

## HOW MANY DEATHS THE NEXT TIME?

### CAPITALISM KILLS

ASKED to comment on the Clapham rail crash in which at least 36 died and a hundred were mutilated, Thatcher said 'This happens at a time when millions of people are being brought into London. Everything goes all right until something goes wrong. It has gone wrong in a deeply tragic way', in other words, on to next business.

What she did not say was that Network South East's subsidy will be cut over the next three years from £240 million to £80 million - which means that, like London underground it will have to continue with its programme of cutting investment while cramming in more passengers.

Through the hurried smoke-screen flung up by the media of pictures and stories of Thatcher and the royal parasites visiting the victims of the crash, a picture of murderous cost-cutting all too familiar to us from Kings Cross, Zeebrugge, and Piper Alpha begins to emerge.

There were three apparent components of the Clapham disaster.

First the crowding of the train, which meant that the toll was higher.

It is far cheaper to have 1000 people on one train than 500 on two and traffic on the system is increasing by 8 per cent a year.

Transport 2000, the joint union/employer transport research and pressure group, is quoted in the 'Independent' as saying 'Although investment has been going up on the railways, the operating subsidy has been going down, at a time when the system is trying to keep up with rising demand.

'We want to know what effect that has on safety. Unlike the buses, there are no regulations on overcrowding.

Second was the failure of the signal which should have told the train to go on. Although

BY BRONWEN HANDYSIDE

the fault was reported and investigated on the evening before the crash, it seems the engineers were not able to locate it.

Union leaders point out that the pay levels for the 5,000 engineers responsible for maintenance of telecommunication and signals equipment, like those for hospital workers, are so low that there are grave problems of skills shortages and morale.

#### Shortfall

British Rail (BR) says that workers can make up the wages shortfall through overtime. The union argues that the fatigue resulting from working long hours is in itself a safety risk.

The salaries are: £8,661 a year for a technician, £5,443 for an assistant technician - this is about 10 per cent of the salary of the duchess of York's friend, Captain Rollo Duckworth, who was a crash victim.

The third factor was that the driver of the train which caused the crash was forced to stop to telephone about the faulty signal because the old 1960s rolling stock used by BR South East network are not equipped with radio telephones - unlike the cars of yuppie businesspersons.

British Rail is supposed to be updating its stock. Dr Martin Mogridge, of the Transport Studies Department at University College London, is reported in the 'Independent'

as saying 'Suddenly BR has found itself with a very large bill to stand still. Why is that? The way public financial restraints have operated over the last few decades has acted as a brake on replacing equipment.

'To say you are pouring all this money into BR in investment is meaningless... it is money they need to spend to very simply prevent the system from grinding to a halt.'

Add to this that if BR had had its way, the guard who ran down the track to prevent a fourth train from ploughing into the back of the other three involved would have been down at the dole office instead. Southern region BR management demanded in February this year that all guards be cut from empty trains.

The report on the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise said that although at first sight the omissions of some of the ship's officers appeared responsible 'a full investigation into the circumstances of the disaster leads inexorably to the conclusion that the underlying or cardinal faults lay higher up in the Company. The Board of Directors did not appreciate their responsibility for the safe management of their ships.' Unfortunately, under the British legal system, you cannot charge a Company with murder.

Desmond Fennell QC's report on the Kings Cross fire, sanitised as it was, concluded that 'London Transport and its holding company, London Regional Transport, had a blind spot - a belief that fires were inevitable coupled with a belief that any fire in a wooden escalator, and there had been many, would never develop in a way which would

endanger passengers. In my view that approach was seriously flawed...'

#### Underlings

The fault lies not in the carelessness of a few underlings, but in the nature of the system itself.

At Kings Cross and Zeebrugge Thatcher also expressed her condolences to the victims.

She does not give her condolences to the hundreds of building workers who are killed or maimed every year through the cost-cutting of employers - you have to be killed on a grander scale to rate a visit from Thatcher or one of the royals, (you can grade the scale of the disaster by the rank of the royal. Clapham was a duchess-sized disaster.)

What is revealed, shockingly, through these tragedies is that all the structures of capitalist society are being eaten away from within by the remorseless drive to cut costs.

They appear quite safe and intact to the careless eye, until the day the factors combine - the signal fails, the escalator catches fire, or the bow doors are left open - once too often.

On all these systems all the prerequisites for disaster exist and are being shuffled around until they settle again into the right combination. Millions of people who think of themselves as taking an ordinary trip to work, or going on holiday, are unknowingly embarking on a gigantic game of Russian roulette.

This game always has the same set of winners. The trade unions must break this vicious circle by fighting now for public and social services to be run and controlled by the workers employed in them, and those who use them

# Workers Press

## Arafat in the den of thieves

Lenin once referred to the League of Nations as a 'Den of Thieves'. The United Nations, its successor, well merited the same characterisation when it returned to Geneva to hear the speech of Yassar Arafat last Tuesday.

The delegates applauded the PLO 'leader's' reaffirmation that the Zionist state was here to stay, his denunciation of 'terrorism' and his call for a Middle East peace conference. Although they were not told officially, they would not have been surprised to learn that the text of the speech had been the subject of intense negotiation between the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and the US State Department.

While State Department Secretary, George Schultz was insisting that Arafat would not be allowed into the US, discussions were conducted through the intermediary of the Swedish government. That is the way things work in these circles.

So, although Arafat directed his appeal to the Israeli people and to their Zionist leaders, the entire UN session was actually part of his negotiations with US imperialism.

The State Department response was therefore predictable. The speech showed 'some interesting and positive developments', they said. However, 'it continued to be ambiguous on the key issues which must be addressed in order for the US to enter a substantive dialogue'.

Foreign Office comment echoed this. 'There are clearly some positive aspects', they murmured.

The UN has always played a central part in the history of the Palestinians. It was under its auspices, with the agreement of Truman and Stalin, that the state of Israel emerged in 1947-8. The Zionists took over from the British, who until then had held the League of Nations mandate, as the direct oppressors of the Palestinian people.

Now, as the descendants of those driven off their land by Zionism continue their uprising against the brutal Israeli occupation, Arafat promises these oppressors that he will guarantee peace for them.

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The 'News Line', still mysteriously published by the dwindling Torrance group, was stung to reply to our previous comment on Arafat's capitulation. Continuing the line of the old Workers Revolutionary Party under its former, expelled, leader Healy, they are shocked by the slightest criticism of the PLO leadership.

'Socialist Organiser', on the other hand, welcomed Arafat's shift. They always supported the existence of the Zionist state anyway.

Many others on the Left are surprised by the new PLO line. But these moves are really only the outcome of the essential nature of the PLO's politics.

For 20 years Fatah and the PLO have received massive support from the people of Palestine and throughout the Arab world. Quite correctly, Marxists have given unconditional backing to every struggle against Israel as the agency of imperialism.

But the PLO was never a revolutionary movement. Its leaderships, bourgeois or petty bourgeois, aimed to force the great powers to recognise the rights of the Palestinians whether through military action or diplomatic manoeuvre.

But the national liberation of Palestine means overthrowing the existing state apparatus. Arafat's 'State of Palestine' is supposed to come into being 'peacefully' on the West Bank and in Gaza. It will leave the Palestinians inside Israel under the dominion of their existing exploiters.

We repeat: only within a Socialist United States of the Middle East can there be peace and liberation for Palestine. Only through the establishment of a revolutionary proletarian party, a section of the Fourth International, can the heroism of the Palestinian people achieve victory over their tormentors. **WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER**

## WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far: £295.44

The Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party decided to make the target for this month's Fighting Fund £1,500 instead of the usual £2,000.

But it was also agreed to raise an extra £1,000 for the International Fund for special and urgent work.

You will see on the back page our plans for the political and technical development of Workers Press. We must raise the necessary finance for this. Please help us to ensure the success of our two funds.

Dot Gibson

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

## REPRESSION IN IRAN

A member of the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) in London said in an interview with Workers Press that Khomeiny was moving in two different directions - relaxing repression of ordinary people, but an increase in repression of the left. About 30 members of TUDEH (the Iranian Communist Party) along with thousands of left wingers, have been executed..

In a newspaper interview, one of the representatives of the Khomeini regime said 'We have to get rid of all oppositionists, especially those people we cannot change. All over the world there are some people you cannot change. We have to oppress them. We should use this terror against these traitors and make them frightened. And that is the only way we can keep them quiet.'

There will be a meeting at 7 pm on Monday 19 December at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London W1, on the Kurds and the wave of executions by all three governments oppressing the Kurds - Iran, Iraq and Turkey. At this meeting it is hoped to be able to set up a steering committee for action, for pickets and demonstrations for the next six months.

We reprint below a statement from the Preparatory Committee for the International Conference to Rebuild the Fourth International.

## PREPARATORY COMMITTEE STATEMENT ON IRAN

OVER the last weeks fresh news has come from Iran of mass executions of left wing opponents of the Khomeini regime. One group, the Revolutionary Workers' Organisation, has said that the rate of executions has reached such levels in the last four months that prison authorities had resorted to burying the dead in communal graves.

It is estimated that as many as 5,000 people have been slaughtered since the Iran-Iraq cease fire of last August.

Virtually the entire leadership of Iran's imprisoned Communist Party, which initially supported the Khomeini regime, has been wiped out.

We call upon all workers' organisations to join us in denouncing these brutal actions against all these left groups, including the Communist Party.

As Trotskyists we are implacable opponents of Stalinism. But the struggle against Stalinism is a matter for the working class, not for imperialism and its agents.

One aspect of the degeneration of the International Committee and the Workers Revolutionary Party (the WRP is now part of the Preparatory Committee) was the shameful silence we maintained in the face of the Khomeini regime's attempt to exterminate its opponents on the left and in the working class.

We are proud to make this statement as part of the struggle to correct these past crimes and to prepare the movement for its future tasks.

Preparatory Committee International Conference to Rebuild the Fourth International

## News briefs... Marrying into slavery

A FLOURISHING trade in mentally retarded women being sold into marriage has been revealed in China.

Chinese peasants were also prepared to pay up to £500 for a young wife, some no older than 13; a price which is equal to five times the average annual wage.

A Peking evening newspaper reported that mentally retarded brides were particularly sought after, as it was felt by the prospective husband she would be more obedient and unable to run away.

## East-west

The total of East Germans who have been allowed to move to West Germany this year is already known to be double those allowed out in 1987.

The August 13th working group which monitors East German affairs stated that, between January and November, the authorities let 23,135 people move to West Germany. The figure for the whole of last year was 11,459.

## Debt to society

KIDNEYS of executed criminals are fetching up to £7,000, according to reports from Hong Kong. Two Canton hospitals are said to be involved in performing the operations for supply to their rich customers.

The bodies of the dead prisoners are transported by army trucks and the transplant operations performed within six hours of death.

One of the hospitals performs about 50 such transplants a year. Consent is neither sought from the criminals themselves nor from their relatives.

Apart from which, it is Chinese tradition that bodies remain intact after death. Murder, rape, embezzlement and even some cases of robbery all carry the death penalty which is widely used in China, especially in the last five years when there has been a big crackdown on crime.

## No goals

THE SPANISH general strike, which took place last Wednesday, won the support of professional soccer players.

Midweek matches had to be postponed when players took a decision to join in. The strike, the first since 1934, was called by Spain's two major union federations, the UGT and the CCOO.

It was in protest against the Felipe Gonzalez-led socialist government's economic policies.

# Crawley meeting - Labour accepts the Poll Tax

BY ROBIN BURNHAM

A POLL Tax meeting called by the Crawley Labour Party on 7 December offered no hope for its future victims. Tam Dalyell, Labour MP, spoke about the most vulnerable - students, youth, women, and the old. Large families will be affected, which will particularly involve the Asian community.

He reminded the audience of the Scottish Labour Party Conference decision against non-payment of the tax - a decision he supported on the grounds that it was not possible to protect people from the consequences afterwards.

Paul Leo, Crawley Labour Councillor, described what the tax would mean.

Every adult (over 18) would have to pay £260 per year compared to the present average of £430 for a whole family. The cost of collection would be doubled, adding £250,000 a year to the council's bills.

Leo said the council had already begun the process of getting computers and extra staff. And he sided with the Tories (and Dalyell) by saying he couldn't support non-payment. If the tax wasn't paid, the council could be bankrupted. He opposed breaking the law because if Labour won the election he would expect the Tories to abide by it. His opinion was that the only solution was to work for a Labour government which would get rid of the Poll Tax.

Question time brought many protests. One speaker said he thought the meeting was about how to fight the Poll Tax - instead all he had heard was how bad the tax was, which workers already knew.

Under pressure from more speakers, and in contradiction to earlier utterances, Dalyell said if there was a mass revolt then non-payment would be a different ball-game.

The parliamentary solution of winning the next election (which would be after the introduction of the tax) was supported by Councillor Ian Irvine and long-standing CP member Steve Longsdale.

The final word, appropriately, went to a pensioner who said 'What my friend and I are worried about is how are we going to pay this tax.'

Dalyell replied they could get benefit but he didn't know how much. 'But we already feel degraded' was the reply.

If we rely on the Labour leadership who are more afraid of Tory law than the misery inflicted by it, then pensioners will remain degraded.

The real answer is to follow Scotland's lead and build anti-Poll Tax groups in every part of the country which include all sections of working people. 'Broader and more democratic even than the miners' support groups' should be the slogan. The class has no choice but to fight.

## Teachers' employers impose conditions

BY OUR EDUCATION  
CORRESPONDENT

A STRICTLY confidential document, the final draft of the paper for the Employers' Forum meeting on 20 December 1988 has been leaked to national council members of the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE), the union for teachers in tertiary institutions.

The union is at the moment negotiating pay increases and conditions of service agreements which the management want to impose on both further and tertiary education sectors as well as the new deregulated polytechnics.

This confidential paper relates to the polytechnic sector, with more than 55,000 staff, and the proposals are designed to come into force on 1 April 1989 under the Education Reform Act.

The proposals represent a major attack on union-negotiated structures of payments, grading and conditions of service.

The document claims that these 'derive from the needs of Further Education Colleges and Town Hall administered local authority services' and 'they need remodelling for polytechnic and colleges as a matter of urgency'.

The aim of the employers is to limit the area of national negotiations to a minimum and 'in essence, national collective agreements will be restricted to a small number of core conditions of service (common, as far as possible, across all staff groups) and to pay matters through spinal columns...'

These spinal columns have not been negotiated by the union and do not appear in the union demands for this year's pay round. They appear in a 'Grading Of Courses' document presented to NATFHE two weeks ago and which is still under discussion in the union.

Management proposals in this secret document represent a major attack on a teaching union. This can be summed up by a clause under the item '3.1 Teaching Staff: 'There is a major mis-match between the present

## BRITISH EGGS GO TO ARMENIA

LAST week news broke that British farmers were sending eggs to Armenian earthquake victims, from the huge stockpile formed after Edwina Currie let the chicken out of the bag about wholesale salmonella contamination of the poultry industry.

The same day, in the Commons, Currie read a government statement on the danger from eggs in which it was stated that it was advisable for the vulnerable - the old, the young, the pregnant and the sick - to cook their eggs until they are solid. We hope this information has been transmitted to the Armenians.

lecturer's contract and what institutions need'.

The proposals include 'the introduction of new style contracts for lecturers' and list the general conditions of service which should then be set, including an entitlement of 30 days' annual leave in each academic year in addition to public holidays; annual leave to be taken at a time agreed between staff and heads of department. At least a 37-hour week and a requirement to comply with any appraisal and assessment system in relation to personal performance'.

The status of Boards of Governors and principals is defined as: 'The Board of Governors shall also have responsibility for setting a framework for the conditions of staff with the director or principal responsible for the determination of the pay and conditions of staff other than the holders of senior posts'.

The power and responsibility for setting the terms of employment therefore rests firmly with the Boards and through them with the directors/principals.

What this means is a phased ending of national pay negotiations and this model of restructuring applies across all public sector employment. It is crucial then that all workers fight against a sell-out by the leadership to accept these conditions and begin to set up joint co-ordinating committees as this struggle increases.

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# Botha releases veteran activists but jails young lions



BY A SOUTH AFRICAN CORRESPONDENT

**AMANDLA!** We salute the ceaseless efforts on the part of the black working class and their class allies internationally to secure the release of all political prisoners! *Aluta continua!*

In accounting for the recent actions of the Botha state we cannot discount the heroic struggles waged by the black South African masses and pressure exerted by militant campaigners world-wide. But at the same time we should not be fooled by the insidious motives and the true political agenda of the crisis-ridden apartheid regime.

In November two veteran activists were released by the South African regime. 75-year-old Zephania Mothapeng, elected two years ago as the president of the banned Pan Africanist Congress (P.A.C.), was freed together with Harry Gwala, a leading member of the African National Congress. Mothapeng was first imprisoned in 1960 and then given a 15-year sentence in 1978 for furthering the aims of the P.A.C.. It is rumoured that both prisoners are severely ill.

These events follow the release a year ago of 77-year-old Govan Mbeki sentenced in 1964 for high treason along with Nelson Mandela. But Mbeki's release has not been unconditional. He is restricted to the magisterial district of Port Elizabeth, cannot address public meetings or give interviews to the press without the permission of the police.

After 26 years of inhuman incarceration in South African jails P.W. Botha teeters on the decision to free Nelson Mandela. Moved first from Pollsmoor Prison to a luxurious clinic for medical treatment, Mandela is presently in Victor Verster prison in Cape Town at a private house where he can be allowed to see his family as often as he pleases. But whatever the perks Mandela still remains behind lock and key, a political prisoner incarcerated in a house with a swimming pool.

The international bourgeoisie and their white South African counterparts laud these developments as 'magnanimous gestures of goodwill' and 'acts of humanity', clear indications of the willingness of the Botha regime to 'reform' itself, a desire of the white leopard to change its black spots.

**'...the young worker and student militants who advance the struggle for socialism and strive fearlessly for the establishment of peoples' power, face the full onslaught of a desperate state racked with economic and political crisis.'**

What really negates these meagre gestures and shows them up to be superficial window-dressing to appease international bourgeois public opinion is the fact that young political activists are being severely dealt



NELSON MANDELA

with by the South African courts.

The Young Lions who heroically sacrifice their lives to smash the apartheid state rather than do a deal with it ('Victory or Death' is the South African Youth Congress's slogan) and the young worker and student militants who advance the struggle for socialism and strive fearlessly for the establishment of peoples' power, face the full onslaught of a desperate state racked with economic and political crisis.

When the Sharpeville Six were reprieved from the death sentence, the flimsy case against them was sufficient for the South African regime to inflict upon them sentences ranging from 18 to 25 years. And four of those accused at the Delmas trial were found guilty of treason earlier this month.

Legal experts inside the country believe that this sets a precedent for any extra-parliamentary opposition to the government to be viewed as treasonous and therefore punishable by the death sentence. Dozens of other accused presently face stiff prison sentences - not to speak of the thousands of militants who are detained without trial, tortured and brutalized without even being able to claim access to legal aid, and the young activists who await judicial murder on death row.

Moses Mayekiso, the General Secretary of the National Metalworkers Union and chair of the Alexandra Action Committee, who won international recognition for his struggle for socialism in South Africa with other members of that committee, faced similar charges of treason for the role they played in leading the community struggle in Alexandra Township during the insurrectionary events of 1984-1986. This week they were let out on bail, but under restrictions which severely curtail their activities.

These are the actions of a regime trapped in crisis. The Bonapartist Botha regime has to seem to be above the warring class factions, appearing to be open handed with gestures of reform, but iron fist in crushing the militancy of youth and workers who fight for true democracy and socialism.

The release of these political prisoners has a further sinister political implication. It facilitates the intention of the counter-revolutionary leadership of the ANC-SACP to

# WORKERS PRESS BOOKS

## CHRISTMAS GIFTS

shops selling this book. What is it about?

It would be more than a little pre-sumptuous to try and summarise, but Rushdie starts with happenings which are clearly mythical, and draw on the legends of the Indian subcontinent and European literature.

There is a complex plot and characters which may have some connection with political and historical events. Rushdie's language is superb, and can be enjoyed even if you don't know the Q'uran and can't unravel all the other allusions.

**Long Dark Teatime of the Soul.**  
By Douglas Adams.  
Heinemann, £12.95

**Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency.** By Douglas Adams, Pan,  
£2.99

AND for pure fantasy - more from the mythical detective agency in hardback, or the paperback of the original adventure. Splendidly original and complex from the author of 'Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy'.

**Captain Pantoja and the Special Service.** By Mario Vargas Llosa.  
Faber, £3.95

LATEST from the Latin American writer, with a back-drop of the politics of a continent where state repression has been elevated to a high level.

**Collected Poems. Primo Levi.**  
Faber, £4.95

**Collected Poems. Philip Larkin.**  
edited by Anthony Thwaite.  
Faber, £16.95

**Collected Poems, 1934-53.**  
Dylan Thomas. Dent, £15

POETRY is not a luxury. Keep repeating that to yourself as you make your way to the till with one of these - or another poetry title.

And books are not expensive, still - though they will be when VAT is added to them and the government abolish the Net Book Agreement and the prices of serious books rise to compensate for price-cutting on the station bookstall bestsellers.

## DINOSAURS AND DOTTY AUNTS

DO YOU have a dotty aunt who thinks it's written in the stars? Here is an appropriate selection on which to spend the book tokens she sends you.

**The Faith Healers.** James Randi.  
Prometheus, approx. £14.50

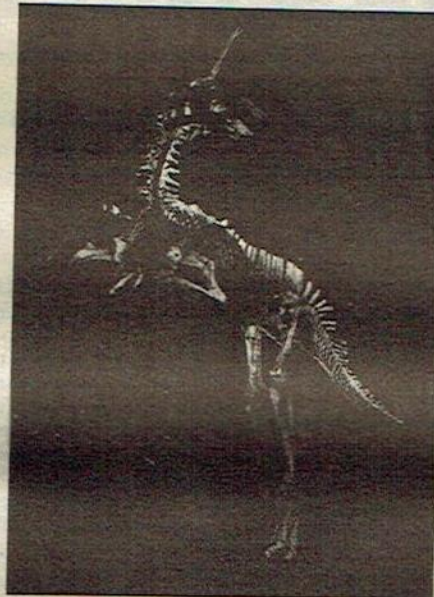
James 'the amazing' Randi is a professional magician and a leading member of CSICOP - not the thought-police but the 'Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal'. Randi and his team of infiltrators penetrate the 'dirty tricks' world of Leroy Jenkins, Oral Roberts and presidential aspirant Pat Robertson. They expose mail order 'miracle cures' and televised 'hysterical' cures and smash up the scam of evangelical millionaire Peter Popoff - who didn't even bother to cash cheques for less than \$5!

**The Stars from Superstition to Supernova.**  
Heather Couper and Nigel Henbest.  
Pan, £9.99

If you missed the six-part series in September and October, or even if you avidly watched every episode, this is the book for you. Lucid even in the difficult areas of star birth and black holes, and superbly illustrated. Each section links the historical development of a particular area of research with the most up-to-the-minute data and speculations.

**Science and Earth History: the Evolution/Creation Controversy.** Arthur N. Strahler. Prometheus, £29.95

A bit on the expensive side, but a state-of-the-art refutation of every creationist argument against astronomy and geology. (Your reviewer helped with details for a couple of chapters.) Mainly for the US market where the evangelical right sees Darwinian evolution behind everything from communism to fluoridation. Particularly useful introductory section 'Science and Pseudoscience'. Read it and be prepared for the next Thatcherite turn in education policy.



*No, it's not a bottle-opener. Answer in the new year*

For the kids, there's nothing better than Michael Foreman's 'Dinosaurs and all that rubbish' in which eco-trendy dinosaurs rejuvenate the earth after man had turned into a rubbish heap to reach the stars. (Puffin, £1.95).

Over the holiday, if you see nothing else, go to the Chinese Dinosaur exhibition at the Natural History Museum in south Kensington. It will be dismantled at the end of January and shipped back to Beijing. No plaster casts here, unlike the majority of the Dinosaur Gallery exhibits, so the detail stands out. Marvel at the 33-foot long neck of Mamenchisaurus, and try to work out what Tsintosaururus spinorhinus used its bifurcating 'horn' for.

Mike Howgate



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# WORKERS PRESS BOOKS

## VICTIMS OF THE BRITISH STATE

### Time Bomb.

By Grant McKee and Ros Franey. Foreword by Ludovic Kennedy. Bloomsbury, £4.99

**W**ELL RESEARCHED, well written and not over priced, this book, by the authors of the 'First Tuesday' television documentaries on the Guildford Four pub bombing trial, brings the facts of that and the Maguire family cases together in one volume.

The authors do not use the word 'frame-up' but to read the book leaves no doubt that this is what we are dealing with, and not an unfortunate miscarriage of justice.

Faced in 1974 with the most successful and professional IRA bombing campaign ever carried out in England, the state needed victims, proceeded to find them and ever since has lied through its teeth to conceal what it has done.

The viciousness and brutality involved may be judged by the fact that these victims included two children (aged 13 and 14), a 17-year-old young woman (not even Irish), an elderly man seriously ill with tuberculosis and a housewife known to be hostile to Irish nationalism.

The outline of the cases should be well-known to Workers Press readers, but the book provides chilling details of how 'confessions' were obtained by threats and drugs, how forensic 'evidence' was forged, and how juries were directed to obtain the convictions the state so desperately needed in a wave of anti-Irish hysteria. As the Guildford Four face another Christmas behind bars, this book should be widely circulated.

It should be compulsory reading for all those who believe that at bottom the British state and legal system is just, fair-minded, decent and honest.

Alan Stanley

## LIVES MADE LITERATURE

**T**IMEBENDS is what Arthur Miller has called his autobiography. He is the sort of writer who has more interesting things to say about himself than anyone else could come up with (Methuen, £5.99).

This year's bestselling biography, on the other hand, Michael Holroyd's 'Bernard Shaw: the Search for Love' (Chatto, £16), makes the most of Shaw.

Simon Callow's 'Charles Laughton' (Methuen, £4.95) is similarly life made literature.

For serious students of reformism there is Tony Benn's diary 'Office Without Power', Hutchinson, £16.95; and in paperback, the first volume, 'Out of the Wilderness', Penguin, £4.95.

Or you might look at 'Blacklist: the Inside Story of Political Vetting' by Mark Hollingsworth and Richard Norton-Taylor (Hogarth, £7.95).

Workers Press readers may turn first to the chapter about MI5 and the BBC, which shows how the state covertly exerts political control over the BBC's 'Personnel Department' to prevent talented and qualified people, including members of the WRP, from getting the jobs to which they were first appointed; other trade unionists will find sections about how the state brands as subversives a variety of left-wingers, CND supporters and the like - and the effect in public and private industries and the newly private, like Telecom.

## ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN

**B**HOPAL: the largest industrial accident yet. At least 3,000 were killed, and perhaps as many as 40,000 injured. Two more still die every week.

Many of those affected by the sudden release of Methyl isocyanate on 3 December 1984 may pass on its damage in some form to their children.

These three books tell the story of the Union Carbide plant in Bhopal, where pesticide was manufactured in the town centre surrounded by shanty dwellers although the planners said it should move 15 miles out and a local journalist, Raj Kumar Keswani, wrote articles with headlines like 'If you don't understand, you will be wiped out.'

They show how poorly-designed equipment was made lethal by negligence, and point the finger at a management that would not admit that the poison released was cyanide, thereby delaying appropriate treatment while eyes and lungs were being destroyed.

But they do more than that; they demonstrate the cruelty that is capitalism, and show why industrial disasters are a permanent and ever-more-frequent feature of a profit system.

Bhopal: The Lessons of a Tragedy. By Sanjoy Hazarika. Penguin, £4.50

The Bhopal Syndrome: Where will it happen next? By David Weir. Earthscan, £5.95

Corporate Killing: Bhopals Will Happen By 'Tara Jones' Free Association Books, £9.95

There are particular sad paradoxes: Indian law requires pesticides and other products to be manufactured in India, so this was not just a case of a multinational choosing a cheap-labour location. Yet Indian law proved hopelessly unable to control the processes at the factory.

But the issue is not 'the export of hazards' or the double standards applied in developed and less-developed countries; nor is the problem that of multinationals or transnationals.

'We all live in Bhopal,' argues 'Tara Jones'. In the United States one worker in five is currently exposed to a hazardous substance; during a working life, we come into contact with many dangerous materials, not just the obvious ones like asbestos, but in the super-clean industries like electronics and in offices and service jobs too.

Weir's conclusions are that 'we are as a species poisoning ourselves and the planet, so that although he points out that the global pesticide industry is dominated by a handful of giant profit-seekers (the top ten companies sell half the world's pesticides) he is unable to explain what to do about the many lethal plants around the world.

Jones points the finger more firmly at capital, though coining the term 'toxic capital' whose 'profits exist on a balance-sheet of death' - as if there could be nice clean capital.

The companies' strategy of blaming 'human error', she says, 'moves the responsibility and need for action from capital to labour' and is used to justify greater control over the workforce.

Yet Bhopal showed that capitalism cannot ensure safe design and maintenance, and

indeed that the chemical industry welcomes 'regulation' so that it can pass the responsibility to the authorities when something goes wrong.

All three books blame Union Carbide for what happened in Bhopal (and warn that the compensation may never come, because the company has been selling assets and distributing them to shareholders so it will have nothing left when the legal processes have run their course) but none of them is able to present a socialist solution to capitalism's mass murder.

Jones comes closest, but she ends up 'arguing against the ideology of development and progress, by underlining the dangers inherent in continued toxic development.'

Capitalism can't develop a humane and ecologically sound agriculture; that can't be achieved by throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Jones ends: 'Without petrochemicals, capitalism itself is impossible.' We might prefer to say, petrochemicals make urgent socialist society and workers' control.

Bridget Dixon

# COMMUNIST SOCIETY AND MARXIST THEORY

**Communist Society  
and Marxist Theory.**  
Cyril Smith.  
Index Books, £4.95

**T**HIS BOOK, as its Preface says, was the product of the crisis that engulfed the Workers Revolutionary Party and the International Committee of the Fourth International when the leadership of the Party, centred around Gerry Healy, was expelled in 1985.

Healy's expulsion - on grounds of his sexual and physical abuse of Party members on a systematic scale - made it essential in the rebuilding of the movement to grapple with the theoretical degeneration with which Healy's practice had been bound up.

Cyril Smith's book represents an important part of this continuing theoretical endeavour.

That he should concentrate on a number of key philosophical questions is entirely appropriate, given that one of the most glaring aspects of the ideological degeneration of the old WRP was expressed in Healy's increasing perversion of 'Marxist philosophy'.

At the centre of this perversion was the idealist conception that thought was not social in origin but was the product of 'individual brain work'.

One of the themes running through this short book is the insistence that thought is indeed entirely social and, of Marx's predecessors, Hegel above all came closest to grasping this fact.

Smith argues that the degeneration of the old party involved the separation of 'day to day work' from the overall aim of the movement, the establishment of communism.

The Party became more and more immersed in countless rounds of 'activity' quite divorced from the theoretical foundations of the movement.

It was these theoretical foundations that Healy more and more implicitly and later explicitly repudiated.

This was not a question of 'bad' or 'inadequate' individuals. As Smith indicates, this problem - the separation of the immediate tasks of the movement from its ultimate goal - is not a new problem.

It was a central issue in the decline of the Second International just as it was a central question in the degeneration of the Third International under Stalin. It involves the struggle against two inseparable dangers: those of sectarianism and opportunism.

Those who plunge themselves into

the spontaneous movement of the working class and lose sight of the central task of parties of the Fourth International - the preparation of the working class for power - will inevitably degenerate into opportunism.

Those who refuse to engage in the real struggles of the working class on the grounds of the 'purity' of their doctrine are equally doomed to degenerate into sectarian discussion circles.

It is for these reasons that Smith's book is centred round one basic theme: that all of Marx's theoretical work can be understood only from the standpoint of the struggle for communism.

It is Marx's conception of communism which is the 'special light' illuminating all aspects of his work. In

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## WORKERS PRESS BOOKS

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this sense it repudiates the work of those who would divide the 'young Marx', the supposed 'humanist', from the 'mature Marx' the 'materialist'.

A theoretical comprehension of the 'historical movement as a whole' can be achieved only from the standpoint of communism.

The first part of the book deals with what Lenin characterised as the 'Three Sources and Three Component Parts of Marxism': German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism.

(Incidentally, there is a slip in the book in that the impression is given (p. 8) that Marxism was concerned only with German idealism, whereas in fact German philosophy can be said to have culminated with the materialism of Ludwig Feuerbach.)

In a short space the book attempts to show how all these three component parts reflected the contradictions of bourgeois society, could not transcend

them and were eventually each thrown into terminal crisis when these very contradictions reached a certain stage in their development.

Emphasis is placed on the relationship between Hegel from Marx.

It was Hegel more than any other thinker prior to Marx who grasped that capitalism, the system of alienation and exploitation, contained within itself the possibilities of a different, even opposite form of society.

Hegel attempted to draw the outlines of a human freedom within the confines of capitalist property relations. Such freedom was to be obtained through the state, the embodiment of reason.

It was Marx (together with Engels) who understood that the antagonisms of bourgeois society were not intellectual conflicts but were in essence an expression of the conflict between the development of the productive forces and the social relations of this system; it was this maturing contradiction which was laying the material foundation for a new, higher form of society - communism.

It is this truth, argues Smith, that many of us tended to lose sight of.

Above all, the contradictions of capitalism found their expression in the antagonism of the working class and the capitalist class.

But Marx was able to grasp that the working class was not merely an exploited, suffering class but a revolutionary class, a class brought into being by capitalism, and therefore the only class capable of overthrowing present-day society.

Here again the book draws attention to the serious distortions of historical materialism found in the work of many avowed Marxists. This certainly included the 'Marxism' that came to dominate the old WRP, where historical materialism tended to be seen as though it were a form of technological determinism.

In just over a hundred pages, this book contains a wealth of learning and ideas. Because of its short length many ideas have to be presented in terse form. This does not make it easy reading. But it is a book that everybody who wishes to develop as a Marxist and revolutionary fighter in the working class should seek to master.

Geoff Pilling

*'Communist Society and Marxist Theory' is available by post from Index Bookcentre, 28 Charlotte Street, London W1P 1HJ. Price to Workers Press readers: £4.95 including postage*

# WORKERS PRESS BOOKS

## A LAD O' PAIRTS

I CAN think of few more attractive Christmas presents than a copy of Stuart Hood's prize-winning *A Storm From Paradise*, first published in 1985, and now issued in paperback by Paladin at £3.95. It is a moving, intelligent novel about one of the most difficult of subjects: Scotland and its relation with the modern world.

It takes its title from a thought-provoking statement about history made by the Marxist literary critic and victim of fascism, Walter Benjamin.

Before I make it sound like a theoretical tract masquerading as fiction, let me say something about its splendidly imaginative story, which presses against the limits of credibility without going beyond them.

It is set in a fictionalised version of the small town of Edzell in north east Scotland, where the author himself was brought up. While the events related bear no relationship to any involving real persons, living or dead, as they say at the movies, it seems reasonable to surmise that the novel's compelling dynamic derives from Hood's sense of the importance of reflecting on his own early life and its relationship to his later history.

The story is told in the first person, using a literary technique which makes you think of a film script, and yet is also very readable. The sense of film actually helps the reader to visualise the scenes described.

The narrator speculates about incidents in the life of his father, who - just before World War One - perhaps had an affair with a beautiful Russian emigrée, in Scotland as a result of a series of events, including her involvement with the revolutionary movement.

The father is the local dominie (school-master), the very epitome of the 'lad o' pairts'; that is to say, a boy who has risen from the lower orders via the mechanism of the nineteenth century Scottish educational system, through which the hard-working and talented were said to be able to proceed from parish school to university and a career, regardless of family wealth.

In telling the story of the affair, the narrator does two interrelated things. He reflects on the father's reserve in later life, the sense that he was living out the form of an existence long since deprived of its potential human content.

And he dissects the supposed 'democracy' of the Scots small town, which gives the appearance of providing a meritocratic ladder of opportunity to achievement in the world outside. In a series of incidents involving gossiping landladies and shopkeepers, vying clergymen and anglicised landowners, he reveals the class-ridden, dehumanising hypocrisy which underlies this appearance.

The concern of the School board, comprising clergy and local 'worthies', is not with individual opportunity at all, but with social stability, religious observance and Scotland's part in Britain's imperial 'glory'.

Against this is counterposed the internationalism of a world about to experience the historic convulsions of war and proletarian revolution. The forces which threaten the stultifying parish community, clinging to the jealousies of a society tied to the values of individual wealth accumulation, come from without.

The dominie-father lost 'his faith and his virginity' in the cafés and brothels of Perpignan on his one trip abroad. His lover brings him the critical spirit which takes him to the brink of a leap into life's real richness - and she brings it from a tradition of struggle against the reactionary dynasties of Eastern Europe.

It would be wrong to reveal whether life or 'respectability' wins out in the end; although there is dramatic inevitability in the denouement which derives not only from the strength of the narrative but also from the historical realism of the story.

Terry Brotherstone

## CHRISTMAS FICTION

**Oscar and Lucinda.** By Peter Carey  
Faber, £10.95

FOR SHEER originality, for seamless craftsmanship and a stunning grasp of the movement of history through the lives of human beings, you could do no better than Australian Peter Carey's absorbing 'Oscar and Lucinda'.

**Beloved.** By Toni Morrison.  
Picador, £3.99

'BELOVED' is everything a novel should be. It is, at least in part, about slavery, sorrow and superstition.

Abolition is coming, but before it still comes the slave-catcher. And the grotesque distortion of humanity that is slavery is presented through a young mother's unbearable choice which she must live with for the rest of her life.

Sethe looks back on one month of her life:

'The twenty-eight days of having women friends, a mother-in-law, and all her children together; of being part of a neighborhood; of, in fact, having neighbors at all to call her own - all

that was long gone and would never come back.'

Toni Morrison has published five novels, each one very different, very stylish, as befits a publisher's editor who has made a particular contribution to writing by black women.

Don't be put off by the fact that this won a Pulitzer prize; it will give you tears and nightmares, and keep you reading until you know how the baby died who has only 'Beloved' (from the burial service) on her tombstone.

**Chatterton.** By Peter Ackroyd.  
Abacus, £3.99

FUNNY, a pastiche, a novel about an incorrigible plagiarist who might have even faked his own death, and the interaction between Charles Wychwood in the present and Thomas Chatterton in the past.

**Satanic Verses.** By Salman Rushdie.  
Viking, £12.95

BOOKSELLERS have been warned by their professional association that fanatical Moslems may act against

## CASUALTIES AND CARNAGE

THE FIRST battalions sent to the front in World War One averaged 40 officers and 1,000 men. By 18 November 1914 all that was left was, on average, a single officer and 30 men.

It is a peculiarity of Christmas that there is a crop of books which detail the tragedy and the butchery of war.

Lyn Macdonald, foremost historian of the period, has produced an anthology of the letters, diaries, songs and poems she has assembled during the writing of her histories. '1914-18: voices and images of the Great War' is published by Michael Joseph at £15.95.

'Voices of War' (Peter Liddle, Leo Cooper, £12.95) is superbly illustrated and uses material from the archive at Sunderland Polytechnic.

But you won't find much in these books about the opposition to the imperialist carnage, especially the principled struggle of the few Second International leaders who kept the revolutionary position and refused to march workers into the trenches.

You won't even hear about the mutinies and desertions; even in John Laffin's 'British Butchers and Bunglers of World War One' (Alan Sutton, £12.95) it is the incompetence of the generals that is stressed, not the 'contunation of politics by other means' and the nature of the war.

You can, though, find tucked away at the end of a chapter, that 304 British soldiers ended in front a firing squad, all but 19 (sentenced for murder) for crimes peculiar to war - desertion, disobedience, striking an officer, casting away arms, mutiny and even 'cowardice'.



More butcher than bungler: Lt-General Sir Lancelot Kiggell. Knighted for sending men to their death four-rows deep.

World War Two also gets the glamourously tragic treatment; you can read 'How They Made Piece of Cake' by Robert Eagle and Herbie Knott (Boxtree, £12.95), which combines television spectacle with the nostalgia industry.

Or there is 'No Time to Wave Goodbye', the stories of three-and-a-half million evacuees (Ben Wicks; Bloomsbury, £13.95).

The books of the so-called peace have more to recommend them for what they reveal. The legal edition of Peter Wright's 'Spycatcher' (Heinemann Australia, £3.99) is out at last; Watergate journalist Bob Woodward's 'Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987' (Headline, £4.99), new in paperback, shows the relationship between stealth and secrecy under CIA director William Casey and United States

More butcher than bungler: Lt-General Sir Lancelot Kiggell.





MOSES MAYEKISO - general secretary of the South African metal workers union (NUMSA), on trial with four comrades for treason.

**'In seeking a 'peaceful' settlement they decisively abort the struggle for the destruction of apartheid-capitalism and the establishment of a socialist South Africa.'**

In seeking conciliation with the liberal bourgeoisie and collaborating with the class enemies of the revolutionary working class, the ANC-SACP alliance threatens to divert the black masses from their course of waging a resolute struggle for the proletarian revolution.

In seeking a 'peaceful' settlement they decisively abort the struggle for the destruction of apartheid-capitalism and the establishment of a socialist South Africa.

The freedom of all political prisoners in South Africa will not come about by decree or gestures of reform squeezed out of the Botha regime. Nor will it be decided upon around the table of negotiation on the terms and conditions imposed by the ruling class.

Only a victorious proletariat led by a revolutionary vanguard party based on a clear socialist programme is capable of smashing the vicious system of apartheid capitalism and leading the working class to the seizing of state power. Only thus will the Bastilles of South Africa be stormed and freedom secured for all political prisoners.



WRP banner at the TUC conference 1988

move towards compromise and a negotiated settlement with the Botha regime. Strongly influenced and encouraged by the Stalinist bureaucracy, which at this moment is more aggressively pursuing its policy of peaceful co-existence with world imperialism (Gorbachev's open renunciation of the class struggle, the settlement of all major world conflicts along peaceful lines, etc.), the ANC-SACP embarks on the same course.

Three states of emergency, the banning of 19 political organisations, the systematic detaining and banning of political leaders and trade unionists has pushed back and weakened the offensive which has been

waged by the exploited and oppressed masses.

The Botha regime does not willingly opt for the politics of negotiation. It demands its own pre-conditions. It has to be assured that the militancy of the black masses has been quelled and tamed. The treacherous ANC-SACP has obliged Botha by waging an all-out attack on anyone who talks of socialism, and it resorts to union splitting as was the case in The Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (Ccawusa), where certain workers who advanced the slogan for workers control were labelled as divisive and brutally silenced.



The arrest of Moses MaYekiso



ZEPH MTHOPENG

## Personal Column

Peter Fryer

## Will the real Bukharin please stand up?

THERE's a story about Nikolai Bukharin presenting himself without his pass at the entrance to a Soviet government building shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The young Red Guard on duty - this was before the Red Army was formed - refused to let him in.

'But I am Bukharin', he protested.

'And I am Lenin', replied the young worker unsmilingly.

So Bukharin, soon to be appointed editor of 'Pravda', had to go back home and get his pass.

This story, along with much else about Bukharin, was not recounted during the programme about him that was shown on television the other evening.

Television programmes on history and historical personages, even when well-researched and accurate so far as they go, often strike the informed viewer as coarse, crude, and one-dimensional. What we gain in visual images - old pictures, old news reels, close-ups of historical objects - and in reminiscent interviews with old-timers is more than offset by over-simplification.

Viewers are customarily treated as idiots who might switch off if asked to use their brains for however short a time. The intellectual level is that of the comics for tiny tots that used to hy-phen-ate e-ver-y word of more than one syl-lab-le, like this.

But the Bukharin programme was so much more than usually marked by

misleading omissions, as well as by special pleading and downright distortions, that it made me wonder what had been the real intentions of its makers, and of the Soviet authorities who had given, not just their consent, but their full co-operation.

Totally omitted from this programme was Bukharin in several of his most important roles.

Of Bukharin as a principal opponent of the Brest-Litovsk Peace - nothing. Of Bukharin as the leader of the 'Left Communists' who went on to lead the rightists - nothing. Of Bukharin as president of the Comintern - nothing. Of the Bukharin who allied himself with Stalin against Trotsky in the 1920s - nothing.

Still more misleading was the false picture given of Bukharin as alleged architect of the March 1921 New Economic Policy. This was such a blatant rewriting of history that I could scarcely believe my ears when I heard it, and had to check with friends who had also seen the programme.

The proposals that were put into effect as NEP were in fact first advanced by Trotsky. In 1920 he called for an end to the requisitioning of crops and said that peasants should be encouraged to grow and sell surpluses and make a profit on them.

These proposals were voted down in the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party at the time; but somewhat over a year later they were taken up by Lenin and accepted by the Tenth Congress. Bukharin, of course, had nothing to do with it.

We had a quotation from Lenin's long-suppressed 'Letter to the Congress' (1922-1923), in which he called Bukharin 'the favourite of the whole party'; but we

were not told that Lenin went on to criticise Bukharin's scholasticism and lack of understanding of dialectics.

We had material on the 1938 trial and execution of Bukharin, including an interview with a British eyewitness; but we were not told that Trotsky, though absent, was in effect the main defendant; nor were we told that the official description of the victims was 'Anti-Soviet Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites'.

When you put alongside all this distortion the fact that there were only two fleeting references to Trotsky in the whole programme - so fleeting that a momentarily inattentive viewer might easily have missed them altogether - the purpose of the exercise becomes quite plain.

Inside and outside the Soviet Union there is a great upsurge of interest in history. Forbidden books are back on the shelves. Unpersons are being restored to their rightful place in the record.

And what is emerging with crystal clarity, as the palimpsest is deciphered and the truth restored, is the continuity of the Marxist critique of Stalinism: a continuity associated above all with the thought and activity and struggle of Leon Trotsky.

This continuity, now being demonstrated for all to see, will become a powerful weapon for the working class inside and outside the Soviet Union. For that reason it is a threat both to imperialism and to the Soviet bureaucracy.

So they are trying to conceal and deny this continuity. The TV programme on Bukharin - or rather on a figment, a pseudo-Bukharin - is part of this attempt. I'm sure we can expect much more along the same lines.

### AS I SEE IT

BY TOM OWEN

## A Way With Words

DICTIONARIES have a curious fascination of their own. Apart from being useful tools for the writer, their format, organisation and explanation of individual items can often be the source and inspiration of literary and linguistic eccentricity.

One of my favourite entries under 'The' (definite article) is an example of comparative usage: 'the more I practice...the worse I sing' taken from one of those dusty dictionaries bought for 30p on a market stall.

More seriously early lexicographers, in their attempt to codify and standardise national vernaculars represented the rationalising spirit of encyclopaedists and the nascent bourgeoisie.

One of the problems with dictionaries is 'language change' and 'updating'. Orthodox dictionaries tend to deal with standard literary usage, not popular everyday language in all its richness.

There are of course

glossaries and dictionaries of dialects and vernaculars but they tend to be the work of lexical antiquarians. Recently I came across a delightful piece of work which has the uncompromising title of 'A Dictionary of Euphemisms' by Judith Nealman and Carole G. Silver (London, 1984).

This original, amusing and ultimately chilling work is a kind of Roget's Thesaurus of popular metaphors that deal with taboo subjects from sexuality to criminal argots to 'war games'. It is an ingeniously devised book which starts with parts of the body, secretions and excretions, the Seven Deadly Sins, and moves to crime and punishment, sex, amateur and professional, to the language of government and war.

The term 'euphemism' is taken from the Greek 'eu' meaning good and 'pheme' meaning 'speech', and generally is taken to mean to use 'a good or favourable interpretation of a bad word', or to approach a taboo or unpleasant topic or entity indirectly.

The feature has its origin in the early religious practice of indirect reference to the Gods so that they would not be challenged or offended. The Furies for example would be referred to as 'the kindly ones' or the Hebrew God by the tetragrammaton.

The authors claim that 'speaking indirectly' is deeply

embedded in the taboos and mythologies of early societies as a way of coming to terms with birth, death, sexuality, fertility etc.

As societies change so do taboos along with prevailing values.

It was the deeply 'puritanical' D.H. Lawrence who wished to restore the integrity of the Anglo-Saxon sexual lexicon, but idealised the sexual 'frankness' of their mores. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon society had its repressive sexual euphemisms along with a number of others. Chaucer's frank physical references are accompanied by highly stylised innuendo and symbolism.

Shakespeare and the early 16th Century poets evolved an elaborate system of sexual conceits and jokes involving sex and death. Curiously enough the most famous English pornographic novel 'Fanny Hill' is redolent with 'engines' and 'machines', but has not one concrete physical sexual referent.

It was the puritan middle class and later the 'Victorian' middle class, with their cult of respectability, who clearly separated private and public areas of life so that euphemistic language assumed a quality of moralism and hypocrisy.

As the actress Mrs Campbell said, 'You can do anything as long as you don't do it in the street and frighten the horses'. But euphemism should not be

simply associated with middle class reserve. It often informs the style of much popular speech especially criminal argots.

In the case of the latter, it is inspired by the desire to avoid detection and reinforce solidarity as with other deviant circles like drug users.

Some of my favourite recorded ones are 'dock asthma' for feigned courtroom surprise, 'a moll buzzer' a pickpocket who confines himself to women's purses and the 'humming bird' - the electric chair...

But passing to the world of real deviants and criminals, the bureaucrats, the military and the imperialist politicians, the euphemism allows them to speak the unspeakable. An 'energy release' is a radiation leak, 'modernisation' (much loved by Thatcher) is increased arms expenditure, 'an adjustment of the front' a retreat.

'Termination with extreme prejudice' is the CIA formula for assassination as is 'destabilisation' overthrow of foreign governments (pace Chile) and 'pacification' which means the bombing of and forcible evacuation of native populations.

After these barbarians I would prefer to enjoy the wit and mysteries of regional euphemisms. Try these from Sheffield - 'after bird' and 'in feather'.

# LETTERS

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

## A paroxysm of hate: the case of Patrick Slaughter

THE FOUL and slanderous attacks on Patrick Slaughter by D. North and his British acolytes place them outside the ranks of socialist fighters.

Why does North spew his filthy lies against a young man framed by police provocateurs and incarcerated for four years in jail?

The answer is simple.

Because of Patrick's association with the WRP.

North's political life and 'career' has been bound up centrally with a campaign of lies and slanders against the leaders of the AMERICAN SWP, accusing them of being FBI agents.

The WRP subsequently denounced these vicious fabrications. North cannot face up to this hence his paroxysm of hate towards the WRP, Patrick Slaughter, and his father, Cliff, General Secretary.

His hatred borders on the psychopathic. The labour movement has no place for such people and they must be told so in no uncertain fashion.

Commiserations and fraternal regards to both Patrick and Cliff. The lies and slanders will rebound on the liars and slanderers.

Alex McLarty  
Glasgow

## Objectivity and the Tweedles

THIS IS a moderate letter about balance. As such I can think of nowhere to send it except Workers Press.

On Sunday 4 December, the Brian Walden interview on ITV sought quite openly - via an 'interview' with top BBC man John Birt - to establish that Tory extremists like N. Tebbit had been justified, prior to the 1987 election and the witch-hunting of director general Alasdair Milne, in accusing BBC news programmes of putting left-wing bias above

objectivity.

Birt did little to combat this nonsense; he only argued about whether he had now put matters straight!

If one then switches to BBC's 'On the Record' (the one run by Tweedlejonathan, not Tweedledavid), one then saw the effect of this new 'objectivity'.

The editorial introduction to the item on Father Ryan stated as fact Mrs Thatcher's claim that a change in the Irish extradition laws had given unique powers to the Attorney General in the 26 counties to make the final decision where extradition to Britain was at stake.

Thatcher, and 'On the Record', said that this was the essence of the difference between extradition to Britain and that to any other country.

Later - and all too placidly and briefly - former Irish Foreign Minister Barry pointed out that this was simply untrue.

The courts made the final decision, he said.

The difference was that in cases involving Britain the Attorney General looks at the papers before they go to the courts for final decision.

This seems to be necessary from the (to me utterly perverted) point of view of the bourgeois regime in Dublin in order to ensure that more people are extradited: otherwise British incompetence (or imperial arrogance?) with legal documents - including the case of Father Ryan - leads to the courts having no alternative but to order release.

The whole basis of the interview - because of prejudiced, right-wing 'research' - was undermined!

Did Dimpleby say 'I'm sorry, we seem to have got that wrong: viewers should check up on the facts!'

Of course not... He passed on as quickly as possible to putting the 'point of view' of 'our' Prime Minister for Barry's comment.

Will the BBC, in the name of objectivity, issue a correction, a full clarification of the facts?!

The only good thing about the programme was the brief snippet showing thousands marching in Dublin against any extradition to Britain.

After seeing how the BBC - far less the Thatcher regime and the Murdoch press - deal with these questions, one can all the more vividly understand why.

Maybe other readers might like to start writing to Workers Press on similar incidents.

Terry Brotherstone  
Edinburgh

## WRITE TO WORKERS PRESS

WORKERS PRESS welcomes letters on all subjects, but please be as brief as possible. Only in exceptional cases are we able to print letters longer than 200 words.

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

## Hugh MacDiarmid

AS A FRIEND of the late, great, Hugh MacDiarmid (he kindly wrote the introduction to my life of John McLean), I was most interested in Terry Brotherstone's perceptive review of the recently published biography by Alan Bold (Workers Press, 26 November 1988).

As Terry points out, MacDiarmid 'was in a position

of extreme contradiction'.

Indeed, he revelled in it, his favourite quotations being Walt Whitman's (from 'The Story of Myself'), 'Do I contradict myself?

Very well then, I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes'.

And perhaps the greatest of all the contradictions in MacDiarmid's character was the fact that, although he was a fervent Stalinist, he also cherished a profound admiration for Leon Trotsky!

## DONALD KERR

THE DEATH occurred recently of comrade Donald Kerr. Big Don, as he was known for his 6ft. 4 ins, was 46.

Don first joined the Young Socialists of the Labour Party around 1956 at the time of the Suez crisis; within a few months he was recruited into the Socialist Labour League, forerunner of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

He, together with other recruits to the movement, did a great deal of useful work. A few years later he moved to London to work for the Socialist Labour League, at the same time becoming a very active member of the London anti-fascist committee.

Living in the Bayswater area where one of our young members was attacked and seriously injured by a gang of fascists, Don carried out a campaign which drove the Mosleyite movement out of the area.

Gerry Healy disapproved of these activities with the anti-fascists saying that they were adventurous, but comrade Kerr carried on with more success. Some time later he was accused by Healy of giving information from internal documents of the SLL to the capitalist press and he was expelled from the Party. It was never totally clear if these charges were true or not.

This was the period of ultra suspicion of anyone who did not support everything the leadership said. After expulsion Don drifted a bit politically but he never lost his class allegiance.

His last words to me a few weeks before his death, were of his hatred for Thatcherism. He will be missed by all who knew him as a real personality and character.

Ian McLaughlan

# SMASH THATCHER'S ATTACK ON OUR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

OVER the coming weeks WORKERS PRESS will publish a series of feature articles in a discussion to prepare a campaign against the Tory government's attacks on democratic rights.

The first five of these articles will deal with: Charter 88, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, freedom of speech and censorship, the trade unions, and youth in Thatcher's Britain.

Their publication will be part of the campaign for the production of Workers Press in tabloid format once more and a sales drive to bring the paper to the forefront of all the struggles of the working class.

We will hold a series of public meetings at which we will explain that the defence of the democratic rights of the working class now under frontal attack by the Thatcher government is inseparable from the preparation of the working class for power.

We know that not everybody will agree with us, but we intend to invite to these meetings all those involved in the defence of these rights.

Many will start the struggle believing that the question is the defence of 'bourgeois democracy'. In the course of the struggle to defend these rights they will realise the need to go beyond bourgeois democracy and come to see that the question is one of working class power.

We want the broadest discussion on the nature of the Thatcher attacks, the necessary response to them in the working class, and in particular the means by which the widest unity can be established amongst all those under attack.

The refusal of the Irish authorities to extradite Father Patrick Ryan on the grounds that he cannot expect a fair trial in Britain raises the same question, not only for Irish fighters but for anyone opposed to Thatcher's onslaught on democratic rights.

The compulsory identity scheme for football fans is the first step towards identity cards for all youth and goes alongside Tory plans to scrap

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legislation protecting the working hours and conditions of the young.

At the same time police marks are sent in amongst football fans to stir up trouble and frame them up for show trials under conditions where the authorities and the press whip up a frenzy of hostility.

Nobody should be surprised that Kinnock's response to the Tory crisis is that Thatcher 'blew the possibility' of extradition with her 'poisonous criticism of the Irish authorities' failure to arrest Ryan.

**Many will start the struggle believing that the question is the defence of 'bourgeois democracy'. In the course of the struggle to defend these rights they will realise the need to go beyond bourgeois democracy and come to see that the question is one of working class power.**

It is the same Kinnock who does not lift a finger to defend the trade unions. The TUC and Labour Party leadership refuse to mobilise the working class against Thatcher's anti-trade union laws.

Resolutions at TUC and individual trade union conferences declaring opposition and refusal to accept the laws are pushed aside by Kinnock and Willis.

In 1984/85 they left the miners to fight the capitalist state alone; it was the same in the News International (Wapping) dispute and the seafarers' struggle.

These 'leaders' always come to the aid of the Tories, giving the impression that Thatcher is too strong for the working class to defeat.

But the Tory government is a government of crisis. The Tory 'boom', on which sectio-

ns of the middle class were seduced by the Thatcher government, is collapsing in the midst of soaring interest rates and mounting inflation.

This government has no choice but to attack the rights of the working class and sections of the middle class. It launches these attacks not from a position of strength but from one of profound weakness.

Overhanging the world capitalist economy is the huge United States budget and external payments deficits. The moves of US imperialism to bring their economy back into something like equilibrium threatens a major slump for the capitalist world.

British capitalism - whose chronic decline has continued throughout the near decade of Thatcher governments - is especially vulnerable in the face of such a slump.

The Tories were frightened by what they saw in the miners' strike. They realise that the coming struggles will not be confined to wages questions but will bring together a mass of accumulated social problems.

It is vital to break up the unity of the working class. Knowing this, the state is preparing for the next round of battle and is determined to stamp out all opposition.

The capitalist state is forced to ever more oppressive measures against the organised working class and the millions of unorganised youth, unemployed, old age pensioners, the disabled, homeless and one-parent families, black and Irish communities as well as to financial attacks on home buyers and cuts in education, health and social and public

services.

Many militant workers are asking what happened to the Stalinist-dominated Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

**We want the broadest discussion on the nature of the Thatcher attacks, the necessary response to them in the working class and in particular the means by which the widest unity can be established amongst all those under attack.**

This organisation has virtually disappeared as the crisis of Stalinism has led to the break-up of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The Workers Revolutionary Party, which expelled its previous leader, Gerry Healy and his supporters in 1985, had degenerated into an opportunist and sectarian clique and abandoned the struggle to build a leadership founded on the revolutionary principles of the Fourth International.

In so doing it destroyed its trade union wing - the All Trades Unions Alliance - and must take some blame for the present failure to mobilise against the Tory anti-trade union laws.

The Central Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party at a meeting last weekend agreed to publish a draft programme in January in preparation for a conference of the Party in March. We intend to organise the discussion of this Programme not only in the Party's branches but amongst all those coming into struggle against the Tory government and the state.

## WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Please send me information about the Workers Revolutionary Party

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

Address.....

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

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