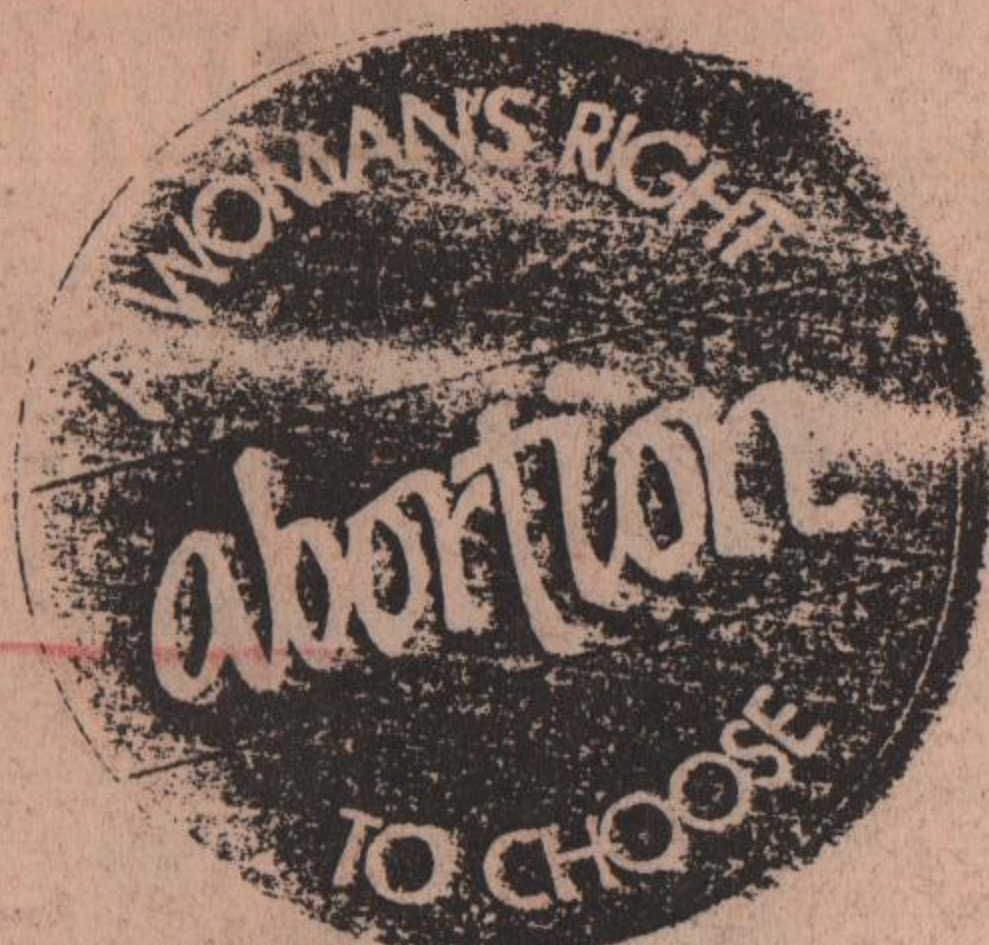


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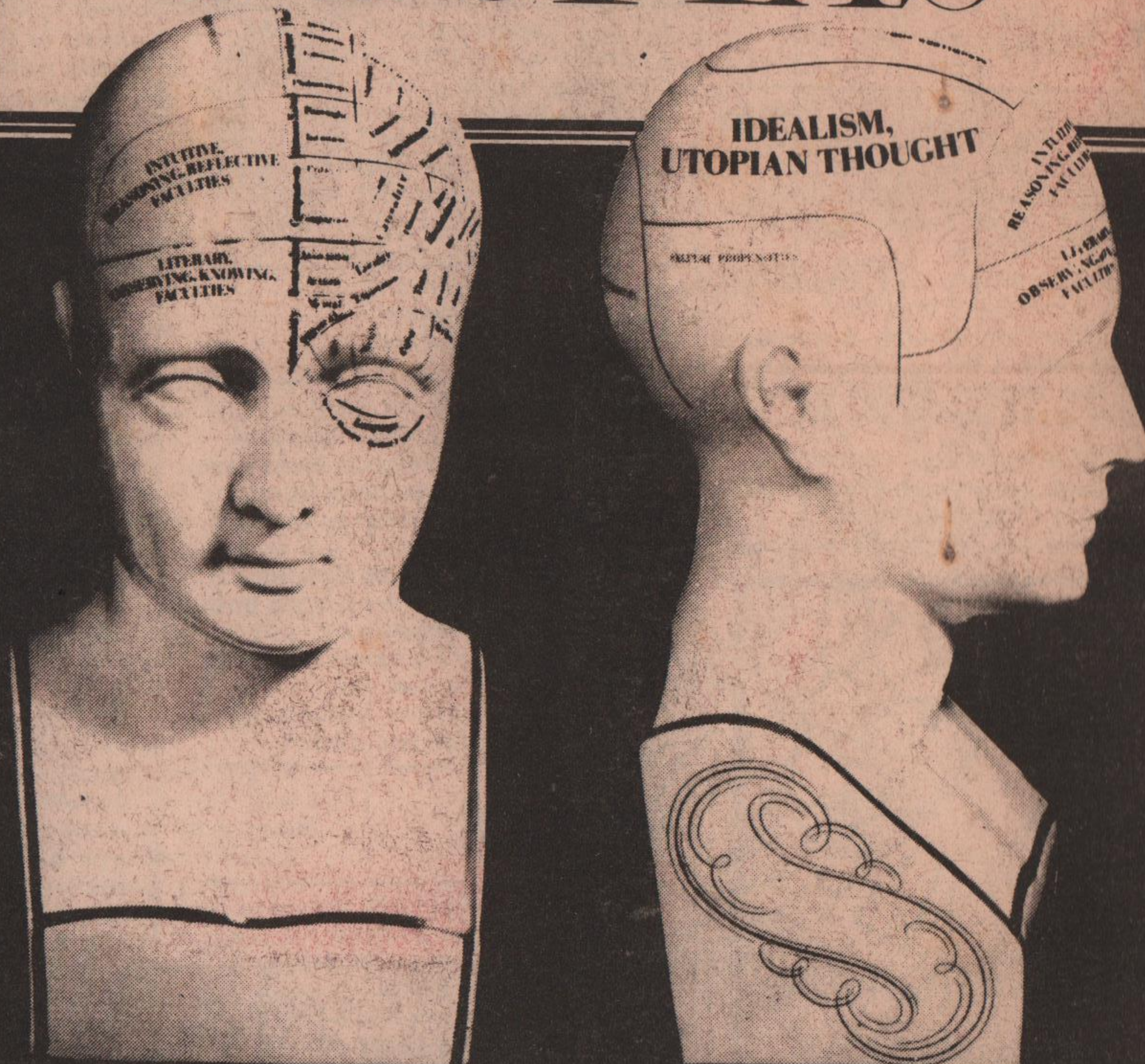
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# the Leveller

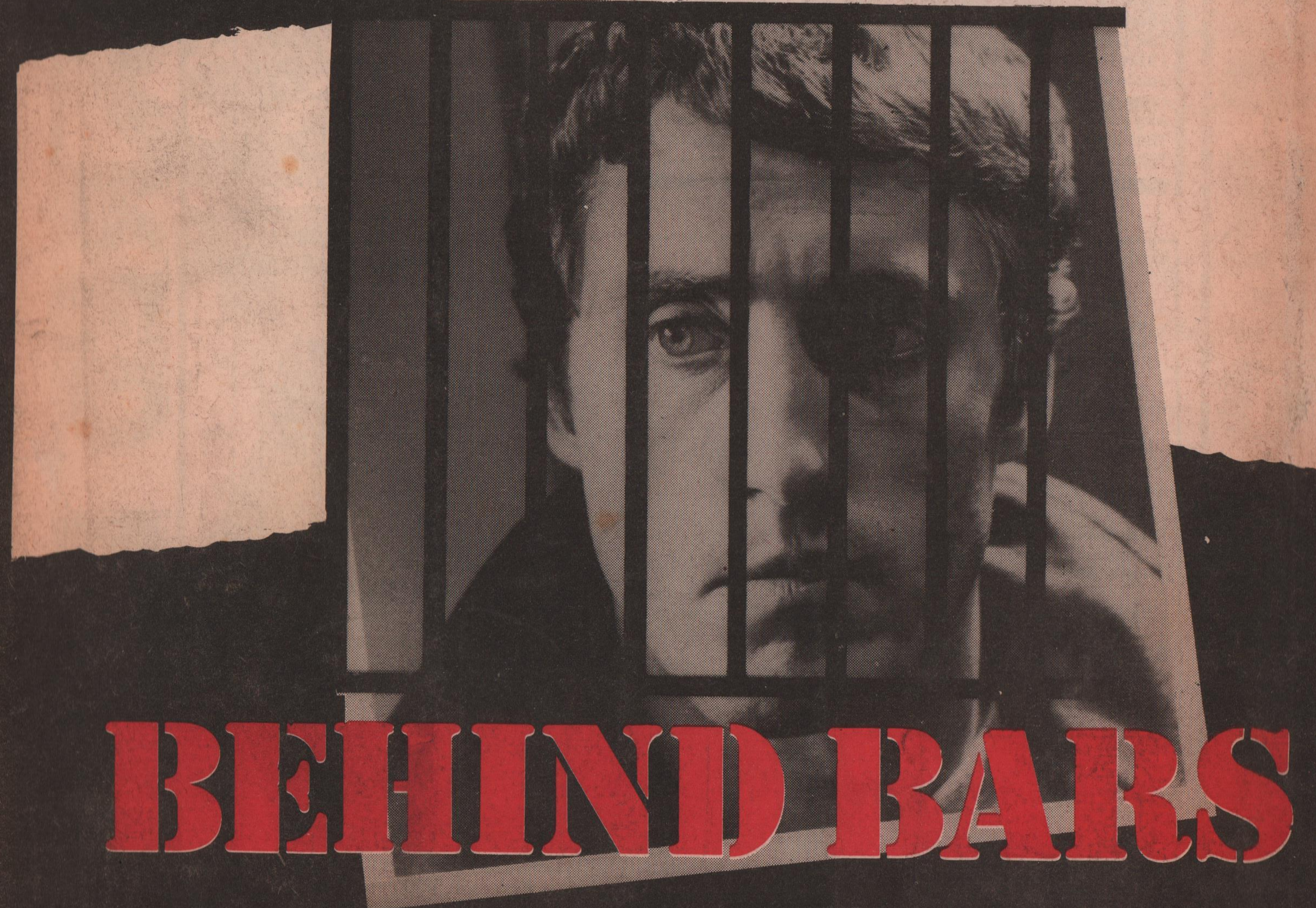
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No.47

January 9 - 22

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## HOLLYWOOD



## BEHIND BARS

WHAT PRISON MOVIES REALLY MEAN

## Free Enterprise Zone

**WELCOME BACK** with the first *Leveller* of 1981! This issue was brought to you, as always, by a ridiculous level of self-exploitation by our usual team of unpaid collective members working all night in our cold basement.

It often surprises readers that we don't have a full-time staff of professional workers on this magazine. Indeed it often surprises us too.

We have managed so far with just one full-timer, who was last seen disappearing into the night muttering about lost subscription forms, the phone bill and something about Value Added Tax.

Just before Christmas we held a weekend conference to review the progress of the fortnightly and decided something had to be done about full-time workers before we all go mad.

This is what we came up with: At the end of the month we're going to appoint two or three part-timers who will have specific responsibilities for areas of our activity. We haven't

yet finalised the details but we need more person power in the fields of sales, subscriptions, advertising and production. The idea is that they'll soon pay for themselves by the extra revenue they'll bring in.

In the meantime, we need to pay them, and this is where you, dear reader, can help. We've opened a Wages Fund Appeal and we hope you'll contribute. No amount is too small, but please dig deep for those tenners, fivers or oncers.

This magazine has no money behind it - we've no party or professional backers - and we rely totally on readers for support. With your help we're convinced that by the spring the new workers will be self-financing, and what you'll get out of it is a better magazine.

Please make cheques/POs out to *Leveller* Magazine (1979) Fortnightly Fund, and send them to: New Year Wages Appeal, *Leveller* Magazine, 57 Caledonian Road, London N1.





RED BOXES  
RED BOXES

Agitlisting of events,  
campaigns and so on.

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## Xmas 'bomb alerts'

### Dainty isn't in it

IT'S ALL part of the Christmas fun in London, when West End shopping streets become a training ground for police exercises in crowd control.

The pretext each year is the 'IRA Christmas bombing campaign'. In 1978, more than 2,000 police in 'Operation Santa' frisked shoppers and cordoned off streets at will after a wave of carbombs in early December claimed by the IRA, but the justification for 'Operation Dainty' in 1980 was the thinnest yet: the Yard's assertion that Gerard Tuite had gone over the wall at Brixton, not to scoot sensibly across to Ireland, or somewhere more remote, but to remain at large in London, the subject of 16,000 posters and prime-time TV publicity, to co-ordinate the assassination of women and children in Oxford Street.

On December 3 there had also been the mysterious bombing of a Territorial Army office in Hammersmith, West London, for which no one has claimed responsibility. And there were threats from the Provisionals of bombings if a hunger-striker died. The collapse of the hunger strike therefore thinned Dainty's pretext even further, and the Met's chief mouthpiece, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Peter Nievens, had to call the media to get out his statement that 'they might have a truce in Belfast but this is London.... As long as Tuite is at large in London there could be bombings. If he gets the

ammo,' Nievens said darkly, 'he will go live!'

This interview was run by London's all-news commercial radio station, LBC, for more than 24 hours. Tuite, who had escaped from Brixton down scaffolding thoughtfully erected for the rebuilding of part of the nick, must have been chuckling heartily wherever he was, but the police had got their operation.

In case anyone forgot the nine absurd photofits of Tuite, the 'master of disguise', he came up again over the other mysterious, unclaimed bombing of the East London gasworks on January 1. Both TV networks tacked onto their reports the reminder that police believed Gerard Tuite was still in London.

It wasn't only the national media that played along with police. So did London's local press. The *Islington Gazette* ran half a page of obviously stunted pictures of police hunting for bombs in Islington, including one of uniformed men, surrounding by bystanders (!), 'defusing' a putative bomb which 'turned out' to be, literally, a pile of rubbish.

It sound laughable, but *The Leveller* takes it seriously. We will give prizes of free life-subscriptions to Commissioner Sir David McNee, Anti-Terrorist Squad chief Commander Peter Duffy, and to Nievens, if anyone is convicted, on evidence we feel satisfactory, of the Hammersmith or

gasworks bombings; but the prizes will be withdrawn if it is proved that Tuite was let out of Brixton deliberately. That's fair innit?

## Vote barons to fix the count

THE MAIN issue facing the Labour Party's special conference on January 24 will be what happens on the second and third ballots if the make-up of the college which will elect the leader is not agreed immediately. While the constituency parties and affiliated organisations have been left in the dark about the mechanics of the vote, the trade union barons will hold the balance of power. And the most conservative of them, notably Terry Duffy's AUEW, still want the dominant voice to be that of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The proposal that the PLP should have 50 per cent of the vote, with 25 per cent each going to the unions and the constituency parties seems likely to be backed all the way to the final ballot by the GMWU, APEX, EEUPTU, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the Communications Workers. The alternatives — either an even three way split or 30 each to PLP and the constituencies and 40 to the unions — depend upon the support of some very reluctant and so far uncommitted reformers like USDAW. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) is very keen that those delegates who want the PLP to have a less dominant voice should come to conference with a clear mandate for the second and third ballots.

CLPD spokesperson Vladimir Derer told the *Leveller* that it was crucial that 'the principle of parity should be preserved in the college. The one-third-each system means that the unions will be involved in party policy, and that they will have a substantial say in the election of the leader.' Only 22 out of the 370 motions submitted for conference opt for giving 50 per cent to the PLP. But they have powerful backers and eyes will be on groups like USDAW and the Mineworkers who have not yet made their intentions clear. 'The only way to save the college,' argues Derer, 'is for those currently supporting the one third option to be ready to switch to 30,30,40 on the second ballot.'

There is unlikely to be pressure for a new leadership election until next September's conference. It's sad and ironic that the spirit and enthusiasm of last year's Blackpool conference should have degenerated into an unseemly mathematical wrangle dominated by half a dozen trade union barons. Meanwhile an increasingly tired and uninspiring Michael Foot, together with a depressingly right-wing shadow cabinet, will limp on as the leadership with 'party unity' the rallying cry rather than any hard and fighting policies with which to attack the Tories.

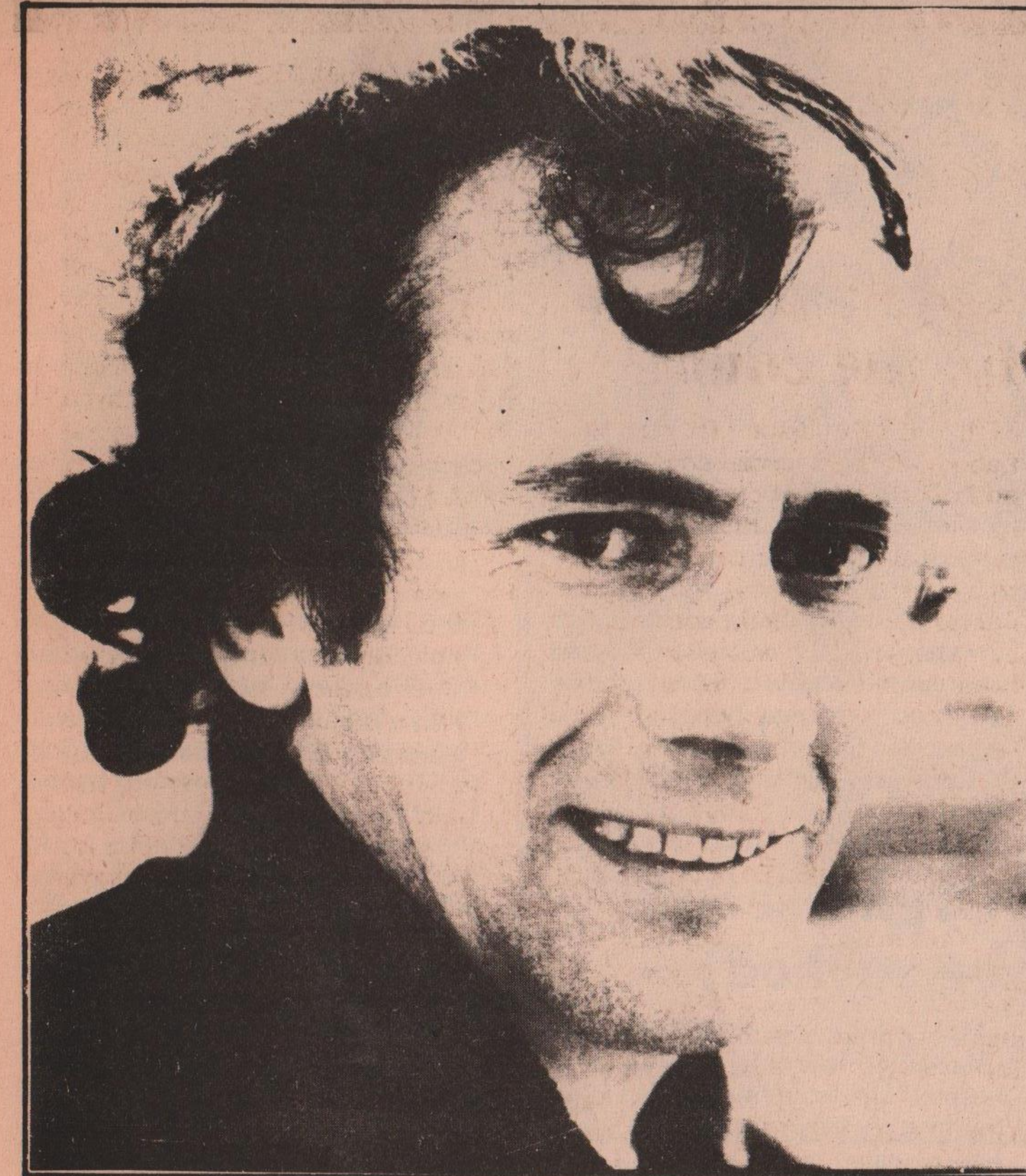
## Fascists on gun charges

SEVEN MEN, including two members of the British Movement and one from the National Front, are to appear in Birmingham Crown Court on January 13 charged with a series of firearms offences, arson and inciting racial hatred.

The charges follow raids by the Bomb Squad on a number of homes in the West Midlands in October 1979. The raids were in response to an incendiary attack on a careers centre a few nights earlier. The arms mentioned in the charges include revolvers, shot-guns, anti-riot guns, rubber bullets, a canister of CS gas, a thousand rounds of ammunition and several prohibited weapons, namely a pump-action shot-gun and a sten gun.

Two of the men, Harvey Stock and Roderick Roberts, are also charged with arson and conspiring to distribute 'threatening written matter likely to incite racial hatred'. Harvey Stock was the West Midlands press officer for the National Front before he left in 1978 to join the British Movement. Roderick Roberts, also a former member of the NF, also followed the same course, from the Front to the BM.

Lesser charges are made against the five others, one of whom is 52-year old Harold Simcox, a member of the National Front. He is charged with possessing a revolver and ammunition without a firearms licence.



## Another victim of Chile junta

A CHILEAN refugee living in Britain has been murdered by the military junta on his return to Santiago. Juan Olivares, president of the Chilean metal workers' union and a leader of the outlawed Chilean TUC, left his family in south London in August after five years of exile here. His tortured and bullet-ridden body was found in a Santiago street in mid-November.

Olivares' return to Chile had been clandestine — despite General Pinochet's supposed offer to refugees of freedom of return, very few receive permission to do so, and these are kept under a rigorous security vigil. Olivares was following the policy of the Chilean Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), of which he was a central committee member, to work underground in Chile with the thriving popular resistance movement wherever possible, rather than from exile. 'People have become so confident and determined that they are more certain of what they are doing,' he wrote in a letter to his family shortly after arriving back in Chile. 'I have seen documents circulating which have astonished me.'

How Olivares was tracked down by the junta is not clear, although it highlights the difficulties of an exile becoming re-integrated in a changed political and social environment. More telling is the way in which they disposed of him: he was ostensibly the vic-

tim of a midnight armed confrontation with the anti-subversive unit of the Central Nacional de Informaciones (CNI), the hated Chilean intelligence service. He was found dead beside a Citroen car along with Ramón Orta, a MIR activist from southern Chile. The only thing is that neither man knew how to drive, they did not know each other, and both bore fresh marks of severe torture. The 'gun battle' took place less than a hundred yards from the CNI's main torture centre on Avenida Diego Santa María.

In fact Olivares had disappeared some ten hours previously, after telling friends he would be back in a few minutes. Orta had been watched and followed for several months, which would have made it impossible for him to travel armed. It is virtually certain that the two men were tortured and killed, then the incident was staged — a common tactic of the Chilean military — to prove that Pinochet is engaged in a fight against armed subversives, and to justify government by terror. Olivares had lived at close quarters with death: his father and brother died at the hands of Pinochet, and he was imprisoned and tortured from 1974-76. A bloody price to pay, as one Chilean comrade of his in London pointed out, for 'for trying to exercise the right to live in one's country'.

## SAS man in SA

PETER MACALEESE, the blood-stained former SAS man who took over the leadership of the Angolan mercenaries from 'Colonel

Callan', is reported to be practising his trade in the South African army, training a paramilitary commando force in Namibia. MacAleese, who's so violent even the SAS had to throw him out, was a member of the Rhodesian SAS until just before the settlement and on one trip to England was boasting of having killed 47 people. Now he's pursuing his one-man war against humanity in yet another racist anti-democratic illegal regime. With anything like luck SWAPO will get him before he does much more damage.

## Hitting the weak even harder

HIT THE weak and the poor the hardest. That's the Conservative Way. The Manpower Services Commission has been told to reduce its costs by £50 million over the next couple of years. Making those cuts will mean the loss of 1,710 jobs, more than a third of them from people working directly with the disabled, the sick and the blind, according to an official memorandum, a copy of which has reached our office.

The MSC is planning to slash staffing levels on Sheltered Employment and the Disablement Resettlement Offices from the current level of 1,473 to 1,120 by 1985. A further 167 jobs will go from rehabilitation projects and another 70 from resettlement offices including those working with the blind.

The figures come from a summary of the MSC's Corporate Plan 1981-85, which was submitted to ministers on December 19. The summary notes: 'the rapid deterioration of the labour market in recent months and the poor outlook for the next few years, reporting the general consensus among economic forecasters that unemployment will continue rising all through 1981 and well into 1982.... Projections show that without special programmes for young people, there could be more than 600,000 school leavers unemployed in the summers of 1982 and 1983 and that the number of adults who have been out of work for 12 months or more is set to rise from 400,000 in 1981 to 600,000 by 1983.'

The summary is pretty brutal about the immediate and mid-term prospects too. While it welcomes the government's decision to expand the Youth Opportunities Programme and various community and vocational schemes, the £50 million cuts will fall 'almost exclusively on the employment and training services'.

Noting that the MSC wants to spread the cuts so that it can maintain the outline of its services, 'albeit at undesirably low levels', the document says that one main item of saving will be a reduction of about 4,750 people trained under TOPS, mainly in college-based

courses.

'The employment service will be under severe strain and the job centre service will be able to offer job-seekers very little beyond the self-service display of vacancies.... It is very difficult for the employment service to do an adequate job within the resource constraints imposed on it given much higher levels of unemployment.'

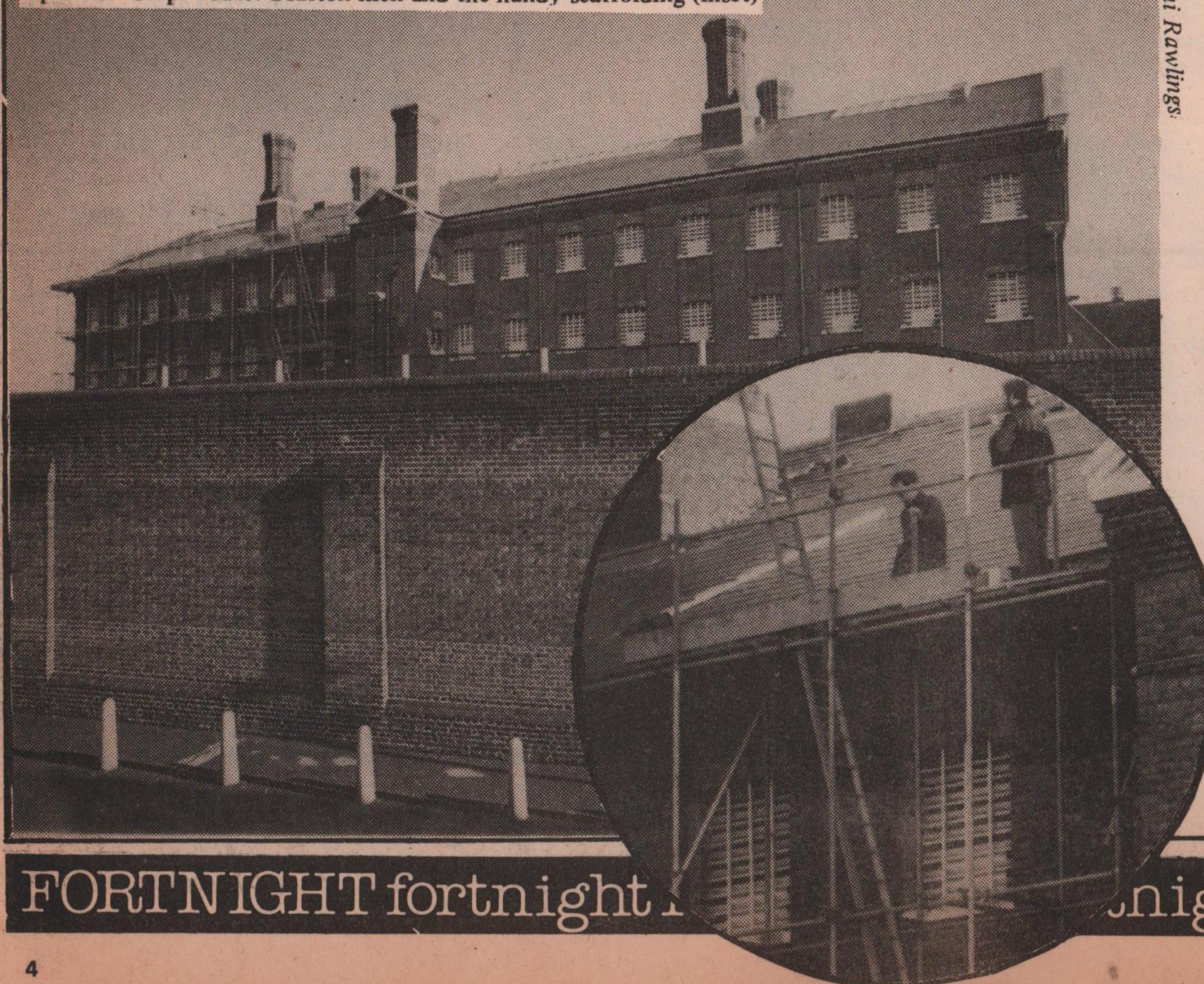
The MSC has been asked by the Secretary of State to: 'examine "voluntary registration" (i.e. a system whereby unemployed people wishing to claim unemployment benefit would no longer be required to register with the employment service). The Commission is uncommitted on this matter and says that a change in this direction 'raises many difficult issues and would require very careful study before adoption'. One of the difficult issues would be which of the scrounger-bashers dies of apoplexy first at the thought of the unemployed no longer having to go through the humiliating ritual of turning up at a Job Centre with no jobs to offer....

## French press spiked again

AFTER BUGGING the offices of the satirical magazine *Le Canard Enchaîné*, and taking legal proceedings against *Le Monde*, the French state is now putting pressure on the radical daily *Libération*. On December 10 last year hearings were held at the Palais de Justice in Paris at which *Libé* was accused of presenting drugs in a favourable light in violation of public health and safety legislation. In its defence *Libération* produced an array of witnesses from the fields of medicine, psychiatry, drug treatment, crisis intervention and journalism. France has never had a fully-fledged drug information and education program and the hysteria and misinformation promoted in the popular press has confused the issue even further. *Libération* has been one of the few papers to distinguish between the types and dangers of different drugs and to press for a public policy that reflected such distinctions.

The prosecution rejected moves to subpoena the minister responsible for drug matters. Throughout the proceedings both bench and prosecution displayed an ignorance of drug usage that would have saddened the heart of the most obscurantist British magistrate. At one point the president of the court admitted that he had smoked *kif* in North Africa and didn't reckon much to it. At the end of the day the case was adjourned until March 1981. However, there was no breathing space for *Libé*. The paper was due back in court the following week to answer charges that an interview with Jacques Mesrine, the flamboyant gangster

Spot the escape route: Brixton nick and the handy scaffolding (inset)



Jimi Rawlings



later shot dead last summer by French police whilst he was on the run, constituted a criminal offence.

Angelo Morris

## Well occupied over Christmas

WAS IT GARDNERS? Was it the 'Ulster Queen'? Which was the great turning point we're all looking for? There do seem to be outbreaks of real fighting against closures and lay-offs, here and there amid the wreckage.

But there's one occupation that's been going on for five weeks which the left doesn't seem to have taken up with such enthusiasm as that of the horny-handed engine-makers of Manchester. Perhaps it's because they're highly-educated middle class book editors that makes the BPC occupation of an office block in the City of London a bit embarrassing.

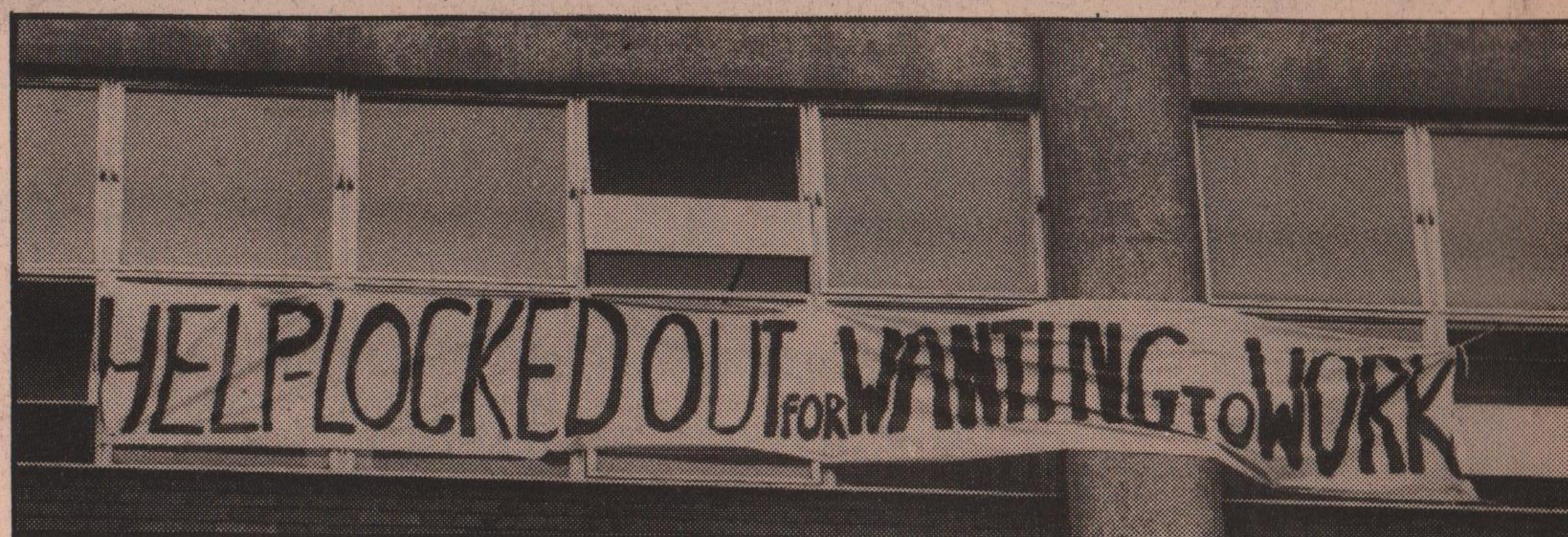
At any rate, 65 of these editors, members of the National Union of Journalists, have been holding the sixth floor of Holywell House, near Liverpool Street Station, owned by the giant BPC group, formerly the British Printing Corporation, Britain's biggest printing group.

BPC wanted to make ten editors redundant. Two of them have quit anyway, the management have conceded six jobs, so the fight is only really over two, but they're still there; a core of the occupiers stayed in the building, locked in without heat or power, for six days, over Christmas, but the rest of the time people have been able to get in and out, past the security guards, through a side exit with a smashed lock.

The guards, from Abbott Security Services ('the first ones in the Yellow Pages', say the occupiers) have indeed been made to look rather foolish. BPC hired them when they sacked all the editors and locked them out on December 8. But the workers succeeded in getting past them, into the building.

The occupation has been made official by the NUJ, which gave each member a £50 'Christmas bonus', but also, predictably enough, tried to sell them out. There was a huge row in the union's executive over a secret meeting that General Secretary Ken Ashton had with management the day before the lock-out. Ashton didn't even tell the members, let alone consult them, over the meeting, which came to naught.

BPC are not running down the business, and their claims that the publishing division concerned — Macdonald Futura — is losing money, is considered a book-keeping swindle by the editors. No, the company's aim, in common with other media managements, is to take advantage of the recession in publishing and replace staff with cheaper casual freelance journalists. The union has instructed freelancers not to work for BPC.



The BPC occupiers' banner hangs over the sixth-floor window

Behind the dispute looms the shadow of right-wing millionaire publisher Robert Maxwell, whose vicious anti-union managerial style is well known to the NUJ through Pergamon Press and the Scottish Daily News. Last July he bought 29% BPC, whose management are terrified at the prospect of his moving in. The occupiers reckon they're trying to soup up profitability to stave Maxwell off.

## Southern give the game away

THE PROCESS by which Britain's TV map was redrawn last month seems to have followed precedent and virtually ignored the people who matter — the viewers. The IBA's decisions had more to do with board shuffles and shareholders' greed than past programme records.

Television South, the group who won the contract for the South of England from Southern TV, offered no radical alternatives to Southern's programming, which was no worse than the ITV average.

And Southern's shareholders — Associated Newspapers, the Rank Organisation and union-bashers D C Thomson — provided the IBA with the perfect excuse. They've been taking inordinate amounts out of the till for years. In 1979, the company left just £40,000 of its after-tax profits of £1.4 million for reinvestment. TV franchises may be licences to print money, but Southern had gone a bit far.

Large profits attract powerful backers. Television South's deputy-chairperson is Tory businessman and MP for Dorking Keith Wickenden, whose other interests include Felixstowe docks, European Ferries, the merchant bank Singer & Friedlander and an international property portfolio. He is tipped for a junior ministerial post in the next Cabinet reshuffle. He says: 'Although I don't understand the technical side of TV, I can understand how you can make money out of it.'

That's the heart of it really. The IBA, for all its pretence of public consultation, dishes out the right to broadcast — and the airwaves, after all, are a public resource, with scant regard for accountability or

access. Their prime concern is with companies, boards, and shareholders (and of course they announced the new franchises on a Sunday so as not to alarm the Stock Exchange). The local communities the TV companies are supposed to serve come a very poor second.

## Organise and be sacked!

THE LEAK of the DHSS 'Sackers Charter' — the internal memo to hospital chiefs on how to get rid of union activists in managerial jobs, first revealed in *Leveller 46* — has led to an incredible row in the health service union COHSE, and the sacking of a trade union activist there.

Chris Perry, the press officer for COHSE, received a copy of the memo from a union member, Andrea Campbell, who was one of those threatened by the DHSS after being arrested on the picket line at the doomed St Benedict's Hospital, Tooting, South London.

Perry, who incidentally gave *The Leveller* the story, was instructed to prepare a press release and protest letter to Health Minister Patrick Jenkin. He did so and in accordance with normal procedure sent out the release, plus a copy of the document itself, embargoed until the union was ready for publicity.

But after the releases had gone out Albert Spanswick, the union's caricature of a bullying, blustering, right-wing general secretary, ordered them stopped. He wrote his own letter to Jenkin and promised that the memo — a very real threat to the union — would not be publicly attacked by his union. Even after rival health service union NUPE had launched its own attack, and the story had been in the national press, Spanswick still refused to make any comment on it at all.

The COHSE leadership has a close relationship with ministers and senior civil servants at the DHSS. The author of the memo, head of the Personnel Department P4, Eric Caines, is a friend of Spanswick and his number two, David Williams. And this is not the first official information liable to inflame the membership that COHSE has kept quiet for its masters' benefit. When the 6% pay

limit was announced, Spanswick made fine-sounding speeches that COHSE would fight it 'tooth and nail'; but privately he opined, 'we're lucky it's 6% and not a total pay freeze'. Figure compiled by the COHSE research department, showing how far ambulance staff pay had fallen behind that of police (25% in four years) were suppressed, with national officer Terry Mallinson muttering: 'We don't want a winter of discontent'.

Spanswick used the leaked memo to maximum advantage for the one thing he's good at: stabbing his opponents in the back. When he heard that enquiries had been made to the DHSS about the document by one of the papers Perry had sent it to, he saw his chance. He was helped by the rage of the regional officials in Andrea Campbell's area when they heard the thing had been suppressed. They invaded the COHSE head office, trying to get it back, and had a fight with Perry, whose copies had been taken off him. Angered by this, the officials told Spanswick that Perry had arranged to meet Campbell; it is forbidden for head office staff to contact local lay officers in COHSE.

Perry was therefore summoned to account for himself. But before the planned inquisition, Perry had a blazing row with his own boss, chief PR Nick Grant, a right-wing Labour careerist who had frequently dropped him in the shit to help Spanswick get rid of him. Perry stormed out of the building, failed to turn up for the inquisition the next day, and was deemed to have 'sacked himself'.

Now why should COHSE want rid of Chris Perry? It may be connected — though the union denies it — with the fact that he had been one of the two staff members who had recruited most of their head office colleagues into the white collar union APEX.

Spanswick, Grant and other officers had attempted to prevent the staff organising with such violence that the APEX official on the case, Len Gristey, was moved to write comparing COHSE, as employers, with Grunwick — and Gristey was the responsible APEX officer in that case too. But the staff had become so angered and frustrated by the treatment they'd received over the years that they flocked to the call, and although forbidden to meet on the premises they stuck

together.

COHSE leaders have wanted to keep the staff quiet within their own tightly-controlled internal bargaining structure, but after being forced to recognise APEX they can't maintain the pretence. For all the officers of the staff side in the internal structure have resigned, and Spanswick can't find anyone to play charades with.

But they couldn't do much to help Perry, and nor could the NUJ, of which as press officer he was Father of the Chapel (shop steward) at COHSE. The NUJ won him some compensation, but Spanswick wasn't having him back. For the man who so actively prevented protest at the employers' plan to break union militancy isn't about to tolerate it in his own back yard.

## 'Cell death' screw in dock

THE DIRECTOR of Public Prosecutions has finally decided to go ahead with a murder charge against a senior prison officer at Winson Green in Birmingham. Melvyn Jackson has been charged with murdering 32-year-old Barry Prosser from Sedgeley in Staffordshire. He was the father of two children.

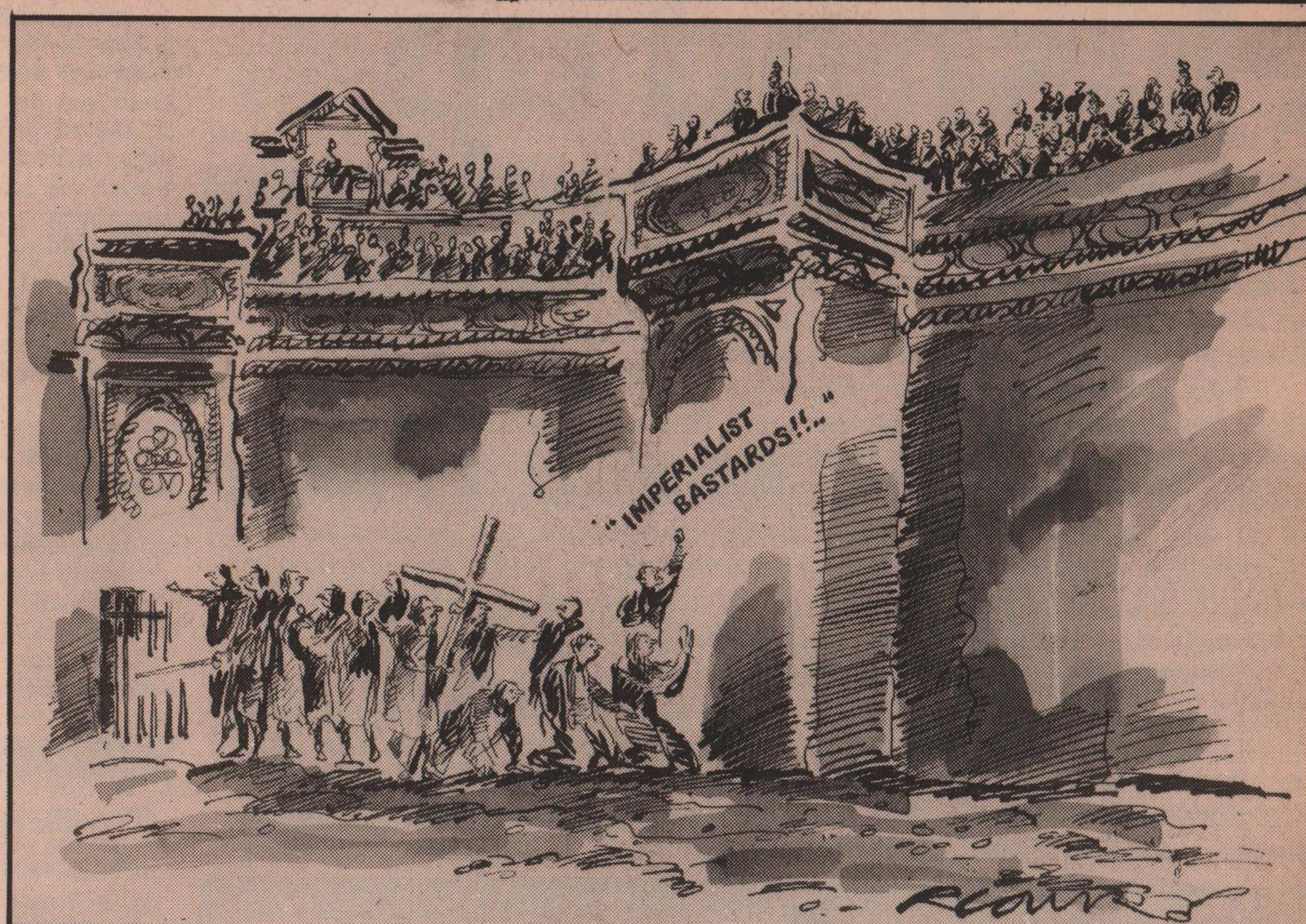
Prosser's body was found slumped in a padded cell in the hospital wing on August 19th. His family had an independent post-mortem carried out. It showed that he died from a ruptured stomach and a torn windpipe. His arms, legs and face were bruised. Prosser had been found guilty of causing criminal damage, and was on remand at Winson Green awaiting sentence while medical reports were prepared.

The results of a police inquiry were given to the DPP four months ago, but it wasn't until Prosser's family picketed Winson Green shortly before Christmas that the charge was made against Melvyn Jackson.

The prison officer was granted bail on two sureties of a £1,000. His address was kept secret at the request of his solicitor.

★ ★

EARLY WARNING of another cave-in to the state by BBC bosses; the Panorama team has been working for more than a year on a special probe into the intelligence services M15 and M16. They've got some hot footage of agents talking in silhouette and so on, and expect to have it ready to go out in February or March. Already there is the sound of the shuffling, indeed running, of feet, at top level, and programme-makers are gritting their teeth for a real battle to get it on the air. 'Bigger than Carrickmore,' mutters one.



'Why do they keep bringing politics into sport?'

## Old soft shoe

SO YOU want to make a million pounds without really trying? You could do worse than follow the example of the shoe company Ward White, which stands to make more than that from some astute share dealing.

Back in October, Ward White made a so-called Stock Exchange 'dawn raid' on K-shoes, another small shoe company. They spent £1.2m buying just under 15% of K-shoes (the most allowed under the Stock Exchange's own rules to curb the more rapacious companies, and thereby make sure the government doesn't decide to regulate it instead). They paid 60p a share, a move described as a 'trade investment'.

In December, Clarks Shoes made an offer for the whole of K-shoes — at 95p a share. K-shoes board approved, and several of their big shareholders have already said they'd take the money — although the final decision won't be known until later this month.

So where does that leave Ward White? They own 3.5 million shares which they bought just three months ago at 60p each. Now they can sell at 90p — a profit of £1.22m (well over 30%) in just three months.

★ ★

IF YOU'VE been neglecting to pay your tax recently and you're just waiting for the Inland Revenue to send an Enquiry Team round to sort you out, then the place to be on the 4th February is London's Café

Royal, where accountant Nigel Eastaway is picking up a hefty fee for explaining just how to deal with that in-depth investigation by the Enquiry Branch. He's just one of a bevy of lawyers and accountants who are being wheeled out to give talks on a number of aspects of tax evasion and

avoidance — a subject, the conference organisers say, (there's been 'renewed interest in' because of 'the recent publicity surrounding the Vestey case').

Tickets come at just £103.50 — but you'll be pleased to know that not only does that include VAT, but you also get lunch and aperitifs thrown in as well.

## The great arts lottery

The atrocious manner in which the vital Arts Council funding to 41 theatre companies, venues and organisations was withdrawn on 19 December — with recipients being assured of more money throughout 1980 and some receiving the news at second hand: Great Georges' Community Arts Project in Liverpool heard from their local radio station 2 days before their letter arrived — is the most obvious aspect of the way the Arts Council is becoming a *de facto* Ministry of Culture, without the accountability of any of the existing direct branches of government. *Arts Fight Back* is campaigning to advert the implications of this trend. At its second meeting, at the ICA, on January 4th, attended by the cut organisations, some of those with 'increased' (barely inflation proof) grants, ex-officers of the Arts Council and other supporters, more disturbing facts were revealed.

There are the hidden cuts of companies, in addition to the 41, being dropped from annual to individual project funding, which effectively puts most of them out of existence; one other company has been told that it is in the line-up for the round of companies to be cut next year; Stevas kept the Arts Council officers under the illusion that the 80-81 increase would be only 6% (instead of the announced 12%) to make sure pruning would occur: 70 companies were to have gone but the actual offer recommendations were reversed arbitrarily at the last minute by the directorate; so that far from any assessment in evidence, there appears to be a lottery in operation for grant distribution. A full scale independent enquiry is needed to investigate what is happening within the Arts Council. The Select Committee on the Arts, now sitting, should be presented with available evidence but its brief is too wide and its life too short to serve as the enquiry. In the meantime, if you wish to support *Arts Fight Back* contact them at 16 Chenies Street, London WC1. Tel. 636 6226/637 5516.

Lloyd Trott



# Hushed up

TWO YEARS ago, the *Leveller* published extracts from a collection of internal civil service security documents. Now we've received further damning evidence of the Civil Service's commitment to maintaining official secrecy.

The Civil Service *Security Handbook*, a manual for the guidance of all civil servants, says that the main threat to government secrecy comes from the intelligence services of Communist countries. But while there's a tacit recognition that our allies take a healthy interest in our 'secrets', there's also a paranoid concern about keeping information out of the hands of the British press, MPs, and Parliamentary Select Committees. The process by which classification of information goes on remains unaccountable to Parliament.

The Handbook was in force right through all the debates on official secrecy in recent years. And the Labour Party was as opposed to any information getting out as the present government is; the fact that Labour had pledged to replace the Official Secrets Act with a Freedom of Information Act demonstrates once again their cynical disregard for manifesto commitments.

THE HANDBOOK carries a 'Restricted' security classification, the lowest on the scale from 'Restricted', through 'Confidential' and 'Secret' to 'Top Secret'. 'Restricted' is defined as: 'information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which would be undesirable in the interests of the nation'. (The full classification system was in *Leveller* 16.) First it sets out the imagined threats: although the threat from other potentially hostile intelligence services cannot be discounted, the most formidable threat to the safety of official secrets comes from the espionage activities of communist countries' intelligence services working mainly through agents recruited on ideological grounds or by corruption or blackmail. But... other subversive organisations and groups, of which the Communist Party in Great Britain is the most important, will try to acquire classified information, not to give to a potential enemy, but with the object of using it in any way which will bring government or security into disrepute.

These subversive activities — nowhere defined in the Handbook — are obviously very worrying: 'Although the dangers to national defence, economic and financial secrets may be obvious, the threat to security arising from subversive activities is less apparent. When assessing the degree of protection necessary for particular information, staff concerned should consider whether its acquisition by a subversive individual or organisation could bring the government into disrepute and, if so, ensure that the material is appropriately safeguarded.'

But the lengths to which the civil servants go to keep Cabinet and Cabinet Committee papers secret have more serious political implications than any threat from subversives. Nobody other than a member of the Cabinet, or a Cabinet Committee, has the right of access to Cabinet documents. Because of a Secretary of State's personal accountability, the handling of Cabinet papers is the responsibility of his Private Office.... When a particular

conclusion by the Cabinet directly affects any department, copies of the extract containing the conclusion will be made in Private Office and passed to the senior officers concerned. Each copy is given a number and is distinctively marked to show that it is an extract from a Cabinet document and that it originated in the Private Office.

The officers that receive the relevant Cabinet documentation have to keep a record of it so that it can be traced at any time. They cannot place copies of the document even on the nightly registered files, though they can make their own note recording a decision or reference and file that. All the Cabinet papers, minutes and conclusions are placed in special folders and may not be removed from them.

All officials who see a Cabinet document, including junior officials or secretarial

**So far as it concerns disclosures the subject matter of the information and its importance or lack of importance are of no concern**

staff who handle the papers, must record their names on the folder in which the document is circulated .... No Cabinet paper other than an extract from Cabinet minutes may be copied. (Copies or extracts must never be made of limited circulation annexes.) Copies of extracts may be made only in the Private Office, or, exceptionally, with the specific authority of the Private Office .... All Cabinet papers have a minimum classification of Restricted but a higher classification must be applied if the contents warrant it.

The ultimate responsibility for security arrangements rests at the Permanent Secretary level. Security Officers in every De-

partment are responsible through their senior officers for security policy and implementing day-to-day security.

After a short discussion of the 'Need to Know' principle — the dissemination of classified information should be no wider than is required for the efficient discharge of the business in hand and restricted to those who have authorised access — the handbook has some interesting things to say about who, outside the civil service, is allowed to know what:

**UNION OFFICIALS:** Following a recommendation of the Radcliffe Committee on Security, civil service unions who take part in staff negotiations are not entitled, merely by virtue of their office, to be given classified information.

**MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT:** In dealing with requests for disclosure of classified information to Members of Parliament the appropriate Secretary of State's private secretary should be consulted.

**PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEES:** Security Division must be consulted before classified information is released to select committees.

**The disruption of data processing might cause maximum embarrassment to the Government for a minimum of effort and risk**

There is a stern reminder that the need to protect information goes beyond even the requirements of the Official Secrets Act:

It is, of course, also essential to prevent the disclosure of official information which neither affects the safety of the state nor involves state secrets of first class importance. In every Government office there are numerous items of information the disclosure of which would be prejudicial to the interests of private citizens, and to the proper conduct of administration.

Any dereliction of duty in this respect concerning classified or unclassified information may lead to disciplinary proceedings being taken, whether or not proceedings are instituted under the Official Secrets Acts .... So far as it concerns disclosures the subject matter of the information and its importance or lack of importance are of no concern.

Every civil servant has to behave in a secure way:

No practicable system of security can afford complete protection against the skilled agent; it can only make his task more difficult. Every system depends on its being strictly observed and no system can be proof against foolishness or negligence .... The most important general consideration is the need for swift action. If classified information has found its way into the press, enquiry must follow hot upon publication, or it may well be useless. It is therefore impressed on all officers, and should be a point of honour with them, that they must report instantly to their appropriate Security Officer any case in which security may have been compromised.

The handbook explains just who has the authority to classify material:

**TOP SECRET:** officers not below the rank of Principal or equivalent grade.  
**SECRET:** officers not below the rank of Higher Executive Officer or equivalent grade.

**CONFIDENTIAL AND RESTRICTED:** officers not below the rank of Executive Officer or equivalent grade.

In addition to the classification systems there is a higher grade of 'National Caveat' for documents containing information which must not be disclosed outside the UK. Instructions on these are not contained in the handbook, but are issued separately by Security Division to personnel authorised to handle documents covered by such a high grading.

The handbook goes to absurd lengths to explain how many copies may be made of which documents, how they should be stored, the necessity for spot checks .... and the need to destroy typewriter ribbons before machines are sent out for servicing.

The section on room security offers a couple of fascinating glimpses into this secret world:

Telephotography can be used for the photographing of documents from any angle greater than 15 degrees above the horizontal of the target document. Where there are dangers of overlooking documents classified confidential or above from distances of up to 100 feet, net curtains or opaque glass should be provided.

And if the cameras don't get you, watch out for the dictating machines:

Owing to the ease with which tape recorders and dictating machines can be modified to operate as radio transmitters special precautions may be necessary. In the UK, if they are used in rooms which have been specially protected against technical eavesdropping or in rooms where Top Secret and Secret conversations take place regularly, they should be

**Destroy typewriter ribbons before machines are sent outside for servicing . . . .**

disconnected from the power supply when not in use .... When in use for classified work they should be kept as far away as possible, at least three feet from any telephone or intercom equipment.

The interception of radio messages is easy, the handbook warns:

It must be assumed that every word of every conversation made by radio telephone is intercepted and recorded by foreign powers. The telegraph system must never be used for Top Secret messages; facsimile machines are similarly untrustworthy and may not be used for sending anything classified higher than Restricted.

Finally, the handbook turns its attention to 'Security in Computer and Data Pro-

cessing Installations'. It identifies three threats — a liability to physical attack, to disruption from within, and to espionage. On physical attacks it notes:

All Government computer installations, whether or not they process classified work, should be made physically secure at all times against damage by vandals, hooligans, political extremists, etc. It must be assumed that all Government computer installations, representing, as they do, a large and concentrated capital investment in a particularly vulnerable form, are at some risk from such people.

On disruption from within, the handbook contents itself with noting:

The disruption of data processing might cause maximum embarrassment to the Government for a minimum of effort and risk.

On espionage it argues that the sheer volume of information stored at a computer centre and the speed with which it can be surreptitiously copied or retrieved via a remote terminal greatly enhances the attractiveness of the target to a spy .... At the same time the capacity of modern computers to cope simultaneously with a large number of users gives rise to peculiar problems in the application of the need-to-know principle.

A supplement, issued only on a need-to-know basis, contains the full set of rules for protection from unauthorised access.

Each installation manager should possess a copy of the supplement; unfortunately, we don't .... yet.



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# Students

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1981 looks set to be the year that the Tories push through their promised Nationality Bill. Based on their White Paper proposals published last summer, the Bill enshrines racism as an integral part of British citizenship, and would replace our present muddled Nationality Act by an apartheid nightmare that includes no fewer than five racially decided grades of Britishness — an Immigration Act in all but name.

Lucia Otto has been looking at the background and the implications.

# Tory race plan

WORD IS out that the new Nationality Bill will proceed with indecent haste to take the minds of Tory faithfuls off the economic position by an appeal to primitive racism.

The government feels that it can count on silence from the Labour Front Bench whose own Green Paper of 1977 was a fittingly racist parent to this White Paper. However, with its chief architect Merlyn Rees removed from the Shadow Home Secretaryship they may find that the Labour Party NEC policy carries more weight in Parliament than before.

If the Tories are not opposed by mass protest parliamentary time will be absorbed by the details of how to flout international and domestic law — anti-racists will recall the H.O. has already admitted its immigration rules are racist but defends them as being outside the bounds of the Race Relations Act. Attention will be taken away from the real defects of the Bill goes

away from the real defects of the Bill by a suitable display of shadow-boxing from Tory right-wingers like Sir Ronald Bell for whom the Bill goes nowhere far enough.

The obvious racism in the categories of citizenship has meant that so far the campaign against the Bill has been led by the anti-racist lobby. The legal nonsense of establishing citizenships with virtually no rights has prompted lawyers to oppose it too. The Action Group on Immigration and Nationality (AGIN) has a 12 page briefing which points four possible ways out of the present muddle. An educational soundstrip, British Nationality, has been produced by the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice and the British Council of Churches. Copies have been distributed around the country for free use. Statements opposing the White Paper have been made by Justice, the British section of the International Commission of Jurists, the CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) and the Runnymede Trust. The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) and the Harehills and Chapeltown Law Centre Leeds, produce advice for individuals.

But unlike the immigration law, nationality law affects everyone. The labour and progressive movement must launch a campaign as strong as the one which thwarted *In Place of Strife* in 1969. A bad law is a bad law against not only those who suffer personally through it — it influences society generally. The issue of nationality should be raised at every trade union and political party branch and queried with every M.P.

Agin Briefing c/o JCWI, 44 Theobalds Rd, London WC1X 8SP (01 405 5527) Price 25p. British Nationality soundstrip from Catholic Commission for Racial Justice, 1 Anwell Street, London EC1R 1UL (01 278 5880). Report by British Section of International Commission of Jurists from Justice, 95A Chancery Lane, London WC1 Price £2.

## What the Nationality Act would mean



THE WHITE Paper suggests five different kinds of British Nationality (two old, three new), only one of them with any rights. The status of British Overseas Citizen gives no rights of entry to any territory at all, anywhere, and does not carry any other rights except eligibility to apply for a passport which will take you nowhere. So Britain will continue to break international law by refusing entry to its own nationals.

● Anybody who is patrial under the present Immigration Law (ie if you or your father or grandfather was born in the UK) will automatically become a British citizen with rights of entry to Britain. That's several million (mostly white) potential immigrants.

● Here's some good news — on sexual equality — British citizenship by descent may be passed on to a child born abroad by a parent of either sex. The bad news — only British born British citizens can do it. So a step against sexism is really a step towards racism since very few non-white people have been born in the U.K.

● What happens when you don't consult your allies: (Example I: EEC). Channel Islanders will become 'British Citizens' with freedom of movement in the EEC — which they have already rejected in order to preserve their tax privileges. Gibraltarians will become 'Citizens of the British Dependent Territories' with no rights in the EEC. But EEC law says they must have freedom to move and work.

● What happens when you don't consult your allies: (Example II: The Commonwealth). Commonwealth citizens settled here before 1973 who have a right to register as British citizens will lose it —

they will have to naturalise which is three times more expensive (£150:£50); carries a language and good character qualification and is at the Home Secretary's discretion. There has been no consultations with Commonwealth Governments about their nationals position. As registration is already subject to up to two years delay it would seem that the Home Office could process a mass demand.

● More good news — Commonwealth citizens will continue to have the rights of British subjects — voting in government service, serving on juries etc — even when the term British subject is abolished. The bad news — For how long? The White Paper explains that 'the Bill, by establishing a British citizenship, will make available a ready definition by which those duties or entitlements may be re-defined in the future' (our italics).

● The principle of 'ius soli' by which all people born in Britain are automatically British (diplomats excepted) would be breached for the first time. Only children who have at least one parent legally settled here with no restrictions on their stay would qualify. So having a British birth certificate will not be enough to get a passport. Who will check on the parents status? How many legal settlers will be harassed in the quest for an occasional rogue. Is this a move towards 'Pass' laws?

● The Home Secretary's discretionary power to grant or refuse citizenship would be increased.

● Unlike most other countries Britain has no written Constitution or Bill of Rights. The White Paper says 'civic privileges do not stem directly from the law of nationality'. So how can they be defended?

● Three of the five types of British citizenship could not be passed on to the holders' children. So the fact that Britain is a party to the UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness is apparently not very binding on the government. According to the White Paper, 'Some children of British Overseas Citizens may be born stateless (abroad).... it is generally understood that the country of birth should be responsible for remedying the situation.' In other words if you are born in Ghana you're Ghanaian, but if you are born in Britain, you're not necessarily British.



Jolly Rohatgi

## Manushi vs. Manu

Madhu Kishwar is the editor of *Manushi*, 'a journal about women and society' published from Delhi. Now London is to be the base from which she hopes supporters will secure a Western network of financial and organisational assistance for *Manushi*, and draw attention to the situation of women in India. H.O. Nazareth spoke to her while she was here.

THE CONTENT of *Manushi* will certainly give a jolt to many whose stock image of Indian women is one of figures in bright and colourful sarees wafting gracefully down the street. Indian women have been subjected to horrific oppression over centuries. Manu, the ancient Hindu law-giver, pronounced that the duty of women towards their menfolk came before their own well being. The Muslims added their own Islamic restrictions when they ruled India, and the British contributed further moral twists and misery.

Indian women participated actively in the nationalist movement from the very beginning in the nineteenth century. They were also involved in local struggles concerning land, caste, religion and work. At the time of independence, the Indian Constitution asserted the equality of women. But like the laws promulgated to protect outcasts, equal rights legislation for women was simply paid lip service, while the situation for these oppressed sections actually got worse.

The worldwide upsurge of the women's movement was also reflected in India. Women formed groups to discuss issues specific to themselves. Madhu Kishwar was a lecturer in English literature at Delhi University, and a member of a women's group there, consisting of students, scientists, lecturers, stenotypists and translators. The nucleus of the *Manushi* collective emerged from this group.

'We were aware of various local struggles involving women. But most of these matters were ignored by the mass media. And we realised that there was an acute need for a forum to link up all these

issues, to prevent demoralisation, to provide information, and give women confidence. Out of the group's discussions came the idea of *Manushi*.

'We published a circular and sent it to sympathetic trade unions, political parties and other organisations. We received a very enthusiastic response, so we began to set up a fund-raising campaign, and a network for distribution. We made certain policy decisions — we would not accept institutional grants, we would work directly through supporters instead of bookshops, we would send *Manushi* activists to speak when needed, and we would correspond on a personal level with every woman who wrote to us.

'We made plans for our first issue in March 1978, and it came out in January 1979. The journal caught on like wildfire, without any media publicity. It sold out very quickly, just through women. For a whole year we had nothing, not a place for a base, not even a typewriter. We carried the office on our shoulders so to speak. When we tried to get a place, landlords were reluctant to rent to us, because they were worried that we, all women, might start a brothel. We didn't have any money even for postage at the start.

'The collective is an open one, not based on membership. All the work is done voluntarily, combining it with jobs or other commitments. About six or seven people work regularly on an issue — not necessarily the same people. And the journal has no political line except that we won't print anti-women pieces.'

Six issues later, the English version has a print run of 10,000 copies and the Hindi

version, 4,000 copies. Only money stops them from increasing the print run. 'Because we wanted to make sure that poor people could afford to buy a copy, we've kept price below cost. Our readership is more than twenty times the sales figures, because various articles get translated into other languages, or are cyclostyled for distribution by local groups.

'Poverty is not our only problem. India has so many major languages; and the level of literacy is low, lower among women. Often *Manushi* articles are read out to groups of women who then discuss them — what are the issues, how to act on them. We don't operate on class divisions. Middle-class women have relatively more freedom, but can't do anything on women's issues without the key support of working-class women.

'Women in cities and in the countryside don't always have the same problems. In rural areas, the main issues are landlessness, the fight for minimum wages, and against bonded labour and sexual exploitation — there are hundreds of cases of gang rapes, rapes by landlords and police. In the cities, there is declining employment of women. And although women are often very militant in trade unions, the unions don't back them fully on implementation of laws on maternity, on creches, and on 'temporary' employment. And everywhere there are instances of rape, harassment, dowry murders, physical and sexual violence, even within the family.

'We also fight the image of women projected by the media. As a journal we don't initiate protests and demonstrations, but we participate, we report, and we make connections and give support. In one case of rape by a policeman, within hours most women in one locality demonstrated outside the governor's residence. We have exposed the connivance of the police in a dowry murder, where a newly-married woman caught fire 'accidentally'. Women have begun picketing the houses of families who caused it — working towards a social ostracism of such families. There's no point going to the law because corruption is so rife.

'Women are worse affected by modernisation in developing countries. In 1901, for instance, there were 525 women to every thousand men in the Indian workforce. In 1979, there were only 210 to every thousand men. Women are now being seen as economic burdens and therefore 'expendable'.

'The green revolution also led to a decline of women's work in the countryside, and they lost jobs in the cotton and textile industries. Maternity legislation has also prompted employers to put women out of work since they can't make as much profit out of them as before. Women have always been paid less, and though women's visibility has increased, that is only a facade.'

What were the prospects for the future? 'For women in general, more struggle, more organisation of women for themselves. As for *Manushi*, we are trying to raise money and other resources. We need a typesetter, so that we can set up the magazine ourselves. At present it takes us more than three weeks to get the magazine typeset manually. If we can get the money, we also want to get offset litho print facilities, so we can print the magazine ourselves. And we will also try to publish *Manushi* in more regional languages. There's no shortage of helpers, only of finances. That's the old story, isn't it?

Write to the *Manushi* Trust, 147 Grove Lane, London SE5 about subscriptions, (£7.50 for six issues) and back copies. Donations and contributions towards the printshop fund are also welcome. In India, *Manushi* is at C1/202 Lagpat Nagar, New Delhi 110024.



WHILE WESTERNS have become self-conscious elegies for over hyped traditions and the possibilities for promotional tee-shirts seem to be the major concern of most science fiction, that old B movie classic the prison film seems to have become the only certain bet for audience and promoters. Made on comparatively small budgets the prison movie manages to be both 'non-stop tension to bring in the money adventure' and necessary social criticism' which help to legitimise its generous use of graphic violence.

At the moment *McVicar*, *Brubaker*, *Escape from Alcatraz*, *Mean Machine*, *Midnight Express* and *Scum* are all doing the rounds, although some of them are years old. *Scum* particularly is a shock — transformed from a censored Play for Today it looked destined for small documentary/art size takings, but became one of the biggest money makers of 1979, and is currently pulling in the crowds on its second run.

In 1981 we will be offered Jimmy Boyle's life story, *A Sense of Freedom*, *Stir*, an Australian prison riot film and a strange sounding epic introducing Pele in a P.O.W. camp football team, amongst others. And this is not counting TV, or the ridiculously successful *Porridge* TV spin off.

What is the attraction? The media exposure that fictional prisons are getting is in direct contrast to the amount we are encouraged to know about the real thing. Even ordinary prisons, leaving aside atrocities committed in Rangoon and Castlereagh, are obscurely mediaeval in a society that likes to think itself humane and modern. The secret system of petty limitations and glaring inhumanities of the prison is the seamy underside of the 'free market' world of cigarette commercials and Friedmanite economics, while the favourite *Daily Telegraph* myth of openness of media, education and government is cut short fairly quickly by the walls of Strangeways and Pentonville. The 'open prison' of course is a simple contradiction in terms — except perhaps Brixton!

The deterrent effect of prison is supposed to come with horrified whispers of the awful goings-on behind the walls, while the hasty look at the regime of prisons on the screen works as a tap on the shoulder for those who need it. This kind of thinking undoubtedly encouraged the Home Office to let the BBC into Strangeways. And Alan Clarke, who directed *Scum*, justified his brutal film to me on the grounds that, placed on a double bill with *Quadrophenia*, and starring Phil Daniels and Ray Winstone, it would 'make youngsters think twice before getting into trouble'.

But showing Redford in chains and Daltrey in solitary does not amount to a threat of what happens if you behave badly. Instead, films like *Scum* and *Brubaker* celebrate the secret society they are supposed to be exposing.

Far from being the miserable and depressing places real prisons are, the filmic prison is enlivened by an all-male secret society where strict but glamorous codes of honour, strength and a brutal form of masculine friendship are acted out. (All prison films are about men's prisons.) Ultimate hard men, all straining muscle and barely concealed animality stalk the prison acting out complicated games — the football team in *Mean Machine*, the escape committee welcome in prisoner

of war films. Although we assume these rituals were developed to counter the harsh routines of the imposed regime they become important in themselves, almost as if they are the reason prisons exist.

The sub-plot of the prison movie is always male rites of passage — the new boy, a little lost, learns the ropes from the old timer and despite an uphill struggle to be accepted finally excels himself, having gained admittance to the most prestigious group, or actually comes to dominate it. Our position in the stalls is of wanting to join as much as the hero does — so much for frightening us off trouble.

Being inside doesn't give men much choice about rejecting women, but prison films turn this into a virtue almost worth giving up life for. Prison movies take the tendency of the 'buddy friendship' film like *Butch Cassidy* to turn women into peripheral bores to its logical extreme by making them entirely absent except when talked about — as not being around to have sex with. When women do get in on the act, as in *McVicar* or *Midnight Express*, they usually serve to emphasise the segregation of prison life or even to reinforce the joy of a totally masculine world.

Of course this doesn't make the prison movie consciously gay, anymore than it does Westerns. But whereas homosexuality is conspicuous by its absence in most films, in new prison epics it is awarded a properly powerful presence. However the sex that is presented has been stripped of all warmth and eroticism (Genet for one wouldn't recognise it) and becomes the final unacceptable act. It is this which causes the young boy to kill himself in *Scum*, while in *Midnight Express* it is Billy Hayes' impending rape by a stinking guard that forces him to the feat of strength that brings about his escape.

Homosexual rape does happen in prison but it is not the only kind of gay sex there is. Many normally straight prisoners find that gay relationships are the only bearable aspect of prison. This was true of the real Billy Hayes who had a long relationship with another prisoner — yes, the Swede to whom he so manfully shakes his head in the version of his life filmed by Alan Parker.

Homosexual rape is only one of the torments presented in the prison movie for our delectation. The essential currency of these films is the careful close up the impact of the truncheon on a head, and the amplified sound of a leather whip hitting the back, along with new 'specialities' each time. Almost all prison films rely on extreme sadism to fill out sparse sections in the screenplay.

Usually such excessively graphic viciousness has about the same relation to unpleasant aspects of real prisons as cheap paperback books on death camps have to fascism. *Midnight Express* and *Scum* (despite Clarke's moral purpose) are particularly offensive in this way, and the prison sequence in the new mercenary film *The Dogs of War* is a fine example of gratuitous violence. The traditional sequence where the inmates get beaten by the guards occupies an important place, vital to the eventual and inevitable explosion at the heart of every prison film. The real shock however is that we are being prepared to see one of the last taboo areas on film — class conflict.

In its purest form the prison riot film encourages us to indulge in an identific-

ation with violent and almost anarchistic revolt against authority. Once the pressure has become almost unbearable films like *Scum* and *Stir* allow us catharsis by striking out with a generalised violence, not at individuals, but at a uniformed caste.

Often the early stages of the film actually encourage us to feel some sympathy for prison guards, who we then subsequently see brutalised by the system. Sometimes the political metaphors are very obvious — in *Mean Machine* Burt Reynolds' football team thrashes the guards' side in the annual match by using every dirty trick in the book. The prison governor, for whose benefit this display is put on is a thinly disguised Nixon look-alike complete with tape recorder. It is the possibility of joining in the hero's revolt against the system, rather than its moral surface that sells the prison film to so many people.

The implicit radicalism of the prison movie is increased by the way that the population of the prison you see at your local Odeon is almost entirely working class. Statistically this is correct, but cinematically highly surprising, since workers are almost never depicted realistically in

Right: Prisoners break up furniture during a riot in 'McVicar', so they can barricade themselves in the records office.

Below: Billy Hayes is dragged back into the cells after being beaten up by the Turkish prison guards in 'Midnight Express' — his punishment for being involved in a fight with another prisoner.

films. The neutral ground of the prison film allows us to see members of a contemporary working class — and not the usual sanitised film industry brand.

How can the film industries, normally so shy of even showing a worker, let alone a rioting one deal with this? Partly because the very 'enclave of barbarity' separation from the outside world which gives the prison movie its interest, and its chance, effectively ensures that any revolt is contained. Riots in prisons never get to cause revolutions unless the outer wall gets broken — historically this has almost never happened, and never as far as I know in a film. In *Attica*, a real prison film, the walls are breached, symbolically at least, by the prisoners' astute use of the media to present their demands to the world. But this outside is never shown in the prison.

The Attica riot didn't get the inmates anywhere. Because the audience for the prison film knows the futility of the prison riot, they are prepared for the prison movie's usual style — presenting options and then closing them off. The viewers

FOR THOSE on the outside, life inside provokes fascination or concern, and the commercial cinema has pulled more than a few Gs because of it. *Jane Root* has been doing a stretch down at the local Odeon.

## Reeling out the years



assume that the prison system will continue — and they wait for the inevitable clampdown. When it comes, it is a continuation of the violence, abstracted through close ups and pure disgust. If you've enjoyed the sadism up to now, it goes on being fun.

Other films have different methods of foreclosing the radical possibilities. In *Brubaker* Redford reveals himself as the new prison governor, while in *Mean Machine* Reynolds decides against escape when there is the chance.

The story is very different in the middle class version, the prisoner of war movie. Through their allegiance to an acceptable entity (a nation rather than a sub-culture) the prisoner of war film usually overcomes the problem of individual against the mass, with Steve McQueen in *The Great Escape* deciding to join in the escape committee's project, rather than go it alone. The same unity can be seen in films as different as Renoir's *Classic Grand Illusion* and Cimino's *Deer Hunter*.

In the prison film however, the escape attempt is usually solitary, and while the hero may unite with the other inmates in an extreme situation it is almost always only temporary. Given the different social status, and possibilities of success ascribed to criminals and wartime prisoners it is hardly surprising that the hunger strikers felt so strongly about their labelling.

There is one notable exception to this pattern. *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, directed by Mervyn LeRoy in 1932, follows an innocent man condemned to a savage chain gang. He escapes, is recaptured, but although pardoned is still forced to serve his time. At the end of the film he has once again escaped, with the help of his friends, and had determined never to be recaptured. At a secret meeting his lover asks the harrassed, scared man how he lives. Nervously listening for cars he whispers, 'I steal'.

The film ends leaving him free, and the radical nature of the film unmodified, even though to support criminals was taboo in the thirties. It is not coincidental that *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* was partly responsible for the end of the chain gang system. It's probably the only prison film to have actually changed the world. And it's certainly the only one to work through the radical possibilities of the prison film — rather than running away from them.



## A true story ...

Hamburg. A City Line railway bridge nicknamed 'The Shoulder-blade'. End of November, getting on for 11.00 at night.

A young man leaves a building after a quarrel with his lover, intending to think it all over as he walks along on his own.

He wanders more or less aimlessly around the area, still thinking about their argument. Deep in thought, he stops in front of a brightly-lit shop-window — the shop's name is 999 Jars — and stares in.

"Shall I get drunk, or what?" he looks around. To the Alexandra Bar, or The Olympic Flame? Undecided, he walks on.

He stops at a cigarette machine and reaches in his trouser pocket for his wallet. "Shit! No small change."

He looks around for someone to ask for change. "Ah! The two-mark piece change I got from the butcher's." He fishes it out of his coat pocket and gets the cigarettes.

"What the hell, I'd rather go up and have it out with her." He spins purposefully around but then halts after a couple of yards.

"I'll just get a couple of bottles of beer to take back with me." He crosses the street, gets the beer from the pub opposite and goes back to the house.

Horst P. is the same age and two days ago he too had a row with his lover. But right now he's at work. He's a plainclothes cop with Department Six (Special Criminal Operations).

At present he's squatting on the 'Shoulder-blade' bridge overlooking the street. He and his six colleagues are watching everything in their field of view that moves. They call it 'area observation'. "If it doesn't kill us it'll toughen us up", his boss always says.

He's in contact with the others on his radio. His callsign is 'Platypus'. Anything he considers suspicious he reports to the others according to instructions. Everything is suspicious.



"Platypus to Spanner. There's a bloke just coming round the corner, long hair, woolly hat, fur coat and boots. He's heading ... no he's stopped ... right outside 1000 Jars ... he's looking in the window — that's the third one down from where I am."

"Spanner, roger. Is he carrying anything — a plastic bag or a briefcase?"

"Can't see for certain, Spanner."



# The eye of the state

JUST BECAUSE you're paranoid, it doesn't mean they aren't watching you. A group of West German activists in Hamburg has proved it — successfully turning the tables on the state's surveillance machinery by setting up their own watch on the watchers. They published the results of their researches recently in a booklet that describes police operations in revealing detail, with photos of undercover men, transcripts of radio exchanges between observation teams, tables of radio frequencies, call-signs and much other useful information. Even with minimal resources, a little initiative goes a long way in combatting superior police power, as Nick Anning reports.

The group's 125-page booklet, *State Security and Constitution Protectorate Routine: The Hamburg Model*, appeared in a privately published and distributed edition of 10,000 towards the end of 1980. It confirms the worst fears of the paranoid and cynical alike. Massive state resources deployed on surveillance of the Left or anybody suspected of supporting it; virtually no attention given to fascist groupings like the neo-Nazis and the Turkish emigre 'Grey Wolves'. A city teeming with plainclothes police in cars, on trains, on the underground, in the Elbe tunnels, on foot in the streets.

Day and night, they sit outside flats and houses, checking when the lights go on and off, who calls, who goes out and in. Their special VW and Transit vans hang about with a concealed photographer to take mugshots. They record who meets with whom, what their car registration number is, how much mileage it's done, even down to what items of laundry 'suspects' take to the launderette. And that is before their 'targets' even dare to go out on a demonstration ... for that, there are different operational procedures. All this is fully documented in the booklet from direct observation or from conversations overheard on the radio frequency by the watch on the watchers.

In short, Hamburg is a microcosm of the West German state's over-reaction to the 'terrorist' threat, an over-reaction which it dresses up in the form most ac-

ceptable to the Euro-bourgeois/liberal consensus which runs something like this: 'We are defending the constitution of the democratic Federal Republic from attack. We are fighting subversion, terrorism, communism, anarchism and all the denigrators of the new social order bequeathed to us by the victorious Allies in 1945 ...' And what happens to all this obsessively gathered information? It goes straight into police computer systems like PIOS, POLAS, INPOL and NADIS, all co-ordinated from the massive complex in Wiesbaden. Available instantly countrywide at the touch of a keyboard. The lesson shouldn't be lost on us. West Germany may be Europe's front-runner in dealing 'efficiently' with disaffection amongst its own population, but Britain has its own testing ground for a very similar surveillance set-up right on its own doorstep in Northern Ireland. High technology Euro-control is almost a reality now. That's why the Hamburg Model deserves a closer look.

The encouraging factor about the Hamburg Model is the ease with which it could be 'overheard' at work and its more intimate secrets revealed. If a secret police officer's greatest fear is to be rumbled, then that may be the strongest weapon an embattled community possesses against an encroaching police state. The Hamburg group merely used readily available radio receivers — 'Skylark', 'Combi Control' and 'Bearcat Scanners' hooked up by 'Acoustomat' to cassette recorders. Equipment like this can be bought in Holland and

Switzerland for £200-£300.

Using it to listen in to police frequencies is, of course, illegal in West Germany. That sense of their own comparative immunity may make the police careless at times and much of their radio-traffic was in easily understood 'cleartext'. But their higher command works on the assumption that their radio traffic is intercepted and for that reason half the *Verfassungsschutz* signals and some of the *Staatsschutz* command-calls use 'Krypto': scramblers, speech inverters (which convert high speech tones into low and vice versa) and in certain cases a digital encoding system.

The frequencies used by the State Security and the Constitution Protectorate give them some 200 channels in the 4-metre and 2-metre bands on VHF: 75MHz-87.5MHz and 167.5MHz-174.2MHz. The Hamburg group concentrated on the work of State Security 'Special Department No7' and in particular on three of its sections, the so-called 'Sixties', 'Seventies' and 'Nineties'. (Special Department No7 is subdivided into nine separate sections).

But the Hamburg group didn't just listen in to the police. It also warned people when they were under observation. Some 'targets' were aware of what was going on, but many others had no idea, and were surprised when informed about the interest police showed in them. But then as West German police chief Herold once remarked: 'We're interested in that nice young woman with the friendly smile who moved in next door precisely because she's nice and has a friendly smile'.

The group also give details of how to spot undercover cars by their aerial attachments and how three or four cars carry out a tailing operation. They explain how to identify a VW van used for photographing: usually green in colour, no side windows and often with a pile of cardboard boxes stacked in the rear window. The

police photographer lies behind these, sometimes with a colleague who notes down the list of 'subjects' snapped and the order they were taken in. Suggestions for counter-measures against such vans are offered. So too is the more creative proposal to jam key frequencies during big police operations like the eviction of the Gorleben nuclear site protesters.

For demos, the advice has a more familiar ring: how to spot police 'plants' (they take three copies of leaflets and handouts, but never read them), police photographers disguised as reporters, police video teams and remote-controlled video cameras mounted at keypoints 'aiding traffic control'. Police procedure at demos gets the full treatment — from sussing the route, spotting the 'ring-leaders' and making sure they get arrested to the post-demo 'sweep' and debriefing. The booklet gives helpful hints about handling these problems and backs it all up with a series of appendices: police car numbers, police radio-jargon with a list of numbered channels and call-signs, technical guide to DIY listeners, a reference guide to all frequency allocations in the Federal Republic, a legal guidance section, a background reading list and, most useful of all if you live in Hamburg: a 20-page pull-out section with photographs of a dozen undercover State Security men.

Obviously this little booklet won't put an end to the police activities it describes — the authors recognise that changing frequencies, recruiting some new faces and getting more secure (and expensive) equipment will restore the uneasy imbalance between observers and observed. But there must have been some red faces in the *Staatsschutz* literary section when they saw the dents in the Hamburg Model made by a few people determined enough to kick back.

Enquiring readers can find the Hamburg police Special Department No 7 (Politische Polizei, Hamburg, Fach-Dezernat 7) at Strohhäuser, Johanniswall, Hamburg. A quick phonecall on [010-4940] 283 7142 will get you the general office number. 283 7145 is the duty officer's telephone. The *Verfassungsschutz* can be reached only through the governmental communications network by dialling 788 or 808.

Special Department 7 has nine separate sections, numbered from 7/10 to 7/90 — hence 'Sixties' (7/60), 'Seventies' (7/70) and 'Nineties' (7/90). Some sections merely carry out special escort and protection duties, others work in with the *Verfassungsschutz* on long surveillance lasting several days. 7/60 is for the Special

Undercover Observation Teams; 7/70 is the Political Intelligence Bureau, which works more openly to assemble a full picture of Hamburg's political scene; 7/90 is the Special Snatch Squads whose job is to make arrests.

Hamburg police radio networks work on the same principle as those of most European forces — the allocated frequency range is divided into numbered channels, formed by pairing an 'upper' and 'lower' frequency with regular separation. There are 92 channels (nos 200-292) in the 2-metre band; 120 in the 4-metre band (nos 400-519), making a total of 220. Some activity has also been heard on the 70-cm band (around 460 MHz) and around 1GHz.

"Whisky calling Spanner. I'm here in a doorway and I can see him. I'll just take a walk by and see if he's got a bag or a case."

A little later. "Whisky calling again, he hasn't got a bag, but he's having a good look around — he's up to something."

"Received. Spanner calling Gaiter, Jet, Pussy and Tarzan. We've got a guy acting suspiciously in front of 1004 Jars. You got him?"

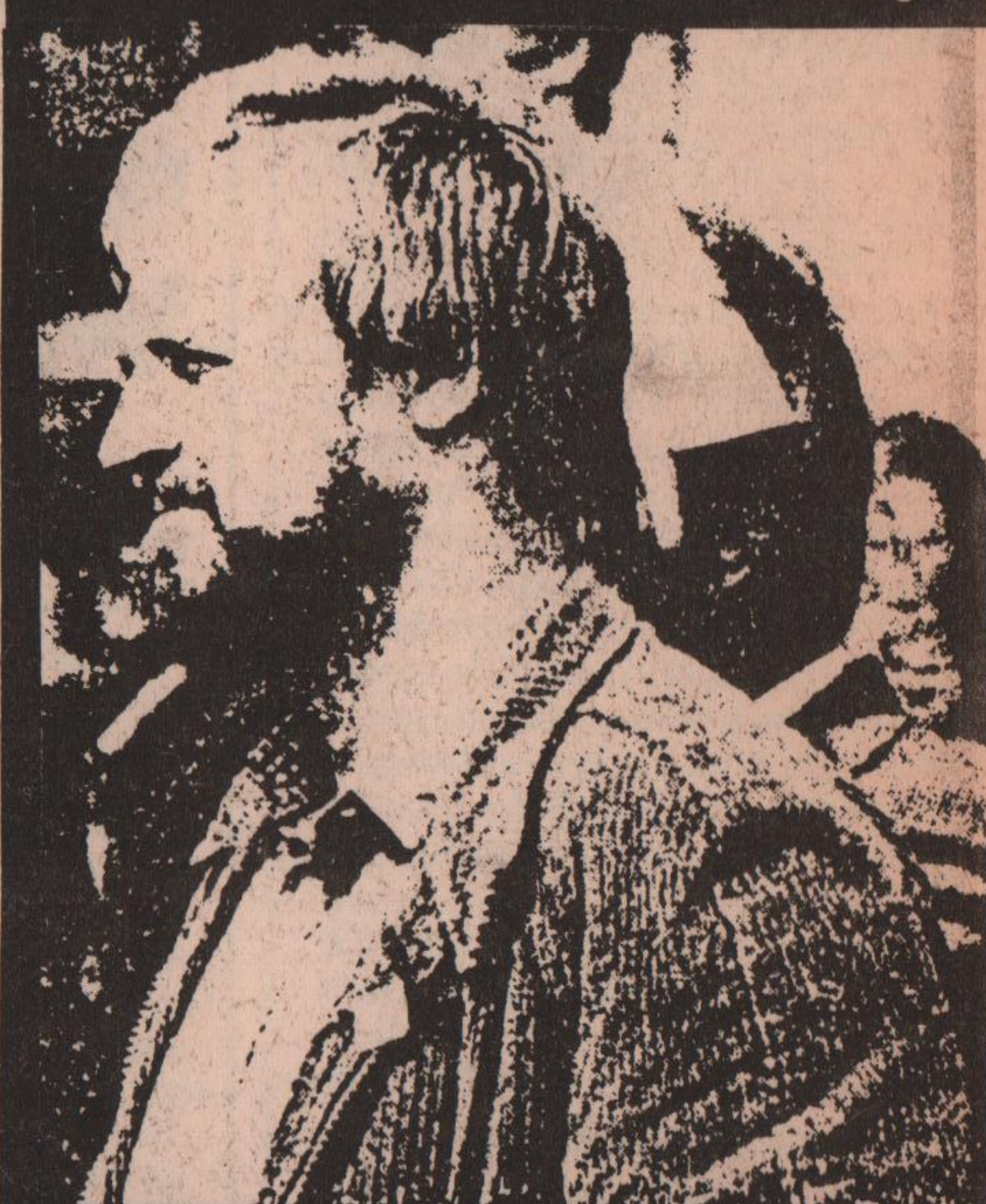
"Platypus calling Spanner. Watch out, the guy's now heading slowly towards the Horsemarket."

"Spanner, roger. OK. Tarzan, you stick with him."

A little later. "Tarzan calling Spanner. The guy's got to the corner of Juliusstrasse, he's standing at a cigarette machine and checking up all the time. I'll break off for now."

"Spanner, roger. Right. Gaiter and Jet, why don't you drive past there in the taxi and have a look what he's up to? But watch it, he's a crafty one, on the lookout the whole time."

A bit later. "Gaiter calling Spanner. Get someone on foot down here right away! He was looking for something in his coat pocket and he kept peering round and checking up behind him. He's a wary one, this. He's up to something."



"Spanner calling Whisky. You stick with him from now on. Calling everybody: only arrest him once he's pulled the job."

"Whisky, roger."

Radio silence... then...

Whisky, excited. "Bollocks! He's spotted me! All he did was get a packet of cigarettes and go off towards the Horsemarket. Oh shit, he's turned round and he's coming back towards me!!" Pause. "Spanner, he's spotted me, I'm pulling out. He's gone into a pub calling The Olympic Flame."

"Spanner calling Tarzan and Pussy. Whisky's been rumbled. You two tail him, but be careful: keep him on a long leash once he comes out again."

A little later. "Pussy calling Spanner. The guy's just come out, and now he's carrying a plastic bag. We can't say from here exactly what's in it — probably bottles of beer. Now he's gone into some flats here on Juliusstrasse. He didn't put the hallway lights on! Shall we follow him in, Spanner? Hold on, a light's just come on on the groundfloor left. Probably lives there." Short pause.

"Spanner calling everybody. We missed out on that one. Break off. Spanner calling Platypus, you got any fresh information?"

"No, Spanner. Everything's clean and peaceful right now.... Hold on, there's a bloke in a black coat coming and...."

FOOTNOTE: Area observations like this take place practically every evening in Hamburg. They can be heard on Channel 280, 173.78MHz in the 2-metre band.



## Album reviews

**UNZIPPING THE ABSTRACT:** Bands of the Manchester Musicians' Collective (MMC) RECORDS LIKE *Unzipping The Abstract* make you feel cheerful about the state of British rock music. There are fifteen tracks here, each by a different Manchester band, and there's not a real lulu among them.

Certainly, some are better than others. The Enigma for example, sound like just another new wave band, and I thought we'd moved on from there by now. But there's also the urgency and freneticism of Dislocation Dance's *You Can't Beat History*, and the discord of Creeps In by God's Gift. In all, it's an impressively varied selection and you can dance to it.

In a sense, the fact of the record is as important as the music on it. There's more than thirty bands in the Manchester Musicians Collective, and they meet fortnightly. The aim is that musicians should retain control over all aspects of their work, and, they say, to engage the music industry with energetic alternatives.

Other LPs of bands from one town have seemed to be showcases, attempts to get the music heard in the hope that a record company will splash some contracts about. The Piranhas, for example, now with Sire, first surfaced on one of the Brighton label Attrix's Vaultage compilations. Will the Manchester Collective be able to create alternatives to the record industry, or will it become just another talent show for the A&R executives and a stepping stone for the bands? Time will tell.

MMC can be contacted c/o 102, Burton Road, Withington, Manchester 20.

Andy Curry

### VAULTAGE '80: A VINYL CHAPTER Various Brighton bands (Attrix)

The third Vaultage compilation from Brighton's Attrix label is of the same high standard as its predecessors. All the fourteen tracks, by bands who're playing in and around Brighton at the moment, are worth hearing; further proof, if any more is needed, of the wealth of musical talent all over the country just now.

Proceeds from the LP go to the Resource Centre Fund. Brighton's left and community groups are trying to find new premises after the fire that gutted the Community Resource last year. Before the fire, the hands on this LP — and those on the two previous compilations — had practised in the centre's vaults.

Peter Chapman

### THE MEKONS: The Mekons (RED RHINO)

IT'S GOOD to hear a second album that's not a mere follow-on from the first, both musically and lyrically. These songs deal with people's passive acceptance of all that surrounds them; doing as they are told not as they think, rather than the more personal approach of the last album.

This is an album which holds your attention and deserves much more attention than it will probably get.

Sarah Wyatt



Keystone Press

## Music

### Wanna buy a lifestyle?

A YEAR on from *Two-Tone*, Chris Schüler searches for the young pop music rebels.

FEBRUARY 1980: I was sitting in a friend's room when someone put on *Too Much Pressure* by The Selecter. It was the first time I'd heard it, that jumpy, nervous music, Pauline Black's angry passionate voice: *Rolling up the dog ends, / Waiting for someone to come round — / But they don't wanna know you / When you're down and angry...* (The Selecter: *Black and Blue*)

This was it. I wasn't rushing out to buy a pork pie hat or a two-tone shirt, but I did rush out and buy the album. Here was music I could identify with, music that didn't romanticise, that wasn't sexist or racist, that actually inhabited a recognisable contemporary world. I never believed *Two-Tone* would change the universe, but I hoped it might just change pop music.

But since then, The Selecter have produced one disappointing single, *The Whisper*; The Bodysnatchers have split, The Specials have descended into clever-cleverness and cosy, patronising superiority. The only one of the original two-tone bands to have stayed on form are Madness, who had the least pretensions to 'social awareness' in the first place.

But *Two-Tone*, as a social force, has retreated in disarray, its morale sapped by persistent, irrational outbursts of violence at their gigs and their confusing tendency to attract fascist fans in spite of their anti-racist message. All that remains is a diehard following whose brand-loyalty can be relied on to sell a record with black and white checks on the sleeve.

So what's new? The last four years have seen an embarrassing succession of musical waves with more short-lived than the last, most of them leaving little behind except groups of fans divided from one another by their tribal dress. The good bands they pro-

duce soon transcend their origins, the mediocre ones stay locked in their time warp. The Buzzcocks' output since *Lovebites* came out in 1978 can by no stretch of the imagination be described as punk, while bands like Cockney Rejects persist in churning out fossilised 'punk rock'.

The disillusionment felt by people who place political hopes in movements like punk or *Two-Tone* stems from a misunderstanding of the nature of pop music rebellion. Far from being a threat to the established social order, it is one of its moving parts, actually helping it to function.

Monopoly capitalism has refined the process. Because it controls the means of production and distribution not only of music itself but also of the emblems — razor blade earrings, pork pie hats, parkas and whatnot — that declare your allegiance to the latest contender for the role of music rebel/patriarch, there's money to be made out of regular rebellion. Get the kids into baggies before they've worn out their drainpipes. So when a rebellion arises naturally out of social and economic circumstances, the establishment is quick to jump on the bandwagon; punk dresses and accessories by Zandra Rhodes and Vivienne Westwood.

MacLaren and Westwood are at it again with their proteges Bow-wowwow and their exotic pirate costumes. Bright threads, so the theory goes, would annoy Margaret Thatcher much more than clothes from the Oxfam shop. I hope nobody seriously believes that she'd be anything other than delighted at the prospect of kids spending all their dode money on profitable luxury garments.

Political slogans and street-fighter rhetoric notwithstanding, these musical waves lead just one place — back into the mainstream. They're the direct road to assimilation. Punk, Mod, *Two-Tone*,

New Funk... forget it. Rebellion isn't spending money on consumer goods, it isn't copying other people's clothes. Dexy's Midnight Runners searched for the young soul rebels, only to discover that people thought rebellion meant copying their woolly hats. The punks thought they'd demolished the musical elite and opened the doors to anyone who wanted to be heard. But there was no safety in numbers even under the spiketop, as the Adverts, one of the most cruelly misused of the punk bands, found to their cost: *It's tricky when it gets tough, / When you need to feel that you're good enough. / Plenty of pretty people being taken over, / You're better looking for your own answers. / 'Cos there's no safety in numbers anyway...* (The Adverts: *Safety in Numbers*)

Rebellion is making music that can't be turned into a commodity, but which is still accessible — an immensely difficult undertaking in the face of capitalism's capacity for assimilation. Impossible, perhaps, while capital retains control of the means of production. Yet enough people are having a go to make me hopeful.

Some of these groups have been around for a while on the fringes of the punk/new wave scene, and are just beginning to come into their own. Patrik Fitzgerald, the 'punk poet' canned off stage in 1977 for playing an acoustic guitar, and who has just released an excellent EP 'Tonight', is no longer a lonely figure. The subtle, idiosyncratic music of Scritti Politti is beginning to have a wider influence.

Listen to a handful of recent independent singles by bands like Ludus, Orange Juice, Dislocation Dance, A Popular History of Signs, or independent cassettes by people like Colin Potter, Genetic Mistake or Missing Persons. These bands can't be described as a movement, except in the most general sense; there's no common 'sound', no lifestyle to adopt. The thing that unites them is that they represent a burst of independent creative energy, a new way of looking at music. Suddenly there are

## CHARTS 1980: ATOMIC TOP FIVE

AVOIDING THE difficult subjects like unemployment or racism, many of our pop artists turned to the Big One. The country was with them. After all, most responsible people are against nuclear holocausts.

The early sixties being currently in favour, why not bring back old-fashioned liberal anxiety and protest singing? Looking at the charts, we had Kate Bush with *Breathing*, very expressive. Then there was UB40's *The Earth Dies Screaming*. A late entry is Jonah Lewie's rewrite of Donovan's *Universal Soldier*, *Stop The Cavalry*, with its strategically placed fallout reference. The most sophisticated was Orchestral Manoeuvres' allegory based on the nickname of the first atomic bomber, Enola Gay.

But the N-Number One didn't have any Bomb references whatsoever. The Beat put their money where all the rest's mouths were. They donated the proceeds of *Best Friend/Stand Down Margaret* to the Anti-Nuclear Campaign. So far they've raised £15,000.

Marek Kohn

people creating music that's tuneless without being commercial, rhythmically exciting without being macho, gentle without being wet. Music that's more politically aware than anything The Clash or Sham 69 ever did, music that deals with personal relations without falling into boy-meets-girl clichés...

*It's nice to hear you're having a good time, / But it still hurts because you used to be mine — / This doesn't mean that I possessed you, / You're haunting me because I let you...* (Young Marble Giants: *N.I.T.A.*)

Music without drums... it would have been unthinkable a year ago. Young Marble Giants have proved once and for all that you don't have to make macho noises to be interesting, that you can get all the rhythm you need from a guitar and a bass.

Music without guitars... even more unthinkable, outside the pasty-faced synthesiser brigade. And yet, using classical percussion, organ and bass, the Passage have made one of the best albums of the year. What next? Music without a bass? I hear Public Image are trying it on their next studio LP.

One by one, the seemingly unshakable cornerstones of the rock establishment are being blown away. Not by the clarion call of an aggressive uniformed movement like punk, but quietly and without fuss by people simply showing it can be done, working in four and eight track studios, or even at home, releasing music through independent labels they often set up and manage themselves.

Music with no big publicity to sell it, waiting out there for you to find it. Music like 'Survival Kit' by The Resistance; a well-crafted pop song, conventional to the point of modesty — yet totally infectious. Or like Young Marble Giant's 'Final Day'; delicate, unassuming — and utterly breathtaking.

It would be sad if this surge of creative talent disappeared for lack of a handy tag the press could hang on them. It would be even worse if labels were found for them, defining, limiting, and creating mutually exclusive fashions out of them. The last thing we need is a new wave. ●



GET HAPPY! South African saxophonist Dudu Pukwana (above right) and singer Peggy Phango (above left) can be seen at London's 100 Club with their band Zila twice this month. Zila play South African Townships music — an infectious mixture of Kwela pop music, swing, bebop and funk, — and they're seen all too rarely, partly, they say, because promoters don't give them gigs because the music is not easily labelled. The concerts are on the 9th and 16th January, and they're being recorded for their first record on the band's own label. And watch out for a feature on Zila in the next *Leveller*.

## Media

### Wringing the news

A NEW kind of left publication came out at the end of last year: *Ink Links' Book of the Year* — a review and analysis of political events in Britain. The editor was David Widgery, general practitioner, member of the Socialist Workers Party, and long-time writer for a wide range of left journals. Here he reviews his own review and adds some further conclusions

'HALF the story never gets told' we announced on our opening page. 'Our intention,' we modestly proclaimed, 'is to break up the myths that the national media reinforce and reproduce.'

The idea was simple: to use radical writers, left wing photographers, designers and cartoonists, and the words of ordinary people, to redress the bias of the pro-establishment, London-based media mafia.

The task, it transpired, was beyond us. 176 pages later, after a scrupulously accurate set of statistics and chronology, the book ends with an uncaptioned photograph of a striking Welsh steelworker lashing out at a TV news camera. I felt the same kind of blind, frustrated anti-media malice as I heaved the last, carefully clipped mound of *Financial Times* into the dustbin, kicked it over and watched the pink pages flutter like origami games down the street.

The problem is not too little news but too much, of the wrong kind. One is invaded and overwhelmed each day, by print journalism, sound broadcasting and the flickering of the tube.

When I do house calls as a doctor I can watch 'Crown Court' in a succession of sitting rooms. Each time I have to ask for the colour TV to be turned down to be able to elicit anything worth hearing from the stethoscope. Commercial radio echoes down the market on *Mediocre Wave*; newspapers pile up in a heap with the supplements, magazines, periodicals, reviews and unsolicited mail shots. News is one of the few British industries which is booming. Never mind

the tone, feel the volume.

As the year (September 1979 to 1980) went by, I sickened with a media migraine after scanning more than three papers or hearing two news bulletins a day. It became more and more difficult to take our carefully-chosen monthly check-lists of Significant Events seriously. What could we do against the torrent?

Instead we tried to snatch moments of permanent significance from the news production line before it reached the incinerator of yesterday's deadline. By the end of our year, I believed nothing anyone said in print ... and that went for *Time Out* as much as the *Daily Express*.

The charismatic overviews we had eagerly sought from such titans of radical journalism as E P Thompson, Paul Foot and John Pilger were succeeded by vox pop interviews with punk rockers, dinner ladies and unemployed workers who turned out to be rather better informed and more articulate about the realities of political life than the Whispering Gallery of the Lobby (and sometimes than those titans of radical journalism). It was the articles we coaxed out of unknown activists (Francis Salandy of the St Pauls Defence Committee, Lucy Toothpaste of NAC and Irate Kate of RAR) which now seem the freshest.

We also learned that an evocative photo or graphic is worth 1,000 politically correct words. The left is heir to the legacy of Hogarth, Rodchenko, Heartfield and the surrealists, though it usually squanders it, preferring the mandatory fist, clenched in the face of all things evil.

## Singles reviews

VARIOUS: *Angst In My Pants*, double EP. INSTANT AUTOMATONS: *Peter Paints His Fence*, EP (Deleted Records)

These two EP's might seem a strange product from Deleted Records in view of their commitment to independent cassettes (*Leveller 43*). But as samplers of the range of music on cassette they're a great idea.

*Angst In My Pants* consists of 16 tracks by 9 bands, most of whom have only been available on cassette — the sleeve tells you where you can get hold of them — and is amazingly cheap at £1.15. I particularly like Mic Wood's songs and the 012 deserve a medal for tearing Sheena Easton's 9 to 5 to shreds.

Peter Paints His Fence comes with a CND leaflet and opens with an impressive anti-militarist song, *Nice Job For The Lad*. The sleeve offers useful information about how the record was made and how much it cost.

If your local indie shop doesn't stock these records you can get them from:

Deleted Records,  
19 Riby Road, Feolby,  
Grimsby, South Humberside.

A POPULAR HISTORY OF SIGNS: *Justice Not Vengeance/Possession* (Melodia)

A Popular History of Signs are a collective who manage their own record company (Melodia... A Symbol of Imperialism). The titles of these songs reflect their desire to tackle the Great Moral Imponderables... which they do through gentle, persuasive music which sticks around long after the pickup has left the turntable.

THE GIST: *Yanks/This is Love* (Rough Trade)

Young Marble Giants are currently taking a break, but two of the band made this single under the name The Gist. Stuart Moxham provides smooth, dreamy vocals over typical Giants instrumentals, subtle, understated and full of rhythmic life. I like this record very much.

THE DISTRIBUTORS: *Wireless/TV Me* (Recorded Sound) THE DISTRIBUTORS: *Lean On Me/Never Never* (Red Rhino)

Adrian Thrills described the Distributors as 'the Gang of Four minus the social concern'. If 'social concern' means what I think it does, i.e. politics, that's the howler of the year; since when have control of the means of communication (Wireless), monogamy (Lean On Me, Never Never) and self-image (TV Me) not been political? They don't sound all that much like the Gang of Four either.

CABARET VOLTAIRE: *Seconds Too Late/Control Addict* (Rough Trade)

Cabaret Voltaire have all the right political attitudes, and they record right-on political noises; hard muzak for hard times. Looking around them they see poverty and alienation, so they make impoverished, alienated music. Which keeps us right where the ruling class wants us; stuck in our isolated gutters with no means of communication.

Chris Schüler



## TV

**THE PROFESSIONALS** ITV  
Sundays 9.25pm  
BRIAN CLEMENTS created *The Professionals*. They were a witty, silly, stylish, pop accompaniment to the sixties. I grew up with them.

Brian Clements has also created *The Professionals*. They are the perfect visual accompaniment to the eighties. They are nasty.

Bodie and Doyle work for C15 which means they are like the Sweeney but chase Russian instead of cockney accents.

This is important because *The Professionals* are not like any other group of people in cars chasing things, they have got politics.

You can see these every week. Defectors, the Eastern Bloc, terrorists, drug syndicates; ... there are over a million Chinese living in London and every one of them a potential drug carrier.

Each week the parade of grim-faced, heartless, blunt-accented, and particularly Commie villains snarls its snarl and passes. The lesson is clear; we live in a cold, intrigue-riddled world and Karl Marx has a lot to answer for.

But there is hope, because we have got Bodie and Doyle.

Bodie and Doyle are hard. You can tell because they don't smile much except when they pull practical jokes on each other or pull each other's birds. The rest of the time they hit people and chase people and spit out dialogue embittered with years of being hard.

It can't be easy, having to be incredibly sexist every waking hour, having to constantly pull better birds, having nobody able to tell you apart. And every third week one of you has to get injured and the other has to crack a little to show that beneath all that hard you are a little less hard. It must be lonely, doomed to chase forever the spectre of Lenin in sports cars through derelict gas works and on foot through a thousand student squats each furnished with the inevitable poster of Che Guevara.

Bodie and Doyle/Boil and Dodo. Victims of these hard times.

Alan Gilbey

**ON TELEVISION**, by Stuart Hood (Pluto, £2.95)

There's a quote from Brecht somewhere in *On Television* that goes, 'It is no task of ours (meaning, the left) to renew ideological institutions by innovations on the basis of the present social system.'

The rest of the book could almost be described as justifications for Brecht. For Stuart Hood is a former programme controller of the BBC, who left, he says, when the place started to get to him. He's also a Marxist, and in *On Television* he writes about TV in its economic and political context.

It's an impressively concise analysis of what's wrong with TV, the best I've yet read, a shopping list of discontent. There's the usual stuff about how programme makers are socialised into knowing what's expected of them, and the links between the IBA, BBC



A couple of Kirks: Geraldine James as Barbara and Antony Sher as Howard in *The History Man*, screenplay by Christopher Hampton from the novel by Malcolm Bradbury, directed by Robert Knights. Serialised on BBC2 last Sunday and the next 3. All this talent produces not only the novel's hilarious debunking of sociology as taught and lived in white tile universities in the sixties and early seventies, but an uneasiness that a mass audience will interpret satire as total truth.

Media bias itself has been a recurrent political theme of the year, but I find the left's indignation over it somewhat naive. It is no great secret that the BBC was shaped to defend what it conceived as the 'national interest', which any half-way radical would recognise as the political establishment. Newspaper magnates have been engagingly frank about their propaganda purposes; this open partiality has reached a point where practising journalists like Larry Lamb and John Junor can accept political honours for political services rendered.

But to a news consumer the most marked characteristic of daily journalism is pneumatic: there are periods when the entire journalistic world becomes quite inflated, infatuated and obsessed with a single individual — Anthony Blunt, Derek Robinson or the 'Queen-to-be' — and quite literally hounds them and anyone connected with them for the merest sliver of 'the story'. For months, non- or neo-stories like the Olympic Boycott, the Lancaster House Talks or the interminable Gang of Three are reported and commented upon, editorialised and satirised. Yet a few months later Blunt is just another heap of cuttings, yesterday's news, a barely-known name again. The Olympics are recalled not as the great Anglo-American moral crusade, but for Duncan Goodhew's bath robe and cloth cap, Salnikov's 1,500 in the pool, and Yifter's 10,000 metre run. And when the boycott issue happened around again, over the New Year Honours, the media were able to present a line critical of Thatcher that was quite impossible when the pressure was on in the early summer.

As some news is inflated, until the media balloon takes off of its own volition, other stories are ignored, because, equally arbitrarily, they 'ain't news'. What chance does a humble hospital closure or jobless town or gutted industry stand while 'MP's circus girl runs off for love' or 'Seige cops hunt tycoon's butler'? The Gardners sit-in might as well have had a D Notice on it for all the reporting it got. London witnessed at least four massive demonstrations: the festive turn-out against Corrie on

October 28 1979, the anti-cuts marches (60,000, mainly public sector employees on November 28 1979, and 80,000 on the TUC outing of March 9), and the colossal CND demo which overflowed Trafalgar Square once more past St Martins. These were hardly rent-a-mob. Yet they were reduced to brusque and inaccurate sub-paragraphs by the rent-a-commentators. *The Sun's* headline after the much-maligned Day of Action was 'Brawls mar the TUC's big rally', which wasn't even true. To call this trivialisation is to give trivia, which are interesting in their own way, a bad name.

But misinformation and bias habitually apply to industrial news (except in semi-private enclaves like *The Financial Times* or programmes on BBC2 or Radio 4 which employers use to find out what's going on and their employees, who aren't tuned in, don't need to be abused). It should be impressed on the despondent that, in the year we covered, the number of days won in strikes was the highest since 1926. And talking to the

workers involved, whether at *The Times*, during the engineers' strike or the narrowly-lost struggle in the Steel Corporation, I found their views on the political issues at stake complex, well thought-out and passionately held.

Yet the same people are presented as frightening, incoherent howling yobs by the media's choice of image, taste for incident and definition of 'news-worthiness'. Orderly picket lines, articulate strikers and eloquent oratory just ain't 'good TV'. Over the year it increasingly puzzled me that those who withdraw voluntarily their labour and seek to persuade others of their case (the process known as 'intimidation' by police chiefs, Mr Prior and editorialists) should be considered such a dire threat to world peace, compared to the hectoring of Anderton, Paisley or McNee, the prime-time SAS embassy storming, Mr Pym's undebated decision to begin unilateral nuclear rearmament or NATO's trial run of World War 3. I know which intimidates me the more.



N Pyne



*Heartland* is based on the writings of Elinore Stuart. It is set in 1910. It is the story of survivors, through cold, and poverty.

Director Richard Pearce's photography can be seen in *'Woodstock'*, *'Marjoe'* and *'Interviews with Mai Lai Veterans'*, and this film is visually stunning, especially in its opening shots. Elinore Pruitt (Conchata Ferrell) and her daughter, Jerrine (Megan Folsom), are bound on a rickety, rolling bus to a ranch in Wyoming.

The man who meets them, Clyde Stuart (Rip Torn), is a hard, brusque pioneer, who eventually proposes to Elinore in a style even less appealing than that of a 'tough' cowboy. Their marriage is one of convenience, hard times draw them apart — but the ending, however strange, is one of optimism.

## Film

**DOGS OF WAR**  
Directed by John Irvin

DOGS OF WAR is pitiful, embarrassingly bad. Politically it's a dreadful blood 'n' guts comic book, a blatant endorsement of militarism with an inane liberal sentiment, whereby you can kill, torture, extort and exploit, as long as you've a conscience. Macho-myths that disappeared into parody in *Flash Gordon* and *Superman* are reaffirmed; they were big dummies, Christopher Walken's Shannon isn't.

His performance brings intelligence to the role — a little fear and lunacy, a dollop of hard-cool. At times he brings a depressing conviction to a vacuously drawn character.

Remember the mercenaries of the Angolan court room? Naive, ignorant of what war they were fighting in, tried as hired killers, looking like sheep. All except Costas Georgio (alias Colonel Callan), the madman seduced by the warrior image of the mercenary, playing the paratrooper 'til his death and admired for it, by men who are still in jail, for their part in missions he'd led.

The reaction has arrived. Shannon is a bourgeois hero, a noble outlaw, the cowboy stereotype overthrown by the post-Vietnam generation of ruthless Peckinpah/Leone bounty men. *Dogs of War* signifies the resurgence of the ideological right, scarred by My Lai's and buried by Marxist-led liberation movements, returning with Friedman economics and Cold-War politics.

Shannon, a war weary mercenary, is employed to oust the paranoid despot, President Kimba of Zangaro, a small West African state, by a mining corporation

wishing to install a more maleable ruler, so they can extract platinum.

On a preparatory surveillance Shannon is arrested and beaten. His wounds are attended to by another prisoner, Doctor Okoye. In the pre-independence elections the 'realist', 'principled' Okoye supported links with the former colonial power. Kimba won on a liberationist ticket, and under his Bokassa style tyranny Zangaro descended into barbarism.

History rewritten, where the liberation fighters rather than the colonial nominees are corrupt.

Shannon's assault force is, of course, successful, but he makes Okoye president, to the chagrin of his paymasters.

*Dogs of War* directly refers to its cine-ancestors *Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*, by lifting complete images, paraphrasing sequences from its forerunners, serving them as an hors d'oeuvre: refugees fighting their way on to a plane; the shell shocked soldier paralysed with fear.

*Dogs of War*, with its reformist hero and 'just' outcome is interventionist. Shannon does what governments should be doing is the message.

It's racist too. Blacks are treated as cattle, and slaughtered as such in the finale, except those taught by outsiders: some speak English, others have Cuban (!!) military training. What joins black and white men in this movie is sexism. Both Shannon and a Zangaran customs official can appreciate *Penthouse*.

The liberalised (not all blacks are stupid) line on racism is paralleled on women: decoration, but sometimes smart. Shannon's way of dealing with a woman is to invite her to be a pioneering Colorado wife, and when she says no to jump on top of her.

An altogether unpleasant

piece, brutally underlined when a torture victim is made to eat glass.

Terry O'Brien

**HOPSCOTCH**, directed by Ronald Neame

WHILE THERE is something a bit disturbing about Hollywood's campaign to present all CIA operatives as either lovably misguided mavericks (as in *3 Days of the Condor*) or hopeless buffoons (S.P.Y.S.) there are moments in Kendig's (Matthau) exposure and humiliation of the CIA which are tailor-made made to provide amusement to all sworn enemies of The Agency.

What seems to be a Christmas caper movie for commies is actually based on ex-CIA man Kendig's fit of pique at being put to grass (or file) for playing the game in too gentlemanly a fashion, unsettling for those who want the lid off the agency for other reasons (remember Chile?). The film is marred by Kendig's thoroughly unpleasant lover played by Glenda Jackson — bland jokes about being friends with old Nazis is taking 'men of the world' jokey amorality far too far. The 'look-we-filmed-in-countless-different-cities' approach to budget wastage also gets terribly boring.

I suppose that with ex-CIA boss Bush back as Vice-President any film that makes outwitting the security state look like such good fun is timely, but overall Hopscotch still manages to look like a Watergate film six years on, right down to the Nixon photographs as props. There is now, after all, a President-elect who believes in the 'moral-majority' aggressive defense' and says he is proud to be too stupid to lie.... which isn't a bad basic plot for a Matthau comedy.

Jane Root

and the Government. But he also discusses the industrial nature of programme production, the way somewhere like Television Centre is run in much the same way as, say, a car factory.

And he looks at the effects that sources of finance have on the programmes that are made. The BBC's drive for 50% of the audience, for example, comes from the certain knowledge that if they don't achieve that market share they can't justify increases in the licence fee. They compete for that market, of course, with a commercial network that always pushes pushes for the largest possible audience to maximise its income. The programmes get blander and blander.

No matter how bland — or biased — the programmes are, the programme makers can't guarantee that we'll understand their meanings the way they want us to. We can be encouraged, though, to read programmes in the 'correct' way by the choice of pictures. Very few people (they include the Queen and her alter ego Angela Rippon) get the authority of talking to us directly from the screen. And of course it's well known that in reporting industrial disputes the managing director is interviewed in an office (read: responsibility, decisions, power, order) while the strikers are interviewed outside their temporary picket hut.

That's a reflection of society: the manager in the office, workers at the gate. And Hood sums up the programme makers' position neatly. 'Those who work in television are engaged in the working and re-working of capitalist ideology.' That goes for everyone — even those who see themselves as in opposition within the system are merely testing the water at the edge of the ideological pool. If you doubt it, think of Hood himself, a Marxist controller of the BBC. And try to remember the effect he had on programmes and policies. Television transmitters are the loudspeakers of Babylon. And there's moving pictures too.

Mike Craig

## Books

**SUGAR PINK ROSE: Writers and Readers Collective, £2.95**

If your children depressed you this Christmas by insisting on having all manners of plastic, electric, sexist toys despite all your efforts to interest them in non-toxic, educational, non-sexist ones, then *Sugar Pink Rose* could be the answer to your prayers.

Published by Writers and Readers and distributed by PDC, it's an imaginatively illustrated story of a tribe of elephants. Upholding tribal tradition, it is the rule that all little girl elephants must eat nasty tasting peony roses and anemones to make them become as bright pink as possible. Thus the sexes are differentiated. The little pink girl elephants are kept in a compound where the flowers grow and their grey brothers play around in the mud outside.

But one little girl elephant has a problem. No matter how hard she tries, or how many flowers she eats, Annabel can't go pink.



◀ The most she can manage is a washed out rosy tint. This is a source of great anxiety to her parents who warn her that unless she becomes bright pink, she will never grow up and get married like her sisters. Annabel is in disgrace, but no amount of flower eating works, and she remains pinky-grey. Eventually Annabel's parents become reconciled to the fact that she is always going to be a reject and leave her alone.

Deciding that enough is enough, Annabel abandons flower eating and the compound, accepts her greyness and begins to do all the things her brothers do.

*Sugar Pink Rose* is splendidly simple and illustrates the stupidity of sexism in a clever and amusing way. The book is probably aimed at the 4 year old market upwards, but the drawings are so vividly clear and colourful that it could be used with younger children with a bit of help with the longer words.

Joanna Blythman

**THE MUVVER TONGUE** by Robert Barltrop and Tim Wolveridge, *The Journeyman Press* £2.95 EVERYDAY SPEECH is the vehicle of Cockney culture, it belongs to the working class and reflects the living conditions, moods and circumstances of the society to which it belongs. The book describes its courtesies, family relationships, swear words, jokes, songs and all the other circumstances of life which have their own particular part of the dialect. It also shatters the illusions about rhyming slang created by distortions in books, films and on television.

This is an entertaining book which shows that the Cockney language can be regarded with respect and used with pride.

Tom Markham

## Theatre

There are no less than four anti-nuclear theatre shows to review this issue. *Almost Free's Power Plays* was finally caught by Andy Rowland in Aberystwyth. This show and *Women's Theatre Group's Breaking Through* recommence touring later in January.

**LANDMARK** by Steve Gooch, *Theatre Underground, Essex University Theatre*.

In Steve Gooch's latest play a nostalgic reunion of old friends develops into a protest against the government when they find out that the barn which was their hide-out when they were teenagers is going to be pulled down in order to use the land for cruise missiles. The group recollects in flashbacks its teenage community life, which was free of the individualism and conservatism they share now, having followed different walks of life as farm worker, junior manager, housewife, etc.

The quick pace of the play and its reliance on gesture, physical attitude and suggestion, at times left the audience feeling the need for more links in the script. However, recorded songs were used between scenes to make explicit what had been implied in the preceding action, without necessarily acting as a commentary. Though at the end when a television crew arrives to give publicity to the protest in its own 'neutral' way, the characters's reaction left the ▶



RayAbbott

## Theatre

# You shall go to the revolution!

David Roper on the sad, sad story of Ms Lefti Panto — and the naughty, naughty sisters who pushed her out of the house!

MY LORDS, ladels and jellyspoons ...here, before your very eyes, for the first time ...the true and compleat history of the ancient art of the Panto — mima, including the exclusive biography of Ms Lefti Panto herself.

Even if it would be strictly misleading to suggest that panto is a working-class entertainment, nevertheless, it has much more in common with the area of popular theatre than with its literary sister. The division asserted itself from an early age ... though in fact the panto has never been considered a medium through which the struggles of the proletariat could be polarized and effectively presented. In other words it has never been a truly 'people's theatre'.

It was in the nineteenth century that little Ms Panto got herself mixed up with all those silly fairy-story types you see her hanging around with today — with clowns, figures playing the same part (basically themselves) in Cinderella, Red Riding Hood, Dick Whittington, Aladdin and other tales. From these have come our 'pantomime dames' and outrageous characterizations.

But it is not so easy to trace the origins of another now familiar feature — the principal boy,

who, as you all know, is played by a girl in tights. With no hint of sexual impropriety this always leads to two women falling in love on stage before our very eyes, and as often as not two men (the pretty heroine's father and the dame) engaging in equally amorous foreplay. But are we shocked? No - thanks, of course, to our willingness to suspend disbelief.

And when the panto began to take many of its performers from the music-hall, it had another change of clothes. They were expected to bring their acts along with them, and the form began to suit itself to the inclusion of popular songs, jokes and cultural references.

But I have not yet told the whole story...for Ms Panto, you see, had a deviant sister who was beyond the control of her patrician father and institutionalised mother. She it was, under the name Alie Nation, who became friendly with Mr Brecht, who adapted her whims and ways to his own subtle propagandizing purpose. Now, Ms Panto had also been quite used to finding her progress checked from time to time with asides to the audience, song-sheets (there is nothing the public likes better than a liberating singalong) and magic. But it took Mr Brecht to see how

this feeling of being both in and out of the action could be turned to more serious and productive purpose; like Mr Gay — he of the Beggar's Opera — before him, young Brecht put the pop back in popular, and avoided the assumption that the theatre should have any high artistic aims. And while music-hall burlesque and vaudeville have largely been replaced by nightclub and television entertainment, they are dogged by censorship and the inability to spontaneously involve the audience and performer in a shared event.

If it is true that universality can best be attained by avoiding the dangers of misinterpretation that are part of the use of words, then panto is truly popular: its forebears are the mime and the rough non-literary entertainment. To see a sophisticated pantomime that works on various levels of appeal, one needs only visit the Lyric Hammersmith, where Cinderella is performed — after careful rewriting by Martin Duncan — as a mixture of music-hall, court masque and harlequinade, with Erte style sets and Alice in Wonderland costumes, both marvelously executed by Ultz. Of course, all this refinement is far from the 'classic' form as she was played: here we find no harsh cynicism, no popular or local satire, no singing of rude, anti-establishment songs. Instead, all the otherwise supposedly traditional elements are present: the magical transformation by the fairy-god-mother and Buttons... in short, the very antithesis of dialectic.

Across London, the Theatre Royal Stratford East has gone for a less refined and even slightly politicized version of another folk-hero story — Robin Hood. Their lips were made for laughter and their eyes knew no tears, and yet by the end all the villains had been brutally killed — egged on by the manic screams of brutal kids brought up on much stronger stuff. Here is a panto rooted in 1980 local colour — there's talk of Sainsbury's, of not paying their income tax, of taking-in washing to pay for the housekeeping since the dame's husband ran off, of the local one-way system, even of Ronald Reagan... but there's still a king who ends up on the throne at the happy end.

And that's what it's all about: reaffirm the status quo and the kids will all sleep safe in their beds. The trusty flunkies remain trusty, the aim is now to excite wonder, and although there is no pretence of illusion, the panto *could* be more than just good, clean fun. Brecht wanted theatre to rediscover its naivety, and his own work resembles the loose, episodic nature of panto and vaudeville routines, yet by alienating the audience he was forcing them into an objective analysis of the drama. Like puppets, the panto has become almost exclusively a children's show, and it has grown further and further apart from serious drama. But it is unique in allowing actors to cross over the footlights to identify members of the audience, and if it were allowed to become sophisticated once again, it could, like the local revues and street fairs whence it hails, become a variety diversion for all classes of society.

Well, that's all there is. And in the words of Goody Biddy Bean, the end of almost everything's horrid...isn't it?

◀ audience feeling uncertain, this did not detract from the intellectual alertness built up by the rest of the play, which is to be published later this year.

Maro Germanou

**NUCLEAR PROSPECTS** by Anthony Matheson, presented by Inter-Action Productions at Aberystwyth Studio.

*Nuclear Prospects* purports to be an introductory lecture to new recruits of the National Nuclear Security Service by the Director, whose slightly manic dedication to a high-security State can be glimpsed through his authoritative delivery.

Most of the powers described in the play are already embodied in the AEA (Special Constables) Act 1976, and Trade Unionists and anti-nuclear activists should consider seriously how far this infiltration (including *agent provocateur*) process may already have advanced.

The second play, *Lies in your hands*, draws parallels between the circumstances surrounding the Aberfan disaster, and the potential for accidents from buried high-level nuclear waste. It effectively recalls how the NCB fobbed off local concern with empty reassurances, and sensitively portrays the tragic consequences.

Andy Rowland

**BREAKING THROUGH** by Timberlake Wertenbaker, presented by the Women's Theatre Group, directed by Julie Holledge, music by Stephanie Nunn; seen at the Cockpit Theatre, London in November, for future venues see listings.

*BREAKING THROUGH* is a 'mystery musical' aimed at 14-18 year-olds but it has a wider appeal than just teenagers, judging by the audience at the Cockpit which was full of adults when I went.

The play looks into the near future and the grim consequences of an accident involving one of the nuclear waste trains on the North London Line.

One of the song and dance numbers was particularly spectacular, with the cast in head-dresses depicting protons and neutrons and I liked the section of official reactions to the accident, especially Clare McIntyre's 'I appeal to you-as-a-housewife' Thatcher.

The play is available for booking at a cost of £120 (but this can be negotiated): it can be booked by getting in touch with Tierl Thompson or Sue Leader at 5 Leonard St EC2. Tel 251 0202/250 0775.

Sue May

**CUNNING STUNTS CHRISTMAS SHOW** seen at Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn, London NW6.

**RADIATION LANGUAGE** and the sick housewife — doctor's cure, take plenty of librium and do the family shopping; the bored satellite 'Budge' who just wants to ring the bell and presumably watch the pretty fireworks; Al Sation, the scratchy capitalist, who loves mega-death with his Christmas presents of Tridents. These, plus a plethora of other characters and sketches involving song, dance, acrobatics, music and audience participation, including a moan-in, made up Cunnning Stunts' Christmas Show.

Cunnning Stunts set out to show

how 'we as women, must find our strength to resist the nuclear threat' but I'm not quite sure whether they achieve this. Far too many characters and sketches overwhelmed the already loose plot. I felt like a prospective buyer at a very jumbled jumble sale; you're damned sure that there are lots of good bargains there, the trouble is wading through the mess to find them. It would really have helped if Cunnning Stunts could have done this for themselves, for I have a distinct feeling there was a good show, in there, trying to get out.

John Connor

## Theatre listings

**BELT & BRACES ROADSHOW** Coming Up by Kate Phelps. Following the shock of his father's death, Kevin returns to his family in Sheffield. All of the people in the play are caught in the anguish of assessing themselves against the society in which they live; beneath the weight of the few contradictory options with which they are faced, they have to choose which way to come up fighting.

**COLCHESTER:** Tues 13 — Thurs 15 Jan — Essex University Theatre (0206 861946). **HEMEL HEMPSTEAD:** Fri 16 & Sat 17 — Old Town Hall. **LOUGHBOROUGH:** Tues 20 & Wed 21 — Charnwood.

**LEEDS ALTERNATIVE THEATRE EVENTS.** Stage Left: Do It Yourself Weekend. The weekend is being organised for theatre workers professional and amateur, organisations and campaigns who commission or might want to commission performances, and audiences. **LEEDS:** Fri 9 — Sun 11 Jan — Trades Club & Swarthmore Centre. Fri, 8 pm at Trades Club: Banner Theatre perform *The Steel Play*. Sat at Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Sq., Leeds 2. 10 am: Cunnning Stunts Theatre Workshop on acrobatics, Open Discussion (1) led by Banner on the *Steel Play* (these 2 workshops running simultaneously) 12 am: Cunnning Stunts Theatre Workshop on juggling, release/contact work and improvisation, Open Discussion (2) led by Red Umbrella from Newcastle. Lunch - cold food available; 2 pm: Word & Action (Dorset) in performance; 3.30 Open Discussion (3) led by Red Ladder Theatre, Music & Voice Workshop with Ros Davies, York Womens Street Band (mixed). Trades Club: 7 pm Stage Left Cabaret with Midland Red, Roseville Community Theatre, Cunnning Stunts, Red Umbrella Womens Cabaret + reggae band. Sun at Swarthmore Centre: 11 am Clowning & Mime Workshop with Interplay, Writing workshop with Steve Trafford; lunch — cold food available, Cheap Labour act; 2 pm Fat is a Feminist Issue - workshop and discussion led by Katina Noble of Spare Tyre Theatre Co., Eyes, Tits and Teeth: an alternative dance workshop on chorus line work, mixed, led by Sandra Hunt, Open Discussion (4) led by Cheap Labour Theatre; 4 pm: Word & Action (Dorset) in performance, followed by concluding discussion.

**MAJOR ROAD THEATRE COMPANY.** *Hurling Days* by Graham Devlin. A play written in celebration of the 600th anniversary of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, taking a new look at both sides of the rebellion. **CANTERBURY:** Thurs 15 — Sat 17 Jan — Gulbenkian Theatre, University of Kent. **COLCHESTER:** Fri 16 & Sat 17 Jan — Essex University Theatre.

**SHARED EXPERIENCE: The Merchant of Venice** by William Shakespeare. reviewed issue 44. **BASILDON:** Mon 12 — Sat 17 Jan - Towngate Theatre. **COVENTRY:** Tues 20 — Sat 24 Jan — The Arts Centre, University of Warwick.

# Letters 57 Caledonian Rd, London N1

## Nukes papers

I CAN'T think what your correspondent Jeff of London WC1 has been doing with himself to induce his state of blindness but his claim (Letters, No. 46) that the Trafalgar Square CND rally got only 'four lines in the nationals' is blatantly untrue.

All the pop press gave unbelievably straight reports of the speeches and attendance, in most cases these were page lead reports and, incredibly, the final editions of the *Sun* had a CND logo on Page One, cross-referring to the centre spread on the demo.

I admit: I just don't know why the press should have been so reasonable. But millions of dormant readers, excluding Jeff, were told that the peace movement was back on the road. If that road is going to take us anywhere, then surely we should be following through to all those people who for the first time, perhaps, found out how many of us were there and why we were. And we had better be quick; as we get bigger the Tory media is sure to go back to the insulting trivia some of us can remember from the Aldermaston days.

Andrew Jennings  
London E.15

## Soviet miner

COMRADES WILL remember that in 1978 Soviet miner Vladimir Kablanov and other workers established the Association of Free Trade Unions of Workers as an independent alternative to the state controlled 'unions'.

The group appealed to the ILO, and a number of Western unions took an interest in their case. When Kablanov was imprisoned in a psychiatric hospital, his case was taken up by the NUM, but then dropped after a meeting in Poland at which the president of the Soviet 'Miners' Union' told Joe Gormley that Kablanov was 'a womaniser, a drunk and a Jew with rich relatives in Israel'.

Information received by Amnesty says he is now being given drugs which have led to swelling of the face, distorted speech, difficulties in walking, and a yellow complexion. He is isolated 23 hours a day. An Amnesty spokesperson quoted in the *Observer* (Nov. 30th) stated: 'The deterioration in Mr Kablanov's condition dates from early 1979. The inference must be that when a case falls from public view and concern in the West the Soviet authorities think they intensify their repression with impunity'.

It is absolutely essential that this matter should be taken up within the trade unions and other

Labour and radical organisations at a grass roots level.

I would be happy to hear from London readers who are interested in organising a campaign on this issue.  
Edmund McArthur  
London W5

## Prison drugs

I AM in the process of suing the Home Office for forcible injection of a drug. If you were in Brixton Prison, in the Medical (F) Wing, between the 6th June and the 13th June 1978, would you please write to me and give details. Perhaps you know someone who was there, and they may now be serving time either there or elsewhere. If so, could you let me have the details.

I would also be interested in any information anyone may have about drugging in prisons, particularly forcible injections.

This case is not just important for me; please help if you can.  
P. Barbara  
London E.1

## Social insecurity

YOUR ARTICLE on 'social insecurity' was excellent, but you didn't mention one important aspect of the system, the local Appeals Tribunals, which claimants can go to once their benefit has been stopped. These tribunals consist of three individuals (almost invariably men): a local businessman, a retired civil servant, and a member of the local trades council (or sometimes a vicar).

Although the chairman gives the claimant a little speech about the tribunal's 'impartiality' and 'independence' they in fact have a very cosy relationship with the local DHSS offices. Members of local trades councils should ask themselves *who* is representing them on local Appeals Tribunals — all too often it is some local right-wing union bureaucrat.

J. S. Greene  
London E.11

## Squatters wrighte

WE WOULD like to correct several errors in your review of 'Squatting, The Real Story' (Leveller 46). The book is published by Bay Leaf (not Bayleaf) Books and costs £4.90 (not £4.50). It was co-edited by Christian (not Christine) Wolmar and the section on 'dossers' was written by Celia (not Colin) Brown.

We apologise for the lack of a 'developed analysis' in the book, but we trust that Chris Warts will be able to provide us with one in future issues of *The Reveller*.

Nick Wates, Christian Wolmar  
London E14



