a Hitler or a Galtieri whatever it took.

Thompson wrote as he did on 31 May. A whole 17 days earlier (and this was a war in which days counted) Enoch Powell had taken the measure of the situation far more surely: "The British are never so formidable as when they are in this mood. It is a mood which, almost irrespective of any outcome, will leave nothing unchanged." The fact that Powell had got it right and Thompson had got it wrong was not without a wider significance.

Regrettably, perhaps, the British electorate was presented with the apparent fact that when it comes to a real crunch the only group one can rely on to show real backbone are Tory right-wingers—specifically right-wingers, for when things reach a crisis the Tory wets, in 1982 as in 1940, simply collapse. In that sense the departure of Carrington and the sudden, deep popular suspicion of Pym have a more than personal importance.

It is no real answer to this to say that Labour would have behaved differently had it been in government, that Foot would have been pushed round as effortlessly by the civil service of staff as he was by trade union bosses in the past. The question is precisely about standing up out of backbone, not because one is too weak to resist the pressure to stand up.

The voice of 1940

Orwell would no doubt have been penetrating on the Newspeak of Ian McDonald, and blunt enough to say that the Falklands crisis has been an immensely enjoyable affair for most. (We were really happy during the war, calls the voice of 1940 again.) He would have known what a long and odious class history lies behind the greater nerve and backbone of the Tory right. But he, more than anyone else, would have known how profound a fact it was that this truth had been glimpsed once again by the British popular classes. He would not have been surprised (though he would have been angry) at the way the left has undermined its own moral credentials. (CND could have grasped the Falklands cause as showing the irrelevance, as well as the obscenity, of nuclear weapons. Instead it has, fatally, tried to gloss over the distinctions it sought so long to make clear.)

Most of all, Orwell would have understood—even, in a sense, sympathised with—the fact that workers, trade unionists, even the unemployed, are flocking over to Thatcher in droves. It would, no doubt, have stuck in his throat to say she deserves their votes. But Orwell did feel, to his very marrow, that socialist intellectuals and their parties had no presumptive right to the workers' votes: they had to deserve that trust. If they behaved as badly as he always believed they might, he would not contest the moral justice of their losing.

He was, after all, the man who wrote, in "My country right or left" in 1940 of "the spiritual need for patriotism and the military virtues, for which, however little the boiled rabbits of the left may like them, no substitute has yet been found."

Arts in society

Tolmers cenotaph

Reyner Banham

"Looks more like a row of tombstones along a churchyard wall," said the man-in-the-gents' of the winning scheme for the redevelopment of the "Green Giant" site. He was right, too, at the level of metaphor, if not of architectural form, for whatever finally gets built there will be yet another addition to London's growing roster of cenotaphs of *causes célèbres*, architectural solutions to political problems that have evaporated long before the buildings are up.

The Odham's site in Covent Garden is one such; Coin Street on the South Bank will be another. But this season's supreme cenotaph will be Tolmers Square, scene of the best-publicised of all radical squats, battleground of Community and Developer. With its slick exterior of mirror-glazed offices, and its grim interior of brown brick dwellings, it is an apt and empty memorial to the battle-cries and environmental fads of the early seventies, architecture with all passion spent.

It is a characteristic of all such politicised planning rows that, in the design of the final cenotaph, current radical chic and the need to make a gesture prevail over normal architectural reasoning—which may not always be a bad thing in the present state of architectural norms—to produce a design which later generations will find incomprehensible without explanatory footnotes.

Some of these are provided by Nick Wates's *Battle for Tolmers Square* (already something of a period classic); others are in Jamie Gough's middle-marxist historical analysis of the planning processes and financial manoeuvring involved (*Twenty Years "Planning" the Tolmers Square Office Development*, Middlesex Polytechnic geography and planning papers, No. 5).

The final outcome of that long process was, of course, a compromise, even if it is not quite the "anthology of everything that went wrong with British architecture" that some have proposed. Nevertheless, what we have got is an irremediably seventies scheme, for the three-way battle between Camden council, the developers and the hopefully so-called Community had burned out by 1973 and the design produced by Renton Howard Wood in the autumn of that year is, in broad outline, what has been built.

How it stacks up on the ground as physical structure is as follows: 1, the mirrored office block sitting on the commercially sacrosanct corner site facing Warren Street tube station; 2, a four-storey brick residential precinct replacing (but not in location, size, form or atmosphere) the late lamented Tolmers Square itself; 3, sundry other brown brick structures providing shops and residence northwards to the point of the Tolmers triangle where Hampstead Road is joined by North Gower Street (or what's left of it); and 4, piecemeal exercises in conservation, re-hab and infill over the rest of it.

It's all, nominally, Renton Howard Wood and (now) Levin, and it's all thoroughly professional as far as one can see. The general level of designing is high—high enough to be worth picking at, because this is a major development on an important site whose history is among the London legends of our time. Whatever gets built on such a site succeeds or fails, in part at least, as a public statement.

The statement the public will observe will be the visually impenetrable bulk of the offices, since all access to the residual square from the south and west has been completely cut off by re-arranging the topography to leave only a narrow snicket (predictably due to be gated for "security") from Hampstead Road. So glass is what you see from both the "public" sides of the complex, glass mirrored and slightly clouded, in panes about six-feet square, not flat because the facade has occasional vertical facets at 45 degrees to the main surface, and crags forward in overhangs towards the top. And not flat, too, in that mirror-glazing always reveals even the most minor distortions or inaccuracies of erection.

Broken images

So what one really sees is a splintered reflection of the buildings on the other side of the streets, not in large, witty and magisterial samplings as in Norman Foster's scheme in Ipswich, but in a spatter of dislocated fragments, one to a pane, like a mosaic that has been put together wrong. This is not necessarily to be deplored, because all but one of the buildings that face the mirror are, frankly, crap. The exception, however, is the Post Office Tower, a design whose power lies largely in the contrast of the smooth shaft below and the broken outlines above. Giving it a broken outline all the way up, as these reflections must, is the kind of insult that architects should not pay one another, even by accident.

That apart, this is a fun facade—until you stand close enough to the details to see what makes it fun. It's not easy to stand close in wet weather, because the craggy overhangs above send down three parallel curtains of run-off water that you have to penetrate to get to the entrance—hardly welcoming at a time when a dry reception would be a public service. But in all weathers a close inspection will show that the glazing bars are just not well enough assembled. Oh, they'll keep the glass in and the weather out, all right, but visually they are a mess. As mirror-shiny as the glass, their highly reflective surfaces reveal every dent, twist or nick they suffered during erection—a comparison with the brightwork on a factory produced object such as a car

will show at once what architects should never ask the British construction industry to do on an unprotected building site.

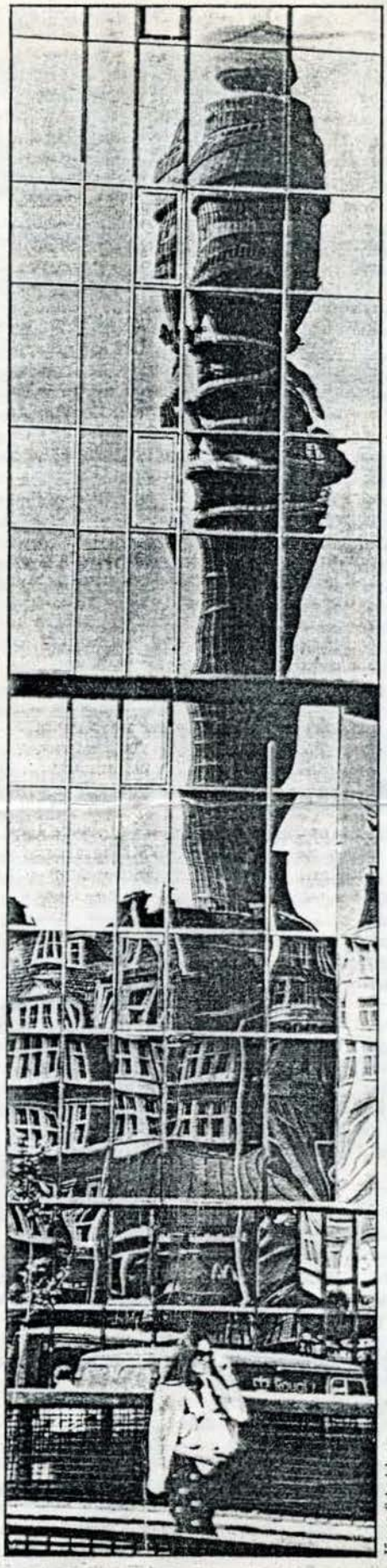
But "behind the false tinsel glitter, and so on" of the wall of offices, what is the inner truth about the square which, for ever, will be the ultimate point at issue here. Tolmers Square and the surrounding streets were squatted, and the existing tenants politicised, in order to preserve a residential body just about cohesive enough to be called a community, inhabiting practically all the usable property in the whole Tolmers triangle, but focused on the square. So, in the new scheme there is a new square, presumably as a memorial of some sort, but because of its displaced location, changed dimensions and different form (it is actually part of a rambling octagon) it is—to revive a useful term from the sixties—no more than a Mickey Mouse version of the original.

The actual *accommodation* provided is probably OK (though it clearly lacks the neat and logical internal planning of what it replaces) but the total residential *environment* must cause some misgivings—even to those who can still recall what this particular seventies sub-style was meant to symbolise when it was no more than a set of pretty drawings. What that sub-style delivers now is a four-storey wall of dreary brown brick around two-and-a-bit sides of the not-so-square. This wall is pierced at intervals by windows of indifferent sizes and by pairs of boxily recessed balconies at second-storey level. At ground level there are arched entrance doors and passage-ways, vaguely Georgian among the nominally modern.

These doors, by their arched form and their location, clearly stand for something more portentous than domesticity. The fifties and sixties saw a great deal of anthropological speculation and sentimentality among architects about the "meaning" of doors and thresholds, and it left its mark on the seventies to such an extent that it became almost impossible for a thinking architect to design a simple entrance. The fact that these are *not* simple entrances is clearly signalled by the presence in front of each of a garden-type structure, a sort of pergola, in brown-stained wood.

At first glance, they might be taken for cheap and cheerful domestic grace-notes, like the famous coloured sheds all over the Byker Wall in Newcastle. Only they can't be; they frame entrance ways, and they do it as ceremoniously in dark formal colours as do Japanese *tora* gates. They are symmetrical and they therefore imply an axis of symmetry running through the archway, the pergola, out into the central space of the square. The largest arch on the eastern side covers what seemingly should have been the main entrance to the square from North Gower Street, for it connects to the original paved pedestrian approach on that side, and thus appears to imply an important axis.

But whereas that old approach was a broad and easy slope that delivered one rather grandly into the square, the present connection is by an uninviting dog-leg alley through the new back yards, and all the archway and its *two* symmetrically flanking pergolas celebrate is an empty gesture, a grandiose exit into nothing in particular.



Jürgen Schadeberg

Bad reflections (right) of the Post Office Tower in the Tolmers Square redevelopment

Now I am not one to condemn symmetrical designs as "fascist" just because they are symmetrical, but there is something about the formality of this design, especially as applied to this monotonous brick facade (which seems to have distant overtones of the dreaded Milner Square in Islington, on whose horrors the likes of Summerson and Pevsner have waxed appalled) . . . something in all this that evokes the mood, if not the precise details, of the least likeable of all seventies architectural chic—the work of the German "rationalist," Rob Krier, whose Albert-Speer-revival projects were described *even by his friends* as fascist.

In-joke or thin disguise?

This could, I suppose, be accepted as a minor architectural in-joke, were it not rendered pathetic by the rear elevation of the mirrored office block which overshadows it, and this back-ways relationship is very queer indeed. The seventh, or south-western, side of the un-square is closed by yet another brick facade, but not of housing for it is a dependency of the offices and attached to them. If this is an historical reference to the commercial properties that stood at approximately the same location in the original square, that could be another smart-ass in-reference, but I suspect that a later generation will see it simply as commerce dressed up domestic in order to disguise the unacceptable backside of capitalism.

Yet between this uneasy compromise of architectural "character" and the office block proper, there lurks what is in many ways the best feature of the whole design, if only it had been differently aligned and built in a different place. It is a vaulted arcade or *Galleria*, boutique-smart in its glassy glitter and indoor plants, parallel to the Euston Road and providing privileged covered rear access to the offices. Such glazed arcades—with the additional radical-chic warranty of being approved by no less than Walter Benjamin—became one of the most powerfully evocative post-modern formalisms of the seventies, and remain as one of that decade's most persistent legacies. They have their uses, too, in the age of the shopping mall and the concourse, and a very good use for this one would have been to turn its orientation through 45 degrees and take it right through the mirror-block from the Euston Road/Hampstead Road corner as a really grand entrance to both the offices and the phantom square behind.

Extended at one end it could shelter visitors from that triple curtain of rain drips at the entrance; extended at the other end it could deliver visitors and residents alike grandly yet relaxedly to the inner sanctum, the historical reason why the whole thing is there. The result, by making a visible connection between the internal community and the larger life of London without, would have been just that much less of a cenotaph, an empty monument.