

Protest and Subscribe!

Special Offer

FOR THIS Jubilee issue we're making a special back numbers offer. *The Leveller* now has twice as many readers as a year ago, so you may well not have seen all the editions of 1980-81. If you take out a subscription before March 5 we will send you any four of these issues. Just underline the ones you want on the list below.

And with each set, for nostalgia's sake, we'll throw in a copy of our pilot issue from 1976.

For those who don't need the back numbers, we're still offering the following books as free gifts to new subscribers: *Who's Watching You?* by Crispin Aubrey; Peter Taylor's *Beating the Terrorists* (neat pun in that title y'know); Pluto Press' *Big Red Diary 1981* (well you might have lost the one you already had); and David Ransom's *Licence to Kill: The Blair Peach Case*.

Any subscription for overseas costs £15, we're afraid. And subscriptions for institutions – libraries, trade union head offices, companies and state bodies – also cost £15. Normally these carry no book offer, but in a seizure of jubilee magnanimity we're prepared to grant the back number offer, just this once.

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- 34. The Blair Peach case, with the first naming of the police officers involved; Who are the mods?; The Blunt Case for Treason; Lord God Almighty's sensational debut.
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- 37. What Make-up Means; H-Bombs for the Third World; Prostitution as a Feminist Issue; The State of The Left.
- 38. Nuclear Power; The Low-down on LIFE; Dali; Anarchist on the Run.
- 39. Violence as a Strategy; Poles Against the State; Inside Armagh Jail; Black Footballers.

- 40. Nuclear Weapons; El Salvador's Revolution Starts Up; Childcare; Jobless on Merseyside.
- 41. Jobs and Joblessness; Radical Chic in left Theatre; Who is George Bush?
- 42. Education: Who Needs It?; Beyond the Fragments Event; Nicaragua's Revolution; Why Defend the Labour NEC?
- 43. The first fortnightly: Fascists and Fight Them; Motherhood: the Biological Time-bomb; Films Against Women; CND.
- 44. Inside the Parliamentary Lobby; Map of Nuclear Britain; Jamaican Election; The Photography of Donald McCullin.
- 45. How and Why BL Workers Got Smashed; Women Against Male Violence; In and Against the State; the H-Blocks Hunger Strike Campaign.
- 46. DHSS at Christmas: the Ghost of Welfare Past; The Power of Comedy; Show Your Own Films; How Men Get Away With Murder.
- 47. Prison Movies; How the Civil Service Keeps its Secrets; Institutionalising State Racism.
- 48. The Red Brigades Exclusive Interview; Ireland on TV; Lord God at Reagan's Inauguration; Spanish Hotel Workers.
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the Leveller

No.50

Inside



Cover design by Laurie Evans

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Two million words later.....

WOULD JUBILEE'VE IT? *Leveller* magazine, that infuriating-rag dragged out by a bunch of libertarian (not so much as you think comrade!) loonies with no money, little organisation and little more political cohesion — depending where you look at it from — *breathe now* — has produced **FIFTY FREAKING ISSUES** (fifty-one if you count the pilot number), 1.712 pages of fantasy, fact and sometimes a little fiction, nearly 2 million words in all, which is three times longer than *Capital*, and about as many people have read all of each.

THERE IS no reason, having gone on this long (five years to the month) that we can't continue, well, for a good while. The collective has never had too much trouble recharging itself, and summoning support from readers, when needed. There are only two people from those who produced the pilot still at it, but the mean age (if that means anything) is now lower, and the commitment higher, than ever.

THIS ISSUE is a kind of retrospective: not reprinting anything, but with extra space for a series of major articles summing up what contributors think have been significant developments of the last five years, and where they leave us now. It happens

that in Britain there has been the greatest political change in decades — the Thatcherite bid to wreck the liberal democratic consensus — and we hope the articles will help people work out ways to put an end to both.

WE HAD planned to celebrate this little jubilee with grand events, but pressure to get the paper out was too much to get the benefit gig and the political event on at the same time. Therefore the gig, announced for this Friday, February 20, is OFF for the time being. There will be one in May — bands have already agreed — but we're not leaking the details prematurely.

HOWEVER the political event, the Teach-In on the Security State, is very ON. Not on the original date (this Saturday), but on SATURDAY MARCH 7. Details on page 4.

WHETHER YOU read *The Leveller* in the shithouse or in bed, at work or in the dole queue, or flying Concorde, we hope you'll enjoy it. If you want to be involved in it, in any way, write, contribute, or come along. Our collective meetings, in the office, every Tuesday night, are always open.

BM skins accused of vicious race attack

VERDICTS were expected this week on five skinheads on trial at the Old Bailey accused of a particularly vicious racist attack on a South East London cinema a year ago. All five defendants — Vincent Wendon, Kevin Wakeling, Shane Spalding, Martin White and Kevin Heathfield — are members or supporters of the British Movement. Judge John Buzzard ordered that any prospective juror who belonged to, or was sympathetic to, the British Movement, the National Front, the Anti Nazi League or the Socialist Workers Party should stand down. Two men did so.

At about 11 p.m. on Friday March 28, 1980, about 100 skinheads marched in formation down Woolwich High Street chanting 'Sieg Heil' and brandishing knives, iron bars and clubs. Prosecuting Counsel Anne Curnow told the jury: 'The skinheads knew a lot of what they call "coons" would assemble outside the Odeon cinema on a Friday night for the late night film.'

There were about 150 black and Indian youths in the queue and *The Leveller* has obtained two eyewitness accounts of what happened next: 'Skinheads attacked from all angles, with knives, wood with nails driven in, iron bars, chains and pick axes. Most of the queue had to run inside or away from the scene for safety. The skinheads then started to attack the cinema itself, kicking in the windows and causing other destruction; even at some stages cornering some of the black youths and beating them up. One such attack was on an Indian youth. His head was cut open: I wanted to help him but because of safety for myself I could not have gone outside from the cinema to help him.'

'They were also shouting slogans like "niggers go home", "kill the black bastards" and "get out of Woolwich, you black cuts".'

A week earlier there had been a fight outside a cab office in Woolwich, in which several skinheads were injured. In revenge they planned an attack. Skinheads converged on Woolwich from other areas, looking for a 'bundle', Wakeling and Spalding making the journey over the river from Canning Town.

In the witness box Wakeling denied participating in the riot. He was found in possession of between 30 and 50 leaflets and stickers. Asked about this in court he said he picked a handful from a table in a pub: 'I asked someone for a few, but I couldn't read them as I can't read. I wanted to stick them on my bedroom wall.'

Spalding, picked up in a nearby street, is said to have attacked a black youth in the police charge

room. The police alleged he said: 'Who are you looking at, you fucking nigger?' Then, as they took him off to the cells struggling, he yelled 'Kill the niggers...'. 'Up the British Movement', and (to the police) 'I thought you were with us. Up the British Movement!'

Spalding, alone of the defendants, did not give evidence in court. He relied on the testimony of a friend, Gillian Hunter, who was with the skinheads on the night. Even Spalding's barrister admitted her evidence was not very convincing, saying that he did not relish the task of summing up his client's defence.

White was arrested by the police at a hospital. He claimed he had been stabbed by a crowd of black youths. He admitted to the police later that 'I knew we would have a go at the coons, but not so heavy. Some of the weapons were out of order.' Under cross-examination he admitted he was a member of the BM, not proud of it, but not ashamed of it. He had known about the planned attack the previous Wednesday but decided not to take part because it would serve no purpose.

Miss Curnow then asked him: 'Is it not one of the ends of the BM to keep Britain white and drive coloureds out and send them back anywhere?'

White replied 'Yes.'

'And if necessary to do that by attacking them?'

White replied 'By force, Yes.'

He agreed that the Movement was 'pretty Nazi' and that they sometimes sang 'The Fatherland', chanted 'Seig Heil' and used Swastika insignia.

The prosecution case was hampered because no black eyewitnesses came forward despite pressure from the local black community group. A spokesperson of Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks said this was the result of a complete breakdown of trust between black youth and police. *Paul Chapman*

An island of home taping

A MAJOR row has broken out within the recording industry as a result of Island Record's latest venture, a range of cassettes entitled One Plus One. The cassettes contain one side of pre-recorded music and one side of blank tape — 'For you to record whatever you like'.

The British Phonographic Industry, the record companies' trade association (of which Island is a member), has been campaigning for years to eradicate home taping, which they regard as theft of copyright. The BPI, still reeling (!) from EMI's release of



By order of the Leveller Collective

Re it enacted

A

TEACH-IN

entitled

The state

its SECURITY SERVICES, MILITARY AND POLICE ARMS, resistance to them;

its SECRECY, attempts to lift it and reveal information protected thereby;

its ROLE AS EMPLOYER AND PROVIDER, the fight for the rights of employees and citizens;

its IMPERIALISM at home and abroad;

its INEVITABLE OVERTHROW.

The teach-in will be informed by participants representing socialist and libertarian groupings; civil liberties and anti-militarist organisation; women's, black and gay people's groups, research and propaganda bodies.

There will be film and theatre, food and refreshments, and novelty subversive entertainment.

It will take place continuously from 11am to 7pm on SATURDAY MARCH 7 at the Refectory, POLYTECHNIC OF CENTRAL LONDON, NEW CAVENDISH STREET, LONDON W1. The nearest underground stations are at Great Portland Street and Goodle Street.

ADMISSION WILL BE £2 FOR WAGED, £1 FOR UNWAGED CITIZENS.

THE LEVELLER

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BowWowWow's C30: C60: C90 GO — which contained the lyric, 'So I don't buy records in your shop/ I tape 'em all, I'm top of the Pops' — has condemned the move, which it regard as 'a blatant encouragement to copy in contravention of the 1956 Copyright Act.' They have approached the major retailers to try to persuade them to boycott the product — you won't be seeing it in Boots.

Island, who regard themselves as part of the progressive wing of the music industry, are disappointed by the BPI's response. Involved last year in an attempt to set up a breakaway trade association with Arista, they think that the BPI has failed to respond to the challenge of the growing tape market. 'We believe that One Plus One will take sales away from the blank tape market... if it was adopted as the standard cassette system in Britain, we believe the income generated would more than compensate for the losses.'

There are now more tape recorders in Britain than hi-fi sets. Increased production costs — especially the price of oil-derived vinyl — means that it is now necessary to sell more than 23,000 copies of a record to make a profit, and home taping, according to the BPI, 'is gradually killing the industry'. Faced with this threat, it seems that the monopolistic facade

of the recording industry is beginning to crack as individual companies become more fiercely competitive in finding ways to win back the section of the market lost to home tapes. *Chris Schüller*

Paisley army bangs the drum

IT WAS a little over a year ago that the first rumours started seeping out from Westminster that Margaret Thatcher and Humphrey Atkins were seriously considering the possibility of making Ian Paisley the head of a new devolved government in Northern Ireland. The last few days have seen the final nail being put into the coffin of that careful project. Paisley has once again shown himself in his true colours as a right-wing rabble-rouser with scant respect for the British parliamentary institutions he's so 'loyal' about.

First came the 500 men waving firearms certificates on a County Antrim hillside; then the launching of a new 1912 style Ulster covenant, against what Paisley sees as Thatcher's sell-out to the Republic; then Paisley's expulsion from the House of Commons; finally, in the County Tyrone town of Omagh on Friday night, the first of eleven rallies throughout Northern Ireland to mobilise Loyalists



Alastair Indge

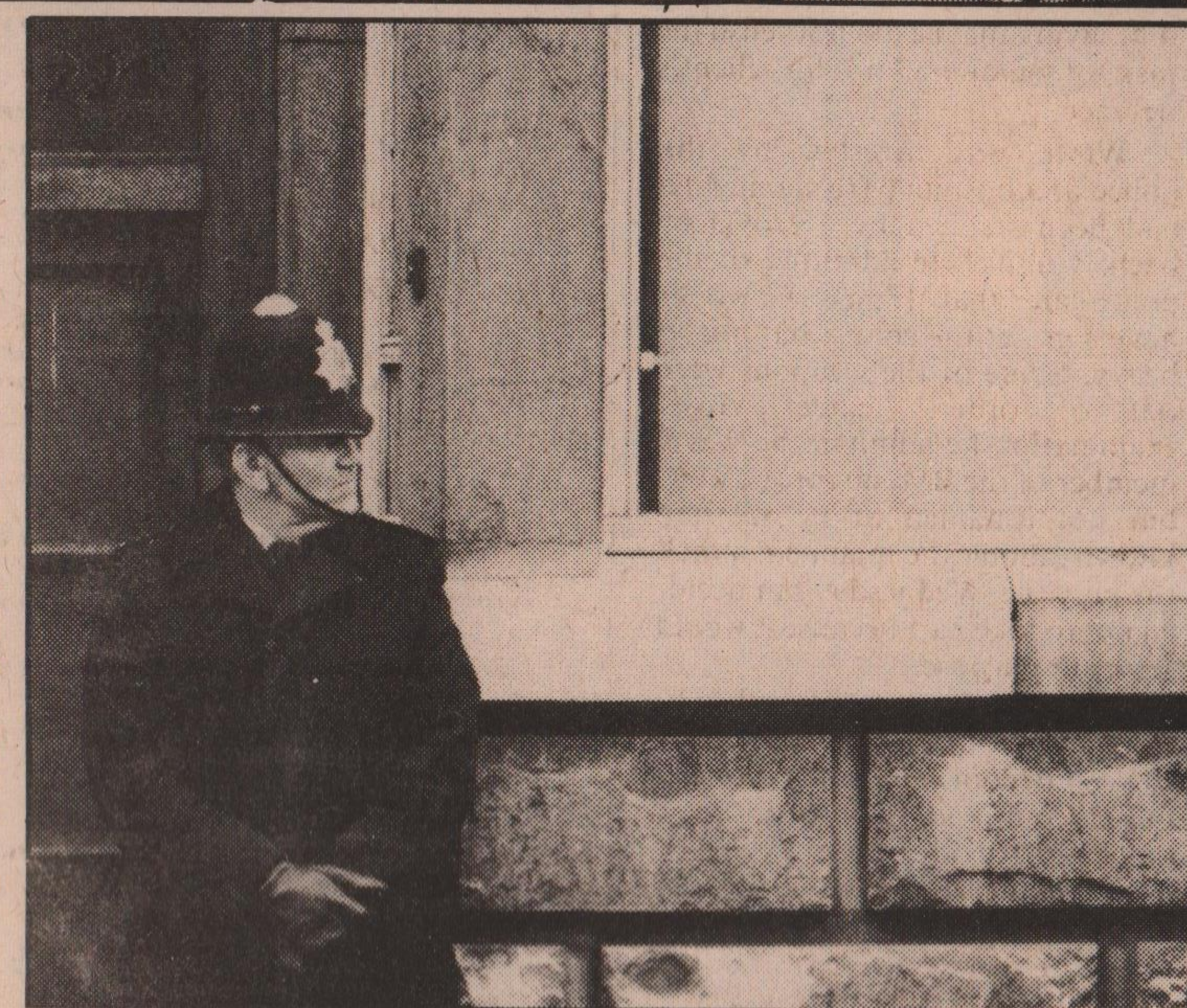
against the Haughey-Thatcher initiative.

Irish republicans, with their traditional tendency to underestimate the strength of Loyalist hysteria, would do well to heed Paisley's message in Omagh. In a speech that was interrupted time and time again by his cheering, whistling, foot-stamping audience, he threw down the gauntlet to Haughey: 'Irrespective of the deal you do with London you will never get your thieving murderous hands on the Protestants of Northern Ireland. Every last drop of Ulster blood will be willingly shed before we enter your priest-ridden banana republic.'

Paisley is out to exploit a real unease among many Protestants that a deal is being cooked up to push them down the road to the all-Ireland republic of their worst nightmares. It is no coincidence that he continually harks back to 1912, when the original Ulster Volunteer Force, led by Edward Carson and massively supported by Ulster Protestants, successfully torpedoed the Asquith government's Home Rule Bill by threatening to rise in armed rebellion against it.

And the timing of his campaign couldn't have been more provocative. By March 28, the day of his culminating rally outside Stormont, Bobby Sands and his fellow prisoners in Long Kesh will be finishing the fourth week of the second republican hunger strike. There is talk in the Paisley camp that the second phase of his campaign will be to hold counter-demonstrations in order to disrupt the protest marches which will be gathering strength in April as the hunger strikers approach what seems to be inevitable death.

And as the backlash gathers strength the republican movement is at its lowest ebb for many years. There have been reports of important personnel changes in the Provisional IRA in the wake of the confusion after the first hunger strike. There is, it is said, a new Chief of Staff and a new Head of the Northern Command. Last Sunday's H-Blocks march in Belfast, the first since the end of that



ONLY 50 ANL stalwarts and supporters gathered to picket the new National Front HQ at 221 Streatham High Road, South London, on Saturday February 7. Prevented by police from marching past the building, the demonstrators dispersed in the back streets of Streatham and worked their way round the police blocks to leaflet the High Street.

The NF shouldn't be too heartened by the lack of left response to their provocative move or by the massive police protection they received. In an inner city borough like Lambeth, under heavy attack from a right-wing central government and divided by the issue of raising the rates to combat the cuts, they are just one more irritant.

hunger strike, saw a poor turnout. There is a general recognition in the Catholic community that there is no reasonable hope of wringing concessions out of the British government the second time round.

More attacks in Southall

TWO YEARS after the police riot in Southall when Blair Peach was killed, the racist attacks continue. On Saturday January 14, a picket was organised outside Southall Police Station by the Anti-Nazi League and the Muslim Youth Movement to protest at an attack by the police on a sick 54-year-old Asian. Mr. Mohammed Sarwar, who had called the police after continuous harassment by fascist youths, was gripped by the throat and punched to the ground by two

officers. The police deny the attack and the officers have not been suspended during investigations.

Southall Campaign against Racist Attacks (SCARA) has issued a leaflet calling on people in Southall to report to them all incidents involving the police and racists. They have also called on all residents of Southall to boycott the police socially.

The Ealing Community Relations Council had its main grant of £24,000 cut by Ealing Borough Council on 20th January. One of the reasons given by the councillors for this cut was the ECRC's support of the SCARA initiative, but the cut has also been made because of criticism made of the Tory-controlled Council.

The ECRC has drawn public attention to the racist policies of the Council in education and housing and pointed out that the events of

23rd April 1979 would not have taken place if the Council had not allowed the National Front to hold a meeting at the Town Hall. One of the people behind this action by the Council is Sir George Young, a junior minister in the DHSS and MP for Acton.

The town is bracing itself for a grisly repeat of the 23rd April attack on its Asian community when the second anniversary comes up in two months' time. The Constitutional Movement of the National Front applied to the Council for the use of the Southall Town Hall on 23rd April on that day and has been turned down. But an application by the ECRC has also been rejected. The fascists have said that they intend to carry out their meeting on the steps of the town hall, and the police, with all the subtlety that they could draw upon, have said that they would stop any counter demonstration. The responsibility for any violence that might occur on that day must be laid at the door of the police and the racists. Southall is sick of being terrorised and if pushed will fight back.

Rip-off time

IMAGINE A company with a three-and-a-half billion pound order book and more orders expected daily. Sounds impressive, in the recession? Especially when it's British Aerospace, a public corporation. Well the government sold half of it off last Monday at ridiculously low prices. And the sale has been organised in such a way that it could make Labour Party plans to renationalise it without compensation more difficult.

The offer of 100 million shares at 150p was attractive enough to ensure that it was oversubscribed. There's the prospect of a quick profit to be made, as they are likely to go up at least 15p in the first month or so. The price was fixed by the Department of Industry on the advice of Kleinwort Benson, the merchant bank handling the issue.

The sale included two features which could make renationalisation difficult: Kleinwort Benson are allocating the shares as widely as possible. The terms of the

offer — minimum application only £75 — favoured this.

And each employee has been given 33 shares, worth £50, and the chance to buy more at half price. These shareholdings might mean that re-nationalisation without compensation is opposed by the unions.

Since nationalisation, the government has invested £110 million in the company, which makes the bulk of its £50 million-odd profits from government defence contracts. And it could do well out of the long-expected boom in orders for airliners.

The privatisation scheme has been attacked by TASS, the white-collar section of the engineering union AUEW. 'The future of the British aerospace industry' said national official Bill Niven, 'depends on solid, gilt-edged investment. That is not likely to come from the crew of speculators who will dip their hands into the British Aerospace till looking for a quick buck.'

But from the government's point of view, the success of the deal, which raised £50 million, will encourage them to press ahead with plans to privatise the British National Corporation. The first steps in a move which could make them £1 billion were taken last week in the publication of the Petroleum and Continental Shelf Bill, which will allow BNOG to sell off shares in its exploration and production subsidiaries.

O'Hara inquiry

TWENTY-FOUR MPs of all parties have now signed an Early Day Motion calling for an independent inquiry into the death of Matthew O'Hara, who died after spending four days in Pentonville Prison last March. A diabetic, he did not receive the insulin he required for controlling his condition; friends say his death was due to neglect by the prison authorities.

O'Hara's MP, Stanley Clinton-Davies, used the opportunity of the debate on the Freedom of Information Bill, introduced at the beginning of the month by Labour MP Frank Hooley but talked out again by Tory MPs, to accuse Home Office Junior Minister Lord Belstead of being 'less than frank' about O'Hara's death.

Arguing that a Freedom of Information Bill was necessary to force Ministers to tell the public what goes on, Clinton-Davies said: 'The Minister refuses to disclose to me what occurred in the prison and what information was given. That is absolutely wrong. When allegations are made about prison treatment, generally speaking a furtive atmosphere prevails.... There should be a maximum degree of disclosure.'

The Matthew O'Hara Committee (177, Glenarm Road, Hackney E5 0NB) are pushing the demand for the public inquiry. They say there has been a cover-up of 'quite astonishing proportions'.

The New Cross Massacre

THIRTEEN black teenagers perished after the fire that swept a house in New Cross, south east London, just a month ago. Police have not found the arsonist who poured paint stripper round a room at the end of a birthday party and set it alight. But local black people are calling it the worst-ever racist attack. Jenny Armitage wrote this poem for the bereaved families.



Telling the truth

It is ten pm and I write while my small daughter is asleep. I am imagining a man driving home along the Deptford Road, or similar; a mile or so from here, where life is expensive.

His car purrs up the winding road,
He slows the car to a standstill
Then swings into his driveway
To park behind his wife's car,
he opens the car door to smell the pleasant air.

Then he leaves his car,
And walks up to his house,
And enters his home,
Removes his hat, his scarf, his gloves, and his coat,
And walks then, with pleasure, into his living room
To see his wife.

She's there, by the fire.
They exchange a brief kiss, then
"Supper's ready, has been for a while",
She laughs, because he's usually later.
But she's tired, what with the children and the cooking,
"Let's eat".

He goes upstairs to wash his hands,
And on the way down again,
Psses by the children's room
Where his two daughters lie sleeping,
So he goes in, to watch them,
To restore his peace.

Sitting down on one bed
He smells their lives at rest,
He takes in their warm breath.
He sighs, and begins:
"My beloved daughters/
you are all my life to me/
so I must tell you/
but while you sleep/
that I have murdered/
some people/
who I didn't know/
so do not fear my daughters/
because they won't find me/
others will be blamed/
look how clean my hands are/
I am able to make sure I don't have to do the deed/
there are people who will kill for me/
who are not free like me to love/
that is their punishment/
but I love my two daughters/
because I didn't see the blood/
or hear the screams/
I needn't know the horror/
or the sorrow/
of those children's parents/
I wasn't at the party/
here I am/
I'm home and my heart opens to you my daughters/
so that you must love me/
keep my secret/
don't say at school that your daddy's a murderer/
don't become my enemies/
and don't hate me/
because your love restores me/
and if I lie and cheat/
I do it for you more than anyone/
never forget that/
tomorrow we can pass over this horrible deed in the press/
I can make some phone calls

so good night my daughters/
sleep peacefully now/
if the bogie man comes/
say your daddy is here/
if the bogie man's here/
your daddy is here."

He goes on downstairs to see his wife
He goes on downstairs to continue his life.

The slipway to centrism

WITHIN DAYS of Sue Slipman, currently a NUPE official but one-time star of stage screen and NUS, coming out in support for the Council for Social Democracy, two branches of her union have voted for her dismissal. NUPE is a left union — it supported the constitutional reforms, its members were in the forefront of the battle against pay policy and 5% — so feelings are running high about her support for Labour's right-wingers. Admittedly, if you once basked in the spotlight as the first woman president of NUS and a member of the national executive of the Communist Party, an obscure role organising hospital porters and school cleaners must get a bit tedious. So, it ought not to be surprising that she is trying to renew her career as a public figure by climbing on the centre-party bandwagon.

They are cock-a-hoop at acquiring their token young feminist. 'This proves,' Dr David Owen told *The Leveller*, 'that we are a radical socialist grouping, not an inert middle of the road centre party and that young people are fed up with the conservatism of the Labour Party.' Respectfully asked if there was not a contradiction between Slipman's past views and the right-wingers she was now lining up with, he replied sharply 'I don't accept that I am a right winger'.

Ex-CP comrades speak of Slipman more in sorrow than in anger. 'Never thought she was that naive' and 'Joining the Labour Party we could understand but going as far right as this is exceptional'. But most of her NUPE colleagues are furious. As NUS president she developed a good relationship with Shirley Williams, then Education Minister. The buzz in the union is that Shirley, desperate to give the CSD some radical feminist chic, leant heavily on Slipman to make her public testimonial. She denied this, saying that she went over to the CSD because of its commitment to decentralisation. Remind her that these same decentralisers are the people who would rather destroy the Labour Party than see any power go from the PLP to ordinary members and that the CSD, far from being a popular movement, is a clique of self-seeking elitists, and she wavers a little but argues bravely that that is all in the past.

There seem to be two main reasons for her actions. Firstly, she hates Trots. The left in the Labour Party generally arouse her to a passion of fury. She keeps repeating, 'I saw them at work in the student movement.'

She is also motivated by a fixed but muddled belief that what she is doing is advancing feminism, quoting *Beyond the Fragments* in defence of her actions. *The Leveller* pointed out that we were at the fragments conference and we



"Excuse me, we've just discovered The Poor. Would you like to say a few words to the listeners and viewers at home?"

didn't hear the cry to rally behind Labour's right wing, but she is undeterred. Friends say she thinks that a strong centre party will change the centre of gravity of British politics, marginalise Thatcherism and the ultra-right and prepare the way for the ultimate triumph of socialism. Pressed she will admit that the centre party in itself isn't a solution, but argues that it will bring in proportional representation and that that is the way forward for socialism.

Perhaps she might stop refighting NUS battles of a decade ago and stop prostituting her past reputation as an activist for the benefit of Rogers and Owen and their merchant banker backers and try battling alongside and listening to the school cleaners and hospital porters she is paid to defend.

Diane Abbott

Manchester gays take to streets

HUNDREDS of people are expected in Manchester for the February 28 demonstration against state repression of lesbian and gay people. Chief Constable James — 'We are inundated with complaints from the public' — Anderton has been running a campaign of harassment against gays for years.

Anderton has already closed down a gay sauna, prosecuted a club for allowing 'licentious dancing' and has a policy of using police officers as agents provocateurs in importuning gay men in toilets. Now he will have the first-ever nationally-called gay demonstration outside London to deal with. Manchester has a strong gay movement and the organisers are hoping that the mobilisation will not only bring in activists from outside; for coaches will be going up from London (*Gay's the Word* at 8am) — but will also bring out some of the less politically active gays.

One angry bus-load will be coming over from Huddersfield, where recent police action against the Gemini Club has set off a storm of anger from the city's gay community. Police are opposing the renewal of the club's licence after a raid a month ago which, they claim, allows them to accuse the owner of allowing 'gross indecency' on his premises.

The demonstration, which is

being supported by a huge list of groups including the NUS, CHE, National Gay Federation (Ireland), SWP, IMG and CP, will set off from Mancunian Way at 1 p.m. and march through town to Piccadilly, ending up with a rally at UMIST. The London end is being mobilised by a group around the paper *Gay Noise* which, sadly, has just changed frequency from fortnightly to monthly.

One of the organisers, Paul Fairweather told *The Leveller* that the march was not just against the police side of state repression: 'It's in the home, the streets, the prisons, the hospitals.'

Welcome home!

LAST JULY British-born Jan Krosnar defected from Czechoslovakia with his wife and two children. Travelling by way of Yugoslavia on Czech papers, he went to the British Embassy in Vienna to ask for a British passport. There he was advised to travel on to Britain, where the situation would be clarified.

Having arrived in this country he stayed with an uncle in Maidenhead — the town where he was born — and applied to the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead for housing under the 1977 Homeless Persons Act. His uncle's house has two bedrooms and a converted box room in the attic. Mr and Mrs Krosnar are currently sleeping in a three foot wide bed in the attic, the two children are sharing one bedroom, while the uncle and his wife are in the other bedroom. A prime case of housing need, you might think.

But that isn't the view of the Royal Borough. Just before Christmas the Housing Manager wrote to the Krosnars to inform them that the Housing and Health Sub-Committee had come to the Kafkaesque decision that:

a) You are threatened with homelessness.

b) You have a priority need.

c) Your threatened homelessness is deemed to be intentional in that on your own admission you gave up adequate accommodation in Czechoslovakia and came to Maidenhead without having ensured that you had adequate accommodation.

Crocodile tears coursing down his cheeks, Housing Manager P.R. Allkins goes on to say that he

'regrets' that he can't offer the Krosnars any Council-owned accommodation, suggesting that they might try an accommodation agency instead.

Meanwhile his uncle is wondering whether he has to take out a court order to evict the family, the children can't get any schooling because they haven't got an address, and the DHSS has offered the family just £16 a week towards the rental of accommodation in the heart of the Tory property-owning belt. Welcome home, Mr. Krosnar.

Youth against the nazis

AN ENCOURAGINGLY broad cross section of youth groups have signed up as sponsors of the forthcoming Youth Against the Nazis conference, set for February 28 at London's Conway Hall. Organised by the Anti Nazi League, sponsors include the National Union of School Students, the National Organisation of Labour Students, the Socialist Student Alliance (IMG) and the Union of Jewish Students. It is the first time that such a wide spread of youth groups has supported such a conference, indicative of the concern felt at the success of fascist groups in their recent upsurge of youth work.

The YCL, the LPYS and NOLS all told *The Leveller* that they would be attending because of their worries about British Movement recruiting in schools and amongst young people generally. The National Union of Students said that there had been an increase in racist attack in colleges, particularly in the Further Education sector where colleges are not so isolated from the community as many university campuses.

The ANL is advertising that there will be 'celebrity speakers' at the conference — as yet unnamed, these are thought to include footballers and representatives of the sponsoring organisations. But hopefully the youth at the conference will not allow the speakers to dominate. The 28th will provide an important opportunity for activists from the main youth groups engaged in fighting fascism to thrash out a common strategy and come up with an agreed programme of action. Too many 'celebrity speakers' will simply get in the way of the main business of the day.



Leonard Burt, head of the original Countryman enquiry.

During 1979 two high-level meetings took place between police chiefs and senior civil servants. They will set the tone of policing and detective work in Britain for the next decade. The two meetings marked the high and low points in a major enquiry into police corruption in the Metropolitan police and the City of London force. The story of the way in which Operation Countryman has been spiked is a major political scandal.

How the CID 'old firm' nobbled Countryman

Mr Hambleton comes to town...

On June 18 1979 Chief Constable Arthur Hambleton of Dorset police came to London for an important meeting at New Scotland Yard. In his briefcase was a six-page memorandum prepared by his Assistant Chief Constable Leonard Burt, operational head of the most far-reaching enquiry since the early 1970s into corruption in the Metropolitan and City police forces. The memorandum listed a total of 78 detectives against whom allegations of various kinds of corruption had been made during the previous year. Present at that meeting with Hambleton and Burt were Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner Peter Kavanagh and Deputy Commissioner Bright of the City of London police, Assistant Commissioner (Crime) Gilbert Kelland of the Met and Detective Chief Superintendent Whitby of Dorset police, Burt's second-in-command.

Hambleton, Burt and Whitby had come to request that the Countryman team, which by that date had grown to a total of 40 officers from provincial forces in Dorset, Avon and Somerset, South Wales and Sussex, should be doubled in strength. The list the Countryman team had assembled since it was set up on September 19 1978 contained allegations against the names of:

- Four commanders CID (3 Met, 1 City of London)
- Five Detective Chief Superintendents (3 Met, 2 City)
- Seven Detective Superintendents (6 Met, 1 City)
- Eleven Detective Chief Inspectors (8 Met, 3 City)
- Nine Detective Inspectors (7 Met, 2 City)
- Thirty Detective Sergeants (27 Met, 3 City)
- Twelve Detective Constables (6 Met, 6 City)

That is - against 8% of Scotland Yard's CID and something like 4% of the capital's total detective force.

Hambleton got what he came for: the number of officers working on Countryman went up to 90, calling on reinforcements from the Gloucestershire and Northants forces. It was the high point of the Countryman investigation. But within a fortnight the tide began to turn. Stories began to appear in the press about Countryman's 'incompetence' and 'inefficiency', its rising cost and the amount of time it was taking to complete its enquiries, the number of officers it was keeping from normal police duty and the demoralisation it was causing amongst Met detectives awaiting the outcome of its investigation. John Weeks, 'Scotland Yard correspondent' of the *Daily Telegraph*, was one of the first to sound a critical note on July 9:

... Many London officers are of the opinion that the Countryman team have not sufficient evidence for prosecution purposes and are now concerned to find possible offences under the police disciplinary code...



And Back To Grass

Only six months later, on December 7 1979, Hambleton was back in town alone. This time he met Deputy Commissioner Kavanagh, Deputy Commissioner Bright, Thomas Hetherington, Director of Public Prosecutions and his deputy Kenneth Dowling. The meeting was not a happy one. Stories from the previously tight-lipped Countryman team had emerged in the press in previous weeks, suggesting that their enquiries were being obstructed by Met officers and the DPP's office.

Frustration in the team had come to a head during the autumn. They knew the press whispering campaign against them was unfair, but were unable to answer back. Met detectives they were interviewing were proving less than helpful, and to make things more difficult, the DPP's office had criticised the way

Countryman reports on individual cases were being prepared. On several occasions there had been acrimonious correspondence between Hambleton and Kenneth Dowling at the DPP's office. In particular, Burt wanted a guarantee of immunity from prosecution for Countryman's underworld informants. The DPP refused to consider this, and the issue became a major sticking-point. So too did the DPP's insistence on the '51% rule' - his guideline for deciding on criminal prosecutions only in cases where there is a 51% chance of juries convicting. In the case of police officers, in effect, by noting that juries demanded a higher standard of proof than in ordinary criminal cases in order to convict.

The political climate had changed since that first meeting. The new Tory government elected in May had come in on a 'law and order' platform, promising to increase police pay and improve conditions. Home Secretary William Whitelaw must have already seen the issue at stake with Countryman - certainly he had been reminded of it on taking office by a former senior police officer with wide experience of corruption enquiries. The credibility of the Met and the police complaints system were on trial.

In June, the Home Office, as the Met's ultimate ruling body, had been prepared to allow Hambleton and Burt the go-ahead for a speedy conclusion to their enquiries. That was essential if the Met were to be seen rooting out 'rotten apples'. But from Countryman's point of view the seriousness and diversity of the allegations they were investigating, to say nothing of the number of senior ranks involved, made it imperative that they should be as meticulous as possible. And that took time.

By December time was running out on them. They were under increasing pressure to complete their job. It was results that

counted, and at that time a total of eight Met and City officers had been suspended from duty. Only one, Detective Chief Inspector Philip Cuthbert of the City of London force, had appeared in court - and that briefly, on a holding charge of 'handling a hi-fi music-centre, an infra-red light, an ultra-violet light, a portable TV, a radio-clock, an electric blanket, eleven containers of toothpaste, razor-blades and nine packets of toilet paper' knowing them to be stolen. Not the sort of earth-shattering charges that might have been expected.

When Hambleton arrived at New Scotland Yard on December 7 he was presented with a statement for publication, drafted by Scotland Yard, emphasising that Countryman had had 'total co-operation' from both the Met and the DPP. Hambleton refused to sign at first but, under pressure, finally agreed. He was due to resign in three months; perhaps at the back of his mind he feared losing a police pension or even a knighthood. It was put to him that Countryman might have greater success if a DPP man was permanently attached to the team in an advisory capacity. Again Hambleton agreed.

He telephoned Burt and read him the text of the statement. Burt refused to sign, at least until he saw it. Hambleton drove down to Burt's Dorset home that same evening. Exactly what pressure Hambleton put on Burt is uncertain - perhaps a repeat of the treatment Hambleton himself had got at the Yard, for Burt could look to retire as a chief constable in the course of time. Whatever passed between the two men, Burt signed the statement. From that point onwards, the days of Countryman were numbered.



• The City of London Robberies
What had started out as a straightforward investigation had gathered momentum and broadened out.

Three callous bandits
gun down a guard in
£200,000 pay snatch

MURDER AT THE MIRROR

The Daily Mirror report following the robbery on May 31 1978

How the CID 'old firm' nobbled Countryman

Burt's original brief was to investigate corruption allegations centring on three robberies in the City. In one of these robberies a man was killed. So Countryman were also investigating the background to a murder.

On May 3 1976 the *Daily Express* was robbed of £175,000 in a wages snatch. The following year, on September 28, Williams & Glyn Bank at Birch Lane in the City was robbed of £500,000 and a Securicor guard was shot in the legs. Then on May 31 1978 another City payroll robbery, this time at the *Daily Mirror* building, ended with £200,000 missing and security guard Tony Castro shot dead.

This last robbery - and the murder of Tony Castro - led to an immediate internal police enquiry. Within weeks this initial enquiry received allegations of police involvement in the robberies. Detectives on Regional Crime Squad No. 5, based out of London in Hertfordshire, heard from one of their 'supergrass' informants that not just City CID but also the Met Robbery Squad were implicated. Home Secretary Merlyn Rees was disturbed enough at such allegations to approve a full scale enquiry with a senior provincial officer in charge. The choice fell to Len Burt of Dorset.

Burt had an honourable, but relatively unexceptional track-record. Traditionally the Yard has always looked down on provincial forces as 'swedes', 'wallies' and 'woodentops' who have no idea what it's like to police the big city.

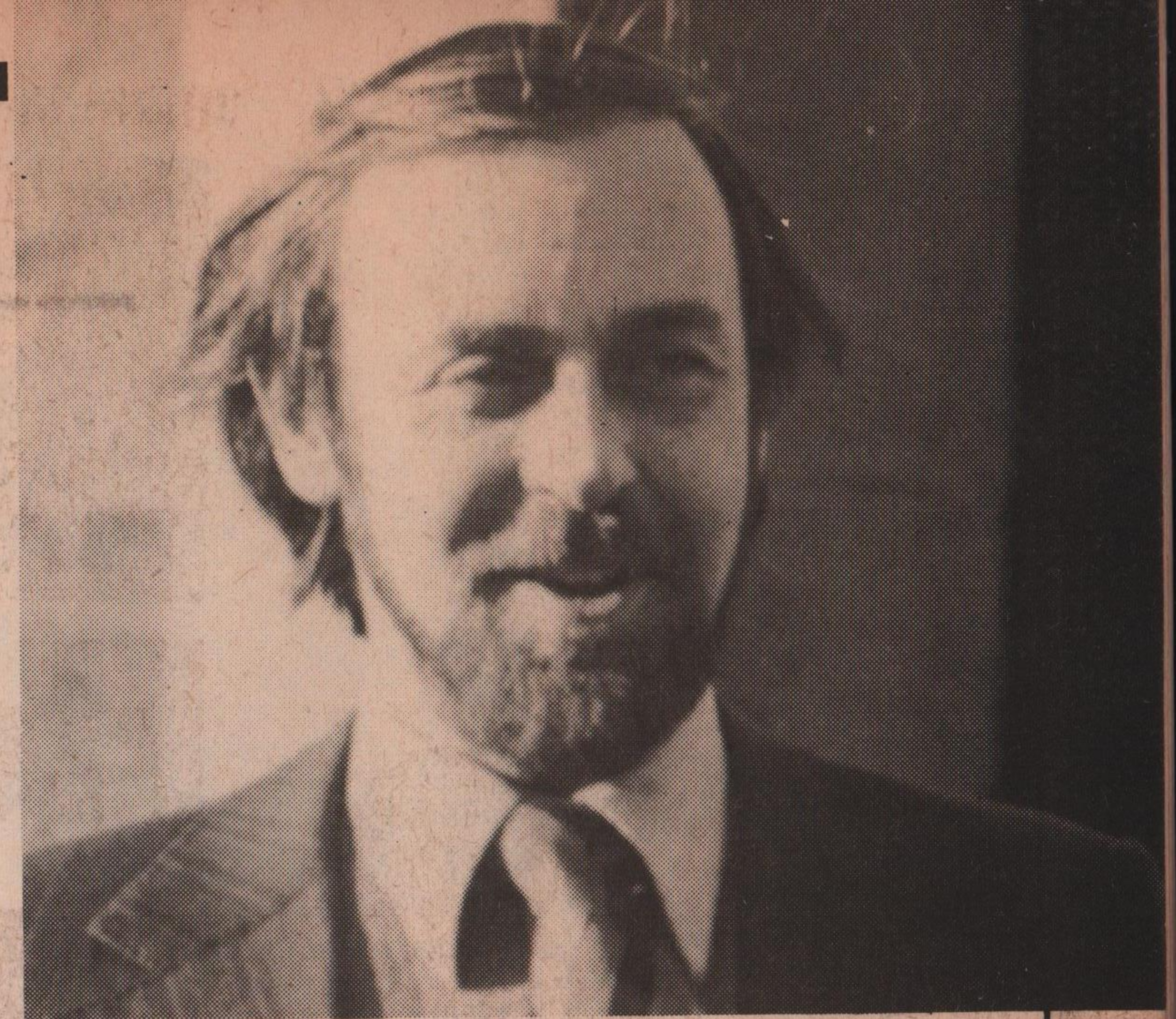
If there was to be an enquiry, what better than to appoint as head of it a man who could easily be discredited as a simple country boy who didn't know the ropes? There were several other provincial assistant chief constables who could have been selected on detective experience in preference to Burt. These men were passed over. Burt was aware of his position from the start. He

accepted the 'Countryman' tag in good grace and set out to prove the Met wrong. But his enquiry had been set up to be knocked as 'The Swede' from the start.

Under the Police Act 1964 Burt was bound to report all the allegations he received to Deputy Commissioners Kavanagh and Bright. Kavanagh was bound in his turn to hand this information on to the Yard's Complaints Investigation Bureau (CIB-2) - the successor to 'A10', the department Robert Mark had established to help clean up the 'firm within a firm' in the early 1970s. It was also standard police practice that the enquiry should be based on Met territory. From September 1978 Burt and his team were given premises in a terrapin building behind Camberwell police station in South London. Each evening when they clocked off the keys to it were handed over to the local station sergeant.

There were immediate problems of confidentiality and security. The position at Camberwell was hopeless and by the beginning of 1979 Burt had insisted on moving to the block of converted police flats in Godalming, on Surrey Constabulary territory, which has served ever since as the Countryman team's headquarters. Even then there were two break-ins at the office of City Chief Constable Peter Marshall.

The problem of confidentiality was harder to deal with and threatened to sink Countryman at the outset. Regional Crime Squad No. 5 had established a certain amount of trust with its supergrasses, and it was from them that the initial breakthrough in the City robberies investigation had come. But other London villains in custody were reluctant to trust Countryman while it was still based in the Met area. They were convinced that CIB-2 was leaky. In their experience any allegations they made would get straight back to the officers concerned and that would only mean more harassment for them



Detective Chief Inspector Philip Cuthbert of City of London CID.

Yet the small Countryman team persevered. Gradually, potential informants were persuaded to talk. On November 7 1978 Detective Chief Inspector Cuthbert became the first officer to be suspended as a result of Countryman enquiries. Shortly afterwards Detective Inspector James Jolly and two other low-ranking City officers were also suspended. The Countryman team now consisted of twenty senior provincial detectives.

They had deliberately not courted publicity, but in mid-November, a senior officer confirmed that: 'Our enquiries are now including the Metropolitan police as well as the City of London. There is a definite link in the allegations and these concern a number of officers of all ranks'. Burt issued a statement which summed up the position: 'Information had been received from people currently serving sentences. A lot of allegations have been made but we are keeping our feet firmly planted on the ground. These are early days yet and we are still evaluating information. I envisage that this will be a long enquiry lasting months rather than weeks and possibly taking up to a year to conclude.'



• Feed It All Into The Computer
Once Countryman was based in Godalming more information began to come their way. Word was out that they were to be trusted. A computer was installed to process and correlate the bewildering amounts of factual and circumstantial material. Allegations covered a period of six years. The City robberies were only part of a wider picture, but the network of police corruption sketched out was far worse than the kickbacks and protection money of Wally Virgo's Porn Squad, or the plantings, set-ups and fit-ups of the Kelaher era in the Drug Squad. Now, if Country-

man's information was reliable, London detectives were helping to plan robberies like the ones at the *Daily Express*, Williams & Glyn and the *Daily Mirror*. And some top men were involved.

It was said that the 'Bishopsgate Board', a group of City of London detectives, were involved in trade directory and 'long firm' fraud and receiving stolen property. One former London villain alleges that he acted as a go-between for the gangs who performed the robberies and the detectives who helped to plan them. He claims to have taken detectives their cut of the 'take' and handed over to them for disposal the shotguns used in the jobs. It has even been suggested that one detective superintendent arranged a traffic diversion at the time of the *Mirror* raid to help the gang get in and out, then protested to the press that this was a cold-blooded killing and the gang must be caught at all cost.

Nor did the allegations end there. Senior and middle ranking Met detectives are said to have taken cuts in robberies from Heathrow, the Bank of America robbery, the Banstead 'chainsaw robbery'. One informant told of an alleged 'auction' of the proceeds from part of the massive Bank of America haul, held by a detective chief inspector in the basement of Paddington Green police station. Another alleged involvement of a commander in a deal to export the antiques owned by the Scott-Elliott family at their Kensington home, after they had been murdered by 'butler' Archibald Hall. The same officer was alleged to have taken large amounts of money throughout his career for arranging bail, having charges dropped, withdrawing evidence. Certain named officers were said to be involved in suppressing evidence in the Darke gangland murder trial and the 'Torso murder' case.

All the allegations mentioned police receiving large sums of money. One former detective

Jeremy Nicholl

continued next page

continued

chief superintendent is reputed to be in Miami living off the £20,000 proceeds of one robbery. There were more claims of fit-ups and bribe-taking at lower levels in the detective ranks. It could be objected that taking such evidence from people, who in many cases were villains already in custody, was leaving Countryman open to manipulation – by those with scores to settle against the police, or those who hoped to gain remission or even immunity in return for their information. But the use of ‘supergrasses’ had already become standard Met practice, in clearing up some of London’s major robberies. And would the Home Office consider spending around £2m following up a series of malicious and baseless charges for the sake of bolstering police credibility? Certainly both Hambleton and Burt took the allegations seriously on their merits and the Countryman team backed them.



Leonard Burt: eased out of Countryman.

• The Met Moves In

The Yard published the statement signed by Hambleton and Burt and backed it with the full force of its publicity machinery. Within a month, in a speech on January 8 1980, Metropolitan Commissioner David McNee defended the Yard against obstruction and corruption charges in his Dallas Lecture in Glasgow. The general line on police corruption was changed: where before it was the odd ‘rotten apple’ who could be removed, now McNee and others advanced the theory that ‘as long as we live in a corrupt society there will be corrupt police officers’.

At the same time, Countryman was being outflanked. On January 10 one of the detectives on Countryman’s list, Superintendent John Keane, appeared at the Old Bailey on corruption charges unconnected to Countryman itself. Put on January 19 Detective Constables Michael Ross and Paul Rextrew of the Met were arrested, with two civilians, and taken to Godalming to be charged. Two days later they appeared at Bow Street magistrates court and were remanded on bail for ‘corruptly accepting £1,500 from James Stevens and the same amount from Thomas Green on two dates in November 1977’. Their case had come to the attention of Countryman some time after their enquiries had begun and had no direct connection to the City robberies.

On January 22 Detective Sergeant Brian O’Leary and Detective Constable Roy Leavers of the Met were arrested. The same day a joint statement from Met Deputy Commissioner Kavanagh and City of London Commissioner Peter Marshall announced that Peter Matthews, chief constable of Surrey, had been appointed ‘adviser’ to the Countryman team. Matthews had seen long service in the Met

before he became chief constable. The following day O’Leary and Leavers appeared at Bow Street magistrates court on a charge which arose out of the City robberies: ‘stealing £14,790 belonging to the Receiver of the Metropolitan police, conspiring to pervert the course of justice by arranging for Leonard Roberts to make a false statement under caution, and theft or suppression of material evidence’.

Arthur Hambleton was due to retire at the end of February. His successor, Peter Owen, another former Met officer, had already been appointed. On February 23 it was announced that Burt was to be ‘temporarily withdrawn’ from Countryman at Owen’s request, to help out on the Dorset force. Two days later Detective Chief Inspector Cuthbert was due to appear once again at Hatfield magistrates court. The DPP had already called for a ‘background report’ on his case from Countryman. Now, to the fury of Countryman officers, Michael Chance, the DPP man, attached to Countryman, told the court that he was not preferring any charges because the evidence against Cuthbert was ‘quite insufficient’. Several Countryman officers were on the point of resigning over this development. The next day the Attorney General Michael Havers, in a reply to a parliamentary question, assured the House that neither the DPP nor Yard officers were blocking Operation Countryman.

On the day he retired, March 5, Hambleton gave an interview to BBC Radio ‘World At One’ in which he returned to the theme of obstruction and the kind of allegations Countryman had been investigating. Middle and lower ranks in the Met had not, he said, been ‘very helpful’; allegations of corruption had been made against about 80 officers in the Met CID ‘up to, but not including the rank of Deputy Assistant Commissioner’ (i.e. to Commander rank). Of these he thought 20-25 would eventually be charged. Almost immediately David McNee and Commissioner Marshall of the City put out a joint statement

‘regretting Mr Hambleton’s comments’.

Within two days it was announced that the DPP had rejected four Countryman reports recommending prosecution of six more Met detectives, including Detective Chief Inspector John O’Connor of the Robbery Squad, who had been suspended as far back as January 11 1979 on suspicion of handling stolen goods. Countryman was openly criticised for the way O’Connor’s case had been handled and he was reinstated. The following day Home Secretary Whitelaw appeared on Westward TV denying that there had been any cover-up of police corruption. The following week Scotland Yard stated that Operation Countryman was to narrow its enquiries down to cover its original City robberies brief. All other evidence would be forwarded to CIB-2 for further investigation.

The manoeuvres were over. It was endgame time. Attorney General Michael Havers, interviewed on BBC radio, assured his audience that there would be no fit-ups for Countryman’s past informants and reminded them that there was a direct line to the DPP’s office for channeling any further allegations of misconduct and corruption against the police. In the background, talks continued between McNee, Marshall, Hetherington and Havers over the way Countryman should proceed. On April 12 eight civilians – six men and two women were detained in the London area and held for questioning at Godalming. The following weekend, in a series of dawn raids in London, more civilian arrests were made and on April 24 Frederick Skipp and Montague Fitzmaurice were charged with ‘incitement to rob’ at Newham magistrates court. A few days afterwards Scotland Yard announced the reinstatement of Detective Chief Inspector Marsden and Detective Sergeant Martin of CIB-2, who had been put on uniform work while an allegation against them (of not pursuing a complaint enquiry vigorously enough) was investigated. The allegation had not been substantiated

Two days later, on May 1 1980 Deputy Assistant Commissioner Ron Steventon of New Scotland Yard took over as operational head of Countryman, with Detective Chief Superintendent Dracott of the Yard’s Serious Crime Squad as his deputy. The Yard now had total control of Countryman. The team began to be wound down until only a small number of officers remained. The City robberies were re-examined and some of the Countryman allegations began to be reprocessed.

On May 10 Raymond Morgan, Edward Watch and Stanley Hall were charged at a Guildford police station with incitement to rob. The net appeared to be closing on some possible suspects. But at the same time Hambleton, now in retirement, found himself the subject of an external police enquiry, conducted by Kenneth Brownlow, Assistant Chief Constable of South Yorkshire. A number of ‘irregularities’ were looked into. It is only usual for an external enquiry of this nature to be set up if serious criminal offences are suspected. If this was an attempt to discredit Hambleton or to punish him for speaking out as he had the day he retired, then it failed in the end, for no charges resulted from the Brownlow enquiry.

• The Outcome

In all, eight civilians have been charged by Countryman. Eleven detectives have been suspended and most have been charged. Detective Inspector James Jolly, one of the first to be suspended, comes up at the Old Bailey on April 27 this year, while in June Detective Constables Michael Ross and Paul Rextrew are due for trial. Ross’s brother John, a detective sergeant, is also under suspension.

On December 19 last year three more Met officers were suspended: Detective Inspector Babidge, Detective Sergeant Russell and Detective Constable Watts. There is still no suggestion that Countryman, for all its best efforts, solved the City robberies, though Attorney General Havers did state in a Parliamentary reply last July that reports on another eleven City of London officers had gone from Countryman to the DPP. None of those involved was higher than Detective Inspector rank.

And yet, a major investigation by Regional Crime Squad No.5, run from Reading and under the command of Detective Chief Superintendent Tony Hill and codenamed ‘Operation Carter’, has come up with information from its team of supergrasses that could solve the City robberies. Hill’s team is said to have high-grade intelligence against a number of villains. It also has similar information against Met and City officers.

Roger Allen

Special 20-page supplement

Where've we got to?

THE FIVE YEARS of *The Leveller* aren't significant in themselves, but they have seen a radical change of political direction in Britain: the turning back by Thatcher of the creeping centrist consensus has been the greatest trauma since 1945. It might be that the Tories will start back towards the centre again for the next election, or the Labour Party might even get something coherent together to fight them. But what no-one can contest is that the left has shown itself virtually incapable of mounting any resistance. Socialism, liberation, revolution, are meaningless if no-one wants to listen to their message.

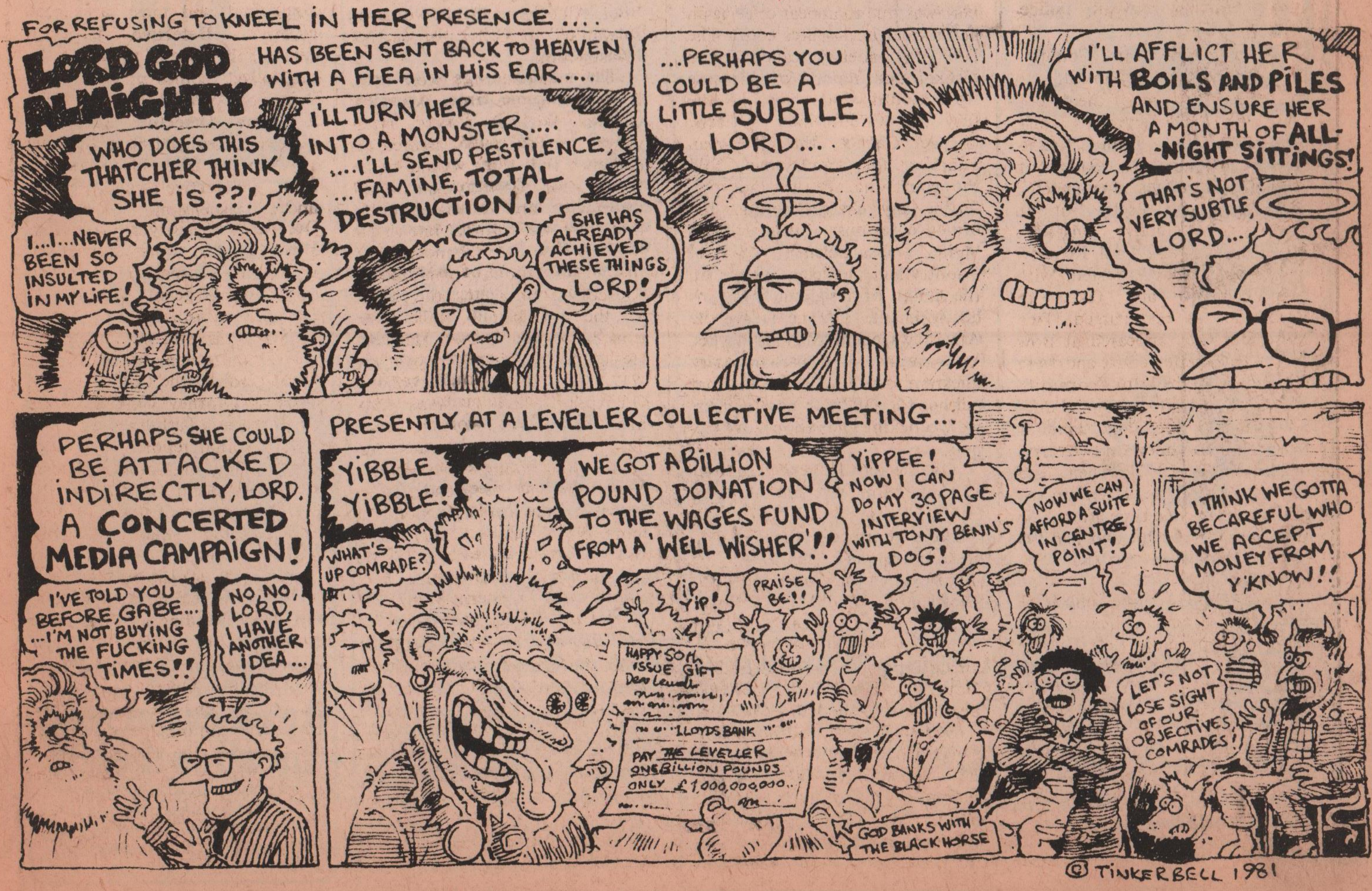
Over the next 20 pages *Leveller* contributors analyse some of the most telling developments of these last five years. It's not a complete picture: lack of space has forced us to drop several articles – for the record, on black resistance to racist attacks; the Labour left and the union rank and file; the resurgence of chauvinistic racism; and the state of the left.

We've also been unable to cover most of the rest of the world. You could hardly 'sum it up' anyway. But we've got an account of the reality of what's been claimed as one

of the greatest 'gains' of recent years – the Iranian revolution, and what's building up for the next: the risings of Central America.

We start with one of the growth areas of resistance in Britain (and elsewhere): women organising to fight male violence. Followed by:

- An analysis of what has really happened to the economy under Thatcher;
- A Labour stalwart's celebration of changes in the party; The constant fight to defend a woman's right to choose; An account of the direction of the gay left; Revolutions in the Caribbean; and Iran;
- Nationalist politics in the British Isles: what's happened in Scotland and Wales; and assessment of the politics of the Provisional IRA;
- The rise and fall of the punk movement; The growth of socialist feminism; Feminist directions in the cinema and fringe theatre;
- A survey of the growth of the alternative press; and, finally, a brief, very straight, account of the history of *The Leveller* itself.



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DURING THE 1970s, it sometimes looked as if nationalism would become a dominant and domestic problem for the British left. In Ireland, republican nationalists once again challenged the basis of British power in Ulster. In both Wales and Scotland nationalist movements won substantial support, to the point where a Labour government was forced, in a period of mounting economic crisis, to waste most of its energies on futile devolution schemes. And in England itself there was a distinct change in the ideological climate, enough to suggest that questions once seen as alien might soon come home to roost.

On the far right small groups sought avidly to foster a white-skin chauvinism, with slightly more success as economic conditions deteriorated. Resentment against the Common Market grew uninterrupted and fuelled a much more widespread form of isolationist sentiment. This Little-Britain posture — always implicit in imperialist decay — had at last found the ideal scapegoat. Everything from elm-disease to industrial collapse became the fault of Europe. In their Empire days the English had adopted a sort of genteel racism, rather than nationalism in the ordinary sense. But now, surely, a small, rancorous, ordinary nation was coming into being here also. And yet at the beginning of the 1980s these trends have not triumphed. Stalemate persists in Northern Ireland. Welsh and Scottish nationalism have receded, after the referendum and election in 1979. The most plausible leader of renaissance English nationalism, Enoch Powell, failed utterly to reshape the old political order and sought a hopeless refuge in Ulster loyalism. The two-party

Nationalism - a from the class

system returned, dominated by a Conservative Party devoted to weirdly abstract economic and social ideas. Class warfare has been its motive impulse, rather than direct national redemption. A more frankly nationalist economic policy — withdrawal from the EEC, import control, state-managed re-industrialization — has become the property of the Labour left. But this left looks like being excluded from power for a long time.

Consequently, many on the left have fallen back into a certain disdain for nationalism. And they are fortified in this position by developments outside the British Isles. Up until the mid-seventies most radicals stuck to guarded approval of minority and Third-World national movements, on the assumption that nationalism meant 'national liberation'. Since then things have changed. In two important areas of the world newly 'liberated' peoples have plunged into war with one another. In China the greatest of 20th century new states discarded all revolutionary pretensions and turned on a freshly-liberated neighbour. The revelation of what Cambodian national renewal had meant gave a farther stunning shock to the old assumptions. At the end of the decade a tremendous upheaval in Iran —

something the international left had looked forward eagerly to for a generation — at once donned the reactionary garb of Muslim clericalism and aggravated the oppression of its minority peoples. Soon it too was at war with a neighbour. At the same time the USSR occupied Afghanistan, arousing a national resistance movement with which, to say the least of it, left-wingers have found it difficult to identify.

It is hardly surprising in this new climate that socialists have suffered some disenchantment about nationalism. Their fears are increased by the world recession. If we are indeed in a 'long wave' of contraction there are bound to be more political repercussions, probably of the same dire sort. These may not be confined to the Third World.

For such reasons, distrust of nationalism today is sometimes amplified to the point of phobia. The positive belief which benefits from this tendency is, of course, old-style internationalism. It has won new ideological appeal, as the only safe haven in a tempest of unexpected and perilous developments. In the United Kingdom it entails indifference or even opposition to the national movements mentioned earlier, justified by the traditional precept that class is — in some near-absolute sense — more

retreat struggle

important than nation. At the world level it simplifies judgement by, (for example, suggesting that in Afghanistan the occupying power at least stands for a few universal progressive values, as against pure religious-national barbarism.

The shift of opinion is understandable, in a psychological sense. But I believe this is another reason why sociologists ought to suspect it and defend themselves against it. It may be true that they have often 'painted nationalism red' without sufficient reason. However, there is no way out, or forward, in painting it black and resorting to tranquilisers. On the contrary, this is a retreat which wins ideological security at the cost of political impotence, or worse.

In Britain the new internationalism discounts what happened in the 1970s as some kind of illusion followed, after 1979, by a sobering return to the fold of class. The truth is the opposite. The last decade saw the onset of a disintegration on both national and class lines, from which a brief and delusive respite has been gained. We are still in this strange interlude. But it will not last long. When it ends the factors of nationality — used or misused — are likely to count for more than the class struggle.

It is the world recession which has provided the principal shaping force to British, as to other, politics of the past two years. This has dealt further deadly blows to an already wasting industrial structure and — through unemployment — limited and tamed working-class reaction. However, the precise form of the slump's political impact has been fixed by two other forces as well, both quite peculiar to Britain.

The first is North Sea oil, whose rapid exploitation furnished a vital cushion against the depression. Nothing could divert the industrial disaster. But oil revenues distanced the British state sufficiently from these effects to permit the surreal interregnum of 'Thatcherism'. The link between the North Sea rigs and the trance-world of Downing Street was given by the characteristic overall bent of the UK economy. It is, of course, a system in which the industrial or productive sector is in any case relatively subordinate. Hence 'disaster' here is in the short term perfectly tolerable, even welcome in some respects, as long as the prosperity of the dominant financial stratum is secured. It has been secured as never before by the petroleum bounty and the consequent soaring exchange rate.

It is quite true that the overt nationalist ideologies of the SNP and Plaid Cymru suffered a sharp rebuff at the election which carried Mrs Thatcher into office. But in those two countries the old manufacturing sector is predominant. So therefore is the electorate's dread of the slump, and further deindustrialisation. They were panicked back into support for Callaghan's bankruptcy-court 'socialism', the unlikely but only stay on the road to execution. However, the underlying fissures of ex-



Edward Bricault

perience and expectation which had generated separatism in the first place were not healed by such a swing. They were forced open.

For England, in its majority, moved in the other direction. While some industrial regions stuck by Labour, the new southern heartland opted firmly for the Conservatives. That is, a crucial sector of its proletariat voted not simply for Toryism — which had long been true — but for Chicago-School crackpottery, the banker's solution to everything which has ever gone wrong with human history. It was only conceivable in the City-ridden, south-east oriented British economy, during the last moment when its parasitism was shielded from the reality of breakdown, and when — having lost most of its marbles — the ruling class found itself in the same taxi as Sir Keith Joseph.

A perfect recipe for phoney counter-revolution, in short. There was too great eagerness to see class conflict, raw and uplifting, emerge from this primarily ideological exercise. A radical polarisation of forces was imagined under the hammer blows of the most reactionary government since ... etc, etc. This is not to deny that things are bad, and worsening, for most people. It is quite possible they are measurably more

awful than they would have been had Healey and Callaghan remained in power. None the less, Mrs Thatcher's monetarist ashram is not really the Iron Heel. Indeed — as the *Financial Times* constantly complains — her spirit-raisers have not yet learned to play properly with their chief fetish-object, the money-supply.

'Polarisation' would have produced a desertion of the centre ground, and a more revolutionary-minded left regroupment. There has been some shift leftwards, fortunately. But the most striking response is the constitution of a new Social-Democrat-Liberal centre, now plainly manoeuvring — with increasing establishment support — to take over once Thatcherism becomes too much of an embarrassment. Using some radical ideas to form a new ideological consensus, this apparently new force will then tackle the old, inescapable problem of a disintegrating imperialist economy. As oil credits diminish later in the decade, it is more likely than the current regime to try a genuine counter-revolution (stealing what it needs to do so from the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' worked out by the left).

However the present interlude is concluded, the trends of the 1970s will resume

continued on next page

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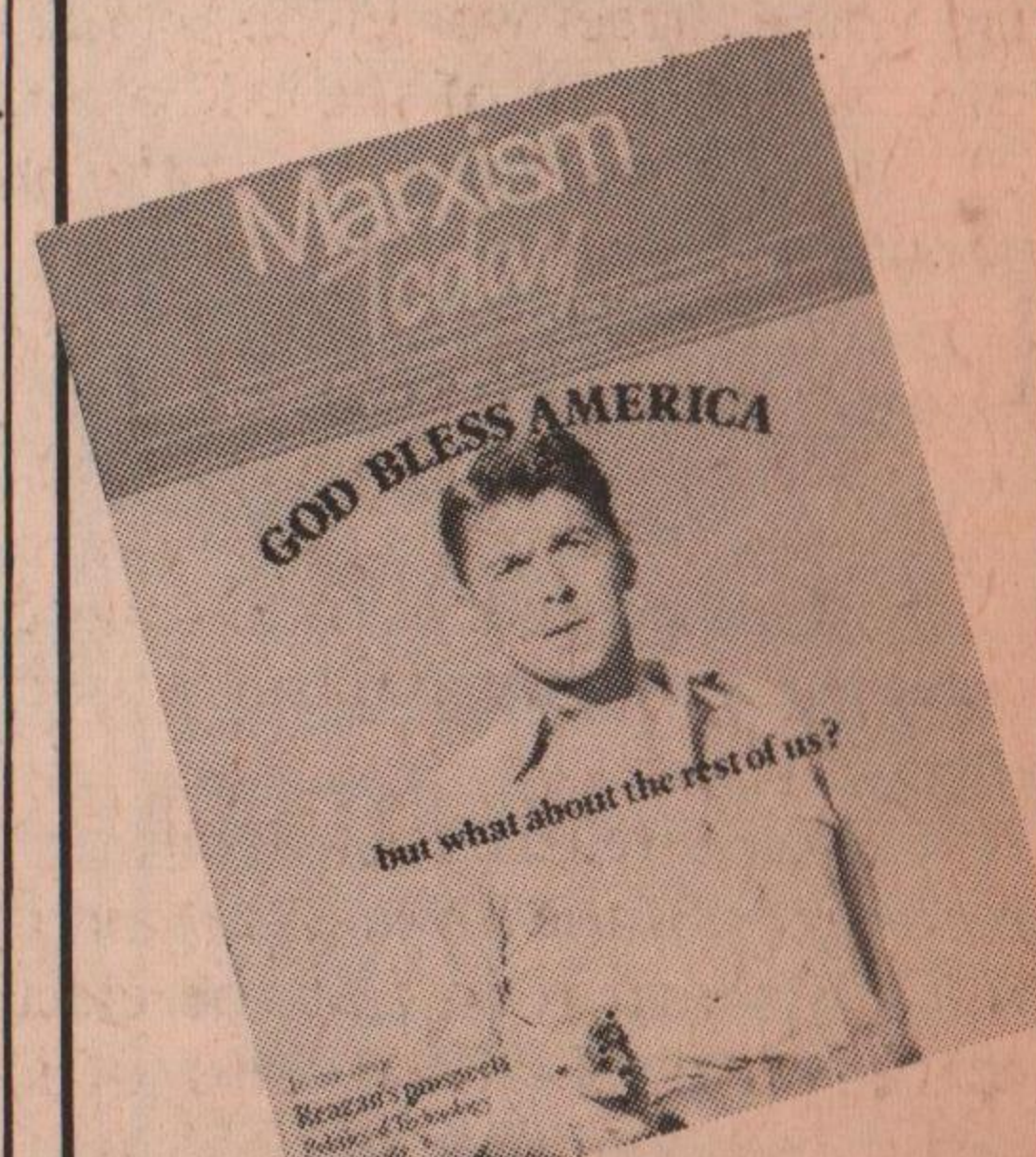
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The end of the Keynesian consensus

FOR 30 years Britain's post-war policy combined four basic elements — liberal democracy, state collectivism, strong independent trade unions and an entrenched private capitalist sector. Since 1975 this unstable compound has begun to split apart. The Conservative government is actively organising the dissolution.

It would be wrong to see the Tories' strategy as a doctrinaire attempt to put into practice an unproven economic theory, or as a simple class reflex action — protecting the wealthy and privileged against the strivings of the oppressed. It is a coherent and novel response to the strains within the system.

Britain's liberal democracy contains a tradition of pluralism and civil freedoms deeply implanted by past struggles; the use of violence and repression by the state against popular organisations, though not altogether precluded, has been heavily circumscribed. And there is scope for organised interest groups, both progressive and reactionary, to press for state action to satisfy their demands.

So state collectivism is a consequence.

continued from previous page

and intensify. Scottish and Welsh separatism will revive and exploit a more fertile terrain. Withdrawal from Northern Ireland will leave behind it an embattled Protestantism, most probably in the form of an independent or semi-independent state. In England itself a new variety of 'National Government' will remain permanently in power, as a flexible coalition permanently pursuing the national interest, and resorting ever more loudly to desperate patriotism. Forced away from access to power by the restructuring of politics, socialism will become a more distinctly opposition force — but probably more cohesive and aggressive, at the same time. It will also be more nationalist in outlook, whatever happens to the Common Market.

On the world stage too, pure-souled internationalism provides a wholly inadequate reading of what is going on, and of likely developments in the 1980s. It claims in essence that what has happened — in Indochina and the Horn of Africa, in Iran, Afghanistan, and other parts of the Middle East — is a betrayal of what ought to have happened. National liberation has not been liberating enough. It has not carried peoples and states at once on to a plane of universal emancipation, but has left them stuck in 'selfish' or hereditary concerns. Thus, the most revolutionary of decades may only be contemplated with distaste, bordering on despair.

But an alternative interpretation is possible, surely. A period of upheavals has demonstrated, more conclusively than ever before, the real limits and structures of contemporary revolution. This may be sobering, but should not provoke ideological misery — not, that is, unless there was something seriously wrong with the old

Its response to a steadily growing workers' movement was determined by the Second World War, which presented an opportunity for a class alliance under the twin banners of Keynesianism and social democracy. The state assumed three major new responsibilities: to manage the economy, with the priorities for avoiding slumps and maintaining high employment; to operate welfare institutions to protect citizens from the hazards of free enterprise capitalism; and to maintain an efficient economic infrastructure through national public corporations.

The British trade union movement is almost unrivalled in its organisational strength and power to influence government policy. More than 70% of the labour force in large manufacturing companies and the public sector is unionised, and although unions are weaker in private services, their membership rose throughout the 1971. In many sectors shop stewards have acquired considerable bargaining rights and control at workplace level. Until the legislation of the 1970s unions operated within a liberal

theories. A difficult reassessment is in order. But, for all its moral grandeur, internationalism may be an obstacle to that.

All actual revolts involve an ever-deeper mobilization of the existing forces locked in inherited social formations. These are inevitably in large part 'backward-looking' — the national, ethnic or religious deposit of one peculiar social trajectory, suddenly called upon to nourish a violent and conscious forward leap. The latter is impossible without them, as most historians would always have recognised. However, what the new revolutionary wave has emphasised is that essential importance and durability of such factors. Socialist revolutions may become, at least for a time — and in some proportion to their success — more nationalist, or even more religious and warlike. There is no instant way to transcend these things. If revolutions do not become for a time their prisoner, they fail altogether.

The new decade was ushered in by the revolt of the Polish working class against its Russian-model state. However, this tremendous popular movement has not shaken the whole Eastern bloc 'in spite of' its devotion to a Polish Pope and its unashamed nationalism. Without them, the class conflict would have found no sustainable form. Protest would have been easily fragmented and beaten down. They are, so to speak, the body of the revolution rather than (as many accounts have argued) merely its clothes.

More nuanced judgements, inspiring less left-wing panic, could also be made about some other cases referred to above. However upsetting, recent trends in China and Cambodia were not the by-products of successful popular upheavals. Both Chinese 'modernisation' and the assassinatory national-socialism of Pol Pot were linked to commandist 'revolutions from above',

system of law: they received little protection, but they were little constrained either. And their links with a national party capable of government helped both to shape the agenda of British politics and to insert working class priorities into the functioning of the economy.

In uneasy co-existence with the others is the private sector. Despite the extension of statism, capitalist enterprise reigned virtually unchallenged in manufacturing, distribution, construction, agri-business, banking, insurance and financial services. Although they were happy to accept state handouts, and were successful as operators in Whitehall, capitalists remained wary of the state, for with the strength of labour in the liberal regime, its power might be used to curb their economic prerogatives. And as the other forces grew in weight, private capitalism's viability and ideological resilience were weakened.

The average rate of profit of industrial and commercial companies (before tax, dividend and interest payments, but after deductions for stock appreciation and the

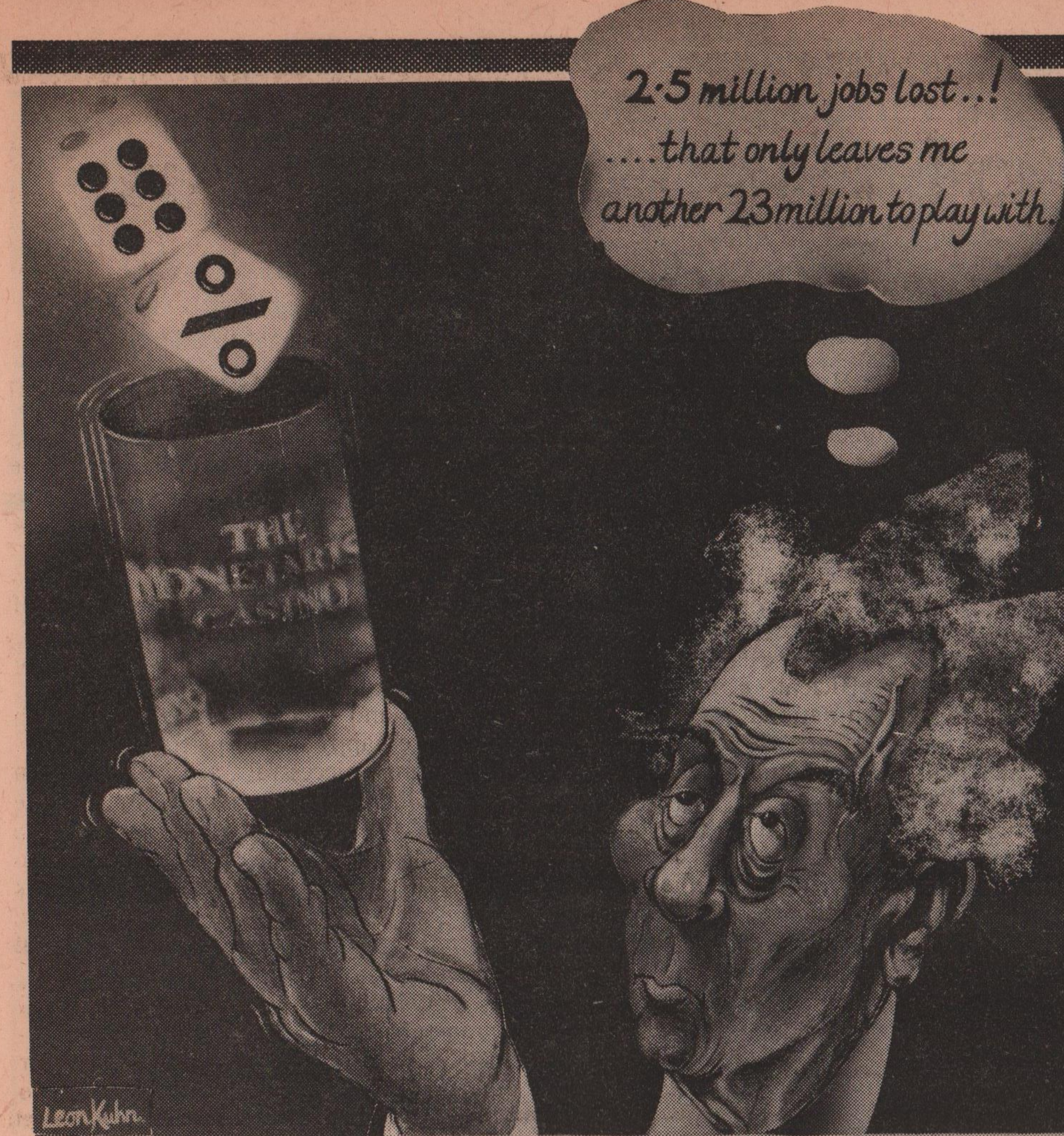
wilful and grisly failures deriving not from nationalism but from 'gangs' in positions of exceptional power. As for the Iranian revolution, pessimism is both unjust to what it has achieved and, more important, premature in relation to a movement which has far from run its course.

In Afghanistan, the extremity of the dilemma — great-power colonisation versus irreconcilably feudal resistance — should make one hesitate, rather than lapse into the kind of sapless support offered by Labour MP Ron Brown and others to the Russians. It is unfortunate — but also almost unique in the contemporary world — that no lay, democratic, national-popular movement exists to focus opposition to the occupiers. However, this too is a situation which may endure and develop for a very long time. And can there be any doubt from which side such a movement will evolve? Or that it will be a modernising nationalism, fiercely anti-Soviet and probably still religious in cast?

Both in our own affairs and in theorising the way of the world we ought — in conclusion — to be more realistic about nationalism. This is not to advocate 'surrender' to whatever forms of atavism are thrown up by social disruption. On the contrary, surrender is what happens to a left which first exorcises the phenomenon as unthinkable and then, when the ground moves under its feet, plunges into frantic opportunism or foreign-hating in order to catch up.

The national is inevitable. As Wilhelm Reich observed half a century ago, studying the advent of Hitlerism, the right won by occupying this terrain and making it its own; and that was only possible because the left, on its class-internationalist axis, had previously spurned it as unworthy or irrelevant.

Tom Nairn



CRAPS IN WHITEHALL

depreciation of fixed assets) fell by half over the 1960s and by nearly half again over the 1970s, to end the decade at about 6% (only 2% in manufacturing). And since the Thatcher government it can no longer be taken for granted that when a major company faces big losses or bankruptcy the state will sort out the mess.

Various processes have caused alarm and dismay among the supporters of the liberal economic order. A regime of 'permanent' full employment clearly removes the reserve army of unemployed as a regulator of the labour market. Workers became much less tractable, setting obstacles to capitalist innovation and expansion and depriving the national economy of an automatic discipline on wage bargaining and pricing decisions. As long as employers remained confident that the state would sustain their markets through fiscal and monetary policy, companies could concede cost-raising pay settlements and preserve profit margins by hoisting prices. So arose the endemic wage-price spiral — sometimes turning faster, sometimes more slowly, according to such factors as import prices, exchange rates or changes in tax rates.

The natural instrument to contain inflation and its associated social conflict was incomes policy. But from the standpoint of free enterprise, direct regulation of pay and prices is a dangerous game. Where democracy prevails and unions are strong, such policies cannot be imposed: they have to be negotiated. Governments are driven into corporate bargaining, swapping concessions in other areas of economic and social policy to win labour's consent to pay restraint. These concessions generally involve more state intervention — price con-

trols, subsidies, industrial strategies and the rest. And the mere demonstration that state power can be used to resolve one set of problems stimulates the appetite for more from other sections of society, including capitalist enterprises.

Faced with these trends, economic liberals were bound to question whether the post-war polity should continue to be accepted. The problem was to find the means and the opportunity to dispose of it. They could hardly overturn liberal democracy even if they wanted to which, unlike General Pinochet, they did not. Similarly, despite a militant anti-union rhetoric, direct confrontation with the trade union movement appeared a risky option after the experience of the Heath government.

That left the agencies of state collectivism as the weakest link in the chain shackling free enterprise. The state institutions which in 1945 had been popularly perceived as benevolent, thirty years later were experienced by most ordinary citizens as an alien, and even hostile, apparatus dominated by highly educated professionals, who enjoyed wielding power and used it to build empires and defend vested interests.

Discontent with the bureaucratic and centralist features of statism merged with popular fright at the unprecedented acceleration of inflation in 1975. The whole economic and social system was widely felt to be dangerously unstable and in need of strong government to re-impose discipline. Monetarism, from being a minor and eccentric economic theory, grew in a few years into a major political force.

A regime of monetary targets limits the growth of state spending to what either the

public will pay for in taxes or the government can borrow from financial institutions. It insulates government from pressure for state action (and spending). The onward march of statism is checked. After a painful transition period during which the public had to be weaned off from the old order, a climate is created more congenial to private capitalism.

The state disclaims its responsibilities for avoiding slumps and high unemployment and the way is cleared for the classical labour market regulator to re-appear, though with something less than its classical effectiveness, owing to rearguard resistance by the unions and the meagre protection of the social security system.

At the same time, the rejection of incomes policies removes any need to negotiate with the unions. They can be ousted from their junior partnership in government. And the general ideological onslaught against the evils of statism (hitherto grudgingly tolerated by the right) re-opens issues thought to have been settled long ago, and saps the political appeal of the labour movement.

So far the labour movement's response to this strategy has contained three strands.

It has seized on the technical difficulties of monetary and exchange rate management and ridiculed the attempt to hit a fixed target for public sector borrowing at a time when the slump is reducing tax revenues and swelling social security payments. For while tight monetary policies and public spending cuts may force down the rate of inflation, they do nothing to stimulate the revival in demand needed for a recovery in output.

The second response has been massive and justified outrage at what stands as the steepest rise in registered unemployment since 1920.

The third has been to give notice of intention to take up the unfinished business of 1945, though the Alternative Economic Strategy, a package of interlocking policies for industry, finance and overseas trade to permit and re-inforce a programme for recovery based on a large expansion of public investment. The intention and effect of the AES would be to subordinate private capitalism in Britain under an extended system of centralised state control.

But the basic difficulty of the AES has been played down. If monetarism gained political ascendancy through popular discontent with statism, how is a programme which relies on state collectivism as its guiding principle to make political headway?

This is easier to state than resolve, in part due to the inhibitions we all face in adjusting our habits of thought to changes in social reality. But it is also because any advanced and complex industrial society requires its state to perform certain co-ordination and regulation; and there is a genuine problem in balancing this need against the claims of individual liberty and of popular democracy and accountability.

It has become urgent for the left to find a new answer to this conundrum. The prospects both for counter-attacking the new economic liberals and for going beyond the mere re-arrangement of the old order depend upon it.

David Purdy

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Limping with Michael

WHO five years ago would have predicted, or *did* predict, that Michael Foot would become leader of the Labour Party? Even six months ago it was generally assumed that the crown would pass from Callaghan to Healey by hereditary right. The election would be a formality. Clearly something has changed. The Blackpool conference changed it.

Tony Benn, who is supposed to have masterminded the Left's victories, was speaking to a large and enthusiastic meeting in Sheffield only days before the conference. Not only did he give no hint of expecting to win at Blackpool: he clearly expected to lose. His message was of the 'fight and fight again/it's a long haul, comrades,' variety.

Blackpool led to Healey's defeat. It led, too, to the Wembley conference, and to the latest spate of defections on the Right fringe of the party. Times are stirring.

The real question, however, is: have we been here before? The Labour Party, with all its faults, is not a uniformly complacent body, and it is quite normal for electoral defeat to be followed by a bout of stormy self-criticism and some rather unsteady lurching towards the Left. This is exactly what happened ten years ago, after the shock defeat of 1970. The sins of the Wilson Government were generally condemned, and a radical programme was devised, designed to achieve 'a fundamental shift of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families'. And the Party made its opposition to EEC entry abundantly clear.

It would be an exaggeration to say that all this rhetorical firebreathing had *no* effect on what happened after Labour returned to office in 1974. There was the Common Market Referendum. And there were strenuous attempts to rebuild bridges with the trade unions.

But by and large the Wilson-Callaghan Governments of 1974-9 carried on in much the same style and pattern as the Wilson Governments of the late Sixties. The sound and fury of the years in opposition, 1970-4, turned out to have signified very little.

Are things so very different this time round? The Party fulminates against cuts in public spending, against monetarism and against unemployment, but in all three respects it was Labour which paved the way for the Tories. The Labour Government of 1966 was the first since the War to use unemployment as a weapon of economic management. It pushed the figure above half a million and kept it there. In the Seventies Labour pushed the figure above a million, and kept it there, more or less. Denis Healey denounces the 'punk monetarism' for which his own crypto-monetarism had supplied the precedent. And it was Labour which, at the behest of the IMF, launched the first major assault on public spending and the social services just five years ago, in 1976.

The steady flow of right-wing defectors over the past few years - Reg Prentice, Paul Johnson, Hugh Thomas, John Vaizey, et al - all say, along with the Gang of Three, that Labour has now



moved too far Left to be acceptable. But where's the solid evidence? They cite conference policy decisions - for nuclear disarmament, for EEC withdrawal, and so on. But they can hardly be so naive as to suppose that the next Labour government will adhere rigidly, or even flexibly, to such radical commitments. It has never happened before. Why should it happen now?

The real significance of the changes that are now taking place in the Labour Party is that the question can no longer be wholly rhetorical. The organisational changes agreed on at Blackpool last year signify an attempt by the Left to shift the balance of power in the Party - the first such attempt it has ever made. It has at last, and belatedly, woken up to the fact that passing resolutions at Annual Conferences is NOT ENOUGH. If they are to have any chance of becoming policy, the Party as a whole has got to increase its power over MPs and the leadership. This is what mandatory re-selection, and the electoral college, are designed to do.

This shift in power, even if it is successful, will not necessarily make Labour a more Left-wing or radical party. That will depend on the future political complexion of the trade unions and the constituency parties. But it does make a substantial change in the character of Labour possible, for the first time in its 80-year life. That is why the rightists and old-time Gaitskellites are getting out. And that is why the period since the 1979 Election is not simply an action replay of earlier Leftist lurches like Bevanism in the 1950s, but an unprecedented and so far quite effective challenge to the traditional domination of the Westminster-careerist right.
Anthony Arblaster

Gays ahead

IN THE heady days of the Gay Liberation Front gay militants offered the first major challenge to the dominant images of homosexuality - dykes and faggots fighting back, zapping, parading, screaming, having fun, refusing to kowtow under the weight of normality. While that uncompromising passion and anger was lost over the years, GLF caused rapid changes in gay people themselves and in surrounding straight society. In turn this produced myriads of organisations, groups, discos, movies, books and journals. Gay people came out in their thousands, and their sub-culture came out too. London might not boast the flamboyant ghettos of New York and San Francisco, but there is an identifiable gay presence there and in most British cities.

Inevitably, that expansion and diversification have dissolved the obvious single and coherent identity it once had. Politically and in other ways, the gay movement and the gay subculture are fragmented and composed of different and often antagonistic groupings. GLF ideology was always makeshift, relying as much on fervour of belief as on cohesiveness and intellectual rigor to convince. Its timely collapse in 1972 left vacant the space for the gay organisation and theory, empty to this day. No single account of sexual oppression exists, nor any single programme or strategy of action. Attempts to induct large numbers of gay people into the revolutionary parties and to give single direction to the plethora of movement groups have all failed. Only attacks by the State have produced anything like that unity, and that only in opposition. Perhaps this betrays the false homogeneity that underlay the category 'homosexual'. A heteronomous category in the first place, 'homosexuality' has dissolved into the self-defined interests and practices of an indeterminate population.

These things have bedevilled gay politics since GLF, and have exercised socialists more than most. The seemingly necessary link between gay oppression and capitalism began to look at least superficially, untenable. The revolution failed to happen, and gender roles seemed more durable than had been supposed. The voluntarism that marked GLF was replaced at least in some quarters by a suspension of rhetoric and more attempts at understanding.

This process of analysis has accelerated over the last five years, in the debates and campaigns of the gay movement and in the writings of gay socialists, especially *Gay Left*. From an attempt to fit sexual oppression into pre-existing marxist categories, gay socialists are now trying to use the insights of gay people and feminists developed in their own struggles, as tools to dismantle the rigid theoretical and practical apparatus of the left. From there, hopefully, we can move to new forms of resistance and transformation.

These new moves have come under fierce scrutiny and critical flak from more orthodox currents in the left. Part of the battle may now be won, as Trotskyists, Communists and even Labourites take up

gay rights. But that piecemeal absorption of demands for gay rights is no substitute for a thorough restructuring of the politics of the personal, the politics of the subject.

Traditionally marxists have seen gay oppression as a spin off of the oppression of women. Radical feminists have argued similarly, though seeing gender as the primary contradiction. Questioning these models leads to a consideration of how we acquire sexual identities, how our desires are constructed, organised and reinforced through ideology. The targets for intervention and domination are more numerous and the changing vectors of power and opposition more complex. And liberation becomes a process of flux rather than sharp breaks.

The growth of the cult of masculinity amongst gay men, the use of drugs, and the casual promiscuity of the scene look like symptoms of some self-oppressive malaise, stemming from a pure vision of uncomplicated liberation. Sado-masochism, amongst

gay men and lesbians, is riddled with ironies, play, and incongruity as well as anxiety, power and violence. It raises all the questions of how you move from one orchestration of desire to one more free, more... Like gay pornography or cross-age sex it raises the spectre of the illicit and the castigated, demanding close attention and analysis, not elitist or moralising invective.

The questions that have arisen about sexual categorisation, and the tyrannical hold it has, have led some to argue against struggling on the terrain of sexuality at all.

So the debates go on: how sexuality is constructed, how to live our lives both within and beyond those categories. This is the substance of sexual politics. But the autonomous movements also aim for a society in which those definitions are politically irrelevant, where sex is not an apparatus of power. How we achieve that, yet at the same time act in the interests of other exploited and oppressed groups, is still in question. There is no immediate and

automatic unity amongst the oppressed, nor is there a hidden logic in history moving to produce it. Alliances, blocs and common fronts have to be built and made to cohere. They can always fall apart.

Sexual politics has thrown another wrench into the simple understanding of a complex oppressive society: questioning our core identities, our most intimate sense of being and satisfaction. The last five years of gay politics have undermined simple certainties of self, identity and organisation; and for the better.

True, our present fragmentation and uncertainty leaves us weak in the face of a powerful ruling bloc, in command of a strong state apparatus, even if riddled with its own contradictions. But the questions feminism and gay politics have raised are not academic but are to do with our vision of worthwhile practice and a better future.

Do we want to win the State and lose our socialism?

Philip Derbyshire

NAC - No losses, no gains

ABORTION. FIVE years ago the word was still taboo in many circles. It conjured up images of illicit sex, profiteering doctors, furtiveness and distress. In a few short years, the word has been stripped of its ugly connotations and put on display. It has been uttered publicly, and without emotion, on platforms up and down the country. It has been scrawled on banners and placards and paraded up and down the streets of every city in the country.

In terms of political organisation and mobilisation, the fight against restrictive legislation has been the most successful mass campaign of recent years and the National Abortion Campaign can claim the credit for most of the success. Launched in 1975, within weeks of the announcement that a restrictive Bill had passed its second reading in Parliament, NAC has shown that an open, loosely federated structure is capable of combining efficiency with real democracy. Autonomous local groups have made their own contacts with trade unions, the medical profession and other organisations and operated without central directives, linking together nationally for mass events such as rallies and demonstrations. For those people who believe that organisation is dependent on a Chairman, central committee and LEADERSHIP, working with NAC has been an education.

Indeed the fact that an essentially feminist organisation, which has no parallel structures with which to liaise with trade unions has managed to draw them into such close cooperation is a massive step forward. It is a pity that the TUC itself proved to be hidebound to acknowledge that it owed to NAC in mobilising for the 1979 demonstration against the Corrie Bill.

But in spite of these real political achievements, the sad truth is that we failed to win anything for women over those years. All the energy poured into campaigning served only to prevent even greater inroads into women's fertility rights, and, while we won the major battles, we lost some minor ones. Five years later, women are in fact worse off.

Mobilising people against a specific threat has proved a great deal easier than organising for more positive changes. The abortion organisations are themselves partly to blame for this. Internal battles about the importance or otherwise of a 'no time limits' policy set potential allies at each others' throats and alienated support from less politically conscious groups. At no time did NAC produce a coherent policy for positive legislation around which the other organisations could rally.

A limited Bill relaxing restrictions during the first three months would have been winnable. It would certainly have gained massive public support and it would have cleared the way for the establishment of clinics performing menstrual aspiration in the first month of pregnancy. (A facility which would be heartily welcomed by women but which, under the present restrictive laws, creates such bureaucratic difficulties that few doctors have dared attempt it.) Although there was within NAC the will to support limited legislation, internal debates about correct theory provided an insurmountable obstacle to NAC launching such a campaign itself. No other organisation had the political credibility to do so. While activists argued, health service facilities were dwindling and women were sitting through unnecessary weeks of waiting for terminations.

So after six years of political experience NAC is back where it always finds itself between restrictive Bills — in a downturn with very little money and a big sense of frustration. But this time there is a difference. Activists are now acknowledging that, however much you sanitise it by public display, abortion is still ugly, it is still a deeply emotional subject. Open discussion may have burned off much of the guilt surrounding it but the fact remains that for most women, abortion is still very much a last resort, carried out in conditions which are often humiliating, usually time-consuming and inconvenient. Perhaps this year, NAC will be able to take stock of its victories, consolidate its support and inject



the personal back not only into its own politics but back into the organisations which support it.

Angela Phillips

Uncle Sam's Backyard

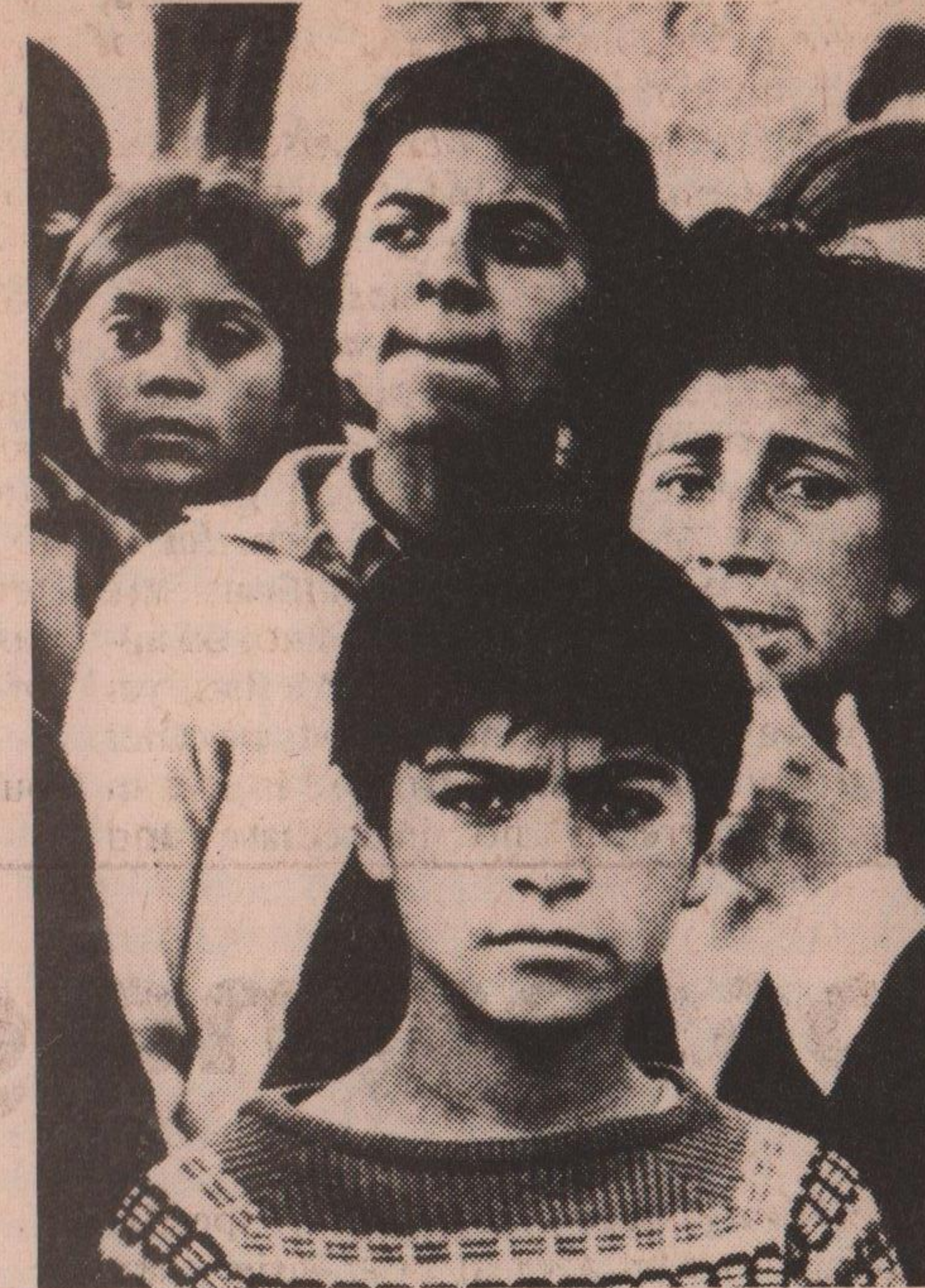
EVERY THREE years the countries of the Caribbean celebrate a cultural extravaganza called 'carifesta'. Designed as a counter-offensive against the cultural aggression of the United States, and to rotate among the participating states, it alternates in a way which gives the various linguistic groups in the region equal representation.

It was last staged in Cuba, in 1979. The one before happened in Jamaica in 1976. That occasion saw an event which, although scarcely reported outside the region, marked a new political direction. By way of underlining the anti-imperialist intent of 'carifesta', five of the world's most uncompromising rebels (Toussaint L'Ouverture, Simon Bolivar, Benito Juarez, Jose Marti, and Marcus Garvey) were proclaimed heroes of the Caribbean.

On the surface this whole carifesta affair looks entertainingly innocent. But behind the song and dance new political and economic links are being forged, aimed at smashing age-old barriers erected between the peoples of the region by their colonial history. One such link is SELA (Latin American Economic System) established in 1975. It embraces 25 mainland and island states, and has the special distinction of being the first such body to emerge in the Americas with a statutory embargo on any formal US involvement.

Today the struggle against cultural assimilation has been strengthened by the triumph of the socialist-aimed revolutions in Somozist Nicaragua in western Caribbean and in Grenada to the east. Although 'Caribbean watchers' could find no evidence of Cuban involvement in either country, pro-imperialist forces played the Cuban card successfully in several elections held in the Anglophone sector during 1980. Four left-leaning or socialist oriented parties suffered defeat largely through public susceptibility to anti-communist antics whipped up in an irrational environment created by crude war mongering.

Although most people know about Jamaica's election results, not much has been heard in the West about resistance from the left. France and the USA are now facing the most resolute opposition yet to their policies by which they seek to absorb



politically and culturally their colonial possessions in the Caribbean. France camouflages her holdings (Martinique, Guadeloupe and Cayenne) as Overseas Départments. According to the USA, Puerto Rico is a Free Associated State slated to be incorporated as the '51st state', while the US Virgin Islands are a colony plain and simply. But the people of these colonies have other ideas. During 1980 no less than 12 bomb blasts went off in the French sector (one exploding during a visit of President Giscard d'Estaing), hinting that it is time for France to quit, or at least, like the British and Dutch, to show willingness to leave. As for President Ronald Reagan, he got a clear suggestion to do likewise on the eve of his inauguration.

In the early hours of Monday January 12 he was treated to a big boom created by a skilfully-planned bombing raid which destroyed nine US jet fighters at the Muniz Air National Guard Base next to Puerto Rico's Isla Verde international airport.

Responsibility for the raid was claimed by two groups of liberationists. The action, they said, was a blow against colonialism in

their own country and a riposte to deepening US intervention in the El Salvadorean liberation war. Juan Mari Bras, general secretary of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party lost no time in giving the operation his endorsement, stressing the right of people to fight for their national freedom. And in their general elections last year November 4 (for governor and congress) the voters frustrated plans for a new initiative — annex Puerto Rico as the 51st state. A plebiscite on the question was announced for this year. The first stage of the scheme was to re-elect pro-statehood governor, Carlos Romero Barcelo. With the full backing of the US he was looking for a landslide victory.

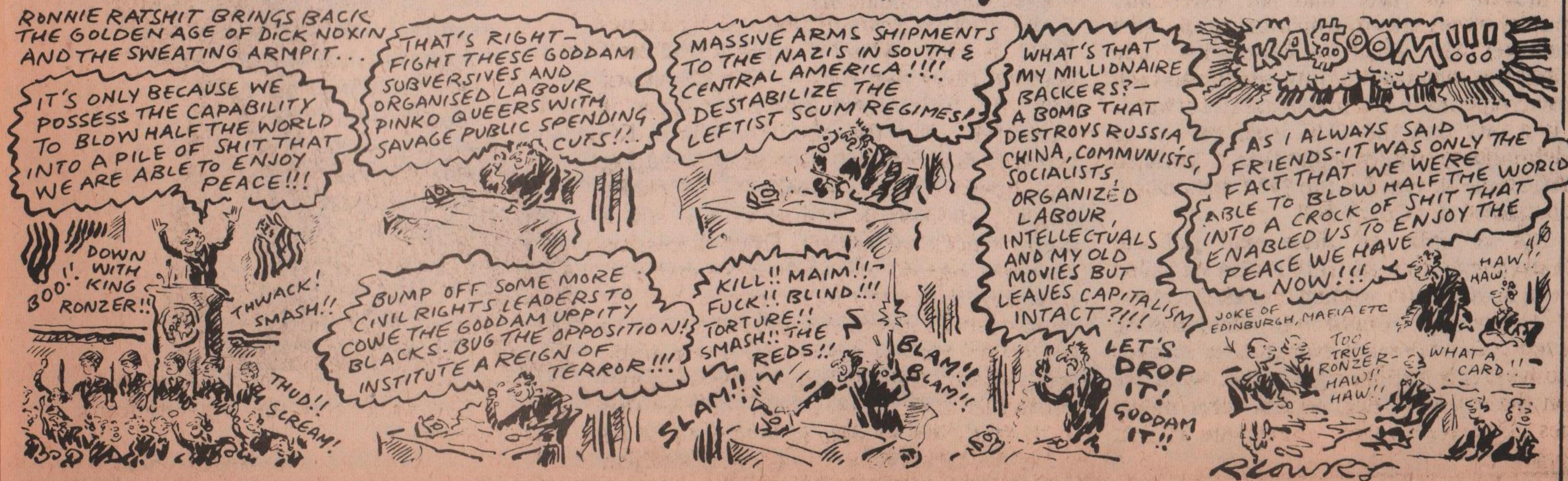
In the end it took several re-counts to declare him victor on December 20 by a mere 3,500 votes over his nearest rival, Rafael Hernandez Colon whose PDP (Popular Democratic Party) controls the senate. There is now a legal deadlock in the house of representatives, where the PDP and Romero's NPP (New Progressive Party) won 25 seats each with one seat in dispute. The consequence is that the islands legislature is out of action and governor Romero has abandoned the planned referendum on the question of statehood.

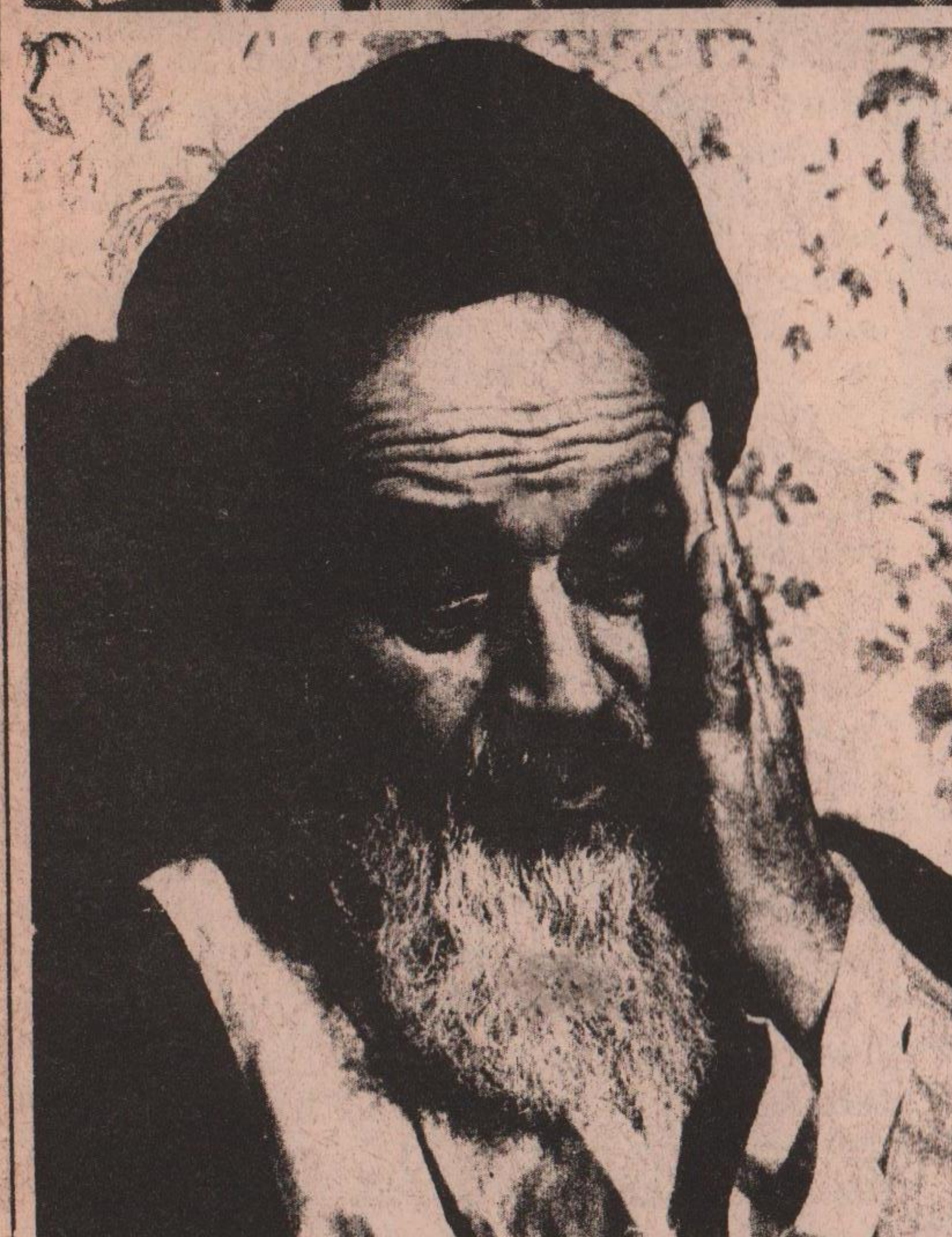
The Americans came to Puerto Rico as friends in 1898 after the war of liberation against Spain, but they stayed as conquerors. The island's independentistas (liberationists) have always wanted them out. In 1973 they finally won the support of the UN General Assembly formally characterised Puerto Rico as a colony from which the US should disentangle itself.

That, of course, did not make British or other Western headlines. Nor did the 1980 statement of protest by the CPRI (Committee for Puerto Rican Independence) against the participation of British ships of the Royal Navy in the US-organised Operation Springboard (Readex — 180), a military exercise in the Caribbean manoeuvred from Puerto Rico. But a lack of publicity in the West isn't going to put an end to attacks on most policy options designed by the USA to continue its grip on Puerto Rico, and its influence in the Caribbean.

Ken Campbell

HOW THE WEST WAS RON.





IT WAS an unusual revolution to say the least. Its financiers were merchants of the bazaar; its shock troops were the urban middle classes, the industrial working class and the suburban poor — both men and women, but the women clad wholly in black except for the outstretched, clenched fist. The goals were mixed, but essentially backward-looking, combining antique religious beliefs and modern anti-imperialism and primarily offering inward, spiritual well-being as an alternative to the pre-revolutionary materialism.

Strangest of all the revolutionary leader that emerged, Ayatollah (now Imam) Khomeiny. A clergyman by profession, long in exile, yet he displayed a remarkable ability to assess and manipulate events from a Paris base. His use of cassette tapes and the bazaar network to prepare the way for his triumphal return has assured him legendary status, and even the bulk of the revolutionary left hold him in the highest reverence, although they too played a crucial role in the Shah's downfall.

But what has become of this revolution, now that Iran is free of the Shah, the landed aristocracy and the tens of thousands of western advisers and businessmen? Most of the social forces that made the revolution possible have gained little or nothing. Women in particular have suffered one setback after another. The revolutionary left, despite growing rapidly in the first year of the revolution, is now in a state of disarray. Workers are finding the gains won all too fragile as unemployment hits more than one in four and Khomeiny learns a few bourgeois tricks. The Kurds are still at war with the Iranian army, just as they were under the Shah. And bazaar merchants, too, are finding the going difficult, even going on strike in late 1980.

In some ways, the revolution that began by delivering a massive kick on the teeth of imperialism, is surviving by doing the same to Iran's more progressive forces. Yet there are signs a-plenty that the new regime is on its last legs, with the war against Iraq being the crippling blow, by virtue of its effect on the economy and the strength it gives to the military.

First warning signs

EVEN BEFORE the Shah's overthrow, socialists and feminists around the world expressed their anxiety about a regime dominated by the Iranian clergy. Somehow, though, no one quite believed they could take power for themselves, and certainly not consolidate it. After all, they were a backward, religious sect, not an organised political force.

It was women who first had to take the clerical regime seriously, almost as soon as Khomeiny had taken power. In a spontaneous reaction to Khomeiny's demand that women must wear the long black veil, the *chador*, thousands of women protested their right to wear what they chose. They won a temporary victory, only to stand helplessly by as gays and prostitutes were executed.

The left, too, had its warnings, when the clergy tried to deny the role of the guerrilla organisations in the revolution and to close their offices and their papers. But at the time the left was growing fast, especially in the shape of the two main ex-guerrilla

Iran's unusual revolution

organisations, the Mujahedeen and the Fedayeen. It thought it could hold its own.

What's more, the country was alive with promising struggles and movements. Fishermen on the Caspian Sea organised a fishermen's and peasants' soviet to protect their livelihood, and a few peasant soviets emerged further East in Turkomanshahr. Workers' councils, already emerging under the Shah, sprang up in countless factories and other workplaces, many espousing the Islamic cause, others more socialistically inclined. It didn't seem such a great problem at that time that the peasant soviets were smashed by Islamic guards, or that the oil workers' organisations, so crucial to the Shah's downfall, became all but subservient to Khomeiny's wishes.

A confusing period, the first few months. Women marched in their thousands, and in many cities, on International Women's Day, but had to face the taunts and provocations of Islamic guards and women supporters of Khomeiny. Their conference had to be held by candlelight when the electricity supply was cut off by male electricians.

Traders fought for the right to sell music on the streets (there was none on the radio). Dancing and singing were officially frowned upon. The bazaar merchants revelled in their new power over Iran's wholesale trade, now that their massive financial support for the clergy had paid off with the withdrawal or nationalisation of most of the western multinationals. And Islamic fanatics found themselves in managerial posts in every sort of business, many of them (like the new head of Iranair) having to be replaced shortly after for their incompetence, others vying for control with the workers' committees.

Fundamentalists Resurgent

THE TAKING of the American hostages in October 1979 (originally to secure the return of the Shah for trial, later the return of his wealth), was important in many ways. It inspired a new wave of support for the nationalist, religious fundamentalists in the regime; at the same time it confirmed the extent to which their obsession with things spiritual and ideological extended to national and international politics.

The fundamentalists appear in some ways to hold committed revolutionary and anti-imperialist politics. They were quite clear about how imperialism was dominating Iran via multinationals, military advisers and forms of cultural imperialism. They helped to ensure that, within six months of the revolution, most of the links with the US (though not Germany and Japan) were broken. And they clearly identified Iran's revolution with the historic struggles of the Vietnamese, the Chileans, Zimbabweans and Algerians.

But their genuine opposition to im-

perialism is based on an Islamic notion that the goal of every individual is unity with God, and Imperialism was simply seen to threaten this above anything else. The social basis of Islam, the petty trade, craftsman and peasant, had lost most through the growing influence of multinationals and the imperialist land reforms, and had the greatest hopes in the clergy.

But as the clergy had nothing to offer, except spiritual well-being, the revolution became a sad saga of scapegoat-bashing and stunts. With no material benefits, ways had to be found to keep politically ideologically committed. So, for months, the Shah and Carter were focal points for the clergy's venom. Later Satan was perceived in the Soviet Union, Iraq, Mexico and Egypt. All the while targets were found within Iran — the revolutionary left, radical women, Kurds, Arabs, and anyone else who could be accused of less than total devotion to Khomeiny.

Anti-communism

WITH the death of the Shah, the reactionary side of the clergy's fundamentalism became more and more apparent. The attacks on the west did not cease — far from it — but the enemy was now seen much more as being within Iran, the far left in particular.

In early 1980, four members of the Fedayeen were killed by revolutionary guards in the Northern province of Turkomanshahr. About 300,000 revolutionaries marched in Tehran in protest. Then, at New Year, March 1980, Khomeiny called on all his supporters to hound the left off the streets, out of schools, out of the universities, etc. Attacks on demonstrations intensified; radical workers lost their jobs; newspapers were banned and their vendors harassed; and meetings were raided by Phalangists, the most militant and macho of Khomeiny's supporters.

This went hand in hand with moves against women, organised workers and the Kurds. A new offensive was launched against the Kurds in April 1980, in an attempt to force the liberation forces out of key strongholds. Women came under renewed attack in the summer, with an insistence by the regime that all women working for the Government should wear the *chador*. Those that refused were sacked, a few were even tortured.

The new Iran remains very much a patriarchy. It also remains capitalist, though with a more ebullient irrationality than elsewhere. In fuelling attacks against progressive organisations, Khomeiny was seeking to unite the fundamentalist and Islamic bourgeois factions behind something more than a Shi'ite state — he sought a functioning economy too. Demands from himself and Bani-Sadr for

harder work and more commitment from Iran's workers became more insistent. They knew that if things continued as they were, the left could turn into a serious threat.

American invasion

THE LEFT held its own for a time. A year ago it was full of confidence. Demonstrations were occurring all over the country against unemployment (officially at 25% of the workforce); prices were getting out of control in some basic items; industry was operating at levels a fraction of those in pre-revolution days; housing conditions, abysmal under the Shah, had suffered from the ending of construction work; and many people, especially youth, were turning to the left for an alternative.

The Fedayeen, by far the largest secular organisation, could claim tens of thousands of sympathisers for its Marxist-Leninist politics, many of them either active in workers' councils or fighting in Kurdistan. The Mujahedeen, with their part-sophisticated, part-crude amalgam of Marxism and Islam, claimed a readership of a million for their daily paper, and held meetings of up to a quarter of a million.

The balance of forces altered with two events: the American attack and the Iran-Iraq war. The first led to renewed nationalist hysteria, and strengthened the widely-held belief in the regime's invincibility in the fact of the mighty imperialists.

But more important was the Iran-Iraq war, caused largely by the ambitions of the Iraqi regime, fuelled by extremely rapid economic expansion... The threat posed by the Iraqi invasion united most Iranians behind Khomeiny and made it almost impossible, initially at least, to maintain an oppositional politics. A major split in the Fedayeen was prompted by this, and general disarray throughout the left.

A military coup?

AS THE WAR progresses, it is evident that military officers, many of them formerly loyal to the Shah, have considerably strengthened their position within the regime. At the same time, bourgeois elements are resurgent, relishing the prospect of renewed links with the west following the resolution of the hostage affair and the rise to ascendancy of Reagan, Bush and Haig. Over the coming weeks, there is bound to be a heightening of tension between these forces and the political-clerical representatives of the bazaar merchants, who most stridently favour economic autarchy. A military coup is more than likely to follow, though it may await the death of Khomeiny. Should it come, the hardships of the last two years will be remembered as heaven.

With tension heightening, the role of the left becomes more crucial, and certainly their cause is far from lost. Despite the setbacks of recent months, much is still intact in key areas such as Kurdistan and Gilan (north of Tehran) and many workplaces. The left still has substantial and well-organised forces, to confront reaction or the very real danger of (covert or overt) Western intervention.

Ben Lowe



TO UNDERSTAND the importance of the fightback against male violence, you must understand that all women live under the constant threat of rape, that we walk in fear of all men for all are potential rapists.

I resisted this idea when it was first presented to me in Susan Brownmiller's book "Against our Will", just as, years before, I had resisted the idea that all women are oppressed. It seemed so... extreme. By the time I finished the book and thought a bit — about where I didn't go and why, about why I was afraid so often, about men I knew, I accepted it was true. The implications are profound — one more layer of mystification and untruth peeled away, changing the way we see the world and causing us to reevaluate relationships with all men.

It is no longer possible simply to name a structure called patriarchy, somewhere in the distance oppressing us all, while working hard at training your man to mind the kids and do the shopping. The whole middle ground in between fills up with potential rapists intimidating us, acting as agents of oppression, both individually and in groups.

You cross a car park at midnight. A man's form approaches — you flinch. The light catches his face — you know him. Relief, then you flinch again. Do I know him? Instead of guilt, as before, you feel anger.

Many women have told of betrayal by men, when they were vulnerable. Many women are saying, repeating, that women are not even safe at home. That most rapes are done by men the women know. We hear of fathers who rape their daughters, husbands who rape their wives, lovers who rape their girlfriends. In reclaiming our lives women will not ask for men's protection. We won't keep making that same old mistake.

The motive behind our actions — to free ourselves from fear of men's violence and our bodies from men's oppression — has given a new impetus to the women's movement. The fightback has swept through Europe and North America in the last five years and taken several interconnected forms: a proliferation of self-defence courses; the spread of refuges for battered women; rape crisis centres; the withdrawal of sexual services from men; action, direct and "official", against pornography and offending advertisements; organisations of prostitutes fighting police harassment.

About the time when Reclaim the Night started in summer 1977, women in Britain and Europe were beginning to demonstrate on a large scale against male violence. A year before, the first Rape Crisis Centre opened in London. In May, 1977, the Women's Liberation Conference in Britain began to formulate a seventh demand; freedom from all forms of sexual coercion. In Rome, in June 1977, 50,000 women demonstrated against rape, incensed by the treatment of rape victim Claudia Caputi. But the first Reclaim the Night marches took place all over Germany in April 1977. It was something new — a celebration of women's power when they get together. Dressing up as witches, the German women were reclaiming history too, for many of the thousands of women tortured and killed in witch-hunts were punished for rejecting the sexual role prescribed for them and living

Malev(i)olence: Women are angry

without masters.

In London, in 1977 a young guardsman was freed on appeal, after being convicted of a vicious rape. Women responded with rage and "What Justice for Women?" was spraypainted over London and Bristol. There was a rally to inform and protest about rape in Trafalgar Square. Women Against Rape invaded *The Guardian* to protest against an article by Harold Jackson called "The Rapists Reply" and their demand for right of reply was met. Women in Catford, South London staged a picket outside a local supermarket selling underpants which proclaimed "I'm your friendly neighbourhood rapist". The line was withdrawn by management.

So 1977 was more or less when it started, and at the end of the year a Reclaim the Night march was organised through Soho in London. That Halloween march has become a legend because the police made so many stupid mistakes: as it wound into Brewer Street "all hell broke loose". Two women went into a shop to drag out some porn. Men inside reached for a hammer and a screwdriver. The one young policeman accompanying the march panicked and radioed for help. Within minutes there were vanloads laying into the women with truncheons.

The police arrested 16 women; charges against one were dropped and six were acquitted. The first magistrate, Ivor Rigby, was clearly very disturbed by evidence that the police had lied and broken the rules. In one photograph used as evidence, a policeman (on top of one of the defendants) was seen to have two truncheons, a serious breach of the rules. A Sergeant appeared in court wearing a male chauvinist pig tie and was forced to admit that he crossed out in his notebook an entry which recorded that he'd hit three women over the head with his truncheon. The second magistrate, Christopher Besley, in another court, ruled out of order any evidence about the severe injuries inflicted on the women and made more convictions. The charges brought were assaulting the police, obstructing the police, insulting behaviour, threatening behaviour, obstructing the highway. Where there were convictions, sentences included £5 fine for assaulting the police, £50 for the same, a year's conditional discharge with £50 court costs for obstructing the highway, £25 for obstruction.

But women weren't simply defying pornography peddlers and cops in Soho. They were organising in many different ways. During the 1977 Womens Aid Federation conference, a motion was adopted which located the case of wife battering in the position of women in society. Womens Aid had put a lot of work into the Domestic Violence Act and the Homeless Persons Act. They then had to work hard in the courts to see that the new laws were applied. During 1977 and 1978, refuges for battered women were opened up in many towns and Womens Aid began to work in defence of individual women, such as Noreen Winchester and

June Greig who were punished by men for defending themselves against male violence. Refuges for battered women were opening up in Europe and the US.

Articles, books, papers on rape were circulated and discussed. In 1978, the theatre group Counteract produced "She asked for it", a play about rape. In March 1978 the judge in a Manchester rape trial was challenged by the jury for his anti-woman views. Rape crisis centres spread and women were encouraged to prosecute, the number of reported rapes in London in the first part of '78 doubled. In October 1978 5,000 women marched through Dublin to protest against rape and sexual harassment and in Glasgow in the same month there was a week of action against rape with the city's first ever women-only march, Reclaim the Night marches spread to France (where in 1978 police were involved in 5 rape scandals of atrocious brutality) and Holland.

In the United States, there were a number of cases of wife raping brought to court and women were organising to defend women who had killed in self defence.

Much of the recent direct action from women has centred around Leeds. This is understandable because of appalling extra pressure put on women in that area by the ripper murders. In June 1979 a Leeds woman commented: 'The ripper killings are only at the extreme end of the violence women face every day.' A week of action was held in Leeds in March 1979 culminating in a 700-strong demonstration.

Women were angered by advice given by the police: to mistrust all men but seek male escorts for protection at night.

In late November, the ripper killed his thirteenth victim, Jacqueline Hill. A few days later, on November 22, in an atmosphere of intense anger and bitterness, the national conference of Women Against Sexual Violence took place.

Four hundred women attended, and a further 350 joined in a relentless march through the city centre. With shouts of 'Women are angry, not frightened' and 'Men off the streets' the women stormed a cinema where 'Dressed to Kill' was showing, and splattered the screen with paintfilled eggs. A taste of their own medicine was given to the men who dared to interfere; their bums were tweaked, and they were verbally humiliated.

One woman was arrested for threatening behaviour, banging on a car roof and shouting. She later pleaded not guilty but was convicted on the strength of a policeman's evidence and fined £25. When she was put in a police van, women lay down in front of it and demanded her release. The van was driven onto the first woman and she was taken to hospital. At this point the police, clearly nervous, became the focus of the women's wrath.

Still on the wave of this determined action, 200 women gathered outside Leeds Crown Court on November 24th, demanding the release of the Maw sisters (sentenced on 17 November for killing their father in

self defence).

Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) played an important part in planning and organising direct action during and after the Leeds Conference. They also co-ordinated the actions on December 11 and 12, when women all over the country took direct action against women-hating images. They picketed cinemas showing woman-hating films, they spray-painted angry messages on walls and bus shelters, they marched and distributed leaflets.

There were many arrests!

Leeds — 4 women charged with criminal damage
Bradford — 9 women charged with "blemish of the peace" for picketing a cinema (It took the police ages to find a charge they could use against them)

Sheffield — 2 women charged with criminal damage

Acton — 5 women on charges of malicious damage and intent to cause malicious damage. They pleaded guilty to one charge each and the magistrate let them off relatively lightly (£50 for the woman in work, £20 for the unemployed), 2 years conditional discharge for those in difficult circumstances.

Lewisham — 10 women charged with assault and criminal damage after a confrontation outside a cinema at the end of a march to protest at the murder of Karen Davies, found murdered on waste ground at Brockley.

Leicester Square — 7 women charged with obstruction, 2 (the ones with foreign accents) with criminal damage, threatening behaviour, obstruction and assault after they were set up by SPG men in plain clothes. They were simply gathering and preparing to peacefully distribute leaflets.

The law not only fails to protect women; in many cases it works against them in a blatant and aggressive way. Indecent assault on a man means a maximum penalty of ten years, whilst the maximum for the same offence against a woman is only two years.

After the 1977 Reclaim the night cases all based on uncorroborated evidence *Spare Rib* was moved to say: 'It's hard to remember that the onus is on the prosecution to prove its case, and not on the defence to prove innocence.'

A judge recently dismissed all women jurors on a rape case, on the grounds that they would be biased. The men who replaced them were of course totally objective: the accused was found not guilty and freed.

Action against male violence involves an attack on the woman-hating images of pornography and there are women who are uneasy about actions which can be linked to the campaigns of the moral rightists. WAVAW are aware of this danger and take care to explain their feminist position. The fear of being bracketed with Mary Whitehouse should not deter us from trying to counteract images which degrade women, just as we should not tolerate jokes and stories which insult women, even if people laugh and call us prudish.

When we buy a packet of chewy at the newsagents, leaning over rows of bums and tits to do so, our fury is not based on a dislike of nakedness or a fear of flesh: such images are weapons used against us. They act as wolf-whistles, whispered suggestions, strutting bravado, patronising put-downs. They say: "Underneath, they're all rapeable".

Chris Stretch
Barney Bardsley

Women who want to take part could contact WIRES, 32A Shakespeare St, Nottingham, for your nearest rape crisis centre, group or refuge. tel 0602 411475.

Provision for change

LAST AUGUST a large delegation from the Troops Out Movement travelled to Belfast to join demonstrations in Northern Ireland. They spent several days in the city but rarely ventured out of West Belfast. The climax of their visit was a tour and series of demonstrations at the various British Army bases: at the end of the demonstration the delegation went to a local social club to hear a number of young Belfast Provisionals outline the politics of the IRA and of Provisional Sinn Fein. An hour later there were few in the audience who did not believe that the Provisionals were, if not socialist then at least well on the way to becoming so.

But is this really the case? To what extent is the move to the left more rhetorical than actual, and how representative of the Provisional movement as a whole is this supposed move to the left? Are there any objective factors preventing the Provisionals from building a class-based organisation, oriented towards class issues?

The language of the Provisionals has certainly changed in the last ten years. Compare these two statements for example. The first is from the statement of aims issued by the caretaker executive of Sinn Fein immediately after the split from the Officials in January 1971. The second is from the policy document "Eire Nua — the social, economic and political dimensions" which was adopted at the 1979 Sinn Fein ard fheis (AGM) in Dublin.

"Our socialism envisages the nationalisation of the monetary system, commercial banks and insurance companies, key industries, mines; the setting up of worker-owner co-ops on a wide scale in industry, agriculture, fishing and distribution but still leaving ample room for private initiative under state supervision. What the junta (Officials) seek would lead to dictatorship and in this they travel the same road as the Communist Party of Northern Ireland, the Irish Workers' Party and the Connolly Youth Movement" (1971).

"Furthermore, with James Connolly, we believe that the present system of society is based upon the robbery of the working class and that capitalist property cannot exist without the plundering of labour; we desire to see capitalism abolished and a democratic system of common or public ownership erected in its stead. This democratic system, which is called socialism, will, we believe, only come as the result of the continuous increase of power of the working class." (1979)

Shirley Williams and Dr David Owen would have difficulty disagreeing with much of the first statement; the second could well pass as a policy statement on Ireland from any of Britain's many and various marxist parties.

But a political organisation must be judged not on its rhetoric but on its policies. In the Provisionals' case what are they doing to abolish "all the misery, crime and immorality which flow from that unnecessary evil" of capitalism?

The 1979 ard-fheis, which saw the introduction of such radical phrases into the



Provisionals' vocabulary, was in many ways a victory for the leftists in the movement. A women's committee, comprised of radicals, was set up to devise a women's policy for Sinn Fein — in itself a big departure for the Provos.

An economic resistance committee charged with devising a policy to agitate on Republican issues within the trade union movement and to involve Republicans in trade union issues was also set up.

Both have since met with a degree of failure. The women's committee dodged the all important (in Ireland) abortion issue by merely condemning the system which forces women to seek abortions (most Irish women travel to England for abortions). It took no position on abortion itself.

The economic resistance committee eventually produced a policy document which emphasised agitation on Republican issues within the trade unions. The idea of Republicans becoming involved in trade union issues was played in a low key.

The radicals lost on economic agitation because traditional Republicans believe that involvement in trade unionism would mean making demands on the state and that in turn would lead to recognition, if only de facto, of the state in the South and, by implication, the state in the North. The truth of the matter is that the leftists in the movement are unrepresentative of the organisation as a whole.

The reason for that, and indeed the key to the whole leftward shift, lies within the IRA and not Provisional Sinn Fein. The IRA is ruled by a seven man Army Council so it only needs four of a particular political persuasion to hold sway on the IRA as a whole and in effect upon Sinn Fein as well.

That "takeover" of the Army Council by the leftists was part and parcel of the military re-organisation of the Provisionals into cellular units. The process had started with intense debate by prisoners in Long Kesh — wherefrom incidentally came much of the impetus for the leftward shift. Various new structures were discussed including a Leninist version which would

have had the IRA subservient to Sinn Fein.

What resulted was the exact opposite and a consolidation of what already existed in the Provisionals. Under the new set up Sinn Fein, via a new organisation, the "civil and military administration", was to come under the control of the IRA at all levels.

The 'civil and military administration' was to promote the leftward shift by becoming involved in economic, social and housing issues and through the establishment of what were called 'People's Assemblies'. The Assemblies were to be an alternative system of local government involving local people with the IRA.

In practice the Assemblies degenerated. The first ones were set up in various parts of Belfast to deal with the Loyalist strike emergency of 1977 and functioned successfully arranging food stores, medical equipment, etc. Interest soon died afterwards, however, and they became glorified 'kangaroo courts' with one or two local individuals sitting in on IRA courts deciding what punishment should be meted out to vandals. Sinn Fein became a collecting agency for complaints about local hoods. (It was this that led Roy Mason to arrest Sinn Feiners and to try to close down *Republican News*).

Agitational work on economic, social and housing issues has become less a matter of organising protests, strikes, marches, etc but more a form of Sinn Fein social work. There have been exceptions to this, such as the campaign to demolish Divis Flats, but in general this work has comprised largely for example of Sinn Fein advice centres distributing phone numbers of government agencies to people with rent problems. They have concentrated on the sort of "constituency" work which most local government councillors would do.

The problem for the left in Sinn Fein and the IRA is not so much that they don't know what to do, or don't want to do it, but rather that the catholic working class within which they work really isn't a working class. There are only a handful of small factories in West Belfast, the base of the leftists in the Provos. The majority of Catholics are either isolated in Loyalist and protestant-dominated factories or are building workers and unemployed. In Dublin and The South there has been more success in this type of work but so far Provo economic work has been largely passive and low-profile.

In addition the militarist element within the Provisionals, even the leftists amongst them, see the military struggle as being more important than the political one. Finally there is the fact that the national question, much less than jobs, houses, etc, is seen by the mass of working class catholics as the main issue in political life.

The leftists in the provisionals not only face obstacles within their own organisations from their own numerical weakness, militarist tendencies and from southern conservatives and traditionalists but in their strongest base, West Belfast, they face a working class with little tradition of behaving like a working class.

The new bohemians: Fade to pink...

ADAM ANT has got the idea. A standing joke for the best part of five years, a plump Frank Spencer trying to be a 'deviant' sex symbol in leather and too much make up — and look at him now. All of a sudden he's done a huge image revision, nicked a light, snappy pop sound, and he's stormed to teen idol success.

The real clue to his meteoric rise isn't the pirate costumes or the devil-may-care looks he gives to the camera. It's in the title of that first smash hit: he's decided that in getting on its's Dog Eat Dog. This is the free enterprise key phrase of today. No liberal pretensions or class sympathies; rock's natural bourgeois individualism has gone commercial once more. In clubs the length and breadth of West One, young upward movers — clothes designers, photographers, musicians — wearing exaggerated, vulgar, attention-grabbing clothes turn to the cameras and do their number. Thus: 'We're living by our wits/using the system (once upon a time this meant trying to subvert it!)/it's Dog Eat Dog!' The fashionable are in the swing of Thatcher Britain.

This lot may be occupying centre stage

just now but we mustn't forget the Great Long Raincoat Army, those other rock individualists who emerged once punk had ushered in the new bohemianism. These are mainly male, introspective, apolitical, obsessed with the cultural descendants of Penguin Modern Classics. It was they who reintroduced a ragbag of senile intellectual ideas like existentialism and structuralism into rock discussions, along with psychedelia and the notion of musical avant-gardism. Socially, they are content to get together in cold halls and stand motionless to stare at Rock Groups. These serious-minded new beatniks may worry about the Bomb, but their lack of competitiveness is that main thing that distinguishes them from the nightclub elitists. They use rock as a comforting myth which reflects and pampers their self-obsession. Not a force for progress.

Rock is a broad church, though. Last winter there was that tense, boisterous, exciting 2-Tone craze (now a major film) which was collective-minded and politically-charged. For a time, while the heat was on, it was the front line where brave anti-racist

idealists and neo-Nazis were thrown into a morass of rage confused with the urge for simple good times. It was ironic that 2-Tone provided the fascist gangs with such a popular strutting-ground. The liberal rock press, embarrassed by its lack of solutions, tries to ridicule the Nazi skinheads or makes self-excuses for them, denying that they are the real thing or that they understand what they're shouting. There's some truth in this, but the fact is that the most committed political tendency among the various kinds of rock audience is now *fascist*. And who would have imagined that five years ago?



It would have seemed even less likely, and more tragic, during the great Left surge of 1977-78. The working-class rebel stereotype of punk was a lucky myth, in that it persuaded various left-wingers to self-consciously move in on rock. Maclaren and his sidekicks had previously injected a sort of politics into rock in a much more cunning way, to start the whole ball rolling. Instigators rather than interveners, they adapted the Situationism of their art college days to the creation of the Sex Pistols. They used the Jubilee as a heaven-sent symbolic target which naturally suited the rather quaint and archaic preoccupations of both old anarchists and the new ones they encouraged through later punk camp follower groups like Crass. They are an essentially conservative breed who perceive symbols — the word 'anarchy' on the one hand and the Royal Family on the other — far more clearly than what lies behind them. Once they've picked up something — 1977 clothes, 'true punk' groups — they hang on to it doggedly. They look like being a wretched but permanent fixture.



Your actual Left has a much wider but more erratic influence. It was very good at mobilising both opinion-makers and ordinary people, though not very far against racism. Young people began to come into contact with far left organisations. This was where a lot of them did a double-take. The two groups had nothing in common: not just basic politics but age, outlook, class and lifestyle. That meant antagonism. Besides, the simple slogans and social realism that suited punk's bluntness in 1977 soon got surpassed. That was partly due to the Inner Self revival, but also because things progressed. The SWP-RAR axis had recognised these early forms of expression as their own, but they couldn't learn new ways of talking and they got left on the margins.

A lot of the most healthy trends in music, especially the increasing number of women in groups, came from the climate of the country and not from the influence of a basically older generation of committed politicians. If there's to be an explicitly left-wing subculture among youth and its music instead of a mass of vaguely liberal opinion, it'll have to spring entirely from people under 25 sorting it out for themselves.

Marek Kohn

"The left has yet to understand the issues feminists are raising"

'I felt more secure in the Women's Movement'

I DON'T like the word *crisis*. We hear it so often: "The left is *in crisis*," with the Labour Party defeated and, like the Communist Party, steadily shedding its membership since 1945, with the tiny revolutionary left failing to grow for the last five years. "The women's movement is *in crisis*", together with most other autonomous movements and campaigns, torn apart by conflicts and tensions, the strength of the forces opposing us, that lack of perspectives of strategies that might unite us.

If we're all *in crisis*, why don't we recover, or else lie down and die? A crisis is not a permanent state of affairs, but the contradictions we all either face or try and deny are continuous and long-term.

There is no sudden recovery from the reformism that impels us still to rely on existing, bourgeois, institutions for political gains, nor from the divisions in the working class (with one sector played off against another), in the left (with conflicting priorities and real disagreements over theory and practice), and in the women's movement.

Five years ago I felt more secure in the women's movement. Under the Tories from 1970-74 we had just shared in the highest level of militancy (in Britain since the twenties). In Islington, North London, many women, most of us non-aligned socialist feminists, were still actively involved in a number of issues. Some were specifically feminist like the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) and women's health groups, and some were local alliances, for example, to save a hospital from the first big round of cuts under Labour. We had a women's centre, providing a place for new women to come into the movement.

These were the fruits of the first five years of women's liberation, the years in which we learned that to feel the creativity and resistance to fight our oppression, our feelings of inferiority and inadequacy, we had to create a new consciousness for ourselves, build a women's culture. Every image we had of ourselves and the world was male-defined. This meant finding ways of coming together which allowed every woman to speak and share her experiences. Small groups were what we favoured.

In theorising the basis of our oppression, the focus was on our role in the family as the basis for women's personal and social powerlessness. We had debated the function of housework, the role of

women in the trade unions, women's health and sexuality. Our theoretical understanding always developed alongside practical activity, for increased family allowances and nursery provision, better housing and community services, support for women's struggles at work and the development of self-help groups focussing on health, sexuality and other issues.

Over the past five years new voices have emerged in the movement, and begun to organise. Black women spoke of racism both inside and outside the movement, and of the victimisation of immigrant women and their families by the state and employers. We have seen fierce and prolonged struggles led by immigrant women. Black, third world and Irish women have talked and written of the realities of imperialism. Younger and older women have raised the particular sorts of powerlessness and abuse they feel and the problems they face.

The painful process of developing any new feelings of confidence and autonomy led some women to an interest in mental health and therapy, which others were suspicious of. Lesbianism emerged as a positive sexual choice for women in the very early '70s, and an end to discrimination against lesbians was adopted as a demand in 1974. However the emphasis on lesbianism as politically the sexual choice for women did grow stronger after 1974.

One of the most significant developments was a new focus on male violence towards women, spurred on by the development of revolutionary feminism in 1976 with its analysis of heterosexuality and the colonisation of women through the penis developed in Reclaim. They argued that all women live with the constant and chronic fear of male violence, that heterosexual rape serves to keep all women in subjection. Meanwhile developments in many socialist feminists' understanding of patriarchy raised new questions concerning alliances between men and women.

Ironically, many left groups began to take the women's movement more seriously. Events like the NAC march in 1975 showed that the women's movement could reach and mobilise tens of thousands of people. The CP wished to include the women's movement in its "broad alliances".

The International Marxist Group came to stress its support for the women's movement. In particular it worked in 1974-75 to build the Working Women's Charter which sought to improve women's position at



Pr. Sue Gibson

work, and to build NAC. However their theorising of women's subordination is strictly in terms of women's role in the family, peripheral to the forces of production. It is once again women subordinate to class oppression; but women's rights need to be added to any basic list of demands.

The SWP not only holds a purely economic interpretation of women's oppression, but in *Socialist Worker* it consistently attacks and dismisses the women's movement, condemned as bourgeois and irrelevant to class struggle. Feminists in the SWP build *Womens Voice*, quite outside the women's movement. They focus on the need of working class women, particularly their right to work.

Very recently, there has been some feminist activity within the Labour Party. Campaigning Women's Sections have emerged in some areas and a Women's Rights Study Group created. There is a Women's Fightback campaign which attempts to organise women militants in the party, to fight Tory attacks on women, and to raise women's issues in general. Again the focus is on equal rights for women, rather than raising wider feminist questions on the nature and scope of politics to include the family and personal life, and the need to attack all social relations of domination. Despite a stronger interest in women's issues, the left in general has neither accepted the need for feminism to re-define the nature of class politics, nor our insistence that we begin changing oppressive practices now.

Meanwhile over the past 5 years many socialist feminists have moved on to challenge more fundamentally the dominant forms of Marxist politics. We had always rejected an analysis which said women would become more powerful simply by gaining certain rights which enabled a greater participation in waged work. Women cannot enter the labour market on equal terms with men anyway.

In the early days, socialist feminists had adopted two main approaches: some, like Juliet Mitchell, stressed the ideological basis of our oppression — how the process of becoming feminine was the cultural acceptance of female superiority. They took up and developed the Althusserian questioning of the traditional Marxist base-superstructure model which saw ideology as a simple reflection of economic arrangements, arguing for the greater primacy and relative autonomy of the ideological sphere. Others, like Selma James, had stressed the way in which women's unpaid domestic work served the interests of capital, and was therefore maintained by the state.

Socialist feminists today are more likely to start off from the need for an analysis of the power relations between men and women that is quite distinct from and not subordinate to class relations. The sexual division of labour, sexual stereotyping and male violence, together with men's control over our sexuality and fertility, are not a by-product of class divisions. All men gain from women's subordination: cushioned and cared for at home, with the more interesting, secure and better paid jobs at work. There is a conflict between women and men. Male power has got to be confronted in all its forms.

But where does this leave the women's movement now? With the defeat of a Labour government which had successfully crushed rank and file industrial militancy in alliance with the trade union bureaucracy, and begun withdrawing welfare services, we now face a Tory government determined to restructure capitalism.

They are deepening the divisions in the working class by first attacking its most vulnerable sections. They are strengthening the ideology of sexism to insist that it is women's primary domestic role to provide the services, the care of the very young, the old, the sick and disabled, without even the assistance that we have always fought for from the state.



Quite inevitably, it is not easy for women to agree on how to fight back. There is still negligible resistance to the Tories. Some women are more worried about the women's movement losing its autonomy in this period of attack, while some emphasise the urgency of uniting to defend women's interests. At the *Beyond the Fragments* event in Leeds in August 1980 women from *Red Rag* argued that the women's movement was itself too divided to risk working with the male left, wherever they came from. We needed to strengthen our own movement first. We needed to insist that if we work together with men they first of all tackle the question of 'patriarchy' and the dominance of men over women. Otherwise feminist perspectives would disappear into a struggle defined primarily by the interests of men, organised and controlled by men.

Feminists do face a dilemma. We cannot go forward with others without first of all asserting the particularity of our struggle. We must organise ourselves separately as women, if we are to expand and develop feminist perspectives and strategy. These perspectives will not come from the left, nor from the labour movement. They never have, and never will without the active intervention of feminist militants.

But we have also to realise that as feminists we are divided, we have more than one identity. A feminist perspective fights for women's interests as a group, but there is

no single source of oppression of women. Race, sexuality, class, age, health, nationality and more things divide us. What we prioritise must be determined by the situation we face.

For example fighting imperialism must be the priority of the working class women of Bolivia: that is their choice between living and dying. The challenge we face as feminists is to understand and resist men's power over women within a world capitalist system systematically structured along hierarchical divisions of race, class and sex. We do not need to subordinate one oppression to another to argue the importance of each. We reject Marxist politics which rest on a hierarchy of issues or priorities.

Can we accept and learn from each specific areas of oppression, while seeking ways of uniting in struggle? It is difficult to give or seek support without dominating or being dominated. That was clear from the TUC-supported NAC march last year: highly significant in being the first time the TUC had come out over a non-industrial issue, but controversial in terms of the TUC domination of the march. But an autonomy which is so delicate that it can never risk uniting with others is of course no autonomy at all.

Whatever disarray we may experience as a movement, feminist ideas are still growing and spreading.

Feminists and a number of socialists have begun a thorough critique of welfare services. They argue that any fight against the cuts must include the need for an alternative to existing bureaucratic and hierarchical social relations in the state sector which create dissatisfaction and frustration for workers and users alike. For instance, women have always emphasised self-help health groups alongside the need to expand and change the NHS. In other areas, feminists have taken up the issues of nuclear power and weapons, and women's theatre groups are currently touring the country with anti-nuclear shows.

Feminists are also organising against male violence, against its manifestation in pornography and the media, against street harassment and rape. Most would reject the sort of analysis given recently in *Socialist Worker*, where male violence is linked up to unemployment and men's frustration at work. Why aren't men raped, beaten and murdered, except by other men?

While still emphasising "women's rights", most of the left has yet to understand the issues feminists are raising. When we do unite, women still have to fight the same battles over and over again.

Most of the left has still to accept the significance of the divisions inside and outside of the working class, and to learn how to develop a class politics which strengthens rather than ignores those who challenge these divisions. They have yet to find ways of working that discourage the creation of permanent elites and leaders, building the confidence and participation of all involved. They have still to accept the connection between private life and public politics. Most importantly of all, they have yet to develop a vision of socialism which goes beyond a new sort of bureaucratic society, to one which involves a complete transformation of everyday life.

Lynne Segal

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SINCE 1977 at least, from the run-down of the Labour Government to the run-up to the landslide Conservative win in the 1979 election, there has been talk of left theatre stopping to take stock, holding its finger up to the changing winds, finding new directions — an effective function — in a (we had to face it) non-revolutionary Britain. I've indulged in the discussion myself, in my book *Stages in the Revolution*, for example: 'what had been achieved? what would the future hold? what was changed? certainly not the world ...'

A period of consolidation and revaluation made sense, then, I think, but now the pressures of monetarism, racism and fascism are so acute that a clear and confident response is required from left theatre. Two years of Conservative government have made clear that *people* don't matter. The neutron bomb is evidence of this new ideology; so are the unemployment statistics, the education cuts and now Thatcher's intention to reduce the statutory social services to a 'limited' and 'supportive' role to the volunteer movement.

If people don't matter, then the arts certainly won't, and it is almost certain that arts subsidies will become just as 'limited' (to working people) and 'supportive' (of elitism) as the Social Services. Don't doubt it ... The writing was on the wall as early as 1978. Socialist theatre would not and could not have developed on the scale it did in the seventies without subsidy. (All those discussions about whether accepting state subsidy via the Arts Council was corrupting were really an ideological red herring). It is not my wish, but I suspect that without subsidy, socialist theatre (as opposed to socialists working in the theatre) as a separate entity will disappear.

The time for reflection is gone. New directions in left theatre should already have been found, and I fear that there is still disarray. Exit Tiresias. Enter Cassandra.

If there is any future for left or revolutionary theatre in the eighties, it is in the area of feminist theatre (as well as women working in the theatre). Specifically, aggressively,

50:1 Theatre

Fifty percent of the world's population own one percent of its wealth. They're women.

unashamedly feminist theatre. And if there was a fundamental failure of socialist theatre in the seventies, it was that it was, for the most part, not also feminist theatre. Of course, a socialist revolution in any form is impossible without a feminist revolution. Left theatre has never fully understood this, nor practised it. Nor has the Left.)

For the most exciting new theatre — in form and content — to emerge has been feminist theatre. Where 7:84 and Belt & Braces, for example, had found new ways of writing about the working class for the working class, the women's groups started to find new ways of writing about women for women. Then there was an important difference — the work was also *by* women. This development occurred, of course, just as the mass media started advertising the women's movement — you know, 'women's lib' — as an historical event, something that had come and gone.

Of the new companies, I am thinking of Beryl and the Perils, Clapperclaw, Bloomers, Cunning Stunts, Spare Tyre, Bag & Baggage — whose work is angry, anarchic, and asexual (in the sense of contradicting social sex/role stereotypes), stylistically

allied as much to performance art as agit-prop. I am also thinking of the women theatre workers — women directors, women writers, women designers, women administrators and artistic directors — who have used the alternative theatre as their nursery slopes, as their apprenticeship for positions of power and persuasion. They are a *force* in the theatre now. Not that many, perhaps most, are not socialists nor have worked in socialist theatre. But they know that a socialist society will only come after a feminist revolution. It's a question of degree, priority and tactics. These women, and their theatre, will become increasingly the rule rather than the exception.

The Women's Theatre Group, in 1974, was a pioneer and a model of collective possibilities. Its roots were feminist. *Monstrous Regiment* is particularly interesting in lessons for left theatre. When it formed in 1975, it sprang from the socialist theatre movement, in personnel and ideology. But it was, earlier than others, committed to feminist work — in content, in constitution and in collective methods, within a socialist perspective (from Scum through work with Caryl Churchill, Susan Todd, David Edgar, Micheline Wandor, Ann Mitchell). Like other companies a couple of years ago, *Monstrous Regiment* was aware of the need to re-evaluate. Enabled by subsidy, they stopped work completely to do so. This period of self-examination was premised on the possibility of stopping work permanently, unless they could find a satisfactory answer to 'why go on?' Their work last year (*Dialogue Between a Prostitute and One of Her Clients*, *Shakespeare's Sister*, and this year's *Mourning Pictures*) provide the answer, I think (or answers). Artistically and politically the plays — the season — are a clear and confident statement of new directions; in shorthand: less socialist, more feminist. And the styles are also new and fresh.

On the other hand, important as their storming of the citadels is on one level, Belt & Braces seem still bound by unreconciled contradictions. Taking seriously the dictum that 'a revolutionary theatre without its most vital element, a revolutionary audience, is a nonsense on which we should not embark' (Erwin Piscator, designer who worked with Brecht), they are playing to packed West End audiences and at the same time, are coming under the Arts Council's axe. Where's the sense? What are the answers?

They lie somewhere in a return to basic principles. Like socialism *vis-à-vis* class society and oppression, feminism recognises the oppression of women and the struggles to liberate the oppressed and to end the oppressive system. This end is not yet nigh, neither for oppressed classes nor for women.

The facts are: women are 50 per cent of the world's population. They put in two-thirds of the world's working hours. They receive ten per cent of the world's income. They own less than one per cent of world property.

If women were regarded as workers in an economic sense, providing material wealth, and not just as 'people', left theatre might have given them the attention reserved so far almost exclusively for oppressed classes and countries. As, of course, would have left politics.

Kathy Itzin



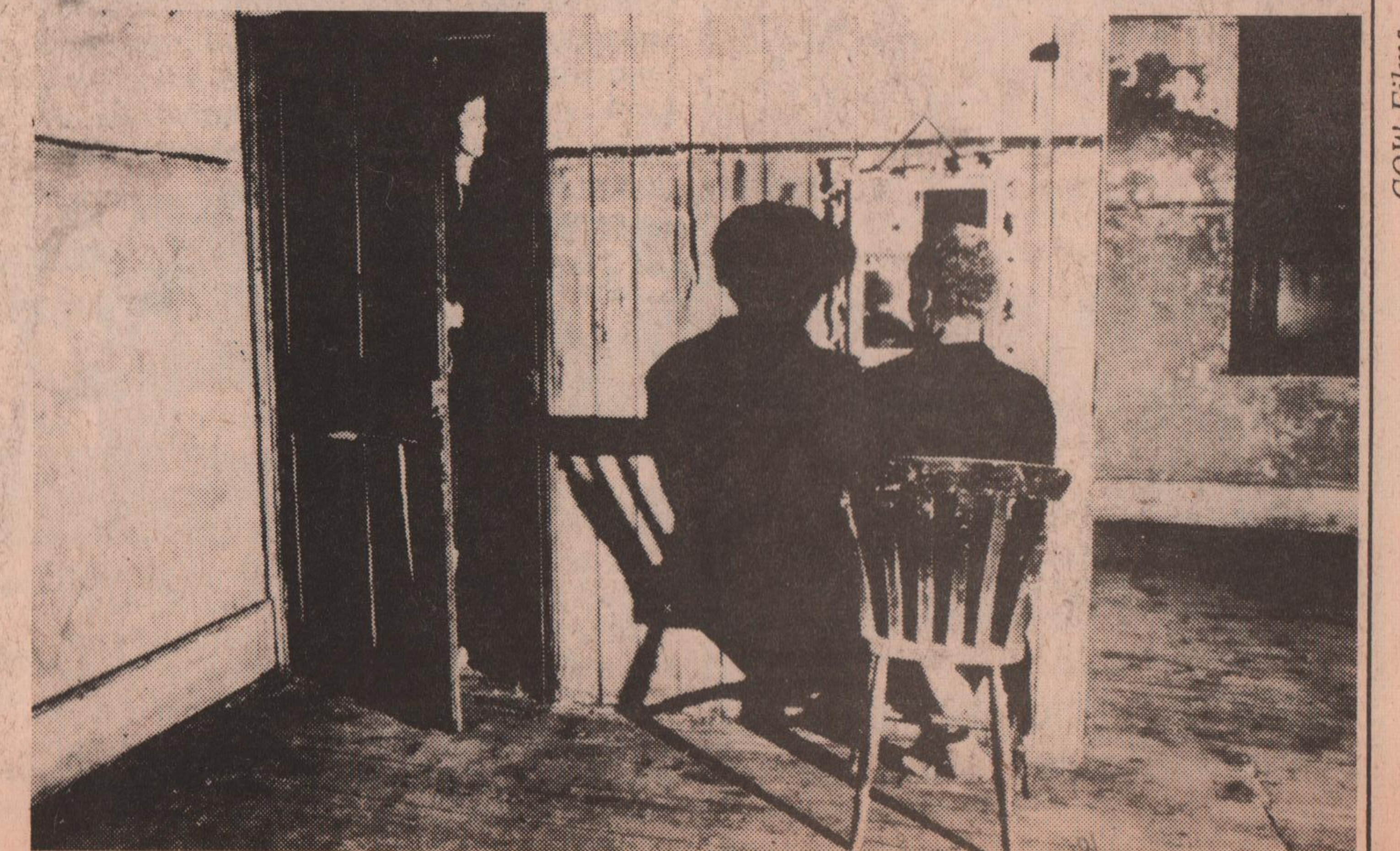
The joy of subversion

UNTIL FEMINISM large sections of the organised left dealt with sexuality, friendship and pleasure as unworthy impediments to seven nights a week paper selling and meetings. The women's movement managed to drag these issues into the meetings, refusing to believe that it is only the relationships with people that you don't know that are political.

It is precisely these awkward areas which we are only just beginning to cope with politically that have always been the content of films. The attraction of all feature films is that they let you sink into a world of physical delight — of non-verbal feelings for images — whether of movie goddesses, landscapes, or whole myths like the open country of the western. Of course most feature films don't look into these things, but merely present them. The possibilities shrivel under the pressing need to support the existing system and the accountants demands for what sells. We end up with thousands of arid and degrading films full of blurred close-ups of the female body and music synchronised to the heartbeat, biologically guaranteed to make you scared.

But this doesn't mean that the possibilities aren't still there. A few of the very best films manage to hint at the same awkward questions that are anathema to the party hack. Films like *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, *Kings of the Road*, *Mean Streets*, *Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* ... actually come close to probing areas like the mechanism by which sex, class and race make people see things differently, sexual attraction, why nationalism and the macho myth are still so important to many people, and why some people choose fascism not because they gain from it, but because they like its style.

Given the innovatory action taken by the women's movement in discussing some of these areas it could almost have been predicted that the best political use of film would be made by feminist film makers. Sally Potter's film *Thriller*, for example, combines sensuously good photography with a dose of rigorous political thinking to dissect centuries of thinking about romantic love and 'female delicacy'. As Mimi, the heroine of the opera *La Boheme* lisps 'Maybe I wanted to be the hero' while we see a woman dancer supporting a male dancer in a *pas de deux*. In words it sounds ridiculous, but on the screen the image manages to discover layers of hidden feelings about the real absurdity of sex roles.



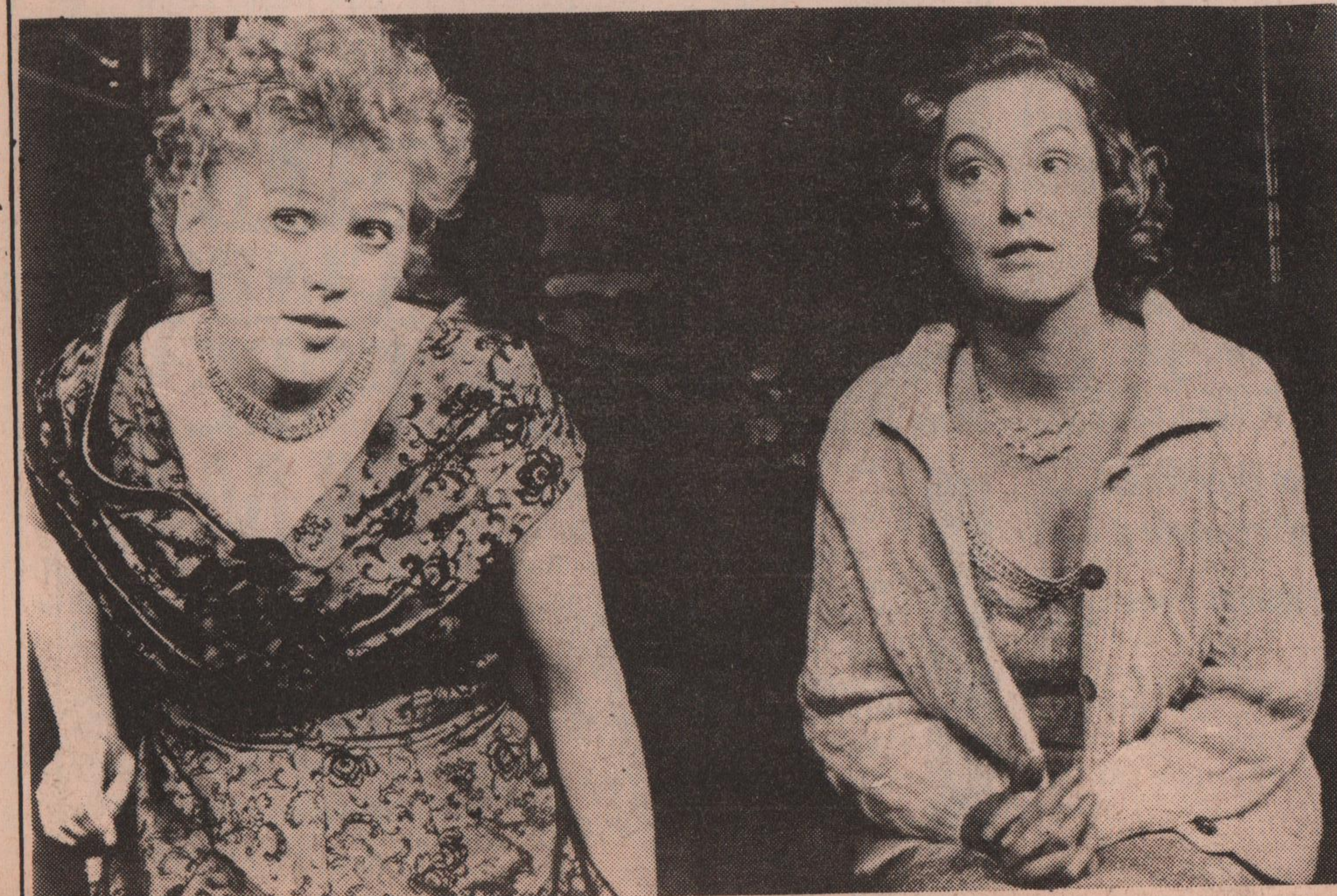
Two scenes from 'Thriller', directed by Sally Potter. 'A dose of rigorous political thinking.'

The same kind of power is present in many other films by women. Chantal Ackerman's film *Jeanne Dielman* turns the disruption of minutely observed domestic routines into a revolutionary act, while Nelly Kaplan creates subversive epics about female power — something you would never guess from their British distribution under titles like *Young Emmanuelle*.

It would be quite wrong, though, to imagine that feminist film making is just a continuation of the 'quivering imagery' tradition of art directors like Antonioni. The area of hard work for feminist film makers and critics has been the way that our thinking is unconsciously structured by the media. This is why Sally Potter uses the conventions of ballet, opera and the mystery film in *Thriller* in her attempt to discover and subvert the effect that they have on us. By using film she reaches the subtle influences these arts have on us — areas far too delicate to be dealt with by writing off as sexism.

The women's movement has always given more time to investigating the way media works than the organised left has done — as the venom of the recent graffiti campaign against advertisements shows, especially when compared to the failure of the left ever to take anti-working class images seriously. The first feminist films come directly out of the street knowledge of stereotypes that almost all women old enough to walk down a street and get shouted at have. Jan Oxenberg's *Comedy in Six Unnatural Acts* is a hilarious destruction of six common media images of lesbians — such as Role Play, which has a 'butch' woman smoothing brylcreem into her hair, donning a hat and cane to present flowers to ... a woman who looks exactly the same.

In moving from jokes to attacks on the more difficult target of the 'true' representations in documentary form, feminist critics have managed to avoid, for the most part, the time wasting spot-the-conspiracy head-count style of media research which still obsesses much of the left. Feminist academics prefer to look at *why* and how women get shown the way they do, while film-makers have begun to develop a critique of BBC style documentaries on film.



Left to right: Clare McIntyre and Sue Glanville in 'Better a Live Pompey than a Dead Cyril', an evening of music and poetry based on the writings of Stevie Smith, currently touring

continued from previous page

Jan Worth shows the lie in the 'we simply show facts' argument by making her film *Taking A Part* both about prostitution and about the way that 'caring' films about 'societies problems' position prostitutes as victims while at the same time dealing with their job in a leering, fetishistic way. Soho, a new film by Jan Mathew plays with the way camera angles always assume a hidden male spectator by putting a woman into each shot, looking at what we in the audience are staring at. Although both of these films deal with abstract problems they remain accessible, funny and challenging, creating a new kind of pleasure at the same time as they expose the fraudulent sense of security that straight documentaries give us. This is an achievement which continually seems to elude the majority of left film makers, who usually offer us a choice between a Marxist Panorama — which is hardly using film's potential to the full — and unintelligible avant garde epics. It has taken feminists to revitalise left film making and break down this gap, with films like Sue Clayton's *Song of the Shirt*.

In addition to this and far more surprising, some of the best films at your local cinema are also heavily influenced by feminism. Male film makers like Nic Roeg in *Bad Timing* and Peter Wooley in the soon to be released *Brother and Sisters*, have turned their attention to men's sexuality.

There is also another side to the coin. Feminist film making has made an impression on the Hollywood numb-brains who always take the option to avoiding problems rather than presenting them. Their reaction to debates on sexuality? Buddy movies with almost all-male casts who lead neuter Boys Own Paper lives. There are also the accountants who have seized the opportunity that a new batch of women films offer, by presenting us with films like *Julia*, *Luna*, and *Turning Point*. Paul Mazursky director of *An Unmarried Woman* actually had this to say on the influence of feminism. 'I don't know if this is a woman's picture or not. I don't know what that means anymore.... I wanted to think like a woman. That is one of the reasons there was so much re-writing. There were many things the women I'd cast in the film wouldn't say. They'd tell me why, and I'd say 'Well what would you say', and I'd let them say that. In other words the only thing I could have done was to get a woman to help me write it. I thought about for a while, but in the end I think it worked out.'

So even the man whose has recently given us *Willie and Phil* — which deserves the invention of a celluloid shredder if ever a film did — feels the need to grovel to what he mistakenly understands as feminism.

Jane Root

Let a thousand papers roll

IF YOU'RE catholic in the use of the term radical press, it ranges from the *Waveney Clarion* in Suffolk (anti-nuke and pro-country matters) to *Rebecca*, the Welsh investigative magazine, through *Achilles Heel* (men's politics) to the whole range of left party publications. But there's every reason to believe that the last five years have seen more activity around the printed word than at any time since the boom of alternative magazines in the late '60s and early '70s. Thatcher may have helped, so to speak, but a wide spread of other issues, from the women's movement to nuclear weapons, have encouraged the radical publishing movement to organise itself in a way that could hardly have been envisaged six or seven years ago.

At a national level, there's now a clutch of magazines which reflect this strength. *Spare Rib* is an obvious example, celebrating its 100th issue last year with 70 pages of feminist news and views. But there's also *Undercurrents*, the alternative technology and lifestyles bi-monthly, *Searchlight*, the excellent anti-fascist paper, *Community Action*, reporting on tenants and community groups' struggles around the country, and *The Beast*, launched last year into the growing movement for animal liberation — not forgetting of course *The Leveller*, which has succeeded in producing a news magazine for the non-aligned left where many others have failed before.

But it isn't just that these magazines have survived — and some haven't, such as the ill-fated *Issues* — which matters, and mostly without any outside funding and dependent on a lot of unpaid work. They actually look and read a hell of a lot better than their earlier counterparts. Professionalism may be a dirty word, with all its connotations of market exploitation and journalistic clichés, but it does sell copies. Look at *Spare Rib's* imaginative use of design, for instance, or a spread from *Temporary Hoarding*.



Locally, the picture isn't quite so bright. *Liverpool Free Press*, one of the best examples of regional investigative reporting, has gone, as have *Alarm* (Swansea), *Counterpress* (Milton Keynes), *Birmingham Broadside*, the *New Manchester Review* ... Others continue, such as the perennially controversial *Rochdale's Alternative Paper*, *Leeds Other Paper* and *Islington Gutter Press*. But the struggle to survive financially and gain a large enough audience for left news and opinions has often only been possible through the hidden subsidy of a linked printing press. Even so, it's constantly amazing how much is being produced.

One factor which can fairly be said to have changed the face of radical publishing is the existence of PDC, the Publications Distribution Cooperative. PDC started five years ago and now distributes over 80 periodicals, as well as books and pamphlets. Since it split into two regional groups and a third concerned just with magazines, it has also become more efficient; and despite occasional arguments about what should or shouldn't be distributed (such as their refusal to take on *IT*), it's still impressive that the radical press has been able to create and sustain its own alternative network.

PDC has in turn encouraged a steady growth in the number of radical bookshops, from something like 50 in 1975 to over 100 now.



Most of these are also members of the Federation of Radical Bookshops, a typical example of the way in which the movement has begun to debate its common problems and differences.

So what are the problems? One of the clearest is that despite the existence of PDC, the distribution system is still tightly controlled by a small group of commercially and politically motivated men. Few of the publications I've mentioned, *Spare Rib* apart, have circulations of much more than 10,000, and yet there could be a simple law, as in France, which at least would guarantee them access to the news-stands. A campaign has recently been formed to press for exactly that, though it could take even longer than a Freedom of Information law to reach the statute book.



But there are also more complex issues. If the radical press is to capitalist on the organisational strength it's already developed, then it needs to seriously consider its internal structures. Too many papers have failed because they haven't worked out either their projected financing or their potential audience or the strains that regular production can place on a part-time collective. This is not an argument for imitating the methods of the straight press, but for seriously considering how to reach beyond the already committed activists.

The question of that wider audience has recently been raised by yet another move towards the creation of a national left daily: the TUC is to finance a feasibility study. Arguments about who controls it and how it could be paid for apart, however, it seems crazy to consider such a move before first plugging one of the most important gaps in the existing radical press — the need for local weeklies which will seriously challenge the existing monopolies. So far, the experience has not been encouraging: *Dundee Standard* and *Hull News* both failed in the past two years, though *Nottingham News* has kept going on finance from the National Union of Journalists. The latest attempt, *East End News*, is due to launch on March 13. It will need all the support it can get.

Crispin Aubrey

The years of the Leveller

THE LEVELLER really started in March 1975 when three socialist journalists sat in a pub bemoaning the lack of a good left-wing investigative magazine. Out of that meeting came a discussion paper, 'Towards a New Monthly'. 250 copies were circulated and a series of meetings held to discuss the project. From those came a working committee which met weekly. These meetings were always open so there was a steady flow of new ideas and people. The principle of the open collective meeting has been central to *The Leveller* ever since.

By late 1975 we had enough of a group to go ahead. Finance was entirely raised by persuading people to become Founding Subscribers, putting in £20 to become members of what was then called the New Monthly. The magazine's name was chosen democratically: by ballot at a seasonal party in a London pub in December 1975.

The Pilot was produced in February 1976 and we printed 10,000 copies — which was far too optimistic. We ended up giving most of them away.

From February to October 1976 there were further discussions and meetings were held in 16 cities. The money wasn't exactly pouring in, though lots of people wished us well: the AGM in June heard that £1,680 had been raised altogether, of which we still had £760 left in the bank. We decided to go ahead. We set up a Co-operative Friendly Society in August, squatted a shopfront in Drummond Street, Euston, put our sign over the door, and opened for business. In October we produced issue one. Most people agreed that the editorial content was pretty good, but that it looked awful. This time we printed only 3,000 copies. For a year we came out every six weeks and stumbled from financial crisis to crisis (which we still do).

It was the state which gave us our biggest boost when Merlyn Rees ordered the deportation of American journalists Mark Hosenball and Philip Agee. Mark was a former member of the working committee, Phil a good friend of the magazine. It was

confidently suggested that an article co-written by Mark and Phil Kelly in the pilot issue, which named two MI6 officers, had contributed to Rees' deportation order. That battle went on for two years and ended with the verdicts in the ABC Official Secrets trial. In the course of it a great deal of information about the security state came to light and we went to court for naming Colonel B.

In the autumn of 1977 we had turned into a monthly magazine and hired a full-time worker.

The squat was freezing in the winter, it had no toilet or running water and acquired its electricity from an experiment in primitive socialism known as the 'Tolmer's Grid' — in a run-down squatted area that has an office block on it now. Although we had specialised in investigative journalism, particularly about the security state, other concerns became just as important and there were a series of discussions about feminism, the lack of women on the collective, our approach to culture, our relationship with the rest of the left, the degree of structure we should have in the magazine, our continuing inability to do much useful work in the fields of science and economics and the practicalities of working collectively. All these debates continue.

The monthly *Leveller* continued to publish reasonably smoothly until May 1980. Throughout that period it had its ups and downs, new comrades came in, old comrades drifted out. But although debates were sometimes heated the collective was always a good place to be and the collective process itself, imperfect as it was, agreed by everyone to be of great importance. But last May we had our first serious split and we lost a dozen comrades. The split was ostensibly around the issue of whether or not the collective should remain open, though underlying it were a number of even more fundamental disagreements about collective working, democracy, and journalistic politics.

Those of us that remained — the "openers" — found that we had several ma-

ajor problems. The collective, which had previously had an average of about two dozen people on it at any one time, had gone down to 14. It had debts of £5,000 and, for a few issues, had lapsed into coming out every six weeks instead of monthly. Perhaps most important there was no consensus on what sort of magazine we were going to be or what its politics would be like.

There was a renewed political debate which resulted in the adoption of our general statement. We also set up a loose constitution.

At the same time we went about persuading everyone that a fortnightly was perfectly possible and could be financed through Launch Subscriptions. By the time the first issue was published we'd raised over £10,000 in subs, though after publicity, postage, book-offers, wages and everything else had been paid for we actually had rather less than £4,000 clear. Indeed, when the first fortnightly appeared, we didn't even know how to finance the second, let alone get as far as Christmas.

We still work out of a tiny basement which gets ridiculously cramped during production or on Tuesday nights, when up to 30 people turn up. We've only the vaguest idea of how we'll finance No 51.

But we've shown that it's possible to sustain an independent, credible socialist magazine without a party, or big money, or making compromises, that it's possible to work collectively, without an editor, and with rotating responsibilities, and that remaining an open collective is a positive strength. We believe we've made a contribution to the socialist movement with both our editorial content and our collective structure.

On the debit side, there are sometimes messy pages and careless writing in the magazine. Some of you don't get your letters answered, sometimes we annoy contributors, lose photographs and mix up subscriptions. The collective still has a majority of white, middle-class men, and we haven't yet found a way of genuinely involving readers outside London.

But the fortnightly currently prints 15,000 instead of the monthly's 9,000 and we will no doubt keep going. But we couldn't have come as far as this without your support and we'll continue to need that in future. Place your order now for *Leveller* 100!

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Dolly Parton, Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda in 'Nine to Five'

Cinema

Taking a break

WORK OCCUPIES a lot of our time. It also
dominates much of our conversation. Even if
the work itself isn't that interesting, the social
networks and power relationships are often
fascinating, even to an outsider. But the
cinema doesn't seem to be able to cope with
that. Occasionally we glimpse an individual
working in a film about the rest of our lives
- in *Une Semaine Des Vacances*, for example,
or *The Lady In Red*.

But when the focus is turned to the work-
place as a whole, as a system of social and
political and economic relationships, the nerve
cracks. Directors just don't believe that we can
possibly sit through a film about work unless
it takes a break in the middle for a sub-plot
about mistaken identity, or a car chase. No
doubt they think we'd get bored. Andy Curry
went to see the recently released *Nine To Five*.

Three women think they've accidentally poisoned
their boss and they're overheard talking about it in
the ladies by the office spy. Faced with the sack,
they discover that he's running a fiddle with some
company stock, but can't prove it because the
computer is being re-programmed. So they keep him
prisoner in his own house - his wife happens to be
away on a long cruise - in the hope that the computer
will come up with the evidence before she gets back.
Three men working in a car factory find that they
haven't got enough money to pay off a tax demand
but hear that their (corrupt) union has a lot of meony
held for safe keeping at the local branch office. They
break in, and although there's only a few hundred
dollars there, they find an account book which
implicates the union in a major fraud. The union,
meanwhile, claims that a lot of money has been
taken, and the men's underworld contacts, who are
supposed to get a cut of the proceeds, start demanding
their share.

Neither sounds like much of a start for a film
about work. But in brief, those are the plots for
Nine To Five and *Blue Collar* respectively. And put
like that, it makes you wonder how they ever got
past the script editor.

But for films that turn into caper movies, both
open unmistakably as films about work. In *Nine To*

Five, legs walk down a crowded city street as Dolly
Parton sings: 'Nine to five - they use your mind and
never give you credit'. The hammer's going and
Captain Beefheart's singing 'The Hard Work Driving
Man Blues' as the cameras pan across a line of tracks
in *Blue Collar*.

And both have a sharp eye for the oppression of
work - of class in *Blue Collar*, and of sexism in *Nine
To Five*. Both start by watching people at work -
itself fairly unusual in the cinema. Mr Hart, the
manager in *Nine To Five*, tells new girl Judy Bernley
that she's a welcome addition, 'and a pretty one too',
and sends his senior supervisor Violet Newstead out
to buy a present for his wife, before making a pass
at his secretary Dora Lee (he's been boasting that
he's having an affair with her). In between times he
demands that people make him coffee and passes off
an idea that Violet had about colour coding as his
own.

And in *Blue Collar*, we get all the tension of
working on the line, and all the little humiliations
that go with it - the locker that doesn't open, the
drinks machine that doesn't work, and of course
the unremitting noise.

After the work place we get the private lives, the
private fantasies. It's a natural enough step to take.
But it's the consequences of these which lead
inexorably to the 'caper' which is there to drive the
film along. And it's that action - which all takes
place *outside* work - which paves the way for the
conclusion, back at work again.

In *Blue Collar*, of course, things are grim; one dies
in an 'accident' in a paint spray room, one is bought
off by the unions, and the third turns informer to
get protection from the FBI. In short, you don't mess
with the system and get away with it.

Nine To Five, in contrast, ends with the three
women drinking champagne in the manager's office
with the manager elsewhere. The system is, after all,
easier to confuse in an office: it runs on bits of paper,
and anyone can write bits of paper. And so while
the manager is tied up at his house - officially he's
at meetings, just popped out, and so on - Dora Lee
sends out memos for him. As she says, she can sign
his name better than he can. In his absence Mr Hart
authorises equal pay, flexi-time, job sharing, a creche,
and even re-instates a woman who was summarily
dismissed.

They get the last laugh too. The company is so
impressed by a manager who can increase productivity
by 20% in six weeks that they promote him. He gets
to work on an important new project - in Brazil.

Films

DANCE CRAZE, directed by
Joe Massot. (Chrysalis).
THIS FILM consists of 26 songs
being done by six 2-Tone type
groups, mostly filmed round the
peak of their popularity just under
a year ago. The idea seems to
be that showing the groups this
way can approximate to a gig. If
you go to gigs to look at bands,
then, this may appeal. If you go
to look at the people around you
in the audience, dance, be at the
scene of what's most exciting at
the time, this will leave you cold.
It captures little of what made 2-
Tone compelling.

It will be interesting to see if
the film isn't a year too late for
the 'kids' whom the PRs talk
about. For them it was indeed a
craze, and I suspect the time lag
involved in filming is too long
for the lure to remain.

It's good to have some foot-
age for posterity of some marvel-
lous groups, but the music isn't
the kind that lasts. And there's
nothing, apart from some labour-
ed Pathe News parody, which
makes this a Film. It falls between
several stools.

'U' certificate. Take 'the kids'.

Marek Kohn

Raging Bull;
directed by Martin Scorsese.
A TORN ring-rope dripping blood
sums up boxing, its audience and
Mafiosi financiers in this picture.

Jake 'Raging Bull' La Motta
took the dive when the bosses
told him to, and went to the top:
world middle-weight champ. But
the kid who couldn't be knocked
down degenerated into wife-
beater, pimp (for which he was
jailed) and ended up a fat,
alcoholic, foul-mouthed strip-
joint comper.

Boxing is modern gladiatorial
combat ('What am I, a circus?')
moans Robert de Niro in his
remarkable portrayal of La
Motta), still fought by a brutal-
ised slave-class, in front of a
crowd screaming for blood,
while the bookies and backers
count the takings. Sport it ain't.

TV cameras stay out of the
ring, Raging Bull puts you in it,
and every punch registers blood,
sweat, pain. Then it's back to
Jake's hotel where his wife listens
in bored silence to his jealous
ravings, as he accuses her of
sleeping with every name he
knows.

You leave the cinema punch-
drunk.

Terry O'Brien

The Ninth Configuration;
directed by William Peter Blatty.
FOR THE first hour of *The
Ninth Configuration* it's not
quite clear just who the joke is
supposed to be on.

There's a German castle in
Washington State rebuilt there
brick by brick in 1900 and now
being used as a special psychiatric
hospital by the military. There's
a new, devoutly Catholic psychia-
trist who dreams of the
crucifixion and encourages his
patients to role-play their
fantasies.

There's a bunch of the most
engaging mental patients you're
ever likely to come across. One
is restaging the works of

Shakespeare for dogs; he worries about whether Hamlet should be played by a Great Dane. And a resigned doctor wanders around in his jockey shorts because his trousers have been stolen by an inmate who thinks he's the medical officer instead.

Then the web untangles itself. The ninth configuration is revealed as the conjunction of atoms necessary to create a protein molecule — and we're told that at random it would only happen once in a very large number of years.

You guessed it. 'Exorcist' author William Peter Blatty — who's written, directed and produced this one — is back with that old bugbear of his, the problem of God and evil. From there on in the film's somewhere between Graham Greene and Sam Peckinpah, although to everyone's credit it nonetheless clips along. But if you had a Catholic education you'll have heard a lot of the script already.

Andy Curry

Plays

'No End of Blame,' Howard Barker.

HOWARD BARKER'S new play concerns Bela Veracek, Hungarian socialist, whose controversial political cartoons lead to his exile in Moscow and later in London. There he works as a *Daily Mirror* cartoonist — until sacked for being 'too miserable'. For a while despair (and a levitating piss-pot) convinces Veracek that insanity rules — but the play ends with renewed hope.

Performed to a backdrop of cartoons by Scarfe and drawings by Clare Shenstone, the play is moving, provocative, and often very funny. A sensitive and authoritative performance.

Helen Breen

Sedition '81, premiere, Essex University Theatre, Feb 10. Belt and Braces.

A TATTY, unfunny and unloveable show by Roland Muldoon and the rest of CAST, appearing here under the Belt and Braces banner. If this is 'New Variety' as the posters claim, take it away and shoot it. There is nothing even remotely seditious about this massively self-indulgent spectacle, which manages to project such a repellent image of socialism and socialist revolution, that its chief effect is more likely to be that of driving a whole load of people into the arms of the reaction.

Paul Brightwell

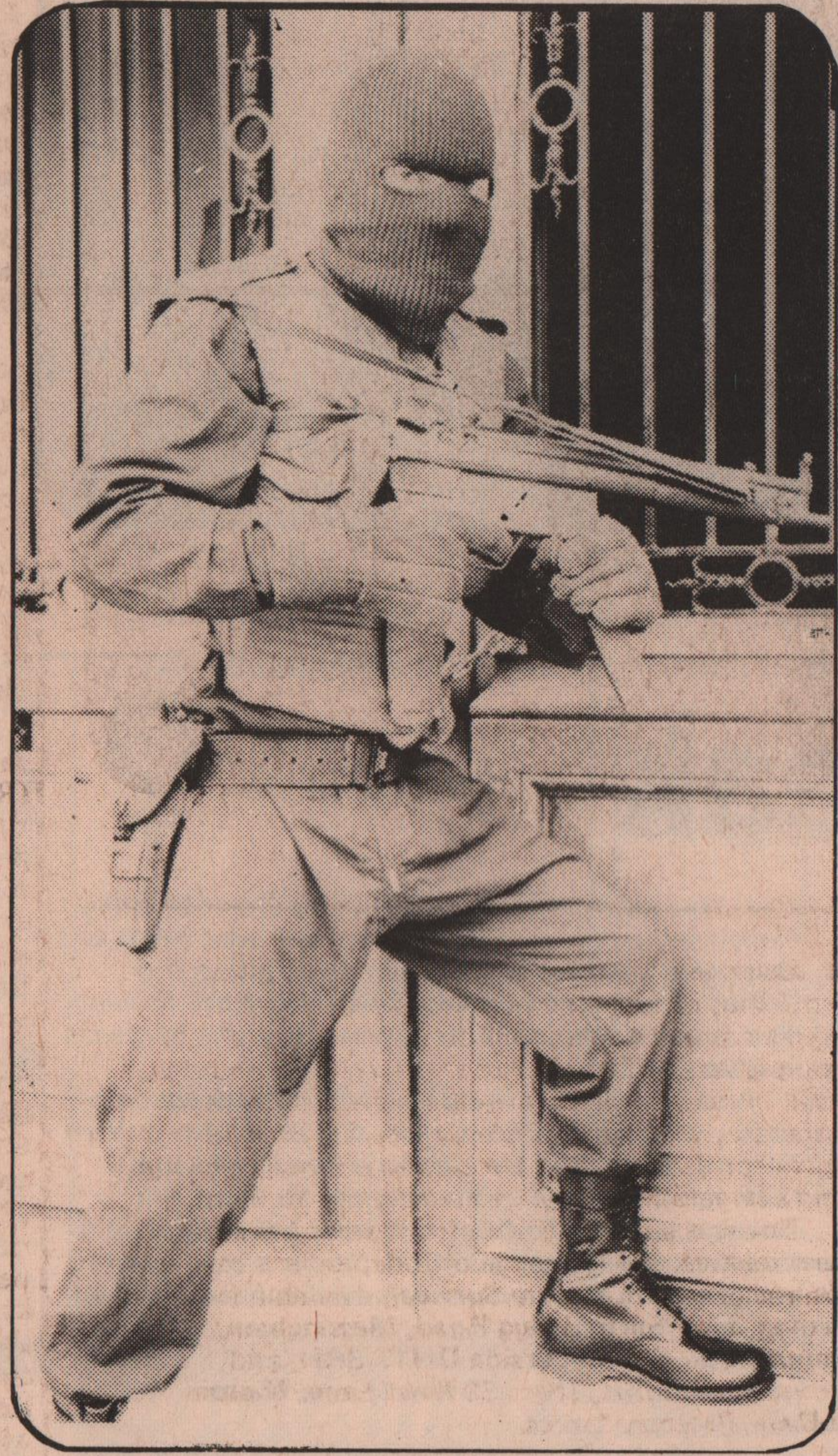
STRANGERS IN THE NIGHT by Doug Lucie at Theatre at New End, Hampstead, London NW3. Until Feb 28.

THE CELEBRATED Lucie's latest sub-Ortonesque plunge into social remoteness, worthy without whining, somewhat resembles the hair transplant for Frank 'Mafia? Who me?' Sinatra, who croaked the same title classic — realistic, partially effective but marred by stunted growth. Satanic humour familiar with earlier Lucie work like Heroes confirms his undoubted gift for conversational manoeuvres. And in David Beames and Gwyneth Strong, Penny Cherns' sensitive direction extracts maximum purchase from a young cockney couple who have lost their identities as much as each other.

Theatre

How much further?

Euan Smith's new play, *No Names... No Medals* is being premiered by RADA at the Jeannetta Cochrane theatre from Feb 19 - 28. The play is about SAS warriors being trained and then breaking an unnamed Embassy stake out. Paul Collins argues that it raises ideological questions about the deployment of special outfits like the SAS and the SPG.



In the blurb to the play Smith quotes the Jingoistic *Daily Express* "... all who cherish law and order in this country could be forgiven for thanking God they are on our side." His play explores the implications of that statement. He voices his concern about the SAS men themselves, the possibility of their use against a civilian population and their role in Union Jack colonialism.

The significance of his alternative title 'Zen and the art of blowing someone's head off' soon became clear to the cast. The team controller Max Arthur — the sole professional in the company — inflicted a punishing rehearsal schedule on the actors. They were of almost regimental intensity, with dawn starts, fitness fanaticism, and climbing feats too gruelling for one actor who withdrew shaken. The point being to emphasize the quasi-Buddhist devoutness of the elitist SAS.

The play begins with a passage from James Elroy Flecker's extravaganza 'Hassan' which conjures the conventional, miraculous image of the regiment: 'We are the pilgrims, master/We shall always go a little further'. Smith presents his protagonists as a 'counter-revolutionary' pagoda team. The ushers of the pagoda are in the unfamiliar uniform of flack jacket, gas mask and carrying shot guns, grenades and gemmys.

Euan Smith, a former actor, explains: 'It is natural that the Iranian embassy rescue, witnessed in television like some over-imaginative horror movie, left the SAS in countless minds as men to admire, saviours of the nation's dignity. Heroes have always received a royal welcome — and never more so than now, with acute uncertainty about employment prospects, the political spectrum should the Labour party split, world anxiety over East-West relations and the nuclear build-up.

'I want to show in my play that the very unreality of secretive, highly-seasoned, remorseless, near robot-like soldiers like the SAS, which appeals to the machismo fantasies of men everywhere, needs juxtaposing with the unreal nature of their work, and what boundaries these 'pilgrims' — as the Flecker poetry suggests — recognise. Can we be confident the SAS will stop short of the ultimate deterrent against civil disorder in England — strikes, blacks' protests, you don't have to scratch your head hard for sinister measures. And emotions do rule even this apparent computerised cavalry. Remember how one SAS man had to be pulled away from dragging the single Iranian terrorist remaining back inside the embassy and blowing the whole lot to smithereens? Frightening eh?

ATC LONDON: Measure for Measure, by W.Shakespeare. The striking inclusion of Weill's music and Brecht's lyrics for Mahogony give a dynamic counterpoint. COLERAINE: Thurs 19 — Sat 21 Feb — Riverside Theatre. CORK: Mon 23 — Sat 28 Feb — Everyman Playhouse.

BELT & BRACES: (1) Coming up by Kate Phelps — reviewed issue 48. COLNE VALLEY: Fri 20 — Live Theatre in the Colne Valley. LEEDS: Sat 21 Feb — Trades Club CLEVELAND: Mon 23 Feb — College of Art and Design. NEWCASTLE: Tues 24 Feb — Lipman Building, Newcastle Polytechnic. SUNDERLAND: Wed 25 Feb — Arts Centre. DARLINGTON: Thurs 26 Feb — Arts Centre. WHITEHAVEN: Fri 27 Feb — Rosehill Theatre. CARLISLE: Sat 28 Feb — Stanwix Arts Centre. BLACKPOOL: Tues 3 Mar — Poulton-le-Fylde College. BURY: Thurs 5 Mar — Metro Arts Centre. (2) Sedition '81 — reviewed this issue. GLASGOW: Tues 24 Feb Star Club; Wed 25 Feb — Jordanhill College of Education; Thurs 26 Feb — Glasgow University; Fri 27 Feb (12 noon) — Strathclyde University; Sat 28 Feb — Castle-milk. EDINBURGH: Sun 1 Mar — Heriot Watt University. HARLECH SEA: Thurs 4 Mar — Coleg Harlech. SWANSEA: Thurs 5 Mar — University. FEMALE TROUBLE (formerly

Playlistings

Les Oeufs Malades): The Family Album — reviewed issue 43. YORK: Thurs 19 — Sat 21 — Arts Centre. LIVERPOOL: Tues 24 — Thurs 26 — Unity Theatre. DOLWILYM: Fri 27 Feb — Shed Theatre. NEWCASTLE EMLYN: Sat 28 Feb — Emllyn Hall. EXETER: Wed 4 Mar — Exeter College. BRISTOL: Thurs 5 — Sat 7 — Arts Centre. FOCO NOVO: Snap by Nigel Geering. 3/7 WocGLASGOW: Fri 20 — Sat 21 Feb — University. Torrington: Wed 25 & Thurs 26 Feb — The Plough. PLYMOUTH: Fri 27 — Sat 28 Feb — Arts Centre. LONDON: Tues 3 — Sat 21 Mar — New End Theatre. MAJOR ROAD: Hurling Days by Graham Devlin — reviewed issue 49. EXMOUTH: Fri 20 Feb — Arts Centre. STROUD: Sat 21 Feb St Lawrence's Hall. BRIGHTON: Mon 23 — Tues 24 Gardner Centre for the Arts, University of Sussex. LEEDS: Thurs 26 Feb — Lawnswood School. ILKLEY: Fri 27 Feb — Ilkley College. CHELTENHAM: Mon 2 & Tues 3 Mar — St Paul's School. MONSTROUS REGIMENT: Mourning Pictures by Honor Moore. EXETER: Thurs 19 — Sat 21 — St Lukes, New North Road (0392

52221). BIRMINGHAM: Wed 4 — Sat 7 Mar — Aston Centre for the Arts, Gestna Green (021-359-3979). OXFORD PLAYHOUSE COMPANY: No End of Blame by Howard Barker — reviewed this issue. COVENTRY: Thurs 19 — Sat 21 Feb — Arts Centre, University of Warwick (0203 51240). SWINDON: Thurs 26 — Sat 28 Feb — Wyvern Theatre, Theatre Square (0793 24481). BRIGHTON: Tues 3 — Sat 7 — Gardner Arts Centre, University Road (0273 685447). PAINES PLOUGH: Beef by David Pownall. MOLD: Mon 16 — Sat 21 Feb — Theatr Clwyd (0352 55114). SWINDON: Mon 23 — Wed 25 Feb — Wyvern Theatre (0793 24481). COLERAINE: Tues 3 — Sat 7 Mar (0265 51388). RED LADDER THEATRE: Circus. Set in the 1930s, it tells the story of the collapse and regeneration of Galileo's International Circus. AIREDALE, nr Castleford: Fri 20 Feb — Family Centre. SHEFFIELD: Tues 24 Feb — Longley School, Raisen Hall Rd, off Herries Rd; Fri 27 Feb — Royal Hotel, London Rd/Abbeydale Rd. LEEDS: Sat 28 Feb — Royal Park School, Headingley. LOUGHBOROUGH: Tues 3 Mar — Town Hall + 2.00pm mat Wed 4. ROTHESHAM: Thurs 5 Mar — Maltby Miner's Welfare.

Music

Open access to the means of recording and distributing music has been the subject of much discussion since the punk years of '76-'77, and has recently become a growing industry. Chris Schüler looks at one such project, while below, Gordon Hope surveys developments on the independent cassette scene since we last looked at the subject. (See *Leveller 39*)

On the cheap

INDEPENDENT COMPILATION albums seem to be mushrooming all over the place these days. Many are strictly local projects, like the Brighton based Vaultage series or the Bristol Recorder, an ambitious magazine-plus-LP package ingeniously financed by local small ads in the magazine. Others, like A Sudden Surge Of Sound are somewhat haphazard packages compiled by would-be music biz entrepreneurs, while Rough Trade's Wanna Buy A Bridge is a showcase of singles. But there's a vacuum these products don't fill; a co-operative project releasing LPs of new music from all over the country and distributed nationwide, leaving them free of further contractual obligations. Last year, Bob Palmer and Chris Corry — himself a musician — set out to fill this gap. They advertised in the music press for cassettes from new bands, selected the best and invited them to contribute towards the costs of pressing an LP. At £55 for a four minute song, this compared very favourably to the £500 — £1,000 it would cost to produce their own single. 'There were six of us in the band, so for less than a tenner each we could get a song on a record,' one contributor said.

Zygo Records, as the project was called, received around 70 tapes; the ones that appear on the album, Influx 1, were chosen not just for quality but also to produce a musically coherent album. (Influx 2, Chris says, will be oriented towards more avant-garde music.) From then on, the bands retained artistic control, producing the master tapes and their own artwork, which appears in an attractive A4 magazine.

The album itself is enjoyable, if uneven. By far the best track on it is Mystery Camp, by Stranger, a haunting atmospheric piece in a similar vein — I hope they don't mind my saying this — to Phil Collins' In The Air Tonight. Radio Moscow's touching, well crafted pop song Loner In The Outcome probably has the most commercial potential, and has already received several airplays. The two singer songwriters, Carl Lewis and Kevin Salinger provide good material, but the rest is, well, a bit ordinary ...

But good luck to them. Zygo records is an interesting co-operative venture which provides badly needed access to the public for new musicians. (Stranger, for example, had done the rounds of all the majors before Zygo took them up.) They don't set out to challenge the musical establishment, and believe that the major record companies should go on fulfilling what they see as a valid function while Zygo provides 'a more fair means of allowing new musicians to prove their worth'.

Given the near monopoly the majors have over distribution, I can't view them quite so favourably myself. It's an uphill struggle to produce and distribute records (or anything else for that matter) co-operatively in a capitalist market. But the initial pressing of 1,000 has nearly sold out, and Influx 2 and 3 are on their way, and they are exploring various ways of getting better distributions and organizing a tour to get some wider publicity. 'When you start thinking of it as a marketable product,' says Chris, 'it changes your attitude quite a lot.'

Influx 1 costs £3.99 and is available from Zygo Records, 44 High St, Redbourne, Herts AL3 7LN. If you're interested in contributing to future Influx albums, please send tapes to the above address.

Two of the bands on the album, Radio Moscow and First Aid, are appearing in London shortly, at North East London Poly on March 23rd and at Camden Dingwall's on March 27th.

THE INDEPENDENT cassette scene seems to have split into two categories now. There are those who just release any old rubbish (i.e. radio tuning, discordant noises or banging objects) without putting any thought into the project, and as a consequence an awful lot of people have been discouraged from sending for tapes, which is a pity.



Robert Wyatt isn't stalling; see singles reviews

But there are a lot of excellent tapes about, from musically gifted people whose sounds aren't commercial enough to interest record companies. And the bedroom tape scene could be used in many new ways — tapes are so clear and comparatively easy to release (see *Leveller 39* again for details), that a lot more expressive groups and strong political lyrics could come to light.

This is a small selection from among the best new releases; a wide range of independent cassettes are reviewed in *Cassette Survival*, available from Protag, Low Farm, Brigg Road, Messingham, Scunthorpe, S.Humberside DN17 3RH, and *Luxury Soundtrax*, from 30 Knot Lane, Walton-le-Dale, Preston, Lancs.

THE KLINGONS: Beamed Down by Starship Enterprise. £1.50 from Al Robertson 37 Doon Rd, Kirkintilloch, Glasgow. A superb quality tape and a joy to listen to. It was all recorded on synthesizers with the addition of vocals here and there. The synth playing is very good and is used widely, from creating the drum sounds to the high lead lines. Sparing use of echo highlights the sound in places. Recommended.

RENTAKIL'D: Nightsoil 2. £1.75 from S I Robertson, 71, Devonshire Road, Dore, Sheffield S17 3NU. This comes complete with posters, lyric sheet and other info, but the tape itself is a strange combination of guitar thrashes, heavy bass rhythms, and synth backgrounds. In between their own material are covers or well known songs. All the trax are rhythmic and interesting.

M.F.H.: Within 30 Miles. £1.75 from David Elliot, 51 Freshfield Road, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 2BL. With 20 trax on this well recorded tape there is a lot of variety within their style, which is using electronics to create an atmosphere. Sometimes they are slow and have gentle swaying synths and guitar washes giving 'water-colour' imagery, and then other parts are deranged guitar strangling lessons or slashing synths. This is one of my fave tapes.

Gordon Hope is a member of the band These Little Aliens, who have just released a C60 cassette, *Incident in Moderan*, which is available for £1 or a blank tape and SAE from: Un-Ltd Abilities, c/o Gordon Hope, 24 Cowper Mount, Leeds LS9 7BB, West Yorkshire.

Strangers shows family disintegration, though, minus clues to original security. Stafford Gordon's bizarre casting as a paternal figure who looks Beames' age, moreover, and mouths Antipodean vowels strains credibility to breaking point.

Paul Collins

Singles

WAR STORIES

ROBERT WYATT: Stalin Waš'n't Stalling/PETER BLACKMAN: Stalingrad (Rough Trade).

A REAL surprise here. Wyatt does his Ron Glum singing acappella over a lurching barbershop backing. Ignoring such historical details as the Russo-German pact, he pits Eastern myth against the Battle Picture Library propaganda that pretends free enterprise won the war on its own. Engaging, and catchy.

On the other side, a heroic poem about the world holding its breath waiting for news of the battle of Stalingrad, read by its author. I find it somewhat offensive: it could have come straight from a 1940s Pravda. Wyatt's song is a modern processing of old-fashioned ideas through pop and a tinge of irony. It's camp, like the bulk of modern culture. You know Uncle Jog would never approve.

And from the last world war to the next one. How Many More? (Radioactive) by the Papers is distinguished by solos from guest performer Ronald Reagan: a good piece of selective quotation. However, the reggae backing isn't going to set the world on fire and the song itself, while pointing the accusing finger at RR, is too full of anxiety without hope or possible solutions.

GILLAN: Mutually Assured Destruction (Virgin). Heavy Metal protest? Bomb rock certainly is a broad-based movement! It's a ridiculous, dreadful record, but people who are impressed by this kind of music will probably think about the ideas — especially as they're extended in a dire fourth-form 'play' in the lavish sleeve. It will be seen by many more people than the Papers' record, and in that functional respect it's a Better Thing than How Many More.

However, it's not only musically but strategically outdated. Military thinkers are replacing the M.A.D. concept — that deterrence works because any use of nuclear weapons means all-out retaliation — with the doctrine of limited war or Flexible Response.

Which happens to be the name of one of the bands on the Mint Sauce For The Masses EP from Edinburgh's Playlist Records. Obscure garage band punks like these make me wish it was fashionable to channel one's energy and discontent into joining the Labour Party or the SWP or CND, instead of proclaiming one's concern in badly played rock songs.

Some records don't mention the war: PERE UBU: Not Happy (Rough Trade). A strange way for Pere Ubu to go: a jaunty little number which is lyrically exactly like Jonathan Richman's hallo-trees-hallo-sky nonsense songs. TELEVISION PERSONALITIES: I Know Where Syd Barrett Lives (Rough Trade). This simpering acoustic ditty may be a parody.

but it doesn't come off. Judging by the state of my copy, it seems to have curled up in embarrassment. AUGUSTUS PABLO: Pablo Meets Mr. Bassie (Rough Trade). A cool dignified dub instrumental which well deserves its reissue.

Marek Kohn

Albums

BASEMENT 5: 1965-1980 (Island)

BASEMENT 5 are a bit like Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman; punk meets reggae and it ain't no party. Martin Hannet's production gives their rather murky live sound extra bite — an improvement on the album's dub predecessor, where he lovingly extracted its teeth.

When gnashers like this get wrapped round lyrics like Riot and Last White Christmas the result is horrendous... irresistible: *Peanut President can't play chess/That's why America is in check/The last white Christmas/No snow fell/The underdog rose instead...*

But hello, what's this? *England is under female rule/That's why we're turning to ruddy fools...* Ah, so that's what's wrong with Thatcherism — Lord Carrington for PM!

And as if sexism weren't enough, Union Games offers us a spot of economic analysis worthy of the Daily Mail: *We have lost countless/Working hours and/Countless export orders. Union Games/Keeping people out of work...* The other songs give me some grounds to hope this is a piss-take, but if it is, it's not obvious enough, and could easily be taken straight. If not... well, they ought to know better than to spread this kind of claptrap.

Chris Schüller

VARIOUS: Dance Craze (Two Tone)

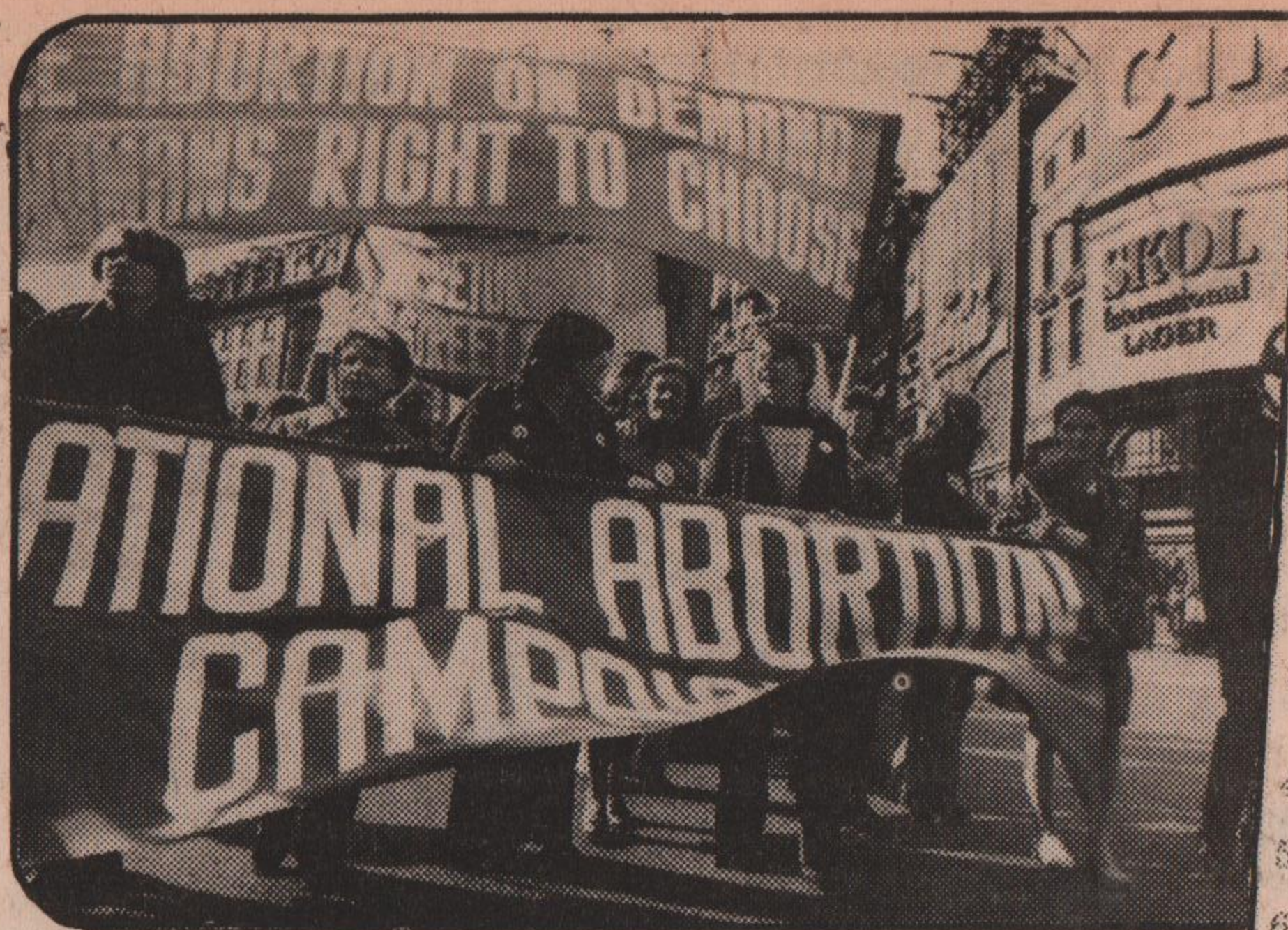
Stop: There has been a great deal written about the importance of Two Tone both musically and socially so I will just confine myself to this album.

Listen: Dance Craze is a soundtrack album of a forthcoming film of the same name. Bar none, this is the best live album I have ever heard. I don't usually go overboard with the 'Two Tone sound' but this album is really impressive.

Dance: Dancing Crazyly you have Madness and Bad Manners with their rock against sanity. The Specials being predictably good with three tracks of Social Observations. The Selector's Too Much Pressure is especially good and along with the Beat's Ranking Full Stop and the Bodysnatcher's Easy Life is one of the highlights of the album. All these tracks combine to produce an effective side long glance at 1980 Britain. As its best it shows how well pop music can be used to convey someone's ideas. That's not to say that the album is an intellectual masterpiece — with Bad Manners on it how could it be?

So to all people who tell us that today's groups can't play their instruments and no-one can write any decent lyrics anymore — *Stop, Listen and Dance*.

Phil Brett



Books

'Women's Oppression Today': Michelle Barrett. Verso. £3.95.

Breaking the connections

Many marxist feminists have moved beyond the gender versus mode of production debate. But has Michelle Barrett, whose new book has just been published by Verso? Liz Storey thinks not.

MICHELLE BARRETT's book promised to be a timely clarification of problems that have been troubling feminists and socialists for some time. (It took *The Leveller* collective three weeks to write one sentence on our commitment to socialist-feminism.) She warns in her preface that there are no strictly theoretical answers to these problems, but in rejecting pure theory she also withdraws from political analysis, preferring 'an historical and empirical approach'. Apart from being somewhat misleading, since the first part is extremely abstract, some of the difficulties of the book lie in the theoretical framework Barrett has chosen and which remain implicit in her argument. The result is uneven and unlikely to satisfy either theorists or activists.

Moving from an abstract discussion of the central concepts of feminism and the ideology of masculinity and femininity to more concrete issues like the division of labour, education and the state, Barrett does provide an excellent survey of the literature of marxism-feminism. This is the book's strongest point and will probably ensure that it becomes a standard text. It is in the argument that underlies this reading of the literature that the problem lies.

Barrett poses two central questions: Can we see women's oppression in capitalism as *independent* of the mode of production? Do we see women's oppression as taking place *exclusively* at the level of ideology?

Posing these questions, which seem to be addressed firstly to the radical feminist position and secondly to those marxists who have developed the position taken in Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, she seems to be reclaiming a position for marxist-feminists that many people no longer find adequate. Quite simply, Barrett seems to be concerned with the old gender versus mode of production debate, and in this context the two positions can be treated together as equally challenging to a 'marxism' which insists on mode of production as primary.

Once relied on as the acid test for distinguishing between radical feminists and marxist feminists, this debate depends on the recognition of a principal contradiction in society. Radical feminists are seen to locate this contradiction at the level of gender, men versus women, and marxist feminists are seen to rely on mode of production. But with the developments in marxism over the last twenty years, some marxist-feminists have moved beyond this position and the whole scene is much more complicated. In the late sixties and early seventies, when

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Marxists began to respond to the challenge of feminism, the first important work was centred on the role of domestic labour: an attempt to integrate the work women do in the home into a marxist analysis, thus legitimising the 'woman question' in marxist terms. It was not uncommon to see women lugging round three volumes of *Capital*, marked to prove the orthodoxy of their position in the debate. On other matters, like sexuality there was theoretical silence, although in practice radical feminist anger informed attitudes and actions.

After the publication of Mitchell's materialist reading of Freud, which depended on the recognition of marxism as philosophy as well as science of history, marxist feminists began to examine areas which had previously been beyond their scope. Liberated from the need to reduce everything to basic economic causes, women began to produce critiques of sexuality, rape, of the representation of women in both popular and alternative culture. Unlike previous marxist feminist theory this new work enabled them to reflect on the tactics of current campaigns and develop new approaches. Importantly it had the same experiential appeal that marxism has for workers and radical feminism has for women.

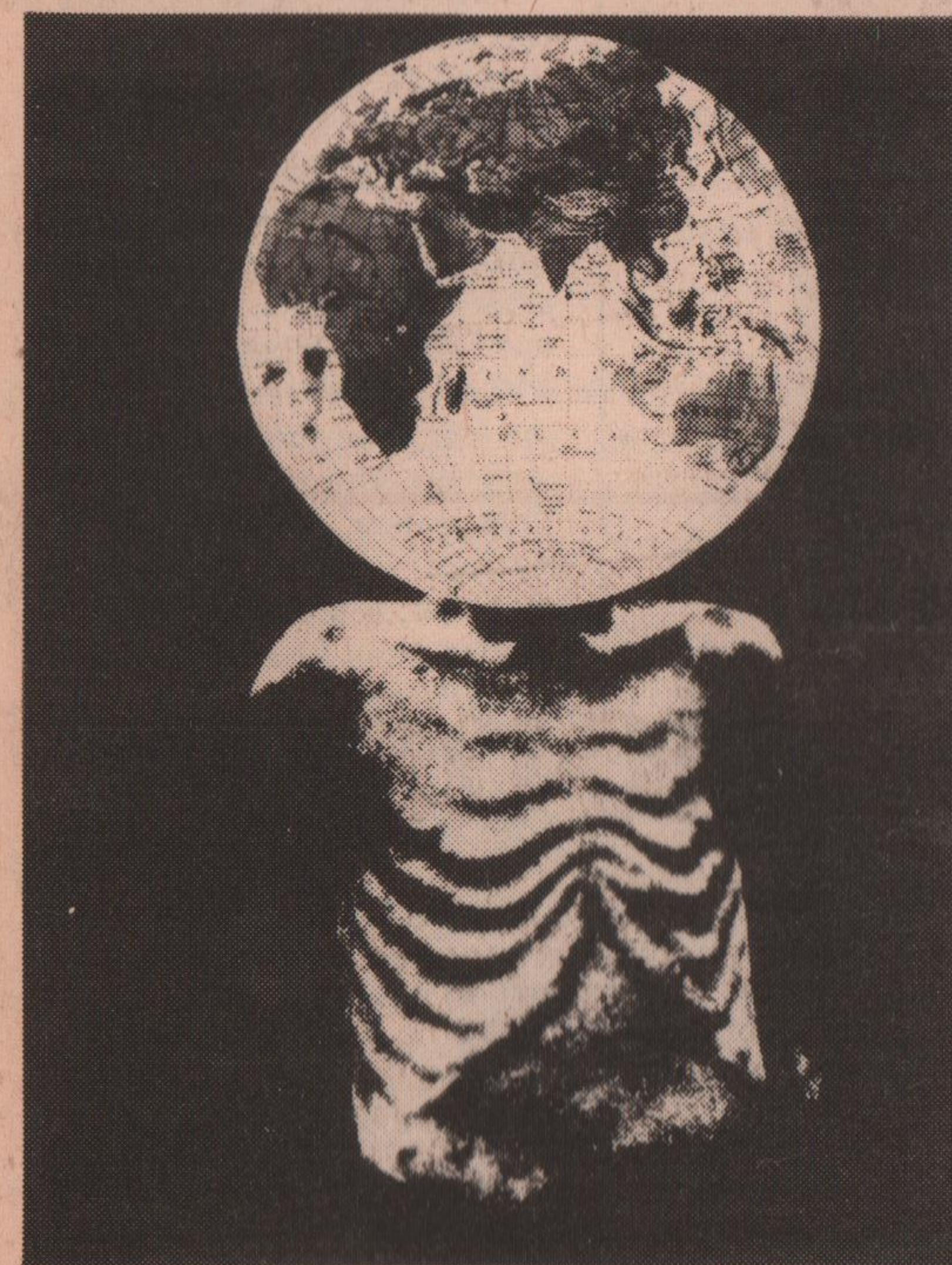
While Barrett doesn't snow her reader under with references to the classical texts, her marxism and theoretical preoccupations have more in common with the protagonists in the domestic labour debate, than with the more recent theorists. In effect the old debate about the primacy of the mode of production or gender was superseded. It was no longer a question of defining priorities and reducing one contradiction to the other: two separate areas of investigation were specified. There are still obvious problems about the relationship of these two areas — patriarchal ideology or the ideology of gender, and the economic mode of production. Barrett's second question must be seen as trying to deal with this problem.

By the end of the book however we are still no closer to unravelling the difficulties. The ideology of gender remains unexplained. This is almost inevitable, as we have yet to see an adequate account in terms of the general concept of the mode of production, and Barrett largely limits herself to discussion of the capitalist mode of production.

Limited by this Barrett is weakest when she turns her attention to specifically political matters. It's interesting to note that *Beyond the Fragments* barely rates a mention in the final chapter. Apart from some general comments on reformism and revolution she has little to say.

The great pity of the book is that despite its failure to come to grips with the real tension in marxism-feminism and the difficulty of the ideology of gender, in effect to deliver the goods it does offer one of the few if not the only comprehensive surveys of the literature. For this alone it's worth reading.

BACK PAGE



Photomontage from 'No Nuclear Weapons' by Peter Kennard and Re Sissons, to be published soon by Pluto and CND at £1.

Publications

● **BEYOND THE FRAGMENTS**
The first bulletin following up the Beyond the Fragments conference is now out. It provides useful follow up resume of the discussions that were had at the conference and starts to suggest the ways in which the movement can be continued after the conference. 25p from 27, Stepney Green, London, E1.

● **PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS — THE POLITICS OF MILITANT**
This Clause 4 pamphlet discusses the Trots. That is what's the matter with them and how to beat them. For instance the nationalisation of the 200 top firms is obviously a silly idea, especially compared with the Alternative Economic Strategy espoused by Tribune and the TUC. 50p + 15p p+p from Clause 4 Publications, 213 Charlotte Despard Avenue, London SW1.

● **DOWN THERE**
An illustrated guide for self examination. 50p + 15p p+p from Onlywmen PRESS, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1.

● **GOING SOLAR**
A practical guide to solar water heating. If you're thinking of giving alternative energy sources a go, this pamphlet gives the low down on problems and manufacturers. £1.35 + 15p p+p from the Natural Energy Association, 50 Clifford Road, London N7.

● **NO MORE HIROSHIMAS**
A pictorial pamphlet of Hiroshima published to mark the re-launch of the Youth Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. 30p + 15p p+p from CND Orders Department, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4 3HQ.

Events

FRIDAY 20 Feb
LONDON
● **Free gig for unemployed youngsters.** Starring three north London bands — The Vincent Units, The Far City, The Fast Set. 8pm at Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way, N19. Tube Archway. Bring dole card or £1 if employed.

SATURDAY 21 Feb
GLASGOW
● **March against Unemployment.** Organised by the Labour Party. Assemble Blythswood Square at 11.30am and march to Queen's Park. Speakers include Michael Foot, Tony Benn, Clive Jenkins.

LONDON
● **East End News benefit party night.** With disco roadshow. 8pm at the Highway Club, Dellow Street, E1. Tube Shadwell. £1.00 unwaged 75p.

● **Gay Community 'Entertainments'** present a disco at the Hemingford Arms, Offord Road, N1. 8-11pm. 50p, unwaged 25p.
● **International Squatters' Festival.** Films, jumble sale, gig in evening + drinks. Noon till midnight at South Bank Poly, Rotary Street, Student Union, SE1. Tube Elephant & Castle. £100 bailiffs. £1 squatters.

MONDAY 23 Feb
LONDON
● **Tatiana Mamonova**, expelled from the USSR for her work on 'Woman and Russia' (the first feminist underground publication) begins her speaking tour of Britain. 7pm, Room 7, London Road Building, South Bank Poly, SE1. Details Sheba 01-254 1590.

TUESDAY 24 Feb
LONDON
● **Nationality, Immigration and**

Women's. Speaker Elizabeth Ball of the NCCL Women's Rights Unit. 5pm at the Polytechnic of Central London, School of Social Science & Business Studies, Student Common Room, 32-38 Wells Street, W1. Tube Oxford Circus.

● **Sky concert at Westminster Abbey.** Commemorating 20 years of Amnesty International. Tickets £10, £5 & £2.50 only available by going to Amnesty, 8 Southampton Street, WC2, from 10.30am on 8 Feb.

WEDNESDAY 25 Feb
LONDON
● **Tower Hamlets Trades Council/CND meeting.** Speakers include Ian Mikardo MP. 7pm at Bromley Public Hall, Bow Road, E3. Tube Bow Road.

● **Tottenham Anti-Nazi League Public Meeting: 'Don't want no Nazis',** with film and facts. 8pm at Tottenham Park Lane Community Centre, Park Lane, N17. Near Spurs ground.

ALIEN

At Your Local Nick No one can hear You scream

THURSDAY 26 Feb
LONDON
● **West London CND Planning Meeting.** 8pm at Chiswick Town Hall, W4. Details Suzanne 01-748 8800.

● **'The Gay Press'.** Speakers include Alison Hennehan (Gay News), Jackie Forster (SAPPHO) and a representative of the Gay Noise Collective. 8pm at the Reading Room, Union Society, City University, St. Johns Street, SW1.

HEMEL HEMPSTEAD
● **Forum on Poland.** Organised by SWP. Speaker Ralph Darlington, recently returned from Polish Solidarity visit. 8pm at Heath Park Hotel, Cotterells. Details Dave Berkhamsted 74468.

BIRMINGHAM
● **Tatiana Mamonova** continues her tour. (see Feb 23). 7.30pm at Digbeth Civic Hall.

FRIDAY 27 Feb
GLASGOW
● **Tatiana Mamonova** at Glasgow University.

SATURDAY 28 Feb
BRIGHTON

● **A day conference on the Armaments dilemma.** The international implications, Britain's defence, arms sales and disarmament commitments. 10.30am to 4.30pm at The Friends Centre, Ship Street. Minimum 50p donation.

MANCHESTER
● **Demo against State Harassment of Gay people.** Assemble 1pm in Oxford Road (Mancunian Way).

BIRMINGHAM
● **Media Censorship and Ireland.** Convened by NUJ. Details from Ron Knowles, NUJ, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

SUNDAY 1 March
LONDON
● **Tatiana Mamonova** speaks at women only meeting. 7.30pm at A Woman's Place, 48 William IV Street, WC2.



● **'Unity and Diversity'.** First of a series of five public lectures by the Religious Society of Friends on the Quaker approach to life. 7.30pm at Friends House, Euston Road, NW1.

● **Gay Workers in Print meeting.** At Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, WC1. (3 doors from Gay's the Word).

● **Mathew O'Hara** Committee meeting. They seek to save the lives of those who might otherwise die in police, prison or mental hospital custody. 8pm at Centerprise, 136/8 Kingsland High Street, Hackney, E8. And the first Thursday in each month hereafter. Details 01-986 5251.



ST. ALBANS
● **STAND (St Albans CND) meeting.** Workshops, reports, books and badges. 8pm at the Jubilee Hall, Catherine Street. Details Julian St. Albans 64372.

TUESDAY 3 March
LONDON
● **'Pornography'** Speaker Anna Durrell (CHE and Lesbian Line). 8pm at Small Halla, Students Union, Goldsmiths College, Lewisham Way, New Cross, SE14.

ST. ALBANS
● **Gay Voice and WU joint meeting.** Sexuality & Monetarism. Speaker Anne Neale (Wages due Lesbians). 8pm at the Beehive, Upstairs Bar, London Road. Details Richard, St. Albans 69041.

THURSDAY 5 March
LONDON



Letters

The Leveller, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1

People Are Shrewd

JULIAN BRENNAN (Letters, *Leveller* 49) regrets that I did not spell out the conclusions to be drawn from my article. The conclusions that *he* draws from his experience of canvassing for the Labour Party show that they do indeed need to be spelled out.

It puzzles me that Julian beefs about opportunism. 'Be an opportunist' is the first rule of politics. There are, of course, those who turn their backs on every opportunity for power or influence that circumstances offer. But, whatever they say, they are not interested in politics. They are only interested in morality. Some people who claim to be socialists do not really want anything to change at all. They prefer the luxury of opposition because it means they will never have to take responsibility for organising anything more complicated than a demonstration, and so they will never have to make any compromises.

Julian says 'we should be talking about politics, not policies'. Did he learn nothing on the doorsteps? People aren't interested in theory and rhetoric. They want specific and workable policies. They are far more shrewd than the average politician and the average political activist realises. The far-left in Britain have always floated off on theory and rhetoric. They have refused to work out a practical programme. That is why they have always been laughed off the hustings.

I agree that the division between the Labour Party and a Labour government should be closed up. But the problem is more intractable than Julian recognises. Let's take an example from local government. Let's say the local party is committed to a comprehensive policy of slum clearance, and the Labour council are carrying this out. In the course of carrying out their policy they meet opposition from a group of people who don't want their old community destroyed and want to be left alone in peace. (This is a real case.) Whom should the council take notice of - the party or the community? There is no doubt in my mind that they should ignore party politics in a case like this. In our demand for inner-party democracy we are in danger of forgetting that governments do not exist to represent the members of a political party, but to represent the people. If democracy meant carrying out party policy, this government would be the most democratic government we have ever had!

Julian says we should become more responsive to the needs of

THE LEFT ALTERNATIVE STRATEGY - A WORKERS INQUIRY

Thas mebbe heered o Tony Benn an Left Alternate Plan
Shushow theer goin to reet the wrongs
Thats done t'workin mon.

Awl telt thi streight its load o' bunk
Thes heerd it all afore
Them Labour Lefts this seem t'think weve come from behint door

They telt us aw that fectrys ourn
"Come on lads pull thi wack
We'll put yer union lad ont board an gi yo all a crack

Tho sum on thee mon hit the road
We've non but jobs for few
We'll pay redundancy brass, come lads take a pew

Its nobbut til thoud countries reet
Thall not deny us that
So come lads go an tek a walk - an dont ferget thi hat"

Tha allus seen em play this role
So t'bosses get theer way
I'd not pay them in buttons lads, or tell em time o' day

All we can do is sowjer on
An gi these lefts a scrap
We'll soon see when wi gine on boot how t'gaffers start to frap

And then we'll kick the gaffers out
But we will pay em nowt
Thonly pay they get fron us will be a left han clout

Thoud revolution'll put things reet
An gi us all a say
So come wi us an gis a pull, we'll soon see t'glorious day.

"Red Lanky"

Comradely
Dave Hallsworth
Ashton under Lyne,

working people. I agree. But this means listening to what working people actually say, instead of imagining what they say, or, even worse, telling them what is in their best interests. Only when the left in Britain starts listening to what people say will it cease to be a small and beleaguered opposition. I am not interested in opposition. I want to see a socialist government in this country, and as far as I can see no party other than the Labour Party offers the slightest opportunity of getting one.

Marshall Colman
London E11

Stopping Fascists: We Need More Thought

LAST THURSDAY 5th February, David Irving, the Hitler 'historian' reputed to have close links with British and German Nazis, addressed more than six hundred people in Birmingham University Guild of Students. On preceding evenings Irving had spoken to student audiences in Southampton and Leeds, all as part of a tour arranged in response to a letter he circulated to student unions throughout the country, suggesting himself as a controversial speaker. The Birmingham lecture was organized by the student Debating Society, with endorsement from Guild Council and Executive; any credibility not already

granted Irving was supplied by the agreement of Professor John Grenville, himself a German Jewish emigre whose mother died in Auschwitz, to reply to the talk.

A self-appointed committee from Jewish Society, Labour Club, and Communist Society provided minimal organization of opposition, the outcome of which was one hundred and fifty overseas students, Jews, and leftists taking over a portion of the hall Irving was to address. The stage was left unoccupied, no attempt was made to denounce the lecturer, nor to explain to the audience why he should not be allowed to speak. The remaining seats were filled by perhaps five hundred students, many of whom began the evening apathetic to Irving, while still believing he had a right to speak.

All the left managed to do was chant, inanely and often hysterically, 'Fascists Out'. This did not drown out Irving's short harangue: it did however provoke the non-committed five hundred into a much louder chant of 'Free Speech'. Irving came away with dignity, enhanced by the text of his talk which attacked fascism! The left, on the other hand, looked a ragged mob, totalitarian, dictatorial, and closed to reason; by the end of the evening they had isolated

themselves completely from almost everyone else in the hall. Which spelt total victory for Irving, whose purpose in inviting himself to lecture can only have been to precipitate precisely such a farcical confrontation.

This sorry incident would be less worrying were it not so typical of many, many clashes between left and extreme right

Denying fascists a platform has long been a maxim of the British left: yet never have satisfactory tactics been developed for achieving that goal without simultaneously isolating the left from the overwhelming majority who make a fetish of 'free speech'. Against the National Front in the mid-seventies, attention was distracted from fascist rallies by the holding of synchronized alternative meetings, a practice which evolved successfully into Rock Against Racism gigs and Anti-Nazi League carnivals. And so long as local councils and student unions refused to let halls to Nazis, 'no platform' policies were rarely tested, permitting broad-based anti-racist campaigns to emerge.

But much of the ground won through these tactics was given away in the brawls which accompanied almost every Nazi demonstration, brawls moreover which invariably matched police, rather than fascists, against the left. Making the left appear the aggressors, the mob, the extremists, is something fascists have practised for sixty years: especially when filtered through the British media, it is a very simple exercise which, if it does not win sympathy from the public, ensures their neutrality towards fascism, and guarantees their antipathy towards the left. The bulk of the left has blithely ignored this process, preferring the masturbatory pleasure provided by crude confrontation.

Confrontation certainly is satisfying, at least superficially. Wild anger is my own first emotion when facing Nazis: but allowing vent to that anger usually achieves little, and can so often be disastrously counter-productive. What we need is the working out of a programme of tactics which harness, or at least manage, that anger, while winning the sympathy of the middle ground, the ostrich liberals obsessed with token free speech... If in the face of the renewed offensive from the right, we are not to continue suffering repeated messy defeats, the left must immediately begin thinking anew about dull, tactical details. Without that preparation we cannot hope to deal effectively with the fascist onslaught.

Peter Reading
Selly Oak, Birmingham

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SPGB

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- | | | |
|---|---|--|
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|---|---|--|

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