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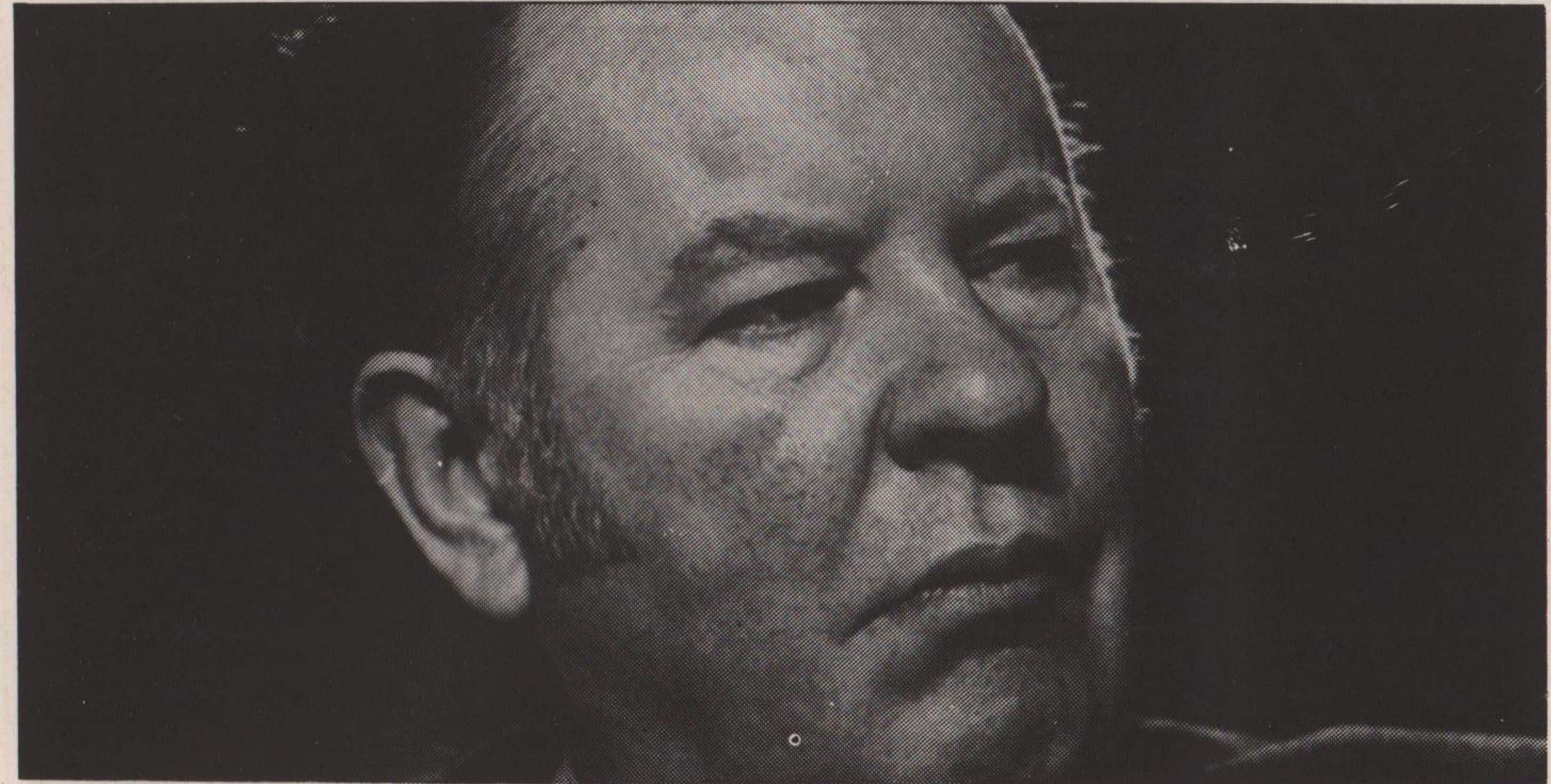
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OVERSEAS VOLUNTEERS

MARCH 1980

INSIDE



Chris Davies

'Let them eat shit!' With the help of a couple of official documents we shouldn't have, we show how Prentice's onslaught on claimants is an onslaught on us all. Page 6



Chris Davies

Philip Harris, head of the Post Office's phone-tapping department. He provides a service for MI5 and MI6. He's got your number, so we print his. Page 8



Cass Wedd

All those millions of dope smokers can't be wrong. As pressure to legitimise the weed gets higher, we report from the Amsterdam conference. Page 9

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- BACK COVER**
Diego Rivera, the most colourful of the Mexican revolutionary painters, stands dwarfed by Mexico City's waterworks, the inside of which he painted. Illustration from The Big Wall by Baron Moss (see pages 18-19).

Cover design: Chris Schüler

Remember Stewart Carr

WHILE IT'S GOOD that the *Leveller*, unlike much of the left press, saw fit to cover the aftermath of the Persons Unknown trial, the inaccuracies and false inferences contained in Dave Clark's article (*Leveller* 35) seriously distort the facts, especially those concerning Stewart Carr.

In the first place, Stewart didn't 'take off' after the arrests started - he left London when the group Black Aid broke up some weeks before the first arrests. You rightly point out that the record of his interviews with the police, read out in court, had been doctored and list some of the real pressures put on him. In addition to those you mention he was also threatened that the woman with whom he was having a relationship in Gillingham would be implicated in the 'conspiracy' if he didn't cooperate. You then write, 'The argument was extremely persuasive and much of the alleged information in the second two thirds of the statement is material the police couldn't possibly have known at that stage of the investigation', implying that it's an accurate record. This isn't the case. Firstly, it's known that Stewart gave information that doesn't appear in the statement at all, since people were questioned on the basis of this in subsequent raids. Secondly, there is every reason to believe that the extensive references to alleged 'preparations for terrorism' (bombing, kidnapping, etc.) aren't true. Either Stewart was fantasising or, more likely, this material was written in by the joint ATS/Special Branch team who prepared and initialled the final version of the interviews. Thirdly, the four defendants acquitted have refuted the allegations made about them in the statement. If this is correct it raises more questions as to the accuracy of the 'statement' and the manner in which it was produced.

The article goes on to make a series of wholly inaccurate and damaging inferences. Firstly you suggest that Stewart 'made a deal' with the police, which Judge King-Hamilton failed to honour. If by 'a deal' you just mean the unwritten code about confessing and pleading guilty in expectation of a shorter sentence, then as you point out, King-Hamilton took this into consideration. It's quite clear from his remarks then (and from his emphasis on the allegations of 'preparing for terrorism' in summing up in the trial of the other four) that he would have been giving sentences of 18-20

years had the others been found guilty; this would in any case have been consistent with recent 'terrorist' and robbery sentencing. Given that intention, to suggest that a 4-5 year sentence (a reduction of two-thirds to three-quarters) would be 'reasonable' is ridiculous. To suggest that any prison sentence imposed by a bourgeois court could be 'reasonable' is in itself astonishing! But the reality is that Stewart *didn't* make a deal of any major use to the police. The normal sense of making such a deal is to turn Queen's evidence. Stewart rejected invitations to do that before committals and by pleading 'guilty' he ensured that his statement couldn't be used at the trial of the others. You say that by dropping his robbery charges the police had 'kept their side of the bargain'. This again is untrue. These charges were dropped inexplicably *after* the rejected approaches to turn Queen's evidence. Far from this being initiated by the police it's known that they were not at all happy about it.

You say that Stewart is 'disowned and despised by everyone concerned'. This is wholly untrue. While on remand in Brixton he shared a cell with his co-defendants (who continued to visit him after their release on bail). He agreed to publicly disassociate himself from the Support Group when it became apparent that a joint defence strategy was impossible. However Support Group members continued to visit, write to him and give material support up until the trial. Only the failure of attempts to contact him since have prevented this from continuing. Stewart is no supergrass. He's done his best to make amends for the statement and, as his counsel was instructed to make clear at his sentencing, he hasn't changed his political views.

This touches on the most offensive aspect of the article - the patronising attitude towards his politics. The underlying assumption seems to be that Stewart Carr wasn't really an anarchist, didn't understand what that meant - and the implication that coming from the background he did his 'lack of a developed political view' was understandable. The Support Group members who visited Stewart in prison got a lot out of the discussions they had with him, discussions covering a wide range of political issues and ideas. This isn't to suggest that Stewart Carr is a theorist, or that political differences didn't exist - it is to make clear that his politics aren't at all the pathetic and confused mess portrayed in your article. Stewart's action in making

a statement to the police may have been inexcusable. But that doesn't mean that in order to feel sympathy for him he has to be portrayed as a helpless 'victim', unable to think or act for himself.

Not content with misrepresenting Stewart Carr, the article also appears to suggest by implication that Gerhardt Sollinger was or is regarded as an *agent provocateur*. There is no evidence for this - indeed he made a secret offer to give a written statement detailing his role in leaving the guns with Trevor Dawton.

Finally, your last paragraph about the jury seems over complacent. If vetting has been widely condemned it is already clear that it will remain, if 'only' for official secrets cases - and this takes no account of the growing evidence that unofficial vetting is more widespread than has been realised. Secondly, the attack on the jury at the end of the trial has strengthened the jury rationalisation lobby with their calls for lowering the ratio of majority verdicts and reviving the system of special juries in 'difficult cases'. It also seems astonishing to describe the Persons Unknown jury as 'docile and largely conservative' - their conscientiousness in reaching their verdicts and their replies to King-Hamilton's insults since the trial, suggest, if anything, exactly the reverse.

Dave Couch
Babs Segal
London N1

No thanks, fellas

AS AN 'anxious reader' I was certainly looking for a 'far more fundamental, far more radical' approach to male sexuality than David Brazil (*Leveller* 35) has managed to put together. Just what is the point of this article (and cartoon), I find myself asking. The only sense of male sexuality it has provided me with is a macho one. Frankly the whole article is an insult to feminism and to men involved in men's groups.

The growth of feminism has posed a real threat to the male left - a threat to which it has, by and large, responded in a tokenist way, as David Brazil points out. The *Leveller* is no exception here. Feminism is treated by the *Leveller* as another category, neatly boxed in with a tidy running head stating 'women', rather than being a fundamental part of the language and structure of the magazine. Evidence to this are some of the headings in the latest issue - 'Screwed by the System' 'Lunge for Power' - need I go on?

Female sexuality is no new threat - men have always feared women's bodies and their sexuality. David Brazil echoes

this fear and further adds to the mystification that often arises from it. What pray are 'female dials' and 'portals'? If we're going to *seriously* discuss sexuality, let's be honest and open about it. Feminism has opened up a whole new area of experience and understanding about sexuality, let's not put the clocks back by centuries with glib references to 'dials' and 'portals'. Surely the women's movement has done more to raise the level of discussion than this.

While seemingly setting out to challenge the rugby club attitude to sexuality, Dave Brazil's article capitulates to the worst aspect of that mentality - the 'cheeky chappie', what a lark lads, attitude. This is perhaps the worst aspect of the whole article - its glib, jokey nature which allows the author to get away with the following sexist rubbish: 'Sex is penetration (*sic*)... The new sexual etiquette may demand we twiddle a few female dials, work up a bit of sweat on the brow, whatever, but it still comes down to "In-out, in-out" and we can't we won't accept how marginal an activity this is for our female companions.' (my emphasis)

While at first reading this *might* appear as a concession (big deal) to the discussion within feminism of sexuality; what it boils down to is a clear statement of how 'marginal' female sexuality is to DB. You don't agree? - well, perhaps the following quote, a few paragraphs on, will sway your mind: 'It is no longer enough for a man, a het lefty, to rely on his good looks, his cheeky chappie lovable nature, all his *old tricks*, to continue with *traditional (sexual) male behaviour*.' (my emphasis) - so what are the 'new tricks'? According to David Brazil, twiddling a few 'female dials' and doing a bit of washing up. Just who do you think you're kidding!

These are the more glaring aspects of the sexism which permeates the whole article. The 'waves of feminism' certainly don't seem to have washed very near David Brazil or he would know that there is more to feminism than who washes the dishes or looks after the kids - we're talking about more fundamental things than these. The picture of women (despite rare glib references to the contrary) that he *chooses* to present is that of a domestic animal (even though she may ask you to do some washing up), the 'ungrateful' women who 'do not thank us in the bedroom the way the memory says they should', and, of course, the big threat to the male ego - the

woman who dares sleep with someone else (*presumed* male).

As if all this were not enough, we are presented with a cartoon which attacks both men's groups and gay men *with no explanation*. Are we to assume that homosexuality is as threatening to the male het lefty as female sexuality seems to be? An explanation and apology are called for.

David Brazil leaves us in no doubt - het male sexuality is *macho*. No thanks, fellas.

Jan Brown
London NW1

Biology sux

BOB MELLOR'S article, *The Agony and the Ecstasy* in your December issue is one in a long line of attempts to justify politics by biology. Usually such arguments have been used to support conservative positions, although occasionally they have been used by the left, and this is what Bob Mellor's article was attempting to do.

We think that such a position is wrong for several reasons. First to extrapolate from animal social behaviour to human social behaviour is mistaken. There are similarities between humans and other animals in some respects, for example physiological. However, when it comes to social organisation, such extrapolations ignore the order of magnitude differences between humans and other animals - most obviously the crucial role of learning and culture.

Second, it is mistaken to assume that social phenomena are nothing but individual characteristics 'writ large'; for example it is clear that wars are not 'just a manifestation of aggressive instincts'. In the same way our concepts of femininity and masculinity are not determined only by our genes, and changes in them over time should be explained by reference to social and political theories rather than by reference to evolutionary

theory.

Thirdly, the argument commits the obvious fallacies of arguing from 'is' to 'ought', or from 'what is' to 'what must be'; it has even been argued that since men have an innate tendency to rape women it is both morally acceptable/inevitable (look at the judgements in rape trials).

It would seem then that this apparently seductive line of argument for the left is, in fact, fraught with pitfalls.

Dot Griffiths,
Allison Quick,
Esther Saraga,
Helena Scheim,
BSSRS Sociobiology
Group: (Women's
Sub-group).

Sexism on the news list?

I WOULD like to draw your attention to the anti-feminist bias of the presumably left-wing newspaper, *Nottingham News*. I have written on several occasions to complain about the editorial policy but little improvement has been made. Admittedly, fashion has been dropped from its 'Women's Page' and replaced by serious subjects like abortion, rape and the image of women in the media, but there are no real changes in the overall outlook and feminists (women only, of course) are still treated as in the Tory-run press, i.e. feminism is seen as some kind of disease.

Perhaps it would be a good idea for a few men to complain about it for a change because the editor would not expect it. I wrote to the editor after he printed a rather derisive article on the way feminists object to women being portrayed on TV as either beauty queens or morons. I can't say what his bias would be in an article on the gay movement as the occasion for one hasn't arisen, but I suspect that the subject of police harassment would be treated in much the same way as that of rape - a harm-

less pastime.

I would greatly appreciate it if you would investigate attitudes towards women and gays in the so-called left-wing press like *Nottingham News* and, even worse, of course, the *Yorkshire Miner*. Such papers seem to ignore the fact that socialism (and, indeed liberalism) is based on the concept of equality. These papers seem to think that it's quite all right for some people (about 48% of the population) to be more equal than others.

Perhaps, if you were to contact the editor of *Nottingham News* (61 Derby Road, Nottingham) you would like to ask him to read the article on rape published in *Gay News* recently in issue no. 179. That might make him think seriously about the matter before putting articles on the subject on the 'Women's Page' again. It seems to me that the people running *Nottingham News* have no idea that open meetings of *Women's Voice* attract a considerable number of men. They appear to think that issues such as abortion, equal pay, rape and childcare only concern a few rather abnormal women and consequently they put articles on these subjects on a page that is not supposed to be read by men.

Hopefully, you can show them that it is possible to produce a publication without degrading half the population.

Zoe Pitt
Nottingham 8

Who's out of step?

NOWADAYS in certain left circles it's considered sectarian if one ventures even to criticise someone else's politics. Woe betide anyone who upsets the friendly mish-mash of radical and reformist politics and single issue campaigns upon which those sections of the left rely.

Typical of this trend was the mention of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency's new

review, *The Next Step* (*Leveller* 34). It is, so we are told, sectarian, that it reckons Derek Robinson and Michael Edwardes want the same things for Leyland, that the Irish march on August 12 was pro-imperialist.

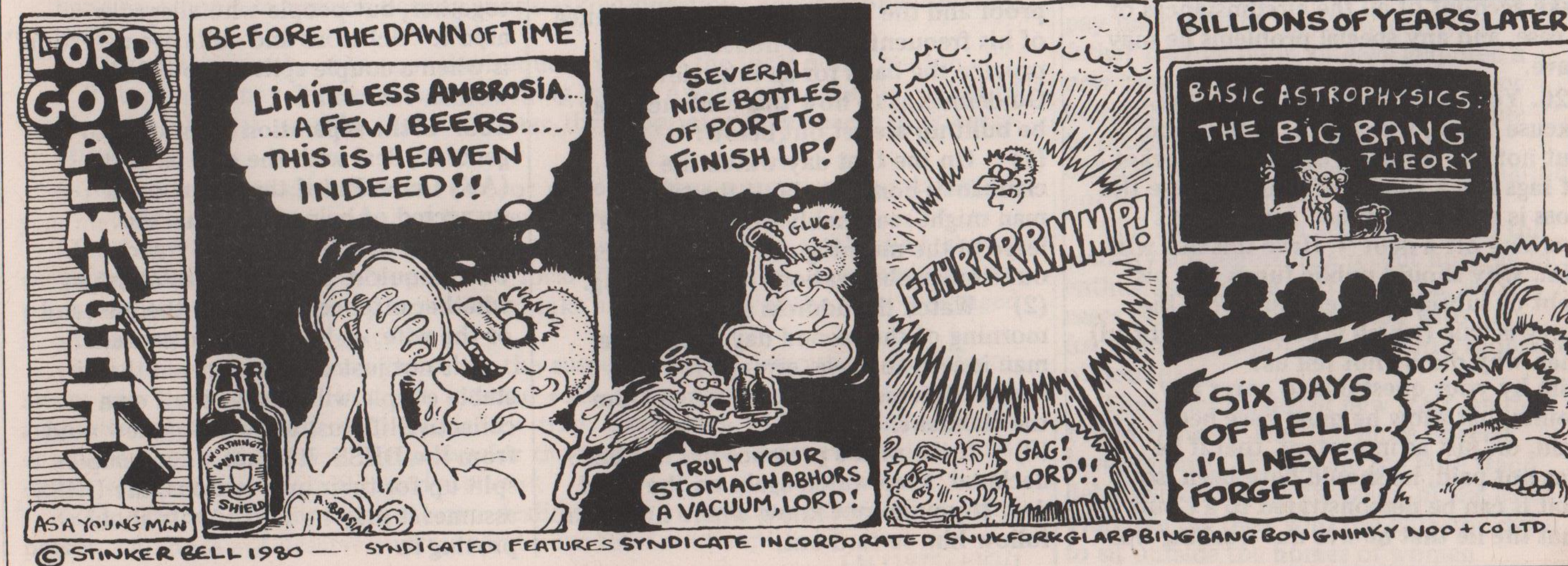
Try and prove that Robinson and Edwardes don't want the same thing - a healthy Leyland - they only have different ideas for achieving it. One thing's certain, however, and that's everyone who has proposed Robinsonesque plans for ailing capitalist concerns have always in practice attacked the working class. Robinson will never defend Leyland workers, is it sectarian sniping to point that out? If so, that's like calling Trotsky a sectarian for criticising the Stalinists or having a go at Lenin for his attacks on Kautsky.

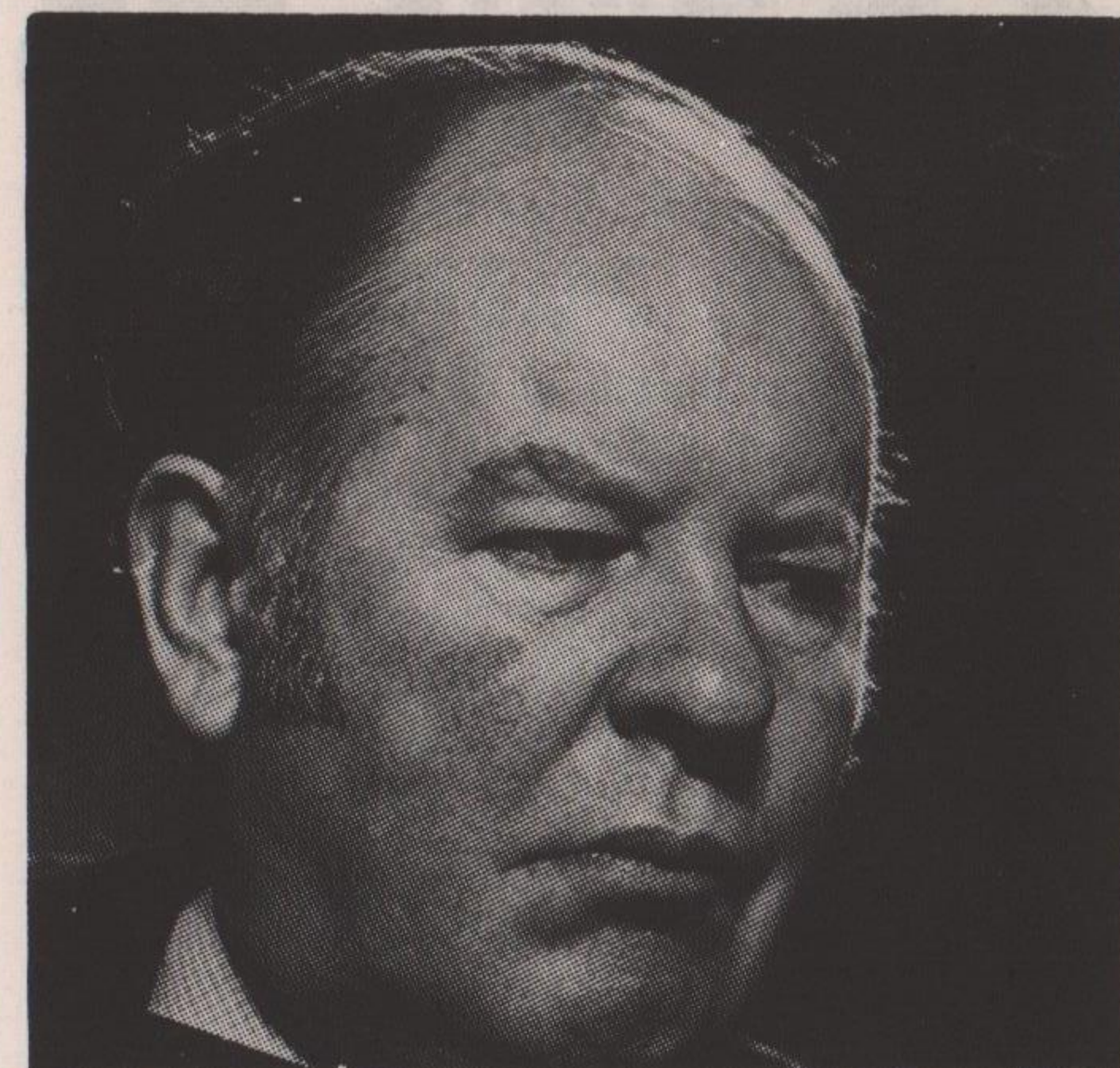
As for August 12, how can moaning about taxpayers' money challenge the national chauvinism so rife in the British labour movement? How could a march that offered *no* support for the Irish liberation struggle show that the struggle is in the direct interests of the British working class? What do you want - liberal sentiment or anti-imperialist politics?

The Next Step's editorial states, 'The review is written for those who are actively committed to defending the working class and for those who realise the need for new political solutions.'

Is the *Leveller* committed to defending the working class or is it, as I suspect, content to chuff out descriptive articles with little or no political analysis or direction - *Time Out* minus the adverts? As a trade unionist fighting the cuts and having to counter both the union bureaucracy's bankrupt reformism and the radical left's equally bankrupt mindless economist, I find *The Next Step* a most welcome and refreshing alternative to the average left press.

Paul Fenwick
London SE11





'Let them kill themselves'

THE PROCEDURE for the Social Security Snoopers — Fraud Officers and Special Investigators — is set out in the *Fraud Investigators Guide*. This is a big fat book first brought out in 1978, and is for internal use only — except that someone's given *The Leveller* a copy.

The guide replaced a section of the notorious secret AX Code, which covers all DHSS fraud work. (See *The Leveller* 26 for some extracts). It is made clear that 'the change is deliberate.' The Code sets out rigid rules. The guide points investigators in certain directions and encourages them to use their initiative.

The Guide sets out the Judges' Rules, the official but widely-ignored standards for police questioning, as applying to the interviews of suspects. The Rules guarantee a right to silence, which doesn't just mean you can keep quiet, but that this won't be held against you; otherwise the right is meaningless. The Guide says: 241. He may exercise his right to refuse to answer your questions once the caution has been given. Don't give up. Keep asking. Replies such as "No comment", "You said I didn't have to answer", "Push off", should be written down. A Court will not miss their significance.

313. If, during an investigation, a suspect threatens suicide, advise him to keep matters in perspective. Point out that, if the matter gets to Court, the Courts take account of all the circumstances of a case, and any special problems he may have.

426. You will, on occasions, get the excuse "Well, I was doing it full time, but not for money. I did it for a packet of fags and a couple of pints because the boss is a mate of mine" (or "I was working off a debt"). Have this out with him. Why should public funds pay his debt or subsidise his employer? If the story is true (which is probably doubtful) then why did he not tell us? Aim by your questions to cover any points that show he must have been paid, or, just as important, that if he was not paid, he should have been, so that it can be demonstrated to a Court that the lie that he was not working was

Everyone is under suspicion

ANY DOUBT the Tory leadership might have had about Reg Prentice's reactionary credentials must now be dispelled. Chosen as Minister of State for Social Security to direct the attack on unemployed people and single parents, he has undertaken the task with tremendous zeal. On February 13 he announced a 'new clampdown on scroungers', a programme of breathtaking savagery against the Tories' favourite target, the poor.

Margaret Thatcher knew how well Prentice was qualified for the job. He has a vast experience and proven ability in the field of fraud, having arguably deceived more honest Labour voters than any other politician. And like his mythical millions of scroungers, he has lived off the back of the taxpayer and the state for many years.

The 'clampdown' is not on scroungers

with the aim of getting benefit that he knew he would not have received if he told the truth.

Remember the context, that to get UB you are supposed to be "available for work." There have been many cases of claimants losing UB for doing *voluntary* work (for a charity or community group) because theoretically they weren't available.

On "living together" — enforcing the rule that women claiming benefit who can be shown to be "living" with a man loses her entitlement — the guide is very helpful:

632. It is likely that it is only when the house is the man's normal home that observation can *prove* that the man lives in the house. More likely it will provide a strong presumption that falls short of proof and the aim is to build up evidence of his frequenting the house that will provide the basis for an interview. Guidelines as to how this evidence may be built up are set out below:

- (1) On the first day watch the claimant's home at about the time a man might reasonably be expected to leave in the morning . . . If possible, carry out similar observations in the evening.
- (2) Watch the address again on the morning of the second day and, if the man is seen to leave, arrange for a review statement . . . to be taken from the claimant.
- (3) If the man's presence has not been declared, keep watch again on the third day. If you do not know where he works, follow him to find out.

at all. In co-ordination with the rest of Tory strategy, it is on working and unemployed people's living standards and organisation. It is scapegoatism on a huge scale, making the poor pay for the failures of capital. And it is a strengthening of the apparatus of the state to this end. It is the same story as the new laws to break the unions, the cuts in housing, education, health and social service expenditure on the one hand, and the increase in resources allocated to police and military expenditure on the other.

Prentice announced the appointment of more than 1,000 extra staff to tackle 'fraud and abuse', which he predicted would save £50 million of the estimated £200 million to be lost over the coming year.

Before we consider the real facts, a few more figments from Prentice's fevered brain. This figure of £200 million, which picked up a good deal of publicity, where did it come from? Embarrassed

Three days is all that's required, as far as the DHSS is concerned, a woman who has a feller to stay for three days is "living with him". So:

628. In some cases, the relationship may be so new or uncertain that you will need to discover who the man is before establishing whether the "living together" criteria are met.

636. If she initially denies a man's presence, do not reveal at once all the information that you have obtained. Ask her to explain each item separately and ensure that her answers are recorded verbatim. Any lies and evasions can then be brought to the attention of the Court and will help demonstrate her intention to defraud.

The Guide goes on to show how to harass, not people allegedly living together, but people who allegedly aren't: "fictitious and collusive desertion" is when a couple split up so that the woman can claim.

663. If the separation is thought to be genuine, deal with the case as in the (AX) Code. But if the desertion is suspected of being fictitious, the approach should be one of fraud and your enquiries directed to establishing whether offences by either the husband or the wife, or both, can be proved.

It's not just the assumption that a stable couple will shatter their own collective life just to swindle a few quid from the DHSS. It's that when couples split up for their own reasons, the DHSS assumes it may be so, and sets about proving it.

DHSS officials, under pressure, while maintaining that of course you can't, by definition, produce a figure for something you know nothing about, concede the following: (You aren't going to believe this) that big retail chains and other companies handling large amounts of money regularly reckon to write off 1 to 2 percent of turnover to theft. And that's it: Prentice got his officials to work out what was 1 per cent of the estimated £19,000 million to be paid out by the DHSS in 1980-81, rounded it up to a headline-grabbing £200 million, and gave it out as the scroungers' swag.

A DHSS background briefing in *The Leveller's* possession puts the loss at £53 million a year. Again, there is no justification. The figure just happens to be £3 million (the cost of the extra staff) above the £50 million Prentice pretends is going to be saved. And *this* figure is equally artificial, being the total of the projected savings from the staff increases in each department. So the whole thing is a complete charade, a self-fulfilling prophecy with the unique distinction that it stands no chance of coming true.

So what are the facts? The DHSS's own figure for 'irrecoverable overpayment through fraud' was £3.9 million when last given (*Hansard* March 5 1979). This was considerably less than the £13.2 million overpayment in error, that is,

by staff cock-up. The estimated gross savings by Special Investigators (SIs — the fraud detection hot squad) was £8.2 million in 1977 (latest figures available). The cost of the SIs was put at £2.7 million, which means they saved three times their cost.

If that ratio was applied to the new staff being taken on, one would have thought it would have recovered £9 million, not £50 million — but let's measure Prentice's fantasies in more constructive ways, by examining what he's really doing to claimants, and fitting this into the government's overall strategy.

More than half his new staff will be extra Unemployment Review Officers — 530 new UROs, more than doubling the present establishment of 447. These men and women are not at all concerned with fraud. Their job is to stop the long-term unemployed (people who've been jobless for six months) receiving the benefit which is their perfect entitlement.

UROs are armed with quite an arsenal. They can cut benefit or stop it altogether if they consider claimants fail, without justification, to find work. They can send them to Assessment or Re-establishment Centres (workhouses). They can initiate prosecutions for failure to maintain oneself or one's dependents. These powers do not often have to be used. Their threat is usually

enough to achieve the aim of getting a claimant off the books — whether to some low-paid non-union sweatshop, or into a limbo without income, or petty crime, they don't care.

At the end of last year UROs were issued with a new form to be filled in after each of their dreaded interviews. It has six columns: the last is headed: 'Money saved'. The good URO is the one who can get shot of the most long-term unemployed claimants. Step forward and accept your silver statuette of Sir Keith Joseph!

This is the real social security fraud: how people entitled to benefit are swindled out of it. There is no generous departmental estimate of *this*. The DHSS might announce how much it loses from 'overpayment in error', but it's silent on the question of underpayment, from accident or design. We have to go to the Child Poverty Action Group for the estimate of £344 million a year not paid out because of non-take-up of benefit.

Now it may not be an explicit intention to withhold this, but the forbidding nature of leaflets and offices and forms, and the delays and abuse to which claimants are subjected, have a deterrent effect that ministers have yet to deplore or correct.

The next biggest increases in personnel are to be new Fraud Officers and Liable Relative Officers — 170 of each.

The Liable Relative (LR) operations are already the heaviest harassment squad in the business, with 2,034 officers nationwide. Their job, quite simply, is to get hold of people (usually deserting fathers) who are considered to be responsible for dependent relatives that are receiving benefit, and extort money from them.

Again, there is no 'fraud' involved. The common picture is of a husband who has left the home. The wife and child need supplementary benefit (SB) to survive, and while one department is grudgingly paying this out, the LROs are despatched to find the errant father. *He* is presented with a bill for the benefit paid, with the sanction of prosecution for failure to maintain his dependents. *The mother* is cajoled to prosecute or give evidence against him for failure to pay maintenance. In many cases, the father may be poor, or have acquired a new home and dependents; either way he can't pay much, and it helps no-one to prosecute; no-one except DHSS officials with their fanatical determination *not* to pay benefit.

Claimants' Union activists around the country are reporting a recent upsurge in enthusiasm on the part of LROs, with cases of men being presented with bills for years of benefit, running into thousands of pounds.

The other classes of new staff are the Fraud Officers, and 100 more Special Investigators. The SIs are the elite fraud detectives; they are the scum of the earth. They are the ones who rise with the dawn to sit outside the homes of women

continued on page 32



FRAUD INVESTIGATOR'S GUIDE

I. If you receive information or have other reason to believe a person may be engaged in fraud or abuse, the procedure is as follows:

(a) Maintain a careful watch on the person's movements. Points to look out for include:

1. The person may be lurking outside a claimant's dwelling. Take up a position from which you cannot be observed and make notes on the times of the person's presence. If he or she is in the same place for three consecutive mornings, and leaves each morning when a man comes out of the dwelling, and follows the man away, you will have strong grounds for suspecting you have indeed got a sex snoopers in your sights.
2. The person may be found rummaging through dustbins or other garbage containers, retaining such detritus as used contraceptives, empty two-helping frozen food packs, used razor blades, marked racing cards from the popular press, stained pipe cleaners or clods of ash from a pipe bowl.
3. The person may be observed in furtive conversation with neighbours, or hanging around in bars or betting shops asking questions about people's private lives.
4. The person may be seen to make frequent visits to the local police station.
5. The person may follow a man emerging from a dwelling under observation to his place of work, and be seen to engage the proprietor or manager in conversation.

(b) When you are satisfied that two or more of these examples are established you may follow the suspect to check for evidence of the others.

(c) When you are satisfied that most of these examples are established, report the matter, with all your notes, to the local Claimants Union, community newspaper or other groups. It may be useful to take a photograph of the person engaged in one or more of these examples.

(d) At this stage you may interview the suspect. Do not let out all the information you have at once, but put forward each item, one at a time, to seek the suspect's reaction. They will frequently trap themselves with their answers. Be careful not to indicate any sympathy for the suspect. If he/she is evasive in replies, or refuses to answer, note this and report it.

(e) In general, remember you are dealing with an unscrupulous, lying, venal person who does not deserve anything but your total contempt.

LM (1979) FIG/1

RECENT REVELATIONS about the national telephone tapping centre at 93, Ebury Bridge Road, Chelsea, London, hark back to the short item in *The Leveller* 30 on the Post Office's Department OP5 — the first public reference to the place.

Here we give a homely insight into the daily comings and goings at the top-security building, tucked furtively behind an Industrial Tribunal office. The pictures show a cross-section of phone-tap personnel, from lowly technician to hatchet-faced 'top customer'

For your reference we also print the chief staff of the Post Office Telecommunications Headquarters (PO/THQ) Operational Planning Department (OPD) Equipment Development Division (EDD) — and if you can follow that you either work for them or they're tapping you. The numbers might have been changed to protect the guilty, but they're worth a fivopenny try. Remember: 'the state is as close as your nearest telephone'.



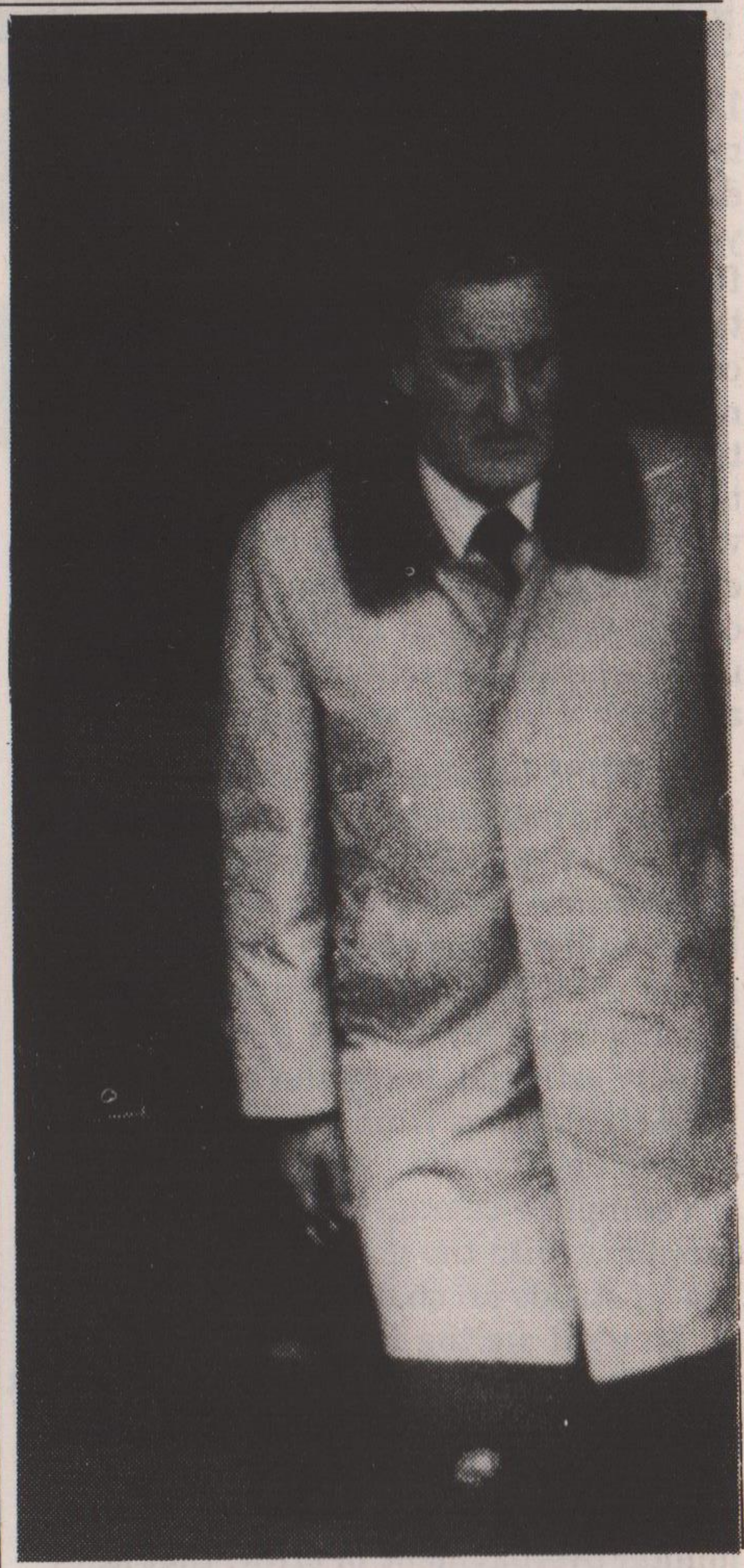
TOP LEFT
On secondment from New Scotland Yard's C11 (Criminal Intelligence) Branch ?

CENTRE
Three Ebury Bridge Road workers start the morning shift with a quick time check.

TOP RIGHT
A 'top customer' exits with official briefcase full of secrets — en route perhaps for MI5.

LOWER RIGHT
More than a sandwich pack, less than a tape transcript in this parcel.

LOWER LEFT
Just time for a quick fag in transit between one part of the building and the other. The phone tap centre has separate entrances — one for 'top customers', the other for ordinary users like the Metropolitan Police.



PO/THQ/OPD/EDD Chief Personnel

- Head of Division P R F Harris 01-432 4132
- Projects R W N Russell 01-432-4187
- Accounting A J Buck 01-730-4291
- E J Shepherd
- Operations C S Rickarby 01-432 4187
- Staff Duty Number 01-730 7857
- EDD Enquiries 01-432 4132



In Amsterdam people from 19 countries met for the first international conference on the legalisation of cannabis (ICAR). Friends of the weed from as far apart as Iceland and Jamaica, Japan and Poland were united in their opposition to the UN Single Convention of 1961 which classifies cannabis as a 'narcotic', demands the treatment of the plant on a par with heroin and aims for its world abolition by 1989.

IN CONTRAST to most international drug conferences, which are largely composed of 'drug abuse industry' liggers on freebies from Paducah and Lausanne, most ICAR delegates had direct experience of the iniquities of the cannabis laws and knew both through theory and practice that the only real problem associated with the herb is the problem of getting busted.

Whereas at most drug conferences people discuss matters of 'abuse' that are always somebody else's problem and then get drunk to alleviate their feelings of inadequacy at being unable to solve them, the ICAR grouping casually smoked dope through every session but rarely slumped into stoned inarticulacy. Despite one or two old-style hippies mumbling about Shiva and the cannabis road to enlightenment, they do, after all, represent a certain dope-smoking constituency, the level of information and discussion, particularly on medical matters, was generally high.

The manipulation of the drug issue by the state for political reasons was a constant theme. The anti-Chicano and anti-Black nature of the 1937 Federal Marijuana Act was made abundantly clear, providing a perspective on class, racism and drug politics that was developed further by Freddy Hickling, senior medical officer at Bellevue Hospital, Jamaica and Antonil, author of *Mama Coca*, in his paper *A War Against Drugs Is A War Against People*, which was dedicated 'to the voiceless marijuana growers of the Third World'.

The treatment of dope prisoners throughout the world was highlighted by speakers from the National Council for the Welfare of Prisoners Abroad, who told of a prison doctor in Bangkok whose only response to a request for treatment was the words: 'Better you die, better you die'.

Contrary to the official line that in the past cannabis was used solely as an eccentric folk remedy and dangerous euphoriant, 19th century therapeutic applications were many and varied. The drug was often preferred to opium which, though efficacious, was known to be seriously addictive. Moreover cannabis, unlike opium, did not constipate the bowel nor repress the respiratory centre. Over a long and distinguished career Sir Russell Reynolds, Queen Victoria's physician, prescribed many pounds of cannabis for the entire Royal family.

The First Cannabis International rolls up

No mortality has been recorded from cannabis overdose, the drug having a toxicity ratio of 1 to 30,000 or 40,000 as opposed to 1 to 10 for barbiturates and alcohol, which says a great deal about the logic of a control system where barbiturates are moderately restricted and alcohol is freely available.

Apart from a deliberate campaign of disinformation regarding the effects of cannabis, the U.S. during the fifties initiated extensive, but futile, research into the military potential of cannabis, whilst forbidding medical and scientific experimentation with the drug. The theory that it destroys motivation was widely promoted by the anti-cannabis lobby, despite the fact that in Jamaica and Brazil agricultural and peasant workers find a spliff break as essential to a hard day's labour as the British find their tea break. Certainly, the activity and involvement of ICAR participants flatly contradicted the stereotype of lassitude and apathy attributed to dope smokers by their opponents.

The economics of the traffic and proposed structures for legal trading between producer and consumer cooperatives did not receive sufficient attention. The concentration on constitutional proposals and tactical ways of scuttling the Single Convention, so that cannabis can be totally excluded from its provisions, should not have meant that the mechanics of supply and demand was largely omitted from debate.

Dope smokers are notoriously unwilling to discuss how cannabis will be obtained after it has been legalised, although they are almost uniformly opposed to letting the tobacco industry take over and have reservations about highly-taxed state cannabis stores administered by the same bureaucrats who had previously opposed the weed in all its forms. It is an important issue, not least because of the enormous amounts of money involved. Some Dutch activists have argued that Holland could finance its entire drug treatment programme on profits from the cannabis business. Currently their 'house dealer' system ensures that smokers get variety and quality at a fair price and eliminates the hazards of the street market.

Eliminating the black market has been a key platform for Italian and Spanish

campaigners, as opposed to the consumer orientation of the Americans. The US NORML campaign in some ways resembles the Campaign for Real Ale in its organisation, composition and meteoric development; the great difference being that you don't get busted for drinking real ale or even fizzy chemical concoctions.

Serving a certain section of the American marijuana market is a huge paraphernalia industry that has come under attack from both the left and right. The Drug Enforcement Agency, the American drugs police, has fomented public concern over paraphernalia advertising that lures young children into taking drugs and by association has attempted to discredit the legalisation movement, whilst the left has been critical of the self-indulgence and profiteering of companies producing silver coke spoons and ever more elaborate bongs at grossly inflated prices. But the paraphernalia industry is only the visible, legal tip of a 20 to 40 billion dollar marijuana market of which the biggest agri-business in California is just a part.

There was genuine concern in Amsterdam that eventual legalisation in the U.S. might turn into just one more rip-off of the natural products of the Third World. Colombia is now so dependent on the traffic that ANIF, an alliance of banking and other financial institutions, is demanding legalisation to prevent further undermining of the economy and, of course, to cash in on the profits. Similar suggestions have been floated in Jamaica.

In a number of Third World countries the traffic is dominated by cliques within the ruling group, particularly the military and the police. At the same time weapons, advanced technology and training are obtained from the U.S. ostensibly for suppression of the traffic but in reality for counter-insurgency purposes.

It would be twisted logic to argue from this that dope smokers are supporting a number of ruthless oligarchies and therefore should stop smoking. One might as well stop buying American rock music, Israeli oranges, Russian vodka or Afghan rugs because one disagrees with the politics of the nation of origin. The peasant growers do not receive one-tenth of the value of the street price of dope, but on the other hand it frequently generates more income than coffee, bananas, tobacco or mangoes. The dope-smoker is surely more effective by

Continues over page

At one stage it seemed that the left in Britain had generally accepted the need for legalisation. However, the nonconformist puritan streak in British socialism still occasionally manifests itself in the Labour Party YS and the Militant group where cannabis has been denounced as a diversion and possible plot to drug the workers into passive quiescence; not an argument I would care to advance down Railton Road. One sometimes wonders whether some of our more humourless comrades might even try to ban sex if the time saved could be used to sell more papers.

In Britain the YCL has endorsed the Legalise Cannabis Campaign and in Spain and Italy the Young Communists have agitated for cannabis reform. The Radical party in Italy, which spear-headed changes in the divorce and abortion laws and filibustered against new terrorist legislation, is leading the fight for legalisation with the support of the socialist and communist left.

The French Communist Party, on the other hand, in a paroxysm of opportunism and obscurantism has denounced in the most lurid terms any attempt to distinguish between 'soft' and 'hard' drugs. An unholy alliance has developed between party bureaucrats, the right-wing press and die-hard Gaullists on the cannabis issue. The current hysteria was initially sparked by the distribution of leaflets outside a suburban school entitled: 'Yes to Struggle, No to Drugs'. Their content was so erroneous that members of the schoolteachers' union felt compelled to reply with a call for rationality headed: 'Yes to Struggle, No to Moralism', at which point the teachers were denounced and a government inquiry demanded.

The CP has been able to pose as the party of law, order and cultural conservatism, suggest that the Socialist party is soft on drugs, denounce the pro-cannabis, left daily *Libération* as an organ of desperation and despair, and skilfully deflect attention from the party's line on Afghanistan. Party leader Georges Marchais recently coined the slogan: 'Yes to the Olympics, No to Drugs', which in its audacity probably deserves a gold medal as an outstanding contribution to the art of obfuscation.

Meanwhile the struggle for a sane international approach to cannabis continues. In a welcoming speech to ICAR, a Dutch delegate euphorically proclaimed to an audience of smokers who had temporarily come out (or at least come in from the cold) that the submarine of legalisation had finally surfaced. How long it will take to sink the Single Convention is another matter. The last word goes to *Libération*, who slyly headed their conference report with Comrade Marchais in mind — 'Long Live the First Cannabis International'.

R. Lewis



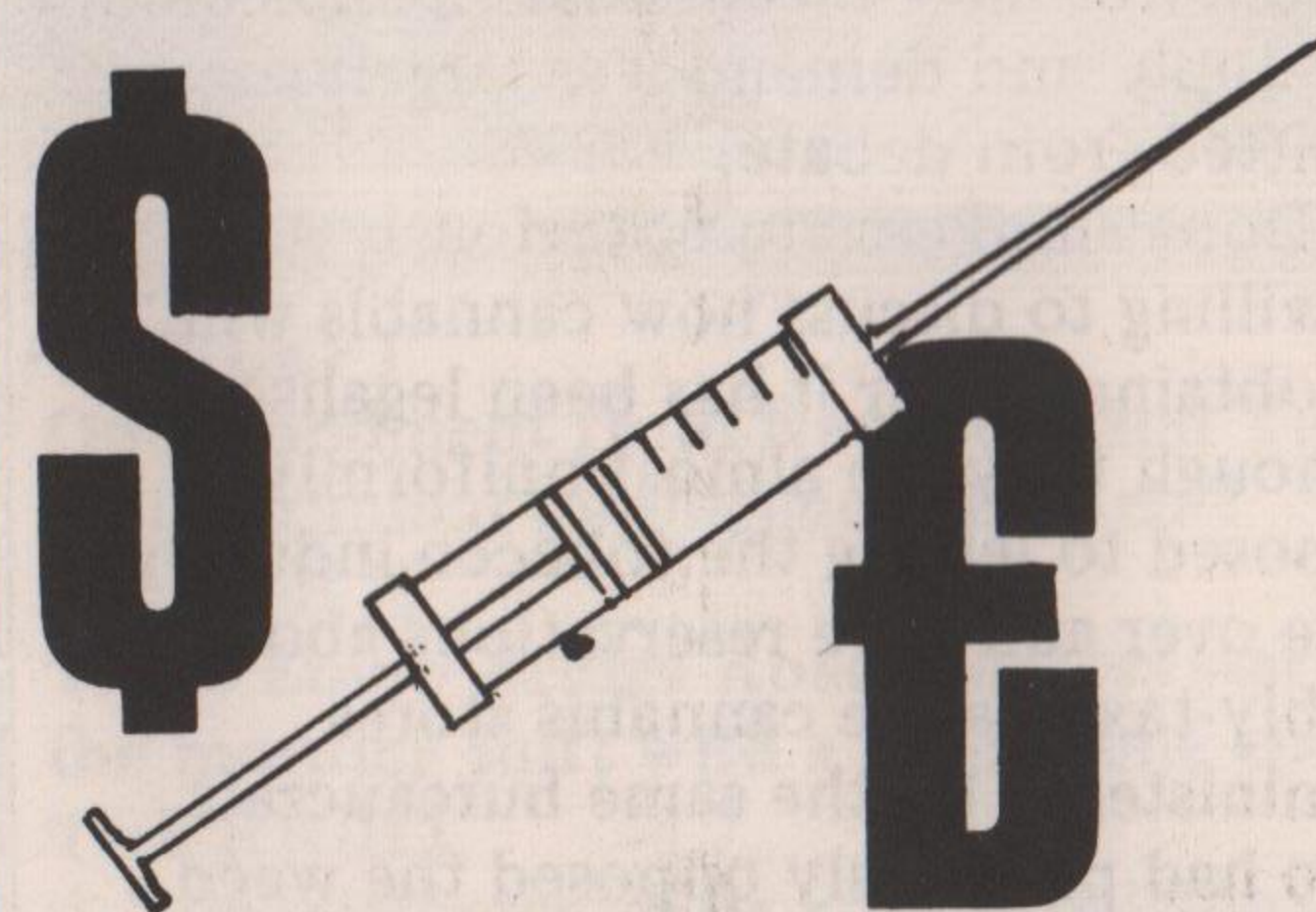
Smack traffic;

WHY is it that illegal heroin distribution throughout the world is in the hands of right-wing and often neo-fascist groups? What is their relationship to more conventional capital, and why does capital itself so dislike heroin? *Dave Clark* attempts some answers.

THERE IS little doubt that Britain is about to have some serious problems with heroin use. Home Office statistics, widely acknowledged to underestimate the number of addicts and users, showed a 20 per cent increase last year, while the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse suggests there may be between 12,000 and 16,000 addicts or serious users.

Over the last five years a real black market in imported heroin has been allowed to develop, which may be worth £50 million a year. We are likely to be faced in the near future with some increasingly strident calls from the law and order right seeking repressive solutions.

First, a little background. Britain was the main imperialist country to turn opium use into a world problem. In the seventh century AD Arab traders took opium poppies to India and Southern China. The Dutch pushed out the Arab traders, and were pushed out by the French, who were pushed out by us. We wanted Chinese tea and silk, all they would trade in was silver, so we spent nearly all the silver we'd got. Net result: British traders, somewhat despised and on the slightly unacceptable fringe of growing industrial capitalism, established themselves in Hong Kong and repatriated the profits.



At home the working class took to opium as a cheap way of forgetting about their problems of the day. It was even cheaper than alcohol in the early nineteenth century, and an effective cure-all in the days when only the rich could afford a doctor. There was rising 'social concern' at the condition of the working class and pressures to outlaw opiates — partly from doctors anxious to regain control of the medical market, partly from employers equally anxious to regain control of the labour market.

In 1912, under American pressure, the Hague Convention outlawed the opium trade while the German company Bayer marketed millions of little green and red heroin pills as a 'cure' for addiction.

By the end of the second world war some important things had happened. Lucky Luciano, former Mafia *capo*, had been let out of jail by the Americans to organise Sicily for them, wiping out the communist Resistance on the way. Luciano opened the heroin trade up again as well. Shortly after, Corsican gangs were used to smash communist trades unionists in Marseilles, and with the aid of SDECE, the French intelligence service, they too got into the heroin business.

Back in Asia, Mao came to power and wiped out most of the opium problems. Much of the Chinese heroin trade had been in the hands of the Green Gang and the Red Gang — right wing bully boys used by the Kuo Min Tang (KMT) to smash the communists in Shanghai and the big coastal ports. Some of them ran to Taiwan, the rest to Hong Kong where such rapacious opium traders as Jardine Matheson, the big trading company, had become pillars of respectability as well as the governors of this dynamic free-enterprise colony. Green Gang and KMT ruffians got themselves established in Northern Thailand too and got the heroin trade running out of the Golden Triangle, into Hong Kong and South East Asia. Meanwhile they were armed by the CIA for cross-border raids into China.

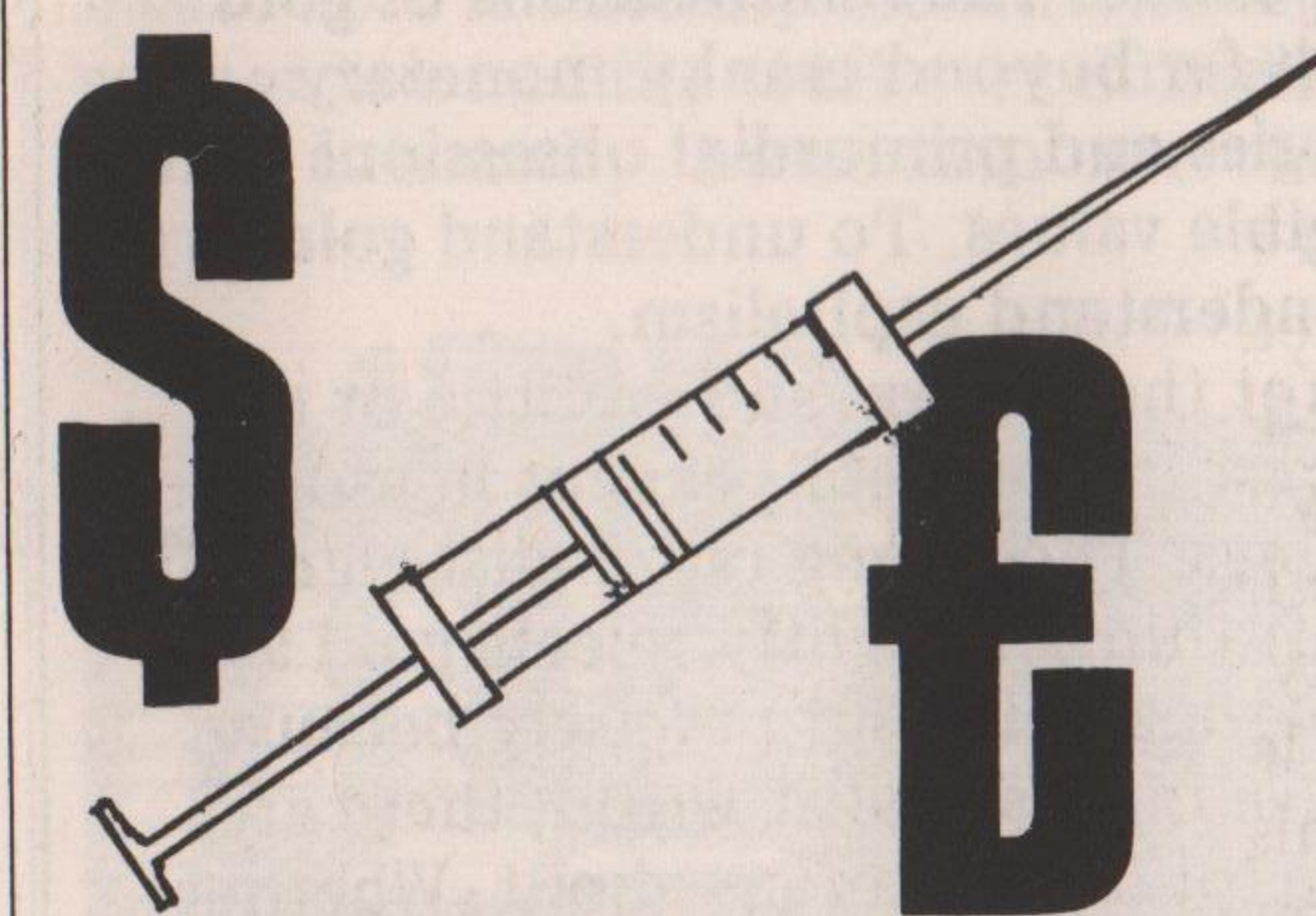
The French connection you'll know about, but although the Mafia had an important part to play, both the Turkish and the French ends were in the hands of proven neo-fascistic right-wingers. And as the Golden Triangle got into full production, a nasty mixture of CIA operatives, right-wing Laotians, Thais and Burmese, and the KMT, wheeled and danced around each other, often using official military hardware, while the GIs were dying in the jungle, or getting addicted in Saigon.

At the same time, Harry Anslinger, boss of the American Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs and, because the Americans paid most of the money, one of the most powerful voices in inter-



the Right fix

national drug law enforcement, was saying that the heroin was being pushed onto the Free World by a Red China determined to subvert our youth.



Today the Golden Triangle trade remains in the hands of a nasty mixture of Burmese and Shan nationalist warlords, who trade it with the KMT, who trade it through the Thai military authorities. Even if they wanted to stop it, the escalation of value up the distribution chain makes it very hard for an impoverished police constable, or even a general, to turn his back. Hong Kong, formerly the main centre for the trade — seems, for the moment, to have done something about cleaning up its police. The leading elements (policemen, financiers and politicians) have gone to Taiwan or Canada.

The Turkish trade, which runs mainly into West Germany, is in the hands of about a dozen leading criminal families, who in their turn are connected to two extreme right-wing parties, the MHP and the MSP. The Iranian trade, which is doing rather well in Britain at the moment, is run by a mixture of people, including a number of former Savak officials: in the Shah's day, not only was his family involved in it, but the trade within Iran was policed by Savak themselves.

This is the pattern of the trade: the producers are impoverished peasants who never get a decent deal — ripped off by the traders, bombed, paraquatted and herbicided by the state if the right people don't get paid off. The traders are fascistic groups: Savak, the KMT (though their days are numbered now we're friends with China), the Turks, the Lebanese Falangists (who've turned over their cannabis fields to poppy production, using Turkish chemists to refine it), and the Corsicans.

The left is against heroin because it's debilitating, blunts your creativity, and stops you wanting to screw or confront

political problems. Bourgeois ideology is opposed to it because it takes labour power off the market, and it can't stand people getting stoned who haven't 'earned' the right to do so.

And though they have their uses for international capital, the traders are also a threat: the black economy of their product undermines stable and traditional financial relationships. A confidential Drug Enforcement Administration paper suggests that in the middle of the seventies Hong Kong financiers were making about £600 million a year from the trade.

But the traders are really marginal to the world economy — either because, like the KMT, they've lost their former

power base and are now simply embarrassing adjuncts to western capital, or because, as at the lower end of Turkish or Corsican enterprise, they haven't yet accumulated enough capital to invest in 'respectable' businesses like property or the service sector of the economy in the way the Mafia has done in the States, the Turks in Germany, or the Iranians here. But the accumulation of value from producer to consumer — anything up to a thousand times its original value — offers the trader the prospect of joining the bourgeoisie in almost one leap.

Certain drugs are functional as well as profitable for capital — they've got alcohol or valium to keep workers quiet and relaxed, nicotine or caffeine to help them concentrate and keep producing, amphetamines to keep them awake or fighting during periods of stress. Heroin is dysfunctional because it removes young labour from the market more rapidly than any other substance. The only section of the entrepreneurial class prepared to go into it is the capital accumulating section of the right that doesn't have access to 'legitimate' political or economic power.

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The new gold rush

GOLD has dominated money talk for months. Fortunes have been made by speculators playing on fears of world war. But gold is also an integral part of capitalism and plays a major role in preserving the existing world order. To understand gold is to understand capitalism. Mike Prest argues that to oppose gold in the hands of high finance is to oppose imperialism.

A FEW weeks ago, strange rumours began to seep out of Johannesburg. Senior bankers there suggested that a deal had been struck between two most unlikely partners: the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia. The deal itself sounded even more improbable. The self-proclaimed leader of Islam would buy from the self-proclaimed leader of socialism no less than 3,000 tonnes of its gold reserves and production.

Now, 3,000 tonnes is an awful lot of gold. Equivalent to all the gold available on the Western market over two years (supply), it would be worth a cool \$125,000 million at today's prices. These are science fiction figures. Nobody takes the rumours seriously. But what if someone got a nought or two wrong? With its foreign assets reaching perhaps \$90,000 million this year, and with a powerful cash flow, Saudi Arabia could afford 30 tonnes, or even 300.

Other snippets of fact and rumour, often inseparable, add credence to such a deal. For the last two years stories have circulated about secret meetings between Saudi Arabia and the Soviet Union, which have no official diplomatic relations. As Saudi fears of increasing Soviet influence in the Middle East grow, intensified by the terror of revolution after the Shah's downfall and of invasion after Afghanistan, talking to the enemy makes sense.

Moreover, the Arabian peninsula was the main buyer of gold during the manic panic which hit the market in January this year. Much of the buying was private — Arabia now boasts thousands of individuals with personal fortunes running into millions of dollars. But an unknown amount of gold was also acquired by governments or their agencies. Both groups were anxious to limit their holdings of dollars obtained from oil.

Since the US Treasury has announced that it will cease regular sales of gold, one important source of gold has dried up. But the Soviet Union is a partly untapped supply. In 1964 the CIA reckoned that Soviet gold reserves were 1,750 tonnes. If we assume tentatively that production has averaged 300 tonnes a year and that throughout the 1970s the Soviet Union has been a net supplier of gold to the west, mainly to buy food, the increase in gold reserves since then could be 2,000 tonnes. My cautious estimate puts current reserves at 3,655 tonnes.

Potentially, therefore, the Russians could dispose of more gold. Some they need to back the rouble, which is not a readily convertible currency. But some could be used to purchase the food, technology and possibly in the future the energy so badly needed. This can be done either by exchanging gold for dollars, which gives the Soviet Union an interest, other than simply political, in a weak dollar and expensive gold. Another method would be barter. Saudi Arabia has loads of both oil and dollars.

Our original rumour has a third aspect, easily overlooked. It came from South Africa. By coincidence, South Africa is the world's biggest gold producer, at 706.4 tonnes of mined output in 1978, or 73 per cent of the western total, and twice that of the Soviet Union, the next biggest gold miner. These proportions have stayed more or less constant over many years. South Africa's geological resources are also colossal — so huge that the recent dramatic rise in the gold price has possibly increased the average life of the South African mines by 30 years.

But while it is encrusted with gold, South Africa suffers from an oil drought. All the Republic's attempts to get on at

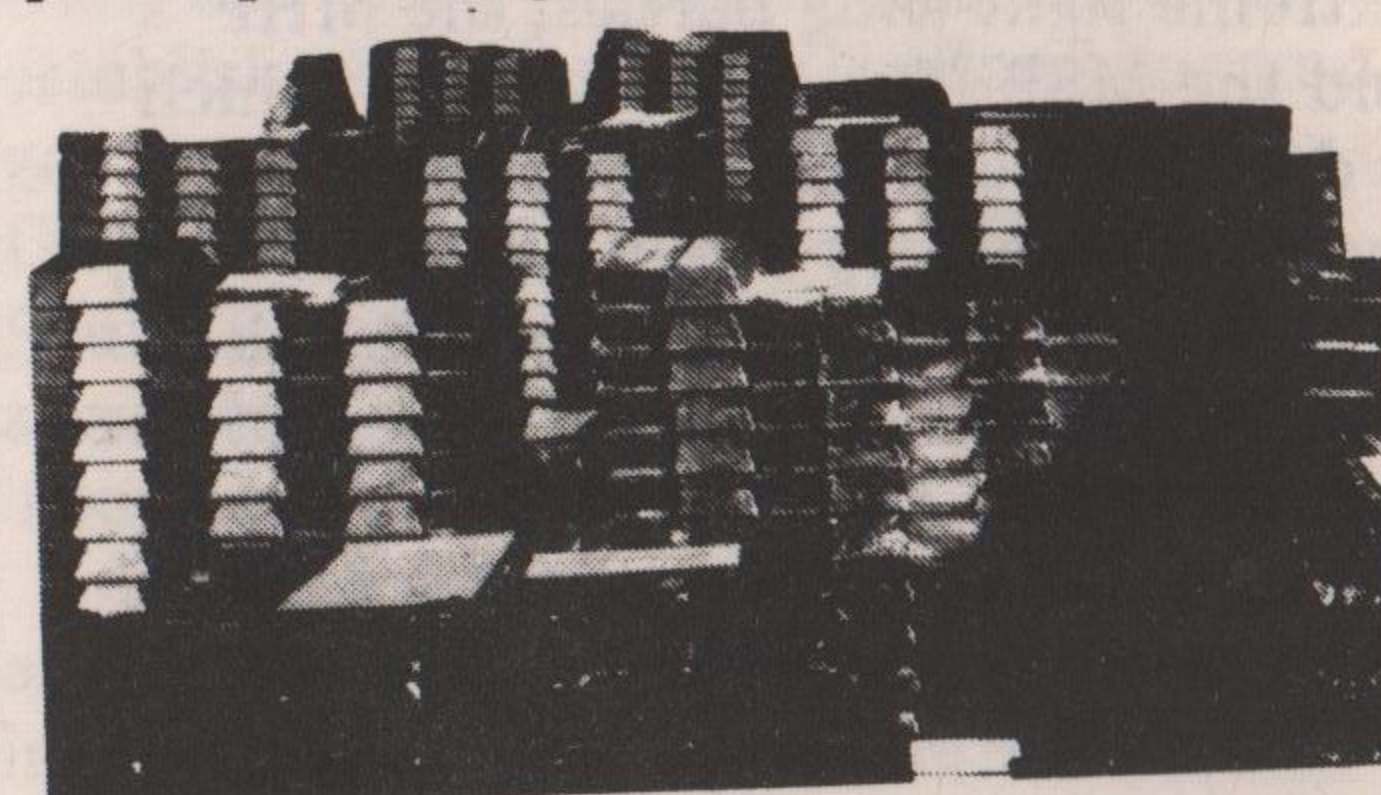
least speaking terms with the Saudis and other Arab oil producers have failed dismally. Now, however, it has a commodity which is very much in demand by people upset at holding too many paper dollars. And like the Soviet Union, its ideal combination is a high gold price and a weak dollar. So any deal which swaps gold for oil, and therefore effectively involves selling dollars, benefits South Africa, whose coffers are groaning with revenue from gold exports.

So much is conjecture. What is interesting about this rumour, however, is the insight it gives into the vitally underestimated political importance of gold, and into the mentality of its supporters. The ramifications of gold reach far beyond cranky monetary theories and primordial obsessions with tangible values. To understand gold is to understand capitalism.

Yet the left has shown little or no interest in the metal, except in esoteric writings. The strong rationalist element in left thinking rightly rejects gold as a barbarous relic. But precisely because we live in a capitalist world, there are still a lot of barbarians about. Whether we like it or not, millions of people around the world believe in gold, among them the government of the Soviet Union.

To believe in gold means basically two things. First, that the stuff has an innate purchasing power, acceptable in most circumstances. This is the currency aspect of gold. Second, that gold's peculiar properties make it a uniquely stable store of value. This is gold as the measure of money, as well as being money.

The Indian peasant, for example, who spends a small surplus on gold and silver trinkets when the harvest is good, is confident that when cash is needed, say to pay the money-lender after a poor harvest or to meet the costs of a wedding, the jewellery will have a ready market and will not have lost value in terms of prices prevailing at the time of sale.

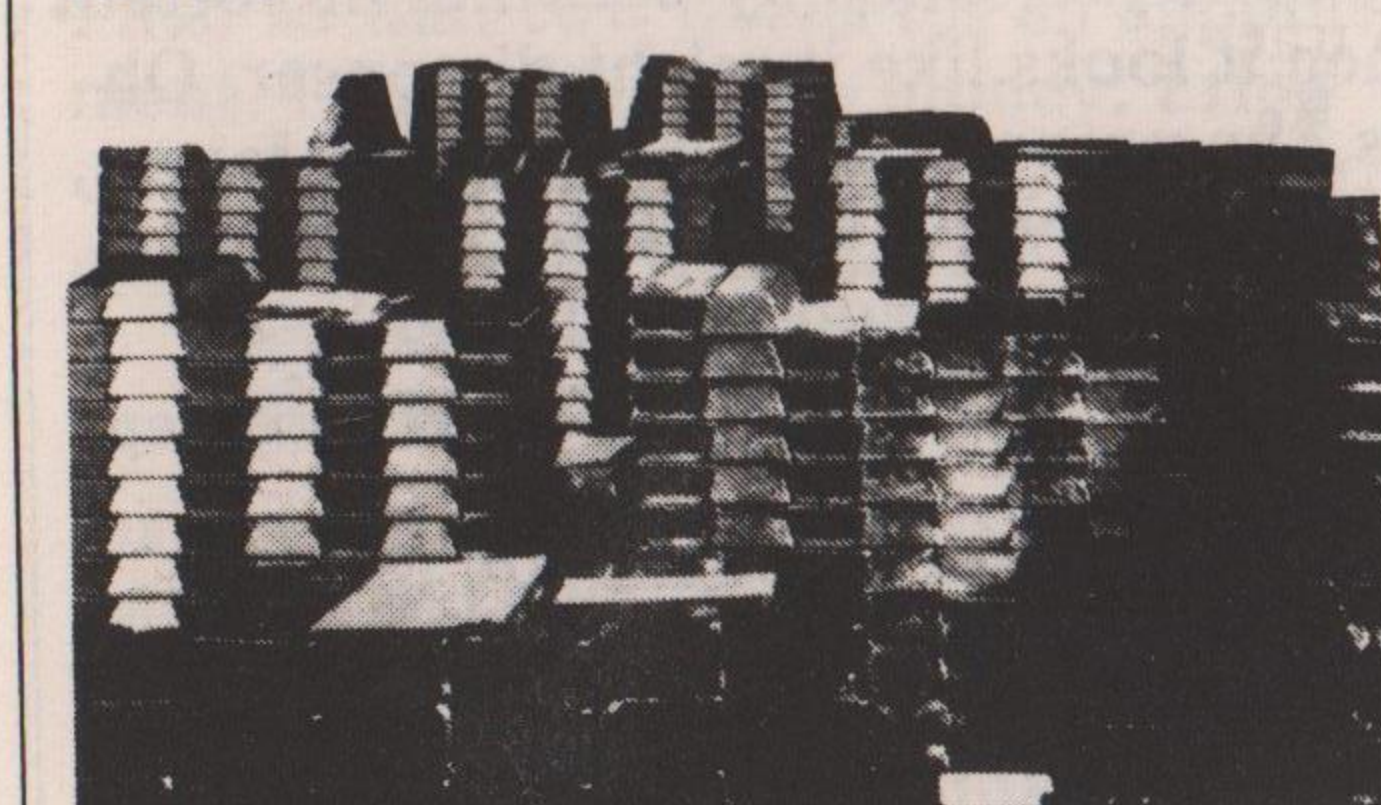


Significantly, these ideas are not confined to so-called 'primitive societies'. Italians, for example, have traditionally put their trust more in gold than in banks and in the policies of central government. Partly for this reason, Italy has the world's biggest jewellery industry. In 1978 Italy used 249.4 tonnes of gold for fabrication, far more than South Africa and the United States, the next largest manufacturers of gold items (fabrication includes coins and industrial purposes such as electronics). The total amount of gold available for purchase on the world market in 1978

was 1,552.2 tonnes.

People who hoard gold — in whatever form — see it primarily as a sort of insurance policy, possibly in a society where life is precarious. During famines in India or Africa precious metal prices (including silver) fluctuates noticeably as the victims dig into their hoards. Quite large quantities came on to the market as refugees fled Vietnam and Iran. There was no other certain way, when the paper money system had all but collapsed, of bribing their way and paying the passage.

Contrary to some instinctive, and ultimately sound, left hostility to gold and the system it underpins, the widespread belief in gold does have a material basis. Gold is virtually indestructible, so that most of the stuff ever mined still exists. It is easily turned into convenient forms.



Above all, the great difficulties in extracting gold, even at current high prices, ensure that the supply is both limited and fairly predictable. Swings in the gold price are not caused by chronic cycles of overproduction, followed by falling investment, leading to underproduction, which are the curse of base metals such as copper, or of other precious metals, notably silver, which is far more plentiful than gold.

Leaving aside for the moment the workings of the gold market, one intriguing consequence for Marxists of

the metal's steady supply is that over long periods its value can be expressed in labour power. In 1930 average American weekly earnings were about \$23 while the free market price of gold was \$20.67. At the beginning of 1975 earnings were \$181 and the price was \$185.

The consistency of price, and thus of acceptability, is the essence of the case put by gold's supporters — jocularly known in the City as 'gold bugs'. Their argument is that no other material offers a physical basis for money. If money is to have an agreed purchasing power it can only be established by reference to a tangible commodity whose value all accept. A gold standard, as this reference is called, would, the bugs argue, prevent inflation by fixing the amount of paper money (money supply) to a given quantity of gold (reserves).

The bourgeoisie is nothing if not consistent in money matters, so as inflation has developed over the last 15 years more and more people have been buying gold. A partial gold standard did in fact exist between 1933, when the US Treasury said it would buy gold only at \$35 an ounce, and the end of 1974 when it effectively declared it would pay the free market price. All other currencies were then on a gold standard to the extent that their exchange rates with the dollar were known.

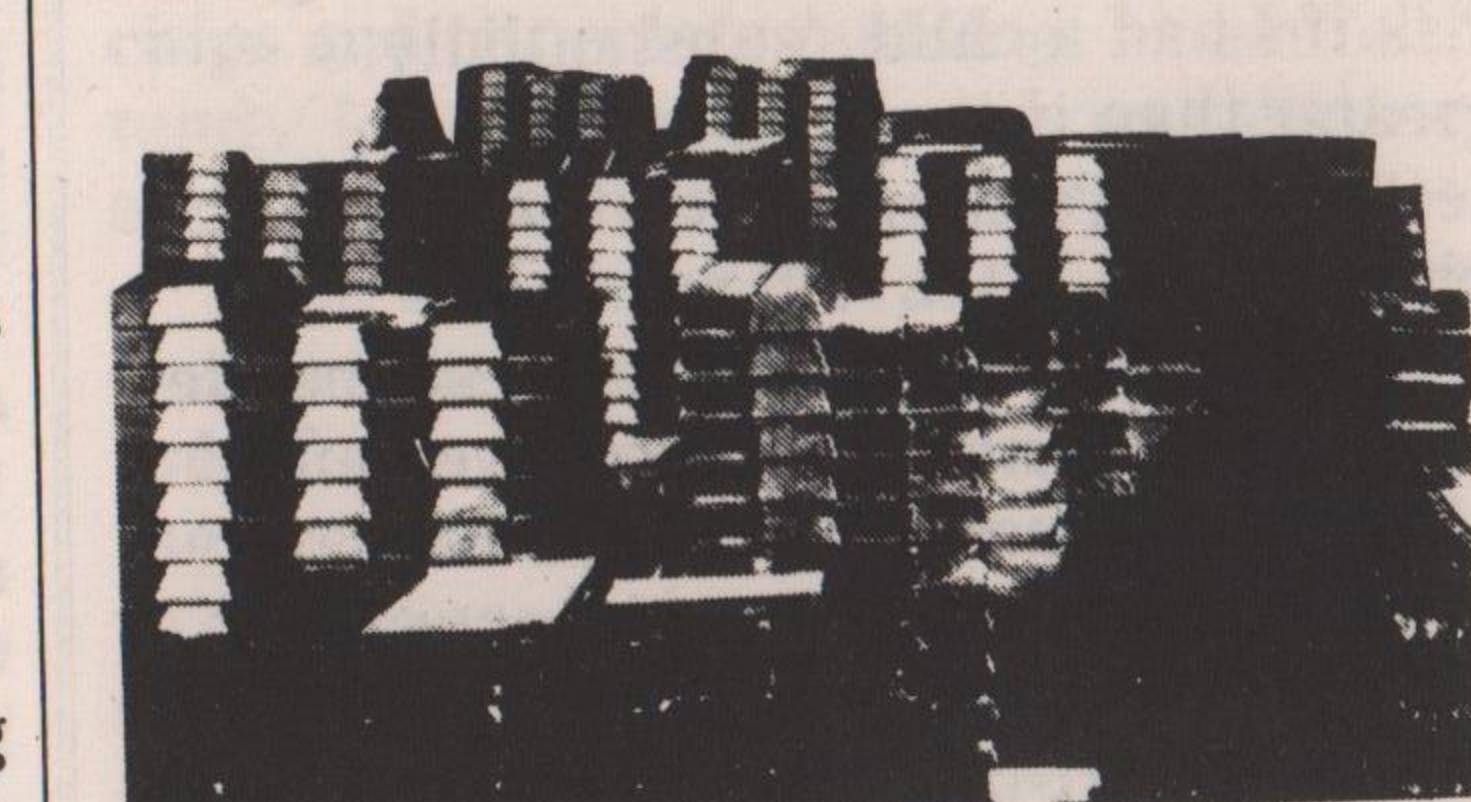
During the intervening years, as the US economy expanded, an ever-increasing number of dollars was available to buy an amount of gold which was growing relatively slowly. The scene was set for a sharp rise in the price of gold. That rise was sparked off by a mounting belief last year that US inflation was deteriorating fast. As the Iranian revolution and invasion of Afghanistan seemed to threaten war and interruption of oil

supplies from the Middle East, the mood became hysterical. Amid loose talk of a "Sudetenland situation" a speculative orgy erupted.

Gold rose from \$350 an ounce at the beginning of last year to \$850 in January of this, before falling back to the current level of around \$650. But the whole process was a kind of self-fulfilling prophesy. If gold was a safeguard against inflation and war, buying pressure pushed the price up. Once it was up, the bugs, who had done the buying, could turn round and say: 'Told you so, gold is the only hedge. It keeps its value.'

This is all very well in a simple society, where the social surplus derives gradually from agriculture, the economy expands slowly, and use for money as either a medium of exchange or a store of value is restricted. But in our own day, when wealth is measured by assets capable of producing other assets, gold is a symptom of instability rather than a cause of stability.

Modern monetary systems are backed by the volume and efficiency (product-



ivity) of the economy's productive sectors. The relation between output of goods and services on the one hand and the volume of money on the other determines a currency's purchasing power. It is not determined by reference to a commodity, whatever its properties, whose price is determined either by agreement among governments or by a 'free' market dominated by the rich and powerful.

Gold is therefore more a political fact than an economic one. The recent leap in price has transformed at a stroke the outlook for two regimes which are interested in 'sound money', that is a gold standard, only in so far as it would secure their status. South Africa wants to be indispensable to the West so it can ward off black revolution. The Soviet Union needs expensive gold to pay for imports, and perhaps one day to start a run on the dollar. To support gold is to accept one of capitalism's crudest constructs and to encourage imperialism.



	Western mine production	Net trade with Soviet bloc ¹	South African mines	Soviet mines ²
1968	1,245	-29	969	
1969	2,252	-15	973	
1970	1,274	-3	1,000	347
1971	1,236	+54	976	360
1972	1,183	+213	910	379
1973	1,124	+275	855	398
1974	1,006	+220	759	421
1975	953	+149	713	408
1976	967	+412	713	444
1977	968	+401	700	444
1978	969	+410	706	280-350

1. Gold from the Soviet bloc, mainly from the Soviet Union, in exchange for imports from the West. 1976-78 were years of poor harvests in the Soviet Union. Chinese mine production, not included here, may be about 50 tonnes a year and rising. This makes China the world's third biggest producer, roughly in line with Canada.
2. Figures from 1970 through 1977 are now thought to be too high. The latest research suggests output in the range quoted for 1978.

Source: Gold 1979 (Consolidated Gold Fields, London).

Not an excuse in the world. I don't need one.

I think I may be the type of woman that John Corrie is trying to get at. Part of the 'abuse' which he claims he wants to stamp out.

I'm not poor. I have a relatively well paid job. I am educated. I don't have five children already. I wasn't raped. And there's no reason I know of why I should bear a deformed child.

I don't fit very neatly into the 'victim' role which well-intentioned people subscribe to. True, I don't have a house of my own and neither am I married. But my mental and physical health wouldn't suffer 'serious' or 'grave' risk if I had a child, 'substantially greater than if the pregnancy were terminated'. I think that's how it's phrased.

I fit the category of the irresponsible woman, the one who has 'convenience' abortions — just when it suits her. Frivolous. Probably promiscuous. Not an excuse in the world. I probably suit the anti-abortion lobby rather well for propaganda purposes.

I haven't even got contraceptive failure as an excuse. I'm not a teenager, I know about these things. But I gave up the Pill long ago, not for health reasons, but because I was fed up with taking something every day for an event which didn't happen that often.

I possessed a cap. But I wasn't 'in control of my own sexuality', as they say. I had the cap in place when I hoped to have sex, (and usually didn't), and didn't have it in when I was least expecting it. Although the nurse at the family planning clinic told me to put it in as part of my everynight bathroom routine — 'your husband will never know'.

That seemed a ridiculous thing to do in my situation, plodding off most nights quite happily to my own solitary bed. I wasn't expecting any unexpected visitors.

But I should have got up and got my cap in the middle of a swoon, you'll be saying. No doubt that's what I should have done. But for many of us sex isn't as easy and unselfconscious as we'd like.

It's not that I was in the grip of an uncontrollable passion; more that I didn't want to break a very fragile link which takes some time and effort to establish. And in any case I thought it was a 'safe' period. I didn't even know, at my age, that sperm could live for a few days. And I'd taken quite a few risks before. It had even occurred to me I might be sterile. In other words, I was asking for trouble.

I knew I was pregnant after — I don't remember — a couple of weeks or so. My body felt different, I was tired and lethargic, my breasts heavy. I talked calmly about what I might do, weighed up the pros and cons. But inside somewhere, I was still waiting for the moment when my period would appear accompanied by the sigh of ecstatic relief which women know so well. I was still waiting for the moment I could thank Fate gratefully and swear: never again.

And even though I knew, even though I'd discussed the probability of it, the gentle tones of the girl who told me the test was positive still came as a shock. I stood and cried in the middle of Oxford Street. It wasn't a unique experience, millions before me had probably sobbed in the very same spot. But this time it was me.

It wasn't a clear-cut life or death decision. It took nearly a week to make. Not because I had any moral qualms about abortion. I was brought up a Catholic, in a family where sex was surrounded by guilt, fear and above all silence. My mother once told me in one of our rare sex education chats, that she'd rather knife me than see me pregnant. But I'd at least escaped some of that. And in some strange way, I felt proud. I was fertile. I'd achieved some mythical womanly status.

But more important, I quite wanted to have a baby. Not desperately. I'd never suffered from intense maternal feelings, no 'getting broody'. But now I thought, yes, that would be nice. It would be nice to have a child.

Isn't she just like we described? She wants to have her cake and eat it.

I couldn't sleep, I couldn't make a decision, my feelings veered dramatically from one hour to the next. I'm not ready, I thought. I haven't planned it. But I knew I'd never be ready. I don't want to marry and I'm not one of those brave single women who plan a pregnancy. This was the only way it was going to happen — by accident.

There were, of course, other considerations. The 'father', for want of a better word, was the friend I shared a flat with. He didn't pressure me either way, although he said he'd quite like a baby too. Perhaps, we thought, we could

remain friends and live together so that he could support me for a while. It didn't mean we were stuck together for life. But he protested at this, said he'd have feelings too. It wouldn't be just *mine*. He couldn't just disappear off the scene at some vague point in the future.

And I knew in my heart that no matter how helpful he was, it would be me who would have to give up . . . what? A job I found boring? Boring it might be, but a job suddenly becomes important when it looks like it might disappear. Oh yes, the union had great maternity leave. But no follow-up. No creche. I suddenly realised what it would be like to be at home with very little money for a few years.

And I couldn't just conjure up a supportive and baby-oriented commune out of thin air. I was struck with the isolation I would be facing. Unless you're really lucky, that's what a baby spells. Withdrawal from the world. A retreat from friends, politics, evenings out for a meal. No work to go out for every day. Local shopping. In the house every day. To retire from all the small things which make up life. I couldn't pay the price asked.

There! cry the anti-abortionist folk, isn't she just like we described? So casual, flippant even. The only thing she's worried about is her nights out on the town! She's weighing up her selfish lifestyle against human life! 'Quite like a baby indeed!' She wants to have her cake and eat it.

Yes, I am selfish. I have to be. Yes, I want the best of both worlds. And why not? My mother made sacrifices, and look at her. Look at the people she made them for. I couldn't pay the price asked. And maybe going out for a meal does seem a feeble excuse, but that's because the sacrifice asked is something indefinable. So it wasn't life and death but I made my decision.

After that, I went to the GP. The conversation went something like this:

Me: I'm pregnant . . . (*Give dates*)

Her: (*in deliberately jolly tone*)

That means it'll be due on . . . (*turning over calendar*) . . . January 21.

Me: I don't intend to have it.

Her: Why not? (*doesn't wait for a reply*) You haven't got any grounds at all. I'm not going to refer you. What do you think your grounds are?

Me: (*humble*): I haven't got a house, no money, I'm not married . . .

Her: Well why did you get pregnant then? (*scornfully*)

Me: I didn't mean to.

Her: Do you intend to get married, do you want to have children?

Me: Yes, I would like to have children . . .

Her: Well, let's see, how old are you? Twenty eight. You'd have to start thinking about it soon anyway. *Silence.*

Her: Well I'm not going to refer you anywhere. But don't worry, there's a clinic around here, you'll be able to get one there. They terminate *anyone*. They'll take in anyone from off the streets . . . (*I walk out.*)

Back home with relief. Anger, tears welling up again. I call her all the names under the sun. And then I phone the clinic which takes in anyone. They need a referral. They advise me to go to my local family planning clinic to get a referral. But the last time I went there I had to wait two weeks for an appointment. I panic. Fuck the money. I ring one of the charity clinics and get an appointment the next day.

There's not much to say about the agency. I knew I wasn't being exploited, or swayed, or charged extortionate rates. It was full of friendly and sympathetic women who did what they could to relieve a fraught atmosphere.

My counsellor was about my age. We went through the motions of discussing what I should do, but I knew that already and so did she. I didn't need to talk through any problems.

The doctor I saw was male, kind, jovial, a shade paternal. He said I really ought to do something about contraception. Yes, but what exactly? There isn't a magic answer. He said I could have a coil fitted the same time as the abortion. I didn't fancy the idea.

I got up and dressed at seven the next Saturday morning to be at the clinic by eight o'clock. I'd asked if I could come home afterwards instead of staying the night; they agreed since I lived near and had someone to look after me. And it was an early abortion. I was still only seven weeks pregnant although it was beginning to feel more like seven months.

Over the last fortnight I'd been lethargic, more tired than I'd ever felt, dragging myself around. I'd been weepy and depressed. And now I just wanted to get my body and my life back to normal.

I was nervous as we drove there. We got there early and went for a walk. It was a bright sunny morning. We talked about nothing much.

The clinic seemed to be swarming with people arriving and departing. Husbands and boyfriends hanging around. My friend was given some written instructions about how I would feel afterwards. He said goodbye and I was on my own.

Well, not quite. Having got undressed and donned some strange gown and plastic slippers, I joined a room full of women. We were all feeling the same. Except one bright young spark. The

nurse told her to take off her eye make-up — we'd all had instructions not to wear any make up. A bit of an argument ensued. The nurse got cross, the woman swore blind she wasn't wearing any. 'Gawd, you ought to see me when I've really gone to town. You wouldn't know me!' It turned out her eyelashes were dyed. The little drama managed to distract us all for a while.

We were called up one by one to the theatre. It was a bit like a production line. Some would have even described it as seedy. It depends on your point of view.

Yes, I am selfish. I have to be. Yes, I want the best of both worlds. And why not? My mother made sacrifices and look at her.

The last I remember is being wheeled in by a few nurses. They were OK, they were admiring each other's jewellery. But I wouldn't have said no to someone holding my hand by then. Someone was asking me if I suffered from asthma. I was getting worried, saying yes I did. Would I get asphyxiated under anaesthetic? They didn't seem to think so. A sharp feeling in the arm, my arm goes heavy with a dull pain. Blackness.

I came round listening to the sound of my own sobs and in some pain. Please somebody, come and help me. I was in a room with other beds and other moaning women. I felt the end of the world had come, utter despair. Blurred figures moved briskly around. But nobody came when I called.

The nurses were used to it, they'd seen it a hundred times. They weren't expected to be comforters or therapists. Maybe their brusqueness was even deliberate, to get us up and on our feet. Maybe everyone feels that way after an anaesthetic. But once again, I would have appreciated a shoulder to cry on.

I was wheeled up a lift into a smaller room with beds and given tea and sandwiches. I became aware of other women; I didn't recognise them since I didn't have my contact lenses in. I wanted to lie there for ever, but we were told to get up again after a brief respite.

By this time I was getting a bit bolshie about being shunted around and told what to do when all I wanted was more tea and quiet. It seemed real production line stuff. Maybe it was, but looking back, I think it was their way of getting us all moving around and dressed and back to normal.

I was beginning to realise now it was all over and I was still alive and feeling

fine. I got dressed and joined my group. We had several hours to kill before they'd let us go. What a different group of women now. Everyone chatty, relieved, giggling. Talking about who was coming to collect them.

The bright spark made her entrance. 'Cor, great, that's all over. A g & t and I'll feel alright!' I laughed with her. Nobody mourned any loss. Not right now at any rate.

I was getting bored and ravenously hungry. Finally, downstairs we went, chatting and cracking jokes. I wanted to reassure all the wan and nervous newcomers. A final talk from a doctor about check-ups and advice and we were free to go.

My friend was outside waiting. I felt high as a kite. Felt as though I'd climbed a mountain, done something great. Felt delicate but free. And immensely hungry. I had every reason to feel great. I'd made a decision which was mine and mine alone and seen it through.

And here was a rare chance to be spoiled and pampered and get lots of attention. I went home to bed, steak-and-chips and chocolate pudding. I even felt randy I was so high. The sun was shining and all was well with the world.

Aha! I can hear the 'antis' pounce. It's even worse than we thought. She doesn't even feel a tinge of remorse, never mind the breakdown we predicted. She's ready to do the same thing again! How can we let someone like that make life or death decisions? She can't even be serious about it! Giggling and chatting indeed!

But I was serious about it. And I didn't want to go through it again. Not long afterwards I reluctantly went back on the Pill. The family planning doctor I saw was sympathetic to my indignant story about the GP, but told me the NHS didn't have to give an abortion to someone who hadn't used contraception. If you're irresponsible, you have to (literally) pay for it.

During the months to come I was often to imagine what it would be like if I was still pregnant. I didn't have regrets. It's impossible to have regrets about something so painful to decide. But I might well be regretful or bear a grudge if someone else had done the deciding for me.

And it wasn't a right decision. There is no 100% wrong or right decision to make. That would be like looking back on life and saying: ah, that's where I went wrong. As though some force of fate has some other path lined up and you've missed it.

If, now, I was putting to bed a two month old baby, I hope I'd be getting some pleasure from it. I certainly wouldn't have the time to imagine how life would be different without him or her. And I'd still like a child. Somehow and at some time.

And I'm not about to enter into any moral arguments about where life begins. Life doesn't begin anywhere, life is a continuum. Life is a cell and an ovum, it's a fertilised egg and a foetus.

ABORTION

Continued from page 15

I have chosen to put my own life, that of a grown woman with a mind of her own, first. And I know it's me alone who can decide that. I don't need to defend abortion by pretending that all we're talking about is a mass of cells.

A month ago I went to a meeting of women sparked off by an article in *Spare Rib*. It was called 'Abortion: the feelings behind the slogans'. Women got up and spoke about their experiences, how they'd felt when pregnant, contradictory and emotional stories. They hadn't been able to say it before because the 'pro-abortion' lobby has to argue about splitting cells and all the rest of it and appear hard in the face of the opposition ranged against us.

'Kill, kill the Corrie Bill!' 'Free abortion on demand!' we shout and rant (or some of us do). The TUC says coyly 'Keep it legal, keep it safe'. That really does make 'it' sound like a seedy experience, with women as the victims. No one wants to go too near the actual experience. You feel some of our supporters might shuffle rather uncomfortably in their seats if you did.

Eileen Fairweather in that *Spare Rib* article expresses it better than I ever could: 'The only way abortion will cease to be each woman's guilty secret, and becomes something she is prepared to fight for publicly, is through our saying without apology — yes, if necessary, we put women first'. Whether at seven or twenty-seven weeks.

But I'm still not without apology. This story will go in under a different name. I have a family to consider as well as the voyeuristic eyes of people I know, colleagues at work.

I went leafletting in the market the other day to try to save the local abortion clinic. A woman stall holder got the edge on me. She sold her ideas as well as she sold the fruit: 'Don't tell me. You can't tell me anything. Young girls today, there's plenty of things they can use. If you muck around you should pay for it. I've got a lovely fifteen-year old daughter and never regretted it. And what's more, why should they put all that money into the clinic? I've been waiting years to have my leg done.'

She had everyone nodding in sympathy. The men around sniggered, abortion was to do with sex, so it must be dirty and worth a laugh. Maybe instead of earnestly reiterating statistics and protesting that not everyone can take the Pill, taking the 'victim' stance, I should have come right out with it there and then.

Yes, I've had an abortion. No I wasn't raped, no I haven't got five kids already, I wasn't even using anything. Then why should I get away with it, did I hear you say? If I mess around, I should take the consequences? No, I'm sorry, I don't agree. We've taken the consequences for too long. Things are going to be different now. My life belongs to me.

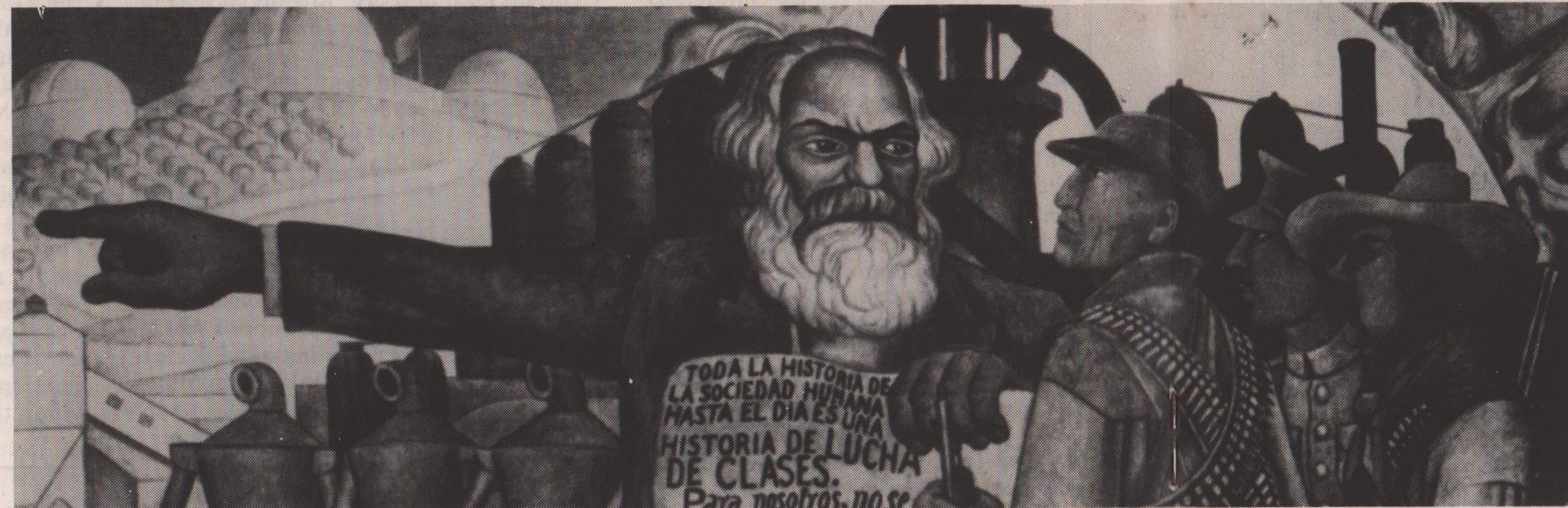
Sally Jones

THE FIRST SHOTS in the Mexican Revolution were fired in 1910. By the time the shooting was over, ten years and four presidents later, the aims of the Revolution had still not been achieved, but power had been taken out of the hands of a corrupt dictator and was held by men more responsive to the needs of the people. The first steps were being taken in a process which was to give millions of hectares of land back to the peasants and bring the country's oil and other resources under state ownership and, for the first time anywhere in the world, a truly revolutionary art was being created.

In 1920 the new president, Alvaro Obregon, appointed as his Minister of Education Jose Vasconcelos, an intellectual who had been a revolutionary student leader and who was inspired with the idea of 'art for the people'. He saw the role of artists as teachers. People who, through their painting, could show the largely illiterate population something of the history of their country, give them pride in what had gone before, understanding of where they had come from, and hope and confidence in where they were going.

Vasconcelos sent government teams of 'cadres' out to the Indian villages. Teams consisting of engineers to help them with such things as irrigation, teachers to help them to set up village schools, agronomists to help them get the best from their land, and artists to help develop their own crafts and to portray their own history in pictures. And he threw open the public buildings of Mexico City and other areas so that the artists could paint the story of Mexico on the walls where the people could see them.

The response was amazing. A great flowering of mural painting took place. Nothing like this had happened before anywhere in the world with the possible exception of the Italian Renaissance. But there was a major difference. Here were no munificent sponsors, no Medicis, no Popes. Here the instructions to the artists were not to glorify god and their patrons but to glorify humankind. And here, too, a new type of artist developed. Parallel in time with the last stages of cubism and the beginning of the domination of western art by Picasso and the School of Paris, the Mexican artists painted not for the dealers, the chic galleries and the drawing rooms of inter-



ABOVE: Karl Marx is seen pointing the way to the future in this detail from the immense mural by Diego Rivera which encompasses the main staircase of the National Palace in Mexico City.

Art for people's sake

A UNIQUE revolutionary art was created during an extraordinary period in Mexican history from 1910 onwards. The most flamboyant artist of this time was Diego Rivera, and with other Mexican artists he set about adorning the walls, buildings and public structures of

ver visitors might go in Mexico, they will see the works of the mural painters.

These exciting art forms are the country with vivid scenes portraying the class struggle and the Mexican people's history. In palaces and patios, in Ministries and museums, where-

here described by Baron Moss, who has recently written a novel novel *The Big Wall* (Bachman & Turner) based on the life and times of Rivera, and set against the background of the Mexican revolution, leading up to the time when Leon Trotsky was murdered in Mexico City.

national millionaire collectors, but simply for the peasants and workers of their country.

They formed themselves into an Artists' Union and negotiated their terms of pay with the government on the same basis as manual workers. They started their own newspaper *El Machete* which became a vehicle for militant revolutionary discussion. They argued day and night about the theory and practice of revolutionary art and then they went off and created it on the walls of Mexico City.

Although dozens of artists of many differing styles and backgrounds participated in the movement, three great painters dominated the scene — the 'Big Three' of Mexican mural painting — Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Jose Clemente Orozco. All three were intensely political. Rivera and Siqueiros were communists. They argued bitterly with each other, with their colleagues in the Artists' Union, with the government, the church hierarchy and the intellectual circles of the day. They used their brushes as weapons and chose the walls as battlefields for the class struggle, putting a clear and stark message into their paintings which portrayed the oppression of the Indians by the Spanish Conquistadors

and the role of the church in the grab for gold. They showed the decadence and corruption of the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship, the struggle against the 'yanqui' invaders, the Zapata-led peasant movement for 'Land and Liberty' and the wider world struggle against Fascism and for a socialist future.

Perhaps the most famous, certainly the most prolific and the most colourful of the three was Diego Rivera. As a young man he had studied in Spain and then in Paris where he met Picasso and joined the Cubists. Then he went to Italy and studied the frescos of the Renaissance before he returned to Mexico where he helped to found the artists' union and became an editor of *El Machete* and a leading figure in the Mexican Communist Party. His magnificent series of murals in the Ministry of Education Building in Mexico City would have been a life's work for any other painter. One hundred and twenty-four paintings running round the walls of a huge courtyard, on three separate floors, all painted in the ancient fresco technique so that the colours are still as vibrant today as when they were first painted. Here, as one goes from wall to wall, from painting to painting, the whole life of the

Mexican peoples unfurls. The unending toil, the brutal oppression, the coming together in struggle, the aims of the revolution, land, liberty, education, food and the pleasures of the fiesta. No wonder that Rivera soon found himself at odds with the government! The row flared up over some words from a poem that Rivera painted on the timbers of the entrance to a mine in one of his murals.

*Comrade miner,
Bowed under the weight
of the earth
Thy hand does wrong
When it extracts metal
for money.
Make daggers with all the
metals
And you will see how,
after all,
The metals are for thee.*

The government, accusing Rivera of incitement to assassination, insisted the verses be removed. After much discussion in the Artists' Union Rivera agreed to remove the words, but made a cavity in the wall and with much ceremony inserted a sheet with the words of the poem inscribed on it, cementing it up for posterity. The offending words were printed all over the world and the young poet became a

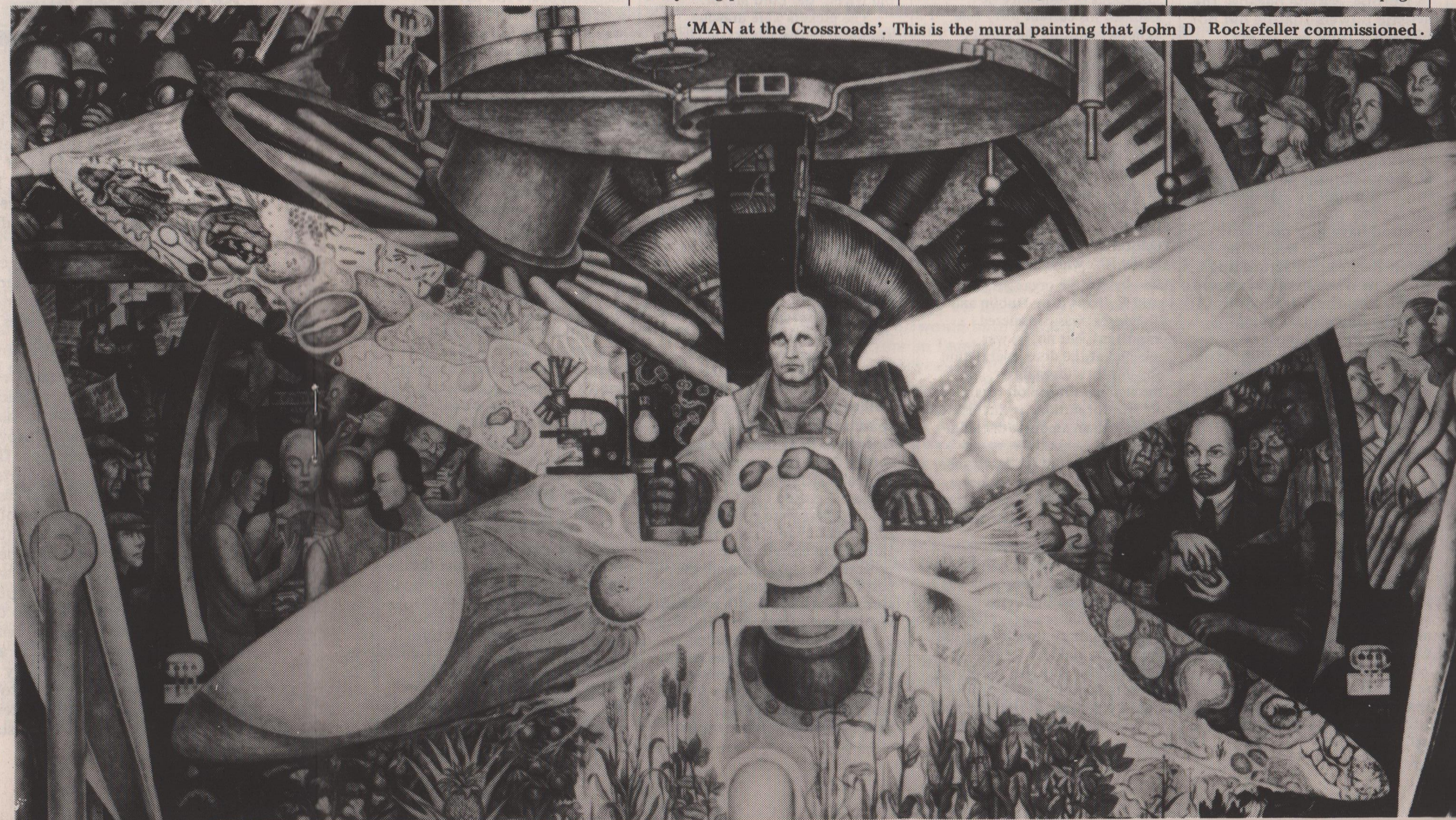
national hero overnight. Then Rivera got down to work on the next panel showing workers and peasants in a fraternal embrace and beneath it some more words by the same poet urging workers and peasants to unite and take the fruits of factory and field for themselves.

The Ministry of Education frescoes became a bible of revolutionary art. But they were just the beginning. Soon they were followed by the commissions to paint the walls of the Cortes Palace in Cuernavaca and the great National Palace mural in Mexico City, a work that was to take him six years to complete. This monumental panorama of Mexican history was interrupted by commissions in the United States to paint murals in (of all places) the San Francisco Stock Exchange, and then at the Detroit Institute of Arts, sponsored by Edsel Ford, and finally the Rockefeller Centre in New York. 'Finally' because it was the last mural commission Rivera was to receive in the USA. The reason for this was the terrific row over this mural for which Rockefeller had paid \$25,000. When America's leading capitalist saw the completed mural painted by Mexico's leading communist

he was livid at the portrayal of Lenin, clapping the hands of the workers of the world. He insisted that Lenin's portrait be removed. Rivera refused. Rockefeller had the painting destroyed. After all, it was his painting. He had paid for it: 'The Battle of Rockefeller Centre' became a *cause celebre* of the art world in the thirties and Rivera enjoyed being at the centre of it, giving it an extra twist by using the Rockefeller money to paint a series of panels for the New Workers School in New York in which the story of the working class movement of the United States is unfolded. It is all there. The Civil War, slavery, the Haymarket martyrs, Tom Mooney, Sacco and Vanzetti, Standard Oil and the United Fruit Company and, surprise surprise . . . John D. Rockefeller! Later, when Rivera returned to Mexico he repainted the Rockefeller mural in the Bellas Artes.

Before his battle with Rockefeller, Rivera had battled with the Mexican Communist Party over Trotsky and had been instrumental in persuading the Mexican government to grant asylum to the Bolshevik leader who became Rivera's guest for the first part of his fateful

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'MAN at the Crossroads'. This is the mural painting that John D Rockefeller commissioned.

stay in Mexico. It was this, too, which created the rift with the other great communist painter David Siqueiros. A younger man, Siqueiros had fought with the revolutionary army and combined active political and trade union organising with his painting. Siqueiros fought in Spain with the International Brigade and on his return to Mexico led the first attempt on the life of Trotsky.

Orozco is different from the others. His painting is the sharpest and most bitter indictment of the evils of every aspect of society. So much so that one feels that he believes *all* society is evil. Government, Justice, the Church . . . war, poverty, prostitution . . . all parade in garish caricature across his walls. He hasn't a good word to say for anybody except perhaps the independence leader Hidalgo who holds out the flaming torch of freedom over your heads as you climb the staircase of the Government Building in Guadalajara. There were many others . . . wherever you go in Mexico you will find walls that have been painted by artists with something to say.

The extraordinary thing is how little is known of all this in Europe. Maybe because the artistic powers-that-be did not like what they had to say? There was a Mexican Art Exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1953 but the murals were not featured, even in reproduction. In Britain today an indigenous mural movement is developing and we have already seen our first destruction of a mural at Wandsworth. So far few of the murals painted have any political content but it is beginning. Brian Barnes had something to say in Wandsworth (maybe that's why they destroyed it?) and the new mural being produced at St. Georges Town Hall by Dave Billington should be of great interest, depicting the battle of Cable Street in the East End, where London's workers defeated Oswald Mosley's blackshirts.

The Thatcher regime won't make funds available for art. But perhaps the TUC, or individual unions should be considered the question of the part that artists have to play in the working class struggles, and there is certainly scope in Working Mens Clubs and Labour-led councils for getting the artists to show the people that there is a future for socialism, and for a socialist art, in Britain.

SHORTS

A taste of Britain

THERE IS no such thing as an anti-imperialist who does not support the Provos and no such thing as a socialist who is not anti-imperialist. Thus concludeth the return of Eamonn McCann's tome on Ireland *War and an Irish Town* (Pluto £1.95).

He insists on this as an even more important point to drive home to the left in Britain these days, now the British Army atrocities seem less or smaller-scale, and the overall political picture in Northern Ireland is not as simple as 'Good Guys' against 'Bad Guys'.

McCann is particularly aggrieved at the 'critical support' that comes from left groups in the UK in relation to the Provisional IRA: 'This gives a handy let-out whenever anything particularly nasty happens. The Provos aren't just playing to a gallery of the world's left, they're fighting a war'.

Not that McCann is himself these days a hero of Republican fighters. They seem more suspicious of him since he assumed his current lofty role as news editor of the Dublin tabloid *Sunday World*. This time round though he insists that the Provos will be gunning till the end. Releases from Long Kesh re-fill the ranks. Very few who leave Long Kesh want to retire from the fight.

McCann would have said many of these things late February at one of the seminars in London's A Sense of Ireland roadshow. Only they wouldn't let him in at the ICA when he turned up. He pleaded the organisers had paid his fares from Dublin and his address was considered important, but no, he was rejected at the door, inebriation apparently a disqualifier, and the seminar limped on regardless.

Not for nothing is the festival being known amongst dissident Irish as 'A Sense of Grievance', or as McCann put it: 'It's trying to prove Paddies are not just good at making bombs, but can only produce mediocre artists.'

IN ARMAGH JAIL in Northern Ireland 36 women are on protest for political status and are living in terrible conditions. They're in solitary 21 hours a day, are not allowed sanitary towels or to use the toilets, and lose a day's remission for each day on protest. Recently a mob of male screws from Long Kesh, in riot gear and carrying coshes, were let loose on

them; several women were badly injured and one woman has been raped.

On last International Women's Day when Irish women demonstrated outside the jail in support of their sisters inside, eleven of them were arrested. 30 or 40 women from England and Scotland went to Armagh in January to support the 'Armagh 11' at their trial, which was adjourned for the umpteenth time. Afterwards the women exchanged songs and slogans with the women inside the jail and spontaneously decided to return in full force to Armagh on International Women's Day this year (March 8th). Anyone who wants to go or to send a message of support should contact Women Against Imperialism. c/o 52 Broadway, Belfast 12.

Racism down under

THERE were pickets at the Guildhall last month when John Bjelke-Petersen, Premier of Queensland, arrived to receive the Freedom of the City of London and have lunch with his old friend, the Lord Mayor.

The pickets were drawing attention to the attacks on civil liberties for which peanut farmer Bjelke and his National Party are notorious in Australia. Public demonstrations were banned in Queensland in September 1977 and since then there have been more than 2,000 prosecutions under the ban.

After Bjelke and his 'Director of Aboriginal Advancement' were sued by Aborigines for racial discrimination, Bjelke passed a law rendering him and his ministers immune from criminal and civil action unless initiated by the police (who are under direct government control).

Bjelke's government holds power with about 20 of the vote, thanks to systematic gerrymandering and a coalition with the conservative Liberal Party. In November 1977, Bjelke vetoed the federal programme to combat Trachoma (a blinding disease) 'because two Aboriginal field workers were enrolling Aborigines to vote'. Professor Hollows, in charge of the programme, said: 'They are the best two field workers we have ever had. The eye health problems of Aborigines here are so horrific.'

Queensland's 'assimilation policy' towards Aborigines has been shown by Jan Roberts in *From Massacres to Mining* to be apartheid by another name. But Fraser's federal government has

not proceeded against the Queensland government, though it is violating federal directives on Aboriginal rights.

Bjelke held a press conference on 15 February. This bulwark of the Lutheran Church uttered ritual pieties about 'doing what is right'. He'd met Thatcher and discussed with her, among other things, the Communist threat, and world energy problems. Queensland has significant uranium and huge bauxite deposits on land which local aborigines regard as their own. This is one reason why the government has shown so little interest in the cause of Aboriginal Land Rights. Bjelke, like Sir Peter Gadsden, the Lord Mayor of London, has shares in major mining companies there. He has no intention of retiring at the moment, perhaps because federal tax authorities are anxious to investigate his financial affairs once he does so.

So this is the kind of person they make Freeman of the City of London. Surely there's a lesson in it somewhere . . .

H. O. Nazareth

Going spare

FOUR DOZEN COPIES of the December issue of feminist magazine *Spare Rib* have been seized by Irish customs on their way to the Old Market Bookshop in Sligo, Ireland. Officials claimed that the magazine had been imported in contravention of Section 42 of the Customs Consolidation Act of 1876.

Spare Rib covers a wide range of issues which concern women, such as family-planning, housing, sexuality and family law, and was previously banned by the Republic's Censorship of Publications Board for a period of six months. This followed the publication of an article on contraception, a controversial issue in Ireland, where the sale of contraceptives is still illegal.

Spare Rib have not been contacted by the Irish Customs, and are baffled as to why this particular issue was seized. They fear that censorship is being used to stop the flow of information rather than pornography, which they see as having far more damaging effects.

Councillor Declan Bree, a director of the Old Market Bookshop, said 'the seizure of *Spare Rib* is a reflection of the perverted and narrow-minded thinking in government circles today. The goal of equal rights for women can only be delayed while subjects such as contraception and sexuality remain taboo in Irish society.'

He intends to continue to stock *Spare Rib* each month.

Minority units: a lesson in how to avoid the issues

ALL OVER the television industry people are gearing up for the glittering career opportunities which the fourth channel will open up and no-one more assiduously than LWT's controller of features and current affairs John Birt. He has long nursed a simple ambition — to run the fourth channel. So his brainchild, LWT's new Minorities Unit, is not so much for the viewers benefit but more to impress the IBA. Plans for the fourth channel were drawn up with the Annan Report (which had a lot of pious talk about the need to serve minority audiences) very much in mind. Ever since then Birt has been building himself up as the Messiah of programming for 'minorities' i.e. anyone not male white or heterosexual. Which fits in well with his much prized but totally bogus reputation as a radical; a reputation boosted by publications like *Broadcast* whose publisher Rod Allen moonlights for Birt as a producer, and journalists like Carl Gardner of *Time Out* who presumably would like to.

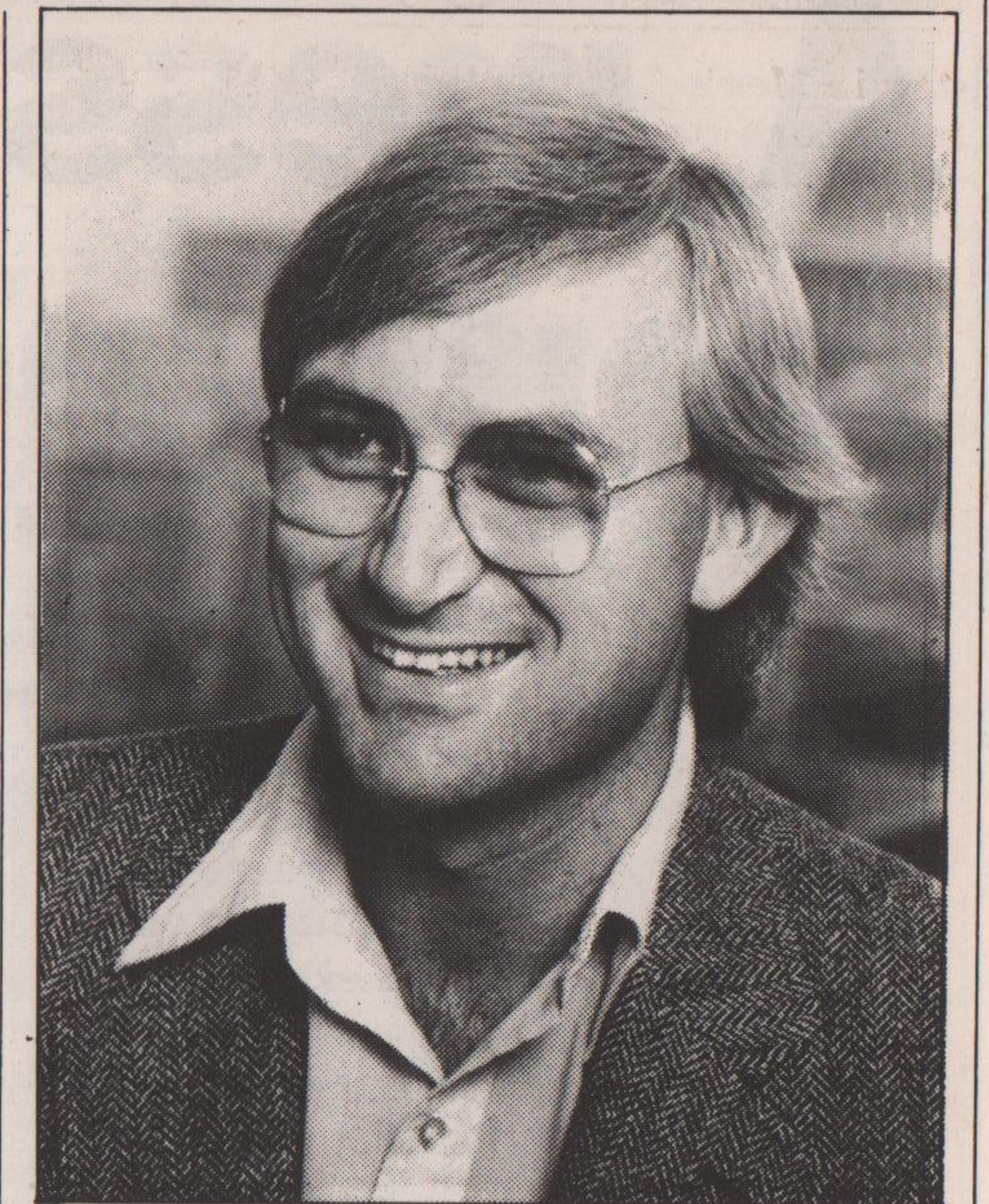
Coverage of the black community on T.V. is notoriously poor, and anything which sets out to rectify this like the Minorities Unit series *Skin* is worth attention. The trouble with *Skin*, like the rest of the unit, is that the thinking behind it is unanalytical and ultimately tokenist. 'Researching blacks' Birt was saying happily last summer, 'is no different from researching the S.A.L.T. talks'. Structural racism, the gulf between black and white, the preconceptions with which even "liberal" whites approach black people and the politics of using an all white production crew to present a picture of black people to the world — all this has entirely escaped the powers that be at LWT. *Skin* has got three black researcher/reporters but, surrounded by white people and constantly pressured to produce programmes specifically for a white audience, their grasp on the reality of life for the ordinary black person is slipping fast.

The growth of the black women's movement has been the most interesting development on the black scene recently — *Skin*'s black female reporter chose as

'The minorities unit is ghetto television, based on the idea that black people are outsiders'

her first programme a piece on Asian herbal doctors. The programme on the disbandment of Islington Community Relations Council managed to miss all the interesting issues. Like, for example, the racism in the ruling (and partially Irish-dominated) Islington Labour Party, the whole debate about whether CCR actually serve any useful purpose or are just a buffer between the state and the black community absorbing educated blacks into lucrative admin. jobs who might otherwise be out on the streets organising. And *Skin*'s two-parter on police/black relations in South London devoted the first part to the 'problem' and took as its point of departure the assumption that black criminality was indeed the 'problem'. (If only the researcher had bothered to read the recent Home Office study of 'Race Crime and Arrests' he would have found that the rate of crime in Lambeth is lower than that in Newcastle with its minimal black population). In reality the problem isn't black people but police racism and police abuse of their powers. Instead the viewer was treated to a string of interviews with police spokesmen saying how reasonably and painstakingly they deal with the 'problem'. *Skin* managed not to interview a single one of the people taking the heat — the black youth on the street.

The Minorities Unit is ghetto television. It is (as LWT admit) underfinanced and gets minimal audiences. Rather than being, as Carl Gardner claims, 'an important digression from mass programming' it reinforces mass programming: salving consciences for pushing out the same old stereotypes at peak



John Birt: 'Researching blacks is no different from researching the SALT talks'

viewing time, strengthening the idea that black people are outsiders best dealt with in a special unit broadcasting at times when nobody watches, increasing the black communities' sense of being marginalised and last (but not least) producing profoundly boring programmes.

But the Unit has been lavishly trumpeted and will no doubt impress Lady Plowden and the rest of the IBA, giving Birt mileage over his main competitor, Jeremy Isaacs (ex-controller of Thames TV, currently free-floating and the obvious front-runner to be Mr 4th Channel). And the IBA needn't be frightened that Birt is a genuine lefty. He produced the recent soft-centred Frost interview with the Shah which was more public relations than investigative journalism. And LWT's current affairs department failed to give any significant coverage to the Agee/Hosenball and ABC affair apparently on the basis of 'research' by Gerry Gable. This consisted of recycled security service briefings. While the Minorities Unit might help Birt become controller of the fourth channel, it won't significantly alter the climate of assumptions which the TV moguls have helped to fashion. The sort of assumptions that made LWT receptionists take for granted that black academics who came to commune with Birt in the planning stages of the Unit were in fact waiting taxi drivers. And TV companies everywhere have yet to realise that a few token blacks and women on screen do not compensate for the lack of genuine equal opportunity in managerial and technical jobs. So while the contenders for personal power make their opening moves and counter-moves in the upheaval that the fourth channel and the re-allocation of the franchises will bring — the real questions about power, control and accountability in the media go undebated.

Julia McLymont

A message from India

THE re-screening of a TV documentary on India will give British audiences a fresh chance to assess the true roots of the sub-continent's democratic potential. *Zareer Masani* discusses Michael Grigsby's trilogy *Before the Monsoon* with hindsight following Indira Gandhi's recent electoral success.

AS INDIA went to the polls last December for the seventh time since independence, British television audiences were given a rare opportunity to assess the relevance of this exercise to the basic problems and demands of the Indian people. The outcome of these elections has not detracted from the value of Michael Grigsby's trilogy on Indian politics, *Before the Monsoon* which marked a refreshing breakthrough both in the genre of documentary films and in its demystification of a theme long clouded by western nostalgia for the Raj and its relics. It is a pity that the film will almost certainly be banned in India, especially after Mrs Gandhi's return.

Grigsby's Indians are not the usual urbane, westernised faces who monopolise most media coverage. They are mostly ordinary working men and women, presented not as a faceless, mass stereotype but as individuals whose sensitivity, courage and political awareness speaks across the barriers of grinding poverty and cultural difference. It is they who provide the essential optimism that shines through this scathing indictment of 'the world's largest democracy.'

The trilogy begins with a well-structured analysis of *The Roots of Violence*, the violence in question being the organised repression waged by a capitalist-landlord state against its own population. The transfer of power from the British to the Congress Party — 'Some call it independence', a woman-journalist sneers — did not mean freedom for the Indian masses. Governments led by Nehru and later by his daughter observed the forms of parliamentary democracy and introduced progressive legislation on labour and land reform. But in the absence of implementation, such measures were no more than a vote-catching, populist tactic which did nothing to curb the power of landlords and businessmen.

The people have no illusions on this score. A group of poor peasants, filmed in a remote and politically neglected village in Uttar Pradesh, discuss the causes of rural unemployment and landlessness with remarkable clarity. So long as the rich own all the land and make the poor work for them, there is no solution. They must either starve or migrate to the cities in search of work.

But the millions of rural unemployed streaming into the cities are scarcely better off. A meeting of brick-workers

and farm-labourers on the outskirts of Delhi, where the capital's elite has its country villas, speak of their inhuman working conditions, of their long struggle to form a union and secure the legally prescribed minimum wage, and of the intimidation and violence used against them by employers, including ironically Mrs Gandhi herself. 'The rich have money, but where would their money get them without our labour?' says an angry, old man. 'We work to make them rich, and at the end of the day we can't even look forward to one square meal.' According to Sardar, a young farm-worker: 'Labour laws were a fraud, an illusion. They were something to be scribbled on paper but never acted on. She (Mrs Gandhi) made all the laws but was not prepared to implement them.'

'Only when peasants and workers organise themselves, can they hope to secure their legal rights', a radical social worker explains. But we are left in no doubt of what happened when they did organise in the late '60s and early '70s. By 1974, peasant struggles for the implementation of land reform and minimum wage legislation had resulted in thousands of prisoners being held without trial — 20,000 in the state of West Bengal alone.

In the same year, a legal strike by railway workers in May 1974 met with similar repression. The strike was forced by Mrs Gandhi, who repudiated a settle-



Muslim widow in Delhi with forcibly sterilised son.



Michael Grigsby with the engine-driver Ashok Kumar.

ment agreed by her own Railway Minister and arrested the railwaymen's leaders when they arrived in Delhi for negotiations.

Even so, a million railway workers came out on strike in the face of massive repression by police and paramilitary forces. During the twenty days that the strike lasted, 30,000 workers were arrested, while their families were forcibly evicted from railway accommodation and many wives and daughters raped by police. When the strike ended, 50,000 strikers were sacked, while the rest were demoted. 'We railwaymen will never forget Mrs Gandhi for what she did to us', says Ashok Kumar, an engine-driver. Judging by her present plans for restoring "industrial discipline", the worst is yet to come.

Grigsby quite rightly treats the Emergency not as an aberration, but as a phase in a continuum of repression. Having tested her weapons on the railwaymen, Mrs Gandhi was ready a year later to turn them on the entire opposition. The immediate cause of the Emergency was the convergence of Mrs Gandhi's 'family crisis' with the wider national upheaval. By 1975, anti-government feeling had rallied around the anti-corruption crusade of J.P. Narayan, the veteran Gandhian leader. Mrs Gandhi, meanwhile, found herself increasingly vulnerable to publicity about the corrupt business dealings of her son, Sanjay. The final blow came when the Allahabad High Court found her guilty of electoral corruption and disqualified her from office. When the opposition demanded her resignation, 'the symbol of corruption and poverty' struck hard and claimed she was acting to pre-empt a sinister conspiracy against Indian democracy.

During the 19-month state of emergency, described by the engine-driver as 'jungle rule', 160,000 people were arrested and all civil liberties were suspended, including *habeas corpus*.

The Attorney-General of India went so far as to inform a dissenting Supreme Court judge that: 'If a district magistrate has a personal grudge against an individual the former can deprive the latter of his life without redress or remedy'. And many did lose their lives.

The main victims of emergency atrocities were not the middle-class opposition leaders, on whose imprisonment the western media focussed, but the masses outside. In the second part of the trilogy, their experiences are relived, mainly through the reminiscences of their stoical and courageous women-folk.

The two emergency programmes which caused the most hardship were urban 'resettlement' and compulsory sterilisation, both personally superintended by Sanjay Gandhi, the Prime Minister's ambitious son. In Delhi alone, 150,000 homes and shops were forcibly demolished and one million citizens were 'resettled' in a disease-infested swamp 20 kilometres from the city, without sanitation, lighting, transport or employment. Many died of cholera. The purpose was to demolish historic areas of the old city to make way for high-rise, commercial blocks.

A 'resettled' Muslim woman gives a hair-raising account of what happened in the notorious 'Battle of Turkman Gate', when 750 ancient houses, occupied for centuries by local Muslims, were demolished without any notice. When 700 women and children resisted by sitting down in front of the bulldozers, the police and paramilitary were brought in and opened fire on unarmed protesters. Many died in the firing, while others were literally bulldozed in their homes. The bodies of women and children were later found in the debris.

It was the sterilisation programme which brought the terror of emergency rule to the most remote villages of India. Between April 1975 and December 1976 10 million people were sterilised, many forcibly, picked up at random from pavements, buses and cinemas. In the northern village of Pipli, 80 per cent of the men were vasectomised at gunpoint. Back in Delhi, a Muslim widow describes with tragic stoicism how her only son, aged 22, was forcibly sterilised. 'At that time negotiations for his marriage were going on and when the girl's family came to know of this, they stopped the marriage. Now my life has finished because his youth has gone, and the line of the family is stopped. I wish something could be done.' Another woman, less resigned, asks angrily: 'Why was sterilisation only for the poor, not the rich? Why didn't Sanjay Gandhi get himself sterilised?'

For all its horrors, the Emergency had one positive result. As Mrs Gandhi's electoral debacle in 1977 demonstrated, it politicised millions of Indians whom the parliamentary politics of previous years had failed to reach. This becomes clear in the final part, *Seeds of*



Rickshaw pullers, Delhi

Democracy, where a rickshaw-puller, a group of farm-workers and the engine-driver discuss the future. Mrs Gandhi's fall in 1977 and the lifting of the Emergency are seen as a temporary release, not the end of the struggle, and the Junta Government is described as 'the same corpse'. The shroud has changed again with Mrs Gandhi's comeback, but for many Indians, the solution lies not in the existing political parties, about whom they are cynical, but in revolutionary change based on local organisation, self-help and participatory democracy.

As for parliamentary elections, they recognise the importance of voting, but they have no faith that their problems can be solved by a ballot-box. How their aims can be realised without coherent left-wing leadership at the national level is another matter. But the confidence fortitude and maturity of the people allow no doubt that they are miles ahead of the leaders of India's left parties.

How far does Indira Gandhi's recent election victory invalidate Grigsby's optimism about the political awareness of the Indian masses? The answer lies in the increasingly marginal and unrepresentative character of India's tottering parliamentary system. Only 55.5 per cent of the electorate voted last January. Less than half this number — 24 per cent of the total electorate — voted for Mrs Gandhi, a mere 8 per cent swing in her favour since her defeat in 1977, and hardly a mass, popular mandate.

Many of the marginal voters who opted for Mrs Gandhi did so for lack of any apparent alternative, not because they had forgiven or forgotten her Emergency atrocities. The disintegration

of Janata rule into near-anarchy, hastened by Mrs Gandhi's machinations, had left a political vacuum which left-wing forces lacked the will and capacity to fill. In a climate of unprecedented cynicism, an unrepentant Mrs Gandhi at least seemed consistent in her refusal to disown the Emergency or her son. Her All-India image and her promise of law and order appealed not only to the middle classes, but to the threatened Untouchable and Muslim minorities who hold the balance of votes in Indian elections. That she won is a bizarre irony of a discredited and increasingly irrelevant parliamentary system, not a contradiction of the political awareness of the Indian people, still less an expression of wide mass support.

Mrs Gandhi has promised strong government to deal with the country's economic problems. But the problems are the same as those she failed to tackle before: food scarcity, industrial recession, runaway inflation and massive unemployment; and her manifesto offers no new solutions. As her marginal popularity quickly evaporates, the real strength of her regime, dominated by Sanjay and his storm-troopers, will lie more than ever in its capacity for repression. For militant workers and peasants, the seeds of genuine democracy may have been sown; but the struggle for its fruition will be long and painful.

Before the Monsoon will be screened at the National Film Theatre, Waterloo, London, on March 8, and at the Institute of Contemporary Art, the Mall, on March 9. Information about the hire of the film from Cyril Haydn, Film Library, ATV Studios, Eldon Avenue, Borehamwood, Herts. Tel: 01-953 6100.

Michel Raptis: Rhapsody in Red

L'ETAT C'EST CHACUN
DE NOUS

VETERAN socialist Michel Raptis — otherwise known by his party name 'Michel Pablo' — was born in Egypt but grew up in Greece. There, he joined the Trotskyist Left Opposition and was imprisoned by the Metaxas dictatorship in 1936. On his release he went to France, where in 1938 he was a founding delegate of the Fourth International. Throughout the war he was active in the European underground movement and served as secretary of the Fourth International from 1943 to 1961. In 1960 he was among militants imprisoned in Holland for manufacturing identity papers and handling arms for the Algerian FLN. From 1963 to 1965 he was economic adviser to the Ben Bella government in Algeria, taking a special interest in self-managed farms and factories.

He was voted out of the secretaryship of the Fourth International following disagreements over whether practical support should be given to the M.P.L.A. in the Angolan revolution. Later, he was invited to Chile by the Allende government and his experiences there led to his book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Chile*. His latest work, *Socialism, Democracy and Self-Management* has just been published. Roger Andersen interviewed him in Paris for *The Leveller*.

I SUSPECT that in Britain you are best known in terms of the name of Pablo and the Pabloite tendency.

Of course. Pablo was my name during my period as the General Secretary of the Fourth International; I was known as Michel Pablo. I thought, and I think I was correct in saying so at that time, that the centre of the world revolution was the colonial revolution.

Many people in the Fourth International and also outside, for example the group of Ted Grant [Militant], the group of Cliff [SWP] thought that even during this period after the war the main work would be in the capitalist countries. Colonial revolutions had some interest but not so much. Our opinion was not that you had to say to people in France or in England, 'leave your countries to support the Algerians' but we said 'as an international organisation we should help the most active centre of world revolution' and at that period the main centre was the colonial revolution.

Is that still true?

It is still true with the following consideration. For some years now I and my political friends think that new chances for revolutionary possibilities exist now also in Europe.

In the 1965 split in the Fourth International, what was your position?

There were many differences between us in the Fourth International. The main

ones were the following. At that time the other comrades had, in my opinion, big illusions about the revolution in China. They thought that Mao represented a centrist tendency, which would grow towards the position of revolutionary marxism. I thought that Mao was a kind of Stalinist bureaucrat.

The second difference, which was connected with the first, was about Krushchev. I was against critical support of Krushchev. This had many theoretical consequences: how we see the bureaucracy, how we see the fight in the bureaucracy and so on.

The third difference was the Angolan Revolution. I was for the MPLA, from 1962, and to my great astonishment the other comrades decided to give support to Roberto Holden. Frantz Fanon said that Holden was a good man because he is a supporter of Lumumba. Later Holden turned out to be a very bad man.

We had these three differences in 1965, together with one much more important difference about the meaning of socialism. What kind of socialism were we fighting for? I started to defend the idea that socialism is self-management in all fields of social life and at all levels. Not exactly self-management in the factories. A conception for the whole of society. This difference had a lot of consequences, for me and for them. What kind of revolutionary party? What is the role of

the revolutionary party? What are the relations between the party and the masses? What was their attitude to new, movements of women, of youth, of national minorities? On all of these questions we started to have a different line and in 1965 we separated.

What about the tactic of entryism that was adopted?

Yes the tactic which was called 'pabloism'. I think that we must work as an independent marxist revolutionary with a correct line towards the mass movement. The mass movement can be a socialist party or a communist party or unions. You must try to do some work inside, not fractional work but try to help any kind of more democratic or left opposition in those parties.

LA NEGOCIATION



Can we look at self-management itself now? What is its history and what does it mean today?

In one sense we can say that this idea of self-management is the old idea of the working-class movement of direct democracy. It is the same idea as the Soviets during the Russian Revolution. Lenin himself in writing *The State and Revolution* was under the influence of what was the immense strength of the direct power of the masses in Russia. He thought that the new state, the new society in Russia would be based on the direct democracy of the soviets, of commissions everywhere from the base to the top. In this sense I think that historically self-management is connected with what was the main idea of any real revolutionary upsurge of the masses anywhere: of direct democracy, to exercise

themselves — producers and citizens — power in every field of social life and at all levels.

That is also the idea today. But I think that today, at least in advanced capitalist countries, it comes out of two new facts. First, given the material and cultural development of the masses in these countries, they reject more than ever the bureaucratic structure of capitalist society. They have a spontaneous desire for a new kind of society, really democratic, in which they exercise their control, their power in their jobs and in all fields of social life and at all levels.

The other thing which reinforces this tendency is the feeling which they have that the model of socialism established in the east is something that they reject. They just don't like it. The explosion of May 1968 here in France, and the same explosion in Czechoslovakia are very important.

If there is this spontaneous reaction amongst many people, working people, young people, women, in fact the majority of people, what then is the role of the party in shaping or articulating these feelings. Or does everything happen spontaneously?

As a proof that this desire is still strong amongst the masses, we must add what is happening on the level of political parties. Why do the political parties and unions in France now, for instance, all adopt the slogan of self-management? Because they know that the slogan has a clear echo amongst the masses. Of course, they try to interpret it according to their own conceptions of self-management, which is not what the masses ask and need. But the slogan is so popular that nobody now, here in France, is able to say they are against it.

But before 1968 all of them were against it. The French Communist Party said that it was a foolish slogan, a utopian one. Now the Communist Party write frequently on self-management, saying our own strategy and our own conception of socialism is based on the idea of self-management. They do this because they know that it is popular. But of course we cannot have any confidence that either the Communist Party or the Socialist Party will promote any real socialism here in France based on self-management.

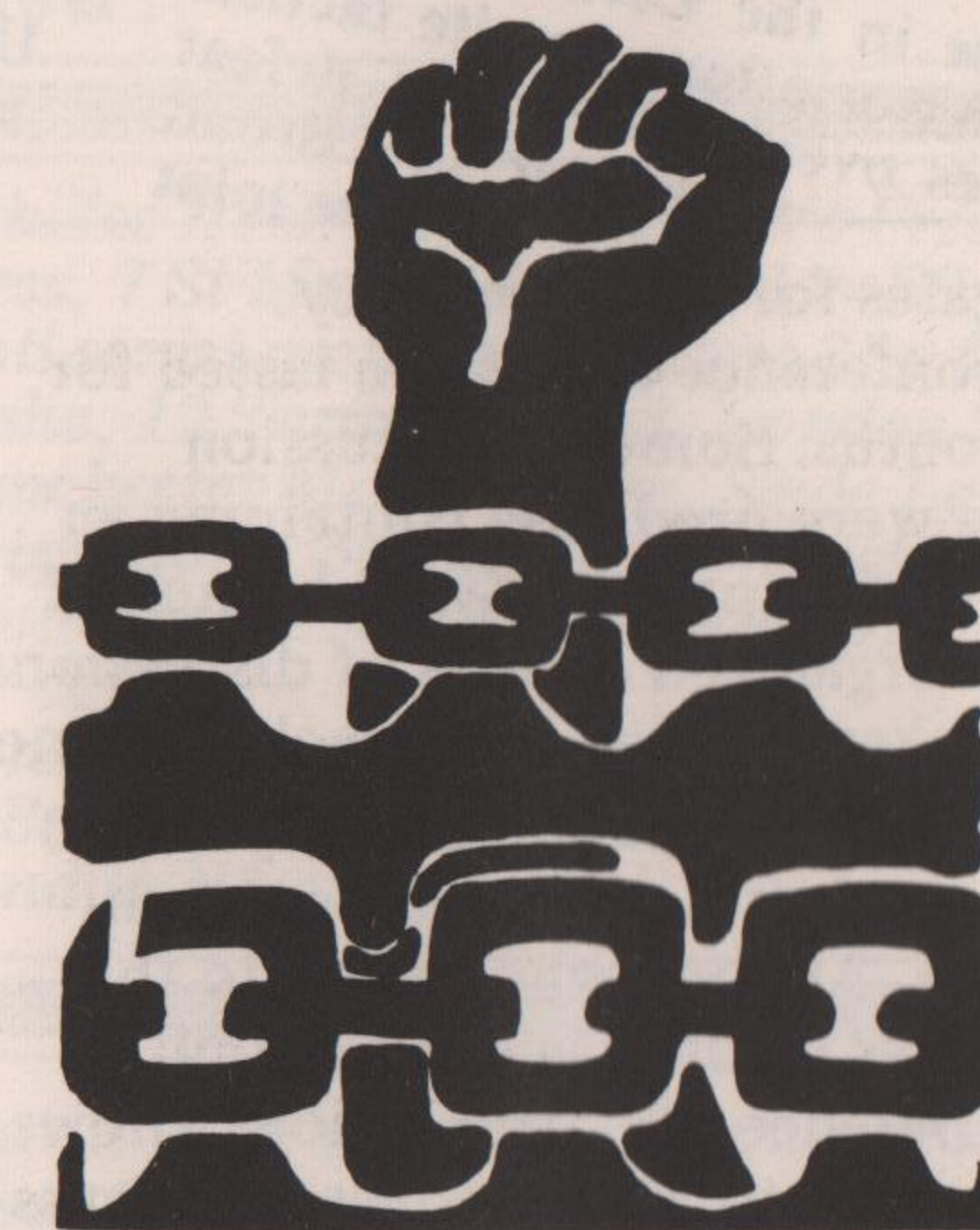
But what about the question of a real revolutionary party?

Self-management must be the policy, the tactic, the action of a real revolutionary party. The revolutionary party must stop saying as they said before, 'We are the leadership of the masses. We will establish our regime and then the masses will come little by little to exercise power and control themselves'. In reality that was the idea of every revolutionary. It was an elitist approach. I think that what has changed now with the idea of self-management is that the role of the revolutionary party is not to direct the masses but to help the masses themselves exercise direct democracy. To help the masses, not to direct them.

If someone is working as an active member of the women's movement or as a trade unionist or in the area of housing, why then should they join the party? What is the role of the party in relation to their work?

The role of the party is that you need to have a global policy, to have a general understanding of the situation and a global policy. Otherwise if you work only locally, you can be a good militant for local work but you don't have a global conception of the situation. In the last analysis, all of these questions need a

LA BASE
CONTINUE LE COMBAT



general political solution at a particular moment. That is still the work of the party.

We need the party in this sense, to elaborate all together the same conception, the same political, social, global plan. To exchange our local experiences in order to arrive at a broader conception of what is to be done. Otherwise you can get lost in local work. From a local point of view you can be a very good militant who defends some partial demands related to housing. Good housing is necessary but you don't solve the problem. *Because in the end you are up against the state and against capital.*

In the evolution of society, the long term aim is to arrive at a situation where you don't need parties and you also don't need unions. Then you would have achieved real self-management. It is not possible to jettison intermediate stages of the revolution. We can't arrive just like that at the ideal society.

Some people have suggested that you have to go through certain stages. Would you accept that you have to get to a particular political or economic level before you can make the basic changes in society? Revolutions do not necessarily occur at the same stage, in the same way in different countries, in different situations.

The revolution is in any case a jump. You can work in a peaceful, transitional way for a period, but at a certain moment you will be forced to fight against the reactionary forces.

So in the end you are going to have that kind of armed struggle.

Yes, you must be prepared to fight.

Otherwise it is better not to start to change things.

If we go back to the particular tactics of revolutionaries or militants who are in a group here in France or in England, where should they work, within the trade unions, in local political activities or should they join the parties which already exist or set up their own?

Revolutionary elements must have their own organisation, but they must work first of all (this is almost an absolute rule) where the real workers are. It is absolutely necessary to work inside the factories, it is absolutely necessary to work inside the unions, it is also absolutely necessary to work with all these movements. But you cannot set up a real revolutionary organisation if this organisation does not have a real working class base.

After all, there are a lot of changes in our society but workers, traditional workers in factories are still a main force of the revolution, without them it is impossible to change society. They are not enough. We can't say that we can make the revolution with only the traditional workers. We also need the new strata of working class people, people in the banks, people in service sector jobs, all these people are absolutely essential. There is a new working class everywhere, composed half and half of traditional workers and the new workers who are employed by the state or in service industries. The alliance between the two is necessary, because the two form something like 70-80% of the active population.

In many cases, however, the people you call the new working class often don't have any clear idea of themselves as members of the working class. They don't see themselves as workers.

That is true, but objectively they are working-class. These people can be attracted by self-management because what they feel worst in their lives is the situation at work. They have no rights in reality. They don't exercise any control in their jobs. They feel a lack of power, they feel frustrated. Self-management is an important slogan for them. We have to show them that it is possible to construct a different kind of society with different roles for everybody.



Putting the democracy in democratic centralism

DEAR COMRADES:
 Revolutionaries have real opportunities in the class struggle today to build a revolutionary party. The current strike wave shows that even under a Labour government, workers no longer accept responsibility for a crisis not of their making.
 The Anti Nazi League has shown the tremendous potential for revolutionaries to take the lead in organising genuine mass movements. These openings also exist outside Britain. The unfolding revolution in

... should be a...
 ... action through the Liaison Committees and the Car...
 ... Action in NUPE.
 In the National Union of Teachers, in which socialists have a powerful influence, there is a united slate and platform between Rank and File and the Socialist Teachers Alliance for the Inner London Teachers Association election.
 Likewise in the Civil and Public Services Association, despite tactical differences over how best to defeat



AT ITS recent conference, the International Marxist Group adopted three major projects. One of them, the decision to seek fusion with the Socialist Workers' Party, has major implications for the British far left. Whilst recognising that major differences existed, the conference declared that the only precondition was the question of internal democracy.
 But what does this mean in practice? Many socialists have abandoned Leninist organisations — or decided not to join — because they find the practice of democratic centralism is all centralism and no democracy. Is IMG any different? Here, *Adrian Yeeles* describes how its conference was organised and argues that this is a model for the new united revolutionary party that the IMG is seeking to build.
 ANY IMG member who disagrees with one of the group's positions, for example, on Afghanistan or Scottish Nationalism, has a right to set up a 'tendency' to fight for a change in this position.
 Every member is entitled to submit documents for the conference discussion bulletin. If 20 or more members support the call for a tendency, further facilities become available. You have the right to make special reports to the organised pre-conference discussions — and the IMG foots the bill if you have to travel from York to Bristol to explain your ideas.
 Tendencies — and in fact individuals — have the right to submit their resolutions and documents to the vote in the pre-conference proceedings and to have delegates elected in accordance with the support they receive in such votes. This last point is vitally important for ensuring representation of small tendencies. If delegates are elected in proportion solely to the votes in each branch, a tendency with one supporter in a branch of 25 members would not get a look in. The IMG uses the *national* vote totals to determine the proportion

of delegates for each tendency.
 Pre-conference discussion lasted for three months. Some 20 discussion bulletins were produced containing an average of five papers. Every branch of the IMG organized a series of discussions with speakers invited from each tendency.
 IMG believes that democracy has to be organised: it doesn't happen spontaneously. Anyone who's been to the conferences of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions knows how easy it is to block moves to discuss alternative resolutions.
 To avoid such possibilities, IMG conference committees are made up of representatives of all the tendencies. Each major session of the conference is chaired by a member of a different tendency and speakers are allocated strictly on the basis of the support each tendency receives during the branch voting. This ensures that even the smallest tendency gets an opportunity to speak. At the beginning and end of each major debate, speakers from the various tendencies introduce their positions.
 A tendency with 10% of the vote gets as much time as one with 50%.
 IMG also tries to deal with the problem of delegates feeling unable, for one reason or another, to speak in the debates. Addressing a meeting of 600 people is intimidating enough in its own right but as an organisation which wants its members to speak at workplace meetings and conferences of trade unions, women's and black movements, we don't think the answer is to abolish plenary sessions.
 We do think it's necessary to stop intimidatory practices, whether they take overt forms like heckling or booing or the more subtle form of applause for 'good' (read demagogic) speakers. The IMG conference is not a talent show where first prize is awarded to the tendency which gets the highest rating on the clapometer. All heckling, booing, jeering, applause etc is banned.
 Of course, this does not solve all the problems. IMG recognises that it cannot but reflect the society of which it is a part. For two years, women and black members have had the right to caucus

within the IMG.
 Despite the fact that the majority of the Central Committee were against this proposal, it was carried by conference and has been implemented ever since.
 When the first session begins, the old central committee ceases to exist. Conference becomes the sole authority. Members of the old Central Committee are not normally elected as delegates and none were this year. This means that only rank and file members vote for the adoption of tendency positions and no member of the old Central Committee votes in the elections for the new one.
 What about representation of minorities on the new leadership bodies? At this year's conference four alternative platforms were put forward. Tendency 1 received 50% of the votes, tendency 2 28%, tendency 3 14% and the fourth position 7%. Although no tendency received an absolute majority of the votes, conference agreed that tendency 1 should have a working majority on the new CC. The other tendencies were represented in strict proportion to their support. The IMG believes that it is only by doing this that it can retain the confidence of members who hold minority positions.
 Why do all members of the IMG agree to put forward positions of a tendency which has received only half the votes? The recent parliamentary debate on Corrie's anti-abortion Bill helps to explain why. Despite the fact that it is official Labour Party policy to support the 1967 Abortion Act, some Labour MPs voted in support of Corrie.
 Democratic centralism says that once a decision has been arrived at by a democratic debate, all members have to implement it. If the Labour Party had been a democratic centralist party, NO Labour MP could have voted for Corrie.
 An organisation which does not try to form a collective leadership with representation for minorities inevitably takes the road to suppression of internal democracy, leading to expulsions and splits. Variety may help Heinz to sell its products but the 57 brands of left groups in Britain make a rotten job of selling revolutionary socialism.

AT THE beginning of 1978 you wouldn't have been stupid if you thought that anti-sexist men's politics had died. There hadn't been a conference for three years, nor a national newsletter. The last such newsletter, produced for the 1975 conference, had been entitled "The Pig's Last Grunt"; it was as though its producers were determined to bury themselves altogether.

Now matters seem very different. There are regular and enthusiastically attended conferences, a magazine (*Achilles Heel*), a regular and lively national newsletter, two men's centres (one in Manchester, one in London) and a good and growing number of men's consciousness-raising groups. The debate about what men should and shouldn't be doing about their own and other men's sexism is an increasingly open one; and the 'crisis of masculinity' is becoming thought worthy of discussion in many places (including *The Leveller*), where before it wouldn't have been given a thought.

The sixth national anti-sexist men's conference took place on February 15-17 in Bristol. There were about 300 men there, some new to men's groups altogether. The composition of the conference reflected a gradual widening of interest in and acceptance of anti-sexist men's politics. There were more older men there than previously, and more younger men. There were more working-class men, and for the first time a number of West Indian men. There were more gay men, and there seemed to be little of the fear and bitterness which had characterised the relationships between gay and non-gay men in the past.

There were a lot of therapy, co-counselling and related workshops, where a year ago there had been scarcely any. It was as though we had been experimenting a lot, deepening our understandings about how to change ourselves and our personal relationships so as to be less oppressive to women and other men, and to lead better lives ourselves.

On the other hand there was also a growing readiness, expressed in statements put to the conference for consideration, to be more publicly active against sexism, certainly among those men who have been involved in men's groups for a while; and probably many others.

It was a very different conference for different people. An "umbrella event", the organisers called it. To express at least some of these differences, some of us in the *Achilles Heel* collective sat down together and wrote our personal accounts of the weekend, from which the following quotes are taken.

Mel "My first men's conference. Previous experiences of 'conferences' were thankfully unhelpful. There were some set-pieces — workshops, plenaries, social events and such — but the coming together round anti-sexism made the style and quality of the exchanges radically different... Being reinforced

Brought to heel

in something can sometimes feel tender. Feeling stronger for seeing and being with so many men struggling in the same area... a definite atmosphere of coming to share, learn, to be open, not to be put down or to put down, not to elevate oneself above others, but not to give yourself away either.

"The euphoria didn't become unrealistic — most everyone knowing how far we still have to go both individually and collectively but not either being transfixed by doubt or being pushed, macho fashion into striding out with 'the answer'."

Achilles Heel: 70p from Men's Free Press, 7 St Marks Rise, London E8.
Anti-sexist men's newsletter: 30p from Misha, 12 Terrapin Road, London SW17.
 Manchester Men's Centre, Slade Lane Neighbourhood Centre, Longsight: phone Rob 225 3335 or Mike 224 3867 for details.
 London Men's Centre Wednesdays 8.00pm at Bread and Roses, 316 Upper Street, London N1.

Martin "The gay affinity home group just grew. On Friday night 16 or so men talked initially about the question 'Should we be in a gay group?' 'Would it be better if we all split and went into random groups?'. These questions positively resolved themselves in that we became a close, open, welcoming support group in which the energy among us spread outward in waves.

"We did not become a separatist group as men who were non-gay were important in the group. One of the overwhelming things was the continual raising of the question of labelling and the coming out of men into an openness about themselves, away from the rigidity of being 'straight' or of being 'gay' in purely sexual terms."

Tony "What I mainly wanted to do there this time was to see in what way we were finding ways to relate our personal struggles and our work in groups to the thorny question of taking practical action against sexism, against patriarchy, in support of the women's movement and for ourselves. Are we bold enough to identify our interests with those of women and gay men?"

"I went to the rape workshop with that in mind. We were divided — some of us felt we were in no position to take public action confronting men about rape and violence, when we are still in the process of identifying the 'rapist in ourselves'. We talked a lot about the slogan 'every man is a rapist' — what that meant to us. I was inclined to be impatient. I wanted to take our consciousness of that further by taking action as men against rape, but for at least one man there talking about his discovery of the power-based nature of

his sexuality was clearly raw and painful."

Paul "I put a lot of energy into thinking about this conference, like others wanting to link my personal life and changes back into the 'big world' again, and to deepen the connections between my men's movement self and my older socialist activist self. Being in a men's group has transformed and enriched my conception of socialism, and how we can move towards it. I have a much stronger sense of the positive content of socialism, of the kind of relationships we are striving for.

"I put to the conference a proposal for a minimum definition of the anti-sexist men's movement, something we could stand by and by which people could know us, something which expressed our common ground, from which we are moving out. It was very well received, which pleased me greatly, though it wasn't formally adopted. It needs more discussion. It starts like this:

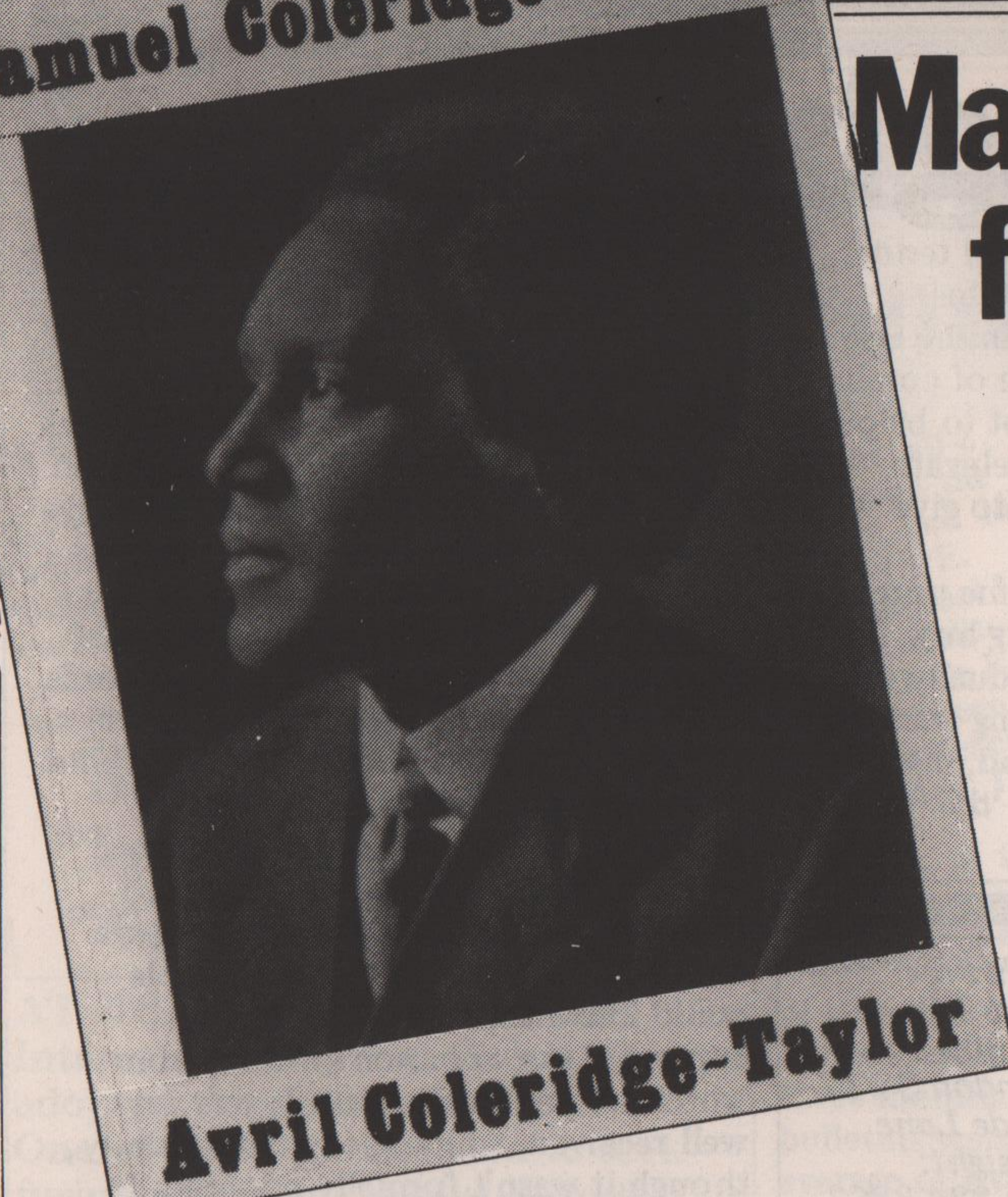
This conference of men places itself unequivocally in support of the women's and gay movements in the struggle against sexism. We realise that men's power in our society means we are not an equivalent or "parallel" movement. We are certainly not a competitive one..."

Steve "Saturday I went to a reassuring opening plenary, a home group, and two workshops; one on straight men relating to gay men, the other to gather ideas on men and work for the next issue of *Achilles Heel*.

"The straight/gay workshop didn't really get anywhere. I sensed undisclosed assumptions and asked one man if he thought that there was anything wrong per se about female/male relationships. He thought there was. A failure of communication. We couldn't see each other on 'falling in love' and 'romantic love', both of which I now want to acknowledge..."



Making black music fit for cultivated ears



Avril Coleridge-Taylor

'ONE DAY he came to my table, pushed a scrap of paper into my hand and then quickly vanished. The note said. "I have been warned against meeting you, or even being seen speaking to you. Doubtless you will understand why."'

IN 1952, Avril Coleridge-Taylor, the daughter of a well-known English composer, visited South Africa for a concert and lecture tour. Encouraged by its success, she returned shortly afterwards in the hope of finding a job. After months of unemployment and unsatisfactory short-term jobs, the British High Commissioner advised her that she was risking imprisonment if she did not return to the UK. The South African musical establishment, happy to turn a blind eye to her father's racial origins when they performed his works — just as the Nazis had conveniently overlooked Mozart's freemasonry — proved more discriminating when it came to offering his daughter a job. Refused interviews, shunned by acquaintances afraid to be seen in her company, she was finally forced by poverty to take the High Commissioner's advice.

For Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, a protégé of Elgar, was the son of a black doctor from Sierra Leone. His father, discouraged by the attitude of his white patients towards him, soon returned to Africa, and Samuel was taken by his English mother to live in Croydon. There he was 'discovered' and sent to the Royal College of Music, achieving wide popularity in 1898 with the first part of his choral setting of Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*.

Avril Coleridge-Taylor's biography of her father

presents a slightly rosy picture of the disadvantages he must have faced. Racial prejudice was something he experienced only from young louts on the Croydon streets or fellow students envious of his success. The musical establishment of the day are portrayed as wise, tolerant Victorian gentlemen who would never sink to anything as uncouth as racism. It would be comforting to believe that his teacher Charles Villiers Stanford was typical of his contemporaries when, hearing Coleridge-Taylor called a 'damned nigger' by another student, he took him to one side and assured him that he had 'more music in his little finger than [the offending student had] in his whole body.'

Coleridge-Taylor's music is very much in the nineteenth-century European tradition and stylistically indebted to Dvořák, but as early as 1896 he was striving to express his African origins in his work. That year he met the black American poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, gave a series of recitals with him and set Dunbar's poems in his *African Romances*. His awareness of racial injustice was heightened by his contacts with black freedom movements in America; while in the USA he met Booker T Washington, whom he appears to have liked and respected, although he found his accommodationist philosophy inadequate, preferring

the (for those days) militant line of W E B Du Bois.

His enthusiastic reception in the States bore a certain similarity to that of his daughter on her initial trip to South Africa. "Please don't make any arrangements to wrap me in cotton wool", he had written to his sponsor, but as a 'visiting conductor' it was inevitable that he would be shielded from the effects of racial prejudice. The orchestra and soloists were warned well in advance. A few musicians withdrew, discreetly, of course, and there is no record of any embarrassing scenes. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was well aware of this double standard. 'As soon as people found out that I was English,' he wrote, 'they were quite different.'

During the first decade of this century Coleridge-Taylor produced a number of works based on black melodies and affirming black aspirations: the overture *Toussaint L'Ouverture*, *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, *The Bamboula* and the *Symphonic Variations on an African Air*. Most of this music is extremely difficult to obtain, either in score or on record. One well stocked library listed only *Hiawatha* and two Coleridge-Taylor songs.

It is a sad irony that much of Coleridge-Taylor's output has been condemned to neglect not because of his race and the pride he expressed in it through his music, but because he was an English composer of the late nineteenth century, operating in a cultural backwater. The music of most of his teachers and contemporaries (like Stainer, Stanford or Parry) is more familiar from the heaps of yellowing sheet music which infest secondhand shops than from the concert hall. They looked exclusively backwards, to Brahms and Dvořák, ignoring the innovations of their European contemporaries, and it can be startling to realise that Coleridge-Taylor died in 1912, the year in which *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Petroushka* were first performed.

The conservatism of this school of composers was reflected in their patronising attitude to music outside the European classical mainstream. Brahms, Dvořák and Grieg had incorporated Hungarian, Bohemian and Norwegian folk music into

the classical context, in theory voicing nationalist aspirations, but in practice providing little more than an exotic touch. Coleridge-Taylor's use of African melodies was received in much the same spirit. A contemporary review of his *Ballade* talks of its 'alterations of barbaric gaiety with languid, swaying melody, its wayward rhythms and strange exotic harmonies...'

Coupled with this musical tourism was the notion that the music of other cultures needed 'improving' according to European standards. Booker T Washington, in his preface to Coleridge-Taylor's *Twenty-Four Negro Melodies*, wrote that 'he had in handling these melodies preserved their distinctive traits and individuality, at the same time giving them an art form fully imbued with their essential spirit.' Although Coleridge-Taylor himself was anxious not to be thought of as 'improving' upon the originals, his own foreword to the collection makes it clear that he felt they needed 'touching up': 'However beautiful the actual melodies are in themselves, there can be no doubt that much of their value is lost on account of their brevity and unsuitability for the ordinary amateur.'

It is also disturbing to find him justifying their musical worth on the basis of their similarity to European music, and dismissing the music of other cultures that did not lend itself so easily to this treatment: 'One of the most striking points regarding this music is... its likeness to that of the Caucasian race. The native music of India, China and Japan, and in fact all non-European music, is to our more cultivated ears most unsatisfactory, in its monotony and shapelessness.'

In the world beyond the isolated backwater of English academic musicianship, composers were already beginning to realise that they could not give an 'art form' to the works of another culture, but that they could learn from them to the enrichment of their own. Debussy, on hearing Japanese music at the 1889 Paris Exhibition, remarked that it employed a counterpoint 'in comparison to which that of Palestrina is a child's game', and the pervasive influence of the gamelan can be heard

in many of his works.

Avril Coleridge-Taylor, writing from within a conservative musical tradition, does not appear to question the insularity apparent in so many of the writings she quotes. In this respect, as in several others, her book raises interesting questions which, on account of her partisan viewpoint, she does not pursue further. Her depiction of her father as a private man, for example, is loyally idealised; but in the final chapters, which she devotes to her own life, she reveals that her father nearly acquiesced in her mother's plan to have her adopted, in spite of his affection for her. It is a startling glimpse of a weaker, more troubled domestic man than her picture of a talented composer and heroic campaigner for equal rights otherwise affords.

'I was to come to understand what a great man he was'

One would like to know more about the experiences which must have left their mark on Coleridge-Taylor's creative output, his relations with his wife and children, the problems of a mixed marriage at the turn of the century, and the effects of sexual, coupled with racial, ignorance and fear. In the absence of a thoroughgoing musical and personal biography, though, Ms Coleridge-Taylor's memoir is an interesting introduction. It made me want to hear more of her father's works than are at present available, and enhanced my appreciation of those that are.

The book's main achievement, though, is its portrayal of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's struggle against racial prejudice and his commitment to equal rights, and of her own deepened understanding of them through her experiences in South Africa: 'I was to have to realise exactly what it meant in one particular society to be the daughter of a much-loved father. I was also to come to know the full significance of his life's work and of his beliefs. I was to come to understand what a great man he truly was. But... the lesson was a hard one.'

Chris Schüller

* *The Heritage of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor*, by Avril Coleridge-Taylor (Dennis Dobson, £7.50).

DO YOU smoke in meetings? Do you light up in pubs just to help you put up with the smoke from a dozen cigarettes? Or are you, like me, a non-smoker who sits and tries to take in the minimum of air until you get out of the place, when you breathe deeply and hope the wind will take the smell out of your hair and your clothes?

Smokescreen

AT LEVELLER collective meetings we've reached an uneasy truce — a non-smoking hour. A small number of the non-smokers finally got around to requesting a non-smoking time. (An earlier tentative suggestion was brushed aside on the grounds that it wouldn't work because people would smoke twice as much during smoking time and make things worse rather than better.)

The smokers didn't seem able to debate the issue, but guiltily and weakly protesting said 'All right then, that's passed'.

All right then. The problems started when we tried to make it work. People would fidget, keep looking at their watches, take out fags and hold them in anticipation of the everlasting hour finally passing, whisper support to each other, pretend that the hour was up when it wasn't and even leave the meeting altogether for a quick smoke.

The few people who took upon themselves the unenviable task of asking people to observe the non-smoking hour and of reminding them when they forgot were subjected to bullying put-downs. Some smokers implied that we were:

- Inflexible (What difference does five minutes make?).
- Boring (There are more interesting and important things to think about).
- Fussy/Weaklings (Revolutionaries have always sat in smoky rooms...).
- A cranky minority (Other people don't complain).
- Cruel/Intolerant (I really

need to have a fag, especially in meetings).

I've suffered those kind of put-downs before, and I feel it's usually been men who've treated me like that. Men who made sexist remarks on purpose, for example, so that when I rose to it they could demonstrate how inflexible, boring, fussy, cranky, intolerant I was. Or men for whom arguing and bullying are one and the same.

I call it macho behaviour, knowing full well that women sometimes behave like that too, but to be so treated by good comrades who are into personal politics is very confusing.

But isn't smoking itself a bit macho? Don't people start smoking to appear 'big', worldly wise, tough. Hardly surprising, then, that smokers reach for a cigarette when they feel most threatened, vulnerable and small, or that cigarette advertisements, exploiting this, offer rural peace and contentment, cosy security, success in business or, lately, sophisticated control.

Smoking starts with a determined suppression of the body's natural revulsion and nausea and, for children learning to smoke, success in controlling this revulsion amounts to bigness and toughness. If you don't puke, you've made it. Doesn't all macho behaviour contain an element of suppression of natural, gentler instincts?

Could it be that the good comrades, who are into personal politics, are so sensitive to criticism about

smoking because it is macho in itself, and, being good comrades, they've learnt to be sensitive about that?

And could it be that a part of the militant left tradition which obliges us to sit in smoky rooms just happens to coincide with a part that we're trying to throw out — a part which obliges us to listen to male leaders pointing out the class nature of women's oppression; which allows political meetings to be places where lefty 'stars' score points and display their sound grasp of Marxist theory and revolutionary practice while humble workers sit and listen, suppressing their misgivings as I suppress my distaste for smoky air, afraid to appear unequal to the task? By not complaining we are oppressing ourselves.

Smokers have different degrees of addiction, but there are, broadly speaking, two kinds. Those who think it's a bad habit, wish they could give it up and feel guilty because they can't and those who say it's something they enjoy doing, who don't want to give it up and don't intend to feel guilty about it.

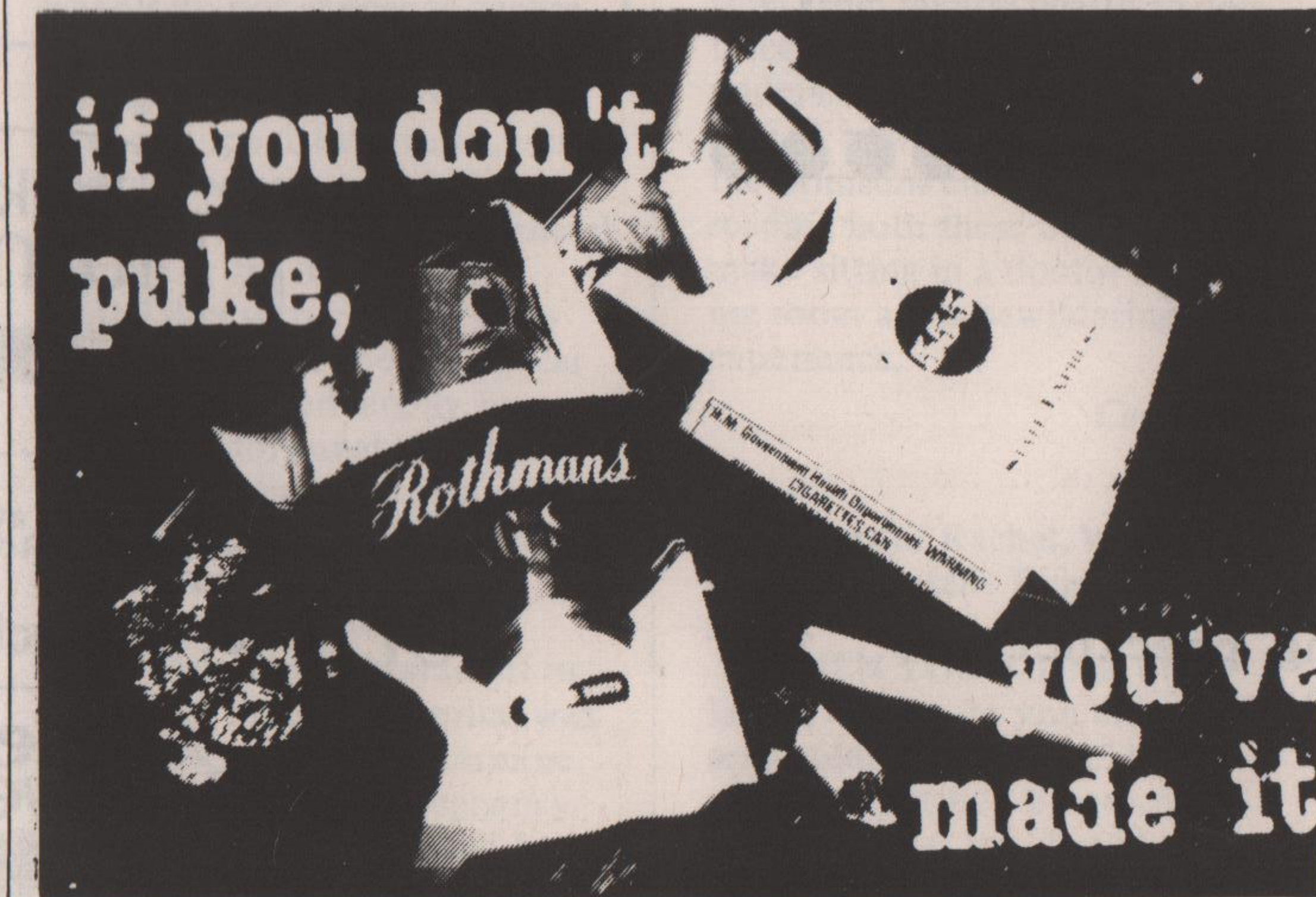
What they both share is a reluctance to admit that it's anybody else's business, that when they smoke they are offending and oppressing other people. Hence the evasion and bullying. But if we're trying to oppress them by asking them not to smoke just when they're most likely to want a fag, they're certainly oppressing us by fouling the air.

A smoker comrade, who always wants to smoke more in political meetings than at any other time, says there are two reasons for this — tension and boredom. Tension because he's intent on saying the right thing and making the right impression and boredom because, in consequence, he doesn't listen to what anyone else is saying, being too preoccupied with working out his own contribution.

Perhaps when we've sorted out our personal politics, smoking will wither away. In the meantime, smokers must accept that non-smokers (even lefty non-smokers) have the right to smoke-free time and having accepted that, then they have to do without cigarettes for the agreed lengths of time.

There are problems here which I can't understand properly because I've never been addicted to nicotine. But I do know that it is possible because I've seen it happen. Smokers can and do go without a fag once they make that decision.

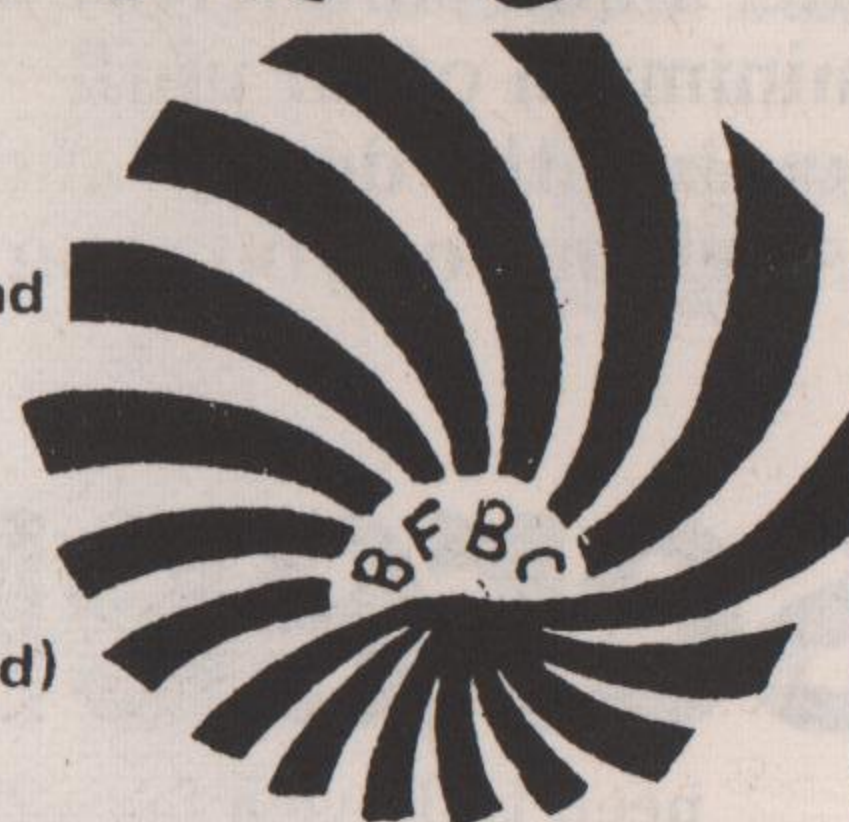
Chris Stretch



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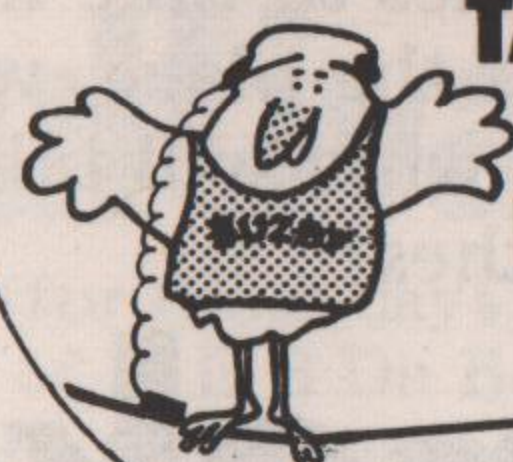
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REVIEWS

We Will Smash This Prison is published by Zed Press, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DN. £8.95 (£2.95 paperback). **Black Women: Bringing It All Back Home** is published by Falling Wall Press, 9 Lawford Street, Bristol BS2 0DH, £2.95. (95p paperback).

INDIA REMAINS, for the West, an area of stereotypes rather than darkness. The media latch on to the more sensational aspects: the gurus who purvey, for Westerners, the instant *karma* popularised by pop-stars and other entertainers; poverty and starvation. But with over 630 million people, 15 major languages, several fairly distinct ethnic groupings, all the world's major religions practised, divisions of caste and class, and a sexism deeply embedded in Indian society, the complexity of the sub-continent eludes simple categorisation. Articles on Indira Gandhi's return to power leave the impression that the authors are as mystified by Indian politics as the ashram-freaks are by its gurus.

The world's 'largest democracy' in fact demonstrates not the triumph but the dismal failure of parliamentary democracy. Each member of parliament 'represents', on average, over a million constituents. High levels of illiteracy, unemployment, land hunger; private armies hired by businessmen, landlords, politicians; corruption and shortages of even the most basic services and commodities all result in a government representative of the needs and interests of the mass of people.

We Will Smash This Prison!: *Indian Women in Struggle* by Gail Omvedt is, apart from the rhetorical title, an excellent book, which goes some way towards elucidation. While Indian women share many of the concerns of Western feminists, the ideas and organisational efforts considered in this book, show that Indian women confront issues with an originality, acuteness and courage, and in a spirit that is likely to come as a revelation to foreigners. Ms. Omvedt's book will also help correct the eccentric picture of India offered by that spiritually stateless queasy-gut, V.S. Naipaul, so beloved of Western liberals. The section on Indira Gandhi and the afterword and bibliographical notes are particularly relevant.

Sections of the women's movement in India have also produced significant periodicals. *The Feminist Network* (Gayatri Singh, c/o Shukla, Bhavna Apartments, 1st floor, S.V. Road, Vile Park West, Bombay 400056) publishes a newsletter as well as mimeographed articles on women. *Manushi*, a mag first published in Jan 1979, is, in most senses of the phrase, a mine of information.

It was intended to appear bi-monthly, but comes out at rather longer intervals. Write to Madhu Kishwar, A-5, Nizamuddin East, New Delhi, for copies.

The principal pieces in *Black Women: Bringing It All Back Home* are speeches made by black members of the Wages for Housework group: Norma Steel (Britain), Margaret Prescod-Roberts USA). Being speeches they tend to appear repetitive in a book, and lack detail. They advance a lot of ideas on the relationship of black women to capital, but there's something odd in saying '... it really took a lot of emotional housework just keeping ourselves together to go' to Britain or the USA (my italics). For all its faults, the slender collection contains, as the introduction says, 'information that cannot be ignored'.

H.O. Nazareth

The NHS: Your Money or Your Life, by Lesley Garner. Pelican £1.25.

Health Rights Handbook (A Guide re Medical Care), by Gerry and Carol Stimson. Penguin £1.25.

PERHAPS WE expect too much of the NHS. Founded in the belief that once a good standard of health was enjoyed by the whole population the money needed by the health service would level off, instead it has a limitless demand for more and more resources. People may not be dying of TB but they expect heart transplants and dialysis machines instead. The NHS is already the largest employer in the country, and expanding yearly. If it is going to demand ever more money which we can't put into it, perhaps we should rethink the whole concept of a National Health Service.

Lesley Garner's answer — in *'The NHS: Your Money or Your Life'* — focusses on the role of doctors. One of the biggest obstacles to a better use of resources is the Alice-in-Wonderland training of doctors: the NHS is not a teaching hospital but medical schools do not appear to realise this. Nurtured in the hothouse atmosphere of expensive equipment and specialised cases, most medical students are quite unprepared for the world of general practice or the demands of mental illness or geriatrics. No wonder these are the unpopular specialties staffed largely by foreign doctors unable to break into the prestigious world of acute medicine. Medical training is even less appropriate to doctors returning to Third World countries — 'a student in an African teaching hospital was asked how he would determine how far advanced in pregnancy a woman might be. He said he would use an ultrasonic scanner'.

Ms Garner argues pertinently that the ideals of a health service — an equitable service for all with fairly rationed resources — conflicts with those of medicine — the best possible treatment for every individual patient. The ideals of medicine, backed by the emotionalism of the press, seem to be winning though. The less glamorous but more needy areas of health care — mental illness, mental handicap and geriatrics — remain the 'cinderella' services. The cost per inpatient week for the mentally handicapped in 1974-75 was £33.68 and for the mentally ill £36.60, but for a patient in a London teaching hospital it was £154.22. Yet numerous reports have suggested changes in medical training to include greater emphasis on social medicine, with little effect.

If it is so hard even to produce changes in medical training, it seems impossible to ask governments to turn the question of health care on its head and look at it instead in terms of environmental factors, though this might prove a more relevant exercise than yet another administrative reshuffle. But can a 'National Sickness Service' ever have an impact on a nation's health? In *'Health Rights Handbook'*, Gerry & Carol Stimson go further than Ms Garner in answering that question. They feel, along with Illich, that much health care, when based on the 'Capitalist theory of disease' (treating the individual and not the source of the disease), is counter-productive. Instead they argue for a radical approach to health care — the liberation of health knowledge, greater emphasis on prevention, no elitism among health professionals, small scale technology, and control of health resources by the users.

A though concluding with these high ideals, the bulk of the *Handbook* is used in giving us practical advice on how to work the present system for our own ends. Clearly written information covers the whole gamut of health care, from mental health to contraception. And possibly better understanding by the user is one way of moving towards the ends the Stimsons envisage? At least reading both these books should make sitting in a doctor's waiting room a less bewildering experience.

Carol Seigel

Daughters of Rachel, Women in Israel, by Natalie Rein. Penguin £1.95.

WHEN YOU THINK of an Israeli woman do you envisage a sexy soldier, uniform chic but practical, uptilted breasts and gun slung over her shoulder? Or do you imagine Golda Meir —

archetypal Jewish matriarch, but jokingly referred to in her heyday as 'the best man in the government'? How true are these stereotypes of the real women who live at the heart of the conflict in the Middle East?

By any criteria they are not true at all. The tough, strong, liberated (but underneath it all, wise, warm and gentle) Israeli woman does not exist. Despite the powerful image — or perhaps because of it — she has been firmly kept in her traditional place, at home, attending to the needs of her man and children. If, driven by the harsh economic realities of the country to work full time, she will find herself in a traditionally female job with no prospects of advancement and will spend a large proportion of her meagre wage on baby-minders.

Through her first book, *Daughters of Rachel, Women in Israel* (Penguin, £1.95), Natalie Rein shows us Israel, and inevitably the whole complicated political arena in the Middle East, from a feminist viewpoint. She traces 'the growth of machismo' and the overpowering ideological, political and economic role of the military machine of the 1970s from the erosion of the idealism of the early feminist pioneers who had run from conditions of intolerable oppression in Russia at the turn of the century.

She points up the inextricable link between the undermining of that early bid for equality and the accompanying slide into the cult of heroism. 'Jewish cowboys' charged round the countryside 'protecting' Jewish women and children from local Arabs with whom, on the whole, they had been coexisting fairly peacefully. The machinery of the new state came into existence long before the state itself, headed by men who had no experience of those desperately difficult attempts to set up a radical alternative lifestyle, but a great deal of experience of bureaucratic manipulation, European style.

Thanks to Natalie Rein's thorough research and rigorous approach, we see the seeds of the present situation in the Middle East germinating in those early power struggles. And refreshingly, and perhaps hopefully, we see the rise of the new feminist movement with its own concomitant effect on the internal politics of Israel. And Ms Rein, unlike the traditional sloganisers of the left, makes clear the dependence of Israeli foreign policy on its internal politics, posing feminist solutions which could put a whole new perspective on the future of the area.

Julia Bard

BACK PAGES

BOOKS

THIS MONTH, Just Books in Belfast reveal the books and pamphlets that have been selling like a dose of salts from their sturdy bookshop.

***Ambush at Tullywest** — the British Intelligence Services in Action, Kennedy Lindsay It's not just republicans the SAS do their ratfucking against in Northern Ireland.

***Beyond the Fragments**

***Irish Voices from British Jails** (PAC)

***The Military Art of People's War**. A monthly review Press publication edited by Steler.

***Nuclear Power for Beginners**

Pamphlets:

***Uranium Mining in Donegal** (pub. by Just Books)

***A Guide to Growing Marijuana in the British Isles** (pub. Hassle Free)

***Camerawork 14**, the Irish issue

***The British Media and Northern Ireland**

***The Media Misreports Northern Ireland**.

Thanks for that list gang, and in return, we should draw attention to a comprehensive guide to Information on Ireland called **Troops on Turf** that Just Books have now brought out. They'll send it anywhere for the price of a stamp as a contribution to what they call 'breaking out of the institutionalised and self-imposed censorship that exists on the North'. Contact Just Books at 7 Winetavern Street, Belfast BT1 1JQ.

Monotype is a novel about a young woman and her escape from a mental hospital. It starts off by describing the horrors of such institutions, and how Fliss, the young woman, comes to terms with her drugged and tedious existence. It is a moving story, and a very enjoyable read.

Peter Beringer could not find a publisher, so he scrounged enough money to pay for typesetting and printing. The rest of the work, collating, correcting and binding (stapling sections together) he did himself. In consequence the finished product is not as professional as those that can be purchased from Pluto.

Avai able from Peter Beringer, 46 St. Pauls Crescent, London NW1 £1 + 20p postage.

CSE Books have just published **Struggle Over The State: Cuts and Restructuring in Contemporary Britain**.

The authors of the book, the State Group of CSE, came together to discuss why a Labour Government, despite opposition from its own supporters, brought in a series of expenditure cuts until its defeat in 1979. The book surveys developments of state activity in spheres ranging from fiscal to industrial policy to the central, regional and local state apparatuses, taking in the welfare areas of housing education, social security, health and social services. The book aims to 'clarify political implications for activists both inside and outside the state, by defining the changing terrain for class struggle which the new forms of state expenditure have brought about'. The paperback version costs £2.50.

Another attempt to be useful. We'll do a list each month of books of lefty interest that have come into us or that we've heard of, and haven't got room to review or mention more fully.

National Liberation by R. Ulyanovsky Progress, Moscow

Disarmament — The Command of the Times. by V. Mamontov. Progress

Violence for Equality — Inquiries in political philosophy, by Ted Honderich. Penguin £1.95

The Ambivalence of Abortion by Linda Francke. Penguin £1.95

The Wise Wound — Menstruation and Everywoman. Shuttle and Redgrove. Penguin £1.95

Socialism, Democracy and Self-Management. Political essays by Michael Raptis (Pablo). Alison and Busby £3.95.

Capital and Labour, A Marxist Primer, edited by Theo Nicols. Fontana £2.95

Race Against the Dying — campaign against chemical and biological warfare, by Elizabeth Sigmund. Pluto £1.95

War and an Irish Town by Eamonn McCann. Slightly revised, and shortened. Pluto £1.95.

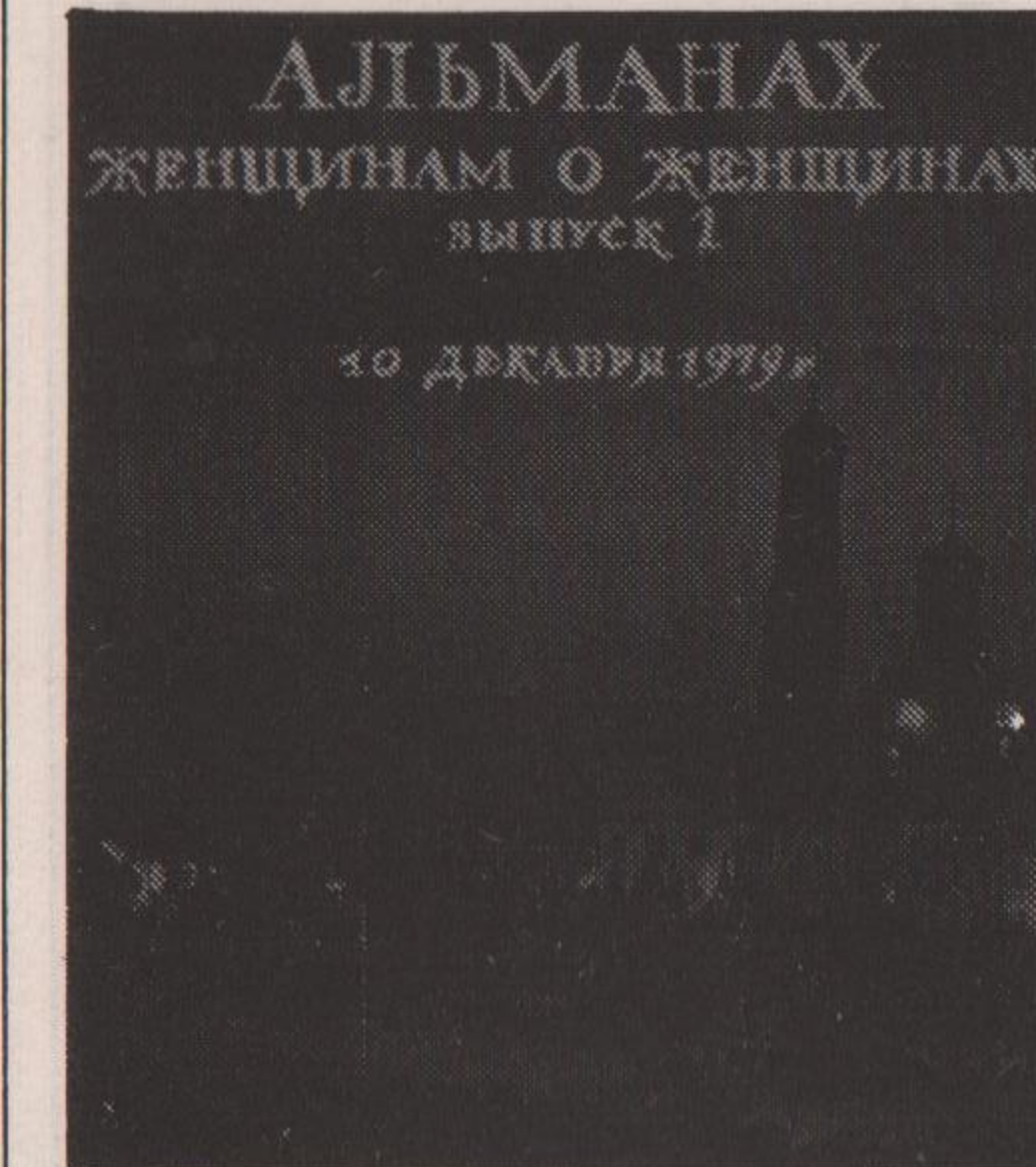
Ireland: Divided Nation, Divided Class Based on Marxist papers from a 1978 Ireland Symposium at Warwick. Inklinks £3.50

Marxism and the Muslim World by Maxime Rodinson. Zed Press £8.95.

The Hidden Face of Eve — Women in the Arab World, by Nawal El Saadawi. Zed Press £2.95.

Gaining Ground. A novel by Joan Barfoot The Women's Press £2.50.

PUBLICATIONS



LAST DECEMBER the public publication of a new feminist journal, **Woman and Russia** was seized by the KGB and its scheduled second number banned from publication.

Tatiana Mamonova, one of the contributors to the journal, was repeatedly harassed by the KGB then summoned by them for interrogation and forced to sign a statement accusing herself of "having published a journal of dubious ideological tendencies".

It is true that the journal is a far cry from the Russians' ideal in a socialist society and it denounces in particular the myth of Russia as a classless society with sexual equality. "The emancipation of society has progressively improved women's conditions. In Russia this process stopped with the appearance of Stalin's personality cult..."

The journal includes accounts of the difficulties unmarried mothers face in Russia, of the medical and financial hardships, the poor housing conditions that make many Russian women totally dependent upon men if they have children.

There is an account of the conditions in abortion clinics and women's prisons and a description by a child of nine of his life in a working camp.

A feminist group in Paris have managed to obtain a copy and have published its translation, causing a considerable stir in France.

Spare Rib will soon be publishing translated extracts from the journal.

PEOPLES NEWS SERVICE has recently been relaunched. In its new format, it will appear regularly every fortnight with more pictures and professionally printed.

BACK PAGES

The second issue seems more solid than the first in its content, and if this trend continues it will become an increasingly useful magazine. Issue two includes articles on the collapse of the Peace Movement, a West German security police informer's own account, a look at the 'Army of the Poor' in Guatemala, and what French intelligence is doing in Africa.

They offer a variety of subscription prices to suit all incomes but the basic subscription price is £10.80 for a year, which includes free indices. They calculate that they will need 1500 subscriptions to become financially viable, and as they so cleverly put it, 'subscriptions are the capital of the anti-capitalist press'. Put pen to paper and send your money to Peoples News Service, Oxford House, Derbyshire Street, London E2.

ISSUES will soon be upon us all. It's a new mag, with an egghead editorial board line-up, which intends to provide a monthly gander on 'events of international importance' and information 'on the political struggles ignored by the world's press in the voices of the participants themselves'. Furthermore, the mag intends to help us all 'make more sense of the crisis-ridden world of the eighties. Boy, do we need that now. Scribblers the mag has at its disposal will include Jonathan Steele and Tariq Ali. Further info from Shelley Charlesworth at 96 Gillespie Road, London N5.

A really straightforward handbook about sex for girls has just been published by Coventry Womens Workshop. Called **Pleasing Yourself**, the book answers most of the questions a young girl might want to know about sex and enjoying it. In these times of renewed calls to discontinue contraception for under 16s, information like this is vital. No return to the fifties! Copies cost 40p from Coventry Womens Workshop, 12 Westminster Road, Coventry.

SERA have just published a pamphlet called **Making the Most Of Workers Co-ops— The Local Agency Approach**, by Alan Taylor. It looks at the sources of help available to workers co-ops and concludes that aid to co-ops could be provided most effectively by Local Co-op Development Agencies. Send 63p (includes p&p) to SERA, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

Southall Rights have produced a carefully researched and drafted report of the events of April 23, 1979. Costing 80p, the report is a must for anyone interested in knowing more about what happened on this day when the police ran amok.

The Committee for Human Rights in Uruguay has published the case history of one political prisoner, Washington Vargas. Washington was arrested in 1972; he was a 19 year old student at the time. Although a judge signed a release order for him in December 1973, he was kept in prison and subjected to repeated torture sessions in order to extract a confession that he had killed two police agents in 1971. Washington protested his innocence but was forced to sign a 'confession' after many months of torture. The Uruguayan Government has repeatedly refused to give a transcript of the trial proceeding against him and the only evidence appears to be his own 'confession'. The document costs 25p from the Committee for Human Rights in Uruguay, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.

ORGANISATIONS

LESBIAN LINK's new number is 061-236 6205 and their new address is Gay Centre, 61 Bloom Street, Manchester M1 3LY. There is a women-only Lesbian Link benefit disco and bar on Sunday, March 2, 7 pm onwards, at UMIST Students Union, Barnes Wallis Building, Sackville Street, Manchester M1. Ring 061-273 3064 for details.

A **Feminist Archive** has been established in the west country. It is devoted to documenting the development of the women's movement and maintaining national and international contacts for the exchange of material and information. Although it is not a lending library, its subscribers and friends pay no users fee. Subscription rates are as follows: less than £2,500 per annum income, £2.00 per year; £2,500-£5,000, £5.00 per year; over £5,000 per year, £8.00; and institutions £15.00 per year. Send your money to The Feminist Archive, Orchardleigh House, Shepton Mallet, Somerset.

EVENTS

What is being billed as the Debate of the Decade will take place at Central Hall, Westminster on March 17 at 7 pm. Tony Benn, Paul Foot, Tariq Ali, Stuart Holland, Hilary Wainwright and Audrey Wise will argue about **The Crisis and Future of the Left**. Tickets cost £1 from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

Saturday 29 March is **Harrisburg Day** — the first anniversary of the worst accident in the history of nuclear power. So join countless legions of

demanders for a nuclear-free future, along with such idols as David Steel and Steve Hillage, at Speakers Corner in London's Hyde Park, noon that day.

CAMPAIGNS

Oxford on 15 March stages a **Campaign against the Cruise Missiles** march and rally in the centre, beginning 3 pm. Further info from Dick Wiles, 99 Woodstock Rd, Oxford (0865-54701).

Darcus Howe, editor of **Race Today**, has been set up in both Manchester and London. He faces charges at the Inner London Crown Court, SE1 on 10 March, and at the Crown Square Magistrates Court in Manchester on March 17. Active campaigns are being organised around both cases; further info from 74 Shakespeare Road, London SE24 OPT (01-737 2268).

THEATRE

A **NEW SHOW** by **Camouflage** looks at the increasing militarism of the West. The 1980 Spit and Polish Girly Show, with an all-women cast with extensive previous experience (Sadistas, Beryl and the Peryls and Belt and Braces), sounds a very promising, laugh-a-minute night out. Playing at the following places; Thames Poly, 8.00 pm, March 5; Dame Colet House, Ben Johnston Road, London E1, 8.00 pm, March 6; Rio Cinema, Kingsland High Street, Dalston, 8.00 pm, March 9; Battersea Arts Centre, Lavender Hill, 8.00 pm, March 22; Theatre Space, 48 William IV Street, London WC1, 8.00 pm, Monday to Saturday, March 24-29.

Combination are putting on a new play by Noel Greig, author of the much-praised *Dear Love of Comrades*. The new play, *Angels Descend On Paris*, is part a psychological who-done-it, and part a historical epic. Set in Paris and Berlin during the rise of fascism, the play looks at the darker areas of the human heart. A three piece jazz band accompanies the action, and the story is threaded through with songs. (Please find out dates from Albany on 01-639 0765).

Rights of Women present an evening of cabaret and disco. On International Women's Day, from 8-11.15 pm, they will hold a women only event at Action Space, The Drill Hall, 16 Chemies Street, London WC1 (Gooch Street tube). Tickets £1.50 (75p unwaged), food and drink available, creche facilities provided. For further information, contact ROW on 01-278 6349.

STATE SNOOPERS

■ continued from page 7

claimants to spot a man coming out to work. They are the collectors who can convert tittle-tattle from nasty neighbours into cases for the courts. They work a lot with the police, and with employers, for the majority of their cases are 'working and drawing' — that is, unemployed claimants or dependents who are found to be supplementing their state pittance by taking jobs. Not usually comfortable, established jobs with tax and insurance deducted of course, but casual ones: seasonal agricultural work, window-cleaning, decorating, odd jobs. These cases made up 55 per cent of prosecutions for SB fraud in 1978-79, and 69 per cent of Unemployment Benefit (UB) fraud.

What the DHSS's ridiculous figures for projected savings (£50 million out of estimated fraud and abuse losses of £53 million) mean is that every claimant will be under suspicion. How else can all estimated fraud or abuse be eliminated?

It has already been policy for two years that every case proved will be taken to court. This explains the prosecution statistics (hold your breath, comrades): In 1976 there were 19,000 prosecutions for benefit fraud. In 1977-78: 26,000. In 1978-79: 29,147. The conviction rate was 98 per cent.

TO PUT these facts into context, compare the zeal with which government is pursuing fraud of two other kinds

that should be comparable — that are comparable, if truth can be admitted in Thatcher's Britain: income tax evasion, and under-payment by employers.

It really isn't possible to get anything like a precise figure for tax fraud. But the chairman of the Inland Revenue, Sir William Pile, last October told the House of Commons Expenditure Committee that he put the extent of what is fashionably and euphemistically termed the "black economy" at 7.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product.

GDP last year was £120,000 million. 7.5 percent is £9,000 million. Assume the undeclared income is taxable at 30 percent, and you've got a figure of £3,000 million a year.

Here come the comparisons: compared with the DHSS's current 4,413 staff engaged on detecting fraud and abuse, now to be increased by 1,000, the Inland Revenue has 260. And of these just ten are *Enquiry Officers*, the elite equivalent of the SIs, to cover the whole country.

Prosecutions? Alongside the DHSS's 29,000, the Inland Revenue prosecuted 184 people last year. An official explained: 'We are in the business of collecting taxes, not sending people to prison.'

Now the criminal underpayment of wages by employers (that is, not all wages, as you might think, but those in industries covered by Wages Councils):

There are 34 Wages Councils, which set minimum rates in the lowest-paid areas, where union organisation is usually:

very weak. To cover half a million workplaces, the Department of Employment's Wages Inspectorate (WI) has an army of 145 inspectors. On average a firm can expect an inspection once every 14 years. Most are never visited at all. But among those that are, the WI has found that one in three is paying wages below the minimum. This proportion has doubled since 1971, when it was one factory in six.

There are three million workers covered by these rates. Possibly a million are being defrauded by their employers. The robbery must run into hundreds of millions of pounds a year.

To pay below the rate is a criminal offence. Prosecutions? Last year, out of 11,000 companies found by even this tiny band of inspectors to be under-paying, *seventeen* were prosecuted. Unlike the DHSS, which prosecutes in every case, the WI has a policy never to prosecute on a first offence.

None of the 17 companies were dealt the full penalty — which is a fine of £100

So Prentice is really only playing a small part in the Tory struggle for inequality. His task is to slim down the growing force of the unemployed to provide cheap labour for these sweatshop capitalists; to grab a few million pounds from the poor to make it a little easier for the rich and propertied to prosper, to help turn Britain into one huge, one hundred percent "black economy".

Tim Gopsill

Classifieds

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TRAMPLE ON TORIES for 20p! Badges and pamphlets by Geoff Hodgson etc. From Clause Four Publications, 15 Burstock Road, London SW15.

Proposed communal living and collective working group in Manchester wants more people, particularly children, women. Also loans of money. Collective/emotional/material support, childcare etc. Anti-authoritarian, anti-consumerism, anti-sexism. High level of sharing, and possibly a later move to the country. Details from TaC, 13 Maida St, Manchester 12.

IDEOLOGY AND CONSCIOUSNESS. Issues one to six. £6 o.n.o. 01-579 5770.

We are setting up a socialist housing co-ownership in the Kilburn area of north London or nearby, and are looking for some more people with kids to join. If you are interested write to Box X, The Leveller, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1

DISCOVER COMMUNAL LIVING! A week of practice for you and others living and working together, gathering April 3-10th. Write for details, with SAE to Laurieston Hall, Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire, Scotland.

GAY'S THE WORD Bookshop, 66 Marchmont Street, London WC1 01-278 7654. Gay books, feminist books, new/secondhand. Information, tea/coffee. Tues-Sat 11.30-7.30 close Russell Square tube.

SENSITIVE MAN, 32, seeks woman for loving companionship. Interests: civil liberties, human rights, third world, environment, classical/folk/Indian music, medieval art, films, languages, countryside. Phone Roy 01-834 5012.

HOMOSEXUAL? So are we. If you need to talk about it phone Gay Icebreakers 01-274 9590. Any evening 7.30 to 10.30.

LEVELLER COLLECTIVE MEMBER looks for a place to live in London. Anything except a bedsit suits me. It's the second time in six months so would be grateful for somewhere more permanent. I'm good with my hands so can do any work needed. Contact Adam Thompson at the Leveller.

NEW SPECIALIST SOCIALIST journal needs funds. Loans wanted. Phone 01-341 1134 (Evenings) or Write Box LLL, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4

'ROBIN HOOD' OF NOTTINGHAM, ex-Leveller contributor, please contact office on (01) 278-0146. Urgent.

Send to Leveller Classifieds, 57, Caledonian Road, London N1

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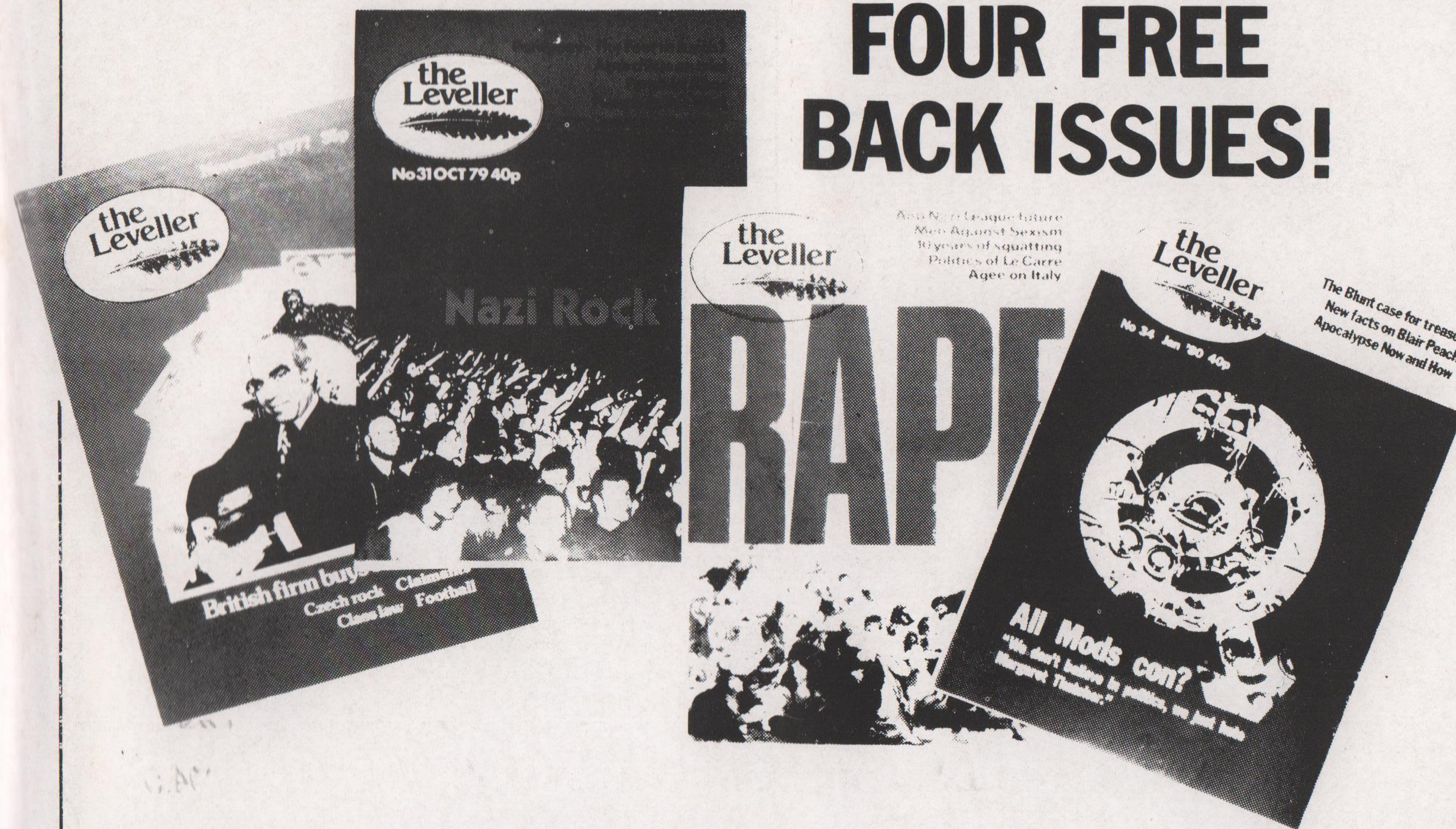
2/ RED BOXES. These are intended for use by the 'movement' in its broadest sense. Based on a single box unit costing £2.50, shapes up to a quarter page (8 boxes) can be built. All Red Boxes must be **PRE-PAID**. And then there's the sheer cynicism of charging four for the price of three, i.e. a series of three whatever the number of boxes, will be followed by a free fourth.

3/ CLASSIFIED. Using the grid on page 34, classified ads cost a mere 5p per word. Again, these must be **PRE-PAID**.

COPY DATES for all Leveller advertising are 11th Feb. for the March issue; 10th March for April; 7th April for May; 5th May for June; 2nd June for July; 30th June for August; 11th August for September; 8th September for October; 6th October for November; 3rd November for December; and 1st December for January 1981.

For all further details, or clarification, please contact our advertising staff at The Leveller's World Headquarters.

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