

SOCIALIST PRESS



Weekly paper of the Workers Socialist League * No. 181 * 9 January 1980 * 20p

Trotskyist International Liaison Committee formed

See page 2

FOR AN INDEPENDENT SOVIET AFGHANISTAN!

Over the last three weeks the army of the Soviet Union has moved ruthlessly and decisively to reinforce the position of the Moscow bureaucracy in Afghanistan.

Probably as many as 50,000 Soviet soldiers are now in the country. They have moved rapidly in the countryside against the various guerrilla movements, which are fighting against the central government in Kabul and which are variously supported and financed by China, the CIA, Iran and Pakistan.

And in Kabul itself, where the government of Hafizullah Amin was overthrown, Moscow has installed a new regime under Barbak Karmal.

In carrying out these changes the Soviet Union reportedly conspired with Karmal—leader of the Parcham (Flag) faction of the Peoples Democratic Party (Communist Party) of Afghanistan—to murder Amin—leader of the Khalq (Peoples) faction.

Qualitative change

And in the aftermath of the gangster-style coup the Soviet troops have apparently disarmed, forcibly confined to barracks or killed in open fighting, a large proportion of the previous 90,000 strong Afghan army, sizeable sections of which continued to be loyal to Amin.

In spite of the numerous contradictions in reports now coming from Kabul, it seems plain that a decisive qualitative change has occurred in the nature of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

The USSR is no longer simply the dominant influence and support for the local state power; it has virtually established itself as the state power itself.

In this sense the Soviet army occupation of the country could be more complete even than that of Czechoslovakia in 1968 or Hungary in 1956.

Politically, of course, the motives for the occupation are different.

Afghanistan is not, like Hungary and Czechoslovakia, a deformed workers' state in which the Stalinist bureaucracy is in danger of losing control. It is a backward capitalist state in which the Soviet-backed regime stood in danger of military defeat at the hands of imperialist-backed rebel forces.

Hard to quantify

At least in immediate terms the Soviet army's presence in Afghanistan appears to be related both to the external objectives of the Kremlin and to combatting possible internal threats to the rule of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Though it is hard to quantify there seems no doubt that the danger of the rise of nationalist



Top left: Karmal; top centre: Brezhnev greets Taraki in Moscow; Top right: Amin. Bottom left: Russian tank in Kabul. Bottom right: Islamic guerrillas.

movements among the national minorities within the USSR—particularly in the Muslim areas of Soviet Central Asia—is in the minds of the Moscow bureaucracy as it moves to suppress the partly nationalist rebels in Afghanistan.

The Soviet Union has said officially that it sent in the army in response to an imperialist threat to the legitimate government.

It justified the intervention under the charter of the United Nations and has said that it will withdraw the army when the external threat has passed.

The bitter divisions between the Afghan CP factions, however, along with the nature of the Soviet invasion, seem to have created the conditions under which any Soviet army withdrawal in the foreseeable future can only result in an immediate takeover by pro-imperialist forces.

The Karmal regime has, therefore, less independence than any of its predecessors.

The political positions it has so far put forward (obviously with Soviet backing) are most of all designed to calm and mollify the Islamic sensibilities which may have been provoked by the Soviet action.

"Holy war"

Karmal has spoken of the need for "a holy war in the name of Allah" against Afghanistan's enemies; he was introduced on television by a member of the Muslim clergy, and spoke of the need to "respect the sacred principles of Islam".

And he has despatched a fulsome message of greeting to the Iranian government.

His exact domestic policies are still unknown but Kabul radio has announced that the objective of the regime is "not to establish socialism but only to open up the way towards it by eliminating feudalism".

Of course, neither the puppets of the Karmal regime,

nor their Stalinist puppeteers in Moscow are capable of establishing socialism in Afghanistan.

But the basis of any regime even semi-autonomous of the USSR now looks extremely thin.

It is more probable than ever that the military occupation of the country will be semi-permanent and that the bureaucracy will be forced to seek stability by nationalising the limited capitalist property in Afghanistan and (as in Eastern Europe after World War II) establishing a new deformed workers state through a process of structural assimilation to the Soviet Union.

To the imperialist governments this possibility raises the spectre not so much of Eastern Europe in 1947-49 but rather Cuba in 1959-61.

Because, like Cuba, Afghanistan was not a country allocated by imperialism to the USSR's "sphere of influence" by the reactionary post-war

settlements.

The Soviet Union's march into Afghanistan, therefore, highlights the worldwide post-Vietnam weakness of imperialism in relation to the Stalinist-ruled states.

None of Carter's much-vaunted retaliatory measures, though they mark a significant move back towards Cold War politics, will inflict real damage on the Soviet Union.

That even applies to the ban on wheat exports, since the USSR, well warned, bought up millions of tons in the week before the ban was imposed and will be able to buy more on the world market.

Redivision

The shelving of the SALT II agreement in the US Congress may even be a relief since it was in any case heading for failure.

So the USSR's ability to occupy Afghanistan with relative impunity is part of the redivision of the world between

imperialism and Stalinism in the post-Vietnam era.

This redivision provokes real conflicts between the USSR and the imperialists, as the USSR (with help from its errand boy Cuba) extends its influence in Africa and parts of Asia.

But central to this redivision of the world is the same counter-revolutionary pact between Stalinists and imperialism as the post-war settlement.

The two forces are united in their hostility towards the forward movement of the working class and other oppressed classes.

Both stand opposed to the struggle for democratic socialist society under proletarian leadership.

Such a struggle threatens on the one hand the private property of the capitalist class internationally, and on the other, the bureaucratic power and privileges of the parasitic

Continued on page 2.

Trotskyist International Liaison Committee formed

The International Pre-conference hosted by the Workers Socialist League on December 28-31 was a resounding success.

At the end of the four days' discussion a decision was taken to establish a new international Trotskyist organisation—the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.

This is an historic decision—not only because it establishes an international grouping comprised of organisations operating in six countries—but because of the degree of programmatic agreement reached between the organisations which united to form the Committee at the end of the conference.

Development

The conference resulted from developments at the WSL summer school held in July 1979.

That school represented an important development in the work of the WSL, with the attendance of six international groupings.

This reflected in particular the sharpening of the political crisis in the USFI, and the emergence of a number of small groupings to the left of the USFI holding anti-Pabloite positions, in addition to the growing international impact of the WSL itself.

The school decided to convene an international conference of those groupings interested in discussing the formation of a new international tendency based on the draft discussion document *The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle*.

11 organisations

A target date was set for the Christmas period of 1979 and a decision taken to prepare for this with the publication of an International Discussion Bulletin.

Both of these deadlines were met with the first edition of the Bulletin being published early in December.

The attendance at the



Trotsky: the struggle renewed for the principles and method of his programme

December pre-conference fully justified the decisions of the summer school.

There were eleven organisations in attendance—some of them entering detailed discussions with the WSL for the first time.

The conference was convened by the organisations which have been in political collaboration with the WSL for some time—the American SLDC, the TAF of Denmark and a group of Turkish militants.

In addition to these groupings, the conference was attended by delegates from the Italian GBL and their nucleus in France, and the Chilean LOB.

Observers came from the Austrian IKL, the German Spartacusbund, the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, the TOC from the United States, Workers Power from Britain and

the Irish Workers Group.

Messages to the conference came from the Spanish FOR and LC and from the PMR which is based in Germany and Italy.

Discussion

These stressed that they had wanted to attend the pre-conference but had been prevented by practical problems from doing so.

They urged discussion as soon as possible on the outcome of the conference.

The agenda was divided into three main sections.

The conference opened with a presentation by WSL Executive member John Lister on the world political situation and the crisis of the Fourth International.

This sketched in some of the

major political and economic developments that have changed the world since the adoption of the Transitional Programme as the founding document of the Fourth International in 1938.

It was followed by extensive discussion and amendment of the main document before the conference—The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle.

The second section began with a presentation on the application of the method and demands of the Transitional Programme in the fight for leadership in the class struggle.

This section also included the presentation of the GBL's nine-point Programmatic Basis document, which is designed to encapsulate the differences between Trotskyism and opportunism in the struggle for revolutionary leadership.

The third section of the agenda revolved around the Declaration of Intent (moved for the WSL by John Lister) which spelt out the basis for the formation of an international liaison committee.

Its task is to undertake the work of preparing the ground within a maximum of two years for the establishment of a democratic centralist international tendency, pledged to the struggle for the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

Motion

It was repeatedly stressed by supporters of the Liaison Committee that its purpose, and that of the projected International Tendency, is not to proclaim itself artificially as an alternative, ready-formed "Fourth International".

Rather its task is to coordinate, deepen and develop the struggle for a principled discussion within the fragmented and confused world Trotskyist movement on the historical problems that have since 1953 effectively destroyed the FI as a revolutionary centre.

With this in view the pre-conference unanimously adopted a motion calling on the Bolshevik Faction/OCRFI/LTT Parity Commission to proceed at once to organise its promised "Open Conference" on the reconstruction of the Fourth International, and demanding that the Parity Commission restrict itself to this task alone, and open its doors to full participation by all those tendencies pledged to fight for the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

Campaign

The task of practical solidarity was raised centrally, with an agreement to launch a coordinated campaign in solidarity with the Turkish working class, around the slogan "Don't let Turkey become another Chile!"

Observers at the conference from the FIT declared in the final session their eagerness to develop a written dialogue with the newly formed Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.

tee, in the form of a bilateral discussion bulletin.

An amended version of the Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle was carried with the support of all the delegated organisations present, and a similarly unanimous vote was taken to adopt the Declaration of Intent and establish the TILC.

While this pre-conference is only a first step in the process of political debate and clarification required to establish international democratic centralism, there is no doubt that it represents a major step forward in the struggle for Trotskyist programmatic principles.

A fuller report of the proceedings, together with extracts from key resolutions, will be published in next week's *Socialist Press*.

Further reading

The basic conference document

Reconstruct the Fourth International!



INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSION BULLETIN 60p

Price 75p including postage from: WSL, 31 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW6 1HR.

The Poisoned Well



The discussion document adopted by the Workers Socialist League for submission to the discussion prior to the 11th World Congress of the USFI. Price 30p incl. p&p

policies it would increasingly become possible to develop armed militias of workers and peasants, under the control of the soviets in each area, which could mobilise the masses to defend Afghanistan against imperialist counter-attack.

The fight for such a programme, which would pave the way for the withdrawal of troops and the establishment of an independent, soviet Afghanistan, is plainly a hard one.

Indeed, like the struggle against Stalinism elsewhere in Asia, in Europe, in Africa or in the Americas, it requires the construction of a conscious Trotskyist leadership in each country to defend the gains of the working class and lead the struggle for the political overthrow of the parasitic bureaucracy.

Afghanistan... from p.1

Stalinist ruling castes in those states where the means of production have been expropriated.

The Soviet move in Afghanistan—the installation of one group of Stalinist gangsters in place of another (who are now glibly dismissed as 'fascists' and 'CIA agents'), as well as the drive against reactionary rebel movements—is part of this overall counter-revolutionary strategy of the Soviet Union.

Even when forced to defend the integrity of the USSR and its nationalised property relations against external threats, the Stalinist leaders have time and again shown themselves incapable of doing so through revolutionary methods.

Instead there has been a succession of squalid compromises and diplomatic agreements with imperialism—a high point of which was the Stalin-Hitler pact of 1939—coupled, in response to imperialist offensives, with heavy handed bureaucratic/military moves to secure strategic buffer areas.

In consolidating their grip on such buffer areas the Soviet bureaucracy has in the post-war period been forced to carry through the historically progressive policy of expropriating capitalist property and the old

landowners, and the establishment of a planned economy.

But the impact of such changes imposed upon these countries from above, and combined with the imposition of ruthless dictatorial Stalinist regimes, has been to impede rather than develop the development of revolutionary consciousness among the masses.

Not indifferent

Trotskyists thus in no way advocate the export of "socialism" by armed invasion of the Red Army. We condemn the invasion of Afghanistan, which involves trampling under foot the national rights of the peoples of Afghanistan, and which will blacken the name of Communism in the eyes of the multi-millioned Muslim masses of the East, impeding the struggle for socialist revolution.

But in the situation that has arisen we are not indifferent on the question of the defence of the nationalised property relations of the Soviet Union. We stand unconditionally for the defence of the USSR against imperialist attack, from whatever quarter.

Now that the Stalinist invasion has taken place, there-

fore, we must assess what would be the impact of an immediate withdrawal of Red Army troops.

Such a policy would in our view open up a vacuum of power in Afghanistan into which would step the imperialists, under the guise of support for the anti-communist guerrilla forces.

The establishment of a pro-imperialist regime in Afghanistan would represent a severe danger to the Soviet Union and to the masses of the East and Middle East.

Nor would it in any way advance the struggles of the Afghan peoples for self-determination—a right they have been denied for centuries by the imperialists.

Critical support

For this reason we do not demand the immediate withdrawal of the invading troops. We give critical support to military actions by the Soviet army against imperialist aggression.

But politically we must at the same time develop a programme which meets the needs of the Afghan workers, peasants and nomads.

This poses the fight for

economic and technical aid that can create conditions for the establishment of a planned, socialist economy.

The fight for such a programme will, we know, bring the masses into head-on conflict with the Soviet bureaucracy and armed forces.

We also raise, therefore, in the context of the occupation of Afghanistan, demands on the Soviet Red Army soldiers.

Such demands form part of the overall Trotskyist programme of political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The elements of a programme for Afghanistan are:

*For joint action by the Afghan masses and Red Army to secure the immediate expropriation of the banks, private industry and the major landholdings, without compensation under the control of elected committees of workers and poor peasants!

*For the formation of workers/peasant councils (soviets) in each area as the basis for a representative workers' and peasants' government in Afghanistan.

*For the guarantee of unimpeded democratic rights and genuine freedom of religion for

all national minorities within Afghanistan: for the separation of church and state.

*For massive Soviet financial and technical aid to create the basis for a planned socialist economy under workers and peasants management. For a crash programme of public works to provide industrial employment, communications, education, social services and health care. Cheap credit and guaranteed market for the small peasants! Special commissions to liaise with and provide for the needs of the nomadic peoples of Afghanistan!

*Full political rights for the masses and for the Red Army troops! For the right to assembly and free speech for all anti-imperialist forces, as decided by the Afghan soviets.

*Against bureaucratism! For soviet officials to be subject to recall, and paid no more than the average wage!

*For a programme of agitation among the Red Army rank and file to press for maximum links with the Afghan masses; the formation of soldiers' committees and soviets; the election of officers; and political revolution in the Soviet Union.

In the context of such

Turkish generals throw down the gauntlet

The political crisis in Turkey reached a new level last week after the declaration of warning issued by the armed forces to the political parties.

Signed by all the heads of the armed forces, the declaration was given to Prime Minister Demirel and opposition leader Ecevit by President Koroturk.

Karamanmaras

It goes into recent developments in Turkey and cites left wing demonstrations against the fascist slaughter carried out in Karamanmaras a year ago; the singing of the 'Internationale' in place of the national anthem by students at Ankara's Middle East university; "dangers of separatism" among the Kurdish national minority; factionalism in the state apparatus which has brought "splits in the police force, teachers, and various other institutions into opposing camps"; and "sterile bickering between the political parties"—all of which are regarded as evidence of the need for a firm hand on the helm.

The generals place special emphasis on the developments in the Middle East, pointing to "the imminent danger of a hot war" in the Middle East.

They also warn that in Turkey "anarchists and separatists are preparing for an uprising".

In response to this, the political parties are told bluntly to find rapid solutions within the principles of parliamentary democracy... or else.

Though the declaration is carefully couched to read like an attack on both left and right, it clearly reflects the crisis of imperialism in the Middle East and the dilemma of the bourgeoisie in Turkey itself—especially in the wake of the Iranian revolution and events in Afghanistan.

The balance of power established in the region by imperialism in the post-war period has been profoundly shaken.

The bonapartist threats of the Turkish military are absolutely linked to the main strategy of imperialism.

A week before the declaration, a row erupted between Demirel's Justice Party and the fascist NAP on the one hand and Ecevit's RPP and the religious NSP on the other.

Carter envoy

The cause of the dispute was the visit by an envoy from President Carter, which, according to the RPP-NSP had brought the signing of a secret agreement with the USA committing Turkey to support US policy in Iran and to join in the new economic and military alliance being worked for by the US imperialists—to include Pakistan, Israel and Egypt.

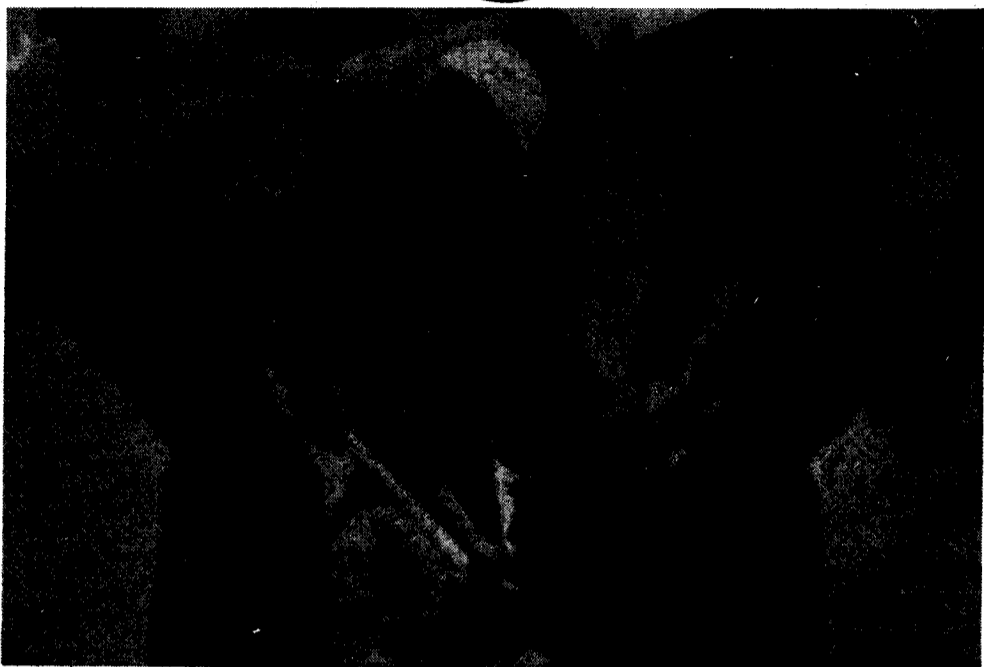
The NSP argued that to join the Zionist state of Israel in such an alliance would be unacceptable, since it would alienate Turkey from the Muslim world.

The military declaration therefore can be seen as a move to pressurise an alliance between the main bourgeois parties, to produce a united pro-imperialist foreign policy and a united offensive against the Turkish working class.

Alliance

Of course both main parties denied that the declaration was aimed against them. The fascists and right wing claimed it could not be a reproach against the government, since it has only been in office 52 days.

Ecevit, on the other hand, said it could not be a criticism of him, since he has been seeking an alliance with the Justice



Turkish state forces in action against militants

Party against "terrorism". Indeed a series of "anti-terrorist" policies devised while Ecevit was in power were passed through Parliament last week by the Justice Party.

These are:
*New police powers to search anyone and any place without a court order.

*An increase in police pay.
*An increase in disciplinary measures within the police force.

*A ban on members of the police force joining any association or union other than sports clubs.

20 'left' RPP members voted against some of these new measures, despite a binding

mandate to support them. Ecevit has promised they will be disciplined.

But though Ecevit grovels to the Justice Party the capitalists know that there is no real solution to the Turkish economic crisis short of a full scale offensive on the working class—which poses an end to the trappings of parliamentary democracy.

The military declaration is little more than a declaration that the generals recognise the task on the agenda, and that their patience with the politicians is growing a little thin.

Of course it is certain that the sabre-rattling will produce still further concessions from

the bourgeois RPP and persuade Ecevit who has the political support of Stalinist and reformist leaders in Turkey to redouble his efforts to hold back the workers' movement so as not to "provoke" the army.

Wretched arguments

Such wretched arguments have been retailed in the workers movement for decades by cynical reformist and Stalinist leaders.

They paved the way for the Chilean catastrophe of 1973. And years of such class collaboration have allowed the Turkish fascists to consolidate a mass party, to wage unceasing provo-



Ecevit

cations against the labour movement and minorities in Turkey, and demoralised and politically disarmed the still powerful working class.

Now, even after the army declaration, none of the workers parties in Turkey has grasped its implications. The TLP, TSIP and TSDP limply opposed the declaration as "undemocratic".

The main Maoist party, the TIKP went as far to concede that "the warning must remain as a warning and should not be developed further".

With such empty phrases and passive acceptance of the action of the military there is no way forward for the Turkish working class.

The fact is that the new move is the beginning of an all-out confrontation against the working class and Kurdish movement in Turkey.

It is vital that the working class break from Ecevit and the RPP and make the political and organisational preparations to mobilise against this threat.

Armed workers militias must be formed by workers' organisations, which must establish a united front to defend the working class against fascist and military violence through the defeat of Demirel and the establishment of a workers and peasants government in Turkey.

Confusion reigns in Indian ruling classes

If effects and consequences are ignored, the story of the politicians in India today, resemble, most closely, the semi-fantastic goings-on of the TV serial 'Soap'.

The government falls in July with a defection by Charan Singh ostensibly because it is not resolute enough in attacking the Gandhis.

The deposed PM, Desai, attempts to continue by presenting the President with an entirely fictitious list of would-be supporters in Parliament.

Gandhi

The attempt fails and so Charan Singh lays his own claim to the premiership, by seeking an alliance with none other than 'irreconcilable enemy' Indira Gandhi.

Mrs G. agrees—up to the day before the vote of confidence, when she withdraws support!

Charan Singh is thus denied his ambition. But then he gets it by default, as 'caretaker PM', since no faction could tolerate the interim moves of the President, who decided that he should really be the PM.

Meanwhile, Jagivan Ram—erstwhile deputy to Desai is denied his right to premiership because—so it is said—ne is a harijan ('untouchable' caste).

This fact, however, appears to pose no problem to the substantive alliance which now forms the rump of the Janata Party, between Ram's followers



(1) Party—syr

Election symbols: Janata; CPI(M); and Congress (I)

and the Hindu-fascist party, the Jan Sangh—which bases its mobilisations on warfare against the lower castes!

The Congress Party, not to be left behind, also split into two after Gandhi's election defeat.

But on the basis of an alliance between her and a powerful leader in the South, Deraj Urs, eclipsed its rival, effectively reunited, but then split into two again because Urs and Gandhi have now fallen out.

And Urs—need one say—has now made an alliance with Charan Singh!

To all this has to be added the part of local chiefdoms—who cannot be identified as being in any one camp at any one time—and defections and counter-defections of individuals, at all levels in the hierarchy almost by the hour.

Singh has failed to extend his power-base beyond the North Indian kulaks and will come off weakest

Ram has found no reason for his existence, other than his formal tie with India's 100 million Harijans and his promise to the business community to be a 'super-administrator' (his euphemism for giving them a free hand).

Butcher

However, Gandhi will make sure she gets a foothold in the next government.

Manoeuvring within the state machinery is her forte. Whoever she governs with, her formidable activities in this arena will see her partner soon destroyed.

Path to power

That would be her path to power and fit in with what is demanded by her backers in India's industrial bourgeoisie.

The ruling classes' crisis of leadership is exacerbated by the

The rich peasant-landlord section demands heavy state intervention and funds, to allow them profit on grain.

Hoarding

The petit-bourgeoisie oppose state intervention in general, since their fortunes are made in hoarding and distribution of grain—although they do benefit from artificially high wholesale prices.

But the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie are served best by consistent and cheap supplies from the rural section.

These material divisions have expressed themselves in the current political mess and have weakened the ruling classes in the common aim, which is to launch a concerted attack on the working class and poor peasantry.

Achieving this will characterise the next phase of Indian politics, and will be done under the domination of the industrial bourgeoisie.

Gandhi looks most suitable for this task, but only relatively.

Irked

She has irked them in the past by her occasional populist measures, her cumbersome bureaucracy and the suspicion—with the continued vile attendance paid to her vile son Sanjay, that she is more interested in establishing her dynasty rather than theirs.

However, more serious than

to defeat the working class during the period of the 'Emergency'.

The militancy of Indian workers was at worst 'muted' during the 18 months under the draconian powers of the state during the Emergency and since then has shown itself as the force which will resist the attacks on the oppressed sections in India generally.

Their weakness is in their leadership, invested in two Stalinist parties, the CPI and the CPI (Marxist).

The former, though still the larger party, with 600,000 members, enters this election with no nationally co-ordinated strategy.

The CPI(M), posing as more 'radical' than the CPI—on the basis that they refused to tail the Congress Party as the CPI did—continues with the disastrous Stalinist strategy of the 'popular front'.

The CPI(M)'s power-bases are in Bengal, Kerala, Tripura and North Bihar, and the party will undoubtedly make gains through this election; (though Bengal is under a tremendous onslaught from Indira's Congress.)

However, as they emerge as a national political force, their developing image as incorruptible administrators and responsible trade unionists means that whichever personality the ruling class consolidates, accommodation from both sides in the name of 'austerity' is entirely



Gandhi



New York gold dealers

CONFIDENCE SLUMPS! GOLD BOOMS!

By John Lister

Prices have been soaring over recent weeks, and, most spectacular of them all by a long chalk, the price of gold has hit new peaks in the international markets.

In the flurry of speculation which followed the end of the Christmas holiday period the price rocketed to \$630 per ounce before easing back slightly to a still colossal \$590.

Instability

What is the significance of this for the average British or European worker? Taking place in the midst of the events in Afghanistan and Iran, it is an indication of a profound lack of confidence of important sections of capitalists in the stability of the capitalist system; it demonstrates a continuing lack of confidence in the US dollar, and a lack of confidence that the forces of imperialism can hope to stem the tide of struggles that threaten its control in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Money invested in gold acquires no interest payments; but gold, unlike paper money, stocks or bonds represents a concentrated and universally exchangeable store of value, of human labour power embodied in its production.

In a period of slump and decline, when other invest-



ments—in plant, machinery, land and raw materials for production—can prove unsaleable or depreciate rapidly, and when productive industry faces intensified competition, rationalisation and increasing problems in realising profits, gold offers a store of value which will remain universally acceptable as long as capitalism itself continues.

The secrecy of the gold

markets makes it impossible to discern whether the run on gold has been led by Arab oil states seeking a means of protecting their revenues, or by US or British financiers opting out of investment in industry and seeking a hedge against mounting inflation.

But it shows unmistakably that significant sections within the capitalist class are losing confidence in their own system.

Oil prices fuel slump

Another price rise that sent capitalist stomachs sinking has been the rise in OPEC oil prices to an average \$26 per barrel from January 1.

The Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation forecast that this increase would produce a sharp deterioration in the already ailing world

economy—driving up inflation, unemployment and balance of payments deficits.

Growth

Economic growth in the OECD countries in 1980 is expected to be only 10% of the average achieved in 1979; and within this average figure both Britain and the USA face an actual economic decline of 1.5

and 2% respectively during 1980.

But the prospect facing the underdeveloped countries that depend upon imported oil is even more horrific. The latest OPEC increases will add \$8 billion to their total oil bill—on top of \$25 billion in increased oil bills during 1979.

This amounts to 12% of the total exports of the underdeveloped countries.

It means ruin for these economies—and a rapid worsening of the plight of the working class and peasantry in the underdeveloped nations, which will be expected to carry the brunt of the crisis.

Carry costs

But the OECD is insistent that workers in the advanced capitalist countries must also be forced to carry a share of the costs.

Higher oil prices must on no account be compensated for by wage increases, it warns.

So if the capitalists have their own way, the prospect facing workers throughout the world in 1980 is one of decay, stagnation and destruction of the forces of production, mass unemployment (up from 17m to 20m in the OECD countries) and plunging living standards.



On the up and up—oil prices

Tories at work

Vacancies down, unemployed figures up: Tory policies are starting to work!

The December figures revealed the way in which the decline in the British economy brought about by Thatcher's economic strategy is now definitely beginning to create the long-predicted rise in unemployment.

The government itself predicts an increase in unemployed of 300,000 in the next year—and with closures and public sector cutbacks continuing their breakneck course in every part of the country there is reason to believe this is an underestimate.

While dole queues lengthen, inflation in Britain at 17.4% continues to outstrip even the comparatively high level of wage settlements being achieved by many sectors.

But a major factor holding back the wages struggle appears to be the refusal of reformist union leaders to confront employers who plead "bankruptcy".

The CBI claims that in a recent survey of firms, *two-thirds* said that they had been able to pressurise pay settlements downwards by referring to their profit figures in negotiations. In other words union officials all over the country are starting not from defence of the independent interests and living standards of their members, but from the supposed problems of the employers.

There will certainly be no shortage of such problems over the next year. One forecast anticipates a staggering 30% drop in industrial and commercial profits in 1980.



Thatcher

Does this mean that these reformist union leaders are going to recommend wage reductions to their members? It is plainly impossible simply to continue pressing for piecemeal improvements in a system which can be seen to be throwing the development of the productive forces into reverse.

Either policies must be devised to defend the gains and independent interests of the working class—through action leading to the defeat of the Tory government, the nationalisation of basic industry and the banks without compensation under workers management and the establishment of a planned socialist economy—or union officials must become even more a secondary arm of management in forcing through closures, wage cuts and speed up on the shop floor.

Irish war defies repression

A New Year's Day reaffirmation of the determination of the Irish people to defeat British imperialism was offered by a Sinn Fein march through Belfast.

But the last few weeks have also seen further evidence of intensified British repression of anti-imperialist forces.

The pre-Christmas police raids in Britain which led to 18 people being held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act were followed up by raids in Belfast which brought the arrest of Provisional Sinn Fein vice-president Gerry Adams.

Only last year, Adams was held without trial for seven months on a charge of membership of the IRA, until a judge finally ruled that there was "insufficient evidence" to proceed with the charge.

This time he was held for three days' interrogation before being released without charge on January 5.

Meanwhile a campaign has been launched by the RCG paper *Hands Off Ireland* to publicise the police violence against Val Greene, one of the 18 arrested in the pre-Christmas raids in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Southampton and Liverpool.

Greene was allegedly arrested for the "crime" of giving food and shelter to

the relative of a republican prisoner. She was held for 84 hours—24 hours of which she was left naked in her cell.

She was assaulted and, on release discovered that her flat had been left in a filthy state by the police raiders.

She has been charged with no offence.

The raid, like so many others under the PTA was simply a device to intimidate opponents of British imperialist repression in Ireland.

The fight for the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland must be linked in the British workers movement to the struggle against the PTA.

Last weekend saw more harassment of anti-imperialists, when three *Hands Off Ireland* sellers were arrested in Bristol town centre and held for seven hours before being released, charged with "wilful obstruction".

They had been selling on a spot where sales of left-wing literature have been established for many years. On the same day police in London broke up a peaceful *Hands Off Ireland* meeting in Kilburn Square.

Protest meetings have been called for Saturday 12 January. 12.00 Kilburn Square, Kilburn High Road, London.

2.00 St. James Barton Roundabout, Nr. Marlborough St. Bus Station, Bristol.

Conference of double talk

The Atkins talks on the future of Northern Ireland opened on Monday with a prospect of two months double talk in store.

The SDLP, growing desperate to regain some credibility with its diminishing Catholic base is seeking an agreement which will leave reality unchanged but which will make a nod—or at least half a nod—in the direction of 'an Irish dimension'.

Paisley and the 'Democratic Unionists' are present to ensure that the British government makes no concession in this direction.

The Alliance Party is there to make up numbers and to back whatever devious formula the British government will use in an attempt to paper over this divide.

Prospects of any tactical success for the British govern-

ment are slim. Paisley holds his dominant position precisely because of his intransigence.

Waiting to pounce on any weakness outside the talks are the Official Unionists, who oppose any steps towards 'Ulsterisation'.

Enoch Powell in a speech to Dundonald Orange Lodge four days before the talks began savagely attacked the British Foreign Office for trying to 'weaken the union'.

"What bribes, what threats, what agents provocateurs can achieve, for that in Ulster you may put your bottom dollar on the Foreign Office".

The British government may confidently expect malleability from SDLP leader John Hume but the Orange politicians have seen too many of their predecessors tossed aside on the altar of compromise to budge an inch.

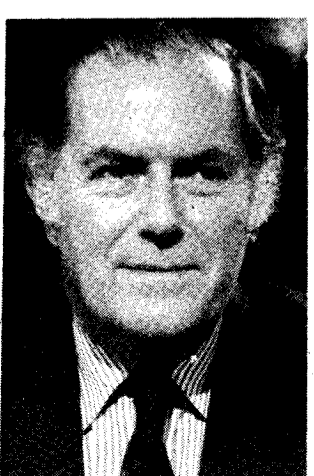
The only likely outcome of the talks is therefore either a breakdown followed by an imposed 'local government' Stormont or the destruction of the SDLP as a major political force.

Meanwhile outside the talks the Provisionals campaign continues unabated.

*A report from 'independent' academics published in the Belfast magazine 'Fortnight', into 350 Diplock Court cases declares that interrogation practices render confessions useless.

About 94% of those brought before the no-jury courts are convicted, and of the 25% contested cases the vast majority are convicted on confessions alone.

But the report's conclusion—restricting interrogation to four one-hour sessions a day!—are almost a parody of bourgeois liberal 'solutions' for Ireland.



Atkins

Why does the Foreign Office back TUC International work?

Six questions for all trade unionists

1) The TUC now spends about £600,000 a year on international work. Most of this is trade union money, but some comes from the Foreign Office. Why don't TUC reports to conference explain who overseas receives this cash?

2) Although the TUC subscribes to the idea of "free and independent" trade unionism the international department appears to relate more closely to the Foreign Office than the membership. Why have recent TUC reports to conference failed to report that two members of the international staff have been seconded to the Foreign Office or that it was planned that someone from the Foreign Office be seconded to the TUC's international

department? 3) Why does the TUC still maintain official links with a Latin American and Carribean regional affiliate—the Inter-American Organisation of Workers (ORIT)—named by a US Senate Committee as being associated with the downfall of a number of democratic governments in that region and since discovered to have played a role in the downfall of Allende's government in Chile?

4) A number of past and present members of the TUC international committee have said publicly that because of their jobs they don't have the time to properly administer the TUC's international programme. Why is there no advisory com-

mittee to assist and vet the TUC's overseas work similar to that which exists for other TUC departments?

5) In 1975 the TUC, Foreign Office and CBI met to discuss jointly funding an overseas "labour" programme. Why was the TUC membership not informed about this scheme and what are its implications for the idea of worker international solidarity?

6) The relevant standing order defining the purpose of the TUC's international work reads—"The TUC shall enter into relations with trade unions and labour movements with a view to united action." Is this any longer sufficient?



Union leaders behind Chile Solidarity banner, why does TUC maintain links with ORIT which helped pave the way for Pinochet?

A new campaign has been launched to spotlight the shady role being played by TUC bureaucrats on the international stage. While we are critical of the political limitations of the campaign, we fully support the struggle to open up these questions in the British labour movement.

LETTER

Dear Editor,

There is growing concern within the trade union movement about the TUC's international programme.

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

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

At present the TUC overseas bill amounts to about £600,000 a year, including an annual £180,000 from the Foreign Office. No details are provided to the membership about who receives this cash and for what purpose.

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

As a result a group of

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

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

They include—Reg Williams, (CPSA national executive committee), Jack Collins (Kent NUM), Tony Ayland (TUC South Western Regional Council), Peter Heathfield (NUM national executive committee), Ernie Roberts MP, Ken Coates (Institute of Workers Control), Joan Maynard MP, Stuart MacLellan (CPSA), George ANUEY (North London AUEW), Stan Newens MP and Roland Sherritt (Secretary, Stirling Trades Council).

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

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

PRESS GANG



As the pages of the calendar flicked over into 1980 the self-appointed arbiters of everything from class warfare to hairstyles—the press empires—tried to persuade us we were entering a NEW ERA.

Superstition, mysticism and entrail reading are sophisticated compared with the dogmatic adherence to the calendar shown by the modern day soothsayers.

Every year is a new dawn; every decade a new age; every century a new historical epoch.

Sadly for the prophecies the economic crisis, the class struggle and the problems facing the capitalist and working class fail to run on such predestined tracks.

It was old problems and old crises which filled up the spaces between those articles in which bourgeois experts gave their worthless opinions of the years ahead.

Leyland signs a deal with Honda (muted applause): Edwardes relaunches the reactionary 'Backing Britain' campaign (a split

opinion from the judges) and the bureaucrats of the TUC and ISTC failed to prevent the steel strike going ahead (muted abuse).

Priests from the US played Christmas Carols to bemused looking embassy staff held in Iran (dewy eyed religious fervour) and Commonwealth troops trained their guns on the Zimbabwe guerrilla fighters (jingoistic pride).

British soldiers shot each other in Northern Ireland (an incident the Telegraph reported under the headline "Army's death ambush 'effectively carried out'") and political opponents of British imperialism in Ireland continued to be arrested (loud applause).

The symptom of crisis which best illustrated the gap between reality and the fantasy world of Fleet Street, was the panic rise in the price of gold.

As confidence in the dollar began to collapse the financial wizards of the city pages were given full rein on the front pages to demonstrate their mystical approach to this most material of phenomena.

The Sun said: "The world went gold crazy

yesterday. Everyone from housewives to oil sheiks joined in a massive buying and selling spree."

The Express: "It could mean bargains in the January sales shops whose gold ware was bought at lower prices. Advice to those about to get married by Mr Ken Pollington, of Royal jewellers Garrards: "Buy quickly. A 22 carat ring at £50 to £60 now will probably double soon."

Roy Assersohn, city editor, demonstrating that gold fetishism has not been dented, wrote:

"It is gold's eternal quality as a store of real value which has sent the world crazy for the precious metal again."

This expression of lack of confidence in international capitalism to resolve its crisis was boiled down to the 'fact' that the plain man and woman is supposed to be able to understand: how much a gold tooth costs, and what your family heirloom might be worth.

Already the new era has begun to have a tarnished look about it. Not all that glistens turns out to be gold.

SOUTHALL



PHOTO: John Sturrock, Report

Saturday 19 January
Nationwide day of activity
to raise £10,000 for the
Southall Defence Fund—
Support local activities

Sunday 20 January
Picket of Pentonville
Prison
March the Southall prisoners
Free from Euston Station
Assemble 1 p.m.

Police in Southall



US troops participate in Holy Communion as the battle rages around them

When will a radical film tell the truth?

Hailed as the greatest war film of all time, *Apocalypse Now* is certainly a finely powerful portrayal of America's imperialist adventure in Vietnam.

With brutally vivid realism, director Francis Ford Coppola shows us a Vietnam war which is less a military operation than a grotesque carnival of the sick, surrealist, farcical and psychotic.

A crazed colonel in a US cavalry hat leads his helicopters into a bombing raid of a village to the taped sound of Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries', and afterwards throws a beach party amidst the corpses.

Three go-go dancers, landed in the jungle on an improvised stage, narrowly escape rape at the hands of a drooling audience of sex-starved GIs.

A whole US base marooned in the middle of nowhere goes collectively berserk, with trigger-happy soldiers sinking rapidly into 'savagery'.

'Savagery', indeed, is the ideological keynote of the film, and a deeply suspect one it is too.

'Dark' continent

Apocalypse Now is a modern version of Joseph Conrad's famous anti-imperialist tale *Heart of Darkness*, in which the narrator embarks on a grisly journey up the river Congo to encounter, at the heart of the 'dark' continent, the ghostly Mr. Kurtz.

Kurtz is a model Belgian colonialist who has succumbed to the lure of the 'primitive' and sunk into obscene, unspeakable rites, lording it as a local deity over his mesmerised natives.

In this film, Kurtz (Marlon Brando) is a model US colonel whom the Vietnam war has driven beyond the brink of sanity into pure 'evil'.

Stuck somewhere up river with his worshipping colony of loin-clothed, spear-wielding former GIs, he wades between smoking altars in a sea of human blood and reads aloud to himself T.S. Eliot's gloomier poems.

'Primitivist'

The ideological meaning of Conrad's tale is clear: scratch a 'civilised' imperialist and you find a 'savage' beneath. This is in one sense anti-imperialist, in another sense racist: "we" white men are as savage as "they" are.

Apocalypse Now isn't racist, but it shares deeply in the 'primitivist' mythology of Conrad's text.

Beneath the surface rational-

ity of civilised society lurk dark, irrational forces which war—any war—releases; the Vietnam war was essentially a form of savage insanity.

This makes for compulsive viewing, but it is unfortunately untrue.

There was nothing in the least 'insane' about Vietnam, whereas this film converts the logic of imperialism into surrealistic nightmare.

Pointless

The same happens in Conrad: for him, the point of imperialism is that it is essentially pointless—grotesquely, absurdly unreal, as elusive and enigmatic as the 'heart of darkness' which reduces Kurtz to a hollow phantom of a human being. (What's the significance of seeing Africa as 'dark' in any case?)

Certainly Vietnam drove men and women mad and was experienced as chaotic unreality; but the political determinants which caused it were wholly real and intelligible, which is why *Apocalypse Now* has to leave them completely out of account.

Despite that chaos, the cinema audience is offered a continual point of security.

There's no chance that we shall lose our bearings because the film provides us with a character with whom we can consistently identify: the heron-narrator, Captain Willard (Martin Sheen), a CIA agent sent on a secret mission to assassinate Kurtz.

Willard is hardly Enid Blyton's idea of a hero: he brutally shoots a defenceless Vietnamese woman so that his mission won't be impeded.

But this, significantly, is about the one positively alienating action he performs in the entire film.

Otherwise he figures as a blank, 'sane' spectator of the bloody farce, just as we are in the cinema.

Narrators in art always have something comforting about them, partly because they provide an 'overview' of the situation, partly because the fact that they are telling the story in retrospect means that they must have come out alive.

Ambiguous

This, precisely, is the ideological function of Willard: to prevent the audience from being entirely 'subverted' by the bestial fantasy it presents.

In this, Willard differs importantly from Conrad's narrator, Marlow.

At the centre of Conrad's eerie tale lies an uneasy, deeply ambiguous relationship between Marlow and Kurtz, one set in motion long before the two men meet. Marlow is in no sense safely 'outside' because of the perversely attractive effect which the idea of Kurtz has on him.

Kurtz's 'evil' finds a resonance inside him; so that as a character Marlow is called into question and can't be wholly trusted by the reader.

There is something of this in the Willard-Kurtz relationship, but not much. Willard grows increasingly fascinated with Kurtz as he travels upriver, but not to the point where we can critically distance ourselves from him.

In the end (in one of the film's endings, anyway), he butchers the mad colonel and strides off back home, pushing his way through a mob of painted bodies in a set of images which transplant the political fact of Vietnam into some timeless, primeval zone light-years removed from this or any other century.

Monster

Where the film succeeds better, however, is in its handling of the hulking, shaven-headed Colonel Kurtz.

The point about Kurtz (Conrad's too) isn't just that he is mad. Much more disturbingly, it is that he has deliberately pressed the butchery of the war to an extreme limit, as though to reveal it for what it is.

He has calculatedly turned himself into a monster, as though to savagely caricature, and expose, the monstrosity of imperialism.

Conrad's Kurtz is in a perverse way a kind of hero: at least he has been consistent enough to press the logic normally veiled by imperialism to its ruthless, unthinkable limit.

In Conrad, this has a danger-

ous element of romanticism: better to be 'authentically' murderous than hypocritically so. Coppola mutes this element, and leaves us with a Kurtz considerably more complex than a mere lunatic.

When Coppola's Kurtz argues that human beings must learn to kill without compassion there is a real sense, for all the fact that he is a bloodstained agent of imperialism, in which he raises an issue of central relevance to revolutionaries.

The playwright Bertolt Brecht once shrewdly commented that you can't learn anything about capitalism by portraying a factory on stage.

What he meant was that realism in art has severe limits: it makes events grippingly immediate, but at the same time can conceal their underlying structures, the forces which determine them.

This is certainly true of *Apocalypse Now*, which might well convince someone that the Americans shouldn't have been in Vietnam, but is hardly likely to tell them why.

The film evades all political questions: its implicit answer to what causes the Americans' behaviour in Vietnam is, in two words, 'human nature'.

In this it has much in common with the disgusting *Deerhunter*, although unlike that film it doesn't go to the lengths of actually glorifying 'Nature'.

We are still waiting for a 'radical' film about Vietnam to tell the truth.



Troops gather in an improvised arena as a helicopter flies in some show girls to a remote supplies camp in the Mekong Delta

VISI APOCAL

Francis Ford Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now* press and mass media, and a trio of reviews submit it raises and the diversity of view of those who three alternative reviews by Terry Eagleton, Tony

'Only

By Terry Eagleton

"In my vision, when he broke the sixth seal, there was a violent earthquake and the sun went as black as coarse sackcloth; the moon turned red as blood all over, and the stars of the sky fell on the earth like figs dropping from a fig tree when a high wind shakes it; the sky disappeared like a scroll rolling up and all the mountains and islands were shaken from their places. Then all the earthly rulers, the governors and commanders, the rich people and the men of influence, the whole population, slaves and citizens, took to the mountains to hide in caves and among the rocks. They said to the mountains and the rocks, 'fall on us and hide us away from the One who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb. For the great day of his anger has come, and who can survive it?'"

The Book of Revelations (Apocalypse) 6: 12-17.

The introduction to the

'Ultim

The only Americans for whom the Vietnam War was a completed experience, a destiny, were those who died in it—and in them, of course, the experience simultaneously vanished.

For those who survived it, however—and this includes those who saw the experience through at home, via sons or friends or husbands or lovers who were there, or simply through the newspaper and television reportage—it was a war marked finally, and above all, by its incompleteness.

This is true of all war perhaps, in that whether in victory, defeat or stalemate—the experience persists in the survivors and the bereaved: as a memory or a maiming or a nightmare or an absence that continues.

But perhaps no war has been viewed generally by those who were involved with such a high consciousness of its utter inconclusiveness and waste as the abortive American involvement in Vietnam.

It is in the light of this fact that the structural problems that a number of critics have already commented on with reference to Francis Ford

ONS OF YPSE NOW



Francis Coppola (right), discusses a scene with Marlon Brando.

ow on general release) has triggered a range of critical assessments in the *Socialist Press*. The importance of the film and the questions that have seen it have persuaded us to take the unusual step of publishing these Richardson and Duncan Bush.

a revolutionary could end this film'

Jerusalem Bible describes a Revelation as being "richly symbolic and so allusive that the message can be interpreted in more ways than one." They were designed to raise the morale of the persecuted Christians.

Coppola's message in *Apocalypse Now* can also certainly be interpreted in more than one way. In fact he himself has made three alternative endings to the film.

In part this reflects the changing political pressures on Coppola himself, since the film was planned 10 years ago, while the Vietnam war was near its peak—and took five years to make.

Techniques

Indeed most people who see the film will respond most immediately to the sheer size and technical artistry of the scenes of the journey down the river to Cambodia.

While most large, multi-million dollar productions today are space epics, Coppola has used vast resources (\$30 million) and modern techniques to portray the brutal realities of war.

But while the visual impact of the film alone makes it worth seeing, it is important to look more closely at Coppola's

message.

Though ostensibly about Vietnam, the film is meant to relate in more general terms to the "civilised encountering the primitive".

And, while Coppola himself has a record of opposing the US intervention in Vietnam, this very theme implies a hint of racialism.

The war is portrayed in terms of the moral collapse and decay of US imperialism. From this angle, it is US imperialism which loses the war, rather than the Vietnamese "primitives" who, by their sacrifice and struggle, actually win it.

Coppola's statement that "Apocalypse 2" would have to be made by the Vietnamese also shows his complete failure to recognise that it was the Vietnamese people who actually created *Apocalypse Now*, by defeating the imperialist armies!

Far from being "primitives", the Vietnamese workers, peasants and soldiers were playing the most progressive role open to them: they were struggling, arms in hand, to defeat US imperialism, which, as the mainstay of a crisis ridden capitalist system, stands as the major roadblock on the historic development of mankind through the expansion of the productive forces.

But Coppola is blind to such

political questions—even though the fleet of helicopters which he used for the film, on loan from the Philippines Air Force, were repeatedly having to be taken back, resprayed, and used on active service to repress guerrilla forces opposing the Marcos dictatorship!

For all Coppola's inability to assess the historic role of the Vietnamese people, however, he has not lapsed to the racialist depths as that diabolical film *The Deerhunter*.

Rather he sees the Vietnam war simply as a moral question, and attempts to expose its hypocrisy.

CIA 'hit-man'

The contradiction is revealed in the film's hero—CIA 'hit man' Captain Willard. He is first seen drunk. Having been on leave, he cannot wait to get back into action: yet while in the jungle, he dreams of home.

The very way of life of an assassin rules out "normal" values. How can you take a "normal break" between murders? And if this is true of Willard as an individual hit man, is it not also true of other imperialist soldiers?

Willard's assignment is to assassinate the renegade Colonel Kurtz who has gone up-river with a gang of ex-GIs and native

forces to form his own private army.

What angers the US Chief of Staff is not Kurtz's continuous killings, or even his obvious insanity. Rather it is the fact that his operation is outside US military control. Others, equally as insane as Kurtz, are free to play a leading role in the framework of the imperialist forces.

Lt. Colonel Kilgore, for instance, brilliantly played by Robert Duvall, leads his helicopter-squadron like a cavalry troupe—complete with cavalry hat!

Kilgore says he loves the smell of napalm as "the smell of victory" and talks of the time he napalmed a whole mountain, leaving not a living thing behind. Yet Kilgore is a part of the "legitimate" US force. It is his fellow fanatic Kurtz who is outside of its control, and therefore to be eliminated.

This hypocritical division is taken up repeatedly. When the crew of Willard's boat massacre the family on a junk, wrongly thinking them to be NLF, a woman is left alive. The crew decide to take her for treatment.

This double-standard is too much for Willard, who kills the woman, and attacks those prepared to "cut 'em in half with a machine gun, and then give them a band-aid".

Meanwhile Willard discovers that Kurtz had a brilliant record prior to his assignment to covert operations (Nixon's whole war in Cambodia was a covert operation concealed from the US people).

And he hears that a previous agent who had been sent to kill Kurtz had ended up joining him!

Anti-climax

Kurtz, in other words, along with his private army, had stepped over the bounds of the "permissible" in war, and made no secret of their barbarism.

Following all this, Willard's eventual encounter with Kurtz has been widely and correctly described as an anti-climax.

This is partly because of the problem of portraying the actions of Kurtz's private army as more barbaric than those of the US imperialist forces already depicted.

Coppola attempts to get around this with a set involving hanging bodies and severed heads and careful lighting of Kurtz himself. But it all appears stagey and false compared to earlier scenes.

The second problem however is the hardest: what is to happen at the end?

The conclusion that I saw was Coppola's "humane ending"

—in which Willard kills Kurtz and goes back.

Another version has him kill Kurtz and take over; in the third version he has Kurtz's followers napalmed.

But in any event the encounter with Kurtz suffers from the fact that Kurtz's statement of position amounts to a repeat of many things already said in the film.

Indeed Kurtz echoes Coppola's political weakness when he longs for an army with the strength of the Vietnamese liberation forces.

This ignores the fact that while US troops were forcibly drafted into the war, or simply the hired mercenaries of imperialist oppression, the Vietnamese fought with the tenacity of an exploited people battling to liberate their homeland. This material difference was the driving force behind the Vietnamese, which brought their historic victory in the spring of 1975.

This is why the Vietnamese war can only be understood if it is seen as a class question, and not a question of morality.

For this reason only a revolutionary could produce an adequate conclusion to Coppola's in many ways magnificent film.

By Tony Richardson

Ultimately an apology for US invasion'

Coppola's film *Apocalypse Now* have to be seen.

The task of eliminating Colonel Kurtz is entrusted to Willard, a war-shocked captain, whose narrative voice is analogous to that of Conrad's anecdotal Marlow, yet whose consciousness of events—or, at least, of their implications—is always ambiguous, passive and less than total.

This lack of a firm perspective, which can be said to centralise the "moral" questions that Coppola attempts to pose, can also be identified in another crucial aspect to the film, and this time a cinematic, or stylistic one: that is, in what can be termed the film's "hallucinatory vision".

Thus, from the moment when Willard sits in a Saigon hotel room hearing the whirring of the electric fan as an Army helicopter's rotor-blades, to the moment when he finally stumbles upon Kurtz amid his army of doped-out Montagnards the journey up-river into Cambodia is a bad trip in more senses than one.

This is underlined throughout by the sinister brilliance of the Coppola soundtrack and the music of The Doors and Jimi Hendrix, but above all by the

hallucinatory or surreal suggestions to the film's visual imagination, its sheer cinematic virtuosity.

Vietnam was a war where a large number of American combatants were under the influence of drugs for a considerable proportion of the time.

Coppola's willingness of this fact allows him to locate his sense of the war's necessity variously against almost hallucinatory and apocalyptic visual backgrounds which recall those of Henry James' *The Ambassadors*.

We witness the surreal scene of the Saigon hotel being a helicopter's rotor-blades, and Wagner's *Ring* of the Valkyries booms out of songs at the jungle itself, and in the instantaneous and stunning beauty of frequent explosions or night flares.

Underpinning

It is in these two major structural and stylistic aspects that the film seems, to me, most impressively successful.

A narrative underpinning was obviously required if the film was not to succumb entirely to the arbitrariness and gratuitousness of war itself, and of the one hand, and of psychodelic visions on the other. And certainly Conrad's

Heart of Darkness, while never insisted upon—except by the critics—can be thought to provide a sub-text of fairly direct and accessible implications for Coppola, a simple thread which would lead him into a more structured exploration of his own imaginative sense of the war and of its meaning to the whole, suddenly questionable experience of American imperialism in SE Asia.

As for the hallucinatory, it is that it is to be noted that the visual aspects of the film, those seen in the almost overwhelming night scenes, and at times in scenes which would seem to be "documentary"—that is, reality "breaking in off" according to those conventions of bourgeois cinema that the cinema under capitalism has only rarely made any ingenious attempt to free itself from.

Thus, there is a third aspect to the film the appropriateness of which appears to me more distinct: the ambiguous last period of the film centered around the cinematic, paradoxically "documentary" and "documentary" figure of Colonel Kurtz himself.

This ending, as most critics have not been slow to point out, appears to pay homage to Frasier's *The Golden Bough* and

Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*—books which Col. Kurtz possesses and which deal with various mythologies concerned with the "fisher-king", an ancient and recurring fertility-cult involving the sacrifice of an old, sick and impotent king by the young king who supplants him.

Myth speaks of a world which is not one of process—that is, of a continuing dialectical struggle which is constantly changing the conditions of that struggle for itself as it proceeds—but one of fixed and immutable essences, of given and static postures, like those of the figures on an ancient vase.

Myth, historically speaking, represented history for those societies in which real history—history as process—had not yet begun: a beginning that is marked by the breakdown of fixed tradition, the closures on which myth subsists: that is, the world of previously given social relations.

Real history only begins, in the emergence out of feudalism, with the struggle of the classes. It is there that history at last replaces myth.

Myth gives Coppola a way of finishing his film off, a way out of the problematic it creates, but it represents a final compromise.

Apologist

Ultimately its message is apologist for the American invasion of SE Asia, and the crimes that were committed in that cause, in that it exonerates the politics of capitalism and casts the problem of human violence in the mythic, pessimistic and eternal light of its own "innate" inevitability.

Yet Coppola's difficulty was real, for how can you find an appropriate conclusion to a work of art that purports to

deal with a subject that is still not finished for America itself (let alone for Cambodia, or Vietnam, about which few American films show much concern)?

How can you neatly round off something that was a national experience as well as an individual one, and that still persists in the nightmares and disabilities of those victims who survived close contact with the war, and in the grief and agonies of uselessness of those who were bereaved by it?

Myth gives the whole sordid, botched, mismanaged, genocidal inconclusive mess that was American aggression in Vietnam and Cambodia, if not stature (it is still too close to us in the sense of real, lived history for that myth to hold up) then certainly in his film, a final stagginess, a literary "twist" that hides the bankrupt and megalomaniac politics and geopolitics that lay behind American involvement, as well as the continuing private suffering, for which it was all fought. Myth makes appear "destined" something that need, and should, never have been.

By Duncan Bush

Nicaragua and the crisis in the USFI

December 13, 1979

Comrades of Socialist Press,

On behalf of the Bolshevik Faction in Britain I would appreciate your publishing the following very brief answer to Comrade Don Flint's article "Nicaragua and the Crisis in the USFI" printed in No. 178 (5.12.79) of Socialist Press.

There are a number of questions which I will not even touch and just refer you to our bulletin Nos. 1, 2 and 3 (plus everything else in Spanish). It is obvious that the information you have based your article on is very brief and partial.

Your analysis of our positions regarding for example: the government slogan, the workers' organisations, dual power, the LMR, military discipline and political independence—even the actual objective situation—is extremely inaccurate and irresponsible.

Your interpretation of the Permanent Revolution itself seems to be done in the same careless way since you ignore Trotsky's position on the possibility of the seizure of power by petty-bourgeois

nationalist movements or other non-Trotskyist forces as occurred in Vietnam, Cambodia (at one time or other), Yugoslavia, China, etc.

Is it that you do not regard these to be deformed workers' states? Unfortunately, I will not be able to take on any of these questions and others you mention because I must be brief.

What was the purpose of your article in presenting a slanted version of the developments in the Trotskyist movement around the Nicaraguan revolution?

The main point your article attempts to make is that the Bolshevik Faction split with the USFI to continue "Moreno's past record (which) yields a plethora of positions similar to those currently held by his opponents".

Meaning to say that since it is these "opportunists" who are organising the Conference for the regroupment (reconstruction) of the Fourth International, it "cannot be reconstructed in such terms".

You argue for the rejection of the Conference by putting an

equal sign between it and the USFI without even mentioning the political basis on which the Conference is being called and what precisely are your differences with it.

Might it be because you refuse to accept that you and I agree on the main points of principle as applied to Nicaragua?

Might it be that you refuse to accept reality as you do when you say that in Nicaragua the FSLN was not the one who led the masses, arms in hand, to defeat Somoza?

Since you do not base your analysis on the class struggle and its effect on the different organisations existing within the working class, the explanation which you arrive at for the split is one of machiavelian manoeuvres.

"Moreno has blown the USFI wide open on Nicaragua and for him therefore Nicaragua has been the world from August 1979 onwards".

The facts, comrade, are that it has been the Nicaraguan revolution which has led the



FSLN leaders Borge, Ortega, Ramirez, Chamorro and Robelo



American SWP and USFI to totally capitulate to the bourgeois Government of National Reconstruction and Castroism; thus supporting the repression of other USFI members who were there precisely to build a section of the Fourth International. (I understand your organisation agrees with this).

So the expulsion of the Simon Bolivar Brigade divided waters: the USFI agreed with it and the Bolshevik Faction, Leninist Trotskyist Tendency, OCFI, WSL, ICL, Workers Power, etc. condemned it.

It is on this and the political analysis of the Government of National Reconstruction as bourgeois, the FSLN's class collaborationism, Castro's support for these, etc.—that the possibility of regroupment or reconstruction exists.

A new situation has emerged in which the BF, OCFI, LTT, ICL have agreed that we must fight the USFI's Castroism and organise a democratic conference where the entire Trotsky-

ist movement can participate on the basis of our principles posed in the Declaration.

The way forward is by intervening in the class struggle constructing the Fourth International's international leadership and sections with those with whom we have principled and programmatic agreements.

It is very easy, backward and sectarian to seize on every detail to broaden and deepen existing differences on questions which have passed into history.

On the Brigade for example, you say that "the brigades were intended to fight 'shoulder to shoulder' with the FSLN which in itself is an absolutely correct formula".

Before Somoza fell, Socialist Press had articles attacking the FSLN as guerrillaist, sectarian, etc. But what is our attitude toward this and other changes in your positions?

Somoza before the fall

We welcome the fact that now you have a correct one. We understand the class struggle has an effect on people and can change them.

The Nicaraguan revolution has triggered off all sorts of politics.

The FI has split and its reconstruction will be through regroupment—through leaps and bounds as the theory of unequal and combined development points out.

It is our duty to regroup with these who defend the Trotskyist programme and principles fighting those who abandon them. It is through this and its daily application in the class struggle that we shall reconstruct the FI.

Monica

We reply:

Don Flint's article in SP 178, cited by the comrade of the Bolshevik Faction, did indeed include a number of excessively brief and unexplained statements on the past political record of Nahuel Moreno—all of which occurred in one paragraph, which read as follows:

"In his adherence to the method of Pabloism, Moreno has adopted the guise of a Castroite (his support for the Fidelista Organisation of Latin American Solidarity in the 1960s), a Maoist (he eulogised the Red Guards), and a Peronist (his paper Palabra Obrera at one point described itself as an 'organ of revolutionary workers' Peronism' and issued 'under the discipline of General Peron')."

It was in any event the intention of Socialist Press to withdraw this paragraph, which takes a prematurely definitive—though unargued—position on a number of questions which are yet to be fully discussed by the Workers Socialist League.

But, curiously, comrade Monica does not challenge this paragraph, focussing attention instead on other questions.

In doing so she lists in a few words a series of Bolshevik Faction positions on which our article is accused of making "extremely inaccurate and irresponsible" statements.

Unfortunately the comrade offers us no hint as to what she believes we have got wrong, and

makes no attempt to correct the position. Instead she goes on to make a number of rather strange allegations against what she regards as positions of the Workers Socialist League, which appear to have little to do with either the article concerned or the actual policies of our movement.

Extraordinarily, for instance, we are accused of saying "that in Nicaragua the FSLN was not the one who led the masses, arms in hand, to defeat Somoza". This is neither our position, nor is it, to our knowledge, the position of any serious revolutionary organisation in the world. It certainly does not appear in comrade Flint's article.

We are similarly accused of not basing our analysis "on the class struggle and its effect on the different organisations existing within the working class". Yet the entire article, headed "Nicaragua and the Crisis in the United Secretariat" began with the unmistakable statement that:

"The dramatic events in Nicaragua which brought the downfall of the reactionary Somoza dictatorship and put the petty bourgeois Sandinista National Liberation Front in control of the country has not only had an impact in weaken-

ing imperialism's grip on Central America.

"It has also produced a major upheaval in the world Trotskyist movement."

Comrade Monica upbraids us for a "careless" interpretation of the theory of Permanent Revolution, in which, she claims, we "ignore Trotsky's position on the seizure of power by petty bourgeois nationalist movements or other non-Trotskyist forces".

Yet Don Flint's article devoted no less than seven paragraphs to an examination of the instability of the petty bourgeois FSLN regime in Nicaragua.

It compared and contrasted the situation to that in Cuba after Castro's defeat of the Batista dictatorship. It looked at the circumstances in which Castro's petty bourgeois nationalist forces developed an alliance with the Kremlin bureaucracy, which created conditions for the overturn of capitalism and creation of a deformed workers state in Cuba.

Surprisingly comrade Monica does not include Cuba in her list of deformed workers' states—instead citing Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and Cambodia, which since all were liberated by Stalinist forces offer few parallels and are of little direct relevance to the situation today in Nicaragua.

We are also accused of arguing for the rejection of the

Open Conference, called by the BF, the OCFI and the LTT.

Yet this is not the position we have taken either in comrade Flint's article or in other articles in Socialist Press.

From the start we welcomed the convening of the conference insofar as it opens up the possibilities of a long overdue discussion on the fundamental crisis of the post-war Trotskyist movement.

From the same position we have also criticised moves which seem to us to suggest that the conference might not be so open as first indicated by the convening organisations—and might not even be held at all.

But we have consistently warned against the position—also argued in comrade Monica's letter—that a conference restricted to the single issue of Nicaragua, on which a number of organisations appear at present to be in agreement, could in itself provide a sound basis for "regroupment or reconstruction" of the Fourth International.

Comrade Monica declares that it is "very easy, backward and sectarian to seize on every detail and deepen existing differences on questions which have passed into history."

But it is even easier in the most opportunist way simply to brush aside past differences



Sandinista guerrillas

without discussion, in a hasty and worthless "regroupment" that would take place without genuine political agreement, and amount to a farcical repetition of the "Reunification" of 1963.

The events in Nicaragua have only brought the revisionist positions of the SWP/USFI to the surface.

In reality those positions emerged not in 1979 but have been carried over from the whole period of political compromise and cover-up since the USFI itself was formed—on the basis of agreement on the single issue of Cuba—in 1963.

by Don Flint. In this way a constructive discussion can take place.

But the WSL will not be deterred from raising in that discussion basic issues of method and assessments of the political evolution of tendencies which today put themselves forward as the voice of orthodox Trotskyism.

If "the theory of unequal and combined development" really has any relevance to the fight for the reconstruction of the FI, it is possibly in the fact that other tendencies—far larger numerically than the WSL—have been far slower than us to recognise the necessity to base such a reconstruction on an objective discussion of the post-war crisis of Trotskyism, from which common programmatic positions that break decisively from the opportunist deviations of the past can and must be derived.

OCCUPYING TO STOP MECCANO CLOSURE

As the struggle against closure continues in the occupied Meccano factory on Merseyside, Liverpool members of the Workers Socialist League tape recorded the following interview at the factory with GMWU convenor Frank Bloor.



Frank Bloor with women stewards from Meccano

What is the up to date position?

We are trying to arrange a further meeting with Airfix to clarify the position on a number of points.

One of the major points is that there are two companies interested in taking over and we want to clarify how far the negotiations with these two companies have gone.

We are also insisting on our 90 day consultation rights, which they are refusing.

In terms of blacking, what are the latest developments?

On Merseyside we're starting to expand now. This morning we are having a meeting with all our shop stewards to start our campaign, especially now the holiday period is over.

One of the main things we will be doing will be forming flying pickets to get around all Airfix factories in the country and start to hit them at the right time.

Do you feel you're getting the maximum support from your union officials?

From some of the officials, yes. Especially from the GMWU, it's been 100%. APEX have also been involved, but the other

unions, for one reason or another, have decided to stay in the background.

We've seen most of the officials but it must be said that G&M and APEX officials have been in the factory every day since we occupied.

Are you receiving any union benefits?

Well first, the Social Security have said what we are doing is illegal and therefore are not going to give us anything. So after the Xmas holiday pay runs out we'll be back to square one—the members will have nothing.

What do you see as the next stage in a campaign to raise the temperature?

As I say the formation of flying pickets—this is the big thing. Also we have to insist that these negotiations with Airfix are not kept secret from us. We have to be informed fully. After all, the Airfix discussions are with two entirely different companies. This seems to be our main hope, both of them are very interested.

Do you draw any conclusions from the enormous increase in unemployment, factory

closures, cuts in public expenditure with the advent of the Tory government?

Yes, as far as we can see it, this is a new stage in management-worker relations, in terms of the Thatcher government, because they are trying a new stunt—no 90 day notices.

If this goes through and this company does close then everybody in this country, whether they are in unions or not will be wary of their jobs.

Mrs Thatcher has only paid lip service when she said in the House of Commons that it was wrong not to give us our 90 day notice of redundancy.

We've seen one junior minister, and that's been this government's help so far.

MPs on Merseyside have been great, but as for this government they'll just let it go through because they are trying to get rid of the Acts brought in by Labour.

If this goes through every company in the land will use it as a weapon, they will just close you down 20 minutes before you finish on a Friday.

What percentage of the workforce are women?

I would say two-thirds—some are part-time, some full time, and a small 'twilight' shift, with the men working the night shift.

So the women will feel the financial problems particularly acutely.

Yes, the only way a married woman could possibly receive any Social Security is if her husband is on the dole.

It really is hard. We have a lot of one-parent families, widows and divorcees and they are in a worse position, if you like, than a woman whose husband is working.

We've had many cases of women with one or two kids going to the SS for help but being turned away, and we've had to try and help them from the fund.

We have even had cases of the DHSS threatening to take away the children, you know—'We can't look after you but we'll take your kids into care'.

This is only to frighten, but it will not work—half the money we receive goes into a hardship fund, the rest is our fighting fund.

Have you approached the union officials for help?

Yes, we've been as high as the National Officer.

And what did he say?

We're still waiting for a decision. All other unions are paying hardship money except the G&M.

How much is that?

£8 a week.

What percentage of the workforce is in the G&M?

About two-thirds.

Anne Noone, senior female steward: This question of our treatment by the dole is important. What they are really saying is 'We'll give you social security if you give up your job'. 'Fight for your job and we'll starve you into submission'.

FB: That's right, they are saying

"accept redundancy" because it seems that this government just want three-quarters of the workforce to be on the dole.

Yes, their policy is to attack the working class.

I agree, three-quarters of the dole and the other quarter subsidised.

The other quarter on low wages!

Exactly! We're going back to the 1930s, back to the means test. There will be that many unemployed that trying to get money out of the government will be like winning the pools every week; you're just not going to get it.

I'd like to ask the senior female steward what particular problems the women workers face as housewives and occupiers of the factory?

AN: Well if you're married you just don't know where to begin.

We spend more time here now than when we were getting paid. You're trying to make time to do a bit of shopping, keep the home as comfortable as possible, and everybody fed and clothed, (you know, in clean clothes).

It takes its toll. Then you've got the worry of the money, because you don't half miss it. If our husbands were earning good wages we wouldn't have to work.

You are working for necessities?

AN: Yes, completely. Then again, when you're home you are worrying about the factory... whether the other shift to occupy have turned up or something happened to them. It's taking its toll health-wise. We are pretty lucky because we have our families standing by us.

Frank, just to finalise, what do you think of this Tory government?

We haven't got a government—all we have is a group of people sitting in the Houses of Parliament smashing up the laws which relate to workers over the past few years.

What they're after is massive unemployment, the lowest pay for the rest, and no aggro.

That's their policy, and they will continue with that policy as long as we, the working class, allow them to continue in office.

Frank, Socialist Press wishes you and your occupation forces maximum success.

Thank you very much.

Xmas bombardment

By Duncan Bush

The commercial ideology of Xmas maintains it firmly in a historical vacuum. According to this, the only event ever to occur at Xmas took place almost 2,000 years ago in Palestine.

Since then, the date has, of course, become overlaid with a variety of other profoundly unhistorical details—a Merrie Engleland world of mufflers, post-horns, stagecoaches etc., and always, always the snows of yesteryear conferring purity to this illusory past: that of a world abstracted from, for example, the current daily round of public expenditure cuts, massive steel closures, a threatened strike, letter bomb campaigns, and other troublesome evidence that all is not right on earth, that capitalism has not met all man's worldly needs.

In the absence of newspapers over the actual Xmas period, it falls to television to become the major medium for maintaining and promulgating this annual deception, on the paternalistic assumption that mankind, (particularly at Xmas) cannot bear too much reality.

This can be seen most clearly, perhaps, in the proliferation of the so-called "variety" programme or Xmas "spectacular", whether home-grown or imported from America.

The viewer can presumably be imagined as sitting through fairly brief—or "fast-moving"—routines in a passive optimism that continually defers the decision to switch off or over, in case a more riveting one should happen to succeed it.

Kings & Queens

Another "seasonal" feature, is an almost total absence from the schedules of any programmes of serious TV journalism or of a documentary nature—as if current political and social problems had agreed conveniently to suspend themselves for the duration of the holiday.

What is noticeable, however, is that hand-in-hand with this tacit agreement to suspend contemporary history goes a compensatory emphasis on past history (often British) which is very much a matter of kings and queens and other paragons rather than of classes and relations of production.

Thus in Xmas week, on BBC TV alone, viewers could watch Mary Queen of Scots, Henry VIII and his Six Wives and A Man for All Seasons presented as "major features".

Given this project, apparent anachronisms such as the Queen's "informal" Xmas day speech (from her "front room" to yours) and the persistent and irrelevant, but almost daily,

incursion into the "national" news by various members of the Royal Family, can be put into a proper perspective: the implication is, throughout, that these people are "just like us", their audience (and subjects) and that all is basically still right in a world of given and preordained normality.

Let no one imagine, however, that the Royal Family are "above politics", as is usually claimed on their behalf: their very existence embodies key aspects of ideology central to the stable continuity of the unequal society, and their occasional, carefully-timed "outbursts"—always headlined by the media—such as the Duke of Edinburgh's attack on social welfare "spongers" or union militancy, and Prince Charles's televised speech against the IRA at Mountbatten's memorial service, are conferred with a unique "authority".

Warfare

What is equally noticeable about the television fare allotted to us for Xmas this year, however, is that despite the usual emphasis on "peace" and "goodwill" endemic and epidemic at such a time, war and warfare themselves are not, apparently, forbidden subjects.

Thus, in this same Xmas week, on BBC again, we had films such as Bridge On The

River Kwai, Where Eagles Dare, The Blue Max, Five Graves to Cairo, etc.

Naturally, the programme planners yet again know what they are doing in presenting this depoliticised "history", which projects war not as a struggle between conflicting imperialist and economic interests (in which individuals figure at all only in and because of their utter dispensability) but—to abstract the key ingredients from such films—as a matter of individual "courage", "gallantry", "ingenuity", "nerve".

Wars closer to the current interests of British imperialism, on the other hand, for example Northern Ireland, are ruthlessly censored, as the Government banning of a recent BBC TV documentary in which members of the IRA took part, sufficiently reveals.

The complicity of the TV heads with the Government—or (what comes to the same thing in this case) with the Army of occupation—is in fact almost total, and this happens not only at Xmas.

One discovers on these various fronts the double-pronged but mutually supportive movement characteristic of official ideology: it works not only through the lies they actively tell us but also through the alternatives to it that they suppress.



Inside the Meccano occupation



UNIONISE HOTELS AND CATERING!

A belated but nevertheless correct campaign for union recognition is being pressed by the GMWU by calling on fellow unions to boycott Scarborough.

The struggle centres on the

hotel industry where the GMWU is calling for recognition of its members at the Crown Hotel.

And until recognition is forthcoming it has appealed to other trade unions to hold their conferences elsewhere. The NGA, the Confed, the Boiler-makers Society and the Womens TUC have already cancelled plans for conferences in Scarborough.

The tactic is clearly a powerful one, but the question must be asked: why has it taken so many years for the GMWU and other unions to wake up to the need to unionise hotel workers in conference towns?

The trade union movement

spends tens of thousands of pounds a year on conferences, the vast proportion of which is funnelled into the pockets of viciously anti-union hoteliers and caterers.

Yet both the TGWU and the GMWU have repeatedly shown themselves adamantly opposed to an all-out national campaign for unionisation in this viciously exploited sector of workers.

While supporting the GMWU's stand on the Crown Hotel at Scarborough, trade unionists must demand that this is made the start of a serious struggle to bring trade unionism to one of the country's biggest and most profitable industries.

NUPE drops pay beds fight

Last summer the leadership of the National Health Service Unions were in a quandary.

As the Tories' axe slashed on the open wounds left by Labour's axe, and following the sell-out of the winter 'low-pay' battles, they were faced with the prospect of having to explain their actions (or lack of them) to hostile memberships at the Annual Delegate Conferences.

With the EGA and Clegg resting uncomfortably over their heads, they were in desperate need of some formula to help restore their tarnished credentials and to divert attention away from the more obvious exposures of their position.

Decimated

With the Health Service being decimated, they needed to sound militant without having to immediately commit themselves to anything so awkward as action—a difficult task! However both Fisher of NUPE and Spanswick of COHSE hit upon the same solution: as cut piled on cut in the NHS, they huffed and puffed about private medicine.

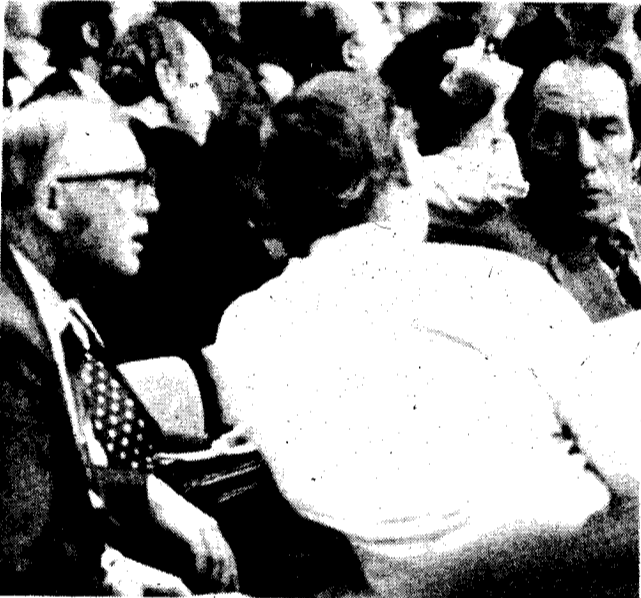
Spanswick, moving an emergency resolution for the COHSE Executive Committee said the union would oppose the re-introduction of pay-beds 'by any legal means'. With this built-in get-out clause, his waffle about blacking went on to grab the national headlines.

Fisher, however, was caught rather differently. A motion calling for blacking of pay beds from January 1 was carried through NUPE's annual conference despite the opposition of the NEC.

Spanswick and Fisher

correctly predicted the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the organisation of the NHS which called for the abolition of private beds within the NHS.

ment Health Services Bill published last month abolishes the HSB and the CHSC, seeks to expand private medicine within the NHS and moves to ease restrictions on the private sector



What do we do next? COHSE delegates

So they thought they were on safe ground, temporarily at least, as the Health Services Board and the Central Health Services Council were committed to a policy of phasing out pay-beds, and it would require legislation to remove those bodies before the Tories could move to increase private facilities.

An added bonus for the bureaucrats was that their blasts of rhetoric on pay beds wouldn't bring them into conflict with a future Labour administration such as action against the cuts might.

Now, however, the Govern-

as an alternative to the NHS.

The time has come for the Fishers and Spanswicks to live up to their words, or to eat them.

There was little doubt as to what option they would choose. On December 28 NUPE called off its blacking—due to start three days later. No action at all has been taken by COHSE.

Any moves to black pay-patients would undoubtedly bring the unions into conflict with the General Nursing Council, which recently circulated to hospitals the warning that industrial action left nurses open to charges of gross profes-

sional misconduct and liable to be struck off!

In the past the Health Unions have always defended the role of the GNC which they have tended to regard as an impartial body.

But while union leaders capitulate to the Tory plan to boost pay beds, they have done nothing to fight the cuts in the NHS itself.

The Health Services Bill also seeks to make it statutory for Health Authorities—or Districts as is proposed—to keep their expenditure within the limits as directed by the Secretary of State—therefore, any Health Authority following the lead of Lambeth in refusing to implement cuts would be committing a criminal offence, making individual members liable to prosecution.

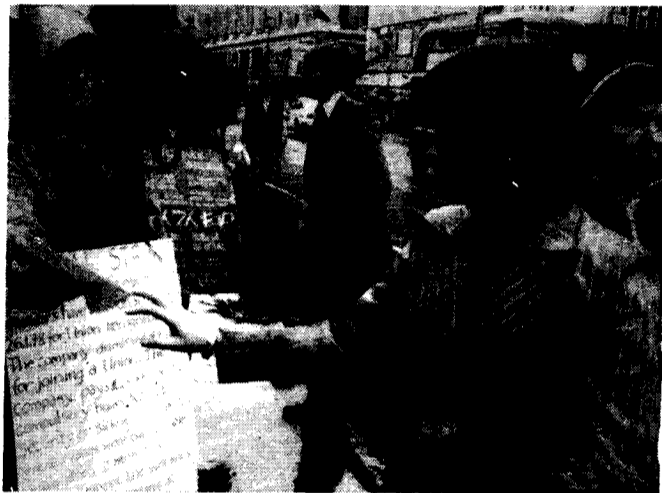
This comes at a time when in London alone 2,815 beds are due to be lost by March and ten hospitals due to close completely.

The reply of the COHSE NEC? They have asked their members to fill in a coupon in the union paper to be sent to Health Minister Gerrard Vaughan, protesting against the cuts and to ask branches to appoint monitors to register and collate the effects of the cuts!

The fight must be pressed in every health service union for a policy of occupations and strike action to defeat the cuts and mobilise alongside other workers to bring down the Tory government.



Health Minister Vaughan



TGWU sold out Garners recognition strike

Unions OK pay cut

Leaders of the three rail unions—never noted for their tenacity in the face of management attacks—have successfully negotiated a £2 per week wage cut for their members.

This followed pleas from British Rail that because of Tory cash limits it could not afford to fulfil an agreement to consolidate the increase into basic rates.

While union leaders have stated their commitment to

ensuring that the money is backdated to January 1 when the annual pay review is settled in April, railway workers must expect that leaders who loan management their wages to keep in business one month will not scruple to abandon legitimate wage claims the next.

Instead of crawling to the BR Board, the unions should have brought forward their pay demands alongside the steelworkers in defence of their members' living standards.

YOU SHOULD JOIN US!

With workers by the thousand taking to the streets to oppose Tory policies there is plainly no lack of militancy in the organised working class.

Yet the existing trade union bureaucrats and Labour leaders—whether right or 'left'—have no perspective to offer those workers prepared to fight in defence of jobs, living standards, social services and democratic rights.

These can only be defended through policies which start from the independent interests of the working class, which, as an international class, has nothing to gain and everything to lose from attempts to restore the profitability of their 'own' employing class.

In a period where the contra-

Please send me more details of the Workers Socialist League.

Name

Address

Send to: WSL 31 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

dictions of the anarchic capitalist system force the wholesale closure and destruction of the productive forces of society, only a socialist planned economy on a world scale offers a way forward.

To achieve such a perspective a leadership is needed which, in today's struggles fights to advance workers beyond trade union militancy, protest politics and illusions that capitalism can be abolished through parliament.

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist movement fighting day in and day out to build such a principled leadership in the working class in Britain and internationally.

We invite all readers of Socialist Press to seek more details of the WSL and its work and to join us in the struggle for socialism.

STILL AVAILABLE
WSL MANIFESTO
A basic statement of the policies of the Workers Socialist League. Price 15p including postage from WSL, 31 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

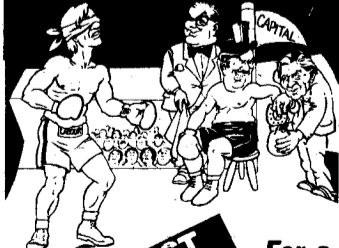
SUBSCRIBE!

Get your Socialist Press delivered each week by post

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Six issues	£1.80
Three months (12 issues)	£3.60
Six months (25 issues)	£7.00
One year (50 issues)	£13.00
EUROPE	
Six months (25 issues)	£8.00
One year (50 issues)	£15.00
REST OF THE WORLD	
Six months (25 issues)	£9.00
One year (50 issues)	£17.00

DON'T GO INTO THE FIGHT BLINDFOLD!



GET SOCIALIST PRESS For a clear lead in the struggle against wage control, cuts and redundancies

Send your cheque/P.O. to Socialist Press, 31 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

Robinson fight puts AUEW EC on the spot

The collaboration of AUEW leaders in the victimisation of BL combine committee chairman Derek Robinson has brought a wave of revulsion from the membership in branches across the country.

A staggering total of over 300 AUEW branches have condemned the Executive's sell-out of the struggle. The number that have supported the Executive barely reach double figures.

Over 100 branches have now endorsed a resolution originally passed by the Longbridge-dominated Birmingham Northfields Branch which states:

"This Northfields Branch of the AUEW censures the AUEW Executive Council for:

- 1) Failing to defend one of their leading shop stewards, Brother Derek Robinson, who was victimised by top BL management in a completely unconstitutional manner, as confirmed by the local full-time official Brother B. Benson.
- 2) For failing to defend the most basic hard won rights of their members—the right to free speech.
- 3) For failing to support the thousands of members who had taken industrial action in defence of that right, to make their strike official in spite of the unanimous full recommendation of the Birmingham West District Committee.
- 4) For dividing the trade union movement by instructing their members to return to work by crossing the official picket line of another union.

Disrepute

We believe the Executive Council has brought our union into complete disrepute and we therefore call on the General Secretary to



Not needed: another jamboree of standing ovations

hold an immediate ballot on the removal of the entire Executive Council as per Rule 15, para 5."

Were this resolution to be endorsed by around 250 AUEW branches (10% of the total), General Secretary Boyd would be obliged under rule to hold the ballot on whether to remove the entire right wing Executive Committee.

Major blow

Irrespective of whether this ballot won the necessary two-thirds majority, this would strike a major blow at the authority of the right wing.

Meanwhile, if the uncritical reports in *Socialist Worker* are to be believed over 500 delegates have sought credentials for the national conference to discuss the Robinson case, due to be held this weekend.

There is no doubt however that this conference will be dominated by the Communist Party of which

Robinson is himself a leading member. The CP has intervened to oppose resolutions condemning the AUEW Executive for the sell-out, and encouraged Robinson to tour meetings speaking as if action to win his reinstatement is a foregone conclusion.

Yet the AUEW leaders have made it clear that their "inquiry" report will not even be produced until the end of January. And BL chairman Michael Edwardes has dropped a broad hint that he already knows the report will criticise Robinson.

The chances seem to be on a deal being cooked up that will get the AUEW leaders off the hook while leaving Robinson stripped of his elected trade union position.

Conflict

The struggle for official action throughout BL to force Robinson's reinstatement as convenor must therefore be prepared in

conflict with the AUEW bureaucracy.

It would take such a struggle no way forward for Sunday's conference to be turned into yet another jamboree of platitudes and standing ovations like that held in Birmingham Town Hall only days before the AUEW sell-out.

Instead, attention must be turned to means of linking the bitter hostility within BL to the company's insulting 5%-with-strings pay offer to the struggle to defend trade union organisation through the reinstatement of Robinson.

And mass lobbies must be aimed at the AUEW Executive to maintain the pressure for all-out official strike action.

Support for Feb 18

The February 18 general strike called against the cuts by the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils is gathering a considerable body of support.

The Yorkshire Area NUM, and Sheffield shop stewards' committees are expected to back the call, which is explicitly in opposition to TUC attempts to forestall action until May 14—when many of the cuts will already have taken effect.

This important initiative must be supported as the basis for further strike action and occupations to stop the cuts.

Meanwhile there are signs that the conference called by the Stalinist-run Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions on January 26 will bring together large numbers of militants looking for a lead in struggles against the Tories.

No such lead can be expected from the platform of the LCDTU—but militants should attend the conference where possible, bringing resolutions calling for concrete action to defend union rights and defeat the Tory offensive.



Low pay demonstrators last winter

PHOTO: Ian Mackintosh, IFL

Clegg no answer to low pay

The fraud of "comparability" exercises as a means of raising low wages has once more been exposed by the findings of the Clegg commission into nurses pay.

Middle nursing grades get a settlement of 25%, only a few percent above the present annual rate of inflation and far from adequate to compensate for years of low wages.

But nursing auxiliaries receive only a wage-cutting 4.3-14.2% rise—far less than the rate of inflation. And student nurses are to get only a 17% increase.

Blind alley

Health unions and the Royal College of Nursing, whose combined efforts directed nurses into the blind alley of "comparability" in the first place, have now issued a chorus of hypocritical condemnation.

But the fact is that in the health service, as in local authorities, the only means of achieving a living wage is through a sustained programme of strike action.

This lesson must not be lost on teachers. Their leaders have been relying upon Clegg, rather

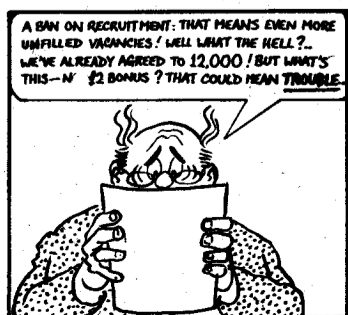
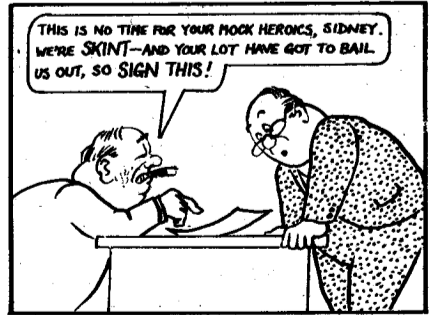
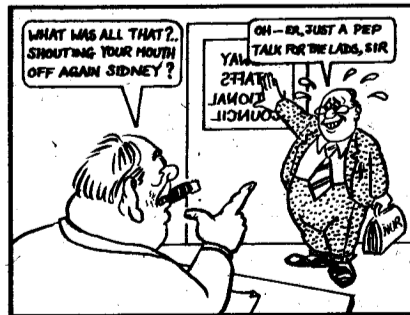
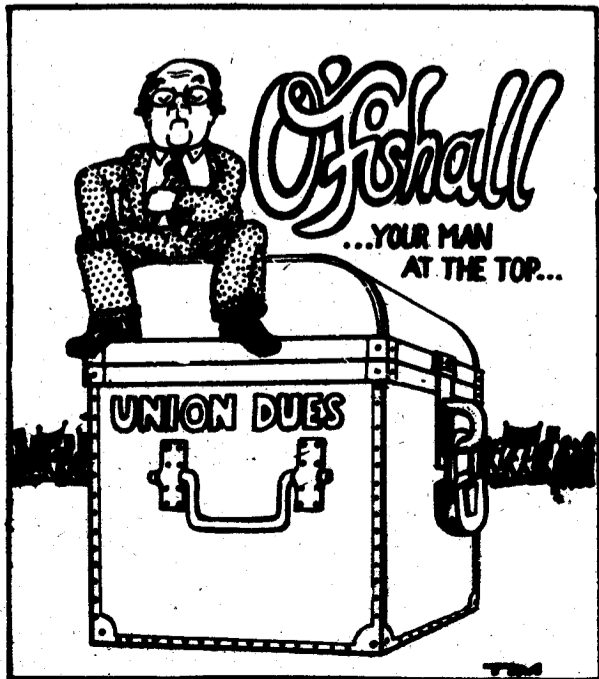
than industrial action to win them a living wage. Now they find that not even the promised report will materialise this month—let alone a pay increase!

STEEL From back page

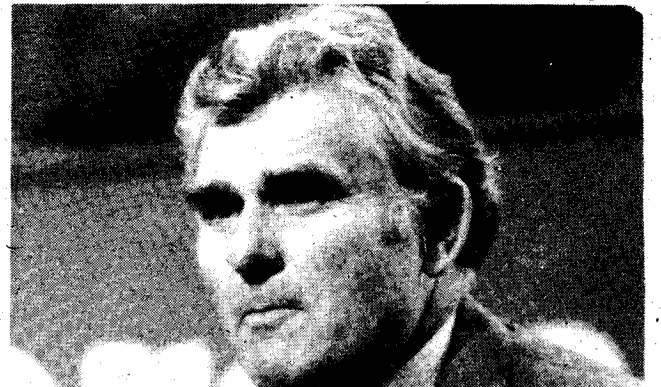
where convenors meet this week to consider the company's 5% pay offer—strike action must be taken alongside the steel workers.

Councils of action should be formed in the steel towns, drawing delegates from trade union and political bodies to co-ordinate maximum support for mass picketing and blacking action and seek to extend and generalise the struggle in confrontation with the Tory government.

The Welsh TUC is correct to call for general strike action against the steel and NCB closures: but this fight must be carried into the full TUC, with a call for all-out strike action alongside the steelworkers, to bring down this anti-union, job slashing, wage-cutting, social service-wrecking Tory government.



SOCIALIST PRESS



Looking for a way out—Bill Sirs

SPREAD THE STEEL STRIKE! BRING DOWN THE TORIES!

As we go to press, a renewed attempt by steel union leaders to sell out their pay strike has crumbled as a result of management's refusal to offer even token concessions.

The strike, which has paralysed steel production and begun to disrupt the movement of steel shipments, is already classic illustration of the contradiction between the wilting cowardice and compromises of the union leadership and the militancy of shop floor workers determined to defend their jobs and living standards.

Top level

National officials of the ISTC have made great play of mobilising top level solidarity from other union leaders nationally and internationally, which has successfully imposed a considerable degree of blacking action—though steel is still moving.

But at the same time union instructions have been sent out to restrict the scope of ISTC pickets on docks, stockholders, and private steelworks.

And an offer by Arthur Scargill of additional forces to support picket lines has been rejected.

Yet the rank and file hos-

tility to this official sabotage was shown in the vote for rejection of these instructions by the Yorkshire Regional Committee of the ISTC on Monday.

For the steel union bureaucracy, indeed, the prospect of a "short sharp strike" is receding rapidly, and all their worst fears are being realised. They know that, the longer the strike lasts:

"The greater the chance of full scale mass picketing developing on a scale to precipitate confrontation with the Tory government and the state;

"the greater the chance that other public sector workers—particularly those in British Leyland and British Rail—will take action on their pay demands alongside the steel

workers;

"the greater the confidence will develop within the steel unions that they have the power to halt industrial production, and therefore the power to act in defence of their jobs and working conditions.

"the more steel workers and other sections of the working class will draw the correct conclusion that living standards and jobs can only be defended through bringing down the Tory government, which is pledged to an unending series of attacks on the working class. And in drawing this conclusion and feeling their class strength, workers could also turn impatiently against those trade union and Labour leaders that oppose such a perspective.

Nothing would delight the union leaders more, therefore, than to achieve by a show of strength, a face-saving formula which would enable them to call off a strike which has already become a considerable political embarrassment to them.

But this is not the perspective of BSC management.

Backed up by the Tories, who have insisted that the Corporation make itself profitable by next April, they have offered only marginal altera-



tions to the initial derisory 2% increase.

And each alteration has been related to further attacks on jobs or conditions through productivity strings and the abolition of the guaranteed week agreement.

The union leaders recognise that they cannot send their members back with nothing at all, though plainly the original 17% claim has already been discarded for all but propaganda purposes.

The employers and the Tories however recognise that

any real increase conceded over and above the 2% would spur on tens of thousands more workers to take up the fight to defend their living standards.

And with a Welsh General Strike called for January 21 to protest at the impact of the steel closures, a sign of weakness could trigger widespread struggles.

Connected to jobs

The militant response to the pay strike from even older workers at the "doomed" plants

Pickets at Rotherham of Shotton and Corby shows the way in which this pay strike is connected at each level to the issue of jobs.

It is essential that within the steel unions the fight is taken up for democratically elected strike committees which must have the final say on any offer made.

And an agreement for the preservation of all jobs in BSC must be made a condition of settlement of this pay claim: jobs must not be sold.

In other sections of industry—particularly British Leyland,

Cont'd p.11, col.6



Scargill

PHOTO: Andrew Ward Report

Guerrillas shun 'peace' plan

In a clear indication of the kind of "democracy" ushered into Zimbabwe by the settlement between British imperialism the Smith/Muzorewa regime and Patriotic Front leaders, Muzorewa last week called for the Patriotic Front to be banned from the coming elections.

His pretext? That only 18,500 people, not all of them guerrillas, had heeded the treacherous appeal from their leaders to come out of the bush and effectively surrender to Rhodesian state forces.

Estimates suggest that up to 50% of the actual guerrillas remain in the bush, unconvinced by the blandishments and diplomacy of their leaders Mugabe and Nkomo.

Weakness

Muzorewa's moves against the PF clearly reflect a feeling of weakness in the run-up to the elections. A mass rally addressed by him in Salisbury on Sunday attracted a crowd far smaller than on previous occasions despite a vigorous campaign by his United African

National Council.

Meanwhile the British Governor Lord Soames has dispatched Rhodesian troops to hunt down remaining PF guerrilla units in the bush. Their efforts will be assisted by 2,000 regular South African troops which British spokesmen have finally admitted are stationed inside Rhodesia at Beitbridge.

Little confidence

The success the imperialists have had in herding large numbers of Patriotic Front guerrillas into the thirty-nine collection points, provides them with little confidence.

There is no doubt that considerable sections of the most experienced and politicised guerrillas have remained in the bush with their weapons, thereby reflecting the widespread spontaneous opposition to the imperialist-imposed settlement, which in many respects is identical with the Smith/Muzorewa agreement of last year.

Workers and militants within the Patriotic Front must transform their abstention from the imperialist settlement into an aggressive strategy starting with the defence of the independent interests of the Zimbabwean



Muzorewa

working class.

While urging their comrades not to hand over their arms or move to the collection points, they must forge links with the masses by creating independent committees of the working class on the farms, in the factories, mines, townships and 'protected' villages.

By making the defence of the working class the first task of armed struggle, they will be able to protect the masses from intimidation and mobilise them around demands for democratic

rights, the defence of living standards and the expropriation of land and capitalist holdings as the basis for a planned socialist economy in Zimbabwe.

By counterposing to the imperialist elections the need for a genuine constituent assembly, with no guaranteed seats for the whites and the free operation of working class parties, and by training workers' self-defence squads, they will be able to prepare the Zimbabwean working class for the inevitable struggle that will ensue after the elections.

Whatever black petty-bourgeois regime is brought to power by the elections the need to restore capitalist profitability will bring it into violent conflict with its erstwhile supporters.

Struggle

It is thus necessary to take up the struggle now for the independent organisation and interests of the working class in order to meet that threat when it comes.

Without the mobilisation of the workers in the towns and rural areas as a class, the mass struggle will always remain the tool of the PF petty-bourgeois nationalists.

WORKERS SOCIALIST LEAGUE PUBLIC MEETINGS

**NO SELL OUT OF THE STEEL STRIKE!
BRING DOWN THE TORIES!**

MOTHERWELL
Monday 14 January
YMCA, Brandon St.
7.00 p.m.

SHEFFIELD
Tuesday 15 January
Station Hotel
on the Wicker
8.00 p.m.

FUND

The December Fund closed at £686.10, well short of our target of £750. Our thanks to comrades in Denmark who again generously contributed to the fund and to an anonymous comrade who donated £60.

The January Fund has got off to a slow start with only £106.50 received in the first seven days of the month. We are going to have to pull out all the stops if we are to reach our target by the end of January.

All donations should be sent to:
Socialist Press Monthly Fund
31 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR