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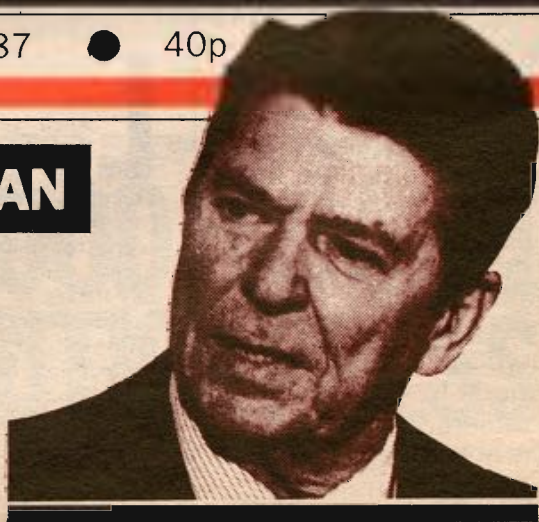
How to
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—see page 12

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REAGAN, THATCHER GUN FOR IRAN



OUR ENEMY IS AT HOME

While Reagan's gunboats continue to menace the Gulf, his defence secretary Caspar Weinberger says Iranians are 'foaming at the mouth'. That statement better describes the mood of the British and American media and governments, who have gone into an anti-Iranian fury to justify their aggression in the Gulf. Thatcher has written to world leaders demanding that Iran be isolated, and the British press has written to the public denouncing Iranians as blood-crazed fanatics. Everybody agrees that Iran is the new public enemy number one which threatens us all and has to be dealt with.

How are the US war ships (and the British ones just behind them) defending us by bullying a third world

country? What interest do we have in supporting reactionaries like Reagan and Thatcher in their witch-hunt against the Iranian people?

The US intervention in the Gulf is designed to reassert the imperial authority of the Western powers over the masses of the Middle East. It is an exercise in oppression which can only bring fresh bloodshed to the most war-torn place on Earth. If we lend our support to such Western piracy, we will not only be condemning more Middle Eastern people to suffer at the sharp end of an American sword. We will also be damaging our own ability to stand up to the authorities in Britain.

(Continues on page 2)

Enemy at home

(Continued from page 1)

The British authorities have a long history of stirring up hatred against foreigners to win support at home for Western aggression abroad. By creating panics about imaginary threats to the British way of life, Thatcher and Co seek to divert our anger against aliens, be they 'mad mullahs' in Iran or 'murdering bastards' in Ireland. Stoking up the fires of popular racism helps to take the heat off the British ruling class, and to tighten the government's grip over political ideas in Britain.

The past victims of Britain's vicious persecution include everybody from Tamil refugees to Argentinian footballers. Now the government and media have turned on Iranians, to prepare the way for any American or British attacks on targets in the Gulf.



MARADONA: BOOED BY RACISTS

We have nothing to gain from lining up with the Tories against Iran. Our real opponents are the Western rulers of the capitalist order, who seek to disguise the way their class dominates and exploits us by blaming foreigners for our problems. We should reject their racist propaganda, and take a stand alongside all the oppressed people whom they threaten or abuse. In the Gulf conflict today, that means defending the Iranians against Western aggression. The number one enemy of the British working class is not an Islamic republic on the other side of the world, but the ruling class whose representatives sit in Whitehall and whose allies are in Washington. Any blow against them in the Middle East must be a step forward for us all.

TRANSPORT WORKERS' DISPUTE

CLOSE DOWN LONDON



ON STRIKE AGAINST WAGE CUTS AND LONGER HOURS

London's big red buses came off the road on Monday when 14 000 bus workers took strike action against wage cuts and new work practices. There was solid support for the 24-hour stoppage, but scorn for the transport union's plans for a series of one-day strikes.

The Tories introduced legislation last year to promote competition between bus operators. London Buses Ltd wants to divide the fleet into profitable subsidiaries. When the first subsidiary came into operation in June, 180 workers at Norbiton garage found they were on new contracts which included a 30 per cent wage cut, seven hours' compulsory overtime, flexible working, shorter break times and less sick pay.

London Buses' managers are getting bolder. Since 1985 they have closed garages and cut more than 1000 jobs. Now they feel confident enough to threaten bus

workers with the sack, without compensation, if they refuse to accept new contracts.

Yet the response from the TGWU has been haphazard and half-hearted.

At the end of April, when London bus workers voted for strike action by a 9:1 majority, TGWU officials led them out on a one-day stoppage and then told them to keep quiet for the duration of the general election campaign. Instead of organising for action, union leaders took London Buses to court for breach of contract. They hired 'the best QCs in the industrial field', who admitted they didn't stand a chance. But the officials carried on talking about 'natural justice' until Mr Justice Hoffman gave his inevitable verdict in favour of management.

But the real damage was done outside the courtroom, as thousands of rank and file bus workers shrugged their shoulders in disgust at their union's lack of leadership. By this time the first mandate for

strike action had slipped. In July the union held another ballot for 'limited industrial action up to and including 24-hour strikes'. After three months of officially inspired disorganisation the majority in favour was reduced to 3:1, and only 2200 out of 16 000 members voted.

Last week the union called mass meetings to explain the current negotiating position and motivate Monday's 24-hour strike. A letter was mailed to each garage. Official notices failed to reach garages on time, so some crews were on the road when the meetings took place. Delegates from the London bus conference, the union's all-London committee, turned up without accurate information about the new contracts. They couldn't answer members' questions, but they were quick to point out that 'one-day strikes will be enough'. In other words, in light, do as we say, and we'll walk it.

But Monday's action didn't put the employers on the run. It was a

lacklustre affair, with small groups of pickets sitting in front of their own garages. At some garages, management 'organised' the strike by locking the gates and letting the strikers get on with it. It was hardly surprising that most workers treated the stoppage as a day's unpaid leave, after officials offered them a choice between staying at home or a spot of picketing. Those who did make the effort suffered further disappointment when they found that the strike call did not include craft section members, who voted in a separate ballot last Friday. All the officials wanted was a bargaining counter for talks which are due to recommence at Acas this week.

MISTAKE

But the union chiefs have not had it all their own way. On Monday, while union officials were telling bus workers to leave their picket lines and go home, militants on London Underground and Southern Region British Rail were taking action in support of the 24-hour strike. And although union officials have written off Norbiton garage as a lost cause, the drivers there have refused to accept a compromise offer from management. They are determined to stay out until they win, and neighbouring garages have taken solidarity action without waiting for official permission.

The will to fight is there. But activists must make better use of their opportunities.

In May militants from all sections of London Buses took the unprecedented step of coming together to form the garage alliance committee. But their failure to confront the union strategy handed the initiative back to the officials. We can't afford to repeat that mistake. Activists can regain ground by urging for all-out action across the entire London transport network. Bus, tube and rail activists must take on the task of convincing moderate workers that victory is possible, if the rank and file takes the lead and makes management's ear ring.

Andrew Calcutt

Respectable racism on the march

You don't have to wear big boots, have your hair shaved or cover your neck in tattoos to demonstrate your racist credentials — you could just as well be a besuited executive at the exclusive Liberty's department store in Regent Street, or you might be the proud owner of a modest semi in suburbia. Because these were the settings for racist attacks on black immigrants last week.

Immigration police carried out a dawn 'fishing raid' at Liberty's last week, netting 11 immigrant cleaners from Nigeria, Ghana, the Ivory Coast, Morocco and Colombia. One was released after producing a British passport, five students were charged with working without a permit and told they could stay in Britain so long as they never worked again; the rest were classified as 'illegal immigrants' and told to prepare for deportation.

FLAMES

Naran Patel lives in Colindale, a quiet suburb in outer London. Last week racists tried to burn down his house while his family were asleep. 'Someone pushed something through the letter-box...there were flames going up the doors almost to the ceiling.' The Patels were saved when quick-thinking neighbours raised the alarm.

Behind the elegant sophistication of Liberty's window display and the respectable veneer of Colindale's lace curtains, fishing raids are carried out by state police and

firebomb attacks are silently executed by suburban hogs. In Thatcher's Britain, racism is as respectable as pinstripes or patio doors.

Shoot-to-kill soldier 'not guilty'

UNARMED and with both hands raised in surrender, 28-year-old IRA volunteer Jim McKernan from West Belfast was shot in the back by a British soldier crouched 10 yards behind him with a high-velocity rifle. At the inquest into the killing last week the jury accepted the British Army lie that McKernan had been reaching for the pocket of his bomber jacket when the soldier opened fire believing that his life was threatened. Another shoot-to-kill cover-up entered the history books and another cold-blooded killer was free to walk the streets.

WITNESSED

McKernan was killed as he withdrew from a daring IRA gun attack on a joint RUC/British Army patrol in Andersonstown on 14 September 1986. It was a bright Sunday morning and there were plenty of people who witnessed how he died. The Army claimed McKernan was trying to escape, witnesses said he had

surrendered. The Army alleged he was reaching for a gun, but no gun was found on his body. The Army said the soldier shouted out the standard

warning: 'Stop, or I'll fire', passers-by said they heard nothing. The inquest called the killing 'justified'. We call it murder.

Occupation against Camden job cuts

Fifty workers from Camden's housing department occupied the council's housing department last week, in protest against their Labour employers' plans to sack a temporary employee who has been working in the unit since last September. Ruth Lawrence's contract expires this week. She is one of the 'temp' whose jobs have been targeted as part of the Labour council's scheme to save £12m. Anyone who has been in the employee redundancy pool for less than two years is liable for the chop.

But Lawrence's fellow Nalco members are not prepared to sit back and see her go. Last Friday they occupied the housing department to draw attention to her case, and to show the need for council workers to take direct action against the cuts. This sort of action needs to be coordinated in all councils, as Labour authorities cave in before the Tories' renewed attack on local government jobs and services. For the full picture and a way to hit back, turn to page 12.

Pandora Anderson

A SENSE OF PROPORTION

ARTHUR SCARGILL says that Eric Hammond of the electricians' union is a 'super scab' because of his fondness for no-strike deals. Hammond says that under Scargill's 'loony left' leadership the miners have become 'lions led by donkeys'. Yet these two sworn enemies, at opposite ends of the official labour movement spectrum, are among the most enthusiastic supporters of moves to make the Labour Party adopt the cause of proportional representation. The newfound common ground between Eric and Arthur indicates that there is no real left v right debate taking place among leading Labour supporters after the election. Instead, all sides agree that Labour's only hope of success lies through the back door of organisational manoeuvre rather than on the open field of political struggle.

Proportional representation is a system of electing MPs which establishes a more direct relationship between the total number of votes cast for a party, and the number of seats it wins. It has long been championed by the fast fading SDP/Liberal Alliance which saw PR as its best chance of gaining some governmental influence by cutting the Tory majority and hopefully creating a hung parliament. Now proportional representation is catching on among Labour members, who have submitted more motions on it to the party's September conference than on traditional issues like the NHS. This amounts to an admission on their part that, like the Alliance, Labour cannot beat the Tories in a political battle. The best it can hope for is the chance to trick its way back into the power game by moving the electoral goal posts.

The debate about proportional representation follows on from the arguments over Neil Kinnock's proposed one member, one vote system for selecting Labour candidates, which is intended to make Labour look more open and less left-wing. Kinnock's party can only offer one organisational reform after another to stop the rot. It has no policies to offer as an alternative to Thatcher.

The organisational approach to Labour's problems is a sign of the party's political bankruptcy. Yet it has been turned into a virtue by Labour MPs like Austin Mitchell, a leading advocate of reforming both the Labour Party machine and the British electoral system. Writing in Monday's *Guardian*, Mitchell observed that 'it would be wrong if all our efforts were to be devoted

to policy and principles.' He need not worry on that score. 'A leadership taking on its own followers,' concludes Mitchell, 'and showing them the facts of life, preferably by a public whipping or a punch on the nose, gathers support.' So, according to leading figures like Mitchell, the way to revitalise Labour is to forget about politics and concentrate on organisational measures to smash the left. This will no doubt find favour with the establishment and the media. But it is unlikely to convince many ordinary people that Labour has anything to offer.

What policy discussion there has been in Labour circles since the election has only exposed the fact that the party has not got one new idea. Instead, it has embarked on a headlong rush into Thatcher territory, echoing Tory themes about appealing to people as individual householders and shareholders. This week Michael Meacher MP, formerly a member of the hard left Campaign Group, produced a plan for making the trade unions more popular. It did not mention little details like fighting for jobs and wages. Meacher proposed that unions should offer their members assistance with car repairs and launch their own credit cards. But why should anybody support a half-baked version of the Tory Party when the real article is on offer? And why should workers join Meacher's type of union when the AA and Barclaycard are available? With their heads buried in constitutional textbooks, Labour spokesmen from left to right have no answer.

The Revolutionary Communist Party has always supported the demand for proportional representation as an extension of democracy. We are in favour of all such measures, because they help to clear the way for us to convince people that the problem is not a corrupt electoral system, but a social system based on class domination. For its leading Labour advocates, however, supporting proportional representation is not a step towards building an anti-capitalist movement. Rather, it is a signal that they have accepted a subordinate political position to the Tories, and are trying to make the best of a bad job by increasing their MPs through constitutional machination.

The only way we can take on the Tories today is by organising around a political programme which challenges all of their reactionary ideas. Labour's approach of concentrating on

organisational reforms while mimicking Thatcher's values can only help the Conservatives, by leaving them with no opposition on political issues and confirming the view that Thatcherite morality, economics and prejudices are common sense.

Our alternative to these games is the campaign to create a *Red Front* of anti-capitalists. It is fair enough to accept that we cannot beat the Tories overnight. But our response should be to maximise our political influence today, by fighting to raise a coherent working class voice on every issue and to change the climate of debate. As Labour gives up on political struggle, and moves further into the marshy middle ground which has swallowed up the Alliance, the need to build a *Red Front* which can take up that challenge becomes all the more pressing.

Panic in the city

THE way in which rumours of bad economic statistics caused a panic in the City of London showed up the myth that Britain is booming. It gave us a glimpse of what is to come, as the hype has to stop and the weakness of the British economy becomes clearer. The Tories boast that Britain has a faster economic growth rate than other Western powers. But it was significant that the bubble burst in the City while the stock markets in the USA and Japan continued upwards. Behind the paper prosperity created by credit and other incidental factors, British capitalism is in a far more parlous state than any of its rivals.

The coming economic crisis will dictate the pace of Tory attacks on the working class. It means that Thatcher will have to cut public spending more than she has done over the last eight years, in an effort to concentrate resources in the hands of the capitalist class. We are in for a rough ride. But if we prepare properly, we are also in with a better chance of cutting through the lies about 'popular capitalism', and popularising the need to overthrow this inefficient and crisis-ridden system.

We're all going on our summer holidays, so there will be no tns next week, but we'll be back on 28 August.

IRAN BOMB BLASTS Death of a fanatic DISCO GIRL

LONDON DAILY NEWS
THE LONDON
DAILY NEWS
MONDAY JULY 20 1987

Psychopaths of Islam



Kamikaze boats in Gulf skirmish

GUTTER PROPAGANDA ON GULF

'BLOOD-CRAZED' BRITISH PRESS

The *Sun* has not yet have paid to have its name painted on a mile pointed at Iran, as it did during Britain's war against the Axis five years ago. But the British press has already played an important part in preparing the way for any Western attack on Iranian targets in the Gulf. The *Sun*, the *Express*, and the *Mail* have been busy creating a public image of all things Iranian as 'fanatical', 'barbaric', 'terrorist' and generally in need of being annihilated.

Last week's bomb attacks on hotels in Tunisia, in which five British tourists were hurt, gave the gutter press a golden opportunity to blame 'Iranian terrorists' (*Mail*), and 'thugs loyal to Iran's fanatical leader Ayatollah Khomeini' (*Sun*). (We are still waiting for them to describe *fanatical* gunmen who murder Catholic civilians in Northern Ireland as 'pro-British terrorists' or 'thugs loyal to Britain's Queen Elizabeth'.) There was not a shred of evidence connecting Iran to the Tunisia explosion. But the *Sun* didn't need any: it was obvious that the Iranian fundamentalists would plant bombs, because Tunisia had been 'encouraging scantily clad tourists'.

SET-UP

This sounds familiar. Last April, the media assured the world that Reagan and Thatcher had 'conclusive evidence' that Colonel Gaddafi's Libya was behind the Berlin disco bomb in which an American serviceman died. This was used as the pretext for the joint US/British bombing raid on Tripoli and Benghazi. In fact, all the available evidence suggested a Syrian, not Libyan, connection to the Berlin bomb.

The non-existent 'evidence' of Iran's responsibility for the Tunisian disco bomb serves the same purpose of setting up a targeted third world country as a suitable case for an air-strike.

When a Muslim committed suicide outside a London mosque last week, the press was quick to point to this as further evidence of the irrational and violent temperament of all Arabs. 'Death of a fanatic' screamed the *Express*. The paper concluded by mentioning that 'Scotland Yard said the death was not being linked with Exercise

Martyrdom, the Iranian military exercise in the Persian Gulf.' It is difficult to see why any body should think there was a link between a man jumping off a crane in Regent Park and Iranian forces preparing to repel an American armada in the Middle East. But the racist screens of the British tabloids, the *Express* and the *Mail*, have shown that Scotland Yard might not have even proved that Muslims are blood-crazed fanatics (those who only understand one language - 'Bomb 'em') (again).

CRUDE

The papers have also dropped out all the gory details of Ayatollah Khomeini's savage tirades against his opponents inside Iran. Khomeini has been brutal in suppressing those who oppose his Islamic republic. But so have countless pro-Western tyrants in the third world, who are cited as the friends of democracy in the press over here. And since when was the *Sun* concerned about the health of communists and working class militants, who have suffered most under Khomeini? Its attacks on the Iranian regime are just another hypocritical attempt to justify US and British aggression in the Gulf.

The *Sun*'s final proof that Iranians are inhuman is the fact that 'the Ayatollah has no sense of humour'. The paper pointed out that Khomeini 'demanded a full apology' when a West German comedian did a send-up of him, in which Muslim women 'dropped their knickers at his feet'. Of course, it is impossible to imagine a British leader like Margaret Thatcher or Norman Tebbit objecting to being lampooned in the media. And a British dignitary like Jeffrey Archer would never demand an apology or damages if papers made derogatory remarks about his sex life.

The British press coverage of the Gulf is little more than crude anti-Iranian propaganda.

Its aim is to convince the British public that the 'blood-crazed mullahs' need a good hiding from Reagan and Thatcher to make them behave like civilised, Christian people. Presumably they mean Christian people like that God-fearing fanatical terrorist, Colonel Oliver North.

TAMIL REFUGEES SPEAK OUT

'THEY CAN'T BREAK OUR SPIRIT'



TAMIL REFUGEES WAVE GOODBYE TO FREEDOM FROM THEIR FLOATING PRISON

Tamil refugees incarcerated on the prison ship *Earl William* have suspended their hunger-strike, but they haven't given up the struggle to win their freedom and the right to live in Britain. **Kenan Malik reports from Harwich.**

The 46 Tamil refugees ended their 19-day hunger-strike on Monday pending negotiations with the Home Office over their imprisonment and future status. They have given the authorities 15 days to

deliver on their demands for freedom from detention and the right to stay in Britain, and are determined to resume their fight if the government refuses to give way. The refugees are right to be sceptical about their chances of

winning clemency from the Home Office, which worked to end the strike last week, and which has taken advantage of similar negotiations in the past to denigrate its opponents. The stream of lies put out by the Home

office to undermine the struggle shows that it cannot be trusted to come up with a solution in the interests of the Tamils.

● Lie No 1: 'They want to go back to Sri Lanka'

Last week press and politicians claimed that the refugees wanted to return to Sri Lanka, in the wake of the peace pact signed by the Sri Lankan and Indian governments. This deal is supposed to end the persecution of Tamils from which the refugees fled. 'That's an out and out lie,' said refugee Veeravagu Raj. 'How can we go back? The agreement is less than two weeks old and we don't know what is happening. Yesterday two Tamils were shot dead by security forces — we can't go back in these conditions. The papers are completely distorting what we say. When we talk about going home we mean back to relatives in London, or Birmingham.'

DIVISIVE

The right of the Tamil refugees to live in this country does not depend on there being a war in Sri Lanka. Even if some Tamils wanted to return to Sri Lanka it would still be the responsibility to defend their right to stay in Britain, as part of the broader struggle against state attempts to discriminate against black people and divide us along racial lines. Immigration laws are the means by which the British government controls the lives of black people. They allow the authorities to incarcerate refugees in prison ships, to refuse black people the right to housing and other benefits, and to keep families out of the country. We must support the rights of all black people against the racist and divisive system.

● Lie No 2: 'The *Earl William* is not a prison'

According to the Home Office, the escape of two Tamil refugees from the prison ship last week proves that the ship is not a prison. Home Office incompetence has brought freedom to two refugees.

But the security measures taken since the escape show that the refugees are treated like criminals. The quay where the *Earl William* is moored is sealed off with barbed wire. There is now a gate-post with a guard 100 yards from the ship. Guards with walkie-talkies patrol the quay. All visitors are escorted in and out of the ship. The refugees can see only two visitors at a time, and only for an hour.

● Lie No 3: 'The refugees are well-treated'

The refugees have faced constant physical and verbal abuse from the guards. One was pushed through a glass door. They are denied medical attention. It was not until the seventh day of the hunger-strike that a doctor was allowed on board. The next day Surendran, a 17-year old hunger-striker, was rushed to Rochester Hospital unconscious after kidney failure. Five others became seriously ill but were refused hospital treatment. Conditions are so bad that visitors are now excluded from most areas of the ship. 'They don't want people to know what it's like in here,' said Raj. 'They don't treat us like human beings.'

'They are using every trick to try and break our spirit,' said Raj. 'But we won't give in.' The hunger-strikers insisted on nothing less than freedom. Yet Labour MP Diane Abbott's response to their predicament was to call for better training for the guards and the introduction of 'the checks and balances set down in prison regulation'. While the refugees reject the laws that have taken away their freedom and their rights, the Labour Party calls for them to be treated like ordinary criminals. 'We are not criminals,' said Raj. 'We don't want to be detained in better conditions. We want our freedom.' Last week 100 people joined a protest in Harwich in support of the prisoners. Now we need to turn people's outrage into opposition to all Britain's racist immigration laws.

EAST END RACIST EVICTIONS

High court says 'Send them back'

'Send them back' was the official message last week when the high court ruled that councils have no obligation to house immigrants who have made themselves 'intentionally homeless' by leaving Bangladesh and coming to Britain. Four Bangladeshi families took Tower Hamlets council to court to stop the local authority from evicting them from their temporary bed and breakfast accommodation. 54 more Bangladeshi families also face eviction. The court ruled that immigrants who give up their homes to come to Britain have no right to be housed here, in a decision that will deprive thousands of black families of their right to housing and other benefits.

The decision introduces legal repatriation through the back door.

The families are facing eviction because they are black. Most have lived in Britain for years, and many are British citizens. Abdul Monuf came to this country in 1959 and became a British citizen seven years later. His wife and five children were finally granted permission to join him last August. Last autumn Abdul applied for council housing, and like hundreds of other Bangladeshi families they

were dumped in a squalid bed and breakfast hotel. In March the family received a letter from the council which accepted that the family 'have a priority need for accommodation' under housing law. But because they are Bangladeshi, the finer points of the law do not apply. 'It would have been reasonable for you,' said the council, 'to continue to occupy the accommodation in Bangladesh. You have thereby rendered yourself and your family intentionally homeless.'

Last week the high court accepted Tower Hamlets' argument that if Abdul Monuf and his family want somewhere to live they should go back to Bangladesh. The council declared that the court had 'completely vindicated' its racist stance.

Ever since the Liberal-SDP Alliance took power in Tower Hamlets last May, it has run a racist campaign against the Bangladeshi community. Last summer the council proposed that homeless Bangladeshis should be housed in an old ship moored in the Thames. In September it used the anti-immigration panic generated by the Tories' new visa restrictions to blame Asians for the



BANGLADESHI FAMILIES PROTEST AGAINST THEIR RACIST LANDLORDS

local housing shortage.

Last week the council declared that it was a 'waste of ratepayers' money' to house Bangladeshis.

Anti-racists have been quick to denounce the Alliance and its discriminatory policies. But the real blame for the suffering of the racists lies with the Labour Party, whose apartheid housing practices prepared the ground for the evictions, and whose campaign against the current council's policies panders to the racists.

For decades the Labour Party dominated Tower Hamlets council, and together with the Greater London Council which administered about half the housing stock in the borough, operated a racist housing allocation policy. Bangladeshis were confined to a handful of run-down estates and excluded from council housing. In 1980 Labour backed a plan to create 'Bangladeshi' estates — only a small-scale campaign by the local Asian community forced a halt to the scheme. A 1982 report on

GLC housing estates in the borough showed that only 0.3 per cent of Bangladeshis were housed on modern estates. Despite Labour's promise to take action, an update report two years later showed that nothing had changed. 'Somewhere, somewhere', the report concluded, 'deliberate decisions must have been taken over which estates (Bangladeshi) were going to be "allowed" to live on.'

The Alliance might be more upfront about its racist policies, but Labour taught the new council how to play every racist card in the pack. Local Labour politicians have allowed today's racists to make the running.

The campaign against the evictions, backed by the Labour Party and the Communist Party, has not yet won support from such Alliance spokesmen as Parliamentary MP Simon Hughes and to plead for clemency from the courts, rather than to organise an independent campaign against the evictions. Campaign organiser

Richard Backes argues that the fight against evictions has the support of 'sympathetic councillors of all parties' — including the Alliance. The campaign has gone out of its way to involve local Alliance supporters. Backes has refused to confront the council and has vetoed activities that compromise his campaign in the eyes of the courts.

This approach has let the council off the hook and demoralised local anti-racists.

A campaign meeting in April broke up in disarray when Backes invited SDP councillors to speak from the platform. Fights broke out as angry Bangladeshis stormed the stage to prevent the SDP from speaking.

Many Labour Party activists are unhappy with Labour's past record and its current campaign against the evictions. Phil Maxwell, Labour's housing spokesman on Tower Hamlets council, admits Labour's culpability: 'It is a fact that racism was institutionalised by previous Labour councils.' He is also critical of the campaign: 'The emphasis of the campaign has been on building links with the Liberals and arguing in the courts rather than building links with tenants and the labour movement. The lesson of the high court decision is that we need to embark on a more political campaign involving direct action in concert with local people.' But Maxwell and other Labour activists have nevertheless gone along with the campaign and kept faith with Labour policy. If we are to win the fight against the evictions and defend black people's rights, then we must break with Labour's sordid record.

ALLIANCE SPLITS AND MERGERS

NO FUTURE IN THATCHER'S SHADOW



THE DOCTOR'S DREAM DIED THE DEATH

David Rourke

David Owen resigned the leadership of the Social Democratic Party last week after losing the vote on the proposal to merge with the Liberals. In a ballot of 58 500 SDP members, nearly 26 000 voted for merging with the Liberals while just over 19 000 backed Owen's option of maintaining the 'open marriage' arrangement.

The fracturing of the Alliance reflects the poor prospects for any middle class party trying to challenge Thatcher.

Alliance leaders insisted that 1987 would be make or break for their crusade to establish a third force in British politics. In February SDP candidate Robin Burns won the Greenwich by-election with a 28 per cent swing in the vote. Opinion polls suggested that the Alliance was coming up fast and even outpacing Labour in the popularity stakes.

DISASTER

But the June general election results were a disaster for the Alliance. Media coverage focused on the weakness of the 'Two Davids' double act, and on disagreements like Owen's poorly disguised contempt for Liberal defence policy. Owen's overtures to the Tories on the possibility of a pact in the event of a hung parliament also raised Liberal suspicions. In the event, for all its promises of ending the 'two-party dictatorship', 22 seats were all that the Alliance could muster.

Liberal leader David Steel began the post-election soul-searching with the proposal to merge the two parties. Steel argued that a united party under a single leader is necessary, given the increasingly 'presidential' style of British elections. The merger idea has upset the fragile balance of middle class interests in the SDP. At the Nottingham conference of SDP councillors in July, pro-merger speakers Dick Taverne and Shirley Williams were coolly received. This was followed by a national committee vote of 18-13 against the merger. Only one SDP MP, Charles Kennedy, has come out for the merger. Likewise, the main financial backers of the SDP, merchant banker Leslie Murphy and supermarket tycoon David Sainsbury, are in the Owen camp.

MANUFACTURE

At the grassroots level, however, the picture has been different. Last week's vote in favour of a merger shows that many SDP members have accepted that electoral failure was due to disunity, and drawn the conclusion that a new party is the answer. Owen's original allies in the 'gang of four' — Shirley Williams, Roy Jenkins and Bill Rodgers — have all climbed aboard the merger bandwagon. The debate promises to rage for months. Both parties hold their national conferences in the

autumn and negotiations over the details of a merger are not due to be concluded until early next year.

But whatever the outcome, no constitutional manoeuvre can manufacture a real social base for an alternative bourgeois party.

The Alliance advanced largely on the strength of the hostility expressed by some middle class people to the strident character of Thatcherite politics and the supposed 'doctrinaire leftism' of the Labour Party. The SDP was itself established in response to the apparent advances made by the left within the Labour Party in the early eighties.

ECHOED

However, Thatcher's uncompromising approach has ultimately narrowed the potential for a third alternative. While the Tories have failed to get to grips with any of the real problems facing British capitalism, they have succeeded in establishing a broad political consensus on what the remedies are. They have monopolised discussion of political issues from law and order to defence, and forced the opposition to follow their lead. Thus the Labour Party has shifted rapidly to the right under Neil Kinnock. The Alliance too has been pulled along behind the Tories. It has echoed Thatcherite themes on many issues and doctrines — such as anti-trade union laws — the Alliance produced proposals which went even further than the government's legislation.

The fact that the Alliance was forced to live in Thatcher's shadow narrowed its appeal in the election. For example, during the June campaign Owen and Steel issued a '101 Damnnations' list of left-wing Labour candidates. But if people were worried about this imaginary threat from the 'left', the obvious candidate for them to support was Thatcher, who had often declared and displayed her commitment to 'killing socialism in Britain'. The Tories felt able to pinch the 'Damnnations' list, and even to credit it to the Alliance during a TV broadcast, without fear of advantaging the SDP and Liberals.

RAGBAG

The failure of the Alliance has opened up divisions among the loose amalgam of middle class groups within it. It has always been something of a political ragbag, spanning such diverse interests as the radical Young Liberals, strong advocates of nuclear disarmament, and old professional Cold Warriors like Owen. It was inevitable that such a coalition could not survive a crisis. If SDP members do follow the merger ballot result and join the Liberals, the tensions will be stored up within the new party. Further splits are likely.

The problems of the Alliance confirm the stability of ruling class politics in Britain.

On the Continent, the political process has traditionally involved alignments between rival parties of the ruling class. In recent years, the unstable state of European capitalism has created a lot of flux and allowed new middle class parties, like Craxi's Socialists in Italy, to get a purchase on power. But in Britain since the twenties, the establishment has been able to

rely on one political machine — the Conservative Party — to represent its interests. In the absence of a profound change in the balance of class forces the ruling class has no stake in experimenting with new options. Indeed, Thatcher's hardline approach shows that any changes in strategy can be carried out through the existing institutions.

The Alliance's main contribution has been to pull Labour to the right. But this has only helped to endorse the Tories' control over political debate. Nobody who supports the existing order can effectively challenge Thatcher today. Only anti-capitalists stand a chance of breaking the mould of British politics.

Tony Kennedy

ABORTION ON THE NHS

Women pay for cuts

Abortion facilities at Colchester General Hospital have been cut by a quarter — an early sign that women's health will be a casualty of Tory attacks on the NHS. Consultant gynaecologists at Colchester General, which serves all of north-east Essex, are now referring patients to private clinics in London. They are following the example set by gynaecologists at St James' in South London, where similar cuts were implemented last month.

The Essex area health authority is trying to justify its cutback by pointing out that the demand for other gynaecological operations has outstripped the limited capacity of Colchester General. 'The consultants and myself have decided to devote more resources to life-threatening conditions such as cervical cancer,' said general manager Nigel Beverley. Beverley's message is that women can't expect the NHS to protect them from both unwanted pregnancies and premature death.

According to the administrator of a registered charity clinic in central London, abortion facilities carry an increasingly low priority in the NHS. Although outright cuts are still rare, she believes there is a trend for health authorities to farm out terminations to private agencies. 'West Midlands health authority has an arrangement with more than 20 agencies. Under some such arrangements, the operations are paid for by the health authority. Sometimes the patient has to pick up the bill. These days, doctors need to be really pro-abortion to get their patient a termination on the NHS. Most of them would rather say "Can you afford £100?" and refer her to an agency like ours. Women are having to go private by default.'

Abortion has always been a grey area in the NHS, ever since the 1967 Act brought greater access to legal terminations. Variations between the policies of 'puritanical' and 'liberal' health authorities are quietly acknowledged, but rarely talked about. Abortion is the only operation that

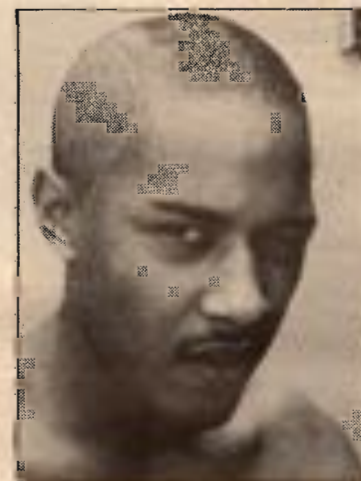
requires the written consent of two registered doctors, and by the time they have applied all the relevant tests and given their consent, a patient's pregnancy may have gone beyond the 12-week limit which many hospitals adhere to. Now the Tories are using the collapse of the NHS as an excuse to push abortion

out of the public sector. They are able to reap the benefits of the resulting moral climate which they worked so hard to create. If we want to defend women's right to play an equal part in society, we must step up the fight for free abortion on demand.

Andrew Calcutt

THE TREVOR MONERVILLE CASE

Police authority threatens family



TREVOR MONERVILLE

The Independent Police Complaints Authority, which is investigating the case of Trevor Monerville, a young black man who emerged from three days in police custody with brain damage, is now threatening to prosecute his family.

Stoke Newington police arrested 19-year old Trevor Monerville on New Year's Day and held him in custody on a criminal damage charge. A week later he was lying partially paralysed on an operating table undergoing surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain, and the police had dropped the charges.

Stoke Newington police, notorious for terrorising black youth in the area, have consistently denied responsibility for inflicting Trevor Monerville's horrific injuries but have refused to answer basic questions. They have come under pressure from his family and supporters who want to know the truth.

Proving just how impartial it really is, the Independent Police Complaints Authority has produced an interim report which backs the police story and blames the family for impeding the investigation by refusing to hand over medical records. The authority is now threatening to take the family to court to force them to deliver the documents. This move reveals the authority as nothing more than an apology for police repression.

The Monerville family has rightly refused to cooperate with a body which is independent only of the truth and dependent on the state which brutalises black youth. But some leading supporters of the Monervilles' campaign are mistaken in demanding an official public inquiry or looking to make the police more accountable. All state bodies and inquiries are part of the racist system which oppresses black people. They cannot be trusted to deliver justice for a victim like Trevor Monerville.

Pandora Anderson

REAGAN'S CENTRAL AMERICAN PLANS

NO PEACE FOR NICARAGUA

The flurry of peace plans for Central America last week indicates the problems Reagan faces in trying to contain unrest in the USA's backyard. Andy Clarkson reports



THE CONTRAS: REAGAN'S FAVOURITE KILLERS

Ronald Reagan took more off from his Gulf invasion to pursue his favourite pastime: bullying Nicaragua. The peace plan he unveiled in Washington was intended to end the conflict in Central America and reward US authorities over the region, by bringing Nicaragua's radical Sandinista regime to heel. Reagan's reputation was shot by earlier revelations about Colonel Oliver North using Iranian cash to arm the Contras in Nicaragua. But the favourable reaction to North's gangster performance at the Irangate hearings prompted Reagan to try to recoup his losses — at Nicaragua's expense.

Reagan's plan demands far-reaching concessions from the Sandinistas: free elections within six months, an economic development agreement with the USA, the suspension of all arms deliveries to the Contras, the authorities (the USA reserves the right to continue to supply humanitarian aid to the Contras) and an amnesty for the Contra insurgents.

Reagan's scheme amounts to nothing less than a demand for Nicaragua's total surrender to US imperialism.

CHASTENED

By raising the stakes, Reagan hoped to force Nicaragua into a corner and silence his critics at home. A crucial congressional vote on continuing US funding to the Contras is due at the end of September, which gives the White House six weeks to swing opinion behind its plans to step up the Contra war effort. According to US opinion polls, popular support for Contra funding rose from 30 to 48 per cent after Oliver North shot from the hip on coast-to-coast TV during the Irangate hearings. Reagan's Democratic opponents in Congress were chastened by the transatlantic delivery of the Contra dossier. But Reagan still has to contend with widespread disgust about his intervention in

Central America, especially as the Contras appear to have failed to make much headway.

Last September Congress approved \$100m which was used to supply the Contras with the latest in military hardware. Reagan's favourite murder gang now promotes hit squads guided by US pilots in downing Sandinista helicopters and convoys. A month ago the Contras attacked a Sandinista military base at San Jose de los Rios, a change from their usual soft targets like coffee farms and hospitals. Covert CIA operations have continued as well. Yet despite all this American backing — overt and covert — the Contras remain more of a bandit outfit than a credible military force, with no prospect of a national force.

DISARRAY

Reagan wants to compensate for this setback by using his peace initiative to take advantage of Nicaragua's current economic and political problems within Central America. The Sandinistas have recently come under intense pressure from 'friends' as well as enemies. In June the Soviet Union banned oil exports to Nicaragua in exchange for progress in the arms talks at Geneva. The Soviet move to help throttle Nicaragua shows up the US myth of a Soviet-inspired conspiracy in Central America. Since Mexico and Venezuela ceased oil exports two years ago, Soviet oil has been Nicaragua's lifeline. Now that its oil reserves are due to run out this week, Nicaragua has been forced into the arms of Mexico — which is using the oil weapon to bring the Sandinistas to the negotiating table.

But Reagan's plans to put pressure on Nicaragua and win wider backing for the Contras at home have been thrown into disarray not only by the decision of five Central American states — Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala — to back Costa Rican president Oscar Arias' alternative 'peace' proposals.

The Arias plan offers a slightly milder form of coercion than the Reagan plan.

Under this scheme Mexico is to assume full delivery to Nicaragua, if the latter agrees to major changes in its internal policy. The authoritative *Latin American Weekly Reports* noted Arias' observation that 'existing economic problems in Nicaragua could make the Sandinistas take a more pragmatic view of the peace plan' (13 August 1987). Threatened by his so-called friends, Nicaragua has compromised with the Arias plan, to save off Reagan's mercenaries and economic collapse.

REVOLT

The Central American states' initiative is a piece of paper which has no hope of bringing peace. Yet the fact that it has been drafted to counter Reagan's proposal is significant. It shows how Reagan's authority in Central America has been undermined to the point where even formerly servile Latin American republics feel free to block their US master's plans.

The Reagan initiative was intended to show the nations of Central America that the USA will wield the big stick in the area. Indeed it has served to expose the incoherence of US policy. And Washington's problems are only just beginning. Economic decay is turning the whole of Central America toward chaos. Last month, the US-backed puppets of El Salvador faced a national highway stoppage ordered by guerrillas and strikers by increasingly restless trade unions. Meanwhile, the military regime in Panama has been compelled to order more to attack the US embassy, and demands for its withdrawal are growing. The nations of Nicaragua and Central America as a whole should draw renewed strength from Washington's confusion. They should seize this opportunity to lead a bloody nose to North and his Contra creation.



THE STRIKE IS A STRUGGLE FOR POWER

SOUTH AFRICA

Miners strike against apartheid

The strike by 250 000 black miners in South Africa could become the biggest battle so far between the black trade union movement and the apartheid state.

Since all black political organisations were banned under South Africa's state of emergency, the unions have stepped into the front line of the struggle against the apartheid system. At its annual congress last month the black trade union federation Cosatu reaffirmed its commitment to place the struggle for political freedom at the centre of trade union activity. The unions' support for political action has provoked an instant response from the government and the employers.

While president P. W. Botha has threatened to drive the unions underground, the country's mining bosses are preparing to face them down in the biggest industrial conflict the industry has seen in 40 years.

Twenty eight gold and 18 coal mines were called out on strike by the black miners' union, the NUM, after the breakdown of pay talks. The miners are fighting for a pay rise of 10 per cent, for improved safety conditions and against discrimination underground. Last year alone more than 800 miners were killed in accidents on South African mines. Most of them were black. The South African mining industry, which produces 50 per cent of the country's export earnings, has the worst safety record in the world. It is the only industry in which the colour bar remains officially in place, enabling employers to run mines like slave camps. Profits are squeezed out of black miners in conditions which have long become a remote memory in other advanced capitalist nations. Black miners are assigned to the most dangerous jobs, often without elementary safety gear, and denied danger pay and the other benefits to which their white foremen are entitled.

HACKED

Last week a riot broke out at Western Holdings, a gold mine at Welkom in the Orange Free State owned by the Anglo-American corporation, after black miners were left to wait for three hours underground at the end of their shift, while whites were hoisted to the surface. In the ensuing confrontation two white security officials were hacked to death, an

black shot dead and 41 wounded. Incidents like this are a regular occurrence in the mines, and explain why the black miners' union has become the biggest and most militant section of the movement.

The conditions in the mines show why there can be no non-political trade unionism in South Africa. To gain even the most elementary rights — equal pay, safety and decent accommodation — requires a struggle against the whole system of apartheid rules and white privilege which serves to keep black sweat and blood into profits for white South Africans and foreign capital.

CONTROL

This week's strike is a conflict over who controls the mining industry. While the mine owners are determined to uphold the slave conditions on which their industry depends, the miners are determined to change them. The government has already declared its intention to use the police and its emergency powers to crush the strike, while the employers have threatened striking miners with instant dismissal. The ruling class is determined to turn the strike into a test of strength with the black unions. Even Anglo-American chairman Gavin Relly, normally portrayed as a liberal because he sponsored talks between businessmen and the African National Congress, declared war on Cosatu last week.

'We cannot expect to treat sympathetically the appeals for support of trade unions who promote sanctions and disinvestment, the more so when such advocacy is part of a wider political programme inimical to the very survival of the free enterprise system of which we are a part.'

Many miners have responded to the bosses' threats by stating their determination to use force, if necessary, to resist attempts to drive them back to work.

Meanwhile, the NUM has come up with a potentially divisive strategy of telling its members to leave the mine hostels and stay at home during the strike. The outcome of the strike remains uncertain. But the struggle for power which it hints at points to the urgent need for a political party that can give conscious direction to the fight for workers' freedom in South Africa, in a way that trade unionism alone never could.

UNBIASED IMMIGRATION CONTROLS?

IN his first speech since being re-elected as an MP, Ray Hattersley continued to form by saying: 'We shall insist upon immigration controls that are unbiased.'



David Routh

HATTERSLEY: QUIBBLING

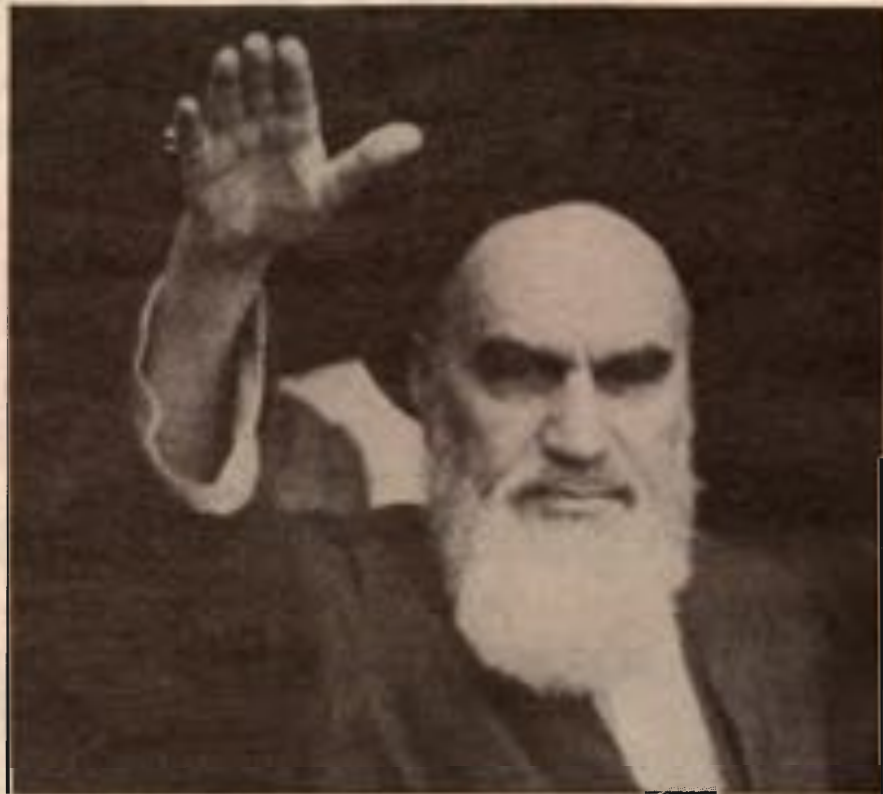
He opposes present immigration regulations which discriminate against Asian fiancées trying to enter the country in order to marry, by claiming that their marriages are bogus because they are arranged, and not contracted upon grounds of proposal, as is usual in the UK. Hattersley considers such marriages as above board although they are arranged, by emphasising that they are as valid as the traditional British marriage.

While doing his bit to reinforce the virtue of marriage and family life, Hattersley further exposed the Labour Party's failure to defend the rights of immigrants. The Labour Party has a long history of implementing racist immigration controls. All forms of immigration control, even the so-called unbiased controls proposed by the Labour Party, are by their very nature racist.



While quibbling about the effectiveness of Asian marriages, Hattersley ignores the issue that all immigration controls are racist and therefore anti-working class. This approach, coupled with the 'left-wing' argument that as many people leave the UK as enter it annually, fails to bring the racist nature of the laws to the fore.

Workers can oppose all controls by bringing their racist nature to the centre of the political stage, through *The Red Front*. Aldridge Prior Leamington Spa



KHOMEINI: AN OPPRESSOR

Don't back Khomeini

I FOUND your coverage of the Gulf War highly contradictory. You oppose the manoeuvres of the US and British navies, on the grounds that it means more oppression for the people of the Middle East. I have no disagreement with that. But just because the British and American opinion-makers have got Khomeini down as a 'blood-crazed mullah' does not mean he should be supported by socialists. As you argued in another article it is not the job of socialists to put a tick where the ruling class puts a cross. Our analysis should be more sophisticated.

The repressive Iranian regime forces women to wear the veil, prevents the working class from exercising trade union rights, sees homosexuality as a disgusting

Western decadence, and chops off people's limbs for stealing, drinking or adultery. In other words, Khomeini oppresses women, gays, nationalities (eg, Kurds), and religious minorities, as well as ruthlessly exploiting workers. He has used the war against Iraq to send the most self-sacrificing youth to their slaughter in the name of holy martyrdom.

Have you nothing to say about this? I am disappointed by your simplistic analysis on this question. I know you are going to say that it is the same as Ireland. But the republican movement do not have the power to oppress anyone, and their attitude to women, gays, Protestants, workers, etc, is genuinely socialist.

Lyndsay Robertson
Cardiff

INNER-CITY POLICING

BLACK youth in North London had the real meaning of the Tories' inner-city policy spelt out to them last week, when scores of police carried out a 'drugs raid' on the Silver Bullet pub in Finsbury Park. They charged in with batons drawn, started arresting people at random, and chased the youth out on to the streets. One young man was lucky to escape serious injury — he was forced to jump 20 feet from a railway platform on to the street below. Another youth was not so lucky. He was run down by a car, while being chased



BLATANT POLICE BRUTALITY

across a main road. It was obvious the guy's legs were smashed, but the cops were only going to administer first aid until pressure from passers-by forced them to call an ambulance.

The reaction from ordinary people in the area, black and white, was a mixture of muted fury and disbelief. A middle-aged white woman nearly

got herself arrested for giving one cop a right mouthful. This is the kind of anger that anti-racists need to build on. The demand for 'police off our streets' makes more sense now than ever before, as more people witness the brutal reality of the government's inner-city policy.

Chris Sweeney
London

Write to **tns**
BCM JPLTD, London
WC1N 3XX or phone
(01) 729 3771

WHO KILLED SOCIALISM?

UNFORTUNATELY I was on holiday during Preparing for Power, so it was good to be able to read the two speeches by Richards and Hattersley in last week's paper (7 August). But one point in Frank Richards' article bothered me. He says that 'we should not view the Thatcher era in entirely negative terms.' He backs up this bald statement with the view that Thatcher has destroyed traditional socialist ideas that were never that left-wing in the first place. A lesser but related point in the article sees the decline of the unions in a positive light, saying that the unions are to blame for conservative views in the working class.

I really think Frank Richards has gone too far. You don't have to be a Labour hack or a trade union bureaucrat to know that it is definitely negative for the labour movement to be undermined by the right. If the old institutions were weak because the rank and file were strong, and an alternative leadership was developing, that would be positive. But to see the 'good side' of Thatcher's virulent anti-socialism, and thereby erosion of trade union rights as a good thing is a serious mistake.

Jeremy Benton
Middlesbrough

IDEOLOGICAL ISSUES

PAUL JOHNSON (tns, 7 August) raises some interesting points about ideology. I think when the next step refers to the Labour Party appealing to the establishment it means that Labour presents its policies in terms of the needs of the economy and Britain, rather than in terms of the needs of the working class.

Of course the establishment is not the group which goes and puts the cross on the ballot for the Labour MP. The working class, in the main, is the force which has traditionally voted Labour. But the party, by putting forward its politics in terms which are acceptable to the establishment, does nothing to challenge capitalist ideology.

Calling it capitalist ideology does not mean only capitalists believe it, it means that the ideas are consistent with the capitalist system, not opposed to it. Of course the working class is infected with ideas against its true interests: this is what Marx called 'false consciousness'. If workers were conscious of their interests as a class

then there would be no need for a scientific analysis of present-day society, or for a revolutionary party for that matter.

On moral panics, surely the point is that the media does know what it is doing, and consciously promotes pro-state ideas. Its attitude to rape is not to call for women's liberation, but more police on the streets. In response to Aids it calls for compulsory testing, not gay liberation. And on the issue of child abuse the media calls for more policing of working class families, rather than abolishing the prison of the family unit. It is natural that the media should arrive at these solutions, because they start from the way things are under capitalism: they support the status quo.

Timothy Stoney
Manchester

BACK TO THE MOORS

I HAD naively hoped that once Pauline Reade had been exhumed and reburied the Brady-Hindley saga would be over. Now we learn that Ian Brady has owned up to more earlier killings. This will enable the media to drag the whole matter out for another 20 years. It is not doing the relations of the victims a lot of good, particularly when they have the press corps camping out on their doorsteps and photos of their children and their killers in every paper. Getting evidence to charge Hindley and Brady with more killings is pointless as they are already in jail for their natural lives. So who benefits from picking over the bones of their unfortunate victims?



BRADY: RARE

I think the ruling class and the police have chosen the moment to relaunch a public scare over killers, child abusers and evil criminals. Precisely because Ian Brady is a rare psychotic, sexually perverse, violent rapist, who killed several people, including children — for pleasure — he has been presented for decades as the personification of the devil to win support for the police, the prisons, and stiff sentencing. The media, which covered the original trial in the sixties in incredible detail (the *Telegraph* included the complete transcript), has dug up all the old stuff to reintroduce fear and loathing into the younger generation.

Jean Wilson
Oldham

THE USA CLOS

BLAME THE WEST FO

Sabena Norton goes beyond the gutter press head



THE BODY-COUNT MOUNTS AS THE WESTERN POWERS PROLONG THE AGONY IN THE GULF

FIran bomb blasts disco girl' screamed the *Sun* last week, after Spanish holiday maker Helen Waddock had been killed in a bomb explosion at the Sahara Beach Hotel in Tunisia, less than 60 miles east of Tunisia, and not a shred of evidence has been offered to link Iran to the Tunisian bombings. But, so what? Five Britain's gutter journalists and story will do, if it can be twisted to help stir up war fever against the Iranian people.

Since US war ships sailed into the Gulf three weeks ago, the British press has revelled in anti-Iranian hysteria. It has barely managed to conceal its disappointment over the fact that the British navy has so far not thrown its forces into the great Western jihad against the 'mad Ayatollah'. To make up for the lack of this waving accounts of British heroism at the front, the media have lit up with wild fantasies about Iranian aggression in every corner of the Middle East. Even liberal newspapers like the

Guardian and the *Independent* have discovered the evil hand of Iranian 'fifth columnists' behind each instance of unrest and violence in the region.

The anti-Iranian fervour of the British press says a lot about an institution which has just indignantly protested its 'zeroism' against Thatcher's imperialism on publication of the *Far Left's* *Spivatcher* memoirs. Even *Street*'s anti-chauvinism reveals it as little more than an extra-mural propaganda department of Whitehall. While the USA and its allies are conspiring to bring the Gulf under Western military control, the British media have conveniently rediscovered the myth of an Iranian fundamentalist conspiracy to subvert the Middle East.

Every time the Western powers go to war in the third world, they discover the reactionary and abhorrent features of third world regimes.

At other times they are more than happy to rely on the influence of military dictators and funda-

mentalist religions to keep the masses under control. Only yesterday Britain and the USA were involved in covert arms deals with the Khomeini regime. But now that the Western powers need to rally support at home for tougher measures in the Middle East they are alerting public opinion to the alleged evils of Tehran's rulers and the menace of radical Islam. In just the same way, back in 1972, the British media suddenly discovered Argentinean 'fascism' to justify sending the task force to the South Atlantic.

◆◆◆ Since the fall of the pro-Western Shah in January 1979, Iran has been at the top of the West's list of 'evil' states alongside Colonel Gaddafi's Libya. To popularise anti-Iranian chauvinism the Western media pointed to the repressive character of the new Iranian regime under Ayatollah Khomeini and the reactionary features of Muslim fundamentalism. In fact, although Iran is being

governed by an anti-working class dictatorship, the Khomeini government is no worse than that of the Shah, who ran the country like a prison camp for 27 years and was loved like a hero in Washington, Paris and London. Neither is it any more obnoxious than many other regimes in the region — from Pakistan and Turkey to Saudi Arabia and Israel — which repress the masses on behalf of the West.

Khomeini's Iran has been singled out for abuse because, unlike the rest, it was the product of an anti-imperialist uprising which overthrew the existing US-sponsored order and dealt a crushing blow to Western power in the Middle East. Anti-Islamic hysteria in Europe and America has nothing to do with concern about the fate of the people who are forced to live under a repressive Islamic state. It expresses the hatred and fear aroused by the struggle against imperialism in Iran — a struggle which has been contained and subverted by the Islamic regime, but which cannot

be suppressed in the long run.

In January 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini and his entourage returned from exile in Paris to take over the Iranian state. Iran's new clerical rulers were no different from scores of moderate third world politicians who sit and wait in the leafy suburbs of London and Paris, hoping and scheming for some misfortune to unseat their rivals back home, so they can return from obscurity to assume power. But the upheaval which led to the overthrow of the Shah unleashed a revolutionary upsurge in Iranian society which could not be contained by the usual reshuffle at the top.

Islamic fundamentalism, which at the outset provided a forceful expression of the anti-Western sentiments of the masses, became the ideological weapon used by Iran's new rulers to crush the revolutionary movement.

To restore stability, the Khomeini regime had to cohere its base among the small traders and businessmen who expected the new

government to economic favour denied under the Shah. Khomeini's support of striking oil workers, who had been dismissed from the government, and other and political ch-

◆◆◆ The Khomeini Islamic regime to provide Western images, responsible and creation of a new dictatorship. The idea of an Islamic rulers were able to impose their Western vision for the Ayatollah.

Religion and the position for the poor are the ideology of. They have been conflicting class society under f

SES IN ON IRAN

OR GULF BLOODSHED

lines to examine the issues at stake in the Gulf

Islamic state. Khomeini introduced economic reforms to bring trade and banking under the twin control of the state and the Iranian merchant and *bazaar* class. The government organised militant urban youth into Islamic militias — the 'revolutionary guards' and the 'baseej' — to turn their anger and enthusiasm into a source of support for the regime. It launched a drive to exorcise all aspects of Western culture from Iranian society, turning anti-imperialist sentiment into identification with barbarous forms of repression, from the veiling of women to the stoning and mutilation of law-breakers.

Islamic threats to export the Islamic 'revolution' to the rest of the Middle East and to oust the pro-Western rulers of Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other moderate Gulf states, have helped Khomeini to keep a grip on Iranian society. In the Western media, Khomeini's war against Iraq and his vehement condemnations of other Arab states have been portrayed as proof of his expansionist ambitions. But the Iranian ruling class has no interest in challenging the Western powers or their allies. Far from being a challenge to Western influence in the region, Iran's military relations and its bloody conflict with Iraq serve to insulate imperialism from the pressure of the masses. They are the means through which the Islamic state has stalled the growth of class conflict and anti-imperialist resistance.

For Iran, the war against Iraq serves a domestic purpose.

It has allowed the regime to keep Iranian society in a permanently militarised state and to suppress the explosive class antagonisms within it. This has also been the function of the war effort for Iran's enemy Iraq — although the Iraqi regime has also been able to use the war to re-establish friendly relations with the Western powers. The seven-year conflict, in which almost a million people have died, shows that carnage ultimately is the only method of maintaining capitalist rule in the Middle East in the crisis conditions of the eighties.



BESIEGED: KHOMEINI

To stay in control, the rulers of Iran and Iraq have plunged their societies into the horror of a

fratricidal bloodbath (see box).

The Gulf War was started by Iraq which invaded Iran in September 1980. Discreetly encouraged by the USA, Iraq's ruler Saddam Hussein attempted to take advantage of the turmoil following the fall of the Shah to attack Iran. It was a desperate gamble by a regime which faced serious domestic unrest and which had few friends in the region or in the wider international arena. The aim was to cohere Iraq's fragile new government, to neutralise the armed forces and domestic opponents and to ingratiate Iraq with the Western powers.

Saddam's gamble did not achieve its intended result. Instead of weakening Iran, the Iraqi offensive provided the Khomeini regime with the focus it needed for reorganising Iranian society. At the time of the invasion the Iranian army was stretched to the limit, breaking strikes in the oil industry and in the country's southern industrial belt, and supporting Kurdish secessionists in the North. But the attack by Iraq enabled Khomeini to unite the Iranian people against a Western-inspired

plot to bring down the Islamic government and destroy their 'revolution'.

The war effort was used to popularise the supposedly progressive, anti-Western credentials of Iran's new government and to institute a campaign of terror against its opponents. Once Iran regained the initiative on the front, it launched a wave of repression against the Iranian left, the Kurdish liberation movement and the trade unions. Tens of thousands were killed and imprisoned and all left-wing organisations were forced underground.

The war also offered a gruesome escape route for Iran's dangerously militant anti-imperialist urban youth. The revolutionary guards, which had displaced their power with the seizure of the U.S. hostages in Tehran in 1979, were the first to be sent to the slaughter. They were followed by the *baseej* — the youth volunteer force, which turned Iranian boys into fodder for Iran's perverse human war tactics. The battlefields of war became a graveyard for working class anti-imperialists.

The offensive against Iraq was



BELLIGERENT: REAGAN

used to crush the militant upsurge that had brought down the Shah, and which had to be liquidated before Iran's rulers could re-integrate the country into the imperialist order.

In military terms the war could have ended in 1982, once Iran had succeeded in ejecting the Iraqi invasion. If the Western powers had wished to bring the hostilities to a close, they could easily have found the means to do so. But from the Western point of view, despite misgivings about the threat to the international oil trade, the beneficial impact of the war on the balance of forces in the region told in favour of keeping the conflict going.

The fratricidal war neutralised two dangerously unstable local regimes and paralysed anti-Western forces throughout the region. Among the conservative Gulf states, who felt threatened by the disruption of the oil trade and by the spectre of Iranian-style rebellion in their own countries, the conflict prompted a growing interest in Western military protection — to which the West was more than ready to respond.

Chronology of a bloodbath

June 1979: Iraqi planes bomb Iranian border villages in actions against Kurdish rebels; the army crushes riots in the mainly Shiite Iraqi town of Najaf and in Shiite areas in Baghdad.	February 1983: Iranian spring offensive launched.
July 1979: Saddam Hussein becomes the new president of Iraq; purges his rivals and expels communists from the government.	March 1983: Iraq receives \$500m Eurodollar loan.
October 1979: Iraq offers to defend any state threatened by Iranian attack or subversion and demands the return of disputed Gulf islands.	April 1983: Turkey agrees to assist Iraqi struggle against Kurdish secessionists in the North.
March 1980: Diplomatic relations between Iran and Iraq broken.	August 1983: French banks agree \$1.6 billion loan to Iraq.
April 1980: Pro-Khomeini al-Da'wa group blamed for assassination attempt on Iraqi vice-premier Tahir al-Muwaijir, leading to mass deportations of Iranians and oppositionists from Iraq.	October 1983: First deliveries of French Super Etendard missiles to Iraq.
September 1980: First Iraqi offensive: 10 Iranian airfields and oil export facilities are bombed; five Iraqi divisions invade Iran, but are halted by stiff resistance at Dehful and Ahwas.	February 1984: Iranian spring offensive.
November 1980: Khorramshahr falls after month-long Iraqi siege and Abadan oil installations are destroyed in artillery battles; the Iraqi Communist Party and Kurdish Socialist and Communist Parties declare armed struggle against the government; Iran starts organising youth in volunteer units (baseej) for 'Turkman wave' warfare.	March 1984: Iraq starts tanker war.
September 1981: Iran breaks siege of Abadan; human wave tactics begin to wear down the Iraqi invasion forces.	June 1984: Saudi fighters shoot down Iranian plane.
February 1982: French foreign minister Chirac visits Iraq to discuss reconstruction of Osirak nuclear power plant, which was bombed by Israel in June 1981.	March 1985: Biggest Iranian offensive since 1982, aiming to seize Qurna and cut Basra-Baghdad highway.
March 1982: Jordan sends volunteer force to back Iraqi war effort; Iran wins major battle in the Dehful region.	April 1985: 'War of the cities' bombing of Baghdad by Iran and Iranian cities by Iraq.
April 1982: Conclusion of Iranian spring offensive; Iraq evicted from most Iranian territory.	August 1985: Iraq steps up tanker war disrupting Iranian oil exports and bombing Kharg oil terminal.
May 1982: Iran recaptures Khorramshahr.	December 1985: Iraqi air raids on Iranian cities.
June 1982: Iraq declares withdrawal from Iran.	February 1986: Iran captures Fao Peninsula, putting 30,000 Iranian troops under murderous Iraqi artillery and missile fire.
July 1982: Iran invades Iraq, but attack at Basra repelled by Iraqi defences.	July 1986: Iraq launches new wave of attacks on Iranian shipping.
	August 1986: Launch of joint Iranian-Kurdish offensive in northern Iraq.
	October 1986: 'Irangate' US arms deal with Iran revealed in Washington.
	November 1986: Iraq bombs Latak oil terminal and Dehful; Iranian missile attacks on Baghdad.
	February 1987: Iranian advance towards Basra; Iraqi government begins evacuation of the city; Irangate hearings open in Washington.
	March 1987: US frigate Stark hit by Iraqi missile in Gulf; Washington begins preparations for re-flagging Kuwaiti tankers.
	June 1987: Reagan declares US intention to send task force into the Gulf on the 'choke-point of freedom'; Venice OECD summit refuses military and financial support for the operation, but Thatcher gives Reagan formal British backing.
	July 1987: US task force enters Gulf with Kuwaiti tanker refuelled the Bridgeton.

WOMEN UNDER THATCHER

Good years for yuppies, bad times for us

'Better for yuppies, worse for working class women' — this is **Kate Marshall's** verdict on the impact of the Thatcher years on women at work and in the home

Many people believe that eight years of Tory rule have forced more and more women out of work and into the home. But this is not strictly true. More women go to work today than ever before. The employers and the government have never been known to exploit women's labour. The female section of the labour force has increased steadily since the mid-1970s, and it is predicted that by 1990 there will be 10 million women workers, only one million less than the male workforce. Three years ago only 7 million women worked.

Yet the Thatcher years have had an uneven impact on women workers.

While the position of women in business and the professions has generally improved, the vast majority of women are condemned to low-paid, low-status work. The expansion of part-time and temporary work for women has reinforced the inferior position of working-class women in the labour market. Changes in legislation and benefit regulations have intensified the barriers on women in the home while pushing many into taking poorly paid and insecure jobs. More women may earn wages today, but the gap between middle

class and working class women has widened as the government and the employers have cooperated in forcing most women to work harder for less both in the workplace and in the home.

Yuppy women make good

According to the Confederation of British Industry, the greatest problem facing business today is the lack of skilled labour. To solve this problem employers in banking and engineering are



PEARLS FOR THE CITY GIRLS...

developing a fresh approach. Recognising that there are 184 000 women with university degrees or even higher qualifications sitting around at home, they have launched programmes such as the 'career break scheme'. These allow staff to take five years unpaid leave with the promise of a career on their return. As well as receiving plaudits from the Guardian women's page, these employers are steadily winning over women who had children and got them started at school before taking them back to work. This device also allows the employer to recoup the average of around £20 000 it costs to train a woman before she disappears into maternal bliss.

Job-sharing is another solution to the employer's problem of finding an 'ad-hoc' female labour force. For example, Sue Osborn and Susan Williams share the job of general manager of Carthorpe Hill Health's Authority on a part-yearly salary of £30 000. The employer benefits from the fact that each of the women works a 11 hour week while the other is paid for 18 hours. Other advantages of job-sharing are that there is less absenteeism, higher productivity and that women bring a wider range of experience to the job.

THE GAP

Whatever the drawbacks of career breaks and job-sharing, in general it is true that in Thatcher's Britain middle class women have never had it so good. There are more opportunities than ever before for female graduates — especially in banking, insurance, finance, engineering, science and technology. The main consequence of the Thatcher years has been to increase the economic and social gap between middle class and working class women. Women working full-time in non-manual jobs who earn less than the male workers — such as teachers, social workers and civil servants — tend to get much higher pay and enjoy better conditions at work than women doing manual work in largely female environments.

The Women's Liberation Movement was often accused of being predominantly middle class and it certainly seems to have achieved things for middle class women.

In the late 1970s women married to professional men were 20 per cent less likely to go out to work than women married to manual workers. Today they are more likely to do so. In 1980 the

richest 10 per cent of women were three times better off than their sisters in the poorest 10 per cent bracket. By 1985 they were five times better off. Of course all women are still worse off compared to men in their own social class. A woman in full-time work still only earns 66 per cent of men's wages. And the proportion of women in senior management positions has only risen by one per cent in the last decade. Even yuppie women, like the banking executive on her career break, are left holding the baby.

The part-time trap

The growing divergence in the labour market between a core of workers in relatively well-paid, highly skilled and secure jobs and peripheral workers in low-paid, unskilled and insecure jobs has had a major impact on the working lives of working class women. At a time when holders of men's jobs in traditional manufacturing have disappeared, there has been a steady increase in employment for women in the twilight regions of the service sector. Part-time work for women is the major growth area of the British labour market. The 261 000 new jobs created in 1985 included 113 000 jobs for women, and 60 per cent of these were part-time. Today nearly half of all female employees work part-time. It is estimated that by 1990 one in five of all workers will be part-time.

Self-employment is another growth area — women now make up 25 per cent of all the self-employed. This does not reflect a boom in women entrepreneurs setting up antique shops and boutiques, but more the fact that women are increasingly forced to work 'on the lump' without any of the legislative and welfare protections of direct employment.

The Tories really mean it when they talk about cutting red tape and removing the barriers to employers taking on more female labour. The current proposal to reduce further the limited rights of part-time workers is not an attempt to get them to leave the labour force for the kitchen sink. The attack on working women's rights is to make it easier for employers to exploit cheap female labour in response to the pressures of recession.



GRIM LIVES FOR WORKING WIVES

Women are being used to reduce the general standard of living of the working class.

Part-time work and self-employment are often promoted by politicians and businessmen as "what the world wants". In reality it is what they want. Part-time work means a cheap, flexible workforce that can be employed and employed not as needed without having to take any responsibility for paying off the wage or making any arrangements for the future.

None out of ten part-time workers are women, 80 per cent of part-timers are married. Full-time women workers — even young single women — do shorter hours than men. Part-time work is becoming the norm for all women, even if they have no dependents. In 1999 eight per cent of women in the 16-19 age group worked part-time, today 50 per cent of those women are part-timers (20 per cent of young men are too, compared with four per cent in 1979). This means that young people are remaining dependent on their parents for longer and that many new workers have been forced to accept that 'half a loaf is better than none'.

The part-time trap also is evident when looking at the children. After becoming a part-time worker, about 10 per cent of women reported that it had become too hard to find anything to do, leaving no time for their children. Of 13 per cent of single, childless working women, 40 per cent of married working women with no dependent children (often women who have worked part-time when their children were young) and 70 per cent of working women with dependent children.

Employers derive many advantages from part-time labour.

First they get the labour they need it, during peak times. Then they avoid paying for the time the worker is idle during slack periods, they do not have to pay a living wage. They simply avoid paying enough for the worker to reproduce herself: the average full-time wage in 1985 was £41.07 a week. Three out of four part-timers are employed in hotels, catering, distribution and other services, where their 'hours are determined by management to suit operational requirements', according to the official *Employment Gazette*.

Second, the Tories have reduced employers' rights so much that it is often difficult to refer to any of the employees' rights at all. Employers already have restricted dismissal rights, are ineligible for unemployment benefit and statutory sick pay. Fewer and fewer workers are covered by employment protection laws and these are being curtailed every year. The

Tories' abolition of fair wage legislation and wages councils has made it cheaper still to employ part-timers, and maternity rights are virtually non-existent for part-time women. It is not illegal for unions to agree with management that part-time jobs should go first when redundancies are threatened.

Temping tyranny

While the big increase in part-time opportunities has benefited all since the late seventies, there have been big increases in temporary working, another feature of the secondary labour market for working-class women. By 1981 there were 421 000 temporary workers employed in Britain. Last year there were 1.4 million. There has been a significant expansion in temporary work in the public sector, where it was valued by the unions in the past. New managers, faced with cuts and a stable workforce, introduced cope with the heavy workload, resorted to employing people to deal with the backlog. This is the shortest way to deal with the problem, rather than expanding the core of permanent workers. For temporary workers are normally brought in on the lowest grade, and offered no chance of advancement. In the DHSS, for example, all temporary workers are brought in on the clerical assistant grade, earning £77 a week.

Not all temporary workers are women — young workers are often employed on temporary contracts too — but two thirds of them are. Half of all temps work in personal services, an area where women's jobs are concentrated. A recent survey conducted by the Low Pay Unit inquired why workers take temporary jobs and received some predictable answers.

Women explained that a temporary job was better than no job, that they would get work experience, and that they would have a better chance of getting a proper job when it came up than someone in the dole queue.

Women are generally more likely to consider temporary work as they take more breaks for childcare, have to move with their husband's job, and often see their work as filling in, rather than as a career. The fact that there is little chance of progression in a temporary job, especially as training is irrelevant, means that the most likely thing to follow a temporary job is another temporary job — not the best way to build up the service record on

which most statutory rights and benefits depend. Although the market for temporary agencies' advertising is attractive, training schemes for women, which six per cent of temporary agencies,

The benefit squeeze

Some women might say that it is just not worth bothering to work. However from April next year a number of changes will be implemented by the Tories that will make it almost impossible to survive without working. Supplementary benefit will no longer take account of the situation of the individual claimant. There will be no weekly payments for special needs such as heating, diet or laundry. There will be no single payments for specific items such as beds, cookers, maternity wear, baby clothes and equipment. Instead claimants will be lent money that will have to be repaid from their weekly benefit. The social fund will be of a set amount and those denied a loan because the fund has run out will not be able to appeal.

Claimants will have to pay 20 per cent of the rates on their flat or house. Widows under 45 will no longer be paid a widow's pension. Family credit (presently family income supplement) will be paid through the wage packet, rather

than at the post office, and will not be paid if the worker is on strike. Free school meals and milk will no longer be given to families on family credit. Child benefit, the only independent income many women receive, is no longer pegged to inflation. Although the Tories backed off from abolishing a benefit which is popular among middle class voters, they plan to phase it out gradually. Single parents claiming social security now and working part-time are allowed to deduct child-minding expenses before the 'earning rule' applies. This is to be abolished.

The £25 maternity benefit has already vanished, to be replaced by a means-tested grant of £80 for women on supplementary benefit. This is less than they currently receive. Even government figures reckon that equipment for a new baby costs £187. Some 500 000 women will get nothing. Only women who start a job before they start a baby will be eligible for maternity allowance from their employer.

The central theme of many of the moral panics promoted under the Thatcher regime — over child abuse, abortion and contraception and Aids — has been to emphasise women's role within the family. However it would be wrong to interpret the Tory objective as being to squeeze women out of the labour force altogether. Their aim

is to use women to transform the relationship between the working class and the capitalist system. Women and youth have become indispensable within the workforce to drive down wages and worsen the overall position of the working class.

While union leaders like John Edmonds of the general municipal workers and Rodney Bickerstaffe of Naps have proclaimed their commitment to recruiting and representing women workers, they have done little to defend their rights. The few unions have failed to resist the assault on women workers and the expansion of part-time and temporary work. This has given the Tories a free hand to run up the working class in a way that corresponds to their strategy to escape the capitalist recession.

At the heart of the failure of the labour movement to resist the Tory offensive lies its acceptance of the view that women should take responsibility for the family.

Women are not working *instead* of caring for their children and elderly relatives; they are doing *both*. Any strategy to force the Tories to back off must involve a ideological counter-attack on the question of the family. If the trade unions fail to take up the issue of nurseries, cuts in state spending and benefits for the unemployed will be unable to prevent their own demise.

Work on the home front

Women are second class citizens in the labour market because of their role as carers in the home. When children come along women have to take time out from the world of work because they have no alternative. This situation is in a weak position to insist on better terms from the boss. Because women have also to care for children at the beginning and end of the school day they are forced to work restricted hours. The fact that most mothers are married means that the state does not expect that their own wage should be enough to survive. The role of the family as the producer and reproducer of labour-power, and as provider for its members even when they are not fully economically active, confines the employers to use women by their subversion.

Yet the men that women prefer have paid in more jobs. Because of their family reasons but this has been accepted by unions; and for example, like,

[illegible]

Some 10 per cent of all working women have dependent children. Only 11 per cent of under fifteen children stay at home. There are 100,000 children in the streets.

the effect of having children on women's pay, productivity and state of mind. If we compare the take-home pay of fathers with non-fathers we find the difference is not income. Childless individuals receive with the national man and we see the same about 30 per cent less. A mother earns a further 30 per cent less than a non-mother.

SUFFERS

A prominent female university professor of women in business produced scientific papers after they had produced children. The investigators found that the women who were most productive as the single women mothers were also the most productive as mothers of the male scientists. The mothers said that they had not been able to cope with their dual role before they had their children and even in a woman's marriage that that housework is generally a very unpleasant task, speaking that women mother. The researchers found that women who were doing a lot of housework in their own jobs were more likely to have a problem coping with the extra work at home. However, those that did not do housework with their husbands were more likely to have a

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however are very poorly paid. If they have one child of their own they will only earn £90, out of which they have to provide food, heating, lighting and have all the problems of isolation faced by other home workers.

Women are also having to spend more time looking after elderly relatives in 'communitarian' balconies as a means of cutting welfare spending. The government calculates that the old people can be cared for in the community for the same cost as looking after them in institutions. Today 33 per cent of the over 85s live with their relatives. Another 10 to 15 per cent are housed in the Government's residential care units. Each year, then, between 100,000 and 150,000 children, usually between 5 and 12, have to walk, speak and become independent with the old people, often for weeks. There are 1.2 million married women looking after dependent adult relatives between 70 and 80 years of age. 20 per cent are over 60 and people being cared for in the community. In addition, the number of handicapped children in special boarding schools, during some respite for parents, has been rising.

SACRIFICE

Women often have to give up their job or reduce their hours to cope with the burden of caring for ailing and aging loved ones. In many cases, a man and a woman face problems as a result. It is clear that the economic impact of aging is very expensive for everything else women do. As the 1990 census report on community care for the elderly in the United States says, "The costs often involve considerable personal sacrifice."

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FIGHTING ON THATCHER'S FRONTLINE

How can we resist the new Tory offensive on local councils? **Claire Foster** points out some pitfalls ahead

The NHS and local councils have escaped drastic cuts in the first two Tory terms. Doctors and nurses remain too popular to be the target of direct attack. But everybody hates the town hall bureaucrats and the squalid and inefficient services over which they preside.

Councils and their workers are set to become the first victims of Thatcher's third term.

Council spending goes on capital items (building and maintaining houses, schools, etc) and on current costs (mainly wages). Capital spending is financed largely by borrowing and has been cut to the bone since the Labour government began the spending squeeze in 1976. Current spending is financed from central government grants, local rates and charges such as council house rents. Rates and charges have been increased as central government grants have been cut. The central government grant has fallen from more than 60 per cent of council spending in 1980 to around 46 per cent this year.

COMPLICITY

Despite all the talk of economic revival, the declining manufacturing base of British capitalism cannot sustain the current level of public spending. The anticipated fall in North Sea oil revenues over the next few years could plunge Britain into a debt crisis unless public spending is brought under tight control.

Back in 1984 the Tories introduced rate-capping, to stop Labour councils compensating for central government cuts by raising the local rates. Around 20 Labour councils, backed by prominent union officials, promised to defy the government, but caved in at the first threat of legal action. Councillors in Liverpool and Lambeth went a step further. Although they soon backed away from fighting the cuts, they went far enough to provoke the wrath of the courts and were disqualified. The other radical councils resorted to financial fiddles to disguise their complicity in implementing Tory cuts.

'Creative accounting' allowed Labour's financial experts to borrow more on the money markets and spend it as additional 'non-prescribed' expenditure. 'Capitalisation' allowed other councils to use funds allocated for capital projects to pay wages and day-to-day running costs. Under new legislation introduced before the election the Tories have blown the whistle on Labour's book-cooking. The plans for extensive privatisation of local services and the introduction of the poll tax, announced last month, amount to a declaration of open war on local councils and all those who work for them or depend on their services.

The Tories have been forthright about their intentions. The controller of the Audit Commission, the government's financial watchdog, estimates that in the next five years the number of full-time jobs in local government could fall by 37 per cent from 1.9m to 1.2m. This is the biggest cut in public sector jobs since the Tories first came to power.

The outcome at the polls on 11 June dashed the hopes of the Labour councils that a Kinnock government would rescue them. Now councils from Gateshead to Greenwich are faced with big



UNION LEADER JACK DROMEY ADMITS THAT HIS APPROACH TO RESISTING THE CUTS MIGHT COST COUNCIL MANUAL WORKERS 100 000 JOBS

deficits between income and budgeted expenditure. They are forced to come to terms with a victorious and vengeful Tory government.

The universal response of Labour councils has been to give in at the outset.

Capitulation has taken different forms. In Haringey, the newly elected local MP Bernie Grant, until recently council leader and still an influential councillor, voted with the Tories to introduce a cuts budget within the constraints of the new law. In Camden, the Labour group's vote to implement cuts provoked a split as a small group of left wingers denounced the decision, though they have yet to resign the Labour whip. In Southwark, councillors still promise 'no cuts in jobs and services' while voting for a balanced budget which makes no specific proposals, but which cannot be implemented without cuts in jobs and services.

SPINELESS

'Better a dented shield than no shield at all' was the specious justification provided by Neil Kinnock during the last rate-capping campaign, for Labour council leaders who opted to pass on the cuts themselves rather than fight the Tories or resign from office. The union leaders go along with this spineless strategy. The TUC is planning a conference on local government in the autumn which specifically excludes any discussion of the threat to jobs. The conference aims are 'to increase public pressure on government and parliament to withdraw the local government Bill and popularise the alternative — better and more accountable services under local not central control'.

Before the election Hackney council noted that 'no authority or trade union felt that this is the time to build a campaign around non-compliance with the legislation.' Now that the cuts are going through it is apparently still not the

time to campaign against them.

Council workers who are on the line cannot afford to take such a complacent approach. Emergency meetings in many councils have attracted large attendances and many workers have voted for defiance. But the outlook of Labour councillors and union officials continues to undermine resistance. Here are some of the dangerous themes that constantly recur in discussions in the councils.

• Services first

Many Labour councillors try to justify cuts in jobs and working conditions on the grounds that these can be made while preserving services. This is how the Camden council leadership explained its 'caring cuts' position in a letter to council workers in July:

'To protect services and jobs...in this difficult situation the council has agreed that an understanding has to be reached with its workforce and trade unions about the redeployment of staff into priority work areas.' (3 July)

Camden has already announced the sacking of temporary workers, the ending of overtime working, cuts in bonus and a freeze on all but essential posts. Similar cuts have been imposed elsewhere, particularly by not filling vacant posts — an especially useful device when council workers who can get out are leaving in droves. But all council services are labour intensive — it is impossible to cut jobs without undermining services.

• Efficiency

'Our first duty is to the members, but they and their unions cannot win the argument for direct public provision of services unless such services are improved. Generally the record is good. However, sometimes it is poor and occasionally a disgrace and now we will have to compete against job-cutting, services-reducing contractors.'

This is how Jack Dromey, national officer of the TGWU,

explains his union's commitment to raising efficiency in local government as a way of keeping private contractors out of council services. Dromey accepts that this approach might lead to the loss of around 100 000 jobs.

Union officials are already pursuing this suicidal strategy. Camden Union officials are suggesting that they invite their own auditor to review the council books, to judge whether the proposed cuts will improve efficiency. More radical union activists point to overpaid lazy managers and to the endemic corruption and freemasonry in the town halls as a source of waste that should be curbed. But once we

accept that cuts are necessary, we can only quibble over who should get the chop.

COLLABORATORS

In Southwark full-time Nupe officers are working with council administrators to find ways of making savings in areas like refuse collection. They are encouraging their members to accept an end to overtime and cuts in bonus payments as well as going along with the council's plans for more flexible working. The consequence is to encourage one group of workers to regard another as inefficient and to point the axe in its direction.

• Consultation

Back in March the trade unions in Gateshead complained to the council that 'we are still waiting for the promised campaign against rate-capping which we were assured would be conducted at the right time and your refusal to give any commitment to the restoration of cuts if and when finance becomes available causes grave concern.' Six months later the Gateshead unions are still waiting for the council to launch its campaign, but in the meantime they have been forced to accept a programme of voluntary redundancies, the sacking of temporary workers, and cuts in overtime and bonus pay. They are in constant discussion with the council over ways of making further savings.

The moral of Gateshead — that collaboration with the council leaves little to chatter for the workers — needs to be learned in unions with more radical traditions. In Hammersmith the unions have issued a total repudiation of council cuts in all areas, which includes a commitment to continuing consultation and negotiation with management. At a time of retrenchment the involvement of union reps in the network of standing committees with the employers can only lead them to sacrifice members' jobs and conditions.

Fighting back

A MEETING of local government activists during the recent **Preparing for Power** conference agreed to five basic propositions to the trade union resistance to council cuts.

• Direct action against the cuts

Council workers should link up with those who depend on council services to organise resistance against the cuts. Mass meetings of council workers from all departments should elect committees which can represent workers across union and sectional divisions and devise appropriate forms of industrial action.

• Defend all jobs and conditions

We cannot allow the employers to pick off the most vulnerable workers — temporary workers, part-timers, ethnic minorities, voluntary sector workers — or leave posts vacant. Treating these divisions weakens our resistance, trying to overcome them can only strengthen us.

• No to all attempts to raise efficiency

The only way to make services more efficient is to employ more staff on better pay, and to better conditions. All attempts to raise efficiency in the context of cuts can only be at our expense.

• For real town hall trade unionism

For too long trade unions in local government have operated as part of personnel management and in the interest of union officials. We need a union that represents council workers — and only workers, not management — in all divisions. We can start by building independent rank and file organisations across sectional divisions in the struggle ahead.

• No to a joint strategy with Labour

Council workers cannot ally with those who are looking for employment in the public sector, and who refuse to resign for Labour groups on councils committed to implementing cuts.

RACISM

A riot of my own

Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, Hutchinson, £7.95

Black men have got a lot of problems
But they don't mind throwing a brick
But white men have too much school
Where they teach you how to be thick...
I wanna riot, a riot of my own
(The Clash, 'White Riot')

Mick Jones and Joe Strummer may not possess Paul Gilroy's sociological finesse, but their lyrics capture with great pungency the essence of Gilroy's thesis. According to Gilroy, capitalism has reconstituted the working class virtually out of existence. It is those on the margins of society — 'the non-class of non-workers' — who today constitute the real force for change. Prominent among these are black youth.

At the same time capitalism no longer rests on exploitation alone: rather, it depends

increasingly on control over 'symbol formation'. This change, argues Gilroy, gives 'cultural politics' its 'cutting edge'. So 'expressive black culture' — from rap to riot — now presents the real challenge to capitalism.

There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack is a study of the cultural forms of racism and of the struggle against it. Gilroy argues that over the past two decades a 'new racism' has emerged based on a consciousness of nationhood, and on an awareness of culture as the bearer of that

consciousness. Blacks are now a problem because they are culturally alien and hence a threat to the integrity of the British nation. For Gilroy, the emergence of this new racism is marked by Enoch Powell's notorious 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968. It came to fruition under Thatcher.

ROOTS

In fact, racism has always been the product of nationalist ideology. Its roots lie in the emergence of the capitalist nation state. The influence of nationalism in the British

working class prepared the ground for the widespread acceptance of racism.

The form that racism takes is constantly changing. What changed towards the end of the sixties was not the 'discursive framework and textual strategies' of the racists but the relationship between the British state and the black community. Primary immigration had been halted; the authorities turned to address the problem of containing black people already here. The shift in strategy meant treating black people as an alien force.



'SING IT, DON'T WRITE IT'—GILROY

It was marked not by Powell's speech, but by the immigration laws of the sixties, culminating in the 1971 Immigration Act, laying the foundations for a comprehensive system of internal control.

ABSURD

Gilroy's failure to understand the material roots of ideology leads him to accept a mystical notion of 'Britishness' not far removed from that of the 'new racists'. Thus, according to Gilroy, the Falklands War 'celebrated the cultural and spiritual continuity which could transcend 8000 miles and call the nation to arms in defence of its own distant people'. He goes as far as to advocate a form of 'Britishness' not 'stained with the memory of imperial greatness'. The absurdity of the notion of a British nationalism unsullied by imperialist exploits escapes Gilroy.

DIASPORA

In a similar vein he posits the notion of a mystical 'black diaspora'. All blacks are bound by 'a common experience of powerlessness somehow transcending history and experienced in racial categories'. The collective identity of this diaspora is provided by 'an intricate web of cultural and political connections' — black

artists such as Afrika Bambaataa and Jah Shaka take the names of African chiefs, young blacks from Hayes to Harlem style themselves the Zulu Nation and blacks everywhere feel for the liberation struggle in South Africa.

Gilroy's account of black culture is interesting, if ponderous. But his obsession with form leads him to glorify its most backward aspects. Rioting is 'joyous'. Rock Against Racism provided a challenge to the 'power of the written word'.

BRICK

Black music is revolutionary because it celebrates 'non-work'. The fact that black unemployment is a major consequence of racism seems to escape Gilroy. Black music, on the other hand, from Ray Charles' 'Hard Times' to Lion Youth's '3 Million on the Dole' is a record of the struggle against poverty and unemployment. Gilroy might deny he is creating 'a mystical unity outside the process of history', but he has lost his grip both on the specific problems which specific black communities face and the answers to them. How do we fight racism? Throw a brick, answers Gilroy.

Kenan Malik

REAL VICTORIAN VALUES

Thatcher's historical fantasy



NO SMILES AT THIS SCHOOL, BERMONDSEY, 1894

James Walvin, *Victorian Values*, Andre Deutsch, £9.95

Did you know that in the 1890s there were 12 postal deliveries daily in London, letters often taking less than four hours to arrive? Or that nude bathing was common among working class people, including women, on the beaches of Victorian Britain? Or that between 1852 and 1899 parliament passed 45 Acts regulating burial? Or that over half of the

babies born in Liverpool's working class districts in 1900 never saw their fifth birthday?

James Walvin, an eminent social historian, has packed his study of Victorian society with such fascinating nuggets of information. In the picture he builds up we can see at once that Mrs Thatcher's 'Victorian virtues' (April 1983) of hard work, thrift, cleanliness, godliness, self-respect and patriotism were, if they existed at all, the property of a privileged minority in

that society. Cleanliness and thrift, for example, were impossible for the mass of people who could not earn enough to feed themselves nor gain access to soap and running water.

The idea of Victorian family life centred around a piano in an over-furnished drawing room, followed by the closing of eyes and thoughts of England, did not apply to the working class. Female and child labour was ruthlessly exploited and sexual abuse by employers was the norm.

There was a dramatic fall in religious belief and attendance, and furious debate about the significance of the advances in science. Crime, prostitution, incest, venereal disease and drug addiction were all probably more common than today.

REALITY

Walvin has little difficulty in demonstrating that the concept of Victorian values as it is used now bears little relation to the diverse reality of nineteenth century life. In fact he shrewdly notes that if anything characterised the Victorian state by the turn of the century it was interventionism in economics, health, welfare and education. But Walvin underestimates the way in which the establishment in that period set about imposing its values on the rest of society.

Men like the writer and educationalist Matthew Arnold were very much aware of the need for the new middle class to secure the hearts and minds of the masses. Religion could no longer be relied upon to do the job. Instead they claimed a moral and cultural superiority based on the virtues of obedience, chastity, hard work, civic pride, education and the arts. These were of course conducive to the disciplining of a working class not used to working by the clock, living in towns and being supervised by police.

The working class was transformed throughout the Victorian period. The



THE QUEEN AND THE MUNSHI, ONE OF HER INDIAN SECRETARIES, 1895

year reign (1837-1901) into the urbanised, literate, patriotic body that we know today. Rioting against royalty in the early years was replaced at the end of the century by popular celebration of the monarch herself. Walvin does show how many of the values of the new bosses came to be accepted by the working class. The labour aristocracy in particular learnt the advantages of emulating their masters. They saved through the Friendly Societies, saw to their own education and that of their children, took the family to church, the seaside and the music

hall. This weaned a section of the working class away from the radicalism and socialism which was taking some root. Of course the majority were condemned to appalling poverty.

When Thatcher harks back to these times she is making history up — but she is doing so very much in the aggressive ideological spirit of her predecessors. In illustrating so vividly the gap between the reality and the image our rulers project, then and now, this book does us a valuable service.

Kate Marshall

Marching for Irish freedom on Saturday



SUPPORT FOR THE DEMONSTRATION SPILLED ON TO THE PAVEMENTS AS THE MARCHERS MADE THEIR WAY UP HOLLOWAY ROAD



THE BANDS STRIKE UP AS THE MARCH SETS OFF

The streets of North London came alive with the sounds of republican marching bands and shouted slogans on Saturday afternoon, when around 2000 people marched on the annual anti-internment demonstration to demand 'Troops out of Ireland! Prisoners out of jail!'

The march was organised by the Irish Freedom Movement to mark the sixteenth anniversary of the introduction of internment in Northern Ireland, when British troops rounded up hundreds of Irish nationalists and incarcerated them without charge or trial in barbed wire compounds and a rotting prison hulk. This year's march was called in solidarity with the 1000 Irish men and women who are still imprisoned on either side of the Irish Sea for supporting the cause of a free and independent Ireland.

The lively demonstration was led by two rousing republican bands — the **Crossmaglen Patriots** from Wishaw near Glasgow and the **Rising Phoenix** from Edinburgh — representing the 17-strong Republican Bands Alliance. It was strongly supported by Irish organisations, labour movement bodies and left wing groups and attracted many young Irish people who have been forced to emigrate to Britain in search of a livelihood.

The 2000 who marched with banners on Saturday might have missed cheering on the magical Maradona at Saturday's big match, but they scored a bigger point against the British warlords by showing that the forces for Irish freedom will not be silenced and are growing stronger.

Joe Boatman



PRISON PROTEST IN SOLIDARITY WITH NAT VELLA AND REPUBLICAN POWS

Sunday 23 August 1.30pm
Strangeways Jail, Manchester

Called by Republican POW Campaign, Britain

Pandora Anderson



Pandora Anderson

AN APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE AT THE POST-MARCH RALLY HEARD SPEECHES FROM THE REPUBLICAN POW CAMPAIGN, THE IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT, STOP THE STRIP SEARCHES CAMPAIGN, REPUBLICAN BANDS ALLIANCE, THE LABOUR PARTY, THE WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (WORKERS PRESS), THE LENINIST

'We have called this march to demand freedom for the 1000 Irish men and women held as prisoners of war in Britain and Ireland. The British government says they are criminals. Yet the British media and Tory MPs insist that a real criminal like SAS captain Simon Hayward, held in Sweden on drug-running charges, is a hero who should be released. Hayward is a hero to the British establishment because one dark morning in February 1985, he led an SAS assassination unit into a field in Scotland, and machine-gunned three young Irish republicans, then shot each one through the head and left their bodies lying face down in pools of blood. This is the horror of the hangman, defending the democracy of the death-squad.

For 15 years of the Irish War, Labour Party leaders who claim to be British socialists have been stabbing in the back of the Irish people. It's time for the sabbing to stop and the solidarity to start. The Irish Freedom Movement is committed to fighting alongside the Irish people to avenge all the crimes Britain has committed against them, from internment without trial to shoot-to-kill. We ask all of



Pandora Anderson

NO MORE BRITISH HEROES

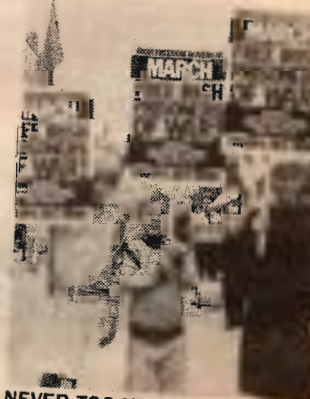
— MICK HUME

you who have marched with us today to join us in the struggle to end the rule of the British gun in Ireland, to chase the SAS out of the shadows of the fields of Strathmore and back across the Irish Sea, and to make sure that there are no more British heroes like captain Hayward with the blood of Irish people on their hands. Victory to the Irish people! Friends out now! **Mick Hume, Irish Freedom Movement**

'Anyone of us could have been the Birmingham Six or the Birmingham Twenty. The Guildford Four could have been the Guildford Forty if the British government had wanted it so. To them, we are all criminals. What are Irish people guilty of? Fighting for Irish freedom and getting Britain out of Ireland — that's not a crime.' **Kevin Colfer, Republican Prisoners of War Campaign**

'The British authorities have increased the use of strip-searching to break the will of Irish prisoners. It has been applied to women as young as 15 and as old as 70, women who are menstruating, breast-feeding or pregnant — one woman lost her baby last year as a result of the stress brought on by strip-searching.' **Anne Hennessy, Stop the Strip Searches Campaign**

'People say we cannot stand up to the state. The Irish have proved them wrong. When I worked with British Intelligence we thought we knew the names and movements of everybody in the Ardara in Belfast. But we didn't know a fart about what the IRA was doing. British Intelligence are stupid because they think they can imprison the spirit of Irish freedom. They cannot.' **Grant French, former British soldier**



NEVER TOO YOUNG...

'Our sympathies for Ireland have kept us going on the long motorway journey down to London. It's good to see more of us here than last year. We have marched in London before and we'll march here again.' **Pat Cassidy, Republican Bands Alliance**



Joe Boatman

END-OF MARCH DRUM ROLL



ARMS IN THE AIR FOR IRISH FREEDOM

THEY ENJOYED THE SPEECHES TOO

'We must remember the sacrifices, the families who've lost sons and daughters in the Irish struggle. The demand for them is not justice, but recognition.' **John McDonnell, Labour Party (personal capacity)**

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Marxism for our time

In September a new series of weekly discussions will start in all areas where we have groups of supporters. The discussions aim to carry on where our recent **Preparing for Power** summer school left off. They will provide a forum for people who want to know more about the Marxist tradition and how it can help us understand the world today.

You don't have to be a supporter to attend, but you should be prepared to do some reading and to attend the discussions regularly. If you want to find out more about them, or if you want to sign up for the course, please contact **Caroline Kelly** who will pass your name on to our local organiser and send you a reading list. Don't delay — the size of the groups will be limited — and in Newcastle and Bristol they are already nearly fully booked.

The course outline is as follows:

- 1 Marx and his analysis of the working class — is it still relevant?
- 2 Marxism and morality
- 3 Marx's theory of the crisis
- 4 Marx's theory of ideology
- 5 Marxism — the Marxist approach
- 6 What is the Soviet Union?
- 7 Class consciousness and the problem of revolution

For full details, reading lists, etc, write to **BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX**, or ring us on **(01) 729 0414**

the next step

Q ■ When is a drug-smuggling terrorist a media hero?

A ■ WHEN HE'S A BRITISH SAS ASSASSIN

Captain Simon Hayward, the British Army officer tried for drug-smuggling in Sweden, may be a blue-eyed boy to the British media. But to the nationalist people of Strabane in Northern Ireland, he's a hated assassin.

Joan Phillips explains why

Swedish police intercept a Jaguar driven by Briton Simon Hayward and stuffed with £500 000 worth of cannabis. They arrest Hayward and 11 others including five 'Orange People' implicated in an international drugs racket. Hayward claims he is on a skiing holiday, but Swedish police find no skis. Police hold Hayward on remand, but cannot work out why a two-bit cannabis-carrying crook should be visited by a procession of consuls and dignitaries from the British embassy. They investigate. Hayward turns out to be a British Army captain who served in the SAS in Northern Ireland. They speculate that the drugs were destined to pay for anonymous arms for use by the SAS on sensitive undercover missions. Their suspicions are confirmed when they are warned of a bid to free Hayward by four former SAS comrades.

SAVAGERY

Enter Tory MP John Gorst and the *Sun* to put the cynical Swedes right. Gorst goes to visit Hayward in jail and comes out convinced that he is innocent. He believes the police are holding Hayward as 'a sprat to catch a mackerel' in the war against International Drug-smuggling Inc. How does Gorst know Hayward is innocent of any crime? He has done 'brave work' in Northern Ireland and is therefore

'an extremely gallant soldier'. The *Sun* too puts up a staunch defence of Britain's unsung hero, who 'forbade his lawyers to use his heroic undercover Army activities in Northern Ireland in his defence'.

Exactly what heroics did Hayward get up to in Northern Ireland?

'He laid his life on the line daily, master-minding a series of hush-hush hammer blows against the IRA,' declared the *Sun*. 'Among his many secret successes was the destruction of a notorious IRA death squad.' This particular piece of savagery by our SAS hero might be news to the sewer scribes of the *Sun*, but it is still remembered with bitterness by Irish nationalists in Strabane, where the killing occurred, and throughout the Six Counties. The 'IRA death squad' in question consisted of 16-year old David Devine, his brother Michael (22), and 20-year old Charlie Breslin, who were shot to pieces by 117 SAS bullets as they made their way across a field in the early hours of a February morning in 1985. Then the silent, cowardly killers came out from their hiding places and shot the three dying boys through the head. Their swollen faces were unrecognisable even to their families.

The *Sun* claimed that the three 'heavily armed terrorists' were 'on their way to rocket attack a police station'. The truth was that the three shoot-to-kill victims were not about to attack anybody. They



NO HERO: HAYWARD

were simply moving some arms from one place to another. As for Hayward 'master-minding' the operation, even somebody of his slender intellectual capabilities could not go wrong when his men were led to the killing field by an IRA informer and told to shoot-to-kill on sight.

The crowning glory for the *Sun*'s 'handsome Cambridge-born officer' was his refusal to leave the scene of the slaughter 'because he was determined to see the SAS guys got away safely' from the large crowd of hostile locals who gathered at the foot of the field. But Hayward had a different motive. The security forces left the bodies lying in the field for seven hours and wouldn't let anybody near them until they had removed the

cartridge shells to disguise how the killings came about.

Hayward's supposed 'gallantry' was a cowardly attempt to cover up three cold-blooded killings, so the authorities could lie through their teeth when the case went to court.

Eight months later the IRA assassinated the man who set up the Strabane killings. Fearing that the republican movement would soon be coming for the man who carried them out, MI5 transferred Hayward to a military intelligence post in Whitehall. He was due to start his new job, so the *Sun* claimed, when he returned from the 'holiday' which led to his arrest and imprisonment in Sweden.

Hayward's defenders have denounced his imprisonment as a 'travesty of justice' and castigated the Swedes for their 'primitive judicial system'. But Hayward was standing facing a jury when the guilty verdict was read out in a Swedish court this week, and got away with a soft five-year sentence. He did not end up on his stomach with a back full of bullets from a military execution squad meting out a death sentence in a dark and muddy field.

CUSHY

Tory MPs have condemned the Swedish authorities for holding Hayward in an 'atrocious and notorious' top security jail, from which he emerged 'pale and tired' to face trial. Hayward has spent his

four-month spell inside in a comfortable cell equipped with a radio and TV, reading British newspapers, exercising in a gymnasium, and receiving visitors from the British embassy.

This is a far cry from the conditions in which Irish republicans are incarcerated.

KILLER

They are convicted in no-jury courts, often after having confessions beaten out of them in British torture centres. They serve their time in hell-holes like the H-Blocks of the Maze Prison, where they are brutalised by prison screws, subjected to intimate body searches, and denied basic rights. Many spent five years in cells smeared with their own shit in protest at being deprived of the right to be treated as prisoners of war. In 1981 10 republican prisoners emerged from their captivity in coffins, after dying on hunger-strike fighting for political status.

Men like Hayward, who have butchered Irish nationalists in a war to deny the Irish people their right to self-determination, are cheered as heroes of democracy by British politicians and gutter journalists. The court found Hayward guilty of being a cannabis courier and took away five years of his life. To the Irish people he is a cold-blooded SAS killer who robbed them of three lives.