

Socialist Challenge

5p
special
striker's price

30 WOMEN DIED FROM BACKSTREET ABORTION IN 1966

NOT ONE DIED IN 1978

Deaths from illegal abortions:

1966	30
1977	1
1978	0
1980	?

Hospital admissions due to septic abortions:

1966	2,560
1976	700
1980	?

'Shot-gun' marriages:

1967	75,000
1978	30,000
1980	?

In 1978, just over a decade after the introduction of the 1967 Abortion Act, there were 142,344 abortions in Britain. A leading anti-abortionist, Professor

Scarisbrick, says that the Corrie Bill — which has its third reading in the House of Commons this Friday — would eliminate two-thirds of these...

In other words, 100,000 women a year may be forced to turn to the backstreets.

STOP CORRIE'S ANTI-ABORTION BILL

OUR POLICIES

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

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

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

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

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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EDITORIAL

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For the General Strike

WHAT DOES it mean for socialists to call for a general strike, given that virtually every right-wing trade union luminary has been hinting at the same thing over the last week (see page 5). For them it's a way of trying to get small concessions off the Tories, trying to ease the pressure from their membership. They won't call a general strike. Instead they issue calls for days of action like confetti. But it's not just empty talk. There is a real tendency towards a general strike in the way events are moving today.

For a start, craft and trade divisions are being overcome in the struggle against closures and cuts. Divisions between the role of the trade unions and that of the Labour Party were also given a knock when the Labour Party called a demonstration against the cuts last year after the TUC had failed to fulfil its congress mandate on the cuts quickly enough.

The boundary between legality and illegality is also being tested on key issues affecting the working class. The very right to take solidarity action, picket and generally pursue a trade dispute effectively has been exposed as a nakedly political

issue for millions after the Denning judgement (see page 4).

Finally there is proof in South Wales from the 200,000 workers who stopped work on 28 January.

Ah, some sceptics might say, but that wasn't a general strike, that was only a day of action. True enough — but that limitation was not imposed by the Welsh workers, it was imposed by the British TUC, by the trade union leaders.

But still, wasn't it only a regional development, the persistent might enquire. Once again, true enough. But then the day of action in South Yorkshire on 18 February wouldn't be just a regional development if the TUC had obeyed its mandate on the question of action against cuts.

The current programmes of the Wales TUC and the South Yorkshire Trades Councils are palliatives in the current crisis. In particular, the Wales TUC's call for postponement of the closures for two years is worse than useless, as a Corby correspondent pointed out in this paper last week.

But no matter what the particular starting point for a general strike, it inevitably poses the question of power. And power, in the first instance, means

the existence of the Tory government. So while not demanding that every struggle should stop and change its demands to calling for the downfall of the government, socialists have to explain that this is inevitably where a general strike leads. Even if a government were to cave in completely to the limited demands of one general strike, then inexorably the working class would step up its demands to the point where it would be suicide for the ruling class to accede to them.

Such a call therefore also means preparation at the rank and file level of the most effective precautions to ensure that the whole economy is closed down by the same means that the steelworkers are already using with their flying pickets.

But between then and now the pressure should go on those who are in the position to call such strike action, the TUC leaders: resolutions should go to trade union bodies demanding that the TUC fully support the action of the Wales TUC with a general strike called throughout the rest of Britain to halt the Tory offensive.

Tap, Tap who's there?

'Hi, Joe. I'm ringing about those **** sanctions those **** have got on Rhodesia. We're taking in 20,000 gallons of crude and we'd like your help...'

An imaginary phone conversation, but thousands of calls like that must have been behind the sanctions busting by major British oil companies which was detailed in the Bingham Report (on which the Tory government has decided to take no action).

Daily, companies plan moves which drastically affect the livelihoods of workers. So does the government and the civil service. The police organise picket breaking, raids on

immigrants, and robberies. The secret service plots against governments and groups unfriendly to the West.

None of these activities is of any interest to the state's eavesdroppers, whose main concern is to spy on left-wing MPs (including those in Labour governments), trade unionists involved in strikes, and left-wing campaigns and organisations.

As Duncan Campbell has revealed in the New Statesman, technological developments enable thousands of phone conversations to be secretly recorded and relevant extracts to be selected by a computer and printed out.

The apparatus of a totalitarian state, which has long been the bogey of right-wing politicians, is taking shape in Britain — with their endorsement. While the mass media engages in lengthy investigations into the possible identity of secret service 'moles' over 30 years ago, no inquiry is made into what MI5 and the rest are doing now.

The files of the government and its various agencies would make fascinating reading. Their secrets are not kept in the interests of the working class, but of our rulers. They should all be exposed, and the surveillance of the working class halted.

AFTER CORRIE?

IF ever it needed proving that Parliament is undemocratic, the debate on John Corrie's Abortion Amendment Bill this Friday will oblige. A parliament overwhelmingly dominated by men will decide whether or not women's rights to abortion should be harshly restricted.

The opinion of the public, the British Medical Association, the Labour Party, the trade unions and the majority of women is that abortion should be the choice of a woman herself.

Yet John Corrie, and his fanatical supporters from the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, are being allowed to plough ahead — backed by Norman St John Stevas, the Tory leader of the House of Commons.

PENNY DUGGAN, a member of the National Abortion Campaign steering committee and women's organiser of the International Marxist Group, argues that regardless of what Parliament decides the abortion movement must go on the offensive. A campaign should be launched, not only to get Corrie's Bill repealed, but to win the fight for a woman's right to choose in law and in practice.

For twelve years the abortion movement has been on the defensive fighting off attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act. The 1967 Act was the most liberal abortion law to be adopted in any western country. It allowed women to have abortions not just on medical grounds but for

'social' reasons.

It has been vital to defend such legislation. But we also need to know what we're campaigning for as well as what we're against. The 1967 Act leaves the decision in the hands of two doctors. Availability of abortion varies widely.

Some Brent women in their pamphlet *Mixed Feelings* have explained that many doctors still refuse to implement the 1967 Act:

'Only one in three of the consultants in our local hospital is prepared to do abortions, which means that 70 per cent of Brent women who obtain an abortion have

to go to the private sector. We have no way of knowing how many women have tried to get an abortion and failed. Women have been known to wait so long for a hospital appointment that they cannot have the operation carried out within the vital initial twelve week period.'

Of course, when a woman makes a decision to have or not to have a child she has to weigh up all sorts of factors. The price of houses, nursery facilities, the community in which she lives, the work she does all come into play. Pro-choice campaigners have taken up these issues too.

But the 1967 Act assumes that women are not intelligent enough to

make such an important decision as having a child by themselves.

Whether or not Corrie's Bill is carried it's high time the pro-choice movement began to consider what kind of law it would like to see that does allow women to choose. The Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress are both committed to 'abortion on request'. Now is the time to build on the victory of winning trade union and Labour Party support for the anti-Corrie campaign and force the labour movement to debate out what kind of law it should sponsor supporting a woman's right to choose.

The labour movement conference on abortion planned for the autumn and the national conference of NAC should debate out the terms of such a bill. The Labour Party must make a clear commitment to pass such legislation through Parliament in its next manifesto.

We cannot be sure that anti-abortionists will stop at Corrie. If his restrictive legislation is passed we could see even greater restrictions in the future. Doctors and clinics that have been willing to give women as much choice as possible under the terms of the 1967 Act will very likely come under attack.

But one thing is absolutely clear. Whatever happens in the Houses of Parliament over the next few weeks, women will not be prepared to meekly accept John Corrie's attempts to take control of their bodies. Labour and Tory MPs who dare to vote for this bill had better watch out because they'll have thousands of angry women at their heels.

Mixed Feelings, published by Brent against Corrie, c/o Brent Women's Centre, 138 Minet Avenue, London NW10. 30p plus postage.

Abortion: Our struggle for control

LOOK WHO'S
CHOOSING
FOR US!



New pamphlet from the National Abortion Campaign, 25p not including postage, from NAC, 374 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1.

WOMAN'S OWN

THE SUNDAY TIMES

Polls show 66 per cent don't know about Corrie but Four out of five women want the right to choose

By Jude Woodward

KNITTING patterns and romantic stories are usually the staple fare of *Woman's Own*. But this week, with the Corrie anti-abortion Bill about to begin its Third Reading, the magazine stepped decisively out of that mould to publish the findings of a specially commissioned Gallup Poll on abortion.

The poll reveals that 80 per cent of women think that deciding whether to continue with a pregnancy should be left to the woman in consultation with her doctor — a clear indication that the women of this country do not want the Corrie Bill.

But it isn't just women who don't want the Bill. About two-thirds of the people polled felt that the 1967 Abortion Act should either be kept as it is or made more liberal.

Only 33 per cent felt that the law needed tightening up to make abortion more difficult to obtain, and this included the small 10 per cent who felt abortion should never be performed.

Findings

Last weekend the publication of the findings of a poll conducted by MORI for the *Sunday Times* on a similar theme revealed broadly similar results. 56 per cent of those asked felt that abortion should be legally available for all those who want it, while only 29 per cent were against.

Whatever else John Corrie thinks he may be doing he can no longer claim to be giving the public what it wants. Least of all can he claim to be giving women what they want.

Interesting figures reveal that even among Catholics over 50 per cent believe that the law should stay broadly as it is now. Although the proportion of Catholics who think abortion should never be allowed is higher than for the population as a whole, it is still only 20 per cent who hold this extreme view, according to the *Woman's Own* poll.

However, it is not the figures revealed by these polls that make them most interesting. Several polls conducted since 1975 give similar results.

Moralists

John Corrie has had plenty of evidence laid before him which shows that his Bill is not wanted except by a small percentage of moralists and religious bigots.

The significant thing is that two such mainstream — if not downright 'establishment' — papers have published the figures with such prominence. Although the press in general still loves the gore and horror of a good-old, bad abortion story, there is the beginning of a change of attitude.

Perhaps the reality of 'returning

■ 81 per cent of women feel it should be left to them, in consultation with their doctors, whether or not to continue with a pregnancy.

■ 53 per cent of women feel that abortions should be available in case of contraceptive failure.

■ 61 per cent of people would want an abortion if they or their partners became pregnant as a result of rape.

■ 87 per cent of women believe abortions should be available if it was discovered late in pregnancy they were carrying a severely deformed foetus.

■ 61 per cent of women felt that if a woman became unintentionally pregnant while she was in, or past the menopause, she should be able to have an abortion.

■ 80 per cent of women thought that if legal abortion was made more difficult to obtain then women would go ahead and seek some other way to end an unwanted pregnancy.

■ 62 per cent of women interviewed would keep a child if they became unintentionally pregnant. In other words being pro-choice does not make people anti-child.



ANGELA WILLANS — of Mary Grant's Problem Page — explained that her job was utterly depressing before the '67 Act. She was inundated with letters from women desperate for help in ending unwanted pregnancies.



to the backstreets' has sunk in on one or two well-placed newspaper people.

More likely they have been forced to wake up to the reality of public opinion in this country, particularly when it has been so vigorously endorsed by such prestigious bodies as the British Medical Association.

Claire Rayner, who used to run the *Sun's* problem page and is very much behind *Woman's Own's* attack on the Corrie Bill, has a clear view. She used to be a nurse and remembers vividly when a young girl of about her age died in her arms, the victim of a backstreet abortionist.

In Rayner's words: 'If John Corrie wants a Parliamentary cause to espouse, let me offer him one... the provision of really effective and

easily available contraception for all. That is what we need much more than we need this ill-advised, anti-life Bill.'

Claire Rayner is not an insignificant person to have on our side, and her opinion is shared by most of the other 'problem page' advisers such as Marje Proops and Anna Raeburn.

Angela Willans, of the *Woman's Own* Mary Grant page, is also against the Corrie Bill. She believes that no one who has heard 'hundreds of genuine cries for help from the unhappily pregnant' can really hold the view that abortion is either irresponsible or particularly easy.

We should welcome this clear stand by *Woman's Own*, and by the

Sunday Times, for it will certainly help step up the pressure on those MPs who are still planning to vote for or abstain on Corrie's Bill.

However, we don't have a great deal to thank the media for in campaigning against the Corrie Bill. Perhaps one of the most significant facts revealed by the *Sunday Times* MORI Poll is that two weeks ago only 33 per cent of the population knew that there was an anti-abortion Bill making its way through Parliament. The mass media can take the credit for that.

*All statistics mentioned on this page are taken from the Gallup Poll commissioned by *Woman's Own* unless otherwise stated.

The state of things in Parliament

THERE is a small glimmer of light on the Parliamentary front in the fight to stop the Corrie Bill. Only 98 MPs voted against the Second Reading of the Bill, but at a press conference last Friday, Willie Hamilton Labour MP revealed that he had a list of 160 MPs who are now committed to voting against the Bill.

He was optimistic that opponents of the Bill would actually turn up for the Third Reading — the campaign outside Parliament has turned on the heat and most MPs now have no excuse for not knowing what is at stake.

Several MPs, including a number on the Tory benches, are known to have changed their minds since earlier stages of the Bill.

On a more pessimistic note, anti-abortion MPs are planning to filibuster the committee stages of the Seatbelts Bill to ensure that 15 February is free for Corrie to return to the Commons, if it needs more than one day to get a vote.

Jo Richardson, Labour MP, at the same press conference on Friday, indicated she was confident the Bill would not come to a vote on Friday 8 February and would need at least a second day.

If discussion continues and there is no vote on 15 February the Bill may return to the Commons on 29 February, but it is not yet clear whether there will be free time for it on that day.

Even if the Bill is passed in the Commons it still has to go through the House of Lords, where amendments can be put. The National Abortion Campaign and the Campaign Against Corrie will be holding a meeting towards the end of February to discuss whether to have a campaign directed towards the House of Lords and other aspects of the way forward for the pro-abortion campaign.

Answering the Church

'IS anti-abortion pro-life?' is the title of a new pamphlet published by the Abortion Law Reform Association. The pamphlet concentrates on the Catholic Church's anti-abortion campaigners to show the inconsistency of their attitude to 'life'.

The Church's so-called pro-life attitude to the foetus is revealed for what it really is — profoundly hostile and suspicious of women and anti-sex.

A criticism of the pamphlet would be that it tends to concentrate on answering the Church's arguments rather than putting forward a positive view of abortion. But if you need to argue against anti-abortionists, or convince the undecided, it is an absolute mine for finding pernicious views held by anti-abortionists on sex, women, rape, childcare, capital punishment and so on.

On our small but important point, however, the pamphlet is completely wrong. It places those people who oppose population control experiments in the camp of the anti-abortionists and claims that 'fertility control needs to be part of a wholesale campaign to raise the living standards of the poor and rid the world of hunger and malnutrition'.

Such neo-Malthusian ideas have no place in the labour movement; they are the basis of racist and imperialist policies in many Third World countries and have been refuted by many international pro-abortion groups as well as by Marx himself. The international pro-choice movement opposes population control just as strongly as it fights for abortion and contraception rights.

'Is anti-abortion pro-life?', new pamphlet from ALRA, 88 Islington High St, London N1. 50p net including post.

By Geoff Bell

IN JANUARY 1977 Alfred Thompson-Denning, PC, Master of the Rolls, Baron Denning of Whitechurch, declared:

'To every subject of this land, however powerful, I would use Thomas Fuller's words over 300 years ago, "Be you never so high that the law is above you".'

Last Friday the Law Lords decided that Denning's judgement prohibiting the picketing of private steel firms was itself 'above', outside and in defiance of 'the law'. The trade union movement drew a collective sigh of relief.

But don't breathe too soon. The same day, the news came that James Prior intends to overturn the previous decision of the Law Lords in the 'MacShane' case.

This was the judgement involving the National Union of Journalists which had sanctioned boycotting of a company not directly involved in a pay claim. Prior is out to remove legal immunity from those workers who take industrial action in support of disputes that do not directly involve them.

In other words under Prior's law pickets like those at the private steel plants will be liable to massive financial damages. Because most pickets wouldn't have the money to pay such fines, that would mean jail. This means what the unions have won, in the House of Lords roundabout, they could lose in the House of Commons.

What of Denning himself? Will the 81-year old judge, who has had yet another of his rulings overturned, now be booted out? That would be rather difficult. To remove an appeal judge would require a vote in both Houses of Parliament. In practice once someone becomes a judge he (well, more than 90 per cent of judges are male) is there for life.

Most of those who do become judges share the same upper class background as Denning. In 1975, 68 per cent of the High Court judges appointed in the previous five years had been to public school.

From 1951 to 1968 only an

DON'T TRUST JUDGES OR LAW LORDS

astonishingly low 1.2 per cent of judges appointed came from a working class background. This is why people like Denning, even if it means breaking the existing law, can always be relied on to side with their ruling class buddies.

But perhaps the fact that the Law Lords overturned Denning suggests that there is such a thing as good old unbiased British justice? Don't you believe it.

The steel union was lucky to even get to the Law Lords in the first place. Only one in six of those who appeal to the Law Lords are given the right to have their appeal heard. In most cases it is not the Law Lords who 'interpret' the law but judges like Denning.

The Law Lords deal with, on average, 50 cases a year. The five divisions of the Court of Appeal, over which Denning presides, handle over 900.

That means that if Prior's attempt to outlaw a whole series of traditional union rights is successful, pickets may — at some future time, — find themselves appealing for

justice to Lord Denning. But they can expect little mercy from that gentleman. Just last year he complained that, 'The power of the unions is perhaps the greatest challenge to the rule of law in Britain'.

What Denning and the rest of his class mean is that the power of the 12 million trade unionists in this country

could prove a 'challenge to the rule' of un-elected, over-paid, life-appointed people like himself.

And just because the Law Lords ruled Denning off-side doesn't alter the fact that in a democratically-run society neither Denning nor the Law Lords would have the right to make the decisions they have in the first place.

WANT TO MEET DENNING?

ANY trade unionist, steelworker or picket who would welcome the opportunity of having an exchange of views with Lord Denning might care to note that he will be making two public appearances shortly to promote his book *The Due Process of Law*.

Denning will be signing copies of

this work at:
LONDON, 8 February, 4.30-5.30pm. Butterworths Bookshop, Bell Yard, Temple Bar, WC2.
OXFORD, 9 February, 11.30-12.30pm. Blackwell's bookshop.



EVEN if the Law Lords had upheld Denning all the signs were that thousands of steelworkers would have ignored his instructions.

That was the main message of week five of the steel strike.

IN WARRINGTON, last Wednesday, Colin Herd, convenor of the town's ISTC strike committee, told Socialist Challenge: 'We've ignored Denning. If the appeal goes against us on Friday we'll still stay out.'

Warrington steelworkers have been concentrating their efforts on Walker's steel stockholders in Blackburn, the largest stockholders in Europe. Colin explained: 'We've maintained a 24 hour picket, with a minimum of 30 picketers, and arrangements have been made for a task force of 200 to be lodged within ten miles of Blackburn in digs with local sympathetic trade unionists.'

'We've had the support of flying pickets from Stocksbridge, Rotherham and Shotton. We're going to make an example of Walker's — take away the biggest brick and the rest will crumble.'

IN RISCA, SOUTH WALES the Denning ruling was totally ignored by 200 Llanwern pickets who arrived outside the gates of the Cashmore private steel plant. One police inspector and three constables told the pickets that under the terms of the Denning judgement what they were doing was illegal. The cops were surrounded by pickets enquiring why. Exit the police.

IN SWANSEA last Thursday 200 pickets prevented anyone entering Metal Box, which manufactures food cans. Swansea pickets also prevented the movement of finished goods from the Signodes factory. This was in spite of union instructions that finished goods, as opposed to steel supplies should be allowed through the gates.



POLICE attempting to break up a picket line in Middlesbrough; there are reports from all over the country of police brutality against steel workers.

Pickets of steel

But as well as defying Denning the steel strike throughout Wales has seen the intervention of the SPG on picket lines.

IN PONTYPOOL on Saturday police brutality against pickets was

denounced by Paul Flynn, a Labour councillor. Flynn was speaking at a 2,000 demonstration, called by the ISTC in support of the strike. Haydn Matthews a member of the South Wales NUM executive also spoke and called for the 10 March strike action

to be brought forward. Matthews added that the aim should be to bring down the government before the year was out. He received a good reception for this call.

IN SCUNTHORPE students at Essex University responded to a call

from steelworkers and joined a picket line at Mistletoe dock. The students also collected £200 towards the strike fund and offered accommodation and full use of union facilities to the strikers. The day after Denning had announced his verdict delegates representing the 6,000 Scunthorpe steelworkers voted unanimously that the ISTC executive should ignore the Appeal Court ruling.

IN CORBY steelworker John's reaction to the Denning judgement was: 'We'll fill the jails because we'll carry on picketing.' Stocksbridge steelworker Mick added: 'If the police start arresting people, in an ideal world the TUC should start calling other sections out. But we don't rely on the TUC.'

IN ABERDEEN contingents of pickets have been arriving every week in an attempt to halt the movement of steel on its way to the rigs in the North Sea. The dockers and members of the National Union of Seamen are supporting the action but there has been a mixed response from lorry drivers. Members of the strike committee are travelling as far north as Wick to seal off any attempt to move steel out to the rigs.

Contrast

But Pat Shevlane, the Scottish strike co-ordinator, has expressed disappointment at the lack of support from the Scottish TUC and contrasted this to the backing steelworkers have been given by the Welsh TUC.

IN SHEFFIELD a march and 1,000 strong rally was held on Saturday in solidarity with the strike. Joe Whelan called upon the TUC to declare a one day general strike.

Reporters: Bill Loxden, Graham Atwell, Ann Henderson, Barry Wilkins, Ann Levy.

By Valerie Coultas

A GENERAL strike is one of the highest expressions of class solidarity. It inevitably pits the working class against the ruling class.

A general strike movement can develop from the base or be led from the top. A look at what happened in France 44 years ago shows what is at stake.

In 1936 French society entered a period of intense crisis. Fascism had triumphed the year before in Germany and was becoming a threat in France as well. Following the electoral victory of the Popular Front in April 1936, a general strike took place that came from the base up.

A great strike wave swept across France on the basis of primarily economic demands for higher wages. The strike movement developed from below, starting with two successful

'A general strike cannot be far off! We are in spitting distance of it. It's a 1926 situation.'

SID WEIGHELL, general secretary, National Union of Railwaymen.

strikes at Le Havre and Toulouse. The movement rapidly gained support, becoming an all-out confrontation between capital and labour.

At the end of May nearly all the engineering factories in the Paris region were out on strike and in the next few days they were joined by textile, distribution, catering, printing and other workers. Factories were occupied in a direct challenge to the rule of the bosses. The ruling class, seized with panic, gave concessions; known as the Matignon Agreement, including massive pay rises across the board and paid holidays.

Giving concessions did not succeed in subduing the working class, but gave it fresh inspiration. They began to raise new demands, particularly for a national minimum wage and the nationalisation of factories.

In one area of Paris the Hotchkiss workers issued a call for an elected central strike committee to group representatives from 34 local factories.

On 11 June the country was at fever pitch and the capital ablaze with rumours that a demonstration to the city centre was under preparation. Thorez, the leader of the French CP, addressed a meeting of Paris Communists. But he could

'A general strike is the last thing people in responsible positions like me want — but if it's the only thing left to you.'

BILL SIRTS, general secretary of the ISTC.

see only one way forward: 'We need to know how to end a strike' that was menacing 'national security', he said.

Instructions followed from Thorez on how to bring the strike to an end. L'Humanité, the CP's newspaper, explained his actions:

'We think it impossible to pursue any policy that would risk endangering the security of France in the face of the Hitlerite threat'.

The Russian diplomat, Maxim Litvinov, made it even clearer:

'The essential point is that France should not allow her military strength to be weakened. We hope no interna-

May 1936: France at fever pitch—

WHAT KIND OF GENERAL STRIKE?



A general strike always pits the working class against the ruling class, raising the question: 'Who rules?'

tional disturbance will favour the designs of the Reich'.

The bureaucrats in the Soviet Union wanted an alliance with Western powers against Hitler. Stalin had already signed a pact with the French government in 1935 and he didn't want the French Communist Party or French workers doing anything to damage it.

Trotskyists in France at the time were few in number, but those there were argued that the revolutionary mood of the masses should be encouraged. Concessions won now would be taken away again unless the movement went onto the offensive,



LEON BLUM

they argued, and this meant workers organising armed defence and forming workers' councils to coordinate control of production, distribution and to move towards the formation of a workers' government.

The Popular Front government saw that these militants expressed the

revolutionary aspirations of the French working class. Their paper La Lutte Ouvrière was confiscated, while L'Humanité launched a hysterical attack on the 'provocateurs' for daring to argue for revolutionary ideas.

The French CP then, as now, had

Now is the time for action

LORD Denning's attempts to divide the steelworkers have failed. 15,000 private sector steelworkers joined 110,000 in the public sector to stand united against the steel bosses and the Tory government.

On 10 March the Welsh miners have called for an indefinite strike against the threatened closure of steel plants in Port Talbot and Llanwern and the proposed imports of cheap coking coal from abroad by the British Steel Corporation.

On 18 February the South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils has called for a general strike against cuts in their area. The stage is set for the British labour movement to take on the Tories.

The power and confidence to win is not lacking. Even at Hadfield's in Sheffield, where there was supposed to be opposition to strike action, there were only four votes against coming out last Monday.

But, despite a lot of talk of a general strike, no one is giving the decisive lead that is necessary, least of

all the body that has the power to coordinate such action — the General Council of the TUC.

Frank Chapple, chairing the TUC Nationalised Industries Committee discussion on the threatened closures in steel, persuaded the Welsh miners to hold off indefinite strike action until the TUC had tried further talks with the government.

Now it seems as if the TUC are trying to persuade the Welsh TUC not to back all-out strike action on March 10 against the closures at Port Talbot and Llanwern.

The Tories have made it clear that they will chop jobs in any nationalised industry that is not making high enough profits for the bosses.

The £48 million that Mr Nicholas Edwards, Secretary of State for Wales, has procured to create new jobs in Wales is a pittance compared to the £300 million that the BSC is prepared to spend on getting workers in the steel industry to sell their jobs.

a mass following inside the working class. When it argued 'Everything for the Popular Front, everything through the Popular Front' the mass movement was disarmed unless it

'The British TUC should follow the example of the Welsh TUC and call a one day strike.'

JOE WHELAN, general secretary, Nottingham NUM.

moved on to challenge the reformist leaders and bourgeois figures inside that Popular Front government.

The French capitalists soon counter-attacked. All the gains won in the Matignon agreements of 7 June were liquidated, except paid holidays. The Popular Front collapsed, not having satisfied fully either the needs of the working class or the ruling class. The ground was prepared for the Hitler-Pétain dictatorship which succeeded in the task of destroying the organised workers movement in France.

Reformist leaders like Leon Blum and Thorez will act in a similar fashion today as they did in 1936. When it comes to the crunch, when the choice is between capitalism and socialism, they always choose

'Serious industrial consequences will follow' if the talks between the TUC and the government over the steel cuts produce no positive results.

TUC Steel Committee

capitalism. They always have more respect for the institutions and ideas of the ruling class than the power and needs of the working class.

As in the '30s, so today, it is only those militants who arm themselves with a clear, uncompromising, revolutionary perspective that will give a lead when the going gets tough. That's why, while it's possible to fight alongside CP members and Labour Party members in building mass actions against the Tories, it's vital to build a revolutionary socialist party that gets across the alternative to reformism. A party that is prepared to see the struggle through right to the end.

Hadwyn Matthews, a miners' representative speaking to 700 steelworkers and miners in Pontypool over the weekend, put it this way: 'The Tories are waging war on the whole working class and can only be beaten by the broadest possible solidarity'.

When he suggested that 10 March was too far away and the miners wanted the date to be brought forward while the steelworkers were still out he got unanimous agreement.

He's quite right. If the pay claim of the steelworkers is to be settled to their satisfaction and jobs in nationalised industries are to be saved, NOW is the time to strike.

Miners and steelworkers should not wait for the TUC to call for a general strike. Workers at the base of these industries know that their jobs are at stake if this battle is lost.

Token solidarity with the steelworkers is not enough. Strike support committees, trade union branches, trades councils must begin now to campaign for an all-out general strike against the Tories.

SUPPORT THE STEEL STRIKE

STRIKE NEWS

The day French and German steelworkers sang the 'Internationale'

FOR 16 years, Jakob Moneta was editor of *Metall*, the journal of the metal workers' union in West Germany.

When he spoke last week to 500 electricians on strike at the Port Talbot steel works they gave him an ovation. The electricians asked him about the kind of demands they should be raising, and applauded his replies.

Here Jakob Moneta, a member of the West German section of the Fourth International, describes the strike for a 35-hour week in the West German steel industry, and how the struggle over jobs needs to cross national frontiers.

THE BRITISH steelworkers, just like those in France, are told that they should raise their productivity to the levels achieved by the steel industry in West Germany.

Yet it was in West Germany, the country which is held up as the model for 'social peace', and in that branch of industry in which 'co-determination' is said to have pacified the working class and put an end to class struggle — steel — that workers engaged in a bitter six-week strike to demand a 35-hour week.

When the steel crisis began in 1974, cut-throat competition broke out between the steel-producing giants in the West. From 1974 to 1978, some 100,000 steel workers in West Europe lost their job, and a further 100,000 were put on short-time working.

Production dropped by 20 per cent, and prices climbed by 50 per cent. It was not long before the EEC intervened. The 'understanding' reached between the steel producers allowed them to raise prices and at the same time to safeguard their profitability by introducing protectionist measures, particularly against imports of steel from Japan.

Plan

The plan for rationalisation and new investment puts profits first, so that the victims of the 'technological progress' are the steelworkers, who are robbed of their job. In country after country, they are refusing to pay that price.

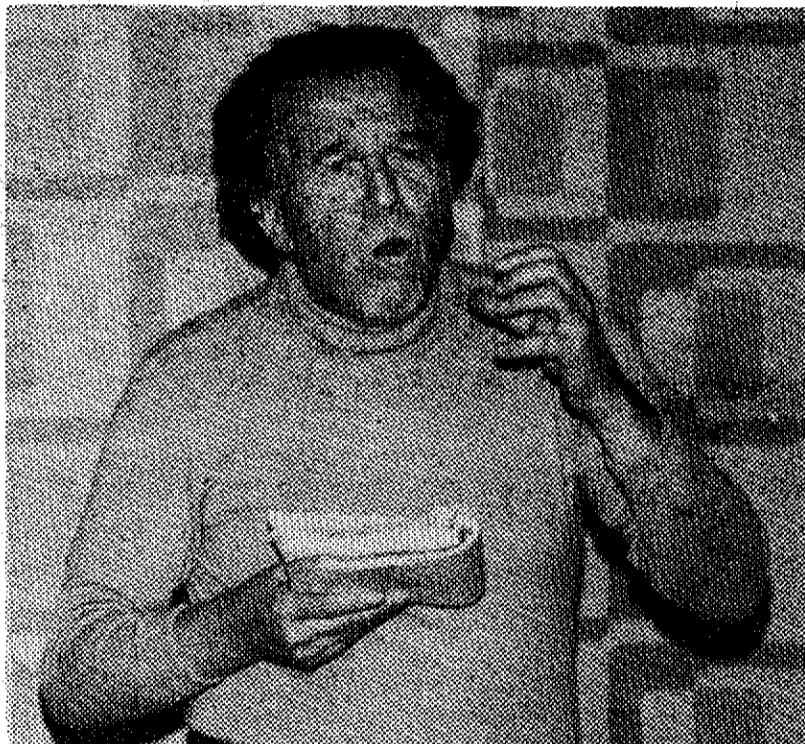
In West Germany, IG-Metall — the Metal Industry Union, an industrial union with 2.6m members, in which the steelworkers are organised — declared that it would take up the fight for a 35-hour week in 1978. The union aimed to show that it is possible to reduce unemployment by sharing work without loss of pay, so that work can be distributed to everyone instead of imposing unemployment.

Strikes in West Germany are decided by secret ballot. Out of 155,000 steelworkers entitled to vote (only union members are allowed to vote) 95 per cent took part in the ballot, and 87 per cent voted to strike. Only 8 per cent voted against.

With such overwhelming support for action, backed by 22 mass meetings which over 120,000 workers attended, the steel barons offered six weeks' paid leave. They refused to make any concession on reducing the working week.

Offer

The employers' offer meant an additional three days leave for those aged over 30, and as much as an extra



JAKOB MONETA - speaking to the steelworkers at a Socialist Challenge meeting in Sheffield last week

nine days for those under 21 — but the union turned it down.

As one of the regional union leaders put it: 'We are not at all against more paid leave. But we did not start this battle in order to win a few more pleasant hours under the marvellous sun in Spain and come back to find that we no longer have a job. We are fighting to keep our job.'

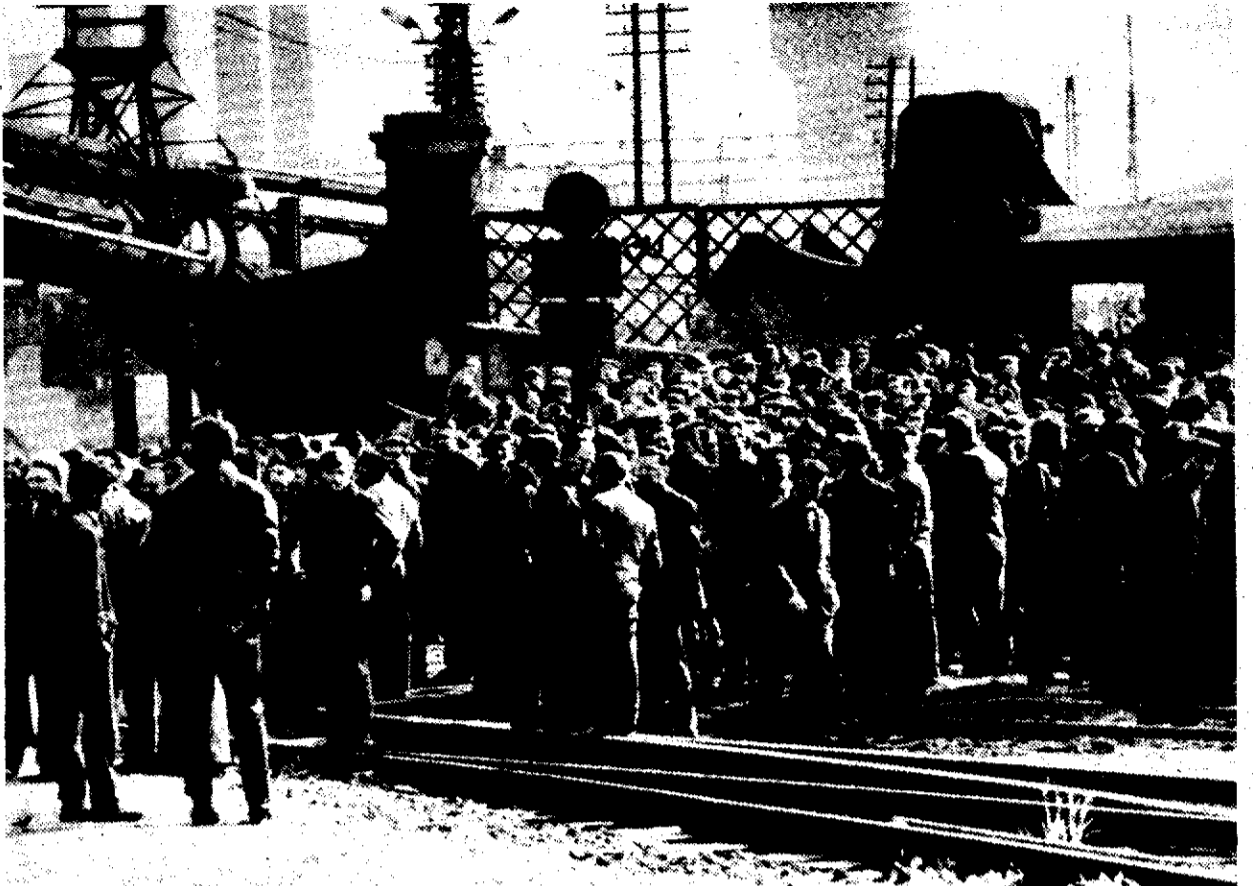
On 28 November 1978, 40,000 steelworkers went on strike. The steel barons retaliated by locking out 30,000 steelworkers whom the union had not involved in the strike.

The strikers' spirit was magnificent. On Christmas eve, four thousand pickets covered the 140 gates of the steel works. They set up Christmas trees hung with Easter eggs to show how long they were prepared to hold out.

Barons

But the steel barons decided to win this battle, and they had a common strategy worked out by the employers' association. It included a 'taboo catalogue' of the union demands which the employers were forbidden to concede. Among these was the reduction of the working week.

A government institute had shown that a cut in the 40-hour working week by just one hour would reduce unemployment by 300,000. Since '74, West Germany — the supposed economic miracle — has had one million unemployed. For the employers, a certain amount of



FRENCH steelworkers - their resistance to closures last year gained support from German steelworkers

much less determination than the employers. But it would be a wild exaggeration to say that the strike led to defeat. We won six weeks' paid leave. The flaw in the agreement, however, is that the 40-hour week remains in the contract until the end of 1983, and this applies to the whole metal industry.

In a secret ballot of the steelworkers, 50 per cent voted to accept the new agreement and 41 per cent voted against it. But of those steelworkers actually engaged in the strike, there was a majority of No votes.

Studies

Meanwhile studies show that about a third of the 8m jobs in industry in West Germany could be replaced by robots and computers in the coming years, and the recession is now deepening. All the forecasts show that the growth rate will tend towards one per cent a year in the advanced capitalist countries, which means even more unemployment.

The fight against unemployment, which began in West Germany and was then taken up in France, is now happening in Britain. But what's really needed is for us to go into this fight together, internationally.

The 100,000 workers who demon-

strated in Paris early last year against the annihilation of jobs in the French steel industry understood this very well. When a small delegation of German steelworkers from the Ruhr Valley appeared at the demonstration they were greeted with a mighty chorus of the 'Internationale'.

The French Communist Party and the CGT, the CP-dominated union, had argued that the reason for the crisis in the French steel industry was German competition. One of their slogans was: 'No to a German Europe'.

We are all organised in the same metal and steelworkers' international, and we must see to it that it starts to be as effective as the multinational corporations, which are acting on a world-wide basis for their interest and against ours.

When the steelworkers in West Germany were locked out, they put up posters saying: 'Now the bosses lock us out. When do we throw the bosses out?'

If we start to plan in common not only the steel industry but the sort of society we need; if we explain what a crime it is to have 17m people unemployed in the advanced capitalist countries, then we might in common find the way out of unemployment and this capitalist system which endangers the future of humanity.

Luxembourg unions halt steel to Britain

From LCR (Luxembourg section of the Fourth International)

WIDESPREAD support for the British steel strike is being won from the trade unions in Luxembourg, where jobs are equally threatened under the EEC's Davignon Plan to rationalise the industry.

The most important union federation, the OGB-L, which is dominant in the steel industry, has sent a telegram to the British unions saying: 'We have informed the Luxembourg steel manufacturers that under no circumstances will we allow any delivery of steel from Luxembourg which might sabotage your action. We are ready to take part in further solidarity action along with the International Metalworkers Federation ...'

We ourselves have distributed leaflets urging solidarity at the three main steel plants (Arbed-Belval,

Arbed-Differdange, and Arbed-Dudelange). We point out that the British strike follows similar struggles in Luxembourg, Germany, and France, and from this we conclude:

'We should demand of our unions, which are organised at the international level, that they take initiatives which span national borders. We should ourselves, through our delegates, establish international contacts to organise a European steelworkers conference to prepare a general strike throughout the European steel industry to win our demands:

'Down with the Davignon Plan and its hundreds of thousands of redundancies!

'For the 35-hour week without loss of pay, without speed-up and with a proportional increase in employment under workers' control!

'Total solidarity with the British steelworkers!'

Two thousand youth rally against the Tories

By Jude Arkwright

LEFT-wing Labour MP, Eric Heffer told 2,200 youth on Saturday: 'You are the standard bearers of the future. We have to build the socialist revolution.'

These fine words were spoken during a Labour Party Young Socialists demonstration and rally at London's Central Hall, called on the basis of 'Youth Against The Tories'.

Heffer, and the other main speaker, Tony Benn, were clearly affected by the enthusiasm of many in the audience — although Benn rather blotted his copy-book at the singing of the Internationale when he obviously wasn't sure of the words.

Democracy inside the Labour Party was the main theme of the speakers. Following the demands by

the Labour right for a witch-hunt against the Militant grouping, Heffer pointed out that the real infiltrators were those with 'Tory concepts', acting as 'a fifth column inside the Labour Party'.

Traditions

Tony Benn took up the theme, taking it upon himself to explain to those 'too young to remember' what the real traditions of the Labour Party were. Benn complained that the 'socialist' policies of George Lansbury and Stafford Cripps had been ditched by the Labour Party in the last 20 years.

But now, he argued, the economic crisis posed the Labour Party with a clear choice, and for Benn the choice needed is a return to the type of socialist perspectives followed in the past.

On what constitutes such a

perspective now, Eric Heffer declared: 'We cannot be mealy mouthed. That's why we support the steel workers, every labour council that fights the cuts, why we oppose all oppressive actions in Northern Ireland and ... (wait for it) ... the abolition of the House of Lords.'

Noticeable in its absence in Heffer's priorities was the need to fight the Corrie anti-abortion Bill. It was regrettable that on a day when up and down the country thousands of militant and angry young women were on the streets against Corrie (2,000 in Manchester alone) the only speaker on the all male platform who mentioned the issue was Tony Benn.

The youth at the rally were looking for a way forward, and although there was much talk about socialism the platform had little to say about how it was to be achieved or what concrete steps should be taken now against the Tory offensive.

The most Andy Bevan, the Labour Party's youth officer and a supporter of Militant, could offer was to join the Labour Party. That copies of the youth paper Revolution sold like hot cakes at the rally suggests that for many membership of the LPYS was not the total solution.

Many at the rally were looking for bold policies involving action. The failure of the rally was that the only action the organisers seemed interested in was marching the youth to the top of the hill — and marching them down again.

BOC defending jobs

By Tessa van Gelderen

TWELVE workers at the British Oxygen depot in Greenwich have been suspended since 18 January for refusing to unload a contract lorry. The use of contract labour can lead to redundancies, and the workers insisted on abiding by an agreement under which the lorry should have gone to the Hackney depot.

BOC management at Greenwich placed all workers on a 40-hour week, which means a reduction in pay. The workers responded by demanding full pay, including for those who had been suspended. As a result the depot is at a standstill.

John Walsh, convenor of Hackney BOC, says: 'Management has tried to use Hackney to break the Greenwich dispute, by asking us to supply the Greenwich customers. We will not let this happen. If they succeed at Greenwich they will try to take on the whole of BOC.'

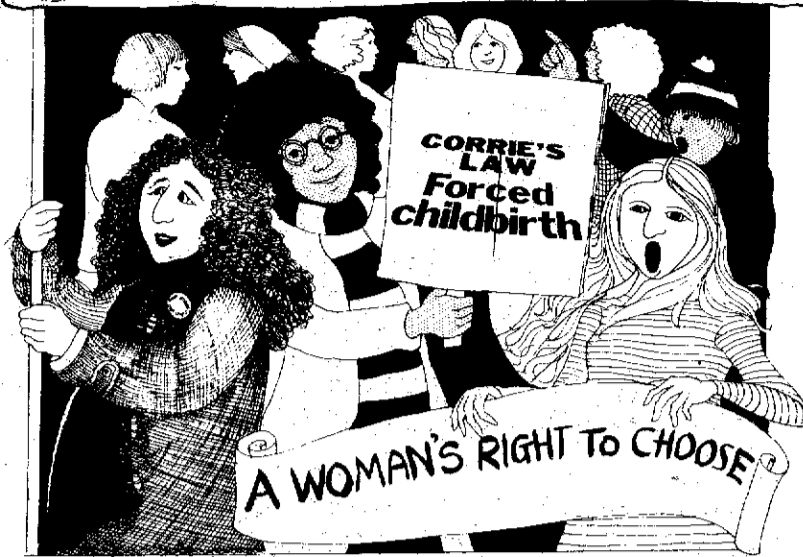
Don't pick up a Penguin

TONY BENN has declared his support for the boycott action by staff at Penguin Books against threatened job loss.

Management at Penguin plans to eliminate a total of 90 jobs, which would include 36 redundancies. The three unions at the publishing company — the NUJ, SOGAT, and ASTMS — are opposing all forms of job loss, including 'natural wastage'.

Their immediate response is to boycott 290 books which are in various stages of production. Among them is a reprint of Tony Benn's *Arguments for Socialism*.

CAMPAIGN NEWS



OVER 100 people marched through Newcastle last Saturday to protest against the Corrie Bill on a demonstration sponsored by the North Regional TUC. It was also supported by the County Association of Trades Councils, many local trades councils and trade union branches, abortion campaign groups and political organisations.

Angry and noisy

NEARLY 3000 angry and noisy protestors marched in Manchester on Saturday in the biggest demonstration in the North-west for over a year. Piccadilly Gardens, in the centre of the city, reverberated with the chant of 'Free abortion on demand' in a very spirited two mile march to protest the Corrie Bill.

There were more than fifty banners including the National Abortion Campaign, trade unions and student unions, women's and gay groups, Labour Party and political organisations. Trade union banners on the march included the Transport Union, Post Office workers, Local Government officers, ASTMS, General and Municipal workers and others.

The march ended with a rally with Dr Sheila Abdullah, Terry Straiton (Manchester NUS) and Linda Thalman (NAC and ASTMS shop steward). The biggest response from the audience came when Linda Thalman said: 'We are going to defeat the Corrie Bill and we are going to defeat this Tory government.'

Charming

FIVE NAC supporters went to see Tony Benn, MP for Bristol South-east, at his surgery last week. He was his usual charming self, anxious to persuade us that he was doing all he could to help.

He thought that NAC and LARC's campaign on Labour MPs had been very effective — we hope he's right.

However, he was at his least helpful on the question of the 'conscience' vote. He didn't think an MP's voting behaviour should be a matter for discipline — he pointed out that he would have been in trouble several times if it was. He also said that a three line whip was never issued for Private Members Bills. Presumably he shares the view of most Tory MPs that if a thing has never happened in the past that's a good reason why it shouldn't happen in the future.

However, he will be coming to speak at the rally on Tuesday, and he threw in the information that he had been deluged with 'masses' of anti-Corrie letters, with only two or three in favour.

Whatever Benn does, there will be big contingents from Bristol on both Tuesday and Friday.

Vote against

ON 18 January Bristol women staged a torch-light procession to the surgery of Michael Cocks, MP for South Bristol and Labour Party Chief Whip, to press him to vote against the Corrie Bill.

The procession delivered a petition against the Bill, which Michael Cocks voted for at the Second Reading. He was offered several arguments why he should change his mind, including the fact that his constituents were against the Bill. He just explained that representation was not his role!

Islington

THE London Borough of Islington was thoroughly lobbied about the Corrie Bill last Saturday. A motorcade bearing about 35 pro-choice campaigners went round all the major shopping centres in the borough, stopping at each one to give out leaflets.

The motorcade was supported by members of the local abortion campaign, IMG, Big Flame and Labour Party members.

The leaflet advertised the lobby on 5 February and the women's assembly on Friday. The response was good: several people said they would come and many expressed support.

Youth march

LAST Saturday saw 400 people on a 'Youth against Corrie' demo through Oxford. There were groups of local school students — members of the National Union of School Students — and Student Union members. Local abortion campaign groups were also represented. One of the speakers was a leader of the Portuguese abortion-campaign.



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

ERIC HEFFER: 'We have to build a socialist revolution'

NO NUKES IN LONDON

By Jenny Flintoft, North London Anti-Nuclear Group

TO SHOUTS of 'Two, four, six, eight, We don't want to radiate' a procession of more than 1500 people set off from Primrose Hill on Saturday 26 January on a five-mile march to Willesden.

The demonstration was called by the London Anti-Nuclear Alliance. The route roughly followed the North London Line's southern branch, along nine tons of spent nuclear fuel passes every week. Friends of the Earth, the National Union of Railwaymen (sic), the National Union of Students, the Ecology Party and Socialist Workers Party banners were carried.

A rally was held at Roundwood Park, with entertainment provided by the Covent Garden Community Theatre. Brent South MP Laurie Pavitt welcomed the demonstrators.

Steve Forey (ASLEF) spoke of rail workers' disquiet at the inadequate testing of the spent fuel containers. (Flasks have been tested in fires lasting only 30 minutes, and in simulated crashes at not more than 30 mph. Previous fires have lasted up to four hours, and impact speeds of up to 145 mph could be expected.)

Mike Grewcock (Campaign Against Nuclear Energy in Southern Australia) spoke of the high number of deaths amongst uranium miners from inhaling radioactive radon gas. Nuclear engineer Charles Wakstein pointed out the extreme unlikelihood of large-scale evacuation if a spent fuel flask released its lethal contents, even though between 6,000 and 30,000 people would die.

Martin Goldschmitt (London Alliance) accused the Central Electricity Generating Board of deliberately misleading the public in claiming a flask release would only affect people in the immediate vicinity. American studies, he said, confirm Wakstein's figures.

Demonstrators hope that NUR and ASLEF will eventually boycott spent fuel transport altogether. Since the British nuclear industry depends on reprocessing this could lead to its closure.

For information on future anti-nuclear activities, contact London Anti-Nuclear Alliance, 6, Endsleigh Street, WC1 (688 4248), or the Anti-Nuclear Campaign, 27, Clerkenwell Close, EC1.



FROM FALLS ROAD to Soweto, the news that Tehran had been seized in a mass popular insurrection and that the last government of the Shah had been sent hurrying into exile after him was greeted with rapturous applause.

Television brought the streets of Tehran into homes across the globe. By their slogans: 'Death to the Shah! Death to Carter!', the Iranian masses publicly indicted monarchic dictatorship and imperialism alike. By their action, they tossed the one aside and mocked the other's impotence.

For all those struggling against oppression the February revolution showed the power of the masses; bursting the chains which had bound them for 25 years; renouncing the limitations placed on their lives, collectively, consciously, unstoppably.

For socialists, there could be no other response but one of welcome. All but the most isolated sectarians hailed the courage and determination of the Iranian people with open arms.

But could the Iranian workers and peasants continue their revolution into a movement that would end imperialist exploitation for ever? One year afterwards they have not yet done so. But is the revolutionary process still going on? Two of our regular contributors on Iran offer different views.

And we highlight the great events of that year.



IN October 1979 President Carter dramatically signalled his continued support for the Shah by allowing him to enter the United States for 'medical treatment'. The reaction in Iran was swift as the US embassy in Tehran was stormed and its staff held hostage for the return of the Shah to face trial for his crimes.

Khomeini hoped to use this to divert attention from the failure of his regime to solve any of the pressing problems facing the country. But the mass mobilisations against US imperialism began to pose the question of how the workers themselves could break the chains still binding the country to the imperialist system.

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The Revolution continues

By John Leadbetter

THE SEIZURE of hostages by Islamic students and the occupation of the US Embassy received mass support from the Iranian people. It also unleashed one of the mightiest imperialist propaganda campaigns against a struggling people since the Second World War.

The demand for the Shah's extradition was tremendously popular in Iran. Numerous marches over the past months have wound their way through Tehran to the gates of the Embassy. Gatherings of unemployed, women, students and youth have given voice to the anti-imperialist sentiment that was the product of the anti-Shah movement. The international ramifications of the Iranian struggle were clearly expressed in a resolution passed by the Islamic Workers Shoras (factory councils) and read on a demonstration supported by tens of thousands of workers on 23 December:

'The radius of revolution is spreading internationally. Revolutionary methods, and economic, political, social and military planning must be the guiding principles for struggles throughout the Islamic world and in all dominated nations.'

This political consciousness is not conditional on the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. It is a product of the radicalisation of broad layers in Iran since the February insurrection. And it extends well beyond the specific demand for the Shah's extradition.

In the same resolution, demands are made on the state 'for the development of basic industry and production of raw materials and

spare parts'. The land question should be resolved by confiscation of the property of feudalists and big landlords, 'to be divided up in accordance with a plan that meets the needs of farmers and agricultural workers'.

Thus the view that the Embassy occupation constitutes a diversion of the masses from the more crucial class battles to be fought within Iran requires some examination.

Powerful

Any hope Khomeini might have had of undermining such developing struggles by making the question of anti-imperialism a rallying call has clearly been dashed. The numbers who voted in the referendum on the constitution were markedly lower than those who participated in the earlier referendum on 'Monarchy or Islamic Republic' last March.

But it is in the arena of the national question that the revolutionary process is being carried forward most powerfully. From the earliest days of the Bazargan government, the Kurds asserted that their political demands would not be suppressed by a religious dictator. The overthrow of the Pahlavi regime unleashed a social upheaval among the Kurds which went far beyond questions of democratic rights, although of course these retained their force.

Clashes between the peasantry and the land-owning classes led to land seizures and a redistribution of property through village and area councils. The whole question of capitalist land relations was raised, forcing the leadership of the Kurdish Democratic Party into taking a clear oppositional stance to the new central government. When Khomeini launched his Islamic Guards against the Kurds, he acted

IRAN: ON THE IN

The Bad and the Ugly

By Azar Tabari

THE OCCUPATION of the US Embassy in Tehran and the events around it have very little to do with anti-imperialist struggle. Nor can the demand for the return of the Shah be characterised as anti-imperialist in any meaningful sense.

Socialist Challenge, like many other journals of the left, has been filled with articles explaining why the Iranian masses detest the Shah and why they are mobilising for his return to face 'trial'. But it has gone unnoticed that this sort of mobilisation is an exception rather than the rule. Where are the thousands of Nicaraguans storming the American Embassy in Managua to demand the return of Somoza, certainly no more a butcher nor less a thief than the Shah.

Is it perhaps that masses in the process of taking their fate into their own hands find more important focuses for mobilisation, and regimes that have progressive social projects (no matter how deficient) do not find it necessary to consolidate their rule through hysterical and completely symbolic demands for revenge?

Just prior to the present so-called upsurge of anti-imperialist struggle, the Iranian situation was marked by increasing anti-government ferment: among the Kurds; in the universities, where issues of freedom of political debate had again been raised; among women, some of whom were beginning to organise against the new marriage and divorce laws, which repeal the small gains that had been made under the Shah; among the workers, where there was a modest

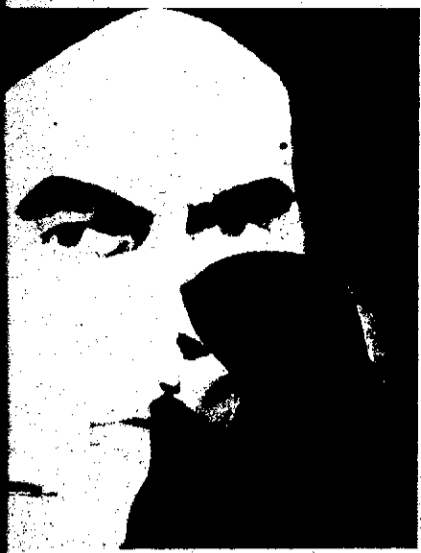
rise in economic struggles.

The embassy occupation, far from impelling these struggles forward, acts as a brake on them. It simultaneously diverts attention from the real issues facing Iran and serves as a rallying cry for the most typical obscurantist appeals to 'national unity', overlaid with the Islamic veneer that renders this time-honoured reactionary appeal even more retrogressive.

Khomeini is now in a position to blame all economic shortages on American sabotage; already a huge propaganda campaign for the restriction of consumption has been launched. All dissidents can now be branded as agents of US imperialism and will suffer the wrath of the masses accordingly. Khomeini is using the occasion to implement what he had failed to achieve before: a massive mobilisation of youth into armed militias under the total control of the clergy and their henchmen and a reintroduction of the discipline into the army.

To complete the picture, one has only to add the impact that the embassy seizure has had on the American political situation. The longer the incident continues, the more likely it will become that Khomeini will succeed in unravelling the effects of the Vietnamese revolution on the consciousness of the American people, rendering it possible for Washington to get away with direct military interventions against revolutions throughout the world.

The line that has been taken by most of the far left on the current events in Iran flows logically from its analysis of what Khomeini stands for. It can be summarised briefly as follows:



situation of popular insurrection the of the most oppressed come rapidly to Women, who had played a prominent the demonstrations against the Shah, to organise for their own liberation. Thousands marched on 8 March, National Women's Day, but rapidly found the reactionary bands lined up against their continuing struggle is one of the compelling the revolution forward beyond of the 'Islamic Republic'.

ally in defence of capitalist property against a threat to a capitalist state. Kurds are not the only tenacious fighters national rights. In Azerbaijan and in the constitution was also decisively in what amounted to a boycott of the sum. Perhaps over half the population indicated that they saw no contradiction fighting imperialism and raising their

own national and class demands.

There are no built-in guarantees that these historically progressive tasks will be successfully accomplished. What has become increasingly clear over the last year is that the national and agrarian demands run up immediately against the state. Assessing the relative strength of the state is the key to understanding which way the revolution is moving.

The February insurrection ushered in a political revolution; state power was passed from the hands of the upstart monarch into those of Khomeini — but through the efforts of the insurrectionary masses. In the process, the armed forces as a main component of state power were radicalised and split, and those sections most loyal to the old regime were destroyed.

Today the forces of repression available to Khomeini, Bani-Sadr and their bourgeois ministers are a blunt weapon for imposing Islamic law and order on the Iranian people. Rhetoric about 'the popular army of 20 million' and squads of fanatical Islamic Guards are not a substitute for a loyal and efficient army. Events in the Kurdish provinces, in Tabriz and in Baluchistan have shown over the last year that no such army exists.

The Islamic Republic remains only the shell of a state, camping out in the ruined ministries of the Shah. In recent weeks, Khomeini has redecorated the interior with a president and a constitution, and hung a sign reading 'neither communism nor capitalism — but Islam'. Unfortunately, as the bourgeois figures who have been struggling to run a government for the last year are acutely aware, no such choice exists.

The impact of Islam on the struggle of social classes in Iran over the last twelve months cannot be ignored, of course. It provided a leadership for the anti-Shah movement, and a channel of organisation and communication through the network of the mosques. Each



IRAN under the Shah was totally dominated by the Persian-speaking minority. National rights were ruthlessly repressed. But as resistance to the Shah's rule grew, the nationalities — Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans — moved to the forefront of the struggle. And Khomeini has found it impossible to drive them back. The latest upsurge has been that of the Azerbaijanis, who virtually took over the city of Tabriz (including the radio station, seen above) after attacks on their leader, Shariat-Madari.

revolution is unique, expressing itself through whatever instruments are available. Islam is what lends the Iranian situation its particular colours.

But religion has not suddenly become a historical force above the laws of class struggle. Any serious attempt to meet the demands of the masses comes directly into conflict with the needs of capitalism. Islam is a cover behind which the bourgeoisie seeks to rebuild and restabilise a capitalist state, with all the attendant needs for a relationship with imperialism.

Socialists maintain that capitalism can provide no answers in Iran today. But more than this, we maintain that the possibilities exist for overthrowing capitalism and beginning the reconstruction of Iranian society along socialist lines.

Only the working masses will provide the driving force behind such a further revolution, however. And they will be successful only if politically armed and led by a mass revolutionary workers party, and if they address themselves to the questions of state power.

The task for socialists in Iran is to build such a party. The resolutions put forward by the Islamic Workers Shora indicate that such a task is on the agenda today. But it will not be achieved by abstaining from any arena in which the proletariat is struggling, or by seeing in their struggles only some kowtowing to Islam.

For socialists here and in other imperialist countries, the most important task is to oppose any imperialist threat to the growing struggles in Iran. That means unconditional defence of the unfolding Iranian revolution against US warships and a US blockade, together with support for all the struggles of the masses against the capitalist government of Khomeini/Bani-Sadr.

These are the best ways for us to link up with the struggling masses in Iran, and take forward the struggle against imperialism together.

ONE YEAR AFTER INSURRECTION

Khomeini represents a bourgeois leadership so many other currents in semi-colonial Iran, although in Iran this sort of current is a religious garb. Accordingly, he is trying to hold the masses at bay until an order can be stabilised and a 'realisation' of capitalist development set in. He will then presumably fail to satisfy the demands of the insurgent masses and will lose political authority in their eyes. Having lost faith in Khomeini, the masses will look for an alternative leadership — maybe us. It is admitted, of course, that Khomeini, like any bourgeois leader, will resort to repression and violence in response to unacceptable demands (like the Kurds' demand for self-determination). Primarily, however, the process is one of rising mass combativity and the erosion of Khomeini's authority, leading to a decisive test between the masses and the working masses. In the event, Khomeini would have to be defended against imperialist or restorationist forces.

This picture bears no resemblance to anything in no sense can Khomeini be said to represent a bourgeois leadership. Although he is to some extent still supported by the commercial bourgeoisie (in the bulk of his base comes from the urban petty-bourgeoisie and the middle and de-classed masses in the cities, and the majority of the new generation of the bourgeoisie). Politically, he has not the slightest idea of how a bourgeois state could or should function. His project, as he has explained quite unambiguously both in writing and in speaking, is the establishment of a theocracy with the clergy as the direct representatives of the people on earth. Independent thought has no place in such a government.

Mass activity is encouraged only when it unfolds under the control of the clergy or in its support; it is ruthlessly crushed the moment it steps beyond such limits. Complete conformity is the rule, for even among the hierarchy itself Khomeini will brook no dissent.

The nefarious effects of this project on the consciousness of the workers and urban and rural poor of Iran cannot be underestimated. The consolidation of Khomeini's authority over the past nine months has meant mounting self-abdication of any confidence and independence in favour of trust in god and his imam.

Khomeini's economic project — to the extent that he has even the vaguest idea of what an economy is — is not a rationalised capitalist system but an austere, autarkic society, preferably guarded from intercourse with the outside world. If that means a regression in the level of national production and an absolute decline in mass living standards, so be it.

On the basis of these observations, it must be concluded that there is absolutely nothing revolutionary or progressive in Khomeini's project or leadership. It follows that anyone concerned with human progress in any form has no reason to defend Khomeini's rule against anything. This does not mean acceptance of US military intervention (which would, in any case, only raise the prestige of Khomeini still further). But it does mean that opposition to a threatened intervention must in no way be cast in any form that suggests defence of the existing regime.

It does not bode well for the future of Iran that the majority of the international left has been unable to distinguish between a deepening process of permanent revolution and a rise in irrational fanaticism serving to consolidate the rule of a repressive and reactionary theocracy.



AFTER the Shah's departure the pace of events quickened. Eight million people turned out to greet Khomeini on his return, in a direct challenge to the Bakhtiari government.

The latter's attempts to get things back under control by using the Imperial Guard to repress airforce technicians a few days later backfired spectacularly in a mass revolt. Brian Grogan, reporting from Tehran for Socialist Challenge, wrote: 'In southern Tehran,

the most combative area of the city, practically the whole population demonstrated in the streets. Huge barricades were built with cars and sandbags. The army stood paralysed.'

At 2pm on Sunday 11 February the army high command announced that it would no longer resist the people. Mass popular insurrection had overcome one of the strongest armies in the world.



The report of 27 January's Bloody Sunday commemoration demonstration was inadvertently omitted from last week's *Socialist Challenge*. The 2,000 strong Birmingham march, called by

Sinn Fein was a considerable success. The counter demonstration attracted only a few fascists — including one in the British Army who was later 'disciplined' after he appeared on television screaming abuse at 'troops out' supporters.

Sinn Fein conference A 'TREND OF LEFT-WING SOCIALISM'?

THE ARD-FHEIS (national conference) of Sinn Fein held in Dublin over the weekend of 19-20 January was dominated by discussion of a proposed social programme for the Republican movement, entitled 'The Social Dimension'. This was put forward as a new introduction to Eire Nua (New Ireland), the programmatic reference document of the Provisional Republican movement.

In fact, the 15 point 'Social Dimension' constituted a fairly rounded general programme. It took as its starting point the most radical statements of Patrick Pearse, the president of the provisional republic proclaimed in 1916, citing a paragraph from the programme adopted by the revolutionary Irish parliament during the war of independence:

'We declare that the nation's sovereignty extends not only to all men and women of the nation, but to all its material possessions: the nation's soil and all its resources, all the wealth and all the wealth-producing processes within the nation, and with Pearse we re-affirm that all rights to private property must be subordinate to the public right and welfare.'

From this, the 'Social Dimension' document went on to make proposals that opened the way for advocating the carrying out a socialist revolution. For example, point 7 stated among other things:

'We deny the right to personal ownership of productive property such as a large farm or a large factory. This type of ownership involves the exploitation of other people's labour for personal gain and is alien to Republican principles.'

Co-operative

Point 9 stated: 'Private enterprise will have no place in key industries and state incentives will favour co-operative projects as the most socially desirable.'

However, such proposals remained mixed up with the populist notions incompatible with a collective, planned economy. For example, point 8 included the statement: 'Each individual worker will own an economic unit of the means of production.'

Moreover, the document offered no realistic

By Gerry Foley

internationalist perspective, without which the establishment of a socialist economy in Ireland is inconceivable. It called only for 'neutral' foreign policy and for expanded trade and contacts with the 'third world'.

The debate over the document was sharp, and a certain political tension was obvious. *Republican News*, the weekly paper of the Republican movement, took note of this conflict in its account of the Ard-Fheis in its 26 January issue. It quoted one delegate, George Stagg, who was elected to the eight member national executive, as saying that he opposed the document because it could be the 'thin edge of the wedge' in a 'trend of left-wing socialism' that would 'alienate us from the people'. *Republican News* pointed out that this view received some support, but that the document was nonetheless adopted overwhelmingly.

Marxism

A number of delegates, mainly from rural areas, did voice suspicion of a supposed trend towards 'Marxism'. But they proposed no alternative programme and did not wage a concerted fight against the adoption of the 'Social Dimension' document.

The discussion on the defence of Republican prisoners, which was conducted in open session, was marked by very sharp conflict. Jimmy Drumm, one of the most prominent older Republicans, raised strong objections to the movement's attitude to the National H-Block Committee — the main organisation trying to mobilise broad support for the most persecuted section of Republican prisoners.

Drumm said that the Republican movement had been 'inconsistent' in its attitude to the H-Block Committee. He complained that the Republicans had waged a campaign against Bernadette Devlin McAliskey — the only candidate in the EEC elections to defend the H-Block prisoners; that it had accused her of trying to 'rise to power on the backs of the prisoners', and had then allowed her to play a prominent role in the H-Block Committee only a couple of months later.

As in previous national conferences of Sinn Fein, it was the president, Ruairi O Bradaigh, who served as the centre-weight in the balance among the various tendencies.

In his presidential address, O Bradaigh defended the National H-Block Committee, saying:

'Sinn Fein is gratified at the establishment of the broad-based National 'Smash H-Block Committee' on the simple platform of the five demands by the prisoners themselves for the restoration of prisoner-of-war status. We urge our members to redouble their efforts with the assistance of non-members on this great issue of human rights.'

Much of the presidential address was devoted to answering accusations that the movement was undergoing a major political change. O Bradaigh said, for instance:

'It has been suggested that those who reorganised the Republican movement at the time the present phase of the struggle began in 1969-70 must now be disappointed and that the Irish Republican leadership today is quite different from that which took up the challenge in 1969.'

O Bradaigh replied to these accusations by saying that in every generation conservatives had tried to attack Republicans by claiming that they had become something different from, and alien to, their predecessors. He said: 'The only difference between the current phase of the age-old Irish Republican struggle and any other former generation is that it has gone on longer, has achieved more, and is nearer ultimate success than anything in the past.'

The statement made at this conference by vice-president Gerry Adams that a purely military victory was not possible did seem to promise a move toward greater realism. The main policy resolution proposed by the leadership is the logical conclusion of this realisation:

'That this Ard-Fheis endorses the need to build a diversified struggle on many fronts in pursuance of these objectives and, therefore, supports the proposal to build an economic resistance campaign.'

Revolution

The adoption of the 'Social Dimension' document will not be a step forward for the Republican movement unless it opens up the way for a more concrete and realistic discussion within that movement of how to achieve a social revolution in Ireland. If this does not happen it could have the actual effect of holding back the progress of the movement.

The demand for a programme for social revolution clearly came from the young fighters

in the movement who have learned by harsh experience who the enemies are and what is needed to achieve real victory. But it would be an illusion for them to think that the formal adoption of the often vague and contradictory formulae in this document means that the movement now has the elements of a real revolutionary programme.

Mass

Such a programme has to be concrete and to be fought for by specific policies and means of action that flow from these concrete objectives. There was no discussion of a concrete campaign of social action and mass mobilisation at the conference.

On the other hand, the adoption of a number of radical general propositions is going to provide more of a focus for fire from the right. If this pressure is not effectively resisted and concrete campaigns of social and political action are not advanced, the result could be political paralysis and greater isolation from the masses of the oppressed and exploited Irish people.

The fact that leaders of the Republican movement have felt it necessary to make public assurances that there are no Marxists in the movement is not very promising in this regard. Such statements create a glaring contradiction and political incoherence. In particular, what would it mean if there were no Marxists in the Republican movement now, since there were Marxists — most notably Connolly — in the 1916 rising?

Split

In his address, O Bradaigh tried to answer charges that left-wing politics were being smuggled into the organisation by saying that the Provisional leaders had carried out a split in 1969 to stop this sort of thing. But those who led the Republican movement before 1969, and the Official Republican faction afterwards, did not develop democratic and frank political discussion and decision-making in the organisation degenerated and broke with the revolutionary traditions of Republicanism.

A more open, frank and concrete debate at this Provisional Ard-Fheis would have been a more convincing argument that the sort of thing that happened in the Official will not be repeated in the Provisionals.

British warships bombard Caribbean island

By Martin Meteyard

BRITISH warships are among those bombing a small Caribbean island and destroying the livelihood of its inhabitants in a massive NATO exercise called Operation Springboard.

The exercise has taken place every year since 1959 and centres on the island of Vieques, part of the US colony of Puerto Rico. Seventy per cent of the island is occupied by the US military; it was from Vieques that the American invasion of the Dominican Republic was launched in 1965.

This year, however, the exercise has been extended to the entire Caribbean area in line with Carter's war threats against Cuba and imperialist fears that the revolution in Nicaragua could spread to neighbouring states. Royal Navy participation has accordingly been increased with the despatch of the destroyer HMS Birmingham to join the two British warships which normally take part.

But it is Vieques which is (literally) in the direct line of fire. Operation Springboard means two months of ship-to-shore shelling and aerial bombardment every year, whose effects on the local population (now reduced to 7,000) can be imagined. Their main livelihood is fishing — but the best fishing waters are occupied by the manoeuvres.

Zone

Not that the local fishermen's association is taking this lying down. Ten days ago Operation Springboard was halted for five hours when the local fishing fleet sailed deliberately into the firing zone. Fishermen's association president Carlos Zenon



VIEQUES islanders demonstrate against NATO war exercises

has been arrested for this act of defiance.

Last year military police in riot gear broke up a religious service in the restricted zone and arrested 21 people for 'trespassing' — including a Roman Catholic bishop. Many of the 21 were given prison terms and hauled off to separate jails in the USA to

serve their sentences.

One of them, Angel Rodrigues Cristobal, is no longer alive to tell the tale. On 11 November he was found dead in his cell in Tallahassee, Florida. The authorities claim it was suicide; but the islanders accuse them of murder, and point to the fact that his head was extensively bruised.

Such methods are nothing new for US imperialism, which seized Puerto Rico in 1898 and turned it into a super-colony. The economy has been totally distorted to serve US needs: 95 per cent of production in Puerto Rico is exported to the US, and 98 per cent of all goods consumed there came from the US.

Eighty-eight per cent of Puerto

Ricans receive less than the minimum income set by the US Department of Health for a family to live under healthy conditions. The real unemployment rate is 46 per cent; forcing two million Puerto Ricans (out of a nation of only five million) to migrate to the USA.

Fertility

The population is also kept down through a massive sterilisation programme. Thirty-five per cent of Puerto Rican women of reproductive age have been permanently sterilised; only around 300,000 women in the country still possess their fertility.

But the US maintains an iron grip on Puerto Rico for one reason above all others: its importance as a strategic military fortress. Puerto Rico houses the headquarters of the South Atlantic Force (COMSOLANT) which controls all US military activities in the Caribbean and South Atlantic seas, including South America and South Africa, some areas of the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and Australia and New Zealand. Also in Puerto Rico are the headquarters of the 10th Naval District, the Caribbean Air Fleet, and the Antilles Defence Command.

It is for this reason that the US denies Puerto Rico the right to independence and claims — with British backing — that it is an 'internal affair'. And then they have the nerve to create a hue and cry about the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan!

* For further information contact Committee for Puerto Rico Independence, BM-CPRI, London WC1V 6XX.

By Roy Alexander

FOR the past three weeks the financial headlines have been held by the roller-coaster performance of world gold prices. Every political event has been immediately translated into hard cash: 'What am I offered for Afghanistan?' '50 dollars an ounce!' 'How much for a second-hand Shah of Iran?' '20 dollars an ounce!'

After a nerve-racking week for financiers in which the price shot up from under 600 dollars to over 800 dollars (and trading on the New York 'futures' market — where gold can be bought for delivery at some future date, allowing speculation on future price movements — was taking place at 1,000 dollars) the inevitable tumble has begun, unmaking not a few capitalist fortunes on the way.

The immediate cause of this unseemly public carnival of capitalist frenzy is the immense amount of money that is floating around the world today looking for any way to turn a fast dollar, pound, franc, yen, mark, etc. The growing concentration of capital in the hands of a few wealthy individuals and firms — especially the multinational corporations and financial institutions — has broken down all the barriers between nations, branches of production, or commodities.

'Hot money' will shoot from country to country, making chaos out of the best laid plans of exchequers, seeking a 1/16 of a per cent edge on the interest rate. Financiers will buy anything that stands still long enough — not at all interested in its practical use (what Marxists call its 'use value') but only in the fact that it is a commodity (with an 'exchange value') whose price may go up or down, thereby enriching their pockets. Once the price of gold and silver had started to fall, money was quite happily switched into sugar and copper.

The renewed prospect of a period of capitalist recession, with mounting inflation, has made investment in industry or stocks and shares somewhat unappealing. At the same time some means of protecting capital against the effects of inflation (a luxury which most European capitalists are busy trying to deny their workers, attacking the various wage indexation schemes prevalent on the continent) is urgent.

Bullion

Gold bullion speculation is a pretty select option. The key London market — which handles most of the gold from South Africa — consists of only five firms. At present prices you need to have about £100,000 before you can ask one of these gentlemen to pick up a nice gold bar for you. If you want to go into the big time and enter one of the periodic gold auctions held by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), you will have to lay your hands on something like £500,000.

THE NEW GOLD RUSH

One of the reasons why gold trading is so frantic is that only a small proportion of world gold stocks actually passes through the market. About 65 per cent of the world's gold is stockpiled in the vaults of the various central banks of the capitalist world or of international agencies like the IMF. Another 6 per cent is held by the Soviet Union and China. Less than 30 per cent is in private capitalist hands.

Confidence

Despite the repeated attempts of capitalist treasurers around the world to assure their citizens that the paper money they issue is 'as good as gold', and despite their repeated efforts to devise a system of financing international exchange that avoids reliance upon the limited supply of gold, they show even less confidence in the world capitalist system than the financiers. Since 1971 the stocks in the central bank vaults have been locked away with a determination that outdoes any medieval miser. They only see the light of day in cases of economic emergency.

The price of gold is like the premium on an insurance policy covering the future of capitalism: the higher it is the greater the risk involved. On present trends, the world's capitalists seem to be writing down pretty heavily the chance of their system living to a ripe old age.



A gold bar in the balance — price £100,000

WHAT'S LEFT

ENTRIES are 5p a word; semi-display £2 a column incl. Deadline: 5pm Friday before publication. All payments in advance.

THE MEDIA and Ireland — a one-day event including video-tape of TV's representation of Ireland; slide-show on the national press's visual presentation of the Six Counties; speakers from TV and the press, including Philip Schlesinger, Jonathan Hammond (NUJ) and Colin Thomas (ex-BBC). Sat 9 Feb, 10am to 5pm, Institute of Contemporary Arts, Carlton House, The Mall, London SW1. Afternoon seats limited to 100.

RAILWORKERS against redundancies. Meeting open to all railworkers to discuss forthcoming pay settlement and associated job loss. 11 Feb, 6pm, Prince Albert, Wharfedale Rd (off Caledonian Rd), London N1.

SCOTLAND: Fight racism! Fight imperialism! Public meetings, Fight racism! Smash immigration controls! Speakers from: Revolutionary Communist Group (Scotland), Indian Workers' Association (Glasgow), Edinburgh, Tues 12 Feb, 7.30pm, Trades Council Rooms, Picardy Place, Glasgow, Wed 13 Feb, 7.30pm, City Halls, Candleriggs.

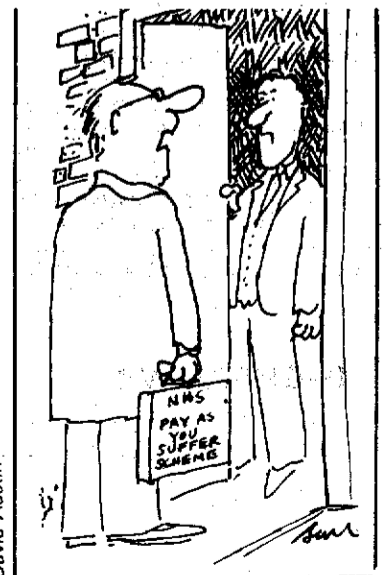
'AFGHANISTAN: Don't join the imperialist army'. Workers' Action public mtg. Speaker: John O'Mahoney. Fri 15 Feb, 8pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1.

OLDHAM Campaign Against Racist Laws. Public mtg: 'Smash immigration controls — support the Bradford/London march'. Speakers from: Bradford AYO and the IWA(GB). Sun 17 Feb, 2pm, Greenhill Centre, Waterloo St, Gladwick, Oldham.

'FIGHT for Trotskyism in the Labour Party. Kick out the right wing. Speaker: Ted Haslin, Socialist Press supporter. Workers Socialist League public meeting. Wed 6 Feb, 7.30pm, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1.

FUNDS urgently needed for the campaign to stop the closure of the Henderson psychiatric unit which offers a life-line to young people who cannot cope. To: Henderson Hospital, Sutton, Surrey, 01-661 1611/2.

SOCIALIST STUDENTS ALLIANCE NATIONAL CONFERENCE: 12 March, Sat 10-5pm Manchester University Students Union, Oxford Rd, MCR 15. Evening Disco, Sunday — UMIST Students Union 11-5pm for publicity and further info tel: 061-273 5947.



'You're behind on your payments, so we're repossessing your kidneys.'

'UNJUST and restrictive conditions continue to prevail. With elections only a few weeks away, this situation should be considered extremely seriously by all concerned to see the advent of freedom and genuine majority rule for the Zimbabwe people.'

This is the conclusion of a new briefing document on 'Political Repression in Rhodesia' produced by the International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAF). It spells out in some detail how Britain's role is to maintain the status quo of white supremacy; extracts from the report are printed below.

The State of Emergency

Through action announced on 18 January, Lord Soames has decreed that the February elections will be held under the terms of the national State of Emergency...

The repressive measures presently in force under the State of Emergency include:

- *powers of arrest and indefinite detention without charge or trial;
- *the control, seizure and destruction of property, livestock and crops;
- *the control of freedom of movement, including the removal of people into protected villages or keeps;
- *control of the collection and dissemination of information, particularly that relating to the security situation, including censorship of the press and other publications;
- *curfews and the establishment of defoliated, mined and free-fire zones;
- *the closure of premises such as shops, clinics, churches and grinding-mills, and the control of water supplies...

According to a British spokesperson in Salisbury, 'in the governor's judgement the level of lawlessness and violence in the country as a whole is such as to conclude that there is still a need for a state of emergency in Rhodesia'. A spokesperson for the Patriotic Front (ZAPU), however, said that Lord Soames' action indicated 'that there will be no free and fair elections because the whole purpose is to limit the movement of people and freedom of speech'...

Martial Law

Martial law, first declared by the regime under the Emergency Powers Regulations in September 1978 and subsequently extended to virtually the entire country, including all prisons, remains in force...

While these powers are not fundamentally different from those already provided for under the State of Emergency, they have very serious implications in that the persons authorised to enforce them are defined extremely widely, to include virtually all public servants, the army, airforce, police, police reservists, the security force auxiliaries, and foreign mercenaries employed as vigilantes by the private sector...

While the operations of the special court martials were suspended by Lord Soames following his arrival in Rhodesia, there has been no move to release those sentenced to prison terms by them or those detained without charge under the martial law regulations...

Protected Villages

There appear to be no plans to dismantle the protected villages, or keeps, to allow inmates to return to their old homes in time for the elections. Under the Lancaster House agreement this was one of the matters left to be resolved by the Governor.

The regime, for its part, has indicated its intention to retain the protected villages and appears to be using the security force auxiliaries, the majority of whom owe allegiance to Bishop Muzorewa, to control and administer them...

Inmates of protected villages live under constant armed guard, have their freedom of movement severely restricted, and are exposed to considerable violence and personal abuse at the hands of the security forces.

In October 1979, for example, a white soldier was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment on various charges of rape and assault against the residents of the protected village under his care. According to the magistrate, the charges made 'horrifying and gruesome reading, and showed that the people were subject to savage and brutal onslaughts where little or no regard was paid to age, sex or the condition of those attacked'.

Since the ceasefire there have been reports of continued arrest of inmates of protected villages, and interrogation and beatings by the police, district assistants and auxiliaries. According to a resident of a protected village north of Salisbury, 'things have got much

New report exposes British rule in Zimbabwe

Whites called up for elections



WHITE mercenaries now serving Lord Soames in Zimbabwe

worse here since the ceasefire. Now they say they will shoot anybody who is even a minute late coming in at night'...

Election Arrangements

Sir John Boynton, the Election Commissioner, has made it clear that the elections will 'differ only slightly in procedure' from those organized by the regime in April 1979...

The main features of the April 1979 elections, apart from the fact that the Patriotic Front parties were not involved, were the prevailing state of martial law, an extremely high level of military mobilization involving the most extensive call-up of manpower in Rhodesia's history, and the concerted and systematic use of a wide variety of positive and negative inducements to get voters to the polls. Once there, voters were required to choose between one or other of the parties to the 'internal settlement' agreement.

A number of unsatisfactory aspects of the forthcoming elections for the 80 Common Roll (African) seats, due to be held on 27, 28 and 29 February, have nevertheless been conceded by all the parties to the Lancaster House agreement — for example, the fact that there is to be no registration of voters. The regime's public service, notably district commissioners and their assistants, will play an important role in running polling stations and in the general conduct of the elections.

District commissioners and district assistants, who fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Home (formerly Internal) Affairs, are armed and trained in counter-insurgency tactics. They share the same powers of arrest

and detention without charge under the Emergency Powers Regulations as the police, and the same powers under martial law as the rest of the security forces.

Under the pre-independence arrangements agreed at Lancaster House, the Rhodesian 'civil police' (BSAP) are responsible for maintaining law and order during the transitional period, including the elections themselves (Annex D, paragraph 20).

It is in practice extremely difficult to identify any sections of the British South Africa Police as 'civil police', in view of the extent to which the police have been mobilised to fight the guerilla war. The BSAP is a heavily armed paramilitary body virtually all of whose able-bodied members have been deployed on front line counter-insurgency duty in recent years.

The impartiality of the police, whose task has always been to control and suppress nationalist political activity, is also a matter for concern. According to one report in the British press, BSAP members have been warned by senior regime officials that they will lose their jobs, if not their lives, if the Patriotic Front wins the elections (*Financial Times*, 19 December 1979).

The BSAP comprise an estimated 8,000 regulars, including national servicemen, and 35,000 reservists. Whereas two-thirds of the regulars are Africans the great majority of reservists are white.

Lord Soames has decided that the regular police on their own will be insufficient to maintain law and order during the elections and has authorised the deployment not only of the regular armed forces, including the

auxiliaries, but also the mobilization of police reservists and army territorials.

Call-up papers for a general mobilization of the security forces were due to be sent out in mid-January and it was subsequently reported that all fit white men between the ages of 25 and 29 had been called up for five weeks from 28 January to 5 March 1980.

During the 1979 elections an estimated 100,000 armed personnel were mobilized to 'protect' voters. Around two-thirds of those deployed were white.

Indications are thus that the February 1980 elections will take place in much the same climate of military preparedness as those of April 1979.

*Further details from: IDAF, 2 Amen Court, London EC4M 7BX (tel. 01-606 6123).

Intercontinental Press
combined with **INPRECOR**

AN eyewitness account of the 200,000-strong anti-junta demonstration held in El Salvador on 22 January, and the government repression unleashed against it, is featured in the latest issue of the weekly *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor* (Vol 18, No 4). Also in this issue: a Sandinista balance-sheet of the Nicaraguan revolution, and an analysis of the 'creeping crisis' in France.

Individual copies cost 30p plus 10p p&p, IPI subscriptions work out much cheaper at £11 for one year (48 issues), £6 for six months (24 issues), or £3 for 10 weeks. Please make cheques/POs out to 'Intercontinental Press' and send to: IP/I, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

THE CONFERENCE of the International Marxist Group is to be held in London this month. In our 24 January issue we carried contributions on the way forward for the organisation from the different points of view inside the IMG. This week the League for Socialist Action, a small revolutionary organisation, gives its opinion on the matters under debate.

The LSA has voted in favour of fusion with the IMG at a recent aggregate of the group. Participation in the IMG conference discussion is part of the process towards finally joining the two organisations together.

The aim of the Thatcher government is crystal-clear. It is to change the balance of class forces sufficiently to drive up the rate of profit for British capital. This aim — which has confronted all governments over the past few decades — she has pursued with ruthless determination.

Divide

Implementing sexist and racist laws, slashing social services to create a mass 'pool' of unemployed, she hopes to both divide and weaken the 'core' unions before decisive confrontations take place. The steel strike is the first example.

This offensive, which seeks to erode all the gains won by the working class since the war, has already drawn thousands into struggle. As sectors of the labour movement move into struggle, however, they inevitably bring pressure on their organisations to lead that fight. The fight against the Tories is linked with a fight to turn their organisations into 'tools of struggle'. This process can already be seen in the fact that it was not the 'left' but the TUC which led the mass Campaign against Corrie rally and the Labour Party's national executive committee which organised the anti-cuts demonstration.

This growing pressure explains the tensions and fissures emerging within the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party (as registered at the last conference in the sweeping rebuffs to the Callaghan leadership).

Conflict

The fight to turn their organisations into organs of struggle against the Tories brings ever-wider layers into conflict with the reformist leaders who seek to control it within 'parliamentary' limits. In this sense, the anti-Tory struggle is paralleled by a struggle by the class to create, within its own organisations, a new leadership adequate to its needs.

It is within this dynamic that, in our opinion, the International Marxist Group has to situate its perspectives for the coming period. A correct understanding of this dynamic could allow a small cadre force to begin to gain significant influence.

Certainly, there is clear agreement among all comrades that a prerequisite for intervening in this process means adopting a **proletarian orientation**. Inability to do so would not only 'marginalise' us from the radicalisation of key sectors of the union movement as it enters struggle in the years ahead. It would also render ineffective our attempts to build movements on social issues (abortion rights, etc) which increasingly can only be won by being allied with the decisive force of the labour movement.

Perspective

While such agreement exists, however, there also exist disagreements as to the political perspective which should guide our work in the labour movement. In the opinion of the League for Socialist Action, ability to take advantage of the dynamic opening up rests on three factors:

1. Building a class-struggle left-

League for Socialist Action contributes to IMG debate

SEEKING A PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION



wing against the reformist leaders is rooted in the struggle against the Tories. It is through fighting for mass action to defend living standards and basic rights that the reformist leaders can, in practice, be isolated and exposed. This means decisively rejecting 'denunciations' of the leadership (à la Socialist Workers Party) or building 'front organisations' (like the Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory, All Trades Union Alliance etc), which are sectarian.

Mass action

It is through building mass action on concrete issues — and supporting anti-Tory initiatives by sections of the bureaucracy, if necessary — that thousands will be drawn into struggle and will be given the opportunity to test out the various currents in the labour movement.

2. Developing a class-struggle left-wing cannot be isolated from the Labour Party (which is the political wing of the trade union movement). The discontent and radicalisation that emerges in the unions, often on a sectoral basis, finds its political expression in the Labour Party (as can already be seen in the opposition building up to Callaghan).

Labour Party

In seeking to build mass action with all forces against the Tory offensive, we must carry this struggle into the Labour Party to put the reformist leaders ever more on the spot. This means that all our supporters in the unions should be active in the Labour Party if a real proletarian orientation is to be implemented. Analysis of the different currents in the Labour Party — such as the Labour

Coordinating Committee — is important here.

3. The demands that we raise should be aimed at reinforcing two basic concepts: class independence and class unity. The positions we advocate to deal with unemployment and inflation register our belief that the working class has no responsibility for the capitalist crisis.

The fight to win the labour movement for defence of abortion rights or anti-racist work is based on the attempts to unite the working class against attempts to split it. While comrades will be involved in day-to-day work in the unions, Labour Party etc, we feel that national priority — in terms of campaigns — should be around: 1) the anti-cuts movement; 2) abortion; 3) the immigration laws; 4) Ireland.

Youth

All other activities of the IMG should, in our opinion, stem from this overall strategy. Two key questions stand out: the youth organisation and our paper.

Launching a youth organisation is vital today since the layer we should be oriented to, above all others, is young workers. The youth organisation should be geared to winning them — in the factories, schools and in the ethnic communities — to a broad campaigning programme. Instead of seeking to link up with Rebel, it should be clear from the start that Revolution should be in political solidarity with the Fourth International (though organisationally independent from the IMG). Fraction work in the Labour Party Young Socialists should be a priority.

As regards Socialist Challenge, we feel that it should cease being a paper for the left but should re-orient itself towards those layers in the labour movement we are seeking to influence.

Paper

It should be a) explaining basic problems of concern to militants (jobs, inflation etc); b) explaining why it is important to fight racism/sexism etc; c) popularising our demands to answer the crisis; d) reporting on basic struggles. Socialist Challenge should be a paper of workers for workers. Its central political thrust should be explaining the need for united action by the labour movement and putting the reformists on the spot (not in a sectarian way but in terms of action).

Finally it is clear that the IMG cannot become a mass party merely through individual recruitment. Splits and fusions, particularly from the Labour Party, will play a central role in this process and we must be constantly on the alert to seek out forces moving in our direction.

Fusions, however, cannot be dictated by abstract schemas, but by the dynamic of the class struggle itself which will push certain tendencies closer to us (and draw others away). If the IMG adopts a clear strategy in the labour movement, fusion with the SWP must be rejected.

Not only is the SWP programmatically opposed to the Fourth International, but its strategy carries it in exactly the opposite path to the one we should take. To move towards fusion could mean adapting to the SWP's sectarian/syndicalist line which will increasingly be bypassed by the dynamic of the class struggle in the years ahead.



Portugal

THE Portuguese Trotskyists of the PSR more than doubled their vote to around 37,000 in December's assembly elections, and would have had a deputy if proportional representation had been established on a national scale.

The PSR made gains throughout the country. These were most pronounced in the Setubal industrial zone (where its vote increased fourfold), in the agrarian reform area, and some districts in the north. It managed this despite an intensive media witch-hunt: on the last day of the campaign the radio and TV networks even falsely announced that the PSR slate had been invalidated by the electoral courts.

Particularly upsetting to the authorities was the PSR's emphasis on the fight for the right to abortion. It was able to publicise this and its other positions through 65 minutes on television and 12 hours on various radio stations (of which six hours was on national radio). Having profited from this unique opportunity, the PSR is now trying to consolidate itself on a national scale and is beginning a recruitment campaign.

Summer school

A SPECIAL summer school is being organised by the International Marxist Group this year. The school will take place near Cambridge from 12-18 July inclusive.

The school is limited to 130 people and will feature as its main course 20th century revolutions as well as subsidiary courses on the British labour movement, Marxism and the family, an introduction to Marxist economics and issues in political economy.

The all-in cost of the school will be £47.50 which will include all meals, social events, films, sports facilities, swimming and country walks. A deposit of £10 secures your place at the school. (All cheques to be made payable to 'The Week', and send to PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.) The school is open to Socialist Challenge supporters on application to local IMG branches.

World Congress report

THE ELEVENTH World Congress of the Fourth International took place in November last year. The Congress reports and documents are printed in a 200-page large format book. It will go on public sale in March at approximately £3 plus postage.

The book, which is a supplement to *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, includes:

- * The world political resolution, plus reports on the international situation by Ernest Mandel and the turn to industry by Jack Barnes.

- * Resolutions on Europe, Latin America and women's liberation.

- * Majority and minority viewpoints on Indochina, Nicaragua and socialist democracy.

- * A report on international youth work.

As a special offer to IP/I subscribers in Britain and Ireland the book is available at £2.30 including postage. Send payment to Pathfinder Press, 47 The Cut, London SE1 8LL, stating that you are a subscriber. Offer open to 29 February.

If you are not yet a subscriber, why not subscribe now and get your early copy of the supplement. Subscriptions for Britain and Ireland cost £3 for ten issues, £6 for 6 months, and £11 per year. Send to IP/I, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

- * Next week. *News of Hugo Blanco's election campaign in Peru.*

In the picture

WE THANK you and your reviewer, Larry Herman, for his useful review (17 January) of our new publication

Photography/Politics: One.

However we would like to point out some inaccuracies following his remark on 'how language can unwittingly be used to confuse'. In the course of making his point your reviewer has misquoted the article (for 'feminists' read 'feminine' — a crucial difference!) and cut out an important explanatory footnote and a specific reading reference which even included page numbers. Additionally it was a highly untypical sentence in a long essay.

We have tried to work towards a consistent use of nonmystificatory language in this publication, but this does not mean we should ignore technical terms when they are necessary, especially if we give ample back-up indication of where terms come from.

It's far too easy to dismiss exploratory or theoretical work with nit-picking attitudes.

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP, London N1

Advising the Afghanis

SUCH is the level of hysteria in petty bourgeois circles over the war in Afghanistan that some of your correspondents have been infected with it.

Richard Carver (Letters 31 January) for example mocks defencists as organisers of Red Army welcoming committees. He was shocked to see the word 'invasion', in one letter, placed in inverted commas. Yet Trotsky used the same inverted commas around the word 'invasion' when the petty bourgeois opposition in America wanted to apply it to the Soviet-Finnish War.

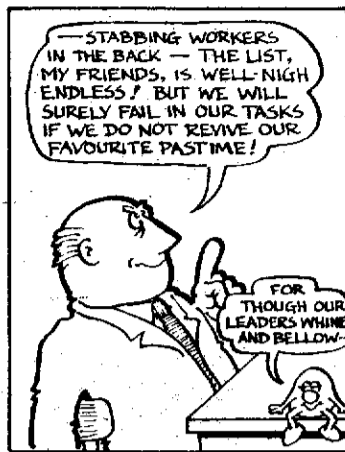
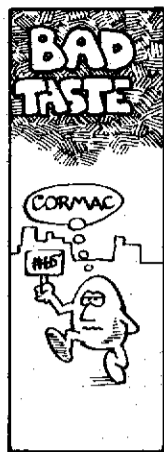
To paraphrase Trotsky, if you base yourself solely on the features of the Soviet bureaucracy, and the mere fact of the 'invasion', your position will be devoid of the slightest social content.

Richard Carver descends from cheapness to vulgarity when he tries to say that defencists would deny that Czechoslovakia was invaded. Defencists do not support each and every action of the Red Army. Again we look at the social content.

As Trotsky wrote in *Again and once more again on the nature of the USSR*, when asked if we support the Red Army if it crushes workers' strikes or peasant protests: 'We have never promised to support all the actions of the Red Army which is the instrument of the Bonapartist bureaucracy.' Likewise with Czechoslovakia.

If he would read the reports from the US bourgeois press and even from *Socialist Challenge*, he might not so glibly dismiss the war moves of imperialism in a destabilised region as 'tired rhetoric'.

The position of Trotskyists is clear — as with Poland and Finland, the property relations that will be established by the



bureaucracy will be in and of themselves progressive. This is because the bureaucracy rests on those forms not because they are waging a revolutionary war.

The Afghan masses will welcome the expropriations but our advice to them would be: build workers, peasants, soldiers committees; conduct revolutionary propaganda against the Kremlin oligarchy; fight arms in hand against pro-Islamic monarchist counter revolution.

Trotsky told the Bolsheviks in eastern Poland: '... educate the masses in the course of the struggle, warn them against naive hopes in Moscow, but do not tear yourself away from them, fight in their camp, try to expand and deepen their struggle and give it the greatest possible independence. Only in this way will you prepare the coming insurrection against Stalin.' (Open letter to Burnham).

TED COXHEAD, London N1.

International conspiracy

A FEW weeks ago you were suggesting that the failure of the Soviet Union to assist the Iranian left was a result of an international conspiracy, in which the Russians abandoned the practice of proletarian internationalism in favour of 'detente'.

And yet, in your latest issue, you state your opposition to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan on the grounds that it aids a Western imperialist 'war drive'.

Does this represent some new development in the Marxist dialectic, or am I to assume that it is just old-fashioned hypocrisy? **ANDREW GOODWIN, London SE4**

Young Socialists

PHIL HEARSE is right to defend the *Militant* tendency against Lord Underhand's witch-hunt, but he needn't falsify history in the process. He claims that his Lordship was 'instrumental in the 1960s in driving out the leaders of the Young Socialists ... who had won the YS to Marxist ideas through the paper *Keep Left*'.

As a founder member of the YS, and, from 1961 to '66 a member of the SLL (now WRP) which produced *Keep Left*, I am qualified to dispute this statement. The YS was overwhelmingly Marxist right

from the start, with the SLL and what are now the *Militant* and the SWP making up the largest blocs at the first conference.

But far from the SLL contributing to the Marxist influence, our sectarian behaviour helped to drive out hundreds of young people who could not understand the fratricidal conflict between the Marxist tendencies. *Keep Left* only won leadership in a sadly depleted YS.

Moreover, the right-wing had no more enthusiastic collaborators in the witch-hunt. We kept other Marxists at arms length, covering them with slander and abuse and refused proposals for a united front against the witch-hunt. At the first conference we isolated ourselves by rushing the platform, thus aiding the right to get through a resolution condemning *Keep Left*.

A year later we were unable to stop a Labour Party NEC inquiry into the paper and the alternative Marxist paper in the YS, *Young Guard*. The three SLL supporters on the YS NC refused to attend the inquiry; they were expelled and *Keep Left* was proscribed. *Young Guard*, who did attend, were able to get an agreement which enabled them to continue.

In 1964 the SLL decided to provoke the suspension of all of the YS branches which it led, I led the first branch to be suspended in Scotland. Protesting loudly to an uninterested labour movement about this self-induced witch-hunt, we proceeded to set up our own 'YS' as the first step to a 'mass revolutionary youth movement', which never appeared.

I seem to remember that young Hearse was briefly involved in the SLL at this stage, which accounts for his having absorbed the mythology, but that is no excuse for misinforming your readers. **BOB PURDIE, Glasgow**

Double departure

YOUR 'General Strike/No World War' issue (31 January) expresses a double departure from Trotskyism.

'Is there going to be a Third World War?' you ask in the editorial. 'Is the world slowly slipping towards war and its accompanying barbarism?' You answer with a resounding No.

No one can say when the imperialists will try to start a new world war. Yet try they will. Our epoch is one not of 'revolution' but of 'war and revolution'. Only fools preach world revolution and fail to anticipate world war.

Faced with fresh danger of war, you busy yourself with predictions that have no foundation and reassurances that carry no conviction, keeping silent on the main question: What can the international working class do to prevent war?

The Second International in the years before 1914 refused to support the war plans of the imperialists and held international gatherings that resolved to meet the outbreak of war with general strike and revolution.

A third world war will not be a repetition of the first or the second, but a war between East and West, capitalism and communism; and it will be fought with the most horrendous weapons. All the more reason, then, for the workers to

refuse support to the imperialists and prepare to meet war with revolution.

If, upon the outbreak of war, the workers of the West fail to overthrow their governments and take their countries out of NATO, the consequences will be more terrible than in 1914 and 1939. The peoples of the West will have to choose between revolution and probable annihilation.

On the front page of the paper you call for the steel strike to be turned into an indefinite general strike. But you say nothing about the fact that a general strike will bring the country to the brink of civil war.

It matters little whether you propose a general strike against the Tory government or against the Tory 'offensive'. All general strikes turn political. In 1926, the TUC declared that it was merely coming to the aid of the miners and intended no threat to the government. Trotsky called this 'ridiculous'.

On another occasion, Trotsky wrote: 'Nothing can be on a higher plane than the general strike, except the armed insurrection. The entire history of the working class movement proves that every general strike, whatever may be the slogans under which it occurs, has an internal tendency to transform itself into an open revolutionary clash, into a direct struggle for power.' (*Whither France?* p.79.)

He continued: 'The leaders of the proletariat must understand this internal logic of the general strike, unless they are not leaders but dilettantes and adventurers.'

'Politically this implies that from now on the leaders will continue to pose before the proletariat the task of the revolutionary conquest of power. If not, they must not venture to speak of the general strike.' (p. 88.)

DAVE BAILEY, Newham

Liaison Committee

I WAS amazed to read in *Socialist Challenge* (31 January) a statement allegedly signed by myself and three others about the last conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions.

I never signed any such statement. I never made any such statement.

You even claim in your report that an attempt was made to move this statement as a resolution at the conference and was prevented by heckling. No such attempt was made.

You also say I signed my name under the Rank and File Coordinating Committee. No such committee exists.

I did make an attempt to get moved a resolution calling for a conference organised jointly by the LCDTU and the Rank and File Defend Our Unions Committee. I am still working for a united opposition by both organisations to the Tory Employment Bill.

It would be rather more useful if you had printed that resolution and the call for unity which I made. Nothing at all is to be gained by snide attacks on the Communist Party.

All you have done by your ill-researched inventions is to make the search for a united fightback against the Tories slightly more

difficult. **JOHN DEASON, Secretary Rank and File Defend Our Unions Committee**

Patrick Sikorski replies: First on the facts regarding the statement included in Socialist Challenge's coverage of the LCDTU conference.

John Deason was approached by supporters of Socialist Challenge after the conference chairperson had moved to close the meeting. It was put to John Deason and other delegates that it would be better to come away from the conference with a positive statement calling for a recall conference rather than have the conference split on an organisational point.

Verbal agreement was reached on this and a wording was jointly worked on and agreed. John Deason was given and took a copy.

It is true that no signatures were appended in the heat of the moment, and for this reason the text accompanying the statement published in Socialist Challenge explicitly uses the word 'agreed' and not 'signed' both above and below the statement.

Secondly, we do not claim that an attempt was made to move the resolution; simply that it was judged impossible (sic) to do so.

We apologise for appending the wrong committee to John Deason's name.

As is well known we are always in favour of united action of those fighting in the workers' interests in the class struggle.

However, as John Deason has said, this cannot cut across the need for the most extensive debate on differences. It is for this reason that Socialist Challenge is in favour of a democratically run recall conference.

ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN

1pm Friday 8 February
Central Hall, Westminster

Torchlight procession to Fleet St
from Temple Place at 5.15pm

Sorry!

APOLOGIES for not crediting several illustrations in last week's issue. Photo of Welsh general strike, page 3, Paul Highfield; photo of Chix strike, page 6, PM Grant; photo of abortion march, pages 8 and 9, Tony Sleep; abortion cartoon, page 16, The Journalist.

Our apologies are also due to *Spare Rib*. The article on trainee journalists and sexism which appeared on Under Review in the 24 January issue was credited to *The Journalist*. In fact it originally appeared in *Spare Rib* (September 1979.)

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

BATH: SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 30298 for more details.

BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.

BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30. Sat. 10-4. For more info phone 643 9209.

BRIGHTON: For more info phone Nick, 605052.

BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1. 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Montpellier, Bristol 6.

COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.

DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.

HUDDERSFIELD: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.

LAMBETH: SC now available at kiosk Brixton tube. Oval tube, Herne Hill British Rail and Tetric Books Clapham.

SWINDON: SC on sale 11-1 every Sat. Regent St (Brunel Centre).

TEESIDE: SC sales: at Newsfairs shops in Cleveland Centre and on Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and at Greens Bookstall, upstairs in Spencer Market, Stockton High Street.

TOWER HAMLETS: SC supporters sell papers every Friday 5-6pm Watney Mkt, Sat 11-12.30pm Whitechapel tube. Watney 10.30-12.00 Brick Lane.

CARDIFF: SC sales Newport Town Centre outside Woolworths 11-12.30; Cardiff British Home Stores 11-12.30. Also available from 108 Books, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

ABERDEEN: SC sold Saturdays outside C&As — for more info ring phone Colin, 574068.

OLDHAM: SC sold every Saturday outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities, Tel. 01-682 3151.

OLDHAM: SC Public Meeting. 'The Socialist Alternative to the Tories'. Speakers include rep from IMG CC. Thurs Feb 7.30pm at Grange Arts Centre (Room A2), Roehdale Rd.

HUDDERSFIELD: SC Public Meeting 'Kick Out the Tories'. Thurs 14 Feb 8pm. Speakers include Jim Ferris (President, Huddersfield NUT), Ron Thompson (AUEW Shop Steward James Nell, Sheffield). Both in personal capacity.

STOCKPORT: SC sold every Saturday 1pm Mersey Square. Tel. 061-236 4905 for more information.

UNDER REVIEW

'TONY Benn is a liar. Not an accidental liar. Not a slip-of-the tongue liar. Not a liar in the excitement of an emotional speech. But a cool, calculated, deliberate, with-malice-aforethought liar.'

That was the *Daily Mirror* on 6 November last year. It could have been the *Daily Telegraph*, *Mail* or *Express* but no, it was an editorial in the *Mirror*, the newspaper which in a full page advertisement in *Tribune* the following month claimed:

'The *Daily Mirror* is a newspaper of the people. The only daily paper which supports democratic socialism. The only daily paper which has supported the Labour Party at every General Election since the War.'

'The *Mirror* is part of the lives of the people of Britain. It reports, comments and campaigns on the issues that concern us all. It is our newspaper.'

All of which was in reply to Tony Benn, who had claimed in a number of speeches that the *Mirror* has always been 'hostile' to the Labour Party and the trade unions.

The *Mirror's* protest of innocence on this charge is partly due to the circulation war of the popular press. The emergence of the populist *Daily Star* has meant that the *Mirror's* 'democratic socialist' credentials become more important.

Sales

But that is not the only reason. If the *Mirror* was only concerned with its sales it would not attack Benn so mercilessly. It knows that Benn is a popular figure among hundreds of thousands of working people, just as it knows that Arthur Scargill enjoys a similar support.

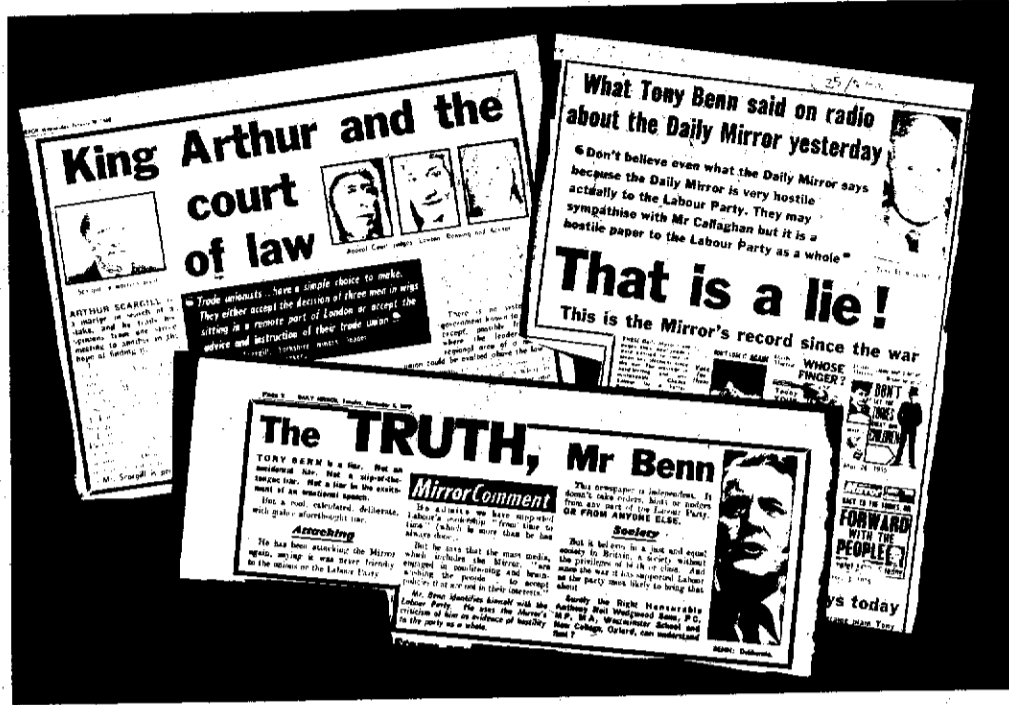
But last week the *Mirror* went so far as to call for the prosecution of Scargill because he advocated breaking Denning's ruling on the steel pickets. Said the *Mirror*:

'The argument against prosecuting Mr Scargill is that that is what he wants to happen. It is a strong one. But if the law is to be applied impartially, he ought to be granted his wish.'

As a 'Mirror Comment', this seems to back up Benn's case that the *Mirror*, along with the rest of Fleet Street, 'are engaged in conditioning and brainwashing the people ... to accept policies that are not in their interests.'

Mirror, Mirror on the wall, are you socialist after all?

By Geoff Bell



There are other examples. During the 'winter of discontent' when Labour was in power, the *Mirror* was indistinguishable from the rest of the national press. 'Britain is being held to ransom as industrial chaos grips the country', ran its lead story on 18 January 1979.

To go further back, the *Mirror* was an enthusiastic supporter of Barbara Castle's 'In Place of Strife' proposals for trade union 'reform'. 'Bloody Good Sense' was the

Mirror's front page headline when Castle's plans were announced — plans not too dissimilar to the Prior proposals today.

In the case of both 'In Place of Strife' and the 'winter of discontent', the *Mirror* was attacking the rights and interests of trade unionists, while defending the particularly right-wing policies of the existing Labour government. And that sums up the attitude of the *Mirror* to the Labour Party: it supports the right wing of the party, but not the party itself.

Thus while it has called for a return of a Labour government since the war, each of those governments has been dominated by the right wing of the party. When, in the *Mirror's* estimation, a Labour government steers left, the newspaper is quick to go on the offensive. In April 1968 the *Mirror* launched a campaign for the removal of Wilson in favour of a more right-wing leader.

Coup

At the same time the *Mirror's* chief, Cecil King, was plotting with Roy Jenkins, Denis Healey, and Richard Marsh for a right-wing coup within the Parliamentary Labour Party; King arranged for the *Mirror* to pay Marsh an annual fee of £500, not for any journalistic services, but, recorded King in his diary, 'to keep him in politics'.

The key to the *Mirror's* attitude to the Labour Party is that there are, in effect, two Labour parties. One, the Parliamentary Labour Party, has always been controlled by the right wing and acts independently of the other Labour Party — that consisting of ordinary rank and file Labour Party members, whose policies are decided at conference and whose leadership is the national executive.

At present that party and its executive are considerably to the left of the PLP. And that is why the *Mirror* is hostile to the darling of the Labour Party rank and file, Tony Benn.

The *Mirror* is indistinguishable from the rest of Fleet Street in that it is run by and serves a capitalist company with a capitalist ideology. It just thinks that the best way capitalism can be maintained is by right-wing Labour governments rather than Conservative ones.

THE OTHER BOOKSHOP

The Singing Flame, by Ernie O'Malley — Anvil, £2.50.

On Another Man's Wound, by Ernie O'Malley — Anvil, £2.50.

On Our Backs, Sexual Attitudes in a Changing Ireland, by Rosita Sweetman — Pan, £1.00.

328 Upper Street, London N1 2XQ

(Tel. 01-226-6571)

Pride and Prejudice: Fay Weldon goes over the top

'IT IS a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.'

The Bennet daughters in *Pride and Prejudice* are five in number, all aged between 15 and 21, and without any inheritance since their father's property must pass to a male heir (their cousin Mr Collins). Mrs Bennet consequently spends all her time trying to ensure that they are suitably married off in the shortest possible time.

Fay Weldon's dramatisation of Jane Austen's novel is currently being serialised on BBC television; SALLY FELDMAN has been watching it.

FAY WELDON is a strident, cheerful, cynical yet tender writer — a committed feminist with strong views about the lot of women. Jane Austen, writing some two hundred years before her, was a mistress of calm, elegant understatement. Her weapon was irony — the barbed nib at the end of the quill. The combination of these two extraordinary women should have been dynamic.

For despite Ms Weldon's directness, her anger, her hard edge — and despite Ms Austen's seeming acquiescence in all the niceties of the society she describes so minutely — there are arresting similarities between them. Both use the details of social manners as a key to their own views of morality. Both indulge in a



wicked love of the ridiculous. Both have a devotion to their own sex — and a deep-rooted mistrust of men.

That is why the choice of Fay Weldon as adaptor of *Pride and Prejudice* for television was so inspired. At last, I thought, we'd have an interpreter of the novel who could see beyond the comedy of romance, deep down into the more serious and more original notions that lie beneath the surface of the story.

But, for some reason, that isn't quite what has happened. For instead of using her own modern perspective to highlight Jane Austen's perceptions, Fay Weldon seems to have obliterated much of the delicacy and subtlety of the original work, in a crass attempt to make it modern.

Mrs Bennet was always atrocious — there was no need to turn her into a Sybil Fawley. Mary, in a quiet way, was a wonderful miniature caricature — here she is exaggerated beyond credibility. Darcy's proposal, in the original, was all the better for being understated. But here, there are too many moments which are — what Jane Austen would never have been — over the top.

The story flows along perfectly well — we are suspended in the delicious position of longing for everything to come right between the lovers, tinged with just the right amount of anxiety that maybe it won't. But there is more to the novel than romance — far more.

Aware

Anyone who has ever read a Jane Austen novel must be aware that she is dealing with a closed, conservative, repressively upper middle class society where all of life's most important decisions are dictated by status, money and connections. But not everyone is aware of the anger and the sorrow that underlies the brilliant descriptions, the lively characters, the fluid language — even though it is present on every page.

For Jane Austen's heroines are all struggling to believe in love, loyalty and integrity — when all the evidence

points to the fact that marriage is a financial arrangement. All but one of her heroines (Emma) are in straitened circumstances, their whole future happiness depending on the finding and trapping of a rich husband. All of them are forced to spend their adolescence hoping for coincidence — that they will fall in love with someone who happens also to be correctly placed.

And the dilemma is never more extreme than in *Pride and Prejudice*, when the five daughters — just because they are daughters — have no right to an inheritance. Their only salvation can be marriage. Hence the often-quoted opening lines of the book — which, in Ms Weldon's version of the novel, are put into Elizabeth's mouth.

Comment

Many of the original author's insights are given to Elizabeth — an irresistible device. Yet I couldn't help feeling that that, too, was misleading. Jane Austen cultivates a polite distance from all her characters, even the nicer ones, so that she can comment on them. A little of the tension is lost when they are allowed to do too much of the commenting themselves.

And though the handling of the absurd Mr Collins is dead right, and the elder Miss Bingley's constantly snoring husband is another good touch, I didn't feel that this production ever really came to grips with the Jane Austen attitude to men. For in the novels, they are almost all of them either ridiculous or dull. The women, locked in their social prisons, are allowed to shine, while the men step down.

That is the most potent similarity between these two women writers — but this production has failed to pinpoint it. And similarly it has failed to illuminate the most dramatic ways in which *Pride and Prejudice* achieves its timelessness.

* The final episode will be shown on BBC-2 on Sunday evening and repeated next Wednesday.

Socialist Challenge

STEEL STRIKE: TIME 'TO PUT THE BOOT IN'

By Rab Bird (shop steward, Hadfields, personal capacity)

MY BOSS Derek Norton, the managing director of Hadfields private steel company, has decided to break the law. On Monday he said he was going to 'withhold' £2 million a month owed to the government in income tax, national insurance and value added tax payments. Norton says that he's protesting against picketing of private steel plants.

But only last week Norton and the rest of the private steel bosses were telling steelworkers how we had to obey the law — that is the 'law' as interpreted by Lord Denning.

Now, after the Law Lords decided Denning's ruling was itself illegal, Hadfields has decided that the law isn't such a good thing after all.

ZIMBABWE

End British collusion!

Saturday 23 February

PICKET: Foreign Office (King Charles St, SW1), 1—2pm.

RALLY: LSE Old Theatre (provisionally), 7.30pm with representatives from Patriotic Front parties

Organised by Zimbabwe Emergency Coordinating Committee, c/o AAM, 89 Charlotte St, W1 (01-580 5311).

Thousands of steelworkers have shown no such double standards. Before and after Denning, before and after the Law Lords, the picketing of private steel plants went on. In South Wales in particular, pickets simply ignored Denning's instructions. The message was law or no law, we fight for our rights (see page 4).

But just because Denning was overturned doesn't mean the strike is all but won. The latest estimate is that only ten per cent of private steel plants are being picketed. This needs to be stepped up and the best way is to call upon other trade unionists, apart from those working in steel, to join the picket lines.

The South Yorkshire steel strike co-ordinating committee has shown another way forward. They are withdrawing all safety cover at British Steel Corporation plants in their area. At one Scunthorpe complex alone this could cost BSC £100 million. Stan Sheridan, spokesperson for the South Yorkshire committee, explained the action like this:

'The BSC management has been sitting back for the past six weeks and not producing one ounce of steel. Sir Keith Joseph is not going to save BSC so we are not going to be in that position either.

'We have decided to put the boot in.'

Let's not kid ourselves. This strike is not really so much against BSC management as against the Tory government. It is they who control the purse strings, just as it's they who say we have to lose over 50,000 jobs in our industry.

That's why steelworkers need to do all they can to win this strike, and why trade unionists everywhere should be organising to give us all the help they can. When it comes to talking about putting the boot in, that boot should be aimed squarely at the Tory government.

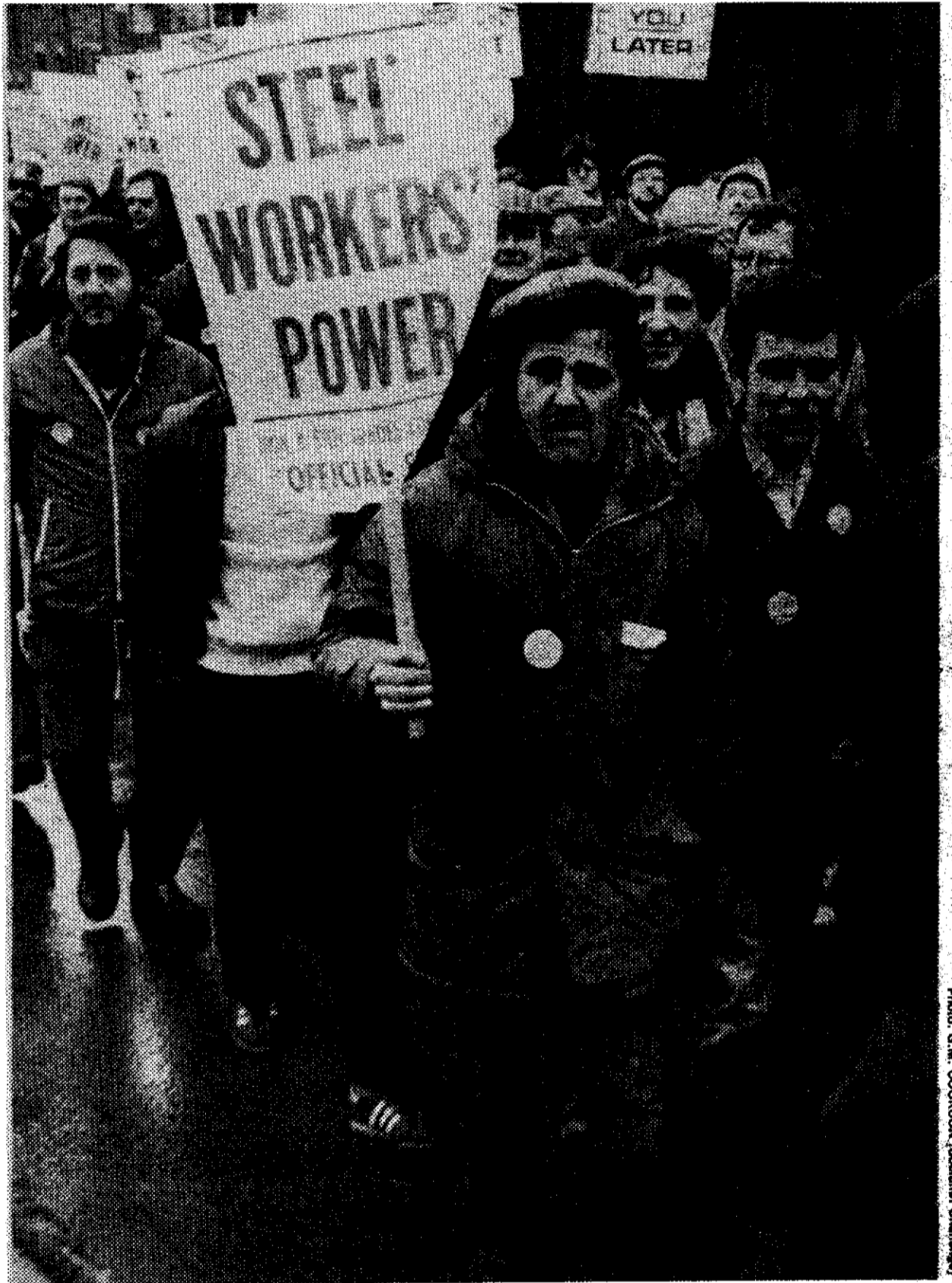


Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

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Multi-reader institutions: Double the above rate

Name _____

Address _____

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.
Complete and return to: Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Our Fund Drive

AS the steel workers step up the pressure on the Tories, you, our supporters, have given our campaign a massive boost with a record £523.56 this week.

Last week Jakob Moneta, former editor of the German steel-workers paper and a member of the Fourth

International, toured steel strike centres in Britain. He spoke at successful Socialist Challenge meetings and addressed a mass meeting of striking electricians at Port Talbot. YOU helped to make that possible through your donations.

At every important demonstration and rally of steel workers we have had Socialist Challenge reporters on the spot. We want to keep journalists permanently in South Wales reporting on the build up to all out action to prevent closures.

Help us meet the challenge. Send a fiver to fight the Tories and join the 155 other people who already have.

Our thanks this week to:
J. Hyatt 1.00
Hackney supporters 5.34
J. Flintoft 5.00

Paddington IMG	40.00
Leicester IMG	20.00
Stamps collected	5.00
Nottingham IMG	25.00
Bath IMG	5.00
Sheffield IMG	30.00
South East London IMG	25.00
Oxford supporter	7.00
Tony Francis	5.00
Anon	3.50
Crawley IMG	10.00
N Bolton	10.00
P Bellis	5.00
Brent IMG	55.00
Leeds IMG	35.00
Paddington supporter	1.72
H Astor	10.00
Outer West London IMG	85.00
AHN	20.00
Swindon IMG	10.00
Total	523.56
Cumulative total	1308.06