, the problems are going to go away, well it's not.

I think also it sends a message to the leadership of the Labour Party who have stood strongly against black sections, that black people are not going to be patronised anymore. They want an equal share, they want their problems to be understood, they want equal participation, and they want the elimination of racism from this society. That's the argument, the message from Handsworth from those black youth.

The response of Rooker and Kinnock has to do with Labour being first in the opinion polls. Four years ago the polls were showing Labour at the bottom, but now Labour think they are going to be the majority party in the next parliament.

That is consistent with Labour's past record.

When it comes to election campaigning they try to woo black workers, but in government they have introduced some of the worst legislation in this country. They think they're going to be the government, so before even getting there they have started taking this attitude.

That proves again the case the black section has been arguing: that these people do not understand our problem, they do not try to understand the problem of black people. It's only with the participation of black people that we can actually get to the roots of the problem and try to do something about it.

Look at the attitude of Labour's leaders during the miners' strike. It was not the struggle of the miners that was important to them, it was the law and order issue.

And look at the attitude they've taken on South Africa for example. They say Neil Kinnock has been very consistent in opposing all the rugby tours of South Africa. Well, what has that got to do with help to the actual struggle of South Africa?

If the Labour movement is going to show any real solidarity with the struggle of black people in South Africa then they should be supporting the ANC. They should be offering practical support for the fight against apartheid. Anything less than that to us is just show-business. That's what the labour movement has got to understand now.

To us the struggle of black people is linked throughout the globe — whether it's in El Salvador, whether it's in South Africa, in the streets of Handsworth, or in Brixton.

Black people are at the receiving end all over and it's the imperial forces that

are oppressing and exploiting them. So for us Handsworth is not a one-off thing, it's interlinked.

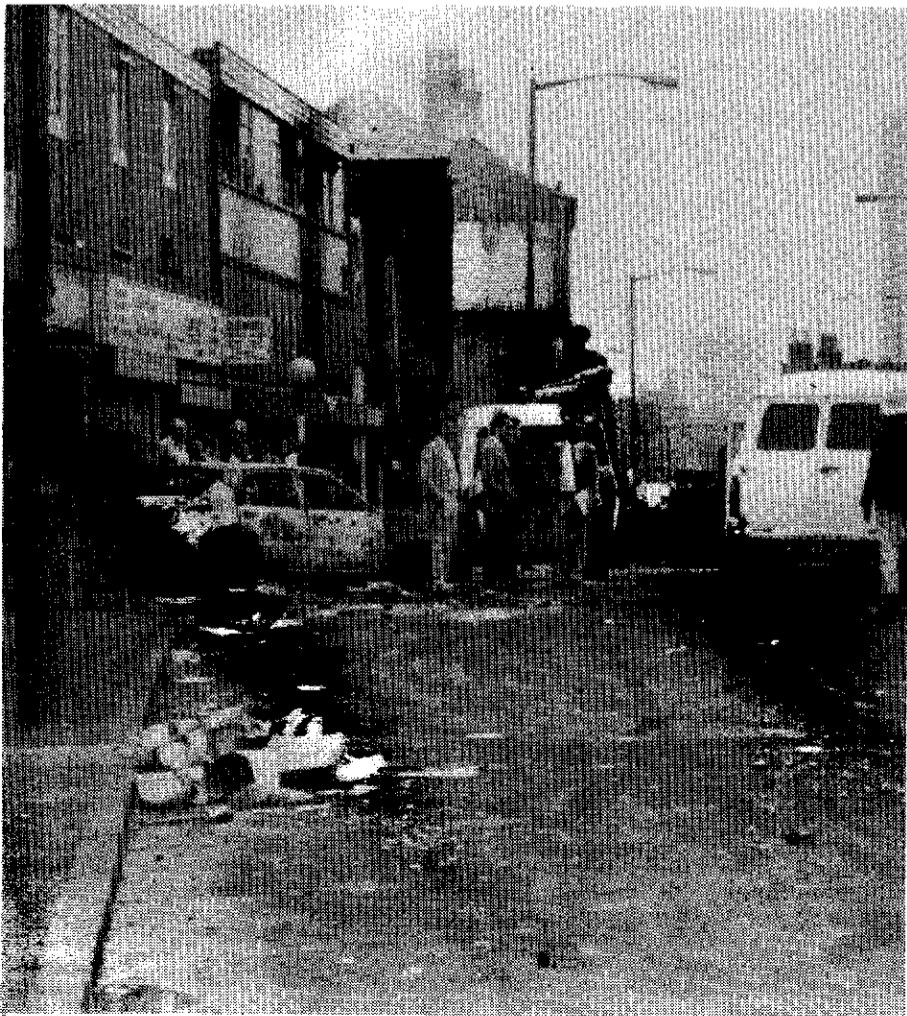
What's happened at Handsworth makes us more determined first to fight more fiercely for acceptance of the black section and to fight the issue of racism within the Labour Party and within society. Second, it's very important that the black section tried to understand this situation, these different events — whether it is Newham 7, Brixton or Handsworth — and tries to link themselves more with the grassroots and more with activists in the street. We have to take up these struggles collectively.

That's the only way that we can keep this movement on the right political path. That's how we can also avoid these attacks like burning Asian shops as well. And that's only by involving ourselves in these struggles.

The black section in Nottingham has called a meeting locally and invited Indians, West Indians, Pakistanis, all the community leaders, to discuss Handsworth: their response, the media and the police, and how we should handle this in Nottingham.

In Hyson Green, Nottingham, there's been a lot of tension in the past two days after Handsworth. We were expecting something to happen, so we actually went there to them to talk to them about what our response should be if anything happens, and how we should avoid any attacks on each other.

That should be the first response of black sections: to get out and talk to the black community, talk to the young people, and make sure that if any struggle is going on it's directed to the right people, those responsible.



Firefighters clear debris around the Lozells Road post office (left foreground) after the Handsworth revolt

Right and left in British politics

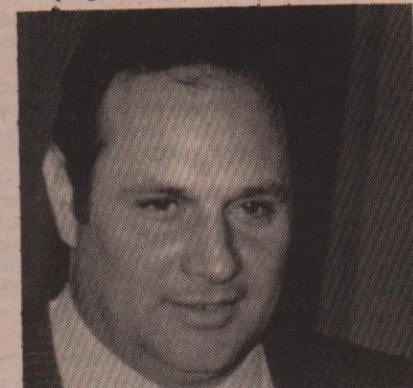
1. The emerging right wing consensus

WHEN THE ruling class embarked on the policies of the Thatcher government in 1979 it set in train an irreversible change not only in the British economy but in British politics. More precisely it began to create the most profound shifts in the structure of British politics since World War I.

The reasons for these changes are easy to understand once the demagoguery peddled in the press is discounted, and the real facts of the political situation are considered.

Already in 1979, at the time of Thatcher's first electoral victory, the Tory Party received its lowest share of the vote in any election it had won since World War I. In 1983 Thatcher's vote fell further — in that election she received the lowest percentage of the vote of any government with a safe majority in parliament in British history.

This combination of a government carrying through extremely reactionary



Shah

policies, but with a low level of direct popular support, was bound to create extreme strains in the political structure of the country.

The alarm bells were already sounding for British capitalist politics in 1981. The outcome of the right wing policies of the Wilson and Callaghan governments — and the revolt against them that came to a head with the winter of discontent of 1978-79 — produced in Bennism the most powerful left wing in the British Labour Party since World War II. Simultaneously the unpopularity of the first two years of Tory government created a situation where Thatcher was rated the most unpopular prime minister since opinion polls began.

In 1980-81 the Tory Party suffered annihilating electoral defeats both in local government and by-elections.

This development was of tremendous significance, and of serious concern, for the British ruling class. While it is true that Thatcher's policies — and particularly their initial impact during the slump of 1979-81 — sharply hit sections of British industry they were in the direct interests of the most powerful groups within British capital.

Output

While the output of British-based manufacturing industry fell by 15 per cent in two years, the great multinational companies, banks, oil companies, retail and property groups boomed as virtually never before.

More than £46 billion of foreign investment flowed out of Britain in the

four years from 1979-83. After decades of decline Britain's share of world foreign investments began to rise again — increasing from 11.2 per cent in 1975 to 14.5 per cent in 1980. The Thatcher government reinforced still further the imperialist character of the British economy and British capital.

This development — coupled with the privatisation of new boom sectors of the economy such as telecommunications, aerospace, and oil — helped to reinforce the position of the most powerful groups within British capital. Their position has been reinforced still further by the merger boom of the last three years.

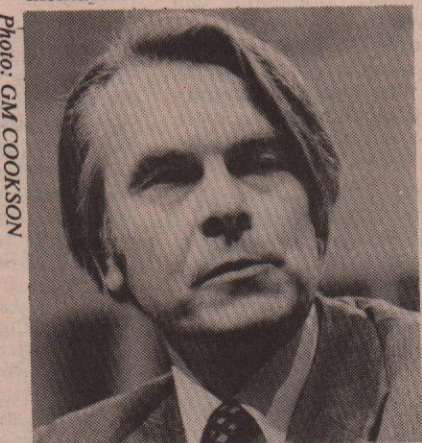
Capital

In addition to the immediate strengthening of British capitals international operations — and the concentration of capital that was produced — Thatcher succeeded in significantly shifting the distribution of income between capital and labour within the domestic economy.

The share of profits of industrial and commercial companies in the economy, after declining in 1980, increased from 13.5 per cent in 1979 to 16.7 per cent in 1983 — the highest sustained level since the 1950s.

Parallel with this process of redistributing income from labour to capital, Thatcher also began a major redistribution of income within the working class. A combination of mass unemployment, tax changes, public sector pay policy, cuts in benefits and every other available means, was used to widen income and other differentials within the working class.

The effect of these shifts even in purely electoral terms was evident in the sharp increase in the political divisions which began to appear between the different regions of the country — the deepening 'north-south gap' which has become such a favourite topic of discussion among the electoral commentators.



Owen

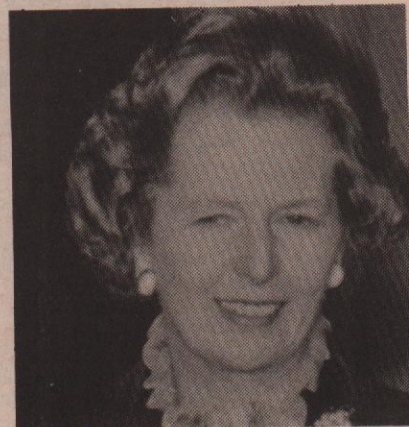
The reasons for this shift are not hard to find. The south of England is by every measure the most prosperous part of Britain with the highest wages, lowest unemployment, lowest child mortality and so on. The Tories' vote held up well here.

But in the north, which was increasingly hit by the economic crisis from the beginning of the 1960s onwards, Tory electoral support fell sharply.

The rapid increase in unevenness and differentials within the working class produced by Thatcher's policies deepened that process still further. The

local government elections of 1984 saw the most geographically polarised shifts in any elections in Britain for more than sixty years.

The sharply increasing differentiations within the working class could



Thatcher

also be seen in studies of the social base of the Tory vote. Tory support in virtually every single section of the population declined between Heath's electoral victory in 1970 and Thatcher's in 1979 — the fall across Britain as a whole being three per cent.

But the one exception to this decline in Tory support was among skilled, and higher paid, manual workers. Here the Tory Party's vote actually increased by more than four per cent. It was this shift among skilled manual workers that decisively won Thatcher the 1979 and 1983 elections.

Within the trade unions the same shifts could be seen. During the 1970s the right wing in the AUEW had already begun to re-assert itself — in particular following the defeat of the 1972 Manchester engineering sit-ins.

But the right wings' dominance was greatly reinforced by the policies pursued by the Wilson-Callaghan governments. The wage controls introduced in 1975 severely hit skilled workers. The strikes among Leyland toolmakers in 1976 and 1977 were the first sharp signs of revolt against this.

The same shifts which produced a shift to the Tories among skilled workers in the 1979 and 1983 elections helped reinforce the Duffy-Boyd right wing of the AUEW. By the late 1970s and early 1980s the AUEW right wing in combination with the EETPU represented a quite new hardened right wing within the trade union movement.

Policy

Thatcher in short had carried out a classic imperialist policy. She has reinforced the international positions of British capital. She had used this to mount a massive offensive against the labour movement. A major part of this was to divide the working class and pull its better off sections closer to directly capitalist politics.

The development of the SDP, and the accommodation to it of a whole series of trends within the labour movement fitted perfectly into that context. Because the policies pursued by Thatcher were indispensable for the most powerful sections of British capital it was vital that no government should reverse them. Labour however, and particularly the Labour Party under strong left wing pressure which emerged from 1979, was in no way a reliable instrument for continuing the policies of Thatcherism. It therefore became absolutely fundamental for British capitalism that Thatcherism 'even without Thatcher' should be continued. The solution to that problem

THE UPRISING in Handsworth showed up in a brutal fashion the tensions which are developing in British politics.

Overall there is a clear shift to the right. Thatcher, the SDP-Liberal Alliance, Kinnock, Willis, and the extreme right of the TUC, are all developing policies which will ensure that the fundamental changes brought about under the Thatcher government are

never undone. But at the same time the most radical and minority currents seen in British politics for sixty years have developed.

JOHN ROSS looks at why an overall shift to the right in British politics can be combined with a development of radical left wing minority currents inside and outside the labour movement: and what should be the response to that.

2. The radical minorities

IF THE radical imperialist politics pursued by Thatcher explain her success in consolidating a shift to the right, then they equally help to explain the radical minority trends which have developed in opposition to her.

The old imperialist politics of British capitalism was summed up in Disraeli's famous phrase of 'one nation'. The Conservative Party consciously set out to integrate almost every section of British society into an imperialist consensus. Those sections which were not integrated by the dominant Tories were integrated by the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracy.

Apart from a period of crisis around World War I — marked by the suffragettes, the struggle in Ireland, and militant trade unionism before the war, and the effects of the Russian revolution and the creation of the Communist Party after it — this consensus succeeded in smothering all serious revolt within Britain itself for well over a hundred years.

In Britain up to the 1840s a radical and even revolutionary, tradition had existed within the working class. It reached its peak with Chartism. By the beginning of the 1850s onwards the entire British labour movement was thrown politically backward by what Marx termed the 'period of corruption' created by the rise of British imperialism.

Britain became the classic land of the 'labour aristocracy' in the real sense

was found in the grisly face of Dr Death — David Owen.

The SDP must be counted one of the most spectacularly successful political operations ever mounted by British capitalism.

A great deal is made of the 'Falkland's factor' but the point purely factually is that there was no increase in Tory support in 1983. On the contrary the Conservative vote fell still further from its already low level in 1979. The entire decline in the Labour vote in 1983 went to the SDP and not to the Tories.

The goal of the SDP was simple. It was not to provide an alternative to Thatcherism but to ensure that its essential policies were continued.

Following the 1983 election Owen announced the SDP's support for the 'social market economy' — the very words Thatcher used to describe her economic policy goals. During the miners' strike the SDP followed a line of total opposition to the NUM. Owen is totally determining the defence policy of the SDP-Liberal Alliance. The SDP, in short, is not an alternative to the fundamental structural policies pursued by Thatcher, it is precisely their guarantor.



Goldsmith

The pressure exercised by the SDP, in turn, has helped reinforce Thatcherism's impact in the labour movement. Owen has maintained the closest possible links with the right wing of the TUC. The leadership of the EETPU works directly with sections of the SDP. A coalition government of Labour and the Alliance is the political cage within which Owen is attempting to imprison the labour movement.

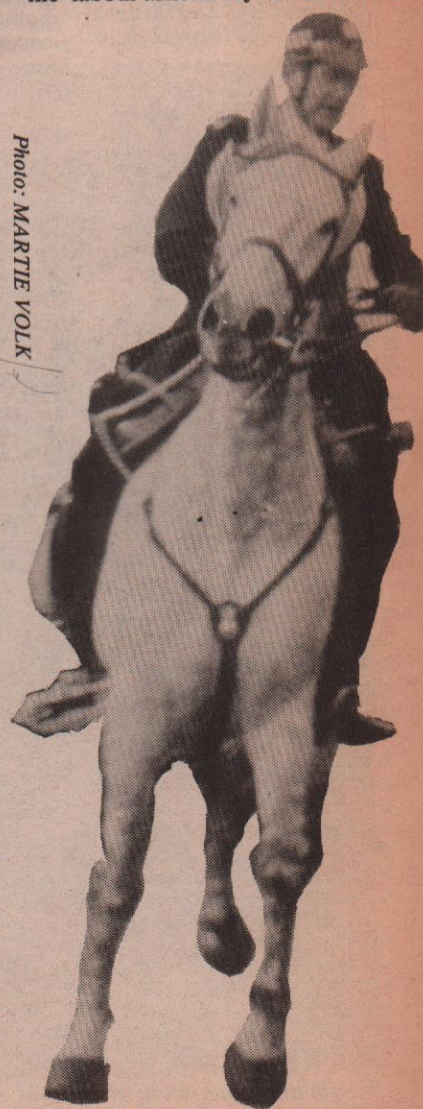
Kinnock and Willis in their turn have moved to shift Labour and the TUC to the right to fit within the mould Thatcher and Owen have created. The TUC is slowly but remorselessly shifting to accept the ballot and other provisions of the Trade Union Acts. Hattersley and Kinnock have already abandoned any pledge to a policy of renationalisation of privatised companies — let alone any policy of new nationalisations. Labour's pledges for reducing unemployment are being slowly whittled away.

Politics

What is being created is a quite new framework for British politics. One in which certain questions are negotiable — notably the exact degree of welfare spending and certain measures of reflection of the economy — but where the fundamental structural shifts brought about by Thatcher remain unviolable.

That consensus now stretches right from Thatcher, through Owen, Steel and Hammond, to Willis and Kinnock. It is the new emergent right wing majority bloc of British politics.

Photo: MARTIE VOLK





arise developments which will be able to more and more give expression to the anger and revolt of Britain's blacks.

Undoubtedly a section of the women's movement is making its peace with Kinnock and the right wing. The line of writer Bea Campbell is for an alliance with the bourgeoisie against the mass of the working class. But by far the greatest section of women activists are moving in exactly the opposite direction — towards an alliance with the working class against the bourgeoisie. Women Against Pit Closures was the most advanced expression of that trend seen in Britain since the suffragettes.

While in other sections of society, and above all in the core of the trade unions, such trends are still a very small minority, nevertheless they do exist. The solidarity, and echo, achieved by the miners' strike showed that. While sharp setbacks are, and will continue to be, suffered — as in the rail industry — even here minority sections of the working class are prepared to take action.

For the consolidation of a right wing majority and a radicalised left wing minority is an inevitable consequence of Thatcher's policies. British imperialism still has the resources to swing the centre, the majority, of British politics to the right. It has no power to prevent the radicalisation continuing among those to whom it no longer has anything to offer.

The vast jaggedness of British politics, the right wing majority and the radical left wing minorities, are an inevitable product of this situation. Both have to be grasped to understand the dynamics of British politics.

And what conclusions flow for socialists in Britain? Certainly not that they need adventures.

The real task was to understand the left's position as a minority force. To develop the type of campaigns — for amnesty for sacked and imprisoned miners, to defend the NUM, for black sections, in solidarity with international struggles — that would break the left out of its minority position and link up with wider forces.

The two models of that type of campaign are the amnesty campaign launched by the NUM and the Campaign

group of MPs and the fight that is being waged for black sections — as were the most powerful developments of CND earlier. Both link up forces inside the Labour Party and the wider labour movement; both are based on key issues of the class struggle. A massive campaign launched on South Africa could have a similar impact.

There is nothing to be overly optimistic about the immediate development of British politics. The emerging right wing majority will consolidate itself for some time to come. It is very capable of imposing, and will impose further serious defeats on the British working class movement. This year TUC, and the coming Labour Party conference, prepare that. Not to see this is to substitute dreams and wishes for the reality in the labour movement.

But what Thatcher, Owen, Willis and Kinnock — in their very different ways — are not capable of doing is preventing the development of the radical minorities of British politics. The minorities that waged and lead the miners' strike, the struggle in Ireland, the black struggle, the fight for the liberation of women, the minorities who lead the fight for a class struggle orientation in the trade unions and Labour movement.

And as British imperialism continues its decline those minorities, provided they learn, provided they are skillful, provided they can break out of their frequent rightism and sometimes ultra-leftism, will become a majority in British politics: Not today, not in the short term, but through many long years of struggle. They will be aided by an international situation that already is, and will continue to be, far in advance of the struggle in Britain itself.

The final goal of these currents must be to take political power in Britain, to take the leadership of society in their hands. But as Lenin once said before the conquest of power must first come the conquest of the masses, the conquest of the majority.

That is the task we are engaged in today. To create the alliance for socialism that will one day win political power for the working class, its allies, and the labour movement in Britain.

That is what Socialist Action exists to fight for.

World War I.

In 1916 the Irish working class made the first practical attempt to translate into deeds Lenin's dictum to 'transform the imperialist war into a civil war'. The Easter uprising of 1916 struck the decisive blow for liberty of that country.

In Scotland John MacLean held aloft the banner of militant opposition to the war — and paid for it with his life crushed by his imprisonment. In England Sylvia Pankhurst broke with the chauvinism of the majority of the suffragettes, and with her mother and sister, to oppose the war. On the outbreak of the Russian revolution she travelled to the soviet state and helped form the new Communist Party in Britain.

War

Finally after the war the political crisis began to affect a wider section of the working class. The newly formed Communist Party achieved an alliance with the radicalisation of the miners — symbolised by the figure of AJ Cook — to create in the Minority Movement in the trade unions, and in the National Left Wing Movement in the Labour Party, the most powerful oppositional and radical movements seen since the rise of British imperialism.

But even then, as the name Minority Movement suggests, these were minority trends within the working class and labour movement. Whereas Chartism had been the most powerful trend within the workers movement in the 1840s — the potential movement of a majority — the radical trends proceeding and following World War I were smashed against the majority forces created by British imperialism.

With the defeat of the general strike in 1926, and the stalinisation of the Communist Party, a profound rupture took place in the life of the working class. It was out of this that the right wing trade union and Labour bureaucracy which dominated British working class politics for 50 years consolidated itself. The Attlees, Gaitskells, Wilsons and Callaghans were the political counterparts of the Bevins, Citrines, Deakins, Carrons, Woodcocks and Feathers. They based themselves on the long period of economic expansion which followed the crushing defeats of 1926 and 1931 and which lasted up until the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Almost every trend in British politics was integrated into the great imperialist consensus. Those that weren't were dominated by the Communist Party which by the 1930s, never mind later, was thoroughly stalinised and thoroughly reformist.

Break

When the break down of British imperialist stability began to occur once more, from the mid-1960s onwards, almost inevitably that too began with those currents least integrated into the prevailing social order.

First was the impact of the great international events which British imperialism did not control. The Hungarian revolution of 1956, the fear of nuclear war in the early 1960s, the Vietnam war in the middle and late 1960s — all produced in their different ways radicalisations within parts of British politics.

The second great break was with the new rise of the struggle in Ireland from 1968 onwards, and the birth of the women's movement. From the late 1960s onwards a powerful wave of trade union struggle took place whose high points were the struggle against Heath's Industrial Relations Act, the 1972 miners' strike, the freeing of the Pentonville Five in the same year, and the 1974 miners' strike. Out of the greatest of these struggles, the 1972 miners' strike, a Yorkshire miners' leader, Arthur Scargill, first became known nationally.

But despite all these developments it was still Thatcher who provided the breaking point in the situation — the turn from which there was no going back. From 1979 onwards there was no return: Thatcher broke once and for all the 'one nationism'. Her reinforcement of British imperialism was not used to integrate society but to divide it and subjugate it. British capitalism no longer had the resources to give something to everybody. Its aim was to give something to enough people to allow Thatcher and her allies to have sufficient a base to smash the others into submission.

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Nation

Thatcher set out not to 'unite' but to divide the nation. If she had the resources to produce a majority consensus moving to the right, she completely lacked the resources to integrate currents to which she had nothing to offer. That is why Thatcher's 'Great Moving Right Show' was inevitably accompanied by the rise of radical and unintegrable currents. Where they arose and consolidated themselves was no accident either.

First and foremost was in Ireland — the historical heartland of radicalism within the boundaries of the British state. In Sinn Fein has arisen the most advanced political current with a mass base in the whole of western Europe.

Among the miners, the historical vanguard of the British working class, has arisen the most advanced mass working class leadership in Britain for 60 years. One that not only led the longest mass strike in the history of any imperialist country but forged the most advanced social alliances seen in Britain since World War I.

The black community in Britain, together with the people of Ireland the most oppressed section of all those within the British state, is also another great unassimilable for Thatcher's new Britain. The inner city revolt of 1981, Handsworth in 1985, were elemental explosions. But in the black sections movement in the Labour Party, and black organisation in the labour movement in general, there is beginning to



in which Marx and Lenin used the term. The 'new model unions' created from the 1850s onwards were based in the relatively secure and privileged sections of the working class. It was almost 40 years before the unskilled were to organise. Fifty years before the working class created its own political party.

A real line of descent, however distorted, exists between the unions of this period and today's right wing. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers, the skilled craft union, was the direct ancestor of the present AUEW. It refused to admit unskilled workers until after World War I. It refused to accept women into membership until 1943. The Electrical Trades Union, the edecessor of the EETPU, was consciously modelled on the old malgamated Society of Engineers.

The benefits that British imperialism provided for significant sections of the working class helped create about movement that was classically iss collaborationist in both its intertional and domestic policies. It was added to the empire, imbued with ism and chauvinism. It failed to ganise women and youth. It had no iss Marxist wing.

While the privileges granted by British imperialism were always unevenly distributed nevertheless they affected, as Marx pointed out, the labour movement as a whole. It was precisely for those reasons that the most radical currents within British politics were always most powerful amongst those who were least integrated into Britain's imperialist system and benefits.

Most important of all was Ireland. Ireland was an oppressed nation directly integrated within the British state and subject to the most savage national oppression. It rose virtually continuously against British rule even at the height of Britain's imperial splendour in the last part of the nineteenth century.

The second crucial area was Scotland. Here the pace of industrialisation was far more rapid than in England. On the west coast, and above all in Glasgow, was created one of the greatest concentrations of industry and slums in Europe.

The third key force less integrated into the imperialist consensus were women. The benefits of British imperialism were never extended to them in the same way as men. While the struggle for the vote at the beginning of the twentieth century had a powerful component among middle class women it also had a big impact among working class women. Sylvia Pankhurst's work among working class women in the East End of London is just the most famous example of that.

These three currents interacted with each other — and above all the struggle in Ireland inspired the most advanced forces both in Scotland and among women. It was these three trends, catalysed later by the Russian revolution, which came together at the time of

Reagan's fake sanctions



under the Export of Goods (Control) Order (1981). They had exported £1 million worth of goods to Eastern Europe without licences. The company was fined £10,000 — and the two men sent to jail for one year. Their crime was to export a machine, the PDP 11/34, which has been in widespread use in the West for several years.

This was only one of a series of such sentences passed on exporters throughout Europe.

Ironically on exactly the same day that this sentence was passed, an interesting announcement was made by the South African distributors of Apple Computers — Base 2. The company explained in detail how it intends to flout the decision by Apple International to terminate trade with South Africa on 31 October.

Base 2 explained that 'US suppliers had told them sanctions will not prove a problem as long as we pay a premium'. Discussions are under way with Far East companies in Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, it explained, and declares it will open a 'black market' in computers.

Economy

Obligingly, Apple International has announced it will continue to supply 'spare parts'. Three months earlier International Computers Limited, the former UK company now

under US ownership, announced that it will be staying in South Africa.

In short, exactly the same 'sanction busting' operation is now being launched that allowed South Africa freely to overcome the embargo on military goods in force since the late sixties.

But if Reagan's sanctions are pure fakery there is evident real concern in the international banking community that South Africa's July 31 financial crisis, when the Rand plunged to its lowest postwar level, was provoked

by Chase Manhattan Bank's decision not to renew loans to South African borrowers.

Week

International Business Week explained the thinking behind the bankers' decisions. 'Chase went far beyond the demands of most anti-apartheid organisations and the economic sanctions bill now before congress.' But not out of sympathy for black people who produce its profits. 'Although Chase refused to discuss the move, US bankers in-

terpreted it as a sign that the bank now believes political issues have become so fused with economic ones that the risk of future lending to South Africa outweighs potential profits.'

Chase Manhattan moved out, at least temporarily, not because of humanitarian motives, but because of a fear for its profits. Fear dictated by the huge mobilisations of black people over the last year and the clear signs that the future stability of the Apartheid regime is at risk. As ever, it is the company balance sheet, and

not the human considerations which determined this decision.

It is profit that is also the reason for the Senate and Reagan 'sanctions'. The measures are designed as a political signal to the South African government — and a way of heading off internal opposition within the US. They say 'we wholeheartedly support your government but we fear you are incapable of defending it. Please introduce the cosmetic reforms which we believe necessary to save your racist regime — and our profits.'

WITH AS much good grace as he could muster President Reagan last week called in the media to witness him signing a package of 'sanctions' against South Africa. It was the only step he could take to stave off humiliation in the US Senate the next day.

But this step by Reagan is a pure fake measure. The *Daily Telegraph* summed it up bluntly. 'The measures will have little economic effect'.

The case of computer exports — increasingly used by South Africa's sophisticated security services — illustrates this.

If US capitalism really wanted to prevent the South African security forces gaining access to computer technology it could easily do so — for it has been running an extremely powerful campaign to prevent a rather different country gaining access to computers — namely the USSR. Not only have a series of heavily restrictive laws been imposed on US exporters,

but the US export department has used its very heavy political weight to force West European

By Alan Freeman

governments to impose the same restrictions on their own exporters. The United States has imposed its own law on the rest of the western world, as aggrieved European business has vociferously pointed out.

Nor is this law imposed with mild slaps on the wrist, or a fine and a caution. On 8 August, for example, two Directors of London-based company Wentwood Systems — Graham Herbert and Michael Molloy — were convicted on seven charges



A film of struggle

SOCIALISTS ARE looking for material to bring alive the struggle in South Africa for the labour movement in Britain. WENDY PEARSON reviews the film *The Anvil and the Hammer*, distributed by the International Defence and Aid Fund.

'SOUTH AFRICA is at the moment in the throes of a deep political crisis. Precisely everything they do — be it so-called constitutional reforms, be it so-called repeal of the sex laws, be it a few crumbs thrown at the workers' tables — all these have met

militant resistance and rejection by the mass of the people.'

Although we might have been following the news coverage on South Africa in the British media, the militant resistance that Alfred Nzo, secretary general of the

ANC, speaks of will become substantially clearer to us through viewing the film *The Anvil and the Hammer*. Combining a fine array of speakers and commentators with plenty of action footage of demonstrations and police-cum-army attacks, the film provides us with an inside look at the current situation in South Africa.

The message of the film is very positive: despite the horrific shows of brute force on the part of the South African regime the masses continue to defy it.

Whitewash

Speakers in the film include the Rev Alan Boesak who states 'I will never have respect for a government that wants to whitewash cold-blooded murderers' — possibly referring to the judicial enquiry which whitewashed the killing of demonstrators on the 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre this year.

The inaugural meeting of the UDF in August 1983, filmed by an amateur photographer, adds strongly to the authority of the material and gives valuable insight into the conference. There are excerpts from speeches by Archie Gumede, Frank Chihane (President and Vice President of the UDF), and Frances Baard from the Federation of South African Women —

who called on political prisoners to 'come out' of the confinement and in a moving way thanked them.

The President of the General and Allied Workers Union draws a vivid picture of the life of the workers of South Africa, and a speaker from the Release Mandela Committee calls on the UDF to be 'action orientated', and the people to 'energise' themselves.

From a racist regime which has had a great deal of coverage in our media lately there are only two brief statements — by cabinet ministers and by Botha in Parliament. Also, there is interesting footage with stooge Sonny Leon — the so called 'coloured' Labour Party leader. He is seen trying to convince a meeting that 'boycotting (the elections) will get you nothing'. When opposition to him becomes vocal the police move in with their whips.

British

To the British viewer, the speakers might be unknown, and more introductions could have been used — for example Billy Nair from the National Indian Congress was recently released after 20 years on Robben Island. We should also not expect historical background or statistics from the film. It aims rather to give the feeling of what is happening in South Africa, the bat-

tleground and the ideas.

There are significant insights such as the two plain clothes Security Branch men who look for their specific target, an older man, and then at the agreed moment remove him to their car.

Rhetoric

The film both opens and closes with quotations from Nelson Mandela. His well known words 'between the anvil of united mass action and the hammer of the armed struggle we shall crush apartheid' can be read at the outset of the film. And the film concludes with his daughter Zinzi reading his statement at the Jabulani stadium in February this year.

Although the film might be said to contain a bit too much political rhetoric, it can be used to good effect within the black and labour movements in building mass action against apartheid.

● *The Anvil and the Hammer: 1985, Colour 40 mins.*

Available on video or 16mm from International Defence and Aid Fund, Publications Dept; Canon Collins House, 64 Essex Rd, London N1 8LR. Phone 01-359 9181.

East London supporters of Socialist Action are placing a copy of this film on loan to black, labour movement and solidarity organisations. Contact PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

The Wendy Savage Support Campaign

Dear Supporters

AS YOU will have seen from the press Wendy Savage has now been to the High Court to ask them to re-instate her, and look into the case during the holiday period.

Unfortunately, her case came before one of the most conservative of High Court judges and he took the view that, as obstetrics was so difficult to understand and would be much better if Mrs Savage's case was judged by her own profession.

An interesting argument because learned judges do not appear to demonstrate any reluctance, or express any difficulty in judging architects, builders, or people accused in extremely complex fraud and embezzlement cases. Yet obstetrics, it appears, is much too difficult to understand! (Perhaps if the judge had been a woman there would have been less difficulty).

The judge stressed very heavily that by not re-instating Mrs Savage there should be no implication that she was incompetent, but he felt that he was in a dilemma. If she was incompetent then she could be a risk to her patients and he could be shown to be in error in over-ruling the Health Authority.

He did not consider the implications of judging someone ahead of the enquiry (by suspending her) and therefore depriving women of a superb obstetrician. In other words, the judge played safe and made it clear that the enquiry should get a move on and should there be a huge delay (he suggested a year would be a huge delay) then Mrs Savage could appeal to the court again.

Her solicitor has interpreted this statement as an invitation to go back within a few months should the enquiry not proceed quickly.

Best Wishes.
Beverly Ann Beech
Hon Chair

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THE STRUGGLE in South Africa is developing almost exclusively under democratic slogans and demands: one person one vote, the right to citizenship, the formation of trade unions, struggles over wages and conditions, the destruction of the apartheid state.

This struggle simultaneously involves the creation of mass organisations of the black working class — above all today the black trade unions, but also with a potential for huge mass organisation in the black townships.

But what is the relation between democratic demands, mass organisation, and the struggle for socialism? **DICK CARTER** looks at some developments of Marxist positions on these questions.

One of the most serious errors which exists on the Marxist left in Britain is to consider that a democratic slogan or demand is a 'second best' issue. That the really key slogans are economic — for the nationalisation of the 200 monopolies, for wage increases etc. That a specific slogan or demand for democratic political rights is somehow not 'advanced'. Without correcting this view the British left will be quite unable to understand the dynamic of the South African revolution as it unfolds.

This drastic underestimation, and misunderstanding, of the struggle for democratic demands is part of an error termed by Lenin *economism*. It is a view that fails to see that the decisive question in any great class struggle is politics.

In Lenin's words, 'Politics must take precedence over economics. To argue otherwise is to forget the ABC of Marxism.' Democratic demands — one person one vote, a constituent assembly, the right to form trade unions — are precisely crucial political demands.

Democratic political demands are not simply vital in themselves, in regard to the working class. They are also in particular the key demands for creating the social alliances without which the working class cannot be victorious.

Trotsky outlined this point with great clarity in regard to Spain, for example, in the 1930s. He dealt with the issue in relation to the decisive alliance for the working class in that country, that with the peasantry, and in regard to students.

Students

Trotsky wrote in his *Tasks of the Spanish Communists*: 'The fact that the workers demonstrated with the students is the first step, though still an insufficient and hesitant one, on the proletarian vanguard's road of struggle towards revolutionary hegemony.'

'Taking this road presupposes that the communists will struggle resolutely, audaciously, and energetically for democratic slogans. Not to understand this would be to commit the greatest sectarian mistake.'

'At the present stage of the revolution, the proletariat distinguishes itself in the field of political slogans from all the "leftist" petty bourgeois groupings not by rejecting democracy (as the anarchists and syndicalists do) but by struggling resolutely and openly for it, at the same time mercilessly denouncing the hesitations of the petty bourgeoisie.'

Trotsky outlined that this decisive role of democratic demands was posed not just for a bourgeois but for a socialist revolution: 'By advancing democratic slogans, the proletariat is not in any way suggesting that Spain is headed towards a bourgeois revolution. Only barren pedants full of pat, ready-made formulas could pose the question this way. Spain has left the stage of bourgeois revolution far behind.'

'If the revolutionary crisis is transformed into a revolution, it will inevitably pass beyond bourgeois limits, and in the event of victory the

Democratic demands



Soweto students demonstration in 1977

and working class power

power will have to come into the hands of the proletariat.

'But in this epoch, the proletariat can lead the revolution — that is group the broadest masses of the workers and oppressed around itself and become their leader — only on the condition that it now unreservedly puts forth all the democratic demands, in conjunction with its own class demands.'

Advancing the struggle for democratic demands would not lessen, but would deepen, the working class's clash with the bourgeoisie — because the bourgeoisie itself refused to fight for thorough going democratic demands.

Trotsky wrote: 'Needless to say, democratic slogans under no circumstances have as their object drawing the proletariat closer to the republican bourgeoisie. On the contrary they create the basis for a victorious struggle against the leftist bourgeoisie, making it possible to disclose its anti-democratic character at every step.'

'The more courageously, resolutely, and implacably the proletarian vanguard fights for democratic slogans, the sooner it will win over the masses and undermine the support for the bourgeois republicans and socialist reformists.'

Struggle

Under conditions of suppression, elimination, or lack of democracy — as in South Africa — it is precisely democratic slogans that lead towards, and provide the framework of, the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat. As Trotsky wrote in his *The Revolution in Spain* for example:

'To counterpose the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the problems and slogans of revolutionary democracy (for a republic, for an agrarian revolution, for the separation of church and state, the confiscation of church properties, national self-determination, a revolutionary constituent assembly) would be the most sterile and miserable doctrinarianism ...'

'To contrast the bare slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat to the historically determined tasks that are now impelling the masses towards the

road of insurrection would be to replace the Marxist conception of social revolution with Bakunin's. This would be the surest way to ruin the revolution.'

The formation of the highest forms of workers organisation — workers councils or soviets — would itself unfold on the basis of the struggle for democratic demands. In Trotsky's view on Spain:

'The creation of workers' juntas (soviets) is undoubtedly the principal task of the day. But it is absurd to counterpose the juntas to democratic slogans.'

'The struggle against the privileges of the church, the abuses of the democratic orders and monasteries — a purely democratic struggle — produced a mass explosion in May that created favourable conditions for the election of workers' deputies (to workers councils); unfortunately, these conditions were allowed to slip away.'

The reality that soviets are not counterposed to democratic slogans — but on the contrary are developed in the fight for them — was posed particularly clearly for Trotsky in relation to the highest form of bourgeois democratic representative organisation: a constituent assembly (parliament) to draw up the constitution of a state elected on the basis of one person one vote. Trotsky wrote in his *Soviets and the Constituent Cortes*:

'But if the Cortes (parliament) is to be boycotted, then in the name of what? In the name of soviets? In my opinion it would be wrong to pose the question that way.'

'The masses of the town and countryside can be united at the present time only under democratic slogans. These include the election of a constituent Cortes on the basis of universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage ...'

'Soviets are as yet nonexistent. The ... workers — not to speak of the peasants — do not know what soviets are; at any rate not from their own experiences. Nevertheless, the struggle around the Cortes in the coming period will constitute the whole political life of the country.'

'To counterpose the slogan of soviets, under these circumstances, to the slogan of the Cortes (parliament), would be incorrect. On the other hand, it will obviously be possible to build soviets in the near future only by

mobilising the masses on the basis of democratic slogans.

'This means: to prevent the monarchy from convening a false, deceptive, conservative Cortes; to assure the convocation of a democratic constituent Cortes; and so that this Cortes can give land to the peasants, and do many other things, workers', soldiers', and peasants' soviets must be created to fortify the positions of the toiling masses.'

The struggle around democratic slogans continues right to the point where the workers and their allies were so organised that they could directly struggle for proletarian power — something that would occur at the end of the entire process not its beginning. It would occur through the struggle for democratic slogans. As Trotsky wrote: 'At one of the later stages — we do not know when — the juntas, as organs of the power of institutions of the proletariat, will find themselves opposed to the democratic institutions of the bourgeoisie. Only then will the last hour of bourgeois democracy have struck.'

Mass

To see a combination of a struggle taking place around democratic demands, and the creation of mass organisations of the working class, is therefore in no sense unusual. On the contrary it is precisely the road to working class power under conditions of a savagely repressive regime as in South Africa.

While the black South African working class has not yet reached anything like the peak of organisation in the Spanish revolutions of the 1930s nevertheless the dynamic of its development — with the combination of the fight for democratic demands and the creation of mass organisation — is totally clear.

Already in the 1920s the first mass black working class organisation was created in South Africa with the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU). This reached a peak membership of 200,000 in 1928. Black trade union membership then suffered a severe setback during the 1930s but rose again sharply amid the strike wave of World War II. By 1945, 40 per cent of all African workers in commerce and manufacturing were unionised.

Other, higher, forms of representative political organisation have also been developed or projected in South Africa — in addition to the trade unions and political parties.

In March 1961, following the mass upsurge and repression which followed the Sharpeville massacre, the Pietermaritzburg conference, called as a 'National Convention representing all the people of South Africa' took place. This demanded the convening of a democratically elected non-racial national convention for the purpose of drawing up a new constitution — in effect a Constituent Assembly. A general strike called the ANC to fight for this demand, however failed amid savage repression by the South African regime.

In 1976 a higher development took place in Soweto with the formation of first the Soweto Representative Council (SSRC) and then the Committee of Ten.

The SSRC was formed on August 1976 directly out of the mass schools initiated revolt which had started on 17 May. It was based on the election of two delegates from each school. Similar, less authoritative councils were formed in other black townships — Katlehong, Randfontein, Mamelodi, Ateridgeville/Saulsville, Sibas, Seshego, Port Elizabeth, the Vaal Triangle townships and elsewhere.

Working with black trade union leaders, notably Drake Koka, the SSRC gained the authority to issue calls for general strikes — notably the general strike of 500,000 black workers in the Johannesburg area on 13-15 September 1976.

Strike

The general strike in Johannesburg was accompanied by a strike of 250,000 workers in Cape Town on 15 September 1976, and by smaller one day strikes in wide parts of Johannesburg and Cape areas later in September.

The SSRC also called for the establishment of a more authoritative black elected body. In June 1977 the SSRC secured, with other organisations, the establishment of the Committee of Ten based on prominent organisations and individuals in Soweto. This issued a plan for the creation of a democratically elected council in Soweto, and unambiguously rejected any contact with 'imposed appointees of the central government.'

The Committee of Ten rejected the racist regime's proposal to establish a new Community Council in Soweto subject to government supervision and veto. It instead demanded free elections to a council that would have final authority over all of Soweto's internal affairs — including legislation, taxation, education and the police.

Undoubtedly a major part of the Committee saw the proposed council as an alternative to mass mobilisation and organisation. But nevertheless the fundamental issue posed — the necessity of mass democratic elected organisations — was entirely correct and vital.

The struggle in South Africa therefore shows a perfectly coherent and logical historical development. It develops under the slogans of democracy. This struggle in turn gives rise to mass black working class organisation and demands for higher forms of bourgeois representative democracy — notably the demand for a constituent assembly. Out of this struggle in turn mass development towards workers councils, soviets and similar organisations tend to grow — although these to reach fruition still demand a higher level of struggle even than we are seeing in South Africa today.

In taking as its axis the fight for democratic demands the struggle in South Africa is not choosing a 'second class' route. On the contrary it is taking the most historically powerful path of development that could possibly be imagined.

The specific form of struggle cannot possibly be seen in advance. But its general line of development is clear.

Notts breakaway loses steam

ROY LYNK'S campaign to split the NUM is running into serious trouble. The ballot on the breakaway, once promised for September, has been postponed with no new date yet announced.

MINERS at Blidworth pit this week gave a sharp rebuff to Roy Lynk's attempt to split the NUM.

When Arthur Scargill attempted to speak at Blidworth a few weeks ago, he was kept out of the miners welfare by the branch committee and forced to speak in the car park. But at this week's Blidworth NUM branch meeting a vote of no confidence in the branch committee was carried.

HELEN ARTHUR reports from Nottingham.

The resolution was voted for both by miners



who had been on strike in 1984-85 and by those who had worked during the strike. The scab officials responded by declaring that no vote, and no ballot, would prevent them splitting from the NUM, even as a minority.

This is just one example of the way the situation is now shaping up in Notts — and of the methods used by the two sides.

Peter Heathfield said at the outset that the NUM would fight on policies and would avoid the personal vilification typical of Lynk. In contrast to the national union's campaign Lynk has launched a rash of billboard posters — estimated cost £60,000 — showing a caricature of Scargill saying 'Lepers! Outcasts! Lend me your votes!' This is coupled with an appeal to vote 'yes' to support 'your Notts area union'.

Fringe

Lynk has also released a record with a song describing Scargill as a liar and a deceiver. Many Notts miners see this as childish and ridiculous, and it has done the breakaway campaign more harm than good.

Lynk's case suffered a further blow when leading

superscab Ken Foulstone was jailed for burglary. This contrasted rather well with Lynk's boasts of defending law and order. This week documents have also been disclosed by *Pit-watch* creating rumours of financial malpractice by Lynk and misuse of the special Notts miners pension fund.

Worse still for the splitters even the government's trade union certification officer has been unable to give them the go-ahead — because of their blatant collaboration with Coal Board management. This is why the promised September date for the ballot has not materialised.

Ideas

'I think we're really going to sink the Lynk now,' Paul Galloway of Thoresby pit told us. 'His campaign is falling on stony ground. The longer he delays the ballot, the more credibility they lose. The Notts men are beginning to realise what he is all about, and it seems he's only got his own loyalists, the real superscabs.'

Paul also had some comments on the strikers' campaign. 'Since a meeting with Scargill at Clipstone was cancelled because of the very bad organisation, some backslides have been kicked. There has been quite a movement for meetings with national officials

speaking.'

Eighty five miners in Mansfield Woodhouse recently heard national officials speak alongside Ken Richards — who resigned as President of South Derbyshire when that area executive voted to start negotiations with Lynk. Richards has joined the national union's campaign although he worked throughout the strike.

Own

The NUM is now organising for a massive rally in Mansfield Leisure Centre on 12 October, to which Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis have been invited. Current reports indicate that Willis and Kinnock have agreed to attend and add their voices to the defence of a unified NUM.

Paul Galloway summed up the turnaround in Notts. 'The Notts miners are starting to see that they've locked themselves in a golden prison. Recent disclosures of NCB plans to revive the bonus scheme on a pit-by-pit basis are showing Notts miners that they miscalculated last year when they thought that their jobs and high earnings were safe.'

'As the Tories now raise their axe over Notts' head, miners have begun to see more clearly the need for one national union to defend the interests of the whole workforce.'

AUEW campaign begins

SHOP STEWARDS in South Manchester AUEW met at their quarterly meeting last Thursday, just one week after the AUEW executive and TUC general council had concluded their congress deal. Inevitably, the meeting was dominated by the cash-for-ballots issue.

The stewards decided unanimously to launch 'the most intense campaign for a 'no' vote in the November ballot. The meeting adopted a resolution which 'recognised that acceptance of state funding of the unions is the thin edge of the wedge to state control of the unions'.

A number of stewards pointed out that such state control had already started with rule changes that had been adopted by the union in May to ensure compliance with Tory anti-union legislation.

And in July, the AUEW executive council had sent out a now-infamous circular advising

shop stewards how to comply with the 1984 Trade Union Act. Such a storm of rank and file protest greeted the circular that general secretary Gavin Laird had been forced to retreat.

In the August issue of the union's journal, Laird went into print to explain that the executive council were *not* insisting on such ballots in strict conformity with the law, and that strike pay would not be withheld 'because members did not conform to Employment Act'.

The shop stewards' quarterly meeting resolved to build on that sentiment by:

- Produce a leaflet for mass distribution and a poster for display in the factories along the theme of 'keep the state out of the AUEW — keep the AUEW in the TUC'

- Organise a public rally with national labour movement speakers to help promote the campaign for a 'no' vote

- Ensure that mass meetings and factory-gate meetings are held on the subject

- Set up a special campaign committee, involving shop stewards and other members 'to ensure the most effective implementation of the resolution'.

Militant shop stewards are also pushing for a special divisional shop stewards meeting in work time to ensure that the campaign is spread to other districts.

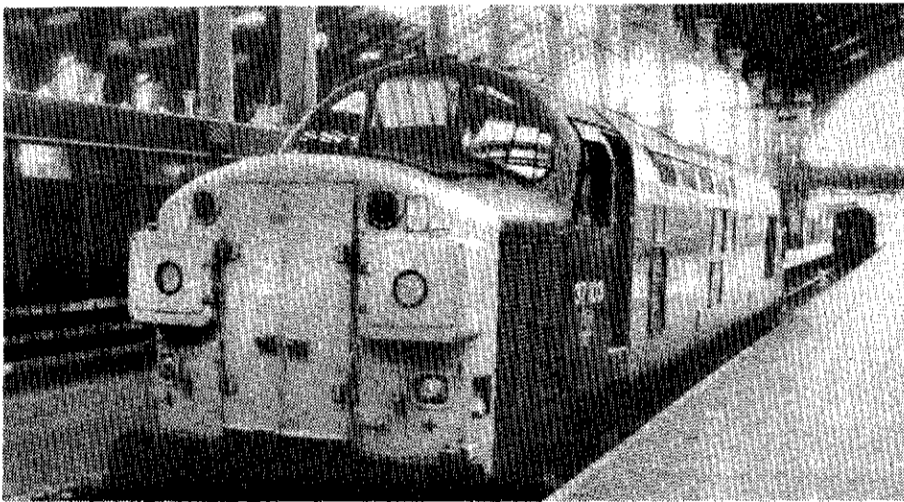


Photo: GM COOKSON

NUR: stop the retreat

JIMMY KNAPP got what he wanted out of the NUR Special General Meeting called on 12 September. The conference was called to decide the union's reaction to the 'no' vote in the ballot on industrial action to fight driver only operation (DOO).

Eighteen out of nineteen members of the union's NEC voted for the resolution put to conference instructing the union leadership to start negotiations with British Rail on DOO. Only 11 out of 77 delegates voted against the resolution.

ROSE KNIGHT reports for Socialist Action.

DESPITE the clear vote many delegates were unhappy with the resolution, because it contained no reference to the reinstatement of the guards sacked during the dispute. Knapp covered for this by saying that the NEC were already abiding by the Rail Federation recommendation that no agreements would be reached until all those sacked had been reinstated.

The debate on the resolution revealed that this was a cover-up. Jim Stevenson, moving an amendment from Kings Cross, argued that the sacked guards should be reinstated *before* any negotiations on driver only operation took place. This aimed to stop British Rail using them as hostages to force union concessions on productivity in general.

Knapp wanted to use the sacked men as a bargaining counter. He knows the NEC will lose face if it doesn't get reinstatement. But as Dave Davies from Old Oak Common said, the resolution which was passed 'capitulated to the worst form of blackmail'.

Delegates also criticised the union's decision to use ballots before in-

dustrial action. This policy was adopted at this year's AGM by a narrow majority of four. Jim McGory, from Glasgow no. 6 branch, argued that ballots have nothing to do with making the union more democratic, but gave management the right to interfere in the union.

He argued that because the NEC had accepted ballots as the only basis for action, guards had been sacked for over a month and the union 'had not fired one shot in anger.'

By deciding to ballot before industrial action, the NUR became the first major industrial union, apart from the AUEW, to put itself clearly within the framework of the Tory anti-union laws.

But this did not stop British Rail sacking, suspending and intimidating rail workers before the ballot had taken place. It won't stop victimisations either, as the Glasgow guards are finding out. Some sacked guards have had letters from management saying they may be re-employed, but shop stewards and strike leaders have not had them. Nor, as Knapp claimed, was the ballot any protection against fines or sequestration of funds.

Clearly what the ballot did do was stop the campaign for action to defend guards jobs before it really developed. Grade by grade balloting has let British Rail pick off each grade one by one. It gives impetus to the sectionalism which has plagued the rail industry, directly undermining a collective approach. It backs up the false notion that it is up to the individual railworker, or the grade to which he or she belongs, to fight to defend jobs.

British Rail want an undertaking from the union to discuss and negotiate freely on future productivity proposals before they will reinstate the sacked guards. The NEC resolution didn't contain this concession — which would totally overturn union policy. However, as many delegates realised, there is a danger that the NEC may do this if reinstatement is used by British Rail as a bargaining counter.

Delegates picked out the weakness of the resolution and yet by a big majority still voted for it. No real alternative was put forward.

Today the priority is to campaign in the union and the labour movement for immediate reinstatement of the sacked guards. Rail Federation policy is non-cooperation with the implementation of driver only operation until the guards are reinstated. A campaign must start in the NUR to overturn resolution 10, which binds the union to calling a ballot before industrial action.

Socialist Worker slanders Liverpool Black Caucus

THIS WEEK'S *Socialist Worker* joins the *Militant* in a vicious campaign of lies and insults against Liverpool's black community.

In a city with the oldest black community in Western Europe, and where eight per cent of the population is black, less than 300 blacks are employed by Liverpool city council in its 30,000 strong workforce.

The *Militant* dominated Labour council have stubbornly refused to positively discriminate in favour of blacks and so redress this long history of structural racism.

The *Militant* led Liverpool District Labour Party have conducted a campaign of lies and insults against the Black Caucus which black people in Liverpool see as being thoroughly racist.

Militant have called the Black Caucus 'unrepresentative' and accused members of being 'pimps and drug pushers'. They have also disbanded the city Race Relations Committee.

By John Nolan

Now *Socialist Worker* have joined in the attack with an article calling the Black Caucus 'Kinnock's vultures' — and stating

that they are more vicious than Labour's right wing because of their stand in the Sam Bond issue.

In addition to the politics of the *Socialist Worker* has gone on to state a series of outright lies about the Black Caucus's actions on a recent march against Tory social security cuts.

Socialist Worker lie number 1: the Black Caucus threatened to 'disrupt the march' and force it to be re-routed. The truth: the organisers — the Merseyside Unemployed Centre — agreed the black caucus's participation. They stuck strictly to march discipline. The police re-routed the march.

Socialist Worker lie number 2: The Black Caucus 'called their own march'. The truth: the march organisers agreed a

pre-arranged feeder march from Toxteth in support of the unemployed. This included Black Caucus supporters, plus Liverpool NALGO and Granby (Toxteth) Labour Party behind their own banners.

Lie number 3: *Socialist Worker* agreed that there was no violence or disruption but said 'threats of violence' forced Labour Party members to withdraw. The truth: the *Militant* dominated District Labour Party tried to pull all Labour Parties off the march. Many refused — including the North West Region women's sections.

Lie number 4: Eric Heffer was 'hauled off the platform'. The truth: Eric Heffer walked off when heckled. A Black Caucus speaker explained that when meeting the Black Caucus Heffer had said that as a Liverpool MP the Bond affair was 'none of his business.'

Class

Lie number 5: according to *Socialist Worker* those opposed to *Militant* 'never vented their wrath against the Liberals'. The

truth: the trade unions and Labour Parties took a stand against the Liberal council including long strikes in defence of social services and low paid typists — which NALGO won!

The Black Caucus speaker said Liverpool blacks totally support the city council's stand against Thatcher and the government but they would not have leaders imposed on them from outside.

It is incredible that such lies as in the latest *Socialist Worker* can come from the founders of the Anti-Nazi League. The only explanation is their current orientation to *Militant*. Their opposition to positive discrimination and black self-organisation, and their isolation from the Labour Party and most of Merseyside labour movement, has led *Socialist Worker* to line up with a vicious long term campaign being carried out by *Militant* against the representatives of Liverpool's black community. They have allied with a campaign and policy which has perpetuated racism in Liverpool.

No retreat on amnesty!



Photo: RAISSA PAGE (Format)

THE KEY debate at Labour Party conference will be on the miners. The Communist Party's industrial organiser Pete Carter has now joined a chorus of voices demanding that the movement backs down from support for the NUM and for amnesty.

VALÉRIE COULTAS looks at why the Labour Party conference must give total support to amnesty and the resolution of the NUM.

NEIL KINNOCK was relying on the TUC to reject the NUM's motion calling for the next Labour government to review all

cases of jailed miners, reinstate all sacked miners, and reimburse the fines incurred by the NUM during the strike. But the TUC

Labour government will be returned if Thatcher is defeated at the next general election.

Two key arguments will be put up against the NUM position. The first is that some of the miners in jail are criminals. Pete Carter of the CP denounces the NUM for referring to those in prison as 'political prisoners'. While some miners should be released others should be left in jail according to Judge Carter!

Jobs

In reality every miner, or miners wife, arrested during the strike was carrying out NUM policy to fight for jobs. They were implementing TUC decisions in refusing to bow to a High Court ruling that outlawed picketing. The miners were treated as criminals because every time they tried to picket, the forces of the state were mobilised against them.

Contrary to what Willis argued at the TUC about 'obeying the law' you can't resist Margaret Thatcher if you obey the law because she is precisely making all forms of effective resistance illegal.

The second argument against the resolution will be that the demand for amnesty will damage Labour's chances of being re-elected. One of the members of the miners' executive — Dennis Murphy of the Northumberland NUM — has succumbed to the pressure of this argument and is reported as thinking the NUM should withdraw its resolution. Pete Carter now believes the 'NUM should reconsider the potential damage of pressing this (resolution's) approach.

Votes

This argument, that identification with the NUM's struggle for jobs will lose Labour votes, is wrong to the core. First it is Labour's duty to support the jailed and victimised miners even if it did lose votes. But secondly Carter's argument is false even in purely electoral terms.

Labour's vote actually went up during the middle of the miners' strike. It went down when Kinno

ck began to stab the miners in the back.

The idea that 'radicalism' by Labour loses votes is just false. The largest vote the Labour Party ever won was in 1945 when it had a manifesto which seemed to most people extremely radical. Labour won in 1974 — when it had the most left wing manifesto since 1945.

To suggest that in Thatcher's Britain, with the SDP stealing the clothes of Labour's right wing, there is any advantage in Labour dropping radical policies, and its stance of support for the miners, makes no sense at all even in the crudest electoral terms.

Labour loses working people's votes because it attacks on working people and their living standards, not because it makes radical commitments and sticks to them.

After the NUM's resolution passed at the TUC conference Kinno

ck just reinforces the right wing's argument. He portrays the miners' case as 'moral blackmail'.

How low can the Communist Party stoop? The most elementary concepts of class struggle seem now to have disappeared even from its vocabulary. Delegates at the Labour Party conference are thankfully unlikely to heed Carter's advice — although the trade union leaders who voted for the NUM at the TUC are under intense pressure from Kinno

ck. A key problem that Labour Party activists face is that even if the resolution is passed then Kinno

EIGHTY ONE Labour Councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool now face surcharge and disqualification from office because of their refusal to implement Tory cuts in local services imposed by the 1984 Rates Act. Jack Cunningham, Shadow Environment Secretary, is annoyed by their stand and has urged them to comply with the Tories legislation and 'get off the agenda'.

This runs directly counter to the mandate given to the Party leadership at last year's Labour Party conference. It is vital that this year's conference backs those councillors standing up for local services and pledges a Labour government, if the court appeals are unsuccessful, to lift the bans and surcharges immediately they come to power. Another repeat of Clay Cross — where former Labour ministers now in the SDP — betrayed their comrades and refused to lift their fines — cannot be allowed to occur. GREG TUCKER looks at the situation in Lambeth



Ted Knight

Tories surcharge councillors

ALL 32 LAMBETH councillors have received notices saying that they have been surcharged. This means collectively they have to pay £127,000 and they are barred from office for five years.

They now have 28 days to appeal to the High Court against this ruling. Following any such ruling they could appeal to a higher court.

Ted Knight, attending a press conference just after the letters had been received, pointed out that job losses in Lambeth would have reached a

pression. We will resist this major constitutional threat and prevent any further step along the road to dictatorship.

Crime

figure of 1,500 if the terms laid down by the government had been accepted. 'Our crime is to fight for the resources necessary to provide a decent standard of living and meet the very severe needs of a section of the population which is disabled, young or elderly.' Accusing the government of demanding ballots in other situations he said the Tories were using the district auditor, 'an unelected, unaccountable figure', to change the control of the council without reference to the local electors. Making it illegal with the struggle of the miners against the Tories he said 'Like the miners we are victims of political op-

The cost of the court cases for Lambeth are expected to reach £100,000. Town Hall trade unions in Lambeth are preparing their response. On 16 October the Lambeth Joint Shop Stewards Committee is proposing a London-wide day of action. This will undoubtedly involve a strike call and a local march in Lambeth. A public meeting is planned with Tony Benn and Ann Lilburn in Lambeth town hall. Following this action is planned around the court cases themselves.

Send donations to: The Lambeth Fighting Fund c/o Campaigner S. Bunn, One, Trade Office, Lambeth Town Hall SW8 1RW. For speakers at meetings tel 274-7722 ext 2312.

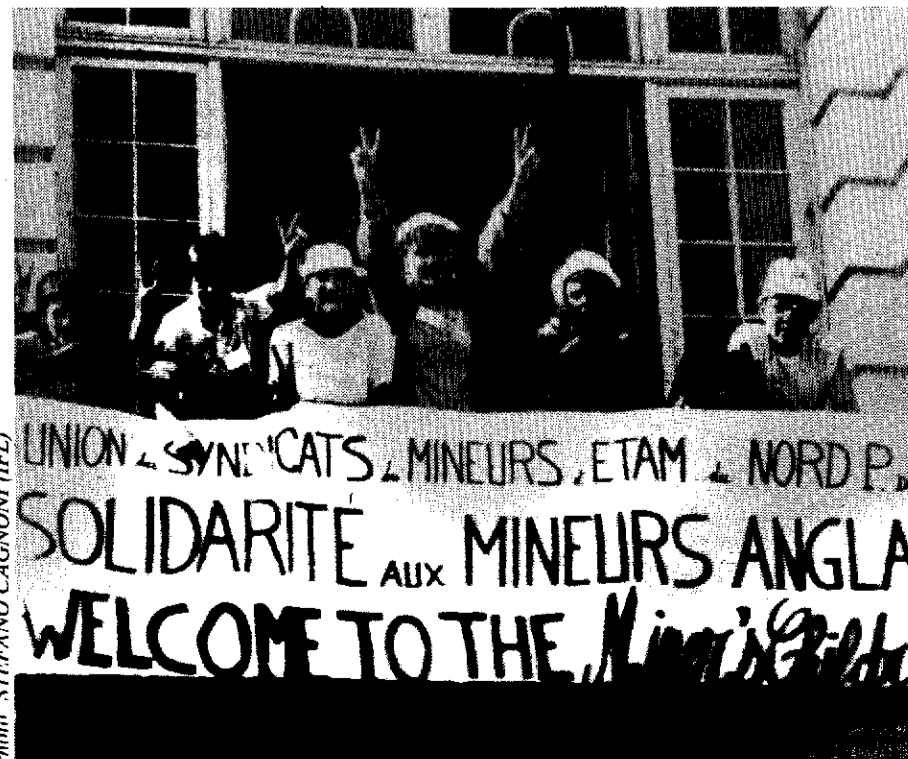


Photo: STEFANO CAGNONI (TEL)

CP deserts jailed miners

The front page of the CP weekly *Focus* last week had an article by Communist Party industrial organiser Peter Carter stating his views on the NUM's call for justice for jailed and victimised miners. It stated:

'The NUM leadership should seriously consider the potential damage of pressing this approach at the forthcoming Labour Party conference.

The moral blackmail involved in converting the widespread sympathy for the miners into support for a particular dogmatic stance does the greatest disservice to precisely those victimised during the dispute, whose

interests it claims to represent.'

Carter goes on: 'To classify all those imprisoned during the dispute as "political prisoners" implies that any action, however individualistic, irresponsible or destructive, is beyond criticism if perpetrated by members of a certain trade union.

'Similarly, the argument that a Labour government should reimburse their allies when they are in power embodies a concept of clientilism and patronage which should be anathema to anyone seriously committed to a democratic and socialist society.'

CAMPAIGN GROUP

Fringe Meeting at Labour Party Conference

Miners Amnesty Rally

12.30, Wednesday 25 September

speakers include:

Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, NUM executive member, and miners' wives from Kent, Lancashire and Derbyshire

For further details and venue contact Campaign Group of MPs, House of Commons, London SW1

A Socialist ACTION



Pretoria's fake reforms No change in South Africa

EARLY LAST WEEK the South African government announced it was to grant 'citizenship' to the inhabitants of the homelands. Two days later the influential president's council recommended scrapping South Africa's notorious pass laws. **ALAN FREEMAN** exposes the fraud behind the claims of reform.

ON THE day the press hailed the 'new reforms', the *Financial Times* reported five people shot dead in Capetown, 10 black students shot in Soweto, and the murder of an Azapo supporter in Durban. So much for reform.

Neither of the steps announced last week holds any real prospect of advance for black South Africans. They simply represent a policy shift in favour of a wing of South African business whose aim is to create a bigger black workforce closer to the industrial centres.

The new measures closely follow proposals from the Urban Foundation — an organisation set up in 1976 to study ways to head off a repetition of the Soweto uprising of that year. The steps have been long advocated by Harry Oppenheimer, the most authoritative spokesperson of South African business.

The aim of the changes is to create a larger black workforce in the townships for the benefit of South African business. Hence such magnanimous steps as guaranteeing that 'no one' will have to travel for more than an hour and

a half to get to work'.

Granting 'citizenship' to people forcibly deported to the 'homelands' does no more than recognise a state of affairs which already exists. As the regime's opponents were quick to point out, no benefit comes from granting a status which already belongs by right to every black person born in South Africa. It will not affect apartheid's racist laws — because these are drawn up so as to apply to people who are not white, whether or not they are citizens.

Freedom

Most important of all, black people will not receive the one citizenship right which would alter the situation: *the vote*. Black people will still be governed by white rulers they cannot remove. Oppenheimer has always been, and remains, opposed to one person, one vote in South Africa as does the South African government.

Pretoria's promise to abolish the pass laws has received wider publicity internationally, and created

bigger illusions in change. But black people are rightly cynical about government intentions.

The pass laws were suspended after Sharpeville but only in the context of massive repression, to be reaffirmed later when the resistance was crushed. This time, it is possible that the hated 'passes' will be phased out over a period of time — but their place in controlling the movement of black labour will be taken over by the so-called 'Book of Life'.

This is an identity document or internal passport which was introduced after Sharpeville and which the president's council proposed should be the basis of a new system of control. In theory, all people, black and white, have to carry them — but it is obvious that only black peoples' movements and rights will be restricted by them.

The new measures are not intended to ameliorate the situation of black people, but to put a cosmetic gloss over the explosive situation that black resistance to the apartheid regime has created. The aim is to appease American and British capital, fearful for the stability of their profits and the Pretoria government.

Botha's measures are no change for South Africa's blacks.

● *Reagan's fake sanctions: see page 8.*



Defend Liverpool!

FROM NEXT Monday week 30,000 council employees in Liverpool could be on all-out indefinite strike action. The Liverpool council joint shop stewards committee has called for this action in the light of threats of sackings and redundancy posed by the huge cuts in spending dictated by the Tory Rates Act. Mass meetings will take place of all Liverpool council unions to decide whether to support this call. VALERIE COULTAS reports.

THE *Militant*-dominated Labour council in Liverpool, with the full support of the JSSC, has created over 2000 new jobs and built 3,500 new houses since coming to office in 1983. Despite threats of 'illegality' Labour won an increased majority in the 1984 council elections and had a clear mandate to continue improving services.

But since 1979 the Tory government has taken away £350 million in rate support grant from Liverpool — some of it because the council has refused to increase rates by more than the rate of inflation. If Liverpool had obeyed government targets it would have had to increase rates by 100 per cent and sack 6000 workers.

Liverpool has refused to do this and gone into

£117 million deficit. Councillors have also been surcharged for setting an 'illegal rate'.

Last week Liverpool council's industrial and public relations committee decided that from 18 December it would be 'unable to honour contracts of employment' because of lack of funds. This galvanised the trade unions into action and as the full council meeting was about to take place on Monday they barricaded the town hall and stopped the redundancy notices being issued.

'As far as we are concerned the council have a financial problem because of the government's policies — which are part of their attack on local services and local democracy', explained

Bob Blundell of Liverpool NALGO.

'We are not prepared to accept redundancy notices and this is why we have voted to call the entire workforce out on strike to demand the Tories reverse the cuts,' he continued.

The council has a legal obligation to pay its workforce. If Liverpool promised not to sack the workers it would become

financially liable. Forty nine councillors would have to foot the bill for £5 million a week!

There will be an intense debate at each mass meeting in Liverpool this week about the tactics necessary to win this campaign against the Tories. The strongest unity needs to be forged between the 49 councillors and the Liverpool workforce if this battle is to be won.

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