

“This pamphlet was written over a long period of time. It began with me asking questions about the dead end in which the revolutionary left had got itself stuck. The Peace Movement provided answers to those questions. But it is also my reaction to the recent ‘mood of realism’ within CND.”

David Barnsdale  
16 St Leonards Rd  
Surbiton  
Surrey KT6 4DE

#### ANARCHIST ARGUMENTS IV

Anarchist Arguments – as the name implies – are intended both to argue the case for anarchism and an anarchist strategy for the wider radical movement and (within that limit of wishing to confine ourselves to fruitful divisions on the strategy of revolution) to give space for debate among anarchists.

Laurens Otter  
College Farm House  
Mill Lane  
Wellington  
Salop. TF1 1PR

#### COMING SOON:

A reprint of *SERIOUS POLITICS* begin with the bomb (Anarchist Arguments 3) a contribution to the debate on *Lessons of the First Wave*.

#### Worth Reading

A lot of the historical background came from the following books  
*The October Revolution* (1979) Roy Medvedev.  
*The Polish August* (1981) Neil Ascherson.  
*The Summer before the Frost, Solidarity in Poland* (1982) Jean-Yves Potel.  
*Congress and the Raj* (1977) D. A. Low.  
*The Nuclear Era* (1982) C. G. Jacobsen.

#### Credits

##### Cover Photos:

Gdansk gates. Aug 1980. 2 Maj (IFL)  
Greenham blockade. July 1983 Andrew Wiard (Report)  
Election day, El Salvador. Pietro Gigli (IFL)  
Nagasaki. Imp War Museum  
Other military photos plus fifties demo from Imperial War Museum photographic archives. The rest as stated or else borrowed from friends.

Thanks to Ramsey Margolis and Helen for editing and proof reading.

Cost: 40p

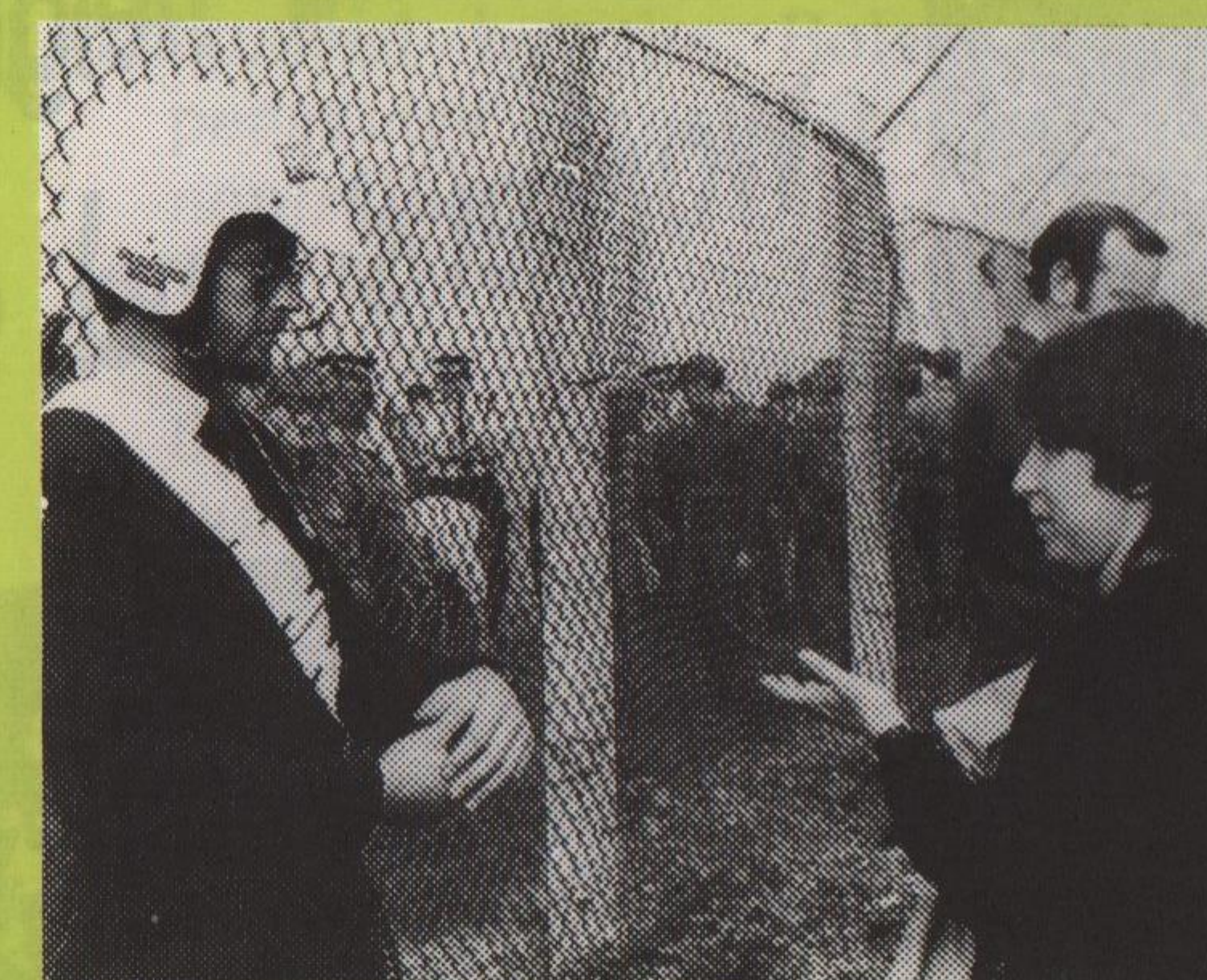
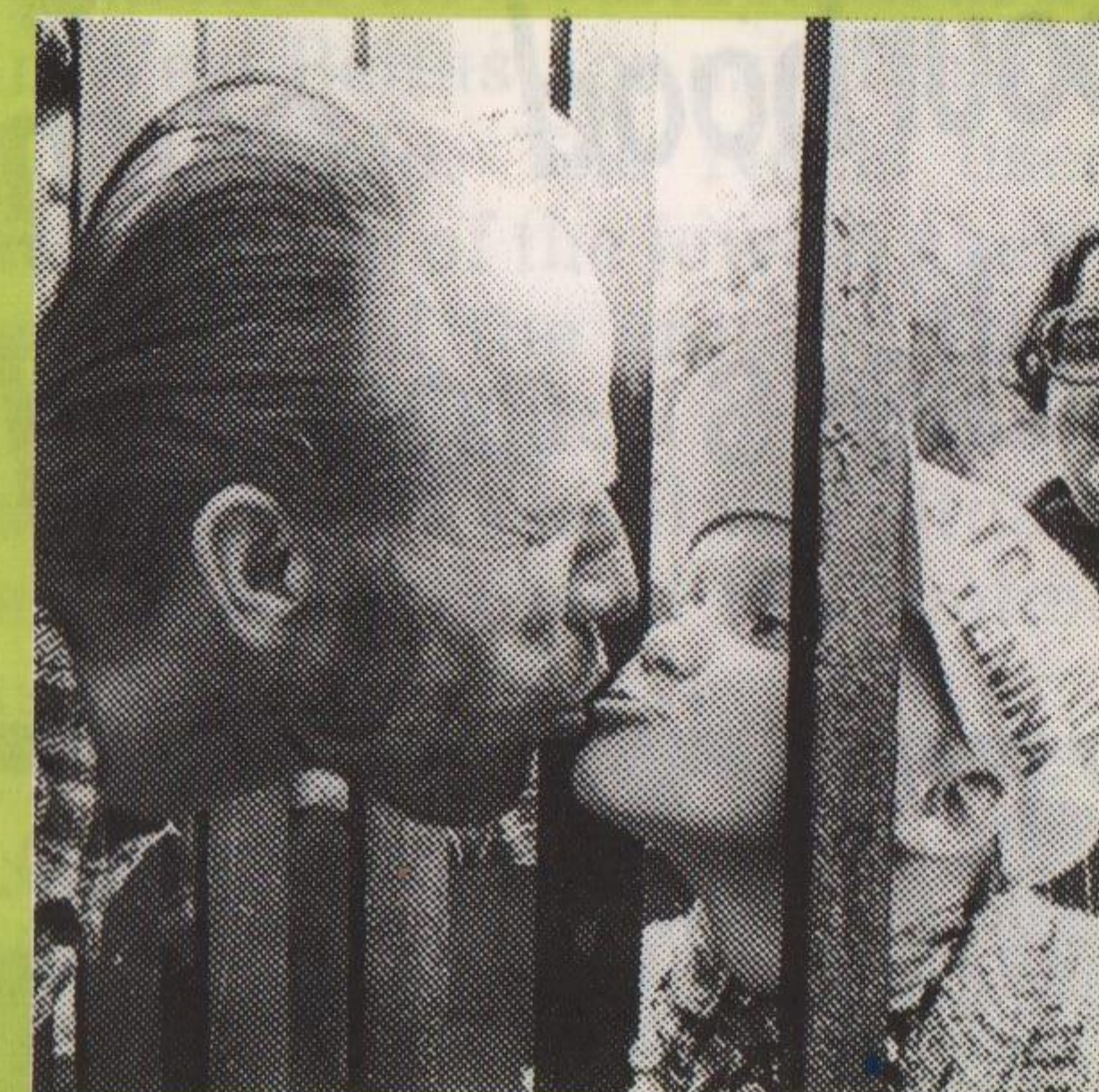
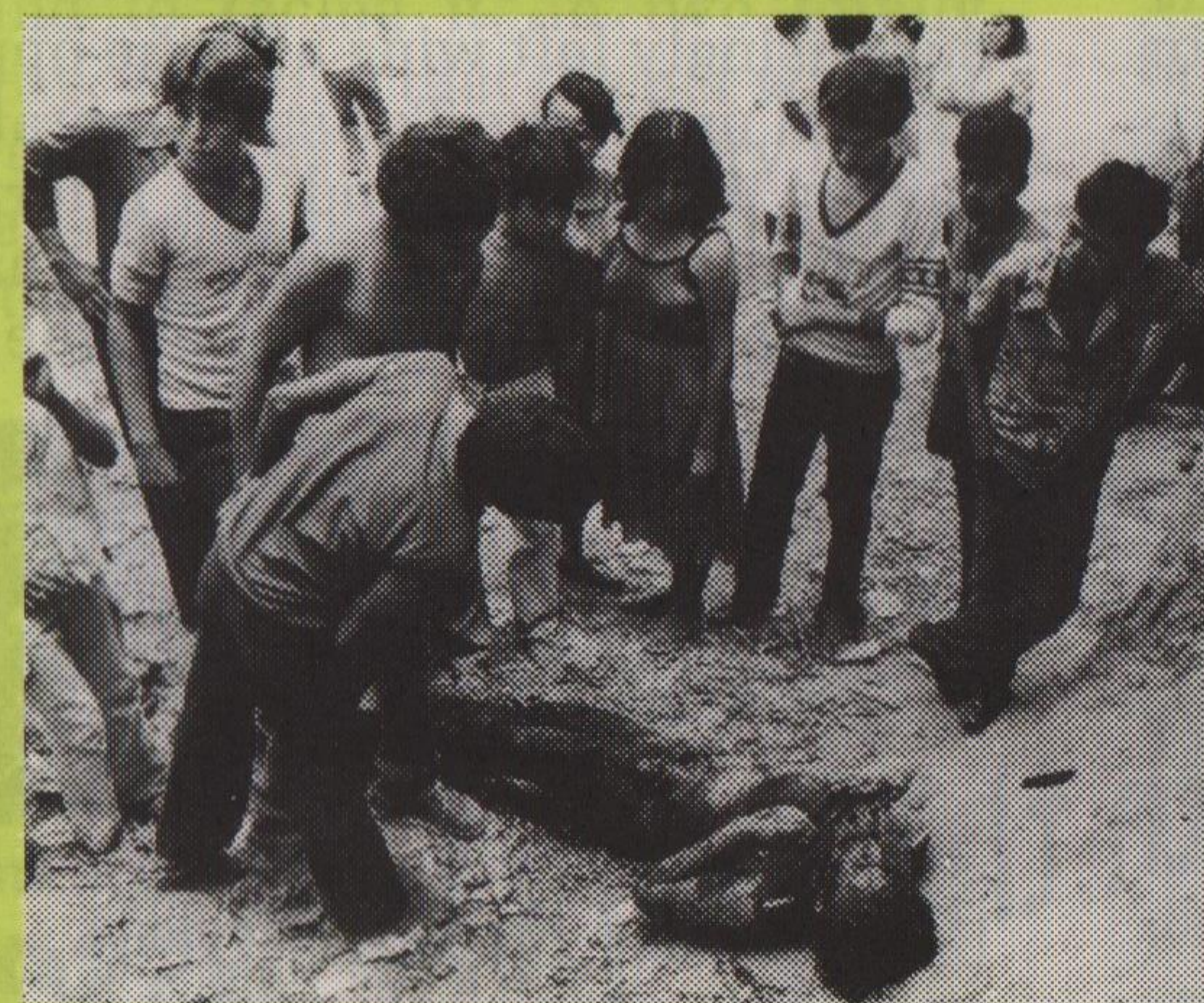
Published by Anarchist Arguments, College Farm House, Mill Lane, Wellington, Salop TF1 1PR  
Designed & Printed by Redesign, 9 London Lane E8.

# THE PEACE REVOLUTION STOPPING THE MISSILES

---

*A winning strategy for CND & why the revolutionary left has failed to provide it*

---



# The Crisis of the Left

The revolutionary left could not be accused of being over optimistic. The future it paints is of continuously rising unemployment, gradual disappearance of civil rights, ecological disasters and even greater food shortages. This seemed alarmist only a few years ago, but now seems inevitable. It is the left's alternative that lacks credibility. The revolutionary left is no longer one movement of groups which could cooperate even as they competed. Sectarianism has once again become respectable. As conflict within society deepens so will our divisions. We will be too busy fighting one another (physically not with words) to pose any real threat to the old order.

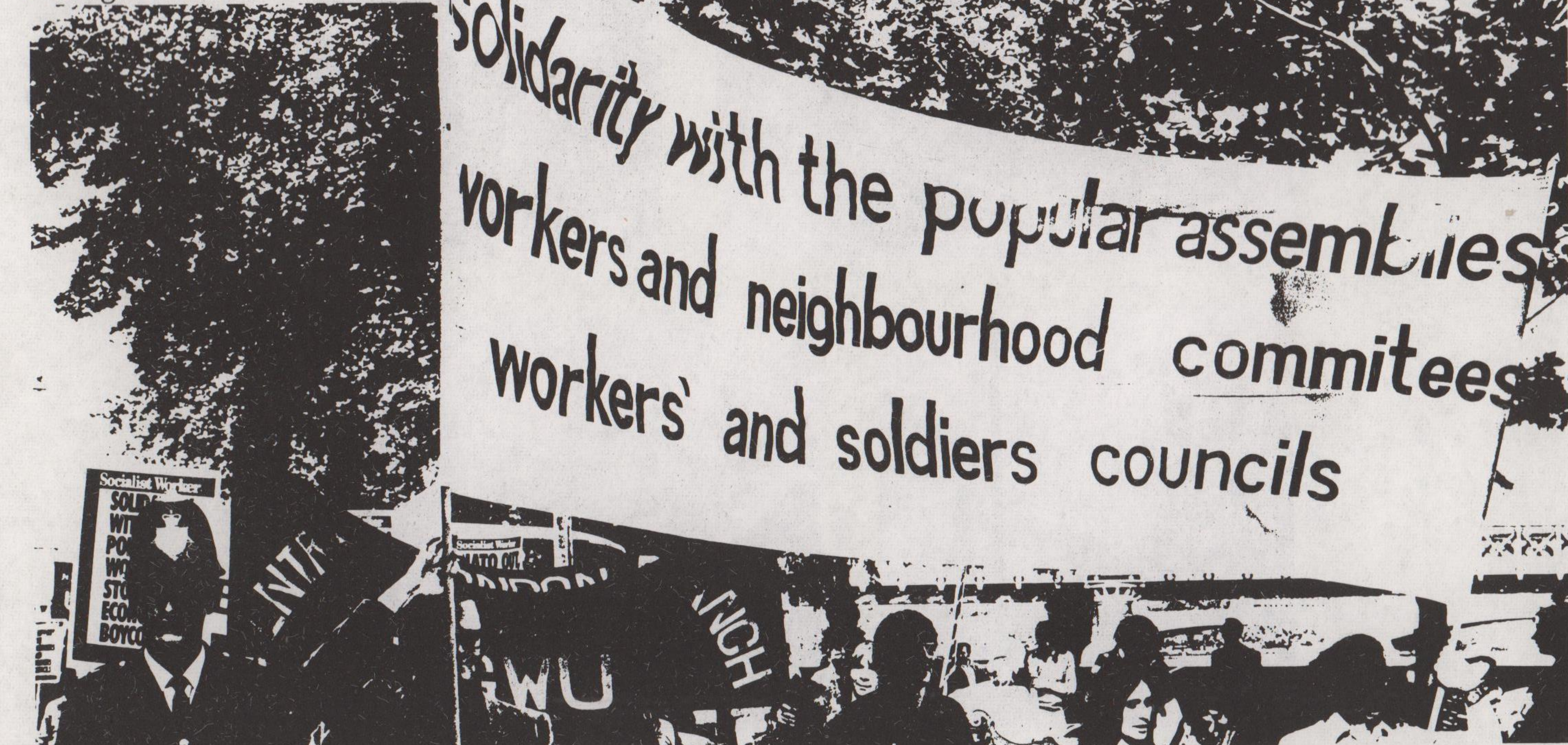
And yet only a short time ago things were very different. 1968, "The Year of the Left", is only 15 years ago and since then we have had near revolutions in Chile and Portugal. We are no longer so optimistic. Contrast the euphoria excited by the 1974 Portuguese revolution and the pessimism of the left over the 1980 Polish revolution.

In Britain the revolutionary left became a force with real influence. As many of us worked in the state sector, the state needed to take us into account and quite a few of our ideas, such as child care and alternative teaching, were beginning to moderate the old system.

In many inner city areas we were able to take advantage of grants for such projects as community arts centres and day nurseries, and even when we didn't actually get grants, the establishment usually turned a blind eye to our squatting empty property and converting them into meeting rooms or bookshops.

But in all this our revolutionary rhetoric began to get a tiny bit empty. On Friday nights while stoned we would dream of storming the Houses of

Portugal Demo 1975.



Chris Davies (Report)

Parliament as a rerun of the taking of the Winter Palace, whilst at other times would collect signatures for petitions and write letters to our MPs. Through this, we changed from bitter enemies of the system to pressure groups the establishment merely disliked. We accepted our crumbs and didn't allow ourselves to think too deeply about what was happening in West Belfast and Derry.

Violence was glibly talked of as a necessary part of revolution but I found people frighteningly unrealistic about the realities of violence. If we were serious about violent revolution we should be learning how to use weapons and finding out about military tactics or, at least, leafleting soldiers. That most people didn't do this shows either that their advocacy of violence was merely an academic exercise or an excuse to throw stones at police. Too many people seemed to be unaware that civil war usually results in a lot of people getting killed.

But we did have real grounds for optimism. Many of the gains of the '68-'75 period we did much to assist. The high point for the left was the defeat of the Heath Government by the miners. The revolutionary left played a small role in this but the important thing was that a popular struggle had proved stronger than the state. What more could be achieved?

## The '74-'80 Labour Government

At first the Labour Government which came in was surprisingly left wing and the opposition which had existed under the Tories evaporated. Then came the run on the pound and the International Monetary Fund inspired cuts. The fact that these cuts were forced on the government hid the importance of this.

The left had learned to live with the ruling class on the basis of squatted property (which now dried up as councils started to repair old property instead of building new), grants to community action projects and secure employment in the state sector. All this was now being withdrawn. This was a real turning point – the ruling class was no longer out to cooperate with us – they were out to cripple us. And they have succeeded: the revolutionary left is now totally marginalised.

This wasn't immediately apparent partly because of our indian summer with Rock against Racism and the Anti Nazi League. We ignored the much more dangerous fascism of the state which had just banned the IRA (the first political organization to be banned in mainland Britain in recent times) and was constantly imprisoning illegal immigrants. We knew we couldn't do anything about the state so we concentrated on the easier enemy of the National Front. We had the heady feeling of being part of a mass movement before being let down with a hangover to face the same questions we should have faced two years before. faced two years before.

Rock against Racism came at an unfortunate time – although it showed that politics could be fun, many took from it the lesson that politics could be easy, which probably was never true and certainly is not now. Those who rejected the idea that politics could be easy tended to reject the idea that politics could be fun.

## Two Solutions

The question facing the left – how to handle the attacks coming from the ruling class – was answered, once we got around to facing it, in two totally different ways. Many, realising that the old ways of outside pressure were useless, decided to try inside pressure and joined the Labour Party. This was helped by the election of Thatcher, who proved so much worse than the Callaghan government that people forgot how much worse that government was than the Heath government.

The opposite answer was that if the ruling class was no longer prepared to live with us, we should put our words into action and prepare for immediate revolution. But even if groups such as the Revolutionary Communist Party did become strong enough to be a threat, could they avoid being isolated in the inner cities?

The military solution to an insurrection in inner city areas such as in West Belfast, or as might occur in Brixton, would be simple. The Nazis used it successfully against the rising of the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw. Total destruction of the area by artillery and bombers would provide political problems, but they would not be so serious in a civil war situation. The Americans were less successful in Cambodia, but that was because Cambodia, unlike Britain, is a rural country.

Despite this, I find insurrection a less unrealistic response than joining the Labour Party. The insurrectionary left have at least realised that the pre-'76 days will never return.

## Office or Power?

In most modern societies the ruling cliques acquire a group of hangers-on and advisors to whom they listen. This group, because they are on familiar terms with local councillors, high up civil servants, etc, are able to influence things like getting a pothole filled or pushing for a road to be built. This kind of influence by a minority is part of what we are fighting against but it is tempting.

I notice a distinct sense of enthusiasm when left wingers talk of Ken Livingstone's open door to those ex-revolutionaries who have joined the Labour Party. There is a similar attraction for revolutionary regimes. I challenge any radical, however libertarian, to read accounts of how Trotsky, in the first flush of October, forced the Czarist civil servants to publish the secret treaties with Britain and France without thinking it would be fun.

If you don't have the sympathy of the ruling clique you have to go out and organise enough people to create sufficient trouble that the ruling clique wants to accommodate your demands. How much easier if a word in the ear of a left Labour councillor or a revolutionary commissar would do the trick.

## The 'Catch 22' of Government Office

But there is the inevitable retribution. Trotsky, at the beginning of 1918, correctly described Russia as the most free country in the world, yet within less than a year Russia had slipped into the civil war which would transform the Bolshevik Party into a brutal dictatorship. But the civil war was not inevitable. The initial efforts of the Whites proved futile in the face of a hostile peasantry. The peasants saw the Soviet government as the guarantor of their rights to the land.

However, the Bolsheviks, with their concern to build a planned economy, decided to maintain the state monopoly in the trade of grain. The peasants bitterly resented the frequent raids for grain for which they received little or nothing in return. Many peasants were arrested for trying to sell the surpluses they had hidden. Yet even Lenin inadvertently admitted that the Russian workers were obtaining half their food from the black market that the state was trying to eliminate. The Left Social-Revolutionaries proposed, as an alternative, a levy on grain with free trade for whatever was left over, but this was ignored by the Bolsheviks. The mood of the peasantry changed from active support to a sullen neutrality.

When the civil war finally broke, the Whites were able to take over vast areas of Russia not due to their strength but due to the Bolsheviks having fatally undermined their own regime. But the Bolsheviks were faced with a real dilemma – if they had confined themselves to bringing in popular reform they would have sold out their own ideals.

Labour and Social Democratic governments have done no better. Repeatedly, radical governments have been elected only to be forced by pressure from

the civil service, big businesses, international speculators and the IMF to renege on their election manifestos.

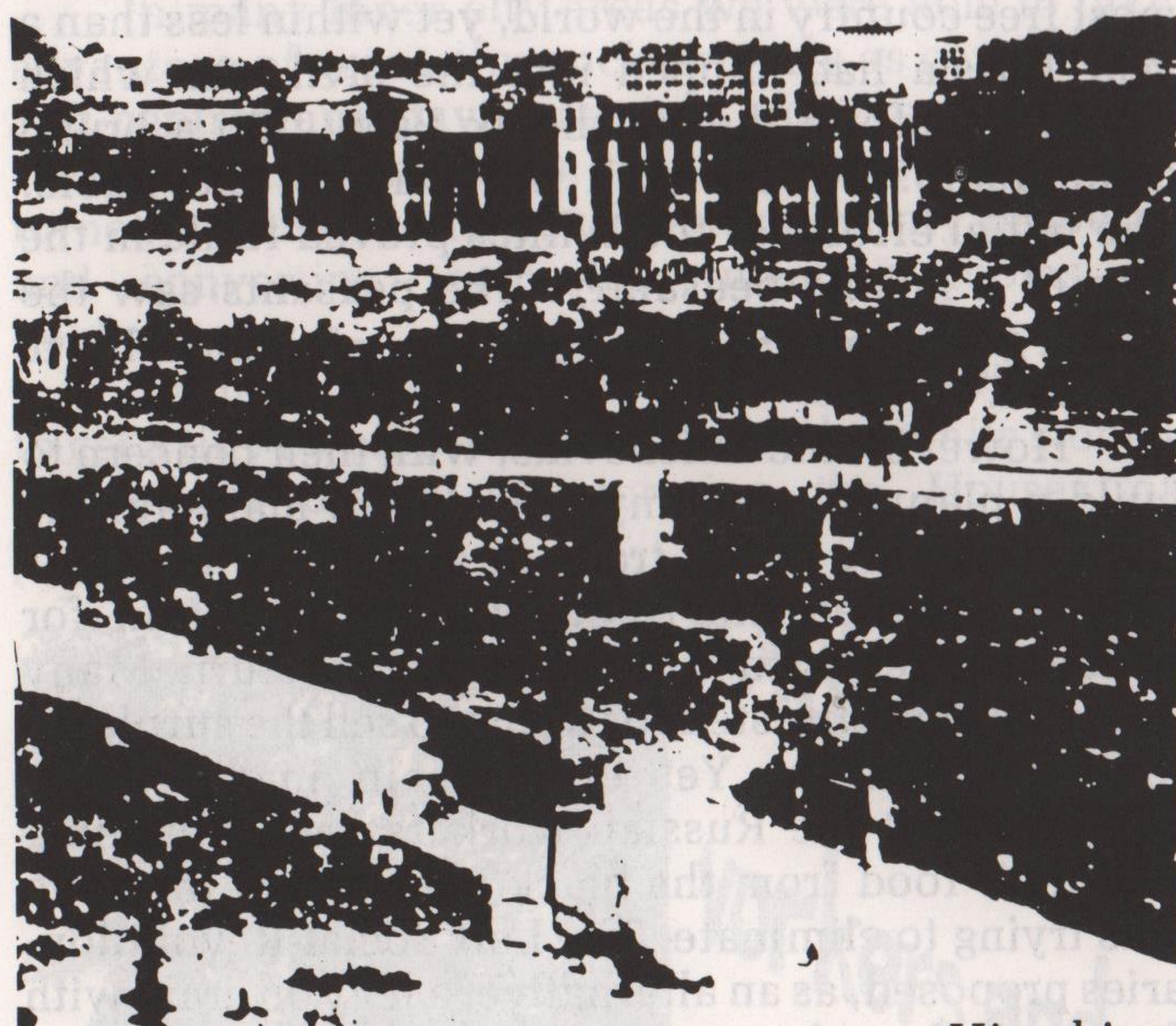
But this cuts both ways. If left wing governments are powerless in the face of an entrenched establishment, so too are right wing governments in the face of mass popular opposition.

Gaining control of the government by infiltrating the Labour Party or by revolutionary insurrection comes down to the same thing. Government office gives the illusion of power but in fact ends all control of events. Governments have no freedom because they must respond to pressure to stay in power.

### A Third Option

There is a third answer to the crisis. This is to go on as if nothing was happening. This is the option taken by the Socialist Workers Party, Big Flame and a few anarchists and non-aligned revolutionaries. These people tended to be the most active in local workplace and community struggles. They had never relied so much on the ruling class being ready to accommodate them anyway and so had less need to change.

But their activity relied on personal contact to be successful and so tended to produce local patches of militancy. This was good when the tide was in our favour, as individually militant workplaces tended to set the pace, but when the tide started flowing the other way, they found themselves dangerously isolated and out on a limb.



Hiroshima

### The Crisis in Society

The crisis of the revolutionary left is a reflection of the state of society itself and all opposition has been affected. Ecological priorities have been increasingly ignored with funds for alternative energy cut. Feminist ideas carry little weight with young working class women whose only alternative to bringing up kids is the dole queue. Trade Unions have found unemployment undermining their power. Groups working for the aid to the South (Third World) saw all the aid that had any benefit being cut.

Conflict between the superpowers became more intense as they competed for limited natural resources. Disarmament became even more distant as this competition inspired another, more desperate, round in the Arms Race.

### Our Crisis, Their Solution

The crisis was not, however, a crisis for capitalism. It was the result of the capitalists' solution to their problem. During the post war boom economic growth had been all the rage. Many sources of natural resources became available for the first time. The Green Revolution provided large increases in agricultural products on the world market. Modern designs of merchant shipping meant that minerals could easily be transferred from the agricultural South to the industrial north. With this abundance of resources the only restriction on wealth was how quickly manufacturing capacity could be increased. It suited the ruling classes in various countries to share some of the increased wealth with the masses, as popular unrest disrupted economic growth.

Full employment also put pressure on employers to make concessions to their workforces. Even firms which were non-unionised benefited because the employers had to pay good wages to attract workers. Because of this, emphasis began to be put on finding labour-saving devices to help solve this "labour shortage".

Much in the same way that research into advanced missile technology exceeded expectations and provided weapons which were better suited to first strike than deterrent, the silicon chip began to provide machines which did not merely save labour but could eliminate it. Already whole production lines exist where the work is done by robots and new concepts in computers reproducing the thinking pattern of the human brain are in the experimental stage.

The old battle between labour and capital looks as if it will be resolved, not as Marx anticipated by the victory of labour, but with capital finally eliminating the need for a working class. This possibility coincided with the post war boom which ended with an effective limit of resources being reached.

Now that the ruling class could no longer increase its wealth by economic growth it was left with the option of reducing the numbers of those with which it shared its wealth.

This makes all three options very difficult. Joining the Labour Party ignores the much greater pressures on any government to force down the workers' standard of living. Further, the demoralisation and powerlessness of people faced with the threat of the dole leads to votes for a strong leader like Thatcher.

Insurrection is also more difficult as the ruling class has a positive incentive to be totally ruthless as anyone killed is no longer a potential worker but surplus labour.

For those based in real struggles it is also pretty difficult. How can you get people to fight when they are afraid of unemployment and when the government is quite prepared to see whole industries like British Rail or British Leyland collapse?

# An Alternative to Violence & Reformism

Finding the revolutionary left's idea of violent revolution an unrealistic fantasy, in 1979 I joined the Ecology Party. It did not take me long, however, to find out just how valid were all the revolutionaries' criticisms of parliamentary reformism. Even when the Ecology Party conference did adopt something radical we kept very quiet about it at election time.

I drifted back to the revolutionary left despite feeling unhappy with their acceptance of violence, but what alternative was there?

What began to make me feel there could be an alternative was the H-Block hunger strike. The power of ten people deciding to face death amazed me. I believe that it came closer to success than most people are prepared to admit and that the Irish National Liberation Army has a lot to answer for, in its eventual defeat.

Non-violent tactics and armed struggle don't mix and I believe the Provisionals, realising this, deliberately toned down the military side of things. They were prepared, if rather uncomfortably, to give different methods a try. It was the INLA who escalated the armed struggle so forcing the Provisionals to follow suit rather than lose credibility.

The importance of the hunger strike was that it showed it was possible, even in the context of a violent conflict to affect events by actions which did not involve harm to anyone else.

But, of course, the hunger strike was not nonviolent. I was in West Belfast when Tom McElwee died and I reacted with tears – partly of sorrow, yet partly of joy. Others, however, reacted with anger at those 'who had let them die' and West Belfast was swept by rioting that night.

### The Polish Revolution '80-'81

In June 1976, when the Polish government raised the price of meat, it met with such explosive opposition that it immediately backed down. When on 1st July 1980, the prices were again raised, the reaction was not as immediate as in '76. Strikes broke out in various places and the government ordered the managements to make whatever concessions necessary to get the workers back to work as quickly as possible. This tactic was initially successful, but in another respect things were very different from 1976. The government was unable to control the spread of information. The opposition group KOR-KSS had set up a paper – 'Robotnik' (Worker) – and this was able to publicise each strike and its demands throughout Poland.

### Gdansk

At the Gdansk shipyard events, at first, followed the same pattern. A few local activists tried to get a strike organised in support of Anna Walentynowicz, who had just been sacked and, partly to their surprise, succeeded. The elected negotiators were soon convinced by the management that their political demands were unreasonable. Most of the other demands were conceded so a deal was concluded and the strike called off. It was at this point that the pattern of previous strikes was broken. Nobody quite agrees what happened next but here is Anna Walentynowicz's personal account:

"Alina Pienkowska and I went running back to the hall to declare a solidarity strike [with other striking workers in Gdansk] but the microphones were off. The shipyard loudspeakers were announcing that the strike was over and that everyone had to leave the shipyard by 6pm. The gates were open and people were leaving.

"So Alina and I went running to the main gate. I began appealing to them to declare a solidarity strike because the only reason the management had met our demands was that other factories were also on strike. I said that if the workers at these other factories were defeated, we would not be safe either. The other strikers wouldn't forgive us for treating them that way.

"But someone challenged me. 'On whose authority are you declaring a strike?' I was too tired. And I started to cry, like a woman.

Now Alina is very small, a tiny person, but full of initiative. She stood up on a barrel and began to appeal to those who were leaving. 'We have to help the others with their strikes because they helped us. We have to defend them. We have to guarantee their security and ours.' Somebody from the crowd said, 'She's right.' The gate was closed. Success. Happiness."

Gdansk Shipyard Aug 1980



2 Maj (IFL)

The workers had followed their own feelings rather than their leaders' considered advice. The occupation strike continued and the Inter-Factory Strike Committee was set up with the other striking workplaces, which on 18th August presented its demands. The government was now in deep trouble.

Hardliners and moderates in the ruling Politburo debated what to do. Should they try repression now or make a deal and hope something would turn up? It seems that the advocates of repression had the majority, but it was now questionable whether the armed forces could be relied on.

Finally the news came through that Silesia had added to these areas on strike. Now even the hardliners had to admit that repression was impractical. Agreements were signed first in Szczecin on 30th August and the next day in Gdansk.

### Boxing-in Freedom

There now followed a whole series of disputes over the interpretation of the Gdansk accords. Different groups of workers went into dispute over specific issues not covered by the Gdansk accords but in their essential spirit.

These disputes would have been inevitable even if both sides had sincerely wanted to keep within the accords. Society cannot be divided into boxes. It proved impossible to have freedom in some areas and dictatorship in the rest. For the accords to have any meaning Solidarity had to make demands about related aspects. These demands gave rise to further demands until, if the process had now gone to its logical end, the whole regime would have been brought into question.

For the government to accept Solidarity's interpretation of the accords would eventually have been to accept a surrendering of real power leaving themselves as mere figureheads. For Solidarity to accept the government's interpretation would have led them to accept the role of the old unions.

This shows the importance of the disputes over the registration of Rural Solidarity and Solidarity's refusal to have a reference to the leading role of the Party in its constitution.

The 'Narozniak Affair' put the problem into even sharper relief. Police raided the Solidarity headquarters in Warsaw and found secret documents about government tactics for combating Solidarity. Narozniak was arrested, along with the clerk who had leaked the document.

The police considered themselves on strong ground as the law had quite clearly been broken. The local Solidarity branch, however, reacted by producing a list of demands including the setting up of a parliamentary commission, including Solidarity, on the legality of searches and a reduction of the police and security services' budget. How could the demand for free trade unions have any meaning while the whole repressive apparatus stayed intact? Its whole purpose was to prevent opposition, like that of solidarity.

The two people arrested were released but the other demands were shelved.

### The Russian Threat?

In this period most disputes ended in qualified victories for Solidarity, but already, the leadership were beginning to do more to dampen down the struggle than to help it. The fear which pushed them into this moderation was the danger of what the government darkly referred to as a national tragedy. This national tragedy was a code word for Russian invasion provoked by Solidarity going 'too far'. This was an empty threat. The phrase often used to refer to August 1980 was 'when we conquered our fear'.

A whole people had decided that free trade unions had to be defended no matter what the consequences. A Russian invasion would destroy the last vestiges of the government's authority. Total nonco-operation would have ended any influence by the Polish Communist Party over social and economic life. Modern societies are too complicated to be run from the barrel of a gun.

But worse: in Hungary when faced with violent opposition by the workers, the Russian invasion was plagued by desertion and disaffection, despite the fact it is not easy to sympathise with someone firing at you. Again in Czechoslovakia, where active opposition only came from a minority, disaffection was again high. In Poland faced with nonviolent opposition from the whole of society, the Russian army might well have mutinied.

With such problems the Polish people could safely have ignored the threat of invasion, but the threat was heeded by Walensa and his Catholic advisors.

### Bydgoszcz

In March 1981, when security police beat up a group of protesting trade unionists in Bydgoszcz, there was an outcry. Picture of bleeding Solidarity members appeared all over Poland. A general strike seemed inevitable if the government did not punish those responsible.

Fortunately for the government, Walensa was not prepared to call their bluff. Convinced that challenging the state's right to employ agents of repression would push the state too far, he imposed a solution on Solidarity in a totally undemocratic way.

For once the government had avoided defeat in a major confrontation, the tide had turned and it began to regain the initiative.

### The Last Phase

Solidarity had its second chance in the late summer of 1981. A spontaneous strike wave swept the country and people took to the streets to demonstrate against food shortages. Instead of encouraging this opposition, the Solidarity leadership rushed around the country trying to calm things down, giving the government space to reform of its own accord.

As the opposition petered out, demoralization set in. People began to blame Solidarity for the food shortages. Solidarity was clearly not doing anything about the economic crisis: perhaps the government could do something people were wondering? The

government, far from being grateful to Solidarity for getting it off the hook during the summer, now became increasingly aggressive and ready to provoke confrontations. Finally, even Walensa was forced to admit that confrontation was inevitable and Solidarity prepared itself for an all-out struggle with the government.

But now the movement had lost its momentum. Even Solidarity's project for worker's self-management, which had been pushed hard by the leadership, had only lukewarm support amongst the workers. Opposition couldn't be switched on again at the whim of the leadership, but there are some indications that at the beginning of December, support for the confrontation with the government began to grow amongst the workers.

Too late, however. When Jarasalsky's coup came, opposition was widespread but halfhearted. The coup could not have succeeded a few months earlier.

It is important not to blame Walensa's compromising on some cynical seeking after position or cowardice. Walensa was sincere and genuinely believed he was doing his best to avoid bloodshed. Leadership inevitably involves responsibilities for decisions which nobody should be expected to bear.

### The Iranian Revolution

That Solidarity was unstoppable in August 1980, even if the Party had used the army, is demonstrated by what happened in Iran where the government did indeed resort to violence. The Shah fell because his rule was based solely on fear, resulting from his ability to inflict death on his subjects. Once the Iranians had lost their fear of death, he became powerless.

Though there was some fighting just before the final victory of the revolution, it was totally irrelevant to its outcome. The regime was defeated because the army, and indeed, the entire state machine, had evaporated.

And yet, though the leadership of Khomeini did much to make the revolution, he doesn't compare

well with Walensa. Rightly, every time the government offered concessions he refused, despite pressure from most of his followers who feared a bloodbath. But to do this he had to harden his heart to the deaths of demonstrators who were dying on the streets of Iran. His refusal to compromise in opposition led easily into a ruthless repression of opponents once he was in government.

It would be better to have a leader like Walensa than this. Better by far to have no leaders at all and for individuals to decide for themselves their own levels of commitment and to take responsibility for any sacrifices made.

### Winning Struggles in Britain Today

At a time when the Tories have just won a massive majority in parliament, we seem a long way from revolution. People don't have the confidence that struggles can be won so the prevailing attitude is that there is no point in trying. Yet there is a sizeable minority in workplaces, the community and the peace movement, who feel that things cannot be allowed to get any worse.

But we must face up to the problems, the government is going to refuse to compromise unless it feels that control is slipping from under its feet. Mere strike action, even in firms as large as British Leyland, is not enough. The capitalist class as a whole do not need British Leyland even if a few individuals might get their fingers burnt in its demise.

Strikers need to use new tactics such as direct action against things the government can't afford to see disrupted in order to win. More than this, it will need a totally different level of commitment. When the Gdansk workers were on strike in 1980, they had no illusion as to what they were taking on, but such illusions are much easier in Britain. Support for an open-ended fast could be a way for us to face up to the difficulties and not take on a struggle without being prepared for the consequences.

The demands might well be quite moderate and limited but to win against a government which puts everything into opposing us would be the real meaning of revolution.



# The Peace Movement

The peace movement has an issue – survival itself – important enough to inspire the all-or-nothing commitment needed. In the campaign against Cruise missiles, we have created for ourselves a demand which is winnable. It is totally reasonable – with so much overkill a demand which leaves the rest of the nuclear arsenal intact might seem too reasonable. Indeed some have argued that Cruise is superfluous and is merely a decoy. Cruise may be conceded so they can deploy the more dangerous Trident.

This is true, but it ignores how Cruise has become a symbol of both the government's authority and the peace movement's strength. Any unilateral moves would be an admission of the necessity for unilateralism for general disarmament. Cruise is symbolic of the whole next generation of nuclear technology; of first strike, computer control and undetectable attacks which make accidental war seem so likely. The danger that the government might install them secretly brings into question the whole apparatus of government secrecy. Just as Solidarity's 'limited' demand for free trade unions brought into question the totalitarian nature of the

Polish regime, so Cruise brings into question the whole military industrial complex.

Cruise was developed, despite severe doubts about its military value, because of the defence industry's political clout and the belief of American politicians that profitable defence firms were essential to the American economy. The British defence industry with its expensive white elephants such as the Challenger tank is supported for similar reasons.

But if Cruise as an issue widens into that of disarmament in general, it brings into question the implicit violence of our society – not just the violence of war but the violence of starvation in the South, of poverty in the inner cities such as Toxteth or Derry, and of industrial accidents. Our nonviolent actions demonstrate the alternative to war which, if we were to succeed, would provide an example to workers in industry.

The government will have to bring in Cruise at the end of 1983, even if it isn't the real thing and they have to use dummies, because the implications of not doing so are so great.

But it is still worth concentrating on a limited demand. To win majority support we need to appear reasonable. If when we have won on Cruise, people have gained the confidence to go further, so much the better.

## Avoiding the issue

But as Cruise's arrival comes closer, CND is desperately playing it down. Many who believe that only elections make changes feel we have lost our chance in June and that we must wait for the next one. But elections tend to confirm what is happening in the rest of society. This is why Heath lost the 'who rules' election in 1974. He quite clearly had already ceased to rule and the voters only confirmed this.

Most people are worried by nuclear weapons but they feel powerless to do anything about it. Deterrent is a pretty irrational idea (what is more crazy than a suicide pact?) but then, anything is better than believing in an apocalypse about which no one can do anything. Only when we can show that ordinary people can stop the missiles will they feel confident enough to support unilateralism.

It is not surprising that those who rely on elections are demoralised, but it would be a mistake to dismiss *Peace News* and people like Bruce Kent so easily. They fear the consequences of going for broke over the Cruise issue and then seeing the peace movement broken by a defeat. They look to a long term build-up of support for peace – what Bruce Kent calls the Wilberforce factor.

But playing it cool is likely to be far more dangerous. As the peace movement loses momentum people will begin to feel that we are getting nowhere and start to drift away.

It is at first paradoxical that those who advocate playing down Cruise are also advocating emphasis on a nuclear freeze which logically should make Cruise a top priority. This shows the difference between what you argue for and what you attempt to achieve. It is worthwhile attempting to stop Cruise whereas a struggle to end all British nuclear weapons would be, at present, futile. But unless we argue for unilateral disarmament, it never will become achievable.

The right wing in CND think that at this moment in time nothing is achievable, so they argue we must concentrate on propaganda for the freeze. Perhaps in the distant future, the freeze will become achievable?



## Trade Unions and Unemployment

There has, for a long time, been a debate in CND over the importance of gaining the support of trade unionists and widening the issue of disarmament to include issues such as unemployment. It is objected that we are likely to alienate as many people as we attract if CND was to take up unemployment as an issue. There is also a self-fulfilling prophecy which says that as there is insufficient support amongst workers, it is not worth the effort to communicate with them. CND's main efforts have been directed towards union bureaucrats, while workers at the grass roots have been all but ignored.

It is true that CND is a predominantly middle class organization but this is because politics tends to be a middle class game with the rules written to exclude working class people.

## The Experience of Central India 1930-31

The civil disobedience campaign initiated by Gandhi's Salt March in 1930 soon extended to a refusal to pay other taxes such as land taxes.

In the United Provinces (Uttar Pradesh), local radicals vaguely aligned to the Congress Party, won the peasants over to the campaign. There was already a tradition of peasant struggles and the world depression had hit the peasantry hard. Independence, they hoped, would provide them with lower taxes and protection against excessive rents. The wealthiest landlords were often allied with the British and the national struggle soon began to coincide with a class struggle as peasants refused to pay rents.

Government revenue plummeted and it is clear that Viceroy Irwin had little choice but to open negotiations with Gandhi. Gandhi interpreted non-violence to mean that one should not take advantage of an opponent in a weak position. He also believed in trusting his enemy. For these reasons he was prepared to accept the vague and inadequate agreement which came to be known as the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

But Gandhi was not quite as naive as he appeared. He relied on his belief that the civil disobedience campaign could easily be restarted if the British failed to honour their side of the agreement.

But the peasantry had made sacrifices to apparently no purpose. In some villages they had deserted their homes en-masse during the campaign and now, with their crops unsown, were now facing a difficult period. In other areas where the division between peasants and landlords was strongest, opposition actually grew stronger for a time despite the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

The Congress Party now dampened down discontent, so as not to endanger the Pact. This was eventually successful – so successful in fact that when, in 1932, Congress was forced to restart the campaign, the response was half-hearted.

In neighbouring Bihar the local Congress was much more closely tied to the small landlords who resented the dominance of the larger landlords. Initially the campaign was as successful as in the United Provinces, but when the British began to impose large fines and impound property, the movement weakened. Congress activists who were quite prepared to face prison were not prepared to see their wealth disappear. They were also somewhat alarmed by the rent strikes in the United Provinces. Similarly, when Congress tried to revive the campaign in 1932 the response was minimal.

But the local Congress Party's indifference, if not hostility, to the aspirations of the peasantry was to have further consequences. Nonviolence became associated with the right wing and with class collaboration and therefore discredited. The lack of any grouping of nonviolent radicals such as existed in the United Provinces meant that the peasants turned to insurrectionary socialism.

When during the second world war, Congress again called a civil disobedience campaign, Bihar was the scene of a violent but totally futile peasant's revolt.



## Making Links

That compromise is the death of radical movements is reinforced by the Indian experience. But it also emphasises the importance of making the movement a popular struggle with direct relevance to peoples' everyday lives.

The connection need not be explicit. Congress nationally defended landlordism but local Congress agitators took a more radical line. In the same way that Independence became a symbol for the aspirations of the Indian peasantry, the bomb could become a symbol of the oppression that working people in a capitalist society face. To do this doesn't need resolutions at conference level, but it will need activists making these links in their propaganda and by our doing things like supporting picket lines.

## Stopping Cruise

Cruise can be stopped if we believe in our ability to do so. The opinion polls show that a majority of people oppose Cruise. This is probably only soft support – a way for people to sit on the fence – but it could become hard if we were to show ourselves as a serious opposition.

Blockades of bases so far have provided publicity and those employed by the state have had their role challenged. They are also a way in which we can discover together the personal strength needed to disobey the diktats of the state and to face the consequences.

But with larger numbers we could directly obstruct the state's wishes. In 1972 the miners struck for a wage claim which totally undermined government policy. With surplus coal stored at a number of depots the government was confident of



sitting things out. The miners responded with mass picketing at these depots. Police efforts failed to keep them open despite many arrests. When the number of pickets at any one depot climbed much above 5000, the government usually admitted defeat and closed the depot.

The miners' interpretation of 'peaceful picketing' was not as strict as the peace movement's interpretation of nonviolence but I do not think the same number of nonviolent blockaders would have been less effective. The miners strike shows what direct action could do.

As well as action to close bases we would need effective blacking by trade unionists, but all this will need a lot of preparation. The large number of blockaders at Upper Heyford were the result of months of organizing, visiting groups and nonviolent preparation workshops.

The government could survive all this by introducing internment camps for arrested activists and using blackleg labour, but if that happened a general strike could become a realistic possibility.

## Open-Ended Fasts

The total commitment needed to defeat the government requires the kind of symbol that an open-ended fast could provide. But there are dangers with fasts. The fast could become a substitute for action by the rest of the movement leaving them passively admiring the superior commitment of the fasters. This is why it is important to make a distinction between a fast and a hunger strike.

A hunger strike is intended to force your opponent to agree to your demands either by causing them to feel guilt, or by inspiring so much hatred that they feel too isolated to go on. A hunger strike is not genuinely nonviolent in that it would be an attack on the self-respect of the individuals in the government. A fast, on the other hand, is a statement that something is so important that no risk is too great to achieve it and faith that it will be achieved. Fasters should not make demands on anyone, even their supporters, nor should they allow themselves to believe that their own actions would achieve their aim.

I sympathise with those who are cautious about open-ended fasts. People could, for instance, find themselves taking on commitments for which they are not ready. But there are others who make an abstract principle of moderation: those who undertake such fasts are accused of violence against themselves. It is good that we do not give more value to people who make greater commitments but these critics have gone to the other extreme. Making sacrifices is seen as not a very nice thing to do.



Dresden after raids in February 1945

We live in a country whose airforce, during the last war, massacred hundreds of thousands of civilians by strategic bombing; a country which is responsible for the deaths of many who are dying of starvation in the South because we import grain to support a meat diet. Against such a ruthless status quo, a reasonable response is likely to be ineffective and tantamount to doing nothing. While we hesitate people are dying.

To defeat the government people will need to take unreasonable risks. When the Gdansk shipyard workers threw out the agreement obtained by their leaders and formed the Inter Factory Strike Committee they were doing something very foolish. They could have found themselves facing police guns. Fortunately for them, their example was imitated throughout Poland.

Most revolutions have needed the example of a group of people prepared to say that things cannot be

allowed to get worse, no matter what the consequences to themselves may be. A fast could be a way for other people to discover that the unreasonable sacrifices needed to bring disarmament were quite reasonable after all.

Fasting must be a personal statement but, to be effective, it has also to be a statement of the movement as a whole. An open-ended fast should only be undertaken when the movement decides to put everything into stopping Cruise – with no going back.

## Learning from the Cruise Campaign

Unfortunately, I don't think we have the confidence to win this time. In discussions around the idea of a fast against Cruise, it has become clear that the majority of the movement have no wish to go for broke over Cruise. They feel that things are not sufficiently desperate – I feel that when things get that desperate it will be too late.

But it is worthwhile recognising it could have been possible. Next time – the arrival of Trident – we might be sufficiently prepared to succeed.

## Our Strengths

Perhaps I am wrong to be pessimistic. The direct action part of the movement has always felt suspicious of leaders, and we are therefore less influenced by the fears of the CND leadership.

We have not been entirely able to do without leaders – Greenham and Upper Heyford Peace Camp (now Dora Road) have both fulfilled this role – but this is leadership of a uniquely limited kind. Regional days of action are planned for December and these probably would not be happening but for people from Dora Road going out and talking to groups in different regions. But, unlike a Walensa, Dora Road could not now stop what they have set in motion.

Our leadership consists of those people who are prepared to organise things which catch the imagination of the rest of the movement. The wide proliferation of overlapping telephone trees and contact lists means that anyone who wishes can take on this role.

By the fluidity of our structures we have escaped the gap between leaders and led which has defeated so many other movements.

But we have learnt to do without the charismatic leadership role of a Ghandi or a Luther King. For the emotional prop these leaders provided we rely on our affinity groups; for orators we rely on people who, when speaking from courtroom docks, substitute deeply felt feelings for eloquence.

Unfortunately the direct action movement is not the peace movement as a whole, and we are not large enough to stop Cruise on our own. By persuasion and by the example of our own actions in December we must demonstrate the possibility of success. We have also got to start involving those people who sympathise with nuclear disarmament but are alienated by CND's bureaucratic structure. If we do make the regional days of action in December a success then we might well stop Cruise in the spring.



# The Failure of the Left

The left should have been providing a radical alternative to the right in CND. Not only has it failed to do so, it has actually been quite destructive. This is because they have failed to understand the movement they have become active in.

The worst example has been the Socialist Workers Party. Much of what they say about the need to get the issue of nuclear disarmament taken up in workplaces, I agree with. But their actions within the peace movement seem to have been almost deliberately designed to antagonise people. Either they are just unbelievably clumsy or they thought a more polarised movement would help their recruiting drive.

Most other groups have been more sympathetic, but their involvement has been motivated more by a wish to be where the action is than by any deep commitment to peace. They are critical of our nonviolence, seeing it as ineffective in the face of violence. Having spent years uncritically supporting the violence of struggles in Vietnam, Ireland and other countries, they are uncomfortable with the idea that violence is wrong.

It is true that starvation, or forcing people to live in slums, is just as violent as killing people with guns but I refuse to accept that "counter violence" is somehow different from other forms of violence. Sometimes the violence of one side exceeds the other so much, that we are forced to take sides. But the left does not take sides in violent conflicts only where there is no alternative. They are for instance much

happier supporting the violent opposition in El Salvador than the nonviolent opposition in Brazil.

Failure to resort to violence is equated with reformism – those who try for an end to violence are ignored or ridiculed. If it is wrong and patronising to criticise Southern struggles for being violent why is it not equally wrong to attack, as the left often does, those who are afraid of violence.

It is unlikely that criticism of violent struggles will influence those directly involved but is important for us to feel free to criticise others who use violence in order to defend our own nonviolence. Last year the London Peace Camp was brutally attacked by a number of drunken fascists. The Peace Campers however refused to offer resistance or to press charges.

*Anti Nuclear Action*, a magazine produced by the libertarian marxist group Big Flame, published an article attacking them for this. It implied that the peace campers were exercising a freedom to choose nonviolence not open to black or working class people. To defend our right to be nonviolent against such criticisms we must inevitably question the necessity for violence used by other people.

## The Workers Bomb Mark II

There are far fewer people today than in the sixties who believe that the kind of society we want exists in the Soviet Union, but the idea that Russian nukes are somehow less bad than NATO nukes lives on.

Much of the reason for this is a lack of confidence in a popular method of resisting invasion. Rather than demonstrate how there is an alternative way of preserving our limited freedoms, they have to convince themselves that Russia has no intention of invading. The Socialist Workers Party, to their credit, do face this issue and though their alternative – guerrilla war by the people as a whole – is hardly nonviolent it does at least avoid wishful thinking about the Soviets' good intentions. The direct action movement need not fear a Russian invasion either – if direct action is successful against our own government we will have gained the experience needed to use the same tactics against the Russians.

Many Marxist groups consider that Russia had no choice and was therefore justified in its initial development of nuclear weapons. It is true that American airforce generals were planning an attack on Russia – whether an unprovoked attack would have been politically possible is another matter – but to say that Russia ensured its survival by relying on the threat of retaliation is to justify the doctrine of deterrent. (One revolutionary commented to me during an argument that the peace movement's aim was to restore deterrent which had broken down due to ideas of limited nuclear war and first strike. I don't believe we are talking about the same movement.)

Deterrent is a totally immoral idea. For it to be credible you have to be prepared for millions of innocent civilians to be killed as a punishment for an attack over which they had no control. Of course it is argued that such a crime need never be committed because the other side, knowing the consequences, will never attack. But there is always the danger of your enemy calling your bluff. Morally, the intention to commit evil is as bad as its execution.

It was a dangerously bad move not just from a moral but from a practical point of view. In the first few years after the explosion of Russia's first bomb America still had first strike capability. If the American military were tempted to nuke a Russia with no nuclear weapons, how much greater would have been the temptation when Russia was developing its own weapons. If the U.S. didn't act quickly Russia would soon be able to effectively wage nuclear war.

Russia also had a first use policy. So primitive was the Soviet nuclear armoury – their missiles took over a week to get aloft – that Russia's only chance to inflict damage would have been by anticipating when the U.S. was preparing to start a nuclear war and hit first. Russia's development of nuclear weapons brought the world closer to nuclear war than at any time except possibly today.

That morality and practicalities lead to the same conclusion should be no surprise. Total self-interest has an appealing logic – but it is essentially a kind of madness.

## Military Aid to the South

The struggles of the South which Marxists have supported – Vietnam, Nicaragua and so on – have relied on arms from the Soviet bloc. Russia probably would not have risked doing this if America had been

able to threaten it with nuclear destruction. Therefore, so the argument goes, Russian nuclear parity is necessary for the victory of popular movements.

But in these revolutionary wars it has always been authoritarian Stalinists who have predominated. This is not surprising as war is essentially authoritarian and tends to encourage a bureaucratic command. Guerrilla warfare is especially prone to this as the struggle becomes exclusively military. In a conventional civil war, such as in Spain in 1936, workers and peasants were able to begin building a new society, but in guerrilla war only those taking up arms count. The people's role is merely passive support.

Trotskyists in Vietnam and Nicaragua have been suppressed by 'revolutionary' regimes. It is where armed struggle has taken only a minor role (and therefore there was no need for Soviet support) that non-stalinist Marxists have made an impact, for example, Trotskyists in Bolivia after the 1952 revolution and, more recently, the MIR in Chile.

That such Marxists should support a situation which inevitably leads to the victory of their opponents shows the ambivalence of their ideals. Though disturbed by the anti-working class actions of regimes such as the USSR they are unable to break with the idea that the means are justified by the end.

## Vanguardism

Trotskyism holds with the basic Leninist idea – originally opposed by Trotsky himself – that the revolutionary party knows best. They do not see themselves as equal members of a popular movement but as the vanguard who must educate the unenlightened to a true revolutionary consciousness.

It is because I am opposed to this contempt for ordinary people that I consider myself an anarchist. To me anarchism is about collectively coming together as equals to change society. Anarchism is nothing unless it is part of a wider social movement. Loyalty to an anarchist movement is a contradiction in terms. People's self-activity and their confidence in their ability to change things is what matters and anarchism only has a value in so far as it can encourage this.

But some anarchists take a totally different meaning from anarchism. Instead of anarchism being about cooperation, they see it as expressing their right to react in any way they wish, irrespective of how others feel.

But their actions are likely to affect others. When at Greenham Common women cut the fence during the 5 day blockade, it was only after discussing it amongst themselves. Everyone arrested knew what they were letting themselves in for. On other occasions where damage to property has occurred there has not been this prior consensus and people, who had not intended to get involved, have been arrested.

Spontaneity is great provided people know each other well enough to have the trust that no-one will want to do something directly in conflict with what



B-52: Main U.S. nuclear bomber since the fifties

the others feel. At Greenham Common this is usually the case. However, at mixed actions where not everyone agrees with nonviolence, democracy begins to become more important.

I do not accept the pure pacifist position that it is violence to attempt to undermine the government's power as I do not accept that the government has any right to that power. I feel I have an obligation to use any means not personally affecting the individuals in the state to obstruct its violence. By the same token I do not believe we are attacking anyone's freedom to try and prevent violence being used by people acting with us.

There is much in common between Trotskyist vanguardism and the individualism of some anarchists. Both have a similar contempt for ordinary people. The difference is that Trotskyist vanguardists want to control the masses while the anarchist variant wishes to ignore them. Direct action therefore becomes an end in itself and how other people see our actions is seen as irrelevant. Nonviolence becomes merely a personal moral issue that people at the same action can make different choices over.

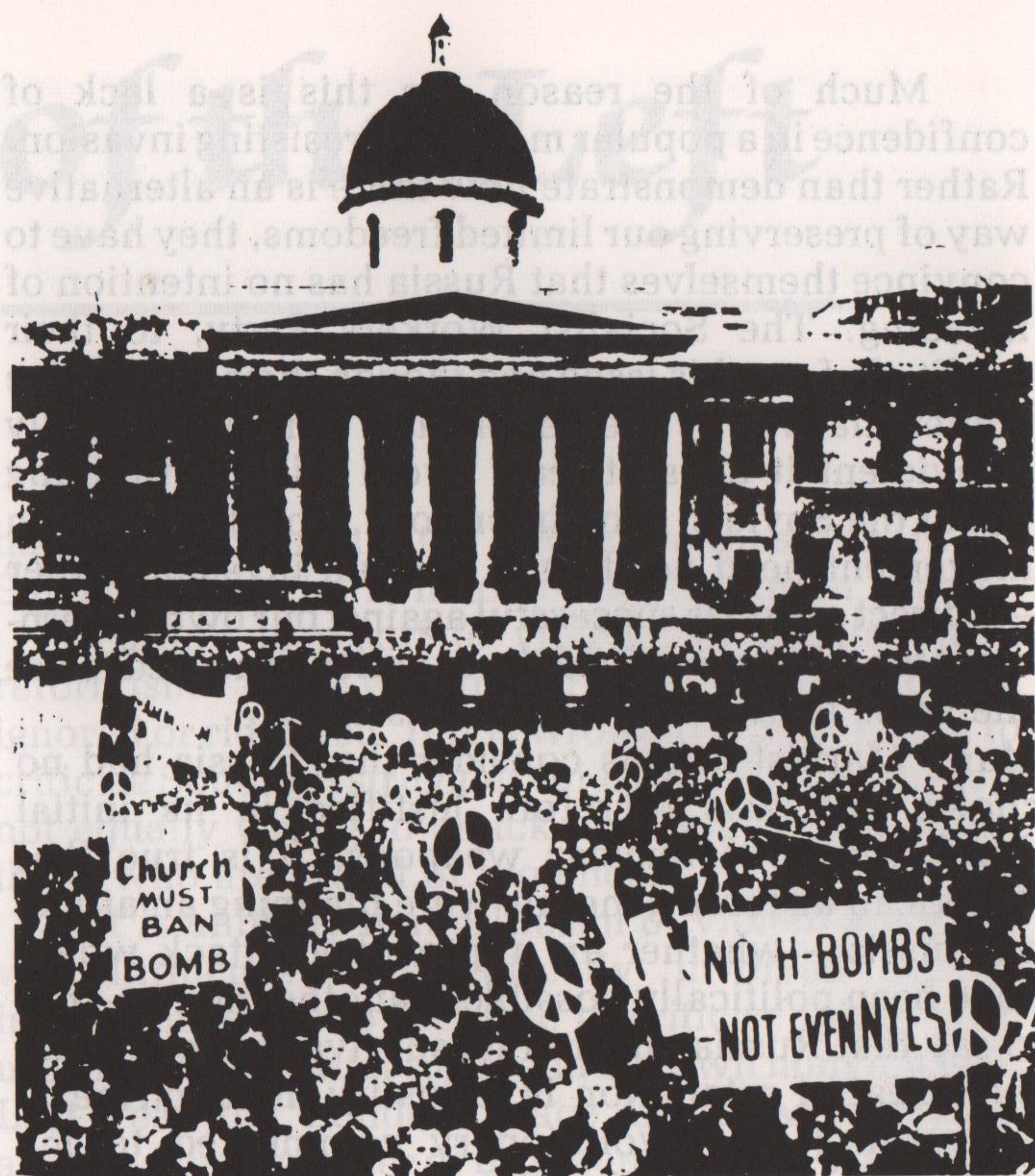
But a minority, however dedicated, can never build a free society on their own. Repression could always stop a direct action movement which was politically isolated from the rest of society. The best defence against repression is sympathy strikes amongst previously uninvolved workers. If direct action was to succeed without the active support of the working class as a whole it would be because the government had toned down its reactions for fear of the working class becoming involved.

Nonviolence needs to be accepted at least as a tactic by everyone participating in direct action. Violence used against us will strengthen us if we refuse to respond in kind. It will confuse those ordered against us and win greater sympathy from those not yet actively involved. If we do respond with violence the initial violence against us will be seen by others as justified.

### The First Wave

The original direct actionists of the fifties were strongly influenced by Gandhian ideals. A strong element of Gandhi's thought was the idea of limiting the struggle sufficiently for your enemy to see the justice of your cause. Ultimately Gandhi hoped that his opponent would be convinced by his own suffering so that his opponent would agree with him. Many of the original pacifists therefore sought to confine their aims to the limited one of nuclear disarmament and any public reference to pacifism was frowned on.

Because moderation was justified in terms of nonviolence, most of those who saw that unilateral disarmament challenged the whole nature of modern capitalist society turned to insurrectionary brands of anarchism, which kept to nonviolence for purely tactical reasons. Anarchism and pacifism are not necessarily conflicting ideas indeed arguably they are the same. Violence is by nature authoritarian and so, logically, should be rejected by anarchists, while it is hard to see how a state and laws could continue to



exist without the use of violence. Unfortunately only a few people around at the time took this anarcho-pacifist position.

In the early sixties Maoism became fashionable. Constantly denounced in the capitalist press, it gained an undeserved credibility. Emotionally, insurrectionary anarchism has a lot in common with Maoism even if intellectually Maoism has more in common with Stalinism. Many people previously sympathetic to anarchism became attracted to the "real" achievements of Maoism in China.

### The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign

The anti-militarist movement split finally over the Vietnam war. The ideological split was between those in the Committee of 100 who took an anti-war position and those who went off and formed the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign based on support for a North Vietnamese victory.

But the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign also combined an interest in action for its own sake and a contempt for non-activists. It specialised in organizing ostensibly peaceful, but in practice violent, demonstrations in Grosvenor Square. The violence involved – throwing stones from the back of a demonstration – needed much less commitment than nonviolent tactics with much less risk of arrest.

The Vietnam Solidarity Campaign became the public image of the anti-militarist movement, thus attracting people who got a kick out of violence. This aggression alienated others who, as a result, decided that all political action was the same as the establishment's game and put their energy into lifestyle politics. Radical politics became the pastime of isolated politicians receiving no sympathy from the rest of society.

By this late stage collapse of the direct action movement was probably inevitable. The Committee of 100 was at the time too divided to present an

effective alternative. What actions it did organise – encouraging American soldiers to desert for example – was not the kind of activity easily publicised, although more of a threat to the state. Direct action had lost its novelty value and many activists were worn out by several years in and out of prison. Parallel to this, the pacifist movement in America split with the advent of Black Power. But if there had been a larger anarchist pacifist input earlier on, things need never have got to this point.

### Stopping History from Repeating Itself

A large minority of those initially involved in planning for the recent 'Stop the City' action had a contempt for ordinary people as did the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign. By contrast those who do believe in nonviolence tend to take it for granted and do not bother to put the arguments in its favour.

Yet the danger of some supporters of a nonviolent movement taking the illusionary short cut of violence has always been a problem. At a time when rioting is a regular occurrence in Britain's inner cities this is a far greater danger than in the sixties. Unless nonviolence can show itself as a practical alternative many will turn to the example of Northern Ireland.

To avoid the fate of the Committee of 100 we need to ensure our actions are not only more radical, but are seen to be more radical, than actions initiated by people prepared to use violence. We also need to put reasoned arguments why nonviolent tactics which attempt to win the sympathy of the majority of people are more effective than violence.

### Anger

Nonviolence simply as a tactic would be pretty empty. It must mean more than just the absence of physical harm to those who are resisting – it also means doing so without anger. Many middle class radicals are attracted to anger as being more real and proletarian than their good intentions. Hence the violent rhetoric of much of the revolutionary left. Most people I have worked with in various factories, however, are alienated by this aggression.

Often the left manages to say quite mild things in a very vitriolic way. How they say it becomes more important than the content. They are amazed that the peace movement does not see that demonstrations make a bigger impact by shouting slogans than singing songs. But if we express ourselves in a very soft way the content of what we say is actually pretty heavy. We will politely explain to magistrates how they are indirectly responsible for mass murder. What we are opposing is so terrible that the horror speaks for itself. We have no need for anger to provide extra emphasis.

Anger is like pain: not something desirable but a sign that something is wrong. As a result of being in prison I felt angry but this was because I could see no practical way to resist the loads of petty rules which surrounded me. Anger is a sign that there is something wrong with your situation and that you need to find a way to start to change things. Once we

start to resist we end the need for anger. Powerlessness causes anger to fester with frustration into hatred but nonviolence allows us to assert our power without the need to feel hatred.

### The Mistake of the Left

I have been very critical of the revolutionary left but it is a tradition I still feel part of. Their mistake has been to adopt the demand for unilateral disarmament without realising that the peace movement challenges many of their old ideas. They therefore dismiss the different attitudes we have adopted as a lack of revolutionary consciousness. But this could apply to anyone who comes to our movement without being prepared to question their old ideas. Tory supporters who join CND and expect disarmament to leave conventional armies and corporate capitalism intact are equally mistaken. How could such a world remain peaceful with continuing mass starvation in the South. The peace movement is not a single issue campaign – it is about a whole new way of living.

## Conclusion

The peace movement has rightly been more concerned with action than theory. Often following our intuition has been more effective than thinking things out.

But we are no longer able to do this. Thatcher's landslide victory has made many people feel we need to be cautious. This pamphlet is intended to explain why I think such caution is not only unnecessary but dangerous. We have real opportunities it would be tragic to let them slip away.

