

# Big Flame

for Socialism

paper of the revolutionary socialist organisation Big Flame No. 77 August 1979

## Ireland: End the War



# TROOPS OUT NOW!

**IT'S WAR.** A war that's continued non-stop for ten years, that's been going intermittently for eight centuries. A war involving hundreds of thousands of people, taking sides. A war where one side is the biggest concentration of British combat troops anywhere in the world. A war costing the British government nearly £1 billion a year. A war which people in Britain can't afford to neglect.

For in this war, like in all wars, it's only possible to do three things. You can support the Irish, you can support the British, you can call a plague on both houses. But that's all the choice one has. You can't - unless you're an ostrich - ignore it.

And in Britain, you can't pretend it's not happening or doesn't matter: that means letting the British government go on doing what it wants.

And what it wants is pretty easy to understand, despite the confusions promoted by government and by the British media. The present phase of the age-long struggle started when the nationalist people rose against oppression: when they said 'no more'. And the present phase can only end when that rising succeeds or if the British army gets what it wants and smashes the resistance.

For it's all too often forgotten or neglected just what has caused the people's rising. It was caused by systematic discrimination in housing, employment and the vote. It was caused by living with the daily threat of assassinations, of cops and Loyalist thugs running riot in the nationalist ghettos. It was caused by mass Loyalist/state attacks on unarmed demonstrators peacefully protesting such conditions. It was caused, in 1969, by the reality of Loyalists (including 'B-Special' police) carrying out the long-standing threat: homes burned out, people killed, more deaths

averted only by fighting on the barricades till people were fit to drop. It was caused, in 1970, by the reality of the British army imposing curfews, saturating whole communities with potentially deadly CS-gas, sealing off whole areas and then wrecking homes in house-to-house searches, in a vain attempt to remove the arms the people needed so vitally for their own defence. It was caused, in 1971, by internment without trial: hundreds of people from the nationalist community carted off and in many cases tortured.

*Continued on centre pages*



## DEMONSTRATION

*'We call on the British Government to commit itself to a policy of withdrawal'*

Assemble; Speakers Corner, London  
Sunday August 12th, 2.30 pm

## MARCH WITH THE TROOPS OUT NOW CONTINGENT

August 4-12th is a week of action for TROOPS OUT

## ABORTION: Why we must fight the Corrie bill

THE 1967 Abortion Act made abortion legal for the first time in this country and available under certain circumstances on the NHS. Death from septic abortion, caused by back street abortions, has disappeared as a result of this Act. Despite the obvious gains made by the Act, it never aimed to give women the right to choose about their bodies:

*"It is not the intention of the promoters of the (then) Bill to leave a wide open door for abortion on request."*

The Corrie Bill aims to:

- Reduce the time limit for late abortions from 28 weeks to 20 weeks (However, it is likely that under pressure from the British Medical Association this will be modified to 24 weeks).
- Change the ground for abortion from "risk to the mother's or child's health" to "grave risk to mother or child's health".
- Tighten up on the regulations governing the relations between doctors and the referral agencies.

- Strengthen the conscience clause of the 1967 Act so that doctors and nurses can refuse to perform abortions on moral rather than religious grounds (which it was before).

There is no doubt that this is a reactionary attack on abortion legislation and that we should oppose any attempt to restrict existing facilities. The Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology and

by Big Flame Women's Commission.

the British Medical Association say that there is no need to change the terms of the 1967 Act. So what is behind this attack on abortion facilities?

In the period leading up to the General Election right-wing anti-abortion groups like Life and SPUC ran a carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign with a number of stories of foetuses crying after being aborted appearing in the papers. When investigations proved them

to be untrue, little coverage was given to the evidence. As a result of this we have the Corrie abortion amendment. More importantly it has diverted attention away from the issue of early and safe abortion on demand and into the field of moral and emotional arguments about the viability of foetuses and up to which point abortions should be performed.

Big Flame believes that abortion should be a woman's right to choose. Obviously day care abortion needs to be extended further and we should oppose any restrictions on the 1967 Act and fight for the full implementation of the provisions, such as day care abortion available under it. If the time limit is reduced to 20 weeks, this means effectively that abortions will not be performed after 16 weeks. With the other restrictions that Corrie is proposing which will cause more delays than there already are for women seeking abortions, this clause

will prevent many women from obtaining abortion at all! We have to recognise that no woman makes the decision to have an abortion lightly and the decision to have a late abortion even less so.

At the moment the Corrie Bill is at the committee stage. It will not be voted on until the Autumn. The TUC is pledged to call a demonstration against it. It's really important to start mobilising now for the Autumn, doing street leafletting, collecting signatures for the NAC petition, and even writing letters to MPs newspapers and calling local radio stations, since this can have an important effect in determining the vote.



Not the church, not the state  
Women will decide their fate.  
With a nicknack paddywack give the  
dog a bone  
John Corrie piss off home.





# FEELING DRAINED

## The Oil Shortage?

THE £4 petrol limit at Watford Gap service station sure wasn't much cop. Our 1948 Buick does 14 miles to the gallon — and that's with the windows closed and the radio aerial down. Stafford was the nearest town when we ran out. John and I tossed a coin for who was going to walk it to the nearest station — he lost. So here I am with time on my hands and an article to write on the oil crisis.

Oil's a funny product — it's not like other commodities. With things like shoes and glasses, manufacturers have to increase their production to increase their profits — but not oil. There are so few large producers of oil that if one of them cuts back on production, there's a world shortage and prices zoom up. And that's what's been happening since the fall of the Shah of Iran — there's less oil coming onto the world market than the industrial nations want for consumption (to be precise there is a daily shortfall on the world markets of 2 billion barrels). Now oil exporting countries like Saudi Arabia and Mexico could meet this shortfall by increasing the flow from their oil wells but they won't do this for two good reasons; firstly

a rise in production would make price rises more difficult and secondly, their oil reserves are not infinite and they don't want to produce more than their industrialisation plans can cope with. That is to say that they want to make sure that they can re-invest the profits from oil sales in industry and not be left with millions of petro-dollars (dollars from oil sales) which they can do nothing with except invest in Western companies.

### TREMENDOUS WASTE

In any case, they are telling the Western powers that the way out of the crisis is less consumption and not more production. And they are quite right to point out the tremendous waste of oil and other energy products that goes on in the industrialised countries, especially the

United States. In the States, the government keeps controls on the price of petrol (it's 45p a gallon!) and can't do much about cars that have an average consumption of 15 mpg. Per head consumption of oil in the States is double that of this country and god knows how many times that of countries like Mexico. The oil-producing countries are fed up with a situation in which they just sit back and watch the industrialised nations burn up the world's oil reserves. And, quite rightly, they are no longer prepared to let it go on.

### A LOONEY SYSTEM

Of course, there's nothing definite about what the oil reserves are. Since as the price of oil goes up, wells which were not economical to exploit become worthwhile. And as the price of oil soars, other sources of energy like coal shale and the sun become an "economic" proposition. In fact you get an idea about how looney a system capitalism is when you discover that world oil reserves refer to what is "economical" to

exploit and not the known reserves. Some people would like to think that in fact there is no oil shortage — that it's all a conspiracy of the oil companies. That's bull-shit. Over the last twenty years, the seven major oil companies (the "seven sisters") have had to hand over much of their control over oil production to the oil-producing countries. Maybe it's true that on some occasions they put up pump prices before the price of their stocks rise; but in fact oil company profits are nothing exceptional as capitalist profits go when you take into consideration that it's a high risk business with huge investment costs.

And, all these howls in the national press about OPEC putting up their prices is pure hypocrisy as if British and American companies don't put up their prices to what the market will bear. But this anti-OPEC (and anti-Arab) rhetoric has an important function — to prepare public opinion for an armed intervention in the Middle East. The US and French governments have well advanced plans to carry out such an intervention in the event of oil supplies being further threatened.

Some of the national press have an easy solution to our oil shortage problems — let's grab "our" oil that's in the North Sea.

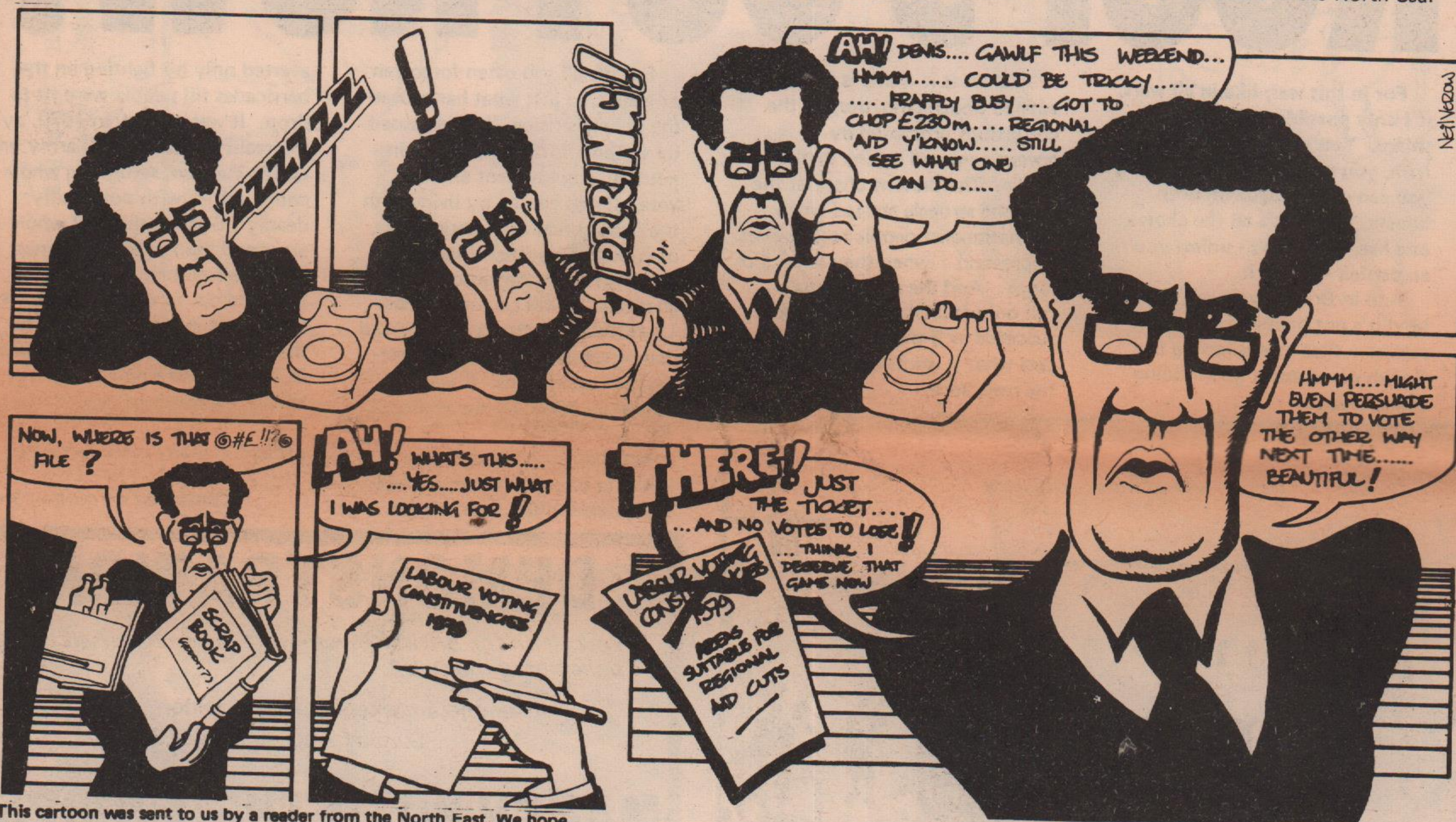
## AND WHAT ABOUT THE NORTH SEA OIL?

The only trouble is it's not ours — exploration rights belong to private oil-companies. 65% of the discovered oil in the North Sea is in fields owned by foreign companies. And in the beginning of the North Sea bonanza, drilling rights were handed out for free! — because the government wanted to do the oil companies a favour. In fact, the British government has been so badly ripped off by the oil companies in the North Sea negotiations that it is the laughing stock of the other oil producing nations. Keith Joseph is planning to run down BNO (the British National Oil Corporation) which will result in an even greater domination by private companies in the North Sea. "Our" oil is a good joke. BP, which right now is 51% government owned, exports 70-80% of the oil it gets out of the North Sea!

## AN IRREVERSIBLE SHIFT OF POWER

Before we can begin to decide what we can do about the oil crisis, we must try to understand it. It is very clearly an irreversible shift in the balance of power away from the major oil companies to the governments of the oil-producing countries. An immediate consequence of this shift is that the Western industrialised nations will very quickly have to find alternative sources of energy (they are bound to go for nuclear energy) and reduce consumption patterns. In this situation, it is important for socialists to pose decentralised, collectivised forms of living and working as against the wasteful individualism that characterises capitalist consumption, for instance, we must defend public transport as against commuters taking their car to work, or again, district heating schemes as opposed to each house having its own heating unit, which in any case many working people cannot afford to run. And we must recognise that if there are oil shortages, we should not be afraid to argue for rationing as a fair means of sharing out. Rationing may remind us of the war but it's a whole lot fairer than allowing the market (price rises) to decide who does and does not get what petrol there is going. Right now, we have a situation where ambulances in London are off the road because they've got no petrol — maybe the idea is for sick people to get fit by having to jog to hospital!

by a (stranded) member of Coventry Big Flame



This cartoon was sent to us by a reader from the North East. We hope other readers are encouraged to make their own contribution to the paper.

Standing order for periodical payments.

TO: Name of your bank Date 19\_\_

Please make the payments detailed below and debit my/our account.

TITLE OF ACCOUNT TO BE DEBITED: (Your name)	ACCOUNT NUMBER	CHECKED
	0	
AMOUNT IN FIGURES	AMOUNT IN WORDS	
£		
DATE OF PAYMENTS	DATE & AMOUNT OF FIRST PAYMENT	DATE & AMOUNT OF FINAL PAYMENT
	£	£
ACCOUNT TO BE CREDITED: or Name and Address of Payee if payment is to be made direct.	ACCOUNT NO. OF PAYEE IF KNOWN	
BIG FLAME NEWSPAPER	00087318	
BANK & BRANCH: to which payment is to be made.	BRANCH CODE NUMBER IF KNOWN	
LLOYDS BANK LTD, INDIAN BUILDINGS, WATER STREET, LIVERPOOL L69 2BT	30-95-11	
NAME & REFERENCE TO BE QUOTED: (if any)		
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: (if any)		

Payments are to continue until date of final payment shown above, inclusive, or until you receive further notice in writing from \*merany one of us (in the case of a Joint Account).

\*Delete as necessary. Your signature.

AN OFFICER and four NCOs face court martial proceedings as a result of a year-long investigation at the Light Infantry Training Camp at Shrewsbury.

The officer admitted four charges of assault against young soldiers and one offence of encouraging other recruits to urinate on their friends.

The court martial was told of a cruel ordeal undergone by some of the recruits. Young soldiers were pinned down while water was flooded across towels wrapped around their faces, giving a sensation of drowning.

Squadron Leader Roger Jones, defending, said the offences had been committed to make the recruits try harder. (Birmingham Evening Mail 4th July 1979)

## seeing red

"IF PEOPLE demand brotherhood, dignity and self-respect, that's fine — but they can find it equally well without more money". An equal society would be "wretched... grubby and unpleasant". It's best to leave the have-nots to their poverty; it's mainly caused by "gross mismanagement, alcoholism and some unforeseen disaster". "...it is unnecessarily sensitive for the rich to worry about displaying their wealth.... since the 'Working Class' enjoy a good show." From a new book "Equality" by the Tory Minister of Industry, Sir Keith Joseph, quoted in Bristol Voice.

## WHAT A GIVEAWAY

A RECENT report has suggested that the down-trodden British executive probably earns as much — in real terms — as any continental. In fact, after the Budget, managerial living standards have almost become a political embarrassment. There are suggestions that perks should be trimmed down, as a means of convincing shop floor workers that the tax changes will mean something. We can predict the CBI's counter-argument: cut the perks and you create unemployment. Such is the crazy logic of capitalism, that they are probably right. Every fourth car on the road is paid for by a company — set against tax, of course. And what about all those catering workers who stand to lose out?

On our visit, both the halibut, grilled with (misspelt) Bearnaise, and fillets of sole Gallieni were un-delectable, and a good deal of trouble had been taken over the vegetables. Portions and prices are both demanding but the menu is more original and the skills more evident than is usually the case in expense-account restaurants. Lunch only — allow at least £15 a head. (The Observer)

THE TRUTH is that current reductions in public spending are essential if future improvements in the quality of our public services are ever to be possible. Sir Geoffrey Howe, Tory Chancellor, Guardian, 24.7.79

REGARDLESS OF their real feelings about unemployment, the Tories have got to be careful what they say in public. In private, it's a different story as a revealing tit-bit from a recent autobiography shows. (A growing concern, by Nigel Brookes, published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson) In January 1972, Nigel Brookes and Victor Matthews, the Trafalgar House and Daily Express tycoons, were invited to dinner at Chequers, the Prime Minister's out of town residence. The discussion turned to the notorious soon to be abandoned lame duck policy.

"Mr Heath then continued to say that, throughout history, civilisations had developed where they were useful, and declined when they were not: if Clydeside came into the latter category, it was just too bad." Note, Edward Heath is generally regarded as being far to the left of Sir Keith Joseph.

# subscribe paper money

A record month for donations. Coventry BF member £40; London sympathiser £5; Frankfurt reader £2; Sheffield BF £5, London BF member £5; Preston supporter £5; BF reader £1.50; collection at Nottingham meeting £23; Manchester BF £12; Liverpool member £2.25. That's £110.75 and there are standing orders for £12 promised which will bring our monthly total to £34. THANKS!

We have had to reduce the size of this month's paper to save money. So we apologise to all of you whose articles could not be printed. Next month we will be back to 16 pages. Deadlines are Thursday August 16th for features and Wednesday August 22nd for news.

I want to subscribe to the paper  Sub rates: £2.75 per year, Britain & Ireland. £1.40 for 6 months. Abroad: £3.50 & £1.75.

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# ENGINEERS PLAN ONE DAY STRIKES— BUT WILL THEY WORK?

Big Flame Industrial Commission

MUCH AGAINST their will, the leaders of the unions in the engineering industry were pushed into supporting industrial action to back their national pay claim.

Only 42 hours after the Confederation of Ship Building and Engineering Unions (the 'Confed') had decided in favour of strikes and an overtime ban, the AUEW President Terry Duffy was suggesting there might be a way of avoiding disruption - through productivity deals.....

Duffy, John Boyd and the other right wing leaders were in fact willing to settle long ago for much less than the original claim, submitted back in February. But pressure from shop stewards, notably in Sheffield, led to the AUEW National Committee passing a resolution in favour of sticking to the £80 claim and at least some concessions this year on hours and holidays. The Confed endorsed this position. And so when the employers' federation (EEF) refused to go above £70 on July 10th, the Confed announced that a national overtime ban would start on July 30th, and one day strikes would be held on three consecutive Mondays in August, starting August 6th.

## DANGER OF SELL OUT

There is a clear danger however that the Confed executive, dominated by the AUEW, will do a deal before the industrial action has really got underway. The kind of action called for, and its timing, is also likely to play into Duffy and Boyd's hands. If, as is quite likely, the summer holidays undercut an effective response to the overtime ban and one day strikes, it will be easier for the union leaders to say that there is not much support for the full claim anyway and an early compromise the best option.

Further confusion has arisen from the different interpretations of the Confed's decision. Whilst some unions have said the one day strikes are recommended, AUEW officials have been saying it's an executive instruction and therefore factory votes are not to be taken.

The former position is being used in some areas to avoid any action at all. The AUEW position will be carried out in the better organised factories - but there is not likely to be much enthusiasm. Many workers stand to gain very little from the pay claim since they

earn more than £80 (or £60 for labourers) already, and as far as hours of work go, the best they can get this year is one hour off the basic week.

One day strikes are rarely popular. Too often they are used by union leaders as token action. But whilst the Broad Left was calling earlier on for tougher action for the full claim they are now stuck with one day strikes for only parts of the claim. They hope that calls for escalating the action will receive more support once the overtime ban has begun.

The push to escalate the strikes will be coordinated by a new unofficial committee set up from a meeting of 300 stewards in Sheffield on July 7th. This event was significant, as the committee is the first national unofficial organisation based on shop stewards committees in the industry for 20 years. But the track record in engineering of the main political force behind this initiative - the Communist Party and the Broad Left, in not inspiring. With a strategy based on electing left leaders in the union, their supporters were demoralised and confused as they watched Hugh Scanlon move further

and further to the right, and saw Bob Wright defeated by Duffy in the election for Scanlon's job as AUEW President

## NEED FOR ESCALATION

Meanwhile, shop steward and shop floor organisation took a severe hammering under Labour's Social Contract - a policy which Scanlon himself did so much to promote. Now the Tories are in Government, it's easier for the left to take a more militant stand. The one day strikes and overtime ban should certainly be supported as a first step in a campaign for higher basic wages and shorter hours. But the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF) and the Tories are going to be a tougher nut to crack than many people suppose. The EEF's document earlier this year instructing their member companies to take a tougher line in disputes illustrates their resolve. And the recent defeat of the TASS

strike at Davy-Loewy in Sheffield - seen as a test case by the EEF - shows that the tougher line is no paper tiger.

Its going to need more militant action, more democracy in the unions and a clearer argument for socialist alternatives for this winter's fightback to be successful.

## THE FULL CLAIM SUBMITTED WITH SUPPORTING STATEMENTS BY THE ENGINEERING UNIONS BACK IN FEBRUARY, INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- \* £80 minimum time rate for craftsmen, with pro rata increases for other grades.
- \* A planned reduction to a 35 hour working week with no loss of earnings.
- \* Minimum 5 weeks paid holiday at average earnings.
- \* Reduction in overtime but increased rates for overtime work.
- \* Average earnings for lay-offs.
- \* Adult rate at 18.
- \* Maternity leave agreement giving 18 weeks paid leave after 12 months service.



## Chrysler, Talbot: new name, same struggle

SINCE THE beginning of July, workers at the Talbot (ex-Chrysler) plants at Ryton and Stoke in Coventry have been on strike.

The strike which has just gone through the summer period looks likely to last a long time. One of the main problems is that workers in the other Talbot plants (eg Linwood in Scotland) have not come out.

What is clearly needed in this situation is rank and file links between the militants in the different Talbot plants since, as the interview points out, the Combine Committee does not represent rank and file interests.

Big Flame spoke to a member of the Strike Committee.

*What was management's response to your 25% wage claim?*

An offer that they claimed increased their national wage bill by 13%. Incorporated into it were parity payments which meant higher rises for some grades in some plants. The offer which works out as 5.5% for production workers in Coventry meant a rise of 29% for some workers in the Birmingham parts plant; progress chasers have been offered £11. It's all part of the move towards national bargaining which we are against. We think that rank and file organisation has strength at shop-floor level and so the plant should be the bargaining unit.

*The offer is obviously an attempt to divide Chrysler workers of one plant from those of another: has the Combine Committee been of any use in bringing about unity?*

Not much. The militants aren't on the Combine Committee - which, in any case, relies too much on management for the

## Big Flame Interview

organisation of its meetings, travelling, etc. The main problem facing us is that Linwood is still working. Linwood militants will be trying to get their plant out after summer shut-down but it is harder for them since Linwood workers stand to gain much more from the offer than workers in the Coventry plants.

*This is the first strike at Talbot since the company was taken over by Peugeot. Is the take-over affecting things?*

Peugeot are a notoriously anti-union company. I think they wanted a confrontation with Ryton which is where the Alpine is assembled. Since they can import Alpines from France as a substitute for the Ryton assembled ones, Peugeot management reckoned that they could win a long drawn out confrontation at the plant. They were not banking on Stoke coming out as well. Stoke is where the kits for Talbot Iran production are made and, apparently, kits are needed, since production in Iran is picking up.

*What are your prospects for winning the strike?*

We will have to step up the pickets after the summer holiday and make sure all Talbot and Peugeot gear coming through the ports is boycotted. The workers seem very determined and it would be a long struggle.



THE PEOPLE of Moss Side, Manchester, are fighting the plans for a "mini-motorway", eight lanes wide, which would cut their community in half. The Tory G.M.C. wants to make life easier for Cheshire commuters, airport users, and for commercial traffic. They're prepared to spend £3½million on ¼ mile of road, in one of Manchester's most neglected districts. The road will do away with 72 perfectly good houses, the gardens of eight more, a pub,

two clubs, a bookies and a chunk out of the park! The road will be almost impossible to cross, barricaded off with railings, with only four ways over - mainly high footbridges and long ramps. Not much use for the old, or ill, or people with young kids. The road will be dirty, noisy, and dangerous.

Princess Road Action Movement (PRAM) has been formed to fight the motorway. So far 3,000 people have signed a petition and last Saturday a demonstration of

local people and kids wound its way round the streets of Moss Side, collecting support for the campaign. PRAM is demanding a public meeting so that the GMC are forced to justify their plans to the people who will be mainly affected. They are also proposing an alternative road plan, a dual carriageway with pelican crossings, a simple, cheap improvement, that would not divide the community.

Contact PRAM at (061) 226.1600; 226.3529; 226.7084

## socialist unity - Future Open

SOCIALIST UNITY (SU) is to maintain a skeleton national structure with a view to preparing for an intervention in next years local council elections. This was the main decision of the recent Socialist Unity National delegate meeting in Manchester.

The meeting began with an assessment of the SU campaigns in the general election. Every area reported on the positive experience of SU, and the way that local groups had been able to build up local class struggle politics

through the standing of candidates. It was felt however that the small size of SU, in such an important national election, had meant we remained marginal - even though SU had made a major national contribution to making Ireland an election issue.

The assessment of the SU experience - since its beginning two years ago - is to be written up by the continuing steering committee; and this assessment will include some of the more practical lessons we have learnt about running election campaigns.

The discussion on next years local elections is still very open.

There is no doubt that with the massive Tory cuts, local government will become an important focus of political struggle and militancy. But with Labour out of power nationally, and with some Labour councils fighting the cuts, or appearing to be, not all comrades are convinced of the need for or possibility of an independent class struggle election campaign. And secondly, as struggles develop under the Tories, the last thing anyone in SU wants is to cling to the specific SU alliance, but rather we have to consider what broader class struggle bodies will be needed to carry things forward.



# Save Lives Not Money

In the Mansfield, Nottinghamshire District Health Authority, a movement is growing to stop massive cuts in the health service. John Freeman, NUPE Area Organiser, detailed the cuts to a 300 strong meeting of health workers, trade unionists and users of the NHS. The Health Authority propose to close wards and small hospitals that will particularly effect the elderly, diabetics, women and children. The Health Finance Action Group, a broadly-based local group, has distributed thousands of useful leaflets outlining the situation and its Chairman, Dr. Norman Burns, made an appeal to the meeting to oppose the cuts. The main issue, of course, was how to do this.

Local Labour MP, Frank Heynes, rightly pointed out the reason why all trade unionists should oppose the hospital closures: an accident in such as one of the local pits would urgently need health facilities. He further explained how Mansfield has always been lower than the national average in terms of health funding. Unfortunately, reflecting a lot of right-wing Labour Party thinking, he took this to an absurd conclusion, attacking the reprieve of the London womens hospital - the EGA - and the better financed Nottingham University Hospital, insisting that less for them would mean more for Mansfield. This divisive viewpoint was opposed by speaker after speaker from the floor, explaining that we all need a free national health service, and shouldn't waste our efforts fighting each other for crumbs on a District, Area or Regional basis.

Let's hope that HFAG and NUPE build on their strengths and continue to inform and mobilise health and other workers as well as users of the health service in campaigns against the health cutbacks, but a campaign that recognises that, in different degrees, working class people all over the country are suffering from health cutbacks.

The HFAG leaflets are available from 49, West Hill Drive, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire.



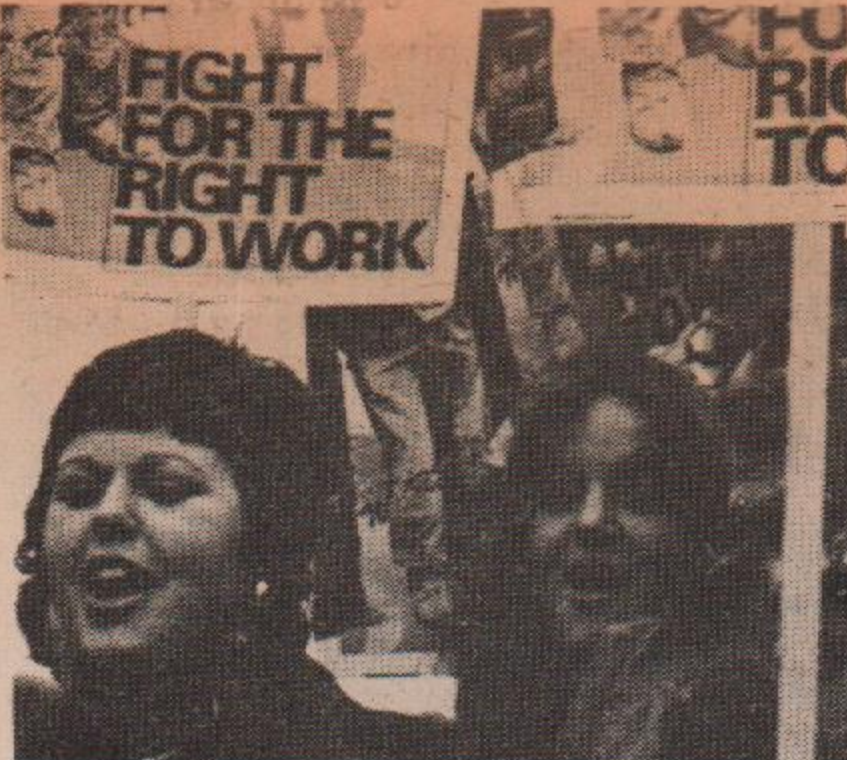
## Yop, Step and Jump

Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), Special Temporary Employment Project (STEP) and other Manpower Services (MSC) job creation schemes were cutback under the budget YOPs, the scheme which employs young people on dirt-cheap rates is being cut the least, while STEP, an adult programme with better wages, has been cutback by two thirds.

One group of STEP workers in Nottingham recently went on strike to get a promised wage increase. This is their second taste of strike action, on the previous occasion to win an improvement of conditions, both times they've been successful. Other Nottingham workers, at a 100 strong meeting on July 3rd, launched a campaign which aims not only to end the MSC cuts but also expand the useful work pro-

grammes. Many STEP schemes, like Nottingham's adventure play scheme, are community managed and contain some degree of workers democracy. The campaign hopes to put on a city-wide display of the useful work carried out by STEP and YOPs projects to attract support and will also oppose the low wage rates some workers get. A successful campaign will need, in the long run, to find common cause with the many workers in the public sector and private industry who are suffering cutbacks.

For more information write to AGE 135a Mansfield Road, Nottingham.



# FIGHTBACK ON THE OFFENSIVE

LAST MONTH, *Fightback*, the rank and file pressure group of health workers and others active in the fight to save, and improve the NHS, held a national conference in London.

The aim of the conference was to draw militants together as the Tories get into the swing of their massive cuts, and to build on the accumulated experience of three years of fighting the Labour run-down.

As the conference broke up into workshops, many of the successful campaigns were described. These had usually won by the breadth of their mobilization from consultants to miners, and by the solidarity and energy, of the tactics, such as work-ins and occupations of administrative offices. But beyond these successes were two realizations. Firstly that often retaining a service in one area only meant cuts in another, less well organized area. Secondly, that many campaigns failed because they started from a defensive position when cuts were announced and not from a position of knowledge of the health needs and services in a community.

To counter these weaknesses, there were two possible ways forward. One is to build up the regional organization of Fight Back, so that one area does not get played off against another. The other is to begin looking at health services now. An example is the Coventry Workers' Enquiry into local health provision, initiated by the trades council but taken up by a wide group of people and organizations. They plan to produce a pamphlet on Coventry early next year, so that they know what they want to fight for in Coventry and what

is not being provided as well as what is being cut.

The cuts have to be taken seriously. It is more than just a run down of the NHS. The Tories are out to destroy the whole concept of the Welfare State and to return to the Victorian idea of private practice for the rich and an emergency service for the poor. The problem of private practice loomed large over the conference, as more and more sections of workers, including some unorganized blue collar workers, are offered BUPA cover in lieu of wages or as an extra perk. It was at the conference as well that news came through of the Tory promise to retain the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital provided it was financed by charity and the women's movement (!).

The conference ended with a knowledge of the need to re-state basic socialist principles.

\* That health care must be available as a right to everyone regardless of means.

\* That a basic code of practice as put forward by the Rank and File conference must be fought for in all disputes within the health sector.

This is now a crucial period for Fight Back as a national organization. The regional development must be strengthened. New initiatives to make our own demands for the health services we want must be encouraged all over the country.

FIGHT BACK, 30 Camden Road, London NW1. Tel 01-560 3431 ext 679.

## Notts. Evening Post

# Reinstate the 28

The struggle to re-instate the 28 journalists sacked from the Nottingham Evening Post goes on. Mass pickets, co-ordinated by the local trades council and supported by trade unionists all over the country are taking place to keep up the pressure on the Newspaper Society and EP management to re-instate the 28 sacked for obeying a strike call. The most recent picket on June 16th attracted a big turnout.

A central plank of the strategy for re-instatement is the weekly production by the sacked journalists of 'Nottingham News'. This is partly financed by the conventional methods of sales and advertising revenue as well as donations from journalists across the country to pay the workers' wages.

However, some journalists and many local trade unionists are growing increasingly critical of the 'News'.

### CRITICISM OF THE 'NEWS'

From the beginning, the paper never intended to be a 'strike sheet' but, filling the gap in a city whose



local paper is fiercely Tory, tried to provide an attractive alternative for those who don't support the 'Hang 'Em and Flog 'Em' approach of the Evening Post. (There's no doubt such a paper is welcome, especially since the 'News' with more sympathy 'progressive events'). A close relationship with the now right wing city Labour Party was sought, going so far as to re-write 'in English' their election manifesto. However, the 'News' has found that exclusive Council Chamber news comes their way less often than they hoped.

### NOT STRUGGLE ORIENTED

The main criticisms of the 'News', however, are these. Firstly, they don't properly cover their own or other people's struggles, fearing that this would reduce their sales. They have a duty to do this, not only because the NUJ pays the piper but because during the last six years at least 295 jobs have been lost, including those of the 28 journalists, in a battle with a hard-line management who have pioneered new technology and refused to tolerate workers'

resistance, including unionisation,

### SEXISM

The other big criticism of the 'News' is its recent marked drop in editorial standards. Not only do they sometimes sneak in a milder version of the outvoted page three newsgirl feature, but so many features play on people's frustrations with headlines like 'Girls are getting shaplier...' Real gutter press stuff.

Despite this blurring of the nature of the dispute at the Evening Post, it is important to join the mass picket to fight for the re-instatement of the 28; for the freedom of workers to organise and to check the ravages of the 'new technology'.

Send cash to Nottingham NUJ Dispute Fund, 14 Jenned Road, Arnold, Nottingham.

MASS PICKET  
12 am Sat. September 1st  
Evening Post Building,  
Nottingham

## Snap, Crackle - Lockout

HAVE YOU noticed the lack of Kellogg's cereals in the shops lately? No, it's not due to a world shortage of maize or rice. It all came about when 1700 workers at Kellogg's factory at Trafford Park in Manchester started to work to contract after they had turned down, at a mass meeting, an offer of £8.50 in response to their claim for an across-the-board rise of £25.

This work to contract, a contract agreed between USDAW, who negotiate for the process workers, and the Kelloggs management, resulted after 3 weeks in a 30% cut in production of sunshine breakfasts. Obviously worried by this the foremen started to interfere with 4 process lines which were promptly blacked and 14 workers who refused to work on them were sent home.

A few days later the shop stewards committee were called in to see management and instructed that unless the workers removed the blacking and returned to 'normal' working ('normal' in this sense meant working on management terms) then the plant would be closed. The shop stewards offered to re-start the 4 lines but insisted on continuing the work to contract.

The factory closed on Monday July 2nd. Although the workers

still turned up for work they were locked out and at another mass meeting they voted against managements offer and their instruction to resume 'normal' work.

Despite repeated attempts by the management to divide the membership e.g. by sending them letters telling them that they had been misled by their union and offering them a 5% bonus if they returned, the workers response to the lock-out is stronger than ever. Pickets are preventing any goods being moved, even if there was any one to move them ..... The TGWU and ASLEF have blacked all Kelloggs products from the plant.

The strength of feeling is shown by Joe Pearce, a shop steward at the plant. 'Kelloggs have what they call a President's Challenge Cup for the plant with the highest productivity internationally of all their factories. Manchester has won it for the last 3 years. No extra money, just a fucking cup. We've crawled back in the past but never again.'

Donations and messages of support should be sent to USDAW branch D.78 c/o Mr. Birchenall, Financial Secretary, 1, Chatsworth Road, Stretford, MANCHESTER.



# GRANADA TAKES

## UP ITS CLUB

### AGAINST PART

### TIME WOMEN

## WORKERS

VICTORIOUS STRUGGLES of part-time women workers are few and far between. In 1976, women at the Club One bingo hall in Coventry forced their management to recognise the T&G. Over the last three years their militant branch won improvements in pay and better conditions of work. Now the Club has been sold to Granada who only recognise NATTKE, a union they have "sweetheart" contracts with. The T&G members have been made redundant, but they are fighting back.

Club One opened in November of 1974. The rate of pay paid to the staff at that time was 50p an hour. They employed 76 staff, mainly part-time women workers, with some pensioners and men in management positions.

In July 1976, the women sent in a wages council complaints form over the rates of pay. To avoid being sacked by the management, they joined the T&GWU. They had 100% membership at Club One and at the sister club, the Rialto which had been open twelve years, they had 25 members.

In September 1976 it was decided that if the management wouldn't recognize the union, strike action would be taken. At first, they thought the strike would be settled quickly. When management discovered they'd joined the T&G, they came up with another union called NATTKE (the National Association of Theatrical, Television and Kine Employees). This was basically a management union, and their official offered them an additional 2½p an hour.

#### WINNING STRIKE PAY

When the women approached the T&G for strike pay, their union official told them they couldn't have any. So the women went to Transport House with their kids to put pressure on the officials. Even though they were part-time

workers, for many of them £6 a week was the difference between feeding the family and not feeding the family.

#### FOUR MONTH PICKET

They picketed the Club from October until the first of January. With the bad weather morale was often low. The dispute was eventually settled on 21st December — they went back to work with a no victimisation clause, and got a substantial pay rise of 18p an hour.

#### SOLIDARITY FOR PICKET

They also got overtime for working Sundays and bank holidays, two weeks sick pay and better holidays. They found throughout the strike that the support they received was not from the official part of the T&G, but from individual trade unionists across the city. They also found the support from the people of Coventry overwhelming — on some nights as few as eight people would cross the picket lines to play bingo.

Between 1976 and January 1979 they maintained their own union branch, Bingo and Entertainment, and all this time it was an active branch. In January 1979 the owner of Orr Enterprises died and the clubs were put up for sale. They were bought by Granada in April as going concerns.



Club One workers on picket line during 1976 strike

## 'How we were victimised'

We asked Ann Coffey, one of the women from Club One, who was active in the struggle for union recognition, to tell us how Granada made 110 women workers redundant, in order to get the T&G out of their bingo halls.

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

"Round about Whitsuntide, a man from Granada came to visit us, and he said not to worry, our jobs were safe. At this time, the buildings offered for sale were in fact Club One and Rialto, and three other bingo halls owned by Orr Enterprises. Now all of these clubs, apart from Club One and Rialto are either NATTKE or non-union places. So what happened subsequently seemed to us to be blatantly a case of victimising us for being in the T&G.

#### REDUNDANCY NOTICES

The take-over date was given to us as the 18th June, but when it came to it, they took over the other clubs but not Club One and the Rialto. Then Friday 15th June we were served with a notice of redundancy. This came as a bombshell, and at a meeting the staff voted 100% to fight Granada all the way.

Management offered the basic entitlement under Employment Protection Act. When the mention of money was made the staff started to crumble.

We were going to be paid for the 60 days that the closure notice was for, though in fact we felt we should have been given 90 days to carry out our negotiations since there were 110 staff in the

two clubs. In the end management threatened to close the club, and not pay the 60 days severance pay.

#### SEVERANCE MONEY

The Rialto girls came to Club One to discuss the situation. The Chairwoman of the branch who had 12 years service and stood to gain £4,000 conducted the meeting. At first, the women were really together, but the problems arose when the question of money was raised. The chairwoman and most of the girls at the Rialto stood to gain quite a lot of money from the deal, and their lengths of service were a lot longer than any of the girls at Club One. And in fact the deal that the management offered meant that some of the girls at Club One would receive only £60 or £90 in redundancy pay.

#### THE UNION

We found that throughout all this trouble the T&G's attitude to us seemed to be that we're only a bunch of part-time women workers. Which seems to me quite disgusting, because we fought long and hard to get union recognition with the T&G in the bingo halls, and they have given next to no support with these redundancies. In fact, instead of mentioning fighting the redundancies, the only thing they ever mentioned was money. We were told to take the company for every penny we could get. But we've quickly realised that this was the wrong way round to do it. We wanted to fight them all the

way but money had been mentioned and this brought about a split.

A small nucleus of 30 of us were determined to keep on the branch. We went and lobbied the District Committee meeting, complaining about the disgraceful behaviour of our official, and we were made to sound like a bunch of lawless, totally unruly women.

We're exploring several lines at present. Granada have applied for a new gaming licence and we're trying to find some means of objecting to it. We've also thought of asking people in the Job Centre not to advertise the new jobs. Of course we'll apply for our jobs back and see what happens. Though we only stand a slim chance of winning this, we feel Granada ought to be shown up for throwing 110 people out of their jobs!

#### UNEMPLOYED WORKERS

If we can, we intend to keep our branch as a union branch for part-time women workers, and unemployed women workers in Coventry because we have an active branch and we're all quite interested in trade union politics. We would hate to see a branch that it's taken two years to build up just go without anything at all. And we feel there's a need for this in the city. We've also got the full backing of our Trades Council and seven convenors from the large factories who picketed with us three years ago. Any messages of support can be sent to:

Ann Coffey, 42 Hamilton Road, Stoke, Coventry.

# Victory at Economist Bookshop

Last month workers at the Economist Bookshop in London won their demand for union recognition. In a period where some strikes for union recognition are being defeated (e.g. Sandersons, Grosvenor House Hotel), it is important that the Economist Bookshop victory becomes widely known.

The Economist Bookshop Ltd., jointly owned by the Economist magazine and the London School of Economics, conceded union recognition to A.C.T.S.S. members after a 9 months strike.

This victory against the company and its management should give hope to low-paid unionised bookshop workers in particular, and trade unionists in general. It should help to end the post-Grumwick gloom which

leads people to assume that 'if a strike lasts more than a few months it will be defeated'. Time is important, but unity, organisation and understanding of one's situation are essential; with those even a 9 months strike can end in victory.

The 7 A.C.T.S.S. members at the Economist Bookshop managed, despite inevitable set-backs and periods of demoralisation, to maintain their unity. The small



numbers involved meant that all issues were discussed fully by all those involved, which helped to cement the unity of interest which led the assistants at the shop to take strike action in October '78. Another important factor maintaining unity was the determination of the strikers never to allow control of the dispute to slip from their hands.

#### MANAGEMENT'S DISUNITY

A key figure on the Board of the Directors of the Economist Bookshop is Prof. Ben Roberts, (no relation) who teaches at the London School of Economics. Roberts is a clever, dangerous and thoroughly reactionary adversary who played a leading role in attempting to break the strike. The fact that he failed is a tribute to the union

members involved. It also reflects the lack of unity between the Board and its management led by Gerald Bartlett. This lack of unity was recognised by the strikers and widened during the dispute. This meant that the Board was unable to mobilise its management, and the employees still working in the mail order dept. in Camden Town, against the strike.

#### STAFF ASSOCIATION

Bartlett, unable to make any tactical compromises because of his total opposition to the strikers, formed a scab 'staff association' in January which called for the sacking of all ACTSS members, at the same time as the Board were offering the union 'individual representational rights'. Bartlett failed to recruit a significant section of the workforce to this association but did encourage the union members to reject the Boards' offer for fear of victimisation by the rabid anti-union management. Thus, the creation of the staff association merely strengthened ACTSS's determination to win the strongest possible union agreement in the circumstances. It also widened the divisions between the Board and

united will never be defeated' the enemy divided is weakened and more easily defeated.

#### IMMEDIATE GAINS

The present situation offers many opportunities to ACTSS members to build upon the gains already achieved. These include dramatically improved holidays (for some people double their previous entitlement) and the right to consultation on various important issues including pay and job descriptions. Many issues remain to be resolved, not least being the raising of the basic pay for assistants and the question of differentials but while recognising the problems, ACTSS members at the Economist Bookshop have much cause for optimism. Above all they know that without having fought for union recognition none of this could have been achieved. Ultimately that is the lesson for all workers when faced with exploitation.

Bookshop workers interested in contacting the ACTSS members at the Economist Bookshop should write to the Shop Steward, Economist Bookshop, c/o Peter Hopson, 173 Clapham Road, London SW9.

(By a member of the Strike Committee).



# BRITAINS' PARTITION OF IRELAND

MANY MYTHS are implicit in British media coverage of Ireland. The biggest myth of all is the myth of the six county statelet they often refer to as Northern Ireland or Ulster. Their unquestioned acceptance of partition and the lack of an adequate explanation of the struggle, which is portrayed as a feud between Protestants and Catholics with the brave British squaddie trying to keep them from killing each other.

The six county statelet was founded after the nationalist population had been beaten into submission by Loyalist terror. A terror that is continued today by the army.

"I feel disappointed because any regime that has to resort to these kind of tactics to keep themselves in being cannot be right", commented Mr Cornelius Boyle (*Guardian* 5.7.79) after learning of the acquittal of the two Special Air Service (SAS) soldiers of the murder of his son John, who

counties still under British occupation had its seeds sown in the first decade of this century.

After several attempts a Home Rule Act was passed at Westminster in 1914, but owing to the 1914-18 war, was not implemented until the end of that war.

There was strong resistance to the Home Rule Act from the dominant Protestant population in the North East whose ancestors had been 'planted' there from England and Scotland to strengthen British rule after previous wars in the 17th century.

## VESTED INTEREST

The Unionist bosses had a vested interest in retaining the union with England and through that the Empire as a highly profitable means of trade for the shipbuilding and linen industries concentrated in the North East. The ideology of the Orange Order, based on Protestant supremacy and allegiance to the crown was used to keep the working class, Protestant and Catholic (Unionist or Loyalist and Nationalist or Republican) communities divided against each other, the Unionist working class being rewarded for their "loyalty" with considerable material privileges over their nationalist counterparts. (better housing, jobs services etc.)

## THE ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE

The Loyalist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) with the backing of the Tory party in England were openly arming to forcibly resist the implementation of the Home Rule Act. When the British army was ordered to move against the UVF the officers refused and mutinied.

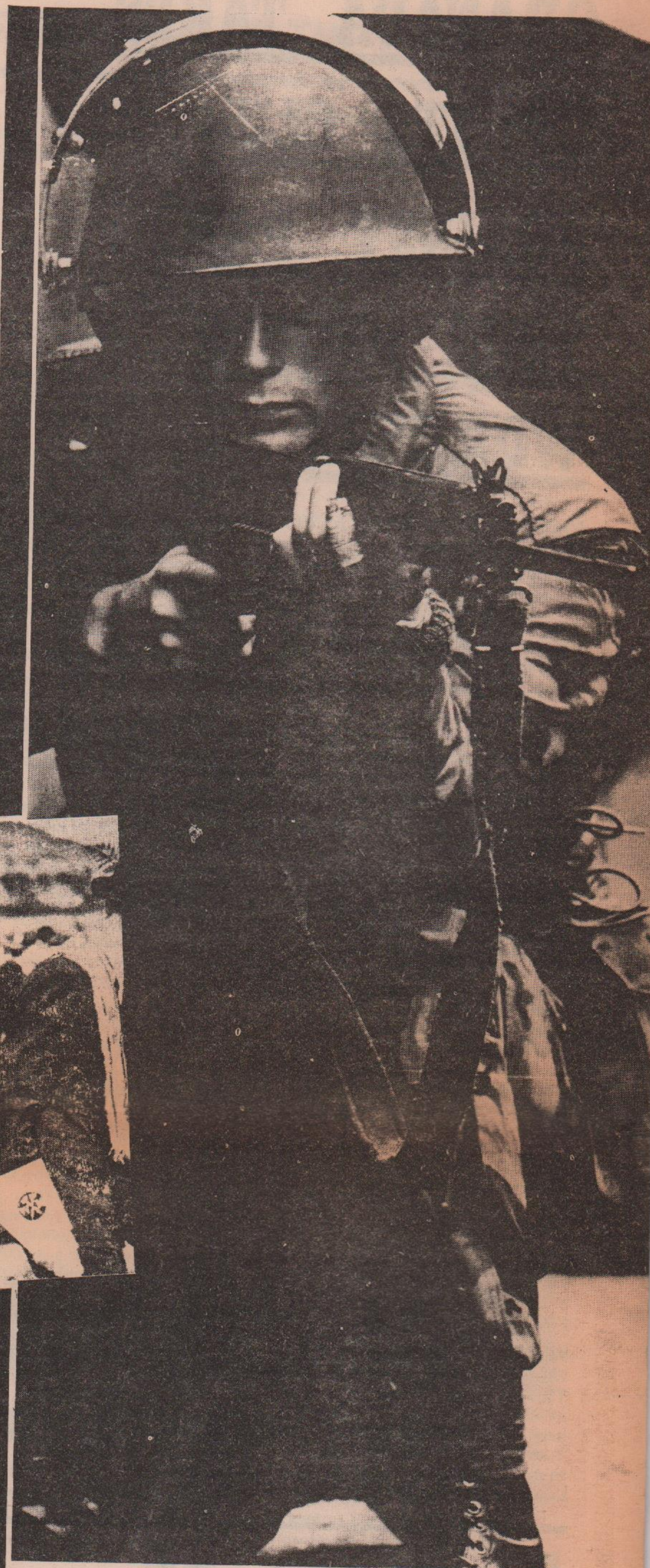
Elections were held after the end of the first World War in 1918. Sinn Fein won 75 out of the 105 Irish seats and in accordance with their election pledge they refused to take their seats at Westminster, and established Dail Eireann (Irish Parliament) and made a declaration of independence. The British responded by launching yet another

vicious war against the Irish people, carried out by the mercenary Black and Tans, specially recruited ex-soldiers and convicts.

## FREE STATE

1920 saw the Government of Ireland Act passed at Westminster partitioning Ireland into a 26 county "Free State" with a limited degree of independence and a six county statelet with an ensured Loyalist majority, which would deny the Nationalist community houses, jobs and full voting rights. (Three counties of the province of Ulster were excluded from this artificially created statelet, as their inclusion would have denied the Unionists their majority necessary to enforce their "supremacy".) The Loyalists only accepted this after realising it was the best deal they could get.

The Black and Tan war ended in 1921 with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty (the Irish signatories being put under extreme pressure by the British) which led to the outbreak of the Irish civil war between the "Free Staters", who had accepted the British imposed partition and the Republicans who would never recognise the "Border". The "Free Staters" then proceeded



Orange men still defending ascendancy

to fulfil their neo-colonial role by crushing temporarily the Republican resistance.

## IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL

For nearly 60 years the very existence of the state of "Northern Ireland" has relied on the brutal repression and systematic terror of the Nationalist population by the Loyalist "ascendancy". It can never be reformed without the re-unification of Ireland. Any British involvement in Ireland explicitly supports the union and encourages those forces of reaction. Only with a complete and immediate withdrawal and the ending of British enforced partition, can the full rights of all the Irish people be attained.

## Half the Population is Suspect

TEN YEARS ago the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) Special Branch had only a hopelessly outdated and inadequate system of surveillance on file. When the army took over they saw surveillance as important because to them the situation could be resolved by simply identifying a few ringleaders - the computer was brought in and has proved an important weapon against the resistance of the nationalist ("Catholic") population.

In 1973 the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act was introduced to update the 1922 Special Powers Act. This development gave the army the power to arrest and detain anyone for up to four hours for "suspicion". This was necessary for the army to collect information, usually at random. The Act let the Army question the identity of anyone with up to six months imprisonment for refusal.

Today it is estimated that every "Catholic" household is

visited at least once every four months, so the collection of information has become an important job for every member of the security forces. By 1974 portraits of half the population ("suspects" or "potential terrorists") were on computer, including details of religion; birthdate; occupation; colour of living room suites; brand of television and names of pets!

Parliament has never authorised this mass surveillance and details have never been publicly available. Last December the Government's advisory committee, the Committee for Data Protection, were refused information by the Military. The Committee was set up in an attempt to satisfy the worries of many that any information could be used if in the wrong hands. This is already the case in the occupied counties of Ireland. The interchangeability between DHSS, RUC and Army computer records has without doubt developed population control as sophisticated as anywhere in the world.

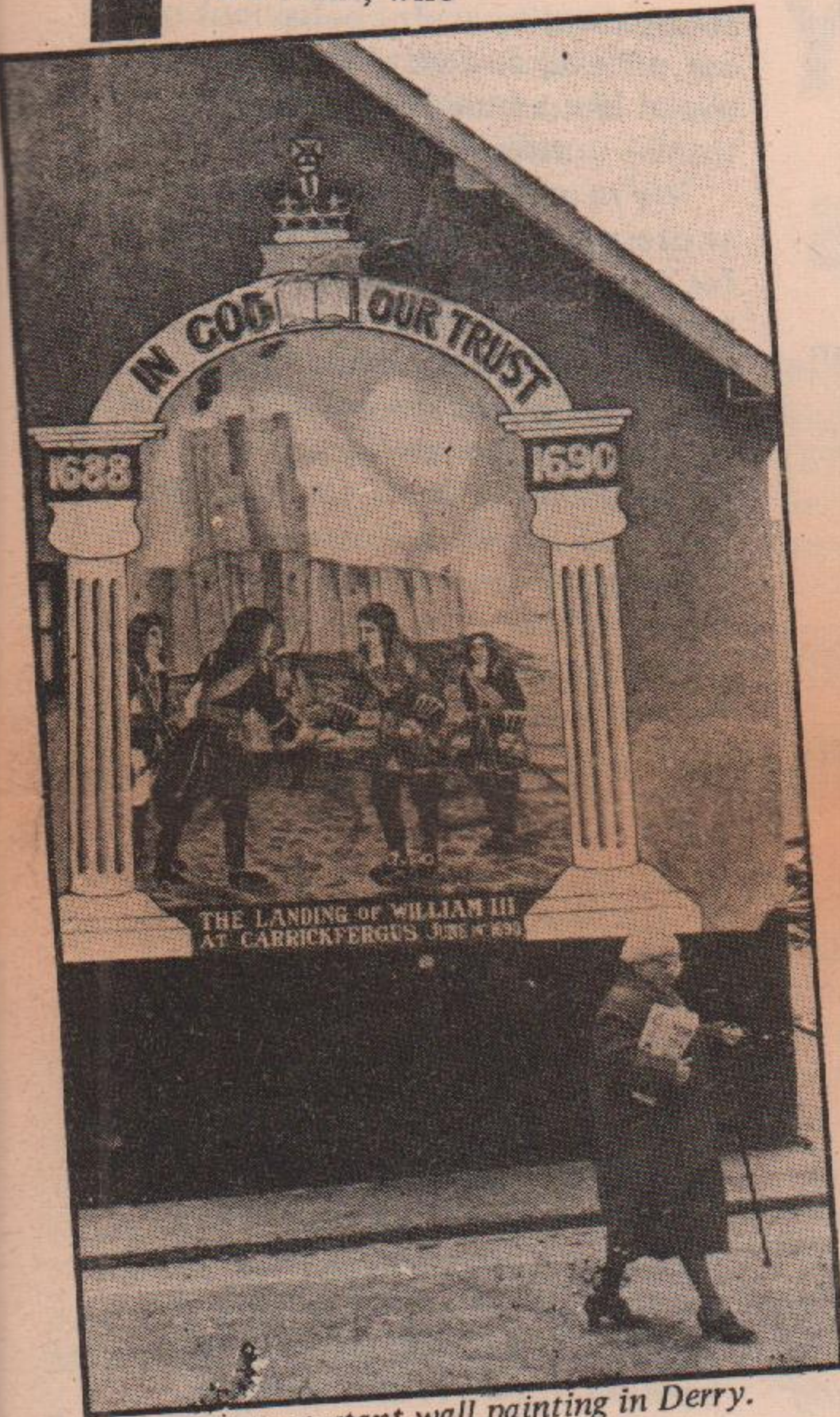
Continued from front page

Ever since, what Britain has offered has simply been more of the same. Direct rule from Westminster was introduced in 1972, but the patterns of Loyalist privilege and state harassment have remained. The Loyalist Shankhill Road still has proportionately twice as many cars, half as many unemployed and twice as many owner-occupiers as the nationalist Falls Road. Internment without trial has been 'replaced' by Diplock courts in which people are convicted by a single judge with no jury, in 90% of cases on the basis solely of 'confessions'. And both Amnesty International and the British Government's Bennett Report have revealed that many 'confessions' are obtained by torture. British soldiers still raid homes

regularly, still searches of the still operate the policy that m Derry on Blo They rarely ra they do work the 90% Loya Loyalist comm continue - tra the Right : la easily top of t pean Parliame lan Paisley's a ment have bee

## RESISTAN

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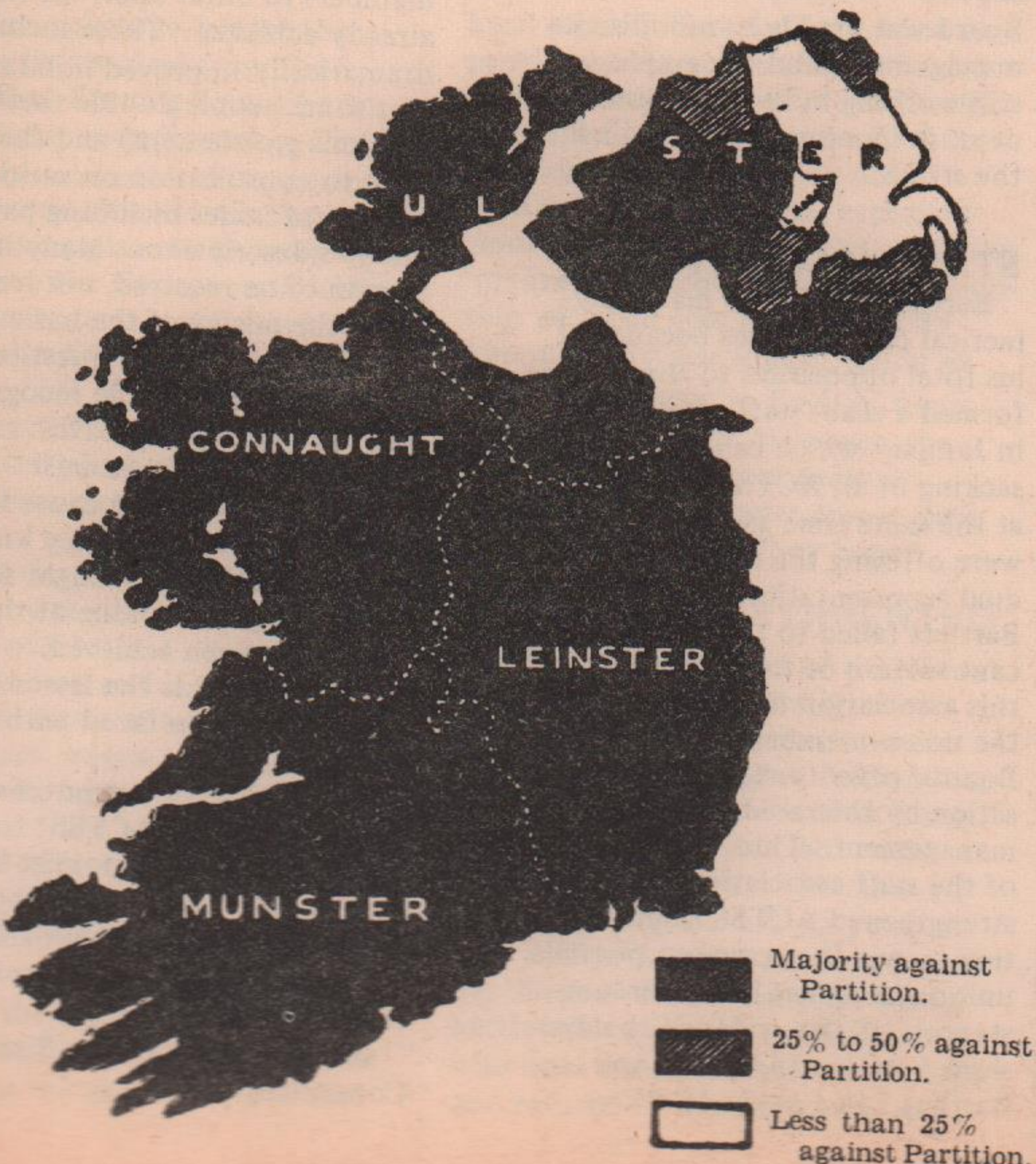


A Protestant wall painting in Derry.

was killed by the SAS in a stake-out of an arms cache which he had earlier discovered.

## ROOTS OF CONFLICT

The roots of the conflict between England and Ireland go back many centuries, to England's first conquest of Ireland in the 12th Century, but more directly the war continuing in the six North Eastern





# from the ashes of '69, came the Provisionals

BRITISH TROOPS were sent onto the streets of Northern Ireland in 1969. On August 12th a massive demonstration will mark the tenth anniversary of that event.

The troops were sent to prop up the civil administration and police force of the Six Counties, reeling before the rebellion of its Catholic second-class citizens.

Out of the suffering and revolt of the religious minority grew the Provisional Republican Movement and its armed wing, the IRA. It's time we examined just why the Provisionals were formed.

It's difficult to realise that the violence in the Six Counties did not simply start because the Provos were formed and then started shooting and bombing. Too many newspaper articles and TV programmes give that impression.

Yet in 1966, over three years before the Provisionals formed, a group of extreme Loyalists — looking for leadership to a Protestant priest, Ian Paisley — formed a unit of the "Ulster Volunteer Force" on Belfast's Shankhill Road. One of their first actions was to shoot four young Roman Catholics outside the Malvern Arms, just off the Shankhill. One of the victims, Peter Ward, died.

## ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE

Though the men responsible were jailed the UVF carried on. In 1969 it bombed several water pipelines near Belfast. They hoped to give the impression that an IRA campaign was getting underway and that strong measures were needed against the Catholics. Needless to say the Press and TV played its part. Just like now, any and every act of violence was blamed on the IRA. Prime Minister O'Neill

was held to be too soft on law and order and quickly lost his post.

## PRIVILEGE

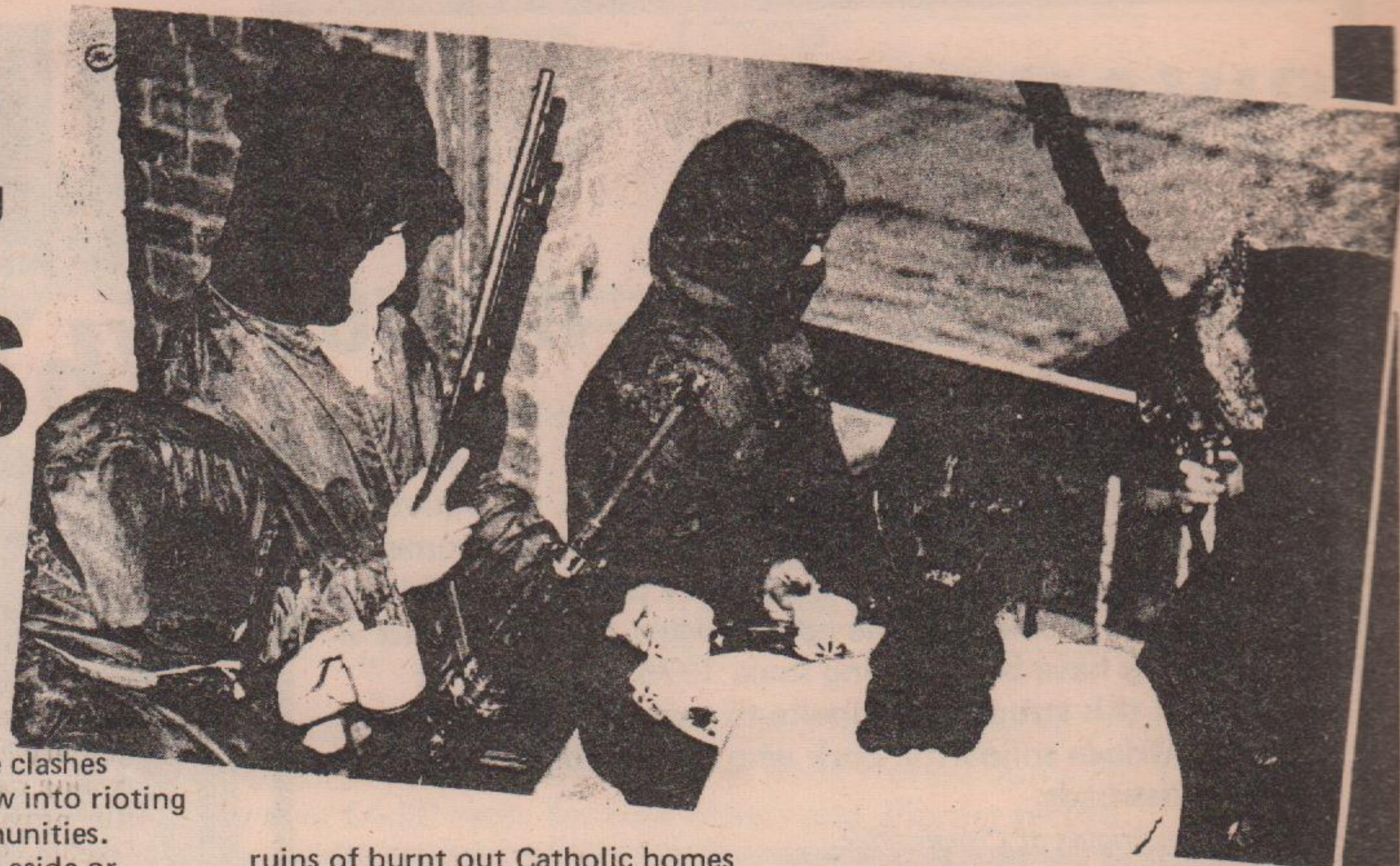
The UVF was formed because the Loyalist community began to fear that modern society was undermining their traditional way of life and privileges, protected by their own armed police, the RUC.

They were right to be fearful. Throughout the late '60's the Catholic demand for equal rights grew louder. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association and

**IRELAND SOCIALIST REVIEW** No.5, Summer '79 now out. Includes an interview with the Women and Ireland Group, a look at the economic geography of northern Ireland and an analysis of the recent election results. 30 p plus 15 p postage from 60, Loughborough Rd. London SW9.

People's Democracy began to organise protest demonstrations against religious discrimination. Paisley and his supporters led counter-marches. The police — almost all Protestants — made a pretext of neutrality but in 1968 in Duke St., Derry, the RUC brutally baton-charged a Civil Rights march beating everyone within range. In January 1969 the police stood aside while groups of Loyalists stoned and clubbed members of a P.D. march at Burntollet Bridge.

The articles on these pages have been written by members of the Big Flame Irish Commission



It was not long before clashes on demonstrations grew into rioting between the two communities. The police either stood aside or, usually, actively led Loyalist attacks into Catholic areas. On one such attack the first victim of the present war, Samuel Devenney was beaten to death in front of his family in his Bogside, Derry, home. The RUC men responsible are still in the force.

In Belfast the RUC led Protestant mobs into attacks on the Catholic Falls Road and Ardoyne areas. Police armoured cars sprayed machine-gun bullets at the Divis Flats in the Lower Falls, killing a nine year old boy, Patrick Rooney, and Hugh McCabe, a local soldier home on leave. He was the first soldier to die.

## PROTESTANT MOBS

In August 1969 Protestant mobs, almost unopposed, forced Catholic families from their homes in Bombay St., and other streets in the Clonard area of Belfast and razed the streets to the ground. The same happened in the Ardoyne. There began a huge movement of terrified refugees, estimated to have reached over 60,000 people, mostly Catholic, the largest number of refugees in Western Europe since the war. And most of this took place after the troops arrived on the streets.

It has often been said that "out of the ashes of '69 arose the Provisionals". The "ashes" were the

ruins of burnt out Catholic homes all over Belfast.

The people of the ghettos wanted defence. The police clearly didn't supply it. The British Army was at first welcomed but later proved no more willing either to defend the minority — nor to further their aims of equality. Self-defence became the great need. And the IRA was formed for that purpose.

## SPLIT

Throughout the terror of 1969 the Irish Republican Army was only a shadow of its former self. Its leadership — heavily influenced by the Irish Communist Party — had sent many activists into the Civil Rights movements. Weapons were dumped. When the Orange mobs attacked there were few guns left to defend the ghettos.

The result was a split — both in Sinn Fein, the Republican political party, and in the IRA. The breakaway Movement, led from Belfast — called themselves Provisionals. They were people of all political opinions. But they were united in their demand that the IRA should now take up a vigorous armed defence of the northern Catholics. Things were moving beyond the simple demand for Civil Rights which the northern Loyalists — politicians, police and people — refused to give. The northern statelet had to be ended.

## GROWTH

The Provisional Republican Movement grew quickly throughout the early '70's. British policy had become clear. They were determined to crush the revolt of the northern Nationalist population. There was the Lower Falls curfew of 1970, when the British Army sealed off the terraced streets of the Lower Falls, along with its thousands of Catholic residents. They proceeded to tear the area apart in a fruitless "arms-search" while they shot dead anyone who dared leave their homes amid a choking fog of CS gas — indicating the repressive nature of the military presence.

Then came the Internment of hundreds of men — later women and schoolchildren — which began in August 1971. There was no charge, no evidence, no trial. And then people began to hear of the new torture experiments being carried out at Girdwood Barracks on selected prisoners. Finally the Paratroop Regiment murdered 13 unarmed Civil Rights marchers in Derry on Bloody Sunday, January 1972. Now it was clear that it wasn't just the Ulster Loyalists who weren't prepared to allow equal rights. The British weren't either.

## TEN YEARS ON

Since the first units of Provisional IRA volunteers were forming in 1970 much has happened in Ireland, but little has changed. Catholics are still discriminated against by the major industrial employers. Though now there are fewer jobs all round. The RUC is still an all-Protestant force but now the force is twice as large, better armed and with new custom-built torture centres at Castlereagh, Dungannon and Armagh. The British Army still occupies the Catholic areas — raiding, searching, harassing, trying to break the resistance.

## IAN PAISLEY

Ten years of intensive British military and political activity haven't altered the ugly face of Ulster Loyalism. It's just got uglier. Now the arch-biigt himself, Ian Paisley, is the leading Loyalist politician. Only the British military presence prevents Paisley and the corrupt system he represents being swept away.

## RESISTANCE

For ten years the Provisionals and the northern Catholic community — have battered away at the occupation army, its local supporters and the Six County economy. They may have used tactics which we in Big Flame would disagree with. But the resistance in all its forms — marches, rent strikes, pickets, riots, the endurance of the blanketmen in Long Kesh — and above all the armed attacks, has prevented the British from imposing a crushing defeat on all hopes of progress in Ireland.

August 12th must mark a major step forward in the contribution of British people towards ending the British army's violent campaign in defence of bigotry and injustice.



Farrington Gardens, burnt out by the Loyalists in 1971

"There was no IRA then. In 1969 from Easter onwards, the Orangemen used to come down the Crumlin Road, beating their drums, painting on the church statues "Up the UVF" and shout obscenities. Some of the Catholics are not great churchgoers, but they respect the church...there was rioting, with the police and Protestants against the Catholics of Ardoyne for a full six weeks before the August troubles. The Orangemen used to follow the police in...and then throw petrol bombs. I seen the police turning round and joking with the people that were throwing petrol bombs"  
 "People had to defend themselves...There was nothing here to defend this area with. There wasn't a gun in the area. The IRA in the Ardoyne was not formed until October or November 1969."  
 (quoted in the Big Flame pamphlet "Rising in the North")

# TROOPS OUT?

conduct area nationalist areas, the 'shoot-to-kill' massacred thirteen in early Sunday 1972. Loyalists, but hand-in-hand with Loyalist police. The community themselves politically - to move to Ian Paisley came the poll in the Eurot elections, and antics in that Parliament widely reported.

CE CONTINUES no doubting that community's re- on a massive over 3,500 ers in Northern 1½ million inha- valent in Bri-

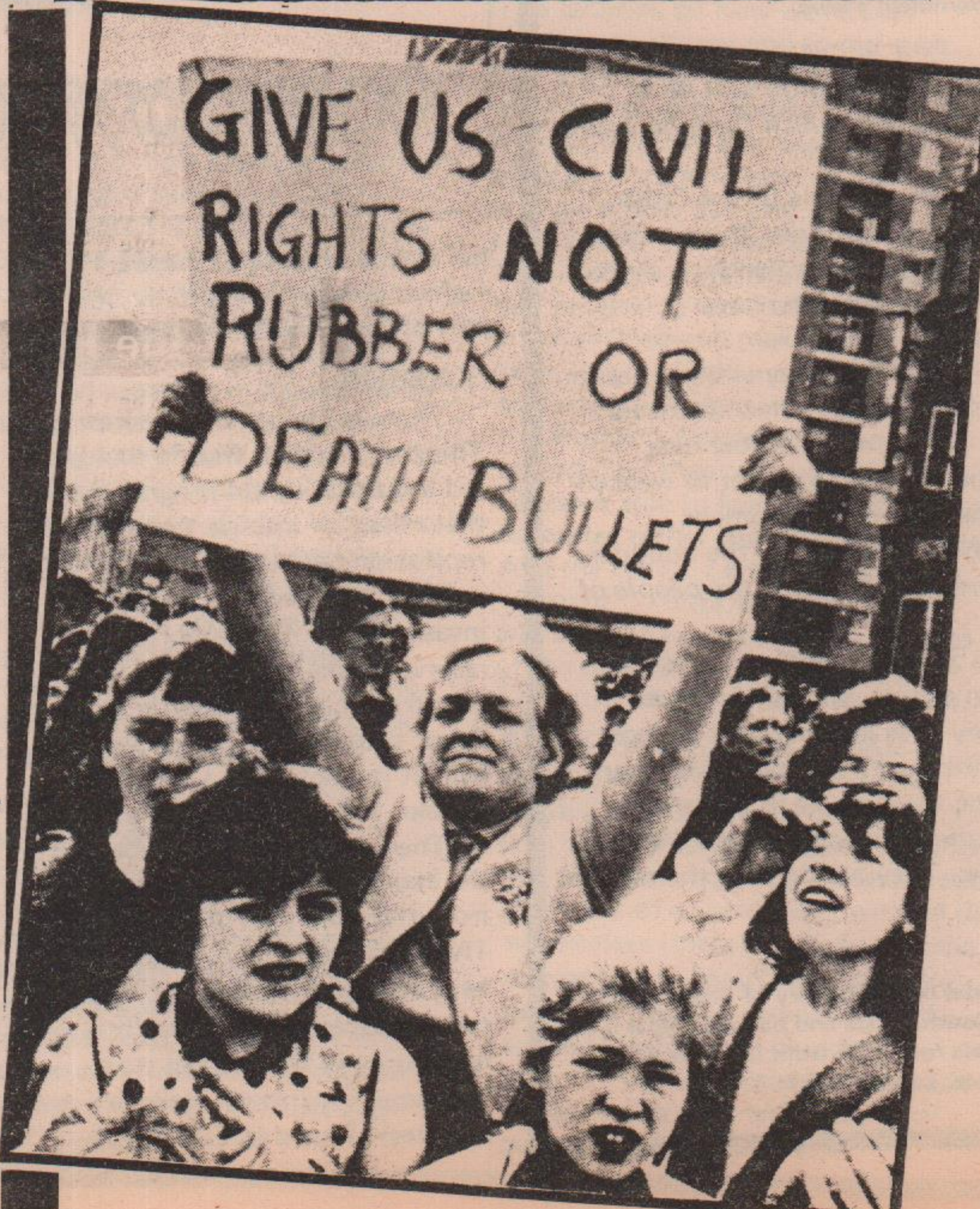
tain would be nearly 150,000. Eighty per cent of the prisoners are from the nationalist community, although they are only a third of the adult population.

## TROOPS OUT NOW

That's to say, what's at stake is whether the just popular resistance of the nationalist community succeeds or fails. Whether or not people in Britain approve of how that resistance is taking place is almost beside the point: it's the fact of the resistance that counts. For the objective of the British presence is to smash what's really happening, not what might have been. And success for the British in that attempt would give a tremendous boost to all reactionary forces in Ireland: it would restabilise British rule in the North, it would give

encouragement to the weak, conservative Southern Government, currently facing a giant strike wave and other massive popular struggles, it would strengthen the reactionary forces in Loyalism by giving them another victory to crow about.

And the reverse is also true! If the nationalist resistance succeeds, if the British Army is defeated, then all popular forces in Ireland will receive a boost. We here in Britain can help their struggle by demanding Troops Out Now, by showing just how bad is what the troops are there for. All the weight of the powers that be in two countries is behind the British forces: when the day of their defeat dawns then it will be clear in all struggles that, in Ireland as in Nicaragua, the people can win!





# SIYAHALA—

## We will not move

IT WAS recently announced in the press that Piet Koornhof, the South African Minister of 'Plural Relations', had decided to make a deal with the residents of Crossroads, the squatters' camp near Cape Town. That the South African government felt unable to implement their customary policy of bulldozing the camp is a reflection of the epic struggle the inhabitants of Crossroads have been waging since 1975. To find out more about this struggle, we spoke to two comrades engaged in South African solidarity work who are just back from a visit to Crossroads.

### What are the origins of Crossroads?

Each area of South Africa is a preference area for workers of one ethnic minority. The Western Cape which is the area around Cape Town is a preference area for so-called 'coloured' workers. The South African government, developing the migrant labour idea, decided that the black workers in the area were now to be attached to bantustans like the Transkei and the Ciskei in which their families were forced to live. In fact, survival in the Bantustans is virtually impossible and the women started to move back into the Cape Town area where they could find work or at least benefit from their husbands' wage. Since they were forbidden an official residence permit, their only option was to squat. And so squatting camps grew up around Cape Town. Most of these have now been destroyed except for Crossroads which the government feels uncertain about taking on.

### How organised is life in Crossroads?

Since Crossroads started in 1975, it is the women who have played the major role in organising things. Most of the men go to Cape Town to work during the day so the organisation of camp life has fallen on the women. They formed a Womens Committee which is democratically elected and runs two schools as well as making sure that issues like roads, housing health and sanitation are dealt with. Crossroads even has its own people's police - the homeguards - and a people's court to try offenders. In this sense, Crossroads is completely different from any of the government approved black townships in the country which are administered and policed by government officials, which all have serious crime and health problems. In the first years of Crossroads, police raids were frequent - they would come to check if residents were committing offences against the 'pass' laws, which rigidly control where black people can live. The community needed self-defence to protect itself from the constant police raids. Now, when the police arrive, the whole township is instantly mobilised to oppose them. Confrontations with the police are often very violent. Last September, 600 police raided Crossroads and shot dead Sindile Ndelela, one of its inhabitants. The Womens Committee has very good links with the press and the Churches, as well as with other black townships, so whatever the police do in Crossroads is made public.



Crossroads is a symbol of defiance; of the determination of African working people to live in Cape Town in spite of the government's laws.

What is the significance of Koornhof's recent declaration that he is prepared to build a new township in the Cape area which the inhabitants of Crossroads can move into?

Firstly, it's a recognition of the strength of the struggle of the Crossroads people. But, in fact, he has made it clear that only 'those without a criminal record' will be allowed to settle in the new township. And this rules out many of the inhabitants in Crossroads who have committed offences against the pass laws.

The people of Crossroads have made it clear that they will not accept Koornhof's offer. They will only accept the offer of a new township if it is for all the inhabitants of Crossroads - which now number over 50,000. They see Koornhof's offer for what it is - an attempt to weaken their resistance by dividing them. As a member of the Womens Committee told us 'you don't only destroy Crossroads by the bulldozer' What can we do in this country to support the struggle of the people of Crossroads?

Make as much propaganda and inform as many people as possible about what is happening there. It has been a great strength for those organising in Crossroads to know that they have international support - this support has weakened the hand of the South African government. It is important to realise that those leading the struggle in Crossroads are not after piece-meal improvement to the apartheid system. What they want is a total end to influx controls. They are fighting the migrant labour system in its totality.

'We will not move!' is an important new pamphlet on the history of Crossroads. The first issue of the pamphlet was printed in South Africa and banned. Now it has been reprinted in this country and is available for £1.25 from Crossroads Action Campaign c/o CCSA 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.

# VIETNAM: Why the boat people ?



CHINA HAS compared Vietnam's treatment of its Chinese minority with Hitler's treatment of the Jews. Much of the Western press has done likewise, and even 'Socialist Worker' has attacked Vietnam, though in different terms.

Is there a case for Vietnam's defence? Below I will argue that there is, even if it is a tentative one. It starts with an analysis and criticism of the role of imperialism - which I think should be our starting point in such a situation - and goes on to deal with China's relationship with Vietnam - a crucial aspect of the problem.

To look first at the imperialist role: it is all too easy for us in Britain to underestimate the damage caused by 30 years of war, including the heaviest bomb barrage in world history, the widespread use of napalm, the large-scale deforestation campaign of the Americans, etc.

Still today there are large areas of arable land that are unusable because of the effects of napalm; a substantial part of the important (and normally very fertile) rice lands of the Mekong delta still

nam than they have spent in the last year on the refugees.

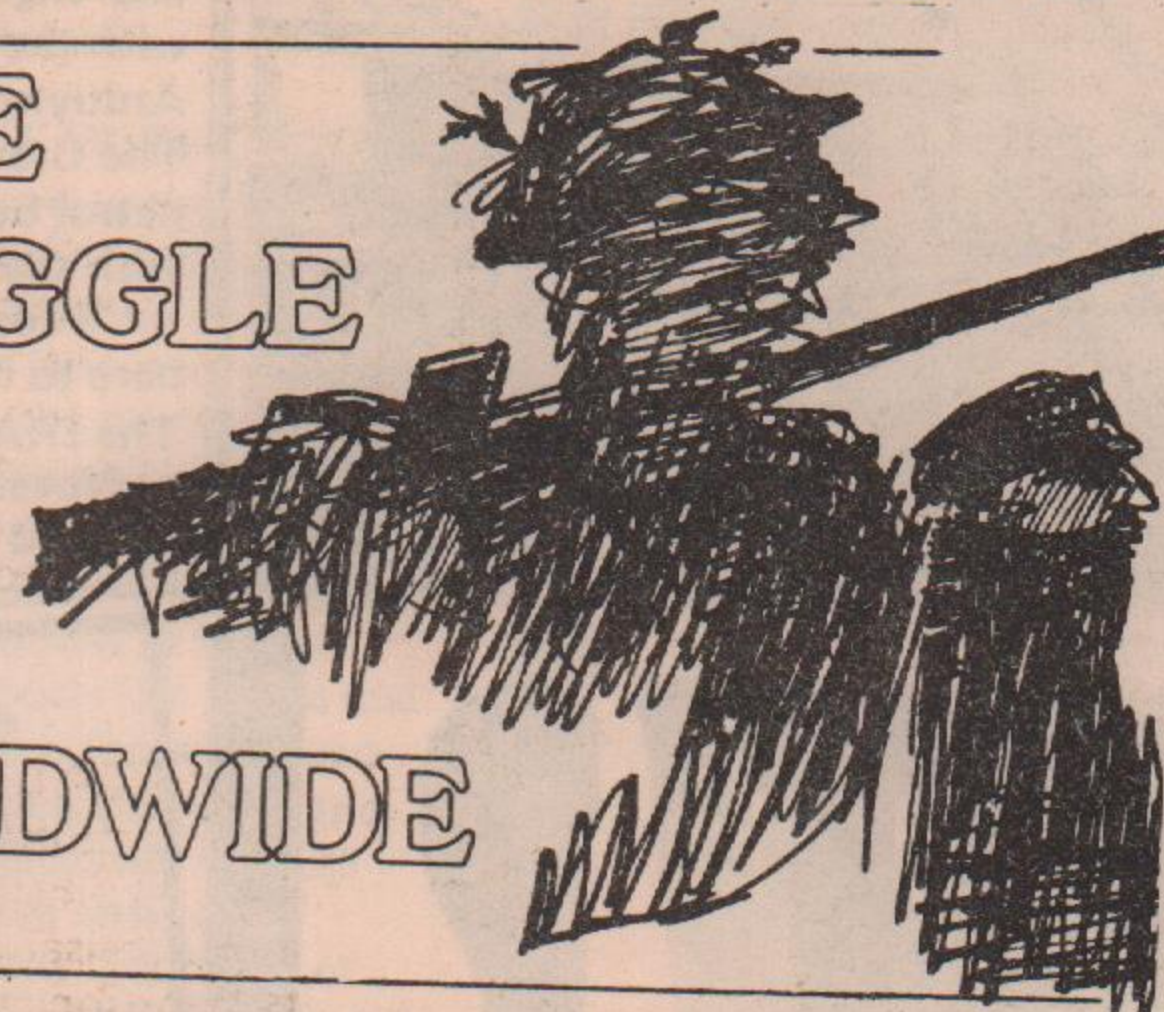
### WAR CONTINUES

In some ways, the Vietnamese war is continuing in a new form, only this time the Americans are determined to win. Vietnam's attempts to have its refugees taken directly to the West by plane were blocked by the US.

And the West carefully selects refugees, taking only those healthy and able to work, leaving the old and the sick to South-East Asia.

## THE STRUGGLE

## WORLDWIDE



lies fallow because of the war - which is why, incidentally, it is part of the New Economic Zones.

### FAMINE

There is famine in the country. This partly results from a too rapid industrialisation programme that relied on massive American reparation payments which never arrived. But also, the Chinese invasion destroyed important reserve stocks of rice. And two countries that consistently talk about stopping the refugee problem 'at its root' - the US and Tory Britain - refuse any food aid.

There is another factor behind the exodus, which stems directly from the American presence. There are thousands of people who benefitted materially from the American occupation. It is interesting in this respect that the Americans spent more in one week on aid to South Viet-

As a result of the refugee exodus, embryonic links between Vietnam and the South-East Asian countries have been broken, thus leaving Vietnam isolated in the region. Also, the US has gone out of its way to block any advances that Vietnam has made towards it, and it gave tacit support to China's invasion of Vietnam. So Vietnam is forced - against its will - into a closer alliance with the Soviet Union. The prophesy of Stalinisation appears fulfilled, and suddenly American military intervention in Vietnam is presented as not wrong after all.

### ESTABLISHING THE TRUTH

But what about Vietnamese racism against the Chinese, the extortion of sums of money totalling several hundred million pounds, the appalling conditions on the boats leading to tens of

thousands of deaths, etc?

### CHINA

Before we can condemn Vietnam we have to know the actual development of the conflict between China and Vietnam over Vietnam's Chinese residents (the Hoa). What is the historical connection between the refugee exodus and China's declaration (in early 1978) that all the Hoa are Chinese nationals, with a duty to China alone?

What role did the Hoa play in the Chinese invasion of Vietnam? To what extent did they act as a 5th column in undermining the Vietnamese war strategy and destroying the rice stocks? To what extent did China (as Vietnam claims) intimidate and pressurise the Hoa on a massive scale into leaving Vietnam, only then to put a stop to the refugees entering China?

### FALSE ATTACK

Before these questions are answered, we do not have sufficient justification for condemning Vietnam. We could be caught falsely attacking an anti-imperialist Vietnam, while a less than innocent China is increasingly dominating the South-East Asian Communist movement and turning it further and further away from an anti-imperialist line - another repercussion of the whole affair.

### PURE HYPOCRISY

The major powers have a big responsibility in the economic situation in Vietnam and the consequent expulsion of the boat-people. But we should be quite clear that their concern for the boat-people is pure hypocrisy. They see them as useful tools in the ideological struggle against communism.

### WELCOME

We, as socialists, should be clear that the boat-people are victims - victims of the power politics of governments. And we should make it heard loud and clear that we welcome their arrival in this country. And we would welcome the thousands more that the Tory government won't take in.

Ben Johnson (South London Big Flame)



# WHICH WAY NICARAGUA ?

IN THE early hours of Tuesday 17th July, Anastasio Somoza Debayle flew to his luxurious Miami mansion. Behind him he left Nicaragua, the country he and his family have ruled for 33 years, in ruins, with masses of its population starving. The Sandinista guerrillas have fought a successful but costly war to force the hated dictator out.

When the Sandinistas or Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) as they are properly called, launched their final offensive in early June, only their most optimistic supporters expected victory. In September of last year the Sandinistas had successfully taken five Nicaraguan towns only to be driven out after siege and bombardment by Somoza's highly organised National Guard. Although the guerrillas had the support of the country's poor, the Guard's superior organisation, and fire power won out. Then in April of this year, the Sandinistas were driven out of Esteli after they had taken the town.

## SECOND OFFENSIVE

But when the FSLN launched their final offensive, they were better prepared both militarily and politically. Better equipment had been secured on the black market. Whereas last year even rifles were thin on the ground, by this June the Sandinistas had acquired sophisticated weapons, including machine guns, mortars and even some aeroplanes. Politically the guerrillas along with their political wing, the United Peoples' Movement had used the nine months between the two insurrections to great effect. Organisation amongst slum dwellers had proceeded at a rapid pace. So that when the order for insurrection came the inhabitants of the barrios (slums) were well prepared to respond, building barricades and securing effective defences. Also the Sandinistas military tactics this time were substantially more sophisticated. In September the guerrillas had simply seized towns and hoped to fend off the bombardment from the National Guard. This time towns were taken but fronts opened in the rural areas as well, in order to keep the Guard fully stretched. So in June simultaneous with the insurrections in Leon and Managua and other towns, guerrillas columns from Costa Rica entered Nicaragua.

## FEROCIOUS BARBARISM

The main measure of the Sandinistas strength has been their ability to resist the most savage and determined assaults of the National Guard. As the resilience of the guerrillas and the masses had grown, the barbarism of Somoza's forces has increased in proportion. In the cities Somoza took to shelling, bombing and finally using incendiaries and napalm against the civilian populations in the areas held by the Sandinistas.

## UNITY GOVERNMENT

The provisional government has been named and recognised. It contains representatives of all sections of the popular movement that backed the Sandinistas. This explains the presence within it of businessmen and others who the US hopes will exercise a moderating influence on the new government. But it must be stressed that the Sandinistas themselves are not completely unified ideologically. In April of this year the two Marxist tendencies who favour a Cuban model of economic development united with the third faction, known as the Terceristas who favour a mixed economy. This unity was to present the strongest possible front against Somoza, but now with Somoza gone, divisions could appear as these ideological differences resurface.

One of the problems for the left is the lack of a tradition of popular organisation within Nicaragua. The working class is small and the peasantry not well organised. All the popular organisation that exists is a direct result of the Sandinistas and the war. Even so in certain areas it has taken surprisingly radical forms. In Leon for example collective systems of distribution have been set up and money abolished. It is difficult to assess the content of such structures, since they are responses to very specific problems of survival and war. Nevertheless in a certain sense they express popular power.

The degree to which such popular power can become generalised depends to a great extent on the international situation. Nicaragua is in a part of the world the US considers to be its own back yard, and only overwhelming opposition from other American countries prevented US military intervention. There is no doubt that the US will encourage moderates in the new provisional government with promises of massive relief aid for reconstruction. Liberated Nicaragua will need aid from somewhere. Its supporters in the civil war, Panama, Costa Rica and the Andean countries are in no position to offer much of an alternative to the US. And since Nicaragua is so much part of the US's acknowledged sphere of influence, it may be seen as provocative if the USSR and Cuba give aid. Contacts have been made with oil rich Arab regimes, such as Iraq and Libya. This may offer an alternative to the US in the short term. Whether it will lead to a more radical outcome is another question.

(by a member of Big Flame International Commission)

Essential reading on Nicaragua is "Nicaragua Libre" the bulletin of the Nicaragua Co-ordinating Committee c/o 20 Compton Terrace, London N.1. They also have collection sheets for fund-raising and the excellent film "Nicaragua - Free Country or Death".



Marina Rossell  
Mustapha El Kurd  
Capsuleries - Mangé  
Fenian Folk Group  
Walter De Buck  
Gilles Servat  
Oskorri  
Guy Schons  
José Afonso  
Taranjolatí Di Tridricó  
Christiane Stefansk  
Vuile Mong  
Misty  
Jomfru Ane  
Oktober  
Bots



The records of the Counter-Eurovision concert are now available in this country. There are two LPs: one folk, one rock and reggae. The records are available from Honest Jon's 281 Camden High St., London N.W.1. They cost £4.50 each, for mail orders add 35p per record.

# FEMINISM AND THE LEFT

IN LAST month's Big Flame we began a discussion on issues raised by the pamphlet "Beyond the Fragments". This month's contribution is by Jean McCrindle, who was centrally involved in the discussions of which the pamphlet is a product.

THE FRAGMENTS of the title are all those floating socialists from the past decade or so who may have been in and then out of the far left groups; or may have been running a Socialist Centre or a study group or a community nursery or a local newspaper or a radical journal; they may have been attached to a women's consciousness raising group and then got involved in a Rape Crisis centre; they may have tried a few months in their local Labour Party and become quickly disillusioned; or they may have concentrated on trade union work and become exhausted trying to keep a hospital open or a factory going. In fact, if you think about it, there must be more unaligned socialists wandering about than at any time since ... when? Before 1918; the 1930's ... ever?

The three writers have all been involved in the women's movement and in various left groups trying to connect up Socialism and Feminism and finding the Left curiously resistant to a more than token acceptance of feminist issues. So the pamphlet tries to spell out what a real acceptance of the ideas of the women's movement might mean to the Left - to its notion of organisation, to its conception of the Party and revolutionary vanguardism, to its hierarchies, leaderships and theory and to its relationships with specific oppressed groups within Capitalism.

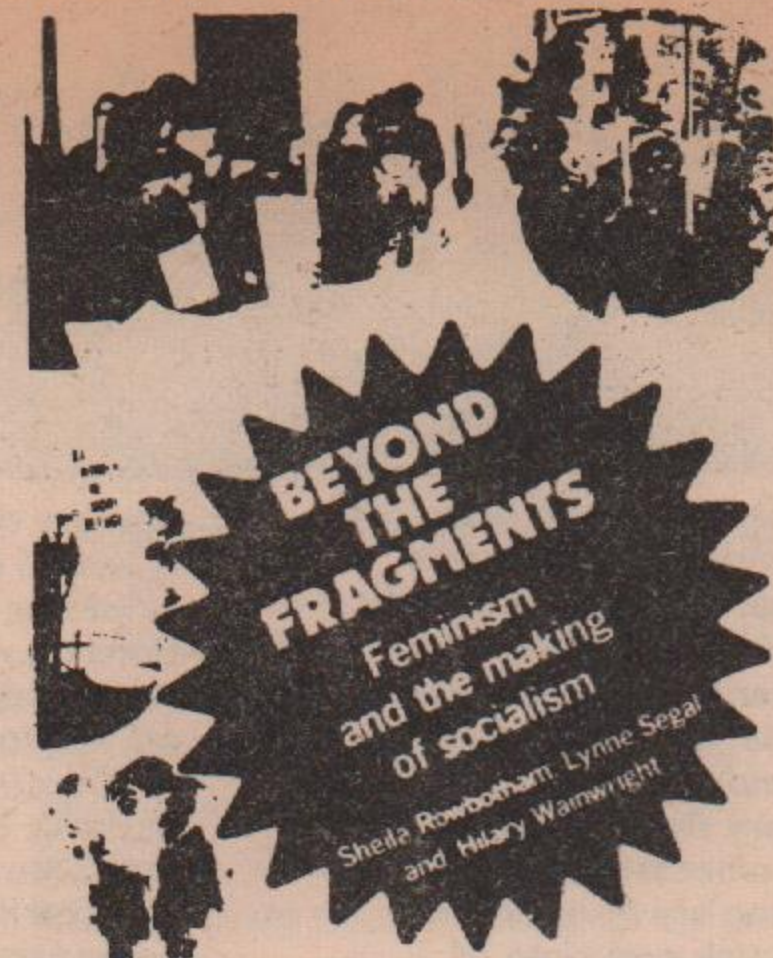
## HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

Sheila Rowbotham's piece is the longest and most sustained argument for a reappraisal on the Left of all its traditions that has yet come out of the Women's Movement in Britain. It is brilliantly written, informed by an intimate historical knowledge of the Left since the 1880s, undogmatic in its assertions and yet caustic in its treatment of some aspects of Left behaviour and thought as she has experienced it. I think it's clearer if I try to summarise the main argument and comment as I go. It's quite difficult for me to do this since I feel too close to the argument and the experiences it comes from and perhaps others can see it more objectively - read the pamphlet anyway.

## NO LOCAL QUARREL

She begins by sketching out her own political biography. She has been most influenced by the post 1956 New Left, by late 60's libertarian Marxism, by radical ideas from the American Left, by the version of Trotskyism associated with the International Socialists (now the SWP) and, for the past ten years,

crucially, by the Women's Movement. Like anybody else's experience this is necessarily partial and her examples, when she comes to the core of her argument, are taken from what she knows best; but I don't think this affects the general relevance of what she is arguing for, although I sometimes think it appears like a very local quarrel particularly with the SWP. In contrasting the ways in which the Women's Movement have organised and grown with "the problem of Leninism", she is in fact throwing into relief the whole range of responses to Capitalism in the past fifty years. That's why I think the book is important and should not be seen as a limited squabble.



## OPENNESS OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

The sections on how we relate to ideas, to theory and to our own past are critical of the way in which the Left has externalised "theory" made it difficult and inaccessible except for a small band of the elite and she points out that it is our relationship to ideas that we should think about rather than concentrating on getting the "correct" line on everything and making sure that rank and file "understand" that correctness. The openness with which the Women's Movement have approached theory means that it has been able to learn from individual responses rather than manipulate them. And the classic Left epithets of "centrist", "reformist", "Stalinist" and so on, have dissolved in the face of the diversity of theory and practice within the Women's Movement.

## FLEXIBLE STRUCTURE

She then goes on to describe the flexibility of structure which has kept the Women's Movement connecting and growing and she asks whether this form of organisation, with all its weaknesses (there are many and she admits them) doesn't reflect more precisely the way ordinary people relate to politics, or could do so, than the tight Leninist "democratic centralist" groups with their vanguards and cadres, leaders

and self-appointed professionals who "woosh" about like sheep dogs keeping the flock in line. She discusses why, given the success of the Bolsheviks in 1917, this Leninist conception of organising came to be accepted by the revolutionary Left and how it pushed aside older forms of Socialist activity in Britain. But she is also critical of the syndicalist tradition, despite its more democratic and anti-authoritarian practice, because it emphasised work and production and in so doing privileged male industrial workers at the expense of women and reproductive issues.

The Women's movement not only suggests different ways of organising for socialist politics but questions the way the Left integrates the insights of the Women's Movement. It is not just a rhetorical acceptance we are asking for, but a redefinition of priorities, a different conception of what "consciousness" is and how it fluctuates, a genuine recognition that theoretical issues cannot be discussed without seriously reading and thinking about the problems thrown up by the Women's Movement. It ought not to be possible to hear male theoreticians go on talking about the changing nature of the State under Capitalism without ever acknowledging the historically different relationship which women have to it.

## PREFIGURATIVE FORMS

The last part of Sheila's essay discusses the problem of how consciousness changes and has changed in the past. She looks at the Utopian and other traditions from the 19th century onwards - the Owenites, the Independent Labour Party, the Clarion movement - and she claims that these traditions make nonsense of the notion that consciousness about Capitalism and how to change it comes through work experience alone. Socialist ideas came from an immense variety of experiences and the need for people to start creating alternative cultures within Capitalism should not be branded as Utopian and dismissed. Pre-figurative political forms, attempts to change one's personal life, may be limited and ultimately impossible under Capitalism, but the alternative Leninist "reality" principle may not make many socialists any more, especially when the "iron" revolutionaries are often such unpleasant people to talk to!

I haven't done justice to the depth and subtlety of Sheila's argument here. She's going to be criticised from many quarters, not least because she doesn't tackle the "big" questions of power and how we "conquer" it etc. But since it seems to me that the "big" question now is whether we're going to have a Socialist movement with people in it at all in the next two decades, the argument has to start where Sheila starts it, not at some hypothetical future confrontation with the Capitalist class.



## Against cuts

Dear Big Flame,

The piece last issue on the 5-1-0 Centre's fight against closure was edited in such a way as to make the 5-1-0's survival appear as a straight forward success. I realise that space is limited but my original contribution attempted to outline some of the conflicts and compromises that emerged in that fight, as well as some of the more successful strategies adopted. I think that this is important as community struggles like this are not well reported in the rest of the left press.

Such struggles are important — at present Hillingdon Law Centre has decided to go independent rather than agree to stringent Council conditions, while Wandsworth projects are negotiating with their council and Islington groups are facing a vast range of cuts.

One thing that is clear is that Westminster City Council's decision to try to close the 5-1-0 was ideological rather than financial. One success that the 5-1-0 Campaign had was to turn the ideological tables on the Council and embarrass them with the charge of suppression of democracy and tacit support for racism. The council in turn tried

to accuse the 5-1-0 of harbouring dangerous left-wingers and sought to divide and rule by differentiating between the "socially useful" groups such as a pensioners club and one parent family group, and the "political" groups like Paddington Campaign Against Racism and the Claimants Union. The campaign claimed the right of any group to comment on political and social issues which affected them and a very important aspect was our success in keeping all the groups together — replying to the Council collectively rather than as individual groups.

It posed difficulties for socialists that put our politics on the spot — if we fought a socialist campaign we were in danger of closing down a working class community centre which had developed many useful local campaigns but contained many people who were not socialists. Glib rejection of reformism is not enough. Without this campaign a major working class centre would have been lost. The problem is coming to terms with the reality of much of our day to day political work in unions, tenants associations and community groups which at first sight could be dismissed as reformist. If we don't do this we will be left mouthing empty, politically correct rhetoric; while having nothing to say about the nagging everyday problems that working class people experience.

MF (West London Big Flame)

*This letter has been cut.*

## Italian style

Dear Big Flame,  
I found your article on the Italian elections misleading because it ignored the rise of abstentions and invalid votes (July, Big Flame)

Voting is a civic 'duty' in Italy. Given the climate of political repression and police intimidation, coupled with the activities of the Red Brigades and other individuals believing in armed political struggle, which are directly confronting and challenging the state, refusing to vote has a greater significance than in Britain and must be looked at closely.

A campaign in favour of abstention was waged by many groups — the re-emerging Italian syndicalist union USI, many of the autonomous workers collectives, as well as the Bordighists and anarchists. There were 35% more abstentions than in 1976 — a total of 10.1% of the electorate.

I also found it odd to see you not distinguishing the characteristics of the different components of the "Far Left" — those on the left of the PCI (Communist Party). The Radicals are scarcely a revolutionary party despite the important campaigns they work for. They are more like the PSU in France or radical Young Liberals in Britain. They are a strange mixture of ex-socialists, Lotta Continua, ecologists, and left Catholics led by



charismatic Marco Panella. The election brought odd alliances too, which will not last, e.g. the alliance between the neo-Stalinist MLS (workers for socialism) and the PdUP (Proletarian Unity) — it seems odd to think of the MLS as anti-authoritarian, as you implied.

I agree that the election does present an opportunity for the real left to develop since it shows that the PCI is stagnating — but the elections have not been a time in which the movimento has collectively built a revolutionary strategy. Part of the problem of creating such a strategy will be facing up to existing divisions, and working out common solutions.

Comradely, Terry Sheen,  
Libertarian Communist Group (North)

## Not funny

Dear Big Flame Comrades,  
I'm very pleased to see Big Flame give coverage to the anti-nuke movement in the May issue. However, I was outraged at the cartoon alongside the article which satirically showed "another safe nuclear power plant" but with the additional comment of "But would you want your sister to live next to one?" As a feminist this smacks of paternalism; as an Anti-Racist this evokes the crude racist jokes about "not wanting your sister to marry one" i.e. a person of colour. As revolutionaries we really must fight sexism and racism — surely politically more appropriate artwork can be used in future!  
NO NUKES!  
J. Woods, Manchester.

## Middle East and Anti-semitism

Dear Comrades,

I was pleased to note in July's 'Big Flame' a degree and depth of coverage of Middle Eastern affairs largely absent in other papers of the revolutionary left. Moshe Machover's article on the development of a mass political resistance movement in the West Bank reveals a principled and perceptive approach. It is no longer (if it ever was) correct to uncritically endorse simple slogans about Zionism as an alternative to understanding the complexities involved in formulating a principled socialist approach to the question

Mustapha' El Kurd's interview also has significant implications for those concerned to develop a socialist perspective on the Palestinian struggle. He talks about his attempts to reach not only an Arab audience but also the Israeli working class. Some anti-Zionist middle eastern commentators write as though the Israeli working class did not exist. But it does, and the years since 1973, when Israel lost the equivalent of one year's G.N.P. in the October War, have seen an intensification of class struggle in the country. In March of this year the Histdrut,

## Men and signs

Dear Big Flame,  
I have only just seen the report on the Mens Conference (Big Flame 74) where I am cited as being in a school of thought fiercely opposed to Mens Groups (and Astrology). The single sentence used to justify this claim is torn, bleeding, from an article on a quite different subject.

For the record, can I say that I am pro-Mens Groups, was in one for two years and think discussion between men about sexual attitudes makes it much easier to understand and change bad relations between women and men (and homosexuals and heterosexuals). I don't even mind Astrology as long as it doesn't get out of hand. I just don't think either are improvements on or alternatives to Marxism.

What exactly I think Marxism is .....is another matter.  
Regards, David Widgery  
London

Israel's T.U.C., which normally acts as an employer and strike-breaker, was forced to call a half day general strike against Begin's economic policy.

These developments, a truly mass Palestinian resistance movement in the West Bank and the deepening of class antagonisms inside Israel, offer a real opportunity to take forward the struggle against Imperialism and its local ruling class allies in the Middle East.

Antisemitism is present in British speech and 'humour' and in the increasing fascist attacks on Jews and Jewish property. The probable switch of many National Front votes to the Tories in the general election implies a widespread recognition of the fact that the British state is a far more effective anti-Black racist organisation than the N.F. This gives the far-right the incentive to step up antisemitism and evidence (in their propaganda and activities) suggests that this is already happening. Paying lip service to the fight against antisemitism, as too many socialists have done and still do is patently inadequate

British socialists must realise that antisemitism is a real problem which socialists must take up on principle as well as because only by doing so will they be able to engage in any meaningful debate about Zionism.

Yours fraternally,  
Clive Gilbert  
Member of the Jewish Socialists' Groups.  
(This letter has been cut).

# Abortion To Term



BIG FLAME Photo

## Angry

Dear Big Flame,

Last month the issue of "viability" was raised in a letter to the paper, which fell into the confusions created by the way anti-abortionists have manipulated the recent publicity. Of course a child we want is a life worth fighting for — and it's a real advance when medical technology has resources to save a premature baby. But it's naive to think that a society that accepts malnutrition, battering, bad housing, bad schooling etc. for vast numbers of its' children, has their interests really at heart.

How, then, can it be right to force a woman to give birth to a child that she doesn't want, and that our society won't care for? The suggestion that "giving birth prematurely" would solve anything is bazaar. As if an unwanted pregnancy was merely an unwanted weight in the belly — something you could take out and solve the problem. Having children is a commitment to supporting another life for a good many years. Just because, as socialists, we do value human life, then we must make it quite clear that women have a right to choose if and when they have children.

It's a meaningless abstraction to distinguish between a woman and the foetus she's carrying. The idea that they have equal rights is a bit of mystical mumbo-jumbo. Let's build a society in which women have some semblance of rights, before we demand rights of "potential people". Lastly, the organisation and control of our present

society is along male priorities. It's not surprising women's health needs are inadequately catered for. Men have made our current inadequate abortion laws. The "socialist" men who obviously think they have every right to decide for women what is morally right and wrong are also familiar. But I'm sick and tired of their posturing. What they actually mean is that they are threatened by the prospect of women in control of their own fertility. They're right of course. If we were in control of it a lot of other things would change, too.  
Yours angrily, ZM  
Manchester.

## Anguished

Dear Big Flame,

Commenting on the letter about the question of viability in last month's Big Flame, whilst recognising that the subject of viability cannot be ignored or considered irrelevant, I feel that at this time we should be concentrating our efforts on obtaining early abortions and day care centres provided by the state.

Bills such as the Corrie Bill which argue about the length of a pregnancy before abortion is denied are just covers for those who want to deny women access to abortion facilities.

Tactically it is incorrect for us to now begin arguing within the terms of reference of the anti-abortionists since these arguments are often distorted by religious dogma.

The question of viability is part of a much wider argument centred around the question of morality and

how we define life and death. It would mean that we would be forced to take positions on mercy killings, euthanasia and when to switch off life support systems.

Coming from a Roman Catholic background, I feel that I am being morally blackmailed enough without being confronted with the decision of whether I want to give birth to a live foetus or not. It has taken me years to shift the debate away from the grounds of theology and souls in my own head because this led me nowhere and meanwhile women and children were being subjected to much pain and anguish.

It is very difficult for a woman to have to decide to seek an abortion in the first place, but the anguish caused by giving birth to a live foetus would be tortuous. I am sure that if this happened to me I would lie awake at night thinking of the foetus growing, curious to see it, and then, whom...I would relent on my original decision whether I committed suicide, battered the child, or went out of my mind afterwards.

Also, as a biochemist, I feel sure that there are those members of the medical profession who would jump at the chance of making names for themselves by experimenting on available subjects. For example, there are many theories about how chemicals produced in the body affect intelligence, and the relationship to this, of the composition of the amniotic fluid in the womb.

Could you imagine the situation that would arise during cuts in public spending... a cheaper life support system would be found and three guesses what that would be... woman.

D. Boland, Liverpool.

## Perils of entrisism

Dear Big Flame,

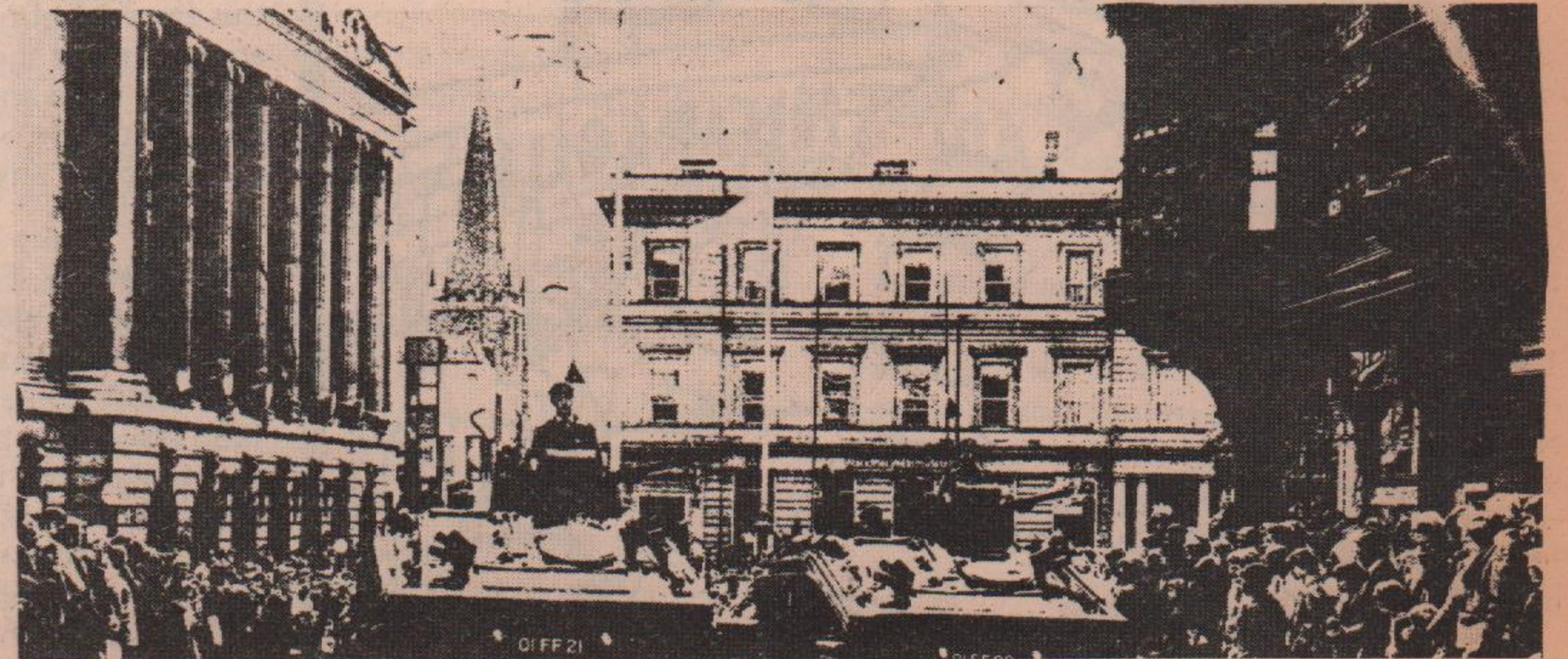
I joined the Labour Party 3 years ago. I was asked to join by two Labour Councillors, who said it was no good being on the outside, I should join the party and change it, which is an argument which a lot of people go along with.

After attending a few of the monthly meetings I quickly realised this was easier said than done.

I have discovered that the Labour party is not a working class party, in the sense that there is little attempt to involve the working class people or to educate them to fight for socialism. You go to a meeting, you may pass a resolution condemning say the next round of cuts in the Health and Social Services, which the Labour Party controlled council in my area have implemented without a word of condemnation. They never organise the people, to fight against such things.

I was asked to sign the nomination papers for Brendan Gallagher who was standing in the general election in Barnsley on a Troops Out of Ireland platform. The first I heard anything about it was on the May day rally in Barnsley where I was told that the Labour Party were not very pleased about the fact that two of their members signing the nomination papers. The other person has yet to appear.

I was invited to appear before the management committee which I did, to explain my reason for signing the paper. There were about 60 people present including the right honourable Roy Mason.



GIFF 21



## Support the Ahmeds

THE TRIAL of Nazir and Munit Ahmed starts on July 30th at Manchester Crown Court. They have been charged with wounding a policeman with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and assault on policemen; very serious charges which could lead to many years in prison. *The Ahmeds are totally innocent of these charges.*

### NATIONAL FRONT

The charges were made after an incident on July 3rd 1978 when seven plain clothes police broke into the Ahmed's shop and house in Longsight, Manchester. Nazir and Munir, like their neighbours, immediately thought they were being attacked by the National Front, and they tried to defend themselves and their family. When Munir tried to phone the local police station, one of the plain clothes police pulled out the phone wires. After Nazir had got outside and shouted "Help! Help! It's the National Front attacking me!" to his neighbours, he was dragged back into the shop and badly beaten by one of the plain clothes police.

These actions by the police

came at a time when racist harassment was at a high pitch in the area; fuelled by the National Front march through Longsight in October 1977 arranged with police cooperation.

The reaction of the local community to the police's action against the Ahmeds was one of great anger and resentment. Nearly a hundred people met within a week and condemned the police's actions, called for the charges to be dropped and set up the Ahmed Defence Campaign.

A petition of over a thousand signatures calling for an investigation into the events was sent to the Home Secretary, which Merlyn Rees refused to accept. Many trade unionists, ethnic minority, religious, anti-racist and community relations organisations have demanded that the charges be dropped.

We hope that there will be supporters of Nazir and Munir Ahmed in court on each day of their trial. If you want to join us please contact us at the following phone nos: (061) 225 8218 or (061) 225 5711 (Manchester Law Centre) or write to Ahmed Defence Campaign c/o 642 Stockport Rd., Longsight Manchester 13.

# Rock Against Racism

THE THREE main subjects discussed at last month's Rock Against Racism Conference in Birmingham were "cock-rock" and Rock against Sexism (RAS), Fanzines (the magazine of Punk music) and the internal structures of RAR.

Lucy Toothpaste and two women from Birmingham talked about RAS and how its most important aim was to try and raise people's consciousness about the problem of sexism. Also RAS would provide a stage for women performers and encourage more women to break through what is a very male dominated industry.

The discussion on "Fanzines" was introduced by members of the Guttersnip Collective. They felt that the Fanzine had helped them a lot in terms of meeting local kids, and introducing their politics, ¾ music - ¼ politics, all the articles kept short and sharp. The issue I saw had a two page spread on abortion which I thought was really brilliant.

It was obvious that the production of Fanzines was an important way of involving kids in more than just the gigs and introducing some of the broader politics of anti-racism, and other issues which related directly to kids lives. Whereas the traditional left papers alienated many people and appeared really boring in both their content and presentation.

The most controversial and heated discussion of the weekend (and at times the most vehement) was the discussion of the internal structure of RAR. There seemed

to be an almost unanimous concern over the lack of communication and co-ordination between the various groups. The Central Committee of RAR which is London based also came in for a lot of criticism. Especially in the way the militant tour was conducted and the fact that huge losses were incurred without any real explanation.

People were concerned about the

lack of democracy and the lack of regional representation. Whilst some people called for the total

disbandment of Central RAR's powers, there and then a compromise was proposed, voted on and accepted. It was decided that regional representation was essential and that there should be three monthly policy making conferences where delegates from all over the country should make the important decisions affecting RAR's national orientation without dramatically curbing local group autonomy, perhaps the most exciting and effective thing about RAR at all.

Energy and enthusiasm and a love of music and RAR has gone along in challenging racism - our national disease. And we came away feeling excited about going back to our local groups and getting on with it.

(a member of South London RAR)

## IMMIGRATION ■ MILITANCY PAYS OFF

OVER THE last year, 1,300 so-called "offenders" against the 1971 Immigration Act have been arrested without legal warrant and imprisoned without trial by jury in 14 gaols throughout the country.

### NATIONAL PICKET

As part of a national picket of these prisons on Saturday July 7th (called by the Campaign Against the Immigration Laws (CAIL)) a hundred people, the majority of whom were Asian, demonstrated outside Risley Remand Centre. Visitors to the prison were handed leaflets explaining the picket and a march was held around the 20ft high perimeter wall with speeches and shouts of support for the 20 or so detainees held in a segregated ground floor landing in "B" wing.

As one ex-inmate informed Big Flame, these detainees are the victims of attacks from some of the other prisoners in the upper landings. Attacks in the form of dropping paper-wrapped shit bombs through their open windows and trying to set these windows

on fire by lowering lighted plastic bottles down to them.

The case of Abdul Azad is just one example of the legal harassment of immigrants made possible by the immigration laws. As the latest CAIL newsletter says "REMEMBER the enemy is not outside the social system, it IS the social system. The Conservative Government have pledged to tighten ALL immigration controls. MOBILISE NOW BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE." 17 year old Abdul Azad knows Risley pretty well, he spent several months inside it awaiting deportation. The Abdul Azad defence Committee, through organising pickets of Risley, played a large part in obtaining his release. Now Abdul has won the right to remain in this country, a clear proof that militancy can pay off.

For further information on the Campaign Against the Immigration Laws, contact CAIL, Box 133, Rising Free Bookshop, 182 Upper St., London N1.



Big Flame Photo - Abdul Azad outside Risley Remand Centre.

## ANL Conference - Now it's up to the Local Groups

The long-awaited Anti-Nazi League conference took place on Saturday 14th July at the Central London Poly. Although it was long-awaited the conference had actually been called at short notice and the effects of this dominated the day's events.

All 82 motions sent in from the branches were on the order paper - and the full programme of speakers (Vishnu Sharma, Amanda Leon, Maurice Ludmer and others) left little time for debate. The majority of resolutions were moved formally, without any speeches, and the unsatisfactory feeling remained that that we had committed ourselves to a great deal, yet without any united commitment to active work.

This aside, important decisions were taken. Most significantly, a new structure was agreed on. This is a three-tiered structure in which regional networks are to be set up. These regional committees will send delegates to the National Working Council which is to meet at least three times a year and to which the steering committee is

responsible. It should be emphasised that it is up to us in the local branches and anti-racist, anti-fascist committees to make this structure work and to build up strong regional coordination. Branches should be starting already to make better links with other groups in the area.

Important advances were made on policy. The ANL has taken a position of opposition to all racist immigration controls. It was clearly the consensus of the delegates that it is the racism of the state and the moves towards the "induced repatriation" of black people that we must concentrate on in the immediate future. Conference committed the ANL to active opposition to the new British Nationality Bill, to the sus laws, to the "ethnicity" question on the 1981 census and other aspects of the increased state repression of "immigrants". Support for black and Jewish self-defence and a recognition of the right of autonomy of black people's organisations were overwhelmingly carried.

A motion calling for the ANL to

support the fight of the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe was carried and with it comes the possibility of creating a much broader campaign against recognition of the Muzorewa regime. The steering committee was mandated to produce a national Newsletter for the ANL and also to work towards a liaison meeting with all other anti-racist anti-fascist organisations to take place this autumn. This second proposal could open the way for a much more unified campaign than has so far been possible.

The least satisfactory aspect of the day was the (re)election of the steering committee. No speeches were allowed either about the role of the steering committee or about the people who were standing. The dissatisfaction expressed towards the steering committee over the last year was suppressed and sadly was not even manifested in the voting. The previous steering committee was re-elected with the addition of the three "official" nominations. Vishnu Sharma, Tariq Ali and Avtar Jouhl. No attendance figures to the steering committee were



Union Place Collective

given and no explanation of why half of its members were not present at the conference. In these conditions, delegates voted for "known" names which include that of Audrey Wise who could not even be bothered to support the local anti-racist carnival in Coventry, where she was an M.P.

Overall the conference succeeded in reorientating the ANL towards the problems posed by the new government. It remains very much the responsibility of local activists to put the paper resolutions into practice.

(a member of Leamington Big Flame)



brother  
goose

"He wants  
to know  
the  
answer!"

BRITAIN HAS  
HAD ENOUGH  
OF  
GOVERNMENT  
INTERFERENCE

Er.. excuse  
me, but can  
you explain  
that?

CERTAINLY,  
YOU NAIVE  
LITTLE  
CHAP.  
YOU  
SEE...

WE WILL NO LONGER  
INTERFERE BY  
HOLDING DOWN  
PRICE RISES,

BAKED  
BEANS  
ONLY  
£18 !!  
HR TERMS

WE WILL SIMPLY  
LOWER TAXES TO  
30p IN THE POUND

but this means  
you've interfered  
to give the man  
earning £30,000  
a year an EXTRA  
£80 a week !!

SHUT UP GOOSE!  
I HAVEN'T  
FINISHED YET

WE WILL NOT  
INTERFERE TO  
STOP RENT  
RISES

but what  
about  
mort

WE WILL STOP  
INTERFERING IN  
BRITISH AEROSPACE  
BY SELLING ITS  
SHARES TO  
THE  
PUBLIC \*

\*The Rich  
Ed.

... AND IN TRIUMPH MERIDEN  
BY FORCING IT TO CLOSE  
DOWN.

NOR WILL WE  
WASTE MONEY  
BY INTERFERING  
IN THE CLOSURE  
OF SHOTTON  
STEELWORKS!

please can i ask  
one simple  
question?

Why not save  
£700 million a year  
by not interfering  
in Northern Ireland?

I HATE GEESE  
WHO ANSWER  
BACK!

now she's  
trying to  
interfere with  
me!

missed!  
by god!  
(but I still  
didn't get  
a proper  
answer)

WHAT APPALLING CURIOUS  
ITY! WHERE WILL BROTHER  
GOOSE'S PROFOUND IGNOR-  
ANCE LEAD HIM ???  
SEE NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE!!

# Big Flame

for  
Socialism

No. 77 August 1979 15p

## A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE

FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND FREE ABORTION ON DEM.

FIGHT  
FOR A WOMAN'S  
RIGHT TO CHOOSE  
ANTI-ABORTION  
BILL

# STOP THE CORRIE ABORTION BILL



The second reading of the Corrie anti-abortion bill on July 13th.  
The photos show (above) the NAC demo outside the Central Hall, Westminster, (left) the sit-down on the pavement outside Downing Street and (below right) police wading in to make two arrests. (Big Flame Photo)