

Workers' fight

5p

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**BOSSES' MARKET
BOSSES' BRITAIN
NO CHOICE
DON'T VOTE!**

ON Monday, a Guardian cartoonist had Wedgwood Benn dressed up as Chairman Mao. On Tuesday the idiotic Tory ex-minister Peter Walker was comparing him to Adolf Hitler, while on Wednesday Walker's colleague on the Tory benches, Keith Joseph, compared Benn with Dracula. Then, to cap it all, Thursday's press recorded that Lord Watkinson, next year's Director General of the CBI, was threatening an organised sabotage of Benn's plans.

For each of these millionair-militants, Anthony Wedgwood Benn is not a reality but a nightmare. A nightmare in which workers rule, in which the capitalist class is ousted and deprived of its great wealth; a nightmare in which industry is not a machine for exploitation but an instrument of planned enrichment for mankind.

The reality is different. Benn is not in the least the revolutionary they keep claiming he is — unless the scope of your imagination runs no further than the bonnet of your Rolls. Benn is a politician dedicated to the "regeneration of British industry" as the key to any development for the working class — in other words, a man who believes ultimately that our lives depend on the decisions of big businessmen. Where he differs from the presently powerful pack of Labour right-wingers — Healey, Wilson, Lever and others — is that he doesn't think all the bosses can be trusted to know what's best for them.

Millions

When he first intervened in the affairs of the fast failing shipyards of western Scotland as Mister Mintec, he gave the old barons the money and ... within a couple of years they were bust again...

Millions upon millions had already been given to Leylands, with the BLMC board free to use it as they pleased and ... they went bust...

In order to achieve his sought-after "regeneration of British industry" he therefore wants to save the begging barons from their own congenital vices of greed, short-sightedness and self-centredness. That's why he wants to bind them within the loose operation of planning agreements; that's why he wants them to disclose information; that's why he wants to nationalise or keep state control over key industrial sectors; that's why he wants to increase his control over the heads of already nationalised industries who may be over-much influenced by their friends in the private sector.

But the capitalists are not ready to give up any part of their control of industry. They are not convinced of the judgment history has made of them, and even less by Mr. Benn's. Therefore they make him the target of every string of half witted abuse they can piece together.

WHY BENN IS BOSSES' BOGEY

by Jack Price

Also, from the benighted viewpoint of the bourgeoisie (and no less from the bureaucratic standpoint of the reformist socialists — from Fabians to Stalinists) state control in itself is socialism. The only alternatives they can see are private industry or bureaucratic state control.

For us there is no socialism without the liberated working class functioning as the active controller of society and economy. We therefore do not put our confidence in anyone — "left" or "right" — who wishes to bind the workers to the chariot wheels of a doomed capitalism: be it

through the Social Contract, through workers' participation, through getting together with the bosses to campaign for 'import controls', through accepting redundancies in the steel industry or anywhere else...

And Benn stands four-square behind every one of these policies.

But so long as the capitalist class and its direct agents in the labour movement attack him for narrowing their room for manoeuvre; so long as each move Benn makes against them confirms and encourages the deeply felt aspirations of millions of workers to get rid of the exploiters altogether; and so long as he is attacked as the champion of these aspirations — the task of socialists must be to oppose this Benn-baiting.

N.IRELAND ELECTIONS: A VOTE FOR CIVIL WAR

A COMMUNAL civil war in Northern Ireland now looms very near indeed, in the aftermath of the Convention elections, and as a direct result of those elections.

The size of the hard-line Orange supremacist majority is greater than could in advance have been taken as a certainty. Its leaders have declared that they will settle for nothing less than the restoration of their supremacy.

Fools

Thus they prove that the Labour politicians who decided after last June's Ulster Workers Council (UWC) strike to create a Convention which will 'hammer out' a constitution for Northern Ireland were either ignorant fools (if they thought that this was the road to amicable settlement between the communities) or else they were and are deliberately preparing the way and setting the scene for a restoration of Orange supremacy within the Six Counties.

Whatever their intentions, they have enormously strengthened the hand of hard line Orangism.

The miners' strike of 1973 forced an election on Heath which in Northern Ireland released the Orange genie that the Sunningdale agreement and the 'power sharing' Executive seemed to have firmly corked up. The British Tory government couldn't do much about that!

However, Wilson's Government could have done something to smash the Orange reactionary general strike last June. It didn't — whether for lack of nerve

or because it couldn't control the army. Since then, it has taken many of the steps necessary to provoke a communal civil war — while protesting that it is 'keeping the peace'.

While the British troops are, we are told, 'keeping the peace', the explosive substances in the atmosphere increase, and the political temperature reaches nearer and nearer ignition point. The Orange politicians, having proved to themselves once more how much support they have, are primed and built up so much that serious journals think a coup d'état is by no means ruled out — made in the name of the majority of the Convention and backed by the UWC, the paramilitary groups, sections of the Civil Service in Northern Ireland, and the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary).

This is what Britain's Convention elections have set the scene for. Make no mistake about it: such an event would spark off a massive sectarian bloodbath. Some commentators believe that the hardline majority of the Convention may be working to a time scale of pushing things to a decision and calling the hand of the British government within two months.

Dogma

This is the latest terrible prospect opened up before the people of Northern Ireland by the new attempt to tinker with, rather than abolish, the Six County framework.

Despite claptrap about troops keeping the peace, any peacekeeping work is done within the overall British strategy of shoring up and maintaining the artificial Six County state. So long as the dogma of the inviolability of this state continues, British governments will continue to zig-zag.

On the one hand they irritate the majority by denying them majority rule WITHIN the Six Counties (while arguing that the wishes of the majority for this state to continue are the political and moral bases for maintaining it against the wishes of 40% of its citizens and against the wishes of the Irish people as a whole).

And on the other hand they accept the claims of the majority and helping them beat down the Catholics.

The Tory spokesman on Northern Ireland,

Turn to Jack page

BENN'S ROW WITH STEEL CHIEF FINNISTON CLOSURE AND DISCLOSURE

THE ROW between Wedgwood Benn and Monty Finniston, head of the British Steel Corporation, started when the BSC Chairman blew the gaff on the next stage of blood-letting scheduled to engulf the steel industry. Without warning, Finniston announced that there would

be between 16,500 and 20,000 more redundancies in the steel industry over the next ten months.

At this the press was rampant with rumours: was Wedgwood Benn going to sack Finniston? Was he going to haul Finniston over the coals? Or was he just

going to chuck him into an open-hearth furnace?

As it turned out, Benn put four questions to Finniston in written form and gave him a few days to answer them. In the meantime, he hoped to repair some of the public relations damage the steel chief had done.

What is crucial is that at no time did Benn ever contradict Finniston! At no time did he ever reject the redundancies.

(That Wedgwood Benn is the loudest voice right now against the steelworkers' wage claim reinforces the fact that he

is hardly the steelworkers' friend.)

The plan of steel job cuts goes back to the White Paper published in the New Year of 1973. This White Paper proposed the investment of £3,000 million over a period of ten years, and stated that "BSC estimates that full implementation of the new developments and closures in the strategy should more than double average labour productivity, and reduce manpower by about 50,000."

At the first signs of any action by steel-

workers, the government began to freewheel a bit. It agreed to appeals and discussion and reappraisals. Meanwhile a steady stream of workers was leaving the industry, weakening the prospects for resistance and lowering the number of "compulsory redundancies". The BSC even set closure dates much earlier than they really wanted, in order to appear to concede a little when dates were postponed.

This game has, of course, not finished yet.

Cont'd on back page

THE announcement of 20,000 more redundancies in the British Steel Corporation just happened to coincide with the "elevation" to its Board of Sir Dai Davies, the dirty little rat who for years was head of the main production workers' union, the ISTC.

LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE ON IRELAND

"AFTER a few months, I realised that we were not in Ireland peace-keeping at all", says a man who served in the British Army until late 1973. "It became clear that our popularity in the Catholic areas was practically nil. When internment was introduced, hundreds were imprisoned and hundreds of homes were wrecked. I saw it with my own eyes. But nothing struck me more than seeing one small girl shot dead and suddenly knowing that if the Army hadn't been in Ireland, it wouldn't have happened.

"At Hollywood interrogation centre, where I was stationed for a time, I saw young men brought in frightened and bewildered — their only crime was that they were between 15 and 50 years old, male, and living in a certain area.

"This Constitutional Convention is just another British solution — and it's not going to bring any solution or peace. So it looks as though the next year is going to see the 'troubles' really hit the headlines again. And if my experience is anything to go by, you're going to see the Army really putting the boot in on behalf of Britain."

This ex-British soldier does not identify himself: not surprising when you consider the case of George Lennox, who as a young soldier in Aden in 1967 wrote a letter to a newspaper backing up an Amnesty charge of British brutality, and has been persecuted ever since.

The statement is part of an appeal for support for the National Labour Movement Conference on Ireland which the Troops Out Movement is organising on May 24th. It concludes: "I'm now working on a building site, and I know that most of my workmates are totally confused about what's been happening in Ireland. So the Conference in London on May 24th is going to be very important."

Write for credentials to T.O.M., 103 Hammersmith Road, London W14. Delegate or observer fee is 75p, and the Conference will be held at the Collegiate Theatre, Gordon Street, London WC1 from 10am to 5.30pm, with creche available.



SINCE the defeat of Portuguese colonialism in Africa, the downfall of the white racist regime in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) has simply been a matter of when and how.

Everyone — perhaps even the Smith government itself — realises that. And the outcome of that realisation has been a remarkable alliance trying to make sure that the downfall of the regime takes the most conservative, right-wing form possible. The perspective is that of a state like Malawi, dominated by a pro-imperialist black bourgeoisie and welcoming economic relations with the apartheid state of South Africa. Imperialist interests have some £600 or £800 million invested in Rhodesia which they don't wish to risk.

Allied together on that perspective are the British government, Kaunda of Zambia, other black African

by
Martin Thomas

leaders, Vorster of South Africa, and probably, behind the scenes, the United States.

Two points came out of the just-ended Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference. The economic blockade on Rhodesia will be strengthened by cutting rail links through Mozambique and Botswana, and fund will be set up to compensate those states. A Constitutional Conference for Rhodesia will be called, probably in July, whether Smith agrees to attend or not.

The 'Financial Times' of 7.5.75 estimates it likely that Vorster will support this Conference — and if he doesn't publicly support it, for fear of internal South African reaction, he will probably give it his endorsement behind the scenes. The South African regime in the first place has to

RHODESIA Trying to part the guerillas from their guns

come to terms with the new economic realities of Africa, and in the second place is concerned to ensure that whatever changes must take place in southern Africa do so in as controlled a way as possible, thus reducing the danger of revolutionary reverberations in the black working class of South Africa.

Within the general agreement, the disagreements on two points at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference are relatively small. Barrow, Prime Minister of Barbados, proposed that a "Commonwealth peace-keeping force" be set up. This "would offer Rhodesian white settlers a guarantee against chaos in the transition to black power". Certainly it would! More bluntly, it would offer imperialist interests a guarantee.

On this, and even on the proposal from Kaunda and

Nyrere of Tanzania for British financial aid to the armed struggle of the Zimbabwe nationalists, the differences are probably no more than a question of tactics and timing. Kaunda's commitment to the armed struggle is more demagogic than serious. At the same time as he makes his proposal, he has been engaged in the forcible unification of the Zimbabwe nationalists, at the expense of their most militant wing, ZANU (which has done most of the actual fighting). Many ZANU activists have been imprisoned, and Joshua Nkomo has been pushed to the fore as a "moderate" leader.

Kaunda is concerned both for his imperialist connections (the copper industry) and also for the possible implications of militant black action in Zimbabwe for the stability of his own tightly-regimented state. But, despite the impressive alliance that has been assembled, from Nkomo and Nyrere to Vorster, things may not be so smooth. The victories in Mozambique, Guine and Angola have had their impact on the consciousness of the black working class in South Africa and Rhodesia, and it will not be long before the results show themselves in action.

'State of Repression' in the Basque Country

DOZENS of persons were arrested on April 26th in the Basque provinces of Guipuzcoa and Vizcaya. The arrests came the day after the Spanish government declared a state of emergency in the region.

Under the state of emergency, police have unlimited powers to search homes and to arrest and hold suspects for an indefinite period without bringing charges. Newspaper articles are also subject to censorship.

The measure was imposed in an attempt to repress the nationalist group Euzkadi ta Azkatusuna (ETA—Basque Nation and

Freedom), which the government claims is responsible for a recent step-up in terrorist actions in these provinces. In the past month, two policemen have been killed, and several shops and villas have been blown up.

As of February 28th, Basque nationalist sources reported that there were 226 Basques in prison for political reasons. Among those who have been sentenced are Xavier Izkó de la Iglesia (110 years), Lorenzo Eguia Lizaso (100 years), Jose Iarza Etxenike (160 years) and Jesus Zabarte Arregi (100 years).

from Intercontinental Press

CIVIL WAR LOOMS IN 'INVESTORS DREAM LAND'

OVER THE LAST week or so 500 to 1,000 people have been killed in fighting in Luanda, the capital of Angola — getting on for as many as have been killed in Ireland over the last six years.

The exact details of the clashes are not clear, and leaders of all the three guerilla groups involved — MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA — have called for a ceasefire. Nevertheless, the general background is clear.

Angola is by far the richest of the three Portuguese colonies in Africa which are due to gain independence (or, in the case of Guine, have gained it). The Portuguese textile industry, and British, American, and German interests in diamonds and oil, have a major stake there. Moreover, the white settler community in Angola is larger and more powerful than in Guine-Bissau or in Mozambique.

According to South African journalists, Angola is "an investors' dream" provided that "business remains as usual". Therefore international capitalist interests have taken steps to ensure that business does remain as usual.

The organisation which had borne the brunt of the 13 years military campaign to win independence for Angola was the MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola). Fearing, however, that the radical nationalist MPLA might damage imperialist interests through such measures as nationalisation, the Portuguese engineered a coalition between MPLA and two other movements, FNLA and UNITA.

The FNLA has extremely close links with the right-wing regime in Zaire; its leaders has lived there for the last 15 years and is the and is the brother-in-law of President Mobutu. As for UNITA, it is doubtful whether it represents anything at all except a stooge of Portuguese and/or American interests.

However, the MPLA was persuaded into a coalition with them; and now, almost certainly, the right-wing forces are set on engineering the sort of disorder which will give them a good basis to secure a "strong government".

A GREAT BRITISH MAY DAY

MAY DAY — international workers' day — was marred in Manchester as in many other cities by a nationalistic anti-Common Market jamboree.

"We must have the right to solve our own problems in our own way", declared Communist Party member Frances Dean at the Trades Council May Day rally. A fine thought by May Day — if by "we" she meant the international working class. But of course not. By "we" she meant "Britain" — or, in fact, since classes do exist in Britain and the capitalist class does rule, British capitalists.

"We", the British capitalist class and the CP in the person of Frances Dean, wanted to restrict cheap cotton imports, which cannot be done under EEC regulations. Likewise John Forrester of the Labour Party NEC and TASS was worried by capital moving out of the country if Britain remains in the EEC. Both Dean and Forrester spoke like old-fashioned Tories of the 19th century, unaware that in the modern world each national capitalist economy is closely tied into the world market and cannot cut itself off, EEC or no EEC.

The rally's standing ovation was reserved for Bann. Bann started off by outlining the major problem of the British capitalist economy as being lack of investment, and said this would be worse in the EEC. The EEC, he said, would veto Government investment in British industry. Curiously, this argument is the exact opposite of that used by many on the revolutionary left to justify a "no" vote: the argument that withdrawal would

throw the British capitalist economy into a very weak and shaky condition.

What Bann got his standing ovation for, though, was his defence of "sovereignty". "Our vote is being devalued", he declared. Yes, indeed, Mr Bann, our vote is devalued: but it is devalued mainly by people like you, elected on socialist promises and then carrying out capitalist policies, rather than by the bogey-men in Brussels.

DIVERSION

That the emotional driving force of this anti EEC rally was simple dislike of foreigners — all foreigners, including foreign workers — was shown by the enthusiastic applause greeting an old age pensioner's message: "I don't want to be a Brussels sprout".

That was a fair sample of the workers' campaign against the EEC which many left wing organisations are so keen to promote. Yet Ernest Mandel on his speaking tour for the International Marxist Group has been saying that his main criticism of the Labour left and the CP on the Common Market question is simply that they will not win their campaign for a "No" vote! The chauvinism is secondary to the fact that they may not pack enough people into the polling booths on June 5th!

In Manchester Mandel shared a platform with Ernie Roberts of the AUEW, who made his main pitch the defence of the democratic

rights that the British working class has won. This sort of argument can be made to sound very "Marxist", especially if well tricked out with quotations from Lenin on the need for workers to fight for democratic rights. In fact it is anti-Marxist and anti-socialist. The "Vote No" campaign has nothing to do with any struggle whatsoever to defend any specific democratic right of the British working class — it has acted as a diversion from the fight to defend picketing rights.

But the "Vote No" campaign has a lot to do with the idea that 'British democracy' is something special, much better than capitalist rule in other countries. This false and nationalistic idea is exactly parallel to the arguments used by the Social Democratic Parties to justify supporting their own capitalist classes in the First World War — they were defending 'the French republic' against the Kaiser, or 'the achievements of the German labour movement' against the Tsar.

Mandel devoted little time to comments on Roberts' speech, and then launched into his economic analysis of the EEC — which he said we should simply disregard in deciding our political attitude. Most capitalists favour being in the EEC; most of the labour movement favours getting out; therefore Marxists should say "vote No".

In Mandel's London meeting on April 30th, a number of speakers from the floor attacked Mandel, pointing out that trade union support for the anti EEC campaign does not make it a working class

political cause when the whole thing is infested with chauvinism.

Apparently by the time he got to Manchester (May 2nd) Mandel had been sufficiently impressed to recognise in his speech the possibility that the "vote No" campaign might (!) boomerang. But in London he replied by accusing his opponents of "historical idealism". Here, he said, was this great mass struggle going on, and these people say it's just a matter of ideas such as chauvinism. Obviously they are "idealists".

ADAPTING

That was the day after the comic spectacle of the Labour Party NEC meeting where the 'Labour left' abandoned any attempt to enforce their anti-EEC conference victory. So much for the 'big struggle'. And as for "idealism" — comrade Mandel, chauvinism is not just an "idea", the free intellectual creation of the French military officer Nicholas Chauvin from whose name the term comes: it is a real and material factor in British society, with very substantial roots in the history of British imperialism. By ignoring that material factor and running to line up with the 'big battalions' of the labour movement, you end up compromising with, adapting to, and covering up for that very chauvinism.

Phil Haddon (Manchester)
Martin Thomas (London).

Arab and Jew in Israel's apartheid society

QUESTION. In the mass media in the United States and in most West European countries Israel is portrayed as a democratic society. What is your opinion?

ANSWER. My opinion is that this is the greatest deception of the twentieth century; and I am not speaking about hidden matters, I am speaking about completely official matters. Israel is about as apartheid as South Africa in reality. It is simply more hypocritical and more able to shape United States public opinion.

For example, take the official statistical abstract of Israel for 1974, which is issued by the Israeli Bureau of Statistics. If you open it at any table, let's say the table of births, deaths, infant deaths and so on, you'll see that officially in Israel there are no Israelis. This is the first deception. When the *New York Times* or other United States papers use the word Israeli, they are lying, because inside Israel there are no Israelis. There are Jews, and non-Jews.

When Israeli statistics report how many infants have died in Israel, you will not find any statistics about Israeli infants. You will find Jewish infants and you will find non-Jewish infants. Sometimes you will find a total or a grand total. You will never find Israelis.

NO ISRAELI POTATOES

And it is not only for infants. If you look, for example, at the statistics on Israeli potatoes, you will see potatoes from Jewish farms, and you will see potatoes from non-Jewish farms. There are no Israeli potatoes in Israel. This is the definition of the Jewish state.

This isn't the only thing. If you go any place where there are so-called twin cities, like Nazereth and New Nazereth, you will see that the old Nazereth is an open city. Anyone can come, and by buying or selling or by agreement can dwell there. But in New Nazereth, the so-called Upper Nazereth, to obtain a flat you have to bring proof that you are a Jew.

A society in which such a thing is required for more than 90% of its inhabited areas has no other name than an apartheid society. Exactly the same proof is required in Johannesburg. The only difference is that people know about Johannesburg, but not about Nazereth.

This goes for many other areas too. For example, you have now an official plan in Israel for what is called the "Judaization" of Galilee. This means that the government thinks there are too many Arabs in Galilee, so it has decided officially and openly to confiscate some of their land, convert it into pure Jewish land, and settle only Jews there.

Q. A few of the key areas where the oppression of Black people in the United States is most readily apparent are jobs, housing and education. What is the situation of the Arabs within Israel in those areas, in comparison with that of the Jewish citizens?

A. It is much worse than the situation of the Blacks in the United States, because the oppression and discrimination here is legal. To say it's legal means that the system of quotas against the Arabs operates in complete legality, without any legal recourse.

ARABS MAY NOT STUDY GEOGRAPHY

About ten days ago, for example, I read published protests from Arab students from the Bar-Ilan University. It's a religious Jewish university near Tel Aviv. The Arab students complained that the secret police prevented them from forming a committee to represent them. They said that the university has openly declared that any Arab student who does not sign a declaration that he is against the Arab students have a committee of their own will not receive a subsidy for his housing or any other social needs. I think such an open

The interview below was given to Intercontinental Press by ISRAEL SHAHAK, who has been hounded as a "traitor" and a "madman" by the Israeli establishment for speaking out against the racism of the regime. Himself a survivor of Belsen concentration camp, he is Chairman of the Israel League for Human and Civil Rights.



Palestinian prisoners in an Israeli Jail.

declaration would be impossible in New York.

Another thing is that every Jewish student who can bring proof that he is from a family having more than four children immediately gets an almost total reduction of his fees. But an Arab student, even if he can bring proof that he is from a family of twelve or fourteen, will never get any sort of deduction. Family deductions are applied only to Jews. And this is done openly, not secretly.

And a third thing: The university openly uses a negative quote against Arabs in many faculties. In some faculties, for example geography and geology, Arabs are completely forbidden to enter. In others only a few are allowed. Again openly. And the number of Arabs who can live in the student housing project is zero.

EVERYONE HAS TO DISCRIMINATE

The same thing goes for municipal grants. Every Jewish municipality receives a government grant of about 140 to 150 Israeli pounds per year per inhabitant. The same grant for Arab municipalities is from 7 to 20 pounds per year per inhabitant. ... Again, it is open and legal.

There is no possibility of bringing any case about discrimination, even the most blatant, to any court, because in Israel there is no law forbidding discrimination against non-Jews. On the contrary, all discrimination against non-Jews is completely legal.

Q. What about the cities? What evidence can you give about housing discrimination?

A. Cities in Israel are of two kinds. There are bigger cities, like Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and so on, which are built on private land. There each landlord can discriminate or not as he wants.

But there is another category of cities, those built on land owned by the Jewish National Fund, in which everyone has to discriminate. In Upper Nazereth, even if there are landlords who would like to rent a flat to an Arab, they are forbidden to do so by law. And if they do it in a hidden way, once it is discovered they are taken to court and heavily fined for breaking their contract.

Q. What about discrimination in the area of schooling at the pre-university level?

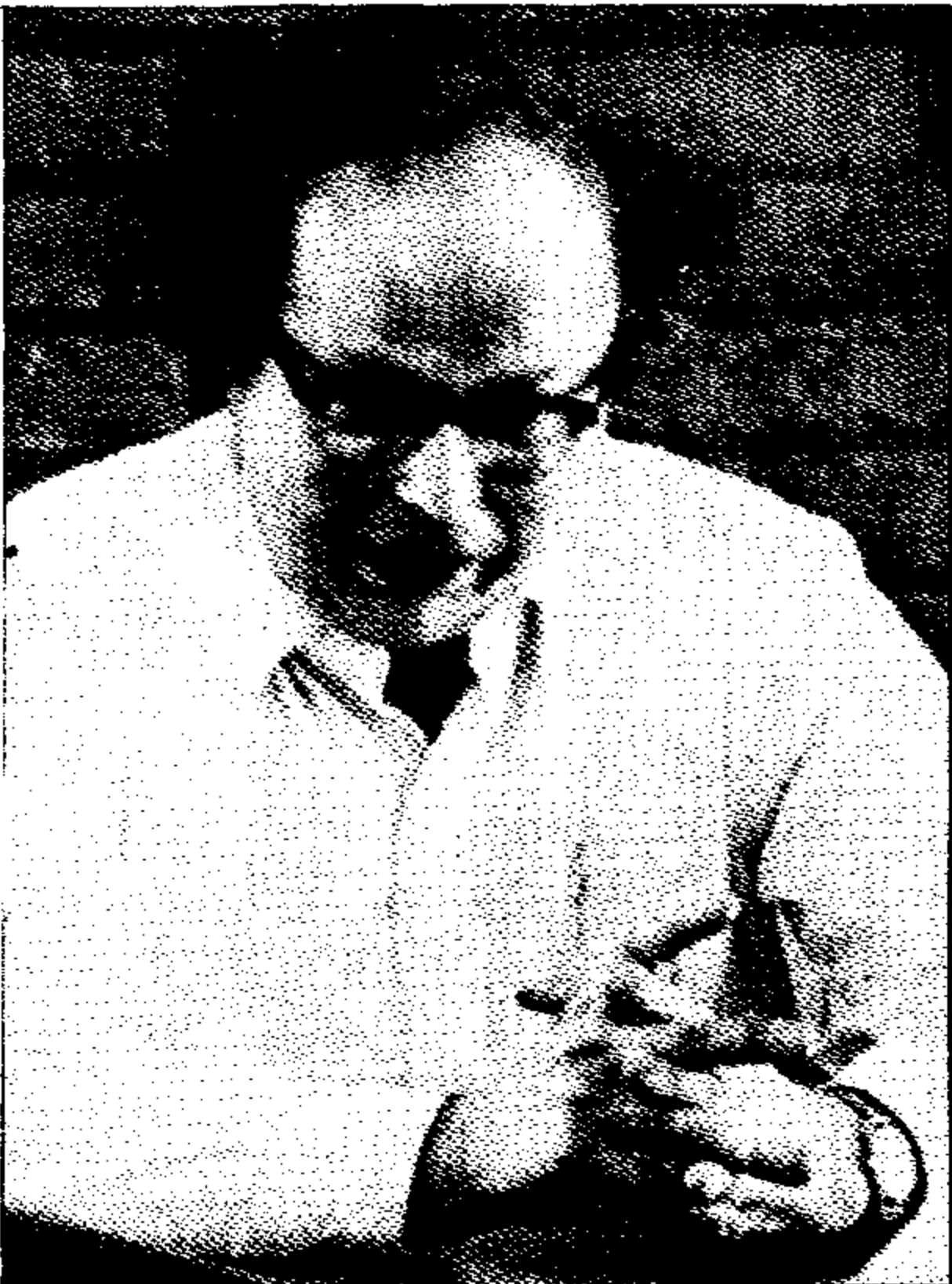
A. First of all there are two

completely separate school systems in Israel, a Hebrew one and an Arabic one. They are separated in statistics, as I said before, but they are also separated in other things.

First of all, the Arab school system is heavily discriminated against in every material area: no buildings, or bad buildings; almost no laboratories; bad teachers; bad teachers-aids.

The most important discrimination is in the area of schooling itself. The Arab students have to learn an enormous amount of Hebrew literature — including Hebrew religious material, the Bible, the Talmud, and so on — as well as Zionist literature, both in Hebrew and in Arabic translations. The Koran is taught less than 10% of the time allotted to the Old Testament. All Arabic literature written after the year 1800 is prohibited.

Even from the older literature there is a very heavy



Israel Shahak

concentration on poems praising the beauties of nature and so on. All poems that can be interpreted as nationalistic, even in a remote way, are prohibited. Most European literature and all Asian literature — the literature of classical China, for example — is also prohibited. They have to learn Hebrew literature instead. And of course they have to pass examinations in it. If they do not pass them they are prohibited from going any further.

Q. What is the situation in schools in the big cities where there are both Arab and Jewish communities?

A. Completely separated. There is a school for Arabs, and there is a school for Jews. Jews are completely pro-

hibited from sending their children to Arab schools, but Arabs can sometimes obtain permits to send their children to a Jewish school. Not in their own area, however, but in a different area, especially to a school in a different village, where there will be one Arab in a class of about a hundred Jews. Even this needs very special permission.

Q. When the Arab people protest against these conditions, what oppression do they face?

A. Inside Israel the oppression of Arabs takes several aspects. First of all, one has to remember that in the so-called sole democracy in the Middle East we still have the defense regulations of 1945 by which the military authorities can arrest, imprison, exile or limit the movement of any Israeli. However, these regulations are employed solely against Arabs. No Israeli Jew, including those who advocate terror, will ever be, let's say, exiled or imprisoned without trial. But many Arabs who advocate cooperation with Jews, or who are leftist, are imprisoned or exiled without trial.

For example, when an Arab friend of mine began to just sympathise with a Trotskyist group he was arrested without trial and given thirty five days in a punishment cell in complete isolation without books or reading material. I should point out that punishment cells in Israeli prisons are especially horrible. The size can be something like one yard by two and a half yards, which means that the bed or lying space on the floor takes up nearly all the cell. The place where the man has to make use of the toilet is also inside this cell.

FORBIDDEN TO MOVE

Practically every Israeli Arab who becomes sympathetic to any leftist group faces something similar. For example, take what is happening right now with another of my friends — Naif Salim — a poet in the village of Pekiin. He is a truck driver, and the truck he operates is from the town of Acre. A few months ago he received an order forbidding him to leave his village, so of course he cannot operate his truck. He cannot even go to Acre to bring it back home. He has six children and now has to live on the charity of his neighbours. All this not only without a trial, but without a charge. There are literally thousands of such examples.

Q. Can you give any current examples of persecution suffered by Arab dissidents?

A. Yes. In Tel Aviv University there is an especially radical committee of Arab students, and the following means of repression were employed against them.

Three members of the committee while walking on one of the main streets of Tel Aviv were suddenly stopped by the police. They were ordered to strip down to their underpants in the middle of the street, taken to a building that is not a police station, and beaten. I would call it torture, really, because they were beaten around their genitals. They were then turned loose and warned that if they continued to be active in the committee, they could expect similar treatment in the future.

ONE IN FIVE IS ARRESTED

In addition, activists among the students are called in for talks with the secret police and threatened. When the 'talks' are not successful, their parents or their uncles or their cousins are called in, and they are threatened. So every student activist knows that because he's active in the student movement, an uncle who might, for example, work for a Jew in the neighbouring village can be dismissed. Again, there is no legal recourse.

Q. What about the situation in the occupied territories?

A. It is much worse, because there the people have no rights at all. In particular, they have no right to organise. At least the Aran students in Tel Aviv still have a committee that is active. All committees, parties, organisations, trade unions, and so on are completely prohibited in the occupied territories. Any political activity, even closing the shops in protest, is forbidden.

The number of people being arrested is really enormous. During demonstrations in the conquered territories, Israeli occupation authorities are quite capable of arresting 10 to 20% of the adult male population. This was done at the end of November in the town of Jenin, where 15% of the adult population (meaning from 14 years up) were arrested and kept in prison for some days.

EXILED AT MIDNIGHT

A second thing is that people in Israel cannot at least be exiled from Israel; they are exiled from town to village, or from one village to another. But in the conquered territories, everyone knows that the delegates of Israeli democracy can come to a family in the early hours, at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, their favourite time. They can take the father, give him literally half an hour to pack, and then take him to the Jordanian or Lebanese border, exile him from his family, and forbid him ever to return. You see, unification of families applies only to USSR Jews. It doesn't apply to Palestinians. And as a matter of fact, Palestinians have no rights to be reunited with their families here.

A third thing is that the brutality of the police, the military police, and the army units is far greater in the occupied territories than within Israel. In Israel, even if there are beatings, they would be usually short. The people in the occupied territories, to the best of my knowledge, are horribly tortured.

IN the USA, where about 1000 rapes happen every day, women campaigning on the issue have highlighted the extreme judicial bias in favour of rapists, and the fact that the law exists as much to protect the accused as the victim.

If the attacker has a previous record of rape, it may not be brought into the case — yet there are no limits to testing the victim's story or bringing in her sex life. In many cases, the issue of the woman's chastity will determine the verdict. In California, "unchaste character" is admissible evidence. Six other states rely heavily for a verdict on a woman's previous virginity. After all, if the victim was not a virgin, how could she have been raped? In New York, where rape is particularly common, a woman needs a corroborating witness who viewed or heard the assault.

But none of these provisions goes anywhere so far toward protecting the rapist as last week's already notorious ruling of the British Law Lords, according to which if a man only fancies himself as Clark Gable giving a woman "what she really wants" despite all her resistance, he can get away scott free.

There has been, at least, an outcry against their Lordships, and Jack Ashley MP has given notice that he will fight to get the law changed in Parliament. But few if any commentators have asked how such a ruling could have been made at all.

The ruling, the law in general, and probably also a high proportion of rape crimes, all arise from a common root: the prevalent view of women's sexuality as passive and masochistic. The major sexual theme which appears over and over again in novels, comic books, films, jokes, cartoons and songs is the drama of conquest and submission: the male takes the initiative and the female waits — eagerly, coyly, shyly, angrily and, in the variation that's obviously in the Law Lords' minds, even 'unwillingly'.

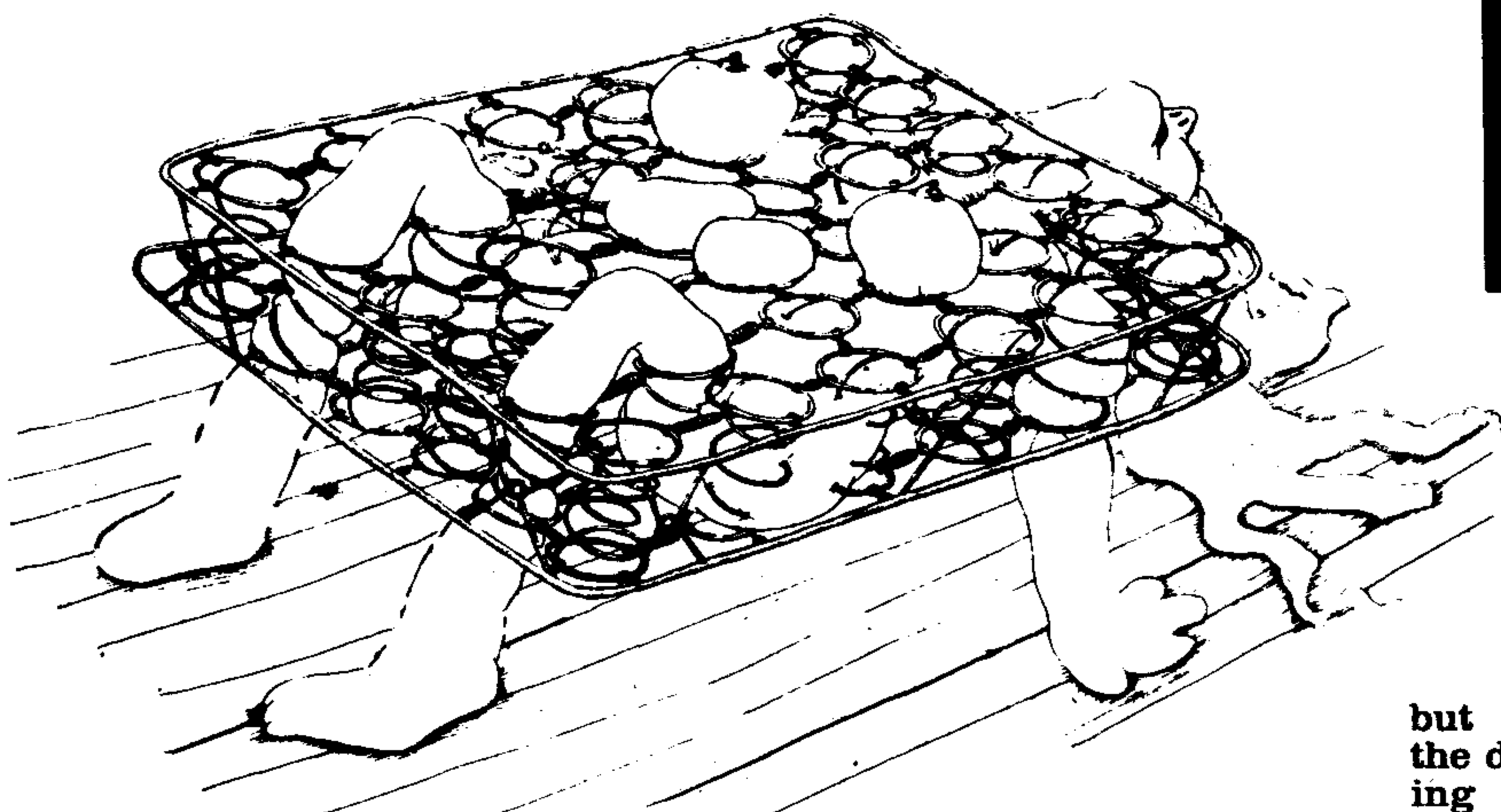
What is rape, in this view, but a rather violent version of Sleeping Beauty, who even from the unconscious is brought alive by a kiss? The rapist, like the Prince, knows what's best for the uninitiated, un-knowing woman. Rape is, too, an extension of the normal relations of the family based on private property. Women, after all, "can't be" raped by their husbands, who have conjugal rights to over-ride any refusal.

According to public opinion, most women who are raped either want it or deserve it. In *Male and Female*, Margaret Mead suggests that if a woman walks down the street alone she is willfully inviting attack. John McDonald, author of *Rape*, writes that even though a woman says "no" to a man, subconsciously she has a desire for forceful penetration. (The same writer devotes nearly half his book to theories about false rape accusations, arising, he thinks, out of desire for revenge, lovers' quarrels, and even desire for publicity!) Even the radical US paper *The Berkeley Barb* ran an article that read "Now as all women (!) know from their daydreams, rape has a lot of advantages. Best of all, it's so simple"...

FALSE

The Law Lords have underlined this view that rape really doesn't exist by making sure that legally it can't exist. But by ruling it virtually out of court, they have ruled it into the lives of many more people. Instead of taking this dangerous myth and knocking it firmly on the head, they have given a legal sanction to add to the all-pervasive ideological one. And this on top of the already publicised fact that the ruling is a charter and an encouragement for the more calculating rapist (and most rapists are calculating rather than impulsive).

The exaggerated concern for the falsely accused or the self-deluded rapist which is written into legal practice is quite out of line with known reality. Of rape incidents that are reported to the police, at most 20% are 'false', and they



hardly ever lead even to the start of a prosecution. Yet it's been estimated that as few as one in ten rapes are actually reported — precisely because of the ordeal that this over-concern for the man has created for the victim.

In the USA, where the FBI stated in a report that "one of the most under-reported

crimes due to fear or embarrassment is rape", about half the cases reported don't lead to prosecution for reasons such as that the victim delayed going to the police, the victim was acquainted with the assailant before the rape, the victim was intoxicated, had a "bad reputation" or was black, or if the victim 'merely' screamed



WHY THE LAW LORDS SAID "YES" TO RAPE

by Jane Gordon

but did not struggle (despite the dangers of a serious battering or worse if the victim fights back).

"I would have thought" wrote Louise Stoll, a school-girl who had been raped "that the type of questions police need to ask a rape victim in order to apprehend the attacker are simple, straightforward and few. What did he look like? Where did it happen? What time of day was it? Which direction did he leave in? But what actually happened was that these 'hot pursuit' questions were not mentioned until the end of the interrogation. The first enquiries were: Was there penetration? Did the man have a climax? When he was using his left hand for this, what was he doing with his right hand?"

MEAT

Another victim writes: "The police became more and more interested in the physical details: What did the man say to me? Did he unzip his pants or take them off? How often did he 'do it'? How long did it take? In what position did he do it? They had me tell the story over and over again to different policemen — ostensibly to check the details."

The next ordeal — and all within hours of the assault — is medical examination. Louise Stoll had to wait undressed for an hour before a five minute examination took place. She felt the doctor treated her like "a piece of meat". One woman was told by a doctor that she "should keep better company!"

In the courtroom, the woman is raped all over again. Failure to get a conviction rebounds not, as usual, on the police, but on the woman

herself, who though not even in the dock, is guilty until proved innocent.

Where in a 'property crime' the courts are biased towards pushing up the rate of convictions, it's the opposite when it comes to rape. This reversal is at work again in the Law Lords deliberations. The very men whose normal concern is that the man in the dock is treated "too fairly", and who have introduced majority jury verdicts (and talked of having no juries at all and abolishing the accused's right to silence) are when it comes to rape worried that the accused might not be treated fairly enough.

DREAD

In a society that, in its law, ideology, popular culture and police practice all but encourages rape, every woman is affected. Women are not free as long as they must dread or experience rape. The chains that this forges around women are the countless things that, hardly noticing any more, we 'just don't do'. As long as the attitude of society, the courts and the police is that women should stay indoors, stay off the streets, be careful not to "act free" because that's provocative, then women will never be free to go wherever a man can go and in every way act as freely as a man. And rape itself comes in different degrees, down to the daily verbal rape that every woman knows so well: the coarse proposals, the lip smackings, the touches and pinches, the jeering goad "mind you don't get raped".

Women's liberation will not in the end amount to much if the problem of rape is not solved. Self defence is a good idea, but is not the whole answer. The answer is to root out the vicious sexist ideology that breeds and sanctions rape, an ideology the Law Lords will have done a great deal to encourage — if the campaign which their decision has provoked fails to bring all these issues out into the open.



Rank and File Organising Committee

LEADING FROM BEHIND

A year ago, when the International Socialist group set up its RANK & FILE Movement, the programme of demands with which this movement was supposed to lead the struggles of women workers amounted to a pathetic 11 words, going no further than existing or promised legislation: "For the struggle of women for equal pay and against discrimination".

Attempts initiated by *Workers Fight* supporters to get this amended to something more meaningful were dismissed as "too political", and there has been no opportunity since then to change Rank and File's policy on working women.

Little wonder, then, that when the Rank and File Organising Committee set about calling a conference on the subject of Women: Equal Pay and Redundancies, it found itself in the rear rather than the vanguard of current trade union campaigns on women. And

even before the Conference takes place, the Organising Committee has received a strong rebuff to its pretensions to 'leadership' on the question from Islington Working Women's Charter sub-committee of Islington Trades Council.

Islington WWC has written to the R & F Organising Cttee. in the following terms: "We recognise the need for a Rank and File Movement, but were dismayed when reading the agenda of this Conference (at) the politics on which you intend to build it. Under equal opportunities there is no mention of either the need for nursery provisions, maternity leave or, most important of all, abortion on demand on the NHS

Family

"The super exploitation of women on the shop floor is inseparably linked to their oppression within the family. To demand equal pay while failing to mention the burden placed on women

within the home is to fail to understand the true nature of women's oppression and the ways in which it must be fought.

"The Working Women's Charter has been active in many areas and has been taken up by many trades councils and trade unions. We would consider it a big step forward for the Rank and File Movement if it would actively take up the demands of the WWC and affiliate to this campaign.

"We also note that the proposed date for this Conference is 21st June, which is also the date for big abortion rally. We feel that the importance of this campaign cannot be overlooked. If this Bill (James White's Abortion Amendment Bill) goes through, working class women will be forced to return to the back street abortionists and it will be seen as a victory for those right wing forces which are determined to push women back into the isolation of the home..."

ASTMS IN CONFERENCE

WILL THE 'ELITE' COME DOWN TO EARTH

ONE MOTION on the agenda for this week's ASTMS Annual Delegate Conference is singularly apposite to the union's present problems. Letchworth General branch calls for the word "elite" to be deleted from this sentence in the membership card: "So you can be sure that you will be in good company and are joining a union that caters for the elite of white collar workers".

With mounting unemployment and rising prices, the professional workers, technical, executive and academic staff of ASTMS are losing whatever "elite" status they thought they had. Indeed, that is one of the reasons for the rapid growth of the union and its relative successes on wage and conditions bargaining.

LEFT IMAGE

Clive Jenkins, general secretary of ASTMS, has been able to cultivate a left-wing image while often following very right wing policies. He hounded Ian Gibson off the National Executive Committee for writing an article in *Socialist Worker* which criticised the ASTMS leadership, and he has taken out a writ against the same paper for lampooning the union's holiday brochures. Towards Tories he is more indulgent: he has shared "Get Britain

Out" platforms with Enoch Powell.

Jenkins is, he says, not opposed to a social contract in principle, but only to certain aspects of this particular one. Many motions on the agenda oppose the social contract in terms of calling for 'free collective bargaining' and 'the extension of public ownership'. Jenkins himself talks about opening the books where redundancies are declared, and about workers' participation. In line with this, several motions talk of participation by trade unionists at board level, joint control of enterprises by trade unions and management, courses in workers' control, and so on.

CONTROL NHS

In the hands of such as Clive Jenkins, these policies are policies of class collaboration, involving ASTMS members in taking responsibility for the capitalist economy, and assisting in the bureaucratic rationalisation of capitalism.

A number of other motions, however, present clear alternatives to the Social Contract. Two motions from a branch in Edinburgh call for a sliding scale of wages to deal with inflation, and factory occupations to meet redundancies and unemployment, with the demand for reduced working hours without loss of pay and conditions; and also for the opening of the books of all companies for independent inspection by trade unionists as the first step towards workers' control of industry. The motions are marred somewhat by the demand that workers' control be implemented by the Labour govern-

ment, and this is taken to a ludicrous extreme in a motion from London University College branch which calls on the Labour Government "to implement the socialist alternative of nationalisation without compensation and with workers' control".

WOMENS' RIGHTS

More useful in terms of guidance for rank and file ASTMS members, Oxford Health Service branch calls for elected committees of trade unionists, representing both health service workers and users of health services, to examine the day to day running of area and regional health authorities in order to supervise and control the deployment of resources. Another motion from the same branch calls for control of the NHS by all the workers in the service. Central London Medical branch demand an



Clive Jenkins

immediate injection of £1,000 million into the NHS budget, a sliding scale of NHS expenditure, no cutbacks in staff, abolition of private practice, nationalisation of the drug and medical supplies industries and a minimum wage of £40 linked to a sliding scale.

Conference will also undoubtedly overwhelmingly call for the abolition of private practice.

There are some good motions on women's rights. Charing Cross Barnet proposes a national women's action committee (as recommended by the ASTMS Women's Workshop). The same branch, and also Edinburgh University branch, raise a number of specific questions on equality for women, including nurseries, maternity leave, and equality in training and promotion. Liverpool General branch calls for the abolition of DHSS cohabitation rules.

A motion from London West End sums up by deploring the failure of the NEC to take action to implement its policies against sex and race discrimination, and calling for a national campaign in the union. This should involve union support for women members setting up their own women's action groups, as has already happened in that branch.

TROOPS OUT

On Ireland, again, London West End has a resolution, the only one worth supporting on that issue. It demands that the NEC campaign for immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and against the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and further it affirms support for the right of the Irish people to self determination and the fundamental justice of the republican struggle against the British army.

But whatever happens at Conference, ASTMS members will certainly be involved in major class struggles in the near future. Which is why they would do well to face up to the fact and pass the motion from Letchworth to regard themselves no longer as an "elite".

J.W.Harding

Music - way into the future?

Comrades - I read with interest Sue Aspinall's article 'Cutting back the fast growing fringe' (WF93). Comrade Aspinall correctly pointed out that theatre groups that are committed to a revolutionary perspective of using theatre to serve the interests of the working class, have little hope of financial support from the Arts Council. However, I would like to attempt to clarify a few conceptions about the nature of art and revolutionary art in particular contained in the article.

As Trotsky wrote "Culture feeds on the sap of economics" and a material surplus is necessary so that culture may grow, develop and become subtle. Art needs comfort, even abundance, to develop. The class which rules economically also rules culturally. Comrade Aspinall correctly points out that the appeal of ballet and opera stems in part from the class ritual of an "evening out". She also points out that art is treated as a product to be consumed. Certainly in bourgeois society art is treated as a commodity, but to assert that music, opera and ballet are primarily sensual (visual and aural) and that "in these forms you don't have to think or relate to what is happening to real life" detracts from a fuller understanding of art.

Negation

The 'fantasy world of graceful movement, soaring notes and orchestral grandeur' often contains expressionist which stretches beyond the present social conditions and in that sense is revolutionary.

Art is revolutionary not simply in the sense of reflecting existing social conditions, but also in pointing to the negation of the present. Music - not all, it is true - can contain social contradictions within its very structure and this structure can challenge existing socially conditioned conceptions and point beyond present consciousness. As Marx pointed out, the very stages surpassed in theory (and this can also apply to art) may not yet be reached in practice.

However, it is the context in which art is presented which is important. In treating art as a commodity, the market orientation frequently hides the revolutionary content. Giuseppe Verdi's "Nabucco", which used a libretto purported to concern Nebuchadnezzar (the king of Babylon who forced the Jews into exile and captivity) is really an allusion to the tyranny in the early 19th century of Austria over most of Italy. Verdi's patriotic operas became songs of the Resistance and at the same time Verdi himself was running rifles through the Austrian lines.

Socialist art should as Comrade Aspinall stresses try to re-integrate the nuances of individual consciences and personal relationships with the problems of material hardships, political debate or industrial issues. Socialist art should try to resolve the contradictions between intellectual work, including art, and physical work which is reflected in the above.

Split

However, art cannot create little islands of socialism within the existing bourgeois society. Only with the overthrow of bourgeois society can the split between mental and manual work be destroyed.

The aims of proletarian artists (I use this to mean artists who place themselves on the side of the working class in the class struggle) should be to break down the barriers between the working class and art, and help in a better understanding of the great past achievements in art. They should point out the critical content (or otherwise, as not all art is critical) in past and present work.

Socialism is built on the foundation of the past achievements of bourgeois society in science, technology and art, and only when we have fully mastered the past will we be able to build for the future. - fraternally, Steve Philips, Sheffield.

TURNING OVER IN THE MALL

Hudson Pace reviews 'FANSHEN'

There is a play 'about revolution' which is, if the barman there is to be taken as an authority, packing 'em in at the Institute of Contemporary Arts down the road from Buckingham Palace.

It's by David Hare, and concerns the events in a tiny Chinese village after its liberation from the Japanese by Mao's army, and the way the Communist Party sets about to bring *Fanshen* (literally meaning "to turn over") to a place that was, by European standards, still in the Middle Ages.

Unfortunately, the play is not particularly instructive about the real problems of revolutionary change; yet because it earnestly tries to be so, it's also not as gripping as it ought to be.

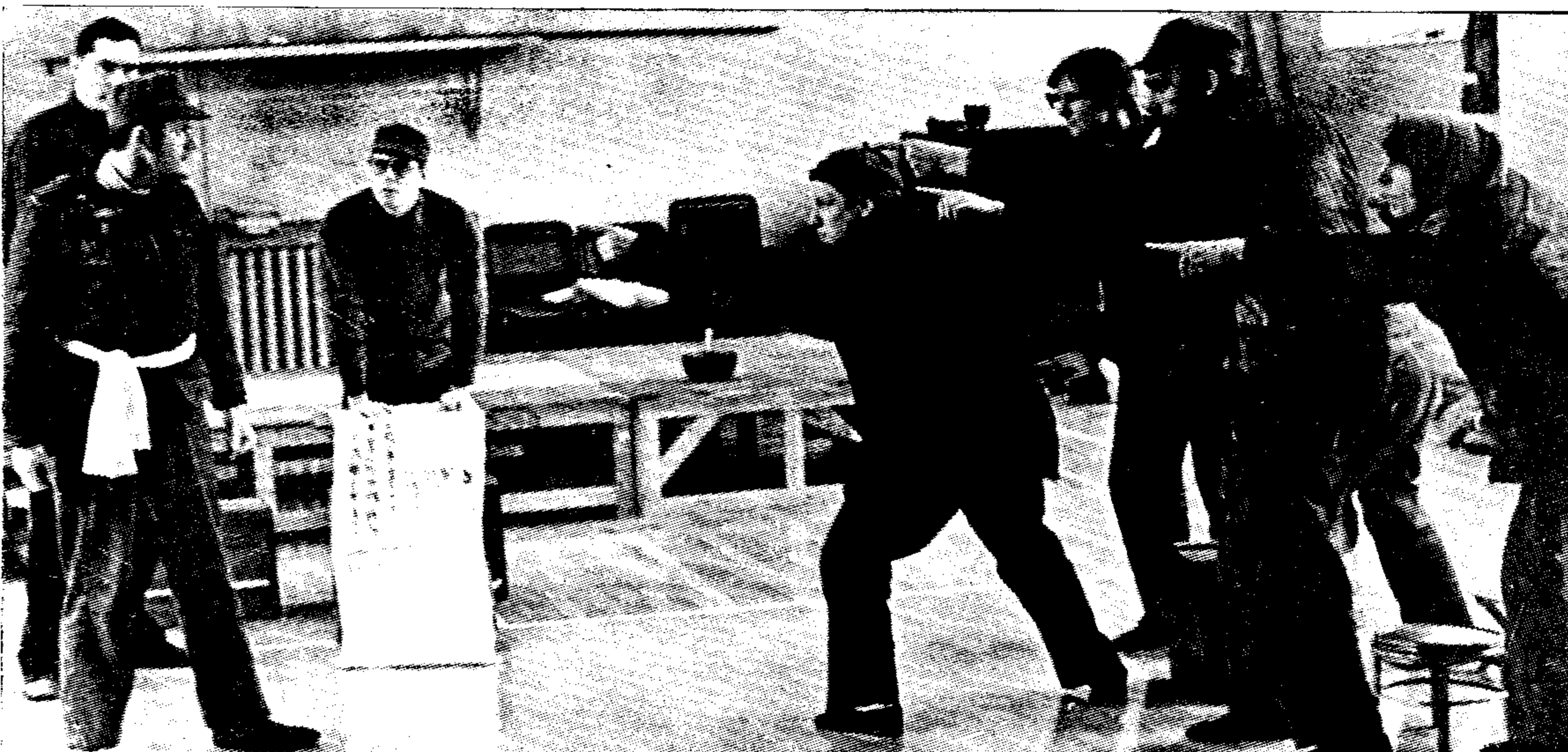
FORMAL

There are exciting incidents. The scenes at the beginning where the landlords are turfed out are done with real energy. But it's hard to feel involved, because it's all so obvious and lacking in dramatic tension.

Hare is obviously trying too hard to let the events speak for themselves. Thus, all the characters are formal types. At moments of high drama, the actors freeze into set-pieces, just like Chinese "socialist realist" posters and theatre. The landlords and collaborators with the Japanese are Victorian villains complete with wicked moustaches, and the 'bad' bureaucrats who replace them in oppressing the peasants are bad because... they are bad.

Hare has used a 'Brechtian' form to try and express a class struggle objectively and avoid the audience getting too involved with individual characters. But without any of the constant questioning and penetrating humour of a Brecht, *Fanshen* can only give us theatrical tricks which relate to reality in a passive way.

It isn't that the play lacks humour. But its function is more



of a comic turn to give light relief than to illumine what the play is saying.

For instance, Tao Yuan is a villager who was a drug addict. He sold his wife to buy heroin. For some reason he also bought a donkey - perhaps because donkeys are always good for a laugh - which died. Publicly criticised by the villagers for his past life, he is asked about his feelings when he had sold his wife. He bursts into tears. Because he misses his wife? No, because he misses his donkey!

It brought the house down. Be we learned nothing about how China coped with drug addiction, or how the peasants treated people like Tao Yuan. The actor might as well have slipped on a banana skin.

The important thing is that this sort of humour relies on making people into objects - turning them into caricatures. And this is true of all the 'personalities' in the

play. With the characters reduced to cardboard cut-outs, the action itself presents not an honest examination of how the Communist Party related to the peasants and to its own internal problems, but a series of acted-out Party reports.

The people are Bad or Good. The Good Party Members struggle to be self critical, but sometimes fail. The Good Peasants respect the Party but want a quiet life working the land. The Bad Party Members are just plain rotten to the core. There are no Bad Peasants - they are too passive for that, merely victims of an 'objective situation', i.e. scarcity, and to be acted upon by the cadres, and having little active creativity of their own.

After the show, people were saying "But the peasants never had any real power" or even "Of course, you can't really increase agricultural production by relying on the Middle Peasants". But the

play's peasants were no more capable of holding real power than the Wombles, and had as little chance of forming the basis for increased food production.

GLOSSY

Instead of creating a form which is designed to let you see reality objectively, David Hare has simply, under cover of Brecht's theatrical innovations, lifted and taken over the forms of official Party art in China - the red banners, stylised characters, sloganised speeches - which were never intended to clarify or reveal reality but are merely a bit of glossy, sentimentalised propaganda. In putting it on the stage at the ICA, Hare is just serving to show that it's pretty harmless really. Certainly, if it had more revolutionary content and less 'revolutionary' form, it would hardly be so well patronised, in any sense, by the liberals at the ICA.

Closure/Disclosure

Where BSC is engaged in a policy of 'shake-out' rather than closure, the loss of jobs should be met by the workers with a policy of 'no cover'. Either the men are replaced or the works grinds to a halt. In any case, no covering should take place for lost jobs.

When Labour got into government, steelworkers hoped for a change of policy. For the workers at Ebbw Vale, the fact that their MP

Michael Foot was now Minister for Employment seemed to clinch it as a certainty. When Benn's number two Lord Beswick began a review of the industry, they thought that would make it official. In fact hardly anything changed. And Ebbw Vale was scheduled for total closure.

Instead of the most recent closures being leaked out gradually, at a moment when the announcement of add-

itional huge redundancies would create the least stir, Finniston has blurted out the truth at once. He has made it clear that about 4,000 jobs will go in Scotland alone if the plan goes through, and rather more in Wales.

Blow up

The Clyde Iron Works, the Clydebridge and Lanarkshire open hearth plant and the Clydebridge slabbing mill will close. As will iron and steel making at Shelton (near Stoke) and a large part of East Moors (Cardiff).

The millionaire press is trying to blow up this issue into a matter of principle: "red menace" Benn versus "honest-Monty" Finniston. In essence, it reveals more about the reality of Benn's claims that he wants complete disclosure of information so that the workers know what's going on.

In this case, we see Benn attacking Finniston's disclosure — not what he said. The facts that the BSC Chairman disclosed haven't been called into question at all in the Great Show-down.

And what of the Iron

and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC — formerly BISAFTA), the main union in the steel industry? They are to unveil "alternative constructive proposals". They don't even claim that these will put a stop to the redundancies. He only positive element of their programme is the demand for worksharing.

This should be taken up in every plant linked to the demand for no loss of wages. The struggle on this will focus on the retention of the guaranteed week agreement which BSC is urgently trying to scrap.

The slogan of **WORK OR FULL PAY** can link the threatened sections of the industry together, and — if there is a fight — the sections BSC is planning to develop. This can only be done if the National Action Committee is re-created. But this time it must have **WORK OR FULL PAY** as its central slogan, and fight for work sharing and in the first place a guaranteed week — instead of just gathering together lots of local please-sir-me-sir groups out to save themselves.

IRELAND

Airey Neave, has made statements that are pretty close to an acceptance of the Orange claims. Will Labour — which has a worse record on Ireland in the last 50 years than the Tories — also be willing to accept a restoration of Orange ascendancy? Given the gutlessness which was shown last June, and given the Pontius Pilate-like agreement of the southern Irish bosses' government which wants to wash its hands of the northern problem, they just might.

At the moment, the IRA ceasefire still holds. The elections showed not only the power of the Protestant politicians, but also that very many Catholics considered the Convention foredoomed, and supported the Provisionals' boycott. They will not accept peacefully any Orange supremacist restoration.

For socialists in Britain, two conclusions follow.

Civil war

Whether pretending to keep the peace or joining in a drive to beat down the Catholics, British troops have no business in Ireland and should not be there. They have been holding the ring — shooting and terrorising Catholics and locking them up without trial — while the present explosive situation was set up and fuelled. If this is peacekeeping, then we must learn to call pyromaniacs firefighters.

There must be an end to complacency regarding Northern Ireland. When sober bourgeois journals like the Irish Times publish editorials discussing as a serious immediate possibility a Loyalist coup, and civil war, then socialists must look to their responsibilities: full active support for the oppressed minority in Northern Ireland; full, active support for those fighting to defend then either against the Orange racists, or against the British army whose 'peacekeeping' has now brought Northern Ireland to the brink of civil war.

We demand the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. Only the Irish people can solve the problems of Ireland. Britain has only ever created problems for Ireland.

And we demand an end to the Six County state — the Labour government should give no financial, military or political support to the continuation of this sectarian bear garden.

Building workers mark time

DESPITE some good ideas which were never meshed together into a programme of action, and a few useful organisation proposals, the BUILDERS' CHARTER conference in Liverpool on 26th April only lifted itself above the level of good intentions when ... it descended to bad intentions.

The Conference started off with a Chilean construction worker and a member of the Chile Solidarity Committee. But, having shed a pious tear over Chile, the conference showed itself less than internationalist when one delegate argued for Charter to support the Solidarity Campaign with the Portuguese Working Class. He was smartly accused of not understanding the problems of British workers.

And what was the understanding of British workers' problems showed by the majority of the conference? Everything,

other workers are "foreign labour".

Perhaps the nationalistic outcry against the Brussels threat to "our industry" helped to divert attention from the shortage of practical proposals on the immediate issues facing building workers. Certainly the immediate problems are serious. 200,000 building workers are unemployed. The union leaderships have dropped the conference demands for a 35 hour week and have negotiated and recommended a wage settlement that, with present price rises, will mean a cut in real wages. Only one in five of all building workers is unionised.

The fight on unemployment is obviously crucial; with organisation weakened by huge numbers being out of work, it is difficult to win anything else. The Editorial Board policy included a demand for a 35 hour week, a ban on overtime, and "a

policy decided by the Conference, which ended up as just the demands of the Editorial Board plus support for the May 21st lobby.

As if to contradict this approach, the report from the secretary of the North Wales Charter Defence Committee on the Shrewsbury pickets case stated:

Picketing

"There have been meetings, marches, rallies, lobbies of Parliament, and a number of approaches to the Home Secretary from the TUC, but time itself has confirmed that the only way to release the lads would be by the use of massive industrial action".

But was it necessary to wait for "time itself" to confirm that? Workers Fight said that "massive industrial action" was the only way to beat back this attack on picketing rights right from the start — indeed, long before the Charter got round even to taking any notice of the case.

And, even after the lessons of "time itself", no conclusions were drawn. Those who had worked hard on the issue were thanked, support was given for the one-day strike on May Day, and there was talk of the "successes" in alerting the trade union movement to the dangers of the conspiracy laws. And still, in relation to the May 21st lobby, Tony McLelland spoke of mass lobbies as the thing that "frightens" the government.

On the Lump, and on wages, there was less discussion. The Editorial Board statement called for "more direct confrontations" on the Lump, but did not go into any further detail. On wages, the demand remains the same — £1.50 per hour for the basic craft rate. "Built in cost of living payments on a monthly basis" were also mentioned — presumably reflecting an article in the last Charter which called for 57p

increase for every 1 rise in the cost of living... starting at 12%! Even Ted Heath's thresholds started at 7%! Why Charter is not calling for a zero threshold is never explained.

There were 301 delegates at the Conference — almost exactly the same number as last year, but one-third that of three years ago. Moreover, the paper "Charter" has failed to appear regularly. Certainly part of the downturn is due to general conditions in the building industry beyond the control of anyone in Charter, and certainly also the urgent need remains to build a rank and file movement in the building industry, which must start with a fight to build and secure militant policies for the Charter.

However, the fact is that the irregularity of 'Charter' hasn't been due to 'lack of time' or 'problems that all rank and file movements face' — the reasons usually given. It has been precisely in periods of intense struggle, when any rank and file movement worth its salt would make superhuman efforts to make sure it got its paper out more often than usual, that 'Charter' hasn't appeared! The 1972 national building strike is an example.

The Conference decided on the recommendation of the Editorial Board to move responsibility for the paper from London to Birmingham and make Pete Carter the editor. In addition, the Editorial Board offered to send speakers to help build local groups, and Conference called on Charter supporters to take the paper round to sites where it's not being sold yet.

Failed

These proposals will be useful. However, they won't get to the heart of the problem. That is the politics of Charter. The present politics of Charter are those of the Communist Party, based on trying to pressure and influence the trade union leaderships into doing things, rather than concentrating on the independent mobilisation of the rank and file. That is why, in periods like the 1972 national strike, Charter has simply shut up. That is why Charter's whole strategy on the Shrewsbury pickets case was based on trying to persuade the trade union leaders to do something. That is why they failed to spread the strike movement that started at Pochins Manchester Poly site when Warren and Tomlinson were reimprisoned. That is why there needs to be a fight inside Charter for a different policy — for a revolutionary socialist policy.

John Blaxam

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reduction of industrial disputes and the improvement of productivity".

In case there is the slightest mystery about this, Lowry spelt it out before the sub-committee: increasing flexibility, labour mobility, reducing of bargaining units, and speed-up.

Lowry was of course delighted that a good many BL workers are already running before the axe comes down. About 2,000 people have left Leyland in just the last month and the workforce has dropped 6,000 to 195,000 since the end of last year.

It all makes the axing easier. And a strong fight-back more difficult.

Paul Adams

LABOUR, said UCATT and the TUC (when they were finally got to take notice) would free the Shrewsbury Two. It didn't. Instead, under a Labour Government, they have been kept in to serve out their full sentences. Separated. Moved from prison to prison; punished with spells of solitary. AND NOW REFUSED PAROLE! The rank and file labour movement has had a hard lesson to learn (and it's been a damn sight harder for Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson): in future, we must look after our own — and leave it to no leaders, no party, no government, to do the job for us.

from the Lump to high food prices, was blamed on the Common Market. Apparently it had slipped delegates' memories that these problems already existed and were getting worse before Britain entered the Common Market. "No" to the Common Market was the answer.

Peter Kavanagh spoke of the danger of "foreign taxes" (so different from our own British taxes!), and "foreign labour". It obviously never occurred to Bro. Kavanagh that from the point of view of a French or a German worker, he, Peter Kavanagh, is "foreign labour". No, for him it is only British workers who are workers;

campaign ... to demand from the Government a changed policy". During discussion, the May 21st lobby of Parliament, called by trade union bodies on Merseyside, was stressed as the next step. A whole number of other, useful points were raised in discussion. The tactic of occupation, used at Pchins (Manchester Poly) and for the last eleven weeks by workers at the ex-Peter Lind and Simon Build site, Cammell Lairds. The need to link up with other sections of workers for a united class fight against unemployment — as is beginning to be done in Birmingham.

But these points were never integrated into the

BLMC: the axeman cometh

THE RYDER REPORT on BLMC was careful not to stir up a hornets' nest of workers' resistance straight away. It made sure to soft-pedal on the question of sackings, and was rewarded with grudgingly friendly and even open-hearted applause from the motor stewards' national committee.

Now the tune is changing. In response to questions put to him at the Commons Trade and Industry sub-committee, Mr. Pat Lowry (British Leyland's director of Industrial Relations) said "We have got to persuade people, whether there is a Ryder Report or not, that the need to reduce manning levels is absolutely

paramount". Being in the 'industrial relations' game, Lowry knows how to call a spade just about anything dainty or exotic ... but not a spade. When he says "we have got to persuade people" you

can bet on bad news. No doubt he will be emphasising what the Ryder Report says about the injection of new finance depending on "evidence of tangible contributions by BL's work force and management to the

The victory of the occupation at Ford's plant at Swansea means not only that job cuts have been halted, but that decisions on manning levels and work rates must be submitted to a joint workers-management committee where stewards will be able to vet proposals.

CHRYSLER workers at Stoke refuse to be intimidated, either by nonsense about the Social Contract or by threatened closure. They have given seven days' notice of strike action as from 5th May in support of a claim for £15 plus consolidation of the £1.20 threshold.

J.W.H.