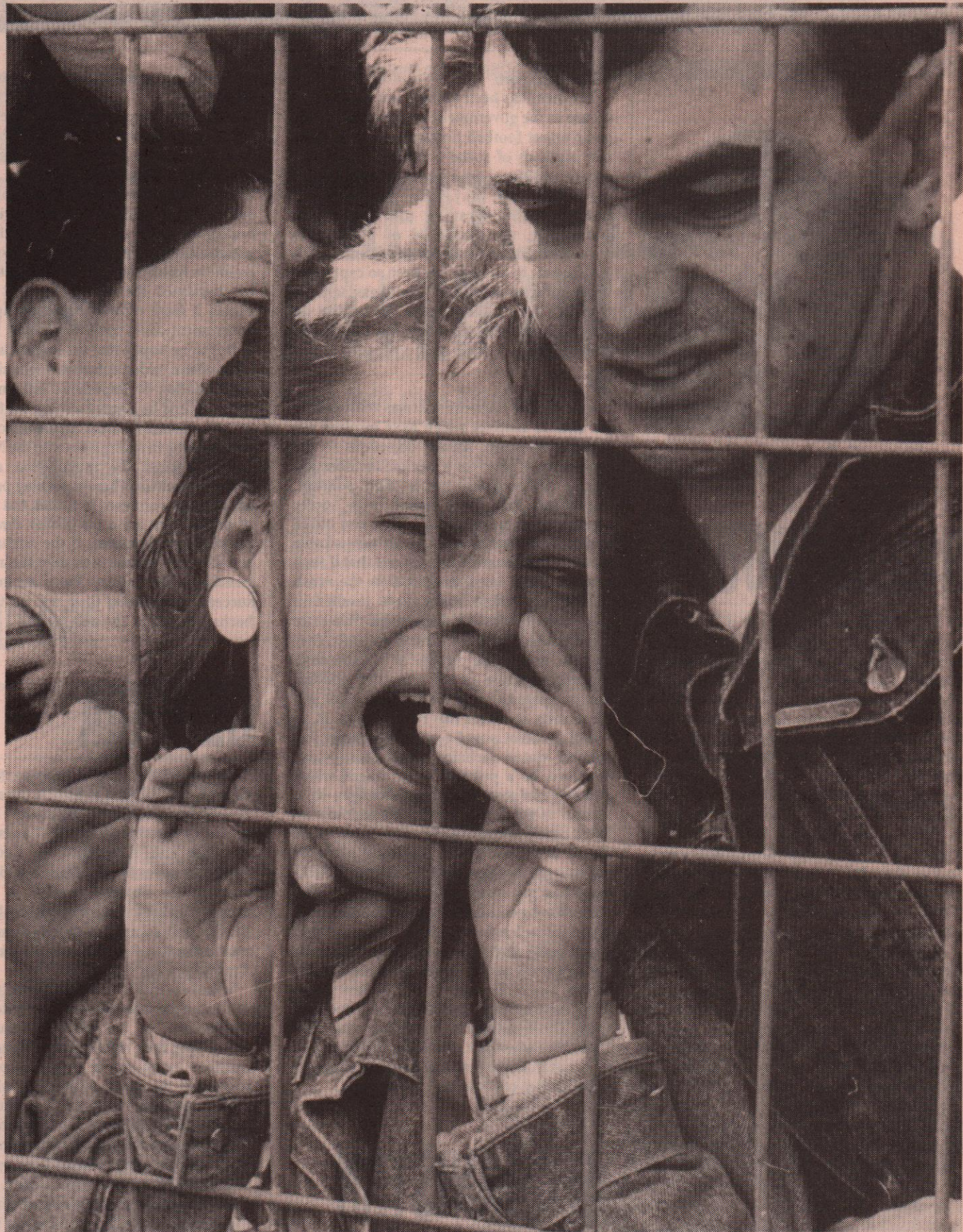


the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly • 21 April 1989 • No 12 • 40p



WHY 95 DIED

CAGED

BY POLICE ON TORY ORDERS

The government, the police and the football authorities have treated fans like animals for years. They are responsible for turning the terraces at Hillsborough into a slaughterhouse.

(Continued on back page)



WHY THEY DIED:

PUBLIC MEETINGS

LONDON

MONDAY 24 APRIL 7.30PM
HOLBORN LIBRARY
THEOBALDS ROAD, WC1

SHEFFIELD

SATURDAY 22 APRIL 3PM
SCCAU
WEST STREET

NOTTINGHAM

SATURDAY 22 APRIL 3PM
INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY CENTRE
MANSFIELD ROAD

LEEDS

SATURDAY 22 APRIL 3PM
THREE LEGS OF MAN PUB
THE HEADROW

NEWCASTLE

FRIDAY 21 APRIL 1PM
COMMITTEE ROOMS
NEWCASTLE POLYTECHNIC

21 April • No 12



Editor: Joan Phillips

HILLSBOROUGH

IN ITS first statement after the Hillsborough tragedy the government said that it would press ahead with plans to introduce a computerised ID scheme for football fans. Under the pressure of public opinion it may delay its schedule for introducing the scheme. But there is no doubt that the Tories will try to force it through when the fuss has died down. They continued to insist that the events at Hillsborough did not detract from the need for a national membership scheme. They said that ID cards were necessary to deal with an altogether different problem from those that led to 95 deaths at Hillsborough: hooliganism. It is true that hooliganism itself played no part in the tragic events on Saturday. But scaremongering about hooliganism played a major part in the carnage.

There has been a lot of buck-passing between the authorities since we first saw the awful scenes of suffocation and death on Saturday. Sheffield Wednesday which staged the semi-final match said it had no say, the FA has shrugged off responsibility for what happened, the police have made excuses for their actions on the day. There is no doubt that all these parties were implicated in the administrative blunders that set in train the events leading to such a tragic loss of life. But the buck stops with the politicians who branded football fans as animals and demanded the caging of spectators which resulted in the slaughter on Saturday. The government has conducted a virulent hate campaign against fans and focused public fears on hooliganism as a mortal threat to the nation. It has done all this for the purpose of legitimising its crusade for tougher law and order.

The 95 people who died in the tunnel and on the terrace at Hillsborough were victims of the Tory law and order panic. They did not die because of administrative blunders alone. They died because the cynical purposes of the government required that they be depicted as scum by the press, herded about like animals by the police, and caged like savages by the footballing authorities.

After all this, Tory politicians rebuked the Uefa president Jacques Georges for describing the Liverpool fans as beasts. This was an attempt to deflect criticism away from the people here who have blood on their hands against a foreigner who was just repeating the insults they have been slinging at football fans for years. In the aftermath of the tragedy some opposition politicians were heard to say that what happened was the result of the government's obsession with hooliganism. But it is 95 lives too late for hypocrites like Roy Hattersley to say that now, after going along with the hooligan panic all these years.

Since the government launched its offensive against football hooliganism, the next step has argued consistently that it was creating a panic to justify tougher policing and repression. The paramilitary-style policing of football matches was designed to accustom people to the routine use of these methods against wider sections of the working class. In the same way the government intended that a national membership scheme for football fans would prepare the ground for a national ID card system of the

Continental sort.

Yet there has been nothing but a deafening silence as the government has made use of the panic about football hooliganism to institute new methods of social control. When police arrested 147 men in a series of coordinated dawn raids last May, after an undercover campaign of infiltration, provocation and entrapment, not one word of protest was written or spoken except for an editorial in this newspaper. Everybody has been so captivated by the official lies about a hooligan upsurge that they have failed to speak out against the erosion of our liberties which has followed in their wake.

Even now the opposition seems oblivious to the ulterior motives which have inspired the hooliganism scare. All the objections to the government's plans for a football membership scheme are technical rather than political. Opposition MPs have united with soccer administrators, players, supporters and police to denounce the measure as an unworkable disaster. They have all pointed out that if such a scheme had been in operation the crush outside the ground would have resulted in many more deaths at Hillsborough. Whatever the undoubted merit of these arguments, they miss the point. The carnage at Hillsborough happened because of the repressive political climate created around the hooligan panic and the security measures that resulted from it.

The problem posed by the ID scheme is a political not a technical one. There must, therefore, be a political battle waged which challenges the government's anti-hooligan drive. Instead of going along with officialdom's inflated claims about trouble on the terraces, we should be exposing their repressive plans for policing the working class. So far the government has got away with stepping up state repression by criminalising unpopular sections of society such as football fans. On Saturday 95 people paid with their lives for the government's law and order panic. If we are to prevent any further loss of life and the further loss of our liberties we have to reject the football hooligan scare. The real threat to our people comes not from those whom the authorities denigrate as a mob, but from the uniformed mob of gangsters in the service of Thatcher's police state.

AFGHANISTAN

CONTRARY TO expectations the government of Afghanistan has survived for over two months since the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Instead of the rapid collapse of the regime which many had predicted there has been a bloody stalemate between government forces and the rebel mujahideen. Some 2000 government troops and over 1000 rebel fighters have been killed in a vain attempt to capture Afghanistan's second city of Jalalabad. The government of president Mohammed Najibullah could still collapse at any time. The most likely outcome is the development of a Lebanese situation in which the country disintegrates into warring factions.

The Revolutionary Communist Party never supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. We pointed out in the next step that the only consequence would be to encourage backward ideas and movements. At the same time we stated our opposition to the intervention of the imperialist powers, which moved in to exploit the conflict for their own reactionary ends. While Western politicians harped on about the evils of the Soviet occupation, they were promoting the most backward sections of Afghan society as proxies,

nurturing and arming the leading mujahideen factions.

Today the seven-group mujahideen alliance based in the Pakistani town of Peshawar is a front for Western interference in Afghanistan. Mujahideen fighters surrounding Jalalabad have US-supplied Stinger anti-aircraft missiles among their weapons. The imperialists are hoping to reap the benefits of the Soviet withdrawal by establishing a pro-Western regime in Kabul. But the faction-fighting which has paralysed the rebel movement and prevented it from moving decisively against the government could spoil their plans.

It is to be hoped that the imperialist powers will suffer a major defeat in Afghanistan. The consolidation of imperialist influence in the region would be a grave setback for the people of Afghanistan. In these circumstances we have no hesitation in taking sides with the Najibullah regime against the mujahideen and their Western backers. There is nothing progressive about the government in Kabul, but the forces of imperialism are a far greater threat to the people of Afghanistan. If the Afghan people are left to determine their own future peace is possible in the country. But if the imperialists succeed in imposing their will on the region barbarism can be the only result.

GEORGIA

THE CONTINUING nationalist ferment in Georgia has focused attention once again on the national question in the Soviet Union. The spread of turmoil across the Caucasus, from Armenia and Azerbaijan to Georgia and Abkhazia raises the spectre of the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. It is becoming clearer with each successive outbreak of unrest that the only solution to the problem lies in the establishment of a federation of autonomous Transcaucasian republics.

It makes sense to recognise the heterogeneity of the people who make up the patchwork of nationalities in the national republics. By recognising their right to political, cultural and religious autonomy it would be possible to overcome the petty differences which have fuelled national tensions. Furthermore the pursuit of the struggle for democratic rights would remove the political obstacles to recognising that the real problem facing people is the existence of the Soviet bureaucracy. As long as the nationalities are preoccupied with fighting each other, they will pose no threat to the rule of the bureaucracy.

The danger of national revolt eventually engulfing vast areas of the Soviet Union is perpetuated by the bureaucratic regime which rules in Moscow. The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and the creation of the Soviet Union created the possibility of resolving the national question once and for all. That possibility was destroyed by the Stalinist regime which usurped power from the working class in the twenties. The continuation of the Stalinist system can only exacerbate the tensions and divisions which are now pulling the Soviet Union apart.

The resolution of the national problem provides the only guarantee against the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. In turn such a solution implies a radical social transformation. The overthrow of the bureaucracy by the working class is the precondition for any kind of progress in the Soviet Union. The struggle for democratic rights in the national republics provides the best conditions for advancing the cause of social revolution. The solution lies with workers from across the national republics taking matters into their own hands to settle scores with the bureaucracy.

NAMIBIA

AS THE death toll rises inexorably in Namibia it is clear that we are witnessing another terrible tragedy for the African people. Swapo has walked straight into the bloody trap set by the imperialists. It has been set up royally by

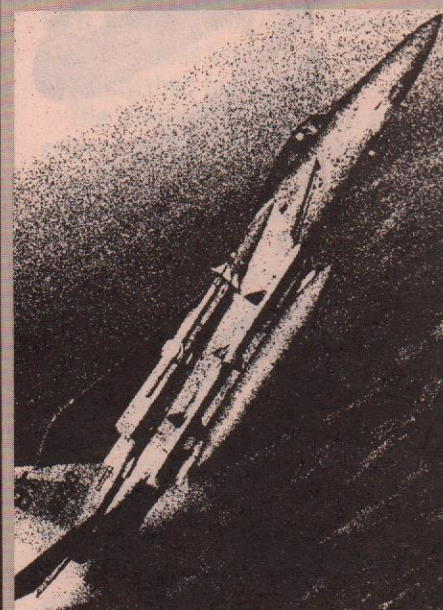
the South African regime, the Western-backed United Nations and the Soviet Union, who between them have conspired to sabotage the struggle for independence in Namibia.

The events unfolding in Namibia have many parallels with the destruction of the liberation struggle in the Congo in 1960. In both cases the role of the United Nations was to perpetuate imperialist control by imposing a neo-colonial solution on the terms of the colonial power. In the Congo the Belgian military commander General Emile Janssens assembled his soldiers at Camp Leopold a few days before independence and wrote on a blackboard: 'Before independence equals after independence.' The combined efforts of Belgian troops, the UN and South African mercenaries succeeded in crushing the masses and restoring the status quo of imperialist domination.

In Namibia the sham independence settlement foisted on the country by the United Nations acting on behalf of the imperialist powers also implies a perpetuation of the status quo. That much was clear from the moment when South African forces ambushed and killed Swapo guerrillas on the day the independence plan was supposed to come into effect. The continuation of the status quo is apparent in South Africa's refusal to demobilise its paramilitary units, in the requirement that Swapo guerrillas disband and get out of their own country, in the stipulation that Pretoria oversees the so-called independence elections.

It has been obvious all along that South Africa was never prepared to grant genuine independence for Namibia because of its strategic importance to the apartheid regime. The people of Namibia were never given any say in the future being mapped out for their country by the imperialists under the auspices of the UN. Today it is clear that the future means independence without the liberation struggle and continued domination by South Africa. Pretoria is in Namibia to stay until the people themselves throw it out.

LIVING MARXISM



The theme of the April issue of LIVING MARXISM is militarism. As conflicts among the capitalist powers intensify, a new generation of gung-ho governments arises. This month's LIVING MARXISM focuses on their drive to rearm and to reinforce militarist ideology.

Articles on the culture of militarism: Origins of the Third World War; The making of Star Wars; Desertion and mutiny in the British army; Japan's rising sun; Britain's little Empire; The war economy; National security.

Plus: Swapo on freedom for Namibia; Ten years beyond the fragments—Sheila Rowbotham and Hilary Wainwright talk to Anne Burton; Hitler's birthday; Food scares; An interview with CLR James; The return of Easterhouse; Benjamin Zephaniah on black politics and poetry; Leonardo da Vinci and much more.

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letters

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WORKERS AGAINST POLLUTION?

CHARLES WOOD suggests that the Revolutionary Communist Party should form a campaign like Workers Against Racism or the Irish Freedom Movement which would focus on environmental issues, and attract people concerned with the destruction of the environment (letters, 7 April). I think Charles Wood should consider why the RCP

developed these campaigns. It was not because they deal with passing interests or even popular subjects. The IFM, for instance, will appeal only to people who are politically conscious and take sides against the establishment. Green issues, by contrast, do not involve taking sides, and consequently appeal to a broad cross-section of the political spectrum.

As John Gibson has already said, there are more important issues to concern ourselves with. If these 'left-wing environment-conscious people' can't come over to our side on issues like racism and Ireland, they will be more at home in the SDP.

Jane London

NEITHER SCOTLAND NOR EUROPE

I WAS interested to read J Gardner's letter about the struggle for Scottish independence being the most revolutionary force in British politics (7 April). What struggle for independence? Surely he cannot mean the struggle for an assembly subordinate to Westminster and the Crown? And what does 'independence within Europe' mean? Scotland just wouldn't be the same if it could be considered part of another continent.

If the United Kingdom has to struggle to keep its head above water in terms of competition from France, Germany etc, then Scotland could hardly fare any better on its own. And as for the European parliament reneging on the democratic wishes of the Scottish people—what

support does Brussels give to the Irish republican movement?

No, the point is that the struggle for Scottish independence can only weaken the Scottish working class. Even if a majority of Scottish workers wanted independence, that doesn't mean that they are right. Most workers support immigration controls and don't support lesbian and gay rights. Communists have a duty to challenge establishment prejudices held by workers.

Scottish nationalism is not the same thing as anti-British nationalism. Fighting for 'the Scottish people', whether Gardner likes it or not, means Scottish workers lining up behind Scottish bosses and their tame middle class servants. And it remains a

fact, established in the Act of Union, that Scottish bosses are part of the all-British ruling class.

I judge it criminal to channel Scottish workers' aspirations for change and democratic control against English members of the same class. To me, the struggle for Irish independence is the most revolutionary force today. Scottish nationalists should forget their pathetic class-collaboration and get stuck in with English and Welsh workers and the Irish people. The weakest point of the British state is the Six Counties, so let's hit it there and leave the cattle rustling to Rob Roy.

John McDonald Wallsend

WHAT SORT OF ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENT?

THE secretary of the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign Sarah Ricca claims the VMDC fought his deportation 'not by starting with the right arguments', but by attempting to 'unite the biggest force in support of the Viraj' (letters, 14 April). In doing so, she gives the game away.

It is a prejudice of modern left-wing thinking that there is a contradiction between a clear uncompromising stand, and 'uniting the biggest force'. It is a prejudice that the VMDC exemplifies, and demonstrates above all else how little confidence it has in the biggest force in British society, the working class.

Throughout, the VMDC seemed to place more faith in the Church of England than in any other force. This reliance on the church constantly dictated the limits of the campaign's politics. It was impossible for it to make the simple point that Viraj was a victim of Britain's irretrievably racist immigration laws, and that like all deportations, his had to be fought from an anti-state perspective.

In place of such a forthright stand, the VMDC appealed to the heartstrings of assorted liberals. The claims that Viraj would face execution at home became the *only* motivation for supporting the campaign.

It should come as no surprise then that the VMDC's last conference was poorly attended, or that a recent



national march in London attracted fewer than 100 people. The idea that sanctuary was able to provide Viraj Mendis with security, and that the main enemy was in Sri Lanka, effectively demobilised the campaign.

Sarah's contention that the arguments of the right are of no consequence, and that you 'only win through political organisation' begs the question of where the strategy and tactics which form the basis of that organisation come from. As Lenin said, without revolutionary theory

there is no revolutionary movement.

Having the right arguments is the prerequisite for winning the fight against racism; and the VMDC's wrong ideas must take a large chunk of the responsibility for its defeat. It would be a step in the right direction if the VMDC would come out of the bunker and examine the failure of its ideas in practice. Making mistakes is no great problem, but refusing to learn from them is suicidal.

Keith Thompson London

News focus

WHEN SATURDAY COMES

'TREATED LIKE SCUM, KILLED LIKE DOGS'

Kenan Malik gives the view from the terraces

It could have happened to any of us' said an Everton supporter returning to Liverpool from his own team's FA Cup semi-final to hear about Hillsborough. The train of events leading up to the tragedy at Hillsborough will be painfully familiar to most people who have attended any big match through the season. The fans are herded like animals into filthy pens with scant regard for safety, comfort or humanity.

Every one of the elements that caused the Hillsborough tragedy—the chaos outside the ground, the disorganisation inside, the surge on the terraces as the game started, the crush against the perimeter fence, the lack of facilities or safety equipment, the callous disregard for the fans by the police—is present at every big match every Saturday.

Football might be the most popular spectator sport in Britain, but the game is organised to degrade spectators.

Two considerations guide the organisation of football matches: the need to squeeze profit out of the game and the desire to keep the 'yob class' in its place. On Saturday the obsession with profit and hooliganism cost 95 lives.

Hillsborough is one of the showpiece grounds in Britain, the 'Wembley of the North'. It is the fourth largest ground in England, and has been extensively refurbished over the past decade. It is little more than a slum—dirty bricks, barbed wire, piss-stained terraces.

Management boasts about spending £1m on major ground improvements in the past few years. £1m? Liverpool's squad on Saturday cost 10 times that. Football clubs are willing to spend £3m for a player, or £300 000 for security—but won't fork out £300 for a defibrillator that could save a fan's life.

At Hillsborough, like at every major football ground, there are four classes of supporters. The executive boxes house the creme de la creme: football bosses hobnobbing with royalty, company directors winning and dining their clients. The boxes make money, and as football becomes big business so the clubs are catering more and more for their corporate clients. The fans who died like animals on Saturday wouldn't get a sniff inside an executive box.

Supporters without a corporate expense account are shunted to the stands and terraces. The stands, with seating, at least provide a modicum of comfort. The terraces, steeply banked, penned in by crash barriers and steel fencing, are little more than pigpens, dirty, uncomfortable and bereft of any facilities. Inside there is little chance of getting something to eat or drink, or even going to the toilet. If you want a piss, you piss on the terraces. But it isn't always cheap. On Saturday the cost of dying like an animal was £14.

For the authorities, the lowest form of supporter is the visiting fan, which is how both sets of supporters would have been categorised at a neutral ground like Hillsborough on Saturday. Luton, Thatcher's favourite club, has banned them altogether; other clubs treat them with contempt.

From the moment they step on to the station platform to the moment they are herded back on to the train at the end of the match, away fans are coralled like a herd of animals.

Mounted police escort you, more police search and sniff you, cameras watch you, steel fencing contains you. Who gets into the ground depends on

the police—a can of beer or a whiff of alcohol and you're out. Police decide too when you can leave. At the end of the match the away fans are forced to wait, often for an hour in driving rain in an empty, desolate ground, until the police decide they're ready to escort you home again.

The chaos we witnessed outside Hillsborough on Saturday is common to all big matches. Stadiums are built on the principle of cramming as many people as possible into a space which cannot possibly accommodate them. All grounds are bottlenecks, most tightly built in the middle of residential housing. There is no room for supporters queuing to get in. The obsession with hooliganism adds to the cram, as supporters are subject to lengthy searches before being allowed in. The closer to the start of the match, the more chaotic the ground, as fans seek to get in before the whistle. At every big match there is a surge as latecomers push in. Because it's difficult to see the match at the best of times, fans want to get to the front.

Once inside you cannot leave. You can only flow with the surge. You fight to keep your footing. The terraces are built to prevent escape—crash barriers stop you moving to the side, the fencing any further forward. Anyone who tries to climb the fence is pushed back in by the police. That's what happened



The hooligan panic has made police harassment a permanent fixture at football matches

on Saturday. Well before the game started it was clear that people were being crushed. The police in the ground refused to open the gates to let the overspill on to the pitch; fans who tried to clamber over the fence were stuffed back into the crowd. 'Get back there you dickheads', shouted one policeman pushing fans back in.

'They treat us like scum, now they're killing us like dogs', said one man who lost his son in the tragedy.

In contrast to official incompetence, Hillsborough was striking for the humanity and courage shown by the fans. Supporters tore up advertising boards to use as stretchers, gave mouth to mouth resuscitation and organised the rescue operation. Despite press accounts of antagonism in the ground, Nottingham Forest fans were in the thick of the rescue. Countless Liverpool supporters recalled how Forest fans came to their aid. One paid tribute to a Forest supporter who stayed with him all the way to the hospital. 'He was brilliant', he said, 'just brilliant'. The press hacks and the football officials could learn a thing or two from the 'yob class'.

SAYING NO TO CENSORSHIP

Linda Ryan argues that the left's ambivalent attitude towards the state prevents it from taking a clear stand against censorship

Tony Benn's bill to abolish the law against blasphemy is a positive initiative which socialists should welcome. Benn might have put forward some dubious justifications for getting rid of the offence of blasphemy, such as the argument that it is an obstacle to full theological debate. But he has also echoed the argument advanced in this month's *Living Marxism*, that the blasphemy law must be opposed as an obstacle to defending the rights of political as well as religious dissenters.

The most important reason for opposing the blasphemy law is that it is an instrument of state repression. In the past the foremost victims of the crime of blasphemy have been political agitators, working class radicals and women's rights campaigners. Today many people might consider that the offence of blasphemy is no longer of any relevance. They should recall Margaret Thatcher's recent stipulation that it must be defended as the state's most important constraint on freedom of speech.

Indefensible

In the context of the growth of state repression today the only position consistent with a defence of our rights is to support the abolition of the blasphemy law and to oppose censorship of every sort. Unfortunately the logic of this position seems to have escaped many on the left, who insist on pursuing a selective approach to the issue of censorship.

This has been brought out in the continuing controversy over *The Satanic Verses*, which has split the left down the middle.

Some radicals have called for the suppression of Salman Rushdie's book on the grounds that it is offensive to Muslims, while others have opposed the call for censorship on the grounds that it is necessary to defend freedom of speech. A closer look at the arguments of both sides shows that neither approach has anything to commend it.

Some sections of the left have argued that *The Satanic Verses* should be prosecuted under the blasphemy law, the Race Relations Act or the Public Order Act because it is offensive to Muslims. Early on in the dispute Max Madden, the Labour MP for Bradford West, tabled an amendment to an early day motion in parliament calling for the blasphemy law to be extended to protect Islam. This indefensible move was supported by left-wing MPs such as Bernie Grant, Keith Vaz and Brian Sedgemoor, some of whom have continued to campaign for *The Satanic Verses* to be banned.

Insulting

It is clear that those who have been most vocal in championing the cause of the book-burners have done so for opportunist electoral reasons. However, they have tried to give an anti-racist justification for their capitulation, which their left-wing critics have had difficulty in dealing with. They have argued that the book is insulting to many black people, and should therefore be subject to the same legal sanctions as material published by racists and fascists.

Against those on the left who have condemned his call for censorship, Leicester East MP Keith Vaz has argued that it is not only legitimate but necessary to call for restrictions on freedom of speech. His case is that to allow absolute freedom of speech would be to give racists and fascists carte blanche to insult black people. Furthermore, it would

mean abandoning state legislation which provides black people with protection against racism: 'If everyone was allowed to say whatever they wanted, the Public Order Act, which restricts the activities of racists like the National Front, would have to be abolished.' And what a blow it would be to see the back of a law which has been used above all else to terrorise black youth.

Inconsistency

Max Madden has argued in the same vein that defending free speech in the abstract means defending the freedom of racists to insult black people. In his view the aim of the left must be to fight for a society in which there is respect and understanding for everybody from everybody: 'This must impose constraints and restraints on freedom of speech.'

The corollary of this perspective is that the left should support measures of state censorship and repression as a positive contribution to the fight against racism.

These arguments for censorship have been repudiated by others on the left who insist that there should be no compromise on the question of defending free speech. Yet these same radicals are vulnerable to charges of inconsistency in their attitude to censorship. They too have on numerous occasions demanded that those who cause offence to black people be silenced by the state censors. They have thus found it almost impossible to confront the arguments of the pro-censorship left who demand that *The Satanic Verses* be banned on the grounds that it too is offensive. This has meant that the debate on the left over *The Satanic Verses* has been about what should be censored, not about censorship itself.

In general the left has tried to ignore the contradictions of its own position. On occasions when it has been put on the spot, the left has put forward tortuous justifications for its selective advocacy of state censorship. Thus Tariq Ali argued feebly that it was legitimate to call for the suppression of racist views because they are intentionally provocative, but this did not apply in the case of *The Satanic Verses* because Salman Rushdie did not deliberately set out to offend anybody.

Incitement

Salman Rushdie has argued that 'the giving of offence cannot be the basis for censorship, or freedom of expression would perish instantly'. Yet the author who now claims as inviolate the right to be offensive has himself supported the suppression of racist material on the grounds that it is offensive. In an attempt to cover up the inconsistencies of his own position, he can only make a spurious distinction between offence caused by racist views and offence caused by intellectual dissent.

The inconsistencies of Rushdie's own position do not alter our support for his right to say what he likes and our opposition to all attempts to burn, ban or censor his work. But the left's prevarication on the issue of censorship has allowed the right ample leeway to accuse its opponents of operating double standards.

This double standard has been illustrated by others on the left who have accused the pro-censorship radicals of making bogus analogies: 'It's wrong to equate Rushdie with fascists whom we seek to crush, not only because Rushdie isn't a fascist. When we call for mobilisation against fascists, it's less because of what they say than because of what they

do. No one can seriously argue that *The Satanic Verses* is encouragement to racial harassment or a threat to the democratic rights of black people in Britain.' (*Socialist Organiser*, 22 February) If it was, of course, the left would be all for banning it.

In the end it is apparent that there is more uniting the two sides in the controversy than there is dividing them. In general they both agree that it is necessary for the state to impose restrictions on freedom of speech in the cause of fighting racism. In this particular case they disagree only over whether or not *The Satanic Verses* should be censored as an incitement to racism.

The row on the left amounts to a squabble about who and what should be the target of state repression. The legitimacy of looking to the state to outlaw views the left finds offensive has never been at issue.

The confused response of the left on censorship stems from its confused attitude towards the state. It has long been taken for granted on the left that the state can be used to legislate against racism. This approach has nothing in common with the revolutionary tradition. It is inconceivable that racism could be fought through the agency of the state,

which is responsible for legalising discrimination against black people through immigration and nationality controls.

On the contrary, the struggle for democratic rights involves a battle against the state. This is why the fight against oppression can only be waged from an anti-capitalist perspective. Any attempt to use the state to fight racism can only reinforce the prevailing view that the state can defend the interests of the working class and the oppressed.

History

By calling for state bans, proscriptions and censorship against racists, the left is cutting its own throat. All limitations on democratic rights under capitalism will sooner or later be used against the working class and the oppressed. It is a mistake of monumental proportions to imagine that the capitalist state will heed the calls of the left to use its coercive powers only against the enemies of the working class movement.

As Leon Trotsky warned over half a century ago, the state will use the repressive powers at its disposal against its class enemies: 'Under the conditions of the bourgeois regime, all suppression of political rights and freedoms, no matter

whom they are directed against in the beginning, in the end inevitably bear down upon the working class, particularly its most advanced elements. That is a law of history.' (*Writings 1939-40*, pp132-33) Trotsky's law of history has been proven on countless occasions since the thirties, but unfortunately the lessons of history have not been learned by the left.

In the thirties the left agitated for the introduction of new powers to keep the fascists off the streets. Aneurin Bevan argued in favour of the 1936 Public Order Act in the stupendously naive belief that the state would prove a reliable guarantor against incursions on civil liberties: 'We know very well that in times of excited political feeling elected persons are not the proper custodians of the liberties of minorities, and therefore it is desirable that as far as courts can be strengthened under our constitution as guardians of the rights of minorities they should be strengthened.'

It quickly became apparent that the state was determined to use its new powers to guarantee the rights of the minority it exists to protect: the capitalist class.

The 1936 Public Order Act was first used to prosecute scores of miners involved in a bitter struggle against the



Keith Vaz has shut his eyes to the dangers of calling for more state bans

scab Spencer union at Harworth pit in Nottinghamshire. In the biggest irony of all it was then used to suppress working class opposition to Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. After the battle of Cable Street in October 1936, when thousands of working class people came out on to the streets to prevent the fascists from marching, the act was used to ban all demonstrations in east London from 1937 to 1940.

After the experience of the thirties the left failed to draw the obvious conclusion: that giving more powers to the state on whatever pretext only invites more repression. When the National Front reared its ugly head in the seventies the left repeated the same mistakes of 40 years before. The Anti-Nazi League demanded that the state use its powers of censorship against the National Front. Some campaigned for prosecutions of fascists for the crime of inciting racial hatred, while others called for bans on fascist publications and demonstrations. The state took advantage of the clamour for a clampdown on the far right to impose tighter legal restrictions on all forms of political protest.

Outrage

As clashes between the NF and the anti-fascists increased, the police responded to growing demands for action by banning left-wing marches. Even on the rare occasions when the NF was banned, the law was turned against the radicals. In 1977 police banned an NF march through Tameside in Manchester. The jubilant left decided to hold a victory parade, only to discover that it too was banned under the Public Order Act. Yet the left seemed impervious to the lessons of this experience, and continued to campaign for new public order legislation to deal with the threat from the far right.

In the turbulent eighties the authorities took up the left's invitation and introduced the 1986 Public Order Act.

This draconian piece of legislation gives the state extraordinary powers to arrest protesters, control demonstrations, terrorise black youth, charge pickets with rioting and censor any and all political views the authorities find offensive.

It is bad enough that the left should

have encouraged the authorities to foist this panoply of repression upon us in the naive belief that it could be used against the far right. But it is an outrage that some on the left should still be singing its praises as a positive contribution to the anti-racist struggle when it has been used particularly to batter black youth in Liverpool 8.

Even among those on the left who would condemn the act as draconian, the illusion that the state can be used to fight racism lives on today. Why else would they be urging the authorities to take punitive action against shops in Carnaby Street which have been used as outlets for fascist material? After all the outrage they have expended against those seeking to censor *The Satanic Verses*, why are left wingers calling for a ban on the gay newspaper *Action* on the grounds that it is offensive to black people? It can only

**By calling for
censorship against
racists, the left is
cutting its own throat**

be because the left is still convinced that it is possible to convince the state to outlaw only those views which the left itself considers to be offensive.

But our attitude towards censorship cannot be determined by what we find to be offensive or otherwise. It must be determined by our understanding that any call for censorship can only set a useful precedent for the state in helping to legitimise wider repressive measures. The lesson of history is that asking the police, the courts, the government or parliament to ban anything is to commit political hara-kiri. The state is not open to reasoned argument about what is or isn't offensive. It will manipulate any call for censorship to serve the interests of the capitalists.

From this perspective it is obvious that opposition to all forms of censorship is the only position consistent with a defence of democratic rights against state repression.

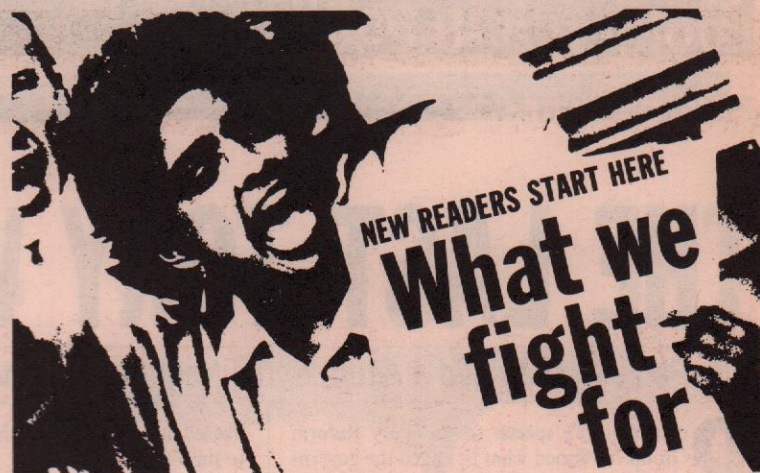
Of course this does not mean that we are prepared to tolerate racist, sexist and anti-working class ideas. It simply means that we have to deal with these problems in our own way, by politically and sometimes physically confronting them ourselves.

The point is that if we invite the powers that be to sort out our problems for us with bans, proscriptions and censorship orders, we risk losing our freedom to take action ourselves by exposing the left itself to state repression. The left must oppose all calls for state censorship because we cannot afford to aid our enemies in diminishing our freedoms.

Guarantor

In all the confusion generated by the Salman Rushdie controversy the left has lost sight of the issue at stake. The question it raises is not whether we are for or against free speech and if so for whom. It is whether we are for state censorship or against it. Some people on the left seem to think that we should be against 'capitalist censorship' and in favour of 'socialist censorship'. But we are living in a capitalist society in which the capitalist class controls the state machine and dictates the boundaries of freedom as it sees fit, according to the needs of the system. The ultimate victims of the state's repressive powers will be the working class, the oppressed and the left.

The only guarantor against further incursions on our rights is the vigilance of our movement and its ability to resist the advance of state repression. That is why we cannot afford to have any confusion about the question of the state and the issue of censorship. It is time the left decided whether it is for censorship or against it. Perhaps it should take its lead from the proprietor of Fagin's bookshop in Exeter, Devon, who is displaying in his window Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, alongside *The Satanic Verses*, Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* and Dante's *Inferno*, all of which have been banned at some stage, as a protest against all forms of censorship.



THE WORKING CLASS in Britain and throughout the West has suffered a series of setbacks in recent years. These setbacks have strengthened those who argue for moderation, 'realism' and a strategy of defensiveness. The Revolutionary Communist Party takes a different view.

We believe that these setbacks are the responsibility of the old parties and union machines of the official labour movement. In Britain

the Labourist tradition has exhausted itself and can no longer relate to even the most modest aspiration of the working class. The exhaustion of Labourism in no way undermines the potential of the working class to change the world.

The RCP is committed to the construction of an independent working class movement. Only a movement which recognises that the interests of the workers are irreconcilably opposed to those of the employers can fight effectively in the struggles ahead.

For the RCP, working class politics cannot be reduced to trade unionism or the affairs of the workplace. Workers must take a stand on every issue and express an independent point of view if we are to liberate ourselves. The fatal flaw of British Labourism is that it restricts workers' horizons to economic matters, while it allows the employer class to monopolise political debate. Workers must define every problem from our point of view and fight for the rights of every section of society if we are to constitute a politically independent class.

While the RCP supports the fight for real reform or improvements in the lives of the working class, we believe that no durable gains can be won within capitalism. The RCP argues that the overthrow of capitalism provides the necessary precondition for the liberation of the working class and of society as a whole.

The British state exists to protect the wealth and privilege of the capitalist class. The RCP aims to destroy the state, which maintains the conditions for exploitation. We believe that the state cannot be used for progressive ends. Any attempt to use the 'soft' side of the state, such as local government, inner-city partnership, or police authorities, lends legitimacy to the entire state apparatus. It can only strengthen the authority of the capitalists' coercive machine.

The RCP believes that workers have no nation. British workers share the same interests as the exploited in other countries. British workers have nothing in common with the employers and must resist the appeals of patriotism and chauvinism. As internationalists we recognise that the enemy is at home. Since Britain remains an imperialist power around the world, the only international role it can play is that of the oppressor.

The class struggle is inextricably linked to the struggle against imperialism. The RCP supports all anti-imperialist struggles. Workers who live in the imperialist heartland

have a special duty to back those fighting against the British oppressor. Thus we fight for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and for Irish self-determination. We opposed Britain's colonial war in the South Atlantic, and support the return of the Malvinas islands to Argentina. We oppose British and Western interference in the Middle East. We support the destruction of the Zionist state in Palestine and of the

apartheid regime in South Africa. We uphold the same principles in every struggle against imperialism. The RCP is a fervent opponent of all forms of British militarism, nuclear, and 'non-nuclear' alike.

The RCP believes that the fight against oppression is central to the construction of an independent working class movement. Workers must defend the oppressed if we are to fight for our own liberation. This is why the RCP is wholeheartedly committed to the fight against racism. The struggle for the emancipation of women is another fundamental issue for the working class. We unreservedly oppose any form of discrimination against lesbians and gays and call for the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Workers must take a stand on these issues, not out of altruism, but because it is in our class interest to fight for the fullest extension of democratic rights.

Workers need combat organisations capable of defending our interests. The existing organisations of the labour movement are singularly unsuited for this task. The RCP believes that the Labour Party is a bosses' organisation that should be fought and exposed. Despite its working class constituency the Labour Party has always followed the dictates of the capitalists. Whenever Labour has been in office, it has always betrayed the hopes of workers. The RCP is against giving any electoral support to Labour. Workers need a party that is 100 per cent our own and only responsive to proletarian interests.

The existing trade unions are heavily bureaucratised and incapable of representing the aspirations of their members. The RCP argues that rank and file trade unionists should fight to take control of the movement. Trade unionists should organise across the workplace and industry and demand that we run our own affairs. Rank and file committees organised on an industry-wide basis could ensure that the unions truly belong to their members.

The RCP's aim is social revolution in Britain and internationally. We believe that this perspective is no less essential in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union than in the West. Only the working class has the capacity to liberate humanity. Our job is to contribute practically to the realisation of this objective.

If you would like to discuss these issues further, please write to: RCP, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX, or phone (01) 375 1702.



PETER WALKER

THE LAST TORY WET?

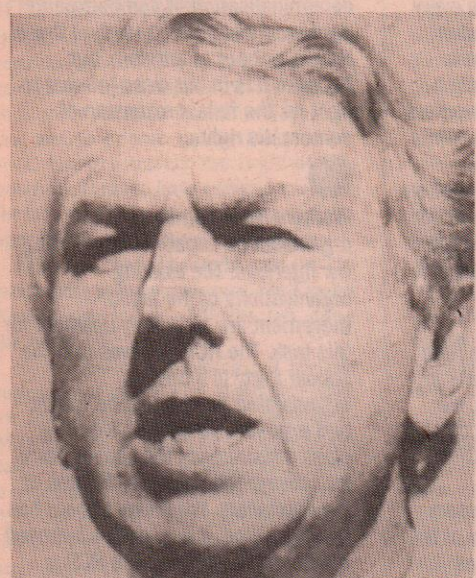
Can Peter Walker lead a return to the traditions of one-nation Toryism?

Peter Walker's speech to the Tory Reform Group rubbished what he called the government's 'simplistic economic dogma', and advocated a return to the more compassionate stance of yesteryear. The speech eclipsed chancellor Nigel Lawson's homage to a healthy British economy, delivered in the house of commons a few hours earlier. While Lawson's comments received a few column inches the following day, the Walker story ran the whole week and culminated in full-page coverage in the Sunday papers. It has led to a surfeit of media speculation about potential rifts in the Tory ranks.

A number of factors have combined to make Walker a talking point. First, resurgent inflation, massive trade deficits and the danger of a run on the pound have dealt a blow to Tory claims to have reversed Britain's economic decline. This has led commentators to imagine an unfolding worst possible scenario, and to ponder on what would be the most likely alternative to a discredited Thatcherism. The only possibility they can envisage to the present hands-off, free-market approach is a revival of the old economic formulas of more state intervention: more spending and higher taxes.

Another factor which has contributed to making Walker the media's man of the moment is that the Tories are suffering from the mid-term blues.

The government's credibility is under the microscope because of the spate of elections due in the next few months. Apart from the May council contest and the European elections in June, the Tories face an uphill task in defending their majority in the Vale of Glamorgan by-election. Since Glamorgan is part of Walker's own Welsh fiefdom, he probably timed his criticism of government strategy to ensure maximum discomfort and publicity.



Walker: the wets' last stand

Finally, Walker has a reputation as the most durable and discerning of all the Tory wets. He has survived as a member of the Tory cabinet throughout the 10 years of Thatcher's rule, a distinction claimed by only one other minister, Geoffrey Howe. And he is reputedly a more sophisticated political animal than other keepers of the tradition of paternal, one-nation Toryism such as Francis Pym, James Prior and Michael Heseltine.

Should a crisis of Tory strategy arise, does the person of Peter Walker, and the strain of Toryism he represents, offer a viable alternative?

The government certainly faces growing problems in sustaining the belief in an economic revival. Even Nigel Lawson's extraordinary capacity for deception cannot disguise this fact. In his latest commons speech defending the estimate of a £14.5 billion current account deficit for this year, he was forced to admit that 'we simply don't know whether it would be achieved'.

However, the chancellor also indicated the likely Tory response to a crisis situation. His insistence that he has 'never made any promises of soft landings or semi-soft landings' suggests that if forced into a corner the Tories would respond by pushing ahead even harder with their present strategy. They would redouble their efforts to counter economic decline through an austerity programme of tight money, cuts in state spending and attacks on living standards.

Such a response is all the more likely because the Tories have had a good deal of success in shifting public opinion towards accepting the legitimacy of austere economic solutions. Their policies have not won acceptance among the mass of the British people, but the discrediting of the opposition parties

has led many to conclude that there is no alternative to the Tories.

At the same time a climate of intolerance towards the welfare-dependent poor, striking workers and inefficient producers has been consolidated within the middle classes which constitute the backbone of Tory support. This, rather than the personal whims of top Tories, is the most significant factor in

determining the outcome of their internecine disputes.

A return to one-nation Toryism is not a realistic possibility in the Britain of the nineties.

It reflects a desire to avoid the harsh policies needed to confront the weaknesses of British capitalism. It also underestimates the degree to which Thatcher has won acceptance for her

confrontational 'there is no alternative' style of politics in the establishment and among Tory supporters.

Despite the respect in which he is held by some political commentators, Walker is personally unsuited for the role of rallying the anti-Thatcherite forces. He has survived at the top because he doesn't mind being kicked around. Thatcher removed her disloyal minister from the energy department after the 1987 election. The offer of the post of overseeing Wales was meant as an insult to one of the Tories' most experienced cabinet ministers. Walker was supposed to respond like a gentlemen and resign; instead he accepted the snub to avoid living out his days on the backbenches.

Thatcher will not take kindly to Walker's latest welching on the party leadership, and will no doubt take the earliest opportunity to ditch the last of the wet dreamers.

Tony Kennedy

POLICE PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN

MARKETING REPRESSION

James Heartfield explains why Britain's biggest armed gang is trying to brush up its image

Metropolitan Police commissioner Sir Peter Imbert has unveiled a new 'Statement of common purposes and values for 1990' for his police force. The statement, published in a new glossy booklet *Making it Happen*, is the Met's latest attempt to improve its tarnished image. Worried by the poor regard in which the public holds the police, Imbert hired image consultants Wolff Olins to discover what was wrong. Wolff Olins found the police divided, beleaguered and unhelpful to the public, as well as operating 'in an atmosphere of shabby confusion'.

Imbert's anxiety over public perceptions of the police is well founded, but no amount of repackaging can cover up their coercive role. At every stage police actions contradict the image conveyed in *Making it Happen*.

'We must be compassionate, courteous and patient, acting without fear or favour, or prejudice to the rights of others.'

Compassionate? Anthony O'Callaghan won £30 000 compensation last week after the high court found

that the police had 'maliciously prosecuted' by fitting him up over a robbery. Police lying is a way of life. 'I've fitted people up', a former Met inspector told television producer Roger Graef in his new book *Talking Blues*. 'You go out with the intention of arresting criminals.' And if a suitable criminal doesn't turn up 'you fit him up on a false charge'.

Patient? The draft for a new edition of the association of chief police officers' tactical operations manual calls for an 'early resolution' of riots and violent disorder. This is a call for pre-emptive actions by snatch squads in preference to lines of police in riot gear, as one senior officer told the *Sunday Times*: 'The long shield line is a tactic we should discard—they are too cumbersome and even dangerous. The thinking now is that we've got to nip riots in the bud.'

Without prejudice? A recent home office report shows that in 1984 and 1985, 52 per cent of black youth between 17 and 20 in the Metropolitan Police district were *prosecuted* (not simply arrested) for serious offences. In the same year just under half of those aged 14-16 were taken to court. One west London WPC explained to Graef how police treat

blacks: 'I would say that at this station most police officers are racist. That's not because blacks are blacks. It's because of the behaviour of the blacks in this area.' On the contrary, the extraordinary home office figures can only be understood in the context of an official campaign of mass criminalisation.

'We need to be professional, calm and restrained in the face of violence and apply only that force which is necessary to accomplish our lawful duty.'

Calm? Last month a 17-year old black youth Nicholas Bramble was killed when his scooter collided with a lamppost while being chased by a police van in Notting Hill. 'The police van moved across', said one eyewitness. 'Then I heard a bang and a scream.' The police tried to cover up the murder by first claiming that they arrived on the scene by accident, and then that they were trying to stop a stolen vehicle. 'The police must be crazy to say that', said a friend. 'I gave the bike to Nicholas.'

Restrained? Tell it to Terry Dewsnap and James Farrell who were shot dead in an ambush by Scotland Yard's PT17 team of marksmen. Their attempted robbery of a Harrow post office was watched from start to finish by flying squad officers who preferred to open fire as they changed getaway cars than stop them before the robbery took place. Announcing an informal policy of summary



Up against the wall: the Met's new image won't save black youth from police harassment

Public relations or mass persecution?

In 1984-85 over half the young black men aged 17-20 in London were prosecuted for serious offences

execution, deputy assistant commissioner Malcolm Campbell said that 'those who armed themselves to shoot at police would face the inevitable consequences'.

'There is room for improvement in the way we communicate between ourselves and with the public.'

The improvement in inter-police relations which Imbert has in mind is the movement towards a national police force. The myth of 43 independent police forces was to all intents and purposes overturned in the national mobilisation of officers to crush the 1984-85 miners' strike. Imbert now wants this formalised. A formal reorganisation on national lines would tighten the police grip on the country while enhancing their ability to share information with other European forces. The panics about terrorists, hooligans and drugs have already improved cross-border policing. Imbert wants to take it still further.

In order to improve communication with the public, Wolff Olins' report recommends smartening up police vans and stations and some customer relations training for police officers. But no amount of paint will make a cell look friendly. The recent press vilification of car thieves and armed robbers indicates that the Met's strongest weapon remains the law and order scare. As long as they can sustain the view that the real danger to life and limb comes from criminals, the role of the police is legitimised.

DON REED

ONE LAW FOR THEIR CLASS...



Dressed to kill for Thatcher: we need to turn our backs on their standards of right and wrong

Many people will have noticed the disparity between the government's willingness to make concessions to judges fighting to defend their restrictive practices, and its refusal to make concessions to dockers fighting to defend the national dock labour scheme.

This contrast may have confirmed an impression among many that it is only possible to make gains today by eschewing militancy and embracing moderation. There is already a tendency for workers in struggle to look to dissident establishment figures to fight their corner against the government.

Yet the experience of those workers who have set out to advance their cause by linking up with respectable opinion only exposes the dangers of this approach. It would suggest on the contrary that it is only possible for workers to win today by eschewing moderation and embracing militancy.

Men in wigs

There is only one reason why the government was prepared to make concessions to the legal establishment. As the partisan representative of her class, Margaret Thatcher always looks after her own. And the judges are the bedrock of the state machine through which the power of the capitalist class is exercised. The government cannot afford to alienate those whose job it is to protect the power and privileges of the exploiting class. Hence Thatcher took great care to extend the consultation period and cater to the whims of the men in wigs.

By the same criterion there was never any question of the government conceding to the demands of the dockers unless it was forced to do so on its knees.

The pursuit of capitalist interests in this case requires that the government sweep aside all obstacles to enforcing harsh flexibility and redundancy terms on the docks. In contrast to her kid-glove treatment of the judges, Thatcher provocatively announced that the dock labour scheme was to be abolished without consultation. She declared that a dock strike would be illegal, political, unpopular and defeated, and then dared the dock unions to take up the challenge.

Curry favour

The working class will gain nothing from looking to the likes of the legal establishment to champion their cause. It would be a grievous error to think that just because sections of the establishment have objected to particular government policies they can therefore be counted as allies in the struggle against the Tories.

These people are prepared to do battle with the government to protect their own vested interests, but they are sworn enemies of the working class to a man. The judges, law lords and peers who are up in arms about the government's assault on the bastion of privilege and corruption that is the legal system, have made a career out of lecturing, fining, framing and jailing our people. As an elite club whose opposition to the government's plans is based solely

on a concern to defend its status, the legal profession can never be an ally in the fight for working class rights.

Yet these are the forces with whom the leaders of the labour movement say we should ally ourselves. The notion that it is necessary to cultivate moderation and respectability to stand a chance against the government is now taken as given. Thus the Labour Party urged anti-poll tax campaigners to stay within the law and trust in Conservative peers and Tory

wets like Michael Heseltine to lead the fight. The leaders of the health unions advised the nurses to fall in behind a respectable public relations campaign run by the top medical consultants.

We cannot entrust our fight for decent jobs, pay, conditions and living standards to establishment figures who are plainly antagonistic to our cause.

If we organise our campaigns so as to curry favour with people like Heseltine, who was a vociferous opponent of the miners in their battle against the

government, we might as well accept that our needs and aspirations will never be voiced, never mind fought for. This is an incontrovertible truth which is borne out by the experience of health workers, whose demands for decent pay and conditions were smothered by the self-interested special pleading of the medical establishment.

The feeling today that it is no longer possible for workers to fight for what they want stems from the failures of the official labour movement. After a decade of prostrating themselves before a ruthless government, the trade unions and the official opposition are a spent force. Their inability to provide a political focus for working class resistance has allowed the government's establishment critics to become the opposition by default.

The problem is not simply that the official labour leaders have discredited the idea of fighting by their lack of leadership. They have helped to criminalise those workers who have been prepared to have a go by denouncing any and every manifestation of class struggle.

First the miners, then the printers and after them the seafarers were abandoned and abused for putting up a fight by the leaders of the Labour Party.

Labour MP Brian Sedgemore damned the dockers without even mentioning them with his intervention against the judges. He tabled a motion in parliament calling on the official solicitor to take out an injunction restraining the 'ringleaders from inciting unlawful industrial action'. In what he thought was a clever dig at senior judges planning a day of disruption in the courts, Sedgemore confirmed all the prejudices espoused by the government about the iniquity of anybody taking industrial action today.

No threat

These prejudices are forthrightly articulated by the leaders of the opposition. It is not difficult to detect in Ron Todd's craven obeisance to the courts the counsel of Neil Kinnock. In a fashion which has now become painfully familiar, the Labour Party has advised the dockers to avoid confrontation, court respectability and seek negotiation. It is sickening to have to listen to lectures about why militant action does not work when the dockers are not even on strike.

It is clear that nobody is going to fight for the dockers unless dockers fight for themselves. It is equally clear that a struggle which is preoccupied with appearing respectable poses no threat to anybody. There are no guarantees of success in the class struggle. But if the dockers do not fight, defeat is a certainty. If they do fight there is no point going half way: to maximise their chances of success against a ruthless opponent the dockers need to unite their own forces and to win solidarity from other workers (see left). All this poses difficulties for the dockers, but it is not as much of a tall order as trying to win by not striking or by appearing moderate.

NATIONAL DOCK LABOUR SCHEME

WINNING UNITY

For anybody who is serious about defeating the government's plan to abolish the national dock labour scheme the crucial question is how to win unity. If a national strike is to be effective militants must begin to campaign around the following demands as a precondition for uniting all dock workers.

• No redundancies in any port

All dockers have a common interest in resisting redundancies regardless of whether or not they are covered by the national dock labour scheme. Since the scheme was introduced in 1947 the workforce on the docks has been cut back from almost 80 000 to 9400 today. While the scheme has provided a degree of protection for registered dockers, it has also provided a framework for the employers to get rid of tens of thousands of jobs overall. By scrapping the scheme the bosses aim to set manning levels in registered ports as they see fit. In order to unite dockers across all ports rank and file activists must fight for guaranteed work for all, not just for those dockers presently covered by the scheme.

• Equal and decent employment conditions for all

All dockers have a direct interest in fighting for decent employment conditions at every port. By abolishing the national dock labour scheme the employers intend to impose on registered dockers the flexible working conditions that already prevail in the non-scheme ports. When the union leaders ratified the scheme in the seventies they left dockers in the non-scheme ports wide open to attack by

management. Over the past decade the port employers have taken full advantage of this invitation to greater exploitation by enforcing punitive productivity and flexibility regimes on their workforces. If registered dockers are to convince non-registered dockers to join their struggle they need to scrap the distinction between the scheme and non-scheme ports, and fight for equal employment conditions for all.

• A united national strike

All dockers recognise that it is only possible to defeat the government by mobilising all-out national strike action. A secret document prepared by the employers noted that the attitudes and actions of the non-scheme dockers would be decisive in deciding the outcome of any strike. It is obvious that the only way to win against the combined forces of the employers, government, police and courts is to rally the widest possible resistance. Yet even if they do eventually decide to ballot for strike action, the union leaders have decided that they will not appeal for solidarity from non-registered dockers. Activists must demand that any ballot should include all dock workers in every port, and delegations of registered dockers must take the arguments for an all-out strike to the non-scheme ports. They need to establish a national rank and file committee to cut across sectional divisions between the different unions and the different ports.

The government's attempt to abolish the national dock labour scheme is an attack on the jobs, wages and conditions of the whole workforce. It must be resisted by all dockers in every port. But to ensure the most effective resistance, rank and file dockers must fight to overcome the divisions which the scheme has helped to consolidate among them.

the next step

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CAGED

(continued from page 1)

THE 95 DEATHS at last Saturday's FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest were not just caused by administrative cock-ups on the day. The Tories and the press have long branded all young football supporters as hooligans. And the police and football bosses follow Tory orders. They spend little money or energy on spectator safety, and plenty of both on riot-style crowd control. This attitude was responsible for causing the crush at Hillsborough, and for failing to save many of the injured.

The police dictated arrangements for the match. They insisted, in the face of all logic, that supporters of Liverpool (average home crowd 40 000) should be allocated a smaller area of the Sheffield ground than fans of Nottingham Forest (average home gate 17 000). Why? Because the police commanders running this sporting event like a battlefield manoeuvre decided that it was more convenient for their purposes to channel the traffic from Liverpool towards the Leppings Lane end of Hillsborough.

The police thus ensured that Liverpool fans would be packed into a small area, and that many more denied tickets would turn up and try to get in. Chaos outside

the stadium was guaranteed. The police finally panicked, threw open a main gate and let several thousand through in one rush. The fans flooded straight into a trap created by the 'security measures' inside the Leppings Lane end, which were erected on the advice of the police.

The system of security pens, which sections spectators off inside wire cages, meant that the new arrivals could only cram into the already over-full central section. They had no way of getting into the side pens where space remained. As the crush became serious, thousands were forced forward. The only way they could escape was on to the pitch. That exit was barred by the 10-foot high 'safety' fences surrounding the terraces. Those who could clambered over the fence. Many more were crushed in the attempt. And some of the first ones to get free were pushed back into the pen by police with orders to keep them caged.

Once the injured and terrified fans began escaping on to the pitch, the authorities' reaction was to treat them as a public order problem. So while people lay dead and dying, hundreds of police formed a line across the pitch to prevent the Liverpool supporters getting near the Forest end. And while the fans themselves tore up advertising hoardings for use as makeshift stretchers, the police brought out the dogs to deal with anybody whose anger got out of hand.

The equipment available at the ground gave a clear picture of official priorities. There was little or no medical gear to hand. Doctors complained of being given

empty oxygen tanks. Local medical services were initially told it was a minor incident, and sent few ambulances. This was in stark contrast to the state-of-the-art policing technology—close-circuit TV, hoolivans, etc.—and the massed ranks of riot vans surrounding the stadium.

Finally on Saturday night, when Liverpool was in mourning and the streets of the city were deathly quiet, the Mersey-side police made their own contribution to the day's events—by sending out extra patrols to keep the embittered community in order.

This emphasis on public order and disregard for safety has to be seen in the context of the Tory government's long-running campaign against football supporters. Since the Heysel stadium riot of 1985, when 39 Italian fans were crushed to death after a charge by Liverpool supporters, the government has tried to turn football spectators into Public Enemy Number One. It has inflated a few violent incidents into a major panic, and criminalised the football-watching public.

Under cover of the Tory campaign against hooliganism, the authorities have used young fans as guinea pigs for experiments with new policing techniques, from nationwide dawn raids to deep infiltration by undercover police officers. The latest of these is sports minister Colin Moynihan's controversial scheme for compulsory membership cards at all English league grounds, which will serve as the first step on the road to making everybody carry a state ID card.

The media, the police and the football authorities have been fully behind the

government's holy war against hooliganism. The objections some of them have raised to the ID card scheme are on entirely technical grounds. They have all accepted the Tory line that the problem with football is a lack of law and order, and the solution is more repressive measures—tougher policing, tighter controls, bigger security barriers, etc. Some football officials have wanted to go even further than the government. A couple of years back Chelsea chairman Ken Bates tried to ring the Stamford Bridge terraces with an electrified fence.

This crusade forms the background to the treatment of football fans like cattle to be herded and caged in, which made such a major contribution to the deaths at Hillsborough. It was a tragedy which could have happened at any big match, because the authorities use similar methods every week (see page 3).

The sight of Tory politicians shedding crocodile tears over the Hillsborough deaths was an even more stomach-churning display of hypocrisy than Thatcher's trips to the sites of plane and train crashes. At least the government had not run hate campaigns against commuters before the accidents. But it has vilified the young people who stand on the terraces, set them up as sub-humans, and now expects us to believe that it is sorry about the consequences. We prefer to remember the words of Tory peer Lord Onslow who, during last month's house of lords debate, said that football ID cards were necessary to deal with the revolting 'yob class'—that is, working class teenagers like those who were crushed last Saturday.

The press, too, has been at its hypocritical worst. The day after the deaths, the Thatcherite *Sunday Times* carried the front-page headline 'Tragedy on the terraces'. Beneath it, a self-righteous editorial reminded us that, after Heysel and the Bradford football fire in 1985, the *Sunday Times* had warned that football was becoming 'a slum sport played in slum stadiums'. The paper neglected to reprint the final part of its 1985 statement: '...watched by slum people'. That just about sums up the true feelings of the establishment towards those who died at Hillsborough.

Football is indeed played in 'slum stadiums'. The young fans who can only afford standing tickets are stuck on terraces which are a cross between a rubbish tip and a public toilet, harassed by police and hemmed in by wire and solid fences. The blame for the horrific deaths on Saturday rests squarely with the authorities who have turned football terraces into derelict prison pens for their own financial and political benefit.

Some Tory backbenchers even had the gall to claim that the deaths proved the need for the ID card system—which would cause even more havoc at the turnstiles. As one angry doctor at Hillsborough put it, the only advantage of Moynihan's scheme would have been to make it easier to identify the crushed young corpses scattered across the pitch.

Mick Hume



Even as fans tried to escape the Hillsborough crush, police treated them as hooligans and pushed them back in