

Socialist Challenge

Bernadette contests Irish elections



REVOLUTIONARY socialist Bernadette McAliskey will be candidate in the southern Irish general election on 18 February.

The former Westminster MP is standing in the Dublin North Central constituency, as a candidate sponsored by Peoples Democracy, Irish section of the Fourth International.

Bernadette said at the weekend that she had decided to link up with PD because she considered it had the best strategy for the anti-

imperialist movement in Ireland. PD is also contesting the Limerick East constituency where its candidate will be leading local trade unionist Joe Harrington.

The election follows the defeat of the Fine Gael/Labour coalition whose harsh Thatcherite budget proposals were voted down in the Irish Parliament (Dail) last Wednesday.

The fall of the government reflects the deep political and economic crisis of the southern Irish state. The economy is in a mess, unemployment is rising, and the major parties have utterly failed to satisfy Irish aspira-

tions for re-unification and British withdrawal from the North.

That is why PD has made a strong appeal for anti-imperialist unity in the election. The key features of this call are:

- For a united and independent Ireland.
- In defence of Irish neutrality — against any plans to bring Ireland into NATO
- In defence of living standards — against austerity measures
- For British withdrawal from the North
- In defence of women's rights.

Bernadette and PD hope for a favourable response for their call for unity in the election — the type of unity that was so successful in building a powerful movement, north and south in support of the Irish political prisoners. Two H Block candidates, including hunger striker Kieran Doherty, were elected at the last general election in June. Kieran subsequently died.

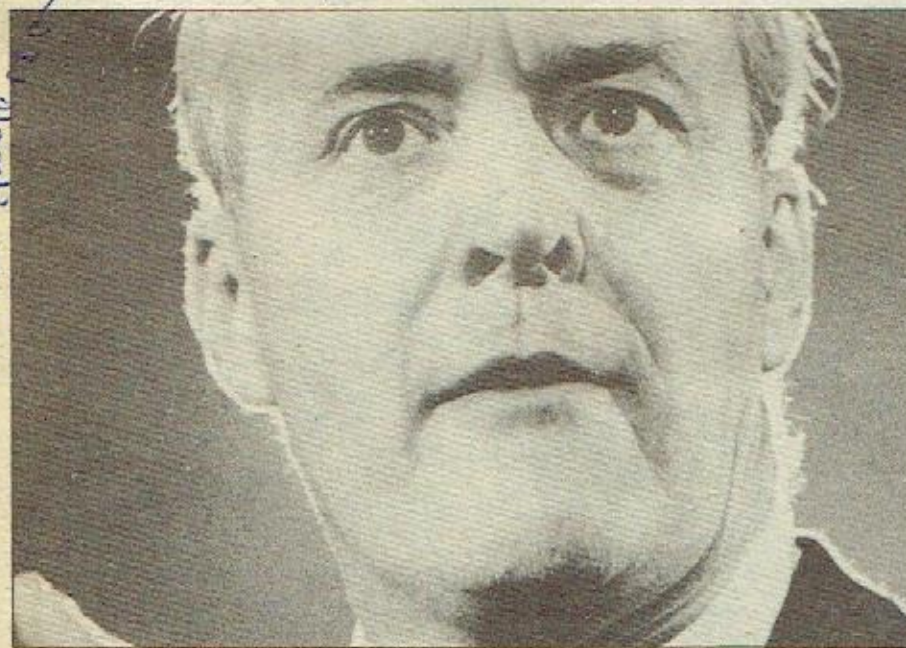
In the Dublin constituency where Bernadette is standing another anti-H Block candidate, PD member Vincent Doherty also did well in the last election. He came sixth out of 13 candidates in a constituency which returns

four members of parliament (TDs) to the Dail under Ireland's proportional representation system.

PD has asked for maximum assistance in the Dublin and Limerick campaigns. Financial help from socialists in Britain will be especially welcome as will election workers. Anyone wanting to help the election on the ground should contact Socialist Challenge.

In the meantime rush money to, Election Fund, Plough Book Service, 16 Chapel St, Dublin 1. Cheques should be made payable to Peoples Democracy Election Fund.

WE'RE BACKING THE RAIL WORKERS



BRITISH RAIL and the Tories are losing the battle against the train drivers.

Miners' president-elect Arthur Scargill has promised that: 'Any assistance they require will be forthcoming'. This was echoed by Eric Clarke, leader of the Scottish miners.

Ken Cameron, of the firefighters attacked the government for encouraging the breaking of the deal with the drivers. The TUC, Scottish TUC, South East Region of the TUC have all come out in support. As have the national executive of the Labour Party and 42 Labour MPs.

So in come Sir John Boyd of the engineers and Frank Chapple of the electricians to the rescue of the Tories.

Boyd made the as-

ounding claim that the defeat of ASLEF was 'in the interests of the public image of the trade union movement'. The only 'public' he can have in mind is that of the Tories. For the bulk of the labour movement support the drivers.

Boyd's own Manchester District has sent a resolution to the Executive Council of the AUEW to demand that they pressure the Rail Board to honour its agreement with the drivers.

No wonder that the despicable Sid Weighell, general secretary of the NUR, has got so frantic. He knows that his own members are totally opposed to his signing of the deal which ASLEF is fighting against. He is sitting on a volcano of rank and file revolt.

He lashed out at ASLEF putting all the blame on the union. He backed the Board's attempts to destroy ASLEF by declaring 'that the dispute would never have occurred if the rail union had spoken with one voice and had merged.'

Yes, the unions should speak with one voice. But in the interests of their members, not the Tories and British Rail.

Alliance

The right wing leaders have no scruples about keeping quiet. An appeal should be made over the head of Weighell to his members for all-out coordinated action. The commitment of Arthur Scargill should be

translated into a pledge for miners to work with the railworkers to ensure picketing of all docks, road transport steel works and power stations.

The Triple Alliance of rail, mines and steel unions, will become the cripple alliance everyone fears if it doesn't act in this situation.

This is the only response that the Tories and the Rail Board understand. It is to the goal that Len Murray's efforts should be dedicated instead of pressuring the drivers to participate in a 'Court Enquiry'.

It was a similar 'court' which lost them their last national strike in 1955. The lesson needs not be repeated.

Full support for the train drivers.

We're backing the bosses

The Tories claim they are not involved in the Rail dispute. This is a lie. But Boyd and Weighell do a good job for them. Boyd already has his knighthood. Weighell deserves one.



Sidney Weighell



Sir John Boyd

Near Police Station

Editorial

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Kill the Bill

THE PUBLICATION of Norman Tebbit's anti union legislation concentrates the mind wonderfully. The main proposals, which the labour movement has known for months, remain unchanged.

In comes:

- **State funding for union ballots.** This will give the press a field day and the right wing to use the media of their own ends — as Gormley did in the recent miners' ballot.
- **Compensation for job loss to those who refuse to join a union in a closed shop.** This will, in the words of David Basnett, general secretary of the general workers' union, bribe 'non-unionists to disrupt collective bargaining.'
- **The right to selectively sack strikers who refuse to return to work.** This gives a green light to all scabs.

Out goes:

- **Union immunity to civil actions for damages for 'unlawful industrial action'.** Unions will be liable for up to £250,000 damages.
- **Legal protection for so called 'political strikes' as well for inter-union strikes.**

The major import of the Bill is to leave to reactionary judges to declare whether or not a strike is 'illegal'. Solidarity actions would be totally ruled out as would such actions as the recent blacking of the Sun by traindrivers. Moreover many trade union leaders will be able to hide behind threats of legal action being taken to block industrial action.

The last time that these sort of restrictions were imposed was on the backs of the defeat of the 1926 general strike. But the working class is not in this position today. Given the right leadership it can easily have the strength and organisation to prevent this legislation becoming law.

Len Murray, general secretary of the TUC, was moved to declare: 'This is not just an anti-union Bill. It is an anti-industry Bill, and it will join its predecessor, the Industrial Relations Act, on the scrap heap'. But the last General Council meeting decided to shelve even modest proposals for action until the special conference of union executives scheduled for 5 April. By that time, the proposals will be well on their way to becoming law.

Terry Duffy, right wing engineers' leader, took Murray's jabberings about the Bill being 'anti industry' one ludicrous stage further. In his view the unions should make common cause with the employers as they have 'bigger influence' than the unions. He left unexplained how such joint action was possible when the employers supported the Bill. 'It is realistic and soundly constructed' said Walter Goldsmith, director-general of the Institute of Directors.

Len Murray may try to claim credit for putting the Industrial Relations Act on the scrap heap. But without rank and file action and a mass movement being built, it would still be in operation.

Before the IR Act became law, two one day strikes were called. One attracted 250,000 workers and the second over 3m. The first time the law was used seriously to imprison five dockers a general strike from below developed forcing the release of the now famous 'Pentonville Five'.

Bill Keys, general secretary of the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, has put forward a platform of measures which would be a good basis for discussion and action. He has called among other things for the use of trade union strength and for the TUC to call for co-ordinating action to defend unions under attack. He wants a fighting fund and for the TUC to withdraw from all government bodies concerned with the implementation of economic policy or dealing with the proposed legislation.

But the key is the mobilisation of the union ranks. A call should go out for the formation in every area for action committees to mobilise against the Bill.

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

Name.....

Address.....

Age.....

Union/CLP (if any).....

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

Labour Party

Labour Liaison '82

'NO TRUCE'

THE new left campaign in the Labour Party, Labour Liaison '82, was launched Saturday 23 January. Central to its discussion was whether or not a truce between right and left had been agreed at Bishop's Stortford earlier in the month.

This underpinned how the left views its strategy in the party and the trade unions during the coming year in the fight against the Tories, running up to Labour Party conference and to the next general election.

TONI GORTON spoke to one of the organisers, BOB WRIGHT, assistant general secretary of the engineering union, the AUEW, about his opinions of the conference and the tasks of the left.

Can you explain what the discussions at Bishop's Stortford mean for the left? How will Labour Liaison '82 be organised, especially in the trade unions and localities?

We are not creating a membership organisation or sectarian representation. What was agreed at the meeting is that LL82 would be a co-ordinating body to launch priorities and a campaign strategy in regard to the problems facing the working class in this country.

The Labour left groups who were initially represented gave general, if guarded in some cases, support for the principle. But there will be no formal organisation.

So the campaign itself is a liaison, it is intended to identify the left and to challenge those on the right of the Labour Party who've been propagating the idea that the left are out to destroy the possibility of an election of a Labour government and to create splits and so on.

Attacks have been made by forces both in the SDP to justify their defections, and by some of the remaining right wing elements in the trade unions and the Labour Party.

We believe that now — nothing to do with Bishop's Stortford — is the time we identify Labour as a serious alternative in order to defeat the right wing in the political sense and the Tories in particular.

And of course we must meet and defeat the challenge of this breakaway SDP, many of whom were the fathers and mothers of Labour's defeat in 1979. So there isn't a truce.

We have made it very clear that we will resist any attempts to reverse the constitutional changes on

But look, some on the left say that if you get accountability and re-selection you don't need mass activity such as the demonstrations around unemployment or abortion rights. What else is needed besides policy agreements?

Demonstrations, activity in meetings, campaigns and so on are all important in that you are involving workers, but in themselves they are not the answer.

It's what you do as a result of the huge upsurge. I think we'll be judged on how far we can develop a strategy as an alternative to what's happening.

There is a lot of movement among trade unionists in the private sector in the industrial world who are saying quite bluntly, 'individual companies, national or multinational, shall not have the same right of determination on cut backs, closures and diversionary strategies in terms of products, lifting companies out of Britain and putting them in South Africa and so on to boost their profits.'

All these things have got to form the basis for a Labour planning agreement/strategy, where private industry is made to be more accountable. We've got to be more aware of the destruction of our industry and be prepared to take them into



Bob Wright is the Assistant General Secretary of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers. He is on the steering committee for Labour Liaison '82 and was also Broad Left candidate for General Secretary of AUEW.

public ownership if necessary.

Will you be 'campaigning' against Tebbit's bill?

We have to do what the AUEW did in 1972 and say that we will not observe your courts, we'll not be subjected to the judiciary. I hope it will be a much more united fight than we had then.

The labour commitment is already there. We have to remove such legislation from the statute book.

The battle in the Labour Party has been fought under the slogan of 'no more Wilson/Callaghan governments'.

But this presupposes not only accountability but a new type of leadership both in the party and in the unions where the use of the

block vote has a decisive affect on policy and constitutional questions.

The struggles that have been going on about who should be the leader have been important. I think it's remarkable that Tony Benn should have come so close to winning the deputy leadership contest.

Whether he stands again, in my view will be largely determined to the extent that the right wing launch an assault when it comes to conference.

Benn will consult the movement about whether to stand again. But we are not going to create the possibility of greater division unnecessarily.

If the Labour Party can emerge as the real alternative to the Tories then there can be substantial changes in the judgments of members about who they elect.



The Callaghan government is responsible for the present electoral problems of the Labour Party. It is a gigantic travesty to blame the lefts efforts to prevent a re-run.



The John De Lorean sting

By Geoff Bell

AT THE start of this year the board of the De Lorean motor company voted to give its boss, John De Lorean a 'performance bonus' of over \$100,000. Although the company announced 1,000 redundancies at its factory in West Belfast last week and now seems to be on the verge of liquidation let none say that John De Lorean hasn't earned his 'performance bonus'. For he may well go down in history as one of the most successful con men of all time.

The only qualification on such a judgment is that the target of De Lorean's con — the last Labour government and its dictator in Ireland Roy Mason — practically stood on their hind legs and begged to be swindled. That John De Lorean duly obliged will be to his credit in the jungle of capitalism, but really, it has been as easy as taking candy from a baby.

The saga began in the summer of 1978. De Lorean arrived on Roy Mason's doorstep and asked for a lot of money. At that time it was £53m, although eventually he was to receive much more. De Lorean had an idea. It was to build a 'ethical, safe sports car', made in stainless steel, with air bags instead of seat belts and something very fancy called 'elastic reservoir moulding'. In return, De Lorean promised that he would eventually employ 9,000 workers.

De Lorean had tried the con in other places. He had been to Michigan, Kansas, Texas, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Spain, Portugal and France, but no suckers could be found. He went to the south of Ireland and asked for £37m, but the government there decided it was 'too high a risk for the Irish taxpayer'. So, grasping the old confidence trickster's maxim that the more money you ask for the better chance you have of getting it, De Lorean asked

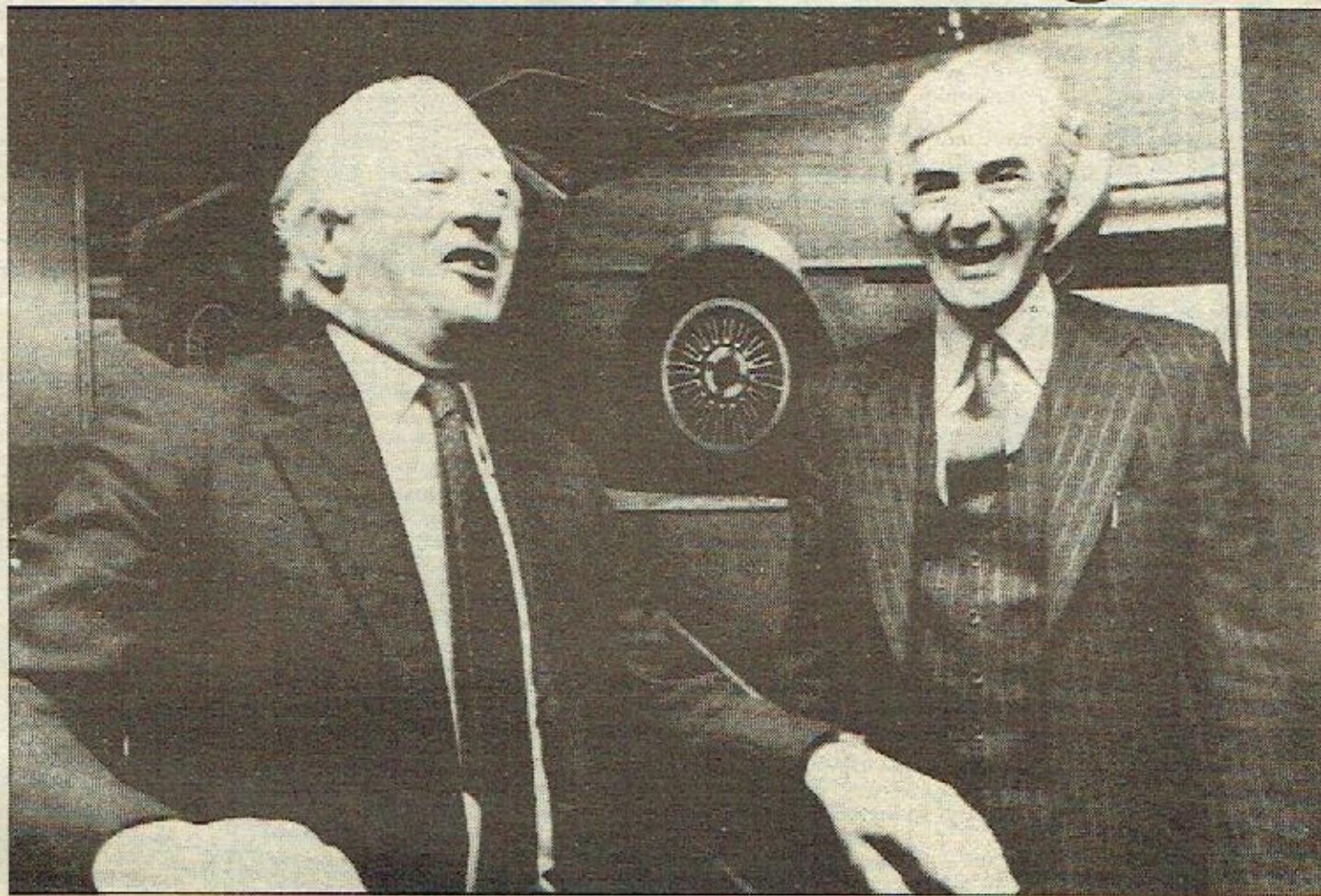
Mason for 40 per cent more than the southern Irish had judged 'too risky'.

De Lorean found Mason and his not too smart assistant Don Concannon in a receptive mood. That was when Mason was swaggering around Belfast proclaiming that he had beaten the IRA. All that was needed to complete the victory was to give Catholics in West Belfast a few thousand jobs and they would return to the friendly bosom of the British family.

So, in one of the shortest negotiating periods in history — only 46 days from start to finish — Roy Mason signed away the money. Normally in such deals there is a certain amount of accountability written into the contract, but Roy Mason didn't worry about such details.

Only one government representative was appointed to De Lorean's board and John himself retained the licence to produce the car. That meant that if De Lorean packed his bags the factory he would leave behind would be forbidden by law to continue to produce the car. Just to add icing to the cake De Lorean demanded that the grants given to him by Mason be linked to inflation. Roy agreed to that one as well.

Such then was the John De Lorean con. It hardly needs saying John's promises have remained unfulfilled. Less than a quarter of the 9,000 jobs ever



arrived, the stainless steel car turned out not to be made of stainless steel after all, and the air bags and 'elastic reservoir moulding' never saw the light of day.

The car did eventually roll off the assembly line — six months later than promised — but it is ridiculously over-priced and was described by a leading US

car journal as 'abysmally short of any commercial standard of acceptability'. As for De Lorean's claim that the car would be 'ethical', the image has now changed as a product for 'the randy young bachelor who's made it', in the words of a company executive.

John De Lorean has certainly made it. The *Daily Mir-*

ror revealed last week he has personally been channelling millions of pounds into a mysterious firm based in Switzerland but registered in Panama. Apparently, nobody knows what this company did for or with the £9m John gave to it.

In a socialist country John De Lorean would be thrown in

jail for the crook he is. But then, no socialist country would have allowed him to operate in the first place. They would have used the money to produce useful products like kidney machines, or build houses. And if any money was left they would have bought simple texts on economics and given them to Roy Mason.

Labour Irish campaigners to meet

ON 6 February, the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI) holds its annual conference in Birmingham. The LCI is a campaigning group in the Labour Party for British withdrawal from Ireland. Socialist Challenge asked Martin, an engineering worker from Manchester, what kind of issues will be discussed.

The LCI was formed two years ago, but already it has over 500 members and is growing. All the time we are gaining new experiences of campaigning. The big question is always

working out the best way to achieve our goal of bringing about a complete withdrawal from Ireland. The troops are most important, but we want to end the imperialist domination.

As Labour Party members and trade unionists, we are keen to change the policies of Labour, and pledge a future government to get out. But the high-ups in the party would never go along with that, so we have to build a protest movement that can force the issue.

At the moment, we are only just beginning —

even the left in the party duck the Irish issue if they are given the chance. All the opinion polls say that the majority of people want the troops out for one reason or another. If the left was prepared to take up this policy it could be a real election winner.

Do you think the last Labour Party Conference went some way to meet your demands? Things have moved in the party in response to the enormous support for the prisoners both in Ireland and internationally. The election of Bobby Sands as MP proved the English

press lied about the support prisoners had. The callous reaction of the Labour opposition to the strikes and tragic deaths brought to the conference a flood of resolutions demanding a break from Tory policies.

The LCI did a great job in bringing these together, but the eventual decisions of conference are little more than a start in committing the Labour Party to getting the troops out and letting the Irish run their country. It is wrong to allow the Unionist politicians to veto British withdrawal. It is wrong to make any conditions upon withdrawal.

There are plenty of people around who support Irish self-government if they make the Loyalists happy, if they remain in the EEC, if they join NATO, if it fits in with what the British want. There are some in the movement, like the *Militant*, who think that British troops should stay in Ireland until it goes socialist! Our campaign will have to sort some sense out on all this.

So what will LCI be doing over the next year? Although we recognise the stimulation for a really massive movement for withdrawal will come from Ireland, there is still loads

of work to be done here and now. We have to try to organise all those who supported withdrawal at Party conference. We have to increase our attention to working in the unions where the block votes at conference went against withdrawal.

There is room for growth of support among young people particularly LPYS supporters and students. It would be

useful to see how much help having Youth CND was for building CND's activities, and maybe do the same with a youth wing of the LCI.

In all these areas I think we will grow. But just as important is making sure that our supporters don't fall for the arguments of the trade union leaders who say we should be persuading the government to work out a

solution which will be 'argued for' with plastic bullets, truncheons and the like.

At conference, a resolution which called for a special policy conference to take a deeper look at the Irish situation was referred to the Executive for further consideration. If we could help to get this off the ground, it would be a great opportunity to put forward our views.



The funeral of Bobby Sands — his election opened up the Irish debate in the Labour Party.

IRELAND: TIME FOR TORY POLICIES TO GO

LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE ON IRELAND

SATURDAY 27th FEBRUARY 1982.
THE THEATRE,
309 REGENT ST LONDON W1.

ASLEF full support needed

By Pete Grant, ASLEF

PRESSURE is increasing on the train drivers' union, ASLEF, to go to arbitration. Sid Weighell leader of the NUR proved once again that he is more a friend of the employers than railworkers. He took his scabbing behaviour to new heights in the press, claiming that ASLEF is going to cause his members to lose their jobs. He said he would take ASLEF 'kicking and screaming if necessary' to the arbitration tribunal.

Why won't ASLEF go to arbitration? The reason is quite simply that there is nothing to arbitrate about. The Rail Board has reneged on an agreement — and ASLEF conference was quite clear on keeping the eight hour day. Arbitration means a willingness to compromise, that is, give up their eight hour day. This we will not do.

Remove

If the NUR leadership was serious about ending the dispute, it would pressure the Board to pay up. It would also join with us in opposing flexible rostering. The rail unions united would quickly bring this dispute to an end.

There has been a lot of discussion as to why ASLEF hasn't called an all-out strike. Many drivers feel that an all-out strike would be counter productive. The majority were involved in the 1955 strike when ASLEF called everyone out to prevent the loss of firemen's jobs in the transition from steam to diesel and electric traction. Isolated from other railworkers and without strike pay, they were starved back to work.

The present three days of strike coupled with the work to rule are having a big disruptive effect with minimal problems for drivers. BR has lost an estimated £60m and it is believed that the full

£920m external cash limit for the present year has been used up.

Next month British Rail will be brought to its financial knees if the present situation goes on.

But what has to be weighed up alongside this, is the way that BR is attempting to use the effects of the drivers' action to turn other railworkers against the drivers. The withdrawal of Sunday working has been coupled with a warning that payment for other 'ays that the drivers' strike will also be withdrawn.

Doom-laden threats are being muttered that the financial loss caused by the drivers' action will prevent any wages rise at all being given by BR in April.

The hopes of BR to utilise Weighell's scabbing to isolate the drivers from the start didn't work out. But its present methods might erode the overwhelming sympathy displayed by the guards.

Unity

The three days of action are having their effect on coal, steel, post and other big users of the railways. However, industry is managing, by and large, to cope. A total closedown would increase the pressure dramatically.

The *Observer* reported frantic lobbying by BR's main users to prevent a



WE ARE
Dennis Cadywould and Steve Forey are the two ASLEF officials who gave an undertaking to the High Court to urge King's Cross workers to stop blacking The Sun and The Times. This is Mr Cadywould's reply to our story that started the row.

The men only want to protect jobs

I AM writing this letter as an individual and would hope to express the views of most of the train crews at King's Cross, but of course I can only speak mainly about drivers. They are not communists, Ludlites, or a thousand other names that we all get used during disputes, but I suspect, just the same as another group of people within this country, with all their faults, wants and wishes (some even died) for the last General Election who are trying to protect their job.

Your article appeared amongst the mass of King's Cross, unprecedented 10-11 and arising from this situation. It was a very bright and clear article, understandable as a "cut" or "action" from angry men.

May I remind you that Mr Justice Gidwell stated that in the same circumstances HE would have been extremely open, and that it was a perfect human reaction.

'Fiddles'
We are not, I repeat not in the business of censorship and never will be. Your report implicated every driver and guard throughout the debate and broadly of BR, not named, but of course inferred. Let me examine some of these "fiddles".
● Summation: Driver's Log - long unqualified driver's log in charge of a train. Party would in the best of circumstances be through being read or taken; attention guards.
● COMMENT: Drivers are responsible people and I suggest would never report any other who carried out these practices.
● "Lying" in head whilst for real days.
● Only the Southern Region work rest days and "double time" is only paid for working over 10 hours on a Saturday night-Sunday morning.
● If you stopped half the trains in the country and asked the driver his name it would be a match up to the name on the roster."
● COMMENT: I challenge you to do just that at King's Cross.

Kings Cross Guards win right of reply to attacks in the Sun

possible lock out by BR. A total close-down is coming. The question is on whose terms this will be. ASLEF needs to step up the pressure on the NUR leadership to force joint all-out action. Time is running out. Ray Buckton, the drivers' leader, cannot allow Weighell to use the federation which exists between ASLEF and the NUR to prevent criticism of his scabbing role.

Unions

Train drivers need all the assistance the labour movement can give if we are to win. The present dispute could well be throwing down the gauntlet on the part of the unions as Tebbit's new anti-union proposals go before Parliament.

An all out strike would require the rapid use of secondary picketing to stop goods normally taken by rail from using road transport. The TUC will be on the spot. What a better way to attack Tebbit and the Tories than ensuring a victory for the train drivers.

Forward ever, backward never (especially to 1919).

Railworkers action conference called

By R Reed, Kings Cross Guard

A CALL has been issued for a meeting of Local Departmental Committees (LDC's works committees) to help coordinate rank and file action to end NUR's agreement to the new flexible rostering in British Rail. This is a welcome response to the need for vigorous support for the train drivers — particularly from other railworkers — as the strike action enters its fourth week.

Since the start of the dispute the BR Board and the national press, with the able help of Sidney Weighell, have done everything in their power to isolate the drivers.

Up to now they have not had it all their own way. Spontaneous strikes by guards and the swift blacking action by traincrews against early attempts to whip up a hate campaign in the *Sun* successfully forced this daily to carry an article in reply.

Non-payment for Sunday work is only the latest ploy to split railworkers. But Monday's action by guards in the Southern region, angry with the average £25 lost in their pay packets, brought yet another group of workers into conflict with BR.

The Board now plans to step up its efforts to put across its case for flexible rosters. Local depot managers will be given sample rosters and no doubt LDC's will continue

new rosters, many guards recognised the difficulties of co-ordinating action on a regional and national level.

But the vote to call off the strike was not at all a sign of their unwillingness to fight. At the same meeting, there was a unanimous vote to join a 24-hour strike by ASLEF members against disciplinary notices issued to two drivers!

Moves are now afoot to bring the LDCs in the London region together within the next fortnight to discuss the next steps in this fight. The call for the meeting is coming from depots on the Southern region who have been taking action over the last two weeks.

Attendance at the meeting and the organisation of a united fight now alongside the drivers can counter those who argue that little can be done until the NUR's Annual General Meeting in April. By that time, the outcome of the driver's strike will be decided!

It's also an answer to those who are starting to look to local agreements as a way of defeating the new rosters. Railworkers in larger depots might fare okay, but it's no solution for depots throughout the country.

their own strength. And it would publicise more broadly the issues to others within the industry.

This should go hand in hand with organisation within the machinery of the union. The re-call of the union's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the Grades Conferences could provide a forum to deal with flexible rostering and all the other issues involved. The forthcoming Rules Revision AGM will be vital for the Broad Left to put forward alternative policies and structural changes to democratise the union, giving the rank and file greater say. Most importantly, it should organise around those policies amongst the ranks.

Sidney Weighell and the right wing leadership not only have the machinery of the union at their disposal, but they have the Tory press, the bosses and the government singing their praises.

But we are not disarmed. We have a set of alternative policies and the strength of the rank and file. A broad left is doomed to failure if it tries to deal with the union leadership by manoeuvre and resolutions alone — without putting the organisation of the ranks at its centre.

If there is any lesson which the present leadership of the Broad Left should learn, it's that a failure to respond to the needs of the ranks will lead to nothing but its marginalisation.

Rail Broad Left A TIME TO ORGANISE

By Hazel Macpherson, NUR Paddington No 1

'DON'T BE frightened to talk about getting rid of this government, because that's what we've got to do.' That was what Dennis Skinner from the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party told a London rally called by the Rail Broad Left last week. The meeting was organised in solidarity with ASLEF.

Dennis Skinner also drew the links between what the right wing is up to in the NUR executive and what it's doing in the Labour Party. 'It's no accident,' he explained, 'that someone like Russell Tuck, a union delegate to the Labour Party's national executive, backs up the right wing on that body. After all, he comes from a union that supports such ideas as an incomes policy.'

Skinner called on all trade unionists to come to the aid of ASLEF and reported that the NEC passed a solidarity resolution that day.

In his view, the concern of the meeting should be now to organise action, not simply a talking shop.

Unfortunately, the leadership of the Rail Broad Left — dominated by the Militant tendency — failed to heed his words. Mike Cleverley explained the history of the Rail Broad Left and the witch-hunt inside the NUR at some

length. But he only referred in passing to the ASLEF strike and the unofficial action taken by NUR guards opposed to flexible rostering.

Speakers from the floor were left to provide a way forward for the present struggle. Apologies were given for the invited speaker from ASLEF's executive, but Steve Forey, branch secretary at Kings Cross, spoke from the floor. Forey stressed the need for the executive of ASLEF to call for industrial support from other unions, and to organise secondary picketing. 'Only an all out strike will win.'

He was encouraged by the support from NUR guards in his depot and by widespread industrial action taking place. In his view, the role of a Broad Left was to coordinate such action.

Other speakers echoed Forey's remarks. Ray Varnes, a guard at Kings Cross called

Faced with this prospect the NUR leadership quickly called the local LDC to Unity House. A day of threats and an agreement signed by Sidney Weighell laying down our right to a working day which 'as far as practicable' would be based on an eight-hour day prompted the LDC to call off the strike.

At the mass meeting which accepted this recommendation to end the strike in support of ASLEF and against the

to be summoned to the offices of station managers where a human face for the new rosters will be found.

Widespread opposition to flexible rostering persists. But how can the mood of militancy among the membership be transformed into action alongside drivers? For a short time, Kings Cross became a focus for guards nationally, with a real possibility of a rapid escalation of their action.



Sleep
Geoff Leighton and Max Wallace might go to sleep, but conscientious assistants are watching the driver checking the signaller and all other aspects of the route. In their own time many of them read masses of publications, mechanical details, BR rules etc. BR sets a driver's assistant must have the same experience as the trainee before a driver's course. THERE CAN BE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THIS. The less practical experience a driver's assistant has, the more dangerous the railway becomes. It drives assistants' physical duties are less than those of a driver. They are not driving the train. They are watching the signaller and the signaller's signals. If you see a driver's assistant, would you feel safe? Perhaps if Geoff Leighton and Max Wallace had spent their time taking a prize in their job, instead of attempting to break light bulbs at Eastern Road and making allegations in the Sun that could have become drivers instead of the outcome that they now are.

RAILWORKERS: AL

ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

The final split from Moscow?

By Phil Hearse

WHEN GENERAL JARUZELSKI's troops went into action against the Polish workers on 13 December most of the European communist parties hesitated to make a judgement. In particular, the British Communist Party waited for several days before making its first hesitant criticisms, while the French Communist Party, almost by instinct, pronounced Jaruzelski's move 'positive overall'. No such hesitations occurred however in the Italian Communist Party (PCI) which boldly condemned the military's move from the start.

According to the PCI's general secretary Enrico Berlinguer, Poland showed that the whole historical process of socialist advance which began with the October revolution 'has reached a dead end'. He concluded that the process of 'socialist renewal' in Eastern Europe was now impossible.

The response of the PCI to Polish events was without doubt the most extreme criticism of the Soviet bloc made so far. For over a decade the PCI has been in sharp conflict with the Soviet leadership over its internal policy and its international orientation.

Worse

The response of the Soviet Union has been immediate and uncompromising. A long editorial in Pravda amounts, in effect, to an 'excommunication' of the PCI, in the same style as previous denunciations of the Yugoslav CP in the late 'forties and the Chinese CP in 1963. According to Pravda, the attitude of the PCI reveals 'tenets of opportunism and revisionism'. It 'denigrates the achievements of the Soviet people and party by speaking of a crisis of the Soviet political system'.

For Pravda, to speak of a crisis of the Soviet political system is to 'openly come out against world socialism' and is 'against the interests of the Italian working class'. In turn the PCI replies that 'there is no Vatican of the world communist movement which can excommunicate us'.

Speculation that this is indeed the parting of the ways between the PCI and the Kremlin has excited intense interest among the ideologues of the European bourgeoisies. Their conclusion is almost unanimous: the PCI has passed an historical test — it should now be allowed into government.

According to the *Financial Times* since the policy of the PCI is rather less radical than that of the present French government or the British Labour left, there is absolutely no reason to now keep it out — provided its links with Moscow are definitively broken.

In fact, the major objections of the American and European politicians to PCI participation in government, which prevented any consummation of the PCI's project for an 'historic compromise' (ie a PCI-Christian Democrat government) has always been that you cannot rely on anyone who is linked to Moscow, no matter what.

Unity

It has never been that the PCI's programme is too radical. Despite the fact that the PCI has pronounced in favour of staying in NATO, the United States in particular has always objected that rhetoric is one thing, but fundamental political loyalties are another.

The PCI's conflict with Moscow is not just a formality, but an event of decisive importance for the labour movement in the whole of Western Europe. It marks a crucial stage of the evolution of



Enrico Berlinguer, PCI leader

the PCI away from Stalinism towards becoming a social democratic party of the traditional type.

Even if the PCI in the past has been quite in favour of participating in a government which managed capitalism rather than attacking it, nonetheless this reflected not just the PCI's own reformist orientation but also the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy — that of the not challenging the division of Europe, of recognising that Italy formerly 'belonged' to world capitalism. The adherence of the PCI to bourgeois order in Italy did not contradict an allegiance to Moscow.

What happened in Italy reflects the conflicting pressure bearing down on the Communist Parties in Western Europe. During the 1920s and 1930s the degeneration and bureaucratisation of the Russian party resulted in the Stalinisation of the other parties.

The resources of the Russian state, including its massive financial and material resources as well as the authority of the first

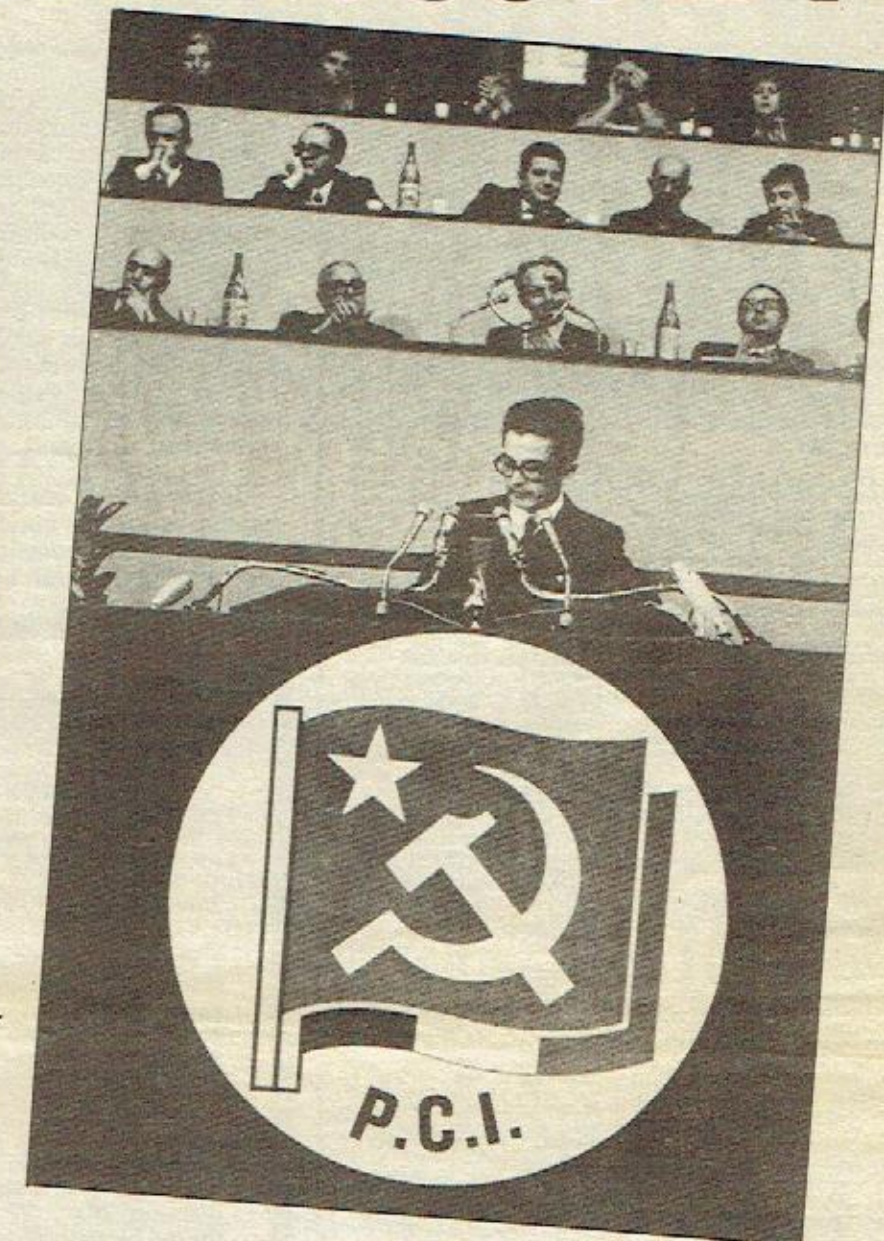
workers state were used to overturn leaderships, promote the theory of 'socialism in one country' and the idea that the defence of socialism was identical to the defence of the Soviet Union.

The net result of this process was the creation of parties — like the British CP under Dutt and Pollitt, the French CP under Thorez, and the PCI under Togliatti which placed adherence to the line of the Soviet Union, in effect defence of its diplomatic interest, above the interests of the international and national class struggle.

Record

This was starkly revealed not only in the way in which the CPs were used to promote the struggle against Trotskyism and the defence of the Moscow trials, but also in the way in which the CPs unanimously defended the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939 — with disastrous consequences for themselves. Numerous other examples could be given.

What happened to



change this? For parties like the PCI and the French CP, the years after the second world war placed them under another pressure. These mass parties gradually implanted themselves in the local and national apparatus of the state. In Italy, not only does the party have a huge national and local full-time apparatus of its own — party organisers, journalists etc. — but hundreds of parliamentary deputies, local mayors, councillors and so forth. A huge bureaucracy has been created with its own independent interests

separate and apart from Moscow.

No doubt, financial aid from Moscow continued until recently, but the PCI is not fundamentally dependent on that. The immense pressure on the PCI has been towards showing the Italian bourgeoisie that it is capable of managing, or participating in the management of the state. In other words, the long-term interests of the party bureaucracy are caught between Moscow and its own bourgeoisie — and it has increasingly chosen the

latter. What distinguishes a Stalinist from a social democratic party? So long as there is no difference at the level of policy, so long as the Stalinists are committed to managing the capitalist state apparatus rather than overthrowing it, there is only difference of a crucial character — the link with Moscow, the subordination of no matter how partial or vestigial to the interests of the Soviet state. If the PCI has made its final break with Moscow, the road to full social-democratisation is now open.

Guardian of Stalinist orthodoxy

By Paul Lawson

MIKHAIL SUSLOV, who died last Monday at the age of 79, was the Soviet leadership's guardian of Stalinist orthodoxy. As such, he had been a key figure in determining the major Soviet policy decisions for a quarter of a century.

He was the one person in the Politburo who personally embodied the continuity of policy of the Soviet bureaucracy, and in particular guarded the perverted version of 'Marxism-Leninism' which has alienated generations of East European youth from Marxism.

Suslov's personal history is testimony to the criminal history of the bureaucracy. In the 1930s he was a member of the party's control commission which helped to prepare some of the purges. In the war he was in charge of NKVD troops who carried out the deportations of whole nationalities — Caucasians and Lithuanians.

In the late 1940s he was in charge of the campaign against Tito in the Cominform, when official Soviet ideology characterised the Yugoslavs as 'Tito-Trotskyists' (see the British Communist Party publication 'From Trotsky to Tito' by James Klugman).

He opposed all Krushov's moves towards cultural 'liberalisation' and 'de-Stalinisation', and played a key role in Krushov's removal. Deeply implicated in the decisions to invade Hungary and Czechoslovakia, sure enough Mikhail Suslov turned up in Warsaw in 1981, to urge 'orthodoxy' (ie repression) on the Polish communists.

More than anyone else, Suslov represented the self-consciousness of the Soviet bureaucracy. He had a reputation for being 'hostile to the West' as well as not tolerating 'revisionism'. This combination neatly represents the

self-interest of the bureaucracy, resting on the social relations of a non-capitalist state but fearing all forms of independent and critical thought.

The Soviet version of Marxism, encapsulated in the 'manuals' like 'Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism' which have been used to train generations of young communists all over the world, has done the greatest harm to the ability of Marxists to counter bourgeois and petty bourgeois ideologies.

It has enabled all the ideologues of capitalism to present Marxism as a non-critical and dead religious ideology. While the communist parties in the West



Suslov together with Brezhnev

can now allow the luxury of their young intellectuals playing fast and loose with all sorts of theorists (above all Gramsci), no such luxury is available to the Soviet party. Once critical thought is in, then

critical action invariably follows.

Soviet Marxism-Leninism is anti-Marxist in the more fundamental sense: it assumes that Marxism is a finished body of knowledge to be learned

by rote. It is literally a police ideology. It is not the least of Suslov's crimes against the international working class that he relentlessly guarded this ideology against every threat.

Where you can buy Socialist Challenge

Scotland

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

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

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

HAMILTON: SC sale every Sat 1-5pm outside Safeway, shopping centre. For more info contact John Ford, 23 Elliot Crescent, Hamilton or Paul Youngson, 18 Forrest Crescent, Hamilton.

Wales

BANGOR: Sat 10-12 town centre.

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England

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

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

BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.40, Sat 10-4. For more info phone 643 0669.

BOLSOVER: Cross Keys, every Fri 8-9pm, Bluebell 9-10.

BRADFORD: SC at Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.

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

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

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

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

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

OXFORD: BOA Books, 34 Cowley Rd.

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

Bookshops

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

BRADFORD: Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Sandgate.

BRIGHTON: The Public House, Little Preston St.

BRISTOL: Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Bristol 6.

BIRMINGHAM: Other Bookshop, 137 Digbeth, Birmingham.

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

ILFORD: South Essex Bookshop, 335 Ley Street.

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

OXFORD: BOA Books, 34 Cowley Rd.

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

What's Left

RATES for What's Left: 5p per word or £4 per col inch. Deadline: noon Sat prior to publication. Payment in advance. Phone 01 359 8180.

WHY Solidarity Failed: Public Meeting of the Communist Workers Organisation, Fri 5 Feb 7.30pm, Rm 29 Brixton Town Hall, Lambeth Town Hall (Brixton tube).

NAC/LARC Trade Union Ctee: Public Meeting on DHSS restrictions on Abortion rights. Defend the doctors! Stop the prosecutions. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, 7pm, Fri 22 Feb. Speakers invited include Terry Marsland, Judy Mallaher.

LABOUR: Committee on Ireland. Discussion on southern Ireland election. Thurs 25 Feb 7.30pm, Briton's Protection pub, Gt. Bridgewater St, Manchester 1. Open to all LP members.

SC Events

EMERGENCY fraction for Socialist Challenge supporters to discuss the situation regarding the prosecution of doctors for giving abortions on non-medical grounds. Friday 5 Feb, national centre, All London branches to send a representative.

SCHOOL on women's oppression and the fight to build a women's movement. Sponsored by Socialist Challenge and Revolution Youth. March 13th/14th 1982. County Hall, Waterloo. SC1. Creche provided. Open to Socialist Challenge supporters. Tickets: £3 for rally and school. Write to Judith Arkwright, PO Box 50, London N1.

RAIL FRACTION: Saturday, 13 February 1.30pm. Venue to be announced.

POSTERS: Cheap, good and fast. Order from The Other Printshop, 061-236-4905.

DEMOCRACY for the rich — repression for the poor. Rally in defence of democratic rights. Organised by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! 7.30pm Fri 5 Feb. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Speakers: Provisional Sinn Fein (Britain), Alistair Logan (IRFP), Benn Hill brother of Irish political prisoner in Britain. Adm. 57p on door, 50p in advance, unemployed.

SHEFFIELD CND/Latin America Solidarity Front public meeting 'Central America, Peace or Holocaust?' Speakers: Jon Snow (journalist), FMLN/FDR (El Salvador) representative, Richard Cahorn (Euro MP). Thursday 11 February 7.30pm AUEW House, Furnival Gate.

FRIDAY, 12 MARCH 1982: Camden Centre off Euston Road. Doors open 5.30. Meeting starts 7.30pm. Invited speakers include: Speakers from the Fourth International; Mary Vinns — United Mineworkers of America; Socialist Workers Party; Speaker from Nicaraguan women's movement; Bookstalls and displays on show. Light refreshments. Entrance £1.50p unwaged.

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Two new journals of the Fourth International

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL is launching two new English language journals — *International Viewpoint* and *International Marxist Review*.

International Viewpoint, the first issue of which is already in print, is a fortnightly news service produced in Paris. The first issue includes articles by Ernest Mandel on the Polish economic crisis, John Ross on the failure of Thatcherism, Sergio Rodriguez on Central America and Daniel Bensaïd on France. Its aim is to provide the workers movement with more in-depth coverage of world events that is possible in the framework of a weekly paper.

Starting regular publication on 22 February, *International Viewpoint* will be an indispensable guide to world politics for militants in the revolutionary movement. We appeal to all supporters of the Fourth International in Britain to subscribe to and support this journal.

International Marxist Review will be the English-language version of *Quatrième Internationale* the theoretical journal of the Fourth International, which appears three times a

year and contains longer theoretical articles from leaders and militants of the Fourth International.

The first issue of *International Marxist Review* contains articles on Poland and the bureaucracy by Ernest Mandel, the French OCI by Daniel Bensaïd, Soviet influence and neocolonialism in Africa by Claude Gabriel, as well as articles on France, the Fourth International and a major editorial on problems of the Central American revolution. *International Marxist Review* will make available in English many of the theoretical writings from Fourth International leaders which are at present only available in French.

To subscribe to *International Viewpoint*: Make out bank or postal cheque to 'PEC' (£16 for 25 issues surface mail, £18 airmail) and send to International Viewpoint, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. North American readers send \$31 (surface mail) or \$39 (air mail).

To subscribe to *International Marxist Review* send £4.50 (\$11) to IMR, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT



Celebrating International Women's Day

8 MARCH 1982 is the 71st International Women's Day. International Women's Day was first celebrated in 1913 to commemorate the anniversary of a strike New York textile workers. This year Socialist Challenge and Revolution Youth supporters are hoping to celebrate this event with an International rally.

Women workers from different countries will come along to share their experiences in struggle with us. Mary Vinns, a woman miner from the United States will talk about the situation of women and the fight for positive action there. Women have been invited from different sections of the FI. It promises to be a memorable event.

Socialist Challenge and Revolution supporters will also be invited to attend a school on women's oppression and the women's movement to prepare us for the battles ahead and the fight for women's liberation by looking at historical and contemporary experiences.

It promises to be a good weekend. The school is on 12/13 March at County Hall, Waterloo. Open to SC supporters. Tickets for rally and school: send £3 to J. Arkwright, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.



Boost our Polish coverage!

ANOTHER boost for the Polish Fighting Fund launched by Socialist Challenge after the military clampdown — from readers in Wandsworth £100 to swell the fund to £820. Only another £180 needed to reach our target of £1000.

We launched the fund so that Socialist Challenge could bring you the best coverage and action on Poland on the left. We think that's what we've done.

Our coverage is extensive and detailed. We have covered all the events in Poland, not giving an inch to the lies of the bureaucracy that the resistance has been smashed. The events in Gdansk this weekend have proved us right. Our pamphlet, *Solidarity with Solidarnosc* has sold 2,000 copies

and is now into its second printing.

On the ground it has been Socialist Challenge supporters that have led the way on the left in building an independent workers campaign in solidarity with Solidarity.

Our supporters in Glasgow and Manchester have taken the message

onto the factory floors and now the Solidarnosc tour is coming to Birmingham.

And of course Socialist Challenge has hit the hypocrites of the White House and Downing Street hard, highlighting their involvement and backing for the blood-soaked regimes of El Salvador and Guatemala.

That's why you need a socialist press, a tribune for the independent working class point of view which owes no favours to Reagan and Thatcher or the Kremlin bureaucrats.

Contribute today to our Polish Fighting Fund! Keep the regular contributions that are this paper's life-blood coming in.

Our thanks this week to:

Hodges	£20.00
Dunne	8.00
Brent	50.00
Blanc White	30.00
Outer West London	187.00
Preston	30.00
Leeds	50.00
Islington	200.00
Wandsworth (Polish Fighting Fund)	100.00
Camden	50.00
Reading	40.00
Sheffield	80.00
Brighton	15.00
Birmingham	238.00
Cardiff	25.50
Bristol	32.00
Anon.	10.00

Total this week 1165.50
Previous total 2789.10
Grand total £3954.60

Women's Rights

Rape: is castration or long prison terms the answer?

By Yvonne Taylor

'CASTRATE THEM' is a common reply of those questioned about what to do with rapists. MORI poll interviewers found this frequently volunteered in their recent poll for the *Sunday Times*.

They also found that 85 per cent of the population wanted rapists executed or sent to prison for at least seven years.

But will rape or other forms of violence against women be solved in this way?

Over the past few days the national press has led the attack on the police and judiciary, giving unprecedented publicity to rape cases which would have gone virtually unmentioned a few weeks earlier.

The outcry has sent heads rolling in high places — with the resignation of Nicholas Fairbairn, the Scottish Solicitor General, over the Glasgow affair

and the police have been rapped on the knuckles after the televising of the episode of *Police* dealing with a rape complaint.

But after the dust has settled — when the spotlight has moved on, it's time to weigh up exactly what women will manage to gain from all the public outrage.

This isn't the first time that rape has become such a major issue.

Nearly seven years ago, a Law Lord's ruling gave rise to a similar storm of public indignation. In 1975 they declared that 'an honest though unreasonable belief' that the woman was consenting to sexual intercourse was a proper defence to a charge of rape.

The controversy led to Labour MP Jack Ashley's Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act which modified the effect of this ruling.

In 1977, only two years later, a Guardsman who had been convicted of rape was released so that his career should not be damaged and rape became a subject of public debate once more.

Then, as now, the solution was seen to lie in stiffer penalties. Jack Ashley

called for a statutory minimum sentence of five years.

Today, despite all the anger at the way the courts have dealt with rape cases, in the past, it is still possible for a woman to be accused of 'contributory negligence' by a judge and for a brutal attack to be written off because it's easier not to bring the rapists to court.

Perhaps the most significant 'statistics' to emerge from the MORI poll is that 33 per cent of those questioned believe that women are themselves at least partly to blame if raped.

Rape continues to be an ever present threat to women's lives — one which narrowly limits their

independence of action and of spirit.

Public debate is once more centred around what to do with the rapists who are actually convicted. Because many cases of rape are never reported and the police pursues few complaints as far as the courts were the conviction rate is low this is a very small proportion. Yet few people seem concerned with how the rape threat can be removed.

Choice

This won't happen by lining up with the 'hang em and flog em' brigade who are among the most reactionary elements of our society.

Joining the campaign

for higher prison sentences, capital punishment and physically torture — ie castration — would on one hand strengthen the repressive rights of the state and on the other cut across all the most humanitarian instincts of recent years regarding the treatment of those who are outside the 'law'.

Length of sentences has never been proven to be a deterrent.

Indeed, the call for castration indicated a belief in the myth that rape is sexual desire that's got out of control. It's nothing of the sort.

Rape is a form of assault on a person who is designated as a victim, without choice, without rights.

As long as women are perceived in this way, rape will continue.

For example, some of the strongest advocates of the most extreme penalties are often men who seem to want rapists punished, not so much for the damage they inflict on women, as for the injury they do to other men by soiling the 'property'.

The male code of honour (which means defending your own woman but seeing all other females — particularly those who are nobody's property — as fair game) has never been finally knocked on the head.

Those who argue for harsh punishment at the same time say that women have to follow certain acceptable patterns of behaviour to deserve the protection of the law.

Defeat Tory attacks on abortion rights

By Anne Potter, National Abortion Campaign Steering Committee

A FOURTEEN year gaol sentence! That's what doctors who continue to apply the 1967 Abortion Act — giving them the ability to arrange abortions on non-medical grounds — face.



Peter Huntingford

Peter Huntingford, a well known campaigner and doctor for a woman's right to choose has to decide if after 14 years, he is going to give medical grounds for abortion on the Department of Health and Social Security form where there are none — or face the threat of prosecution for performing illegal abortion. And the DHSS claim it has not changed the law!

This is a serious situation for doctors like Peter Huntingford but for the 80 per cent of women who

seek abortions for social reasons, it threatens disaster.

Many doctors now will refuse to give women abortions for non-medical reasons for fear of prosecutions. As Peter Huntingford said, 'If this prosecution goes ahead, I would regard it as the prosecution of eighty per cent of women who have had legal abortions under the 1967 act.'

The DHSS, under pressure from the anti-abortionists, is attempting to intimidate doctors into

severely restricting practices. It is chopping away at the most important part of the '67 act without daring to debate it in parliament.

But if the DHSS thought it could sneak this through without people fighting back then it is grossly mistaken.

At a large meeting at the House of Commons last week MPs, trade unionists and pro-choice organisations came together for a council of

war and worked out a local and national campaign to support the threatened doctors and to withdraw the new form. There has to be immediate action to stop the Director of Public Prosecutions bringing these charges.

Tuesday 9 February has been chosen as the day of action. There is a lobby of parliament and a demonstration in London on that day. There will be local actions in all the major towns — Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge,

Leeds, Cardiff, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich as well as in Scotland.

Trade unionists and Labour party members should discuss this issue and demand that the TUC and the Labour Party nationally take action. Corrie's bill to restrict abortion was only stopped by the strength of the labour movement. We have to ensure that on this even more serious threat to women's rights, the labour movement fights and fights quickly.

Horror

During the Yorkshire Ripper scare, for instance the press were outraged when the murderer turned his attention from prostitutes (fair game) to 'respectable' (which means 'our') women.

Few people would advocate that the law should recognise rape within marriage and many would still find it hard to believe that the majority of rapes are committed by men who are known to the victim.

And it's easy to see why. The sexual violence of husbands or male friends or acquaintances simply not viewed with the same horror or given the same name.

It's an accepted hazard of women's relationship with men and it's what happens when women are 'not careful enough', 'give the wrong impression' or 'lead men on'.

Power

There is no single, simple solution to the crime of rape.

The roots of sexual violence go deep. They are buried in the social conditioning which distort a human relationships, particularly those between women and men, where violence is used — an tolerated — a means of confirming power over others.

It is necessary to campaign for the rights of the victims, to publicly fund women-run rape crisis centres, to protect the victim's needs in court and to ensure full physical and mental support is given to the victim following his ordeal.

It is also necessary to take up facilities such as street lighting and late night bus services for women who work at night.

A vital part of the movement against rape will be for women to be seen as independent people in their own right fighting for their right against their image as passive recipients of male sexual needs.

This task is not simply the task of women but of those who ally themselves with women.

Defending a woman's right to choose on abortion against the Tory moves to restrict the 1967 Abortion Act will be an important part of the struggle.

Abortion — a reality in every woman's life

By Nina Scott

LYING on a hard couch under harsh lights in a shabby cubicle for what seems like hours. Official footsteps pass the door — is it my turn? Hanging on the very edge of a cliff, waiting for a doctor's pronouncement that could completely change one's life.

Dramatic? Exaggerated? Far from it. This is the crunch moment for any woman seeking an abortion.

Whatever she plans for her life can be completely swept away in a matter of minutes. However armed she is with knowledge, however good a case she can present (and where is she trained for such court-room tactics?), the doctor's decision is final.

The reality of 'A Woman's Right to Choose' nowadays, is that any rights a woman ever had under the 1967 Abortion Act are progressively being chipped away until eventually the law will be turned against women.

Attitudes have not changed much either — any woman becoming accidentally pregnant is guilty and must not get off lightly. That's right — blame us women for your lack of serious research into safe, effective contraception!

So what is happening? Some GPs use delaying tactics in the hope you'll change your mind ('you'd better have another test'; 'take these pills and if you don't have a period come back in a week'; 'think about it for a week').

Or else, the referral letter does not present a good case to the consultant; and in some cases, women are referred to a consultant who will refuse.

Others refuse outright, and do not point out that you have a right to be referred to another, sympathetic GP. Some GPs simply chase women out of their surgery shouting 'murderer!' (Yes, it does still happen).

In the hospitals, waiting lists for outpatient appointments are getting longer from two weeks, if you're lucky, to nine or more, if you're not. The consultant may use delaying tactics, or refuse — then its back to the GP again.

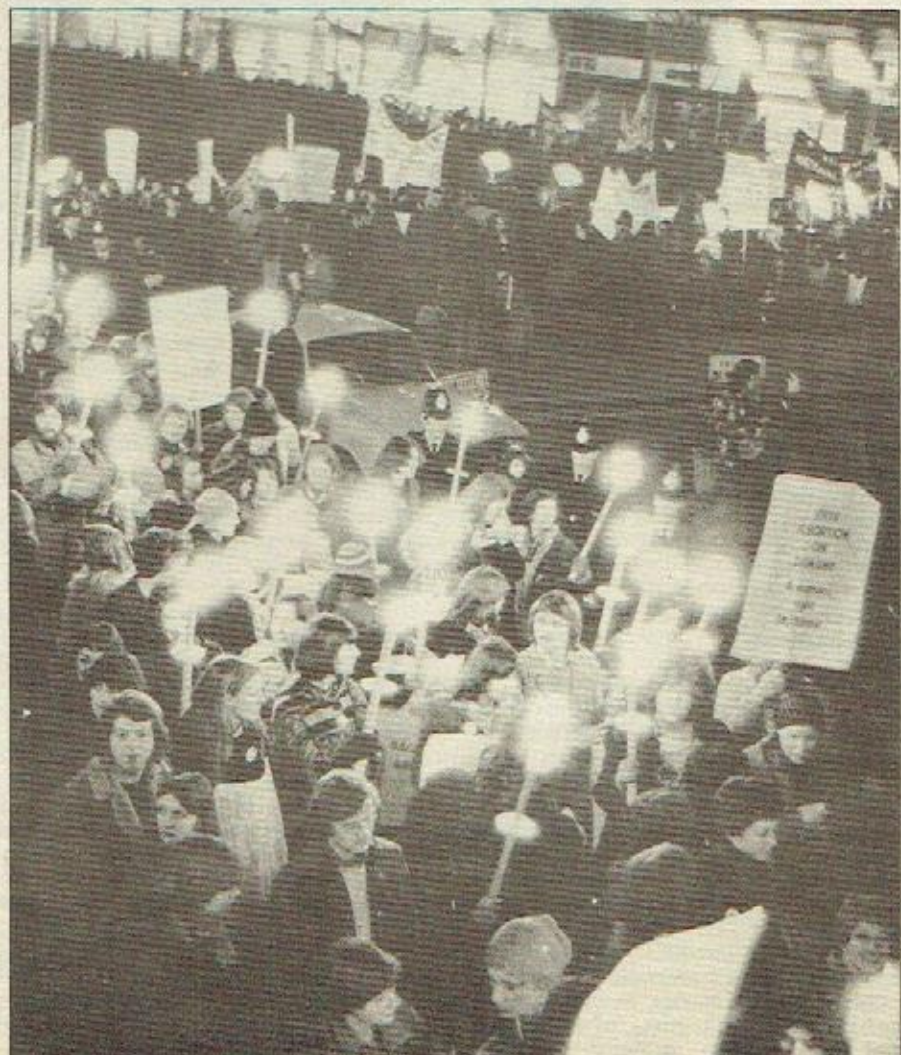
If you 'succeed' there's a delay of weeks for admission. What the staff will be like is anybody's guess.

The alternatives, day care clinics, exist only in some areas and are threatened by cut-backs. They are run by the NHS and provide a quick referral, and early abortion service that is sympathetic. The charity clinics are also quick, efficient and sympathetic, but they cost over £100.

The latest moves by the Department of Health and Social Security to prevent doctors from performing abortions for social reasons and the pressure being put on individual doctors will result in desperate women who will resort to desperate measures.

Back-street abortion is a reality. So are the many women who died of sepsis, in great pain and alone, through fear of prosecution.

If the Act, or its interpretation is changed, then not even the charities can help.



Time to start organising mass activities again

Against the bureaucracy, the programme of political revolution

By Ernest Mandel, leading member of the Fourth International.

FROM the workers' revolt in East Germany in June 1953, through to the Hungarian revolution of October/November 1956, to the Prague Spring in 1968, up to the rise of the Polish workers in 1980/81, the Fourth International has consistently been on the side of the East European proletariat in its revolutionary anti-bureaucratic struggle.

We adopted the same attitude to the workers' struggles in the Peoples Republic of China during the 'cultural revolution'. For although these did not take a revolutionary direction, they did add up to an acute social and political challenge to the bureaucracy.

This approach stems from strategic considerations. We reject all conceptions which reduce the political struggles on a world scale to the opposition between two camps or between two military alliances, in which the class struggle is a minor element or subordinate.

There are two camps in the world. But they are the camps of the working class and the bourgeoisie. Between these the bureaucracy which has usurped power in the Soviet Union wavers with very little autonomy. When it attacks imperialism — and sometimes does that to defend its own power and privileges — it strengthens the international working class, whether it wants to or not. When it attacks the working class, as it has just done in Poland, it reinforces the international bourgeoisie.

Solidarity with the anti-bureaucratic struggles of the workers of Eastern Europe, Soviet Union and China also flows from practical considerations. The class struggle has been an international one for a long time. Imperialism and the international bourgeoisie have fundamental objectives which they relentlessly and intelligently pursue on a world scale.

To paraphrase Karl Marx, unless the working class counterposes the foreign policy of the bourgeoisie with its own internationalist policy it will go down to endless defeats. And there is no other material basis for an international policy for the proletariat other than active international solidarity based on common interests.

The Fourth International's support for these anti-bureaucratic workers' struggles in the countries of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China is based on a precise understanding of the immediate and historic goals that these struggles aim to achieve.

Contrary to the propaganda of both the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie there is no socialist country anywhere in the world, that is, in the sense that Marx and Lenin gave to the word 'socialism' — a society with no classes. All the countries commonly referred to as socialist, are, in fact, in transition between capitalism and socialism, a transition which the bureaucratic dictatorship has frozen midway between one and the other.

The massive workers' revolt against a government calling itself 'socialist' clearly shows the bankruptcy of that government. But it is not

the failure of socialism or Marxism. It's the bankruptcy of the bureaucratic usurping of power in this post-capitalist society which is revealed.

The goals of the anti-bureaucratic political revolution which the Fourth International had outlined in a theoretical analysis — in the *Transitional Programme* of 1938, in our resolution on the decline of Stalinism in 1957, and in theses on *Socialist Democracy* in 1979 — have been fully confirmed by practical experience. These are the same goals which were put forward by the Hungarian workers in their 1956 revolution, the Czechoslovak workers in 1968/9, and the Polish workers in 1980/81.

dependence of the unions from the state and plurality of political parties, free access with no censorship to all groups of workers to the printing presses, the radio and television; free access to all sources of culture, knowledge and information.

These two principles featured in the revolutionary Marxist classic, *State and Revolution* by Lenin. They are central to the construction of a socialist society, the progressive taking of control over all aspects of economic and political life by society, and thus the gradual withering away of the state.

There is no better indicator of the progress towards socialism than this withering away — the transfer of real

put into motion.

That's the socialism that we want. That's the socialism that the workers in the Prague Spring and the workers in Solidarnosc had started to conceive and build.

But let us never forget that the crisis we have been living through since 1914 is a world crisis. At the historic level, the crimes of imperialism, the disastrous consequences of the survival of capitalism are even graver than the crimes and disastrous consequences of the bureaucratic dictatorships.

Today, there are thirty million unemployed in the imperialist countries alone. There are undoubtedly more than 100 million people caught in the ghetto of poverty and degradation and in the so-called Third World there are some thirty million children each year who die of hunger. Must we recall that torture and atrocities are institutionalised in more than fifty countries?

Reformism long ago abandoned any attempt to suppress the capitalist regime which is responsible for these abominations. It contents itself with slightly alleviating the worst excesses. But even this goal, which has nothing to do with the elementary imperatives of solidarity and human liberty, has broken down lamentably since the crisis of the system accelerated.

To the joint crisis of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships, to the bankruptcy of reformism and Stalinism, the struggles for the democratic power of the workers and world socialist federation, is the only alternative. The Polish workers, after those in Portugal and those of May '68 in France, and of the 'hot autumn' in Italy, have shown that it is anchored in the reality of the condition and the capacity of the workers' struggle.

The Polish events like those of so many other countries have also confirmed that for this plan, which carries all the hopes for the future of humanity to be realised, the spontaneity of the workers, as impressive as it might be, is not enough. Against enemies eager to defend their privileges at all costs there needs to be an organised and far sighted vanguard, rooted in the class, preparing and leading it towards power. Revolutionary parties must be built, the Fourth International needs to be built.



Partly leader and premier, Jaruzelski, with former party chief, Kania — two faces of the same privileged bureaucracy

power to the mass of the people. There is no better indicator of the check on the building of socialism than the long term reinforcement of the state, which is and always will be the sum of the apparatuses, the men and women who exercise the functions from which society as a whole is excluded.

Such an economy is one where the workers themselves determine the production and consumption priorities and the organisation of the work. It is different to bureaucratic centralism as it is to the rule of the market, which both subordinate the workers to exterior and uncontrollable forces.

Authentic socialist democracy with the ending of the total monopoly of power by a single party, a party/state or a 'Front'/State. This would involve much greater democratic freedoms for the working masses, in other words, freedom of the press, of association, of the right to demonstrate and strike; in-

power to the mass of the people. There is no better indicator of the check on the building of socialism than the long term reinforcement of the state, which is and always will be the sum of the apparatuses, the men and women who exercise the functions from which society as a whole is excluded.

These two ideas culminate in one and the same conclusion: all power to the workers' councils and the democratically centralised popular councils. For the importance of the workers' and popular councils is that while they are organs of the state, exercising repressive functions over the imperialism and the class enemy, they also reflect the progressive withering away of the state, gradually fusing with the mass of the population in the exercise of governmental powers.

If this process of fusion is real, and it cannot be so without self-management, socialist democracy, and the plurality of parties — then and only then, is the construction of a socialist classless society genuinely

The repressive apparatus confronts the workers: their interests are in fundamental contradiction

Solidarity

Solidarity activists speak: 'An idea can never be destroyed'

Solidarity activists Piotr Kozlowski and Marek Garztecki recently spent nearly a week in Scotland, meeting representatives of the labour movement to build support for Solidarity. Kozlowski was a senior steward at the Ursus tractor plant near Warsaw; Garztecki a journalist with Warsaw Radio and also a shop steward.

During their visit, Piotr and Marek gave a lengthy interview to DES TIERNEY and MARTIN METEYARD for Socialist Challenge. This week we print their comments on the situation in Poland since the military crackdown and what they would like to see workers here doing to help Solidarity.

Do you think Solidarnosc might have been better able to resist martial law if it had been more tightly organised at the expense of being less democratic?

MG: That was a key problem for us, one we discussed a lot but which was never really resolved. No doubt Solidarnosc would, in some ways be more effective and stronger today if it had been less open. All information was available to anyone who wanted it. There was never a question of any secret talks or secret decisions.

But, on the other hand, the very principle of Solidarity, its reason for existence, was to do away with secrecy and the absence of information. The question really was what was more important for Solidarnosc — its principles or short-term effectiveness. We were for principles. That was the most important thing, because an idea can never be destroyed.

The police are so effective. After all, they hounded Trotsky for 20 years till they got him. They can penetrate and destroy any organisation in the end. But the idea survives. So I think the way we went about it was right.

How is Solidarnosc fighting back?

MG: Well, most of the information that we have has appeared in the media. But I should say that we Poles are underground specialists. We have a lot of experience in this field. It will be very difficult for the government to completely crush Solidarnosc.

Was there much discussion before the takeover about organising resistance to such a move?



PK: The problem was that we were preparing more for a Russian invasion. So the instructions sent out were based on a resistance to Hitler in 1939 — destroying lists of inhabitants, removing street names, turning round direction signs, and so on.

We did include the possibility of martial law, but we never expected it to be so severe. One of Jaruzelski's first policies was that Poles would never shoot Poles — and we were foolish enough to believe him. We didn't believe they would crush the workers by simply killing them. We never believed the Polish Army would act this way. We expected that martial law would break down, and then the Russians would come in.

Did you expect more support in the Army?

MG: Definitely. But the Army itself was not used very much. The time it took to suppress the resistance suggests that they just used the crack units, moving them round the country from one city to the next. The main instruments of the repression was the paramilitary force, ZOMO, with its tanks and machine guns. Today the Poles call them the Gestapo.

What other means did they use to crush resistance?

MG: Above all, they struck at the centres of the movement. Telephone exchanges were cut off, two hours

before the military operation began. They confiscated all CB and short-wave radio sets (which had to be licensed), all duplicators (also subject to licensing) and in some cases even typewriters and film and video equipment.

There is a total ban now on taking photographs in Poland. It carries a three year jail sentence.

What are you asking the labour movement here to do to help Solidarity?

PK: The first thing we want you to

do is to make it clear to your members. Of course, people like Reagan and Thatcher will try to use the situation to their advantage. But these people have nothing to do with us, we don't even speak to them.

Our approach to anyone who claims to want to help us is always: what do you think about free trade unions and workers being killed?

Our aims are constantly being distorted by these people. For instance, let me ask Piotr a simple question: could you find one worker in your factory who is in favour of a return to capitalism?

PK: No. MG: Trade unions are working class organisations, we just don't understand people who can go on asking questions like this. Of course we want democracy but a union we set up and we control, not one handed out by the bureaucrats.

PK: People here must recognise that we don't judge them by the name of their party — Conservative, Labour, even Communist. The question is: do they oppose the killing of workers, do they really stand for workers' rights.

That's the touchstone for us as to their real intentions. Living in Poland makes you immune to words — only deeds are important.

Finally, is there anything you'd like to say about your reception in Scotland?

MG: It was always the same when we went to the factories and talked directly to the workers — there were never any silly questions, they never questioned our intentions. They knew who we were and what we stood for.

The problem starts when you're talking not to workers but to those who claim to represent them. We feel sometimes that these are the same brand of people who used to run the state trade union — the way they talk, the same kind of attitudes. It is incredibly arrogant when such people claim to know better than us how well off we really are. They think they know best what's good for the workers which means that really they despise them.

We were much less taken aback than you by the hostile reception from the convenor at Rolls Royce, Illington. We've met such people when they've visited Poland. And we know what goes on. They're whisked round in limousines to tour factories, the canteens are restocked with chocolate and other things we haven't seen for years, all at cheap prices — even the grass is painted green! They never see the country as it really is.

Such people want to believe that the workers hold power somewhere in the world and all they have to do is close their eyes a little and believe what they saw was genuine. And of course the prize for doing so is to be invited back next year.

It was a real contrast to meet a representative of the Liberation Front in El Salvador. He immediately greeted us by saying that we were fighting for the same things.

It doesn't really matter so much who we are fighting, as for what — for our freedom. The oppressors have many faces, they go under many guises and they bear many names. But the threat to us as workers is just the same.

understand is that the Solidarity trade union working group in London is not acting on its own intuition and wishes alone. We get bulletins, messages and instructions smuggled out from Warsaw, Wroclaw and Gdansk. What they want from trade unions in the West is quite clear:

First, they should support our four demands: for the freeing of all internees; the lifting of the state of war; the return of union property confiscated by the junta, the possibility for Solidarity to continue its activities in Poland.

Second, they should break off relations with the Polish state union, never consider having relations with any dummy Solidarity that may be set up, and cut their links with other trade unions which fail to condemn the deprivation of workers' rights in Poland.

Third, they should consider refusing to handle imports and exports until our basic demands are met. From this we exclude medical and food supplies organised on a humanitarian basis through the Church or individuals.

Some people would say that you risk playing into the hands of Reagan and Thatcher.

MG: Our approach is that we always try to deal not with governments but with trade unions. We don't ask governments to do things for us because they are not our natural part-

Manchester rallies to Solidarnosc

By Pete Clifford

'Nearly two centuries ago on the site where this hall stands, workers struggling to build British trade unions were gunned down in the infamous Peterloo massacre. Please stand for a minute's silence in their memory.'

This was how Piotr Kozlowski, a leading Solidarnosc member and senior steward from the giant Ursus tractor factory, began his speech at a rally in Manchester's Free Trade Hall last week.

The rally was the culmination of a torch light demonstration organised by the Greater Manchester Polish Solidarity Campaign. Some 600 rank and file trade unionists, Labour Party members and Polish people wound their way through the streets of Manchester to express their solidarity with Solidarnosc.

The banner of Manchester Trades Council was on the march and there were contingents from a number of local factories — including Massey Ferguson and Laurence Scott where Kozlowski had spoken in his tour of Manchester's factories.

Particularly impressive was the number of young people on the demonstration. Placards calling for 'Victory to Solidarnosc!'

were carried and the most popular chant was the old union song 'Solidarity for ever' ending with a new line: 'And we'll kick Jaruzelski out, out out!'

The theme of workers' unity ran through the speeches of all those on the platform at the rally. Steve Longshaw, deputy convenor at Laurence Scott, told how pickets at the factory had been arrested that very morning and how workers at Scott had been fighting the bureaucrats in the AUEW. He likened the Scott's struggle to the fight of the Polish workers against the bureaucrats there.

Eva Barker of the Socialist Workers Party explained that workers everywhere had a lot to learn from Solidarnosc: 'The best union the world has ever seen'.

Jonathan Silberman, secretary of the Manchester Campaign and a supporter of Socialist Challenge, denounced the campaign of Reagan and Thatcher.

'These people who support the repressive



Piotr Kozlowski (centre) at a Manchester press conference last week

regime in Turkey,' he said, 'who send military personnel to back up the murderers in El Salvador, who back the South African invasion of Angola and who lock up trade unionists in their own country are no friends of the Polish workers.'

'Only the international workers' movement can give real support for the Polish workers — that's why our campaign is solidly labour movement based.'

Piotr Kozlowski himself received a standing ovation before he spoke and another immediately after his speech which so inspired the audience. Answering Reagan and Thatcher's claims he declared: 'Solidarnosc does not support capitalism. We stand for a genuine socialism based on workers' democracy.'

Answering Jaruzelski and the Kremlin bureaucrats, he declared: 'The Polish regime is not socialist, they use fascist methods. It is Stalinist.' He spelt out in graphic detail the crimes of the Jaruzelski regime.

Victory

Finally, answering the pessimists and sectarians he emphasised that Solidarnosc has not been crushed. The resistance is growing and victory will come. 'Ten million workers, half a million students and two and half million peasant families cannot be defeated by the Junta. We will win.'

The rally and demonstration were the highlights of a successful three day tour of the Manchester area by Piotr Kozlowski.

During that time he spoke with stewards from Chloride, Shell Chemicals, Mather and Platt, Kellogs, Laurence Scott and BL in Leyland. In addition he addressed meetings of the powerful engineering union's Manchester North and South districts.

Local TV, press and radio broadcast Kozlowski's message that Solidarnosc would return, that Polish workers were determined to get rid of Jaruzelski. The most important reception was from workers at Massey

Ferguson. The company has a large contract with Ursus where Piotr works. Over 80 workers attended factory gate meetings organised by their stewards where they were told how the workers at Ursus were working with the military in the factory. Should Piotr return there he would certainly face a long prison sentence.

However, the resistance is growing. In the first two weeks after the declaration of martial law, only two tractors were produced by the entire factory.

Military

Dave Leonard, senior steward from the central packaging site, had earlier in the week seconded a resolution at the national convenors' conference of Massey Fergusons which called for rank and file blacking action across the group.

Wearing badges supporting the struggles of Laurence Scott and BL, Kozlowski's message was simple: we face the same problems, you are attacked by the law, we face the military.

He appealed for strengthening the links between Polish and British workers in our common struggle. During the course of this tour Piotr met some objections raised against Solidarnosc.

At the AUEW Manchester north district, for instance, one delegate claimed that independent trade unions were incompatible with a socialist planned economy and argued that Solidarnosc was an agent of the counter-revolution and the CIA.

Piotr, who was familiar with such charges from the top bureaucrats in Poland, replied sharply to these attacks on workers' rights. He explained how the right to be in an independent union was guaranteed by the Polish constitution and that Solidarnosc itself had been officially recognised from the time of the signing of the Gdansk agreement.

And he asked ironical-

ly how millions of workers, students and peasants could all be in the pay of the CIA. Fortunately the committee did not adopt the views of this delegate but resolved to send a protest resolution to the Polish embassy demanding the release of those held under martial law and requesting the embassy to send a representative to the district committee to explain their case.

It was at a conference of senior stewards that Piotr explained that he was here as a Pole, as a worker, and as a trade union activist requesting support from British workers. But his appeal was more than that, because of the threat to workers' organisations in Poland today.

They were facing a military government that claimed to speak on behalf of the workers but really didn't have anything to do with socialism. He didn't want to see a return to capitalism where private companies ruled the roost and workers had few rights.

On the contrary Piotr appealed for workers across the world to unite in a common battle for what he described as 'socialist workers' democracy'.

With that message and just three days in the Manchester area, support for Solidarnosc has grown massively. In the coming months the Greater Manchester Polish Solidarity Campaign which organised the tour plans to go out to win active support from every major union and factory in the area.

Inspired by Piotr Kozlowski we are sure that can be done.

Socialist Challenge Polish school

Two day educational school on Poland and political revolution for Socialist Challenge supporters on 13/14 February in London. If you would like to come see your local SC supporters or write to Socialist Challenge school, PO Box 50, London N1.

Solidarity Committees with Solidarnosc

Birmingham Polish Solidarity Committee, c/o Roger Murray, 28 Blackford Road, Birmingham 11. Ring 021-773 5396.

Glasgow Polish Solidarity Committee, c/o Ian McCalman, 18 Mossiel Rd, Glasgow, G43. Ring 041-632 1839.

Greater Manchester Polish Solidarity Committee, c/o Jon Silberman, 51 Montrose House, Crete St, Oldham, Lancs. Ring 061-620 2885.

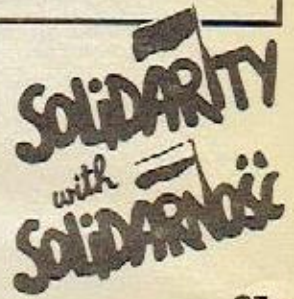
Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign, 10 Park Drive, London NW11. Ring 01-458 1501.

Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, Box 23, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8.

Polish Solidarity Campaign, 69 Edinburgh Rd, London E13.

Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group in UK, 64 Philbeach Gardens, Earls Court, London SW5. Ring 01-373 3492.

Labour Poland Solidarity Fund, c/o Co-operative Bank, 110 Leman St, London E1.



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North London: Fri 5 Feb, 7pm at Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Rd.

Huddersfield: Thur 11 Feb, 8pm at Friendly & Trades Club, Northumberland St.



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Solidarity with Solidarnosc Birmingham

Sat 6 Feb

11am Chamberlain Square
12.30 AUEW Halls, Queensway

Manchester ASLEF fighting for jobs

TRAIN DRIVERS' representatives from every depot in Manchester are meeting, in a weekly liaison committee, to push forward the organisation of the struggle in this area. TREVOR WANGSAM, DUNCAN EDWARDS and REDMOND O'NEILL asked the members of the liaison committee their views on the progress of the dispute.

Peter Gunn (secretary Manchester No1 branch ASLEF) We've got to overcome the barrage of press distortions about our dispute. We're fighting against the British Rail Board's attempt to get rid of the eight-hour day and along with it, 4,000 jobs.

Look around here. You don't see many young people here. That's because they've chopped 50,000 train drivers' jobs since the war. Right now there are 30,000 unfilled vacancies on BR and still they're not recruiting. Since I started this job I've been made redundant and shifted right around the country, depot to depot, more times than you've had hot dinners.

H Newell (chairperson of Manchester LDC) I suspect that the government has provoked this dispute to try to smash ASLEF and shut down more railways. Unfortunately when we take action, it's the public that gets hurt.

But if they can take on ASLEF then they will be out to break all of the militant industrial unions. That's the aim of this Tory government. If we go, it'll be harder for everyone else to maintain their standard of living.

Albert Seymour (secretary Newton Heath depot ASLEF) The press have claimed that flexible rostering is a normal practice in other countries. But if they want to compare us with other Common Market countries they should also look at pay and conditions.

British train drivers have the longest working week, the shortest holidays and the lowest wages. Now they're threatening there will be no electrification if we don't ditch the eight-hour day. But on the railways they've always promised us paradise next week.

Harry Turner (Manchester No. 1 ASLEF) We've had 100 per cent

support from the NUR drivers but as yet the guards have not taken action. All the same, there is a lot of support from the train operating grades of the NUR because they also work shifts and know what's involved.

The BR Board is trying to split the unions by ending Sunday working. Sidney Weighell is letting them get away with it. He makes fine speeches about the 35-hour week and banning overtime at the TUC, but when it comes to defending his own members, where is he?

Guards have to work weekends just to survive on the wages they get. If they don't work Sundays or their rest days, guards come out with around £50 a week.

Bob Barrows (chairperson Newton Heath ASLEF) If you are members of the engineering union, you ought to

get Terry Duffy to keep his mouth shut about this dispute. When he mouths off against us on TV the idea is to convince people that he speaks for all engineers.

In fact, Duffy is like a lot of his colleagues — he's just going for a seat in the House of Lords. We would ask all AUEW members to protest against his interference in our dispute.

Peter Gunn This dispute is not likely to be settled by compulsory arbitration. Our last protracted struggle in 1955 went to arbitration and the result was that we ended up with the same as BR's original offer.

The Board has had no scruples in the past about ignoring recommendations from arbitration bodies.

While we are fighting we want all the support we can get from the Labour Party and the unions. We want to get the truth across to the public.

This is a strike to defend jobs, to defend living standards and to defend militant trade unionism. That's why a victory for us will be a victory for all workers.



US RAILWORKERS

It's the same the whole world over

By Ike Nahem

WHILE British railworkers are fighting to defend the right to an eight hour day, their counterparts in America are up against a drive by rail bosses to increase the legal limit on the working day to 16 hours!

This and other attacks on US railworkers take place at a time when big business is on one of the most concerted offensives against working people seen for decades. Monetarism is the watchword in Britain. In the US these attacks go under the name of Reaganomics.

Today American unemployment figures are higher than at any time since 1939. A full 50 per cent of black and Latin youths can find no jobs. In heavy industrial areas like the Chicago/Northern Indiana steel centre, unemployment stands as high as 30 per cent.

Does it sound familiar? There are even more parallels. It was no accident for instance, that last week's *Economist* magazine argued that a good outcome to the current British dispute would be 'the destruction of ASLEF in much the same manner as President Reagan... destroyed the air traffic controllers in America last year'.

Most railworkers in the US have been working without a contract since April 1981. The contracts expired following a serious defeat inflicted by railworkers on the government — subsidised and regulated, but privately owned Conrail line. This line carries much of the freight in and out of the north eastern part of the country.

Reagan threatened to liquidate the company completely, selling off the most profitable lines. In the face of this blackmail, rail unions called a national march on

Washington. Their demands were 'No cuts' and 'No job losses'.

The union leaders had in mind a small protest action. They only estimated 1,200 marchers on the official demonstration permit forms. Thirty thousand angry railworkers turned up!

But no sooner had the marchers returned home when union leaders signed an agreement that inflicted a stunning loss on Conrail workers. Index-linked wages were eliminated. Thousands of jobs were wiped out. Safety and other work practices that have been in effect for decades have been gutted. For at least two years now, wages have been frozen.

With this victory under their belts, rail bosses are moving to establish the Conrail precedent as the norm for industry nationwide. Reductions in crew sizes, flexible rostering and the longer working day are all at stake. If they get away with this, railworkers can be ordered to report anytime, anywhere, to go any place at the beck and call of the company.

US railworkers are up against some pretty formidable obstacles. For instance, a labyrinth of federal laws and red tape that date from the Railway Labour Act of 1924 rule that there must be up to two years arbitration and appeals before strike action is legal.

Furthermore, the giant labour upsurge of the 1930s which resulted in industry-wide organisation in most basic industries, left the craft structure of the rail unions untouched. Today railworkers are divided into some 20 separate unions, a situation which the infamous 1924 Act has reinforced.

Finally, the most powerful rail unions are notoriously undemocratic. Most railworkers don't even have the right to vote on the contracts we have to work under.

One big difference between the US and Britain is the private ownership and management of American railways, although they are government subsidised and 'regulated'. Huge financial bonanzas for the railway capitalists have come from a cozy partnership between the government, the big banks and the rail companies. The land handouts in the 19th century were only the start.

After the rail bosses let the railways deteriorate, they organise bankruptcies — around the tables in secret meeting rooms of the banks. Then they reorganise and consolidate a new profitable line.

This concentration and monopolisation of industry, or 'merger-mania' as it's known, is sweeping the US. And it's moving full speed ahead on the railways.

Smaller firms — whose service is crucial to the livelihoods of farmers and small businesses — are becoming less viable. Many will be gobbled up by the five or six giants that will remain.

Socialist railworkers in the US are calling for an end to all cut-backs in the service and for massive investment to rebuild the entire industry on the basis of human need, not profitability.

Finances for this and other vital social services can come from closing the tax loopholes for the rich and especially from the 200bn dollar a year Pentagon budget for war and nuclear holocaust.

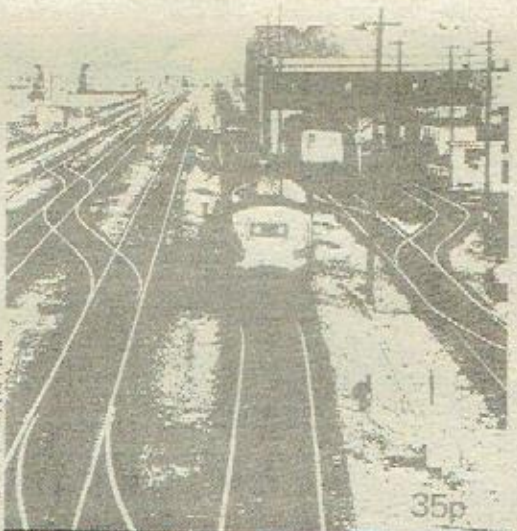
It's also necessary to remove the rail industry from the fetters of private ownership. But as the current British crisis shows, nationalisation in itself doesn't guarantee the rights of labour. This will come with the control of day to day operations on the railways by the workers, through their unions.

The nationalised industry must be administered by an independent democratically elected body of workers and consumers.

Today more and more American workers are seeing that the solution to our problems can't be met on an industry by industry, or on a union by union basis. The solution must be political.

Above all, workers in the US need an independent political party based on our class. Solving this problem of working class political independence will be the next giant step of American labour.

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OUT FOR VICTORY

Leyland Vehicles

NO EDWARDES' PLAN HERE

BRITISH LEYLAND Vehicles workers have taken direct action to defend their jobs at both the Bathgate and Leyland plants over the last two weeks. Michael Edwardes' corporate plan will almost certainly result in the total closure of the Bathgate plant and the reduction of the workforce at Leyland in Lancashire by 6,000.

True to form, Edwardes tries to lay the blame at the workers' door. Only drastic reductions of the workforce, he claims, will make BL viable. Speaking at a press conference in Scotland last Friday, Edwardes admitted that the future of the Bathgate plant 'hung in the balance', and that 'a long strike could mean a short future for the Leyland Vehicles plant in Lancashire.'

Bathgate workers' immediate response to the closure plans was to occupy the plant. Last Friday, after a one week sit-in, the company gained a court injunction against them. But an all out strike at the plant continues.

JIMMY SWAN is works convenor at Bathgate. Last Saturday the Leyland Vehicle Combine Committee met in Preston and afterwards he spoke to PATRICK SIKORSKI from Socialist Challenge.

'Our position is that we are determined to retain jobs and the manufacturing base in Leyland Vehicles. If Edwardes gets away with this, the direction is towards complete closure of the Bathgate plant.'

Support

'The meeting was very well attended with delegations from every Leyland plant in the Bus and Truck division. We discussed the general situation, exchanged information on our attitude to management's approaches for negotiations as well as the distribution of financial support which is starting to come in, and general solidarity.'

Jimmy Swan went on to explain that the Lancashire workers were as determined as those in Scotland to fight Edwardes. They face a situation where all parts will be hived off to the private sector and only the assembly work would be done in the brand new Leyland assembly plant built in 1978 with £32m of public money.

Jimmy is convinced that it has been the action taken by Leyland workers that has stopped the American company, International Harvesters, literally in its tracks, from investing in a diesel engine plant in Spain.

'This plant was to have built some 80,000 diesel units, mainly for export,' explained Jimmy. 'The project is only viable if the Americans could have guaranteed supplying the demand from a gutted post-Edwardes' Plan Leyland assembly plant.'

Part of this plan is to sell off the tractor division to the privately owned company Marshalls in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Such has been the arrogance of management in Leyland that the Marshall company colours have already been introduced into the paint spraying at Bathgate! But



Picket lines at BL truck division, Leyland and Bathgate, Scotland.

the company has not reckoned on the determination of the workforce to fight back.

Even the successful serving of an injunction on the occupying workers has not demoralised them. As Jimmy Swan points out: 'The whole way that we occupied the plant and carried out the occupation in a very disciplined manner, massively bolstered the confidence of the workforce in their own ability to organise.'

'We weren't surprised that the company went to the courts with this Tory government in office, the

Tebbit measures and what they did to Laurence Scott. We weren't surprised at the outcome of the court hearing at which we of course opposed the granting of the injunction.'

Fight

'But we didn't want to have the main fight over the injunction and occupation at this stage. There is a full 24 hour picket on the factory and nothing will move in or out. The effect on the company is the same and we can get more people involved on the picket lines.'

'We had to say enough is enough. I wouldn't say our action was the product of a completely new political awareness. As you know we've had the Clydeside occupations in the past. Lee Jeans has shown that it can be done and the whole town and community around Bathgate know that it is fightback or die. Look what happened to Linwood.'

'We had a very successful shop stewards' rally in support of our fight last week attended at very short notice by between

200 and 300 stewards from the West Lothian region including convenors from Rolls Royce and other major factories.'

Meeting

'Others came from as far away as Dundee and the Clyde shipbuilders would have attended if they had been more notice. The Scottish TUC and local Trades Councils were well represented.'

'Plans are being laid for a major demonstration aimed at the Scottish Grand Committee meeting in mid-February which has the Bathgate issue on the

agenda. We are planning a joint meeting with the Plessey occupation which is also in Bathgate. The stewards' meeting also called for financial support, levies and collections to be arranged.'

Win

'At the Combine level there are also moves to organise an all Leyland Combine meeting, and I understand that Vehicles Convenor Jim McLean is in contact with cars convenor Jack Adams. We are determined to win this one.'



'THE WORKS COMMITTEE is making its present demands in order to sustain employment and retain Leyland Vehicles (LV) as a publicly owned manufacturer of trucks and buses.'

'The longer term future of all workers in the industry is also at stake given the international re-organisation now taking place. We will be looking to future discussions with other workers and trade unions in this region to develop our strategy to save the industry.'

'We will also be calling upon the political and industrial organisations of the labour movement, the Labour Party, and the TUC, to conduct their own inquiry into the fate of LV as what is supposedly a public company.'

'We will be looking through them to develop a policy for the future establishment of an industry with an acceptable range of products under full control by its workers and those it

serves.'

Leyland workers want a future. The trade unions have known for sometime that their jobs were in jeopardy and have been presenting their alternative to the membership.

The 1981 UK market for trucks was only half the 1979 level. In the North west thousands of jobs in the industry have gone in the last 12 months. As the rate of profit on each truck or bus falls, the multinationals which control the industry will only invest in the most 'efficient' plants — that is, those which are unorganised and where workers are paid a pittance for sweated labour.

Michael Edwardes then claims that UK workers are responsible for an 'inefficient' industry — that is one where the workers have fought hard for their conditions — and puts forward his survival plan. The trade union plan proposes:

- ★ No redundancies
- ★ No more out-sourcing of components (ie. keeping component

manufacture in Leyland itself)

- ★ No more selling off of parts of LV
- ★ No transfer of work

The works committee is demanding 'full information about the present financial position'. It also wants a 'parliamentary inquiry into all aspects of management and mismanagement of LV since it came into public hands.'

The works committee is very conscious of the need for Leyland to be accountable because 'LV is unlike other nationalised industries. It is under the direct control of the Department of Industry. Information about LV is therefore neither publicly available nor publicly debated before decisions are taken.'

To save jobs the works committee is putting forward some immediate demands. 'LV management did not carry out the programme of renewal... envisaged by the 1975 Ryder Plan... the works committee therefore

demands immediate investment in a new foundry and adequate investment in machine tools.' And it wants the government to provide funds for investment at low rates of interest.'

The works committee knows only too well that it has to build support for its plans if Leyland workers are to successfully combat Edwardes. 'Success can only be achieved through united action by all LV workers from all unions and every plant. But in the wider political battle we call for the support of the whole labour movement: the Labour Party, trades councils, the TUC, the Confederation of Shipbuilders and Engineering Unions and Labour controlled councils.'

The works committee has been putting its trade union alternatives to the whole workforce over the last three months in a series of leaflets. As the last leaflet pointed out: 'There is an alternative to the disastrous policies of the Edwardes' management. It is time to call a halt.'

The trade union alternative

Patrick Sikorski reports on the trade unions' alternative to Edwardes' plan.

US to double military aid to El Salvador

El Salvador Air Force goes up in smoke



By Phil Hearse

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION is proposing to double military aid to the beleaguered Duarte regime in El Salvador. The build up of military aid has been on the cards for some time because of the generally worsening military situation.

As we reported two weeks ago, it is now clear that the guerrillas of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), a left wing alliance fighting the right wing dictatorship, control a quarter of the countryside.

The need to boost the capacity of the army and the national guard becomes increasingly important because of the elections planned for 28 March. In order to give the Duarte dictatorship more 'legitimacy' elections have been carefully prepared for well over a year. But there is one problem: the main opposition groups, in particular the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) of which the FMLN

is a part, are excluded from the election.

Further, since large areas of the countryside are under full or partial guerrilla control, and since there is a war going on, there will be no effective election facilities in many places. The result will therefore be a fraud. The United States even fears that the guerrillas may choose the date of the elections for a major military offensive.

Just how bad the military situation is was revealed last Wednesday when FMLN guerrillas calmly walked into the main airforce base in San Salvador, planted mines on the planes and walked out. Most of Duarte's airforce thus went up in smoke in one big bang. Helicopters, fighters and transport planes were destroyed. The helicopter war has been an increasingly important part of the regime's strategy against the guerrillas — the US military advisors are teaching the regime's officers the tactics of Vietnam.

The destruction of most of the helicopters in the country will give the guerrillas much greater freedom of movement in the next couple of months. Hence the US panic to

rapidly replace the planes.

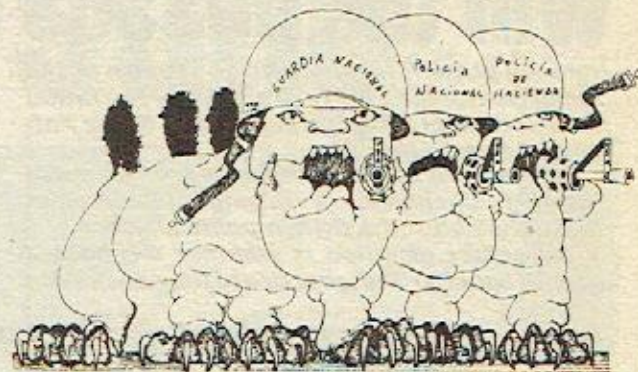
The project of doubling US military assistance requires that the Reagan regime convince a sceptical Congress that Duarte's government is 'improving' the human rights situation. The attempt to do this has received a severe setback in the past week as the reports of a massacre of civilians in Morazan province has come out.

Journalists visiting the area report seeing dozens of decomposing bodies in the village of Mozote. Eyewitnesses among the local peasants saw villagers being bound, beaten up and then taken away in groups of four to be shot. Women and children were machine-gunned to death.

What is happening in Morazan — a stronghold of the guerrillas on the border with Honduras —

repeats the pattern of Vietnam. The US and South Vietnamese forces in that country tried to terrorise the population in the countryside to prevent them from supporting the guerrillas. But terror of this kind has never won the hearts and minds of the people — on the contrary it will only succeed in consolidating support for the FMLN.

In 1965 the Vietnamese revolutionaries destroyed most of the American air force planes at the Da Nang base in northern South Vietnam. Their ability to do this was a dramatic demonstration of their military strength and political support. In El Salvador history is repeating itself. A regime which can't defend its main airfield against revolutionary guerrillas is heading for defeat.



Secret meeting plots counter-revolution

By Paul Lawson

NEWS is coming out of a secret meeting of top brass from Central and South America held at Fort McNair, Washington DC last October. The meeting, attended by US Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger, discussed 'how to fight the Cuban-Soviet invasion of the Americas'.

Leading military personnel attended from Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Surinam, United States and Uruguay.

The meeting was introduced by a speech from US Army General Meyer, who argued that 'we are already in a war against communism'. Among the decisions of the conference were: to set up a permanent co-ordination centre of the armies of Latin America and a permanent headquarters of the conference.

These decisions will of course promote direct contact between the armies of the region which will, if necessary, be able to bypass governments. Direct contact between the US and Chilean armed forces were a key lever in organising the coup against the Allende government in 1973. The Interamerican Police Academy (torture training centre) is being moved from Panama to Honduras.

The conference discussed the best way to ideologically combat the left and the labour movement in the region. The assembled generals discussed the best term to refer to left-wing movements. Bizarrely they decided that 'revolutionaries' was out, and that the key terms were 'Marxist subversion' and 'terrorists'. One general asked those assembled to make 'terrorism' a common, not political crime.

The generals had a 'useful' exchange on tactics. Chilean Defence Minister, General Carrasco, argued the need for the right to combat the left's ideology with a right wing one. 'So far we've only used force,' he said, 'and it has not worked. To kill them is no use, for two arise in the place of one. What works is to penetrate the people, to organise courses, to improve the life conditions of the poor so that they become deaf as regards subversives. Our wives are working voluntarily with communities, teaching women how to read, how to sow, and how to take care of the children(!)'.

General Marques, a Brazilian, read a secret document describing how the Brazilian army was able to eliminate the threat of communism through infiltration. He said that alongside infiltration, it was necessary to improve income distribution and keep violence to a minimum. Just to give a balance to all this talk of improving the conditions of the poor, Salvadorean minister of Defence, General Guillermo Gracia, asked for more military aid to El Salvador, which other generals supported, in order not to let the country succumb to 'disgrace'.

American young socialists fight Reagan's offensive

By Richard Rozanski

900 people gathered for the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) conference in New York in January. The main item which the YSA conference had to face up to was the offensive which Reagan has launched against workers at home and abroad.

Reagan's public spending cuts make Thatcher's look tame by comparison. Military spending has shot up. While posing as the friend of the Polish workers, Reagan has attempted to smash the PATCO — the air traffic controllers union.

In his defence of the 'free world' Reagan has spent millions of dollars in giving military aid to the ruling junta in El Salvador, which is massacring its own population. Reagan is also making plans for war

against other revolutions in Cuba, Nicaragua and Grenada.

Lisa Hickler, introducing the international political report, explained that the anti-working class offensive at home and abroad was part of the at-

tempt to solve the economic crisis of US imperialism. To do this the ruling class has to increase the exploitation of American workers, while defending their markets and spheres of influence abroad.

Solidarity with the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean will be at the centre of the YSA's activity in the next period, as will solidarity with the struggle of the Polish workers.

Malik Miah, in introducing the report on the political situation in the United States stressed that although working people were becoming angry with

the ruling class offensive they had few outlets to express their anger.

Class

The crucial lack was an independent workers party — a Labour party — which would unlike the bourgeois Democratic Party fight for the interests of the workers.

A hopeful sign of independent working-class politics is the emergence of the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP). The YSA pledged to do everything in its power to promote the growth of this party.

Over the last two years the YSA has succeeded in getting over half its membership into industrial jobs to spread socialist ideas in the factories. They will continue to organise this, and over the last few months have succeeded in establishing a fraction of members in the garment industry.

Support

On the last evening of the conference well over 1000 people attended a rally entitled 'Fighting Reaganism at home and abroad', where over £1600 was collected for building YSA campaigns.



EL SALVADOR SOLIDARITY DEMONSTRATION

To coincide with the government's fraudulent elections
 Sunday 28 March
 Assemble Speakers Corner 1 pm
 March to rally in Trafalgar Square

Will the bosses back the SDP?

Here we present three views on the rise of the Social Democratic Party, from Gerry Hoffa and from Socialist Challenge supporters Steve Potter and Britain Heron.

The debate so far in the past two issues of Socialist Challenge is raising fundamental questions about the British political scene.

Especially disputed is whether the bosses are still backing Thatcher or are they switching

their allegiance to the SDP/Liberal Alliance. And what affect is the SDP having on the workers' movement?

If you wish to join in this debate or comment on any subject please write to us: SC Letters, PO Box 50, London N12XP. Please keep to 400 words or fewer — all letters will be edited.

Monetarism not in interest of British bosses

BRIAN GROGAN has got it all wrong (Letters 21 Jan) when he says that Thatcher's monetarism (factory closures, redundancies, etc) is in the interests of the British bosses because it leads to increases in productivity.

Far from it. Her obsession with the 'market-place' leads in practice to an alliance with foreign multi-nationals against her own British industrialists.

The consequence is here for all to see — the destruction of the UK manufacturing base and decimation of key sections of the organised working class.

Moreover, how can we seriously maintain that the Tories selling off North Sea oil assets — a key commodity — to foreign companies strengthens UK capital?

At present 60 per cent of UK oil exports are sold to the US and being stored in a strategic reserve (that is in topped up oil wells) and five more years of Thatcher will lead to the US not only owning UK oil wells — but to oil being sold back to us at inflated prices!

Further, during the 1920s and 30s we saw, as today, a recession producing plummeting wage levels and living standards — but, contrary to Brian's argument it did not lead to increases in the productivity of labour. The history of the pre-war mining industry is a case in point here.

Indeed it was only the compulsion of war, state intervention and later nationalisation which led to a jacking up of productivity in major industries.

Why was this? Quite simply because the specific character of British capitalism has been the institutional divorce of finance capital from industrial capital, with the former dominating and controlling the latter. Exportation of capital rather than domestic investment has been the main activity.

Hence it's not a coincidence that the key industries making massive profits are banking, properties and more marginal in the food industry.

The inability of UK industrialists to adopt the new technology on the scale of their competitors is a product not of 'innate conservatism' but of the extreme difficulty in obtaining long-term credits from the banks.

The reason for Britain's economic decline is not a high wage economy — the UK is bottom of the league table — but a historic starvation of investment over decades.

The logic of Thatcherism if left to its own

devices over the next five years won't be a 'leaner, fitter economy' but an economy of warehouses and consumers who are forced to buy whatever the multi-nationals decide to dump on us.

In theory it could be possible to restructure Britain's financial institutions to facilitate a long term refuelling of finance into British manufacturing, as was done in Japan and Germany under US tutelage after the war, or interestingly as Hitler did during the 30s.

But to expect that such a phenomenal programme of investment could be carried out by 'wet' Tories, the SDP, Denis Healey, or even Thatcher

herself would be about as realistic as expecting Cardinal Hume to lead a radical restructuring of the Vatican.

These groupings are mere puppets of different fractions of Capital, totally unable to reverse the long term tendencies of decline of the UK economy.

What socialists have to argue and fight for is a workers' government that will lead the struggle for the nationalisation of the economy under popular control — which is the only realistic alternative to a wasteland of dole queues.

GERRY HOFFA (ASTMS) Manchester

What about the workers?

BRIAN Grogan says that the 'bosses need the policies of the SDP like a hole in the head.' But, as the old refrain goes, what about the workers?

The rise of the SDP represents the crisis of leadership of both classes in society. The Tories have liquidated a considerable part of their popular support among the working class.

Large sections of the mid-

dle class cannot stomach their war-mongering and pulverising of jobs in the public sector. Independent of ruling class support for the Tory programme (although Brian underestimates the bosses' divisions) the Tories meet widespread resistance. The heart of that resistance is the organised working class.

The question for the bosses is not that a new course represented by the policies of the SDP is opening up, but rather how they can fun-

Underestimates the City

ONE YEAR after the foundation of the Social Democratic Party it is vital that we take stock of its significance.

Brian Grogan is correct to point out that Thatcher's programme still receives wide support from the bosses and the rest of the ruling class; but political and economic necessity does not always match up and the ruling class would find the programme of the SDP/Liberal Alliance moderate economic expansion plus wage curbs and attacks on the unions, not completely inadequate for the next period, however limited that might be.

What are the implications for the labour movement? If the SDP establishes itself as broker for coalition governments as seems likely, pressure for coalitionism will leave the working class movement unaffected.

damentally divide and further weaken the workers' movement.

At the same time they face the electoral annihilation of their own party at the next election.

To stop the defeat of the Tories turning into something far worse — a crisis in the way that the ruling class governs — sections of the ruling class will move behind the SDP.

There is also a real crisis of leadership in the workers' movement. At the moment the right wing leaders of the labour movement have the simple project of Labour adopting the policies of the SDP.

But the mantle of Wilson and Callaghan and the 'good old sixties' has been firmly grasped by the SDP. As a result, the right wing Labour leaders succeed only in building the SDP.

Already, both James Callaghan and Denis Healey have raised the question of whether an SDP-Labour coalition would not be preferable to another five years of Tory rule.

The attack of the right against the left inside the Labour Party at the present time is intimately bound up with the question of government. In the first instance the witch-hunt and the right wing offensive are attempts to render the Labour Party 'fit to rule' (in the interests of capital).

But it is also the case that the defeat of the left is a necessary precondition for any coalition perspective from the Labour right.

In its campaign for a Labour victory the left must start to explicitly fight against the SDP policies of the Labour right and centre, particularly on incomes policy, and against

coalition.

Without such a fight the long term dangers for the labour movement are obvious. If the Labour Party proposes coalitions with other parties doesn't this legitimise the type of break with the Labour Party already openly canvassed by Frank Chapple and others?

The possible repercussions of another Isle of Grain type dispute within the TUC under these type of political conditions pose the very question of the organisational unity of the working class.

These are the questions which arise from the SDP/Liberal threat to the working class movement. None of them are inevitable, but neither should the left willfully blind itself to their scope or their implications for our tactics today.

STEVE POTTER

The upshot is likely to be a major division in the traditional Labour vote at the next election — and the basis therefore laid for a coalition government between the SDP and sections of the Labour right.

The current witch-hunt in the Labour Party and the unions against the Bennite base is designed to create just such freedom of manoeuvre for the right wing bureaucracy.

The consequences of such a division would tend to work their way through at every level, including in the unions.

Such a prospect is by no means certain. Every major struggle against the Tories threatens to put the whole process in reverse.

The whole emphasis of Brian's letter therefore is to underestimate the significance of the SDP from

the point of view of the threat that it holds for the workers' movement.

From his point of view the SDP becomes a simple re-run of Thatcherism in sheep's clothing — while the working class progressively lines up behind Benn.

To this comforting notion, we say that the class contradictions, which run through the labour movement with its thoroughly bourgeois leadership, programme and apparatus, threatens the unity of the labour movement in the next period.

Barring unforeseeable and major industrial battles over the next two years we are on the verge of a period of growing polarisation and political re-composition within the labour movement.

BRIAN HERON East London

ARGUMENTS for SOCIALISM

WHAT IS THE LABOUR BUREAUCRACY?

By Ailean O'Callaghan

DURING Thatcher's government hundreds of thousands of workers have gone into battle, only to be stabbed in the back by trade union leaders. And not just by right wingers like Terry Duffy.

The actions of transport workers' leader Alex Kitson in British Leyland shows that 'lefts' cannot always be trusted. In the recent Fords sell-out many militants wondered how someone like Ron Todd, who used to be a Ford worker himself, could force an horrific productivity deal on his members, despite their original overwhelming vote for strike action to oppose the deal.

Employers

How is it that leaders of organisations formed to defend workers against bosses end up de-



fying the interests and wishes of their members?

Fundamentally, it is because the trade union leaders have their own interests which are often counterposed to those of the mass of their members. This social layer is known as the bureaucracy.

Trade unions need to employ full time organisers and negotiators. But, as Solidarity in Poland has shown, such a need doesn't by itself, create a bureaucracy. Indeed, in the first flush of the formation of the mass general unions at the end of the last century, these unions had many similarities with Solidarity.

They were responsive to the needs of their members, were led by dedicated militants and had constitutions which gave tremendous control by the membership over their full time officials. The activities of these unions frightened the life out of the bosses.

But the bosses soon understand how to create a new moderate breed of leaders with whom they could 'negotiate'. Union leaders were encouraged to receive wage increases and 'perks' which gave them a high standard of living.

Of course, union leaders were not crudely bribed. Many, who started off with the best intentions would justify opposition to the demands of their members through the sometimes correct need to put the interests of the organisation as a whole above that of the action of a small section of the union.

This occurred in Solidarity, when the national leaders sometimes prevented the uncoordinated outbreak of local strikes.

However, the permanent separation of the top officials from the general needs and interests of the members comes when these leaders have been able to satisfy their own material interests within the framework of the capitalist system.

Salaries

Today, union leaders enjoy a standard of living beyond that of most workers. Len Murray, one of the lowest paid, has a salary of over £15,000. In addition, they have expense accounts, union cars, fees for TV appearances and lectures to bosses' organisations. They receive salaries for being on government advisory bodies on the boards of nationalised industries, or even on the boards of private companies. They have a lot to lose if capitalism is overthrown.

In a period of capitalist expansion, the bosses can allow certain concessions to workers. In over one hundred years of their existence unions have been responsible for dramatically raising the material and cultural level of the working class. This has given the

unions tremendous prestige. The union leaders bask in this glory. They embody the achievements of the unions in the eyes of the mass of workers.

Despite their integration into the state and government, even right wing leaders sometimes have to sanction strike action in order to keep control.

Union leaders can't always keep control by directly sabotaging struggles. From time to time bureaucrats come forward who understand that the best way to preserve the control of the bureaucracy to place themselves at the head of a militant upsurge, and thereby control it.

This was the story of Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones. But their subsequent careers showed that they were just as capable as the right wing of blatantly selling out struggles. Their 'militant' past made this job that much easier.

As the crisis in Britain intensifies, the room for concession diminishes. More and more, the choice is whether the role of unions is to police the working class in the interests of the bosses, or dedicate themselves to promoting the interests of the working class.

To act in the interests of workers in today's conditions means breaking with the capitalist system. But for unions to become instruments for socialist change would require the complete rooting out of the bureaucracy.

Many thousands of workers have recently gone through bitter experience of how trade union bureaucrats act on behalf of the bosses. But, at present, such workers are a minority. For the majority, the leaders still enjoy a certain prestige. These leaders cannot be ignored or 'gone around'.

Plessey workers occupy

By Neil Cruickshank

ON 1 DECEMBER, 1981 Plessey management served 90 days notice on its workforce at Bathgate in Scotland. The factory was to close with the loss of 330 jobs. The workforce has occupied the plant since 25 January.

They are pledged to stop any movement of machinery which management intends to ship to Italy. The occupation, overwhelmingly composed of women workers, is the second action in Bathgate to defend jobs.

Two miles away BL workers are fighting their management and now the courts to save their jobs. Socialist Challenge spoke to some of the women in the Plessey occupation about the situation the town now finds itself in.

MARGARET, a day worker, explained, 'With both factories facing redundancies this town is on its knees.' In fact, the loss of the 330 jobs at Plessey would bring unemployment in Bathgate to 30 per cent.

clerical union, APEX. Most of the women belong to the AUEW and so far

have the support from their officials.

But the fight will be very hard, for as June said, 'There's work to do in the factory but Plessey will not invest in new machinery. They have taken a great deal out of this place and put nothing back. Plessey last year had a nine month profit of £84m and yet they propose to close us down.'

Future

'We have always been cheap labour. Average take-home must be £59 or

£60 for most of the women here. And that's with bonus. But we will stick it out as long as it takes. They are not going to take our jobs as well as everything else they've got out of us in the past.'

Links between the two struggles in Bathgate are growing at every level. Last Wednesday a meeting in the town of over 200 shop stewards and convenors from all over the area pledged full support for Plessey and BL.

Ann told Socialist Challenge about the welcome pot of stovies which had been cooked in the canteen at Plessey for the frozen BL picket. She said, 'We have to get together because it's sure that the management will get together.'

George Wilson, the TASS convenor at Plessey

said that the fight to save the factory was the fight to save Bathgate's future as was the strike of the BL tractor plant there. If those two factories close there would be no work left in the town.

Breach

The occupation action committee on hearing of the proposed closure and the redundancy money being offered produced a balance sheet to show to the Plessey workers. On necessities alone it would all be gone in 18 months.

As we left there was still no news about management's failure to pay the week's wages owed to the women before the occupation. Similar tactics have been tried with BL. But the mood was cheerful and confident and the message was 'We'll stick it out.'

Money is urgently needed. Send donations to Plessey Fighting Fund, c/o Mary Murphy, 30 Main St, Fauldhouse, West Lothian.

The ups and downs of the Dunlop occupation

By Matthew Boulton

SOME TWO months ago 450 workers occupied the Dunlop DIY plant at Brynmawr South East Wales. Dunlop, the biggest employer in Brynmawr was occupied in protest against the constant eroding of jobs by management.

At its height, in the late '70s, Dunlop employed 1,800 workers in Brynmawr. Today, a major redundancy deal and many small scale redundancies later, Dunlop employs only 650 workers.

During all this time the workers proudly boasted that not a day's work was lost through industrial unrest. Large scale reinvestment had been promised. One pitifully ancient machine eventually arrived.

Just before Christmas more redundancies were proposed. 450 workers from the clerical section of the transport union occupied. The members of the engineering union and the office staff union, ASTMS, did not join the occupation and were locked out.

Negotiations with local management revealed that management had been considering shedding up to half the remaining workforce. The occupying workers survived the bitterest blizzards in living memory in South Wales, surrounded by snow drifts, 20 to 30 feet deep.

In mid January Dunlop announced the closure of the plant because of lost production! The negotiators from Wales transport union took over. Delegations from the local workers' movement were received and appeals to Dunlop workers for solidarity were made.

The arbitration service, ACAS, stepped in. The Wales officials of the TGWU tried to make a new agreement. The union would accept the total closure of the plant despite the fact that Brynmawr is one of the unemployment blackspots in Wales.

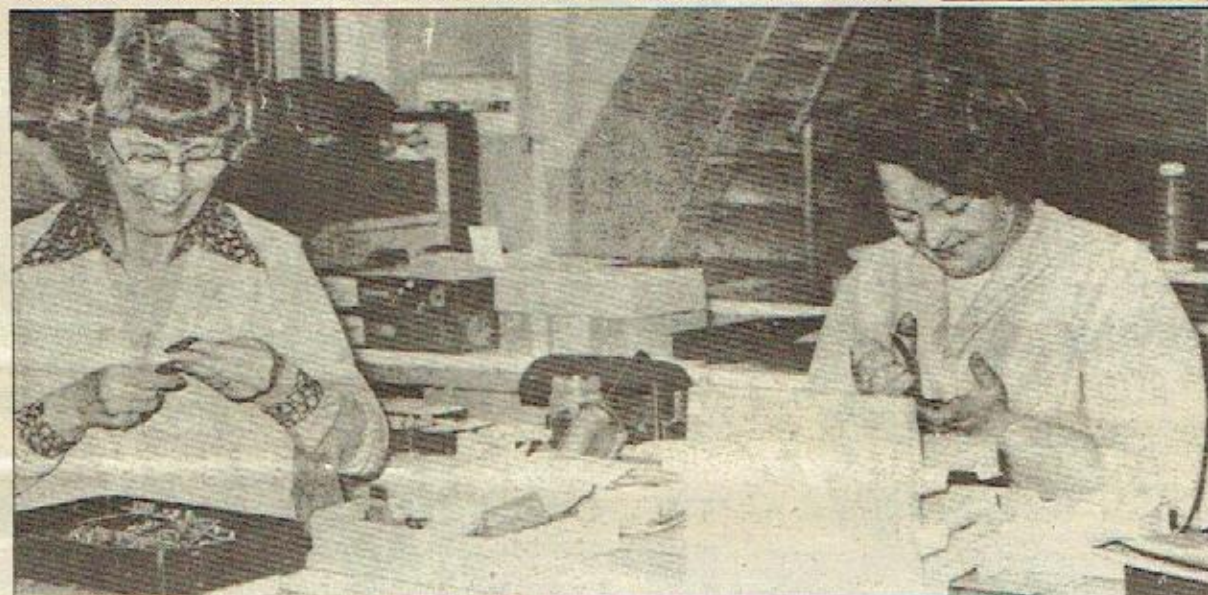
In return full redundancies rights for all workers were to be observed. But management would not accept.

The 1980 Tory Employment Act meant that the state would give nothing to workers who had lost their jobs through an industrial dispute. The Dunlop workers faced a choice: permanent unemployment or to press on with the fight. They've chosen to fight.

Leicester Dunlop has banned overtime in support of Brynmawr and other branches in the Combine have promised support.

Negotiations have now moved to a British level. Moss Evans, general secretary of the transport union, has been briefed and on 4 February a British team is due to meet Dunlop UK. If this fails the workers say that a national campaign at every level should be launched. As they point out taking on a giant multinational like Dunlop is no easy matter.

Send donations and messages of support to Dunlop strike, c/o Wales TGWU, Transport House, Cowbridge Rd, Cardiff.



Bathgate workers at Plessey are following in their sisters' action (above) who in 1977 worked-in to stop redundancies at the Kirby factory

Teams

Margaret pointed out, 'Many of the women here have their husbands working at BL. We are getting support from the whole town. Teams have been sent out to local factories and shops; they've had a great reception. We are travelling all over to raise support. A delegation has been sent to Lee Jeans.'

There are four unions involved in the occupation: the engineering union and its white collar section, TASS, the electricians' union and the

Scott's convenor arrested on picket

By Pete Clifford

IN A NEW provocation in the ten month long strike at Laurence Scott, Manchester Tactical Aid Group police arrested on the picket line, convenor Denis Barry, chairperson Peter Rowen and two other strike committee activists.

Denis Barry told Socialist Challenge what happened. 'We called a mass picket on hearing that a non-union security firm was to be responsible for protecting the factory.' The company, Clan Security, was believed to be offering to do work additional to simply security of the factory.

Attack

Over one hundred strikers assembled outside the factory last Thursday to protest about this but were refused the right to picket their own factory. 'You can't even talk to them, I'm the picketing law', we were told by Inspector

Morris', said Denis Barry in reference to their attempts to peacefully persuade the scabs not to cross the picket.

'Inspector Morris picked on myself and three other identified activists. This was a diversionary tactic, as the scabs then gained access to the factory by another means,' said Denis Barry.

Protest

He and the other three were charged with obstruction. In spite of this attack, the strikers are maintaining the picket around-the-clock basis. Moreover, they are not letting up in their campaign for removal of the engineering union executive council who they see as the main problem they face in pushing forward the struggle.

To carry out this campaign, Denis Barry is appealing to supporters of Laurence Scott to step up their financial support.

Please rush money to G. Fryer, 20 Roundcroft, Romiley, Cheshire.



Denis Barry (right) on the picket line with Charles Morris MP as the strikers stand up to the bitter winter.

Laurence Scott Strike Bulletin No 3

NEW issue with the case of the Scott strikers and their appeal for action by engineers against the AUEW council NOW OUT.

ORDER, 2p each plus postage, from LSE strike committee, 20 Roundcroft, Romiley, Cheshire. All donations for the AUEW 'rule 14' campaign gratefully accepted.

Laurence Scott Strike Committee Protest resolution for AUEW branches

'THIS branch believes executive council has seriously mishandled the Laurence Scott dispute. As this is an issue of concern to all AUEW members the branch demands a ballot for removal of executive council in line with Rule 14, paragraph five.'

Rule 14, paragraph five states: 'The executive council, or any member thereof may be removed from office by a ballot of the membership of the union provided such a ballot is demanded by ten per cent or more of the branches and not less than two thirds of the membership are in favour of such removal. The ballot should be conducted by the General Secretary.'

If your branch supports the protest resolution, make sure it is sent to the AUEW general office, 110 Peckham Rd, London SE15 and a copy is sent to the strike committee, 20 Roundcroft, Romiley, Cheshire with donations.

Socialist Challenge

Solidarnosc

As Reagan TV bonanza flops

Polish rulers tighten the screw

By Davy Jones

THE POLISH RULERS have stepped up their offensive against Solidarnosc. They have introduced massive price rises to make the Polish workers pay for the economic crisis. And they have launched vicious repression against the first mass demonstrations since Xmas against their rule.

The scope of the government's austerity package is staggering. It adds up to the biggest price increase of consumer goods imposed on the workers of an advanced nation since the 1930s. Sugar goes up by 400 per cent; ham by 300 per cent; gas, hot water and electricity by 200 per cent; butter and margarine 350 per cent; cream and cheese 400 per cent; meats and fish between 200 and 500 per cent.

These increases will savagely attack the workers' living standards. So-called 'compensatory' wage rises of roughly twenty per cent are a drop in the ocean compared to a round of price rises averaging out at between two and five hundred per cent.

The government blamed a thirteen per cent decline in national income last year, the third consecutive annual decline, for the austerity measures. But the Polish economic crisis is not the fault of the workers and farmers. The responsibility for the crisis lies squarely on the shoulders of the bureaucratic misrulers.

For years they have defended a system that allowed enormous corruption and incompetent mismanagement by the privileged elite. This was combined with the complete exclusion of the mass of workers from any role in drawing up the economic plan. The bureaucratic centralism which governs the Polish economy has nothing to do with socialism or workers' management.

But already the Polish workers have shown their response. Last weekend in Gdansk saw the first mass protests against the regime since before Xmas. Young

people gathered outside the Lenin shipyards and refused to disperse. The militia were sent in injuring, according to official reports, at least half a dozen marchers and arresting over 200.

The government's response has been severe. The curfew in Gdansk now begins at eight o'clock, all private telephone calls and travel by car has been banned. The regime has used the Gdansk events to warn the Polish workers that similar unrest will be dealt with severely.

Neither has there been any let-up in the government's clampdown against the independent union movement. Solidarnosc's leader Lech Walesa has now been served with an official internment order accusing him of threatening state security and public order in the Gdansk region. Walesa has called for a continuation of the resistance: 'Take no steps backwards', he appealed in a message smuggled to the West.

Meanwhile Reagan's horrendous 'Let Poland be Poland' extravaganza received its just desserts. Overwhelmingly the politicians and TV critics dubbed it as a disaster: 'Almost as dull as an East European propaganda film' said *The Times*; 'A virtuoso display of cringe theatre', commented the *Financial Times*.

Less than one third of the hoped-for 300 million audience saw this imperialist binge which highlighted the Turkish premier minister lecturing on democratic rights, no doubt from his experience of crushing the union movement in his own country.

Tuesday's *Daily Mail* revealed that the pop

group Abba have complained of censorship over the TV show. Their song was omitted from the show at the last minute. Guitarist Bjorn Ulvaeus complained that this was probably because they criticised human rights in El Salvador.

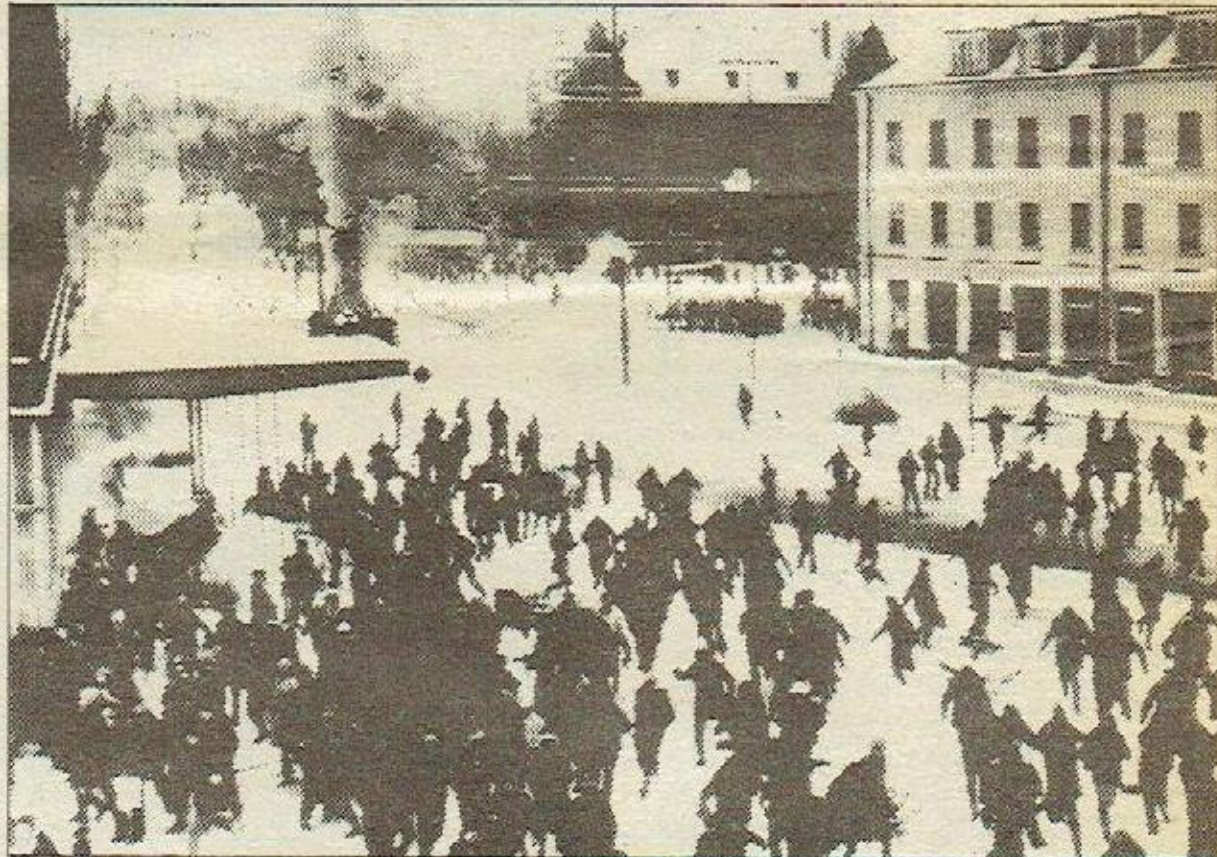
On the same day as the TV show Reagan announced a big increase in economic aid for the murderous Salvadorean regime. The hypocrisy of Reagan, Thatcher and the other stars of the 'Let Poland be Poland' show has stuck in the throats of workers throughout the world. Few have any doubts now as to whether Reagan is really a friend of the Polish workers.

The real friends of Solidarnosc are other workers — the international labour movement. On Monday the South Wales miners visited the Polish Embassy to demand that they be allowed to send a delegation to Poland to investigate the repression against the Polish miners. The TUC announced that it was to break off relations with the East German official 'union' and was considering doing the same to the Bulgarian 'unions' for their position on the Polish crisis.

The Labour Party national executive has backed the idea of a major London rally on Poland, and around the country Solidarnosc members have been touring factories and labour movement bodies spreading their call for workers' support.

The Gdansk events of last weekend should remind the labour movement that Solidarnosc is still alive and needs the support of the labour movement in this country.


See inside pages, 8, 9 & 10 for an interview with Solidarnosc militants in Britain, a round-up of solidarity news and an article by Ernest Mandel on political revolution.



The first riots since Xmas against martial law in Poland took place in Gdansk last weekend

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