

Socialist Challenge

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Photo: MORNING STAR

200,000 stopped in South Wales on Monday — but such a fightback needs to be organised throughout the working class

General Strike can smash the Tory offensive

WHEN the Tory government decided to take on the steelworkers they thought they were choosing a soft target.

They were wrong. How wrong was shown on Monday when 200,000 Welsh workers went on strike.

They struck in defence of the tens of thousands of jobs threatened by the steel closures. But the spirit and anger shown in Wales on Monday went beyond that.

It was a demonstration of solidarity with the steelworkers who are striking for a decent wage.

It was a gesture of defiance against an old rich gentleman who sits in London with a wig on his head. Lord Denning is his name, and on Saturday he ruled

that 'secondary' — in other words effective — picketing was illegal.

Even Margaret Thatcher didn't know that, because she intends to pass a law in Parliament for just that purpose. Whether or not the Denning judgement is reversed the Tories will proceed on that course.

Steel union leader Bill Sirs declared on Monday that to defend jobs the TUC 'might be forced into a general strike'. And Bill Sirs is 'a moderate'.

The South Wales National Union of Miners has called indefinite action on jobs from 10 March. In South Yorkshire a day of action against the Tory attacks is planned for 18 February.

The TUC must bring these protests together and start now to organise for all-out, indefinite strike action against the Tory offensive from 10 March.

The planning of such strike action would mean establishing co-ordinating bodies up and down the country. The steelworkers and miners must take the lead in setting these up.

Whatever the immediate reaction of the TUC, rank and file trade unionists can start campaigning and calling for such bodies now.

The Tories think that with their parliament, their steel bosses, their judges, and their press they have everything on their side.

But they are mere insects compared to the strength of the working people.

Let them point to their laws. But let us point to the 200,000 who struck in Wales on Monday. And then let us say that this was only the beginning.

OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions offer solutions that are in the interests not of the workers but of the capitalist class.

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:

- To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character, grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

- To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

1 The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.

4 The Communist parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Eurocommunist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.

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EDITORIAL

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Is there going to be a Third World War?

IN HIS State of the Union address delivered last week, President Carter announced the first steps towards the reintroduction of conscription. For many people, both in the USA and abroad, this must be a chilling reminder of the possibility of a new world war.

In the same speech, Carter went on to list the rest of his war preparations: massive increase in arms spending; the formation of a rapid deployment force of the US armed forces; the siting of medium range missiles in Western Europe; the attempt to keep the increasingly shaky treaty between Israel and Egypt intact; military aid to Pakistan and (possibly) China; and the renovation and reintegration of the Central Intelligence Agency.

All this was rounded off by the now infamous 'Carter doctrine', namely that if the Persian Gulf appears to be slipping out of the control of forces friendly to the USA it will be restored 'by any means necessary', including military force.

Carter of course claims that these preparations have been occasioned by the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. This is a lie. All these projects, with the exception of the step towards restoring the draft, had been implemented well before the invasion.

However what the invasion has allowed Carter to do is to put this package together, publicise it and actually regard it as an electoral asset to have done so. The degree to which this is true can be seen in the recent voting in the Iowa caucuses of the Democratic Party. More cautious sectors of the American ruling class, who had seen Edward Kennedy providing a degree of stability in relations with the rest of the world, have now stampeded (how permanently is unclear) into the camp of Cold War Carter.

So does this mean that the world is slowly slipping towards war and its accompanying barbarism?

We have confidence (and relief) in saying no. Despite frantic efforts there is no sign that in the major capitalist countries (including the USA) any significant section of the majority of the population — the working class — is in favour of any imperialist adventure.

A much quoted referendum in the USA established that three years ago only ten per cent of the population thought that war was likely in the next three years, whereas today 70 per cent think that this true. However *thinking* war is likely is a long way from *supporting* war. There is as yet no sign that the American workers have

been won to Carter's war drive.

Any major step towards such a war would generate mighty protests inside the American public and of course it is the job of socialists in the USA to prepare that response and give it a political direction.

But what of the tasks of socialists here? Thatcher is now furiously adopting the traditional position of modern British prime ministers to American presidents — unconditional support for their war aims. She is now obviously Carter's strongest supporter in Western Europe.

This is not just paper support. In Ireland and Zimbabwe Britain is playing its part in the imperialist war against the exploited and oppressed. This war has never stopped. And it is this war which Carter intends to step up. Instead of war against the largest enemy of imperialism, Carter declares war daily on the workers and peasants in Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador and scores of semi-colonial countries where there are US troops.

This is the war which we must bend our utmost efforts to stop now: Stop Carter's war drive! Victory to the struggle of the Irish and Zimbabwe liberation movements!

Corby's lessons for South Wales

By Charlie Keeny (Corby)

OVER the last two years we in Corby have had an experience that Port Talbot and Llanwern have still to come. We faced the loss of our livelihood, the means of supporting ourselves and our families. We now face the degrading, dehumanising dole queue, where the same people that threw us out of work will deride us as scroungers and spongers on the state.

In the first two years when we were waiting for the sack, our officials constantly related the message from management: 'Don't press for better conditions or wages now. It will mean inevitable closure. Help us now and we will be able to prevent shut-down.'

Critical

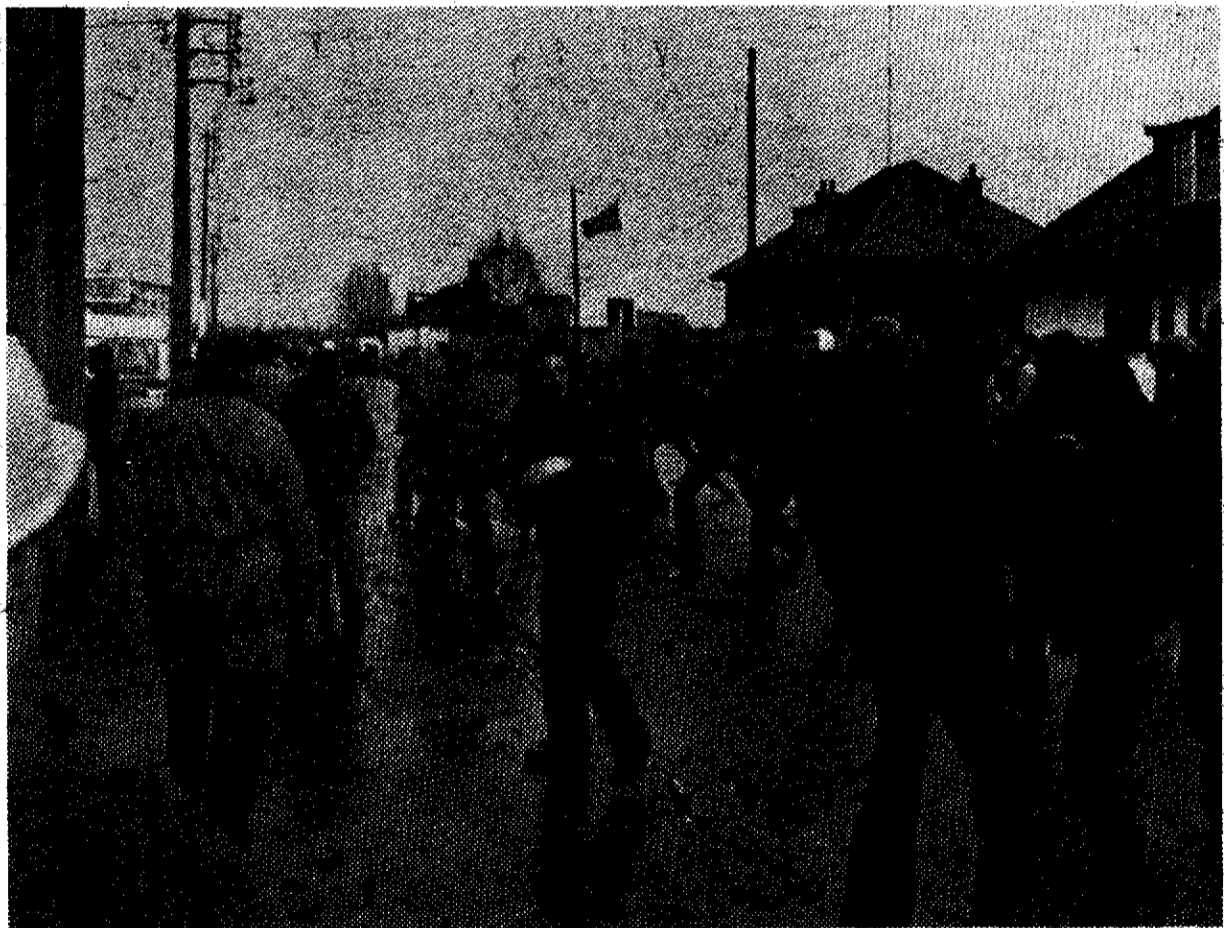
So, for a long time, we did just that. We allowed cuts in our conditions and didn't press any claims for meaningful increases in wages. We allowed workers to leave and not be replaced, even though many of us knew that manning levels were already at a critically low point. With less workers, production levels were surpassed in the frantic attempt to become 'viable'.

This was all we ever heard for those two years: 'We can't afford to pay you more, but become a viable proposition and you can keep your jobs.'

Finally those two years were over and they told us: 'Too bad, you didn't work hard enough.' Figures were presented about our lack of viability. But economists from Warwick University told us that the British Steel Corporation's figures were nonsense and that Corby could produce strip more cheaply than bringing it in.

Naive

The new investment needed would have cost much less than the amount they intended to buy our jobs with. We tried to make the Corporation see this. But it was at this point that it began to dawn on even the most naive of us that the BSC didn't want to know — have never wanted to know. The whole quest for viability had been a gigantic hoax at our expense.



FRENCH steelworkers didn't fall for bosses' arguments

The BSC's plans had never changed. We had been fed small drops of hope in a cruel attempt to keep us quiet until they were ready to give us the chop.

If this sounds familiar it should. It's the same argument that the BSC are using over the current national wage claim. 'Don't ask for more' or 'Work harder for less or the closure will come quicker and harder.'

Don't fall for it brothers and sisters!

We did at Corby and we found out that unless you fight they will close you anyway. Forget about the constant threats of closure, fight initially for a decent wage, and when you have won that fight as you inevitably will if you keep solidarity, take heart and know that if you have won once then you can win again.

If you don't fight from the very start you'll soon find the closures that are demanded are ever growing

and the timetable for shutdown ever shorter.

If you think that the BSC's promises of more jobs to replace the cuts are genuine then take a look at the facts. BSC's job-finding service has found 5,000 jobs nationally in six years. We need 5,800 jobs at Corby alone, leaving aside the other 46,000 redundancies the BSC has announced.

As for the redundancy money, from what we can see of other areas much of it will go in the pub, the odd trip to the bookie. The regular wage packet is replaced by a pittance from the dole — totally inadequate to support a family.

We haven't had this sort of experience yet at Corby, but some of the signs are already there. Shops are booming as people buy on hire purchase to be paid for from the redundancy payments. We know from East Meads that that bonanza is

short-lived and long regretted.

What we can tell the lads and lasses at Port Talbot and Llanwern is that your future is in your hands, not the BSC's.

Don't believe the Corporation when they tell you that they can't go on subsidising steel to a greater extent than other European countries — they don't. In fact British steel is subsidised less than in France for example, where the workers of Longwy have won their battle for survival and have succeeded in bringing massive investment that will provide more jobs. They have won a battle against cuts that put lunatic economic policies first and people last.

Their lesson is one that we can all benefit from. Only if you are prepared to fight and go on fighting do you have the chance to save your jobs and the jobs of your children.

A DAY OF DEFIANCE

Eyewitness account from South Wales

PUBLIC INDUSTRY in Wales came to a halt last Monday when 200,000 workers struck in protest at the threatened closures in the steel industry and the prospects of pit closures in the valleys.

There were no trains and the docks were at a standstill. In Gwent the buses did not run and council offices in the Rhondda were closed. 30,000 miners joined the 40,000 steelworkers in South Wales in an all-out strike on the day of action called

By Valerie Coultas

by the Welsh TUC.

The message from the industrial heartland of Wales was loud and clear. Steel union leader Bill Sirs, quite overwhelmed by the degree of solidarity of the Welsh workers, put it this way at a rally in Cardiff:

'Today is the starting point of a revolution — a revolution against

policies that are crippling this country and which will force us to become a nation looking after tourists. I'm prepared to go to jail if my executive instructs me to.

'This is not just a problem for Wales but for the workers throughout Britain. What about a general strike? A general strike is the last thing people in responsible positions like me want — but if it's the only thing left to you...'

'TO OUR dying shame we let them divide us at Shotton, Corby, East Moors and Ebbw Vale. Now we're all in it together at Port Talbot, at Llanwern and in the pits. Pay and jobs are part and parcel of the same issue. We're not going to take it.'

This was the mood of the AUEW contingent from Llanwern and it was the unanimous feeling of the marchers in Cardiff on Monday. 'Save steel', 'Save pits', 'Save Wales', 'Coal not dole', said the placards carried by steelworkers and lodge after lodge of miners as the 15,000-strong demonstration made its way through the city to rally at Sophia Park.

Tiger

As South Wales miners' leader Emlyn Williams pointed out, Thatcher had stepped on the toes of the miners in trying to teach the steelworkers a lesson, and in doing so 'she's caught a tiger by the tail'. But Williams was a little worried about the postponement of indefinite strike action on jobs in Wales to 10 March, because the 'need of the steelworkers is immediate'.

The closures in steel are expected to mean the loss of 7,500 jobs in mining, and if the BSC goes ahead with its plan to import twice as much coking coal from abroad the figure could double. The Welsh TUC wants a 'stay of execution' for two years in order to attract new industry to Wales.

Lawrence Daly, speaking for the NUM executive, pointed out that some people would try to use the 'two years delay in preparing the case for a further run-down of major industries. Lord Robens started doing it with the coal industry in the '60s, Lord Beecham did it with the railways, Edwardes is doing it at Leyland, and now Villiers is doing it with steel.'

'We will oppose any pit closures that take place', he told the eager crowd. 'If we get the same subsidies as foreign coal we can produce all the coal the British steel industry requires.'

Turn out

As in 1974, so in 1980 the miners would be 'prepared to give the people of Britain a chance to turn out the worst administration this country has ever known'.

To rapturous applause, Daly announced that the NUM nationally had donated £20,000 to the steel strikers.

Then Labour deputy leader Michael Foot, MP for Ebbw Vale, rose to speak. There was a chorus of boos, and shouts of 'What about Ebbw Vale?' Miners and steelworkers at the back of the rally began to file out.

One miner commented that it was people like Foot, who had sold out to Callaghan, who were responsible for the state they were in today. It was Foot who allowed the Ebbw Vale steelworks to be run down while Labour was in office.

The rally ended with the singing of the Red Flag, fists raised. Margaret Thatcher had better watch out — this was the message from Wales.

TERRY THOMAS (South Wales NUM):

'Some members are hiding behind their union constitutions and simply waiting for instructions from their national executives. But no one should criticise the action of the Miners. We abstained at the TUC general council meeting on delaying all-out strike action, but we're determined to fight. We just don't want to fight alone.'

'I hope the steelworkers will turn their present dispute over wages into a campaign against closures. It would cost the government £33 million to subsidise Welsh coal and stop the closures of the pits. It will cost them £70 million in redundancy payments if the closures go ahead.'

COLWYN WILLIAMS (Swansea Trades Council, member of the SWP):

'You can't play games with a general strike. You can't keep backing down. If we are to get action on jobs then it has to come from the men (sic) in the factories. It has to be organised from below and above simultaneously.'

JOHN PERRINS (National Union of Blastfurnacemen, Port Talbot Strike Committee):

'Thirty-five per cent of my members have already lost their jobs through closures. They will not be too enthused with a day of action. They are already very active in stopping the movement of steel.'

'We were provoked into this strike because the Tories thought they could weaken us during the strike to accept the closures in Port Talbot and Llanwern. This is not a fight against a frugal employer. It is a political fight against the government.'

'We're not enamoured by the way the Wales TUC has related to this strike. After cancelling the action on 21 January the TUC nationally has taken things out of our hands. We're weary of Len Murray.'



Jobs before profits

WELSH miners, dockers, steel and railway workers are in a mood to fight on jobs. The TUC both in Wales and nationally is committed at the moment to backing strike action in Wales on 10 March.

But how can the strike be made solid? Only if it has clear goals and clear leadership.

The Welsh TUC's vacillation about action and their demands for a new management, a stay of execution and tighter import controls do not get to the bottom of the problems faced by the steel and mining industries in Britain. It is profits, not bad managers, that are the source of the problem.

Fighting for the right to work in steel and the mines today means taking action now to challenge the

dictates of profit, arguing that jobs come first. 10 March is a clear focus for general strike action on jobs against the Tory offensive.

Steelworkers and miners need to initiate a debate inside the labour movement about a plan for the nationalised industries — a plan that uses the new technology to shorten the working week and takes the decisions about investment out of the hands of the bosses and puts them in the hands of the workers themselves.

Only through such a plan for the economy can workers permanently protect their jobs from the anarchy of capitalism.

The Tory government and the bosses will resist such a plan all down the line because it hits them where it hurts — in their pockets. But the

political implications of a struggle on jobs cannot be avoided.

If the battle on jobs is to be won by the labour movement then capitalism itself must be confronted.

STRIKE SUPPORT MEETINGS

Cardiff **Newport**

To discuss issues and problems arising from the strike, and to raise support from local trade unionists

Speakers: RAY DAVIES (ISTC branch sec., Llanwern)
ELAINE CHAPMAN (S. Wales Ctee Against NHS Cuts)
PAT KANE (Socialist Challenge)
RAGHIB AHSAN (Rover Solihull shop steward)

CARDIFF: Wed 30 Jan, 7.30pm, Oddfellows Hall, Newport Rd
NEWPORT: Thur 31 Jan, 7.30pm, King William IV pub, town centre

KICK OUT THE TORIES

STRIKE NEWS

GKN and the steel corporation

Where steel is as good as gold

By Johann Schweik

'THIS dispute,' Guest Keen and Nettlefolds, the steel corporation's largest customer and one of the largest private steelmakers in Britain, informed its employees in Cardiff last week, 'is nothing to do with us at all.'

The occasion for the letter from GKN's chairperson was the instruction from the steel union for its members in the private sector to join the strike. That the company's declaration of non-involvement in the affairs of BSC should echo the sentiments of Lord Denning and the government can be taken as more than a coincidence.

To start with, GKN has been generous to the Tory Party. The company's last published accounts, for 1978, show that in that year it donated £25,000 to the Conservatives, sufficient to place it in the top ten of the party's financial benefactors.

Think-tank

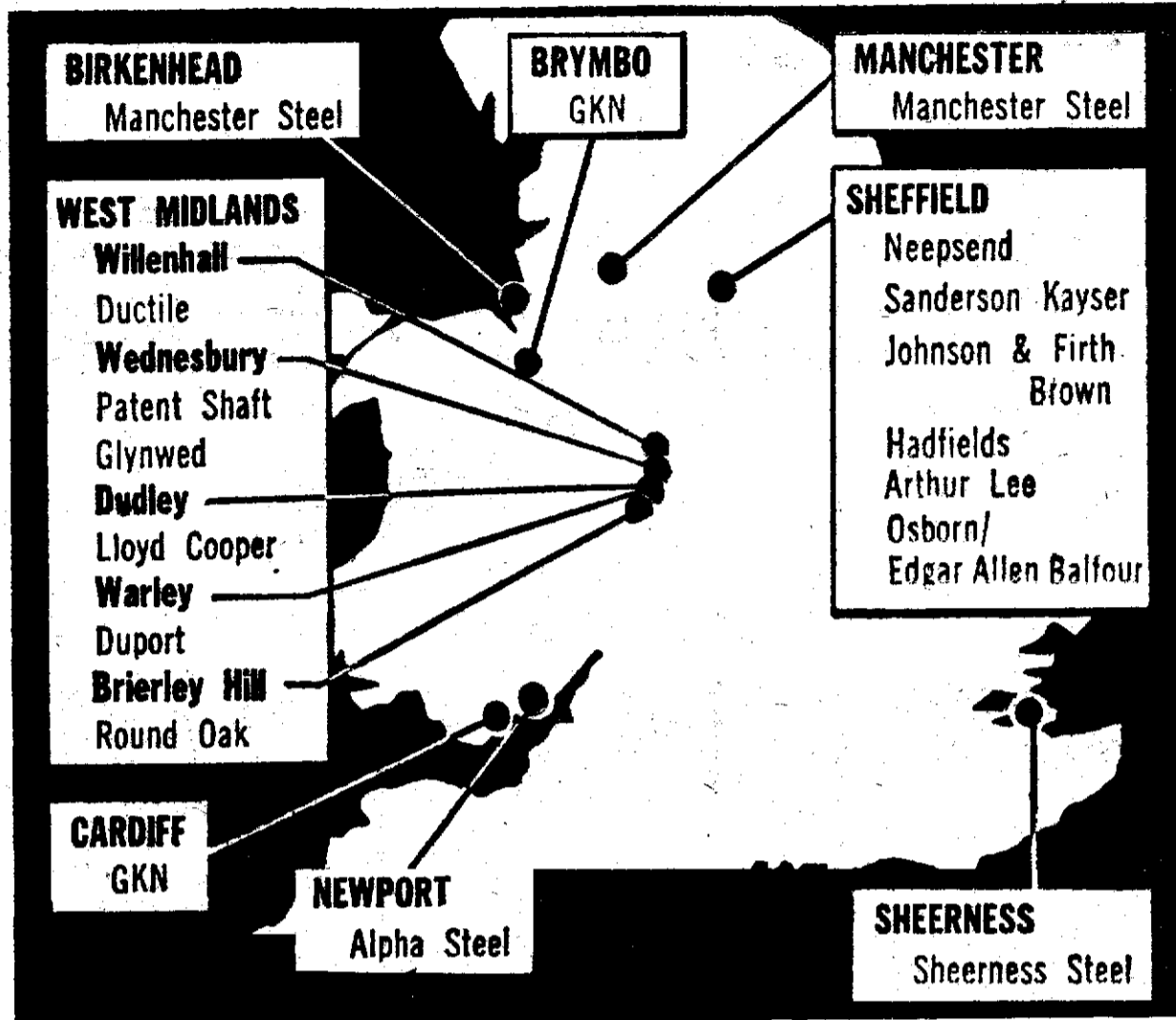
GKN also handed £3,200 to the right-wing Economic League in 1978, and for good measure it donated £1,000 to the Centre for Policy Studies, which is Sir Keith Joseph's private think-tank for developing his monetarist ideas (not that a lot of thinking is required).

Company handouts to the bosses' own political party aren't especially surprising, but they often indicate some particular interests in government policy. For GKN that interest lies in a gravy train known as the British Steel Corporation.

Tucked away in the *Financial Times* over recent weeks have been brief references to talks — 'so far inconclusive' — between BSC and GKN over what the newspaper refers to as the rationalisation of rod and bar production between the public and private steelmaking sectors.

The need for talks is that in the heady days of 1976 the corporation invested £33m in a new rod mill at Scunthorpe, while GKN opened a similar production plant in Cardiff. Then came 'over-production' in the shape of the recession.

It can be confidently predicted that the beneficiary of this discussion over how production can be merged will be neither the steelworkers involved nor the public sector. GKN has long experience in channelling



The major private steel firms — now taking 25 per cent of the British market

profits from BSC.

In 1967, when the steel industry was partially nationalised, GKN owned two steelworks: East Moors in Cardiff and Brymbo in the Northwest, both supplying steel billets to nearby GKN engineering works (GKN is the largest engineering firm in Britain).

The company received £42m in compensation for the nationalisation of these two plants, both of which happened to be obsolete. In line with one of the main aims of nationalisation — throwing tens of thousands of steelworkers out of their jobs — East Moors was shut down.

But after a £4m face-lift, Brymbo

was sold back to GKN in 1974 along with a foundry at Dowlais for a total of £20m. Taking inflation into account, the company was thus allowed to buy back its modernised plant for a third of the price it had previously been paid. Meanwhile BSC bore the cost of redundancy payments.

And GKN's balance sheet? In the early '70s the company's trading surplus nudged an annual £50m. By the late '70s it topped £110m. Over the same period, the private steelmaking sector has watched its output grow from 8 per cent to 25 per cent of the UK market.

In short, the private steel firms have bloated themselves off nationalisation — reason to both

extend the steel strike to these companies, and to bring the gravy train to a halt by demanding their nationalisation. They have already been richly compensated by BSC and the state, so they should be paid nothing for their plants.

That's the view of ISTC member Derek Parkes, who works at GKN's Cardiff plant. 'Private steelmaking is the most profitable part of the industry,' he says. 'For that reason alone nationalisation makes sense.'

'The all-out strike in South Wales on Monday and the proposal for indefinite strike action provide the kind of struggle that is needed to stop the closures and raise demands like nationalisation which can defend workers' interests.'

Selling point

LORD Denning has thrown down a gauntlet to the British labour movement: dare to confront this Tory government and you could end up in jail. The Pentonville dockers faced the same challenge under the last Tory government in 1972, but they didn't stay in jail long. The reason? The organised power of British labour. As Arthur Scargill says: when the labour movement gets going it's 'invincible'.

But it's not simply a question of trade union muscle in the battle with the Tories. They know that the British trade unions are powerfully organised. But they also see the weak points of the labour movement.

John Corrie is taking on women with his proposals to restrict abortion rights. William Whitelaw has made black people a target. Joseph wants to see the steelworkers taught a lesson.

The Tories have called in Lord Denning because they know a united response from the trade unions means defeat for them. They'll be pulling out all the stops to divide that united opposition — the courts, the press, the police, even the army.

Political arguments

That's where a paper like *Socialist Challenge* comes in. It gives the political arguments, the arguments for socialism, that can give a clear direction to trade union action and arm the workers movement against the Tory accusations of 'mindless militancy'. *Socialist Challenge* is open to debate, it's open to argument. It's a paper that welcomes your contribution. Read it, buy it, sell it and write for it.

If you would like to receive copies of the newspaper to sell, contact SC Distribution, 328 Upper Street, London N1. Tel 01-359 8371.

Strikers versus Brute Force

KEITH Johns, organiser for ISTC's No. 3 division, which covers South Yorkshire and Humberside, talking to *Socialist Challenge*:

The policies of the government are enshrined in this dispute. The Tories deliberately chose the steel workers because they thought we could be taken on and beaten. I think they have been shocked by what's happened.

But having made that mistake the Tories are perpetuating it. They are trying to break us down by sheer brute force. The use of the law

against us is only the latest example. The judiciary, backed by the government, is seeking to impose a defeat on the working class movement.

We initially came out on strike over the 2 per cent wage offer. But we are very conscious of the question of closures and the threat to jobs in the industry — especially in places like South Wales.

There should be a wide campaign by the whole of the trade union movement to demonstrate that the closures in both the national and private sectors would affect the whole of the working class.

I don't think the labour movement should have to be asked what action is necessary in the present situation. We are being attacked by judges, by BSC, by private employers and by the government.

It should be clear to trade unionists throughout the country what we should be prepared to do.

The only settlement which will satisfy the members I represent is a 20 per cent wage rise without any strings. If anyone thinks they could sell anything else, let them try. I know I couldn't.

STEEL BLOCKADE

Glasgow

'WE want a Labour government led by Arthur Scargill,' said three Scottish steelworkers last week.

The three, Joe Coyle and C McFadden of Tube Works, Bellshill, Glasgow, and M Laita a works' delegate from the Dalziel Motherwell plant attended Aberdeen Trades Council on 23 January and told of the state of their current struggle.

McFadden assured the meeting: 'We're determined to go right on to the end. The rank and file is very strong.'

The trades council set up a support committee for the strike and decided to build a public meeting for the strikers. Thanking the trades council, the strikers said: 'If we get this response everywhere the Tories will be on their knees — and they won't be praying either.'

Blackburn

By John Parkinson, Ann Henderson, and Brian Grogan

IF Hollywood ever gets around to making a film about the steel strike, Walkers in Blackburn — one of the largest steel stockholders in West Europe — would make a good location for a dramatic pre-credit sequence.

Outside the yard lorries line up to form a convoy. When there are 30 or 40 in the line, the sky suddenly lights up. As a signal to the scab drivers to charge the picket line, the police unit inside the yard sends up a flare to indicate the time is right to break through the pickets.

To counter this military-style of police and driver scabbing operation, the ISTC has organised mass pickets supported by steelworkers from Warrington and the Sheffield and Rotherham district.

Two mass pickets held last week succeeded in halting the convoys, while Transport Union district officials in Preston are still turning a blind eye to the fact that their members are scabbing.

Support from local trades unionists has led to plans to mount a round-the-clock mass picket until Walkers is forced to shut its gates. Preston and Blackburn Trades Councils arranged accommodation for a hundred pickets last week.

At the Preston Liaison Committee, set up to fight unemployment, trades council delegates will be arguing this week for a joint approach to the TGWU, and solidarity action on the picket lines. A tour of local factories and union branches to organise support will also be proposed.

A Lancashire-wide mobilisation for a march and rally against cuts in jobs and services is planned for 23 February. The events will take place in Preston.

A day of action and demonstration to protest against government policy is to be held in Manchester on 18 February. Steel workers have indicated their support.

Nottingham

FIVE hundred people marched in Nottingham on the weekend in support of the steel strike and against cuts in public spending. After the demonstration, called by Nottingham Trades Council's cuts committee, marchers heard speeches from a representative of the Boilermakers' Union, a steelworker from the Stanton and Staverly plant, and others.

Southall

By P Grant, ASLEF delegate on Ealing Trades Council

THE main target for flying pickets formed by strikers from Lyle Spencer steel stockholders in Southall, owned by BSC, is Sampsons. This firm in Colnbrook is the main steel supplier to London and the southern counties.

Attempts to stop lorries there have so far met with little success, but the aim now is to build solid pickets at Sampsons. Details of pickets from: Tom Kellan, 122 Redwood Estate, Cranford.

SUPPORT THE STEEL STRIKE

COMMUNIST PARTY PARALYSE LCDTU CONFERENCE

By Patrick Sikorski

THE 1,000-STRONG conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, held in London last Saturday, was effectively prevented by the Communist Party organisers from discussing the nuts and bolts of a plan for action in the fightback against the present Tory government offensive.

Rather than allow the conference to escape from their tight control, the organisers preferred to close it down altogether.

The clash came when Alan Thornett, a Transport and General Workers Union

delegate from Leyland's Cowley plant, and then John Deason, secretary of the Right to Work Campaign, were prevented from putting amendments to the LCDTU's proposed declaration. The declaration had only been distributed on the morning of the conference.

Conference chairperson and CP member Kevin Halpin was eventually forced by the conference to take a vote on whether to allow Deason to speak. The vote was in favour, but the microphone was nevertheless removed from Deason (who is a member of the Socialist Workers Party). Then stewards tried to evict Deason from the room, but he was rescued by

SWP members.

Halpin, using the only microphone still functioning, then screamed for a vote on the declaration. Although many felt it could and should have been strengthened, none voted against.

Halpin then attempted to close the meeting a full hour before it was due to finish. Around 150 delegates, most of them seemingly CP members, immediately occupied the platform to prevent the meeting from continuing. Anyone who then tried to speak from the floor was howled down by those on the platform

with shouts of 'out, out, out'.

A clear majority of the delegates — between 500 and 600, including some CP members — registered their disgust at the platform by staying in the hall until the official closing time, after which they left. The platform then took a re-vote on the declaration.

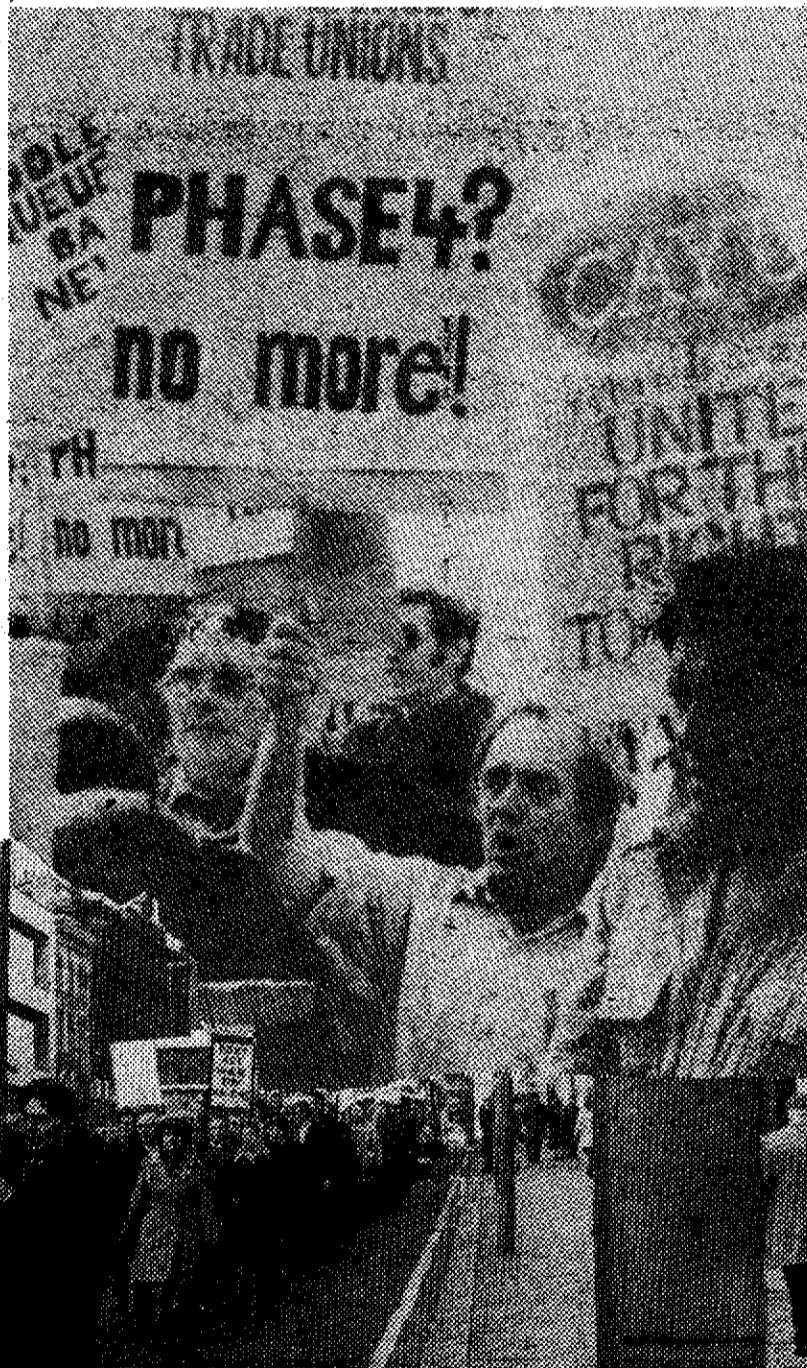
Thanks to the disruption by leading members of the LCDTU, the conference was denied the opportunity of concretely discussing how the declaration could be strengthened and used as a real weapon against the Tories.

REPRESENTATIVES of the majority of LCDTU delegates who opposed the undemocratic ruling of CP chairperson Kevin Halpin agreed to the following common declaration, although it was impossible to put it to the vote because of the CP's heckling:

'We condemn the undemocratic way the conference was closed by the chair. The large number of delegates who remained indicated the frustration with the lack of discussion about action that can be taken NOW against the Tories. Therefore we call for a recall democratic conference.'

JOHN DEASON (Rank & File Co-ordinating Committee)
ALAN THORNETT (TGWU, Cowley)
STEVE CORBISHLEY (CPSA national executive)
RAY VARNES (NUPE London divisional council)

(All delegates agreed to this in a personal capacity)



*This
conference
declares...*

THE declaration adopted by the LCDTU on Saturday incorporated all the points of the Code of Practice which came out of the 1,000-strong Rank and File 'Defend Our Unions' conference last June. It also backed the various calls for action which have since come from the TUC and other labour movement bodies.

On unemployment the declaration supported Monday's one-day strike in South Wales, while on the cuts issue it backed the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils' call for action on 18 February.

Support was also offered to the TUC proposed 'day of action' on 14 May, which, said the declaration, 'must be a real action of general strike proportions'.

On the steel strike there was 'full support in their battle to win higher wages. All appeals by the steel unions for help must be supported... the call by the steel unions to stop on Monday 28 January must be met by the utmost alertness.'

It was left to John Cowling from the ISTC executive to spell out what these generalities should mean in practice. He called for an end to the practice of selling jobs for pay rises and for 20 per cent without strings. Going beyond official union policy, he also invited all trade unionists to join steel picket lines. 'Join us and fight' was his message.

The importance of uniting all sections of the movement was emphasised by Linda Smith from Southwark trades council. She stressed how the Tory attacks on the social services made women a special target and how a massive ideological campaign was being waged to push women back into the home. Unfortunately Linda Smith did not link this up with John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill.

An attempt was made to add to the declaration with the resolution from the Defend Our Unions conference. Principally this called for joint action between 'Defend Our Unions' and the LCDTU. But it wasn't clear what exactly such joint action should consist of — whether it would be in the CP's framework of building on the TUC's initiatives, or for the extension of general strike action against the Tories from the 10 March date as called by the Welsh TUC.

Clarification on these and other issues could have come if the conference had been allowed to proceed properly. The declaration provided a starting point. The debate now needs to concentrate on how to centralise the present scattered campaigns on cuts, against redundancies, around the steel strike with the general aim of getting rid of the Tory government.



What has happened to the LCDTU?

THE MAJORITY of those attending the LCDTU conference on Saturday needed no convincing of the need for a co-ordinated strategy against the Tory government.

And it is worth remembering that during the 1970-74 Tory regime the LCDTU did offer a forum for the mapping out of such a campaign. Not that the LCDTU was any more democratically run in those days. But it was able to organise forces powerful enough to call national strikes in 1970-71, and this in turn put pressure on the TUC.

That period was the heyday of the Communist Party's strategy of alliances with the 'lefts' in the leadership of the unions —

individuals such as Hugh Scanlon of the AUEW and Jack Jones of the TGWU.

Accordingly the CP was able to build a series of 'Broad Left' organisations capable of attracting a significant number of shop stewards. This was especially the case in the fight against Ted Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

Even after the fall of Heath the LCDTU could still put on an impressive show. A conference it inspired on unemployment, held in Birmingham in 1976, was attended by 3,500 delegates. But the conference organisers refused to call any action. To do so would have been to endanger the alliance with Jones and

Scanlon — who were themselves, by their support of the Labour government's social contract, helping to increase the dole queue.

That failure to give a lead has resulted in decline. Neither at Saturday's conference nor at the CP-sponsored 'Re-instate Derek Robinson' conference two weeks ago were there anything like the numbers who attended the earlier LCDTU events. It is also significant that Saturday's platform was not decorated by the most significant leaders of the Labour and trade union left, such as Tony Benn or Arthur Scargill.

But it would be wrong to write off either the CP or bodies like the LCDTU because of the fall-off in support. The strength of the CP in industry is still qualitatively greater than that of any other party or group on the left. In no way can any other of the present organisations in the

unions hope to attract the type of forces the LCDTU once did. And that is all the more unfortunate, because such strength is desperately needed now in face of the Tory onslaught.

The biggest lesson of Saturday's conference is that democracy in organising conferences is not a luxury. A simple 'call' by the Communist Party is no longer sufficient to bring out the troops. The 'troops' now need convincing that it is worth their while attending such conferences. The best way to achieve such a response is to provide a real forum for discussion which can arrive at real decisions on action.

In order to learn these lessons the recall conference now proposed should be organised by a committee open to all those forces present on Saturday. This way a real debate, with the declaration as its starting point, can be held.

Avon teachers sit-in

By Mike EAUDE

TEACHERS in the Avon district have occupied staff rooms, refused to work a job-slashing timetable and are teaching exam pupils in 'alternative classes'. The struggle threatens to develop into a major flashpoint between teachers and the Tories over spending cuts.

Hartcliffe in South Bristol is a massive council estate of the early 1950s. People came out of the bombed, demolished and decaying inner-city to live six miles out on the sprawling new estate in the middle of fields with few services.

Three years ago 1,200 students from Hartcliffe comprehensive school marched to Bristol city centre demanding an end to the cuts imposed by Avon country council.

Now teachers at Hartcliffe and two other schools, Hengrove and Lawrence Weston, are taking a militant stand. Rod Povey, one of the teachers sitting-in at Hartcliffe school, explains:

'Avon authority suddenly decided to cut staff and change timetables in the middle of the school year. They cut our staff by four over Xmas. We came back to find the timetable completely changed.

'Teaching groups in the first year of the school have been split up, and children in extra literacy and numeracy schemes have had their class sizes doubled. If Avon gets away with this they can cut staff and change timetables at any time.'

The leader of Avon county council is Sir Gervase Walker, whose desire to slash local authority expenditure by £8m has threatened 400 teachers' jobs.

In November 8,000 people marched in Bristol to express their hostility at such vicious cutbacks. Teachers at the centre of the dispute have been balloted for strike action, and 27 schools have received the required two-thirds majority.

Last Friday the NUT's action committee gave the go-ahead for strike action on a rota basis in the 27 schools already balloted.

Nine schools will be striking this week, nine the next and nine the week after for three days each.

Don't let the Avon teachers stand alone. They deserve your support in the fight against the Tories.

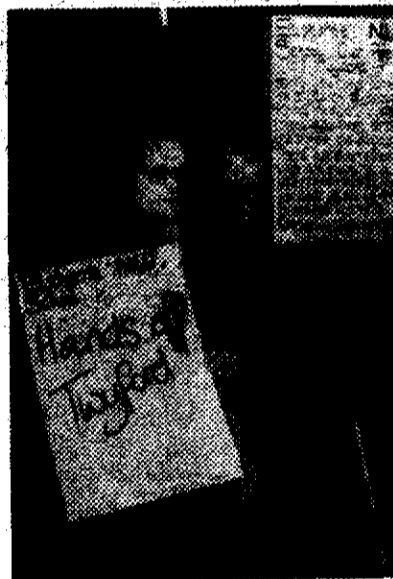
* Letters and telegrams: NUT c/o Bristol Resource Centre, Bedminster Parade, Bristol 3. Tel: 0272 667933/4 (day), 0272 49815 (eve).

Going Anglican

TWYFORD school in Ealing is one of the most successful multi-racial schools, but if Ealing council's decision to sell it to the Church of England goes ahead, thousands of Asian, West Indian, African and Polish children in West London will have to take second place to children whose parents are Anglican enthusiasts.

Nearly three-quarters of Twyford's teachers — who will also have to follow Anglican principles to work in the school — have refused to stay on if the sale goes ahead.

On Wednesday of last week the Twyford staff led a half-day protest strike of students and teachers in the West London area. The Tory education minister, Mark Carlisle, who proclaims his support for 'parent power', has received a petition from parents who fear that Twyford will become an exclusively white secondary school.



Teachers' protest last week

Nursery action

By Roger Tanner (Nottingham NUT)

'REINSTATE Eileen Crosbie' was the demand of 2,000 Nottingham teachers when they struck to defend nursery education last week.

Eileen Crosbie was suspended for refusing to teach in her nursery unit at Robert Mellors school because of the fall in standards. Failure to replace a nursery assistant meant that 40 children between the ages of three and five were being taught by only one teacher and an assistant.

Within three days of the new term starting the accident record had gone

up 50 per cent on the previous three months.

These conditions will spread throughout the area if the county council goes ahead with its plan to cut a further 136 assistants.

Local feelings are running high. Parents at nearby Sycamore nursery have already organised to fight its threatened closure. Council employees joined teachers on last Wednesday's march and teachers are now prepared to ballot for strike action.

Chix strike enters fourth month

By Hilary Driver

SINCE October, 96 workers at the Chix sweet factory in Slough have been on strike for union recognition. When they joined the General and Municipal Workers' Union last year, the Chix workers found that the management refused to listen to their demands for better pay and conditions. The wage was a splendid 95p an hour.

Comparisons with Grunwick are inevitable. Most of those on strike are Asian women. Management has refused to meet union officials and has rejected moves by ACAS to intervene.

The GMWU has called for regular support for the daily picket. A mass picket was held on 17 January, which was attended by two hundred local militants. They did not manage to stop the bus carrying scab workers getting into the factory yard. One picket was arrested.

Further mass pickets will be held. With the strike entering its fourth month, and still solid, messages of support and donations can play a valuable part in sustaining morale. Send to: M. Anwar, 271 Goodman Park, Slough, Berks.

Former psychiatric patient tells why there's No place for sanity in Tory cuts

By Geoffrey Sheridan

THERE is a date that Anne Miller will never forget, and it is possible that Patrick Jenkin, the social services secretary, won't either. On 1 August 1977 Anne Miller was admitted to the Henderson Hospital, a specialised psychiatric unit. She left the hospital 10½ months later, in her words 'a whole person'.

On 31 March the Henderson is due to close, thanks to the policies of Jenkin and his colleagues. Anne Miller has other ideas about where the axe should fall.

From early childhood, Anne Miller says, she was extremely unsettled, finding it difficult when she left school to stay in any one place for very long. She worked mainly in hotels, frequently changing jobs and towns. She couldn't socialise, and not surprisingly felt isolated.

'I had no roots and was wandering around aimlessly,' Anne explains. 'I had no sense of worth.'

By the age of 32 she had attended numerous out-patient and psychiatric units, and had been admitted on three occasions to conventional psychiatric hospitals after overdosing on drugs.

Responsibility

And then something happened which changed Anne's life. She was referred to the Henderson Hospital, in Sutton, Surrey.

'I was very confused when I first got there,' Anne says. 'I didn't understand what was going on. It was totally different from anything I had ever experienced.'

'What startled me was the complete way in which I was accepted by the community at the hospital. Things were given to me instead of being removed. In a conventional psychiatric hospital your identity is taken away and all decisions are made for you. But in the Henderson you're encouraged to take on responsibility as part of the community.'

When psychiatrists refer patients to the Henderson, their letter usually ends: 'Of course, there is no point in my admitting the patient to our local mental hospital, because it would be a waste of time.'

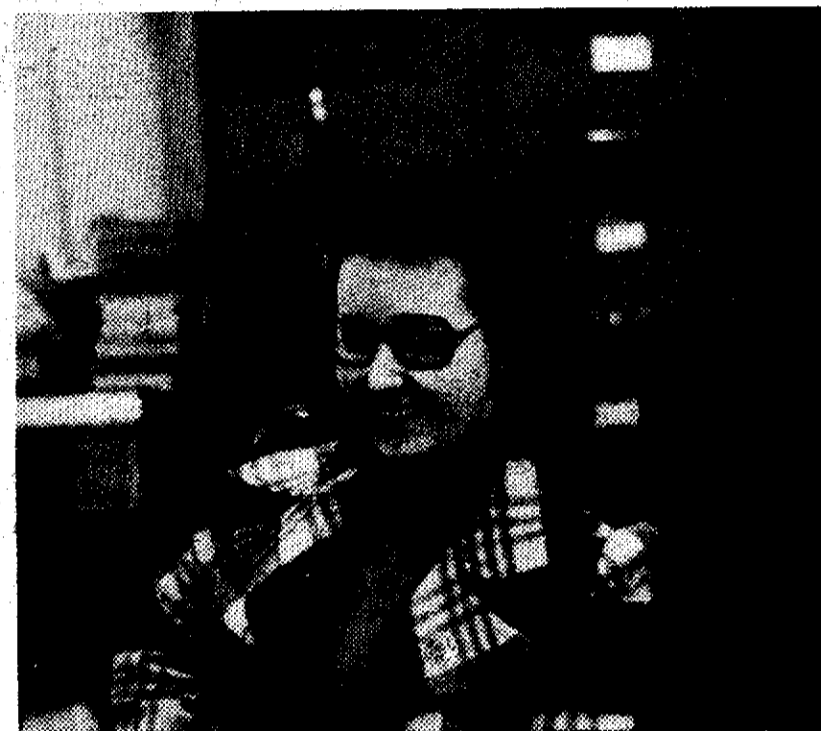
Communal

The Henderson provides a form of treatment for the emotional problems of young people which is hard to come by on the health service — psycho-therapy. The hospital makes no use of drugs or electric-shocks, employing instead a method of communal organisation which places patients — known in the Henderson as residents — at the centre of their own treatment programme.

Many of the young people who

come to the 42-bed psychiatric unit are sent via the courts. Most are 'failures' of other remedial institutions. All are looking for a way out of the emotional turmoil of their life.

'Conventional psychiatric hospitals,' Anne Miller comments, 'can't cope with people like us



ANNE MILLER — Henderson made her feel 'a whole person'

without using drugs. At the Henderson you talk through your problems; not just your own problem but all the other residents'. All the shit that's been gathered around you is taken away.'

Ten and a half months after her admission to the Henderson, Anne left it, a totally different person, she says. 'I can communicate with people. I am aware of my strength and convictions. I'm not afraid to say what I think. I feel a whole person.' That is how she has felt for almost two years.

Now the Henderson is under the Tories' health axe, which the social services secretary, Patrick Jenkin, vowed in Parliament last week to sharpen. The government's latest message is that we shouldn't expect 'a

pill for every ill', which roughly translates as 'suffer with a smile'.

Why chop the Henderson? Dr Kenneth Nuttall, one of the two consultant psychiatrists at the hospital, considers that the government's monetarist policies take no account of social well-being, and its 'short, sharp, shock' approach to 'law and order' makes the Henderson seem like a soft option.

Vulnerable

Like the Stoke Mandeville Hospital for paraplegics, and the kidney units which are threatened with closure, the Henderson depends on funds from an area health authority but serves the whole country. Such specialised units are

among the most vulnerable as the pace of the NHS blood letting quickens.

If Anne Miller had never been to the Henderson, she says, she would still be dependent on hospitals and psychiatrists. Instead she works as a packer in South London, devoting much of her spare time to the campaign to save the Henderson, busily contacting trade unionists, social services departments, theatre groups, the press — anyone who will listen and might be prepared to do something.

The occupation committee at St Benedicts Hospital in South London has been particularly helpful. The occupation last week of St George's Hospital in Central London and Etwell Hospital in Derbyshire may have set a trend of resistance to the axe which the staff at the Henderson will decide to follow as the 31 March deadline for closure approaches.

Anne Miller has a word for the government's health policies and those who impose them. She says they're criminal. Patrick Jenkin has no reason to maintain a hospital which allows people to work through their problems, especially when it leads to the militancy shown by Anne Miller. The labour movement has every reason to ensure that the Henderson is saved.



TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE HENDERSON HOSPITAL, SUTTON, SURREY, TEL: 01461 1611 2. DONATIONS TO THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE HENDERSON HOSPITAL, SUTTON, SURREY, TEL: 01461 1611 2. DONATIONS TO THE CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THE HENDERSON HOSPITAL, SUTTON, SURREY, TEL: 01461 1611 2.

Newcastle conference: Left searches for a 'common endeavour'

By Geoff Bell

IN WHAT was described by one participant as 'the Ascot of the left', 200 people met in Newcastle last Saturday to debate and discuss 'the Labour left and the struggle for socialism'.

The main speakers included left Labour MP Stuart Holland, former MP Audrey Wise, Duncan Hallas of the Socialist Workers Party, Alan Freeman of the International Marxist Group, and Robin Blackburn, who described himself as a 'socialist scribe' and a 'supporter of the IMG'.

The event was staged by the Newcastle Socialist Centre, and its organisers strove hard to create an atmosphere of seeking agreement rather than polemicising over differences. Many of the speakers concurred with this approach.

Unity

For Audrey Wise, 'Argument is part of building a movement, action is part of building a movement. Take these together and we will build the movement'. And for Duncan Hallas, 'Irrespective of who is right on the question of long term strategy, we do have a common interest in developing the maximum practical unity in action against the Tory offensive'. While Alan Freeman pleaded: 'Don't let them split us up.'

The expression of such sentiments did not mean that, as Hallas put it, 'the fundamental issues which divide us' were avoided. Discussion here concentrated on the capability of the Labour Party to deliver socialism.

The immediate relevance of that question was apparent in the composition of the audience. By and large it was not particularly working class. Rather, it was representative of what Freeman described as 'relatively socialist-minded people' who have



AUDREY WISE: 'The rank and file have always been on the losing end of the struggle in the Labour Party.'

been drifting towards the Labour Party since the fall of the last Labour government, essentially because they see no viable alternative.

It was such a movement which Wise in particular sought to encourage. 'I am not saying it's an easy road', she conceded, but argued that it did offer the prospect of 'class struggle within the Labour Party itself'.

For some at the conference the admission that the Labour Party had class struggle within it, rather than being a weapon of class struggle, would have justified their scepticism about throwing in their lot with Wise, Holland and company — never mind Callaghan, Healey and company. Particularly when Wise agreed that, 'There's never been a golden age in the Labour Party, there's always



CALLAGHAN: Coming under a lot of fire

been struggle and the rank and file have always been on the losing end of that struggle.'

Blanket

To such admissions, Alan Freeman replied that the strategy of the Labour left was 'if at first you don't succeed, pull a blanket over your head'.

Despite the witticisms, or maybe because of them and the fact that what point-scoring there was took place in a friendly and non-sectarian manner, there was a willingness on the part of most of those involved to listen and seriously consider each other's arguments.

Stuart Holland, in reply to far left critics of his alternative economic strategy, spelt out that for him this would involve the opening of the books of the multinationals, and the right of the shop floor to hire and fire

management. 'I want a challenge to capital which is powerful', said Holland.

But on other issues both Holland and Wise were less receptive. For instance, neither replied to Freeman's demand that, 'The Labour left launch a campaign on Ireland which will sweep the length and breadth of this country'.

Steel

The reaction of the Labour left to such calls for action — and there were others made by Hallas, Freeman and Blackburn around issues such as the steel strike, the cuts and women's rights — will to a large extent determine the attitude of many militants to that left.

Certainly debates like that in Newcastle are important, and it is good for all concerned that a real dialogue is now taking place between sections of the Labour left and the far left. It is also excellent that the desire for unity in action found a concrete expression in support from the floor for the suggestion of a Newcastle socialist alliance campaigning on different issues.

But such discussions and alliances can only go so far; they do not by themselves provide the instrument for establishing a national co-ordinated fightback against the Tory government; they do not solve the longer term question of how socialism can be established.

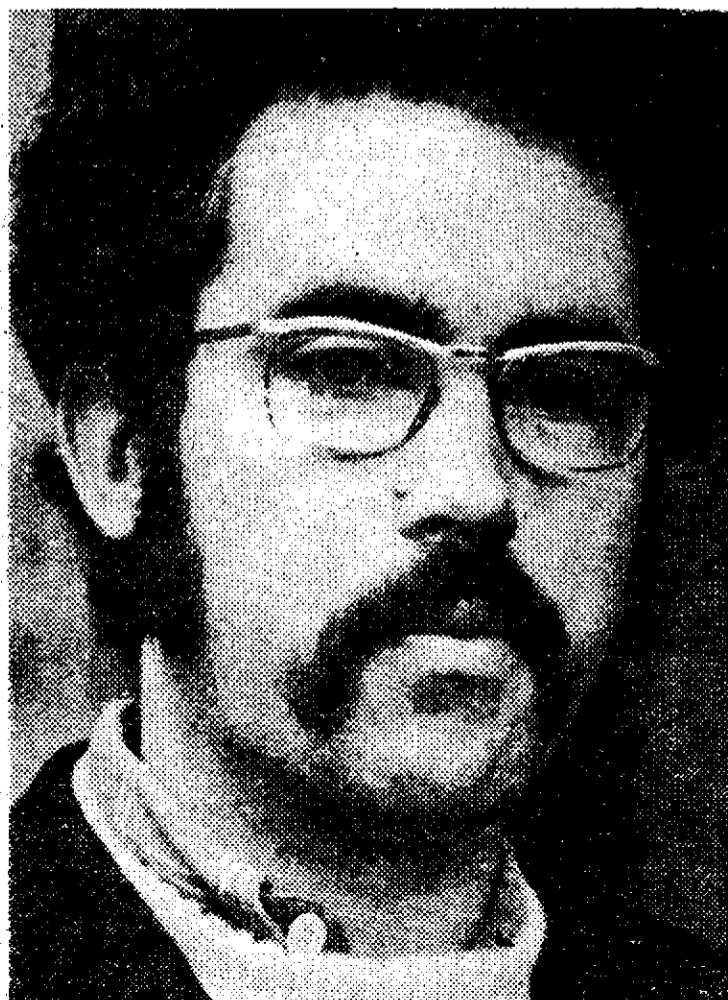
Parliament

In answer to this latter question, Audrey Wise argued that 'one arm is Parliament, one arm is workers' action' — which brought a comment afterwards that 'Parliament's arm has done nothing but strangle workers' action'.

Another solution came from Duncan Hallas — the building of 'an open revolutionary party'; while Freeman advocated the dual approach of a united revolutionary organisation seeking affiliation to the Labour Party but maintaining its own existence, and the building of left-wing currents in the Labour Party such as the Labour Coordinating Committee.

It need hardly be said that the argument will continue, particularly at the 'debate of the decade' between Benn, Holland, Wise, Paul Foot, Tariq Ali, and Hilary Wainwright in London on 17 March. But if there is to be what Blackburn called 'a common vision, a common endeavour', the most obvious place to start is on the steel picket lines.

Labour executive rejects witch-hunt call



TED HESLIN: A Transport and General Workers Union shop steward.

MEETING on Wednesday of last week in London, the Labour Party's national executive turned aside the hysterical demands of right-wing Labour MPs and Fleet Street to launch a major witch-hunt against Labour left wingers.

The NEC decided not to publish the report on 'Trotskyist infiltration' prepared in 1977 by former national agent Lord Underhill. In a second decision, it voted by 14 votes to 8 not to endorse the expulsion of Ted Heslin, former executive member of Oxford City CLP and a supporter of *Socialist Press*, paper of the Workers Socialist League. Instead Heslin's expulsion was referred back to the party's organisation committee for re-examination.

Heslin, a Transport and General Workers Union shop steward, was expelled a year ago when he proposed a motion on his general management committee calling for the removal of the right-wing party leaders. Instead his own party decided to remove him.

Last week's NEC meeting was picketed by 15 supporters from Ted's union branch and Labour Party. A leaflet handed out by the Defend Ted Heslin Campaign argued:

'The lefts say they stand against witch-hunts. They must clearly reject all attempts to use the Underhill Report to hound the Militant grouping. But the sharpest point is that where a member of the Labour Party is on the point of being expelled, Ted Heslin must be defended. His expulsion must be rejected.'

The decision to refer the expulsion to the organisation committee does not mean that the Heslin affair is now over. But both on this issue and the ruling class offensive against 'Trotskyists' in the Labour Party, the Labour left would be best advised to go on the offensive. This would involve calling for the right of affiliation of all working class organisations to the Labour Party, and the right of all such groups to organise openly within the party.

WHAT'S LEFT

ENTRIES are 5p a word; semi-display £2 a column inch. Deadline: 5pm Friday before publication. All payments in advance.

HOUSING

Cuts — crisis — fightback
National delegate conference
Saturday, 23 February, noon to 4.30pm, Central Hall, Oldham St, Manchester. Conference fee £2. For delegates from trade unions, trades councils, tenants' and community groups, women's groups, and other labour movement organisations and campaigns.
Discussion will include:
*Why housing is important to the labour movement
*Tory policies, their effects and the campaigns resisting them
*Alternative policies and demands
*Strategy for action to implement these alternatives.
Speakers will introduce discussion on:
*Links between tenants and trade union organisations
*Council allocation policies and repairs policies
*Women and housing
*Problems faced by owner-occupiers
Details and credentials from: National Housing Steering Committee, c/o SCAT, 31 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1. Tel 01-253 3627.

PUBLIC MEETING

WSL Expels Leninist Faction —
What programme for revolutionary regroupment?
Friday, 8 February, Essex Road Library, Essex Road, London N1. 7.30pm

INTERNATIONAL Contraception, Abortion and Sterilisation Campaign Information Bulletin: first issue out now. 60p incl postage, or subscribe at £1.80 for three issues. Write or phone, ICASC, c/o NAC, 374 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1. Tel 01-278 0153.

'WOMEN'S LIBERATION and the Socialist Revolution' — a day school organised by Hemel Hempstead IMG. Sat 2 Feb, Chaulden Hall, Long Chaulden, Hemel Hempstead. Starts 11am; social (bar/band/discos) starts 8pm. £1.50 for the whole day, £1 for social only.

DUDLEY Socialist Folk Night at Smiling Man. Hall Street, on 7 Feb. Irish folk band Scariaglen. Bar extension. Adm 75p. All welcome.

SPARTACIST society meeting — Birmingham, Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Thurs 31 Jan, Committee Room 1, Students Union, Birmingham University. For further details ring 021-472 7726.

MANCHESTER North-west Smash the PTA Campaign Public Meeting: 'The Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Labour Movement'. Speakers: NWSPTAC, RCT, IRSP. Star and Garter pub, Fairfield Street, Manchester (nr Piccadilly station). Time: 7.30pm, date: Thur 7 Feb 1980.

SPARTACIST Britain no. 18 just out: Afghanistan: Hail Red Army!; steel strike — general strike now!; Party Committee — the most rotten bloc; WSL expels Leninist Faction. 25p p&p or 10 issues for £1.50. Spartacist Publications, PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE.

FILM 'Divide and Rule — Never!' about racism, with music from Tom Robinson, Steel Pulse, etc. Centreprise, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8. Thur 7 Feb, 7.30pm. Adm 40p (children 20p).

FIGHT for Trotskyism in the Labour Party. Kick out the right wing! Speaker: Ted Heslin, Socialist Press supporter. Workers Socialist League public meeting. Wed 6 Feb, 7.30pm. Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1.

ABORTION: THE STRUGGLE

ON

By Jude Woodward

FOR OVER 50 years women in this country have been fighting for abortion rights. The legal and the medical situation has progressed since the early campaigners took up the slogan: 'Our bodies are our own'.

The 1967 Abortion Act represented a qualitative step forward for women, but now we face a Bill which is likely to reverse these gains. As we enter a new stage in the struggle for women's right to control their fertility it is useful to look at the history of that campaign and see what lessons it has for us today.

It was the laws passed by the Bolsheviks after the Russian revolution in 1917 that really changed the character of the fight for fertility control in Britain.

The first decrees of Soviet power stripped away centuries of prejudice. Along with the abolition of illegitimacy and the provision of divorce on demand, legislation guaranteed that 'Abortion may be performed free and unimpeded in the soviet hospitals where the maximum of safety is secured'.

Victory

Before the victory of the Bolsheviks the question of birth control in Britain was firmly associated with reactionary views about the working class. Marx polemicised vigorously against the ideas of Thomas Malthus, an 18th century clergyman and amateur economist, who said that overpopulation would eventually swamp the world's food resources — an argument still used today to justify forced sterilisation in many Third World countries.

Malthusian ideas were used to justify rigid sexual segregation in the workhouses, and were

'IF one understand by the family a compulsory union based on the marriage contract, the blessing of the church, property rights, and the single passport, then Bolshevism has destroyed this policed family from the roots up.'

Trotsky, Liberty Magazine 1933.

behind most early efforts to take birth control advice to the working class.

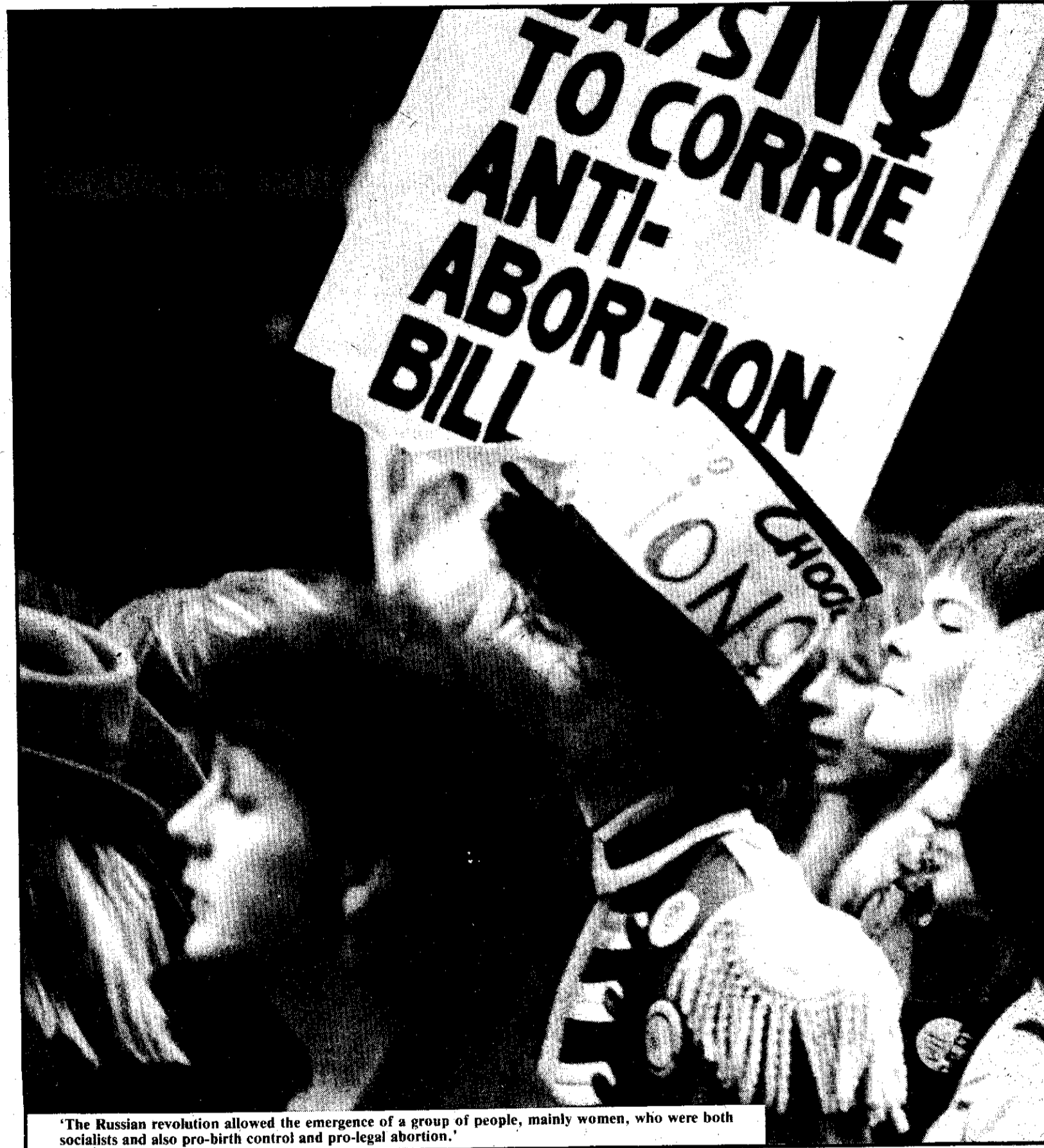
Other ideas — of genetic inequality of races and classes — combined with theories about overpopulation to produce some of the most horrific arguments in favour of birth control, similar to those Keith Joseph and Enoch Powell advance today.

When Malthusian League speakers advocated birth control in the streets of South London they were heckled by socialists. Most early socialists and communists were exceedingly doubtful about both abortion and contraception.

The Russian revolution changed things dramatically. It allowed the emergence of a group of people, mainly women, who were both socialists — members of the Labour Party, Communist Party and so on — and also pro-birth control and pro-legal abortion. They set up the *Abortion Law Reform Association* in 1936. This was the beginning of the end of a social system and a moral code.

Browne

Stella Browne was an active birth control campaigner who left the Communist Party in the 1930s. She put the other side of the issue most succinctly: 'We are out to smash compulsory sterilisation just as much as



'The Russian revolution allowed the emergence of a group of people, mainly women, who were both socialists and also pro-birth control and pro-legal abortion.'

compulsory maternity. It is for women to choose whether they will have children or not; and if so, how many, at what intervals, and with whom.'

Russell

Stella Browne, together with other early feminists, such as Dora Russell and Janet Chance, set up a campaign group to get the Labour Party to change its policy on abortion and birth control. They took the issue to Labour Party conferences in 1924, 1925 and 1926, and in the latter year they won a slim majority in favour of birth control advice at local authority clinics. The following year the position was reversed.

Finally, in 1931, concerted campaigning from Labour Party women's sections, the Co-operative movement, public health authorities, maternity and child welfare centres, the National Council of Labour Women's Guilds and other women's organisations forced the Ministry of Health to approve birth control advice in local authority clinics. Many campaigns did not start to give such advice until 1931.

Following this success, Stella Browne, Dora Russell, Frida Laski and Janet Chance set up the

Abortion Law Reform Association in 1936. The founding conference was well attended by vocal working class women.

One of them, Nurse Daniels — who had been dismissed as a health visitor in Edmonton, despite mass opposition from local working class women for giving birth control advice — intervened indignantly:

'Poor women live under the spell of fear and they are always trying to get themselves right. Working women want abortion. Why should not the poor have it? Let the poor have what the rich have already got.'

The association received thousands of letters from working class women, many of which they forwarded to the Birkett Committee on Abortion in 1937. It campaigned vigorously in every way, in the streets, through petitioning and conferences and by attempting to organise working class women until the Second World War interrupted its work.

Even during the war Stella Browne bombarded the association with demands for mass action for abortion rights. The tide was already turning against the pro-abortion campaigners.

Stalin reversed the Soviet abortion policy in 1936, releasing at the time a flood of unfavourable statistics to support the shift in

policy. This sapped the self-confidence of the working class pro-abortion movement, and

'IN my opinion, as a Feminist and a Communist, the fundamental importance and value of birth control lies in its widening of the scope of human freedom and choice, its self-determining significance for women. Birth control means freedom for women, social and sexual freedom, and that is why it is so feared and disliked in many influential corners today... (it) is the beginning of the end of a social system and a moral code.'

Stella Browne, International Women's Conference, 1927

handed a great many arguments to the other

GLGLE GOES



Catholic Church enters fight

EVERY so often the Catholic Church gives the misleading impression that it is about to change, about to start playing a more progressive role in society. The impression is always wrong.

A few weeks ago the Pope made a very controversial announcement. He said that sex between married people who are not actually planning to conceive — as long as they love each other and as long as they don't use contraception — is no longer a sin! Well, it's a start.

But last week the Catholic Church in Britain made an explicitly political and reactionary intervention into the current fight around the Corrie anti-abortion Bill. The seven British Roman Catholic Archbishops jointly declared that abortion, in all circumstances, is an 'evil' — not a light matter for the religious.

The Catholic Church has made no secret of its opposition

to abortion in the past, but this was not simply a restatement of known policy. It was timed to get the maximum publicity just before the final reading of the Corrie Bill in Parliament.

Almost as shocking as what these Archbishops actually say is the fact that the 'liberal' Guardian gave them nearly a half a page to explain their case without a word of the counter arguments.

The archbishops' statement is in fact a liberalisation of their previous position. They now say that if a pregnant woman's life is in danger doctors may approach the situation as though they had two patients. Previously the doctor had to think of only one life — that of the foetus!

In other respects the statement — Abortion and the Right to Live — just reiterates the Church's traditional, and utterly misogynist approach. If a woman is raped 'the newly-conceived child cannot rightly be made to suffer the penalty of

death for a man's violation of the woman'.

To abort a deformed foetus, say the archbishops, is to kill another human on the basis it would be 'better off dead' — a judgement we have no right to make.

Of course, it hangs on the fact that they believe life is a question of 'souls' rather than something that's socially defined. But even taking this into account it is remarkable how little the real life of the woman is considered compared to the incredible concern for the abstract and potential life of the foetus.

Clearly the Catholic Church is determined to throw its weight behind the Corrie Bill. But this Church that bans contraception, refuses to allow women to become priests, and above all continues the cult of the holy nuclear family has built up a huge debt of outstanding fury among women. They won't get away with it forever.

BAD NEWS

By Sue Watkins

THE PRESS coverage of the Catholic Archbishops' latest statement on abortion almost certainly kicks off a concerted press campaign leading up to the vote on the Corrie Bill.

We can expect the press to paint a lurid and terrifying picture of abortion: a mixture of blood, gore, horror and sex. The very idea that women sometimes have sex when they don't want to have babies will be portrayed as perverted and immoral. An unwanted pregnancy will be a shameful disgrace.

Stories

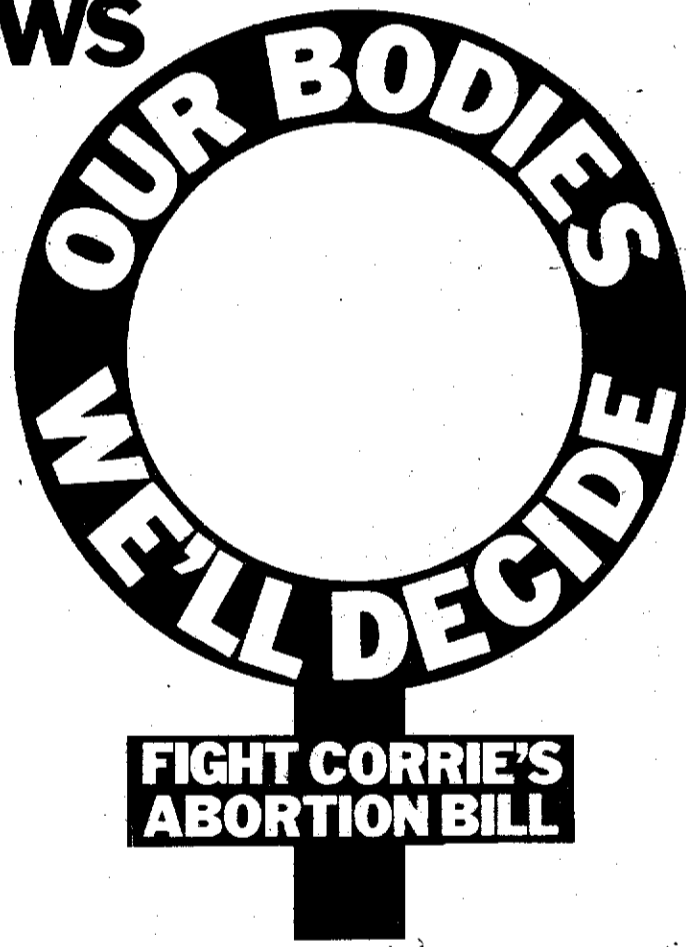
Stories about women having abortions will be dragged up from the files and given the full treatment. Whether it's young women, old women, single or married, British women or women from another country, some sexist or racist angle will be exploited.

A typical example is The Sun's shock horror revelation last week that women under 16 have abortions. Would The Sun rather they attempted to deal with unwanted pregnancies on their own, like the thirteen year old girl in Leamington who was prosecuted for taking six laxative pills and a hot bath in an attempt to end her pregnancy, and who had a miscarriage with the threat of imprisonment hanging over her?

These notions, that abortion is a furtive, squalid, dangerous affair grew up during the century when it was completely outlawed. They reveal the ideology of back street abortion: a mixture of nightmares and titillation, the gratuitous mutilation and humiliation of women.

Prop

The Daily Express you'll find the main line of the anti-abortionists' argument: the idea that legal



restrictions on abortion stop abortions happening. Statistics prove the opposite, as the findings of the Birkett Committee show. In 1935 it estimated that between 100,000 and 150,000 (completely illegal) abortions were done every year in Britain. Under the '67 Act, the total figure is around 130,000.

Lying

The anti-abortionists and their allies in the press are lying when they say abortion can be 'stamped out'; it just means stamping on women.

A favourite trick of The Guardian is to have two women describing their abortions, one glad to have done it, one remorseful and regretful. This 'fair

balance' really divides people into two camps: those who are pro-abortion and those who are anti-abortion.

whether you are pro- or anti-abortion. They avoid saying whether abortion should be the woman's decision, the doctor's or the state's. This is the trap the trade union movement has often fallen into.

The only way out of it is to say that — for women — it's our bodies, our lives and terminating or continuing a pregnancy should be established in law as our decision.

If your local paper publishes anti-abortion articles then demand the right to put the opposing point of view. Contact the NUJ chapel and ask if someone from the abortion campaign can talk to them. Use the letters page. But if all else fails, then there's always direct action. The London Evening Standard did give space to the point of view of women who are lesbian.

side.

After the Second World War, ALRA had become little more than a group of liberal lobbyists with their eyes fixed on Parliament. There was no more talk of mass action or street campaigning. ALRA did play a role in fighting in the lobbies for the 1967 Abortion Act, which only Dora Russell of the association's early feminist founders lived to see.

For those early abortion campaigners, as for us now, the issue of women's right to control their fertility was a direct challenge to the medical profession, the Church, and to the state. It was not simply a question of righting an injustice, but concerned the liberation of women, an outright assault on puritanical 'morality', and the liberation of sexual relations.

Pleasure

Stella Browne argued openly in favour of sexual pleasure, despite the prevailing atmosphere of hypocrisy and taboo. 'What is this ban on pleasure asked. It is a sexual taboo; it is a demand that women should experiment freely, without punishment.'

These were the pro-abortion

movement in this country, and the many working class women that they organised, have much to teach us now.

Obstinacy

As the pro-abortion movement faces the possibility of a serious reverse we should remember the obstinacy of those early campaigners. They faced social ostracism, the loss of custody of their children, sackings, and the prospect of a long fight against not only the establishment but the labour movement itself. But they were determined to keep on fighting.

We have come a long way since then. We have begun to win the fight in the labour movement there are fewer obstacles in our path. We must learn their lessons and insist that abortion is an issue for the whole working class, and that mass action is the only way to win.

acknowledgements for information to Dave Widgey in International Women's Day/July/August 1975 and the Women's Rights Campaign paper 'A Woman's Struggle in the East'.

Why we defend the Soviet Union

Against imperialist war threats

By Dave Packer

LAST WEEK President Carter warned that any Soviet attempt to use Afghanistan as a springboard for seizing control of the oil-rich Persian Gulf region would be 'repelled by use of any means necessary, including military force'. This tough language was followed by an announcement that he was ordering registration of men aged 18 to 26 for call-up should he decide to reimpose the military draft.

This escalation of war threats against the Soviet Union (faithfully reflected by Thatcher & Co.) represents at the very least an ideological preparation for Cold War. It poses vital questions for every socialist: in particular, our attitude towards the USSR itself and its defence.

Many workers, despite a natural suspicion of Carter's sabre-rattling, will ask how it is possible to oppose these moves and defend the Soviet Union when the latter tramples on the democratic rights not only of the masses in the USSR but also of those in independent countries (to the extent of using brute military force).

Defend

We have argued that it is necessary to defend the Soviet state unconditionally against imperialist war threats despite the bureaucratic actions of its totalitarian regime in Afghanistan and elsewhere. This may seem contradictory; but in fact the nature of the Soviet Union itself is contradictory.

The Russian revolution in 1917 drew a sharp line in the labour movement between those who identified with this revolutionary establishment of workers' power and those who counterposed a perspective of class-collaboration with the capitalists. Subsequently, however, the issue has been confused by the rise of Stalinist totalitarianism and the liquidation of workers' democracy.

In his long struggle against the ascendancy of Stalin's regime, Leon Trotsky many times defended the class nature of the Soviet state established by the Russian revolution

(its social basis, the state property relations and planned economy) despite the bureaucratic degeneration that was taking place. One of his last political struggles before he was struck down by Stalin's assassin was on this question (see quotation printed here).

We defend the Soviet Union unconditionally in the sense that we defend *these* gains. We defend it as a workers state and those things within it which correspond to a workers state.

This is not conditional on the actions of the bureaucratic elite who have usurped political power from the working class. Here lies the essentially contradictory nature of the Soviet Union. Stalin, the main representative of the ascendant bureaucracy, was able to transform the Red Army from the armed expression of the revolutionary proletariat to an instrument in the hands of this bureaucracy.

Clearly it is out of the question to support all the actions of such a 'Red Army'. Its character is graphically illustrated by the gold braid, epaulettes and numerous medals that weigh down its generals. The foreign policy

The points marked are US military bases

of the Soviet bureaucracy, in line with its internal policy, is entirely concerned with the preservation of its narrow material interests and privileges. Conservatism and defence of the status quo are the hallmarks of all bureaucratic elites.

Detente

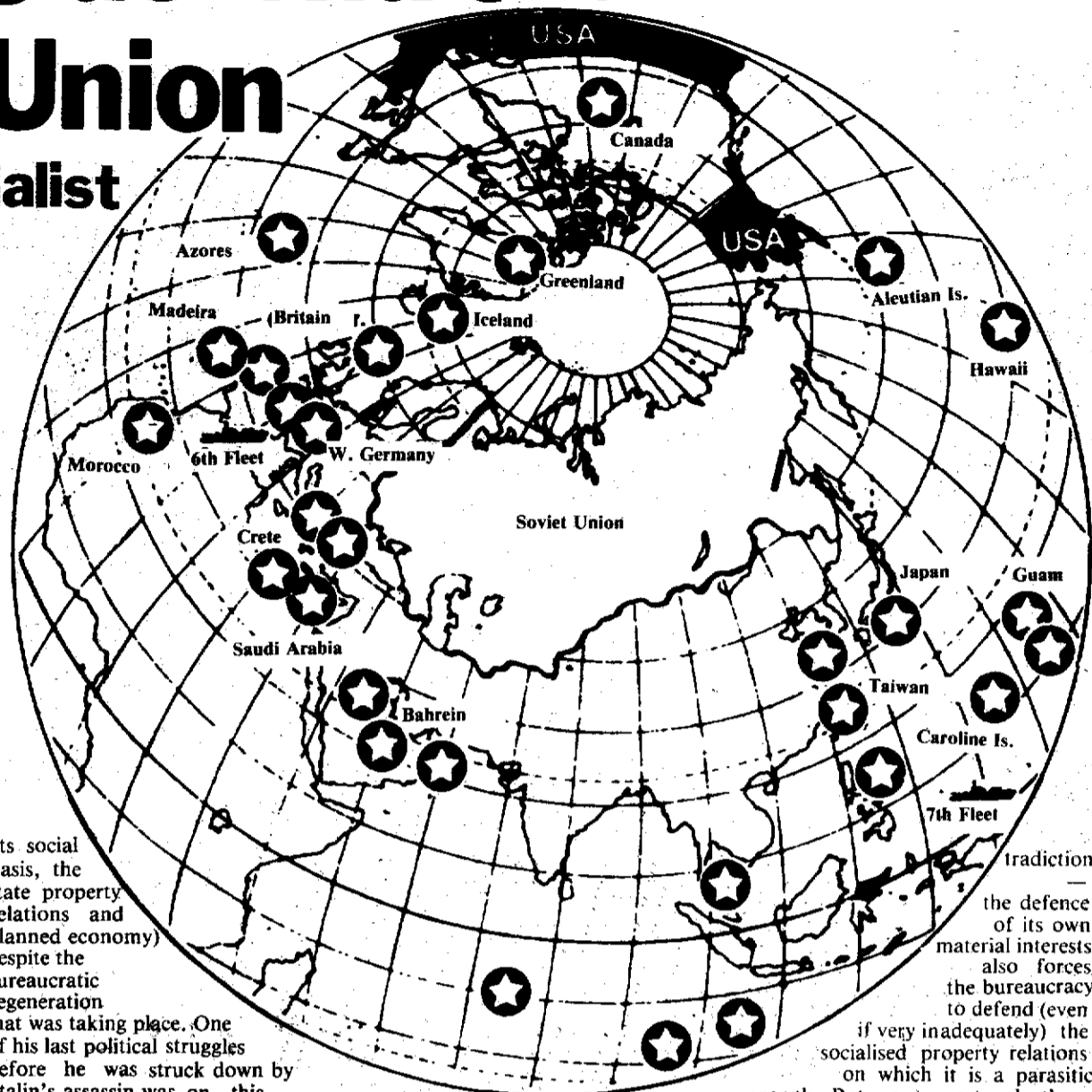
The Kremlin policy of peaceful co-existence with imperialism (détente) is directly counterposed to the policy of revolutionary internationalism. It subordinates the international class struggle to the national interests of the bureaucracy. The outcome of the Spanish revolution and civil war was a tragic confirmation of its counter-revolutionary character.

However — and this is the con-

tradition — the defence of its own material interests also forces the bureaucracy to defend (even if very inadequately) the socialised property relations on which it is a parasitic growth. But we support only those actions which defend these gains; there is no question of giving political support to the bureaucracy as a whole.

It is for this reason that we also defend the right of the workers states to arm themselves against the war threats of imperialism. We defend the formation of military alliances to this end while utterly opposing all imperialist military blocs such as NATO.

But in the final analysis the defence of the gains of the Russian revolution effectively rests on the shoulders of the international workers movement. Only through an unyielding revolutionary and anti-imperialist policy, incorporating a perspective of ruthless struggle against the bureaucracy of the workers states by the workers, peasants and rank and file soldiers within these states, will Stalinist totalitarianism be finally removed from our movement.



CAMPAIGN NEWS



By Barry Wilkins

LAST Saturday Cardiff Abortion Campaign held a conference attended by about 60 feminists, socialists and trade unionists from Cardiff, Newport and the South Wales valleys.

The conference had two purposes — to discuss how to take forward the struggle for abortion rights and to mobilise support for the mass lobby of Parliament on 5 February and the women's assembly on 8 February.

The campaign had asked the Wales TUC to sponsor the conference but met with refusal. Derek Gregory, a NUPE full-timer who represented the Wales TUC at the conference, defended this on the grounds that it could not sponsor anything without having organisational control!

Ros Olivier, NUT delegate to Cardiff trades council, spoke on behalf of the Cardiff Abortion Campaign. She argued that the struggle for abortion rights is not just a woman's issue but also a class issue and that the attack on abortion rights is a part of the overall Tory offensive against the working class.

In the final report-back people were urged to intensify their campaigning against the Corrie Bill over the crucial next three weeks. Transport is being arranged for both the mass lobby of Parliament and for the women's assembly. For details phone Cardiff 43470.



300 people marched through East London against the Corrie Bill last Saturday

GLASGOW march against Corrie sponsored by the Scottish TUC on 2 February. Assemble: Blythswood Sq, 11am. Move off at 11.30am to Custom House Quay, for rally. Speakers: Chris Aldrid (National Abortion Campaign); Tess Gill (TUC); Mary Harrison (Chair).



From left to right: Grechko, Podgorny, Brezhnev, Kosygin, Suslov.

Trotsky — no let-up in struggle against the bureaucracy

'MISTAKES on the question of defence of the USSR most frequently flow from an incorrect understanding of the methods of "defence". Defence of the USSR does not at all mean rapprochement with the Kremlin bureaucracy, the acceptance of its politics, or a conciliation with the politics of her allies. In this question, as in all others, we remain completely on the ground of the international class struggle...

'We must formulate our slogans in such a way that workers see clearly just what we are defending in the USSR (state property and planned economy),

and against whom we are conducting a ruthless struggle (the parasitic bureaucracy and its Comintern). We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the USSR is subordinate to us to the question of the world proletarian revolution.'

(Leon Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism*, 1939)

Sakharov removed from the limelight

AMID intriguing Izvestia suggestions that Dr. Andrej Sakharov is an American Mole, the creator of Moscow's nuclear bomb was forcibly removed from Moscow to Gorki last week. The party leadership wanted to ensure that its only world famous domestic opponent will be out of range of foreign TV cameras during the Olympic Games.

Dr. Sakharov, who was taken from his chauffeur-driven car while on his way to the Academy of Sciences, will suffer little material hardship by being removed to a new flat in Gorki. And he has not been expelled from the Academy of Sciences.

His removal without trial was illegal — a trial was obviously felt to be too costly — but it was a very different action from the sentences of exile to Siberia being meted out to lesser known political figures. Rather, it is in direct line with the old Tsarist practice of banning dissident members of leading families from the capital, extraordinarily

mild compared with the other things that the KGB has on offer.

Timed so that it would compete with Afghan headlines in the Western press, the action against Sakharov succeeded in torpedoing the Kremlin's single diplomatic triumph since Christmas — the friendly visit to Moscow of France's third-in-rank political leader, Chaban-Delmas.

Moscow overlooked the fact that while the Gaullists are unashamed backers of national realpolitik in foreign policy, the French bourgeoisie is firmly committed to trying to use human rights demagoguery against its domestic labour movement. Chaban-Delmas had to retreat to Paris the day after he had arrived in Moscow, with the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister in panic-stricken attendance on the same plane.

Meanwhile the French desk in the Soviet foreign office must be wondering whether one of those who decided the timing of Dr. Sakharov's removal might not be the American Mole!



SAKHAROV — removed from Moscow to Gorki

Pre-Olympic drive to round up dissidents

By Helen Jamieson

THE forcible removal of Dr. Sakharov decisively proves what Soviet oppositionists have been saying for months — that the Soviet leadership is centrally concerned to prevent any contact between domestic critics and foreigners during the Olympic Games. This is the only possible explanation for the decision to remove Sakharov to Gorki, an otherwise quite pointless exercise in gaining bad publicity.

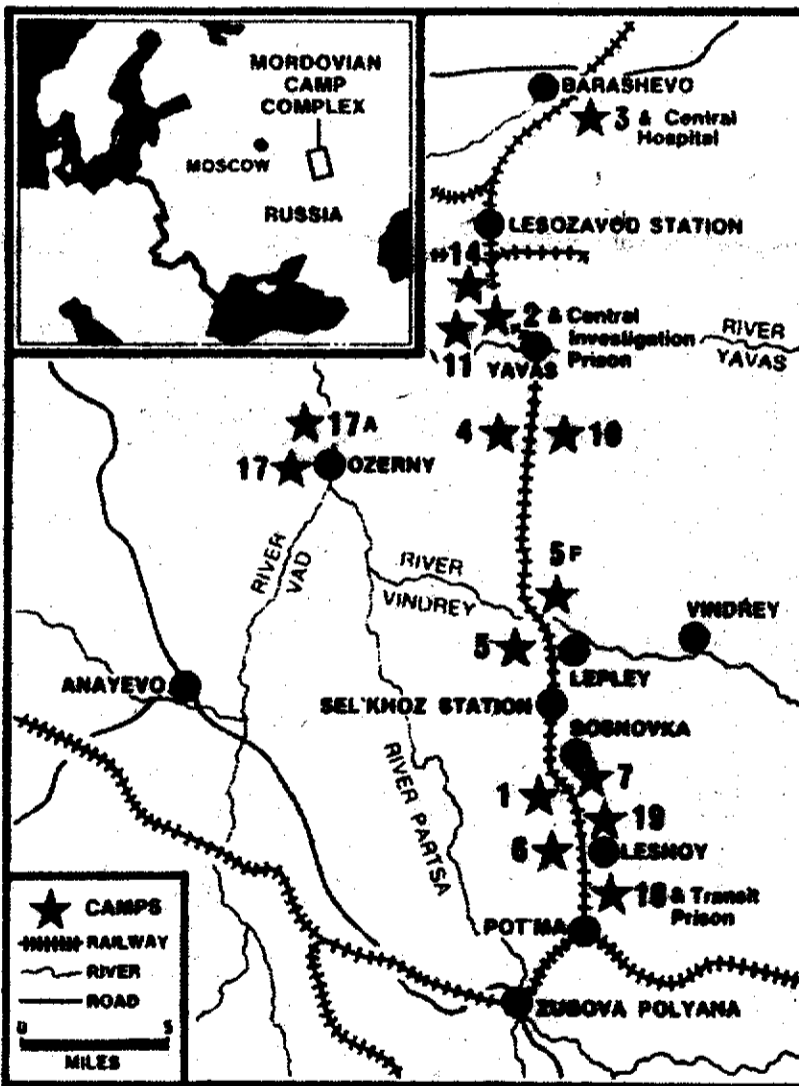
This latest action is part of a general sweep against critics which is wider than anything since the beginning of the 1970s. The drive has involved the arrest and sentencing of members of the various Helsinki monitoring groups, especially those in the Ukrainian group; of trade union activists, religious groups, national oppositions in Lithuania, Ukraine and among the Crimean Tatars; of young leftist groups and feminists in Leningrad; of samizdat journals including the *Chronicle of Current Events* and *Poiski* (Searches). Psychiatric repression has continued to be used.

Detente

The last wide sweep between 1970 and 1972 — when 200 people were arrested in the Ukraine — had been connected to the opening of Brezhnev's new detente policy. It was designed to show that detente would not mean any domestic political relaxation, and to prevent the opposition currents from attracting wider influence in the new international atmosphere that was emerging at that time. Many activists were sentenced to between 12 and 15 years in prison and exile.

A new form of protest emerged in 1976 with the formation of Helsinki monitoring groups in Russia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia. These groups worked together to try to expose Soviet violations of their own voluntary commitments at the 1975 Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation.

Partly in response to Carter's human rights demagoguery, and partly because the monitoring groups gained significant support from ethnic minorities and religious groups, the Soviet leadership rounded up the movement's main leaders in 1977 — including Orlov, Shcharansky, Ginsburg and Rudenko. Their heavy sentences were designed to isolate the movement totally from domestic support, and were accompanied by at-



Treatment of Sakharov was mild compared with other things the KGB has on offer

tempts to crush the monitoring groups outside Moscow altogether.

The Georgian group was effectively silenced, but the Ukrainian group responded to each new wave of arrests with new members, and along with the others continued to produce new documents. More significantly, a wide range of hitherto unheard of currents came to the surface throughout the European region of the Soviet Union.

In particular two trade union groups appeared. Vladimir Klebanov's Free Trade Union Association, formed early in 1978, was quickly and brutally crushed; but a second group, the Inter-Professional Trade Union Association (SMOT), has survived despite repression since it appeared in November 1978.

A Moscow-based group monitoring psychiatric repression continues

to operate despite the exile of its founder, Alexander Podrabinek. A movement of invalids demanding their social rights has appeared. And a Left Opposition youth group whose leaders were imprisoned or sent to psychiatric hospitals in spring of last year was shown to have had wide support by a protest demonstration involving some 200 students in Leningrad. The group's documents also showed that they were in touch with other leftist groups in some half a dozen cities.

In the summer of 1978 a new literary review called *Poiski* was founded in Moscow, involving a wide range of political views from Marxist to liberal democratic. Among those involved were an Old Bolshevik, Raissa Lert, and the very eminent Marxist historian Mikhail Ghefter. Another literary project, *Metropol*, appeared with the support of some of

Russia's most popular official writers.

Most recently, a feminist journal started to appear in Leningrad at the end of last year (two articles from the first issue will appear in the next issue of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*).

All these activities were matched by continuing ferment in the national republics and amongst religious groups. In Georgia at least 5,000 people demonstrated in defence of their national rights against changes in their constitution in spring 1978, and samizdat activity has been particularly strong in Lithuania. The struggle of the Crimean Tatars to be able to return to their homeland has also been very vigorous during the last two years.

Savage

But the KGB has been hard at work on a search and destroy operation against all these movements during the last few months. It has been savage towards the trade unionists and the Left Opposition group, using psychiatric repression in both cases.

Metropol has been closed down and contributors to it have been expelled from the Writers' Union. The entire editorial board of *Poiski* has been threatened with arrest, and two members are already in jail awaiting trial.

Leading Lithuanian and Tatar activists have been given heavy jail sentences, and since summer 1979 no fewer than nine members of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group have been arrested. Of the five already sentenced, Oles Berdnyk, a former member of the Writers' Union, was given a total of nine years of jail and exile. Another Ukrainian activist, Yuri Badzyo, a former headmaster and party member, was jailed last year for seven years followed by five years' exile. More of the 30 current members of the Ukrainian Helsinki group are certain to be arrested in the near future.

Editor

In Moscow, Tatyana Velikanova, the editor since 1974 of the *Chronicle of Current Events*, was arrested last October. Moscow Helsinki Group member Malva Landa has been charged with anti-Soviet agitation, and a number of leading dissident Orthodox Christians including Father Gleb Yakunin have been arrested.

This month three members of the Revolutionary League of Communards have been sentenced to between one and three years in jail, and the editors of the new feminist jour-

nal *Women and Russia* have been threatened with jail if they produce a second issue.

One perhaps significant twist in this course of events has been the decision of the Soviet Supreme Court to annul a three-year jail sentence on Edward Kuleshov, a worker in an engineering factory making combine harvesters in the Donbas region of the eastern Ukraine (see 'Headaches for the Prosecution' in *Labour Focus*



GINSBURG — arrested in 1977

Vol. 3, No. 4 on the fabricated KGB evidence in Kuleshov's case). This unprecedented Supreme Court decision suggests that the Soviet leadership may be wishing to make a propaganda gesture towards trade union opinion in the capitalist world.

Support

This could be a symptom of stronger Soviet interest in gaining working class support in the West in conditions where its efforts at collaboration with the imperialist bourgeoisie are breaking down. If so, it makes working class support for victims of repression in the USSR all the more important.

The Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign decided at its last meeting to raise within the labour movement cases of repression of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group members and of the *Poiski* editors. For further information contact: EESC, c/o Vladimir Derer, 10 Park Drive, London NW11.

IRELAND

General strike shuts down South of Ireland

By Tom Marlowe

THE LARGEST general strike in the history of the Southern Irish state took place on Tuesday 22 January. In a half-day stoppage called by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, an estimated 700,000 people took part in a series of demonstrations throughout the 26 Counties. Approximately 400,000 joined the Dublin march.

The strike was over the unequal taxation system which operates in the Southern Irish state. This works in such a way that 87 per cent of all income tax collected is paid by industrial and service sector workers — about 700,000 workers in all. Farmers — and there are 170,000 in

the South of Ireland — contribute only one per cent of the total income tax.

But it is not only farmers who have benefited from the Irish taxation system. Taxes on the richest five per cent, who own 71 per cent of all wealth, have either been dropped or massively cut in the last few years. A wealth tax has been abolished and corporation tax will be reduced from 45 per cent to 10 per cent next year.

In all, taxes on capital yield only one per cent of the total raised by income tax. Among the victims of the taxation system are married women, who pay a disproportionately greater amount of their income to the Irish exchequer than do single people.

What all this adds up to is that while industrial and public sector workers work one day in five for the Irish revenue commissioners, the self-employed and larger farmers

contribute less than one day a month, and those in the higher levels of business put in about one day a year.

Reports in the British media have tended to portray the arguments about the Irish taxation system as a conflict between industrial workers and farmers. In fact, as speakers at last week's demonstrations made clear, the general strike was against the whole system which demands that Irish industrial workers pay for all the rest. As Ruaidhri Roberts, general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, said: 'The whole burden of taxation has been shifted not towards those best able to pay, but away from them and onto the worker.'

While the Irish Fianna Fail government, under the new leadership of millionaire Charlie Haughey, has promised to look into reforming the taxation system, it also wants to do a Margaret Thatcher and impose severe cuts in public spending. Roberts made it clear that the

Irish unions are also opposed to this:

'We are not seeking cuts in overall taxation, we are not seeking and are opposed to reductions in public expenditure. We recognise the need to maintain the level of government spending on education, on housing, on social welfare and on the creation of employment opportunities. We do not wish to see a diminution in that expenditure and we are in no way seeking a deflationary Tory policy.'

But whether such a deflationary policy is followed by the Irish government depends on what follows last week's general strike. Certainly the militancy of Irish workers can hardly be questioned. 1979 saw more days lost through strikes than in any other year since the establishment of the Southern Irish state. The message to the Irish government was summed up by one placard on the Dublin demonstration — 'Tax the greedy, not the needy'.

NF 'smash IRA' march for Glasgow

By George Kerevan

THE National Front is to hold a march and rally in Glasgow on 15 March under the banner 'Smash the IRA'. This is in response to the successful (U)TOM demonstration last April which attracted over a thousand people. The Troops Out Movement in Scotland is calling for the labour movement to organise a massive protest to stop the NF marching.

West of Scotland NF organiser Raymond Skinner claims the march was prompted by calls from 'Ulster Loyalists in Glasgow'. The latter have been outraged by TOM demonstrations in Glasgow and Dundee over the past eighteen months, but the fact that they have had to go to the NF to organise a counter-demo is revealing of their weakness.

Orange lunatics

In April, despite two weeks when the TOM march was prominent in the Scottish media, the Loyalists could muster only a few hundred counter-demonstrators who shuffled along throwing the odd beer can. The Front's links with the Orange lunatic fringe stem from their attempt to make up for the scant appeal of their rabid English nationalism north of the border.

John Tyndall is the scheduled speaker at the rally, though this was announced prior to his resignation as NF führer. Tyndall's father was an Ulster Protestant. The rally has still to get police permission. The leader of Glasgow's Labour administration, Jean McFadden, says 'the Labour group would not want to see the National Front marching through Glasgow's streets'.

But it is not only the NF who are



The demonstration in Glasgow last April which attracted over a thousand people.

worried about the TOM. Interest in Scottish TOM has also been shown by the British army, who have been investigating a recent speaking tour. In the week 13-21 January, a highly successful series of meetings was organised by TOM in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Stirling and

Aberdeen to publicise the Birmingham Bloody Sunday commemoration march. These meetings were addressed by Lloyd Hayes, an ex-soldier who served two tours in Northern Ireland. Hayes also spoke to kids in a local school.

Later an army representative

repeatedly called the school seeking Lloyd's name and address. They gave no explanation as to why they wanted the information. This says little for army intelligence: Lloyd had actually debated the army's role in Ireland in front of the kids with a sergeant major.

Ireland 'single biggest issue' — Benn

By Geoff Bell

TONY BENN said last week that the North of Ireland was 'the single biggest domestic issue in the United Kingdom', and that 'what is needed now in Britain is a real debate about the situation in Northern Ireland'. Benn made the remarks during an interview on Irish radio, although his comments have gone unreported in the British press.

As to his own views, Benn was suitably contradictory. He said that he believed the partition of Ireland in 1921 was 'wrong ... I think you cannot look at this without a very broad historical sweep and recognise that attempts to solve the problem in London have never been successful'. But then he added: 'On the other hand there is the anxiety, which I do feel myself, that if you move precipitately to solve it by a withdrawal of troops, which is the argument put forward by some people, that this might lead into a situation so terrible that it would not represent a move towards a solution.'

So for the moment Benn has adopted the position on Ireland most favoured by the Labour left — in favour of British withdrawal and reunification in principle, but against it in practice. Nevertheless, his call for a 'real debate' can only be welcomed; especially as Benn himself has shown some reluctance in the past to be drawn on the issue. For example, in his book *Arguments for Socialism*, Benn mentions Ireland ... not once.

Over 300 people attended Lloyd's meetings, which were also addressed by Harry McShane, a veteran socialist who told of campaigning for 'troops out' with John Maclean in 1920. The Edinburgh meeting was to have been chaired by the Labour MP for Leith, Ron Brown, who sent his apologies when at the last minute he had to attend the steel debate at Westminster.

* One MP missing from that debate was Tam Dalyell, who was sent up north the same evening to speak to members of Edinburgh Central Labour Party. TOM members in Edinburgh Central had taken part in the heckling of Callaghan during a general election rally. But a right-wing attempt to purge the hecklers back-fired when the local party voted to adopt a troops out position.

Dalyell was sent in as part of an attempt to persuade Edinburgh Central to 'cool it'. But by the end of the meeting Dalyell was also calling for troops out. He even took back with him copies of a report prepared by the original hecklers to explain their positions, saying that he would show them around the Shadow Cabinet.

NEXT WEEK:

Gerry Foley, American journalist and author of several publications on Ireland, reports on the Provisional Sinn Fein conference held recently in Dublin.



IN THE slums of Port Louis, the capital of Mauritius, 434 families from Diego Garcia have been living in poverty-stricken exile for the last ten years. Many of their shacks are made from no more than beaten tin cans. They are the human price for the imperialist war machine that is being put together in the Indian Ocean; a problem that the Thatcher government is now trying to sweep under the carpet.

Diego Garcia, and the other islands which make up the Chagos Archipelago, were historically attached to Mauritius, a British colony from 1814. But in the 1960s there were growing demands for Mauritian independence. How was Britain to retain control of the vital shipping routes?

Bribery was the answer. In return for 40 million rupees the Mauritian government abandoned all claim to Diego Garcia. The inhabitants were not consulted as the islands of the Chagos Archipelago were lumped in with other far-flung islands to form the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT).

Indifference

Two years later, on 25 April 1967, the US and Britain concluded a 50-year agreement to use the BIOT islands jointly for defence purposes. There was still the problem of the people living there. But who cared about them?

In 1970, when the decision to establish a naval communications base on Diego Garcia

Invasion victims no one cares about

By Martin Meteyard

The exiles of Diego Garcia

was announced, the American administration told Congress that the island was 'uninhabited'. It was the truth — but not the whole truth. Over the previous two years some 1,200 people, making up 434 families, had been forcibly evacuated in the face of general international indifference.

The islanders found themselves dumped in the Port Louis slums, a different world for which they were totally unprepared. In compensation the British government came up with the grand sum of £665,000, which was handed over to the Mauritian government to finance a rehousing scheme. And not a penny of this money found its way into the islanders' hands until 1978, by which time it was worth

much less.

The inhabitants of Diego Garcia were effectively left to their fate. But they didn't give up. Of the 434 families, 422 signed a petition to the British and American governments demanding that they be repatriated to Diego Garcia. Public meetings were held, and the issue was taken up by the left-wing opposition party, the Mauritius Militant Movement (MMM). The Diego Garcians threatened to become a public embarrassment to both imperialism and the Mauritian government.

Enter a London barrister named Bernard Sheridan, bearing a new British offer of no less than £1¼m (about £1,000 per person). There

was just one little snag. In order to get hold of the money, the islanders had to sign a paper declaring that 'we abandon all titles and rights which would permit a return to the British Indian Ocean Territory'.

Initially the islanders' response was favourable. Most of them are illiterate, and all they knew was that somebody wanted to give them some money. But fortunately they were not without friends.

A Port Louis docker, Michel Gerard Nina, made it his business to find out what was going on and then began to contact all the Diego Garcians to tell them: 'Don't sign anything. You have to talk it over with the MMM and the government and keep the newspapers informed.'

The British-sponsored secret deal was blown. Now a general meeting of the islanders has voted not to accept any strings on the compensation offered, and steps are being taken to invalidate documents already signed in which they gave up the right to return to their homeland.

The moral of this little tale: that Carter and Thatcher's military build-up in the Indian Ocean has nothing to do with anyone's 'self-determination'. So next time some Tory collars you with a lecture about the threat to the 'free world', ask them when they intend to dismantle the military bases on Diego Garcia and hand the islands back to their inhabitants. The reply should be interesting.

How Britain is breaking the Lancaster House agreement

By Richard Carver

LORDS Soames and Carrington are British gentlemen of the old school. They will shake your hand, declare that their word is their bond, and appear mortally offended at any suggestion that they are less than trustworthy. Yet this is how they have kept their word over the Lancaster House agreement. Since 17 December the two Lords have:

- * authorised the presence of South African troops in Zimbabwe;
- * refused to prosecute oil companies who supplied the 'illegal' Smith regime;
- * refused to confine the white Rhodesian troops to their designated areas and even ordered them into action against the Patriotic Front;
- * given similar freedom of action to the 'auxiliaries' loyal to Bishop Muzorewa;
- * refused to ground the Rhodesian air force;
- * given Muzorewa a head start in the election by only belatedly legalising the Patriotic Front parties and doing everything possible to delay the return of ZANU leader Robert Mugabe.

Guards

All but the second and last of these are explicit violations of the Lancaster House accords.

Most publicity has been given to the presence of an 'officially' estimated 250 South Africans 'guarding' Beit Bridge. They are deployed up to seven miles inside the country and are equipped with artillery. It is less well known that the British have refused to publish the section of the Lancaster House agreement in which it was agreed that there would be no foreign involvement, including by South Africa.

The Supplement to Annex E is not included in the White Paper recording the talks, despite the fact that it was only the British commitment on the South African troops issue which induced the Patriotic Front to sign the agreement.

Foreign Office officials insist that Lord Carrington's commitment to the principle of non-intervention is still valid — an instructive example of what an English gentleman's word is actually worth.

Whitehall is evidently stricken by collective amnesia. As well as forgetting the Supplement to Annex E, the government mysteriously omitted to notify MPs of the publication of the third annex to the Bingham Report on oil sanctions-busting.

Unfair

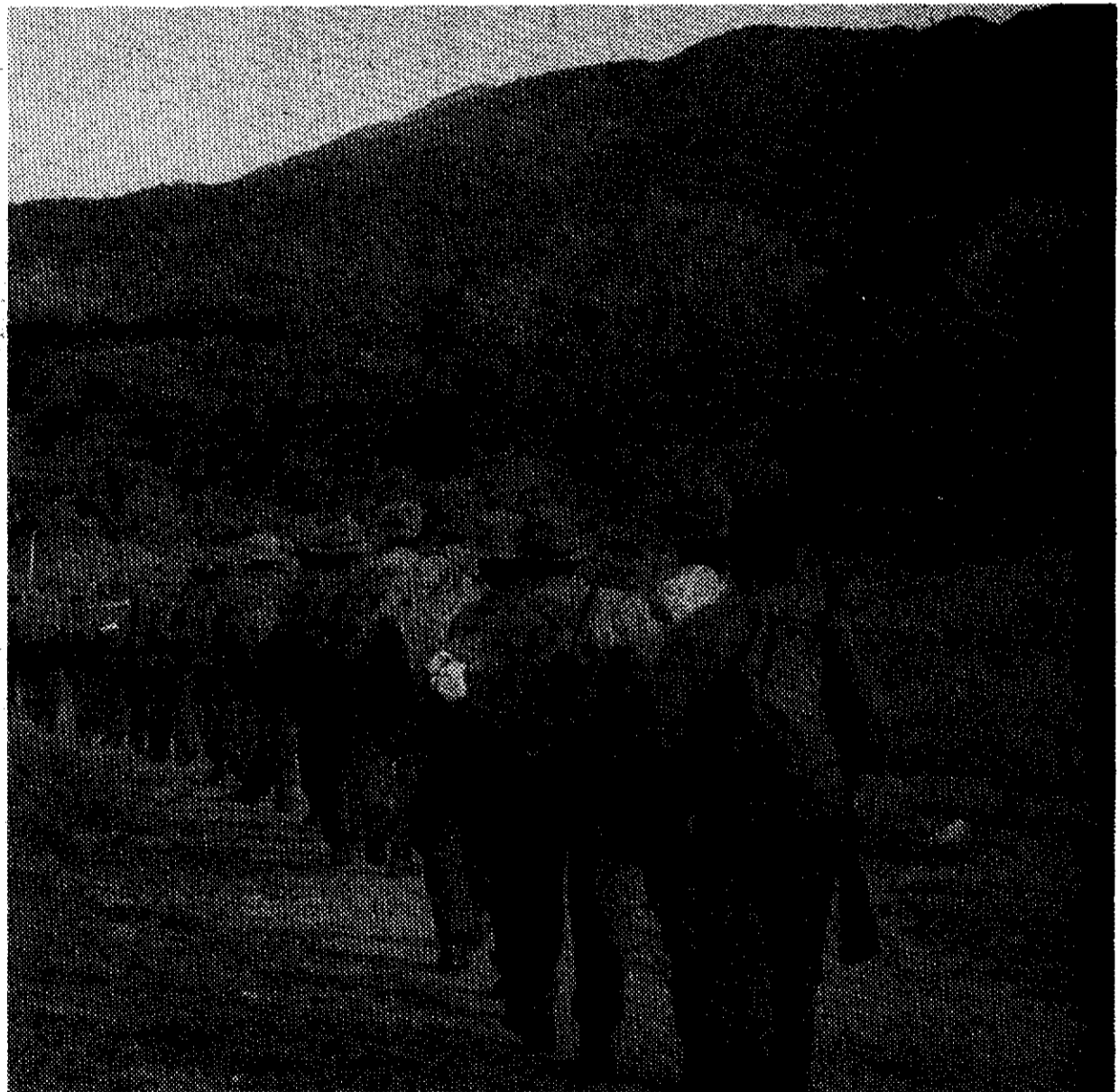
The government dismisses suggestions that this had something to do with the annex's title, 'Evidence of Criminal Offences', and the fact that its semi-secret publication coincided with the Attorney General's announcement that there would be no criminal prosecutions as a result of the report.

Although it is now public knowledge that the Rhodesian army is operating at will inside the country, with or without Lord Soames' instructions, less publicity has been given to what was laid down in the original agreement. This said that units of the security forces should be restricted to within four kilometres of their bases.

This is grossly unfair, since the Patriotic Front is cooped up in assembly areas under the eye of the British — but obviously not unfair enough for the white Rhodesians. It is difficult to estimate the extent of the casualties caused by the security forces, since the Patriotic Front leaders are anxious not to rock the boat, but there have been at least two incidents in which half a dozen or more people have died, and possibly dozens with one or two casualties.

Grounded

The supposedly 'grounded' Rhodesian air force was only 15 minutes away from being sent into action against 450 guerillas on 7 January. Soames only refrained



because the group laid down their arms.

The 'auxiliaries' are meant to abide by the same rules as the army, of which they are technically part. In fact they are a private gang owing allegiance only to Muzorewa, and they have if anything even greater freedom of movement. There have been numerous reports of auxiliary rampages and beatings of people who fail to produce the correct party card. They often pose as Patriotic Front supporters in order to detect ZANU and ZAPU supporters.

The British refusal to clamp down on the auxiliaries is part of a larger concern that Muzorewa, the trusted servant of the whites, should win the election. To that end the same civil service and police apparatus which ensured his victory in the internal settlement elections last April will be wheeled out for a repeat performance on 27-29 February.

This, unfortunately, is not a violation of Lancaster House but is

fully in line with what the Patriotic Front leaders agreed. One of them, Joshua Nkomo, is already trying to play down the security forces' atrocities in order to win British favours. He may well come in handy if Muzorewa's standing among the voters drops much further.

The British presence in Zimbabwe is thus not neutral. A neutral Governor would have thrown his British troops against the South Africans at Beit Bridge. Not only did Soames not do this, but he wouldn't be prepared to do it in a million years.

The question does not really even revolve around British intentions — though 90 years as the colonial power has shown only too clearly what they are likely to be. It concerns the incapacity of the British state ever to do anything to benefit the African masses of Zimbabwe.

That is why the idea that more British troops or more Whitehall civil servants would solve everything is

misplaced. Only if the British presence is reduced — to nothing! — can the people of Zimbabwe decide their own future.

Intercontinental Press

AFGHANISTAN'S long struggle against imperialist intervention is explained by Ernest Harsch in an article in the latest issue of the weekly *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* (Vol 18, No 3). Other features examine the growth of the US nuclear arsenal in Europe, the performance of the left in the Portuguese elections, the repression in Colombia, and the fight for the 30-hour week in Sweden. Individual copies cost 30p plus 10p p&p, but subscriptions work out much cheaper at £11 for one year (48 issues), £6 for six months (24 issues), or £3 for 10 weeks. Please make cheques/POs out to 'Intercontinental Press' and send to: IP/1, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Afghanistan — not a new issue

THE INVASION of Afghanistan by Soviet troops has raised once again the issue of whether there is ever any justification for the Red Army to intervene in the internal affairs of another country. The issue is not new.

It arose in 1920 when the Red Army marched on Warsaw. Up till then it had been, as Deutscher puts it, 'a canon of Marxist politics that revolution cannot and must not be carried on the points of bayonets into foreign countries'. Trotsky resolutely opposed the Polish venture; Lenin, who had hoped that the advance of the Red Army would act as a catalyst for the Polish workers, subsequently admitted his error (Klara Zetkin: *Reminiscence of Lenin*). For the same reasons, Trotsky opposed the Red Army's invasion of Menshevik-ruled Georgia in 1921, though Georgia was even more of a hot bed of imperialist intrigues than Afghanistan today, where, effectively, Moscow has been the dominating influence since 1968.

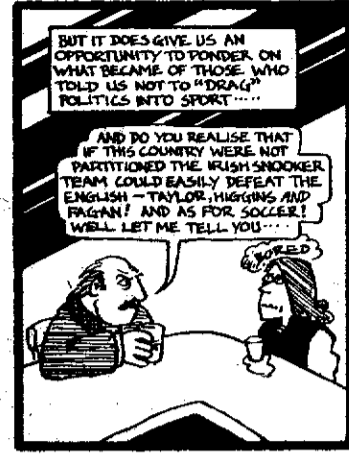
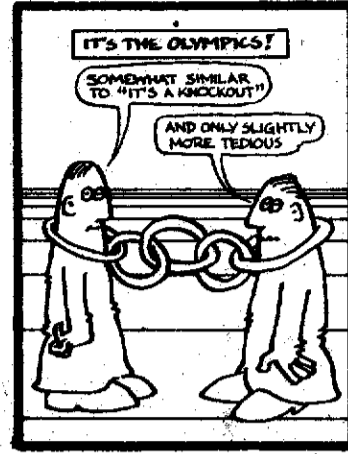
To come a little nearer to the present day — in his interview with a correspondent of the *St Louis Post Dispatch* (March 1940) Trotsky was asked if he, as former head of the Red Armies, felt it necessary for the Soviets to move into the Baltic States, Finland and Poland, the better to defend themselves against aggression. The question concluded, 'Do you believe that a socialist state is justified in extending socialism to a neighbouring state by force of arms?' Trotsky replied:

'...The defence of an isolated workers' state depends much more on the support of the labouring masses all over the world than on two or three strategic points...that does not exclude the right and duty to give military aid from without to peoples rebelling against oppression. For example, in 1919 we naturally had the right to help (the Hungarian revolution) by military means ... Unfortunately we were too weak ...

'The invasion (of the Baltic States etc) is seen by the populations not as an act of liberation but as an act of violence and thereby facilitates the mobilisation of world opinion against the USSR by the imperialist powers...' (*Writings 1939-40*).

There is no evidence of a mass popular uprising in Afghanistan which called for revolutionary intervention of the Red Army. Trotsky's strictures on the Soviet invasions of Poland, the Baltic States and Finland can be cogently applied to the current situation, a situation even more complicated by the existence of not one isolated workers' state but several, which may find themselves on opposite sides of the battle-lines.

We must not and cannot give any support to the imperialist campaign against the USSR. Trotsky, quite correctly, while opposing the march into Georgia in 1921, nevertheless subsequently staunchly countered the imperialist and social-democratic campaign for the restoration of Menshevik rule and the withdrawal of Soviet armed forces. Similarly, he never demanded the withdrawal of the Soviet armies from the Baltic



states and Poland in 1940.

We, in our turn, while condemning the policies which sent the Red Army into Afghanistan to bolster up a bureaucratic satellite regime, do not join the chorus of imperialist jackals who call for their withdrawal as this would create a power vacuum which would be quickly filled by imperialism.

We must demand that the Soviet troops respect the rights of the people of Afghanistan to determine their own future, which must include the right of the Afghanistan people to demand the withdrawal of foreign troops from their territory. We must give every support to any movement toward the establishment of organs of popular control, even where this will meet — as it will — the violent opposition of the occupying Red armies.

CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN, London NW10

Soviet arms to the Afghan masses

AS COMRADES McNair, Andrews and Shuja correctly point out (Letters, 17 Jan), to raise the slogan 'Soviet troops out of Afghanistan' is to effectively condone Carter's attacks on both the Afghan revolution and the USSR. However both comrades Andrews and Shuja commit the inverse mistake to that of Tariq Ali by assuming that the USSR could go some way to meet the aspirations of the Afghan masses.

Of course it is not excluded that the Soviet army may be used as it was in Eastern Europe to create a deformed workers' state but this is only a possibility and even so would result in the political expropriation and domination of the Afghan masses by the Soviet bureaucracy. It is up to revolutionaries to chart a course that is independent of the bourgeoisie and the Soviet bureaucracy.

The intervention of the USSR was not because Brezhnev might still have a sentimental attachment to proletarian internationalism but designed to stave off increasing destabilisation along its southern borders. The revolutions in Iran and Afghanistan, coupled with the imperialist military build up in the Persian Gulf and Pakistan, meant that the bureaucracy had to intervene to prevent a serious dislocation of the status quo in a strategically vital area.

The fact the invasion delays the machinations of imperialism should not lead us to assume that the intentions of the USSR are for once

honourable (and comrade Shuja seems to imply that the USSR should intervene militarily wherever there is a revolutionary situation). However to large sections of the Afghan masses, particularly in the cities, the Soviet invasion is a progressive move. In such a situation revolutionaries must put demands on the bureaucracy that correspond to both the objective needs of the Afghan toilers and their existing consciousness.

Coupled with the demands raised by comrade McNair (Imperialist hands off Afghanistan; No sanctions against the USSR etc) demands such as 'Soviet arms to the Afghan masses' and 'Make the government responsible to workers' and peasants' organisations' give revolutionaries an orientation to the self-organisation of the Afghan masses while attacking imperialist designs on Afghanistan.

By developing the thing that both the Soviet bureaucracy and the world bourgeoisie fear most, the self-organisation of the masses, revolutionaries can give a clear lead not only to those people outside Afghanistan in solidarity with the revolution but also to the Afghan masses in their fight against imperialism.

TONY VANZLER, Hull

Afghanistan: having it both ways

IT WAS predictable that some people should try to use the columns of *Socialist Challenge* to organise welcoming committees for the Red Army.

Thus comrade Andrews (Letters, 17 January) defends the invasion of Afghanistan by explaining that: 'The only way forward is to create a working class from above with Soviet help' — an ominous echo of the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

From comrade MacNair we would hardly guess the Soviet army was in Afghanistan. Amid tired rhetoric about imperialist war drives we find the Soviet 'invasion' — in inverted commas! If 80,000 troops are not an invasion this is truly a breakthrough in revolutionary nomenclature. It opens the way for the alleged 'persecution' of Soviet oppositionists, the imaginary 'labour camps' and of course the so-called 'invasion' of Czechoslovakia.

But these comrades do have the sole virtue of consistency. They are convinced of the revolutionary potential of the Soviet army and will, one hopes, cheer it all the way to Islamabad and New Delhi.

The editorial of *Socialist Challenge* wants to have it both ways. It argues thus: the invasion was wrong because it strengthened the counter-revolution in Afghanistan and the region as a whole. But because of these new 'political conditions' we are forced to take sides. Therefore, now that it has happened without our being consulted, we support the invasion.

Unfortunately what passes for dialectics in Upper Street is not necessarily good sense in the real world. Since when have revolutionaries been forced to choose between the politics of the Soviet bureaucracy and the politics of imperialism? If the invasion helped the counter-revolution at first at what point did it stop doing so? Above all, whatever happened to *Socialist Challenge's* much trumpeted support

for the right of nations to self-determination?

Your editorialist will no doubt say (remember Finland and all that) that such piffing questions go into abeyance when great international class conflicts are at stake. That is nonsense. With a moment's thought it would have dawned on your editorialist that this is precisely when we are most required to defend self-determination — for not surprisingly it is then that it is most under threat.

The only alternative is to argue that the Soviet Union can violate other people's self-determination at will because it is a workers' state. That is the basest political opportunism. Editorial Board members who believe that should be despatched forthwith to the Ukraine or Czechoslovakia and try convincing them.

RICHARD CARVER, London SW2

Men's group errors

I WAS pleased to see that my article on men's groups was included as a *Speakout* in the last issue of *Socialist Challenge*. Unfortunately the pleasure was marred by two mistakes.

For some inexplicable reason the article was wrongly attributed to Paul Morrison.

Secondly the title of the article was changed from 'Men's Groups, Achilles Heel and Socialism' to 'In defence of men's groups', without consultation.

To me the two titles have a very different orientation. The article was intended as a positive assertion of the usefulness of men's groups and their role in the struggle for socialism, not as some dubious phenomenon that needed defending.

JAMES SWINSON, London N5

Steel: now let's fight for jobs

COVERAGE of the steel dispute has been good, but there's a sore thumb — the absence of the fight against closure. It is not good enough just to say 'stop the closures', or 'no redundancies'.

The reformist bureaucracy is intent upon separating the question of pay and jobs, though most steelworkers probably want them linked. The solid support for the pay strike among steel workers only weeks away from closure like Shotton and Corby is testimony to this.

The bureaucracy is after a deal on pay at the expense of jobs. Sirs' position is obvious enough, but witness too the pressure the TUC nationalised industry committee applied upon the Welsh TUC to get it to postpone or abandon a real fight against unemployment!

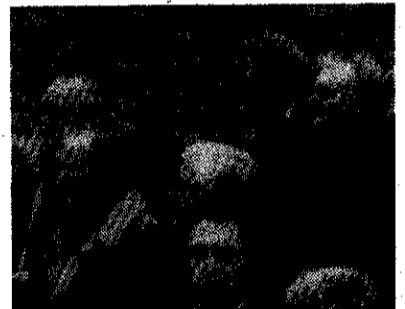
Incidentally we should probably raise a call for the sacking and re-election of the TUC nationalised industry committee. It showed its own bankruptcy by refusing to support the Welsh TUC action on jobs and offering no alternative defence of jobs.

Revolutionaries need to prepare steel workers for turning the fight on pay into an active defence of jobs. Apart from saying no to closures *Socialist Challenge* has emphasised work sharing. This ignores the practical problem that to impose work sharing one has to be in control of the plants in the first place!

The sharpest way to pose work sharing is for an immediate 35 hour week in steel and for a scale of future hours to be decided by workers themselves. However all slogans on the organisation of work in steel, on nationalisation of the private sector, and for a workers' plan for steel, revolve around the same pivot, that is workers' control.

The key demand against closures must be one which allows the body of workers to take action, against the opposition of their leaderships, to prevent the further rundown of steel. This has to be through occupying plants hence effectively vetoing the plans of the BSC management and their cupboard backers, the Tory government.

Time is short but now is the time to raise a slogan like 'From a strike on pay to occupations against closures'. STEVE BELL, Cardiff.



Solidarity is key

IT'S time that the TUC and the trade unions united with the BSC strikers.

The steel strike is now a few weeks old and the pickets are getting organised. The movement of steel is virtually at a standstill. But the time has come for the rest of the workers in this country to support them.

The fight is not just for percentage rises and protection of jobs in BSC alone. It is a fight against the Tory proposals which are affective all of the working class.

The media are often, if not always, asking the question: 'How long can you last out on strike?' We should ask the question: 'How long will the steel bosses and the Tories last?' The answer will be 'Not very long at all' if the workers unite and support the steel strikers.

If the Tories defeat the steelworkers there is little chance of anyone else putting up a fight. They have been picked by the Tories as being 'easy' to beat, but we must prove them wrong.

The backlash of the cuts in jobs in BSC will be severe throughout the country, especially in South Wales, which will be 'left for dead' by the Tories. It is also pretty obvious that those who are lucky enough to keep their jobs will not earn a decent living wage.

This is why the TUC and ourselves must not sit idly by and see the Tory cuts in the NHS, social services, jobs, education, and an ever rising dole queue make the lives of the working class even more unbearable and hard. Sadly this is the capitalist way.

It is time for united action against the Tories, because if ever there was a need for solidarity amongst the working class it is now. Remember — Thatcher hasn't done swinging the axe yet!

Support the steelworkers now and kick out the Tories. P.H. WILSON, Mansfield

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

Support the steel workers — Kick out the Tories
A series of meetings
BIRMINGHAM, Thurs 24 Jan, 7.30pm, Digbeth Civic Hall. Speakers: Tariq Ali; Pat Hickey (Senior steward Rover Solihull) and local speakers.
LIVERPOOL, Thurs 24 Jan, phone Liverpool 728 7007 for venue and time. Speakers: Raghib Ahsan (BL worker Rover Solihull) and local speakers.
CARDIFF, Wed 30 Jan, phone Cardiff 394755 for details. Speakers: Pat Hickey (Socialist Challenge editorial board) plus local speakers.
NEWPORT, Thurs 31 Jan, phone Cardiff 394755 for details. Raghib Ahsan plus local speakers.
PORT TALBOT/SWANSEA, Mon 28 Jan, Dynevor School, Swansea. Speaker Jacob Moneta (former editor of *Metal*, German steel union journal).
SHEFFIELD, Tues 29 Jan, venue Station Hotel, The Wicker, Sheffield. Speakers: Jacob Moneta, Tariq Ali, Ron Thompson.

CARDIFF SOCIALIST CHALLENGE FORUM, Aberdeen, women's rights and socialism. Speaker: Penny Duggan (M.C.) and speaker from Cardiff Alliance Campaign in a personal capacity. Fri 1 Feb, The Moorland pub, Splott Rd. Cardiff. 7.30pm.

CARDIFF: SC sale, Newport Town Centre outside Waco. 11-12.30. Cardiff: British Home Stores, 102-3, Ave. available from 106 Books, Salisbury Ave. Cardiff.
ABERDEEN: SC sale Saturdays outside C&A — for more info, phone 0183 574064.

BATH: SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 20298 for more details.

BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.

BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30, Sat. 10-4. For more info phone 643 9209.

BRIGHTON: For more info phone Nick, 605052.

BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Montpellier, Bristol 6.

COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.

DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.

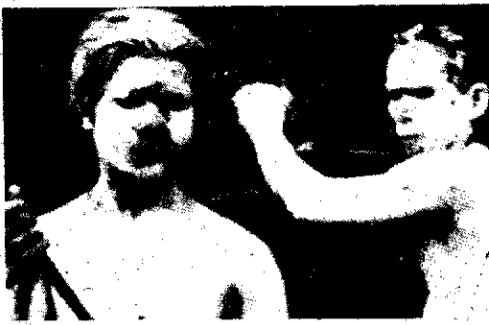
Huddersfield: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.

LAMBETH: SC now available at kiosk Brixton tube. Oval tube, Herne Hill British Rail and Tetric Books Clapham.

SWINDON: SC sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Broad Centre).

TESSIDE: SC sales at Newsfash shops in Cleveland Centre and on Linshepe Road, Middlesbrough, and at Greens Bookstall, upstairs in Spencer Market, Stockton High Street.

TOWER HAMLETS: SC supporters sell papers every Friday 5-6pm. Watney Mk1, Sat 11-12.30pm Whitechapel tube. Sundays 10.30-12.00 Brick Lane.



By Anthony Francis

A CAPTAIN Willard is sent by military intelligence up through Vietnam into Cambodia in search of an American colonel whose atrocities — committed through a fanatical pagan sect — are beginning to attract attention back home. The colonel is Kurtz — plucked from Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* and transported to South-east Asia. On his way Willard witnesses example after example of the Americans' barbaric cruelty towards their 'enemy', and occasionally reflects, ironically, upon the disintegration that human beings suffer in the context of war.

Apocalypse Now is a film that would appeal to those who feel that war is simply morally wrong. It never raises itself above this platitude and by half way I had lost any notion that it was supposed to be about the most barbaric imperialist calamity in modern history: Vietnam. Instead there is a bizarre and formless scenario of violence which reaches a climax in an attack on a village where Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyrie* is relayed from loudspeakers strapped to the underside of the helicopters.

Crisis

This is the crisis of Hollywood realism: \$30 million spent on the portrayal of violence, but no idea of analysing why all this is happening.

It is sexist in that the frenzied male world of the army is transmitted through the eyes of Willard, the cool-guy who is unflinching and emotionless even in the wake of the most shocking atrocities. It is racist in that the mythic 'enemy' never articulates its plight or struggle. And the dialogue is the usual Hollywood bull-shitting of a gruff male voice padding out clichés like 'he's got balls'.

So what is this film worth? I don't think very much, except insofar as, unlike many of its predecessors, it does not glorify war itself. It glorifies the driven-to-evil individual falsely cut loose from their society, politics, history and authority (which is presumably why we are assaulted with quotations from Eliot, Kipling, Wagner and *The Golden Bough*). But this is nonsense; for however disconnected and schizophrenic the army had become, it was still in Vietnam on the orders of its generals and a president operating from behind a classical facade in Washington DC.

The formal climax of the film comes when Kurtz, in a state of abject moral exhaustion — disgusted with the war, himself and the world — gives himself up, as it were, to be sacrificed. He flees the world in negative confusion, ignorant to politics, change or why he has ended up in this situation.

below

But he is 'an honourable, cultured man', and having read *The Golden Bough* and other such mythological texts he decides to die in his own 'noble' way. That is to say, he consciously refuses to confront and analyse the nature of his predicament. And thence war itself is taken out of context and bastardised, leaving Vietnam distant and exempt from any coherent statement except 'the horror, the horror'.

The root of the confusion lies in Coppola's inability to make a film based on *Heart of Darkness* — and the inadequacy of Conrad's novel itself.

In the novel, Marlow is sent by his employers, a British ivory-trading company, to go up the Congo and seek out Kurtz, who has abandoned the company and surrounded himself with a mad, devoted tribe. Unlike *Apocalypse Now*, *Heart of Darkness* begins its description in England in the genteel drawing-room of Marlow's mother. His boat leaves from Westminster.

On his way up the Congo, Marlow witnesses (what we now know to be Belgian) colonialism in its most brutal form. And we



a \$30m war epic directed by Francis Ford Coppola, has attracted attention not only among the bourgeois press but in socialist newspapers too.

Two different views of the film, now on general release, are presented by ANTHONY FRANCIS and VALERIE COULTAS.



Marlon Brando's ox-like figure eventually looms out of the shadows as Kurtz'

are reassured by Conrad's dialogue that the white man's business in Africa means one thing: capital and subjugation. In addition to this, Conrad describes the whites' fear, due to their culture, of both the appearance of the Africans and their landscape.

When Marlow finally encounters Kurtz, decaying and desperate, it is inferred that the disintegration of this European might be due to his culture and civilisation. In the end, Marlow returns to England, lying to Kurtz's lover; saying that he died an honourable, manly death of dignity.

Base

If Coppola had adhered to this structure we might have had a more interesting film. We might even have seen the base: America itself, and the directors of the war. But Coppola's film never returns home. We leave Willard staggering, bloodstained and dizzy, on the steps of Kurtz's den.

But even adherence to Conrad's form would have still have made the film chauvinist and racist, because Conrad depicts the Africans as passive, speechless lambs, offering themselves up the capitalistic arms of the white imperialists: the only words they utter are of

Kurtz's demise, 'Mr Kurtz, he dead'.

This kind of deduction seems to be beyond Coppola, because he does not seem to understand what form is. Interviewed on *The South Bank Show*, he gave a reasonably accurate description of what American foreign policy was about. But when he came on to say how he would make a film about Vietnam, he then said: 'I don't want to make a film about Vietnam, I want to create Vietnam itself.'

All I can conclude is that one only has access to \$30 million to make a film if one is not going to rock the imperialist boat.

THE OTHER BOOKSHOP

Black Bolshevik, by Harry Haywood — Pluto Press, £2.95

Black Jamaicans Struggle v Slavery, by Richard Hart — Community Education Trust, 95p

Scarlet Woman, No 10, Newsletter of the Socialist Feminist Current, 45p

328 Upper Street, London N1 2XQ
[Tel. 01-226-6571]



By Valerie Coultas

WAR films are usually memorable. *Apocalypse Now* is no exception. The audience leaves the cinema stunned into silence by the sheer brutality of war.

The bombastic US colonel in the cavalry hat who strides across minefields takes a sadistic delight in killing Vietnamese. He is a caricature of the American aggressor but one that sticks.

'I love the smell of napalm', he says to his coterie of admirers after destroying a whole village and 'blowing up the ass' of a brave Vietcong woman who throws her hat into the helicopter with a grenade inside.

Sex

The music of Wagner, the Doors, Hendrix, the sound of helicopter blades beating above, the Bunny girls that arrive to titillate the sex-starved GIs, all make the brutal events seem bizarre and unreal. The audience itself is invited to participate in a hallucinogenic experience.

Captain Willard, played by Martin Sheen, is a CIA assassin. He is sent on a trip to kill Colonel Kurtz, a model US soldier who has gone beyond the pale and not only succumbed to brutal paganism and genocide but is doing it outside the military control of the US, in Cambodia.

(The Americans were conducting 'covert operations' in Cambodia throughout the Vietnam war.)

From our very first glimpse of Willard, where we see him in a Saigon hotel room getting drunk and displaying his masochism, right up until the gruesome ending of the film, we are urged to identify with this assassin, to appreciate his 'sanity' in an insane, barbaric world.

His role is contradictory. He shoots a Vietnamese woman because he dislikes his companions' hypocrisy when, having shot her, they want to save her, and because he has a mission to accomplish and can't afford to pussyfoot around.

Willard becomes fascinated with Kurtz, the man he has to kill. The more he learns of his brilliant record in the past, the more excited he becomes at the prospect of meeting a man who has come to terms with a horrible war by immersing himself in a cult of death.

The swift killings in the earlier part of the film contrast with the pedestrian character of Kurtz's particular brand of barbarism, which is based on the real forms of torture carried out by the South Vietnamese against the NLF. The scenes are nonetheless shocking for all that.

Marlon Brando's ox-like figure eventually looms out of the shadows as Kurtz. He is intrigued by the fierce resistance of the Vietcong to the Americans. He admires their 'cadre'-like discipline and military strength.

He, like many people in the Western world, cannot understand that the Vietnamese spirit of resistance is based not on some inscrutable Asian personality but on a commitment to fight as hard as possible for the liberation of their country. Kurtz idolises violence for its own sake. The Vietcong were willing to fight the Americans violently because that was the only way to get rid of them.

Neither Kurtz nor the film's director fully understand that. But it's still a film not to be missed.

Socialist Challenge

OVER OUR DEAD BODIES, CORRIE

All out on 5 and 8 February

THREE surveys published recently reveal that the vast majority of people in this country either want to keep the '67 Abortion Act or want a more liberal law. John Corrie, with the tacit backing of a large chunk of this Tory government, prefers to ignore this, and insists on imposing his own personal views on the millions of women who live in this country.

It's hard to believe that he can really get away with it. Unfortunately there's a good chance he can.

Who do we blame for this?

Firstly, we blame this Tory government which has made the passage of Corrie's Bill exceptionally easy. Norman St John-Stevas, prominent anti-abortionist and 'leader of the House', has used his position to speed up its passage. The government may not have overtly backed the Bill, but it will go through — if it does — on the strength of the Tory majority in the Commons.

That's why everyone who opposes the Corrie Bill should be demanding an end to this Tory government.

Labour

The second reason why the Bill is likely to get through is down to the Labour Party. It should be obvious that all those who defend the interests of the working class should defend and fight for a 'woman's right to choose'. But the Labour Party still insists it is a matter of 'conscience'.

There will be no Labour whip to ensure that every Labour MP votes against the Corrie Bill. A number of Labour MPs will vote for it.

Even by the cringing, cowardly standards of British social democracy they should be ashamed of themselves.

The fact that the Labour Party insists it is a matter of conscience has allowed the Communist Party to press for a very wishy-washy line on abortion. Although the party itself supports a woman's right to choose, it encourages campaigns to act simply on the basis of defence of the '67 Act. It bends to the 'conscience' arguments, particularly in the trade unions.

Clearer

If the Communist Party had fought for a clearer position on abortion among its supporters in the trade union movement we could have had huge contingents of miners, engineers and building workers on the lobby on 5 February. Then we'd have seen if the Tories would have dared to press ahead with the Bill!

For most of us, and especially those whose memories scarcely stretch back before the '67 Act, the likely passage of the Corrie Bill is

hard to believe. It is demoralising and frightening.

But now is not the time to be demoralised. The campaign against Corrie may not achieve what it set out to do, but it has achieved many things. The TUC demonstration last October was an historic step towards getting abortion adopted as an essential part of any class struggle platform.

It is increasingly difficult for trade union leaders to say that it is not an issue for the unions. It is unheard of for anyone to claim it is not an issue for socialists.

The strength of the campaign that has been built against Corrie, and the pressure on the labour movement, puts us in a very good position to take the struggle forward. Now we have to look to the future.

The next Labour manifesto has to contain a clear commitment to

positive legislation on abortion, and an end to the 'conscience' vote nonsense. The strength of the campaign against Corrie puts us in a strong position to apply pressure to the Labour Party. If Corrie's Bill becomes law it will be a setback — but only a temporary one.

Our sights must now be set on the trade union conference on positive legislation called for next Autumn. Every union must be represented there to discuss how to win positive legislation, and to ensure that the Labour Party is not let off the hook.

Let's make 5 and 8 February the biggest possible show of the strength of feeling of the working people of this country. A big turn-out, particularly from those unions with a clear policy on abortion, can still turn the tide. But if that doesn't stop the Corrie Bill, we won't let the Corrie Bill stop us.

Our Fund Drive

A WELSH general strike, a call from the LCDTU to turn 14 May into a national general strike and the fifth week of the steel strike... the struggle against the Tories is really hotting up.

Eleven more 'Fivers to Fight the Tories' came in this week making 66 this month. UCATT members, IMG members and Socialist Challenge supporters have all dug into their pockets to boost the fund appeal.



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Complete and return to: Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

With three weeks of January gone our total so far is already poised at the £800 mark. Let's make it £1000 by the end of the month.

Ann Shirley	£5.00
M Korn	5.00
A Southall	2.00
Paddington IMG	15.00
J Hammond	2.00
Hammersmith IMG	15.00
Reading IMG	15.00
UCATT member	5.00
R Johnson	35.00
Swindon IMG	10.00
Anon	2.50
Total this week	£111.50
Cumulative total	£784.54

Correction: £5 credited to F Revell in issue 131 should have been from Wolves IMG.

AN ITEM in London's Evening Standard of 25 January alleged that

Socialist Challenge and its editor Tariq Ali were 'parting company'.

This report is a fabrication based we understand on 'Fleet Street rumours'. For some weeks Tariq Ali has been concentrating on a series of speaking engagements concerning the Southall trials, the steel strike and the international situation. This has meant that he has been playing less of a day-to-day role in the running of Socialist Challenge.

Because he is the best known public face of the International Marxist Group he often has public engagements which take him away from the offices of the newspaper. The last few weeks is only the latest in a series of occasions that this has happened over the last two years.

But Tariq Ali remains editor of Socialist Challenge.