

Socialist Challenge

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the resistance

Editorial

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THE STRUGGLE taking place in Poland is crucial not only for the future of that country, but for the workers of the whole world. It would be difficult to overestimate the stakes involved.

The imposition of martial law by the Polish bureaucrats shows not their strength but their weakness. It is the bureaucracy's last card short of Soviet invasion. The stakes in the struggle have been raised massively.

Those people who thought that the events after August 1980 were leading to a gradual, peaceful transformation of Polish Stalinism to a more 'open' and 'democratic' system have had a rude shock. The military's action clearly demonstrates the incompatibility of bureaucratic rule with genuine independent workers' organisations.

The significance of the struggle in Poland for the workers of the whole world was that Poland in 1980 and 1981 represented the *highest point of the world revolutionary process*, the most politically advanced struggle taking place anywhere.

The struggle of Solidarity against the bureaucratic system gave rise to forms of organisation and struggle which contained lessons for the workers of every country. Control over hiring and firing; veto rights over works managers; democratic organisation of strikes and unions; access to the media; direct access by tens of thousands of workers to the negotiations between party leaders; massive use of factory occupations; and the extension of Solidarity's membership and influence into every sphere of Polish society — all these things represented a threat not only to the bureaucracies in Eastern Europe but also to the capitalist system in the West. Despite the crocodile tears, Solidarity's radical actions had few friends in the Western governments.

The defeat of the Polish proletariat, either at the hands of the Polish army or at the hands of Soviet tanks would amount to a major reversal of the world relationship of forces between the working class and its enemies.

On the other hand, if the Polish masses can continue the struggle against bureaucratic repression then it will be continued at an infinitely higher political level than even the struggle during 1981. The question of power is posed. The alternative to bureaucratic rule is workers' power. No intermediate solution is possible.

The defeat of the Polish workers would be a defeat for the workers of the whole world, especially if a Soviet invasion occurred.

The effects of such a move would be incalculable. Anti-communism and anti-socialism would be strengthened everywhere. Movements like CND in the West would be completely undercut by the ideological impact of such events.

Already the crackdown on the Polish workers has put the peace movement in West Germany on the defensive, opening it up to demagogic attack from government leaders. If the Polish workers are defeated a similar process will take place everywhere with the right wing being strengthened in all the trade unions and mass workers' parties. The Stalinist suppression of the Polish workers would immensely strengthen the hands of US imperialism, giving it much more room for manoeuvre, especially against the revolution in Central America.

Never has the interaction between international and national class struggle been more clearly demonstrated. Never has the silent but very real community of interests between Stalinism and imperialism in the face of mass workers struggles.

The defence of the Polish workers is the single most important task for socialists everywhere. Public meetings, collections of money for the Polish resistance, and trade union delegations to visit Poland should all be planned. Poland must be raised in every workers' organisation — and those like Tony Benn who hesitate to speak up in defence of the Polish workers must be forced to act.

Solidarity needed — from the left

By Tom Marlowe

'THERE are difficulties in the Polish situation.' That was one comment miners' president-elect Arthur Scargill made just after the military crackdown.

Scargill also maintained his support for 'free independent trade unions in every nation', but added, 'it is clear that Solidarity is not a trade union in our accepted sense of the word. It is, I suspect, a political movement.'

The 'difficulties' Arthur Scargill appears to have in standing full square with the Polish workers are shared by a number of leading personalities in this country's labour movement.

Even worse, it is left wingers who have tended to react most cautiously to the Polish events.

Tony Benn, for example, has said virtually nothing in public since the imposition of martial law. The majority of the Labour Party's national executive refused to support a call from Eric Heffer for a Labour Party demo on 20 December in London in support of the Polish workers.

Instead, at its meeting on 17 December the executive adopted a milder motion expressing the Labour Party's 'deep concern' at the introduction of martial law.

Leading left wingers Joan Maynard and Eric Clarke specifically spoke against Heffer's stronger resolution.

Heffer is one of the few on the left who has been willing to speak without any equivocation against the Polish government. 'Real democratic socialists must stand up and be counted,' he said the week before Xmas.

'If it was right to protest over events in Chile, South Africa or Turkey, it is also right to protest over what is happening in Poland.'

Equally strong statements have come from Communist Party member Mick McGahey, president of the Scottish miners. On 29 December he offered to go to Poland as an expression for his support for miners there.

He explained that Scottish miners, 'are calling for the freeing of all those who have been detained arising from resistance to the imposition of martial law.'

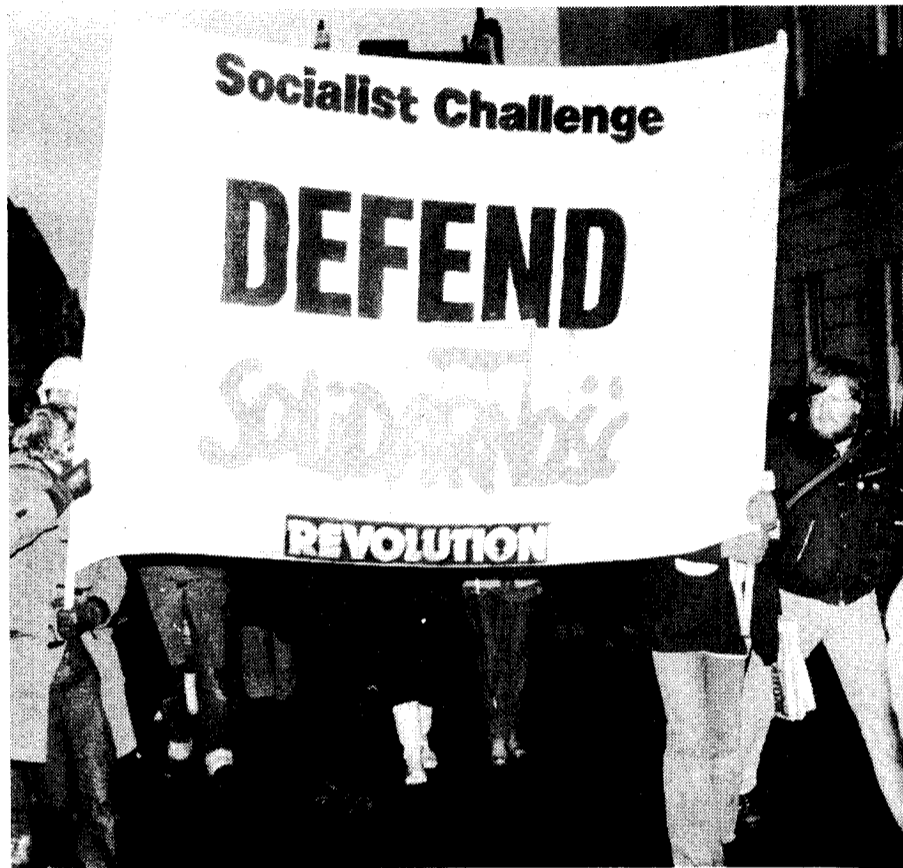
'We are insisting on the ending of martial law, the return to civil rule and the restoration of civil and democratic rights.'

The TUC and general secretary Len Murray were also quick to condemn the crackdown. Murray has applied for a visa to visit Poland, a point he made when he and other members of the TUC general council visited the Polish ambassador in London on 27 December.

The delegation, said Murray, 'voiced 'very strongly indeed the revulsion of British workers and the TUC about what has happened in Poland.'

Statements like that give the labour movement in the country something to build on in establishing real and active support for Solidarity.

But this will not happen if the right wing in the Labour Party and TUC is seen to be giving the lead in condemning Polish authorities. Sad to say



Socialist Challenge supporters on the London demo were part of a labour movement contingent.

apart from individuals such as Heffer and McGahey it is right wingers who have been most vocal.

Tom Jackson of the Post Office workers, Frank Chapple of the electricians and Terry Duffy of the engineers have all been quick to express their support for Solidarity.

At times, such individuals have used the Polish events as part of their anti-left, pro-imperialist crusade.

For example, Joe Gormley the moderate president of the miners alleged that Polish workers 'are only fighting for the things we take for granted in Britain, freedom and true democracy.'

The fact is that some of the forms of union democracy advanced by Solidarity, and the type of workers' control they have fought for are a million miles away from what happens in this country.

But Gormley and others of his kind will be allowed to get away with distorting what Polish workers want, and will use the imposition of martial law as a way of whipping up anti-left feeling, unless the left out-gun the right in attacking the Polish government.

It is true that many of the larger meetings and demonstrations in this

country which have been held in protest over the events in Poland have been dominated by cold war rhetoric.

But that is inevitably the case if the left muffles its voice, or prattles on about the 'difficulties' in giving one hundred per cent support to Solidarity.



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The Polish demonstration in London on 20 December — the Labour Party refused official support, and a right wing atmosphere prevailed.

Activities on Poland

Glasgow demo
Saturday 23 January 1.30pm. Assemble corner of Queen Margaret Drive and Great Western Road. March to Patrick Burgh Hall at 3pm. Speakers include Jimmy Reed et al.

Oxford Rally
called by trades council for Thursday 21 January 8pm at the Town Hall. Speakers invited include Eric Heffer.



With friends like these...

By Geoff Bell

ARE Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II the best friends the Polish workers have?

That's certainly the impression that is being put over by much of the media. Ronald Reagan in particular is being portrayed as the lone cowboy of the Western World ready to ride to the rescue of the Poles.

The action he has taken in imposing sanctions against the Polish and Soviet governments is contrasted to the reluctance of others in the Western alliance — notably the West Germans — to make any moves against the Eastern bloc.

But if this is the popular interpretation of Western capitalism's response to the Polish crisis, the reality is not so simple.

The initial US response to the military takeover was as cautious as the Europeans'. The first statement of US Secretary of State Alexander Haig, merely expressed his 'concern' with the rider that the military takeover was an 'internal affair' for the Poles.

Reprisals

While the statements became a little more bellicose as time went on, even in his Xmas message Ronald Reagan remained cautious. Although he mouthed the traditional anti-Communist clichés, his singular suggestion was that US citizens should display a lighted candle in the window over Xmas to express their sorrow at the suffering of the Poles. This was the same Ronald Reagan who had criticised Jimmy Carter's reprisals against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as being too weak. At the same time, two years ago when he was running for President, Reagan had suggested a blockade of Cuba as the proper reply to the Afghanistan events.

It was only on 29 December that Reagan opted for something more flamboyant than candle lighting. He announced a series of economic sanctions, aimed principally at the Soviet Union, the most spectacular of which was to ban the export of equipment for the planned Soviet-Western Europe gas pipeline.

Despite the wide publicity that these measures received, they are extremely limited in scope. For example, Reagan did not attempt to halt the export of US grain to the Soviet Union, a move Carter did make over Afghanistan.



Reagan and Schmidt — no friends of the Polish workers.

A repeat of this exercise would have hurt the US economy too much. US grain sales to the Soviet Union make up between two-thirds and

three-quarters of total US exports to the USSR, which in the first eight months of last year earned the US \$1.3bn.

What Reagan did attempt to do was to use the Polish events, not so much to express support for Polish workers, but rather as a part of his ideological offensive against the Soviet Union. Indeed at one point Reagan said that Solidarity 'may have asked for more than they could be given' in demanding a referendum in Poland on the form of government.

And the same day that Reagan showed his supposed concern for workers in Poland, the US publicised two other decisions of foreign policy. The state department appealed for an end to EEC sanctions against the Turkish military junta, where 50 trade union leaders have just gone on trial for their lives. Reagan also announced US government training of officers from the Salvadoran Army — responsible for the murder of tens of thousands of workers and peasants.

Slumped

Given such obvious hypocrisy it is hardly surprising that some leading European politicians have reacted to Reagan's sanctions with open disdain. 'We do not share the American government's opinion', West German government spokesperson Kurk Becker said on 30 December.

Even the French government, which has been more critical of the Polish crackdown than the West Germans have showed impatience with Americans. Jacques Hutzinger of the ruling French Socialist Party commented, 'One day President Reagan says it will not prevent him from meeting Mr Brezhnev, and the next he talks about suspending the Geneva arms negotiations. One cannot see the guiding inspiration in American policy.'

The 'inspiration' in the West German 'softly-softly' approach is more obvious to see. For the past ten years the West Germans have built up strong trading and banking links with Eastern Europe, and Poland in particular. While US trade with Poland has slumped in the last few years, Polish/West German trade has more than doubled.

West German banks are also Poland's leading creditor. Billions of dollars are owed to the German banks by the Polish government. In that respect it is hardly surprising that one leading German newspaper, *Die Zeit* responded to the Polish crackdown with the judgement, 'Although one need not approve of General Jaruzelski's military coup d'etat, one has to wish him success.'

Or, as a senior US government of-

ficial, quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* put it on 31 December, 'With all this unemployment and recession in Europe, it is understandable that the Europeans and particularly the Germans, are reluctant to participate in sanctions involving a key market for them.'

Economic interests apart, the Western European countries, with the possible exception of Thatcher's Britain, have had, for some time, different tactical attitudes from the US government to the Western/Soviet Union relationship. The EEC view, as expressed by West German leader Helmut Schmidt at the weekend, is that the Yalta agreement of 1945 remains in force. This was the deal whereby the imperialist powers were given a free hand in West Europe, and the Soviet Union was allowed to do what it liked in East Europe. The Americans, with their declining empire in Asia and Southern and Central America are no longer so happy with this arrangement. But what all involved — West Europe, the Soviet Union and the USA — agree is that the type of experiment in workers control, which Solidarity began in Poland is not one that merits support.

Sordid

The other highlighted actor in the Polish events, Pope John Paul II, takes a similar view. According to a story printed in the *Sunday Times*, the Polish Ambassador advised the Vatican of the military clampdown two hours before it happened.

The Pope was assured that the measures taken by the government would be limited and that the Church would be asked to mediate between the government and Solidarity. In return for these assurances — which turned out to be false — Polish Archbishop Jozef Glemp preached a sermon just after the takeover in which he pleaded, 'Do not start fighting Poles against Poles.' Only when it became clear that the Polish government had out-manoeuvred the Vatican did the condemnations of the military by the Pope become less weak.

It is all a very sordid picture. One of secret deals, bankers' interests and the Polish workers being kicked around in an ideological football game between Reagan and Moscow. The only real friends those workers have, and the only ones they need are trade unionists like themselves — in the US, West Germany and the rest of Europe.

A matter for workers everywhere

'Today the counter-revolution is a reality in Poland. The bureaucratic power, plunged into an unprecedented crisis over the last months, is using its last weapon. The state of war installed by General Jaruzelski against the working class and the whole of society is an attempt to crush the workers' revolution by State terrorism.'

'Over the last months the inability of the State and party apparatus to satisfy the most elementary needs had become evident to everyone. Nevertheless the workers placed their hopes in the economic reform based on workers' self-management which was planned to start in early January. The development of social control over the political economy, and the perspective of the first free local elections next spring, reinforced these hopes.'

'In November, the abandonment by the government of its own project of economic reform, and its decision to concentrate even more economic power into the hands of the bureaucratic apparatus provoked widespread social tension. In numerous enterprises and regions the workers of Solidarity began to prepare for a strike action in order to exercise control over the means of production and distribution, to install a genuine workers' self-management and to impose an economic reform from below through a mass movement.'

'The question of who should hold power — a

privileged minority or the working masses themselves — began to be discussed within Solidarity. A directly revolutionary situation developed from then on in Poland. It's then that the Polish army hierarchy decided to put into motion the preparations to impose its dictatorship: preparations which had begun a year ago, but to which the leaders of Solidarity had devoted insufficient attention.'

'Today, recourse to bayonets is suppressing not only the possibility of workers' socialism and self-management to which the free unions and the Polish working masses aspire, but also the elementary rights of man, of citizens and of workers. The Polish revolution, which constitutes one of the most advanced and audacious experiences in the world from the point of view of the emancipation of the workers, is in danger of being crushed.'

'The working class and the Polish people have decided to resist, but they need the united and determined support of the workers of the world, and in the first place from the powerful workers' organisations of Western Europe. The defeat of Solidarity would represent their own defeat. What is happening today in Poland is a matter for every worker.'

— Zbigniew Kowalewski, member of the presidium of Lodz Solidarity, 17 December 1981.



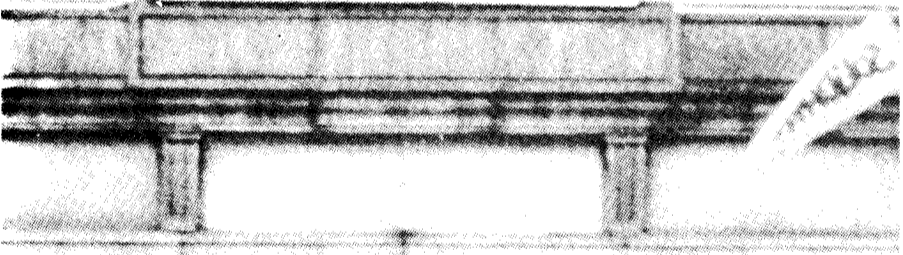
Solidarnosc sticker on a tank outside Gdansk shipyard days after martial law was declared

Solidarność THE WORKERS

Polish coverage in this week's Socialist Challenge compiled by Davy Jones



Katowice miners remember those murdered at the Wjtek mine by the military authorities



Supporters gather outside Solidarity's Warsaw HQ, the day after martial law was imposed

THREE WEEKS of martial law and vicious repression have not stopped the workers' resistance in Poland. Indeed, in many regions a co-ordinated fightback is beginning to develop. DAVY JONES reports on the facts of the repression and the workers' response.

The effects of martial law are devastating. There is still a night curfew. All phone communications are cut, and all letters opened by the censor. Strikes, protests, publications and any union activities are banned. Links with the outside world have also been cut, except through the censor. The aim is to isolate the resistance and impose a climate of fear.

Some local Solidarity officials like Kolodziej from Gdynia have been drugged and forced into signing confessions and appearing on TV to denounce Solidarity. Leading solidarity activists like Rozplochowski of Silesia have been attacked in the media as 'degenerates'. Anti-semitic campaigns have begun in the press against supposed hoarding by the tiny Jewish population, and Catholic associations have been shut down.

Martial law automatically 'militarises' whole sectors of the economy — rail, buses, post, telecommunications, radio and TV, power plants, ports, refineries, petrol stations, and workshops for all forms of military equipment. Workers in all these areas are under martial working regulations. Party and state officials who hesitate to implement the measures are ruthlessly removed, like the governors in Katowice, Elblag, Radom and Koszalin.

Thousands of Solidarity activists were systematically rounded up and interned.

More than one hundred of the 107-person national leadership of Solidarity were arrested in Gdansk in their hotel beds. Lech Walesa was whisked away to Warsaw. Solidarity HQs were raided, documents taken away, and crowds who assembled outside to protest were dispersed by riot police. In all, it seems that at least 15,000 Solidarity supporters were immediately arrested.

The response in the first week was fairly uniform throughout the country. At first, stunned shock and disbelief, and a desperate search for news. Then, workplace strikes in virtually every town and city and in every plant. In the Baltic regions of Gdansk and Szczecin, the Silesian region and Katowice, Lublin, Lodz, Poznan, Wroclaw, Legnica, and Warsaw there were massive shutdowns. The city of Radom, the centre of military equipment and ammunition factories was totally sealed off by the army.

The resistance and repression then followed a monotonous pattern. The workers occupied the big plants like the Katowice steelworks, the Ursus tractor plant near Warsaw, and the Gdansk shipyards. Tanks were used to smash a way in and the elite ZOMO riot police were sent in to break resistance and arrest 'ringleaders'. But by the next shift workers had re-occupied, only for the break-



up to begin again. Some of the national and regional leaders of Solidarity escaped the security police. In the Gdansk shipyards a national strike committee was established with one of Walesa's deputies, Miroslaw Krupinski, as well as Jan Waskiewicz, and Anna Walentynowicz.

The shipyard, after repeated military attacks was closed down until Monday 4 January and the strike committee arrested. By Thursday 17 December, anniversary of the 1970 massacre of shipyard workers, street demonstrations and work stoppages had reached a new peak. In Gdansk there were two days of street riots, with over 60,000 protesters. Hundreds were injured.

The authorities made a determined attempt to crush

the resistance. Dogs were used to break up a sit-in at the Krakow steelworkers, and miners were shot dead at the Wujek mine in Silesia. The big steelworks near Warsaw and Katowice, all the Baltic shipyards, the Ursus tractor plant and other big plants were shut down till the New Year. As many as 284 factories were still on strike on 23 December.

In all, some 49 internment camps have been set up. Many thousands have been interned, hundreds more arrested for 'infringing the curfew'. In the last few days reports have come in of a hunger strike planned by internees at the Bialoleka jail over inhuman conditions.

Reports of deaths are hard to confirm but the authorities' figures of eight is a lie. Some 11 miners are

SEWERYN BLUMSZTAJN was among the first of those reported arrested by the new military government in Poland. But in fact what was published was obviously a 'hit list' — because Blumsztajn was in Paris, while two others named were in the United States!

Blumsztajn was one of the founders of Solidarity's press agency, AS, which coordinated and distributed information to all the interfactory committees (MKZs). He was thus in a good position to know how Solidarity had prepared for the present confrontation.

This is what he told the Paris newspaper Le Monde, in an interview published on 19 December.

Was Solidarity prepared for what has happened?

We were generally convinced that a confrontation was becoming inevitable, and that a systematic reform of the regime could only be undertaken in its wake. It was clear that the conflict would take the form of a general strike. So we were psychologically and politically prepared.

On the other hand, no-one thought that the regime would impose such brutal measures; Solidarity was not technically prepared for these. That would have required an underground organisation, conspiratorial measures — something inconsistent with this kind of movement, with its total commitment to democracy and public debate. I know no other example of a movement where any meeting of at least six members of the national commission could be

observed — as was the case — by a journalist free to report in detail and without the slightest censorship.

We knew that, in the event of an attack, the authorities would have no difficulty in arresting the majority of the leadership; and that the organisation could only be re-established by those who regrouped in the factories. It was impossible to establish an underground apparatus. Not because the scale of arrests was unforeseeable, but because it was out of the question that a leader should be appointed — even by Walesa. They had to be elected.

Then again, the least preparation for a confrontation would have been denounced by the regime as an attempt to take over. Just look at how they seized on the pretext of the workers' guards which some factory sections tried to set up.

What do you think will be the outcome of General Jaruzelski's coup?

It is being said in France that the general, by his putsch, saved Poland from a Soviet intervention. That seems bizarre to me. It was clear to Poles that the population would resist the coup. The restrictions it has imposed take society back to the 19th century, or bring back memories of the Hitlerite occupation with its seizure of all radio sets.

Jaruzelski has deprived himself of all possible allies in Poland. If he really uses the army, a section will turn its weapons the other way, provoking a situation where Soviet intervention would become much more likely. From what we know today, it's the only logical outcome of the process which has been set in motion.

The entire responsibility lies with General Jaruzelski. The only way to avoid a catastrophe is the immediate freeing of the leaders of Solidarity. But it's no longer certain that, once released, even they could convince Polish society to accept the Communist regime under any guise at all.

In deciding last Saturday to hold a referendum on the methods of the regime, Solidarity was engaging in political activity. How did a trade union reach this point?

The basic principle of the movement at the beginning was 'self-limitation'. We thought that by 'self-limiting itself' — that is to say, by impinging neither on the interests of the USSR nor on those of the political regime of the Polish party, the PUP — the trade union would nevertheless be able to take over certain areas of public life.

At the same time, we thought that the control exercised by society would make the Communist regime more effective. Our perspective was that the entire society, self-organised, would be able to control the central regime in the social and economic sectors.

We thought that thanks to Solidarity, the life of society would be reborn at all levels, in the professional associations as much as in the localities.

However, Solidarity was continually forced to take initiatives which went beyond a trade union framework. This was for two reasons. First, the regime was incapable of taking the measures needed to get out of the crisis. Secondly, all social aspirations found their focus in Solidarity, whether they were for economic or cultural renewal or for self-management.

For example, the distribution of food products became so precarious that people were convinced that the regime was deliberately starving them, which



WORKERS' RESISTANCE

believed to have died at the Wujek mine, up to 15 workers at the Pafawag rail wagon plant, 14 more miners in Jastrzebie, eight people in Bydgoszcz, one worker at the Ursus plant, and individual deaths in Plock, Warsaw and Wrocław. There are unconfirmed reports of soldiers being executed for refusing to carry out orders.

There are also reports of deaths in captivity. Mazowiecki, a leading Catholic advisor to Walesa and editor of Solidarity's weekly paper, is believed to have died. There have been at least two suicides by Solidarity activists.

Among those believed to be held in captivity are all the candidates for the chair of Solidarity's recent congress — Walesa, Jurczyk, Rulewski, and Gwiadza. Other well-known Solidarity figures imprisoned are Rozplochowski of Silesia, Modzelewski from Wrocław, and Baluka from Szczecin. Dissident figures such as Kuron, Michnik, Litynski from KOR have also been held.

The last workers' occupations were in the mines of Silesia. The miners in the Ziemowit and Piast pits staged sit-ins with stores of food for a long haul. The use of gas, threats against their families and fear of isolation forced an end to the occupations. 'Ringleaders' were arrested.

Over Xmas came the next stage of repression as the workers temporarily retreated. Solidarity activists were put on trial. Dozens were sent to prison for years.

Workers from the Katowice steelworks were given up to 7 years; Slowik and Kropiwnicki, the leaders



Resistance to the Polish military continues

of Lodz Solidarity, three years; Jan Filipek from Jelenia Gora received three years for organising a strike; Andrzej Pawlik from Silesia five years for distributing leaflets; three workers from the Warsaw Fiat plant, four from Koszalin, more from the

Zeran car plant have all been sentenced. The trials start this week of workers from the Huta Warszawa steel plant and the Ursus tractor plant. General Jaruzelski threatened on Tuesday to expel Solidarity militants from the country!

The authorities are trying to obliterate every trace of Solidarity's former existence and tradition. Every poster, banner, piece of graffiti about Solidarity has been removed.

Workers in the big plants, the media and the government and state departments have been asked to sign pledges that they will not rejoin Solidarity before being allowed to return to work. The majority refuse, some sign anyway and go back to work to continue the struggle. Even in the Ministry of Justice only 30 per cent agreed to sign.

The workers' fight back has changed to passive resistance and sabotage of production. In the first week of the repression only one tractor was produced by the 14,000 workers at the Ursus plant. And at the FSO vehicle plant the workers changed the tolerance levels of the machine settings — the cars produced disintegrated through faulty welds and ill-fitting pieces.

In the Baltic Coast, Warsaw and Silesia regions, Solidarity has re-established a serious network of opposition, and bulletins have become regularised. Solidarity leaders still free include Zbigniew Bujak, head of Warsaw Solidarity, Bogdan Lis from Gdansk (who came to Britain last year to see the TUC), and Alina Pienkowska, the young nurse from the Lenin shipyards who played a key role in the August 1980 strike.

The authorities have responded by new measures to stop the resistance. It is now a military offence to buy duplicating paper or to wear knapsacks, after Solidarity couriers were found carrying

leaflets in them!

Worse, drastic price rises have been announced. Butter up 350 per cent, pork 400, sugar 400, milk 300, beef 350, electricity up 250 per cent, gas more than 200 per cent and hot water 350 per cent.

Wages are to rise by a whole 15 per cent, supposedly to compensate for these rises! With the work week extended to six days and the 12 hour day imposed in some sectors, it is clear that martial law is to be used to force the workers to pay for the economic crisis.

Reports suggest that the country is currently being run by a small team of party leaders like hard-man Olszowski, and generals Jaruzelski and Siwicki. The latter spent most of November in the Kremlin preparing to take operational charge of the military crackdown, which was supervised personally in Warsaw by the head of the Warsaw Pact armed forces, Marshall Kulikov.

The Polish rulers — the party hierarchy and the army in alliance with the Kremlin — still appear to have no solutions other than repression and the complete crushing of the independent workers' movement, Solidarity. Attempts to set up a phony Solidarity under party control would need figures like Walesa to endorse it, which seems increasingly unlikely.

There is still a battle going on within the regime over what to do next. That crisis will intensify with the workers' resistance. Our job in this country is to keep the heat on them by maximising the international support for Solidarity.



How to fight the regime

THIS is the text of a circular put out in Silesia by Solidarity and reproduced and circulated by a branch of Solidarity in Warsaw

Today we find ourselves faced with a choice between opposition and capitulation. For those who choose the first road we offer the following advice:

- 1) If there is a strike, remain with the workers; don't create a strike committee; there must not be a leader.
- 2) In your relations with the forces of law and order, act dumb; you don't know anything, you are disorientated.
- 3) Solidarity must remain in every workplace. Don't get yourself eliminated by foolhardy acts of bravado.
- 4) Don't take vengeance on those nearest to you — your enemy is the militia, the over-zealous employee, the collaborator.
- 5) Work slowly; criticise the disorder and inefficiency of the management; leave all decisions to the military commanders and collaborators; flood them with questions; share your doubts with them; don't think for them; make out you're dumb.
- 6) Do not aid the decisions of the militia and the collaborators with a servile attitude. It's up to them to do the dirty work. You must create a vacuum around the bastards and in this way, drowning them with questions on minor problems, you will provoke a disintegration of the military and policy machinery.
- 7) Follow to the letter the most idiotic instructions. Do not seek to resolve any problems — leave these to the military and collaborators. The stupidity of the rules is your most certain ally. Remember at the same time to help your workmate or neighbour without worrying about breaking the rules.
- 8) If some wretch gives you an order which is outside the rules, demand it in writing; try to prolong the whole thing and sooner or later the military commander will want peace; thus will begin the ending of the dictatorship.
- 9) Take as many days off sick or to look after your children as possible.
- 10) In your private relations openly avoid all collaborators and scabs.
- 11) Help the families of all the arrested and wounded and all the victims.
- 12) Set up in your place of work a social aid fund.
- 13) Participate in the diffusion of propaganda by word of mouth; communicate all information on the current situation and acts of resistance.
- 14) Paint slogans on the walls; stick up posters, distribute leaflets — but remember to take the necessary precautions.
- 15) In your activity guard closely two basic principles: I do not need to know more than is necessary, and the most important thing is to be able to fight. The first principle is to be able to fight in the state of emergency and secondly to defend trade union rights.

We shall never be slaves!

The strike committee of Huta Warszawa, after having consulted the workers who voted 80 per cent in favour of a strike, proclaim an occupation-strike in the steelworks to be started at 9am. We steelworkers demand the satisfaction of the demands of the national strike committee which has its base in Gdansk.

We declare with all determination that we and our families will never be slaves even if they tie our hands and gag us. We go on strike with the whole of Poland, with the whole nation united ...

Strike bulletin number two of the Huta Warszawa steel works

Communique number one of the secret national strike committee

In line with the resolutions adopted on the 14th of December at Radom and by the (Solidarity) National Commission on the 12th of December at Gdansk, we are responding to the violence with a general strike ...

In beginning this strike we affirm that it cannot be ended until the following conditions are met: the freeing of all those imprisoned, and the ending of the state of siege.

Not until these conditions have been carried out will it be possible for us to enter negotiations with a view to reaching an agreement ...



Support us in our struggle!

At the risk of our lives and our freedom, in defiance of the draconian measures of martial law and despite the attempt to paralyse us with fear, hundreds of thousands of workers and Polish patriots are on strike and demand the lifting of the state of siege, the freeing of all those arrested, the restoration of all trade union and democratic rights won by our people since August 1980.

Support us in our struggle with massive protests and by your moral support. Don't stand aside with folded arms and watch the attempt to crush the beginnings of a democracy in the heart of Europe.

Be with us in these difficult moments! Solidarity with Solidarity! Poland still lives!

Strike Committee of the Warski naval shipyard, Szczecin



Zbigniew Bujak, Warsaw Solidarity leader, co-ordinating the resistance

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POLAND: Solidarity IN ACTION



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General Jaruzelski (centre) with Marshall Kulikov (left) who masterminded the military crackdown for the Warsaw Pact



Workers re-occupying the Gdansk shipyards on Thursday 17 December, anniversary of the 1970 shipyard workers' massacre

The struggle for workers' power in Poland

TO understand why the very existence of Solidarity, a mass independent organisation of the workers, was intolerable to Poland's bureaucratic rulers we need to look at the nature of Poland's political system. Described by Western analysts as 'Communist' and 'totalitarian' along with the Soviet Union and other Eastern European states, Socialist Challenge would characterise Poland as a bureaucratically-ruled workers' state.

Poland: a post-capitalist society

Poland was devastated by the war. More than twenty per cent of the population died during the war, almost forty per cent of the entire national wealth was destroyed, and the whole country was moved

physically two hundred miles to the West.

The country was liberated by the Communist-led resistance and the Soviet Red Army. The Communist government quickly transformed the economy. What was left of the landowning class after the war was obliterated by the breaking up of the old estates of more than 50 acres of arable land. All industries employing more than fifty workers per shift were nationalised, and by late 1946 over ninety per cent of industry was state-owned and controlled.

As a result of the Yalta agreement, Poland passed into the Russian 'sphere of influence' together with other East European states. The socialisation of the Polish economy went hand-in-hand with the crushing of the self-activity of the Polish masses, and their isolation from the labour movement in the West. The division of Europe into pro-Stalinist and pro-imperialist 'spheres of influence' has been used to this day to disrupt the fighting unity of the workers of the European continent, to set worker against worker behind respectively the capitalist and bureaucratic rulers.

Polish society then followed the same basic model as the other Eastern European states. The nationalised economy works in a completely different manner to the capitalist system. Economic life is no longer governed by the capitalist market but by the principle of state plan-

ning. Production and investment resources are not allocated according to market profitability but through deals and decisions of the bureaucratic elite that has political power.

Enormous state-funded projects such as the construction of the Nowa Huta steelworks complex outside Krakow were undertaken, and the country's rapid industrialisation made it the eleventh largest industrial power in the world by 1980.

But while capitalism may have been abolished in Poland the workers do not have political power either in this bureaucratically-ruled workers' state. That position has been usurped by a huge bureaucratic apparatus, organised by the Communist Party, numbering at least two hundred thousand people.

This layer has big material privileges: its own special shops, better access to consumer goods, decent housing and education, and above all, political privileges in decision-making.

Although the membership of the official party apparatus in Poland is only about 10,000, the party also controls tens of thousands of positions of power and influence in the national, regional and local areas of state administration, the army hierarchy and the police, the economy, the trade union and youth organisations.

The bureaucracy uses the 'nomenklatura' system common to other Eastern European countries whereby candidates for any of these positions have to be approved by the party hierarchy at the relevant level.

The aspiring bureaucrat must satisfy one key criterion: his or her capacity to defend and serve the interests and political needs of the bureaucratic

apparatus as a whole.

The challenge of Solidarity

The bureaucratic system in Poland, at least after 1956, tolerated some limited freedoms to certain layers of the population. In particular the Catholic Church was allowed to run its own religious organisations and journals, and freedom of worship was not drastically repressed. The bureaucrats even tolerated the visit of the Polish Pope, John Paul II, in 1979 which brought millions of Poles onto the streets for the first time in a non-party organised event.

This allowed an extremely moderate opposition force to exist which had sufficient power within the system not to want to rock the boat too much. So while the Church often gave some shelter to dissidents facing repression it also issued appeals for moderation at crucial times to defuse the workers' struggles.

But the bureaucratic system cannot tolerate independent activity by the working class, that threatens the party's monopoly of political power. Under capitalism trade unions may be an irritant to the ruling class but they do not threaten its very existence. Trade unions and their bureaucratic leaders can be 'integrated' into the capitalist system.

From its creation Solidarity never questioned the state ownership of the means of production, nor called for a return to capitalism. Its links with the Church and its dislike of any trace of Marxist or socialist terms should not lead socialists in the West to be sceptical of its aims.

The dynamic of Solidarity has been clear. It has increasingly challenged for workers' power. After years of repression and injustice

the working class has moved to use its new-found strength in Solidarity to challenge the whole oppressive system.

As a mass working class movement in a state supposedly run by and for the workers, it was natural for Solidarity to challenge the privileges of the bureaucracy and to champion an end to corruption. This in turn led to a series of challenges to the party's political domination.

Solidarity demanded an end to party nominations for factory directors and for candidates in local elections. When the government used the economic crisis to explain price rises Solidarity demanded full access to economic information and the establishment of workers' self-management in the enterprises. Solidarity asked for its own journals and an end to censorship of the media.

Solidarity's campaigns for radical democracy within the context of a nationalised economy threatened to explode the power of the bureaucracy and to totally undermine the 'leading role of the party'.

It is because the bureaucrats in Poland and in the Kremlin understood the dynamic of Solidarity towards an increasingly comprehensive challenge for workers' power that they tried every possible method of weakening or destroying it.

The bureaucrats tried to use the Church's moderating influence whenever possible; they attempted to use repression against union militants or supporters of KOR, the dissident movement that played a key role in the creation of Solidarity; they tried to split Solidarity by co-opting sections of its leadership into a government of national unity.

And all the time they were preparing to use their last card — the army, which alone among all the

establishment institutions in Poland retained popular respect. General Jaruzelski was made first prime minister and defence minister, and then party leader — the first time someone had held all three posts in an Eastern European state since Stalin!

Conscription periods were extended and special military patrols were sent into the countryside during the autumn supposedly to help food distribution. All the while the plans for military-led repression were being laid. General Siwicki, deputy defence minister, was sent to Moscow for a month just prior to the crackdown, and Marshall Kulikov, head of the Warsaw Pact armed forces, arrived in Warsaw two days before Sunday 13 December to supervise events.

Workers' power is an alternative

Socialist Challenge does not believe that there are only two alternatives for the workers of the world: Stalinism or capitalism. We believe that a system of workers' socialist democracy is both possible and necessary. The Polish workers began to point seriously in that direction before the recent repression was unleashed.

There can be no medium or short-term compromise with the ruling bureaucracy in Poland or the Eastern bloc. There can not be two powers in such a system; the workers and the bureaucrats. The workers' movement has to prepare for the sweeping away of the whole bureaucratic caste from its position of political domination if it is not to be crushed by the bureaucracy's repressive apparatus. Unfortunately the Solidarity activists have only now learned this lesson through the bitter experience of the military repression.

The bureaucracy is unable to utilise the state monopoly of trade, invest-

ment and production resources through serious workers' planning as the latter entails the creative involvement of the workers themselves in the productive and political system. Such an involvement threatens the existence of the bureaucracy.

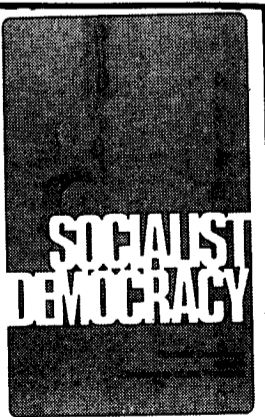
Freed from its tyranny the workers would be able to organise a system of national, regional and local workers' councils to thrash out the needs of society through the mass involvement of the population.

Such an open debate would need the maximum freedom of expression of political views and the right to form political parties — the very opposite of the current practice in so-called 'Communist' countries. All political trends within the workers' councils would be granted full democratic rights as long as they did not take up arms to overthrow the system.

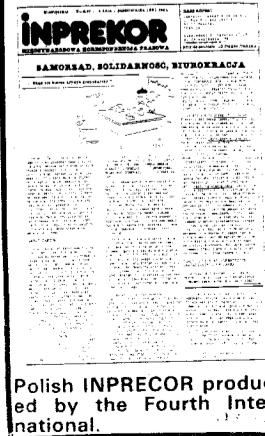
A system of workers' socialist democracy would bring more and more of the population into active participation into the affairs of the state, allowing for an increasing decentralisation of decision-making and the beginnings of the end of any separate State bureaucracy.

Revolutionary socialists would build a party to fight for their ideas within the system of workers' councils, but in an open and democratic debate, not through any insistence on the 'leading role of the party'.

For us socialism means more freedom than under capitalism, not less. It means an extension of democratic rights alongside a socialised economy. That will only be possible in Poland or the other Eastern European countries through a political revolution to overthrow the bureaucratic rulers. Such a system is possible and it would be a fantastic inspiration for workers throughout the world.



Socialist Democracy theses, the Fourth International's model of workers' democracy. Available from Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, London N1 for 30p (+ postage)



Polish INPREKOR produced by the Fourth International.

Czechoslovakia— the day the tanks rolled in

The Polish events serve as a grim reminder of Stalinism's capabilities. MARK JACKSON recalls that last attempt at political revolution in Eastern Europe — Czechoslovakia in 1968 — and how it was crushed.

When it seized power and established its political monopoly in 1948 the Czechoslovak Communist Party (CPC) had a lot going for it. Czechoslovakia was already an advanced capitalist country, unlike most of the rest of Eastern Europe.

The CPC was both the biggest political party in the country and had a genuine mass base inside the working class.

It soon squandered those advantages. For the next five years hundreds of thousands, including top party leaders, went to labour camps and many to their deaths.

The national autonomy promised to Slovakia was destroyed, and the economy was subject to rigid bureaucratic command.

The state of the economy — in 1963 national income actually dropped by 3.7 per cent — led to the growth of a current arguing for a market-oriented reform.

Demands were also raised for the rehabilitation of the victims of the purges. Calls for the rehabilitation of the 'bourgeois nationalists' in Slovakia once again highlighted the question of national rights.

In the Czech Lands students began to demand an end to party control of the official youth union. Two of the leaders of the group known as 'Prague Radicals', Jiri Mueller and Lubos Holocek, were expelled from the university in late 1966.

The campaign for their reinstatement increased political awareness among the students.

Liberals

In 1967 the threads began to come together. The liberals won control of the Writers' Union. Prague students demanding over bad electricity supply were attacked by police, organising a riot. Students organised an occupation in protest.

Then, on 5 January 1968 Alexander Dubcek became first secretary of the CPC. With this election it became clear that an important change was taking place at the top of the party, but between January and April 1968 the new leadership came up with no definite policy.

The population began to take things into their own hands. Although censorship had not yet been formally abolished, writers, journalists, and media workers stopped paying any attention to it.

The mass organisations of farmers, workers and students, which had served as transmission belts for orders from the centre, came under intense pressure from their membership to reverse their role. In some cases entirely new organisations were formed.

A wave of strikes broke out from March onwards against such things as poor wages and unpopular managers.

According to the party daily *Rude Pravo*, at the March party conferences there had been an almost universal demand for free information within the party and the general democratisation of party life.

For the Dubcekites the mass movement was a mixed blessing. On the one hand it ensured their position as party leaders. But it also pushed the other Warsaw Pact regimes into thoroughgoing reformation.

The reformation could not 'reassure' Moscow by cracking down on the mass movement, since that was the only guarantee of their leadership.

Loyalty

So, at the same time as (sincerely) professing loyalty to the Warsaw Pact, and Soviet Union, the Dubcekites took steps such as clearing Soviet agents out of the security services.

This could only increase paranoia in the other East European capitals.

At first glance the Dubcek leadership could have based itself on the mass movement and gone all the way with it. But that would have been against its nature.

Politically the Dubcek leadership was deeply loyal to Moscow, and socially it did not aim at the destruction of bureaucratic power.

The Action Programme, adopted by the April Central Committee plenum, outlined the need for economic reform and federalisation. But it remained firmly wedded to the idea of the monopoly party, the backbone of bureaucratic rule.

The Dubcek leadership could only zigzag between Moscow and the mass movement, trying to keep everyone sweet and ending up satisfying no-one.

As the pressure from the other Warsaw Pact regimes increased, the new leadership began to bend. Over and over again it was summoned to give an account of itself to the other East European countries; on each occasion demonstrators urged them to stand firm.

At one of these encounters, recalls Josef Smrkovsky, who was present, a delegation came 'from nearby Trencin or Zilava' bringing a petition



Russian tanks in Czechoslovakia in 1968 — as unwelcome as the tanks in Poland are today.

'containing 20,000 and a few dozen more signatures'.

The delegation emphasised that 'all the citizens of the region had signed, including the sick. No-one was missing. And when the party leaders came back from Cierna, they were met by a crowd of about 10,000, mostly students, who demanded the truth about the talks'.

On 21 August the Warsaw Pact tanks rolled into Prague. This was meant to be the solution of Brezhnev's Czechoslovak problem.

It would prevent the 14th Party Congress from meeting and force Dubcek and his supporters to resign.

But the Kremlin seriously miscalculated. The party leadership condemned the invasion and the congress was convened.

Although, according to *Pravda*, the invasion had been carried out at the request of 'healthy forces' within Czechoslovakia, the occupiers were unable to find anyone willing to collaborate with them openly.

A general strike broke out and underground television and radio networks co-ordinated a campaign of non-cooperation.

Signposts were removed and soldiers could only get a glass of water at gunpoint.

The glacial hostility of the Czechs and Slovaks, whom, they had been told, they were going to rescue from the grip of counter-revolution baffled

and disturbed many of the Warsaw Pact soldiers. Suicides were reported.

The Soviet leadership under the official Communist movement: all the most important West European CPs condemned the invasion.

But the Dubcekite leaders themselves gave Moscow the solution. A number of them were kidnapped to Moscow where, under threat, they signed the Moscow protocols which bound them to annul the decisions of the 14th Congress, curb the development of alternative political organisations to the CP, muzzle the media and get rid of certain leading figures who were particularly disliked in Moscow.

Of the Dubcekite leaders in Moscow only Frantisek Kriegel refused to sign.

By signing this document the Dubcekites pledged themselves to demobilise the mass movement.

Prague

Over the next few months the repeated mass actions in defence of the Prague Spring took place against the opposition of the party leaders.

From then on it was the workers and students who occupied the centre of the stage. In particular the Prague group played a major part in providing political leadership to the mass movement.

In November 1968

there was a wave of student occupations backed by many workers organisations.

When an attempt was made to remove Dubcek supporter Josef Smrkovsky as chairperson of the Federal Assembly many working class organisations were prepared to strike in his defence.

This was only stopped by Smrkovsky himself going on television to appeal for restraint.

Burned

On 16 January 1969 the student Jan Palach burned himself to death, leaving a note calling for an end to censorship and an unlimited general strike to win this demand. Hundreds of thousands of people attended funeral processions in his honour.

At the end of March 1969 riots in celebration of an ice-hockey win over the Soviet Union were used as a pretext to replace the Dubcek leadership with a new one under Gustav Husak.

This new leadership was prepared to use repression to stamp out opposition.

Some half a million party members were purged, censorship re-introduced and all the independent mass organisations of the Prague Spring dissolved.

Then in 1971 the trials began. Oppositionist Jiri Pelikan estimates that over 3,000 were arrested for political crimes in 1971-2.

The Prague Spring was over.



The 21 demands of the Interfactory strike committee at the Gdansk shipyard

- 1 Acceptance of free trade unions independent of the Communist Party and of enterprises, in accordance with convention No 87 of the International Labour Organisation concerning the right to form free trade unions, which was ratified by the Communist Government of Poland.
- 2 Guarantee of the right to strike and of the security of strikers and those aiding them.
- 3 Compliance with the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech, the press and publication, including freedom for independent publishers, and the availability of the mass media to representatives of all faiths.
- 4 (a) Return of former rights to:
 - People dismissed from work after the 1970 and 1976 strikes,
 - Students expelled from school because of their views.
 (b) Release of all political prisoners, among them Edmund Zadrozynski, Jan Kozlowski and Marek Kozlowski.
- (c) Halt in repression of the individual because of personal conviction.
- 5 Availability to the mass media of information about the formation of the Interfactory Strike Committee and publication of its demands.
- 6 Undertaking of actions aimed at bringing the country out of its crisis situation by the following means:
 - (a) Making public complete information about the social-economic situation.
 - (b) Enabling all sectors and social classes to take part in discussion of the reform programme.
- 7 Compensation of all workers taking part in the strike for the period of the strike, with vacation pay from the Central Council of Trade Unions.
- 8 An increase in the base pay of each worker by 2,000 zlotys (app.£30) a month as compensation for the recent rise in prices.
- 9 Guaranteed automatic increases in pay on the basis of increases in prices and the decline in real income.
- 10 Full supply of food products for the domestic market, with exports limited to surpluses.
- 11 Abolition of 'commercial' prices and of other sales for hard currency in special shops.
- 12 Selection of management personnel on the basis of qualifications, not party membership. Privileges of the secret police, regular police and party apparatus are to be eliminated by equalising family subsidies, abolishing special stores, etc.
- 13 Introduction of food coupons for meat and meat products (during the period in which control of the market situation is regained).
- 14 Reduction in the age for retirement for women to 50 and for men to 55, or after 30 years' employment in Poland for women and 35 years for men, regardless of age.
- 15 Conformity of old-age pensions and annuities with what has actually been paid in.
- 16 Improvements in the working conditions of the health service to insure full medical care for workers.
- 17 Assurances of a reasonable number of places in day-care centres and kindergartens for the children of working mothers.
- 18 Paid maternity leave for three years.
- 19 Decrease in the waiting period for apartments.
- 20 Increase in the commuter's allowance to 100 zlotys from 40, with a supplemental benefit on separation.
- 21 Day of rest on Saturday. Workers in the brigade system or round-the-clock jobs are to be compensated for the loss of free Saturdays with increased leave or other paid time off.



WHAT SOLIDAR

ANNA Walentynowicz was a veteran activist of Poland's free trade union movement and a crane driver at the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk.

Many times the management had victimised Anna for her union activities. On 31 January 1980 a hundred workmates led a four hour strike for her reinstatement after she had been moved from the yard.

In August later that same year the management moved to sack her again, and opened the door to the mighty strike movement that rocked the whole of the country.

But the shipyard strike was not just in defence of Anna Walentynowicz. It also concerned a cost of living rise in wages. On 1 July the Polish government had raised the price of meat, sparking off a series of strikes and walkouts by workers across the country.

In Lublin there was a virtual general strike, and by mid-July more than 51 plants and enterprises in the country had successfully fought for pay rises. A hundred more had taken action before the Gdansk shipyard workers' strike.

Nor was this the first strike wave against price rises. Dozens of workers were killed in riots over prices and wages in 1956, the year that Soviet tanks crushed the Hungarian uprising. There were similar revolts in 1970 and 1976.

Each time the workers achieved some economic success, but government promises of greater union and political freedoms were always broken.

There was a profound sense of anger among the Polish workers in the summer of 1980. They were disgusted by the corruption and injustice of the system they lived under, and they sensed that they alone had the power to change it.

They had learned the lessons from their previous struggles. These became the guiding principles of the 1980 August strike wave and for the subsequent development of Solidarity itself: the need for an independent working class movement, for unity of the workers and of other social groups behind the workers, and for the fullest workers' democracy.

Solidarity — a mass working class movement

The interfactory strike committee established in the Gdansk shipyards drew up a list of 21 demands on the authorities (see box). These ranged from improvements in pay and pensions, freedom of speech and the right to strike, and an end to repression. But the first, and most important demand, was for the right to form independent trade unions.

The old national trade union centre (CRZZ) was completely bureaucratised and incapable of defending the workers' interests. Its officials were nominated by the ruling Communist Party and it concerned itself mainly with social facilities and improving production. Above all the Polish workers wanted new trade unions to fight for their interests.

When the government signed the Gdansk agreement and similar ones across the country in August 1980, it accepted the principle of independent unions with the right to strike. It spent the following months desperately trying to stop the workers from implementing that principle.

It attempted to prevent Solidarity being legally registered, it arrested



Anna Walentynowicz

established the workers' right to strike and not to be victimised by the management.

As the economic crisis intensified it campaigned for fair rationing an end to the special privileges of the bureaucratic elite. The workers' Jelenia Gora held a long strike early last year for the removal of corrupt local officials and for the special hospitals of the military and police to become part of the health service.

Former TV and radio minister Maciej Szczepanski was arrested after a public outcry over his luxury villa and debauched lifestyle. More than five thousand party members and figures in the national and local apparatus were sacked for corruption due to Solidarity's pressure for justice.

Solidarity also challenged the ruling party and the government to give the full facts to the workers about the economy. Workers' councils for self-management sprang up across the country in the major enterprises, the workers attempted to develop control of the economy and to run in the workers' interests.

In the factories and the mines the workers argued for re-organising the economic priorities. As Silesia's Solidarity leader Andrzej Rozplochowski said: 'In the future there will be no planning without us.'

Solidarity demanded the right to have its own newspapers and journals. The army and party newspapers and the radio and TV were all run by the party apparatus and subject to heavy bureaucratic censorship.

In April 1981, some eight months after the Gdansk agreement, the government reluctantly agreed to the establishment of *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* (Weekly Solidarity) with a half-million print-run, and *Jednota* (Unity) in the Szczecin region with a print-run of some 100,000 copies.

Solidarity was also allowed to produce local newsletters and its own internal news agency, AS, which sent out news reports from each region of Solidarity.

But even these officially tolerated journals came under fire from the authorities. In November 1980 Solidarity printer in Warsaw, Jan Narozniak, was arrested for publishing a state document outlining the authorities' plans for harassment and undermining the union movement. He was only freed after a major strike threat.

ITY STANDS FOR



legally registered, thanks to the support of the workers. Soon Rural Solidarity could boast of over two million members allied to Solidarity.

Students too fought successfully to establish their own independent students association, thanks to the help of Solidarity. Throughout the 1980 strike wave students and academics had attempted to help Solidarity establish the national union.

In November 1980 medical students had occupied the Medical Academy in Gdansk in support of the health workers who were demanding higher wages and an increase in the budget for the health service.

Tram and bus drivers stopped work in Gdansk, Warsaw, Poznan and Lublin in support of the students and health workers, in an incident which symbolised the unity of the workers and other social layers to help the lower paid and to improve the health care for the whole population.

Solidarity — a model of workers' democracy

From the outset of the 1980 August strike wave Solidarity has presented an inspiring model of workers' democracy. The Gdansk inter-factory strike committee comprised democratically elected delegations from each striking workplace. Each of these delegates was subject to recall.

All the meetings of the committee were taped by the delegates so that the workers in the enterprises could hear the debates.

It is well known that the negotiations with the government ministers which ended the strikes in Gdansk were relayed 'live' over a public address system for all the workers in the shipyard to follow. As a result every worker was able to hear every word from their own representatives and from the government. There were no secret deals cobbled together behind the backs of the workers, and no

Declaration of Solidarity Congress, 10 September 1981

The supreme aim of the independent trade union Solidarity is to create dignified conditions of life in an economically and politically sovereign Poland, a life freed of poverty, of exploitation, of fear and deceit, in a society organised democratically and on the basis of law. Today the nation expects:

1 The improvement of food supplies by the establishment of control over production, distribution, and pricing, in collaboration with the Solidarity union of individual farmers.

2 A reform of the economy, through the creation of authentic self-management councils in the factories and through the liquidation of the party 'Nomenklatura' (Ed note: the system of party appointments to key jobs).

3 The truth through social control of the mass media and the suppression of falsehoods in education and Polish culture.

4 Democracy through the introduction of free elections to the Sejm (parliament) and the people's councils.

5 Justice through the assurance to each of equality before the law, the freedom of prisoners of opinion, and the defence of persons charged for their political, editorial or trade union activities.

6 The protection of the nation's health, through the protection of the environment, an increase in the funds channelled into medical services, and a guarantee to the handicapped of the rights which are due to them in society.

7 Coal for the population and industry, through giving a guarantee to the miners of decent living and working conditions.

We will achieve these aims through the unity of the trade union and the solidarity of its members. The activities of a variety of forces creating a feeling of exterior danger will not remove from us the desire to struggle for the ideals of August 1980, for the implementation of the Gdansk, Szczecin and Jastrzebie accords.

most daring democratic experiment of all. Their negotiations with the government over corrupt local officials were broadcast through the public address system of all the major enterprises. Further, Solidarity telephone engineers also hooked them up to the phone lines so that anyone in the region could listen in to the 'live' negotiations by dialling a special phone number!

Free access to all information and accountability of all representatives — those are the democratic principles of Solidarity. These principles combined with Solidarity's imaginative use of technology to strengthen workers' democracy would be more than welcome in our own trade unions. Perhaps the Terry Duffys and Frank Chapples of this world, who have been quick to claim support for Solidarity, should take note.

Solidarity is a mass democratic movement of the workers, fighting for the interests of the working people of Poland. And that is precisely why the Kremlin and the Polish ruling hierarchy sent the military in to crush it.

secret clauses in the agreements.

This approach was continued at subsequent meetings of Solidarity. Its national congress was opened to the world's press and the proceedings were taped by delegates for report-back meetings. This enabled all the workers to be aware of the inevitable and healthy differences and debates within the union leadership.

The structures of Solidarity were created with such democratic considerations in mind. Rather than craft-based unions, Solidarity developed regional cross-industrial organisation enabling the strongest sectors to aid the less well-organised workers. Great care was taken to ensure that workplaces were adequately represented within the regional and national structures, and that delegates were subject to recall.

In January last year in Bielsko-Biala Solidarity members staged the

Solidarity's first national congress last summer in Gdansk issued the call for free elections and an end to the system of only party-appointed candidates. The right of workers to run their own factories was also to be

developed through ending the party's exclusive right to nominate the managers of the enterprises. Solidarity demanded the right to have its own candidates for the job (see box).



Solidarity — winning the support of all social layers

But Solidarity is not simply an organisation for those workers with industrial muscle, greedily demanding more power. It is also notable for the help and support it gave to other sectors of the population, in particular the farmers and the students.

There are more than three million small farmers in Poland. For years they had been discriminated against by the authorities. They saw the development of Solidarity as their opportunity to get organised. In December 1980 there was the first national meeting of representatives of the small farmers, and in early 1981 there followed a wave of occupations

of public buildings and offices by Rural Solidarity supporters demanding official registration of the union.

Many groups of workers gave support to the farmers' protests with their own strikes. Then on 19 March last year the authorities violently broke up a sit-in by Rural Solidarity and Solidarity members in Bydgoszcz. Activists were badly beaten up, including Jan Rulewski, the militant leader of Bydgoszcz Solidarity.

Solidarity responded with the threat of an all-out general strike to protest the beatings and the failure to register Rural Solidarity. By early May the small farmers' union was



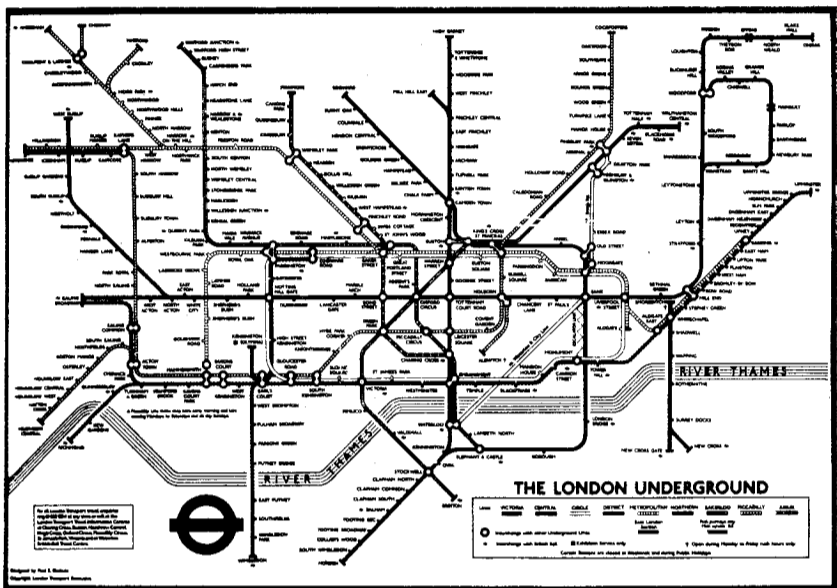
Graphic: PETER KENNARD



NOT A PENNY ON THE FARES!

LAST month the House of Lords upheld an appeal court ruling that London's fare policy was illegal. This decision was a blow both to working people in the city and the Labour Greater London Council who introduced it.

Tessa van Gelderen interviews **DAVID WETZEL**, chairperson of the GLC Transport Committee and argues why the GLC's approach is disastrous if it wants to successfully overturn the Law Lords' ruling.



Time to take a stand

By Tessa van Gelderen

THE Labour-controlled Greater London Council is in disarray — not because of the ruling of five Law Lords but because the Labour Group has no strategy for struggle. Labour came into office pledged to carry out a fairly radical manifesto.

Ken Livingstone said, just prior to the May elections in an interview in Socialist Challenge: 'The government has the power to prevent us building new housing, extending the tube, buying new buses or undertaking any works of improvement or tending the environment. The new council will have no alternative but to lead a massive and continuing campaign to mobilise public opinion and force the reversal of these policies.'

Unfortunately the GLC has not led or organised such a campaign. One by one it has allowed its policies to be torn to shreds.

Housing estates were transferred to borough councils; school dinner prices were not reduced; council houses have been sold — and squatters evicted. But the reduction of London Transport fares was one of the most popular measures that a local authority has taken for many, many years.

Anyone who lives or works in London — except members of the House of Lords and the stockbrokers of Bromley — is delighted to have some respite from what has been a huge financial burden.

Now this policy is under direct attack from the state in the form of the House of Lords' judgement. What is the GLC's response? David Wetzel, chairperson of the Transport Committee, says: 'The only way we're going to reverse the decision is by changing the law through Parliament.' This is to reject any idea of a mass campaign that mobilises the organised labour movement. Instead he wants a campaign of letter writing to MPs.'

David Wetzel makes some concessions to the role of the unions when he says: 'Obviously the unions must get involved and not just the transport unions ... we welcome the support of all unions ... but if you're talking about industrial muscle you must talk to the unions and not to me because I haven't got industrial muscle at my command.'

Gone unfortunately are the fine words of Ken Livingstone about leading campaigns against the government. Write letters instead to your MP and let the unions get on with it. Iltyd Harrington best summed up the GLC's dilemma when he spoke to transport workers who have lobbied

the GLC. He said: 'We (the GLC) need you more than you (the unions) need us.'

So why has the GLC got itself into such a sorry mess? The left inside the Labour Party, both in the GLC Group and in the London Labour Party, never had a clear strategy for mobilising the rank and file of the trade unions and Labour supporters. They have organised their base only through the council and Labour Party meetings, pressure and protest politics will not get this or any government to change the law unless there is mass mobilisations and action by the working class itself.

The Labour GLC pledged to carry out its policies against all opposition, against the government, against the courts, against the police, could have provided a real lead to London's working class. Now it has been left bleating how 'unfair' the House of Lords is. Five thousands jobs will be lost, fares doubled and then up again this year alone, transport services slashed and the GLC really has nothing to offer.

The transport workers involved do want to fight. They want to save their jobs and provide a cheap and adequate service to Londoners. Tube and bus workers are planning a one day stoppage which if it goes ahead will be the very first strike of underground and bus workers together. This is part of the campaign the unions have launched against the Law Lords' decision.

It is this campaign that the GLC should throw its full weight behind — not an 'all party public transport campaign' such as David Wetzel proposes. Since when have the Tories and the SDP been allies of the workers? They're rubbing their hands with glee at the sorry mess the GLC has got itself into.

Instead, the GLC should be initiating a mass labour movement conference to organise solidarity with the transport unions if and when they take action. The GLC should shout loud and clear that there will be not one penny on the fares, there will not be one job lost, there will not be one cut in bus or tube and then they should organise the labour movement to support it. If the GLC fail to do that — and sadly it looks that way — then not only will its fares policy be in tatters but its very survival will be in doubt.

If the GLC make a clear fight, then it will give a much needed lead to take on this government. It certainly has nothing to lose and everything to gain if it takes such a course.

'Five vandals in ermine'

What have been the effects of the GLC's cheap fares policy and what will be the effects of the Law Lords' judgement?

The policies that we've been pursuing in public transport, that is, improving services and reducing fares, is not a uniquely socialist policy. It's a good common sense public transport policy for any great city and one that's been carried out in most of the great cities in Western Europe and also many in the United States.

The average level of subsidy in Western Europe is something like 50 per cent of costs from public funds. Even with our fares policy we were only planning in 1982 to meet 46 per cent of the costs from public funds. So in terms of what other countries have been doing our policy's quite modest.

The important thing about it was that it was working. Eleven per cent of extra passengers on buses and 7 per cent extra on our London Transport trains as opposed to expected declines. We were expecting a decline because of the effects of the recession and also fewer visitors coming to London. There's been a bigger decline this year than was actually anticipated. We've reversed that and we've now got a swing back to public transport. We think that's important.

In the long term it would have been more as people got used to the cheaper passes because they are even cheaper than the day by day fares, particularly on the buses and the use of season tickets; when people had to make decisions about whether or not to renew their cars we think they would have swung to public transport.

We've increased bus miles by 7 million and train miles by 400,000. We were increasing services by allowing no overtime or rest day working and secondly by recruiting staff.

The result of the judgement by the House of Lords is that fares have got to be up at least double and our legal opinion at the moment is more than double in 1982. Legal opinion again is that we can't continue to give old age pensioners their concessions.

That has to be picked up by the boroughs and it seems unlikely that all the boroughs will agree to do that, particularly in a situation where they are cutting back on home helps for people who are housebound — how can they then justify extra expenditure for the ones who aren't housebound?

In services it means drastic cuts.

We're already talking in terms of closing stations and branch lines, and reducing the scheduled bus mileage by a quarter. That would be over three years. It would mean 5,000 jobs lost — mainly through natural wastage but some redundancies in specific areas.

No firm decisions have been made and I would like the Labour Group to actually vote against any fares increase or cuts in services and to maintain the policy on which we were elected.

What do you think the implication of that would be?

Well it would still be that London Transport would cut services and increase fares, because not all the Labour Group would vote for that policy in council. It only needs five people to vote with the Tories and they would get the budget they want.

I think it's right and proper that Labour makes a fight and says we're not going down the road.

Do you think you can have a campaign to change the decision?

Yes, but the only way we're going to reverse the decision is by changing the law, through Parliament. The sort of campaign that I would like to see is to get people to write to their MPs and to write to the boroughs and really criticise the judges. The whole basis of this judgement is that they've overthrown what people have voted for. We need a campaign to get people to demand what they've voted for.

I'm encouraged by my postbag that people are defending us and also in the newspapers, the number of letters defending our fares policy. We need a change of law and our objective is to convince this government that it is essential to go back to where everybody assumed we were before the judges ... I describe them as the five vandals in ermine who got together and actually reversed what everybody assumed what the law was.

It's important that the trade unions join us. We need a GLC campaign, we need a labour movement campaign, we need an all party public transport campaign. Obviously the unions must get involved and not just the transport unions because other unions also have workers who need public transport.

The transport unions — they don't want to be stuck in traffic jams all day long. These are the implications. When you're talking about cutting out whole bus routes people have got no choice but to get a bike, a motor

bike or a car to make their journeys. Therefore you're talking about more congestion, more accidents, more pollution on the streets of London.

It's essential that the legislation is reversed and I think the easiest way to get that is probably old age pensioners, who can be used as a battering ram, and once you've got the door open other things must be included as well.

David Howell, Minister of Transport, doesn't understand the implications of the law. He's said we need only put the fares up by 60 per cent. None of our legal advice agrees with that.

What he's chosen is to ignore is that London Transport also had a deficit last year before we took over and our increase on the rates, the supplementary rates was to help wipe out that deficit as well as to pay for our fares policy.

The supplementary rate raised over £220m. Only £60 odd million of that was for the fares, about £5 million of it was for the extra services and the other £48.5m was for the deficit and the £111m that we lost in government grants.

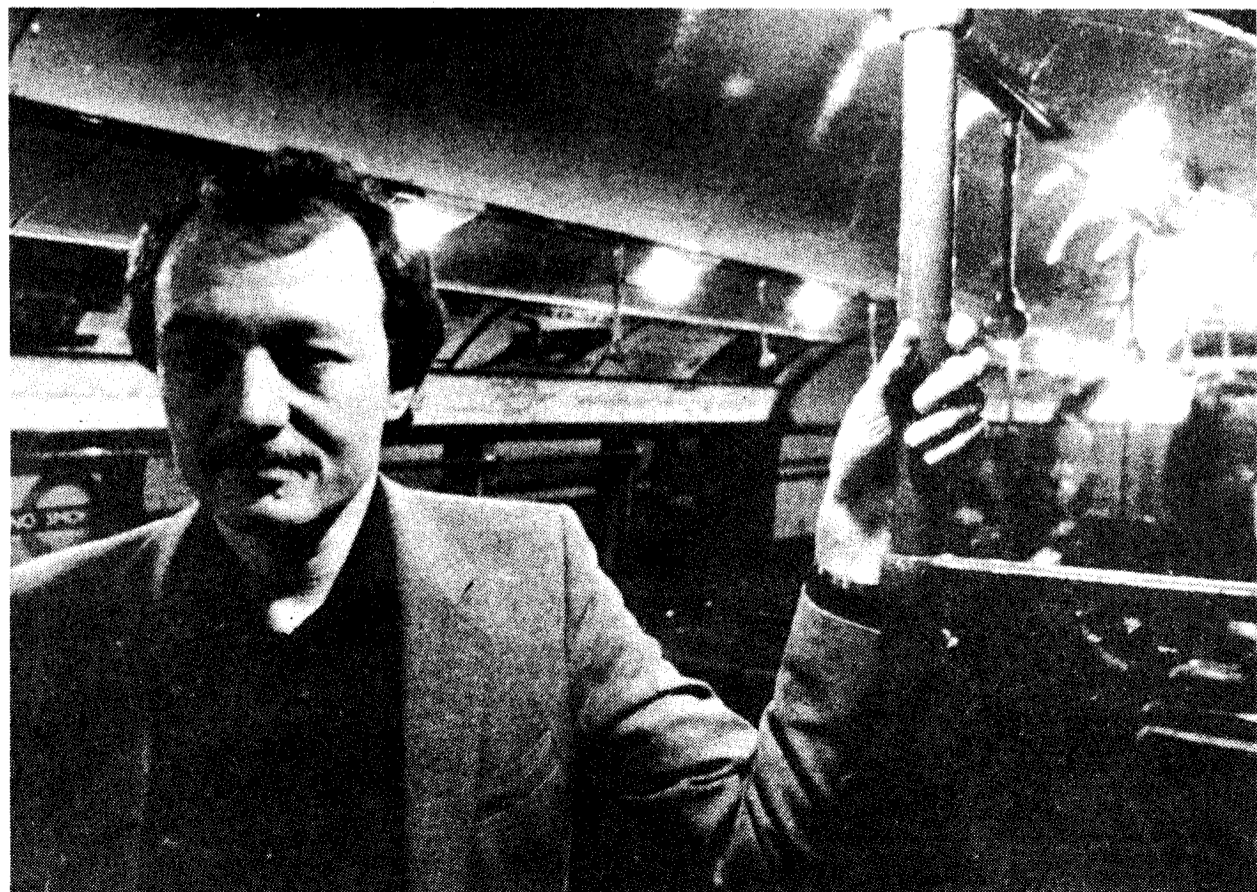
But there does seem to be a lot of glee in Westminster over this judgement. This campaign you're proposing is all very well, but when it comes down to it do you think that it's really going to change the law?

We welcome the support of all unions — and I stress not just the transport unions. But if you want to talk about industrial muscle you must talk to the unions and not to me because I haven't got industrial muscle at my command.

This government isn't going to last forever. When this government goes, whoever replaces it must give us a change in the law eventually. But I'm more concerned that we get a change in the law now, to campaign between now and 21 March to see that the law is changed so that London Transport can carry out the policies that were working, that's the beauty of them, we were actually proving that they work.

I want the GLC to vote against an increase in the fares. That's my position personally. I'm opposed to any increase in fares and I'm going to vote against any.

Obviously if there's going to be an increase in fares, I would want it to be as small as possible. We're hoping to organise this campaign through the GLC, if not the GLC then through the labour movement.



Ken Livingstone: how much longer can he hang on?

Left launch Labour Liaison '82

By Toni Gorton

'WE ARE all aware that the decisions taken at the 1982 conference and the Party's success in achieving unity around those decisions will greatly influence Labour's prospects.

'Our prime objective is to secure the defeat of the Tories and the Liberal/SDP Alliance, and the election of a Labour Government with a working majority.'

With these words leading supporters of Tony Benn are calling for a new body in the labour movement to be launched 23 January. 'Labour Liaison 1982' is meant to be a 'democratic forum representative of the Left in the Labour Party, trade unions, the parliamentary Labour Party and the Regions...'

Socialist Challenge welcomes this. It marks a 'first' in the history of the Labour Party in proposing to organise the fight for socialist policies in the unions.

The big question for the left in the Labour Party and the trade unions is the degree to which it possesses a real base in the working class and social movements and what it intends to do to mobilise that base.

Will the left challenge the parliamentary terms of battle being insisted upon by the right wing?

Unity

Tribune has already given its answer: prostration in front of the right. Talk of 'low profiles' and 'unity' are just other terms for capitulation to right wing policies, abandonment of the democratic gains of the last year and collaboration in disorganising and disuniting the ranks.

The blocking of Bermondsey prospective candidate, Peter Tatchell, threatens to be followed by challenges to the democratically nominated Bob Clay of Sunderland and Pat Wall of Bradford.

The decision by the NEC to 'investigate' *Militant* promises mayhem in the constituencies as this is just a code-word for witch-hunts against all currents of left political

opinion in the party.

The misnamed 'Solidarity' group of MPs is openly campaigning for an overturn of the democratic gains.

SDP

The meeting of the right wing Trade Unions for a Labour Victory (TULV) this week threatened to cut off funds to the Labour Party from the unions if the left refuses to give up the fight against these attacks.

This sort of unity is the one beloved of the officials and top leaders of the movement. They take the genuine sentiment for working class solidarity to confront the Tories and use it against the desperate need of the class for a programme and leadership that is capable of actually winning against the Tories and the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

What sort of victory against the SDP is a re-run of Callaghan-type governments, that is, a Labour government on SDP policies? No, the only answer is to drive deeper and deeper into the movement to create a new leadership.

We cannot be diverted by charges of 'splitters'. The right have been the main culprits for splits in the past. They will do everything in their power to retain control and then split if they fail. The weaker of them has already started this process in forming the SDP.

The success of the SDP is not undermined by Labour returning to discredited policies. A Labour Party which is seen to be combative and boldly embracing decisive answers to the key questions of the day can polarise the base of the



Mass unemployment marches such as in Liverpool '81 show potential for building base in the unions

Liberal-SDP Alliance.

Left policies can inspire masses of people. This is the lesson of the anti-missile movement. If the trade union and Labour leaders seriously organised a mass campaign around conference policy for unilateral disarmament, the SDP-Liberal Alliance would be sharply divided. The Denis Healey's of this world would also be more than a little miffed.

The strategic orientation of the Labour left must be to deepen its base in the trade unions. The deputy leadership contest showed just how suitable a case for constitutional reforms the unions are.

LSE

Fine words don't even scratch the surface. The Laurence Scott dispute has been at the sharp end of the struggle to democratise the unions, making them responsive to the needs of workers in struggle.

Engineering union officials, Boyd and Duffy, who attempted to sabotage the LSE strike have been seen by over 1000 engineering union branches as a power that has to be removed. The Bennite left must make this struggle its own.

Early in November, the Scottish Labour Co-ordinating Committee in Scotland set itself the target of ending 'non-political trade unionism'. Its aim was to persuade hundreds of thousands of inactive members of trade unions to fight for Labour conference policies.

It seeks to establish

Labour Party workplace branches as well as the democratic exercise of the block vote at TUC and Labour Party conferences.

This is the background to the Labour Liaison 1982 campaign invitation to the Broad Lefts in the unions.

However this runs counter to the approach of many CP type broad lefts which are tied to the fortunes of top union officials.

What is required are new-style broad lefts which will take on these leaders as part of the fight

for democracy, accountability and a socialist programme.

Job

How organised should the new campaign be? This will depend on how seriously it takes its job of combatting and defeating the right wing in the labour movement.

The right are permanently organised from top to bottom of the trade unions and Labour Party. Any effective struggle against them needs

equivalent organisation.

The strength of the British labour movement lies in its organisation which can be brought to the side of the Left through an affiliation campaign for example.

The Labour Liaison campaign cannot remain at the level of those invited at this point, but must go on to win participation from union and party branches, women's sections, and so on.

It should be open to all currents in the labour movement.

Its first task must be to

meet the witch-hunt, not by finding excuses for Foot but by calling for a recall Labour conference.

Already the LP national executive have received hundreds of protest motions from constituency parties and trade unions.

Socialist Challenge supporters from the trade unions will be at the January conference and look forward to rebuilding the sort of momentum behind left policies that almost brought Benn to victory in the deputy leadership contest.



No more Wilson/Callaghan governments



Bennites must deepen roots of mass campaigns in trade unions

Five priorities are laid out for Labour Liaison 1982:

- Assisting Labour's political and industrial campaigns against the Tories and the Liberal/SDP Alliance, including the May elections, and fighting on such issues as unemployment, wages, attacks on unions, local councils, social security and women's rights.
- Implementing Labour's policy on disarmament, the alternative economic strategy, public ownership and control, public spending and the Common Market.
- Defending the electoral college and mandatory reselection and extending accountability into the Parliamentary Labour Party.
- Reversing the right's gains in the national executive at this year's party conference and preparing for possible contests for the leadership or deputy leadership.
- Working for an atmosphere of tolerance within the party.

Invitations to attend have been sent to some fifty organisations, including left trade unions, the Broad Left groupings in the AUEW, engineering, health workers, electrical and plumbing, post office unions and others.

In addition a number of national organisations have been invited such as Tribune Group of MPs, Labour Co-ordinating Committee, National Organisation of Labour Students, Militant, Socialist Organiser, Labour CND and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign.

Socialist Challenge News

FUND DRIVE '82

By Pauline Ryan

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE is this year launching a fund drive to raise £68,000. This is one of the most ambitious tasks we've ever set ourselves. So, in order to get it off to a flying start, we want to raise the first £7,000 during January.

Already our readers have shown what they can do in response to our emergency Poland appeal, which was completed in less than a week.

£68,000 may sound a lot of money, but it is, in fact, only just over half of what we need. The rest, £52,000 has to come in from sales of Socialist Challenge. What, you may ask, are we proposing to spend £120,000 on over the coming year, and how does this figure compare with last year?

In the year to October 1981 we raised £38,100 in sales and £51,700 in donations — a total of £89,800. This year, we want a 30 per cent increase in both sales and donations. This may not be in line with Maggie Thatcher's desire for only 3 per cent rises but we need it to help defend the causes we've fought for in the past.

Within 12 hours of the news of the army takeover in Poland we had thrown resources into organising support for Solidarity. Socialist Challenge supporters made up a sizeable chunk of the first 500 strong picket.

The Xmas issue of Socialist Challenge had four extra pages and our supporters were well in evidence at the 15,000 strong demonstration through central London on 20 December. This year our campaigns in support of the Polish people will cost at least £800 a quarter.

In CND we will be fighting for the biggest possible turnout on the International Day of Action against missile madness planned for 6 June. All these activities will cost us at least £800 a quarter.



The Central American solidarity organisations have formed a united front against US intervention in Central America. A big labour movement conference is being planned for February with speakers like Scargill and Benn invited. In March there will be a national demonstration in solidarity with those struggling in Central America and the Caribbean. Socialist Challenge supporters will be helping to build these activities against the lunacy of Thatcher's and Reagan's warmongering.

Last year ten hunger strikers died fighting for the liberation of Ireland. Socialist Challenge has consistently supported and reported on the events in Ireland. We don't expect to stop this year! Our support, including active assistance to People's Democracy in Ireland itself, will cost another £600 a quarter.

Fund drive targets 1982

Area	Amount
Scotland	£2,540
North-West	3,840
North-East	880
West Yorkshire	2,320
South Yorkshire	1,400
West Midlands	3,420
East Midlands	1,840
South Wales	2,280
South & West England	2,900
West & North-West London	4,936
North London	3,992
East London	5,476
South London	5,108
To be raised nationally	£27,068
Total	£68,000

Our support for women's rights will continue. In particular we are actively involved in campaigning for a woman's right to work. Our supporters in the Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work back the committee's demand to turn the Labour Party's festival planned for 5 June into a massive demonstration. During the year Socialist Challenge will be sponsoring a tour by a woman mineworker from the United States. Our work in support of women's rights will cost £800 each quarter.

Then there is the cost of our solidarity with trade union struggles and the fight to build a left wing in the labour movement. Last year Socialist Challenge reporters went to assist the struggles at Laurence Scott, Lee Jeans, Staffa, Longbridge and at the many demonstrations that took place against unemployment.

This year opens up with a bang with the Ford strike, where we have already assigned reporters — with the miners and train drivers to follow. We want to be there both to bring you the facts and to use Socialist Challenge to build support for these struggles.

We want better photographs, we want up to the minute reporting, we want to be able to travel around the country, to the pits, the depots and plants. All that takes money — at least £2,000 a quarter.

Our voice should be heard where the enemies of socialism are doing their best to strangle it — in the Labour Party. The present witch-hunt against the supporters of *Militant*, Peter Tatchell and Tariq Ali has to be met with a united response from the left. Socialist Challenge intends to continue its coverage of what is happening in the Labour Party, both past and present.

Socialist Challenge was born during Grunwicks, and we've been battling ever since. We are certainly not going to give up now, in the face of Foot's onslaught and Kinnock's treachery.

On the contrary, we intend to intensify the battle:



- on behalf of our readers
- on behalf of the Laurence Scott and Ford workers
- on behalf of the Irish prisoners
- on behalf of women in struggle
- on behalf of the Bradford Twelve

In short, on behalf of all the causes and struggles that Foot turns his back on.

This is where all the money goes. We estimate that the production of the paper alone will cost about £77,000 next year. This will not even be covered by income from sales, and we don't have rich backers, or income from capitalist advertising.

On top of this we want to spend £23,000 on political campaigns.

When we say Socialist Challenge is a fighting paper we mean that because we *organise* not just passively report.

Finally our administration will cost a further £5,000 a quarter. This covers rent, rates, office costs and such like.

There are three ways that YOU can help.

1. **Help us sell.** Take out a subscription if you haven't got one. Take a bundle of papers to sell

(you can arrange this either direct with us, or through your local sellers). We want to build up a network of sellers. If you already sell try to build up to at least six sales — unless you already sell more of course!

2. **Give a regular donation.** The vast bulk of our money comes from supporters who regularly pay £5, £10, £15 and in some cases even £40 a month. They do this either through local sellers, or direct to us by standing order. (Thanks to our supporters who have already responded to our appeals for standing orders — you are the backbone of our finances.)

3. **Become an active supporter.** Get in touch with us by filling in the form in the paper and sending it to us. We will then put you in contact with other local supporters.

Please be patient if you live in an area where we don't yet have an organised group of supporters. We've had a lot of requests lately, and it takes time to deal with them all. It must be a sign that our message is getting through!

1982 will be a year to remember. Socialist Challenge will be there but we need your money!

SUBSCRIBE TO SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

Stewards Committee takes Socialist Challenge

For new readers we are offering TEN ISSUES of Socialist Challenge for the incredibly low price of £2 (real value £3.15!)

With 12 month subscriptions we are giving away a free copy of the *Big Red Diary 1982* (usual price £2.50).

Complete the form below and rush your order to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques and POs payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.

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 Delete as appropriate.

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For multi-reader institutions double the above rates.

Following their strike at MacPherson's Paints (see p13) the TGWU stewards committee at the factory has asked for four copies of Socialist Challenge a week from local sellers as a regular order. This is on top of the excellent factory gate sales local supporters have had there every Friday morning.

As TGWU steward Kevin Colleran says: 'Socialist Challenge is an excellent newspaper. With the right-wing bias of the rest of the press its one of the only ways workers can get their message across to other militants fighting for the same things they are.'

'Education is very important right now to convince people of the necessity of fighting back and the paper is a great way to do this.'



Train drivers on the offensive

By D Ellis, NUR member

IF THERE'S one thing Britain's train drivers are adamant about, it's that no one is going to take away their hard won right to an eight-hour work day. 'If we lose this, we're turning the clock back over half a century,' many drivers explain. And to prevent just that, drivers are now on an overtime ban and are working to rule. This action will lead to a two-day strike on 13 and 14 of January.

British Rail knows that the stakes are high in this battle. The Board has already announced that 38,000 jobs need to be chopped from the 190,000 strong workforce. If it can crack the nut of work practices and keep down the wages, then maybe its books will be balanced a bit better — but it will be at the expense of railworkers.

With union leaders like Sidney Weighell, general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, BR's job is that much easier. Train guards were astonished to read in the national papers that their eight-hour day had already been sold down the river by the NUR executive.

The enormous drive to increase productivity on the railway is tied up with last year's pay deal. Then

it was agreed that 8 per cent of an 11 per cent award would be paid immediately, but the remaining 3 per cent would be linked to five productivity exercises.

Four of these proposals were to be 'discussed'. Only one was to be 'negotiated': the 'open station' concept which will eliminate ticket collectors and put their work on to the already over-burdened guard.

Agreed

The BRB has now transformed the agreement drawn up by the arbitration service, ACAS, in August which stated that discussions on rostering should be concluded by October 1981 to read that flexible rostering must be agreed before the addi-



Photo: CHRISTOPHER DAVIES (Report)

Ray Buckton — no deals with Sidney Weighell!

tional 3 per cent is paid. It has also just announced that the 39 hour week — another part of the August agreement — will probably not be implemented

from 4 January, 1982. The membership of the driver's union, ASLEF, armed with a clear policy from its national conference that under no cir-

cumstances will the eight-hour day be rescinded is determined to fight.

Ray Buckton, the union's general secretary, will be more likely to continue to say thumbs down to the split shifts, the continental system where Sunday becomes part of the ordinary work week and to all the other things that go along with BR's idea of flexibility, if the membership makes its voice heard loud and clear.

The two-day strike can be used to prepare for further all-out industrial action against not only the flexible rostering, but the one-person operated trains, the open station concept and all the other dirty productivity tricks that are on the cards if the new rostering gets through.

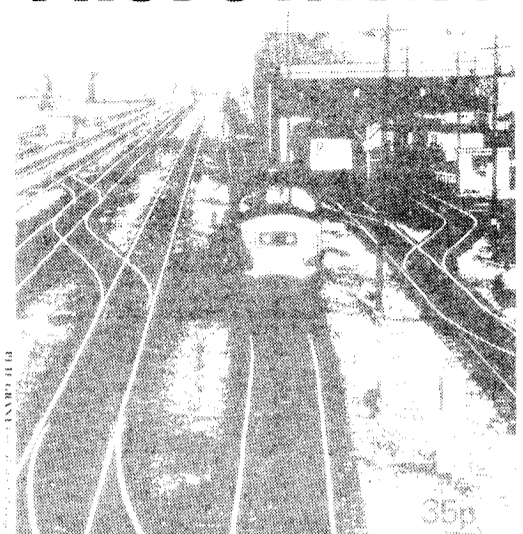
Limb

The drivers' shouldn't be left out on a limb. NUR members recognise — even if the executive doesn't — that a victory by ASLEF over the eight-hour day will make it more difficult for the BRB to push through their plans for fewer workers, with more work for them to do.

NUR members shouldn't wait for picket lines to go up by ASLEF members (and pickets are a must!). Sympathy strike action would show Sidney Weighell that he would do better in starting to fight for our interests, instead of making his public appeals to ASLEF to call off its action.

The membership of all concerned unions should be kept informed. Today we hear about the com-

HOW TO FIGHT 'PRODUCTIVITY'



Socialist Challenge PAMPHLET FOR RAILWORKERS

What policies are needed to tackle productivity in the rail industry? Order now 'How to fight productivity', a Socialist Challenge pamphlet for railworkers. 35p plus 10p p&P.

Cheques/Postal orders to Cardinal Enterprises Ltd. Available from: Rail pamphlet, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

promises from the Fleet Street press. As long as ASLEF is involved in industrial action in defence of its members' rights, regular mass meetings involving all railworkers will be vital.

Our fight against productivity is not a new one. Workers in every industry are faced with similar battles from the Ford workers to the miners. Every

railworker should do their utmost to win support throughout the trade union movement and the Labour Party in defence of our conditions and living standards.

Never before has the need to transform the Triple Alliance — involving railworkers, steelworkers and miners — into a fighting force been more urgent!

Paint workers win reduction in hours

ALMOST a thousand workers at MacPherson's Paints, Bury, the largest factory in the area, went on strike for over a week in December to fight management's offer of 8 per cent plus an extra day's holiday.

At the end of the dispute the workers got the beginnings of a move towards a 35 hour week and two more holidays a year, but no increase on the wages offer. MICK WILSON, transport union convenor at MacPherson's spoke to Socialist Challenge about the dispute.

'The workers were angry with the company offer. Productivity in the plant was increased by 14 per cent during the last year. And that despite a reduction in the workforce by 6 per cent through natural wastage. We didn't want to settle for less than the rate of inflation, 11½ per cent, and also make a start on reducing the working week to 35 hours.'

At the mass meeting before the strike we got unanimous backing of our members for industrial action. And this despite the fact that Christmas was approaching and the weather turning cold

I think there's been a real turn around in the working class in the last three months. People are now ready to challenge the employer for a decent wage.

After the mass meeting we put fifteen pickets on the gate for the duration of the strike. Support was solid. Not a single lorry went through and we really appreciated the support

of the union. The district official stood by us all the way.

At the end of the first week, the company made approaches on the weekend and their offer showed some concessions to us. They stuck to the same wage offer but they made a firm offer on the 35 hour week, something that unions all over the country are fighting for.

On the Monday at the mass meeting the workers decided to settle for this and although we didn't get everything we wanted there's a really good feeling on the shop floor for the concessions we did win. We're a lot more confident now. We're a lot better prepared if we need to be for next time.'



Mick Wilson (right) convenor at MacPherson's

Dear Brothers and Sisters

The pickets from Laurence Scott would like to thank all who contributed to the Christmas appeal for monies and toys for the strikers' families.

The main contributions were from the workers from British Steel, Sheffield and British Steel, Stockbridge who between them provided a toy, a selection box, £2 bag of sweets, and a £10 voucher for each of the strikers' children. They also brought 220 turkeys for all our Christmas dinners which went down a treat. In addition £10 for each picket to be spent on a little Christmas spirit.

Let's hope the new year brings all trade unions behind us in our fight for jobs at LSE and that we will win our fight. Can't thank you enough.

JOHN McNEIL
PETE HAYES
For the LSE strike committee

Miners: mobilise now

By Brian Grogan

MINERS will vote massively for strike action in their ballot on 14 and 15 January in pursuit of their claim for £100 minimum for surface workers. Whether the pits actually do come to a stop will require the sort of campaign which lead to Arthur Scargill's massive election triumph.

The miners will be voting on an executive request for a mandate for action. A 55 per cent majority is required. This is guaranteed. A special delegate conference just before Christmas backed the proposal with only three voting against. The mood in the coalfields is such that even the spokespeople for the right wing had to troop up to the platform to pledge support.

At present basic pay for surface workers is only £80.85. The Coal Board's offer would give them a magnificent £87.80. But as many delegates to the conference pointed out, this proposed increase has already been eaten away by the effects of Chancellor Howe's 'mini budget', let alone the effects of inflation.

But more than simple arithmetic is required to mobilise the miners for victory. Everyone knows that a miners' strike challenges the existence of the Tory government.

Many militants will welcome such a challenge with an enthusiasm to match the cringing of the right wing leaders of the



Des Dutfield: 'Get off our knees'

movement. The miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974 against the last Tory government were on the lips of many a militant speech.

Des Dutfield, vice president of the South Wales area summed it up best when he declared: 'It's time for the British miners to decide whether to put up or shut up, whether we join the broad retreat of the last two years or get off our knees and tell the board and the government we are ready to fight them and the political savages behind them.'

To achieve this, the argument will have to be pressed vigorously in the pits and lodges. The success of the Presidential campaign showed that the tactics of 1972 when 'flying pickets' were sent out from Yorkshire to many of the coalfields prior to the action can still pay dividends.

The Tory political savages will use wild threats and attempt to wreak real carnage. Rank and file vigilance and understanding is the only way to meet such behaviour.

Letters **letters** Letters
 Letter: **LETTERS**

STAFFA dispute 'lies and distortions'

IT IS with much regret that we note the re-emergence of a deeply sectarian trend within your organisation. The article in the 10 December Socialist Challenge is deeply offensive to all those members of the Socialist Workers Party and Right to Work Campaign who worked so hard to try and ensure a victory for the workers at Staffa Products.

We cannot understand how someone of Brian Grogan's experience and years in the revolutionary movement can write an article for a socialist newspaper so full of lies and distortions. Sour grapes, comrades, have no part to play in our struggle.

Let's look at some of the points raised by comrade Grogan on the role of the AUEW District Committee..... 'failed to lift a finger to help the fight'.

Now as members of that District Committee and of the SWP we have been in opposition to many of the positions adopted by the committee for a number of years... nevertheless we would like to state publicly that, whatever reservations we

may have concerning the role of some of our officials, the committee as a whole endorsed immediately our members' actions.

Far from failing to lift a finger many members of the committee worked hard to ensure financial support e.g. Fleet St delegates raised a £5 per member levy amounting to a collection of almost £4,000, other delegates also held factory collec-

tions. In addition the DC organised a meeting in Westminster with AUEW MPs. Now so far as we were concerned this was a bit of cop-out but we didn't object, since all publicity for the dispute was to be welcomed and so long as the strikers had no illusions about the ability of the MPs to produce the goods it could do no real harm.

Unfortunately some Socialist Challenge supporters, in particular comrade Grogan, choose to spread the illusion that the Labour MPs could influence the issue, with the resulting disappointment on their failure to do so.

OK, so not every delegate to the DC moved off his or her backside but you do no service to revolutionary politics by your ill-informed commentaries.

On the Right to Work Campaign's involvement,

your correspondent collapses into complete sectarianism, in addition, he also collapses into inventing facts.

Firstly it is not true that when the police moved in, all the best stewards were on the Right to Work March. In fact only a few stewards went on the demonstration to the Tory Party Conference.

Present at the factory was the deputy convenor and a member of the District Committee, with other stewards attending as necessary.

There was never a decision to oppose the police taking over the factory, that canard was put about by the Communist Party. We were never in a situation to oppose them.

Comrade Grogan spent enough time hanging around the factory gates to realise that even had we been able to mobilise enough people that the factory itself was almost totally indefensible.

On your other 'criticisms', yes we did make the Right to Work office available to the stewards while they were getting a strike organised, it would have been irresponsible for us not to do so.

Yes the RTWC issued collection sheets for the strike.

Is comrade Grogan opposed to socialist organisations collecting money for strikes? As to our 'disdaining to fight in the engineering unions' well, both the signatories of this letter are long time SWP members and members of the AUEW, North London District Committee.

We have now two other comrades elected to this committee, including the convenor of Staffa Products, this hardly constitutes 'disdaining to fight in the engineering union'.

What we will confess to is disdaining to maintaining illusions in the Labour Party's ability to achieve a meaningful and lasting socialist change, nor shall we encourage our supporters to develop these illusions.

JIM SCOTT AND ROGER COX
 Members of North London District AUEW and Socialist Workers Party

Brian Grogan replies

THE outcome of the Staffa dispute was a major test for the Right to Work campaign — which was made the centre of the SWP's politics at its recent conference.

The SWP has a history of involvement in the leadership of the factory. The stewards had backed the Right to Work campaign on previous occasions.

Convenor Dave Green, as well as his predecessor, were both members of the SWP. And another 13 Staffa workers, including other stewards, were claimed as members.

Undoubtedly, the initial decision to occupy was a result of SWP influence. But how do we explain that after 10 weeks only 31 out of 390 workers voted to continue the fight?

The dispute still had official backing. Solidarity and finance were still coming into the strike HQ. Blacking was beginning to bite and was extending — as the frenzy of overtime



Bidwell — a change of mind

WHEN Sid Bidwell wrote to the Guardian on 27 November about Tariq Ali's decision to join the Labour Party he showed himself to be both a hypocrite and racist.

The depths of his hypocrisy can be measured by comparing the following two statements.

Through the columns of the 19 June 1975 issue of Red Weekly, Mr Bidwell declared:

'I believe all socialists, particularly young socialists should join the Labour Party and get into the mainstream.'

'I think the various Trotskyist groupings should assess the situation carefully and without romance, and should then help to take hold of the Labour Party locally and nationally for socialist purpose.'

Six years later he states: 'I very much hope that Tariq Ali's application for member-

ship of the Labour Party will be given the utmost of close scrutiny... I would not mind having him on the basis of a new kind of probationary status.'

Would citizen Sid care to explain why comrade Tariq's membership would have been acceptable in 1975 but is unacceptable in 1981?

ROB JONES
 London

on the return to work showed.

No one indicts the SWP for failing to lead a victory. The responsibility lies with the reformist leadership of the unions — including that of the District Committee. The good work of individual members is no reason to cover over for this.

Our case does not rest on incidental factors like how many stewards were around the factory at crucial times. At issue is what was offered for the attention of the strike leadership by the SWP.

The task of mobilising the majority of the workforce was neglected in favour of winning the active minority of strikers to support the Right to Work campaign.

Jim and Roger pose physical defence of the occupation as the only alternative to the Right to Work Tory Party demonstration.

The reason for leadership on the spot was the need to mobilise politically to defend the occupation — through the labour movement.

The presence of the deputy convenor and Jim Scott (the AUEW DC member), is beside the point.

The central strike leadership was not helped to see its task as forcing the existing leadership of the labour movement to back the Staffa fight. This includes MPs.

As the campaign which forced the about-face of local MP Bryan Magee showed, such an approach is what helps create a new leadership. Self proclamations, typical of the Right to Work, is not the same thing.

The £4m government grant which was the basis for the move of the factory drew in the GLC and raised the role of the Tories.

The GLC could easily have been involved, reinforcing a demand for the Labour leadership to act. Progress here would not only have increased the chance of victory, narrowed the room for manoeuvre of Duffy and Boyd, but it would have also boosted the con-

fidence of the inactive majority and inspired the militant pickets. Ignoring such people is precisely what 'maintains illusions'.

The fact the SWP members sit on District Committees is not evidence of a serious fight in the labour movement.

It is silly to suggest that our objection to Right to Work collection sheets, use of Right to Work headquarters and so on is an objection to socialists making collections.

Socialists make a contribution to the fight by utilising the strikers' own material. To do otherwise is positively harmful. For Right to Work substitutionism can give the right wing more excuses for not supporting the fight.

On the evidence of the Staffa dispute do Jim and Roger believe that the Right to Work campaign which was, for once, moderately influential, actually altered the relationship of forces in the labour movement in favour of the rank and file? We look forward to their or other comrades' replies.



Staffa workers with Steve Longshawe (second from left), LSE striker

WRITE TO US! Think of this page as a noticeboard for your comments, criticisms, or even congratulations! Be brief, to leave space for others — maximum 400

words.
 Write to: Letters, Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper St, London N1 2XP (tel 01-359 8180/9).

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Scotland

ABERDEEN: SC available at Boomtown Books, King St. For more info ring Bill 896 284.

DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, Thur 4-5.30pm, Fri 4-5.30pm, Sat 11-4pm.

EDINBURGH: SC sold Thur 4.15-5.15pm Bus Station, St. Andrews Square and bottom of Waverly steps 4.30-5.30; Sat 11.30-2pm East End, Princes St. Also available from 1st May Books, or Better Books, Forrest Rd. More info on local activity from SC c/o Box 6, 1st May Bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

GLASGOW: SC sales every Thur/Fri 4.30-5.30pm at Central Station. Also available at Barretts, Byres Rd; Clyde Books, High St; Glasgow Bookshop Collective, Cresswell Lane; Hope Street Book Centre.

HAMILTON: SC sale every Sat 1-5pm outside Safeway, shopping centre. For more info contact John Ford, 53 Elliot Crescent, Hamilton or Paul Youngson, 18 Forrest Crescent, Hamilton.

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BANGOR: Sat 10-12 town centre. **CARDIFF:** every Sat in Butte Town 10.30-12. Also available 1-0.8 Books, Salisbury Road.

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

BIRKENHEAD: SC on sale at Labour Club, Cleveland St, Thur nights, in precinct outside Littlewoods, Sat 11-12.

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BRADFORD: SC at Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.

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

BURNLEY: SC on sale every Sat morning 11.30-1pm St James St.

CHESTERFIELD: SC sold outside Boots, Market Place, Sat 11.30am-12.30pm.

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LEEDS: Sat 11-1 at Lands Lane Pedestrian Precinct and 10.30-12.00 at Headingly Arndale Centre. Corner Bookshop, Woodhouse Lane.

LIVERPOOL: SC on sale from News from Nowhere, Whitechapel and Progressive Books, Berry St.

MANSFIELD: Stockwell Gate, Sats. 10.30-12 and 2.30-3; West Gate, Sats 10.30-12; Four Seasons shopping centre, Sats 10.30-12. Phone 653216 for further details.

Bookshops

BANGOR: Rainbows, Holyhead Road, Upper Bangor, Gwynedd.

BRADFORD: Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Sandgate.

BRIGHTON: The Public House, Little Preston St.

BRISTOL: Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Bristol 6.

BIRMINGHAM: Other Bookshop, 137 Digbeth, Birmingham.

DURHAM: Durham City Co-op Bookshop, 85a New Elvet.

ILFORD: South Essex Bookshop, 335 Ley Street.

MILTON KEYNES: Oakleaf Books, 109 Church Street, Wolverton.

OXFORD: EOA Books, 34 Cowley Rd.

LEICESTER: Blackthorn Books, 70 High St, Leicester, and V Karia, 53A London Rd, Leicester.

LIVERPOOL: News from Nowhere, 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool L1

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SC Events

POEU fraction 30/31 Jan in London. Venue and agenda to be announced.

MANCHESTER SC sold 11-1pm Sat at OLDHAM outside the Yorkshire Bank, High St; at BURY in the shopping precinct and at Metro Books; at BOLTON in the town centre; and in MANCHESTER outside the central reference library in St Peter's Square and at Grassroots and Percivals Bookshop. Tel: 061-236 4905 for further info.

NEWCASTLE: SC on sale every Sat 11-1pm outside Fenwicks. Also available at Days of Hope bookshop, Westgate Rd. Every Friday outside Newcastle University between 1-2 and outside Newcastle Polytechnic between 12-1 every Monday.

OLDHAM: SC sold every Saturday outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities, Tel: 061-682 5151.

OXFORD: SC sold Fri 12-2pm outside Kings Arms and every Sat 10.30-12.30pm in Cornmarket.

SHEFFIELD: SC on sale Thursday, Pond St, 4.30-6pm; Saturday, Fargate 10.30-12.30pm.

STAFFORD: SC on Sale Market Sq Sat lunch-time.

STOCKPORT: SC sold every Saturday, 1pm, Mersey Way. Can be delivered weekly: phone 483 8909 (evening), 236 4905 (day).

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

TESSIDE: SC on sale Sat lunchtime in the Cleveland Centre, and in Newsfare, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and outside Woolworths on Stockton High Street.

WOLVERHAMPTON: SC sales on Thur/Fri at Poly Students Union from noon-2pm and British Rail 4.30-6pm; and Saturday near Beatties, town centre from 11am-2pm.

YORK: on sale every Thursday, dole office Clifford Street, 9.30-11; University Vanburgh College 12-2; Saturday at Coney Street 11-1.

London

BRENT: SC sold Willesden Junction Thur 4.30pm.

EALING: SC sold Thu, Ealing Broadway tube, 4.30-5.30pm

ENFIELD: SC at Nelsons newsagents, London Rd, Enfield Town.

HACKNEY: SC on sale on estates throughout Hackney, at public meetings, and local factories. Contact us c/o PO Box 36, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8 2NF or phone Megan or John at 359 8288.

HILLINGDON: SC sold Fri, 4.30-5.30 at Uxbridge tube station; Sat 10.30-12.00 outside Woolworths, Uxbridge shopping centre.

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KILBURN: SC sales every Sat, 10am in Kilburn Square, and Thursday 8.30am at Queens Park tube.

LAMBETH: SC available from Village Books, Streatham; Tethric Books, Clapham; Paperback Centre, Brixton; Oval tube kiosk. Also sold Thur and Fri evenings and Thur mornings outside Brixton tube.

NEWHAM: SC sold Sat 11am to noon, Queen's Rd Mkt, Upton Park.

PADDINGTON: SC sold at Portobello Rd market Sat at noon.

WEMBLEY: SC sales Fri 6.45am at North Wembley BR Station.

LONDON: Central Books, 37 Grays Inn Rd; Colletts, Charing Cross Rd, WC2; Paperback Books, Brixton and Charlotte St; Kilburn Bookshop, Kilburn High Road, NW6; The Bookplace, Peckham High St, SE15; Books Plus, Lewisham; Balham Food Co-op; Housmans, 5 Caledonian Rd, N1; Compendium, Camden Town NW1; Owl, Kentish Town; New Beacon, Seven Sisters Rd, N4; The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, N1; Bookmarks, Seven Sisters Rd, N4; Centerprise, 126 Kingsland High St, E8; Dillons, QMC, Page One, E15; The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, N1; Reading Matters, Wood Green next to Sainsbury's.

YORK: Community Books, Walmgate.

NEW PAMPHLET — 'Open letter on the Middle East to a student of the left' by Aubrey Lewis — Lies and misconceptions of the anti-Israel left examined and exposed. 75p post free. Cheques, POs to PPME, 3 Wood Grove, Whitefield, Manchester M25 9ST.

CRITIQUE CONFERENCE: 'New Cold War?' Mary Kaldor, Fred Halliday, John Gittings, Tariq Ali, Martin Shaw, Andrew Gamble, Huiet Tickitt, Moshe Machover, Mick Cox, Sandy Smith, Mike Haynes, Frank Furedi, Phil O'Brien, Peter Lawrence, Lionel Cliffe. Fri 15 Jan 7pm, Sat 16 Jan 10am, University of London Students Union, Malet St, London WC1E 3J. Tel 041-339 5267.

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! MONTHLY! JANUARY ISSUE: Imperialist Hands Off Socialist Poland (editorial), Ireland: British Terror: Third Force; Repression in the 26 Counties; Communist Tradition on Ireland — Revolutionary Warfare; Racism: Scamman Defends Police; The Fightback, South Africa: Ciskei Concentration Camp; El Salvador Repression — Eyewitness account. 20p plus 16p p&p. Subscriptions: £2 six issues, £3.50 twelve issues. From: Larkin Publications (SC) BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

Under Review

Why the steel strike was lost:

A question of leadership

Bath Labour Party last month organised a showing of KEN LOACH's film on the 1980 steel strike, *A Question of Leadership*. Local Socialist Challenge supporter, MIKE POLLEY, was there.

Ken Loach was commissioned by ATV to make a film about the steel strike. When completed, the film's format differed radically from other media coverage which had focussed exclusively on top officials like the general secretary of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, Bill Sirs.

Loach's film was based on rank and file strikers and those involved in solidarity action.

From this point, the film's history is as instructive as its content.

Bosses

Initially the Independent Broadcasting Authority said the film had to be cut by fifteen minutes. Then they said representatives from British Steel should be involved in the film

notably in relation to BL. The workers of BL were in the same situation as the steel workers. They had the same employer — the Tory government — and both groups were scheduled for mass redundancies and closures. The case for joint union action was overwhelming.

When all the red tape had finally been overcome, the IBA decided that the film was too outdated for national screening!

In the end the film was shown — at 10.30pm and only in the Midlands region where very few steel workers live.

The main reason for the IBA's hostility to the film was its exposure of the union officials who ensured the strike's defeat. The film concentrates on their attempts to isolate the strike and to stifle rank and file moves towards solidarity action.

For 13 weeks, the strikers had to fight the policy of Sirs and Co most

notably in relation to BL. The workers of BL were in the same situation as the steel workers. They had the same employer — the Tory government — and both groups were scheduled for mass redundancies and closures. The case for joint union action was overwhelming.

Defeat

Yet as soon as BL workers voted for strike action, the ISTC and the TUC leaders stampeded the membership to end the steel dispute.

Sirs and the TUC, firmly committed to bourgeois democracy and not to workers' democracy, believed in the right of the Tory government to rule throughout its full term of office, come what may. So they were firmly opposed to any attempt to link workers' struggles together in a way that could 'confront the government' and even, perhaps, bring it down.

In 1980 this meant that



Alan Thornett

they had to isolate the steel strike, and so inevitably ensure its defeat.

Despite their rhetoric the labour movement's leaders were, and still are, determined that each dispute run an independent course. The result is that the Tories can pick off groups of workers one by one. Disputes from the steel strike, to BL and Laurence-Scott, all demonstrate that the union leaders are more afraid of the possible consequences of victory than they are of defeat.

The Bath meeting invited Ray Davies, from ISTC Llanwern, and Alan Thornett, from TGWU and BL Cowley to address the audience. Both

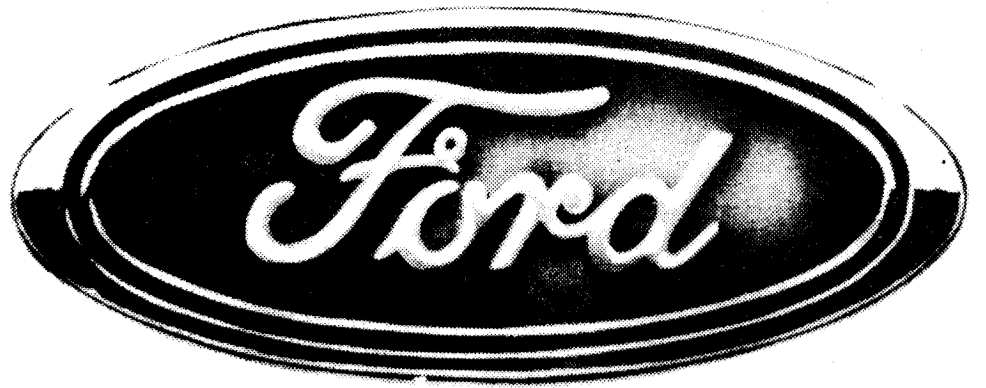
featured prominently in the film and are able representatives of the 'class-struggle' leaders who emerged during the steel strike.

The fact that over one hundred people turned out for a meeting in Bath — and donated £74 to the Laurence Scott strikers and Bath Labour Party's political fund — demonstrates the urgency with which the rank and file in the labour movement are searching for new solutions to the problems posed by this Tory government.

A Question of Leadership can be hired by application to ATV, 46 Charlott St, London. Tel 01 637 4602.



Socialist Challenge



Ford workers fight sell out



By Mick Drake, Dagenham

WORKERS at Halewood, Bridgend and Swansea have given a magnificent answer to the sabotage by union officials of the national Ford strike. As news of the deal cobbled together over the New Year spread around the Halewood body and assembly plants on Monday, work stopped.

Stewards and mass meetings voted for strike action from the end of the shift. This decision was backed up by a mass picket on Tuesday morning.

Swansea walked out on Tuesday. Bridgend also declared themselves opposed to the sell-out. At Dagenham, stewards in the assembly plant decided to recommend rejection.

The anger of the Ford workers is understandable. Before the Xmas holidays, mass meetings throughout the country voted almost unanimously for strike action against the company's 7.4 per cent with strings wage offer.

The long list of so-called 'efficiency' conditions attached to the offer — including elimination of demarcation, total mobility of labour, co-operation in the introduction of new technology and work systems — were particularly stressed in union opposition to the company's offer.

In addition, the company stated its intention of eliminating all local plant agreements on working conditions and practices which it considered 'inefficient'.

None of these strings have changed. But now, in return for bringing forward the 39 hour

week by just five months from November to June 1982 and minor improvements in pensions, national union officials are recommending acceptance of the same deal, meaning a pay cut with slavery thrown in.

As this offer was railroaded through a national trade union side meeting on Monday there was almost a straight split between full-time union officials who hold 32 seats on this body and the 24 Ford plant convenors — the actual vote was 27 to 17 with two abstentions.

The actions of the bureaucrats has wrecked the unity present on the shop floor before the holidays. Workers are now arguing among themselves about whether it is possible to continue in the face of such sabotage. At Dagenham stewards accepted, however reluctantly, the decision to 'defer' strike action pending mass meetings later in the week.

At Langley there was a split vote among stewards on immediate continuation.

The Halewood's and South Wales' workers actions offer the possibility of re-uniting Ford workers around the fight for their £20 and 35 hours without strings claim. But that means mass meetings taking the claim and our strike out of the hands of Ron Todd and the officials and placing it firmly in the hands of our own elected stewards and convenors.

By the end of the week we will know whether that has happened — or whether another Leyland-style sell-out has been inflicted on car workers.

Laurence Scott fights on

By Pete Clifford

THE LAURENCE Scott strikers ended the five weeks long flying picket of their parent company Mining Supplies of Doncaster just before Christmas. Despite this step back the strikers who've now been fighting for their jobs for nine months are determined to fight on.

The 24 hour picket of the Manchester factory will be strengthened. Efforts are being made to ensure Snipe, their employer, is unable to remove any of the remaining £2¾m worth of motors.

The picket of Mining Supplies was launched after Snipe's flying scabs snatched a small number of motors from the Manchester factory. At first the flying pickets met with some success. Lorries were turned away and miners initially in Doncaster and then further afield in Derbyshire pledged to black goods from the factory.

To back up the strikers on the picket line were unemployed and employed trade unionists as well as Right to Work campaigners, Socialist Challenge and Revolution supporters. Although this support played a vital role in sustaining the picket it

was not enough to counter the campaign being waged by engineering union leaders, Boyd and Duffy to stop the picket being effective.

They were terrified of not only of the possibility of flying picket tactics becoming effective but also of confronting the law, as an injunction was being pursued by the employers under the Employment Act to stop picketing of the Doncaster works. They were aiming to isolate the picket.

Initial backing by the transport and engineering

union's Manchester district for the picket became ineffective as Snipe was able to organise with local union officials under pressure from Boyd and Duffy for drivers to scab.

At the same time the engineering union leaders put pressure on miners' president Joe Gormley, to send out a smear letter to the NUM areas advising that they lift blacking action.

The final blow came with the injunction under the Employment Act. The union's legal facilities were withdrawn from the strike. Support was sought from elsewhere. Labour MPs Charles Morris and Michael Meacher issued a statement of support for the picket. But that was not enough.

On Friday 8 January at 8 am a mass picket of all the Laurence Scott strikers will take place outside the Manchester factory to refute the statement by Ken Cure, the AUEW executive council member and Alex Barry, confed general secretary, that the dispute, now in its ninth month, is finished.

The court hearing for the injunction underlined how dangerous the Employment Act is. The judge's concern was to legislate what the most practical action for the strikers should be. For him that was the one that least harmed the employer by continuing it to solely the factory directly concerned.

Towards the end of the four hour hearing the judge asked: 'Well who's this Mr Snipe then?' revealing an expected contempt for the strikers' interests. The hearing was adjourned till March. In this situation the strikers felt they should consolidate the dispute back in Manchester and reopen the fight in the labour movement for solidarity in the new year.

The Manchester North District of the engineering union has backed them throughout the months of bitter dispute. Now all trade unionists should give full support to the Laurence Scott strikers. Send donations and messages of support to G Fryer, 20 Roundcroft, Romiley, Cheshire.

