

## THE MINERS ARE NOT DEFEATED

**'IN TEN year's time, you will be able to look back and say to your children and grandchildren that you took part in the most noble, the most courageous struggle of the working class to defend our jobs and communities.'**

So said miners' president Arthur Scargill, as the year-long miners' strike started in March 1984.

With only half that ten years past, that epic struggle is being recalled in miners' homes with exactly this pride.

The Workers Revolutionary Party salutes the miners, their wives and their families. We remember the families of David Jones and Fred Green and others whose lives were lost. We salute Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland who are still in jail, reviled by Neil Kinnock, Kim Howells and other Labour turn-coats. We salute the victimised men, many of whom were never re-instated.

How do we judge the miners' strike today?

The strike was part of an international wave of workers' struggles which create the most favourable conditions for answering the most burning question of all for the working class: the building of revolutionary leadership.

It produced a powerful international support movement. It was followed by big strike waves in France and Spain. It gave a great spur to the South African miners, whose three week strike in 1987 terrified Botha's regime.

This movement of the working class is aimed against both capitalism and the Stalinist bureaucracy which controls the Soviet Union and the deformed workers' states of eastern Europe.

During the miners' strike the Thatcher government imported Polish coal and Russian oil as part of their efforts to break the strike. At that time the rulers of eastern Europe and the USSR appeared all-powerful.

Only a few cracks were evident - like the messages of support to the strike from Solidarnosc.

In Britain the Stalinists of the Communist Party, living on its past reputation, played a key role in trying to undermine the miners' strike by trying to isolate it from the rest of the working class.

Today things are vastly different.

**BY SIMON PIRANI**

The British Stalinists, although not finished, are widely discredited. A profound crisis shakes the Stalinists in the east. They are forced to admit that 'socialism in one country' has failed completely.

They are forced more and more into open deals with Bush, Thatcher and Botha against the working class and the oppressed of the world.

On this fifth anniversary miners' are in the vanguard of the struggle against Stalinism.

In Kosovo, in the Serbian part of Yugoslavia, 1000 Albanian miners

staged an underground sit-in last week demanding national rights. (See article page 3) Local Stalinist officials were forced to resign but a strike wave is building up throughout the country.

In Hungary, a 'Workers' Solidarity '89' trade union was established last week. After a speaker from the mechanics section of the Durham NUM brought greetings, a Hungarian miner stood up and said: 'Maybe the Polish Stalinists were sending coal to break your strike, but in our village we were collecting food to support you.'

### Unity

Here is the unity of the socialist revolution against imperialism and the political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy.

This is the basis for building the Fourth International, the international revolutionary organisation

founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938.

The miners' strike was not defeated. It was betrayed by the trade union and Labour leaders.

The NUM was unable to halt pit closures. But Thatcher set out to smash the union. She failed - despite the support she got from the reformist and Stalinist leaders.

The September 1984 Trades Union Congress voted for 'solidarity'. Then 'left' union leaders called off the national dock strike and ensured that the scab lorries kept rolling. Within the NUM the Stalinists worked to undermine the strike, and opposed the decision to defy legal threats. After the strike they sought unity with the scab UDM and took part in the witch-hunt against Scargill.

Those who say the miners' strike was defeated, not betrayed, are covering up for the trade union and labour bureaucracy.



Black and Asian groups (above) demonstrate in south east London last week against police brutality and harassment. Organised by

Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks, the rally afterwards included speakers from campaigns like those in defence

of Trevor Monerville, Broadwater Farm, Blair Peach, Viraj Mendis, Plaistow Four, Rajah/Ranvir, and Anti-Fascist Action.



# Workers Press

## The real crisis...

FOR MILLIONS of people all over the world - unemployed steel workers, starving farmers, homeless youth, the aged sick - the past decade has brought starvation, disease, mass unemployment and brutal oppression.

Meanwhile a tiny group of the world's money-men have laughed themselves sick all the way to the bank. While industry was restructured - that is, decimated - huge fortunes have been made by the computerised shuffling of debt. This decade has seen the planet's first billionaires and a score of multi-billion dollar take-overs.

Now, the financial experts are talking of the coming 'recession'. The trick, they explain, is to ensure 'a soft landing'. A 'Financial Times' editorial on 24 February had this to say:

The last two rapid expansions of the world economy - between 1971 and 1974 and again between 1975 and 1979 - ended in inflation, recession and tears. After six years of sustained economic expansion there is a fear that history will repeat itself.

The FT sternly warns the monetary authorities that they must act. As interest rates start to rise throughout the world, they have absolutely nothing to say about what kind of action they have in mind, nor, indeed, just who they expect to take it. ('No "Financial Times", no comment', as the advert says.)

To compare the present situation to that of the 1970s is dreaming. Even after 1971, governments still had at least a remnant of that control over national economies which had characterised the post-war inflationary boom.

The main feature of world capitalism today is the complete absence of control, either on a national or an international scale. In the age of Thatcherism and Reaganomics, governments are themselves governed by the feverish movement of debt.

Ten years ago, the US, centre of the world financial structure, was still the major world creditor. By 1985, the US, remaining at the heart of the system, had become the world's largest debtor.

As the percentage of unused industrial capacity has risen, the largest companies in the world were increasingly sucked out of production and into speculation. No-one could resist the compulsive smell of quick profit.

British Petroleum, for example, the biggest UK manufacturing firm, which would at one time have financed its operations by re-investing its vast profits, now makes more out of currency dealing than out of oil. Its currency turnover is reported to be bigger than that of the Bank of England.

The market in national currencies now amounts to over 200 billion dollars. This mass of speculative paper moves round the world in milliseconds, in search of the slightest shifts in exchange rates and interest rates. Only 10 percent of this money is in the hands of central banks.

But this is only a small part of the 2000 billion dollars of 'hot money', estimated to have doubled between 1985 and 1987. Like a swarm of locusts, it rushes from one financial centre to another, threatening to eat up whole economies as it goes. Sniffing out the highest interest rates, it is continually pulled towards debts of ever shorter term and higher risk. Fraud of planetary proportions is never far below the surface.

This mound of paper represents a claim on future capital accumulation, at the same time operating to reduce production. Something just has to give.

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This is the reality of the 'six years of uninterrupted expansion'. Not only can there be no national economic policy, but the most powerful sectors of capital cannot break from the lucrative chaos of the past few years. Capitalism's central nervous system becomes ever more dependent on debt, now a fatal addiction.

Why did the October 1987 Wall Street 'melt-down' not stop the orgy of debt-expansion? Terrified of financial cold turkey, the 'authorities' had no alternative but to administer ever-bigger doses of the very drug which had caused the crash.

The international working class movement must grasp the implications of the changes of this decade, their speed and scope. The idea that a Labour government could somehow take control of the capitalist economy on behalf of the workers was always false.

Governments of every political colour, far from controlling the system, are today in its power. In Greece, France and Spain, for example, 'reform' governments are in the grip of financial scandals, just as much as the governments of Japan and South Africa, and they are now taking back the gains of the working class.

The idea of a 'soft landing' is a debt-induced hallucination. As the frantic movement of the 1980s reaches its climax, the comfortable word 'recession' is meaningless. The fantastic speed of self-inflation of all kinds of assets has prepared for a deafening explosion when the balloon bursts.

But the contradiction is that this crisis makes clear the necessity and urgency to nationalise the banks, the big corporations and close down the stock exchanges. Opportunities now open up for revolutionary leadership to unite the masses to carry out such a programme.

# WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far :£2,066.23

Thank you for completing the £2,000 for February. I can tell you it was a nail-biting situation here.

One problem is that our mail is taking a whole week to arrive. For instance letters post-marked 7 February were not delivered until 14 February. We do not bother to check the postmarks every day. We know this is not the fault of the staff at the local sorting office. No, our mail is being held up by the state security department which intercepts mail sent to organisations like ours. So please bear this in mind when trying to get your fund donation to us in time.

We will soon be making announcements about the publication date for the new Workers Press. We need to press ahead with the March Fund to help prepare this. So don't waste a moment.

During February we also received £2,991.60 for the International Fund. Many, many thanks.

Dot Gibson

Please send donations to: Workers Press Fighting Fund  
PO Box 735, London, SW9 7QS

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A SERIES of demonstrations and events are coming up, all on the defence of democratic rights against Thatcher's onslaught.

Following the Workers Press public meeting in London, at which we opened a discussion on this issue, the Workers Revolutionary Party must support these events, intervening with the resolution passed at the meeting, and our Draft Programme.

On Saturday, 4 March the fifth anniversary of the miners' strike will be marked with an event at Manchester Town Hall, St Peters Square, Manchester. It starts at 10:00 am with workshops; a rally follows at 2:00 pm, with speakers including Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield.

On Monday, 6 March is a Commemoration Vigil for the IRA volunteers assassinated in Gibraltar, at Kilburn Square, Kilburn High Road, London NW6, 5.30 pm - 7.00 pm, organised by the Committee for British Withdrawal from Ireland.

The same evening, at the Brent Irish Centre, Salusbury Road, there will be a meeting on the defence of Irish Republican life prisoners. The next evening, Tuesday 7 March, a similar meeting will be held at Deptford Town Hall, New Cross Road, London SE14.

On Sunday 12 March, an International Womens' Day picket is being held at Durham prison, in support of Irish Republican women prisoners, followed by a march to nearby Frankland prison. (Assemble 12 midday at the prison, Old Elvet, Durham).

On Saturday 18 March, the Irish in Britain Representation Group March for Peace and Justice will join up with a demonstration organised by the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign. Assemble 12.00 midday, Whittington Park.

A national demonstration against the poll tax takes place in Glasgow on the same day.

Sunday 23 April sees a Blair Peach Memorial March and Meeting in Southall, organised by the Friends of Blair Peach, numerous black and community groups and campaigns, Labour Party black sections, the National Union of Students and others.

Will all WRP members outside London please send items for this diary. There is life north of Watford, we think!

### LONDON WRP LECTURES

'Marxism': a series of lectures by Cyril Smith. No. 2, 'Marxism and nature', Friday 17 March, Room 9 Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1.

'Marxism and Ireland': a series of meetings. The first meeting in this series on 'Socialism and Nationalism', was held last week; the discussion will continue, Wednesday 8, 7:30 pm, Brent Irish Centre, Salusbury Road, London NW6. The second meeting, on 'British workers and Ireland - from Karl Marx's time onwards' will take place on Wednesday 22 March.

## WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Please send me information about the Workers Revolutionary Party

Name.....date.....

Address.....

Trade union.....Age (if under 21).....

Send to: Secretary to the Central Committee,  
PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS



# MINERS ARE VANGUARD OF GENERAL STRIKE IN KOSOVO

**BY RADOSLAV PAVLOVIC**

IN KOSOVO, in southern Serbia, where the population is 90 per cent Albanian, the foreseeable general strike has become an accomplished fact.

Since the big demonstrations in Pristine last November, not a single demand has been granted. The entire coalition of the Yugoslav bureaucracy has sought to rebuild its shattered unity at the expense of the Albanian people.

The legitimate movement for national equality which lies at the heart of the Yugoslav Federation has been met with contempt and slandered as 'counter-revolutionary'. Serbian chauvinism, at an official level, has aimed the words 'terror' and 'genocide' at the Albanians.

Thus the cup spilled over. Students and intellectuals find themselves linked together by the working class itself. When the Serbian constitutional reform was adopted (which removed the administration, the judiciary and the police from the control of local governing bodies) the Albanian people opposed this retrograde step for what it was.

Leading this movement are the miners from Trepca who work in a large complex of zinc and lead mines. A small Serbian minority in their midst are in solidarity with them.

Of a total of 1,200 miners, 1,000 at the time of writing are underground, refusing to come to the surface. The whole Albanian population has come out on strike in solidarity. The region has ground to a halt: factories, schools, transport, local government are out and even private shops have closed.

Although the official Yugoslav press focus its attention on the nationalist and separatist 'instigators', the real truth is that the Albanian people are unanimous in their spontaneous refusal to allow their most basic national rights to be taken away. This is a political strike. The Albanian people are demanding that the 1974 constitution is upheld because it safeguards their rights to true autonomy.

Following the action of Milosevic (head of the Serbian party) installing Rohman Morina (former chief of police) as the new local Communist Party leader, the Albanian mass movement has demanded his resignation.

Since November they have also demanded that the federal leaders, Suvar and Milosevic, heads of the Croat and Serbian CP, give a proper account of their constitutional reforms. But both of them have turned a deaf ear, in effect treating one-and-a-half million Albanians with utter contempt.

It required a general strike for them to respond, and they are not alone.

The President of the republic and

the military chiefs are also on the spot. The Yugoslav presidency threatened almost openly to use the army - this was not merely a verbal threat.

The Albanians, for their part, have no independent political leadership.

They took their time to build up their resolve to fight, but they had to, despite the risks, because they could no longer bear to live in the economic and political situation foisted upon them.

Once they made up their minds, there was no doubting the tenacity and power of resistance of this small people, firmly united in the defence of basic rights.

Despite the strength and unani-

mity of the Albanian movement, despite also the internal weaknesses of the corrupt bureaucracy - who need a scapegoat after having dragged the whole country down the road to ruin - the relationship of forces does not favour the Albanian workers.

On a national level the Albanians are isolated and they have no political leadership capable of building a bridge to reach the countless discontented workers of other nationalities.

The Fourth International must with all its strength support the legitimate struggle of the Albanian people.

25 February 1989

## The Ayatollah and Judge Smedley

**ANITA STONE.**

On 9th February 1989, Judge Brian Smedley fined artist Rick Gibson £500 and art gallery founder Peter Sylveire £350 for 'outraging public decency', an ancient common law dating back to 1663.

The object of the charge was a sculpture by Rick Gibson: a wide-eyed mannequin with two freeze-dried fetuses made into earings dangling from its ears.

This sculpture, displayed in a glass case, was one of 40 works of art exhibited under the theme 'Animal' at the 'Young Unknowns' gallery in December 1987.

The work was described by defence counsel as a 'profoundly moral' comment on a society in which tens of thousands of fetuses are destroyed and dissected every year and where animal parts are accepted material for adornment. The fetuses used by Gibson to create his sculpture were approximately 25 years old and had been given to him - quite

legally - by a professor of medicine who intended discarding them.

Nevertheless, fifteen minutes after the exhibition at the 'Young Unknowns' opened, the sculpture in question was seized by the police who subsequently brought the case to the Old Bailey where it was tried as a common law offence. Mr Geoffrey Robertson QC, for Peter Sylveire, sought to have the case dealt with under the 1959 Obscene Publications Act, which was introduced precisely to protect artists and writers from being tried for their work under common law.

But Robertsons's request was denied by Judge Smedley, and there followed two-and-a-half days of debate (from which the jury was excluded) which culminated in Smedley's decision to disallow any expert evidence, any evidence on artistic merit, or any evidence on the artist's motives.

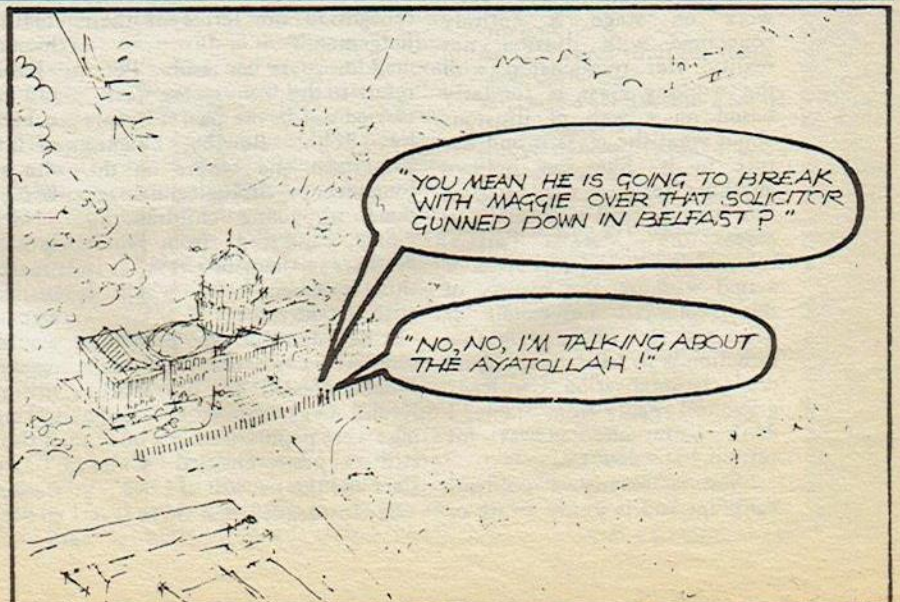
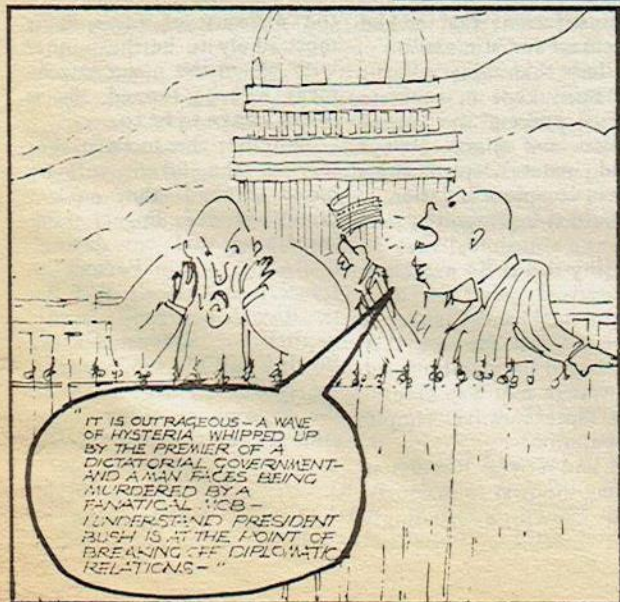
At the end of the trial, Judge Smedley directed the jury to decide the case on their emotions, setting aside logic and reason when reaching their verdict. He stressed that 'outrage' is an emo-

tion, therefore it must be the criterion for the jury's decision.

No-one complained about Rick Gibson's sculpture, which was seen by over 150 people on opening night. It was a newspaper inquiry addressed to the police which led to the eventual court case. And since then, police have entered other galleries demanding that particular works of art be removed.

It would seem that gone are the days when artists - following in the footsteps of the surrealists - can shock an audience into thinking! To do so today entails defying the state.

The Gibson/Sylveire case, which resurrected an ancient law to prevent an artist from exercising his right to free expression, has to be seen as part of the Thatcher government's systematic erosion of all basic democratic rights. It is not just a matter for artists, but for the whole working class and sections of the middle class who have increasingly come under the Thatcher hammer. Khomeini's threats to Rushdie involves the same use of mediaeval laws to silence the artist





# LETTERS

Write to: Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

## Vanessa Redgrave and demented sects

WORKERS PRESS (18 February) contained an important article and letter dealing with two of the groups that came out of the old Healyite Workers Revolutionary Party.

Dot Gibson's reply to Dave North's slanders and abuse of Cliff Slaughter answered this demented sect very effectively. My one disagreement is with her argument that North's use of slander and abuse puts him outside the labour movement. If only it were true. The movement would have been rid of the Stalinists long ago; likewise Kinnock would have found himself with no place within the movement either.

The labour movement includes many reactionary organisations and individuals. A major task for us is to fight and defeat them to the point at which either they break from the working class or the movement drives them out. That work is still in hand.

Certainly the most moving part of Workers Press was Clare Cowen's letter commenting on a review of Vanessa Redgrave's acting. Comrade Cowen's point that Redgrave's acting talents cannot be separated from her support for Healy gives food for thought.

We do have to be clear (as Workers Press is) that we cannot rubbish her art on the grounds of either her political position or her practical role as spokesperson for a man who was probably the most corrupt 'leader' the Trotskyist movement has suffered from.

It seems to me that Redgrave's work on stage is entirely concerned with illusion, not reality. Her relationship with the working class is similarly based on a web of illusions about what the class is and her role in it. She can believe anything her guru wants her to. She has no need to attempt to assess the 'Marxist Party's' relationship to the real lives of actual workers, the history of the Trotskyist movement or Marxism. Her one nod in this direction is to later invent some crude rationalisation. Can Redgrave tell reality from drama? I don't know the answer for certain, but I doubt it.

She is clearly a political bankrupt and is dimly aware of

it. That is why she persists in attempting to separate her acting from her politics. The refusal to give interviews unless the interviewer agrees to stick to the theatre says a lot. 'Time' magazine recently (6 February 1989) produced a sketch of her without her help.

Help was refused on the grounds that she was not given a guarantee, in advance, that the interviewer would steer clear of politics. Can we imagine a revolutionary frightened of politics? No, but we can well see that a sect led by people who are totally corrupt can only discuss politics under conditions that it controls.

Workers Press must continue to review Vanessa Redgrave's work when appropriate, although a warning is needed about Redgrave's politics. Like Clare Cowen I am sure that the two are tied together. It is obvious that a considerable talent co-exists with political bankruptcy. However, along with Clare, I feel unable to make more than a start in trying to answer the question.

Geoff Barr  
Exeter

## Do children need a mother?

I ALWAYS find Peter Fryer's 'Personal Column' one of the best 'reads' of the week, but I must take him to task about some of the secondary points he makes in his 'Rough Justice' article, 28 January 1989.

The article quite rightly draws attention to the injustice, inhumanity and absurdity of sentencing to prison the mother who poured boiling water over the lodger who raped her five year old daughter. (Readers will be aware that even the establishment has subsequently recognised the 'error of their judgement'!)

Almost as an aside, Peter refers to the 'convincing work... carried out in the past 40 years by John Bowlby, James Robertson and others on the long term psychological damage done to young children by being separated from their mothers in times of stress'. It is this statement with which I wish to take issue.

In 1951, John Bowlby prepared a report on 'Maternal Care and Mental Health' for the World Health Organisation. His findings were popularised in a book, still in print, entitled 'Child Care and the Growth of Love'. Bowlby argued that there was

an almost mystical relationship between a mother and her child, that it was qualitatively different from any other attachment the child might form and that 'when deprived of maternal care, the child's development is almost always retarded - physically, intellectually and socially - and that symptoms of physical and mental illness may appear'.

He emphasised that 'even the bad parent who neglects her child is nonetheless providing much for him... He may be ill-fed and ill-sheltered, he may be very dirty and suffering from disease, he may be ill-treated, but ... he is secure in the knowledge there is someone... This is 'children thrive better in bad homes than in good institutions'.

Marxists will appreciate that the popularity of 'theories', psychological or otherwise, is determined by social factors rather than any 'absolute truth'. During the Second World War, the British government, needing to conscript women workers into the munitions factories, had been forced to provide full-time day nurseries for working mothers.

But by the early 1950s the troops had been de-mobbed and were back in 'Blighty' looking for a job. There was a shortage of vacancies, so when Bowlby said, in effect, that mothers working full-time threatened the physical, emotional and mental health of their children, his argument was seized upon by those seeking to close down the nurseries and return the women to the kitchen sink.

In the years that followed, many women and children paid the penalty exacted from the popularity of Bowlby's philosophy. (Women were told their place was in the home; courts were reluctant to remove abused children from the custody of their parents).

Since those days there has been a tremendous amount of research in the field of child development, and many of Bowlby's views have been challenged.

His work had been based on studies of children reared in orphanages in the 1930s and 1940s - institutions that lacked human contact and stimulation.

Babies less than nine months old had been kept in separate cubicles, to prevent the spread of infection, and almost always the child inmates spent their first year in complete isolation.

Nor should it be forgotten that there was almost always a 'reason' why the child had been institutionalised - often they were 'difficult' and hence it would be a great mistake that research based on institutional children was in any way investigating a representative sample of the population.

James and Joyce Robertson were among the first to seriously challenge Bowlby's findings.

Much of their work has been widely exhibited on film. The Robertsons cared for four children, separately, aged between one and three years, whose mothers had been hospitalised for periods between 10 and 27 days. Each child brought his or her own bed, blankets, toys, photos of mother and the fathers were encouraged to visit daily. The Robertsons found that by providing a substitute mother in a benign environment it was possible to hold anxiety at a 'manageable level' and permit 'positive development' to continue; indeed, in a relatively short period the children were in care they were able to develop strong bonds with their surrogate mother, Joyce Robertson. The Robertsons insisted they had shown that the problem is not the loss of the mother, rather it is a question of preventing a bond disruption.

More research had followed and readers wishing to know about it should get hold of Michael Rutter's 'Maternal Deprivation Reassessed' (2nd edition, Pelican 1986). It can no longer be convincingly argued that there is some sort of 'special relationship' between a child and its biological mother.

Most researchers would agree with Herbert and Sluckin (1982), that there is 'no evidence' from human studies of a 'brief optimal time' during which a mother is able to form an attachment and would also agree with Rutter, that the distress Bowlby saw as arising from separation from the mother is more likely to be the result of all the deprivations - home, peers, friends, siblings, toys, father etc.

In addition, the child may well 'learn' its distress from the other members of the family, all equally worried by the events that are responsible for the impending separation.

To conclude, if a child is to grow up physically and mentally healthy, it needs a caring, stress-free social environment that gives it the opportunity to form multiple attachments. In the majority of cases, it is most likely to be the mother with whom the major attachment will be formed, but it doesn't have to be so.

Whether the socialist society of the future will be based around the nuclear family is, as Engels said, something that our descendants will decide. Personally, I feel it is unlikely that the traditional bourgeois family, implicitly advocated by Bowlby and his supporters in the 1950s, will necessarily be the appropriate social formation for the classless society.

Bob Potter  
Hove, Sussex



# 1789-1989

# THE FRENCH

# REVOLUTION

BY BERNARD FRANKS

**TWO HUNDRED** years ago this year, on 14 July 1789, the great Paris prison fortress, the Bastille, was captured by a section of the city's populace after a 4-hour battle.

This event is rightly recognised as the beginning of the end for French feudalism and as the first step towards the spread of capitalism on a European, then a world scale.

Yet the story of the events behind the siege shows that fundamental divisions already existed in the classes that were otherwise united in their hatred of their aristocratic oppressors.

This conflicts with the views of various French Stalinist historians of the 1930s and the 1940s.

They affected to see in the revolution's apparent unity of action to overthrow feudalism some historical justification for 20th century workers' and capitalist parties to unite in a

popular front against fascism.

The French Revolution was not unexpected. For years a political crisis has been developing as the rise of new productive systems in town and country, vitally needed to compete with capitalist Britain's agricultural and industrial revolutions, were blocked at every point by backward feudal relationships.

Mass production was developing in Britain and had already begun flooding Europe with cheap textiles. They came to France under a Free Trade agreement made in 1786.

## Surplus

French society rested on legal theft of the peasant surplus and strict control of urban labour and production methods, to protect the high quality of luxury goods renowned throughout Europe since the reign of Louis XIV.

True, the French capitalists had made prodigious advances during previous decades.

As well as French commerce and manufacture they already owned 25 per cent of the land. But they were constantly frustrated in their

need to develop to a new stage by the fact that all society was geared to meeting the requirements of the privileged feudal classes and state.

They were therefore reduced to dissipating their huge fortunes in competing with the great nobles in the opulence of their estates and the 'high life' extravagance.

At the same time, the small producers of town and country were prevented from improving their condition by the constant calls on their small earnings by church and aristocrat, as well as the crown.

Meanwhile, the feudal 'absolutist' state itself - one in which all legislative and executive power resided in the head of state alone - had fallen into bankruptcy, a reflection of the long-developing crisis of French feudalism.

The traditional forms of taxation failed to tap the wealth of the bourgeoisie to pay for debilitating wars and court extravagance, while the clergy and nobles took it as their right to contribute virtually nothing.

As for the poor, they proved ever more unable or unwilling to pay.

During the previous 50 years the Enlightenment philosophers - such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Holbach and Helvetius - had been continuously predicting that a new form of society was pending.

However, being mostly liberal nobles or bourgeois intellectuals they always hoped to see this achieved through the good offices of a reforming absolutist monarch; an 'enlightened despot'.

They were all disillusioned in this respect and only a few lived to see the real form change would take.

## Richest

By 1788 the French bourgeoisie (a term current at the time for prosperous urban business people) comprised the richest class in France but held no political power. It was rated as socially inferior by the ruling monarchy and nobles.

Borrowing the slogan 'no taxation without representation' from the American War of Independence against Britain (which France had supported), and playing on the royalists' fear of revolution by



## 1789-1989 THE FRENCH REVOLUTION



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the poor, the bourgeoisie won itself a parliament, a National Assembly of suitably limited franchise - that is, carved up between the nobles, churchmen and bourgeoisie.

This, it hoped, would peacefully achieve its desired economic advance and social acceptance through accommodation.

At most, the great power of the lower classes, whom the bourgeoisie affected to represent, was seen by it as a useful pressurising factor to bring parliament into being and give itself the dominant role.

There was no thought of using this might to overthrow the privileged classes and seize power for itself alone. However, the feudalists feared it precisely for its control of these classes.

## Meeting

It soon became clear from even before the first meeting of the Assembly that the imagination of the peasantry and of the town craftsmen, artisans and petty traders (no fully-fledged working class existed in France at this time) had been fired to the extent that they believed the new body would solve their problems also.

To them, the capitalists' reforms implied the feudalists' death knell.

A horrified monarchy, having failed to manipulate parliamentary seating to leave the bourgeoisie outnumbered by the nobles and churchmen, prepared a counter-revolutionary coup.

On 11 July 1789 the new government's finance minister, Jacques Necker, a Swiss banker, was exiled by the king. At the same time a ring of 30,000 troops was thrown around the capital.

Necker departed meekly for the border. His daughter wrote later of her father:

'What he dreaded most in the world was a triumph at the expense of the authority of the king.'

## Bayonets

The National Assembly sat petrified, hourly expecting soldiers to charge in with fixed bayonets. But the citizens of Paris arose as one to arm themselves against the impending royalist coup.

On the night of 12-13 July, 40,000 pikes were manufactured in the Paris work-

shops, while gunsmiths' shops were forced to open and were ransacked. That same night the 54 toll houses around the city were burnt to the ground.

These were customs posts at which all goods entering the capital were taxed.

Fearfully, the City Council, a bourgeois body, set up a permanent committee under Provost of Merchants, de Flesselles, and established a 48,000 strong bourgeois militia ('Milice Bourgeois').

Their concern was not so much to fight the threatening royalist forces as to suppress the popular movement, which might constitute a danger to property. Anyone else who asked for arms to help defend the city was sent off on a wild goose chase by de Flesselles.

However, early on the morning of 14 July, thousands of furious citizens congregated at City Hall demanding that the state armouries in the city be opened so that the entire populace could be armed.

Under this pressure a deputation of councillors was sent to the pensioners' hospital, Les Invalides, to plead with the governor to part with the massive cache of arms stored there.

When he refused the councillors urged the accompanying crowds to disperse peacefully.

They angrily swept governor and deputation aside and appropriated the entire stock of 28,000 muskets and 20 cannon.

The throng returned with their haul to City Hall and demanded similar action to be taken to secure the 30,000 pounds of gunpowder and 16,000 cartridges known to be held at the Bastille.

## Forced

Only when they forced their way into the council chamber and threatened the committee did de Flesselles consent to organise a second deputation. This was well received by the governor of the Bastille, de Launey, who treated the councillors to a two-hour luncheon but firmly refused to part with the powder.

The huge crowd outside, growing increasingly concerned at such delay when the royalists might attack at any moment, launched an assault on the citadel. Its complement of 80 pensioners and 33 Swiss Guards opened fire and a fierce battle ensued.

Three times the attack was held up by new deputations from City Hall, desperate to convince de Launey to surrender the fortress and its contents to the municipal committee rather than have it fall into the hands of 'the mob'.

The last delegation was fired on from the battlements. The besiegers themselves sent it packing, wanting to know why no cannon or soldiers had been sent.

## Angry

At the city hall itself the same point was being made by hundreds of angry citizens.

The committee removed itself from the main chamber and locked itself in a back room to discuss how they could restore order and prevent the Paris masses from arming.

However, the delegates arrived from the fighting, in the form of wounded men sent to demand support, the irate citizens broke down the door and harangued de Flesselles and the committee for seeking to negotiate with those who had fired on the people, and for failing to take firm measures to capture the fortress.

## Burn

Outside city hall, anger had reached such a pitch that preparations were being made to burn it down. This was only averted when a cry was raised that their own comrades had now occupied the building.

Finally, a detachment of 59 soldiers who had deserted from the royalist army and 'gone over to the nation', on their own initiative took five cannon and headed for the Bastille. Their arrival was decisive. Three cannon were lined up on the main gate whereupon the defenders inside surrendered.

They were led away under arrest through a tumultuous crowd. When almost at City Hall de Launey was cut down and his head hacked off. Six of the other defenders were also killed; the rest were eventually released unharmed.

Inside the council chamber the triumphant revolutionaries presented the committee with the keys, banner and register of the Bastille and reported that they had released seven prisoners discovered within it.



## 1789-1989 THE FRENCH REVOLUTION



The storming of the Bastille

The keys were dangled over de Flesselles' head and demands were made that he go to the Palais Royal gardens, the popular café area where the revolutionary intellectuals held sway, to answer charges of being responsible for the deaths of the 98 attackers killed in the assault.

De Flesselles left the building protesting. He was shot down a few yards from where de Launey had been despatched.

Within hours the heads of de Launey, royalist commander of the most dreaded of all feudal bastions, and de Flesselles, leader of the Paris high bourgeoisie, were being paraded side-by-side before the revolutionary forces on the streets and at the barricades erected to keep the royalists at bay.

## Stages

Francois Babeuf, in later stages of the revolution to found the first communist revolutionary party, wrote to his family a few days later:

'I commend such rough justice when it is satisfied by the destruction of the guilty, but how can it fail today to be cruel?

'Terrible punishment of every sort, quartering, the rack,

the wheel, the stake, the whip, the gibbet, so many tortures everywhere have taught us such wicked ways! Our masters, instead of civilising us, have made us barbarous because they are barbarous themselves. They are reaping what they have sown and they will go on reaping it.'

## Resolve

In fact, no attack on the city materialised. The firm resolve and resolute action of the populace had demoralised the aristocrats and monarchy while winning over thousands of soldiers - themselves often brutally treated by the feudalists.

The king caved in, recalled Necker, conceded the bourgeoisie its majority in the parliament and withdrew the troops.

Soon the nobles were emigrating in droves. In Paris and throughout the rest of France the small-scale producers, traders and craft-workers, who termed themselves 'sans-culottes' (without breeches), from a term of contempt used by the rich for those who merely wore trousers, went over to the offensive.

They overthrew bourgeois town councils, attacked castles

and established revolutionary committees and assemblies.

Only with the greatest difficulty did the radical intelligentsia, organised in their Jacobin clubs under such great revolutionaries as Robespierre, Danton, Marat and Madam Roland, bring this movement under its control and direct its activity into parliamentary channels.

To this end, and to defend the revolution, rule had to be successively ceded to ever more radical sections of the bourgeoisie and its representatives who could control the masses and direct their energies into the war against both foreign interventionists and home-based counter-revolutionaries.

## Rule

As the last stage of this process, rule passed from the liberal bourgeoisie - 'Girondins' - to the radical petit bourgeoisie.

Once in power, fearful of letting the revolutionary poor exercise its own dictatorship over the nobles in case it used this position to pass to a new stage of the revolution, the Jacobins replaced the peoples' terror - often purely verbal - with a state terror based on the guillotine.

One of its earliest victims was the King.

When the vanguard of the revolutionary poor nevertheless appeared about to transfer power from the parliament to the local popular assemblies - into forms of direct democracy advocated by Rousseau 27 years earlier - it met the same fate as the aristocrats and the leaders of the conservative factions.

This left the Jacobins - the revolutionary petit-bourgeois democrats - divorced from the masses. But by now fundamental changes in economic and social relations had been made and the basis of feudal political power irrevocably destroyed in France.

The conservative bourgeoisie, which had never relinquished its financial and economic control, now re-took power.

It divided and destroyed the radical middle class party, culminating in the coup which overthrew Robespierre and the Paris Commune on 9 Thermidor, year II (27 July 1794).

Even at the last Robespierre could barely bring himself to call on the popular assemblies for support for fear of usurping the parliament's authority.



## 1789-1989 THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Having stopped the revolution, the bourgeoisie tried for a time to maintain the parliamentary facade, before handing rule to a military dictator of its choice, the ex-Jacobin Napoleon Bonaparte.

It proved to be his role to mark the end of the revolution in a qualitative sense - by preventing the resurgence of a popular movement - while extending it in quantitative terms throughout Europe, suppressing feudalism wherever he came upon it.

Trotsky wrote of him: 'Napoleon guarded bourgeois property, including that of the peasant, against both the 'rabble' and the claims of the expropriated proprietors.

'Feudal Europe hated Napoleon as the living embodiment of the revolution, and it was correct according to its lights.' ('The Class Nature of the Soviet State', page 32.)

## Cradle

In so many ways was the French revolution the cradle of modern politics. The terms 'left' and 'right' for example, in the political context, derive from the seating arrangements around the president's chair in the National Assembly.

Marxists, especially, have always studied its developments and drawn on its concepts and events to make their points.

Even after all this time controversy rages around these events.

## Claimed

It is claimed by a section of 'revisionist' historians (in this context a term for anti-Marxists) that the Marxist view (currently termed 'orthodox') of the French revolution as 'bourgeois' is wrong because the bourgeoisie can be shown to have played only a minor role in the uprising and the respective governments.

As we have seen from the example of 14 July alone, the most powerful section of the Paris bourgeoisie was not simply passive, but actively hostile to the insurrection.

It wanted only peaceful compromise with the fundamentalists and looked with fear and loathing on any relationship with the plebs. It had to be dragged again and again into the necessary actions to create and defend its ideal form of society.



Soldiers of the French revolutionary army

We have already indicated why the bourgeoisie could not be to the fore in the later organisations of the revolution.

There is a wealth of material to show that the Marxists have always fully understood this.

Thus in 1847 Marx himself commented on the action of the people in wiping away the ruins of feudalism from French soil:

'The timidly considerate bourgeoisie could not have accomplished this in decades.' ('Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality'; Collected Works, volume 6, page 319.)

In February 1889 Engels wrote to Karl Kautsky: 'Then it will be plain that the bourgeoisie was too cowardly, in this case as always, to uphold its own interests; that starting with the Bastille events the plebs had to do all the work for it.'

## Designate

The real point is that Marxists do not designate the French revolution as 'bourgeois' because of the class that made it, or even led it, but because this was the class in

whose name it was made and whose form of society and whose rule resulted.

As Leon Trotsky told the London congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party in May 1907:

'The objective result of the revolution was the creation of 'normal' conditions for capitalist exploitation.'

## Mob

But the social mechanism of the historical process decreed that the conditions for the bourgeoisie's rule must be created by the mob, the democracy of the streets, the sans-culottes.

'It was their dictatorship of terror which cleansed bourgeois society of the useless rubbish that encumbered it, after which the bourgeoisie achieved domination by overthrowing the dictatorship of the petit-bourgeois democracy.'

## Proletarian

Subsequently, Trotsky drew on the significance of these events to extend the analysis of proletarian revolution,

which could only be made by the proletariat itself. Henceforward: 'The revolution could not be made by the bourgeoisie, but only against the bourgeoisie.' ('1905', page 70.)

But once in power, Trotsky showed, the proletariat would have to go beyond the bourgeois framework and install its own by means of its own revolution.

## Attacking

Clearly the 'revisionist' historians are attacking Marxism by striking at some convenient variety of their own creation.

Today, the leaders of French conservatism, social democracy and Stalinism all celebrate the fall of the Bastille, but as heirs of the various bourgeois and middle class factions which fought to establish parliamentary - that is, bourgeois - democracy in France.

They do not represent those heroic men and women who not only demolished the feudal order, but also sought to put something more than a new system of exploitation in its place.



## A criticism of John Steele

YOUR correspondent, John Steele (Workers Press, 18 February 1989) the new born Socialist Revolutionary, if not careful, is in danger of being exhibited as the perfect reason for political birth control.

It seems the business of the Sinn Fein Ard Fheis of 27 January, has left the poor fellow in dire need of a change of diapers. 'Popular front tactics were the order of the day' he wails - why?

All because the 'main political debate centred on a resolution which called upon the Party to work with other groups in a broad all-Ireland anti-imperialist movement'.

I would suggest to the political man-child Steele, that is the very concept of Socialism - the theory that the community as a whole, i.e. comprehensive - should have political and therefore economic control of (it's) their own destiny.

Not so, he wails - this strategy submerges the interests of the working class to pacts with all sorts of 'progressives'...

Steele, Douglas Hogg-like produces no evidence... except to say that neither Tom Hartley, Gerry Adams nor indeed Martin McGuinness, 'excluded alliances with representatives of the 26-county bourgeois parties...' - a 'Sun'-like piece of political misrepresentation as the question simply does not arise and, therefore, to state so would, of course, be simply stating the obvious. Though it appears the Murdoch-inspired Steele would wish to imply the opposite.

Steele claims there is a 'popular front' strategy in Ireland (!!!) which is of the belief 'that the 26-county bourgeoisie still has a progressive role to play in the fight for national independence.'

I confess I am somewhat baffled by that particular piece of Steelism. However, such nonsense is, apparently 'justified' by the following - 'this is an important component in the Stalinist 'stageist' theory which artificially separates the struggle for self-determination from the struggle for socialism'...Stalinism?!... But just a moment, I thought Steele was talking about Sinn Fein?...but wait... The Stalinists are very influential in deciding Sinn Fein policy...claims Steele...and to 'prove it' 'in the course of his presidential address to the Ard Fheis, Adams revealed (WOW!) that during 1987 he had had a series of discussions with northern protestants'.

Hardly very revealing, thought I, but...but...note well, warns Steele, not socialists, or workers, just 'protestants'.

Is Steele implying that protestants are excluded from being socialists? Steele, this

self-proclaimed modern-day Trotskyist, is caught in his self induced political time warp... and so, back to the '60s...' and it was, of course, the involvement of the Republican movement with the Stalinists in the 1960s, which was mainly responsible for its inability to defend the nationalist areas against the Unionist pogroms'.

Note Steele's very convenient deletion of events which resolved that particular inability - such as the costly and bloody war of attrition within the republican movement which led to the formation of the much wiser, comprehensive and more articulate Provisional movement of today. When Steele talks of Unionist pogroms, I am sure that at least some of the readers of Workers Press would be interested if he would explain just who fills the ranks of Unionism?

Gerry Adams and many, many more are painfully aware of the problematic answer. Just one of the many questions to be answered by all socialists who concern themselves with the British-imposed political problems in Ireland is just now do you set about countering such political ignorance?

Members of the British establishment are perfectly well aware of this, hence the media ban on the articulate voices of the Republican movement. All the more reason, I would suggest, why the working class, whether employed or otherwise, must be even more vigilant and indeed sceptical of the so-called leadership of the Labour movement, who are, we know through bitter experience, nothing more than cosy fire-side Walt Disney politicians.

There is no such thing as a bloodless revolution, every revolution has its price. The ultimate question to be answered, do you have the correct political values?

Leabras MacCaoilite

## And a reply

I WON'T take up everything said by Leabras MacCaoilite in his letter attacking John Steele. But the Workers Revolutionary Party must make its position clear on the following:

Firstly: MacCaoilite says Steele 'is in danger of being exhibited as the perfect reason for political birth control'. What is this supposed to mean?

The Stalinists attempted 'political birth control' against the Trotskyists in the 20s and 30s. Similar Stalinist methods - physically wiping people out to shut them up - were used by the Official IRA against the newly-formed IRSP in 1975. I will give MacCaoilite the benefit of the doubt: I assume he knows Trotskyists won't be deterred by threats, and his reference to 'political birth control' is (like

much of his letter) intemperate and abusive bluster.

Secondly: MacCaoilite says 'the very concept of socialism' is that 'the community as a whole' should have 'political and therefore economic control of their own destiny'. That's not our concept of socialism. We believe that, before mankind as a whole can establish control over its own destiny, the working class will first have to seize power, and use that power to mercilessly repress one section of society - the capitalist class. Only then, when that section of society is deprived of any control whatsoever, can mankind proceed to socialism.

Thirdly: MacCaoilite says it is 'Murdoch-like' and 'Hogg-like' to say that Sinn Fein leaders don't exclude the possibility of alliances with representatives of bourgeois parties. The question of such alliances, says MacCaoilite, 'simply does not arise'. Here he is plain wrong on the facts. An example. After last year's Sinn Fein Internal Conference, Tom Hartley's speech was reported as follows: 'He said that 'Britain can only be moved on the national question if the British state is confronted by the combined forces of Irish nationalism'. He then discussed how this could be brought about and argued that republicans should be aiming to dislodge the SDLP from its present links with the London and Dublin governments...

'Hartley said that every effort should be made to make the SDLP adopt the correct demands on national and civil rights. Like Fianna Fail, its nationalist base is vulnerable to pressure on the role of its leadership - when their nationalist supporters raise demands on which they have sold out (extradition for example) they are forced either to change their pro-British position or alienate their base.'

'Sinn Fein's attitude to both Fianna Fail and the SDLP was dealt with in the discussion that followed, and there was general agreement that broadening the republican struggle meant bringing as many people as possible inside and outside these parties to support the demand for British withdrawal and self-determination.' ('Republican News' 12 May 1988). Here Hartley does not exclude alliances with SDLP or Fianna Fail, he specifically calls for them.

Another example, Gerry Adams, speaking at the Derry '68 commemoration ('Republican News' 13 October 1988) said the demand for national self-determination could 'drive a wedge between those who are leaders of what is called 'cons-

titutional nationalism' and their supporters'. He went on to advocate turning to members, and some leaders, of Fianna Fail and the SDLP. He also said, 'a charter of sorts such as the Freedom Charter of South Africa must be built' - which is interesting because the Freedom Charter specifically appeals to sections of the national bourgeoisie as 'progressive' forces, and specifically does not mention socialism.

Finally: MacCaoilite is scathing about Steele's accusation of 'stage-ism' against the Republican leaders. But these leaders have themselves made plenty of 'stage-ist' statements.

In his book 'Politics of Irish Freedom', Gerry Adams calls for an 'anti-imperialist movement' and adds: 'Such a movement cannot be built around the slogan of socialism until socialism comes on the historical agenda...' This movement should have 'an appeal to all major sections of Irish society'.

The capitalists are a 'major section of Irish society'. It is precisely to accommodate some of them that it is proposed to drop the slogan of 'socialism' for now. To talk of an 'anti-imperialist movement', in which the slogan of 'socialism' is not raised, followed by the establishment of a 'democratic Republic' in which the issue of socialism 'comes on the agenda', is classic stage-ism.

Simon Pirani, WRP

## On the anniversary of Gibraltar

Innocent victims

In the flat curve, the front of your thigh  
Firmness, position of your hip,  
your spaces, poise;  
Your coolness, your knowledge,  
your arrogance:  
I shall file these abstractions  
alphabetically

In my steel drawer which has no lock  
And no key. I shall file them  
appropriately.  
We talked all day and a lot of  
the night  
But you know I listened, and I  
know too

While we looked for understanding and competence  
(Place them in the drawer) we  
discovered  
Two dead men and a woman  
had walked on stage  
To face venal ministers, and  
hired gobs

And the loud noise of ignorance. File them all.  
Today I am wearing a lily for  
the woman and men murdered.

John Peters,  
SE London WRP

## WRITE TO WORKERS PRESS

Workers Press welcomes letters on all subjects, but please be as brief as possible. We have printed our draft programme in the paper, and welcome discussion on it from our readers.

We also welcome new contributors of articles or reviews.  
Workers Press PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS



## Personal Column

Peter Fryer

## Making criminals

IF you are born black in Britain you're almost twice as likely to be sent to jail by the age of 21 as you are if you're white.

This is one of the findings of a report, published this week by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO), which highlights yet again the extent to which racism is built into the British criminal justice system.

There's nothing really new about this report, which makes the obvious comment that these statistics reveal an 'appalling prospect' for black people in Britain.

What would be new, startlingly new, would be any sign of this report and its innumerable unheeded predecessors having the slightest effect on the British ruling class and its police, its courts, and its prisons.

But such reports never have any effect, since the whole system is designed, amongst other things, to exercise social control over the black community.

Black people, especially young black people, are defined as a problem by a state which doesn't see white racism as any kind of a problem at all.

Young black people are thought to be in need of special discipline and are therefore subjected to a process of criminalisation.

This process is carried out by a racist police force, racist magistrates and judges, and racist prison officers. Well-documented complaints about police racism have been commonplace since the mid-1960s.

As long ago as 1971 Margaret Simey, chair of the Merseyside Police Authority, said that local police were hounding the black community, and that no black person in the area was safe on the streets after 10 p.m.

Seven years ago an independent inquiry into policing in the London borough of Lambeth, set up by the local council, showed that the aim of the police was, as the 'New Statesmen' put it, 'to lay siege to the black communities'.

Research in Notting Hill in the following year showed that black men were four times more likely to be stopped in the streets than white men.

These findings were borne out by the official Home Office study 'Race, Crime and Arrests' (1979), written by Philip Stevens and Carole Willis, which showed that black people were 14 or 15 times more likely to be arrested for theft than white people.

They were confirmed also by the work of Maureen Cain and Susan Sadigh, published in the 'Journal of Law and Society' in 1982.

Cain and Sadigh found that over 46 per cent of Afro-Caribbeans arrested for victimless crimes (motoring, drunkenness, etc.) were under 21, compared with only 12 per cent of white people arrested; and they concluded that 'young blacks are indeed disproportionately harassed'.

When young black people are brought before the courts they are significantly less likely than white people to be put on probation, significantly more likely to be sent to prison.

There's a long way to go before the courts are even-handed in their treatment of black offenders, says this week's NACRO report.

The black prison population is not only disproportionately high, but is rising steadily, year by year.

The NACRO report gives figures. In 1985, 12.5 per cent of the prison population was black. In 1986 this figure had risen to 13.8 per cent. By 1987 it stood at 14 per cent, or one in seven.

Black prisoners have to meet racism, often virulent, from prison officers, some of whom - an estimated one in three at Wandsworth in 1981 - are members of the National Front.

Black prisoners are often made to share cells with known racists. They are often assaulted and abused, and are often given the dirty jobs or the worst-paid ones.

The experience of prison has led some black people to take their own lives.

Horace Bailey (23), on remand for three months for obstructing the police, hanged himself in Ashford Remand Centre in 1973. Dennis Mulling, in prison for the first time, hanged himself in Winson Green in 1974. Paul Worrell, on remand in Brixton four months after his arrest, hanged himself with his own shirt and towel in 1982.

And, as the NACRO report makes clear, nearly one black person in ten is sent to prison before reaching the age of 21.

These facts should be a matter of serious concern, not merely to the black community, but to the entire labour movement in Britain. Justice is portrayed as blind; but British justice certainly isn't colour-blind.

**FURTHER READING.** Paul Gordon's 'White Law: Racism in the police, courts and prisons' (Pluto, 1983) is a useful survey, well researched and well written.

## AS I SEE IT BY TOM OWEN

### Dumps

TWO weeks ago a young boy of nine years of age died in the Sheffield Children's Hospital. His companion is still very ill with two broken legs and a third child is severely traumatized.

These children were the victims of an increasingly dangerous decaying city environment.

A wall on some 'spare' ground at the end of their street collapsed and crushed them.

These 'spare' plots, or dumps, as local children call them, are a common feature of the city, especially in the old 'artisan' working class areas like Walkley where the terraces range up the steep slopes of the hills which rise to the high Pennine moors of the Peak District.

A combination of geographical features, urban decay, lack of public investment and private resources have made whole tracts of the traditional 'industrial' cities dangerous wastelands. Children find these places centres of excitement and attraction.

They are alluring and adventurous playgrounds free from adult interference and supervision.

Unfortunately, they are also places sought after by more disturbed adult adventurers and are often the scenes of serious violence and sexual attacks. The other group of adults who enthuse over these tracts of wilderness are the middle class urban 'wild lifers'.

They delight in urban foxes and vermin who are 'reclaiming' the city. They produce boring local radio programmes on their discovery of various weeds and 'natural' fauna in the city centre. Some of the more dotty ones set up urban farms or buy their own goats and horses or donkeys to graze at the end of the street.

To the traditional working class communities, urban decay is an increasing nightmare. It is a 'condition' of life against which people feel powerless. Land slippages, collapsing retaining banks, dangerous structures, bring on financial insecurity, depression and in the case of the above terrible fatality, grief and impotent anger.

That area of life in which families had to act independently in finding rented accommodation or paying a kind of rent through mortgage, or decorating and repairing the

home etc. seemed to offer a kind of autonomy and self-determination.

The scale of the problems now becomes so vast that it lies outside the scope of individual action. In the face of the paralysis of the Labour councils and the deep cuts the Tories have made, the mood changes between cynicism, fatalism, and anger.

When given a political focus this anger can and does find a creative expression, as in the very large movements in the past to prevent local school closures and, much more recently, the large and vigorous meetings in the Crookesmoor and Walkley areas of Sheffield to launch the anti-Poll Tax campaign.

The demand for urban renewal, a clean, decent, and safe environment for working class communities, has the same content as the miners' strike. The great industrial cities of Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield etc. were built and developed to service the needs of capitalism in the 19th century. Historically, this has given them their shape and character and us an expectation of what urban life should be like.

From the writings of Engels, or from the novels of Mrs. Gaskell or, later, Jack London, we know that the great cities that

serviced steel, cotton and shipbuilding were 'veritable Dante's infernos'.

The post-war public housing programmes which were to end slums and homelessness once and for all have long since halted.

Homelessness is now a major social problem.

The Tories' new Housing Act, which Ridley boasts will be one of the most ambitious pieces of social engineering of the century, is designed to uproot thousands of people in the south east and re-settle them elsewhere as a flexible 'modern' labour force unaccustomed to the disciplines and traditions of trade unionism.

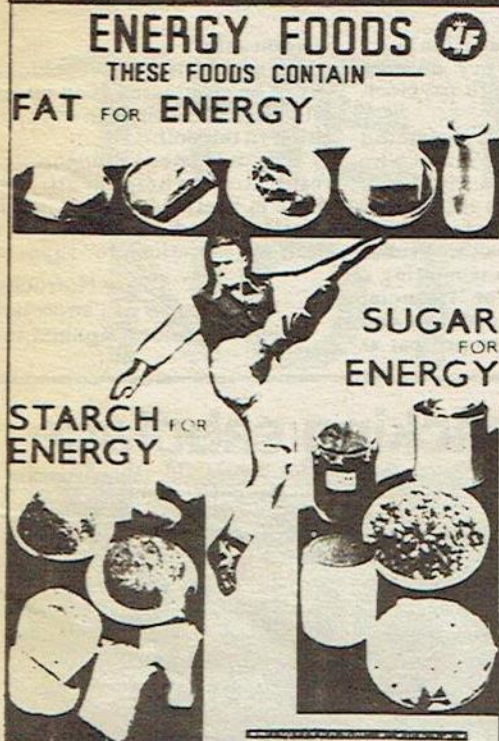
These developments in modern capitalism will not regenerate the cities.

It is intended that they by-pass them. The Tories will let the once great centres of the working class decay to become wastelands.

The Labourites with their ludicrous plans for leisure complexes, 'heritage' centres etc., will find that without productive labour their economic bubbles will burst. What is urgently required to meet the needs of the working class is a revolutionary housing and environment programme against the decay, the despair, and the grief.



# POISONED FOOD FOR THOUGHT



UK government nutrition propaganda 1940s

THE sacking of Edwina Curry when she came too close to the truth about the state of egg production in the country, raises important questions surrounding the issue of food quality and public health.

Mrs. Curry's indiscretion brought to an end the government's silence about the extent of salmonella in eggs, eventually she was forced to explain in public that a 'significant' number of eggs, from a 'significant' number of flocks are infected.

Professor Lacey, a microbiologist from Leeds University believes that salmonella in eggs kills at least one person a week.

One report at the government's disposal suggests that there may have been up to two million cases of salmonella poisoning last year, extrapolating from the official figure of 20,532 infections, and the fact that most cases go unreported.

A Public Health Laboratory report shows that most of the increase in salmonella poisoning is accounted for by one particular type of salmonella, called enteritidis, which is primarily associated with poultry. The incidence of salmonella enteritidis contamination increased by 250 per cent between 1987 and 1988.

Egg-laying flocks are bred from fertilised eggs supplied by about 500 farms, and it is known that 12 farms are contaminated to some extent with salmonella enteritidis. The protein processing plants which make poultry feedstocks (from rotting carcasses amongst other unwholesome ingredients), have been identified as the most likely source of the outbreak.

Whatever the original source, intensive battery methods of poultry and egg production involve overcrowded and unhealthy conditions.

Disease has only been kept at bay by the liberal use of antibiotics, and strains of bacteria resistant to standard measures will inevitably evolve.

When consumer's fears caused the demand for eggs to plummet, the Tories responded by issuing public health lessons in the hygienic preparation of eggs, and then stepped in to bail out the egg producers. There are more than 'free market forces' at work here.

Marx commented on the adulteration of bread, which was revealed to parliament during the course of struggles between the working class and bourgeoisie over the length of the working day.

'Englishmen, always well up in the Bible, know well enough that man, unless by elective grace a capitalist, or landlord, or sinecurist, is commanded to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, but they did not know that he had to eat daily in his bread a certain quantity of human perspiration mixed with the discharge of abscesses, cobwebs, dead black-beetles, and putrid German yeast, without counting alum, sand and other mineral ingredients. Without any regard to his holiness, free trade, the free baking trade was therefore placed under the supervision of the state inspectors (1863).' (Capital, chapter X)

Since the days of the Corn Laws, the bourgeoisie have understood the necessity of maintaining a cheap supply of food for the working class.

Today in Britain 200,000 tons of additives (an average of 8lbs per person), many cancer- and allergy-causing, are used in processed foods - accounting for 80 per cent of total food expenditure.

These chemical additives are used to extend storage time, to disguise cheap and unpalatable ingredients, or replace real food altogether.

Children especially are victims of persuasive ideology which sells sweets, soft drinks and fast foods stuffed full of harmful chemicals.

Although some additives are banned in baby foods, they are exempt from regulations which specify the quantity and quality of ingredients in meat products.

Baby milk is permitted to contain levels of aluminium well above those found in water, suspected of causing pre-senile dementia.

The over-consumption of processed foods containing too much fat, sugar and refined starch is responsible for unquantifiable suffering, ill health and premature death, heart

disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity, and rotting teeth. And the reformists call for tougher regulations.

Behind the appearance of competing food manufacturers striving to improve productivity by reducing costs and avoiding waste, is the drive to cheapen the overall value of labour power.

It is not just the owners of food manufacture, agribusiness and chemical industry who gain.

Indeed this process does not only demand cheap food, convenience foods reduce the time necessary for food preparation within the household, so reducing the cost of reproduction of labour power, and increasing the availability of cheap unorganised labour in the form of women.

The rate of surplus value is thereby increased for the whole of the bourgeoisie, at the expense of the misery incurred by the working class.

Even apparently healthy food, like vegetables, fruit, and wholemeal bread usually contain poisonous pesticide residues. The application of pesticides and fertilisers which has boosted food production to record levels, has not benefited the working class.

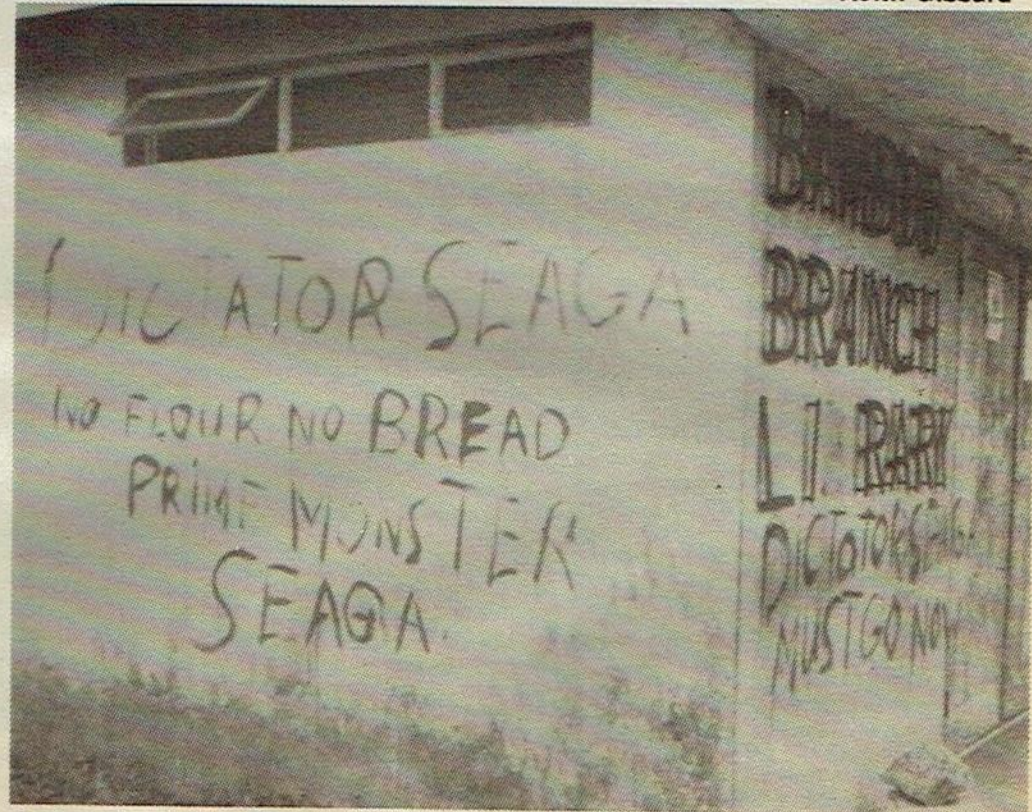
Under the Common Agricultural Policy, of the European Economic Community, which maintains artificially high prices and subsidises farmers, the stockpiling and destruction of food costs the average family £11.50 a week.

In contradiction to the over-production and obscene destruction of food in the industrially developed countries, an eighth of humanity endures chronic malnutrition.

Cash crop intensification, for export mainly to food processing companies, has resulted in starvation and death on a scale unprecedented in history, and is causing ecological catastrophe.

Can there be any doubt that what we are witnessing is the stagnation and degradation of the productive forces, the most important of which is the working class, under the decaying capitalist system?

Keith Gibbard



Anti-government graffiti, Jamaica 1986



## News briefs . . .

### Reactor shut

A NUCLEAR reactor near Yerevan, Armenia, scene of last December's earthquake, has been closed down. Built in 1976, with a capacity of 405,000 Kw, the plant's closure will cause severe power shortages throughout the three republics of the Trans-Caucasus - Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan and austerity programmes to conserve energy are to be introduced. Since Chernobyl the power station, which opponents say should never have been built in an earthquake area, has been under constant attack. Protesters claim that, in the last three years, there have been more than 150 serious malfunctions at the plant.

### Protester assaulted

ONE of the organisers of last week's Indian protest at Altamira over Brazil's Kararao dam project has been beaten up. Father Angelo Pansa, an Italian priest, was discovered outside the Amazon town, bound and gagged, say news reports. The landowners' Rural Democratic Union, a pro-dam organisation, who have been accused of being behind the killings of those in favour of land reforms, are believed to be responsible for the attack on Father Pansa.

### Do not drop

THE MINISTRY of Defence has admitted that there have been a number of design faults found in the British Army's new SA 80 rifle. The weapon has already been issued to 85,000 soldiers. Majority of complaints have come from troops serving in the north of Ireland. One of the problems being that it goes off if dropped on its muzzle. This has, however, been given urgent attention. The MoD said the faults were no more than 'teething troubles', that the Army was 'very pleased' with the gun and that, because it was new, soldiers had been encouraged to complain about any faults they found with it.

### Petition

THE LATEST step in the campaign to prevent the building of a hydro-electric dam on the river Danube was the handing-in of a petition signed by 124,000 people to the Hungarian government last week. The project was formally approved by parliament in November and the petition is calling for a referendum.

### ID cards for claimants

Social Security Secretary John Moore has outlined Tory plans for compulsory electronic tagging of the nation's non-producers. Micro-chip 'smart cards' to be introduced before the end of the year, will define who is or isn't eligible for benefits and pensions. They will contain information such as the claimant's physical description, thumb print, their working history, their family, a photo of their retina, medical information, and a voice sample. The NHS and 2,000 members of the Dallington Country Club have already kindly offered their services to try the cards out - see next week's Workers Press.

# DEFEND SCOTTISH POLL-TAX RESISTERS!

THROUGH the pages of Workers Press I would like to issue a call for solidarity by the labour movement with those in Scotland who are now beginning to receive punitive fines for refusing to register for the poll tax.

In November 1988, one month after the Scottish register was supposed to be ready, over 55 thousand households in Strathclyde region alone had still not completed their registration forms.

Registrar Jack Wood claimed to the press that 'the vast majority' of non-registers returned their forms after they were issued with £50 fine notices. Undoubtedly some did - several I know attached a bitter message such as 'extracted by force' to their completed forms.

But most of the 'refuseniks' were simply registered without their consent - with information filched from the electoral roll, library records, gas and electricity suppliers and social work files. Registrars are empowered to demand any personal data from any local authority body except details relating to past or present employees.

In a farcical incident recently, Glasgow's District Council Labour Group briefly bared their teeth and refused to hand over to Wood the names on their housing list. Less than 24 hours later they caved in ignominiously, having been reminded that they were liable for personal surcharge if they did not comply.

The Labourites of Strathclyde Regional Council - whose task it is to collect penalties from non-registers and non-payers - have no better record in opposing the tax. 'All we have been able to do,' says leader Charles Gray, 'is to play the procrastination game as skilfully as we could'.

Both councils have been the target of lobbies by the hundreds of anti-poll tax groups in their area, based in community, college, and trade union branches - groups committed to a campaign of mass non-payment of the tax.

I believe the strength of this opposition - which owes no thanks to the Scottish Trades Union Congress or Labour leadership - has contributed to the registrar's strategy for dealing with those who have not registered.

Comparatively few were fined £50, and even fewer the second penalty of £200 - only 25 in the whole of Strathclyde, of whom I happen to be one.

If I continue not to register - as I intend to do - I will be fined an additional £200 at three-weekly intervals, up to a maximum of £2050.

The Regional Council can then carry out wage arrestment, a warrant sale (bailiffs removing

your furniture for auction) or - most likely in my case - deduction from benefit payment.

Those who have not registered are only the first of many who will be prepared to break the law on this issue. At this weekend's all-Scottish conference on the tax in Glasgow, my local anti-poll tax group is moving a resolution calling for 'financial help in cases of hardship and physical presence to protest at

warrant sales.'

'Non registration', it concludes, 'is to be considered as an integral part of the campaign of opposition to the poll tax.'

I urge delegates to support this resolution, to help identify all those in Scotland who are in this position, and to campaign in their organisations for support.

Hilary Horrocks  
Glasgow WRP, secretary  
Ibrox/Cessnock Against the

## Ford sacking sabotage



Ford workers lobby during their pay battle last year

BY KEVIN LAND

THE FIGHT to reinstate victimised Dagenham Ford worker Mick Gosling has been sabotaged by union officials.

After Fords rejected Gosling's final appeal under the Company's dispute procedure a ballot was prepared in his department on the Sierra assembly line.

Ford management declared that they would not allow this ballot to take place claiming that anti-union legislation meant that the whole plant had to be balloted.

Instead of repudiating this interference in union business Transport and General Workers' Union official Steve Hart agreed to ballot all transport union members on one shift.

After several delays this ballot took place on Monday 20 February without any mass meeting beforehand or a recommendation from the union for action. Individual stewards were left to decide whether to hold meetings in their departments.

In the meantime the Company put out a four-page letter to each employee repeating its accusations against Gosling, of instigating strikes, of attending a meeting on Ireland in his dinner break and of not declaring his educational qualifications on his job application form ten years ago.

All these charges had been

dealt with by the union in his defence.

The key question of his refusal to sign a statement agreeing not to take part in any union action or be instantly dismissed was only vaguely referred to.

Much of the letter was gloating over the level of co-operation the management claims it has with the plant's union leadership and local official Steve Hart. Under these conditions the ballot resulted in 500 for action, 800 against.

It is no secret that right wing Stalinist Hart is hostile to Mick Gosling, chairman of the 1/1107 branch.

Gosling had also argued with plant convenor Joe Gordon just prior to his sacking last November over the allowing of 're-manning' on the Sierra line when its regular workforce had walked out on strike.

The stewards' committee one year ago had carried a resolution one year ago by just one vote, not to support 'unofficial' stoppages, and to allow the Company to 'reman', in effect to strike break.

Mick Gosling was amongst those who warned that this agreement would be used to victimise those who took action in defence of their rights.

Hart now wants to drop Gosling's case. While Gosling considers what further action can be taken, moves are afoot to call for Hart's removal as official representing Ford workers.