

the next step

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Taking on the
police state
see pages
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STOP THATCHER'S PASS LAWS



Don Reed

AS their plans for a computerised membership scheme for football supporters run into trouble, the Tories are speeding up their preparations for a national identity card system for everybody. Whether or not the government succeeds in pushing through the soccer scheme is besides the point: from the first it was primarily a propaganda exercise to prepare people for a system of pass laws.

Opposition MPs are taking great delight in the spectacle of sports minister Colin Moynihan struggling to steer his shambolic scheme through the house of lords. They have united with soccer administrators, players, supporters and the police to denounce the measure as an unworkable disaster which will do nothing to combat football hooliganism.

Anxious to avoid a humiliating defeat, government ministers have readjusted the Football Spectators Bill, putting greater emphasis on its measures to prevent British football fans rampaging abroad. Moynihan is now stressing how the honour of the nation is being stained by hooligan thuggery at foreign games. He has unveiled measures to prevent rowdy supporters from travelling overseas for matches: the courts will have the power to force fans to attend police stations or carry out community service orders at the time of the game.

Most of the football membership scheme's critics have made little reference to the threat the scheme poses to civil liberties. Yet this is the most serious aspect of the entire debate from the point of view of the working class. The recent leaks about preparations now underway at the home office for a voluntary system of national identity cards confirm the warnings we have been issuing in *the next step* since the start of the football ID issue. There can be little doubt that a voluntary scheme will serve the thin end of the wedge for introducing compulsory ID cards for everybody.

The official opposition has been so eager to go along with the panic about football hooliganism that it is incapable of mounting a challenge to the government's repressive plans. Instead of kowtowing to Tory scaremongering we should be exposing their plans to keep tabs on us through a computerised surveillance system. The ID card proposals are part of a package of repressive measures, all of which will be ultimately used to crush political opposition to the government. Our only protection against state repression is a collective campaign to resist every attempt by the government to diminish our rights and increase its powers.

'Where's your ID card sonny?'

editorial

20 January • No 2 • Editor: Joan Phillips

OVERCOMING THE DISASTER FACTOR

THERE is an unmistakable process of depoliticisation at work in British politics today. It must have struck many people that there has been no political debate of any substance about an issue affecting the working class for some considerable time. The fact that the Tories can get away with dismissing unemployment as a non-issue now that the heavily massaged official figures are about to fall below the two-million mark says everything about the lack of a working class voice in politics today.

The absence of a credible opposition which can provide a focus for resistance means that the problems facing ordinary people are never forced on to the political agenda. When the government first unveiled its plans for hitting people with the poll tax there was a great deal of anger and a lot of talk about defying the law. As the weeks turned into months and nobody raised a finger to organise this anger into an effective political campaign, the poll tax was gradually forgotten and now scarcely rates a mention in parliament or the press.

There were uproarious protests too when Tory-controlled Bradford council prepared to devastate jobs and services with a £5 million cuts package last November. On the night of the council meeting when the mayor used his casting vote to push through the cuts, Bradford town hall was besieged by hundreds of angry

local people. These demonstrations quickly faded for want of a political leadership which could inspire people. The last that was heard of the anti-cuts campaign was when a Tory-voting Bradford pensioner Jemima Wilson failed in her high court bid to challenge the casting vote of the mayor in December.

The exclusion of working class concerns from the agenda of public debate means that politics today has been deprived of any real meaning. This is expressed in the sort of topics which now dominate the news, and the banal discussions which pass for legitimate political debate.

The past few months seem to have been one long catastrophe, with one disaster after another being endlessly picked over on the television, in parliament and in the press. The tragedy of the Lockerbie air disaster has acquired the status of a soap opera. As the media reports moved from intrusive discussions of the deaths, to speculation about the cause of the crash, to controversy about the royals not attending the memorial service, to a never-ending debate about airport security, most people were praying that they would never hear the name Lockerbie ever again.

A growing public obsession with health risks is another indication of the political malaise. A host of diseases which people have never even heard of before are now the

subject of heated discussion. People have become obsessed with what they eat, and everybody is becoming an expert on listeria monocytogenes and bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Instead of being directed to do something about the scourge of racism, the evils of unemployment, and the plague of police violence which afflict us, we are encouraged to agonise over whether we will fall sick with salmonella if we eat a soft-boiled egg. While people anxiously consider the pros and cons of cook-chill, their minds are kept safely away from welfare cuts, declining wages and war.

It sometimes seems as if we are suffering from an interminable extension of the silly season, when the business of politics closes down for the summer, and silly stories replace serious issues in the news. What else are you supposed to think when a speech by the prime minister bemoaning the theft of rare bird eggs and the loss of 120 000 miles of hedges becomes a 10-minute television news item? When 630 000 people buy the *Sunday Sport*, the paper which alerted the nation to stories like 'Killer Plants Stalk Queen Mum' and 'Space Aliens Turned Our Son Into An Olive', there has got to be something amiss.

In a situation where politics lacks any meaning for the vast majority of society, there is an increasing tendency for people to become preoccupied with their own individual concerns. As a result people no longer see themselves as members of a class with problems in common, with the collective power to influence events decisively.

The exclusion of working class people from any role in politics finds expression in rising abstention rates at the polls, falling union and party membership rolls, and a general cynicism about the political process. For anybody surveying the state of British politics today, the overriding impression they are left with is one of impotent politicians and an apathetic public.

Yet this does not mean that people are unconcerned about the state of society. Millions of people are angry about the indignities that are daily heaped upon them at the hands of the most anti-working class government in living memory. Over the past year there has been no shortage of workers ready to take a stand against attacks on their jobs, living standards and rights. This was evidenced in the action taken by seafarers, nurses, carworkers, postal workers and others in the face of intimidation from their employers and disorganisation from their union leaders. It is apparent too in countless outbreaks of personal anger against employers, politicians, social security officials, police officers and other figures of authority.

The problem is that the significant minority of people who want to protest have no collective voice. Their anger is quickly dissipated when it fails to find a leadership which can direct it, their action remains fragmented in a series of

isolated strikes here and protests there. There is no organised force to bring people together and make their opposition count, no focus through which their frustrations can be turned into a political force.

The responsibility for this state of affairs lies largely with the Labour Party, which has made a major contribution to the depoliticisation of the working class. It is ironic that Neil Kinnock should now seek to launch a campaign to recruit working class people to the party, when the anti-working class policies which he has embraced so enthusiastically have driven people away in droves. As the Labour Party proves unable to make any impression on the shape of politics, a deeply unpopular government approaches its tenth year in power with a 10-point lead in the opinion polls.

As long as the working class lacks a coherent political leadership, opposition to the system will remain confused and fragmented. One of our aims in launching our new monthly political review, *Living Marxism*, is to provide an antidote to the depoliticisation of politics which is having such a corrosive effect on our class. If the working class is to wield some political influence, the first thing that needs to be done is to clarify the important issues at stake. This is the task to which *Living Marxism* is dedicated.

To combat the depoliticising climate in which we find ourselves involves creating an intellectual alternative to the barren ideas of the establishment parties. It means arming ourselves with the ideas that can inspire people to get involved in political activity, and giving them a clear vision of what needs to be done to realise their aspirations for a better life. Things will only change in a radical fashion when working class people begin to organise resistance to the system. But we can begin to make things happen by using *Living Marxism* as a political focus for those who want to fight.

Without an intellectual perspective which identifies the independent concerns of the working class on every issue, and without a political focus which can unite the forces of the opposition, there can be no possibility of breaking the mould of British politics.

The prerequisite for overcoming the disaster factor which has plagued political life in recent months is to put politics back at the top of the agenda. The condition for giving the working class a voice in British politics is to clarify the issues which we consider to be important. The way to make sure that they are put at the centre of the political stage is to provide a focus for the angry and frustrated who are presently consigned to political retirement. With your help, *Living Marxism* can become their mouthpiece, a source of intellectual inspiration and a political powerhouse for organising resistance to the system. So, if you have not done so already, take out a subscription, start selling the magazine, and start building the new opposition. See page 5 for details.

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letters

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NUS AND THE NEED FOR A NEW OPPOSITION

THIS week I attended an all-London student activists meeting at the London School of Economics. Well over 100 people came—not bad for the first week of term—and about 20 colleges were represented. The mood was angry and determined.

Before Christmas debate had been centred on whether or not to call on the NUS to organise a national week-day demo against the government's loans proposals. We had argued that the NUS would not organise effective action, and would disorganise any activity that did occur.

The new NUS proposals confirm this: a weekend march on 25 February, through the backstreets of south London; a 'week of action' during the FE colleges' half-term (FE students comprise 64 per cent of total NUS membership); abandonment of the mandated shutdown of education on 16 February: it will now be a 'day of action' in a week of action.

Some activists took heart from the fact that London NUS has called a demo for 1 February. But London NUS representatives at the LSE meeting had no intention of leading a fightback.

First they accepted the police

route from Finsbury Circus to Shoreditch, described by one student as 'the middle of nowhere to the back of beyond'. Then the officials accused activists of being 'hell-bent on causing trouble'. We were told NUS cannot defy the Public Order Act, and anyone doing so will not be given any support by NUS. As one official put it: 'I'm warning you, you're either with NUS—and that means keeping within the Public Order Act—or you're on your own!'

When a student from Barnet FE college complained that FE students were being ignored by NUS, an official grabbed the microphone and said 'I've organised a half-day conference on the poll tax for you, what more do you want?'

Well, most of us wanted a lot more. We voted to meet at Finsbury Circus on 1 February and then march wherever we want. Since NUS officials are incapable of leading anybody, they will have to follow their members or stay at home.

Claire Foster
London

THE management of the Polytechnic of North London seem to be adopting the Tory style of confrontation. Before Christmas they suspended six

students and expelled two for participating in a protest against Norman Tebbit. An occupation was organised to defend them, as a result of which a further four students (including three union representatives) are threatened with disciplinary action. A technician was forced to resign for 'aiding and abetting' the students, and a lecturer who indicated his support was suspended for a minor disciplinary offence.

Management cancelled a meeting with one of the PNL Eight because they discovered that students planned to lobby it. Management have now informed the student that they will not meet him at all; in other words he has been expelled with no right of appeal.

The NUS has been conspicuous by its absence during all this. An official did make an appearance at the occupation—to check the ballot boxes for NUS conference. But the union leadership didn't even bother to send a token message of support. Victimisations are just an embarrassment to the NUS, even when it affects elected officials.

PNL student
North London

What's in an egg? Who knows what to believe. According to the British Public Health Laboratory 'all eggs including clean, intact eggs should be regarded as infected with salmonella'. According to agriculture minister John MacGregor 'it is not the case that most eggs are infected with salmonella'.

Clinical microbiology expert Richard Lacey claims that a quarter of pre-cooked food contains the bacteria listeria, causing at least 800 cases of infection a year and about 200 deaths. The department of health is insisting that listeriosis associated with food is a rare disease which has affected just four people since 1986, and 'there is no reason for the public to stop buying cooked and chilled food'.

Effluent

A new study by scientists at the Medical Research Council has yielded evidence of a statistical link between levels of aluminium in drinking water and increased risk of Alzheimer's disease, an incurable disorder of the brain. The government has advised the Water Authorities Association that the Medical Research Council study does not warrant any immediate change in the aluminium standards for drinking water.

These are just a few of the controversies about food contamination which have raged in recent weeks.

It is almost impossible to ascertain the true extent of the problem for the simple reason that the facts are not available. The Thatcher government is always boasting about how it has enlarged our freedoms, but there is no freedom of information when it comes to finding out the truth about the scale of food poisoning.

'We are always open about the facts available to us' proclaimed John MacGregor, the minister responsible for allowing egg production at farms known to be infected by salmonella to continue. The ministry of agriculture has been aware of the dangers of a salmonella epidemic since the seventies, but has done everything in its power to keep the public in the dark.

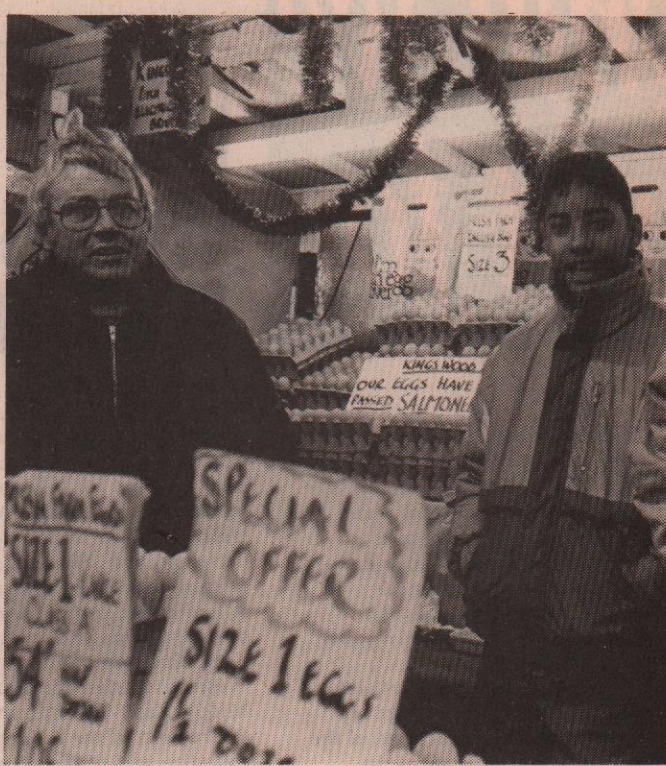
Salmonella and other bacteria began to spread rapidly in Britain from the early eighties. Yet when proposals were advanced to force animal feed plants to separate untreated raw material from the finished product, the plans were pigeon-holed. The agriculture ministry transformed the 1981 Protein Processing Order, which allows unspecified material containing human effluent to be included in animal feed, into a voluntary code of practice which is flouted by every egg producer.

Reputation

When Edwina Currie, who should know the facts given that her health ministry was complicit in the outbreak of a spate of food poisoning epidemics in hospitals, blew the gaff, she was finally shut up permanently. The agriculture ministry orchestrated a campaign to get her sacked, gave millions in compensation to egg producers and funded a half-a-million pound advertising campaign to restore the reputation of the rotten egg.

MacGregor has been obliged to eat eggs wherever they appear on the menu at public dinner engagements lest he is forced to eat his words and admit that Currie was right all along.

We are unlikely to find out for sure whether there is any



Capitalism leaves a bad taste in the mouth

Tories deny food poisoning epidemic...

LET THEM EAT ROTTEN EGGS

As fears grow about an epidemic of food poisoning, Andy Clarkson looks behind the government lies

objective basis for the current panics about food poisoning now sweeping the country. One thing we can say with certainty however, is that the total number of notified cases of food poisoning is now nearly 70 000 a year; if this is the official figure, the number of unrecorded cases must be enormous.

Organic

From the dawn of capitalist society there is plenty of evidence to suggest that we should not trust the food producers or the government to tell us the truth. In the nineteenth century there were periodic outcries about the adulteration of food consumed by the working class.

In his *Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844, Frederick Engels gave a horrifying account of the impurities to be found in butter, sugar, tea, cocoa, bread, pepper and tobacco. In *Capital* Marx remarked that 'even God Almighty does not escape this fate', referring to an article about the falsification of the materials of the sacrament.

In a society where the production of commodities is organised according to the criterion of profitability it is inevitable that food producers will cut costs to ensure the highest return on their investment regardless of the consequences for our health. From processing plants to supermarkets, the quality of the food we eat is ultimately determined by the profit factor.

In conditions of recession which have squeezed profit

margins since the early seventies, the capitalists are under even more pressure to disregard hygiene standards and the dangers of food poisoning are bound to increase.

Eating organic food has been championed by Prince Charles, among others, as an alternative to the mass-produced and poisoned provisions consumed in such vast quantities. The comments of Engels on this subject are still pertinent today:

'The poor who must buy many things with little money, who cannot afford to enquire too closely into the quality of their purchases, and cannot do in any case because they have had no opportunity of cultivating their taste—to their share fall all the adulterated, poisoned provisions.'

Adulteration

Most people do not have the time, money or inclination to track down organic food shops. They must buy in bulk the sort of quick-to-cook, unhealthy food that is sold at the chain-stores.

Even if organic food was made available on a mass scale all the present problems would be reproduced. The problem of food adulteration is not an inherent product of intensive factory farming methods or technological advances in catering methods such as cook-chill. It is the consequence of a system which organises food production at the minimum cost to the producer and the maximum cost to the welfare of the working class.



Angry students confront Norman Tebbit at the Polytechnic of North London

GADAFI & HIROHITO: HEROES OR VILLAINS?

I TOO find it hard to stomach the hypocrisy of the USA, Britain and the rest whether we are talking about chemical weapons or war crimes. But I wonder whether you go too far in the other direction, in ignoring altogether the crimes of Gadaffi and Hirohito.

I think it is important to redress the balance of the biased treatment these leaders have received at the hands of the media, but I don't think it is the job of a left-wing newspaper like the next step to make them out to be unsullied heroes. Yet all we got was a long list of the atrocities committed by the West against the peoples of Asia and the Middle East, and silence about Japanese and Libyan atrocities. We get enough distortion in the gutter press, let's have some balance in the left press.

Jonathan Hepworth
Bristol

WAR AND PEACE IN THE THIRD WORLD

I WAS interested to read your review of 1988, which I generally thought was a very useful survey particularly of international developments. The emphasis you put on the political disintegration of the third world

state and the spread of class conflict there has been shown to be entirely correct by the outbreak of fresh struggles already this year.

One thing which I thought you missed out, however, is the moves towards peace in a number of long-running conflicts, in Angola, Afghanistan and Kampuchea for example. In fact I was struck that you made no mention of Africa at all. Can we expect some coverage of these developments in future issues of the next step?

Alan Russell
Cambridge



Hirohito: war criminal?

what we fight for

NEW READERS START HERE

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) 729 0414.

Melvyn Mortimer is the collective name for a new breed of protester whom Paul Johnson takes to task in the New Year issue of the right-wing *Spectator*. This fusion of Melvyn *South Bank Show* Bragg and John *Any Questions* Mortimer is the prototype of the establishment liberal whom Johnson upbraids for claiming that Britain is becoming an oppressive country where cherished freedoms are under threat.

Melvyn Mortimer is a new factor in British politics, a symbol of the growing public awareness that repression and censorship are becoming a way of life. These days it is becoming commonplace for respectable figures, including many who would not take kindly to being designated liberals by Johnson, to accuse the government of bullying, censorship and even totalitarianism.

Irony

A recent *Panorama* programme which documented the erosion of freedoms under the Thatcher regime was symptomatic of the sense of foreboding afflicting influential sections of society. A controversial new play showing at the Liverpool Playhouse is another pointer to the anti-establishment mood in the artistic world. *Fears and Miseries of the Third Term* has been accused of drawing a comparison between life under Margaret Thatcher and life under Adolf Hitler because it is being staged along with Bertold Brecht's *Fears and Miseries of the Third Reich*. The fact that it is now the target of Tory censors lends a certain irony to its message.

There are many more signs of queasiness among one-time Thatcher loyalists about the excesses of her government.

The fact that pillars of the establishment such as Stewart Steven, editor of the *Mail on Sunday*, and author Roald Dahl, of *Tales of the Unexpected* renown, are voicing their fears about the doings of the police is a sign of the times. Neither could be described as an old-fashioned liberal even by the wildest stretch of Paul Johnson's imagination; yet both have recently had cause to complain about the uncivilised behaviour of the Force.

Stewart Steven was arrested recently by an arrogant young police officer who accused him of improperly using his car horn. Such was the treatment he received at the hands of the police that Steven was driven to vent his rage in a major feature in the *Mail on Sunday*: 'On Monday last week I learned that our police force—the best in the world we always used to say—is in danger of being infected by an attitude which, if allowed to rampage through its ranks unchecked, could lead to the collapse of every civilised value we hold most precious.' It seems that editorship of one of the country's most right-wing newspapers is no protection these days against police vindictiveness.

Shocked

Roald Dahl happened upon a scene of police brutality which is all too familiar to anybody who lives in an inner-city area. To Dahl, whose wife was driving him past Hyde Park Corner, it was an eye-opener. He watched as a police officer pounded the face of a captive black man until he slumped to the floor, where he was repeatedly kicked and punched by a semi-circle of five police officers, before being thrown in the back of a police van 'like a sack of cement'. When the case came to court Dahl pointed out that he had always supported the police, but as he stood in Hyde Park that day 'I thought I was probably in South Africa'.

It is not difficult to see why the Tories have upset the sensibilities of such committed defenders of the status quo. Over the past year the

Opposition grows to Tory repression

THE RISE MELVYN M

Joan Phillips looks at the spread of state repression



The prosecution of 24 officers involved in the 1987 Battle of Wapping has prompted police

Thatcher government has accelerated its programme of repression, doing away with civil liberties which affect all sections of society, and not just those who have long been persecuted. Once upon a time the government was highly selective in its use of repressive measures, and the majority of people were oblivious to the exercise of coercion against minorities. Nowadays newspaper editors, television producers and even football managers are speaking out about the loss of freedoms under an increasingly authoritarian government.

Many people have been shocked by the severity of the state offensive and the speed with which repressive measures have been implemented by the Tories.

In the space of months the government did away with a suspect's right to silence, banned Sinn Féin from the airwaves and introduced plans to tighten up its official secrets law. These are only the most prominent examples of the legal clampdown. But there are other less talked about indices of an advance in state repression which give serious cause for concern.

Few people probably paid any attention to the announcement on New Year's Eve that several people had been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. After

7000 such detentions since this notorious piece of legislation was introduced in 1974, the British public has become accustomed to the routine exercise of terror against the Irish. Yet these particular arrests marked a frightening advance in state repression.

In an unprecedented step, Scotland Yard refused to say how many people had been arrested or where they were being detained. It could have been 500 people for all anybody knew, and they could have been held in a mental hospital and nobody would have been any the wiser. This is the sort of police state practice which the Chilean dictator General Pinochet has made the hallmark of his regime.

Ruse

Such a flagrant disregard for the already limited rights of the victims of its anti-Irish law would seem to indicate that the government has no intention of heeding recent criticisms of the PTA. In November the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the present practice of holding prisoners incommunicado for up to seven days was a breach of Article 5 of its convention on human rights. The court stipulated that detainees should not be held for more than 48 hours without being brought before a court.

OF MORTIMER

and the resistance it has generated



Leads to call for a military-style Force

The government's response was to exercise its right to temporary non-compliance with the ruling while it studied the options open to it.

It has yet to work out a response, thus ensuring that the court's objections cannot be met in time for inclusion in the revamped PTA, which is due to become law in March. Now the government has announced a guillotine on any further debate on the draft Prevention of Terrorism Bill presently in its committee stage, appearing to confirm speculation that it plans to turn its initial temporary derogation from the ruling into a permanent defiance.

Another worrying addition to the state's arsenal of repression was floated last week, when a number of newspapers reported that plans for a national ID card could be in place later this year. The news that the government is considering the introduction of a voluntary national ID card scheme should come as no surprise to readers of the next step.

Since the start of the controversy about football membership cards we have warned that the government was using the issue to prepare public opinion for a national identity card system. This ruse has now been made explicit by senior civil servants, who admitted that

the row over ID cards for football supporters has been invaluable in getting people used to the idea of a national scheme.

The introduction of such a scheme will be the punchline to the government-sponsored panic about football hooliganism which has dragged on for years.

It is a classic example of how the Tories have succeeded so often in preparing the way for all-purpose repression by using a moral panic to justify tougher law and order measures. The tragedy is that everybody will probably be carrying compulsory ID cards before the government's critics wake up to the fact that the real issue at stake was not football hooliganism but civil liberties.

Bias

While attention has been focused on the removal of a suspect's right to silence, the government has been busy abolishing the right of peremptory challenge in criminal trials. This was the right of defence lawyers to remove up to three members of a jury in advance of a trial without giving their reasons, a convention which provided a minimal counter against bias in the composition of a jury.

Home secretary Douglas Hurd welcomed the abolition of this

right, arguing that the practice was 'a serious distortion of the principle of random selection', and that it was wrong for jurors to be disqualified because they were carrying copies of the *Daily Telegraph*. In fact the process of jury selection is not remotely random, and the recent change in the law can only reinforce the present bias.

Jurors are hand-picked from electoral registers, thus ensuring an in-built bias against ethnic minorities, young people and poor people who are less likely to be on the register. This explains the preponderance of older white professional males, and the underrepresentation of black people and white working class people on juries.

Assault

The removal of the right of peremptory challenge will make it even harder for black people in particular to be acquitted. The refusal of an Old Bailey judge to accept the defence counsel challenge to the all-white jury in the trial of four young blacks last week underlines the point.

The change in the law is an ominous sign of how the Tories are intent on tightening up the procedures for jury selection.

For some time now there has been a growing disquiet about the increasingly censorious and repressive activities of the government. It is evidenced not just by programmes such as *Panorama* and editorials in the *Guardian*, but also by a number of initiatives recently undertaken by various concerned individuals and organisations.

The launch of the magazine *Samizdat*, which takes its name from the dissident publications of opposition movements in the Soviet Union, is one example of this disquiet in liberal academic circles. Its first issue contained contributions from Margaret Drabble, Anthony Barnett, Mary Kaldor and Clive Ponting, among others. 'Samizdat is a call for ideas', proclaimed its editorial, 'it is the child of a bleak decade of overbearing single party domination, and weakened opposition'.

The launch of Charter 88 by the radical weekly *New Statesman and Society*, backed by many public figures opposed to the Thatcher government, is another protest against the mounting assault on traditional civil liberties. Its initial list of signatories excluded active politicians in favour of peers, academics, writers, artists, actors and other celebrities.

Naive

What these initiatives have in common is a hankering for a return to the days of consensus, when the country was governed through the conventions of compromise and tolerance. Thus they issue appeals for the government to play by the old rules. The signatories to Charter 88 call for a new constitutional settlement to guarantee democracy and curb the excesses of the Thatcher government. The subscribers to *Samizdat* also see some redress in constitutional restraint upon executive tyranny. For them the problem is that there is no constitutional protection for those whose rights and freedoms have been infringed.

The idea that it is possible to put a brake on the drive towards authoritarianism by appealing to the authorities for constitutional reforms, legal safeguards and codes of conduct is a non-starter.

In the present climate of repression it is naive to appeal to the authorities to review their procedures in the hope that they will come up with something better. Of course the establishment can always make a show of acceding to these demands, by instituting an inquiry about the scope of censorship here and a prosecution against police brutality there. But they will also

make use of the opportunity to revise procedures to their own advantage, as several recent cases have proved.

A pertinent illustration of this fact of political life under the Tories is the inquiry into *Death on the Rock* controversy. All shades of liberal opinion in the media welcomed the announcement of an inquiry into the Thames Television documentary into the SAS killings of three unarmed IRA members in Gibraltar last March.

The programme had been the subject of a concerted attack by the government and sections of the media led by the *Sunday Times*. For having the integrity to report the testimony of eye-witnesses which suggested that the SAS was involved in a shoot-to-kill operation, the programme producers were accused of bribing witnesses, falsifying evidence and prejudicing the outcome of the inquest.

Curbs

Lord Windlesham, a former Tory Northern Ireland minister, was appointed to conduct an independent inquiry into the making of the documentary. His report is to be completed on 26 January, and is expected to make only minor criticisms of the programme. But there is a sting in the tail of this story which many have judged to have a happy ending.

In a statement designed to end premature speculation about his report, Lord Windlesham announced that it would set the programme 'in the wider context of current affairs reporting of the measures necessary to counter terrorism'. By this he meant that he would be proposing new curbs on television reporting of similar operations against republican targets.

Coming after the broadcasting clampdown on interviews with republicans, this represents another act of censorship against coverage of Northern Ireland affairs.

Another illustration of the establishment using the cover of an inquiry to press ahead with repressive measures is the present review of public order policing methods arising from incidents during the Wapping dispute. Many critics of the police have celebrated the decision to bring charges of perjury, assault and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice against 24 police officers over their conduct during and after disturbances at

Rupert Murdoch's News International plant.

Some 300 people were injured when 12,000 demonstrators clashed with police on 24 January 1987, the first anniversary of News International's move to Wapping and the sacking of some 5,000 printers and other workers. One of the complaints of police brutality came from BBC reporter Kate Adie who was hit on the head by a truncheon, which is one reason why the investigation has proceeded as far as it has. It is unlikely that the prosecutions will result in anything more than token action against the officers involved.

Nothing positive can come out of the Wapping affair from the point of view of the working class. This much has been made clear by the furore the prosecutions have generated within the Force. In an outspoken defence of paramilitary policing which would have been unheard of a few years ago, senior officers at Scotland Yard have demanded to know what the public expect the police to do when faced with violent confrontation in future.

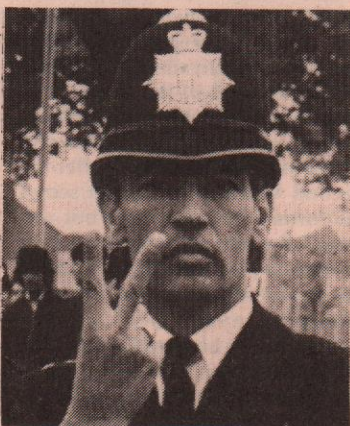
The question was not intended to be entirely rhetorical: a major review of public order policing methods will be launched after the trials are over. For many officers the lesson of the Wapping prosecutions is that baton charges should be replaced with new crowd dispersal methods such as CS gas and plastic bullets to avoid charges being brought against police officers in future.

The lesson of the Wapping affair for those at the receiving end of paramilitary policing is that appealing to the authorities provides no protection against state violence.

There is no point trying to meet the threat to our civil liberties today by politely appealing to our enemies to alter the rules of engagement in our favour. We are living in a post-consensus society, and the issue today is power. Thatcher has demonstrated her determination to use all the power at her disposal to protect the privileges of the rich and powerful. We should recognise that there is no going back to the days of give and take, and organise our forces accordingly to defend the rights of our own people. To meet the challenge from the Tories in 1989 will require an organised opposition with a political strategy that can match them blow for blow.

LIVING MARXISM

The politicisation and militarisation of the police force is a key change of the Thatcher years. A quiet, apparently impartial symbol of British civilisation has been transformed into the sort of braggardly and aggressive right-wing force usually found in the third world. Such a major shift suggests that something is seriously wrong with the capitalist system in Britain. (Living Marxism, January 1989)



David Rourke

For all those who are concerned about the growth of state repression, the January issue of *Living Marxism* provides a comprehensive analysis of the rise of the political police in post-consensus Britain. The third issue of our new monthly review focuses on some of the key changes in British politics and society over the Thatcher years, and puts forward clear guidelines for building an opposition movement today.

Living Marxism editor Mick Hume conducts an in-depth interview with Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams, giving the republican view on the British government's latest round of censorship and repression. Plus features on Designer capitalism, Marxism v the market in the third world and much more.

Living Marxism costs £1.50, or £15 for a 12-month subscription. Don't miss it! Make cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd and send to BCM JPLtd, London WC1N 3XX. Phone (01) 729 3771 for more details.



● **Tuesday 10 January:** Thames Television asks an independent producer to make a programme about the findings of an inquiry into how the documentary *Death on the Rock* was made. The documentary, about how three IRA volunteers were assassinated by the SAS in Gibraltar in March last year, came under sustained attack from the government and sections of the press, most notably the *Sunday Times*. Lord Windlesham, chairman of the government inquiry into the programme, has other ideas about how the inquiry into the documentary can be used. He says that it will make broader recommendations covering the reporting of 'anti-terrorist operations', leading to speculation that new curbs on coverage of the Irish War are in the offing.

● **Wednesday 11 January:** Douglas Hogg, a junior minister at the home office, announces that the new Prevention of Terrorism Bill will not contain any amendments concerning police powers of detention. Opposition MPs had expected some change after the European Court of Human Rights ruled against the seven-day detention allowed under the new bill.

● **Thursday 12 January:** Home secretary Douglas Hurd accuses Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi of being 'the IRA's most dangerous supporter'. In a forthright explanation of Britain's support for US aggression against Libya, Hurd tells his audience of Italian police chiefs of his fears: 'We have proof that he has supplied them [the IRA] with tons of sophisticated weapons and large quantities of Semtex explosive. He has also provided them with ample funds and as recently as September reiterated his political support for them, describing their cause as "just".'

Douglas Hogg is criticised for blowing the cover on why the British Army conducted blanket searches in Belfast in the last two months. Asked at committee stage discussions on the proposed Prevention of Terrorism Bill if it had been necessary to search 2000 homes in Belfast and 400 in Armagh in order to cover up targets and conceal sources of information Hogg admitted that it was. Seamus Mallon of the moderate nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party told the committee that rather than go to the house where someone had given information, troops had gone and searched another 90 houses. Hogg subsequently withdrew his admission.

● **Friday 13 January:** SDLP leader John Hume calls for new talks between Unionists and nationalists which could lead to an agreement approved both North and South of the Border. There would be no preconditions for anyone attending the talks, except of course Sinn Féin which would have to accept the existing division of Ireland.

● **Sunday 15 January:** A British soldier is injured in a booby-trap explosion in the Beechmount area of West Belfast.

Gardai in the South uncover a large cache of arms and ammunition near Kilkenny.

A man whom the Royal Ulster Constabulary claims left the RUC Reserve three years ago is shot dead in County Donegal, six miles South of the Border with Northern Ireland.

Mark Reilly

When George Bush succeeds Ronald Reagan this week as the forty-first president of the USA, the White House management style will change. Ron was renowned for his afternoon naps, but jogging George is always out and about, ready for a game of pitching horseshoes or a vigorous sail on a racing yacht. Few expect Bush to be as nonchalant as Reagan on the day of the grand ceremony; informed by his aides that the ceremony was in two hours, Reagan is said to have asked 'Does this mean I have to get up?'.

There are some things, however, that are unlikely to change. Bush has proved as adept as Reagan in putting his foot in his mouth. Questioned about his racism during the election campaign, Bush retorted 'I am an anti-racist, an anti-bigot and an anti-Semite'. Aside from White House workouts and Reaganesque gaffes, what can we expect from the new regime?

Anonymous

Bush's past yields few clues as to what his presidency might be like. His main political strength is his opportunism, his willingness to bend with whichever wind is blowing in the Republican party. Known as a consummate 'team player', Bush moved smoothly from being a Goldwater Republican in 1964, to a Nixon Republican in 1970, and to a moderate alternative to Ronald Reagan in the 1980 election (ridiculing Reagan's economic ideas as 'voodoo economics').

Today, after his hard-nosed electioneering on such race-related issues as drugs and crime, he is in some respects more right-wing than one of the most reactionary presidents in living memory.

George Herbert Walker Bush was born in 1924 of a wealthy Connecticut family. His father was a Republican senator in the Eisenhower and Kennedy years. The young Bush moved from prep school to Yale University; many of the appointments to his 'country club cabinet' are Wasp cronies

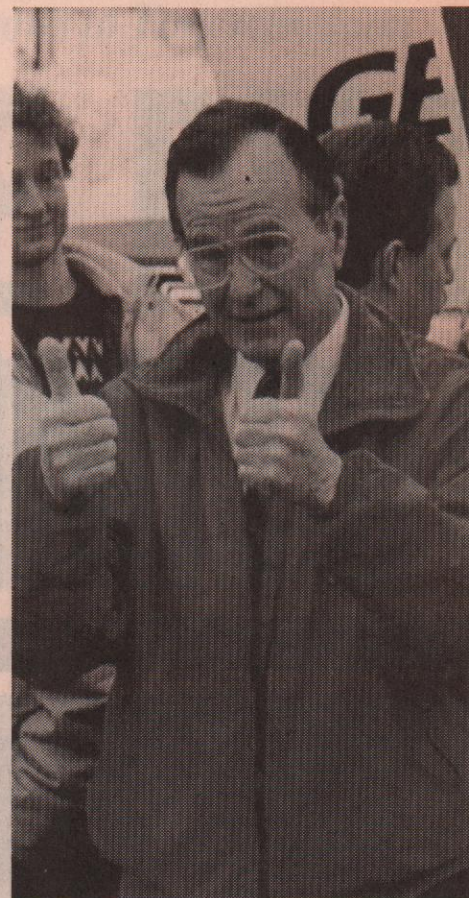
from his schooldays.

In between prep school and Yale, Bush fought in the Second World War as the youngest bomber pilot in the US navy, flying 58 combat missions and surviving being shot down. This parachute to safety was caught on film, and shown time and again during last year's election campaign to counter the universal image of Bush as a wimp. After college he received a big loan from his uncle, and went off to found Zapata Oil in Houston, Texas.

The oil business made him a millionaire and allowed him to turn his hand to politics. In 1966 he won a Texas seat in the house of representatives. But after losing twice in his bid for a senate seat, the second time to Lloyd Bentsen,

The Bush inauguration

JOGGING GEORGE TAKES THE HELM



The Bush Doctrine: hang on in there

Michael Dukakis' running-mate in last year's election, Bush gave up on the idea of achieving elected office. Nixon appointed him ambassador to the United Nations. From then on, until he ran for president, Bush found work solely by appointment.

He served as envoy to China and director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the seventies. After running against Reagan for the Republican nomination in the 1980 presidential election, he was eventually appointed his running-mate. He was an ideal vice-president—loyal, self-effacing, anonymous.

Throughout his career Bush has been surrounded by scandal, but has developed a knack for avoiding blame.

While at the CIA, Bush was involved in the obstruction of an investigation into the agency's role in the 1973 overthrow of Chile's socialist president Salvador Allende. Bush's CIA also had a hit-squad of anti-Castro Cubans on its payroll, CORU, which assassinated the former Chilean ambassador Orlando Letelier in Washington on behalf of the Chilean secret service. Of the 10 men present at the original CORU meeting to plan the Letelier murder, at least four have been linked to the Contra supply scandal.

Before the Irangate scandal broke in 1986, Bush boasted 'I am in on everything'. Afterwards he pleaded 'I was simply out of the loop'. Bush claimed that he learned the details of the scandal in December 1986—a month after attorney general Edwin Meese revealed all in a televised press conference. On the day of the key meeting, he was 'at the army-navy football game'; at the second meeting, he 'stepped out to go to the bathroom'.

Sleazy

In reality, Bush not only knew of the infamous May 1986 trip to Tehran with gifts of cakes and a Bible—he helped plan it. As the then national security council adviser John Poindexter told Oliver North on 4 April, 'If we can manage it, the VP would appreciate if the Iran trip did not take place until the VP leaves Saudi Arabia'.

Bush is also known to have used Panama's General Manuel Noriega as a drug-runner for the CIA.

During the election campaign, Bush (and Reagan) had trouble pursuing the attempts to oust the Panamanian leader after a Noriega aide announced 'I've got Bush by the balls'. By the summer, however, the media had dropped virtually all investigations into Bush's sleazy past and none of the scandals became an issue in the election.

His career might have given Bush inside knowledge of the workings of US imperialism, but many commentators fear he lacks what it takes to be a leader. In this respect he is a product of the decline of the USA as a world power. One leading Republican has aptly described the goal of the Bush administration as a 'Holiday Inn kind of government, where the best surprise is no surprise'. It is a measure of America's lack of self-belief that the best it can hope for is simply to hang on in there.

James Malone

Libya's Colonel Gaddafi

THE MYTH OF THE MAD DOG

Western leaders have branded Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi as the mad dog of the Arab world. Libya, they argue, is a terrorist super-state hell-bent on fomenting revolution across the globe by supplying guns and explosives to radical movements worldwide. In reality Libya is an impoverished and isolated third world state which has been made the scapegoat of the Western world because it cannot retaliate.

Like many other African and Middle Eastern nations, Libya is the creation of an imperialist carve-up. Britain encouraged Italy to take control of the territory in 1911 as a buffer between French-controlled North-West Africa and Egypt under British rule. After the Second World War Britain seized the former Italian colony but was later forced to share control over the country with the USA. In 1951 the imperialists installed a puppet monarchy.

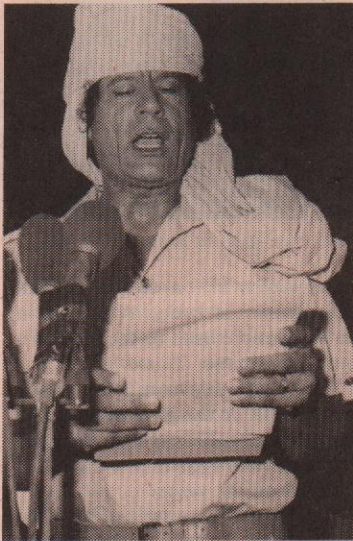
The open corruption of the Western-imposed regime led a group of junior army officers headed by Gaddafi to seize power

in 1969. The new regime's populist rhetoric, the nationalisation of the oil industry and the expulsion of foreign troops quickly led to conflict with the West. Within a month of the coup, the British embassy was encouraging army officers to overthrow Gaddafi. Throughout the eighties US forces have regularly clashed with the Libyan military. In April 1986 American bombers, flying from British bases, killed over 100 people in Tripoli and Benghazi.

Irony

Gaddafi's backing for radical movements abroad is largely rhetorical, and is not much more than a device for distracting the attention of the Western powers. In 1987 the colonel told *Observer* journalists that he had increased backing for the IRA as a direct result of Britain's involvement in the 1986 raids on Libya. His support for Kanak rebels in the French colony of New Caledonia was a response to French military intervention in Libya's war with Chad.

A particular irony of the recent



Gaddafi: scapegoat

attacks on Libya is that Gaddafi has been trying to improve relations with the West. Towards the end of 1988 he restored relations with West Germany after a two-year rift. In August the head of the Libyan People's Bureau in Paris denounced IRA violence. Last week Libya returned to the USA the body of a pilot killed during the 1986 bombing raids.

Gaddafi's Libya does not pose the faintest threat to the Western powers. His radical rhetoric is a response to Libya's problems of chronic underdevelopment and Western military intervention. The myth of the mad dog is a cynical propaganda ploy by the Western states to justify political and military intervention in a region which has long suffered from imperialist domination.

Daniel Nassim

Tories talk...

NURSERY NONSENSE

The recommendation by a Tory-controlled commons select committee last week that there should be nursery places for 'all children whose parents wish it' came as a surprise to many people. This newfound enthusiasm for expanding nursery facilities seems at odds with the government's penny-pinching attitude to state provision and its emphasis on the sanctity of the family.

In fact the new proposals fit in well with the government's long-term aim to shift the burden for welfare services from the state on to the working class, and in particular on to women. The main aim of the report is not to provide free, decent nursery provision for all, but to encourage women to enter the workforce as a source of cheap labour while at the same time forcing them to shoulder the burden of childcare.

Axe

The select committee report comes at a time of increased interest in workplace nurseries. The Midland Bank, for example, is conducting a feasibility study into the possibilities for workplace childcare. But while there has been an explosion in private childcare schemes—the report points out that nursery school provision is the fastest growing sector of private education—state facilities have been severely curtailed.

Brent council's decision at the end of last year to axe all nursery school provision as a major part of its £17m cuts package is a better measure of the reality facing most working class parents. As state-run nurseries close down, working mothers have no alternative but to pay for private childcare.

The purpose of the select committee report is to encourage this trend by promoting 'self-help' nursery provision.

Margaret Thatcher recently made it clear that increased nursery provision means an increased burden on women. The best way of organising childcare, she argued, was if 'several women get together and arrange that one looks after the children while the rest go out part-time' (*Sunday Times*, 15 January). Tory education minister Angela Rumbold steered well clear of promising to provide even the inadequate budget recommended by the report.

Bargain

Above all the report aims to meet the needs, not of women for decent childcare facilities, but of employers for a source of cheap, expendable labour. Back in 1985 the late lamented Edwina Currie pointed out the benefits of hiring women: 'Part-time women are now doing roughly half the average working week of the men and are picking up one third of the male full-time earnings. Half the work for a third of the money is a bargain.' (*Hansard*, 11 March 1985).

Recent reports from the department of employment emphasising the necessity for women to take on part-time jobs underscore the point.

Free, decent nursery provision is a necessity for women. So long as the brunt of childcare falls on women, we will be unable to participate equally in society with men. The latest Tory proposals simply reinforce the already precarious position of working mothers.

Sara Hardy

Pandora Anderson



Women have to shoulder the burden of childcare

POLL TAX PRIVATE EYES

Tory-controlled Westminster council has become the first local authority to employ a private company to compile its poll tax register. The Midsummer Computing Agency will be paid £3 317 608 to track down the 40 000 people who are estimated not to be on the electoral register. The company will employ 20 private snoopers to visit 10 000 homes from April, the date registration begins, to December when the register must be published for implementation in April 1990.

According to council officer David Bolger, who prepared the contract, Midsummer's canvassers will have full legal powers to force

people to comply. Not only will Westminster empower Midsummer to collect information on local people, it also intends to give all existing data to the private eyes. The 110 000-strong electoral roll, along with rent and housing benefit records, social security records and even information from applications for parking permits will all be in the hands of a data agency and a small crew of private investigators.

Even for a council that has pioneered the privatisation of local authority services, Westminster's latest plans are extreme. But every council—whether Tory or Labour—is preparing to implement the poll

Scotland after Govan

TWO months after the Govan by-election, the main political parties in Scotland are still squaring up to the consequences of Labour's shock defeat at the hands of the Scottish National Party. Both Labour's Scottish executive and the national executive of the SNP met last weekend to discuss the way forward. At the same time 60 people, many of whom have left the Labour Party, met to found the Scottish Socialist Party.

The Labour Party is still looking for answers to its decline. In December a Scottish TUC report—*Govan: Why Did It Happen*—prescribed better organisation, a membership drive and an attack on the SNP's 'independence in Europe' strategy. None of these remedies address the key problem facing Labour: its inability to take up the problems facing the working class. The poll tax has placed the Labour bureaucrats in a dilemma: if they fail to organise resistance to the tax, the SNP will gain credibility. But any campaign that could really challenge the poll tax would be beyond the bounds of legality, and this Labour is not prepared to contemplate.

The SNP is set to benefit from Labour's dilemma. With the advent of Jim Sillars—the victor in the Govan by-election—the party can no longer be dismissed simply as 'Tartan Tories'. But it still aspires to be all things to all people. When one of the SNP's Grampian councillors threatened resignation if the SNP/Democrat coalition council implemented warrant sales for those not registering for the poll tax, the local party was split over the issue. A

party which cannot even take a consistent stand against the poll tax does not deserve the allegiance of Scottish workers.

The most interesting New Year development is the formation of the Scottish Socialist Party. It provides an organisational alternative for those disgusted with Labour's capitulation. But it has yet to make a political break with Labourism. Early on it seemed that the new party would stand against Labour unconditionally. Now a couple of Euro-seats in Glasgow and Lothian are being targeted, but none where the SSP might split the Labour vote and let the Tory in. 'We wouldn't want to stand somewhere in a way that would benefit the Tories', said Jim Young, a major contributor to the party's policy documents.

It is symptomatic of the malaise afflicting all the parties that the main debate in Scotland is not about the imminent introduction of the poll tax, but about the Constitutional Convention which has its first meeting on 27 January. The convention, called by the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly, which David Owen's Democrats have now applied to join, is racked by major debates such as whether David Steel should be the chair or not. It is an indictment of all participants that, with the poll tax just two months away, any credence should be given to a body that does not even exist.

There are many working class people looking for a real alternative in Scotland, and there is every opportunity to forge a new political movement as long as we avoid rehashing the old ingredients of Labourism.

Alan Harding

Tories cook jobless figures

Jobless to fall below two million' crowed the *Times* on Monday. Tory ministers are cock-a-hoop at the prospect of unemployment breaching the two million mark and falling to the lowest point for nine years. In fact government unemployment statistics are a sham. And behind the talk of falling figures lies a major new Tory offensive against the unemployed.

The main reason for the fall in the figures has been the way the Tories have massaged the statistics. Employment secretaries from Jim Prior to Norman Fowler have so far made 25 changes in the way unemployment is counted. Coun-

ting as unemployed only those who could claim benefit took 200 000 women off the register; the removal of unemployed men aged 60 or over reduced the count by 30 000; the change in the Community Programme's eligibility rules swept away a further 29 000.

At the same time the government has used bully-boy tactics to force people off the register, boasting that it has reduced the jobless total by 200 000 through intimidating claimants at Restart interviews. The new Social Security Bill will make it harder for people previously in part-time work to obtain benefit, and virtually impossible for a claimant to turn down a job offer, however menial or low-paid. The government expects these proposals to harass a further 50 000 claimants off the unemployment register.

Jon Hann

tax. Situations Vacant columns in newspapers and council in-house jobs lists are awash with highly-paid 'community charge' posts. From Tory Bradford to 'loony left' Haringey, local authorities are offering big money to bully people on to the register.

Some left-wing boroughs have claimed their hands are tied, pointing to the powers wielded by their finance directors irrespective of the wishes of councillors. Already the Labour-controlled Local Government Information Unit has been told to stop producing anti-poll tax campaign material, while Brighton's Labour group refused to discuss waiving poll tax

debts for fear of breaking the law.

Whereas Tory Westminster has privatised the poll tax, Labour boroughs have simply washed their hands of it. Both policies lead us to a conveyor belt that starts with snoopers in April and ends in summonses, fines, court orders and bailiffs. We need to break out of the individual approach to fighting the poll tax. The only way to stop the poll tax is by building a campaign among council workers to boycott all work dealing with the tax and by organising working class resistance against the snoopers which makes it impossible for them to carry out their work.

James Heartfield

the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party Weekly • 20 January 1988 • No 2 • 40p

£1 solidarity price

**George Bush:
profile of a
president
see page 6**

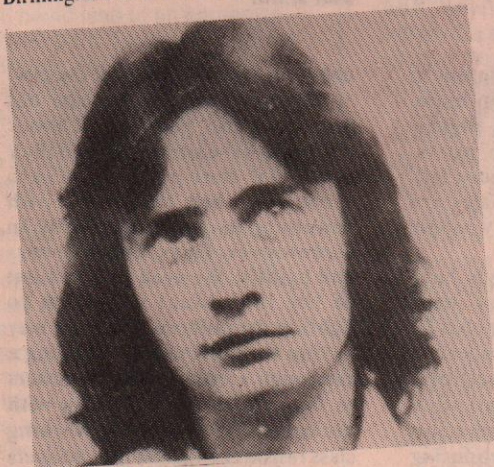
Guilty of being Irish

FREE THE GUILDFORD FOUR!

Home secretary Douglas Hurd has referred back to the court of appeal the cases of the Guildford Four, three Irishmen and one English woman framed for the IRA bombing of three pubs in Guildford and Woolwich in 1974. They have spent over 14 years in jail, branded as 'terrorists' by the British judicial system.

On 5 October 1974 two IRA bombs exploded in the Horse and Groom and Seven Stars pubs in Guildford, Surrey. A month later another bomb shattered the King's Arms in Woolwich, south London. The explosions, which killed seven people, were part of a major IRA bombing campaign in Britain. Two weeks after the Woolwich attack a bomb in the Mulberry Tavern in the centre of Birmingham killed 21 people.

The IRA campaign rocked the British authorities and unleashed a wave of anti-Irish hysteria. On 21 November the Labour government rushed through the Prevention of Terrorism Act which treated every Irish person as a potential terrorist. For almost 15 years this act has been the centrepiece of the state's campaign to criminalise the fight for Irish freedom. It has cost thousands of Irish people detained under its draconian detention provisions days and weeks out of their lives. It has cost some, like the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six, the best years of their lives.



Gerard Conlon

Paul Hill, Gerry Conlon, Patrick Armstrong and Carole Richardson were among the first victims of this wave of British terror. They were three Belfast men and an English woman squatting in Kilburn.

picked up in a police trawl of the Irish community. They had nothing to do with the Guildford pub bombings, but they were Irish, and that was enough to establish their guilt in the hysterical atmosphere whipped up around the bombings.



Paul Hill

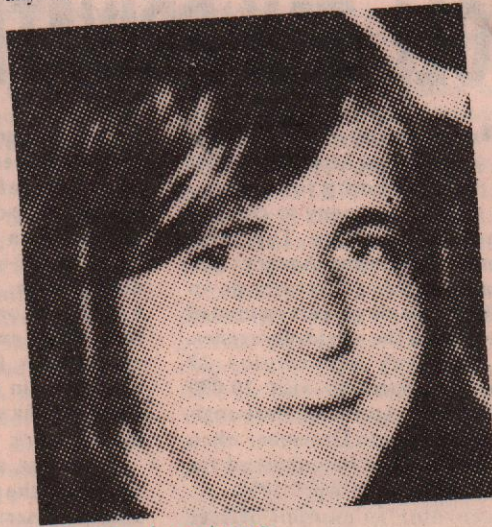
The only evidence against the four were confessions beaten out of them under torture, and which they all subsequently withdrew. The police produced not a shred of evidence to corroborate these statements, which between them contained 153 inconsistencies. The Guildford Four produced a string of witnesses who provided them with alibis. But in the climate of panic and revenge created by the British authorities, the truth counted for very little. The Guildford Four were duly convicted; Paul Hill was sentenced 'never to be released'.

In the intervening years it has been revealed that Richardson, who was suffering from drug withdrawal symptoms, was injected with the drug Pethidine, before giving her statement. Two independent medical experts—a forensic psychiatrist and a psychologist—examined Richardson and both concluded her confession was false. Yorkshire Television discovered another witness, Yvonne Fox, who was with Hill on the night of the Woolwich bombing. Most damning of all was the evidence of an IRA active service unit eventually captured in Balcombe Street, which claimed the Guildford and Woolwich bombings as their work. They outlined every detail of the attacks, even who they had sat next to while planting the explosives. That won the Guildford

Four an appeal, but the judges sitting without a jury threw it out.

Concerned that the case could undermine faith in the British judicial system, establishment liberals have increasingly voiced their concern. Former law lords, Scarman and Devlin, wrote to the *Times* to express concern about the interrogation techniques and to call for a royal pardon. Former Labour home secretary Merlyn Rees called for the case to be reopened. Prominent churchmen such as Cardinal Basil Hume and even the Archbishop of Canterbury have lobbied the home office. All these campaigners have welcomed Hurd's decision to reopen the case.

Others, however, have spoken out against the move, saying that things should never have gone so far. Many establishment figures are acutely aware that the convictions of the Guildford Four are at the heart of the policy of criminalisation which is such a vital part of the state's strategy for winning the Irish War on the home front. In other cases of wrongful conviction the establishment can sometimes afford to admit that it has made a mistake. But there is no question of the ruling class conceding that they have conducted a calculated campaign to criminalise the Irish. To free the Guildford Four would be to admit that British justice is nothing more than a licence to terrorise anyone who happens to be Irish.



Paddy Armstrong

The case of the Birmingham Six shows what Hill, Conlon, Armstrong and Richardson can expect. The Birmingham Six are six Irishmen who, like the Guildford Four, were framed on the basis

of confessions beaten out of them under torture, in their case for the Mulberry Tavern bombing. Despite overwhelming evidence of police brutality and judicial frame-up the appeal court upheld their convictions last January.

In 1980 Lord Denning, in turning down a civil action by the Birmingham Six against the police officers who attacked them, explained why Irish people could never expect to gain justice through British courts: 'If the six men win, it will mean that the police were guilty of perjury, that they were guilty of violence and threats, that the confessions were involuntary and were improperly admitted in evidence and that the convictions were erroneous.... This is such an appalling vista', continued Denning, 'that every sensible person in the land would say "It cannot be right that these actions should go any further"'. In other words, to maintain the criminalisation policy, Irish men and women will continue to rot in British jails.



Carole Richardson

So long as Britain occupies Ireland there will be no British justice for Irish people. British justice is a weapon in the hands of the British state in its war against the Irish people. The only way to fight for freedom for the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and countless other Irish men and women incarcerated in British jails, is by challenging the right of the British state to criminalise the Irish, and by upholding their right to fight for freedom from British rule.

Kenan Malik

**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 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).

Phone (01) 729 0414 for further details.