

Break
links
with
Tories

Socialist ORGANISER

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Labour
Party

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No. 154 November 10 1983 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

US sails towards all-out mid-East war

STOP

REAGAN!



A LARGE fleet of United States warships is moving, ominously, towards the coast of Lebanon. Why? Nobody knows for sure, yet, except the US government. But Margaret Thatcher has failed to get an assurance from the White House that the US government will not "retaliate" for the recent killing of 230 US soldiers in Lebanon.

"Retaliation" would be the 'good reason' to feed to the American people. The real reason is more likely to be the fact that all efforts to find a solution in Lebanon have so far failed.

The US is said to believe that it is mainly Syria and its Lebanese clients who stand in the way of a deal between Lebanese politicians, to put the shattered Lebanese state back together again.

US Tomcat jets are active over the Chouf mountains, stronghold of Syria's allies, the Druze, who recently defeated the forces of the Maronite Christian government which the US, Britain and France are in Lebanon to support.

It is expected that some of the American fleet will veer off and go to the Gulf, far to the East.

That could mean that Reagan's target is Iran.

In the fifth year of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq has just had its first supplies of the French Super-Etendard aircraft and Exocet missiles.

The US Navy may be getting in place to stop Iran if it responds to Iraq's Exocets - or to an American attack on its Shi'ite Moslem allies in Lebanon - by trying to block the Hormuz Straits, which are considered an essential lifeline by the United States.

Possible options

Concerted action by Iraq and the USA against Iran would be a new departure, but it would serve both their immediate interests.

What are the possible US actions?

*To strike at selected targets inside Lebanon. The Druze? Or the Shi'ites, who are considered most likely to have carried out the suicide bombing attacks on the Americans and the French?

*To occupy all or parts of Lebanon.

By John O'Mahony



Worried - Thatcher

*Collusion with Israel to deliver a knock-out blow against Syria, relying primarily on air power.

*To seize control of the Hormuz Straits.

*To strike directly at Iran, perhaps in open or tacit collusion with Iraq.

*Simply to make an intimidating show of massive US strength.

Against all scenarios of large-scale military action stands the fact that both Israel and the USA are likely to face large-scale reaction at home against actions which mean protracted war or large numbers of casualties.

We will soon know what their intentions are.

Certain things are clear already, however.

US imperialism and the mad dog in the White House are threatening world peace. Attacks on Iran or Syria (which is closely allied to the USSR) could lead to a major East-West military confrontation.

We are back in the world of brinkmanship - America's policy in the '50s, when the US threw its weight about in the world, risking and threatening war to get its own way.

Only this time, they are playing with tactical nuclear weapons and now believe that nuclear war can be limited and, for themselves, survivable.

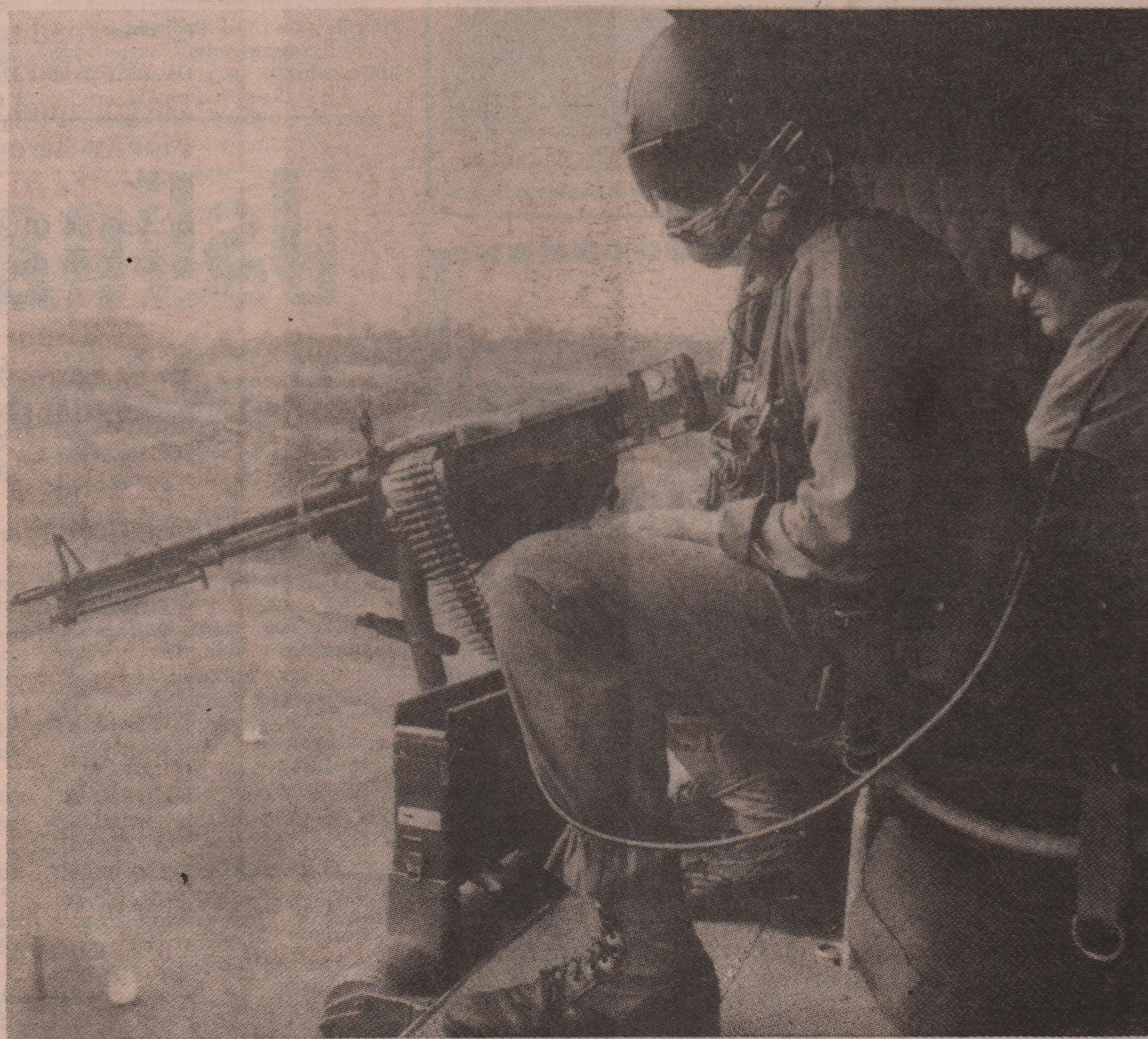
When the Americans occupied Lebanon in October 1958 it was one of the three or four occasions in the '50s when the world teetered on the very edge of nuclear war.

It is clearly insane for the British people to allow themselves to be tied to a military alliance with the USA in which the US government can involve Britain in an annihilating war without needing even to consult the British government.

A Daily Mail National Opinion Poll shows that 94% of British people now want British control over cruise missiles. 47% of those questioned are completely against cruise, while only 37% want it.

Most significantly 68% of those questioned thought that America would fire cruise missiles from Britain against the wishes of a British government. Only 18% thought they wouldn't.

The lessons of Reagan's war-mongering is for Britain to reject cruise missiles and US bases, to get out of NATO and to abandon its own nuclear weapons.



Hands off the PLO! - p.16

EDITORIAL

66 years on

"WE WILL now proceed to construct the socialist order" said Vladimir Ulyanov, whose nom de guerre was Nikolai Lenin, when he opened the Congress of Workers Councils (Soviets) in Petrograd 66 years ago, immediately after the successful Bolshevik insurrection of November 7, 1917. (According to the old Russian calendar it was October 25).

Sixty six years! In 1917 Lenin was as near to the European Revolution of 1848 as we are to the October Revolution. He was almost as near in historic time to the very beginnings of Marxism in the 1840s as we are to Lenin. When he led the Russian Revolution, Lenin was almost 20 years closer to the first modern workers revolution, the Paris Commune of 1871 than we are to the revolution he led.

In 1917 Karl Marx had been dead 34 years, Frederick Engels 23. Lenin has been dead 60 years (in two months time) and Trotsky was struck down 43 years ago.

Sixty-six years. We are a long way from that great day in human history when the Russian workers and peasants threw down the social and political power of the landlords and capitalists and themselves took control. The socialist order has not been constructed, in the USSR or anywhere else. If we judge present Russian reality according to the goals of the October socialist revolution - Liberty, equality of sexes, peoples, nations, freedom from poverty and want, democratic self-rule in society and at all levels of society, the absence of a parasitic and oppressive elite and of a bureaucratic state - as distinct from some of the social mechanics by way of which it was hoped to achieve those goals - for example, socialisation of the means of production: then it is indisputable that the Soviet Union is more distant from 'the socialist order' than are quite a few of those states ruled by capitalists and landlords.

The only road to 'the socialist order' in the Soviet Union now - as for five or six decades past - is by way of a new workers' revolution against the totalitarian bureaucracy which has ruled the USSR since the 1920s. What remains of the October Revolution can only be defended by overthrowing the present rulers of the USSR.

The Bolsheviks took power in a backward country they knew was not ripe for socialism - the Russian working class itself was only a small part of the population.

They expected to link up with revolutions in the advanced part of Europe. But they were isolated by the defeats of workers in the West. 14 states invaded the territory of the workers' republic, intertwining with the civil war. The small working class was uprooted and dispersed. A state bureaucracy emerged in control and the leaders of that bureaucracy abandoned socialist goals and hardened out as a privileged caste. Those who resisted were jailed and slaughtered in the Stalinist terror.

The women and men who seized power and set up the Republic of Workers' Councils 66 years ago are not to blame for the Stalinist counter-revolution which came about because the Russian Revolution was isolated.

Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish/German revolutionary told the truth about the Bolsheviks and the Russian workers they led when, in the course of criticising aspects of their policy she wrote:

"Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary foresightedness and consistency in an historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky and the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honour and capacity which Western Social Democracy lacked were represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian Revolution, it was also the salvation of the honour of international socialism."

In an American jail - for opposing US imperialism in World War Two - the great American Marxist James P. Cannon expressed in memorable words in November 1944 what we also think and feel about those who led the Russian workers to victory 66 years ago:

"I am grateful to the Russian Bolsheviks, and I am convinced to the bottom of my soul that it is better to be here with them, to feel that here I am one with them, than to be anywhere else under any conditions and be against them."

Silkin's plot to take over Tribune

Tribune was set up in 1937 with 26 original shareholders, most of whom are now dead.

John Silkin and Lord Bruce have cornered the majority of shares in the hands of the living.

They called a shareholders' meeting in December 1981 to vote out the existing board and put themselves and their supporters on it.

The first thing they wanted to do was remove the workers from the Board. Five of the ten board members were workers. But they were stopped from doing that by Jack Jones, (he has ten shares) who made it clear that it wouldn't be a good idea for a TGWU-sponsored MP to go against TUC policy of workers' representation on the board.

So they only kicked two workers off the board, myself and the then-advertising manager and elected themselves onto the board.

Thanks to Jack Jones, however, they ended up a minority on the board, so they were unable to sack me and run the paper in a rather different fashion.

We took legal advice and were told that under the 1980 Companies Act it is possible to set up an employee shareholding scheme. So we called another board meeting. Lord Bruce and John Silkin, sent apologies and at this board meeting we agreed to allocate 50 shares each to each member of staff out of the unallocated authorised shares, giving us a total of 450.

The writs then arrived made out against every member of staff, against the company and against the chairperson of the board, Michael Meacher.

The writs allege that our motivation was bad. The Companies Act is silent on the question of motivation, so it will be up to the judge to determine. The second point in the writs is that they had inadequate notice of the nature of business on the agenda.

Why do you think they did it?

Well, some people were very upset when I became editor and

CHRIS MULLIN, editor of Tribune, spoke to John Bloxam about the latest legal comings and goings.

immediately there were attempts to cut off advertising.

What probably happened is that some former employees approached Silkin and Lord Bruce with a plan. They possibly showed them a photocopy of the shareholders' register.

Silkin and Bruce probably had different motivations. Bruce thinks he is doing the best by his own standards.

Silkin saw himself as leadership material for the Labour Party (he was probably the only person in the country who saw himself in this light). It perhaps wouldn't have done his chances any damage if he'd had a newspaper like ours on his side.

That assumed it would be a quick, clean operation and it turned out to be very messy.

I don't think he anticipated that and I'm sure he now regrets the terrible mess he's got himself and everyone else into.

Negotiations

What have been the more recent developments?

There have been three sets of negotiations or attempts at mediation. The breakdowns always come on the same point. They won't accept any formula that doesn't leave them or their friends in control of the paper.

They regard themselves as the owners of the paper, and as long as they suffer from this delusion it is very difficult to help them.

How would you sum up the political issues involved?

This is a test case for whether

it is possible for a free paper to exist in a socialist environment. We don't have many papers that are broadly speaking 'on our side' and we talk about the need for a labour movement newspaper. I think we must judge by the few labour movement newspapers we do have and the way they are permitted to conduct business.

I think the moves against us began in the political climate of a year ago, when the idea of expelling Militant emerged, and the idea of vetoing various Parliamentary candidates.

But we've moved on a bit since then and some members on the right of the party, never mind the centre, are opposed to what Silkin and Bruce are doing.

Invitations

What pressures have there been to dissuade them?

Well, I didn't initiate it, but a lot of people from Silkin's Deptford constituency started ringing up, offering to help. So I said why don't you get me invited to your ward meeting, and to my astonishment, seven of the eight wards invited me and all of them went on to pass resolutions in April and May of this year, calling on Silkin either to stand down as MP or drop the writs.

He and I were invited to address the May GMC and the recorded vote was 43-9 in favour of his either standing down or dropping the writs. Unfortunately the general election was announced a few days later.

So his constituency have been very helpful, several times passing resolutions in support and one of no confidence in Silkin in September.

Many people who don't agree with us politically have been very helpful, while they have won no friends at all. They have no support among the staff or on the board and no MPs are really prepared to stick their necks out over this.

Silkin and I addressed the Tribune Group, where I am not



Meacher: one Shadow minister being sued by another!

the most popular person, and they, too, passed a motion calling on Silkin to drop the writs.

We are now faced with the interesting spectacle of one member of the Shadow Cabinet (Silkin) suing another (Meacher). A High Court case involving two members of the Shadow Cabinet would really do tremendous damage.

I would like to see the leadership say publicly that Silkin has got to stop.

What can members of CLPs or trade unions do?

I would have liked the TGWU who sponsor Silkin to take an interest in the matter, but this hasn't happened, and they've remained pretty neutral so far, at least publicly.

There was an attempt to get it raised in the TGWU group of MPs in the Commons but it came to nothing.

Bankruptcy

Do you intend to defend yourself against the court action?

Well, the court action would, of course, bankrupt the paper, and everyone understands that. It could bankrupt individual members of staff, which is a sign of their vindictiveness in taking out writs against individual members of staff, because they could have achieved the same legal purpose by just suing the company.

I think the attitude of people on the paper is that while we are prepared to try and negotiate our way out of this, even at the cost of making concessions, the one thing we are not prepared to concede is control of the paper even if that means oblivion.

One thing we are sure of is that this is going to cost a lot of money and three Labour MPs set up a Friends of Tribune Fund and have raised quite a bit of money but not really enough. So if anyone wants to send some money, send it c/o Jo Richardson, House of Commons, London SW1, with cheques made out to Friends of Tribune.

Islington losses

By Nik Barstow Secretary Islington Local Government Committee, (in a personal capacity).

bury.

But for most voters the main concerns now were more straightforward and more rational: the rates increases, and the fact that, despite all the promises, nothing much has changed or improved since Labour re-took the Council in May 1982.

If anything the left's 'flagship' wasn't sunk... it was scuttled.

Islington Council was elected in 1982 with a strong mood that it would confront the government and fight for the interests of local people.

By April '83 things had changed. A large majority of both councillors and party bodies opted to raise the rates by 30% rather than fight the Government. Labour policies - the bare bones of them - have been carried out but little has been achieved in most people's eyes.

Islington has improved its services marginally, which in the present climate for local government is something of a victory, but for the average

Islington tenant the minor improvements count for little. Reduced queues for repairs, or plans to eventually 'decentralise' services by making them more locally based and convenient aren't convincing arguments for socialism. Most tenants saw rate rises last year, as they had seen for years before: as then, paying more for services that aren't up to much - poor housing, slow repairs and few community facilities.

Islington had the promise of being a centre of resistance Tories. So far it hasn't lived up to it... disillusioning its own supporters and strengthening its enemies - who can snipe at the gestures because they aren't backed up with real action on the key issues.

Labour's 'local government left' should learn a lesson from the Islington bye-elections - they have only two ways to survive. They can take the traditional road of reforming new broom administrations and 'manage' the services the government will allow them to... or they can break from that depressing, corrupting view of Labour politics and take on the government. If they don't, do either, they won't be 'the local government left' they will be ex-councillors.

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Social 50

HAVE the SDP sunk the flagship of the Labour left? The loss of two Labour council seats in Islington bye-elections on October 27 was widely reported as just that by the press and TV.

It wasn't that simple. Partly the results were due to a dramatic Tory collapse with most of their votes going to the SDP, as the main Opposition to Labour's vote fell too.

The press, particularly the Sun and the Evening Standard (but with some extra help from the Observer and the Mirror in the week before the bye-elections) constantly attacked Labour's policies of equal opportunities and every political statement and gesture made by the left. The average headlines: 'Gym mats on the rates for lesbian self-defence group', 'The Council that banned Irish jokes' said a lot about what prejudices they aimed to whip up.

The SDP played on the bigotry, rarely saying anything about their own policies, harping on about Labour's 'extremism'. After all, it almost worked for them in the General Election when SDP career-politician George Cunningham came within 400 votes of winning Islington South & Fins-

LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN FOR PALESTINE NEWSLETTER

New issue now out! Heffer and Kinnock on the Middle East. The fight in Fatah. 10p plus postage from LMCfP, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd., London N16.

Kinnock launches NHS campaign

A "Save our Health Service" national campaign was launched on Thursday 3 November by the Labour Party.

The centrepiece of the campaign will be a touring ambulance fitted with audio-visual equipment, leaflets, posters, stickers, and other publicity material.

Neil Kinnock and Michael Meacher — the new shadow social services secretary — speaking at the press conference, stressed Labour's "Charter for the Health Service", which includes the aim of a 3% real increase in the NHS budget per year and the abolition of patient charges; the purpose of which is to "rouse the whole nation in defence of its most prized institution."

The ambulance, to be staffed by Labour Party supporters, is to travel throughout the country promoting what Meacher described as "extra-parliamentary activity" — petitions, meetings and the writing of letters to Tory MPs!

Of course a crusade to defend the NHS is badly needed: but already a number of areas have "anti-cuts" campaigns which are restricted in scope by full

time union officials to vague and impotent propaganda and letter-writing rather than industrial action.

What will Kinnock and Meacher's attitude be to the hospital occupations currently under way in London and in Bradford, and the growing calls for industrial action by NHS unions to stop the cuts?

Such struggles must be the bedrock of a real campaign of action to halt the cuts. Insofar as the official Labour campaign supports and extends this message it can play a useful role: insofar as it lines up with union officials to divert from the necessary class action in the hospitals, it will detract from the fight.

This week, the campaign is due in Whitehaven on Thursday, Workington and Hexham on Friday, Gateshead and a TUC conference on the Black Report in Gosforth on Saturday.

Then it is due to begin a tour of Yorkshire, the East Midlands, Merseyside, Wales, the West Midlands, Oxford, East Anglia, London and the South Coast before going to Scotland in the New Year.



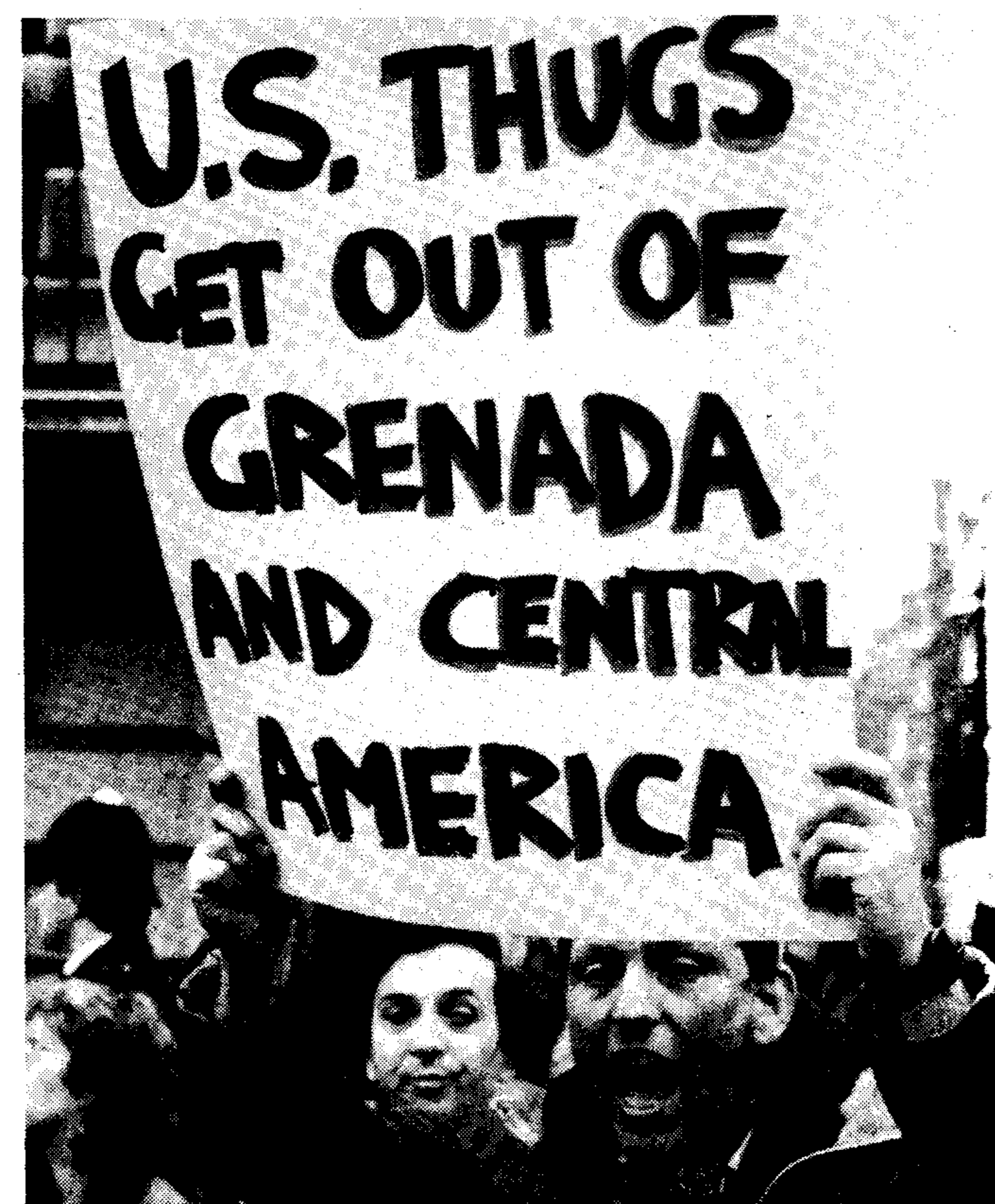
Imperialist hands off Grenada!

8000 people marched in London last Sunday in protest against the US invasion of Grenada. In Hyde Park before the march moved off the speakers included Fennis Augustine, Grenada's High Commissioner in London, a representative of the Nicaraguan Embassy and Tony Benn.

Benn said the invasion proved that the Americans "regard socialism anywhere in the New World as a threat to US capitalism."

Maria Urbani, representing the Nicaraguan Embassy gave the meeting a sombre warning: the invasion of Grenada, she said, was a build up to an invasion of Nicaragua to destroy the revolution there.

Fennis Augustine called on the British labour movement to devote its energies to building a campaign to "get the US out of Grenada".



DHA forced into open

By Ted Dowd

LAST week's re-scheduled Oxfordshire DHA meeting was subject to a constant barrage of barking and chanting from about 100 protesting members of the public.

In SO 153 we reported on how the previous meeting had been abandoned in the face of a 'mass attendance' of the meeting room.

Venue

The DHA changed the venue of the recalled meeting — it was held in the County Hall on the same day as the courts were in session amid strict security. Police and security officers escorted about 100 people into the public gallery after a vigorous lobby. This shut about 60 outside who kept up a continuous stream of chants and slogans through the open windows.

The DHA then proceeded with the greatest of arrogance. It was the public who had to call for amplification in order that their mumbling could be heard. The

authority then whipped through a 31 point agenda in just over an hour. It was obvious that all real discussion had taken place at the pre-meeting.

The DHA is terrified of taking discussion in public. Thus on all major issues there was only cursory comment a final decision on FPA cuts in force since March was deferred. On a request from the Region that they make staff cuts of 77 the officers recommended 'no action at present'.

As they are already 141 staff short this is a de facto acceptance of the cuts. There was no discussion on the principle of whether to accept or reject the Region's request.

The whole meeting was a farce. Proceedings were halted many times as the fury of the public drowned even the PA system.

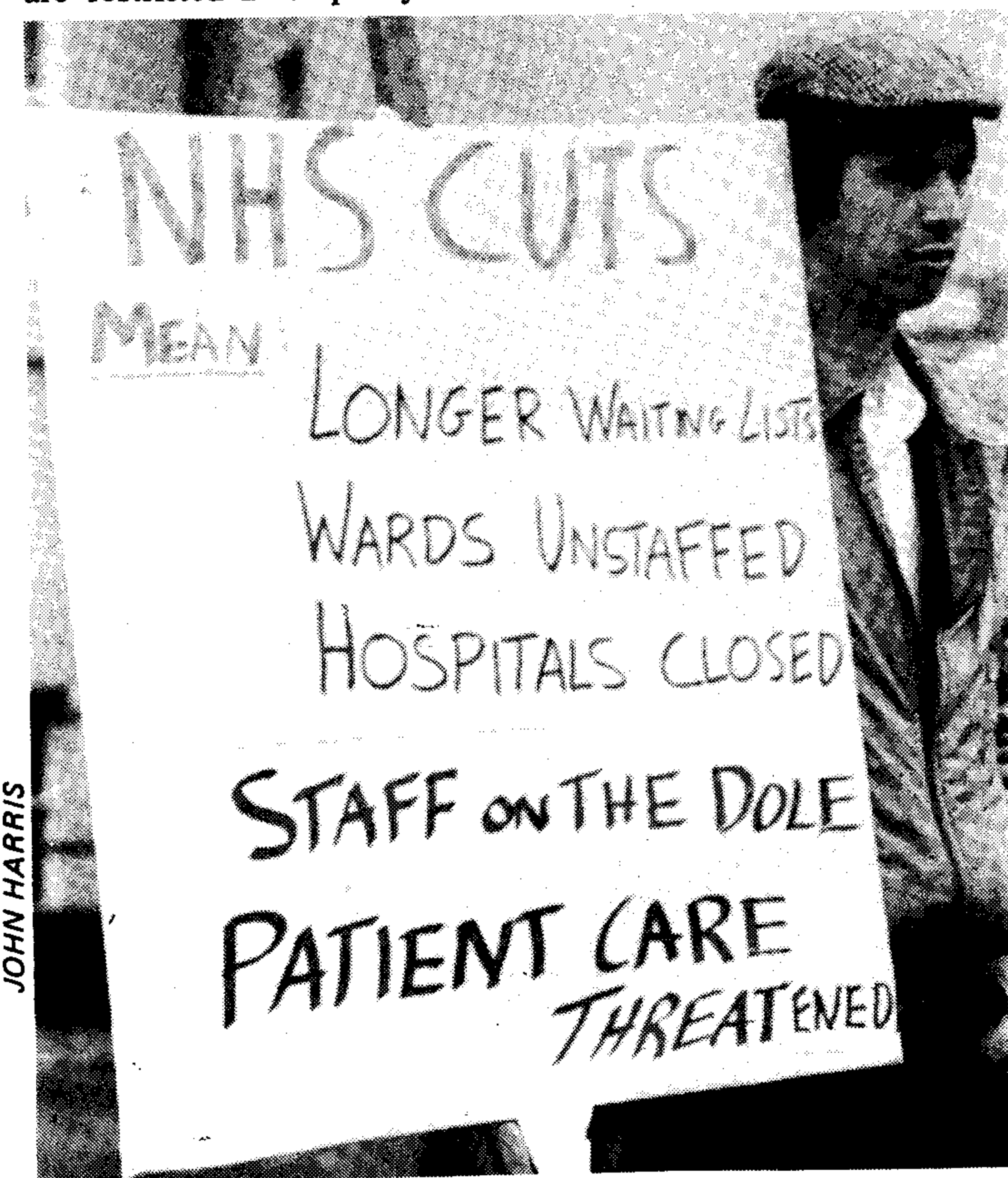
The DHA tactic is obviously to treat the public with contempt, to ignore them, take all their decisions at the pre-meeting and simply to get through the public bit as quickly as possible.

Mere noise is not going to affect them. This leaves the Oxon campaign with some interesting tactical decisions to make.

November 14
court
deadline

Defend
the
Newham
8!

Picket the Old Bailey 9am



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of a People's Marcher
and
"How politics were kept out
of the People's March"



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Crocodile tears at bosses' conference

DESPITE — or perhaps because of — the hollowness of the event, the annual conference of the Confederation of British Industry is attempting to acquire all the

trappings and splendour of a real party conference.

Of course the employers' actual political party, the Tories, has just completed its own annual

jamboree — with distinctly mixed results.

The CBI has followed up with its own mixture of tub-thumping, "militant" rhetoric and — to make it more convincing — has even incorporated manipulation of the agenda to avert discussion of "divisive" issues!

Just like the Tory conference, "representatives" are no more than individuals rather than delegates; they report to no democratic local bodies. Their "resolutions" are drafted in boardrooms and country estates and reflect the material interests of a wide section of exploiters in British industry.

To avoid that wide section coming into public conflict, under conditions where a few of the larger monopolies are beginning once again to boost their profits while smaller firms go to the wall, the CBI leadership decided to prevent discussion of resolutions from West Wales, Avon, the North and South West area councils which criticise government economic policies.

The key resolution, tabled by James Neill Holdings, was a sub-

dued reminder to the Tory government that "lower inflation does not automatically produce higher growth."

The more extremist employers who support the existing economic policies without reservation but look for still more swingeing Tory spending cuts and still tougher anti-union legislation, have largely been attracted to the rival Institute of Directors.

But CBI resistance to the shorter working week (for workers) and pay comparability between the public and private sectors (for workers) remains solid, as does support for the Tebbit anti-union legislation and the new Bill being pushed through Parliament.

There was even plenty of the kind of fake jollity and hypocrisy which is normally such a feature of proper party conferences. Richard Pettit of Vaux Breweries in Sunderland dressed up in a cloth cap and sang a song to the delight of his pin-striped "comrades", while CBI President Sir Campbell Fraser wept crocodile tears for the unemployed.

Sir Campbell — recently



CBI conference excluded criticisms of Thatcher's economic policy

berated by shareholders of Dunlop Holdings, of which he is chairman for increasing his own salary while profits have slumped and whole plants have been axed — groped around for some element of human sympathy:

"Be damned with the conventional wisdom that the country will only know high levels of unemployment until the end of the decade. Who stays in the dole queue? Your son? Your daughter?"

Not likely! The wealthy exploiters and parasites applauding Sir Campbell know all too well that their kids remain protected in public schools and privilege while they axe jobs and urge

the Tories to carry through education cuts. They know they have their private medical insurance as Thatcher, at their behest, slashes the NHS: if all else fails, they can fall back upon their own personal wealth, shareholdings and speculation to squeeze by.

As they take off their party hats and campaign badges, returning to step up the offensive on shop floor workers across the whole of British industry, these employers mean business. Like the Walrus and the Carpenter consuming the oysters some may weep — but they will seek to eat, nevertheless, and the feast will be extracted from the sweated labour of the working class.

'Sun' goes undercover

LAST week a Sun reporter was flushed out from the Greenham Common peace camp after the Guardian Diary revealed that a woman in her mid-30s had been sent in by the paper which supports our boys. In her rush to get away she unfortunately left behind her diary, which we now exclusively reproduce...

Daily Mail
Press **EXPRESS** **Gang**
FINANCIAL TIMES
The Daily Telegraph
Sun
By Patrick Spilling

Monday: Dear Diary, I've still got my job, but only just. Editor called me in yesterday. Said I wasn't looking too well. Had my personal file on his desk with date of birth ringed.

Kept talking about 'my time of life' and 'easier pastures'. I said I was happy where I was. He kept mopping his brow. Lost his temper. Said I was looking my age.

Accused me of having sagging breasts (that wasn't the word he used). Said reputation of paper would suffer if he was seen to be employing slags. "We don't want this newsroom looking like a Greenham Common peace camp," he yelled.

I cried on his desk. Said I had given the best years of my life to his paper. Now he wanted to throw me over for a younger woman.

I know I looked older. It was the strain. But people trusted me more. I could be useful. There were things I could do a younger woman couldn't.

When I looked up he was smiling. Said he would give me one last chance. Opened another file on his desk, marked Operation 'Nuke the Slags'. I could hardly take in what he was saying.

If I pulled this one off I would be in for life. Jean Rook was mentioned. I was in a daze. The next thing I knew I was back in the newsroom clutching a map of Berkshire and a Sun feature from last year '20 ways to spot a Dyke.'

The news editor gave me a bottle of whisky. Wished me luck. Called me a taxi. I looked back through my tears at the

building where my reputation had been built. There wasn't even time to say goodbye and here I was. On my way to Armageddon. Why me? Why me?

Tuesday: Arrived last night. Parked the hire car a mile away and trudged to the Greenham camp. It was a cold night. Given a £500 Everest tent but I couldn't carry it from car, so arrived with nothing but shoulder bag and concealed tape recorder.

Greeted by someone called Sally who kissed me on both cheeks and said I could sleep in her tent.

Fell asleep to the sound of singing around the camp fire. Said a prayer against being attacked by lesbians. Tomorrow must buy a garlic from nearby village.

This morning I asked my new friend where the action is. She said missiles were on the way. She was going to talk to guards inside fence. Drafted in my head feature on the sex fantasies of the Greenham women. "How the Cruise missiles guards keep the peace fanatics awake at night".

Pink cheeks

Went with Sally to talk through the fence. Guard was a young man with pink cheeks. Looked nervous and pretended we weren't there. Older corporal arrived and made lewd suggestions through fence. Must remember to report him when all this is over.

Action hotbed up later. Filed through fence with plastic credit card. Sally, me and twenty other women ran through gap and sat down on runway. I threw tin

tacks in flight path of US transport planes. Noticed the tacks were made in Korea.

Took notes while we waited for military police for feature: "How Reds supply Greenham Saboteurs". After we were carried away I got rocket from other women. Said someone could have trodden on tin tacks and hurt themselves.

Private property

Later went to shop to buy garlic. Shopkeeper threw me out and said he wasn't serving lesbian slags. Tried to ring into paper but police dragged me from phone box saying it was on private property.

Can't find anything to read here. Only peace pamphlets copies of the Guardian, and books. Asked if anyone had the Sun but they thought I was making a joke. My darkest hour.

Wednesday: Today on verge of best scoop of my life. Interviewing woman called Nicky when conversation turned to red infiltration, abandoned families and lesbians. Kept tape running. Conversation got more and more dramatic. Then heard suspicious click noise from Nicky's bag. Seized it and found tape recorder. Searched her and sure enough she was undercover reporter from the Mirror. We started a right good scrap, punching and kicking, till we were separated by Sally and friends, who told us if we kept fighting we would be thrown out.

Took notes for piece on the Greenham Women Thought Police. Nicky threatened to blow my cover. I threatened to blow hers. Hope the ultimate

deterrent works.

Thursday: Woke up to great excitement. Heseltine threatened to shoot peace women. Well that's what the Guardian says. Can't get straight news here. Women volunteering to break into camp again that day.

Ask me to break in with them. I say I have hurt my foot on a tin tack. Working on a great piece about the phallic implications of the peace movement. 'Penetrated' by bullets; wire cutters being used to 'castrate' the military. And of course the glorious phallic symbolism of the missiles themselves.

I spend morning walking round fence imagining quotes from the abandoned fathers. "She said she wanted peace but she deserted me on the battle field of life" said one man, cradling his baby daughter in his arms. Baby sobbing 'Mummy, Mummy, please come home'.

Friday: Complete disaster strikes. Guardian Diary blows my cover. Major hunt on for infiltrating reporter. I was preparing to bluff it out when Sally picked up some notes from floor of tent. Had been working on piece called "Spot the hunkiest Greenham US Marine".

Took to my heels and ran for hire car. Drove to station. On train saw Nicky and we both hid from three other peace women on train. They turned out to be from Star, Express and Daily Mail. We were all in same boat. Facing the sack.

Decided to interview each other using our aliases. Later today turned in copy exposing one lesbian looking for an orgy, one Bulgarian agent using peace women to spy on US military hardware, and one ex-mental patient who abandoned children to her sex monster husband so she could lower property values in Berkshire.

Saturday: Went into editor's office after he had read it. Tears in his eyes and a bulge in his trousers. I flushed with pride. Safe till next week anyway.

Reinstate Wythenshawe!

THE CLPD is circulating six model resolutions for the Regional Labour Party conferences on positive discrimination; Manchester Wythenshawe CLP Disaffiliation; Labour Women's Organisation; Pressure Groups; Public Ownership; and Parliamentary Labour Party. Texts are available from 10 Park Drive, London NW11 7SH (tel: 01-458 1501).

The one on Manchester Wythenshawe is:

"This Annual Meeting expresses its deep concern over the suspension of Manchester Wythenshawe CLP by the NEC following an internal dispute. In particular this Annual Meeting regrets:

a) that the CLP was suspended before the CLP officers were given a chance to state their case;

b) that the section of the 1983 NEC Report dealing with the matter states only the case against the CLP officers;

c) that the NEC enquiry has still not been completed five months after the suspension, thus depriving the CLP of the right to take part in the 1983 Annual Conference and to answer the one-sided account given in the NEC Report.

This Annual Meeting accepts the right of the NEC to intervene in a CLP where necessary, but considers it essential for the NEC to only do so with due regard for natural justice, and not to abuse the powers which it has been granted."

This resolution is particularly important after events last week. The scheduled meeting to

reconstitute Manchester Wythenshawe CLP was called off by the Labour Party National Agent and no new date has been fixed. This followed a large number of new trade union delegates turning up at the meeting, and the left successfully challenging the credentials of a number. The urgent need is for pressure to get the National Agent/NEC to convene the new AGM as soon as possible.



Alf Holmes

'On my way to Armageddon'

Greenham women face new trials

THE Greenham women face a new round of court appearances. The trials which started on 4 November involve all the women arrested during the wire-cutting action on 29 October. They face charges of criminal damage.

Fines ranging from £25 to £70 have been imposed and some have received prison sentences. Some women are refusing to pay fines and are choosing to go to Holloway.

The magistrates in Newbury are ignoring some women's insistence that they were in possession of wire-cutters. Why?

Because such an offence cannot be dealt with by magistrates, and would have to go to Crown Court, and this means trial by Jury. Dealing with offences in a magistrates court is snappy and more difficult to campaign around.

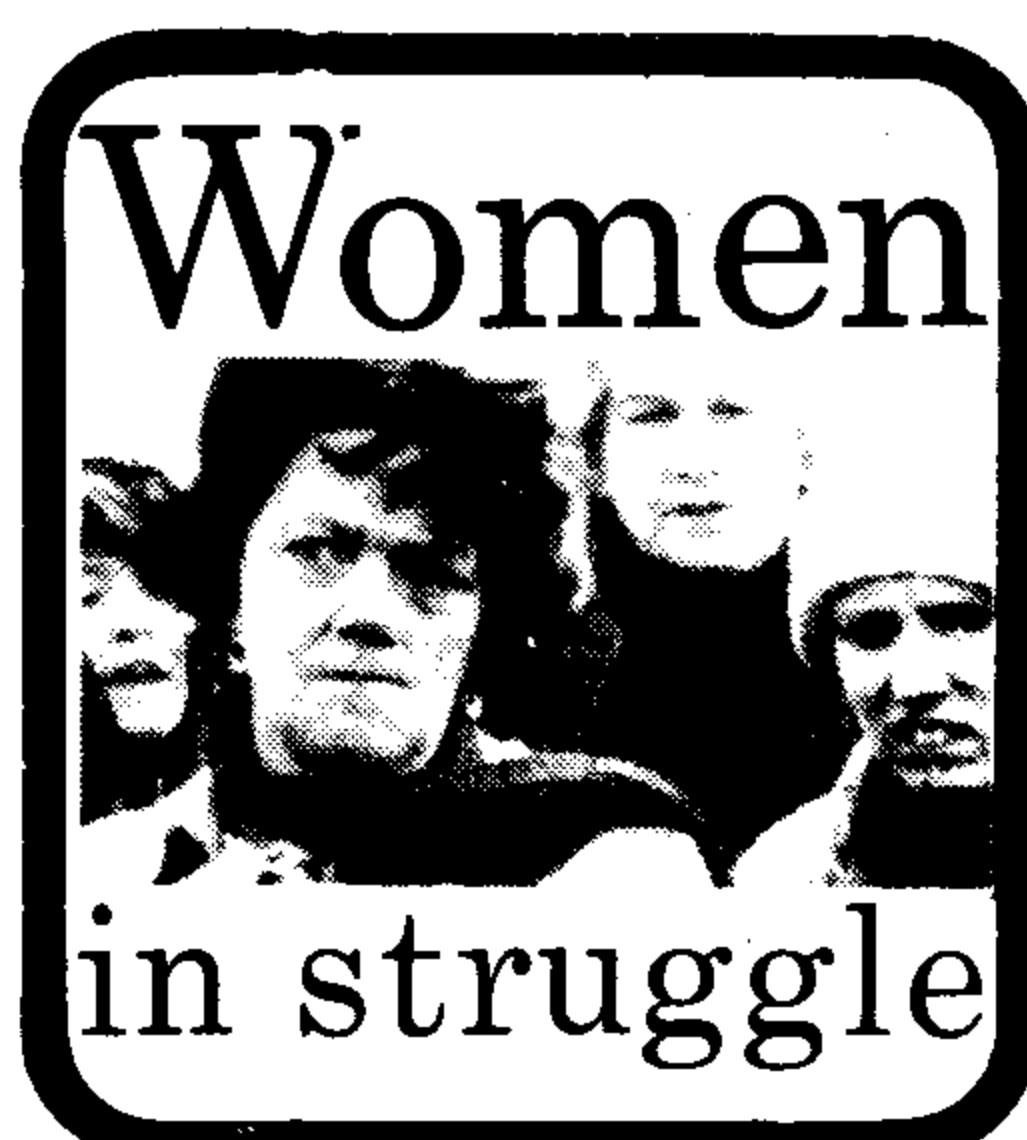
Prepared

Most women at Greenham are prepared to get arrested. Some have been arrested so many times that they no longer care about being arrested any more. And the feeling is that if you are going to get arrested, it's as well to get arrested for doing something big.

The government has over 8,000 men guarding Greenham — police, army, paratroopers, helicopters, bugging devices, cameras, spotlights, trucks, and vans — and is spending somewhere above £500,000 per week on it.

But despite the tight security it is pretty certain that there will be further break-ins at the camp.

The army and police try a variety of tactics to demoralise us. These including taking the helicopters down low enough to blow down tents, revving up cars, continually making noises at night, taunting women with sexist



By Judith Bonner

and anti-lesbian abuse, and even smashing up carefully built kitchens.

But you can use ear plugs to keep out noise at night. And it is easier for us to wind these men up and demoralise them — especially when some soldiers are doing 47 hour shifts — than it is for them to demoralise the women.

We have to laugh at the attitudes and antics of the men there, especially the police.

They never quite know what's going to happen next, or where. The male bonding systems have

"We have to laugh at the antics of the men defending Greenham..."

gone to pot with the police hating the army, who hate the paratroopers, who hate the people that drive the cars, and so on...

Greenham gives women a real feeling of power. You can leave there with a strong will to fight, but you also leave there feeling that enough support could bring that base to a standstill. The government still sees the women there as a threat. Heseltine's blunder in Parliament has not helped them either.

Feeling powerful and confident of your own strength means nothing if you don't use it to real effect. Greenham needs our support. We must campaign to get Labour Parties, Trade Unions, etc., to sponsor groups of women to go to the camp. A coachload of women factory workers would give the camp an added boost.

Supporters of Socialist Organiser share a lot with the Greenham

women. We should be using our credibility and strength in the labour movement to turn the rhetoric we write about Greenham into real action.

This means organising the left inside the disarmament movements to secure the unilateralist policy.

No accident

It is no accident that when the CND leadership is trying to break up the CND left it is also talking of the time being right to make the camp at Greenham mixed — no doubt as a means of taking it over and getting into firm control of it.

National meeting of Greenham support groups in Manchester, November 12 & 13.

Women only demonstrations at Newbury court on 17, 18, 24, 25 November.



Church militant? Christians to the fore in a road-blocking protest

At last! Women's rights win a hearing!

PENNY BARNETT reports on the CPSA Broad Left conference.

CPSA National Broad Left's Conference of 1983 began with a long overdue acknowledgement of the importance of women's rights in a union which is almost three quarters women. Alas, the placing of the hour-long debate first on the agenda did not alter the cavalier atti-

tude of the broad left towards women.

The Socialist Caucus (which includes SO supporters) and the new 'Labour Left' group make women's rights a central plank of their policy statements. And this year Militant supporters were divided over the issue of women-only schools.

In spite of this, crucial motions on sexual harassment, women's education and the use of the union journal to increase women's involvement were lost after the most spurious opposition.

Militant even attempted to block affiliation to the National Abortion Campaign on the grounds that the motion proposing it contained mild criticism of the 1982/3 Broad Left NEC.

However, the voting was closer than ever before at this largest broad left conference, and many women felt that important steps are slowly being taken. But a measure of the distance still to be covered is the broad left slate for the CPSA national elections: it contains only two women, both Militant supporters.

The policies adopted by this conference swung unpredictably from left to right and back again throughout the weekend. Mainly as a result

of the inconsistent lines adopted by the new 'Labour Left' group (well to the left of Militant on some issues despite the witch-hunting atmosphere that gave birth to it).

Merger

A worrying development during the debate on the proposed merger of the CPSA with the SCPS (the Executive and Managerial Union) was the narrowly defeated bid by Militant to ditch the CPSA hard won workplace balloting system for union elections, which they have vehemently opposed since its inception.

However, their argument that the clandestine, almost masonic SCPS broad left would never permit a merger with such a democratic CPSA further exposes the disaster that such a merger would be. Unfortunately those that successfully defeated this motion failed to make the connection, and the principle of supporting such a merger remains broad left policy.

Troops Out

On the international section despite moves to postpone the entire debate until the 1984 conference, the broad left finally adopted a motion calling

for Troops Out of Ireland, and reaffirmed its support for Solidarnosc.

These policy decisions underline the political realignments within the broad left which are creating the beginnings of a shift to the left. The stagnant entrenchment of Militant in electoral machine politics remains unaltered, but opposition to them within the broad left is becoming more determined and more political.

They failed to hold their ground on a number of issues, and only marginally won on others.

Lost impetus

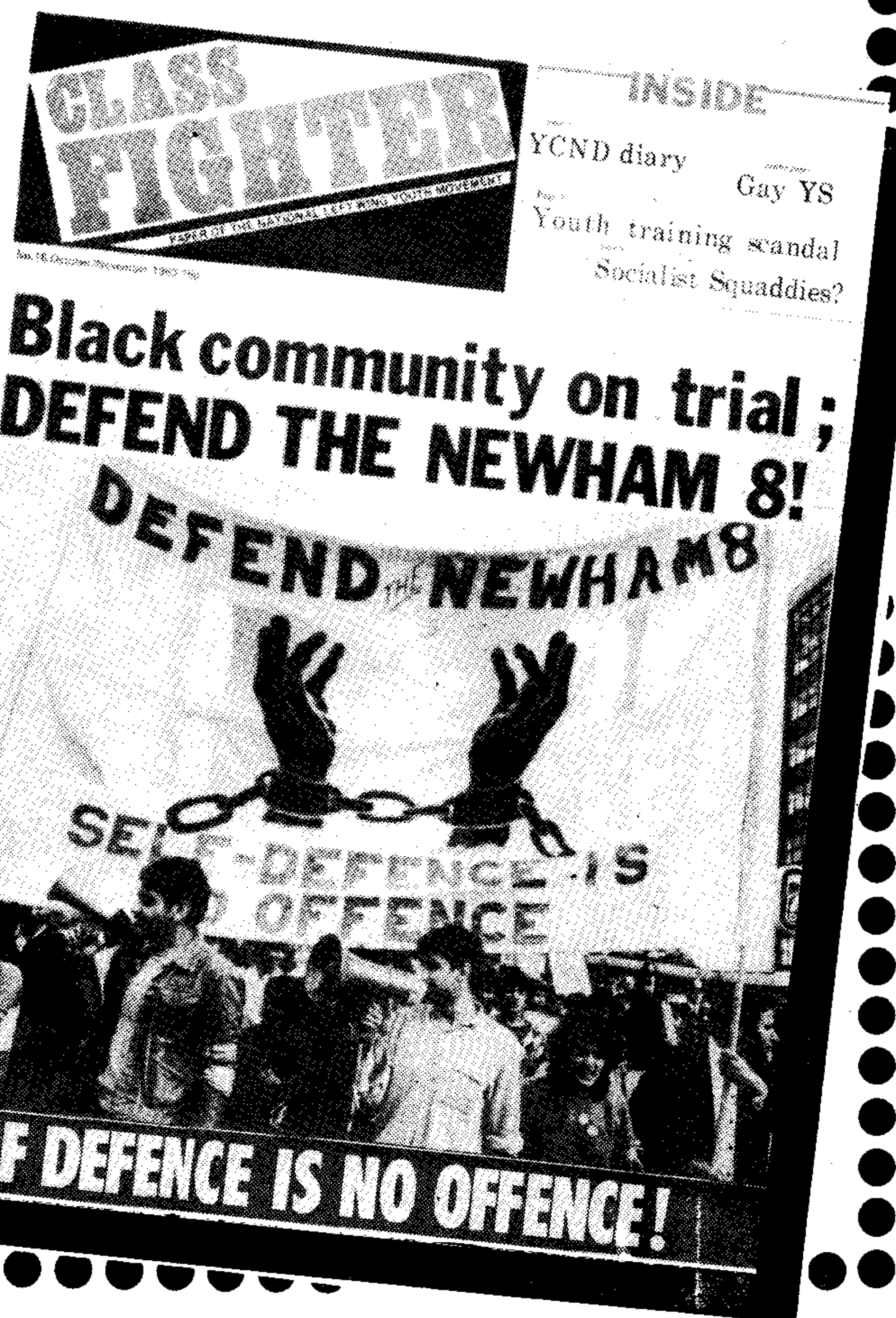
The 'Labour left' seen at the same conference as mainly an anti-Militant force has lost much of its impetus and its leadership are dropping more of its right-wing policy stances. The Socialist Caucus won the arguments this year on several issues for the first time. Two caucus members, Rod Bacon and SO supporter Ian Leedham were elected to the Broad Left slate.

The CPSA needs a broad left that can link up with the massive resentment towards Tory government attacks on the Civil Service. For once this conference may have helped instead of hindering that process.

VOICE of Solidarnosc

Voice of Solidarnosc is published fortnightly by NSZZ Solidarnosc. Subscription rates are £8 for six months [UK] and £10 for six months [overseas]. Cheques and postal orders payable to NSZZ Solidarnosc should be sent to the NSZZ Solidarnosc Information Office, 314-320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. Tel: 01-837 9464.

New issue of Class Fighter now out — 12 pages for 15p plus postage from 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1 2SY.



International news

Botha's white 'majority'

BOB FINE gives his view of the outcome of South Africa's constitutional referendum last week.

THE SOUTH African Prime Minister, Pieter Botha, has won an overwhelming majority for his constitutional "reforms". In a referendum that included only white voters and excluded Coloureds, Africans and Asians, the Nationalist government received a 2-1 majority.

The "reform" marks a shift from one racist constitution to another. Under the new arrangement, Coloured and Asians will each have their own racially defined assembly alongside but also thoroughly subordinate to the white assembly.

Africans — the mass of the population — will continue to be excluded.

The co-optive and divisive nature of the government's strategy is already clear enough: the government is already speaking about conscription of Coloureds and Asians into the Army.

Opposition to the reforms came from the ultra-right within the white community organised under the HNP; many whites were clearly scared by the spectre of fascism into voting 'yes'. I wouldn't be surprised if the ultra-right turn increasingly to terrorist methods to subvert the reform programme.

A call for a "no" vote came from practically all the major black and radical opposition groups: the black consciousness National Forum, the ANC-

backed United Democratic Front, the major black unions like FOSATU, even the very moderate Asian Reform Party.

The ANC let off a bomb to disrupt the referendum which apparently killed a black bus driver.

Now all these groups are calling for a boycott of the assemblies.

My own tentative view from afar is that perhaps too much emphasis was placed by the UDF and other black groupings on calling for a "no" vote in a white-only referendum. Who was going to listen to them? Presumably the reaction of most whites was to vote "Yes" if the dreaded UDF said "no".

Now that the reform has gone through, a careful tactical approach to the boycott question should be undertaken rather than refusal to participate in principle.

Radical

There is a strong radical tradition of "boycott" on the South African left which, though understandable as a reaction to racist institutions, blinds itself to the advantages which blacks can sometimes secure by making effective use of even the most minor and timid concessions.

Lenin's tactical approach to the boycott of the Duma in Russia could provide a useful historical lesson.

For the present however, the entire spectrum of the left in South Africa seems committed to boycott of the assemblies.



Stalinist tank in Kabul

Torture in Afghanistan

In a new report published last week, Amnesty International made allegations of torture by Afghan security police.

Amnesty has named eight centres in the Afghan capital, Kabul, where security police tortured political suspects, according to testimonies from former prisoners. In some cases, prisoners were reported to have died or suffered serious injury.

The former prisoners told Amnesty that torture was used systematically by the State Information Police, the Khad. Beatings, electric shock and deprivation of sleep were inflicted during interrogation, they said.

Known torture victims ranged from 16-year-old girls to people in their sixties.

Ex-prisoners reported that injuries resulting from torture included deafness and dumbness and mental damage. Two told Amnesty International of

the deaths after torture of prisoners arrested with them.

All Amnesty's information showed that the victims included not only many people reported to have been involved in armed resistance to the government, but many others seized on mere suspicion of opposition. They included civil servants, students, teachers and people who said they had been arrested as a warning to others.

Some were arrested for such apparent reasons as having relatives abroad or having foreign literature.

Teenage students reported having been seized and tortured after taking part in demonstrations against the government and the Soviet presence in the country. Amnesty International said the evidence, including its interviews with former prisoners and witnesses and reports from other sources, indicated that hundreds of students from he university and high schools in Kabul had been tortured during the past three years.



North and South

by Paddy Dollard

THE treatment of Irish prisoners of war in Britain is savagely vindictive. Irish prisoners in British jails live under a different regime to that under which their comrades in Northern Ireland live.

There the blanket protest, the hunger strikes and other struggles over the years have loosened the penal straightjacket and prisoners have regained some rights within their captivity. Nothing like that

in Britain's dark-age prisons.

That it is a matter of wilful vindictiveness and vengefulness by the British authorities is indicated by their refusal to agree to transfer Northern Irish prisoners in Britain to Northern Ireland.

In this article, Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin abstentionist MP for West Belfast, explains the plight of Irish prisoners in British jails.

Irish prisoners in British gaols

By Gerry Adams MP

A CONSTANT stream of letters from Irish political prisoners held in English prisons, supplemented by contact with their relatives, and despite the continuation of the Home Office ban on visits to these prisoners by myself, provides an accurate picture of their situation and that of their long suffering families.

The most draconian and restricted classification under which a prisoner can be held is Category 'A'. Of the 40,000 prisoners in English jails, 300 are in this category. Almost a quarter of these are Irish political prisoners.

Despite being subject to this regime, with the denial of 'rights' and 'privileges' offered to other prisoners, Irish PoWs bear the brunt of individual acts of vindictiveness by prison administrations.

For example, Roy Walsh, who is in Winson Green, Birmingham, is only permitted to attend the same Mass as other prisoners if he is handcuffed during the entire service.

Ronnie McCartney, who is held in Parkhurst, is denied the right to have his fiancée's father and mother visit him, in spite of the fact that his own parents are dead and Ronnie has named these people as his next of kin.

Rule 43 (Good Order and Discipline) of the prison authorities' standing orders is widely practised, for punitive reasons, against Irish prisoners. This regulation allows the authorities, without notice or explanation, to move a prisoner from a 'high security prison', where most Irish prisoners are held in special control units, to what is termed a 'local prison' for an indefinite period.

Prisoners are then housed in total isolation and locked up 23 hours a day. Cell lights are kept on throughout the hours of darkness, constant visual checks are made every 15 minutes, with the accompaniment of a great deal of noise, day and night, and a warden sits outside the cell door at all times.

Although the Irish PoWs' burden is indeed a heavy one, a constant theme in all correspondence is the repeated expression of deep concern for their relatives outside the prison walls.

This concern is entirely justified, given the particular sense of isolation suffered by their relatives who are forced to make long, lonely and expensive trips

to English jails, in many instances accompanied by young children. Even the journeys on the prisoners' welfare bus to the six county prisoners provide at least a sense of common suffering and comradeship.

Many prisoners have expressed grave anxiety about the vulnerability of their relatives travelling to England, which is understandable given the operation of the racist PTA.

Not only is there a fear that relatives might be arrested, but there are real possibilities that they may be falsely charged.

The tragic case of Giuseppe Conlon illustrates this well.

He was arrested when he went to visit his son, Gerard, and after years of protesting his innocence, he died in an English prison. There is also the case of Brian Keenan's wife, Chrissie, who spent six months on remand in Brixton Prison, depriving their young family in Belfast of both parents.

A visit, bringing with it the prospect of seeing loved ones again, should be a source of comfort for both a prisoner and their family. Instead, in the case of Irish PoWs, it is a source of tremendous strain and for many, especially the elderly and those with a young family, it is a major ordeal.

The Home Office's obstinate refusal to repatriate Irish prisoners is clearly intended to have these effects and is in flagrant contradiction of their own stated policies.

The immediate transfer to an English prison of the British soldier who gunned down young Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly to ensure that family visits could 'more easily be accommodated' is an illustration of this political double-think.

The Irish prisoners in English jails have five very reasonable demands:

1. The release of Paddy Hackett on medical grounds.
2. The release of prisoners framed by the British police.
3. An end to solitary confinement and special control units.
4. The abolition of the PTA.
5. Repatriation of prisoners to Ireland on request.

The fact that the British government have totally ignored these demands makes it obvious that they not only inflict the full rigours of their barbaric prison system on Irish prisoners but are deliberately inflicting suffering on totally innocent families.

from 'An Phoblacht'

Reagan's anti-Cuba hate campaign

A NEW wave of anti-Cuban propaganda has been unleashed by Reagan's State Department as a US naval task force carries out naval "exercises" off the Cuban coast.

US spokesman John Hughes straightfacedly told newsmen that Fidel Castro's regime is planning a campaign of "terrorism" against such targets as "American institutions, libraries (!) and commercial interests."

It is perhaps ominous that such warnings have been followed by a mysterious bomb attack on the Capitol building.

The State Department has gone to the absurd lengths of sending a highly publicised note

By Harry Sloan

to Havana saying that Reagan's men "will not tolerate a wave of anti-American attacks."

But such crass scare-mongering and slander is being avidly swallowed and regurgitated by reactionary US columnists, and carries added weight in the USA itself, where no established political or labour movement body has come out clearly against the Grenada invasion or the intervention in Nicaragua.

Columnist Jack Anderson, for example, claims that Castro has "ordered" terrorists "to kill Americans" — and from the State Department, John Hughes has lent official endorsement to

such nonsense, which trades upon the long-discarded guerrilla politics of the early Castro regime.

In part the anti-Castro hysteria is a smokescreen for the scandalous treatment meted out by the US invaders to Cuban diplomatic envoys in Grenada.

While the diplomats held firm, demanding the right to check on the safety of Cuban workers on the island before they left, they were placed under rigorous house arrest by the occupying forces.

Yet only a short while ago the USA itself attempted to whip up world opinion against the abuse of American embassy personnel held hostage by Iranian students in Tehran!

The propaganda war, however, is also linked to US military harassment of Cuba, as an aircraft carrier and eight other ships engage in a "no notice exercise" offshore, and Reagan's men admit that plans exist for military action against Cuba.

Missiles crisis

In the 1962 missiles crisis, the plans considered by the Kennedy administration included a nuclear strike, air strikes followed up by invasion, and a naval blockade. In the event the desired dismantling of the Soviet missile launchers: but the US war chiefs had got to within twelve hours of implementing a full-scale invasion, and many plainly still hanker after completing the job.

Though Castro's regime has



Castro

become an integral link in the chain of Stalinist states, it remains an especially vulnerable one — a mere 90 miles off the Florida coast. Were Reagan to move in a concerted attack on Cuba, it is at least open to doubt whether Castro's "allies" in the Kremlin would be prepared to risk world war in order to save him — though the fight-back within Cuba would be formidable.

The defence of the nationalised economy which has brought significant gains to the Cuban working class must be combined with a struggle against the Stalinist politics of the Castro regime.

The fight for a political revolution to replace the populist facade of the Cuban system with genuine workers' democracy is a fight to be conducted by the Cuban and international working class — in opposition to Reagan and the NATO warmongers.



TROOPS OUT NOW!

Join the Labour Committee on Ireland.
BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX

International news

Behind Turkey's 'election' farce

LAST Sunday's elections in Turkey were peculiar in that the result was of less importance than the poll actually taking place.

For, behind the ballot stood the harsh complexities of three years of rule by military decree which, paradoxically, the election will serve to strengthen rather than replace with civilian government.

A simple reading of the competing parties' electoral achievements — and the eventual success of Turgut Ozal's Motherland Party over its Populist Party and Nationalist Democracy Party rivals — would provide little insight into the actual conditions in Turkey today.

Equally, any similarity with the electoral practices sanctioned by the generals and those normally associated with Parliamentary democracy would be purely coincidental, even down to casting a vote — something which was compulsory on pain of being fined.

Other pre-election precautions by the junta included the vetting of the political parties that were set up (all political organisations have been banned since the coup in 1980), with most failing to live up to the military's standards.

And, even with the three out of 15 that did, their candidates were still subject to scrutiny.

So all 400 members ultimately elected to the National Assembly will be there only with the approval of the ruling National Security Council.

Cautious

As if this were not enough, the ever-cautious generals have placed other constraints on the possibilities for independence of its puppet assembly.

Martial law stays and the latter-day Sultan, General Evren becomes President with dictatorial powers within the state.

It is reasonable to ask both why this exercise was necessary and how it was allowed to happen.

The answer to the second question is to be found in the prison camps and torture chambers. "Politics" has been outlawed and the jails are full of tens of thousands of political prisoners, many presently involved in the marathon show trials for their activities in trade unions, socialist or Kurdish nationalist organisations.

Even the old bourgeois politicians cannot find a place in the Generals' Turkey.

Election victor Ozal, formerly a finance minister in the pre-coup government of Suleyman Demirel, is one of the very few

PAT LALLY reports on the background to the bizarre elections staged last week by Turkey's military junta.

to survive. His zealous advocacy of monetarist economics saw him coopted by the junta after their seizure of power — only for him to fall from grace through his involvement with a major bank which collapsed a year ago.

Meanwhile Demirel and other right wing leaders suffer vindictive banishment for their failure to impose 'law and order' on the class struggle.

The army chiefs are adamant that there will be no repetition of the "anarchy" of the 1970s. Yet they are obliged to go through the motions of 'liberalising' their regime and appearing to tolerate political rights.

The constitution referendum last year was the first step, the election the second, in a circular which begins and ends with the

Only three parties appeared on the electoral lists, after military vetting to assess their suitability. This means that almost all of Turkey's political leaders, and particularly working class parties, have been prevented from standing before the 19 million electorate.

Besides the Motherland Party, the Nationalist Democracy Party, led by former General Turgut Sunalp with the backing of the President, General Kenan Evren (and with the apparent favour of the Reagan administration) and the Populist Party, led by Necdet Calp, seemingly put up by sections of the military to give an appearance of democracy, are contesting the election.

At the time of writing, it appears that since the party favoured by the military, the NDP, has received minority support, an emergency meeting of the five-man National Security Council headed by Evren has been called in Ankara to assess the situation.

However it is thought unlikely at least in the short term, that they would risk a confrontation with public opinion by trying to keep Ozal out of office.

military in power.

Much of this charade is played out for purposes of appeasing 'public opinion'; not, of course, at home but in Turkey's NATO and EEC partner-countries.

Regrettably, for all its fraudulence, Turkey's elections will, at least in the short term, bolster the regime and perpetrate its crimes.

That means solidarity work remains important, especially within Western European countries where opposition to Turkey in the European Parliament has met with some success. In Britain that work has been taken up energetically both by Turkish exiles and sections of the labour movement.

But the divisions, and in the worst cases open rivalry, between expatriate solidarity organisations has not helped build the kind of support strong enough to have any real effect on Thatcher's pro-junta policy.

However, an initiative from a group of Labour MPs has brought encouraging possibilities of at least minimising the bad effects of this disunity.

Around the elections a number of MPs, some of whom have recently visited Turkey, called together all three main solidarity committees.

A meeting took place last week of representatives from the Turkey Solidarity Campaign, the

Solidarity Committee for Democracy and Trade Union Rights in Turkey and the Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (plus sub-groups from these organisations) and Kurdistan Solidarity.

Predictably there was no instant solution forthcoming but a modest achievement was agreement on a protest picket of the Turkish embassy later in the week.

All three Turkish solidarity organisations responded on the day.

A recall meeting is due to take place next month when a stiffer test of intentions will be discussion on a labour movement conference on Turkey in early 1984.



The Pope in Nicaragua: now the Church is actively opposing conscription of forces to fight the "contras"

Will Reagan move on Nicaragua?

By Harry Sloan

IN THE euphoric aftermath of the whirlwind US invasion of Grenada, prominent Pentagon and State Department hawks are urging Reagan to go a major step further and "take out the Sandinistas" by military intervention in Nicaragua.

They point to the imminent deadline for the delivery to Nicaragua of a squadron of Soviet MIG fighters — badly needed to defend the country against US-financed air-strikes on key economic targets by counter-revolutionary mercenary forces from bases in Honduras and Costa Rica.

The "contras" have bombed airports, an oil refinery and other targets — and combined these air raids with sabotage raids on the ground planned and supervised by CIA operatives.

Disruption

The disruption of fuel and power supplies has wreaked havoc on the tottering Nicaraguan economy — already hard hit by a US economic blockade.

But the purchase of MIGs that would enable the Sandinistas to defend their country against these attacks would be regarded by the Washington warmongers as "crossing a threshold"; it would provoke, according to State Department officials, "strong countermeasures".

The Sandinistas take these threats — which could refer to anything up to and including an all-out US invasion — extremely seriously.

According to US intelligence reports they are stockpiling arms in the hills in case an invasion makes it necessary to revert to another prolonged guerrilla war to liberate Nicaragua once again from US proxy rule.

Plans

The American leaders barely attempt to conceal the extent to which they have planned and — as with Grenada — practiced the moves necessary to capture Managua and major airports.

Former Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Enders has told a Senate hearing that plans are established for military action against both Nicaragua and Cuba.

lar support.

Any US invasion of Nicaragua would need the deployment of vast forces in a prolonged guerrilla struggle against the majority of the 2.5 million population — under conditions where the recent gains by FMLN guerrillas in El Salvador underline the problems of containing such a popular revolt.

Intervention into Nicaragua would also have the probable effect of regionalising the conflict — embroiling shaky Honduras and even Guatemala as well as El Salvador and Nicaragua itself. Reagan would be forced to face reelection year 1984 with a mounting death toll and a Vietnam-style open-ended conflict of his own making on his doorstep.

Unions

If Reagan is restrained from implementing Pentagon game plans for invasion of Nicaragua it is more likely to be a result of such an assessment than from the influence of any serious political opposition from Democrats or union leaders in the USA.

Leaders of the predominantly pro-Democratic American AFL-CIO union confederation recently went on record not in defence of the Nicaraguan revolution against the threats from US imperialism, but simply

condemning the Sandinista alleged abuse of 'human rights'.

In advance of Reagan's invasion of Grenada, these reactionary US "labour leaders" issued a statement on removal of Grenadian leader Maurice Bishop.

"The AFL-CIO calls upon democratic governments to take every possible action to castigate and condemn the lawless military regime."

As for Reagan's fellow imperialists, their views are for as little in the State Department and the White House as the overwhelming 108-0 vote of the United Nations to condemn the invasion of Grenada — a bigger vote than the condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan).

When it comes to Latin America and the Caribbean, Presidents have always felt to act without reference to imperialist "allies" — when their actions threaten the whole of the world, as Kennedy's 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

Only the building of a world-wide working class action in opposition to the imperialist offensive and a mass war movement in the USA restrain and defeat the Washington warmongers.

US hands off Nicaragua! Troops out of Grenada!

Bigger project

But there is no doubt that any attempt by the US to invade and control Nicaragua would be an entirely different scale of project from the invasion of Grenada.

Unlike the top-level coup which led to the Grenadian 'revolution', the Sandinista revolution of 1979 was the product of mass-based guerrilla struggles going back 20 years.

Even after four years of heavy-handed and often bureaucratic rule by the Sandinista leadership under conditions of deprivation and economic blockade, the revolution has yielded tangible gains in rights and living standards for most Nicaraguan workers and peasants, and retains a strong popu-

Solidarnosci

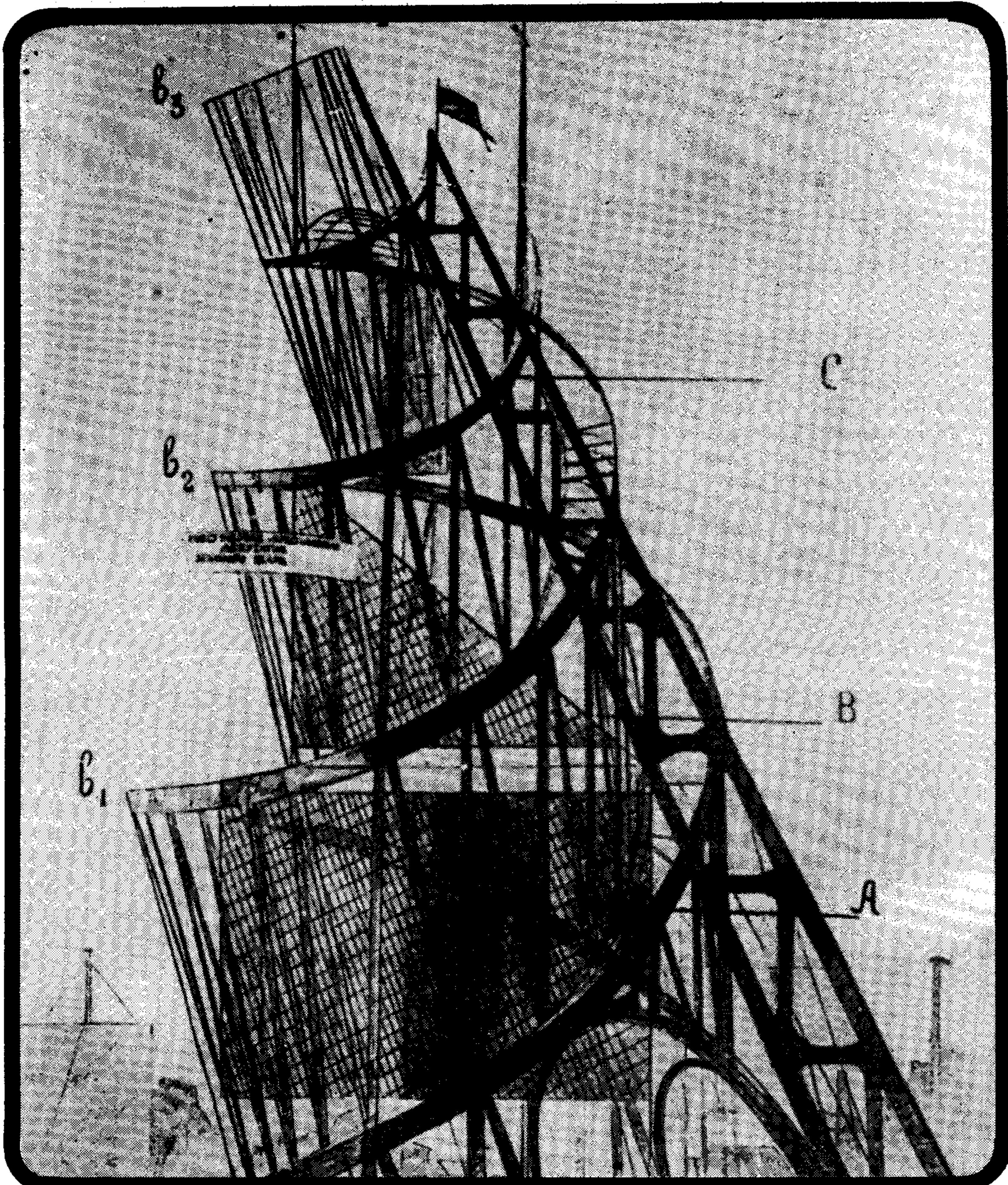
UNDERGROUND

'Solidarity Underground: Free trade unionism in Poland today' is a new pamphlet by Magda Zalewska, Henryk Gawinski, and John Taylor, published by the Polish Solidarity Campaign. 50p plus postage from PSC, 186 Avenue Road, London W3.

TURKEY

INFORMATION BULLETIN

New pamphlet, 50p; latest TSC bulletin, 30p, plus postage. From TSC, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.



Design for a monument to the Third International (1919-20) by Vladimir Tatlin



Rodchenko in the workers' costume he designed (1920)

The Art of Re



Earth - poster for film by Dovchenko, by the Stenberg brothers

GEORGE COSTAKIS fell in love with "modern" art soon after World War Two. Living in the Soviet Union, where he had worked as an embassy official, he began collecting the art that Stalinist officialdom had rejected.

Costakis collected what he loved and what he loved were the bold ventures of the Russian avant-garde, the suprematists, the productionists, the cubo-futurists and the constructivists.

The October Revolution had an explosive effect on Russian art, but the revolution in art was not a product of the October insurrection, it was a constant accompaniment to the revolutionary strivings of the Russian masses and the intelligentsia that stood on their side. And like those revolutionary strivings, the changes in art grew both out of the Russian soil and in connection with similar developments elsewhere in Europe — above all in France.

The turmoil in Russian art at

ANDREW HORNUNG reviews the exhibition 'Art of the Avant-Garde', which has been on show at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

the turn of the century was such that one painter, Alexander Benois, was able to write in 1902 that "the whole art of our time is deprived of direction... it is uncoordinated, broken up into separate individuals." During the next decade and a half every major western art trend found its admirers and adapters in Russia.

The artists of Russia — the avant-garde, at least — were part of the same international trends responding to conditions which were international in their

origins.

Trotsky explained the phenomenon in the following way: "The backward countries which were without any special degree of spiritual culture, reflected in their ideology the achievements of the advanced countries more brilliantly and strongly. In this way, German thought of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries reflected the economic achievements of England and the political achievements of France. In the same way, Futurism obtained its most brilliant expression, not in America and not in Germany, but in Italy and Russia."

Certainly Futurism became the most important of the avant-garde movements in Russian art — in the visual and the literary arts — in the years before 1917.

The Futurist works in the current exhibition show the same preoccupation with time, speed, muscular movement and simultaneity as the more familiar Italian works of Severini,

Boccioni and Balla that are in a number of this country's permanent collections.

The fate of Russian Futurism was quite different from that of the more limited Italian movement. Again Trotsky: "Futurism originated in an eddy of bourgeois art, and could not have originated otherwise. Its violent oppositional character does not contradict this in the least... The seizure of power by the proletariat caught (Russian) Futurism still in the stage of being a persecuted group." It is this, according to Trotsky that saved Russian Futurism from the fate of its international co-thinkers who became linked with reaction, and some with fascism.

But to the blast of Futurism came the counterblast of Suprematism and Constructivism. The complex forms and rhythms of Futurism and other trends, like Rayonnism, sharing a similar aesthetic were abolished. The representation of objects was abandoned. For



By the Law (1926) - film by Lev Kuleshov (1899-1970)



The End of St. Petersburg (1927) - film by Vsevolod Pudovkin (1893-1953)



Lenin speaking on "Peace, Bread, Land" — photomontage by A.M. Rodchenko

evolution

those involved in sculpture or evolving towards sculpture, both colour and the two dimensional surface were also rejected.

Malevich was the most important of the Suprematist painters and his work is represented in the exhibition by a number of canvasses and designs covering nearly two decades of work.

Productionism's demand that the artists become workers in society was interpreted differently by different artists. Some interpreted this in the spirit of Mayakovsky's call to make the streets into canvasses, some more prosaically. The stern apoliticism of Suprematism was bound to break up under such pressures and in time a number of Russian avant-garde artists, Kandinsky, Pevsner and, perhaps most importantly for the developments of Soviet art, Gabo, emigrated.

Most of those who stayed deserted the architectonics of Suprematism for architecture and design for use.

Notwithstanding this development, the aesthetics of Suprematism and some of its utopianism survived in the theatric and film constructions, the posters of the Stenberg brothers, sculpturo-architectural projects like those of Tatlin, book designs like those of El Lissitzky and Rodchenko and in other areas of applied design.

The trouble with this exhibition is that it is not extensive enough to illustrate this range of development. Although Costakis' collection (of which this is only one-tenth) is huge, it — not unnaturally — tends to stick to conventional art forms like the easel painting, although the years covered by the collection were precisely those that saw a big departure from easel painting.

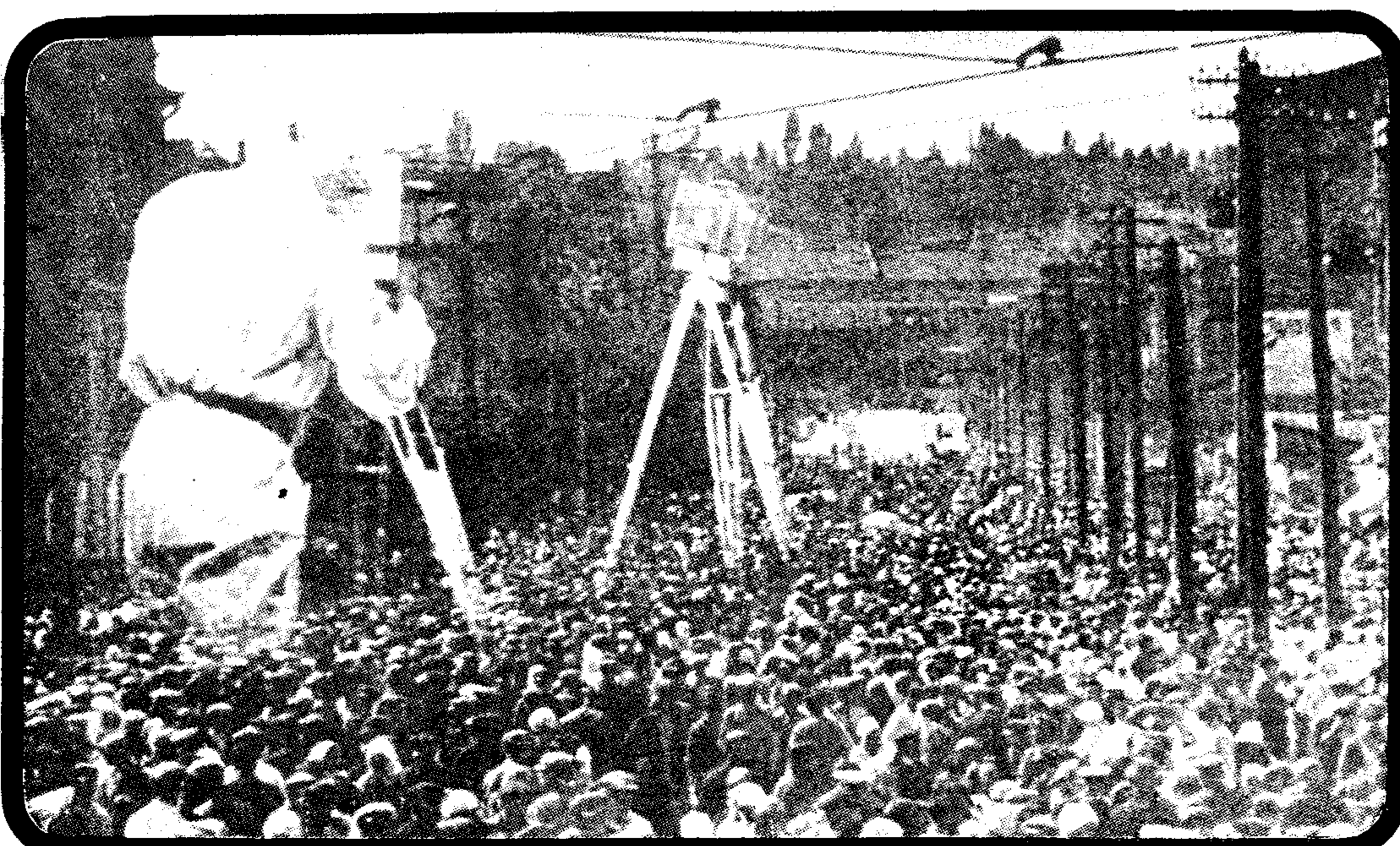
One reason why Costakis was able to amass such a vast and valuable collection was that when he began buying these pieces the artists and trends

represented in the exhibition were considered by Stalinist officialdom to be for the most part "anti-proletarian" and worthless.

Plastov's "Collective Farm Threshing" — featured prominently in the 1959 Royal Academy exhibition of Russian painting — was more to the taste of the bureaucracy.

But while the mailed fist of Stalinism was decisive in irradiating the trends so vividly displayed in the Costakis collection, it must be admitted that the avant-garde artists' distance from the tastes of the masses had already prior to the stern edicts of the state's Socialist Realism placed the artists before the choice: applied art or no art.

How the Soviet artists faced up to the complex problems posed by the new society provides us with an exciting intellectual drama, and the Costakis exhibition gives us an insight into its dynamics.



The Man with the Movie Camera (1929) — film by Dziga Vertov (1896-1954)

Tensions that could undermine Kremlin's leaders

HARRY SLOAN reviews the novel 'The Fall of the Russian Empire' by Donald James (Granada paperbacks).

FROM a best-selling novel entitled 'The Fall of the Russian Empire' most socialists would legitimately fear the worst.

Par for the course would be naive, blood-curdling and exultant stories of the triumph of "Western democracy" over brutish, bureaucratic "Marxists" — possibly involving heroic deeds by the SAS or the US marines, or at the very least nerve-tingling exploits by some virile and promiscuous Western superspy.

But Donald James' novel is very different from this stereotype. The "Fall" he describes is one arising primarily from the internal contradictions of the bureaucratically mismanaged economy and totalitarian society; and the term "Empire" is not used to present the usual caricature of the USSR as an expansionist "imperialist" power bent upon "world domination" but to draw the analogy between the Kremlin's present-day oppression of national minorities and that of the Tsars prior to the 1917 revolution.

Though unashamedly a work of creative fiction (the 'action' begins in 1986 and is written as if it is a retrospective piece of historical research), James' story is pieced together on a foundation of real problems existing within the USSR.

First and foremost he draws attention to the national antagonisms produced by the Great Russian chauvinism of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

The novel looks at their implications, both for Soviet society as a whole; in which a whole patchwork of nations are forcibly held together, and in particular for the effectiveness and cohesion of the Soviet armed forces, which in the last resort (as we have seen in Poland) form a vital line of defence for the bureaucracy against the working class.

This problem of chauvinism is by no means new. As a legacy of the old Tsarist regime, Great Russian chauvinism was vigorously combated by Lenin: Stalin's brutal insensitivity to the feelings of the oppressed was a major factor in Lenin's conflicts with him in his dying days. James actually refers to "the dying Lenin's prophetic denunciation of Joseph Stalin."

Yet it was Stalin at the head of the rising bureaucracy, who was to set the pace of policy towards the nationalities within the Soviet Union after Lenin's death.

By 1939, as Stalin, Hitler and other reactionaries bartered over the people and territory of the Ukraine, Trotsky was pointing to the legitimate grievances of the Ukrainian people, the dangerous growth of reactionary, Ukrainian nationalism, and raising the slogan for "A united, free and independent workers' and peasants' Ukraine."

"The bureaucracy strangled and plundered the people within Great Russia too. But in the Ukraine, matters were further complicated by the massacre of national hopes. Nowhere did restrictions, purges, repressions and in general all forms of bureaucratic hooliganism

assume such a murderous sweep as they did in the Ukraine in the struggle against the powerful, deeply rooted longings of the Ukrainian masses for greater freedom and independence."

(1938-9 Writings, p.302)

Later Trotsky referred to the "revolutionary national uprising which represents nothing else but a single segment of the political revolution" against the Kremlin.

Since that time, the Stalinist crimes against the non-Russian nationalities have been multiplied many times over, with Stalin's wholesale deportation of the Crimean Tartars, repression of the Ukrainian uprisings, and reprisals against whole "suspect" nations occupied by Axis forces in the war.

And since the war the rising population of Asiatic nationalities within the USSR have formed a growing component of the Soviet Union's conscript armies, officered by a largely Russian High Command.

James' book is no Trotskyist text: it projects the emergence of a strident chauvinism amongst the Russian population of the USSR exacerbating elements of alienation and revolt among the oppressed nationalities; and he sets such a scenario against a background of acute dislocation of the chronically mismanaged economy and a breakdown in the tottering Soviet agriculture industry.

As additional factors, he brings in the stresses and strains of sustaining the flagging Stalinist economies of Eastern Europe, a major shortfall in Soviet oil production, a slump in gold prices, and a simmering leadership crisis in the Kremlin.

Goaded beyond endurance, Russian workers in Leningrad begin to organise clandestine unions: when the bureaucrats call in the troops they find their army divided, and as they step up the repression of political dissidents, creating once again vast gulag-style camps of the Stalin era, they create unwittingly a vast horde of utterly desperate opponents of the regime, made up again of chiefly the downtrodden and oppressed national minorities.

To produce his chronicle of upheaval and internal revolt,

James is forced to overstate the various actually existing components of the economic and social crisis in the USSR. He is also forced to understate the cohesion between the various wings of the Kremlin bureaucracy when faced with a crisis.

Yet his projection of the emergence of a Stalin-like veteran figure in the form of Semyon Kuba leaves out of account any possible top level opposition to a restoration of mass purges and slave labour camps.

But the novel is an interesting exercise in projecting the implications of present-day bureaucratic rule for the long-term stability of the Soviet Union.

It is also interesting in avoiding any identification of the "Soviet system" with Marxism and Communism. The leader of the Leningrad union movement, Joseph Densky is described as 'a communist'. The defecting secret policeman, Letsukov, who joins the opposition, is attracted not to Western "democracy", but to Densky's vision of communism.

And in the final cataclysmic chapters, the fall of the "Russian Empire" leads to no idealised conclusion, but to a chaotic, brutal picture of rape, pillage and destruction at the hands of the most bitter and alienated victims of Stalinist repression.

The picture, in short, is one of a form of "political revolution" produced by social and economic pressures but without revolutionary leadership or programme even on the level spontaneously developed by the Solidarnosc movement in Poland. It does not topple, but rearranged the Kremlin bureaucracy.

In real life, we might reasonably expect the political gains and cruel lessons arising from the Polish events to figure prominently in the development of a mass workers' revolt in the USSR.

But the fact remains that we cannot rely on spontaneous social forces alone to create the movement for the overthrow of Stalinist rule: a Trotskyist political party is needed to fight for a perspective of restoring revolutionary rule by workers' councils and defence of the nationalised property relations after the defeat of the Kremlin bureaucracy.



Tourist pictures of Soviet Tajik people at tea. but the reality is one of oppression and discrimination against Asiatics by Russian leaders.

Discussing a Brighton balance sheet

"CLPD remains to pick up the pieces"

THIS year's Labour Party conference may well be regarded as a fitting end to the latest chapter in the Labour Left's pathetic history.

The much needed party unity produced at conference was overwhelmingly welcomed by the Party. However, it is likely to be a kind of unity that the Left will find increasingly hard to live with. Yet it was the Left which did its best to produce it. Ultra-left cretinism and traditional Labour Left opportunism combined to make the worst out of what, admittedly, was a difficult job.

The fact is that conference, out of understandable and justified desire for party unity agreed:

*To give the lunatic right its pound of Left flesh;

*To give the NEC carte blanche to cut some more off the joint;

*To legitimise expulsions of members for selling a particular socialist newspaper at Party meetings;

*To reject even moderate and, from the point of view of rebuilding the Party, much needed reforms, such as the democratisation of the women's organisation and that of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Expectations

Contrary to the Left's great expectations the composition of the NEC has not changed much. The strength of what passes for the 'hard left' (on the NEC) has gone up from eight to nine (or is it ten now?). Those who placed hopes in the increased voting strength of what passes for the 'soft left' had their first lesson in the first action of the NEC, when it decided to expel Tariq Ali.

Audrey Wise's place on the NEC was saved by the last minute withdrawal of the two Militant supporters from the contest (perhaps Militant should be congratulated for showing some symptoms of sanity at last) as well as by a somewhat unusual alliance between the Conference Arrangements Committee and CLPD on upholding the Constitution by not allowing defeated Labour candidates automatically to stand.

Needless to say the NEC's Left masterminds recommended that conference should ignore the Constitution. Had their advice been followed not just Audrey Wise but perhaps even Joan Maynard would not have been elected.

From the point of view of the Left there was perhaps a silver lining. This, however, was not

Since last month's Labour Party conference in Brighton, we have been inviting Party activists to give us their views of the outcome.

This week's contribution is from VLADIMIR DERER of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.

There will be a response to this and other contributions next week.

due to the traditional Left's efforts.

A CLPD sponsored resolution demanding the recognition of the principle of positive discrimination in favour of members of the working class, ethnic minorities and women and asking for a working party to be set up to explore the ways of implementing this principle was remitted with the promise that a working party will be set up.

The resolution might have been carried had the NEC recommended support — a possibility which cannot be excluded given the NEC's generally chaotic proceedings during its conference sessions.

Unfortunately some of our 'very Left' comrades from a London constituency insisted on the inclusion in the composite of a demand that the NEC should produce constitutional amendments for consideration by the 1984 conference, in line with the proposals contained in the resolution.

Not surprisingly the more perceptive members of the NEC's Right quickly seized upon this demand as unrealistic when the NEC deliberated what to recommend. Quite apart from this predictable reaction, to entrust the NEC with producing constitutional amendments on a controversial subject of this kind verges on the insane. No doubt the comrades who thought up

this brilliant idea were aware how Lab Mikardo's undertaking of 1977 that 'we shall put down at the next year's Annual Conference all the amendments to the constitution necessary to provide automatic re-selection in the way and in the sense that the sponsors of those 60-odd resolutions want' was miraculously transformed into 'the Mikardo compromise' of 1978. It only goes to show that our highly principled ultra-left Bourbons have forgotten nothing and learnt nothing.

The Left's second consolation prize was the massive defeat of the two resolutions which under the pretext of introducing 'greater democracy' sought to destroy the electoral college by ostensibly giving us what we already have, namely 'one member one vote'.

Dupes

Unfortunately a third resolution containing the same proposals was saved by the NEC by request for remission. No doubt friends of the PLP supremacy and their dupes will do their best by trying to keep these proposals alive. Given the NEC's present composition they have a good chance of succeeding.

The negative pleasure at the temporary setback to the attempt to undermine the electoral college as an instrument of accountability, will not be shared by the whole Left. Recent debates on 'one member one vote' reveal that there are many on both extremes of the Left spectrum who have forgotten that we live in a class society in which people are conditioned to see reality as 'in a camera obscura' and that the battle for socialism will not be won by rational argument alone.

Were the conference results inevitable? Only in the sense that even had the Left at last 'seen the light' after the 1983 election it would already have been too late to stop the general drift to the Right. Something could have been achieved had the Heffer campaign received more than lukewarm support even from those who rallied behind the only credible leadership candidate of the Left. Most of the Labour Party members who opted for Kinnock were unaware of his voting record on the NEC. Those who were involved in the much acclaimed wider consultation in the leadership contest cast their vote without having seen any election literature which contained criticism of the candidates (apart from the Left friendly national press). But this, of course, is the very situation the not-so-naïve advocates of 'one member one vote' seek to create.

Left press

Nor was the weekly Left press all that helpful (admittedly it does not reach many Labour Party members). Some editors seem to have believed that



"The kind of unity that the Left will find increasingly hard to live with..."

declaration of support must be accompanied by a long list of Heffer's real or alleged shortcomings so as to ensure that only minimum enthusiasm for his candidature would be generated.

Tribune, which not so long ago criticised CLPD 'from the Left', published details of Kinnock's record in full only in September. By this time most CLPs have consulted their members' views.

Having waited until five minutes to twelve before declaring their support for Heffer, the clock had not stopped striking midnight before the Tribune Jacobins jumped on the Kinnock-Hattersley bandwagon.

The Heffer campaign, instead of becoming a rallying point for organising the forces of the Left merely revealed the Left's total fragmentation and marginalisation.

Failure

A more substantial reason for the Left's inability to prevent the rise to dominance of the Right was its misjudgment of the situation after Labour's defeat in the 1979 election.

There was a failure to realise that the objective conditions for the Left's advance are more favourable when there is a Labour government and less favourable when the Party is in opposition. In opposition, the priorities of the Party are dictated by the overriding need to get rid of the Tory government. Party unity is one of the essential conditions which must be met if the Party is to present a credible alternative.

Unity

Unity at almost any cost becomes the priority for the majority of Party members, and above all of the Party's industrial wing. Furthermore, in opposition commitments to policies cannot be tested by reference to deeds, but only to words.

The fact that the Left in opposition faces a different situation than under a Labour government was brutally brought home at this year's conference. In 1979 it was disguised.

Firstly because a defeat of a Labour government is generally followed by an inquest, this temporarily tends to favour the Left. Secondly, because seven years of work by CLPD had made mandatory re-selection, and to a lesser extent, the electoral college, acceptable to the majority of Party members, both individual and affiliated.

Thirdly, there was the fact that Callaghan had overruled the NEC over the manifesto. After Labour's defeat, the NEC revenged itself by reopening the ques-

tion of the electoral college, by seeking to vest the control of the manifesto solely in the hands of the NEC, and, more reluctantly, by allowing the question of mandatory reselection to be reopened.

Temporarily, a united front between the NEC majority and the rank and file ensured the victory of two constitutional reforms between 1979 and 1981. However, the resistance of the Parliamentary Labour Party led to internal Party tension which produced an image of a deeply divided Party.

Party members, and above all trade unionists, were fearful of what the consequences would be for the Party's electoral prospects. It was then that the Left committed its first major blunder.

Whereas CLPD had always viewed the electoral college as an instrument for making the Party leadership accountable to annual elections in the same way as the Treasurer and other members of the NEC, the Left saw it primarily as a way of getting its candidate elected. Hence, in the deputy leader contest the Left opted for a 'presidential-style' campaign.

Public displays of disunity, mercilessly exploited by the media, alienated the trade union rank and file. The Party's stock with the public fell, and Labour supporters started blaming it on those who dreamt up constitutional reforms. Above all, the Left's deputy leader candidate was blamed.

1981

The 1981 conference saw not only the narrow defeat of Benn, but also a sharp turn to the right

by the NEC. Thirsting for revenge the NEC initiated an 'inquiry' into Militant, disqualified properly selected Parliamentary candidates, and debarred from Party membership individuals who would have normally been accepted.

It was at this stage that the Left committed its second blunder. Still euphoric from the near-victorious Benn campaign, it chose to answer the right wing offensive with the tactics of confrontation. CLPD's proposals for a defensive strategy which would combine defence of the existing gains with a demand for Party unity on the basis of give and take were dismissed as a 'move to the right' and 'going the Kinnock way'.

Lenin

In fact, as Lenin pointed out, revolutionaries who know only how to advance, but not how to carry out a tactical retreat, are poor revolutionaries. In the case of our 'revolutionaries', they had shown themselves capable of neither.

The consequences are with us now.

In conclusion, CLPD has been written off as having fulfilled its role, as having moved to the right, as not understanding the women's movement and the tasks facing the new Left. In fact, its only fault was that it was unable to prevent its better-organised and more illustrious allies from adopting their politically suicidal course.

After the dust of defeat has settled, CLPD will still be there to pick up the pieces.

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Seeking consolation in electoral statistics?

SOME parts of this book are useful. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 conveniently summarise the personal and financial links between the Tory party and the leading circles of the British capitalist class.

The book, however, is centred round a statistical argument which just does not stand up. The core of it is the graph below, allegedly showing a remorseless long-term decline in the Tory vote.

This decline, exclaims Ross, has "enormous structural roots". It is "part of a 137-year party political system in Britain". "It is scarcely possible to imagine a more clear-cut development."

Grandiose

But the statistical evidence is not sufficient to support such grandiose historical developments. In the first place, Ross notes that the electorate in 1983 is socially very different from the electorate in 1846, but comments only that changes in voting rights do not seem to affect the statistical trends. But a 'trend' connecting percentages of one electorate at one time to percentages of a very different electorate at another time is not a valid statistical law.

Even for the period since 1931 Ross's trend is dubious. Look at the second graph of the Tory vote below. The picture is now, if anything, of a slight rising trend.

Yet the second graph can be got from Ross's figures just by including 1929 and excluding as exceptional 1931 and 1935 — when, following Ramsay MacDonald's defection from the Labour Party, the Tories stood as the core of a 'National Government' coalition.

There are plenty of other ways that the figures can be presented to produce a different impression. Simply by altering the scales of the graph, so that the 'percentage of the vote'

MARTIN THOMAS reviews 'Thatcher and friends: the anatomy of the Tory Party' by John Ross (Pluto Press, £2.50)

axis started at 0 rather than 33, would change the impression to one of high stability in the Tory vote rather than marked rise or decline.

Or suppose that the Tories win another general election, say in 1987, with over 50% of the vote. Every socialist will regard such a prospect with horror: but it would be a foolish and weak-hearted socialist indeed who tried to convince himself or herself that iron laws of history made such a thing impossible.

A result of that sort, even if it was a one-off freak, would completely destroy Ross's pattern.

This points to a fundamental problem with Ross's very method of procedure. If the 1983 election result was the product of iron laws moving over 137 years of history, then where does the conscious activity of socialists come in?

Gale

Doesn't Ross's approach imply that all the articles written by himself and his comrades in Socialist Action and Socialist Challenge about how Labour should orientate in order to win the 1983 election were so much spitting into the teeth of a gale?

The words of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci are very relevant here: "... statistical law can only be employed in political science and practice in so far as the great mass of the population remains essentially passive ...



Tory rank and file: oblivious to Ross's analysis that their Party is in historic decline

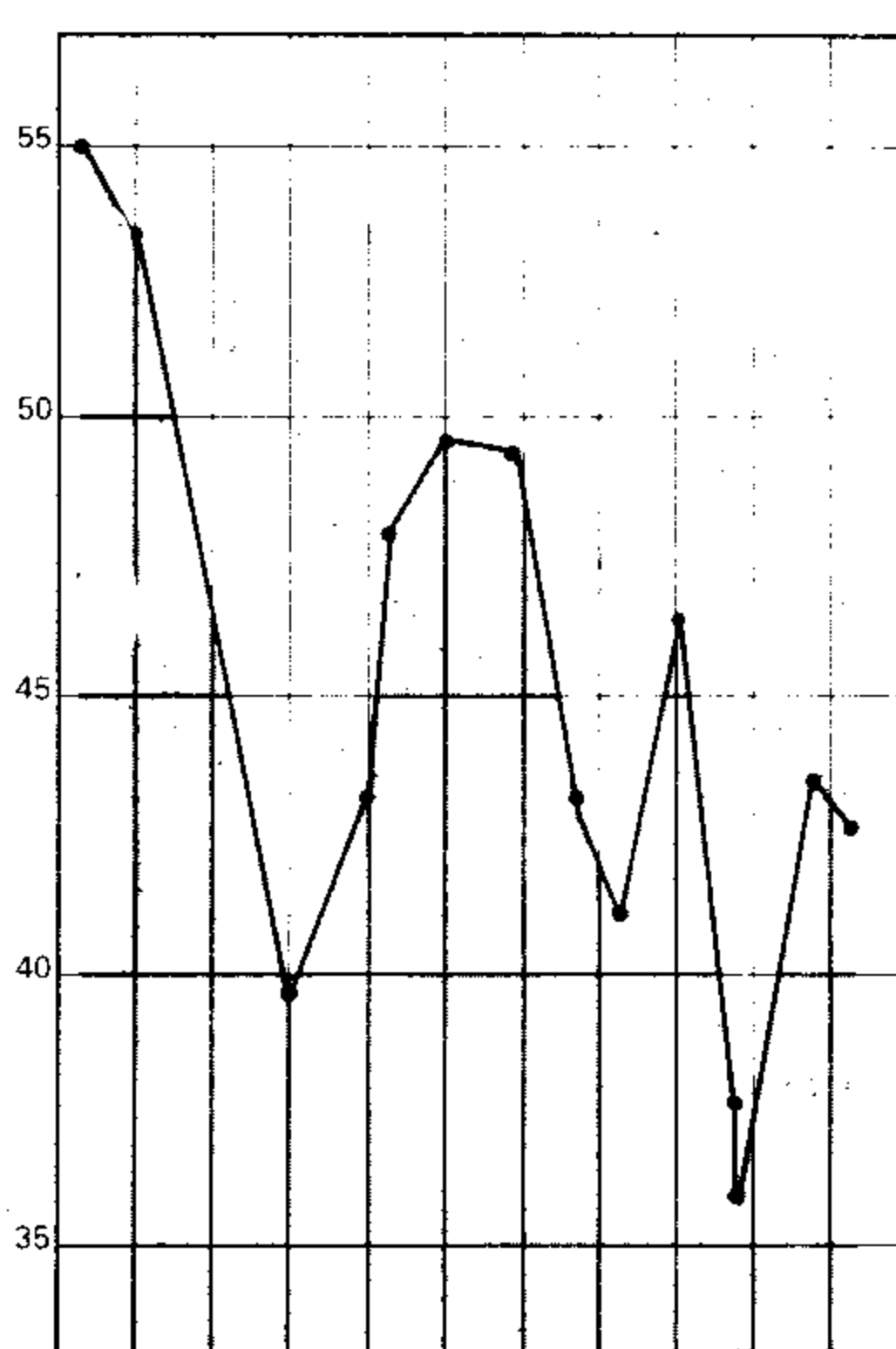
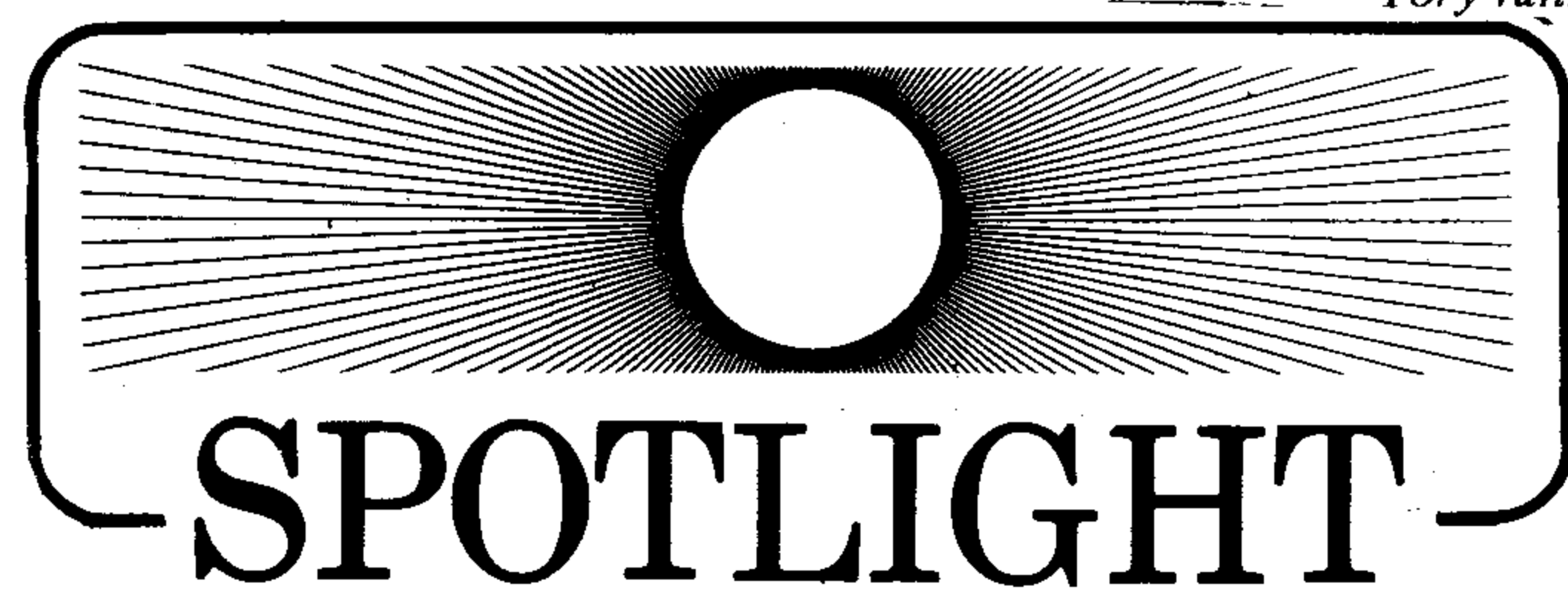
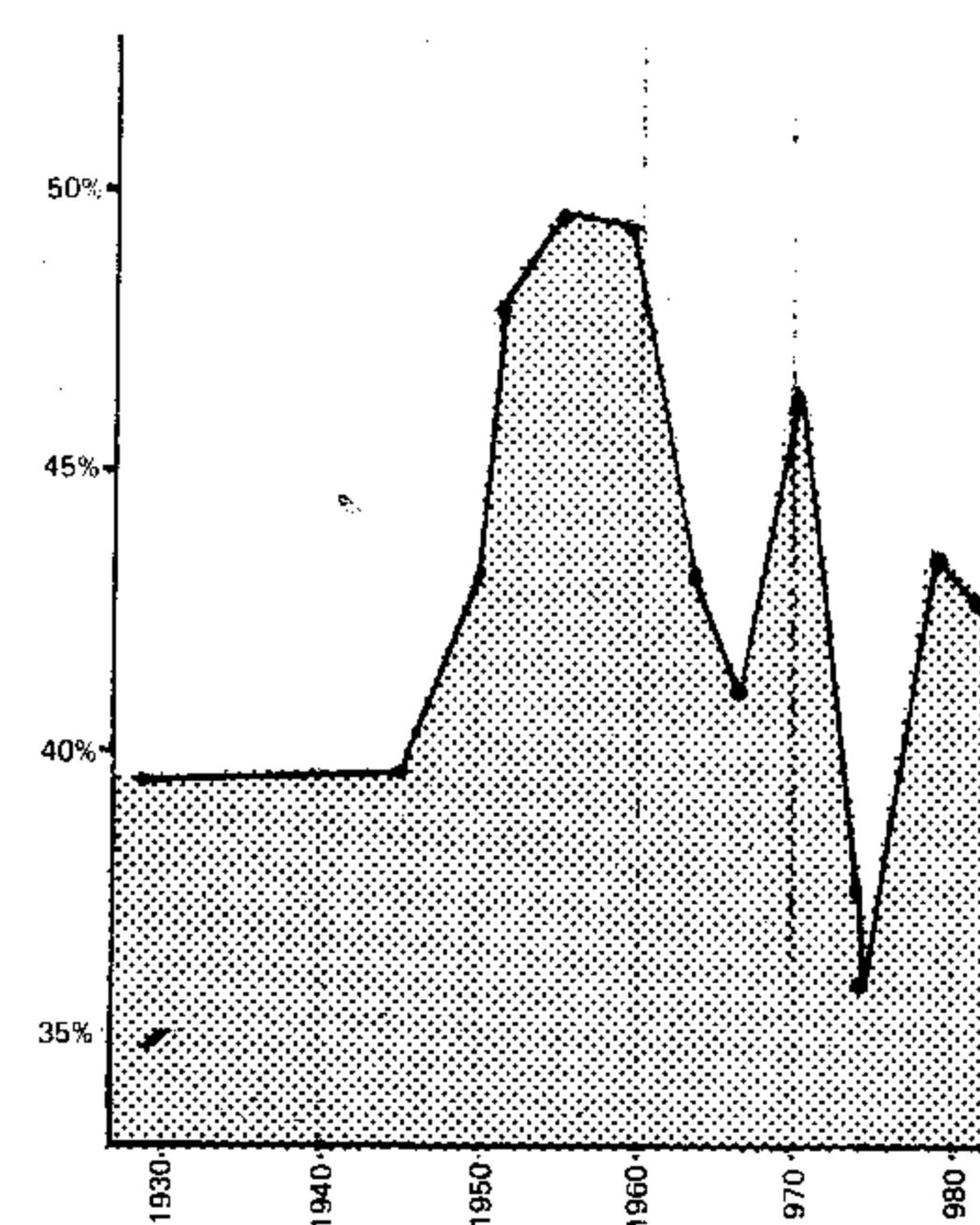


Figure 1 Tory percentage of the vote since 1931

Ross's graph: a clear-cut long-term tendency for the Tory vote to decline.

"Indeed, in politics the assumption of a statistical law as an essential, fatally operating



But 1931 and 1935 were exceptional years: the Tories headed a 'National Government' coalition. Leave out those exceptional years, and include 1929, and the picture looks quite different.

law is not only a scientific error, but becomes a practical error in action; in addition it encour-



JOHN HARRIS

ages mental laziness and programmatic superficiality.

"It should be observed that political action aims precisely at raising the multitudes out of their passivity, that is, at destroying the laws of the greatest numbers; how then can this be held to be a sociological law?"

Mechanical

Gramsci was arguing against mechanical variants of Marxism which made the rise of socialism a 'statistical law': but the comment applies equally to Ross's argument.

Of course, for whole periods "the great mass of the popula-

tion" is "essentially passive", in some respects at least, and 'statistical laws' do operate. The steady rise of the Liberal vote since 1951 seems to have something of the nature of a 'statistical law', but I'm not sure what the basic clauses are, and I'm none the wiser from Ross's book. (The basic reason he gives for the decline of the Tory vote is the economic decline of British imperialism, though there are refinements in the argument).

Curves

Ross is also not very illuminating as regards what his historical "curves of development" have to tell us about the future. The present party system, he says, is breaking up: "As to what (the replacement) will be, we can only outline its chief features by name: the formation of a 'Gaullist' Tory Party; the creation of the SDP-Liberal 'pro-EEC' Party; and the creation of a reformist Socialist as opposed to Labour Party."

He does not explain why these should be the trends or even what he means. ('Gaullist' in what sense? What's the difference between 'reformist Socialist' and 'Labour'?) Surely a book claiming "to see the shape of British politics not merely as it has developed over months or years, but over decades and even centuries" should have more to tell us about the future than this.

Shooting parties: Tory wildlife policy?

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

A RICH TORY is getting richer by charging other rich Tories to shoot one of the world's most endangered species of bird, reveals Catherine Caufield in last week's New Scientist.

The barnacle goose is protected under European and British law. The 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (W&CA) bans the hunting of barnacle geese and guarantees "special measures" to protect them. But it also allows the geese to be shot under licence "to prevent serious damage to crops".

The Isle of Islay in Scotland is divided into a handful of large estates, the largest of which is owned by Lord Magdalen, a former Tory MP with two Tory MPs for sons.

The land is farmed by tenant farmers, whose crops are sometimes damaged by the geese.

However, the Scottish Office issues licences to shoot geese not to the farmers, but to Lord Muck and his fellow lairds. And the lairds don't hand the licences on to their tenants. Instead, anyone with £50 and an invitation from Lord Muck can go and shoot some rare geese.

Such shooting parties made £10,000 for Lord M. last year.

So who's in favour of this?

Not the Nature Conservation Council (NCC), whom the Scottish Office has to consult before issuing the licences. They advised the Scottish Office that on 38 of the 53 farms covered by licences, crops could be protected by less drastic action, such as scaring. The Scottish Office even issued licences to shoot geese within two sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) set up by the NCC to protect barnacle

geese.

Not the farmers. The National Farmers Union says shooting for sport is an inefficient way of controlling birds that damage crops.

Not the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, who with the NCC say that licences are frequently violated to make the shooting more "sporting".

But Lord Muck and his fellow lairds support it and indeed successfully opposed rule changes ending these abuses. At the time of passage of the W&CA, Lord M. made it clear that his continued support for the government was dependent on their recognition of the "traditional sports of the countryside".

This scandal is one more stage in exposing the sham of the Tories' wildlife policy.

Only six months after passage of the W&CA, the NCC reported the loss in the previous 30 years of half of Britain's ancient woodlands, with one fifth of the chalk grasslands in the previous 15 years. Half of Dorset's heathlands had been lost in 20 years, with one third damaged in 1980

alone.

One eighth of SSSIs had been damaged in 1980 alone, despite their supposed "protection" and all were under threat from agricultural "improvement", roads, tipping and mining.

The NCC asked for an extra £20 million over ten years to defend wildlife habitats, but the government offered only £600,000. Worse, the government was even giving grants for schemes that destroyed wildlife habitats.

Just one of the results of this parsimony was the loss of part of Romney Marsh in Kent, one of the top SSSIs. The NCC was unable to offer compensation to farmers for not ploughing up the land and turning it over to intensive agriculture.

By doing this, farmers gained the advantage of guaranteed prices from the EEC for crops, most of which are already accumulating in a range of mountains of surplus.

By draining and despoiling Britain's unique wetlands, farmers even get government grants of up to 50%.

Under the W&CA, the NCC can designate any site as an SSSI. In theory, it is protected,

but the NCC must give three months' notice during which time the owners can do as they please.

One example from May 1982 was a 6.5 hectare meadow (part of the proposed Ripon Park SSSI) which contained some 90 species of flowering plant, including marsh orchids, and nesting sites for curlews and reed buntings. Six weeks before SSSI status came into force, the farmer ploughed the lot over.

Even previous SSSIs had to be redesignated with this three-month waiting period.

Labour's response to this has been mixed. Michael Foot condemned the W&CA for making wildlife protection "worse, not better", and providing a "bonanza for the richest sections of society".

But Tam Dalyell, Labour's leading Parliamentary science speaker (despite his removal from the front bench for opposing the South Atlantic war), recently wrote a self-congratulatory piece in New Scientist on how many improvements he and his co-thinkers had made to the W&CA during its committee stages. His worries about the Act were few and vague.

But if the working class is to have anything worth inheriting, the Labour and conservationist movements are going to have to recognise their common interests and fight now to save what remains of our wildlife.

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*Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line; no state interference in our unions! No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions.

*Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. For a price index calculated by working class organisations, as the basis for clauses in all wage agreements to provide automatic monthly rises in line with the true cost of living for the working class. The same inflation-proofing should apply to state benefits, grants and pensions.

*Fight for improvements in the social services, and against cuts. Protection for those services against inflation by automatic inflation-proofing of expenditure. For occupations and supporting strike action to defend jobs and services.

*End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs. Fight for a 35 hour week and an end to overtime. Demand work-sharing without loss of pay. Organise the unemployed — campaign for a programme of useful public works to create new jobs for the unemployed.

*Defend all jobs! Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers and bankers, to elected trade union committees. For occupation and blacking action to halt the closures. For nationalisation without compensation under workers' management.

*Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions, without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.

*Freeze rent and rates.

*Scrap all immigration controls. Racism is not a problem: racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets. Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence. Build workers' defence squads.

*The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, MI5, etc), public accountability, etc.

*Free abortion on demand. Women's equal right to work and full equality for women. Defend and extend free state nursery and childcare provision.

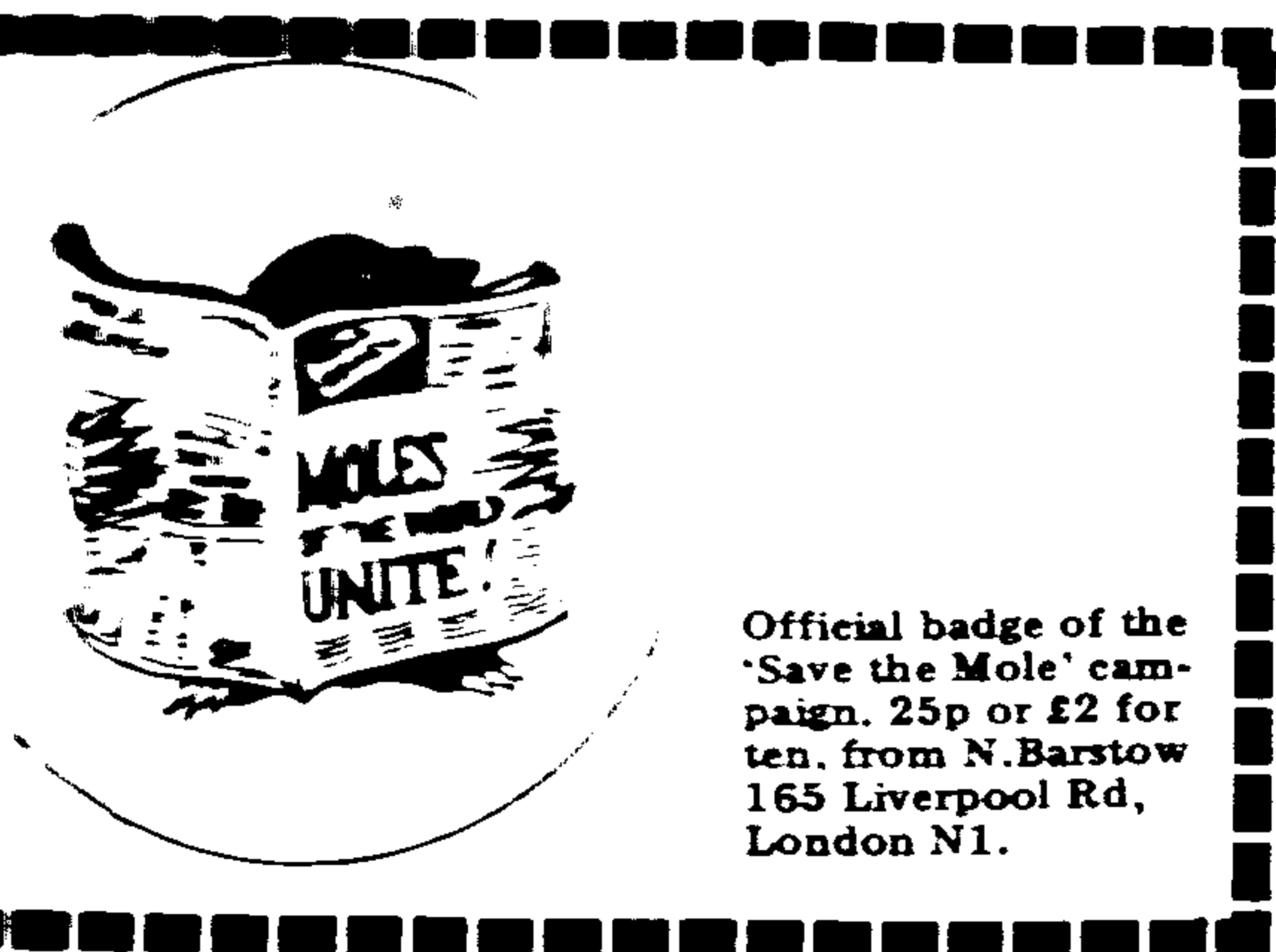
*Against attacks on gays by the state: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stand publicly.

*The Irish people — as a whole — should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.

*The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.

*It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each Parliament and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.

*The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now — in Britain and throughout the world — show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control. The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist alternative in its place — rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the capitalists and bosses.



Not so wise after the event

By Terry Smith

'I TOLD you so,' is always the least popular attitude for socialists to strike in the aftermath of a betrayal or defeat for the working class.

No matter how accurately a Marxist organisation may have pinpointed in advance the weaknesses or treachery in an existing mass leadership, all too often a major setback makes it difficult or impossible to persuade the workers concerned to examine these lessons and draw the same conclusions.

How much more irritating, therefore, to find groups in the aftermath of the Grenada defeat suddenly developing criticisms of the weaknesses of the New Jewel Movement which they never attempted to raise or oppose before the invasion.

The classic example of this is of course **Socialist Action**, which, together with its predecessor **Socialist Challenge** carried repeated and undiluted eulogies of the New Jewel Movement and its activities in Grenada.

While their 'comrades' in the American Socialist Workers Party went completely over the top, embracing Castro's Stalinist politics, attacking Trotskyism, and looking to Castro, Bishop, the Sandinista leadership and

the Communist Party of El Salvador as the nucleus of a 'New International', **Socialist Action** nevertheless echoed much of the SWP's uncritical adulation of Bishop.

Now, however, as the hunt goes on for Bishop's body, and Reagan masterminds the installation of a puppet government, **Socialist Action** (November 4) has at last come out with a mealy-mouthed criticism of the NJM.

In a centre page feature, what appears to be an editorial comment declares:

Whatever the disagreements that have come out in recent weeks within the New Jewel Movement, and within the People's Revolutionary Government, there can be no excuse for the bloody consequences of the disagreements.

'The Cuban condemnation is absolutely correct. The lesson is that real proletarian democracy is not an optional extra for a revolution but a crucial component.'

'Despite the positive gains of the revolution, there was no real democracy within the NJM and only a consultative

process with the population as a whole. The NJM does not possess the structures of internal democracy by which disputes may be resolved.'

(page 8)

Now they tell us! From this astonishing exercise in locking the stable door after Reagan's marines have bolted through, we deduce (1) **Socialist Action's** view — that there was no proletarian democracy in the NJM; (2) that, by implication, there is proletarian democracy in Cuba!

Yet experience has shown that when the NJM bandwagon was rolling forwards, **Socialist Action** was quite happy to turn a blind eye to its lack of democracy.

And indeed the model followed by the NJM leadership was very much that of Castro's July 26 Movement, which was catapulted to power in 1959 by the abrupt collapse and abdication of the Batista dictatorship, and which from the very outset avoided and opposed the establishment of proletarian democracy either within the Cuban state as a whole or within the bureaucratic fiction of the Cuban 'Communist Party'.

Castro's method involves a skilful combination of personal charisma and populist

appeal to 'the population as a whole', linked to a 'Party' and a 'National Assembly' whose functions are simply to rubber stamp decisions taken by the top dozen Cuban leaders.

Bishop's fulsome admiration for Castro (an admiration shared by some of his rivals) is spelled out beyond doubt on the facing page of the **Socialist Action** spread — in a speech delivered in Havana in 1980, and reproduced now without criticism or qualification.

Now, at last, **Socialist Action** gives its advice and draws lessons. Now they even lecture the Grenadian workers!

Their words are in fact a telling indictment of all those currents which tail-end popular mass movements and subordinate their own paper criticisms to a falsely understood concept of 'Unity'.

'If the masses had been allowed a real legislative and decision-making role, then the US threat of invasion, a real threat for four and a half years, might never have become actuality.'

Only by rejecting the sirencalls of Castroism and fighting for an independent Trotskyist perspective can such errors be combatted: **Socialist Action** has once again learned too little, and tells us all too late.

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of **Socialist Organiser**.

'Where We Stand' — 20p plus 15p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' — 10p plus 15p postage. Or the two together, 45p including postage. From **Socialist Organiser**, 28, Middle Lane, London N8.



Agenda

BRENT YCND public meeting: 'Hands off Grenada, hands off Nicaragua'. Speakers from national YCND, Cuban Embassy, Grenada High Commission, Nicaraguan Embassy. Tuesday November 15, 7.30 at the Moonshine Theatre, Victor Rd (off Harrow Rd), NW10. 7-7.30: tape of Maurice Bishop's speech.

'THE Thorn in the Rose — the politics of Clause Four, a revolutionary Marxist critique'. By Brian McKenna. Produced by 'Socialist Student' (Glasgow). 30p per copy; by post 50p, or 80p for 2 copies, £1.25 for 3, £2 for 5, £3.95 for 10. From

'Socialist Student' (Glasgow) c/o 29 Bowmont Place, Halfway, Cambuslang, Glasgow.

LABOUR group for human rights in Sri Lanka: public launch meeting coming soon. Speakers invited: Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Tariq Ali, Jeremy Corbyn. Date to be fixed. Contact: 42 Sicker Court, London N1.

LONDON Labour Campaign for Gay Rights meets every four weeks at Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont St, WC1, at 6pm. Next meeting Sunday December 4 — contact Mike 659 2938, Bob 341 0666.

Gay YS meets at the same place, again every four weeks. Next meeting November 20. Contact: Martin 263 9484.

Gay NUR just forming. Launch meeting soon, open to all lesbian and gay railworkers. Contact c/o 119 Southwyck, Coldharbour Lane, London SW9.

Lesbians in the Labour Party: next national meeting Saturday November 26, 2pm in County Hall, London SE1. Creche available. Contact: Sarah Roelofs, c/o Gays The Word bookshop, Marchmont St, London WC1

CLASS FIGHTER conference, 26-27 November in South London. Two days of workshops, videos and discussion on perspectives for Class Fighter. For details write to 214 Sicker Court, London N1 or phone Jane on 263 9484.

Where to find Socialist Organiser

SCOTLAND

Glasgow. Contact: Stan Crooke, 34 Garturk St, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at West End bookshop, Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunchtime), Coatbridge shopping arcade (Saturday lunchtime), and Maryhill dole (Tuesday morning).

Edinburgh. Contact Dave, 229 4591. SO is sold at Muirhouse (Saturday 10.30-12) and at the First of May bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

NORTH-WEST

Manchester. Contact Tony, 273 5691. SO is sold at Grass Roots, Books, Newton St, Piccadilly.

Stockport. Meetings every Sunday, 7.30pm: contact 40 Fox St, Edgley, Stockport. SO is sold at Stockport market, every Saturday, 11 to 12.30.

Wirral. Contact Lol Duffy, 3 St James Court, Victoria Rd, New Brighton, Merseyside.

Leeds. Contact 733 6661. SO is sold at Progress Books, Beckett St and at News from Newcastle, White Chapel.

Stoke. Meets first and third Tuesdays of every month. Next meeting November 15, 8pm: 'Socialists and CND', with showing of 'Carr Greenham Home' video. For venue and other details, phone Paul Barnett, 328198.

Hyndburn. Contact Acerrington 395753.

YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST

Huddersfield. Contact Alan Brooke, 59 Magdale, Honley, Huddersfield HD7 2LX.

Harrogate. Meets every other Sunday evening. Contact Mark Osborn, 522542. SO is sold outside the market, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday lunchtime.

York. Contact 414118 (98 Hull St). SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday morning, at the Community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

Sheffield. SO is sold outside Boots in Fargate (Saturday 12 to 1) and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Rd. Contact Rob, 589307.

Durham. Weekend school on the politics of SO. December 3-4. Contact Andy, 64088. SO is sold at the Community Co-Op, New Elvet, Sunderland: contact c/o Durham.

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Hebden Bridge Books.

Leeds. SO is sold at Books and Corner Books, Woodhouse Lane. Contact Garth, 623322.

Hull. Meets every Wednesday, 8pm. Details from SO sellers. Childcare available.

WALES AND WEST

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

Bristol. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Discussion meetings on 'Imperialism', alternate Wednesdays, 7.30 at 169 Barclay Rd, Bearswood, Smethwick. Next meeting November 16. 'The multinationals, the international banks, and inter-imperialist rivalries'.

SO is sold at the Other Bookshop. Leicester. Supporters' meetings alternate Fridays at the Socialist Centre. Next meeting November 18. Contact Phil, 857908. SO is sold at Blackthorne Books, High St.

Coventry. Contact Keith, 75623.

Nottingham. Meets 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 7.30 at the International Community Centre. SO is sold outside the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1) and at the Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St. Contact Pete Radcliffe, 585640.

Northampton. Meets alternate Tuesdays. November 15 — business meeting. Contact Ross, 713606.

SOUTH

Oxford. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday 11 to 1) and outside Tesco, Cowley Rd, Friday 5 to 7. Also at EOA Books, Cowley Rd.

LONDON Hounslow. Sunday November 20, 8pm: business meeting. Contact Chris, 898 6961. Other London group contacts: Brent, Mick 624 1931; Camden, Mike 267 4806; Islington, Nik 278 1341; Hackney, Andrew 249 4618; East London, Susan 377 1328; South-East London and Orpington, Siu Ming 691 1141; Putney, Tom 789 7587.

Southwark/Lambeth. Next meeting, Tuesday 22 November. James Dunkerley on 'Central America after Grenada'. 7.30pm at Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5. (The meeting on union leadership with Alan Thornett has been postponed to December).

Socialist Organiser London educationals.

1. Fridays, 6pm, at the London School of Economics, East Building, first floor, room E196.

November 18: Cuba and Central America. To follow: State and Revolution; The Russian Revolution; The USSR and Stalinism; Ireland; Why is the Left divided?

2. Sundays, 8pm, in Southwark (phone 609 7459 for details).

November 13: Black nationalism. To follow: Rise and fall of the Bann movement; Castroism.

3. Half-day school in Hounslow, Sunday December 4, 12noon to 5pm, at Hanworth Labour Hall.

Politics of SO: The 'parliamentary road', The Alternative Economic Strategy; The working class and revolutionary politics. Details: 898 6961.

4. Discussion series on imperialism, Thursdays 7pm at 214 Sicker Court, N1.

November 10: Multinationals and the EEC. To follow: The New International Division of Labour, Lenin on imperialism; The economics and politics of 3rd World development. Is the USSR imperialist?

For details of preparatory reading etc. contact 609 7459, 278 1341 or 354 1050.

Grenada and the Falklands

How US overcame the Vietnam syndrome

LAST WEEK in a discussion article ALAN THORNETT argued for an analysis of the Grenada invasion which recognised the centrality of the Falklands war as a factor in the turn by imperialism towards overt military intervention.

This week, in a more extended article, MICK O'SULLIVAN, drawing upon material from Fred Halliday's book 'The Second Cold War', argues that Thatcher's South Atlantic war was "little and anachronistic", and that the turn by imperialism towards intervention began as far back as 1978.

ALAN Thornett's article in last week's Socialist Organiser is unfortunate for a number of reasons.

Attempting to construct a picture of world politics now around the axis of the Falklands war, Alan Thornett cannot help but play down, distort, misconstrue and misrepresent the real dynamic behind both the US invasion of Grenada and the present war drive.

If you start with the 'Falklands syndrome', and use it to explain everything subsequent to it — the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the French sale of Super Etendard jets, the possible invasion by the US of the Gulf — then you are using an approach to current history which owes more to the method of magicians seeking the philosopher's stone than Marxism.

Imperialism is imperialism. Alan Thornett, if I have understood him correctly, is saying that without the Falklands war the whole period we are now going through would be substantially different. It is of course impossible to answer such an idea with 100% certainty.

What is possible is to say that the general line of imperialist development would necessarily have taken its present course.

Direct military intervention has always been an option for imperialism — dependent, of course, on who the opponent is and what the likely consequences are. Just as the state, in the final analysis, is a body of armed men, so naked aggression is the final weapon of imperialism. To say otherwise — that this could only happen because of the Falklands — is to reject the basic nature of imperialism.

It is to imply — though obviously Alan Thornett does not actually hold such an opinion — that imperialist militarism and aggression is merely a policy and not a basic and ineradicable part of its nature and that Thatcher's anachronistic little South Atlantic war was a great pioneering, trail-blazing innovation.

This is nonsense in terms both of history and current world politics. It does not make sense to think that modern history — even post-Vietnam War history — begins with the Falklands War.

Better to put the Falklands War into the real picture of post-Vietnam War history. As far as I can see its place there is at best a minor one.

US destabilisation. At the end of the '60s Nixon and Kissinger's policy of detente was introduced. Not since the war did East and West seem to have so much in



Deaths in the Grenadan invasion may total over 1,500

common largely freed from ideological rhetoric (contrast Nixon over Czechoslovakia — he was inaugurated five months after the invasion of Czechoslovakia — and Reagan over Poland).

Detente was to provide mutual benefits for both sides. The Russians would gain much-needed technology and grain supplies, discussion on nuclear weapons were to be opened up and in return the USSR would help extract the US from Indo-China with an 'honourable' settlement and contain other third world movements.

There was of course nothing new about this policy. In its essentials it was the continuation of the division of the world into spheres of influence which had been the foundation of post war stability.

This system — which relies on bureaucratic and military repression both East and West — remains the basic parameter within which both imperialism and the Kremlin operate.

However, from the initial success of the Paris accords the policy collapsed into one of devastating failure for the Americans.

13 revolutions. Between 1974 and 1980 (by which time the policy had long been abandoned) 13 regimes had come to power which, to varying degrees, were hostile to the West. This breakdown between imperialist powers and subject nations has been the main destabilising effect on US foreign policy.

And then in 1979 the USSR armed forces moved into territory not already conceded to it in the 1940s — they invaded Afghanistan.

These transformations have taken five basic forms.

1) April/May 1975 victory in Indo-China, NLF, Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge. All were led by Stalinist parties which had fought protracted guerrilla struggles.

2) Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Cape Verde, Sao Tome, Angola. Between 1974 and November 1975 the former Portuguese colonies in Africa were granted independence following the fall of the Caetano regime. Long established guerrilla movements came to power though not through direct military victory.

3) The Ethiopian revolution, September 1974 and the coup in Afghanistan, April 1978: pre-capitalist monarchies were overthrown by revolution from above carried out by the armed forces, both of them looking towards Russia (Ethiopia after an initial

period under US patronage) for their methods and models of modernisation.

4) Grenada and Nicaragua in 1979. Each took place against the background of a corrupt ruling class with little social base, the former after a bloodless coup, the latter after protracted fighting. Both saw socialist parties working in tandem with bourgeois forces.

5) Iran, February 1979, the first successful urban based revolution since 1917, finding a political expression in reactionary clerical radicalism. As Halliday (in 'The Second Cold War' from which much of this material is taken) points out, the relevance and implications of these victories for the future are limited because the form of oppression they overthrew — i.e. colonialism, pre-capitalist monarchies — are rare in the world today. (By far the largest group of oppressed and occupied nations is in the Soviet block).

The Kremlin's response. While these revolutions took place independently of Moscow, once they had occurred there has been varying degrees of self-serving support for them. The underlying dynamic for this was the bureaucracy's "tendency to extend its power, its prestige, its revenue. This is the element of 'imperialism' in the widest sense of the word which was the property in the past of all monarchies, oligarchies, ruling castes", as Leon Trotsky described it, over four decades ago.

Two basic reasons allowed for the Kremlin to react in this manner and must in part be why they dared behave in Afghanistan with a boldness unknown since the mid 1940s.

a) By the beginning of the 1970s the Russians had virtually caught up with the Americans in nuclear strike capability (part of the reason for detente and nuclear arms talks was to once again give the US a massive superiority). This was a fundamental reversal of the cold war 'settlement', where the US had a massive nuclear advantage (which was decisively shown in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962).

Near parity was seen as an achievement for the Russians and a defeat for the Americans.

b) The defeat in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal traumatised public opinion and effectively paralysed the Executive's ability to carry out overt acts of aggression and severely limited their ability to engage in covert operations.

After Vietnam the US leaders and everything militaristic was so discredited in America that they had to abandon conscription.

The above are the major elements in the collapse in US foreign policy during the '70s and, it should be added, the destabilisation of the whole post war structure because these forces also fell outside of the bureaucratic grip of Stalinism.

Now Alan Thornett's basic idea is that: "Thatcher's victory over Argentina broke through the 'Vietnam syndrome' and gave a green light for imperialism to use force openly once again." While the 'syndrome' was real enough, the Americans managed, as we shall show, to overcome it long before the invasion of the Falklands.

The effect of the Vietnam defeat was felt in two main areas.

Undermined

1. Foreign policy. As I have shown the detente policy was undermined by the success of various revolutions, while domestic considerations impinged on the ability to carry out an aggressive foreign policy.

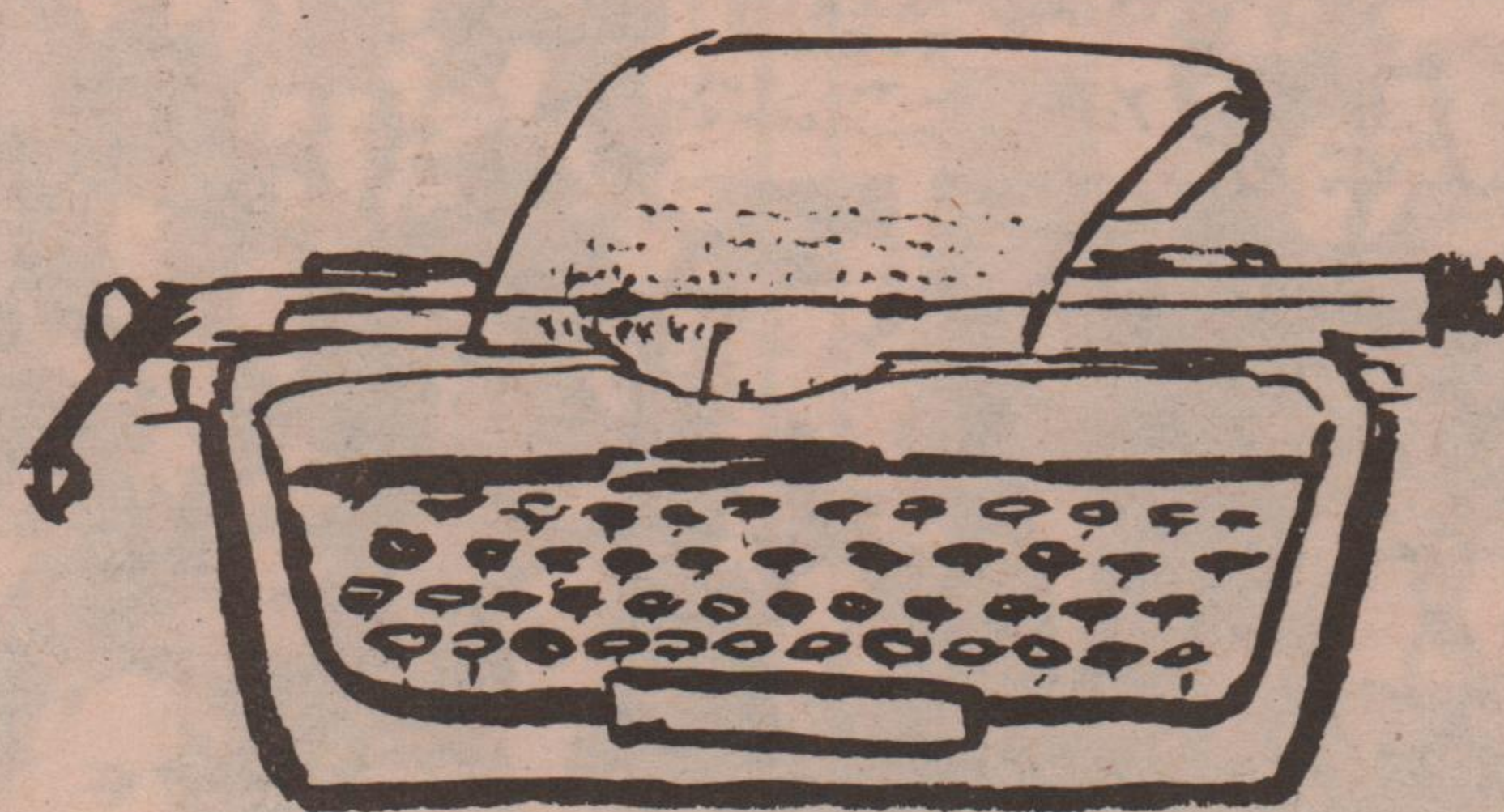
But the US military establishment remained intact and by 1978 they had effectively hammered out a consensus in support of the new Cold War. The purpose of the Second Cold War was the same as the purpose of the first — to drum up American support for an arms drive and for a newly aggressive and self-assertive posture towards the Russian "Empire of Darkness".

2. The response of the state. One of the myths perpetuated by Reagan is that detente disarmed the US. From the late 1960s onwards, the Executive and the military began to absorb the lessons of Vietnam and the Russians' increasing nuclear strength and began to plan for the 1980s. Even during the period 1974-78 when hostile US public opinion impinged on the Executive's ability to act, the military retained a cohesion and continuity as the following chronology shows.

1970, Nixon delegated the role of regional police force to certain 'sub imperialist powers'. 1974, the basis for tactical nuclear weapons is laid. 1976, Carter signs presidential decree forming a tactical assault force to react to third world trouble spots.

From 1978 onwards a major increase in the

Writeback



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. No longer than 400 words please: longer letters are liable to be cut.

US defence budget instigated by Congress.

Plainly, it is not as Alan Thornett asserts that "After the Nicaragua revolution, Carter under pressure from Pentagon generals stepped up the US war drive..."

The turn around in Congress took place in 1978 with the increased defence budget (predating both the Iran and Afghanistan revolutions).

When the Sandinistas overthrew Somoza in 1979 the decisive change in US policy had already occurred a year earlier.

Weakness

Given the weakness of the left and the deep-seated nationalism of the working class, the reactionary, racist bigotry of Reagan found support. There was an 8% swing to the Republicans from blue collar workers. It was not that people were supporting a closet cold war monger. He was right up front calling for a crusade to make defenceless America great again.

Reagan adopted the policy akin to the Republicans of the early '50s who talked in terms of negotiating from strength, conventional and nuclear, of rolling back communism and who, under Secretary of State John Foster Dulles practised brinkmanship (i.e. taking the world to the brink of nuclear war to win).

It was on this foreign policy ticket that Reagan won the election. 60% of a poll supported his unheard-of increase in armaments expenditure in 1981. It was not, as Thornett asserts, that Thatcher's victory broke through the Vietnam syndrome.

Not only do all the facts point to "defenceless" America getting over its moral qualms by 1978, four years before Thatcher's war — but in 1980 they elected a President who hasn't just started talking as Thornett would have us believe, "in the language of imperialism on the offensive" but has made it a point to be an offensive imperialist.

By attempting to find a "first cause" in ... South Atlantic, Thornett makes himself incapable of seeing the wood for the trees in the build-up of the imperialist offensive.

Rules

Limits to rolling back 'communism'.

Despite the rhetoric, Reagan has kept to the 'rules'. The Russians, on their side, have seen

their allies Syria and the PLO attacked by Israel and the virtual annexation of South Lebanon, and now the invasion of Grenada.

Both sides know that the world exists within a "balance of terror". The other major factor which necessarily inhibits Reagan is the likely effect of any major engagement in resurrecting hostility to US interventionism as US casualties mounted.

The mechanics of the invasion. Despite Reagan's rhetoric, his mass arms build up and increase in covert US operations, he had not, as far as the right wing is concerned, delivered the goods. Afghanistan, the Korean airliner, and then the massive loss of life in the Lebanon with no immediately discernible enemy — there was little Reagan could do. This smacked of Carter and the US hostages in Iran, of an ineffective President.

The 'military coup' and the shooting of Bishop the previous week pushed Grenada further into the 'Soviet sphere' and opened up a 'major' problem for the US both in terms of prestige and destabilisation of the area.

At the same time it gave them the option for intervention. Now while Reagan necessarily took a gamble it was, compared with Thatcher's, a very small one from a logistical standpoint. The Cuban construction workers gave as good as they got against the best technologically armed army in the world, but the shooting of Bishop had decisively weakened support for the New Jewel Movement, so the US had an easier job than they might have expected.

Reagan's victory has been on two fronts. Firstly he has shown himself to be a strong President and secondly he has in the traditional manner, asserted imperialist domination of the area.

Where next?

Where will Reagan go next? He has obviously got the bit between his teeth and will not be satisfied with Grenada. But as long as the rationality of the US policy-making bureaucracy remains relatively intact there are limits to Reagan's gunboat diplomacy.

Finally, something I agree wholeheartedly with Alan Thornett on: when he states that the international working class is the only force which can influence the situation. Undoubtedly Reagan's action will begin to generate an opposition in the USA just as he has now made it harder for Thatcher to hold the line in Britain.

Trotsky on Stalinism

The classic Marxist analysis of Stalinism is Leon Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?' Available via Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8: £2.50 plus 50p postage.





Longbridge mass meeting: are they all extremists?

New purge in BL

By Jim Denham

BL's long-running purge of socialists continues. Last Wednesday, two workers were sacked simultaneously from the Cowley Body Plant and the Longbridge plant. Like the 15 so-called moles sacked from the Cowley Assembly Plant recently, both were supporters of Socialist Action.

New starters

Like the 15, the Cowley Body Plant victim was a recent new starter, with little prospect of defending himself. Although workers on his section were prepared to take action against the sacking, this was thwarted by the convenors.

The Longbridge victim was Grant Kier, a well-established shop steward who had worked at the plant for over three years.

BL's decision to sack him was clearly a more risky and audacious move and will be seen as a more ominous development by other socialists and militants at BL.

The Longbridge Works Committee decided that the victimisation could not be fought because of the lurid publicity surrounding the Cowley 'moles' case. The joint shop stewards voted by a fairly narrow majority to back the Works Committee view, and when Grant's appeal to an extended Plant Conference predictably failed, his sacking was confirmed.

Grant told us, "I see my victimisation not just as a continuation of BL's persecution of socialists. It's also specifically aimed at softening up the organis-

ation in preparation for the big redundancies that are coming in the power and train area at Longbridge.

"I suspect that management also want to demonstrate their determination to clear out militants in order to reassure Honda that closer collaboration with the BL operation in Britain would be a good idea."

Stronger lead

Clearly if more sackings of socialists and militants are to be prevented, stronger leadership is needed than that offered by the Longbridge Works Committee. The failure of the plant leadership to call for any action in defence of Grant Kier can only encourage BL to continue its campaign of victimisation.

Bosses' vandalism fuels social workers' militancy

By Amanda Barnes

ACTION in support of residential social workers in Southwark has been stepped up this week. This results from events which have led to the worsening of NALGO's relations with Southwark's Labour council and the breakdown of local negotiations.

Events over the last two weeks can be briefly summarised as follows:

Monday 24 October, morning, 32 residential social workers were suspended for following official national instructions to refuse redeployment.

Monday 24 October, midday, NALGO members in all sections of the council walked out on indefinite strike, demanding reinstatement of the suspended 32.

Monday October 24, evening, Labour Group decided to reinstate the 32 and to commence 'meaningful local negotiations' following a mass lobby by NALGO members.

Tuesday October 25, the strikers returned to work and negotiations commenced. Labour Group's so-called meaningful negotiations included the demand

that cover be arranged in children's homes while negotiations proceeded.

This was agreed, but NALGO received further demands that NALGO members would not be disciplined for breaking industrial action and that NUPE, which has consistently scabbed on NALGO action, be given a seat on the negotiating table.

Wednesday October 26, evening, the offer was withdrawn.

Retreated

Thursday 27 October, children in the Hollies residential home were seen to be removed by management scabs. Management retreated to their office and a stone was thrown through their window by one of the children in care.

Within half an hour of this incident, eight van loads of instant response unit police, the new SPG, arrived on the scene and forcibly removed the kids and their possessions, leaving the Hollies wrecked.

Further vandalism by management rendered the whole building uninhabitable. It is not certain what happened to the kids but several were taken into custody at Bexley police station.

Two of the girls allege that they were strip-searched by police in the absence of a responsible adult. 13 of the kids escaped from the clutches of the police and went missing for two days. The Hollies has now effectively closed down. This preempts council proposals for the home to be closed some time in the future.

Enquiry

Southwark NALGO is now demanding an independent inquiry into events at the Hollies. Given that Southwark's manifesto clearly opposes the use of the SPG, it has demanded that the council's police committee meet NALGO representatives to look into this matter.

A special branch meeting on Tuesday resolved to step up the action. This will include borough wide bans on overtime, no cover for unfilled posts, no working with agency staff, no use of cars on council business and no contact with councillors or MPs.

There will be no library fines collected, social services duty

phones and reception will not operate, unsocial hours will not be worked by council employees, and councillors will not receive their attendance allowances.

The branch further resolved to hold a one-day walk-out on November 9 culminating in a mass lobby of Labour Group that evening.

In the event of any NALGO member being suspended, it was agreed that all members will immediately walk out for 24 hours, during which time a meeting will be held to decide on further action. All sections will hold urgent meetings to decide how best to increase their pressure on the council to settle the long-outstanding claim of the residential social workers.

In Bury, where residential workers had been locked out of three children's homes, and the children distributed across a wide spread of local towns, a provisional agreement has been reached to reopen the closed facilities and return 27 children.

50 local strikers have also been reinstated by management, while the national dispute continues.

Monktonhall strike betrayed

AFTER nearly eight bitter weeks of isolated strike action, a small majority of striking miners at Monktonhall Colliery voted last week to return to work on the urging of the Scottish area leadership.

The deal on which the return to work was argued is a complete sell-out; the basic grievances of the Monktonhall men are to be put into procedure. This includes talks on increases in productivity and job losses.

The sizeable minority who voted against this settlement,

which was endorsed by the "left" talking Communist Party-led Scottish Executive, showed that they expected to win more than this from two months on strike.

But the Scottish leaders had been determined from the outset to restrict the scope and impact of the Monktonhall fight. In place of preparation for area-wide and national extension of the struggle in defence of jobs and conditions, they offered only moral support, financial donations from other Scottish miners still at work, and a token one-day strike called just

before the union's recall Special Conference, which virtually guaranteed that no other areas would be brought into the action.

The settlement comes amid a continuous flow of hot air from Stalinist Scottish President Mick McGahey against the latest threats from new Coal Board Chief Ian MacGregor.

"If Mr MacGregor thinks he can wipe out the so-called 'peripheral' coalfields in Scotland, South Wales, Northumberland, Kent, etc., then obviously he is living in cloud cuckoo land," he

told the Morning Star.

But with repeated examples of the abject refusal of the NUM Scottish area to call supporting action behind strikes and sit-ins at Kinneil, Cardowan and now Monktonhall, it seems more like MacGahey than MacGregor who has got it wrong.

And unless the NUM moves rapidly beyond its existing divisive policy of an overtime ban in pursuit of its wage demands, there is a real danger that MacGregor will notch up a further victory — on pay.

Why Syria wants to crush the PLO

From back page

all built up Arafat's stature. According to Abu Musa, Arafat was a law unto himself. There was no democratic decision-making within Fatah — nothing more than Arafat consulting, as and when he chose, with his closest confidants.

As long as the PLO's star was rising this kind of organisation might have maintained its unity. But with the bloody defeat at the hands of Israel in Lebanon last year, a challenge was inevitable. And yet — the immediate aftermath of the PLO's withdrawal from Beirut saw Arafat's leadership confirmed without open dissent.

Two events produced the open fracture. Firstly Arafat had pressed for an accommodation to the US plan according to which Hussein of Jordan would head a West Bank Palestinian statelet federated with Jordan.

Secondly, Arafat gave important military positions to two friends who had disgraced themselves only shortly before when faced by the Israeli invasion.

From the beginning the opposition to Arafat's official leadership stood in the shadow of Syria. It was not a matter of choice. Rather, two dissimilar projects with opposite objectives had found a temporary

unity. Arguably Abu Musa didn't have much option. Without Syrian support and without the support of those Palestinian groups that are no more than agents of Syrian policy, Abu Musa's group might have been eliminated almost as soon as it broke away.

Now, Abu Musa, who accuses Arafat of accommodation to US imperialism, looks set to become the instrument through which Syria attempts its own accommodation to US imperialism.

When Syria first invaded Lebanon, President Assad thought that the valuable service he was performing for imperialism would be recognised. Perhaps America would force Israel to declare that the Golan Heights — annexed from Syria by Israel — were 'negotiable'. Perhaps a closer relationship with the US would force Moscow to be more generous.

No doubt Israel and the US would have liked Assad to wipe out the Palestinians then, to go one better than the 'Black September' massacre of 1970 perpetrated by Hussein of Jordan.

But, apart from anything else, Assad was aware that his trump card was control of the PLO. He wasn't against its destruction, but against

playing his hand too soon.

Syria stood with the Christian Phalangists against the PLO and the Lebanese National Movement in 1976, providing the conditions for the massacre of Tel al Zaatar and other Palestinian camps.

But in the period after Sadat's 1977 visit to Jerusalem the Egypt/Israel Rapprochement Syria claimed the leadership of the front of steadfastness. Behind the scenes Syria sought to strengthen the forces sympathetic within the PLO.

Any independent Palestinian organisation was and is a threat to the ruling clique in Syria. Arafat's selling the pass to Hussein and acceptance of the mini-state idea was the worst of all possibilities, though, because it meant that once again imperialism could bypass them.

It was therefore expedient to keep the PLO, in some form or another, while either eliminating Arafat or forcing upon him a collective leadership, one in which Syria would have a considerable weight.

Arafat has consistently refused the demand of the Abu Musa group to establish a collective leadership.

What will happen if the forces loyal to Arafat are defeated?

The butcher of the Palestinians in 1970, Hussein, is

already standing by to grab the mantle of leader of the Palestinians. It is extremely unlikely that in the foreseeable future US imperialism, the decisive force in the region, will be prepared to boost Assad even if his trustees take over the PLO.

In any case, the Syrians cannot hold more than a rump PLO: the PLO's relations with the Palestine National Council will be fractured and new splits within the PLO will almost certainly emerge.

There seems little likelihood that the Syrian workers will soon overthrow Assad. There were few protests in 1976 and there is no reason to think things will be different now.

The Lebanese opposition is itself absorbed in its own war. The Palestinians — despite the meaningless protestations of every Muslim regime — are without allies.

The danger is that the smashing of the PLO will initiate another period that following the defeat of 1948.

But while disorientation will certainly be the immediate outcome of the confrontation, this time the Palestinian people will have behind them the experience of a decade and a half of political-military struggle which has raised their political consciousness enormously.

IN Glasgow, 11 POEU members at the Baird GSC have been called out on strike as part of the struggle against privatisation. Baird is a major exchange for the Glasgow area, and the strike has halted work on trunk maintenance, creating a backlog of traffic through the exchange.

Other members in Baird are working to rule and refusing to touch equipment normally worked by the strikers.

One non-union member has been used by management in an effort to break the strike, but with little success, and his future work has been "blackened" by the union.

Local response to the collection of the second levy to support the union's strike fund has met a willing response from the membership.

LAST week's article on Ben Tillett was wrongly credited. It was written by John McIlroy, not Noel Hibbert. Apologies to both of them.

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March backs Carousel strikers

SOME 350 people demonstrated through the East End of Glasgow on Saturday 5 November in support of the sacked Carousel strikers, now in the sixteenth week of their fight for union recognition, reinstatement and better working conditions.

The demonstration — the first labour movement demonstration to be held in the East End of Glasgow for nearly 40 years — had been called by the strikers in conjunction with the TGWU (the union which they joined) and had been built for with the distribution of 40,000 leaflets and the flyposting of nearly 2,000 posters.

Banners

Led by the Monktonhall miners' pipe band and then the Carousel strikers themselves, the march had contingents behind seven union banners, two joint shop stewards committee banners, the Glasgow Trades Council banner, and also five Labour Party banners, mostly from local branches and CLPs.

At the closing rally the union speakers and local Labour MP called for support for the strike, both financially and on the weekly mass pickets: Carousel, it was said, exemplified Thatcherite Britain: rock bottom wages, lousy working conditions, attacks on trade union rights, and instant dismissal for fighting back.

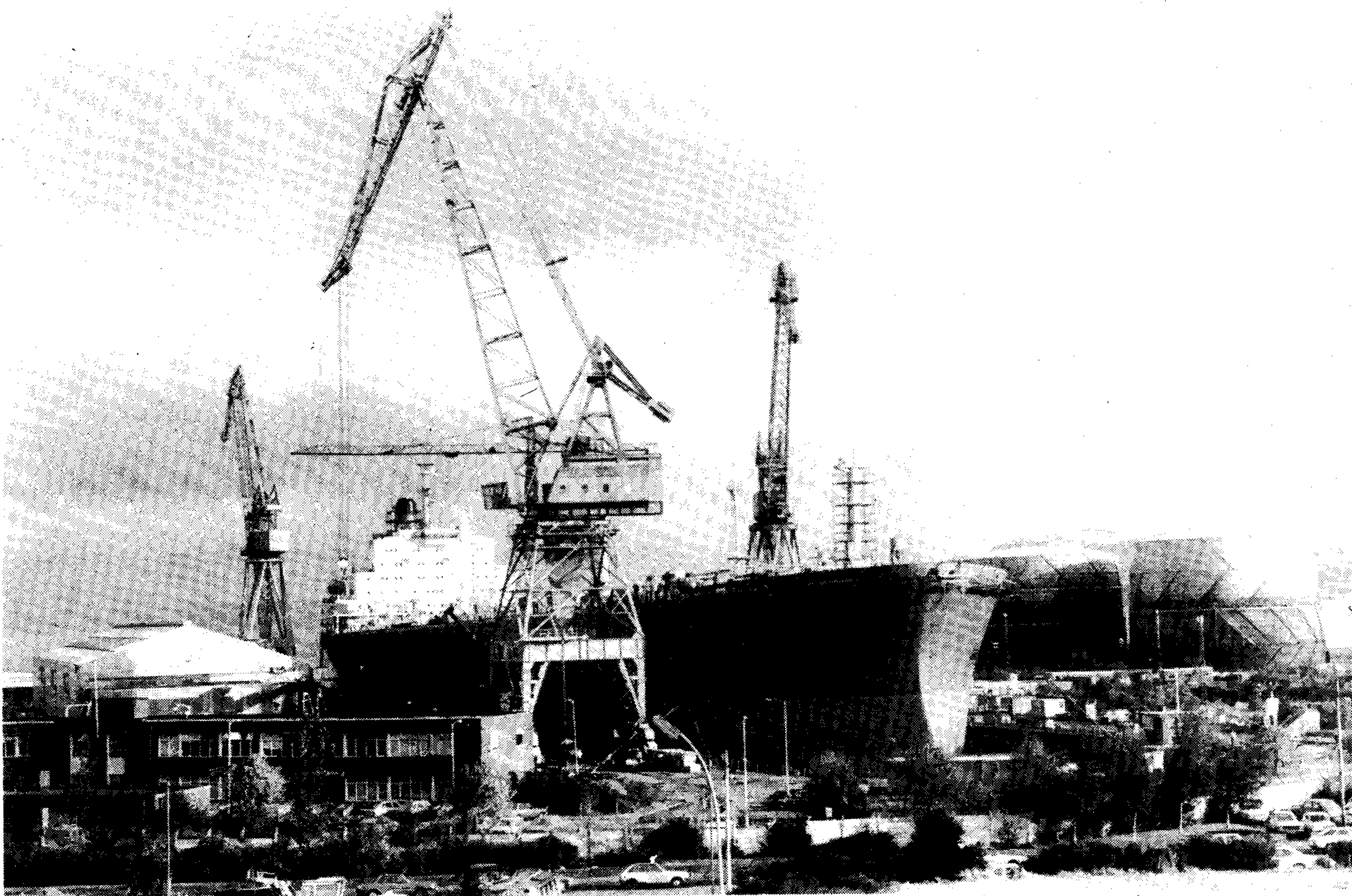
David Marshall, the local MP, pledged to get an early day motion in the Commons this Tuesday relating the situation at Carousel to the latest round of Tory anti-union legislation, being discussed that day.

The demonstration was a lot smaller than might have been legitimately expected, given the publicity it had received throughout the union and Labour Party branches, and also the support merited by the Carousel workers after 16 weeks on strike.

Deadlock

And, in itself, the demonstration could not of course answer the basic problems confronting the strike: how to break out of the present deadlock and find a lever whereby the necessary pressure can be exerted on the factory owner to force him to back down.

Even so, the staging of the demonstration was an important and welcome step forward in maintaining support for the strikers, and must be followed up by implementing the call made at the closing rally for people to join the mass pickets and renewed efforts to build financial support.



The threatened Scott Lithgow yard: SNC negotiators came away with a "deal" that does nothing to lift threats of closure or redundancy

RICK MATTHEWS / IFL

Throw out SNC's shipyard sellout bid

By Lol Duffy

ON WEDNESDAY, November 2, two members of the Shipbuilding Negotiating Committee met with British Shipbuilders management in an attempt to avert any action being taken by Shipyard workers in support of their pay claim and against enforced redundancy.

The meeting was held at Benton House, BS's headquarters in Newcastle, and was lobbied by over 2,000 shipyard workers from the Tyne, Scotland, and Birkenhead.

The message from those demonstrating was as loud and clear as it had been outside the lay delegates conference on October 28.

Placards proclaimed 'No Job Losses', 'No Back-downs', 'Save Our Shipyards'. Those lobbying called for Jim Murray, Chair of the SNC, to come out and listen to what they had to say, but he refused, as did Alex Ferry, Secretary of the SNC.

Inside Benton House, despite having about 29 members of the SNC present, including lay delegates from the yards, Jim Murray and Alex Ferry went into the negotiations with British Ship-

builders on their own, reporting back to the rest of the SNC occasionally.

'Survival Plan'

Throughout the 13 hours of 'talks', Murray and Ferry kept coming out with offers of cash if the yards accepted British Shipbuilders Survival Plan, which came out of the October 4 negotiations and was rejected by the yards.

The final offer to come out was £7 to be paid to those workers who complied with national/local productivity/survival packages, to be worked out by Murray, Ferry, and British Shipbuilders at a meeting on Wednesday, November 9.

It is proposed that if agreement is gained in all the yards by December 15, then the £7 will be paid backdated to September.

If any group of workers does not come up with the agreed standards of flexibility/productivity, then British Shipbuilders have the right to stop the £7 being paid.

Insult

All of the lay delegates present supported this deal as being the best that could be achieved. Not once during negotiations were British Shipbuilders told that the redundancy and closure notices could be withdrawn.

This offer is seen as an insult, and reaction from the Tyne and Merseyside is that the SNC is trying to sell us out again despite their bluff and bluster about action. The written reports about what went on between Murray, Ferry and British Shipbuilders should be in the yards by Wednesday, November 9 and that is when most stewards meetings will take place. The indication is that the rank and file are angry about

what is going on, and that the SNC is out of touch with the feelings in the yards.

There will be stewards who will try to sell the deal to their members, the loudest amongst them being on the Clyde. Some of those stewards think they are being clever by taking the money with any strings attached, and saying they will ignore the agreements in the end. How many times have we heard this in British Shipbuilders, yet 30,000 jobs have gone since nationalisation, and our standards of living have dropped lower and lower.

For those clever stewards the strings will soon become a noose. There is only one way to answer British Shipbuilders and that is by sticking out for a basic rate increase across the board and resisting the threat of redundancies, and closures, by united action, in striking and occupying all the yards as agreed by mass meetings earlier this year.

If the SNC can't lead us in the fight for better wages and against the destruction of our jobs, then we need to elect representatives from each of the yards who will, and kick out Murray, Ferry and friends.

35 hours

The wage claim, lodged on January 11 1983, for the year April '83 to April '84, by the SNC goes part of the way to pointing out how we can resist job cuts by demanding a 35 hour week without loss of pay and longer holidays.

Reduction of the working week, and sharing out the work available in the yards without loss of jobs or pay are essential demands in the fight against redundancy. In some yards some people work nearly double their normal working week in overtime in an attempt to take home a fairly decent pay packet. That is a pointer to the type of wage rise that is necessary.

There are 9,000 jobs at risk, and the SNC has decided to sit back and wait for them to go.

We can not afford to do that. Shipyard workers have got to demand a recall of the lay delegates conference and send delegates to

that conference to represent the feelings in the yards and not the boot-licking attitudes of the SNC.

We have the strength in the yards to fight back and win, provided we cut off the attempts by the SNC to split us. If British Shipbuilders and their friends in the SNC get their way this year, you can bet that the 9,000 redundancies due before March 1984 will be nothing compared with what is to follow.

Offensive

BS will go on the offensive against the unions, wages, conditions and working practices. They will push ahead with their plans to privatize the profitable sections.

The time for bluff has come to an end. The workers in British Shipbuilders did not create the crisis and they should not be the ones who pay for it.

Graham Day, British Shipbuilders recently appointed Chairman, on £80,000 a year, plus a performance bonus, is very pleased with the SNC's response to his offer, and so he should be.

If this deal is accepted he will have a free hand to do a Michael Edwards on British Shipbuilders workers.

Industrial digest



A 1,200-strong mass meeting of production workers at Michelin's Stoke-on-Trent plant voted at the weekend to reject an ultimatum to accept seven-day shift working. The scheme, supported by local and national TGWU officials including the works convenor, is similar to the one that management tried to impose in the summer provoking a month long strike.

A profit-sharing bonus scheme, unprecedented in any nationalised industry, is being introduced by British Airways for all its UK staff. Its purpose is to hold down wage settlements, and to boost 'motivation' and productivity.

A decision made after negotiations between Sir Rex Hunt (Civil Commissioner of the Falklands) and the Department of the Environment is causing a row amongst Falklands labour leaders. No local labour is to be used in the construction of the \$215 million airport near Port Stanley because of fears that wages on the construction site might lure islanders away from traditional jobs. Some 1,400 UK workers are being recruited at the moment.

NUPE won a victory in the High court [Tuesday November 1] on behalf of 4,800 kitchen staff employed by Hertfordshire County Council, who had imposed "unlawfully", wage reductions last March, unilaterally amending employment contracts.

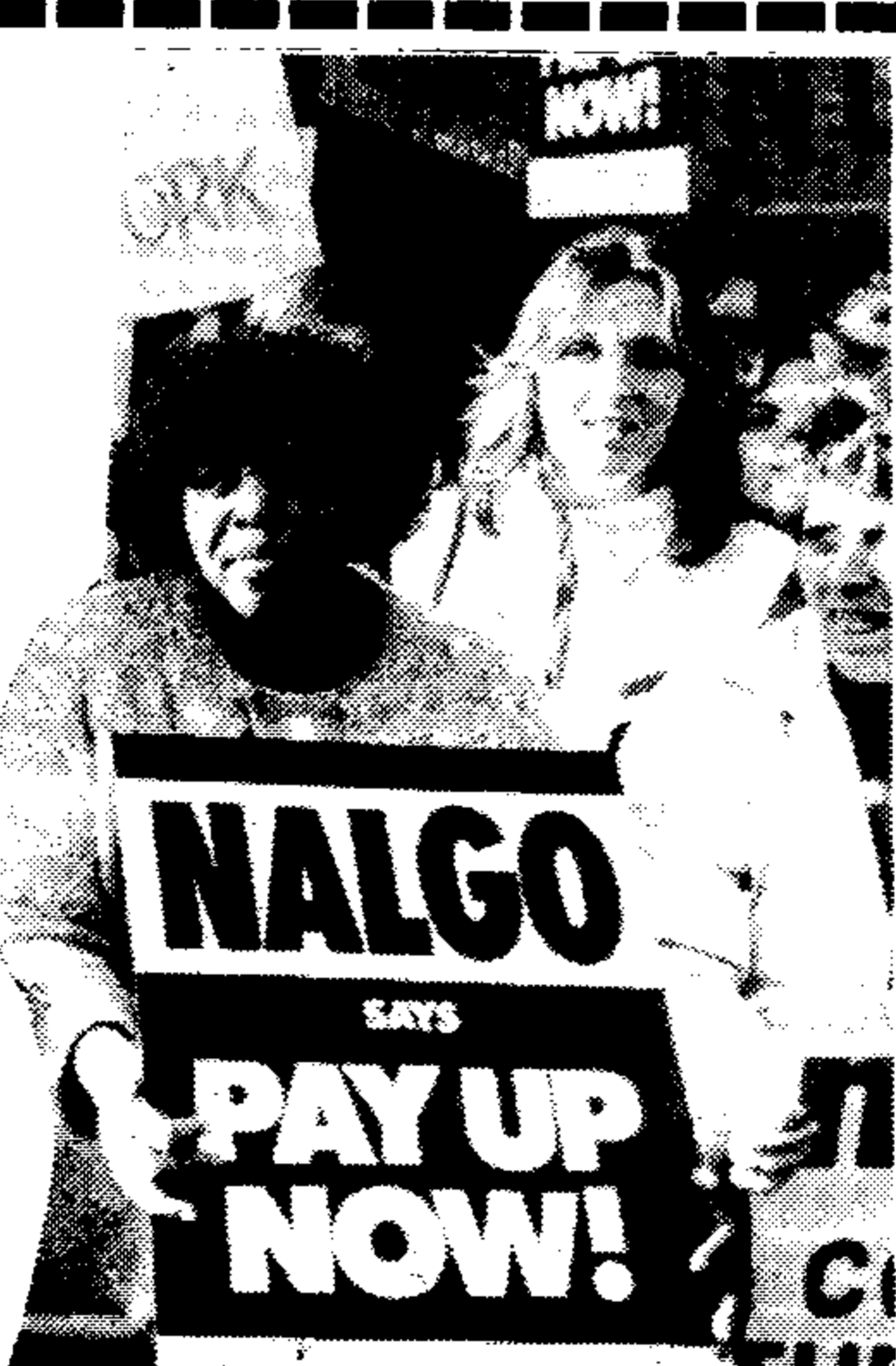
This means that in some cases as much as 20% cuts in wages will have to be paid back by the council.

Two next steps that the Tories are looking at to follow their current anti-union bill are limiting the right to strike in "essential services" and American-style laws to make agreements between unions and employers legally binding.

Refuting the Tories' rigged statistics and lying projections, a forecast made by the deputy president of the CBI suggests that unemployment in manufacturing industries would rise throughout next year by around 13,000 a month.

Conference Nottingham Nov 11

*National Conference of Rank and File Residential Social Workers, called by Nottinghamshire Branch Action Committee, Queen's Walk Community Centre, starting at 10.30 am on Friday 11 November. Contact Nottingham 810405 for details.



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To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS. £5 for individuals, or for affiliated organisations, per 1,000 members. £2 for low-waged individuals. £1 for unwaged. Add 50p if you want the special issue of Gay Socialist.

Shipyards sell-out,
BL purge - see
pages 14, 15

Socialist ORGANISER

Injunction against POEU CHALLENGE TO UNIONS

THE chips are down for the leadership of the Post Office Engineering Union, following the Appeal Court injunction giving them 48 hours to call off their "blacking" of the private Mercury Communications network and its backers.

The unanimous judgement by the three judges was handed down by Sir John Donaldson, formerly the judge who presided over Edward Heath's hated Industrial Relations Court in the early 1970s.

It will almost certainly be followed up by management moves to sack 49 POEU members who have been suspended for refusing to cross-picket lines and scab on the union's selective action.

By Harry
Sloan

In any event, the legal ruling means that the union must choose between effectively abandoning its struggle against Mercury — the tangible expression of its struggle against Tory privatisation of British Telecom — or defying the injunction.

To do so would place the union's leadership in contempt of court — and solicitors have warned that this could mean heavy fines,

personal bankruptcy or jailing of officers and executive members of the union, or seizure of POEU assets.

The judgement was announced while the POEU's recalled conference was in session in Blackpool. No decision on whether or not to defy the injunction has been taken as we go to press.

But if the union does vote to grasp the nettle and confront the vicious Tory anti-union laws that aim to stifle their struggle and other struggles against privatisation, cuts and closures, it will be essential to abandon the "selective action" strategy which has operated so far, and to prepare the membership for an all-out strike.

Only from such a fighting

stance can the POEU hope to summon the necessary support from other unions in the public and private sectors.

Every union branch, trades council and Labour Party must place the POEU struggle and the fight for solidarity at the top of their agenda. Resolutions urging the POEU to follow the recent example of the NUJ National Executive, defy the injunction and step up the fight should be forwarded to local POEU branches and POEU national headquarters, together with pledges of practical and industrial support.

Behind Mercury — chaired by Michael Edwardes — and the Appeal Court ruling stands a Tory government hell-bent on smashing the strength of the trade union movement.

It is up to POEU militants and their fellow trade unionists and socialists to meet this challenge head-on.



"HELLO — R.S.P.C.A.?"



JOHN HARRIS

Why Syria wants to crush the PLO

WHEN we have finished with Arafat, the Syrians will try to finish with us,' Abu Musa is reported to have said. At present his troops, backed by Syrian arms and Syrian soldiers, stand ready to attack Yassir Arafat's last strongholds in the north Lebanese city of Tripoli.

If Abu Musa's forces, who broke away from Fatah, the main organisation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, some months ago, crush the resistance of the Arafat-Fatah loyalists, they will be altering the political map of the Middle East.

For nearly twenty years after the establishment of the state of Israel, in 1948 the Palestinian people seemed completely disorientated by their defeat. The world that the victory of Zionism had revealed to them negated all the old certainties.

In 1965 Al Fatah began its first military operation. This did not open a new era in which Israel was threatened by a dangerous military opponent.

But it did signal the beginning of an era in which a defeated

By Andrew Hornung



Arafat

and disorientated people found their identity again.

It also signalled the opening of an era in which that people, the Palestinians, would represent not only their own national cause, but the cause of radical Arab nationalism as a whole.

In this sense, the Palestinians

became a bigger threat to Arab reaction in the states bordering Israel that they were in a military sense to the Zionist state.

The Arab League tried imposing a thoroughly reactionary leadership on the Palestinians, but, following the shattering defeat of 1967 in the June War, the PLO threw off this restraint and organised themselves in a militant political front.

Yassir Arafat led this front and its principal component, Fatah, from the beginning. From the beginning there were signs of a personality cult around Arafat, and gradually he built around himself a hand-picked band who never challenged his political authority.

After the 1974 Rabat Conference, which conferred on the PLO the sole right to represent the Palestinian people, Arafat's authority grew enormously.

The diplomatic successes which followed — appearing at the UN, with the Pope, etc. —

Continued on page 14

Let's hope the race is on! Monthly Fund

SWALLOWING our disappointment that the Fund column has again been denied the whole back page, we still bring you a wealth of information in our few column-inches.

As our Xmas/New Year Fund Drive gets underway, we print a "League Table" of groups who have contributed so far. Brent supporters have clearly taken it upon themselves to define the character of this quarter's fund drive. Determined to make this a one-horse race, they have roared up the chart like a lion.

Can anyone dislodge these animal lovers? Veteran tipster and one-time pigeon breeder Patrick Spilling is known to be quietly favouring Islington to take the lead by the end of the month. "I go for form, myself," the loveable octogenarian told the Fund Column's research assistant. "Islington have had some problems recently, but with their planned jumble sale, I'd put a fiver on now, while the odds are good."

True to form, Spilling evaded our researcher's questioning as to who was to provide the said fiver.

Will he be proved right? Or is there a "dark horse" waiting in the wings to take over? Only time will tell. Watch this space. And while watching, send donations to: 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1 2SY.

GROUP	% achieved
Brent	49%
Cardiff	13%
Sheffield	13%
Hull	12%
Leeds	12%
Southwark	9%
SE London	8%
Tower Hamlets	7%
Halifax	6%
Coventry	1%

Groups yet to score: Basingstoke, Birmingham, Bristol, Chelmsford, Durham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Harrogate, Huddersfield, Leicester, Leigh, Liverpool, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Northampton, Nottingham, Oxford, Rochdale, Stockport, Stoke, Wallasey, York, Camden, Hackney, Haringey, Hounslow, Islington, Putney.

Thanks this week to: Dai and Sarah Stephens, for a donation of £100; Tony Biles, £5.80; Carol Hobbs, £5; Brent supporters, £5.50; Halifax supporters, from extra sales, 85p; and Francis Lawn, 50p on top of paper money; Southwark supporters, £2.50; Total this week: £120.15. £327.34 (11%) raised so far.