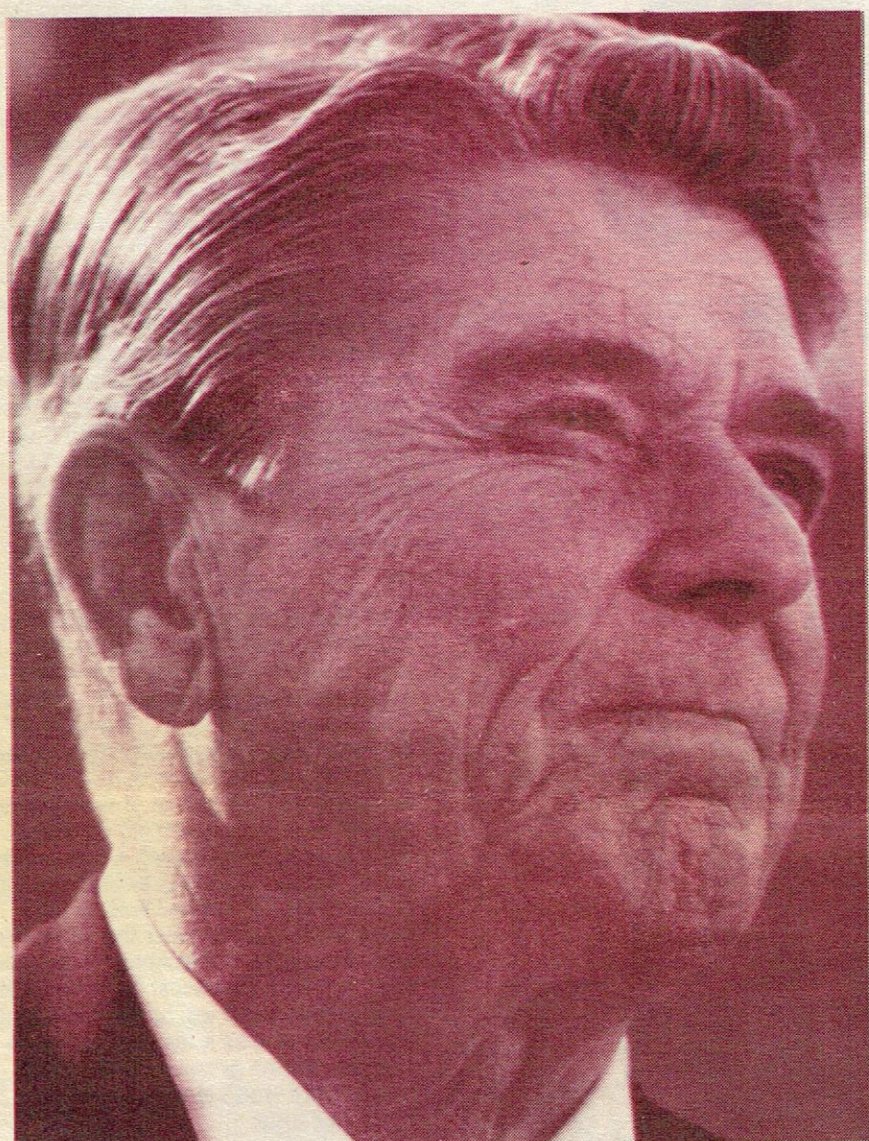


the next step

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1988—the
year that
was. See
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USA targets Libya (again)

WESTERN HYPOCRISY ON CHEMICAL WEAPONS

Western leaders have accused Libya of manufacturing lethal gases at a secret chemical warfare plant at Rabta, and warned that chemical weapons in the hands of Colonel Gaddafi are a mortal threat to humanity. In fact the anti-Libyan campaign exposes the double standards of the Western powers, whose own record on chemical weapons reveals them to be the real menace in the third world today.

The USA is one of the biggest manufacturers of chemical weapons in the world. US secretary of state George Shultz admitted at last week's conference in Paris aimed at limiting the manufacture of chemical weapons that the USA planned to spend hundreds of millions more next year modernising its stock of deadly poisons. The USA has obstructed moves to impose a worldwide ban on such weapons. Several countries, such as the Soviet Union and France, have been pushing for a total ban on their production and the destruction of existing stocks. The USA claims it would be impossible to verify such a ban and that countries should be able to retain a minimum chemical warfare capability as a 'deterrent'.

The West has never objected to the use of chemical weapons when it suited its purposes. The Western powers knew for years about the use by Iraq of chemical weapons against Iranian troops and Kurdish villagers. Iraq first started to use mustard gas in the Gulf War in 1983. A BBC *Panorama* programme in 1986 exposed a major Iraqi chemical warfare complex near Samara. There were six UN reports on the subject. But as long as the West found it useful to put pressure on Iran through the Gulf War it was willing to turn a blind eye to such horrors. Iraq's use of chemical weapons only achieved international prominence after Iran accepted a ceasefire in the Gulf War.

Nor have Western leaders any objections to the use of noxious weapons against civilians by their own forces. According to counter-insurgency expert Charles Townshend, Britain, not Iraq, was the first to use chemical weapons, including phosphorus bombs, against the Kurdish resistance in the early twenties. In Vietnam the USA used napalm by the ton to wipe out entire villages. Israel, which is

equipped by Washington with the latest in chemical and nuclear warfare, employed phosphorus bombs during its invasion of the Lebanon in 1982. It is clear that the Reagan administration has not made a fuss about the Rabta plant out of a humanitarian concern over the use of chemical weapons.

To listen to the disinformation issued by the White House anyone would think that Libya alone in the Middle East had a stock of chemical weapons. In fact the USA's silence about the six other countries (Israel, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria) which already have them indicates that its real concern is not to hinder the production of chemical weapons, but to whip up hysteria about a supposed Libyan threat. Libya has been the West's favourite bogey in the Middle East since the seventies. Today the USA is appealing to concern about the spread of chemical weapons to justify further Western intervention in a region where its influence is waning.

We should reject the hypocritical Western campaign against Libya, and any attempt by the West to increase its interference in the third world. The only way to rid the world of weapons—chemical or otherwise—is by getting rid of the system that depends on terror and destruction for its survival.



editorial

13 January • No 1 • Editor: Joan Phillips

'Hands Off Libya!' must be the most frequently recurring headline in the pages of *the next step*. On umpteen occasions in recent years we have had cause to condemn some act of imperialist aggression against Libya. Now the West is on the warpath against Colonel Gaddafi again. Why has Libya become the scapegoat of the West, and what should be done about it?

Ronald Reagan's threat of a military strike against an alleged chemical warfare plant at Rabta was the goodbye kiss of a president who made hostility against Libya a key feature of US foreign policy during his eight years in office.

Throughout the Reagan years Libya has been presented as a rapacious power, ruled by a deranged dictator variously described by the US president as a 'barbarian', a 'mad dog' or simply a 'flake'.

Libya is not and never has been a threat to the world's leading imperialist power or any other Western nation. The country over which Gaddafi rules is 90 per cent desert, inhabited by a mere 3.5m people, mostly poor farmers and herdsmen. Its armed forces have grown over the past 10 years, but they remain the smallest of any major Arab power.

As for the allegation that Libya is the organising centre of a world terrorist conspiracy, the Western powers have yet to provide the evidence to substantiate their smears. The response of senior US government adviser Dr Robert Kupperman to the Lockerbie disaster was revealing in this respect: 'The first thing to do now is to take out that Libyan chemical warfare plant. In a sense it does not matter who was responsible for the bomb.' This brazen attempt to implicate the Libyan regime in a bombing conspiracy in the cause of justifying US aggression follows a long-established pattern.

In 1986 the USA alleged that Libya was involved in the Christmas bombings at Rome and Vienna airports to justify its new offensive against the Gaddafi regime. Even *Newsweek* admitted that Washington had evidence of Syrian responsibility; but the Reagan regime chose to lie about Gaddafi's involvement because, as one US expert put it, 'Libya is fair game to take a crack at'. Months later the USA claimed it had conclusive evidence that Libya had carried out a bombing at a Berlin disco used by US forces, when it was generally conceded that if any state was behind the bombing it was Syria. The Reagan administration used the Berlin bombing as the pretext for its lethal strike against Tripoli and Benghazi in April 1986. These examples of deliberate misinformation show that the hype about Libyan terrorism is a myth manufactured by the West.

Gaddafi has not been singled out as the enemy of the Western world because he is a threat to US interests. On the contrary, Libya has been chosen as a scapegoat precisely because of its weakness. The feeble Libyan regime has proved a convenient target for America's attempts to assert its military might in a region where it can no longer rely on its former economic and political leverage. Bullying Libya has helped the US establishment to

assert its authority against Arab regimes and European allies alike.

The European powers have generally been happy to play along with the USA's propaganda offensive against Libya. In Britain in particular the Thatcher regime has learned the value of whipping up chauvinist prejudice against enemies overseas for political advantage at home. In 1984 the killing of PC Yvonne Fletcher outside the Libyan embassy prompted a

torrent of abuse against Libya in the media. The allegation that the miners received donations from Libya during their year-long battle against the employers and the government was used to discredit the strikers. The eagerness with which the Tories seized on the latest anti-Libyan scare was a prime example of manipulating the terrorism panic to distract attention from major problems on the domestic front.

Although the European powers have taken advantage of the Gaddafi Factor for domestic purposes, they have also been wary of US interference in a region where they have their own interests to protect. Unlike the USA, the European powers have a major economic stake in north Africa and the Middle East. Britain, France, Italy and Germany rely on the region not only for oil, but also for crucial investments and trade outlets. While it suits the USA to maintain a degree of instability in the area as a pretext for waving the big stick, this is a direct threat to European interests which above all seek to preserve stable conditions for capitalist exploitation. The European powers fear the spread of anti-Western sentiment in the Middle East, and any move by the USA to improve its position at their expense.

This clash of interests has been evident on several occasions in the past, when Europe has refused to comply with US demands for sanctions against Libya. It is apparent today in the reluctance of some European nations to fall into line behind Washington's gung-ho approach to the chemical weapons issue. The European powers are not concerned about the consequences of US interference for the Libyan people, but at the damage this could do to their own business interests in the region.

While Europe and the USA might have their differences over Libya, they are united in their determination to maintain imperialist domination over the Middle East as a whole. This was borne out by alignments at the Paris conference on chemical weapons in response to Arab efforts to link the issues of chemical and nuclear weapons. In uniting with the Soviet Union against such a move, the British foreign office underlined the extent to which the conference was divided along North-South rather than East-West lines. The more that Mikhail Gorbachev lines up behind the West over the Middle East, the clearer it will be that any conflict there will come as a result of the West stepping up the pressure, not from a lunatic third world leader dancing to Moscow's tune.

Libya is a pawn in a sordid superpower game. Ever since the country was created in the carve-up of Africa among the imperialist powers in the years before the First World War it has been the victim of imperialist intrigue. As the West prepares to launch a new offensive against Libya today we must take sides with the Libyan people against imperialist aggression and expose the West as the real threat to the peoples of the Middle East.

HANDS OFF LIBYA!

ANOTHER DISASTER

The 44 people who died when the British Midland 737-400 jet crashed on to the M1 were the latest victims of a system which puts profits above people's lives. Such tragedies are becoming commonplace. The Bradford football fire, the Zeebrugge ferry capsizes, King's Cross, Piper Alpha, Clapham Junction. Nor should we forget the rising daily toll of dead and injured from industrial accidents, multiple pile-ups, derailments and other smaller-scale tragedies which goes largely unrecorded.

These events are often dealt with by media and government commentators as if they were natural disasters. There is nothing natural about them. The

increasing frequency with which they occur says something about the advanced stage of decay of Britain's infrastructure. But above all they speak volumes about a system which puts the quest for profit at a premium, and puts the lives of people second.

Behind the British Midland crash is a story of employers cutting corners with safety standards to save money, just as they did at King's Cross, Piper Alpha and Clapham Junction. Two days before the crash a former executive employed by the General Electric Company alleged that parts for the jet engines used on the 737 plane, the CFM-56, were leaving the

factories without going through adequate safety checks, and that safety certification was falsified by the company.

One of the most sickening aspects of the recent spate of disasters is the way they have been exploited by the authorities to create a mood of national mourning. It is galling that the same people who are largely responsible for the decline in standards of safety in industry, services and transport should manipulate the tragic consequences in this way. As long as we are forced to live under a system whose rulers show such a casual disregard for human life, there will be many more disasters.

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letters

LETTER FROM SRI LANKA

The following letter from an activist in Sri Lanka has been passed on to the next step. For reasons of security we have deleted the name of the author and certain other details.

I AM writing this letter hoping that it will reach you. For about two weeks now there has been a state of great uncertainty in the country. The post is irregular and sometimes for days no letters are collected or delivered. Petrol stations do not have petrol. Since last night we have had no electricity in our area. Sometimes no newspapers are available for days on end.

In the north and east of the country the Indian army has not been able to suppress the armed struggle by the Tamil freedom movement; casualties among the Indian army have been estimated in the region of 600. In whole areas of the country there is no government. A state of war exists and continued killing both by the Indian army and by the Tamil insurgent groups goes on. In many areas the roads are mined and travel is unsafe.

Shortages of food and various essential commodities is the order of the day. Life is not only very hard and difficult but also very uncertain. The arrival of the Indian army has neither brought peace nor an end to the virtual civil war.

In the south the situation is not very different and one wonders how long it will be before the Indian army goes south. Already Indian auxiliary forces (not combat units) are supposed to be in the north and one estimates that their purpose is to relieve the police and army of guard and other duties so that the numbers available for sending to the south could increase.

In the south the JVP (People's Liberation Front), formerly Maoist now Sinhala racist, has

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been carrying on what is called an 'armed struggle'. This has mainly manifested itself in the form of political assassinations. The governing party, the United National Party has had over 250 of its members assassinated, including an attempt to destroy the cabinet. All political parties have been attacked, left-wing groups have had leading members killed. The JVP has brought large areas of the country to a standstill, it now seems to be reaching out for power.

Premadasa (the new president) roamed the countryside prior to the election making the most fantastic promises that weren't taken seriously. He stopped the budget-making process during the elections, saying that 'learned men' (economists and accountants) are not necessary, and claiming that as president he would finish the budget in one hour. He promised a monthly minimum of Rs2500 per unemployed family; it will be better to be unemployed than to work as few people earn Rs2500 a month!

It is difficult to see the president and ministers going back to normal civilian life after 11 years of lording it over the country in the way they have done. They face such an awesome situation that even more drastic repressive measures seem to be likely. We do not know how long we may be permitted to function in the way we do. We are operating on a razor's edge and have to act with considerable caution. Despite the hazards we have been able to recruit worker comrades and our membership has expanded. No one has left us despite the reactionary chauvinist hysteria that prevails in the country.

subjected to the usual filthy abuse: 'What you lesbians need is a good fuck, that'd sort you out.'

The union executive avoided giving a lead. The emergency general meeting a week later was organised by the Lesbian and Gay Society. Its motion proposed that photos be taken off the union cards of the thugs and pinned up for all to see. The executive objected to this on the grounds that libel action might ensue!

At present our polytechnic is threatened with a merger, which would send us to Cheltenham and Cambridge. The executive seems incapable of organising against this too. During a recent occupation against the merger, union officials opposed students who wanted to invade a meeting of the board of governors. The union advocates writing letters to MPs instead.

The NUS is incapable of defending its own members. We need an organisation that puts our interests first.
Michael Johnson
City of London Polytechnic

NUS: NO USE TO STUDENTS

LAST term at City of London Polytechnic an anti-Clause disco was broken up by members of the rugby club. Glasses were thrown, the

president of the Lesbian and Gay Society was thrown over a table, and the rugby players stripped off and simulated anal intercourse. Lesbians were



Pandora Anderson

ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

JOHN TAYLOR asks what position the RCP takes on the right of the national republics to secede from the Soviet Union (letters, 9 December 1988). We support the right to secede as the only basis for the voluntary union of different peoples. However, we oppose the implementation of that right since imperialist reaction would be consolidated if the Soviet Union were dismembered.

Revolutionaries support all

national struggles when directed against oppression, up to and including secession if necessary. This is because such struggles help unify workers from different backgrounds and break them from Moscow's influence.

Each national struggle must be approached individually. Not all national struggles aspire to independence. The Crimean Tartars and the Armenians are fighting for equal status within the Soviet Union. Even Soviet Jews are not demanding independence, but the right to emigrate.

Other national struggles are no longer directed against oppression. For instance, the Baltic peoples, who have long suffered persecution, now downplay their previous commitment to independence

and instead aim to force Moscow to extend the exclusive privileges they enjoy compared to other Soviet peoples. No revolutionary could support this divisive objective.

The Kremlin hopes to distract attention from the failure of glasnost by scapegoating selected Soviet peoples such as the Armenians. By fomenting national divisions, the Kremlin weakens Soviet resistance to imperialist interference. Soviet workers can best offset the threat of Western intervention by struggling against the corrupt Soviet system.

Championing the cause of those peoples victimised by Moscow must be at the centre of any programme to overthrow the bureaucracy.
Andy Clarkson
London

Hirohito hate campaign

REMEMBER BRITAIN'S WAR CRIMES

The death of Emperor Hirohito was the cue for an outpouring of anti-Japanese chauvinism

Hirohito's long-expected death had been eagerly awaited by the British media, keen to resurrect its favourite tales of Japanese atrocities during the Second World War. Allied prisoners of war recounted their horrors in Japanese prison camps. Spokesmen for veterans' organisations, such as the Burma Star Association, were wheeled out to tell of their experiences as forced labourers. Reporters constantly reminded us of the 27 000 British prisoners who died at the hands of the Japanese. MPs from all parties signed a motion calling on the Queen to boycott Hirohito's funeral as a protest against Japan's wartime legacy.

Barbarism

Hirohito was certainly a war criminal, implicated particularly in the deaths of millions of Asians. But Britain, and its allies, have a record of war crimes in Asia unparalleled in its savagery. Hundreds of thousands of civilians were killed by the Allies in their bombing raids on Japan. In the bloodiest night of the Second World War 200 000 people were killed in the Great Fire Raid of Tokyo in March 1945. Some 130 000 Japanese civilians were incinerated in the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima,

Mutiny of 1857. Frederick Engels commented that 'there is no army in Europe or America with so much brutality as the British. Plundering, violence, massacre—things that everywhere else are strictly and completely banned—are a time-honoured privilege, a vested right of the British soldier'. Sixty years later General Dyer ordered his troops to fire at point-blank range into a peaceful crowd in Amritsar in the Punjab: 380 were killed and more than 1000 injured in the massacre. During the Malabar Rising of 1921-22 the British butchered more than 2000 rebels. The British dealt with the 'Quit India' campaign during the war by arresting 60 000 and bombing the rebels from the air.

Racist

A million people were killed as the West struggled to keep control of Korea, formerly a Japanese colony, during the Korean War of 1950-53. Many more died as the USA used its military might in a vain attempt to conquer Vietnam. Britain launched its own bloody counter-insurgency operations against civilians in Asia, notably in its war in Malaya. During the Malayan 'Emergency' of 1948-60, the British interned 35 000 people in concentration camps and deported another 15 000.

its own interests, and the two countries found themselves on opposite sides during the Second World War. The fact that the Japanese were not European lent a nasty racist edge to anti-Japanese chauvinism.

Having successfully dealt with the threat of Japanese imperialism, Britain and the USA were happy to use Japan again to promote their interests in the region after the war. America rearmed Japanese troops and sent them to fight against the newly-independent Korean government in 1945.

Discipline

British officers led Japanese soldiers against Indonesia and Vietnam soon after the war. 'The British were delighted with the discipline shown by their late enemy', noted one American observer in Vietnam, 'and were often warmly admiring, in the best playing-field tradition, of their fine military qualities.' (Cited in 'Ernest Bevin and the Cold War', *Socialist Register* 1984, p79) The British put these 'fine military qualities' to good use within four months they had massacred 2700 Vietnamese.

Hirohito was central to the post-war Allied strategy. In 1945 the USA strenuously resisted all attempts to depose him or to try him as a war criminal.



'There is no army with so much brutality as the British' (Engels): the British army in action in Malaya, 1951

and, three days later, another 140 000 perished in Nagasaki.

Western barbarism in Asia was not confined to the Second World War.

From the Opium Wars of the last century to Vietnam, the imperialists have tried to impose their rule over the region through terror. The Opium Wars of 1839 and 1856-60 were the result of Britain's attempt to open up trade in China. To circumvent official Chinese restrictions, Britain began smuggling opium into Chinese ports. The war started after the Chinese authorities tried to close down the illicit trade. The second Opium War ended with the British razing the capital Peking to the ground.

The British record in India has been even bloodier. Writing after the British attack on Lucknow during the Indian

Collective punishments were commonplace; at Kachan and Batang Kali the British were responsible for cold-blooded massacres of civilians.

Britain's rulers have no objections to subjugating foreign peoples or treating their opponents with utmost brutality.

Indeed, Britain initially supported Japan's move into Asia as a bulwark against Russia and later the Soviet Union. Between 1902 and 1922—the period when Japan fought a war with Russia and formally annexed Korea—Britain and Japan were allies. When the victors handed out the spoils after the First World War, the Treaty of Versailles gave Japan former German concessions in China's Shan-tung province.

Britain took exception to Japanese expansionism in the 1930s because this threatened

In the immediate post-war months the Allies feared a communist takeover in Japan. They recognised that maintaining the continuity of the imperial tradition would be an important bulwark against communism. Consequently, General Douglas MacArthur, the effective ruler of Japan, stripped Hirohito of his claim to divinity but restored him to the chrysanthemum throne. It proved an effective tactic in keeping Japan within the Western sphere of influence.

We should have no truck with the anti-Japanese hysteria which the British establishment is promoting. Hirohito might have been a war criminal but there are plenty who walk the corridors of Westminster who can match his record.

Daniel Nassim



Gorbachev outpointed Reagan in the diplomatic stakes

By the beginning of December clashes between Azerbaijanis and Armenians were assuming the dimensions of an embryonic civil war.

As tens of thousands of refugees fled from Azerbaijan, the prospects for a peaceful resolution to the problem seemed increasingly remote. To make matters worse, nationalist agitation in the Baltic republics, particularly in Estonia, reached a climax in November. Suddenly the Soviet Union looked less like a superpower than an empire in decline.

The enormous devastation inflicted by the earthquake in Armenia in December diverted attention from the disturbances temporarily. The Kremlin made use of the opportunity to reassert control by sending in yet more armoured divisions to assist in the rescue and reconstruction operation. But the underlying causes of the ethnic unrest have not gone away, but will create more problems for Moscow in the future.

Failure

Given the intractable character of his domestic problems, it is not immediately apparent how Gorbachev managed to win such prestige internationally. The answer to this puzzle is to be found, not in Moscow, but in Washington.

Gorbachev's success was made possible by the growing incoherence of Western diplomacy.

We should recall that throughout 1988, the USA was run by a lame-duck president. Reagan never recovered from the scandals associated with Iran-Contra and Oliver North. With only a year left of his presidential term, Reagan decided to sit it out.

The feebleness of US foreign policy was exposed in February over Washington's failure to get rid of General Manuel Noriega of Panama. Noriega succeeded in defying US efforts to destabilise his regime. His survival symbolises the ineptitude of the Reagan administration. Washington and its Contra mercenaries also failed to make any headway in Nicaragua. Eight years ago the newly-elected president Reagan undertook to sort out Nicaragua as a foreign policy priority. Now the retiring president has had to eat his words.

Guardians

Reagan's biggest diplomatic coup—the Moscow summit in May—was a gift from Gorbachev. The Soviet leader was happy to lend Reagan a helping hand. He had his own reasons for fostering the impression that the superpowers were getting down to serious business. Sprucing up Reagan's image was a small price to pay for worldwide acceptance as the key international player. Since the USA and its Western allies are unlikely to get their act together in the coming year, Gorbachev is assured of a clear run in the diplomatic stakes.

The advancing disintegration of the Western alliance was one of the important features of the year.

Disputes over trade, the dollar and third world debt were much in evidence at all the important gatherings of the representatives of the imperialist powers. Washington's isolation over its refusal to allow PLO leader Yassir Arafat to address the United Nations general assembly in December was symptomatic of the existing state of affairs in the Western alliance.

A major crisis of the third world state was a feature of 1988. The upheavals in Algeria, Burma, Haiti, Pakistan and South Korea indicate that virtually the whole of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East faces political instability. The death squads have emerged as important guardians of law and order, even in relatively industrialised third world countries such as Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and the Philippines.



Palestinians led the struggle for freedom in 1988

The ceasefire between Iran and Iraq in August ended one of the bloodiest wars this century. Nevertheless, the Middle East remains the main international trouble-spot. The collapse of Lebanon continues with no resolution to the fighting in sight. Over the past 12 months the Palestinian *intifada* has become more powerful, and is now the most advanced struggle in the Middle East. However, the PLO's acceptance of the state of Israel in November threatens to undermine the momentum of Palestinian resistance.

What then are the major developments of 1988? The most striking new trend is the acceleration of fragmentary tendencies in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

In particular, the explosion of ethnic tensions in Azerbaijan, Armenia, the Baltic republics and in Yugoslavia is a major challenge to the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is also a significant problem for the working class. The growth of nationalist consciousness in the circumstances can only be at the expense of class identification.

The outbreak of national conflict in Eastern Europe is probably the most negative development of 1988 from the point of view of the working class.

A qualitative decline in the Cold War conflict was another trend to note in 1988. As we have seen, relations between the super-

1988 THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS...

Frank Richards highlights the important trends and key developments at home and abroad in 1988

1988

will be remembered by the media in predictable terms, as the year in which George Bush was elected president of the USA and François Mitterrand became president of France. For the newsmakers of the West, it was the year of Reagan-Gorbachev summits and of the comings and goings of international diplomacy.

For Marxists the memorable events of the year are different. We remember the SAS murder of three Irish freedom fighters in Gibraltar in March and the shooting down of an Iranian Airbus by the US navy with the loss of 290 lives in July. Nor should we forget the P&O ferry strike at Dover, the postal dispute in September, and the strife in the health service which continued throughout the year. The most significant struggles occurred elsewhere, among Brazilian workers in November, in the French public sector strikes in the autumn, and in Spain, culminating in a general strike, in December.

In reviewing the year we need to go beyond superficial impressions, and adopt an objective perspective to make sense of what are often contradictory trends.

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was without a doubt the dominant international figure of the year. He maintained a high international profile, launching one initiative after another. Western diplomats were forced to react, in an attempt to limit Gorbachev's appeal and impact.

But they were invariably upstaged, most notably by Gorbachev's speech to the UN general assembly in New York in December. His unilateral commitment to cut Soviet conventional forces by 500 000 was a significant diplomatic coup, giving the Soviet leader the moral advantage and putting NATO on the defensive. Gorbachev had to cut short his diplomatic schedule to take command of the rescue operation after the Armenian earthquake disaster; but he returned to the Soviet Union having enhanced his stature as the pacesetter in international relations.

Gorbachev has been prepared to

make major compromises to ease East-West tensions. The Soviet disengagement from Afghanistan, diplomatic agreements over troop withdrawals from Angola and the prospect of some kind of settlement in Kampuchea are all the fruits of Gorbachev's efforts. In drawing the West into a new framework of international diplomacy, Gorbachev has succeeded in undermining the effect of Cold War propaganda.

Tensions

The Soviet leader's growing international reputation is paradoxical given his failures in the domestic sphere. Gorbachev's celebrated economic reforms remain to be implemented. Soviet society has undergone a degree of liberalisation under Gorbachev, but the economy appears impervious to any real change. Unless he can deliver on his economic promises, *glasnost* threatens to blow up in Gorbachev's face.

The fragmentation of the Soviet economy has been reproduced at the political level. Smouldering ethnic tensions exploded in February over the future of the Armenian-dominated Nagorno-Karabagh enclave in Azerbaijan.

have become less conflict-oriented. As a result, anti-Soviet propaganda is more restrained.

The political disintegration of the third world states and the increasing prominence of the death squads were important developments last year. Here the picture is not entirely negative. Struggles in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru and South Korea show that a powerful new class of proletarians is emerging to claim its historic role as the bearer of social change. The growing confidence of the working class in the third world was one of the most positive trends of the year.

The major unresolved problem internationally is the future direction of US imperialism. During the year-long election campaign the American ruling class did everything possible to avoid confronting the problems of economic stagnation and of the dollar.

US capitalism cannot continue without making major adjustments to bring under control its budgetary deficit and balance of trade problem.

At present it is not clear how the newly-elected president George Bush will proceed. No doubt he will seek international support for the dollar to minimise the scope of internal adjustments. But even if his bullying of European and Japanese imperialists succeeds, it is unlikely that Bush can avoid inflicting a degree of inflation and austerity on the USA.



Popular protests rocked the third world

facing a moral collapse and a crisis of identity.

Developments in 1988 also highlighted the deep and irresolvable problems facing the Labour Party. Throughout the year Labour proved incapable of presenting itself as a credible contender for government. It did not even manage to project itself as a plausible party of opposition. Again and again the parliamentary Labour Party was overshadowed by Tory backbenchers, eccentric aristocrats and church leaders who put themselves forward as opponents of the government. Not once in 12 months did Labour take advantage of the government's

the year shows that Labour has become a party in search of a justification for its existence. By the end of the year even the most naive Labour supporter could no longer believe that the party is capable of regaining its historic role in British politics.

In 1988 the TUC proved that it has no policy for sustaining trade union organisation. The union leadership is now entirely absorbed with its own survival and is concerned only with maintaining its dues-paying membership. The union bureaucracy is involved in an internal civil war and devotes its energies to poaching members from other unions or merging with other affiliates to minimise the effects of decline. The TUC's split with the EETPU simply confirmed that the union bureaucracy has lost its coherence.

The paralysis of the trade union movement is in striking contrast to the dynamism of the employers' offensive. Over the past year the employers have redoubled their efforts to influence the working class directly. Having dispensed with the mediating services of the unions, the employers have tried to dictate terms without using the traditional methods of collective bargaining. They have also encouraged the growth of scab unions; the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and the Royal College of Nursing are the most successful examples of managerial unionism.

The future direction of the Tory Party is also fairly clear. The Thatcher government has exhausted its policies; it has no ideas of substance on economic and social policy. In the absence of a coherent programme the Tories have taken to launching public relations exercises like the privatisation of water or the membership scheme for football fans. The importance of these measures, as well as the other proposals outlined in the Queen's Speech in November, is that they give the impression that the government is doing something.

In reality the government is only capable of consolidating its previous gains, not of initiating new policies.

Thatcher realises that the aim of any capitalist government is to preserve the status quo. Consequently the main emphasis of her government is on repression. By stepping up repression and criminalising dissent, the Conservatives hope to establish the conditions for a stable order.

In the absence of any domestic initiatives of substance, the Tories are likely to turn to the international sphere to strengthen their authority. Thatcher's speech attacking the EEC in Bruges, her outbursts

Thatcher: running out of ideas but still a step ahead of her opponents



against Dublin and Brussels over the extradition of Irish priest Patrick Ryan, and her oft-repeated claim to be the most senior Western leader are all part of a campaign to use diplomacy for domestic ends.

It is likely that in the year ahead Thatcher will raise her international profile to score the successes that elude her in the domestic sphere. A more stridently chauvinist foreign policy can be expected from a government that still reaps the benefits of the Falklands Factor.

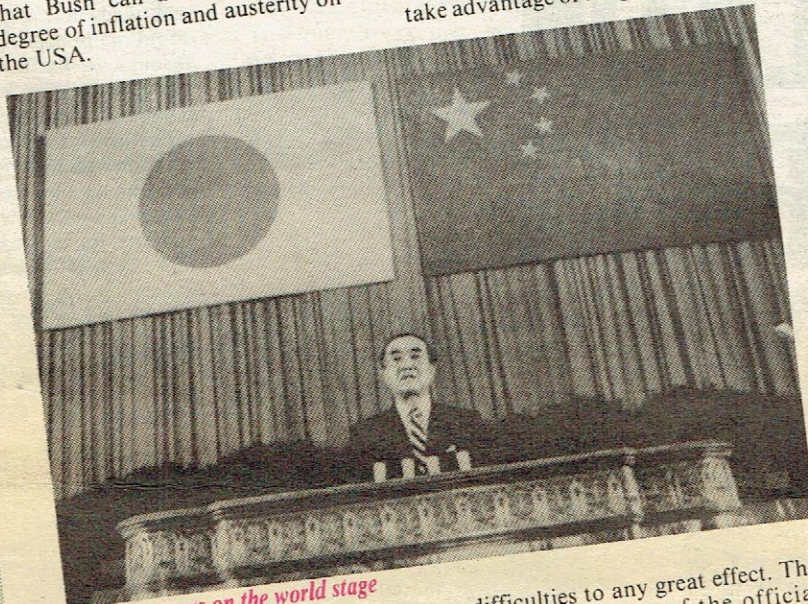
The one area of British politics which remains unresolved is the response of the working class.

The decline of Labourism and the TUC has brought to the surface the crisis of working class politics. Workers who have fought back in 1988 - nurses, seafarers, carworkers, postworkers and others - have received little support. This experience of fighting alone has heightened the sense of isolation among militants. The working class is fragmented and divided after the experience of the past decade.

Influence

Yet workers are still forced to fight. In the short term the decline of the unions has weakened our class, but the breakdown of the old conventions has made the pattern of working class protest less predictable than before. Most of the institutions of the labour movement had a restraining effect on the working class. What form the class struggle will take in the years ahead is the most interesting question facing Marxists. The answer to this question is far from clear. Our job is not to speculate about the future but to act decisively now to influence activists in the principles of Marxist politics.

The working class had a bad year in 1988. But then so did the ruling class. The class struggle in Britain remains unresolved. All the more reason to build a movement capable of resolving it in favour of the working class and the vast majority of society.



Japan appears on the world stage

Japan is the mystery of the year. The most powerful economy in the world has finally begun to adopt a high profile politically and diplomatically. Japanese diplomacy has been particularly extensive in the third world, where it is now the largest donor of aid. At the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Japan takes the lead in launching initiatives to tackle the problem of the third world.

Collapse

The growing confidence of Japanese diplomacy is an obvious threat to the interests of its imperialist competitors. The question is whether Japanese diplomacy will go forward to match its economic power in the years ahead. If it does it will have far-reaching consequences for a world order shaped and dominated by the USA.

In Britain questions that were still unresolved at the start of the year were answered over the subsequent 12 months. It is important in the British context to look at how previously identified trends were consolidated over the year.

Early in the year it became evident that the politics of the centre have no future in Britain.

The crisis of the Liberals and the SDP over merger plans in January, and the continuing acrimony between David Owen's outfit and the SLD, show that neither side is about to break the mould of British politics. With hindsight it is obvious that the previous gains made by the Alliance were entirely the fruit of the Labour Party's crisis. The fact is that there is no significant constituency for the centre. Today the one-time aspirants for government office are

difficulties to any great effect. The most defiant act of the official opposition was when Ron Brown dropped the Mace in parliament in April.

The Labour Party's inability to rattle the Tories is only the most striking expression of Neil Kinnock's difficulties. Internally the party is a mess. The Labour leadership has not been able to promote the image of a movement united in purpose and direction. The Labour Party conference in October degenerated into a farce when Kinnock ended up embroiled in another row with transport union leader Ron Todd over the issue of unilateral disarmament.

The leadership's strategy of reorienting Labour towards the centre is a non-starter. It will lead to the weakening of the party's link with the unions, without yielding any compensation from the middle class electorate. The events of the past year demonstrate that this strategic reorientation can only deepen the crisis of the party and reinforce its lack of direction.

Labour's leaders no longer know what the party should stand for.

The only principle which Neil Kinnock, Bryan Gould and the rest now believe in is doing anything to get elected. The succession of policy documents published throughout

Dover seafarers were left to fight alone

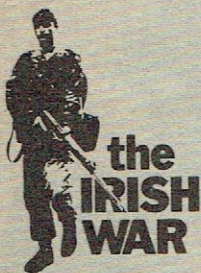


iddle East



Conflict in Eastern Europe

Pandora Anderson



This week's Irish War diary covers the extended holiday break and takes us through the events of December.

● **Sunday 4 December:** Following the arrival of Father Patrick Ryan in Dublin, Margaret Thatcher writes to Irish Taoiseach Charles Haughey demanding changes in Ireland's extradition laws.

Gardai in County Offaly find a large quantity of explosives, weapons and mortar bombs.

● **Monday 5 December:** The European Court of Human Rights condemns Britain for having the worst human rights record in Europe. Meanwhile, the indications are that the British government will defy Strasbourg's ruling on the unlawfulness of seven-day detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

● **Tuesday 6 December:** Thatcher rules out the suggestion that Patrick Ryan could stand trial in Dublin for his alleged fundraising for the IRA. Only two of the four charges against him could be brought in an Irish court.

● **Monday 12 December:** In contrast to its low standing among nationalists in the Six Counties, the Anglo-Irish agreement still has the support of 70 per cent of people in the South, according to a MORI opinion poll. The poll finds the agreement's bedrock of support among the urban middle classes.

● **Tuesday 13 December:** In response to increasing pressure from Britain, Irish government sources say that Patrick Ryan may face charges of possession of explosives. Thatcher describes Dublin's decision not to extradite Ryan as 'an insult to the British people'.

A mechanic who repairs vehicles belonging to the Crown forces is shot dead by the IRA in Portadown, County Armagh.

● **Wednesday 14 December:** Northern Ireland secretary Tom King is accused in the Belfast high court of blocking an investigation into discrimination against a Catholic-owned firm. The Fair Employment Agency claims that King had intervened on the grounds of national security to prevent an inquiry into why Northern Ireland Electricity had refused a contract to a Newry demolition firm for work at Ballylumford power station. The trade unions at Ballylumford had opposed the contract because the firm's workers were 'IRA sympathisers'.

● **Thursday 15 December:** The first reading of a Fair Employment Bill goes through the house of commons. The bill will provide more funds for investigation of cases of discrimination and establish a code of conduct for employers.

● **Friday 16 December:** An off-duty member of the Ulster Defence Regiment is shot dead in Downpatrick, County Down. The IRA warns the British Army to evacuate their families from the North.

● **Monday 19 December:** In two separate attacks in Armagh and Tyrone, about 40 houses belonging to soldiers' families are damaged in IRA mortar attacks. The attacks are greeted with enthusiasm in West Belfast where nationalists have suffered massive raids from Crown forces in the past two months.

● **Thursday 29 December:** In its New Year message to its supporters, the IRA describes 1988 as 'a difficult time for republicans' but pledges a 'consolidation of the struggle against the British' in 1989.

Mark Reilly

As immortalised in Francis Ford Coppola's movie *The Godfather*, New Year's Day of 1959 marked the end of the regime of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista. The opposition to the US stooge Batista was led by Fidel Castro's 26 July Movement, which had been fighting a guerrilla war with the army since 1957. The guerrillaism of Castro and his comrade Che Guevara became identified as the strategy which could expel American influence and set third world nations on the road to socialism.

Cuban guerrillaism inspired people throughout Latin America, and became a potent symbol of anti-imperialist resistance for a generation of Western radicals in the sixties. The question of whether the Cuban model represented an effective challenge to the status quo, however, has never been answered. Cuba's survival for 30 years in the face of unrelenting US hostility would seem to suggest that the Castro experiment has indeed been a success.

Audacity

An examination of Castro's campaign indicates that there never was any distinctive strategy. After raising money from the expatriate Cuban community in the USA, Castro set sail for Cuba in 1956 with 82 students and no pre-conceived plan other than a determination to remove Batista.

From the perspective of overthrowing capitalism, such an adventure made little sense.

Yet it was precisely this element of Castro's project which held such an appeal for Western radicals. For two years the *Fidelistas* endured the most appalling conditions; the French academic Régis Debray theorised this experience in his work on guerrillaism. The idea of a handful of revolutionaries battling against insuperable odds struck a chord with a movement preoccupied with the suppression of individuality in capitalist society. Castro himself was far more realistic.

In the first place he never contemplated the overthrow of capitalism, only the fall of the Batista dictatorship. Nor did Castro attach especial significance to guerrilla warfare: it was simply the only method at hand. By announcing his invasion in advance, for example, Castro violated every principle of secrecy in guerrilla tactics. It might have been bad guerrillaism, but such daring was good politics.

Castro was well aware of the fragility of the existing regime, and appreciated that a determined opposition could topple it. Audacity was an essential requirement in rallying such an opposition, and a quality that has characterised the Cuban leader's entire political career.

Violent

Batista's military rule had created a volatile political situation. Not only peasants and workers, but businessmen and professionals resented the fact that their country had been turned into a floating casino and sugar plantation for the Americans. They sought a greater degree of independence from the USA, and a civilian administration capable of establishing a stable society in Cuba.

The corruption, repression and censorship of the late Batista years predisposed even the most moderate elements towards a radical solution.

Castro was representative of the general character of the opposition. A lawyer by profession, he felt violent opposition was justified, orthodox methods having failed. As he made clear in his famous proclamation—'History Will Absolve Me'—Castro accorded the working class no distinctive role other than as part of a broad alliance of small businessmen,



Castro's revolution provided the inspiration for a generation of Western radicals

Cuba 1959

REVOLUTION IN LATIN AMERICA

farmers, professionals and others.

The unpopular character of the Batista regime led Castro to believe that a democratic capitalist Cuba could be created, and a more stable relationship established with the USA. In one sense he was proved right. By 1958 even the USA had begun to distance itself from Batista by cutting off military aid. In January 1959 the new administration was installed, with respectable figures occupying most of the key posts. Relations with the USA were cordial; the US regime of Dwight Eisenhower was the first in the world to recognise Castro's Cuba.

Sense

When Castro visited the USA in April he was favourably received by the media. He said he opposed dictatorship of any kind, and 'that is why we are against communism'. Castro was soon to change his mind. It became clear that support from the Stalinist bloc might be necessary to guarantee survival as his regime was forced to adopt more radical measures.

With the passing of the Agrarian Reform Law on Castro's return to Cuba in May, relations with the USA deteriorated. The reforms were modest, offering generous compensation to landowners and leaving intact farms of up to 3000 acres. But even this small step towards a more equitable division of land was a threat to the control exercised by the landowning elite and their US masters. Even more alarming for the latter were the demands for more radical change encouraged by the new government policy.

In the short term, the popularity of Castro's stand allowed him to marginalise the more overtly pro-capitalist interests. The real problem was the USA. Castro had the good sense to realise that Eisenhower would use economic sanctions to prevent a further radicalisation of the regime. Deliveries of sugar, Cuba's main export, to the Soviet Union had dropped significantly in 1959. Castro considered the resumption and possible extension of this outlet



Fidel Castro

as the best means of easing the pressure from the USA.

The trade and aid agreement with the Soviet Union of 1960 was a significant turning point in the evolution of the Castro regime.

Eighty per cent of the sugar sold to the Soviet Union under the agreement was to be paid for in Soviet oil. With the backing of Eisenhower, the refineries refused

to treat the oil. Castro was forced to nationalise the refineries. Eisenhower's calculation that such a move would precipitate a domestic crisis proved mistaken. The deterioration of Soviet relations with the USA after the U2 spy-plane incident meant that Nikita Khrushchev was keen to find a way of putting pressure on the USA.

Aside from giving it a degree of diplomatic leverage, Moscow reckoned that support for Cuba could help restore its reputation throughout Latin America and the third world. The Soviet-sponsored Cuban Communist Party's participation in previous Batista-led governments had discredited Stalinism among the masses. This helps explain why there was such popular support for armed guerrilla warfare: it was a radical alternative to the collaboration practised by the Communist Party. The Kremlin's association with Castro's regime made sense given the opportunities for extending Soviet influence in the sixties.

Unequivocal

In 1961 the USA led the Bay of Pigs invasion, and it has sustained a total economic embargo against Cuba to this day. This has forced Cuba into a closer alignment with the Kremlin. On the eve of the abortive 1961 invasion, Castro proclaimed himself a socialist to persuade Moscow to provide assistance. At the end of 1961 he proclaimed himself a Marxist-Leninist to exact a greater military commitment from his patrons.

The Soviet connection explains the divergence between the unexceptional course of development originally envisaged by the radical nationalist Castro, and the Soviet-style command economy presided over by the Marxist-Leninist Castro ever since.

The legacy of 1959 lives on today for several reasons. The events of 30 years ago were the first significant setback for the USA in the region after the Second World War; they thus had to be explained by the supposedly exceptional Cuban guerrilla tactics. The Cuban regime has continued to promote this image to sustain its popular anti-imperialist base of support; this has been particularly important given Cuba's increasing resemblance in every other respect to the stagnant regimes of Eastern Europe.

The enduring reputation of Castro and Guevara cannot be explained finally without reference to popular aspirations for change. Whatever its limitations, identification with Cuban guerrillaism represented a desire to change the existing order, and the unequivocal approach of Castro and Guevara gained them unswerving support. Today, the Castro regime's resistance to Mikhail Gorbachev's overtures to the West reflects an instinctive understanding that vigilance against imperialist intrigue is just as necessary now as during the dark days of Batista.

Adam Eastman

The recently-released cabinet papers for 1958 reveal how the British government carefully paved the way for the introduction of immigration controls.

Throughout the 1950s the British establishment faced conflicting pressures over immigration. In the immediate post-war years, the government recruited black workers from the colonies to make up the labour shortage at home and to take on the dirty, degrading jobs that British workers refused to do. However, by the late fifties it was clear that the boom was petering out and that Britain had less need of a supply of foreign labour.

The government was concerned, however, that imposing curbs on immigration could have an adverse effect on its relations with the Commonwealth.

Home secretary RA Butler told the cabinet that 'unrestricted coloured immigration' could have 'serious social consequences'. However, 'legislation directed against the Commonwealth' would be 'used against us by those who are anxious to prove that the Commonwealth is no longer a unity'.

Restrict

The cabinet decided that foreign policy considerations made it inappropriate to introduce restrictive legislation immediately. But Lord Hailsham warned that the situation had to be kept under 'constant review'; he noted that 'the list of contingent bills in the future

1958 Cabinet Minutes

THE MAKING OF RACIST BRITAIN

legislative programme' included a draft immigration law.

The cabinet also decided to put pressure on the West Indies to follow India and Pakistan in imposing administrative restrictions on emigration to Britain. Indeed, the Commonwealth secretary Lord Home hoped that it might be possible in the future to obtain the acquiescence of India and Pakistan to a bill limiting immigration specifically from those countries. He observed that 'it would, of course, be a good defence against criticism of the bill as a colour-bar measure if we could say that the governments of India and Pakistan acquiesced to it'.

Another problem confronting

the government was how to frame any future immigration law to target black immigrants without appearing to be racist. The authorities aimed to restrict, not immigration in general, but simply 'coloured immigration'.

At the same time they recognised that an openly racist law would offend public opinion at home and abroad.

Lord Hailsham proposed drafting a bill that would cover immigration in general, thus avoiding allegations of discrimination. But he went on to emphasise that the administrative rules subsequently drafted by the home secretary should single out blacks, thus establishing in a less public



Under attack: immigrants faced racist mobs and a scheming government

manner the principle of discrimination against black immigrants. 'A general bill', argued Hailsham, 'would place less emphasis upon considerations of colour. These would however emerge at the Order in Council stage'. Such a bill might create 'problems with the old [i.e. white] Commonwealth countries', he added, but would 'render less obtrusive the discriminatory intentions of the Commonwealth provisions'.

The third dilemma facing the government was the lack of public pressure for immigration controls. The authorities were conscious that soon they would have to move towards controls; they were equally conscious that 'public opinion does not appear yet to be seriously concerned by the problem'. Since immigration controls 'would clearly be contentious', it was important to win public backing before proceeding.

Riots

The Notting Hill and Nottingham riots in August of that year provided the government with a major opportunity to win popular approval for future curbs on immigration. The so-called riots were in fact a racist pogrom, organised by gangs of marauding white youth against black residents. West Indian houses and cafés were firebombed during the attacks in Notting Hill.

In contrast to the anti-black hysteria that has informed media comment on recent Notting Hill carnivals, the government launched no campaign in 1958 against 'white

steamers', nor initiated a hunt to track down the firebombers. Instead, Tory and Labour spokesmen blamed blacks themselves for the violence and argued that the presence of immigrants inevitably led to conflict.

Press and politicians decried the 'slovenly' and 'immoral' lifestyles of immigrants. Hailsham warned that black landlords 'made the positions of white tenants intolerable', adding that 'many immigrants are accustomed to living in squalid conditions and have no desire to improve their surroundings'.

Butler argued that the riots were the result of 'competition for housing and casual employment... aggravated in some cases by disputes about women'. Cutting immigration, deporting 'undesirable immigrants' and restricting prostitution, he added, were the means to prevent further violence. The effect of this anti-black propaganda was to criminalise the black community and create a public consensus against immigration.

The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which made the state directly responsible for enforcing racial oppression, was the fruit of these developments.

The 1958 Cabinet Minutes show that the establishment carefully and consciously set about institutionalising racism. Thirty years after the Notting Hill pogroms, black people are still paying the price.

Jackie Reynolds

The GEC takeover

ANOTHER WESTLAND?

News that a consortium of home and overseas interests is preparing a takeover bid for GEC, Britain's largest electronics group, is circulating the City. The interested parties have made no commitments and the money has yet to appear upfront. Amid all the confusion, however, one point emerges clearly: even those companies which top the British industrial league table are ill-equipped to meet the challenge of their overseas rivals.

The GEC affair comes at a time of hectic change within the hi-tech sectors of the world economy. In the eighties lucrative defence orders, the credit-led consumer boom and the prospect of big profits on new products have led to massive investment in hi-tech. Many large companies have scaled down traditional operations and diverted resources into hi-tech areas. The rush to get into telecommunications, computer software and military, consumer and medical electronics has, however, produced severe overcapacity. Today there is not enough business to go round.

Overseas

Everybody in the business knows that large-scale rationalisation is inevitable. This has intensified hostility among companies needing quick returns to improve balance sheets showing heavy investment outlays on the debit side. Stronger concerns have sought to build up cash reserves to finance takeovers which they hope will relieve the pressure. One possible drawback here is that a fat bank balance can invite attention from bigger rivals on the lookout for takeover opportunities.

The threat to GEC highlights the extent of the competitive pressure on British business. Behind the bid is the British company Plessey. Why? Because GEC is also trying to swallow up Plessey. Both have



Lord Weinstock looks for help for his ailing company

sought overseas help in launching hostile bids. GEC has joined with the German company Siemens, alongside Philips of Holland, Europe's largest electronics concern.

Plessey is hoping to recruit overseas help to launch a £7 billion buy-out of its larger British counterpart. Potential allies include the French state-owned concern Thomson-CFS—Europe's biggest defence electronics firm—and US giants General Electric and AT&T.

These are unlikely allies. Siemens is noted for the aggressive way in which it has sought to establish a worldwide production capability through takeovers in recent years. It will certainly not countenance playing second fiddle to GEC in the Plessey takeover bid. Likewise, Plessey is dwarfed by the French and American concerns it hopes to rally against GEC. The US companies have made clear their intention to buy into Europe prior to the moves to economic integration in 1992. There are rumours in the City that GE is planning a separate bid for GEC because the Plessey plan does not

offer it a big enough slice in the event of a subsequent carve-up.

The GEC affair puts the government in a dilemma. On the one hand, it knows that it is futile to resist the impetus towards rationalisation in areas such as defence, electronics and telecommunications. On the other hand, the government will find it difficult to stand aside while overseas rather than British business dictates the course of events.

As powerful lobbies demand government action to protect GEC from takeover the issue has the potential to be even more explosive than the Westland helicopter controversy two years ago. Then, the Tories held firm to their free market principles and allowed the US firm Sikorsky to acquire Westland. Should the Tories step in to stop the GEC takeover it will undermine their boasted commitment to the free market. Should they let the takeover battle go ahead it will only draw attention to the weakness of even the best of British enterprise.

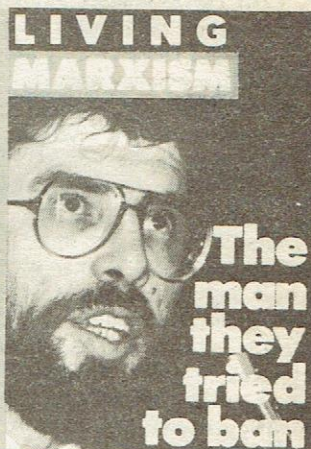
Tony Kennedy

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The man they tried to ban

the spread of union-busting.

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**GEC: Another
Westland for
the Tories?
See page 7**

17 years since Bloody Sunday

BRITISH TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND

*Mark Reilly remembers Bloody Sunday, when British
troops shot dead 14 unarmed Irish nationalists in Derry*



British terror cannot crush the struggle for Irish freedom

The events of Bloody Sunday in Derry on 30 January 1972 stand out still as the most dramatic illustration of what Britain's occupation of Ireland means for the nationalist people.

For two years the Crown forces had battled to control the revolt that was spreading inside the occupied Six Counties of Northern Ireland. Curfews in nationalist areas, saturation raids and internment without trial had failed to break nationalist resistance. On the contrary, the dawn raids, the beatings and shootings had nurtured a determination among many nationalists to fight to the finish for Irish unity.

Since August 1971 the nationalist people had been demonstrating their support for 'the men behind the wire', the hundreds of Catholics interned by a government running out of solutions to the revolt. All attempts to bully the nationalist people into submission had so far failed. British officials had hoped that internment would crush resistance by taking the 'ringleaders' out of circulation and striking fear into the rest of the population. Instead it created a new generation of republicans ready to risk life and limb against the Crown. The options were narrowing for the authorities: only mass murder could contain a mass revolt.

While the authorities became increasingly desperate, nationalists gained in confidence as their defenders, the IRA, went on the offensive with a bombing and shooting campaign. Reports of torture coming from the concentration camps gave added urgency to the protests. On Christmas day 1971, 4000 people marched the 10 miles through the snow from Belfast to Long Kesh, outwitting the Army on the way. The scene was set for a massive anti-internment demonstration in Derry.

The British, too, were preparing. Stormont premier Brian Faulkner discussed the situation with military overlord General Sir Harry Tuzo. On 27 January Faulkner flew to London for secret talks with Tory prime minister Edward Heath. On 28 January a high-level defence policy meeting was convened immediately after a session of the inner cabinet. That night Faulkner issued a statement saying that he had received assurances from the Army that action would be taken against 'illegal marchers'.

In Derry too, there were signs of something afoot. An Irishman serving in the Parachute Regiment, Peter McMullan, reported to the IRA that preparations were being made for an attack on the march, and requested explosives to destroy the Army's motor-pool. The IRA leadership, attaching no significance to his reports, gave McMullan enough explosives to destroy a few lorries. On the night of the 29th, a detachment of the Parachute Regiment was spirited into Derry to execute a special mission.

The 30 000 marchers who set off from the Creggan on the afternoon of Sunday 30 January were in high spirits. The Army allowed the march to leave the Creggan, but prevented it entering the walled city. The organisers, expecting this manoeuvre, turned away from the Army barriers and set up the speakers' platform for the rally. As usually happened in these situations, several hundred nationalist youths stayed at the barriers to taunt the Army. The Army replied in the usual fashion by firing tear-gas and rubber bullets. It seemed like the ritual stand-off. Before the paratroopers could be sent in to

deal with the marchers. Army commanders had to know one thing: where was the IRA that day? A few hours before the march set off they arranged for two youths to be shot and injured on the Creggan Heights. If the IRA made no response to this provocation,

the paras could go in with little fear of retaliation. The Army watched and waited. By 3.30pm there was still no sign of the IRA.

The Derry brigade of the IRA had joined the march that day, leaving their guns at home. Like most people, they believed that

the Army would not dare attack a march of 30 000 people. But suddenly, at the barriers near the Rossville Flats, the Army did attack. The armoured cars, which Peter McMullan had tried to take out, careered around the corner and disgorged a platoon of paratroopers. Without warning, the soldiers opened fire, shooting methodically and shooting to kill.

Kevin McElhinney was on his hands and knees crawling for cover when he was shot. The bullet entered his left buttock and travelled through his body to exit at the left shoulder.

Barney McGuigan was shot in the back of the head as he was crawling on his stomach towards the dying Pat Doherty.

As everyone fled for their lives, Gerald McKinney stood still, holding his hands above his head. A soldier walked up to him and fired point-blank into his chest.

Soldiers used the bodies of the dead and dying as traps to lure others into their target range. Those who attempted to rescue the injured Jim Wray were fired on. When the Army had finished mopping up the area, they passed the injured Wray and shot him three times in the back.

When the firing stopped 13 nationalists lay dead and 70 injured, one of whom would die later. The Army insisted that it had been fired on. Every independent witness rejected the Army's version. The Derry coroner described the killings as 'sheer unadulterated murder'. However, Lord Widgery, appointed by the government to head a commission of inquiry, absolved the Army of any blame. To drive home the point, the Queen awarded Colonel Derek Wilford, the commander that day, the Order of the British Empire for his services.

Bloody Sunday was the most brutal lesson Irish nationalists were to learn in their struggle against British rule. But rather than cower in submission, they fought back with greater defiance. The ruthless calculation of the British establishment in carrying out the Bloody Sunday killings revealed that it will stop at nothing to crush resistance to its rule in Ireland. But the resistance of the nationalist people in the 17 years since 1972 shows that even sheer unadulterated murder cannot crush their desire for freedom.

**Irish Freedom
Movement**

**No More
Bloody
Sundays
Rally**

7.30pm
Friday 27 January
Caxton House, 129 St John's Way,
London N19
(Archway tube)

Speakers: Irish Freedom Movement; John Mitchell, sacked general secretary of IDATU, the Irish shopworkers' union.

Followed by disco with bar; refreshments from 6.30pm.
Admission £3 waged/£1.50 unwaged (rally and disco).

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