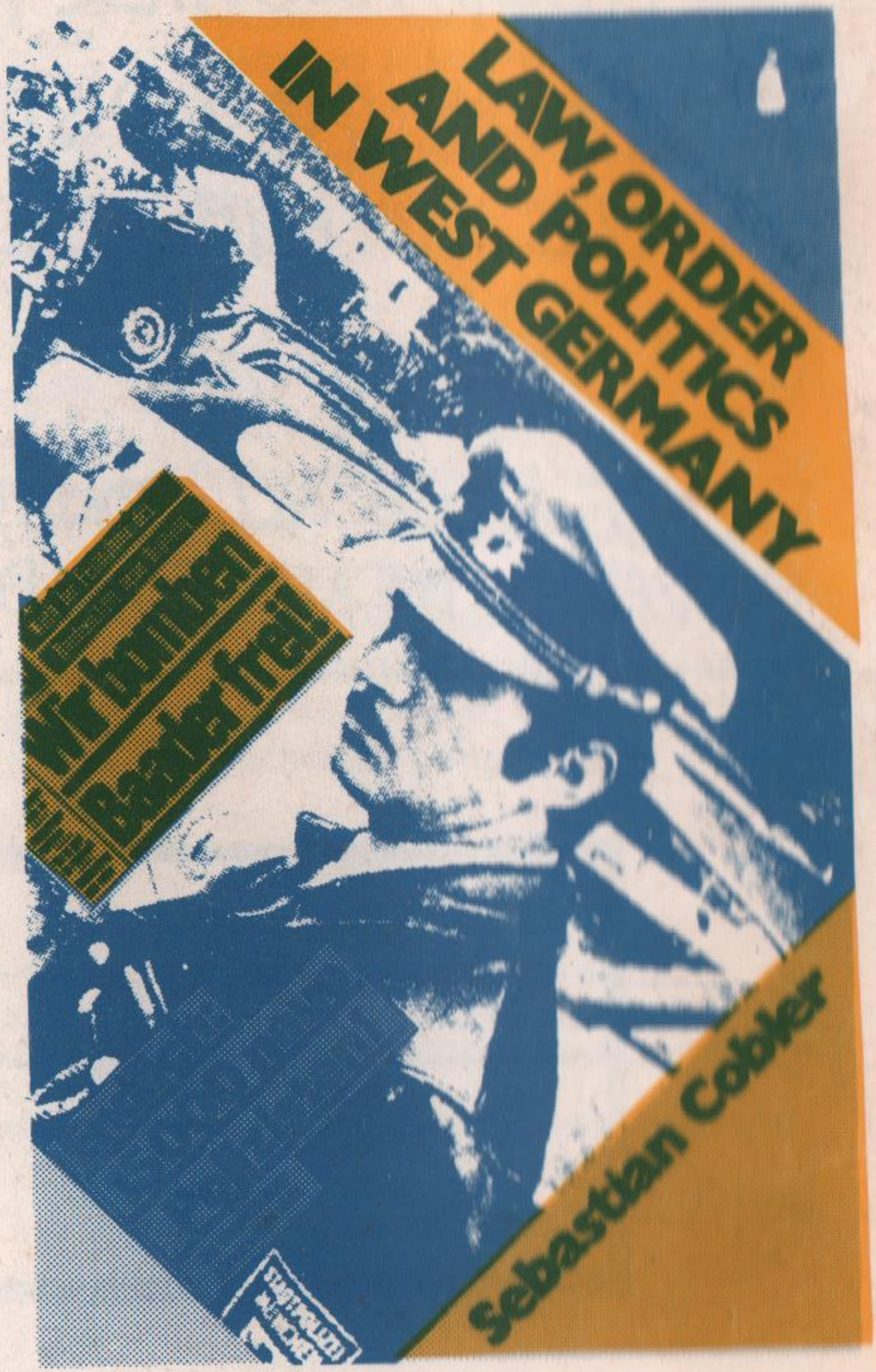


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 This democratic structure is one of the chief strengths of *The Leveller*. The extra subscription also gives us a secure financial basis and allows us to increase circulation and to make the magazine more effective.
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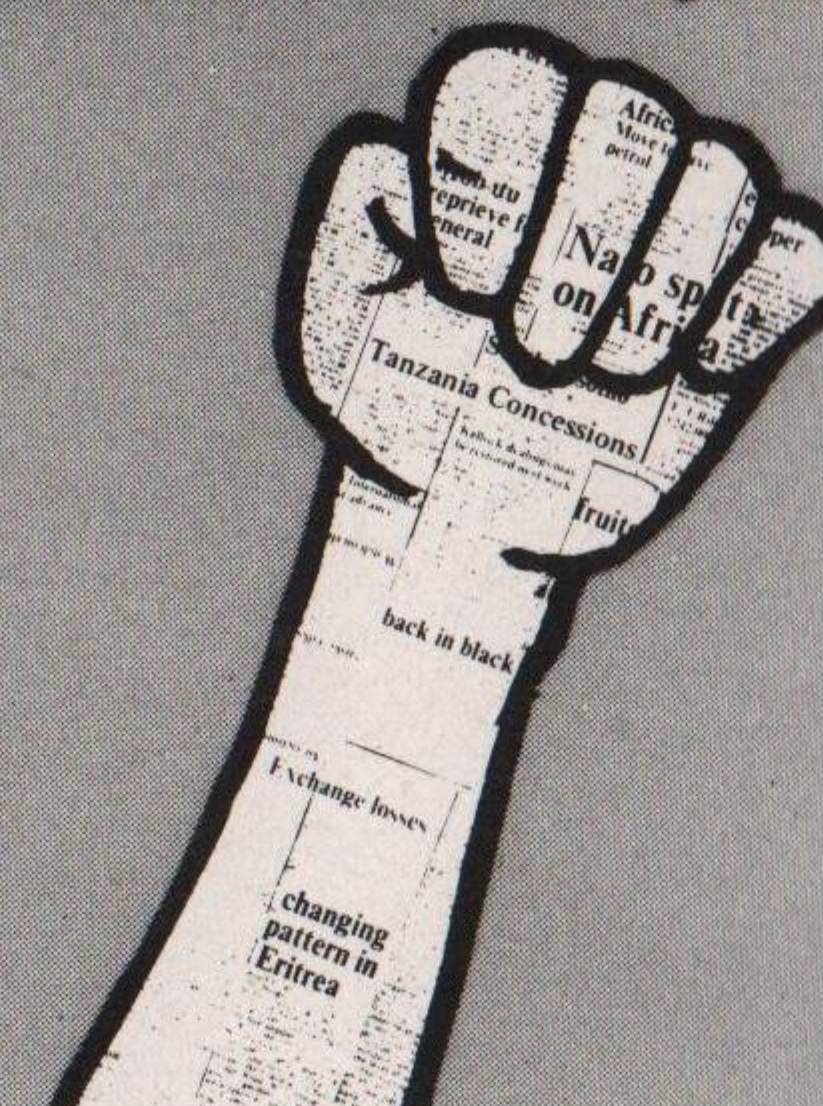
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ISSUE 18 AUG/SEP 1978

This issue has been produced collectively by *The Leveller* working committee and published by Leveller Magazine Ltd, a registered friendly society.

THIS ISSUE will have to last you two months. The *Leveller* Collective is taking a summer break in production. But we'll still be around. Keep in touch. Next issue out September 18.

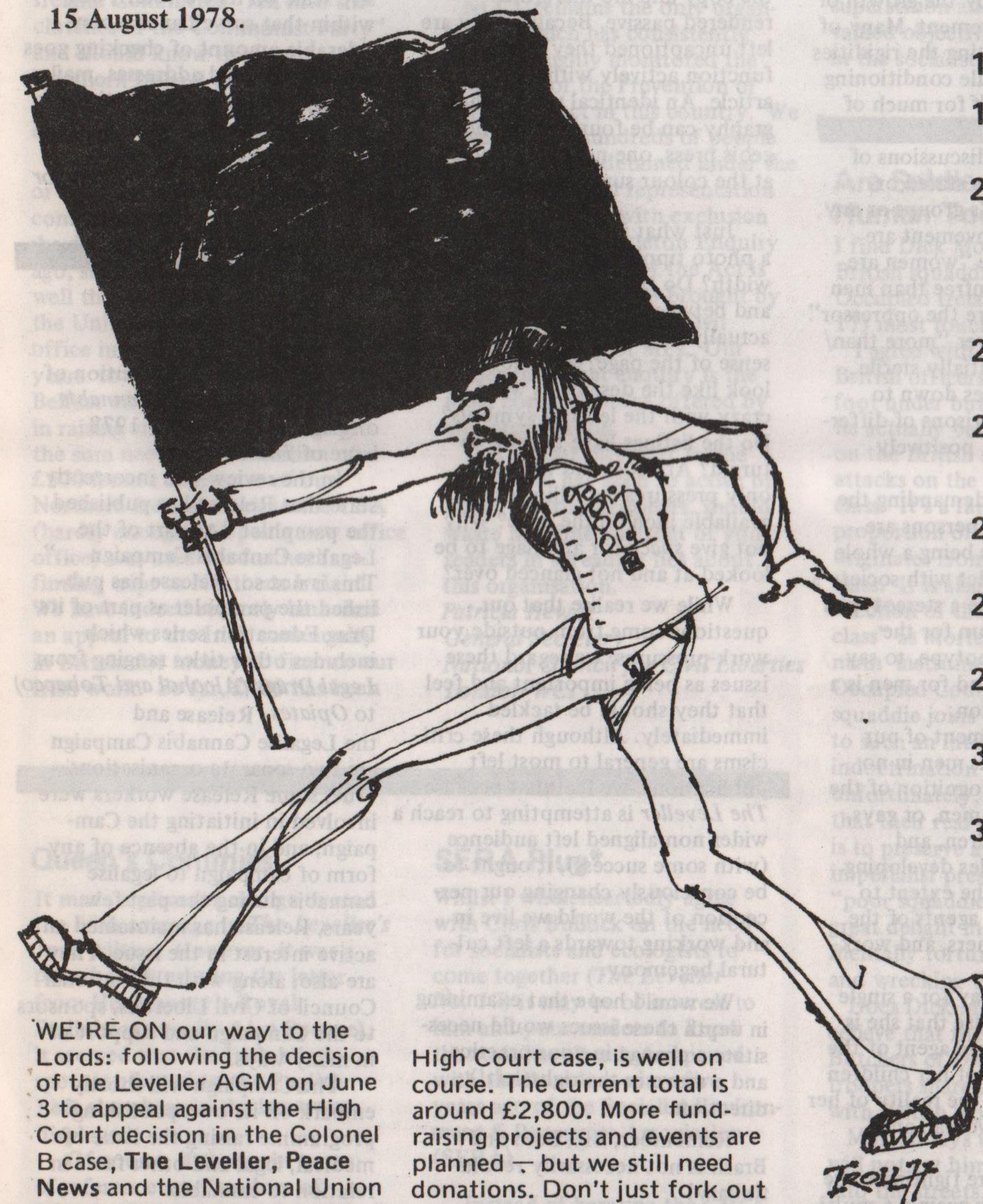
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Become a *Leveller* agent, 10p commission per copy sold. Call and collect from the office. Cash in advance, but money refunded on unsold copies.

Readers are welcome to attend and assist in the development of the magazine. Next introductory meeting Tuesday 15 August 1978.



WE'RE ON our way to the Lords: following the decision of the *Leveller* AGM on June 3 to appeal against the High Court decision in the Colonel B case, *The Leveller*, *Peace News* and the National Union of Journalists were granted leave to appeal by the Lords Judicial Committee on 6 July. The case, which will greatly embarrass the Lord Chief Justice, as his contradictory judgement is carefully torn to pieces, is not expected to come up until the New Year.

Meanwhile the *Leveller/Peace News* Defence Fund, set up to raise £5,000 to meet fines and costs, from the

High Court case, is well on course. The current total is around £2,800. More fund-raising projects and events are planned — but we still need donations. Don't just fork out yourself. Get your union or party branch to pass motions — and pass the hat round. With further lawsuits ahead (the appeal, and our libel case over the Truamid allegations — see last issue) we want to get this one behind us quickly.

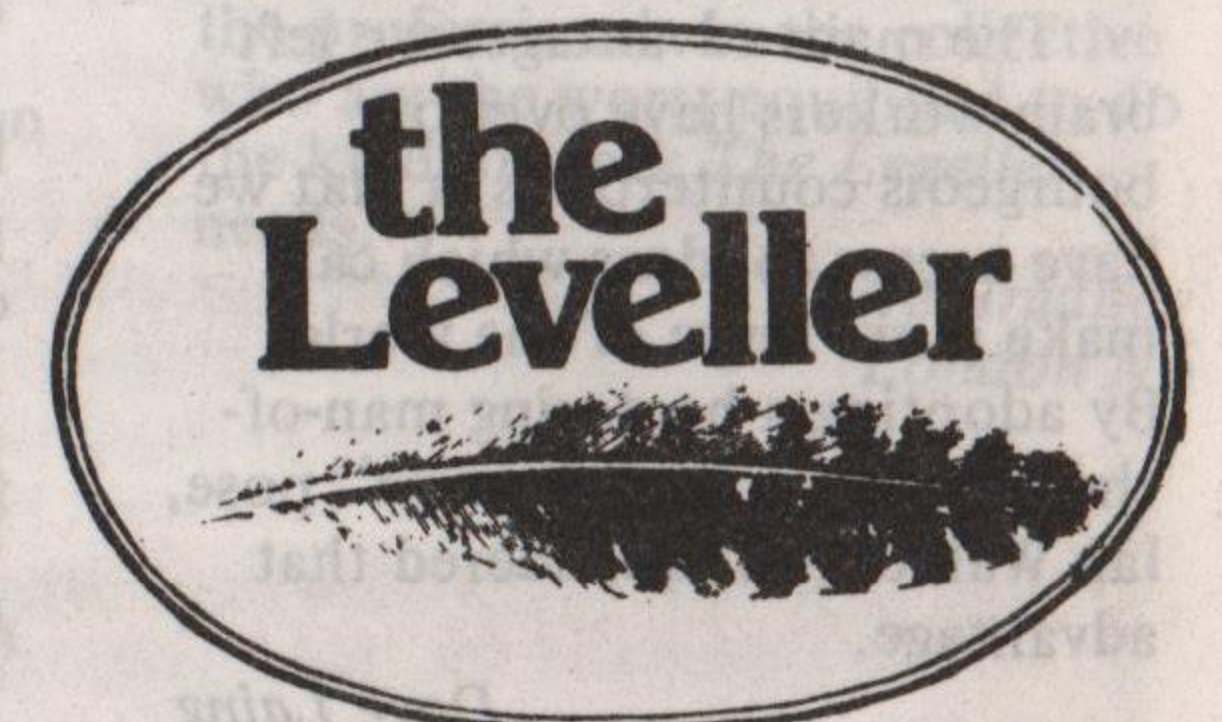
Big thanks to the hundreds of comrades and branches who've sent money already; we can't list them all, and don't really want to single any

out, but the Aberdeen Peace News group that organised a fund-raising sponsored swim in the cruel North Sea must deserve a mention.

The address for donations: *Leveller/Peace News* Defence Fund, Box B/HAJ, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. You must not ask what the mysterious box number stands for.

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Letters

Blue Suede Boots

One of the strengths of *The Leveller* has been the degree of coverage given to cultural issues of all kinds, in contrast to other left papers. But if you're going to take up space with articles like those on the World Cup and the Carnival (June issue), it doesn't seem worth bothering.

The first presented a ludicrously caricatured view of football in capitalist society. The writer seems to think that while the game is totally complicit with patriarchal values now, it will be pure and unsullied "after the revolution". Ironically, considering the article's commitment to feminism, it was precisely the women's movement that showed us the error of this complacent view. There are contradictions in football as well as the other institutions of this society. For instance, something like half a million people (including increasing numbers of working class women) play football in Britain every weekend, in contrast to the goggling millions Terry Flott portrays passively in front of the TV set. And the choice of Johann Cruyff to be sneered at as a "demigod" is particularly curious.

Apart from the fact that only the most vulgar egalitarian would deny the pleasure his exceptional skills can give, their machismo quotient is much closer to Nureyev's than John Wayne's (or Joe Jordan's!).

As for the Carnival piece, in his comments on those of us who dare to criticise Tom Robinson's music, Ian Walker seems determined to become the Jean Rook of socialist journalism, which he recognises himself by mentioning the "straw leftoids" he's knocking down. He attacks People's Liberation Music for recycling slogans about oppressed peoples, but surely most of Tom Robinson's songs do precisely that, even if he's singing about us rather than the Vietnamese. I think it's important to realise that though Robinson's virtues are many, they have their limits. He is the Tom Paxton of now, not the Bob Dylan.

The main advantages we left brain-workers have over our bourgeois counterparts is that we have access to ideas which can make more sense of the world. By adopting a hectoring man-of-the-people "common sense" pose, Ian Walker has squandered that advantage.

Dave Laing
Hebden Bridge

Downtrodden Men

I didn't hear about the London Men's Conference until too late so I was very interested in the report by Joe Schwarz in your last issue. I was surprised to read that the men there (according to Joe's report) agreed that men are not oppressed as men.

Perhaps there are some semantic problems with the term "oppressed". The word demands that there be an oppressor. It is a word which (unlike the rest of us) lives in a world of goodies and badies.

The most important thing I've got out of men's groups and conferences in the past, is the knowledge that there are other alternatives for men within sexual politics to being a reactionary pig or a grovelling apologist for the male sex as a whole. Certainly many men have come into sexual/personal politics in response to pressure created by the growth of the women's movement. Many of us have been fighting the rigidities of stereotyped male conditioning on our own behalf for much of our lives.

Too often in discussions of sexual politics it is stated or implied that men's groups or any form of men's movement are irrelevant because "women are so much more" unfree than men - or that "men are the oppressor".

Any debate over "more than/less than" is essentially sterile and, when it comes down to quantified comparisons of different people's pain, positively obscene.

Men who are demanding the right to be whole persons are unfree in as far as being a whole person is in conflict with society's demand that we be a stereotyped male. Society is run for the fantasy male stereotype, to say that it is run by and for men is a sexist generalisation.

Acknowledgement of our own unfreedom as men in no way negates a recognition of the unfreedom of women, or gays, or blacks, or children, and necessarily includes developing an awareness of the extent to which we are the agents of the unfreedom of others, and working to change it.

In the same way for a single mother to recognise that she is the most immediate agent of the ageist oppression of her children in no way denies the reality of her unfreedom as a woman and mother.

People who are fighting to be free are struggling against a multiplicity of roles, within which each of us plays a multiplicity of roles. Each new group working to illuminate their own part in that network should be welcomed by all who are genuinely concerned with universal liberation.

Mark Palmer
Cambridge

Slagging our designs

Now that cultural politics has been put on the agenda for all the left to see, the aesthetic being adopted in left magazines (including *The Leveller*), seems to have its roots in Russian Constructivism. This aesthetic can be attributed to both being the only readily available one, and the one which is ideologically correct because of the circumstances of its birth.

Looking through recent issues of left mags, notably *The Leveller*, *Socialist Challenge*, *Socialist Worker* and *Spare Rib*, one can clearly see the trademarks of this aesthetic. For instance, the use of documentary photographs as empirical Truth, with harsh black and white tones and cut-outs denoting Pure Truth. These photographs are most often used as illustrations to the copy and are therefore rendered passive. Because they are left uncaptioned they rarely function actively within the article. An identical use of photography can be found in the bourgeois press, one need only look at the colour supplements.

Just what is the rationale for a photo tipping out of the column width? Do the heavy bars around and between the articles/columns actually help the reader make sense of the page? Why does it look like the designer/s went crazy with the letraset symbols? Do the listings have to look so turgid? Are cost and time the only pressures for filling every available inch on the page? Why not give space for an image to be looked at and not glanced over?

While we realise that our questions come from outside your work-pressures, we regard these issues as being important and feel that they should be tackled immediately. Although these criticisms are general to most left publications, we feel that because *The Leveller* is attempting to reach a wider non-aligned left audience (with some success), it ought to be consciously changing our perception of the world we live in and working towards a left cultural hegemony.

We would hope that examining in depth these issues would necessitate a change in your practice and a move in the right (left!) direction.

Remember, Big, Bold and Brash is not necessarily revolutionary!

Lucy Williams, Tony Benn

**Write to: The Leveller
155a Drummond St
London NW1**

Surveillance

In regard to your interest in "Tapping From the Inside", let me say that back in the middle '60s the *Committee of a Hundred* which operated for many years over the issue of the atom bomb, produced a booklet on this same subject. Postal and telephone surveillance was surveyed from many angles including the people who worked within the service.

As a postman I contributed from my position as a postman at the Eastern District Post Office, Whitechapel. I confirmed to them that mail going through the postal service was interfered with by the postal investigation service, a service which works hand in glove with the secret police and with the people who control local police stations.

Surveillance within sorting offices is carried out on an extensive scale on its own staff, but within that surveillance a considerable amount of checking goes on with selected addresses, mail which is taken off the sorting floors delivery sections and returned later.

Bill Connor

Wrong Again*

May we correct your mention of the Release pamphlet *Cannabis* on page 32 of the July 1978 issue of *The Leveller*.

In the review you incorrectly state that Release has published the pamphlet "As part of the Legalise Cannabis Campaign" This is not so. Release has published the pamphlet as part of its Drug Education series which includes other titles ranging from *Legal Drugs (Alcohol and Tobacco)* to *Opiates*. Release and the Legalise Cannabis Campaign are two separate organisations. True, some Release workers were involved in initiating the Campaign, and in the absence of any form of campaign to legalise cannabis during the past few years, Release has maintained an active interest in the issue. They are also, along with the National Council of Civil Liberties, sponsors to the Campaign and support us in many ways.

The Campaign will shortly embark on its own publishing programme raising the issue of medical, legal and other facts in relation to cannabis.

Legalise Cannabis Campaign

Letters

Taking Liberties

Jackie Kaye's article on Amnesty and the NCCL (*The Leveller* issue 16) contains so many inaccuracies that I feel I must correct them.

NCCL does not officially support the Better Life For All Campaign, whose objectives go well beyond our civil liberties concern. Like most organisations in Northern Ireland concerned with civil rights, we support the introduction of a Bill of Rights - although we have never been naive enough to believe that this would transform the situation. Jackie Kaye is quite wrong to say that our Northern Ireland Committee "fell into the clutches of the Communist Party" and should know that our former Northern Ireland officer, Catherine Scorer, did not join the CPGB until after she resigned from NCCL.

Since Jackie Kaye was a member of our Northern Ireland sub-committee until, to our regret, she decided to resign a year or so ago, she should also know perfectly well that money was *not* raised in the United States for an NCCL office in Belfast. We tried for some years to raise money to open a Belfast office but did not succeed in raising anything approaching the sum needed. A donation of £500 from a supporter of our Northern Ireland work in the USA (hardly enough to open a new office) was used for further fact-finding trips to Northern Ireland. We have indeed recently launched an appeal to the Irish community in Britain for money to finance our Irish work. So far, £400 has been

Queen's Commies

It made a pleasant change to read the Irish coverage in *The Leveller's* June edition. However, it was a pity that by printing the letter from Her Majesty's Royal Stalinists (actually Alan Spence), it seemed that the Irish blind spot, attributed to the English Left elsewhere in the issue was displayed.

Of course, if the main terms of reference are Freedom of Speech, this criticism is misplaced. If not it might be pertinent to ask would a letter, in Marxist jargon, justifying Afrikaner Nationalism be printed? Although I am not offering to provide one and can never recall such a case being made out, I think that it would be just as plausible as that for Ulster "Protestant Nationalism".

Padraig O Conchuir
London E6

pledged in donations and we are working to increase this figure.

We did *not* sack our Northern Ireland officer. For the last two years Bart Milner has done the job of assistant to the general secretary/Northern Ireland officer. When he resigned in April, we agreed (with his support) to appoint a full-time assistant to the general secretary and to leave vacant the job of part-time Northern Ireland officer until funds could be raised. In the meantime our legal department is extremely active on Prevention of Terrorism Act cases, of which a number have been submitted to the European Human Rights Commission.

As Jackie Kaye well knows, we are more than prepared to take up cases on prisoners in this country. But it does not make our job easier when Jackie Kaye herself tells prisoners they should not contact us.

NCCL remains the only organisation which has consistently and thoroughly monitored the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in this country. We have advised hundreds of people who have been detained under the Act and arranged representation for people faced with exclusion orders. The Shackleton Enquiry into the operation of the Act is the result of pressure brought by NCCL and the Labour Civil Liberties Group of MPs. Our evidence to that enquiry is the most comprehensive offered by any organisation.

It is a great pity that Jackie Kaye, who has been so active on behalf of Irish prisoners, should waste her time and that of your readers in spreading lies about this organisation.
Patricia Hewitt
General Secretary
National Council for Civil Liberties
London WC1

SERA Plug*

Whilst I wholeheartedly agree with Chris Bullock on the need for socialists and ecologists to come together (*The Leveller* No. 17) it may be of interest to him and your readers to know that this has already happened with the founding some five years ago of the Socialist Environment & Resources Association (SERA).

Instead of berating the Left's neglect of environmental issues, I think Chris Bullock would have done better to have acquainted himself with what we are doing and urged those who sympathise with his view to join the one socialist organisation that is trying to do something about it.

Steve Rosenthal
Socialist Environment and
Resources Association

Health Food for Social Change

While I go along with the general drift of David March's article in *The Leveller* 16, surely he is not saying that we should reject outright the positive offerings of "alternative" technologies, whole food, and the like? Certainly this area is now being exploited in much the same way that traditional science has been in the past, and by a variety of people with differing long-term aims, some of them quite crazy.

However, the practical benefits of "health foods" and medical practice which treats the person as a whole rather than as a collection of unrelated symptoms are not incompatible with socialism. Some new developments in nutrition and medicine are based on ancient discoveries which have been until recently obscured by mysticism and superstition and which are now valued objectively by scientists in the socialist countries.

Gerald Ford

Are Soldiers Human Too?

I find Dick Morton's concern for British squaddies serving in Occupied Ireland (*The Leveller* 17) most touching.

I agree with him that not enough British officers are buried six foot under but I'm amazed that he actually believes that attacks on the British squaddies are attacks on the British working class. It's a fact that a large proportion of the Brit Army originates from the British working class. It is also a fact that this "section of the British working class" as Morton defines it is the main instrument of terror in the Occupied Counties. Once the squaddie joins up he's subjected to such an intense level of racist indoctrination that very few, unfortunately, come to realise that their real purpose in Ireland is to preserve and strengthen the imperialist presence. Quite a few "poor squaddies" actually take great delight in physically and mentally torturing Irish workers and wrecking their homes.

Does Dick Morton really believe that the Paras, the Butchers of Derry, and the SAS troopers share a common identity with British workers?

Morton says that gradualism will not get him off his arse and into the streets. It is people who express this negative bloody-minded attitude who share the responsibility with the imperialists for the continued presence of squaddies in Ireland, and their subsequent fate.

The sooner the Mortons of this world get off their arses and explain to the squaddies why they're always in the firing line, and not the officers, the better!

John Farrell

Don't Join the Professionals*

A few weeks ago I went to my first *Leveller* Tuesday night meeting, and discussions at the AGM have encouraged me to write down some things I might otherwise have kept to myself.

The Tuesday meeting I attended seemed largely run by the professional journalists in the group. Self-assertiveness, articulateness, competitiveness and a sense of being "in the know" were to the fore. All very male.

Much animation was produced when the subject of corruption came up. At that point the meeting really did become a private discussion in which each of the participants seemed to be basking in the reflected glory of "their" information on this or that scandal.

I think corruption exposes are politically useless. All they do is confirm the already widespread assumption that we're all of us completely unprincipled and self-seeking, and that the unpleasantness of the system we live in is just a reflection of that "fact". We all nick paperclips from the office and spare parts from the factory - so now we know that the politicians and bosses do it too. Just goes to show, dunnit? Still, mustn't grumble.

Journalists compete for corruption stories just like scientists compete to be first to get discoveries published. They're personal (or "team") property. They're how you get rich and famous, or at the very least famous. And there's another analogy with science: corruption stories are "technically sweet" - they involve using the elite techniques and rituals of investigative journalism, which of course only a very few mortals are competent to do.

To sum up, journalism as practised uncritically by conventionally trained journalists can be a very powerful medium for transmitting the competitive, sexist, hierarchical stereotypes to which we are all in theory totally opposed.

Perhaps the collective needs to maintain an internal division - not between the sexes but along professional/non-professional lines. It would be nice to think that the journalists in the collective would just grit their teeth and reform themselves, but if they don't, the rest of the collective will have to make them change.

Producing *The Leveller* is undoubtedly journalism - a kind of journalism which is or ought to be light-years away from what conventional journalists have been trained to do. In some ways it is the professionals in the collective who are the worst equipped to do the kind of work *The Leveller* needs.

Dave Bradney
London N6

* these letters have been shortened

BANGLADESHIS



Community Politics

The East End of London has once again exploded into the national consciousness with a series of ugly and politically alarming incidents of racial violence. For years the area has been a Labour rotten borough, yet the years of social democracy have brought little in the way of housing or jobs. In this special theme, the writers with different political positions examine the internal politics of the Bangladeshis, point to their housing conditions and attempts to better them, and describe what it's like to be black around Brick Lane as the police restore 'law and order'.

Distinct political divisions are emerging within the embattled Bangladeshi community of the East End. Muhammad Haque, a radical journalist from the Sylhet province of Bangladesh, here provides an introduction to the political struggle being waged within the community itself.

Bangladeshi workers, although predominantly young, oppose the idea that the community needs more police "protection". They have seen that those who make speeches in what have been publicised as "youth" meetings invariably reflect the sterile views of three persons: Tayiabur Rahman, Tassaduq Ahmad and Luthfur Rahman.

While Luthfur Rahman's activities have been confined mainly to vilifying the Sylhetis' culture and traditions to the "community workers", Tayiabur Rahman has served that effort by acting as an agent of partisan politics in Bangladesh. Both Luthfur Rahman and Tayiabur Rahman have been used by Tassaduq Ahmad who had acted, over the last 25 years, as the chief source of the British establishment and the middle class in their "understanding" of the Sylhetis.

This has meant that in the wake of the recent attacks, when the community responded with a determination to fight back, these "leaders" stayed behind the scenes and sent their respective cronies to masquerade as the voices of the youth. At least five "youth"

outfits have emerged, namely, "The Bangladesh Youth Association" (Tassaduq Ahmad); "The Bangladesh Youth Movement for Equal Opportunity" (Luthfur Rahman); "The Bangladesh Youth League" (Tayyabur Rahman); "The Bengali Youth Movement Against Racism" (Socialist Workers Party, the Law Centre and the Trades Council anti-racists); and "The Bangladesh Nabin Samity" (Mimbor Ali, Abdul Mannan; the latter being, like Tayiabur Rahman, a travel agent in the East End while Ali is a businessman loyal to Tassaduq Ahmad).

Although these "youth" organisations have held meetings to present their respective mentor's views, the vast majority of non-aligned youths who do attend these meetings, have rejected the divisive politics of the "leaders". They have also rejected the exaggerated claim that the fascists were only attacking the Bangladeshis, identifying with all black and Asian people under attack. They have thrown out the pleas by petty bourgeois businessmen that the community should seek help from the Bangladesh High Commission in London. They want facilities where they can get together to organise or just enjoy themselves. This means that the Bangladesh Welfare house, situated in Brick Lane and kept under lock for the past nine years, will have to be opened, sooner or later.

Demands are also growing for the publication of the accounts of the income from lodgers at the Welfare House that has been collected over the years.

The process of organisation that is afoot now, despite the manipulation by the enemies inside, will take some time before the young people reach the level of unity which enabled the youths in Southall, for example, to at least shake the confidence of the collaborators and effectively face the combined forces of the State and the fascists. One thing that has already happened in the East End is the refusal by the workers to donate money to the "leaders".

If anyone can be isolated as the embodiment of divisive politics inside the community, it is Tassaduq Ahmad, the owner of the Ganges restaurants in Soho and Paddington, amongst other properties.

Unlike the majority of Bangladeshi workers, Ahmad came here in 1953 supposedly to raise money from amongst the then East Pakistani workers already here, for the banned "East Bengal Communist Party". Ahmad also comes from Sylhet.

Before coming here—with his upbringing as the son of a big feudal landowner—he worked for another remnant of feudal collaboration with the British imperialists—Hamidul Huque Chaudhury of Noakhali who was a publishing tycoon. Ahmad soon established links with the British Left and was appointed the unofficial spokesman of the Sylhetis workers. His interpretation invariably projected the workers as somehow defective by their very humanity. This was the kind of thing that the likes of John Stonehouse, Sydney Bidwell et al wanted to hear. Tassaduq Ahmad was elected to the Labour Party's race relations subcommittee (the committee has since been scrapped) in recognition of his services to the cause of race relations.

working against the workers

The lid was blown off—albeit temporarily—by the Sylhetis who protested strongly against a racist article written against their culture and history by the *Sunday Times* colour supplement on December 2, 1973. The main sources of information for that piece were Tassaduq Ahmad, Luthfur Rahman and a group of Bengali-speaking, middle class Bangladeshis who resented the Sylhetis' pride in their culture and traditions. They organised a counter protest, though not before they were identified to be working against the workers. One of the accusations they sought to make against the protesting Sylhetis was that they were acting against the interest of Bangladesh.

Hardly surprising therefore that Abdullah Faruque who followed Tassaduq Ahmad, had been a leading thug in the fascistic "student" outfit called the National Students Federation in Dacca during the regime of dictator Ayub Khan. Ayub Khan was the hero of Tassaduq Ahmad who, when the late dictator visited Britain in the early 1960s (when he was said to have made friends with Christine Keeler) praised him beyond belief. The dictator was impressed and agreed to Ahmad's request that he (Ahmad) be given permission to invest "immigrant Pakistani" workers' money in an industrial project in West Pakistan.

The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants felt unable to continue to allow Tassaduq Ahmad to act as its Treasurer. The mainly restaurant-orientated Pakistan Welfare Association and the Pakistan Caterers Association, both decided that the time had come to oust Tassaduq Ahmad. But that did not deter him from engaging in his dangerous politics. Towards the end of the 1960s, at the height of the crisis in the then East Pakistan, the late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was being tried for alleged treason by the regime of Ayub Khan. True to fashion, Tassaduq Ahmad got involved in a Fund to Defend the Sheikh for whom a British QC was being sent.

This enabled him to show his "concern" for the forthcoming movement for Bangladesh, a cause to which a number of Labour MPs lent considerable support. Outstanding among them was his friend the Rt Hon John Stonehouse, and the then representative of the Bangladesh government, Justice Abu Sayed Chaudhury. Chaudhury and Stonehouse were two of the three Trustees of the Bangladesh Fund which they had launched. Stonehouse and his Bangladeshi accomplices have not accounted for the bulk of that money—exceeding £1 million.

It was the Sylhetis who generously donated to the Fund, and earlier, to the Defend Sheikh Mujib Fund. They also gave money to the smaller outfit called the Greencross Society which had been separately launched by Abdullah Faruque and a Bangladeshi lawyer. Faruque, like Tassaduq Ahmad after the Anglo-Pak Enterprise, opened an Indian restaurant in South London shortly after the Bangladesh liberation war was over! He had come to Britain only in 1968! Other enterprises that grew during the year of 1971 disappeared likewise and in their place emerged a few Indian restaurants. None of these outfits ever accounted for the money. And repeated demands to prosecute them have been ignored by the DPP and by the Labour MPs.

Besides these, who have doubled for the media, the police, and parts of the British Left as the "leaders" of the Bangladeshis, there is of course the Bangladesh High Commission and its sister agencies, the Bangladesh National Bank and the Bangladesh Air lines. Neither the diplomatic Mission nor the other two Bangladesh Government outfits have any senior staff who speaks Sylheti. The result is that the customers, the majority of whom are Sylhetis, are constantly humiliated and harassed. Thousands, literally thousands of cases of such humiliation and harassment are told by workers who have looked upon their "own Government" offices here as the only place to go to in an oppressive racist society. The High Commission has escaped any embarrassment or accountability since the majority of the Bengali "professionals" are supported by Tassaduq Ahmad.

Indeed, the High Commission has opened a centre, allegedly for the benefit of Bangladeshi youths in London, 16 miles away from where the Bangladeshis live! And the man whose idea it was is Luthfur Rahman. "We are treated the same way as if we went to a whites-only club", say Sylheti youths who visited the place. Luthfur Rahman has worked in the East End as an employee of the local adult education centre, which, like most State-orientated agencies, prefer Bengali speaking employees on jobs that are supposed to be for the benefit of the Sylheti speaking workers! At the other end of the spectrum are the other Asians in the area, mainly the Pakistanis, who have no social or working class solidarity with their fellow workers from Bangladesh. Luthfur Rahman, Tayiabur Rahman and Tassaduq Ahmad have made sure that the Bangladeshi workers stay in constant hostility to their fellow workers from Pakistan. Even the Sylheti speaking workers who have tried to oppose this have been condemned by this lot, or their appointees.

Another group of "Bengali" leaders are the half a dozen Bangla language papers that appear in London. With the exception of one which has only just begun publication, the papers are exclusively dedicated to the political situation in Bangladesh. The interpretation is determined by which faction a given paper supports. The result has been an insulting indifference to the struggle of the Sylheti workers who are the main market of all these "newspapers". And according to the spokesperson of one, "The Sylhetis will never change, so why try to change them? The best thing is to see them for what they are—as a market."

When, on April 30 this year, 80,000 young people were taking part in the Anti-Nazi Carnival, the *Sunday Telegraph* announced the forthcoming appearance of Tassaduq Ahmad's paper *The Asian*. It is curious that Ahmad should be so popular with these quarters. After all, he is still known to some of the British Left as being a "Marxist-Leninist"! Yet at a meeting in Euston in March this year Ahmad asked a representative of the British Home Office present, to "deport illegal immigrants!"

welfare house closed

Back in Brick Lane Ahmad is unable to appear at a public meeting of Bangladeshis, save at a highly publicised Labour MPs election meeting. But the Bangladesh Welfare House remains locked to the workers, as Ahmad and Tayiabur Rahman have entered a court agreement to continue to deny the workers any access to the House or indeed to call an election for the defunct Bangladesh Welfare Association. The Association is claimed to be their own property by each of the two cliques. And for nearly a decade they have succeeded in not letting the workers have a Welfare organisation of their own.

This has been responsible for the occasional emergence of bunches of "lawyers" who call for more useful liaison between the Bangladeshis and the police. And the machinery of police and "Asian" community liaison that already exists has only confirmed the police theory that the best way to combat racism is to rely on them. At the first meeting held since the two murders and the rampage of Brick Lane, Ghulam Mustafa and Abdul Quddus, two "leaders" both gave "all credit to the police for what they have done". Such spirits of conciliation to the police are not confined to these two leaders. The acts of Tassaduq Ahmad have created a vacuum in which "more police" can be the only meaningful cry that the "leaders" are able to make. At successive meetings in 1976, 1977, Tassaduq Ahmad openly spoke against the youths getting prepared against the NF. He was supported by the "leaders" who have, like him, now taken cover and are operating from behind the scene.

Meanwhile, the Bangladeshis who have been in the forefront of the attacks are getting arrested for their resistance to attacks. The police, the youths say and know, are in Brick Lane not to protect them but to help their attackers.

The only short term hope for the future is that the community at large is learning to see through the ploys of its enemies—both inside it and elsewhere.

Housing Action

Housing remains the crunch issue for most of the inhabitants of Tower Hamlets. Judy Klein examines the rise of the Bengali Housing Action Group.

Decent housing in Tower Hamlets is something almost all residents have to struggle for. But the discriminatory effect of local authority housing policies, and the additional constant threat of racist attacks make the need for an organisational offensive on housing even more imperative for Bangladeshis in the area.

In the borough as a whole 78 per cent of residential property is owned by the council or the Greater London Council (GLC). Private flats are almost impossible to come by and a five-year or more wait on the housing list faces most families in need of good housing. Many Asian men who came to the UK under the employment voucher scheme in the late fifties and early sixties face an additional catch-22

Under the point system, which supposedly regulates what little movement there is from the waiting list, a male immigrant is usually not even considered, because his family is in Bangladesh he is single in the eyes of the council. The powers that be in charge of immigration argue that he cannot bring his family over until he acquires adequate accommodation. This bureaucratic device enables the state to play its role in keeping immigrant labour 'cheap' by ensuring that as few of the services of the welfare state as possible are available to immigrant workers.

In Spitalfields less than 40 per cent of the housing is owned by the local authorities. The relative size of the private market does not make the search for a place to live easier and the high demand for housing has encouraged the ubiquitous sale of tenancies. Many go for over £800 with the previous tenant, a few middlemen and the owner all getting their cut, total neglect of maintenance on the part of the landlord and physical threats and forced eviction of any who dare demand a proper rent book, repairs or lowering of rent through a tribunal. Spitalfields has the lowest percentage in the borough of residences with standard amenities (44 per cent) and the highest percentage of overcrowded residences.

A lot of the local authority residential property remains empty for years. Mix hundreds of boarded-up flats and bricked up houses with a desperate need for housing and you get squatting. Probably more so than in other boroughs the 'average squatter' is a working class couple living in overcrowded conditions with family or friends

Caevll St., E1. Crowded but home.



who eventually say "screw the waiting list", and occupy the flat that has lain empty for months across the hall. For many such squatters the need for organised struggle or support seems minimal.

In 1974 there were several Bangladeshi families who found themselves squatting houses that they had thought they owned or rented. They were victims of a squat-selling racket that both the Council and the police turned a blind eye to. A typical scenario would be a family new to the area, with little knowledge of the English language or laws and practices governing property exchange, being put in contact with bogus "landlords" or "estate agents". A few of the victims have alleged that this initial contact was via an official of the local Community Relations Council.

The family would be shown empty property in Stepney, Bow or Whitechapel, and told they could move in immediately if a substantial deposit was paid. The agent would give them a receipt and rent book or false documents showing ownership, and usually never be heard from again. Within a few months the occupants would receive a letter from the GLC or Council ordering the squatters to vacate the property immediately or face court proceedings leading to eventual eviction.

The victims of the squat-selling racket, with support from other squatters in the area and *Race Today* magazine, tried to get the police and the Council to take action against those involved in the racket. When that failed they turned to publicity in the local press, national TV and in widely-distributed leaflets written in Bengali. Only one case was eventually taken up by the courts, but the growth of a strong and vocal housing action group has ensured that other Asians have not had the same fate.

Bangladeshis who are "fortunate" enough to receive tenancies on nearly all-white council estates in Poplar, Bethnal Green and Hackney often face physical attacks and continuous harassment from racists in the area. In one case a Bangladeshi moving from a slum clearance area in Hessel Street accepted a tenancy on the Mountmorres estate in Stepney. On the day he was moving in some tenants on the all-white estate, with help from members of the National Front who had been called in, threw all their furniture from their third-storey flat and painted "Pakis Out" and "Mountmorres Stays White" on the walls and door. The police were called and in the presence of the racist thugs declared they could do nothing. Although white squatters across the street offered support, the family was well aware that if they moved back in they could not live in safety there. The police themselves told the GLC to drop the tenancy and make another offer. Mountmorres Estate stayed white.

Faced with total inaction on the part of the police and the GLC, the Asian families on the Canada Estate discussed their common problems and took direct action. With help from people in the *Race Today* collective and Tower Hamlets Squatters Union, they publicised their case and occupied empty flats in GLC property. Eventually the GLC was forced to grant them a transfer of tenancies to an estate where they felt secure. The combination of working with other Asians who shared similar experiences to bring pressure on the housing departments of the GLC and Tower Hamlets Council through publicity and direct action was to become the basis of the Bengali Housing Action Group (BHAG).

Since its founding in early 1976, BHAG has provided an organised offensive for Asians living in unsafe, overcrowded or slum residences. Entire streets and a block of flats have been occupied by BHAG and turned into comfortable homes. Probably the most significant occupation has been that of Pelham Buildings near Brick Lane. The GLC planned to demolish the block of over 60 flats. Although most tenants had been moved out by March 1976, it was, like a lot of publically-owned property, going to be left empty, but still standing, for a few years. The empty flats had been gutted by the GLC to prevent squatting and it had all the outer characteristics of inner-city slum property. But to the hundreds of Bangladeshis who decided to squat it was the only chance of a home where they were not overcrowded or isolated from the rest of the Asian community.

In October 1977, the GLC announced an "amnesty" for all people squatting in their property. When the Conservative Party gained control of the GLC after the local elections, they made plans to get rid of all GLC housing stock by selling houses on the private market, or by handing property over to housing associations or the local councils. Opposition was expected from Labour-controlled local authorities, and the GLC knew that if residential property was to be handed over, the recipients would probably demand vacant possession or regularised tenancies. Also in December 1977 the Criminal Trespass Bill and the Homeless Persons Act were to become operative. The local authorities could not make the former enforceable without making themselves immediately responsible for rehousing thousands under the Homeless Persons Act.

The GLC "amnesty" consisted of one offer of a temporary tenancy or licence to each household that registered by a certain date. All squatters were told that if they rejected that offer, for whatever reason, they would be evicted. Nearly 100 Asian families

squatting in GLC property registered through BHAG. The organisation demanded that all be offered tenancies within the relatively safe area of E1. In response to GLC claims that not enough empty housing was available in the area, BHAG produced a list of 16 housing estates, comprising more than 40 buildings, on which they knew empty flats existed and in which their members would be willing to live. The GLC, aware that BHAG could back its demands with strong organisation and mass action, eventually agreed to rehouse Bangladeshi squatters in the area.

BHAG's conditions for accepting offers of rehousing and the subsequent list of suitable estates that was drawn up have been distorted by the national media into a 'demand that comes from within the Bengali community' for segregated ghetto estates. Neither BHAG nor any other Bangladeshi organisation has asked for all-Asian estates, and BHAG has made it clear that they will fight against such a policy being implemented. Some Conservatives within the GLC doubtless think that segregated estates are desirable, and in fact local authority housing policies and mob-rule on the part of racist tenants have ensured that many estates in the East End have had no Asian tenants for years.

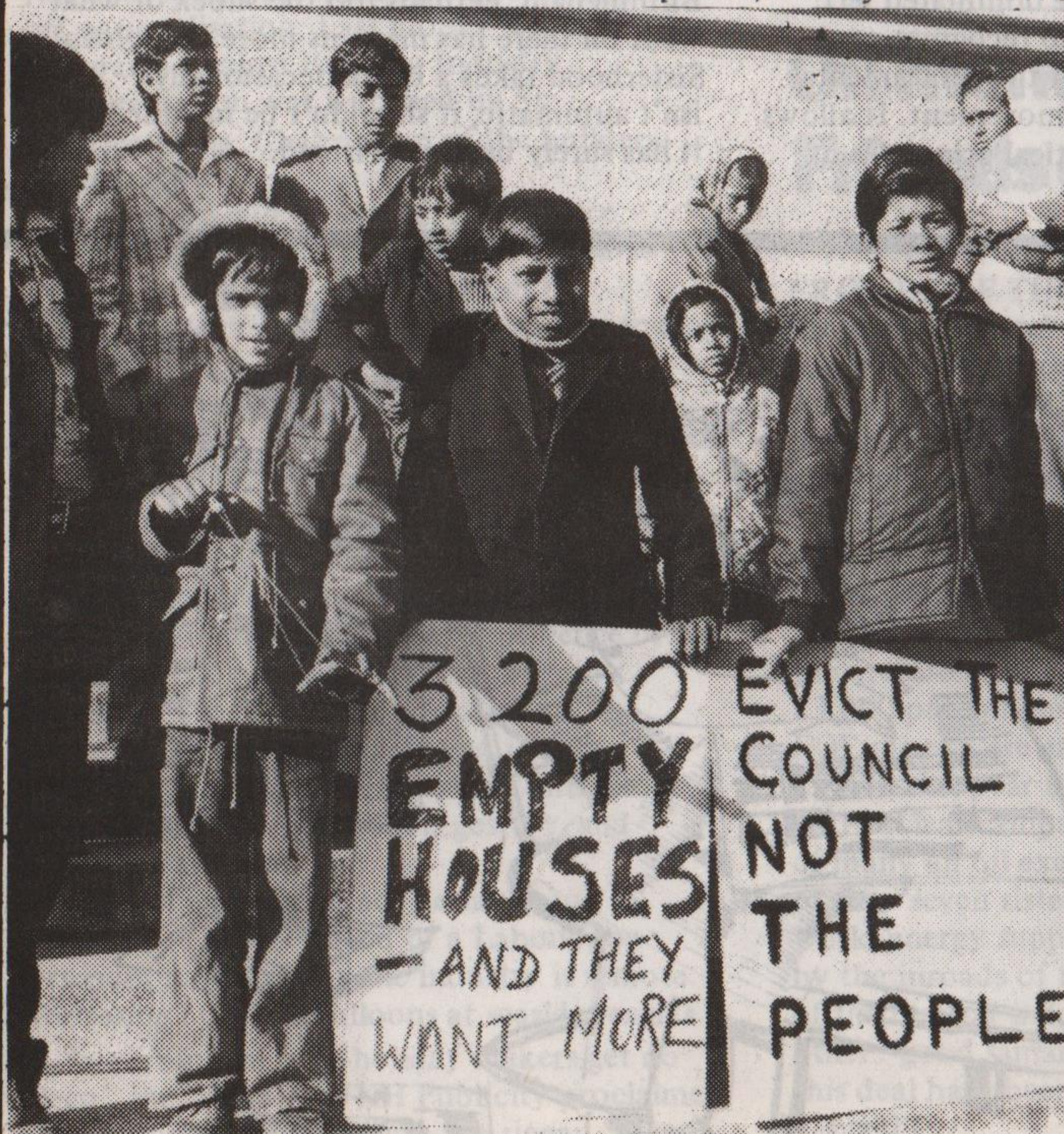
In response to the GLC offer to squatters, BHAG demanded rehousing on estates where Bangladeshi families could live without the constant threat of attack or harassment. For their members living in GLC property this demand will probably soon be met. It is unlikely, however, that the need for an organisation like BHAG will disappear with the GLC amnesty. Many BHAG members are still squatting in non-GLC property and the huge housing problem facing people working in Tower Hamlets, and Asians in particular, will not go away with the rehousing of a few hundred squatters.

Although BHAG is one of the strongest housing action organisations within London, and one of the most important groups that has developed within the Bangladeshi community in the East End, it has been limited in the action it has taken. Many conditions have forced the organisations to take the offensive only in local authority housing and there mainly in the form of squatting. A concerted fight against the corruption, intimidation and appalling conditions facing private tenants has hardly been considered.

Also the scale of problems that have required immediate solution has resulted in little being available to develop a strategy that will bring about a change in long-term government housing policies. Also BHAG, like most organisations based on housing action, is constantly faced with the problem that many working people with families just do not have the time nor energy to sustain active involvement once they get a home. This could lead to many such groups having to rely on the leadership of a relatively small number of very active members.

At its peak BHAG membership included over 120 households. One thing that has become clear to members and those who have worked along with BHAG in housing struggles is that some form of organisation and direct action was necessary given the situation facing Bangladeshi workers in the East End. In several of the houses squatted by BHAG iron bars were found on the ground-floor windows. Those bars were put up by previous tenants, Jews living in the area before the war for protection. But the present occupiers feel that such a defence is not enough.

BHAG picket, County Hall Nov. 76.



Brick Lane

The feeling of being under siege intensifies in Brick Lane and the surrounds, as it grows dark. Bangladeshis move in twos and threes. Hearing footsteps, they check out the faces above the feet: whites are glanced at for a hint of friendliness or hostility, Afros are regarded with cautious neutrality, other Asians are nodded at. Police, who now have a beat here, are given a very, very wide berth.

Having talked to a few people I know there, I walk back towards the tube. Ten o'clock. Two beefy cops confront me. I look round. Not a soul in sight. A barrage of questions: What have I got in my bag? What am I doing in the area? Where do I live? Where do I work?

I don't have to answer the questions. They have no right to detain me. I answer the questions tersely to salvage some dignity, compromised by having to answer at all. A matter of self-preservation for blacks. Too many, especially Bangladeshis, have been hauled off to an East End cop-shop, beaten, held on trumped-up charges, even convicted. The Old Bill is among the most racist in Britain, and in the past five years it's been picking most on Bangladeshis—the lack of fluency in English affords greater scope for bullying, presumably. And racist immigration laws give them further power.

NF thugs don't swagger down Brick Lane much now, since the Bangla youth might beat 'em up. If they do so, the cops protect them.

When they stopped me, I thought of asking: "Aren't you supposed to be protecting us blacks from being attacked by racists?" But being a smart-arse won't help. They revel in being racist. Not for nothing can Martin Webster boast that the NF has many supporters among the police. The cops use the uniform to clothe their racism, use their legal power to harass. After all, in spite of numerous complaints to the Home Secretary, A10, to the local station, these cops are getting away with little short of murder.

Bangladeshis reporting assaults or vandalism by racists get cross-examined about the legality of their residence in Britain. And the more racist assaults, damage and arson take place, the more Banglas get picked up on one pretext or another. The Bangla vigilante groups for self-defence, and not the racists, were hounded by the cops.

When the racists do something that the national press find difficult to ignore, the cops feel

obliged to make some arrests. Quite apart from the fact that often more Banglas get arrested than whites, the whites arrested tend to be the youngest in the fascist mob. That way the impression is given that only a bunch of twelve to fifteen year olds are involved. And when they get to court, sentences, where given at all, are tantamount to encouragement.

The Bangladeshis are conducting their own enquiry, and compiling a list of cases which they will later publish. In one recent incident, a Bangladeshi youth attacked by a white defended himself. Both were arrested, the white released and the Bangladeshi youth beaten up in the station. In another similar incident, the Bangladeahi youth arrested had a curfew imposed until his trial in September. He was banned from Brick Lane on Sundays, though he lived there. No such terms were imposed on the young racist, and in any case, he had come all the way from Essex.

As for the white left Bangladeshis distrust most of them. A couple of white groups have used the situation to try and recruit to their organisations. A number of Bangladeshis, perhaps with an eye on the main chance, join up, but soon get disillusioned and leave. This kind of opportunism only serves to further complicate the problems of a community already full of factions.

The Anti-Nazi League East End demo, which assembled in Brick Lane, was boycotted by a number of the most militant groups who had not been consulted over the date and venue and therefore regarded the ANL attitude as high-handed and patronising.

So far the white left has been a nuisance, and internal conflicts have not made the situation easier. But one thing is clear. Once the youth have shaped up their movement, they are going to become a formidable force, with little respect for such suspect legality as they have been faced with.

UNITY AND SMILES

Rose Shapiro (*Leveller 15*) described the Birmingham National Women's Liberation Conference as "the end of an era"; many felt it to signal the demise of a united movement. When the London regional conference was convened on the weekend of June 24/25th, the question in everyone's mind was whether or not the grim tension of Birmingham would be repeated. As it happened, the conference turned out to be something to celebrate — a positive reaffirmation of feminism, injecting new hope into the way forward for women's Liberation: as a basically united movement

It looked at first as though few had even bothered to attend; Saturday mid-morning and there seemed to be only a few women wandering in desultry fashion around the various book-stalls. It turned out that the swish City University, full of multi-levels, spacious rooms and wide corridors, easily engulfed the several hundred women who came. Saturday morning workshops included those on radical, revolutionary, anarcha- and socialist feminism.

I chose one called non-aligned feminism (meaning non-aligned to any tendency within the movement) — curious to meet those brave individuals who choose to do without prefixes or labels. All who turned up, non-aligned and 'labelled', had the same worry: that the different tendencies in the movement were no longer listening to each other or even attempting to have a dialogue. Was the sectarianism and dogmatism so characteristic of the left seeping into women's politics, someone asked. Were feminists beginning to think and act in terms of false polarisations of position, labels and struggles for power? Socialist feminists came under as much attack as revolutionary feminists for manipulative behaviour and the use of deliberate tactics to out-manoeuvre the opposition in Birmingham.

There is still some suspicion of women who are in left groups. You can see why, given the opportunism of the organised left in various feminist campaigns in the past. But the suspicion goes deeper than this; that somehow there is a danger of feminism becoming polluted and male-defined —

*But something's happened, quietly creeping
In the women's movement while we were sleeping*

as someone put it in a warning poem. This fear isn't confined to the revolutionary feminists and it strikes a sympathetic chord in the hearts of most feminists of whatever persuasion. Hence the increasing drift towards separatism in politics and lifestyle.

Saturday afternoon brought the real box office workshop which everyone had been waiting for — "Why is there a split between the revolutionary feminists and the socialist feminists?" The whole thing looked like it had been framed to encourage that perverse streak of voyeurism in us all. It was as though somebody was asking for trouble or at least hoping to draw the crowds. The crowds came, tense with the hope that this would not be a repeat of the emotional and aggressive fiasco that was the Birmingham plenary.

It wasn't. A useful and for the most part rational discussion ensued, during which it became clear that we caricature each other's positions — socialist feminists become traitors who rush off to report back to the

male dominated left; the revolutionary feminists are elitist and purist fanatics. This polarisation is admitted, out in the open, and better understood by us all. But important differences remain. People, though, are growing tired of this particular argument and perhaps there are more important things to be getting on with.

The evening was devoted to workshops on perhaps the most important topic — the seven demands of the Women's Liberation Movement. Do we want as our basis concrete campaigns around which to mobilise and unite large numbers of women? Or are the demands reformist (forgetting for the moment the 7th), expressing nothing of the revolutionary struggle against the patriarchy or of the personal and positive nature of feminism?

We in our workshop had a discussion which revealed this division between the revolutionary and "broad" to be false. We talked about a group of Catholic feminists. Now to most of us this was a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, should we encourage such beginnings or would it be mere liberalism to do so? It dawned on us that the discussion was irrelevant, given that the movement isn't something you join or have a membership card for; nor is it something you can exclude people from!

In any case there was a definite feeling that to begin to incorporate more openly revolutionary demands — like the 7th on male violence — into the other 6 wasn't the answer; that a reassessment was needed; that perhaps there was room for both concrete demands and some kind of manifesto or declaration of aims.

My first workshop of Sunday transformed itself by accident into a consciousness raising session. A diverse collection of women — in terms of age, experience and lifestyle — were able to identify not only with each other's oppression but with each other's triumphs and strengths. It might be old hat now, but once again the validity of the personal as political was reaffirmed.

Influenced by the male dominated left, it's taken me a long time to recognise consciousness raising as one of the fundamental strengths of the women's movement. It allows for "the basic radical political principles of

going to the original sources, both historic and personal, going to the people — women themselves, and going to experience for theory and strategy" (*Katjie Sarahild*).

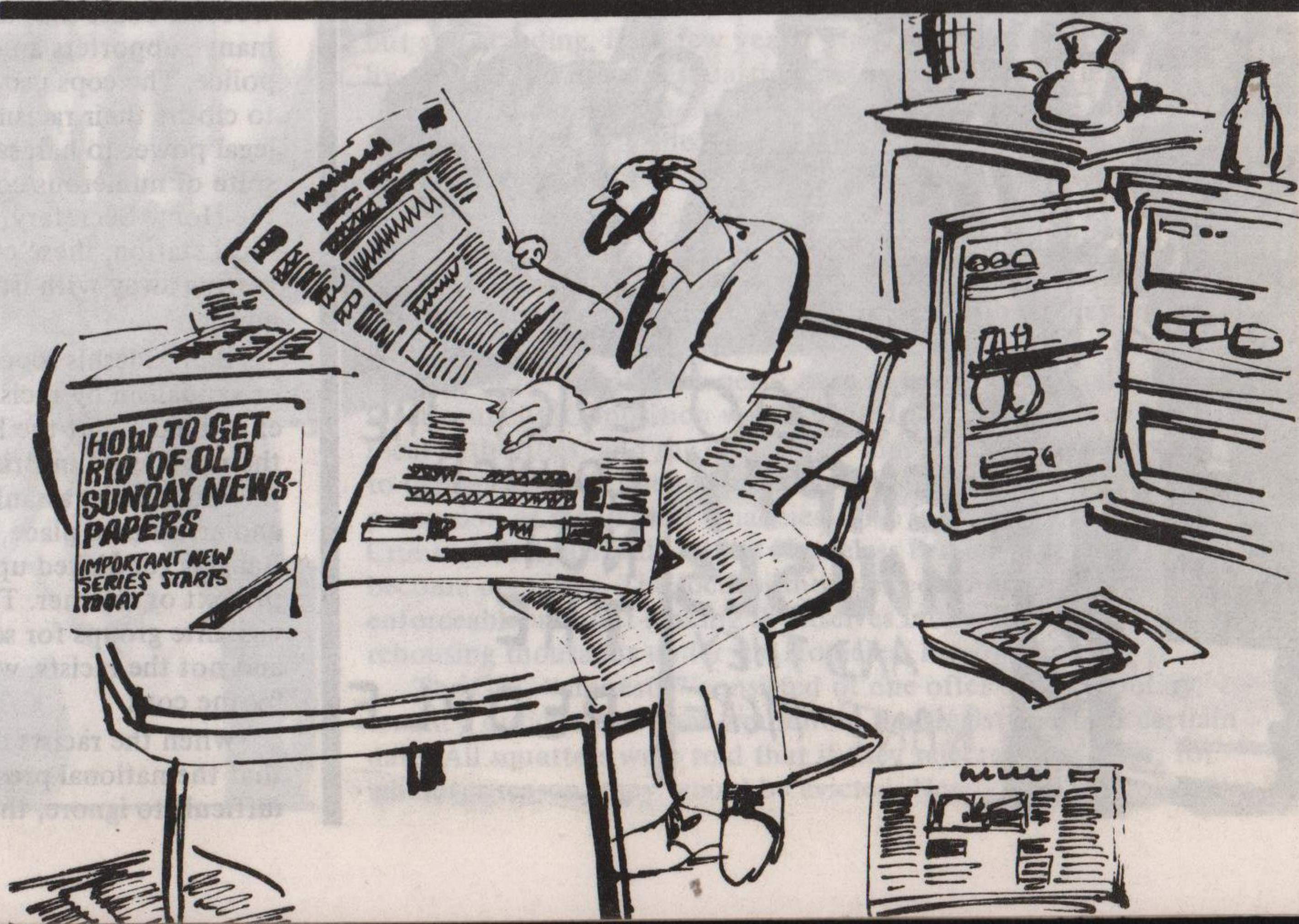
Concern was expressed over the talk of introducing some kind of more disciplined structure into the movement. After Birmingham many women felt that the 'structurelessness' of the small group could not be applied to a group 3,000 strong — the 'tyranny of structurelessness' and so on. Sure enough it was oppressive at Birmingham and the idea that we need a firmer structure for a mass organisation sounds impressive; but impressive too was the success of the big workshops and the reportback session, when the democratic and 'structureless' principle of the small group was transferred to them. Several hundred women managed to maintain a dialogue, listen to individual points, develop arguments, *without* delegates, prepared speeches, motions or voting. This is how tendencies and policies are formed, grow and develop from the roots of the movement.

The reportback session was a relaxed event, and who said the WLM has no sense of humour? ("Can we have a report from the workshop on Our Own Violence?") Silence. "Seems like they're all dead.") It was above all a demonstration of unity — the unanimous response to the "Letter to a Suffragette" written by one group was of thundering applause and support.

It was constructive in terms of the campaigns, plots and meetings which arose out of it — plans to sabotage government celebrations of fifty years of the vote; a campaign for child benefits for all women; a campaign around "women are an endangered species"; a group to study and organise against male violence; a group for women in the caring professions....

The weekend culminated in a riotous show by the Coventry Lesbian Theatre Group and disco. The London conference, unlike Birmingham, had been a successful assertion of the power, unity and democracy of our movement. Perhaps the numbers were more manageable and organisation better than at Birmingham. Perhaps too the shock of what went on there has made us more thoughtful. Sisterhood takes a break occasionally — it isn't automatic, it shouldn't be idealised, but it has surely been reaffirmed.

Cherrill Hicks



WALES

Welsh fight for TV channel

WHO SAID the conspiracy laws were dead? On July 10 the fourth conspiracy trial against members of Cymdeithas Yr Iaith Gymraeg (the Welsh Language Society) opened in Camarthen.

For 10 years the society has been campaigning for the allocation of the fourth TV channel in Wales to a Welsh Broadcasting Authority. This has indeed been government policy for four years, but nothing has been done, and, coincidentally, at the same time, the Government has spent about the same amount as the WBA would cost (£8 million) on an English-language TV service for British troops in Germany.

To back the campaign the society has been indulging in its distinctive style of protest: eight TV studios and other places occupied; seven establishments damaged; nine TV mast climbings and 12 disconnections; protests in Parliament and the Court of Appeal; grand public burnings of TV licences, and refusals to pay fines for not having licenses. For these activities, 152 protestors have been fined and 19 jailed.

Now the Society's chairperson, Gruffydd Williams and vice-chairperson Dafydd James, are charged with conspiring together or with persons unknown to cause criminal damage to television stations.

The Society maintains that it rejects any violence that might endanger people, and its elected Senate takes full responsibility for any damage caused. It adds: "We have all conspired to obtain a television channel in our own language...We shall go on conspiring and acting to this end."

THE RIGHT

From the crew that brought you Mr Cube

BRITAIN'S leading civil contractors, the chaps who brought you Ronan Point and the NatWest tower, are banding together to ward off nationalisation. Last month the Campaign Against Building Industry Nationalisation was launched by Sir Maurice Laing, Chairperson of the builders of that name.

No expense will be spared, Sir Maurice told an eager audience in the City, to save "this great industry of ours" from the socialists. And in this respect at least he may be right. The banks are thought to have spent about £980,000 solely on newspaper advertisements in their campaign against nationalisation. Sir Maurice's merry gang can safely be assumed to have a lot more. Laing's profits last year were £21.1 million.

The campaign originated with the passing by the last Labour Party annual conference of the discussion document "Building Britain's Future". The National Federation of Building Trades Employers and the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors promptly took fright at this gesture, and CABIN was born.

The campaign need not be taken too seriously. The likelihood of a Labour government nationalising the industry is remote. Releasing 300,000 balloons at seaside resorts — "we will make sure holiday makers get no sleep" the creep from KH Publicity proclaimed — and printing posters with the slogan "Keep

Britain's Builders Free" does not seem calculated to whip up a storm of protest at this outrageous restraint on free enterprise.

But the campaign does give valuable insights into how the ruling class operates. KH Publicity for example, describe themselves as a financial public relations company, but are best remembered as the spivs who handled the anti-nationalisation campaign for Mr Cube, the chubby representative of one of British capitalism's less savoury companies, sugar monopolists Tate & Lyle.

EAST GERMANY

Bahro jailed for eight years

THE EAST GERMAN economist and dissident Rudolf Bahro (*See The Leveller 13*) has been sentenced to eight years in prison after having spent nearly a year in the custody of the state.

According to the East German News Agency ADN he was accused of treason for collecting news items and betraying secrets. The fact that he published a book in the West critically analysing the Soviet brand of socialism has been interpreted as "the systematic collection of wilfully fabricated lies, crude distortions and false statements" and "making them accessible to circles active against the DDR (East Germany) using known conspirative means, methods and channels". The state also claims that to satisfy his greed for money his masters paid him the sum of 200,000 Marks (about £50,000).

Bahro's brilliant book "The Alternative" is due to be published by New Left Books in October (hopefully in a cheap edition).

Socialist Challenge, has initiated an "Open Letter to Honecker" which will be presented to the East German Embassy. All protests should be sent to the Embassy of the German Democratic Republic, 34 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QB. Copies to the Defence Committee, c/o Gunter Minnerup, 14 Folkestone Road, Copnor, Portsmouth, Hants. The "Open Letter" is available from Bahro Defence, c/o Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

ECOLOGY

Oil money for Friends of the Earth

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH have joined the list of endangered species and monuments to past glories receiving a subvention from the Atlantic-Richfield oil company, whose previous exercises in philanthropy (or is it PR?) have included large donations to save Abu Simbel from the rising waters of Lake Nasser, and the *Observer* from the rising tide of financial insolvency.

For the past three years FOE have merited the munificence of ARCO to the tune of £3,000 per annum, but rumour has it that the FOE moguls are angling for an increase to £5,000 this year to keep up their high-pressure anti-nuclear campaign, a cause dear to the heart of many an oil executive who see the monopoly of the "seven sisters" and their associates in the world energy supply industry being threatened by the inroads of the "johnny-come-lately's" of the nuclear industry. In contrast to ARCO's other "good samaritan" exercises, both sides in this deal have been anxious to keep the liason a secret.

PROPAGANDA

Smear job by Foreign Office

THE GHOST of the Foreign Office Information Research Department (IRD) lives on in Whitehall, and has provided an illuminating insight into how manipulation of official information will go on after we eventually get "open government".

IRD (*See The Leveller 13*) was the Foreign Office Department which for 30 years handed out subtle anti-communist propoganda in the guise of "briefings" for selected journalists, mainly right-wing, in Britain and around the world.

It was, in theory, closed down by David Owen at the beginning of 1977. Recently, the Foreign Office, in common with other government departments, started offering specific documents, which they said were "used in the formation of Government policy" to the general public. One document offered was a rundown on the black organisations of South Africa. Liberation movement supporters in Britain wrote for the document and were amazed at its inaccuracy.

Close examination shows it to be a document from some successor operation to IRD! The description of the African National Congress stresses the links between it and the South African Communist Party, and the use of selective quotations makes the ANC seem totally dependent on Moscow, and suggests that the Moscow relationship is the most important factor shaping its politics.

This is a classic IRD smear, cleverly done with a lot of carefully selected facts. It's ironic that people are now being encouraged to write in and volunteer to be sent propoganda.

UNIONS

Jack Dromey - My life and times at Grunwick

ROY GRANTHAM, the APEX gen sec, will discover this October that his nightmares over the extended Grunwick dispute are still not finished.

Lawrence and Wishart will then be publishing Jack Dromey's account of his role as effective trade union organiser during the dispute. Dromey says his book will show that the right-wing of APEX, the TUC and the labour movement did what the courts, NAFF and the police could not — they brought the dispute to a spluttering inglorious end.

Dromey - himself of course not without critics — offers an account of Grunwick's implications for the trade union movement; he is also involved with two other publications on the issue.

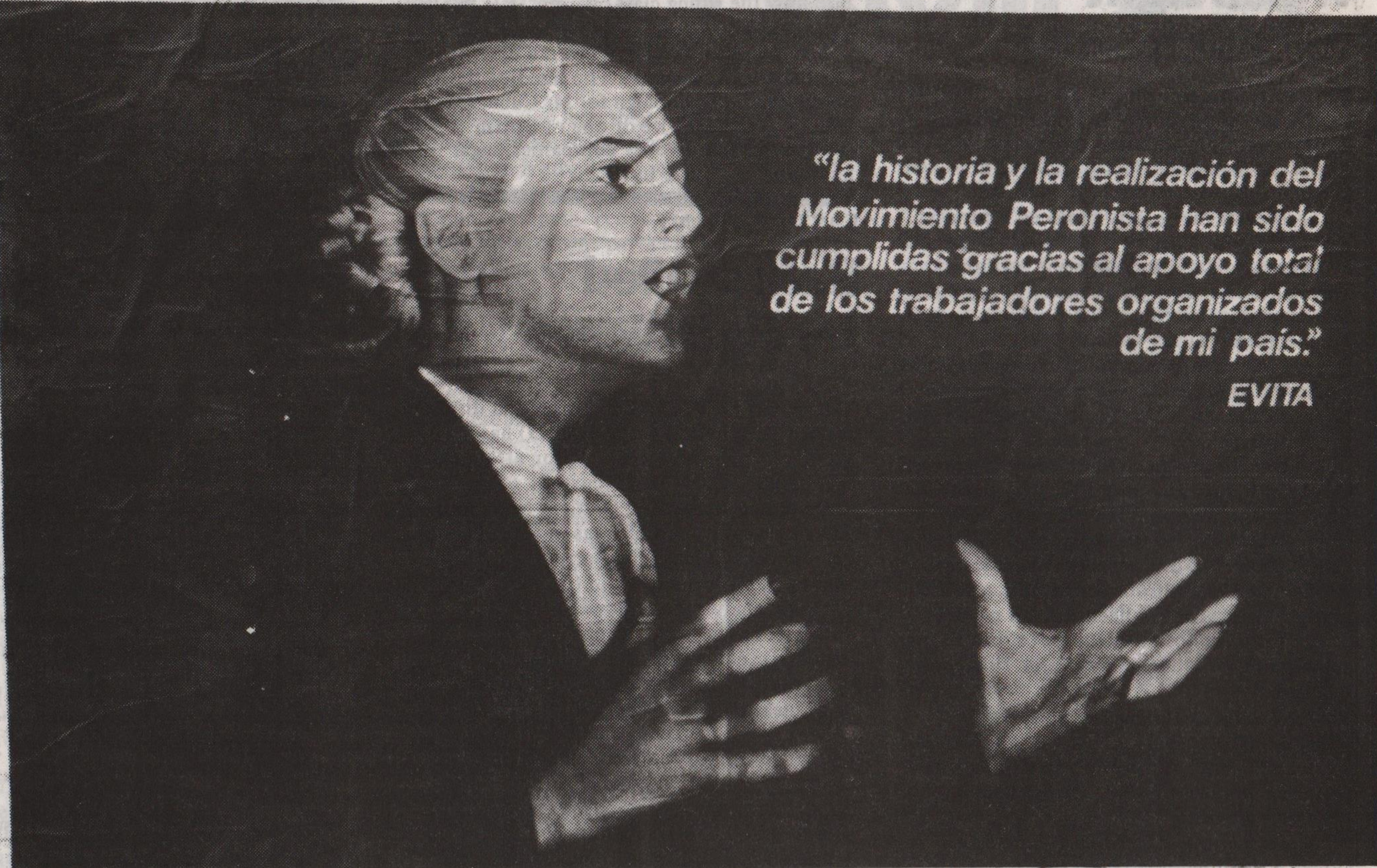
One is a pamphlet on the role of the police, and the other is supported by Brent Trades Council and called *Bravery and Betrayal*.

These add to an already bulky body of literature on the dispute — what with George Ward's version and the rush-job by *Financial Times* scribe Joe Rogaly. Acedemia will also be offering an onslaught — according to Dromey, he has had 38 approaches from learned people for help with their MAs and PhDs.



CGT

CONFEDERACION GENERAL DEL TRABAJO DE LA R A



"la historia y la realización del Movimiento Peronista han sido cumplidas gracias al apoyo total de los trabajadores organizados de mi país."

EVITA

Juan for all and all for Juan?

THE MOST frequent criticism levelled against "Evita" in the British press is that the protagonist emerges as heroine. They complain that the production fails to project her essential evil. Their concern stems from the fact that it is part of the accepted wisdom in Britain, for both left and right, that peronism was a peculiarly Argentinian form of fascism. This is also the view of the author of "Evita", Tim Rice, who recently described Peron as nothing more than a common or garden fascist, in an article in the "Sunday Times".

Argentinians of almost every political tendency find this characterisation of peronism completely irrelevant to any serious discussion of the subject. It says more about Britain than about Argentina. Ernesto Laclau, one of the most original young Latin American political scientists, who teaches at Essex University and last year published a book on ideology, marxism and fascism (New Left Books), wrote in 1973:

This theory (that peronism was fascist) is now totally discredited in Argentina, except among a few unimportant groups on the extreme right. Indeed it cannot withstand the most elementary historical enquiry. Whereas fascism based its strategy on smashing the trade union organisations, the political

power of peronism depended on the mobilisation of the working class. Once in power, the peronists permitted the growth and consolidation of the strongest industrial unions in Latin America. Moreover, a decisive element in the triumph of fascism was the support of powerful financial groups, while the principal sectors of Argentine capitalism — landowners, traditional industrialists, and the commercial bourgeoisie — were peronism's most determined enemies.

Peron was an Argentine, and Evita was a glamorous actress from the provinces on the make in Buenos Aires. This is absolutely true. It is also true that Peron and his wife became great national political leaders, who indelibly left their imprint on Argentine political life for the next 30 years. Laclau identifies three

main features of the peronist regime up to 1955:

1. a general democratisation of society based on nationalist and anti-liberal ideological forms;
2. the creation of a kind of welfare state based on the continuous increase of the power of the unions and the working class; and
3. the formation of an economic structure based on an expansion of industrial competitive capitalism through a transfer of income from the agrarian sector.

The phenomenon is a lot more complex than one would imagine from reading any of the standard works in English. Other Argentine leftists have complained that peronism has been classified as bourgeois nationalism, even though the working class formed the greater part of its base...and was, with Peron himself, its only permanent feature.

This was particularly true after 1955, when repression of the working class was carried out in the name of extirpating peronism. Most British writers on peronism have completely ignored the marxist tradition inside peronism, which goes back to its first emergence in 1945. Important sectors of the Communist and Socialist Parties, and the most progressive sector of the Radical Party left their own parties to enter the electoral movement supporting Peron. Part of the hatred with which peronism was subsequently regarded by the traditional parties can be ascribed to the bitterness of the original splits.

John Williams Cooke, Peron's personal representative in

Argentina after 1955 for almost ten years, co-ordinated the first peronist resistance. He survived to become the theorist of a revolutionary transformation of peronism, which inspired the Montoneros and other groups which emerged to lead the resistance to the military dictatorship of 1966-73. He constantly found himself at odds with the cautious and reactionary bureaucrats who surrounded Peron in exile and pretended to keep his memory alive in Argentina. In 1964 Cooke went to Cuba, where he became close to Guevara and participated in the various liberation movements in Havana in 1964-66.

It is an interesting footnote to "Evita" that it was Cooke who persuaded Guevara to revise his estimate of peronism and brought him to see it as the possible cradle of a future Argentine revolution. It was significant that the column which had been formed in Argentina to link up with Guevara's continental command post in Bolivia decided after his death to struggle for Argentina's national and social liberation from inside the peronist movement. This column became the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación, which in 1973 linked up with the Montoneros.

Undoubtedly Evita was a source of great dynamism in the early days of the peronist

movement. Her instincts were in favour of class struggle, hostile to the oligarchy, hostile to the interests of British imperialism. Of course, some of her methods may seem crude in retrospect. The idea that you could create a charitable foundation, which would enforce contributions from the rich, and then give sick workers and children whatever they wanted; opening the snooty Colon Opera House for a tango evening with tickets distributed free to factory workers; wearing Dior dresses to show that the President's wife is "as good as" the Queen of England, may seem absurd. The cult of personality is offensive to socialists and liberals in Britain, but it is by no means specific to fascism and has often played a crucial part in uniting people in time of crisis. Fidel Castro's distribution of benefits in Cuba has occasionally been as idiosyncratic as that of Evita.

Her life and death were the stuff of which myth is made. Her picture became an icon for millions of Argentine families, who saw her as the guarantor of the possibilities which had opened for them with the peronist victory in 1945. Once again, this confusion of political and religious images is not peculiar to any particular political doctrine. It happened in Spain during the early Franco period with the image of La Pasionaria, and again in Bolivia with the image of Che Guevara. Any treatment of her life, which does not understand with some sympathy the meaning of the myth, will almost inevitably be offensive to the great majority of the Argentine people, who remain peronist to this day.

In Britain, it is important for critics to recall some of the particular circumstances of Peron's rise to power. We were the dominant imperial power in Argentina before the second world war. In 1933 we imposed a grossly unfavourable and inequitable trading pact on Argentina, specifically designed to further the interests of British capital, and drawn up by Sir Walter Runciman, a leading British admirer of Hitler. (Balance

this against the excessive emphasis on Peron's admiration for Mussolini).

All over the world (India, Nigeria, etc.), Britain attempted to stem the advance of nationalist movements by describing them as "fascist". Many people who were far from fascist, seeing Britain and the US as their principal enemies, hoped that the axis powers would be victorious. This must seem today to be mistaken, but surely completely understandable. The other decisive factor, extremely important for subsequent Argentine political history, was that Argentina's political crisis coincided with the period of maximum co-operation between Stalin and Roosevelt. When the US ambassador in Buenos Aires, the mining magnate Spruille Braden, launched his crusade against Peron, the Argentine Communist Party gave him their full support, allowing Peron to win the 1946 election on the slogan: "Braden or Peron?"

A final point is that Argentinians are often enraged to hear European marxists discussing peronism because the discussion is so patronising. The impression is given that if only Argentina had known more about marxism, there would not have been any of this silly nonsense about peronism. Argentina has one of the richest political traditions in the world. Marxist theory was more generally discussed and argued in the period 1968-73 in Argentina than in any European country. It was a furious and exciting period of ideological debate, which ranged back to the strong anarchist tradition of the Argentine labour movement, through peronism and the Cuban revolutionary experience, down to the emergence of armed political revolutionary movements in Argentina itself.

The debate about peronism is not a simple one, but it is unlikely to advance very far in this country unless the left manages to rid itself of the notion that it can usefully be equated with fascism. ●●

Chris Roper



The show of the LP of the true story

WEBBER'S, RICE'S, and, most importantly, director Hal Prince's "Evita" is the "Saturday Night Fever" of the West End stage in 1978. It has become, simply, a phenomenon; and as with all media-spawned phenomena, it just is, it happens.

The modern era delights in spectacle and magnitude. And the "public" — so we are told — delights in such phenomena. Which are both unusual and exciting (something different) on the one hand, and on the other, deeply familiar and easily recognisable (something the same). Any differences only emphasise the common nature of all show-biz blockbusters.

But "Evita's" differences also serve to fill the show with some unique significance: a number one hit single over a year before the opening of the show. Sung by Julie Covington, who rises to fame on the back of this and a TV series about stardom, and the quest for stardom, "Rock Follies". Then refuses to be a star and turns down the lead in the show. Reasons undisclosed.

Whether by coincidence or cunning, the show opening just as the World Cup is opening in Argentina. And so, making the show seem suddenly more important, more in touch with the currents of the real world.

Argentina is, anyway, a perfect setting for a West End musical: after all, who knows anything of Argentina, its people and history? It's like a South Sea island. It's exotic: the vague memories of corned beef, pampas and machismo which spoiled the perfectly clear horizon have been wiped off, are now replaced by the gracefully flowing Kempes, the black eyes of Luque, the skulking, cigarette-smoking face of Menotti. Bang up to date, but with the decided advantage that we are still a million miles away from reality.

There is a correspondence between the show's internal meaning and the history of its coming to the stage. They are parallel reflections: just as the phenomenon envelopes the show, just as the packaging becomes paramount, so the show celebrates the triumph of style over content, the victory of effect over meaning

and the success of spectacle over significance. In this "Evita" is a model of all West End shows.

"Evita" promises enlightenment but offers only myth. To accomplish this, art is debased into "entertainment". The audience is allowed its sense-perceptions of eye and ear, but is denied its intelligence. Contact is lost: the audience becomes mere spectators. We are duped in exactly the same way as Eva dupes the masses when she sings "Don't Cry for Me, Argentina."

Plot and narrative are dispensed with. It's almost a formal necessity in a musical to lurch from song to song, tableau to tableau. Meaning is disrupted; rather, it becomes of secondary importance. A sausage-string of pre-digested clichés replaces narrative.

The sausage-string is as follows: small-town girl, Eva, whores her way to the top; behind every great man (Peron) there stands a strong woman (Eva); and heroine dies tragically young. On an ideological level this reproduces and romanticises a (reactionary) view of both men and women. This is strengthened by the whirl of Eva's costume, which emphasises her femininity and physicality. Peron is displayed in public scenes in his tight-fitting general's uniform, but privately, with Evita, in sloppy and baggy, distinctly George Raft-ish, mufti; so disclosing the weakness of his inner (true) self inside his public persona.

Similarly, characterisation is cut to a minimum. "Evita" of course is a nickname: characterisation remains at that level. "Evita" doesn't explore the doubts, hesitations, inner complexities and contradictions which are the expression of the human. It's an expression of style in the form of the spectacle, which requires of the audience only that they spectate, and requires of the puppets in the play that they make as few concessions to the human behind the mask as possible.

There are no characters, only figures surrounded in coloured light, lit from below, back-lit and found half in shadow, or in glaring floodlight — all highly unnatural forms of light. The figures, mostly, are enclosed within a large definitionless black space, a stage without boundaries, and are posed in

striking tableaux.

All this seeks is to mystify. Likewise, recurring religious motifs in music and staging add significance to the show's portrayal of Eva's character as ineffably mysterious.

Finally, political explanations are mystified and bowdlerised. Peron's rise to power is shown in one song where, along with five other generals, he sits in his rocking chair. A game of musical chairs is played, at the end of which he is the only one left, rocking in his chair, comfortably. Realpolitik becomes a parlour game.

Eva's social climbing is telescoped into one scene

outside her revolving bedroom door. In true musical comedy fashion her visiting gentlemen are swept out of it in ascending order of status and position by an increasingly silky and sophisticated Eva who in a twinkling of the eye and a quick off-stage change discards the down-market and provocative nightwear of the small-town slut for the high-fashion pornographic deshabillement of the "Vogue" sophisticate.

At least Eva and Peron do not suffer quite such a sad fate as Che Guevara, who is wrenched out of time, place and character to comment on

the action. Che's comments do not undercut or analyse the action, they do not flow from any form of revolutionary consciousness, but are the sad, satirical jibes of the English liberal who equates Peronism with fascism, and fascism with all forms of non-Parliamentary democracy.

But the most striking indication of Rice's politics, and what eventually spikes the whole hype of the show, is the depiction of the masses, the Argentinian peasants and workers. They are given little real part to play. They respond, rather than initiate. They are undifferentiated,

without individuality, and have no solo numbers. And they worship Eva as fans do film-stars. Their enthusiasm for Eva is comparable to the enthusiasm of the Argentinian football supporters for their team.

This isn't a musical about politics at all. It's a musical about show-biz, about being a success in the world of musicals. Peronism is fascism, fascism is all forms of government except bourgeois Parliamentary democracy, and politics is, of course, show-biz. There are leaders and masses, stars and fans. ●●

Sandy Craig

The preface to the lyrics of *Evita* describes it as "a Cinderella story about the astonishing life of a girl from the most mundane of backgrounds." The backgrounds of the authors of this opera were equally mundane, if rather more affluent. Both are ex-public schoolboys, from the commuter-belt middle class. Musically, their work belongs to an equally middle class tradition of English light music and operetta, stretching back to Gilbert and Sullivan. Jesus Christ Superstar indeed is well on the way to becoming a modern *Mikado*, a staple of school and amateur dramatic productions.

It is important to get this straight right away because the work of "the most remarkable musical child of his generation" and his "partner of perfection" is often claimed to embody some new maturity in rock music, casting off forever the rough and the rude. The quotation is from Derek Jewell, the most tireless (and tiresome) exponent of this viewpoint.

Jewell is a middle-aged Sunday Times executive and jazz buff who writes a weekly column on popular music. His heroes are a procession of literary singer-songwriters, grandiose and often incoherent composers and pretentious instrumentalists, of the Yes, Genesis and Rick Wakeman variety. All these are presented as the real heart of today's pop, in an unbroken line with his heroes of the 1930s, like Duke Ellington and Cole Porter.

Takeaway Rice and Webber

Jewell hates punk with a rare virulence, exhibiting all the panic of a suburban householder when a black family moves into his street.

Jewell has always been a fan of Rice and Lloyd-Webber. It was he, in fact, who gave them their first review of their first publicly performed work, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat*, in 1969. At this stage, Lloyd-Webber was still a student at the Royal College of Music, which Rice had been working as a kind of trainee producer in the record industry. They had previously written a musical on the life of Dr Barnardo (!) which hadn't been taken up by anyone.

The choice of Barnardo, J. Christ and E. Peron as the central figures of their big works is probably not accidental. In different ways, all can be treated as examples of a familiar type in bourgeois mythology—the saint who is also so very "human". This is the motheaten old "human nature" cliché which denies that anyone's motivations can be primarily political (or religious or charitable) because always underneath is the "real" (ie non-ideological) person. To quote the *Evita* blurb again: "This is a story of people whose lives were in politics, but it is not a political story."

In its first year, the double-album of Jesus Christ Superstar sold 20,000 copies in Britain. In rather less time it sold three and a half million in America, a gross income of thirteen million pounds. At this point, each of the authors had made about £250,000 from record royalties. Most of the

performers on the album, having opted at the start for a flat fee rather than royalties, got a few hundred pounds.

Superstar reached America at that moment when the collapse of the 1960s counter-culture had contributed to a resurgence of various forms of fundamentalist religion (remember the Jesus People?) Christianity had become a media event, and the album and subsequent Broadway show found a ready audience. The eager consumers were middle-of-the-road middle class people as much as the revivalist religious fringe. Indeed, Billy James Hargis, a reactionary "rock is the work of the devil" evangelist, argued that the work treated "Judas as the hero, Jesus and His Apostles as drunkards and Mary as the secret lover of our Lord." and denounced the whole thing as a "satanic production".

The devilish work of getting Jesus Christ Superstar on the stage was that of Robert Stigwood, one of the less lovable moguls of the rock world. Arriving in London from Australia as an actor in the early 1960s, he turned to pop management and signed up the Bee Gees. He later managed Cream and with the profits from these groups and various live promotions, turned his attention to the theatre. Stigwood hustled his way into the theatrical rights of Superstar and put it on in New York and London, where it's still running over five years later. There was also a film shot in Palestine by Norman Jewison.

After all that, Rice and Lloyd-Webber were rich and famous (Stigwood was richer but less famous). Tim Rice

became a minor celebrity, writing letters to *The Times* and playing records on Capital Radio. Lloyd-Webber involved himself in an abortive musical of *Jeeves* and more recently has produced his doodling *Variations* as well as the BBC's World Cup Theme.

Evita will do in the eighties what Superstar did for its composers and producers in the seventies. It's constructed according to the same musical formula, adding a new coat of paint to the threadbare philosophy of apolitical liberalism. Lloyd-Webber's undoubted skill at producing artful melody lines is firmly in evidence, notably in Julie Covington's *Don't Cry For Me Argentina*. But the dramatic contrast in *Evita* as a whole consists only of the juxtaposition of the quiet melodic pieces with thumping identikit rock numbers in the public and political scenes. The result, in the songs, is that the aim of presenting Eva Peron as some kind of complex, passionate character comes to very little. Whatever the spectacle in the theatre manages to add, the figures on record remain resolutely cardboard.

Dave Laing



Meanwhile 6000 miles away...

Argentina has been governed by a military regime for nearly two and a half years. The period has been marked by brutal repression and economic hardship which has made the country a safer and more attractive place for the multi-nationals and a lot more uncomfortable for everybody else.

In many ways the military junta seems more firmly in control than ever. The success of the World Cup was a major victory for the regime's international image and its international prestige. There was no political chanting on the terraces and none of the gorillas running the para-military death squads escaped from their cages to perform some new atrocity. No-one was more relieved than General Videla when it was all over.

It did however give a badly needed boost to the President's prestige. He faces internal dissension within the three-man ruling junta, within the army of which he is head and between the different sections of the armed forces. There is little consensus on how to resolve the country's economic and political problems and there are signs that the military is reluctantly preparing to hand them back to civilians.

Militarily, the regime is in complete control. They have achieved their main objective of annihilating the guerrillas, whose members are either dead, in exile, or imprisoned in one of the military's concentration camps. What remains of the Montoneros and the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) is too small to constitute anything but nuisance value. There are signs, too, that these organisations are beginning to reassess the military strategy they have pursued since 1974, although the task is not easy in today's climate of political repression and clandestinity.

The guerrillas are dead, but the political and economic tensions which caused them to emerge are still there. That is mainly why the kidnappings by armed groups under military control go on. They continued right up to and during the World Cup and are going on today. The economic situation is potentially explosive. A rash of strikes which took place last November were brutally repressed.

All those identified as leaders were kidnapped.

Two years of monetarist economic policies have produced a balance of payments surplus and large foreign exchange reserves. It has also produced an industrial recession which has thrown thousands out of work. Real wages have been reduced to their lowest level since the banks started compiling statistics in 1950.

People have used up what savings they had and the desperation is written on their faces. Some survive by taking a second job or doing long hours of overtime. Most have to make do by eating less and cutting down on everything but the barest essentials. It is not a situation that can last. The trade union structures remain intact, if banned for the time being, and the military is going to have to concede a more peaceful alternative to kidnapping people for keeping industrial peace.

The junta has recently reconfirmed Videla as President until March 1981. He will have to rapidly impose his control over the government and the armed forces if he is not to be replaced—a task made more difficult by the fact that he has had to retire from all his military positions this month.

The main bone of contention is the economy minister, Jose Martinez de Hoz, whose inability to demote Argentina from the top of the world inflation league (annual rate of 180%) is making him increasingly unattractive. The navy, firmly under the control of Admiral Emilio Massera, wants him and his policies to go. Massera's scheme for coming to an agreement with the right wing trade unionists and the Peronists is ruined whilst the combination of inflation with wage restraint remains.

Right wing nationalists in the army, headed by Generals Menendez, Suarez Mason and Saint Jean want Martinez de Hoz out because his policies are destroying small and medium-sized businesses in favour of the multi-nationals (which now control 70 of the top 100 companies). However, Martinez de Hoz is likely to stay. None of his opponents have any serious contenders and he has the support of Videla who still hopes he will pull off the economic miracle which might form

the basis of a political solution. That seems unlikely. Although the agro-export business is beginning to show signs of expansion, the labour-creating industrial sector remains as depressed as ever.

Whilst the air force chief, Brigadier General Orlando Agosti and the Interior Minister General Albano Harguindeguy are insisting on no deals with populists and political parties, Massera is insisting on the need for a political solution to precede any economic solution. "The army knows how to give orders but not how to govern" he told me in London in July.

The army is suspicious of Massera's political ambitions to become a latter-day Peron. Former President General Lanusse tried to make the transformation from a military to an elected President in 1973. According to a well-informed army source, his fellow army officers squashed the idea. The elections were held without him and the Peronist Hector Campora won. Massera has considerable charisma and might pull something off. But the navy is junior to the army and he will lose all his official power when he retires from the

junta and as head of the navy some time before March next year.

President Videla is expected to take the wind out of Massera's sails by bring some people from the right wing Radical Party and other civilian politicians into the government. That would shut them up.

But no political solution is possible without the Peronists, the biggest political force along with the right wing Radicals. Such negotiations are anathema to the military and former President Isabel Peron is still under house arrest. However, the Peronists are now deeply divided between the corrupt followers of Isabel, mostly under lock and key, the traditional populists vehemently opposed to Marxism, and the left, who joined the Montoneros.

New political formations are bound to emerge. But in the present climate of political repression and a gagged press there is little room for new ideas and it is difficult to assess which way people will turn. Videla will try to negotiate the participation of some politicians in the government in order to assess the possibility of controlled elections from there.

But any hand-over of power

would have to be preceded by a cleansing of the barracks of all the elements seen to be responsible for the atrocities and the dismantling of the concentration camps where thousands are held prisoner without trial. That may prove to be a lengthy task. ●●

Jenny Rathbone



Rise and Fall of the Far Left

From the late sixties to the return of the Labour government in 1974, the organised far left in Britain—mainly Trotskyist—grew spectacularly. Since then, however, a political crisis of the far left has been developing steadily. In this, the first of a two part analysis, Susan Gargen traces the development of this crisis, its causes and the reaction to it of the SWP and the IMG.

The signs of crisis are the halt in the growth of the IMG and SWP and the significant decline in their influence in the industrial working class. Both these organisations have suffered high turnovers of membership and have spawned numerous opposition currents (which often have been expelled from the SWP or split from the IMG) adding to the already numerous far left groups—which would be laughable were it not so tragic.

There are clear political aspects to this crisis:

- 1) a crisis of marxist theory—the organised far left has made little contribution in analysing the current crisis of capitalist society. Such work that is being done is produced by people working around independent journals such as *New Left Review*, *Capital and Class*, *Radical Philosophy*, *Ideology and Consciousness*, *Race and Class*, *m/f*, *Critique*, *Gay Left* and *Wedge*. A possible exception is the work done by comrades in the RCG/RCT, but in the writer's opinion their theoretical work is so flawed by propagandism and economio-reductionism that it is of doubtful value.

- 2) a decline in the internationalist outlook of the organised far left—this is not only evident around the unpopular issue of Ireland, as Dave Clark highlighted in *The Leveller* 16. Compare the campaign against the deportation of Philip Agee with that against the deportation of Rudi Dutschke in 1970/71, or the size of the demonstrations against Caetanb in 1973 with those after the Soweto uprisings.

- 3) a deepening tension between the organised far left groups, on the one hand, and the autonomous movements (eg women's movement, the black movement, the gay movement) and independent campaigns (eg anti-imperialist campaigns, anti-racist campaigns, campaigns for women's rights) on the other.

The far left attitude to these movements and campaigns is like that of the grasshopper—jumping into and out of them at a moment's notice in a parasitic manner. Hence we have, for example, the hostility of many in the

women's movement to the participation of women from the far left groups. A key cause of this crisis was the unexpected decline of the trade union struggle after 1974. Along with this came the evaporation of many of the left's trade union fractions and the collapse of the rationale for much of the hyperactivism of their members. The fact that this collapse of trade union militancy was so unexpected and lasted so long indicates how superficial is their understanding of the crisis of capitalism or the nature of working class consciousness. Regularly during the 60s and early 70s the conventional wisdom of the left was that the reappearance of mass unemployment and decline of living standards of the working class would have a radicalising effect—that illusions that capitalism could continue to deliver the goods would be shattered.

The effect has been, on the contrary, a conservative one with many accepting the need for wage controls, high unemployment and slashing of state welfare programs. The overwhelming consensus of the far left remains

that this downturn is temporary; that with the coming rise of the class struggle all the present inertia will dissolve like the mists before the morning sun. There is little attempt to develop analyses of the different economic, political, social and cultural aspects of British society, and in the absence of that, the butterfly approach to various issues, the frenetic search for the get-rich-quick gimmick, continues.

The SWP has been, since the mid 1960s, the largest and most effective organisation to the left of the Communist Party. Initially it had a very rosy picture of what life would be like under the Labour Party, producing such gems of political analysis as that the honeymoon period between the working class and the Labour government would be shortlived, and that inflation would be the motive force of trade union militancy. The non-appearance of this new dawn of trade union militancy led to a major decline in membership and in the circulation of *Socialist Worker* in the 1974-1975 period.

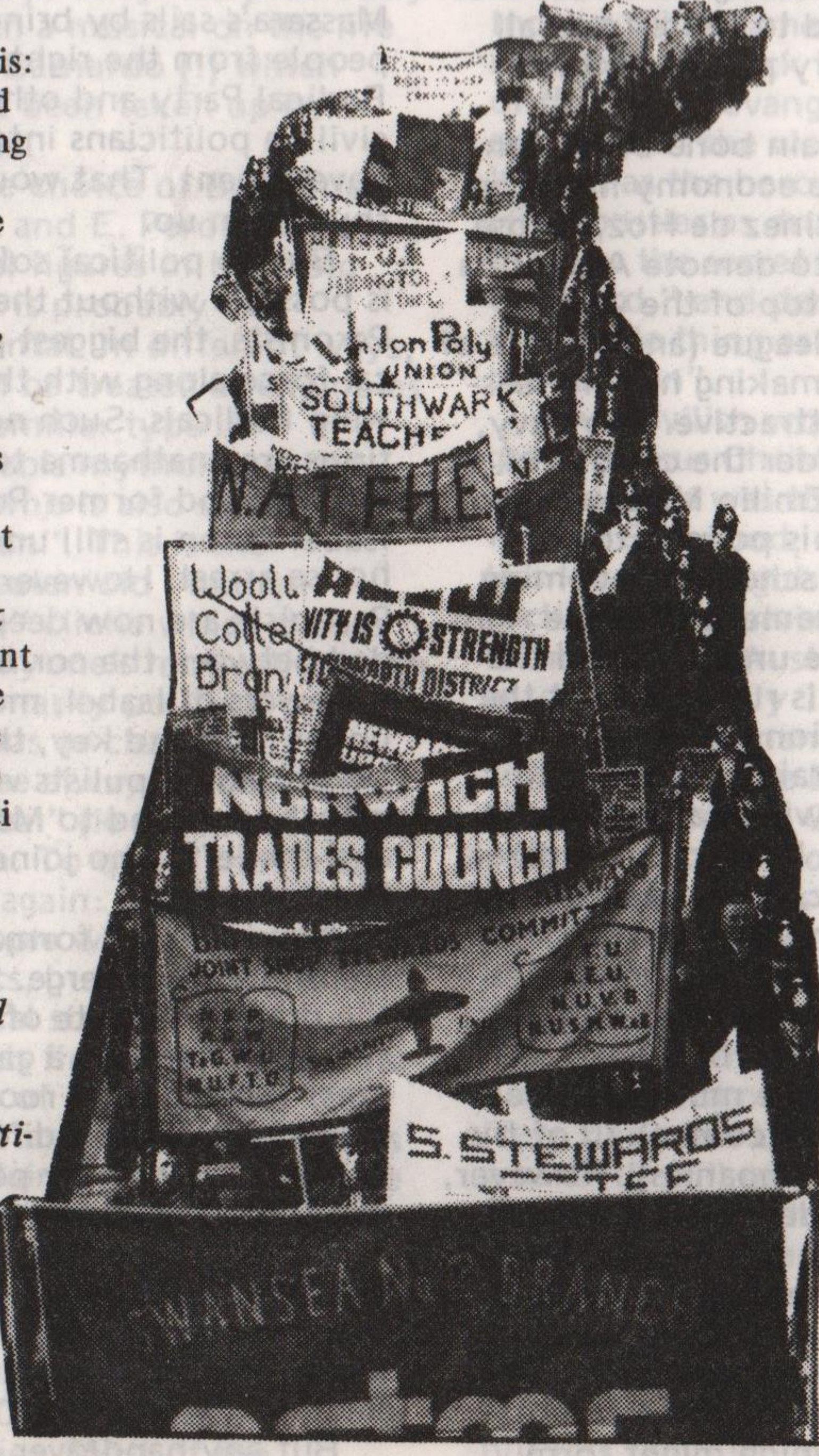
In response to this it evolved a "steer left" orientation, which led it to organise militant, strident campaigns, which had much flair and dynamism (eg the Anti-Jubilee campaign) and which were accompanied by vigorous recruiting and party building drives. Party membership increased once more. However it is an organisation with less influence than in 1974, and its leadership candidly admits that its implantation in the trade union movement is still weaker than under the Tories.

The IMG had similar naively optimistic views about political developments under the Labour government. Its first attempts to come to grips with the new situation was an orientation towards left social democracy. This was accompanied by an expectation that the "betrayals" by the Labour Party leadership of the 1974 Labour election manifesto would lead to a polarisation within the party, which would in turn lead to a radicalisation of the trade unions. This turn towards the Labour Party led the IMG into a political dead end for two years (and produced an acrimonious internal situation).

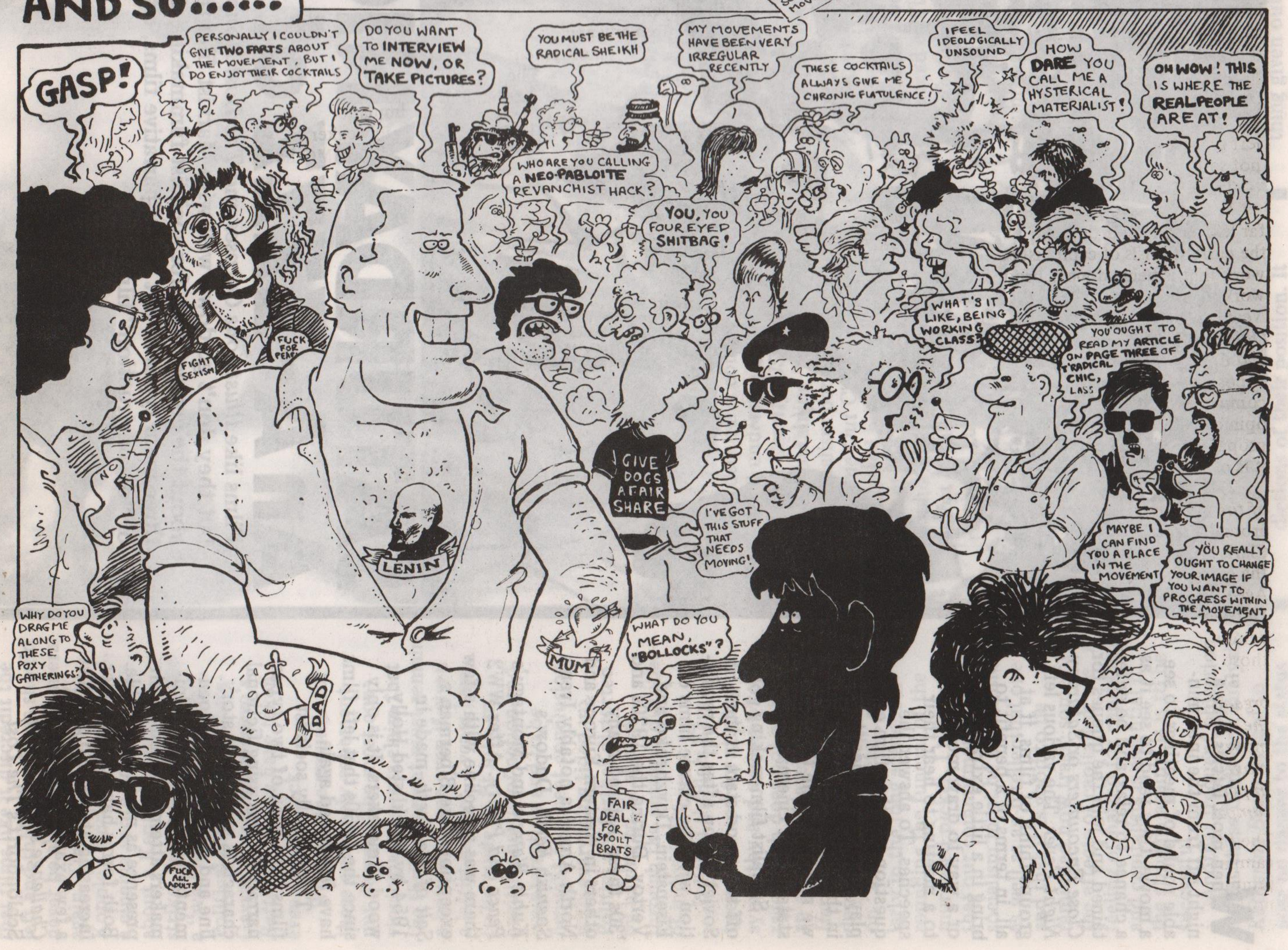
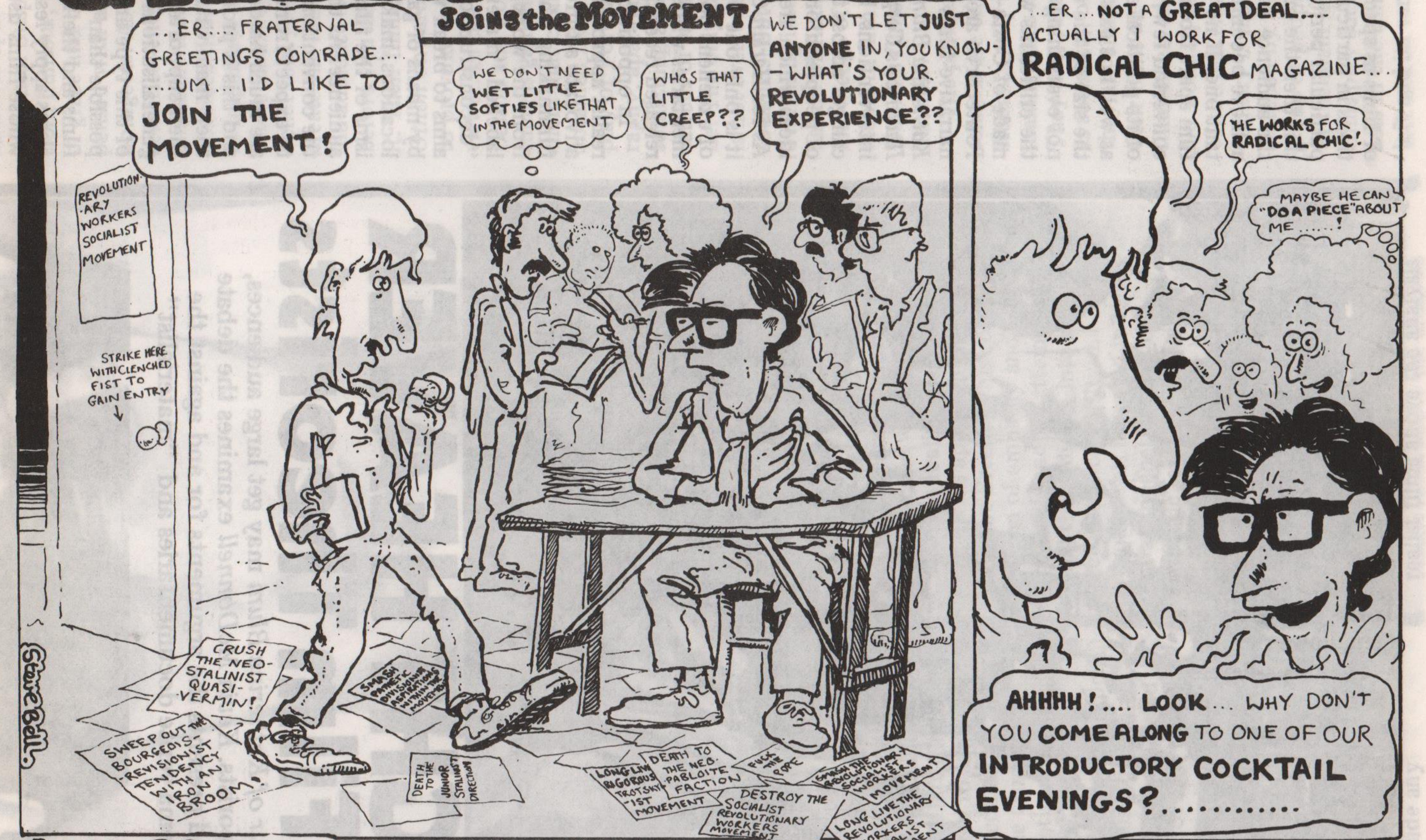
Faced with the failure of this policy the IMG again overhauled its political positions in late 1976/early 1977.

The key aspects of current IMG politics were outlined in a special supplement of *Socialist Challenge* on February 2nd 1978. This included an analysis of the political situation in Britain since the return of the Labour government, an outline of the need to build a socialist alternative to the Labour party through a campaign for a united revolutionary organisation of the far left, and (both from the point of view of organising a serious electoral challenge to the Labour Party and building left unity) the proposal to build Socialist Unity—as an electoral front and as an ongoing campaigning organisation.

As left unity and electoral activity are burning issues on the left at the present time, I will attempt to assess IMG's Campaign for revolutionary unity and the performance of Socialist Unity in the next issue.



GILBERT GAUCHE an everyday story of MARXIST-LENINIST FOLK



When most lefties take a night off from the interminable round of meetings to see a movie, they tend to see it as a chance to relax and be entertained and join the queues for *Close Encounters* or *Saturday Night Fever*. The various left groups think of films, if at all, in terms of a benefit to bring in a little extra money or a way to draw more people to a meeting to hear their speeches. To answer the question whether film could play a more significant role in the struggle for socialism we must examine the current state of left cinema.

Socialist film-making got off to a good start in the Soviet Union after the revolution with the classic films of Eisenstein, Dovzhenko and Vertov. During the 1920s and '30s these inspired many others in Western Europe and North America notably Iven's *Spanish Earth*, Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe* and Montagu's *Peace and Plenty*. After WW2 there was a decline with a few exceptions like Biberman's *Salt of the Earth* made in 1954 by blacklisted Hollywood filmmakers. It is only since the 1960s that left films have flourished again.

Traditionally socialist films have been of two types: narrative films using fictional characters and a clear story line and cinema verite documentaries in which the filmmakers attempt to hide their presence as much as possible. Both forms have come under increasing attack. To give just a few examples — *Socialist Challenge's* response to Schlöndorff's *The Lost Honour of Katherina Blum*, a narrative film about the harassment of "suspected terrorists" by the state and press in West Germany, was that films like it discredit the left and that the makers should never be allowed near a camera again. *Time Out* has called Kopple's *Harlan County USA*, a cinema verite documentary about a Kentucky miners' strike, "seriously flawed" and a "well intentioned failure". Political thrillers like Costa-Gavras' *Z* and Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* have taken even heavier stick.

What are the grounds for these extremely vehement put downs? The most convincing arguments claim that the thriller format must remain a bourgeois one even if given a leftist subject. Events have to be made to fit into an exciting battle of action and counteraction and to be brought to a neat conclusion with everything tidied up. Politics are further distorted by having to be shown through the personal qualities of individuals.

Political thrillers have also been criticised for stirring up sympathy and a sense of outrage which does not go beyond an emotional level. Similarly *Harlan County USA* is condemned for relying too much on "emotive effects", particularly in the long scenes surrounding the funeral of the murdered picket. I believe that our commitment to socialism must be an emotional as well as an intellectual one and that it is good to be reminded how tragic some of the effects of capitalism are. A feeling of hatred for capitalism and capitalists is essential if the struggle against it is to be successful.

Another frequent objection is that these films lack analysis. *Katherina Blum* is said to pose no danger to the status



SATURDAY NIGHT HEAVEN An A-ZZZZ of Film Theorists

Films like *Illustrious Corpses* and *The Lost Honour of Katherina Blum* may get large audiences, but they don't go down well with Marxist film theorists. Kevin McDonnell examines the debate about the correct path for socialist filmmaking and presents the arguments for and against the three main types of left films: narrative films, cinema verite documentaries and "materialist" or "deconstruction" films.



quo because it contains no useful understanding of it. *Harlan County USA* is charged with containing "no allusion to socialism per se". In a letter to *Time Out* Clancy Sigal has confessed his astonishment about the way its film critics "who seem to lap up the most appalling sexist-horror garbage, turn into left-than-thou purists during certain phases of the moon". As he says, one of the best things about *Harlan County USA* is that rather than merely giving us simplistic pat denunciations of the capitalist system or portraying the strikers as it would like them to be, it lets us hear what they actually think, demonstrating both the strengths and contradictions of their position. It

not only describes one strike, but gives us much of the information necessary for an analysis of the mining industry in the USA. Chuck Kleinhans has remarked that left films are often expected to say everything when you couldn't even read out the *Communist Manifesto* in the time.

Sometimes the criticisms are based on an approach which dismisses the realist films as such. This approach associated with the journal of film theory *Screen* now dominates academic discussions and has spread to the film reviewers of *Time Out*, *Spare Rib* and sometimes *Socialist Challenge*.

It argues that realist films, both narrative and documentary, assume reality is something given outside any

presentation of it and that the task of film is simply to record this reality. This, it is alleged, means realist films cannot cope with the extent to which reality is contradictory. This approach also follows Brecht in his condemnation of empathy and catharsis and his attempt to pull the audience into an active critical position. Usually this is argued in terms of an impenetrable psycho-analytic terminology which talks of the spectator being fixed in position by the realist film.

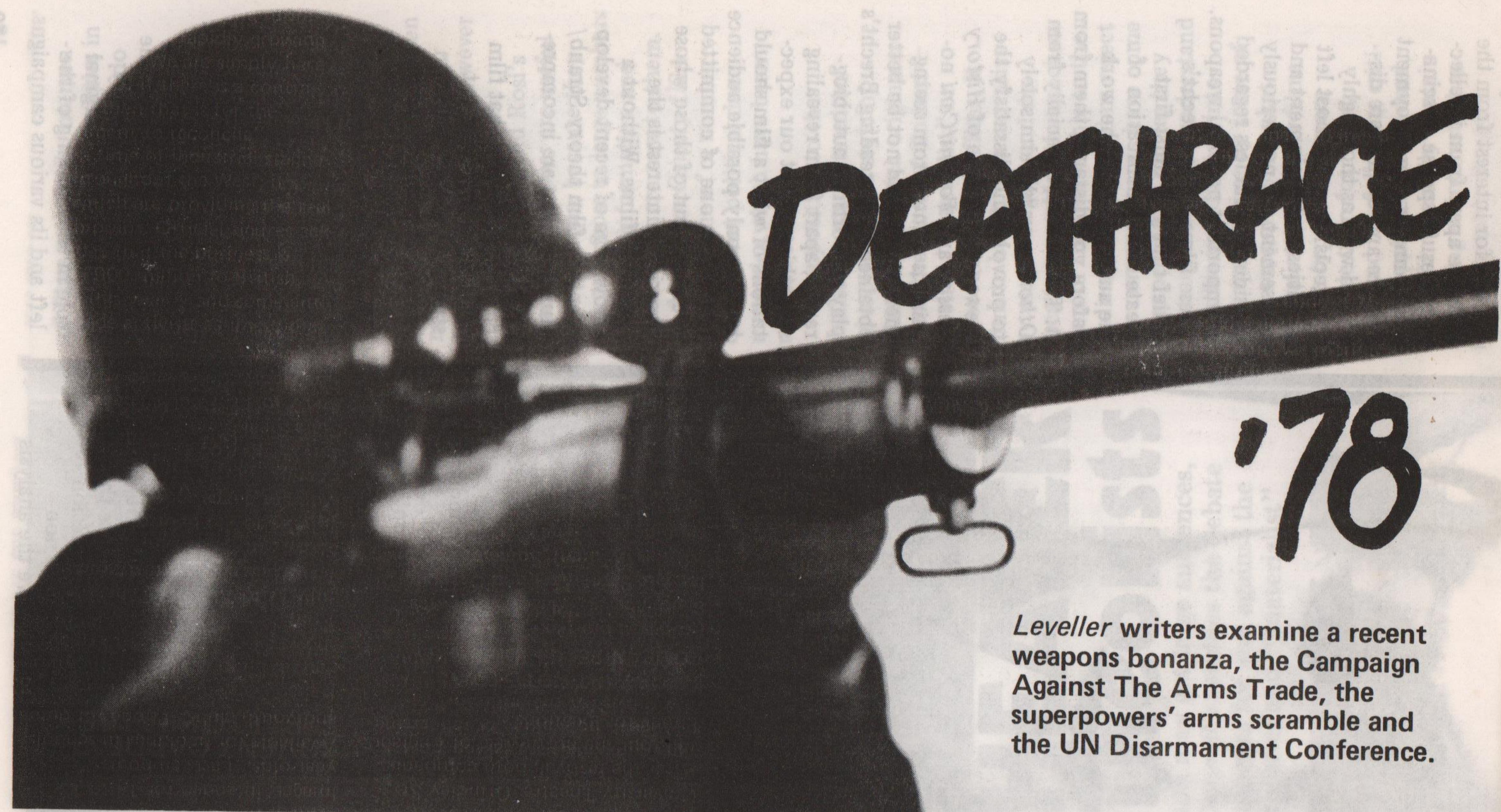
While there may be something in both these points, they are used to elevate the abstract formal distinction between realist and non-realist films above the analysis

of films as specific interventions in particular societies in particular periods. If we do this then the question of the audience a film can achieve becomes an important one. If no one sees a film apart from an already converted few, then in terms of its political effect it might as well not exist. Of course the size of the audience is not everything and many of the criticisms which have been made of Costa-Gavras and Pontecorvo are valid. However narrative films such as *Katherina Blum* and Rosi's *Illustrious Corpses* are useful interventions, because they can get across to large numbers of people information and ideas which are new to them. As for *Harlan County USA* it is only one of a number of excellent political documentaries which have been released recently.

In opposition to the realist approach its critics advocate a third style of filmmaking which originates from the work of Godard — labelled "materialist" or "deconstruction" films. It aims to break with narrative by means of gaps and dislocations, making the mechanisms of the film visible to the audience. As these films reject the conventions we have come to expect from movies they are much harder to understand and this is promoted into their main virtue by some of their supporters. Blanket generalisations about films of this type are no more possible than for realist films and the following criticisms apply less to Godard, whose films usually contain something of interest, than others, notably Straub/Huillet.

Their films refuse any grounds for interest from the audience apart from intellectual ones. Suspense, fascination, humour, the enjoyment of grace and beauty are dispensed with as thoroughly bourgeois. As with most left activities, entertainment and amusement are not seriously considered, still less regarded as important political weapons. These films reject Brecht's belief that you must first create the identification of the audience with the work before you distance them from it. Their films, especially from *Othon* onwards, aim solely to provoke and dissatisfy the viewer. In the case of *History Lesson* and *Fortini/Canis* nothing is gained from seeing them that could not be better obtained from reading Brecht's play or Fortini's autobiography, apart from revealing something about our expectations of what a film should be. The only possible audience is not even one of committed socialists, but of those whose overriding interest is the nature of films. Without a knowledge of recent developments in film theory Straub/Huillet's films are incomprehensible.

The problem is that film schools are churning out students only interested in making films in this style. They may regard themselves as socialists, but the people they are aiming to please with their films are their fellow filmmakers and theorists. No wonder, then, that much of the left cinema in this country is made by and watched by the same small group of people. This is one of the main reasons why films play such a marginal role in the thinking of the left, and its various campaigns.



"I was at the Oxfam conference a couple of weeks ago," said the earnest young rep during his lunch break at the recent British Army Equipment Exhibition at Aldershot. "We were talking about using our fuel tanks for irrigation projects in Bangladesh. They'd be ideal."

He was a blue suit and tie Conservative, thought Rhodes Boyson was the only man in the party to talk sense, had moved over from engineering to the sales side of the business: "That's what's wrong with this country.. We just don't take marketing seriously." His company makes rubberised fuel bags which fold up small for easy transportation and swell out once they're full. About 60 per cent of the business is defence sales: the bags make ideal reserve capacity for the mobile modern army.

He couldn't see any contradiction between selling fuel bags for war and selling them for peace. The world's armies have the purchasing power and he wasn't in favour of swords into ploughshares while there was business to be done. A feeling shared by Major General Sir Hugh Beach, the Master of the Ordnance and one of the supremos of Britain's rapidly growing arms trade: "We are simply here to do a job. If there is a contradiction, then that is for the Government to reconcile"

In a time of industrial stagnation throughout the West, it's arms which are providing the real growth point. Official figures acknowledge that the business is worth £900 million to British capital this year — and some anti-arms-trade activists estimate that

the true business is worth much more. Growth in Britain, particularly under a Labour Government nominally committed to world peace, has been phenomenal: in 1965, when the Wilson Government set up the Defence Sales Organisation as a state-owned body to encourage and develop the arms trade, it was thought that British exports were worth £150 million a year. In 1976, official estimates of its export value were at the £560 million level and city stock-brokers Greene and Co were noticing that the exports of the 22 leading manufacturers were growing at the astonishing rate of 47 per cent per annum.

Arms are clearly good for business and the Army Equipment Exhibition — a biannual event complemented by similar exhibitions for the Navy and the Airforce — reflected the lavishness of the trade. There were expensive stands, simulated firing ranges, British squaddies on tap to help with the demonstrations, endless drinks available in the hospitality rooms, bountiful supplies of brochures with pretty model girls — there's no other way to describe a woman

DEATHRACE

'78

Leveller writers examine a recent weapons bonanza, the Campaign Against The Arms Trade, the superpowers' arms scramble and the UN Disarmament Conference.

prepared to use her sex-appeal to sell barbed wire or sophisticated guided weapons systems — on hand to answer questions.

The foreign visitors lapped it up of course. The Generals, Admirals and Police Commissioners of 70 assorted democracies and military dictatorships happily rubbed shoulders and compared notes on fire-power and death capacity

The nature of the debate on the arms trade, particularly on the socialist left as opposed to the pacifist, has been woolly and unclear — particularly in the light of different interpretations of the class nature of the Soviet Union and thus of the cold-war stance that fuels much of the arms business. The Soviet Union devotes twelve per cent of GNP to armaments, compared with 4.8 per cent in the West.

The exact function of the defence industries in the western capitalist economies is still the subject of debate on the left, while that of the Soviet Union has been barely discussed. Mike Kidron, the architect of the now-disputed permanent arms economy theory which provided a key theoretical underpinning of the IS platform of the sixties,

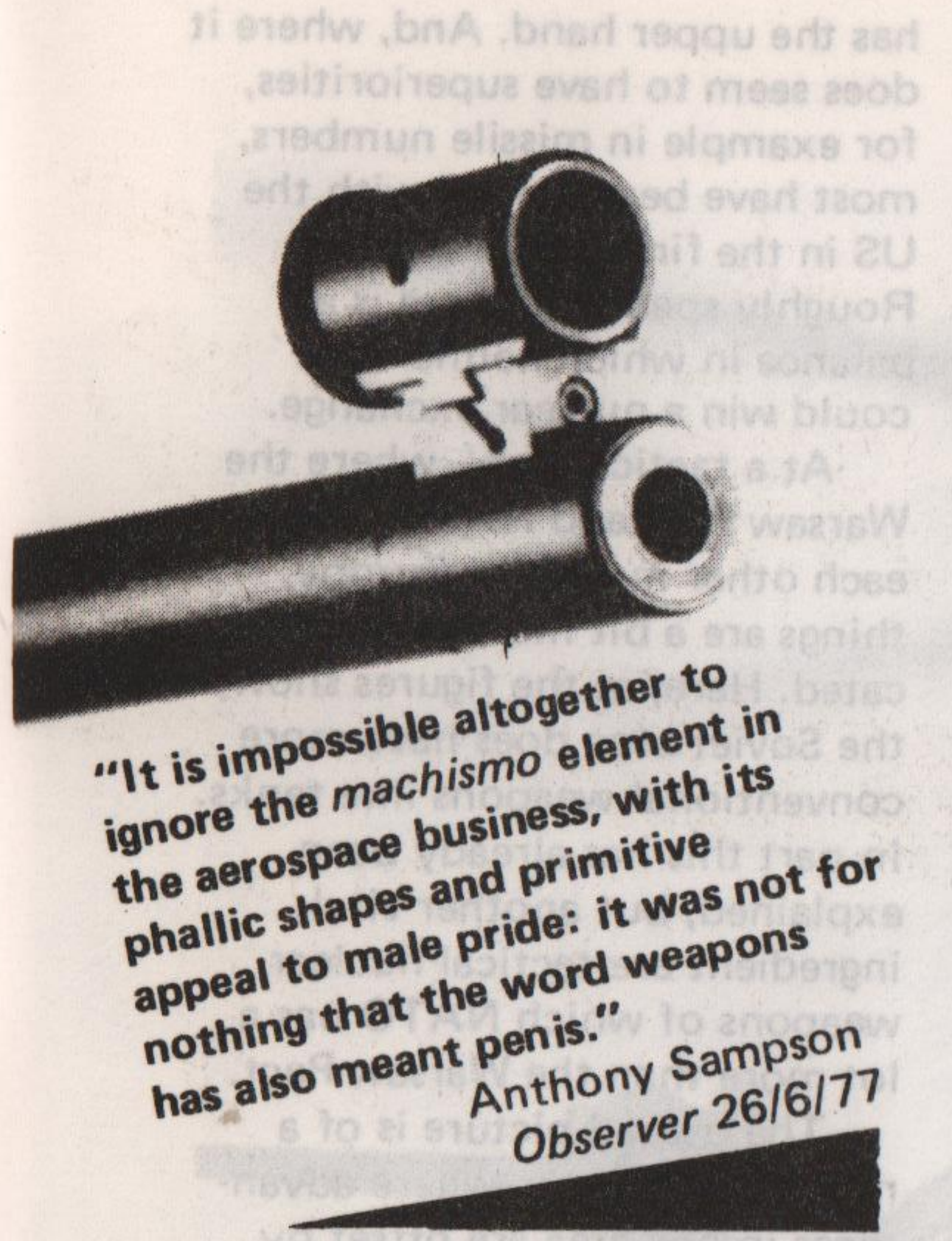
will be putting his own arguments forward in the next issue. But it's worth noting that in "Capitalism — The Latest Stage", in his *Capitalism and Theory* he argues that:

"The drain provided by arms budgets since World War 2 has constituted a far more effective mechanism for stabilising the system than classical imperialism ever could, for it has involved a systematic destruction of values, not a relocation of their use, and it has acted in integrating the system far more effectively than any other form of expenditure..."

He goes on to argue that the post-war state controls the economy in part through taxation which is then fed back into defence industries: "the very existence of national military machines of the current size, however happened upon, both upsets the bias towards declining profit rates and compels other national capitals to adopt a definite type of response and behaviour which requires no overall policing by some overall authority. The sum of these responses constitute a system whose elements are both interdependent and autonomous, held together by mutual compulsion — in short a traditional capitalist system".

In Britain, which accounts for about ten per cent of the world's arms export business, "cut-backs" in defence brought about by a Labour Government, have been more than recompensed in employment terms by the growth of the export side.

The *Defence Estimates* for 1977 put the total defence bill at £6,329 million: out of that, a total of just £200 million was cut, a third of it — about £75 million — in the equipment programme. That sum was more than



"It is impossible altogether to ignore the *machismo* element in the aerospace business, with its phallic shapes and primitive appeal to male pride: it was not for nothing that the word weapons has also meant penis."
Anthony Sampson
Observer 26/6/77

recompensed for by the £4-5000 million additional revenue generated from the export drive and the total industry is thought to employ between 70 and 80,000 British workers. And the spin-off into supporting industries may take the employment total up into the 250,000 range.

Clearly it's big business, and it's one that the state is in to up to its neck — not just through the activities of the Royal Ordnance Factories, or the export business stimulated by Millbank Technical Services, which provides the skilled labour and technical back-up for the private companies in the arms business — but also to its shareholdings in, or outright nationalisation of, firms as well-known as Vickers, British Leyland, Short and Harland, Ferranti or the British Aerospace Corporation.

Some workers are unhappy about the situation and their most political response has been seen in the proposals put forward by the Lucas Aerospace Corporate Plan proposals for the restructuring of the company to produce goods for peace, not war. But there are enormous difficulties in the way of proposing such changes, particularly in areas of high unemployment.

And although the Labour Party and the TUC have official policies of discouraging the arms industry, the ever-escalating sales around the world spell both profits and jobs. Indeed when the Labour Government first announced the cuts in defence expenditure, the Treasury was quick to reassure companies selling defence equipment to the government that they could increase prices and profits to allow them to make a target rate 18 per cent return on capital employed — a rate of capital accumulation virtually unequalled anywhere else in the economy.

It is the arms trade between the west and the Third World that really points up the political obscenity of the business. The Campaign Against the Arms Trade has estimated recently that military research costs £10,000 million each year — more than twice

the amount spent on constructive research, and enormous in comparison with the £2,000 million spent on medical research. In some third-world countries, defence expenditure amounts to 60 per cent of Gross National Product in areas where people still die for want of proper food or basic medical facilities.

Yet last year, British arms trade to the Third World increased by 40 per cent, and brought with it a continuing commitment to come back for spares, back-up and training facilities. And wars aren't fought on the territory of the west, but in the impoverished countries of the Third World: the world spends fifteen times as much on weapons as it does on total government and private aid to the Third World.

The world arms trade is divided up with the United States taking the bulk of the business at about 37 per cent, and the Soviet Union following closely behind with about 32 per cent. France and Britain hold about 10 per cent each with a handful of other countries — Italy, Israel, Sweden, Switzerland — taking up the slack. Although the west leads in technology, many Third World countries are developing their own industries — Egypt, India, Brazil, are all examples — though they usually work on the basis of disadvantageous lease-back and licencing deals with their Western masters.

The other giant capitalist economies — those of Japan and Germany — are kept out of the world's arms markets by World War 2 peace treaties, hence their enormous competitive power and the undoubted marketing expertise they would add to the business are only in the wings at present. But there are ominous signs of an awakening industry in both countries and their future role should not be underestimated.

The international arms industry is functional in both the economic and political spheres for western capitalism — as it is for the Soviet Union. After the downturn in western imperialism following the American defeat in Vietnam, there are alarming signs of a hot war mentality emerging from both the 'hawks' in the United States and in the aggressively right-wing stance adopted by Mrs Thatcher's Tories.

No political realist can view these developments with anything but profound pessimism. So far the arguments about the arms trade have been largely in the hands of the dedicated pacifists whose moral ideas quite properly fuel a part of the broader socialist ideology. But it is time for the left to develop its own theories on the arms trade, and to take political action to deal with it.

David Clark
"The Chieftan — our main battle tank, which is the great virility symbol of the modern army."
Major General Sir Hugh Beach

INTRODUCING FIRE FIGHTERS

THE CAMPAIGN Against the Arms Trade works from Housman's Bookshop, Kings Cross, London, bombed in July by Column 88. Set up four years ago in the wake of the Middle East War, CAAT is sponsored by a number of religious and pacifist organisations. *The Leveller* talked to Sandy Merritt, the campaign's organiser.

Are you opposed to all arms sales by everyone everywhere?

We're opposed to all arms sales. But we only work against British arms sales because we're in Britain and we feel that that's where we can do the most good. There's small CAAT groups in nearly every Western country and there are groups in the Third World who are working against their country's or their region's involvement in the arms trade.

If we didn't make arms, wouldn't the sales simply go to other countries that did?

Certainly in the short term they would. But there's a lot of concern at governmental levels on arms sales: President Carter and Brezhnev are allegedly having talks on curtailing the arms trade. The main problem is perhaps not the major suppliers, the United States and the Soviet Union, but France and other countries who are far less scrupulous than Britain who they sell arms to.

We feel that if Britain stops selling arms — it's not going to stop overnight — but if Britain limited its sale of arms, it would hopefully create a climate, a political climate in which other countries couldn't so easily step in.

Even if Western nations pull out, aren't there forces arising in the Third World which will soon be in a position to sell arms?

Certainly there are countries in the Third World which already can sell arms, like Brazil, Korea, Taiwan. But their productive capacity is very limited at the moment. And the industrialised countries still probably have enough control of the productive processes because of licencing

agreements. When Israel wanted to sell aircraft to Ecuador, the aircraft had American engines and America refused to let the aircraft be sold.

Perhaps it's countries like Israel who will be the real problem because they are very advanced and can start producing without licencing agreements. One can only hope that an international political climate will arise where there just won't be so much demand by Third World countries to have the arms, that there will be a lot more moral pressure, as well as political pressure, against the countries that want to sell them.

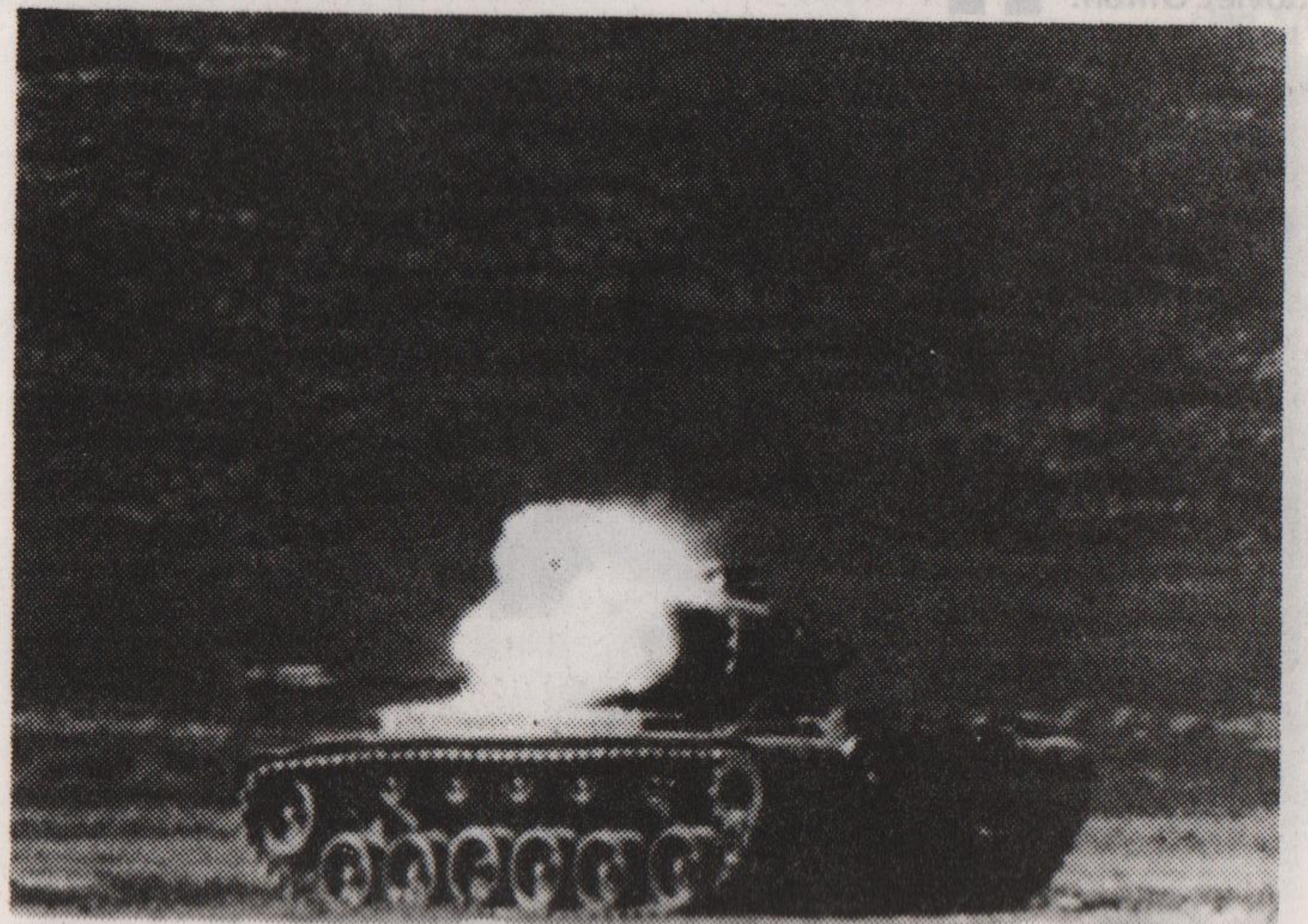
If Britain did cut back on its defence sales, who would make the arms that would defend Britain?

It's not going to be something that's going to happen quickly. There would still be the Royal Ordnance Factories; there would always be, presumably, enough productivity capacity in Britain to produce the arms that Britain needs. It would probably be done a lot more in conjunction with NATO — because there's already a lot of talk about standardisation across NATO.

In the Third World if there was a country that we wanted to support against an aggressive neighbour, for example Kenya at the moment, that we should give the arms to them in the same way that we did during the colonial times.

Are you opposed to the commercial sale of arms by the Soviet Union?

Very much so. And the Soviet Union is the second largest



supplier of arms in the world — more so than Britain. The United States is providing about 38 per cent of the arms that are going to the Third World, the Soviet Union about 34 per cent, Britain and France about 10 per cent each. We work primarily against British arms sales because we're here. In the case of the United States, France or Germany, we can work with groups in those countries that are opposing arms sales. In the Soviet Union they don't allow groups that oppose the arms sales so it's more difficult.

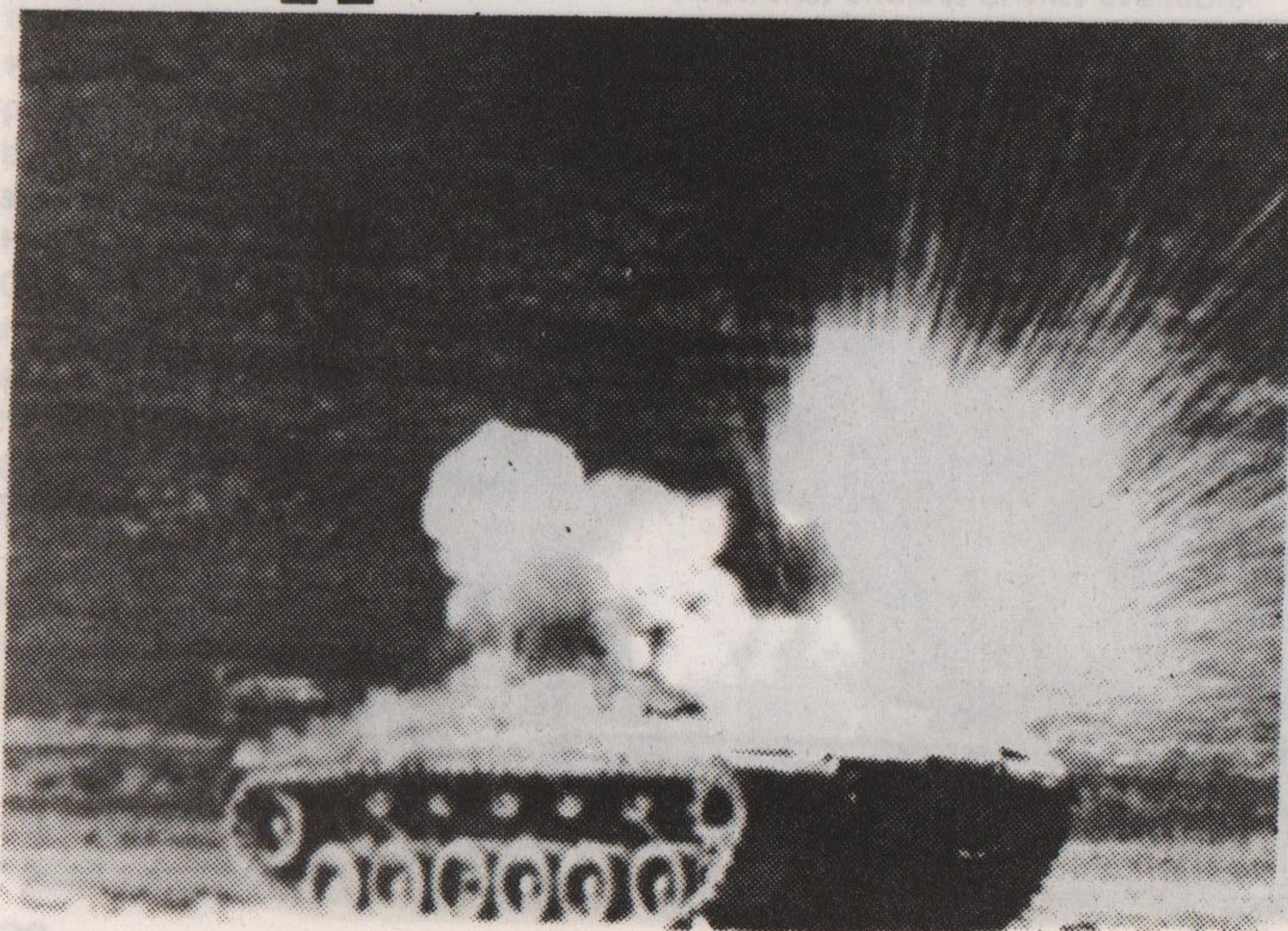
Does the enormous amount of Soviet armour in Eastern Europe facing Western Europe alarm you?

No more so than the enormous number of nuclear-armed aircraft in Western Europe facing the Soviet Union. Although I think everybody agrees that the Soviet Union has superiority in ground weapons, equally everybody agrees that the West, the United States and NATO, has superiority in nuclear-armed aircraft.

I'm speaking as myself rather than for CAAT when I talk on this. My feeling is that despite all those tanks the Soviet Union's got enough problems just hanging onto its satellite countries without worrying about countries that are going to be extremely hostile and are going to be protected by NATO. And it hasn't had a very easy time in Hungary or Czechoslovakia, which it had to take by force, repress by force.

If one considers the resistance within Czechoslovakia — which still exists despite the presence of all those troops there, then think how much greater the resistance would be within West Germany, which presumably would be the first country.

Look at Czechoslovakia where it's had all those tanks and a much more docile population. And if you talk to people in Czechoslovakia, nobody likes them there. People co-operate to the barest minimum. And in West Germany, people would be far less co-operative with the military power. They haven't been able to repress Charter 77, any more than they've been able to repress dissent in the Soviet Union. ■ ■



FIGURING OUT THE RED MENACE

As relations with the Soviet Union get worse, a massive propaganda war has been launched in the West to win support for NATO's military buildup. Brian Deer looks at "the Soviet threat" and argues that this is not the biggest danger to peace.

My aunt Hilda, a woman of great wisdom who never married, once advised me that I should always believe nothing I heard and hardly anything I saw. Taking her advice has left me almost entirely ignorant, but I am convinced that there is some kind of inverse relationship between the accuracy of information and its availability to the public.

Luckily, perhaps, we are not all so sceptical, but many of us do take on board beliefs about the world, the source of which are to say the least dubious. "I read Lord Chalfont in *The Times* and things" was, for example, how one *Leveller* collective member explained to me his acceptance of the common belief that there is a massive Soviet arms buildup going on.

We can't of course go and count the Soviet weapons that are ranged against us, any more than we can check out for ourselves the NATO armouries. We seem to be more or less obliged to believe what our military leaders and politicians tell us. And they tell us that the Soviet Union is hell-bent on world domination by force.

The picture painted by the British government, who we naturally believe, is the straight NATO view that the Russians are indeed coming. As Prime Minister Callaghan said in June while picking up the first ever "Hubert Humphrey award for international statesmanship", the military might of the Soviet Union "far exceeds her legitimate security needs."

To support the sentiments of this much-used phrase, NATO points to a number of superiorities the Warsaw Pact has achieved. In main battle tanks, for example, the Warsaw Pact has 2.7 times the number NATO has in central Europe. It has 1.2 times more soldiers and 2.5 times more artillery.

In nuclear weaponry, the Soviet Union has 2,466 strategic nuclear delivery systems, compared with just 2,011 possessed by the United States. And the total megatonnage of the Soviet strategic arsenal is 8,421 compared with US strategic warheads totalling only 5,454 megatons.

Taken at face value these figures might prove conclusive and there are doubtless some people who think we might as well wrap ourselves up in brown paper and lie on the floor right now. But there are other facts which need to be mentioned to complete the picture.

It's true that the Warsaw Pact has more tanks, but this is generally viewed as the result of the Soviet Union's reluctance to throw away out-of-date weaponry. And NATO has twice as many anti-tank guns. Similarly, the larger number of soldiers is not disputed, but it's worth knowing that NATO will often use civilians for jobs which the Warsaw Pact would have done by people in uniform. And NATO long ago decided not to match Warsaw Pact artillery gun for gun, since Western equipment is better.

In the nuclear balance, if you look at it one way the Soviet Union is ahead. But if you consider that the US has 1,046 MIRVed missiles, compared with 230 Soviet MIRVed missiles and the US has 11,894 nuclear warheads compared with the Soviet Union's 4,398, the picture looks very different.

The consideration of MIRVs and warhead totals is essential to a proper understanding of the nuclear balance. MIRVs, or Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles, are like small missiles which break away from the main rocket when it nears the target. They vastly increase the destructive power of a ballistic missile and make defence much more difficult.

Worse than this, MIRV warheads have an amazing accuracy — an accuracy not needed for nuclear retaliation amongst cities, but really most useful to destroy missile silos. Since an empty missile silo is not worth attacking, MIRVs are best used to attack the opposition before they have attacked you.

At a strategic level it's mad to say that the Soviet Union

has the upper hand. And, where it does seem to have superiorities, for example in missile numbers, most have been agreed with the US in the first SALT treaty. Roughly speaking, there is a balance in which neither side could win a nuclear exchange.

At a tactical level, where the Warsaw Pact and NATO confront each other in central Europe, things are a bit more complicated. Here, as the figures show, the Soviet bloc does have more conventional weapons like tanks. In part this has already been explained, but another vital ingredient are tactical nuclear weapons of which NATO has a lot more than the Warsaw Pact.

The overall picture is of a rough equivalence where advantages in one area are offset by disadvantages in others. Neither side could, at the moment, get away with an attack on the other — even if it wanted to. But this balance may not always be steady: new developments threaten to tilt it one way and to make a successful "first strike" possible.

It's more than a year since President Carter called on NATO members to put up arms spending by an annual 3% to counter the "growing Soviet threat". Most countries agreed and a big spending increase is under way in the West. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, NATO defence spending went up last year (in US \$ at 1973 prices and exchange rates) by \$5,586 million.

But, also according to SIPRI, Warsaw Pact spending fell by \$248 million during the same period, leaving NATO with a military budget \$51,759 million higher than that of the Warsaw Pact. We can always quibble over the figures, but they don't seem to show that the Soviet Union is massing for the attack.

The waste of money these budgets represent is obvious to anyone, but the figures alone don't bring home the enormous risks. New technology is throwing up weapons, like long-range cruise missiles and the neutron bomb, which threaten to undermine any possible nuclear balance. The speed of the arms race is growing much faster than efforts to control it. SALT has made little progress and talks on the balance of power in central Europe have got nowhere since they started in 1973.

Blaming everything on the Soviet Union does not hide the fact that the United States is the front-runner in the arms race. It's not the Russian tanks, but the American cruise missiles and neutron bombs that are the big threats to peace. And a propaganda war doesn't get around the fact that unless serious efforts for disarmament are made by both the superpowers, the technological explosion may take us all with it.

Any amount of belief in a red threat won't save our skins then.

UN DISARMAMENT CHAT-SHOW

The largest disarmament conference ever held began in New York on 23 May 1978 — the United Nations Special Session on Disarmament (SSD), due to run till the end of June. Delegates there have discussed a variety of more or less radical proposals for arms reductions and programmes of disarmament, and listened to each other and occasional heads of state make somewhat monotonous but fine-sounding speeches which too often have more fluff than real substance.

The SSD has ironically coincided with a number of events on a contradictory theme. As it opened, the NATO Council was meeting in Washington where it agreed on a new long-term programme to strengthen NATO forces. In June, while British delegates in New York supported calls to restrict the arms trade, the Defence Sales Organisation held an arms exhibition in Aldershot to titillate potential customers. More dramatically, the SSD's first week coincided with the neo-colonial intervention in Zaire by Belgian and French forces.

But such ironies are a routine feature of the 'disarmament' scene. Since 1969, when the USA and USSR began the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, each side has more than doubled its inventory of

strategic nuclear warheads. Since 1973, when NATO and the Warsaw Pact began talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions, both sides have increased key components of their forces in central Europe and have failed to agree on almost everything, including what to call the talks and how many troops the Warsaw Pact has in the region.

For over a decade the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, meeting in Geneva, has discussed chemical disarmament; meanwhile a new generation of flame weapons based on triethylaluminium (affectionately known as TEA) has emerged. Whereas napalm, one sticking point in the Geneva talks, only disables those actually splattered by the jelly, TEA releases a spasm of heat so intense it will sear anybody exposed to it.

The dilemma in all such negotiations, even when some or most of the parties are negotiating in good faith, is that their pace is far slower than the pace of weapons development. In an effort to galvanise progress towards arms reduction, the Colombo Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in August 1976 endorsed a Yugoslav proposal which eventually led to the SSD. It is, in general, Third World states, together with some other non-aligned governments, who are the most dissatisfied with the present pace of arms control and disarmament talks. It is they who set the pace in making new proposals, and they

who created the SSD.

Two basic interests motivate this drive. First, the hope that a scarce international economic surplus now squandered on arms could instead be used to aid economic development; second, a general desire for a new international political order which might parallel the more formally proposed New International Economic Order.

The weakness of their position is twofold: the entrenched power of the economically advanced states, and their own divisions about the form and content of a future political order. Differences cannot just be wished away.

Many commentators and western governments point to a further weakness — increasing Third World appetites for sophisticated weaponry. But this is concentrated in a few states, notably the oil-rich Middle East dictatorships which, with the aid of the 'oil weapon' and oil revenues, have

ample power to force some change in the international political order, but not necessarily to the advantage of underdeveloped countries. Such states do not generate pressure for arms reductions — they have no need of them as a lever for international change.

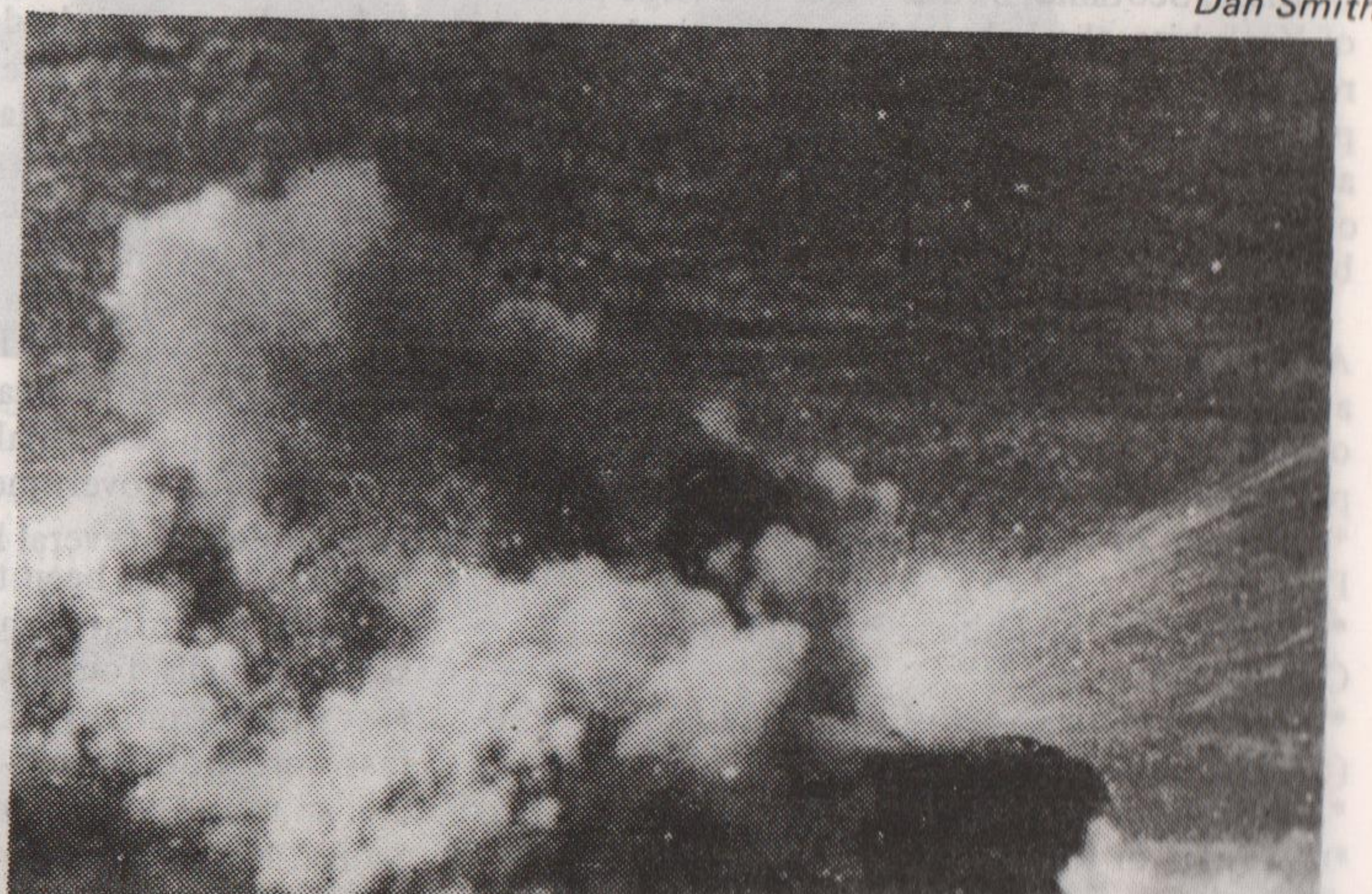
All this does not mean that the SSD is irrelevant. Rather, it means that trying to get actual arms reductions (instead of agreements not to increase levels of selected types of arms, which is the best that arms control talks normally produce) is an exceptionally hard task to take on. It also means that any positive effects of the SSD will be felt not so much in its specific proposals and final statement, as in more indirect and long-term ways.

Through the SSD, preparatory work, and future projects it will generate, pressure is exerted on the best-armed states to turn at least some of their pro-disarmament words into action. Many industrialised states of both east and west may not be prepared to implement real arms reductions, but neither can they completely ignore the concerted voices of a number of non-aligned states.

Important though this factor is, there is a yet more important source of pressure, which has yet to be fully exerted — political movements within the well-armed countries. Given the nature of international politics and the variety of factors motivating high military spending, such movements have a key role to play, for international negotiations and conferences alone will never achieve decisive change.

Too many groups and individuals on the left have failed to face up to these issues. Too often, organisations like CND and CAAT are dismissed as merely reformist and diversionary, yet without them there would be no opposition to British arms policies. To my mind, the centrality of armed force to the self-perpetuation of states makes this attitude of some parts of the left into a nonsense. It is high time these problems, none of them simple, were faced up to.

Dan Smith



Take the money Do not go to jail

CORRUPTION IS nothing new in Britain. Ever since the South Sea Bubble Scandal, periodic outrages have erupted in the midst of the supposedly "clean" British public life. What is new about the last five or six years is the extent of corruption, and the consciousness of it among all layers of society. *Martin Tomkinson of Private Eye* examines the politics of corruption.

IN MANY WAYS the Ronan Point disaster of 1968 was a watershed. An ill-conceived and cheap system of building collapsed, narrowly averting a disaster of Aberfan proportions, and even the most obtuse of observers could see that all was not well. The lengthy public examination in bankruptcy and ensuing trial of architect **John Poulson** revealed that behind such disasters lay a whole superstructure of corruption involving local government officials and politicians of both major parties.

At one of the bankruptcy hearings a letter was read out to Poulson from one of his "employee" councillors, Robert Urwin. He was writing to evil genius of corruption **T Dan Smith** and referred to a local council where they were seeking to obtain work as "not one of our controlled councils". Sadly but significantly, the vast majority of local government corruption cases concern Labour administrations. The reasons are fairly obvious but also instructive.

From being originally a party of opposition, the Labour Party has come to be the dominant political force in many areas of Britain. In Durham, Scotland, South Wales and large parts of Yorkshire, the Labour Party effectively represents a one-party state. As a result the party has come to attract men and women who are not even token socialists. They are out-and-out careerists, intent on riding to power on the backs of the block votes of the unions.

The best example of such a man is Alderman **Andrew Cunningham**, who has recently completed a four year jail term on corruption charges arising out of the Poulson case. At the height of his power Cunningham was:

- *Chairman of the Northern Area of the Labour Party
- *Chairman of the Labour Party Finance Committee
- *Secretary of the North-East Area of the GMWU (the largest union in the area)
- *Chairman of the Durham Police Authority
- *Chairman of the Northumbrian River Authority
- *Chairman of the Newcastle Airport Authority

In this last capacity Cunningham represented both management and unions, because there is a GMWU closed shop at the airport. In all these jobs Cunningham did his utmost to further Poulson's interests. (Significantly his son John is also an MP, and PPS to Callaghan. When Cunningham was released from jail Honest Jim was one of the first to visit him).

In effect, nothing moved in the North-East without Cunningham's say-so, and ironically there is a tie-up here with the Ronan Point disaster. While Chairman of Felling District Council, Cunningham gave Poulson and builders Taylor Woodrow a massive contract to build Ronan Point-type tower blocks. After the disaster, the government ordered all such blocks to be strengthened and the taxpayer had to fork out £570,000 to make up for the firm's negligence. The blocks were consequently empty for 2½ years, causing a loss in rent revenue to the council of a further £430,000.

This is the vulgar reality of corruption — bad housing, expensive contracts, and a lack of funds for schools and hospitals as a result. Naturally, with men like Cunningham at the top of the Labour Party, hundreds of mini-Cunninghams have blossomed all over the land. With scandal reaching right up to **Harold Wilson's** own private office, involving land speculation and the Field family, the local councillor who fiddles a few pounds thinks himself totally justified. Thus, one aspect of corruption can be ascribed to the decline of the Labour Party from anything like a socialist party into a careerist party.

Historically, the final abasement of the Labour Party at local government level has been accelerated by several key occurrences. Chief among these has been the huge rebuilding programme initiated in the 1960s. Suddenly small councils found themselves responsible for vast sums of money. Local councillors very often just were not capable of dealing with such sums and so became easy prey to men like Poulson and Smith. Formerly an ardent revolutionary, Smith was easily able to insinuate himself into the deliberations of councils consisting

overwhelmingly of working men. Bluff, amiable Dan always knew just the right people to design and build, and far too frequently the councillors succumbed with good grace.

What is tragic if not laughable is the paltry amount that such men were prepared to sell themselves for. In one case, the whole of an Urban District Council was lunched for £76. Contracts for a swimming pool, the town hall, a large council estate, and a magistrates' court for Poulson followed. When the local Labour Party wanted to build a new club, the Chairman of the Planning Committee told the general management committee that planning permission might not be granted for the club unless the party changed its architect. His argument was that so much of Eston had been designed by Poulson that any plans by another architect might not "fit in" with the surroundings.

This vast increase in money to be spent opened up unrivalled opportunities for unscrupulous businessmen and greedy local government officials. Many of the corruption cases reported in recent years date back in their inception to this period when important alliances were frequently made. But it should not be thought that corruption was confined to small areas. In some cases whole towns and cities were plundered for the benefit of private businessmen and their friends. This practice was in no way confined to the Labour Party, and the best example is the huge city of Birmingham.

For over a decade, irrespective of which party was in power, one large building firm, **Bryants**, obtained the lion's share of all contracts handed out by the city. Figures such as the city architect and members of the engineers' department were systematically corrupted by gifts of cash, holidays, gambling expenses and women. The Bryants case illustrates to a horrifying extent just how much power these officials hold. As a result of their bribery, Bryants were given contracts for giant housing estates such as Chelmsley Wood, for vast stretches of the inner ring road and many other contracts totalling well over £75 million. The city architect,



Fat cats make merry in month of May

May started well with the disappearance of a hand-written note from a file at the Greater London Council. The file concerned a planning application for a building development on green belt land, and said that the applicant was a "personal friend" of Horace Cutler, Conservative leader of the GLC. Cutler acknowledged that the man was a friend, said that he had behaved in a perfectly proper manner on behalf of a constituent, and that he knew nothing about the note. The first planning application was turned down, but the decision was changed after a second enquiry.

On the tenth of the month, Reginald Mauding was awarded substantial damages in a libel action against *The Observer* for printing his picture next to an article about three MPs allegedly involved in corruption. The article specifically stated that he was not involved with that corruption incident, but the juxtaposition of the picture and the text made it seem as though he was. Nothing was said about his unfortunate relationship with the Real Estate Fund of America or jailed architect John Poulson.

While the Sunday papers were busily nosing around for the stink of graft in Blackpool, Sir Hugh Fraser and four other directors of Scottish and Universal Investments were trying to explain to the Glasgow Sheriff's Court how they had "lost" £4.2 million in the company's accounts for 1975. The deal was a complicated property package with a subsidiary called Amalgamated Caledonian. When the whole thing collapsed, not only did the equivalent of something like 1,200 people's annual wages disappear with it, but Sir Hugh had somehow forgotten to write it down.

At the same time, Lonrho, still smarting from its expulsion from Tanzania for sanction-busting, were arguing the merits of their £39 million take-over bid for SUITS to the Monopolies Commission. Poor Sir Hugh had to tell the Sheriff's Court that he couldn't understand the subtleties of company accounting, and Angus Grossart, a merchant banker and co-defendant, had to explain that he was "absolutely amazed" that the loan had been misclassified. But Lonrho were quite happy to tuck Sir Hugh's £4.5 million House of Fraser profits into their own accounts.

And while Bryants, the Birmingham building

contractors fined £425,000 for corruption on contracts valued at £112 million, smarted at the dent in their balance sheet and the loss to prison of their most energetic directors, Sports Minister Denis Howell explained that Christmas gifts and the use of holiday accommodation between 1962 and 1974 were simply "tokens of friendship" from the company in which he was a former public relations man and director.

It was all getting a bit close to home, even for a government led by former director of the Italian National Bank and intimate of Sir Julian Hodge, the Rt Hon James Callaghan. So the government itself announced its new measures for rooting out corruption in public life. Announced in Parliament by Home Secretary Merlyn Rees, they had all the dynamic impact of warm blancmange. Instead of a new agency to come down hard on corruption, the public can now complain direct to a senior police officer, and all reports will be properly coordinated by the Fraud Branch; the Chief Inspector of Constabulary will have guaranteed access to the central register kept by the Metropolitan Police and the City Police. Terrific. Hong Kong would love it.

Howell's embarrassment was followed three days later by revelations that £750,000 of "strange" transactions were being investigated at the late Sir Eric Miller's Peachey Corporation. The sum included nearly £5,000-worth of champagne sent round to 10 Downing Street for one of Sir Harold Wilson's farewell parties. Sir Eric had been one of the parasites and vampires knighted in Wilson's Resignation Honours List.

And as the Bryants trial made it obvious that the sweet scent of money had spread as far as the normally docile St Albans, and the worried dignitaries on the thousand-name gift list wondered how long before questions were asked about them, the month closed with the news that William Stern — whose property empire crashed with debts of more than £100 million — would continue to live undisturbed in his £200,000 house.

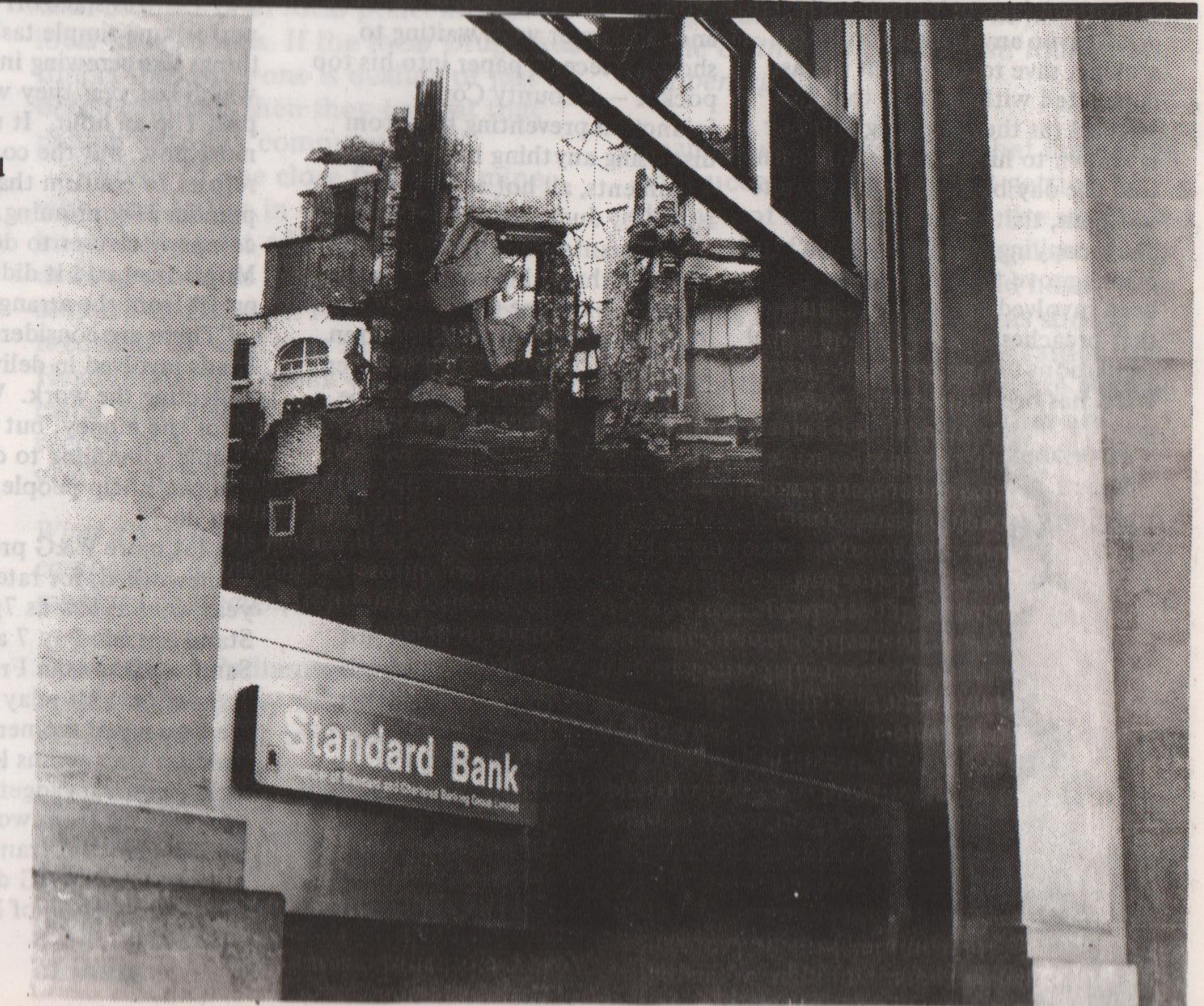
Lord Salmon published his committee's report on "Standards in Public Life" two years ago. So far there hasn't even been a debate in Parliament on it. Perhaps the issues it raises come too close to home.

three Bryant directors and several other officials have been given prison sentences and the firm itself fined nearly £500,000. *But Bryants still own the largest bank in the city and their shares are flourishing.* In the old phrase, they are crying all the way to the bank.

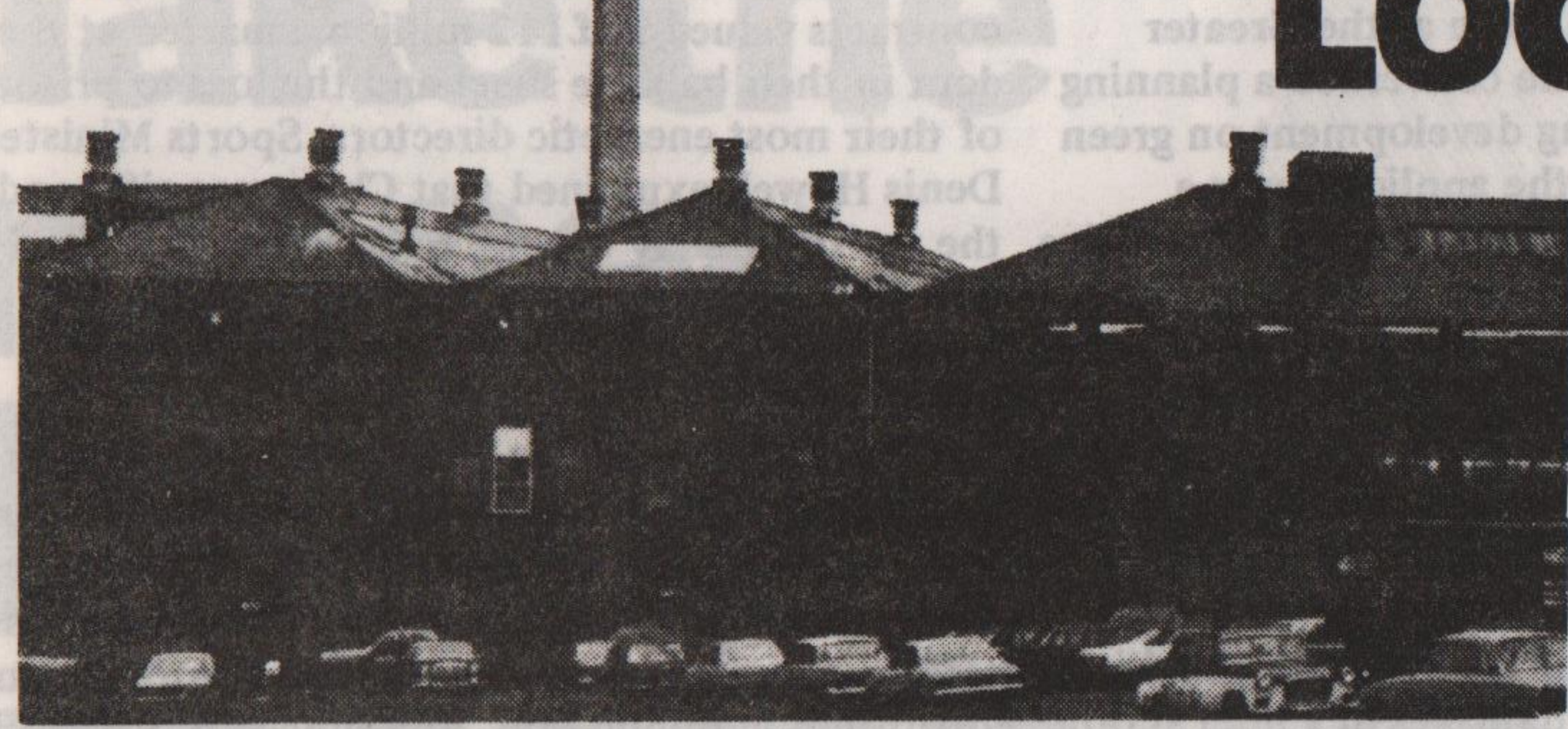
The point is that for a large section of the building industry, corruption is an everyday part of life. When dealing with Middle Eastern countries, British firms often pitifully claim that "corruption is a way of life" out there. As if things were different over here. The crisis that British capitalism has entered in the last 20 years is mirrored in the rise of corruption. Any pretence at a classical *laissez-faire* competitive society has long vanished. Instead cartels and price-fixing alliances dominate industry. A cynicism about the future of the economy is reflected in a grab-it-while-you-can attitude towards wealth and morals. Inevitably this mood and dominant practice has infected the supposedly incorruptible civil service.

At the very highest level of political life, civil servants have been forced to acquiesce in decisions which they personally abominate. The best example of this concerns Wilson's laughingly-termed honours list. Senior civil servants fought tooth and nail against some of Wilson's (and Marcia Williams') nominees, but to no effect. Marcia's personal friends were ennobled and the whole system was reduced to a level of pure farce. Again, this is no accident. Corruption and bribery at the apex of our society are reflected in our politics just as they are reflected throughout industry. Certainly we get the politicians we deserve.

The only refreshing sign is that more and more people are becoming conscious of the deep-rooted nature of corruption within this capitalist society. The eradication of corruption goes hand in hand with a fundamental change in the nature of our society. Until this occurs it is almost inevitable that corruption will grow rather than diminish.



The Sampson Works, Gate 7 in the centre



Local mafia closes ranks over sacked worker

TAKE THE biggest employer in Anytown, the district council leader, a local County Court judge, the local police and press. Join them together and what you got? You got the Network in Salford, Lancs. The firm: Ward and Goldstone, manufacturers of cable and electrical fittings, with 6,000 workers. The council leader: Les Hough, one of those employees. The judge, Ivor Taylor, neighbour of company chairman Sampson Goldstone CBE and of managing director, son of Sam Michael Goldstone, who turns out injunctions from his home at the company's whim. The paper: the *Salford Reporter*, which sucks up to the Goldstones like poison ivy on a shithouse wall.

They've got the town nicely tied up. So far. But they're having to make the connections work hard to keep quiet certain of the company's activities, now threatened with publicity by a sacked W&G employee, Maurice Cahm.

Cahm, a junior executive in the export department, was sacked on March 23, the day before Good Friday, at 4 pm. At no time has W&G given any reason for the sacking, save to deny that it was connected with the fact that Mr Michael (as the managing director is known to his workers) had been told the day before, by a colleague of Cahm, that Cahm had been photocopying documents which he claims prove that the company has been involved in a pricing racket that breaches the exchange control regulations of countries to which W&G has been exporting.



At any rate, W&G has gone to great lengths to shut Cahm up. The Network slipped smoothly into action. While Cahm was detained by the W&G security goons (and the distributor arm removed from his car in case he tried to escape), the Salford CID were called, who, to their amazement, discovered in the boot of the car a length of co-axial cable said to come from W&G. This had been placed in the boot four days earlier by another colleague, who has testified he believed it to be stolen. Cahm has been "verballed" as saying he too believed it was stolen, and he was charged with alternatively stealing or receiving it. The colleague has not, however, been charged; instead he will be giving evidence when Cahm comes up at the Crown Court in September.

Cahm next breathed freedom at 11.30 the following morning. He was held all night in the nick, denied food, drink, cigarettes, a solicitor or medical attention, though he was ill. Why so long, for the alleged theft of something the Crown only claims is worth £5? Why, because Judge Taylor had been wheeled into action.

When Cahm was finally frog-marched from the nick, Mr Michael and his lawyer were waiting to shove a piece of paper into his top pocket — a County Court injunction preventing him from disclosing anything in the documents, all hot and freshly issued by Judge Taylor from his home, granted on the application of W&G through a barrister called Morris Goldstone (Nephew of Sam). The injunction was hand-written, and Judge Taylor wrote at the end: "Any further applications to be before another judge, as the deponent is known to me."

How well does Mr Michael know Taylor? "Not very well at all," he told *The Leveller*. "I think he knows my father better. I can't really say how. But you must remember that Manchester is not like London. It's a smallish place, and people do know each other." Only 600,000 souls in Manchester.

W&G has also enlisted the services of Ferguson Investigations Ltd., of Dale St., Liverpool, in its pursuit of Cahm. And Cahm's solicitor was told by W&G's that police Special Branch had been

called into it too. The company has told Cahm he is not being followed, however.

Cahm is still enjoined, so the documents cannot be published. W&G has additionally instituted High Court proceedings to get them back, with damages: proceedings that could drag on for years. But already they have proved their worth to the company: an industrial tribunal case brought by Cahm for unfair dismissal was adjourned on June 30 after the Chairman accepted that matters covered by the civil proceedings might well, but should not, come up. So Cahm is denied his right to settlement over his sacking — though W&G has made cash offers to him to drop the case.

W&G isn't used to trouble like this. By and large, things in Salford run smoothly enough. It helps, no doubt, to have Hough on the payroll — he is a turner, though spends little time at his lathe. He was taken on after nominating Sampson for the Freedom of the City of Salford, which apparently means a lot to the old boy, in 1972.

The Council has been able to help in specific ways: pensioners in its Day Centres stave off boredom by performing simple tasks for W&G; things like screwing in screws, for which last year they were being paid 10p an hour. It might be more now, but the company refuses to confirm that the practice is continuing. The company refuses to deny it too. Mr Michael said it didn't really profit from the arrangement: "There are considerable overheads involved in delivering and collecting the work. We aren't in it for the money, but to give old people something to do, and if you can't help people, what can you do?"

A lot more W&G production is homeworked, for rates which last year went as low as 7p an hour. Stand outside Bay 7 at the main Sampson Works in Frederick St at 9 am on a Monday and you'll see a queue of women and children with prams loaded with little electrical gadgets, their hands torn and cut from working intricate parts at frantic speed. The unions at W&G did not fight the build-up of homeworking.

All this has been exposed in Salford's gutsy alternative paper, the *Salford Champion*. The *Salford Reporter* writes about the Goldstones too, in the following terms: "Sampson Goldstone, the city's biggest employer, head of a family firm with a fine record as employers but also a Freeman of Salford, with the long and proud record of personal service which alone can earn the city's highest honour. Any city would be proud to count such a man among its citizens."

This from Saul Reece, former editor, now columnist, who sat with Sampson on, among other things, the magistrates' bench and the Salford University Council. The Univeristy is said to have a fruitful R&D relationship with W&G.

After the *Champion* revelations on homeworking, the *Reporter* carried a letter defending the company, in effusive terms which recall Reece's prose style. The *Champion* checked the name and address on the letter. It was a fake.

Tim Gopsill



Maurice Cahm

Mr Michael

£48 an ounce and still rising... Legalise it quick!

Hard-line Marxist-Leninist moralists regard all drugs as diversionary (to the struggle), bourgeois, etc. End of debate. But most of us consume a fair amount of booze and drugs and in the wake of RAR are waking up to the fact that our politics have some conjunction with our pleasure. A good time then to set up the Legalise Cannabis Campaign — launched on 3 June — which is sponsored by glam media types (Jonathan Miller and George Melly) as well as Parliamentary worthies (Lord Avebury and Maureen Colquhoun). *The Leveller* talked with Tim Malyon, Legalise Cannabis Campaign organiser.

A lot of people are still getting busted — something like 10,000 a year and it's rising. I think that's worth taking seriously. The Home Office goes on about how penalties for dope are getting less serious: if you get busted in London you might get away with a £10 fine. But you might be a bit unlucky and get busted somewhere else and get a £100 fine. And you get a criminal record and that's a very serious imposition.

More generally relevant to the broad left is that the dope laws are very serious political laws. A lot of the warrants that police use to get into people's houses are dope warrants. The reason why police can get them so easily is because they are doing it for cannabis. Something like 75-80 per cent of all arrests for drugs in this country are for cannabis. If they no longer had the excuse that just about anybody on the broad left smokes cannabis, or is likely to have cannabis in their house, it would be harder for them to get those warrants. They would have to get them on the basis that they think that someone is doing speed or heroin or something like that.

Look at the recent anarchist busts after Ronan Bennett and Iris Mills were arrested. Most of the charges preferred so far have been dope charges. There has been a series of Special Patrol Group raids on squats just recently. Several of the warrants that were used for those raids were Misuse of Drugs Act warrants. I don't think it's just paranoia thinking about the Central Drugs Intelligence Unit and the computer that they use to put names on of so-called suspect drug users.

A lot of the people on that computer don't have any kind of criminal record. They have put a lot of people on that they find in address books, a lot of people they have raided. We don't have any power over what they do with that computer because it's secret and they don't tell us how they spread out the information. Obviously they won't say what's on it. That's quite a powerful political weapon.

You're saying that the police take a drugs warrant to harass and spy on people?

Yes. The police can hassle black people because of cannabis, they can stop just about any young black person on the street because they suspect them of being in possession of drugs. The law is so loose in that area that they need very little justification for that.

I'm certainly not saying that if cannabis were made legal then black people would no longer get harassed in Brixton and they would no longer raid squats. Sure they would come up with other grounds for doing it. But it would make it harder for them, that's all.

Whose names go on the police computer you mentioned earlier?

Nobody knows for sure. It has a lot to do with discretion of local policemen or local drug squads. If the local Drug Squad thinks that someone is dealing or just doing cannabis then they can get that person onto the computer.

I know of one close friend of mine who used to live in Oxford, and who knew quite a lot of people who were dealing cannabis in Oxford, who was stopped in London. He has no criminal record at all, and they radioed back to Headquarters to check out his record and came back after they had checked out his record and said: "Ah, you're a druggie are you?" and proceeded to search him.

What do you look to achieve with the campaign? Are you looking for a parliamentary campaign, or for mass support?

Ultimately a Parliamentary campaign, because ultimately that's where the law gets changed. The problem is basically one of image and being taken seriously as a campaign. There have been lots of attempts to campaign in the past and nobody has really seen it as a serious political attack. So what we are not doing at the moment is smoke-ins and that sort of thing.



I always tend to think of dopers as people who don't get off their arses and get involved in politics anyway.

That's very much a stereotype image of dopers which is what we are trying to get away from. A lot of the people who I know who are very active on the left either smoke or have close friends that smoke. Smoking is not a way of life for them, as you might say that a hippie lives smoking, but it is their drug of recreation. A lot of people like that aren't particularly interested in legalisation because they see it as being a dead political issue.

The organised left has not shown any interest?

Not on the whole. That's partly because up until now we haven't really aimed anything at the organised left. We have only been going for 15 weeks now so we haven't had a lot of time to aim anything at anybody particularly. But certainly at the moment it seems that the organised left thinks it is a bit of a middle class dead issue.

If you look at the 60's when there was this sort of growing up surge around the Vietnam issue, a lot of the politics disappeared into smoking dope. I imagine some of the left are worried that could happen again.

I can't see the campaigns that are having any success at the moment getting drained of their success by the supporters going off to support the Legalise Cannabis Campaign. I would have thought that these campaigns should lend support to one another rather than obstructing. The people that are getting busted for suss, the people that are getting hit by the racist tendencies in this country at the moment. A lot of them are also the people who are getting hit by the cannabis laws.



THE NOTORIOUS President Banzer of Bolivia has stood down. In the July 9 elections, his civilian puppet Pereda Asbun took over. Meanwhile, the people, in particular, the Indians, are organising for power in other ways.....

Several unprecedented events have shattered the easy confidence of the generals and the 'Santa Cruz' mob on whom they depend—those latifundists who get generous government help to desecrate the forests and soil in the interests of oil, gas, cotton, sugar, and ranching, financed by Brazilian capital.

The first event was last winter's women's protest. Then came the return of exiled leftists. Third, and potentially most significant, has been the emergence of a new national Indian movement, MITK'A.

Two years ago, over a thousand tin miners were locked up under the country's Decree Law no.11947, for deigning to attempt to strike. Wives from six of their families began a hunger strike, last Christmas, demanding the reinstatement of the sacked workers, the return of political exiles, and the removal of troops from the mines.

More than a thousand other Bolivians joined in, taking over churches with the support of the Catholic bishops. First Banzer vacillated, then tried negotiations, and finally released the workers. The trade unionists moved into their old offices and bodily expelled the official dupes.

Next to march back into La Paz were some of the leftist leaders whom Banzer had ousted in 1971 with the help of Brazilian arms and USAID. But they were a little more subdued, and far from united. In the few months up until this July, Guillermo Lora's Trotskyists had decided not to vote; Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz the Socialist leader refused to join any united opposition; and the Left Revolutionary Front which did emerge, made up of miners and Maoists, couldn't find common ground with the Moscow-supported Union Democratica del Pueblo (UDP). Which was hardly surprising, since UDP's leader Hernan Siles Zuazo, had used the army, when President himself from 1956 to 1960, "to dissolve the Congress of Workers Confederation and put into practice an economic plan dictated by the USA", Lora maintains.

In contrast with this familiar (if intermittently invigorating) contestation on the Left, stands the *campesino* Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari (MITK'A). Campesino is a term used in Bolivia to denote both peasants and Indians; more than 80 per cent of Bolivians are Indians, or of direct Indian descent. The country's 80,000 tin miners, working their guts out for the sake of Britain's Rio Tinto Zinc, can regard themselves as *Indios*, peasants, workers and unionists: one of MITK'A's strengths is in refusing to employ the conventional distinctions between the four.

Though MITK'A is not the first Indian movement in Bolivia, its main predecessor, MINK'A cast its eyes back too longingly at the 'great Inca empires of our glorious past'. One document circulated by MINK'A, for example, approves the strict divisions of the Inca dynasty—between aristocracy, priests and peasants—as "never intended to create a relationship of exploitation".

Moreover, MINK'A has provided little or no analysis of the external forces operating on Bolivia. In particular, the penetration by Brazilian and US capital and settlers. And it seems content to call for the indianization of the country's institutions—such as the armed forces—not their dismantlement.

MITK'A, on the other hand, is a very new development: a movement founded specifically to intervene at the elections, not so much to put up candidates (which it did) as to dramatise

The Red Indians of Bolivia

the failure of conventional politics in a country dominated by conscious and unconscious racism. Perhaps one mark of its success in this has been its characterisation by left and right wing white politicians as 'racist' itself.

Its leading figures are the Aymara Indians, Constantino Lima and Jaime Apaza, and Luciano Tapia. But it is quite inaccurate to call it, as Richard Gott does, a "party of the nationalist movement of the Aymara Indians", any more than SWAPO is a group representing only the Ovambo 'tribespeople' of northern Namibia.

To quote from the proceedings of its first Congress, held between 24th and 27th April this year: "The numerous delegates represented the Aymara, Quecha, Uruchipayta, Camba, Mojo, Guarayo, Ayoreo, Chiquitano and Chiriguano . . . they were farmworkers, peasants, miners, factory workers, cane-cutters, transport workers, university students and professionals."

The Congress went on to attack "both left wing and right wing groups . . . since they are all imported from Europe and fight for their share (or the remains) of republican heritage: mines, haciendas, and Indians. (But) the Indian people itself is the leftwing and fights for the restoration of the Mallcu-Inca type of socialism, based on cooperative Ayllu communities".

Constantino Lima has gone further than any other Bolivian in developing the connections between foreign intervention in Bolivia, the abject conditions of the campesinos (many of whom are kept in virtual slavery on the rubber plantations and in the mines), and the need for a humanist liberation movement.

"Our movement grows from everything they do to us" he said at the UN 'Indigenous Peoples' Conference in Geneva last September (a conference consisting of Indian delegates from North and South America) "We say there is no such thing as *white man*; that is an identity invented by the Europeans to justify their enslavement of other people. Maybe there is no such thing as Indian either. Historically it is the term used by the colonisers to make us less than them. Well, let us turn this knife around. What glues us together, the way we have been seen, the way we have been tortured—let it now be *our* knife."

Crucial to the development of the new Indian consciousness was the massacre at Tolata in 1974. Very little has been written about this in the Western press, partly because of Bolivian government suppression, but also because 'only Indians' were involved.

Lima describes the event: "Our Indian women going to market to sell their meagre products would be continually abused. One day you could sell without a license, the next day you couldn't. Well, people reacted one day. There was a big strike. A few thousand people ended up in the market square; their only demand—they wanted a guarantee about selling things. That was all. Not one violent thought, not a revolver in sight. So innocent."

On the fourth day of the strike, tanks were heard approaching along the road, and planes came overhead. "You know, the people thought—the General [Banzer] he always travels big like that. They still waited. And then the shooting started. The tanks fired. The planes machine gunned from the air. Horrible, horrible! Over 1,300 died. This we know. The official press, they say 200. But we have the count, it is that many more".

Understandably, in view of the mutual suspicion between the Left and MITK'A, it's the campesinos who have most strenuously opposed Banzer's plan to bring in upwards of 150,000 whites from Namibia, Zimbabwe and Azania (South Africa) and relocate them on Indian lands. They conjecture a master plan not only to outflank the left with neo-Nazis of German descent, but primarily outnumber the Indians in areas of strategic importance—specifically those along the Brazilian border.

As a dummy run for the resettlement of southern African whites, the Bolivian regime recently agreed to take 100 families from the Hmong refugee community in Thailand and give them 50,000 acres of 'virgin arable land' in an area 120 miles north-east of La Paz. The project is supported by California's relief organisation 'Food for the Hungry'. So far, there has been no opposition to the scheme outside Bolivia . . .

Support for MITK'A in Europe is being coordinated by IWGIA (International Workgroup for Indigenous Affairs), Frederiksholms Kanal 4A, DK 1220, Copenhagen K, Denmark. Copies from CIMRA, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1, tel: 01-263 0253.

"I am only one and you can kill me . . ."



... but tomorrow I shall return in the form of millions like me
Tupac Katari, 1781

Taken by an anonymous photographer just after Banzer's forces committed the Tolata Massacre in 1974, and before the government removed the bodies to conceal the true total of the dead.

It was smuggled out of Bolivia and ended up in the hands of a Danish journalist Morten Sørensen, who used it for an article published in the radical daily newspaper Information, Copenhagen, November 7th 1977.

It is now the basis for a poster, intended to mobilise support in Europe for MITK'A—the Movimiento Indio Tupac Katari. Tupac Katari was an ordinary Indian who led a force of 40,000 against the Spanish in 1781. Just before he was executed (and had his tongue torn out) he delivered the promise which has become the motto of the new Movimiento, "I am one and you can kill me, but . . ."

YOU CAN almost see Soweto from the swimming pool at the top of the Carlton Hotel, white Johannesburg's symbol of opulence. I say 'almost' because Soweto is kept as carefully out of sight by whites as it is out of their minds. Few could say with certainty where it is, and even fewer could claim to have been there. But there is one way of telling if you are looking in the right direction: the smoke from a hundred thousand coal fires drifts in a black smudge across the brilliant blue sky of the high veldt.

Only 20 per cent or so of Soweto has electricity, and the white authorities ultimately responsible for its administration appear in no hurry to instal more. Yet despite what the name South West Townships might suggest, Soweto is a city of over one million blacks, more than the white population of Johannesburg some 10 miles up the road. To white South Africans, however, Soweto is a non-place, a kind of black urban limbo, from which the white city's labour force ebbs and flows as though compelled by natural forces. In the Johannesburg Deeds Office Soweto is registered as a farm.

To white South Africans, Soweto is a non-place, a kind of black urban limbo . . .

The forces are far from natural, of course. But to admit otherwise would be to destroy the elaborate delusion within which white South Africans live. To the casual observer Johannesburg looks like any other white city, or perhaps like an American one with the usual minority of blacks in menial jobs and districts with black shops and bars. Indeed, so painstakingly contrived is the illusion of a white city that the casual visitor may be forgiven for wondering what all the fuss is about.

What shatters the illusion is fear. To leave the Carlton Centre in the heart of this white bastion after dark on foot is considered downright dangerous. Every white inhabitant has his or her crime horror story. No white suburban house is complete without bars on the windows and a dog in the hall. By the end of last year nearly 750,000 South African whites officially owned handguns, out of a

THE INVISIBLE CITY

population of 4.5 million. They are not meant for use against Cuban tanks.

There is fear of another kind too—the fear on the faces of blacks desperate to return to Soweto after dark before being arrested under the pass laws, but for whom the white municipality does not think it necessary to lay on adequate transport when they are detained by their white bosses. It is not uncommon to see several blacks piled into a car driven by their white employer because it is the only way they can get home.

Such fear is corrupting. For all its seeming physical strength white South Africa is rotten to the core. A country which glorifies sport and open air accomplishments—and is therefore more sensitive to sport boycotts than its apologists admit—has an extraordinary number of obscenely fat young men. It is not so much that they merely labour under the weight of steaks and beer. It is that after years of prosperity wrung from the sweat of blacks, whites can think of nothing else to do except indulge themselves, and, even more tedious, they talk of little else.

There is a more important type of fear, however. The mounting self-doubts of the whites drive them over and over again to reinvent their history, to make the legend of the Trek, the struggle for the Boer republic, the Nationalist victory of 1946, serve the present. When black Africa, both inside and outside the republic, is taking up arms against you, when your economy is being squeezed by the reluctance of fellow Christian whites to invest in apartheid's future, you need to believe in the determination of your culture to survive.

And the white man's culture it is. On a prominent hill outside the nationalist capital of Pretoria stands the Voortrekker memorial, a monstrous monument in the neo-fascist ceremonial style erected to celebrate the heroism of the trekkers fleeing English tyranny in the name of liberty. Ugly murals glorify incidents from Afrikaaner history, mainly massacres of blacks, and from the top is a sweeping view of the Transvaal, green and orange and blue in the early evening light, with the sinful towers of Johannesburg shimmering on the horizon. But it is a



white man's country. For the monument is open to blacks on Tuesdays only. And guess on which day of the week the Voortrekker museum and restaurant are closed.

The very fact that the Afrikaaners felt it necessary to erect so preposterous a symbol as the Voortrekker memorial points to their awareness of being a conquering race, despite the claims to be as African as the Zulu, or Xhosa. The monument may well suffer the same fate as the Vendome column, and like that unlamented pile, it will fall because its builders grew more and more distant from the masses over which their triumph loomed.

The central corruption and fear in white South Africa is this contradiction in the way blacks impinge on its consciousness. In Boer history they are the external enemies. Now they are the internal majority on which whites rely for their absurdly high standard of living.

It is hard to find an analogy—itsself a fact which makes the enormity of South Africa hard to grasp—but there is perhaps a similarity with the slave societies of the ancient world where the slave

..... whites would be reduced to such indignities as watering their own gardens.

was integral to the society, not necessarily badly treated, able within limits to achieve prominence, but a slave nonetheless, and always feared by the masters.

For this reason Soweto is the barometer. Nowhere else is the sheer greed of white South Africa as concisely summarised. Without Soweto Johannesburg would simply stop functioning: whites would be reduced to such indignities as watering their own spacious gardens. But the blacks of Soweto have no rights. Under the crazy logic of separate development they do not exist: the non-place is inhabited by non-people. And when the non-people from the non-place rise in revolt as they did two years ago, they are all the more terrifying for that. Only when the towers of Soweto can be seen from the hill on which the Voortrekker memorial once stood will the terror be at an end.

Emma Trevelyan

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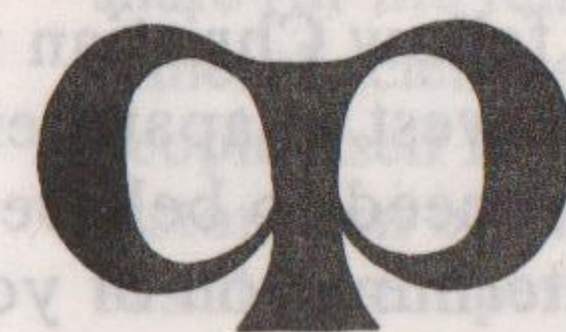
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JULY 14-28



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The Leveller questionnaire

We're in the process of expanding and developing the magazine. And to do it properly we need to know a lot more about you, the readers. So we've designed a market survey. We'll be using some of the information in it to drum up more advertising. But it's also a survey of what you think about the magazine, what direction it should develop in, and who exactly our readers are. Don't fill in any questions that you find objectionable, but please do fill in those you can. It will help us enormously -- and we will respect individual confidence.

Your Name and Address (Optional)

- Your Age
- Your Sex M/F
- What part of the country do you live in? County?
- Are you a member/supporter of any political party or group?
- Which one?
- How active are you in that group? Very/Middling/Barely
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- Are you a member/supporter of any other campaigns or groups? Which ones?
- How active are you in it? (or them)? Very/Middling/Barely
- How did you get hold of this copy of the magazine? Subscription/Bookshop/Street sale/Newsagent/Other
- Is It Yours? Did you pay for it? Yes/No/It's a friend's and I can/can't cut it up/Stop asking me these tom-fool questions. I've got an alibi anyway.
- How often do you see the magazine? Every month/fairly regularly/irregularly/First time
- What's your job?
- How much have you earned in the last year? Do not lie.
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- How Do You Live? Barely/Reasonably/Comfortably/Well/Luxuriously
- Where do you live? Squat/Rented flat/own flat Rented house/Own Other
- What do you think of the magazine in general? Very good/Good/OK/Poor/Terrible
- What sort of balance of material would you like to see in future issues? Remember that more of one thing means less of something else. Do you have any comments on HOW the magazine has handled these or other areas? (Write More/Same/Less and/or add comments)
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- Political Debate
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- Short News Items
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23. Anything else you'd like to say.

SPECIAL HOLIDAY GUIDE

Eyes down for the unique Leveller guide to make this summer one to tell your doting grandchildren about. Our network of foreign correspondents has let us down rather, so the following concerns events within the Domain of Our Glorious Queen. But first, some occasions on which to be generally loutish. Make a nuisance of yourself at the Cowes Week from 29 July-6th August. We recommend bringing your Black and Decker drills. If you find yourself in Devon the 20-22 July, why not Meet the Marines (including Military Tattoo) at Lymptone near Exeter, and tell them just what you think of them. Remember those tricks you learnt at Lewisham and Grunwicks when the mounted police galloped at you? Well, try them

out again on July 28-29 at the Metropolitan Police Horse Show and Tournament at Imber Court, East Molesey in Surrey--don't forget your marbles and hat-pins. Plenty of scope too for trouble at the Earls Court Royal Tournament which lasts until 29 July--and if you must watch the Dad's Army film "The Wild Geese", suck some toffees, mash up some tomatoes and, yes, hurl them at the screen! IRELAND: 18-20 August: Carnsore, Co.Wexford. Ireland's very own anti-nuke festival to be held wittily on the site of a proposed Electricity Board nuclear-powered generating plant.

LONDON. August: the ICA, The Mall. An affectionate month-long exhibitions titled "Who's Who" devoted to that splendid rock band. Organised by their fans, it presents their history, regular laser and hologram shows, their music, the lads themselves, pinball machines, and other novelties. PEAK DISTRICT. 22-30 July: The Stoney Middleton Wells Dressing. Not really sure what this one is, but it sounds nice. Plenty of boozing and general prancing about in that ole pagan style. HARROGATE. 29 July-6th August. International Festival of

Cycling. On your bikes for this Yorkshire homage to two wheels at the Harrogate Exhibitions Centre. CAMBRIDGE: 28-30 July: Cambridge Folk Festival. Good line-up of acts at this commercial event, but watch out for those drug cops--they traditionally pounce hard at these weekends. CARDIFF. 7-12 August. National Eisteddfod. Our Welsh cousins will need no reminding about this gathering of bards and others. OBAN. 23-24 August: Argyllshire Highland Gathering in Strathclyde. Forget those Ally MacLeod blues and revel in the Scottishness of it all. MANCHESTER. July: "Here Today--Gone Tomorrow", Heaton Hall. Lap up the nostalgia at this month-long one-man exhibition of fond photos.

Agitprop

OFFICIAL SECRETS TRIAL

AFTER 19 months on remand, Crispin Aubrey, John Berry and Duncan Campbell finally come up at the Old Bailey to face their Official Secrets Act charges on September 5. The trial will go on for two or three months, with the Crown case, assuming it doesn't fall apart, taking weeks and weeks as they plough through a three-hour tape (in camera, without doubt) and hundreds of items from Duncan's files. The question will be: does the amassing of all this relatively harmless stuff add up to a threat to "national security", and the fun will be how the Crown sets about proving it. They need an expert witness. At the committal hearing it was Colonel.....Will it be the same person this time? Or another? And how will they keep his name secret?

The tireless ABC Defence Committee, which has built up a formidable base in a notoriously difficult area, will be mounting pickets and meetings around the trial.

SUNDAY SEPT 3: TUC Congress Meeting, Brighton Polytechnic Faculty of Art. Speakers: ABC defendants and Denis MacShane, President, NUJ.

MONDAY SEPT 4: Pre-trial rally, Conway Hall, London WC1, 10.30. Film: "Home Soldier Home", ex-squaddies from the North speak out (see *Leveller* issue 17).

TUESDAY SEPT 5, and all subsequent Tuesdays, mass picket at Old Bailey, 9 am.

THE TYNESIDE ABC Defence Committee has sponsored a pamphlet, "Region 1", written by the Black Jake Collective.

It is a round-up of the civil war preparations — emergency planning — in the North-East, which the state has designated "Region 1" in the event of a suitable emergency. The pamphlet takes what is known of present arrangements (the suspension of democratic government, the transfer of power to regional commissioners, and so on) and adds local research on the arrangements at present in force for local officials, police and military, to take over their "emergency" tasks. It details the amount of money spent by local authorities in the region, and names a few local bureaucrats who might be expected to take up various "emergency" tasks. It is a

useful guide to the sort of research which can and should be done in every area, and provides a chilling indication of how the state is preparing to resist working class action.

"Region 1" is available from the Black Jake Collective, 115 Westgate Road, Newcastle on Tyne NE1 4AG, or from the ABC Defence Committee in London, c/o Time Out, Tower House, Southampton St, London WC2, 25p plus 7p postage.

WOMEN'S STUDIES CLASSES '78-'79

Women in Society, Past and Present; Morley College, Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1, Mondays 6.30 beginning Sept 18. Tutor: Barbara Taylor. Socialism and Feminism in 19th and 20th century Britain; Tuesdays, 7 pm, beginning Sept 19, venue to be fixed. Tutors Sally Alexander and Barbara Taylor.

Marxism and Feminism, the theory and practice of the modern women's movement; South London London Women's Centre, 45 North St, London SW4, Thursdays 6.30 beginning Sept 21. Tutor Barbara Taylor. All classes sponsored by WEA. Details from Sally Alexander, 01-828 3735.

WOMEN'S ART

AUGUST 11 to 18. Four days of films, theatre, dance, music, video, visual and performance arts, etc., all by women artists. Events include: performances by the groups Clapperclaw, Pirate Jenny and Roadgang. There will be more. When the "official" events are over, there will be three days for arts workshops, discussions, impromptu events and general enjoyment. Booking accepted from women only, but men can attend events during the first four days, excluding the party. You must book in advance. Write as soon as possible, with SAE, to Laurieston Women's Arts Festival, Laurieston Hall, Castle Douglas, Kirkcubrightshire, Scotland.

'Argentina: The Trade Unions fight on' is an excellent digest of Argentina's history and present plight. It is available from the British Argentina Campaign at 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1, for 35p plus 10p postage.

BAC also has details of other material on Argentina, films, slideshows, etc, and can supply speakers.

GREEK ANARCHISTS

On May 9 three anarchists, G Garas, G Kitsos and T Tsantarmas were arrested in Thessaloniki for flyposting, against the new Greek "anti-terrorist" law which is particularly directed against the anarchist movement. They were found guilty of "stirring political passion" (under a law passed during the civil war). Garas got 2½ years, the other two 13 months, and were heavily fined. International support is needed to assist the Greek anarchist movement against this and other incidents of state repression — further arrests and raids by the police on homes, bookshops, cafes. Further information: TO RIGMA, the magazine for Greek anarchists in Britain, c/o Black and Red, Students Union, The University, Leeds LS2 8JT

SHREW Summer '78

"Neither Victim nor Assassin", new issue put together by a study group on feminism and non-violence. Includes: Women and the Military; street hassles; nuclear power; how boys learn their role in the cult of violence; co-counselling; Northern Ireland; and patriarchal justice. Individual copies and correspondence: Lynn Blackmore, Some Friends Community 128 Bethnal Green Rd, London E2. Bulk orders and trade distribution, PDC, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

RCT

Revolutionary Communist Tendency public meeting to launch Revolutionary Communist Paper No. 3: The Recession, capitalist offensive and the working class. Speakers Mike Freeman and Kate Marshall. Thurs July 20, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Admission 20p. Be early because many thousand people are expected.

PALESTINE

"60 Years of Struggle", pamphlet produced by Revolutionary Struggle. Contents include Palestine Under the Mandate, Israel in the Imperialist World, and Resistance, together with a wide range of photographs and other visual material. Copies and information from Ray Smith, 21 Whitestrand Rd, Galway, Eire, or Box RS, 182 Upper St, London N1, or M McBride, 5 Henrietta St, Dublin.

CRANN-TARA

New independent Scottish radical quarterly magazine for nationalists and socialists, filling a vital gap in Scottish publishing. Current issue examines critically the SNP and Plaid Cymru, and prints writings of John Maclean. Subs £1.80 for 4 issues. Further details from 54 Powis Place, Aberdeen.

NO NEUTRON BOMB

The US government is continuing with modifications to missiles capable of delivering the neutron warhead and there are strong indications that President Carter will give approval for deployment of the weapon. CND is distributing "The Neutron Bomb" by Professor Eric Burhop FRS, President of the World Federation of Scientific Workers. Single copy 20p, 20% discount on more than ten, from CND, 29 Great James St, London WC1N 3EY. 01-242 0362. Also available: Stop the Neutron Bomb petition. Petitioning will coincide with Hiroshima/Nagasaki week in August. "No Neutron Bomb" badge, 30p each. Posters 25p, or £2 for ten, £16 for 100.

CARF

Campaign Against Racism and Fascism paper, Issue 6 out now. Articles on racist attacks, Tory proposals, immigration laws, NF activities, fascist conspiracy theory, Chief Constable Anderton, campaign reports etc. From most progressive bookshops, 15p, or from ARAFCC, Box 35, 182 Upper St, London N1. (P&P 10p). Subscription £2.

CHARTIST INTERNATIONAL 2

Includes "Socialist Unity, Labour and the Far Left", a critical look at recent attempts at revolutionary regroupment and electoral intervention. "Trotskyism and Sexual Politics", a look at what the writer describes as "the most outstanding lacuna in the whole of the Lenin-Trotsky tradition." "The Anthropology of Evelyn Reed", and a review article on Ireland. Chartist Publications, 60 Loughborough Rd, London SW9. 35p plus 15p P&P; three-issue subscription £1.20.

GAY TEACHERS GROUP (LONDON)

Started summer 1974 as the result of an initiative in "Sappho". Now has 200 members. Monthly meetings in term-time at University of London Union, Malet St, WC1. The group has published "Open and Positive", an account of how John Warburton came out in school and the consequences. 75p (90p inc. P&P). Details from Peter Bradley, Gay Teachers Group, c/o 112 Broxholm Rd, London SE27. Please send SAE.

REMEMBER JOHN MACHALE

John was a Scunthorpe journalist, a *Leveller* subscriber, trade union activist, involved with Irish issues, who died after being beaten up on March 17 this year. Clann na hEireann is now offering a John MacHale Memorial Prize, £100 for the best piece of writing on an "Irish in Britain" theme, to commemorate him. Entries by late August to the Clann at 173 Lozells Rd, Birmingham 19. The winner will be announced at the CRAC festival in Birmingham on September 15-17.

WHY PAUL FOOT SHOULD BE A SOCIALIST—THE CASE AGAINST THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Of the dozen or so Marxist-Leninist (*Maoist*) small groups, the Communist Workers Movement (CWM)—a relatively new regrouping drawn mainly from the decaying CPB(m-l)—is the first to have produced a serious critique of the politics of the Trotskyist tradition. Taking Paul Foot's book *Why You Should Be A Socialist*, as the basic text, they demolish the paucity of serious marxist analysis in the SWP, its reliance on manic activism and its opportunism on questions of nationalisation, the state, the Labour party and the unions. Doing this in an amusing and readable style (another first for a marxist-leninist group), they at the same time give a clear outline of their own politics.

Apart from whether or not you agree with their analysis, however, (though probably not completely separated from it), you cannot overlook the sexism that riddles the text. The M-L's are still very much outside the mainstream of political debate in this country, and, while they may have a lot to contribute to it they also have a lot to learn. This book, at least, is a start.

£1.20 from CWM, October Books, 4b Temple Court, Liverpool.

PEOPLES NEWS SERVICE

PNS marked its 150th issue by progressing from the old duplicated editions to a new printed format. The collective say this opens a wider range of opportunities for the fortnightly bulletin, which has been going for five years. PNS provides news for use by the left. It has built up a strong reputation among community papers and works closely with them, co-ordinating their national activities. Using these sources, PNS distributes news of local struggles which are of national importance, but rarely get the coverage they need. By means of its international network of correspondents and exchanges with overseas alternative news services, it provides a unique coverage of world-wide events. Issue 150 has articles on police brutality, the new wave of Tory cuts in local spending, the referendum in Italy, and abortion in America. The new format allows a 30% increase in material, and with the cleaner, more legible look, it should be more widely used. At the moment, only four people produce the service, and contributions, of news articles, labour and money, are essential for its survival. For more information contact PNS at 182 Upper St, London N1. Phone 01-359-3785.

BLACKS BRITANNICA

An excellent short film (57 mins) which almost silences arguments for more feature films on the left, instead of documentaries. But the title is misleading. "Blacks" in Britain include Asians, whereas the film deals exclusively with the Caribbean experience here. The narrator, with his Rasta locks and English accent, may seem odd. Alternatively he can be regarded as symbolic of the black presence in Britain.

An activist talks at a meeting, simply and brilliantly, about the guilt or innocence of young blacks harrassed by the police, about "learning his politics in his mother's kitchen." And the scenes towards the end, which show young blacks getting police on the run at Carnival 1976, are positively inspiring. SCALA CINEMA' Tottenham St, London W1, from July 9. The Scala is the phoenix from the ashes of The Other Cinema.

HORACE OVE

The National Film Theatre open a new season of retrospectives of low-budget, independent British film-making, with the work of Horace Ove. Ove has a number of firsts under his belt. *Reggae*, the first full-length documentary made by blacks in Britain, and *Pressure*, the first black feature film produced in Britain. *Pressure* was also the first commercial success for the British Film Institute. Thereby hangs a tale.

Originally, *Pressure* was scripted by Ove and novelist Samuel Selvon for the BBC. They wanted, not a feature, but a documentary. Ove finally went to the BFI. They estimated the cost, for a two-hour feature, with 30 speaking parts, at £10,000, raised later to £18,000! Shot in five weeks with help from people who worked just for expenses, it was finished in 1975. The BFI sat on it for two years, on the basis that rights to all BFI films were owned by an American company, Films Inc, who were not interested in releasing it.

Taking the initiative themselves, with support from film critics of some national newspapers, Ove and Rob Buckler succeeded in getting public showings. But it still hasn't had the exhibition programme it deserves. The story: the experience of a Trinidadian family in Britain, with a younger son born here. Sensitively observed and skilfully presented, it's very well worth seeing. (Naz)

- Thu 20 July 6.30. *Baldwin's Nigger*. (James Baldwin and Dick Gregory meet Caribbean students in London). *King Carnival* (Carnival in Trinidad).
- Thu 20 July 8.45. *Reggae* (1970 Caribbean Music Festival at Wembley). *Colherne Jazz and Keskiee Blues*.
- Wed 26 July 6.30 & 8.45. *Pressure*.

Theatre

Most companies are taking a break in August, holidaying or rehearsing new shows for the autumn. IMPORTANT NOTE TO ALL COMPANIES: the deadline for listings in our next issue is September 4. Please have dates for late September and October with us by then. Some of you been slipping a bit lately.....

AVON TOURING THEATRE

McArthur Warehouse, Gas Ferry Rd, Bristol (0272-20247). Feminist interpretation of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, set in modern Italy, plays in London Sep 4 to 16. Venues not yet fixed. Phone for details.

BELT AND BRACES

22 Vicars Rd, London NW5 (01-267 6722). Multi-national spectacular show *A Day in the Life of the World*. LIVERPOOL: Sep 12 to 16, Everyman Theatre, 7.30. On the 15th there will be a late-night gig at the theatre by the Belt and Braces Roadshow Band, 11 pm.

COMMON STOCK

31 Fulham Palace Rd, London SW6 (01-741 3086). *Muscles*, outdoor kids show based on stories the kids thought up themselves. LONDON: Playing in parks, estates, adventure playgrounds, play schools and festivals all round London, twice daily until Sep 2. Phone for details.

COUNTERACT

27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1 (01-251 4977). Two new shows in preparation: *Party Games*, an election show, and *Much 'n Brass*, on ecology. Press shows in London Aug 29 and Oct 4 respectively. Phone for details. OXFORD: Sep 23, *Muck 'n Brass* playing at the Nuclear Information Network conference.

GAY SWEATSHOP

10 Marius Mansions, Marius Rd, London SW17 (01-673 5992). Women's show *What the Hell is She Doing Here?* plus new men's show *Bliss*, by Jim Hiley, cabaret-style presentation on oppression of gays. EDINBURGH FESTIVAL: Aug 24 to Sep 3, both shows alternating at the Herriot Watt University Theatre, Grindley St. After the festival, both companies will tour the north-west of England. Phone for locations.

COVENT GARDEN STREET THEATRE

Italian Garden, Central Market Piazza, London WC2. Lunchtime shows every Monday to Friday 1 pm. July 17 to 21: Thud Theatre in *The Black and White Mummer Show*. July 24 to 28: Spur of the Moment dance show *New Clear Energy*. July 31 to Aug 4: London All Stars Steel Band. Aug 7 to 11: Rough Theatre Roadshow: *Corrugated Iron Vaudeville*. Aug 14 to 18: Betzuki Puppet Theatre. Aug 21 to 25: The Reelists: fun and folk group. Aug 28 to Sep 1: Covent Garden Community Theatre in *Fools Paradise*.

PIRATE JENNY

11 Acklam Rd, London W10. (01-969 2292). New production, *Emigrants*, by Peter Sheridan, director Pam Brighton. The play deals with the cause and results of the massive emigration for Ireland during the last century. EDINBURGH FESTIVAL: Aug 22 to Sep 2, St Anne's Community Centre, Cowgate. BLACKPOOL: Sep 5, Trades Council performance. LIVERPOOL: Sep 6, Titchfield Community Centre; Sep 7, Bootle Labour Club; Sep 8, Liverpool Labour Party; Sep 9, Damwood Hall, Speke. ROCHDALE: Sep 12, Kirkholt Community Centre. MANCHESTER: Sep 13, Tameside Trades Council; Sep 14, Eccles

AUEW Club; Sep 15, South Manchester CP; Sep 16, Stockport CP. LONDON: Sep 18 to 30, Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. All performances 7.30.

7:84 (England)

31 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. (01-253 4049). Rehearsing *Vandaleur's Folly*, by John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy, opening September, some bookings still available. Phone for details.

WOMEN'S THEATRE GROUP

44 Earlham St, London WC2 (01-278 6783). Rehearsing *Back to the Pouch*, new play by Eileen Fairweather and Melissa Murray. Fast funny attack on sex stereotyping, with cartoon and surreal images, intended for 14 to 18-year-olds. Lasts an hour. Available for bookings in schools and youth clubs. Phone for details.