

womens VOICE

Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

May '82

Issue 63

Price 40p

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Falklands,
Ireland and
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THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN BRITAIN TODAY

- 1 The tenth anniversary of Pentonville.
- 2 Updating the downturn.
- 3 Will Arthur Scargill go the same way as Hugh Scanlon?
- 4 The way forward—Broad Lefts or Rank and File groups.
- 5 Is the Communist Party finished?
- 6 What does the Labour left do now?
- 7 Women's liberation and the working class.
- 8 Will the downturn ever end?
- 9 The black struggle a year after the riots.

The record levels of unemployment plus the demoralising experience of the previous Labour Government have produced a crisis of militancy among workers, that, in its turn, has produced confusion and paralysis among many sections of the left.

In this course we examine and explain the passivity of the workers' movement and we compare the fight this time with the height of the struggle last time—the massive strike to free the imprisoned Pentonville dockers. We go on to analyse how the Left is shaping up to the situation and whether we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

THE FAMILY AND WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

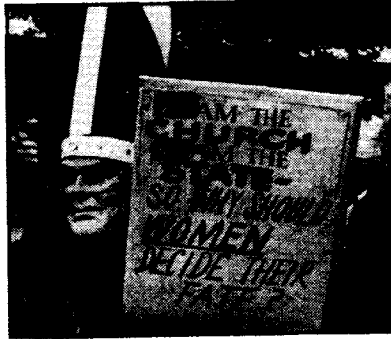
- 1 The origins of the family and women's oppression.
- 2 The pre capitalism family.
- 3 How early capitalism began to destroy the family—and why it did not succeed.
- 4 The modern capitalist family.
- 5 The Women's movement—the last fifteen years.

In this course we attempt to re-establish one of the most misunderstood of theoretical traditions—the Marxist analysis of women's oppression. Despite the fact that Marx and Engels developed one of the first and most penetrating analyses of the role of the family and women's oppression, it has become fashionable to decry the contribution of revolutionaries to the liberation of women.

We intend to look at that tradition, and to show that it has the power, as no other set of ideas have the power, to set in train a successful revolution which will liberate women.

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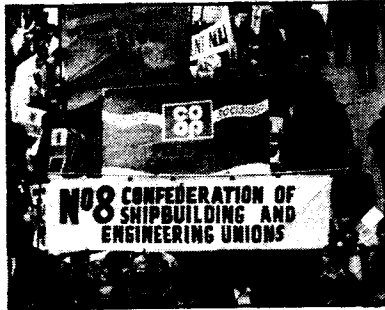
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Love and Marriage in India. We talk to three Asian workers about how the system of arranged marriages works and looks at what effect it has on the lives of Indian women ... pages 10-11



With May Day marches organised in most cities annually, Joan Rudder reminds us of the history surrounding May Day ... pages 12-13



Butchery in El Salvador: Carla Lopez gives us an historical account of the war in central America and the United States interest in quashing the guerillas ... pages 14-15



Two London women send in an account of their recent experience of a women's delegation to Northern Ireland. A vivid account of a community under siege. ... pages 16-17

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Back cover drawing by Jayne Spittle

Articles, letters, news, for next issue to reach us by 16 June

Published by Elophatin Ltd, London, E2.

Printed by East End Offset Ltd (TU), London, E2

WOMENS VOICE · PO BOX 82 LONDON E2 · 01 986 6222



Jobs fight victory!

AN occupation by 3,200 strong workforce at Massey Fergusons in Coventry ended last week claiming a great victory. The occupation, which had lasted for just over two weeks, was over a threat of compulsory redundancies on the shopfloor.

The Canadian based firm, had wanted 750 redundancies, 450 of them from the shopfloor. Most of the cuts were attained by voluntary redundancies however there was a shortfall of 170 and management wanted to make workers compulsorily redundant on a 'last in first out basis.' This backfired on them when the militant workforce took over the factory and around the clock picketing took place.

The few women who worked on the shopfloor turned up to do their share of picketing and the women workers in the canteen who were out in support (or should I say, "in" in support) played an active role in continuing to cook and make drinks for the strikers.

Ten women strikers from Kiegass in Leamington who are on strike for trade union recognition came over to give support and to

get ideas for their own picket lines. This boosted the determination to win for both the Kiegass and Masseys strikers.

Management tried to do its best to split the workforce, by taking the union to court and getting an eviction order. They also sent their own ballot forms to the homes of all the workers at the same time, making threats of moving their work to a plant in France, and closing the Coventry factory.

The workers weren't having any of this and on the day that management agreed to withdraw the compulsory redundancy notices and to re-negotiate on work sharing for the 170 jobs, the strike committee had already decided to defy the law court and continue the occupation.

It was also clear from the management that ballot forms had not shown the desired split in the workforce.

The workers were right to shout victory after the mass meeting had voted to end the occupation. It proved if there's a will, there's a way ... and it should be an inspiration to all other workers whether male or female.

*Sue Pinkham
Coventry SWP*

Switching off and dusting out

Telephonists and Dustmen. That's the unusual combination of strikers who are tking on Wandsworth Tory Council. The fight is over 'privatisation'; the selling off of council services to private business interests.

This policy is gaining ground all over the country, but it's most rampant in Wandsworth. Already the stret cleaners have been sold off, the dust is now under immediate threat. In the

pipeline are jobs clearly identified with women workers—meals on wheels, care workers, cleaners.

The selective strike action is going well at present. Dustmen are picketing the sites where scab labour want to dump their rubbish. Agency telephonists brought into the town hall switchboards were heard saying 'We're patriotic and proud to be here'. They are finding other workers taking the phones off

the hook or leaving them to ring unanswered.

One council worker told Womens Voice 'The problem is we should be building up the action, not leaving it to fewer and fewer strikers to carry it for all of us. On April 19 we had this marvellous strike by ALL of the council, all eight of the different unions, manual and white collar. We need that sort of all-out action if we're going to win in the end'.

Striking is the only way to win

SEVENTY WOMEN at Kiegass in Leamington and ABEX in nearby Warwick which make components for cars, came out on strike on 5 April for the second time in two months. Last time they came out for union recognition and went back after a day and a half on the advice of AUEW officials who said they would negotiate on their behalf. Negotiations didn't work so the women decided that a strike was the only way to win.

They see union recognition as a way to fighting for better wages and working conditions. They are very badly paid £30 to £45 a week take home pay and work in very unsafe and unpleasant conditions. Sandra Healy: 'The toilets are always disgusting and there is no canteen or adequate safety facilities. Since the last strike we now have a nurse but she's out on strike with us.'

Many women have been injured in the factory by metal flying into their eyes, fingers getting stuck together with high power glue, and when one woman drilled her finger, Wardman, the boss said that she had done it on purpose in order to get off that particular machine! Fiona Gordon: 'When I injured my eye, the stuff they gave me to put on it said on the bottle "use once and throw away", God knows how long it had been in the cupboard. Also I asked them to write it in the accident book, but it seems that they haven't even got one.'



It's not easy for the women to be on strike, many of them have families who are unemployed but on the whole they are supported, though desperately short of money. The attitude of the local press has been that the strikers are 'irresponsible young girls mainly under 18.' Yvette Gledrie shop steward said: 'It's bloody disgusting. It's not irresponsible to be on strike.'

Dawn LaLaine added 'Only a few of us are under 18, there are women out on strike who have been working there 14 years, they must be desperate as they've got a lot more to lose. They've got families and their pensions to think of.'

After the report in the Morning News, a delegation of strikers went up to the newspaper offices and forcefully demanded the right of reply to the article that had called them 'irresponsible'. Which they got.

Dawn is one of the six shop stewards, she had no experience of trade unions before the strike and this has been a problem. 'For a start, my age, I'm only 17 and at the beginning of the strike there was a lack of communication even between the strike committee, none of us know what we were doing at all, so I suggested we just start organising picketing rotas and being informed for a start. Simple things like you've got to tell everyone what's happening.'

There was and still is to

some extent a communication problem between the Asian women strikers and the other women. But the experience of the strike has started to change things.

'Some of the women now have more respect for the Asian women, they take more time to talk to them. As a shop steward you've got to take the time to talk to everyone, even if they don't speak good English.'

Other attitudes have changed to. Dawn said: 'Before I went out on strike myself, I thought strikers were a load of rabble, and scroungers. Now if I read about a strike I'll balance both sides for a start. You can't believe what you read in the papers.'

Also though the women want union recognition, they have started to realise that they must do things themselves. For instance, taking collections, and making sure Kiegass and ABEX goods are blocked. On Friday the 16th, they took a bucket collection for the strike fund outside Flavels a local factory and raised almost £50. Yvette said: 'The union official came today and told us that he was doing things but just not telling us!'

Fiona added: 'You've got to check up on them, because you just don't know what they're doing.'

For instance last Friday the women turned away a lorry from Fords in Daventry, a factory the union officials said they'd contacted. As the

strike continues the women are becoming more confident, they have been encouraged by other trade unionists, visiting the picket lines, such as the men from Automotive Products in Leamington and Talbots in Coventry. Also the success of the Massey Ferguson occupation is encouraging. A delegation of women strikers visited the occupation last week and found the advice of the Massey workers very useful.



Anne Hickman

The women are determined to win. Anne Hickman: 'When you break down what we're earning compared to what we'd get on the dole, once you've taken off busfare or petrol money, all we're working for is £5 or £6 a week.'

Sandra Healey added: 'If we go in they take us back as a union, or we don't go in — we've got nothing to lose.'

**Maureen Casey
Leamington SWP**

Stop these deportations

Najat Chaffee must stay

Margaret Thatcher and her ministers love to preach to us about the importance of the family and their support for it as the society of 'our' society. Their hypocrisy is exposed by the savagery of their immigration and nationality laws which tear families apart.

Najat Chaffee risks falling victim to these laws and losing her child unless a determined campaign can win her the right to stay in Britain.

Majat came to London from Morocco in 1979 after her marriage to Hassan Ghailan who was settled here, with parents. Their son Mohssim was born in July 1980. Hassan was consistently violent towards Majat, and eventually she left him taking Mohssim with her, went to live in a Women's Aid refuge. While she was living there, her husband was deported to Morocco. Najat applied to the Home Office for permission to stay, and was refused. 'The child may stay, but you must go,' was the response.

Najat is determined to stay. She wants to make her own life here with her son. If she is sent to Morocco, she family will not have her back, because they did

not approve of her marriage. Her husband will try to take Mohssim from her, and under Moroccan law, he would probably succeed.

So look for the Tories' respect for the family!

The choice forced on Najat by the racist, sexist immigration rules is a bitter one. Either she returns to Morocco alone, leaving her twenty-one month old child here on his own, to be taken into care; or she returns with him to Morocco where he will be snatched from her by his violent father — a man who has not only been violent to her, but has been convicted of battering a none-month old child.

Experience has shown that these vicious laws can be challenged by a determined and sustained campaign. Nasira BEgum and Jaswinder Kaur won the right to stay, Anwar Ditta won the right to have her children returned to her, but only because of the strength of the campaigns in their support and the publicity gained for their cases.

A campaign has been set up to support Najat in her demand to stay. We are planning to take leaflets and petitions to the shopping centres, factories and



housing estates in the area. We have made contact with other campaigns against deportation. We are organising a march meeting, picket and a public through the area with a band and street theatre.

Unless we mount determined resistance to all immigration and nationality controls we shall see them being used increasingly against trade union militants and community activists.

SUPPORT NAJAT CHAFFEE — NO DEPORTATION

- Public meeting 30 April Moonshine Community Arts

Workshop, Harrow Road, NW10

- Picket 7 May outside the hearing of Najat's appeal against the refusal of permission to stay, 9.00am, Thanet House, The Strand (opposite the Law Courts)

- Unless the appeal succeeds, a march through Harlesden and Waltham Saturday 15 May — assemble main gates of Roundwood Park, 11am.

- Factsheets, petition forms and collection sheets from: Friends of Najat Chaffee, c/o 138 Minet Avenue, London, NW10

Sarah Cox
N W London SWP

Defend Khan family from expulsion

In Manchester there has now been a five month struggle to prevent an entire family being expelled—Shaukat and Parveen Khan and their two young children, Imran (16 months) and Irfan (6 months).

What is happening to the Khans shows how far the Home Office will go in its efforts to repatriate black people. Shaikat came here from Pakistan at the age of 13 in 1972 to join his uncle. He arrived using his cousin's passport—which is not surprising given the stringent nature of immigration control. However, he was, in fact, too young to know any of this. In 1974 the government announced an 'amnesty' for all so-called 'illegal' immigrants.

In 1977 Shaukat discovered his situation. However, like most people, he assumed that the amnesty was automatic — no one told him or anyone else that it had to be applied for. When he discovered, in 1980 that he had to make an application he did apply to the Home Office. He was then told by the Home Office that the amnesty had stopped in 1978! He was also told he was going to be removed from this country — thanks to the fact that he had announced his presence here. The Home Office also said they were going to remove Parveen. She had come in 1979 and was, as it happens, completely ignorant of Shaukat's immigration status.

This is another way of

repatriation. Under the new Nationality Act children of 'illegal' parents will anyhow be forced to leave with their parents — as they will not be UK citizens. Under the Immigration Act anyone 'accused' of being an illegal immigrant can be removed without having the opportunity to be heard.

What you can do to help
William Whitelaw has said that it is in the interest of 'good community relations' that the Khans be removed. A Khan Family Defence Committee has been set up which says that it is in the interests of good community relations that the Khans stay and the Immigration Act be removed. So far the Committee has gained local support within the community and is being aided by

Manchester Trades Council, the North West TUC and Ardwick Labour Party.

- 1) For you and your organisation to send letters of support to Gerald Kaufman, MP, House of Commons, Westminster.

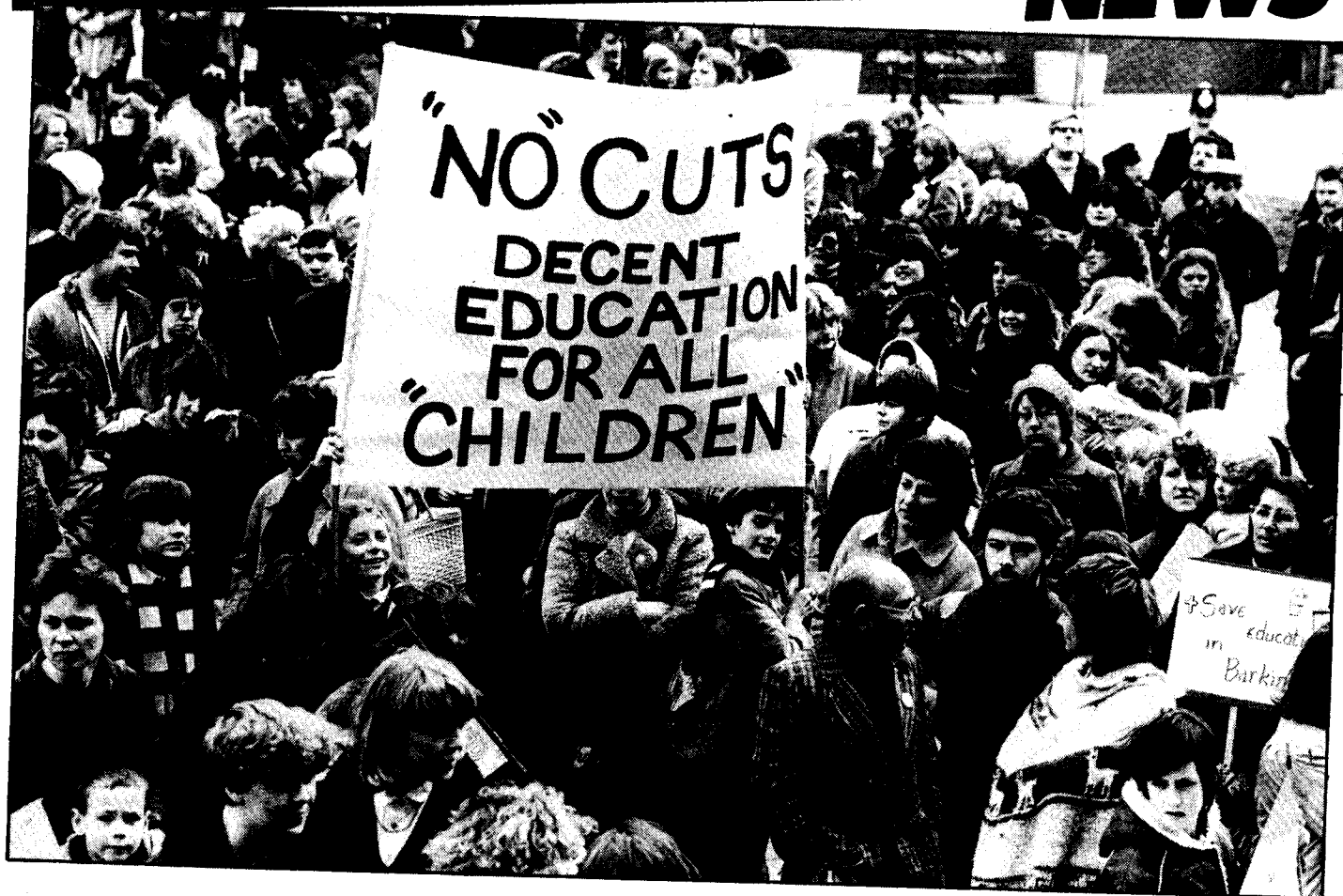
- 2) To send a similar letter to your own MP and to William Whitelaw.

- 3) To invite a speaker from the Defence Committee to speak to your group, branch etc

- 4) To collect petitions from the Committee
- 5) To send money to the Khan Family Defence Committee

Our address is 593 Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester 13. Telephone: 061 225 5111

Khan Family Defence Committee



Barking teachers: a predictable compromise

AFTER seven weeks of strike action the dispute between Barking Council and Barking NUT is over. The strike was in response to the council's threat to cut 160 jobs — on top of the 80 already cut last year.

The all-out strike began after half term and within days, all schools were being picketed by NUT members. The pickets, the majority of whom were women, managed to prevent the post, oil, milk and other supplies from getting into the schools.

The early part of the strike saw groups of schools contacting parents through strike bulletins and organising meetings with them.

One of the main thrusts of the striking teachers was to get parents on their side. Some schools by-passing their generally middle class Parent-Teacher Associations reached out to ordinary parents and found them willing and eager to get involved.

It was during this period that the local NUT passed resolutions defining what they were striking for. It was not just a strike over compulsory redundancies but a

strike over jobs lost. Teachers in Barking had seen jobs whittled away by use of redeployment, temporary contracts and non replacement of staff who had retired or who had just simply left.

The membership resolved to make the abolition of these practices a condition for ending the dispute. This would mean that the council would find it very difficult to lose jobs through 'natural wastage' in the future.

These demands linked up with our other main argument for being on strike; which was to protect the standard of education in Barking. It wasn't so long ago that working class families only sent their children to school for three days a week due to shortages of teachers.

Now that there were enough teachers — Barking's Labour Council was using all its powers to try to get rid of them!

It was this argument that won working class parents to our fight. While school PTA members were asking us to return to work — local mums were taking their kids up to

the town hall organising sit-ins, demonstrations, petitions, writing to local papers and in some cases setting up a parents' action group to fight the cuts.

With the support and successes on the picket lines the membership's hopes were high. Their morale was boosted by the local refuse drivers, all T&G members who, when one of their members was sent home for refusing to cross an NUT picket line — came out on strike.

However, as the weeks went on, and our strike began to gain momentum the NUT officials started mumbling about 'compromises' and 'being realistic'. Our local officers, instead of standing firm with our democratically elected five demands — went about persuading our members that it was in 'our' interests to unify with our executive; to forget our five demands and fight for 'staffing levels.'

A couple of weeks later, they went further still, when they announced that now it was the 'protection of the curriculum' that we should be fighting for. That we

shouldn't confine ourselves to a particular figure regarding numbers!

It was this aura of compromise over the last month of the strike enacted by our local officers that made the final compromise with the council predictable. The last week of the strike saw the negotiators being prepared to lose jobs.

The eventual outcome was that the strike won back 70 per cent of secondary school jobs, while only 55 per cent of primary school jobs were saved. The NUT executive hailed this as a great victory — but members were divided. One third of those at the final strike meeting voted to reject the offer and fight on. The feeling was particularly high among the primary sector, mostly women, who it seemed were to get the worst deal.

Strike action in Barking won back jobs and created links between parents, teachers and other trade unionists. The fact still remains that the final outcome — a loss of 55 jobs on top of 80 lost last year — was not a 'resounding' victory.

A GEBBETT, Barking NUT

Neither the Pope nor Paisley but women's emancipation

ALREADY the propaganda surrounding Pope John Paul II's visit to Britain is becoming quite nauseating. To many women, it must seem a gross insult, for this pope, like all his predecessors, wants to keep women enslaved to a medieval patriarchal system.

The Catholic Church recognises only two roles for women: consecrated virgin and downtrodden mother. The elevation and worship of the 'ideal woman', the Virgin Mary, neatly combines the two; but since a truly virginal mother is a physical impossibility, the rest of us have always had to choose!

For a short time in the Middle Ages, nuns (especially abbesses) enjoyed considerable power and independence, for example in 'barbarian' areas where they held the front line of Christianity against paganism. But since then, all new and reformed orders of nuns have been placed firmly under the control of male priests, and until quite recently were preferably cloistered, ie cut off from the outside world unless under heavy escort.

Nowadays, most nuns — there are almost a million of them in the whole world — perform 'charitable duties' as unpaid labour in schools, hospitals and clinics.

Since the 1960s, lay women have been allowed to read out passages from the bible during Catholic services, but the present pope has made it quite clear there are to be no 'alter girls' (though why the traditional bobbing up and down and fetching and carrying should be reserved for boys I never could understand as a child — perhaps it was because naughty altar boys traditionally swigged the consecration sherry). Certainly there is no question of women priests.

The Catholic woman who does not choose a life of consecrated separation from men must be a wife and mother. Sex before marriage is absolutely forbidden, and Catholic girls still undergo the appalling ritual of having to confess their 'impure thoughts' to a male priest who is often a quite powerful sex symbol.

There can be no escape from marriage through divorce for a Catholic woman, and the obligation of childbearing cannot be evaded. The church's traditional ban on coitus interruptus (withdrawal) as a method of birth control was extended to mechanical methods such as the sponge in the eighteenth century. Some time in the twentieth century the learned theologians discovered the existence of the excruciating 'rhythm method' (having sex only on infertile days in the monthly cycle) and permitted it, thus causing millions of Catholic couples untold misery.

In the early 1960s, when the contraceptive pill had become available to ordinary women, Pope John XXIII set up a series of carefully selected commissions of 'expert' clergy to consider the Catholic position on contraception. By 1968 it had become clear that however carefully selected, every commission appointed came to the conclusion that there should be some relaxation of the ban.

Pope Paul VI, however, chose to ignore all this holy advice and issued an encyclical letter (ie a letter to be read

aloud in every Catholic church) repeating the ban in full force. Ten years later, an opinion poll in the USA showed that *eighty-five per cent* of married Catholics thought the pope was wrong, and 'followed their consciences' instead. The survey sample showed that it made no difference whether they were regular churchgoers and communicants, or whether they had had a Catholic education.

In some other countries, however, it is different. There is no doubt that in Latin America, rural Ireland, and many other peasant areas, most Catholic women accept frequent childbearing as their God-given role. This is because in areas such as these poor families depend on producing many children (a high proportion of whom will die young anyway) to bring home wages from plantations, towns or distant imperialist countries, in order to survive. The pope plays heavily on this appalling human misery for support.

There is less difference among Catholics on abortion, despite the fact that in the middle ages early abortion (before the foetus acquired a soul, whenever that might be — the theologians were rather vague about it) and was not condemned. But in modern times, the condemnation has been complete.

Pope John Paul II, at the beginning of his reign, said the three great evils threatening humanity today are 'pollution, war and abortion'. He is, of course, powerless to do anything about poisonous waste or nuclear weapons even if he really wanted to, but millions of Catholics throughout the world are organised to oppose legal abortion by lobbying, demonstrating, or taking up prosecutions.

Everywhere he goes — Latin America, Africa, Italy itself (where he backed a recent attempt to abolish the hard-won abortion law) Pope John Paul II repeats the same message: women are not to control their own bodies; papal infallibility rules over personal conscience and freedom; authority in the church is male authority.

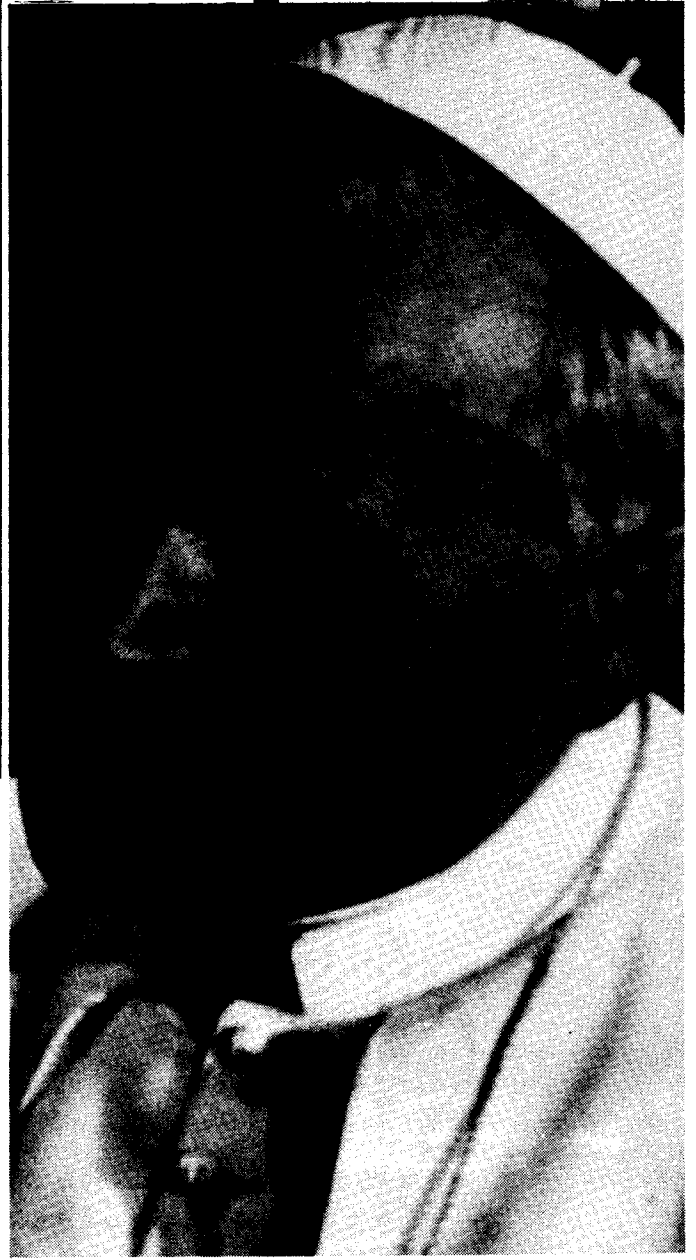
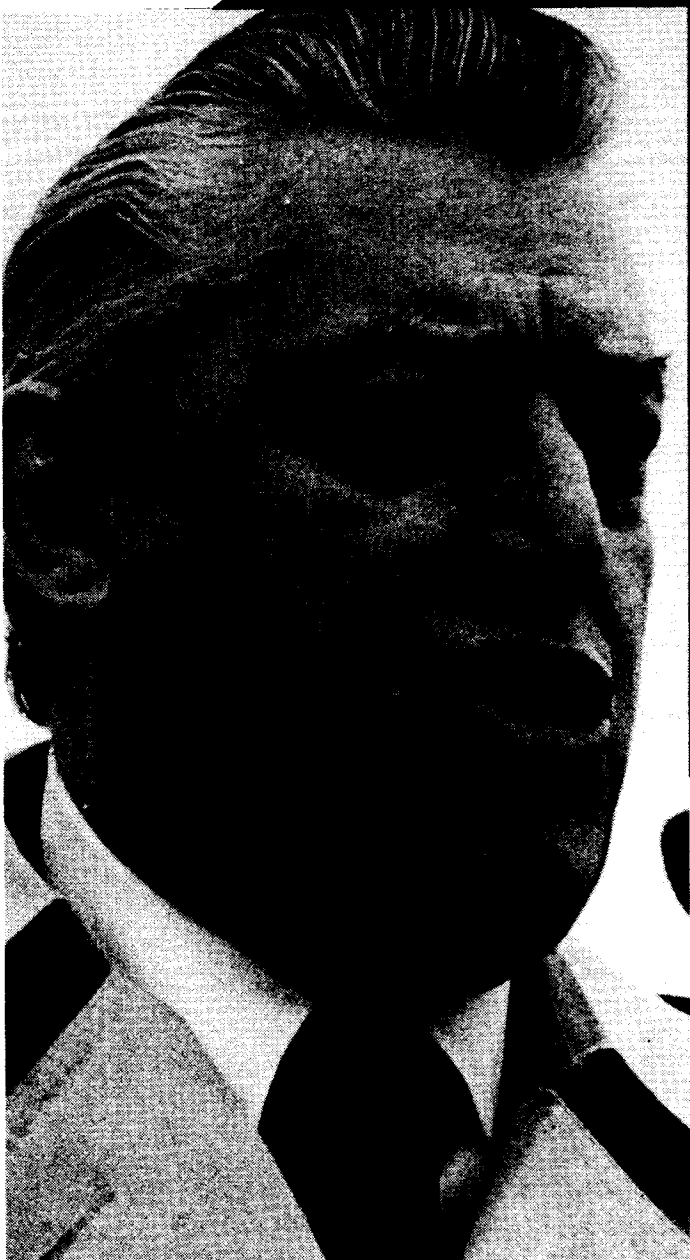
At the same time, we should have no sympathy for the Protestant 'crusade' against the pope's visit, spearheaded by Ian Paisley and his Northern Ireland thugs. The attempt to play on sectarian divisions in the working class, inside or outside Northern Ireland, is vicious and disgusting, and it should not hide the fact that most Protestant leaders (especially Paisley) have a reactionary position on women, and Protestants are prominent in anti-abortion organisations such as SPUC.

Paisley and his like have kept the Homosexual Law Amendment Act out of Northern Ireland, and the Protestant Moral Majority Movement in America has campaigned against the Equal Rights Amendment and liberal abortion laws, with as much sickening propaganda on women's God-given role as comes from Rome.

It is not just the pope (or Paisley) that women need to fight. It is really religion itself, that spiritual Valium peddled to women with the promise of relief from oppression and misery. Let's work for the day when all the bonds of exploitation and oppression are broken, and we can do without this drug.

Norah Carlin

**WHERE
BIGOTS
LEAD-
FOOLS
FOLLOW**



Love and marriage

Asian style

THREE Asian workers talk to Womens Voice about their experiences of arranged marriages in India and this country. Raj who is a 24 year old man has very strong views about the position of women in Indian society and explains his views.

'It's difficult to believe that in 1982 the system of arranged marriages is still popular in Asian society. I think you have to look at the economics of a country to understand how such traditions stick.

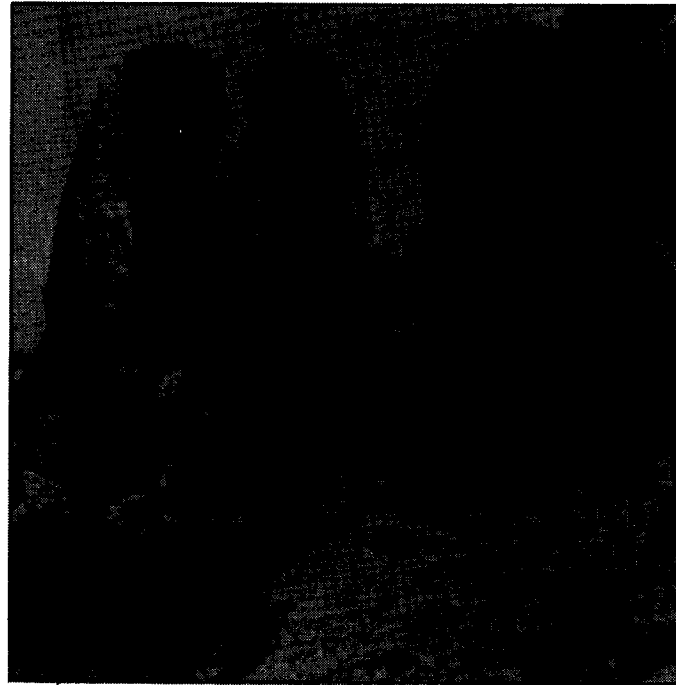
'For example Japan, a country with a traditional Asian culture has undergone some changes in recent years. As Japan became more and more industrialised and particularly as more and more women have entered the workforce, women have gained a little more economic independence and have begun to question "arranged" marriages.

'In rural parts of India, the man in the house will usually go out to work and his wife and children will be economically dependant. This economic power over a household allows enormous emotional and financial blackmail on his wife and kids.

'There is no "social security system" or unemployment benefit in rural India, so the family unit becomes more and more central to survival.

'There are three different types of "arranged" marriages. Firstly, there is the marriage that is "arranged" from a very early age. Child marriage is meant to be illegal now, but marriages still take place with children of ten-thirteen.

'The second perhaps most common type of marriage is where two sets of parents get together to arrange a marriage, the dowry for the girl is arranged and after meeting once or twice in the company of their parents the couple



are married. It's all a bit of a "fait accompli".

'The third type of arranged marriage, more common with middle class families, is where the parents of the boy and girl arrange a meeting for the young couple, usually at the home of the young girl's parents. Then there is a choice. If the son, and sometimes the daughter are not happy with the choice, then the parents go away and try someone else.

'Once married the position of women in India is just terrible. The first hurdle to survival is the young wife's relationship with her mother-in-law. It's difficult to explain why the mother-in-law wields such power in a young couple's relationship. Perhaps it's because her power over her son has been eroded, perhaps because she's losing an income from her household. I'm not sure.

'But, whatever the reason, mothers-in-law who don't get on with their daughters-in-law will incite their sons against their wives. It's very common for a young wife to be beaten up by both her husband and her mother-in-law.

'There are enormous ex-

pectations on a young Indian wife. She must be a good cook; be prepared to cook meals for her husband whenever he demands them. She must also do all the housework, bring up the children and be good in bed.

'Male domination in Indian society is very strong. For example if a young couple in England were having trouble producing children, it would be quite normal for the man and woman to visit the doctor and attend clinics for tests to find out what the cause of the problem was.

'In India, if a couple had the same problem, the husband would assume that it was his wife's fault. It wouldn't even cross his mind that it could be him that had a problem. It will be the wife who has to go through all the tests and visits to the doctors and it will be seen as her "fault" if no children are produced.

'Everything is ranged against a young wife in India. Even the way out of a bad marriage. Except amongst the rich, divorce in India is seen as the man's prerogative. Although women have the legal right to divorce their husbands, they rarely do so, because everyone will think

she's in the wrong—she will have brought "shame" to the family "honour". Yet I think if you asked most women if they'd leave their husbands if they could afford to, they'd say yes.

'Tragically, a woman's only way out of marriage is suicide, most commonly done by dousing herself with petrol and setting fire to herself or throwing herself down a well. Many of these so-called suicides are really murder, where a girl's mother-in-law or husband incites her to kill herself, sometimes even pouring petrol over the wife's body. It's really a sordid reflection of what a woman's lot is in an Indian marriage where such a painful death is preferable to life.

'The only bargaining power a young wife has is her "power" to withhold sex, but that's a really fragile sort of power isn't it?

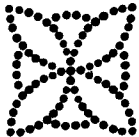
'Although women in arranged marriages in this country have more chance of economic independence, many young wives are never encouraged to learn the language, are not allowed to go out alone and so are still at the mercy of the husband and his family. The terrible tradition of death by setting fire to yourself has travelled thousands of miles across land and sea and still remains a custom of unhappy Asian women in Britain today.

'I think the way these pressures have affected me as a socialist, has been to react against the "macho" image of men. I have to make it clear time and time again that I aim to choose my own wife, and I don't want a "baby doll" to look at, but a wife who shares my outlook on life and I can communicate well with.

'I don't drink beer or spirits and I've taken up learning to cook.

'Having said that I've rebelled a little from the stereotype of men, I still think it's really important in rebelling against traditions that are reactionary that we don't abandon our culture. I feel proud of our culture, our language and our customs and I think it's really sad when

young people react against the bad things about the culture, that they can often turn their back on our history and traditions at the same time.



Vimar talked to Womens Voice about her views on marriage in India. She and her husband have two young children and live in - Buckinghamshire.

'Most girls have little say in their choice of husbands. What usually happens is your parents and your prospective husband's parents get together and organise two or three visits to the house; where you get the chance to talk to your parents' choice of husband.

'Whether you end up in a happy relationship often depends on luck. If your husband and his family are alright then there's no problem, but, more commonly women find themselves being beaten not only by their husbands but also by their in-laws. It's terrible.

'For most Indian women their married life is hell. My niece had a terrible time. She had two children. Her mother-in-law was really wicked and used to beat her. Her husband had another girlfriend and used to often hit her. Her husband eventually left her and married his girlfriend.

'My niece was just left alone. Her husband took the children and her in-laws wouldn't let her near them. She was only 33 when she died. She felt she had nothing to live for, I think.

'You see it's very difficult for an Indian woman to live alone. Women rarely file for divorce, it's usually the men. Even if a woman leaves her husband and returns to her parents they will put pressure on you to return to your husband. Because all the fingers and eyes of the village will be on you, talking about you.

'Indian husbands do nothing in the house. The husband will never let himself be seen looking after the children. Men feel ashamed to be seen to do such work.

'My husband is very good in the house. He helps me wash the clothes, cook, and

look after the kids, but my parents don't feel comfortable about him doing such things. I think they think I'm lazy or something.

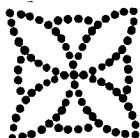
'When my husband was brought to my home I thought I'd have a better chance than most because he is a white man and somehow I thought perhaps he'd have a better attitude towards me. I was lucky I suppose.'

How does the arranged marriage system still continue?

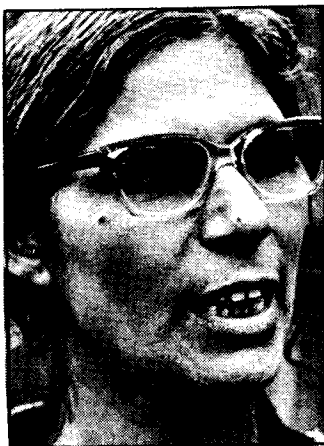
'I'm not sure really. It's tradition. When a girl's periods start Indian parents get worried. Although contraception is available, there is much ignorance about it. No girl is allowed boyfriends and there's always the possibility a girl could be raped. If a girl is known to have had boyfriends or has been raped no man will marry her. So parents keep their daughters on a tight rein.'

How do women cope with marriages that are a nightmare?

'It doesn't matter how good you are in the house, looking after the children, doing the housework, most women get beaten. Some women just accept it. A few women leave their husbands but the only way out for many Indian women is suicide.'



We spoke to Jaswinder Brar, the militant who led the marathon Chix union recognition strike, about her views. She has been married for 24 years and has four children. Two others died when they were infants



Jaswinder Brar

'What I will look for when I think of my children getting married is that they like and care for each other. I wouldn't arrange a marriage for my children in the old fashioned way unless that's what they wanted.

'I have told my daughter if she falls in love with a man and wants to marry him I will not stop her, but if she wants me to find her a husband from India then she should only get married if she is happy with the choice and the boy loves and cares for her. I think where 80 per cent of Indian marriages go wrong, is where marriages go on, despite the wishes of the children.

'What has been important in my marriage is my husband has always been a good trade union militant, a progressive man who sincerely cares about our marriage and our children. We share a lot of trust and respect which is very important. I think some Asian marriages that go wrong in this country are partly due to women as well.

'With the high unemployment in Britain, many married men are out of work and their wives are the sole breadwinner. This is good in one way because women learn an independence and confidence from their economic responsibility. But sometimes women can be very tactless.

Because of society's expectations of men being the breadwinner etc, many men suffer a terrible loss of self respect from being a 'kept' man, I think it's been important in my marriage, where I go out to work, and my husband's on the dole, that I care about and am sensitive to my husband's feelings too. Many women do not take this into account and end up suffering from their husband's reactions to their insensitivity.

'In regions of India where there has been a growth in education I think things have changed a lot. There are many young people now who will not accept the old ways and challenge their right to choose their husbands or wives. I think this is more the case in the Punjab than in other parts of India.'

The system of arranged marriages is a product of the feudal system that still

operates in parts of India. The understandable reaction of socialists to this system that identifies women as property to be bargained with and reinforces male domination, is one of horror and revulsion.

But we need to be clear about the choices open to workers even from western societies. Although in this country we appear to have a freedom of choice in our relationships, it's worth asking — what choice?

For the upper classes, property is still an important factor in determining marriage prospects. Wealth, property, education etc are still important facets in upper class circles.

For most working class young people the system works more subtly. True, marriages aren't 'arranged' in the way Raj, Jaswinder and Vimar described, but the social pressures and conditioning in this society still restrict most working class women and men to the importance of marriage and family at an early age and for young women as perhaps the most important role in life.

The social pressures on young girls of 16/17 to get engaged and married with a family as soon as possible, are still strong. Freedom of choice about who you marry is often restricted to the small circle of friends you are likely to meet before you're 20. Then fears of being 'left on the shelf', the necessity to leave your parents' home and 'lead a life of your own' leave marriage and a family as often the only choice.

Not surprisingly, both divorce and re-marriage figures continue to rise as do the numbers of women and children who are battered in the home. The truth is the system of marriage in India shocks us because it's so blatant, but we can expect no radical change in personal relationships east or west until the society we live in undergoes a revolutionary change. Where men and women can truly control and determine their own lives.

Compiled by Yolanda Bystram

All you ever wanted to know about May Day but never dared to ask...

1888 to 1892 were very exciting years of our history. They saw the growth of unions of unskilled workers, which led to the spectre of hundreds of thousands demonstrating for the eight hour day throughout the world. Such numbers hadn't been seen on the streets of London since the days of the Chartists.

The unions were organisations of skilled workers, mainly craftsmen. Described by John Burns as looking like 'respectable city gentlemen; they wore very good coats, large watch chains and high hats'. Their leaders didn't want to upset what they saw as the natural order of things.

The Socialist Movement was small. In the late 1880's the largest group, the Social Democratic Federation had 4,500 members. It's leadership was rotten. It didn't relate to the concerns of working people. It was the Socialism of ideas, not of action. But there were socialists in the ranks of the SDF who did try to organise among the unskilled. They were to form the leadership of the new unions.

This great movement started with the matchgirls' strike in East London. They worked in appalling conditions. Workbenches were covered in phosphorous. Clothes shone at night when you took them off. Girls went bald from carrying trays of matches on their heads. Some died of 'phosphorous on the inwards'. They took home an average of six shillings a week.

In every sector of industry women were the lowest of the low. We formed a third of the workforce, and earned about half male wages. The maximum wage for an unskilled man was around four shillings a day.

In 1888 the matchgirls struck over fines being deducted from their pay. Against all the odds, they won. The East End of London rang with the women's victory. Other workers were not slow to learn the lesson. If unskilled women could organise successfully, then so could unskilled men. The women provided the inspiration and confidence for the gasworkers and dockers to organise.

Will Thorne, a gas worker at Beckton, organised a meeting to form a union. The aim of the union was to win the eight hour day. 800 joined the union on the spot. Within a fortnight 2,000 had joined.

Thorne was not of the 'high hatted' brigade. He was described as 'slight and fine drawn through the heavy labour of his arduous calling. He came to the platform straight from the retort house with the mark of that fiery place burnt into his features. Round his eyes were dark rims of coal-grime his hands were gnarled and knotted by the handling of charging tools.'

The gas workers organised a petition and presented it to the company owners. To their amazement, management conceded, and the 'third shift' was instigated. According to Will Thorne, 'it was the spirit of new unionism that made international working class solidarity a reality.'



While all this was going on in England, the International Socialist Labour Congress, later known as the Second International, was meeting in Paris. There were over 400 delegates representing 22 countries. 20 delegates from Britain were present. Eleanor Marx, the youngest daughter of Karl Marx, was the interpreter. The main resolution of the congress concerned the eight hour day. 'A great manifestation will be organised on a fixed date, in such a way that simultaneously in all countries and in all towns on the same agreed day the workers will call upon the public authorities to reduce the working day by law to eight hours.' The date fixed was May 1st, 1890. In the event the London demonstration took place on the nearest Sunday — May 4th.

Back in London the confidence and size of the movement continued to grow. Engels perhaps best sums up the mood: 'the masses are on the move and there is no holding them anymore. The longer the stream is dammed up the more powerfully will it break through when the moment comes.'

The dockers struck in the summer of 1889, for 'the docker's tanner'. They wanted a wage increase of one penny from fivepence to sixpence an hour. Workers in France, Belgium, Germany and America collected a total of £108.14s.2d. for the dockers' strike fund. While Australian workers sent £30,000.

By the end of 1889, 115,886 women had joined unions in 1876 the number was 10,600). Everywhere women were prominent

in the fight for the eight hour day. Women shop assistants in Hammersmith, for example, formed a union and struck for an eight hour day. They worked an average of 86 hours a week at the time. As well as striking, they organised a boycott of all the shops that wouldn't concede their demands. They won hands down.

Not all strikes won by any means. The dockers didn't get their tanner, though they did win improved working conditions. What is important about these times is that workers flexed their muscles and felt their strength — they gained an identity as a class with power to change things.

It was amid this atmosphere that Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, Will Thorne and the small band of socialists around them set about building for May Day.

They toured the country, speaking at meetings and demonstrations. Wherever Eleanor spoke she stressed the need for International solidarity, and above all of involving women in the new movement.

There were, of course, difficulties. The TUC and the leadership of the SDF were against legislation for the eight hour day. They argued that if parliament could reduce the working day, it could also increase it. Moreover, trade unions should not be involved with politics.

Eleanor argued staunchly for parliamentary reform. There was no Chinese wall between trade unions and politics. Furthermore, she argued that 'by making their

voices heard in the very citadels of power, they would challenge the unlimited exploitation of capitalism itself.' **It was this very challenge which the 'high hatted' brigade were afraid of. They didn't want to see the stream break through the dam.**

Consequently there were two demonstrations, one 'legal' one not, to march from the embankment to Hyde Park by different routes.

The press was busily whipping up hysteria about 'violent eruptions' throughout the world on May 1st. The Sheffield Independent said: 'There have not been so many troops converged in Paris since the commune, whilst Vienna and Berlin will be practically under a state of seige. What is troubling statesmen all over Europe is the apprehension of what may follow once the working class have brought home to them a sense of their predominating power by a simultaneous muster of that power in all the capitals of Europe.'

The demonstrations were massive, involving millions of workers. The largest were in Austria and Hungary — where 4,000 attempted to liberate the prison in Prossnitz. In Germany strikes were illegal and socialists imprisoned. Yet 25,000 came out on strike in Berlin.

The London demonstration was magnificent. 300,000 took part. Men and women skilled and unskilled, employed and unemployed. It was a gigantic show of strength and solidarity. The vast bulk of the demon-

strators marched with the 'legal' eight hour banners.

Engels said of the rally: 'All in all the most gigantic meeting that has ever been held here ... I can assure you I looked a couple of inches taller when I got down from that old lumbering waggon that served as a platform — after having heard again, for the first time since 40 years, the unmistakable voice of the English Proletariat. The real socialist mass movement has begun with May 4th.'

But let the last words come from Eleanor Marx's speech. 'I am speaking this afternoon not only as a trade unionist, but as a socialist. Socialists believe that the eight hour day is the first and most immediate step to be taken, and we aim at a time when there will no longer be one class supporting two others, but the unemployed both at the top and at the bottom of society will be got rid of. This is not the end, but the beginning of the struggle; it is not enough to come here to demonstrate in favour of an eight hour day. **We must not be like some Christians who sin for six days and go to church on the seventh, but we must speak for the cause daily, and make the men, and especially the women that we meet, come into the ranks to help us.**

*Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth on
you —*

Ye are many — they are few.'

Joan Rudder



May Day in Hyde Park, 1891—The International Platform. Eleanor is the lady in the Spanish cloak, Aveling the speaker, Engels the taller of the two bearded gentlemen behind him.

Reagan the West and El Salvador

With the eyes of the world's press fixed firmly at present on the Falklands, public attention has been drawn away, again, from America's involvement in the atrocities in El Salvador. **Carla Lopez** explains Reagan and Haig's commitment to crushing the Salvadorean guerilla movement at all costs.

El Salvador is a tiny Central American republic, scarcely the size of Wales, with a population of five million most of whom live in abject poverty. Salvadoreans have the lowest calorie intake in Latin America. 73 per cent of children under five are malnourished, the infant mortality rate is 63 deaths for every 1,000 births (18 in Britain), only half the population has access to safe water, 73 per cent of the rural population are without sanitation.

The situation of the vast majority of the people contrasts starkly with that of the tiny elite which own the country's wealth. In an agricultural country like El Salvador, wealth has traditionally meant ownership of land. It was in the late nineteenth century that land became concentrated in the hands of a few rich families (a mere 14 of them at this time, today it is nearer 200, but still 2 per cent of the population own 60 per cent of the land).

These families took over the communal lands of the Indian population when private property was declared the only legal form of land tenure in the 1880s. They used the land to respond to growing world demand for coffee, and this became the country's main export and is still so today.

While ownership of land and the

export of coffee was the basis of the ruling elite's political and economic power, the creation of the wealth was based on the super-exploitation of the dispossessed peasantry. For many years the latter were virtual slaves to the plantation owners. In return for a tiny plot of land on which they could only just subsist, the peasant or *colono* and his family would be expected to give free labour to the landowner.

Gradually, as the years passed and the landowners expanded into even these tiny plots, wage labour was introduced. This initially took place in the Western part of the country and it was here that the first challenge to the oligarchy took place in the years of the Great Depression. In 1932 Farabundo Marti led a peasant uprising; but Marti himself was killed just before it took place and over 30,000 peasants were killed in the subsequent massacre.

Since 1932 the oligarchy have ruled through crude and systematic repression. The armed forces took over the state apparatus and worked closely with the oligarchy to preserve the privileges which both enjoyed thanks to the oppression of the majority of the population.

During the 1960s economic changes took place which were to have a profound effect on the development of the class struggle in El Salvador, and which help explain the present conflict. In this period, the United States, which considered El Salvador to be part of its 'backyard', began to promote a strategy which it believed would prevent the Cuban revolution spreading to Central America.

Part of this strategy involved economic modernisation. It began to encourage the Salvadorean oligarchy to diversify its production and to increase its productivity, and it granted aid and credits to enable it to do so. As a result the oligarchy took over more *colono* plots to plant cotton, and extended the system of wage labour.

This had a dramatic effect on rural life, creating a semi proletariat living on the margins of subsistence. In 1961 the number of landless peasants was only 12 per cent of the rural population, by 1975 it was 41 per cent and in 1980 65 per cent. As labour is only required seasonally in El Salvador and mechanisation was reducing even the need for this, there are few alternative means of employ-

ment open to the landless. Unemployment in the rural areas is estimated to be 45 per cent of the rural population.

Some peasants went to San Salvador, the capital, in search of work. Here the US had promoted industrialisation through the creation of the Central American Common Market, a market made up of the elites of Central America. But the industries set up by the Salvadorean oligarchy often in close collaboration with US transnational companies were capital rather than labour intensive. Only a few got jobs in the new factories. Most of those who went to the city, ended up in the swollen service sector, living in the squalor of the shanty towns.

The changing economic conditions in the 1960s and 1970s, with the expansion of commercial agriculture and industry, did give rise to new reformist movements seeking gradual change of the *status quo*. The Social Democrat, Christian Democrat and Communist Parties, united in 1972 to fight an election.

They won the election (their presidential candidate was Jose Napoleon Duarte), but there was a fraud which deprived them of victory. The United States helped suppress a constitutional coup aimed at restoring Duarte to the presidency.

Subsequently, the guerilla movements and mass popular organisations began to grow in strength as the peasants and workers came to realise that only armed struggle together with mass political mobilisation could really bring about change.

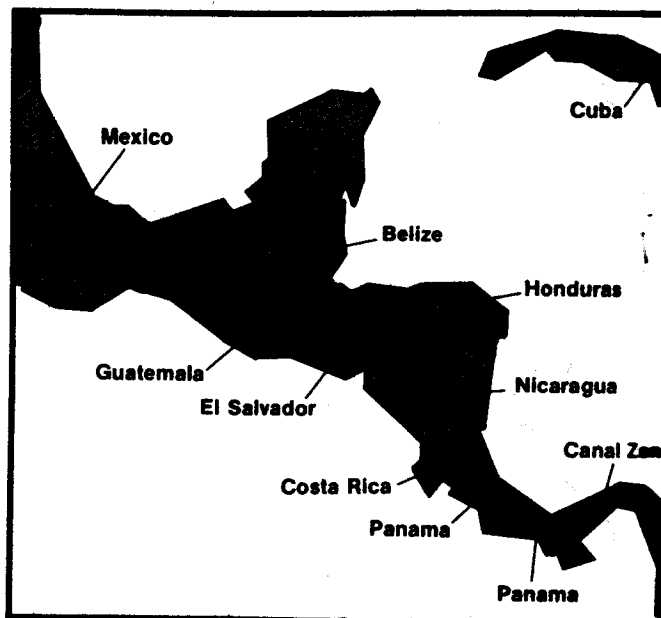
The growth in these movements

was spectacular and the FDR/FM finally formed in 1979 a political front called the mass revolutionary and those reform Social Democrats, Christians and Communists who finally decided to take an armed struggle in the unity of the movements.

The growth of the movement was an open hegemony in a regionally dominated Nicaraguan revolution determined to prevent going the same way. He came to power, he El Salvador would his commitment to Soviet subversion backyard.

He made a few however. He believed helicopters, military weapons would guerillas. This was the case; by the guerillas controlled the country and the army has proved dislodging them de offensives.

It is the essence of the Salvadorean explains the brutality with US help, they on the peasants and Salvador. Well over have been savaged the past two years simply eliminates the knowledge that trial or actual guerilla But still the guerilla defeated, although

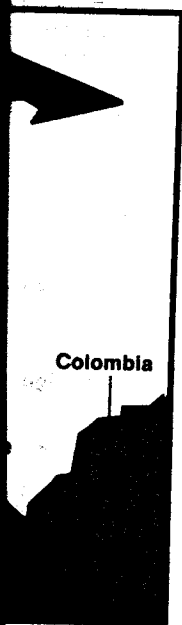


and is the origins
of the FMLN which was
founded in 1980. The FDR is a
coalition consisting of the
major organisations
of the left (the
Marxist parties (the
FMLN, Social
Democratic Communist Party)
and the FMLN
decided to support
the FMLN in 1980. The FMLN
is the main force of the guerilla

the popular move-
ment challenge to US
policy in the region it had tradi-
tionally supported. Following the
election, the US was
convinced that El Salvador
was a test case in
the US's policy of
'defeating
communism' in the US

fundamental error
was made that a few US
policy advisers and
senators had
defeat the
FMLN was very far from
the truth. In June 1981 the
FMLN had one third of
the Salvadoran
territory and was
incapable of
defeating the army
despite numerous

the weakness of
the army which ex-
plains why with
the aid of US
arms and workers of El
Salvador 30,000 people
have been
murdered in
the last two years. The army
is the oppressor in
the country and
they are poten-
tially the main
supporters.
The FMLN has
not been able to
overcome their weakness



in the urban areas, where govern-
ment repression has been severe
and where the guerillas failed to
pay attention to the defence of the
workers, makes it difficult for them
to win an all out victory.

This places the United States in
a difficult dilemma. The Salva-
dorean army will not defeat the
guerillas, a prolonged war might
even favour the guerillas rather
than the army which has less room
for manoeuvre, has low morale and
insufficient troops. The US has
considered an indirect inter-
vention, but this would have to be
led by Argentine troops, now
heavily engaged in the Falkland
Islands. A direct intervention
would be political suicide for
Reagan as public antagonism to
his policies has escalated within
the United States.

In addition the recent elections
in El Salvador, rather than produce
a victory for Jose Napoleon
Duarte, now the US's favoured
stooge in El Salvador, strength-
ened the far right who will make no
concessions to US public opinion
which might enable Reagan to
rally support for increasing mili-
tary aid to the country. Indeed the
strongest civilian in El Salvador as
a result of the elections is Major
D'Aubisson, a pathological killer,
committed to the physical exter-
mination of as many of the popula-
tion as is necessary to impose
order. If 30,000 died under Duarte,
the figure for a government in
which D'Aubisson is a key figure
defies imagination.

But the problem remains, that
without more direct US help it will
be difficult even for an extreme
right wing government to defeat
the guerillas. With the situation in
neighbouring Guatamala about to
blow up, what we may see in the
next year is a regional conflagra-
tion of vast proportions. However,
the regionalisation of the class
struggle is the best hope for
socialism in Central America.

A victory in the region would be
a colossal defeat for imperialism
with widespread implications all
round the world. To ensure that the
US does not intervene to prevent
guerilla victories — either militarily
or by negotiating with the so-
called 'moderate' elements in the
FDR, a mass movement of soli-
darity with the struggle in Central
America must be built in Britain.
Ultimately a defeat for US im-
perialism in Central America is a
major victory for British workers
and deserves their mass support.
Carla Lopez



Stop the warmongers

Demonstrate against Reagan's visit
Sat 6 June! — Hyde Park — 12.30pm

(called by CND)

Picket US Embassy,
Grosvenor Square—7 June 5.30pm

Northern Ireland: community under siege



Alison Court and Angela Birtill

OUR initial reaction to the border was one of horror. We approached it from the South, and the beauty of the landscape was wrenched into perspective by the line of Saracens and the heavily fortified tower.

The border defines the reality of Northern Ireland, not only for the women and men who are actively involved in the armed struggle, but for everyone who lives in the Six Counties or travels into them like ourselves.

The British recognise this, and it is forbidden to take photographs of the Army and their 'defences'. A photograph would have shown the Saracens, the tower, and a British troop pointing a rifle at us.

Our impression of the border were still vivid when we entered Belfast. It is a small city and reminded us of many working class towns that we have seen in the North of England. There are two basic differences.

The poverty is stark and uncompromising. The narrow streets and the rows of terraced houses evoke images of the Thirties. The open spaces are derelict and the paving stones, cracked and uneven. It is worth remembering that Northern Ireland has the highest rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom. It is also worth remembering that this Kingdom is far from united.

The second difference is the Army of occupation. There can be no doubt that it is an army of occupation. The British troops are alienated and isolated from the rest of the community. They patrol it like a minefield, and their weak footprints are an indelible stain on the consciousness of the population.

Our coach meandered through the streets until we arrived at the Pass N Grove Community Centre in Beechmount. As we climbed down from the coach, men and women rushed out from the Community Centre with cups of tea and sandwiches. It was an incredibly warm welcome, and it was in brilliant contrast to our early experience at the border.

We were taken from Pass N Grove to the Sinn Fein Centre on Falls Road. The welcome continued and we were told that a mural had been painted to celebrate our visit. The walls and gable-ends in the Republican area of West Belfast are covered with the most intricate and colourful paintings. The artists are youths, who attempt to defend their handiwork from the British troops. Within days of our visit the mural will have been ruined.

The army pick up the youths for questioning. The youths are questioning the troops' right to occupy their country. In their absence, the mural will be bombed with acid. Initially, the army used paint, but the youths began to glaze the murals, making it easier to get rid of the paint. Acid burns through the glazing.

The Sinn Fein Centre is heavily defended against attack. Periodically the army tear down the wire fencing and the

Photo: Syd Shelton

have written up their experience of the women's delegation to Ireland this year.

Centre is fire bombed by loyalists. We were assigned to our billets at the Sinn Fein Centre, and warned against straying into the Loyalist areas of Belfast.

It was made clear to us, that although we would learn a great deal from talking to the Loyalists, we were also likely to get our throats cut. We would not be attacked because of our political differences with the Loyalists, but because we were different. The Loyalist community is insular and paranoid, and the descriptions reminded us of the Afrikaaners in South Africa.

It constantly surprised us that the Republicans we spoke to went to great lengths to stress that they harboured no personal differences against the Loyalists. The reality of Loyalist Supremacy, as practiced by their working class supporters, was seen as something that was worthy of mourning and pity rather than hatred.

Our hosts, Janice and Joe Austin, reiterated this final point when we arrived at their house. A minute terraced home, where they lived with their five children and Janice's brother. It amazed us that Janice had agreed to put us up for the weekend, but the warmth and sense of purpose that motivated the household soon made it apparent that our fears were unjustified. We were welcomed into their home without reservation, and we were cared for in the same way that they cared for the rest of their family.



Bag searcha daily occurrence

In a sense, we were like children, and the reality of the War was both difficult and dangerous for us to grow accustomed to. We were grateful that Janice and Joe, and the entire Republican community, were protective towards us. It wasn't that they doubted our strength, but we recognised that we needed help and support to become acclimatised to West Belfast.

Initially, it was difficult and almost unreal for us to adapt to the Army of occupation. To see them darting from street corner to street corner on their patrols, to see the Saracens cruising the streets with all the arrogance of male punters in Soho, to see the squaddies leering at the women and spitting their contempt at the children and the youths.

We were told that the black squaddies are always made to sit in the rear of the Saracens, and to bring up the rear of a street patrol, as these are the positions where a soldier is more likely to be shot. Our own observations confirmed this monstrous absurdity. The oppression is piled thick, layer upon layer, like an obscene sandwich of hatred and self-loathing.

The reality of British oppression also borders on the ridiculous. To enable two RUC men to walk into a Republican area, at least six British soldiers are needed as chaperons, surrounding and protecting the RUC from the community that they are supposed to police. Perhaps the Tories could get Scarman to write a report about it, although Jardine and Anderton would probably see it as a perfect model for policing on the 'mainland'.

The dogs bark at the patrols, and there is a complex but effective warning system that is used whenever the troops enter a Republican area. It is worth noting that not only Republicans are at risk. Youths have been beaten up for wearing the wrong colour of football scarf, women have been assaulted for being alone, six children have been killed by plastic bullets. They also shoot dogs, and Janice and Joe were quick to bring their dog into the house whenever they were in the vicinity.

It was frightening for our delegation to experience at first hand the intimidation used by the RUC and the British Army. The RUC met our coach both going into and out of Belfast, our bags were searched and the posters that we had bought were confiscated. We emerged from a Community Centre at night to suddenly find a rifle literally, under our noses.

The street lamps are especially subdued to facilitate the patrols, and we could just make out the squaddies' grin as we recoiled from his gun in horror. It should be remembered that we were not the specific objects of their oppression. They had been told to be polite with us, and to treat us to the delights of male imperialism 'gently'.

Talking to Irish women and men, living in their houses and taking part in their community, brought home to us the sheer horror of the oppression that is levelled at them.

On the Saturday night alone, 37 people were picked up for questioning under the Special Security Laws. Almost every person that we talked to had either been inside the British gaols themselves, or had close friends or relatives who had been imprisoned. A man who stayed with us overnight, had never been out of gaol for more than three months at a time over the past eight years. It was accepted as fact, that the RUC and the army would fabricate evidence, lie and torture, to extract the maximum punishment from the non-jury courts. He, along with the Blanketmen who stayed at Janice's house on the Saturday night, was humble, unassuming and friendly, reluc-

tant to condemn and genuinely compassionate in his views of the world.

Every time that someone knocked at Janice's door, their identity had to be verified before they were admitted. The door itself was reinforced with locks and bolts, with the dog keeping guard constantly. The adults didn't mention the names of activists or discuss political business when the children were present, to protect them from harassment and intimidation from the army. Joe pulled his little boy down quickly when he was playing near the window in the evening. Another of their children, who was fascinated by our camera, told us that he had been photographed 'once, when I got shot in my head.'

Violence, and the threat of violence, was ever present. It pervaded everything, even the jokes and the stories that we shared, it awoke with us in the morning and it slept next to us at night. It was a measure of Janice and Joe's warmth that we slept at all.

Joe had been close to death himself on many occasions. A close friend had been murdered by Loyalists when the two of them had been walking down the road. Both Janice and her husband recognised that their lives were always at risk. A neighbour had just been released from gaol. A young woman, who had not even been involved in the war, had been murdered and her breasts had been cut off. Yet another neighbour had been shot and killed. Each of these people had lived in the same street as Janice and Joe. Their specific horror was not untypical. Each street has its own obscene and violent history.

And across this history, the British Army and RUC barracks straddle like monstrous insects, enlarged and deformed and sucking at the life about their wire and metal legs. They are implanted onto the community, dividing tiny streets and commanding acres of derelict and wasted space. Their fortifications are hymns to bondage and oppression. They not only impose their reality on the community, they sanctify a fascist dogma with the red, white and very, very blue stamp of Imperialism, capitalism and sexism.

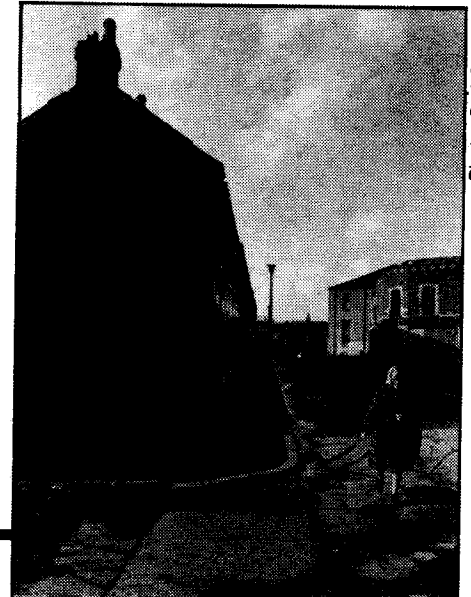


Photo: Syd Shelton

Warmongers on the warpath

THE utter madness of the Iron Lady and the Tory Government seems to know no bounds. Three years ago when the Tories won the election, few of us would have believed that there would soon be three million unemployed. The extent of the devastation and disaster in the lives of millions of ordinary people caused by this government and its policies would barely have seemed possible.

But however bad anyone thought a Tory Government would be, few can have expected to see a massed fleet of warships and aircraft carriers steaming to the South Atlantic to fight a war with Argentina.

But perhaps even more amazing are the cries from right wing Tory MPs and newspapers like the Daily Mail that Argentina is ruled by a fascist military junta.

This probably is news to readers of the Daily Mail. It's certainly not news to socialists in Britain who have been campaigning against the military junta in Argentina for the last six years. The truth about the right wing death squads, about the disappearance of thousands of socialists and trade unionists in Argentina, is now headline news. Just a month ago, no-one outside the socialist and trade union movement in Britain wanted to know.

Not that the sending of a British Fleet will do anything to change the system of dictatorship and repression in Argentina.

It may well be that the crisis over the Falklands may at some point provoke yet another change of names in the Argentina junta, or even a slightly bigger shake up. But the only people with the ability to change Argentina dramatically and get rid of the generals and policemen who rule the society are the Argentinian working class. Just days before Galtieri seized the Falklands, Buenos Aires was rocked by demonstrations and marches against the regime.

But all that is now forgotten. The very same workers who marched against Galtieri and the junta, are now demonstrating against the British Fleet and the British presence in the Falkland Islands.

It's worth asking why, and not just dismissing what is clearly the opinion of the vast majority of Argentinians, as yet more nationalistic clap trap.

By virtually any geographical definition, the Falklands are part of Argentina. They are dependent on Argentina for supplies and communications. They are thousands of miles from anywhere else (apart from Chile and the Antarctic continent). It's really very difficult to see a way in which the Falklands can stay outside Argentina for any length of time.

This has nothing to do with any judgement about the sort of Government which

exists in Argentina. Certainly the nature of the junta has never worried Tory or Labour politicians in Britain before. In June 1976 after the military takeover, thousands of refugees tried to get out of Argentina, knowing that if they stayed they faced torture and possible death.

In three months, Canada took 272 refugees, Sweden 247, Holland 231, France 202, Cuba 165.

Britain under a Labour Government with Michael Foot as deputy Prime Minister, took just 13.

In the same year, Britain, with Michael Foot as deputy Prime Minister, supplied 30 per cent of Argentina's arms imports. In January 1978, still with Michael Foot as deputy Prime Minister, Argentine troops trained in Britain.

Those same troops have now been used to seize the Falklands. But of course as Michael Foot, Margaret Thatcher and the editor of the Daily Mail know only too well, their training was not for that. It was to enable them to break up and put down demonstrations, strikes and insurrections against the military junta which Michael Foot has suddenly discovered he opposes.

Socialists should have nothing to do with this hypocrisy. The working class of Argentina will deal with the junta at the end of the day. And the working class in Britain has enemies enough with the Thatcher Government at home.



A warmonger's dream come true!!

WOMENS HEALTH

'If you're warm and can breathe then you're fit for work!'

The column this month was written by a TGWU shop steward in a London engineering factory who has been a steward for the past five years and sees the need to fight for safe and healthy conditions at work as one of her priorities.

The industrial nurse is usually a joke. Much like an army doctor with the attitude: 'if you're warm and can breathe then you're fit for work.' I've known girls at work faint with period pains, in pain with torn ligaments and told nonetheless to return to their job.

Industrial nurses have an enormous responsibility. They can have your jobs changed if causing ill-health, send you home if unfit to work, even recommend that working conditions are changed to protect your health and safety.

Sadly, most factory workers will have stories of how their health or safety at work has suffered as a result of the 'final word' of the 'works nurse.' The trouble is people hate arguing with people they think 'know better', while they should trust more in what they can see with their own eyes.

The outcome of a faulty diagnosis or a refusal to take a worker complaining of a pain or injury seriously, can have very sinister implications to the health and welfare of workers. For instance there are many prescribed industrial diseases that do not necessarily show symptoms for months, sometimes years. The longer the complaint is left, the harder it becomes to prove that the company you work for is liable for the injury or disease incurred.

For many shop stewards the process of halting a dangerous process or Preventing the use of dangerous chemicals etc depends on the extent you are prepared to persevere often against sophisticated and cold blooded management techniques. No one could begin to know the thousands of disabilities and diseases and even deaths that are a direct cause of undiagnosed industrial injury or disease. It's frightening.

Every year hundreds of new processes of production and new processes are introduced on shop floors. Workers have a responsibility to themselves and their work-mates to make sure that any new process is checked to ensure that no ill effects immediate or longterm, can hurt them.

We had a new process introduced where I work some time ago, where the fumes from the heated flux we worked with caused dizzy heads and sore throats. The engineer in charge assured the shop steward it was all quite safe. The shop steward had the imagination to have the process checked by a chemical analyst and eventually proved that it was quite unsuitable and should be taken off the shopfloor. A new type of flux is now being used!

Cost and risk

The cost of putting dangerous plant and processes into a safe condition can be astronomical and this is often used as an excuse by management not to bother to put things right.

In some cases it's also a case of a lack of imagination and communication on their part. Although it's wrong to expect changes overnight, I think they're must be a continual sifting through of complaints and the results of safety inspections on the shopfloor to ensure the maximum health and safety.

I don't believe enough workers know that there are lots of ways to make sure things are put right. And it shouldn't just be left to shop stewards to keep up the check on health and safety.

I get fed up with people who say 'What can we do?' What I say is, if you've gone through the normal channels, made your complaint and got no satisfaction then it's up to workers taking action and refusing to work with dangerous chemicals or hazardous conditions.

Of course it's no good just one or two workers taking that sort of action, it leaves you wide open to one of management's 'favourites' at the present time—'If you won't risk your health then there's three million on the dole queues that will ...' They really are on the bandwagon with this terrible recession and awful government.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 was passed in parliament to help assure better working conditions. But the Act is meaningless unless shop stewards, and rank and file union members keep a permanent check on conditions at work and are prepared to fight not only the industrial nurse when they're wrong but also the management. Health and safety at work is our right and we need to organise ourselves collectively at work to defend that right when under attack.



REVIEWS

Ten years ago the women's liberation movement was born in Britain. 'Sweet Freedom' by Anna Coote and Bea Campbell is an account of that movement, of its struggles and its future.

Below two women who were both active in the early movement as socialists and feminists send in their views of the book. We welcome your views.

Sweet Freedom
by Anna Coote and
Beatrix Campbell
Pan Books £1.95

A little more than a decade after the formation of what we know as the Women's Liberation Movement comes 'Sweet Freedom' a welcome review of where we came from and where we go from here. As the book itself states, it is an 'interim report'. It does not claim to make any far reaching contribution to theory or strategy, and anyone looking for new insights will not find them in abundance. What they will find is extensive research and the gathering together of disparate thoughts, writings and campaigns which have shaped the movement.

Having myself been involved in the process, heard many of the voices at first hand, shared their feelings and experiences, I find it difficult to be anything but subjective. I too felt the exhilaration of the early seventies, the rejection of the old myths, the discovery of my talents, my sexuality, my positive self image, and a new enjoyment of politics which at last seemed to

relate directly to me.

I experienced the confusion as the movement grew and the initial sisterhood gave way to the infighting only too familiar in other political movements. I have zig-zagged my way from campaigning to introspection, anarchic euphoria to socialist-feminist strategy. Now we reach the 80s and look for review and regeneration.

The book provides the review, but I feel it falls short in terms of regeneration. First it does not seem to recognise the many negative features—features due partly to our present confusing political climate and

partly to the processes individuals in the movement have been experiencing.

The closing chapter looking forward to the future offers a programme not far removed from the original demands of the movement. It reasserts the movement as a campaigning of consciousness as raised through psychoanalysis and other such activities. Perhaps the book does not see that as its brief, but my feeling is that the 'sweet freedom' we all strive for will not come through political campaigning alone.

The issues which intrigue me are why women in their mid-thirties are suddenly

turning their thoughts to babies? Why are people generally, and women in particular, turning away from organised collective activity and towards psycho analysis, individual development in work and cultural practice and so on.

One thing which attracted me to the women's movement was its attitude to organised politics, its assertion of the personal, of individuality, sexuality, subjectivity, feeling as important and fruitful areas of activity. It is a movement which has never become stultified or dogmatic, or at least not for long. I feel that this should be celebrated and emphasised above all else.

It is nevertheless warming for feminists to have a book which takes all the thoughts, writings and events which have so changed the course of women's history in such a short period. I hope the book will serve, as the authors say, to keep this period from being excluded from history as the progress of past women's movements was all but lost to us.

SUE BEARDON

NO SENSE OF FREEDOM

In 1971, women's liberation was a whisper and it was a joke. That year *International Socialists* (the organisation which is now the *Socialist Workers Party*) debated on the position of women for the first time — the women who presented the motion were jeered and many of the women who supported it were later isolated. Responses of other socialist and labour movement organisations were no better.

Unsure, emergent feminists scoured the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky to dredge up proof that the great masters really believed that women were oppressed. And between the quotes and the undeniable fact that a large percentage of workers were women, the jokes began to fall flat and

PICADOR

Sweet Freedom

THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION
Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell



some of the issues were taken seriously. Typing and teamaking were done less willingly, and women began to speak at meetings.

Our misery turned to anger and our isolation to solidarity. We grasped at the threads of confidence and we began to find a voice. The Women's Liberation Movement, directly and indirectly, went on to change the lives of most women and to put new and often revolutionary questions on the political agenda.

Eleven years after those fumbling beginnings, in *Sweet Freedom*, Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell attempt 'an account of feminist politics to show how far the objectives of the Women's Liberation Movement have been resolved and met resistance.'

For all of us who owe the quality of our lives to the new awareness of issues raised by the women's movement, it is a sad, superficial and confusing book. There is no sense of the spirit of the movement, the rumblings of new life, the sanity of discovered self respect. There is no understanding of why and how women are oppressed. There is no feel for the lives of most women, their day to day struggles, the battles they still face—often as mothers, as girlfriends, as wives.

There is little mention of the new culture of women's writings, films, new lifestyles, commitment to their own growth and development, concern with their own health and physical needs. The chapter on culture deals almost exclusively with the involvement and presentation of women in the mass media. Pregnancy, childbirth, relationships, the structure of emotions, guilt and the devaluing of all that is 'female' are ignored.

The early movement is often presented as a clique of friends, not as the breath-taking gust of fresh air that it was. Then after a series of disconnected chapters — the bulk of them on work, legislation and the trade unions, we pick up the Women's Liberation 1982-style presented by Coote and Campbell as warring factions of separatist lesbians.

Is it really news that part

time work is stigmatised because mainly women do it or that men are seen as breadwinners? That the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act achieved very little; that Tory strategy is to dismantle the welfare state making women the major casualties and the nurses of the casualties? It has all been said many times before.

All through the book you want to ask why? Why does this happen to women, why is it possible? And the authors present a series of confusing non-answers: men, the cuts, the shortage of women in powerful positions, the lack of positive discrimination. While they sometimes condemn men, they simultaneously accept 'male' definitions of what is political.

Women's Liberation made the personal political. It showed that politics was not simply about men in the 'outside world', it showed that politics was right there in the kitchen, the bedroom and the labour ward. It showed that women could be active, showing people that what they did was already important and what they might go on to was their right. It began to demonstrate that the germs of hope for a very different society lay within the warmth and feelings that women had nurtured, once they were able to harness that warmth and not let it be used against them and against most people in the maintenance of a ruthless, oppressive and miserable system.

Women's Liberation is not and never has been about bringing women up to the level of men but that essentially is what Coote and Campbell believe it to be. Men will have to hand over their power, they say. Get into the male pond and swim. We don't want 'male' power and we challenge the 'male' pond. It is the 'male' view of the world that has held all women and most men in chains ten feet under.

Feminist politics is about changing the world and, maybe, eleven years after the jokes and the jeers, socialist organisations are beginning to see it that way. It's a pity that Coote and Campbell have failed to make it any easier for them.

SHEILA DUNCAN

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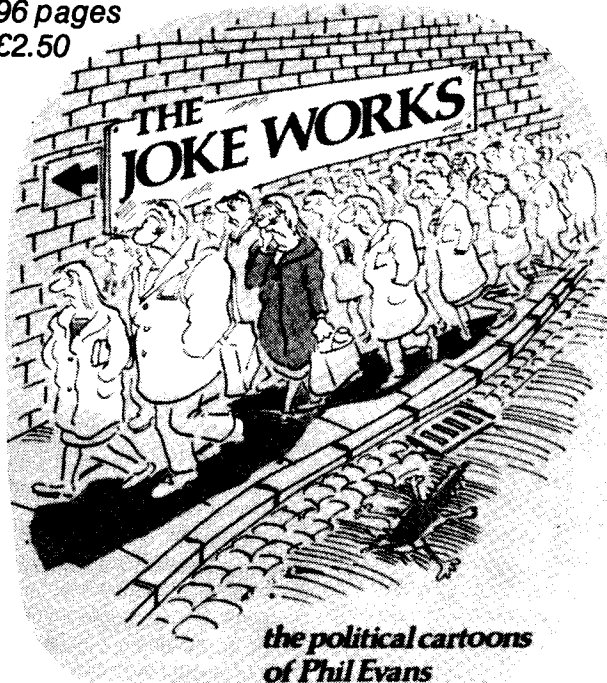
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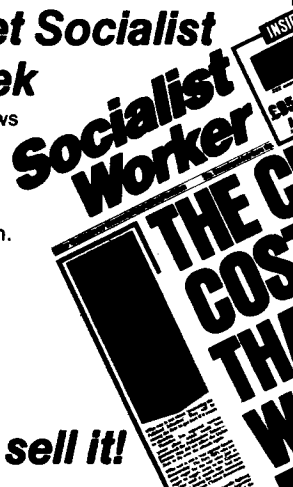
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LETTERS



Few options and little power

Dear Womens Voice,

Chanie Rosenberg's short story 'Obituary' (March 82), and subsequent letters to the editor have raised some important questions concerning incest.

In my experience, incest is a complex relationship that doesn't always take the form of sexual violence perpetrated against a helpless young female who has no way of fighting back. Those outrages certainly do happen. But, under some conditions, incest may be appealing, even enjoyable for a girl who is approached gently, and where special attention and a more powerful position is the reward for sexual co-operation.

That may not be the general situation, but it was mine. My father's need and desire made him more vulnerable to me than he would have otherwise been. That gave me more power than I would have otherwise had. And when you feel powerless, you tend to use whatever methods or options available to increase your power, even when it means co-operating in something you might not otherwise want to do.

The tragedy of incest is not that men can and do seek sexual relations with little girls, but that capitalism provides most young women with so few options and so little power that we are vulnerable to sexual use and abuse.

The incestuous relationship may be detested, it may be enjoyed, or anything in between. What is always

brutalising and oppressive is learning so young that your body, your sexuality, is a commodity that you will be pressurised to trade in return for material and emotional necessities.

Telling the truth is not misogynist, even if it is painful and ugly. Only if we tell the truth can we hope to uncover what lies at the root of our oppression.

I applaud Rosenberg for her unconventional presentation of incest and I hope Womens Voice continues to print articles and stories which make us confront not only the myths of capitalism but our own as well.

In solidarity,
Susan Rosenthal,
International Socialists
(Canada)

Female Follies

Dear Womens Voice,

I thought you'd like to know about 'New Variety' in Brixton. It's a pub gig, every Friday night with a difference. It's run by Cast Theatre Group and is political entertainment. It's main emphasis is on women performers.

If you've got an act — from a women's reggae band to comediennes, from poets to fire-eaters ... phone 01 487 3440.
Warren Lakin.
Cast

God squad on the make

Dear Womens Voice,

I am just writing to tell you that Manchester is trembling at the roots, no, not because of impending war, not because of Tebbit's bill, nor even because of our Hospital Worker Industrial action against 4%.

Manchester is trembling at the roots in honour of a brief visitation from God's representative on earth, because all the trees in Heaton Park have been pulled up, leaving only barren waste land to receive the man and the masses.

Cynics amongst you may whisper appropriately given his line on abortion, contraception and divorce, let alone the male hierarchy of the church. But then you never did have any spunk — sorry spirit. Places — in rows — on these compounds — are of course free for the thousands and millions expected to attend. Rather reminiscent of South Africa, South America — Ascot I hear you whisper. Surely that's

blasphemy to compare the spiritual to the temporal because it's sure going to cost thousands and millions. But then there's always compound interest (the joke's are terrible — I know). Yes — Papal Incs is in business, selling busts, (how dare you!) souvenirs and no doubt Coca Cola at heavenly prices.

Never fear what the church taketh with one hand, the state will cover with the other. All complaints to rate rises inclusive of holy drop-in to ... God, St Peter's Square, Manchester.

Remember ... in case of cancellation due to war, riot, or other natural disasters, no refunds are available.

Finally, talking about dropping in. 'Wanted' drop out exchange! One weekend in delightful two bed, near end terraced. Guaranteed Holy Presence and chemical fumes, in exchange for any quiet corner of sanity!!

Penny Simmons
Eccles, Manchester.

Disquieting dieting

Dear Womens Voice,

Ruth Cowan (letter WV April) accuses us of 'pandering to capitalist society' by printing Chris Fellowes article on Weightwatchers.'

As far as I know, WV does not have a 'line' on slimming — so Chris was giving a personal history, not an editorial opinion. Although I agree with Ruth that the arguments in 'Fat is a feminist issue' are by and large the most convincing, I see no reason why she should expect Chris or anyone else to accept them just like that.

This argument about dieting is a bit like the argument about how we fight for socialism. Wouldn't life be easy if we could say to people 'the world is unequal — socialism will make us happy, so let's have socialism.'

Unfortunately, it doesn't happen like that. Central to Marxist argument is that people learn mainly from their own experiences and sometimes from other peoples

— which is why we spend so much time talking and writing about them.

I spent five years going to weightwatchers. It turned me into a compulsive eater, which I wasn't before, and I left after reading Susie Orbach's book and discovering macrobiotics (that phase is over now, too!)

Chris Fellowes will probably change her mind about weightwatchers, too.

But in the meantime she has every right to share an experience that is so familiar to many of us.

If Ruth Cowan went to a Weightwatchers' meeting she would find it full of working class women even in a posh area like Richmond in Surrey. Middle and upper class women won't go any more than they would go to Butlins — and just as beer prices don't stop people who are desperate to drink — Weightwatchers prices don't put off people who are desperate to be slim.

Tracy Phillips
East London

SPUC on the move in Ireland

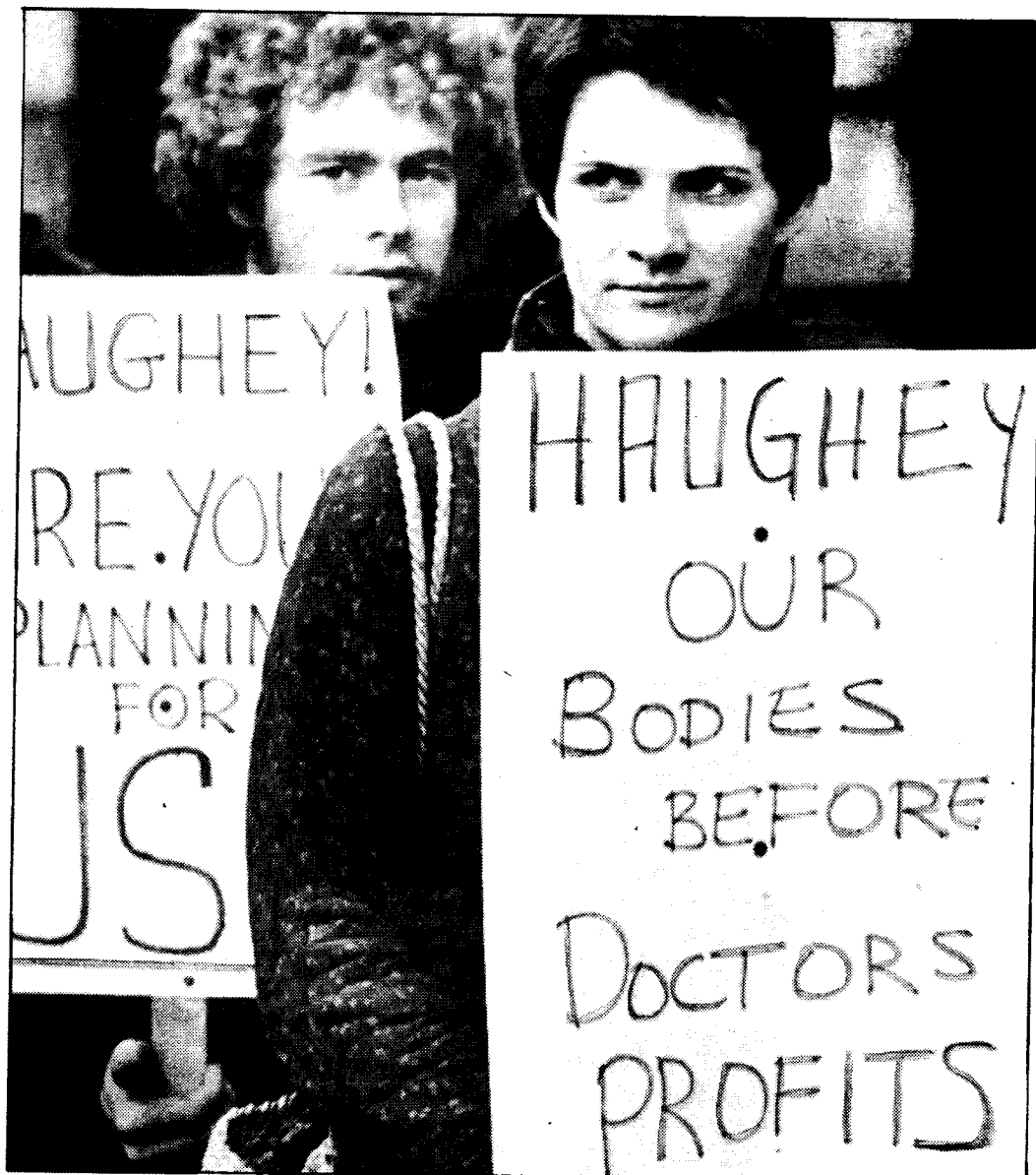
Dear Womens Voice,

If you were a school child in Ireland, you would have seen some pretty horrible slides and leaflets over the past few months. They show fully formed foetuses in rubbish bins and bloody embryos inside the womb. Your first and gruesome introduction, in a curriculum devoid of sexual education, to the whole murky area of sex.

They are what the 'Pro Life' groups and the Society of the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) have been putting around, unopposed, Irish schools. They are part of a concerted organised campaign of the 'anti-abortionists'. Their latest coup, with the backing of people in high and Catholic places, is the declaration by Charlie Haughey that a referendum to outlaw totally abortion in Ireland will take place at the end of the year.

Abortion, as the 1861 Offences against the Person Act makes clear, is already an imprisonable crime—for both the women involved and the procurer. But quoting a case in Britain in 1938 where a doctor was acquitted after performing an abortion on a raped woman, the Pro Life group claims that an amendment to the constitution would block any such loophole. Taking this example they are clear to stress that a woman who has been raped should under no circumstances have an abortion—and also that such a raped woman who has an abortion should, on top of all her suffering, go to prison as well.

400 Irish women every week go to England for abortions. Contraception in Ireland is expensive and dependent for the most part on the whims of doctors and chemists. Unmarried mothers receive little state support and all the stigmas. These realities the



referendum not only ignores but also hypocritically transfers the whole problem to the realm of moral crime.

If this amendment goes through, the existing contraceptive clinic, women's clinics and referral clinics will, in the climate of clampdown, be undoubtedly outlawed. The service that they are forced to provide, in the absence of the state providing it, will be unavailable and contraception itself become an inaccessible and expensive black market.

And worse, a 'yes' to the referendum will score a victory for the most reactionary elements in this society. It will return squarely to the Church a role not of individual conscience but another arm of the state.

We, as socialists, should join with them to make the 'no' to this amendment as massive as we can. Our future, both as women and socialists, depends on it.

Marnie Holborow
Socialist Workers Movement,
Dublin, Ireland.

Let's have more of the truth

Dear Womens Voice,

I thought your article in last month's magazine about Polish textile workers was fascinating.

I made a special effort to show it to friends of mine in the Communist Party and asked them what they had to say about working conditions in a

so-called 'socialist' country.

One shrugged her shoulders, the other said it must be an exaggeration! Let's have more about workers' daily lives in Eastern Europe, which tell us so much about the nature of the society in question.

Sandra Lewis
Birmingham

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ABORTION
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SANDRA

— Life of a housewife —



MAY 1972 Gill Brown looks back

ON MAY 26 1972, President Nixon and Leonid Brezhnev signed the first SALT Treaty. This was hailed as a major step forward for world disarmament. Both countries agreed to limit and reduce their Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles. Since then there have been numerous treaties signed, and now Reagan is talking about a further round of talks with the Russians. However, despite all the talks and the many treaties, the nuclear arms race is increasing.

Total nuclear warheads

| | 1970 | 1980 |
|------|------|------|
| USA | 4000 | 9200 |
| USSR | 1800 | 6000 |

So what has been happening? Why didn't SALT work? Since the early 1970s there has been a change in attitude towards nuclear war. It was believed by the

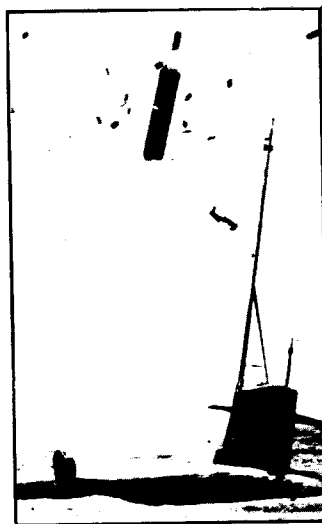
ruling classes that nuclear war would be final. Each side would blow the other out of existence. MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) meant that we would totally destroy Russia and Eastern Europe, who would in turn destroy the West.

Now, however, it has been replaced by the spectre of Theatre Nuclear War, staged in Europe. That is, one side would destroy strategic targets in Eastern Europe, the other would destroy strategic targets in Western Europe. Theoretically, or so the military believe, USSR and USA could be left untouched.

This assumption has led to a number of very important changes in the attitude to nuclear war. Firstly, if you get your strike in first you could possibly win a war. Secondly, it has changed the sort of weapons that could be used. The older type weapons were not that accurate, which did not matter because total destruction was the aim.

The development of the Cruise and Pershing missiles by the West and the SS20s by the East provided missiles which could be accurate over thousands of miles on a pre-selected target. Cruise missiles in Europe could be used to wipe out SS20

sites in Eastern Europe before the SS20's had left the ground. These developments put the emphasis on firing your missiles first in a war you think you might be able to win, which has bought the likelihood of war that much nearer.



The number of warheads owned by each side is still enough to wipe out the other side many times over.

SALT and other treaties failed and will continue to fail. Multilateralism will not work. Whilst ruling classes East and West may want to slow down the

arms race they do not want to do away with it. If they did they would simply halt deployment and dismantle the silos. They can't do this. Whilst the West is experiencing its worst economic crisis for 50 years arms expenditure continues to rise.

For capitalism the arms business is still highly profitable, as weapons become obsolete so quickly, and need to be replaced. The weapons the countries agreed to limit through SALT were rapidly becoming obsolete anyway. We shouldn't have any illusions in the Geneva talks or the proposed START talks next summer.

It's worth remembering that the amount needed to educate, feed, clothe and house the population of the world for a year, is roughly equal to two weeks of the world's expenditure on arms. In order to redistribute that wealth we need a society which plans its economy, a world based on co-operation and internationalism, not competition and petty nationalism.

Socialism is the only alternative to the barbarism of nuclear war. Multilateralism is the argument of those whose wish is to build up the arms race behind a smoke screen of meaningless agreements like SALT.

why I became a socialist

SUE Drabble is 18 and a member of Pontefract Socialist Workers Party, She spoke to Womens Voice about how she joined the party. 'When I was 13 I used to go to British Movement meetings. I used to knock about with skinheads and punks from Leeds. It wasn't that I really agreed with the politics of the British Movement, it was more like a sort of rebellion.

My mum is a socialist and I think I was trying to rebel against her a bit. Also, it was something about walking around town covered with swastikas, the way it shocked people, that appealed to me.

But then we heard about the Anti Nazi League carnival in London. I used to follow the band 'Clash', and they told us that they would be playing there. Also my mum and our next door neighbour and other socialists up our street were telling us about it. So we went on one of the coaches to London.

I got talking to people on the coach and I found myself agreeing with what they were saying. So I joined the ANL and in no time joined up about 15 of my friends. I guess I've just got more and more involved since then. A little while later I went to an anti fascist demonstration in Leicester. I don't think I'll ever forget the impact that had on me.

At one point, I was surrounded by five policemen and got badly beaten up. A friend came over to help me and he ended up getting arrested and landed up with a £300 fine! While I was in the police station an old woman of 68 came in to file a complaint. The police had broken her spine. I couldn't believe how brutal the police were that day. So much for them upholding 'law and order'. The way they were running police cars and bikes into the demonstrators will always stay in my head.

I guess I was even a rebel when I was at school. It was a horrible school. Everyone was always fighting. Even the teachers. They were really strict about uniform too. Well I couldn't stand all that. I used to go to school wearing trousers and with my hair all colours! I was the only punk at school and I eventually got expelled when I was 15 for hitting our deputy headmaster.

I'd been in the top stream when I was

at school, so my mum asked if I could come back to do my 'O' levels. I hadn't been around for any of the lessons so I landed up with one. After I was expelled I went on the dole. I used to get really bored and depressed. I was losing all my confidence and I felt like I was becoming a hermit.

'Before I joined the party I felt things were hopeless. That this rotten system could never be changed. Now I'm more hopeful, I understand how it can be changed and I'm going to do all I can to make sure it does'

So my mum suggested that I went to college to do my 'O' levels. It was about that time that I joined the SWP. I felt my confidence growing and after a year I recruited five women and two men to the party. I think it's been important that I've always talked about the general politics of the party. We've agitated around all types of things: racism,



unemployment, abortion, and fighting the Tories. I think that's the reason we've been able to recruit women into the party and hold them. Because we've never isolated 'women's issues' from the rest.

I also found the atmosphere at college so different from school. It's a working class college and the teachers treat you a million times different from school. They talk to you on a one to one basis — don't look down on us so much. I ended up with four more 'O' levels and now I'm doing four 'A' levels.

I don't know what exactly made me a socialist. I guess I've always been brought up by my mum to care about people, and with a socialist way of looking at life. When I look back to the time I used to knock about the the British Movement I never really respected them at all.

Another thing that has influenced me a lot is the way socialist men make a conscious effort to treat you equally. My mum's first marriage was pretty rough and I could have easily been put off men. Working alongside socialist men has made me feel a lot different.

Now my dedication to socialist politics and the party comes before everything. Everything else comes second. This week I'm speaking at a branch meeting. It's my second time now. I do a lot of work with the Right to Work Campaign, and around workplaces, and doles. We are also organising in our college. I'm president of the students' union, and most of our other members in the college also have been elected to leading positions.

Before I joined the party I felt things were hopeless. That this rotten system could never be changed. Now I'm more hopeful, I understand how it can be changed and I'm going to do all I can to make sure it does.

WHERE WE STAND

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers. The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based on councils of workers delegates and a workers' militia. At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system. Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a world-wide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racialism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the fight of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence.

We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. Russia, China and Eastern Europe are not socialist but state capitalist. We support the struggles of workers in these countries against the bureaucratic ruling class.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against homosexuals.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and-file movement within the unions.

We urge all those who agree with our policies to join with us in the struggle to build the revolutionary party.

Small ads

The radical Nurses group is holding its next national conference in Sheffield, at Park Health Centre, Duke St (at corner of Rhodes St), Sheffield 2, on Saturday 15th May. 10am to 5pm and Sunday 16th May. All nurses welcome. More details from 218, Heavygate Road, Sheffield 10.

WOMEN LIVE! EVENTS

presents
GO-GO

a new comedy by James Pettifer, concerning two go-go dancers faced with the prospect of replacement by the space invaders
24 — 29 May

Soho Poly Theatre, 16 Riding Horse St, London W1 (Oxford Circus tube)
Box Office Tel: 01-636 9050

Order feminist books from:
Lark Lane Books (mail order)

82 Lark Lane,
Liverpool 17
Send SAE for list

Womens Workshop courses:

Afro-caribbean Studies Course: The changing role of women in Caribbean societies. Starts Friday 26 March 10.30am-12.00. Every Friday for six weeks.

Womens Health Course — self help and medical alternatives. Starts Tuesday 20 April, 1-3pm. Every Tuesday for 13 weeks.

Phone 01 267 0688 for details and fees.

if you want to help produce Womens Voice phone 01 986 3955.



And another thing

by Susan Pearce

It was pointed out to me last week that on every page of *Socialist Worker* the words 'lunacy' and 'lunatic' appeared at least once. I sympathise with the critic—when the Falklands affair, the government, Denis Healey, and the police are all so described, it can get repetitive. All the same, 'lunatic' is an apt word for the world at the moment. Take a bird's-eye view:

While the Queen dances Canadian-style on the remnants of Indian rights, a school holiday ship is requisitioned to be re-fitted as a hospital ship so that someone can sew up the remains of all the young soldiers currently hanging around the Antarctic desperate for somebody to start shooting so they can justify all those hours of press-ups and playing soldiers on Salisbury Plain. What a shame Aston Villa fans have pipped them to the post with a live television battle on the Belgian terraces. (Andelecht fans were only chanting 'Argentina!' but I suppose that's enough to get any right-minded football patriot going.)

Back home the antics of Tebbit the Chingford skinhead go unnoticed by all except those whose picket lines are being clapped into jail by our eager police force, who can't wait to get some practice in even though Tebbit's proposals are still just that.

Thatcher and Tebbit will undoubtedly get their way when it comes to smashing the unions, unlike the disgruntled boss of the Alfred Marks Bureau. Having publicly denied that sexual harassment at work exists, he commissioned a survey, and was 'astonished and embarrassed' at the results: 14% of women office workers have actually left their jobs because of it, and 51% have suffered harassment at some time. Bernard Marks found the results 'staggering'. But he is a man. Like the good men and true of the Manchester Council who have decided that in order to pack more of the faithful into Heaton Park for the Pope's visit, all the trees in the park must be uprooted, stored and replanted.

By next Budget Day, what with paying for the war effort, the Pope's visit, and the police language training programme (the met are being taught to say 'You're effing nicked you black b.....d' in all the languages of Britain's former colonies) rates and taxes will be so high we won't be able to afford a can of corned beef for dinner.

What I say is, when the state of the world gets you down, be grateful for life's lighter moments—like the Eurovision Song Contest. Get rid of all that pent-up aggression by throwing cushions at the telly and think how easily we could sort out the world if we all co-operated like they do in Europop and It's a Knockout. Tell you what, why don't they invite Argentina to join the EEC and fight it out in song?

Surely that's no crazier than mobilising the entire army navy and air force to sort out the fate of a handful of sheep-sh....earers.

For details of the Socialist Workers Party, fill in this form and send to: National Secretary, SWP, PO Box 82, London E2.

NAME

ADDRESS

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TELEPHONE

TRADE UNION

Women on the barricades

FROM 'They Shall Not Pass' by Richard Kisch. Wayland Publishers, London 1974. In 1936 a revolutionary surge swept Spain. For three years republican forces fought to establish a new society.

THE deep vibrant voice echoed through countless cafes, streets, barracks, bivouacs and homes in the Republic; it radiated out of Madrid to reach into every corner of Spain. Its passionate intensity struck deep chords in the heart and soul of every Republican who heard it.

La Pasionaria was speaking! It was galvanic. Tonight she was speaking to the women of Spain. Her words flamed like rockets. 'Fight! fight! fight!' she cried. 'Fight them with knives, fight them with burning oil. Better it is to die standing on your feet than to live on your knees!'

La Pasionara



For three years the sounds of her words gripped the imagination of the world. 'No Pasaran!' They shall not pass! Dolores Ibarruri launched the phrases that saved Madrid and electrified the imagination. She not only symbolised Republican resistance to tyranny, she epitomised the spirit and desire of millions of women everywhere.

She was then a tall dark woman with large eyes set deep under heavy black eyebrows. She radiated a burning intensity which was reflected in her gift of language. Her long black hair was curled into a bun in the nape of her neck. She had the strong classic features of Iberian women. Her long head with its wide sloping forehead was set firmly on slightly hunched shoulders. She was a working woman, a miner's wife. La Pasionaria, like other mass leaders who were making a name for themselves as natural soldiers — Modesto, Lister, Gonsalez, Durutti — knew how to seize the moment of action when it came. She had already been sentenced to a fifteen year jail term after the 1934 troubles. In the 1936 elections she was elected on the Popular Front ticket as a Communist.

Out of the kitchens

Dolores Ibarruri's appeals swept millions of Spanish women in to unprecedented activity. For the first time the role of women in Spain was spectacularly transformed. In earlier times of stress they had always supported their families and men from behind. But now they were able to come out of the kitchens and bedrooms to claim the right to a new role in the building of an effective social and military organisation capable of defending the Republic. They went into industry, the administration, the social services, even the

army. In schools, hospitals, medical services, which virtually came to a standstill because of the flight of the regular personnel, they played an essential role.

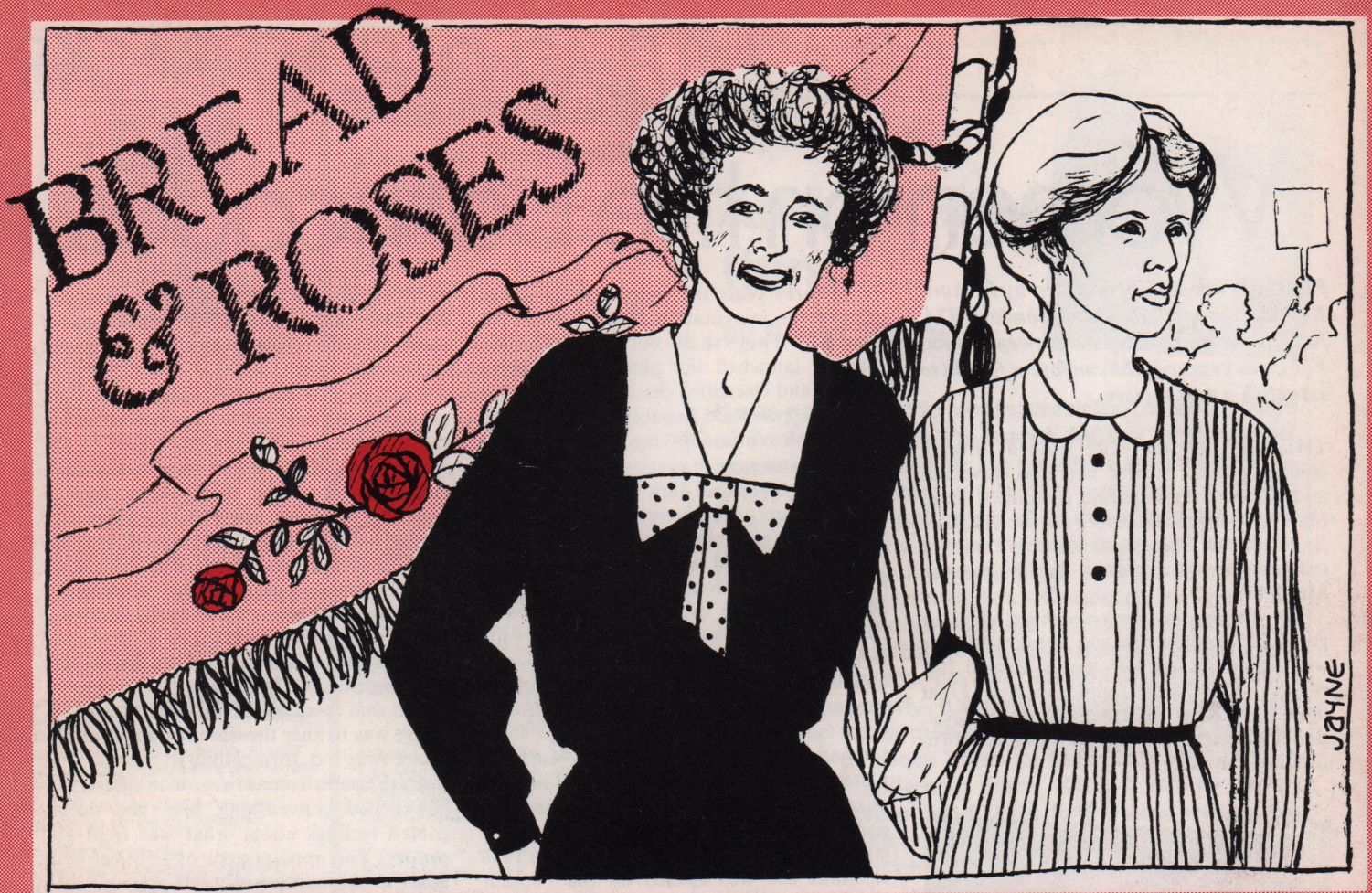
They eagerly seized the chance to fight alongside the men, on the barricades, and in the trenches, outside the cities held by the Nationalists. Girls with bandoleers of cartridges slung across their chests were a common sight on every front. They also carried hand grenades, and ammunition. The modern vivandières of the early militia, especially in Catalonia, were no respecters of persons and stood no nonsense from anyone, even if some of them were former prostitutes released from the bondage of the 'barrio,' the brothel district of Barcelona.

Not that there was much sleeping around. There was neither the time nor opportunity. There was no fornicating in public. The average Spanish man and woman, apart from entrenched conventions, also had deeply rooted feelings about what was right and proper. The appointment of political delegates to the militias also left precious little opportunity for fooling around. They were far too likely to regard sexual by-play as 'a fascist deviation' calculated to demoralise the troops. Deviants could find themselves in deep trouble.

The women who responded to La Pasionaria never gave up, never lost their strength. It seemed to be rooted deep in their inner fibre. In the last analysis, perhaps, it was the same instinct for preserving the species which frequently gives women the edge over men in times of crisis. It was as marked in Spain as it was later among the Kikuyu women of Kenya, or the women of Algeria, Cyprus, Malaya, Vietnam and in every other struggle against oppression and colonialism.



Volunteer women's militia marching through the streets of Madrid



As we come marching, marching in the beauty of the day
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing: 'Bread and roses! Bread and roses!'

As we come marching, marching we battle too for men,
For they are women's children, and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweetened from birth until life closes;
Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but give us roses!

As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient cry for bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew
Yes it is bread we fight forbut we fight for roses too.

As we come marching, marching we bring the greater days
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.
No more the drudge and idler—ten that toil where one reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and roses! Bread and roses!

James Oppenheimer, inspired by banners carried by young mill girls in the
1912 Lawrence Massachusetts textile strike