

EXTRADITION CRISIS HITS TORY GOVERNMENT

THE THATCHER Government has been hit by a serious constitutional crisis following the refusal of the Belgian and Irish governments to extradite Father Patrick Ryan and the European Court of Human Rights' decision that police powers to hold suspects for up to seven days are illegal.

Seven day detention is a key feature of the Prevention of Terrorism Act which was brought back to the House of Commons in strengthened form only last week.

Thatcher is now faced with a stark choice - either change this Act or defy the European Court and provoke a major political crisis throughout the Common Market.

Thatcher has been slapped in the face by the Belgian government who refused to hold Ryan, by the Irish government who rejected appeals to hold him and by Strasbourg.

The Court of European Rights ruled in favour of a plea from four men from the north of Ireland who were held as suspects in 1984. Two were held for four days and the other two for almost the full seven days. They appealed that this was in breach of the European Convention which decrees that suspects held by the police must be brought 'promptly' before a judge.

The decision on Ryan - who discharged himself from a Dublin hospital and went into hiding - is likely to break up what is left of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, a crucial element in Thatcher's brutal efforts to defeat the IRA.

There were sound legal reasons why both the Irish and Belgian governments acted in the way they did. Ryan's alleged offences did not take place in Britain but on the continent where, it is claimed, he conspired to help the IRA. In any case the charge of conspiracy does not exist in either Belgium or Ireland.

Far more powerful than the legal arguments is the build up of political forces. Like the Thatcher government the Haughey government faces a major political crisis over the issue of extradition. There is a growing wave of anger in the Irish working class against the sending of Irish freedom fighters to British courts which, on framed-up evidence, are jailing Irish people for life.

The frame-up of the Birmingham Six, the Guildford Four and, more recently, the Somerset

BY GEOFF PILLING

Three, is bringing home to the Irish and British working class the real nature of 'British justice'.

There are deep divisions in the ruling class on these issues. Two retired Law Lords took a full page in the 'Times' last week to say in a detailed analysis of the trial of the Guildford Four, that they consider the British judicial system, and thus the constitution, to be wrong, in that it was possible to make a decision on the appeal of the Guildford Four without recourse to a jury.

This political crisis in London

and Dublin provides the most favourable conditions for the united struggle of the Irish working class for the right of self-determination against British imperialism and the British working class, fast being deprived of the basic rights won in centuries of bitter struggle against the bourgeois state.

It is the Labour leaders who stand in the way and undermine this unity. They have stood fully behind Thatcher's brutal activity in the north of Ireland. It was a Labour government under Callaghan in 1969 who first sent the army into the north in an effort to wipe out the republican movement.

Labour's shadow Northern Ireland Secretary, Kevin McNamara, last week accused the Government of being 'ham-fisted' in its approach to the Ryan case.

'I think the Government's attitude towards extradition, given

the current position in the Republic, has been very foolish. Public opinion there is very sensitive about what it perceives as a lack of justice in the courts.

'British anger should be directed against the Belgians who chickened out, rather than the Irish.'

These events underline the profound weakness of the Thatcher government with a political crisis as well as a deepening economic crisis (see editorial Page 2 on the economy)

This crisis fuels the mass movement already building up. It makes ever more urgent the building of a revolutionary leadership in the working class whose aim must be to bring down this Government. This task is inseparable from the struggle to rid the movement of its treacherous reformist and Stalinist leaderships.



Police ready themselves on Westminster Bridge for repeated and brutal mounted police charges following the student demonstration against loans. Our photographer was unable to take subsequent photos because he was knocked down from behind by a police horse - luckily he was unhurt. Behind the police is the line of vans from which the mounted police charged. See story on back page.



Thatcher's Fake 'Boom' Collapses

THE LATEST TRADE figures show a record deficit for October and for 1988 as a whole. They herald the beginning of the end for Thatcher's 'boom'.

Lawson's sharp rise in the rate of interest - a shock to all mortgage-holders - will hit what is left of British industry. A rising pound will cut exports still further. Meanwhile, in the name of the fight against inflation, Lawson will push prices up still faster.

Despite massive unemployment, a powerful battery of anti-union laws, and the efforts of the union bosses to tie the working class hand and foot to the needs of capital, wages have continued to move steadily upwards.

Together with the orgy of borrowing and privatisation which has been presented as 'prosperity', this has produced the lethal combination of rising imports and lagging export figures. 'Over-heating' of the economy is leading to shortages of some types of skilled labour, while mass unemployment continues.

News of a consumer boom always comes as something of a surprise to old age pensioners, single-parent families and unemployed workers, struggling along near or below the poverty line. The free play of the market does not seem to have worked for them.

Nonetheless, it is true that some sections of society will be eating themselves sick this Xmas, while others are condemned to misery in Thatcher's Britain.

The Labour response to the disastrous trade figures, hardly distinguishable from that of the damper Tories, is to make high-pitched noises about Lawson's 'incompetence'. They pretend that they know a better way to run British capitalism - only they never get a chance.

But even if they did, their actions would be at the mercy of the capitalist market as much as Lawson's. The Chancellor, competent or otherwise, is not responsible for contradictions which are inherent in the situation of decaying British capital. His answer to the latest emergency - raising interest rates to record levels - can only make them sharper.

His immediate aim is to protect the exchange rate of sterling. If he succeeds, money will move into the City of London for a while and the pound will be worth more in dollars, deutschmarks and yen. The result will be to make British exports even less competitive on world markets.

If he fails, of course, even further interest rate rises and still more vicious cuts in social services will follow. Either way, further inflation and unemployment are on the way. Powerful wages struggles, involving a direct challenge to the anti-union legislation, can be expected in the new year.

But Lawson is not merely faced with the problems of British capital. At the heart of the difficulties of each capitalist economy is the central issue facing the entire world system: the growing mountain of debt.

The United States, still the centre of world capital, is at the same time the biggest debtor the world has ever known. While the US was taken up with that TV spectacular laughingly called the presidential election, no action could be taken to deal with this, the debt goes on growing and Bush still can't tell us what this might be.

In any case, any measures to reduce the US deficit will simultaneously wreck the prospects for the rest of the world, which has been living off this outflow of dollars. Bush will face the same problem as Lawson, but on a far grander scale. An interest-rate war has now broken out, with New York fighting London over the flow of hot money.

After the stock market crash of 1987, the major capitalist powers worked hard to avert a recession. The method employed was precisely another dose of the very medicine which caused the crisis - to pour billions more credit into the world economy!

This problem of indebtedness underlies the entire economic situation, both in Britain and in the world as a whole. It explains why some people find that their main problem is to keep their weight down, while for others it is to find a way to feed their children each day.

The world economic crisis now enters a new stage. There can be no answer to it except the preparation to take control of the economy out of the hands of the bankers and transnational corporations, and into the control of the working class.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far: £1,491.30

£508.70 is needed to complete our fund and only one more post is due at the time of writing.

Just as I was wondering what to say about this, we received a telephone call with a translation of an article in 'Le Monde' reporting a meeting about Trotsky held in Moscow. Nothing could be more inspiring or impelling than these words of victims of Stalin and Stalinism who have never ceased to stand up for Trotsky and the Left Opposition. This is published below.

We must collect our fund to ensure the continuation of Workers Press to print the historical truth, and lead the fight to build the Fourth International.

Dot Gibson

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

(Translation of a report which appeared in 'Le Monde', 22 November 1988 of a meeting on Tuesday 15 November 1988 held in a room in the House of Culture in the Aeronautical Institute of Moscow.)

'FROM THE platform there now speaks a very old woman with magnificent eyes. It is the daughter of Joffe, one of the great ambassadors of the early years of the revolution who committed suicide in 1927 in protest at the expulsion of Trotsky, his long time friend.

'She had certainly paid in the Gulag for the crime of being the daughter of such a father and she spoke about Trotsky and the 1920s.

'It is as if you were there: the vice tightening, the deportation of Trotsky to Alma Ata, the embarrassment of the officer who had come to arrest such an important man, the letter sent clandestinely by Lev Davidovitch to his first wife - prisoner in the same camp as the young Joffe. The first sentence read: 'I don't understand why this epoch punishes us so'.

'And when the old lady finished quickly, on the assassination of Trotsky in Mexico by an agent of Stalin made Hero of the Soviet Union and 'afterwards welcomed in our country' the room trembles, and protests: 'How! No! It can't be true!'

'A young man takes his head between his hands as if crushed by collective shame. A woman looks at her husband shaking her head as if to escape from the nightmare. Strangely, it is this medal given to the assassin which they find most revolting.

'But another speaker already has the microphone - Galina Antonov Ovseenko, daughter of the old political leader of the Red Army liquidated in 1938. She was in a camp from 1937-1953 and she had this to say: 'What is Trotskyism? It is my life'. All that she had ever done, she meant to say, her destiny. Shaking all over in order to be able to finish speaking and speaking like lancing an abscess, she shouts: 'Give us our history, just as it has been. The truth, only the truth'.

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NURSES IN THE FRONT LINE AGAINST TORY GOVERNMENT

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

AS NURSES in 17 London hospitals took industrial action in defiance of the Tory government last week, it was clear that a showdown is looming in the health service.

It concerns not only nurses, or other health workers, but the whole working class.

At a private meeting of Tory MPs, Health Minister David Mellor has declared 'We will not allow the nurses to become the miners of the 1980s.'

In other words, there is no question of nurses being treated as a special 'deserving' case, 'angels' or not. So far as the Tories are concerned, they are just another group of workers who must be clobbered down before they encourage others.

In the House of Commons on Friday, after ACAS talks had broken down, Mellor told MPs 'I am not prepared to talk to NUPE or COHSE unless they call off their attempt to organise industrial action.'

Interviewed on BBC radio News at One the same day, Health Secretary Kenneth Clark boasted of how well he got on with Trevor Clay of the no-strike Royal College of Nursing (RCN), and concluded triumphantly 'you'll find the majority of hospitals are working normally, because people are happy with the rise.'

In other words, if you strike we won't talk to you, and if you don't strike we'll assume you're happy with what you get, so there'll be no need to talk to you.'

Meanwhile, in keeping with Clark's urgings to health authorities to get tough, nurses at Bristol's Hanham Hall mental handicap hospital were sent home without pay for working-to-grade - that is, doing only the tasks the authority is prepared to pay them for.

Whether or not he might be embarrassed by Clark's declarations of affection over the air, Clay was not here to hear them. The RCN's president was in South Korea - not a country noted for its union rights or health provision - fixing up an international nursing conference.

But he managed to get off a blast attacking NUPE and COHSE for the failure of talks, accusing: 'They are playing poker with patients and Kenneth Clark will call their bluff.'

At this rate, maybe Clark and Clay should stop wagging tongues by making the affair legit, incorporating the Royal College into the government Department and paying its president a suitable official salary.

Allowing for Tory prejudice against nationalisation, worried RCN members would at least be relieved of the cost of 'business unionism' - £2.3 million to date invested in a public relations company called Scutari, much of it without any reference to members' wishes.

While the RCN leadership ingratiated itself with Thatcher to no advantage for nurses, it must not be pretended that NUPE and COHSE leaders are up to the kind of fight that is needed.

Having failed to get their act together earlier this year, so that it was left to young rank-and-file nurses to establish union action, the union bureaucrats greeted the Tory pay offer as a great victory, rather than warn of the dangers.

Now, nurses have been left to fight sporadic local actions as

though the enemy was merely the Tory stooges in the Health Authorities, when clearly it is the government itself and the rotten interests it represents.

At St. George's Hospital, in south London, picketing NUPE nurses last week rightly carried placards attacking Clark, and chanted 'Thatcher Out!' Passing drivers tooted support, and some delivery vehicles turned away.

Although there is widespread support for the nurses among other workers and in the middle class, this is not being aroused or mobilised. Even other health workers, who know the score, are not being approached for backing.

When the Tories refer in the same breath to miners and nurses, they mean that however popular the nurses' case, they intend to beat them as an example to the

rest of us. It is part of the continuing Thatcherite plan to smash the Health Service and to demoralise and crush working people into submission.

Yet it also expresses the Tories' fear, especially with crisis facing them on the economic and home-ownership fronts, that the whole thing could blow up in their faces.

We don't want the nurses to be treated like the miners were either - left to fight on their own while the rest of us pat them on the back, and the Labour leaders 'deplore' the conflict, and plead with Thatcher.

What is needed is a leadership in the labour movement that stops trying to crawl to the Tories, and fights for working people and socialism as determinedly as the enemy fights for exploitation and the rich.



Miners march in support of nurses earlier this year

A victim of perestroika

UKRAINIANS are campaigning for the release of an engineer, Ivan Makar, jailed after he demanded the opening of Stalinist secret police files, and attacked bureaucratic privilege.

He has waged prolonged hunger strikes in jail to protest his detention.

Makar was arrested in August and charged under Article 187, a 'public order' law extensively used in Brezhnev's time.

The authorities accused him of 'violating social order' by helping organise a public meeting in Lviv in July - even though permission for the meeting had been granted.

Shortly after his arrest on Au-

gust 4, police brutally broke up another rally in Lviv.

In a letter to the newspaper 'Leninska Molod' on July 18, Ivan Makar wrote:

'My statement that the crimes of the 1944-49 years in the western Ukrainian lands were encouraged and sometimes directly organised by criminals from the NKVD and KGB has obviously annoyed you.

'So let us open up the archives from that period, which do not reveal any military secrets, and you will see my lies.

'Together we would discover that many criminals against humanity with ribbons on their chest stroll down the streets of our city...

'They are the ones who fought not on the battlefield, but against the peaceful civilian population, murdering, shooting, and deporting them to Siberia. ...They belong to the 'fighters of Stalin's cohorts'.

Replying to slurs on his supposed incentives, Makar said he lived in a workers' hostel, on his wages, and did not enjoy a government car, special hospital treatment or other privileges.

He said the public was well-aware of some party 'comrades' political lifestyle - 'privileged picnics and drunken orgies in restaurants and dachas', - and was more likely to heed the ideas of those who had suffered in the camps.

He has become the first in the Ukraine to be jailed under Gorbachev's policy of 'perestroika'.

Continuity

of the Fourth International



A photograph smuggled clandestinely out of Russia to Trotsky in exile in Cayoacan, showing a group of Trotskyists before their exile to the camps, amongst them two close collaborators of Trotsky - Victor Yeltsin, top left and Igor Poznansky, middle right.

(The following is the first in a series of monthly columns reclaiming the history of the Fourth International which Stalinism attempted to destroy forever. Michel Varga tells the stories of some of Trotsky's closest supporters who perished in Stalin's camps.)

VICTOR YELTSIN

(top left in the photograph - son of Boris Yeltsin) became a Bolshevik in 1917 when he was a student at secondary school. He became President of the Soviet in Viatsk in 1918, then political commissar of a division of the Red Army. After the civil war he went to the 'Red Professor's' academy and became an economist in 1926. From 1923 he prepared, as a member of Trotsky's secretariat, an edition of the Works of Trotsky.

Arrested in 1928, he went from one camp and prison to another. In 1930 he wrote a letter to Leon Sedov from prison - I quote:

'...The success obtained in the union of the international Left (he is speaking about the first conference of the International Left Opposition held in Paris in 1930) - is a great celebration for us.

'This information gives us strength and assurance. We ask you to send us the most important articles of our Bulletin...' He disappeared after 1936.

BORIS YELTSIN

(Father of Iossif and Victor) was a Bolshevik from 1903 and leader of the Soviet in the Urals in 1917. He was then a member of the Executive of the All Russian ... in October.

In 1923 he was one of those who signed the famous 'letter of the 46', starting point of the opposition to Stalin, and from this date he was one of the leaders of the Opposition and one of the drafters of its platform in 1927.

After the exile of Trotsky in 1928 he organised and led the clandestine oppositional 'Centre' in Moscow which organised and assured, amongst others, the routing of reports and documents to Trotsky in Alma-Ata as well as the links between different oppositional groups in the country.

After his arrest he was put into a prison with bad conditions and contracted tuberculosis of the bones.

Stalin proposed a 'deal' to him. He answered from his cell that he would agree only on condition that Trotsky could return to Moscow and the Bolshevik-Leninists could organise a conference...

IOSSIF YELTSIN

is less well known. He died in exile of tuberculosis.

IGOR POZNANSKY

(in the middle on the right in the photograph) is one of the finest figures of the so-called young generation of Bolsheviks. He is mentioned several times by Trotsky in 'My Life'. Trotsky describes how he knew him in 1917:

'One night, coming back from a meeting by deserted streets, I heard steps following me...'

Later, in the same book Trotsky quotes his own letter to the Central Committee:

'My two closest collaborators from the time of the civil war, comrades Sermux and Poznansky, having decided to accompany me of their own free will to my place of exile, were arrested immediately on their arrival, shut up with criminals in a basement, and then exiled to a remote area in the far north.'

We know from different sources that during the year 1936, the Bolshevik-Leninists still alive were concentrated in the camp of Vorkuta with Igor Poznansky amongst them.

Their number is estimated (by a Menshevik who later escaped from this camp) at several thousands!!

Immediately after their arrival, the life of the camp changed. This same Menshevik characterised their (his opponents') activity by saying that they refused to work more than eight hours a day, they rejected in an organised way the rules of the camp, openly criticised Stalin and the general line of policy, declaring at the same time their readiness to defend the Soviet Union. They organised in groups and cells with a committee in charge of all activities, led by Igor Poznansky.

After the first Moscow trial, in the autumn of that year, they organised meetings and demonstrations in the camp and, in a general assembly where their leaders spoke, decided to have a hunger strike with several demands, aimed at improving the conditions in the camp.

This strike started on 27th October 1936 and lasted 132 days!! Every effort was made to break it: forced feeding, cutting off heating (at minus 50 degrees Celsius!) etc.. In vain...in March 1937 the local authorities gave up on the whole line, following an order from Moscow. After some months, the repression began. Then the Trotskyists, with all of those who followed them in the strike, were enclosed in separate buildings and guarded militarily day and night.

In March 1938, 35 Bolshevik-Leninists (Trotskyists), men and women, were taken away by truck outside the camp, lined up alongside a trench and machine gunned. Every day for over two months, the executions continued! The Trotskyists of Vorkuta, several thousands, were murdered, Igor Poznansky amongst them.

(Life in Vorkuta camp is described by Maria M. Joffe (widow of Joffe) in 'One Long Night' published in London in 1978).

LETTERS

THE GOVAN by-election result was one of the most surprising, and could turn out to be one of the most significant, in parliamentary history. It was not our reporter's fault that only a partial sense of this emerged from the article: 'Govan: two fingers to the Labour Party' (WP 19/11/88).

May I make some shorthand points, in the hope they will contribute to a 'full and frank' discussion in Workers Press.

I suspect that some of the more heterodox members of 'West of Scotland WRP' might have voted SNP, had they lived in Govan.

Workers Press exists, in large part, to fight for internationalism and against Stalinism in the British workers' movement. The story about the historic retreat of the PLO under Stalinist pressure was a vital one. Nonetheless, what does the Scottish working class have to do to get on Workers Press' front page?!

The Labour Party, the British Communist Party, the Militant, the Labour Committee on Ireland, etc., were not the only ones to misread the mood in Govan. So did the WRP. Should we not spell out the full extent of the surprise, and begin from thinking about why it surprised us, rather than giving the impression that we think it merely confirms the need for the revolutionary party we know needs to be built.

Just a few questions about the content of the article. Kinnock may indeed be an idiot, but was it entirely idiotic to say that Govan was a vote against Thatcher? Govan workers (or at least a majority of those who voted) presumably think they have found a more effective way of protesting against Thatcher.

Sillars' victory 'certainly' (my emphasis) didn't signify an upsurge of Scottish nationalism. Are we so sure? The river Tweed is not about to be defended by kilted shipyard workers bearing claymores (I don't think so, anyway); but the idea that 'Scotland' has a right to self-determination within the capitalist European Community might catch on as Thatcher's attacks on democratic rights (dealt with in the Workers Press editorial) mount.

John L. Broom's letter rejecting the definition of the SNP as 'petty bourgeois' was therefore timely. More thought is needed about this unique political formation. But there is no necessary contradiction between a political party being 'petty bourgeois' in the ideological horizons of its leadership and also being 'left of centre'. Indeed one could throw the question back and ask what 'left of centre' now means: the centre, like the SNP's position on the Common Market, keeps shifting!

Are Broom and his co-thinkers telling the Scottish working class it can achieve socialism by agreement with those sectors of the European monopoly capitalism which look to a Brussels-centred superstate? They did not put it quite like that in Govan.

Terry Brotherstone
Edinburgh

Organising underground

AN INTERVIEW WITH A POLISH WORKER

When did you start publishing 'Reduta'?

Just after the military coup in 1981 we were getting various papers in the factory - 'Tygodnik Wojenny' ('Military Weekly'), 'Niepodleglosc' ('Independence') 'Przetrawianie' ('Endurance'). There was no point starting another paper.

But after the smashing of the first MRKS (Inter-factory Workers' Committee of Solidarnosc) our own structures fell apart. There was a great shortage of papers. People from outside didn't dare to contact us because we had Piotrkowski working in our factory - the only prosecution witness in the trial of MRKS.

In the process of rebuilding our Solidarnosc factory structures, the idea came up that we should publish our own paper.

When was this?

It must have been in the spring of 1983. We planned to publish the statements put out by TKZ (the local factory committee), the communiqués of the leadership of the Union and things about our own workplace. We wanted 'Reduta' to be the paper of all the factories in the Wola district, but it didn't work out like that.

But 'Reduta' doesn't only provide information. There is a regular historical section, correspondence, a crossword, cartoons and what's more the only health and safety column in any of the Solidarnosc press.

At the beginning there were many plans... with great difficulty we are carrying on with the historical section. 'Reduta' is a typical trade union paper; we want to write about union matters, not political.

How is it received in the factory: among workers and the management?

The management and supervisors do not admit that the paper exists, although they know it does. For instance some scandal or problem comes to light, they say there was a leaflet stuck somewhere and something must be done about it.

The editor of 'Glos Wolnego Hutnika' (The Voice of the Free Steelworker) told me once that appearance of any information about a factory in the factory press makes a bigger impression on the management than if it appears in one of the national papers...

Certainly. Management read it before some workers!

Does management ever carry out any of your proposals?

When we write, for instance, about some health and safety issue, then the following day the person responsible for safety runs around and checks. He makes a report and...usually everything stays the same, but there is some reaction.

It's the same with the sale of alcohol. When an article appears about drunkenness, they go after the drunkards, and the places they go to.

There is no drinking for a week or so, and then it starts again. The bulletin of the neo-unions wants to co-operate with us. They take it up - but of course they would not publish that the secretary goes around drunk.

What are the conditions of work in the Wola factory?

The basic problems: lack of ventilation and air conditioning, together with primitive machinery. As a result there is a lot of dust and noise. The quality of protective clothing is very poor so it wears out quickly.

It is very cold in the buildings. In January 1985 there was a strike because of it - the temperature in the building fell down to nearly freezing point.

The windows were broken and let in draughts;

In this interview, the editor of 'Reduta' - paper of the Workers 'Solidarnosc' Committee at M. Nowotki Engineering Works in the main industrial area of Warsaw, Wola, explains to the oppositionist paper, 'Robotnik' ('Worker') how the Solidarnosc movement has been maintained in spite of illegality

Translated from 'Robotnik' no: 122, 15 April 1987



'Strike tomorrow!' banner, with support from the students and 'free political prisoners'

the doors were left open for vehicles. On top of that the heating didn't work and there were no protective clothes.

Workers demanded the heating of the building, to be given warm protective clothes and the repair of the wall in the assembly plant.

At first the management wanted to frighten us, but when they failed, not only were the clothes found, but also the heating started working.

What happened after 13 December 1981? Were many workers sacked?

There weren't many actually dismissed, but if workers wanted to leave, the management let them go earlier than the regulations allowed.

In 1982 there was a strike in defence of one of the workers from the assembly plant who was sacked. A few more workers were sacked for taking part in the strike, a few others were transferred to other jobs, usually worse. Later they also left.

There were a number of protests against price rises. During our morning break we would go outside. The management and security would go mad. Unfortunately the following year the same action failed. Management realised what was happening and blocked the exits.

Leaflets would be distributed in the factory, and someone would paint 'S' signs on the walls inside and outside the factory.

We would also play jokes on the security. One of us would telephone and say that in such-and-such a place people are gathering or leaflets being given out. They would run like mad - only to find out nothing was happening. It was great to see the chief of security and his men off at 'quick march'.

How many workers identify themselves with Solidarnosc?

It is difficult to say. Out of 4,000 about 200 pay membership dues regularly, but the free press is collected in much larger numbers. Second-hand books are sought after - especially historical ones and good literature. Also very popular are cassettes and videos.

How many workers belong to the party (PZPR - Polish United Workers' Party, the ruling Stalinist party), neo-unions, etc.?

I don't know, but it's people like the supervisors, managers and the drunkards who join the neo-unions. When they're caught drinking or thieving, it gets covered up.

The party is the same as it was; no-one joins it, if anything people leave. ZMP (The Union of Polish Youth - the Stalinist youth movement) apparently exists, but no-one hears about it. After the state of emergency a great number of young people left. Whole sections no longer exist.

How many workers were there in 'Solidarnosc' during its legal activity?

Almost everyone, over 90 per cent.

Why is there such a big drop from 90 per cent to five per cent?

You can't understand it like that. Five per cent pay the fees but many more identify with it. All the supervisors and managers left.

There are many peasant-workers here who, on the whole, are not interested in the factory. They are the ones who work 16 hours a day and don't want to go out on a limb.

That's one reason, but there is another one, more important. People thought the 'war' will only last a few months, perhaps one or two years, and then Solidarnosc will be legal again. But the period of illegal activities has now gone on for several years - and people have doubts. The 'top' did not produce any programme. We had to organise on our own.

Apart from this, being active in Solidarnosc is hard work - you have to have good health! Now open Solidarnosc councils have emerged. Something has started happening, but will the enthusiasm last?

What are you expecting from the open councils?

Help, financial and material...

...and programmatic?

Some kind of education: about workers' control, law, work etc. We need somebody at work we can turn to for help, for advice.

What union activities will you propose?

Those that will unite, bring people closer. For instance, video showings, trips. Things that make contact between different workers in the factory.

Which actions are more effective - social ones or those appealing to the conscience - such as laying flowers on anniversaries like that of the workers shot in Gdansk in 1970, or demonstrations?

Both. Everything depends on the temperament of the activists.

How is 'Robotnik' received in your factory?

When it doesn't appear for a while then people begin to ask why. The interviews with the factory committee are very good. At least we find out that something is still happening somewhere.

Personal Column

Peter Fryer

How to recognise Churchill

LAST Wednesday saw the 114th anniversary of the birth of Sir Winston Churchill, and the week it fell in was formally proclaimed 'National Sir Winston Churchill Recognition Week' by resolution of both Houses of the US Congress as well as by presidential proclamation.

Reagan's proclamation urged American citizens to honour Churchill with 'appropriate ceremonies and activities', which seems to mean cocktail parties and fulsome speeches.

From beginning to end, two threads ran consistently through Churchill's career: his implacable hostility to the working class and his rather more furtive, but no less implacable, racism.

To remember Churchill without remembering those two threads, as is now almost always done, is to falsify history and turn biography into hagiography. Churchill was home secretary in 1911, during the most widespread labour unrest that Britain had ever known.

On Merseyside 70,000 dockers and low-paid railwaymen, together with seamen, carters, and tramwaymen, came out in a general transport strike.

Two warships were moored in the Mersey with their guns trained on Liverpool, and Churchill had 7,000 soldiers and special police moved in.

There was a brutal police charge against a gigantic demonstration on St George's Plateau, and a crowd of workers - allegedly trying to stop a prison van and rescue the prisoners - was fired on by troops and two workers were killed.

'Let Churchill do his utmost', declared Tom Mann, chairman of the transport workers' joint strike committee. 'Let him order ten times more military to Liverpool and let every street be paraded by them, not all the king's forces with all the king's men can take the vessels out of the docks to sea.' And, in the end, the employers and the government had to come to terms.

Meanwhile the Port of London was closed down by a strike of dockers, stevedores, gasworkers, carters, coalporters, tugmen, and grain porters - a movement bigger and more solid than even the great 1889 struggle for the 'dockers' tanner'.

At Churchill's insistence the War Office reinforced the London garrison and threatened to send in 25,000 troops to break the strike by doing the dockers' work. But, again, solidarity won the day, and the strikers won most of their demands.

It was Churchill who, in the following year, insisted on an unsuccessful attempt being made to intimidate into surrender a national strike by 200,000 railwaymen.

At the request of the railway companies he had large bodies of troops sent to Manchester and elsewhere, and two workers were killed when a demonstration was fired on at Llanelly.

It was Churchill who, when 10,000 miners in the Rhondda Valleys came out on strike in 1911, sent in both troops and Metropolitan police, who savagely attacked the strikers at Tonypany.

And it was Churchill who, during the 1926 general strike, edited the government's notorious 'British Gazette', perhaps the most bloodthirsty strikebreaking sheet ever issued in this country, telling his readers that the strike meant civil war and foreshadowing Thatcher by describing the strikers as 'the enemy'.

Churchill's racism, and his role as the pace-maker of state racism in the early 1950s, are less well known; but the facts are freely accessible to anyone who consults Sir Alexander Cadogan's diaries and Harold Macmillan's memoirs, and visits the Public Record Office.

Told during World War II that a black official at the Colonial Office had been barred from his usual lunch-time restaurant because it was patronised by American officers, Churchill retorted: 'That's all right; if he takes his banjo with him they'll think he's one of the band.'

In 1952 Churchill was agitating inside the Cabinet about the 'large numbers of coloured workers' employed by the Post Office, which risked the creation of 'difficult social problems'.

Somewhat later he was telling Ministry of Labour officials 'that he would not regard unfavourably proposals designed to restrict the entry of coloured workers into Great Britain'.

Discussing around this time the migration of black people to Britain, Churchill told Sir Hugh Foot, governor of Jamaica: 'We would have a magpie society: that would never do.'

And, according to Macmillan, early in 1955 Churchill proposed the slogan 'Keep Britain White' as 'a good slogan for the Election which we should soon have to fight without the benefit of his leadership'.

It's safe to say that these essential aspects of Churchill's career will not be unduly stressed to the workers and the black community of the USA during National Sir Winston Churchill Recognition Week.

But they will never be forgotten by the workers and the black community of Britain, who know the difference between a saint and a scoundrel.

AS I SEE IT

BY TOM OWEN

(Instead of his usual column this week, Tom Owen is inserting an original poem)

Fantasia

They came out of the sea,
(some, they say, stepped out of the trees)
Expert bowmen practised their art to no avail
When they reached the towns, they were not recognised at first, the thoroughfares were so full and the rains had begun.

It was the wolves that alerted the people and then the miracles that were performed with transport and food. Their public rites and rituals, new music in the subways and the shameless wall drawings announced their occupation.

Their gaudy caravans and exotic entertainment drew large and curious crowds, some of their women could sing for hours keeping us from home or work for days.

They had no children, they seemed to be born at twenty and not

one was seen to die.

Our authorities and priests called for a pogrom, the soldiery and the scum from the market taverns gathered in the squares with pistols and cruel knives. The loudspeakers awoke us to patriotic music and martial hymns.

They assumed perfect disguises, some went so far as to age in an hour, they were invisibly in our midst. The authorities decreed that a representative number of the handsome the young and the clever should be slaughtered. After the carnage, the rains

ceased and the frost bit.

There were no more wonders
Our watchmen turned to the sea and our woodmen cleared the forests.

Our armourers made great advances
And our merchants grew fat.

When the summer came the stars fell out of the sky and drew their suns into the sea. Now in the dark age we marvel at the exquisite music and luminous cave drawings they bequeathed us when there was light

KING AND COUNTRY

THE WEEK of the Govan by-election was a good moment to be watching Shakespeare in Scotland. And, by a happy chance, Edinburgh was hosting productions of an historical tragedy and comedy about corrupt authority within a caber-toss of each other.

Better still, one production was quintessentially English, a beautifully spoken affair with not a doublet out of place: the other was a crazy, quixotic stab at doing 'As You Like It' in Scots accents.

'Richard II' is a great play. Derek Jacobi a fine actor. Bring the two together and you have perfection of a particular sort. The difficulty lay not in Jacobi's well modulated performance, but in what one of the posters outside the Kings Theatre described, with cruel accuracy, as his 'supporting cast'.

For Shakespeare's historical tragedies are about great themes - which is why they fit in well with Govan. They are about power not being all its cracked up to be, and yet being a driving force in human affairs. To speak anachronistically they are about not believing every thing you read in the newspapers.

Richard II as a boy-king of 14, played a key role in the suppression of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381.

But the play deals with the events of 1398-99, showing the king trying to secure his position as 'first among equals' (and believing it secure); his deposition by Bolingbroke, later Henry IV; and his assassination by an over-zealous would-be favourite of the new king.

For the drama to achieve its full vitality and realise its inner dynamic, Richard's edgy arrogance, his bleak aloneness as his troops desert and his male favourites are killed, and the banal tragedy of his ending, must be expressed not only in the performance of the king, but must find their counterpoint in the way those who bring



DEREK JACOBI

about his downfall are portrayed.

Jacobi's fine Richard, in Clifford Williams' production soon to be seen in London's West End, finds no such counterpoint.

David Rintoul's Bolingbroke rises to the throne with all the conviction of a balding and unambitious younger son assuming a minor baronetcy on the unexpected death of his elder brother.

And Malcolm Tierney's York, cumbrously got up to look like a bust of Homer, switches his loyalties, quarrels with his wife, and denounces his son as a traitor, with about as much passion as one would expect from such an artefact.

One could go on, but it would not be the point. For this is basically a very good cast, which - with the exception of Barbara Jefford as the maternal Duchess of York, and Pete Postlethwaite in one of his three cameo roles (as a gardener) - seems to have been

told to be heard and not seen.

The gesture of having Jacobi and Rintoul take their curtain call together could not dispel the impression that the production is a 'star vehicle' for a commercial tour, the cut-throat West End, and the U.S. market. It is a fine example of the genre, and it has one real theatrical advantage.

For through it, Shakespeare speaks. We are forced to listen to the words, since, apart from Jacobi's set pieces and the competently elegant set by Carl Toms, there is not very much to watch.

And so we learn afresh (young people of London, go and learn it perhaps for the first time!) how much Shakespeare has to say, not so much about the history of the late 14th century, but about the great moral and political issues of his own day.

And since that day began with the Renaissance and was to close with the bourgeois revolution of the 1640s (Shakespeare himself died in 1616), those issues can find powerful echoes in the revolutionary times in which we live now.

Not directly, to be sure, but through the prism of our own historical consciousness. Shakespeare, like all great writers, will only teach to those who want to learn. And at least one English, and one Establishment-minded Scots reviewer did not think there was much to learn from Hamish Glen's Scotticised production of 'As You Like It', which has now finished its run at the Lyceum Theatre.

Both found either the production as a whole, or key aspects of it, incomprehensible. Perhaps it would have seemed less inscrutable if they had seen it after the rustic jesters of Caledonia had taken Duchess Margaret and Lieutenant Fluellen down to the Govan pub to tell them the one about the Scots person, the English woman and the Welshman!

For Glen's production, in its way, was a cry from the heart,

full of Scotch nonsense as well as real and passionate conviction. At times it called to mind the famous occasion in the 18th century when a quite absurdly sentimental historical drama - written by a Scot - was greeted by the Edinburgh literati with cries of 'Whaur's your Wullie Shakespeare noo!'

But its basic point was clear enough. Shakespeare, it was saying is too important, too contemporary, to be surrendered to the bourgeois Establishment and profitably marketed - on Scottish stages or anywhere else - under the guise of 'our heritage of finely spoken drama'.

Shakespeare's essential Englishness has nothing to do either with the enterprise culture or the Falklands spirit. It has everything to do with the universality of the questions posed in the period of the English bourgeois revolution.

So why not let Shakespeare, the supreme English genius, force us to think about Scottish questions today? About the idea of anglicised Edinburgh as the equivalent of a corrupted Renaissance court/centre of government?

About the possibility that Establishment theatre, whether influenced by the gentle art of capitalist state subsidy or cringing before the crude bludgeon of commercial sponsorship, may actually stand in the way of culture rather than encouraging its development?

This Scots 'As You Like It' did not entirely work. It was not quite funny, and not nearly sexy enough, despite Siobhan Redmond's lively and convincingly transexual Rosalind. But it had its moments and deserved to be seriously thought about.

Now, however, life has overtaken art. The scene shifts to another part of the forest, an urban glade near Govan Cross. Enter mechanicks, hussifs and a motley crowd. Bearing spears...

Terry Brotherstone



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News briefs...

Staggering ignorance

THE BRADFORD City Football Club fire, the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise, Piper Alpha and the King's Cross disasters have clearly had no effect on safety training and education in Britain, an international congress on emergency planning heard last week. Recommendations from public inquiries 'seem to vanish', congress chairman Eric Alley said. 'It is not simply individual managements who fail to learn the lessons of what has gone before, but also responsible people at government level who are the first to express their horror when people die.' Lives would continue to be lost in large numbers unless proper preventative steps were taken, Alley predicted. 'We stagger from disaster to disaster and appear to learn nothing.'

Refuse in space

ACCORDING to Professor Bernard Lovell, the astronomer, 'There are now a million million bits of debris in orbit', weighing a total of 2,000 tonnes. If this accumulation of rubbish, routinely disposed of by spacecrafts, is not low enough to be burnt up by the earth's atmosphere, it would remain in orbit for hundreds of years. Lovell was speaking at a press conference to launch his latest book, 'Halfway to the Universe', jointly written with Francis Graham-Smith, the Astronomer Royal. Space pollution is reaching such proportions that a disastrous collision in space is now two per cent likely to occur within the next ten years, the authors claim.

For whose sake?

AS WITH the thousands of other paintings designated 'degenerate' by the Nazis, what became of Picasso's 'Acrobat and Young Harlequin', which last week became the most expensive 20th Century work of art when it was sold for nearly £21 million, immediately after it was confiscated? Who were the 'lucky buyers' at those 1937 auctions? Its new owner keeps well within the tradition of the fabulously wealthy 'patrons' of the arts, by preferring to remain anonymous.

Mentally ill at risk

THE NATIONAL Schizophrenia Fellowship stated last week that Tory health minister Edwina Currie's intention to close 55 mental hospitals does not include a further 22 closures 'which the government doesn't appear to know about'. Regional health authorities were 'racing ahead with closures' said the fellowship's director, without any real (so-called) community care alternatives. In the last ten years 40,000 hospital beds for mentally ill patients have been closed.

POLICE PERJURY AND DEATH THREATS

BY BRONWEN HANDYSIDE

ON 23 APRIL this year a young man on a motorbike was knocked down by a car and killed. A tragic incident, but not unusual - it happens every day.

The difference for Stephen Mordey was that 10 weeks before, while in gaol on trumped-up charges, he had been asked by police to act as an agent provocateur.

When he refused he was told 'you might have a f---g accident with a car. A car bumps you, knocks your missus down, knocks somebody's relative down, drives off, you might want to know something about that car.'

Stephen Mordey and his friend Stuart Newton were picked up by police in April 1987 and charged with robbery - a charge they vigorously denied. The evidence against them - as with the Guildford Four - were confessions they were supposed to have made to the police while in custody.

But in order to protect themselves from frame-up they had a tape recorder smuggled into Durham prison, which Stuart Newton sewed into his jacket and used to record an interview by a Northumbria policeman, Detective Sergeant Alan Long. When it came to their trial, Detective Long gave a detailed account of the interview which he said contained a full confession.

The defence produced the tape of the interview which contained no confession. The prosecution dropped the case, and the two men were acquitted.

Stephen Mordey also used the tape recorder, to record an interview with police from a different force, who asked him to turn informer.

Ten weeks later Mordey was in a fatal collision with a car driven by Brian Knox, an employee of a private security firm, and an ex-policeman. In another vehicle following the motorbike at the time of the crash was Evans Davies, also employed by a private security firm.

The police in Cleveland are proud of their close co-operation with security firms - an editorial in the Newcastle Chronicle on 17 October states that 999 calls are often answered by the staff of private firms 'in several police areas, including Cleveland.'

A curious disinclination to enquire too far into the circumstances of the death is manifested by police - the pillion passenger who was on the bike at the time of the crash has not been interviewed, nor did they inform him or Stephen Mordey's widow that an inquest was taking place.

The inquest itself was mysteriously called off at the last minute. It has been suggested that this is not unconnected with police knowledge of the existence of the tape containing death threats to Mordey and his wife, or with the

intervention of Bob Clay, MP for Sunderland North, who believes his phone is tapped.

Clay has quite a few constituents who say that they are the victims of police perjury, in many cases involving the same policemen who were shown to have perjured themselves at the Newton and Mordey trial.

Shortly after Stephen Mordey's

death, the police again knocked at Stuart Newton's door. He let them in, walked straight out to the kitchen and glued his mouth up with superglue.

After being charged with another robbery, he was taken to hospital and his lips were unglued. 'It was uncomfortable' he says 'but at least I couldn't say anything'. The charges against him were dismissed.

Victimisation at Fords

BY FRED BAER

The Ford Motor company at Dagenham is backing up its victimisation of PTA production worker Mick Gosling with a campaign of lying press statements. Gosling, Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) branch chair, and elected delegate to Region Number 1 of the TGWU committee was sacked when he refused to sign a statement that he would not encourage or take part in any 'unconstitutional' actions or be dismissed.

Such an undertaking would

compel him to be a scab if his fellow workers took strike action. The Ford Motor Company has told the press that he was sacked over issues connected with Ireland (!), and promoting unofficial stoppages, charges that were dropped when the unions answered them item by item. The PTA stewards' committee has issued a statement to its workforce denouncing the smear campaign as a frame-up and calling for support for his unconditional re-instatement. A fuller report will appear in next week's Workers Press.

Police attack on students

BY A STUDENT CORRESPONDENT

FOLLOWING a week of action against Tory plans to introduce loans and make students pay for their education as well as the abolition of state benefits during summer vacation, 20,000 students from all over England marched on Westminster last week in defiance of the Public Order Act and their own national and local leaderships.

The National Union of Students leadership spared no effort in trying to stop any form of protest by the students. When that failed, they called upon colleges not to send more than six representatives to lobby their MPs.

As a last resort, realising that students would be descending on Westminster in their thousands, the venue of the march was switched from Westminster to the Imperial War Museum.

Stewards who had kept students from south London waiting in the cold at the London College of Printing for four hours made a frantic bid to regain control of the march after a majority of students had already begun leaving the park at the War Museum to join the main march at Westminster.

The students then rejoined the official march, but at the park broke through police lines, and led nearly all the students there in a march towards Westminster. 'We didn't come here to talk to trees,' students were saying.

Just before reaching Westminster Bridge the south London contingent met the national

march which was heading towards the War Museum. After a discussion all the marchers turned around and headed back for Westminster.

The police had already blockaded the bridge. They were clearly very psyched up and ready to do battle with anybody attempting to cross over to Westminster and confront MPs. The scene was reminiscent of episodes during the miners' strike and other class confrontations since. It was no surprise therefore when leather-clad officers controlling the police lines were identified as those that were in charge of the riot control forces at Wapping. Undaunted the students pressed on.

At about 3.30pm stewards stepped up the pressure on the demonstrators to leave and several thousand of them began to do so.

The police wasted no time; the line of vans opened up and the mounted police charged into the dispersing students. Although some regrouped in a side street, many simply ran for their lives as police on horseback charged back along the road. It was obvious most students were leaving peacefully - but the police charged again and nearby vehicles were overturned to give protection from the unprovoked attacks.

Students are the amongst the first of a wave of struggle which will sweep the working class over the next months - struggles which will immediately involve workers, like the students, in a confrontation with the state and their own leaderships.