

# flux

*A magazine of  
libertarian socialism*

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# Great Art Of Our Time Number 265

## "Radical Posture" by Sue Denim



**flux**

*A Magazine of Libertarian Socialism*  
*Issue 2*  
*Spring 1991*

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### INSERT

.. Hunt Saboteur Killed ..  
*the facts and the response*



# Editorial

*In this edition, we wanted to give an indication of "where we stand" - so we sat down. But then things became difficult...*

*We were struck by the difficulty of writing an account which actually gets hold of the complex, slippery world we live in, yet which doesn't deny the existence of loose ends. For loose ends are inevitable in any truly critical perspective, and recognising them has positively informed the libertarian socialist tradition.*

*This said, gathering loose ends is fine for those who only want to understand the world: our desire is to change it. That means tying some loose ends together, putting forward ideas and testing them in practice. Just because we can't know everything doesn't mean we can't know anything.*

*At the heart of libertarian socialism is the recognition that capitalism has taken away our control over the most basic decisions which shape our lives. This is graphically illustrated by the Gulf war. Worldwide, millions of people are now implicated in a carnage where the only "winners" will be oil interests and competing state machines. Meanwhile, on the home front, unemployment is rising as working people again pay the price for the capitalists, as they blindly chase after haphazard events in a chaotic market system.*

*And oppression is not caused by economics alone: oppression is multi-faceted. Patriarchy, racism and compulsory heterosexuality are all oppressive in their own right. And it is this totality of social relations that alienates us - whether in the factory, the kitchen or the bedroom. Thus, the state's mobilisation for the Gulf war doesn't just involve troops, tanks and planes, but gender stereotypes (YOUNG MOTHER KISSES HER BRAVE MAN GOODBYE) and overt racism (JUST WHOSE SIDE ARE THE BRADFORD MUSLIMS ON?).*

*Yet the outlook is never entirely bleak. Dissent, both isolated and organised, is inevitable. Our capacity for co-operative self-determination continually strains and breaks the machinery of exploitation and oppression. There is resistance to the Gulf war. There is continuing resistance to the poll tax. And people are showing their outrage at Clause 25 - the latest in a long line of homophobic legislation.*

*For our lives are never wholly determined by the sticks and carrots of the market system. Every aspect of existence - in work and out - is a potential arena for struggle and contestation: be this over specific issues such as job losses or the right to abortion on demand, or in the uncovering and assertion of new cultural values.*

*FLUX aims to recognise the potential inter-connectedness of all these issues, and to acknowledge the potential of our small day-to-day struggles to join together and create a radical and subversive alternative to what is.*

*FLUX wants to aid genuine communication between those groups and individuals who refuse the comfort of false certainties. And we recognise that whatever our shortcomings, how we act and what we say must always be consistent with the ends we seek to achieve.*

**The FLUX Collective,  
March 1991**



# ... The Gulf War ... The

NB: As we go to press the war is continuing. By the time you read this it might be over. Either way, we think that these articles are worth a read.

part 1:

## WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

The US led intervention into the Gulf sought legitimisation in several ways: it claimed that the intervention was about defending the integrity of small nations; that it was a defence of international law; and that, as a UN coordinated operation, it expressed global revulsion over the unwarranted aggression of a despot.

This stance is a transparent sham. For a start the US have consistently vetoed UN resolutions calling for action over similar instances of aggression. Thus we can compare the zealotry with which the US have responded to Iraq, with the indifference or complicity they have shown on other occasions; for example, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the Indonesian annexation of East Timor and the South African incursion into Angola.

Their condemnation of Saddam Hussain's 'barbarity' is even more immediately hypocritical. When he played his allotted role as the leader of a buffer state against Iran, after the fall of the Shah, the US and the rest of the West supported him, armed him, and turned a blind eye to both his genocidal attacks on the Kurdish minority and his brutal suppression of internal dissent. In Britain, at that time, only a few isolated voices on the left called attention to the nature of his regime.

Finally, Iraq was encouraged to commit this aggression by implicit (or explicit) assurances that the US wouldn't intervene.

For the US and their key European ally, the UK, this is a war about oil resources. It is also about the US reasserting its role as global policeman in the more uncertain, post-cold war world. Apologists for the 'coalition' dismiss this as a simplification, but nothing else makes sense of the inconsistency and hypocrisy which riddles current US foreign policy.

The peace movement has largely responded to the crisis by issuing impassioned appeals for sanctions, 'peace' and 'justice' which ignore the very real political and economic interests and forces at work. As solutions to the conflict in the Gulf liberal

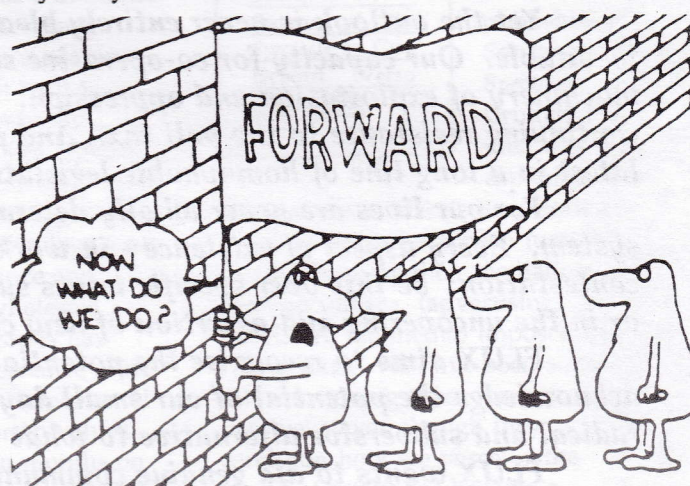
indignation and heartfelt compassion is sadly insufficient!

But this does not mean we take sides with Iraq. Such a position is in any case pure rhetoric - with no practical relevance. Just as we can't summon up angels bringing peace, neither can we send tanks or planes. But even if we could organise enough benefit events to buy a warplane, *would we?*

The Iraqi state is motivated by similar considerations to the US and its allies. It too wants control over oil supplies. And it is also impelled by aspirations of regional aggrandizement.

Many sections of the far-left have given in to the easy option of taking sides against the US. But as socialists we cannot take sides between these competing state powers - supporting the little bully against the big bully - without completely compromising our socialism. We are trying to transcend the system of state and economic competition; not take our stand within it. This means supporting the Iraqi working class and dissident opinion against Saddam, just as much as it means supporting the struggle against the capitalist state at home.

The pro-Iraq stand has been justified by calling Saddam Hussain an 'objective anti-imperialist' and by arguing for a position which supports him 'militarily' but not 'politically' (as if politics and war were separable; as if the SWP et al were organising the new 'International Brigade'!!). Saddam Hussain might be trying to draw on the resources of anti-imperialism, Arab nationalism, Palestinian liberation etc., he might even have become a symbol for many of the Arab people. But this line of reasoning simply lends credence to an ideological posture servicing the national interests of the Ba'athist regime. When many of the workers and dissidents of Eastern Europe looked to the likes of Thatcher as a symbol in their struggle against state capitalism, how many of these 'socialists' would have supported Thatcher as 'objectively anti-Stalinist'?



Not only does supporting Saddam Hussain lend credence to a regime which only a year ago these self-same left groups were rightly condemning (perhaps consistency is too highly rated a virtue?), it also rests on dangerous speculation - about the possible outcome of this crisis.

The fact is that we do not know what will happen. If the coalition breaks (and it looks increasingly fragile) the result could be a solidification of Islamic fundamentalism. It might result in Iran assuming the role of regional power broker, leading to new conflicts. It could mean a whole array of rivalries: Syria against Turkey against Iran over disputed Iraqi territory. If the U.S. win



# Gulf War ... The Gulf

it would certainly mean the imposition of western interests in the short term. This could itself invoke a wave of nationalist struggle. And it could mean an over-stretched US playing a role it can ill afford, facing increasingly belligerent competition from its capitalist rivals. Who knows?

We should take seriously the maxim 'our main enemy is at home'. Whilst supporting the independent action of the Iraqi workers, we can only use what tools we have and expend our energies where we can. Indulging in super-revolutionary rhetoric might piss off a few squares, and add a radical gloss to our levis but ultimately it's meaningless posturing.

This means we should contribute to the building of a broad anti-war movement, an anti-war sentiment that might not be programmatically pure but would certainly be more effective in making the war effort politically difficult.

Importantly, it also means not getting drawn away from those areas which the ruling class media are trying to relegate to the back pages of the press - the Poll Tax for example. War is an excellent way of diverting discontent: remember the Falklands? Keeping that discontent to the fore is central to the anti-war effort. It is fighting the enemy at home.

*During the preparation of this article, FLUX was riven by a heated debate over ethnocentrism. How can we non-Muslim whites simply pronounce a verdict on a situation which we know so little about when, as libertarian socialists, self-determination is one of our central tenets? We decided that we need to discuss in depth the issues raised, and that this discussion might be the basis of a future article.*

**The Flux Collective**

**part 2:**

## THE MEDIA AND THE GULF

One week into the Gulf War, David Dimbleby makes a revealing slip: "This war is being conducted by television". What makes this statement so shocking is that it is suddenly so obvious and basic. We know that Bush stayed up on January 16th, not to hear first reports on Western bombing, but to see when news first reached the U.S. so he could time his pre-rehearsed 'Address to the Nation' with maximum impact; and when he said "This won't be another Vietnam", it wasn't the military campaign he was referring to but the media war. Then we saw the home movies of 'precision bombing', with military commentary transforming the destruction of human life into a play in American Football. Or the live-by-

satellite broadcasts which give Baghdad, Tel Aviv and Dahrán the feel of high-risk adventure-playgrounds.

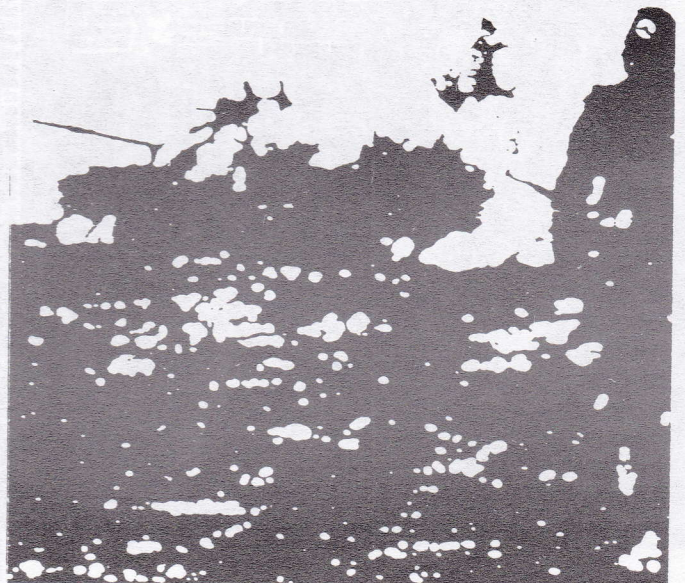
Yet why is it that I turn on my television every morning, to find out what's 'going on', even when I **know** that all I'm getting is lies and disinformation? What is it about the coverage that is so seductive? It would seem that even the most sceptical of observers is drawn in when subjected to a bombardment of 'facts' repeated endlessly on four channels. The media tantalise us with 30 second 'sound bytes': opinion and reporting become indistinguishable. When we are told that 50 Iraqi tanks have deserted the impact is made, even though a few days later the Saudi tale is discredited in a couple of newscolumn inches.

As John Pilger, one of the few dissenting journalists on this crisis, has pointed out, the explosion in communications technology has not resulted in a democratised information society, with unlimited access to sources of fact, opinion and analysis. On the contrary, we have a media society, in which information is controlled by a few multinational corporations. Their output is largely determined by two pressures: the commercial interests of capitalism (domestically and worldwide); and the political interests of states who perpetuate and sustain this exploitation.

Major events such as the Gulf War tend to bring out these pressures more clearly, because more energy must be expended to sustain the false picture. The media is complicit with this process, on the one hand blindly accepting allied military propaganda as fact, and on the other hand having the arrogance to sneer at the Iraqi media for its crudeness and ineptitude. This in turn reinforces the colonialist ideology of the 'stupid Arab', fanaticised by Islamic fundamentalism but only to be feared as an unpredictable animal.

We do not feel knowledgeable enough to talk about the Arab media (which in any case is far from homogenous). But the point is that propaganda can always be seen through more easily when looked at from another cultural position. It is effective in its own country, however, because it tries to mirror the culture and ideology of the people it is aimed at. In our country, people's

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# BIGGER CAGES...LONGER

1990 was a year during which prisons and prisoners figured prominently in the media. The "Strangeways Riot", lasting twenty-five days, highlighted the appalling conditions of prisons and showed the despair and anger of people locked up inside. Prisoners smashed up cells and made fires whilst the prison authorities played Wagner and talked of murders. Defiant prisoners shouted out demands and told their stories in an atmosphere of hysteria and paranoia. There were cries from the establishment for the S.A.S. to be called in whilst politicians warned that the prisoners would not get away with it. Everything was upside down and the prison authorities and the government were panicking. Not too good for political credibility or "law and order". David Waddington, the then Home Secretary, talked about reintroducing laws against prison mutiny and said that he would finance increased security measures. His actions and utterances were guided by his pathetic fear of it all happening again. It is not surprising that he got it all wrong. Instead of looking at why we in Britain lock up far more people than any other European country and questioning the intent and functions of prisons, Waddington espoused the blinkered priorities of order, stability and routine.

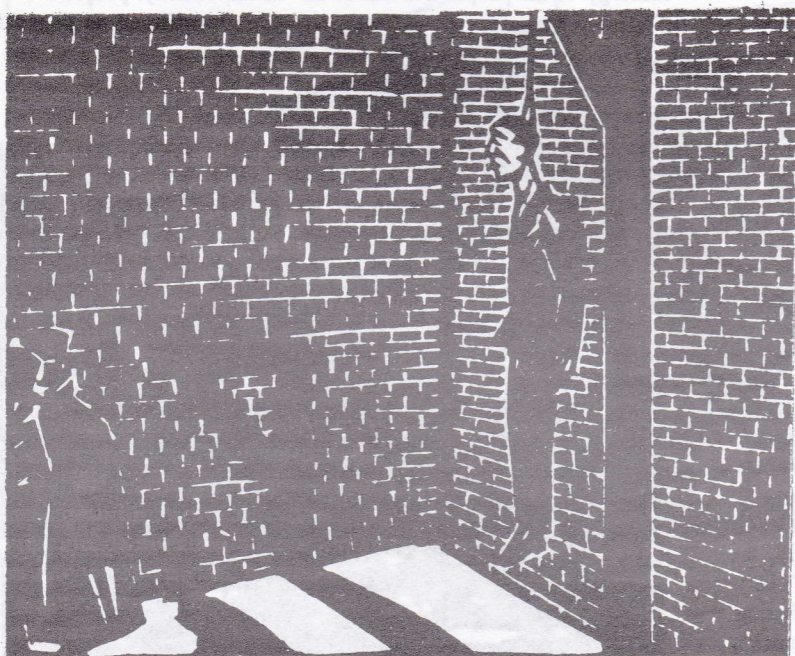
It seems a bit clichéd to talk of how prisons serve to control and coerce us all, but it's true. They are there to remind us all to obey and conform and taunt and threaten us with loss of liberty. We're told to respect and uphold the law because it's "ours". This is nonsense. Laws are not made by, or for, people like us, they never have been. The primary purpose of legislation is to restrict and manipulate from above, the powerful over the powerless. Thus people are sent to prison for not buying T.V. licenses, for shop and

property thefts, for refusing to pay the poll tax, and for exercising so-called civil rights like going on demos. People are crammed up in tiny cells to be taught a lesson, to mend their ways. A person who is economically poor and steals to exist (you don't *have* to be poor to steal) will be in exactly the same situation when s/he leaves prison. Prison does not teach us how to get the kind of jobs we want. Prison degrades and humiliates. It is the only answer the ruling classes have ever come up with to deal with "unrulies" and "anti-socials". Shut them away and we can all go on, living quite happily, problem solved.

It is only when people themselves come together to protest and force change that ears and eyes are turned. This is exactly what happened in Strangeways. Other action by prisoners which featured importantly in the media was prison suicide.

Last year forty-eight prisoners killed themselves, a figure which has more than doubled since 1986. Out of these, nine have been under the age of twenty-one. Philip Knight, the most recent, hung himself in July. He was found hanging from his cell window only hours after his detention. Philip was just fifteen years old. He should not have been in an adult prison. Social Services and the Courts deemed Philip to be "unruly" and remanded him to prison because of this. Philip had been in the care of the local authority for fifteen months and had absconded and committed numerous offenses. The local authority had nowhere suitable to send him so he was placed in an adult prison. Normally young people who are "a danger to others" are placed in secure units for juveniles (under 17's), units which, it is argued, are more appropriate for young people. However, there are not enough of these units and so Philip, like so many other under 17's, was remanded to prison. Philip did not even last a day in Swansea prison. Akin to many before him he made his protest by ending his life.

So what has been the state's response? An all too familiar one. Another inquiry and yet more recommendations. Judge Tumim, Chief Inspector of Prisons (assisting Lord Justice Woolf in his inquiry into Strangeways), is being heralded as a great liberal who holds humanity close to his heart. Leaving aside the blatant contradictions inherent in such a notion, a browsing through of his report indicates no mention or intent to reduce prison numbers. Pragmatic alterations are all that is necessary. His 123 recommendations include improved sanitation, more leisure activities, televisions in cells and increased educational and employment opportunities. Additionally Tumim argues that prison psychiatric services ought to be equivalent to the National Health Service. This is in response to his view that attempted suicide is a behavioral problem and, as such, can be managed within prisons. Critics explain how he failed to make any contact with prisoners, or with the relatives





# CHAINS

of prisoners who have killed themselves. Tumim obviously thought that they had nothing to say - or maybe too much.

Tumim's recommendations all read very well. Such promises ought to be received lightly. His report (pub. 19th Dec.) told us that the practice of remanding under 17's to adult prisons would stop. Yet on 25th Jan. another fifteen year old was remanded to exactly the same prison in which Philip killed himself. And now we are being told that local authorities have four years in which to develop secure units. When only 35 places are needed nationally, four years appears extremely lengthy. It is argued that such delay results from limited resources and other demands upon the government and local authorities. Quite understandable really when Britain alone is spending £4 million each day on the Gulf War.



The pressure is off the government - again prisoners have become a hidden minority, their experiences silenced. Despite protests from various professional organisations and pressure groups nothing much changes. Why should it? Prisons mirror and ally the obscenity and degradation of capitalism. They do not face up to nor challenge that behaviour which violates. Instead they react using more subtle forms of violence.

Philip Knight and forty-seven others last year all lost their lives as a consequence of being detained in prisons. Others lived squalid and pathetic existences whilst some prisoners were tempted by the gross practice of tagging.

Prisons present a sad indictment of the society in which we live. No amount of convoluted talk from David Waddington, Kenneth Baker or liberal judges will ever make them legitimate

Carolyn Willow

# POLL TAX

Events in the Gulf have driven the poll tax off the political and media scene in recent weeks. But it hasn't gone away, and neither has the campaign against it. With the end of the war now clearly in sight the poll tax is set to move back into the spotlight - and for us on the Left the timing could hardly be better.

Some councils have already set their poll tax rates for the coming year. In Scotland, Edinburgh, entering their third year of the tax, are charging a massive £584, despite making cuts of £28 million. Here in Nottingham, this year's poll tax will be £448, an increase of £60 on last year even though the council are closing homes for elderly people in a desperate attempt to save money. These are typical increases; unlike Rochester in Kent, for example, where the poll tax is actually coming down by £58 to £190 - "through good management not big cuts" says the Tory council, conveniently forgetting the sale of £80 million worth of council housing which they are using to finance the reduction.

But most councils will meet to set this year's poll tax during March, and demonstrations outside town halls across the country should push the poll tax back into the headlines. The March 23rd national demonstration in London, whether it is attacked by the police again or not, should do the same.

And non-payment remains high. In Nottingham, the council admitted early in December that 56 145 hadn't paid a penny of the poll tax - that's a third of all those registered! Another 70 000 were in arrears, and less than a third had paid up-to-date. Non payment in Liverpool is over 50%, and between a third and a quarter of people in most major towns and cities aren't paying. So far, Scotland has issued 1.25 million summary warrants for non-payment - but the sheriff officers still haven't managed to hold even one warrant sale.

For the government, the options now look increasingly limited. They know the poll tax has to go, but are frightened to admit it because it will further boost non-payment. With a round of local council elections coming up, and a June general election looking ever more likely, they

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# GET OUT ..

## Ashley Fletcher discusses the implications of Clause 25

Towards the end of 1990 the government prepared its armaments to launch two New Year offensives. The first - in the Gulf, against Arab nationalist threats to oil - has received much publicity and attention and is a policy proudly owned and publicised by its authors. The second - against the Lesbian and Gay communities - is quietly endorsed but publicly ignored. But it is no less comprehensive in the intended impact on its victims.

The spearhead of this other offensive is Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill, itself the centrepiece of this Parliament's legislative programme. Designed to bring 'Better justice...' to us all through '...a more consistent approach to sentencing' it aims to make us more secure through the use of exemplary sentences for persistent violent and sexual offenders who pose '...a serious risk to the public'. Such people are to be made into deterrent examples.

For them *"...an exception must be made to the principle that the length of the individual sentence should be justified by the seriousness of the offence"*.

Clause 25 spells out these eleven newly categorised 'serious sexual offences'. Conspicuously placed amongst heterosexual incest, paedophilia, sexual abuse and incest against children are three victimless, consensual acts - not necessarily sexual - between men. These are:

1. **Soliciting by a man:** This could include cruising, flirting, winking, smiling, chatting up or swapping telephone numbers etc.

2. **Procuring of homosexual acts:** Or helping two men to have sex even if they are over 21. It could include introducing two male friends who fancy each other or lending out a room to two friends.

3. **Indecency between men:** This includes sex with men under 21, or any expression of gay affection. This includes not just cottaging or sex in 'lovers' lanes' but also kissing, hugging or holding hands etc.

None of these even require  
sex to have taken place.

### CLAUSE 25 DEMO - London, 16th February 1991.

*A report from Simon Scott.*

We got off our coaches (late as usual) at the Embankment, to be greeted by a barrage of noise: drums, sticks on cans, hoots, and many, many whistles. It was a sight for sore ears, after the recent sombre Gulf War demos. To be angry and affirmative: this is what makes a good protest. Before moving off we caught up with a few friends. Stood around, waiting, chatting, performing to the viewing gallery of Waterloo bridge.

By the time the march was underway it had swollen to maybe 15,000 men and women. It was good to see so many women in solidarity, for like much homophobic legislation the clause only targets gay men - the idea of lesbians having an active sexual life, or even existing, being too horrifying for the legislators. But of course it's two sides of the same oppressive coin, and we need to fight it together.

Getting into the spirit of things, the three of us, still in tandem, linked arms and sidled up the street. This, of course, was nothing compared to many others: the highlight, for me, was when we passed Piccadilly, to witness the spectacle of gay couples snogging on the steps of Eros, to the stunned stares of the Saturday shoppers. The sight was greeted with appreciative cheers and whistles.

I must confess I don't like rallies, and it was too cold to stand on Hyde Park Corner - so I don't know who spoke or what they said. What I do know, however, is that the organisers have learnt a lot from anti-Section 28 action: it was well organised, its message was clear, and there was a good sense of unity. In particular, I didn't feel there were any exclusions going on. So apart from a few "well-meaning" liberals who may have felt uncomfortable, we were united by our anti-'straight-identified' stance.

After the march, we had a few hours to spare, so wandered down Oxford Street (having first availed ourselves of the Hilton Hotel toilets, on Clare's insistence!). It was funny, for us, to be able to recognise the fellow marchers, window shopping, unknown to the sightseers and straights. Makes you think, though, doesn't it?...



# ■ ■ GET ANGRY ■ ■

At face value not much may seem to have happened. All these offences were on the statute books anyway, helping to make Britain the most 'anti-gay' state in Western Europe barring Ireland and the Vatican. So what is the importance of them all being dragged together in the Criminal Justice Bill?

Firstly, while debate for the last twenty years has centred around greater liberalisation and lowering the age of consent, the government has now chosen to boldly and confidently re-state its homophobic bigotry.

Secondly, previously minor misdemeanours have been reclassified as 'serious sexual offences' with sentences of up to five years, followed on release by up to five years medical and psychiatric treatment for 'persistent offenders' - a reversion to the punitive medical responses to homosexuality of the 50's and 60's. But why is this happening now?

The 1967 act was not so much meant to be a legalisation of our sexuality, but a decriminalisation of aspects of it. It was never intended that we should gain any recognised profile or that we should play a part in mainstream society. We were just meant to quietly and privately get on with it. Our liberal society was to tolerate us hidden discretely in their midst, not recognise us or live with the issues our sexuality raises.

The 80's changed all this. Up to '85 our profile grew as we were monstrosly scapegoated for AIDS, while at the same time working and campaigning to develop the power and skills to save our communities in the face of public indifference. By the mid-80's the government could no longer ignore the crisis and began inadequately to intervene. The press, religious and political reactionaries vilified us for bringing AIDS to the heterosexual agenda. At the same time, our growing experience, organisation and politicisation had given us a growing public and political profile. Gay people were consulted at local and, later, at national level, as the growing realities of AIDS required our insights and experience. As a community we became more confident and open. Even our images and representations on TV began to show a greater recognition of us as viewers and consumers.

Tolerance had obviously had the wrong effect. We were once more a target for the 'moral majority'. When resources were allotted to HIV, they were allotted away from gay men (who had to develop their own resources right from the start) as part of a conscious 'de-gayng' of HIV. The press continued to blame us for the epidemic. Arrests on gay

men in cottaging and cruising areas increased rapidly, as did 'queer bashing'. Even concern with child abuse has been turned against us. 95% of assaults are by heterosexual men on girls; but when it is on a boy, it is no longer called 'child



abuse' but 'homosexual abuse' - and the minority of cases where this happens are catapulted onto centre stage.

The public mind has been prepared and turned against us. Even the Labour Party has blamed us for losing them the last election as we were '...not popular...on the doorsteps'.

The growing recession and the undermining of the family has made it easier to target us. When Section 28 failed legally to confine us or intimidate us underground in 1988, we knew something else would follow, but thought that recriminalisation was probably unlikely. The



# ...GET EVEN !

government has proved more devious than we imagined.

This commitment to eradicating aspects of victimless, gay behaviour should not be underestimated. Prosecutions have risen steadily since 1985, to a 1989 record of nearly 2,500 convictions. The ferocity of the new onslaught is demonstrated by the sentencing in January of 8 gay men for between one and four and a half years for consensual S/M sex in private after a massive policing operation called 'Spanner'. If gay men still manage to overcome the obstacles erected by Clause 25 to find themselves in bed together, we can still be prosecuted for what we choose to do - be we over 21 or not! Yet despite the massive policing of our lives, the number of unsolved 'queer bashing' murders continues to grow - averaging nearly one a month for the last two years.



Paragraph 16 of the Children's Act - also introduced in December - makes clear the absence of rights of any lesbians or gay men to adopt or foster children. Combined with the existing power of the state to remove children from biological parents on the grounds of parental sexuality; the continuing ability of employers to sack workers for being gay; and the 1988 ban (through Section 28) on any centrally

funded body supporting or endorsing our 'needs' (for fear of 'promoting pretend family relationships'), we can see that the attack on our already embattled position in society is total.

The impact of this offensive on our right to meet, our clubs and pubs, support groups, advice lines, magazines etc. is not yet clear. But by granting the courts complete discretionary powers the Criminal Justice Bill makes it potentially devastating. If re-criminalisation via the back door is their aim, the tools are now in their hands.

For us, this is not so much an issue of Civil Liberties, but of life and death. While murders and attacks go on unchecked, many of our lesbian and gay teenagers in care or at home continue to live in desperate isolation for which suicide sometimes seems the only remedy. Suicide rates are also high amongst men who have lost their jobs, homes and even families through their prosecution. While the hope of successful HIV prevention work in a community going underground are bleak.

But it is an ill wind that blows no good. Many lesbians and gays still think of the battle against Clause 28 as a victory, despite its passage onto the statute books. Why? Because in that fight we gained a sense of strength, community and perspective hitherto denied us. Effective challenges in most cases where attempts have been made to apply the Clause have shown that the battle can continue with success even after a bill becomes law. Clause 25 for the first time brings most anti-gay legislation into one act - a target focal point more powerful than we have had before.

Already up and down the country, groups are forming and the first demonstration in London in February saw 10,000 plus on the streets. A spark is once again igniting our communities, and though we recognise that changing the law will not end our oppression, the fight will increase our power. Battle is being joined and we enthusiastically anticipate the struggle to come.

...STOP PRESS... ..STOP PRESS... ..STOP PRESS...  
Since this article was written the government have already begun to climb down. Procurement is no longer included as an offence under Clause 25, and they've made other minor changes too. Shows what we might achieve if we organise and fight them together..

**The author of this article, Ashley Fletcher, was involved with Lesbian and Gay Noise, and is a former member of the Wildcat group**



# CONFESSIONS

of a

# STALINIST

(Apparently) I am a Stalinist, not because I worship Uncle Joe but because I have been a member of the C.P.G.B.

In the same way as many members of Militant are probably not 'Trotskyists', I take issue with the smart-arsed student-union approach to politics and the politically active that says you are what your Party is.

There must be many reasons why people join 'left wing groups'. I expect most people don't join because they agree with the group's precise ideological stance, but because they are pissed off and want to change the system we live under, by getting involved with people who appear to be fighting back.

My swift disillusionment with anarchist groups led me to look at what else was on offer; despite my distrust of socialists I joined the C.P.G.B. My attraction was probably as much romantic as rational/political - my granddad, father and brother had been members, the Party had been well established in the community, plugging away with little major success, against local and national problems. But at least they were fighting.

The alternatives, S.W.P. and Class War were, although probably closer to my political position, not as attractive. They were mainly composed of university students from outside the area, who had all the answers but no obvious tradition or commitment to the community.

I am not writing here to slag off other left groups, and would not describe my time in the C.P. as inspiring. The point I am trying to make is that when people are motivated enough to get involved in the struggle - in itself



taking some dogged persistence - there may be many reasons for joining one particular group rather than another: its location and activity; its relevance to your particular experiences; family influences; romantic ideas; as well as the party line.

Just as it is unlikely that the rank and file community in Greece were fighting for a Stalinist dictatorship in 1947, so I expect most people from El Salvador to South Africa and Nottingham are not fighting for a specific ideological vision, but against exploitation and misery and for control over their own lives.

What people are looking for when they join a group is a sense of community with others who have similar backgrounds, experiences and aspirations, and the security in knowing they are not alone. When the ideologues decide to emphasize the **label** of their group and paper, and insist on the Truth of their particular line, individual members of 'opposing' groups are categorised and stereotyped, leading to mistrust. Let's face it, some spotty git telling you you've got it all wrong because you're in the wrong party hardly enthruses you with ideas of solidarity and unity.

This tyranny of the ideologues is one of the things which divides the left, preventing different groups communicating with each other or forming effective alliances against the common enemy. For though we have differences in approach and tactics, we all want the same thing: what's stopping us are the forces of the ruling class, not having the 'wrong' political badge.

David



# DESPITE TV

Outside London, most people on the left have only heard of Despite TV since last year when Channel 4 showed their programme *"Battle of Trafalgar"* about the riot that followed the London anti-poll tax demonstration last March. But Despite TV have been around for quite some time, doing community video work in London's East End. This interview with Siobhan and Mark of Despite TV took place early in December 1990

**FLUX:** Lots of people must dream of setting up TV companies, but very few ever do it. How did you manage it?

**MARK:** DTV began as an Adult Education Class! It was an experiment to show that people can make good videos without much technical experience or training. We were funded by Tower Hamlets Arts Project, and our brief was to make video available to the local community

**SIOBHAN:** Right from the start, DTV was an open access workshop. Anyone could join, and those who knew a bit more would teach them. Another basic principle was training through production: you learned to use the video equipment through having something to say

**MARK:** That's right. People who had something to say could just come in and say it, it didn't need to be mediated by "experts"

**FLUX:** But weren't there video groups all around the country doing that kind of thing?

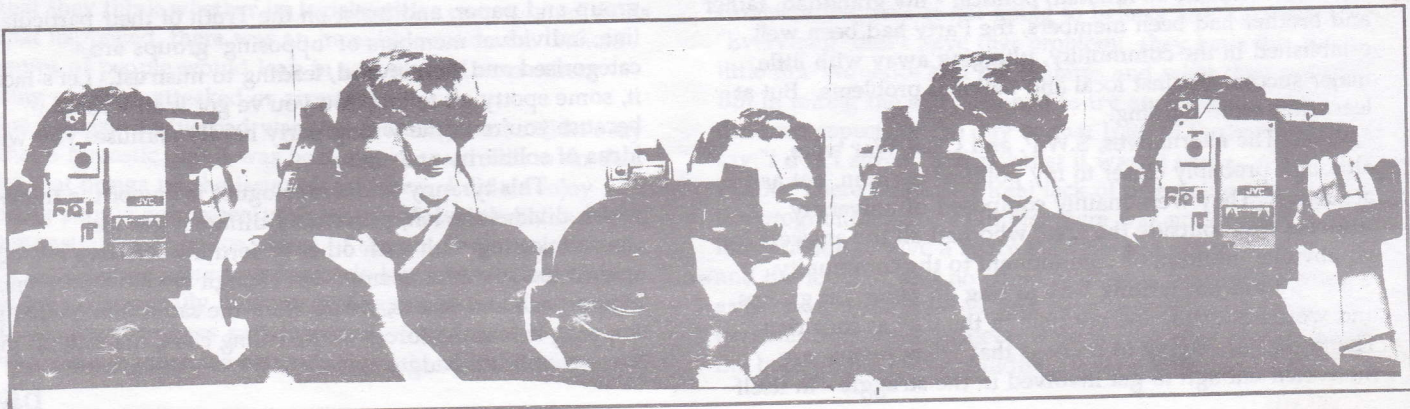
**SIOBHAN:** No. At most video projects, people were taught over a six-week period how to use a camera and editing suite - and that's all. Maybe they'd produce a short video, but very often not because of the expense. And you couldn't actually join these groups, all you could do was pay £130 or so to hire a good camera from them

**MARK:** All their equipment had been bought with government and regional arts grants, but suddenly no-one else could use it. Either they'd be too busy with their latest production for Channel 4, or they'd just say "well, this isn't what we do nowadays". The problem was that all these groups had formed themselves into the standard industrial unit: producer, editor, director, camera operator. They'd all become teams of individual film makers. The liberal fringe of the establishment media thought that these people would make innovative TV, but they didn't. They never could, because they were using the same industrial process as mainstream TV, so no matter how radical the subject matter, it was always treated in the same way. These groups all related to people simply as clients, or subject matter

**FLUX:** How did DTV avoid going down the same slippery slope?

**MARK:** It comes down to ways of working - what you actually *do*. For example, the tendency usually is that the person who is best at filming uses the camera, the person who is best at editing does the edit, and so on. But that's a problem, because who holds the camera is vitally important to what you produce. Look at that BBC2 programme "Open Door". Its meant to show different community viewpoints, but they just send a camera crew along and everything they produce looks exactly the same!

**SIOBHAN:** The social work approach to community video!





**MARK:** At DTV, we agreed that the best way to learn about video cameras is by using one, so training was never formalised. Whoever volunteered to film something could do it, regardless of whether they'd ever filmed anything before. That did two things. People got more chances to learn, and it also cut out the hustlers who might offer to do a really cheap video for a rock band, then come here and use our equipment. You can't tout for business professionally when the person filming might never have used a camera before! The motor of DTV is *desire*, not money. No-one here ever got paid for production. If there was money around you might get paid for doing the uninteresting things, but as soon as you picked up a camera or started editing you were working as a volunteer. Jobs were always rotated, too, because if you hog the camera someone else only gets to hold the microphone. There've been people who'd single-mindedly explore one area - computer graphics, say - but they couldn't have a monopoly on it, anybody else could have a go. Besides, they'd always end up doing other things as well, simply because there weren't enough other people to hand stuff out to at meetings

**FLUX:** Did working like that make a difference to either the content or the form of the videos you produced?

**SIOBHAN:** It made a difference to both. DTV made ongoing production a priority, but we did it by using the video magazine format. You know, we'd cut together lots of five minute bits that had no relation to each other, except for the fact that they all related to the local community. Since then the idea has been picked up and proliferated across the mainstream - Network 7, DEF II, all kinds of youth shows - but at that time it was new. So it looked different, and because lots of people were represented it said something different. Also, nothing was ever excluded on the grounds of quality. Technical perfection is important, because you want to make your art stronger, to get your message across. But we decided that what people were actually *saying* was most important

**FLUX:** Was it hard for new people coming in, to fit into that way of working?

**SIOBHAN:** Sometimes. People who came with their own ideas were always encouraged to join DTV, although things had to be potential magazine items. After that, if they had an idea the group didn't want to work on they could hire the video equipment from us, and we only charged nominal costs. If they wanted DTV to help we'd budget for labour costs too. But our first priority was the local community - if there was a local event, that came first.

Consequently, we've done a lot of work for people who can't get anybody else to film their events - lesbian and gay stuff, Clause 28, Wapping

**FLUX:** Its unusual to maintain such a flexible and open structure over a long period of time. Groups use all kinds of excuses to make themselves more rigid and close off, so as to protect themselves from outside

pressures. Like, you might have said "what would happen if the NF came along and wanted to use our facilities?"

**SIOBHAN:** DTV has never had an explicit political line, either left or right. Politically this has caused problems, but its also given us strength through diversity. And we have had people whose personal politics were right wing. They never wanted to produce fascist propaganda but they did want to make individual art works. They just wanted to use DTV to help their careers as artists, but they never stayed for long - the interests of the group as a whole quickly wore them down. They were only a threat when they wanted to change it to fit in with their vision of being an artist. But every time we've fought against this.

**FLUX:** So you get problems with "professional artists", or aspiring ones: is it their agendas, rather than those of the politicians, that cause problems?

**SIOBHAN:** The "artists" are a political problem too.

People's aspire to what they think is a career in film or TV, as defined by the propaganda and hierarchies of the industry. That's why if you go to film school everyone wants to be the director - its how you get creative control

**MARK:** Its like if you had a college of rock bands, everyone would want to be lead singer but there'd be plenty of vacancies for drummers!

**FLUX:** Although their life expectancy is a bit limited! Making video art or propaganda is one thing, but getting people to see it is another. How did you find audiences for these tapes?

**SIOBHAN:** That's *always* been the most difficult part.

Originally, DTV was part of Tower Hamlets Arts Project, so we inherited contacts with local community groups and tenants associations. We'd show the magazine tapes

wherever we could - local screenings in schools, libraries, community centres -

**MARK:** There were ironic situations. Like one of our tapes would be showing at the Turin Film Festival, who loved it, and then we'd organise a local screening and three people would turn up! Its so labour intensive to reach three people that you wish they'd just nick the tapes and copy them!

**SIOBHAN:** "Despite The Sun" was easily our most successful tape, but that had a ready made audience

**FLUX:** This was the tape about the 1986/87 Wapping dispute, with Murdoch's "Sun" newspaper. Tell us how you got involved with that?

**SIOBHAN:** Well, Wapping is just down the road from DTV, so we went down to the picket line twice a week, filming and getting to know local tenants and some of the strikers. The material for "Despite The Sun" came out of that.

It was in the magazine format again, but it was all around the strike. People produced their own five minute bits, about things like the myth of new technology and what it felt like to be on the picket line

**FLUX:** So did any of the strikers actually get involved?







**SIOBHAN:** No - most of them had enough to do already! Also, we wanted to avoid the views and opinions of the union leadership, which made contact more difficult. But some of the local tenants did join in

**FLUX:** And this is your most successful tape so far?

**MARK:** Easily, yes. Some of the Wapping pickets bought it, and although we were only charging them what we thought was cost price, they were bootlegging it too. And then we suddenly realised that we'd been charging them less than the cost of the blank tape and losing money on it, and the bootlegging was a real relief! Altogether, we only sold 300 copies of "Despite The Sun" - the bootlegged tapes don't show up in that - yet it got into the Top Five of a national chart of independent video tapes. That shows how pathetic independent video distribution is

**SIOBHAN:** That's why mainstream TV is so attractive - its got an instant audience

**FLUX:** Which is a good lead in to discussing the "Battle of Trafalgar" programme... You said earlier that one of DTV's strengths is the diversity of views within it. But I didn't see a diversity in that programme, I thought the context of the programme undermined *anything* that might have supported the police. For example, when you showed the guy saying "chaos isn't the kind of thing you normally associate with the police", it didn't seem that the programme agreed with him at all. Instead, it was cleverly making the point that chaos is *exactly* what the police cause on demonstrations

**SIOBHAN:** There *were* cleverly coded bits. There had to be because there were some arguments that we would never have gotten past the IBA. And we wanted to reach a large audience with the message that the police provoked a riot by attacking a peaceful demo. So we had to be more imaginative. "Battle of Trafalgar" said something that TV hadn't said about the riot before: that if you're attacked you've got the right to fight back, even if its the police. That's legally accepted, but its also in people's heads, its what they think whether its legislated for or not. And that's what happened, there was an incredible solidarity. Whole groups of people would leap in and try and stop others being crushed, attacked or arrested.

One criticism we've had was that the programme didn't say what a fantastic day it was because we were able to do that. But that brings up the issue of violence. I didn't enjoy seeing people get beaten until they bled, whether they were demonstrators or police. Most of the time I felt good about the fact that we were fighting back, but when I actually saw people getting really hurt my feelings were mixed

**FLUX:** Its sometimes said that "art" - if we can use that word - can explore the contradictions that politics has to give

you a straight line on

**MARK:** It opens up all kinds of debates that normally get tucked away on the Left. Like, its clear that on March 31st the people in the front line were your 18 to 30 year olds - just like the forces in the Gulf. And what happened was a straightforward mobilisation of the whole crowd against an attack: some people threw stuff, some fought, others got the injured into ambulances or took info from those who were being nicked. So the people fighting were simply the best ones for the job, and it all depends on your attitude whether they were heroes or villains. But the IBA would never have let us take that line on national TV!

**SIOBHAN:** We didn't come away from March 31st knowing all that had happened, or why. So most of the politics in the programme came from the people who spoke. No-one was prompted, and there were no scripts, but everyone's story correlated. So we built a framework that allowed these different experiences and emotions to come through. Because that's the starting point of any political message, the ideas that are in people's heads

**MARK:** But it was our own personal experience too.

There's a strong backbone of chronology in the programme, and that's because some people in DTV hadn't been there on the day, and they wanted to know exactly what fucking went on. So someone went off and studied everything - all the interviews, photos, bit of films, newspaper articles. At the same time, others were working on film footage, piecing it all together like a big jigsaw. The chronology and the film clips weren't put together until the sixth or seventh edit, they evolved independently.

We were motivated by a desire to understand which a professional film crew just wouldn't have had, and which wouldn't have been economically viable for them at the pre-production stage. Also, we knew from our experience with the Wapping tape that some people would say "well, the fact that you were even there means that you must be a troublemaker, so I'm not going to believe anything you say". "Everyman" don't have that problem: they have the nice little title sequence and the fanfares and what they say goes! But in telling the story we had to try and show lots of different aspects of the day so that Irate of Purley could only say "I don't agree", and not that it wasn't true

**FLUX:** There's almost a total lack of distancing techniques in the programme. For example, there was no lengthy introduction to give a space between the programme makers and the footage, and no panel of experts passing judgement at the end. Interviewees, and even specialists like the barrister Michael Mansfield, were shown with riot footage in the background. You couldn't separate either DTV or any of



the interviewees from what went on, and that made it a very powerful and coherent programme

**MARK:** And it was the minimal intervention we could make. The people we interviewed wanted to talk: most talked for a good 40 minutes, and there were 30 of them! Obviously they were edited, but all we were trying to do was catch the essence of what they had to say

**FLUX:** Something that keeps popping up is the phrase "these ideas are in everybody's heads". That was one of the slogans of the Situationists <sup>(1)</sup>. How useful are their theories to your work?

**SIOBHAN:** Situationist theory informs me in terms of the audience. Although TV is very good at treating people as though they are stupid, I believe that audiences are very visually literate and can pick up things extremely fast - look at TV advertising for proof of that. But too much TV assumes that the audiences won't understand, which is where Situationist ideas come in. I believe that people can understand, because those ideas are in *their* heads just like they are in mine. One of the arguments we had about the programme was over the technique of showing the talking head with film footage running as a backdrop. We wondered if it would be boring or difficult, or if the audience would be able to keep pace with it. But we decided to try it anyway, partly because we didn't want the programme to be too slick

**FLUX:** So that people couldn't just passively consume it, but would have to work along with the programme?

**SIOBHAN:** Well, because we were dealing with a complex argument and one of the dangers was of oversimplifying it. That's something TV is very good at, building simple narratives about complex events out of voice-overs and edited footage. That's exactly what the TV news did about March 31st

**FLUX:** Sticking with the Situationist terminology, do you have any qualms about becoming part of the "Spectacle"?

**SIOBHAN:** None. It was an intervention from the outside. DTV wasn't part of the media establishment then and it isn't now. Although ultimately we had the IBA looking over our shoulders, there was no direct censorship or control from Channel 4. Look at what we achieved. 1.4 million people watched a programme which told them that the media were lying, the police were lying, *this* is the reality that 200 000 people experienced. It was a chance to claim back some of people's history, to prevent the state having the final word. If you were purist and turned that down because you didn't want to become part of the Spectacle, it would be a crime. If your ideology says that you can't take a chance like that, fair enough. But it isn't the only politically valid position. Its like saying we shouldn't do anything because what we can do isn't perfect. And that's rubbish - you can't resign from capitalism

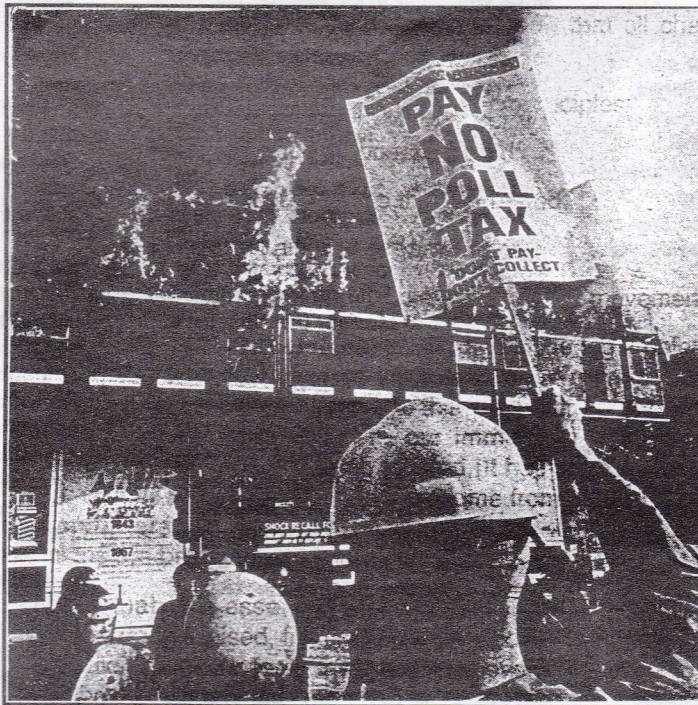
**MARK:** Nor the state - and that was one of the really scary things. Lots of people knew we were making the programme and were sending us their tapes. Stuff the cops

would never have known where to look for, video evidence they normally wouldn't have had access to, and we were gathering it all together into one place ..

**SIOBHAN:** We didn't sign the contract with Channel 4 until July 1990, and by then we were all paranoid. Nobody cares if the police come and bust down the door of a little community video project in the East End, but busting down the door of a Channel 4 production is headlines. So we hid behind the liberal media establishment. After the riot Operation Carnaby was on and it was witchhunt time: we needed that protection

**FLUX:** What comes across strongest is that because you know the TV industry can't assimilate DTV because of the way that you work, you can do all this and feel confident that you won't be compromised

**MARK:** Yeah. And capitalism won't just go away and leave us all alone. When DTV was an unknown group struggling to get audiences we got ripped off all the time. It was obvious that the big companies had sent their researchers along to view the independent output and copy their ideas. So you're being re-appropriated all the time, whether you actively engage or not



**SIOBHAN:** Its important to intervene, its about reaching people. One of the problems with anarchism has been its lack of engagement. There's a whole community of people out there who have aligned themselves to anarchist ideas in all sorts of different ways, but don't have any access to explore them, or any idea that other people feel the same way. Anarchists themselves make much open discussion of anarchism taboo - although there's a whole talking shop of other socialists you can join

**MARK:** And sell newspapers: the TV is dirty, but newspapers aren't, they're clean!

**SIOBHAN:** But you have to be careful. I've always objected to the way that much left wing politics rests

on theories which sit outside of people's experience, yet at the same time you can only get taken seriously on the political scene if you understand those theories. That justifies vanguard parties, and leads directly to the idea of having to educate the working class

<sup>(1)</sup> *The Situationists were a group of artists and revolutionaries who formulated a theory of capitalism as a "spectacle" which we all passively consume. They were vehemently opposed to any collaboration with the forces of capital, and would probably have described DTV's programme as an example of capitalism's ability to recuperate its opposition, the image of resistance sanitised and sold back to us in the comfort of our own homes. See page for a review of a recent book by one of their leading theorists, Guy Debord*

John



# CORRESPONDENCE

Here are some letters we received in response to the first issue of FLUX. They probably won't make much sense to you unless you were lucky enough to get one. We're keen to hear from readers, and will be happy to print letters that you send to us.

## The Wrong Starting Point.

*From Andrew Green, Sheffield.*

*I was pleased to find a new magazine "of libertarian socialism" in Sheffield's independent bookshop, but disappointed at what I found inside. Ten out of eighteen pages devoted to a dispute which I'd thought had faded into history, long before these articles were written. Surely anarchists learnt a hundred years ago to take a grain of salt with everything Bakunin wrote or said; and surely all socialists, however libertarian, make use of Marx's contribution to theory, whether or not they proclaim themselves Marxist. And those self-proclaimed Marxists who persist in the defence of Lenin and Trotsky must by now be conscious that they are misrepresenting the speculations and hopes of Marx himself.*

*I think you've chosen the wrong starting point, and are in danger of inviting a replay of old debates.*

*I'd hoped to find in Flux some exploration of Marx's ideas and incorporation of them into an ever expanding interpretation of events in the way that French theorists such as Debord and Foucault have demonstrated. They have offered us means of inspecting the creation and control of knowledge, the means by which power is operated, and if the libertarian aspect of our politics is to mean anything, it must require the exploration of how oppressive systems are set up and may be combatted.*

*If you wish to explore or dispute their ideas, I'd like to contribute to such work.*

*And if that's the area you're moving into, I might be interested in subscribing to Flux. But you aren't offering subscription terms. Can I rely on finding a copy at my local bookshop? I will keep looking.*

## An Outmoded Debate

*From Adam Buick, London.*

As a member of a group in the Marxist tradition which has always held that socialism necessarily involves the disappearance of the state and which views words like "socialist state" and "workers' state" as contradictions in terms, I'd like to make a contribution to your discussion on "Anarchism and Marxism".

Although, if pressed, I will describe myself as a "Marxist", I don't think this is a very adequate term. First,

in using the name of one individual to describe a particular body of theory it gives the mistaken impression that this theory was created, even laid down, by that person. Second, it gives the even more unfortunate impression that if you call yourself a "Marxist" you have to defend everything that Marx said or did.

Anarchism too is an inadequate term. Its main inadequacy is that it groups together in a single category all those who want to see the disappearance of the state. This is a very disparate group embracing supporters of extreme individualism (like Thoreau and Max Stirner), supporters of an unfettered market economy (like Proudhon and today's anarcho-capitalist) as well as supporters of common ownership (communists like Kropotkin). To me it doesn't make sense to group all these together and I cannot understand why those anarchists who are also communists should want to consider that they have more in common with anarchist individualists and free-marketeers than they have with others who stand for a stateless communist society without calling themselves anarchists.

That Marx fell into this last category - of standing for a stateless communist society without calling himself an anarchist - is no longer really open to doubt. The difference between Marx and communist-anarchists like Kropotkin was not over the end to be achieved - in this respect Marx was just as much "anarcho-communist" as Kropotkin - but over the means to achieve this. And here the differences were real. Marx held the view that socialism/communism only became possible at a certain stage in the development of human society, after capitalism had developed the forces of production to a level where plenty for all could be produced. Since he believed that this level had not been reached in his day, his general perspective was to support what would favour the fastest possible development of industrial capitalism.

Kropotkin, on the other hand, did not believe that the development of capitalism was necessary before socialism could be established. For him a communist society could have been established (re-established) at any time after the end of the communistic tribal societies under which human groups had originally lived. This meant that he did not favour measures to speed the full development of capitalism, but stood for trying to immediately establish a communist society.

Who was right? Marx or Kropotkin? Or were they both wrong? Kropotkin saw more clearly than Marx the dangers of state capitalism (he can be given full credit for inventing this key term). Marx, on the other hand, was right to see the need for developed industry and technology if communism was to be a world society rather than mere isolated, small-scale communities (a point accepted, of course, by syndicalists, anarcho-syndicalists and industrial unionists like the IWW who came on to the working-class scene at the beginning of this century).

In a very real sense what those who wanted socialism/communism should have done in the 19th century is now of academic interest only. Capitalism did survive and did further develop the forces of production, to such an extent that socialism/communism as a classless, stateless, moneyless, wageless world society of common ownership and democratic self-administration can now be established immediately without the need for any so-called "transition period". The Marx-Kropotkin argument has been solved by the course of events and is now no longer an issue. Both could now agree that the immediate aim of the working class revolution should be the establishment of communism and the abolition of the state.

The issue that remains is how to get there. On one point anti-Leninist "Marxists" and communist "anarchists" should be able to agree: that socialism/communism can only be established by the action of a democratically-organised majority since no minority, however sincere, enlightened or dedicated (or ruthless) can do this. After all, how could a free society of voluntary cooperation be imposed on people?

*Adam Buick is a member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, and is co-author, with John Crump, of State Capitalism: The Wages System Under New Management*

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# Subscribe to flux

Getting a magazine like this together is difficult. One hassle we could especially do without is paying for the bloody thing - and that's where you come in. A decent number of subscriptions means that when the printers bills come we could actually pay them straight away (ensuring they'll be willing to print the next issue), instead of first having to sell the six thousand copies of Issue 1 still lying underneath Simon's bed.

If you subscribe, we'll arrange for a uniformed state employee to deliver copies of FLUX right to your very doorstep - until your money runs out, when we'll write and ask you for some more. We reckon that £3 should do it for about a year's worth - depending on how often we can produce them. So send us your dosh - now. You know it makes sense.

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## POLL TAX

(continued from  
page 5)

would like to keep the poll tax down. But the deepening recession, the huge cost of the Gulf war *and* their own political credos all make it difficult for them to increase subsidies to local government. This only leaves poll-tax capping - but capping is already controversial, and its use tears the last shreds of credibility away from their claim that the poll tax increases local accountability. Heseltine's review of the poll tax is now clearly a charade, and vague promises to replace the tax with something better by 1993 won't carry much weight with disgruntled Tory voters.

The Labour Party are equally in a mess. Having resolutely opposed both the poll tax *and* non-payment, they have failed to put forward a coherent alternative and, if elected, will face the same lengthy timescale of abolition as the Tories - and all the problems that the delay will cause. Labour councils are already using poll tax bailiffs in many parts of the country, severely damaging Labour's credibility with their supposed natural constituency, and showing concretely the capitalist reality behind their rhetoric of socialism. If Labour do form the next government, the economic recession they will inherit limits their options just

as it does the Tories. If they are elected, the determined fence-sitting that Labour has practised for the last few years may yet be part of their own downfall.

So from our side of the barricade, things look good - but there are still serious difficulties ahead. The domination and manipulation of the All-Britain APT Federation by Militant continues. At the AGM in Manchester last November, a suggestion by Danny Burns (of the Bristol Fed. and 3D) that the People's March Against the Poll Tax was not the most successful, well organised protest ever mounted, and that money spent on tracksuits for the marchers might have been put to better use, resulted in attempts by Militant members to attack him physically and stop his speech. As a forum for debate, decision-making and swapping information, the AGM was a total waste of time: it was sham democracy on a level that parliament itself would be proud of.

Despite this, the anti-poll tax campaign up until now has been remarkably effective (demonstrating just how powerful people really are when they take action, and perhaps showing just how little they really *do* need to be shown the way by the likes of us?). The problems of communication and co-ordination caused by Militant's stranglehold have been tackled, and strange alliances (between Socialist Organiser and anarchists, for example) have emerged. But all this could change if there is a general election. Calls to back the Labour Party may yet shatter the fragile unity of the non-

Militant part of the movement. We all - revolutionaries and parliamentarians alike - will have to try especially hard to maintain a minimum basis for working together over the coming months. Great potentials lie before us - let's not lose sight of them in the heat of the arguments that will inevitably arise.

John

## BACK ISSUES

Copies of Issue 1 of FLUX (featuring two articles by Ulli Deimar on Anarchism and Marxism, a discussion of the inner life of a poll tax group, and some book reviews) are, surprisingly enough, still available from us for only 50p each. Write to us at this address:

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# THATCHER WASM

## *the ice-cap melts?*

Let's confess it we miss her. John Major just doesn't excite the same passion, does he? But is this the end of the Thatcher era - as some pundits are suggesting? Or, alternatively, will things go on pretty much as they have done? And what exactly was the 'Thatcher era', what was 'Thatcherism'? Did they represent a fundamental redirection in contemporary British capitalism? Or did nothing really change? Were we all simply taken in by the great publicity machine? Most importantly, where does this leave us now; our opposition and resistance?

It's true that Thatcher's novelty was often exaggerated. At its crudest Thatcherism was nothing more than a good old ruling class crack down, designed to shift the balance of class power. Also Thatcher was very much a part of an international trend. Mitterand in France, Kohl in Germany and Mitsotakis in Greece (to name but three), all marketed their own brands of 'Thatcherism'.

More significantly here, the spotlight on Thatcher as an 'ism' often obscured the distinct lines of continuity with developments whose origins lie much earlier. She was more coherent; certainly more belligerent than her predecessors, but the offensive she championed had been gathering steam for twenty years.

Underlying this offensive were deep rooted economic problems faced by the capitalist class: of international competitiveness and profitability - problems which the end of the post-war boom brought clearly to the surface and which became especially acute after the oil crisis of 1973. Inevitably the state responded with strategies designed to undermine workers' strength and reduce working class living standards. And it was these related strategies which later cohered at the heart of Thatcherism.

For example: her attempt to legislate controls on workers militancy and to criminalise effective strike action and solidarity, were louder (and more successful) echoes of earlier attempts at utilising the law. These included the Labour government's 'In Place of Strife' in 1969, which failed to reach the statute books, and Heath's 1972 'Industrial Relations Act', which was effectively defeated by industrial action.

Her attacks on workers' living standards, by politically engineered mass unemployment and swingeing cuts in welfare spending, again had their precedents. Labour's attempt to

hold down wages and dampen shop-floor conflict through various accords and agreements with union leaders (for instance, the Social Contract), and their own massive reductions in public spending after 1976, may have been tactically different but strategically they worked to the same end.

Then, of course, there was the 'shopping bag economics', she famously espoused. 'We can't spend more than we've got'. This usefully legitimated the terrible social costs endured during the last decade. but was itself only a more strident version of an earlier theme. In the 1970's establishment commentators became convinced that the British economic malaise stemmed from an overexpanded state, which starved industry of potential investment and drained away economic wealth into a vast but unproductive bureaucracy. Economic regeneration, therefore, required a massive reduction in state spending and a popular re-education in what people could, and should, expect the state to do or provide. Thus, it was Healey and Callaghan, and not Thatcher, who, after 1975 introduced 'monetarism'; put cash limits on local government; and who talked endlessly about 'not being able to spend our way out a crisis'.

Yet Thatcherism can't only be seen as a continuation or a rearticulation. There was novelty there too. But this wasn't simply a case of a 'new' agenda imposing itself on events; the novelty lay in the way in which a highly ideologically committed political intervention fused with social and economic processes already at work.

Though the ideas Thatcher represented had long existed as a current in the Tory Party, they came to the fore by meeting with the collapse of the post-war consensus. Various referred to as the corporate or the welfare state consensus, this had cohered around structures involving bureaucratic planning, government intervention, centralised bargaining between the unions and capital. Its political agenda involved such notions as compromise and negotiation, welfare and the mixed economy. This consensus had been conspired against by a combination of economic decline, government action and the public frustration they caused. As a system able to organise British capitalism it was systematically undermined. By the end of the 70's it had become incapable of generating support amongst the population at large; and more importantly, it no longer

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functioned as an ideological framework for the ruling class. Thatcher was able to make "explicit" what was already "implicit" in the actions of previous administrations. Unlike her political rivals she recognised that the good old days of bargain and compromise were over. Of course, it wasn't that 'society' or even the ruling class had suddenly, over night, become converted Thatcherites, but that only she seemed to be offering any way out of the cul-de-sac.

Excluding Heath's brief flirtation with free market

economics between '72 and '74, the offensive of earlier administrations had been undertaken somewhat pragmatically. Despite its decaying all around them, her predecessors still *believed* in the values and methods of the post-war consensus and their attempts to hold back the working class occurred largely within its ambit. The approach centred around 'conflict incorporation' via Union bureaucracies. The welfare-corporate consensus had brought the union leadership into the state structure, and they certainly found their seats around the various planning and negotiating tables convivial. The *quid pro quo* was that the Union leaders would be able to police their members and deliver their members' consent to policy decisions made by the government. It was never an entirely successful arrangement (there were major problems with 'wages drift' and 'wildcat strikes' in the late '60's and early '70's), although in the recessionary mid-70's the Labour

Government were successful in holding down wage demands - principally through the negotiated 'Social Contract'. However, it soon became apparent that wage restraint agreements effectively meant workers carrying the burden of economic decline without receiving anything in return - inflation cut into the real value of the wage packet, unemployment began to rise steeply, the 'social wage' (education, pensions, welfare) was reduced. In the drama of the Winter of Discontent in 1978/79 the corporate structures finally came unstuck and the system of capitalist state management developed within the post-war consensus lay bankrupt.

Thatcher was certainly not held back by the commitments that had hampered her predecessors. Rather than wanting to bargain away the threat of workers militancy she chose to tackle it head on. And instead of trying to 'persuade' workers that reduced welfare and unemployment etcetera were in all of our 'national interest', she opted simply to impose them. For legitimisation she could refer back to policy decisions already made and to the political agenda they already suggested (the Labour front bench looked pretty silly criticising her for reducing welfare spending); and she could point to the quite clear failure of the corporate-welfare system to continue to generate economic prosperity. But what made her stand out as unique in British politics was the way in which she sought legitimisation from a vociferous ideological commitment; which drew with increasing vigour on the New Right ideologues. Poverty, unemployment, anti-union legislation came gift wrapped in the themes of market values and self-reliance.

Thatcher's ideological commitment expressed the lack of *any*, and not only the welfare-corporate, consensus. Given the wholesale nature of the crisis faced in 1979 and the loss of direction felt within the ruling class, this commitment was certainly useful. It worked for the political faction led by Thatcher and for the particular interests they represented - mainly grouped around the financial

institutions, but also involving sectors like food and drink and construction. For a period it paid dividends for the ruling class as a whole. It provided a driving force which enabled her to carry forward the class war in a way no other political leader could have done. Yet it was not without its contradictions. Contradictions that ultimately led to its demise.

For a start it was too partisan a construction. It fostered the interests of the city but, despite extolling the

little difficulty in providing. It

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virtues of private enterprise, it never responded to the needs of industry - except in narrow class-on-class terms. More than that, it was too politically exclusive: the question 'Is he one of us?' evoked an anti-establishment mentality which antagonised the old civil service/ clerical/ academic/ old money establishment. Ultimately it lacked the flexibility to adapt; it got too stuck in its own rhetoric. It alienated its southern yuppie constituency, after a clean environment and efficient commuter trains. High interests rates turned the 'property owning' dream sour as repossessions soared. It became seen as arrogant and out of touch. And divided. Underlying this was the fact that Thatcher like her predecessors, was unable to reverse an economy in decline - indeed by decimating manufacturing industry she aggravated it. After the credit led 'boom' of the mid-80's all the old problems came back with a vengeance - industrial relations problems, inflation, sterling and so on. This combination of an economy tilting back into recession plus Thatcher's ideological narrowness led to deep and divisive conflicts within the ruling class. These were disagreements over where British capital was going and in particular took place around the question of Europe (Lawson/ Walters; Ridley; Howe' resignation). Then as the City institutions became more and more convinced that their future lay in Europe, she moved out of step with them. Events definitely left her behind.

Drawing up a balance sheet of the Thatcher years depends, of course, on what we're looking for. Clearly there was no reversal of Britain's economic slide. Neither did her schemes for 'social engineering' make any great inroads into popular British culture where commitment to collective provision remains pretty much intact. But her success lies elsewhere: in waging a class war which rid the establishment of a failing consensus, whose structures and values had become a fetter on their freedom to act and to exert social control. In doing so she created the necessary space for the next consensus to emerge.

Thatcher was incapable of promoting the kind of



overarching ideological unity a ruling class desperately needs. Clearly without an agreed set of game rules, within which the various sections of the ruling class can organise and negotiate their various interests, its position as a ruling class is weakened. This was evident in that final discordant period of the Thatcher regime. For the Tories this had immediate political consequences. As the arguments got louder, popular support fell. But Thatcher's leaving not only concerned the political fortunes of the Tory Party; it had a much wider significance than that - for position of the ruling class as a whole.

A new consensus, a new set of game rules, is now in the making - after Thatcherism comes Major-tine-nockism. It promises a return to 'pragmatism' (though pragmatism is just another way of saying that Major, Kinnock et al will be working to a common agenda), and pulls together various elements within the establishment: manufacturing industry looking for a more supportive state and markets in Europe, elements within the city converted to the possibilities of the European proto-state, the Labour bureaucracy, the church and liberal establishment with their compassion and concern for fair dues. It tries to tap into the widespread general aspirations for a fairer, more efficient, more educated, cleaner, more 'pragmatic' society. In its right wing guise it's referred to as the 'social market', and in it's left, as 'market socialism'.

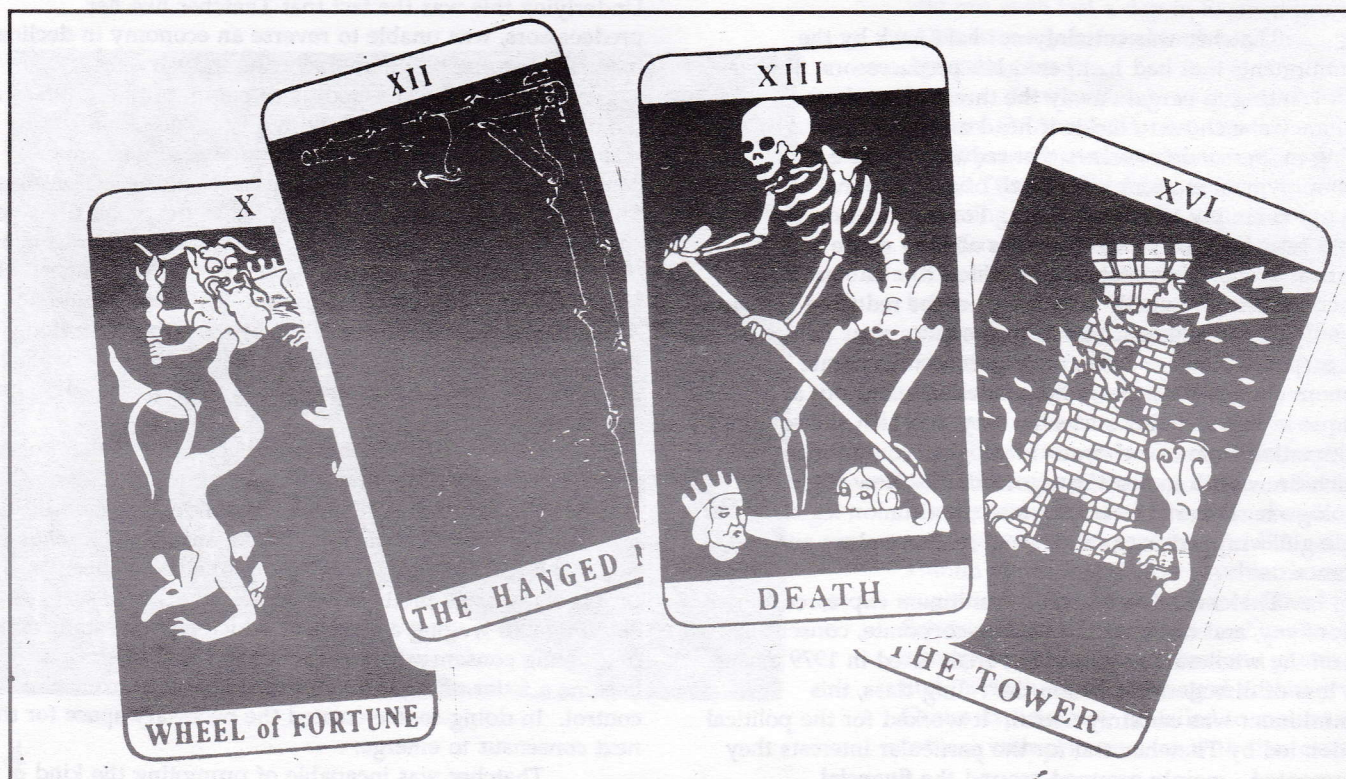
But this return to normality doesn't imply any return to the pre-Thatcher days. From Thatcher it inherits an explicit orientation to the market, and to the values of entrepreneurialism and merit (Major's 'classless society; Kinnock's 'enabling state'). Whilst there is a commitment to welfare and education etc. (untrained workers are a major deficit to any advanced economy) this commitment is contingent on getting the economy right first. There is no confusion of priorities. And importantly under the 'social market/market socialism' the centralised corporate bargaining and planning structures will not be reestablished. The union bureaucracy will have few real partnership opportunities. They will be just one more sectional interest playing their role - and being rewarded for doing so - in the promotion of a clean, streamlined, well-trained, fair-but-flexible *national* interest. At least this is how the brochure

describes it!

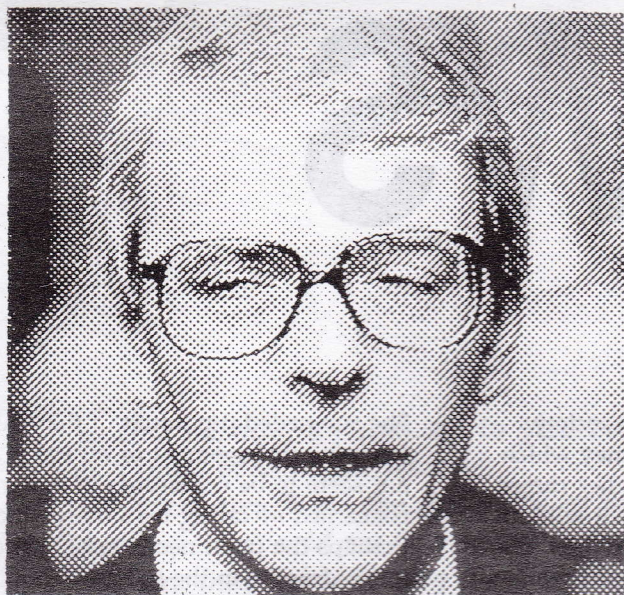
Consensus is vital to the health of a ruling class, but making one is not as straightforward as that. It involves more than political and ideological agreement on the part of the ruling class. And the question now is can it be delivered? It all depends on two connected factors. Firstly, where the economy goes; secondly, the level of class struggle and popular resistance. The prospects do not look at all rosey.

Alongside the market values inherited from Thatcher, comes a recession. All the indicators - the employment situation, investment, production costs, levels of business confidence etc., suggest an economy probably weaker than it was in 1979. At the same time the government's freedom of manoeuvre has greatly receded. Domestic manufacture still suffers chronic underinvestment and is still costly compared to its competitors; but significantly it's also a much smaller sector with which to even try and promote competitiveness. By joining the ERM the value of sterling and many of the key finance decisions will be dependent on agreements made in Brussels rather than in London, and these will reflect the interests of and power balance between other European capitals, under the overall leadership of the Bundesbank. The city is losing its privilege as a money market to Tokyo, New York and very probably Frankfurt. One of the enduring features of Thatcherism will be that it opened Britain up to the more intense processes of economic and political internationalisation without doing anything to protect specifically British capital in that context. One wonders what John Major really has left to play with. His ability to oversee the construction of a system satisfying the demands and self-perceived needs of the different parts of the ruling class are severely constrained; and this suggests that the arguments and conflicts, which seem to have abated since he took office, will reemerge with all their weakening, divisive effects.

The other side of the equation is what happens below - and again the ruling class can have little room for optimism. Thatcherism occupied the space left by the old structures, but its success also expressed widespread working class retreat. This is not to say that there was no







resistance, far from it. But it is to say that the whole climate conspired against any generalised struggle; and for the most part disputes tended to remain isolated. Even the miners' strike, which remains a high point in militant and creative struggle, failed to pull other sectors in alongside. Likewise the Wapping dispute - despite some pretty exciting evenings on the picket line. But there was resistance. There was resistance outside of work as well: there was the Peace Movement; through the mid-80's there was a thriving 'rebel' lifestyle culture amongst the, mainly unemployed, young. The Green movement enjoyed a phenomenal rise. There were riots in all the major cities in 1981 and '85. What was so positive was that, despite the 'downturn', activity and organisation continued in the space evacuated by a crippled and legally bound union and labour hierarchy. If much reduced there was still a culture of resistance, organised on the ground, in which connections were made. Miners' wives going to Greenham; links being made between the miners and the anti-nuclear campaign; a whole range of groups and people drawn into the plethora of support groups and networks around disputes large and small - printers, dockers, Silentnight, Salford Plastics, Caterpillar. Not all of it was effective. Not everyone stayed the course, but the struggle kept going despite the seeming omnipotence of Thatcher.

This resistance began to take on a new combativity toward the end of the decade. In part it was due to workers taking advantage of labour shortages during the mid-80's boom (the engineers, for example). Perhaps there was also a 'psychological' element to it - people had grown used to her and she'd lost her sting. And generally the public climate became more sympathetic as the demands of, for example, the ambulance workers, teachers, London Transport workers dovetailed in with a more general frustration with the state of health care, education, the environment and the infrastructure.

What is clear is that for the new consensus to sell itself and achieve acceptance if not active consent, it has to meet the aspirations and satisfy the frustrations generated within the Thatcher period. What is also clear is that its capacity to do this is very restricted. (It's almost as if society has generated its own 'transitional demands'!). At the same time the working class are unlikely to respond to this new recession as they did last time; there is a new mood abroad! Yet with the recession, and given that the government has fewer economic strings to pull what choice do they have but to keep up the attacks on the working class and to frustrate popular expectations for (admittedly ill-defined) social improvement.

What is also clear, is that the corporate-structures which were in part designed to incorporate and corral struggle into safe bureaucratic channels have been systematically dismantled. And this will be another enduring legacy of Thatcherism. The Union leadership are in no position to deliver their members' consent to state policy, because they're no longer party to the decision making process - the corporate bargaining and planning table has been sold off. Their main concern now is to hold onto what bureaucratic privileges they have, and hope that the sequesters keep their distance. After the latest industrial relations which effectively makes Union leadership responsible for even unofficial rank and file action, their role as a policing agent on militant rank and file action will become even more apparent. At the same time both the union and Labour Party hierarchies have been enthusiastic in the shaping of the new consensus - they have made a definite political investment which has involved the Labour Party shedding much of its residual identity as a party of the 'working class' and of 'socialism'. Politically they have shown themselves incapable of responding to any radical demands made by potential supporters. Rather, like their colleagues in the union hierarchy they have been more concerned with selling a responsible and clean media image (albeit one with little content and in so far as opinion polls give indication, one that has done little to persuade the electorate that Labour has anything definite to offer). But that has always been the stuff of Labour party politics.

There were features to the resistance during the Thatcher period which like Thatcherism itself echoed earlier times: it tended to be rank and file organised; unsupported by the labour bureaucracies; and it generated networks of support which pushed away from the official structures. Class struggle is hardly likely to decline in the face of a revamped ruling class offensive. Now workers are going to have to develop their own organisational and agitational potential, they have no choice. The rhetorical call on the TUC and the 'leadership of the Labour movement' 'to give a lead' has become an utter banality, for even as a channel of moderation and mediation union hierarchies have become completely hemmed in by legal constraints and almost wholly excluded from the corridors of state. We're in for a bumpy ride but the tendency towards self-organised resistance is surely likely to grow.

J.E.





# REVIEWS

Not a Man to Match Her - the Marketing of A Prime Minister by Wendy Webster (Virago Press).

This is Wendy Webster's first book, in which she takes a close look at the "marketing" of Thatcher, at the how and

why of her creation. It documents her transformation from a 1950's social climbing liberal feminist, to the Iron Lady of today. Taking a feminist tack she starts by looking at the psychological influences on Thatcher - her domineering father, the austere Grantham environment - and then goes on to examine the marketing techniques she used to manipulate her image and respond to her audience. Far from denying her gender it seems that Thatcher used every worn out stereotype in the book to further her career: housewife, mother, nanny, amazon warrior, the



list is endless. She became chameleon in nature.

In her 'feminist' phase she wrote articles arguing that women could combine home and career without detriment to family life. "That the family suffers is, I believe, quite mistaken." It's 1950 but the tone is already there, the message however is very different. M.T. soon learned the reality of her position, that to succeed in a male dominated traditional Tory establishment she'd have to change her tune. She rapidly did so, championing the cause of the housewife and mother, whilst employing a full time nanny. She

proclaimed the classless society, whilst marrying the money which enabled her to continue her career. She couldn't have made it without denying the reality of her life. She minimised and trivialised women's needs and denied the women's movement's existence, whilst grasping the opportunities it had helped to create with both hands.

She heaped lie upon lie, and the lies were necessary because she addressed a male audience - to gain power she appealed to the powerful. The swing to Thatcher in 1979 was not among women, but (as Lynne Segal points out) amongst white male skilled workers in the South.

So Webster gives us a full description of how the great deception was carried out, but fails to reach any conclusions about the importance of Thatcher, the implications for women.

Women were never included in Thatcher's meritocracy, the only choice given to them was a domestic one. In real terms women have suffered, if Thatcher has made us poorer then women will be the victims as they are already the poorest in our society. The eighties saw massive cuts in the welfare state, cuts in nursery provision, legislative changes have meant difficulties with child custody, maintenance and maternity leave. The wholesale dismissal of women's issues has contributed to make resistance more diffuse and sporadic, but despite all this the treasured Victorian values have not returned. Two months on and the phrase is hardly mentioned. Women still work, they took up the majority of the one million part time jobs created in the eighties, and whilst having to juggle home and work there has not been any rush back to the bliss of domesticity. Women simply can't afford it and don't want it.

What I think Thatcher brought into question was any notion of the success of liberal feminism.

She succeeded, no doubt of that, but feminine management of capital does not seem to be necessarily any more concerned or caring than masculine. Perhaps the point needs to be made more strongly in the light of feminist admiration for her achievements, it is not how well we can manage capital, how caring and responsive we can make it. It is how well we can rid ourselves of a system motivated by profit. We are looking at another recession, some say it will be worse than the Thirties, but at least for women the enemy is again identifiable.

M

Comments on the Society of the Spectacle by Guy Debord (Verso 1990. £8.95)

In 1967 Debord published *The Society of the Spectacle*. Crudely his idea was that capitalism has

changed since Marx's time: now all social relations have been turned into commodities by their mediation through images (advertising, television, the media) imposed by the ruling class. We have been socialised into consuming these images passively, even though they condition how we perceive the world. Society has become a 'spectacle' which we no longer participate in actively, disconnecting us from the reality of our impoverished lives and the possibilities for changing it.

At that time the spectacle had two forms. The diffuse spectacle characterised Western 'free-market' capitalism: the masses are bombarded through the media with useless consumer goods, from



washing-up liquids to political parties, giving the illusion of choice when in fact all choices have already been made. The **concentrated spectacle**, on the other hand, described totalitarian 'bureaucratic' capitalism: the same passivity and alienation is achieved by installing a dictatorship which is the sole purveyor of the Truth.

Today, according to Debord, the two forms have dialectically combined to create the **integrated spectacle** which is imposing itself globally by conditioning even our most private experiences. The underlying mechanism of the world is still the development of capital, but more than ever before the State monitors and represses deviant behaviour through the media explosion: both in terms of surveillance and indoctrination.

This may seem very heavy going. But in this book Debord gives much more space to concrete illustrations of his ideas. These range from the secrecy and lies surrounding nuclear power (increasingly maintained by the complicity of an enchained and obsequious scientific discourse); to the spurious opposition of terrorism, which the state exploits in order to divert attention from its 'own' activities; to the Western educationalists' invention of the concept of 'language difficulties' to hide the rise in illiteracy in advanced industrial countries. Debord's descriptions and comments are always lucid, giving the reader ample opportunity to test the relevance of his hypotheses.

But I feel that it must be argued against, at least on certain levels. For I am left with the impression of an 'integrated spectacle' so pervasive and so ubiquitous, that the only genuine opposition to it is one of complete refusal on all levels. Indeed, this distinction between **diffuse** and **concentrated** spectacle was never emphasised in Debord's earlier work, making me suspicious that his **integrated spectacle** is an intellectual fabrication designed to perpetuate his own status as 'original thinker'.

What we get here - and Debord is explicit about this - is a conspiracy theory of twentieth century history. Debord believes that the integrated spectacle has induced a society of "fragile perfection" (p.21). It is perfect because it has encroached on all aspects of life to such an extent that living outside it

is almost unthinkable; it is fragile because incessant technological change exacerbates the potential for seeing through it - so one demystified detail may expose the falseness of the totality.

If this is the case, however, then all we are left to do is oscillate between a paralysing pessimism and a wishful spontaneism. In other words, the book gets so convinced by its own rhetoric, it blinds itself to the potentially radical nature of the small and local refusals which make up everyday life.

For example, the spectacle is not so homogenous that it will attempt to take over Third World markets in the same way as it will expand a domestic market. The failure to recognise geopolitical differences contributes to the prevailing blindness towards the specificities of local resistances, and in particular to the positive, potentially radical, nature of so-called nationalist movements. In short, the analysis takes the West as its centre, reproducing a colonialist ideology by refusing to let the oppressed speak on their own terms.

Or: to 'come out' as gay or lesbian is not simply to capitulate to a spectacle of false identities, providing another specialised market for capitalism. This is only the *risk* of a tactic intended to openly confront the unspoken categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality, with the aim of subverting them. The original impulse is a radical one.

The above 'extreme' examples aim to show with clarity what is just as relevant at the level of daily life: namely the contradictions and compromises everyone experiences, in various ways and to varying degrees of self-awareness.

By not examining such real phenomena, towards which nobody has privileged knowledge, Debord ultimately does a disservice to the very people he is trying to inspire. He does not acknowledge how *aware* many people are of the bad quality of their lives, or how articulate they can be about it if they are given the chance.

Read this book, but don't succumb to the God-like pronouncements of doom.

Simon Scott

## The Media and the Gulf War (continued from page 3)

senses are bombarded with unconnected and apparently raw data, resolved into a running commentary like a sports event. It is as though we had a window on the 'Arab world', when in fact that window is socially constructed by the same system which is attempting to subordinate this Arab world. And this is how the ruling powers have attempted to make us experience our own society, through a cultural and ideological framework which obscures real power hierarchies. Both worlds are illusions, but by being mutually supporting we find it hard to reject the colonialist ideology which conditions our perception of the Gulf if we have not rejected the capitalist ideology which conditions our perception of our own society.

What is lost here is any historical perspective. For example, there has been no analysis of the genesis of the Gulf into oil states imposed by the imperialist powers of Britain and France, which would help us understand the nature and significance of border disputes in the region. There has been no attempt to understand the differences between Islamic and Western nations, on political, religious or economic levels. No parallels have been drawn between the start of this war and WW2, in which similar statements were made about 'precision bombing' which later turned out to be completely false. And there has not even been a reexamination of U.S. foreign policy since August, in the light of their eventual procurement of a blank cheque to destroy Iraq and install themselves in the Middle East permanently.

Paradoxically this period of heightened media-management is also the period when it can be most easily exposed. It is heartening how many people are getting beyond the euphoric jingoism of the first few days of war. As it is prolonged, the reality of the 'worlds' imposed by the military and the media will become increasingly difficult to sustain. This may turn people's developing healthy cynicism about what they're told into a more general refusal to accept the diktats of those in power.

Meg and Simon





Call it: "Popular Scenes from the  
Class War!"

GOD  
HELP ANY  
POLL TAX  
BAILIFFS  
THAT COME  
TO THIS  
HOUSE!





# **STOP PRESS - MURDER OF HUNT SABBER**

Eighteen year old Mike Hill was killed on 9th February whilst trying to stop the barbaric "sport" of the Cheshire Beagle Hunt. He and two others climbed onto a pick-up truck, which was pulling a vanload of hounds, in an attempt to make the driver stop. The driver, Alan Summersgill, ignored their shouts, putting his foot down on the accelerator instead. For almost five miles Summersgill drove frantically on with no care for the three saboteurs. By this time they were literally hanging onto the truck. As the truck approached a roundabout it slowed down and Mike took the chance to jump down, Summersgill yet again drove off at high speed, with the two remaining sabs begging him to stop. They had seen that Mike was hurt. But Summersgill had no inclination to stop - for all he knew Mike could have been dead. It was only when the sabs managed to smash a window of the truck and enter that Summersgill was forced to stop. He responded to their anger and panic by attacking them with his whip. So predictable.

The two sabs then hitched a lift from a passing car and returned to Mike. Summersgill still did not stop. Mike was alive when they found him but died soon after.

Summersgill was questioned by the police for only a matter of hours. A press release issued by the police on 28th February stated that no charges were to be brought against him. They state that there is no proof that he did not stop his vehicle. Rubbish - in the truck there was another of Summersgill's sort; there are the direct accounts by the two sabs involved and two cars were involved in getting Mike to the nearby hospital.

The police obviously do not view this as worth investigating - only the death of a hunt saboteur.

We only have to compare the Police's response to Summersgill's appalling actions with their enthusiastic arrests of saboteurs on 11th February and thereafter to see where their spoiled moralities take them.

On 11th February between 100 and 150 Hunt Saboteurs protested outside Summersgill's home. Initially the protest was peaceful but the outrage was so high that vandalism ensued. Damage to property. Only one sab was arrested at the time but when two workers from Freshfield Animal Rescue Centre went to collect him they too were arrested. The total number arrested now stands at twenty-nine, although the numbers continue to grow. Those arrested were sent to remand centre to await court appearances, eventually being bailed upon sureties of £1,000, a ridiculous amount.

Mike Hill had lived and worked at Freshfield Animal Rescue Centre for eight months. One of the workers at Freshfields whom I spoke with explained that Mike spent most of his time tending abandoned puppies. His wish was for an isolation unit to be set up within the Rescue Centre, thereby saving more animals' lives. As the woman at Freshfields stated, "It seems the police put property before people."

And typically animals are relegated to a position where compassion and worth have no place. It is this kind of infrastructure which allows murderers like Summersgill and his Huntsmen (sic.) friends to continue unchecked. People like Summersgill are so used to doing as they please and will go to endless extremes to exert their power. Mike Hill's death serves as an example of one such extreme.

If you wish to make a donation (any amount) towards the setting up of an isolation unit at Freshfields write to:

Freshfield Animal Rescue Centre  
Ince  
Blundell  
Merseyside

Tel.(051) 9311604

