

socialist

# REVIEW

Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party



The  
strong arming  
of the law

Inside: Falkland Islands,  
El Salvador. Fares fight,  
Mary Whitehouse

# The same the whole world over

As Thatcher continues to tell us that Britain can get out of the crisis if we all make sacrifices, and the left in the Labour Party advocate import controls to protect British industry, the world crisis goes on. The most striking feature of the current world slump, says **Pete Green**, is just how global it has become.

The major Western economies, far from recovering in 1982 as officially predicted, are sliding deeper into depression. The United States economy slumped in 1980, recovered a bit in early 1981, and then under the impact of Reaganomics dropped at a rate of 4.7% in the final quarter of the year. Throughout Western Europe unemployment has reached new post-war highs. In West Germany it has doubled in the last year. Even the export juggernaut Japan is slowing down fast as the rest of the world cuts its imports with the slump.

But it is elsewhere that the slump is wreaking most havoc. Prominent among the casualties are those debt-ridden economies which have virtually run out of foreign exchange, and are effectively bankrupt. As well as Poland, a recent list in the *Financial Times* named Zaire, Turkey, Togo, Sudan, Liberia, Madagascar, Pakistan, Senegal, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Vietnam and Romania. All have had to cut back on essential imports with devastating consequences for their

economies (although Turkey and Pakistan have both received special assistance from the IMF and USA for their strategically important and suitably despotic regimes).

The *Economist* magazine recently lamented the condition of some of its favourite 'free enterprise' success stories in South America. There, heavy bank borrowing and flows of multinational investment, attracted by the firm hand of military rule, led to growth rates of 5% a year or more in 1977-80. In 1981 those same economies shrank on average by 2%.

In Brazil the weight of \$63 billion dollars in long-term debt forced the regime into restrictive measures designed to squeeze wages and cut imports. In Argentina in 1981, inflation ran at 105%, money poured out of the country, the peso collapsed, and manufacturing production dropped by 14%.

As the crisis is generalised, it becomes more protracted. Difficulties in one part of the world economy feed back onto the rest. Efforts to deal with the slump in one country reinforce the problems everywhere else.

## Interest rates

Three aspects of this are worth spelling out:

(1) The major Western economies are competing for huge sums of footloose money which move rapidly from one financial centre to another. About £75bn a day, or over \$20,000 bn a year, gets traded in the world's currency markets (fifteen times the annual value of world trade). High interest rates in the United States, pushed up by the American version of Tory monetarism, have attracted large amounts of this, leading to an interest-

rate war between competing financial centres.

France has proved particularly vulnerable to flights of hot money, undermining the Mitterrand government's attempts at an only mildly more expansionist programme. Rising interest rates have also, of course, added to the squeeze on all those sections of capital heavily in debt and trying to borrow more, whether loss-making airlines like Laker, or whole countries like Brazil.

(2) The slump has caused a fall in many commodity prices, especially raw materials. In 1981 aluminium fell by 21%, rubber by 28%, cotton by 37%, and sugar (outside the Common Market) by 54%. The third world producing countries are forced to cut back on buying manufactures from the West. Nigeria's plummeting oil revenues could easily cost British companies £250 million worth of business.

(3) Competition between states and groups of states is intensifying. Trade wars are raging between the USA and the Common Market over steel, chemicals and textiles, and between both of these and Japan over virtually everything.

Each country is trying to boost its own exports and cut imports from everywhere else. Austerity measures, cuts in wages and public spending, pushing up unemployment and diminishing domestic demand, are all imposed for the sake of improving international 'competitiveness' and attracting foreign investment.

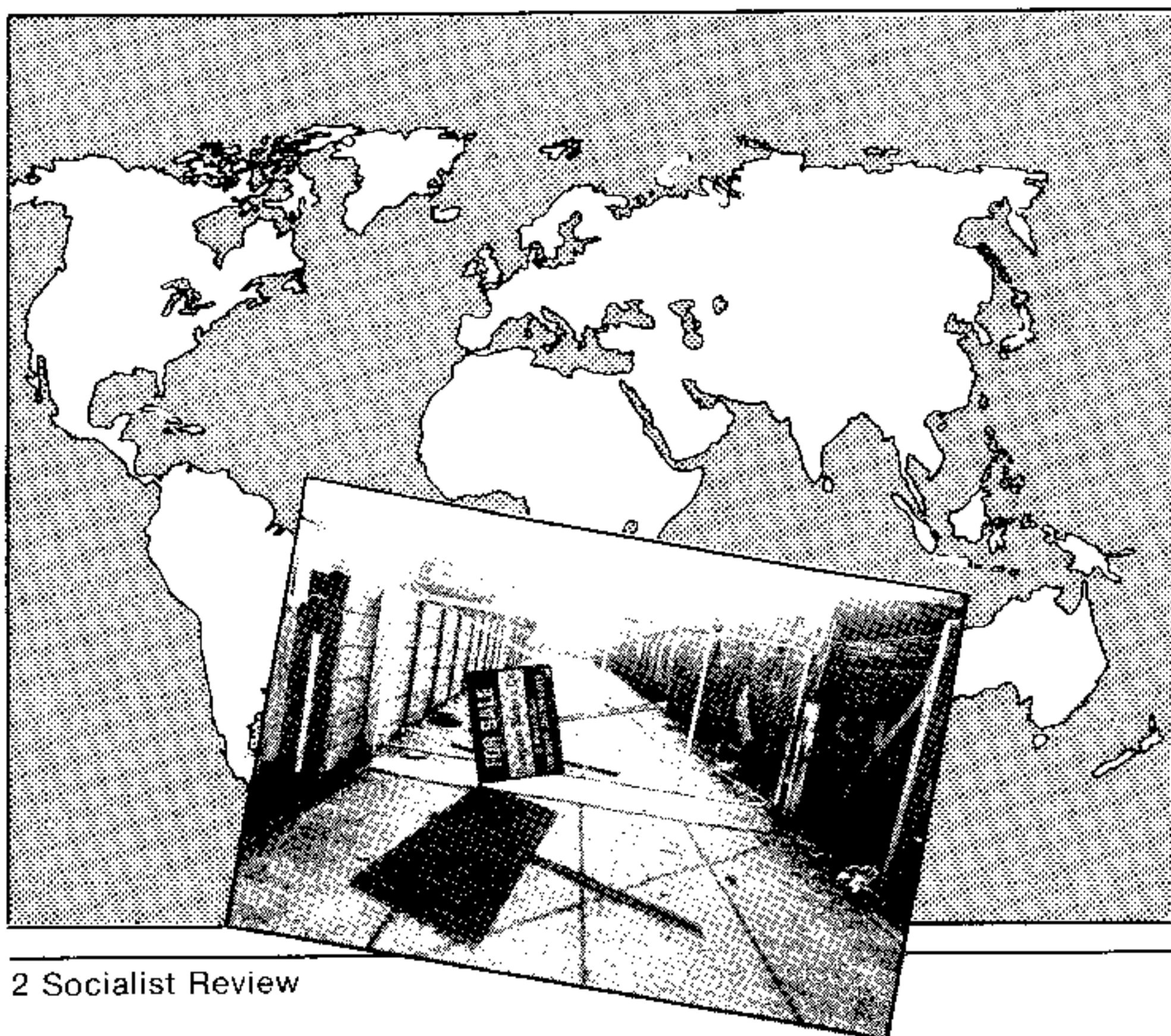
One country on its own that attempts to imitate Japan or Singapore might succeed in carving out a bigger share of the world's stagnant markets. But if every country adopts the same strategy, the effects can only cancel each other out. One economy's import reduction is another economy's loss of exports. Indeed it is worse than that. Protectionism, austerity measures and wage-cuts all have the effect of lowering the overall level of world trade and world demand, exacerbating the slump.

## Cutting demand

It would be a mistake to conclude from this that the slump is just going to get worse.

The 1974-75 slump was followed by a weak, uneven and inflationary recovery in the late seventies. A similar sort of recovery will slowly emerge over the next year or so. Wage-cuts and falling costs of energy and raw materials will increase the profits of those industrial companies which ride out the slump. Postponed investment projects will be revived, stocks will be rebuilt, and governments will try to boost their economies in the face of mounting unemployment and impending elections (for a few of them).

But the 'recovery' will leave 26 million plus officially on the dole in the industrialised West alone. The fundamental problems of world capitalism will not be resolved. Low rates of profit; excess capacity in major industries such as steel, vehicles and chemicals; chronic trading imbalances between the stronger and weaker national economies; the massive overhang of accumulated debt, and the corresponding instability of the world's financial system – all of these will persist through the 1980s, as they did through the 1970s.





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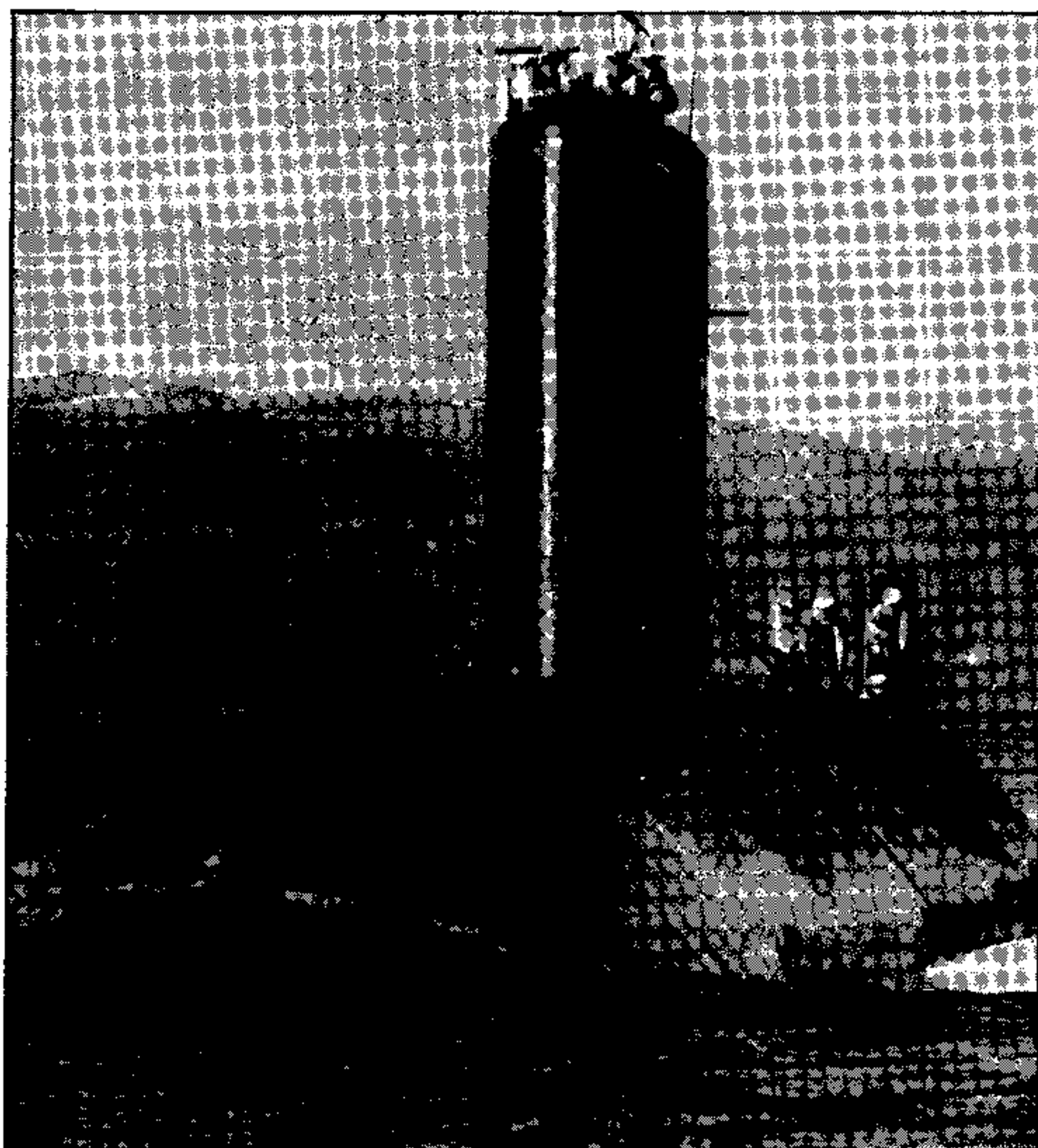
## Contents

- 2 World slump
- 3 The Falklands fiasco
- 5 Central America
- 7 Palestine
- 8 Greece
- 9 The Labour Party: retreat of the left; fares fight flop; Hillhead
- 13 The Times
- 14 Books are weapons: Open letter to the party
- 16 The oil crisis
- 18 Law and order
- 22 Mary Whitehouse
- 23 John Reed and Communism
- 25 Industrial discussion: Nurses, Civil servants, teachers, Tebbit, taxes
- 29 Inside view: Risley remand centre
- 30 Writer reviewed: Dickens
- 31 Kinder trespass
- 33 Books: Socialism with a human face, Nicaragua, personal politics, futurology, socialist novel
- 35 Music: second wave punk
- 36 Revolutionary Calendar: Dublin 1916

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## The enemy is at home

The Falkland Islands 'form the most southerly colony of the British empire.' When these words were written, in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1910-11), the sun never set on the empire. Now they are, or were, virtually all that was left (apart, of course, from Northern Ireland). When the Argentinian armed forces seized the islands in the early hours of Friday 2 April they overran 98 per cent of Britain's remaining overseas territory.

It is in this context, the context of imperialism, that we have to see the Argentinian occupation of the Falklands, and the British government's decision to send half the Royal Navy's operating fleet 'in wartime order', as Defence Secretary John Nott put it, to the South Atlantic.

One thing should be clear. The Falklands crisis has very little to do with the fate, or the rights of the islands' 1800 inhabitants, despite the purple prose of Fleet Street, epitomized by a *Times* leader headed: 'We are all Falklanders now', and comparing the incident with Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939.

The islands have always been the pawn of outside forces. They were ceded by Spain to Britain in 1771, but left unoccupied, and therefore claimed by Argentina in 1820. A British warship, HMS *Clio*, expelled the Argentinians in 1833, since when the Falklands have been a crown colony.

In 1845 the government sold to an Argen-

tine cattle and hide merchant, S Lafone, 600,000 acres of land, the entire southern portion of the main island. He was bought out in 1851 by the Falklands Islands Company, set up by royal charter that year.

Today the company, since 1977 a subsidiary of the fuel, vehicle and distribution group Coalite, owns 1.3 million acres, half the island's land, and 300,000 of their 700,000 sheep, and employs a similar proportion of the 1800 inhabitants.

The *Sunday Times* writes of the Falklanders,

'descendents of the mid-19th century Scots, English and Welsh farmers who came to cultivate the sheep, they still make most of their fairly comfortable living from wool. But there is little real independence or security. Most families are not freeholders, but tenants of the Falklands Islands Company. Their homes are, in effect, tied cottages, and



**John Nott, uncomfortably perched on Trident**

they have to leave — usually for New Zealand or the Home Counties — when they are too old to work' (4 April 1982).

It is to retain control of this company island that Britain is prepared to go to war. But surely, some may object, the issue is not British imperialism, but the aggression of the Galtieri military junta in Buenos Aires?

Indeed, one of the most striking facts about the emergency debate in the House of Commons on 3 April was that, as the *Guardian* commented:

'Tories who have not used the word "fascists" in anger since 1945 were raging about human rights and despicable Latin American juntas' (5 April 1982).

But, in the first place, one has only to glance at a map to see that it makes far more sense for the Falklands to be part of Argentina than to remain attached to a country 8000 miles to their north. Secondly, there is little in Argentina's history to make it likely that the Falkland Islanders would become an oppressed national minority. On the contrary, Argentina's population is, like that of Canada, Australia or the US, largely the offspring of European settlers, rather than the descendants of slaves, and conquered Indians, as is true of the rest of Latin America. The links between Britain and Argentina are close: there are 17,000 British residents, as well as English and Welsh-speaking settler groups.

Indeed, it is precisely Britain's position as the traditional imperialist power in Argentina that is the main motivating force behind the demand for the Falklands. Although supplanted by the US as the dominant power, British capital still has considerable interests in Argentina: £200 million worth of direct investment in 1979, including 35 branches of Lloyds Bank, extensive ranching interests owned by Brooke Bond Liebig, and factories belonging to Unilever and Dunlop. The desire to win back Las Malvinas, as the Argentinians call the Falklands, is seen by them as part of winning their national independence from Western imperialists.

This legitimate assertion of the right of self-determination has been hijacked by a brutal and unpopular military dictatorship. President Galtieri played a crucial role in the suppression of the left after the 1976 coup, which led to the 'disappearance' of at least

12,000 people murdered by the security forces.

In return for power, the military have given economic disaster — the peso has fallen from 65 to 11,500 to the dollar since they came to power, prices went up 131 per cent while gross domestic product last year fell by 6.1 per cent and 13 per cent of the workforce are unemployed. Only a few days before the seizure of the Falklands, Buenos Aires saw the first mass demonstrations against military rule since 1976. No wonder the junta has decided to recover some support by an appeal to patriotism.

Far from opposing the regime they are now happy to denounce as 'fascist', both Tory and Labour governments have supplied the junta with arms. Two of the Argentine warships with which the British task force may soon engage, are British-made Sheffield-class Type 42 destroyers. Moreover, the Thatcher government is the only European supporter of Reagan's strategy of building up right-wing military regimes such as Galtieri's as a counterweight to social revolution in Latin America.

It is the workers of Buenos Aires, Cordoba, and the other industrial centres of Argentina who will bring down the dictatorship. A British military adventure against Argentina will have the effect only of cementing these workers to the regime.

### The real issue

So what is the issue? Quite simply, the decline of British power. The Tories, like Labour before them, have sought to preserve Britain as a major power with a special relationship with Washington, an independent nuclear deterrent, and formidable military forces, including what is still the third largest navy in the world. Humiliation at the hands of Argentina would affect the British ruling class's military and diplomatic standing across the world.

It is this, the attempt to retain some international standing for British imperialism, that is at stake, rather than Britain's residual interests in Latin America — although one should note that the British Antarctic Territory, London's stake in the vast mineral wealth of the South Pole, was administered from the Falklands.

Many Tory back-benchers — notably the very powerful chairman of the 1922



**Francis Pym—its an ill wind ...**



**Lord Carrington, fall guy**

Committee, Edward Du Cann — are clearly haunted by the fear of another humiliation like that of Suez in 1956. The government's critics on their own side include those such as Julian Amery, a fervent supporter of apartheid, who advocate a traditional 'blue-water' military strategy involving a strong navy not exclusively committed to NATO. They therefore opposed the decision to withdraw from the South Atlantic and to abandon the Simonstown base in South Africa and bitterly attacked Nott's policy of running down the surface fleet in order to finance the Trident D-5 nuclear missile system.

Meanwhile, Michael Foot seems intent on repeating 1940, when the labour opposition and Tory dissidents used military disaster in Norway to destroy Neville Chamberlain, and bring Churchill to power. Such a strategy involves outjingoing the Tories, a role into which Foot has slipped with ease. After all, is he not the co-author of *Guilty Men*, a hugely successful wartime pamphlet which laid the blame for Dunkirk on unpatriotic Tories? He has been ably assisted in this by his fellow blimp, Enoch Powell — the two men have long admired each other, and in the 1960s co-operated against their respective front benches. One Tory MP, Patrick Cormack, praised Foot for 'speaking for Britain' in the Commons' debate on the Falklands.

The attitude of revolutionary socialists to the issue is perfectly simple. We are opposed to any British attempt to retake the Falklands, to which Britain's claim is a vestige of colonialism. Such an operation would cause many casualties among the Falklanders, and could easily lead to more deaths than the entire population of the islands. If successful, it would lend legitimacy to the idea that the Western powers have the right to intervene in any part of the world where they are threatened — the US in Central America and the Gulf, France in her former African possessions, Britain, perhaps, in support of an embattled apartheid regime. Defeat for Britain would, at worst, breathe a little life into an Argentinian regime whose hours are in any case numbered. It would certainly weaken, and could conceivably bring down the most reactionary British government for many years. As Karl Liebknecht said in 1914, the enemy is at home. The interest of British workers lies in their 'own' government's defeat. □



# The options narrow in Central America

The last month has seen general elections in Guatemala and El Salvador. In Guatemala a coup has already overthrown the official victor, and as we go to press, the election results in El Salvador indicate that a similar coup may be on the way. In this article, **Carla Lopez** looks at the options open to the local rulers and their US masters in the next few months.

The Central American oligarchs and generals who for so long enjoyed unquestioning US support, are deliberately reducing Reagan's room for manoeuvre. They believe that when it comes to a straight choice between backing them or allowing a guerilla victory, the US will opt for the former. They are pursuing this strategy not only in El Salvador but also in Guatemala, the country which will soon become an even bigger headache for Reagan than its neighbour. A coup took place in Guatemala on 23 March which bore all the hallmarks of a CIA operation. It purported to come from junior officers who were protesting against the electoral fraud earlier in the month in which General Anibal Guevara, the chosen successor of President Lucas Garcia, had emerged victorious.

Although the three-man junta which took power following the coup pledged to hold elections and introduce reforms, it is clear that the far right is closely involved with the coup. One of the leaders of the MLN, an ultra right wing party similar to D'Aubuisson's Arena party in El Salvador, has admitted publicly that he helped prepare it. This is going to make it extremely difficult for the Reagan administration to convince Congress that the new Guatemalan government is genuinely interested in reforms. Meanwhile, the guerilla movement in that country as well as in El Salvador grows in strength daily. There is no doubt that the United States is facing one of the most serious challenges to its hegemony ever.

The United States has refrained from taking any major initiatives till after the Salvadorean elections. But the preliminary results of these elections suggest that they are likely to complicate rather than ease the Reagan administration's dilemma. It is unlikely that Duarte will attain an overall majority which



**General Anibal Guevara, now deposed, declares himself winner of the Guatemalan presidential election**

will force him to ally with one or other of the right wing parties in order to retain the Presidency.

Even worse for the United States is the possibility that the extreme right wing Major Roberto D'Aubuisson, who has made a formidable showing in the elections and will come a clear second in the count, will himself rally the right to exclude Duarte. With the extreme right in El Salvador considerably strengthened, it will be all the more difficult for Reagan to convince US and international opinion to continue military support for the Salvadorean government.

Despite the claims of Haig and assorted other right-wing gangsters, there is no doubt that the election result is a sham. Outside of the guerilla held areas, voting was compulsory and identity cards were marked to show who had been to the polls. The 'has voted' mark was allegedly invisible but was not, and, since it lasted for forty eight hours, it was an open invitation to the death squads to massacre anyone who supported the left's call for a boycott.

## Captain Blowtorch

What the election did show, however, is that there is substantial support for D'Aubuisson amongst the middle classes. This is the man who promised to finish the war in 'three months' if given power. It is also the man whom the former US ambassador Robert White described as a 'pathological killer.' His nickname in El Salvador is 'Captain Blowtorch', which dates from the days when he was in charge of torture activities for the National Guard, and refers to his favourite instrument of interrogation.

The US needed the election results in order to sell their policies on the home market. Both Congress and US public opinion are extremely wary about being drawn into anything which might lead to a repeat of the defeat they suffered in Vietnam. Some members of Reagan's administration, like Defence secretary Casper Weinburger, have read the writing on the wall. He is an open opponent of direct US intervention because he fears that the popular backlash might wreck the chances of pushing through his

defence budget. Others are more confident: Haig, for example, believes that Central America is an area where 'we can be tough'. His view is that any set-back in the region would weaken the US position elsewhere.

The United States' options are now extremely limited. The Reagan administration based its policy toward El Salvador on the belief that the guerilla movement there is comparable to the small armed groups which emerged in Latin America in the early 1960s. These groups gained little support amongst the peasantry and were rapidly defeated with the help of US counterinsurgency techniques. Reagan assumed the presidency in January 1981 convinced that a military defeat of El Salvador's guerillas would be just as easy once the Salvadorean armed forces had a few more guns, helicopters and US advisers.

The administration was making a fundamental error. The guerilla movements of Central America today are qualitatively and quantitatively different from those of the early 1960s. They have rethought the militaristic and vanguardist strategies of those years modelled on the *foco* theory of Che Guevara and Regis Debray. They have combined armed struggle with mass political work; to some extent they have taken into account the urban working class as well as the peasantry; and the most powerful forces in the region today—the FPL in El Salvador, the EGP and ORPA in Guatemala—have pursued a strategy of prolonged popular war rather than immediate insurrection. As a result they have built up a large, well organised base of support within the population. They have military experience in the Guatemalan case based on over twenty years of armed struggle and in El Salvador on at least a decade. And as the





**Cuban arms? These two Salvadoran guerrillas have a Chinese rocket launcher and an American carbine**

US-backed armed forces in the region have responded with increasing levels of brutality against the population as a whole, so the support of the guerrillas has grown still further.

Although the January 1981 guerrilla offensive in El Salvador seemed initially to confirm the Reagan administration's analysis—the guerrillas failed to gain a decisive advantage over the armed forces—it soon became apparent that they were extending their control over large areas of the countryside. By June 1981 the guerrillas held at least one third of the country. In October they blew up the key *Puente de Oro* road bridge. In November the Reagan administration showed its growing concern that the guerrillas were in fact winning. Haig told *Newsweek* that there was a stalemate situation which 'could ultimately be fatal'.

It was in November 1981 that the administration began to consider its various options in El Salvador. Its first option was to continue its present policy of military support for the Salvadoran army in the hope that with increased amounts of US assistance it would defeat the guerrillas in a prolonged war.

In December the administration announced that it was going to train 1,500

Salvadoran soldiers and officers in the United States, the largest training programme of foreign troops on US soil ever. It has increased military assistance to the army. This reached US\$ 55 million from the Pentagon's internal budget after the guerrillas had destroyed or damaged 28 planes in a raid on the Ilopango airbase. This compares with US\$ 35 million during 1981. There are now 51 US military advisers in the country.

### **Military failure**

But despite this increase in assistance the Salvadoran armed forces have proved themselves incapable of defeating the guerrillas. Successive army offensives have failed while the guerrillas have extended their activities so that at the beginning of March they launched their first major actions in San Salvador, the capital, since January 1981. The army lacks the personnel either to deal with the guerrillas—its most recent recruits are 15 year old boys, press ganged into its ranks—or the technical skills to absorb much more US military equipment. Morale, at least in the lower ranks, is very low. It looks increasingly as if a strategy based on a prolonged war of attrition is likely to favour the guerrillas rather than the Salvadoran armed forces.

It is the weakness of the Salvadoran armed forces which has forced the United States to consider other military options. Most convenient would be an indirect intervention involving an inter-American peace force. In November 1981 the military commanders and intelligence officers of 20 Latin American countries met in Washington. One of the main items on the agenda was the possibility of a collective Latin American response to the present conflict in El Salvador. Since then, rumours have abounded that the Argentine armed forces would lead such a force, which would also include Colombian and Honduran troops. Argentina has come to play an increasing role in Central America.

An estimated 20-30 Argentine advisers are at present in El Salvador. The Nicaraguan government has accused Argentina of involvement in CIA sponsored destabilisation efforts in Nicaragua. At the

end of February Colonel Flores Lima, chief of staff of the Salvadoran armed forces went to Argentina to discuss military assistance. As a result the Argentines announced plans to sell ground aircraft and other weapons to El Salvador and the Argentine chief of staff stated that his country would give all possible aid to the Salvadoran junta. Subsequently, at the beginning of March, Thomas Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter American Affairs, visited Argentina and declared that he expected Argentina to be 'active in whatever action is taken in Central America by other Latin America powers.'

The possibility of an indirect intervention should be taken seriously but it faces enormous difficulties. In the first place it would still require considerable US logistical if not direct support. Secondly, there is opposition to Argentine involvement from within the Argentine armed forces as well as within Argentina itself. And thirdly, in order to justify such an intervention under the provisions of the inter-American mutual defence pact, the Rio treaty of 1947, the United States needs to prove that there is an external threat to El Salvador.

So far, all administration efforts to prove that Cuba, the Soviet Union and Nicaragua are sending arms to the Salvadoran guerrillas have proved farcical. A young Nicaraguan presented to the press as having been trained in Cuba and Ethiopia for guerrilla action in El Salvador, recanted confessions which he claimed to have been made under torture by the Salvadoran army and announced that a US official had threatened him with death if he did not testify. Extensions to Nicaragua's airports which the US presented as evidence of a massive military build-up in the country were shown to have been recommended by the US to the Somoza government in 1975. And while these and other propaganda disasters were taking place, the *Washington Post* revealed details of a CIA plan to destabilise Nicaragua which had been personally approved by Reagan.

### **Negotiated solution?**

This plan not only reflects the United States' continued hostility to the Sandinista government on ideological grounds, but also the belief that any military options it pursues in the region would first require the 'neutralisation' of Nicaragua and Cuba to prevent them aiding the guerrillas elsewhere.

But, if indirect intervention remains as problematic as deployment of US troops, the administration has so far ruled out its only other option, a negotiated settlement. It believes that this is tantamount to admitting a guerrilla victory. Pressure from France and Mexico has grown considerably over the last few months to persuade Reagan to accept such an option. Negotiation is for them the best way of preventing a total guerrilla victory or a US military intervention. But the United States knows that neither the armed forces nor the oligarchy in El Salvador would accept a solution involving the guerrillas, while no solution which didn't involve them could succeed. □

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# 'The best traditions of Israeli democracy'

The last few weeks have seen massive new resistance to Israeli rule on the West Bank, Michael Davis gives the details.

Alarm bells are ringing in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem as Arabs in Israel have joined the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in strikes and mass demonstrations. The young Palestinians who have taken to the streets in Nazareth and Acre to shout 'Down with the Zionist occupation: Long live Palestine' have reminded the Israelis that though they now wish to incorporate the West Bank, after 34 years of occupation they have still not managed to absorb and pacify the 600,000 Palestinians of Israel 'proper'.

The protests expose Israel's claim that Palestinian Arabs have been 'peacefully integrated' into the Israeli state, and that the real trouble is caused only by 'PLO terrorists' who have infiltrated the more susceptible population of the West Bank. Most important, they continue the tradition of mass collective resistance which has always been the most effective obstacle to Israeli occupation of Arab lands.

The Israelis are well aware of the significance of the latest events. 'It is a power struggle between Israel and the PLO', says Menachem Milson, head of Israel's West Bank 'civilian' administration. 'Both we and the PLO know that this is a critical stage in the struggle.'

For the Israelis the latest stage involves the attempt to decapitate the PLO leadership on the West Bank. Since they changed the method of administration from that of military to 'civilian' rule last year—most Israeli officials simply ceased wearing their uniforms—it has been clear that the pro-PLO officials of the towns and larger villages would refuse to co-operate in what was effectively the first stage of the annexation of the West Bank.

The Israeli strategy has been inspired by the old colonial policy of co-opting local leaders who will act as collaborators to discipline their own population. For months the Israelis have been engaged in finding a group of West Bank 'moderates' they could use as cover for creeping annexation of the area, and as a lever against the PLO. They have worked hard to develop the 'Village Leagues', based on individuals willing to co-operate with the occupying forces on a basis no different from that of the collaborators used by the Americans during their 'hearts and minds' campaigns in Vietnam.

But the Israelis have had serious problems



in substituting these 'moderates' for the elected pro-PLO officials. Their solution has been to sack those officials who will not co-operate with the 'civilian administration'. When the first group of Palestinian councillors was dismissed, at al-Birah, the other town councils called for demonstrations of protest. Tel-Aviv has responded with further widespread sackings, and the Palestinians have accepted the challenge with three weeks of strikes and demonstrations.

## Clumsy propaganda

The Israeli propaganda campaign that has accompanied the sackings has been clumsy in the extreme. West Bank administrator Milson has insisted that 'if people are

pro PLO then they are terrorists, anti-Semites bent on the destruction of Israel.' This picture of ruthless conspirators fired by racial hatred has hardly fitted the scenes of young boys throwing stones at heavily armed Israeli troops that have flashed around the world's television screens.

Israel's standing with its own supporters in the West has also not been assisted by Milson's complaint that the dismissed PLO officials had been elected in 1976 only as a result of intimidation and bribery. He has been unable to respond to attacks from the Israeli opposition who point out that in 1976 the then Israeli government described the elections as 'in the best traditions of Israeli democracy'.

For six years the Palestinian mayors and councillors have been resentfully accepted by the Israelis as the representatives of West Bank opinion. But as time for the evacuation of Sinai has drawn near, and the Camp David plan has run out of steam, the question of the need to absorb the West Bank has grown more urgent, and the fate of the Palestinian officials more certain.

The scale of the Palestinian protest will be enough to bring some added pressure on the Arab states to find an alternative to the Camp David farce that Israel and the United States still insist will provide a form of 'autonomy' for the Palestinians. This scheme is unlikely to be more than a modified version of the ill-fated Fahd Plan that came crashing down at the Arab League summit last December, and will show up the inadequacy of the oil-rich Gulf States. Though they have recently given some £30 million to the PLO, they show no sign of mobilising their much-vaunted 'oil weapon'. Given the current state of OPEC, they are less likely to do so than ever before.

More important may be the effect of the West Bank and 'Israeli' Arab response inside the PLO. Here the impressive scale of the strikes and demonstrations may strengthen the hand of those who are arguing for an intensification of the struggle inside the Occupied Territories. □

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There are some 750,000 Palestinians in the West Bank, and an equal number in Gaza. Over 100,000 now regularly commute to work in Israel, and have indeed provided a source of cheap labour which has helped to keep Israel's sickly economy afloat. For the first time in forty years the Palestinians again have some economic muscle. As a larger proportion of their population become urbanised they enjoy a wider collective political experience. Leftists in the PLO who argue for a greater emphasis on raising the level of struggle where there is the greatest possibility of mass action amongst Palestinians, may now find that their arguments are making more sense.

The new wave of mass struggle is of great importance to the PLO, which has been going through a difficult period on the military front. Since the Syrian invasion of 1976 the movement has largely been confined to the south and east of Lebanon, and the level of its armed operations against Israel has been modest.

This has encouraged the Israelis to plan a

further invasion of Southern Lebanon, in which they hope to smash the PLO's military machine, and to drive the Palestinians and Lebanese leftists far to the north and under the guns of their allies the Lebanese fascists. Though they are better trained and equipped than ever before, the PLO and the leftists are no match for Israel's huge army and the firepower of its US-supplied arsenal.

Israeli Prime Minister Begin is not given to caution. Under the added pressure from his right-wing coalition partners to annex the West Bank he may decide to attempt the military elimination of the PLO in Lebanon while he continues the political offensive on the West Bank.

If such events should occur it is to be hoped that the Palestinian population of the West Bank and of Israel 'proper' show the same determination that they have displayed over the last month. Mass political strikes and demonstrations involving two million Palestinians would pose a problem that would sorely test Israel. □

through a referendum. Now, PASOK seems to have forgotten its promises for the referendum, and is satisfied with 'good performances' from the benches of the European Parliament.

Particularly significant is its attitude towards the situation in Poland. Although Papandreou has stated in party aggregates that 'Solidarity fully expresses what we think about socialism', the statements from the government itself against the military coup in Poland have been very vague.

And Papandreou immediately dismissed the minister who condemned the coup in Poland 'more than was necessary' at the EEC summit. In exchange for these services, the USSR bought thousands of tons of oranges which otherwise would have been left to rot, since the EEC would not buy them.

On the whole we can say that the 'hard line' of PASOK on matters of foreign policy has softened. It has changed its war-mongering policy towards Turkey into one of 'friendly neighbourly relations' without even openly condemning the Junta.

Things become clearer when we look at PASOK's internal policy. After the initial period of liberalisation and generosity, PASOK has gone on to prove in practice that it is nothing more than a party which aims to modernise Greek capitalism.

PASOK succeeded in deposing by juridical means the old right-wing leadership of the Greek TUC. The majority of the new TUC leadership belongs to PASOK. Therefore, at least for the moment, PASOK has manoeuvred to keep the CP out of the TUC leadership, although the CP controls most of the unions. So, although the government claims that it aims to democratise the trade union movement, it has created all the conditions for complete control by itself.

**Tear gas**

The new TUC leadership, instead of demanding wage increases through direct action, is resorting to industrial tribunals. When PASOK was in opposition, it was repeatedly demanding the abolition of the industrial tribunals!

As far as the nationalisations are concerned, things are vague. In a speech on TV, Papandreou avoided specifying which industries will be nationalised, under what terms, and with what compensations.

There are also a number of other occasions where PASOK has shown what it means by 'social policy'.

PASOK has not interfered at all with the old state of things in the army. At the same time, it has tolerated the interrogation and pursuit of soldiers who participated in demonstrations and political public meetings.

The 'socialist' government of PASOK has sent the MAT (the Greek SPG) to attack with tear gas a prisoners' revolt for better conditions in seven prisons in the country and against demonstrations in solidarity with the struggle of the prisoners.

It has sent the police to attack and evict the squatters who occupied empty houses immediately after the elections. The arrested were sentenced to up to 20 months imprisonment. □

# Papandreou: promises and performance

In previous issues we've looked at the record of the Mitterrand government in France. Now, **Kostas Pittas** from Athens looks at the record of Western Europe's other 'socialist' government, that of Papandreou in Greece.

The Socialist Party, PASOK, won the elections last October with an absolute majority in parliament. Thus, it has been in a position to put into practice its

programme without having to negotiate on the important issues with the other two parties in parliament (the right wing New Democracy and the Moscow-oriented CP). The changes which have taken place though, are far from what was promised during the election campaign.

PASOK has hardened up Greek policy towards NATO and the American military bases. However, it has not initiated any processes for withdrawal from NATO or the ousting of the bases as was promised.

Andreas Papandreou had promised before the election that Greeks could have the chance to decide themselves whether or not Greece should remain a member of the EEC,

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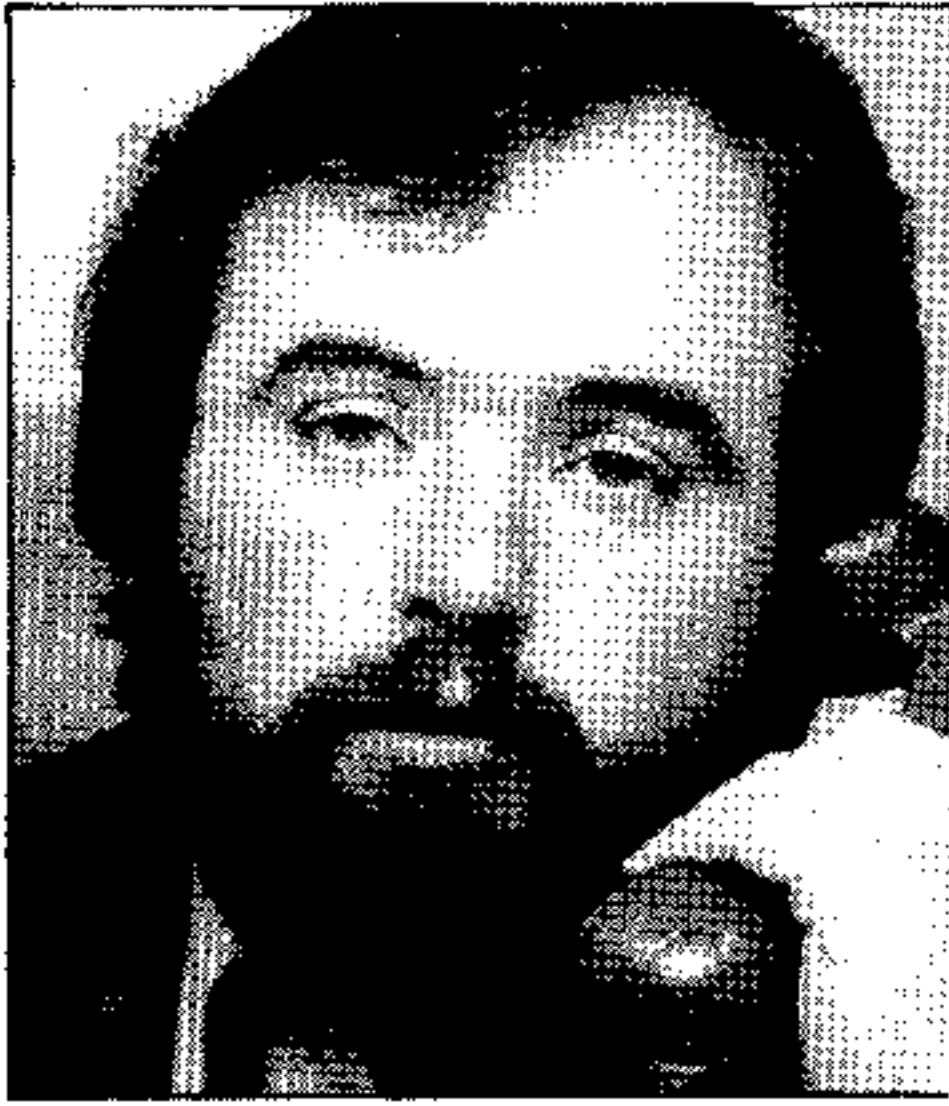
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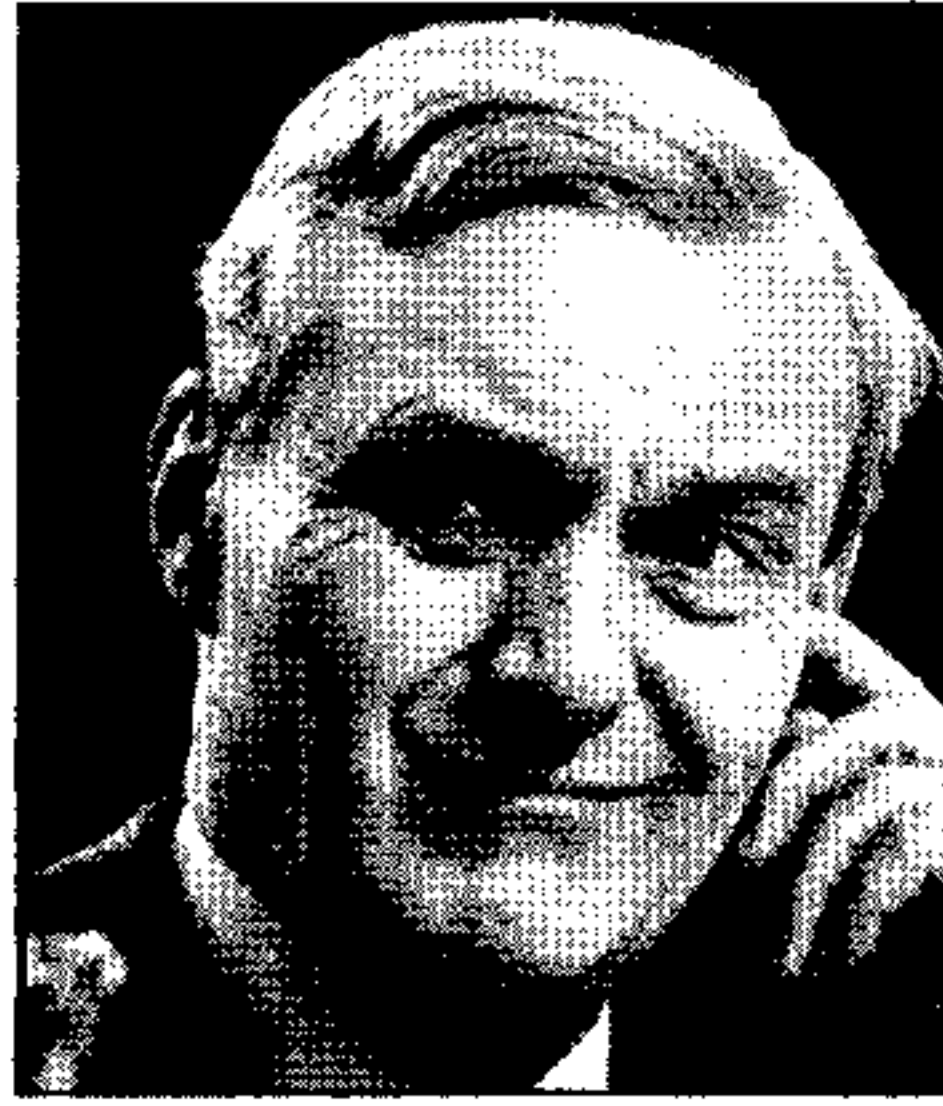
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**Jack Dromey—supporting the peace of Bishops Stortford**



**Tony Benn—backtracking on no compensation**



**Ken Livingstone—opposing 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay'**

# The retreat will be a long one

The fight in the Labour Party shows no sign of ending. The right wing is on the offensive. **Pete Goodwin** looks at the latest developments in detail.

Put it to virtually anyone on the Labour left that their movement is in retreat and they will agree with you — up to a point.

They will admit that they reached a high point in the weeks immediately before the deputy leadership election in October, when confounding the pundits, it looked as if Benn might beat Healey. Since then there have been a succession of setbacks: right-wing gains in the National Executive, the Tatchell affair, the inquiry into the *Militant*.

Then of course there is the Peace of Bishops Stortford. The Left don't like it. But they accept that pressure for unity in the face of the SDP threat was mounting and that this necessitated some restraint on their part.

But then comes the qualification. Despite the setbacks, most Labour leftists will argue that the constitutional changes remain intact, fundamentally altering the rules of the Labour Party game. They claim that the left remains stronger than ever in the constituencies and ready to extend its base in the unions. In short, the Labour left conventional wisdom says there is a retreat, but that it is no more than a temporary withdrawal.

There are however a number of reasons for thinking that the retreat goes a lot further than this.

First of all there seems to be a growing amnesia about what exactly the new Labour left that carried through the constitutional changes and the Benn campaign was arguing until last October. Central to its rhetoric was that the last Labour Government was a disaster and that left wing resolutions at conference were absolutely no protection against a re-run. What was necessary was to make sure that the people who constituted the next Labour govern-

ment were actually committed to carrying them through. Hence reselection, hence the electoral college, hence Benn actually standing for deputy leader.

Now the personnel of the next Labour government is more or less determined. It will remain the same old crew, most of them making quite clear now that they have no intention of implementing conference policies. Just take Michael Foot interviewed recently in *Tribune* as an example. He absolutely refused to make even a commitment to either unilateral nuclear disarmament or withdrawal from the Common Market. On both questions he spelt out precisely his cover for backing out of them: the 'need to consult our French comrades' — who are of course resolutely committed to both nuclear weapons and staying in the Common Market!

Labour lefts will readily agree that they expect nothing different. If pushed they will agree that the next Labour government looks like being no different from the last. *But now they have given up fighting to prevent that.* Benn is not going to challenge the old crew again this side of the next election.

Rather he is saying (as he did immediately after the Hillhead result) 'The Labour Party is going to win the next election, and it will do what it says it is going to do'. He knows that is not true. But he will say it more as the next election approaches. And so increasingly will the rest of the left.

There is also amnesia about the claims the Labour left were making during the Benn campaign last year. Not the claims about how well they would do. They did far better than any of us expected. But the claim that a Healey victory would be a pyrrhic one. Benn would just come back again the following year and eat away Healey's majority. For a brief moment Benn continued to act as if that was the case. Remember his 'I am the deputy leader' outburst in December? He fell flat on his face. Within a month he was indicating he would not stand again and most of the Labour left were heartily glad of it. Because they suddenly woke up to the fact that he would do a lot worse if he did. Suddenly union bosses and the pressure for unity which had seemed such paper tigers in the summer had become unchallengeable obstacles. □

**After the heady days of the campaign for the deputy leadership, where now for the Labour left? What moves for the embattled Militant tendency? Do followers of Tony Benn just wait in the back rooms till next conference? In **THREE LETTERS TO A BENNITE**, Paul Foot takes a fraternal look at the dilemmas they face...**

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Dear comrade...

## Three letters to a Bennite

from Paul Foot

Cartoons by Phil Evans

A Socialist Workers Party pamphlet



## THE LABOUR PARTY

The only thing the Labour lefts came up with to shift them was a recognition that it was necessary to do something about the unions. But without the Benn campaign as a focus their fringe meetings at this year's union conferences will seem a let-down from last year. And so far as a broader trade union strategy is concerned, it amounts to little more than an attempt to revive the broad left strategy which has provided totally weak-kneed allies in the past. Significantly Jack Dromey, chairperson of last year's pioneering Labour Co-ordinating Committee industrial conference, was defending the Peace of Bishops Stortford at a left fringe meeting at this year's London Labour Party conference.

Alongside the amnesia there are signs of policy shifts by some of the Labour left. Tony Benn, for instance, was recently proposing a scheme for compensation when hived off nationalised industries are re-nationalised. But it was his stand for no compensation that brought his break from Foot and the Labour front bench at the end of last year.

Michael Meacher is now saying that 'while old-style incomes policy is unacceptable, free collective bargaining is not on either.' Straws in the wind?

At local government level they look like a lot more than that. The new Labour left's revamped municipal socialism is in tatters. And some very bitter arguing has broken

out about it. In the March issue of *London Labour Briefing* leading left GLC councillors made a tortured apology for why they should continue in office.

'Are we not clinging to the trappings of office as all real power steadily drains from our hands! Is this not the pattern of all past Labour Governments, played out on a small scale within our ranks—as if nothing had been learned at all?

'...We would reply that comrades should not doubt us quite so much. We are not yielding ground to the Tories any more than we are literally being forced to.'

The authors of this were, remember, people who were *to the left* of Ken Livingstone on the 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' campaign (which Livingstone refused to support).

In the April issue of *London Labour Briefing* there were a number of angered cries of 'You're going soft'. But these were written before the humiliating collapse of the Can't Pay Won't Pay campaign, which was, after all expected to be *the* exemplary piece of Labour left extra-Parliamentary action. That collapse will greatly strengthen the hands of 'Let's be reasonable. Let's hang on for a Labour Government' advocates.

All in all it looks as if the retreat of the Labour left is going to be a long one. □

over London, collected a quarter of a million signatures, and was supported by a majority of Labour GLC councillors. The policy of cheap fares had been voted in by 900,000 Londoners and, according to opinion poll data, had 63% support in the capital after it was introduced.

But despite the optimism of the Labour left, the final tactic of fare refusal petered out in ignominy and farce. What went wrong?

### Wildly unrealistic

First, the Fare Fight campaign in the two months before the increases did not actually represent a mass determination to fight the Law Lords' anti-GLC ruling by either industrial or consumer action. A 'Fare Fight' public meeting included, in at least one case, the local Labour MP proclaiming that 'the people by themselves are powerless' and urging Londoners to vote Labour at the next General Election and rely on reforming legislation. Emphatically not all those who supported the 'Fare Fight' campaign supported fare refusal, and the major demonstrations the campaign organised—the lobby of Parliament on 11 March and the festival on the South Bank on 13 March—were disappointingly small anyway. Those who based optimistic predictions of stopping the fare rise on 21 March by consumer action on the 'success' of this campaign were being wildly unrealistic.

But right from the start, the campaign failed to organise within the trade unions for the kind of industrial action that could have stopped the increases. The strike of 10 March, called by the London shop stewards' conference, was magnificent. Not a single bus or tube ran, and a quarter of Londoners stayed at home; even so the evening rush hour was chaos.

Solid though the strike was, it failed to link the issue of redundancies with the fare increases directly. Taking place almost two weeks before the fare increases, it appeared as an isolated and token gesture. Links between rank and file transport workers and the fare refusal campaign just were not built. The campaigners were clearly relying on the union leadership to secure co-operation between fare refusers and transport workers. Indeed, the *April* edition of *London Labour Briefing*, on the news-stands a couple of days after March 21, contains a categorical statement that 'the unions have again confirmed that their members will not be forcing or harassing passengers to pay the increased fares.'

By D-Day, 21 March, the situation was totally confused, with Bill Morris of the Transport and General Workers' Union playing a particularly devious role. He assured Fare Fight campaigners of backing for fare refusal which he could not carry with his members. As far as one can tell, he appears to have said different things in different places and one day after another. His most serious threat, to 'stop the lot' if London Transport disciplined any members for accepting the old fares (18 March) kept the distinction between the workers' interests (which warrant strike action) and the pas-

# Fare Fight flop



All smiles: But when it came to 21 March...

The Labour left often talk about the need for extra-parliamentary action to support their legislative proposals. **Norah Carlin** and **Martin Roiser** argue that the London fares campaign has proved that they are on a road to nowhere.

The campaign to stop London Transport's massive fare increases has died a swift and sorry death. With it have perished the Fares Fair policy, the central plank of the Labour-controlled Greater London Council's programme, and the political strategy of London Labour both right and left.

The 'Can't Pay Won't Pay' campaign was billed by *London Labour Briefing*, the platform of the London Labour left, as 'the crucial test for Labour in London', and 'an idea whose time has definitely come'. As it quite correctly pointed out, 'the rest of Labour's GLC manifesto—on school meals, council house sales and so on—lies in tatters.' Everything now hung on a demonstration of mass popular support for the Fares Fair cheap transport policy. That demonstration signally failed to materialise.

The 'Fare Fight' campaign had held a series of well-attended public meetings all



sengers' interests (which do not) alive.

The Can't Pay Won't Pay campaigners must also be blamed for propagating the idea that 'consumer action' could succeed, even if not accompanied by transport workers' strikes. 'Mass popular action is the true arbiter of justice,' proclaimed *London Labour Briefing* in March—it somehow seemed much more trendy and even more radical than boring old rank and file work in the trade unions.

The first few days of fare refusal were a fiasco. On March 21st a disappointing 500 gathered at County Hall. The fare refusers split into small bands and went to nearby bus-stops and tube stations. But they ran into trouble whether the transport worker concerned was sympathetic or not.

One bus driver welcomed the refuser with a hand-shake and let him address the passengers who grumbled and wanted to continue their journey. In another case the conductor told twenty fare refusers to write to their MPs. 'We have', said the refusers, 'why don't your union leaders call another strike?' The conductor said that Bill Morris was too left wing for his liking and asked the refusers to leave. In other cases refusers were simply allowed to get away with it and behaved, in effect, like fiddlers. In no instance did a group of workers collectively refuse as a matter of union policy. The protests were individual or token or both.

**Labour group split**

The issue of fare refusal further split the GLC Labour councillors. Ken Livingstone withdrew his support and cut off the phones at the campaign office. Eventually it was only Dave Wetzel, Transport Committee Chairperson with six councillors (out of the fifty-strong labour group) who made a final and rather non-historic fare-refusing journey to Poplar. Municipal socialism is now well and truly dead. The GLC councillors will have to run London on Tory terms from now on.

There remains only the Transport Act Amendment Bill, proposed by Douglas Jay, which could re-introduce subsidies. But this is a potentially dangerous measure and deserves no support. Even Howell, the Transport Minister, has said that subsidies could be re-legalised but only, 'within the likely level of public resources available and a sustained emphasis on higher productivity and greater efficiency within the LT system.'

The Labour Party believed it could introduce a reform through parliamentary means without any real involvement of rank and file trades unionists. The Fares Fair policy was promoted on the basis of voters' support and when it ran into trouble the GLC



... Dave Wetzel's fare-refusing trip to Poplar proved distinctly un-historic

councillors turned to the passengers for support. Two of the myths of liberal democracy now stand revealed. Firstly the people do not get the policies they vote for. Secondly consumers do not control the market place.

These points are easy enough to make. But to convince the Fare Fight campaigners of them is more difficult because the conclusions shift the focus of attention away from parliament and towards the workplace. But these are the arguments we must

put in the aftermath of the Fare Fight campaign. The real struggle is in the transport unions.

There are some grounds for hope. The cuts in underground services that were to have been made on 21 March have been postponed because the NUR instructed crews not to work the new timetables. But LT will have to make these cuts soon. With the removal of subsidy and an estimated 20% loss in passenger numbers, services will have to be withdrawn. LT plans to reduce staffing by 5,000 to 7,000 and with very little overtime left this means real job-loss. Further cuts in bus services are planned for July.

The union leadership does not have a good record in fighting cuts. The initiative must come from the rank and file. There must be a recall of the London shop-stewards conference which initiated the previous strike call.

What role is there for the public? As passengers or voters not very much. But as trades unionists plenty. Many London workers have suffered a wage cut of say £5 per week as a result of the fare increases and time taken in travelling by whatever means is increased. Working conditions in the capital have worsened. These should be taken up as trade union issues, as pay-claims and as London Allowance claims.

It has been shown all too obviously that a cheap transport policy cannot be won on the basis of voters' wishes or passenger resistance. We have to turn it into a trade union struggle. The lessons for socialists couldn't be clearer. □

Photo: John Sturrock (Network)

**'You could see the strings being pulled.'**

The left's strategy for changing the Parliamentary Labour Party was in trouble in Hillhead. They started off with a 'fine left wing candidate' who had all the right Bennite credentials. As Dave Sherry shows, the right wing were able to gag him in the interests of party unity and winning the election.

The SDP victory at Hillhead was a blow to the left. Polling took place one year to the

day after the foundation of the SDP, and more and more people are getting a clearer idea of what they are about. Roy Jenkins, the victorious candidate, was an unlikely figure for popularity in Glasgow. Not only is he a merchant banker, but he found it very difficult to make himself understood to the locals.

Labour came third in a constituency with a significant working class element. It failed to lead the evident hostility to the Tory government which is felt throughout Glasgow. It lost ground even from its own showing in the 1979 election. All of this has given everybody in the Labour Party cause for thought.

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# The <sup>Not So</sup> Strange Case of Dr Jeckyll & Mr Hyde

or, Hillhead revisited...

The story so far, David Wiseman, starry eyed young Bennite rallies the constituency faithful with a rowing speech...



The Labour right have an easy explanation: it was all the fault of those Bennites and Militants. Denis Healey put it openly and bluntly: 'The Pat Wall affair cost us 6,000 votes in Hillhead.' The fact is that the SDP were only too happy to make great play with divisions inside the Labour Party. On the morning of the poll they sent a special leaflet to every voter. It said:

'The Labour Party is today two warring camps—one is marxist, anti-parliament, pro-revolution—the other is frightened, shifty and lacking ideas.

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Their battle is not with Mrs Thatcher but with each other...

'Who is winning this civil war?... Pat Wall, the man who seeks to sack the police chiefs and judges and abolish the monarchy. Remember, Hillhead needs change, not bloody revolution.'

This sort of cheap rhetoric obviously has enough of an echo in people's minds to account for some of the Labour failure. The staggering thing is that it bore no relation to what actually happened in the course of the election. David Wiseman, the Labour candidate, did start the election with solid Bennite credentials, but he changed in the course of the campaign.

Wiseman quickly dropped his 'Ban the Bomb' past and avoided coming out against NATO. When the storm over Pat Wall broke, he told the press that the Labour Party had no place for people like the *Militant*. The right wing sat on him very firmly. He was rarely to be seen without a 'minder' like Donald Dewar, Bruce Milland, even Denis Healey himself. Every time he spoke you could see the strings being pulled.

The fact that he clearly enjoyed this political quick-change act simply rubbed salt in the wounds of all those eager Labour leftists who had worked so hard to make sure that 'their' candidate got selected. Hillhead was a picture of the future. As election-time looms, the Labour left will retreat under pressure from the right because both of them share exactly the same goal: they all want to win votes. When you set out to do that, then you are bound to pander to the lowest common denominator.

It is that reality that makes the response of the left in the area so impractical. The day after the defeat, *Militant* supporters turned

up at the Scottish TUC rally against Tebbit and distributed a leaflet arguing that Wiseman was beaten because the campaign had not been fought on full-blooded socialist policies. The problem with that argument is simple: its supporters should ask themselves if Pat Wall as candidate would have resulted in a better showing.

What the left avoid is the stark fact that the majority of the workers in Hillhead are not, at the moment, crying out for socialist politics. And if your aim is to get votes, then the arguments of the right wing are unanswerable.

Ironically, the Hillhead election provided a lot of evidence that there are other things that socialists can do than manoeuvre to get your candidate selected, watch them cave in to the right wing and then lose the election. Political meetings and activities around the election were at a high level.

2,000 turned up to hear Benn. Another 2,000 turned up to hear Michael Foot. 300 turned up to hear Paul Foot and Harry McShane. There is a substantial minority who are open to socialism, even if the majority of workers are not yet open to the left. Active work with that minority can help to change the overall balance.

CND provides a good example. They were able to hold a series of meetings and activities around the Trident issue. Youth CND organised a demonstration of people too young to vote and marched into the Michael Foot meeting to heckle the right-wingers on the platform.

The left on the Labour Party needs to face up to reality quickly. They are blocked at every turn of the Parliamentary road. The alternative, of doing the hard work of winning the active minority to socialist politics, means dropping the obsessions with Parliament and the Labour Party. It means a shift towards revolutionary politics. □



# Shock! Horror! Times Editor bumped

The ruling class is always using 'freedom of the press' as a stick to beat trade unionists. The recent case of the *Times* demonstrates what they really mean by this. Paul Bryden writes.

The decline and fall of Editor of the Year Harold Evans from his position as Editor of *The Times*—allegedly the most prestigious in British journalism—was a must for *Dallas* fans.

All the ingredients of high-life soap opera were there: the mounting tension as the cliff-hanging plot unfolded, the did-he-fall-or-was-he-pushed drama of its climax.

And the cast was marvellous—a star studded list of self-serving manipulators, devoid of scruples or principles other than a compulsion to feather their own nests and generally extend their own power and that of the class of which they are the dutiful servants.

Oscars all round. It even had a moral, though a little too crude and didactic for some tastes. Was it *really* necessary to make it so clear that when it comes to a conflict with wealth and power, all the grand abstractions of 'journalistic integrity' and 'editorial independence' are not worth the paper they are interminably written on?

For all but the hopelessly naive (people who believe what they read in the newspapers) the outcome was inevitable from the moment Rupert Murdoch added *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* to his worldwide collection of propaganda sheets just over a year ago.

Murdoch stands in the great tradition of newspaper proprietors like Beaverbrook and Northcliffe—right-wing megalomaniacs.

But to some of the more sentimental members of the British Establishment, the chap *did* seem a bit of a bounder. And his track record on other high-class 'organs of record' also left a little to be desired. *The Australian*, after all, has had 15 editors chopped by Murdoch in 16 years.

So their solution was to set up a 'Board of Independent Directors', manned by the likes of Lord Robens, whose express purpose was to prevent Murdoch doing what he has since done.

John Gerard, writing in the anti-union *UK Press Gazette* noted

'A member of the public could be forgiven for thinking that it had all come as a big surprise. Anyone with his ear to the ground in Fleet Street knew that it had been likely for months.'

Murdoch had certainly decided to dump Evans within six months of signing solemn, binding, and supposedly watertight agree-

ments on non-interference in editorial policy.

His reasons were entirely political. Murdoch wants a far-right *Times* but Evans was soft on the SDP, pale pink on El Salvador, and generally not subservient enough (though an editor who writes a cringing memo to his proprietor asking him what line to take on the Budget is hardly wilfully headstrong).

All very predictable—Murdoch behaving like the corrupt Tory gangster that he is.

Or, as another 'distinguished journalist', George Gale, writing in the *Express* more tactfully put it,

'Since his money is keeping the ship afloat, he had every right to say who the captain should be and in what direction the ship should head.'

What about Editor of the Year Evans himself? Is he the innocent victim of the forces of darkness and reaction? Should we start making the 'Reinstate Evans—Defend Press Freedom' banners?

## Golden handshake

Weil...no. It is now clear that Evans' initial reluctance to quietly clear his desk and go had very little to do with journalistic integrity, and very much to do with inflating his golden handshake. The fact that that led some of the more gullible of his camp followers to go down with him is unfortunate—for them.

Since our Harry had got as close to his asking price of £580,000 as he was likely to, it was time to wave a fond farewell.

As for those defenders of the public interest, the Board of Independent Directors, Lord Robens made their position plain:

'We are not going to go snooping around. It is not our job to go around saying "Are you happy in your work?" If the editor has a problem then he must say



Rupert Murdoch: In the great tradition of right-wing megalomaniac British newspaper barons

he has a problem. The only way we can be activated is for him to activate us.'

Evans, for all his huffing and puffing about staying put, *never referred* his dismissal to the Board, so that they, of course, could say officially they knew nothing about it!

'Freedom of the Press' really did mean something once. In 1831, Henry Hetherington, editor of the *Poor Man's Guardian*, spoke for the countless men and women who suffered poverty, repression and years of imprisonment to build a genuinely free, radical, working class press.

He wrote:

'Defiance is our only remedy; we cannot be a slave in all; we must submit to much but we will try the power of Right against Might; we will begin by protecting and upholding this grand bulwark of all our liberties—the Freedom of the Press—the Press, too, of the ignorant and the Poor'.

It is a very long way down from Hetherington to Editor of the Year Evans and £580,000.

But if Freedom of the Press is ever going to mean anything again, other than an ideological shroud to cover a rotting corpse, then it is to Hetherington and the working class radical press that we must look. □



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# Solidarność: the missing link

This month Bookmarks are reprinting Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski's famous *Open Letter to the Party*, under the title of *Solidarność: the Missing Link*. Colin Barker examines its arguments.

If, as this series suggests, 'books are weapons', then Kuron and Modzelewski's *Open Letter to the Party* (1965) is a gun that has remained buttoned in its holster. It has still to be fired.

Yet what a weapon. The *Open Letter to the Party* is by far the most impressive Marxist document produced from within Eastern Europe (or Russia for that matter) since the 1920s. It is, analytically and politically, much superior to its obvious rival, Leon Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*.

The circumstances of its production were dramatic. Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski, its joint authors, were young academics at Warsaw University, and members of the University branch of the Polish United Workers Party (Polish CP). They had participated in the student movement that emerged in the course of the 1956 events in Poland, through which the old party regime was shaken near to destruction by a mass upsurge of worker and popular protest. Looking at Poland in the aftermath of 1956-57 they concluded that the popular movement had gained virtually nothing.

The 'October Left' of 1956 had permitted itself to be sucked into the orbit of the re-shaped bureaucracy and had thereby failed to give a proper socialist lead to the working class. As a result, the Polish ruling class had re-established its grip on Polish society. The path of 'reform' and 'renewal' to which the progressive wing of the Polish intelligentsia had looked in 1956 had, in

reality, proved to be a path to the re-consolidation of the ruling bureaucracy's grip on Polish workers.

The conclusion these two young writers drew was that what was needed in Poland was a working-class, socialist revolution, to overthrow the ruling bureaucracy and establish workers' power. For this purpose, a new revolutionary socialist party was needed.

The Polish authorities moved swiftly and brutally to deal with two such dangerous young dissidents. They were arrested and expelled from the PUPW for possessing an unfinished typescript outlining their views, and – when they attempted to explain their arguments to their former comrades in Warsaw University branch by means of the *Open Letter* – they were arrested and charged with aiming to overthrow the state with force. For this 'crime' Kuron and Modzelewski were brought in chains to court, and sentenced to three years and to three and a half years in prison. In line with a long and honourable socialist tradition, they defended their writings in court, and – when sentence was announced – joined with a section of the spectators in singing 'The Internationale' from the dock.

Fortunately for the world socialist movement, a copy of their *Open Letter* reached the West, and was translated into numbers of languages. In 1968, copies were circulated in Czechoslovakia. It rapidly became apparent why the Polish regime had responded with such ferocity: Kuron and Modzelewski had written the most far-reaching Marxist critique of a 'communist' regime yet produced by its own subjects.

The real power in Poland, the authors insisted, is the monopolistic property of those who head the State and Party. The great majority of Poles, the workers and peasants, have no direct way of influencing their rulers. Democracy does not exist in any meaningful sense. The rulers of Poland

are 'the central political bureaucracy'.

As Marxists, Kuron and Modzelewski insisted that it was not sufficient to analyse the political relationships in Poland – the only matter considered by Western political scientists. What is decisive is the form that the *relations of production* take.

Unlike previous Marxist critics of 'communist' regimes, such as Trotsky, Kuron and Modzelewski denied that state property had any necessary connection with socialism. In Poland and the rest of the Warsaw Pact countries, indeed, state ownership is the particular legal form through which *class exploitation* is organised.

The working class, they showed, receives in Poland no more than is necessary for their basic subsistence. (Indeed, some workers barely receive this.) There is no meaningful sense in which the workers can be said to 'own' the means of production in Poland. Rather, they are in the same position as the workers in western capitalist countries, in that they are forced to sell their labour-power to the real owners of the means of production – the central political bureaucracy. The actual labour the workers perform, and the product of their labour, belong to their rulers.

## Central class goal

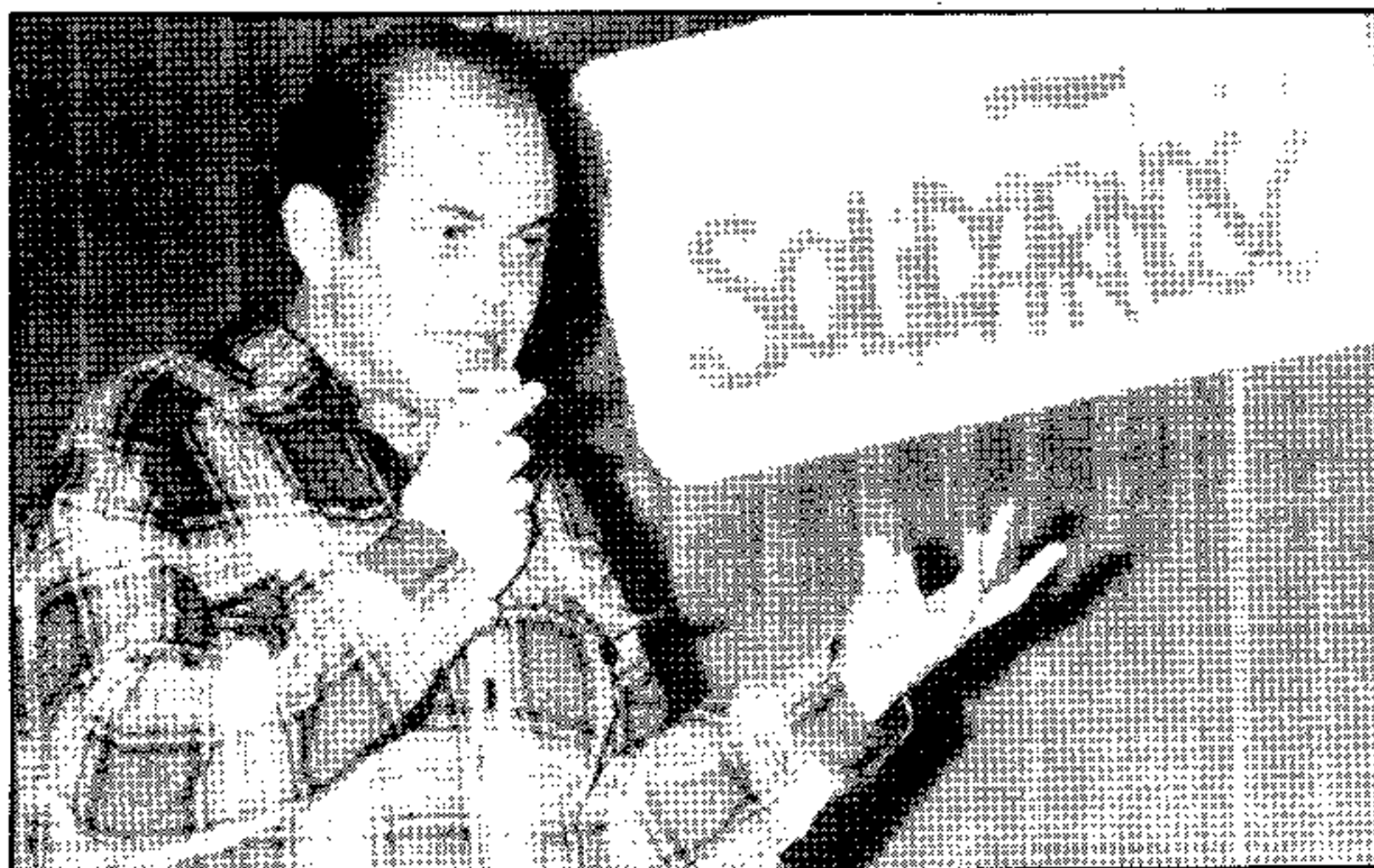
To the objection that the bureaucracy cannot be a class, they responded by pointing out that all the contrary arguments merely proved that the property of the bureaucracy is not individual property but 'the collective property of an elite which identifies itself with the state'.

'Since the state finds itself in the hands of a central political bureaucracy – the collective owner of the means of production and the exploiter of the working class – all means of production and maintenance have become one centralised national "capital".'

And it is as a *capital* that the bureaucracy owns and directs the productive resources of Polish industry. It enforces into Polish production the same 'class goal' that is also found in western capitalist production: accumulation for the sake of accumulation, production for the sake of production. The central aim of the bureaucracy is to force the workers to produce the means whereby its national capital may be increased. On this basis the ruling bureaucracy seeks to enlarge the basis of its own rule, and maintain its own international position as against the rest of the capitalist world.

Given its central class goal, the bureaucracy seeks to hold down the share of national income passing to the workers to the historically necessary minimum, and to devote the maximum resources to expanding the national means of production. The aim of production in Poland is not the satisfaction of the population's rising wants, but 'production for the sake of production'.

Like the western capitalist class, Kuron and Modzelewski suggest, the Polish central political bureaucracy once played an initially progressive role, in the period after the war, in dragging the backward Polish economy forwards through forced industrialisation. This was achieved, as in the West, by ex-



Kuron addresses students in 1980



panding industrial employment and enlarging the working class on the basis of a fiercely applied series of controls over the population, and the strict limiting of their consumption standards.

'The nature of the task of industrialising a backward country called to life as a ruling class a bureaucracy which was able to achieve this task, since it alone, through its class interest, represented the interest of industrialisation under such conditions – production for the sake of production.'

However, by the mid-1950s, the main elements in that process of forced industrialisation had been achieved. Thereafter, the very existence of the bureaucracy and its rule became an increasing impediment to the further economic development of Poland. The bureaucracy's class goal, and its monopolistic rule, became a fetter on society's productive development. What further development required was a sharp shift in social and economic priorities, towards an emphasis on raising living standards and the level of popular consumption generally. But that need was not met: rather, the bureaucracy continued to exert its power to pursue its own class goal.

Just as Marxists in the West argue that the existing relations of production hold back the development of productive forces, so in Poland. The most obvious sign of this contradiction, suggested Kuron and Modzelewski, is the growing evidence of economic crisis in Poland. Growth rates were falling in the 1960s, and the economy was running into a number of 'barriers' to its further development: inflation, raw materials shortages, wasteful misuse of resources, difficulties in raising productivity, balance of payments problems. These signs of crisis were not accidental, but were the direct result of the exploitative social relations at the heart of Polish society, and the ruling class's continuous drive to expand production for the sake of production.

The only solution to this impasse, they suggested, was revolution:

'Production relations based on bureaucratic ownership have become chains hampering the country's productive forces; with every day this continues, the crisis deepens. Therefore, the solution of the economic crisis requires the overthrow of these productive relations and the elimination of the class rule of the bureaucracy.'

It was not only the workers, but also the peasantry, who must benefit from such a social revolution. For the peasantry, too, is required to bear the costs of the bureaucracy's class rule. Agriculture is stagnant,



1956. Tanks on the streets of Poznan after the beginning of 'the first anti-bureaucratic revolution'

for it produces predominantly means of consumption for the workers, and the ruling class has no systematic interest in its development. The peasants are exploited, and peasant life is kept backward and underdeveloped.

The first major political manifestation of the crisis in Polish society occurred in the period 1956-57, in what the authors term 'the first anti-bureaucratic revolution'. The revolution failed – principally because the Polish 'October Left' failed to meet the challenge of the period, in that it failed to put forward a working-class programme for the reconstruction of Polish society and failed to organise a movement around such a programme opposed to the rule of the liberal wing of the bureaucracy. As a result, the liberal wing of the bureaucracy was able to consolidate its position and push back such gains as the popular movement had achieved.

### What kind of revolution?

The defeat of the 1956-57 movement, however, had solved nothing. The crisis was now general. Almost every section of Polish society – the workers, the peasants, the young people, the creative intelligentsia, etc – was forced into opposition to the rule of the bureaucracy. 'Revolution,' declared the two writers, 'is inevitable'.

What kind of revolution did Kuron and Modzelewski foresee and propose? Quite simply, their programme was a classic re-statement of the main arguments of revolutionary Marxism. The revolution must be internationalist in its perspectives, for the crisis is experienced throughout the Warsaw bloc, and in the West as well. The

authors offer no utopian schemes for 'socialism in one country', but raise again the traditional socialist slogan 'proletarians of all countries, unite!'

Central to their proposals is the argument for workers' power, at factory level and at national level, organised through a system of Councils of Workers' Delegates. They thus revive, at the heart of their programme, the idea that Marx celebrated in the Paris Commune and which took the name of 'soviets' in the period from 1917. For them, as for the whole of the genuine Marxist tradition, socialism begins with the direct exercise of power by the working class. The only way in which a majority class like the working class can exercise its rule is by the fullest democracy, hence the authors call for a multi-party system. Hence too, they reject the 'parliamentary system' – it offers no guarantee against dictatorship, and crucially, 'it is not a form of people's power'. The whole system of parliamentary elections and government is a sham democracy, through which citizens lose their power to control politics.

Trade unions must be completely independent of the state, providing workers with the means to self-defence. The working week must be reduced, to allow workers time to educate themselves and participate in political life fully. The regular army must be replaced by a democratic workers' militia, for 'as long as it is maintained, a clique of generals may always prove stronger than all the parties and councils' – sadly prophetic words, in the light of what happened in December 1981! The peasantry must have full political rights, and have the means to develop their farms properly – without forcible collectivisation, which is a method

*Solidarnosc: From Gdansk to Military Repression* is the first full-length analysis of Solidarnosc to be written since the imposition of military rule. Drawing on a variety of original Polish sources Colin Barker and Kara Weber trace the unfolding crisis in Poland and the debates it provoked within Solidarnosc. They argue that Solidarnosc was too deeply rooted in the factories to be co-opted, that real revolutionary possibilities existed, but tragically this was only grasped by the radical wing of Solidarnosc too late.

The book also includes a major section on the underlying causes of the Polish economic crisis.

160 pages £1.95 from all good bookshops or (plus 30p post) from IS Journal, PO Box 82, London E2.



alien to socialism and suitable only for police dictatorships.

Only the working class can provide the social force capable of bringing down the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, and of providing a decisive lead to the rest of exploited and oppressed Polish society.

In one respect, Kuron and Modzelewski's *Open Letter* has been fully validated. Their argument that Polish society was being driven towards crisis was proved correct in 1970, as the leading figures in the bureaucracy admitted. In the 1970s, under Gierk, the Polish bureaucracy attempted to overcome the growing tendency to stagnation by borrowing capital on the western market in staggering amounts, only to see the crisis return in the late 1970s with redoubled strength. In 1970, also, the working class revolted – especially in the coastal areas. In 1976, again, in Radom, Warsaw and elsewhere, workers' strikes and demonstrations rocked the regime. And, in 1980 and 1981, working class resistance to the Polish bureaucracy reached altogether new heights in the formation and development of Solidarity. The fundamental correctness of Kuron and Modzelewski's argument was proven in practice.

### Abandoning their best ideas

But, what of their programme for social revolution? They themselves, back in 1965, concluded their discussion of the needed programme for a workers' revolution by asking if it would be realised. They stated, absolutely correctly,

'That depends on the degree of ideological and organisational preparation of the working class in a revolutionary crisis and therefore also depends on the present activities of those who identify with workers' democracy.'

Unfortunately, in the intervening years between their own writing of the *Open Letter* and the upsurge of Solidarity in the summer of 1980, Kuron and Modzelewski themselves had abandoned their own best ideas. They did not attempt to put into practice their ideas of 1965. Space does not permit a full discussion of the reasons for their change of heart (see Colin Barker and Kara Weber, *Solidarnosc: from Gdansk to Military Repression* for this). Suffice it to say that, ultimately, they made the same tragic error as many reformists before them: they urged the workers not to go 'too far' and in the process contributed to the very strengthening of the Polish state which permitted Jaruzelski to smash Solidarity with a military coup in December 1981.

Now, once again, Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski are in jail, along with thousands of the finest militants of the Polish working class. The worst aspect of the tragedy is that, fifteen years earlier, they had a better perception of the realities of Polish class society.

Even in their terrible hour of defeat, Polish workers will be thinking and learning. When next they rise – as they most certainly will – they could not be better armed than with the ideas of Kuron and Modzelewski's *Open Letter to the Party*. □

# The profits behind the oil prices

The price of crude oil goes up and down like a yo-yo. Just now it is falling and the North Sea looks less and less like a solution to all economic problems. The price of petrol, on the other hand, just seems to keep on going up. Pete Green explains the complex economics of the oil business.

The severity of the world slump has itself produced what seemed impossible – a glut of the world's most important and profitable commodity, oil. Total production by the OPEC cartel of Third World oil exporters has fallen from a peak of 31 million barrels a day in 1979 to 18 million. On the Amsterdam spot market for surplus oil the price is down to 28 dollars a barrel, 6 dollars below OPEC official prices, and falling.

For some, all this is a tribute to the success of market forces and heralds a return to sustained economic growth. It's a curious sort of success that 'works' only through the waste of closing down steel plants and oil refineries and leaves 26 million people (officially) on the dole in the industrialised West alone. Expectations of recovery look a trifle premature as the US, West German and even Japanese economies sink deeper into slump. What's more, all the talk about the market conveniently ignores the decisive role still being played by a few rather powerful international oil companies.

On 2 March, the price of North Sea oil was cut to 31 dollars a barrel (down from a peak of 39.25 dollars in June 1981). North Sea oil is now significantly cheaper than the official OPEC price for the comparable heavy grade African oil, still set at 35.50 dollars. The *Financial Times* noted that the major oil companies, especially BP and Shell, had been pressing for such a cut for weeks.

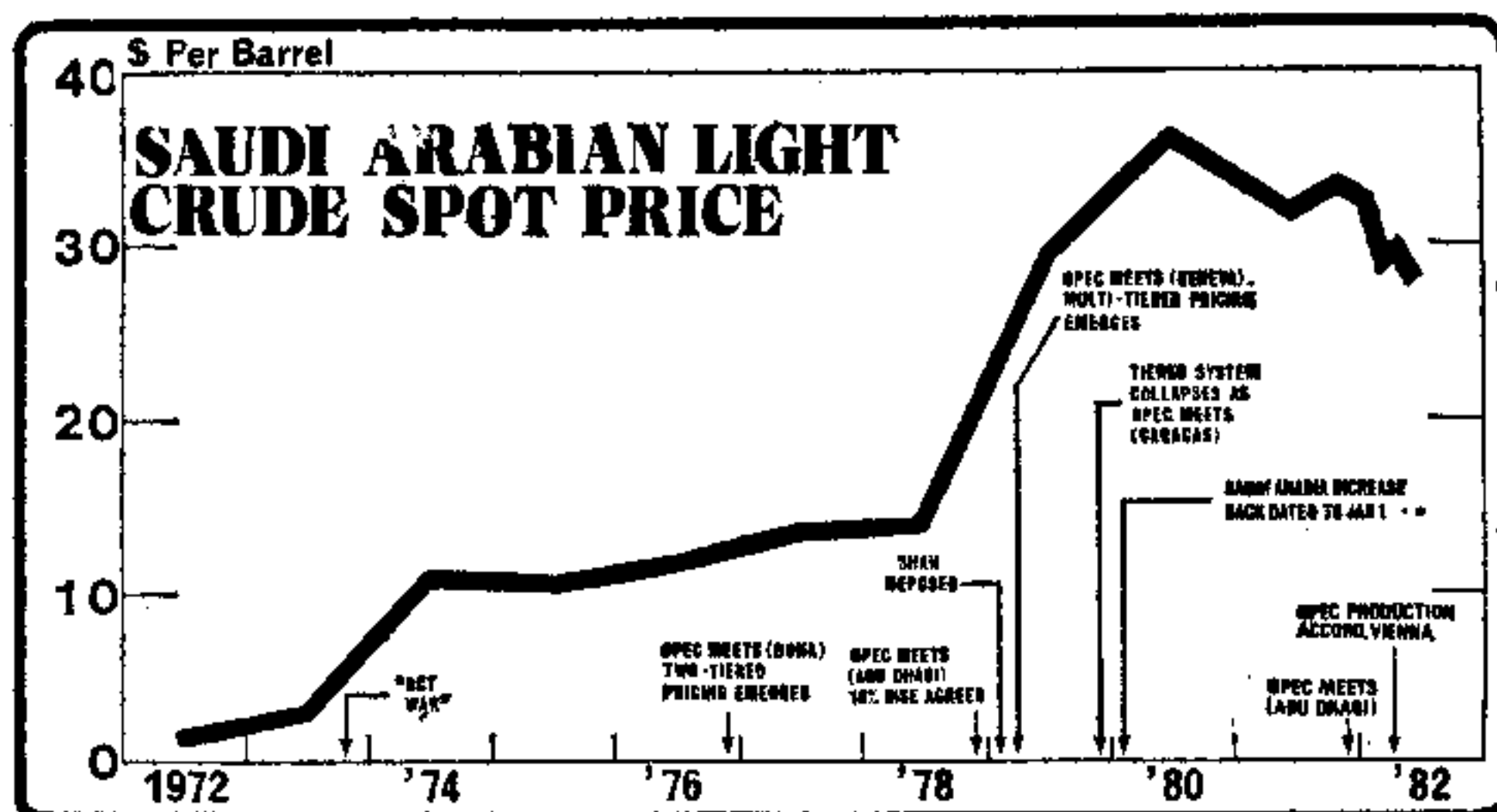
Less than three weeks later, Shell announced a rise in the price of petrol at the pumps of 5p a gallon. Funnily enough, the next day Esso, BP and Texaco all announced that they were raising their prices by 5p a gallon. All claimed to be making heavy losses on petrol sales.

The worldwide profits of Shell last year amounted to one thousand, eight hundred million pounds (or 1.8 billion). Esso is the most profitable multinational in the world, raking in a cool 5.56 billion dollars in 1981 (a mere 2% down on 1980). British Petroleum has had a few problems, with profits falling by 25% and only managed 1.02 billion pounds (dividends to shareholders were unchanged).

Certainly the market for oil has been under severe pressure. Energy consumption in the West fell by 3.2% in 1980 and by 3.0% in 1981. But oil consumption fell even further, by 8% in 1980 and another 6% in 1981. Energy conservation, smaller cars, and the increased use of other fuels such as coal have weakened the demand for oil on top of the slump.

The 'natural scarcity' of oil has long been invoked by the companies to justify price increases. The argument has also been used to shift responsibility for the stagnation of the system away from capitalism and its rulers onto something nobody could do anything about. Now the scarcity theory is being exposed for the myth it always was. Oil use per unit of output in the main industrial countries fell by 20% between 1973 and 1980. At the same time the number of drilling rigs is up by 79% on 1974. Estimates of reserves now suggest that the peak of oil production will not be reached until 2025. Non-OPEC production in the North Sea, Alaska and Mexico is increasing rapidly.

It is this situation that the oil companies, the 'Seven Sisters', Exxon (Esso in Britain), Shell, BP, Texaco, Mobil, Socal and Gulf, in particular, are exploiting with all the skills





and ruthlessness acquired from sixty odd years of dominating the world's oil markets.

### Oil Companies and OPEC

In 1934 the oil companies came to a highly secret agreement. In response to the great slump and the dangers of competition they agreed to fix prices and carve up the world's output and markets between them. In the 'golden decade' of the fifties those same companies parcelled out the extremely profitable Middle East oilfields under the aegis of British and American military 'protection'.

Eventually the national ruling classes in producing countries were bound to catch on and demand their share of the take. In most cases the companies reached an amicable agreement with the state concerned. Even where all their assets were nationalised the companies continued to supply technology, advice and marketing outlets. Their share of the profits diminished, but that mattered less than the fact that the profits themselves rose enormously.

OPEC and the oil companies worked together to force up the price of oil. In 1973 they used the Arab-Israeli war, and in 1979 the fall of the Shah of Iran, to manipulate the market, hold back stocks and create an atmosphere of crisis in which prices shot up.

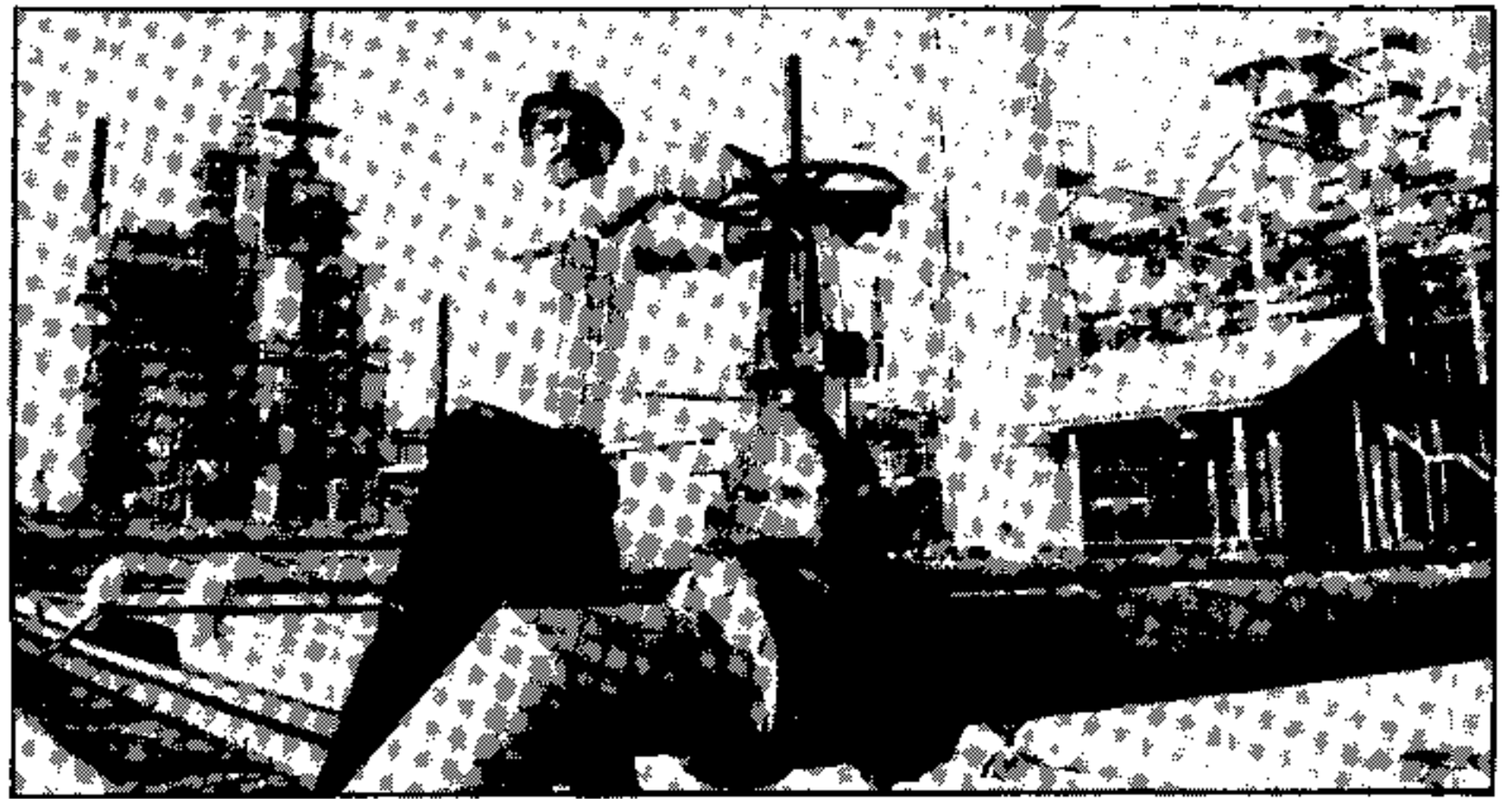
The share of 'non-Communist' world production owned by the Seven Sisters fell from 61% in 1970 to 25% in 1979. The share of State oil companies rose from 6% to 55% in the same period. But it is ridiculous to suggest, as the Economist did recently, that the power of the Seven Sisters has collapsed. They still own more than half of the oil-refining capacity and market 44% of the refined oil products.

They have diversified rapidly into chemicals, synthetic fuels, coal and other minerals. Not least, they have the backing of a United States government which recently helped them out by 'adjusting' taxes and decontrolling prices.

In 1979 oil company profits doubled. In 1980 the Seven Sisters alone raked in 23.3 billion dollars. But in 1981 the slump hit the marketing end of their operations in Europe. Petrochemical plants at 30% below capacity were making huge losses. Oil refineries were working at only 50-60% of capacity. Profits were falling especially for those companies (including BP) without access to cheaper Saudi Arabian oil.

The companies responded in a manner not dissimilar to that of the 1930s. At the refining and petrochemicals end output was cut, huge modern plant closed down (such as BP's Isle of Grain refinery) and workers sacked. But prices were maintained in the noticeably co-ordinated way noted earlier. At the other end the companies began to turn the screws on the oil producing countries. Cushioned by large stocks and the rising profits on their American operations, they could use their control of the market to pick off the OPEC producers one by one.

In May 1982 the companies suddenly suspended their contracts with Kuwait. That soon succeeded in removing the premium of \$5.50 on top of the official OPEC price



**No guarantee of success or prosperity for anyone except the oil companies**

that Kuwait was charging. In June, Mexico cut its price by \$4. Though Mexico is not in OPEC a political storm and a new oil minister then led to a \$2 increase. Within days oil exports had dropped by half. Thirteen US oil companies suspended or reduced their contracts. Now the Mexican price is down to \$28.75 - well below that of OPEC.

With these successes under their belt, the companies then turned to the more militant African members of OPEC, Algeria, Libya and Nigeria. All found their sales dropping heavily. Libya proved to be the most resistant, with its small population and huge financial assets. Output fell from 1.6 million barrels a day to 600,000. Then in November Exxon pulled out altogether. Mobil threatened to follow. At the time this was attributed to Reagan's hostility to Libya as a 'terrorist haven' but it seems fair to suggest that it was just as much the other way around. Anyway, even Colonel Gaddafi had to give way and concede a tax reduction for the remaining companies.

### Britain's role

Britain's role in all this is interesting. The price of North Sea Oil is set by the state-controlled BNO. The companies involved in North Sea production sell most of their oil to BNO, and then buy it back again for refining, and sales to the consumer. On two occasions in the last year, in June 1981 and again this March, BNO has cut its prices, under pressure from the companies. For the government that meant substantial loss of revenue. But the companies involved, especially Shell, Esso and BP made up for their loss on the production side by their gains on refining and marketing. More crucially the cuts in the North Sea oil price undercut the OPEC countries and gave the companies a very useful lever in forcing the prices down where they had no share in production.

As one Financial Times journalist commented last June, in a rare moment of honesty, the whole manoeuvre showed that the companies had 'scored a powerful victory... over politicians and officials at the Department of Energy and at the Treasury' and that 'they have not lost the power to cow governments.'

The oil companies have also been helped by the divisions within OPEC itself. Saudi Arabia's role here has been crucial.

Regardless of the splits within the rest of OPEC (including the war between Iran and Iraq), up until the autumn of 1981 the decisive division was between Saudi Arabia and the rest. The Saudi rulers responded to the Iraq-Iran war by stepping up their production and maintaining the price of their oil two dollars a barrel or more below that of the rest of OPEC. As OPEC output fell, the Saudi share rose to almost half. Sheikh Yamani, in April 1981, claimed 'We engineered the glut in order to stabilise the price of oil'.

With financial assets of \$150 billion lodged in the West, Saudi Arabia feared the impact of the oil price rise on the weakening western economies and thus on its own investments. More crucially, fearful of the spectre of the Iranian revolution, eager for American arms, the Saudi rulers prized their alliance with the United States over their relations with the rest of OPEC.

But Saudi Arabia has no desire to see OPEC collapse. As the slump deepened and prices began to collapse they were forced to adjust. Having secured a unified price again they are now cutting back output drastically in order to hold the line. That is proving difficult. Iran, where production collapsed with the war, has also moved from being an OPEC hawk to offering massive discounts in order to unload as much oil as it can. Nigerian oil is the same type as that of the North Sea. With the price cut there, Nigerian sales have again fallen by half.

OPEC will probably survive but in the meantime the consequences of the cuts in price and output for its most heavily-populated members in particular will be severe. Most of the benefits of the oil revenues have gone to small and often highly corrupt ruling classes, creating glaring inequalities. As the revenues fall, development plans will be cut, unemployment will rise and the instability of the regimes concerned will increase.

Nigeria has just had to slash its imports as oil revenues plummet. The Iranian economy is barely functioning, as the desert war drags on. Even success stories such as Mexico and Venezuela are in difficulties with their balance of payments. The OPEC countries as a whole have become net borrowers from, rather than lenders to, the world's banks.

Oil, as the example of Britain also shows, is no guarantee of success or prosperity—for anyone except the oil companies.

# The law and order show



Last month saw a concerted campaign involving police chiefs, the Police Federation, sections of the press and right wing Tories to create a powerful 'law and order' lobby. **Chris Harman** looks at the real issues at stake in this.

First the Met released figures on crime designed to give the impression that 'black muggers' were terrorising London. Then the Police Federation joined in with their national newspaper ads calling for a return of hanging. Finally, Anderton, chief constable of Manchester, launched an attack on the very existence of local police committees. The press were not slow in following the cue. The *Daily Mail*, raved about the apparent softness on crime of a home secretary it christened 'Wetlaw'. And even the *Daily Mirror* covered its pages with photos designed to send a shiver up the spine of every law-abiding citizen.

The immediate goal of the campaign was simple enough. The police's image has taken a bit of a battering lately. There has been a growing total of complaints against the police. The riots last summer led to very public questioning of police methods. In the months since, pressure has been put on local police chiefs to be more 'sensitive' in their dealings with the black population, and the old style Sus laws have been scrapped.

The campaign was meant to create a counter-pressure, to reverse these trends

and to allow the police to assert themselves again.

To some extent the campaign seems to have achieved its immediate goals. To rapturous applause, Whitelaw told a meeting of Tory backbenchers that he intended to back the police wholeheartedly and to introduce a new law, extending to the whole country the power police already have in some areas to search people on the streets for weapons or stolen goods.

However, when it comes to the more long term implications of the campaign, there is much confusion.

For some people on the left it is purely the latest instalment in a most sinister long term development. This is the continual push of senior police chiefs and army officers to create a 'strong state', in which long established liberties are trampled underfoot.

This has long been the implication in the argument of many of those who write upon the police and the Defence establishment in the *New Statesman*, *The Leveller* and the London listing magazines. It has been a theme taken up by all sorts of left political figures, ranging from E P Thompson, through Ken Livingstone to Tony Benn.

For all of these people it is the autonomous drive within the police and military themselves that is the threat that faces us all. To resist this trend, it is necessary to expose state secrecy and to establish 'community control' over the police.

Those who hold this view have produced some very useful exposés of the machinations of police chiefs and the Defence Establishment. But they have at the same time

created confusion as to who the real enemy is and what is really at stake.

On their view, the enemy becomes the police and defence chiefs alone. Resisting them becomes a question of creating counter-lobbies, aiming to reform the way in which the forces of the state operate.

But what has been happening in the police cannot really be understood unless you see the police as one organisation among others of a wider capitalist society.

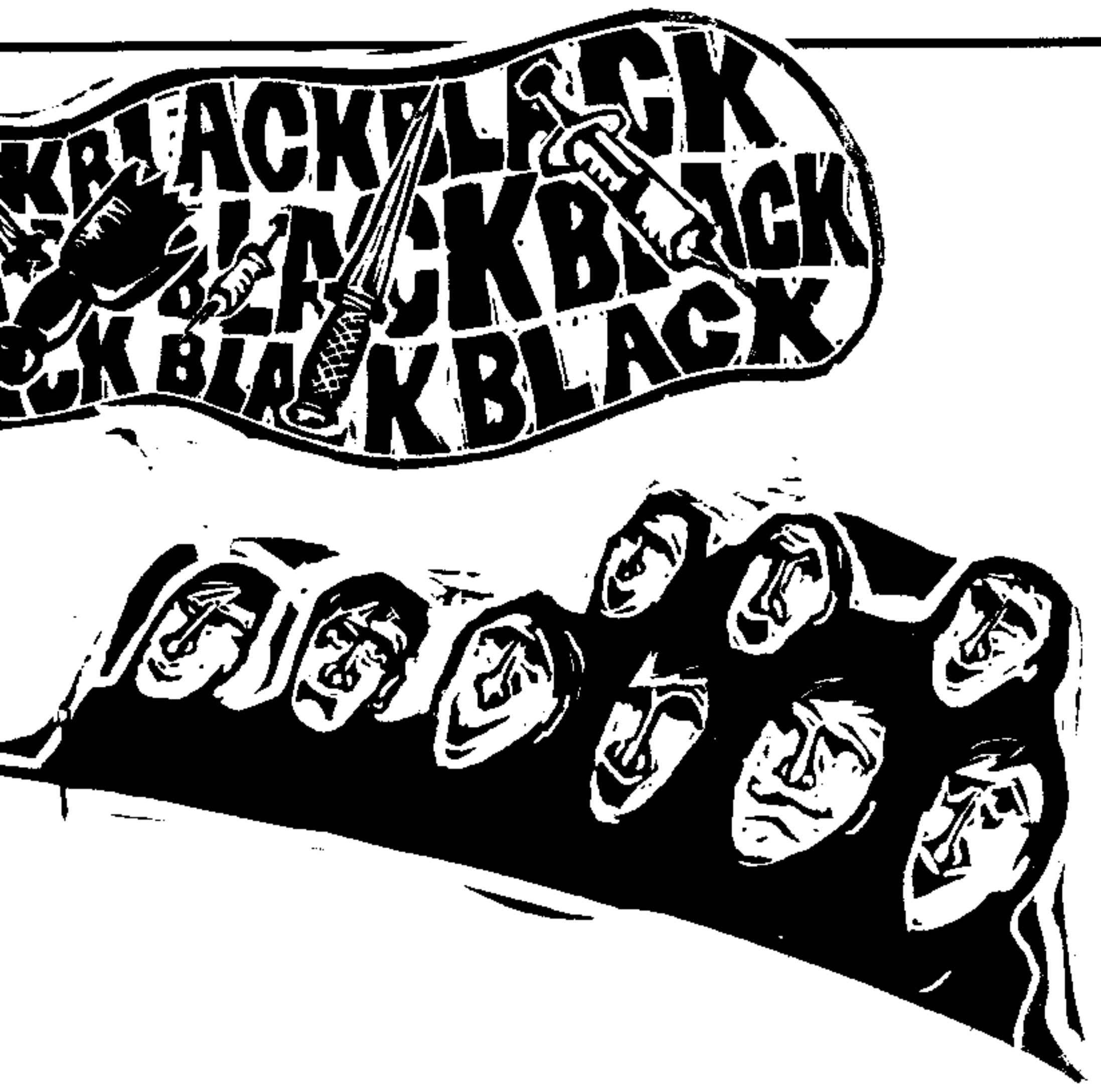
To understand this, you have to understand why the British police have traditionally been able to operate in a certain way, and how this has been put into question by the development of a deep economic crisis over the last decade.

The traditional slogan of British home secretaries and chief constables has been 'policing with consent'. This has not meant softness — it was held by those who had no compunction about using the hangman, flogging and long prison terms in 19th century jails.

But it has meant attempting to present a friendly image to the mass of the population while cracking down heavily on those who challenged the rule of property.

So, for instance, there has been resistance to the creation of any permanent paramilitary force like the French CRS, even among the ranks of chief constables. When a delegation of them met Whitelaw during the steel strike two years ago, the head of it, Alan Goodfield, expressed the view that to create a CRS-type force would be 'deplorable': 'We have got to have policing by consent.'





this development. If 'consent' is undermined, so too is one of the bulwarks against a development of revolutionary consciousness. And so they do their utmost to preserve the old patterns of policing.

It would be quite wrong to see their resistance to certain forms of 'hard policing' as a mere pretence — they do not want a population that hates the police and will knock certain police heads together in order to try and stop it being produced.

But it would be equally wrong to see the trend towards harder forms of policing as something resulting merely from conspiracies of police chiefs that various reforms — like the establishment of 'community control' by elected councillors — can stop.

If the police are going to protect property in a society in which the lives of the propertyless are visibly deteriorating, then they are going to have to use harder methods than in the past. Just as successful reformism becomes a dream of the past, so does successful 'policing by consent'.

That is not to say that there is no trend at all for the police to try and grab more power, regardless of the feelings of the ruling class as a whole.

The police are like many of the other bureaucratic structures in capitalist society. Those who head them want them to grow larger with ever greater funds at their disposal. This is the way in which they gain ever more privileges and ever more respect within ruling class circles.

So there is naturally a chief constables' lobby for higher police spending, increased police numbers and ever more technologically sophisticated equipment.

This is reinforced by the palpable advantages such changes can bring to rank and file police. It is, after all, a much pleasanter life to speed about in a panda car than to pound the beat on a wet night.

The police pressure has been remarkably effective over the last decade, regardless of the government in office. Police spending increased 50 per cent in real terms between 1971 and 1981, and the number of police has grown by about 20 per cent.

But it has been less effective in achieving the twin goals of the ruling class — to protect property and to maintain the ideological case for policing among the mass of the population.

The number of 'crimes cleared up' has, incredibly, fallen from 109,830 in 1972 to 106,421 in 1981. This was in a period when the total amount of serious crimes nearly doubled according to police figures, rising from 377,094 to 631,328.

The dominant style of policing over the last decade has not given the ruling class value for money.

At the same time, as the riots showed last summer, it has created a growing minority who do not have faith in the police—something confirmed by a recent opinion poll for the *Observer*.

Hence the pressure from Whitelaw, Scarman, Alderson and so on. It has not been an ineffective pressure. In many cities police have been forced out of their panda cars onto the beat.

It is precisely because of the pressure on them to change their style that sections of

This is the perspective still shared by Whitelaw and, in an even more open form, by Alderson, chief constable of Devon and Cornwall.

It is not in any sense a 'left wing' perspective. Rather it follows from a clear perception of what any ruling class needs to do to maintain its power. It has to persuade the great majority of the population that the state acts in their interests, even while it preserves the property of a very small minority.

'Policing by consent' — based on the image of a hundred thousand Dixons of Dock Green helping old ladies across the road while grabbing the occasional villain — could serve this goal admirably for a long period of time.

It was in many ways the other side of the coin to the stifling reformism that dominated the working class movement in Britain for so long. British capitalism could provide improvements in working class living standards first as 'the workshop of the world', then as the centre of the world's largest empire and finally on the basis of the arms economy boom of the 40s, 50s and 60s. It could therefore benefit from a virtuous circle in relation to the 'consent' of the mass of the population. Riots were few and far between and revolutionary movements were small. Therefore its police force was not nearly as alienated from the mass of the population as in many other countries.

Therefore a policy of 'policing by consent' was possible which did not contribute towards creating widespread disaffection or new revolutionary moods.

Of course, things were never quite that simple. In certain cities there was always a

greater than average hostility between the working class and the police. And at times, as in the crises of the 1880s and the interwar years, the iron hand had to be brought out of the velvet glove, with baton charges and bitter confrontations on the streets.

Thus the London police commissioners, Warren of the 1880s and Trenchard of the 1930s, were as synonymous with hard policing as is Anderton today.

But when the crisis passed, just as reformism reasserted itself within the working class, so did 'policing by consent' within the forces of the state.

The problem the police face today is that in a new period of great economic crisis, this old, effective form of policing does not fit as neatly as it used to.

A great economic crisis always breeds certain sorts of mass behaviour that are detrimental to the established order. In some cases, as in 1969-74, this means a growing level of class organisation and struggle. In other periods — as in the mid 1880s, the early 1930s or the present period — it means a growth both of crime and of the tendency to angry street confrontations between sections of the poor and the police.

A growth of mass unemployment increases the pool of bitter, poor, desperate people — especially young people — from which the minority who engage in various forms of crime come. Those paid to protect property against the propertyless come to see all those who belong to this pool as potential criminals and react accordingly. In doing so they break down the old 'consent' to policing.

The Whitelaws and the Aldersons fear

the police joined in the 'law and order' furor last month.

But just as it would be wrong to see the trend to hard policing as mainly a result of a police conspiracy, so it is wrong to see the resistance Whitelaw has put up to the pressure of many of the police constables as ending that trend.

The 'hard' and 'soft' elements within the ruling class often have a way of complementing each other in practice despite their arguments. The growing crisis means, necessarily, the growing alienation of large numbers of people from the system. Pressure on police to behave like 'friendly bobbies' is one part of the ruling class strategy to deal with this. But so too are highly equipped tactical support groups with deadly, high technology weaponry, prepared to step in when the police on the beat can no longer hold the line.

Once this is understood, it should also be clear that for socialists the argument must not be for community policing and the bobby on the beat as against Anderton and the panda cars. Instead we should be focussing on unemployment, low pay and declining social services as the cause of increased crime. And we should insist that while such conditions exist to create more crime and more violence, then any sort of policing — whether under the auspices of Anderton, or Alderson or even Ted Knight and Ken Livingstone — will be policing directed against a growing section of the working class.



the assailant approaches the victim from behind so as not to be very clearly seen. What is more the last research done in Scotland Yard on muggings proper showed that most of them took place between 10 at night and 2 in the morning — hardly the best circumstances for victims to identify assailants clearly.

Under such circumstances, people will often say they saw things that prejudice — racial stereotyping — makes them think they saw. And in many cases, prejudice will be reinforced by the desire of racist police to get them to say their assailants were black.

The whole process is self-fulfilling. By encouraging the press to link the words 'black' and 'crime' the police help get the victim's 'perceptions' that seem to justify the linkage.

This process and the way in which the police have broadened the definition of 'mugging' to include what is little more than pickpocketing or even finding and stealing, mean that the figures contain the most amazing anomalies.

Take the figures for Hackney and Islington.

These two boroughs adjoin each other, are of very similar character, both have the same very high level of unemployment (20 per cent for adult males) and the same proportion of black people (12 per cent 'New Commonwealth immigrants' at the time of the 1971 census).

Yet the police figures record 1599 'robberies and other violent thefts' for Hackney, but only *half* that number, 732 for Islington. And in Hackney, three quarters of these crimes are allegedly committed by 'coloured' people, in Islington only about 35 per cent.

Again in Hackney only one victim in 16 was apparently unable to record the colour of their assailant. In Islington the figure was much higher, nearly one in four. There must be the very strong suspicion that racist police in Hackney put pressure on victims to say their assailants were black.

However, the way the police figures are put together is only half the story. The other half is the way the police focus on street robbery and theft. Even if you include bag, purse and wallet snatches in the figures, as the police do now, the incidence of this crime is only about one seventh as frequent as household burglary in the London area. And for working class people, particularly elderly women living alone, finding a burglar in the house is just as frightening as having a purse snatched on the street.

But if the police had published figures for 'race' and burglaries, they could not have created the stereotype between 'blacks' and 'crime'. Research by Pratt on the Yard's figures for arrest in Lambeth in the early to mid 1970s showed that Afrocaribbeans were judged by the police to be responsible for 28 per cent of robbery, but only 14 per cent of burglary and only 13 per cent of all crime. At that time West Indians made up about 10 per cent of Lambeth's population.

By emphasising 'muggings' the police and the press emphasise the one crime with a disproportionate black involvement.

But this disproportionate involvement has nothing to do with race.

Criminologists have long recognised street robbery is the most amateur of crimes. As an American book *Mugging* by Morton Hunt recognised ten years ago, mugging has become 'the genetic term for robberies characterised by ... lack of criminal professionalism.'

For this reason, it is closely associated with youth unemployment. Pratt's research showed that

'mugging is very clearly an adolescent crime. Of the cases in which the victim was able to judge the assailant's age, 72.7 per cent were under the age of 17 and only 10.4 per cent over the age of 21.'

Both the robbery and the 'snatch' figures go up when youth unemployment goes up, and down when it goes down (only three years in the last ten — 1972, 1978 and 1979).



Given that black youth are two or three times as likely to be unemployed as white youth because of racism, it is not surprising if they are two or three times as likely to be involved in so-called 'muggings'.

Interestingly, in the 1950s when there were relatively few black youth in Britain it was another immigrant group, adults from the Irish Republic, who were said to be disproportionately involved in robbery of all sorts. In a semi-official study of robbery in 1961, McClintock argued that 'more than half the increase in convictions of adult robbers is attributable to the element of the adult population born in the Irish Republic.'

Today, 'mugging' has nothing to do with race. It has everything to do with unemployment and *racism*.

Racism makes it even more difficult for black youth to get jobs than white youth. They are therefore driven to the most desperate, most amateur and least remunerative form of crime. The police deliberately exaggerate the significance of this one per cent of all crime, so reinforcing racial stereotypes. It becomes still more difficult for black youth to get jobs and there is an inevitable increase in the number driven to street crime by desperation.



## Race and crime

The Metropolitan Police press conference last month was a conscious attempt to encourage racist stereotypes.

The press were given figures designed for them to hammer home the message that black people cause crime. They readily responded — 'Black crime: The alarming figures' screamed the *Daily Mail*.

But the figures the Yard provided to justify such claims are dubious in the extreme.

First, they are based on 'victim perception of appearance of assailant'. But the majority of the crimes dealt with by the police figures are bag, purse and wallet snatches, in which





# The myth of mugging

The term 'mugging' was introduced into Britain by the police and the press ten years ago. It has been deliberately used since then to give a grossly exaggerated picture of the level of violence on the streets.

The first time the word was used widely in the British press was in August 1972. An elderly widower, Arthur Hills, was stabbed to death near Waterloo Station. The *Daily Mirror* headline the next day declared: 'As crimes of violence escalate, a word common in the United States enters the British headlines: Mugging. To our police it's a frightening new strain of crime.'

Since then there have been a succession of press scare campaigns over the issue, in each case carefully whipped up by the police. Figures are given purporting to show how the number of muggings has grown year by year, and it is implied that all of these 'muggings' involve the sort of appalling, random violence directed against Arthur Hills.

The tone of the press scare campaigns has not changed one iota in the ten years.

Thus in 1972, the London *Evening News* could report: 'At night when you are lying in bed, you can often hear the screams of people who are being attacked.'

In that year there were all of 1544 street robberies — that is, fewer than five a day for the whole 8 million population of the Metropolitan police district — it is only possible to suppose either that the *Evening News* journalist had an excessive imagination or that he lived near a police station and heard the beatings down in the cells.



In 1975 it was the turn of the *Sun* to excel itself. It reported to those of its readers who looked at anything more than page three:

'Four times a day the thud of a cosh on an innocent skull.'

In that year there were 1977 street robberies, of which only one case in 14 — ie fewer than 150 in total — involved either threats with or the use of a blunt instrument. The *Sun* was, to put it mildly, exaggerating by something like 800 per cent.

Exactly the same techniques of distortion have been used over the last few weeks. Take, for instance, the *Daily Mirror* on 29 March. It ran nine pages on 'Our violent cities — bloody, battered, frightened.' On each page was the photo of a gashed and bruised face. As one of the captions put it, this was what happened: 'on an average night in Britain's cities'.

Yet the facts actually show that violence, particularly violent robbery on the streets, is still a relatively rare occurrence, even if it is on the increase.

Your chances of being robbed on the streets of London in any year are only about one in 1400. And research done six years ago in the Met's research department showed that over half the cases of robbery involved no injury, in only a quarter of them was a weapon used and only one case in 20 involved the victim going to hospital.



In other words, the average person has to live 1400 years before being robbed, 2,800 years before being injured in a robbery and 28,000 years before joining the hospitalised victims whose faces covered the *Daily Mirror*.

Nor is it the case that your chances of being robbed violently are greater than the average if you are an elderly woman. In fact, the research of six years ago showed that four fifths of victims were *male* and the police figures for last year show that twice as many adults between the ages of 21 and 30 are victims of theft on the streets as people over 60.

Only conscious distortion of the statistics has enabled the Met to present a picture of millions of old people afraid to leave their homes because of 'muggers'.

The very term 'mugging' is part of this distortion. As the most recent book on the subject notes:

'Mugging' has no legal meaning at all and has entered the vocabulary of crime statistics purely as a result of popular usage.'

The police and the press trade on exploiting the vagueness of this term, giving the impression that almost any form of theft in the street involves vicious wounding.

Until recently, they did this by implying that all forms of street robbery involved vicious assault. In the latest scare, they have gone even further. They have widened the definition of 'mugging' to more than *treble* the incidents included in it.

Mugging used to refer to 'robbery' on the streets. But now the Met have widened it to

include a new category — 'other violent thefts'.

This is a very strange procedure indeed. For ever since the precedent-setting legal case of Rex versus Harman (no relative!) in the early 16th century, *all* thefts involving 'violence or the threat of violence' have been included under the heading of 'robbery'.

So the police have inflated the 'muggings' figures by adding to them so-called 'violent thefts' which involve neither 'violence or the threat of violence'.

What the police have done is to throw in with genuinely violent thefts those that involve no more than the snatching of a purse, handbag, or wallet, without the 'victim' being touched or threatened at all. Something is pulled from their pocket, off their shoulder or out of their bag by someone who runs off with it. The 'victim' often may not even notice anything has happened. Yet this is counted now as 'mugging'.

Of the alleged 13,000 'muggings' in London last year, 7,330 fell into this category.

The police quite crudely fiddled the figures. Had they not done so, instead of seeming like three per cent of all crime, 'muggings' would have been less than one per cent.

But then it would have been much more difficult for the press to run their scare campaign.



For Britain as a whole there are in any year only about 400 homicides, of which only about 130 are classified as 'murders'. And, far from this being a pattern of 'random', 'pointless' violence, in three quarters of cases the killers are close relatives or friends of the victims.

Such figures also put the recent hullabaloo about murders of police into perspective. The average number of police killed in any year is two, out of a national total of 110,000 police.

By contrast, out of every 100,000 agricultural workers, 24 die of fatal accidents at work and out of every 100,000 miners, 17 die — and this is ignoring the 630 deaths through coal dust diseases each year.

# Inside Mary Whitehouse

Mary Whitehouse is a well-known figure. She pops up as regularly as clockwork, denouncing moral decline in every guise. But she is not just an outraged old fogey. She has a very clear idea of what she is doing, and her political ideas go back a long way. Noel Halifax investigates.

The recent trial of *Romans in Britain* has brought Mary Whitehouse into the limelight once again. For almost twenty years now she has been campaigning round the issues of 'christian morality' and censorship, using the courts to fine and restrict freedom of speech and pressurise the TV companies to censor their programmes (that is, more than they do already). At first liberals treated her as a joke, then when her campaigns grew they tried to pacify her and co-opt her, or treat her as a one-issue fanatic. But Mrs Whitehouse is not a sex obsessed fanatic nor an eccentric harmless loony, neither is she likely to be co-opted by the mandarins of the BBC. She is a nasty piece of work who has a well-defined world view that has similarities with McCarthy and even Hitler, and a mission in life, given to her by God.

Mrs Whitehouse's ideas were formed very early on in her life and have not radically changed in the last 40 years. She met her husband in the '30s at an 'Oxford Group' meeting in Wolverhampton. The 'Oxford Group' was an extreme right-wing movement that included many admirers of Hitler and his strong moral and political government. The founder and leader of the 'Oxford Group' was Frank Buchman, the tone of the movement can be judged by his statement in August 1936 that:

'I thank heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who built a front line of defence against the anti-christ of communism... think what it would mean to the world if Hitler surrendered to the control of God. Or Mussolini. Or any other dictator. Through such a man, God could control a nation overnight and solve every last, bewildering problem.' (25/8/36 *New York World Telegram*)

In 1938 the movement renamed itself Moral Rearmament, and remained committedly anti-communist. I don't want to over-stress the similarities of Hitler's Jewish conspiracy theory and Whitehouse's world view, but they do have a lot in common.

'After the last war, the enemies of the West... saw that Britain was the lynchpin of Western civilisation. She proved herself unbeatable on the field of battle because of her faith and her character. If Britain was to be destroyed, those things

must be destroyed.' (*Observer* 9/12/68)

So the enemies of Britain, within and without, created permissiveness, as a plot to destroy Britain.

'I feel that all the current permissiveness is a direct result of middle-aged entrepreneurs...' (*Sunday Express* 22/2/70)

'At the root of the trouble is something more sinister, a political and ideological conspiracy' (*Observer* 9/12/68)

sorry for them. She prosecuted *Gay News* for printing a poem that suggested Jesus was gay, and to the shock of all liberals won the case of blasphemy (she did not follow up the case when *Socialist Worker* printed the same poem as an act of solidarity). In fact she has been very good at using the courts to rewrite the laws for her benefit, and win back battles everyone had thought had been won years ago - everyone but the judges, that is.

The most recent activities of Mrs Whitehouse have been in the same tradition as before. Writing in the *Daily Mail* of 5/6/81 attacking Roy Jenkins for being too liberal she asks of Woy:

'But what do you yourself now feel about the way in which the tenets of the "civilised society" have subverted the importance of the family? Where do your loyalties lie as so-called "gay" organisations seek to



Mary Whitehouse: her 'heart rejoiced' at the Tory election victory in 1979

It has been Mrs Whitehouse's mission to fight the ideological battle with Communists, homosexuals and all the other aspects of this plot to undermine Britain's christian codes. So as well as campaigning against such TV shows as *Till death us do part* or the ITV documentary on Andy Warhol (again using the courts), because they are sexually explicit or use 'bad' language, she has also attacked the appearance of Cohn-Bendit (the radical student leader) on a discussion programme in the late '60s, and the showing of a documentary on Culloden (for being anti-English). She also complained of too much violence in the form of Vietnam war coverage on the News as it was putting people against 'the just war against Communism'.

And of course Mrs Whitehouse does not like permissive attitudes to sex. She loathes homosexuality, is for a strong family and a strict moral (sexual) code. Free abortions on demand, the right to have sex for all who want it, in fact all forms of sexual liberation are a disease to be fought. She seems particularly to hate/fear homosexuality, or probably, in her most christian mood she is

influence vulnerable teenagers to an acceptance of homosexual practices as normal? What do you feel, for example, about the erosion of religious education in schools?

For Whitehouse, even the Tories are not totally to be trusted, though 'news of the Tory victory in 1979 lifted an enormous burden off my back and my heart rejoiced' (*Sunday Telegraph* 7/2/82). She doesn't really trust all of them, there are those nasty wets and moral unreliaables. And all this when time is running out, the permissive plot goes on, and today is even more urgent. She calls for a return to the christian standards, because:

'The roots of our economic problems run so deep, their resolution must inevitably be so gradual, that nothing but the willingness of the people to go along with sacrifice, to accept demands on energy and commitment to change attitudes and expectations can bring hope. (*Sunday Telegraph* 7/2/82)



Underlying the Whitehouse world-view is a belief in the stupidity and 'innocence' of the public generally, and teenagers and children in particular. The changes in attitudes towards sex and morality must, in the Whitehouse mind, happen because of TV brain washing. Any idea of self-activity of teenagers, of them fighting towards their liberation is alien to her. She assumes people only believe what they are told and Whitehouse wants to see to it that they are told the right things.

Another strand of the Whitehouse theory is populism. Part of her critique of the BBC, for example, is that it is a closed elite spreading their ideas with little accountability to the public, essentially elitist and undemocratic. Part of her campaign has been to 'democratise' the BBC. Of course in this labelling of the BBC she is right, though it is hardly the centre of permissiveness corrupting the nation's morals.

Again, these ideas have a lot in common with McCarthy's belief in communist subversives in Hollywood and the media corrupting Americans with un-American ideas in the '50s. Like Paisley, or the SDP talk of democracy in the unions, it is calling for 'democracy' in the abstract in order to undermine the establishment which she wants to influence. Any opening up of the TV network to democracy, meaning that anyone could make and broadcast programmes on anything that they wanted, she would view with total horror - that would be a total licence for pornography and anti-christian views. Britain would be swamped with uncensored ideas! On this point, at least, she and the mandarins agree: freedom such as that would be anarchy and unthinkable.

### Help from the judges

Her latest coup has been the prosecution of *Romans in Britain*. This play, put on by the National Theatre, had the usual Whitehouse phobias of homosexuality. One bit of the play had a scene where some Roman soldiers raped a local Briton. The play also intended to draw connections between Rome's oppression of Britain and England's present-day oppression of Ireland. Both obviously part of the great plot to undermine etc. etc. The case ended in creating (again) a rewrite of the law.

In a year of outstandingly reactionary judgements, Judge Stoughton followed the now traditional procedure: he remade the law. Before the judgement it was considered that freedom from censorship in the theatre had been won by the 1968 Theatre Act. But Judge Stoughton ruled that there was no difference between a simulated and a real act of gross indecency, so that the play had to answer under the Sexual Offences Act! The Attorney-General then rode to the rescue with a 'nolle prosequi' (Latin for that's enough) which means that everyone pretends the prosecution never started and everything is wiped off the books - except the judge's ruling. Once again, judges have shown how flexible our 'impartial' law can be. Meanwhile, Whitehouse and her campaigns roll gayly on. □

# John Reed —party member

The film *Reds* has aroused a lot of interest. Not only has it made the name John Reed widely known but it also showed that early Communist ideas had an audience in America. Much of that history is unknown to modern socialists. Pete Goodwin gives the details of the founding of the American Communist Party and John Reed's part in it.

The American Labour movement in the years before the First World War was weak by international standards, but it was a real and growing force with an audience amongst some of the most militant sections of the working class. All of the organisations active in that period were to be deeply shaken by the war and its aftermath. Out of that experience were to come the people who looked to the Russian revolution as a model for changing American society.

The IWW (or Wobblies as they were affectionately known) was founded in 1905 as a new union federation in opposition to the more established American Federation of Labour (AFL). The opportunities seemed obvious. Only about 5% of the non-farm workforce was unionised—2 million in all, with three quarters of them in the AFL—and the AFL refused to recruit the unskilled, blacks, women or the foreign-born. With an aggressively class-collaborationist president, the AFL displayed every nasty aspect of the most reactionary trade unionism at its worst.

The Wobblies, on the other hand, were committed to unremitting class struggle, and, despite an often voiced contempt for 'politics', boasted the presence at its founding conference of some of the leading figures of the American socialist movement, both political and industrial. However, it was plagued by internal faction fights right from the beginning, losing its leading socialist agitators and biggest union section early on. It led some magnificent battles, had some temporary local successes, and achieved some degree of permanent organisation amongst migrant workers. But at its height it never numbered more than 200,000 (the AFL had 2 million) and was effectively broken by the wave of repression in 1917 and 1918, when America entered the First World War.

But as an organisation of revolutionary agitators the IWW, with its heroism and principle, its ideas of direct action and 'one big union', left its mark on tens of thousands of the most determined working class militants in the dozen years before the Russian Revolution. However, though many of those who formed the American Communist movement must have been ex-

Wobblies it was not from that organisation that the movement came. The Wobblies were bound up in fighting against repression, and still retained their hostility to political parties. So despite the efforts the Bolsheviks made to get them in, the American Communist movement was formed from another, and apparently less promising source, the Socialist Party.



Sketch by Art Young

John Reed hitches his trousers before addressing the founding convention of the Communist Labour Party

The American Socialist Party was founded in 1901. It grew rapidly. By 1912, it could claim 118,045 members, five English and eight foreign language daily papers. And in that year, its best known public figure, Eugene Debs, got nearly 900,000 votes (6% of the poll) as Socialist Party candidate for President. In reality, however, the party was electoralist-minded, had a strong right wing, and controlled by a centre group that would side viciously with the right when the chips were down (by changing the constitution, for example, to expel a leading industrial militant). But this craving for respectability did nothing to enhance its electoral fortunes, and after 1912, its membership declined.

So far as trade union activity was concerned, in practice the Socialist Party did not really consider it part of its business. The right would do deals with AFL leaders, the left (which had lost ground, even while the party prospered) would sympathise with the IWW, but politics and trade-unionism were seen as two very different animals.

To both these organisations John Reed was an outsider, albeit an increasingly sympathetic one. Fresh from Harvard University and a trip to Europe, he arrived in New York in 1911, to start a journalistic career. A spectacular and unconventional young man, he moved in Bohemian circles, a radical but not yet a socialist. What put him on the way to socialism was being persuaded to go to report on the Paterson silk-workers strike of 1913 (organised by the Wobblies). He went to Paterson, got arrested and threw himself into the struggle, organising a spectacular fundraising pageant in New York in which a thousand of the strikers reenacted the struggle in front of an audience of 15,000. (It lost money, by the way.)

But he was still capable of swanning off to Europe while the strike was on and of writing to his mother to deny he was a socialist. What confirmed his move to the left and earned him a reputation as one of America's top journalists was his arrival in Mexico in 1914 to report on the Mexican Revolution. When war broke out in Europe Reed opposed it, not out of pacifism, but because it was a 'falling out between commercial rivals', a war for profit in which the workers of both sides had no interests. 'We who are Socialists must hope that out of this horror of destruction will come far reaching social changes.'

On the day that America declared war, April 1917, he was at an anti-war rally dominated by liberals, the more radical elements in the audience shouting for him to speak. When the news that war had actually been declared reached the platform, the chairman rose and declared: 'We are for peace, but we will follow our country.' Reed replied: 'This is not my war and I will not support it.' It was a stand that barred him from employment by most of the bourgeois press.

By the time, then, that he went to Russia, he was a socialist, a determined opponent of the war, hoping and expecting revolution. His experience of that revolution was what turned him for the first time into a disciplined political activist.



Sketch by Art Young

Chicago 1919. The hall where the CP was founded

When war broke out in Europe the American Socialist Party clearly opposed it, a position overwhelmingly reaffirmed when America itself entered the war. Much of the actual practice, however, was distinctly lukewarm and focused on a revival of the old Socialist International, whose major parties were supporting their own ruling classes in the war. Where a more determined opposition began to emerge was in a new left wing in the Socialist Party, particularly round a newspaper significantly titled *New International*, drawing its inspiration from European revolutionary opponents of the war.

At first Russia did not loom very large. The editor of *New International*, Louis Fraina, for instance, had never heard of Lenin till 1916. But by the summer of 1917 Fraina was calling for a second revolution in Russia and when the Bolshevik revolution came in November it became the rallying point for the growing left. Reed was able to supply detailed information on his return from Russia in April 1918, lecturing to enthusiastic and often huge audiences. He

immediately became the Russian Revolution's best-known advocate, and a leading figure in the left-wing of the Socialist Party, which he had now joined.

But it was only after he had finished writing *Ten Days that Shook the World* in January 1919 that Reed was able to throw himself into the growing internal struggle in the Socialist Party. Membership of the party was increasing and by the spring of that year it looked as if the left would make a clean sweep for the new executive, having won 12 out of 15 places.

Then the leadership struck back. The old executive annulled the elections for their successors, and in the next few weeks proceeded to expel or suspend nearly two thirds of the membership. Before the purge in January membership had been 109,589; after the purge in July it was 39,750!

This, then, was the situation of open war that existed when the national convention of the Socialist Party left wing met in New York in June.

The issue that dominated the convention was whether to immediately form a communist party or to go along to the Socialist Party convention in Chicago in ten weeks' time and attempt to capture it for communism. Fraina and Reed opposed the immediate formation of a communist party and carried the day, 55 votes to 38. The minority then walked out and declared they were calling a conference to found a Communist Party on September 1st in Chicago (two days after the Socialist Party convention was scheduled to open).

The issue might seem trivial. Most of the left wing had already been expelled and those who advocated trying to capture the Socialist Party made it quite clear that should they fail they would found a communist party anyway.

But the nature of the groups supporting the majority and the minority tells us a lot more about the split than the supposed issue over which it occurred. Part of the minority took their ideas from the Socialist Party of Great Britain—absolute opposition to reforms, contempt for trade unions, and winning the workers simply by education.

The other part of the minority were the far more important foreign language federations, covering a staggering 53% of Socialist Party membership at the beginning of 1919. These huge left federations, all Eastern European ones, viewed the Russian Revolution practically as their own property. They were contemptuous of any tactic to 'Americanise' communism. As one Russian federation leader put it:

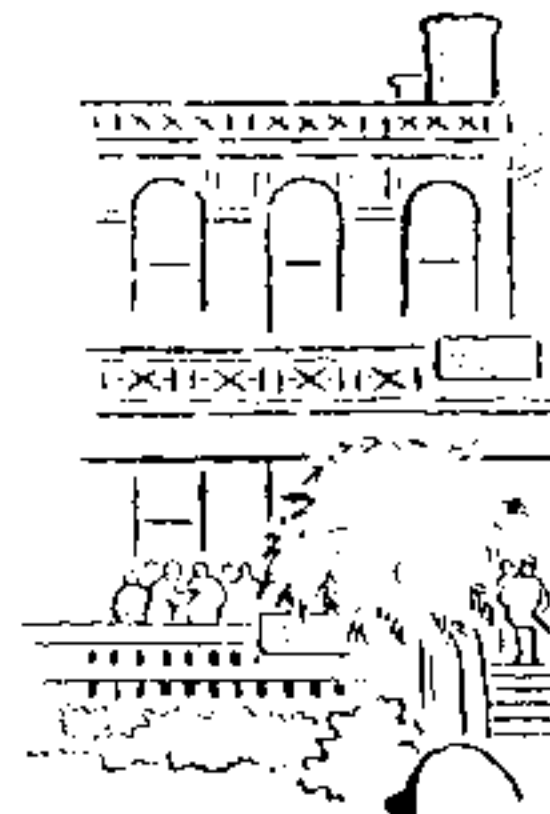
'Must we stoop so low as to beg admission to the Socialist Party convention in order that we may capture the masses? Bolsheviks never run after masses.'

Reed, Fraina, and most of the other English speaking delegates saw that this was a road to sectarian disaster. As Reed had put it a few months earlier, the Left Wing:

'must find out from *American workers* what they want most, and they must explain this in terms of the whole Labour Movement and they must make the workers want more—make them want the whole Revolution. They must do this

in words that can be understood immediately by the workers.'

For the moment Reed's position appeared to be in the majority on the left wing, which had elected a committee to go to the Socialist Party conference. But defections by those who had concluded that they couldn't do without the foreign language federations led a majority of the committee, including Fraina, to abandon the idea and go in with the call for a new communist party.



Sketch by Art Young

Chicago 1919. The hall where Reed was founding the CLP

Reed and some others stuck to their guns and went along to the Socialist convention in Chicago on August 30th. Refused admission, they had to crash it and were thrown out with the aid of the police. They then trooped down to the billiard room on the floor below and formed an alternative convention which declared itself the Communist Labour Party on September 2nd.

Meanwhile, in another Chicago hall, the foreign language federations and their supporters were founding the Communist Party in a meeting dominated by separate caucuses and threatened walkouts.

Relations between the CLP and the CP were so bad that negotiations to get a united party came to nothing, even though their programmes were virtually indistinguishable. The CP was bigger, perhaps 25,000, as against the CLP's 10,000, but the bigger size of the CP disguised the problem that only 7% were English speaking, with English speaking leaders like the brilliant propagandist Fraina and his organisational counterpart, Ruthenburg, prisoners of the less talented and far more sectarian leaders of the foreign language federations.

Six months later in April 1920, Ruthenburg and his supporters split from the CP and in May joined with the CLP to form the United Communist Party. It took another year to unite with the remainder of the old Communist Party (what was left of the foreign language federations), and that still left a heritage of factionalism which was to plague American communism throughout the twenties.

But by the time even the first step to unity was made in 1920 things were very different for the early communists.

First and foremost they were illegal. Although the CP and CLP conventions took place in comparative safety, police raids, first in New York, and then in 33 cities across the whole country, with many thousands of arrests, had a catastrophic



effect. CP membership was reduced by three quarters. The CLP was even worse hit. The communists went underground, aggravating their factional divisions and sectarian inclinations.

By the time all this was happening Reed was out of the country. Both the CLP and CP were eager to send representatives to Russia to get endorsement for their particular party from the Communist International. Reed was the obvious choice for the CLP. Fraina went later for the CP. Very sensibly the Communist International recognised the strengths and weaknesses of both organisations and told them to unite rapidly. Reed had intended to return to America after this. But after three months in a Finnish prison, he found himself back in Russia with the second congress of the communist International preparing to meet there in July 1920.

Reed took a very active part in this as a CLP delegate, but working quite harmoniously with the American CP delegates, including Fraina. Reed's main contributions were in the discussion on the trade union question. The debate was fraught and messy, with Reed constantly jumping up to demand changes in the order paper, special translation facilities and the extension of debate; and with Radek, who led for the platform, apparently displaying his most crude and nasty characteristics when Reed exasperated him. Reed went away unconvinced and wrote in

his American communist press report that the wrong policy had been adopted and would have to be changed at the next congress.

Whatever the drawbacks in debate, the issue was an important one: should revolutionaries work in reformist unions? With their experience of the AFL, and the IWW'S influence on them, Reed (and Fraina) quite understandably sided with the ultra-lefts, who were against working in the reformist unions, a position the Comintern leaders recognised as dangerous nonsense that needed quashing.

But was Reed correct that America was a special case? Radek was prepared to give ground: he admitted not having taken American conditions sufficiently into account and made it clear that revolutionaries would often have to organise the unskilled themselves (that would mean harmonising with the IWW). But he insisted that it was both necessary and possible to work also in the AFL: 'There are cracks in it, and it is the duty of the American Communist Party to widen them.'

Reed in turn appeared to give ground. But his concession, that he was not in principle opposed to work in the AFL, was a token one. His views did not really differ from the theses of the American United Communist Party, which arrived in Moscow during the debate:

'A Communist who belongs to the AFL should seize every opportunity to voice his hostility to this organisation, not to reform it, but to destroy it... The IWW must be upheld against the AFL.'

Radek cited this in refusing to make any further concessions to Reed.

And quite rightly. By the time of the debate, the summer of 1920, the IWW was effectively finished. But even more important, big struggles had taken place involving AFL unions—the massive steel strike of 1919 especially. Without a serious policy towards the AFL American communists in practice stood on the sidelines during such struggles, even if they thought they were intervening with the odd leaflet calling for armed insurrection.

Reed was not convinced, unfortunately. But being in a minority didn't stop him being elected to the Executive of the Communist International the day after the debate. The rows at the congress and the subsequent rows he had on the Executive later gave rise to stories that he became disillusioned with communism in the last months of his life. The evidence is flimsy. When he fell fatally ill in October 1920 everything points to the fact that he was a committed communist, who, like most communists of that time, was willing to voice his opinions vigorously—even when they were wrong. □

## INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION

# Heading off the anger

This year the Government is getting very tough with public sector pay. Their four percent guideline represents a substantial cut for any group of workers settling around that figure. Some of the stronger groups, like the miners, have managed to squeeze a bit more in their final settlements, but the weaker groups have been offered even less than the norm. We look at three of these groups—the teachers, the civil servants and the nurses, all of whom have had very low offers. In all of these cases, there has been substantial anger and readiness to fight but the trade union leaders have been busy trying to head off action into manageable channels.

## Nurses

The government is already giving some Nurses a bit more, based on a sliding scale of 4-9%, totalling 6.2%, while the ancillaries, clerical

and ambulance sections' offer remains at 4%. But even the vast bulk of nurses, who are students or nursing auxiliaries, will also only get the 4%.

The offer neatly divides the nurses themselves at a time when they are making most of the running, while encouraging the idea they should be treated differently from other grades. This will hardly endear them to ancillary staff who have done most of the fighting over the last decade, and who they need to unite with if a decent rise is to be won.

The last time nurses took action was in 1974, when some miners in South Wales took sympathy action, and they eventually got a 50% rise. However, the 1974 rise came in the wake of industrial action the previous year by ancillaries, on a scale which we have not seen since.

### Settlement

The failure of the unions' leaders to call any action after the 100,000 demonstration in November 1976 against the cuts and the subsequent cuddling up to the then Labour Government at the expense of workers' struggles, cost hospital workers dearly. There have been many victimisations of militants, and the 1980/81 pay settlement moved the ancillary claim from November, when the traditionally militant sections of the class put in their pay claims, to April when the weaker

sections in the NHS have traditionally settled.

So we have nurses leading the fight over pay, squeezed over the years by gross understaffing and declining wages, but with the expectations of 1974. However, this time round it's not after militant strike action by ancillaries but after a defeat for the stronger section the previous year.

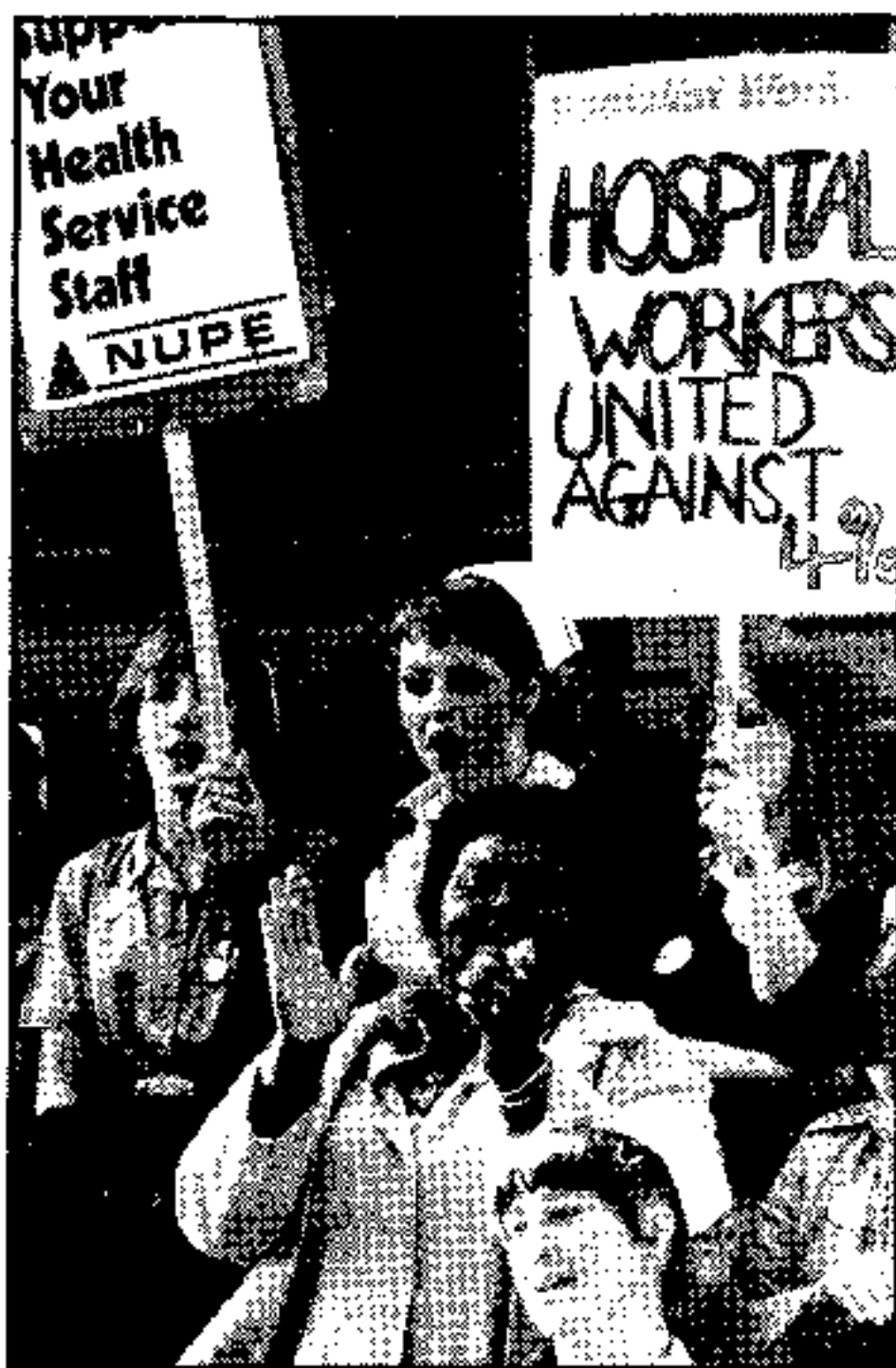
That is why the extra money this time round for the nurses is far short of the 50% they got in 1974, and why the little that is being given is going to so few even of the nurses.

The question is, can the anger and the expectations of nurses be channeled to raise the level of activity among all hospital workers before they are sold down the river by the bureaucracy? It is around this that socialists must concentrate, and there are hopeful signs.

For example, 3,000 hospital workers came from all over the country to lobby parliament at *less than 10 days' notice*. In Manchester the North Manchester JSSC called mass meetings in most of the hospitals on the pay claim which resulted in a half day stoppage involving all grades.

Clearly, there is a minority prepared to fight, and it is possible to unite all sections into a common fight and overcome the cynicism created by the past failures of the full time officials. As socialists we have to say that all out strike action is the most effective answer to the 4% but this has to be





argued and prepared for. This means using whatever activity is called by the officials to call mass meetings and argue for action that goes beyond the half-hearted response of the bureaucracy. Such activity also provides the basis on which hospital workers can go to other workers for support and possibly solidarity action.

The stress needs to be put on militant action *beyond the calls of the union leaders*, and the need to generalise not only to all grades but *beyond hospital workers themselves*.

In this way we can approach hospital workers honestly and with a strategy that can begin to turn the tide, even if it's only in our own hospital/district.

Ray Storrey □

## Civil servants

The Council of Civil Service Unions, the body which negotiates on behalf of all civil servants, put in for a rise of 13 per cent, with a £12.50 minimum rise. The government's offer was very much lower. Those who have been on their current pay grade for less than a year will get nothing at all. People on the top of their grades will get 5½ per cent. The computer centres, who led last year's claim, have been offered up to 11 per cent.

The whole offer is designed to split and divide the workforce, and to frighten the lower paid with 'market forces'. If you don't like it, the government are saying, there are plenty of people on the dole who will gladly take your places.

The offer was so bad that the initial response was one of outrage. In office after office, thousands of civil servants walked out after hearing the news. There was clearly a mood of anger in the offices over such an obvious wage cut, despite the demoralisation which set in after the long and costly defeat last year.

The union leadership had no intention of

building on this militancy. As part of the settlement of last year's pay claim, both sides agreed that this time round the claim would go to arbitration. The government, for its part, made it quite clear that, if they did not like the results, then they would disregard the results of any inquiry.

Despite this, and despite the fact that most civil servants can see quite clearly that the actual arbitration machinery is little more than a puppet of the government, the main efforts of the trade union officials have been put into securing the best possible result from that machine. The leadership of the largest union, the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA), have even stated that they will consider the results of arbitration binding.

In line with this attitude, the CPSA leadership have only issued one piece of literature about the claim; a circular outlining the offer in neutral terms. They have refused rank and file pressure to reconvene the campaign committees. Although these proved last year that they were powerless and bureaucratic, they at least provide a starting point for action.

### 'Other ways of pressure'

Alistair Graham, the CPSA General Secretary-designate, has said that he does not think a strike is on the cards this year. In his view, civil servants have to 'think of other ways to put pressure on the government.' So far, all he has managed to come up with is the idea that we should lobby Tory MPs in marginal seats and threaten not to vote for them next time if they don't pay up.

The other union executives have hardly been any better. The leaderships of the Inland Revenue Staff Federation (IRSF) and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) admit in private that an all out strike will be necessary to get any sort of pay rise at all, but they have shown themselves as unwilling as the CPSA to talk about any action at all until the results of arbitration are known.

If the arbitration offer is even a whisker above the current offer, there is no doubt that the union leaderships will leap at it. If that happens, then our only hope of getting

the sort of action which could lead to a decent offer will be if the government refuses to honour its side of the bargain.

To stop that happening, we have to organise now. In some areas there are already local strike committees and they provide a model for local organisation. We have to build the confidence of the membership in their ability to act on their own. Only if we can do that will we avoid a defeat this year.

Sally Bild □

## Teachers

Readers of *Socialist Review* might have been surprised to hear news bulletins announcing that the National Union of Teachers was planning national strike action on pay.

The NUT has best been known in recent years for expending more energy in attacks on its own members than for its ability to take on the employers over jobs or wages. Was 1982 to be the first time in ten years that teachers were being called out to fight on pay?

Not quite. The objective of the union's action was not the pursuit of the modest claim of 12 per cent, but for arbitration on that claim. The local authorities, backed by the government, had refused to concede even this crumb.

The NUT has calculated that teachers' pay has declined over the past few years by 25 per cent because the union has consistently settled below the rate of inflation. This year they submitted a claim of 12 per cent in line with the current rate of inflation and were offered a paltry 3.4 per cent. Instead of refusing this outright and campaigning for the full claim it demanded arbitration. The management refused even this face saver for the union executive.

In order to force management to agree to arbitration the union called on members to 'withdraw goodwill' (ie not to do voluntary duties like lunchtime supervision). As soon as some of the Labour controlled local authorities agreed to arbitration the 'action' was called off in their areas.

At the next national negotiations the full management panel would still not agree to





arbitration. The union's response was to call for no-cover action and to threaten strikes. No-cover is very popular with teachers; it protects conditions of work as well as forcing the employment of more supply teachers. Management 'caved-in' and agreed to arbitration at last.

But what kind of a victory was this for the teachers? Arbitration consists of one union nominee, one government nominee and one nominee from the employers. The odds are stacked against the union from the outset, the employers having only offered 3.4 per cent and the government being committed to a 4 per cent limit in the public sector. *Rank and File Teacher* has argued that the action should be continued while the arbitration panel is meeting and that the Union should prepare for extended strike action if the claim is not met. It is also arguing for co-ordinated action with the

nurses and civil servants who are pursuing similar claims.

Perhaps the most promising aspect of the saga was the level of resentment amongst class teachers. Many schools demanded strike action right from the start. The no-cover sanction was implemented with enthusiasm and there was a real feeling that the campaign could be won. The action gave teachers a rare opportunity to act like trade unionists and they felt the exhilaration of the exercise of trade union power.

Sadly this mood has been dissipated by the Executive calling off all action. There is still a strong possibility that the Government will veto the arbitration settlement. They vetoed a management offer of 4.5% on Burnham and they have power to overrule any offer from arbitration. This could lead to further action.

Jane Jones

strong that the five dockers had already been released.

The fact is that the movement today is very much weaker than it was then. Nothing illustrates that more clearly than the conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions held in London on 27 March.

The Liaison Committee is the body which fought the Labour anti-union proposals in the late sixties and played a leading role in the fight against the 1971 Tory law. Its conferences were sufficiently confident and sufficiently organised to call an unofficial strike of half a million workers.

It is now a shadow of its former self. The latest conference had perhaps 400 delegates compared with 1,500 ten years ago. The Liaison Committee was always dominated by the CP, but this time their members made up the bulk of the audience.

The manual unions' presence was still quite impressive, but wide representation which marked the previous conference was not there.

The speeches were certainly militant enough. Peter Kavanagh of the TGWU building section set the tone by calling for a general strike if a single worker was fined or jailed under the Act and delegate after delegate echoed his words.

But it is no good pretending to ourselves that the movement will leap into action at the first hint of the law being used to smash industrial action. Other laws are being used here and now for precisely that purpose, from Laurence Scott's to Heathrow Airport. The truth is that the movement has not responded to these attacks with mass action.

In the end, the Liaison Committee half admitted that their talk was hot air. The declaration of the conference called for nothing more ferocious than to ask the TUC to organise lobbies of Parliament and two-hour protest stoppages if the Bill passes into law.

Militants can do rather more than that, even in the present state of the movement. The fact that the TUC is making it a big issue means that it will be possible to carry the arguments for rank and file solidarity to the best organised sections of the class.

The effects of those arguments will not be immediate. But if the case for action is driven home firmly, then it can pay big dividends. Despite the downturn, there are still groups of workers who do have strength and confidence. The idea that the imprisonment of strikers, whatever their union and whatever the dispute, is an injury to the whole movement and requires immediate action, must be firmly lodged amongst the best-organised.

The best way to make sure those arguments stick is to make sure that the disputes taking place today are won. The fact that the Tilbury dockers can defy the law today and get away with it is the best possible lesson. The more that we can win today on the little issues, the easier it will be tomorrow when the Tories up the stakes.

The last few weeks have shown that we cannot rely on the TUC to do anything more than to lobby, retreat and wait for the next government. It is clear that the Liaison

## Creaking into gear against Tebbit

**'This new Bill is the most serious threat to the movement since the Industrial Relations Act.'**

**That is the view of the TUC General Council on the Tebbit Bill. They are right. As Colin Sparks explains the Bill must be taken seriously and it must be fought right down the line.**

As we go to press a special conference of Trade Union executives is meeting. All the signs are that they will adopt the General Council's proposals for opposing Tebbit.

They propose a massive campaign of publicity to educate trade union activists. They want to make sure that no union accepts government funds for ballots. They call for defence of the closed shop.

They also propose that they will give assistance to any union that finds itself hauled up before the courts.

All of this is to the good. The TUC have started this time by taking a firmer stand on Tebbit than their initial response to the Industrial Relations Act a decade ago. But there are snags.

The TUC says that it will give its solidarity if *they* 'are satisfied that assistance from the Movement is justified.' They go on to spell out in great detail just what they think would be satisfactory.

The TUC is not giving anyone a blank cheque to fight the law. They want to make very sure that it is they who decide when to act.

'The General Council would give support only if requested to do so by the affiliated union or unions concerned.' This means that the TUC is only going to support *official* disputes. Any group of workers taking unofficial action are not even going to get past first base.

But, even if the action is official, it will be the TUC which decides whether to support it. It will not be the union involved and it will certainly not be the workers themselves. If the TUC decides that the situation is best solved by calling off the action, they can make that a condition for their support.

In practice, these conditions are so strict that they mean the TUC will only ever consider supporting a handful of cases. Those are likely to be those in which: 'Unions continue to observe strictly the requirements of the TUC Disputes Principles and Procedures.'

These 'Principles' are an updated version of the 1979 TUC 'Concordat', which limited pickets, handed over control of disputes to officials and met the bosses half-way.

This list of qualifications means that, in practice, short of Len Murray being sent down for five years, the TUC are going to be very reluctant to back any fight against the law.

The overall effect of the TUC proposals will be to do half of the Tories' job for them. Faced with the threat of legal action, groups of workers will have to look to their official leaders for support. Those leaders will have to look to the TUC. Unofficial action will become very difficult indeed. The policing role of the bureaucracy will be stepped up simply as a consequence of the existence of the new law.

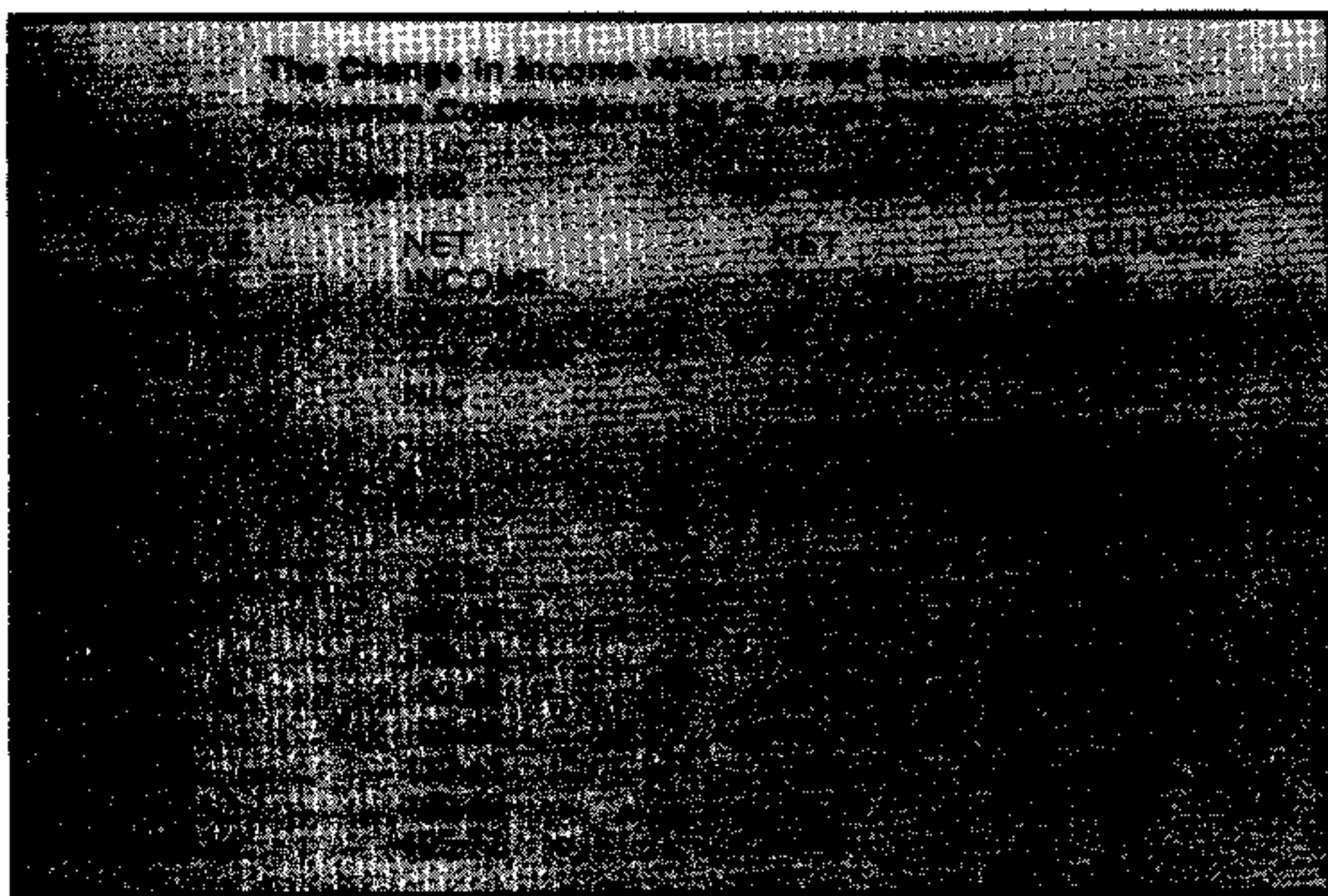
### Unofficial weakness

This would not matter too much if the rank and file of the movement was strong enough to force the TUC to back action started outside of their guidelines.

In 1972 the TUC was, if anything, even more reluctant to act. Then the strength of the movement in solidarity with the Pentonville dockers was so great that the TUC was forced into calling a one-day general strike. It did not take place, but only because the unofficial movement was so

Committee can do little more than talk left and trail behind the TUC. It is the task of militants to carry the real struggles of the movement, inch by inch, towards victory.

None of this will be easy. The movement is at a low ebb, and we need to work hard even to achieve that much. But there is no alternative. □



## The great tax trick

The Tories came to office claiming they would cut taxes. **Sammy Rankel** shows that so far this has not been the case.

Sir Geoffrey Howe's Budget on March 9th was welcomed by the Tories and their press because they thought it gave just enough in increased tax allowances to keep the punters happy. According to the way the story was told, the Chancellor didn't just increase personal tax allowances by the rate of inflation — 12 per cent — but he added another two per cent, increasing personal allowances by the generous amount of fourteen per cent — a real increase in take home pay.

But let's look at what has really happened. First, Geoffrey Howe failed to increase personal tax allowances at all in his budget in March 1981. There was already a twelve per cent deficit to make up which will not be recovered, so he wasn't doing anyone a favour this year. Second, and most important of all, in his mini-Budget last December he announced that National Insurance contributions were to be raised by one per cent from 1 April 1982 — an increase from 7.75 to 8.75 per cent of gross earnings. This NI increase was quietly shoved under the carpet when the tax allowances were mentioned in the Budget.

So from 1 April this year we are all paying higher amounts in National Insurance and the increase in personal tax allowances are neatly cancelled out, so that a large number of workers will be taking home less pay each

week or month by the end of April, when employers bring the changes into operation.

In fact it now seems clear that the Chancellor was forced to raise personal tax allowances by the two per cent more than the rate of inflation because if he hadn't, the National Insurance increase would have bitten deeper into take-home pay and been more noticeable.

The new burden of higher National Insurance payments is just the latest instalment in a series of broken promises from Thatcher on taxation. When the Tories came to power in May 1979, one of their main slogans was that they were going to cut taxes and relieve people from the burden of central government claw-backs from pay packets — to produce an incentive based economy. Although they cut the basic rate of tax in Howe's first budget they also raised VAT to the staggering rate of 15 per cent which cancelled out the benefit. In fact workers have been paying more in direct tax, indirect tax and National Insurance together in each year of the Thatcher government than in the last year of Callaghan's reign.

Taking all taxes together, plus rates, in the last year of the Labour government single workers on average earnings lost 47 per cent of their gross pay to government. Under Thatcher, a single worker on average earnings lost 49.6 per cent of pay last year and, after this Budget, will lose 50 per cent to government this year. But don't despair, for bosses on very much higher gross pay the Tory tax changes have given them much greater take-home, so at least some people have benefited from this government. □

## Treated like animals

As Whitelaw gives more power to the police and the crisis of overcrowded prisons grows, **Bridget Parsons** describes her experiences inside the notorious Risley Remand Centre.

'No bail! Another seven days at the Risley Hotel.' 'Grisley Risley'. 'Five minutes in Court — five years in prison'. The police cell was covered with such graffiti. I didn't know then that I'd soon come to understand the depth of feeling which lay behind these bare words, scratched with nails, bits of wood, blood — anything you could use to leave your mark on those grim walls. For I had just been arrested in the 'Handsworth riots' and for the next six weeks was to be brought back weekly from Risley only to be refused bail and sent back for another seven days.

A lot has been written about Risley and the prison service over the past few weeks, much of which misses the point. Two things immediately struck me when I found myself in prison. Firstly that the majority of women inside are not criminals. They are working class women who are the victims rather than the criminals of our society. And secondly that the degrading and inhuman treatment are not the unfortunate result of overcrowding and short staffing. They are a deliberate and integral part of a system which is based on fear and punishment. The conditions in Risley Remand Centre are calculated to 'knock prisoners into shape'. To make sure that they get the message about how prisons work. To institutionalise, criminalise and control them so that when they get to prison they're less likely to create any trouble.

On arrival at Risley I was taken before a senior officer. 'No wonder the country's in the state it is with people like you teaching our children', she said. 'You won't like the cell I'm putting you in. It's all we've got. I don't know how long you'll be there.' I found that I was being punished before I'd had a chance to do anything — because I was put on what I later discovered was the punishment landing. The cell had no glass in the window — only wire — so that it was freezing at night. There was a piece of foam on the floor, a pot and a mug of water. Nothing else. I was in there for five days.



That day I didn't see any other prisoners. When I asked to use the toilet I was told 'there's no toileting tonight'. But in the morning when I was let out to 'slop out' I was horrified by what I saw. Women who had 'cut up'. Not just slashed their wrists but their arms, legs, stomachs and faces. Highly disturbed women whose only treatment was to be locked in solitary for hours on end. Aggressive, angry women who were rebelling against being treated like animals. Pathetic young girls (some only fifteen) who were bewildered by what was happening to them. Women struggling to maintain their dignity against all the odds.

I remember one woman who had had a miscarriage whilst in custody and was also suffering drug withdrawal, with no medical help or treatment. She had been in a strip cell for two weeks. That is, locked up 24 hours a day, in a cell with no window, no mattress except at night, sitting on a concrete floor wearing a pair of rough shorts and a tunic top. A cardboard plate of food shoved on the floor three times a day with a strip of cardboard to use as a fork. When they put her in the cell opposite me her cries were pitiful. Cries for help, to talk to someone, to be let out. One day her cries were answered. I heard the officers run into her cell, a struggle and then her cries of 'give me my clothes back. Don't leave me like this... You bastards'. Then she was left for hours in a totally empty cell, with no clothes.

One morning I was taken from my cell to do a job. I found myself in one of these strip cells, which I was to clean. It was filthy and smelly. Used sanitary towels lay around. The pot had spilt over the floor. There was nothing but an old blanket which the person had been lying on. It was a place I'd be ashamed to keep a dog. When I asked who went in there I was told 'only unstable people'. As if that justified it. But I soon found out that anyone who showed the slightest sign of rebelling against the Risley regime would get a dose of the strips. If they weren't unstable when they went in the chances are they were when they came out.

### Cell nightmares

At night the cells were locked from 6 until 8 the next morning. The night staff were not authorised to open up under any circumstances. You'd hear conversations like 'Please can I come out. My mattress is soaking wet and it's covered in blood'. 'Then turn it over'. 'I have done'. 'Then you'll have to sleep on it'. 'I've got diarrhoea. My pot's overflowing'. 'You'll just have to hang on till morning.' 'But it's on the floor.' 'I'll see if I can shove some toilet paper under the door. Will that help?'

After three weeks at Risley I was classified as troublesome and was put on rule 43, in the interests of good order and discipline. This meant I was locked in solitary for 23 hours a day, seeing and talking to no-one except prison staff. And this was before I had been brought to trial - which raises the whole question of whether one can have a fair trial after being held in such appalling conditions.

It was never very clear why I was put on rule 43. I think I reacted much as anyone would to the disgusting way that women

were treated at Risley. And, being more articulate than many of the others there, I suppose that this was seen as a threat to prison order. You weren't supposed to complain about what was happening to you and to others. You are supposed to suddenly switch from being a relatively free person to being the model prisoner - and if you didn't you got the treatment designed to knock any resistance out of you and to stop you communicating with other prisoners.

### Fighting back

The heartening thing is that it doesn't work. Women may decide that as long as they're inside they had better accept the situation quietly. And by and large they may not be the sort of people who will write about what society is doing to them in its penal institutions. They may not have much of a voice, and they may fight back in only a very disorganised way. But fight back they do. Not through the pages of the middle class press, but by refusing to accept the label of criminal. Because they know that they shouldn't be in places like Risley and Styal and Drake Hall. Ninety-five per cent are working class women who cannot live decent lives without shoplifting, or cheque fraud or prostitution. Many are single parent families, struggling to bring up children on Social Security. And when they find that they can't afford the electric or the gas, when they can't afford clothes for the kids or food for the weekend, they strike back to

defend themselves and their families. It may not be a very constructive way; it does nothing to change the injustice in our society. They may end up the losers, going to prison for a few pounds, an unpaid fine, a joint of beef. The real criminals - the multi-nationals, the tax fiddlers, the government, the arms dealers, which create the conditions which make it impossible for ordinary people to live - go free.

When I came out of prison the sickening hypocrisy of our society was highlighted for me on one event. Lady Di was pregnant. The papers were full of it. The care that must be shown for a pregnant woman, playing on our natural feelings of protection towards someone who is carrying a child. And at the same time young girls have miscarriages in filthy police cells, pregnant women are forced to scrub floors and many end up losing their baby, mothers are callously separated from their children for the crime of shoplifting to provide for them.

It's not enough to talk about improving conditions in prison by building new ones or by shortening sentences. What goes on in Risley will continue as long as we have a society which is based on laws which defend the privilege of one group of people by criminalising another - be they working class, black or Irish. The prison system merely reflects that injustice. And the conditions in Risley are necessary to make it work. The whole system runs on fear - fear of loss of remission, loss of privilege, of punishment. Without that fear our prisons would be unmanageable. □



# Dickens: more than a sentimentalist

Most people know something about the Victorian writer, Charles Dickens (1818-1870), from the serialised adaptations that crop up regularly on television. Gareth Jenkins argues that the novels are worth reading too.

Television adaptations tend to stress the picturesque and sentimental side of Dickens. Dickens may have been a critic of particular social abuses, such as the workhouse in *Oliver Twist*, but he also believed that the ills of the world could be cured through a change of heart. Skinflint employers, like Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, only have to have their feelings roused by the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and To Come, and they become models of benevolence.

It's not always the case that Dickens was very radical, either. Despite the statement made a year before his death that: 'My faith in the people governing is infinitesimal; my faith in the People governed, is, on the whole, illimitable', Dickens had, when it came to the crunch, little faith in the People as soon as they took matters into their own hands.

At the time of the Indian Mutiny in 1857 and later after the rising in Jamaica (1865) he made no bones about his support for the people governing and their bloody and cruel suppression of these movements. Nearer home, his depiction of the French Revolution of 1789 in *A Tale of Two Cities* turned the poor of Paris into a senseless, blood-crazed mob.

## 'Sullen socialism'

And in *Hard Times* (1854), despite a brilliant attack on the educational and industrial philosophy of Victorian factory owners, which led one contemporary critic to accuse the book of 'sullen socialism', Dickens viciously libels the Trade Union movement in terms only too familiar to us. Trade unions he sees as manipulated by extremists who do not represent the members' feelings; and they victimise honest workmen who refuse to join on grounds of conscience.

The extraordinary thing about this libel is that Dickens actually knew it was false. His own reports on the great cotton strike at Preston (on which he based his description of Coketown in the novel) indicate that he was as one critic has put it, 'greatly impressed by the quiet and orderly way in which the strike had been conducted.'

The reason for going against the evidence of his own eyes has to do with Dickens' need to extol the virtues of class-collaboration. It

would never do to suggest that only one side (the employing) side was wrong; otherwise there would be no point in co-operation between the classes.

Is Dickens worth reading? The answer is a qualified yes. Dickens' philosophy, as outlined above, leaves a lot to be desired; and certainly, his sentimental portraits of women and children make modern readers cringe in embarrassment. But there is another side to Dickens, and that is in his rendering of the experience and effect of modern, urban life, and his attacks on middle-class hypocrisy, greed and snobbery.

Dickens is the first English novelist whose imagination was gripped by what it was like in the new, huge, chaotic and still expanding metropolis that was early Victorian London.

What struck Dickens (as it did many other observers) was the anonymity of life in the city. It reduced individuals to dehumanised fragments, mere objects and products of their environment. But the city itself also

appeared to have acquired a grotesque life of its own.

It is this that Dickens captures in memorable phrases and descriptions. Frequently, the blank windows of houses are compared to staring eyes. A lawyer who makes his living out of other people's misfortunes is likened to a vampire, so lacking in humanity that he takes his gloves off as if unpeeling his skin. A philanthropic lady is so determined in her unwanted attentions to the poor that she is always knocking things over, even at a distance—she is a relentless force, rather than a person. An ageing dandy is so tightly strapped into his clothes that even his eyeballs appear creased with the strain.

These examples, grotesque and comic, come from *Bleak House* (1853). In it, Dickens presents the individual worlds of all these characters, from the highest to the lowest, all unknown to each other. Gradually, he shows how they are related. The upper classes may ignore the festering social conditions in their midst, but the disease bred by those conditions is no respecter of persons or place.

The interconnectedness is summed up by the image Dickens chooses of the Court of Chancery (which dealt with questions of inheritance). Its pomp and ceremony turn out to be an immense cancer, draining the





life and energy of society. People are born and die into legal cases stretching from generation to generation, from which there is no escape.

And like the fog described in the opening pages of the book, the High Court, reaching out to influence every part of the land, prevents anyone from seeing anything other than tiny, disconnected and mysterious fragments of the truth.

Brilliant though the images are, Dickens too is subject to a certain fogginess. The mysteriousness of the process controlling individual lives also effects his understanding. He knows that the Court of Chancery can't be fought in its own terms (one of the characters dies in the attempt), but beyond that he tends to give up and suggest the private cop-out through marriage for his central characters.

Later novels reflect the same mixture. *Little Dorrit* (1857) uses the image of the prison to make much the same point Dickens made in *Bleak House*. This time the institution he attacks is government bureaucracy, the Circumlocution Office (or How Not To Do It), run by the aristocratic Tite Barnacle family. But prisons here are created as much in the mind as in the outside world.

### Financial dependence

In *Great Expectations* (1861), Dickens attempts to undermine not so much an institution, as a key ideological concept: that of the gentleman. Pip's expectations, which turn him into a snob despising his origins, prove to be founded on the money of a convicted and transported criminal he had unwillingly helped as a child.

For once, Dickens wrote an unhappy ending. He wished to stress that Pip's move up the social ladder inevitably destroys him emotionally. He is unable to marry the girl he hankers after, who has been similarly brought up and similarly dehumanised by wealth. But under pressure from friends Dickens relented and rewrote the ending to suggest their future union.

This bowing to pressure brings us to our final point. Dickens published his novels in monthly parts (spread out over a year and a half) or in serial form in magazines. This meant his novels were cheaper and more accessible. Dickens became phenomenally popular and used this to say—particularly in his later novels—what he wanted to about society. But his popularity also became a liability—his financial dependence on his choice of publication method made him a prisoner of his largely middle-class audience's expectations.

When, on the one occasion, he did discover the industrial working class, in *Hard Times*, the tragedy is that he turned his back on its power to reshape society and abolish the alienation and confusion that Dickens sensed. That is hardly surprising, given his lower middle-class origins and prejudices and his position as 'popular' novelist. But when I read of a legal case just ended that had been going on for a hundred years, I know that Dickens' sense of alienation, and the images he used, were no exaggeration. Writing as 'a special correspondent for posterity' he is still relevant. □

# Walk right back

The end of March saw a mass trespass in the Pennines. Landowners have always preferred grouse to people. They go to great lengths to make sure the great unwashed are kept off the property of the rich. Working people have fought them long and hard for the pleasure of walking freely over beautiful countryside. Colin Knowles, of the socialist walking and climbing club *Red Rope*, tells of some of the past struggles and looks forward to the battles that will take place in the near future.

A walk on the Kinder Plateau in Derbyshire would have been impossible fifty years ago. It belonged to the estates of the Duke of Devonshire. He had decreed 'No Access' on his grouse-moor, and used game-keepers to enforce his ruling. Fifty years ago, workers were met with abuse and violence, and turned away.

This was the situation between the wars in the beautiful Peak District. The shorter working week, and the large numbers of unemployed, stimulated the search for leisure opportunities. The situation for ramblers from the large conurbations around the Peak became intolerable. There was no good reason why they should not walk the hills. Five bills were put before the House of Commons demanding free access. All five were knocked back. Some new method of struggle would have to emerge before the movement could make any progress.

The deadlock was broken by some members of the Lancashire District of the Workers Sports Federation, a body organised by the Young Communist League. On a ramble one day they were stopped by game-keepers on Bleaklow. Bernard Rothman recalls the ramblers' fury; out of the discussion that followed, the idea of the 'Mass Trespas' was first mooted.

The first Mass Trespas was arranged for 24th April 1932. The plan was to walk from Hayfield up onto the Kinder Plateau where the Manchester contingent would be met by a contingent from Sheffield who had walked from Edale. The idea of the Mass Trespas excited a lot of press comment—and hostility from some sections in the official Ramblers Federation. The police took out an injunction to prevent Bernard Rothman from addressing a meeting in Hayfield, and the Duke of Devonshire engaged a large posse of gamekeepers, variously estimated as being between eighteen and fifty.

The ramblers gave the police the slip, as they set out from Hayfield without holding a



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meeting. The five hundred or more present stopped for a brief meeting in a disused quarry, where Bernard adjured them to be orderly and non-violent. They passed up Williams Clough in such tight order that the police could not stop them, and on approaching the plateau spread out. Thus the gamekeepers could not prevent trespass for they could only attack a limited section of the front.

At the top they combined forces with the Sheffield contingent, and returned to Hayfield, where they met with a police roadblock. As a result six ramblers, including Bernard, were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly and breach of the peace. They were brought for jury trial to Derby where a jury packed with landowners and retired military men decided their fate. Five were found guilty and sentenced to a total of seventeen months in prison. The outrageous result of the trial inflamed public opinion.

## Step forward

This success stimulated the Sheffield Ramblers Federation to organise a Mass Trespass on Abbey Brook. This was a step forward, as the previous trespass had been organised solely by the Workers Sports Federation. On this occasion, 200 ramblers from Sheffield set off to Abbey Brook, where they were met by a hundred gamekeepers armed with pick handles, who set about them vigorously. Having beaten off the first attack, and concluding that the balance of forces was against them, the ramblers proclaimed their right of access by sitting down and having lunch.

A mass movement was on the move. That year 10,000 people attended the annual Winnats Pass demonstration, where Mass Trespassers were vocal in their demands for militant action. Support for the movement grew throughout the mid-thirties, but unfortunately was shunted into the by-ways of parliamentary legislation. So powerful were the forces at work in and around parliament that the 1938 Creech Jones Access Bill was amended to the point where it became a landowners' protection act. The mass movement of the thirties was disembowelled by the chicanery of leading politicians.

During the war, a series of government-appointed committees examined the 'problem' and laid the ground for the post-war Labour Government. In 1949 the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act was put on the statute book. It failed to grant free access. The measures were complicated. Basically it said that if the public had their 'sufferance' access denied, then the Local Authority should attempt to negotiate an access agreement, and if that failed use the powers of the Act to enforce access.

The ruling class, whilst unwilling to make any substantial concessions, feared the socially explosive effects of access struggles. The Act left them with their privileges untouched, while this unhappy botch-up had a bad effect on the ramblers movement. Ramblers' attention was drawn to lobbying their local authority to try and secure access agreements. The role of the movement was

to police access areas and keep open paths. The aim of free access was shelved until the indefinite future.

The effectiveness of the Act can be gauged in the following manner: a third of the land area of England, Wales and Scotland is open country. By 1975, access had been secured, under the act, to a miserable 158 square miles of this open country. 76 squares miles of this are in the Peak District, set aside as a special case under the act. That covers only a third of the open country in the Peak National Park. Access to Kinder Scout was restricted until 1958. Of the 100,000 miles of footpaths in England and Wales, it is estimated that 20% are obstructed, despite heroic efforts by local ramblers groups, who in their efforts to keep them open often have to face confrontations of the most unpleasant kind.

The Kinder Scout Mass Trespass celebrates its Fiftieth Anniversary on April 24th. There is to be a big celebration in Hayfield that day. Starting from the original quarry, some of the original mass trespassers will lead the walk up to the Kinder Plateau, whilst a delegation, organised from Sheffield, will cross the moor from Edale, as before. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 10,000 people will attend, many staying on in the evening for meetings and open-air concerts. On the following day, amongst the attractions is a mass walk to reestablish the right of way on a blocked footpath.

## Clear path needed

Red Rope is involved in helping to organise and promote the event. We hope that the commemorative weekend could signal the rebirth of a mass movement to gain free access. We have an aim, but we do not yet have strategy or tactics.

What's needed is discussion: we've started the ball rolling by organising a meeting in Hayfield on the evening of the 24th, entitled 'Socialism and Outdoor Life'. I haven't had the space here to go into the other things that we're concerned about. The Tories have a new Countryside Act on the slipway which is not favourable to ramblers; they are also threatening to privatise the Ordnance Survey, which would lead to the loss of many valuable maps. Nor have I talked about the role of the military in the countryside, or the hazards of nuclear power. The whole debate is wide open, let's walk in and take it up.

For more information about the Commemorative weekend, contact Julian Batsleer, 52 Ogard Road, Rye Park, Hoddesdon, Herts. (Hoddesdon 41705) or Bernard Rothman, 86 Crofton Ave, Timperley, Cheshire (061-973 2355).

Howard Hill made this article possible by writing his book, and I think all socialists are in his debt. It's called **Freedom to Roam**, published by Moorland Press at £5.95.

**Red Rope**, formed two years ago, is a membership organisation with 240 members nationally. Our main function is to organise cheap (anti-sexist and anti-elitist) weekends in the hills, so socialists can go walking and climbing together. Contact Address, Red Rope, PO Box 82, London, E2.



# Composite error

**Socialism With a Human Face**

Michael Meacher

George Allen & Unwin £15

Until recently the Labour Left had few, if any, theoretical pretensions. One section of it was dominated by a sterile sub-Stalinism, another by a peculiar English literary radical tradition stretching from Bunyan to Orwell; neither bothered much with the scientific analysis of capitalism. Not so today. Since the 1968 generation decamped into the wards and constituencies there has been both demand for theory and a ready source of supply. Hence *New Socialist* magazine, hence Stuart Holland, hence Geoff Hodgson and so on.

However the theoreticians of left reformism have a problem, they lack any independent theoretical starting point. Insofar as they require a serious theoretical critique of capitalism there is only one place they can find it, namely, in Marxism. But they are not Marxists and consequently their theoretical productions exhibit constant oscillations in and out of Marxism, from Marxism to bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideological positions.

Michael Meacher is an extreme example of this. Taken as a whole his thought stands at a considerable remove from revolutionary socialism but he has no qualms about borrowing liberally from the Marxist

conceptual arsenal. In *Socialism With a Human Face* you will find 'class' and 'class-conflict', 'exploitation', 'alienation', 'the domination of labour by capital' and even 'the permanent arms economy' and 'state capitalism'. At the same time these concepts are blunted, deprived of the precise and sharply critical meaning they have in Marxism in favour of looser, more populist, usage which can be fitted into a reformist perspective. Thus in chapter one Meacher talks in near-Marxist terms of the British 'ruling class' but almost immediately 'the ruling class' becomes 'the power elite', and finally 'the Establishment'.

In similar vein Meacher will take a Marxist idea, extract it from its Marxist framework and simply yoke it together with a 'popular' piece of bourgeois ideology. The result is a maze of contradictions and inconsistencies. Consider this tangle of 'class' and 'nation':

'The British Establishment... acts exclusively in its own interest... but it does so with skill and sophistication behind a smokescreen of soothing assurances that its sole concern is 'the national interest'. Hence a key part of the role of a socialist ideology is 'to expose this dichotomy between the Establishment's self-interest and the wider national interest of the general community.' (p.241)



**Michael Meacher: does his left hand know what his right hand is writing?**

With the notion of the 'wider national interest of the general community' Meacher colludes in the very 'smokescreen' he's supposedly trying to dispel. Nor is this an isolated slip. From beginning to end this book is studded with references to 'the national interest' and one of its central themes is the old populist idea of the unpatriotic 'Establishment' selling out Britain's true interests.

'A third dimension of this ideological cleavage between the interests of the ruling Establishment and those of the mass of the people lies in the repeated implicit preference of the former for accommodating to foreign international pressures rather than asserting the primacy of what is nationally advantageous to the British people.' (p.34)

And this from someone who goes on, to *complain* that the Labour Party 'colludes in transmitting... orthodox definitions of political matters'. 'Ignoring the fact that the roots of Labour's support lies in its identification as the party of the working class, its spokesmen regularly disown all "sectional" class-based, "divisive" politics and preen themselves as the firmest upholders of the national interest' (p.244) Perhaps Meacher's left hand doesn't know what his right hand is writing or maybe he hopes we just won't notice. In fact examples of such contradictions could be multiplied at will.

The most serious of them is that between Meacher's conception of socialism and the means he proposes for getting there. The former is an exceptionally idealistic and utopian vision of decentralised democratic market Socialism based on 'sharing, co-operation and altruism' (p.95) in which classes will disappear but differentials will continue and profitability will remain desirable so long as it doesn't take over. The latter is the familiar mix of the

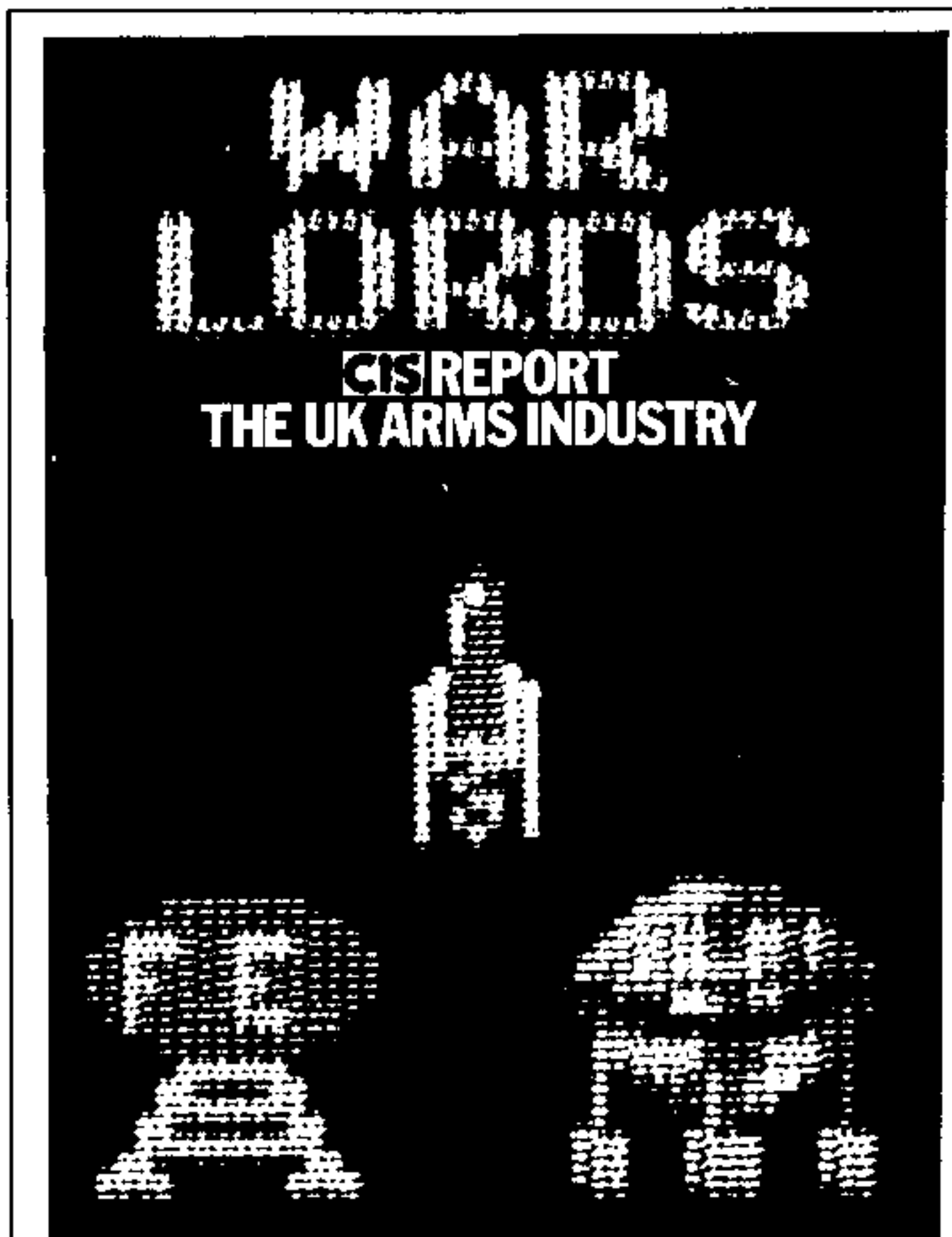
Alternative Economic Strategy - growth, import controls, increased nationalisation, planning agreements, workers participation etc. (with special emphasis on import controls and a dash of ecology).

Between the two there are parallels but no connecting mechanism. Indeed the AES pulls in the opposite direction for at bottom it is a programme for the revival of British capitalism. 'The essence of any acceptable economic strategy for Britain, socialist or otherwise must be escape from stagnation and long term decline' (p.167). Consequently in the extremely unlikely event that the AES was successful the result would not be socialism, even of the Meacher variety, but the strengthening of British capital and the strengthening of the British state.

The truth is that Meacher wants to have his cake and eat it, to support British capitalism against its competitors in 'the national interest' and to be a socialist. On paper these two goals can coexist, at least they can both be contained within the covers of the same book. In life however they are utterly incompatible, as would rapidly be demonstrated should Michael Meacher and his party find themselves in office. The first contact with real power and responsibility would necessitate a choice between the socialism and the nationalism and the very acquisition of power would guarantee that the latter was chosen.

To conclude: *Socialism With a Human Face* is billed as 'the first articulate statement of socialist ideology since Crosland'. In reality it's very old reformist hat. Marx said of Proudhon 'he wants to be the synthesis, he is a composite error'. Of Meacher, to preserve a sense of proportion, it would have to be said that he's a second hand composite error.

John Molyneux.



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## Colourful claims for the Sandinistas

**Nicaragua: The Sandinist Revolution**  
*Hewi Weber*  
 Verso £2.95

This book is a good example of the sort of muddle that the 'deformed workers' state' analysis gets you into, but it does very little to provide the reader with an understanding of the Nicaraguan situation. In particular, it tells you very little about the recent development of the revolution.

The first three chapters of the book are historical and deal with the background of Nicaraguan history. They cover economic development and the crisis of the later years. They give a picture of the formation of the political opposition to the regime.

The treatment of the Somozist state and its control over the National Guard is particularly concise and clear.

The last chapters concentrate on the Sandinistas in power and their politics, the 'transition towards

socialism' of the revolution, and its prospects.

Weber's belief that Nicaragua is on the road to socialism within its national boundaries lead him to ignore its role and position within the world economy.

The transition is an act of will by both the masses and the Sandinista leaders. This will, aided by the 'correct democratic forms', safeguard the revolution from a 'bureaucratic degeneration'. From this position the defence of the Sandinista austerity programmes is the only logical conclusion.

In short, the book is full of colourful claims, such as 'the Sandinistas have draped Marxism in the cloth of Nationalism'. It also follows Regis Debray in arguing that a successful socialist revolution can take place in Third World countries by 'mobilising the nationalist sentiment of the masses as well as their ideals of liberty and equality'.

**Juan Sintierra**



## Like most drunks

**Continuous Excursions**  
*Marshall Coleman*  
 Pluto Press £3.95

This book takes up for me painful memories of parties in Habitat-land, where I've often had to beat a hasty retreat from the obligatory drunken hippy social/community worker slurping all over me and asking desperately 'Oh, why can't people be nice to each other?' I've a sneaking suspicion that the writer was one of those drunken slob.

Just like every party I go to all excited and hopeful, I began reading this book hoping it would make a serious attempt to analyse the valid

questions posed by the women's movement slogan of the early seventies, 'the personal is political'.

When faced with issues such as class, access to time, space, finance, language, hours at work, racism and sexism, Marshall Coleman is completely floored. He goes into rambling verbal excursions around these 'problems' instead of trying to analyse them. The book is certainly aptly named!

I felt very often that I was reading a badly researched naive A level sociology essay, riddled with meaningless terms such as the 'cult of intimacy' alongside homely truisms.

The basis of the book is the assumption that the women's movement has somehow achieved a degree of success at fusing the personal with the political, without discussing if this is so.

The book's definition of personal relationships as only being ones involving sex is very limiting. Overall

we are offered no positive solutions of how we would improve our personal life in a political dimension.

The book ends up like most drunks, rambling and on the floor - as for me I stopped going to those parties years ago and discovered sex, drugs and soul music instead.  
**Rosie Buzby**

## The future needs politics

**The Global 2000 Report to the President - Entering the Twenty First Century**  
*Penguin £7.95*

This book, all 800-plus pages of it, is a set of 'projections' of the year 2000. It contains projections for population, income, food, fisheries, forests, water, energy, and much else.

Its cover proclaims that it was 'commissioned by Carter, disregarded by Reagan'. The blurb on the back says, 'The struggle to sustain a decent life for human beings on our planet will be enormous - yet there is reason for hope'. This identifies rather neatly the intended audience; a 'concerned' middle class layer that is anti-Reagan, wants to sustain (rather than achieve) a 'decent life', and is desperate for a 'reason to hope'.

The inspiration for the book was cynical - Carter's wish in May 1977 to strengthen his support from this 'concerned' middle class by playing the 'ecology' card. The result is pseudo-scientific nonsense, part of a wider trend of 'futurological' projections substituting for political understanding.

Graphs, tables and equations abound. We are treated to this breathless description of a World

Bank Computer model: '... It contains over 200 econometrical equations. It is written in approximately 1,500 lines of FORTRAN and is run on the Bank's Burroughs 7700 computer.'

Despite this impressive technological assistance we learn that 'it is very likely that the same resources have been allocated (in the projections) to more than one sector', ie, it is admitted that the projections are inconsistent *even in their own terms*.

And what are those terms? 'This study projects foreseeable trends under the assumption that present policy trends continue without major changes ... (it) assumes that there will be no major disruptions of international trade as a result of war, disturbances of the international monetary system, or political disruption.'

In other words, this 'analysis' of the future of capitalism assumes away the very contradictions that capitalism produces. The projections are a mythworld built by bureaucratic administrators. By abolishing *ideally* the reality of capitalism they produce 'reason for hope'. Our 'reason for hope' is that we will *actually* abolish capitalism.

This is a profoundly useless book.  
**Derek Howl**

If you've seen *Reds* very likely you are going to want to find out more about John Reed, and are going to rush out and buy Robert A Rosenstone *Romantic Revolutionary* (Penguin £2.95). Do so, but be prepared to be just a bit disappointed. It's a very well researched book, which tells you a lot and certainly doesn't try and downplay Reed's revolutionary politics. But it is more interested in Reed 'the whole man', which we guess isn't quite the focus most socialists will want.

For those of you who haven't noticed yet, Penguin have re-issued John Reed's classic *Ten Days That Shook the World* (£1.95), his eyewitness account of the October revolution.

Three recent titles on Latin America. Audrey Bronstein *Triple Struggle: Latin American Peasant Women* (War on Want £3.00) is an important collection of interviews showing the triple exploitation of peasant women living in the Third World. It is more extensively re-

viewed in this month's *Women's Voice*.

Bernard Deidrich *Somoza and the Legacy of US Involvement in Central America* (Junction Books £6.95) is a journalistic account of the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua.

Penguin have republished, with a new introduction, Penny Lerroux *Cry of the People* (£2.95). This is a useful account of the Catholic church in Latin America for the general reader.

Indres Naidoo *Island in Chains* (Penguin £1.95) is the story of the author's ten years on Robben Island. Although a moving description of the terrible conditions he suffered, it lacks any overall political analysis of the problems facing the liberation movement.

Published in recent months is Anthony Brewer *Marxist Theories of Imperialism* (RKP, £6.95). This is a helpful and readable account of various analyses of imperialism, marred only by the author's willingness to accept fashionable refutations of some basic Marxist notions.



## Second wave: a punk mortem

A few years ago it looked like the days of punk were numbered. The explosion of talent from '70 onwards that swept in a new age of music, aggressive, anarchistic, exciting and fun, looked to be over. The beginning of the end seemed to have started with the break up of the Sex Pistols and later the degeneration of Sham 69. The music scene fell in on itself – a varied number of styles competed with each other but no new movement broke through to dominate. Two-tone, disco, soul-funk, new romantic, Oi, reggae. Popular music never seemed to be so varied and punk a thing of the past.

But now a second wave of punk is back. *Sounds* now challenges the *NME* as the top selling music paper. *Sounds* has made its name promoting Oi and Heavy Metal under the famous idiot Garry Bushell (music's Roger Rosewall). Oi is a nasty adaption of punk to suit some skins. It sounds similar to second wave punk except it's usually faster, more aggressive and macho and has developed BM associations. *NME* has reacted to *Sounds*' success by backing punk and the music from Joy Division spin-offs and imitators (the doom and gloom and angst brigade).

With bands such as Killing Joke, The Dead Kennedys, Anti-Nowhere League, Theatre of Hate, Charge and all the other out-pourings of Rough Trade and to be heard on the John Peel Show, punk is not withering away but very much back

both as its Oi offshoot and the more traditional form of Clash clones with 'political' lyrics.

The style of this music is similar to that of five or six years ago, fast hard beat, words shouted out usually incoherently, lead-singer tightly gripping the microphone and twisting his/her face round at an angle to spit out the words. People occasionally pogo. But like anything once new and exciting, if it remains unchanging it becomes staid and conservative. I don't mean that all new punk is now singing the praise of Thatcher, but it's no longer creative, expanding or innovating. The form has become a tradition. In the same way the '60s 'progressive' rock got stuck in a musical rut that ended up as the ritual static 'Heavy Metal' of the head-bangers.

Much of punk shouts out denunciations of dole queues, alienation and gloom. But it's now all so predictable, rather soulless, and often plain boring. Sometimes the old form can give a spark of excitement (The Dead Kennedys maybe?), but punk seems largely to be in a musical cul-de-sac. The fact that it's now making a come back means that, whereas the Sex Pistols getting to Number One or a gig by The Damned (the original ones) was part of a cultural revolt, it's now just another style. It's part of the downturn.

When punk first started there was a heated debate about the true nature of punk – was The Clash signing with CBS a sell-out or Jimmy Pursey a hype, would punk remain true to its principles etc? I well remember a moralistic piece of nonsense on the essence of 'true' punk by Julie Birchell and Tony Parsons (*The Boy Looked at Johnny*); punk was seen as an attitude to life, a set of anti-establishment morals etc. Punk was the music of revolt, but at the very instant of its creation was in danger of being incorporated, so the purists sought to keep the rebelliousness of punk by keeping it 'pure' and static.

Not all of the first punk movement saw things in this way. Johnny Rotten went on to create P.O.D., Malcolm McLaren transformed Adam and the Ants and now manages Bow Wow Wow. Things can never stay the same, they either move forward or backwards. In trying to remain 'true' it became conservative and created its own traditions and conventions. It's from this 'pure' punk that the second wave has developed.

Of course most of today's punks know very little of the arguments that went on in the Roxy in 1976, why should they? A 15 year old punk of today would then have been 9 years old. But it has made the style from which the second wave springs. In this punk the idea of fun seems to have been lost, political comment is less of a celebration of the oppressed and more and more a moaning about oppression. It often seems to be conservative music with well-intentioned words that you can't hear.

I don't intend to put a blanket put down of all punk as reactionary, but this time around it is not the music of working-class youth in revolt as Bushell for one claims (working class 'youth' are not all white and male). It is a rather dated style that seems to have out-lived its creative life.

Noel Halifax



## Writing about our lives

**The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition**  
Edited by H. Gustav Klaus  
Harvester Press £18.95

This collection of essays deals with socialist novels or novels about working-class life published in Britain between the 1840s and 1970s. Its aim is to remedy 'the way in which whole movements like Chartism have been elided from the map of English literary history' and in so doing it roots up a lot of useful, buried material.

For example, Engels's criticism of Margaret Harkness's novel *A City Girl* (1887) is well enough known but few will be aware of her attempts to respond to Engels's sug-

gestions in her next novel *Out of Work* (1888), described here in a thoughtful contribution by John Goode.

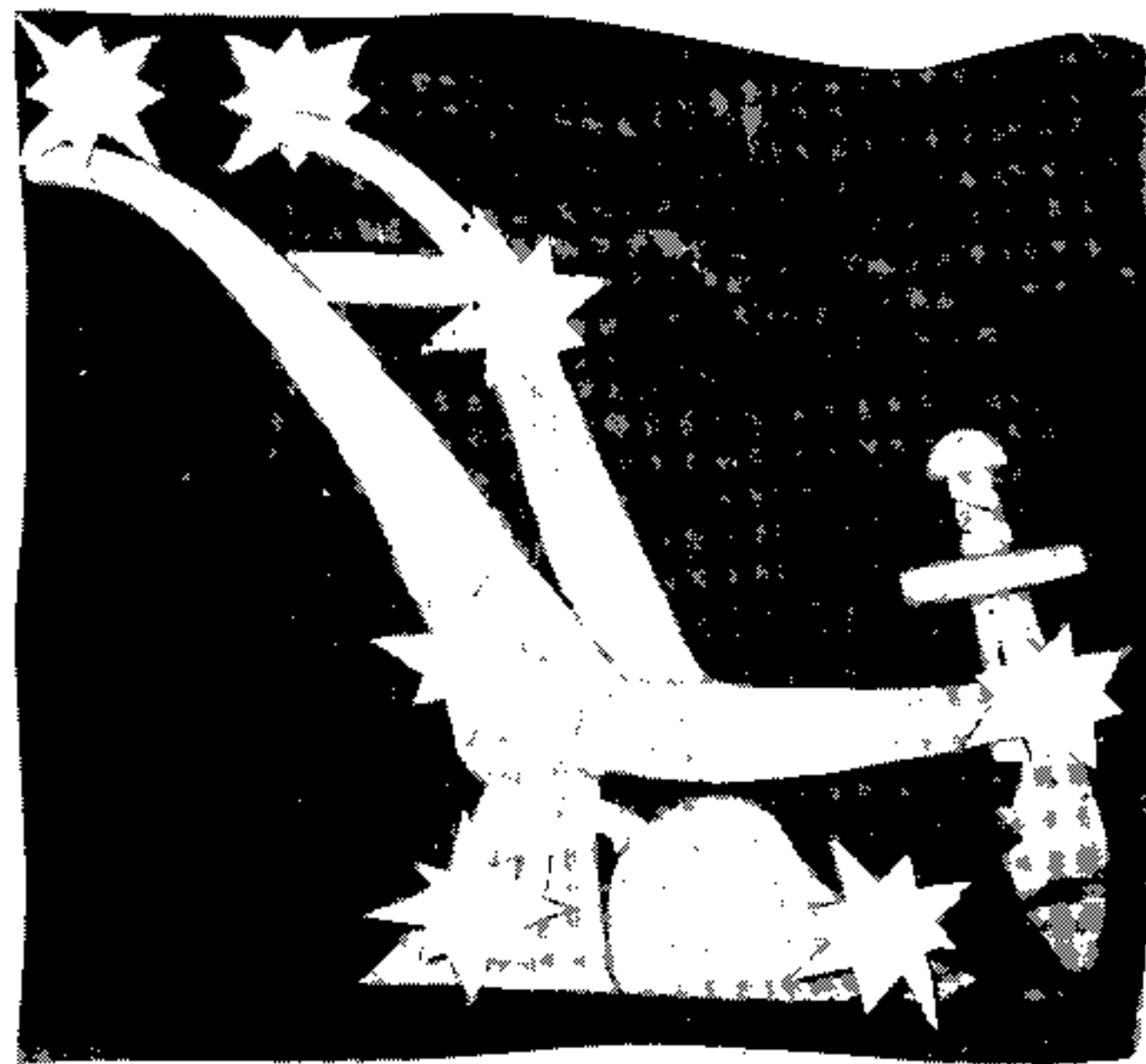
Other articles are less successful. Raymond Williams seems to me to write in an increasingly inscrutable and self-parodying way these days, though his piece here on the Welsh novel has some sharp moments. There's an article by Jack Mitchell on socialist fiction of 1914 which doesn't seem to be aware of developments in Marxist literary criticism since that date, while Kiernan Ryan writes some strangled rubbish about John Berger's *G*. Apparently, *G* 'shatters and finally freezes reality into a static mosaic configuration of discontinuous aperçus, isolated

tableaux and scattered, internally vibrating epiphanies, evacuating in the process all real historical sense of continuous human becoming.'

But most of the collection is better than that, and its call for a library of socialist classics is worth repeating. It's not just English literary history that has removed whole movements, it's English publishers too as any teacher trying to design even mildly radical courses and finding everything out of print knows only too well. Virago have shown there are plenty of readers for the lost classics of feminist fiction; it's time there was a socialist equivalent. This book reminds us there's plenty of material.

Paul O'Flinn

# EASTER 1916



On Monday, April 24, 1916, at a few minutes past noon, the centre of Dublin was taken over by anti-British forces. Standing on the steps of the General Post Office, a group of men and women listened while Padraic Pearse proclaimed the birth of an Irish Republic to a crowd of bemused onlookers.

In total, perhaps three or four thousand people were to be involved in the insurrection. Desperately short of arms and unable to spread beyond Dublin, it was crushed within six days by British troops who outnumbered them twenty to one. The suppression of the rising was bloody and brutal. About 1,300 people, including civilians, were murdered or injured by the British Army and an iron terror descended on Ireland. The leaders of the rising were court martialled and executed by firing squad.

It might seem that the 'Easter Rising' had failed, but within five years the survivors of those isolated rebels would be part of an organisation with members in practically every town in Ireland and mass popular support. The movement which seemed laughably small in 1916 would force the mighty British Empire to the negotiating table to sign a treaty.

The reverberation of those days still echoes. The Provisional IRA can, with justification, claim to be the direct descendants of the Republican wing of the 1916 rebels. The terms of the Treaty of 1921 remain too: it led directly to the partition of Ireland and the creation of a sectarian Orange statelet in the North of Ireland.

The immediate origins of the rising lay in 1914. Nationalist politics in Ireland were then dominated by constitutional parliamentarians. On the outbreak of the First World War they urged the Irish to join the British army and fight 'to defend small nations' against the Germans. They hoped that their Liberal friends in parliament would

reward them at the end of the war by home rule for their own small nation.

There was another, much smaller group, within nationalist circles who believed that the outbreak of war presented Ireland with an opportunity to rid itself of British domination. These people were the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Its leader was a teacher and poet called Padraic Pearse. He took his inspiration from the 1798 rebellion led by Wolfe Tone. His first reaction to the war was that it was: 'the greatest blood sacrifice given by man to good.' Yet the IRB decided almost from the outbreak of the war that an anti-British rising must take place.

Pearse and his supporters wanted a free Ireland, and they were prepared to fight and die for it. But for them a free Ireland was also one in which people would be free to own private property. In their Ireland there would be Irish bosses free to exploit Irish workers.

There was another wing to the movement present at Easter. It was called the Irish Citizens Army and it was a revolutionary socialist organisation. Its best-known figure was one of the finest Marxists and political agitators in working class history - James Connolly.

Connolly could not have been more different from Pearse. He had begun his political life in Edinburgh as a trade unionist and socialist militant. He had worked as an organiser for the Irish Socialist Republican Party, he played a leading role as a trade

union organiser in America, and then returned to Ireland to work with James Larkin in unionising the workers of Dublin and Belfast.

Two aspects of Connolly's politics stand out: his 'syndicalist' ideas and his views on national liberation.

Before 1913, Connolly believed that if workers took control of the factories, then the state would be powerless and would have to capitulate to the working class. This 'syndicalist' view was proved wrong in the Dublin lock-out of 1913. Connolly played a leading role in this struggle to gain union recognition which brought most of Dublin to a standstill. The unity of the bosses, the role of the government and the police, the activities of the church and the inactivity of British trade union leaders, all proved too much for the workers, who were starved back to work.

Connolly learned from this defeat that the struggle for workers' power meant a struggle against the state as well as against the bosses. As a direct result of this experience, he founded the Irish Citizens Army - the force he was to lead in 1916.

Connolly believed that the struggle for Irish freedom was intimately linked to the struggle for socialism. In this, his view was very close to that of Lenin. It was this idea which led him to play a key role in the Easter Rising.

In fact, the rising was not the signal for a mass movement throughout Ireland, and there was marked indifference amongst the workers of Dublin whom Connolly had led in mass struggle just three years before. The fact that Connolly found himself in this position, and that the socialist movement collapsed after his murder, can be explained by a key weakness in his politics. He never really understood the need for a revolutionary party which could lead the workers' movement not only in the upturns of the great strikes, but also in the years of downturn.

Connolly had not abandoned his socialism: just as his men were preparing to march on the Post Office, he told them to hang on to their guns even if the rising were to succeed, 'for they (the IRB) may stop at the minimum, for us only a socialist republic is acceptable.' During the Rising, he sent a detachment of men to raise the Starry Plough (the socialist republican flag) over the premises of one of the most savage employers of 1913 as a symbolic gesture of the meaning of the Rising. But that fine socialist tradition depended entirely on one man, and failed with his death.

Connolly, along with the other leaders of the rising, was shot. His case was particularly horrible because he had been wounded in the Rising. He was taken in an ambulance from the hospital to Kilmainham Jail on 12 May 1916. He was lifted from his stretcher, tied to a chair and carried in front of the firing squad. He died in that chair.

The rising had failed in its immediate objectives. It was disowned by the reformists in the Labour movement and welcomed by Lenin. Within a year, the savagery of British repression and talk of introducing conscription to Ireland led to the birth of mass resistance. The dead of Easter 1916 were about to be avenged.

**Pat Stack**