

Socialist Challenge

KICK OUT THE TORIES

NO STEEL SHALL PASS



FLYING pickets discussing the steel strike with a lorry driver in Rotherham, Yorks.



STEEL strikers in Motherwell on a 1,000-strong march on Monday

Strike a blow against the Tories

THE latest offer by steel boss Sir Charles Villiers to the unions is an insult. Backed by the Tories he is refusing to put any more cash on the table. His 8 per cent offer is, as Len Murray said, 'festooned like a Xmas tree with conditions'. Villiers is demanding that jobs are sold for wages.

If ever proof was needed that co-operation with the bosses doesn't pay, the steel strike has provided it. Union leader Bill Sirs has agreed to compromise on pay, jobs and productivity time and time again. The Tories see this as a sign of weakness and are right behind Villiers when he says that no extra

cash is available.

The only way to win this strike is to be as ruthless as Villiers and the Tories. Flying pickets have already been organised in Scotland, Sheffield and Wales.

The stakes are high in this dispute. The steelworkers are not only taking on BSC management but the Tory government itself. Already the police have been brought in to try to curb effective (ie. secondary) picketing.

Steelworkers are saying that their living standards are more important than the bosses' profits. Their stand is one that every trade unionist can identify with. Solidarity is the key to

success.

It is not only steelworkers' pay that is at issue; many steelworkers will end up on the scrap heap unless they can establish themselves as a force to be reckoned with.

Thatcher thinks she can teach the trade unions a lesson by smashing the steelworkers. The British labour movement can turn the tables and strike a massive blow against the Tories by giving the steelworkers the solidarity they deserve. If they win we all win.

ORGANISE TO WIN:

* Make the strike solid — strike committees in every area should be

set up with representatives of as many unions as possible taking action. Wives of strikers should be contacted and involved in the struggle. Hostile reporting in the media should be countered with the demand for the right or reply — backed up by pickets where necessary.

* **Solidarity is key.** Stop the movement of steel, make the strike solid in the steel industry, get the craft unions out, close private steel plants, get dockers and railways to refuse to touch steel. Organise a meeting in your workplace to raise money for the steel strikers.

* For international solidarity from

European and American steel unions in boycotting British industry.

* **The TUC must lead the fight** — not only wages but jobs are at stake. The Welsh TUC has called for strike action on jobs in Wales on 21 January; the TUC should be giving this its fullest support and campaigning up and down the country for national strike action on that day.

* **This Tory government has shown what it intends to do to the British labour movement. The only way it's going to be stopped is by forcing it out of office.**

SOUTHALL SATURDAY

SUPPORT LOCAL ACTIVITIES



19 JAN

NATIONWIDE DAY OF ACTIVITY TO RAISE £10,000 FOR THE SOUTHALL DEFENCE FUND

OUR POLICIES

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

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

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

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

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us.

• I am interested in more information about activities in my area.

• I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs. (Delete if not applicable)

Address.....

STRIKE NEWS

SOUTH WALES TA

Miners call for a strike on jobs

IF the Tory government has its way South Wales will be forced to return to the 1930s. Then, half a million people left Wales in search of employment.

Today, with the rundown in the steel industry, which accounts for the jobs of one in ten people in South Wales, an unemployment rate of 12 to 15 per cent is again being predicted. Cuts in steel mean cuts in mining, rail transport, road haulage, small engineering firms.

This is why the labour movement in Wales is preparing to take on the Tories. On 21 January, 17 unions affiliated to the Welsh TUC have called for a general strike.

South Wales has the largest concentration of steel workers in the British Isles. The normally co-operative steel workers have been trodden on long enough and they are just beginning to flex their muscles in striking to defend their standard of living. Nine thousand strikers reported on Monday to mount mass pickets on the private steel plants at Port Talbot.

Cut and run

The stand of the steel workers over pay has given a boost to miners, dockers and railwayworkers in fighting to protect jobs.

After a decade of lost battles to save Ebbw Vale, East Moors, Shotton and Corby the Tories are hoping that Welsh steelworkers will fall for voluntary redundancies — 'cut and run'.

But in attacking the steel industry in South Wales the Tories have come

up against the powerful National Union of Miners. They are committed to fighting the rundown in steel and defending miners' jobs.

The Tories have also to confront the Welsh people, who are beginning to protest at the decimation of their community.

Even the Tory local paper, the *Western Mail*, said: 'Wales is destined to become an economic wasteland and remain that way'. So the call for a regional general strike on 21 January is likely to gain a good deal of sympathy from the people of Wales.

The initial focus of the struggle for jobs started with the dockers' action blacking coking coal imported from Baltimore. As the British Steel Corporation buys more subsidised coal from America and EEC countries to try to reach the break-even targets demanded by the Tory government, more and more miners'

jobs are put on the line. The BSC says it plans to import a million tonnes of cheap coal, mainly from the USA.

Subsidies

The Tories are refusing to give BSC any extra money to save steelworkers' and miners' jobs, even though it is Common Market policy to subsidise the production of coal. The miners, dockers, railwayworkers and steelworkers in South Wales are adamant about defending their living standards. They want to confront the non-interventionist policies of the Tories by demanding a £33 million subsidy.

The Welsh labour movement has a tradition of resistance. Only four years ago it forced the Labour government to back down in its attempts to sack 40,000 workers at Port Talbot, Velindre and Trostre

mills. They know that a united response, led by steelworkers and miners, demanding that jobs come first will stand a good chance of success. The labour movement should back them to the hilt in their fight to defend jobs.

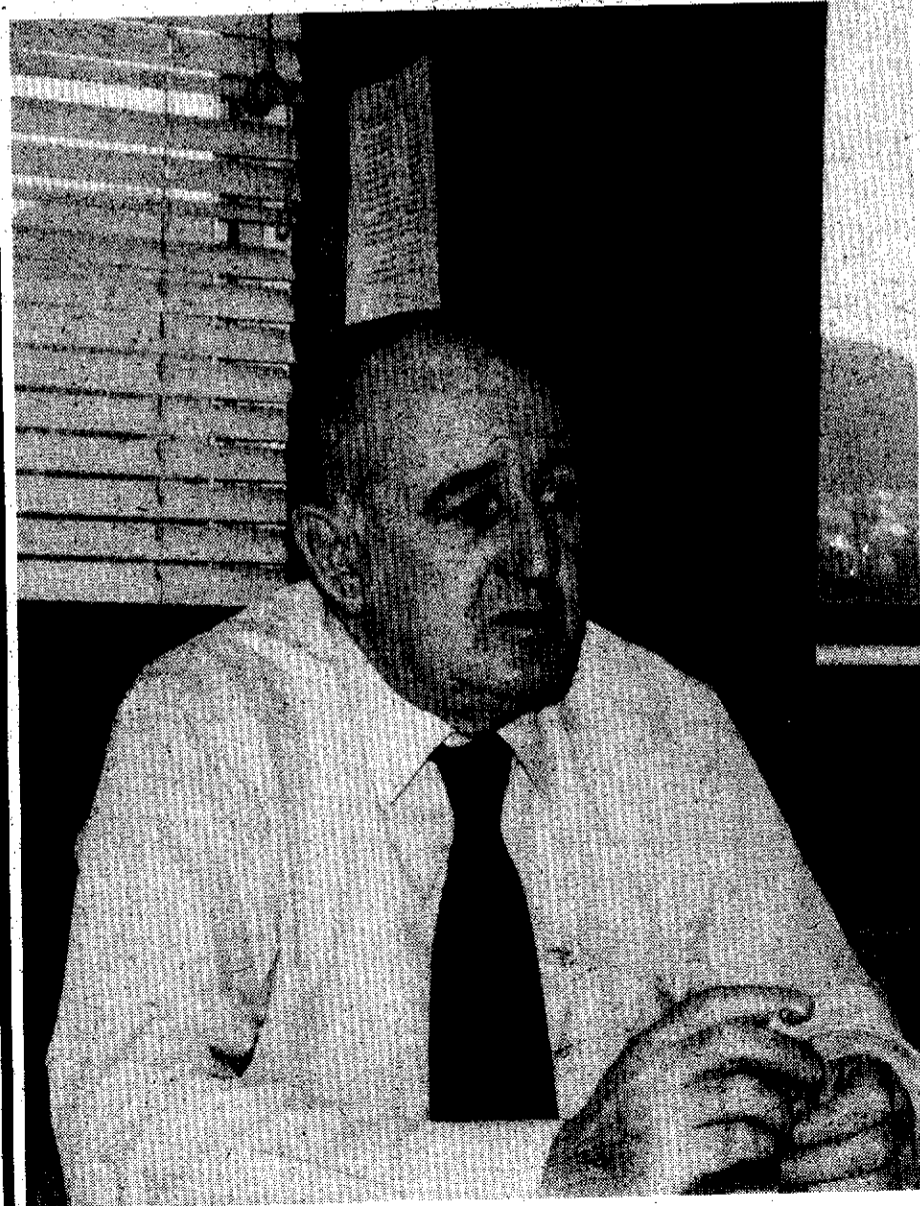
But George Wright, Secretary of the Welsh Trades Union Congress, says that he is not in favour of 'no redundancies'. Some cuts are necessary 'because modern industry demands change'. He also strongly urges the government to look into import controls as a long term solution to the problem of Welsh industry.

We think that his views are rather short-sighted.

Closures in steel and mines are due to the international economic recession and the massive technical changes that are underway worldwide. It is not possible to protect

'This is the biggest issue ever faced by South Wales'

DON HAYWOOD, Administration Officer, South Wales NUM:



“The British Steel Corporation is importing coal from the USA at a rate of £10 a tonne cheaper than South Wales coal. If this continues then many collieries in South Wales may close. What we're saying is that as all coal industries in other countries are subsidised — in Germany it's 29 times more than our coal industry — so the government should subsidise our coal.

South Wales produces the best coking coal in the world. We're members of the EEC and our industries should get the same subsidies as other EEC countries. Just before Christmas the government and BSC decided to cut back at Port Talbot and Llanwern steelworks. At least 15,000 redundancies are expected.

The steelworkers' action is understandable with the insulting offer of 2 per cent, but I'm of the opinion that the offer was designed to take the minds of the unions off jobs. Partial closure of the steel mills now is the first step to total closure.

The two ships in Newport Docks are being blacked by dockers. They contain coal produced in America by scab unions (many American miners are on the dole). The NCB has recently agreed to allow five million extra tonnes of coal into South Wales through Newport Docks to be sold to the Electricity Board, but the unions have not agreed to allow the coking coal in these particular ships to be imported by BSC to produce steel at Llanwern.

BSC are quite happy to see 10,000 tonnes of Welsh coal going to the floor each week. In fact they're making new contracts for cheap foreign coal so I can see all of the coal we produce going to the floor. We're only asking for £33 million to subsidise our coal to make it competitive and the Tories refuse to do it. Yet BSC paid out £138 million in interest rates alone last year!

This is the biggest issue ever faced by South Wales. The National Union of Railwaymen handles 35 million tons of freight for mining. The Coal Board spends £55 million a year on purchasing goods. Small engineers, hauliers, coal merchants will lose their jobs. Llanwern pays £500,000 in rates to Newport. Every Welsh family will be affected. We think it will become a national issue in mining — coal imports can close pits in Kent, Durham, Staffordshire and Northumberland.

Margaret Thatcher wouldn't get four votes here if she stood in an election. How can she spend £9,000 million on armaments and refuse us £33 million to protect jobs? Either we sit back and take it or we stand up and be counted. We're taking strike action and we're calling for a national delegate conference in the NUM.

In 1947 there were 107,000 miners in South Wales. Today there are about 30,000. We're fighting for the younger generation, voluntary redundancies mean selling jobs. We're going to strike and picket where we want to — the Tories are going to have to put 30,000 miners in jail if they think they can stop us.

The difference between the situation here and the situation in the steel community in Corby is that everyone is involved — steelworkers, dockers, miners and railwayworkers — and we're going to win.”

ALL OUT 21 JANUARY

KES ON THE TORIES



ROGER TOVEY, blast furnace worker, Llanwern:

“WHAT we are fighting for here is the future of the industrial community of South Wales and the people of South Wales must take the lead in that fight whilst canvassing support from other areas. That's why the strike on 21 January is important.

People are nervous about taking on the government but

our only weapons are our numbers and our organisation. The Llanwern workforce is young and it wants to produce steel.

We must press to subsidise either steel or coal like they are doing in other EEC countries, and load British Steel plants fully and restrict the import of subsidised steel.

My personal opinion is that with a Labour government you only get the same medicine as the Tories in smaller doses.

As long as political power is in the hands of the business and financial institutions there's no way we're going to find co-operation to solve the problems of the steel industry — for instance, micro-technology. A shorter working week will eat into profit margins and it won't be allowed to operate unless we change the economic and political system.”

countries.

The Tories are serving the interests of capitalism worldwide in their assault on our living standards and rights.

The British labour movement has to break with its nationalist traditions to resist this assault.

Workers in Britain and internationally have no interest in opposing the introduction of new technology as long as these changes can be used to improve conditions. Labour, not capital, produces the profits out of which these changes are financed, so why on earth should workers accept any redundancies at all? These changes could be used to shorten the working week, through worksharing, rather than to make redundancies.

Ruthless

When Welsh miners argue for a subsidy it should be based on this argument, to defend workers' living standards and jobs, not to protect British bosses' profits.

Welsh miners could widen their support if they used these arguments because it shows how a united assault on Tory unemployment policies could begin. It's not just Welsh workers who face the axe but miners and steel workers throughout Britain and the western world.

The common interests of workers — for a decent living standard and a shorter working week — must be pitted against the ruthless drive of capitalism to sack workers as soon as profits fall. Regional, national and international solidarity is the key, not protectionism.

Union leader

GEORGE WRIGHT,
Secretary Welsh TUC:

“We are of the view that the BSC management should be investigated. They've never attempted to win markets and hold markets.

We want a stay of execution until 1982. We want the BSC management investigated, and we want subsidies on British coal and steel in line with all other EEC countries and an inquiry into imports and import controls.

You have to accept some cuts but the workers of this country are under serious attack. We've made some mistakes in the past. Now I think we should fight it out.

On 21 January we want a mini-general strike. All the 17 unions affiliated to the Welsh TUC involved in steel are committed to this.”



Ebbw Vale: 5,000 jobs lost

Electrician

DEREK is a member of the
AUEW at Port Talbot:

“THE Tories are out to smash the unions. If the plans of BSC go through Port Talbot will be a ghost town. Everyone has to stand up and be counted.

Management is relying on acrimony between the craft unions, the Blastfurnacemen and the ISTC. We can't let them divide and rule.”

Computer worker

MARLENE, a computer
worker and ISTC member
at Llanwern:

“ISTC said they'd call on women for picket duty if they needed them but they claim they don't need us at the moment. This is not good enough — we want to get involved.”



Steelworker

RAY DAVIES, steelworker,
Llanwern:

“OUR strike is about the dignity of the steelworker and justice. Two years ago we gave 5 per cent of our income back to the nation when we accepted less than the going rate. Last year we accepted 8 per cent when everyone else was getting 15 per cent.

We've given management massive co-operation, even to losing 40,000 jobs, but we're not going to go on our knees and grovel. BSC seems to have the opinion that we're a weak force because we've co-operated in the past.

Now we've been forced to fight back. This is why the strike is about justice and the dignity of the steelworker.

If we win on pay we'll be in a position to fight to keep the steel industry in South Wales. The government is a tragedy of monumental proportions as far as the people of South Wales are concerned, and we're going to need not simply regional but national and international solidarity to avoid becoming isolated.”

Docker

DOCKERS at Newport
quayside:

“No pickets are needed here because none of the dockers will touch the two ships with the coal for Llanwern.

We think the dockers should support the miners even if they're the only ones who are willing to take on the government over jobs. The miners are taking a stand and they hope everyone else will come behind them.”

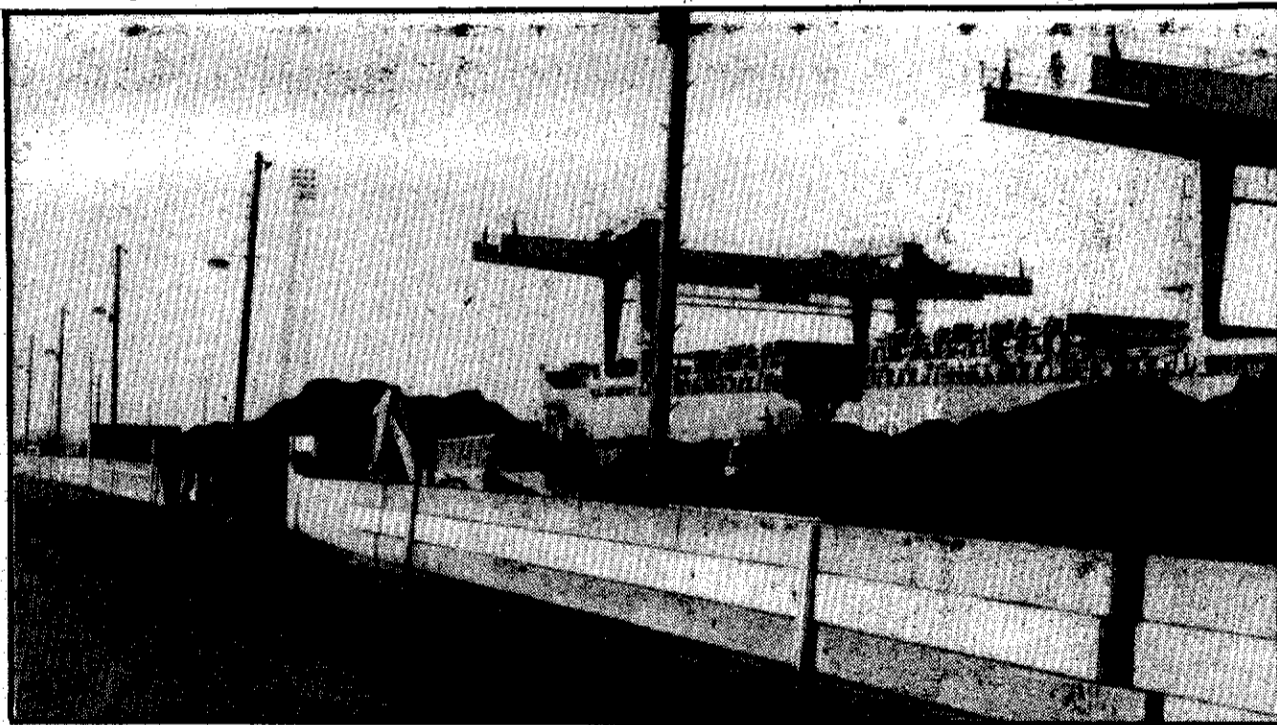
British or Welsh industry from the effects of this crisis without challenging the dictates of the drive for profit.

The ruling class has shown how clever it is at dividing the British labour movement in the fight against redundancies in the steel industry. Corby and Shotton remained isolated so they lost the battle.

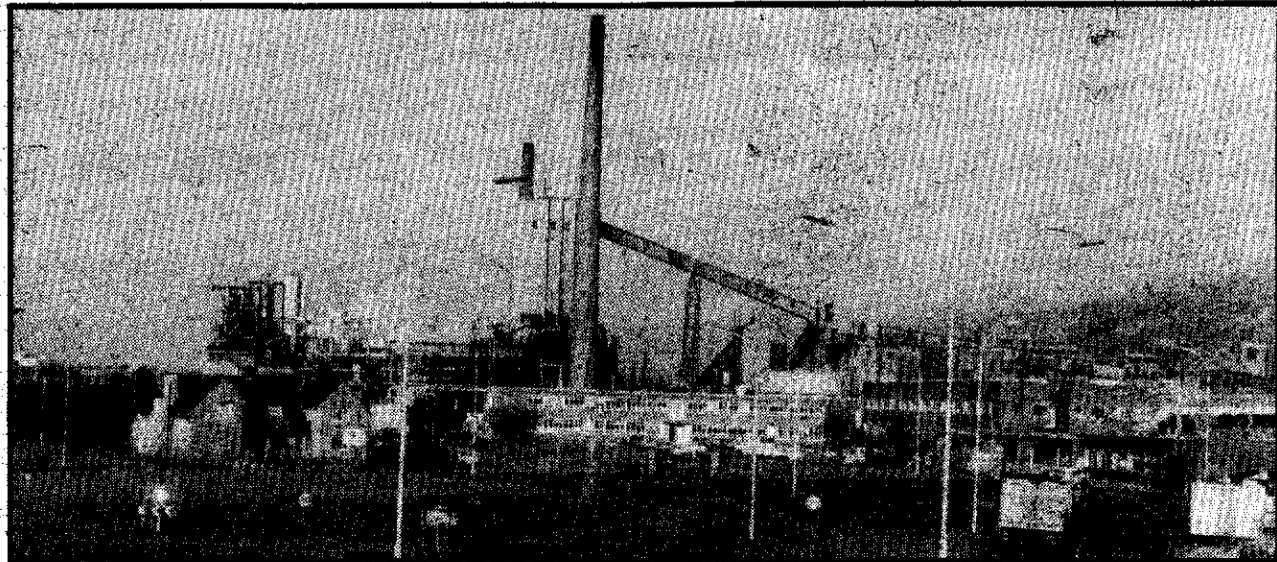
The Welsh TUC is demanding a stay of execution for the steel plants, an investigation into the BSC

management and an investigation into imports and import controls. It could end up isolating British steel workers and miners by demanding job protection for them at the expense of foreign workers.

This plays into the hands of the Tories who portray the struggle to defend jobs as backward, insular, against change. Tariff barriers encourage British workers to place their future alongside British bosses rather than workers in other



Newport docks where dockers are refusing to handle cheap coking coal from the USA



Bedwas Pit, Caerphilly — on of the pits that could close

STEEL SHEET

Steel Sheet is produced by rank and file workers at Port Talbot and now at Llanwern steel plants. It is committed not only to fighting for higher pay but also to oppose the redundancies in South Wales. As it explained in a sheet produced last week:

“In every plant rumours are rife. Are they going to close Llanwern OR close Port Talbot OR close the finishing end in Port Talbot and the heavy end in Llanwern? Will they give off Trostre and Velindre to private enterprise?

“The rumours are helping to divide plant from plant. There must be no divisions now — the only way for us to avert disaster is for all the plants and the union to act as one.”

If you're a steelworker in South Wales and you are interested in Steel Sheet write to: 9, Maes-Y-Bettws, Cwmavon, Port Talbot. Donations will be very welcome.

STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST THE TORIES

'The Tories picked us out as a weak union, but they've made a mistake'

By Clive Turnbull

'This dispute will be won by stopping every ounce of steel in the country,' according to Brian Molyneux, secretary of the Stocksbridge & Tinsley Strike Committee.

'In South Yorkshire the strike is 100 per cent solid. We're leaving only token pickets on the BSC plants, and concentrating on the rest — private firms, stockholders, and ports.'

As we spoke in the local strike headquarters, pickets were being organised for the ports of Boston and Kings Lynn.

Dispute

'Sirs' position is contradictory. On the one hand, he's saying that only BSC is involved in the dispute, and on the other, that no steel should move.

'Our position is that all steelworkers should be out. Even if the EC rejects our position, we will go ahead with mass pickets.'

Brian outlined the position of the South Yorkshire Divisional Strike Committee on the claim.

'We are for 20 per cent index linked, with no productivity strings at national or local level, and no more redundancies. We've sent telegrams to the EC explaining this.'

Future

In reply to the Tories' argument that the steel strike threatens the future of the industry, Brian Molyneux explained:

'You don't have to argue on an economic basis, but on a social basis as it affects our members. We start



Photo: Paul Orton

BRIAN MOLYNEUX (top right) with the Stocksbridge and Tinsley Park Strike Committee is the secretary of the Stocksbridge smelting shop ISTC branch and also secretary of the National Liaison Committee for Constitutional Reform in the ISTC.

He was sacked by BSC on Thursday 6 December for what management claimed were 'persistent breaches of works rules'. Management claimed that he had attended an 'unofficial' meeting but provided no evidence to back up the charge.

The response of the workers was an immediate strike, with a vote of 293 to 7 in favour, despite it being just a few weeks before Christmas, and with the prospect of a national strike in the New Year.

Brian Molyneux has been hounded by management since last May, following the publication of *Steelworkers and Reform*, a pamphlet by a number of ISTC branch secretaries from South Yorkshire, Scunthorpe, and South Wales.

With the national strike over pay, the local dispute has been suspended, but only until the wages fight is over.

from their need for jobs and a decent standard of living.

'The Tories must think we're

naïve, the way they compare BSC with other countries. We don't get the subsidies that they do.'

'They claim BSC is bankrupt, which then gives them a beautiful argument for hiving off, to denationalise.'

Suspect

This point was underlined by local MP Allen McKay, who suspects that the BSC decision to put together steelworks in South Yorkshire and Scunthorpe, under the new BSC (Yorkshire and Humberside), is a step towards denationalisation.

He fears the dispute could end in the government abolishing BSC and assuming temporary control of state steel through the National Enterprise Board.

The industry would then be gradually hived off, with private capital allowed to take 51 per cent of any part of the corporation.

'I approached BSC chairman Sir Charles Villiers about this plan, and told him that it closely resembled the operations of the old privately owned United Steels Company', said Mr McKay. 'He agreed with me.'

Knackered

Brian Molyneux added: 'If we didn't strike the trade union movement would be knackered. This isn't just directed at the steel industry. The Tories have picked us out as a weak union, but they've made a mistake.'

'This dispute is causing a minor revolution in our union. Even Conservative branch officials are becoming militants. This is going to be a different union after the strike.'

SOLIDARITY IN SOUTH YORKSHIRE.

SOLIDARITY with the steel strike has been widespread in the area. Arthur Scargill has held two meetings with local ISTC representatives to give advice on picketing.

Yorkshire NUM have given £1000 to the strike fund and agreed to pit-head collections.

The NCB has also been contacted, and instructed to buy no steel during the dispute. Similar solidarity is being called for in car and engineering plants throughout the country, by rejecting any steel deliveries.

In Rotherham, the Labour Council has broadcast over Radio Hallam details of social security payments, tax, rent and rate rebates for strikers. At Stocksbridge local nurses from Middlewood Hospital have been visiting picket lines with tea and sandwiches.

...AND THE NORTH EAST

By Dave Carter

BOTH the main steel unions report complete support for the strike in the area. That means that out of 25,000 employees, 19,000 are on strike.

The mood is bitter, since cuts of 12,000 jobs have been recently declared in the area. The Consett plant is threatened with complete closure and other jobs are threatened at the South Tees Works and at Redcar with its giant new furnace.

The first meeting of the District Strike Committee decided, in its own words, 'to organise secondary picketing'.

Transport workers at the big steel import point at Hartlepool are frustrating attempts to import continental steel.

Steel stockholders are being picketed throughout the North East. Lorries are being turned away from the largest steel stockholder, Robert Frazer at Hebburn on Tyneside, leaving 600 tonnes of steel stranded.

Pickets in Middlesbrough told us that railway workers have said that all steel will remain where it was on 1 January.

Likewise a coal carrier from Australia carrying a cargo for the Redcar steel plant remains strike bound till the end of the strike.

The effects of the strike are beginning to bite rapidly in contradiction to the propaganda being promoted about the invincibility of the employers.

Haulage contractors have been laying off. British Rail Eastern Region has been badly affected, losing the £0.5 million per week that it gains from BSC custom.

A local pay offer similar in form to that being negotiated nationally has been rejected by local officials. They say that they want to settle nationally and the 17 per cent offer has too many strings attached.

Feeling confident in Corby

CORBY, in Northamptonshire, has also been the scene of immensely solid strike action. The recent defeats in the struggle to defend steel jobs in the town have not sapped workers' militancy.

MALCOLM IMRIE and MARIANNA NAVA were in Corby over the weekend and spoke to MICK SKELTON, ISTC co-ordinator in the town.

How solid is support for the strike in Corby after four days?

Most people in Corby come from Scotland, so New Year's Day here is more of a celebration than Christmas. I had the shock of my life when 200 blokes turned out for the picket at dawn on 2 January, many of them coming straight from parties.

It's getting stronger all the time. We've been sending flying pickets every day to Kings Lynn and now to Boston (where private firms are still trying to get steel through from Scandinavian ships).

How much effect is the strike having at a national level?

They picked on us because they thought we were weak, that we wouldn't go ahead and that we wouldn't get support if we did. They thought we'd accept 2 per cent because we've accepted 8½ and 7 per cent over the last two years, that we were the weak link. But we've got total support from the NUR and ASLEF locally, and the TGWU has gone to the brink of calling a total strike.

How can anyone in their right

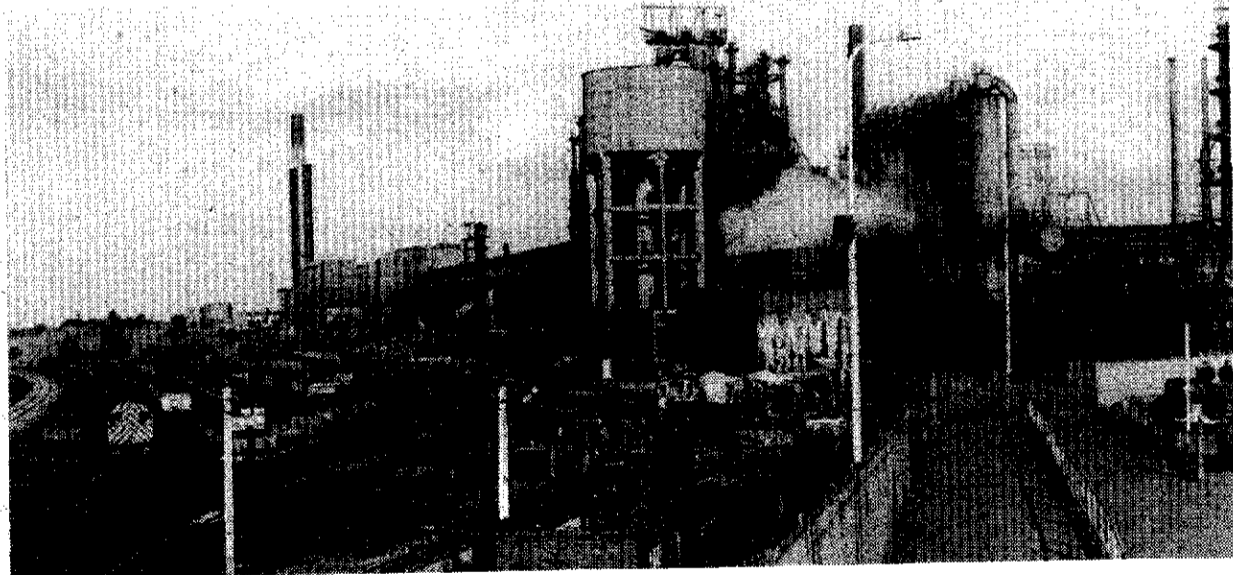


Photo: JUDE WOODWARD (Socialist Challenge)

mind, not think it's a political fight. It's 100 per cent political, both the pay and the closures.

Why has there been such a poor response to the threatened lay-offs at Corby [5000 jobs are to go in March]? Will the support for the strike change that?

What happened in Corby is that someone set the hare running. The NUBF (blastfurnacemen) gave up — there was no way they were going to support us — and without them we couldn't have made steel anyway.

But we were trying to keep the works open on behalf of tube workers, steel and iron workers. We knew that severance pay's no use to them — a job's a lot more use. And

the town itself was pushing the fact that if the works went, it would be decimated.

But when it went public that one section had given up, the hare was away. We had to negotiate redundancy payments even though acceptance was against union instructions, simply because so many people wanted the money. But even if we're going we have to support those who'll be left holding the baby.

Things can change rapidly though. Before the strike Corby was like a ghost town, despairing. Now there are two factors coming into play. First, if the strike continues the 14 metre furnace at Redcar might take six months to recover, which would mean in effect another six months life for Corby.

And people are suddenly starting to realise that the closure will fast be a reality unless they do something. When you're all together on strike, you start to feel different, more confident.

The more successful the strike is, the more chance we've got to re-start the fight against lay-offs.

Sweet Charity!

The ISTC has given its seven divisions just £1000 each to finance the dispute.

In South Yorkshire, they spent £3000 in the first day alone.

The assets of the ISTC run to £10½ million of which £3 million is in liquid assets.

SUPPORT THE STEEL STRIKE



SOVIET invaders in Kabul. Inset: Babrak Karmal, the newly-installed prime minister

Why the Soviet Union went into Afghanistan

By Tariq Ali

WITH the entry of thousands of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, bourgeois leaders and commentators — notably those who justified the French interventions in Chad and Zaire, and the South African invasion of Angola — are now shedding tears for the plight of the Afghan people. The object of the exercise is to portray the Russians as an untamed 'expansionist' power hell-bent on revolution by conquest. Nothing could be further from the truth.

There is a basic difference between Soviet foreign policy and that of the United States and other imperialist powers. This relates to the different modes of production which exist in these countries.

The Western powers are determined to use all available means to preserve societies resting on the private ownership of the means of production. They realise that seeking to resolve their own economic and political differences through direct military conflict (as in 1914 and 1939) risks weakening their common front against the working class. But the struggle for markets within the imperialist world continues apace, combined with the utilisation of a number of neo-colonial states for the cheap production of manufactured goods.

The Soviet Union is not an imperialist power in this Leninist sense. The expansionist dynamics of imperialist exploitation were

removed with the expropriation of the capitalists after the 1917 October revolution — a gain which has never been reversed. It is not the dictates of private capital which determine Soviet foreign policy but something very different.

The ravages of the imperialist-sponsored civil war which followed the October revolution drained the energies of the small working class and crippled the democratic institutions of political power it had established: the system of soviets. This allowed a bureaucratic caste championed by Stalin to seize the reins of political power in the USSR.

Caste

In place of the policy of defence of international working class interests put forward by Lenin and Trotsky, Stalin and his co-thinkers substituted the idea of 'socialism in one country'. The interests of working people throughout the world were henceforth to be subordinated to defence of the Soviet Union — as the basis for the rule of this bureaucratic caste.

Thus Soviet foreign policy for the last fifty years has been determined by one basic priority: the preservation of national security within the framework of the international status quo. Its overall hallmark is caution and conservatism. Any development in the

international class struggle which jeopardises this framework has to be avoided or, if necessary, stamped out.

Hence the periodic adjustments in the Stalin era which were necessary to bring Soviet policy into line with the changing status quo. In the 1930s, Stalin inaugurated the Popular Fronts to defend the bourgeois powers against Nazism. From 1939 to 1941 he made a few changes and accepted Hitlerite rule in Germany via the Nazi-Soviet pact. Finally, through the agreements at Yalta and Potsdam, he closed down the Communist International and replaced it with the theory of 'spheres of influence', by which the Soviet Union agreed to prevent social upheavals in Italy and France in return for the West's acceptance of Stalinist hegemony over Eastern Europe.

Soviet foreign policy has not altered since in its essentials. Andrei Gromyko, a veteran Stalinist diplomat and Foreign Minister, wrote in *Pravda* on 28 June 1968 (two months before the invasion of Prague): 'Our foreign policy is

TROTSKY ON BALTIC INVASION, 1939-40

Q. Do you, as the former head of the Red Armies, feel it was necessary for the Soviets to move into the Baltic states, Finland, and Poland, to better defend themselves against aggression? Do you believe that a socialist state is justified in extending socialism to a neighbour state by force of arms?

A. It cannot be doubted that control over the military bases on the Baltic coast represents strategic advantages. But this alone cannot determine the question of invasion of neighbouring states. The defence of an isolated workers' state depends much more on the support of the labouring masses all over the world than on two or three supplementary strategic points. This is proven incontrovertibly by the history of foreign intervention in our civil war of 1918-20.

Robespierre said that people do not like missionaries with bayonets. Naturally that does not exclude the right and duty to give military aid from without to peoples rebelling against oppression. For example in 1919 when the Entente strangled the Hungarian revolution, we naturally had the right to help Hungary by military measures. This aid would have been understood and justified by the labouring masses of the world. Unfortunately we were too weak... At present the Kremlin is much stronger

and will continue to be characterised by resoluteness in defending the state interests of the Soviet people, in safeguarding the inviolability of our land frontiers, maritime coasts and air space, and in protecting the dignity of the Soviet flag and the rights and security of Soviet citizens.'

Even the ritual reference to the struggle of the international working class was lacking. This absence was, however, not allowed to remain in Soviet textbooks on foreign policy. In one such manual, dedicated exclusively to Soviet foreign policy, the authors (including Gromyko) wrote: 'Soviet foreign policy reflects the harmonious connection of the international interests of the Soviet state and of the Soviet people with the international duties of the working class which has come to power. Soviet foreign policy combines patriotism and service to the interests of the Soviet homeland with internationalism.'

Coherent

The first quotation is at least coherent. The second is confused gibberish. There can be no foreign policy based on both a narrow-minded national chauvinism and proletarian internationalism.

The driving force behind the USSR's role in world politics is its domestic preoccupations. Any event which weakens the power of the bureaucracy vis-a-vis the masses inside the Soviet Union is to be dealt with rapidly and brutally. The crushing of the Hungarian and Czechoslovak mass uprisings are a case in point. Tito got away because he threatened Stalin with a protracted guerrilla war and armed the Yugoslav workers. It is questionable whether Brezhnev would have invaded Czechoslovakia if Dubcek had taken a similar course.

But all this does not mean that there is no objective tension between the Soviet Union and imperialism. The very existence of the Soviet Union and other workers states — now comprising a third of the world — limits the ability of imperialism to rule at will and creates a situation of permanent confrontation. In turn this means that when social classes and political groups at their head seek to free themselves from domination by capital, the Soviet Union is often forced to provide military and economic aid.

Ambitions

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan is thus motivated neither by 'imperialist ambitions' nor by a decision to transform the country into an Outer Mongolia. Its aim is to institute a government not dissimilar to those that exist in Angola, Mozambique, South Yemen, Ethiopia. The Russians were clearly worried that the excesses of Hafizullah Amin were handing the country on a platter to the religious rebels backed by the West. Such a regime, they believed, would threaten Soviet state interests. Hence they moved in and installed Karmal in power.

In one of his last writings Lenin displayed extraordinary foresight. He expressed concern at the consequences which the policies of 'the dzerzhymorda — the Great Russian chauvinist and bureaucratic bully' could have 'among those hundreds of millions of the peoples of Asia who will in the near future move to the forefront of the historic stage'.

Stalin's treatment of China and Iran, and now Brezhnev's entry into Afghanistan, indicate that the price paid will be a high one.



Tass supplied this photograph from Kabul on Saturday with the following caption: "Afghan people resolutely support the measures of the new leadership in Afghanistan aimed at defending gains of April revolution of 1978. Afghans read newspaper Truth of the April Revolution 1978."

WHAT were the events in Afghanistan which led to the overthrow of Hafizullah Amin and the massive influx of Soviet troops?

This is not a question that has greatly concerned the media. They have preferred to denounce Soviet 'expansionism' in order to prepare the way for renewed military intervention by the West.

CHARLES LISTER was in Kabul just a few weeks before the coup. Here he reports on the background to the event that has shaken the world.

By Charles Lister

TWO MONTHS AGO, a secret sympathiser of the Parcham [Flag] faction of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan [PDPA] told me that they would be back in power within months. I didn't believe him. Everybody in Kabul at that time agreed that Parcham had been totally liquidated. But today Parcham leader Babrak Karmal is back, this time as leader of Afghanistan.

Karmal, in his fifties, is the son of a senior army officer. He is a well known figure in Afghan politics. Under the King, Nadir Shah, he held the post of Minister of Planning, from which he was ousted in 1965.

About a year later he formed his Parcham faction within the PDPA. Relations between the two factions of the party — the other being the Khalq (Masses) faction — were stormy from the start. Whereas Khalq leaders like Hafizullah Amin and Mohammed Taraki found their inspiration in the Communist parties of the USSR and India, Babrak Karmal was much closer to Pakistani petty-bourgeois parties such as Wali Khan's National Awami Party.

It was this political difference, rather than the personality clashes highlighted by Western observers, that underlay the persistent feud between the factions.

Great Divide

In July 1973 came the great divide. Mohammed Daoud, a bourgeois figure who had been deposed as prime minister ten years earlier, came back to power, overthrowing the monarchy. The first Republic of Afghanistan was proclaimed. Arguing that Daoud's 'revolution' was a step forward, Parcham entered his government. This effectively split the PDPA, as the Khalq remained in clandestine opposition.

But soon Daoud decided that he had no further need for the left-wing veneer provided by the Parcham ministers. They were deposed and many were arrested. Parcham was temporarily wrecked; it was in organisational disarray, and its relations with the Khalq were poisonous. (Khalq leaders had accused Karmal of condoning, if not actually encouraging, the arrests of Khalq members by Daoud's West German-trained police.)

But Daoud's government was in crisis too. His great modernisation programme had come to nothing. Seeking to break from the near monopoly of Soviet assistance to the country, he had opened the door to Western aid. One part of his new programme was the signing of a treaty with the Shah of Iran sharing the waters of the Helmand river. Karmal came back into prominence at the head of mass demonstrations opposing the scheme.

Decaying

In April (Saur) 1978, Daoud's decaying regime was overthrown by a lightning coup. Neither faction of the PDPA expected it so soon. The coup was in fact an armed preventive strike against a wave of repression that Daoud was expected to unleash. But matters went much further. Daoud was killed in his palace and the PDPA took power in a 'ten hour revolution'.

Taraki was the new regime's number one, Karmal number two. But the alliance soon crumbled as the government divided on the orientation of the new 'Democratic Republic of Afghanistan'. What these differences were remains a matter for conjecture.

The PDPA was strongly Stalinist in its origins and traditions. Debate on democratic lines was unknown. Differences were traditionally settled by purges. Furthermore the virtual lack of popular participation in the April 1978 coup meant that no debate was taken up in the independent newspapers. The outcome was predictable.

Parcham ministers were sent abroad as 'ambassadors', isolating them from their



WHY SOVIET TANKS ARE ROLLING ACROSS

supporters and the masses. Reportedly Karmal was put bodily on his plane to Prague by the military. Soon they were summoned back to Kabul to face charges of high treason. Few, if any, responded. Most sought political asylum in Eastern Europe.

The Khalq enjoyed a brief period of stability. A five year plan was devised, Taraki decreed a number of popular reforms (such as the abolition of debts to absentee landlords), and the party felt strong after the purging of the Parcham leaders. Taraki was confident that Soviet aid would soon raise the quality of life in tribal, feudal Afghanistan.

But from February 1979 the internal situation began to deteriorate rapidly. Delicate reforms on women's rights, the land reform, the campaign against illiteracy (especially as it affected

women), were often rammed through by Khalq cadres and Soviet advisers in brutal, ruthless ways. Many of the rural areas began to resent these intrusions on traditional values, and the Khalq regime rapidly found itself confronted by a series of Jihads (holy wars).

Hard-line

The Iranian revolution did play an important triggering role in this. A new course was clearly needed. Taraki, in collaboration with the Soviet Union, decided that his hard-line deputy Amin had to go. But unfortunately for the Soviet Union the coup backfired. After a shoot-out at the presidential palace, Moscow found itself confronted with Amin as head of state.

The Soviet bureaucracy only resumed its aid

after it had received assurances from Amin that the reforms prepared by Taraki would be implemented. While rumours of friction between the Soviet Union and Amin were rife, I was frequently told in Kabul that, 'the Soviet Union will never intervene. It cannot control the countryside. The Russians know that.'

The fact that the Soviet Union did intervene does not demonstrate their concern for the 1 million largely peasant population of Afghanistan, but rather their fear that the reactionary pro-Islamic and monarchist guerrillas would win big military victories against the faltering Amin regime.

The stability of the Soviet Union's borders and therefore of the position of the Moscow bureaucracy, has always been a guiding principle above and beyond thoughts of promoting

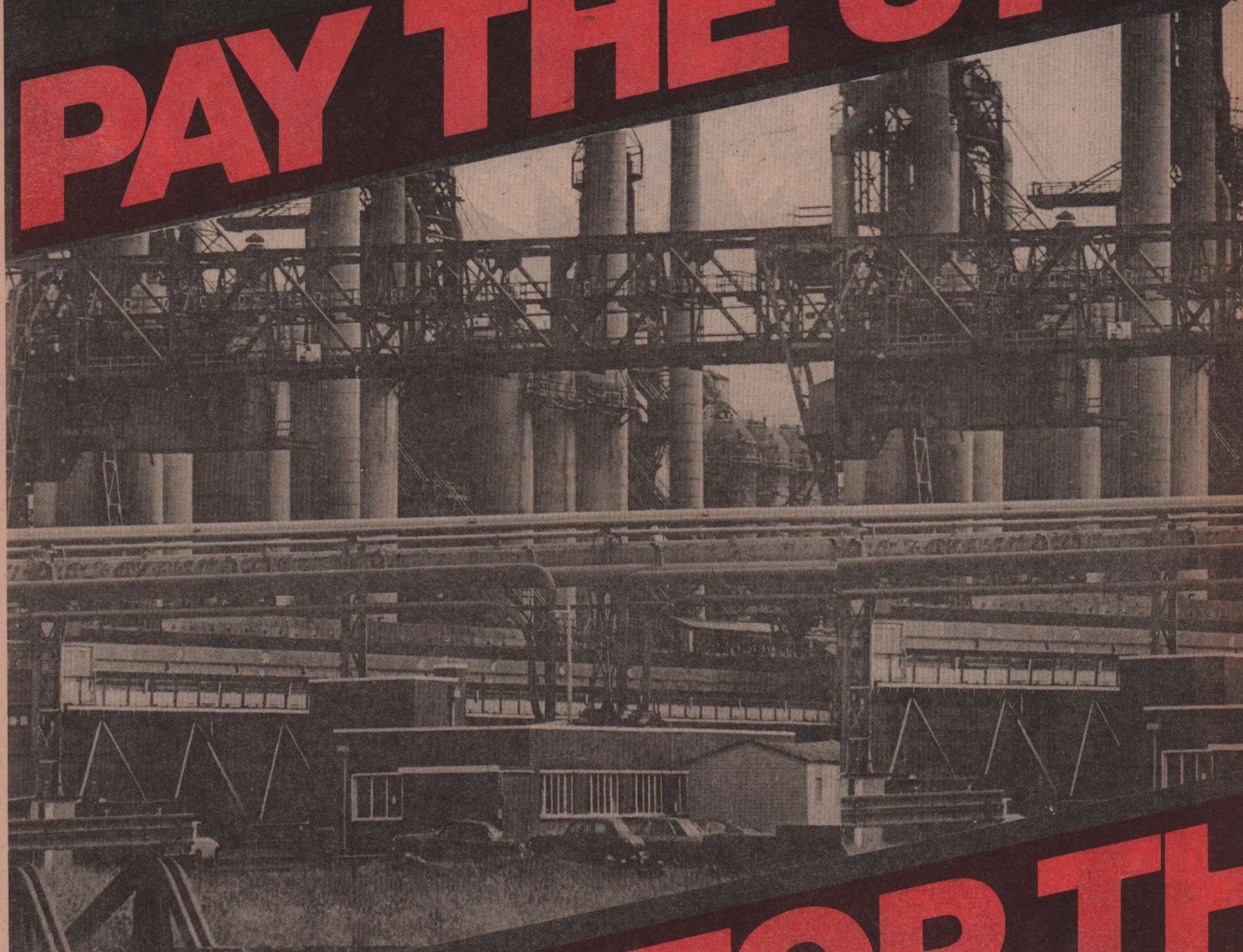
Socialist Challenge

STEEL STRIKE SPECIAL



Socialist Challenge

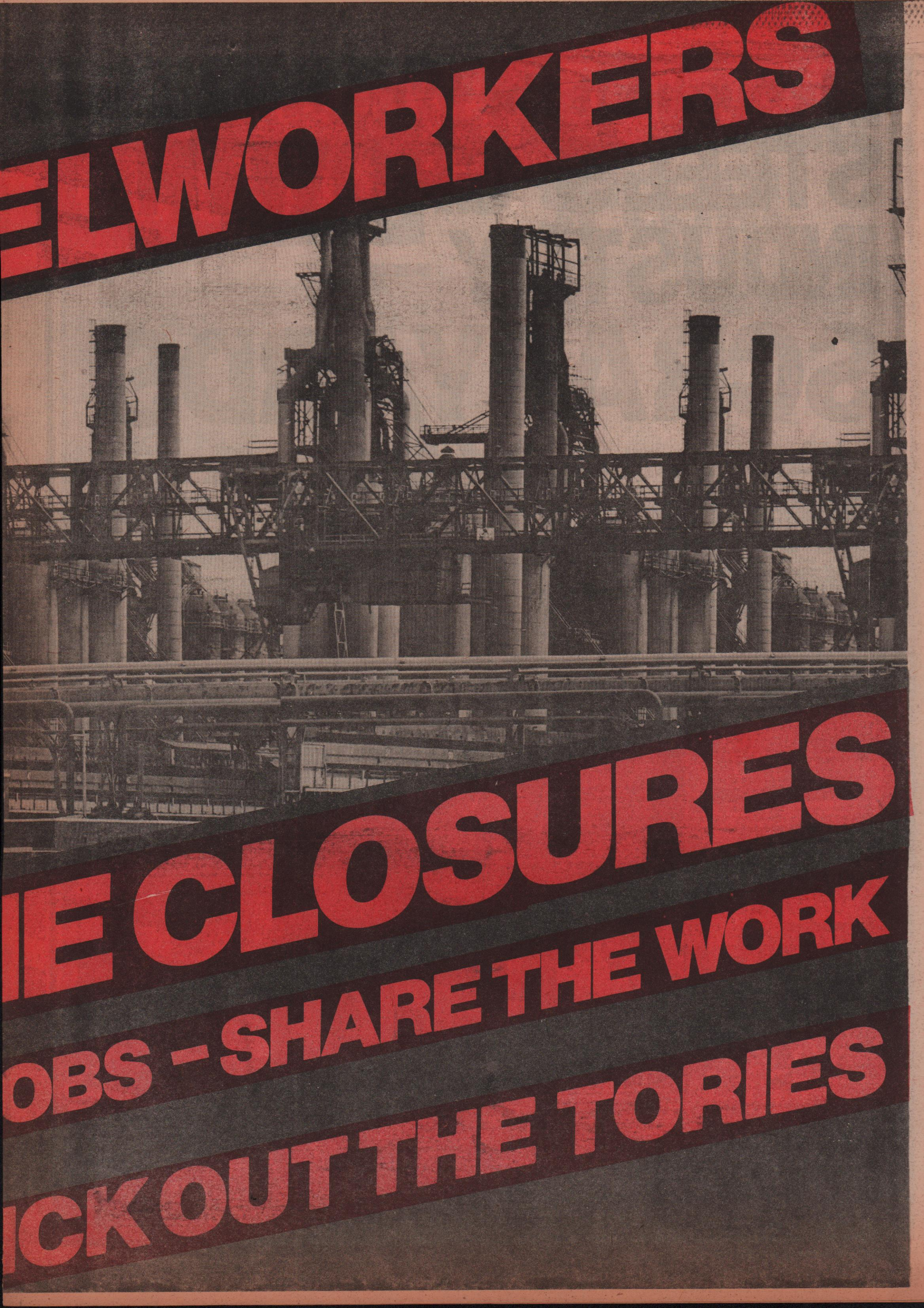
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Throughout the Western world STEEL'S GROWTH INDUSTRY — SCRAPYARDS

By Geoffrey Sheridan

THE DECADE has opened with two kinds of metal competing for the headlines. The escalating price of gold registers the panic of the wealthy in response to the deepening crisis in the West. The plans to cutback steel production in virtually all the advanced capitalist countries indicate the depth of that crisis.

The British Steel Corporation is by no means alone in seeking to shrink its losses by shutting plants and running down its workforce — although, under the Tory government, it is ahead of most other Western countries in the pace at which it aims to slash its steel-making capacity.

With the bulk of steel production required for the construction, car, and machine industries, demand is closely tied to the ups and downs of capitalism's economic cycles. The graphs for each of these industries presently resemble a ski slope.

Post-war boom

In the early '70s, when the governments in the West crossed their fingers and hoped they were still riding on the post-war boom, whatever the temporary setbacks, BSC set itself a production target of 30m tonnes a year.

Production in 1970-1 was at a peak of 26m tonnes, and the new target required a massive programme of modernisation, part of which has now been achieved. The problem is that sales have not met these expectations. BSC is now planning for an annual production of 15m tonnes.

The story is repeated in the rest of the Common Market. Until a few years ago the EEC believed that in 1980 steel output in the nine countries would reach 228m tonnes. That projection has since been levelled to below 140m tonnes.

Steel workers

There has been a corresponding drop in the consumption of steel in the EEC, which fell from a 1973 peak of 126m tonnes to just over 100m tonnes last year.

The Economist spelled out the implications for steel workers in West Europe. 'The latest "guesstimates" of the sort of steel capacity EEC should sensibly aim for by the mid-1980s make gloomier reading than even this newspaper expected.

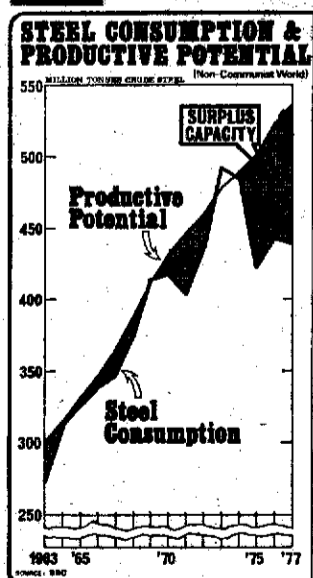
'If productivity is by then 500 tonnes per man year — much better than now, but barely acceptable by world standards — that means something like 200,000 jobs out of the present labour force of 510,000 (not including staff) should go'.

This figure, the Economist added, is based on the 'most optimistic assumptions'.

The prospects are similar in the United States, where steel consumption last year is estimated to have dropped from 99m to 90m tonnes. United States Steel, the second largest steel company in the West, laid off 13,000 workers, and more are expected to go.

The problems facing Nippon Steel in Japan, the West's largest steel company, indicate the scale of the crisis affecting the steel industries in the advanced capitalist countries.

Two years ago Yoshihiro Inayama,



GERMAN steelworkers on strike last year for a 35-hour week and higher pay. The graph, showing the West's 'surplus' capacity, indicates why demands need to cross national frontiers.

chairperson of Nippon Steel, said: 'From now on, there won't be much incentive for rapidly expanding steel-making capacity. The advanced economies have reached the point where so-called prosperity has just about hit the ceiling.'

Nippon Steel's new, technologically advanced mills need high operating rates to realise the economies of scale which the mills are designed to achieve. Unit costs rise sharply as production falls, which is the prospect now

facing Japan.

This arises not simply from the domestic effects of the economic crisis, but the declining demand for Japan's exports of steel, which make up about a third of its sales of the product. A major reason for this is the expanding steel production of the neo-colonial countries.

Several of these countries have established the basic industry which first underpinned the industrial revolution in the West — with

threatening results for capitalists in this part of the world.

In the past year Brazil has increased its steel output by 14 per cent, India by 10 per cent, and South Korea and Taiwan have both registered rises of nearly 70 per cent. 'Little can be done in the long run,' the Financial Times noted 12 months ago, 'to preserve the world markets of Europe, the US and Japan against the new producers.'

Shrinking

The response from the advanced capitalist countries, faced with shrinking markets, competition between the respective steel industries, and imports from the Third World, has been protectionism — yet another solution to their crisis taken from the portfolio of remedies which led up to the crash of '26 and the ensuing depression.

The method employed by the United States government is known as the trigger price mechanism, which blocks steel imports if their price is calculated to be below production costs.

Protectionism and restraints on competition are part of the EEC's Davignon plan, which specifies minimum prices for steel produced within West Europe, as well as for imports. The other part of the Davignon plan are the mass redundancies and closures, to cut steel production throughout the Common Market.

Headlong

And the logic for this headlong rush to solve the problems of Inayama's 'so-called prosperity', which the working class barely glimpsed? The Financial Times says it all:

'The combination of Davignon and the US trigger price does seem to have brought about this new philosophy that profits are more desirable than tonnes of steel produced.'

The FT is wrong, though, about the originality of this philosophy. That's been with us as long as capitalism, which scars a world wracked by material need with its ever-deepening cycles of 'over-production'.

The battle for wages and jobs, and still more the world-wide struggle to put an end to the capitalist system, are in no way enhanced by one of the favourite remedies of the Communist Party and the left in the Labour Party: import controls.

Protectionism will not sustain the productive capacity of the British steel industry. But it would help to put steelworkers in the rest of the West and in the Third World on the dole queue.

Above all, the raising of this demand by the labour movement would help to stave off a nightmare of the bosses: a campaign across national frontiers to counter the sackings and closures with the demand for worksharing with no loss of pay.

When, within the past 12 months, the German steelworkers struck for seven weeks for a 35-hour week and higher pay, and the French steelworkers in Longwy led a hundred thousand-strong march against the closure of their plant, anything that cuts across the possibility of an international 'steelworkers' campaign would be a tragedy.

The cold war —as it was

By Geoff Bell

THE Soviet invasion of Afghanistan seems to leave detente as dead as the 1970s. The only argument is not whether the world has returned to the cold war but whether we are on the road to a hot one.

Certainly the image Western propaganda is currently putting over is comparable to the message that was being broadcast from the same camp after the Second World War: an aggressive, expansionist Soviet Union; freedom loving Western democracies.

But was this true after 1945? Someone who should know is a gentleman by the name of George F Kennan. Until 1946 Kennan was stationed in the US Embassy in Moscow. He was then brought to Washington to become director of the Policy Planning Staff of the US State Department, which acted as a 'think tank' for the US implementation of the cold war. At the time Kennan made speeches describing communism as a 'malignant parasite', an outbreak of 'pathogenic bacteria', explaining how the US had to cleanse the world of this terrible disease.

Rudimentary

But 20 years later, in the period of cold war 'thaw', Kennan was to acknowledge the truth concerning the image he had helped to create of the Soviet Union bent on conquering the world. In a speech in 1965 he said:

'It was perfectly clear to anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of the Russia of that day that the Soviet leaders had no intention of attempting to advance their cause by launching attacks with their own armed forces across frontiers.'

The real 'threat' according to Kennan was, 'conspiratorial action of the Communist-trained and inspired minorities', who hoped to seize, 'dictatorial powers in their respective national orbits'. What Kennan meant by this is illustrated by the event which precipitated the US declaration of cold war — the civil war being fought in Greece in which America intervened in 1947. The background to this conflict provides further evidence of how limited a threat to the capitalist order the Soviet Union posed after the Second World War.

Greece had figured in the Yalta talks of 1944 when the allies had divided up parts of the world into spheres of influence. Although Communists led the anti-Nazi resistance in Greece Stalin agreed that Britain should have a free hand there. By Churchill's own account, 'Stalin... adhered strictly and faithfully to our agreement'.

But despite Stalin's attitude the British-backed right-wing government had difficulty in imposing its authority and it was this failure



which brought American intervention. President Truman asked the US Congress to grant the Greek government 400 million dollars worth of military aid and accompanying his call came his presentation of the 'Truman doctrine', which gave the ideological gloss for the cold war. This pledged US support for any country of 'free peoples' who 'are resisting attempted subjection by armed minorities or by outside pressures'.

This general principle applied only in those circumstances where the 'subjection' was being exercised by the left. Thus in the name of 'freedom' the US supplied its own 'outside pressure' in Greece and as this was being prepared it endorsed the French bombing of Haiphong in 1946 in which, in a single afternoon, 6,000 died.

In other words what lay behind the cold war was not Soviet expansionism but the fear of revolution from within.

This fear of revolution was the dominant characteristic in the attitudes of the capitalist world as the Second World War drew to its close. In January 1945 the US military headquarters of General Eisenhower issued a 'directive on internal security' which alerted troops in France to the dangers of 'internal disorder and strife' due to 'economic and political factors'. The directive went on to outline procedures for the putting down of any such revolt.

Imaginery

Again the issue of a Soviet threat was imaginary. In post-war France, on Stalin's instruction, the Communist Party sat as junior partners in conservative, clericalist governments, until they were forced out after the presentation of the Truman doctrine.

Accompanying the cold war rhetoric came Marshall Aid, the declared aim of which was to create 'political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist'. Millions of dollars were ploughed into Western Europe in an attempt to buy off the threat of revolution. Investment in the cheap labour market was also good economic sense for US business, but the essential aim of Marshall Aid, and later 'foreign aid', was political. Desmond Fitzgerald, a leading light of the post-war CIA, explained foreign aid this way: 'The critic thought the objective was to get economic growth, and this wasn't the objective at all. The objective may have been to buy a lease or get a favourable vote in the UN, or to keep a nation from falling apart or to keep some country from giving the Russians airbase rights.'

Assistance

Financial assistance wasn't confined to buttressing the capitalist world's definition of 'free institutions'. While fascist Spain was, for the sake of appearance, denied Marshall Aid, the US financed Franco in another way by leasing military bases there. 'Spain has nothing to fear from the United States', wrote US President Roosevelt towards the close of the Second World War, a war fought, supposedly, to rid the world of fascism.

Roosevelt's successor, Truman, explained US policy by saying 'we cannot allow changes in the status quo by such methods as coercion, or by such subterfuge as political infiltration'. What he meant by 'changes' were changes in a leftward direction but the identification of the enemy called 'political infiltration' served another purpose, that of witch-hunting anyone suspected of not swallowing the cold war ideology in the US itself. The practice reached its height with the McCarthy 'purges' in the early 1950s. McCarthyism could only be sustained if a 'foreign' threat could be posed, if socialism, radicalism, even liberalism could be portrayed as pro-Soviet, as putting 'national security' at risk.

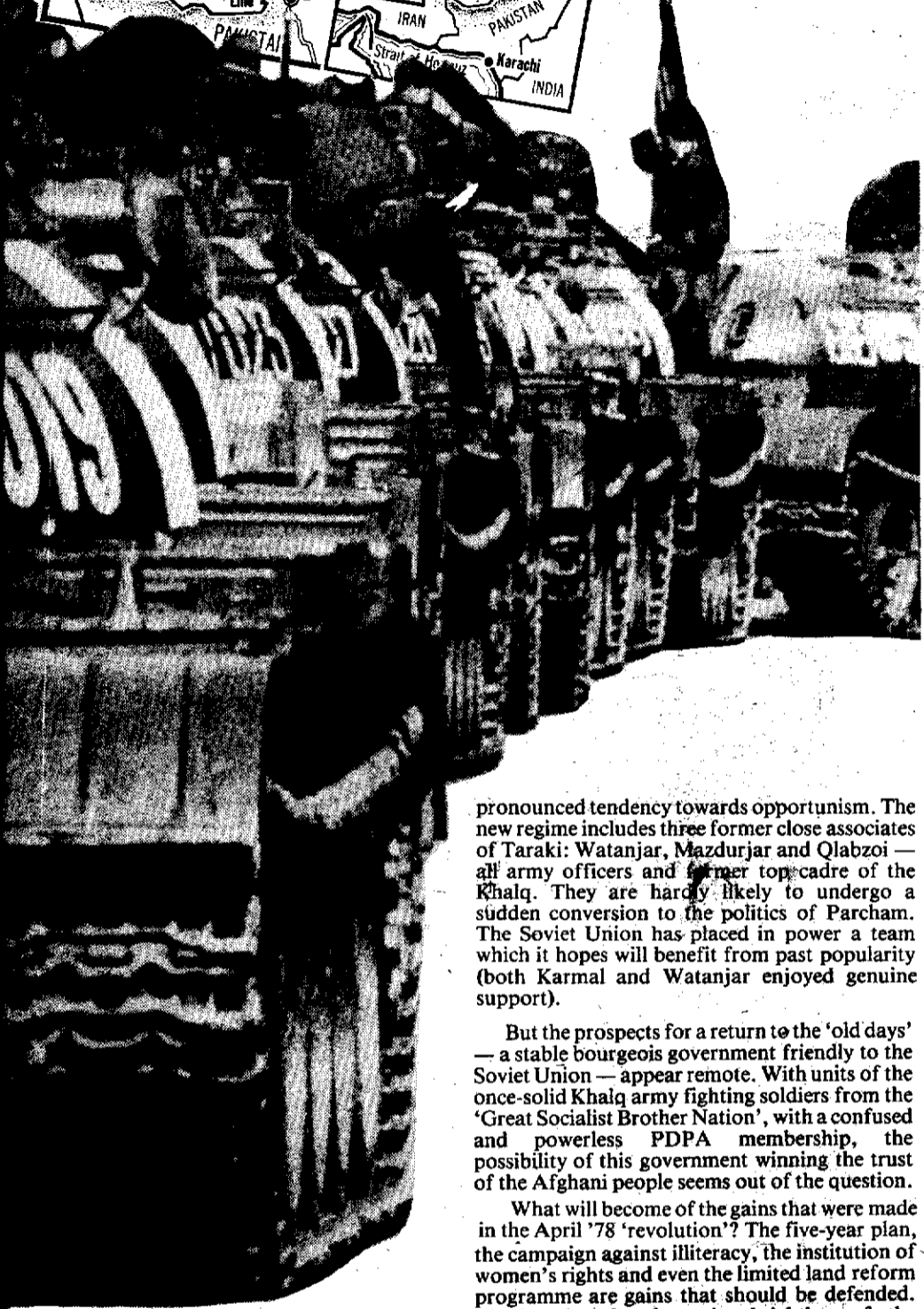
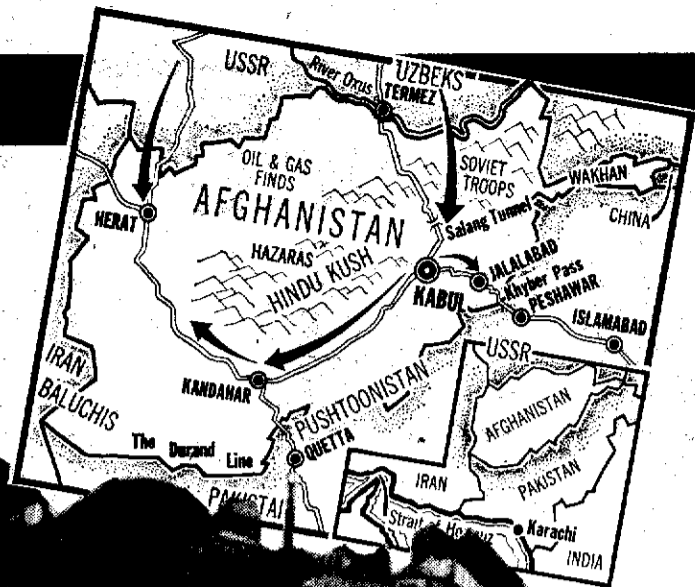
But it was the US which posed the greatest threat to many people's security. When NATO was launched the threat of a capitalist war on the Soviet Union became a real possibility, for as George Kennan later said NATO was a 'defence' against 'an attack no one was planning'.

Intervention

The US and its capitalist allies not only planned attacks, it launched them. The early 1950s saw Western intervention in Korea, Guatemala, Iran and elsewhere. The theory was summed up by Allen Dulles, a former head of the CIA: 'We cannot safely limit our response to the communist strategy of take-over solely to those cases where we are invited in by the government still in power.'

Dulles's definition of 'communist take-over' was somewhat wide-ranging: it meant that any leftist government anywhere in the world was liable to US invasion, economic pressures, or CIA-organised assassinations.

Yet in many instances US policy met with failure. The revolutions in Cuba, Vietnam, and more recent events in Angola, Iran and other countries show the difficulties the capitalist world has had in imposing its demands for 'world order'. The ability of US imperialism to intervene where it likes is not so great as when Truman spelt out his 'doctrine' of counter-revolution in 1947. But the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan doesn't change the fact that it is that doctrine which is still the greatest threat to humanity.



pronounced tendency towards opportunism. The new regime includes three former close associates of Taraki: Watanjar, Mazdurjar and Qlabzoi — all army officers and former top cadre of the Khalq. They are hardly likely to undergo a sudden conversion to the politics of Parcham. The Soviet Union has placed in power a team which it hopes will benefit from past popularity (both Karmal and Watanjar enjoyed genuine support).

But the prospects for a return to the 'old days' — a stable bourgeois government friendly to the Soviet Union — appear remote. With units of the once-solid Khalq army fighting soldiers from the 'Great Socialist Brother Nation', with a confused and powerless PDPA membership, the possibility of this government winning the trust of the Afghani people seems out of the question.

What will become of the gains that were made in the April '78 'revolution'? The five-year plan, the campaign against illiteracy, the institution of women's rights and even the limited land reform programme are gains that should be defended. That's why the favourite brick-bat of the Western press — 'Russia's Vietnam' — is so far from the mark. These measures did have the potential to win over the masses, and for the masses themselves to take action to promote them.

Czechoslovakia

Even more perverse is the comparison with Czechoslovakia in 1968. Cynically the bourgeois press argues that the Afghan affair is more serious than that of Prague as it affects a region previously considered to be outside the Soviet zone of influence. But all the imperialists are worried about is their dwindling 'zone of influence'. The fate of the Afghani people is nothing to them.

Nor were they overly concerned with the crushing of the Prague Spring in fact. Western governments were informed of impending Russian action prior to the invasion, but did not see fit to inform Alexander Dubcek and his government.

The United States is now ready to commit itself to 'defence' of the reactionary and fanatical dictatorship of General Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan by pouring in American arms previously withheld. Many of these weapons will find their way directly into the hands of the Ikwamis (Islamic Brotherhood). The imperialists will do all they can to favour such a reactionary movement, which would have the valuable by-product of easing relations with the Khomeini regime.

The Soviet invasion, far from defeating such a counter-revolutionary bid by imperialism, promises to assist its development. That is a measure of the bankruptcy of the Moscow bureaucracy.

ANKS GAIN

revolutionary advance. Such stability might be threatened by the effects of the guerilla war (which finally attracting large financial assistance from imperialist powers) among the tribes that are found on both sides of the fairly arbitrary Afghani-Soviet border. The USSR contains many more Islamic communities along its southern borders that are a continuous source of concern — and, it must be said, a target for CIA-backed subversion.

Evidence

But will the Russians impose a socialist system in Afghanistan? The evidence points the other way. The new government is not even going to be Parcham old-style. The only link between old Parcham and today's Karmal is a

Belize presence aids Carter's war drive

By George Kerevan

PRESIDENT CARTER is mounting a war drive in the Caribbean to isolate the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions. Last autumn a full-time military task force was set up to 'respond rapidly to any attempted military encroachment in the region'. Its first exercise was a massive mock assault on the US base at Guantanamo in Cuba — an example of military encroachment if ever there was one!

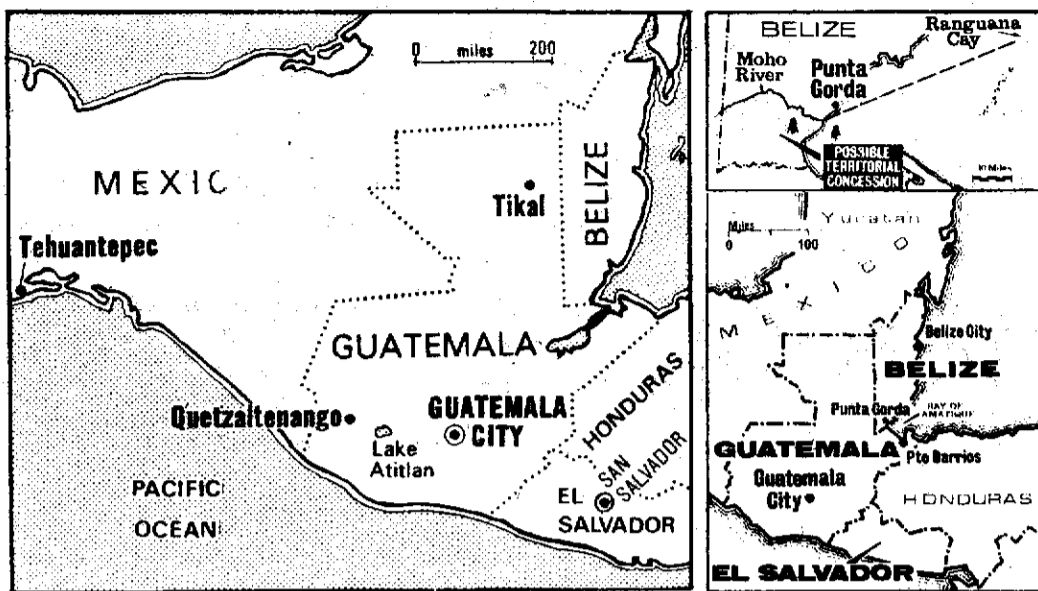
Among those who have opposed these moves are former British colonies in the Caribbean such as Grenada and Jamaica. This raises the danger that Carter will call on the Tory government to exert its considerable political and military presence in the area to stem further revolutionary developments in its ex-colonies. Though little known to the British public, the Thatcher government has formidable army, naval and air forces in the British 'dependency' of Belize on the Guatemalan border, only a short distance overland from Nicaragua.

Belize — known as British Honduras until 1973 — lies on the east coast of Central America and is the second smallest country on the American continent, with a population of 130,000. A stooge government under the so-called People's United Party has controlled Belize domestic affairs for 15 years.

British Troops

Yet this obscure corner of the world is 'defended' by 2,300 British troops, a massive air component consisting of a squadron of the latest Harrier jump-jets, and batteries of Rapier missiles. Army detachments including Irish Guards and Gurkhas are rotated every six months. They have support from big Puma transport helicopters, and smaller, armed Scout helicopters. The heavily defended Belize International Airport has been extended to accommodate American-built C-130 Hercules troop transport aircraft and VC-10 jets.

A British journalist recently reported: 'There was no sign of the Harriers, which I was to discover later in camouflaged hides with reinforced blast pens, but the RAF Regiment, responsible for the protection of vital installations at the airport, makes no secret of



its presence, with a Rapier unit on the side of the runway which tracks every aircraft as it approaches.' [Air International, November 1979]

When added to Britain's naval presence in the Caribbean spearheaded by a frigate, the obvious question arises: just what is it that Thatcher is so anxious to 'defend' in Belize?

The official story is that Britain is defending Belize from Guatemala. The true story is that British imperialism grabbed Belize from colonial Spain. When the Spanish colonies in America fought for and achieved their independence, Britain hung on to Belize as a little insurance that the 'free' Central American republics would fall within Britain's trading empire. Guatemala has demanded for well over a century that the British get out. Belize effectively blocks Guatemala from the sea.

In 1859 Britain forced Guatemala to sign a treaty in which the latter 'recognised' British control over Belize in return for the

construction of a cart road from the Atlantic coast to Guatemala City. The British of course never built the road, and in 1945 the Guatemalans rightly tore up the treaty.

The current massive British military build-up in Belize stems from 1977 when the Guatemalans threatened to take back their territory by force, and the Labour government under James Callaghan decided to send in the modern equivalent of the gun-boat — the Harrier jump-jets. But as the Air International reporter noted: 'The Guatemalan Air Force's one squadron of Cessna A-37Bs does not pose a very potent threat.'

In fact Britain keeps a military presence 5,000 miles from home in Central America for quite different reasons. It is an insurance policy for heavy British investments in a part of the world where Britain has been unable to impose stable repressive neo-colonial governments following independence. For instance, in March 1979 an insurrection in Grenada

overthrew the pro-Western dictatorship of Sir Eric Gairy. Other tiny and impoverished island states are rumoured to be going the same way.

Even Jamaica, relatively stable until now, has seen increasing signs of unrest. Prime Minister Michael Manley has accepted Cuban aid and denounced the American troop build-up at Guantanamo. This has provoked an American inspired de-stabilisation plan, and September saw right-wing riots. An obvious ploy might well see British forces rushed to 'friendly' countries facing a break-down of law and order, courtesy of the CIA.

Meanwhile the British forces in Belize are getting plenty of training. The Air International correspondent reports going on a practice operation with Forward Air Controller 'Russ Nutter' and watching the Harriers drop bombs, fire their 30-mm cannon and let off air-to-ground rockets. It is not yet possible to get that sort of training in Belfast or Derry. But if British workers don't start an immediate campaign to get British troops out of the Caribbean, it is only a matter of time before the Nutters of this world are used to defend capitalism in Britain itself.

NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY

A SMALL contribution to the worldwide campaign in support of the Nicaraguan revolution was made in Scotland just before Christmas when over 140 people attended showings of the film Nicaragua, Free Country or Death.

The film tour, co-ordinated by the IMG in Scotland, covered Paisley, Glasgow, Stirling, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. At colleges in Paisley and Aberdeen students are planning further activity in conjunction with the Nicaragua Co-ordinating Committee, and in Edinburgh organisations sponsoring the tour called for the formation of a local solidarity campaign aimed at linking labour and student organisations with the newly formed workers organisations in Nicaragua.

Through the tour a network of activists has been built up to take part in the NCC's regional aid campaign for Nicaragua.

TUC overseas work under fire

By Don Thomson

THERE IS growing concern within the trade union movement about the TUC's international programme.

This involves allegations that, in some cases, funds have been used to oppose real and representative workers' movements overseas. There is also concern about Foreign Office links with the TUC's international department.

So far the TUC has failed to make a detailed reply to these various charges. The main cause for concern, however, which is not in dispute, is the TUC's failure to make its overseas work accountable to the membership.

At present the TUC's overseas bill amounts to about £600,000 a year, including an annual £180,000 from the Foreign Office. No details are provided to the membership about

who receives all this cash and for what purpose.

This secrecy makes impossible even the idea of workers' international solidarity. At the same time the global recession and consequent unemployment and erosion of trade union rights makes it more imperative than ever that workers link up across frontiers.

Meeting

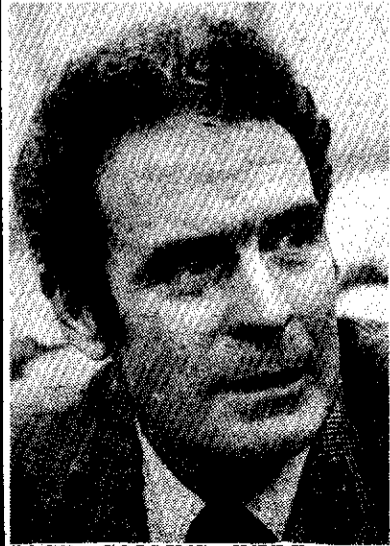
As a result a group of concerned trade unionists are planning to hold a public meeting in London in February to launch a national labour movement campaign to make the TUC's overseas work accountable to the membership.

A number of prominent figures within the labour movement, well known for their campaigning work on international issues, have agreed to sponsor the meeting in an individual capacity.

They include: Reg Williams [CPSA national executive committee], Jack Collins [Kent NUM], Tony Aylard [TUC South Western Regional Council], Peter Heathfield [NUM national executive committee], Ernie Roberts MP, Ken Coates [Institute for Workers Control], Joan Maynard MP, Stuart MacLennan [CPSA], George Anthony [North London AUEW], Stan Newens MP, and Roland Sheret [Secretary, Stirling Trades Council].

The meeting will take place on Sunday 10 February in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, starting at 2pm.

May 1 appeal for trade union support and participation and ask that all inquiries about the campaign be directed to: Don Thomson, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.



JACK COLLINS [NUM] — a sponsor of the meeting



A SMALL crowd of demonstrators outside the court in Prague on 21 December

Lawyers barred from Prague court

By Ed Murphy

SHORTLY after midnight on 21 December the Czechoslovak Appeal Court announced an unsurprising verdict. At the end of a 16-hour session it rejected the appeals by six members of the Committee to Defend the Unjustly Prosecuted (VONS) against sentences totalling 23 years for their activities in defence of civil rights.

Despite the regime's efforts to keep the whole thing secret, a number of lawyers and journalists from the West were in Prague to observe the proceedings. Among them, on behalf of the London-based Charter 77 Defence Committee, was John Platts-Mills QC.

Platts-Mills is president of the left-wing lawyers' Haldane Society, and vice-president of the Soviet-backed International Federation of Democratic Lawyers. In 1938 he was active in the campaign to stop Britain's sell-out of Czechoslovakia, and in 1948 he was expelled from the Labour Party for speaking out in

favour of the Communist seizure of power.

All but four relatives of the accused were refused entry to the courtroom. Platts-Mills and five other lawyers who had a letter of introduction to the court's chairperson, Ms Dojcorova, were stopped in the foyer and told that she was busy but would try to see them at the end of the hearing.

Not satisfied with this, Platts-Mills and an Austrian representative of Amnesty International then went to see the Minister of Justice. But he was too busy. It was his wedding anniversary, explained his secretary, and besides, the building was being repaired. But if they returned to the court they could speak to Josef Ondrej, president of the Czechoslovak Bar Council.

Due to an unfortunate error, however, they were met not by Mr Ondrej but by the police, who arrested them and took them to the Central Police HQ.

Two hours later the police had obviously realised the implications of their actions. A senior officer

apologised to Platts-Mills and assured him that he was a person of the highest character who had been misused by unscrupulous people. With this he was released.

Minutes after leaving the police HQ, however, he was accosted by a man who asked him in fluent English if he wanted to change some money. On being rebuffed the man then followed Platts-Mills at a discreet distance.

Czechoslovak policemen may not be very imaginative. But they make up for it in numbers. No less than 12 of them were used later that afternoon to arrest Charter 77 spokesperson Zdena Tominova as she was speaking to Platts-Mills in a café.

The trial was characterised, in fact, by the harassment of Czechoslovak citizens who tried to ensure an open hearing, the closing of the court to all but a handful of relatives, and the arrest of foreign lawyers whose only wish was to attend ostensibly open proceedings. Increasingly the Western labour movement is asking: what is it that the Prague authorities are trying to hid?

BRITISH hypocrisy knows no bounds. While our rulers go on endlessly about the presence of foreign troops [in this case Russians] in a small country, exactly the same thing is happening in a country for which they claim responsibility — Zimbabwe.

Several thousand South African troops have been operating there for some time. Now magazine reported in early December that 'there is a battery of South African howitzers at Chirundu on the Zambesi — their muzzles pointed at Zambia. There are armed South African guards on the railway line north of Beitbridge, at least as far as Rutenga, and perhaps beyond.

'There are South African pilots at the controls of Puma helicopters, hunting Patriotic Front guerrillas deep in the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia bush. There are patrols of South African soldiers fanning out in the Mateke Hills, north of the Limpopo.'

When the ceasefire was signed the British assured the Patriotic Front that the South Africans would be withdrawn. But that has not happened.

Moving In

According to ZANU president Robert Mugabe, '20 truckloads of South African troops have moved into the country in the last two days or so... The British told us that as soon as the Governor set foot in Salisbury any foreign troops, including South African ones, would go. But now it appears that these troops have come into the country at the invitation of Britain.'

Confirmation of the continuing South African presence also comes from Financial Times reporter Bernard Simon. In last Friday's issue

The foreign invasion the Tories are backing

By Martin Meteyard

he dismissed as 'most unlikely' the suggestion that South African units would be withdrawn.

'Although the South Africans say they will do nothing to hinder the settlement process in Rhodesia', wrote Simon, 'they are known still to be concerned about the safety of what Prime Minister P.W. Botha referred to recently as "our vital lines of communication".'

So while the Patriotic Front guerrillas are cooped up in assembly camps supervised by the British, the South Africans are able to roam the countryside without restriction.

But that's not surprising when you look at who's responsible for security: the Rhodesian police. To get the new year off on the right foot they murdered no less than seven guerrillas on 1 January. There was no complaint from Government House.

Then there is the Rhodesian

Army. They are supposed to be confined to their bases under the ceasefire, but immediately after Christmas they were authorised to patrol along the Mozambique and Botswana borders.

Within days they were murdering guerrillas — with the full approval of the British Governor, Lord Soames. Now it is proposed that they should be used to make a 'sweep' to 'mop up' guerrillas who failed to reach the assembly points in time.

Finally there are the government 'auxiliaries' — the official name for Bishop Muzorewa's private army. There have been many reports of their continuing activities, which included the killing of two guerrillas in an armed clash on 31 December. But nothing has been said by Soames.

On the contrary, the Governor is doing everything in his power to boost Muzorewa's fading chances in the



SOUTH African troops on patrol near the border

February elections. Most blatant was his insistence that ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo should postpone his arrival from last Sunday — so that it should not clash with a mass rally organised by Muzorewa!

The purpose of the British presence is quite simple: to make the country safe for imperialism by breaking down the military effectiveness of the Patriotic Front while keeping that of its opponents intact.

Commented Mugabe last week: 'Britain's strategy seems to be that eventually South African troops will

surround us and encircle us. Once elections are held and the people vote us into the government, Britain will leave the country and we will be face to face with the South Africans.'

That is why so many guerrillas have been reluctant to enter the assembly camps; and why those who have are hanging onto their arms and digging into defensive positions. That is also why socialists must demand the immediate withdrawal of the British presence. Any other position means complicity in preparations for a bloodbath.

IRELAND

Atkins hopes that something will turn up

By Geoff Bell

THE TORY government's constitutional conference on the North of Ireland finally got under way on Monday. The only thing going for it is that no-one expects it to succeed.

Attending the conference are Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party led by John Hume, and the Alliance Party, whose leader is Oliver Napier.

The only one of these guaranteed to dance to any tune North of Ireland Minister Humphrey 'Dumpty' Atkins chooses to play is Alliance. The most 'moderate' of the Unionist parties, it always does its best to please. But Alliance is a minimal force in Irish politics, having received just 6 per cent of the vote in last year's election for the EEC parliament.

Neither Hume nor Paisley can afford to be seen to take a conciliatory line. Hume only agreed to take part after securing a six-point agreement which widened the basis of Atkins' original proposals.

Carefully

A British government declaration that if a Northern Irish 'majority indicated a wish for a change in their constitutional status', then 'Her Majesty's Government would not stand in the way of such a change', enabled Hume to persuade the SDLP executive to change its mind and back the conference. But the party leader needs to tread very carefully in light of recent 'greenward' shifts in SDLP attitudes.

Paisley faces a different problem. He surprised many by backing the Atkins initiative in contrast to the boycott attitude of the Official Unionist Party. He now needs to prove that his gamble was worthwhile. Again this will mean taking a 'hard-line' attitude and insisting upon unfettered Loyalist rule for the North.

The Official Unionists have already called for as much in a policy statement issued on the eve of the

conference. Their proposal is for a referendum on the old Stormont parliament abolished in 1972.

Stormont was dominated by the Official Unionists for over 50 years, and its policies were best summed up by James Craig, a Unionist prime minister in the 1930s, who said: 'I am an Orangeman first and a politician second. All I boast is that we are a Protestant Parliament for a Protestant State.'

Overboard

The Official Unionists are reliving such traditions in an attempt to win support away from Paisley. Their leader, James Molyneux, has gone overboard with allegations that the 'whole object' of the conference is 'to devise a mechanism to shift Northern Ireland just one step out of the UK and eventually turn it into an all-Ireland republic'. Fellow party MP Enoch Powell has said that Atkins' 'eyes and affections' are 'on Dublin, on Brussels, on the Vatican'.

It is such publicly stated positions which make the possibility of a compromise settlement most unlikely. For many observers the most intriguing question is what will happen when the conference fails.

This speculation has been particularly fuelled by recent revelations about the make-up of the Tories' cabinet committee on the North of Ireland. This group is headed by Thatcher herself, and as well as Atkins it contains Lord Carrington, Willie Whitelaw, Francis Pym and Lord Hailsham.

Influential

Each of these figures is very influential in the Tory establishment, and the suggestion is that Thatcher is taking much more seriously than Callaghan a 'settlement' of the Irish question.

But having the will to 'settle' and knowing how to do it are two different things. That is the first thing Humphrey Atkins is likely to learn in Belfast this week.



ENOCH POWELL accuses Atkins of looking to the Vatican

Bloody Sunday demo

THE demonstration marking the 10th anniversary of Bloody Sunday will take place this year in Birmingham on 7 January.

It is now eight years since British Army paratroopers murdered 14 marchers in Derry's Bogside during an anti-internment protest.

The British Army's version was that they were fired on first, and that the troops would never fire on people unless they had given them due warning. But only last week two paratroopers were killed 'accidentally' by their own side in Armagh. Like Bloody Sunday this illustrated the British Army's real policy of 'shoot now, ask questions later'.

The Troops Out Movement [formerly UTOM] are organising transport for the demonstration from a number of centres. Further details in subsequent issues of Socialist Challenge.

Women's trial adjourned again

THE Irish feminists who have become known as the 'Armagh Eleven' had their trial postponed again last week. The women are now due to appear in court in April.

This will be over a year since the original incident when demonstrators were set upon by the police during an International Women's Day protest outside Armagh jail while expressing their solidarity with the women political prisoners held inside.

The trial was adjourned last week because of the 'sudden illness' of a prosecution lawyer. The accused have now said they have no intention of returning to the court in April.

ON THE EVE of the Fifth World Congress Since Reunification of the Fourth International (Eleventh World Congress), two groupings, the 'Bolshevik Faction' and the 'Leninist Trotskyist Tendency', split from the Fourth International. The World Congress adopted a statement on the split on 17 November 1979, extracts of which are printed below.

THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL has suffered a split which represents a serious blow to our movement...

The leadership of the Bolshevik Faction and the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency have publicly attempted to justify their split by charging that the majority of the forces of the Fourth International have 'abandoned Trotskyism' by their defence of the Nicaraguan revolution and that this World Congress has not been democratically prepared. The facts speak otherwise.

The charge that the majority of the Fourth International is 'liquidating' Trotskyism by its revolutionary response to the Nicaraguan revolution, by its analysis of the present stage of the Nicaraguan revolution, and by its fraternal attitude to the fighters of the FSLN who led the revolutionary overthrow of the imperialist-backed Somoza dictatorship, is absurd. Any other stance would amount to sectarian abstentionism in the face of the living revolution...

Rejected

The BF and the LTT had full rights to present their views on Nicaragua and every other point on the agenda of this World Congress. A section of the LTT which rejected the split course has in fact done so. The leaderships of the BF and LTT make the same excuse that there wasn't enough time to begin the discussion on Nicaragua at this World Congress since the overthrow of Somoza four months ago. On the contrary, a revolutionary organisation such as the Fourth International has the duty to react rapidly to events of such importance as the Nicaraguan revolution...

The right of the LTT and BF to present their views inside the International was not and is not challenged. Their split was not politically justified and was therefore unprincipled.

The origins of the split go back before the Nicaraguan revolution. For some years the Bolshevik Faction has been functioning as a more or less open public faction, without regard to the decisions or norms of the Fourth International. Increasingly, it sets itself up as a parallel formation to the Fourth International, organising splits of our forces in country after country, setting up their own international apparatus and financial system in competition with those of the International, and moving their comrades from country to country without regard to the interests of the sections involved and not under the control of or even in consultation with the regular bodies of the International.

Public

Before the Nicaraguan events, they were warned that this World Congress would take the necessary measures to put a halt to this public factional operation. This method of functioning reached a criminal culmination in the operations of the 'Simon Bolivar Brigade' in Nicaragua (see statement by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on the Simon Bolivar Brigade in the 22 October 1979 issue of *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*)...

The criminal adventure of the Simon Bolivar Brigade was bound to end in disaster, and it did. At that point, the Bolshevik Faction leadership switched its public line from attempting to cover themselves with the prestige of the FSLN, to public attack on the FSLN as the instrument of consolidation of a bourgeois state in Nicaragua. This set the stage for their bloc with the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency and the Organising Committee for

THE SPLIT IN THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

Statement issued by world congress



Anibal Yáñez/Perspectiva Mundial
Victorious Sandinista guerrillas in Nicaragua. Women played a prominent role in the revolution. We are against 'sectarian abstentionism in the face of the living revolution...'

the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI).

Both the LTT and the OCRFI reacted in a sectarian fashion to the Nicaraguan revolution. There is a parallel here with the Algerian and Cuban revolutions... From the fact that these revolutions were led by revolutionists who did not have the full Leninist programme, these sectarians deduced that the correct stance was to denounce them at all times as betrayers, irrespective of what they were concretely doing in the context of the mobilisation and organisation of the masses, the scope of the

anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist measures taken, etc.

Such a sectarian stance can lead to disastrous consequences, deeply discrediting Trotskyism in the eyes of the masses engaged in the revolutionary process... Any criticisms revolutionists make, including on any violation of workers democracy, must be in a different framework — that of unconditional solidarity with the revolution, defence of the revolution against imperialism, which will attempt to drown it in blood as it advances, and with a fraternal attitude toward the Nicaraguan revolutionaries.

Under the impact of the Nicaraguan revolution, the OCRFI reversed its line toward reunification with the Fourth International... They de facto excluded a delegation from the United Secretariat of the Fourth International from the discussions at their international conference, to which they had originally invited the United Secretariat. In addition, they decided to invite to that conference the LTT and BF, that is, to support the open break with the Fourth International by the LTT and BF...

What this reversal by the OCRFI amounts to is a short-sighted policy of seeking supposed temporary factional advantage. To do this, they turned their backs on the objective need of pursuing a course of exploring the possibilities of a principled unification with the Fourth International, which would represent a major contribution toward solving the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the coming class battles in a number of key countries...

Destination

The OCRFI, the LTT, and the BF have issued an appeal to set up a 'parity commission for the reorganisation (reconstruction) of the Fourth International'. This is an operation designed to further split and attack the Fourth International and world Trotskyism as an organisation. They have called for an 'open conference' of those seeking the destruction of the Fourth International.

This 'open conference' itself will be nothing more than a talking shop with its only common denominator being opposition to building the Fourth International as a world party. It is clear that the OCRFI, the BF, and the LTT do not agree on the major issues of the class struggle today, and that they are opposed to majority rule, that is, democratic centralism. Their plan will come to nothing, just as the OCRFI itself failed to build an alternative to the Fourth International along these lines. It will only result in the demoralisation and destruction of hundreds of valuable cadres.

By these actions, the OCRFI, the BF, and the LTT have turned their backs on building the Fourth International as an organisation today. The need to simultaneously build national working-class revolutionary parties and the world party of socialist revolution is a fundamental programmatic tenet of Marxism. This is the epoch of imperialism, an epoch of growing internationalisation of the productive forces and of the class-struggle, an epoch of world revolution and counter-revolution. Any attempt on whatever basis to build national revolutionary parties without at the same time working to build a revolutionary International will lead its practitioners to grave errors in the class struggle, not only on an international level but in their own countries...

Reverse

The Fourth International calls on the OCRFI, the Bolshevik Faction, and the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency to reverse their course. The World Congress affirms that the Argentine Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores, the largest grouping supporting the Bolshevik Faction, should become the Argentine section of the Fourth International. We maintain our general orientation on the question of principled fusions and regroupments.

We reiterate the basic concept that the building of mass revolutionary workers parties and a mass revolutionary workers International cannot succeed solely by individual recruitment to the existing nuclei alone, which are the Fourth International and its sections, but will of necessity include fusions with other organisations either already existing or which will appear in the course of the revolutionary struggle itself. It reaffirms its conviction that the way in which the Fourth International and its sections respond to openings for fusions is and will be an important test of their revolutionary capacities...

Fund Drive

This week's fund drive got off to an excellent start. Over £200 came in. G. Cadwallader sent £3 saying: 'Here's £3 of my invalidity benefit. The only way to fight the cuts is to tell people what is happening. Wish I could afford more but Thatcher and Co keep on putting up prices. Keep up the good work.' Oxford IMG one of our regular and best fundraisers sent us £100. But where are those fund-raising events in

Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow? We can only hope that their New Year's resolution was to raise money so that our paper can fight without one hand tied behind its back. That's why our '£5 for Socialist Challenge Fund' is so vital. We appeal most earnestly to every reader and supporter — help your paper, this month in taking home the battle against the Tories. Send us a fiver to the following address: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Our thanks this week to: HMS and A Agnew 10.00 M Lomax 2.00 G Cadwallader 3.00 Bart, Cardiff 4.00

Rob, Cardiff 2.00 C Evans 0.50 Cardiff IMG 4.00 Sale of stamps 15.00 Preston IMG 21.54 Anon 10.00 L Irwin 5.00 G Ryan 10.00 Oxford IMG 100.00 Swindon SC 15.00 Anon 4.00 Sale of stamps 7.00 **Total 213.04**

(Two small corrections to previous entries; apologies to Ann Jay for not being credited for £50 in issue 126; and £20 profit was made from the sale of wholefood and not the figure mentioned.)

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

TOWER HAMLETS SC supporters sell papers every Friday 5-6pm Watney Mkt, Sat 11-12.30pm Whitechapel tube, Sunday 10.30-12.00 Brick Lane.
HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge public meeting: 'Crisis in the Steel Industry' Thurs 10 Jan, Speaker former ISTC branch chairperson, Friendly and Trades Club, Northumberland St, Huddersfield.
HUDDERSFIELD SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.
LAMBETH SC now available at Kiosk Brixton tube, Oval tube, Herze H&B British Rail and Tetric books Clapham.
HACKNEY SC meeting: 'Support the steel strike — kick out the Tories!' Tues 22 Jan, 7.30pm, Hackney Trades Hall, 96 Dalston Lane, E8.
EALING Campaign Against Corrie film 'Take it Like a Man, Ma'am' (96 mins) plus 'Whose Choice?' (40 mins). Wed 16 Jan, 7.15pm, Queens Hall, Ealing Town Hall. Adm £1, unwaged 60p.

ABERDEEN: SC sold Saturdays outside C&As — for more info phone Colin, 574068.
BATH: SC on sale at 1985, Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 20298 for more details.
BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.
BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30, Sat. 10-4. For more info phone 643-9209.
BRIGHTON: For more info phone Nick, 605052.
BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Moulshelm, Bristol 6.
COVENTRY: SC on sale...
DUNDEE: SC on sale...

UNDER REVIEW

No escape from suburbia?

The Women's Room by Marilyn French
Sphere Books Ltd 1978, pbk £1.95

IT'S IN the graffiti-covered women's toilet that we first meet Mira, a 38 year old student at Harvard University in 1968. In retracing Mira's life, Marilyn French exposes the mainstream of experience for middle-class American women, in the decades following the fifties.

Mira was transformed from an intelligent, independent adolescent without knowing how it had happened. A few years, a husband and two sons later, she was drowning in the claustrophobic surroundings of upwardly-mobile suburbia. Her intelligence found expression in devising a filing system of rotated cleaning chores.

Uptight

Her friends fared similarly — uptight American mothers of the fifties, endlessly working to mind their children, clean house, and service their husbands' petulant demands for food, clothing, sex and entertainment. Their conversations, routines and cocktail parties will make you want to scream with boredom. Divided from each other in their suburban prisons with their very own petty dictators, the women survived with a bit of help from their friends.

The women suffered: Martha overdosed; Lily was certified and electrified; Samantha and Theresa battled to survive economically; and Mira herself sensed her world was slipping away from her.

Harvard, the Vietnam draft, the sexual revolution, movies, Janis Joplin. Even Mira feeling like a prehistoric species amid the jeers of the young students.

She soon learnt the values of casual clothes, interesting apartments with plants, bright colours and lots of different food. Mira studied English, had a lover, experienced orgasm. Her relationship with her teenage sons improved. And, most importantly, she developed enjoyable and supportive friendships with other women.

Explosion

Marilyn French allows the women to soar towards their freedom so as to more strikingly contrast their fall. The final pages of the novel relentlessly bury their optimism with one explosion after another (one of them literal and able to rival any sensational trash in its macabre descriptions). For all the possibilities opened up to Mira, she ends alone, bitter, thinking 'all truths are mortal illnesses'.

These events are seen distantly filtered through the 'old' Mira's eyes of acceptance, and then, with the benefit of hind-sight, Mira and her friends look laughingly at the past. On the third level is the narrator's voice, raised in anger and hatred against this oppression.

What happened in *The Women's Room* is essentially a let-down. The politics of *The Women's Room* are politics of despair. There's no disagreement with the descriptions of women's lives — we know only too well the despair of housework, economic dependence, intellectual stultification, sexual oppression, rape.

But French's pessimistic conclusion is that there are no answers to and



THEORIES OF THE SOVIET UNION

Marxism and the USSR by Paul Hollander

THIS BOOK by Paul Hollander is useful as it collects together a significant amount of the discussion on the left concerning the nature of the USSR. Unfortunately it scarcely mentions the important discussions which took place within the Communist International in the years immediately following the Russian Revolution itself and only lightly touches on contemporary East European writing. Its focus is clearly the discussion which have taken place in America since the end of Trotskyism — with a few Marxist, Maoist, and other theories also being dealt with.

This scope determines both the strengths and weaknesses of the book. For a part of the left at least it covers material that is already familiar and does not touch upon any theoretical ground itself. It is however the highest and most systematic study of the various theories.

The book's value is that it will bring discussion dealing with fundamental issues of Marxist theory to a wider audience beyond the relatively small groups

of the Marxist left.

With a few small omissions (eg. the Lenin-Grover group in Russia does not consider China to be state-capitalist but capitalist) it is an excellent guide to an enormous literature.

One other drawback to the book is its method of presentation. Starting historically from the positions of Marx and Engels is logical from one point of view, but it also means that much of the same ground is covered in the chapters on Lenin and Trotsky. The result is that the first chapters tend to be repetitive and the book only begins to really get going half way through. Some demand a greater consistency in the approach.

In all the book is an extremely valuable reference for those interested in the history of the USSR. But if you enter it from the other way you will get a fairly comprehensive introduction to many of the most important debates on the USSR.

DAVID HOELAND



no possibilities of women's liberation.

At the root of the political failure of the novel is her analysis of women's oppression which, despite its insight, is basically anti-male and little else. Although the material is all there (US imperialism, racism, gay oppression), she does not draw the links between other forms of oppression and women's oppression.

Like many of the student radicals of the late sixties, French does not notice it is a class society and the ruling class's dependence on the continuation of oppression (which is not to say that various men don't get their cut).

Nor does she draw from the experiences of history, and conclude that political organisation of the masses holds the key to liberation. Which is probably why a novel about the women's movement can be a bestseller — a book which says, 'give up', suits the establishment just fine, doesn't it?

STELLA KING

Question marks over the family

Critical Theory of the Family
By Mark Poster
Pluto Press, hbk £8.50, pbk £3.95

THRASHING out a coherent Marxist theory of the modern family is one of the most challenging theoretical problems facing the revolutionary movement.

On the one hand the historic relationship between revolutionary Marxism and the women's liberation movement depends upon the successful resolution of this problem. On the other, the entire intellectual interface between Marxism and analysis which seeks to explain and operate on individual experience — such as existentialism, and psychoanalysis, as well as large issues of consciousness, culture, and ideology — hinges around the problem of the family.

Large question marks hang over the continued vitality of the family in all social classes, even though it has been stripped of most of its economic functions.

Disarming?

Where does the family come from and how is it sustained? Whose interests does its continued existence serve? Is it true that by structurally oppressing women, the family offers men a limited freedom, tending to make them complacent in their own oppression? Does admission that men as a whole have a real interest in the oppression of women in the family disarm the Marxist movement?

In this turmoil of unanswered questions any serious attempt to clarify the issues is welcome. Mark Poster's *Critical Theory of the Family* is just that.

Tools

He aims to avoid the banal ideological justification of the status quo which characterises much sociological discussion of the family, by providing us with a 'critical' theory. He also wants to avoid the fulminating foggy rhetoric of some of the anti-family writers. Instead Poster wants to provide the theoretical tools to dig into and understand the changing nature of the family and its relationship to society.

Poster provides a comprehensive, clear and acute survey of most of the main attempts to theorise how the family fits into society. The book demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses, from a standpoint not unsympathetic to Marxism, of the contribution of Freud, Reich, Marcuse and Horkheimer, Erikson, Parsons, Lacan, Laing, Bateson and the 'family therapists'.

Poster rightly focuses on developing a theory to explain the differences in family form rather than the similarities, but he evades the crucial question of how these differences have been historically wrought.

The theoretical tools he offers are for analysing the static form of a family and relating it to the larger patterns of power in the society it

inhabits. It offers no way of studying [say] the process in which the working class family was formed in the image of the bourgeois family in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries.

What the author does not do is provide a theory capable of indicating how changes in the family are related not just to class as a static category, but as a dynamic one. How the family has been formed in different classes in the course of class struggle and capitalist development cannot really be explained by the 'critical theory'.

Some clues are suggested in the four typological case studies offered employing the 'critical theory' of the bourgeois family, the pre-capitalist aristocratic, the peasant and the early working class family.

Transformations

Clearly, these different family forms and the differing psychological constructions they tended to produce are related to a set of social transformations. To say that the history of the family enjoys a 'relative autonomy' from economic developments, as Poster does, is to beg the question.

If the historical dynamic of the bourgeois family is to be uncovered, and the appropriate response of the socialist and feminist movements formulated, then discussion will need to be directed to the nature of the transformations which produced the universalisation of the privatised nuclear family in capitalist society.

DAVID HOELAND

Socialist Challenge

STOP US WAR DRIVE

A US NAVY official was quoted in the Washington Post last week as saying the Afghanistan crisis 'has nothing to do with American national security'.

That startling admission needs to be underlined as the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan continues. Unjustified though that occupation is, it is not a threat to the 'national security' of the US, Britain or of the Western world in general.

The danger that is posed — to the security of us all — emanates from the same source that it has done throughout this century: the imperialist powers, and in particular the ruling class in the United States.

Isolation

The Soviet invasion should not be seen in isolation.

Before the invasion of Afghanistan the Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement, signed by Carter and Brezhnev in July had, in effect, been dumped by the US because of Senate opposition.

Before the invasion NATO had announced its decision to deploy 600 advanced US nuclear missiles in Western Europe. This means, for the first time, NATO will have land-based nuclear missiles capable of hitting targets inside the USSR.

Before the invasion the US was negotiating for setting up new military bases in Kenya, Oman and Somalia.

Before the invasion Carter announced that he had ordered a full-scale deployment of the new generation of mobile intercontinental missiles.



'HOW many kilo-tons of death did you say?'

known as M-X. This project cost 30 billion dollars and was described by US Senator George McGovern as 'the biggest single waste of public funds since the Vietnam war'.

Before the invasion the US had declared it would bump up its increase in military spending this year by 66 per cent.

Before the invasion the US had stated it was establishing a 'quick strike force' to 'respond to crises in the Persian Gulf and other areas'. And before the invasion US cabinet member James Schlesinger had predicted the US would militarily intervene in Saudi Arabia if it found its interests there threatened.

What the Soviet Union has done in Afghanistan does not help the fight against US war moves. But the Soviet Union is correct to say that the US runs far in front of the field for aggression.

Jimmy Carter is not in the least concerned that the principles of self-determination have been violated in Afghanistan, indeed with its



AMERICAN soldiers on a Hawk missile site in West Germany

record of invasions and CIA-organised coups the US has much to teach the USSR.

What does worry the US is what has motivated its increased military spending, its spread of nuclear missiles and its establishment of a 'task force' — the setbacks American imperialism has recently suffered in Iran, Nicaragua and elsewhere.

Soviet troops should be immediately withdrawn from Afghanistan. But perhaps when the US withdraws from the 64 countries throughout the world where it has military bases; perhaps then the danger of world war will really begin to recede.

* Now see pages 5, 6 & 11 for the rest of the story on the world crisis.

Gandhi wins, masses lose

From Paul Terry in Bombay

IN THE PERIOD leading up to Indira Gandhi's landslide victory the newspapers here were dominated by stories of defections, denunciations, electoral blocs being made and broken, and the rhetorical slogans used by the bourgeois parties. The latter were empty of all content: 'Bring Indira, Save the Nation', 'We pledge to fulfil your dream of a socialist, democratic secular India', 'Janata for Bread with Liberty'.

It says a lot about this election that none of the three major bourgeois parties — Congress(I), Janata, and Lok Dal — bothered to produce a manifesto! In a curious way this election bore a marked resemblance to the previous one. The masses voted for largely negative reasons.

The Janata Party defeated Indira Gandhi last time not because the masses supported what it stood for, but because they wanted to register a protest against the Emergency. The utter and complete failure of the Janata government to satisfy any of the aspirations of the workers and peasants has now seen a return to Indira Gandhi. On both occasions the left parties were unable to offer a credible national alternative.

Joy

And yet the election victory of Indira Gandhi will not bring any joy to the masses. India faces a drought, oil shortage, power shortage, a massive balance of payments crisis.

There is also a growing cynicism. People readily accept that the only reason bourgeois politicians seek office is to feather their own nests. The average salary of a minister, discounting bribes and perks, is 37,500 rupees a month. This is over 800 times the average wage of a worker.

Since mid-December there has been no work for agricultural labourers in the provinces of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. This means that 31 per cent of the population is unemployed. In Tamil Nadu there have been reports that students are getting support from the rural poor in some districts for the revival of a Naxalite-type movement.

What will the new Congress government be able to do? The answer is that as far as the masses are concerned it will do nothing, as its past record clearly reveals. All the indications are that in the next decade the political crisis will grow side by side with the social and economic impasse which Indian society has reached.

What is needed to resolve the problems of India is a social revolution. The 1980s will see massive social explosions throughout the country. The fruits of Indira Gandhi's victory may turn bitter sooner than she imagines.

Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Union

Saturday 26 January, 10.30am,

Friends Meeting House,

Euston Road, London

Credentials from Him Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex.

Reinstate Robinson Conference

Sunday 13 January, 11.00am, Digheth Civic

Hall, Birmingham.

Credentials from Mr Colin Willett, 21 Barrow Lane, Harlesham, West Midlands, B63 0JF.

PUBLIC MEETING

The History and Future of the Indian Communist Movement

Speaker: Tariq Ali

Friday 18 January, 7.30pm,

Room S16, adjacent Student Union Bar, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1 (Nearest tube Russell Square).

Organised by South Asia Commission, International Marxist Group.