

Socialist Challenge

socialist challenge wishes all our readers a happy holiday & a revolutionary new year

New HQ makes Britain prime target - Cruise missiles here in April



some of the thousands of women who besieged Greenham Common last week

Photo: John Harri

THE GOVERNMENT is planning to deploy Cruise missiles in Britain in April — nine months earlier than the announced date of December 1983. NATO spokespeople have confirmed that the Cruise missile launchers will start arriving in April. Previously NATO had given December as the date for the placement of the missiles in order to give time for arms reduction negotiations with the Soviet Union to bear fruit.

But the arms talks going on in Geneva are a fraud. The United States has flatly rejected a Soviet

offer to reduce the number of SS-20s in Eastern Europe from 600 to 250 in return for no placement of

Cruise and Pershing. By bringing forward the date for the installation of the missiles the United States is making clear that it is set on its plan for the upping of its nuclear arsenal in Europe, irrespective of what progress is made at Geneva.

Meanwhile, the revelation that the United States plans a command HQ at High Wycombe in the event of war shows just how Britain will be a prime

target if war breaks out. The local council in High Wycombe believes that in any case the HQ will be used to programme Cruise missiles.

The plan for the HQ also shows that the US has no confidence in its ability to fight a conventional war in Europe — its installations in Germany would be quickly over-run — and it thus relying on a strategy of nuclear war.

No one in their right mind should believe that the Soviet Union intends to march into Western Europe. The 'Soviet threat' is being used by the United States as an excuse for its world-wide military build-up, aimed at the developing revolutions in Central America and the Middle East, aimed at re-establishing the domination of the United States in the Western Alliance, and aimed at putting massive

economic pressure on the Soviet Union.

Thatcher is a willing participant in Reagan's war plans. Britain is becoming the United States forward command post to fight a nuclear war. The April date for the missile launchers means that the fight against the missiles must be stepped up in the new year.

Above all the Labour leadership must demand

no installation of Cruise missiles before a general election and make absolutely unequivocal its intention to send back the missiles if they come to power.

The 30,000 women at Greenham Common have given the campaign a tremendous boost. Now the labour movement, with its six million affiliates to CND must mobilise its forces.

'Kill LPYS' says Labour right

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE has obtained a secret letter from Richard Heller, Denis Healey's parliamentary secretary, who is a state official paid for with your taxes.

It is addressed to nine right wing members of Labour's NEC including Healey, John Golding, Russell Tuck and Gwyneth Dunwoody. It gives explicit instructions on how to put the boot into the Labour Party Young Socialists.

'Our first task,' it says 'is to kill the reprinting of the LPYS pamphlet on Northern Ireland.' The pamphlet, it seems, commits a terrible crime — it attacks the SDLP 'a fellow member of the Socialist International.'

Since Irish voters have also given the SDLP the thumbs down in two successive elections, perhaps these voters should also be suppressed.

Mr Heller's views on building a campaigning youth wing for the Labour Party are equally instructive: he thinks the new budget (which has been cut by £10,000) is a great improvement because there are 'no provisions for LPYS campaigns'.

As for the Young Socialists' newspaper: 'Why have it at all?'

The nine NEC members have some questions to answer:

- Will they be applying to register?
- If so, will their meetings be open to all party members as the register demands?
- Will the source of their finances be revealed?
- How do they propose to win the youth vote while destroying the youth organisation?

Watch this space for next year's gripping instalment ...

WITCH-HUNT

LAW to work with 'Campaign' group to win union support

By Alan Freeman, LAW secretariat.

ANTI witch-hunt campaigners will work with the new left wing 'Campaign' group of MPs — which includes Tony Benn — to fight the expulsion of Labour Party members.

A deputation from the Campaign group and from Labour Against the Witch-hunt — which represents over 100 CLPs — has handed a letter to the NEC in support of Tony Benn's motion to cease all action against groups of Labour Party members.

The two groups are now campaigning to win trade union support, following LAW's first National Council on Sunday 12 December. A letter has been sent to

leading trade unionists asking them to oppose the witch-hunt, and fringe meetings are to be held at all major trade union conferences next year in support of model resolutions promoted by LAW and the Campaign for Labour Party democracy.

The campaign aims to win enough votes at the next Labour Party conference to overturn any expulsions and reverse the decision to establish a register.

Local meetings and conferences are to be held in all major towns early next year in support of policies such as unilateral disarmament and against expulsions, and LAW will seek endorsement of its policies at the spring regional Labour Party conferences.

LABOUR'S INDEPENDENT WEEKLY

Tribune

LAST WEEK'S sudden showdown between John Silkin, Lord Bruce and the editor of Tribune newspaper seems to have blown up in Silkin's face.

A week earlier Bruce and Silkin announced that they had secured proxy votes from Tribune's founder shareholders with which they were going to remove Chris Mullin from the editorship of Tribune.

Under Mullin's direction the paper has been sharply critical of the Labour leadership including Michael Foot, and has firmly opposed the witch-hunt in the Labour Party.

Now, it seems, Silkin wants to have a private witch-hunt of his own. But he didn't have it all his own way. On Thursday 9 December the shareholders met and Silkin moved the removal of Mullin — and George Hopkins from the Tribune Board of Directors and their replacement by himself and Bruce.

His plan was to make a clean sweep of the board of directors, which has eight members, by cutting it to five members, removing two further journalists, and relying on the

To Denis Healey cc Betty Boothroyd MP
Anne Davis Denis Howell MP
Gwyneth Dunwoody MP Shirley Summerskill MP
John Golding MP Russell Tuck
Eric Varley MP

YOUTH COMMITTEE: 3-30 Tuesday 7 December 1982 Committee Room 8

Main task for this is to kill the reprinting of the LPYS pamphlet on Northern Ireland. This is the usual Trait trash and its closing pages oppose and disparage official Party policy. (Incidentally the pamphlet attacks and proposes to campaign against the SDLP, a fellow member of Socialist International).

The Budget shows a welcome improvement, since there is no provision for LPYS Campaigns, and there are some extra resources for NOLS. Moreover the Budget for Socialist Youth is halved. (But why have it at all?)

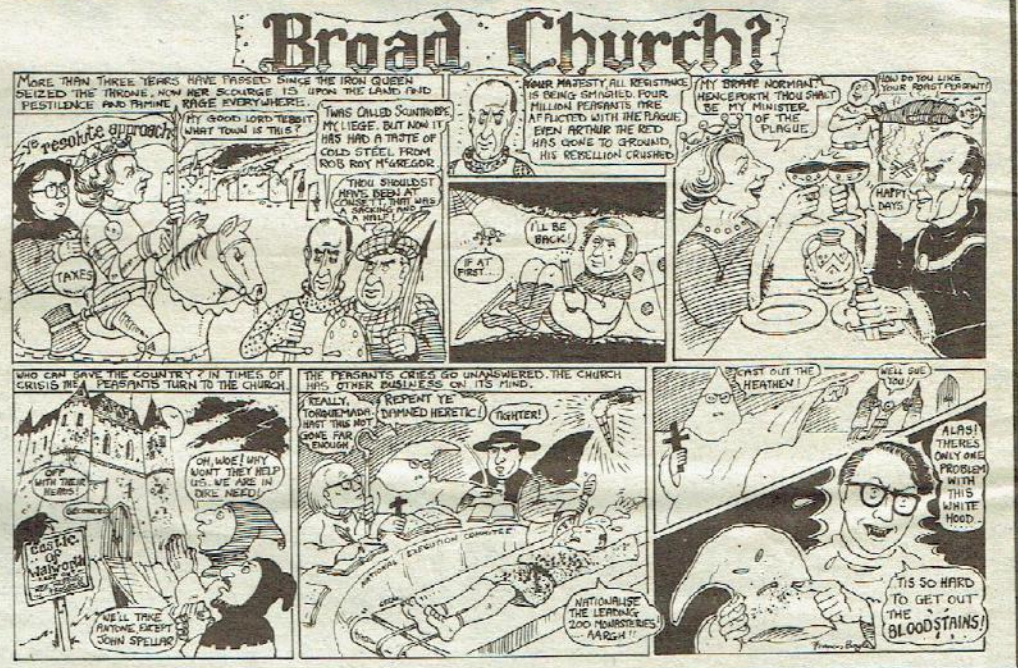
The poor LPYS now want £1500 for birthday cards!

Richard Heller
6 Dec 1982

Young Socialists: 'The budget shows a welcome improvement since there is no provisions for campaigns'

Silkin bites off more than he can chew

Front page cartoon in last week's Tribune.



support of Brian Murphy, former TUC Press officer, to secure a majority to remove Mullin from the editor's post.

Unfortunately he made some sad miscalculations: apparently he forgot that Jack Boddy, a director, was a prominent Transport workers' union member — and Tribune

uses the union's premises. Mistake number one. The meeting then heard an impassioned plea from Jack Jones for worker participation on the board: and journalists Sheila March and Sheila Noble retained their places on the board.

The final result is thus a board of directors in

which Mullin's supporters still have a built-in majority. But Silkin will be back for more.

However, he doesn't seem to have been too careful about his open base of support. Deptford Labour Party, his own constituency, are strongly rumoured to be discussing

a censure motion against his outrageous antics.

Taking a leaf from John Spellar's book — his constituency has demanded that Tribune journalist Nigel Williamson be expelled from his own constituency party — activists might well be advised to get motions sent to Deptford supporting the idea.

CLPD — No registration

WEDNESDAY 15 DECEMBER was the closing date of the ballot of CLPD members on whether CLPD should 'register'. Greg Tucker of Vauxhall CLP discusses the issues raised.

THE REGISTER of Non-Affiliated Groups was killed off last month. It even had an obituary in Labour Weekly.

But the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy seem intent on risking breakup over the issue.

It decided to organise a consultative ballot before its AGM in January

decides on the issue.

Reasonable so far! So imagine the surprise when, on receiving the ballot papers and statements for and against, you find among them a statement from Victor Schonfield (CLPD Treasurer). This spends two pages abusively attacking 'those who support CLPD for their own tactical reasons, but oppose its basic strategy'. It goes on to list these CLPD EC members who are declared unfit for re-election and finally threatens to resign, along with the Secretary and other key officers (unspecified), if the AGM does not vote in favour of registration.

All this on the spurious grounds that CLPD was set up 'to make Annual Conference decisions binding.'

Comrade Schonfield should look at his membership card again. Mine states: 'We believe that policy decisions reached by Annual Conference should be binding on the Parliamentary Labour Party and undertake to secure the implementation of this principle.'

It is one thing to demand that the PLP implements agreed policy. It is another to ask us to go along with our own expulsion from the Party. CLPD has never said we

should not defend ourselves from measures that seek to destroy democracy in the Party.

Sad

It is a sad state of affairs that Victor Schonfield should decide to use tactics more akin to Sid Weighell and the Right in his attacks on other CLPD members. But since then the CLPD EC has compounded these errors by deciding to recommend that the AGM agree to register.

The CLPD Women's Action Committee at its AGM last weekend opposed the register and 'ex-

pressed concern that the CLPD EC had jumped the gun and recommended to the AGM to register regardless of the ballot result.'

The dispute has reached a pitch where even a split is possible. Why the heat when the register itself is nearly dead?

Perhaps the last EC gives a clue: a routine motion against expulsions was amended so that the Executive would not recommend defiance of expulsions. Yet this is the key issue facing CLPD: will it be an effective force against expulsions, defending parties like Hornsey? Or will the tactics of those like Schonfield split or destroy the campaign?



Tanks batter down the gates of the Gdansk Lenin Shipyard last December.

Solidarnosc one year after

By Jacqueline Allio From International Viewpoint

This article is one of a number on imperialism and the new cold war which

will appear in the new year edition of International Viewpoint.

THE PROBLEM of the bureaucrat-generals is how to overcome what they call disorder. What they mean by this is continued unrest reflected in constantly occurring strikes, even though these have often been isolated and subjected to severe repression; innumerable street demonstrations, both violent clashes involving relatively small groups and impressive mobilisations of several thousand persons; and various sorts of demonstrations of massive opposition to the military junta.

How can the junta boast that it has re-established order when hundreds of clandestine periodicals continue to appear, testifying to the breadth of the resistance movement? How can it claim that it has silenced the enemy when clandestine radio broadcasts are continuing and growing more numerous, despite the seizures of radio transmitters that have been announced with a great furor on TV?

Boycott

How can the junta hope that it has gotten the support of the privileged layers when the actors and the stage managers are continuing the systematic boycott of the TV that they started in the wake of the 13 December crackdown? This sort of protest, which few people expected to last more than a few weeks, should be pointed out.

Not only does it involve very serious material loss for those conducting it but it shows that the junta has not succeeded in breaking the alliance between the workers and the intellectuals that was one of the bulwarks of the Polish revolution following the August 1980 strikes.

How, moreover, can the military claim to dominate the situation when the new unions they

set up to replace Solidarnosc are being massively boycotted by the working class? Not even bribery has been successful.

For example, the Polish railroads offered a wage increase and a six week vacation in a socialist country of your choice to anyone who would agree to join the organizing committees for the new unions. They got hardly any takers.

So far only three per cent of the 40,000 enterprises in the country have been able to get together the 15 candidates required to set up an organizing committee.

Cynical

In this context, one can understand the cynical tone openly adopted by the minister of social affairs in an interview about the impact of the trade union law on public opinion. 'It produced a post-operative shock that has still not worn off. People are bitter, full of resentment, distrustful, cautious, and fearful of being ostracized by others ... Building the new unions will take at least two to three years.'

The restoration of order on the trade union front is not going any better than it is in the economy.

What progress has been made, then, towards achieving a 'national

understanding'? According to the underground press more than 5,000 political prisoners have been sentenced to long terms, from three to ten years. Another 5,000 are awaiting trial. That is quite a lot of victims for a government that boasts of being the champion of national harmony.

Since the regime has no carrots to offer, it is using the stick. This is the meaning of the moves that are being made on the eve of the lifting of the state of siege to grant the government special powers enabling it to proclaim a state of emergency if necessary.

Lesson

One of the lessons of the past year is that the workers are not letting themselves be intimidated easily. Despite the repression and the thousands of firings, it cannot be said that the rebellious mood of the Polish workers has receded notably.

The fact that the regime is deeply divided over what attitude to take to Solidarnosc makes the perspective of a 'national accord' still more remote.

It would be possible to think that this might be no more than the usual sort of factional wrangle in the Polish CP, if the party itself were not in a totally dilapidated state.

Jail

'You have a choice between being fired, going to jail, or joining the Party', workers caught drunk or stealing have been told at the public transport depot in Poznan. 'If you are in debt, join the Young Socialists and we will wipe it out,' the chairman of the CP youth organisation promised in Bialystock.

'We don't meet very often ... We don't care what your views are, the only thing that matters is your presence.'

As a Gdansk worker said, 'the situation is difficult, we lack perspectives. But these gents who rule us have even less.'

In this situation, the workers clearly perceived the Catholic hierarchy's appeal to them on the eve of the planned action not to go on strike on 10 November, as a result of a deal by the church with the regime at the expense of the resistance movement. 'He dropped us,' many underground Solidarnosc workers leaders said about Monsignor Glemp, the primate of Poland.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that all priests embrace the views of their superiors. There are many stories of arrests and roughing up of priests who support the actions of the underground union.

Views

And it has become impossible to keep track of the number removed from their churches by the Catholic hierarchy itself because they showed too much sympathy for the views of the resistance movement.

The fact remains that in renewing its appeals for social peace as a quid pro quo for the release of Lech Walesa and permission for the Pope to visit Poland, the hierarchy showed clearly which camp it was choosing. It is clear that both the church and the bureaucracy are counting on Lech Walesa to undermine the underground opposition. 'Lech Walesa's decision to enter into dialogue with the regime

over the problems of achieving a national understanding ... represents a disavowal of this opposition and its policy of confrontation,' the French CP paper *L'Humanite* wrote, for example, on 13 November.

Error

What role Walesa will actually play in the period opening up remains to be seen. But whatever attitude he adopts, it would be a fundamental error to think that the position of a single person — even if he is a charismatic leader — can determine the whole future of a movement.

The 10 November, 1982, strike highlighted the problems that the union is experiencing.

Without making harsh judgements, many workers expressed their concern about the lightminded way, as they saw it, that the Provisional Coordinating Committee of Solidarnosc (the TKK, the underground leadership) called a general strike that they did not feel they could carry out.

In fact, the strike call was not followed by and large. How could it have been otherwise when for a week every worker at a key point in production had a military man on his back?

But those who are so anxious to see the end of the resistance movement should not count their chickens before they are hatched. Tens of thousands of people came into the streets in the wake of the 10 November setback itself. And just before Lech Walesa was released the Gdansk shipyard workers had started preparations to go on strike at the end of November 'to make up for the 10 November failure.'

Dead

No, the outlawing of Solidarnosc does not mean that it is dead. The workers no longer believe in any possibility of a national accord, and they expressed this in forceful terms after the delegatization of the union. They are not going to change their minds overnight because Lech Walesa was released.

The problem is then not so much whether the resistance movement has reached a crossroads and entered into a period of ebb. The most important question is how it is going to prepare itself for a confrontation that is inevitable, even if it is deferred.

It is necessary then, to prepare for this test of strength. The only weapon

the workers have for such a confrontation is — and that will remain true — the general strike. But in order to carry out one successfully, the movement first has to be capable of taking on a series of tasks.

However, the fundamental problem, one that is particularly evident since the failure of 10 November, is the problem of leadership. What is needed is a collective leadership able to keep closely in touch with the reality of the underground movement and to offer programmatic perspectives and tactical methods that show the workers the road to follow.

In the coming period, the Interregional Commission to Defend Solidarnosc, which includes workers representatives from 16 regions and is working out an action programme, may be able to contribute to the formation of such a leadership.

What is certain is that the underground movement more than ever needs international support. It needs material aid. It needs support for its fight to win the release of all political prisoners, and for winning the restoration of democratic and trade union rights. It needs support to keep Solidarnosc alive.



International Viewpoint

The latest issue is largely devoted to dossiers on the situation in Poland and the Middle East. Also contains articles on the growing war danger in Central America and the 'mini-war' between Somalia and Ethiopia.

Individual copies 65p from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St., London N1. Subscriptions £16 for one year. Send cheques, POs made out to 'PEC' to: IV, 2 rue Richard-Lenoir, 93108, Montreuil, France.

SINN FEIN BAN

Tory hypocrisy exposed

By Brian Grogan

THE DECISION to ban Sinn Fein leaders from Britain reveals graphically the continuing instability of British rule in Ireland. The British government will do anything to prevent the truth of the Irish situation being put across to British workers.

Tory Home Secretary, William Whitelaw invoked an exclusion order under the terms of the Prevention of Terrorism Act against three Sinn Fein leaders, Gerry Adams, Danny Morrison and Martin McGuinness. Two of these had been invited for talks with a group of GLC councillors including Ken Livingstone. Livingstone has accepted a subsequent Sinn Fein invite to go to Belfast some time in the new year.

The use of the exclusion order against supposedly British citizens exposes the total fiction of Britain's claimed right to rule the North of Ireland.

It also underlines the reality of British democracy in relation to Ireland. All the excluded men are elected members of Prior's 'Assembly'. Yet they are refused rights granted everyone else. This has been the 800 years record of British rule: rights of pro-British elements, none for opponents.

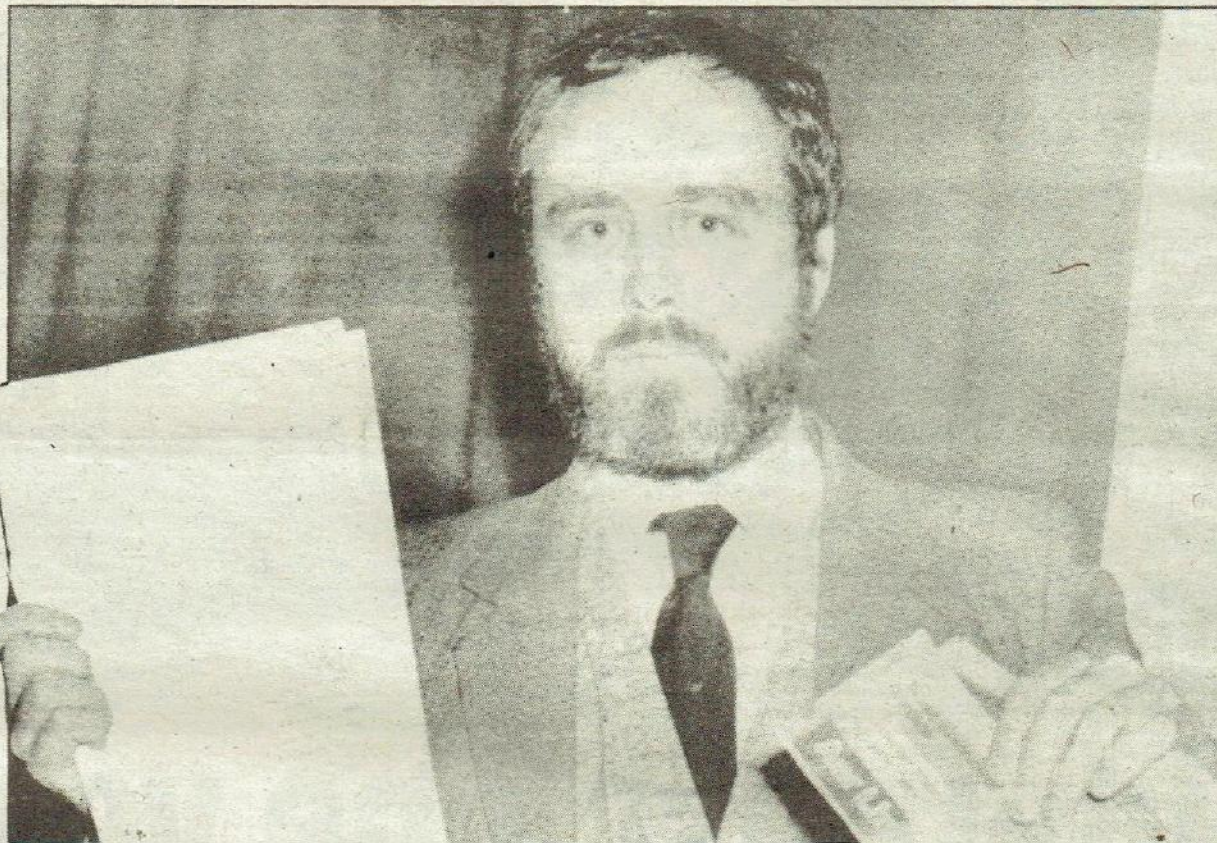
The British 'free press' has weighed in in favour of free speech. In one of its

periodic pieces from British intelligence propaganda, it carried as a supposed front page exclusive 'secret files' showing that Sinn Fein endorsed ... the armed struggle against British imperialism. Much better to get Sinn Fein's views from 'captured documents ... rolled up tightly and hidden in a pencil case' than to hear things from the horse's mouth.

These documents supposedly 'blow apart the fiction used by Sinn Fein that all they share with the Provisional IRA is a common political objective'.

Hard

If what this scribbler is referring to is actual involvement in the armed struggle by the Sinn Fein leaders, then why has such 'evidence' not even been used in the rigged Northern Ireland court. A previous attempt to convict Gerry Adams as a member of the IRA was thrown out of court through 'lack of evidence'.



Danny Morrison, holding Whitelaw's exclusion order and wasted plane ticket

Photo: An Phoblacht

But support of Sinn Fein for armed struggle is a matter of public record. Not only did the last ard fheis (conference) of Sinn Fein pass a resolution insisting that its candidates for office should be 'unambivalent' in their

support for the armed struggle. But recently Gerry Adams spelt the matter out in the following terms: 'Sinn Fein and the IRA have the same objectives. The IRA engaged in armed struggle. Sinn Fein would not only defend the

IRA's right to wage armed struggle but have the job increasingly of popularising support'. He went on: 'I honestly see no other way by which the British can be forced to withdraw from this country except by a mixture of

struggle which involves properly controlled interactive armed struggle'. The Tories double standards in banning Sinn Fein has underscored this proposition once again. As Owen Carron, Sinn Fein

Westminster MP explained there can be 'no electoral answer' to the problem of Britain's domination of Ireland. As he went on: 'This is a typical hypocritical British decision. The response of the British government ever since 1918 has been to ignore democratic decisions in Ireland'.

Given this, the response of the Labour leadership had been even more scandalous than its normal pro-Tory stance on the Irish question. Michael Foot and Denis Healey endorsed Whitelaw's ban. Labour spokesperson on Ireland, Don Concannon only opposed the action on the grounds of the obvious political credit Tory action has given to Sinn Fein.

Tony Benn has backed Ken Livingstone. Good. This, together with sympathetic mutterings emanating from certain members of Labour's Northern Ireland group of MPs should become a focus for demands for a Labour Party delegation to Ireland to meet Sinn Fein at the time of Ken Livingstone's visit in the New Year. This should lead to Labour Party backing the demand to get the troops out. A demand supported by a majority of Labour voters.

Stool pigeons: Internment by the back door

IN THE LAST several months there has been a spate of arrests in Northern Ireland. People have been subsequently charged on the basis of testimony of 'informers'. This has been explained by the Tories and the RUC as a result of the breakdown of solidarity in the Catholic communities there.

Such developments in no way square with the uncontestedly greater support that exists for Sinn Fein since the hunger strike. In the New Year there will be a series of show trials resting on the evidence of such informers. So Brian Grogan asked Gerry O'Brien, a representative of the Relatives for Justice a group based in Belfast, to explain the situation to Socialist Challenge.

THE TRIALS which are coming up will include up to 40 people at a time. They will be judged solely on the basis of an informer's word.

The current widespread use of informers has to be set against the background of British repressive techniques over the past decades and a half.

In the early 70's the Brits

'I now deny any involvement with these crimes or people that the police asked me to pick out and further say that the statement I made was under duress and threats by the police.'

prisoner on remand, Crumlin Road Jail, signed 14.4.82

relied on internment to try to crush the resistance to British occupation but pressure forced them to abandon this. So they turned to forced confessions made under duress and torture — mainly carried out at Castlereaigh.

But again, following the Bennett report which condemned such brutal and inhuman treatment, they were forced to change their methods.

Starting in November 1981, they have developed a system of informers to systematically put away peo-

ple in large numbers. The Northern Irish police, the RUC, have perfected a number of techniques for creating an informer.

They lift someone and keep them incommunicado for seven days. They use this time to either bribe, blackmail or psychologically pressurise people to turn 'informer'. They have been known to of-

fer as much as £100,000. But more frequently they use blackmail.

For example, it came to our notice that one person who owed several thousands of pounds under the Payment of Debt Act (brought in to force payment of arrears after a prolonged rent strike in the early 70's. Payment is taken out of social security money) had failed to inform the SS that he had gone back to live with his wife. So they threatened to charge him with this offence if he didn't 'co-operate'.

After the RUC has successfully won the 'cooperation' of the informer, a large number of people — maybe 40 or 50 — would be lifted and taken to Castlereaigh. The Special Branch man would then read a statement to the informer (for example, did

'I have since spoken to both ... and ... in 'C' wing, Crumlin Road Jail, and asked them why they told lies about myself. They said that the police had gotten them for certain offences that they (the police) had offered all sorts of deals to them if they would point out certain people and involve them in serious offences, and testify against them in court. They agreed to this to try to save their own skins. On the day ... made his affidavit, detectives visited him and offered him immunity if he would go through with his false allegations.'

prisoner on remand February 1892

you conspire to commit explosions with one of the lifted people present?) who would say 'yes' — the person would then be charged in court and could then be remanded in custody for up to two years. This amounts to internment by remand.

The informers themselves when they are cooperating often are put into isolation in England. Several times, their wives or families would be taken away against their will.

'They offered me £50,000 and a safe passage to South Africa or Miami. They asked me to give evidence against people they named to me.'

prisoner now on bail

Taken to barracks; held forcibly in isolation and away from their relatives, puts them under tremendous strain. We know of five instances — out of twelve or so — recent cases utilising informers where the informers have retracted their evidence

once they have been able to contact their family.

Relatives for Justice has developed as a response to those methods. We attempt to organise the relatives of those pressurised to become informers. In the case of McGurk and Mallen for ex-

ample, we were able to bring their relatives into the courts and there were retractions in those situations.

It was after those two cases that the RUC put pressure on the Department of Public Prosecutions to bring in the Bill of Indictment. This is an ancient law utilised to avoid the necessity of actually producing the informer until the trial itself. Yet another means of pressure to turn 'informer' is the threat to

use informers against anyone who refuses. We had the case of someone from the Markets area of Belfast. After he refused, he was himself immediately arrested and charged on 'conspiracy to acquire arms' — solely on the word of another informer.

The whole system is tied into the use of the Diplock Courts which sit without a jury. In normal courts, they wouldn't get away with it.

If successfully sentenced through this process you can actually get 20 years or so. If they get away with it they will have carte blanche to deal with anyone and everyone they like.

So we appeal to everyone in Britain to help break the wall of silence surrounding these methods. We ask you to expose the way that they try to

say this is legal; that it is just. The legal system is just be-

'They said that there was no way out for me except sign and take the deal, and they would take care of all details like my wife and all my debts.'

prisoner on remand 2.5.82

ing used to whatever political decision they wish to implement. Even the solicitors in the North, have come out against these methods. Very rarely do they speak on questions let alone something so sensitive as this. So it shows

how far the situation has gone and what the potential for

mobilising opposition is. Due to legal constraints we have been forced to delete the names of those who have made statements and others mentioned.

Telecoms

Buying shares doesn't mean workers control

ONE of the best stories currently being peddled is 'democracy through shareholding'. The idea is that all those who own shares in a company can vote to control the policy and profits of the company — unlike all these 'unaccountable' nationalised industries.

To be sure, if every one of the 245,000 British Telecom workers had £15,000 to spare after Christmas they would be able to buy 51 per cent of the shares in BT. In reality, the multi-national vultures that are gathering around our wealthiest public asset will share the carcass out between them. Yes, you've got the idea — money buys votes.

Not that workers having a share in a private company would give them any more say in its running. Privatising BT means completely subjecting it to the laws of the market. That means screwing the workers for the last ounce of profit. Holding a share or two would not alter that.

What all this talk of 'democracy' covers is a

crude Tory hand-out to its friends. The asset value of BT is £15bn. It is definitely the growth industry of the 1980s. Yet the plan is to sell it for the bargain basement price of £3bn.

More outrageously, they will then use this revenue to give a tax-cutting bonanza to these same friends. As we all know, the result of Thatcher's tax cuts has been one of increased payments for ordinary working people — taking into account national insurance contributions — and the massive concessions to the upper bracket.

The alternative to the Tories is not to defend the nationalised industries as they are. Nationalised BT amounts to little more than a public funded Research and Development project to make the operation a fat picking for the ITT and Ericsson multinationals of this world. It means dedicating 'development' to the needs of big business.

Public ownership must provide a service for the whole community. This requires planning — not the law of profit. Industrial

expansion should not benefit the entrepreneurs, asset strippers and management bureaucrats, but reduce charges, provide free phones for pensioners and those innovations that benefit the working class. It must allow the operation of workers control, to reduce the working week, expand the workforce and determine an intensity of work decided by workers themselves.

This is the democracy we want. The 'shares' issue is just a diversion.

STOP The Tory Phone Vandals.

British Telecom belongs to you — keep it that way.
NO PRIVATISATION



Militant and NUR elections

BY Hazel McPherson

THE MILITANT tendency which ritualistically proclaims itself the 'voice of Marxism in the labour movement' has decided against supporting the only class struggle candidate for general secretary, Geoff Hensby, in the upcoming elections in the National Union of Railwaymen.

In an article by Bob Russell of Willesden No 1 branch of the NUR, which will shock many young workers who buy and sell their paper, *Militant* has revealed that it has no stomach for the fight for policies which it claims to support.

Militant recommend support for Jimmy Knapp — a former organiser for the southern region and now an official at the national headquarters. Knapp is seen as a challenger to the right wing domination of the union. As such even a victory for Knapp could have the effect of boosting the confidence of the militant wing of the union. So we are not indifferent to the outcome of the elections.

But our standpoint is how best to mobilise and gear up rank and file workers to fight the class enemy. Our main enemy is the bosses and the Tories. We are not simply interested in replacing the right by the left.

Lead

There are some on the left in the union — who look to the Communist Party for a lead — who see things in such electoralist terms. For them, the struggle for a left victory takes precedence over everything.

They see the call for rank and file action — let alone real struggles that might erupt — as being a barrier to electoral victory of the left as they imagine such action would scare off the 'middle ground'.

These people have prioritised support for Jimmy Knapp as a means of blocking with the 'moderates' in order to isolate those individuals most strongly associated with ex-general secretary Sidney Weighell. *Militant's* stance towards Knapp doesn't challenge such an approach.

Even if Jimmy Knapp was the only challenger to

the right wing, *Militant's* approach would be wrong. Any left wing campaign would have to be really critical. This means it would have to emphasise an approach which stimulated rank and file mobilisation and be aimed at clarifying Knapp's political stance — not half-hearted literary queries.

To date, Knapp has failed to state where he stands on key issues facing rail workers — like over the productivity offensive and the wages erosion. He has no record of organising railworkers to oppose these attacks.

Record

Geoff has included in his campaigning platform many of the policies needed by railworkers to meet the bosses' offensive — policies around which he has a creditable record of struggle.

There is a single transferrable voting system in these elections. So there is no chance of splitting the vote and letting in the right.

Russell, in his article, himself suggests that militant railworkers might do well to seek assurances from Knapp about job losses, pay and conditions. But even this misses the point. It is not verbal assurances from Knapp that is required but a combative and aware rank and file which forces such people as Knapp to pursue policies in the interests of railworkers.

Militant is concerned that if the right wing in the NUR win, then they will carry the witch-hunt from the Labour Party into the union. But it would be foolish in the extreme to put their hopes in the election of someone like Knapp. The only defence of the left against witch-hunt is a combative and alert rank and file.

Russell's shamefully dishonest article is headed 'NUR presidential (sic) election gives railworkers



Railworkers lobby Weighell. He paid the price for always ignoring the ranks

the opportunity to elect a leader that will lead a campaign to defend jobs and services'. But he offers not

a shred of evidence that Knapp's campaign, as it is presently being run, really represents such an oppor-

tunity.

Russell's only argument against supporting Geoff Hensby is that

'many see him as an outsider'. That would be good advice for betting on a horse race. But the class

struggle demands more principle. This appears to be more than *Militant* an Russell can offer.

Raindi dispute: action needed

By John Bailey

THE STRIKE for union recognition and against the victimisation of union members at Raindi Textiles and Supreme Quilting in Smethwick is still going on.

The workforce is largely women, some of whom get as little as £36 a week. They have been picketing to stop 75 scabs and even extended this to the homes of individual workers who were persuaded not to go in as a result.

Every day from seven am pickets gather. At 7.20 a lone policeman walks up to the picket line and pointing to the barrier that has been drawn across the gate orders 'move it'. He talks with the manager and the security officer. A

short while later transit vans each carrying 5 or 10 scabs start arriving.

Workers stand in front of them, bang the sides and try to talk to the scabs inside. The drivers force through the line and the policeman says that

the next person to bang the van will be nicked. From now on pickets only bang the side away from the policeman — but the vans still go in.

The T&G has circulated information and collection sheets through its local branches and also other unions. Collections have been made including a substantial one at Hockley bus garage. And a fundraising social has been arranged jointly with the Labour Party.

The leadership of the T&G would clearly like to win this dispute. But while collecting money is vital and motions of

support — like Sandwell Labour Party will be discussing — are important, the scabs are still going in and goods are coming out in private vehicles. This shows that the militancy and determination of the strikers alone is not enough. The weight of the whole labour movement must be used to win this strike.

At the weekly meeting the TGWU leadership have been saying that the strike is going well. It is however essential to organise mass pickets that would be a focus for active support and close the factory. Michael Foot came down to

the picket line and said he supported the strike. Militants of the Labour Party should be fighting for him to give active support.

P.S. Raindi is running the factory by using relatives and scabs — some of whom are chauffers in his own car. The TGWU wants to win the dispute by good intention and playing by the official rules. Only massive support from the labour moverment playing by our rules, not those of the Tories, can reinstate the sacked workers and score real victory against the boss jobs and conditions offensive in Birmingham.

Donations can be sent to D Higgs, Transport and General Workers Union, 9/17 Victoria St, West Bromwich, West Midlands.

1983 THE 'YEAR OF THE MISSILES'

By John Ross

ONE ISSUE will dominate international politics more than any other in Western Europe in 1983 — the struggle to prevent the deployment of Pershing II and Cruise nuclear missiles. The outcome of this fight will affect the class struggle in every part of the world.

The struggle to prevent the deployment of these weapons will be extremely hard. They are a central part of the current imperialist military build up. But the anti-missile movements are also enormous. At the beginning of 1982 opinion polls showed 58 per cent of the population of Britain opposing the introduction of Cruise missiles and 56 per cent opposing the Trident nuclear submarine programme.

In the November '82 elections eight out of nine US states elections voted 'Yes' to a nuclear freeze. The decision of the Norwegian parliament to allocate funds to carry out NATO's decision to install Cruise missiles was only carried on a 77-76 vote.

The anti-missiles and anti-nuclear weapons movement has already penetrated extraordinarily deeply into the workers movement. In West Germany even before the fall of the Social Democratic/Liberal (SDP/FDP) coalition government around one-third of the SPD opposed the missiles. In Britain the Labour Party conferences since 1979 have voted against the missile programme and in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. In 1982 it was a two thirds majority.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has for the first time in its history come out in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Finally the demonstrations held against nuclear weapons in summer 1982 — with over three million people participating in Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and North America — were the largest demonstrations on an international question since the Second World War.

But there should be no illusions as to how important it is to imperialism to install these weapons. They are a central part of its military build up.

Imperialism has thus commenced a new round of manoeuvres to disorient the anti-nuclear movement — starting with Reagan's announcement of the deployment of the MX missile.

In order to understand how the anti-missile movement should confront these manoeuvres, we should start by recalling what role the nuclear build up in Western Europe plays in the overall international counter-offensive of imperialism and the present stage of the international class struggle.

Imperialism's military build up is aimed primarily at confronting the colonial revolution rather than war with the Soviet Union. In this respect it differs fundamentally from the military build up of the late 1940s and early 1950s, which was indeed aimed

at building the momentum for a military assault on the USSR.

But imperialism cannot engage in a military build up against the colonial revolution without also trying to neutralise the Soviet Union by either threats or deals. At each step in the colonial revolution economic and military aid from the USSR to liberation forces has played a crucial role.

It was the economic and military support of the Soviet Union which supplied the weapons with which the NLF defeated the Americans and their puppets in Vietnam, which maintains in existence the Cuban workers' state, and which made possible the Cuban intervention in Angola. Any new workers' state formed in Central America would necessarily seek support from the USSR and agreement to or refusal of this would in great measure determine its chance of survival.

The US ruling class does not believe that Russia is fomenting revolution. As Henry Kissinger put it in a recent interview, 'There are some American conservatives in both parties who luxuriate in the myth of diabolic Soviet planners implementing a master plan for world revolution. No one who has actually dealt with the top Soviet leadership has encountered such types. If they exist, they are well hidden from foreign visitors. The leaders one in fact encounters are tough, ruthless and persistent. But they have originated no profound initiatives; they have usually avoided great risks. They have expanded into vacuums created by irresolution or weakness.' (*Newsweek* 29 November).

But if US imperialism does not fear 'world revolution led by the Kremlin', it takes very seriously indeed the military potential of the

Soviet Union. The US also knows that in cases of imperialist 'irresolution or weakness' — by which it means successful revolutionary struggle led by others — the Soviet Union can supply major material aid to consolidate the situation. This was the case, in different ways in Cuba, Ethiopia, Angola, and could happen again in Nicaragua.

As a result each imperialist military build up against the colonial revolution also involved an armaments build up against the Soviet Union. For example the massive American military programme against the colonial revolution which took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s was accompanied by a simultaneous one against the USSR. Decisions of December 1957 and May 1958 of the NATO council led to the deployment of American Jupiter and Thor intermediate range missiles in England, Italy, and Turkey. Major US naval bases for nuclear submarines were established at Holy Loch in Scotland and Rota in Spain. The construction of 1000 Minuteman nuclear Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles, and of Polaris submarine launched missiles was ordered by Kennedy. These remained the backbone of American nuclear strength into the 1970s.

This nuclear build up against the USSR took place simultaneously with a huge conventional military escalation which culminated in the Vietnam war. The attempts by the Soviet bureaucracy to negotiate a halt to the arms race, for example through the unilateral Soviet troop reductions ordered by Khrushchev in 1959 were ignored. Kennedy and his Secretary of Defence McNamara calculated on the economic superiority of the United States to outproduce the Soviet Union

and crush all obstacles in their path. It was only the strength of the Vietnamese revolution, and the crisis the effects of the war produced inside the imperialist countries, that led the US ruling class to reverse its position and embark on the policy of 'detente' followed in the early 1970s.

Detente was in no sense considered a move to 'liberalism' or 'peace' by the US ruling class. It was simply a move to reconsolidate the situation in imperialism's home bases and prepare for a new offensive. As Kissinger, the chief organiser of 'detente' put it, 'what could we do otherwise than to calm the atmosphere when, in this country, the political climate (under the impact of the Vietnam war) was almost that of civil war.' He explained, 'President Nixon conceived detente as a means to create a satisfactory relation of forces and to promote a certain world order.' (*Politique Internationale*, Autumn 1982)

While of course the missile build up in Western Europe and the United States is not the only factor in these Soviet decisions — it would for example be a much more decisive confrontation with the United States for the Soviet Union to arm Nicaragua than it was Ethiopia — nevertheless there is no doubt that the American military escalation is both hitting at the colonial revolution and affecting many arenas of the world revolution through its pressure on the USSR. The stakes in the anti-missiles and anti-nuclear weapons movement are enormous not only for the workers of the imperialist countries but also for the USSR and the colonial revolution.

There is no doubt that the resistance to the missiles in Europe is qualitatively greater than foreseen by imperialism. From their statements it





been foreseen by imperialism. These are not on the level of 'protest' demonstrations but on a scale which could deflect government policies and provoke political crises.

The fight over the missiles in Western Europe has become a struggle involving huge international class forces. If the NATO decisions can be implemented and the missiles brought in, then the United States and European imperialism will gain an enormous military and economic lever against the Soviet Union. It can use this to 'damage the economy of the USSR and force it to shut down its economic and military aid to struggles in the semi-colonial countries.

Similarly if the attempt to bring in the missiles is defeated then this would impose a major defeat on imperialism, greatly relieve the situation of the Soviet Union, and leave the USSR with a greater potential for its own development and for aid to struggles in the colonial world.

In short the outcome of the fight over the missiles in Western Europe will affect the entire international class struggle. Compared to, for example, its victories in the Middle East, imperialism continues to face massive problems in its programme in Western Europe. It is in the two areas of Central America and the struggle over nuclear weapons, combined with the grinding fight over austerity, that imperialism faces its greatest immediate problems. Building the mass actions planned against the missiles in 1983, defeating the new manoeuvres being carried out by imperialism against that movement is a decisive task next year. *Stopping the US nuclear missiles being deployed in Europe is the greatest blow that the West European working class can strike for socialism in 1983.*

is obvious that neither Carter nor Reagan expected massive resistance inside Western Europe. Talk of 'theatre nuclear weapons', the possibility of 'limited nuclear war' in Europe consideration of 'warning nuclear explosions' was the very opposite of what was required to get NATO policies through.

The United States of course expected protest action against its policies. But while a few tens of thousands protesting in Europe, or 100,000 in the United States, may seem large it does not deflect the policy of imperialist governments. US imperialism carried on the Vietnam war for years against the opposition of the majority of its population. A routine round of protests on the nuclear weapons would have been swept aside.

It was the truly colossal scale of the opposition actions which had not



Greenham Common

Photo: John Harris

An inspiration to us all

By Jude Woodward
WOMEN braved sleet and icy rain to make a massive protest against Cruise missiles at Greenham Common last Sunday. 30,000 women 'embraced' the 9 mile perimeter of the air-base where the first Cruise missiles to arrive are due to be sited.

It seemed like an enormous task, a virtually impossible protest to organise. Yet from being grouped at the entrances the base was surrounded in ten minutes flat!

And everywhere women had hung momentoes, drawings, children's clothes, toys and photographs of loved ones. It was a massive protest that couldn't be ignored by the bosses' press, will rattle the government, and is an inspiration to us all.

Of course some people mutter with sour grapes that it was all wrong for it to be women only. While it is vital to understand that working men have just as much interest as women in stopping Cruise and stopping nuclear war, that doesn't make a women only protest wrong.

Women spend most of their lives as domestic slaves, degraded and oppressed by stultifying domestic tasks.

In the eyes of men and many women, women are the weaker sex, wives and mothers, not politicians or fighters. When this 'weaker sex', these wives and mothers, shake off the influence of centuries of oppression and emerge in the vanguard of the fight for a future for the whole of humanity then it is an inspiration to us all, both male and female.

And that's how Sunday's protest has to be seen. As an inspiration to the whole movement against nuclear weapons. We have to follow the initiative of the Greenham women to go out and build bigger and bigger mass actions against Cruise and Trident.

In addition to the mass protest on Sunday, 700 women pledged themselves to risk arrest in an attempt to block the entrance to the base on Monday. The labour movement has to respond in kind and be prepared to defend any women arrested in the fight against the missiles.

Tony Benn went to Greenham on Sunday 'to support the protest'. The best support that he can give, along with all the other sympathisers of the Greenham women in the leadership of the labour movement, is to fight for the labour movement to build the most massive opposition to nuclear weapons this year. And that will also be the best way to defend anyone arrested at the Greenham airbase gates.

Greenham Common on Sunday was a women-only protest. Next time perhaps it will be mixed. But that shouldn't make any difference to what the labour movement does about it. In factories and workplaces up and down the country it's women in particular who oppose the missiles. How often do you hear women say: 'I'd do anything for my kids.' And it's true, women will and often do make incredible self-sacrifices for the lives of their children, and their futures. Today in El Salvador thousands of women are in the guerrilla army. Not because they are more 'peaceful' than men, but because they have the courage to fight for a future.

Among working women in particular there exists a tremendous reserve of anger, energy and will to fight against the threat to everything we hold dear. This reserve has to be tapped and can be tapped in the present fight against nuclear weapons. But it cannot be tapped by circular letters from Greenham Common alone. The organised labour movement has to call these mighty forces into action. If they did the next Greenham Common protest, women only or not, could be three, four times the size. National demonstrations could be a million strong. And Cruise missiles could be stopped.

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Trade Unions

Basnett issues a call to arms

By Bob Pennington

IN FIVE YEARS time, the Mall could be running with blood as the TUC economic committee led by its chairperson, David Basnett, general secretary of the General and Municipal Workers, storms the Winter Palace.

Last Saturday a Labour Party conference on economic matters was addressed by the TUC's answer to Lenin. Unlike the impatient far-left inside the Labour Party who have blown their cover by openly arguing for Marxist ideas, Basnett, the 'red mole' of Congress House, has hitherto played his cards close to his chest.

Now, even he has had enough. Fed up with being outflanked by Militant, and outdone by Peter Tatchell's urging of extra-parliamentary activity, the old bolshevik has finally revealed his true colours. Last Saturday he warned the conference that another five years of Conservative government could turn the trade unions towards 'insurrection and civil disobedience'.

We understand that the secret committee of TUC bolsheviks, which Basnett leads, are disturbed that Basnett has broken from the 'entry tactic' and openly declared himself. Some of them thought that Britain's four million unemployed had proved too much for even an adept 'entrivist' like David to stomach. Others thought maybe it had been the Falklands affair.

But it was something much more serious than that which had made him unfurl the scarlet banner of revolution and sound

the tocsin rallying the bureaucracy to the barricades.

He was enraged at the new Tory redundancy plans. As he told the conference: 'Another five years of the exclusion of the trade union movement from influence on economic affairs could convert us into an insurrectionist trade union movement committed to civil disobedience.' The disappearance of the Quango has driven David into a paroxysm of revolutionary frenzy.

Bled

Naturally his heart bled at the thought of all his old trade union chums who have so loyally kept the system going, causing as little trouble to the state as possible, being tossed onto the scrap heap. The stipends would go, the use of the state car would be lost, no more five or six course lunches, and who



Basnett chats up Len on the need for the revolutionary road

would supply the free booze and Havanas which are such a necessary feature of a full-time union official's life?

When the Tory government cuts out all the jobs for the union bureaucracy, then that is really class war and can only be answered by revolutionary action. Like any serious revolutionary, David Basnett knows the difference between important issues like that and the odd ir-

relevance like an imperialist war in the Falklands, or the siting of a few cruise missiles here.

But David Basnett will not lightly embark on the revolutionary road, so do not pack your bag yet on the assumption that Albert Spanswick, Frank Chapple and Terry Duffy are going to instruct you to report with rifle in hand at Trafalgar Square next Sunday. He is prepared to call off the insurrection if

the government will relent its ways and take the bureaucracy to its bosom again.

As he says: 'We want to play our role with a government working towards agreed general consensus objectives within a pluralistic democracy.' Translated into plain English that means we will not overthrow the state if the government lets us back into the act.

The Kornilov revolt

By John Ross

IT IS sometimes believed in revolutionary politics that united action, the united front, is some sort of right wing policy. The 'really revolutionary' course is to denounce everybody and go it alone.

The falseness of such an idea is shown by the Russian Revolution of 1917. Probably the single greatest turning point in this, the one where the Bolsheviki gained the support of the majority of the working class, was one of the greatest examples in history of the application of the united front.

At the beginning of August 1917 a great right wing purge was being carried out by the provisional government in Russia. This government was dominated by the reformist parties (Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries) in alliance with the capitalists. Under its Prime Minister Kerensky, it had imprisoned Trotsky, forced Lenin into hiding, and was disarming the working class and smashing its organisations.

Emboldened by these moves the most extreme right wing forces in Russia, grouped round General Kornilov, decided to overthrow even the provisional government. It aimed to restore the situation prior to the overthrow of the Tsar in February 1917. The provisional government itself, torn between its fear of the working class and its fear of Kornilov, remained paralysed.

The Bolshevik leadership however made a tremendous tactical turn. It simply said in effect 'We will defend the revolution, and if necessary the provisional government, whether it likes it or not.' The Bolsheviki began distributing arms to the working class, approaching even those parties which had been arresting and imprisoning the working class leaders and mobilising the maximum forces for the struggle against Kornilov.

This sharp tactical turn, from direct conflict with the parties of the provisional government to practical collaboration with them, led to a fierce polemic inside the Bolshevik Party. A few ultralefts wanted to try to overthrow the provisional government then and there.

A more important group however started to say that it was necessary to support the provisional government as it was better than Kornilov. This debate was to become very important in later history and was used by the Communist Parties under Stalin and his successors as a justification for their policies of support of 'progressive' capitalist forces.

Lenin however ex-



plained with extreme clarity the basis of the united front and the attitude to the Kerensky government. He wrote:

'The Kornilov revolt is a most unexpected... and downright unbelievably sharp turn in events.
'Like every sharp turn, it calls for a revision and change in tactics. And as with every revision, we must be extra-cautious not to become unprincipled.
'It is my conviction that those who become unprincipled are people who (like Volodarsky (a Bolshevik leader - JR)) slip into defence or (like other Bolsheviki) into a bloc with the Social Revolutionaries, into supporting the Provisional Government. Their attitude is absolutely wrong and unprincipled...'
'Even now we must not support Kerensky's government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren't we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviki who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be carried away by the course of events.
'We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, - just as Kerensky's troops do, but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness. It is rather a subtle difference, but it is highly essential and must not be forgotten.'

Lenin explained:

'What, then, constitutes our change of tactics after the Kornilov revolt?
'We are changing the form of our struggle against Kerensky. Without in the least relaxing our hostility towards him, without taking back a single word said against him, without renouncing the task of overthrowing him, we say that we must take into account the present situation. We shall not overthrow Kerensky right now. We shall approach the task of fighting him in a different way, namely, we shall point out to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov) Kerensky's weakness and vacillation. This has been done in the past as well. Now, however, it has become the all important thing and this constitutes the change.'

In practical terms the Bolsheviki supported the struggle against Kornilov. This was also Kerensky's verbal position. But the Bolsheviki called for this struggle to be carried out in a far more radical and thorough going way than the reformists were prepared to contemplate. Lenin wrote,

'The all important thing now has become the intensification of our campaign for some kind of 'partial demands' to be presented to Kerensky: arrest Milyukov (a capitalist leader), arm the Petrograd workers, summon

the Kronstadt, Vyborg and Helsingfors troops (who support the revolution) to Petrograd, dissolve the Duma (the reactionary Parliament), arrest Rodzyanko (a leading landowner), legalise the transfer of the landed estates to the peasants, introduce workers' control over grain and factories, etc, etc. We must present these demands not only to Kerensky, and not so much to Kerensky, as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been carried away by the course of the struggle against Kornilov. We must keep up their enthusiasm, encourage them to deal with the general and officers who have declared for Kornilov, urge them to demand the immediate transfer of land to the peasants, suggest to them that it is necessary to arrest Rodzyanko and Milyukov, dissolve the Duma, close down Rech and other bourgeois papers, and institute investigations against them.'

Not by 'supporting Kerensky', but definitely by fighting Kornilov, the Bolsheviki played the key role in crushing the rightest rebellion. It was they and not the provisional Government who were the gainers. From then on the Bolsheviki commanded majority support in the Russian working class. Three months later they overthrew not merely Kornilov but Kerensky as well. It was because their policy at every stage corresponded to the objective interests of the working class that the Bolsheviki gained this victory and created the first workers' state in the world.

* All the quotations are from Lenin 'To the Central Committee of the RSDLP' in Volume 25 of his Collected Works.

On Friday 10 December, world news reported the deaths of 75 children in a helicopter crash as they were evacuated from an area near the Honduran border which was under attack from counter-revolutionary forces hostile to the revolutionary government of Nicaragua. **ANDY de la TOUR** was in Nicaragua for the 19 July celebration of the third anniversary of the Sandinista-led revolution against the dictator Somoza. He is presently touring Britain with a slide show of his visit and he spoke to **Toni Gorton** about what's happening in Nicaragua today.

Nicaragua has just renewed the state of emergency that has existed since May last year, what's the situation now?

Nicaragua is at war. That's the simple reason why the state of emergency has been maintained. There was a big article in *Newsweek* in November which talked about America's secret war — and that's what it is. That's why these children died.

Since Day One of the revolution, since 20 July, 1979 when the Somoza dictatorship was overthrown there have been over 400 military attacks on Nicaragua: acts of sabotage, terror, physical attacks on people, buildings and military installations.

These have been carried out by the ex-National Guard who fought under Somoza. There are 5-6,000 along the Honduran border. These, along with Honduran army personnel are organised by the US ambassador to Honduras John Negroponte who is in effect the military commander-in-chief.

They've been working with \$19m allocated by Reagan in 1981 for the destabilisation of the Sandinista government. They've been working to weld together a counter-revolutionary army which in the past few months has been transformed into a large military unit poised for a full scale invasion of Nicaragua.

That invasion was expected this month to coincide with joint US-Honduran military manoeuvres which were to be carried out along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border.

The army manoeuvres were postponed partly because of the *Newsweek* article which has caused a big furore in America.

The US has learned something in the past few years. That is, if they're going to overthrow revolutionary or progressive governments it is difficult to do it in one fell swoop.

This has been a slow war: in fact, the US administration has called it a 'slow motion Bay of Pigs'. It's meant to have the same effect but not to arouse the wrath of the American people.

The border is now a military zone and that's where the Sandinista army and the popular militia are.

What does this state of emergency mean for the people of Nicaragua?

I suppose we think of a state of emergency when its introduced in other countries as immediate hardship for the people. Here it's more of a political measure which has the overwhelming support of the Nicaraguan people.

When we were there this summer the first thing that hit you is the level of revolutionary mobilisation and politicisation of the people at large.

The mass organisations of which there are many are constantly in meetings, demonstrations, pickets and discussions talking about what's happening in the revolution, how to take it forward, how to organise against the counter-revolution, how to take forward the war on the economic front as well as the military front.

Nicaragua, of course, is still a very poor country. There is poverty but there didn't seem to be any food shortage, the markets and food stalls were full. Certainly there was no malnutrition.

Most of the people except in some of the most rural districts have got running water and electricity. The material gains of the revolution have been relatively very big.



Commemoration of the death of 13 guerrillas killed in the war of liberation. Gladys Baez a guerrilla who survived the defeat speaking to part of crowd

'Nicaragua is at war'



The two women illustrate the changing position of women: the traditional role of mother and the more recent one of soldier

When I was in Cuba in the early days of the revolution, milicianos armed with machine guns went up in lifts with you and in the public toilets. Is there that sort of thing going on?

Oh yes. Through the popular Sandinista militia, which is not the full time army, everyone takes part in weekend and evening military training in order to defend the revolution. All places which are prone to counter-revolutionary attack — bridges, roads, tiny footpaths — are guarded by milicianos.

At the hotel we stayed there were two or three young milicianos guarding the entrance. A lot of people have guns. There's been no attempt to

disarm the people, who have still got weapons from the revolutionary war.

The main thing is that the people absolutely trust their leadership, the FSLN. When government measures are taken this is after a dialogue between the FSLN and the people through the mass organisations. Together they arrive at what are the primary tasks of facing the Nicaraguan revolution.

At every stage when the government issues decrees such as the state of emergency, or all the 101 decrees such as the formation of peasant co-operatives, nationalisation of certain sectors of private manufacturing, these measures are only taken after this 'dialogue'.

The thing that is realised is that the laws are meaningless unless they're

done with the agreement of the people and institutionalised by the people.

Because this relationship exists the people respond amazingly quickly when things have to be done. For instance, last year Lake Managua flooded and thousands were made homeless and within an incredibly short space of time, something like three weeks, they were all rehoused. — Primitive housing yes — but a roof and walls instantly built by the Sandinista youth and defence committees. They just went out and built them.

These are very critical times. You have a revolutionary government and by and large a revolutionary people, but you still have a largely privately owned economy. 50 percent of the land is still privately owned, some 70 percent of manufacturing is as well.

Of course when you talk of manufacturing its very small industry. Its overwhelmingly an agricultural and peasant country. This is obviously an unstable situation.

What is happening with the economy? Is there any attempts to diversify, to increase basic industry?

In 1979 at the end of the war years it would be fair to say there was no Nicaraguan economy. Literally there was \$3m in the bank, all the factories had been destroyed, all the transport system, roads and so on had been wrecked. Homes were wrecked, herds of cattle even had been taken over the border into Honduras by the land owners getting out as quickly as they could. It was devastation.

So they had to start from scratch. Reconstruction started from zilch. In three years given the objective problems — the imperialist blockade, the Tory government blocking aid from the EEC — the economic strides forward have been very big.

Nicaragua is now approaching a situation where it's virtually self-sufficient in basic grains, there has been a resuscitation in coffee and cotton which were main export crops.

There have been new projects financed by material aid from Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union but also from Spain, France and Canada. We saw new granaries, new chemical fertilising plants. It's all still directed at agriculture for export and self-sufficiency.

When you go about Britain showing your slides and talking about Nicaragua what things are people interested in?

They're interested in the role of the Catholic Church, women's rights and the achievements of the revolution.

The Catholic church during the war years and now plays a dual and

completely contradictory role. As far as the lay priests are concerned, because they were so close to the oppression they played a very strong role in the actual war. There are very many revolutionary priests in Nicaragua with whom the people very strongly identify.

The church hierarchy is very reactionary, although it plays a diplomatic role depending on how it sees the balance of forces. The people have an ambivalent attitude to the church hierarchy. As long as it performs its proper function, that is, celebrating the mass then that's fine but when it starts interfering in politics then there is unbridled hostility towards it.

When we were there there was a very good example of this. There was a militant revolutionary area in Managua called Santa Rosa where the local priest had a good reputation from the fight against Somoza.

He was transferred by the church hierarchy to some out-of-the-way place. There was an immediate response. Within hours of learning about it, people occupied the local church with meetings and demonstrations inside the church. And a wave of sympathy church occupations took place in other neighbourhoods. The relationship between the Sandinista government and the church hierarchy is a tense one. The government supports religious freedom but will not tolerate actions against the revolution.

Women were part of the revolutionary war and comprise an active part of the mass organisations and are part of the Sandinista government.

Women leaders explained to us that the big emphasis right now is on the right to choose and this means having children who will live past their first year, have enough to eat, somewhere to live, be free from disease and be educated. Before the revolution women had lots of children because they knew many would die without reaching adulthood.

While the right to contraception and abortion is in the Sandinista programme and there is a formal right to them the objective situation doesn't put these things up front.

What about solidarity with Nicaragua?

It's obvious that an elementary duty of working people is to help defend this revolution against the US military machine and against our own Tory government as well. But more than this we have a lot to learn from and celebrate in the Nicaraguan revolution.

For further information contact the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 20-21 Compton Terrace, London N1. Tel 01-226 6747.

Photos: Carlos Augusto Guarita

The Socialist Party and the Popular Front

IN this, and the next issue, Bob Pennington will describe how the Spanish Socialist Party confronted the last of the workers' revolutions that took place in the years between 1917 and 1944.

Historical guide

- 1872 Small group of supporters of Marx expelled by anarchists from Spanish branch of 1st International
- 1879 Partido Democratico Socialista Obrero, (Spanish Socialist Party founded.)
- 1881 With a membership of around 1,000 party legalised.
- 1888 Mora and Garcia Quejido form the Union General de Trabajadores (UGT) the trade union of the Socialist Party. Membership around 3,000.
- 1917 Series of revolutionary strikes flare up across Spain. UGT, along with the anarchist union, the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) play prominent role in organising the strikes. Army brutally puts down the strikes and restores order. UGT however grows to a membership of more than 200,000.
- 1921 Socialist Party decides by 8,880 against 6,025 not to affiliate to 3rd International. Mora and Garcia Quejido take nearly half of the party militants into Spanish Communist Party. Andres Nin, Maurin and other CNT leaders attracted to communism also join new Communist Party.
- 1923 Following military coup of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, socialists invited to collaborate in government. Largo Caballero, secretary general of the UGT becomes state councillor.
- Election of Republican-Socialist government by big majority. Monarchy abdicates. Largo Caballero joins government of Manuel Azana and becomes Minister of Labour. Government carries out bitter persecution of CNT militants. Meanwhile UGT has big growth.
- 1933 Victory for the right in the elections. Republicans and Socialists out of office. Government attacks worker's organisations. Within one year over 100 issues of El Socialista seized.
- 1934 Second International estimates more than 12,000 workers have been imprisoned. The socialist militia is proscribed, workers meeting halls are closed. In October general strike called by UGT and the Workers Alliances, which consist mainly of Socialists, Communist Party members and Left Communists. Anarchists refuse to join.
- Strike lasts 15 days. In Asturias the miners led by the socialists, in alliance with the Left Communists give land to the peasants, take over factories, set up revolutionary tribunals to try workers' enemies and fight Foreign Legion and Moorish troops for 15 days, by using dynamite from the mines. Five thousand Asturian workers give their lives, most slaughtered by troops after they have been forced to surrender, 80,000 imprisoned.
- 1935 Resistance of masses continues. On May Day a complete stoppage of work takes place. Enormous campaign launched demanding an amnesty for all political prisoners. Large anti-fascist rallies are held calling for dissolution of Cortes and for fresh elections. Socialist party and UGT play prominent role in these campaigns.
- 1936 As February election approaches left-wing Socialists oppose joint election ticket with Republicans. Indalecio Prieto, Caballero's rival for leadership of the Socialist Party, and a confirmed moderate, along with the Communist Party agrees to give the Republicans a majority. As a result 152 Republican deputies are returned against 116 for the workers' organisations.
- Parliament announces that 4,838,449 voted for the Popular Front, 3,996,931 voted for the right and 449,320 for the Centre. Manuel Azana a liberal Republican elected president. Caballero insists that new government is based on a bourgeois programme and that it is up to Republicans to carry out their own programme; Socialists could therefore do no more than give loyal support to the government by their votes. Socialist Party adopts Caballero's position against Prieto who wants Socialists to enter government.

On 18 July 1936 fascists begin civil war against the Republican government.

THE ELECTION of the Popular Front government meant different things to the masses than it did to the politicians, like Anzana and Prieto. Within four days of Anzana becoming president, the workers and peasants started to break open jails. They had decided to declare their own amnesty for the prisoners of 1934.

While the Cortes deliberated in the manner of all bourgeois parliaments, on legislation, the masses acted. Not prepared to wait for a parliamentary Act that would force the employers to reinstate all those workers dismissed, after the October uprising in 1934 they simply arrived at their workplaces with the victimised workers and instructed the bosses to reinstate them there and then.

Peasants impatient to get their own land began to act and take it for themselves. In area after area, the hated clergy were expelled from the villages. By June 1936, in Valencia there was scarcely a church still open.

Meanwhile the government gazed with horror at the emergence of the downtrodden workers and peasants acting as an independent force fighting for their own aims and interests, instead of accepting what the capitalist politicians were prepared to grant them.

Strikes

In parliament, Anzana promised that he would stop the strikes and seizures of the land. In March he prolonged press censorship, and on 4 April, only eight days before the municipal elections were due to be held, he decreed an indefinite postponement. In Spain's political climate at that time the municipal elections would have resulted in sweeping victories for the workers' parties.

As Ventosa who was a spokesperson for the Catalan landowners hailed Anzana as 'the only man capable of offering the country security and defence of all legal rights,' a squad of fascists and civil guards shot up a workers' street in Madrid.

On 17 April, the CNT called a general strike against the fascist attack. At first the UGT denounced the strike, as did the Communist Party. But there was a massive response to the strike call from the workers, including large numbers of UGT members. The strike which had been a great success, received a belated and ungracious endorsement from the UGT and the Communist Party just before it was ended.

As the waves of revolution lapped around the feet of the capitalists and their servants in the Cortes, they began to discuss how to crush the workers' movement.

Some favoured the use of the military, but Anzana suggested using the workers' leaders to do the job of restoring order. His solution was to get the Socialist

leader Prieto to form a cabinet.

Prieto was only too keen to be prime minister, but Caballero warned him that only the Socialist Party could give him permission, and right then the party was well to the left of Prieto.

Meanwhile the Madrid party, the largest of the Socialist districts had adopted a new programme, which stated that the bourgeoisie was not capable of carrying out the tasks of the democratic revolution and could not settle the agrarian question. The programme insisted this could only be done by a proletarian revolution.

This programme was accepted by Caballero. Caballero the man who had served under the dictatorship of de Rivera and had been Minister of Labour in the Republican government of 1931, had been 'converted' to revolutionary theory when for the first time in his life he had read Lenin, Marx and Trotsky during his imprisonment. Accepting that only proletarian revolution could solve the problems of the democratic revolution meant that the Socialist Party should break from the Popular Front Government of Anzana.

Either it could encourage the revolutionary wave and use it to break the power of Spanish capitalism, or it could try and divert it back into the parliamentary channels of class collaboration. The Prieto wing of the party unhesitatingly would always choose the latter course.

Law

On 4 June the government minister Augusto Barcia, told the syndicalists that if 'they persisted in disobeying the orders of the Ministry of Labour, the government proposes to declare syndicalism outside the law.' On 19 June the government closed down the CNT headquarters. But unlike in 1931 when Caballero had personally led the attack on the CNT, the UGT this time supported their CNT comrades and the government had to retreat.

Throughout the summer the workers' struggles intensified. On 8 July in Lerida — a stronghold of the left centrist party of Marxist Unity (POUM) — a general strike was called demanding that the government feed the unemployed. Miners in Murcia struck on 24 June calling for better conditions. On 2 July the Federation of Agricultural Workers in Andalusia demanded that the govern-

ment put up money to make up for the loss of crops.

Then on 8 July the students in Barcelona's catholic schools had a strike and called for the expulsion of the priests and their replacement by lay teachers. Invariably these struggles were supported by the local Socialist Parties but the official Socialist Party counselled care and patience and turned its face against leading these attacks on the old order.

On the streets the workers and the fascists fought bloody battles. Time after time the workers dealt the hardest and deadliest blows. Spain was truly embarking on the path of proletarian revolution and civil war.

Goods

Anzana was not able to deliver the goods for Spanish capitalism. The right wing socialists under Prieto, and his allies in the Spanish Communist Party could not hold back the workers' movement because of the power of the mass movement, and the strength of the left socialists.

With the armed forces led by the officer corps, and the Civil Guard at their disposal, the capitalists decided they either had to organise an insurrection or be swept aside by the rising tide of revolution. Spanish socialism and particularly the Spanish Socialist Party was now going to face its biggest test.

But on this issue, Caballero's 'conversion' had its limits. He argued that 'the government has not yet entirely exhausted its possibilities,' and that 'trade union unity and the merger of the Marxist parties must precede the revolution'. Caballero therefore justified hanging onto the coat tails of Anzana. The left Socialist deputies abused the government but whenever it came to the critical question they voted for it.

As Prieto stood for the right and Caballero, despite his newly learned Marxist language, stood for the centre, on the left of the party were people like Javier Bueno, who writing in *Claridad*, the paper of the left Socialists was demanding an end, not just to the conciliations of Prieto but also to those of Caballero. Bueno, a leader of the Asturian rebellion urged a break from dependency on Anzana and the Republicans.

Across Spain, the rank and file of the Socialist Party took up the fight against the old order. As the Prieto leadership indignantly denied that the peasants of Badajoz who were led by the Socialists, were going to 'illegally' seize the land, 25,000 peasant families inspired by their local Socialist leadership took over the great estates.



In Asturias, once a powerful base of Prieto, a strike was called against the government on 13 June which called for the dismissal of the Ministers of Labour and Agriculture, the strike was supported by 90,000 miners. Meanwhile Prieto dared not take up Anzana's invitation to go into the cabinet, because in such a situation of proletarian revolt it would have destroyed any influence he had over the rank and file of the Socialist Party.

The official paper of the Spanish Socialist Party recoiled in horror from the workers' upsurge. *El Socialista* denounced the independent activity of the masses saying: 'The system is genuinely anarchistic and provokes the irritation of the rightists'. As the upsurge of workers rebellion grew — in the five months between February and July 1936, every big city had at least one general strike — the Socialist Party faced a choice.

The programme of the Popular Front

ON THE agrarian question it stated quite specifically, that 'Republicans do not accept the principle of the nationalisation of the land and its free distribution to the peasants, as solicited by delegates of the Socialist Party'

Instead it contented itself with promises to 'stimulate exports, credits, and security of tenure for tenants and the state purchase of estates for rental to peasants ...'

On the economy it promised a more efficient system of protective tariffs, institutions to guide industry ... and wanted to put the treasury and the banks at the service of 'national reconstruction, without slurring over the fact that such subtle things as credit can not be forced outside the field of profitable and remunerative effort'. The Republicans did 'not accept measures like nationalisation of the banks as proposed by the workers' parties'.

It came out against subsidies for unemployment, which meant it was against dole.

On the army and the police it lamely promised an investigation and punishment of police abuses and the dismissal of commanding officers found guilty of abuses against the people. In its five months in office, the Popular Front government always put off investigating the crimes of the officer corps during the repressions of 1934 when thousands of workers had been arbitrarily executed. This left the reactionary officer corps intact to prepare its counter revolution.

On the Spanish colonies the Popular Front programme was silent. The colonies were left in the hands of the Foreign Legionnaires. This made sure that the Moroccan people saw no reason to ally themselves with the Popular Front, and that the army had a secure base to organise the counter revolution.

No attempt was made to deal with the capitalist state. The government promised 'mixed labour boards, a Supreme Court' and stressed that 'the interested parties ... acquire a consciousness of the impartiality of their decisions.' Just to make sure that the workers got the message it said: 'The Republican parties do not accept the workers' control solicited by the socialist delegation.'

This was the programme for which the Socialists and the Communists gave the Republicans a majority.

Lloyd's Insurance Scandal —

A Christmas Carol

By Alan Freeman

THIS YEAR as you scatter scraps of silver paper on your Christmas shrub, spare a thought for one less fortunate.

We refer to Mr Raymond Posgate, director of Alexander Howden's and a member of Lloyd's, the world famous insurance group.

Mr Posgate is rich. He gets a quarter of a million every year — more than anyone else in Britain except British Oxygen's Joe Giordano. Mr Posgate takes more in a week than you get in a year.

But wealth, as everyone knows, is the reward of a virtuous life. This is why Mr Posgate was so upset when Lloyd's suspended him in September after Howdens was found £14.6m short on being taken over by the American company Alexander and Alexander.

He was so upset he has sued Lloyd's for breach of natural justice and loss of livelihood. As Lloyd's counsel Peter Scott explained to the High Court: 'In view of figures that showed he was earning many hundreds of thousands of pounds, Mr Posgate was concerned about even a temporary interruption of his activities.'

Given what these ac-

tivities were, his concern is no surprise. With four of his associates he is accused of 'diversion of funds, personal benefits fraudulently or improperly obtained and the purchase of shares in a bank from the Alexander Howden Group, financed with money that derived from the syndicates and underwriting agencies.'

Dead

Aren't we lucky that the British buccaneering spirit isn't dead? Mr Posgate, who began life as a mere Oxford graduate, set up 'baby' syndicates for 're-insurance.' (Remember that word: you'll be hearing more of it.)

You see, insurance people double as brokers — professionals who advise others where to put their money — and underwriters — people who put up capital to create firms which receive this money.

So it has become normal to divert funds from companies where you work as a director or broker, to one you own!

As Scott put it: 'enormous sums of money belonging to Howdens syndicates passed, first to respectable companies — mostly in the Howden group — thence to non-respectable companies.'

These included interesting and far-off enterprises such as the Real Estate Company of Panama, Southern Re-insurance, and Southern Insurance Re, which received \$29m but was found this year to be worth only \$1.27m.

'Where the money had gone was to a considerable extent unexplained,' Scott says. Like all patriots, Mr Posgate's friends are also good internationalists. Money has been traced to New Southern Re-

insurance, a Liechtenstein trust.

These British entrepreneurs, thought big. Not content with a Swiss bank account, they bought a Swiss bank — Banque du Rhone et de la Tamise. £9.3m has just been recovered from this bank.

Soft

They also had a soft spot for culture: among the assets recovered are numerous art treasures. You may recall the leading Nazis started doing things like that near the end of the Second World War.

But why is Mr Posgate suing? One might have thought, given the current obsession with law and order, that he would have as much chance as Militant will have with John Golding.

The point is that Lloyd's doesn't appear to

have the right to stop him. It uses what's called 'self-regulation' — which means that it is subject to no scrutiny and very little restraint. It relies for self-discipline on the high moral standards and probity usually associated with men of great wealth.

Particularly the 100 Tory MPs included in its ranks.

Mr Posgate is aggrieved at being told off for doing what all his mates are up to their eyeballs in. No wonder the *Financial Times* calls it 'the most serious crisis that has ever faced a City institution'.

It isn't just one individual. Lloyd's are now studying, the 'seven year relationship' between Brookgate investments and its former subsidiary Fidentia Marine Insurance of Bermuda.' This seems to have been sold for a

song to 'an unnamed party' with £7.75m on its books, mostly invested in 'a land-holding company in Cyprus and a small subsidiary in Panama.'

Minet

Then we have the sad case of Minet holdings, whose subsidiary PCW is being investigated by the fraud squad and the Department of Trade after suspending six of its members including its director and founder Mr Peter Cameron-Webb and its former chair Peter Dixon — two of Posgate's partners in intrigue.

Lloyd's is concerned. The good will of the banking community is at stake. Sir Peter Green, Lloyd's director, wants to set up a special committee — to oversee Lloyd's relations with the press, who are attacked for 'hysterical ac-

cusations' against respectable people.

Sir Peter has a 20 per cent holding in an interesting company in the Cayman islands — the Imperial Insurance Company — with which, several Lloyd's companies have — you've guessed it — reinsurance contracts. Where does it all end?

Bunch

This tale is far from over. The banking community will soon own all that's left of Britain's wealth. They bring in a massive share of Britain's 'invisible income'. They have the ascendancy in the Tory Party.

And it just wouldn't do, would it, if Britain was run by a bunch of crooks?

As 'Tiny Tim' (Rowlands) might say 'Merry Christmas, one and all!'

ANOTHER REMINDER that you can solve your Xmas present problems by shopping at The Other Bookshops in London and Birmingham.

Both shops run a good line in postcards, one we recommend reads 'The birth of a man who thinks he's God isn't such a rare event' (price 15p).

A book we can also really recommend is *The Battle of Beirut: Why Israel Invaded Lebanon* by Michael Jansen (price £4.50).

This book documents with painstaking care the Israeli conspiracy and shows the collusion between the US State Department and people like Begin and Sharon.

The invasion was a show run by the military as Asher Wallfish who is quoted by Jansen revealed when he said although the cabinet sometimes met twice a day it 'never held a proper discussion on the objectives of the campaign.' Wallfish complained that '...as civilians we were like clay in the hands of the military men.'

All the Israeli claims that the invasion was a 'limited' military operation and no harm was intended to civilians and that Beirut was held hostage by the PLO are blown sky high.

Covering the period from the start of the war in June 1982 right up to the massacres at Sabra and Chatila it exposes Israel's real aims which is for the extension of Greater Israel.

Despite being produced so quickly this is not a piece of 'instant' journalism, but a well argued and thoroughly researched piece of work.

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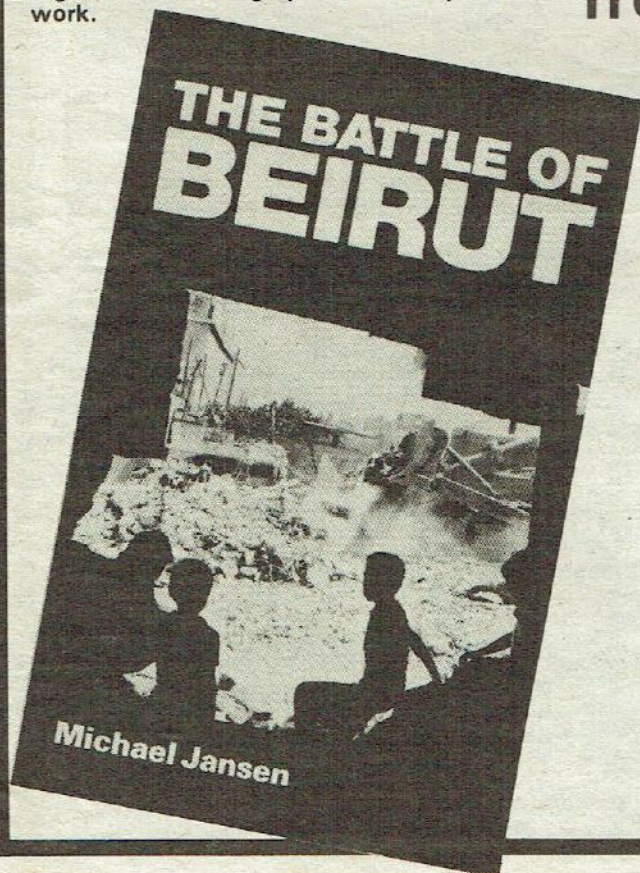


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AS YOU can see by the figures below, even if the goose is getting fat for somebody's Xmas somewhere, it certainly is not in the finance department of Socialist Challenge.

We need the sum of £4,493.64p between now and the end of December, so this is not a reminder dear reader, it's a begging plea. If that money does not arrive here on time then your paper is in real danger.

Remember it is the paper that has supported every struggle of the workers' movement here in Britain, and internationally, and has always done its utmost not only to explain and promote these struggles, but has encouraged its readers and supporters to give them active solidarity.

You can make sure that we go on playing this vital role by doing the following: sending an immediate donation yourself; asking people who buy the paper to give a donation; buying a subscription for your friends — it makes a good and useful Xmas present; selling a subscription to people in your union branch, Labour Party and/or local campaign group.

Best of all, do four of those things, but at the very least do one of them. As I explained, we are begging so please do not let us down.

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Socialist Challenge

Miners prepare for showdown with Thatcher

By Barry Wilkins

LAST WEEK an area conference of South Wales miners called unanimously for all out strike from 17 January unless the National Coal Board meets their demand for substantially increased investment and recruitment in the coalfields.

South Wales NUM leaders are already winning support from other coalfields to extend the action. Des Dutfield, vice president of the South Wales miners, explained: 'Between now and 17 January, we will be working to turn this into a national strike. We have already had indications from other coalfields that they are willing to strike over this issue.'

Arthur Scargill, NUM national president, said that this strike 'would spread like wildfire throughout the British coalfields'. As Des also explained: 'We'll be looking for supporting action from other trade unions both regionally and nationally.'

It is clear that despite the failure of the

November ballot for strike action, militant areas such as South Wales, Scotland, Kent and Yorkshire remain willing to fight.

These militant areas are confident that the support of the 'moderate' areas can be won either by persuasion or picketing in a battle for jobs and the future of the industry.

In February 1981 it was the South Wales miners who started off the strike which spread to several areas and made the Tories back away from their plan to close 23 pits. But today the danger is even greater and the stakes are very much higher.

In the next eight years, the NCB want to close 60 pits some of which are in

South Wales. And 17 out of the 33 South Wales pits are classed as 'short life' by the NCB.

The South Wales miners have responded magnificently to this threat to their jobs and communities by making bold demands backed up by the threat of militant action.

United

As Emlyn Williams, president of the South Wales NUM explained: 'The South Wales coalfields will die unless we do something to get recruitment and capital. This year the coal board is planning to invest only £30 million in South Wales compared with £1,600m in Yorkshire. We are demanding £500m immediate investment in South Wales. We have to decide on behalf of our children and also the unemployed

Mardy lodge voted 100 per cent for strike

whether we accept the closure of pits or stand up and fight for the investment, the new pits and the new jobs the industry needs. I believe South Wales miners will fight for their future. It's fight or die.'

This strike decision takes the miners' struggle to a new and higher level — a fight for the development and future of the industry.

As Paul O'Sullivan from Trelewis Drift told Socialist Challenge, 'The problems have become so acute that we've decided to go onto the offensive. This is no longer just a defensive struggle against pit closure. This is the first time since Thatcher was elected that workers have gone onto the attack to demand investment and jobs to safeguard the future of their industry.'

By going onto the attack the miners are posing a big challenge to one of the main projects of Thatcher's government — to run down coalfields in areas like South Wales, Kent and Scotland and simultaneously to weaken the considerable power of the miners.

For Thatcher to give in would be a much, much bigger climbdown than in February 1981. Therefore

this battle could be a lengthy one. Of course it is possible that Thatcher will try to postpone the showdown by making a tactical retreat until after the election.

But this would be much harder than in 1981 and would result in a substantial loss of face, giving the green light for other workers to go into struggle.

So as Paul O'Sullivan said: 'We are prepared for a long hard struggle this time. But we'll fight to the finish and win.' The strike call has had massive backing following the area conference.



Evelyn Williams
Emlyn Williams reported that over 80 per cent of South Wales

miners have supported the strike call. Trelewis Drift is not a traditionally militant pit but there was a 100 per cent vote in support.



Des Dutfield

At Penrhwiweiber pit Dai Davies, area executive member told Socialist Challenge that in five meetings covering all shifts only two miners have voted against the strike.

Dai added: 'This strike is certain to go ahead if the NCB doesn't deliver the goods and it is very likely to escalate to a national strike. Yes, we are going onto the offensive now and we won't go back to work on the same terms as in 1981.'

At Mardy pit there was a 100 per cent vote for the strike. The Lodge secretary Ivor England gave his view of the battle ahead.

'It is the Thatcher government's deliberate policy to smash public ownership and weaken the

muscle of the miners and the strength of the working class. Therefore this is definitely a strike against the government.'

The South Wales miners and their leaders are very serious about this battle. They have learned lessons from the fate of the steel industry where weak union leadership has meant over 100,000 jobs lost in the last 10 years.

Escalation to a national strike together with support to other unions will be necessary, and the determination to pursue this with the support of Arthur Scargill.

Most important of all a victory for the miners by defeating Thatcher's policy for the coal industry would change the balance of class forces to the advantage of workers against the Tories. It would create the best conditions for the return of a Labour government which would then be under great pressure to satisfy the aroused expectations of its supporters to implement policies in the interests of workers and not the bosses.

It is therefore vital for socialists to go all out to build massive support for the miners' strike in the trade unions and Labour Party. The miners must win!

Photo: Paul Highfield

SPECIAL OFFER

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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Police execute Republicans

By Brian Grogan

TWO IRISH nationalist figures were summarily executed by members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary last Sunday evening in Armagh. The two, Peter James Grew and Roderick Martin Carroll, were shot dead after allegedly jumping a road block. The police 'assumed' they were about to be fired on. No weapons or explosives were found.

These police assassinations are now becoming a regular occurrence. In early November three alleged members of the IRA were gunned down in similar circumstances in Lurgan. Later that same month two youths with no connection with any Republican

organisation were also assassinated near Lurgan. They had the misfortune to stumble on three World War I vintage rifles without ammunition.

Summing up these incidents, Seamus Mallon, security spokesperson for the Social Democratic and Labour Party charged that police were operating 'SAS type patrols' with license to kill.

Peter Grew was only released from prison after serving seven years of a 14 year sentence earlier this year. During his imprisonment he was a regular letter writer to Socialist Challenge. Both he and Carroll were supporters of the Irish National Liberation Army.