

Socialist Challenge

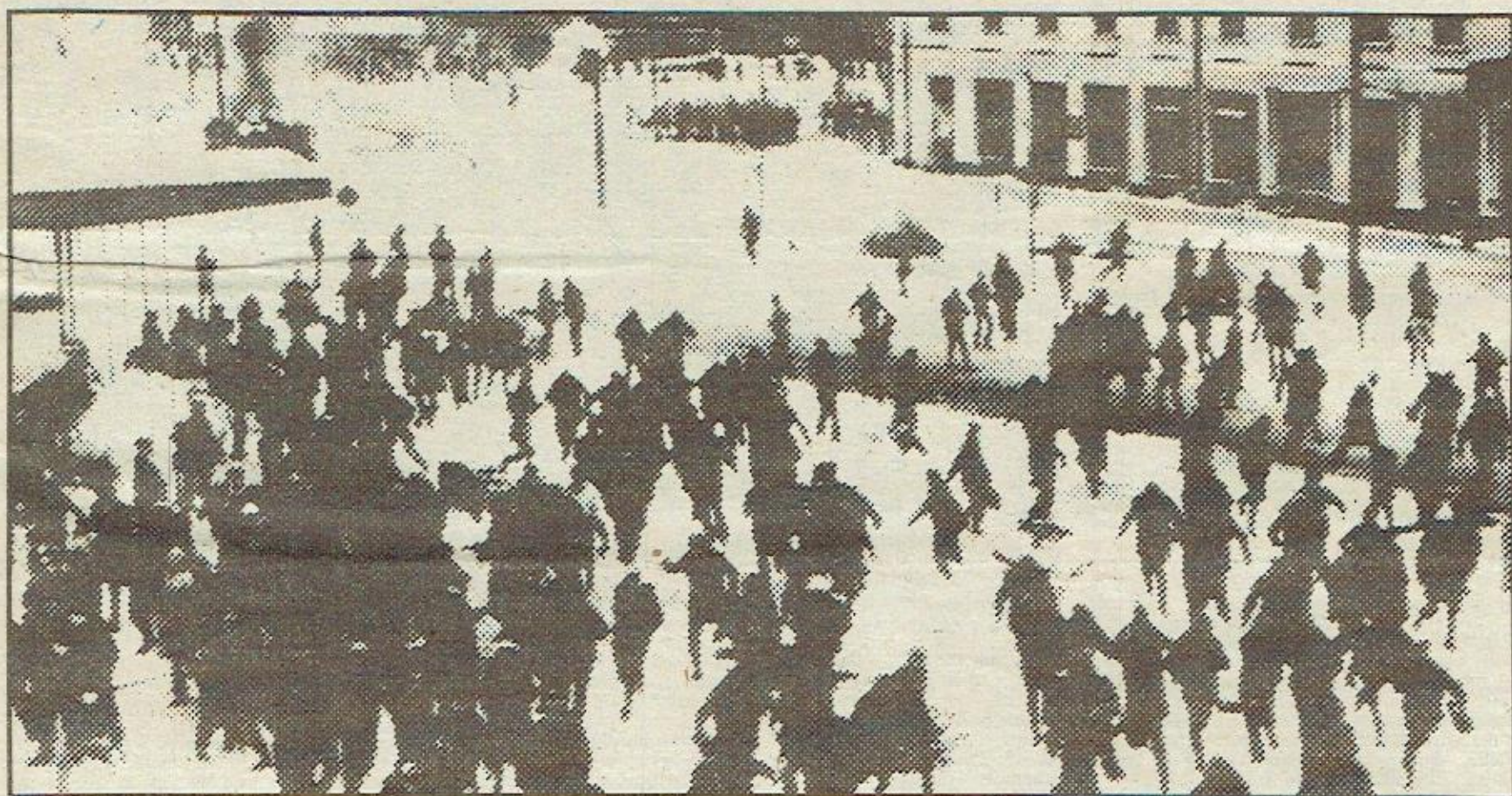
Labour against the witch-hunt

Conference of delegates from CLPs, unions, LPYS branches, LP branches, women's sections

30 October
Country Hall, London
Contact: Labour against the witch-hunt
107 Nevill Rd, London N16.

Sponsors now include:
MPs: Norman Atkinson, Ron Brown, Bob Cryer, Martin Flannery, Les Huckfield, Joan Maynard, Reg Race, Allan Roberts, Ernie Roberts, Dennis Skinner, Audrey Wise
PPCs: Paul Boateng, Hilary Bryer, Jeremy Corbyn, Ian Roxburgh, Chris Smith, Jim Orpe, Peter Tatchell
Unions and broad lefts (in personal capacity)
Alan Sapper ACTT, John Aitken EETPU, Phil Holt POEU, Ray Davis ISTC
CLPs: Hackney North, Bermondsey, Chipping Barnet, Brent South, Southwark/Peckham, Islington South, Islington North, Wood Green, Vauxhall

Solidarnosc



AS WE go to press, the Lenin shipyards in Gdansk are on strike again, demanding the withdrawal of the anti-Solidarnosc law and the release of political prisoners. Unconfirmed reports say that the workers of the Szczecin yards have joined the strike.

On Monday night, supporters of Solidarnosc, the only organisation which represents the Polish workers, built street barricades in Gdansk in fighting with the riot police.

The strike shows once again that Solidarnosc is alive and fighting — and that it has the support of the workers.

Last month's street demonstrations on the anniversary of the Gdansk agreement mobilised hundreds of thousands of people against martial law. In response the Jaruzelski martial law regime has decided to finally outlaw the Solidarnosc union.

The law, passed last week by the Polish parliament, dissolves 'all previously existing unions' — including the state unions. But the real target is Solidarnosc; the state unions had anyway become hollow shells with no following.

Martial law struck a cruel blow against the many advances which the Polish workers had won since the heady days of the occupation of the Lenin shipyard in 1980. But despite the brutal repression, despite the internment without trial of many of the Polish workers' leaders, including Lech Walesa, Solidarnosc refuses to die.

The underground leaders of the union had called for demonstrations on 10 November, the anniversary of the official registration of Solidarnosc, as a protest against the banning of the union. Their statement, signed by Zbigniew Bujak (Warsaw), Bogdan Lis (Gdansk) and others, calls on the Polish workers to boycott the new plant-level unions which the authorities want to set up.

It calls for the creation of secret committees in every factory to organise the struggle.

But the Polish workers have not waited. They have decided to act immediately. It seems likely that the authorities will try to crush the strikes with more brutality. But in the words of the statement by the leaders of the union: 'Solidarnosc exists, and will continue to, whether they like it or not'.

ALIVE AND FIGHTING

Right wing hysteria, brutal reality

By Paul Lawson
THE MESSAGE from the Tory conference was totally unambiguous. Despite Thatcher's embarrassment at the leak of the 'Think Tank' report, and despite Michael Heseltine's annual appeal on behalf of the inner city poor, Thatcher's Tory party is set on a brutal right wing course.

Keith Joseph has made it clear that 'all the options' are still open in relation to privatisation of the health service, and the destruction of the free education system. Instead of passing sweeping laws, the Tories will encourage 'pilot schemes' in the localities.

Tebbit put the blame for unemployment on the unions, and made clear the determination of the Tories to pursue their attacks on trade union rights. In other words, the Tory onslaught continues.

Thatcher's authority as leader remains unchallenged. The Falklands factor is still operating strongly in the opinion polls — the Tories still have well over 40 per cent of the intended vote.

Thatcher's own viciousness in dealing with the 'wets' who want a softer approach has been completely successful. With a few exceptions, the wets have been cowed into silence.

At a superficial glance, all this should add up to plain sailing for Thatcher and a grim time for the rest of us. With such a high rating in the opinion polls, a clear programme, total domination of the party, and the SDP in decline, everything should be fair for a storming run up to the general election. But things are not so simple.

In the first place, the dizzying Tory success over the Falklands does not assure them of being permanently able to avoid other central political issues. The Falkland war came at an extremely fortunate time for the Tories — the much vaunted 'tur-

naround' on the economic front has failed to materialise. Despite the continued strong backing for Thatcher from the business community the economy has not ceased its nose dive, and unemployment can only go upwards.

The Tory standing in the opinion polls has begun to decline slightly. History may well conclude that Thatcher made a mistake in not going for a general election in the immediate wake of the war victory. By next summer much of the post-Falklands glow will have disappeared.

Deceptive

Second, appearances about the situation in the Tory party may be deceptive. Tory conferences are notoriously stage-managed. In general well-known opponents of the regime in power do not manage to catch the eye of the chair.

But in the fringe meetings the bitterness of the wets has been unmistakable. Ian Gilmour accused the government of swindling the unemployed. Peter Walker denounced '19th century liberalism' as being as irrelevant as Marxism, just a few days after John Nott had described himself and Thatcher as old-fashioned

19th century liberals.

In the Tory party, office and success are all-powerful. The new Thatcherite Toryism will dominate so long as it is successful in purely electoral terms. But Peter Walker's theme — that the Tories should be a party of compassion, of one nation and above all economic deflation — is privately held by many of the Tory leaders.

The point is that for the Thatcherites, there is no alternative but to go forward on their present deflationary course. But in the medium term the conditions are still being created for the utter collapse and shipwreck of Thatcherism.

The electoral arithmetic is working against the present Tory leadership — but so is the logic of the class struggle. Tory domestic policies are hugely unpopular. A recent opinion poll showed that 87 per cent of the public support the health workers' claim.

Irrespective of whether the miners do go for an all-out strike, the coming winter is likely to be one of bitter industrial dispute. By the spring the basic issues of welfare cuts and unemployment will have re-asserted themselves.

The big losers from the 'Falklands factor' were the SDP-Liberal Alliance. Within the alliance it has been the SDP who have slumped in popularity much more than the Liberals. This reflects the fact that the SDP have, despite intentions, been a bigger threat to the Tories than Labour.

Once Tory fortunes start to decline, the attraction of the SDP-Liberal alliance will continue for middle class voters. The



Thatcher spells out her message — press on regardless.



The Tory faithful here worship Thatcher.

All photos GM Cookson.

idea that the SDP-Liberal alliance is finished is foolish. On the economic front the Tory project has failed and will continue to fail. Even within a capitalist framework very different policies are needed to counter-act the effects of the world recession.

The Conservative con-

ference, if only at the fringe meetings, showed that the Tory party is still very divided.

Again, it is hardly likely that the 'wets' will just continue to accept humiliation and resist the temptation of some sort of link up, albeit informal with the regrouping forces of the centre.

Underneath the surface, the fundamental realignment of British politics is continuing. It is still overwhelmingly likely that there will be three major party blocs in the new parliament. It is by no means excluded that Labour will be the biggest of the three. The Alliance is still likely to have a ma-

major role in trying to put together a coalition.

The fight for a Labour victory, the possibility of sweeping away this Tory government is still very much alive. And this possibility will be maximised by a Labour Party fighting on the socialist gains of the last three years' conferences.

Weighellings and dealings

By Mary Jacobs

'A GREAT LOSS to the railway industry which he has served as a dedicated and wise trade union leader. He has always had the wider vision to consider the long-term interests of the industry and will be greatly missed.'

Unfortunately, Sir Peter Parker's eulogy of Mr Sid Weighell cannot yet be read as an obituary.

But it is certainly a telling indictment of Weighell's treachery to his members. His actions at the Labour Party conference only differed from his past and possible

future ones in that he was found out.

Weighell's behaviour shows the utter contempt he has for the working class in general and his own members in particular. On the Sunday before Labour Party conference the NUR delegation met to discuss all the motions and mandates which had already been decided at on the union's executive.

Eric Clarke, the miners' union candidate for the Labour Party's NEC, had already been endorsed by the NUR's leadership.

When Weighell cast his vote on the Monday, he did not inform his delegation that he had not sup-



Weighell

ported the NUM candidate. When the results of the ballot were announced on Tuesday, Weighell remained silent.

Only late on Wednesday, after his shenanigans were exposed by Scargill,

did he inform his delegation that he had 'abstained'. This was a lie. Weighell had cast his vote for the right wing electricians' union candidate.

Even his 'resignation' statement skirts around this when he states that 'I decided not to vote for the NUM candidate.'

Weighell tries to defend his position by arguing that the NUM did not confirm that they would support the NUR's candidate. This was a lie. Weighell was sitting only 20 feet from Scargill throughout the conference. The NUM had in fact written to the rail union to inform them that it was unconstitutional for them to give a written

pledge of how they would vote. But implicit in such a letter was that they would vote for Russell Tuck — which they did.

Weighell knew all this, which is why he presented a statement to his executive rather than face the condemnation that was rightly his due. He now has the upper hand. He is prepared to 'abide by any decision' the Special General Meeting may take this week.

If Weighell does get the support from the SGM, which tends to be to the right of the membership, he will go on the offensive. He will regard such endorsement as a green light to sell a lousy wage deal and 20,000 jobs. He will

work hand in glove with the British Rail Board and the Tories to implement the McCarthy report against the wishes of his members.

He will find it difficult to give full hearted support to the health workers while selling his own members down the river; and finally he will do his utmost to destroy the Triple Alliance and undermine Arthur Scargill.

If this happens Scargill himself will be paying the price for allowing such wheeling and dealing to go on in the first place.

Whatever happens this week to Sid Weighell, the lessons are clear: workers want leaders they can trust

to act in their interests. Weighell's manoeuvres cannot be allowed to demoralise the growing tide of opposition to the Tories and the right wing labour movement leaders. The best way to get rid of the likes of Weighell will be a massive show of strength in support of the health workers, the miners, the steel workers and all other workers moving into struggle, including the railworkers themselves.

Throwing the full weight of the Triple Alliance behind these struggles will give Scargill and Co the best opportunity to make amends for their own wheelings and dealings.

WITCH-HUNT

30 October Conference forges ahead

The Labour Party's National Executive Committee is likely to be lobbied when it meets in November to discuss action under the new register of non-affiliated organisations.

The proposal is to be put to sponsoring organisations of the steering committee of 'Labour Parties against the witch-hunt', which was established on 4 September at a conference in London convened by Hackney North Labour Party.

The committee is preparing for a founding conference against the witch-hunt to be held at County Hall, London, on 30 October. At its meeting this weekend, 9 October, the committee decided to propose to the conference that it establish a national organisation to prevent expulsions.

The proposed statement of aims, which will be put to the conference, calls for action to:

'prevent expulsions or disaffiliations under the NECs proposed register of organisations, and defend the unity of the Labour movement, and the rights of all Labour Party organisations and groups of members against any witch-hunt under its provisions.'

Proposals for action, which are to be circulated to delegates before conference, include model resolutions seeking:

- A commitment from CLPs 'not to expel, nor recognise the expulsion of, or disciplinary action against, any Labour Party member or group of members, or the disaffiliation of any CLP or constituent organisation in connection with the NECs register.'

- A parallel campaign in unions and other affiliated organisations calling for support to CLPs taking such a stand, and a commitment to 'maintain affiliations to any disbanded CLPs and boycott attempts to substitute new CLPs by the NEC.'

Post Office workers oppose witch-hunt

LONDON SOUTH CENTRAL branch of the Post Office Engineering Union have backed the 30 October conference against the witch-hunt in County Hall, London. The branch have also circulated all other POEU branches in Britain with their resolution and a call for similar action.

A clause in the union constitution gives any branch the right to circulate other branches in



Healey, after the deputy leadership vote. He now commands a majority on Labour's NEC.

● National campaigns in support of any expelled member or disaffiliated Labour Party.

Further detailed questions for action are to be discussed next weekend and the proposed agenda finalised.

Invitations to attend and address the conference are to be sent to the *Young Socialists* and *Militant*. Indications are that the *Militant*, and the steering committee set up by the 11 September Wembley conference to defend *Militant*, will be responding positively. At their press conference last week the steering committee indicated they would be supporting the 30 October conference.

this way.

Campaigners against the witch-hunt should ensure that the item comes up under 'correspondence' at branch meetings and ask for the branch to contact all Constituency Labour Parties to which they are affiliated, to try and obtain speakers on the witch-hunt and, if a decision against the witch-hunt is won, to ensure that the CLP is informed of the branch's position.

We hope other trade unionists will be able to emulate this initiative, although not every union possesses such a clause.

We also suggest that stewards' committees and trades councils take discussion on the witch-hunt and, if a commitment against the witch-hunt is secured, circulate labour movement bodies with which they are associated to inform them.

Breaking up the NHS

By Bob Pennington

OXFORDSHIRE Regional Health Authority is not bothering to wait for the Tory 'think tank' proposals to get the official nod. After discussions with Geoffrey Finsberg, the junior minister for health they have announced 'a radical reduction of services.'

The proposals aim to save £12 million each year for the next two years and call for ending altogether some services and having cheaper provision for others. One of the more horrendous suggestions is that people settling in Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire — the four counties covered by the authority — will be barred from getting treatment on the NHS, except in emergencies, until they have fulfilled a special qualifying residential period.

Reductions will be made in the comprehensive accident and emergency service, and at best nine accident and emergency centres will have to cover all the four counties.

The private sector will be rubbing its hands with glee at the authorities' proposal to hand over to them a number of services like varicose veins and hernia operations. All the mentally handicapped hospitals will be closed and some wards for the mentally ill will also close without

waiting for local authority provisions.

Maternity care will be reduced to a 24-hour delivery service. Transport, laundry, food and personal service will be transferred to volunteers or a charge will be introduced for staying in hospital. For people who get involved in road accidents and hospital care a charge will be introduced and it is also proposed that

most health workers should be employed on a part-time basis.

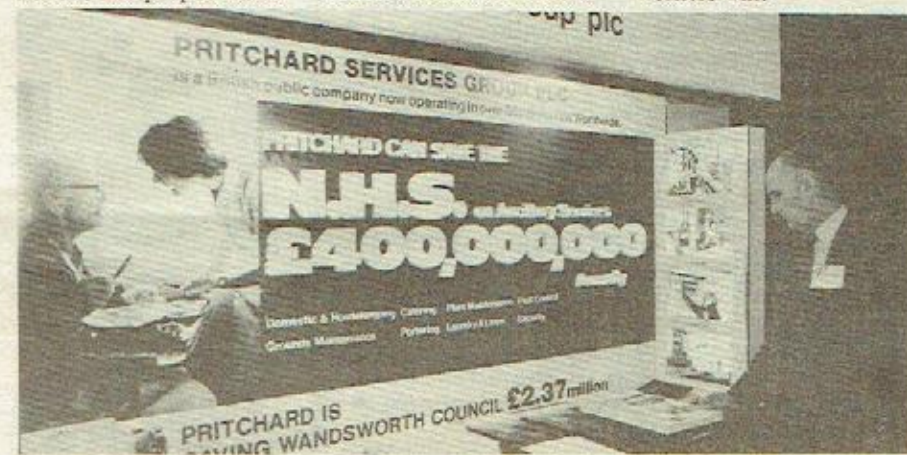
These proposals undermine the entire principle that health care should be provided free of charge for all those who need it, which is a principle that any sane and civilised society would insist on. But Tory Britain is not sane and civilised. It is a society where human needs run a very poor second to profit.

Once again we see the importance of the fight around the NHS and why the labour movement has to rally to the cause of the health workers. What is at

stake is not just a 12 per cent claim, although that is a vital issue, but the very existence of the NHS.

The Tories want to sell health care to the highest bidder and turn pain, sickness and injury into commodities like any other item up for sale. Oxford is the start. If the health workers are crushed, then that will be the green light for operation 'think tank' everywhere.

It is working people who will be hit by these proposals. It is their health and their lives which are at stake. That is why the labour movement has to make sure the health workers win.



Private medicine advertises at Tory Conference — they know who will reap the benefits.

HEALTH STRIKE South Wales moves into action

By Helen Slyomovics, Cardiff North CLP

THE SOUTH WALES day of action in support is getting widespread backing. Large pickets are expected at all main hospitals as well as rallies in Swansea, Cardiff and Newport.

But South Glamorgan County Council are in danger of strike breaking. This Labour-controlled council,

which has just decided to name streets after South African and Polish revolutionaries and is closing down its nuclear banker due to fire risk, is sabotaging the health dispute.

NUPE workers were planning to close down the South Glamorgan Headquarters in support of the health workers, but the council's policy committee have

renominated keyholders in defiance of NUPE. Monica Walsh, shop steward and chair of Cardiff District NUPE branch, is one of the first woman porters in Welsh local authorities. She told Socialist Challenge:

'I've been out six times in support of the health workers. But this time we're not just supporting the health workers; we're going into

dispute ourselves. With mass picketing and an occupation of the building, we will close County Hall. We expect this of the Tories — not our own party. We've canvassed for these people and now our own Labour councillors are strike breaking.'

Mass support is expected from the Cardiff labour movement.

Stewards angry with TUC

ON 22 SEPTEMBER 15,000 people marched in Aberdeen and about a quarter of the working population took some form of strike action.

Since this tremendous success, the Grampian Association of Health Service Unions have asked the TUC to cancel the 'day of action' called for their region on 20 October. If it does go ahead they will not be asking other unions to strike.

The leaders of GAHSU claim that the last day of action was a waste of time and the shop stewards want the TUC to set a date for an indefinite general strike to force the government to pay the 10 per cent.

Jim Kiddie the GAHSU chairperson says 'the TUC have shown no leadership during the dispute.'

Socialist Challenge can sympathise with the stewards' scorn over the way the TUC has organised this struggle. On 22 September the massive turnout in Aberdeen was largely the work of the GAHSU stewards who built the response by leafletting and organising workplace meetings.

However *Socialist*

Challenge thinks that the stewards' suggestion if the 'day of action' goes ahead, of scaling it down to a 'speakers corner' in the town, and giving support to any action taken by the telecommunication workers against the privatisation of British Telecom will have the reverse results to what they want.

What has made the TUC take what action it has done is because health workers, like those stewards in GAHSU, have mobilised their own workforce and other sympathetic workers to come out in defence of the NHS and for the wage claim. If that action stops, then the pressure is taken off the government, the TUC, and some of the more timid health union leaders. This will not lead to a general strike but to the end of the fight for the claim.

The Aberdeen health workers up to now have done a great job. *Socialist Challenge* urges them to keep it up.

Victimisation

HUNDREDS of health workers in Aberdeen staged an impromptu sit-in at various hospitals last week. Furthermore the city could face a total walk-out if Jim Kiddie, the chairperson of the Grampian Association of health workers is not reinstated.

The workers see this provocative action by management as an attempt to break up the union organisation and curb union activity, particularly during the present dispute.

As the secretary of GAMSU says 'They have picked on the chairman of GAMSU first. If he goes we will be next.'

Miners to resist hospital closedown

TYRONE O'SULLIVAN, secretary of Power Lodge, told *Socialist Challenge* that a number of South Wales Lodges will be supporting a health workers' demonstration in Aberdare.

In the afternoon they will join a picket outside a meeting at the Welsh office in Cardiff where the secretary of state for Wales, Nicholas Edwards, will be pushing plans to close Rhydylafar hospital. This hospital treats many miners and the South Wales NUM.



Fascinated by uniforms and authority.

Sir Kenneth - identi-kit copper

By Bob Pennington

IF SIR KENNETH NEWMAN, the new boss of the metropolitan police, did not exist as an identi-kit copper, then you would have to invent him.

From his early days he has been fascinated by uniforms and authority. At 16 he joined the RAF through its Cranwell training college. There the young cadets were taught to do as they were told, until they got on top, then they could kick the lower orders around.

From the RAF he graduated to the Palestine police where he learned about the use of firearms and riot control. After 8 months he was promoted to the Special Branch whose job was to keep the 'uppity natives' in their place by the use of 'sus' acts and belting them around the cells. An experience like that could not but help an aspiring lad eventually going to Ireland.

He also learned in Palestine how volatile the ethnic population can be. Maybe this is why he told

Bruce Porter, a journalist for the American *Police Magazine*: 'In Jamaica you have people who are constitutionally disorderly ... it's simply in their make-up. They are constitutionally disposed to be anti-authority.'

Unfortunately for Sir Kenneth, Britain's days in Palestine were numbered and the army had to escort the police out, otherwise they would have been lynched by the locals. When he got home, he joined the metropolitan police. Then his time came with the anti-Vietnam demonstra-

tions. As the demonstrators poured into Grosvenor Square in their thousands he mobilised the police on a scale never seen before.

Soon the police would be organising the Special Patrol Groups, the snatch squads and increasing their armoury. Community policing began to take on a new meaning as the police swept into the community batoning sense into its head! Merlyn Rees, then secretary of state for Northern Ireland sent Newman off to Ireland in 1973. In his reign as the RUC chief constable the beating up of suspects took a dramatic rise. Complaints of police brutality rose from 180 in 1975 to 671 in 1977.

Injury

Doctors reported serious injuries suffered by suspects. Newman's reply to this was there was no proof of wide-scale violence at the Castleragh, the interrogation centre. He even claimed that many of the injuries were self-inflicted. Presumably the prisoners beat themselves up with plastic spoons causing 'traumatic perforation of the left eardrum' and inflicting abrasions and bruises on their own backs and buttocks by hitting themselves with their toothbrushes — a devious and acrobatic lot are the IRA!

You can never accuse Sir Kenneth of not being prepared to learn his lesson. As he watched the plastic bullets fly, saw the soldiers run riot in the Bogside and presided over Castleragh he could see the future. He explained that

going to Northern Ireland was useful, because its social problems made it a kind of police laboratory for the rest of the UK. So now we know. The Catholics of the six counties are the guinea pigs for experiments in the new style community policing.

With a metropolitan police force which Operation Countryman exposed as a bunch of thieves and extortionists — which naturally boasts the lowest crime clear-up rate in Britain — and with a police chief like Sir Kenneth we have nothing to fear.

DEBATING SOCIALISM 23-24 October

JUST TWO WEEKS to go to the International Debating Socialism weekend. You can hear Ernest Mandel on the international monetary crisis, a debate between Bea Campbell and Valerie Coultas on women's liberation, Ken Livingstone on the lessons of Labour's GLC, Frances Morell and Alan Freeman on the new Labour left, and much more!

This weekend event, packed with discussions on a programme for the British crisis, will be held on 23/24 October at Kingsway Princeton College, near Kings Cross in London. For just £4 you can attend all the sessions, or spend £2.50 to attend for one day. Snacks will be available, and a creche which must be booked in advance.

This is an educational event you can't afford to miss. Fill in the order form below for your tickets.

Kingsway Princeton College
Saturday 23 October

9.30-10
10-1 Registration
Plenary session in main hall
Ernest Mandel on the international monetary crisis
John Ross on the British political crisis

Lunch Break 1-2pm
2-4 Workshops
a) Ken Livingstone, Hilary Wainwright & Tessa van Gelderen on the lessons of Labour's GLC
b) Bernadette McAliskey on the Irish revolution
c) John Ross & Duncan Hallas debate entrism and the Labour Party
d) Mike Davies on Exterminism and the Cold War

Break 4-4.30pm
4.30-7 Plenary session in main hall
Frances Morell, Labour Briefing & Alan Freeman discuss the new Labour left

Sunday 24 October
9.30-10 Registration
10-12 Plenary session in main hall
Ernest Mandel on Poland and workers' self-management

Lunch Break 12-1pm
1-3 Workshops
a) Pat Hickey, Alan Thornett & John Deason on the tasks for socialists in the unions
b) John Harrison on the British economic disaster
c) Paul Gilroy on black crime and law and order
d) Julian Atkinson on Labour's youth movements
3-5 Plenary session in main hall
Bea Campbell & Valerie Coultas discuss *Sweet Freedom* and women's liberation

Please send me tickets for the International Debating Socialism weekend.
I enclose £.... for the tickets. Please reserve places in the creche.

Name Address

Make cheques etc payable to: International, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Off to a flying start

TWELVE and a half thousand pounds — that's how much our appeal for a week's wages from our supporters raised.

When we appealed in the summer for a week's wages to help meet our escalating costs, we knew it would be a tall order to achieve more than ten thousand pounds. But you responded magnificently. We had unemployed readers sending us their giros, old age pensioners their weekly pittance and others dipping into their slender savings.

Particular thanks to our supporters in the Brent area who raised more than twelve hundred pounds. And our thanks to everybody who contributed.

Our quarterly fund drive reached a final total of £14,045, two and a half thousand pounds short of our target. Not bad for the summer months, with the week's wages campaign running at the same time.

This quarter's fund drive got off to a flying start with the proceeds from our East London cdes' banquet celebrating the revolutions in the Caribbean and Central America, as we reported in last week's Socialist Challenge.

And the Birmingham Red Trotter, Steve Faulkner, is still collecting in the sponsorship cash from his fundraising marathon. The final total is expected to top £300.

Inspired by Steve's example Des Tierney, a Socialist Challenge supporter in Glasgow, is

running in the Scottish People's Marathon on 17 October to raise funds for Socialist Challenge and Revolution Youth, our sister youth paper. You can rush your sponsorship for Des' heroic efforts to the Socialist Challenge office in London.

Our big priority for raising funds for Socialist Challenge over the next few weeks is the national rally celebrating the 65th anniversary of the Russian Revolution on Friday 22 October at County Hall in London. Hundreds of Socialist Challenge supporters from round the country are coming to hear Ernest Mandel and Bernadette McAliskey, and we hope to raise a bumper collection.

Meanwhile, our thanks to all those who contributed to the Week's Wages campaign around the country. The final figures per area were as follows:

West London	£1062
East London	1419
North London	707
South London	883
Brent	1260
Birmingham	1045
Manchester	1332
South Wales	836
South West	297
Oxford	180
Scotland	1072
North East	305
East Midlands	343
West Midlands	187
North West	190
TOTAL	£12,509

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

If you would like to be put in touch with Socialist Challenge supporters in your area or would like more information fill in the form below

Name

Address

Age

Union/CLP (if any)

Send to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

FUND DRIVE '82

Privatisation — what it means

AT THE END of July the government announced that 51 percent of British Telecoms (BT) would be sold to private buyers by 1984. Now valued at £5 billion, this is the biggest share issue ever offered in British history.

The Thatcher government has set itself the task of re-shaping British industry. Under the guise of 'private is best' industry is to be re-structured and rationalised. Fewer workers are to produce more profits through a worsening of conditions, and redundancies. This is the asking price for new technology.

The telecommunications industry and the microchip industry will transform industry and the microchip industry will transform economic, social and political life. It compares with the role played by railway development in the industrial revolution. Ripe pickings exist for the private speculator hovering in anticipation of Thatcher's denationalisation.

Selling off our assets is an important feature of Thatcher's attempt to solve the crisis of the British economy at our expense. The other side of this is dismantling the welfare state. But nationalisations and the welfare state were gains of the labour movement which even previous Tory governments have not felt able to reverse. To generally introduce such proposals would require a decisive weakening of the strength of the working class. Privatisation is crucial to this objective.

This is how the bosses magazine the *Economist* explained things at the end of July: 'British unions are cowed but not broken ... The union grip is strongest in the public sector monopolies. The most effective way to reduce public sector union power is to end this state monopoly or near monopoly in the service they provide'.

British Telecoms is the biggest and richest prize in this sale of the century. In the process of privatisation the 'service' aspect of the industry will be dropped. Services will be cut in the 'unprofitable' rural areas and investment concentrated in city business areas. The private consumer will be discriminated against in favour of big business. This is what they mean by making BT 'more efficient'.

'Efficiency' will also result in thousands of Telecom workers being thrown on the dole. The job security agreement BT has with the POEU is 'conditional'. The condition is that BT is not subject to pressure 'outside its control'. Putting the Board under the control of the shareholders is the sort of 'outside control' they will use to scrap the job security provisions.

The inefficiencies of BT, the slowness in providing new lines, new equipment and maintaining them is blamed by the Tories on nationalisation. This is outrageous. All these things stem from the conscious starving of funds to BT and the subjecting of BT to the laws of 'profitability'. BT's £2bn investment in the last two financial years had to be funded solely out of internal sources — as opposed to private industry which can raise money from the stock exchange or the banks. Yet at the same time it has to make a five percent return on capital and repay £45m in loans to the government.

The telecommunications revolution can be a tremendous force for bettering the lives of ordinary people. It cries out for an integrated system. This means planning, not the anarchy of a system based on profitability. It requires workers control in order to ensure that the bureaucratic functioning of today is overcome and to allow the industry to be run in the interests of the workers and not the city sharks. This has to be our message and our demand on any future Labour government as we fight to defend our industry.

After the Day's Strike

What next?

THE ONE DAY of strike action of the POEU was a good start to the Campaign against Privatisation of British Telecoms — the fact is that the fight has to go on if we are to win. We don't just want token stoppages and protests, only to retire into the background to wait for a return of a Labour government.

The campaign has to be a fight to get the Tories out and that is best organised by taking action. Already the signs of a real challenge to the Tories are mounting — in the mines and steel industry — alongside the tenacious struggle of the health workers.

The POEU and other BT unions should link their action to these blows against the Tories — one out, all out. The POEU should organise its National Stoppages to coincide with the action of other unions. The POEU is already committed to blacking *Project Mercury*.

Selective action

This is an essential part of a national strategy. It can only be seriously organised through a national levy. Profit centres and big business can be hit

by selected action in the big cities, especially those with intentions to buy shares.

Labour Party

The TUC and Labour Party have committed themselves against privatisation. This is good. The unions in BT need this backing. Local Constituency Labour Parties should organise support for striking BT workers — distribute British Telecom Unions Council public leaflets — showing how the public will suffer.

They can circulate affiliated branches with speakers, campaign in the press. But the fight for a Labour government committed to renationalisation cannot be left to the ballot box only.

Accountability

We want a Labour government that means what it says, MPs and councillors who will be ac-

countable. That's why we can't be indifferent to the witch-hunt.

The POEU sponsored MP John Golding who leads in this has to be called to order. It's high time that the POEU membership had the real right to decide on Labour Party affairs.

The struggle for an accountable NEC, and the fight for changes at the rules revisions of 1984 conference is part of our tasks.

Special Conference

The POEU executive have ducked their responsibility. Having talked out any motion or policy at annual conference this June, they now oppose the call for a special conference put out by City Branch and backed by lots of branches. Such a conference would enable us to map out a real strategy:

- of rolling industrial action in conjunction with other workers against the Tories
- blacking of *Project Mercury* and other companies intending to buy shares
- for a National Levy for selective action



HANDS OFF TELEPHONES!

- for a 35 hour week now — no job losses. No redundancies

Every branch must back the call for a special con-

ference and circulate others for their support. Two thirds of the 270 odd branches are needed. Make sure your branch backs it.

Privatisation: how to fight it

JOCK CAMPBELL is the secretary of London City POEU branch. He helped to organise the 35 hour week campaign at the base of the union and is now actively involved in preparing for the campaign against privatisation. Socialist Challenge spoke to him about the lessons of the 35 hour week campaign.

Can you explain the background to the 35 hour week campaign?

The demand for a campaign around the 35 hour week was conference policy for 12 years but the NEC did nothing to organise it. Eventually LNCI took industrial action on the issue. London City branch supported LNCI and in order to put pressure on the executive blacked Post Office buildings. This action plus the support from other branches forced the NEC to call for national industrial action.

What form did that action take?

City branch took selective action against the banks and the stock exchange. We did not put new PBAX's into service in the banks and we completely blacked the stock ex-

change.

This resulted in the Bank of Illinois appearing on television to undermine the union's action. Together with the stock exchange the banks went to the then Prime Minister James Callaghan.

This coincided with the national 1/2 day strike and mass rally in Hyde Park. There Bryan Stanley announced to the whole membership that he was committed to fight to the end for the 35 hour week.

The next day he went to see James Callaghan and sold out. The POEU settled for the 37 1/2 hour week.

What lessons can we learn from the 35 hour week campaign?

We have to change the NEC. The present NEC still think we are in the civil service. They are politically yesterday's men.

We need a new leadership to organise the membership in this period. It is campaigns like the one against privatisation that will assist and build the political pressure in the branches for the removal of the present NEC and the election of a NEC prepared to defend the union membership now.

Is the demand for the 35 hour week still relevant in the union?

No. Now we must demand the 32 hour 4 day week. This is the way we will maintain posts.

During the next period there will be pressure for us to sell jobs. As a union not only should we not contribute to a large dole queue, but we should also fight for a better life for our membership.

As a start to the privatisation campaign London City is calling a special meeting. What do you see its purpose as?

We called a special meeting to inform and gear up our membership and to put pressure on the NEC. This pressure has

already resulted in the calling of a one day national strike.

The special meeting will also show the NEC we are serious in our campaign to have a special conference.

Why do we need a special conference?

If our demands are to be won we need a national plan of action. We know that this struggle is not going to be won quickly or easily, therefore it must be planned.

The one day strike is vital in uniting the membership for the struggle ahead. But following that the first thing that convinces the members that something is going to be done is a national levy. Because cash is essential to be able to win.

What action do you think the Special Conference should plan?

The action has to be selective and we are in an industry where we could paralyse big business by selective stoppages.

What is the role of the Broad Left?

The Broad Left must bring the issues to the membership and show that the problems can be resolved. We are winning the policies but we need to change the NEC to a leadership that will carry them out.

Is there any point that you would like to make?

The Labour Party conference showed the importance of the block vote in the fight for control of the party. We need democratic control of the block vote by the grass roots.

That means we need to fight in the unions for the block vote to be mandated around clear policies. To do this means the left in the CLPs and unions should orientate to the unions and push a campaign based on democracy and policies.

For example, the only policy the POEU branches had a say in was the deputy leadership election. We should look at the rules so we can allocate time to the discussion of political issues.

Don't let the Tories take your job

By Denny Fitzpatrick

A CONFIDENTIAL Department of Industry Paper forecasts the axing of 45,000 jobs in British Telecom (BT) — in other words one in four in the next 5 years (*Guardian* 14 Sept). The report, prepared by BT's chief business planner Mr Adam Scott, will go before the BT board in January.

BT management's own plans were for 15,000 to be axed over 3 years by natural wastage and retirement of the 13,000 over six-

ties.

Plans for the Eastern Region to increase productivity by 6 percent include the lapsing of 250 posts and a further 1,000-1,500 by 1985.

In the Scotland Region the plan to spend less on current and capital accounts in 82/83 includes reducing staff by 5 percent in March 1983.

In London a heavy order book is being reduced by increasing overtime rather than recruitment. They want to cut 929 jobs in the

operator services, with 236 in Personnel and Administration. This is the lead into a further 1,660 of the combined services by March 1984.

When Sir Patrick Jenkins said in his House of Commons speech announcing the sale of BT 'I pay tribute to the way Sir George Jefferson and his board are transforming what was not so long ago a Government Department into a commercially orientated business' he was praising the threat to our

jobs.

The point about privatisation is that it allows for the introduction of new technology under their control. POEU officials estimate that new technology will lose 60,000 BT jobs in the next decade. Attacks like this can only be waged in the aftermath of the denationalisation — with a weakened union. The Tebbit law only aids their plans.

Implementing 35 hours now with plans to introduce union policy

of a 32 hour four-day week is what we need.

At the same time the union should cut overtime levels. Increased overtime is not the answer to the pay cuts. The union leadership negotiated this (while BT made record £458 million profits).

Overtime is a cheaper way of BT meeting the demand rather than giving someone the right to work. Without these sorts of policies the job threat cannot be challenged.

Stop Steel jobs massacre

THE TORIES are planning to close two major steel plants. The impact on jobs in Scotland and North East, the likely place for the closures, will be catastrophic.

British Steel has thrown 100,000 workers onto the scrap heap in the last three years. Productivity has shot up beyond European standards. This has been achieved exclusively by workers working harder. They have received no wage increase for two years.

This horrific record has been prevented by BSC boss Ian MacGregor as a 'survival plan'. All the Tory press is now lamenting how poor old MacGregor has seen his hopes for maintaining 14.4m tonnes of production dashed. What we are asked to believe is that everything was going fine and dandy until all of a sudden things turned sour at the beginning of the summer.

This is a nonsense. What we are seeing now is simply the second phase of the MacGregor plan. And there will be more cutbacks and job losses unless a stand is taken.

Bill Sirs has blamed the problem on foreign imports. But BSC sales have shrank massively more because the home market has shrank catastrophically because of the recession. It is Tory policies, not foreign imports that need attacking.

Michael Foot has made the excellent proposal that BSC capacity should revert to the 25m ton level. But this will need the stimulation of the economy to increase demand — not on the basis of a forlorn hope that the bosses will do their 'patriotic duty' and respond. The French situation shows the silliness of that idea. No, we want socialist planning and full blooded socialist measures which takes the running of the economy out of the bosses hands. This is the sort of perspective the Clydebridge workers need as they move to occupy their threatened plant.

A 24 hour strike is a good first step within such a framework. But by itself one day action can waste the potential militancy which is developing. Bernard Connolly, convenor of BSC South Yorkshire crafts, explains the situation to Socialist Challenge.

ANOTHER 16,000 jobs under threat and Bill Sirs and company can give only two hours for a conference to organise a fightback — it's pathetic. We weren't allowed to put resolutions from the floor. All we got was a 4-point plan of inaction.

The conference started 10.30am and finished at 12.30am. Sirs told us nothing new. 16,000 jobs were under threat, which Macgregor had already announced at the EETPU steel trades conference. Ravenscraig and Redcar plants were the ones most affected — which had already been leaked to the press. When it came to taking any action, Sirs' 'multi-union pilot scheme' turned out to be a Pontius Pilate scheme — a washing of hands.

Bill Sirs gave a very polished performance, weeping and wailing over the diabolical plans that Macgregor has for the industry. It should be a polished performance — he's made the same speech at Consett, Clyde Iron, Warrington, Corby, Shotton, Hartlepool, Bilston, London Works, Hillside ... He reminded me of the professional mourners who used to weep at funerals in Ireland.

Sirs said that any plant opposing redundancies would be supported, just as he's said before. But he never said that the TUC steel committee or the ISTC would support any plant fighting redundancies by calling out the whole industry — like the miners came out over pit closures.

Sirs did announce a 24-hour token stoppage on 22 October, as a 'warning shot' over closures. With over 150,000 jobs lost in steel since nationalisation — 100,000 in the last three years — Bill Sirs just wants a 'warning shot'. I can see the look of terror on Thatcher's face! But that's not all.

We are going to withdraw from all committees, and the worker directors of BSC are going to be withdrawn! In other words a heavy sulk. That'll stop BSC management in their tracks.

We now have to go to our members and convince them of the need to support the 24-hour strike and try to build on it. If we don't, Sirs will turn round and say: 'Well, we gave a lead, but the membership weren't prepared to fight.'

Sirs didn't galvanise any reaction in the conference, despite the lobbies from Clyde bridge and River Don, who are in the front line of the jobs fight.

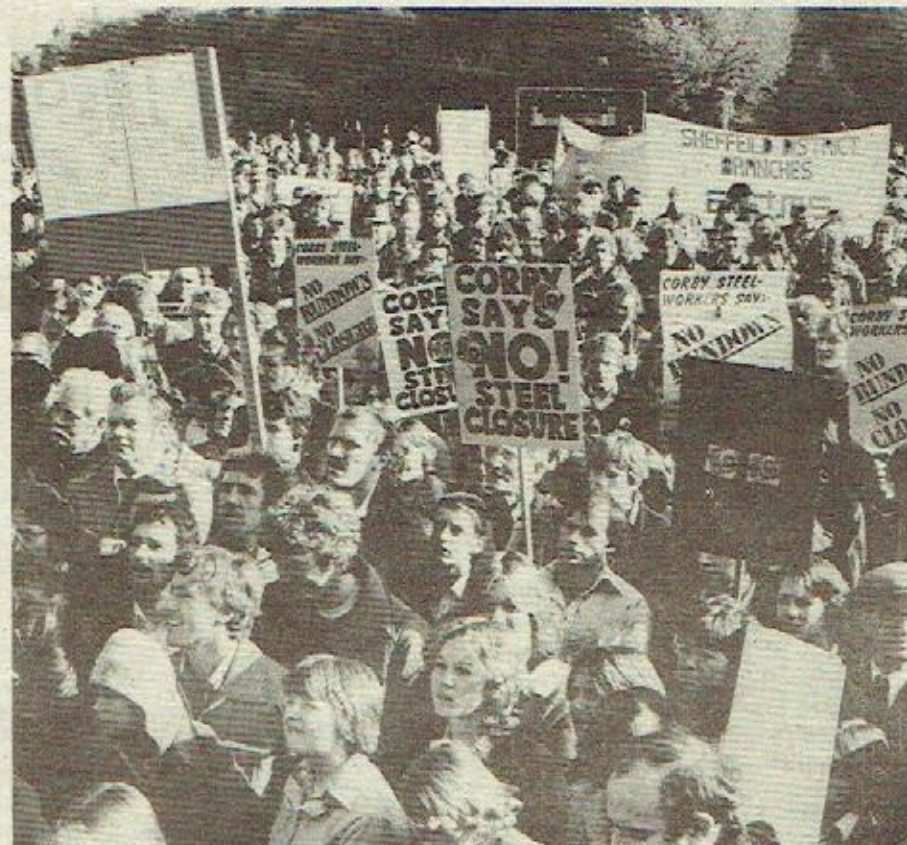
There was much talk once again of educating the members and winning the psychological war. With their 'leadership' we'll have the best educated and most defeated workforce in the world! Gavin Laird, the new general secretary of the AUEW seemed to be more concerned that the Clydesbridge workers demonstration outside might damage the AUEW building in which we were meeting.

Rejected

But the spirit to fight is there. Clydesbridge workers are proposing to occupy their plant to save over 500 jobs there. At BSC River Don, Cliff Wright, the AUEW convenor has said that they plan to copy French and Belgian steel workers in taking to the streets.

We recently held a meeting of all BSC craftsmen in South Yorkshire to re-affirm our position: no redundancies, defence of the rota system, defence of the contractors agreements, defence of shop stewards, and if BSC closes one plant we close all South Yorkshire plants. This was voted unanimously with a mandate for strike action.

Policies like these get results. We haven't been able to stop voluntary redundancies, but whilst overall redundancies in South Yorkshire have gone from 17,000 to 5,000, the number of craftsmen has only gone from 1100 to 900. We maintained the apprentice intake and got a job for every one. This is the sort of thing we need nationally.



Corby workers prepared to fight, but sold out. At the steelworkers' conference Sirs reminded me of the professional mourners who used to weep at funerals in Ireland.

TEESIDE

By Dave Carter

McGregor is playing Russian roulette with the five steel complexes in Britain, said John Pallister, Boilermakers convenor at BSC Lackenby plant on Teesside. He was speaking at a meeting called by Cleveland Association of Trades Councils to organise opposition to BSC's plan to destroy 20,000 more jobs in the industry.

Teesside was built around steelmaking. The closure of the Redcar and Lackenby plants, which is one of McGregor's options, would devastate the area, which already has the highest level of unemployment of any country in Britain. McGregor is coming to Teesside on 22 October to decide the future of the plants. A warm reception is being planned for him by trade unionists in the area.

Twelve thousand jobs have gone in the Teesside steel industry in the last 2 years — that's more than the total lost when Consett

works closed. I moved a successful resolution at the Northern Regional TUC meeting in Carlisle last week pledging opposition to any more closures in the region. That policy now has to be put into practice.

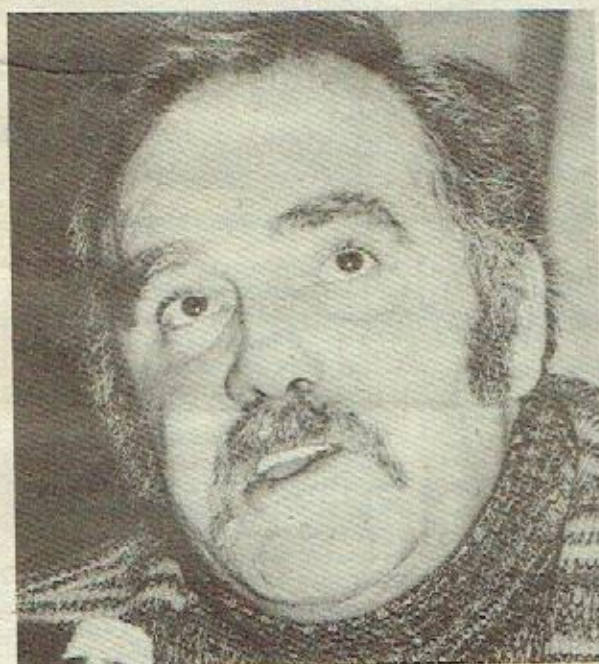
Cleveland Association of Trades Councils has called for a mass picket to greet McGregor as a first step in the campaign. Thousands of leaflets are to be distributed throughout the labour movement, and on the estates by the steel plants, to build support.

Local MP Leon Brittan, an architect of That-

cher's plans to slash nationalised industries, will be hounded whenever he visits his constituency. We have called on the Cleveland County Council to set up a conference to organise a fight against closures in Cleveland.

The Regional TUC has been asked to fix up meetings with other regional councils where steel plants are threatened so that McGregor cannot pick us off one by one.

The rank and file on Teesside have started the ball rolling in total opposition to McGregor's latest plans to cut back steel making. The livelihoods not only of steel workers but of tens of thousands of others in steel communities depend on that fight being successful. Will the full-time union officials be prepared to back us?



Bernard Connolly, convenor of South Yorks craftworkers.

Miners Campaign Under way

Britain's miners vote on 28 October to give powers to their union Executive Committee to call strike action against pit closures and the insulting 8.2% pay offer from the National Coal Board. To get the required 55% vote, NUM leaders throughout the country will need to campaign hard

Des Dutfield, Vice President South Wales Area NUM



Here we print two reports from militant areas, which indicate how the campaign is unfolding.

We've had our area meeting and we've started our campaign to get a vote against the pay offer and against pit closures. We've got a plan of pit and institute meetings and a mass rally at Afon Lido in Port Talbot on Monday 18 October. This will bring together miners from the whole area. In the final eight days to the ballot we will organise pit head meetings throughout the coal field. There is a national leaflet being produced and we may consider producing our own. We've already produced our own poster.

We've learned our lesson from before. We have to campaign in the pits to get the right vote, but it's no good peaking too early.

I'm not sure what the picture is in the other areas, but it looks like there'll be the same intensive campaign.

In 1981 we saw that you can't separate the wage issue from pit closures. This was bought in the 1980 pay claim

and the NCB followed it up with pit closures. We resisted last time and we're not going to let them do this again.

We haven't considered our approaches to other unions yet. We're concentrating on our pits campaign. Obviously we will try to work closely with the steel and rail unions in the Triple Alliance. But remember what I told you in an interview for Socialist Challenge last year. The Triple Alliance could be a wonderful instrument if people went into it sincerely. But, as I said, Gormley, Sirs and Weighell reminded me of the three stooges at the pictures in Treorchy when I was a boy.

One of these stooges has gone and another may be on the way out. But Bill Sirs doesn't instil any confidence in my members. I hope the steel strike he has called will take place and I don't want to sound cynical. There are a lot of good people in rail and steel; the problem is the leadership. I hope we can look to the Triple Alliance in the future.

'We can't afford not to strike'

John Chambers — Markham Main Armthorpe, near Doncaster

ALTHOUGH there is no support for Thatcher's policies among Doncaster miners and certainly no love lost between us and the government, we still face a hard fight to win a 'Yes' vote in the ballot on jobs and pay.

The unity which was our main strength in 1972 and 1974 has been eroded by the bonus scheme, which has created big differences in earnings between areas, and even between pits in the same area.

The board and the Tories want to appeal over Scargill's head and divide miners in areas like Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire from miners in Scotland and S. Wales.

We have got a lot of ground to make up in putting over our case. The NCB have been winning the propaganda war because the union hasn't campaigned.

We cannot afford not to strike. A 'No' vote would give the board the go ahead to close more pits and claw back the gains we have prised from them. It would strengthen the Tories' position at the same time as dealing another blow to the chances of a fightback by the working class. It would be seen as the acceptance by a strong union of the government's monetarist policies.

We can't afford to be insular. We must send delegates out to every other branch of industry to explain what we are fighting for and win support. Even now, with a strong campaign and the support of other trade unions, we can win not just the fight against closures but the fight against the Tories.

The Crisis of Strategy

The strategy of a one-sided 'war of position' put forward by some Solidarnosc activists, especially in the Warsaw region, has been shown to be inadequate and contrary to the dynamic of the movement. Instead of confining themselves to building the structures of a clandestine society, as dictated by the basic lines of this strategy, the working masses came onto the streets in impressive demonstrations. These actions very quickly led to street confrontations.

The elements of a 'war of movement' had accompanied the forms of a 'war of position' earlier — in the form of strikes — after 1 May. But now these elements began to come to the forefront. However, all this happened in a spontaneous way. The street battles were fought without any knowledge of the tactics of this form of struggle.

On the other hand, the workers are ready for actions of strategic scope, battles that would be at least decisive if not final, which could concentrate all the energy of the working class and the other oppressed sections of society rallied around it. Battles that could lead to decisive gains, actions that, in other words, would oblige the bureaucracy if not to withdraw from the scene, at least to yield considerable ground.

The call for a general strike — that is, the carrying of a 'war of movement' into the factories and fighting it there — is the confirmation of the basically proletarian character of the resistance to the military dictatorship.

From the outset, since the summer of 1980, this has been the character of the Polish revolution, not only because of its working class social content and the leading role that the working class has played in it but also because working class forms of struggle — economic and political mass strikes — have been the main form of struggle for the mass movement as a whole.

In taking the decision to prepare for a general strike, we have to realise what a momentous decision this is for the leadership of the mass movement, how great a responsibility it involves, and the fact that it has a historic importance. We have to realise the character that any real general strike would have and what conditions are necessary for it to lead to success. In fact, general strikes are governed by certain laws that have to be strictly observed.

In the first place, it has to be understood that a general strike is a large-scale revolutionary action by the masses, by the entire mass movement; that it means we are moving into an openly revolutionary situation. Trotsky wrote, in this regard: '... the general strike is not possible except under the condition of extreme political tension, and that is why it is always the incontestable expression of the revolutionary character of the situation (2).'

From this it follows that the launching of such a strike must reflect the fact that the masses are ready for a revolutionary action, and that all the component parts of the Solidarnosc network are prepared to engage in such a struggle.

In the writings of the Solidarnosc leaders, two tendencies can be perceived now, which, if they persist, could reduce the chances for the victory of a general strike. One is represented, for example, by Zbigniew Bujak, who wrote a letter dated Friday, May 21, to Bogdan Lis, commenting on the attitude of the workers in the big plants in Gdansk who were expressing their support for a general strike: 'Explain to them that because of the character of this strike (active self-defence), it would amount to a revolution (overthrow of the government).'

Bujak was right. The entire working class has to realise that this is a revolutionary action of great scope, and that it means taking the road that leads to overthrowing the bureaucratic regime.

But, contrary to what Bujak says, a general strike will not necessarily end in either the defeat of the movement or the overthrow of the bureaucracy.

As we will show further on in this article, it is possible to envisage a partial defeat for the bureaucracy and a correspondingly partial victory for the mass movement.

The general strike and the question of power

Every large-scale revolutionary struggle, and therefore any general strike, has to be armed with an action programme. In building a general strike, such a programme has to be put forward. Its precise formulation and popularisation play a dual role. First, only this programme being taken up by the broad masses, by the whole mass movement, makes it possible to determine when the latter is really ready for a general strike. Secondly, the

programme makes it possible to advance the consciousness and combativity of the masses, and this plays a fundamental role in the preparation of the strike itself.

The demands of such a programme can be divided into two categories — demands that can be met within the limits of the military dictatorship and those that can be met within the framework of the bureaucratic dictatorship in general (military dictatorship being only one of the possible forms of the bureaucratic regime).

The release of all the political prisoners is conceivable, although not very likely, within the framework of the military dictatorship. The military government, feeling its grip slipping, might agree to this in order to maintain its rule.

On the other hand, the other two demands presently being put forward by the movement — rescinding of the state of siege and reestablishment of trade union rights — can only be achieved through the overthrow (or forced resignation) of the military dictatorship. However, winning them does not require overthrowing the bureaucratic regime right away but only being able to force it to make concessions.

All these demands must be included in Solidarnosc programme for building the general strike. Not only are they not too ambitious but, they are insufficient for such a strike. 'Nothing can be on a higher plane than the general strike, except the armed insurrection. The entire history of the working class movement proves that every strike, whatever may be the slogans under which it occurs, has an internal tendency to transform itself into an open revolutionary clash, into direct struggle for power (3).'

This is sort of a 'law of movement' of general strikes.

The fundamental importance of the general strike, independent of the partial successes which it may and then again may not provide, lies in the fact that it poses the question of power in a revolutionary manner. By shutting down the factories, transport, and in general all the means of communication, power stations, etc., the proletariat by this very act paralyses not only production but also the government. The state power remains suspended in midair. It must either subjugate the proletariat by famine and force and constrain it to set the apparatus of the bourgeois state once again in motion, or retreat before the proletariat. (4)

These statements also hold for bureaucratic states, although we must not forget certain special features of such regimes. The bureaucracy can resist generalised work stoppages better than the bourgeoisie because, unlike the capitalists, it is not a class integrated into the process of production but only a parasitic layer. As a result, a general strike would have to be long to break its resistance. The danger of famine, therefore, is greater.

If only for this reason, it is necessary to envisage going from a passive general strike to an active strike in more and more plants as the strike continues. With respect to the active strike affecting most of the north Italian factories in 1920, Trotsky stressed that such an action meant in reality establishing workers power: '... all that was lacking was to organise it, and to draw from it all the necessary conclusions'. (5)

In fact, an active strike poses the question of power still more forcefully than a passive occupation strike. Commenting on this active strike while it was spreading, Antonio Gramsci asked: 'Will not all these proletarian republics, which is what the factories occupied and run by the workers are, not be constrained by the force of historical development to federate and to

What strate

Solidarnosc

THE FORMAL announcement of a law dissolving the Polish workers movement, Solidarnosc, is likely to lead to more conflict on the streets of Poland. At the present time an intense debate is taking place among the activists in Solidarnosc about what strategy to adopt for the union.

Some people, most notably the Warsaw leaders around Zbigniew Bujak have been arguing for a long 'war of position' — building up Solidarnosc's underground strength, and avoiding frontal confrontations with the state authorities. Others like Bogdan Lis and the Gdansk leaders are arguing for a move towards a general strike. This is also backed by Jacek Kuron.

Here we publish excerpts from a much longer article from the Polish language *Inprekor*, which has also been published in *Veto*, the journal of Poznan Committee for Social Self-Defence, arguing the position of Polish supporters of the Fourth International.



organise in a united way to counterpose their own central power to the bourgeois power?' (6)

What are the conclusions to be drawn from all this? Let us go back again to Trotsky's reflections on the general strike: 'The leaders of the proletariat must understand this internal logic of the general strike, unless they are not leaders but dilettantes and adventurers. Politically this implies that from now on the leaders will continue to pose before the proletariat the task of the revolutionary conquest of power. If not they must not venture to speak of the general strike.' (7)

The question of power in the action programme

The first demand that has to be included in the action programme is for the release of all the activists of Solidarnosc and other independent organisations whether sentenced after being tried or interned without trial.

'In every war', as Zbigniew Romaszewski has correctly pointed out, 'even in a war waged by a government against its own people, one principle is observed — the question of prisoners has to be discussed before there can be any talk about agreements. Otherwise, any accord would be only a capitulation, capitulation all the more grave because it would weaken our most important weapon — our solidarity.'

The second point of the programme has to be the demand for ending the state of war and therefore the military dictatorship.

Finally, the programme has to include the demand for the

reestablishment of trade union, and democratic rights in general that were won between August 1980 and December 1981. In particular, this means fully restoring the freedom of action of the independent self-managed union Solidarnosc, with its present statutes, all its democratic elected leaderships, its organisational structures, and the programmatic resolution adopted at its First National Congress of Delegates chosen by the masses.

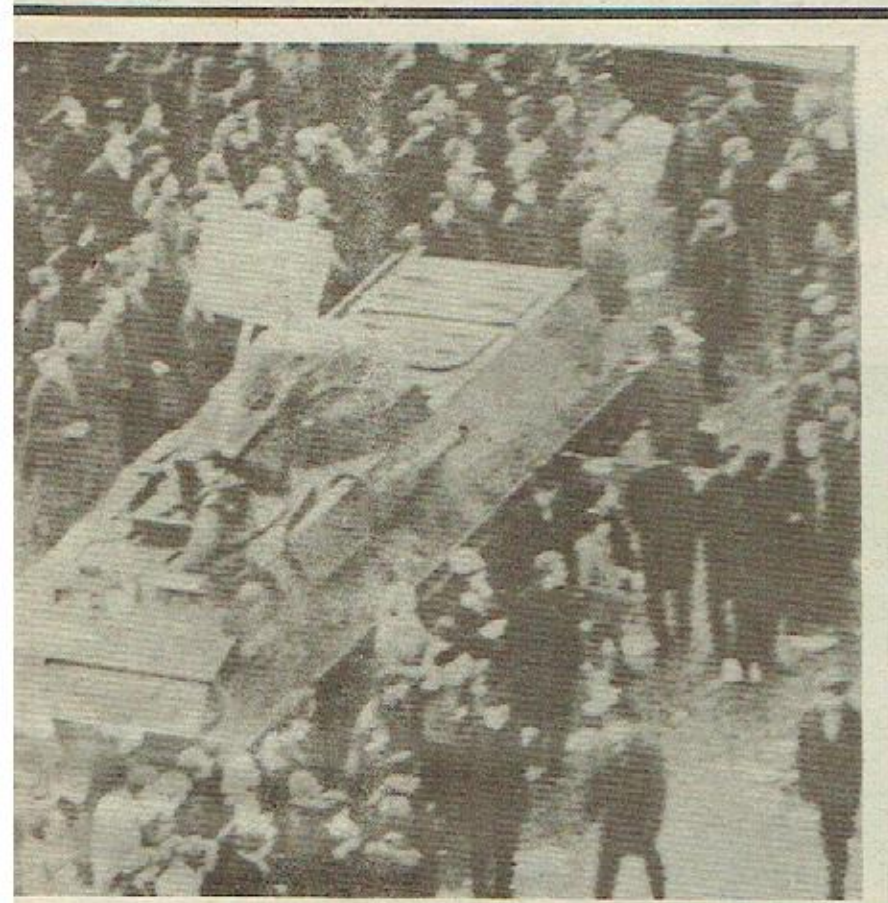
However, these are only immediate demands. Along with them, Solidarnosc's action programme must include more advanced demands representing the elements of a transitional programme. In fact, those demands that can be won under bureaucratic rule cannot be severed from the goal proclaimed in the political resolution of the First National Congress of Solidarnosc, the building of a self-managed republic.

Such demands cannot be isolated from the strategic aim that the Polish working class adopted after August 1980, when it took up the struggle for genuine socialism — that is, a democratic system run for the workers by the workers. And in this struggle, the Polish proletariat linked workers democracy and republican democracy with a genuine socialisation of the major means of production. The pre-condition for achieving this goal is overthrowing the rule of the bureaucracy. The demands that, when achieved, will make it possible to open up the road leading to this goal must, therefore, have a place in the action programme.

We think that partial gains in the realm of political democracy,



Strategy for Solidarity?



such as the achievement of the immediate demands already mentioned, must be complemented by at least some limited gains that will provide a basis for protecting the society from the dangers that imperil its material existence. These are gains that will make it possible to shield the society from the effects of the economic crisis and will open up the way for waging an effective struggle against this crisis.

A social (working class) programme for combating the crisis — for combating the spectre of famine, poverty, massive unemployment, and more generally the final collapse of our national economy — has to be, therefore, an integral part of Solidarnosc's action programme.

There are two social priorities today — assuring full employment for all workers and guaranteeing the socially necessary minimum living standard for all citizens. The achievement of these objectives must be the goal of social and economic planning in the near future.

This means that it will often be necessary to maintain production in one or another plant or to start it up even when the costs of such production are higher than the average costs in a given industry. However, the real costs of production in all enterprises have to be clear. The society must know how much it 'pays' and why, and at the same time the total subsidies cannot exceed the sum of the income gained by the other enterprises.

The establishment of workers control over production and distribution (including over rationing, and in fact such a check was established in the fall of 1981 by Solidarnosc in the Lodz

region), workers control over all the enterprises, has to be the axis of a programme for fighting the crisis. Therefore, it should be the main demand in this part of Solidarnosc's action programme.

In 1932, Trotsky wrote: 'In contemporary Germany, under the conditions of the present crisis, control over industry signifies control not only over the operating but also over the partly operating and shut-down industries. This presupposes participation in control by those workers who worked in those industries prior to their dismissal. The task must consist of setting the dead industries into motion, under the leadership of factory committees on the basis of an economic plan.' (8)

Let us be specific about the sort of plans involved: 'If it appears that in a given enterprise stopping production would benefit the society more than continuing, the workers concerned must be given the time to draw up an alternative plan. In this time, the workers, under the leadership of their council and with the involvement of the union, must develop a plan for a new kind of socially useful production, on the basis of the available machines and raw materials, so that the enterprise can resume operations and maintain the present level of employment.' (9)

It is necessary, therefore, to demand the reestablishment of freely elected workers councils. Such councils should have the status of workers control. At the same time, since any tactical compromise is only a prelude to new struggles, they must be means for organising the fight for self-management. They have to prepare the workers to take

power in the plants and the working class as a whole to establish a system of self-management throughout industry and in commerce and all other economic activity. This involves building up a vertical structure, coordination, and cooperation, and thus democratically centralising the self-management bodies.

Workers control is a form transitional to self-management. The setting up of such workers control in the present conditions would mean the burgeoning of a situation of dual power in industry and in the state sector of the economy as a whole, since the system of workers control 'has a contradictory character, presenting a sort of economic interregnum'. (10)

The bureaucracy will no longer hold total and exclusive power over the means of production and, likewise its monopoly of power in the state will be cut into.

It is impossible to foresee what the relationship of forces between the regime and the society will be at the moment a general strike proves victorious. It cannot be excluded that such a strike will overthrow the rule of the bureaucracy. Nor can it be excluded that the new relationship of forces will be reflected in a large-scale situation of dual power. It is also possible that economic power — following the development of active strikes in a large number of plants — will pass into the hands of the working class and may be institutionalised in the framework of a Self-Management Chamber or Socio-Economic Chamber of the Diet, while at the same time political power remains in the hands of the bureaucracy. It is possible at the first only at the economic level through the growth of workers and social control in this sphere.

That is the minimum that we should seek in undertaking a general strike, that is in posing the question of power. Solidarity should fight for such control with the same energy, the same determination, the same assurance as it fights for the release of its activists, and for the reestablishing of trade union rights.

We stress that this is the programme necessary for undertaking the strike. But there is no reason why more advanced demands could not grow out of the strike itself. They could go beyond the call for workers and social control over the economy to calling for the immediate institution of workers and territorial self-management.

Self-defence, agitation in the army and police forces, and the active strike

Let us now consider, apart from an action programme corresponding to the laws of the general strike, what the other conditions are for the success of such a strike.

First of all, as the Solidarnosc regional leaders in Warsaw, Gdansk, and other places have correctly stressed, during a general strike it will be necessary to organise self-defence in all the plants.

During the period preparatory to the strike, the organisation of the workers guards should take a simple form; at least, that is what is indicated by the experience of the workers movement. This means small groups of three, five, or ten persons under the orders of a guard leader for the factory or neighbourhood and of a special cell of the Solidarnosc regional or inter-enterprise committees.

Setting up company-size detachments (250 persons) will not as a general rule be possible before the strike if clandestinity is to be maintained. What is meant by clandestinity here, of course, is simply that the composition and technical aspects of the workers' guards will remain secret.

At the start, the workers guards will be armed in a makeshift or even primitive way. But even such crude forms of armament will be a means for acquiring real weapons when confrontation occurs with the repressive forces.

During the active defense of the enterprises that took place in some Silesian mines in December 1981, axes, swords, and pikes were made in the forges; the workers armed themselves with picks and clubs. Some of the ZOMO were killed, because the workers used fire extinguishers that propelled supercooled liquid and white-hot metal spears to defend the strike.

The precondition for forming and arming workers guards is that the mass movement be ready to resort to force if necessary. Mass violence must not be confused with individual terrorism or the actions of small groups operating on the fringes of the mass movement or trying to substitute themselves for it.

The international impact of the Polish general strike

At the time of the general strike, consciousness of the international character of the Polish revolution will be more necessary than ever. In fact, such a strike will be a dramatic call to awaken the workers and the societies as a whole that are subject to the same totalitarian rule in the other East European countries and in the USSR, and it will become the model for the workers in the capitalist countries in their struggle to liberate labour.

Instead of hiding our heads in the sand, we must answer the question of whether the totalitarian bureaucracy of the USSR will decide to rescue the totalitarian bureaucracy in Poland if it finds itself facing a formidable adversary. What can neutralise or at least limit the threat of Soviet intervention?

Can this threat be warded off by a Solidarnosc that is powerful but has to take refuge in passive resistance? Or can this be accomplished by a Solidarnosc that would be still more powerful because it would be prepared to occupy the factories in a coordinated and organised

way and to fight in the streets under the leadership of an armed workers guard, and prepared finally to mount a sustained campaign of intense agitation among the Soviet soldiers, who would have nothing to gain from such a war?

The more favourable relationship of forces Solidarity achieves in the general strike, the more supporters it has in the workers movements of other countries — today in the West, tomorrow also in the East — the more the bureaucratic regimes in the USSR will hesitate before sending their armies against the mass movement in Poland. If Solidarnosc had been ready to defend itself actively in December 1981 and to use force, as the bulletin we quoted above says, 'the regime would have had to think twice before making a frontal attack on the union.'

Today, it is possible to make the totalitarian regimes in the USSR and East Europe think twice before deciding to invade Poland. This can be done by improving the relationship of forces for Solidarnosc, by a general strike and by assembling all the preconditions to assure the success of such a strike, by appealing to the workers in the West to support the strike in Poland actively and the workers in the East to follow its example. Facing the sort of enemy these regimes represent, force is the most effective means of persuasion.

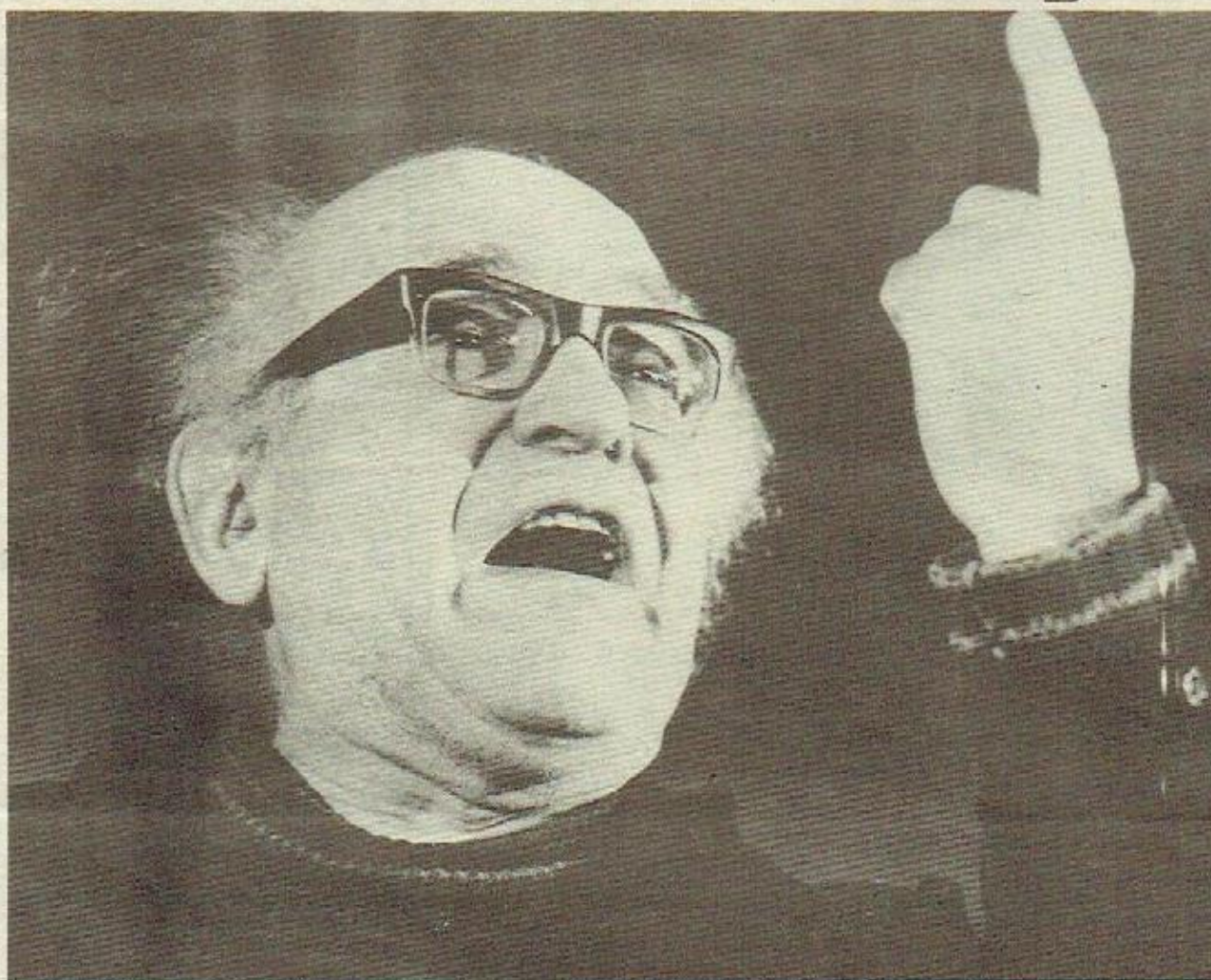
Footnotes

- 2) Wither France, *Leon Trotsky on France*, p.94
- 3) Wither France, *Leon Trotsky on France*, pp 93-4
- 4) Wither France, *Leon Trotsky on France*, p.100
- 5) *Leon Trotsky, The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* p 189
- 6) *Antonio Gramsci, Ecrits Politiques* p 385
- 7) Wither France, *Leon Trotsky on France*, p.100
- 8) *Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* p. 242
- 9) *Zbigniew Kowalewski, Solidarnosc and the struggle for workers self-management, Lodz 1982*, pp 24-5
- 10) *Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* p. 77



Anna Walentinowicz (above) and Jacek Kuron (right) two of the most influential voices of the Polish resistance. Both are now detained without trial by the Polish authorities

An open letter to the Socialist Workers Party



SWP's Tony Cliff, his response to declining influence was to wind up Women's Voice and Rank and File Groups to 'purify' the party.

much larger — did stand up against the Malvinas war, did oppose the war in Ireland (and warmly applauded Bernadette when she addressed her first *Tribune* rally last week), did back the Palestinians against Zionism, does support the Salvadoreans and wants to get out of NATO and has taken active part in extraparliamentary actions.

The question we should therefore ask is this: has there been a greater radicalisation inside the orbit, or outside the orbit, of Tony Benn? And would you have been more effective raising your policies inside, or outside, this layer of people?

You have not grown. You have wound up your rank and file organisations claiming they have no base in the working class because the stewards have degenerated — in the middle of a giant wave of health strikes. You have not been more effective in getting action around your demands. And when massive struggles around democracy and the leadership of the Labour Party gripped both the Labour Party and the unions, your only role was to 'vote Benn when it came to the crunch.'

What you have done, comrades, is precisely what you accuse the *Militant* and the Labour left of doing: giving up and running away from a real,

mass struggle. Your approach is very close to abstention: and as Joan Maynard reminded Neil Kinnock last week, in a struggle an abstention is a vote against.

Nor is the struggle in the Labour Party over: on the contrary, the fiercest part is just beginning. The new left in the Labour Party, at the base of the constituencies and unions, *doesn't want* to be saddled with this new NEC, *doesn't want* the purge, and does want to see a government that will carry out the new policies which Labour has voted for.

Moreover, it is possible to unseat this leadership, possible to stop the witch-hunt, and possible to force a Labour government to carry out these policies: provided, as you and ourselves both agree, the left understands that independent mass action will be needed to impose these policies on an unwilling Labour cabinet.

So let's ask a simple question: will it help socialism if the socialists are expelled from the Labour Party? Would they then devote themselves to building a real socialist party? We don't think so. You know, and we know, that it will be a tremendous defeat: and the effect of every defeat is always to weaken the left. Every socialist knows this, and that is why

the witch-hunt is being resisted so fiercely. There is going to be a big fight, and the fight will spill into the unions. Why aren't you putting yourselves in a place where you can not just wait for such developments but help lead them?

Nor can you pretend that the unions are some kind of safe haven in which the Labour Party does not intrude. Why, after three years of selling out strikes, does Sid face his most serious challenge over his behaviour at Labour Party conference? This fact alone shows the fundamental flaw in your argument about the union bureaucracy.

You see, it is very double edged: you say, and we agree, that the union leaders are a 'conservative layer in British society, committed to improving workers' conditions in the framework of capitalism'. But may we remind you that the union leaders do also play some role in the unions? Are you proposing to organise outside the unions? You can't judge whether or not to conduct a fight in an organisation simply because it is dominated by bureaucrats.

The problem is this: how will we assemble the forces that can mount an effective challenge to the leadership of the right wing? The experience of the seventies shows that only a

political challenge can hope to succeed; and that means, given the present level of working class consciousness, a challenge to the right wing's role in the Labour Party.

And it is not a realistic perspective to tell workers who want to defeat this leadership *now*, that they should wait until the SWP is big enough to present an alternative to the Labour Party!

The problem, comrades, is that the union leaders operate on two fronts: in the unions and in the Labour Party. Trade unionists all see the Labour Party as 'the party of the unions'. On the other hand this makes it much easier for the union bureaucrats to hide behind the excuses about 'waiting for a Labour government'.

But on the other hand it makes it much harder for them to stop socialists inside the Labour Party from organising to defeat them.

Whenever in the past they have succeeded in driving socialists out of the party it has never been because they managed to foist mass expulsions on the party; it has always been because the socialist themselves backed up and ran away.

That is why Lenin, for example, proposed affiliation to the Labour Party. He recognised that as a purely parliamentary party, it was *forced* to allow great freedom to its members to organise or it would lose its claim to represent all working class opinion. He wanted to ensure that the communists took advantage of this freedom to help Labour Party members fight the union leaders *both* in the unions *and* in the Labour Party.

Shock

And that was the importance of the Deputy Leader campaign. You see, it is true that the campaign for constitutional reform 'did not set out to alter the fundamental character of the Labour Party'. It could not have done so and we have never claimed it would. But we do think that the reforms weakened the bureaucracy's grip, not just on the Labour Party but on the unions too. For what did the campaign do? It shook the leaders to their roots!

It forced them to confront their members and explain why they support allegedly 'left wing' policies — and vote for Labour leaders who oppose them. It gave the trade union rank and file the opportunity to take on their leaders and call them to account for their *politics*.

Now, of course, because the campaign was led by reformists the confrontation was limited in its goals, and when it was over it was wound up. But didn't it make it rather easier to wind it up for the fact that you weren't in it?

Nor is this the only trade union development which is conditioned by what happens in the Labour Party.

Let's take the block vote. The most bizarre thing about your attitude, comrades, is that *you yourselves* cannot deal with the block vote because for you it is a non-issue. You take the left to task for failing to deal with it — but how will *you* deal with it? What do you think the unions should do — affiliate to the SWP? For our part we have some very concrete proposals that we shall be taking up over the next few months. For example, how about a campaign to ensure that the block vote is cast for unilateralist candidates in the NEC elections? It will be rather easier to keep track of these votes now that the Labour Party has agreed to a recorded vote — but perhaps you didn't notice.

Or how about a campaign for a split block vote according to votes at union conference for different positions? These kinds of ideas, which understand the relations between the union bureaucracy and the Labour Party but try to use it against them, to fight for accountability, are impossible unless you are *part of the struggle* in the Labour Party.

But, comrades, you are not: not because you have been witch-hunted out, but because you ran away before the fight began.

Dear comrades,
THREE years ago the International Marxist Group, a leading force in establishing Socialist Challenge, approached you with a proposal to form a united revolutionary socialist organisation. You rejected this.

Since then Socialist Challenge and Socialist Worker have gone their separate ways, and have had many differences: Of these the most important surrounded the attitude which socialists should take to the Labour Party. Socialist Challenge argued that the democracy struggle in the Labour Party, the Benn Deputy leadership campaign, and other struggles in the Labour Party were so important that it was not enough for socialists to support them passively from the outside.

We said that they had to take part, side by side with Labour Party activists and trade unionists who did not want to create a new party but *did* want to struggle for socialist policies, *did* want to engage in extraparliamentary activity to achieve them, *did* want to challenge the right wing leaders of the Labour Party and unions, and centred their aspirations on the person of Tony Benn.

We said so for two reasons: first, because we thought that what they were fighting for *would* advance the socialist cause; and second because we knew that the ideas of revolutionary socialism would not get a hearing unless we threw ourselves actively into their struggle.

Socialist Worker took the opposite view.

Now, you have addressed an open letter to Labour Party members — which include many Socialist Challenge supporters — calling on them to withdraw and join your organisation.

What has happened since you rejected fusion three years ago? Let us take the major issues which socialists have had to face up to.

Emphasis

There have been many differences of emphasis. But we both supported the rebirth of CND and the movement against cruise missiles. We both supported the revolutionaries of El Salvador against American and British imperialism, and joined together to build mass action against Reagan's visit. We both supported the Argentinian people against Thatcher's mad war. You saw our large contingents — containing many Labour Party activists.

We both support the struggle of the Irish people for a united Ireland and against British troops. We both supported the PLO against Zionism and its agents. We both backed Solidarnosc against Jaruzelski; we both support the health workers to the hilt.

There are some serious differences: we don't for example, share your judgement on what's happening in Nicaragua. But then, neither do many of your own members. So we think you must accept that you have no grounds for claiming that on any major issue of world politics, we have crossed class lines, abandoned revolutionary politics, or ceased to campaign actively for them.

Nor are you justified in claiming that the Labour left as a whole has moved rightward. You can't cite Benn, or the *Militant*, as proof of what politics is like inside the Labour Party with any more justification than we could cite Roger Rosewall or the Communist Party as proof of what happens outside.

And in fact the Labour left has *differentiated*: one section has gone rightward with Michael Foot. But another section — in our opinion

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

This year, next year, sometime ... NEVER?

By Alan Freeman

WHAT DO NATO's General Rogers, Denis Healey, the Financial Times and Michael Foot have in common? Answer: they all understand that Britain cannot get rid of nuclear weapons unless it leaves NATO.

Denis Healey was quite explicit at the Labour Party conference. You are living in a dreamworld, he said, if you imagine that you can be part of a transatlantic alliance with a nuclear strategy, get rid of your own nuclear weapons, and tell your partners in the alliance to remove their nuclear weapons from your soil.

The next day the Financial Times reported a 'sane and sober contribution' to the discussion from General Bernard Rogers, NATO's top general in Europe, who had his statement ready before delegates had even started homeward. NATO, you may recall, has not been asked to register Labour's NEC. Rogers 'sane and sober' argument was that NATO could not commit itself to a 'no first use' policy — in other words it had to be

able to start a nuclear war if it wanted. NATO's nuclear strategy would be 'non-viable' if nuclear installations were removed from British soil. Concludes the Financial Times (which has also not been asked to register) 'The Labour Party's policy ... might force Washington to reconsider the viability of its whole commitment to NATO. Such a policy is not merely vapid and simple-minded; it is positively dangerous.'

No wonder Michael Foot, in his post-conference meanderings, has been more than vague about when the Labour Party would actually do the deed and get rid of the bomb. He is strangely reluctant to take on the combined extra-parliamentary opposition of the Pentagon's NATO generals (whom he has



Michael Foot: Will he, won't he, ban the bomb? ... and Healey will decide.

decided not to break from), the banks (which he has decided not to nationalise) and Labour's right wing (to whom he has just given control of Labour's NEC).

How can we help poor Michael? Well, first we can take seriously the Labour Party conference decision to build a giant demonstration against Cruise in 1983 — and just to make sure it happens, let's ask CND to take the lead in organising it.

Second, we can ensure that next year Labour does decide to nationalise the banks and get out of NATO. And finally we can mobilise in every corner of the Labour movement to stop Michael's sordid witch-hunt and clean out Healey's stooges from the NEC next year.

This may cause Michael some problems. It may even be read as a challenge to his 'leadership'. But then, there isn't much left to challenge, is there?



LEBANON

Onslaught against Palestinians continues

UNDER THE protective umbrella of the three-nation peace keeping force, the huge round-up of Palestinians and suspected Lebanese left-wingers is continuing.

Last Tuesday, Lebanese and French troops together sealed off the entire area of central West Beirut with tanks and armoured personnel carriers. As commercial activity in the area was paralysed, the Lebanese troops carried out house-to-house searches for arms, 'criminals' and 'aliens without papers'.

450 people were arrested during this round-up, some of whom had been blind-folded with their own shirts, and led away in trucks. 2000 people have been arrested so far in this type of operation.

The victims of the whole 'security' operation in West Beirut are the

Palestinians and those suspected of helping the Lebanese left. The operation is located entirely in West Beirut. No action whatever has been taken against the Phalangist militias, which are still controlling their own areas.

The Phalangists still monitor who enters and

leaves Lebanon through the port of Jounieh which they control. Phalangist radio stations still operate, and check-points are still manned by Phalangist troops.

Among the people arrested so far include Arabs from other countries who were fighting with the Palestinians, Kurds and other 'foreigners'. The Italian army has also assisted the Lebanese army in these operations. Despite the fact that the Italian army surrounds the refugee camps, there is no guarantee whatever that the Lebanese army troops will not be allowed into them.



TRIPLE ALLIANCE Join up!

By Tessa van Gelderen

'EVERY CUT-BACK, every job lost in the steel industry, threatens and causes cut-back and job loss in the mining and railway industries.'

So writes a Scottish divisional officer of the National Union of Railwaymen in the *Scottish Miner*. And he goes on to say that 'every miner, steel worker and railwayman has a vital interest in the future well-being of all three industries. That is the reason for the existence of the Triple Alliance.'

The Triple Alliance is between three unions: the NUR, the National Union of Mineworkers and the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. The 'reason for its existence' may have ostensibly been to support and defend workers in all three industries but the situation

in England and to a certain extent Wales is vastly different from that in Scotland.



Sirs ISTC

Sirs came to a deal with British Steel management that redundancies could occur provided the 'big five' steel works were not touched. Now, of course, MacGregor, BSC chair-

man, is planning to shut down at least one if not more of the main plants.

The steel unions have called a one day strike and broken off all redundancy negotiations with BSC. Never has the need for the Triple Alliance been more vital. Not only are steel workers facing further mass redundancies but railworkers and miners are facing a fight for their jobs.

Now is the time to follow the lead taken by the Scottish unions involved in the Triple Alliance. There, miners' leaders Mick McGahey and Eric Clarke have taken the Alliance into the ranks. They are organising a lobby to 10 Downing Street on Tuesday 26 October to tell Thatcher that 'no more



Scargill NUM

butchery of the basic Scottish industries will be tolerated'.

Organising at the base is what Weighell and Sirs fear most. And now that Gormley has found his way to the House of Lords they are even more worried. Arthur Scargill does want to evoke the Triple Alliance involving the whole membership.

In fact he wants to go further: he wants to bring

into the Triple Alliance all those unions directly involved in the three industries; that is the engineers, the train drivers and so on. What a powerful instrument that would be: not just against Thatcher but against these right wing leaders of the labour movement who are not prepared to confront this Tory government.

The Tories want to decimate the unions in the steel, coal and rail industries. They were on the way to doing that with the co-operation of Weighell, Gormley and Sirs. But given the right leadership, the membership is more than willing to fight. After the betrayals of the steel workers and the train drivers, the Triple Alliance led by Scargill and

Buckton could be a vital nail in the Tories' coffin.



Weighell NUR?

The rank and file need the confidence that they can win. This means the backing of all sections of the labour movement including the Labour Party — and the Labour left should fight to ensure they

get it. It's also important to give strikers the confidence that Labour will stand by its promises if elected to government in the Tories' stead.

Yet there's a problem: the Labour Party NEC elected with Triple Alliance votes doesn't exactly inspire this confidence. The right wing have to be cleaned out of the Labour Party and unions if this struggle is to succeed; and Scargill did not help matters by trading votes with Sidney Weighell and voting for the NUR's Russell Tuck.

To prepare victory, the NUM and Labour left should join hands to build a fighting left wing that commits itself to struggle, and votes for struggle — across the board.

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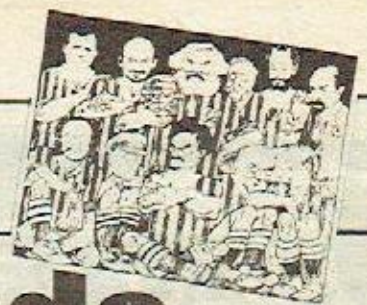
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What is Trotskyism?



Khomeini defends Iranian capitalism

In his educational series on Trotskyism, John Ross shows that despite the anti-capitalist aspirations of the masses, the Khomeini regime serves the interests of the capitalist class.

IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE OVERTHROW OF THE SHAH in the insurrection of February 1979 the workers, peasants and oppressed nationalities of Iran won a right to organise and made social gains such as they had never had before. The number one task of the Iranian capitalist class in this new situation was to take away these gains and prevent the Iranian working class and peasantry asserting their own independent class goals.

The crucial role in this, inevitably fell to the Khomeini regime. It alone possessed the political prestige to control the mass struggles and to start to rebuild the severely damaged capitalist state apparatus.

This policy of the Khomeini government however ran into immediate mass opposition. This started inevitably with the oppressed nationalities who make up 60 per cent of the population of Iran.

The problems the regime was going to encounter were immediately shown by the massive boycott of the March 1979 referendum on the 'Islamic Republic' which took place in Kurdistan because of the refusal to give any pledge on the rights of oppressed nationalities.

Rights of women were taken away, and in June 1979 three leaders of the Workers Council of the Petroleum Industry, which had formed a backbone of struggle against the Shah, were arrested. In the next weeks Fedayeen movement were executed, and the Kurdish Democratic Party banned. From July onwards a massive military offensive against Kurdish areas of the country was started.

Calls

These repressive actions of the regime however began to meet mass opposition and undercut its political support. The offensive in Kurdistan was defeated. A mass demonstration, with an estimated 200,000 participating, took place in Tehran against the banning of the opposition journal *Ayandagan*.

Most significantly the new Constitutional Referendum called at the end of 1979 resulted in an abstention rate of up to 50 percent — and far higher in many areas. The regime was losing its political prestige and with this its power to rebuild the capitalist state apparatus.

As a response to this situation the Khomeini regime seized the US embassy in Tehran in late 1979.

This move was greeted with overwhelming enthusiasm in Iran which was the whole object of the exercise. The Iranian people had suffered almost unimaginable crimes under the Shah's regime which had been organised directly in collaboration with the United States. To seize the 'nest of spies' in Tehran, to defy for a year

the US government, was greeted not only in Iran but among the oppressed of the world as a great triumph.

But while the workers and peasants saw the seizure of the embassy as simply part of a consistent struggle against imperialism the regime did it for different reasons. After an initial period in which a certain 'relaxation' took place, because of the huge upsurge around the embassy seizure, the regime again stepped up the repression. The war against the Kurdish people was intensified and systematic actions started to break up the independent working class organisations.

The Shora (council) movement came under particular attack. The Polytechnic coordination in Tehran, which was a regroupment of up to 200 Shora's in Tehran, and which possessed a central newspaper *Shora*, was broken up through a combination of repression and the creation of an alternative government dominated 'Workers House'. The workers leaders of the strike at Pars electric in Tehran were executed. The regime systematically began attacking the independent organisations of the working class.

When the imperialist backed Iraqi invasion of Iran started in 1980 this



Repressive war waged against Kurds

needed a total mobilisation of the people of Iran against the invasion. Instead for a year the regime claimed political credit for waging the war but continued to intensify its internal repression. A major part of the army was still used to continue the repressive war against the Kurds and not to fight Iraq. New measures against the press and workers organisations were started in spring 1981. Systematic torture on a wide scale was reintroduced in the prisons. Only after it felt it had crushed the possibility of any independent working

class opposition did the government allow the war against Iraq to be waged with full force — finally driving out the invaders in spring 1982.

The systematic and increasing repression carried out by the Khomeini regime is not something 'incidental' or in contradiction to its 'anti-imperialism' but is integral to its capitalist class nature. It is prepared to take certain actions against imperialism. But above all it was, and is, determined to crush any independent organisation of the working class and its allies which enable them to

fight for their class goals.

The workers and peasants of Iran still have major gains achieved through the revolution compared to the Shah's regime. But these gains are not maintained by the regime but on the contrary come into increasing conflict with it.

Particular actions may be engaged in with the Iranian government against imperialism. But the strategic way forward for the working class in Iran, including in the fight against imperialism, lies not in alliance with the Khomeini regime but in their overthrowing it.

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Socialist Challenge

LPYS march

Richard Rozanski,
Hackney North LPYS

JOBS FOR YOUTH SACK THE TORIES

NORMAN TEBBIT DECLARED WAR on youth and the unions at this year's Tory Party conference. Not surprisingly he got a standing ovation from his colleagues.

On Saturday 16 October in Liverpool, the Labour Party Young Socialists will strike out in our defence, with a march and rally: 'Youth Against the Tories, End Cheap Labour, Jobs for Youth!'

Tebbit and the Tories have put over half a million youth on the dole. If he gets away with smashing the unions then the chances of getting decent jobs will be gone for

many years. At the same time the government is spending billions of pounds to defend our 'democratic right' to the dole queue, poverty and homelessness.

The 'Youth Against the Tories' march will show that youth are prepared to do what Len Murray and his chums will not: wage a real fight against the Tories.

Revolution and Socialist Challenge supporters will be participating in a 'Jobs not Bombs' contingent, involving local groups of Youth CND.

We want to fully commit the LPYS to actively building Youth CND, and

Norman Tebbit the man who should get on his bike and get lost.

at the same time convince Youth CND activists that they must take their fight into the LPYS alongside all those committed to fighting the Tories, opposed to the right wing's witch-hunt, and in favour of a Labour Government committed to socialist policies.

This is a march not just

for those fighting youth unemployment, but for all those in the mining, steel, rail, and post office industries fighting to save their jobs.

It is for the militant health workers, desperately fighting for a decent living wage and to save the National Health Service. It is also for the activists in

the disarmament movement who see the need to turn labour movement support for unilateralism into action against the Tories to stop the missiles coming in 1983.

It is for all those in the Labour Party and unions who oppose expulsions and are fighting for a Labour government which

won't sell us out like that led by Wilson, Callaghan and Healey.

Help build the Labour Party Young Socialists as a fighting force against the Tories. Join the 'Youth Against the Tories' march.

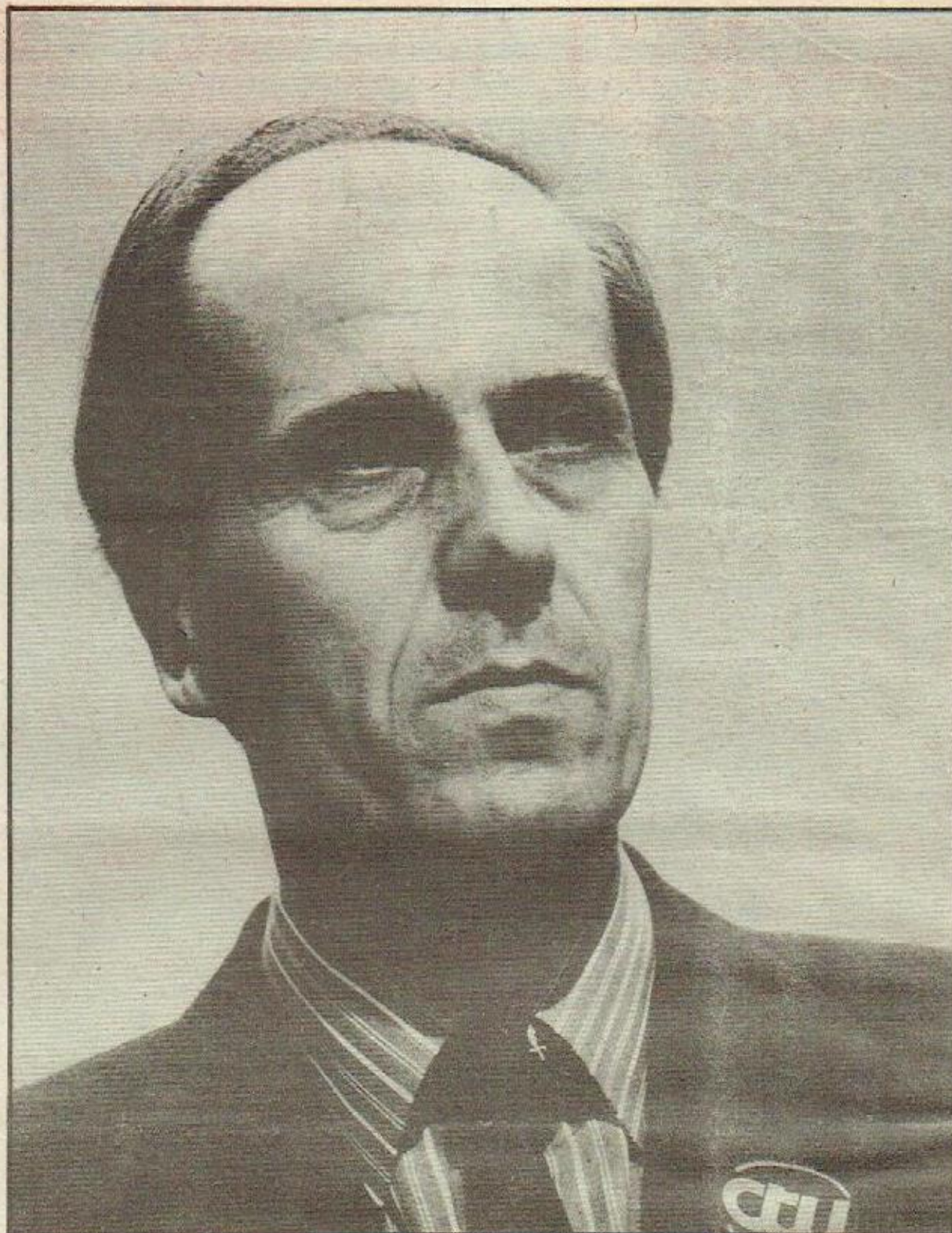


Photo by John Harris

London and home counties readers of *Socialist Challenge* are urged to go to work for the return of the Labour candidate in the Peckham by-election. Volunteers should report to Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, Peckham. The by-election headquarters will be

staffed seven days a week.

Midland readers of *Socialist Challenge* are also urged to go to work for Labour in Birmingham, Northfield.

Let's make sure Labour is returned with two thumping majorities.

Northern Irish elections

Irish socialists for unity against new Stormont

ONE YEAR after the Republican hunger strike ended, British imperialism is once again seeking to impose a sectarian and undemocratic solution in the North of Ireland.

British secretary of state, James Prior, wants a six counties assembly with a built-in loyalist majority, with neither guarantees nor concessions to the national majority in Ireland as a whole. All anti-imperialist forces agree that this assembly is an attempt to restore the hated Stormont regime in the British occupied six counties.

PD has been to the forefront in exposing the dangers of Prior's assembly. Their manifesto says:

'The key question in this election is unity.

Building again the united strength and confidence that brought down the old Stormont, and which can make this new version unworkable.

'This could have been achieved if all anti-unionist parties had supported total boycott. PD fought first and fought hardest to get such a policy adopted. The intransigence of the SDLP leadership and their enthusiasm to play politics with the future unity of Ireland prevented this policy from being followed.

'In this situation a partial boycott would be ineffective. People's Democracy is standing in this election to help rebuild anti-imperialist unity and a new mass struggle which can bring this new Stormont crashing down.'

PD candidates are:

• **John McAnulty**, D councillor for West Belfast, election candidate for West Belfast

• **Fergus O'Hare**, Belfast city councillor, election candidate for North Belfast

PD is fighting for a united anti-imperialist intervention with Sinn Fein, the other anti-imperialist party, who are standing twelve candidates but reject the proposal for a united anti-imperialist campaign. PD is fighting to build united rallies; they need money not only to fund their own campaign but to continue to lead the fight for unity, and for a return to the streets to smash the new Stormont.

Donations to: PD account no. 03514129 with the Allied Irish Bank, 159-160 Andersonstown Road, Belfast BT11 9DU; or PD, Connolly Bookshop, 6 Avoca Park, Belfast 11.

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