

been put in by the politicians. In January there was a meeting between Shamir and some reservists serving in Nablus, broadcast on Israeli TV, in which one soldier, expressing the thoughts of many, complained that "to create order in the Casbah, we have to brutalise innocents, to make them fear us (...). In the street I catch a man who has a worker's hands like me, and I have to beat him (...). An oppressive rule cannot be enforced without oppression."

Class divisions among Jews have been showing through even in the supposedly communal kibbutzim. At Kadarim, workers managed to stop management's plans to produce rubber bullets for the suppression of the intifada, while at K'ramim members of a kibbutz protested at the bureaucrats' public condemnation of three of their number caught painting slogans in support of the intifada.

Some Jewish protesters have themselves come up against State repression. Earlier in the year police fired tear gas when members of Dai la Kibush (Enough Occupation) mingled with Palestinians visiting relatives at Megiddo prison in northern Israel. A petrol bomb was thrown at a police vehicle.

Meanwhile, groups of Israeli Jews are increasingly visiting the occupied territories, to help rebuild houses demolished by the army, to join protests, or just to show support. In Tel Aviv University, students have organised a sit-in against the forcible segregation of Jewish and Arab students, while at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, students have invited Arab students to join them from universities closed by the authorities on the West Bank.

Most Jewish support for the intifada is still couched in terms of nationalism and the "two-State solution", but it is nonetheless true that more and more Jews throughout the world are dissociating themselves from the policies of the Israeli State, and even from Zionism itself.

E) The intifada is causing major problems for the Israeli economy:

1) The conflict is costly, both in direct terms and in terms of production lost through call-up. The cost of detention centres in the occupied territories alone amounted to 100m shekels (£33m) by April.

2) After a mere seven months of trouble, tax revenues from the occupied territories had fallen by 40% due to resistance.

3) Tourism, officially Israel's main export industry (although who can tell the real profit made from foreign trade in weapons, security and military advice?), has been hit hard. Fewer holiday-makers want to go to a country whose violence is broadcast across the world.

Nowadays even hotel-owners are calling for a "peaceful political solution".

4) Strikes by Palestinian workers and the current blockade of Gaza have cut off an important supply of cheap labour to small industry and the building trade.

Order and the profit-rate are thus being undermined by a movement that is wider than simply a "Palestinian intifada", a movement impelled by both Arabs and a significant minority of Jews. As the economy deteriorates, all participants in this movement are likely to come under heavier attack one way or another (in the last month for instance the maximum period of detention without trial has been doubled to one year). It is practical unity in resistance to this attack, and in offensives against both the Jewish State and the Palestinian Statist *wanna-bes*, that can erode the apartheid system that is part of the material basis of local Zionism and anti-Semitism. A democratic *negotiated solution* would in itself be a defeat for the resistance because it would reinforce apartheid by imprisoning Jews and Arabs within separate States. Given the economic crisis this would lead to an exacerbation of the *bad side* of recent developments in the region, such as the growth of Islamic fundamentalism (and its corollary, the "socialism of imbeciles", namely anti-Semitism) and the rise of Jewish fascism, which on the West Bank is already spreading from religious fruitcakes to infect the yuppies. Rabbi Kahane's Kach ("Thus") party already advocates the expulsion of Arabs from Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

The sum total of what we are saying is that the proletariat must destroy the "peaceful democratic solution" before the fascists do.

For those of you who thought The Red Menace had ground to halt during the summer, here is a bumper issue featuring the first in occasional series of supplements. Our resources are being stretched as we develop more contacts, particularly overseas. If you find RM useful and would like to see it continue, we would like you to contribute - we await your interesting articles/letters, and need money as we are determined that RM should be freely available.

THE RED MENACE
BM WILD
LONDON WC1N 3XX
ENGLAND

THE RED MENACE

No.4

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1989

FREE

MORE MISERY NOW!

Forced to lie in the sun instead of sit in front of a VDU...to stay in bed instead of going to work...these have been some of the horrific privations inflicted on commuters by the last few months' transport strikes. If this is misery, give us more of it!

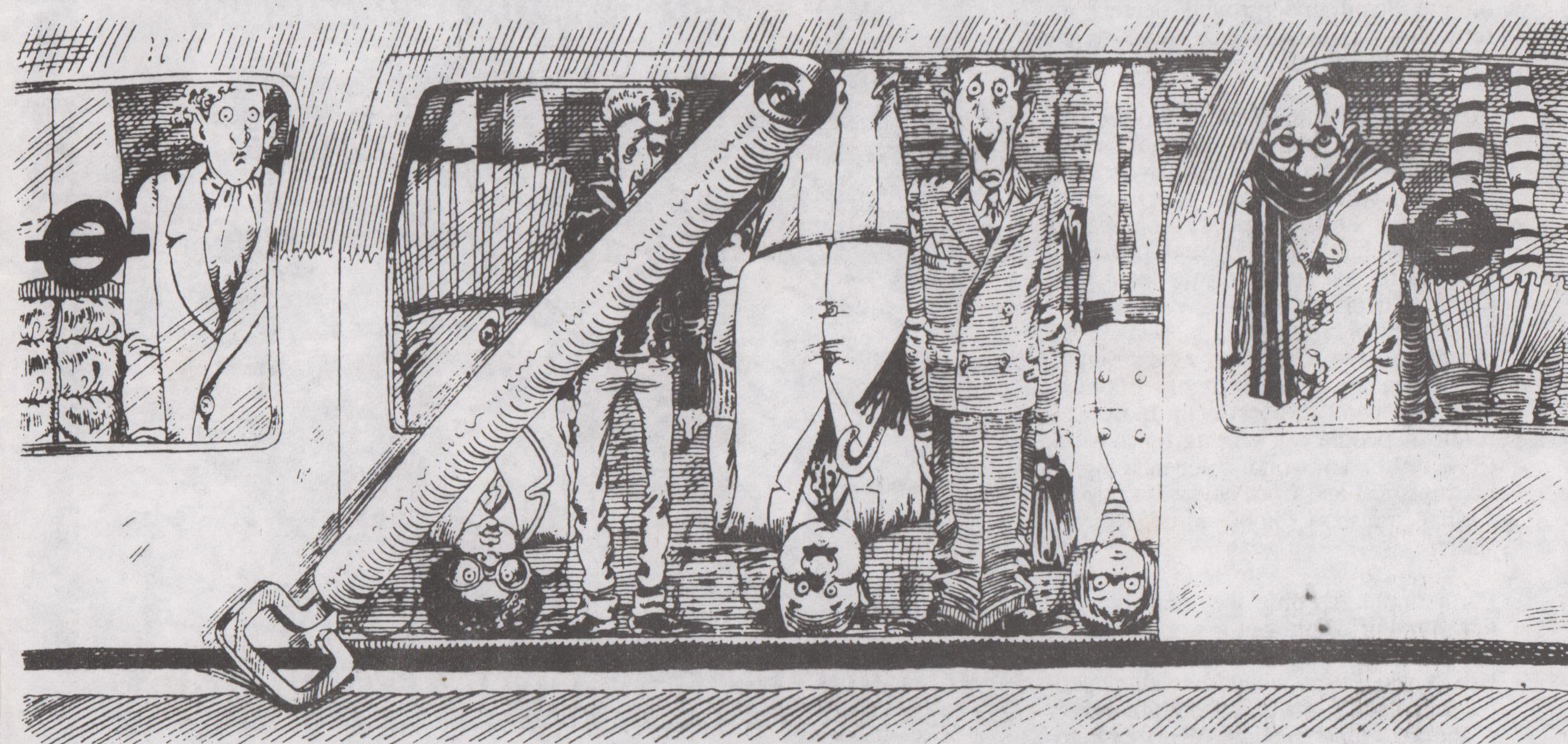
Our rulers' response to these strikes has been to talk of banning strikes in "essential services" and bringing in new laws against wildcat action. Their attempts to mobilise 'public opinion' against the strikes on the basis of the supposed misery they caused to commuters were largely unsuccessful however. Hundreds of spaces in the emergency car parks set up in Hyde Park and elsewhere in London remained empty, as people simply used the strikes as an excuse to stay off work, or at least arrive as late as possible. Indeed from April, when the first strikes began on the London Underground, until early August, many people were on what amounted to an unofficial 4 day week. With all the strikes now apparently settled, people everywhere can be heard moaning about the return to 'normality'.

Real misery consists of having to spend time (for which we are not even paid) travelling to and from work every day in inhuman conditions. Overcrowded trains, broken down escalators (one in three is out of order on the London Underground), automatic ticket barriers - these are just some of the daily hazards we face. And as conditions deteriorate the threat of an 'accident' like the King's Cross Underground fire (which killed 31 people in November 1987) constantly hangs over us. A secret report leaked at the end of August identifies 126 fire risks at Tottenham Court Road tube station alone. All this just to get to a place where most of us don't want to go - the office or factory.

Apart from planning to increase fares by 20% to reduce numbers in the rush hour, London Transport's main attempt to 'improve' matters appears to be a campaign of colourful posters extolling the wonders of the tube system and featuring a series of specially commissioned paintings. (Once again artists, those specialists of creativity, are exposed as the vanguard of marketing, selling us a way of life that denies the real creative powers of the rest of us).

"SOD THE UNION"

The strikes involved at various times train drivers and station staff on British Rail and the London Underground, bus drivers and bus maintenance workers. For the most part, they have been limited to relatively ineffective one day action and have remained firmly under the control of the unions. There have been some interesting developments though, particularly on the London Underground, where the strike movement for a £64 a week pay rise was instigated after an unofficial mass meeting of 700 drivers in March. Subsequent mass meetings involved members of the NUR and ASLEF, both of which unions opposed the strikes. ASLEF stated "All members are instructed by this Executive Committee not to participate in unofficial action and to work normally". But as one train operator put it, "A lot of them are saying 'Sod the Union'." Eventually the unions reestablished control after declaring the strikes official and seizing the initiative in other transport strikes. However many drivers were furious when the unions called off the strikes on the 9th August after accepting a pay rise of up to £16 a week. The next day many of them staged an unofficial strike, and one driver was quoted as saying: "If those union leaders who accepted the deal had turned up in



person there would have been a riot". If the unions failed to immediately halt strikes, they gave London Regional Transport the confidence to threaten to sack drivers taking any future unofficial action. Faced with this prospect, mass meetings of drivers decided to suspend strikes.

Bus drivers at the Central Scottish Bus Group also defied "their" union during their 7 week strike (which finished at the end of May). Against TGWU orders, unofficial pickets successfully halted work on a number of occasions at depots belonging to CSBG's parent company.

A major weakness of the strikes was their sectionalism. Despite the obvious similarities between their respective situations there was little attempt to unify the struggles of different groups of transport workers (let alone unify these with other recent strikes by dockers, steel erectors, and workers in the oil industry, local government, passport offices, the BBC, etc.), beyond sometimes striking on the same day. Some of the unofficial co-ordinators of the tube drivers' strikes were even reluctant to take joint action with station staff on the underground.

The strikes at least demonstrated the potential that exists when different groups of workers strike simultaneously. On one fine day, June 21st, tube, bus, and British Rail workers were all on strike in London, virtually bringing the city to a halt (an appeal by the organisers of a Billy Graham rally that night to cancel the strikes was ignored- perhaps this is why LRT chairman Wilfrid Newton accused ASLEF members who joined the action unofficially of being brought out by "ungodly" elements).

Unfortunately strikers didn't attempt to stop the city completely by blocking roads, unlike in Spain where in June striking bus drivers barricaded the main road to Madrid airport during the rush hour! There was some disruption to roads in North East England on the 12th July though when striking council workers closed the Tyne Tunnel on the same day as a rail strike.

STOP THE CITY

In some quarters (including the Independent's letter column) it has been suggested that transport workers should stage a 'social strike', i.e. instead of striking they should turn up to work but refuse to collect any fares. Such an approach was adopted earlier this year in South Korea for instance, when workers on the Seoul underground opened the turnstiles and offered free travel to the system's 2.5 million passengers.

We are opposed to this tactic in the current context, firstly because it would massively decrease the effectiveness of transport workers' strikes. It is true that the profits of the transport companies would be hit, but the real power of workers in this sector comes from their ability to deprive capital as a whole of its most valuable resource- labour. LRT claims to have lost £18m as a result of the 14 one day tube stoppages. But business in general has lost a lot more as a result of people not turning up to work (85% of London workers depend on public transport) and from having to pay for special transport, hotel bills, etc. for staff.

Furthermore, keeping the transport system running would put a stop to one of the most subversive aspects of such strikes- the way in which they allow people to reclaim some time from the wheels of the workaday machine. We need to re-

member that most people spend hours travelling every week because they have to not because they want to.

Of course, there are occasions when social strikes of one kind or another are a good idea. In Peking, railway workers allowed people to travel without tickets so that they could participate in the recent ill-fated demonstrations. But there is a world of difference between using transport for our own ends, and self-managing the circulation of commodities, including human beings.

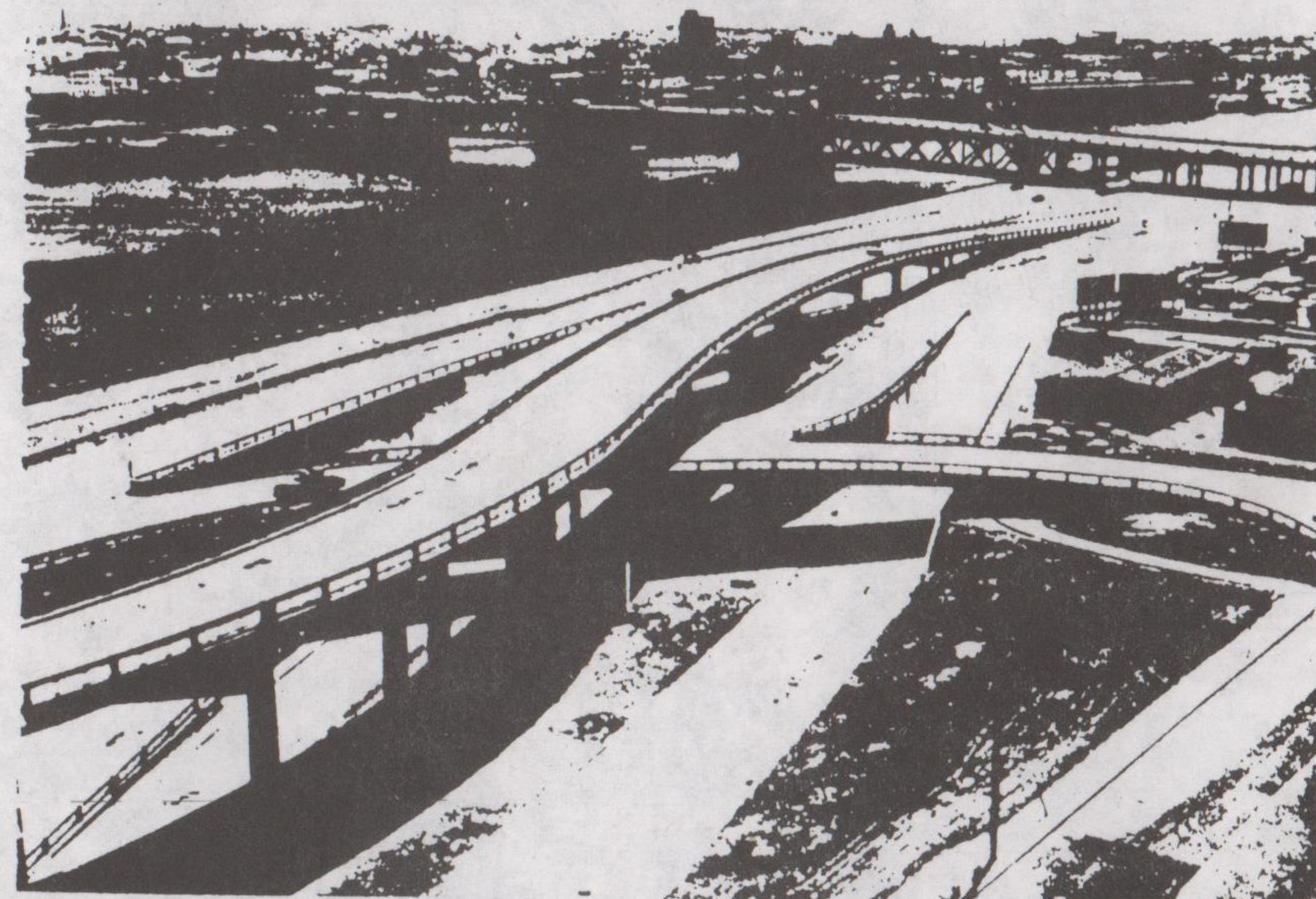
COMMON INTERESTS

Successful transport strikes benefit users not just by giving them more free time, but also because they increase the strength of transport workers, putting them in a better position to impose improvements in safety. The common interest between those of us travelling to work and those of us working in the business of travel is clear. Last year train drivers on British Rail's Eastern Region went on strike in a dispute over unsafe braking systems, a threat to passengers as well as drivers. At about the same time there were several 'commuter revolts' on the London Underground, with passengers refusing to leave diverted trains. One result of this was the recruitment of 51 new drivers on the Northern Line.

Another site of struggle has been over plans to extend the transport system by building new road and rail links. In the process many homes and areas of wilderness face destruction. It is planned for instance to build a four lane motorway through Oxleas Wood, a large area of ancient woodland in South East London. One weakness of opposition to such development is that it generally accepts that there is a transport crisis, and proposes alternative ways of solving it. What nobody seems to be saying is that it is not a question of cars versus trains, or this route against that route, but of why so many people have to travel in the first place. It seems clear that the daily mass movement from A to B and back again is neither freely undertaken, nor does it satisfy any needs except those of capital.

In future strikes a positive development would be for transport workers, users and other interested proletarians to get together (outside of the control of the unions and parties) to wage a struggle on the basis of *our* need.

OBSCENIC VIEW



CONCRETINIZATION

dadata
PO BOX 33 STILLWATER PA 17878, USA

ISRAEL, PALESTINE: TWO STATES TOO MANY

Despite its position as a local superpower with one of the best-trained and best-equipped armies in the world, the State of Israel has been rocked by a major movement of resistance for nearly two years. Shamir's cabinet might be able to kidnap Koran-pusher Sheikh Obeid, but it has been incapable of crushing the intifada. Although the rulers of Israel could in the future use far more force than they have done already, and would not balk, for example, at using chemical weapons on Nablus as Iraq did on Halabjah last year, they and their counterparts in all the countries seeking representation at a future "peace conference" can only dream of discovering a *final solution* to the 'proletarian problem'.

Ever since the second world war the Great Powers have called for the institutionalisation of apartheid in Palestine. Once the idea of a "land without people for a people without land" had been generally accepted as bullshit, *separate development* for Jews and Arabs became official UN policy in 1947. Borders changed, a minority of Arabs became Israeli citizens, expropriations continued and diplomatic policies altered, but the basic principle was restated by UN Resolution 242 in 1967 and by the 3 parties to the Camp David accords in 1978. Last year even the PLO dropped its demands for a non-racial capitalist State of "all Palestinians" (i.e. including Jews) and theatrically declared the independence of a Palestinian "Arab State"... "in the name of God".

Although Israel has never recognised eventual Palestinian sovereignty over anything, there is a clear feeling among some factions of the Israeli ruling class that maybe, just maybe, the PLO might be able to ensure social peace in the occupied territories, and it might be worth making a few concessions to help them do it. There has been talk of releasing hundreds of "PLO activists" from jail if Arafat promises to "call off the intifada". But in reality any kind of short-term "solution" will run into problems for numerous reasons:

A) *The intifada has its own logic*, through the cycle of resistance and repression, not controllable by the PLO or anyone else. For example, in Beit Sakour on the West Bank last year, the repression of a campaign of "victory gardens" designed to free the town from dependence on the occupation authorities led to a stepping up of the struggle, first through

the withholding of all tax, then the handing in of ID cards. The Palestinian insurgents could certainly teach us a thing or two about how to oppose the poll tax- on 14th August a tax collector's car was petrol bombed on the West Bank.

B) The intifada has strengthened the movement of Palestinians within pre-1967 Israel. For instance, on "Land Day" in March (the annual protest against the expropriation of Arab land), they staged a one-day general strike. The interests of the 700,000 Israeli Palestinians (17% of the Israeli population) are ignored by the "two-State solution". In fact the creation of a Palestinian State or semi-State would probably be used as an excuse to expel these Israeli Arabs, either directly or through harassment.

C) We cannot forget the Palestinians in exile throughout the Middle East, western Europe and the US. In West Germany 70,000 are faced with the threat of deportation. In Jordan and the Lebanon (particularly in the rebellious Arkoub region), Palestinian proletarians are showing that they have interests wherever they are, not just in the area called Palestine. A "State of all the Arab Palestinians" is as much of a bourgeois pipe-dream as the Zionist nonsense of a homeland for all Jews.

D) The intifada is accentuating the divisions within Israel. First, there has been increasing direct resistance to repression of the intifada. Hundreds of army reservists have refused to serve in the occupied territories, and some in the mass detention camps as well, supported by their organisation Yesh Gvul - "*There is a limit*" or "*There is a border*" (PO Box 6953, Jerusalem 91068). This group was originally formed in 1982 by those refusing to do military service in the Lebanon. Today Yesh Gvul *refuseniks* pledge: "*We shall refuse to take part in suppressing the uprising and insurrection in the occupied territories.*" Pressure on Yesh Gvul activists has been recently intensified with some facing charges of 'incitement to mutiny'. Meanwhile a smaller, but growing organisation has been set up by those completely refusing military service.

Those serving have also increasingly protested, both against the extended length of reserve service, and against the situation they have been put in by the politicians. In January there

(Continued from front page)

industrial mechanicalness, from automation to word processing and robots, a cycle which renders humans inessential has come into being, and that today 'the development of the productive forces is simply an expression of the domination of commodities'.

A long article in **Demolition Derby** criticises anarcho-syndicalism, in particular the version of it espoused by the U.S. leftist outfit the **Workers Solidarity Alliance**. The ideology of self-management, whose 'radical' horizons stretch no further than democratically running the existing factory system, is subjected to a well-deserved demolition job. There is also a good anti-nationalism piece, translated from **Brouillon pour une critique sociale** (another Montreal-based journal).

A criticism we would make of some people in the 'primitivist' scene is that they have abandoned any class perspective and talk solely in terms of a struggle between humanity and capital (see for instance the text 'Countering the mystique of the proletariat' by **Interrogations**, translated in the August issue of **Fifth Estate**). We would remind them that the despoliation of our planet, the massacres of Beijing, Halabjah and

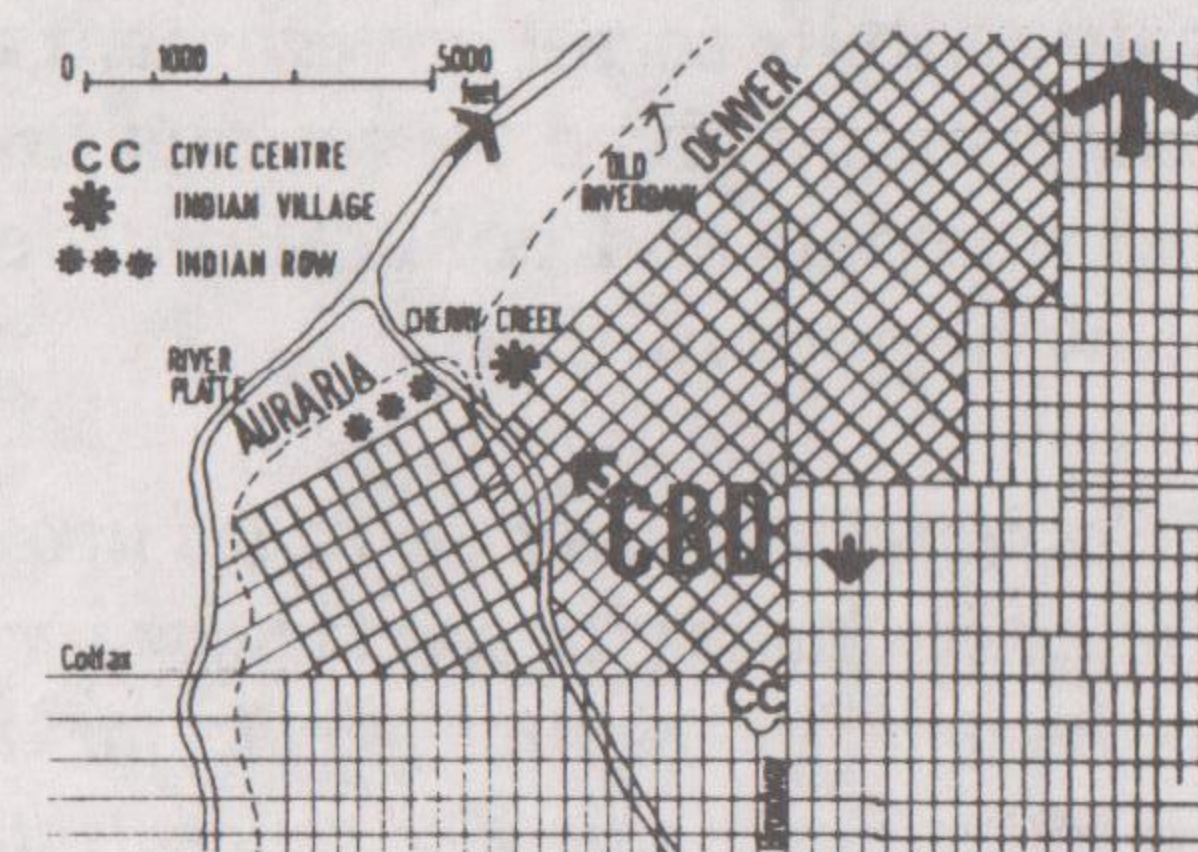


Figure 9.50 - Denver, Colorado, the modern centre-city plan with Auraria and Denver City as founded on opposite sides of Cherry Creek, immediately above the junction with the major river Platte. The National Land Grid was imposed with the alignment of Broadway and Colfax Avenue. (The viewpoints of the two photographs of old Denver are given as their respective figure numbers.)

RETURN

- the case against zionism/ zionism and jewish identity (March 1989).

Return are a group who "hope to become a focus and a voice for those Jews and others who are opposed to the Israeli state and its policies". This magazine is based on a conference they held in London last year.

As well as examining the Israeli oppression of Palestinians, it is argued that the interests of the Israeli state conflict with those of most Jews. Within Israel for instance Yiddish, Sephardi and Mizrahi cultures have all suffered at the hands of a state imposed, and in many ways artificial, Hebrew culture. As far as Jews outside of Israel are concerned, one article suggests (somewhat questionably), there is "a colonial relationship between Israel and the diaspora, where Jewish communities are drained politically, culturally and economically to the benefit of Israel".

ZIONISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM

A number of articles demonstrate quite clearly how zionism has often co-operated with, rather than confronted anti-semitism. Some zionists collaborated with the nazis before and during the second world war (both agreed that Jews didn't belong in Europe), and more recently some zionist leaders have feted the French fascist Le Pen, who combines anti-semitism with an anti-arab and pro-Israel stance.

Israel maintained friendly relations with the Argentinian Junta (1976-1983) despite widespread official anti-semitism there: of the 30,000 people 'disappeared' (i.e. murdered by the state) in this period, some 10% were Jews, despite Jewish people comprising no more than 1% of the total population. The group **Jewish Mothers of the Disappeared** responded by

elsewhere, etc., etc., were masterminded not by the evil spirits of a metaphysical capital, but by our rulers who are human, all too human. A classless society is something to strive for, but realising it first involves a class struggle against the human defenders of capital. Encouragingly one of the contributors to **Demolition Derby** does state that he actively supported the printworkers strike at Wapping a couple of years ago. Where exactly **Demolition Derby** stand on the question of class will hopefully be made clearer in future issues.

addresses of groups mentioned:

Demolition Derby, C.P. 1554, Succ. B, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3B 3L2

Brouillon pour une critique sociale, C.P. 5209, Succursale "C", Montreal, Canada H2X 3N2.

Fifth Estate, P.O. Box 02548, Detroit, MI 48202, USA.

Interrogations pour la communauté humaine, c/o I.S., B.P. 243, 75564 Paris Cedex 12, France.

This review section is the first in an occasional series of supplements. Please send us any interesting publications which would be suitable for review.

Red Menace,
BM WILD,
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England

Operating according to the same logic, a Palestinian state would suppress proletarian insurgency as ruthlessly as any other state, including Israel. For confirmation of this we need look no further than Algeria where the F.L.N., yesterday's national liberation movement and exemplary anti-zionists, happily massacred those staging their own local Intifada last December.

We do not assert that all states are identical, or even that at certain times it wouldn't be preferable to live under one state rather than another. It is quite understandable for instance that Jews should have wished to live anywhere else than in nazi-occupied Europe. It is not enough however to attack particular frameworks for exploitation, such as zionism or fascism. We need to attack the whole basis of these phenomena: capital and the state. As Jean Barrot has put it: "The proletariat will destroy totalitarianism only by destroying democracy and all political forms at the same time. Until then there will be a succession of 'fascist' and 'democratic' regimes in time and space; dictatorial regimes transforming willy nilly into democratic regimes and vice versa; dictatorship coexisting with democracy, the one type serving as a contrast and self-justification for the other type" (*Fascism/Anti-Fascism*).

Despite these criticisms, this magazine contains much interesting material and is a further sign of the rift between the Israeli state and those on whose behalf it claims to act. Available from: **RETURN**, BM 8999, London WC1N 3XX (minimum cost £1) Jean Barrot's *Fascism/Anti-Fascism* is available from **Unpopular Books**, Box 15, 138 Kingsland High St., London E8 2NS (90p + large SAE)

trying to stop the Israeli ambassador to Argentina and Itzhak Navon (ex-president of Israel) from entering the 1984 congress of Amia (Ashkenazi Jewish Council in Buenos Aires).

IDENTITY CRISIS

Contributors to the magazine also examine the question of 'Jewish identity' in a world where the dominant definitions of this identity are based on allegiance to Israel and/or religion. In her article, Jenny Bourne is critical of the whole notion of a politics focused around the question of identity: "the question of 'Who am I?' has taken over from 'What shall we do?' as the political programme. Or rather it is substituted for politics itself."

ZIONISM/ANTI-ZIONISM

Our main criticism of **Return** is that most of the contributions are couched in the leftist language of 'democratic rights', 'self-determination', etc. This is particularly apparent in **Return's** petition Against the Israeli Law of Return, for the Palestinian Right to Return, which among other things calls for an independent Palestinian state (presumably under the control of the P.L.O. which is described as "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people").

We do not see the Israeli state as simply the offspring of zionist ideology- it has functioned throughout according to the logic of international capitalism. For example, the expulsion of Palestinians from the land and their transformation from peasants into proletarians is best understood as a form of primitive accumulation. This process of looting and land grabbing has been a feature of capitalist development everywhere (see for instance the Highland Clearances in Scotland during the last century).

THE RED MENACE

HELP THE ECONOMY- SLEEP ON THE STREETS

A review of **No reservations- housing, space and class struggle**

"More and more the city is a monolithic temple to the power of money over us, as the pyramids were to the power of the pharaohs over the slaves- and like the servants of the pharaohs, we are buried alive inside it."

The articles in **No Reservations** (from which the above quotation is taken) look at some of the ways in which the logic of capital shapes the housing situation and other aspects of social space. Recent changes in housing in Britain are discussed, as is the historical development of the city, the role of art in relation to gentrification and the state's hostility to unofficial social gatherings (as shown by the suppression of the Stonehenge festival in 1985).

One article, published originally in the U.S. journal **Midnight Notes**, looks at the U.S. government's "spatial deconcentration" programme. This was developed in the aftermath of the 1960s riots in American cities, with the aim of breaking up large concentrations of the inner city poor (especially black people). In Washington D.C. for instance, 50,000 people a year were being displaced from the inner city to isolated suburbs during the 1970s, encouraged by the carrot of rent subsidies for suburban housing and the stick of deliberately run down inner city dwelling space.

As our struggles in the past (such as inner city riots) have shaped capital's present strategy for dealing with social space, so this strategy too will generate new struggles. **No Reservations** examines some recent struggles over housing and social space, such as the Zurich riots of the early 1980s (focused around the demand for an autonomous youth centre), the August 1988 anti-gentrification riot in Tompkins Square, New York, and last year's squatters' resistance to evictions on the Stamford Hill Estate in North London.

Although the pamphlet focuses particularly on the Western 'developed world', it is clear that the struggle is a global one. In the Kurdish region of northern Iraq for instance, troops have begun the forceable evacuation of 250,000 people. The entire population of the town of Quala Diza (100,000) have been deported and their homes reduced to rubble. In Romania meanwhile 7000 villages are to be obliterated and the dispossessed peasants resettled in new towns in the course of the state's "sistemizarea" programme. The aim here is not simply to modernise agriculture, but also to increase social control through the destruction of remote villages at present relatively free from state surveillance.

In the few remaining corners of the globe not yet completely colonised by capital, the struggle over space also takes the form of a fight to preserve a way of life that is not completely dominated by money. In this context we could mention the Kayapo Indians' fight against the destruction of their home: the Amazon rainforest.

While trendy rich popstars like Sting give their worthless 'support' to the Kayapo Indians in their opposition to hydroelectric dams however, they keep silent about the flooding of the urban jungle with wine bars, office blocks and housing developments for the wealthy. Those of us natives facing deportation from the inner cities to reservations in Essex and elsewhere need to mobilise our own tribes in opposition. Reading **No Reservations** will give us a better understanding of the terrain on which we are fighting.



Figure 1.18 - Detail arrangement of the workers village at Tel-el-Amarna. Sir Leonard Woolley, who excavated this city wrote, 'We dug out a model village put up for the labourers who excavated the rock-cut-out tombs made in the desert hills. A square walled enclosure was entirely filled with rows of small houses divided by narrow streets; except for the foreman's quarters near the gate they were all monotonously alike, each with its kitchen-parlour in front, its bedrooms and cupboard behind, the very pattern of mechanically devised industrial dwellings. (Digging up the Past).

Available from **News from Everywhere**, Box 14, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 (£1 + SAE).

DEMOLITION DERBY, NUMBER 1

(free from address below, donations welcome)

Demolition Derby is a new revolutionary newspaper from Canada. Politically it situates itself in what could loosely be described as the 'anti-authoritarian primitivist' tendency, with an emphasis on opposition to technology and environmental themes. The approach taken by **Demolition Derby** (and others such as **Fifth Estate**) is refreshingly different from the familiar parliamentary cretinism of the Green Party on the one hand and the just plain cretinism of the likes of **Green Anarchist** on the other (with their support for national liberation rackets and the 'informal

economy' of hippy shopkeepers). Here opposition to the ravages of industrialism is clearly posed in terms of the abolition of the money/work/wages system and all that upholds it. As one article in **Demolition Derby** puts it: "We desire neither a green army, nor a green state, nor green money."

While we are not sure how far down the 'primitivist' road- or footpath- we want to travel (some argue for a return to a hunter gatherer lifestyle), the critique of industrial capitalist civilisation advanced by **Demolition Derby**, **Fifth Estate**, **John Zerzan** and others needs to be taken seriously. We ourselves are certainly anti-progress, in the sense of opposing the idea that the continual expansion of production offers a never-ending improvement in the quality of life. We would agree with the group **Interrogations**, whose 'Questioning Ecology' text is included in **Demolition Derby**, that "from factory production to (continued back page)

DEBORD'S NEW BOOK

Guy Debord, *Commentaires sur la société du spectacle*, publ. Editions Gerard Lebovici (27, rue Saint-Sulpice, 75006 Paris, France), 1988, 97pp

Not surprisingly, the Situationist International (SI), which lasted from 1957 to 1972 and was the most extreme revolutionary organisation of its time, has won contempt and false praise from all sorts of people who deign to acknowledge or capitalise upon its influence. Recently BBC2's *Late Show* spent half an hour illustrating the role of "situationism" in politics and art [sic], as a plug for an exhibition of "Art of the SI" staged at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in June.

But the liars and imbeciles who make such programmes and stage such exhibitions, much as we despise them, are of little real historical importance. In most "advanced" countries today, the tiny minority of subversives can read the texts of the SI and use them as they see fit, just as a future revolutionary movement would be able to do.

Guy Debord was one of the SI's prominent theorists throughout its existence. In his *Commentaries* (as yet only available in French) he wastes no time defending the image of the SI. He begins by explaining that he is not at complete liberty to speak, since his *Commentaries* will be read by defenders of the system of spectacular domination as well as by those who seek to undermine it. The overall design of the book is left deliberately *obscure*, and even contains a few "decoys" ("the very signature of the epoch"). Amongst the subversives who read it there will probably be much disagreement over interpretation, and not least as to whether such a mode of expression is a rational one.

INVASION OF THE MIND-SNATCHERS

Debord's theses concern the directions commodity society has developed in since the troubles of 1968.

"...Since the spectacle today is assuredly more powerful than it was before, what is it doing with this extra power? What previously-unoccupied territory has it moved into? In short, what are its current lines of operation? The vague feeling that there has been a rapid invasion, obliging people to live a very different life, has since then become widespread; but it is felt rather as an unexplained change of climate or as another sort of natural equilibrium, a modification about which ignorance knows only that it has nothing to say..." (Para.2)

His aim is to evoke certain practical consequences, still little known, resulting from "this rapid deployment of the spectacle over the last 20 years."

In his earlier book *Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Debord distinguished between *concentrated* and *diffuse* forms of the spectacle. The concentrated form, typified by Nazism and Stalinism, particularly the latter, corresponded to a regime with a dictator at the helm of the state and a bureaucratic, police-run system of commodity exchange. The diffuse form corresponded to freer competition between commodities and a higher form of commodity fetishism, with enthusiastic mass consumption of an ever-changing stream of star products. In Debord's view a third form, the *integrated* spectacle is now in existence, combining the other two on the general basis of the diffuse form. Whereas Germany, Russia and the USA played the predominant part in the origin of the concentrated and diffuse forms, a similar role in the development of the integrated spectacle has been played by France and Italy. One factor which made these two countries stand out was the ne-

cessity to get rid of a surprise wave of revolutionary contestation. Other factors are the weak democratic tradition, the long-term monopolisation of power by a single government party, and the role of Stalinist parties and unions in political and intellectual life.

The integrated form uses various techniques of its predecessors: no more clear ideologies or Uncle Joes, but there is still a "directive centre", albeit now under the cover of darkness. And the peripheries that were once immune to the diffuse spectacle are now no more: no more media-free discussions in pubs or workplaces or cafes, no longer even the semblance of independent standards of competence among scientists, doctors or historians.

Debord identifies five major characteristics whose combined effects help make up modern society in the era of the integrated spectacle. Two tendencies that have been in evidence for a long while are *non-stop technological renewal* and *an alliance between economy and State*. Their effects in today's world include *generalised secrecy*, the *presentation of falsehoods without fear of reply* (with important consequences in the scientific, political and judicial fields, not to mention the field of artistic knowledge), and an atmosphere of a *perpetual present*.

Moreover, for the first time, spectacular domination has brought up a generation of people in obeisance to its laws. Memory, both in the field of historical life and in the sphere of personal consumption of fashions, has flown out of the window. In Debord's terminology, *history*, defined as what is *memorable*, as the totality of events whose consequences are long-lasting, as the measure of what is new, has been *outlawed*. Already recent history has been pushed into clandestinity. Those active in the 1986 "events" in French colleges and railway-stations showed little

knowledge of the movement of '68, and we doubt whether British youth in general have much recollection of the week of riots in 1981. The world is now more frantic.

There is much in the *Commentaries* about *secrecy*, the law of *omertà*, the mafia code of silence. Having broached upon the financing of political parties and the role of State speculations in various parts of the economy (new towns, motorways, nuclear energy, oil prospecting, underground distribution, banking, secret arms exports, pharmaceuticals), Debord cites Marx's reference in *The 18th. Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* to a man "who, rather than deciding by night and striking by day, decides by day and strikes by night."

Whether or not conspiracy is growing in importance in international finance and matters of State (and we think it is, given the developments in the media, for whom arse-licking is now considered unacceptably rebellious, and given the decreasing levels of knowledge among the population, not to mention the process of economic concentration), it is undeniably a reality.

SECRET OPERATIONS

Debord also analyses the secret services, for whom "knowledge must become power." (Para.20). Adopting the "police conception of history" (i.e. conspiracy theory), whilst accepting that in the 19th century it was reactionary and ridiculous, he states in Paragraph 21 that "secrecy dominates the world, first of all as the secret of domination." Those who have access to a few supposed secrets that have been revealed to them feel superior to those who know nothing, but they remain merely first-class spectators, bribed with manipulated information. You won't find the answers to the questions "Who rules?" and "How?" in the *New Statesman* or *Private Eye*, even if Duncan Campbell (lunch partner of a former Attorney-General) tells everything he knows about the coup plots of the mid-1970s.

Whereas catastrophes are in sight in areas such as ecology and banking, Debord thinks that capitalist domi-

nation has already got into position to deal with them with means other than the use of *disinformation*. After speaking of the recent history of the mafia, the end of the "State of Right" (Rule of Law) along with democracy, and the growing importance of illegality in the economy (arms, hi-tech), he goes on to say that various means of "preventive civil war" have already been put in place.

Debord has written elsewhere about the manipulation and use of terrorism by secret services and P2 (the international secret Lodge that provided -and probably still provides- Italy with its secret government and has been involved in various financial scandals and political murders). Now he goes further:

"The secret services were called upon by the entire history of spectacular society to become its central pivot; for they more than anything else concentrate in themselves the characteristics and means of execution of the corresponding society. Henceforth they are also charged with adjudicating the general interests of this society, despite continuing to be modestly known as 'services'." (Para.27)

"Finally, [surveillance's] principal contradiction at the moment is that it watches, infiltrates and influences an absent party: that which supposedly wants to subvert the social order. But where is it in evidence? Certainly, never have conditions everywhere been so deeply revolutionary, but this is only recognised by governments. Negation has been so perfectly deprived of its thought, that it dispersed a long time ago. Because of this, it is no more than a vague threat, albeit very worrying, and surveillance has consequently been deprived of the best field for its activity. The present necessities governing the conditions of engagement of this force of surveillance and intervention have led it to move onto the terrain of this threat in order to combat it in advance. This is why surveillance will have an interest in organising poles of negation to which it will feed information outside of the discredited channels of the spectacle, in order this time to influence not terrorists but theories."

(Para.30).

This last assertion is left without examples or scenarios, making us sus-

pect that it is a "decoy". But one example of preventive civil war Debord gives is the possible future employment of the technique used in the Square of Three Cultures in Mexico City in 1968, where hundreds were massacred in one decisive move calculated to ensure the successful opening of the obscure Olympic Games. Such a technique can be used *before* the day of revolt. This is not what happened in Algeria recently, but it is exactly how the Chinese State has tried to impose its own order. Moves like this are not at all ruled out, indeed they are even implied by the theories of British counter-insurgency specialist Frank Kitson, who has written of the need to "drown the revolution in babies' milk." Outside of such extremes, Debord speaks of the use of assassination on a smaller scale. (His *Commentaries* are dedicated to his friend and publisher Gerard Lebovici, an entrepreneur ambushed and shot dead in Paris in 1984, with four bullets in the back of the neck).

On reading such thoughts we were left with the impression that what we need is a more detailed knowledge of State counter-subversive and counterrevolutionary operations and planning, although we recognise that this is not something to be discussed lightly.

In the penultimate paragraph of the *Commentaries*, Debord says that the changed conditions he has described will lead inevitably to a "relief operation" (presumably some kind of coup) from within the "co-opted caste that manages domination and, notably directs the protection of this domination." Whilst we agree that the wave of struggles that began in 1968 was defeated a long time ago, and that the period is still one where capitalist domination is plucking the fruits of past victories, we are still unsure as to exactly how well-organised and well-prepared it is possible for our enemies to get. In our view the *style* of the *Commentaries* does not contribute to a fact-based discussion of this point, although we recommend them for raising this and many other issues, only some of which we have dealt with above.