



# LIVING MARXISM

April 1989 No 6 £1.50

Desertion and  
**MUTINY**

in the Second World War

The culture of  
**MILITARISM**  
and the Third World War

Plus: Rowbotham and Wainwright: 10 years beyond the fragments,  
CLR James: how Lenin would beat Thatcher, Rushdie: the right to be offensive  
and much more





## theme

### The culture of militarism

As conflicts among the capitalist powers intensify, a new generation of gung-ho governments arises. This month's *Living Marxism* focuses on their drive to rearm and to reinforce militarist ideologies.

**16** **Origins of the Third World War.** If the Cold War is over, asks Frank Richards, why is the Western world still tooling up for a hot one?

**21** **The making of Star Wars.** Gemma Forest examines the facts behind the sci-fi image of Washington's Strategic Defence Initiative.

**24** **Desertion and mutiny in the British army.** Toby Banks blows one of the best kept secrets of the Second World War.

**27** **Japan rewrites its history.** Japan's sun is rising again—and so, says Daniel Nassim, are its imperial ambitions.

**30** **Britain's little Empire.** Andy Clarkson looks at the Thatcher government's shift back towards a classical colonial policy.

**32** **The war economy.** John Gibson investigates the ever-closer links between profits and militarism in British industry.

**34** **'National security'.** Sharon Clarke spells out Margaret Thatcher's magic words.

# contents

**6** **Living dangerously.** Worried sick about all the food and health scares? Linda Ryan suggests an antidote.

**8** **Ten years beyond the fragments.** Sheila Rowbotham and Hilary Wainwright talk to Anne Burton about the women's movement and the left through the Thatcher years.

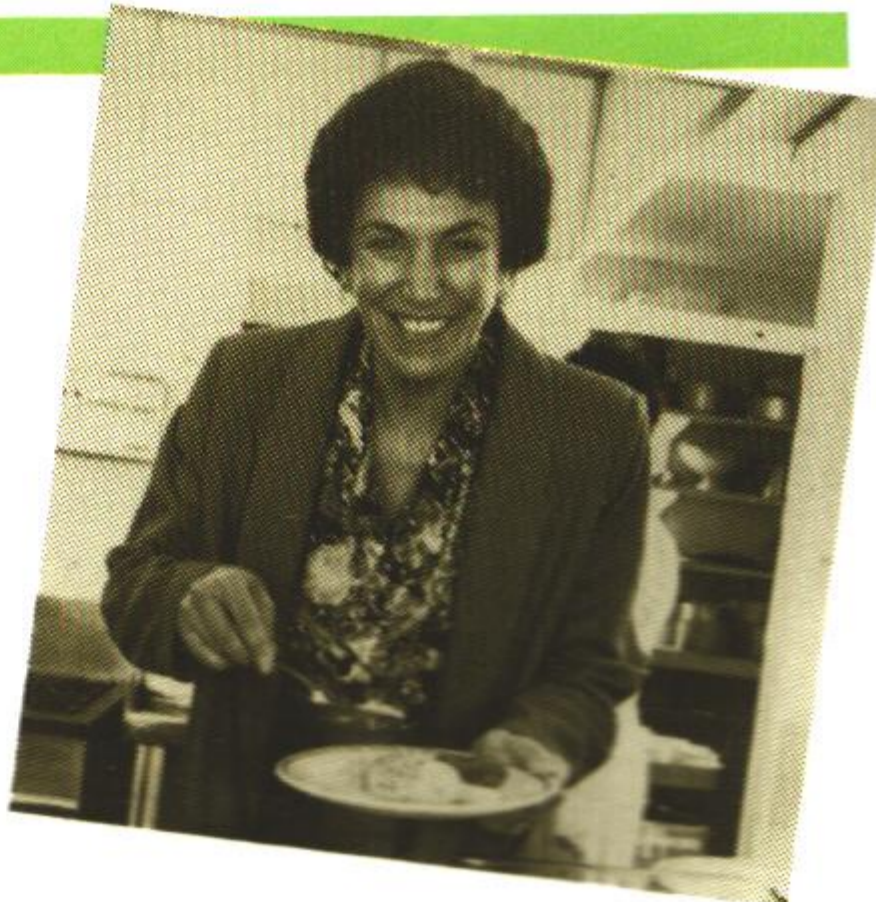
**12** **Spare Rib.** Anne Burton on the two hundredth edition of a feminist flagship.

**13** **Rough justice.** Keith Tompson spends a grim day in court.

**14** **Then and now: April 1889—**Alan Harding on Hitler's birthday.

**35** **Namibia: free at last?** Russell Osborne asks Swapo.

## living



**37** **American kitsch comes to Britain.** Mike Neary on the Neon lights school of new ideas.

**45** **Letters: Greens see red** on technology, nuclear power and nomads; Abortion, Alton and Aids.

**38** **CLR James tells John Fitzpatrick** how fast Michael Holding bowls, how Lenin would beat Thatcher, and how he likes the new book about his 89 years.

**40** **'A pen against oppression.'** Benjamin Zephaniah talked to Andrew Calcutt about black politics and poetry.

**42** **TV thought police.** What you see is what they vet says Nick King.

**43** **Another Easterhouse rising.** Pat Ford welcomes the return of singer/songwriter Andy Perry, new style and all.

**44** **Art and anatomy.** Bartholomew Walsh on Leonardo da Vinci.

## LIVING MARXISM

Monthly review of the Revolutionary Communist Party ● Telephone: (01) 375 1485  
 Editor: **Mick Hume** ● Assisted by: **Andy Clarkson, Gemma Forest, Mike Freeman,**  
**Tony Kennedy, Kenan Malik, Joan Phillips, Pat Roberts, Linda Ryan** ● International Editor:  
**Daniel Nassim** ● Assisted by: **Stefanie Boston, James Malone, Russell Osborne** ● Reviews:  
**John Fitzpatrick** ● Production and Design Coordinator: **Dave Lamb** ● Production and Design: **Don Bannister,**  
**Tony Costello, Joanna Doyle, Sara Hardy, Simon Norfolk, Sean Thomas, Joe Watson** ● Managing Editor: **Phil Murphy**  
 ● Marketing Manager: **Suke Karey**

**Subscription rates:** Britain and Ireland £15 ● Europe (airmail) £20 ● Outside Europe (airmail) £27.50 ● Overseas (surface mail) £16 ● (Institutions add £7.50)  
 Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to Junius Publications Ltd, BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX; Fax: (01) 377 0346 ● Distributed by Comag  
 Magazine Marketing, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE. Phone: West Drayton (0895) 444055; Fax: (0895) 445255; Telex: 8813787 ● Typeset by  
 Junius Publications (TU) ● Printed by Morning Litho Printers Ltd (TU), 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16 ● ISSN 0955-2448  
 ● c copyright Revolutionary Communist Party April 1989

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome, but will only be returned if an SAE is enclosed



# We are giving away free lifetime subscriptions to **LIVING MARXISM**

No we're not. That's just our weak idea of an April fool's joke.

But we are offering you a 12-month subscription to **Living Marxism** for just £15, postage paid, to anywhere in Britain or Ireland.

A subscription gets **Living Marxism** delivered to your door first class, before it's even in the shops. And it still works out about 17 per cent cheaper than buying it over the counter. So it means less aggravation in the newsagent, and more money in the bank.

We have plans to extend and develop **Living Marxism** even further in the months ahead, so the value of your investment is guaranteed to increase.

Take out a subscription to **Living Marxism** now. Just fill in the form below and return it to: **Living Marxism** Subscriptions (6), BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd.

**Subscription rates:** Britain and Ireland £15 • Europe (airmail) £20 • Outside Europe (airmail) £27.50 • Overseas (surface mail) £16 • (Institutions add £7.50)

## Subscribe!

I would like to take out a one-year subscription to **Living Marxism**

I enclose £ (see rates above)

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

POSTCODE .....

TEL .....

## SPECIAL OFFER ON **LIVING MARXISM** BINDERS

And this one is genuine. For a limited period, we are offering our readers custom-made binders for **Living Marxism** (1988-89 issues) at just £5 a time.

**Living Marxism** is an indispensable source of reference and reading that you will want to go back to time and again. To keep your copies safe from coffee-stains, 'borrowers' and other hazards of everyday life, get into binding.

Order from **Living Marxism** Binders (6), BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd.

## KEEP IT UNDER THE COUNTER

**Living Marxism** is now available from a wide range of high street newsagents, including many branches of WH Smith and John Menzies. To ensure your local shop keeps you a copy, fill in this box and hand it to your newsagent today.

Dear Newsagent,

Please reserve me a copy of **Living Marxism** every month

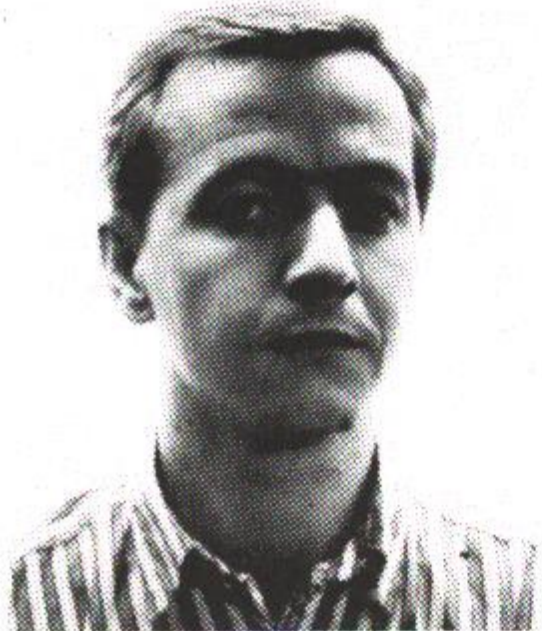
NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

**COMAG**

TEL.....





# DEFEND THE RIGHT TO BE OFFENSIVE

This magazine is deeply offensive.

The front cover alone (not only is that man half-naked, he's making dusters out of the flag under which we civilised the world) is enough to offend the sensibilities of a couple of million citizens. Inside it gets worse: several articles rubbish the Second World War and don't have a good word to say for Winston Churchill; there's a piece suggesting Mrs Currie is not too bothered whether we have listeria for lunch so long as worrying about it keeps us off the streets; and an interviewed black poet thinks the world wants to know what an Israeli soldier does with his private parts on a dark night in old Jerusalem.

Yet there it sits among the knitting and angling mags on respectable newsagents' shelves, like a pair of fetus earrings on a red-nose day parade. According to the standards of decency laid down by many who claim to speak for public opinion in this mock-puritan age, it shouldn't be allowed. Which brings us back to Salman Rushdie, and the need to defend the right to be offensive.

The British government has felt obliged to break friends with Iran over the Rushdie affair. It doesn't really care what becomes of him. But this most gung-ho of governments, which has bullied its opponents into submission by being the loudest patriotic lout in

the Westminster neighbourhood, cannot afford to back down before threats from Johnny 'Mad Mullah' (see page 34).

Yet the Thatcherites have (for them) been notably restrained in their statements on the subject; compare the rhetorical rubber bullets which they lobbed at the ayatollah in February and March to the verbal exocet missiles and F1-11 bombers with which they previously blasted General Galtieri, Colonel Gadaffi or even Arthur Scargill.

Indeed, Thatcher and Sir Geoffrey Howe have both been at pains to assure Iran and the world that they, too, find *The Satanic Verses* 'offensive'. This is now a buzz-word among those attuned to the latest hip-talk around Whitehall. The government has invested too much in its own campaign to censor and curtail criticism for it to make a big song and dance about freedom of speech now. Instead, the Rushdie debate has been swung around to add weight to the arguments for more restrictions on all manner of offensive and blasphemous material. And that is something we should oppose to the last.

No scientific or social progress is possible unless we insist upon our right to offend the established standards of an existing society. A few centuries ago, those who argued that the world was round rather than flat offended contemporary 'public decency' to a degree rarely matched since. In the seventeenth century, Galileo was convicted of heresy for his part in the 'indecent'

discovery that the Earth was not the centre of the universe. In the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin was pilloried as an offender against God, humanity and nature for his theory of evolution.

In their turn, universal suffrage, steam trains, organ transplants, contraceptives, women displaying their ankles in public and many more developments of all kinds have been branded as offensive to public decency and heralded as the beginning of the end for civilised society. If it were not for those who were prepared to offend their peers, we would still be living in decent, civilised caves.

Then there is the right to blaspheme. Let us, by all means, uphold freedom of religious worship. But let us also insist upon our freedom to offend all religious groups by exposing their creeds as superstitious gobbledegook.

This will, on occasion, involve criticising Islam, especially for its attitude towards women. But that is much more of a priority for secularists and socialists in the Muslim world. Here in Britain, the blasphemy which we need to promote is against Christianity; not so much because there is any religious revival sweeping the country, but because the church and the blasphemy laws act as a bulwark of reaction.

Many past British blasphemy prosecutions were against political dissenters and social progressives, like the radical Chartists of the 1840s or campaigners for birth control in the 1880s. The last successful



prosecution was a civil case brought by Mary Whitehouse against *Gay News* in 1977, in which the judges effectively extended the legal definition of blasphemy to include anything which offended Christians, rather than simply that which might incite religious hatred and violence.

● Religion has returned to the political spotlight today as a sure sign of more conservative, repressive times; witness Thatcher's use of Christian themes in her speeches on the virtues of accumulating personal wealth, and her recent pointed parliamentary reference to the blasphemy laws as one of the main constraints on freedom of speech in Britain.

Elsewhere in the Western world, the Pope has had Madonna's singing Pepsi commercial banned from Italian TV because the *Like a Prayer* video is deemed blasphemous. A campaign is afoot to extend the ban to the USA. The civilised Christians, it seems, need no lessons from 'barbaric' Muslims on the use of religious excuses to extend censorship across the board.

● Now is a good time, then, for blasphemers of the world to unite and speak out, to expose the mysticism of religion to ridicule, and to puncture the inflated status of Christianity in the British system. As Stuart Weir has recently noted, to an objective mind there is little to choose between an infamous *Sunday Sport* report like 'Alien baby

kept in a jam jar' and a key biblical story like 'Virgin mum in take-off drama'. Yet one is a joke newspaper and the other is a state religion which we can be jailed for offending. Blasphemy is part of the business of *Living Marxism* and of all those who want to rid society of backward conventions and ideas.

It is even more important to offend accepted standards on directly political matters. What constitutes public decency, like what constitutes public order, is ultimately defined by the authorities; that which offends *them* is said to offend *it*. So the police have used the 'offensive material' provisions of the

features of life.

The right to be offensive is now under assault from both sides of the political arena. Everybody appears to want something censored; the dispute is only about what to ban. The right wing bans exposures of state secrets, Irish republicanism, gay literature and so on. The left wants the blue pencil applied to pornography, racist propaganda, etc; to their shame, some Labour MPs have even suggested extending the indefensible blasphemy laws to protect ethnic religions in Britain.

Asking the capitalist authorities, be it the courts or the cabinet, to ban anything is a very, very serious mistake. They will interpret and adapt

on with the job of censoring, assaulting and occasionally executing the opponents of the existing order.

In calling for wider censorship, on any pretext, radicals hand the state a stick with which to beat us all. Whatever the left might think it is asking for, if an official offensive against 'offensive' publications really got going, publications like this one would be prime candidates for inclusion on the list.

Upholding the right to be offensive means rejecting any and all censorship. Inevitably there will still be plenty of stuff around which we find offensive. But if we have the freedom to protest and

## 'Blasphemy is part of the business of *Living Marxism* and of all those who want to rid society of backward conventions and ideas'

Public Order Act to prosecute those putting up posters calling for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. And Howe has said that the nation is offended by Rushdie's claim that Britain is a racist society.

Yet the cause of genuine democracy demands that Britain should withdraw from its oldest colony and allow the Irish self-determination, and that the racist character of British institutions should be exposed and opposed. Offensive or not, we either keep saying these things or accept oppression and degradation as permanent

any call for censorship exclusively to suit the interests of the status quo. They are not open to reasoned argument about what is and is not decent or offensive. They act unswervingly on the instincts bred of class privilege and the prejudices of a Judge James Pickles.

If the left truly has time and energy to waste, it could start a debate not just about which books the courts should ban, but about which people the police should beat up, or even about which side the SAS should shoot at in Northern Ireland. The state, meanwhile, will get

to argue for popular support, we can take steps to deal with those problems ourselves. The point is that, if we ask the powers that be to sort out our problems with censorship orders, we risk losing that freedom altogether in a fresh wave of restrictive legislation.

So long as we live in a society where standards are laid down by Thatchers and Howes, where decency is defined by a dictatorial government, where the rules are made by an exploitative ruling class, we ought to defend the right to be offensive against all comers.



A plague of food and health scares

# Living dangerously

**Linda Ryan suggests an antidote to the listeria hysteria**

Is it worth living? Dangers lurk in the most unexpected quarters. The kitchen has become a minefield. That innocent-looking egg can be a killer. And what about that piece of soft cheese loitering with intent in the fridge? Or the pre-cooked chicken you bought from Marks & Sparks, because you were afraid to eat the 'fresh' meat that came from a sub-EEC standard British abattoir? We are all old hands now at dodging salmonella and listeria. But how many other lethal bugs are waiting, silently, to ambush us? If the worry all gets too much and you need a Scotch to steady your nerves, can you risk drinking the water with it?

For those who survive the killers in the kitchen the struggle for survival has only just begun. Anybody's office air-conditioning could be coddling legionnaire's disease. Nor is it any good turning to your loved ones for comfort; sexual encounters are definitely out, unless you are prepared to restrict your passion to a friendly handshake.

The news is no longer about politics. This is the season for health and food scares. Listeria and salmonella have now been joined in the rogues' gallery by campylobacter and staphylococcus. We have also learned that soya milk is harmful to

babies, that tampons contain toxic substances dangerous to women, and that infected cattle can trigger a fatal brain disease in humans.

Sometimes the health obsession appears to acquire irrational, panic-like proportions. 'One in three victims will die' screams the *Mirror* in its coverage of 'the frozen killers'. At a time when millions are supposed to be studying their *Sun* 'cut-out-and-keep safety guide', it is worth taking a step backwards and asking what is really going on.

Food safety and health has never been a serious concern for capitalist firms and governments. The food industry's sole preoccupation has always been profit. The money gets spent on packaging and advertising, not on safety or research. Successive British governments have provided next to no resources for food research or to establish an effective inspection system. The Thatcher government has been more cavalier than most with health and food safety. So why the sudden expressions of concern?

The revelations about new dangers to our health are based on information that is pretty old hat to the food industry and scientists alike. The questions raised are not scientific ones. The real question is: why

should problems that have been known about for years suddenly become big news?

The spread of food and medical panics is symptomatic of a wider social malaise—the modern cult of personal problems and individual solutions.

Over the Thatcher years, conservatism has advanced across British society as militant campaigns and industrial action have declined. The government has succeeded in discrediting collectivist traditions. The idea of getting together with others in your union or community, and fighting to resolve problems like low living standards or poor housing is now widely considered to be a nostalgic notion. Instead, individuals have been forced to sort things out for themselves and their families.

## On your own

The discrediting of collective action and the individuation of society has far-reaching consequences. It changes public perceptions and eventually transforms our view of the world. When people think and act only as isolated individuals, it leads to the conclusion that problems exist at the level of the individual, not at the level of society. Thus it is not capitalism that causes unemployment but individuals with the wrong skills who happen to be in the wrong place.

The transformation of social problems into individual ones is popular with the authorities, since it absolves their system of any blame. Thatcher has codified this outlook with her propaganda campaign about individual citizenship, and her declaration that there is no such thing as society. From this perspective, the threats we face always appear to be external, natural problems, for which nobody or no social system in particular is to blame, and which we must just do our best to survive as individuals.

Today's circumstances prompt major modifications to perceptions about what constitutes a problem. In a climate of conservatism there is a tendency to abandon the consideration of wider issues. If everything is fixed and we are powerless to change society, what's the point of going on about the scourge of unemployment or poverty? Individual concerns top the agenda and individual insecurities haunt our everyday existence.

PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK





## Health scares give them an excuse to blame individuals for every problem

This is the ideological background to the present medicalisation of the news. From an individual point of view it is the mundane routine of everyday life which dominates. Isolated from other human beings, individuals can develop a distorted view of the world. In this situation panics about health and food will find resonance. People may not be able to take control of their lives, but at least they can watch their weight, inspect the content of their food and worry about their very existence.

The medicalisation of politics is spontaneously produced by a society which is not prepared to question itself, willing to accept that it can't change the fundamentals. But once the panic enters the public domain,

gains ascendancy over that which threatens millions.

To add insult to injury food and health scares provide the authorities with an excuse to blame individuals for every problem. So Edwina Currie can tell old-age pensioners threatened with hypothermia that they are not knitting enough bedcaps. Recently the government has advised the already overburdened mother to shop every day to prevent infection in food. No doubt as the water supply deteriorates we will be told to boil it or suffer the consequences of our own irresponsibility.

There was a time when media-fostered panics were restricted to law and order issues. Crime panics directed against 'black muggers' and 'alien terrorists' used to be sufficient to establish a climate of fear and to justify more official repression. During the past five years the old-fashioned crime scares have been supplemented by a variety of moral panics.

### Resist the sirens

The government's Aids campaign is a model of a successful exercise in terrorising everyday life. It had all the right ingredients for mobilising prejudice and reinforcing a climate of repression: individual irresponsibility, homosexuality, promiscuity. Despite the fact that the vast majority of the population is in little danger of contracting the syndrome, the Aids panic has succeeded in promoting restrictive forms of human behaviour as essential to the good health of all. In the past, scares about masturbation causing blindness could be laughed off because they bore no relation to reality. In contrast, scare stories about Aids have made a deep impression today.

Crime and moral panics have now been reinforced by health and food scares. This explosion of panics reflects the trends in society. A society dominated by panics is one afraid of asking serious questions. Instead of a critical examination of

issues, superstition and irrationality become the preferred forms of intellectual discourse.

It is hard to avoid coming under the influence of one or more of the contemporary scare campaigns. Even the most enlightened individual is vulnerable to the plague of panics. Nevertheless it is essential not to give in to their insidious effects. There is no doubt that we live in a dangerous world. Yet human beings have always survived and got on with life, often in far more perilous circumstances than we face today. Taking sensible precautions is one thing. But if we allow ourselves to perceive every problem as a matter of life and death, we will fall into the trap of self-paralysis, becoming too frightened to do anything.

Despite all the claims about providing the public with new information, health scares and panics do not enlighten. They terrorise us into inaction. They force us to be more careful and ultimately to be more conservative. They demand that we follow the old routine, never taking chances and never letting go.

This is not only a recipe for the dullest of personal lives. It also means we will not risk raising new political questions about society—or taking a stand against the system which is responsible for our problems in the first place.

At the risk of being labelled irresponsible, it is necessary to insist that living means living. My mother, who is in her seventies, was thoroughly upset after watching some blood-curdling reports of street attacks on pensioners. Her initial reaction was that it was too dangerous for her to take any more long walks or to visit friends. Was she going to live out her years in the confines of her home? Fortunately, on reflection, her instinct for life prevailed. 'I'd rather take my chances on the street than stop living', was her final word on the matter.



the authorities and the media are happy to popularise the dangers to our health. They prefer discussion of listeria to that of exploitation. It forces people to become more careful and less experimentative, less concerned with political change than with personal survival. And repressive policies which should be opposed because of their social consequences—like, say, the denial of civil liberties to gay men as part of the Aids panic—may well be accepted by a nation of individuals worried only about their own health.

Panics force people to lose sight of reality. Headlines about four or five deaths from a particular infection suddenly blind us to the thousands of casualties caused at work, or the many more promised by modern military technology. For our rulers, such panics have the virtue of obscuring the real dangers that face members of society. Through the medicalisation of debate, the trivial

PHOTO: DON REED



## Join the debate!

**Living Marxism** forums are being organised around the country to discuss the issues raised in the review.

If you want to take part in the debate about the future of left-wing politics, ring **(01) 375 1702** today for details of the forum taking place near you.



Sheila Rowbotham and Hilary Wainwright

# Ten years beyond the fragments

**It's 10 years since Sheila Rowbotham and Hilary Wainwright wrote *Beyond the Fragments* and influenced a generation of left wingers. Anne Burton talked to them about socialist feminism then and now**

**Anne Burton:** Why did you decide to write *Beyond the Fragments*?

**Hilary Wainwright:** I'd been in the International Marxist Group. But there seemed to be real conflict between the rigid notions that the IMG had, and the new ways of organising we developed at the Tyneside Socialist Centre, which were coming from shop stewards or socialist feminists themselves. And I wanted to say that there was a possible future for the left that wasn't the Labour Party that had proved a dead end, or this vanguard party with its pretensions and no base, but was from movements struggling around specific issues, that were thinking what I think.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** In Hackney and Islington in the seventies people were struggling for access to resources, and they turned to the councils. The women's movement, particularly socialist feminists, were also part of those struggles about health, housing and things like that. I had earlier been in the International Socialists [later the SWP]. I couldn't understand why they talked a lot about grassroots politics, and were anti-bureaucracy, but were so resistant to the women's movement, especially when the black civil rights movements were so successful in the States. Because I was puzzling about it, I decided to write about it.

**Anne Burton:** You say you were frustrated with the left's reluctance to take up struggles against oppression, but why did you decide that what was needed was a bringing together of the fragmentary struggles, rather than to challenge the economism of organisations set up to be revolutionary parties?

**Sheila Rowbotham:** It seemed so difficult to get the women's liberation movement accepted because it didn't fit into an idea of the exploitation of workers. Having watched that difficulty from the late sixties, and with the positive experience of the women's movement, it seemed better to build something outside. And then the groups which were looking to vanguards might take notice.

**Hilary Wainwright:** I suppose I found that on my own, in five

months working in this socialist centre I actually had credibility within the Tyneside working class which all the parties couldn't have. Because the work was based on feelings that already existed rather than saying, 'you come to us; we've got the line'. I thought the revolutionary vanguard way of organising was never going to gain roots among the people who could change society.

**Sheila Rowbotham and Hilary Wainwright,** along with Lynne Segal, wrote *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* in 1979. It examined their problems with left-wing parties and argued the case for feminist forms of organisation. The book became a seminal left-wing work of the eighties, and inspired a 2000-strong conference. Hilary Wainwright later headed the popular planning unit at the GLC. She has recently written *Labour: A Tale of Two Parties* and is involved in the Socialist Society. Sheila Rowbotham and Lynne Segal have become widely known for their writings on feminism and the left.

**Anne Burton:** So what were you trying to do with *Beyond the Fragments*? Who were you trying to bring together?

**Sheila Rowbotham:** Well, we weren't very ambitious at first. We were only planning to produce a thousand copies, but we had to produce two thousand to get the money back. We didn't think anything would come of it did we?

**Hilary Wainwright:** No. My idea was that it would reach as many people as possible, in particular socialist feminists, people involved in tenants' groups and shop stewards, and that it would lead people to write about their experience. It was really about evaluating forms of popular resistance and organising.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** We hoped black people would write things too, but we felt that we couldn't write beyond what we'd actually experienced. There was a very strong sense in the

women's movement that you could only speak about what you have actually experienced, which means that people can say 'but they didn't mention such and such'. It also gave the misleading impression that we were saying that we had the answers, when we were saying 'here is a particular experience which can be mined when people are thinking about socialist organisation'.

**Anne Burton:** Is it still relevant? Do you think these fragments still exist waiting to be brought together?

**Sheila Rowbotham:** You've found them in the Labour Party haven't you, Hilary?

**Hilary Wainwright:** Yes, I suppose so. Although I suppose that the fragments that existed then on the whole don't exist now, or not in the same form. It's partly defeat. It's quite complicated because sometimes they do crop up. There have been a lot of changes.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** One change is in relation to getting resources from the local state. Throughout the eighties with the rise of the GLC a lot of these campaigns developed an almost institutional form. People became quite professional at doing grant applications and God knows what. Now the funding for these things has been cut. It's very difficult to get access to resources because central government is rather firm and has chopped them.

**Anne Burton:** Don't you think that there was a problem with the way that many 'fragment' campaigns—black groups, women's groups—focused on getting resources for their pet project? Rather than groups of people under attack being brought together in struggle, often different groups were forced to compete over resources. Instead of an alliance of 'fragments' you had black groups arguing that funds shouldn't go to lesbian and gay groups. I'd argue that if you simply bring together different groups concerned with their own experience, you reproduce the narrow attitudes that you criticised the left for.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** I see what you mean. It could be said that when there are limited resources it is in



groups' interest to make walls around themselves higher, because by packaging yourself to the local state you become a funding category, rather than people learning about each other through struggling together. The limited access to resources allows the state to impose divisions.

**Hilary Wainwright:** I recognise the tendency you're describing, but there are other examples of where, maybe when groups aren't in competition for money, there is a sort of desire to make connections. I'm not saying it's automatic, but if you think about the miners' strike, you did get what would look like extraordinary connections—like lesbians and gay men making connections with these sort of macho Welsh or Yorkshire miners, black groups seeing connections because of the policing. I think when people become active they are quite sensitive to other people's struggles because they notice common experiences. What I don't know, what nobody knows, is how to connect all these different consciousnesses when there isn't a dramatic struggle.

**Anne Burton:** I'd say that's one of the jobs of a revolutionary party.

**Hilary Wainwright:** If you look at the response to the recent Chesterfield Socialist Conference it indicates that amongst a minority these wider connections are still there. It is pretty amazing that the *Beyond the Fragments* conference in 1980 was so big, but the Chesterfield conference has happened twice. I think this shows a desire to connect consciousnesses beyond party boundaries.

**Anne Burton:** Is the Socialist Conference the late eighties equivalent of *Beyond the Fragments*?

**Sheila Rowbotham:** I don't know, I mean—in the days of *Beyond the Fragments* the left who we were attacking were all these people who make up the Socialist Conference now. It's funny.

**Hilary Wainwright:** Because they've got this strong Labour Party element, in one sense the Socialist Conference is more rooted, solid. *Beyond the Fragments* sort of just captured a moment. After the conference, there wasn't the same solidity, the *Fragments* constituency was more people who agreed with a certain sort of set of ideas that wasn't all that easy to name. Really I suppose there wasn't the basis for the unity. I couldn't really say that we wanted it because the conference wasn't our idea. Looking back, we weren't at all organised about what to get out of the conference. Maybe

the strength of the response gave us too much of an optimistic impression of what would come out of it. But the last session was disastrous, terrible.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** We had 2000 people and we'd only expected 1000. When people were hostile we didn't have any way to deal with it. There are videos and you can see Hilary and some of the people in the centre collapsing—it's like a cake. We were very trusting, we thought 'Oh, you know, things will just emerge', but when you've got 2000 people they actually don't. The people who are really hostile tend to come over clearly rather than the people fumbling for ideas. And I'd got laryngitis and couldn't speak—which everyone thought was a deliberate ploy.



**Anne Burton**

**Anne Burton:** If you say you want to bring all these people together, but there are no defined political ideas that you're trying to bring them around, then surely you're bound to have chaos? Unless you've got clear proposals on the table, even if they agree no one knows what they're agreeing to.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** The basis for getting them together was that we'd experienced quite a lot in local politics or autonomous politics and we wanted to make that more coherent. But there were some people who didn't want that. Anarchists thought that we were involved in reformist stuff, some feminists thought that it would endanger the autonomy of the women's movement. Don Milligan didn't like anything. And a lot of other people went back into the Labour Party, they thought that it might change, instead of building anything outside. The momentum went out of it.

**Hilary Wainwright:** But also I'd slightly question this idea that people will only move forward if they agree about a political strategy. An idea implicit in our writing was that the process of developing a strategy should be drawn from a variety of experiences rather than being worked out by a small group and then presented as the basis of agreement. I mean a socialist society has to involve very democratic processes and people arriving at very complex decisions through debate. And it seems to me that if that's going to be possible in a socialist society it should be possible in building a socialist movement. It will be terribly messy, and we were a bit depressed by the *Fragments* conference. But as long as I believe in socialism I'll believe in that democratic discussion.

**Anne Burton:** It seems you're saying that the way forward is to get people together, and from sharing their different individual experiences they will draw conclusions about how to proceed. Couldn't it be argued that trying to organise around the experience of individuals has been a major cause of the collapse of the left-wing women's movements? We know that the fight for abortion rights is a vital part of the struggle for women's liberation, although individual women might not experience it as such themselves—some women experience the problem of infertility, many black women feel the medical profession forces abortions on them, lesbians may feel abortion is a side issue. But even if it flies in the face of individuals' experience, the denial of abortion rights reinforces women's oppression—so we must fight for abortion rights. Don't you think it is more effective to work out what women need for full equality and thrash out how that can be fought



for? You seem to be saying 'let's all throw our feelings in the air, and draw something out of it'—I think all you can get is a muddle of different opinions about what's a valid experience and what isn't.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** In the origins of the women's movement there was this emphasis on the importance of individual experience, because that had been an important influence on the civil rights movement in the States and on the student movement. That's where they coined 'the personal is political'. The language that they had about black people's consciousness was very influential on how we felt because we were seeking a different political language. We read Engels at exhausting length but we were having to say things have changed and we have an experience that isn't fitted by Lenin or Engels. So we were starting with personal experience against theory. We were influenced by socialism, but we needed more than that. But we were also aware that you couldn't just concentrate on one or two things. We were frightened of being reformist. There was a tension between our feminism saying every experience is valid and our socialism which said we have to analyse and understand so we can act. This may have been lost; there is a tendency in feminism now to say only the subjective is valid.

**Anne Burton:** Why has the women's movement changed so much? In 1979 it identified itself as a liberation movement, campaigning for abortion on demand, free 24-hour nurseries and all that. Now the campaigning for what women need has been dropped, in fact people don't even talk about the women's *liberation*

movement any more, it's seen much more as a cultural lifestyle thing—a movement of liberated women. Where did socialist feminism go?

**Hilary Wainwright:** I can't deny that socialist feminism as an organised movement has diminished but I'm always coming across ways in which socialist feminists have been dispersed into activities which have widened the influence of feminism, like TUC courses for women, started by socialist feminists who happened to be working in Congress House. I met a woman in Leeds the other day who's applying the sort of principles of socialist feminism to work on a housing estate with working class people. So I think there's a lot of understated influence.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** What wasn't done was to create any institutional form where the ideas could carry on politically. After 1979 there weren't any socialist feminist conferences. I think it could also have been that there were political tensions within socialist feminism that weren't resolved. We got into a lot of debates about whether socialist feminists needed a political programme, whether we should have a political line on, say abortion. We couldn't agree. So we went off on different tracks.

**Anne Burton:** There may well be women who see themselves as socialist feminists, but you can't argue that that creates a political force. In fact it seems that the parts of feminism that have survived are the ones that have been taken on board by the establishment—like anti-sexist education, equal opportunities to do woodwork, or rediscovering women writers. If it

hasn't been incorporated and made respectable it barely exists.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** It is very important though that talking about equality hasn't been stamped on in a very reactionary period. If you look at the changes even in women's magazines it is quite extraordinary. It's not in the form we wanted it, but it is quite important because so many radical ideas have been beaten back.

**Hilary Wainwright:** I think any acceptance of women's equality, whatever the form, is really important. OK, women stockbrokers aren't going to further socialism but if that ethos is influencing education and young people, it's important. And you do witness a sort of stropiness and confidence among young working class women and that is progress—or at least a precondition for progress.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** It is really funny how even the word 'sexist' has become one which everybody uses all the time.

**Anne Burton:** But isn't this a real lowering of horizons? You start off with the original demands of the women's liberation movement—the recognition that women must be freed from the restrictions of family life—and 10 years later you're citing changes in women's magazines, a couple of women stockbrokers, and the fact that people talk about sexism as successes. Today abortion access is probably more restricted, nursery facilities are a joke for most women and women are still in lower-paid jobs.

**Hilary Wainwright:** But I think that could be explosive—if young people's expectations are raised and then what they see doesn't match up to it. Women will have got confidence because of anti-sexist education. These cultural gains are not that easily containable. I don't think I'm lowering my horizons—I think young women with expectations will make it harder for Thatcher.

**Anne Burton:** Don't you think that when young people see books about women plumbers they just think it odd because it doesn't fit into their experience? Most youngsters are no more likely to come across Mrs Plug the plumber than they are the flopsy bunnies, and they might categorise it in the same way—a nice fairy story. Because that isn't life—reality isn't like that.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** I've noticed that with Will [her son]. He's been given all this stuff by his nursery and by me and when he went to school he did reject some of it that was too



Sheila Rowbotham



ideological, although he really liked Mrs Plug. He observes that I'm not very good with money, or at male trades like carpentry. But then he tells me his friend Glenn is socialist feminist because she plays football. And I met some little boys on the train who thought it was perfectly normal for girls to play football. They hadn't been brainwashed by socialist feminists. I think the Tories are worried by the fact that people's values have changed a bit.

**Anne Burton:** Why are so many people from the *Beyond the Fragments* discussions in the Labour Party now?

**Hilary Wainwright:** I never joined it, but a lot of people did, especially around the Tony Benn campaign. They really thought that changes were possible—it did seem like momentous things were happening. Of course it doesn't look that momentous now. A lot of those same people today are either dropping out or staying in the Labour Party but are more involved in their other interests and aren't enthusiastically Labour Party, most are pretty browned off.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** I did join it, but I am bemused by it all, all the structures...So I'm not very active. I think it's like Petra Kelly said, you need a parliamentary link between what's inside and what's outside. And there's a danger of a polarisation between what's grassroots and what's parliamentary.

**Anne Burton:** Do you think it is possible for what you call grassroots movements to influence the Labour Party?

**Sheila Rowbotham:** CND did have influence, didn't it? And I think that the women's movement did. But the problem is then the relationship of the Labour Party to people's consciousness outside.

**Anne Burton:** Don't you think CND's influence has been overestimated? Kinnock has just thrown unilateralism out. And Labour has always refused to instruct MPs to oppose things like Alton's anti-abortion bill. You talk about being in or out of the Labour Party as if it was a purely administrative matter. But it's a political party, with politics which are mainly anti-working class.

**Hilary Wainwright:** No...well, yes, I agree about the leadership's policies but the Labour Party does have two realities. It's got the constituency parties and then it's got the trade union connections and the parliamentary party. People join it mainly because it's the working class



**Hilary Wainwright**

party locally. Often in wards people aren't particularly parliamentarist. They've had the experience of Labour governments ditching quite radical manifestos. So Labour Party socialists have become very extra-parliamentary. I wouldn't predict that the Labour Party won't change. If Labour is defeated a whole lot of the right might leave and work with the SLD and you'd be left with the left in the party and Ken Livingstone might become leader. I mean all sorts of things might happen.

**Anne Burton:** Surely, though, even very left-wing activists in left-wing constituencies feel the full weight of Labour Party *politics* bearing down on them? Lesbian and gay activists in London were told to shut up or ship out when the leadership thought they would give Labour a bad press in the last election. How long would anyone last who decided to organise their Labour Party branch to campaign against immigration controls? The stranglehold that the Labour Party has had on the left has contributed to stifling left action. Anyone who speaks out in the Labour Party is hauled up for fouling up their election chances. So you have a set of reactionary Labour policies, and people think well, if this is socialism I don't want any of it.

**Hilary Wainwright:** But on the other hand you have Ken Livingstone who did help to give people in the lesbian and gay community a sort of legitimacy. I don't want to defend the Labour Party at all. But it is contradictory, you can't generalise from the leadership.

**Anne Burton:** Obviously there are lots of people in the Labour Party who think different things. But you have to assess a political party on the basis of what its politics are. I'm in the RCP because I agree with the

politics, the party leadership agrees with the politics. So we've got a common aim. You present the Labour Party as a method of networking rather than a political party.

**Hilary Wainwright:** But it is so different. It has a link with the unions. People have joined the Labour Party because it's the party of the working class, and then fought within it. The reason why it's got these groups in it isn't casual. They see an importance in parliament and the working class.

**Anne Burton:** What would the Labour Party have to do before you stopped seeing it as the natural party of the working class?

**Hilary Wainwright:** Well I'm not in it, everybody thinks I am—I get invited to speak for it, it's embarrassing.

**Anne Burton:** Maybe it's because the politics you put forward are the same as Labour's. It is hard to see why you're not in it.

**Hilary Wainwright:** I feel I could be in the same party as Tony Benn, I don't feel any comradeship with Neil Kinnock. If we were talking about a party that you're in because you believe its ideas I couldn't be in the same party as him.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** When I joined the Labour Party in 1964 I joined without any notion that you would agree with its politics. You knew what you believed as a socialist, and you knew you were opposed to Wilson and things. It's a question of what else is there. I don't want to spend my middle age building small left groups outside of something that has got a lot of meaning.



**Anne Burton:** But doesn't that mean that the Labour Party can do whatever it wants and you're saying you'll always stay with it. Isn't that a big step back from say, *Beyond the Fragments*, which at least saw that some kind of independent movement was needed?

**Hilary Wainwright:** But the Socialist Conference is composed of people in and some not in the Labour Party, therefore they have a voice in parliament, because that's how you influence public debate, but they also have a base in factories and the communities.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** I think what's important is that people work together to build opposition to Thatcher. If you're struggling for particular things that make sense even some SDP people will support it, even some wet Tories maybe. But there has to be some alternative and the trouble is that no one's convinced that there is now.

**Hilary Wainwright:** I think there's a danger of taking the left in the Labour Party for granted. Can you imagine if Ken Livingstone and Jeremy Corbyn and Audrey Wise gave up and you had no left-wing

MPs to lobby? That would be a huge setback.

**Anne Burton:** Is there anything that gives you a sense of optimism now? Presumably it isn't just Audrey Wise and Jeremy Corbyn.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** I've been very inspired by Audrey Wise over the years. I've just written this book about the women's movement and she figures in it rather a lot.

**Hilary Wainwright:** Watch it Sheila, the headline will be 'Fragments look to Audrey Wise'. When I think about inspiration and optimism I look much more to ground-level movements in society. I'm meeting women in Leeds involved in nursery and community campaigns. There's nothing terribly political but there is this sense of a generation of women in their twenties and thirties, so confident and strong despite being in beleaguered circumstances. I suppose I feel good because they make me feel that people haven't been crushed by Thatcher. If the left can develop ways of organising that listens to them and is able to attract them to the idea of fighting for a democratic society it will have real hope. In Chesterfield I'm involved in trying to develop an organisation that can do that. So there's no ready-made answer that I can be inspired by there. It's more what's on the ground level.

**Sheila Rowbotham:** The last two years have been the worst and most depressing time I can remember since I've been involved in politics. I think it must be very, very hard for younger people who have only known Thatcher. But on the other hand they still are doing things, and perhaps they've never had some of the false hopes that we had. But I can't see an opening, at the moment, for any mass popular resistance to Thatcher. All that can be said is that small groups of people have shown courage in defying what seems to be a hopeless situation. The Silentnight people go round supporting other groups, Women Against Pit Closures go round supporting people, people from Wapping are going round. And the fact that the seafarers have been out at Dover for over a year—maybe there's hope in that.

**Hilary Wainwright:** Even the defeat of Thatcher might eventually be down to what happens internationally and when you look at what's happening in Spain and Brazil and Mexico... That's important when thinking about sources of hope. It's all very difficult.

## Feminist publishing

# 200 Spare Ribs

Over the years, *Spare Rib* has been the nearest thing to a flagship of British feminism. This month the *Spare Rib* collective celebrates the magazine's two hundredth issue. Not that these women have been around for the duration; when the first issue appeared in July 1972, most of the current collective were in their early teens. And they want to take today's magazine (for which they claim a circulation of 25 000) in a slightly different direction than the earlier version.

The early issues carried George Best's thoughts on women's lib, 'Amusing anecdotes about the situation of women in the fourteenth century' by Sheila Rowbotham, a review of *Cosmopolitan* by Richard Neville of *Oz*, along with articles on 'The liberated orgasm—make a New Year's resolution to have one'. Just a couple of years ago, *Spare Rib* reflected the increasingly personal preoccupations of many feminists with items like an eight-page feature on 'fat oppression'.

The present collective has only been together for about a year. Although the women remain resolutely feminist, they are trying to shift the emphasis in *Spare Rib* to focus less on individual and more on social issues. 'You can talk about masturbation all you like', says one collective member, 'but if you can't have an abortion or walk the streets at night without fear of being attacked you're not sexually free, even in your mind. You're not going to be able to express yourself until the political, social and economic forces on the planet are changed. That's what we want to encourage debate on'. *Spare Rib* has recently covered the Palestinian *intifada*, attacks on civil liberties and the left's debate on 'post-Fordism'.

It is rather ironic, given this shift, that *Spare Rib* is currently on trial

with WH Smith, which has put it among the mainstream women's magazines—it was previously with the political mags. The collective members hope this will make it more accessible to women who 'might be intimidated by political magazines'. They seem wildly optimistic about their prospects and dismissive of women who claim that feminism has had its day:

'All this talk about post-feminism seems to us to be emanating from mostly middle class white women who were around in the early days of the women's movement—maybe they even started *Spare Rib*. For them feminism was equal opportunities with their middle class male counterparts. But for most women—in the third world and poor women here—who wants equal opportunities when the men are so oppressed and exploited? That's not what feminism is about to us. It's about forging a new society.

'When we talked to women on the Gaza Strip they weren't talking about post-feminism, they were talking about an *intifada* which in many respects had been led by the women's committees. Women from Soweto are not talking about post-feminism. Maybe some women on the *Guardian* women's page can afford to say "It's over girls, we're in a post-feminist situation". We can't afford to do that—we have to have change. The lives of too many women are too hideous to even think about post-feminism.

'The legacy of 17 years of *Spare Rib* weighs heavy on our shoulders. There are a lot of things in past issues that no one here would agree with. We have no power over that. All we have control over is what we do today and we have to make it count.'

**Anne Burton**



A day with the magistrates

# CONTEMPT IN COURT

Keith Tompson sat in Harlesden magistrates court and watched the law treat all the accused equally badly

The small crowd outside the court were having a smoke, puffing furiously as if they didn't expect to see another cigarette for some time. Or maybe they were just trying to smoke off the stench of the Victorian building, a smell of poor laws and imprisonment through the ages. As the day was to show, it's still the poor wot gets the blame.

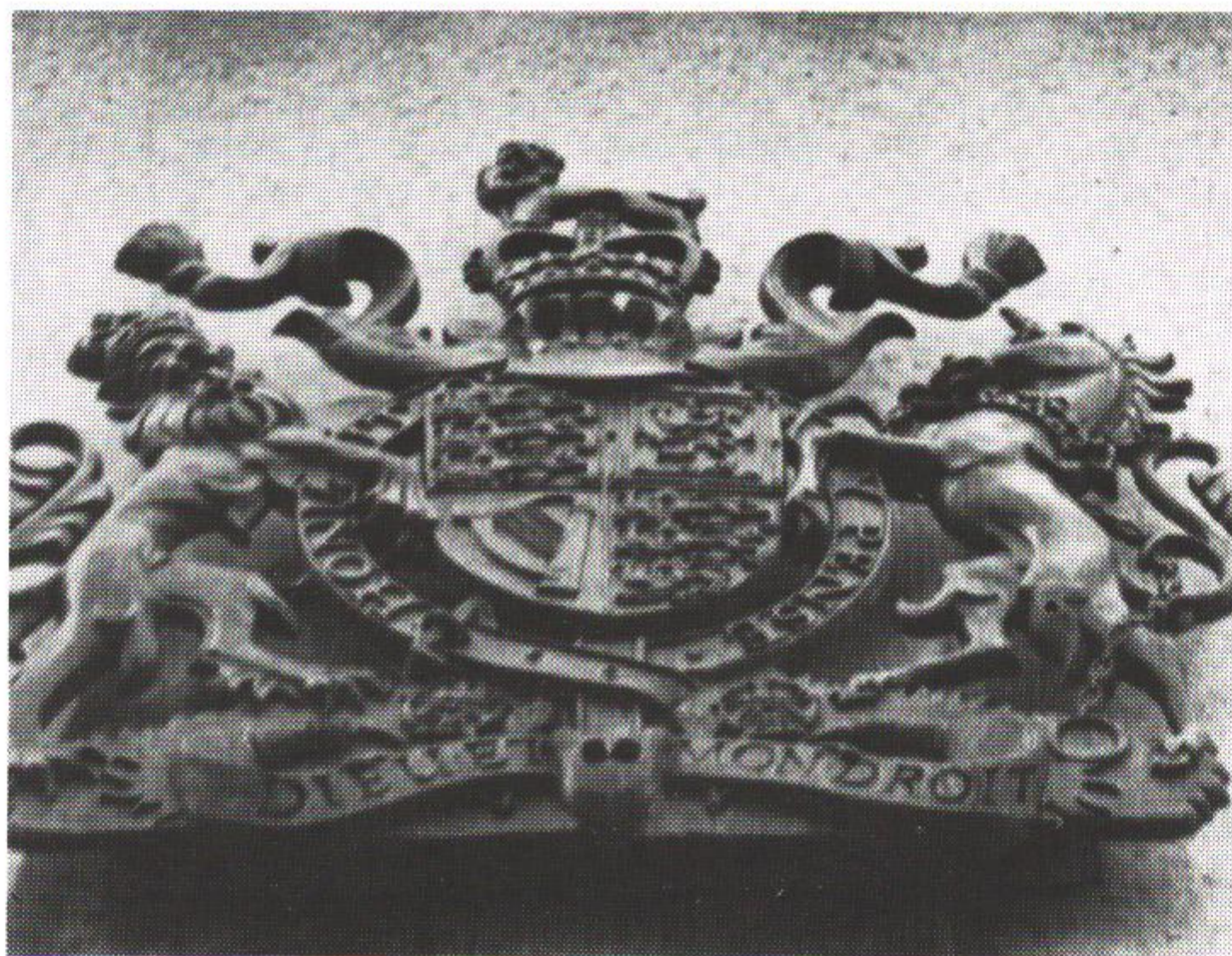
The first job was to check the court lists to see who was coming up and for what. They read like a bad Jim Davidson joke, a saloon-bar caricature of who commits crime in British society: an O'Reilly, a Singh, a Patel, a Winston M, a McLoughlin, a Patrick B, and a Silvanus F. Irish, Asian and Afro-Caribbean men. Don't white Englishmen break the law, then? Or do the Met make a point of arresting others? In fact just about the only white Englishman in court all day was the one genuine crook among them all, a wide-boy who pocketed £40 000 worth of somebody else's cheques.

## Drinking and walking

The first three magistrates on duty were as white as they come, two male members of the local rotary and golf clubs and a Mary Whitehouse thinkalike. They were sentencing Mr Patel for a driving offence as I arrived, in a manner reminiscent of the local squirearchy sending a felon off to Parkhurst on the last page of a Sherlock Holmes story. The motto over the magistrates' heads read 'Dieu et mon droit' (God and justice), and they looked as if they truly believed they were representing some superior force, be it God, the Queen or the freemasons.

Call case number two. The public gallery was occupied by half a dozen teenagers, who started looking interested as Paul B was brought into the dock. Paul's accent was strongly Irish. His friends were Irish too. The clerk read out the charge: 'Last night you were drunk and disorderly in Kilburn High Road. How do you plead?' 'I was drunk but not disorderly.' A date was set for the trial and they all marched out of court. I followed.

It turned out that their friend Finbar was still being held in the cells. They had been out at a well-



You can't get justice from a stone

known pub, Bidy Mulligan's, the night before. As they were going home two policemen asked what they were up to. The sound of Irish accents sets the police off like a bell incites a boxer. They forced Finbar to take a breathalyser test, not a common experience for London pedestrians. As he blew into the bag one of the officers smacked him in the face and arrested him and Paul. The police read them their rights—'You are a pair of Irish pigs'—and locked them up for the night. They asked for a phone-call, but got neither that nor the legal representation in court which it would have brought. They assured me such a miserable night out was routine for the regulars at Bidy Mulligan's.

Next up was Alan S. He ran his own butchery business and had been arrested the previous day on suspicion of drunken behaviour. He pleaded not guilty and asked to be released on bail. If the beaks would let him out, he offered to abide by an 8pm to 4am curfew, to attend a police station daily, and even to go to a drinkers' clinic. His wife and his mother offered their £3000 savings as a surety. Their lordships (you call them sir and madam really) retired to consider this impressive list of self-imposed restrictions. They decided to jail Alan S for a fortnight because he was a dangerous character who might commit another offence. His

business will probably collapse as a result.

Patrick B was brought in, another victim of the Kilburn High Road squad. He had been arrested the previous night and accused of carrying an offensive weapon. He had a knife, which he uses in his work as a builder's labourer. The prosecution case was based on a lot less evidence than innuendo. It was implied that Patrick had been begging when the police came across him, although no such charge was brought. It was then implied that Patrick was prepared to stab the officers; it later turned out that the police deduced this from the fact that he had his hand in his pocket. The knife was said to be a nasty piece of work; presumably they didn't bother producing it in court for fear of frightening the magistrates and me. Patrick was given no legal advice. Confused and worried, he pleaded guilty to possession, was fined £40, and got a damaging criminal record. For what?

John D arrived, accused of drunken behaviour and violence to an officer in Harlesden police station. He was homeless and hoping to stay at the Pound Lane lodge the previous night. The lodge authorities refused him entry and so he became agitated. They considered this an unjustified response from somebody who had been told to go and sleep in the

street, so they called the police, who arrested him. This agitated him further. He was found guilty and given the option of being imprisoned for one day or paying a £10 fine. He didn't have £10.

The last case of the day concerned Silvanus F, who was alleged to have assaulted a traffic warden some time ago. He had already been convicted of that, but had refused to pay his fine since he was not present in court at the time. What happened was this. Silvanus turned up at court, ready to present his case, on two separate occasions. Each time the prosecution witnesses failed to appear, and the magistrates postponed the hearing. On the third occasion Silvanus was on a course, and told the court he could not attend. The magistrates decided that it didn't matter if the defendant was missing, the important thing was that his accusers were there. So they went ahead with the case, convicted him *in absentia*, and fined him £50 plus £100 costs. He refused to pay, demanded the right to clear his name, and was now back in court for so doing.

## Hopeless cases

As the non-payment case was being heard, the magistrates grew ever more frustrated at his refusal to obey their commands. They threatened him with prison unless he paid. In the end he was given three weeks to come across with the money. 'Do you think he'll pay?' a policeman asked the clerk after Silvanus had left. 'No', she said, 'he's pissing about. He thinks he's above it all'. This court seemed to consider those who try to survive its petty vindictiveness with some self-respect to be the worst offenders of all.

That was the end of a five-hour session in which five well-paid magistrates, two clerks, at least 20 police officers and as many other assorted functionaries had convicted a handful of predominantly Afro-Caribbean, Irish and Asian working class people of such offences as having a drink, walking down Kilburn High Road, being homeless, working as a labourer, and refusing to abide by unjust rulings. Several would spend up to a fortnight in jail before their next appearance, and up to three months before they got a chance to argue their case in a crown court. The certainty with which the magistrates sided with the police witnesses showed their contempt for the people in the dock; if they had been arrested, they must be criminals and liars. Dieu et mon droit? If they want an old legend to pin on the wall, it should be 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here'.



April 1889—Hitler's birthday

# MANY UNHAPPY RETURNS?

Hitler isn't around to celebrate his centenary. But, warns Alan Harding, the system which created Nazism still lives

'Therefore learn how to see and not to gape.

To act instead of talking all day long.

The world was almost won by such an ape!

The nations put him where his kind belong.

But don't rejoice too soon at your escape—

The womb he crawled from still is going strong.'

(Brecht, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, translated by R Mannheim, 1986, p214)

So Brecht concludes his viciously funny parable of the rise of the gangster Arturo Ui, written in exile a few years after Adolf Hitler rose to power in Germany in 1933. The figure of Hitler lends itself to parody, as Charlie Chaplin showed in *The Great Dictator*. The hypnotic stare, the rapid arm movements, the awed crowd, the goose-stepping stormtroopers; such is the stuff of which enduring myths are made.

Conventional wisdom has it that the carnage unleashed on the world at the end of the 1930s was the result of crazy little Adolf's frustration as a failed artist forced to slum it as a decorator, and his fiendish ability to manipulate hero-worshipping Germans. This infantile psychologising has served for 50 years to mystify the causes of both fascism and war.

## Twilight zone

Hitler was born 100 years ago this month in Vienna. He served in the infantry and was gassed in the First World War. Afterwards, like countless other ex-servicemen, he drifted into a twilight zone of sporadic employment in a defeated, ruined and unstable Germany. Like many he felt that Germany had been humiliated in the Treaty of Versailles which ended the war, and betrayed on all sides: by its decadent upper classes, by communists who sold it out to the foreigner in the name of internationalism, and by Jews who put Germany into pawn.

The National Socialist German Workers Party—the Nazi Party—was one of many right-wing, nationalist, anti-establishment groups. There were acts of random violence, much hot air and, for

Hitler's bunch, the 1923 Munich beer hall putsch, a joke of an insurrection. There it might have ended: a light sentence from a right-wing judge, then more pub talk, a steady job and obscurity. But in Weimar Germany there were few jobs and less stability.

## 'Putrid vapours'

After the infamous inflation of 1923 (a wheelbarrow of notes for a loaf, etc), American bankers sought to invigorate German capitalism with loans. The collapse of the US money markets in 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression left Germany economically prostrate, fought over by desperate people playing for the highest stakes: socialism or barbarism.

'When the social crisis takes on an intolerable acuteness, a particular party appears on the scene with the direct aim of agitating the petty bourgeoisie to a white heat and of directing its hatred and its despair against the proletariat. In Germany, this historical function is fulfilled by National Socialism (Nazism), a broad current whose ideology is composed of all the putrid vapours of disintegrating bourgeois society.' (L Trotsky, 'The only road for Germany', September 1932, in *Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It*, 1979, p17)

The putrid vapours were the ideas that Hitler had espoused for a decade: nationalism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism. The Nazi Party had no monopoly on these sentiments; it simply articulated them in a crude, clear form and it put its thugs where its mouth was. The crisis in German society did the rest. By the thirties the Weimar Republic was completely discredited. The German bourgeoisie found parliamentary democracy inadequate for breaking the working class and reviving capitalism. For their part the workers were well-organised but, thanks to the Stalinised Communist Party, lacked a strategy for taking power. Fascism emerged as the force to break the stalemate.

## Nazi salvation

Between 1928 and September 1930 the Nazi vote rose from 800 000 to 6 400 000, as many Germans turned to Hitler's party

for salvation from the national crisis. They hated big business and they now believed that the workers' movement was all talk. Nobody has explained this phenomenon better than Trotsky.

## 'Human dust'

Trotsky identified the social base of fascism as the petty bourgeoisie—the peasants, the artisans, the employees, the petty functionaries, etc'. Buffeted between the two great classes of capitalist society, this heterogeneous group 'cannot conduct an independent policy'; it needs 'a "leader" who inspires it with confidence'. This 'personage or party can be given to it by one or the other of the fundamental classes—either the big bourgeoisie or the proletariat'. The failure of the German left to provide an effective leadership for the masses left the field clear for the fascists:

'Fascism unites and arms the scattered masses. Out of human dust it organises combat detachments. It thus gives the petty bourgeoisie the illusion of being an independent force.' ('Is it true that the petty bourgeoisie fears revolution?', *Whither France?*, 1974, p12)

The independence is illusory because fascism, for all its talk of 'national socialism', serves as the agent of the capitalist class. Just as Arturo Ui is used by the businessmen of the Chicago Cauliflower Trust to control the vegetable trade, fascism's historic function is to smash the working class, destroy its organisations, and stifle political liberties when the capitalists are unable to govern in any other way.

## Lebensraum

The idea that Hitler's personal, or the German national, character explains the rise of Nazism is further exposed by the fact that similar regimes and movements arose throughout Europe, in conditions of capitalist crisis and failed revolutions. From Mussolini's Italy to General Pilsudski's Poland, political arguments were settled arms in hand.

What was different about Hitler and the Nazi Party was that they came to power in potentially the most powerful country in Europe.

The defeat of the working class enabled the German ruling class to prepare for war. Hitler's policy of *Lebensraum* (living space) was not his own invention; he gives it just seven out of 700 pages in *Mein Kampf*. Expansion in the East at the expense of the Slav peoples had been a cornerstone of German foreign policy for more than 50 years. Denied access to a colonial empire on the British or French model, and lacking the continental territory of the USA, this was the only possibility for German imperialism to prosper. Hitler or not, Germany's rulers would have needed to take a similar course.

As the Munich agreement of 1938 demonstrated, the Western powers were willing to tolerate Hitler's moves to the East so long as German expansion did not threaten their vital interests. The British and Americans did not object to his anti-Semitism; they refused to take in Jewish refugees or later to bomb the rail link to Auschwitz. Britain was finally forced to fight when German power became a direct threat to the Empire. The USA joined the war in Europe to prevent German domination of the Continent—the only barrier to America becoming the leading world power.

## A razor

The Second World War was no democratic crusade against fascist lunacy. Behind the different forms that capitalist rule took in different states, one set of imperialist powers was defeated by another set, aided by the Soviet Union. The international working class paid the price in countless massacres and pogroms that are the responsibility of the capitalist system, not of one man.

Hitler died in his bunker in Berlin in 1945, but the system that produced him did not. One hundred years after his birth the economic crisis and national rivalries that created his regime are with us again. Brecht's warning that the womb from which he crawled is still going strong remains apposite. Unless we overcome the system which produces the slaughter that has marked our times, the fascists could always come back to act as 'a razor in the hands of the class enemy' (Trotsky).



# EASTERHOUSE

THEIR NEW ALBUM

# WAITING FOR THE REDBIRD (ROUGH 124)

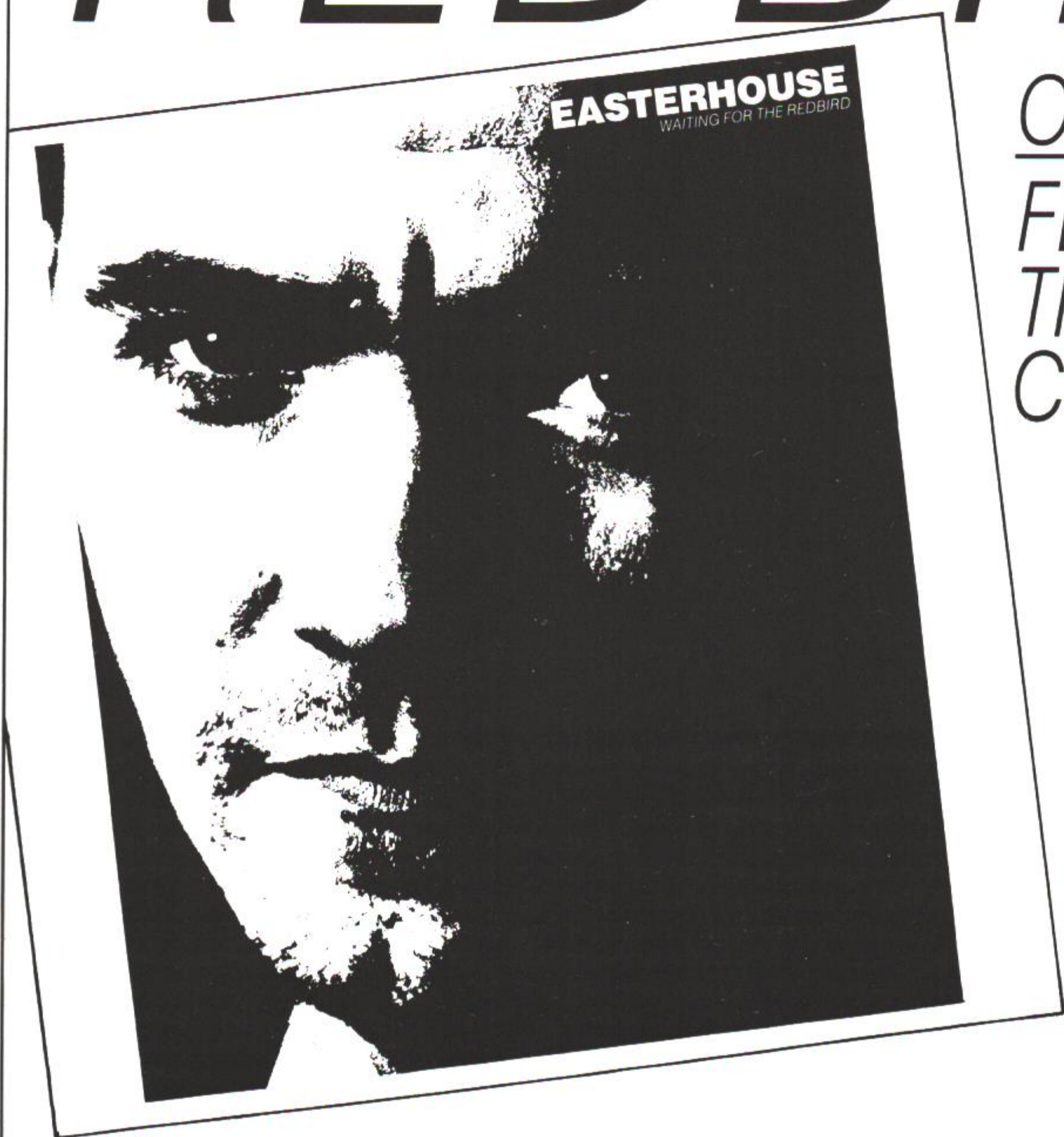
OUT NOW

FEATURING  
THE SINGLE...  
COME OUT FIGHTING  
(RT 204)

AVAILABLE IN ALL FORMATS



ROUGH TRADE RECORDS LIMITED  
61 COLLIER STREET, LONDON N1 9BE



MUSIC WITH A POINT OF VIEW!



# The origins of the Third World War

**If the Cold War is over, asks Frank Richards, why are the Western powers preparing for a hot one?**

Since Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan started talking and smiling at summit meetings there has been a marked relaxation of East-West tensions. It is ironic that this reduction in international friction has not produced a significant slowdown in the Western contribution to the arms race. On the contrary, the USA is carrying on regardless of progress in the diplomatic negotiations. It is continuing with the Star Wars project, and pushing its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to accept the modernisation of its short-range nuclear arsenal in West Germany at next month's Nato meeting.

The escalation of the arms race by leading Nato powers at a time when Moscow is pleading for disarmament suggests that the militarisation of international relations has little to do with traditional East-West conflicts. Indeed it appears that the recent improvement in Washington's relations with the Kremlin is something of a mixed blessing for the Nato leaders. It is not easy to justify more spending on arms when Gorbachev keeps popping up in Western capitals to announce new cuts in Soviet military strength.

## Tired old tune

When they formed Nato in 1949, Western rulers sold it as necessary to defend the 'free world' against the Soviet threat. For 40 years Western governments have pointed accusing fingers at the Soviets to provide the pretext for almost every Nato policy. The ostensible threat from the East gave Nato and Western militarism its coherence. Since Gorbachev launched his diplomatic offensive, however, the old clichés about the

dangers of a Russian invasion of Western Europe are hard to sustain. Many Europeans can see little reason for Nato to exist today. Nato has had to look for alternative reasons to justify itself and its actions. The problem of international terrorism has replaced the Red threat as Nato's favourite bogey.

Unfortunately for Nato, international terrorism is not a viable substitute for the Red menace. It is difficult to justify modernising the nuclear arsenal, or Star Wars, or any of the other major military projects on the grounds that they are essential to fight small groups of Palestinian or Iranian guerrillas. The tens of thousands of American troops stationed in West Germany and the dozens of Nato military installations spread throughout the world cannot be packaged as part of an anti-terrorist programme.

## Bush's bogey

As old-fashioned Cold War propaganda has lost its edge, the Western Alliance has become less coherent. Conflict within Nato can no longer be resolved through American calls for unity against the Red menace. This problem has now become so acute that US president George Bush has been forced to construct a new variation on the myth of the Soviet threat.

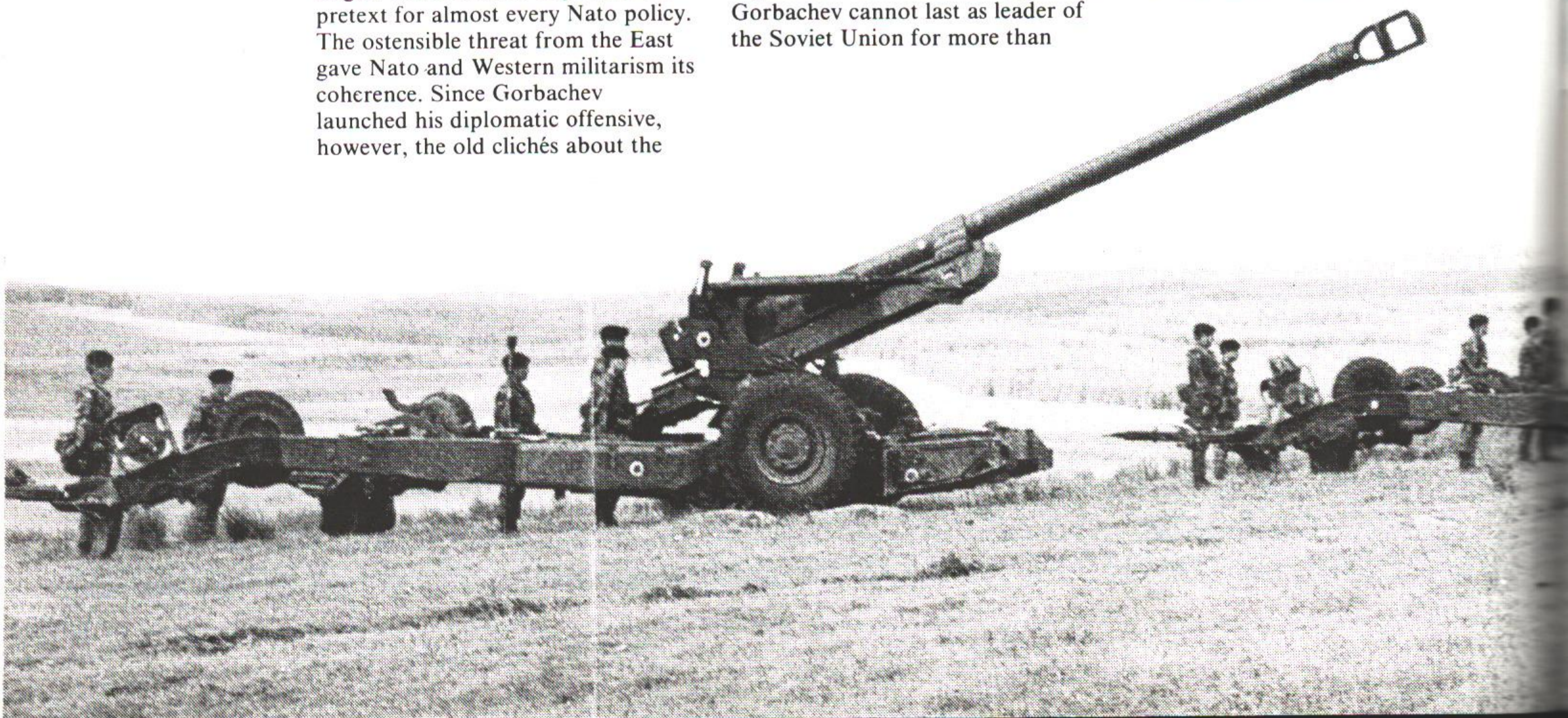
According to the revised version of the Soviet bogey, there is little to fear from Gorbachev's *glasnost*. However, experts from the US state department and the CIA suggest that Gorbachev cannot last as leader of the Soviet Union for more than

another year. Alternatively, they suggest that Gorbachev will soon have to change policy and reverse many of his reforms. Bush adviser professor Adam Ulam has summed up the new line: 'There is always the danger that Gorbachev will be overthrown by more conservative elements. But the most likely outcome is that Gorbachev himself will have to restrain the forces he has unleashed.' (*Guardian*, 15 February)

On the basis of these carefully contrived forecasts, the Bush team has concluded that the USA cannot count on détente lasting indefinitely. Gorbachev may have peaceful intentions but, they warn, it is only a matter of time before the Kremlin becomes a menace to the Western world once more. Of course, the burden of this argument is that a strong Nato is still necessary to counter the *possible* threat that the Soviet Union *may* represent in the *indefinite* future.

## 'Bomb Lenin's tomb'

Washington has invented this future Soviet threat in the hope of halting the disintegration of the Western Alliance and of preventing wayward European allies from adopting an independent foreign policy. The hard line has the robust support of James Baker, the new secretary of state, of Brent Scowcroft, the national security adviser, and of Robert Gates, former deputy director of the CIA, now deputy head of the national security council in the White House.





Bush will continue with Reagan's charade of appearing at peace summits; but America's ruling Republicans are preparing for war. They argue that Gorbachev's initiatives are a response to Western pressure and, as such, justify raising the stakes further to force more Soviet concessions. Pat Buchanan, Reagan's director of communications, spelled out the objectives of this approach: 'Let us look and plan and work towards the day when patriots of the Red Army, accompanied by priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, will go down into Lenin's tomb and dynamite the little wax dummy to kingdom come.' (*Guardian*, 15 February)

Far from stabilising international relations, the Reagan-Gorbachev peace offensive has provided the point of departure for a new era of militarism. It is now evident that no matter how many concessions Gorbachev makes, Western militarism will continue to escalate. Clearly this rearmament programme cannot be understood by focusing on East-West affairs. To understand the growing trend of militarism it is necessary to explore the changing balance of influence within the Western Alliance.

### Pax Americana

From a Marxist point of view the Western Alliance is not so much an alliance as an American-built framework for regulating relations among the handful of imperialist powers which dominate the capitalist world. America's global pre-eminence, exercised through Nato, created the conditions for restabilising world capitalism after 1949. The other imperialist powers recognised US supremacy; in return, Washington provided resources to allow its former rivals to get on with the business of post-war economic reconstruction. American troops in Germany provided an insurance against the recurrence of the conflicts which led to two world wars. The US occupation of Japan completed the

scheme. Henceforth all the old enemies would abide by the rules laid down in Washington. Nato institutionalised the Pax Americana, and the arrangement was lent legitimacy by a constant barrage of anti-Soviet propaganda.

Britain, France and the other imperialist powers accepted American leadership as a small price to pay for the stability it brought. Former enemies forgot their differences and participated, albeit as junior partners, in the share-out of the world's resources among the members of the Nato club. The Western Alliance has only begun to fragment in the last decade.

Despite appearances, Gorbachev's diplomacy is not the main cause of the alliance's problems. There are more profound, structural reasons for Nato's creaky state today. The major flaw contained within the Western Alliance is that it represents the balance of international power established in the post-war settlement. The existence of Nato thus presupposes that the USA is in a class of its own as economic superpower and military giant. It also presupposes Germany and Japan accepting, in exchange for forgiveness, exclusion from influence in the international arena. As a deal between a powerful global empire and a collection of second-rate vassal states, the Western Alliance made a lot of sense in the late forties. However, the world looks very different in 1989.

### Losing balance

During the past two decades the American empire has suffered a series of setbacks. It is still the dominant military power, but has lost much of its economic vitality and strength. In turn two of its former vassals, Japan and West Germany, have become dynamic economic powers. Japan in particular is well on the way to becoming the strongest economy in the world. The assumptions which motivated the setting up of the Western Alliance in the forties no longer hold. The balance of power

has shifted and the post-war equilibrium that has served imperialist nations so well cannot be sustained indefinitely.

The changing balance of forces among the imperialist powers has now called into question the coherence of the Western Alliance. With the erosion of the existing framework for regulating relations among imperialist powers, trends towards militarism will necessarily become stronger rather than weaker. Several important global trends point in this direction.

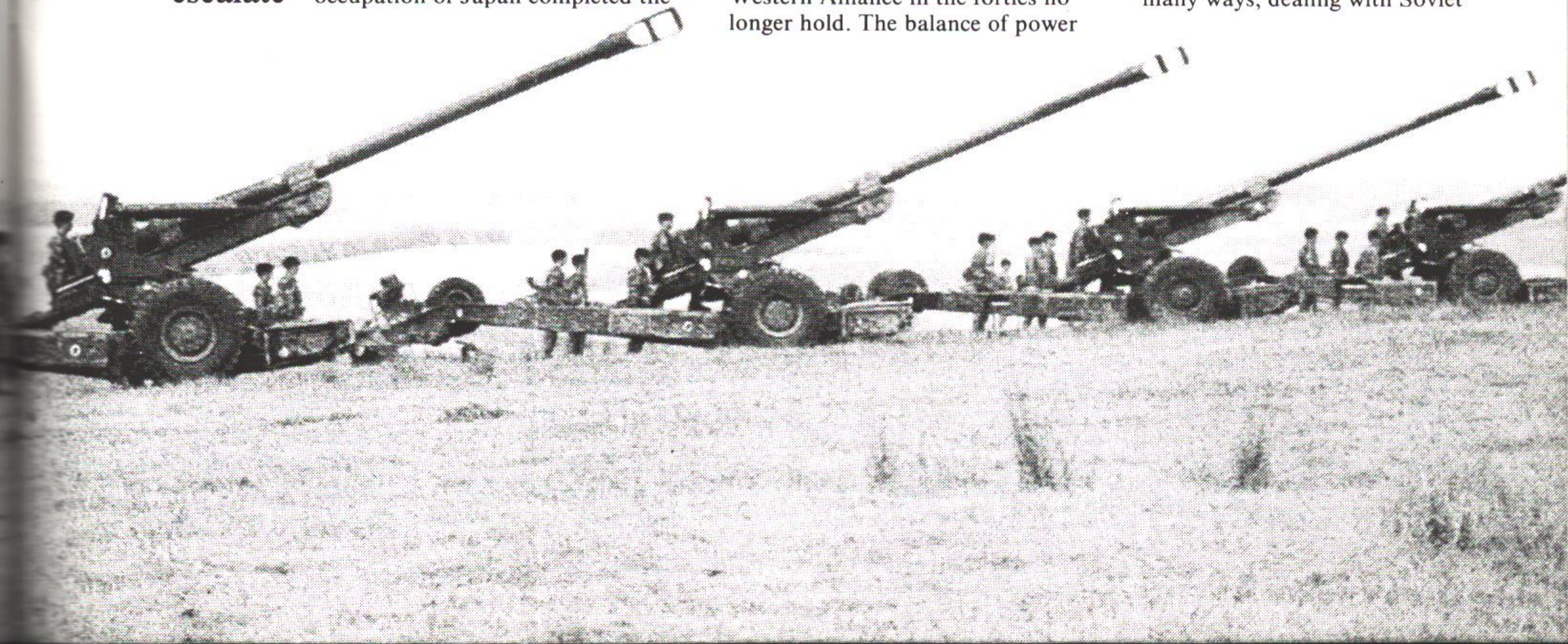
### 1 The defensive reflex of US imperialism:

America is no longer an economic model to be emulated. It is heavily in debt and has fallen behind the technological capacity of its competitors. America's economic decline makes its pretensions to global power seem unconvincing.

Since the Jimmy Carter presidency in the late seventies, the American ruling class has sought to minimise the effects of its economic problems by relying on its political and military clout. Washington has used Nato to keep its competitors in line and to maintain its predominant international position. Successive presidents have encouraged the militarisation of international relations. They initiated an arms race, and depicted the Soviet Union as the 'evil empire' to provide the arguments for giving Nato a more prominent international role. Through Nato, the USA has tried to sustain its role as the global guarantor of capitalism despite the decline of its economy.

The fear of emerging powerful imperialist rivals, rather than of Soviet intentions, has forced the USA on to its militarist trajectory. Paul Kennedy, leading mainstream historian of the decline of US power, has noted the difference between Washington's presentation of the problem and its real motives: 'In many ways, dealing with Soviet

It is now evident that, no matter how many concessions Gorbachev makes, Western militarism will continue to escalate





military rivalry was psychologically easier for the American political culture than dealing with the fact that Japanese per capita income is soaring their own year on year.' (*Sunday Telegraph*, 15 January) The USA finds it hard to compete with Japan and West Germany in many economic spheres; but for the time being it can still impose its will by reinforcing the Western Alliance.

The US-inspired international naval task force in the Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War illustrates the sort of initiatives that America needs to underwrite its global position. Washington's outbursts against West Germany's reluctance to see the Nato nuclear arsenal modernised on its soil show that Bush will continue to take a militarist line in diplomatic affairs.

## 2 The assertion of West German and Japanese confidence:

One of the most significant developments in the eighties has been the growing assertiveness of German and Japanese diplomacy. These two powers are not yet ready to challenge America's predominant position. But they are no longer prepared to remain junior partners to a declining economic rival.

As Daniel Nassim argues elsewhere in this issue of *Living Marxism*, Japan's emergence as a major international player has been dramatic and sudden. During the past year leading Japanese politicians have put forward the idea of a Japanese-American alliance to manage world affairs. In particular, they have argued for international recognition of Japan's special role in economic and financial matters. Tokyo's deputy foreign minister Taka Kazu Kuriyama recently called for Japan to 'assume a major share of the responsibility for managing the world economy' (*Sunday Times*, 5 February).

West Germany is also growing impatient with life under the restraints of the post-war settlement. West German capitalists are less than enthusiastic about Washington's manipulation of Nato. From Bonn's point of view, an escalation of US militarism tends to concentrate too much international tension within Germany. That's why leading figures in German politics have now publicly questioned the basic assumptions behind Washington's militaristic policies. West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher has declared his belief that the Soviet Union's foreign policy has been 'demilitarised'. Admiral Elmar Schmahling, former head of German military intelligence, has even called for the US and British forces in

Germany to go home.

These statements indicate that the West German authorities are not prepared to put up with a 40-year old set of American rules indefinitely. One British journalist who interviewed chancellor Helmut Kohl concluded that the German leader has an 'underlying message for the West': 'The rest of Nato and the European community will have to accept a stronger and more assertive Federal Republic that will no longer allow itself to suffer a subtle form of international discrimination because of the Nazi past.' (*Financial Times*, 10 February)

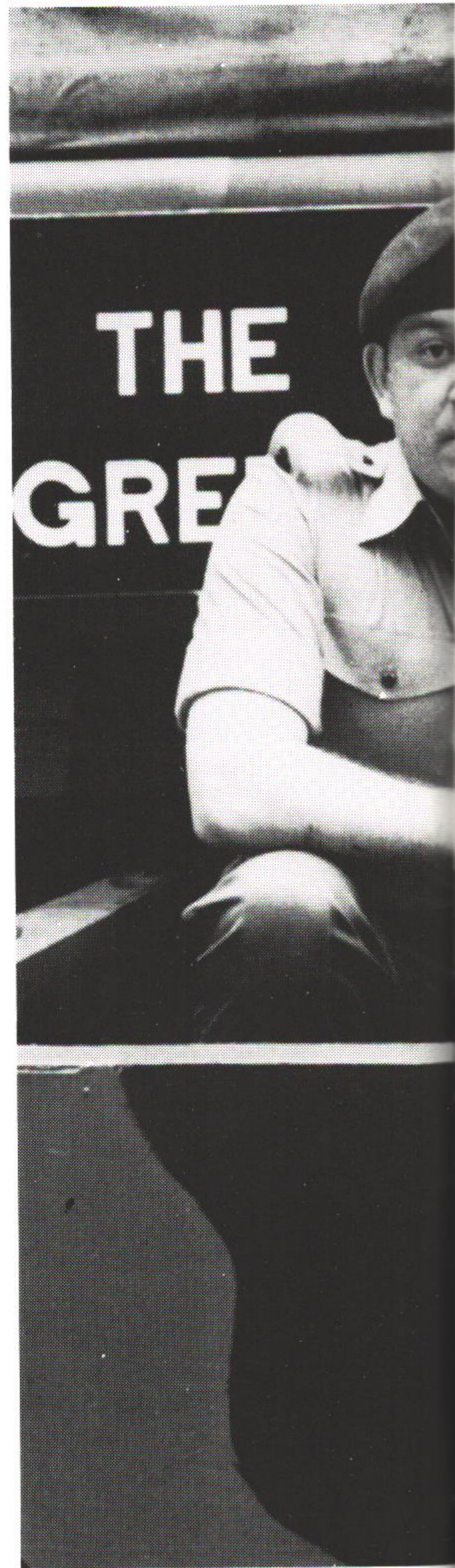
German and Japanese assertiveness is symptomatic of the passing of the post-1945 world order. The two powers have put to question the existing framework, but have not yet staked a claim to lead a new order. Nevertheless, even their hesitant first steps towards creating a new settlement have unleashed tensions that may soon prove uncontrollable within the parameters of the old Western Alliance.

## 3 Escalation of imperialist competition:

There is a growing awareness among big business that the survival of one major capitalist power can ultimately only be secured at the expense of another. The decline of America has undermined the forms of regulation which kept imperialist rivalries in check. At their summit meetings, Western rulers still manage to issue communiqués which paper over their differences. But in the real world the trend is towards a break-up of the international status quo.

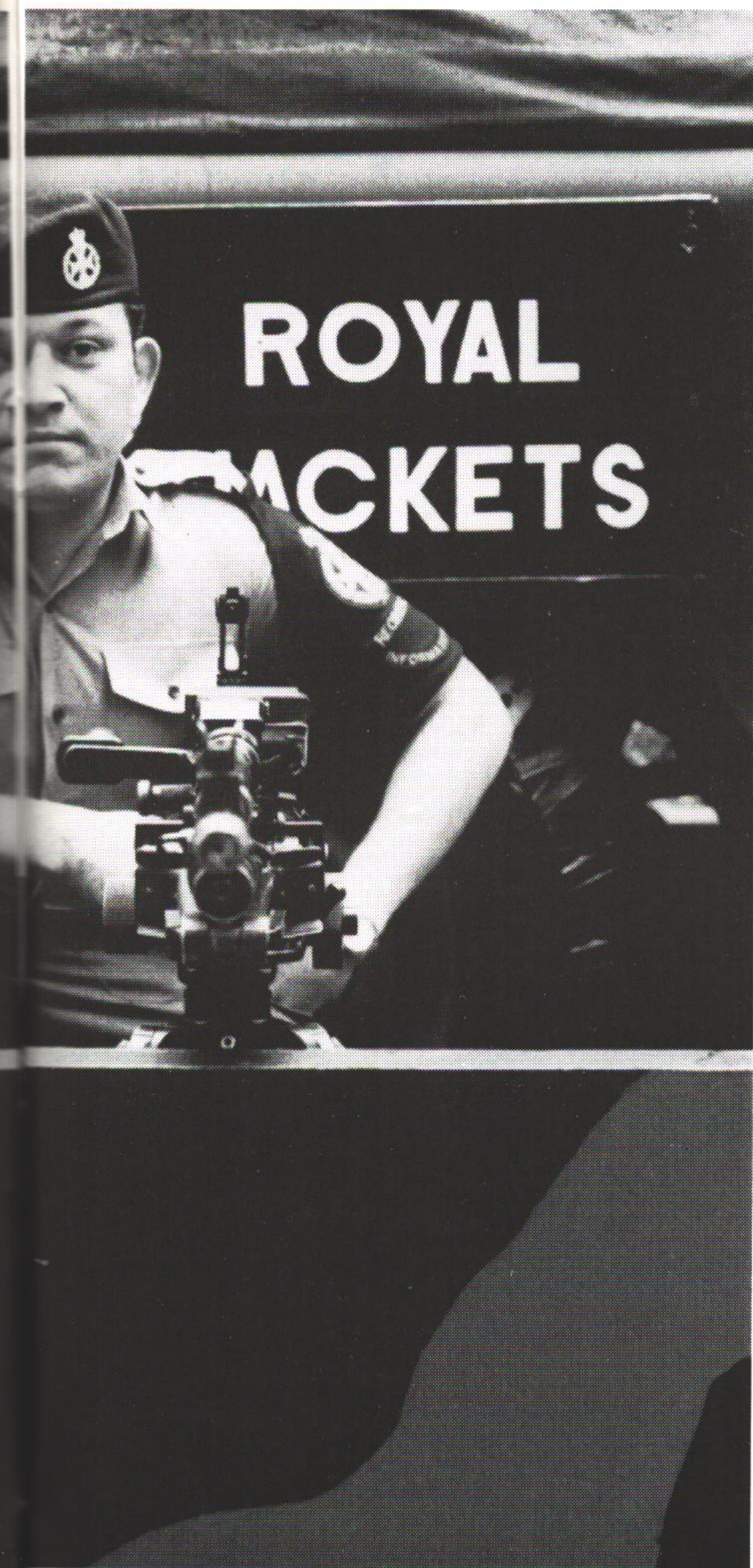
The growing economic imbalance between countries with a trade deficit like Britain and the USA, and those with a large surplus like Japan and West Germany, is strengthening isolationist tendencies. A trade war is in the making. The bitter trade dispute is illustrated by the competition over high-definition television (HDTV). Japan and the EEC are each championing their own quality standards, to pave the way for keeping the other out of their markets. Meanwhile the USA is working out its own strategy for developing HDTV with a Stars and Stripes label. Each government is working hand in hand with business to secure markets at its competitors' expense.

The growth of these economic rivalries explains the trend towards a culture of militarism in the Western nations, which involves both physical rearmament and a political emphasis on chauvinist denunciations of foreign rivals. Thatcher's anti-European speeches last year, for example, were motivated by the



realisation that Britain will face major problems from the more dynamic EEC economies in the reorganisation of Continental capitalism between now and 1992. Arch-Tory and *Sunday Telegraph* editor Peregrine Worsthorne has posed the question 'Will Germany rule Europe?', and answered it with a resounding 'yes'. He predicted that, after 1992, Britain would be reduced to a second-rate power, and concluded that the 'moral for Britain would seem to be that its "special" relationship with the United States should be cherished and that its own deterrent must be retained to provide a safety-net in case the new European settlement should not





#### A look into the future

prove durable' (12 February).

The search for a new system of alliances complements the economic competition for markets and spheres of influence. The new nationalist, militaristic culture which is now in the making has been fuelled by the exigencies of economic survival. As the economic interests of different trade blocs diverge further, the Western Alliance will become an empty shell—an embarrassment to most of its members.

It took Washington considerable effort to get an agreement to stage a Nato summit at all next month. However, the USA could not obtain assurances that the summit will produce a consensus in support of

modernising Nato's short-range nuclear weapons. West Germany is not the only one hesitating on the issue. Norway, Denmark and Belgium have all indicated that they will not yield to US pressure on this matter.

Commenting on the disputes over the modernisation of nuclear arms, the *Washington Post* noted 'the absence of true Nato consensus on the problems raised by the new diplomatic options and by the greater equality among Nato partners'. It concluded that 'Washington has differences with almost every West European Nato state, not just West Germany, and the alliance as a whole now lacks a sense of broad direction' (14 February). As things develop, these conflicts are likely to involve far more than the odd abusive speech and rows over television technology. They may well mark the start of the road towards the Third World War.

#### What causes war

In conventional history, war is presented as the product of accidental events and irrational forces. Thus the First World War began in 1914 because the Austrian arch-duke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by a lone Serbian at Sarajevo, the Second World War started in 1939 because Adolf Hitler was a mesmerising lunatic who unleashed strange passions, and so on.

Marxists, on the other hand, view these wars as the continuation of economic rivalries by other means. It is no longer fashionable to use the word imperialism. Yet this unfashionable concept provides important insights into the dynamic of international relations throughout the twentieth century. The theory of imperialism argues that the economic problems facing a capitalist power can only be solved in the international arena, at the expense of poor nations and of its major rivals. Competition therefore becomes increasingly international in character. In periods of prosperity, such as the fifties and sixties, this competition can be conducted in a relatively amicable environment. But at times of economic stagnation it becomes more and more ruthless and predatory. We are in such a phase today.

At a certain stage economic competition is transformed into all-out economic warfare. Governments intervene and use special measures to attack competitors. This politicisation of economic competition usually represents the prelude to war. Nobody sets out to start a full-scale war. But as the process of economic competition runs out of control, it is only a matter of time before conflicts take an unpredictable course. The

developing imperialist rivalries have not yet required a definite political shape. The post-war world settlement remains intact—but only just. This settlement no longer corresponds to the true balance of power. Something has to give; it is not yet clear what that something will be.

Realising that the world order is in transition, foreign policy experts have begun to debate the likely outcome. One American pundit, Kenneth Moss, has noted the changing perceptions of Washington's relationship with the other capitalist powers: 'Economically speaking, the post-war period has ended. The members of the European Community, as well as key non-members, are no longer clients of the US economic goodwill. They are competitors, albeit friendly ones.' ('The next step in US-European relations', *Washington Quarterly*, spring 1988)

More far-sighted commentators don't share Moss' faith in the friendly character of economic rivalries; they understand that America's economic decline points towards a major political upheaval in the old international order. An important article published last year in the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs* argues that America's financial crisis has acquired a 'geopolitical and historical dimension'. The authors suggest that this 'creates the grim possibility that the United States, the country that created the post-war global economy, is now on a course fated to destroy it'. They insist that the challenge facing US foreign policy is not its relations with the Soviet Union, but the threat posed by its capitalist rivals: 'Under the circumstances it is imperative that the United States not become so preoccupied with Soviet relations that it fails to make the fundamental changes in the West that are the preconditions for future stability.' (See D Calleo and others, 'The dollar and the defence of the West', *Foreign Affairs*, spring 1988)

#### War in the third world

But even these experts underestimate the problem. America cannot simply 'make the fundamental changes' which they prescribe. World affairs cannot be reorganised through intellectual schemes or diplomatic discussions. From Waterloo to Hiroshima, history provides no precedents for establishing a new international balance of power without military conflict. One of the ironies of contemporary affairs is that a relaxation of East-West tensions and the erosion of the Western Alliance should represent, not a real step towards peace, but a point of transition towards the eruption of a





new global conflict among the capitalist powers.

Although the evolution of imperialist conflict is still at an early stage, it would be dangerous to conclude that militarism is a problem only for the future. While the major powers remain hesitant and careful about sparring with each other, they have no hesitation about upping the stakes in other parts of the world. The militarisation of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East is proceeding at a furious pace. The export of arms to the third world appears to be the West's major civilising mission today. South African terrorism in countries like Mozambique, Israeli violence against Palestinians, American and British support for government-by-death-squad from the Philippines to Sri Lanka are typical examples of the trend towards more direct political/military oppression. Meanwhile, the imperialist powers' economic domination is devastating growing areas of the third world, as they try to compensate for their economic crises at home by bleeding poor nations dry.

According to one prestigious report, in some third world states 'the severity of...prolonged economic slump already surpasses that of the Great Depression in the industrial countries' (*World Development Report 1988*, p3). The report examined 35 'low-income developing countries'; in 21 the daily calorie supply was lower in 1985 than in 1965. Those who believe that imperialist plunder is an historical curiosity should take a glance at the consequences of the debt crisis. Since 1982, the third world has transferred nearly \$90 billion to the imperialist

states. The burden of debt repayment in Latin America is double that which ruined Weimar Germany between the wars.

The economic enslavement of the third world invites political and military interventions as imperialist powers try to establish their own spheres of influence. This explains Washington's obsession with its 'backyard' in Latin America. Now the Japanese are busy constructing their own economic bloc in South-east Asia. Japanese investments are pouring into Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

Lebanon is the model of what the Western carve-up of the third world means in practice for the peoples of these regions. The Lebanonisation of Afghanistan, and potentially of Pakistan, points to a trend spreading across the third world.

The culture of militarism in the West looks to the third world for its raw material, in the shape of hostility to Arabs, Asians, Africans and others. Western powers have picked on small targets like Libya, Nicaragua and Grenada to popularise a militaristic outlook. The USA justifies its foreign interventions in the name of fighting 'terrorist states'. Crude chauvinist outbursts against third world people have become respectable in the West.

Within Britain, the growth of a militarist culture has met with little resistance. It is fashionable to pour scorn on the Rambo politics of the White House. Yet the home-grown British Rambos are allowed to operate from the South Atlantic to the North of Ireland without facing any serious challenge at home. The Tory government and its media supporters have rarely been

confronted as they issue poisonous propaganda against Arabs, Argentinians or any other suitable alien target.

Many British liberals and leftists are happy to denounce American imperialism. Such sentiments smack of hypocrisy when a different standard is applied to British imperialism. In Britain, the priority in the fight against militarism ought to be taking on the enemy at home; attacking US imperialism instead is an easy option which sidesteps the most pressing issues facing us. The 20-year long war which Britain is waging in Ireland does not appear to merit a fiftieth of the column inches devoted to Nicaragua in British left-wing newspapers.

Labour leader Neil Kinnock's formal abandonment of unilateral nuclear disarmament must be placed in the context of the general submission to militarist culture. Those who accept the legitimacy of defending the British state will inevitably acquiesce to the means required to protect its interests. Marxists do not accept that the defence of an imperialist power like Britain is a legitimate public concern. Militarism protects only the interests of the capitalist class and its right to exploit people around the world. In the third world, defending British interests means upholding the rights of piracy and plunder. And supporting the British state against its imperialist rivals means accepting the sacrifices, in terms of living standards and lives, which are always involved in economic and then military warfare.

### Good riddance

The way to halt the drift towards war is to challenge the ruling class which benefits from militarist adventures. The way to counter the culture of militarism is to popularise an internationalist outlook in Britain, an outlook which identifies a common interest among people from all nations in opposing imperialism.

After 40 years of operating as a united front of the world's most dangerous militarists and warmongers, it is good that the Western Alliance is crumbling. At the same time, we need to be vigilant against the new and increasingly militaristic methods which America, Britain and the rest will adopt to pursue their global interests. The chauvinist propaganda of the Tory government is designed to prepare the political ground for the major conflicts to come. Whether it is directed against Europe, Ireland or Libya, this propaganda war requires a robust response from those concerned to prevent another international conflagration.

Lebanon is the model of what the Western carve-up of the third world means for the peoples of these regions

PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK



What does SDI really stand for?

# The making of Star Wars

**Gemma Forest examines the facts behind the sci-fi**

The budget which new US president George Bush unveiled in February trimmed \$5 billion from Pentagon funds, as a first faltering step towards cutting America's massive budget deficit. Yet Bush went out of his way to declare that he would 'vigorously pursue' Ronald Reagan's strategic defence initiative (SDI), popularly known as Star Wars. Why?

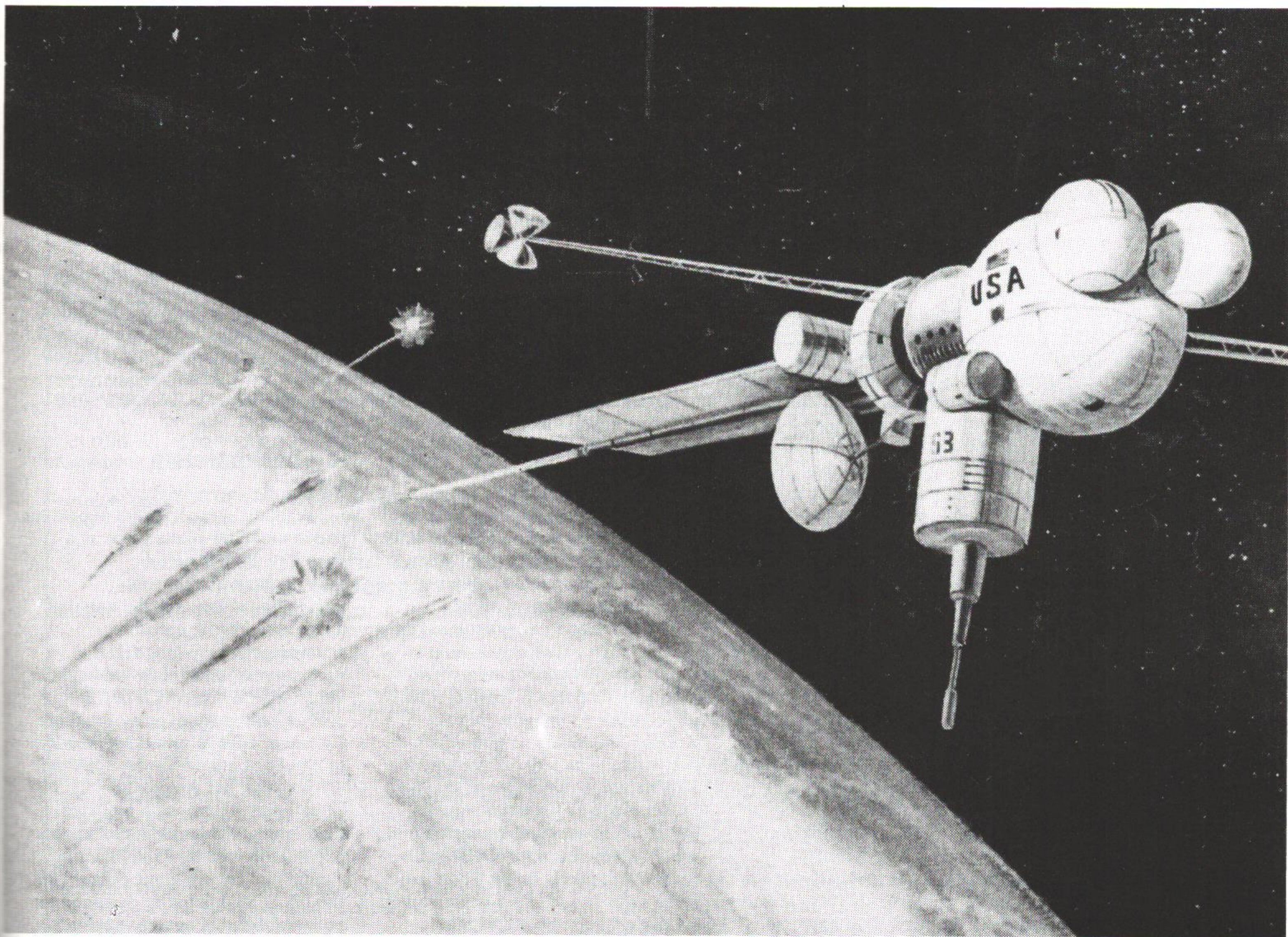
Strategic defence—the ability to destroy offensive strategic nuclear weapons in flight—has long been part of the US armoury. But it has never enjoyed the high profile it has today. In the fifties, US cities were ringed with Nike missiles backed by 2500 'fighter-interceptor' aircraft. As intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) replaced nuclear bombers, the USA moved to develop a ground-launched anti-ballistic missile

(ABM) system. These systems remained a negotiable part of Washington's arsenal; the ABM treaty, signed with the Soviets in 1972, limited the USA to placing 100 ground-based missiles around its silos in Grand Forks, North Dakota—an option which Washington chose not to exercise at all. Yet throughout his diplomacy with Gorbachev, Reagan made clear that SDI was not negotiable. At first sight this new emphasis on strategic defence appears surprising, given the relaxation of East-West tensions and the technical and financial problems that have dogged the Star Wars project.

SDI has changed a lot since March 1983 when Ronald Reagan first declared his intention to make nuclear weapons 'impotent and obsolete'. Instead of being a

replacement for nuclear deterrence, SDI is now put forward as a supplement to mutually assured destruction. Where Star Wars was once promoted as offering an impregnable astrodome stretching from New York to Los Angeles, its goals are now more modest. To understand SDI's role today, we must first go back to the beginning.

In its original conception, SDI was supposed to stop a Soviet first strike on US cities. It consisted of a multi-layered screen of space-launched and ground-launched beams of directed energy or particles, supplemented by ground-launched missiles. First, space-aimed beams would destroy hostile missiles in their 'boost' phase—immediately after launching, and before they had time to break up into multiple warheads. Next, further systems would target warheads in





Almost immediately after Reagan's 1983 Star Wars speech, Washington conveniently 'discovered' new Soviet SDI programmes to justify its development

mid-course. Finally, warheads which penetrated the first two layers of the umbrella would be taken out, high above American cities, by surface-to-air missiles.

### Science fiction

Reagan's original plans were announced not long after the blockbusting success of the George Lucas movie from which its popular name was taken. Star Wars captured the imagination of the American public, put Reagan's opponents on the defensive, and helped him to win a second presidential term.

However, the technical and economic feasibility of SDI was quickly called into question. If it was to depend on chemical lasers, for example, SDI would entail launching 1600 satellites into low orbit, each weighing 100 tonnes and each costing the same as an aircraft carrier. As for excimer lasers, they would require the construction of satellite mirrors 30 metres wide but completely blemish-free. In the case of x-ray lasers, these would be fired from exploding nuclear 'spaceguns' launched from submarines. In all, SDI Mark 1 comprised at least eight components. According to Reagan's research and development man Dr Richard De Lauer, each component would require as much R&D effort as the Manhattan Project, which used \$2 billion, a huge area of the New Mexico desert and 50 000 people (including most of the world's top scientists) to build the atom bomb in the forties.

The accuracy demanded of SDI beams was comparable to firing a rifle over a range of 1000 miles and erring by no more than the diameter of a bullet. SDI space platforms had to escape anti-satellite weapons. SDI sensors would have to pick out 10 000 real Soviet warheads from among 100 000 decoys. SDI computers could easily go wrong: they would depend on perhaps 10m lines of software code. Former defence secretary James Schlesinger calculated that a perfect shield for the USA would cost \$1000 billion; others maintained that keeping it up to date would cost up to \$200 billion a year—every year (see F Long and others (eds), *Weapons in Space*, 1986).

It is little surprise that both the objectives and the technologies of SDI have been scaled down. Instead of defending all US cities, SDI is now designed merely to complicate a salvo against American silos. Instead of intercepting every enemy warhead, it is intended to stop perhaps a third—enough to make anybody think twice about unleashing a pre-emptive onslaught. As Henry Kissinger put it, 'the incentive for a first strike would be sharply, perhaps decisively, reduced if an aggressor knew that half of the opponent's

ICBMs would survive any foreseeable attack' (quoted in R MacNamara, *Blundering into Disaster: Surviving the First Century of the Nuclear Age*, 1987).

Methods have also changed. In the wake of suspect—perhaps falsified—experiments with rays, and of wounding resignations of disillusioned Pentagon scientists at California's Lawrence Livermore x-ray laser research laboratory, the technological emphasis has shifted from directed-energy beams to more prosaic kinetic energy weapons: to 'smart rocks' or, in their latest incarnation, 'brilliant pebbles'. Such non-explosive projectiles, loaded up with on-board computer guidance, are felt to be more likely to smash nuclear weapons than are lasers. They will dominate phase 1 of SDI, which will be ready by about the turn of the century at a cost of perhaps \$70 billion. Phase 2, beams and all, will follow on a few years later.

Spending on kinetic and directed-energy weapons will exceed \$1 billion each in fiscal year 1990. An ambitious programme of testing has begun, to check speed of response, the ability of hardware to function in a nuclear environment, first-time software operation, short downtimes, the ability to react to human commands and to withstand anti-satellite weapons.

### Trains, boats & planes

What is all this in aid of? Given the insuperable obstacles to a perfect national defence system, why was SDI Mark 1 ever advocated? And if SDI is now more modestly about improving the survivability of land-based ICBMs, what makes it more attractive than alternative means of protecting the US strategic nuclear triad? After all, the Pentagon has plans to deploy the MX missile on hard-to-catch trains and the Midgetman missile on still more mobile trucks; it has also rolled out a Stealth bomber with a body design which prevents it being detected by radar; and it maintains a critical force of ICBMs hidden beneath the sea. Clearly the technologies of rail, road, stealth and submarine are much more proven than those of SDI. So why bother with it?

The Pentagon has tried to argue that SDI is a necessary counter to Soviet weaponry. But even before Gorbachev's peace offensive, it was not credible to imagine that the Kremlin was ready to undertake a first strike. The bulk of American ICBMs are invulnerable at sea: any Soviet lunge at US cities would, therefore, invite total devastation in reply. Within months of Reagan's Star Wars speech, Brent Scowcroft (then chief of the US commission on strategic forces, now national security adviser) admitted that the

Kremlin did not have the wherewithal even to wipe out the more vulnerable land-based US nuclear missiles.

Nor is it possible to prove that Star Wars is a response to Soviet advances in SDI technologies. While Soviet skills in space launchers and energy/particle beams may exceed those of America, in sensors, computers and telecommunications the USA is way ahead. This fact is central, given that much of the Pentagon's SDI spending goes into those areas where Washington already enjoys a comfortable lead.

SDI has played some part in US-Soviet relations. It has served as a useful lever (and, at around two per cent of total US defence spending, a comparatively cheap one) with which to press the Soviets into making concessions on nuclear arms. Late in 1985 Gorbachev offered to cut his strategic nuclear warheads by half in exchange for SDI's dismantlement. The threat of Star Wars also increased the pressure on Gorbachev to make concessions on intermediate nuclear forces. But in the main, Washington's emphasis on the Soviet dimension has served as a smokescreen to justify the pursuit of SDI programmes for other purposes.

Almost immediately after Reagan's 1983 Star Wars speech, Washington conveniently 'discovered' new Soviet SDI programmes, and has published these claims to justify Star Wars. But this evidence is now treated with suspicion even within American establishment circles. Two top analysts from the committee for national security have rubbished the CIA and Pentagon reports: 'The evidence that the Soviets may be preparing to break out of the ABM Treaty is highly selective, one-sided and, when subjected to even limited scrutiny, unconvincing.' (S Daggett and RD English, 'Assessing Soviet strategic defence', *Foreign Policy*, spring 1988)

### Big backhanders

Behind the anti-Soviet propaganda, a much more important purpose of SDI seems to be as a disguised prop for US manufacturing's faltering technological base. In the home of the free enterprise culture, governments have long felt it necessary to justify state support for industry by delivering it in the publicly acceptable form of defence contracts. SDI allows the authorities to hand out aid on a massive scale.

This year, the American Electronics Association reported that, from 1984 to 1987, electronics production rose by 75 per cent in Japan, and by just eight per cent in the USA. SDI is partly designed to bolster US firms against statistics like that. More than the less exotic



technologies of rail, road, stealth and submarine subterfuges, SDI has considerable spin-off value for civilian industry. Since a Soviet attack is not an issue, the relative merits of the different defence systems in terms of 'survivability' count for little. But prowess in commercial technologies does—and SDI has a special contribution to make here. It could help to keep the USA ahead in supercomputers, telecommunications, fault-tolerant data processing and automated software production. It is also meant to regain some ground on the Japanese in robotics, and to ensure that Europe's Ariane project does not supplant the ill-starred US space shuttle in launcher technology.

SDI also has a broader political significance for the heightening conflicts within the Western Alliance. It serves as another way of teaching Europe and Japan that Uncle Sam is still boss. Unlike Cruise and Pershing, SDI was the result of a unilateral announcement by the USA: the Nato partners were not consulted about its genesis. Star Wars is the flagship of Washington's campaign to consolidate its position of global leadership by militarising international relations.

SDI can also give Washington a badly-needed boost in the technological trade wars among the capitalist powers. It has already

allowed the USA to lead European arms manufacturers a merry dance in search of supposedly lucrative military contracts. And SDI research broadens the scope of technologies which the CIA can declare 'off limits' to European companies interested in exports to the Eastern bloc. When the Americans have trouble competing in the race to sell such hi-tech goods to the East, they can emphasise the importance of SDI and accuse European exporters of jeopardising the security of the 'free world'.

### Good buy SDI

In the same vein, Star Wars gives the Pentagon an opportunity to force new technologies on to its troublesome ally/rival West Germany. When demanding that Bonn submits to the modernisation of nuclear weapons on German soil, and pulls its weight on building up conventional forces, America can argue that the most advanced systems are only available from SDI-linked US suppliers.

All in all, SDI is not what it seems. Given the revival of US-Soviet détente it might appear logical for SDI to go away. But given the continuing decline of the US economy, and the direction of US foreign policy, Star Wars is here to stay.

In focusing on the SDIs of Reagan

and Bush, we have no desire to depict Europe as innocent victim. It too has plans. While West Germany's chancellor Kohl and even Britain's Thatcher grumbled about America's monopoly on SDI in the mid-eighties, French president Mitterrand won 18 European states around to Eureka, a \$5 billion collaborative programme of research into SDI-related technologies. The drive toward a Euro Star Wars has accelerated. Between 1984 and last year, the European Community's Esprit programme gave 12 electronics companies nearly \$2 billion to research civilian/military technologies; now a further \$2 billion has been agreed. In addition, the 13-nation European Space Agency has put aside \$32 billion for satellite research and deployment up to the turn of the century.

SDI shows that a military technology does not have to be nuclear to be significant. As a recent US air force document on space policy, approved by the Pentagon, put it, 'spacepower will be as decisive in future combat as airpower is today'. From the laboratories of America to surveillance satellites above the Gulf, New Caledonia, the Falklands and Northern Ireland, SDI systems are a mortal threat to people around the world.

## WORLD OF MUSIC ARTS AND DANCE WOMAD WEEKEND MORECAMBE BAY, LANCASHIRE 16 · 17 · 18 · JUNE · 1989

Presented in association with Lancaster City Council  
PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

**FAIRGROUND ATTRACTION (UK) THE DRUMMERS OF BURUNDI** (Burundi) **DOUDOU N'DIAYE ROSE** (Senegal) **REMMY ONGALA AND ORCHESTRE SUPER MATIMILA** (Tanzania) **THE MUSICIANS OF THE NILE** (Egypt) **FARAFINA** (Burkina Faso) **THE FOUR BROTHERS** (Zimbabwe) **PERE UBU** (USA) **PRAHALAD NATAK THEATRE CO** (India) **SACRED MUSIC & SACRED DANCE - MYSTICAL ARTS OF TIBET** (Tibet) **SABRI BROTHERS** (Pakistan) **MEKONS** (UK) **PURE GOLD** (South Africa) **RED SHIFT** (UK) **ORQUESTA REVE** (Cuba) **MIGHTY LION & STREET CULTURE** (UK) **GEOFFERY ORYEMA** (Uganda) **HOURIA AICHI** (Algeria) **AMADOU JOBARTEH** (The Gambia) + **SAMBA DIABARE** (Senegal)

WITH

CONCERT SESSIONS · WORKSHOPS · OPEN-AIR STAGE · CIRCUS BIG TOP · CLUB VENUES · LATE NIGHT EVENTS · CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT · GUEST-HOUSE ACCOMMODATION

ADVANCE WEEKEND TICKETS £26  
CHILDREN UNDER 12 FREE

GUEST HOUSE ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE AT BARGAIN PRICES FOR WEEKEND TICKET HOLDERS

Please ask for accommodation booking form with ticket application

For general information or enquiries regarding accommodation, please contact: The Festival Office, Town Hall, Morecambe LA5 4AF (Tel: 0524 417120)

#### TICKETS BY PHONE:

Credit Card Hotline: Access, Visa · 0524 65679 (24-hour service)

#### TICKETS BY PERSON:

**Manchester:** Piccadilly Records 061 236 2577. **Sheffield:** Fon Records 0742 722016. **Preston:** Action Records 0772 58809. **Penrith:** Echoes 0768 62969. **Liverpool:** Probe Records 051 227 5646. **Newcastle upon Tyne:** Volume Records 091 232 1678. **Leeds:** Jumbo Records 0532 455570. **Edinburgh:** Virgin Records 031 225 4583. **Glasgow:** Virgin Records 041 221 2606. **Bristol:** Revolver Records 0272 299105 · Biashara 0272 260902.

**TICKETS BY POST:** The Duke's Playhouse, Moor Lane, Lancaster LA1 1QE. Cheques payable to: Duke's Playhouse Ltd. Please mark enquiries 'WOMAD'. N.B. Orders must be accompanied by an s.a.e.



# THE SOVIET UNION DEMYSTIFIED

This materialist analysis of developments from Lenin and the 1917 Revolution to Gorbachev and *glasnost* answers the key questions about the Soviet Union and its relations with the West.

£5.95 plus 85p p&p. Junius Publications, BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX.



Secrets of the Second World War

# Disaffection, desertion and mutiny

**Toby Banks finds that confidential reports reveal some little-known truths about Britain's conscript army**

Images of the Second World War play an important part in the Thatcher regime's attempt to construct a new culture of militarism. The authorities never miss an opportunity to commemorate an anniversary or re-run a war story. This is not just nostalgia. The official history of the years from 1939-45 emphasises a theme which the Tories want to popularise again today. It depicts a nation united behind its government, making willing sacrifices to defend British decency against foreigners. Swap Margaret Thatcher for Winston Churchill, and the modern point of using this imagery becomes clear. And of all the images of the Second World War, none is more important than that of Tommy Atkins, stereotypical British soldier.

In countless books, comics and films, the British squaddie of the Second World War has been depicted as a noble crusader for democracy, a chirpy chappy who grinned and bore it, a patriotic terrier. Tommy Atkins is a key player in the nationalist pageant of British history. He is also largely a myth. To keep him alive in the public imagination, the authorities have had to shroud many facts about the war in secrecy. But they know the truth.

## To question why

The War Office produced two internal pamphlets assessing the experience of the army in wartime—'Morale' (1949) and 'Discipline' (1950). Each report, classified as highly confidential, gives a glimpse of the discontent in the ranks that conventional accounts ignore.

The number of uniformed troops stood at about 2.5m in 1942 and was close to 3m by the end of the war (army only). Of these, just a quarter of a million had volunteered. The War Office privately conceded that the conscripts 'had little wish to serve' ('Discipline', p39), and noted 'the undeniable and and all-important fact that a very large proportion of those who served as soldiers remained civilians at heart...':

'Moreover, most of the conscripted army consisted of men who, without necessarily being more

intelligent or in a true sense better educated than the regular soldier, were more prone than he to think for themselves, to "question why", and to reflect, if only to the extent involved by pondering on the headlines in the cheap newspapers, on the wider political and other issues raised by the war, which provided the reason why they themselves were under arms.' ('Morale', p17)

Concern about the unwillingness of many conscripts to do what the state demanded seems justified by first-hand accounts. A Scottish volunteer remembers presenting his paybook to be changed:

'I was the only one with *Duration of War*, meaning that I was a volunteer. All my mates are standing behind me and everyone's going "You bloody mug you!"....That showed me nobody wanted to volunteer....If this nation was a nation of sacrificers it was because they were forced to do something they didnae want to, and they done it with a great deal of reluctance and I would say, without going any further, that's the myth chopped.' (Quoted in P Grafton, *You, You & You!*, 1981, p157)

The British soldier was embittered by conscription, grim conditions, and anxiety about loved ones at home, plus the prospect of being killed. Few could stomach the petty restrictions of army life; the official reports complain that the private soldier did not 'cease to grouse as soon as he was told the reason for an unpopular rule; too often, indeed, he professed not merely discontent but disbelief' ('Morale', p19). He expressed particular disbelief about being paid a pittance while munitions workers earned record wages. Conscripts, concluded the War Office, were an ungrateful bunch:

'The soldier was only too ready to ascribe his comparatively low rate of pay to neglect on the part of parliament—an added ingredient of the bitterness with which he regarded the government and "authority" generally....When satisfactory increases were finally granted they

were received without gratitude, and regarded as having been extorted from a reluctant government by continual pressure.' ('Morale', p15)

The troops' main preoccupation was getting out of the army: 'Old Churchill came over at Alamein...with his cigar and his V—Victory sign. "Better times are around the corner." And we were going "And when are you going to get us home, you pot-bellied old bastard?".' (*You, You & You!*, p87) All of this meant that the conscript army was soon an unhappy band. The War Office was keenly aware of the possible implications of this disaffection, particularly among overseas forces—'a continual source of anxiety to the authorities' ('Morale', p11). Above all, it feared a collapse of discipline, recalling the conclusions of the committee which had reported on courts martial at the end of the First World War: 'Unless discipline in armies be preserved such forces are but a mob—dangerous to all but the enemies of their country.' ('Discipline', p56)

During the First World War, great armies of the European powers had collapsed against the backdrop of revolutionary uprisings. Even the British army experienced mutiny and insubordination. Desperate to avoid a repeat, the British authorities treated disorder and desertion with sensitivity and secrecy in the Second World War, creating the impression that they did not exist. But exist they did, even if they were not as politically motivated as the earlier European protests.

## Darkest secret

Mutiny is the darkest secret in army annals. Even now, just one Second World War mutiny is really acknowledged—at Salerno, Italy, in 1943—and even that only came to light in 1959. Convalescents from the 50th and 51st divisions, who had been told they were being sent back to their old units (which were rumoured to be due to return to Britain), were instead shipped in to reinforce the Allied army trying to land at Salerno. The survivors insist that many of them were still wounded. When these 1500 men were told to move inland and join the 46th division, about 300 refused



and remained on the beach 'on strike'. After a lieutenant general admitted that they were there by mistake, but still insisted that they obey orders and march, another 100 gave in. The remaining 191 were put in a prison compound, and later court-martialled for mutiny. Three sergeants were sentenced to death, the corporals to 10 years in prison and the privates to seven. All eventually served prison sentences.

The idea that Salerno was the only mutiny in the Second World War is made nonsense of by the statistics in the War Office's own secret pamphlets. These show that 800 soldiers were convicted of mutiny at

courts martial from 1 September 1939 to 31 August 1945—and Salerno accounted for less than a quarter of them ('Discipline', appendix 1a).

One or two other minor mutinies have recently come to light—officers were locked up in Mersa Matruh in 1940, an NCO was tied up on an Egyptian train in 1942. The tiny number of mutiny convictions resulting from each of these incidents suggests that the 800 convictions represent a large number of disorders and riots. Servicemen's verbal accounts also record fairly serious acts of mutiny for which nobody was charged. The full story of mutiny in

the British army remains to be told. But it is clear that, although revolution was not sweeping the ranks, the threat of large-scale disorder was not too far beneath the surface.

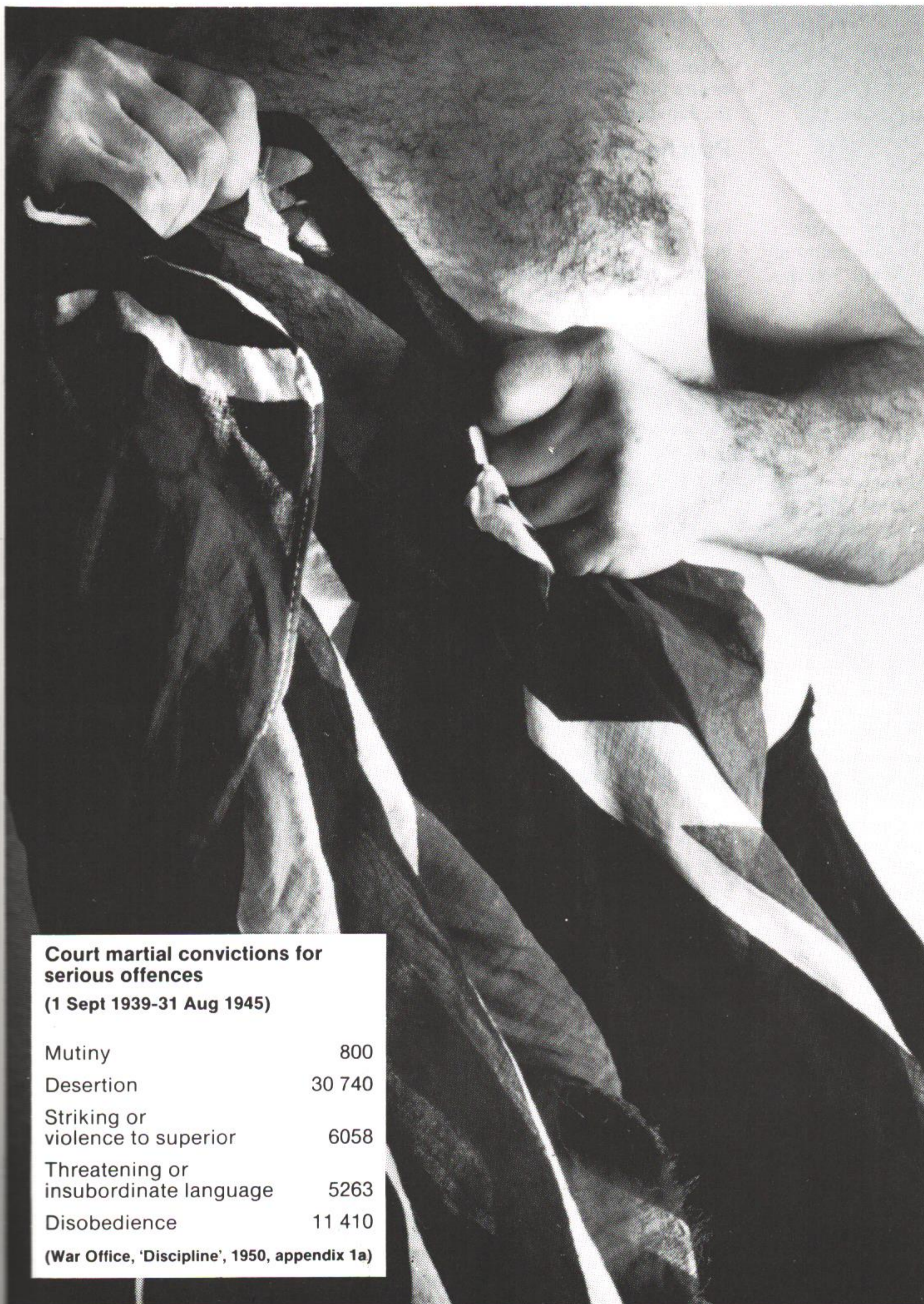
Desertion by individuals was far more widespread, described by the War Office as 'the most serious morale problem that arose in connection with troops in action' ('Morale', p13). The confidential court martial figures show that 30 750 British soldiers were convicted of desertion (and a further 75 157 of absence without leave) ('Discipline', appendix 1a). These figures only reveal the tip of the iceberg; for example, 99 139 were struck off army lists for desertion, but only a third were ever convicted. The authorities admitted that, two years after the war's end, 20 000 deserters were still at large; the true figure may be considerably higher. 'You can't spell Victory with an absentee' was a well-known slogan of the war years.

### Terror tactics

On top of this, a further 6058 soldiers were found guilty of striking or using violence to a superior officer, 5263 of threatening or insubordinate language and 11 410 of disobedience. That makes a total of almost 130 000 convictions for what were considered *serious* disciplinary offences.

The total of court martial convictions for all offences up to August 1945 was 210 029. Even this is clearly a conservative record of incidents, since 'only a relatively small proportion of offences ultimately lead to courts martial' ('Discipline', p42). It also excludes the demobilisation period after the war, which proved the most troublesome for the authorities, as soldiers became impatient to get out of uniform. In 1946, 258 paratroopers were charged with mutiny in Malaya.

How did the authorities deal with wartime dissent and prevent it spreading? Their traditional response was to terrorise the troublemakers. The sheer number of serious offences presented a problem. The disciplinary apparatus had to be expanded. Permanent presidents of courts martial were appointed and later increased to deal with demand. Special court martial centres were set up, with crack staff to prevent 'mass insubordination' among prisoners awaiting trial. Detention centres for convicted men were made tough enough to deter people from seeing them as a soft option; tales of beatings were rife. Others were sentenced and then sent back to fight, warned that their sentence would be enforced at the first hint of further trouble.



#### Court martial convictions for serious offences

(1 Sept 1939-31 Aug 1945)

Mutiny	800
Desertion	30 740
Striking or violence to superior	6058
Threatening or insubordinate language	5263
Disobedience	11 410

(War Office, 'Discipline', 1950, appendix 1a)



Education  
officers  
were told to  
teach the  
troops  
'how the  
British  
Empire  
stands  
for the  
essential  
factors of a  
better life'

Military commanders felt far more drastic measures were needed to deal with the problem. 'In 1942, the situation in the Middle East as regards "Desertion" became so serious that the commander-in-chief (General, afterwards Field-Marshal, Sir Claude Auchinleck), with the unanimous agreement of his army commanders, forwarded to the War Office a recommendation for the reintroduction of the death penalty for desertion in the field, which had been abolished in 1930.' ('Discipline', p54) This demand was taken up by many other officers as the war progressed.

The War Office, however, had learnt some important lessons from the First World War. It believed that terror alone was not sufficient to deal with the modern conscript. So the authorities used more sophisticated methods alongside the brutality. Many of these were pursued by the bluntly named Morale Committee, set up in 1943. They included propaganda campaigns, scrutiny of the causes of ill-discipline (including psychiatric techniques), analysis of the mood of the troops, and 'democratic' reforms.

### Imperial education

There was nothing new about governments using propaganda to keep troops loyal. But the British government of the 1940s adopted a slightly subtler approach. Jingoistic patriotism had been widely discredited by the carnage of the Great War and the disillusionment resulting from Lloyd George's promise of 'a land fit for heroes' which turned out to mean dole queues and soup kitchens. This time, the authorities emphasised that Britain was fighting for 'freedom' and 'social justice' at home as well as abroad. Instead of the old 'Your country needs you' command from Lord Kitchener to the lower orders, Churchill's government used the more egalitarian 'Let us go forward together'.

In 1941 the Army Bureau for Current Affairs (ABCA) was set up under the auspices of the education corps. ABCA's promotional film told troops that its aim was 'not to impose the "official" view, but to help the soldier come to well-balanced views of his own'. The 'well-balanced view' which the authorities had in mind was spelled out in ABCA's orders from above: to teach soldiers 'how the British Empire stands for the essential factors of a better life'. Education officers gave talks on developments in the war and discussed post-war prospects. Winning was presented, not as an obligation to King and country, but as the basis for a fairer Britain. The War Office noted that such controlled discussion provided 'a

healthy opportunity for letting off steam on the part of the disgruntled' ('Morale', p18).

In February 1944 officials foresaw that, after the defeat of Germany, it would be hard to motivate troops to continue fighting distant Japan. So they set up the Morale (Far Eastern) Inter-Services Committee, to oversee 'the maintenance of the morale of our forces in the Far East, who (it was anticipated) would feel that the war was in a large measure over and would be inclined to ask why they should be kept thousands of miles away from home in tropical conditions of climate and terrain to fight an enemy whom they had not then learnt to hate, in a cause which they did not fully understand'. The committee's work 'concerned not only welfare, but "indoctrination"' ('Morale', p26). Presumably to ensure that the British 'learnt to hate' the Japanese.

### Psycho-propaganda

The mood of troops and their reaction to propaganda were carefully monitored by the welfare and morale committees, through detailed reports compiled by censors who read soldiers' mail. Psychiatrists were brought in to aid the propaganda effort; they told directors always to shoot training films from behind guns rather than facing them, and encouraged scriptwriters to show compassionate officers preoccupied with the men's welfare.

The image of officers as aloof and incompetent upper class twits was a legacy of the First World War. The authorities countered it by making superficial changes. Officers wore ordinary battledress, and the custom of saluting them in the street was allowed to lapse. Public schoolboys served in the ranks for a token period before becoming officers. When Field-Marshal Montgomery took command of the demoralised desert forces he cultivated a common touch, and used briefing sessions to explain strategy to his men. The line was that 'we're all in this together', and the confidential documents lay great stress on the need for officers to cultivate man-management skills.

### Isolating ringleaders

Sorting out those who did offend was a priority. The prisoners were carefully scrutinised by psychiatrists, and the army operated three basic categories: psychological problems (including shell-shock); 'genuine' cases (good sorts who had gone astray, usually worried about events at home); and habitual bad characters (defined as criminals and 'chronic grumblers and ringleaders in discontent'). The aim was to get the first type fit and discard the incurable; to deal leniently with the

second type and return them to the front; and, most importantly, to isolate the third and prevent them from contaminating others.

Many hardline offenders were segregated in special labour units from 1942. In the eyes of authority, the misfits who refused to fight for their country must be mentally backward, psychologically disturbed, or criminals. These prejudices were captured by the commanding officer of one labour unit:

'Just as the intakes were almost wholly unintelligent so they were correspondingly non-adult psychologically. As with a child, nothing was ever their fault—it was always their wives, the army, the capitalist system, the medical officer, never themselves.' ('Discipline', p70)

Teenage soldiers proved particularly resistant to army discipline. Special Young Soldiers Training Camps were set up to deal with them. Here too, the offenders were categorised. At one camp in Leeds categories ranged from: '(a) The physically immature lads, who shaved once a week and who could not stand up to the ordinary training', to '(d) The "rowdies", usually brought up in the tenements of large towns with little sense of self-respect. Though loyal to their own "gang" they resented all forms of discipline.' ('Discipline', p65)

The camp authorities most resented those youths they labelled 'the social rebel'. The list cited above describes category (c) as those sent to the Leeds camp for 'false interpretation of the meaning of "a Free Country"'. One boy soldier had no illusions about freedom in the army: 'When it came to educating boy soldiers it was just bloody sadistic.' (Quoted in *You, You & You!*, p86)

### 'Fear is the force'

Ultimately, the army relied on coercion to control conscripts. 'Discipline' refers to an essay by an experienced private in the Black Watch: 'He contended that fear is the driving force behind the execution of nearly every order and that it enters into every aspect of the soldier's life.' (p45) Such was life for Tommy Atkins.

Through all the media ballyhoo about the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the war this September, it is important to remember the secrets behind the official story. We will examine some of the other wartime myths—from the 'gentlemanly' behaviour of British forces abroad to the united 'Blitz spirit' at home—in a forthcoming issue of *Living Marxism*.



Japan rewrites its history

# The sun also rises

**And so, says Daniel Nassim, do Japan's imperial ambitions**

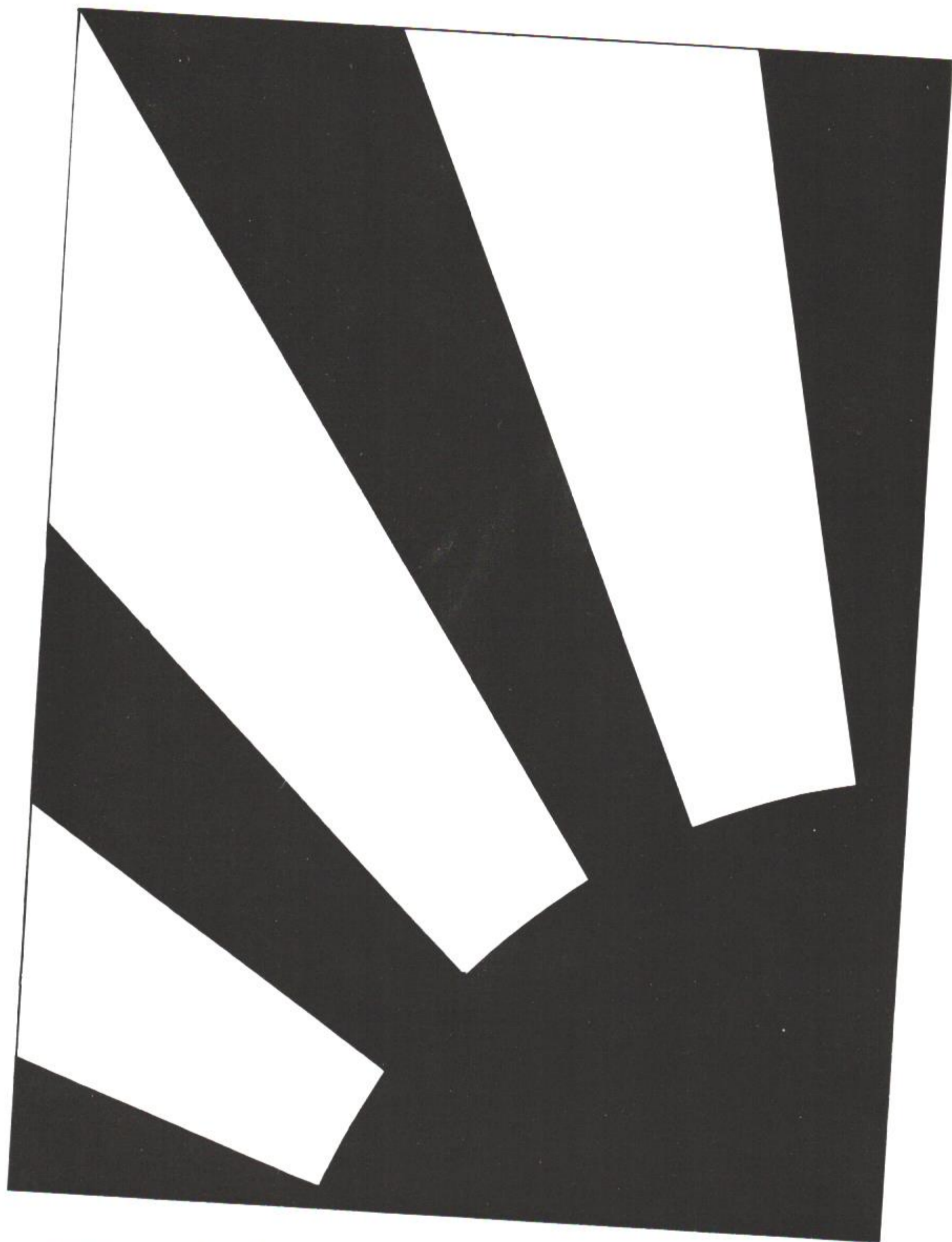
'An economic giant, a political dwarf' was, until recently, a fairly accurate description of Japan's status; but no longer. Japan has matured into a major player on the international field. True, it is still not a fully-grown political giant. But it now has the sort of muscle that cannot be ignored. This shift is evident in Japan's relations with its former patron—the USA.

The Bush administration has woken up to the importance of its relationship with Japan. Unlike in Britain, there was no debate over whether the US head of state should pay his respects to the dead Emperor Hirohito. One state department official told the press straight: Bush was going to Tokyo because the alliance with Japan is America's most important bilateral relationship.

## The price is wrong

As the USA finds it harder to police the globe alone, it is looking for its allies to share the burden (behind American leadership, of course) and to ease Washington's budget problems. Japan's wealth and regional position make it an obvious candidate. Japan already does a lot to support the US military. Tokyo gives Washington \$2.5 billion to subsidise the 120 US bases in Japan—about \$45 000 for each American serviceman. In return for funding American forces, Japan is meant to receive protection around the world. For example, Japan depends upon Middle Eastern oil, but has no military forces there to ensure supplies. So the USA looks after the Gulf for all the capitalist powers.

Washington has decided that Japanese subsidies are not a high enough fee for its services. Bush wants Japan to spend more on its own armed forces. A standard US complaint is that Japan only spends one per cent of its gross national product (GNP) on defence, while Washington spends 6.5 per cent—almost 10 times as much in cash terms. Last August the US congressional defence burden sharing panel called for a big increase in Japan's defence spending: 'Why do the Japanese—whose drive and ingenuity led them from total devastation to economic superpower status in a mere 40 years—appear unwilling to assume free world



burdens at a level more commensurate with their ability to pay than they currently assume?' Before Bush left for Hirohito's funeral in February, he again called for a 'greater improvement' in Japan's contribution to policing the world.

## 'Best kept secret'

A closer look at the 'one per cent debate' reveals that Japan is already a formidable military power. One per cent of Japan's booming GNP is enough to give it the third largest military budget in the world—\$30 billion in financial year 1989. In any case the one per cent figure is based on some clever figure-juggling. Japan really passed that marker back in 1983 or even earlier.

Japan's military capacity has increased dramatically. Between 1976 and 1986, while nominal GNP doubled, military spending rose by 140 per cent. A Reagan official called Japan's military power 'the best kept secret in Washington' (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 September 1988). For example, Japan will have a fleet of 60 destroyers by 1990; militaristic Britain has 47.

The Japanese already play a big role in policing their region. In 1981 the then prime minister, Zenko Suzuki, agreed to patrol an area 1000 miles from Japan, taking Japanese forces just south of Taiwan and north of the Philippines.



Powerful over-the-horizon radar enables the Japanese to spy 2000 miles into Soviet territory. Japan's East Asian neighbours, the victims of its imperialist aggression in the thirties and forties, are voicing fears about the resurgence of Japanese militarism.

### Arm the world

Japan is capable of highly sophisticated military production, as in the \$8 billion joint US-Japanese project to produce a new generation of fighter aircraft. Consequently, it's not just Japanese videos and cameras that are flooding the world market. The Japanese have sold helicopters to Sweden, Burma and Saudi Arabia, transport planes to Zaire, mines and bombs to India and Taiwan, patrol boats to India and Burma, jeeps to Nicaragua and radar and communications equipment in the Middle East.

Japan has the industrial capacity to raise military production much further. A country which has been the world's largest car producer since 1980 would have no problems turning out an army of tanks. Nissan recently changed its articles of association to include 'weapons'. The company already makes rockets and missile systems. According to a report by a British securities trader,

the Japanese government funds industry to maintain excess military capacity in case of an emergency.

Yet beneath their assertive exterior, the rulers of Japan have a problem. In February, the education ministry announced major changes to the school curriculum, demanding a new emphasis on the 'veneration of the emperor', on patriotism and on 'instilling a sense of Japanese identity'. This artificial attempt to teach children to 'love thy nation' shows that the Japanese authorities lack confidence in their authority and legitimacy.

### Guilty past

The reassertion of national identity is essential for the successful transformation of Japan from an economic success story into a world power. The discussion of school textbooks and teaching expresses the central dilemma facing the Japanese ruling class. Present-day Japan is the product of the military defeat of 1945. Japan suffered the humiliation of defeat and occupation—and had to accept guilt. Japanese rulers were forced to renounce their tradition and their past. The new Japanese state lacked the legitimacy of history. Worse still, what history the victorious powers allowed the Japanese to teach branded the

Japanese establishment as a gang of war criminals.

The legitimacy crisis which the Japanese ruling class shares with its counterpart in West Germany—both losers in the last war—presents a major problem. Capitalist politics depend upon the successful mobilisation of nationalist sentiment. This is the bread and butter of Thatcher in Britain and Bush in the USA. In Japan, mobilising such sentiments requires the rehabilitation of its history—and that threatens to re-raise all the issues of the war. There are many signs that a more militant nationalism is emerging. But the experience of defeat still provides a check on the consolidation of a full-blooded culture of militarism.

### God-king

The most striking indication of the growth of nationalism is the reaction to the death of Emperor Hirohito and the succession of Akihito. Five million Japanese sent get well messages to the emperor and many more cancelled New Year celebrations. For months a thousand media personnel camped outside the imperial palace. Some 500 000 Japanese joined them on news of Hirohito's death.

The emperor is the central focus of Japanese nationalism. The transition

*"Natasha Richardson... absolutely smashing performance..."*

NEW YORK TIMES

BEAUTIFUL... RICH... KIDNAPPED.  
SHE CAPTURED AMERICA'S HEART  
AND TORE IT APART.

# PATTY HEARST

HER OWN STORY

AN ATLANTIC ENTERTAINMENT GROUP/ZENITH PRESENTATION A MARVIN WORTH PRODUCTION A FILM BY PAUL SCHRADER "PATTY HEARST"  
STARRING NATASHA RICHARDSON WILLIAM FORSYTHE VING RHAMES FRANCES FISHER JODI LONG EDITOR MICHAEL R. MILLER DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY BOJAN BAZELLI  
BASED UPON THE BOOK "EVERY SECRET THING" BY PATRICIA CAMPBELL HEARST WITH ALVIN MOSCOW SCREENPLAY BY NICHOLAS KAZAN (LINE PRODUCER) JAMES D. BRUBAKER  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS THOMAS COLEMAN AND MICHAEL ROSENBLATT PRODUCED BY MARVIN WORTH DIRECTED BY PAUL SCHRADER

At selected cinemas from APRIL 7





A reassertion  
of the  
emperor's  
importance,  
and  
particularly  
of his  
divinity, is a  
symptom of  
more  
assertive  
nationalism

to modern capitalism in the nineteenth century was carried out in the name of restoring the emperor. In reality hardly anyone even knew the emperor existed before the 'Meiji restoration' of 1868. The emperor was reinvented as a symbol of the emergent capitalist state. When America occupied Japan in 1945 it retained the emperor as a bulwark against radical change, but made him admit he was no god. By reducing the status of the emperor the USA asserted its dominance over Japan. In contrast, a reassertion of his importance, and particularly of his divinity, is a symptom of more assertive Japanese nationalism.

A row is brewing over the Shinto rites to be performed before Akihito can become emperor. This is far more than a debate about a peculiar cult of ancestor worship. Like the institution of the emperor, modern Shinto emerged as a central component of Japanese nationalism. Now the 43-strong far-right group in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party wants the emperor's role as chief priest of Shinto to be brought closer to that of head of state, taking him towards the traditional role of god-king. There are intense arguments over the form that the *daijosai*, the enthronement ceremony in which the emperor supposedly has sex with the sun goddess, will take in November 1990. It all serves as a focus for nationalist fervour.

However, the far right's veneration of the emperor has not touched everybody. After Hirohito's death, while TV channels broadcast endless homages to the emperor, video rental stores and ski resorts reported record business. The authorities told the world that a million Japanese would line the funeral route. In the event, only a quarter of that number turned out.

### Massacre whitewashed

But whatever people think of the emperor, the chauvinist attitudes he symbolises are strong. A recent survey showed that 80 per cent of the population believe that the Japanese 'race' is superior. Ideas about the uniqueness of the Japanese run deep. Anti-Semitic tracts, more a reflection of hostility to foreigners than Jews in particular, are best-sellers. The 680 000 Koreans and 110 000 Chinese in Japan suffer severe discrimination. Visa requirements for new immigrants from the Indian sub-continent have been tightened. The Hawaiian Sumo wrestler, Konishiki, has been the public target of much chauvinist hostility.

The recurring debate over school textbooks is another indication of the more militant nationalist mood. The Japanese ministry of education produces school textbooks which whitewash Japan's part in the conflicts of the century. In 1986

prime minister Yasuhiro Nakasone had to fly to Peking to calm the Chinese down, after the education ministry approved a textbook which implied the Nanking massacre—where Japan butchered hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians in 1937—did not happen. The education minister, Masayuki Fujio, who also told Japanese parents to raise the Rising Sun flag at home, was forced to resign. Last May another far-right minister, Seisuke Okuno, had to go after denying Japan's responsibility for the war with China in the thirties. And this year, premier Noboru Takeshita told parliament that Japan's invasion of its Asian neighbours cannot simply be labelled as a war of aggression.

Arguments over school textbooks and Japanese history are more than academic discussions of the past. The winners of any conflict write the history. The first censorship of school textbooks in Japan was by the American occupation forces. In revising its history Japan is asserting its right to be an expansionist world power—just like the USA.

### Senior partner

The post-war settlement has imposed on Japan a permanently inferior international status. Yet this arrangement no longer corresponds to the balance of forces. Japan and West Germany are ready to play a major global role. However, the post-war settlement cannot be revised without a major and dangerous dislocation in the international order. That's why Japan is starting in such an apparently trivial arena as the school curriculum. For now, forces of the conservative right lead the campaign for the rehabilitation of Japan's history. The Japanese ruling class as a whole is not yet prepared to commit itself to what could be an uncontrollable sequence of events.

There remain powerful forces acting against a complete reassertion of nationalism. Defeat, atom bombing and occupation by a foreign power are not easily forgotten, and pacifism is still strong. At present Japan is prepared to prosper under America's political and military leadership, rather than risk a traumatic break with the post-war system of international relations. Takeshita emphasised the leading role of the USA in his February meeting with Bush: 'There is no country that can replace the United States as leader of the free world. It is our intention to be the most reliable partner for the US.'

But how long can Japan continue to operate within the stifling terms of the post-1945 settlement? Until 1952 Japan was under US occupation and effectively ruled by General Douglas MacArthur. His directive number one ordered Japan to dismantle its

armed forces. In 1947 the USA imposed a constitution, article nine of which renounced Japan's right to use force. This did not prevent America using Japanese troops, bases and napalm to wage its own wars in Korea and Vietnam, but it did symbolise Japan's subordination to US military power. Japan's non-nuclear stance has also been a sign of US protection and leadership.

### Japan's gap

Rumblings against the post-1945 system are becoming louder in Japan. Hideaki Kase, a prominent hawk, has called for article nine to be revoked and for the development of a totally independent Japanese military armed with nuclear weapons if necessary. As Japan grows in strength relative to the USA these rumblings will get louder. Tokyo is already voicing disquiet at the gap between its economic weight and political influence. The militant nationalists are likely to gain ground.

Washington's problems in pacifying the third world today increase tensions with Tokyo. The Japanese looked on nervously as the US-led task force in the Gulf last year seemed only to endanger Japan's oil supplies still further. Many US-Japanese trade disputes have already erupted. The coming years are likely to raise more questions about America's ability to maintain global stability. And there are limits to how long Japan can continue subsidising the US economy without damaging its own.

### Ask Henry

The post-war order will not collapse easily. All the major powers have a strong interest in maintaining global stability. A powerful resurgence of Japanese militarism puts it on course for conflict with the USA. Japan will not take that step until it runs out of other options.

Yet, as the post-1945 equilibrium crumbles, Japan and the USA will start to view each other as potential opponents rather than permanent allies. Japan will become ever less willing to accept America as number one. In the not too distant future the USA is likely to regret calling for Japanese rearmament. Former foreign policy supremo Henry Kissinger (who, having bombed Cambodia flat, knows all about militarism in Asia) has warned his government of this. 'It requires an extraordinary imperviousness to history', Kissinger declared last year, 'to believe that Japan would rearm substantially to share burdens defined in America and to achieve purposes originated across the Pacific'. And impervious to history the rulers of Japan are not.



Colonies, task forces and terrorism

# Britain's little Empire

**Andy Clarkson  
on another of  
Thatcher's  
Victorian  
values:  
imperialism**

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) decision to order its diplomats to flee Afghanistan was badly received in Britain. Andrew Gimson spoke for many grumbling pundits:

'The behaviour of the foreign office gives other people their idea of what kind of people the British are. At worst it can leave the impression that we are reluctant to stand up for ourselves, inclined to take the easy option, unlikely to react angrily when attacked. This conclusion was drawn by General Galtieri.' (*Independent*, 8 February)

The unseemly departure of British diplomats from Kabul, leaping into getaway cars and leaving newsman Sandy Gall behind to fly the flag, was certainly not in the spirit that built the Empire. Gimson concluded that, despite its fall from the position of global pre-eminence it enjoyed in the past, Britain still needs to keep a stiff upper lip in international affairs; indeed, 'the reduction of British power actually makes it more desirable to show that the British themselves are not a cringing people'.

## Bludgeoning Brits

Afghanistan notwithstanding, this point is well-understood by the British government. It explains why Thatcher launched the Falklands task force in 1982 to bludgeon Argentinian dictator General Leopoldo Galtieri. In an era when economic decline threatens to reduce Britain to the status of a third-rate power, projecting an image of political and military strength abroad is vital. The Tories have taken various steps towards that end.

The South Atlantic War contributed to a reassessment of the military implications of Britain's role in an increasingly unstable world. One lesson which the authorities learnt was the value of Britain's remaining colonies in servicing the airmobile rapid deployment forces essential to get troops to troublespots across the world. The Tories have since set about militarising Britain's 'dependencies' (colonies).

Britain still has a far-flung collection of dependencies: Anguilla, Ascension, Bermuda, British Indian Ocean Territory, British Virgin

Islands, the Caymans, the Falklands, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, Montserrat, Pitcairn, St Helena, Tristan da Cunha and the Turks and Caicos Islands. Until recently, the official line was that these colonies could have independence if they wanted. The British government has now changed its tune and forgotten Thatcher's fine words about 'self-determination'. It is reverting to a classical colonial policy, tightening its grip over the dependencies in recognition of their strategic usefulness.

The reversal of Britain's post-war decolonisation policy followed events in the Caribbean Turks and Caicos Islands, when the colonial dependency was torn by scandals over drug-trafficking and corruption in the government. The Tories ordered governor Michael Bradley to dissolve the local administration in July 1986. When a new one was elected last year, it had to operate under an altered constitution which gave the Whitehall-appointed governor a far tighter grip on the colony's affairs.

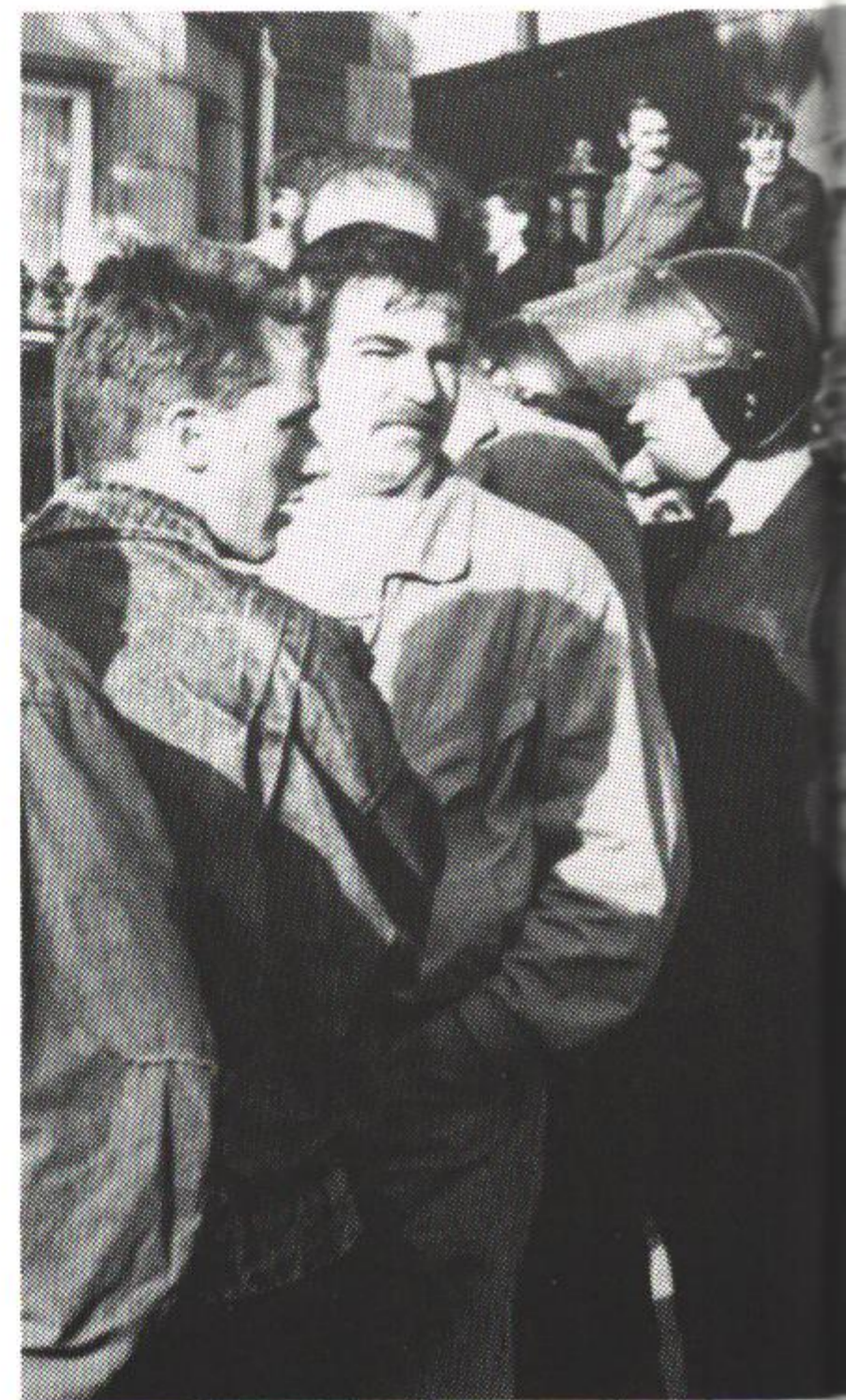
LSE academic George Drower recently drew attention to the wider ramifications of this unnoticed incident. After holding off-the-record talks with FCO mandarins, he revealed that the government had organised a 'confidential symposium' to consider the implications of the Turks and Caicos affair for the future of the colonial dependencies, and confirmed that its 'findings are now being acted upon':

'It has come to be realised that in its earlier scurry out of Empire, Britain might well have stepped too far down the road towards decolonisation by granting the small territories advanced self-government....Now, when the opportunities arise for doing so in individual territories—the FCO are likely to try to find a means of back-peddalling to a system which is far less constitutionally advanced.' ('A rethink on Britain's dependent territories?', *The Round Table: Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, January 1989)

It's no more Mister Democratic Nice Guy in Whitehall. Britain will take every opportunity to 'back-pedal' towards old-fashioned imperial

arrangements by imposing a 'far less constitutionally advanced'—that is, a dictatorial—regime in its colonies.

Tame, stable dependencies are necessary to facilitate the movements of British task forces across the map. During the Falklands War, Ascension Island and St Helena helped form the crucial airbridge to the South Atlantic. Fortress Falklands, with its new airbase, is both a symbol of British clout in the South Atlantic and an ideal launchpad for Libya-style air-strikes against stropky Latin Americans. One British colony is already part of America's military infrastructure. In 1974, Britain gave the USA the air



and naval bases on Diego Garcia in the British Indian Ocean Territory, after dumping the inhabitants in a slum in nearby Mauritius. In 1979, Diego Garcia became a staging-post for the US rapid deployment force aimed at the Gulf.

## Swift Sword

The exceptions to colonial retrenchment seem to be Hong Kong and Gibraltar. In 1984, the Tories agreed to hand back Hong Kong to China in 1997, and recently announced a big cut in the Gibraltar garrison. To concentrate resources where they will count, the hard-up

PHOTO: PHIL MURPHY



British authorities need to reduce unnecessary military and administrative expense; and they hope that the resulting improved diplomatic and economic relations with Spain and China will compensate for the cuts in Gibraltar and the loss of Hong Kong. In any case, the Gibraltar base is less important today because Britain no longer depends on the Suez Canal route for oil supplies.

Alongside the rearrangement of colonial affairs, Britain has staged elaborate military exercises that recall its imperial splendour, to impress its Western allies and intimidate any third world 'upstart' bent on imitating Galtieri.

In November 1986, British forces conducted their largest overseas operation since the Falklands when 5000 troops of the 5th airborne brigade, warships including an aircraft carrier, and a squadron of RAF Tornados performed Operation Swift Sword in Oman on the Persian Gulf. One year later in the Irish Sea and south-west Scotland, Operation Purple Warrior,

presence in key areas. Just under a third of Britain's 316 000-strong regular forces serve overseas, 69 700 forming the British Army of the Rhine. Many of the rest serve in the colonies, but there are 566 British military 'advisers' in 30 other countries. Though these are mostly based in Commonwealth countries, they are often seconded to the small Gulf states like Oman and Bahrain. The sort of 'advice' these crack troops are on hand to give can be judged from the involvement of US military advisers in the Contras' war against Nicaragua.

### Foreign 'adventures'

Outside of Nato and the Commonwealth, British military manoeuvres are well-camouflaged, to forestall the dreaded cry of 'British imperialism!'. There was little publicity given to Thatcher's March 1988 decision to resume training Fijian army officers shortly after they had overthrown an elected government, quit the Commonwealth and instigated a reign of terror. Last August a Royal

angry at its support for the apartheid state, the British government arms and trains the military in Mozambique. About 45 British officers and NCOs run training courses for Mozambican soldiers at Zimbabwe's Nyanga military school. Mozambique itself, however, is officially off-limits to the British military. So Whitehall operates there via security firms like Defence Services Ltd and arms contractors like Hall & Watts. DSL is run by former SAS officer Alastair Morrison, who provides a 600-strong team to guard the Malawi-Nacala railway. Hall & Watts is supposed to have no connections with the British government, but maintains 'excellent contacts with Royal Ordnance arms manufacturer, and has been licensed to export the new L851A rifle to Mozambique' (*Africa Confidential*, 4 November 1988).

### KMS/SAS

Sending surrogates like DSL to do the British government's dirty work is called engaging in 'plausibly deniable operations'. These are assuming an increasing importance in British military policy in the third world. For example, KMS, a private security firm based in Jersey and run by former SAS officer David Walker, has trained Sri Lanka's Special Task Force death squad to torture suspects and massacre Tamil separatists (see *the next step*, 1 May 1987). Though the foreign office frequently denies any connection, it is well-known that armed KMS personnel get special escorts and can bypass customs on their way through British airports. Rumours abound of KMS links to MI6. Robert Owen, Colonel Oliver North's courier to the Nicaraguan Contras, informed the Irangate hearings that KMS was responsible for bombing the Chipote military base at Managua in Nicaragua on 6 March 1985.

All of this helps to boost British interference around the globe without direct army involvement. And British militarists don't always need Sandhurst-trained soldiers, be they SAS or KMS, to achieve their ends. Abdul Haq, a Muslim warlord operating against the Afghan regime south of Kabul, has received British Blowpipe missiles for the past three years. Britain's diplomats might have scurried out of Kabul, but they left some well-armed friends to look after their interests.

Whether it is by cracking down in the colonies, training marines to storm up beaches or contracting out terror operations in the third world, the Thatcher government is determined to defend—and extend—Britain's little Empire.



**And on top of all this, they are still fighting a 20-year old colonial war in Ireland**

the largest amphibious exercise since 1945, involved 20 000 troops of the 5th airborne brigade, 39 ships, and 100 naval and airforce helicopters and fixed-wing planes. According to the official *Defence Estimates*, Purple Warrior assumed that islands 'entitled to our protection' 1500 miles away 'had come under attack from a powerful neighbour'. Britain conducted 30 other exercises in the third world in 1987, from Brunei in the east to Belize in the west.

As well as honing its rapid deployment forces for a quick strike across the world, the government maintains a permanent military

Marine was killed in the Peruvian Andes, just days after foreign office minister Timothy Eggar offered to lend Peru British military 'specialists' to help defeat the left-wing Sendero Luminoso guerrillas. The embarrassed British authorities claimed he had only been involved in 'adventure training'.

Many other Whitehall-approved military operations are not carried out by British forces at all. Events in southern Africa illustrate the close relationship between official and informal British militarism in the third world. In a bid to improve its standing among black African states



How British industry relies on arms contracts

# The war economy

**John Gibson investigates the inseparable relationship between profits and arms contracts**

The Serious Fraud Office charged a retired general and three other top GEC-Marconi executives with defrauding the government last month. Many observers were shocked by the big names allegedly involved in the use of corruption and bribery to secure ministry of defence (MoD) contracts. Yet this scandal is only the small, public side of a far bigger phenomenon.

The flow of money from the defence ministry to manufacturing industry is one of the central features of the British economy today. Without armaments contracts, some of Britain's biggest firms could not survive. In short, the profit system and militarism are now inseparable.

Despite all the Thatcher government's talk of freeing the markets and 'rolling back' the state, no modern capitalist economy can function without extensive government support. This is particularly true of a declining power like Britain. Defence contracts make up a huge slice of state hand-outs to industry.

## Biggest customer

The annual MoD budget now stands at more than £18 billion—5.2 per cent of Britain's gross domestic product. In 1984-85 (the last year for which full figures are available) more than 45 per cent of the budget went on buying weapons and equipment (*Observer*, 5 March). The ministry is British industry's single largest customer, buying 45 per cent of aerospace production, 30 per cent of shipbuilding, and 20 per cent of electronics. These contracts provide a very profitable lifeline for the big companies which dominate what's left of British manufacturing, such as British Aerospace and GEC.

Military contracts account for more than 70 per cent of BAe production. Half of these military products are sold abroad, which is the only reason why BAe is Britain's largest manufacturing exporter (South East Economic Development Strategy Association, *Defence Electronics Conference, Working Paper No 1*, 1987). And it's the MoD's sales organisation, rather than the company, which organises military exports. As with most British airframe manufacturers, almost all BAe's profits come from military contracts (*ICC Business*

*Ratios Report: Component Manufacturers*, 1987).

At present around a third of GEC's business is producing military equipment. If the joint attempt by GEC and three foreign firms to buy Plessey gets through the monopolies and mergers commission, two thirds of GEC production (excluding ventures jointly owned with bigger US, German and French firms) would be defence-oriented (*Labour Research*, February).

The importance of defence contracts to major British manufacturing firms becomes clear if we look at how weak these same companies are in the civilian aerospace and electronics sectors. In 1986, for example, UK electronics firms controlled only 29 per cent of the domestic market. Take a major sector like consumer electronics. This can be divided into two broad categories: audio-visual and 'white kitchen appliances'. The first sector



PHOTO: SIMON NORFOLK

**Marconi: a secret service to British manufacturing**



is expanding, but Japanese-dominated. The second market is saturated, and Britain finds it hard to compete with European rivals: GEC's Hotpoint has just five per cent of the European market compared with the 25 per cent taken by Sweden's Electrolux (*Economist*, 4 February).

British electronics and aerospace companies are ghettoised in the defence sector, living on a dripfeed from Whitehall, because they cannot compete on the open market. And defence spending doesn't just prop up Britain's few profitable concerns in these vital areas. Many firms not immediately associated with militarism also produce substantially for the defence sector. In its annual report, Jordan & Sons covers companies belonging to the Defence Manufacturers Association (*Britain's Top 500 Defence Companies*, 1988). ICI tops the list. Lower down, and more surprisingly, we find Tarmac, Dunlop and Chubb Alarms. At any time the MoD has up to 10 000 contractors working for it, accounting for an estimated 650 000 civilian jobs in 1984.

About half of these jobs were in the south-east of England, and half of those were in manufacturing—one in nine of all manufacturing jobs. The South East Economic Development Strategy Association report cited above provides a powerful counter to Tory propaganda about economic miracles and enterprise cultures in this part of the country. Its results suggest that military contracts have been largely responsible for industrial growth in the famous M4 corridor. Only 10 per cent of the firms surveyed there were doing no defence work at all; for half of them, defence contracts made up at least 20 per cent of their work.

The Marconi fraud scandal provides an insight into the inseparable relationship between the MoD and British industry. The big companies know that their future depends to a considerable extent, not on their poor ability to compete in the world market, but on their place aboard the MoD gravy train. Thus they cultivate links with the ministry, and recruit former top civil servants and military commanders to act as link men.

In 1984, an all-party treasury and civil service select committee unearthed many examples of this practice. Sir Brian Tovey had been head of the GCHQ spy centre, one of the few people who would know the details of secret purchases of electronic eavesdropping equipment. When he left he became a consultant to Plessey—which manufactures that very bugging gear. When Sir Frank Cooper retired as the commanding civil service mandarin at the MoD,

he was quickly signed up as a director by Westland helicopters. Sir Harry Tuzo, formerly deputy commander of all Nato forces in Europe, became chairman of Marconi Space and Defence Systems when he took off his uniform—one of 50 retired senior officers whom the committee found working for Marconi.

These links do not, as is often claimed, represent a conspiracy among a few individuals. They reflect the integration of entire key areas of British capitalism into the culture of militarism, and their dependence on the defence sector.

However, the Marconi fraud case could be interpreted as a warning sign that the authorities are seeking to rationalise the state's expansive back-door support for industry. It is certainly the case that the government is now caught between conflicting pressures. It needs to maintain a high level of military spending, both to keep up its international profile and to aid industry; yet it also needs to save money wherever possible.

### The squeeze

Since Britain is a power with substantial overseas investments and with pretensions to playing a leading role in world affairs, successive governments have sought to maintain a sizeable military capacity—and none more so than the Thatcher regime. From 1979-84, British defence spending rose faster than in any other Nato country except the USA, increasing from 4.5 per cent of GDP to 5.4 per cent (*SIPRI Yearbook*, 1987).

Since then, however, real spending on defence has stagnated. Between 1984-85 and 1990-91, total new equipment spending is expected to fall by 16 per cent. This, combined with a growing concentration of spending on nuclear weapons, has squeezed defence procurement; it is estimated that up to 200 000 of the 650 000 civilian jobs associated with the defence sector in 1984 may have gone in the following four years. It held out the longest, but like all aspects of state spending, the military budget has felt the effects of the capitalist recession.

The Tory government is pursuing a two-pronged strategy to achieve defence spending cuts while minimising damage to the British military machine. First, it is trying to reduce waste by exposing domestic production to overseas competition. And second, it is seeking to increase the number of collaborative ventures involving both British and foreign (mainly European) firms. Two years ago, defence secretary George Younger outlined the approach which the Tories hope will start bearing fruit today:

'Ministers expect significant reductions in two to three years as defence R&D becomes more efficient and competitive and as Britain reduces its duplication of its allies' research effort through greater international cooperation.'

This partly explains the government's unease about the bid for Plessey, which would make it hard to enforce competition since GEC would monopolise the defence electronics sector.

The government's strategy is illustrated by the contract awarded to Vickers Defence Systems to develop a replacement for the Chieftain tank. After much argument, during which it was widely accepted that the American Abrams M1A1 tank was a better buy, the British firm has been given just a year to produce an equivalent model, failing which it loses the contract.

The problem with this is that increasingly, as the British defence sector is exposed to foreign competition, it loses contracts. GEC, for example, could not develop an adequate early-warning radar system for the Nimrod aircraft; so the contract went to the American E3A (Awacs) system.

Each time this sort of thing happens, there is an outcry from the defence establishment, which fears that without significant domestic weapons capacity Britain will be a hostage to fortune as rising international tensions lead to more and more militarisation across the Western world. For this reason, the state will try to give the needed assistance for key projects, and to protect the important firms like GEC. Indeed the increasingly nationalist current in world affairs is undermining so-called collaborative projects like the European fighter aircraft being built by Britain, West Germany, Italy and Spain, as rival consortia lobby their respective governments for aid in winning the lucrative (state-funded) contracts.

The uncompetitive position of British industry poses a serious problem for the Tories. Economic recession will intensify the squeeze on defence spending. Yet at the same time, greater competition from European firms will make British aeronautics and electronics even more dependent on the state, both for military contracts and protection. The fact that such vital sectors of British industry rely so heavily on militarism is a symptom of the decay of the economy, and a reminder that the authorities are on a permanent war footing, ready to solve their international problems by more forceful means when the time comes.



**N**'ational security', 'the national interest'; these are the magic words of modern British politics. By claiming that it is acting in defence of the national interest, the Tory government is now able to get away with just about anything, secure in the knowledge that the parliamentary opposition will fall silent at the sound of this emotive slogan.

The government announced last month that it was expelling 20 Iranian civilians after the ayatollah's threats to Salman Rushdie's life—and that the other 25 000 Iranians living in Britain, many of whom are exiled leftist opponents of the Khomeini regime, would be 'closely watched'. You might think that the promise of such a massive state crackdown on foreign nationals, on a scale unseen outside wartime, would at least raise a few eyebrows on the opposition benches. But when foreign secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe uttered the magic words 'on security grounds', Labour, Democrat and SDP spokesmen rose to support him.

At the same time, it was revealed that the memoirs of a Second World War codebreaker had been withdrawn under official pressure, because they raised embarrassing questions about whether or not the British authorities told the Americans that they had discovered Japanese plans to attack Pearl Harbour in December 1941. Admiral William Higgins, secretary of the defence ministry's censorship committee, wrote to warn the publishers that 'revelations of this kind can, despite their age, still damage our national security'. The book was quickly dropped—an entirely painless operation by the state censors, carried out under the anaesthetising effects of the 'national security' formula.

### British passport

From throwing foreigners out of the country without charge to banning books that tell 50-year old stories, the Tories can do as they please if they couch their policies in the magic words. This is their passport to continual political success.

National security, however, is not a demand to which we should make concessions. It does not mean preserving the safety of the majority of people in Britain; it means securing the interests of the British state and of the ruling class which that body protects.

For example, are we really to believe that a British government which has deported many Iranian dissidents back to face torture and death at Khomeini's hands, and has given the Tehran regime the names of leftists working undercover within Iran, would suddenly go to such lengths to protect the health of one writer whom it

### 'National security'

# THATCHER'S MAGIC WORDS

Sharon Clarke on the language of repression



The true party of the flag eats patriotic opponents for breakfast

cannot stand? The anti-Iranian measures were taken, not to reassure Rushdie, but on 'security grounds'; that is, to secure the British state's authority abroad and at home by making a show of strength against a troublesome third world country. After all, the Tories feel no need to announce expulsions or mass surveillance operations against other groups who threaten the lives of people living in Britain—groups like South African and Israeli agents, or right-wing thugs supporting repressive regimes from Asia or Latin America.

Yet the official opposition goes along with the government's arguments about 'the national interest'. This is what allows the Tories to lash out at will against all those they label as enemies within.

Labour and the centre parties have been fully integrated into the conventions of the British system, and imbued with loyalty to the state. They are involved in administering the affairs of the establishment at many levels, from the privy council to the police authorities. They have supported the British state's wars from the South Atlantic to Northern Ireland;

indeed, when they got the opportunity in the past, Labour and Liberal governments were more than willing to organise military invasions and interventions themselves.

The opposition's attachment to the state has profound consequences for political debate in Britain. It means that these parties are paralysed to act against the Tories' use of the 'national interest/national security' arguments. As the most fervent flag-wavers in a parliament full of patriots, the Conservatives have a permanent advantage over their opponents.

### Who's next?

The Tory Party is the true party of the British state. It has increasingly extensive links with the military, the media, the civil service, the judges, and so on. Thus it is always the odds-on favourite to win a debate about which party can best serve the national interest. Conservative leaders have long used chauvinism to cohere a base of reactionary support and to unnerve their opponents. Thatcher has simply generalised this approach, declaring that all who oppose her will be endangering national security. For now, it has proved a winning tactic.

As the opposition back-pedals before the government's chauvinist campaign, the official list of enemies within grows longer and longer. Today, 25 000 Iranians have publicly been told that they are under intensive surveillance. Tomorrow it could be anybody else who invokes the wrath of the authorities. The new Security Services Bill will make it entirely legal for MI5 to bug, burgle and tap the phones of 'subversives'. And it defines this category of people in sweeping terms, as those involved with any group 'whose aims are to undermine or overthrow parliamentary democracy in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland by political, industrial or violent means'. So who's next for the full treatment?

### Break the spell

Those who accept the 'national interest' argument give the government carte blanche to repress. As Thatcher plays this card in response to almost every problem, it is becoming ever clearer that defending national security simply means preserving the power of the authorities. This clarification should make it easier for us to win support for a stand against the government. But only if we refuse to fall under the spell of Thatcher's magic words.



## Swapo and Namibia Free at last?

**As UN forces arrived to supervise November's pre-independence elections, Russell Osborne spoke to a Swapo spokesman about Namibia's prospects for real freedom from South Africa**

South Africa has finally accepted moves towards Namibian independence under United Nations Resolution 435. After lengthy talks involving the apartheid regime, Angola, Cuba and, behind the scenes, the USA and the Soviet Union, Pretoria has agreed to a phased withdrawal of its military forces before elections are held in November. South Africa is supposed to pull out its own troops, and to confine its locally-raised South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) to barracks. The black liberation movement, the South West Africa Peoples Organisation (Swapo) has also formally agreed to confine its forces to base.

Peter Manning, Swapo information officer in London, says his movement has no illusions that South Africa will really demobilise its forces. SWATF is being maintained as an organised force on paid leave: 'You don't pay an army

for a seven-month period if you don't intend to use it again.' South Africa has always tried to present its local forces as the future army of an 'independent' Namibia, which gives a fair idea of how little freedom the apartheid state wants to grant in its colony.

SWATF and similar units are commanded by white officers but the rank and file are local blacks. 'For many black Namibians it's either a job in the army at an attractive salary or starvation' says Manning. South Africa has raised about 30 000 troops locally, out of a population of just 1.5m. These forces have not only acted as the backbone of South Africa's occupation of Namibia, they have also been in the frontline of Pretoria's attempts to undermine the Cuban-backed MPLA regime in neighbouring Angola. Manning says they 'were used as cannon fodder' at Cuito Cuanavale last year, the largest land battle in Africa since the

Second World War, where a serious defeat for the South Africans contributed to the eventual peace deal. Given sensitivity at home over rising white casualties in the Angolan war, SWATF has had clear advantages for the South Africans; they don't have to announce death tolls of Namibian troops.

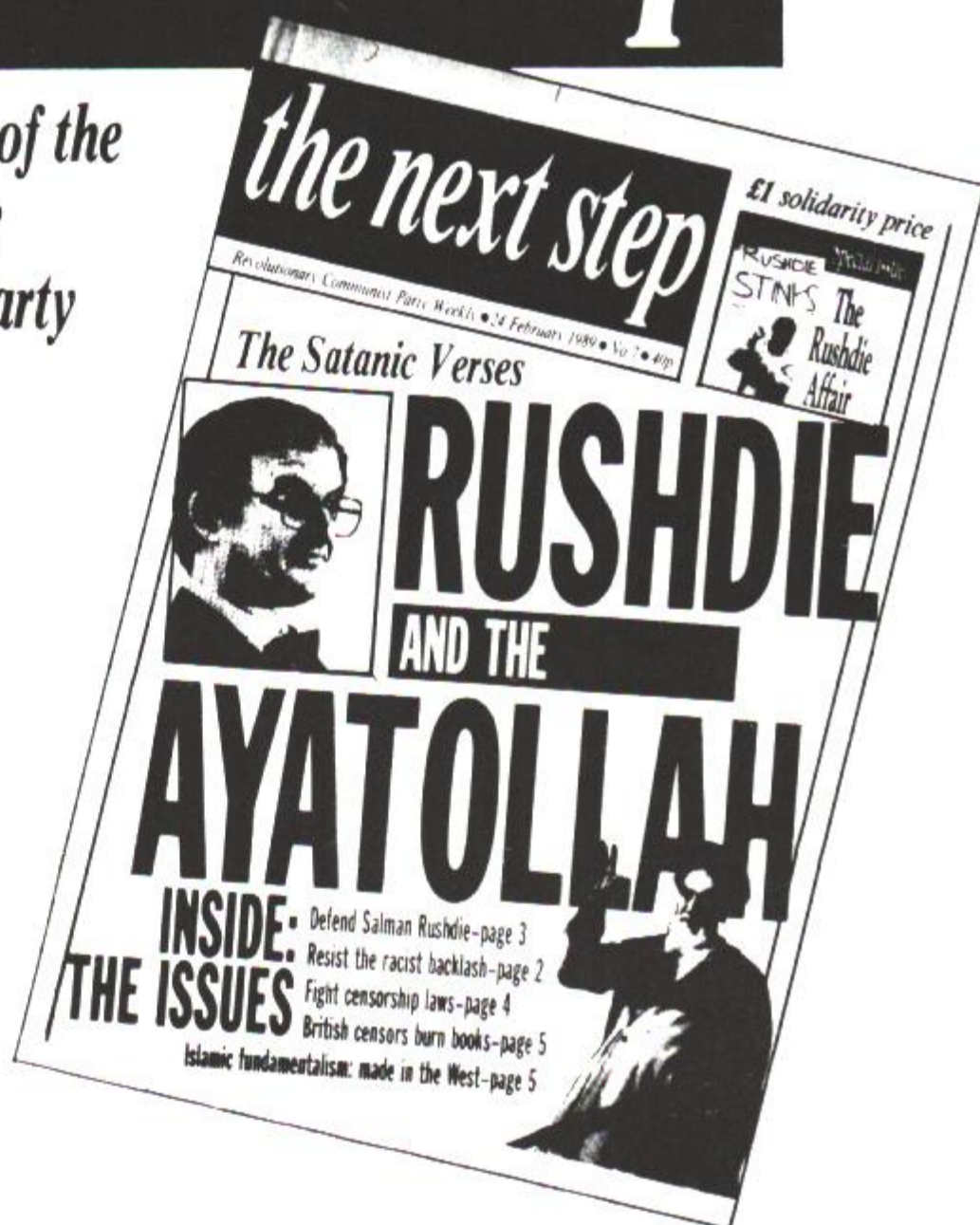
### Stooge shelter

South Africa has also used Namibia as a base for its Angolan stooges, the pro-Western Unita guerrillas. Unita has functionally been part of the South African military machine since apartheid forces first invaded Angola in 1975. Defeated by the MPLA and Cuban forces, Unita withdrew into Namibia where it has received South African support, training and publicity. Manning is cynical about Unita's avowed independence from South Africa. He reckons that South Africa's 32 battalion, based at

# the next step

Weekly paper of the  
Revolutionary  
Communist Party

40p



A 12-month subscription to anywhere in Britain or Northern Ireland costs £26. Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX.

If you like what you read in *Living Marxism*, then you should get into **Confrontation**, the theoretical journal of the Revolutionary Communist Party.

**Confrontation 1** pp108  
(limited number available)  
Marxism in our time  
—Frank Richards  
The road to power—Mike Freeman  
**Confrontation 3** pp164  
Abortion rights—the dangers of  
being defensive—Anne Burton  
South Korea's take-off  
—Tony Kennedy  
**Confrontation 4** pp146  
The third Thatcher term —  
Frank Richards and Mike Freeman  
The decline and fall of British  
Labourism—Mike Freeman  
**Confrontation** costs £2.95  
plus 50p p&p.

A four-issue subscription costs £15  
to Britain and Northern Ireland,  
£18 by airmail to Europe and  
Southern Ireland, and £16 by  
surface mail to other countries.  
(Libraries and institutions add £10.)

To order, write to Junius  
Publications Ltd, BCM JPLtd,  
London WC1N 3XX. Make  
cheques payable to Junius  
Publications Ltd.

# CONFRONTATION



Caprivi in Namibia, becomes Unita as soon as it crosses the border into Angola. Covert South African special forces have been captured hundreds of miles north of the Namibian border, dressed in Unita uniforms and carrying Portuguese passports and even Portuguese bibles. South Africa is still running arms across the border to Unita, despite ceasefire promises to stop.

The strategic importance of Namibia to apartheid militarism in southern Africa means that Pretoria is not going to sit back and allow

than the dice to be loaded against us'. After independence, the South African-backed army looks likely to be recalled, and Pretoria will try to impose it on a new Swapo government as a permanent threat 'unless we toe the line. They want to have an absolute stranglehold over the government of Namibia'.

Swapo expects South Africa to use the pretext of alleged ANC bases in Namibia as an excuse for continued interference. Black frontline states have suffered countless terror attacks by the apartheid forces on this basis

colonial economy and has been for the last century'. It supplies primary products for the South African economy and serves as a captive market for South African goods. Most businesses in Namibia are run by South Africans or by their primary Western backers—the British. Manning says that 'an assessment of each will have to be made to decide how we'll deal with them in the short, medium and long term'. He has no doubts that South Africa will use its economic links as a powerful weapon to counter Namibian independence.

### Maximum control

Neither can Namibia expect any respect for its independence from the West. Manning thinks Western powers will demand guarantees from a Namibian government before granting aid. 'We'll tell them to keep their aid, we won't tolerate interference.' West Germany is already trying to extend its influence in what was once the Kaiser's colony. 'They tried to support the current occupation in effect and to bypass Swapo while pretending not to. They also insisted on setting up German schools despite the fact that Swapo sees English as the future national language.'

Britain, too, is trying to strengthen its foothold. British companies like RTZ and Consolidated Goldfields already have large holdings in the colony. Now Britain is contributing a signals unit to the UN forces and Manning is worried about the fact that it will control communications up to the elections.

Although any Swapo government faces overwhelming odds, Manning remains confident. He argues that Swapo morale is very high and that the South Africans 'aren't ready for what they'll find confronting them'. He believes that international factors are in Swapo's favour as well, because the USA seems to prefer a South African withdrawal—although America has been hostile to Swapo and has given military assistance to Unita. 'No one expects South Africa to leave Namibia alone. But independence is just a new stage in the struggle, not the end of it.'

Manning says Swapo will take no chances in the run-up to November: 'I don't think you'll see much open emergence of our forces. You won't see them handing in weapons or surfacing unarmed. Frankly we don't trust the situation.' He feels that only unfavourable economic and military circumstances have forced South Africa to do a deal. 'There's little enthusiasm for it in the apartheid camp and they would prefer that it didn't happen. They will try to maintain maximum control. But we are absolutely determined to wrest that control from them.'



**Crowbar by any other name still smells of apartheid**

Swapo to establish genuine independence. Koevoet (Crowbar) has been the elite unit of the South African military in Namibia. Resolution 435 declares that the army must be demobilised; so South Africa has simply turned Koevoet into a police force. 'They have taken the cutting edge of the military and incorporated it into the uniformed police to avoid their demobilisation. Koevoet is renowned for its brutality, killings and torture.' It remains a mortal threat to Swapo's freedom to operate inside Namibia as the election approaches.

### 'In name only'

Swapo assumes that South Africa will tolerate the establishment of a Swapo government 'in name only' after the election. 'Not too many people realise that South Africa runs the election' says Manning—the United Nations will only be monitoring things. The UN was supposed to have 7000 troops in the area to oversee independence, but this has been reduced to only 4650. Informed sources suggest that a secret deal with the Soviet Union brought South Africa to the conference table in exchange for Moscow accepting the UN troop cuts.

'Quite frankly', admits Manning, 'we do not expect anything other

over the past decade. So would a Swapo government distance itself from the ANC to avoid South Africa's wrath? 'Publicly we will fulfil all positions of support for the South African struggle as taken by the Organisation of African Unity' says Manning with caution.

### White commandos

The white community in Namibia could also be a long-term problem. Many are sending their money over the border and preparing to leave, but a hardcore has pledged to resist; the far-right HNP party has threatened to raise an army of 20 000. As most of the 75 000 whites are already heavily armed and organised into local commando units, Manning agrees that these are not empty threats. He quotes an example of the white brutality which continues despite South African attempts to play 'a moderate game' before the election: 'A couple of days ago at the black compound at Walvis Bay, a white supervisor turned a hose of boiling water on workers queuing for food. A fight broke out and another white shot dead two blacks and wounded several more.'

South Africa's economic domination of Namibia will be another major hurdle for a Swapo government to overcome. Manning agrees that 'Namibia is a typical

PHOTO: IDAF



American kitsch comes to Britain

# WORK, TRAINING AND TOM WOLFE

Mike Neary looks at the Neon lights school of new thinking

I was once told by my brother-in-law that Tom Wolfe's early writing was like Neon lights. Flashy, attention-grabbing, and exciting. In a superficial, garish sort of way. Being at an impressionable age, I decided to abandon my efforts to impersonate Tolstoy's prose—anyway, my stories didn't translate that well into Russian—and become the British Tom Wolfe. It was, after all, the same language. After detailed study of *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamlined Baby* (1965) and *Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), I was sure I had discovered the Wolfe secret. It was not, as I had first imagined, its geographical proximity to Las Vegas; but, rather, its eccentric sentence structure, held together in a chain-mail of punctuation. And it was mainly full-stops. Period.

Armed with this discovery, I set about writing paragraphs that ran like an engine with a blocked carburettor, and short stories with long titles and short sentences. I had some limited success, satisfying editors of downbeat periodicals, and downbeat periodical friends of my 'cool' credentials. But I never did get anywhere near Wolfe's extraordinary technique, and long since abandoned the attempt.

## Boston Compact

I hadn't thought until recently about my brief infatuation with Wolfe and American kitsch. However, I was reminded of it in my research into the latest employment and training initiatives by the trendy right, and the trendy left's ideas for socialist economic regeneration. No matter how hard I looked, they both kept coming up Neon. This rampant Americanisation is most apparent in the right's Partnerships, Compacts and Employment Training and also, more surprisingly perhaps, in the left's notion of Fordism and its recent appendage: post-Fordism.

The government's educational and training initiatives are taken from US models. This is apparent from the right's obsession with the concept of Partnership, discovered by a British delegation to New York in 1984, and in the particular programme, pioneered in Boston a few years later, of Compact and Employment Training. The PR that goes with the introduction of these schemes in Britain makes interesting reading.

The Boston education system is presented as being close to breakdown: 'In the mid-seventies armed police were stationed in the corridors of state schools in Boston USA, and metal detectors screened all who entered....Unchecked, the inner-city chaos would have degenerated still more.' It claims that, thanks to a 'revolutionary scheme' pioneered by local industry and commerce, the schools cleaned up their act. In return for not blowing up the school, the students got to go on work experience and attend mock job interviews. This historic educational and crime busting scheme 'became known as "The Boston Compact" '.

Things are, of course, pretty tough over here. However, the hype has been to sell the scheme less as an alternative to the Guardian Angels, and more as a way to get schools to raise deficient standards. Employers are more honest about their motives for getting involved. Mr Lennon, from Tesco, writes: 'It has proved a great advantage to be in Compact at a time when the number of school leavers is falling and competition to recruit them is going to be increasingly severe.' Compact is a cheap and easy way for employers to gain access to the most vulnerable members of the labour force, who are less available than they used to be, in such a way as to be able to claim to benefit local communities, while knocking the education system.

## Deficiency view

The much-heralded Employment Training also has its origins in the East Coast of America. Unlike Compact, which takes a deficiency view of education, Employment Training takes a deficiency view of people. Unlike its British predecessor, the Keynesian-inspired Community Programme, which dealt with unemployment by creating temporary jobs, ET is based on the hypothesis that there are enough jobs in the economy to go around. The problem lies, therefore, not with the economy, but with the unemployed. The jobless are not enterprising enough, have no motivation, are not literate or skilled enough and, by their unreasonable aspirations, have priced themselves out of work into a condition of voluntary unemployment.

Therefore, the workshy and incapables need to be put into workhouses, or their equivalents, where they can be trained for six months to run packets of corn-flakes over computerised check-out screens. When they have got the hang of that they can have another six months' tuition in stacking shelves. After which they will be replaced with another trainee, and can go back on to whatever Saatchi & Saatchi have decided to call the dole.

To understand these programmes it is necessary to get behind the marketing, the PR, the selling, the Neon, and the red light market forces that thrive on deficiencies in people and society; to see how Compact and ET formalise and institutionalise that deficiency and, as with the best pornography, attempt to make a virtue out of it. Only then can Compact and ET be seen for what they are: totems to private capital, creating the conditions and the consciousness that is broadly supportive of the existing social relations and accumulation process.

## Name that system

Populist left-wing groups have attempted to combat these initiatives by appealing to our leaders' better natures. This opposition includes wretched groups like Campaign For Work. Their idea of struggle is to get the unemployed, and the usual celebrity guests, to hold hands in a very long line, hoping Bernard Ingham doesn't notice the gaps. The other idea, based on romantic notions of past worker struggles, is to walk a very long way indeed. Preferably in a north-south direction. However, the current attack by left-wing intellectual bigwigs is spearheaded by the concept of post-Fordism, which they have identified as the dominant characteristic of global capital restructuring, replacing Gramsci's Fordism and Orwell's Fordification. Quite apart from the fact that Fordism is, in essence, an American design and, therefore, the British left's obsession with it a further example of Americanisation, the technique used by the left, in this instance, is typically Tom Wolfe.

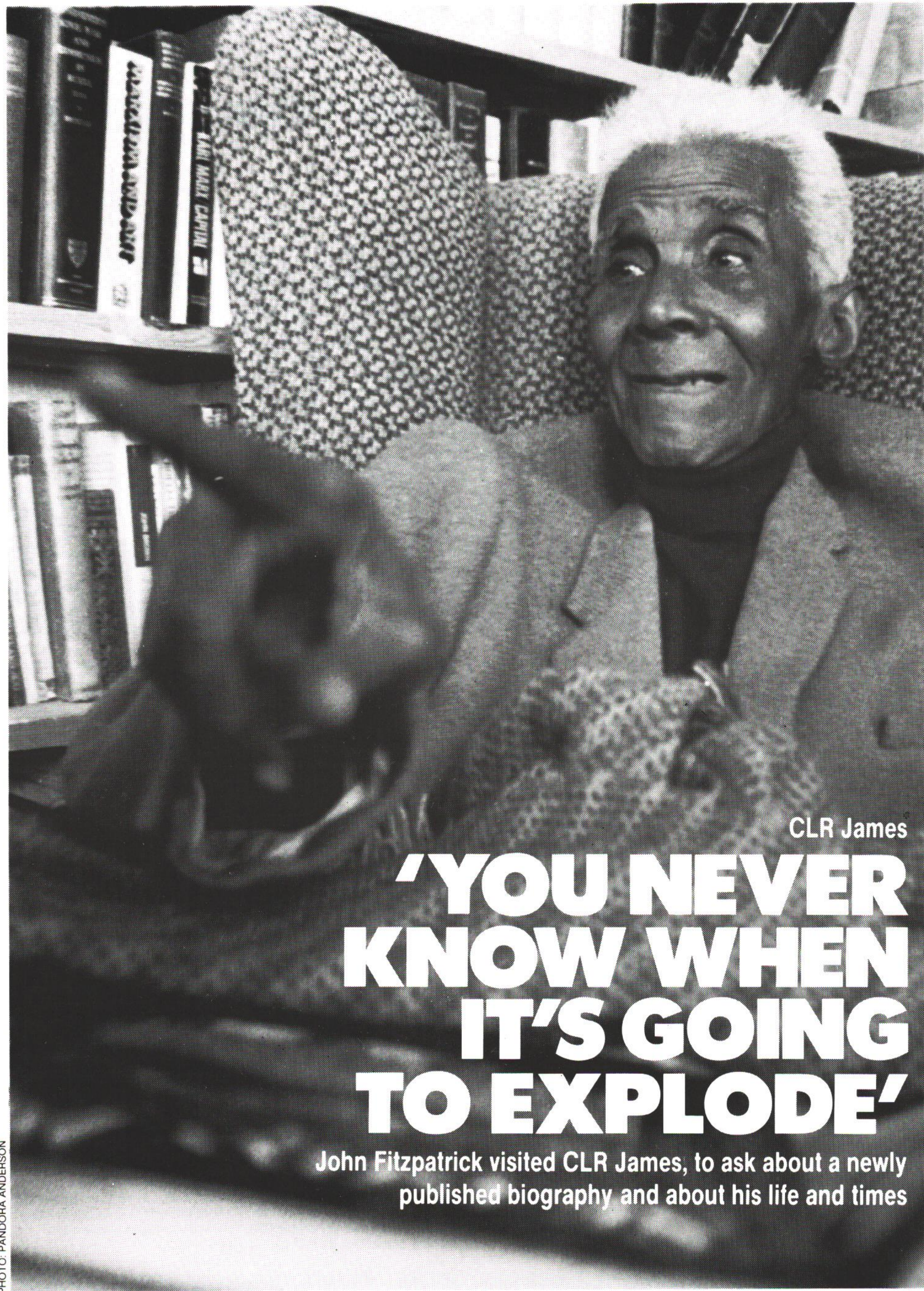
Brian Appleyard, in his review of Wolfe's *Bonfire of the Vanities*, refers to Wolfe's earlier practice of spotting social trends and giving

them interesting names. Appleyard calls this 'revenge of identification'. Extending this concept to our analysis, we can see the parallels. By identifying a process of production and naming it Fordism or post-Fordism, the left is attempting to gain revenge on the right. By naming it, the left feels that it has got some sort of control over it. By developing a social theory and fitting it with an off-the-peg name, they can claim some ownership and control of the means of production. It's their baby too. In this way 'Benetton Britain' becomes radical chic, and Gramsci has *The Right Stuff*.

This approach poses more questions than it answers. It tends to oversimplify, generalise and stereotype very complex processes. That's the problem with Neon. It's not very subtle. For example, how many commodities are there in a small batch production run, and, when does the small batch process become mass production? Where do McDonalds' Big Macs fit into this scenario, are they not globally mass-produced? Is there not a good deal of evidence to suggest that Ford and Taylorism were unpopular with British management as well as workers and, therefore, not as influential as is often supposed? Even if you go along with Braverman's deskilling thesis, you must make room for struggle, conflict and contradiction. Miners do now get showers at the pit with hot running water. And soap. So far as Emilia Romagna is concerned, far from being a workers' paradise, their small-scale production process has as much to do with employer strategy to decentralise production after the tensions of 'Hot Autumn', and weaken the workers' power-base, as it had to do with autonomous worker-controlled production units.

Post-Fordism, like its predecessor post-industrialism, argues for an acceptance of a preordained history, the product of the objective laws of capitalist development. That is to say, the left without recourse to struggle or conflict should accommodate itself to this version of reality, the New Times. If reality doesn't fit the model then change reality. The model must stay intact. In this way, the packaging becomes more important than the product. That's where Neon comes in.





CLR James

**'YOU NEVER  
KNOW WHEN  
IT'S GOING  
TO EXPLODE'**

John Fitzpatrick visited CLR James, to ask about a newly published biography and about his life and times

PHOTO: PANDORA ANDERSON



**F**or once the publisher's blurb is no exaggeration: 'CLR James is one of the twentieth century's most remarkable individuals.' Nobody could argue with that. Born in 1901, James was a leading literary figure in his native Trinidad well before he came to Britain. From Nelson, Lancashire, he became cricket correspondent for the *Manchester Guardian* and other papers. In 1938 he published *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, a landmark study of slave revolt. He has written extensively on politics, dialectics, literature and sport. *Beyond a Boundary*, his remarkable study of what cricket meant to him, and should mean to us, came out in 1963.

### Sensitive portrait

He lectured for years in the USA and in Africa, and acted as *eminence grise* to such leaders of Pan-Africanism as Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. He was also a relentless political activist, a leading figure in British Trotskyism in the thirties—in the Marxist Group and the Independent Labour Party; and in the forties, a leading figure in and out of the American Trotskyist organisation, the Socialist Workers Party. In the sixties he entered the fray in Trinidad with his Workers and Farmers Party.

Paul Buhle's book *CLR James: The Artist As Revolutionary* is an intellectual, political and cultural biography, a sensitive portrait by a man who has been an editorial collaborator with James for years. Himself an historian of American Marxism and former activist of the New Left as well as cultural critic, Buhle is steeped in many of the concerns and the personalities close to his subject's heart. If he sometimes makes inflated claims for his hero, it is not simply out of affection for the man and regard for his achievements. Buhle sees James as the nearest thing yet to an ideal reconciliation of the multiple identities of a sundered human nature, which is the fragmented condition of every man and woman in late capitalist society. It is an almost mystical theme, seeking redemption within the individual personality for problems which are social in nature and origin. It is consistent with the over-emphasis on ideology and the anti-Leninist bent of Buhle's earlier work. Nevertheless, the story of James' life, and the detail and the connections which Buhle brings to bear from his own wide learning, make this a book worth reading.

### Holding: how fast?

CLR James, not far from 90, is now ensconced in a second-floor garret in Brixton. Perched above

the offices of *Race Today*, with a view down Railton Road, he sits in an armchair flanked by shelves of books (a cricket ball is wedged among them). He gets the first question in: 'Are you Irish? I thought you might have some whiskey in your pocket. No whiskey? Irish in name only.'

He is frail, but he talked for over an hour before tiring. Lucid and serious, but with a spry wit, he often checked after a long answer, 'Is that clear? Good'. He was quick to rebuke any hint of a lazy or patronising question, and careful in all his replies. When towards the end I asked if he had ever seen anybody bowl as fast and straight as Michael Holding, he weighed the question up: 'I couldn't compare the pace of bowlers. I have known bowlers who were as fast as anything when they were playing. I will say this much. Holding ranks with the greatest fast bowlers there have ever been. I'm not going to compare him with George John or Statham, but he's in that rank. There is no perhaps or maybe about it. He is one of the great fast bowlers. You want to know more ask the great batsmen of the day.'

## 'Are you for the Labour Party or for the revolution? That is the question in Britain today'

What did he think of the biography? 'I thought it was a very good book, and a hard book to write, a biography. I haven't killed anybody, but he made it interesting. A successful piece of work.' The political climate in which the book has been published is very different from the times that it describes, when James rubbed shoulders with Leon Trotsky, and balked at the latter's advice to enter the Labour Party in the thirties. How would he compare political work in Britain then and now? 'In those days independent revolutionary work was quite an adventure. Today things are more organised. It's harder in a way, but you know what you're doing. In the thirties the whole thing was wide open. You were in an open sea, and you worked hard or you sank. Today, it isn't so. The organisations are pretty much set and now you join this or you join that.'

He had been in many organisations, and often in none: did he still believe in the importance of a

revolutionary party? 'I believe you must have an organisation, but I don't believe that means you have to join something that's there. Maybe you have to fight against an organisation to get a clear policy. In the old days an organisation meant a certain political and philosophical orientation. Today it is that in theory, but in reality it is a structure. In the old days the political line and the philosophical basis of it was dominant, not today.' So he hadn't moved away from Leninism? 'No, I have always felt that I was a Leninist. I believe Lenin was the greatest political leader, theoretician and organiser that we have known.'

James took great pains to distinguish Leninism from Trotskyism. 'Trotskyism and Leninism are not the same. Leninism—you are for the Leninist revolution; Trotskyism—you are for the Trotskyist party. Lenin had a philosophical view of the revolution. He was not on the surface. He was fundamentally opposed to bourgeois society and unless you are aware that every step that he took had that in mind you will go wrong with Lenin. Trotsky began to be

for the party, quoting Lenin for the party, but in reality his conception of the party was different. Trotsky in the end was swept away by his followers into having, I wouldn't say a superficial, but a conception of the party that was not fundamentally connected with the state of society. Lenin never lost sight of the party and its relation to the people.'

How would Lenin have dealt with Margaret Thatcher? 'Lenin would have said, "She has won three times. Something happens once, that is an accident. The second time, maybe it is a coincidence. But the third time, that is an orientation. She has won three times, let me see *why*". He wouldn't rush into agitation to put up somebody against her. He would have said "Bring me all her books, and everything she has said". He would have analysed them all and he would have said "She represents *this* and this today is stronger than it was, and she sticks to *that*, and that is why she wins; and now to defeat her we

have to get down to these fundamentals".'

James is a mine of rare first-hand reflections, not just on international revolutionaries but on the people who made the history of the British left—men like Red Clydeside MP James Maxton of the ILP. 'Maxton was an orator. He had a fine voice and a rhetorical manner, and he said all the things that everybody agrees with. Maxton would get up and say "We are against these enemies. They support King and country. They support the army. But we are with the people and the ordinary soldier and the rank and file". All these abstractions. Maxton, he was a marvellous man for making the abstraction revolutionary.'

### \$64 000 question

What of the issues for the left in Britain today, like the race question? 'I don't see the race question in Britain as the race question in the vast colonial areas. The dominant question in Britain today is this: are you for the Labour Party or are you for the revolution? And the race question has to fit itself into that. That is the question in Britain.'

'When black people raise the race question it means to them a lot more than when the Labour Party votes in favour of their struggle. For them, that's something in the paper. It means little. Only coloured people in Britain really feel race. An Englishman in Manchester or Salisbury or Dorset voting in favour of the black struggle, to him that is something abstract.'

### Battling Stalinism

What, then, of the colonial world, and the problems which beset African states like Nkrumah's Ghana after independence? 'I believe that in many an African country there was ultimately no distinction between the party and the state. At first the development of a party that had Marxism as its policy was undoubtedly valuable. I want to make it clear, in many a formerly undeveloped country the organisation of a party is a tremendous step forward. They leave the tribe, they leave the religious structure and they make a political structure. But if that political structure becomes a representation of the politics of the advanced country, there is a hell of a mess. That happened in Trinidad and it happened in many colonial territories because the Communist Party, the Stalinists, picked up these things and went to the colonial territories and said the party is what makes politics, and the party is our party...and once the struggle began as to which party the organisation became dominant.'



The battle which James had with Stalinism was clearly the ongoing political fight of his life. He feels that it was a job well done. 'Today it is becoming more clear that Stalinism is mainly a projection of the need of certain sections of the movement for political power. I wouldn't say that the back of Stalinism is broken, but there is a movement against them, not just a few intellectuals or writers. People don't rush to them as the hope of the future as they used to do.'

'And if you will allow me to say so, and this is particularly true in the former colonial territories, they understand Stalinism owing to the fact that James and other colonial writers not only spoke of independence but pointed out the evils of Stalinism. It was a tremendous struggle you know to make people understand that the Soviet Union, and the Communist Party it influenced, was the enemy of the revolutionary movement, but it was done and the theoretical foundations have been laid. We made clear that the things which happened were not the mistakes of leaders or the weaknesses of

individuals, but were the result of the structure and system which grew up to produce them. I think that is one of the most important things we left behind.'

I asked about his fiction; does

'Yes, activist. Good. I left fiction behind. I don't think anything should be made of my fiction. I hadn't really become soaked in the Marxist movement. I was still on the surface.'

## 'I am in doubt for tomorrow, maybe—but I am never in doubt for the day after tomorrow'

he have any favourite pieces now? 'No. For this reason. I began by expecting to write fiction and to write literature and about society in a traditional way. But I came to Britain, joined the movement and became a political analyst and writer.' 'And activist?' I suggested.

On the surface today, I put it to him finally, there is much pessimism about the prospects for revolution. 'Well my friend, I want to say something about this. When I look at the revolutionary movement over the ages, over the decades, for me emerges one thing. You

never know when it is going to explode. The revolutionary movement is a series of explosions when the regular routine of things reaches a pitch where it cannot go on. To me that's a philosophical question based on history and I am never in any doubt—I am in doubt for tomorrow, maybe—but I am never in any doubt for the day after tomorrow. It has been a fundamental part of my outlook, a statement of Marx early on, that the revolution comes like a thief in the night.

'I believe, you know, that the Marxist theory is a scientific, intellectual theory such as the world has never seen before, and properly used, properly thought of, always with the feeling that history brings things new, that you didn't see before—with the basic Marxist guide you can manage. On the whole we can view the future with a certain confidence; we have a method that is aware of the past, but open to the future.'

P Buhle, *CLR James: The Artist As Revolutionary*, Verso, £7.95

### Performance poetry

## 'A PEN AGAINST OPPRESSION'

Andrew Calcutt talked to dub poet and playwright Benjamin Zephaniah, one of the most popular performers on the circuit

I got arrested in 1975, kept in a cell for a week, then the policeman took me to court and said he arrested me the previous night. I went around shouting about this all the time. One of my family even suggested that I see a doctor: I was a weirdo. Then I did a poem about it, and they put me on television. I said, if this is the way to do it, I'm going to use it.'

Experience of British racism is at the heart of Benjamin Zephaniah's poetry. He sees himself as part of a network of dub newcasters, 'telling our own history', recording events which otherwise would go unreported. There are plenty of these in Liverpool 8, where Zephaniah is currently writer in residence at Source Books, sponsored by the Africa Arts Collective. 'The other night the police blocked off Princes Avenue. A car went up in flames. There was a big confrontation out there. This was 3am. I turned on the television in the morning expecting to hear something. Nothing. I thought I'd had a dream. That inspired me. It's my job to write it down. You might

not hear the poem tomorrow, but the experience is collected.'

### That Israeli story

He takes inspiration from other struggles, too. He has just been to the West Bank and Gaza, and his next book is *Rastatime in Palestine*. The Israelis mistook him for an Arab, so he witnessed the degradation of Palestinians which tourists don't see. 'There is a crippled man in old Jerusalem. By day it's a tourist trap, and then the soldiers come out at night. The Arabs, who are mainly on strike, allow the man to carry on selling cigarettes which people give him. This soldier came up and tried to force his penis into the old man's mouth. The soldier could see I was there, but he thought I was an Arab so it didn't matter. The crippled man was spitting and vomiting. Then the soldier turned around to me with his trousers hanging down, and expects me to do the same. I left it until the last minute, then pulled my passport out, and he ran like mad.' Zephaniah enjoyed the irony of being

saved by a British passport.

He was in Palestine to make a film for the BBC, but they didn't like what he brought back, and dropped it. He set out to use the media, but has it used him? 'There have definitely been occasions when I have been pigeon-holed, and there is an unavoidable element of the token black man. But I am proud to say I've never been on television and said somebody else's words. The only time I've been censored, they had to strike the film altogether.' Despite the dangers of censorship, tokenism and stereotyping he is sure the word will get through. 'You can't just put your hand over someone's mouth to stop them speaking. People will have to find other ways.'

### People's poetry?

For Zephaniah, connecting with popular experience is essential to make any art form worthwhile. He draws a clear line between performance poets and those who write primarily for publishers. 'Generally speaking there is an

"us and them" situation between performance poets and published poets. The dub poets, we're writing for people who don't read books. Lots of these poetry people see our poetry as superficial. We get a bigger live audience than them. We have attracted people who poetry didn't normally appeal to. But as far as they are concerned, we have done this at the expense of poetry. As far as we are concerned, they are doing poetry at the expense of people.'

In 1987 Zephaniah was prevented at the eleventh hour from taking up a visiting poetry fellowship at Trinity College, Cambridge. It confirmed his worst fears about the 'high culture' milieu. 'There is another story to the one that was in the press, and the story is that I actually got the fellowship. Then, when it came to be officially announced they changed their minds, and it's reverted back to going to professor so-and-so's daughter. It was a clash of many things: racism was in there, cultural snobbery was in there, as well as trial by media.'





His antagonism towards the stifflingly elitist atmosphere of establishment culture is well-founded. But, on the rebound, he is in danger of becoming narrow-minded himself, as when he says all novels are tainted with Western, pro-imperialist ideas. The novel form can hardly be dismissed so sweepingly, and anyway what makes poetry any more immune to the society which produced it? Zephaniah asserts that he is not interested in the form of poetry. 'I've got no great love of poetry as such. The artistic side of it doesn't really bother me.' But how can a writer stay fresh without looking for new ways to get his message across? Indeed, why bother to write poems at all, if you're not interested in the fact that they are poems?

### Bouncing about

In trying to distinguish himself from writers whose obsession with form disguises their lack of anything to say, he seems to overreact again. In truth he has a keen interest in the developing form of his poetry. As well as insisting that his work should be heard live, ('the rhythm, the bounce which is what it's all

about'), he admits to experimenting with calypso beats and looking for new angles, 'because you can only write so many poems about Mrs Thatcher and the police'.

Yet he remains dogged about political inspiration being what matters. 'I started writing because I wanted to be heard politically. Even in my poems that are not overtly political, there is an underlying political message.' He has written in the past of the poet's role—'a pen against oppression'—but in 1989, when his enemies resolve every issue with police batons, he concedes that poetry cannot be the means of a direct political intervention. 'It is more indirect—you can make people question things. But I don't think they are going to put the book down and say "Right, I'm going to join Benjamin Zephaniah's army".'

### Aswad & apathy

He is not very impressed by the left in Britain. 'The words people use change all the time, yet sometimes when I listen to left wingers I think, that sounds like 1968. It's got to be presented to people in terms they can understand. And black people generally are shying away from them. So I

began to approach it from a different angle. When I came to write a poem about sexism, I wrote "My sister is a beautiful girl", and kids loved it, and afterwards they come up and ask "what do you mean by this line about her being used like a slave?"'

Some of Zephaniah's criticisms of the left hit the mark—about the problems with the old Anti-Nazi League, or the patronising attitude of those who move into ghettos because it's 'right-on', when local blacks are trying to get out. But they also suggest a wider, misplaced prejudice against political theory. Zephaniah ascribes to the 'get up and do it for ourselves' school of black politics. Yet he concedes that there is little sign of that today. 'There has been a lot of punch taken out of us. People now think that fighting for equality means fighting for a big car. (I don't mean we should be equal and poor. We've got to be rich.) The record companies are going in on this too. Aswad used to be militant. Now the Rastas are being softened up and put on kids' breakfast TV.' With poems like 'Black politics of today' he wants to combat apathy.

Despite the rich diet of green

room hospitality and arts council grants, Zephaniah remains attuned to the conflicts in society and resistant to being taken in. 'Thatcher's trying to kid everyone they are rich because they can buy a share, and saying, look there's an Asian face in the Conservative Party. Britain seems really safe, and then every now and again you see it rock a bit. They are trying to suppress so much—trade unions, *Spycatcher*, Sellafield—it shows they are paranoid.'

### Messing around

He has busy plans, and a wish to rock things a bit more. An album is under way on Island. He is toying with the idea of going back on the road but is not keen on 'getting involved in London—too many yuppies and buppies'. He has even been commissioned to do a musical. 'But if you ask me what is my ambition, I can't say I want to make a record or do a film. I want a revolution. Until then I'll be messing around with all these other things, and seeing what I can do towards it.'



Television thought police

# RETURN OF THE LONE RANGER

What you see is what they vet, says Nick King

**A**mid all the talk about the threat from satellite and deregulation to civilised television as we have known it, a far greater threat, the steady progress of the thought police, is overtaking us with relatively little fuss. No sooner had the new Broadcasting Standards Council (chairman, Lord Rees-Mogg) issued a draft code on the amount of sex, violence and general indecency we should be subjected to, than the BBC published its own 22-chapter tome of guidelines for its programme makers. This sort of thing could be more harmful to television than Murdoch's monopoly and the 'free market' put together (as indeed they often are).

The draft code, disingenuously couched in the language of anti-sexism and anti-racism, doesn't just rule out Del Boy's bad language, Benny Hill's suspended 'bimbos' and the *A-Team's* mayhem. It doesn't just want to ban, it wants to promote. Its authors claim that broadcasters have a responsibility to set a certain moral tone. 'It is important that characters whom children are likely to admire should behave well and not, for instance, resort to violence as the means of resolving differences capable of other solutions.'

## Childwatchers

The guardians and arbiters of public taste are particularly interested in the way television can promote their values among children. Colin Shaw, the director of the BSC, has said that 'someone needs to be keeping the score on what happens to minority programmes like education, religion and children's television'. By someone he means Colin Shaw. At the moment he is confined to commenting on matters of sex, violence, taste and decency, but he wants wider powers and a 'positive and creative role' rather than 'one which just prevents things'. As if state censorship were not sinister enough, now they want to regulate openly what they do allow to be broadcast.

It is a measure of the disgracefully defensive and demoralised state of broadcasters that they greeted the code with relief rather than outrage. In fact the biggest complaints came from Mary Whitehouse, who lambasted it for

being too weak; 'It has tried very hard not to come down firmly on one side or the other'. Meanwhile, the BBC took it, as usual, lying down. Its upper echelons are now stuffed with Thatcherites and safe-servers. It implemented the government's ban on Sinn Fein with barely a craven whimper, so why should it balk at a bit of minor muzzling from Rees-Mogg? Still, there must have been a few grim smiles about the place when deputy director-general John Birt claimed 'There will be no thought police walking the corridors' as he launched the BBC's own guidelines.

Like the BSC code, the BBC's 'advice' to its staff restricts by another few notches the portrayal of sex and violence on the screen. It is not, however, these new rules in themselves which will change the way programmes are made. As any BBC producer will tell you, the book lies largely unopened on their desks. Its importance is its

contribution to the deadeningly cautious climate within which programmes are made. Producers are selected, among other things, for their judgement as to what at any given time will be 'acceptable'. And if they get it wrong, there is always a superior on hand to pluck out an offending item.

GF Newman, who made the excellent and brutal *Law and Order* drama for the BBC in 1978, recently made a rare return trip. He noticed the changes at Broadcasting House: 'There is now more interference by department heads with drama producers.' In his latest play, *Here is the News*, the BBC changed his references to the prime minister from 'she' to 'he'. And I don't think they were complying with the new code on sexual stereotyping.

On sensitive issues there are already elaborate procedures for 'reference up', such as the Standing Instructions for Coverage of

Matters Affecting Northern Ireland, involving everybody up to the director-general. In most cases, however, it doesn't have to be spelt out. In an atmosphere moulded by such developments as the Video Recordings Act and the fetus earrings ban, people will know what to do. Without any code being invoked or formal procedures applied, all the subjects, the images, the language which the programme makers employ will be selected and tailored to pass muster with Birt and Shaw and even Whitehouse.

The outlook is bleak. The climate will also affect which programmes get made in the first place. With the new emphasis on targeting the children it is little wonder that oldies like *The Lone Ranger* are being remade. It is being cast in a more modern idiom, but with those wholesome, black and white moral certitudes of yesteryear preserved for today's youth. *Grange Hill* and *Wurzel Gummidge* watch out. *Neighbours*, by far the most popular programme with children today, is being singled out for praise and further promotion. Well it would be wouldn't it? Its characters are all squeaky clean, white, owner-occupying, gainfully-employed, middle class heterosexual stereotypes. Now that sounds like the television of the future.

SATURDAY 22 APRIL

AT LEAST WITH A NIGHTMARE YOU WAKE UP



# KEITH ALLEN

IN

# MAGGIE III

**A COMEDY OF TERROR!**

...THE NIGHTMARE CONTINUES

AS THATCHER CELEBRATES A DECADE  
WE'VE JUST GOT TO HAVE A LAUGH




DOORS 7PM SHOW 8PM £4.50 (£3.50) + MEMBERSHIP

**ALBANY EMPIRE**

**DOUGLAS WAY SE8 01 691 3333**





PHOTO: IAN MCKELL

Politics and pop music

# THE ROBOCOP OF ROCK

Andy Perry  
told Pat Ford  
about the  
second  
Easterhouse  
rising

**T**hose whom the gods wish to destroy they first make 'extremely promising newcomers' in the music business. And nobody was made more extremely promising than Easterhouse.

This is how the band from Manchester were being talked about in 1986, the year of their third extended single, *Inspiration*, and their debut album *Contenders*: 'One of the most exciting and provocative pop groups in the land today' (*NME*); 'quite uncommonly magnificent...momentous, enthralling, beautifully conceived' (*Melody Maker*); 'this is an excellent band' (*Guardian*); 'bloody great' (*Time Out*); 'without doubt the most important group to furrow their ruffled brow in aeons' (*Sounds*); 'simply the finest song

I've heard this year' (*Record Mirror*); 'best first album since The Smiths' (*City Limits*); and *Sounds* again—'Easterhouse without a shadow of doubt are one of the best bands in the universe. So beat that, mate'.

Not bad for a band who openly declared that they had been inspired by the politics of the Revolutionary Communist Party, and who sang of miners on strike and Irish republicans on hunger-strike. Soon afterwards the band disintegrated, leaving only singer/songwriter Andy Perry to carry on the Easterhouse name. The biggest loss was his brother/guitarist/collaborator Ivor, but if the new album, written by Andy Perry and performed by him and some experienced session musi-

cians, proves anything, it proves that Perry the elder is a formidable talent on his own. *Waiting for the Redbird*, just out on Rough Trade, is one of the most irresistible records I have heard in a long time. But it is also very different from Easterhouse Mark I, and this time Mr Perry is getting a frosty reception from the critics.

## Troglodyte rock

There are two, overlapping, complaints. The troglodyte tendency can't stand the sleek, polished sound. The electronic finery of the studio has replaced the thin, jangling guitar with a fuller, richer roar such as could comfortably roll out across the rock stadiums Perry now intends to fill. The tt however want the

draughty pub noise of old. Then there are the 'uncompromising' critics, those who sniff a sell-out in the air, but wouldn't recognise one if they had to step over it on the way to work. They 'feel' that the politics don't *sound* the same now, or that if Perry is after a gold record-sized audience the music must automatically be MOR and mediocre to match.

## Wagner meets who?

To say that Andy Perry is unrepentant is something of an understatement. In a King's Cross bar, drinking among friends, he insists he has turned out the 'perfect' product. 'I want to talk to the man in the street, not just the spiky hair brigade. We want to be broader, to reflect a positive attitude to new influences; we want to be modern, to observe and absorb, especially the technology. My music is more contemporary than tomorrow's newspapers. It's the machinery which makes modern pop records, and the pure beauty of the best technology is so important. Easterhouse is now the Robocop of the music business. I want to relate on a more fundamental level, not just the purely agit-prop. In one sense it's politics, in another sense it's pure art. It's Wagner meets Brecht. A huge joke. A grotesque parody. What do you want to know? End of errand.'

Perry is an intense 24-year old with a sharp, combative tongue. He is committed to putting some politics into pop, or rather through it; but with an apocalyptic gleam in his eye he is quite capable of racing off at a tangent. Some of his barmier flights of fancy are punctured by his articulate friend Denise—'Just say the point'—but Perry generally presses on. Words like 'cleaner', 'disciplined', 'wholesome', 'organised', 'muscular' recur as he describes leaving behind the 'degenerate' scene which engulfed the old band. He believes this parallels the mood in the working class today. 'Haircuts are getting shorter, eyes are getting clearer. People want to put on a uniform now, it's up to us what uniforms they are.'

## Silent inspiration

Perry's music paper critics, eager to trip him up but wary of taking on his music, have unfortunately been given too much ammunition by his motormouth interview style. Most of what he feeds them is harmless wind-up material, but when he starts talking macho he gets out of order and he knows it.

As for the politics, Perry is convinced that last time around the band was brought low by establishment and industry reaction to *Inspiration*, the song about the 1981 Irish hunger-



strikes with an image of Bobby Sands on the sleeve. 'Total silence. It was a complete knockout. We walked into a sucker punch.' This time, although politics are still up-front, he is boxing clever, going for the more acceptable targets of nuclear weapons and US imperialism, a shift unnoticed by—or rather unrecognisable to—his ignorant critics. 'We had buckets of credibility before. But I want to reach a wider audience.'

### More Boss than Bragg

Never mind all that, listen to the record. *Waiting for the Redbird* (the Redbird of the title track is a nuclear missile) is a mainstream, mid-Atlantic sound with shades of Simple Minds and Springsteen (particularly on *Come Out Fighting*, the first single). Producers Steve Lovell and Steve Power ('they produced Samantha Fox', Perry says proudly) must take credit for the smooth, balanced sound. Credit too to Neil Taylor, guitarist with Climie Fisher and Tears for Fears, Lance Sabin of Slave Raider and John Marshall who all joined Perry on the album. Its greatest asset, however, is Perry's velvet glove of a voice, now given the scope and exposure it deserves. It is a strong, confident voice but can be warm without getting mushy.

The album is accessible, but there's also a lot to explore on nine good-length tracks, from the storming *You're Gonna Miss It (When It's Gone)* to the seductive *Stay With Me*. I am normally allergic to pop music which is explicitly political. I only have to think of Billy Bragg to start wincing at the threadbare, earnest awkwardness which usually taints protest and politics in pop. It's not a question of an incorrect political line in the lyrics, it's just that Bragg sounds so awful. But Perry can even carry off a song like *Say Yes* (to the revolution, that is), without sounding embarrassing.

I think it works because he embraces so enthusiastically the often predictable conventions of the polished rock form, investing them with new vigour and clarity. Even the heavy-metal guitar breaks sound fresh. He then gets an extra charge by boldly unleashing from the sophisticated package his forthright political sentiments. The main thing, however, is that Perry succeeds in the task he has set himself, to produce cracking contemporary music. *Hope and Glory* should be released as a single forthwith, to become an anthem for our time.

*Waiting for the Redbird*, out now on Rough Trade

## Exhibition

# ART AND ANATOMY

## Bartholomew Walsh dissects Leonardo da Vinci's method

**I**t seems to me that all sciences are vain and full of error which do not spring from experiment, the source of all certainty.'—Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519).

Leonardo da Vinci was the first genius of the High Renaissance. With a confidence characteristic of his times he acknowledged no disciplinary boundaries, and accepted no limit on his own abilities. 'All true sciences are the result of experience which has passed through our senses, the eye is the universal judge of all objects.'

The extraordinary diversity of his relentless observation and experimentation, not to mention the most exquisite draughtsmanship and artistry, is revealed in the current exhibition of his drawings at the Hayward Gallery: life studies, anatomical drawings, botanical works, architectural ideas, drapery exercises, engineering projects.

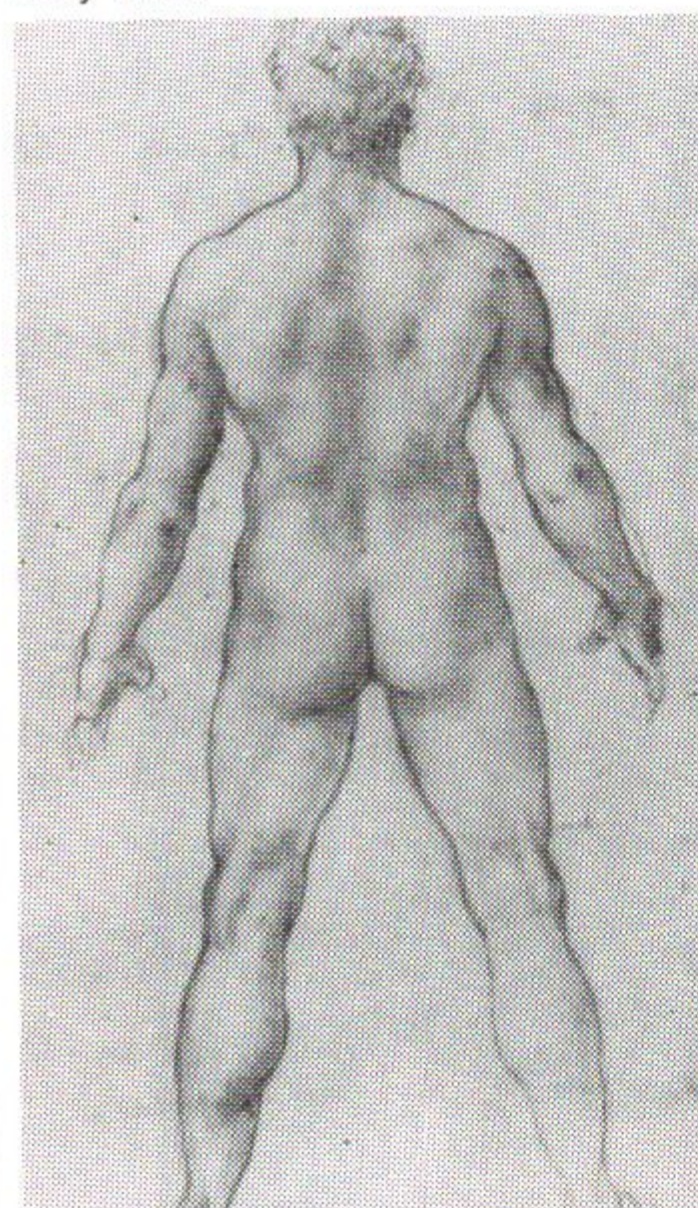
### Thirty cadavers

In his search for the laws which govern the structure and proportions of man, Leonardo personally dissected some 30 cadavers at the hospital of Sta Maria Nuova in Milan. Not only was Leonardo the first artist, with the possible exception of Antonio Pollaiuolo, to dissect, but he also had few rivals in the field of medical dissection itself. Having ceased in the middle ages, the tentative resumption of dissection had only been formally sanctioned by the Pope in 1482.

The fact that Leonardo had to perform in less than sterile conditions, over a putrefying corpse and without modern lighting, makes his achievements in precise observation and drawing all the more remarkable. Anatomical illustration at this time was a primitive affair, and Leonardo's drawings represent a quantum leap. In the *Muscles of the Upper Limb* he presents the arm not from one angle but from several, systematically circling it. In *Studies of the Arm* he goes beyond mere depiction of musculature, and demonstrates how muscles perform pronation and supination movements of the wrist.

Even for the pioneer, however, there were discrepancies between what he saw and what he drew. His primary source for anatomy was Johannes de Ketham's illustrated

version of the *Anatomia* by Mondino da Luzzi (1315). This famous text was firmly rooted in the Galenic tradition, where medical progress had been frozen for a millenium. No doubt the influence of this tradition (Roman dissection was limited to animals) led Leonardo to draw in his schematic depiction of the human digestive system two stomachs (characteristic of ruminants) when he saw only one.



Standing Male Nude

In the same drawing, the *Coition of Hemisected Man and Woman*, he demonstrates the popular contemporary belief that sperm originates in the spinal cord and traverses through a fictitious channel to the penis. The cross-section of the male member reveals this double conduit, a fact known to be anatomically incorrect by the artist. While Leonardo noted in the margins of his drawings the inconsistencies between his reading and his observation, he did not dare openly defy the dogmas of medieval scholasticism in the way that Andreas Vesalius was later to do in his *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* of 1543. It has been suggested that the reason Leonardo wrote from right to left was to disguise his potentially heretical ideas.

One prominent theme in the exhibition is the analogies Leonardo drew between the structure of man and the structure of nature. In his writings he compared the blood vessels of an old man to the meandering of the Arno river. To

see what he was getting at compare the tortuous blood vessels in the *Anatomical Figure Showing Heart, Liver and Main Blood Vessels*, with the *Map of the Arno River and Proposed Canal*. The drawings gathered under the category the *Vortex* illustrate the artist's fascination with the currents and turbulence in natural phenomena, in flowing and falling water (*Studies of Water Passing Obstacles and Falling into a Pool*), and the flow of blood through heart valves (*Studies of the Vortex Motion of the Blood Within the Heart*). An obvious extension of this interest can be seen in the swirling drapery of the *Study for a Sleeve*, the spiralling *Star of Bethlehem and Other Plants* and the decorative circular braids of the *Study for the Head of Leda*.

### Flight of fancy

Computer graphics (IBM is the exhibition sponsor) and models supplement the drawings. There is a fascinating one presenting the perspectival problems of the *Last Supper* and their ingenious solution. Leonardo, with his interest in spatial visualisation and centrally planned (as opposed to cruciform) churches, would have approved. Borrowed from various sources, the large-scale models of his inventions give concrete expression to the two-dimensional studies. Soaring over the exhibits is James Wink's full-scale model of Leonardo's flying machine. The model, built of original materials like beechwood and leather, is too heavy to fly. Yet it is a superb realisation of the artist's experimentation with the ancient ambition of human flight.

The exhibition cannot bring us the supreme achievements of Leonardo's art—the fading *Last Supper* from the wall of the Refectory of the Monastery of Sta Maria delle Grazie in Milan, nor the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre in Paris, nor even the famous drawing of the *Universal Man* in a circle and a square from the *Accademia* in Venice. There is still something for everyone. The medic can hunt for the inaccurate interdigitations of the deltoid muscle, the engineer can enjoy the technicalities of the machines, the art history student can appreciate whether the cross-hatching is straight or curved. And everybody can marvel at the formal beauty of drawings like the *Standing Male Nude*, a study in surface anatomy so entirely confident of underlying structure that it soars beyond its formal status as a scientific study.

*Leonardo da Vinci—Artist, Scientist, Inventor*, Hayward Gallery, South Bank, London SE1, until 16 April



# Letters

## GREENS SEE RED

This is just a sample of the mountain of mail we received in response to the features on the environment in our February issue (Frank Richards, 'Can capitalism go Green?'; Nigel Lewis, 'The Greening of British politics'; John Gibson, 'Nuclear power—no thanks?'). A few of the controversial copies are still available from the address on page 3, at £1.50 plus 40p p&p.

### MYTH TAKEN IDENTITY

The space *Living Marxism* devoted to the debate is an acknowledgement of the fact that Green issues, and the Green Party, are being taken more seriously. It is a pity, then, that the writers had no idea of Green Party values.

'Many Greens', states Frank Richards, 'now argue that technology has advanced so far ahead of its creators, that its further application must be called into question'. The 1987 Green Party manifesto says, 'Contrary to popular mythology, the Green Party is not anti-technology. We favour appropriate technology that is good and satisfying to work with, produces useful results, and is kind to the environment'.

Creating, through genetic engineering, vegetables that could grow in arid climates would be highly beneficial. The regeneration of foodstuffs from single cell grafts is an exciting prospect to aid the third world, and need not lead into a horror-movie age of cloned humans. Another area which serves Green concerns is computing, where networking systems and electronic mail cut out paper consumption and use a fraction of the energy required to send messages via conventional methods. Carried to its full potential, computing could eliminate the need for costly and wasteful magazines, books, newspapers and so on.

John Gibson points at what he calls 'the narrow anti-nuclear prejudices of many Greens' and describes how this can 'lead to an exaggeration of the dangers of nuclear power'. Jonathon Porritt points out that

Greens *will* accept it, so long as it is proven safe first. 'If the nuclear industry were to come up with a totally different technology for using nuclear power for generating electricity, we would have to be open-minded enough to consider it as an option for future energy systems.'

(*Environment Now/World Magazine*, February 1989)

Frank Richards touches on another common misconception when he portrays Greens as retrospective ruralists who wish to live in small, self-sufficient, introspective groups. The desire to decentralise power is not a move to relive outdated hippy ideals, but to offer people a chance to take an active role in their community/country. Localising industry creates employment, deploys jobs evenly around the country, and cuts transportation costs and energy.

Environmentalists are not fighting technology or social growth. What Greens are concerned about is consumerism. The West is consuming raw materials at an alarming rate. There must be a status quo between demand and supply—or rather, between demand and the continued ability to supply. Where this does not exist, there is a simple choice: continue to supply despite long-term consequences, or change our consumption habits so that we make more realistic demands on resources. It goes without saying that we must handle our resources efficiently and recycle what we can do. Surely this makes economic sense, let alone environmental.

Herein, I believe, lies the greatest criticism one can make of Green policy. As Greens urge the public to

waste less, buy less and be aware of what they buy, the public can claim that their freedom of choice is being attacked, and that Green ideology forces a fall in living standards; people will still want burgers even if it means mass deforestation for cattle grazing. I do not dispute this, but I do question the selfishness of this attitude. We must learn to be responsible consumers, and realise that we should pay for our requirements. Indians in central America should not pay with their freedom to allow us to drink cheap coffee. Responsibility and sensitivity are keywords to Green thought.

**Corinne Hart**  
Loughborough, Leics

### NUCLEAR POWER— NO FACTS

I searched in vain for your ideas on three issues crucial to any fully informed perspective on nuclear power.

1 The safe disposal of nuclear waste is an enormous problem—even if we close all nuclear power stations now. You don't refer to this issue at all in your article—which in many respects appears to have been drawn from a GCSE physics textbook. In a nutshell: nobody knows the long-term effects of low-level radiation on living matter, nobody knows if storing waste underground or under the sea is safe—but risks are being taken, and corners being cut to find 'cost-effective' ways of getting rid of this most embarrassing side of nuclear power.

2 You don't mention the issue of control. No government, especially a Tory one, wants to be held to ransom by a section of the working class getting organised enough to shut down Britain's power stations. Not again, anyway. There is much less scope for that sort of action against nuclear power stations than coal or oil-fired ones critically dependent on the availability of large amounts of fuel. This is a big plus for nuclear power.

3 Your other glaring omission is no reference to the expense and problems associated with actually shutting down nuclear power stations—decommissioning. Each closure leaves several acres of ground which will remain dangerously radioactive for

thousands of years. So build another one next door—like Sizewell. Better for the nuclear sewerage to be concentrated rather than leave nuclear dog-turds all over the country. Where will that end? What is the logical outcome of the inevitable process of nuclear power station building and decommissioning?

The article looks backwards. It has no eye for the future, other than to knock the Greens for standing in the way of technical change. If you really want to gob-smack the public through WH Smith's distribution then articles on subjects like nuclear power should be more thought-provoking—rather than simply being provocative by omission.

**Joel Crayford**  
London W12

### YES, IT CAN

'Can capitalism go Green?' concludes that for a Greener environment society has to be changed. Yes, but isn't this rather glib? What is needed are changes in legislative controls. For example, the USA was portrayed as a 'casual' polluter; but their pollution control laws are the most stringent in the world, based upon a definitive Best Technology Available, as opposed to our own (vague and debatable) Best Practical Means.

Another example of Green capitalism is the contentious privatisation of the regional water authorities (RWAs). The bill will result in approximately a 10 per cent increase in water charges; but privatisation of the RWAs is potentially beneficial for the environment. With privatisation, the National Rivers Authority (NRA) will be instigated to ensure that the RWAs comply with their discharge consents. The NRA represents a positive step away from the poacher-gamekeeper situation whereby an RWA cannot prosecute itself if discharge consents are exceeded.

Perhaps the most interesting examples of Green capitalism are the rapidly expanding environmental consultancies. There are reported incidents of 'fudged' reports being produced. However, there are reputable environmental consultancy firms that make profits from solving environmental problems.

The safety of our



environment lies in strengthening legislation, and this is gradually occurring through the implementation of COPA and EEC directives, of which there are now over 200. This, I feel, is a more satisfactory conclusion than 'The future of our environment will be decided in the struggle over which class has the power to control society'.

**G Wood**  
London SW7

## TAKING SIDES AND EDGEWAYS

The *Living Marxism* features are a welcome contribution to the debate between Greens and socialists, and provide important and provoking arguments. It worked, we are a little provoked!

Firstly, by suggesting that Green politics evade the reality of capitalism, your writer is unaware of key Green Party policies: the commitment to dismantle the banking system; to take all land into collective ownership; to break up transnational corporations and bring industry under the control of workers and the community (Green Party general election manifesto, 1987).

Secondly, Greens do not

avoid taking sides in class conflict. Many of us are active in our trade unions; we have supported miners, health workers and others in their struggles. We come down firmly on the side of anti-racism and anti-sexism and have policies on gay and lesbian rights which stand up to any comparison or criticism.

It's a bit naughty of you to quote Jonathon Porritt in support of your position: 1) Jonathon hasn't been a spokesperson for the Green Party since 1984 and 2) there are thousands of Greens without a highly-privileged background who might well, had you asked them, have expressed a different view of class oppression!

Many Greens do have a lot of learning to do (history of oppression, transitional reality) but so do revolutionary communists. In the article on nuclear power (created by capitalist imperialism to fight capitalist imperialist war), where was the solidarity with uranium miners of Namibia, South Africa or Australia? Bet they don't think it's a politically neutral technology since it destroys communities and sacred sites and gives them cancer. And you forgot to mention the issue of 100 per cent safe disposal of waste—anything less is

murderously irresponsible.

If we let each other get a word in edgeways, we can create a radical, revolutionary Green and socialist movement.

**Penny Kemp and  
Freda Chapman**  
Association of  
Socialist Greens  
Ashford, Kent

## WHAT ABOUT THE NOMADS?

Frank Richards makes the classic mistake of assuming that, because a problem exists under capitalism it can be solved by abolishing capitalism. This is to turn Marxism from a scientific philosophy into a question of blind faith. If we concern ourselves simply with the biological survival of the human race, then it is possible we can do so by purely technical advancement, but if we put *quality* of life (and not just quantity) into the problem, the situation changes.

Frank Richards states 'the very act of posing a problem in a new way is often the first step towards its solution'. True, but also the announcement of the solution can hide the creation of two more serious problems. If a million people wish to ascend Ben Nevis in 1989, this can be achieved

by the creation of new paths, ski lifts or even a railway. But if, for half of them, the object of the ascent was physical achievement, followed by quiet relaxation, the technical achievement has nullified the original idea. The technical facilities already exist to solve the demand for housing and transport in the south-east, but even with a socialist economy, the result would be a social disaster.

For thousands of years, history was dominated by the conflict between the settled and the nomads who, driven by local over-population, would periodically sweep down on to the settled regions. Frank Richards ignores the fact that this process has swung through 180 degrees. Now the over-population is in the settled industrial areas, from where the nomadic hordes sweep into the international countryside, destroying everything they seek in the process, and gaining nothing.

We cannot begin to solve our economic problems without abolishing capitalism, but that very act may exacerbate problems latent within humanity since the beginnings of civilisation.

**Tom Dunmore**  
Cricklade, Wilts

**We welcome readers' views and criticisms of *Living Marxism*. Please keep your letters as short as possible and send them to The Editor, *Living Marxism*, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX.**

## ABORTION: THE ALTON FACTOR

Anne Burton was correct in highlighting the increase in pregnancies, especially amongst the young, due to increased use of the condom ('How safe is safe sex for women?', March). But she has missed an important factor in trying to explain the extraordinary increase in abortions over the first quarter of 1988. Not only was there an increase of 17 per cent as compared with the same quarter in 1987; late abortions (19 weeks and over) rose by a massive 36.5 per cent—admittedly on a very small base (all figures for resident women).

The important factor Anne missed was the Alton campaign. At the time, Fight the Alton Bill (Fab) organised a press conference, at which Diane Munday, from the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, foretold that there would be a big increase in abortions, because David

Alton was telling women that abortion was available on demand—and they were believing him! Business at BPAS had never been so good. At the same meeting, Wendy Savage said that late abortions, especially on the grounds of disability, were increasing, also due to David Alton, who had inadvertently told women about amniocentesis, the most common test for disability, and women were asking for the tests as a result.

Needless to say, the press mostly ignored this at the time, and similarly ignored the press release NAC put out when the figures were released. Whilst we do not welcome any increase in abortion rates, it does seem to indicate that, contrary to what Anne says, it is not moral pressure which prevents women seeking abortions, but lack of information, or wrong information!

**Leonora Lloyd**  
National Abortion  
Campaign coordinator  
London WC2

## PILLS AND PLASTIC BULLETS

Anne Burton writes of most women, 'The chances of contracting Aids from sex are negligible'. Does she not know that, worldwide, most people with Aids were infected through heterosexual sex? The rate of HIV infection in straight people is higher than ever and shows no signs of levelling as did the infection rate of gay men. The virus changes people's lives and sometimes ends them. The only protection is safe sex. The pill is as safe to a woman and her partner as a plastic bullet to an Ulster child.

**R Jackson**  
London N4

## MILLIGAN'S VILLAINY

Having read Don Milligan's 'Villains or victims?' (March) I am left with the impression that he has by no means tackled 'the myths and

hypocrisy' surrounding rent boys and homosexuals. He states that 'rent boys are indeed lying cheats'. Surely in any context this is a misleading and unnecessary generalisation which can only add to the myth that *they* are the villains and not victims. In another investigative gem he writes: 'Because homosexual men frequently pick up strangers in parks, streets and public toilets...' I'm sure the British media would agree wholeheartedly.

By focusing more attention on the repression of homosexual rights and the consequent backwardness of prevailing views of gays, I feel Don Milligan would have got closer to the crux of the matter. Instead, he became bogged down in subjective observation and didn't provide a revolutionary perspective—I could have read this article in the *Guardian*.

**Damian Guilfoyle**  
Oldham



AVAILABLE ON VIDEO



BATTLESHIP POTESKIN

STRIKE

OCTOBER

TIME IN THE SUN/BEZHIN MEADOW

ALEXANDER NEVSKY

IVAN THE TERRIBLE

THE BOYARS' PLOT

MOTHER

END OF ST. PETERSBURG

STORM OVER ASIA

FALL OF THE ROMANOFF DYNASTY (DOCUMENTARY)

TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD (DOCUMENTARY)

RUSSIAN CLASSICS

HENDRING 20a ECCLESTON STREET LONDON SW1W 9LT TELEPHONE 01 730 8691





Friday 21-Friday 28 July 1989 University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1

# PREPARING FOR POWER

Each year, the Preparing for Power summer school organised by the Revolutionary Communist Party brings together people from around Britain and abroad to discuss the Marxist view of current events. In 1988, well over 1000 turned up to join in; this year we expect our biggest and best conference yet.

Preparing for Power is organised around 16 week-long courses, covering the big issues from the environment and glasnost to the Irish War and the French Revolution. This year's courses will be:

- An introduction to Marxism
- Social movements and class politics
- Marxism and the environment
- Imperialism in the nineties
- New Left thinking—old ideas
- The French Revolution
- The making of Marx's *Capital*
- The Irish War—introduction
- The Irish War—advanced course
- Women's liberation
- Race and racism
- Marxism and culture
- Issues in contemporary capitalism
- Gorbachev and *glasnost*
- Problems of the British revolution
- The German question

On top of this, there are more than 100 workshops covering political and social issues around the world. Whether you're interested in anti-racism, Armenian nationalism or Acid House, you'll find plenty of interest at Preparing for Power. And there's top class entertainment, bars, sauna and sporting facilities to keep you busy in between times.

Creche facilities, transport from around the country and accommodation in London are also available on request.

Preparing for Power will be the major Marxist event of 1989. The sooner you book your tickets, the less you have to pay. Our special discounts mean that, until 1 June, a ticket for the whole week will cost you just £25 waged/£16 unwaged.

Tickets, and brochures with full details of the week, are available from Preparing for Power, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to RCP Association. Or ring us on (01) 375 1702.