

Socialist Challenge

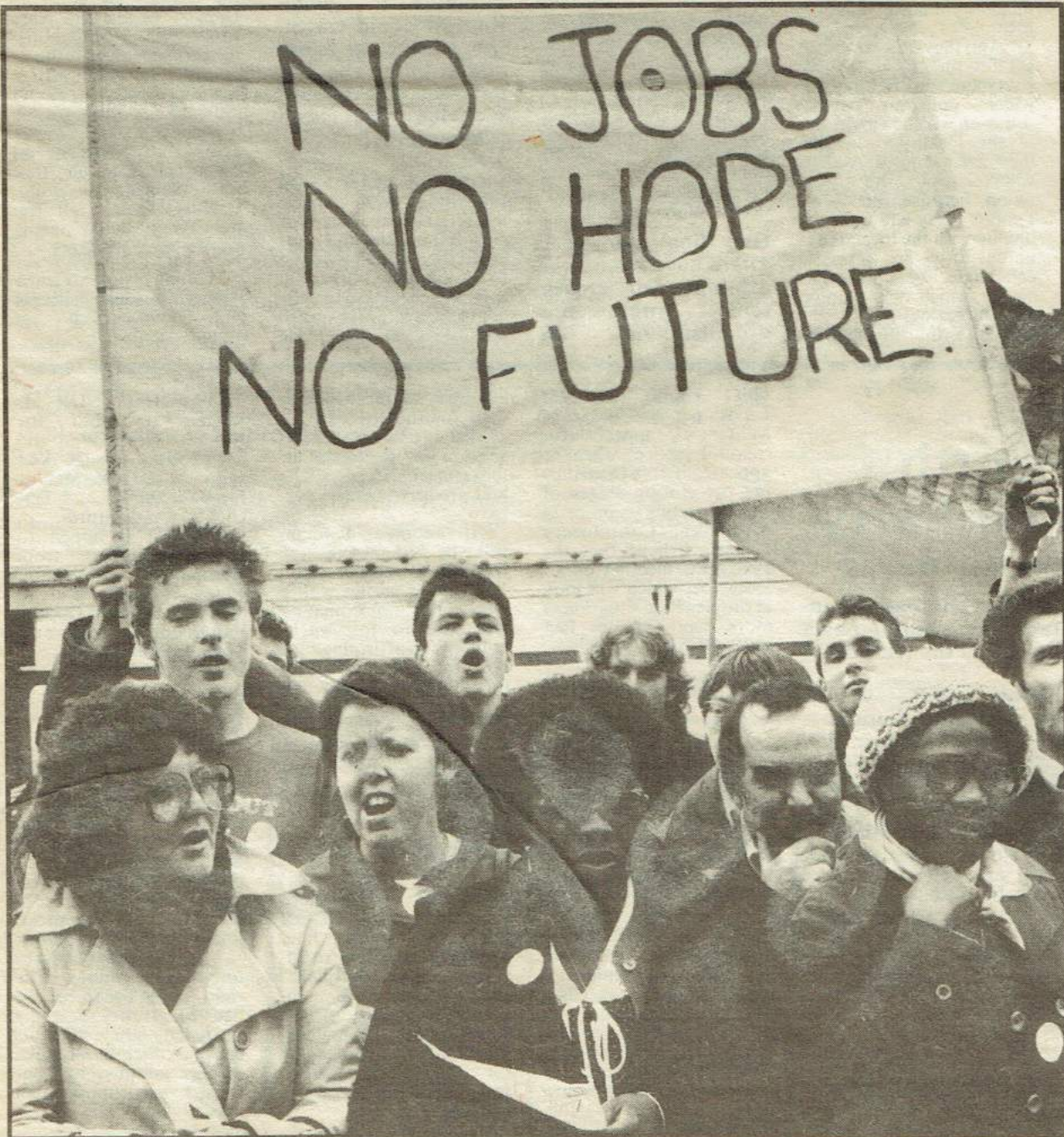
Women's demonstration
Fight Cruise missiles



Sunday
12 December
**Greenham
Common**
10am onwards

After Tory lies, the truth...

FIVE MILLION UNEMPLOYED



LAST WEEK the government found another way to lie about the unemployment figures. By using a computer count at benefit offices, rather than the Job-centre register, it managed to 'lose' 200,000 from the out of work total.

Not that the 200,000 will get jobs. They will simply become part of the 'invisible' army of unemployed. But the 'invisible' army is much, much, larger than the 200,000 lost in the new count.

According to the Labour Research Department, the real total of jobless is not the government's admitted 3,063,000 but five million! LRD claim that the total of unemployed women is double the government's figure, while the total for men is at least 50 per cent greater than the official estimate.

As LRD explains the government conveniently leaves out of its estimates people in Manpower Services Commission temporary schemes; those seeking part-time work but not claiming benefit; disabled people and temporarily stopped workers.

For women active in work the figure had slipped to 61 per cent in 1981 but if the number of women active in the labour market has gone on rising by one percent a year as it did in the seventies LRD says this should account for another 500,000 women.

In 1979 the government's General Household Survey found 120,000 men and 240,000 women unemployed but not registered, so that wiped 360,000 off the official unemployment figures. And that figure has been steadily rising as job opportunities have steadily decreased.

This is the real face of Tory Britain: five million unemployed. This is the reserve army that the Tories hope to use against those in work. This is the threat that it wants to use against the trade

unions and the right of workers to organise.

The Tories see this as a way of demoralising the labour movement and aiding their efforts to claw back all the post-war gains made by working people.

No doubt these revelations will cause outbursts of protest to emanate from Congress House. No doubt Labour's Front Bench will demand of Thatcher that she change her policies. And no doubt Thatcher will ignore both the TUC and the Labour leaders. Why should she take any notice when she knows that up to now they have protested and marched but taken no action. Certainly Bill Sirs' actions as the steel industry has been carved up have hardly worried Thatcher.

The left inside the trade union and inside the Labour Party must say that mere verbal protests are not enough. They have to insist that every struggle against redundancies be backed by solidarity action inside and outside parliament. They have to insist that Labour puts itself at the head of a campaign to resist unemployment and that it links that campaign to a commitment that when returned to office it will launch an immediate programme of public works and a 35-hour week.

By demonstrations, strikes and occupations it must resist these Tory attacks which are designed to smash the organised power of the working class. A wide, active and vigorous campaign could show people that the Tory plans can be defeated. It could also show that there is a socialist alternative to the dole queues.

This type of campaign could lead towards a Labour victory at the General Election and certainly hasten the downfall of this government.

On the block vote

Socialist Challenge has been debating Alex Kitson's proposal to give Constituency Labour Parties twice as many votes at Labour Party conference. Alan Freeman discusses the issues with Reg Race MP who has been prominent in setting up the new left wing 'Campaign Group' of MPs.

How can we win control of the NEC when the block vote controls such a decisive section of it?

I don't believe for a moment that Sid Weighell's action was in line with his union's views. And this poses the issue very sharply: trade unions with a block vote have to make it accountable to their members.

But there's another problem: the overwhelming size of the union block vote compared with that of the other sections of the Labour Party conference.

I think Constituency Parties should have a much better share of the conference vote. I tend to support the arguments for giving them fifty per cent. I don't think Alex Kitson's argument for 15-20 per cent for the constituencies will do. His argument rests on the unequal financial contributions made by the two sections. But he has excluded all the money raised by constituencies at local level, which never reaches Walworth Road.

Eric Heffer, for example, has said that he believes from his investigations on the NEC that the CLPs and unions produce about fifty per cent each of the party's finances. If that's so, then there's a very strong argument for fifty per cent each of the votes.

Organise the left trade union vote better. I also think the proposal put forward by the Women's Action Committee of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy to shift the election of the women's section of the NEC to the women's conference is very good.

The women's section delegates are elected by the male-dominated trade union block vote. There is an overwhelming case for that to be changed. It would produce women different in many ways from the women now on the NEC.

So that's one method of raising the question of the NEC in an entirely new way, which raises political principles and not just the crudeness, if you like, of prudential power.

Organising the left trade unionists suggests a trade union slate.

There was a trade union slate at the last conference but some delegations didn't follow it entirely, and this caused a few problems. So I think we have to be better at it next time.

But, for example, I don't recall that any trade union conference took any discussion or engag-

ed in any mandating about the way their people should vote in the NEC elections.

One of the problems about that is when trade union conferences are. It's all very well to have trade union conferences mandating for the Deputy Leadership election, when the candidates are known in advance of the trade union conference. Indeed, that's one of the reasons the announcement was made when it was, when Tony Benn stood. But that's not possible with the trade union candidates for the NEC.

The LCC discussed a proposal for resolutions to go before the union conferences to commit them to support NEC candidates who backed party policy, for example on unilateralism.

Yes, I think that's a good idea. I also think some trade unions have to learn who their friends are, and I think people who read this article will know who I mean. They've got to be more sophisticated about who they vote for and not vote on the basis of longstanding relations which are really no longer viable.

I want to take up a number of objections to the proposal to change the size of the CLPs vote. The first point is a worry that if the campaign for reform of the voting structure becomes the left's main campaign, accountability for the block vote will be put to one side in favour of this easier objective; people like Kitson, whose union voted for the register, may want to offer a sop to the CLPs.

Yes. We've not only got to talk about the proportions of the vote at conference but the way delegations at the Labour Party conference are made accountable to the rank and file. That means, in some cases electing the Labour Party delegations, which isn't done in some unions. You will also have to talk about splitting the block vote in each union.

In other words if on the Deputy Leadership election the public employees had voted by 55 per cent for Healey and 45 per cent for Benn then the block vote of the union would have been cast in that proportion, for each candidate. This was done in the 1920s and before, and it was only in the 1930s that the tradition of a unitary block vote was

established. I think there's great merit in that.

The second point is the financial aspect. Isn't financial accountability a dangerous principle — more of a joint stock company principle than a labour movement one? Couldn't it lead to trade union leaders buying votes at the Labour Party conference?

Yes. And it has a counterpart. Some union leaders argue that because they pay the piper, they're going to call the tune, thank you very much. Now that kind of crude, block-busting use of power is greatly resented by the CLPs. I greatly fear a growing disaffection between the unions and the constituency delegates.

The left must try to unite the rank and file of the trade unions with the rank and file of the constituency parties. That's even more true when the constituency parties are, let's face it, even more dominated by middle class people than before, and therefore this knee-jerking anti-union stance that some comrades come across with, when they argue for a reduction in the block vote, really won't do.

We have to reach an intelligent agreement with the unions about how the block vote will be used and how best we can make it accountable.

That brings me onto the third point. There's an implicit argument in giving more votes to individual members: that in some sense canvassing activity has a greater validity than trade union activity. The unionist is

active in her or his trade union; and there, at least in theory, discuss what the local and national Labour Party is going to do. Are you in fact devaluing activity of the individual trade union activist?

No, not at all. We've got to try and overcome this division between the trade unions discussing collective bargaining, and the Labour Party discussing politics. I think we're not devaluing the collective bargaining at all. What the argument reflects is a concern that the trade unions don't talk about politics enough and make political decisions.

But in effect you're saying that the only way the individual trade unionist can become politically involved is to join the local constituency party, rather than fighting for the unions to discuss political issues and make their leaders accountable for their political actions in the Labour Party.

No, I'm not saying that. They've got to do both. They've got to fight on trade union issues which connect the rank and file with working conditions, which is the most immediate thing for most of them.

And they've also got to get into their local Labour Party and start fighting on wider political issues, some of which will relate to the locality in which they live, some of which will relate to the trade union because the local Labour Party will want to link up with the local trade unions to try and support campaigns of industrial action which the unions are supporting.

I am proposing a more



Reg Race MP

united campaign between the unions and the constituency parties to promote clear objectives.

I do think it's true, however, that some trade unions enjoy being only collective bargaining institutions. We have to break down the idea that trade union general secretaries can go to an employer and somehow negotiate full employment from them. It can't be done, because it's not in the employer's gift. It needs political action.

One final question. There have been past attempts to create rank and file organisations in

which both the political and the trade union side were involved. Do you think that is the direction in which the left could travel, if it does want to try and straddle the gap between the constituencies and the trade unions?

I have thought for a long time that if we're going to win the Labour Party for clear left policies and a left leadership, then we've got to have a united organisation which links up the constituency parties with our allies in the trade

unions, and links them up with the left in the parliamentary party.

That's an absolute first priority. We did it during the campaign for the Deputy Leadership very successfully; we did it during the campaign for mandatory reselection, which was very successful; we did it during the campaign for the election of the leader and deputy leader by an electoral college, and that was enormously successful. Against all the right wing could throw against us.

I want people to learn from the lessons of success and build such an organisation again.

Attack on Newham North West Labour Party

Patrick Sikorski (Newham North West GC)

IT ISN'T JUST the Bermondsey, Hornsey, Manchester parties which face witch-hunting as a result of the decisions taken by the NEC on 24 November.

Newham North West CLP, whose neighbours dealt so ably with Reg Prentice a few years ago, have just re-selected their MP.

It finally seemed that they had succeeded in ridding the constituency of Arthur Lewis and adopting GLC Councillor Tony Banks as their future prospective parliamentary candidate.

But the NEC refused to ratify Tony's selection despite the fact that this was the second time Newham have gone through the procedure. After being rejected the first time round Lewis, MP for 38 years and obviously a firm believer in his divine right to represent this particular part of the East End, appealed and the whole process was frozen for several months.

However after careful and exhaustive investigation by regional and national officials of the party which validated every single voting member of the GC the go-ahead was given for the process to be started afresh.

Lewis, decisively rejected once again, appealed both personally to Michael Foot and to the NEC. Foot predictably supported and the new

NEC readily accepted Lewis' perverse usage of Militant's appeal for 'natural justice' when he appeared before them during the closing stages of the meeting on 24 November. Constituency officials believe that the next NEC meeting on 15 December which will look at the Newham situation in more depth will in fact ratify Banks.

Help

But assuming that John Golding and company will do this would not be any help in defending the democratic reselection of the militants who have fought and won the right of re-selection.

A special meeting of the GC on 9 December will take a resolution from a ward branch which prepares the ground for an open campaign similar to the one which looks like winning in Bermondsey.

The resolution pointing out that these attacks on the constituencies finally lay to rest any illusions that the register and the witch-hunt were ever aim-

ed solely at the Militant, calls for the NEC to immediately ratify Bank's selection and to stop all attacks on individuals, CLPs and groupings in the party.

If adopted Newham will be contacting the Hornsey, Bermondsey and Manchester parties with a view to co-ordinating resistance to the witch-hunt and re-affirming support for Labour Against the Witch-hunt and the Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-hunt and sending a delegation to LAW's National Council Meeting on 12 December.

Hard

Finally and perhaps most importantly if the NEC takes a hard line, steps will be taken to inform every affiliated organisation and individual member of the Newham party, so as to get solid rank and file backing for Bank's candidature and democratic reselection.

Labour party members

in East Ham NUR affiliated to both the Newham North West and Bermondsey parties won support last Wednesday for both Banks, and Tatchell's candidatures. In addition it is hoped to mobilise support from Newham for the London wide rally 'Defend Socialist Policies Oppose Expulsions' at Walworth Town Hall on Saturday 11 December.

Hound

John Golding has been reported as telling Frank Allaun that he is prepared to go on month after month hounding the left and its policies despite the damage to Labour's election chances and the boost it gives to the Tory press' line of the 'divided party'.

The left must be just as tough as Golding. The right must be forced to back off. If they sense any weakening they will attempt to ditch the socialist policies adopted by conference even more than Healey and Foot have already done.

Grim anniversary in Poland

By Oliver MacDonald

AS THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY of Poland's 'State of War' approaches, Solidarnosc's underground resistance movement remains intact. Its organisation and leadership has still not been crushed. But General Jaruzelski has been able to gain the initiative through a combination of repression and skillful political manoeuvring.

The group of generals and civilian Communist Party politicians around Jaruzelski were realistic enough to grasp that last December's blitzkrieg against the working class had not destroyed Solidarnosc as a mass movement.

During the last year the security police have been working flat out to weaken the links between the underground activists and the mass of workers through using exemplary violence against street protests — shooting to kill on some occasions — and through wave after wave of arrests.

With some 5,000 resistance activists now in jail, amongst them a number of key regional leaders, the underground leadership has been experiencing growing difficulties in judging the state of opinion in the factories and rallying its supporters around its initiatives.

But the regime has possessed another weapon at least as powerful as its own security police, indeed more so. The great authority amongst the population, including the working class, of a Catholic hierarchy which has no basic interest in seeing Solidarnosc's survival as an independent workers' movement. The real secret of Jaruzelski's successes against Solidarnosc has been his tacit but

real and firm alliance with the Church bureaucracy headed by Archbishop Glemp.

The alliance has not extended down to the Catholic laity, of course, nor to many of the parish priests in working class areas. Individual bishops have broken ranks on occasions and at times Glemp himself has faced strong pressure from below. But with an authoritarian structure and ideology which is the equal of any Communist Party, the Church hierarchy has been able to drive a powerful wedge between the underground movement and large parts of the population.

Glemp has achieved his results by seeking to suggest that the Church supports Solidarnosc while at the same time publicly opposing everything that Solidarnosc does to struggle for its rights. Every single national protest action by the underground has been deplored by the Church hierarchy as being likely to endanger peace and stir up hatred. And Glemp has been able to pursue this course in the

knowledge that he was protected from attack on the part of Solidarnosc by the mantle of religion.

For obvious reasons, the Western media have studiously ignored the Church hierarchy's real political role under martial law. Why destroy the great myth of the Polish events as a Christian anti-Communist crusade? And it is still possible to find people on the left, even influential people, who see Solidarnosc as the pawn of reactionary bishops.

Yet since the law formally banning Solidarnosc was issued in October, doubts about the Church leadership's role cannot be taken seriously. Glemp, who has had more meetings in a year with the Communist Party leader than his predecessor had in 30 years, has now accepted that future negotiations should be based on the premise that Solidarnosc is a thing of the past.

In return, the hierarchy can expect a variety of concessions for itself in the future. As the regime's spokespeople gleefully declare, relations with the church have reached a 'higher level' than before martial law.

The Church bureaucracy in reality always feared Solidarnosc as it has always feared every popular, democratic movement for emancipation from below. Unlike the regime itself, the Church leadership could not stage a coup against the workers' movement, but on the contrary had to maintain its own popular support by a policy of

dissimulation and double-talk.

General Jaruzelski has just declared that the anniversary of the State of War will be marked by the lifting of martial law. It was also announced that some of the political prisoners — those from the Warsaw area — will be released.

Solidarnosc's underground leadership has said it will disband if all those remaining in internment — some 600 or so — are released. Archbishop Glemp may at this moment be drafting a Christmas speech along the lines that national reconciliation is at hand as

the Second Coming of the Pope approaches.

But socialists and the Western labour movement must continue to face the stubborn facts of life, on earth, in Poland, for ordinary workers: their basic rights have been crushed and there will be no socialism or democracy in Poland unless they are restored.

General Jaruzelski's Military Council for National Salvation, WRON for short, is known by Poles as 'Wrona', the Crow. In reality the Polish workers have been facing attack by a Rook, protected by a Bishop.

Glasgow march for Solidarnosc

By Martin Meteyard

ON SATURDAY 11 December the Glasgow Polish Solidarity Committee will assemble in Blythswood Square at 10.30 am to demonstrate against the imposition of martial law which happened one year ago.

Sponsors of this event include the Scottish TUC and Council of the Labour Party. Keith Hickson of COHSE will speak for the STUC, and Jim McCafferty of the NUM will speak for the Labour Party. Marek Carzdecki from the Solidarity Trade Union Working Group will also speak.

Although the government is 'lifting' martial law on 13 December, this demonstration is an excellent chance to show that this action by the authorities in no way represents a 'return to normality'.

The Gdansk agreements of August 1980, which recognised the workers' right to form independent trade unions, remain a dead letter. The recent trade union law from the govern-

POLISH SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE GLASGOW

DEMONSTRATE AGAINST

MARTIAL LAW

MARCH ON SATURDAY 11th DECEMBER FROM BLYTHSWOOD SQUARE 10.30am. TO THE CITY HALLS, CANDLERIGGS.

SPEAKERS INCLUDE—
Keith Hickson, STUC
Jim McCafferty, Labour Party Scottish Council
A member from the Solidarnosc Trade Working Group

FREE INTERNEES
NO FAKE TRADE UNIONS
END MARTIAL LAW

SOLIDARITY WITH SOLIDARNOSC

ment is nothing more than a means of establishing puppet bodies in the factories and even these unions will not be allowed to federate nationally until 1985.

At the same time unions are still being banned. The latest victim is the actors' union which was outlawed last week. Over the last year this union has mounted a crippling boycott of state radio and television in protest at martial law. The state justified the ban on the grounds that it was necessary to 'sober up the politicians active within the community'.

The Polish masses are still resisting the state's attack on the rights to organise independently and we must give them all the support that we can.

The Glasgow demonstration can help in that direction and be a step towards strengthening solidarity in the British labour movement.

Right wing try to discredit CND

By Phil Hearse

LAST WEDNESDAY'S *Guardian* carried an extraordinary article by Peter Jenkins entitled 'How the Trots Highjacked the CND'. In the article Mr Jenkins — who supports the SDP but not CND — comes to the defence of CND against its alleged highjacking by 'the Broad Left'.

What Mr Jenkins is really complaining about is that the CND national conference, as we reported last week, decided that it had to continue to prioritise support from the labour movement, as a crucial part of its strategy.

The people who are alleged to be behind this heinous crime are 'the people who destroyed the Labour Party as a broadly based force of progress' — in other words anyone from Eric Heffer leftwards.

According to Jenkins, the poor middle class political dupes in the ranks of CND are being shaken down by the nasty Trotskyist plotters and their Bennite co-thinkers. But there is more to Mr Jenkins campaign than meets the eye.

His second complaint is that CND, against the opposition of EP Thompson, re-affirmed the campaigning slogan 'Britain out of NATO, NATO out of Britain'. Thompson thought it was necessary to have a slogan which emphasised the dissolution of both major nuclear alliances. Let's look at the sober and objective way in which CND's new friend

Jenkins puts it:

'Here he (Thompson) was, the prophet not without honour in Hungary and Poland, the apostle of Euro-communism, confronting the hordes of British Trotskyism. For that is who they were. British Communists are to Euro-communism as British football fans to Europe. Having turned out to support the Labour Party they had now arrived to give their support to CND. The amendment was lost and Britain voted out of NATO'.

Now any right thinking *Guardian* reader would feel for poor EP Thompson faced with the baying, ignorant partisans of simple-minded Trotskyism. Except of course every single work of Jenkins' piece is lying nonsense, designed to split and defuse CND's campaign.



Sun attacks CND

Let's leave aside whether or not EP Thompson is an 'apostle of Euro-communism'. Any *Guardian* political columnist knows that Trotskyists were in the forefront of opposing the Russian invasion of Hungary, and have given much more unequivocal support to Solidarnosc than the Euro-communists. But let's leave that aside as well, and the implication that Trotskyists, Bennites and the like have the political level of football hooligans.

The political question at issue, that Britain should get out of NATO, has been policy of CND from its early days. If the campaigning slogan car-

ried at this year's conference had been put even three years ago it would have been carried overwhelmingly. The many new supporters of CND may not be so clear on the issue, but according to the survey carried out on CND's 250,000 strong demo last June, 68 per cent of those questioned were against British participation in NATO. Mr Jenkins of course is in favour of Britain remaining in NATO.

The campaigning emphasis carried at this year's conference reflects an obvious fact — that Britain is part of NATO and not the Warsaw pact. Unilateralism means getting out of the imperialist nuclear

Peter Jenkins is part of a right wing campaign to nobble CND in the year when the Cruise missiles are due to arrive. There is a neat division of labour here.

Tory Party Central Office is pouring forth dozens of speeches and articles attacking unilateralism. The Socialist Challenge post on 28 November included speeches by Margaret Thatcher, Norman Tebbit and Cecil Parkinson on this theme.

The Tory press are harping on alleged 'Russian connections' — the extraordinary fact that Bruce Kent has actually visited Russia, that TASS

reporters went to the CND conference and so on.

The aim of these attacks is transparent. CND is either consciously or unconsciously playing into the hands of the Russians.

The attack by Peter Jenkins and his co-thinkers is more sophisticated and more dangerous. CND is made up of worthy people, quite rightly alarmed by the nuclear threat, who are being led up the garden path by British Trotskyists. Instead, they should give up campaigning on NATO, leave the labour movement to the right wing and get on with being... worthy and ineffectual.

The beginning of a commitment to unilateralism by the Labour Party and the TUC are CND's most valuable assets. CND may have only about as many individual members as the SDP, but six million

trade unionists are affiliated. To ignore this political capital, to let it be won back by the right wing as was done in 1961, would be the most extraordinary folly.

Next August the Labour Party, the TUC and the CND are organising a joint day of action against the missiles. This can be an immense show of strength against the Tories' nuclear lunacy.

To achieve its aims over the next year CND must above all remain united in action and firm in its resolve that the labour movement is its crucial ally. CND has nothing to fear from British Trotskyists, the Bennite left or the labour movement. Its enemies are the Tories, the Labour right wing and the SDP — including their full-time polemicist on the *Guardian*.

The Great Moving Right Show

The publication of the *Guardian's* red-baiting attack on CND by Peter Jenkins coincides with the publication of the December issue of *Marxism Today*, theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party. In it the *Guardian's* red-baiter in chief and anti-Bennite slanderer is featured in genteel discussion on complex questions of political composition and class

hegemony. We at Socialist Challenge always read *Marxism Today*. It's always nice to know what the chief constable of Devonshire, the Italian CP, the Polish bureaucracy and the SDP are thinking. But just occasionally couldn't Martin Jaques and company be a bit cautious who they sit down and discuss with?

Even bad taste has its limits.

Trade Unions

Interview with Geoff Hensby - candidate for general secretary

'We need a democratic NUR'

because Weighell made contradictory statements.

'One minute he said he complied with the NEC decision for action and the next he was giving statements to the press undermining these decisions. This caused confusion in the ranks. The members did want to go into battle to defend wages, conditions and the industry, but Weighell steered a course away from this.'

Demand

'In my campaign I'll raise a demand that the NEC and the Annual General Meeting should reconsider the agreements made with the Board. We should withdraw from the agreements on single driver operation. The Board is using these technological advances as a productivity axe to get rid of jobs instead of improving life and conditions for railworkers.'

'It is part of the treachery that Weighell pushed through the whole of McCarthy's recommendations at the Special General Meeting. Despite this SGM, the battle has not been lost. It is not impossible to launch a fightback even at this late stage. The Guards and Shunters Conference,



Geoff Hensby

which draws 400 delegates, representing thousands of guards has a powerful voice on this.

'Another issue I'll take up is privatisation. The membership is confused on this. When the Glencastle Hotel was sold, the NUR bought shares in the private consortium! This is incredible.'

'This is where the Triple Alliance has to play a

meaningful role. It hasn't done so yet. The threads of the Triple Alliance have to be remoulded in a credible way. We should engage in national industrial action to save industry from being hived off.'

'My campaign will include policies for fundamental change and the policies a Labour Government should take up.'

'Healey and his friends argue that being too radical will frighten off the electorate. This is rubbish. When candidates are prepared to fight on a platform of real socialist policies, people are prepared to back them. If we had a Labour government that did what it said and carried out radical policies for peace and jobs, then it would get tremendous support.'

NATO

'Personally, I support unilateral disarmament and the Labour government must be totally committed to this, and that includes getting out of NATO.'

'A Labour government will never get returned if it pursues the sort of Healey policies which produced the so-called "winter of discontent". It wasn't that people became Tories overnight. Disgust, frustration and apathy greeted the Labour government that had stabbed them in the back.'

'Confidence can be rebuilt.'

'I don't consider that my campaign is splitting the left vote in these elections. Branches cast their vote through a single transferable vote system. If the system was first past

the post, maybe there would be grounds for this argument. But this doesn't apply. I'll be calling for my supporters to make a second preference vote for Jimmy Knapp.'

'Even if I don't get elected but get a significant vote, this will be a breakthrough for the left in the union. All the candidates have a responsibility to come clear on the fundamental issues. I haven't heard what Knapp has to say on these issues yet. It looks like he may try to be everybody's friend and run a campaign to protect his vote from all sides.'

Clear

'This is not clear and concise and the membership are entitled to better. You can't stand in the middle of the road without eventually getting run over. You must say which side you are on. We could be talking of a general secretary elected for another 20 years and it is necessary that the candidate of the left has clear and positive credentials.'

'This is an opportunity not to be missed. Those who say I'm splitting the left vote don't see that my standing is complimentary to the left by raising all the issues.'

GEOFF HENSBY, secretary of the Paddington No 1 branch of the National Union of Railwaymen and of the influential Guards and Shunters Grades Conference is campaigning for nomination in the battle to succeed Sidney Weighell as general secretary of the NUR.

Another candidate who presents himself as a challenger to the right wing domination of the union is Jimmy Knapp - previously an organiser for the southern region and now an official at the union headquarters. He at present is reported to have gained 200 nominations.

Socialists are not indifferent to who holds office in the union. But gaining office is not an end in itself. The crucial question is the mobilisation and combativity of the ranks in fighting the bosses. Even the victory of a candidate like Knapp with no record of organising the membership against the productivity offensive of the Rail Board or the wages erosion of railworkers can boost the ranks' confidence.

Geoff Hensby is a serious candidate for office. What recommends him above Knapp is his concentration on mobilising the ranks - as his role in the flexible rostering and other struggles of militant rail-workers in the last years has shown.

In this interview with *Celia Pugh* he raises some of the issues in his campaigns and explains why he has joined the race even given the head start of Jimmy Knapp.

'WE MUST grasp the opportunity to put the NUR back on the tracks. For years the union has been in the grip of vicious right wing leadership under the helm of Weighell. This showed itself in a witch-hunt launched by Weighell against rank and file members like myself who had the audacity to say things were wrong in the leadership.'

Change

'The time is right for a change. We need a democratic NUR that meets the needs of the members. This means more accountability. I believe passionately that all officials should be subject to regular reselection. Any national officer who has done a job of work has nothing to fear. Only individuals who have acted contrary to the interests of the members need worry.'

'For Weighell, the Labour Party ballot was only a culmination. It wasn't really that which led to his downfall. Weighell usurped the authority of the National Executive Committee, who became uneasy and

frustrated. This became clearer day by day. Take the example of flexible rostering. This was a major sell-out.'

'During local negotiations, union representatives are finding how phoney this deal is. Union head office put out lots of glossy propaganda claiming that guards would benefit from this deal. They told us that guards would get as much as a 40 per cent reduction in unsocial hours. This has proved to be a fraud.'

'The Board say that they never promised this, it was only the union officials who made these claims. They say we should have looked at the small print on the agreement which spelt out that improvements to conditions would only take place if economically possible.'

Pity

'It's a great pity Weighell didn't put as much propaganda out to support the national rail strike on wages and productivity. One of the principle reasons the Board has been able to get away with what they are doing is

Mines Key election

By Andy Miller

On 15 December 32,000 Nottinghamshire miners will be electing a new full time official following the death of area secretary Joe Whelan.

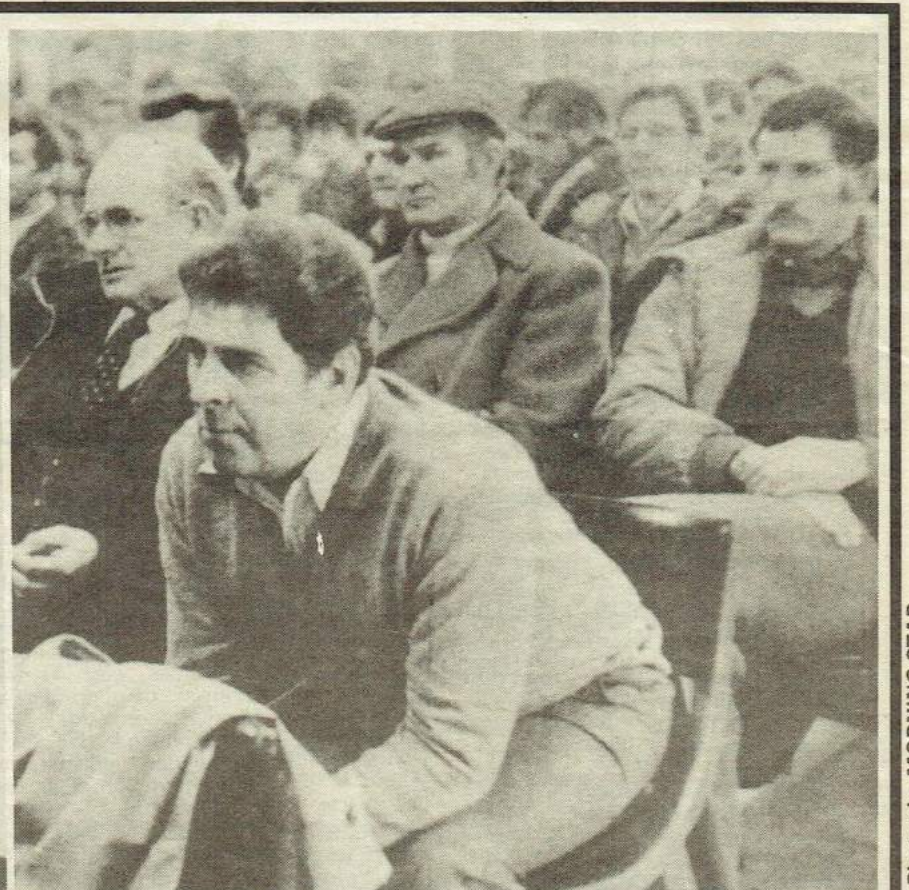
The result of this election could change the balance of the national executive committee of the National Union of Mineworkers as its winner is likely to be elected as the NEC member from the area. At the moment, the balance is 13 to 12 in favour of the left. The victory of the right wing candidate would give the right the majority on the NEC.

The stakes in this election are very high. Miners face the growing threat for a wave of pit closures and a jobs massacre. The NUM cannot afford to be shackled with a right wing NEC. A right wing NEC would block any chance of achieving reform of the NEC. It would place the right in a position to begin to cancel out Scargill's election victory.

The leading left wing candidate is Henry Richardson. He was recently elected from the branches to serve as NEC member until June. Richard-

son stands on the basis of support for NUM policies. The planks of his platform are: no premature pit closures; retirement at 55 for all members; a four day week with no loss of pay, and rate protection; periodic election for full time officials.

Nottinghamshire has for a long time been a stronghold of the right wing. That can be changed. Last year, the stranglehold of the right wing was broken with the election of a left wing area executive. But if the left in the area is going to win solid support for militant policies it isn't enough to replace right wing officials with left wingers. The Notts NUM must be transformed into a campaigning union. To start with that means getting out to explain to every miner the case against pit closures and the NUM's policy to defend jobs.



Kent miners rallying to a fighting speech from miners leaders to save the Snowdown colliery. Area general secretary Jack Collins told the rally that the Coal Board 'had chosen the wrong pit at the wrong time.' Kent miners would take action to defend the pit where the Board had refused to develop seams containing millions of tons of coal.

Arthur Scargill, union President, said that strike action was the only way to save jobs. He received a standing ovation.

Photos by MORNING STAR

Steel massacre goes on

'RAVENS CRAIG saved' trumpeted the Tory press. But even if such a stay of execution is bought till after the next election, it will do nothing to stem the tide of steel job losses.

Last week saw 6000 steel jobs axed. The plan is to cut the workforce from the present 92,000 to 75,000 by the end of 1984 — with or without a major plant closure. Such job letting is, as the *Guardian* explained, so that the Ravenscraig decision 'can be dressed up in suitable monetarist clothes'.

With the present Thatcherite

policies, the outlook for steel industry is more than bleak. Last week, the Brussels commission on steel demanded 15 per cent cut on flat steel products and five per cent on long.

Meanwhile, the government is deliberately smashing up Britain's foundries and steel wire producers. Last week, major wire producers agreed to shut down seven sites and 'consolidate' at 14 others on the basis of a government bribe.

On a similar basis, the government has made a £40m hand out available to steel foundries,

dry bosses to shut and smash firms accounting for 40 per cent of capacity. Similar cutback schemes are in the pipeline for five other industries.

A fightback must be made now. We cannot wait till the next general election. To continue to allow such massive redundancies creates demoralisation which undercuts support for Labour. But the permanent destruction of plant and capacity undermines any economic revival plans which the next Labour government may be forced to introduce.

The main steel union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation should be developing a perspective around Labour's target of a 25m tonnes of steel a year from the present 11m. Instead, general secretary Bill Sirs offered this gem to rank and file workers looking for a lead: 'MacGregor is now chopping off the undefendable bits of the Corporation and keeping the big five intact'. So, for him the threatened 17,000 jobs are 'undefendable'.

Valerie Coultas reports on how not to fight closures.

played on nationalism and racism to the hilt.

Not that he didn't have something for the workers to do as well: 'Write to the chairman of BSC, demanding import controls', he suggested. Even more daringly, he called for local authority leaders in the area to come together with steelworkers and petition parliament. This was extra-parliamentary action with a vengeance.

As to what they should petition parliament about, he made it clear that he was quite open to privatisation of Roundoaks.

Not surprisingly, rank and file steelworkers left the meeting with the view that the only hope they had was with private enterprise.

'I agree with anything that will save my job' said a young steel worker clearly disgruntled about the meeting. We put the suggestion that surely the answer lay in a struggle for full nationalisation and the guarantee of a new plan for the steel industry under workers' control. Heads nodded, but none of them thought that this line could be won with the sort of lead coming from Sirs and co.

JOHN BLACKBURN, Tory MP for Dudley, in the West Midlands, stole the thunder at the mass rally held at Dudley Town Hall to discuss the future of Roundoaks steelworks at Brierly Hill.

His job was an easy one. For the message of the whole platform, including the steel union officials, was that the only way to save Roundoaks is through import controls

and by finding a private buyer.

John Blackburn stole the show, because he muttered on less about future import controls and talking of the tap being switched off south of Sheffield and directed his fire at ... Ian McGregor. 'British Steel is not your friend', he told the 800 assembled steelworkers. 'But I still believe there is going to be a future for Roundoaks. Your

only hope is the private sector.' He then went on to flatter Jack Bates, Roundoaks convenor. This was justly deserved.

Bates ranted and raved at Bill Sirs not being able to call out everybody in steel. He asked rhetorical questions about whether the whole of Dudley would close down; he moaned about the short notice of the closure date — 'Corby was given nine mon-

ths', and he warned the audience that if they did go for a fight that it would be long, hard and bitter ... and like others they might lose!

Then, after an amusing interchange with 'John' about the pros and cons of drinking in the local Tory club, he told the meeting — in no uncertain terms, of course — that it was up to them to decide what to do.

Next came Jeff Edge — a 'left' West Midlands county councillor. The EEC took a big hammering in his speech, especially an EEC that 'let Britain be a dumping ground for cheap foreign imports' — the key problem, he thought. Accordingly, his conclusion was at best ambiguous: 'We're prepared to use ratepayers' money', he said, 'to save jobs, whether the workforce commits itself to

public ownership or to being sold off to private enterprise'. And he's the Bennite!

We must, however, record the illuminating contribution of the silver-haired, 'emotional' steel union leader Bill Sirs.

He went to every possible length to try to persuade the Tory politicians of the 'reasonableness' of his case. Putting forward protectionism as their answer, he

Raindi's - the second Grunwick?

By Valerie Coultas

IT IS 4.30 on a Wednesday evening. The room at the Sikh Temple in Smethwick High Street makes do as the strike HQ for the strikers, now in their seventh week, from Raindi textiles and Supreme Quilting. The strike is over union recognition and victimisation of union members but it has become about much more. The strike is quickly becoming a symbol of resistance for all black workers in the Textile industry and beyond who are bearing such a huge burden of the recession in unemployment and the awful wages paid in slave labour sweatshops up and down the country.

Jiti, a 27 year old Asian woman who came to Britain in 1968, has described her working conditions earlier in the week. 'I had to do 200 trousers a day, 5p for each trouser. I would often work 6 days a week and only take home £40 or £45 per week. I've taken home as little as £25. If the machine's not working you're left with no work to do and you get no pay.'

The room at the temple is packed full, half with Asian men and half with women. As on the picket lines the sexes choose to sit together but the workforce is fully united in its cause, to force PS Raindi to back down and recognise the T&G.

Avtar Jowl, the President of the IWA is addressing the meeting. Over the last few days the houses of scab labourers have been picketed. On Monday 10 workers were turned back. On Tuesday five. On Wednesday three. Despite no strike pay these strikers are even more solid than when the strike began. The local labour movement is beginning to recognise the importance of this dispute and the inspiration it is giving to workers in general.

Slaves

Bob Badham, a Sandwell Councillor, has put a lot of work into the dispute. He brings £50 from his union branch and makes a speech which is well received. The biggest round of applause is reserved for his attack on PS Raindi who has put an

ad in the Sandwell Evening Mail to try and convince the general public that he is a 'good employer' and the strikers are the unreasonable ones. He pays good wages he says, good food, in a good canteen. 'He ain't gonna get public opinion on his side', says Bob, 'because the whole labour movement in Sandwell is united in telling the public that he's exploiting you for slave labour wages.'

Petition

He can afford to pay a security guard, he can afford to pay for a huge advert in the paper to try and influence public opinion. Why can't he find the money to pay you a decent wage?

Bob promises that if PS Raindi or any of his friends apply to Sandwell for planning permission to sell the factory or to buy a new one he would ensure the Labour councillors would be as obstructive as possible. This is quite a different approach to one of the Ladywood Asian councillors who has signed Raindi's petition and condemned the strike for pitting blacks against each other.

An Asian speaker refers to S&K's in his speech. It's clear that Raindi's is not seen as an isolated case but Asian militants throughout the area are getting involved because of their own experiences of trying to fight against sweated labour in warehouses and textile factories. The Asian com-

munity as a whole is watching the strike to see which way it goes. More and more workers understand the need for militancy to be channelled through the union.

The T&G speaker captures this mood, making a very radical speech, given the role of the T&G at S&K's where they encouraged the workforce to accept only partial reinstatement of the original workforce. 'The T&G is 100% behind this dispute because you're 100% right morally and in every other way and they're 100% wrong. This dispute has taken on a national significance. Some people have called it the second Grunwick's but I prefer to call it the first Raindi's. The brothers and sisters here are on a moral crusade. Together you will win. The workers united can never be defeated'.

The strikers clap at the end of each speech and at the end of each translation. They are not only polite but very patient as some of them have been on the picket line all day and the room is very hot. Every gesture of practical support is enthusiastically welcomed.

Busy

Socialist Challenge and Revolution Youth supporters in Birmingham have been busy not only on the picket lines but raising the issue in the Labour Party and the Labour Party Young Socialists and the regions five T&G Broad Left. We now plan to persuade the strike committee to do a wider tour of the labour movement in the West Midlands in support of the strike. ACAS has been called in this week. Let's hope PS Raindi gives in sooner rather than later because if feelings here are anything to go by he's bitten off more than he can chew and he's going to have to give in somewhere along the line.



Day strike success

NEARLY 400 of the 533 social security benefit offices were closed last Friday as a result of a one-day strike call by the civil service unions. There was a massive response from all areas of the country.

In Birmingham, over 1000 people marched to a rally. It was in Erdington, Birmingham that the dispute began 11 weeks ago when the staff walked out demanding more staff to cope with the massively increased workload. As local Labour MP Jeff Rooker told the rally 'There has been a 22 percent increase in the number of claimants in the West Midlands, but a 2 percent cut in staff'.

Firm calls were made for the stepping up of the action to force the government to negotiate.

BERNADETTE McAliskey recently toured North America, visiting Detroit; St Paul, Minnesota; New York; Boston; Burlington; Vermont; San Francisco; Montreal; Saskatchewan; and Vancouver, British Columbia.

The following speech (abbreviated) was delivered in New York on 22 October to members of District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. At the meeting she was presented with a copy of a resolution supporting the struggle of the people of Northern Ireland that was passed at the last AFSCME conference.

WE in Ireland have been struggling for independence from Britain since before capitalism itself developed. But our present struggle dates back to the turn of the century, when a movement developed among small nations across Europe fighting for independence. Historically, it marked the beginning of the the great anti-imperialist movements.

The Irish rebellion took place on Easter of 1916. Like every other combat between ourselves and the English, it was an ill-balanced affair. Facing the British army were several hundred dedicated young men and women. They came from Cummann na mBan, the Irish women's army; from the Irish Republican Brotherhood; and from James Connolly's Irish Citizen Army.

Connolly was one of the few people at that time who understood that winning Ireland's freedom required combining the fight for its national independence and the fight for the rights of its developing working class. He raised the slogan that the cause of Ireland is the cause of labor and the cause of labor is the cause of Ireland.

Over the years, the separation of these two historic struggles has led to our inability to win our freedom.

Although the 1916 uprising failed and was brutally suppressed, its suppression had a completely different effect than the British government expected. In this regard it was similar to the results of the brutal manner in which the British allowed Bobby Sands and his comrades to starve to death in prison.

The deaths of the few of 1916 inspired the many. And by 1918 the movement for home rule and independence became a mass national movement in Ireland. In 1918 there was a general election throughout all 32 counties of Ireland.

In the 1918 elections Sinn Fein got 85.13 per cent of all the votes cast in Ireland. More than 85 per cent of the population peacefully, democratically, and by the ballot box, voted for Ireland's independence. This is important to keep in mind when we hear of the violence that came later.

How did the British government respond to Sinn Fein's victory? Britain declared immediate war on the rebel parliament and the Irish people. Gunboats sailed up the River Liffey to the capital city of Dublin and blew up the building in which the parliament was meeting.

Every member of that parliament that Britain could get her hands on was arrested and sent to jail in England.

A war of independence began in 1918. On December 6, 1921, a treaty to end hostilities was signed in London by the prime minister of England and Michael Collins on behalf of the Irish Republican Army.

Under its provisions a 'Free State' within the British Commonwealth was to be established in 26 of Ireland's counties. And although the loyalist population — those who wanted to remain under British rule — was less than 13 per cent of the total and was concentrated in only three counties in northeastern Ireland, six counties in the north would remain an integral part of Britain's empire.

The treaty's concessions to the British caused a civil war in Ireland, which lasted until 1923.

I live in that part of Ireland that



BERNADETTE McALISKEY: THE STRUGGLE FOR IRISH FREEDOM

Britain retained. The people I represent — and although this is not a religious struggle, historically we are the Catholic population — make up nearly 40 per cent of the northern population.

Our forefathers — together with the overwhelming majority of the Irish people — voted themselves out of the British empire in 1918. At no time since then, from my great-grandparents down to my grandparents to myself and my children, have we ever conceded the legality of the existence of the state we are forced to live under through violence and threats of greater violence.

We were given exactly the same choice as the people of Palestine; if you don't like it, move out and become homeless. But our people stayed where they were and became the second-class citizens of Northern Ireland.

We were denied equality before the law, equality in the election system, equality in employment, and equality in housing.

It was not until 1947 — when a Labour Party government in Britain introduced socialised medicine, socialised housing, and socialised education — that the Catholics of Northern Ireland had any choice of improving their situation.

In 1968 I was 19 years old. I was not a revolutionary or a socialist then.

I was not even a militant. I was a young Catholic student who simply wanted equality before the law and equality within the system.

What made me a revolutionary and an international socialist was practical experience. I saw what happens to people who ask for little. They get less! I saw that when people refuse to lie down and be walked over, they get kicked down. And when they have been kicked down but get up again, they are put in prison. When they find a way under the law to organise legally, the authorities change the law.

When people claim they cannot support our struggle in Northern Ireland because it is violent, they must remember that it is that way because of those who own and control society, not because we have chosen to make it violent.

Thirteen years ago, in 1968, we took to the streets peacefully to demand that every person over the age of 18 have the right to vote in every election in the country.

We demanded an end to discrimination in employment on the basis of politics, race and religion.

These were hardly the most revolutionary demands to raise in Western Europe in 1968!

In response to these simple democratic demands, the British jailed thousands of our people without trial. At 4 am on 9 August 1971, the

British army swept through Northern Ireland, breaking down our doors and taking away the male members of our families to be interned in British concentration camps, where some were held for years without trial.

In 1969, we staged a peaceful march from Belfast to Derry, a city that was Northern Ireland's prize exhibit of discrimination against Catholics. We modeled that march on the civil rights march in Alabama from Selma to Montgomery.

Along the way we were attacked by loyalist thugs who were the uniformed and paid law-enforcement officers of the state. 85 marchers required hospitalisation. And those kids, including me, got up, gathered our injured, and marched on.

But that was the last time we turned the other cheek. We reckoned that we only had two cheeks, and we had turned them both. Never again would our people walk and be beaten to the ground and simply say 'that's OK, I'll keep on walking.'

In August 1969 in the Bogside area of Derry we fought back against the police attacks for three days and three nights. We fought with stones and petrol bombs, which we had also seen on television, against police guns and teargas.

In that same month, a loyalist mob systematically burned down the Bombay Street area of Belfast in a

pogrom against the Catholic people. There too the forces of 'law and order' led the attack. In that situation a very few people with a very few guns came out to defend the neighbourhood and opened fire on the advancing loyalist force.

That was where the present phase of armed struggle began. It was not organised by diehard terrorists. In general you find the diehard terrorists in positions of government in America of Western Europe.

These were young people acting to protect their community. The present IRA was born out of fear of pogroms. And out of fear it could happen again the people continue to support the IRA.

As a socialist, I recognise that even fighting another 800 years the IRA will never be able to militarily defeat the might of the British army, no matter how many guns trickle in from here and there. They cannot militarily win freedom for the Irish people.

I believe that because of the history of my own and every other country proves that freedom cannot be won by the few and handed over to the many.

If you look at your own trade-union experiences, you see that the might, strength, and solidarity of the trade unions has won through the blood, sweat and tears of the masses



of working people. That is the only way anything is won.

People are only free when they take freedom for themselves. They must be armed with the ability to educate, to agitate, and to organise themselves to understand that their oppression is not something that just hits them individually. They must understand that what oppresses me is also what oppresses him and what oppresses you.

Oppression, discrimination, and injustice occur worldwide. And ultimately to fight them we must fight them on a worldwide basis.

That is also why many of us come to look to you in America. We don't look to Ronald Reagan. We try to take our case to those who form the backbone of American society — the people who make America work, its working people.

And the people with the most strength are those American workers who are organised through trade unions. There is no power on this earth greater than the democratic majority of the people organised through their own organisations.

We are fighting to change an irrational system that has barbaric priorities. Margaret Thatcher's government, which allowed our hunger strikers to die, is now locked in a battle against people very much like you — the health service and public employee unions in Britain.

For a year these workers have been fighting for a 12 per cent wage increase, while the government refuses to give them more than 4 per cent. Virtually everyone in the country supports 12 per cent for the health-care workers. They are supported by the railway workers, the miners, the patients who have come out of the hospitals to march with the health-care workers.

But the British government said: 'You're not getting the money. We don't have any money!'

And in the middle of that dispute, somebody placed a wee tiny Argentine flag on a wee tiny island somewhere in the South Atlantic. All of a sudden money was no object! Every bathtub that could float was being refitted for war. Bands set to relearn to play 'Rule Britannia'.

And in defence of this kind of system, these barbaric priorities, the British have filled their prisons with

our young men and women. Ten of the finest young men that our or any country ever produced died slowly in defence of human dignity in last year's hunger strike.

Can you imagine 74 days on hunger strike? Can you imagine how many seconds there are in 74 days, and how many times you make the same commitment that you're not going to give up?

To defend 'peace', 'justice' and 'law and order', the British authorities have taken away the right to trial by jury in Northern Ireland. They have shifted the onus of proof from the prosecution to the defence.

They have taken away the defendant's right to know the identity of and to cross-examine the accuser. Only last week they took away the right of defendants to be presented with the evidence against them!

Britain has a problem. Britain's problem is that we will not meekly submit to continued British rule over our country.

We do not accept the argument that you should forget past injustices and start afresh from where we are now. We maintain that where we are now is the direct historical consequence of the injustices of yesterday. If there is to be peace in the world, those historical injustices must be redressed.

We too have a problem — how to end British rule in our country and how to start building in Ireland a society fit for human beings to live in.

We don't just want to stick one land mass onto another and get a new flag and a new anthem. James Connolly taught us that if that's all we did, nothing would change for the ordinary man and woman in the street.

We want to build a different kind of society, one in which every child has an equal chance to be all that he or she can or may want to be.

We want to build a society where people do not go hungry because it is more profitable to close down factories than to produce what people need.

We want to build a society where people have a decent roof over their heads. Ridiculous as it may seem, while we have the worst housing conditions in all of Western Europe, we also have the highest percentage of unemployed construction workers.

We want to build a reasonable society, but to do that we have to change the system. In Northern Ireland they tell us that the building workers cannot build the houses we need because it is not profitable for the contractors, the big construction companies, to build housing.

I say, fair enough! If the contractors don't want to build the houses people need because it's not profitable enough, we can get them jobs as construction workers. We'll nationalise the building industry and build the houses ourselves. Isn't that reasonable?

When we say we need money for education and for hospitals, but the

bankers won't give it to us because they make more money financing the war in the Falklands or investing in South Africa, or building nuclear weapons to blow everyone to blazes, we say that's a totally irresponsible way to act. It's irresponsible and socially dangerous.

I happen to think that if you use your money, made off my work, to build nuclear weapons, that is socially irresponsible and your money should be taken away from you.

The kind of society I want to build is eminently reasonable and sensible. That's precisely why the British and American governments are terrified of our struggle. They fear our example.

It's bad enough when people in Africa begin to talk like that. But at least Africa is far away from America. And in the Third World, America can still wield power because it has more money than anyone else and can, in Henry Kissinger's words, use hunger as a political commodity.

But we are right in the middle of Western Europe and our example could spread into areas where the people are strong and unionised.

Moreover, when I speak or someone else comes to this country to speak to you, and you begin to examine what's happening in Ireland and are moved to do something about it, then you also start seeing your own society slightly differently.

When you see injustice in Ireland and try to redress it, you begin to look

just a bit differently on Nicaragua and Cuba and all the places in Latin America that you are told are trying to sneak up on here and paint you all red in the middle of the night while you're not looking.

You begin to wonder if that's not all nonsense. You begin to question all the rubbish that is spewed out on television, in the press, and in election literature. You begin to see that it has no validity.

And you might actually begin changing the policies of America.

Someday in this country a broad American movement will come together that is not just Irish-Americans for freedom in Ireland, or Black Americans for freedom in Africa, or Chicanos for Puerto Ricans in defence of their homelands.

There's going to be an American movement for peace, freedom and justice at home and throughout the world. And do you know what will happen then? There'll be no Ronald Reagans winning elections.

We in Ireland will fight on with or without international support. We will fight on with whatever means are at our disposal to empty our jails, to save our children from their bullets.

We will fight on until we win. It may not be in my personal lifetime because I don't know how long I will be permitted to live, but in the lifetime of my generation there will be a united Ireland.

But that alone is not enough. I want a united socialist workers republic of Ireland because no one will look to the interests of the working people of Ireland but the workers themselves. Unless working people run society themselves, we will all have fought and died for little more than change of flag and a change of anthem.

There is a better day coming in Ireland, and in America as well. Whether we move together as a common movement, or whether we move first and you move later, a new movement will arise in the United States too. This country is a melting pot of ethnic groups that arrived here fleeing poverty and oppression. Many have links to their struggling people at home.

The complete speech is available in the US socialist weekly *The Militant*, 3 Dec 1982, available from 14 Charles Lane, New York, NY 10014, USA.



Where you can buy Socialist Challenge

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

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

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

COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop.

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Whats left

RATES for What's Left. 5p per word or £4 per col inch. Deadline: noon Sat prior to publication. Payment in advance. Phone 01-358 8180.

'Z' a film by Costa Gavras, director of MISSING. Ruskin Hall, 16 Church Rd, Acton W3. Saturday 11th December at 4pm (£1) and 7.30pm (£1.50). OAPs and UB40s half price. Information: 993-5631/992-4887.

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Labour Committee on Palestine

TWO WEEKS ago Socialist Challenge carried an article on the Labour Committee on Palestine inaugural conference, in which we commented on the walk out and the subsequent split by Socialist Organiser supporters and others. Andrew Hornung who led the split has submitted the following reply, following our refusal to publish a 1700-word reply which would have amounted to a full page of Socialist Challenge.

YOUR INSISTENCE that any reply to Ros Kaplan's report of the Labour Committee on Palestine conference (SC no 271) be limited to 500 words is most unreasonable: everyone knows that replying to mis-representation and malicious innuendo takes a lot longer than writing it. Socialist Organiser will contain a full response.

1. You know that about 100 WRP supporters and members were marched into the conference with Ted Knight's connivance and that there was no evidence that these people were either members of the LCP or delegates from affiliated organisations.

At the time Socialist Challenge supporters in the conference acknowledged that this was going on but refused

to raise it because — to put it ingenuously — they wanted the LCP to remain united. Now Ros Kaplan says that 'the conference was marred by allegations (!) made against some of the organisers by members of Socialist Organiser etc.' Stop evading the issue. Were these 'allegations' true or not?

2. If the allegations are true — and I have privately shown Ros Kaplan fur-

ther supporting evidence — on what basis do you say that 'behind this row was an attempt by Socialist Organiser to get the conference to adopt a platform which included very detailed positions on reactionary Arab states and other questions'.

Firstly, these 'detailed positions' don't exist. There was only a cursory reference. Secondly, what was behind the row was vote rigging.

3. You say: 'It seemed however that SO were unhappy with a committee which was not in their pocket'. This is malicious factionalism. The truth is that Tony Greenstein (who is not a Socialist Organiser supporter) and I said several times during the conference that we did not consider the conference legitimate because it was packed. That is why we did not stand for election.

4. You say the committee is 'broad based'. Do you really think that the WRP marched 100 members and supporters —

Corin Redgrave, Clare Dixon, Alex Mitchell, Jean Kerrigan, Sheila Torrance etc

into the LCP conference in order to hand it over to a 'broad based committee' ... something that the LCP had had since its inception.

5. Since the events Socialist Challenge comrades have argued that to have blown the whistle on Knight and the WRP is adding fuel to the witch hunt. Comrades, we're not just fighting for democracy and against political gangsterism. You cannot help that process much by writing 'whether or not supporters of Labour Herald or the WRP or both packed the conference is irrelevant. Certainly SO themselves mobilised their supporters in strength ...'

Fascinating! Firstly the facts: SO which had been the biggest single force in developing the committee since its inception can hardly be put on a par with a mob hired for the afternoon who have had no contact with the LCP. Secondly if SO comrades not involved in LCP work had 'mobilised in strength' how is it that there was only 'a walk-out

of 30 delegates'?

Thirdly you treat the WRP as if it were just some other tendency within the labour movement, overlooking its dubious political methods — in a matter connected with the Middle East — its connection with Arab regimes.

6. Those who walked out of the LCP conference have established a Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine. To continue the work done by the LCP with the taint of corruption, the stigma of vote rigging and the influence direct or indirect of the WRP was not on.

7. Finally, why is Socialist Challenge covering up for Knight, Labour Herald and the WRP. Is it out of concern for the LCP, for which it did hardly anything between its inception and the conference? Or are there other motives?

The LMCP can be contacted by writing to LMCP c/o 28 Carlton Mansions, Hamleight Rd, N16.

'A grave error of judgement' — Socialist Challenge replies

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE makes two accusations against Andrew Hornung and Socialist Organiser. First that they irresponsibly split the Labour Committee on Palestine at its founding conference, thus creating a disastrous situation where there are now two Labour movement campaigns on this question. Second that they then proceeded to engage in a muck-raking, irresponsible and scandalous campaign in the bourgeois press which in addition to making it extremely difficult now to build any labour movement campaign on Palestine, bordering on red baiting against Ted Knight and Labour Herald journalist Penny Cole.

Andrew Hornung, who would have made a good solicitor but makes a lousy revolutionary politician, responds by logic-chopping and point scoring, but nowhere confronts the issue of the damage which has been done to the task of building labour movement support to the Palestinian cause.

At the Labour Committee on Palestine founding conference there were undoubtedly problems with the credentials. Socialist Challenge supporters are not in possession of all the relevant documents and are not in a position to give an accurate account of all the problems.

Ted Knight alleges that on the door Andrew Hornung 'waved through' Socialist Organiser supporters. Andrew Hornung alleges that the conference was 'packed' with WRP supporters. If Hornung's allegation is true, and our considered judgement is that Knight probably did mobilise Labour Herald and WRP supporters in some strength, then this of course was incorrect and a breach of workers democracy which we condemn.

But the essential question is this: do you fight sectarian stupidity with sectarianism, and breaches of workers democracy by walking out? This has to be judged concretely, and not with ritualistic formulae and lawyer's arguments.

Andrew Hornung and Socialist Organiser have to answer: what would have been changed, what was at stake, by accepting the existing delegations to the conference, even under protest? As far as we could see, and Andrew Hornung does nothing to dispel our assumptions on this, there were but two.

First, what would be the political platform of the LCP. Second, who would be the officers of the LCP. On the first, Hornung believes we exaggerate the differences between the platform proposed by him and the one adopted — in other words that the passage on the reactionary Arab states was 'just a passing reference'. Even if he is right, then in effect his argument is that there was not a substantive political difference.

Second, and we think this is the question which



To fight Zionism we must overcome sectarianism

Hornung, Greenstein and SO thought was decisive: should Hornung and Greenstein be the secretary and chairperson of the LCP?

In our view the question of the officers was not a crucial question for a small labour movement campaign just getting going. We in any case would have backed Ted Knight for one of the leading posts because he is the person with credibility and support in the labour movement who has done most to raise the issue of Palestine.

There was no question of preventing Hornung and Greenstein being on the steering committee. In the event, not a single member of the WRP was proposed for or accepted on to the steering committee of the LCP.

But Hornung and

Greenstein were not satisfied with that: they wanted to ensure that they were the officers, and split the committee when it looked as if they would not be. They should have stayed in the campaign and accepted nomination to the steering committee, rather than splitting and throwing the campaign into disarray.

Subsequently there have been gleeful articles in the Guardian and New Statesman. The Guardian obviously got their information from Hornung and devoted their whole 'Diary' column to it — which started 'And now an everyday story of Labour Party folk'. This gutter press campaign was at best a grave error of judgement. At worst it was a deliberate attempt to discredit the LCP, using whatever weapons came to

hand. It gave the bourgeois press not only an opportunity to discredit any labour campaign on Palestine, but an opportunity to discredit the far left in the Labour Party at the height of a witch hunt. How stupid can you get?

Socialist Challenge is in no way allied with the WRP, and does not cover up for its activities. In particular, we defend Socialist Organiser unconditionally against attempts to use the courts to prevent fair political comment. But what Socialist Organiser did at the LCP conference and subsequently is inexcusable.

The way out of this mess is for Socialist Organiser and Tony Greenstein to come back into the LCP. A refusal to do this is to continue to fight sectarianism with sectarianism.



Home office threatens to deport South African political exile

THE Home Office has turned down the plea for political asylum of Anwar Mohamed (41), currently held in Strangeways Prison, and is threatening to deport him back to South Africa. Manchester Anti Apartheid is campaigning against this.

Anwar Mohamed was detained by the SA security police in December 1974, after a chance search revealed him to be carrying a leaflet issued by the banned African National Congress.

'I was taken to a room and I was interrogated and beaten by six Bureau of State Security (BOSS) men. During this interrogation I was standing up all the time, and had strong flash lights directed to my face. If I blinked, turned my face or even shut my eyes, then I was either smacked on

the face or I received a blow on my back or stomach. They never threw a punch at my face, but always at my body or a kick at the back of my knee joint.'

Anwar however refused to confess to membership of any banned political organisation. He was then put into solitary

confinement for three days.

'At the end of the third day they took me out of the confinement and took me to a different room, where I saw a man hanging from the ceiling (about two feet off the ground). Both his hands and legs were tied behind his back with a rope and this rope was extended to the pole in the ceiling ... it was inhuman and nauseating. Then they took me away and asked me if I wanted what I saw to happen to me? I said 'No'. They said 'It will, if I don't come up with a confession.'

After a week the police let Anwar go. He feared however

that they might detain him again.

'On the morning of 20 January 1975, while I was going home ... my neighbours told me that two black cars were at my house and they were there for about three hours waiting for me. I knew immediately that they were from BOSS (when I was told that they were white men.)'

Anwar fled across the border to Mozambique, using a forged passport.

He then stayed with a sister who lives in Mozambique and found work there as an accountant. However the government soon afterwards

ordered all South African passport holders to leave the country.

He then went to Pakistan, where he did not speak the language and could not obtain permission to work. He soon left for India, where he lived from June 1976 to April 1979, first in Bombay and then at his grandfather's village in Suret, where he stayed until his grandfather died.

Anwar eventually came to England. He came in as a visitor with nowhere to return to. He found work, first in a London hotel and then as a cost clerk in Bolton. In May

1981 he found himself overtaken by financial problems ... He issued cheques even though his bank account no longer had any funds in it. Eventually he was arrested and charged with deception, convicted and sentenced to eight months imprisonment.

He finished serving his sentence six months ago. Since then he has been held in prison while the Home Office decide what to do with him. They regard him as an illegal immigrant. Manchester Anti Apartheid is supporting his claim for political asylum through a press campaign and regular Saturday morning pickets at Strangeways Prison

gates from 9 until 11am. Last week the Home Office was they said they would reconsider his case, this combined with intimidation of the picket by prison officials, will not halt the campaign until Manchester AA are certain he will not be deported to South Africa.

Manchester AA are demanding that Anwar's long and fearful wait by dragged out no longer and that he will be given political asylum in Britain.

The campaign is now supported by the Anti Apartheid movement on a national scale.

Coup attempt in Ghana defeated

EARLY in the morning of Wednesday 24 November, Flight-lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, Chairperson of Ghana's ruling Provisional National Defence Council, announced that an attempted coup against his 11 month-old government had failed. It now appears that the forces behind the coup were right wing although with the participation of a leading left winger. **Walid Hadad** asked **KOFI MENSAH**, a Ghanaian socialist, to explain the background to these events.

How did Jerry Rawlings coup on 31 December '81 differ from previous military coups?

Like Rawling's earlier coup in 1979 this one was led by the lower ranks of the armed forces. From the start left wing activists — both military and civilian — were part of the ruling PNDC and massive support was immediately forthcoming from working people shown in huge demonstrations.

At the time of seizing power, Ghana's economy was bankrupt. Inflation was raging at over 100 per cent and a loaf of bread cost more than the minimum daily wage.

The cedi, Ghana's currency, was trading at 16 times its official rate on the black market.

The cocoa crop, which accounts for 60 per cent of Ghana's export earnings was stranded in the growing areas due to lack of

transport, mismanagement and corruption.

Jerry's coup gave working people the hope that this would be ended.

How did the PNDC seek to involve the people of Ghana in changing this state of affairs?

People's Defence Committees and Workers Defence Committees were set up in the towns and villages, within the army and workplaces. These are popular organs of democracy set up to bring decision making to the broad mass of people.

Their role has been to expose corruption and the hoarding of essential commodities, to enforce some price control and to initiate self-help programmes.

Recently the WDC at the partly-British owned

Ghana Textiles Printing Company attempted to take over the factory. It was attacked by police who wounded a number of workers.

The government intervened, seizing the assets of the company and ordering the expatriate manager to be deported within 48 hours.

The PDNC has also mobilised a student task force to evacuate cocoa to the ports, helped set up a national women's organisation, established a training school for ideological and military training of leaders of the PDCs and WDCs and has established People's Courts to try people for corruption and economic sabotage.

What has been the reaction of imperialist countries and other governments to all this?



Jerry Rawlings

tries and other governments to all this?

They are trying to destabilise the regime. There have been threats of foreign invasion through neighbouring countries and there have been some recent clashes on the Ghana/Tobago border.

Advance credit from international institutions and firms have been cancelled and there have been threats of economic embargo. On top of this the world price of cocoa has continued to fall.

Within Ghana reactionary bodies such as the Ghana Bar Association

and the Professional Bodies Association have attacked the development of the PDCs and WDCs.

On the other hand countries like Cuba and Libya are exploring areas of closer economic links while loans have been sought from East Europe to rehabilitate ailing industries.

Why did the latest coup occur and what is the future of Ghana's revolution?

Since names and numbers of civilian and military arrests haven't been disclosed it is difficult to assess the threat to the PNDC and its implications.

However, it is reported that the right wing with an 'ultra-left' faction within the army was responsible. It is also implied that the divisions were on a tribal basis as the people involved were reportedly from Northern Ghana.

This latter view is superficial as it ignores class divisions. However we can be sure that imperialism will use these divisions to destabilise the revolution.

The lack of a united front of the major left-wing political movements could be at the basis of the 'slow pace of the revolution' which prompted this

adventurist intervention.

So far the June Fourth Movement, Jerry's original power base, and the Kwame Nkrumah Revolutionary Guards have merged to form a more radical united front.

The National Democratic Movement — which believes Ghana's revolution is in its 'national democratic' stage — has not joined this front.

Immediately following the coup attempt, tens of thousands of workers demonstrated in favour of the Rawling's government shouting power to the people and demanding the removal of top civil servants. This clearly indicated the grass roots support the PNDC enjoys.

What remains to be seen is how this support can be channelled into clear policies, first, by ensuring that the PDCs and WDCs remain representative democratic organs of the people.

Second, whether there can emerge a clear economic direction which can break Ghana's economy from imperialist domination and satisfy the basic needs of the impoverished masses. It is in this light that the debate around whether to accept the IMF conditions for a loan must be seen.

FDR/FMLN launch new political strategy

By Murdo Ritchie

IN AN interview in the US newsweekly *The Guardian* Ruben Zamora, a leader in the El Salvadorean FDR/FMLN explained developments in the strategy of the FDR/FMLN that have been made since the fraudulent elections on 28 March of this year.

'The war against the government is the fundamental situation within the country,' he said. However, because 'of the war, within the dominant groups of society there is an internal confrontation between two historical projects. The repressive

and regressive project of the most backward sector of the oligarchy represented by the Nationalist Republican Alliance (ARENA) and the repressive, reformist project that is backed by the Americans, the Christian Democrats, and other sec-

tors inside the Salvadorean army.'

He continued, 'These two projects are fighting inside the state for the leadership of Salvadorean society. This confrontation has resulted in the dispersal of certain social forces that previously more or less supported the government. Because of this they have started to explore other alternatives.'

This prompted the FDR/FMLN to launch its 'policy of convergence'. This policy recognised that the March election solved the problems of representation for the 'most backward sectors of the oligarchy' but created massive problems for other organisations in the country and that the FDR/FMLN will 'have to approach those other sectors that, because of this crisis, are moving away from the government.'

Sectors

'Convergence does not represent a policy of united front because, objectively, it is not possible to establish a united front with these sectors. Already the FDR is a united front of the democratic progressive sectors.'

He stated: 'The united

front is a more organic strategy in that you present to other forces the idea of forming a structure, however loose it might be. But it is a structure in which everybody gets together under one 'umbrella'.

Converge

'The strategy of convergence is different in that we are not asking those other forces to join in a common structure with us. It is instead a policy of convergence — trying to work out what objectives we have in common.'

'Basically there are two objectives: to fight against the fascists in El Salvador, because they want to destroy not only the FDR and the FMLN forces, but as well these other forces.'

'And secondly, to try to fight together against the danger of massive American intervention in El Salvador, and the problem of regionalisation of conflict that the current American military intervention is producing in Central America.'

This strategy is directed at the 'institutional Catholic Church' and 'all those people that have some sort of organisation within the church, Democratic Action,

a newly formed political party, the Popular Democratic Union, some of the Christian Democrats, and the part of the trade union movement that is outside the FDR.'

'The long-range objective of this policy is, on the one hand, to present to the Salvadorean people a more clear scenario of choices. Where is democracy? Where is social change? And where is dictatorship, brutality, repression and reactionary social measures? In that sense it is to some extent to clear the political arena in terms of choice for people.'

'Another objective is that, insofar as those other sectors develop a struggle against fascism in El Salvador, the government will become more isolated internally — not only externally, where they are quite isolated at the international level. Therefore the contradictions inside the government will develop more acutely.'

'The third objective is to develop the possibility for a democratic society, a society for real social change for the people.'

Finally, he explained the purpose of the FDR/FMLN's call for 'dialogue' and 'negotia-

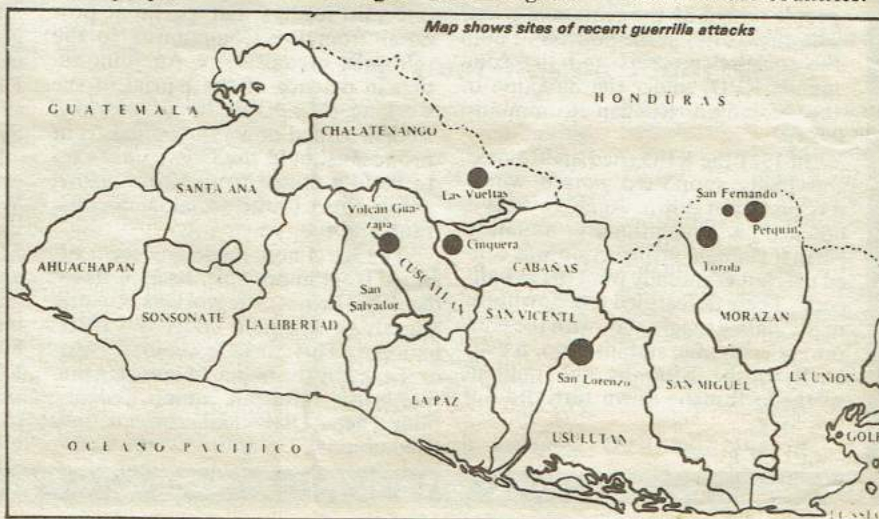
tion': 'There is no point in just sitting down to talk; what for? For us dialogue is a means to approach negotiation.'

'That is, dialogue for achieving certain objectives. And the objective for us continues to be fundamental one: to achieve a political settlement of the struggle of El Salvador.'

'Our objectives are to achieve peace, democracy, social change, and respect for the rights of our people. Normally those are not the objectives of either the American administration or the military governments of our countries.'



FMLN guerrilla



In the preceding parts of this series PHIL HEARSE traced the growth of the German Social Democratic Party, the most authoritative party of the Second International, showing how it became bureaucratised and reformist — and how it betrayed the

German revolution of 1918-19. In this third part he shows how the Social Democratic leaders were powerless in face of the rise of Hitler, and how the ultra-left sectarianism of the Communist Party contributed to Hitler's victory.

3. Social Democracy and the rise of Hitler

'Nothing is easier than to ridicule the social democratic bureaucracy ... (who have) struck up a Solomon song to socialism. Yet, it must not be forgotten that the reformist workers have a thoroughly serious attitude to the question of socialism. One must have a serious attitude to the reformist workers. Hence the problem of the united front rises up again in all its scope'. Leon Trotsky

Out of the defeat of the 1918-19 revolution emerged the Weimar Republic, whose SPD founders created 'the most perfect constitution in the world'. Between 1918-23 the SPD leaders participated in several governments, generally with their 'democratic' bourgeois allies. But the shape of the German workers movement was changing.

In 1920 the majority of the Independent Social Democrats (the USPD) fused with the small German Communist Party. For the first time since the outbreak of the war, the German workers had a mass revolutionary party, the KPD.

Throughout the Weimar Republic German capitalism staggered from crisis to crisis — Germany remained the most unstable country in Europe. But after a temporary upturn in the economy during 1924-28, it crashed again in 1929. It was this economic collapse which gave the Nazis their sensational breakthrough in the September 1930 elections, and ultimately their victory in 1933.

But why did the Nazis gain from the crisis. Why were the swaggering stormtrooper thugs ('human dust' Trotsky called them) able to mobilise behind them millions of middle class people ruined by the economic crisis? The answer lies in the policies of both the social democrats and the communist KPD, under the direction of the Stalinised Russian Communist Party.

In 1921 the KPD tried an ill-timed and badly supported *putsch* which was easily put down. Again in 1923 it botched a revolutionary situation when a planned insurrection was called off, but eventually went off at half-cock. These defeats led to a downturn in the class struggle and, with the temporary economic stabilisation, a drift back to the SPD by the militant workers. But the down turn did not last long.

In 1925 the KPD launched a

referendum for the confiscation of the lands and riches of the German princes. Throughout 1926 this campaign proved immensely popular; millions of German workers, including many social democrats, threw their energies into this campaign. It proved to be a turning point. Just a couple of years after the defeat of the stormy struggles of 1923 the German working class was regaining its strength and combativity.

This resurgence of the workers movement was reflected in the outcome of the 1928 election: the SPD vote went up from 7.9 million to 9.15 million. Those of the KPD went up from 2.7 to 3.36 million. The Nazi vote reached its all time low of 810,000. SPD leader Herman Muller became Chancellor; the social democrats were back in office for the first time since 1923. Here was the opportunity for the KPD to begin to break the social democratic workers from their mis-leaders. A growing radicalisation inside the working class coincided with an SPD government, and an impending world economic crisis to boot.

Expose

But just at this point the KPD under the guidance of the Stalinised Communist International made its disastrous ultra-left turn — the so-called 'Third Period'. According to Thalmann and the other KPD leaders social democracy had now become 'the left wing of fascism'. They called the SPD 'social fascist'. They argued that it was more dangerous than ordinary fascism because of its left-wing guise. Thus any united front with social democratic workers could only be under communist leadership, hence a 'united front from below'.

Lenin and Trotsky had always explained that the united front was not a manoeuvre aimed at 'exposing' the reformist leaders, but a genuine proposal from the Communists to the reformist organisations for joint action in defence of the crucial of the working class. Only if the reformist leaders turned down the united front proposal should the Communists try to build a united front 'from below' going direct to the social democratic rank and file.

The KPD now made any form of united front impossible. Its appeals to the social democratic workers became appeals to assemble under the KPD banner. This insane course was deepened by the policy of ignoring the (majority) reformist union federation, the ADGB and constructing 'Red unions'. Up until 1924 the Com-

munist had held many positions of influence inside the ADGB, but now they built the RGO (Red Trade Union Opposition) as opposition unions to the official ADGB.

In the Berlin metal workers strike in 1930 the RGO accused the social democrats, in a completely unjustified way, of collaborating with the Nazis to break the strike. In the Ruhr miners strike in the same year the RGO isolated the communist miners and the strike was quickly defeated. Perhaps the most symbolically criminal episode of 'Red' trade unionism was the Berlin transport workers strike of 1932.

Berlin was part of SPD-controlled Prussia, and thus the demands of the transport workers were directed against a Social Democratic state government. Opportunistically, the Nazis — to reinforce their base among the workers — supported the strike. Correctly the KPD did too, but then made the criminal error of collaborating with the Nazi trade union federation in building support for the strike. Nazis and Communists stood shoulder to shoulder in the streets collecting money for the strikers. The response of the social democratic workers to this kind of collaboration can be well imagined! This kind of alliance with the Nazis most famously occurred during the 1929 referendum against the Prussian social democratic government organised by the Nazis. After some hesitation, the KPD backed the referendum dubbing it the 'Red referendum'.

Smash

A united front policy would have been precisely the opposite. While explaining to the workers the repressive policies of the Prussian state government, the KPD should have fought shoulder to shoulder with the social democratic workers to defeat the Nazi attempt to overthrow the state government and replace it with an even more repressive one. Instead, KPD policy went as far as jointly organising with the Nazis to smash up SPD meetings.(1)

The economic crash of 1929 inevitably polarised German politics. While in the 1930 elections the KPD vote went up 1¼ million, while the SPD vote went down a similar amount — a clear move to the left amongst the workers — the Nazi vote increased spectacularly from just 800,000 to over six million. While the KPD ultra-leftism had gained some small short-term successes, it has been incapable of winning the petty bourgeoisie, ruined by the crash,

behind the workers movement.

The leader of the Centre Party, Brüning, an extreme right winger now took power. His government was opposed by Communists and Nazis — indeed the KPD called it 'fascist' and in doing so confused many workers about the real character of fascism — the fact that if the Nazis took power all working class organisation would be destroyed. After all, if the government were already 'fascist', would the Nazis be so bad? This was precisely the logic the KPD drew in coining the slogan 'after Hitler us' — thus spreading the criminal illusion that Hitler's rule would be short-lived and followed (!) by socialist revolution.

Decree

Brüning's government, when defeated on its budget by the joint votes of the KPD, SPD and Nazi deputies, imposed its will through decree. The sanctity of parliamentary rule, so dear to the Weimar constitution and the SPD leaders, was being breached. Brüning's rule in fact represented a form of *Bonapartism*, the combination of some parliamentary forms with one-man dictatorial rule. Weimar was on the way to being overthrown.

The SPD was now faced with a choice. Should it combine with the 'extremists' to overthrow Brüning or 'tolerate' his government, by ensuring that a vote of no confidence would be defeated? SPD Reichstag leader Müller ensured that Brüning should be defended as the 'last bulwark' against fascism. Thus did the reformist leaders collude in the general destruction of democratic rights.

In 1932 Brüning was followed by the openly anti-parliamentarian von Papen, on the basis of a sharp move to the right among the whole bourgeoisie. The right wing bourgeois parties were declining, their support going to the Nazis and the right-wing nationalist *Stahlhelm* ('steel helmets') militia.

Against them stood only the workers movement. The July 1932 elections showed the polarisation: Nazis 13.7 million votes, SPD 8 million, KPD 5.3 million, Centre Party 4.6 million. Even at this last desperate stage, the victory of the Nazis was not inevitable. If the workers parties had formed a united front to defeat fascism, Hitler could have been stopped. But a united front was precisely what neither side wanted.

After Hitler's victory, and the destruction of the world's most powerful labour movement, the social democracy and Stalinism contended

with one another to argue who was responsible. Both were. The lessons of Hitler's victory are some of the most crucial for any socialist, any class conscious worker, to remember.

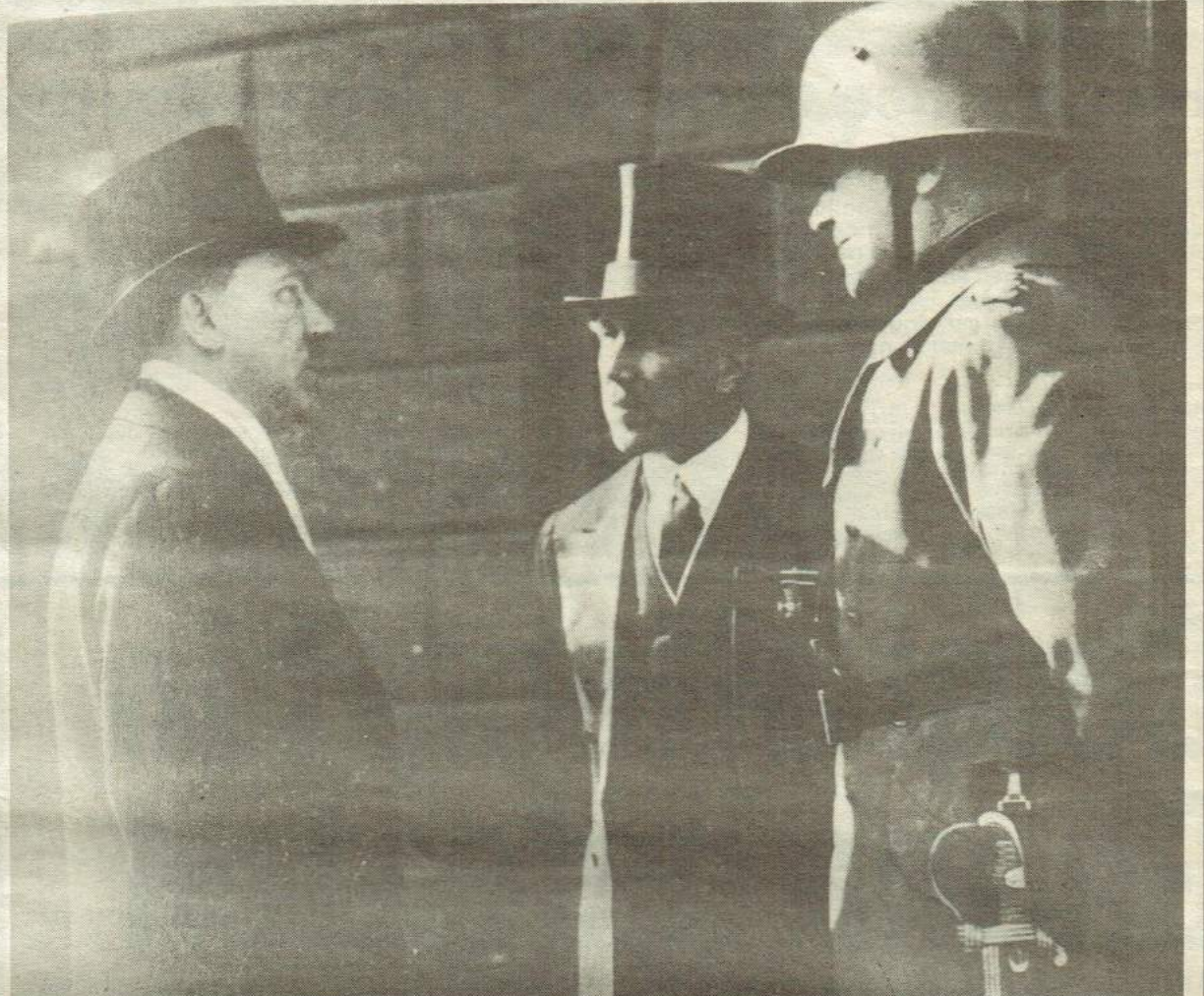
Hitler was impelled to power by the German bourgeoisie when all the traditional parties of Weimar Germany were incapable of solving Germany's economic catastrophe. The social democrats, by their reliance on parliamentarism and their failure to go beyond reformist tinkering with the system also failed to give political answers to the crisis. German social democracy which had rescued capitalism during the revolutionary crisis of 1918-19, was now repaid for its loyal services by being strangled.

But the KPD also failed the test by its chronic sectarianism towards the reformist workers. In a situation of chronic crisis it was always able to reinforce its forces from the ranks of the unemployed. But through its refusal of the united front, by its refusal to engage in a serious dialogue with the SPD cadres in the factories, it laid the basis for permanent division, and the continuing hold of the SPD bureaucracy. Nothing is simpler than revolutionary verbiage against the social democratic mis-leaders; and nothing more fatal than the failure to challenge them in their own bastions through the united front.

Footnote.

(1) On KPD-Nazi collaboration see R Krebs ('J. Valtin') 'Out of the Night' and also Albert Krebs (no relation) 'The Infancy of Nazism'. Valtin was a communist organiser and Albert Krebs the Nazi *gauleiter* of Hamburg. It is important to remember that the Nazis, in order to build a plebian base, presented themselves as an 'anti-capitalist' party, especially the 'left wing' Nazis led by SA chief Strasser. Thus they had a dual policy of trying on the one hand to raise money from the industrialists and to shore up their base, especially among the unemployed, by denunciations of 'Jewish capital'. With the SPD in power in Prussia, and in government from 1928-30, the Nazis and the Communists appeared as the two most radical parties. During the period when the KPD was denouncing the SPD as the 'main enemy' there were many defections from the KPD to the Nazis and vice-versa. This was the product of the criminal ultra-leftism of the Stalinists. After the RGO was banned in early 1933, Communist reports speak of many Communist workers voting for the Nazi trade union list in preference to the SPD free trade union list.

The 'anti-capitalist' policy of the Nazis caused them many problems with their capitalist backers and many internal strains. As is well known, Hitler resolved these conflicts in 1934 by the 'Night of the Long Knives' when Strasser and the other radical brownshirt leaders were murdered.



Hitler with Von Papen (centre)

Books for Xmas

By Bob Pennington

YOU WANT A DIARY or you have a friend who needs one? Then two old faithfuls are strongly recommended. The *Spare Rib Diary for 1983* uses the theme of women's history. I particularly like their quote from Boudicca who raised 80,000 tribesmen to fight the Romans, when she said: 'Better masterless poverty than prosperous slavery!' (Price £2.75)

The *Pluto Big Red Diary and Directory* has taken images of liberation as its theme and as always has got the message across. (Price £2.50)

The Crossing Press of New York have produced an excellent calendar which is edited by Joan Larkin. As she says in her preface: 'In compiling the *Women Writers Calendar* I wanted to extend the networking processes which have touched me, and to reach others who write, or whose lives are changed by women's writing.' Nice to have a calendar with good feminist literary standards. (Price £3.95)

Pluto have got two real good buys in their *Arguments for Socialism* series. It makes you Sick proposes policies for reshaping and democratising the NHS which go far beyond anything the Labour Party has put forward. With Fowler and Thatcher now on the war-path against the health service, this book by Colin Thunhurst makes useful, instructive reading, whether you work in the NHS or are just one of those millions who needs it.

Richards Minns in his book, *Take Over the City*, takes the City apart and shows how that whole crooked set up operates. He provides the kind of arguments you need in the pub, and at work, on why we should take it off the bowler hatted-brigade and give it to responsible peo-

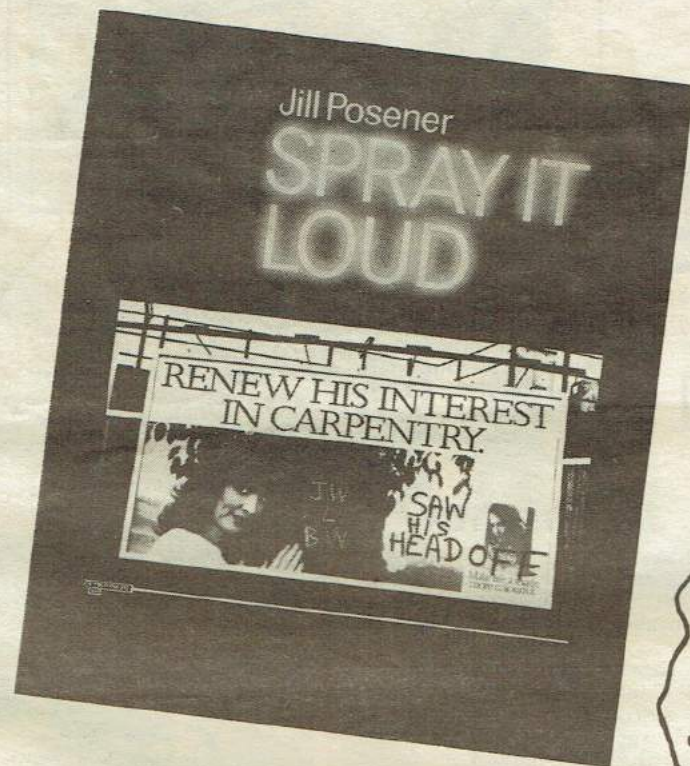
ple, like those who actually produce the wealth. (Both cost £2.50)

We all have the problem of what to buy for the kids. So much of the run of the mill stuff is racist, sexist and reactionary. But who wants to give an inquisitive, intelligent eight-year-old, a story about the heroic young Komsomol who collected silver paper for socialism?

Three that are different are *The Twits* by Roald Dahl (price £1) — if you were still between six and ten years of age you would laugh yourself silly at this ingenious and very skilful story about trouble amongst people and animals.

The Nigerian authoress Buchi Emecheta, says the *Sunday Times*, is a 'natural born writer' and her two books *Titch the Cat* and *Nowhere to Play* prove that for once the *Sunday Times* has got it right. About children and for children. What better recommendation? (*Nowhere to play* £3.75, *Titch the cat* £2.50, both published by Allison and Busby.)

Jill Posener has a long record of activity in the Women's Liberation Movement and her book of photo journalism shows she has put it to good use.



The collection of recorded graffiti in *Spray it Loud* is humorous, sharp, and at times angry. It is guaranteed to make you think. One I liked in particular was 'Whitelaw's White Law' (£2.95).

Further Down on Maggie's Farm gets into the Xmas spirit with Steve Bell dealing with Turkeys and politics. The 'boring' old Turkey Trot, insists that

without 'a credible and fighting turkey vanguard' every turkey is a goner. Luckily reformist realism survives and the SDP turkey scorn the mad 'trot' and fulfill their festival function by getting all hung up.

Which just goes to show that if you are not careful, trots will ruin Xmas even for turkeys! Not only turkeys, but Teb-

bit, Howe, Maggie and the penguin, they are all there. (£2.95)

Socialism and Survival by Rudolph Bahro (£3.50) — at a time of 'peace and goodwill to all' it is useful after the pudding and booze to start thinking will we be allowed to enjoy it next year?

Bitter Fruit by Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer. A dramatic and astounding story of how the CIA obliged the United Fruit Company of America and overthrow the legitimate government

of Guatemala, and how Ike Eisenhower, the US president gave it the nod. That was 1954, and today they are still at it in Central America. (£3.95)

Now the ones that I would like to have said something about, but a hard nosed editor and space called a halt. So unfortunately I cannot give them more than a listing: *World View 1983* (£6.95) *Women under Apartheid* (£3)

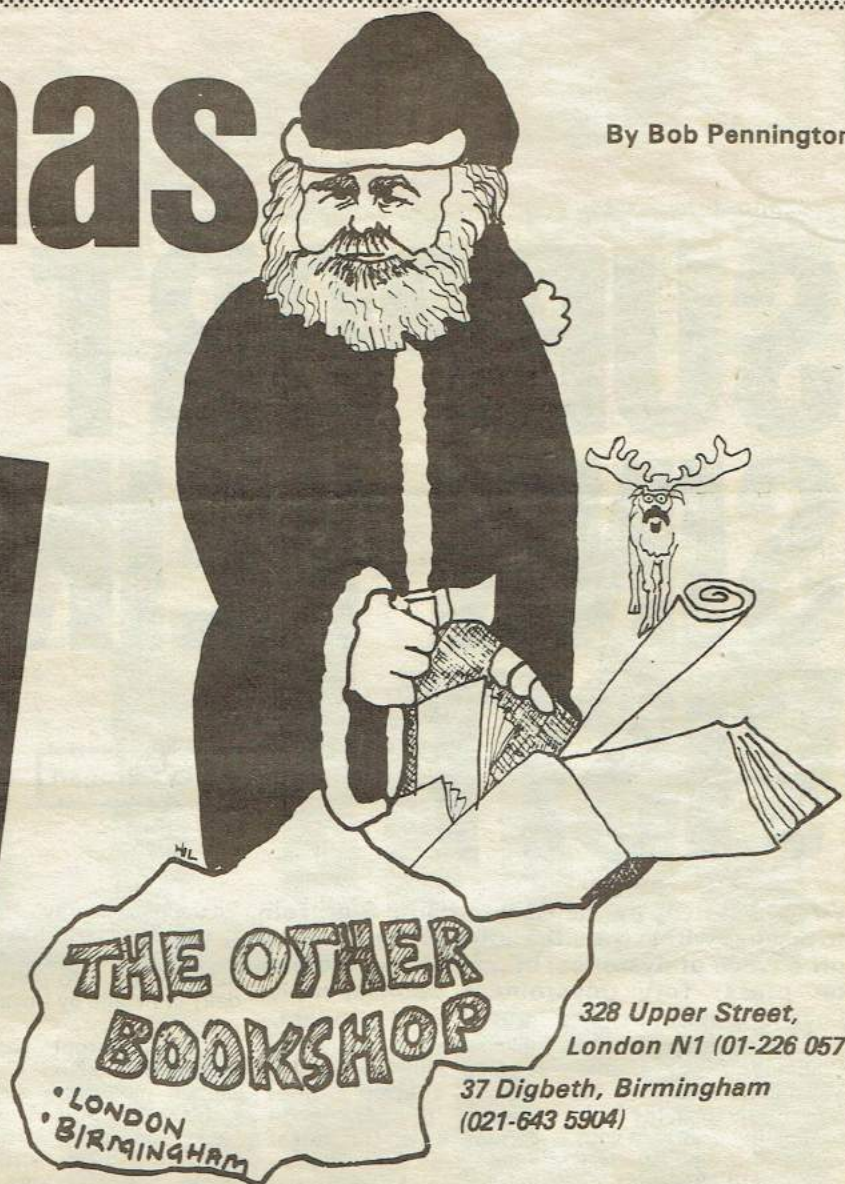
Through the Flower Judy Chicago (£4.95)

The Anti-social Family by Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh (£3.95)

George Orwell — a life by Bernard Crick (£2.95)

Frustration by Claire Bretecher (£3.95)

These are just a selection of what's going. Call or ring either of these two shops but make sure that you use the holiday to get the best out of books like these.



328 Upper Street, London N1 (01-226 0571)

37 Digbeth, Birmingham (021-643 5904)

Cormac Strikes Back!

By Les Green

TAKE A WALK through any British city and one soon becomes aware of the message of big business writ large on huge billboards. Sometimes frustration or objections to a particular sexist or racist ad have induced people to destroy or change the slogans.

On a similar walk through republican West Belfast the numerous murals soon catch the eye. Mainly painted by republican youth with the approval of the local community, they depict resistance themes from defence of political prisoners to support for the armed struggle.

Many of these paintings have been vandalised but this time the culprits are British soldiers who use the cover of darkness in attempts to destroy them.

The North of Ireland may be the most oppressed area of Western Europe with some of its worst social conditions, but as far as hearts and minds go the nationalist areas are liberated zones.

Cormac, the radical Belfast-based cartoonist, accurately reflects that balance of power in his work. On the surface his subject matter, which includes British soldiers and the paramilitary RUC on the streets, loyalist murder gangs and torture, might appear depressing. But Cormac's cartoons never are: they are full of life and vitality because the people

form *Cormac Strikes Back* (Information on Ireland £2.50). The majority of the cartoons are from

An Phoblacht/Republican News, the Sinn Fein paper, but also included are many from the *Bad Taste* series in Socialist Challenge, where Cormac turns his caustic pen on political themes in Britain.

Humour can play an important part in war and *Cormac Strikes Back* is war humour with a vengeance for a British audience as he cuts the enemy down to size, lampooning British politicians, belittl-

ing British troops and police and boosting the morale of the oppressed by depicting a valiant armed resistance struggle.

Cormac's deft pen coupled to a surrealist imagination multiplies the effect, which in its most crazy moments seems to outstrip reality, while at the same time prodding the reader's mind to meet it.

A hundred pages long, the open layout style makes this a book easy to read through in one session. If you know someone depressed by the state of politics in Britain,

Cormac Strikes Back makes the ideal Christmas present and pick-me-up rolled into one. It costs £2.50 and is available from most radical bookshops. It can also be purchased direct from the publishers: £3 including p&p from Information on Ireland, Box 189, 32 Ivor Place, London NW1 6DA.

The Other Bookshop will be showing an exhibition of Cormac's work from 6 December for two weeks, and *Cormac Strikes Back* is on sale there now.

The Other Bookshops

IF YOU ARE looking for presents like books, cards and posters either call or write in to The Other Bookshops, in London and Birmingham.

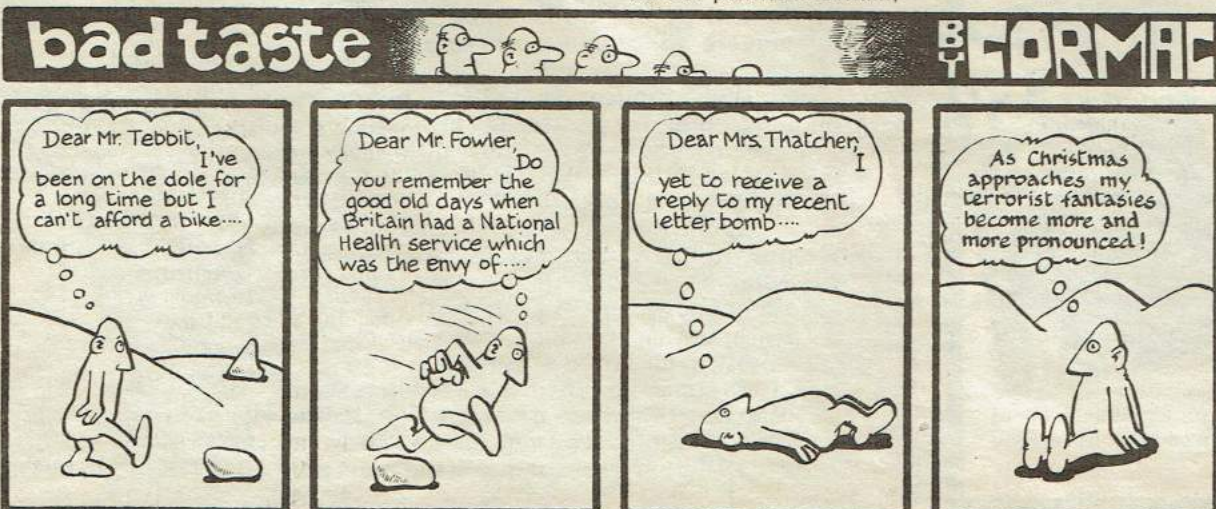
You could also do worse than get yourself some Xmas reading, after all you cannot live on a permanent diet of the Queen jawing on about 'my husband and I' or Judy Garland flying over the Rainbow.

Instead of Xmas trees with Trotskyist angels — which we suspect are ideologically unsound, we recommend our posters for decoration — women will particularly like, and men should appreciate the poster 'Why men should not have the vote' based on the words of the American feminist and novelist Alice Duer Miller.

That great epic 'Gone with the Wind' an IMF production, directed by Milton Friedman and featuring Ronnie and Maggie might not get a Xmas late night show on Channel 4. But we can let you have the uncensored poster.

The Other Bookshop London — Xmas opening hours

20/21 December 10-6 pm (as normal)
22/23 December 10-7 pm (extended)
24 December 10-3pm (early closing)
Closed 25 December - 28 December
Open regular hours 29 December - 31 December
Closed 1 January 1983 - 3 January
Open from 4 January 1983 at normal hours.



Socialist Challenge

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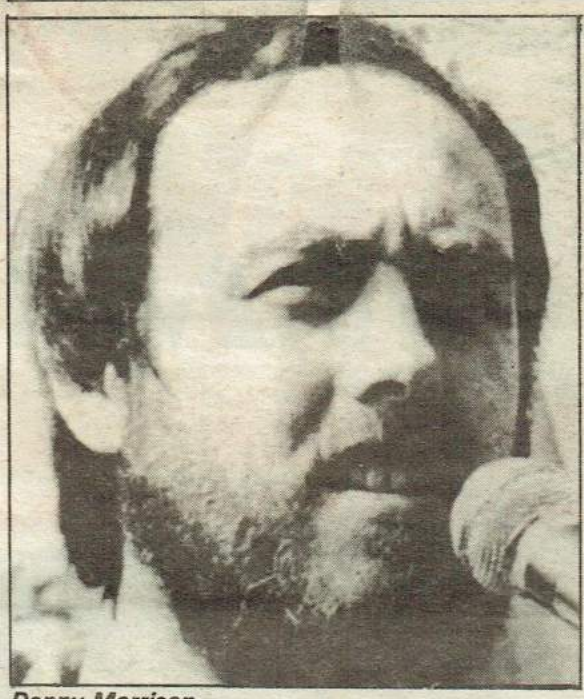
By Brian Grogan

THE DECISION by the GLC to invite Sinn Fein to discuss with it the situation in Ireland has set off a wave of hysterical opposition by the gutter press, Tory government spokespeople, Loyalist politicians and Labour right wingers.

Loyalist leader in the Commons, James Molyneux even went so far as to threaten the Irish community in Britain with violence if the meeting went ahead. Speaking on

England generally'. The Labour leadership has not seen fit to denounce this threat — put into practice daily in Ireland by Loyalist thugs.

Labour front bench spokesperson Don Concannon predictably sided with the Loyalists. It was Don Concannon who went to hunger striker Bobby Sands bedside to



Danny Morrison

gloat over his imminent death. He made it clear that he would be unwilling to meet with any Sinn Fein delegation. Michael Foot, whilst refraining from demanding the invitation be withdrawn, issued a thinly veiled condemnation.

Threats

But what are the Loyalist, Tories and the Fleet St scribblers afraid of? Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison are elected members of the Tory 'Assembly'. They rest on the support of the nationalist community in the North of Ireland. The facts are that 13

years of British direct occupation, plastic bullets and blanket repression of the nationalist population, electoral gimmicks, repressive 'anti-Terrorist' laws, and every dirty propaganda trick in the book — far from undermining support for Sinn Fein, has increased it. The visit of Sinn Fein might just help to raise the curtain of lies and calumny heaped on those struggling for their freedom from British domination.

United

Already over 50 per cent of British workers favour British withdrawal. It is to prevent this senti-



Gerry Adams

ment being translated into action that every effort is being made to prevent the visit.

Opinion in the Parliamentary Labour Party is divided. Deputy Labour spokesperson, Clive Soley agreed to meet with Sinn Fein. And officers Labour's Northern Ireland group of MP's distanced themselves from Michael Foot.

The bombing of the Droppin Well bar in Derry — a venue frequented by British soldiers — will now be used as a further argument to invoke the Prevention of Terrorism Act and prevent Sinn Fein leaders from entering the country. As we go to press it is still

not clear who is responsible for the bombing, although this has not prevented the *Sun*, *Mirror* and the rest from immediately accusing the Provos. Yet the bombing will be used in Britain as a way of aiding the enemies of the Irish people.

But the root issue remains the imperialist domination of Ireland. Such bombings would not occur if Britain was not occupying Ireland by military force. Winning the right of Sinn Fein to open discussions with the Labour Party will be a step on the road to ending British domination and getting troops out.

Attempted curb on abortion rights fails

THE LATEST ATTEMPT to curb abortion rights failed this week in the House of Lords. By 57 votes to 42 Lord Robertson's Abortion (Amendment) Bill was defeated despite backing from reactionary figures like Lord Denning and Lord Longford. But a new threat has come from another quarter.

The fate of the bill became sealed after a government spokesperson's statement failed to give the measure support. The Tories evidently feel that after the spectacular defeat of the Corrie Bill in 1980 a frontal assault on abortion rights in Parlia-

ment would meet determined resistance.

Pro-choice campaigners lobbying the House of Lords drove the point home.

Similar considerations underlay the failure of any of the notorious anti-choice MPs who came top of the ballot for private members' bills to sponsor anti-abortion measures last week.

John Corrie, for example, chose instead to take up a bill on diseased fish.

The new threat to abortion rights comes from another direction.

The national planning meeting of the Na-

tional Abortion Campaign were told last weekend of a restriction of abortion rights in the London region through the new procedure of registering abortions.

The so-called 'buff form' was introduced last year. The effect of its introduction was to re-interpret the 1967 Act by minimising the content of the clause allowing abortions on social grounds and demanding that a medical condition had to be specified for the abortion to be within the terms of the Act.

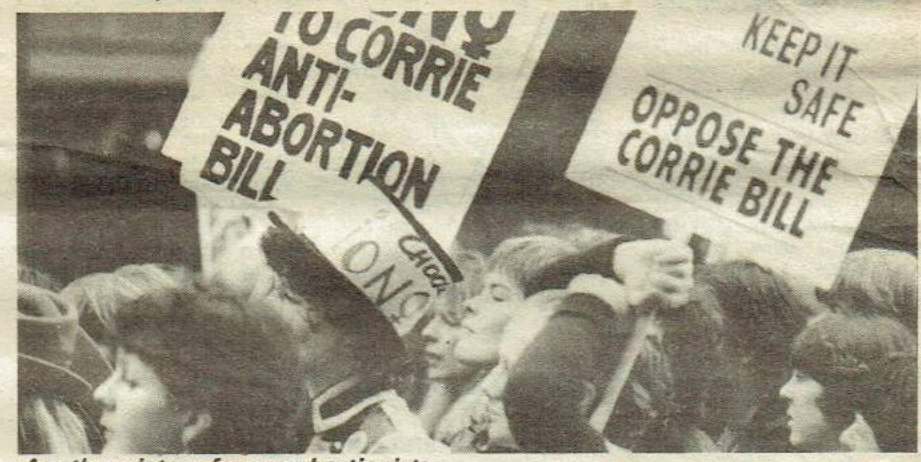
The storm of protest that the new procedure

sparked off forced a hasty statement by Health Minister Kenneth Clark that the new procedure would have no effect on the provision of abortion rights.

But an increasing number of instances point to the fact that the Tories, while not prepared today to take on the pro-choice movement on abortion rights, are introducing curbs through the back door.

Further curbs on a woman's right to choose whether to have a child or not will therefore remain a threat.

By Ann Potter



Another victory for pro-abortionists

The National Abortion Campaign will be using the temporary

defeat inflicted on the anti-abortion forces to prepare the women's

movement and the labour movement for the coming battles.

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For readers who take out a year's inland subscription we are offering a free copy of Alan Freeman's new book **THE BENN HERESY**. The book normally costs £3.50

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FUND DRIVE '82

Christmas — a time for giving

MOST OF our readers thoughts at this time of year will turn towards the yearly festivities. But this Christmas will be bleaker for many workers than in previous years. According to Labour Research there are nearly 5 million unemployed.

In the new year many more workers face the dole. This is the result of Tory policies, and the complete and utter refusal of the trade union and Labour leaders to organise an effective fight back.

While thousands are being put on the dole and Tory attacks intensify, the Labour leaders are more interested in witch-hunting the left wing than fighting the Tories.

Never has an effective left-wing opposition to both the Tories and the right wing been needed — one that fights both inside the Labour Party and the trade unions. Building such an opposition is a long hard struggle.

There is no royal road to victory. It means a long slog of patient dedicated work. That's why we need Socialist Challenge; to give militants the facts and

the arguments to take the struggle forward. And to do that we need money — which brings us back to Christmas.

Everyone knows that there is more pleasure in giving than receiving, so we're asking you to give a Christmas present to Socialist Challenge.

Such a present will help to ensure that the fight inside the Labour Party and the unions continues.

Our thanks this week to:

Sunderland	£ 18.25
Brent	100.00
Outer West London	80.00
Hazel, Chiswick	20.00
Swansea	18.00
Sheffield	14.00
Leamington	10.00
MB, RDT, Glasgow	30.00
C. Dunne	5.00
Exter	23.00
Leicester	50.00
T. Mohun	26.00
Mansfield/Bolsover	18.00
Total	412.95
Total so far	10,649.36
Total required by Dec 31	16,000

