

# Socialist Challenge

Inside

A Labour-SDP coalition?



Why it won't work  
See pages 6-7



2000 pointless deaths  
£3 billion wasted

# THATCHER IS

# GUILTY

ON TUESDAY the Franks report largely exonerated Thatcher for her handling of the Falklands war. The report is a whitewash dealing with none of the crucial issues.

Thatcher waged war over a rock in the South Atlantic with a population no bigger than a village. The net result was two thousand dead and £3 billion wasted ... so far.

As Labour MP Tam Dalyell revealed in the House of Commons, at an early stage of the war when the Argentinians were putting out peace feelers, Thatcher had the Argentinian warship *Belgrano* sunk to ensure the war would continue. Far from being in the exclusion zone, or posing a threat to British forces, the *Belgrano* was on its way home. 300 Argentinian sailors perished in this atrocity, for which Thatcher personally gave the order.

At the end of the war nothing had been gained for the population of the Falklands, only some political prestige for Thatcher.

Before the war the Falklanders relied on Argentina for medical care, food, post and supplies of every kind. Now they are completely isolated — for hospital care they have to come thousands of miles to Britain.

Sooner or later a settlement will have to be made with Argentina. The British rule of the Falklands, whose people were even deprived of British citizenship in 1981, is a relic of a nearly extinct empire. The millions of pounds being spent on the British garrison will not prevent the eventual return of the islands to Argentina.

Franks says Thatcher was justified. We say she caused 2000 pointless deaths, wasted billions of pounds and whipped up a disgusting war hysteria. History will render a verdict of guilty.

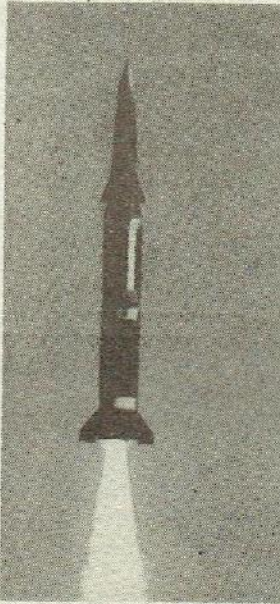
# Reagan's missile fraud

By John Ross

RUMOURS circulating in the press this week suggest that one of the reasons US arms negotiator Eugene Rostow was sacked was because he was coming too close to an agreement with the Soviet Union. This agreement, apparently agreed between Paul Nitze head of the American delegation at the Intermediate Nuclear Force talks, and Yuli Kvitsinsky of the USSR would have cut back the SS-20 Soviet missiles as well as the cruise and Pershing missiles.

But such an agreement would have violated Reagan's 'zero-option' position. Rostow claimed that he was being sacked for violating Talleyrand's principle of diplomacy — 'no deal'. Here we look at the fraud of Reagan's 'zero option' proposal.

What Reagan is actually proposing is clear. The Soviet Union must dismantle all its nuclear weapons in Europe — that is the SS-4, SS-5 and SS-20. In return the United States will not deploy the Pershing II and Cruise missiles, but will retain in place every single one of its existing nuclear weapons, as well as the entire missile submarine force in the seas that surround the USSR. Britain and France will continue to possess all their nuclear weapons and to modernise them. This is supposedly a 'zero option' which the 'aggressive' Soviet Union is turning down.

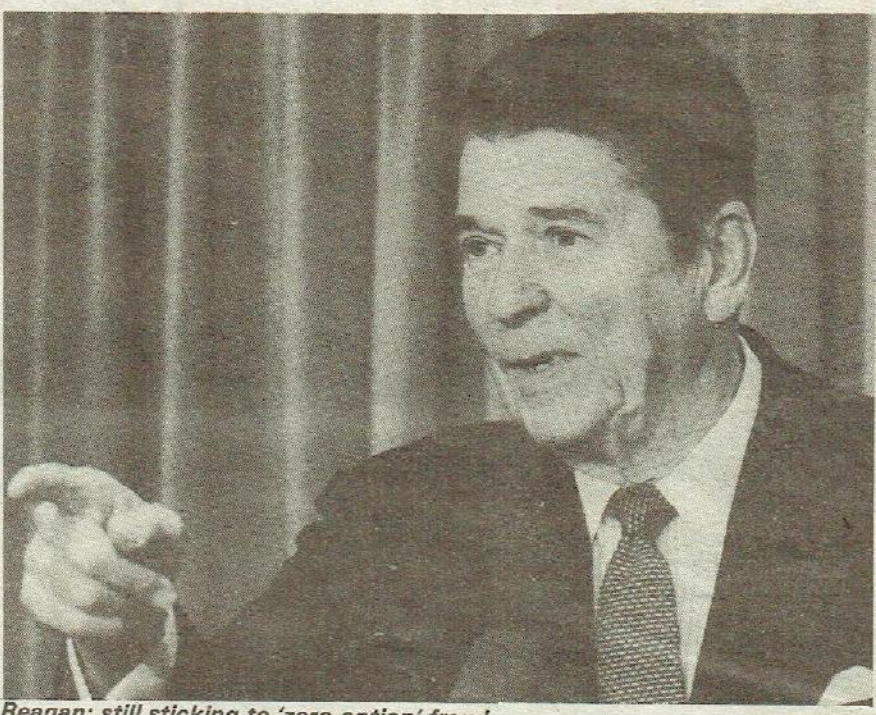


However, the SS-20 has far too short a range to hit the United States. Whereas the American MX, Trident, Pershing are quite capable of striking the USSR. Professor Carl G Jacobsen, professor and director of Soviet Studies at the University of Miami, explained the situation clearly in the January 1982 issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 'The point of the matter is ... that SS-20 merely confirm and guarantee long established Soviet strike potentials against America's allies. The Cruise and Pershing II missiles, however, threaten not just reciprocal destruction of Soviet allies; they threaten the Soviet heartland instead, just as effectively as

perialism because the Soviet Union can only be attacked with nuclear weapons. To remove all the American, British, French nuclear weapons from Europe would precisely make it impossible to launch a surprise attack on the USSR.

Reagan's proposal is absurd. It demanded that the Soviet Union give up all its nuclear defences in Europe, while the United States can maintain all its existing forces, the British and French modernise theirs, and the US deploy its new submarine forces.

On that basis Reagan might as well propose that the USSR simply open up its borders, haul up the white flag, and allow the US tanks to roll in. The Soviet Union rightly rejected this unserious suggestion of the United States — as Reagan knew they would.



Reagan: still sticking to 'zero-option' fraud.

## True

do inter-continental range missiles based on US soil. For there to be a true analogy Moscow would have to deploy the SS-20s in Cuba. The fact (is) that Washington feels that Moscow will be forced to swallow Cruise and Pershing missiles in NATO Europe, when it is quite clear that the United States would not tolerate SS-20s outside Havana.'

Professor Jacobsen could have gone even further. Washington made it quite clear in 1962 in the Cuban 'missile crisis' that it would fight a world war to prevent the Soviet Union having any bases near the United States in any way equivalent to those with which the U.S. surrounds the USSR.

In fact the Soviet Union has made it repeatedly clear that it is prepared to give up both the SS-20 and all the nuclear weapons that it has in Europe, or aimed against it, on one simple condition: that the imperialists do likewise — namely the United States, Britain and France remove their nuclear weapons.

But this proposal, 'A Nuclear Free Europe from Poland to Portugal' is totally rejected by im-

## Talks

In reality, in the whole history of 'peace' talks, few more grotesque proposals than this have ever been put forward. It more or less ranks with Johnson's claim that the North Vietnamese navy was carrying out an offensive against the US fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin, or President Carter's assertion that Cuba was posing a military threat to the United States by having a few hundred Soviet troops stationed there.

Let us take first the SS-20 — which the Soviet Union is using to replace its more than twenty-year-old SS-4 and SS-5. Both are liquid propelled rockets. The SS-4 takes hours to prepare for firing. Above all, both are fixed-site missiles that cannot be

made mobile.

Since the United States is now developing and deploying nuclear missiles that are accurate to a few hundred meters or even less, the SS-4 and SS-5 are completely useless to defend the Soviet Union against an American 'first strike'.

This would be roughly the equivalent of attempting to repel a modern tank attack using weapons from the first world war.

The SS-20 is a modern accurate weapon. Above all it is mobile — which means that it is far less vulnerable to an attack by a system such as the American MX, or any more accurate American submarine-launched weapon — or of course the Cruise and Pershing II.



Women from Greenham Common lobbying Parliament in protest against Cruise Missiles last Monday. Later 70 women staged an anti-Cruise protest from the Strangers Gallery. More women staged a sit-down in the central lobby, and were dragged away by police.

Photo: MORNING STAR

# Tebbit - hands off!

By Jeff King

THE LATEST proposals from Norman Tebbit are a calculated attempt to shackle the trade unions and bankrupt the Labour Party.

Tebbit proposes that the union national executives are elected by a secret postal ballot. Once this is done the same system could then be introduced to cover all union elections.

If the trade unions refused to implement Tebbit's proposal then the courts would be given power to freeze union funds, or even remove union leaders from office.

These sweeping proposals come packaged under the heading: 'Democracy in the Trade Unions'. The Tory idea of democracy is to remove elected leaders and take the union's funds away on the instructions of judges who have never been elected by anyone, and are accountable only to the ruling class and its state.

The use of ballots rather than branch votes does not extend democracy. At the branch the members can debate and argue the policies of the different candidates, and can make their minds up as a result of discussion. They can also acquaint themselves with the track record of the candidates.

This democratic process contrasts with the ballot method. The one person, one vote, method means that the overwhelming majority of the voters receive the greatest part of their information from the media. While this no doubt is good news for Tebbit — after all there is not one national newspaper that can be relied on to support any candidates other than safe

'moderates' — it's certainly bad news for rank and file democracy. The more the Tory media influences elections, the less can the interests of the ordinary members be served.

In opposing Tebbit, militants inside the unions however must point out that they too are in favour of extending trade union democracy, but from the angle of serving the interests of the rank and file. Therefore they are in favour of the periodic election of all full-time officials and of all the national, district and area committees.

Furthermore that all the officials and candidates for office should be at all times accountable to their members, and subject to recall at any time a majority of the members decides that they are no longer carrying out the task they were elected for.

The Tebbit proposals on the political levy have the aim of financially bleeding the Labour Party. He intends to scrap the present system under which union members automatically pay a political levy unless they 'contract out'. The levy is an absolutely essential lifeline for the Labour Party, in 1980 it put £5 million in the party treasury.

The last time the Tories used such legislation was in 1927 after they had inflicted a big defeat on the unions in the General Strike of the previous year, and this resulted in a big loss of income for the Labour Party.

Tebbit of course claims that he is concerned that members are contributing money, that offered the choice they would not give to the Labour Party. Naturally Tebbit has no

proposals to stop big business making hefty donations out of their profits to the Tory party. The fact that these profits are made out of the labour of the workforce has apparently escaped his notice.

## Money

The unions are affiliated to the Labour Party and pay money to the Labour Party because the majority of their members have decided that working people need a political party to represent their interests. Tebbit and the Tory party are against working people having a party to represent them, particularly if that party begins to adopt policies that damage the interests of the ruling class.

For this reason they want to strip the Labour

Party of as much of its funds as possible and thereby make sure that it is organisationally crippled.

The labour movement must unite to resist the Tebbit proposals. Under no circumstances can we permit the judges and the Tory politicians, accompanied by their friends in the media, to decide what goes on in the unions. The unions were formed because workers had recognised such people as that could not be trusted to run things.

As far as the Labour Party is concerned, all the labour movement must stand firm behind the idea that the trade unions must themselves decide how to spend their money and on what political objectives, and that they are not having Tory politicians interfering with that right.



# Why the witch-hunt should stop

By Tony Benn

The long and ill thought-out campaign launched with the help of the media, to expel the editors, employees and supporters of the Militant Newspaper has now led the Party into a grave and unnecessary crisis from which the NEC must seek to extricate itself as soon as possible, if we are to improve our chances of defeating Mrs Thatcher and electing a Labour government with an overall majority to implement our policies for peace jobs and freedom.

I have set out below ten reasons why the campaign against Militant should be abandoned and conclude with a notice of motion to be moved at the NEC on December 15th.

## The Case for Dropping the Campaign Against Militant

1. The evidence against Militant upon which the Hayward-Hughes report was based was not made available to the NEC at the meeting on June 23rd at which it was ruled that Militant was in breach of the constitution.

2. The decisions of the 1982 Conference on the register explicitly rejected a witch-hunt which the NEC now propose to conduct by adopting a process of interrogation, behind closed doors, of individual members of the Party about their present and past beliefs in clear breach of their civil liberties; and to be accompanied by a special loyalty oath in the form of assurances not required of other members

of the Party.

3. The NEC has not been issued with the legal advice sought by Party officials which apparently warned them that the proposals put to Conference would, if carried out, involve the Party in taking action contrary to natural justice, the upholding of which is central in a parliamentary democracy.

4. The motion to reintroduce a prescribed list of organisations is itself a clear breach of the Party constitution since the 1973 Conference approved the ending of proscribed lists and this decision has never been rescinded by Conference.

5. The threat of expulsion of employees of a newspaper, unless they

give up their employment, constitutes a breach of human rights, an attack on the freedom of the press



Tony Benn

and would in this case be arbitrary in that it would not apply to the employees, readers, contributors or supporters of newspapers which oppose the Labour Party.

6. The risk of legal action arising from the proposed decisions of the NEC would expose the Party to a prolonged scrutiny of all its internal affairs, in open court, under the protection of privilege during which the activities of all groups operating within the Party, including many groups which organise privately to oppose or secure a change of party policy, could legitimately be raised.

7. If the court case comes up before the General Election these hearings, which could be prolonged, could seriously damage the Party's electoral prospects and would be reported at length in the media which already cover the Militant question at the expense of Party policy.

8. If the court case is delayed beyond the General Election an injunction may be sought, and granted, against the NEC to restrain it from expulsions until the case has been heard and the legal costs of such preliminary hearings, not to mention the case itself could run into tens of thousands of pounds.

9. Those constituency parties which respect and value the hard work done for the Party by active and dedicated socialists who support Militant, or which have adopted candidates who do so, and which refuse to expel their colleagues at the dictat of the NEC could themselves be faced with disbandment on the eve of the Election which would constitute an unnecessary diversion, overstrain our staff and fill the local papers with endless stories of disputes at a time when we should be uniting for the campaign.

10. The attack upon Militant, and other socialists, is widely believed by individual members of the Party from left, right, and centre to be a mere cover for the abandonment of Conference policies, including our commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament, Britain's withdrawal from the EEC, rejection of wage restraint and the abolition of the House of Lords; all of which the Party expects to see in the Manifesto; and to open the way for the return of SDP defectors either directly, or as part of a coalition government or a Lib-Lab-SDP pact in the event of a hung parliament.

## Conclusion

I therefore intend to move the following motion, of which I gave notice of at the last meeting of the NEC, at the next meeting on December 15th.

*"That, in the light of the situation that has developed since Conference, the NEC resolves;*

(a) To take no further action against any groups.

(b) To unite around the policies in Labour's programme in 1982 and as agreed at Conference."

## Labour's Democracy campaign threatened

KEY OFFICERS of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy have threatened to split the campaign if it passes policies they disagree with, including opposition to the register.

The campaign, which pioneered the struggle for reselection of MPs and paved the way for the Deputy Leadership campaign, is having what may well be the most important Annual General Meeting in its history on Saturday

29 January, at which left and right have lined up around the register issue, and around whether or not CLPD should urge CLPs to defy the NEC by refusing to expel their members.

The officers threaten-

ing to resign include Vladimir Derer, a campaign founder, Peter Willsman and Victor Schonfield, whose attacks on the left have descended to pure muckraking.

Schonfield names twelve CLPD members who voted against the register in July and claims that their 'past services to CLPD do not amount to much, and the fact that these comrades used their

EC places to try and overturn our main objective makes them unfit for re-election.'

CLPD's future is in the balance — but not for the reasons given by Schonfield, who claims that to oppose the register would entail a 'double standard towards conference decisions'. The real question is whether or not it is

willing to organise its supporters to stand up to the right wing's attacks on the party, which had nothing to do with conference decisions and have already gone wildly beyond any mandate given them by the rank and file.

We urge all readers who can do so to attend the AGM and save the campaign.

## PR = a matter of principle

IT IS GOOD to see that Socialist Challenge is taking seriously and opposing the support for

Proportional Representation gathering among some sections of the left: notably the Communist Party, Socialist Society and even within the Labour left.

However it is vital that PR is opposed on principled grounds. It is not enough simply to say that it will lead to centrist coalition government in Britain — which it will. We also need to point out that whatever its claims to 'fairness', in practice the way it is implemented destroys the very accountability for which we have successfully fought in the labour movement these past few years.

In brief, the PR system favoured by the Alliance and others, of Single Transferable Votes in Multi-members constituencies, would require monster constituencies of over 300,000 electors on average (bigger than a London Borough). This would break the link between the MP and a



Photo: GM COOKSON

Peter Hain recognisable community and also prevent local parties from holding their MPs or councillors accountable.

These and other arguments against PR are explained in what we believe is the fullest socialist critique of PR in a pamphlet by Geoff Hodgson and myself: *Proportional Misrepresentation?* (£1 including p&p from Tribune, 308 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DY). We hope it will be widely read on the left and perhaps reviewed in your paper.

Yours fraternally,

Peter Hain

## Write to us!

WANT to get something off your chest, tell our readers about an event you're planning? Be brief, write fewer than 400 words to LETTERS c/o Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Tel: 01-359 8180.

## Marxism Today

WHILE raising many telling criticisms of the current political orientation of the CP journal *Marxism Today*, Robert Mossgeil gives a very one-sided view of the debate raging in the CP over the Tony Lane article 'Unions caught in the ebb tide'.

Far from having drawn a hostile and thoroughly justified response from CP trade unionists, it brought down the wrath of the CP apparatus and those CP layers most closely linked to the national and local

trade union bureaucracies. It further reawakened the debates inside the CP over whether *Marxism Today* should be a narrow party journal, or should engage broader debate with non-party members.

While not defending Tony Lane's article we should be careful before associating socialists in any way with the party hacks' campaign against him and Marxism Today's open contributions policy.

DAVY JONES

## 'Stop Silkin's coup', says his local party

By Nick Long, Deptford GMC (personal capacity)

JOHN SILKIN'S constituency party has overwhelmingly condemned his attempt to take the left-wing Labour party paper *Tribune* out of the hands of its new editor Chris Mullin.

Under Mullin's editorship the paper has taken a welcome left-wing direction, firmly opposing the witch-hunt. Silkin has been trying to use the proxy votes of *Tribune's* founding shareholders to sack Mullin.

A resolution passed at Deptford's December GMC likened his action to that of a city tycoon saying it had 'more in common with city boardroom struggles than the day-to-day activities of the labour and trade union movement'.

Silkin circulated a report to Deptford's January GC which defended his attempt to 'save *Tribune*' and prevent it being used 'to launch witch-hunts against good socialists'. 'I want *Tribune* once again to be the socialist campaigning newspaper it once was,' he goes on.

When asked to endorse the report Deptford GC reaffirmed its socialist credentials and showed Silkin the door, rejecting the 'report' by a large margin.

## The resolution reads:

This GC views with extreme concern the reported attempts of John Silkin to take over the Board of *Tribune* newspaper. *Tribune* has, over the past year, begun to re-adopt the socialist policies of the rank and file of the labour movement and was in the process of making the newspaper accountable to its readers through the establishment of a *Tribune* Friendly Society. We believe that the actions of John Silkin have more in common with City boardroom struggles than the day-to-day activities of the Labour and trade union movement.

We call upon John Silkin to withdraw from his attacks and at the same time, to make clear his total opposition to the attempts by the Labour Party NEC to begin a witch-hunt against socialist policies. We believe that the efforts of the whole party should be directed to removing this barbaric Tory government from office and preparing the way for the return of a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

## Fight the Witch-hunt — Sell the anti-witch-hunt bulletin

COPIES of LAW's second bulletin are available for 5p, or 3p per copy in bulk. 8,000 have been produced with articles from Tony Benn, Peter Tatchell, Jo Richardson, Hornsey, Manchester District LP and many others. Help spread the fight: get your branch/GC to order a bundle of 50 or order yourself. Orders from the secretary, 11 Wilderton Road, London N6 (802 1709).

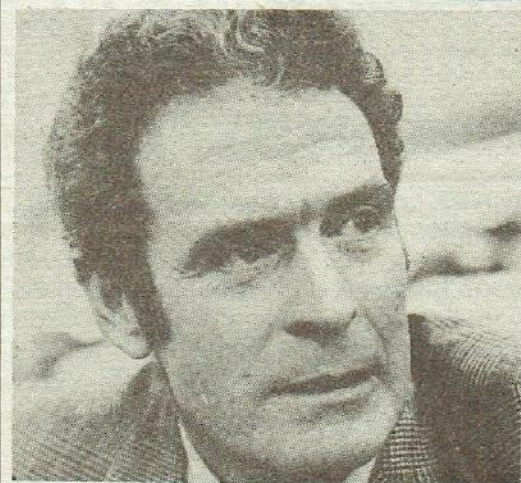
## International

Bi-monthly theoretical and discussion journal published by supporters of the Fourth International in Britain.

Latest issue includes Ernest Mandel on the world monetary situation, John Ross on the legends of King Arthur, Oliver MacDonald on Poland, Ron Brown MP on building a mass Labour Party, Harry Wicks on the birth of British Trotskyism and an interview with Britain's best political cartoonist Steve Bell.

Subscriptions £5.50p per annum (Britain) or £6.50 (surface) /£12 airmail abroad. International PO Box 50 London N1 2XP.

# Kent miners straighten their back



Jack Collins, general secretary of Kent NUM

**ONE THOUSAND** Kent miners decided last weekend to reject the Coal Board's offer to cut the workforce of the Snowdown colliery by 250 as a condition of keeping only one face open. This decision puts the Kent miners on collision course with the Coal Board and the Tories. **BRIAN GROGAN** asked **JACK COLLINS**, general secretary of the Kent area of the NUM, to explain the situation.

## HOW DID you decide to reject the Coal Board's proposals?

Last Friday, the Board gave us what they termed the 'final plan'. After they had read a prepared statement, we asked if this was negotiable. Rawlinson, the

area director, said that it was not. It was clear that they thought that the recent decisions of other coalfields had strengthened their hand.

So we went back to the membership last Sunday. We told them in a resolution that we were dissatisfied with the

Board's manpower proposals for Snowdown. We also asked them to recognise that it had been the solidarity and unity of the Kent miners that had kept Snowdown open since 1981.

We rejected the Board's proposals and demanded negotiations.

This resolution was overwhelmingly supported. There was no vote but my guess would be that no more than 100 to 150 people voted against out of 1000 that were present.

The Board has now agreed to meet us.

## What do you think will be the consequences of this decision?

Well I think it shows that if you straighten your back and decide to fight that you can get the support. We are not out of the wood yet. But we are still holding the line.

When you look at the situation in Kent, as opposed to some of the areas where decisions have been made recently, you must realise that we've been keeping Snowdown open since February 1981 against a decision for total closure. It has only been our determined resistance that has done that.

We have rejected the current proposals but even here they are now offering to keep 450 jobs. Compare this with total closure.

## What happened at the branch meeting the previous Friday which voted to accept?

There was a branch meeting called under pressure which voted by 250 votes to 213 to accept the Board's proposals. The main factor here I think was a certain lack of communication. Many people had heard we had rejected the Board's proposals and they didn't think that they

were to be consulted. This is what we did at the mass meeting on Sunday when it was significant that a number of the 260 changed their minds at that time.

As elsewhere, we in Kent have our share of those that have been destroyed by a life in the industry and would take early retirement; of younger men who are attracted by the £1000 transfer fee on offer; and others who are sure of a job even with the Board's present offer.

We of course are for early retirement, but we want such jobs replaced by younger men. Even if transfers go ahead we want to make sure that they don't leap frog over the young men waiting to be made up to face workers.

But at present we are refusing any redundancies and this is what we will tell the Board when we meet them. We will wait for their reaction and take it from there.

# Waterworkers declare all out strike

By Brian Grogan

**THE WATER** workers' union leaderships have declared all out strike from Monday 24 January. An overtime ban was imposed immediately. They are claiming a 15 per cent or £13 increase on basic wages — to bring them back in the top quarter of the manual workers' wages league.

The union leaders rejected Tory overtures of 'arbitration'. Yet they have agreed to meet the arbitration and conciliation body, ACAS. This body is no friend of the workers. It is prepared to make small criticisms of the bosses, but, as it showed in the railworkers disputes of last year, it fundamentally supports the bosses' line and Tory policies.

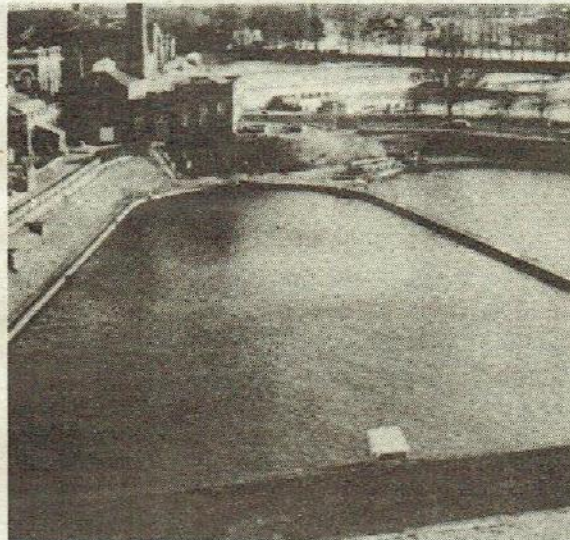
In this case, the invitation of ACAS is a Tory ploy. The Water Council offer is four per cent. But it has been widely mooted that they had been prepared to offer six per cent except for Tory government meddling. Now, through ACAS, they will try to make the original six per cent offer look like a concession to

the unions' demand of 15 per cent.

This ruse was made absolutely clear in the statement made by Tom King on his appointment as environment secretary that he would allow a negotiated settlement. It was the same Tom King, as Heseltine's deputy, that first put the block on the employers' six per cent.

Rank and file workers will need all their vigilance to prevent a sell out by the union leaderships through ACAS. Water workers are in a tremendously powerful position.

The 29,000 workers in the industry voted by a massive four to one in favour of strike action. An all-out strike would stop decisive sectors of British industry.



Thames waterworkers — will they throw the Tories into the shit?

Rather than conceding the claim, the Tories are reported to be training the army in preparation for a strike. The solidarity of the whole labour movement will be necessary to break the back of the Tories. This would put the mockers on the Tories' electoral prospects and en-

sure a Labour victory.

The Labour Party has every interest in backing the water workers to the hilt. Labour Party policy stands against any form of incomes policy. The demand must go out for active support from the Labour leadership.



Kent miners marching in support of health workers. Now they are looking for support from other workers themselves

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

# South Wales miners' leadership retreats over strike plan

By Barry Wilkinson

**IN DECEMBER**, the South Wales miners' leadership took a big step forward in fighting for the future of the coalfield. They drew up a plan for new recruitment and £400m new investment. They won 80 percent support from the membership for a strike from 17 January if the coalboard failed to deliver.

This was a new offensive battle and no longer just a defensive fight against pit closure. Following in the wake of the failure of the miners national ballot for industrial action, it showed the decisive role of vigorous local leadership. In talks with the Board, South Wales leaders got no firm commitments on their demands. The area ban on recruitment was lifted but no definite figures were promised either on this or new investment.

However, at an area conference last week,

following the recommendation from the South Wales executive, the miners called off the strike and supported further talks with the Board. Even so over a third of the pits voted against the executive for the strike to go ahead as planned.

'If the executive had made a recommendation for strike action, it would have been overwhelmingly carried and the strike would have been solid', **TYRONE O'SULLIVAN**, secretary of Tower Lodge told Socialist Challenge.

'The setback over Kinneil could have been over-

come by a strong lead. The responsibility lies with the executive. This is a repeat of 1981 when we went back to work on the basis of empty promises. The Board will now seek union involvement in review procedures, as in the 1960's hoping to trap us into closure agreements. But we must fight every threatened closure.

## Fight

'Tower Lodge general meeting has unanimously agreed not to treat the area conference decisions as a defeat but to fight all closures and to send messages of support to three immediately threatened pits — Britannia, Lewis Merthyr and Blaongwrach. The decision of Kent

miners to reject the Board's latest offer on Snowdown will give encouragement in South Wales after this setback.'

From Trelewis Drift, **PAUL O'SULLIVAN** told Socialist Challenge that calling off the strike was 'a total sell out by the executive.'

Paul's lodge is protesting to the executive that they were totally wrong to call off the strike when their demands have not been met by the Board. 'The fight was there in the coal fields and with the executives lead we could have won against the Board and the government. We don't get much out of more talk with the Board.'

The way forward is for a threatened pit to take action to start spreading it though the coalfield and

pull in executive support to strengthen the strike. We must get organising to be ready to back threatened pits with action.'

**MIKE GRIFFIN**, lodge secretary at Penrhiwceiber, told Socialist Challenge that the area conference decision means that the Board will step up plans for pit closures: 'It will mean a strike to save these pits and we must build up pressure to make it irresistible to the leadership', Mike said.

**DAI DAVIES** from Penrhiwceiber, and a member of the South Wales executive, spoke to Socialist Challenge in his personal capacity. 'We could have won this battle. The setback in Scotland over Kinneil has been over-emphasised. It showed a weakness of the area leadership not the rank

and file. With a strong lead from South Wales, we could have got into other coalfields including Scotland and won their support.'

## Case

'The leadership is afraid of isolation in South Wales, but we showed in 1981 that we have the ability to persuade other coalfields to back us. Our case for investment and recruitment is completely unanswerable. In 1981 only three South Wales pits voted to continue the strike but now 12 pits voted for the strike against the executive.'

'So some have learned the lessons of 1981. But not enough. Yet the militant heart of the coalfield remains totally against

closure so a fight is likely. The Board will not try and bring us to our knees and we can re-unite the coalfield by fighting back around threatened pits.'

A majority of the South Wales leadership has backed away from the battle which they had prepared for with the Board and government. This is a setback for miners and other workers. But militant miners and rank and file leaders in South Wales will now be preparing for the next stage — to fightback against the Board to save the immediately threatened pits.

It is vital that this fight should succeed. By building up the pressure to win the support of the leadership, the Board's offensive can be rolled back.

# Police: 'democratic control needed'

By Toni Gorton

THE BRUTAL unwarranted shooting of Stephen Waldorf in London on 14 January has highlighted the abuse of power by London's police. It is set against the battle by the Labour GLC to remove the 'Met' from the authority of the Home Secretary and make it accountable to Londoners and that of the National Council for Civil Liberties who are alarmed by the new Tory police bill which would, in their opinion 'be an astonishing invasion of the individual citizen's right to privacy'. The NCCL argues for this to be stopped and for more control over police power by the institution of a genuinely independent element in the police complaints procedure.

In London the Labour GLC has announced its plans to bring the Metropolitan Police under local control, a demand supported by most Londoners who paid £323m in rates for a police force with the lowest clean-up rate in the country and the worst record of harassment of black and working class areas.

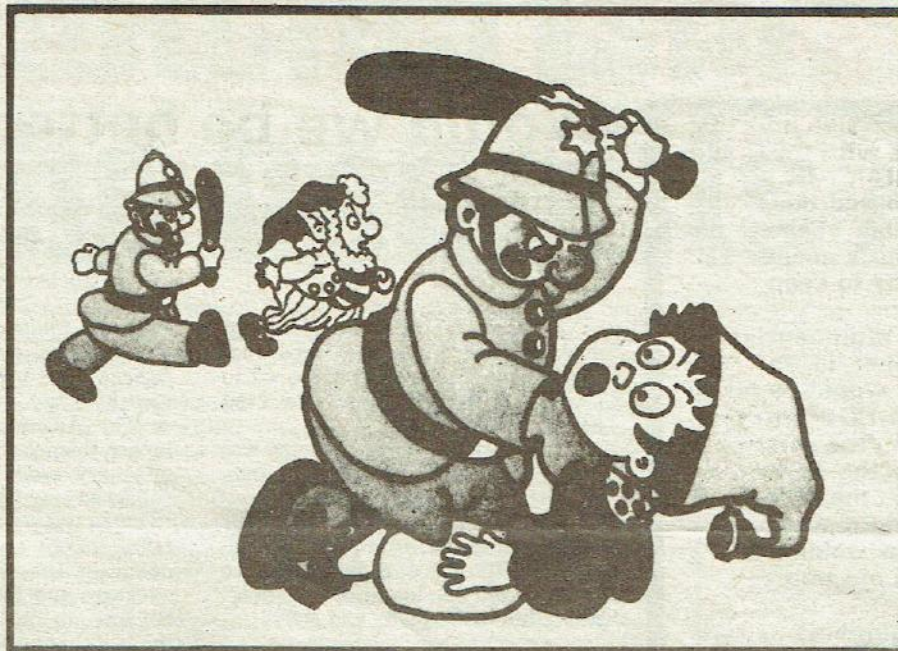
Everyone is now awaiting Sir Kenneth Newman's, the Met's new police chief, views on how he sees the task of trying to establish public 'confidence' in a police force notorious for corruption and brutality.

That the situation vis a

vis Britain's police needs a thorough overhaul and a response from those who wish to defend democratic rights is plainly revealed by the NCCL in a new pamphlet and two press releases in the space of a week.

On the Police Bill which has had its first reading and is now in its committee stage, the NCCL condemns proposals which would give the police:

- power to search innocent people's homes and to inspect the confidential records and papers of doctors, social workers, priests, journalists, lawyers and other profes-



"NODDY GETS A SHORT SHARP SHOCK" is the title of a new postcard and badge available from Rhinoceros postcards. The design shows Noddy receiving a lesson in the Immediate Response Unit's new riot control procedures. Badge or card are available at six for £1 (including postage) from Rhinoceros Postcards, 22c Ferndale Road, London SW4.

sional advisors.

- power of stop and search which would form the basis for routine searches of men and women leaving gay pubs, clubs and meetings, and would allow the police to read diaries and address books.

- power to arrest gay men and lesbians for showing each other affection in public on the grounds of preventing an 'affront to public decency'
- power to make body searches and take body samples of blood, urine,

semen, saliva in police stations.

While arguing for the removal of the relevant clauses from the Police Bill the NCCL has also drafted a Police Complaints Bill which proposes a fully independent system for deal-

ing with complaints against the police.

Graphic examples are given in their new pamphlet *A Fair Cop* of the refusal by police to regulate and control their own people.

In 1976 a black middle aged couple in Stoke Newington were raided by the police early in the morning and brutally assaulted. In 1982 they were awarded £51,392 in a civil action against the police.

To date no internal investigation has taken place and indeed one officer has been promoted. These sorts of abuses are common and only the most flagrant reach the headlines.

While the NCCL is attempting to deal with the problems at the legal and parliamentary level, the GLC is trying to get greater local control of the police. They want the Home Secretary replaced as the capital's police authority by a GLC police committee and separate police committees in the 32 boroughs with maximum power at the borough level.

This would mean that the officers would become local government

employees rather than crown officers, allowed to join unions and political parties.

Scotland Yard has argued that the proposals are political and it is the commissioner's policy to be apolitical. This begs the question. Who is more political than Thatcher's Willie Whitelaw — the Home Secretary?

The proposals from the NCCL and the GLC and the abuses they are trying to prevent should be supported. The protection of democratic rights and control over police power is important.

The general framework of the proposals however presents more of a problem. When the NCCL argues for increasing 'public confidence' in the police this obscures the essential nature of the police as a repressive arm of the state.

In the final analysis the police are anti-working class and anti-black and anti-labour and nothing can prettify this ugly picture.

*A Fair Cop: reforming the Police complaints procedure by Patricia Hewitt is published by the NCCL, 21 Tabard St., London SE1. (46 pages, price £1.75 plus 20p p&p)*

# Metal Box jobs fight

MANAGEMENT at the Metal Box factory in Hackney, East London are to announce substantial redundancies at the end of January. In an effort to save jobs at this 600 strong workplace the shop stewards are having talks with local MPs, GLC and borough officials. Socialist Challenge spoke to FRANK GORTON who is the Trade Union Liaison officer for Hackney North Labour Party and also an engineering union shop steward at Metal Box. There are five unions involved: TGWU, ASTMS, AUEW, EETPU and TASS.

What's the story behind the company's new moves?

The planned rundown of Metal Box production lines in London continues with the recent announcement of the administrative merger of the Palmers Green and Clapton sites. This will bring about significant job loss among ASTMS members and management is saying that all departments will be affected.

Metal Box is the last manufacturing establishment left in Hackney employing more than 500 people. With the recent closures of Lesney's the Matchbox toy makers and Staffa in Leyton and job loss at Gestetner in neighbouring Tottenham, this latest threat to jobs in the area will prove to be catastrophic.

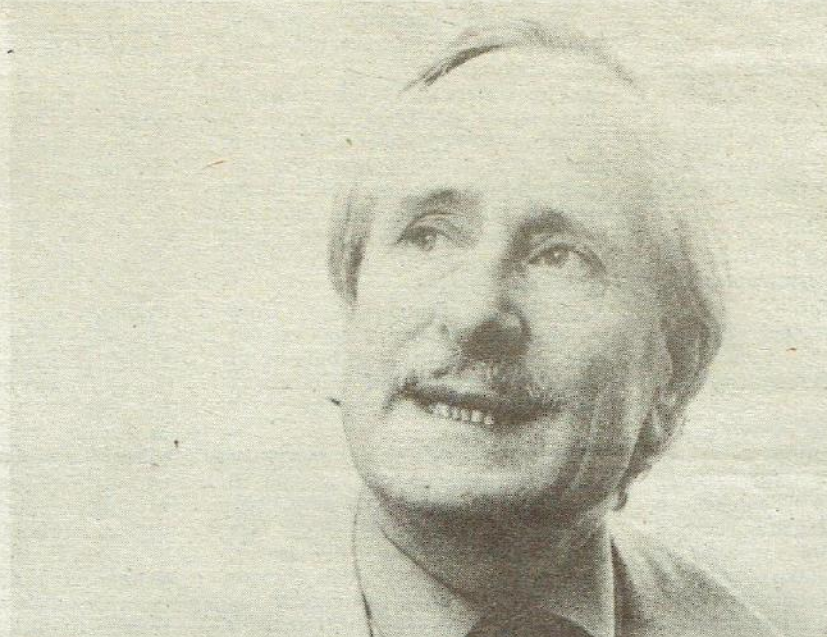
One out of every four of working people in Hackney is already unemployed. The declining job opportunities hit local youth — many of whom are black — very hard.

This unemployment problem in Hackney is of great concern to the local Labour Parties and the trade union movement.

What are you doing to stop the redundancies?

The joint shop stewards committee has convened two meetings to bring together all those who have an interest in maintaining Metal Box production in Hackney and minimising job loss.

The latest meeting at the Town Hall was attended by the three Hackney MPs; Ernie Roberts and Stanley Clinton Davis,



Ernie Roberts, Labour MP for Hackney North

'I HAVE been looking at the '82 company accounts. 54 percent of sales are at home bringing £18m profits and 46 percent are overseas bringing £54m profits.

'This is a consequence of the differential investment between the UK and overseas. £48m was invested in plant and equipment last year: £17.5m in the UK and £30.5m overseas. There is obviously a case for greater investment in Hackney to save jobs compared to overseas.

'This also certainly means this company isn't with its back to the wall or near liquidation.

'In the past the London plants have contributed to Metal Box's growth and

Labour, and Ron Brown SDP:

There were officers from the GLC and Hackney Industrial Policy groups and the leader and deputy leader of the Hackney Borough Council and other top officials.

In addition we had the district officers of the TGWU and ASTMS, the Hackney Trades Council representatives, Metal Box shop stewards and a number of others.

We centred on establishing the facts from national and local management plans for the

factory as a first step towards making concrete the promise of local government intervention.

What the situation demands, of course, is that the company opens its books to the workforce so that all economic and policy factors are known to all. This they refuse to do. As a result three MPs and the local government officials have now met with local and national Metal Box management.

The great majority of the workforce need to keep their jobs and are responding to these initiatives with great interest. However it's early days.

This situation makes big demands on the workforce, the management, the unions and the MPs. But especially it tests

the GLC election promise to save jobs in the inner city areas.

What we really need, as Arthur Scargill says, is a government that is as loyal to the working class as the Tories are to their class.

economic success. It should be prepared to carry the Hackney site through a lean time in order that when the promised upturn in the economy comes the workforce is there to go into full swing again.

'As a long standing national trade union officer I can say that redundancy pay is never an alternative to a job. Especially in Hackney people aren't likely to get another one and the redundancy pay runs out quickly.

'I believe that the workers at Metal Box can hold onto their jobs if they're prepared to put up a struggle through their unions and on the shop floor.

'In the multinationals it's only those workers who put up a struggle who can maintain employment.'

How do you think this is going to develop?



Sid Weighell they caught him with his fingers in the ballot box

## Sid bends the rules

By Bob Pennington

YOU MUST remember Sid Weighell — he was the lad who got caught with his fingers in the ballot box at the Labour Party conference — now he wants his candidate, Charlie Turnock to take over from him as general secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen.

What is more, Sid does not intend to let silly irrelevancies like union rules get in his way. So in late December he sent a circular to NUR branches which was not intended to do Jimmy Knapp, Turnock's main opponent, a lot of good.

The NUR president Tommy Ham had asked Weighell not to send out such a circular, saying it could be interpreted as a plea to vote for Turnock not Knapp. Then after Ham had gone home to Derbyshire for Xmas, Sid sent off his circular. Not being too confident of the postal system, Sid used private contractors which is against NUR rules. Perhaps he thought the NUR members were so overworked handling the Xmas mail, he would give them a break.

Ham was a bit upset by all this saying: '... the rules say any circular will be issued officially from the Head Office'. But Ham does not appreciate that the rules do not count when it comes to a fight to save the union against communism.

Sid knows full well what a danger to the union and the Labour Party Knapp is. Sid told a press conference that Knapp was 'a disaster for the union' and that he 'was a member of the far left supported by the Militant and the Communist Party'

who if elected could tilt the balance against Labour at the next election.

As proof of Knapp's electoral liability he cited Knapp's support for unilateralism, how he wanted Britain to withdraw from the EEC, and how he was against the expulsion of Militant from the Labour party. As the majority of the Labour Party and the trade union are in favour of unilateralism and getting out of the EEC it is clear that these two organisations are being run by subversives and supporters of godless communism.

As for people being against the expulsion of Militant there is no doubt that a massive majority of individual Labour Party members belong in the Knapp camp. If this great majority are allowed their way we will not have any nuclear weapons, we shall be out of that nice capitalist Common Market and we won't be allowed a witch-hunt in the Labour Party.

To save us from such horrors Sid manfully tried to fiddle the ballot at the Labour Conference and was prepared to break his own union rules.

Now he has gone off fishing, disgruntled with an ungrateful public who do not appreciate how hard he tried to fight majority decisions.

### Anthony Kendall, leader of Hackney Borough Council

'IT'S an appalling situation both for individuals and for Hackney. The 25 per cent unemployment here is worse than the depression. It's horrific.

'My anger increases daily about the way that private companies deal with people's lives. There is no real evidence that the company is in trouble.

'It's just putting people on the scrap heap so as to maximise profits and hiding the whole thing under a smokescreen of accountability fiddles.'

# COALITION: WOULD IT W

## Would we be better off under an SDP-Lab

LAST WEEK Socialist Challenge showed that the Communist Party and the 'soft left' of the Labour Party are beginning to call for a coalition with the Social Democratic Party to keep out Thatcher.

As the election gets nearer this argument will become more popular. Thatcher is so dangerous, it is said, that anything would be better. And by linking up with the SDP we could achieve 'moderate' progress on the sort of radical social reforms to which the SDP seems to be committed. After all, isn't the SDP only putting forward Labour's old right wing policies? Wouldn't we just, as John Golding says he wants, go 'back to Labour's old traditions'?

ALAN FREEMAN looks at the arguments.

WHAT IS the argument in favour of a coalition? Last week we quoted Sam Aaronovitch in *Marxism Today*, where he argues that 'The nature of Thatcherism is such that I'm prepared to construct an alliance with all kinds of forces who are prepared to challenge what Thatcherism is about.'

He went on to argue that 'the policies the Alliance is putting forward, though very inadequate, contain elements which would certainly be in advance of the situation we've got and, with a massive crisis, couldn't fail to bring about limited kinds of revival.'

The case is that we would be able, without Thatcher in command, to get a 'soft option' government by toning down our demands. So let's ask two questions: first, what demands would we have to tone down — what would be the price of a coalition? And second, would we stop or even ameliorate the crisis; would we be better off?

You can't answer these questions by looking at the SDP's manifesto. What any government achieves is not decided by its paper policy but by the material forces at work in the country and how it mobilises them. In 1976 Callaghan and Healey implemented policies demanded by the IMF, Treasury, Bank of England and big multinationals because they refused to mobilise working people for any alternative.

In 1974, however, when working class militancy was still high, Wilson granted many working class demands which he was only able to retrieve later.

The SDP is absolutely against mobilising working people. So coalition only makes sense if you think

there is some *other* material force knocking around, which you can rely on for support against those who back Thatcher.

On the facing page we show who has really gained from Thatcherism. It is not a tiny minority. At least half the capitalists *directly* benefit — banking, finance and the distributive trades, not to mention oil and agriculture.

This runs directly counter to the Communist Party's claim that Thatcher only represents the City or a handful of monopolists.

But we must now ask: what is the prospect of setting the rest of the capitalist class against Thatcher? Certainly, this is part of what the SDP hopes to achieve. Can't we make a deal with the CBI for a 'sane' recovery?

We have to ask, therefore, what sacrifices *they* would need to turn away from Thatcher. And the answer is a simple one. We would have to junk, permanently, all the crucial working class gains which were made in 1945 and for which working people have fought since they possessed the means to do so:

- full employment
- the right to universal and free health and education
- freedom from fear of imperialist war
- adequate social security and housing
- a rising standard of living and freedom from want.

In short, all the *social* achievements which Thatcher is demolishing would still be as threatened as before — but the Labour Party would take the blame.

Therefore, when Labour's right wing and the SDP leaders say they want to return to Labour's traditions, they are either fooling themselves or lying. What they mean by 'Labour's traditions' is the tradition of peaceful

collaboration with the employers. The problem is that this could deliver some advantages in 1945, but it cannot do so now.

What is the proof of this?

The first fact we have to grasp was explained in SC two weeks ago: that in 1945 the Tories were prepared to accept the welfare state and even helped develop it.

The world capitalist economy was ripe for expansion for many reasons.

● The working people of continental Europe and Japan had had their organisations destroyed by fascism and war. The rate of exploitation rose savagely amidst conditions of near-starvation in Germany and Italy.

● America finally stepped in as leading world imperialist power. In 1947 General Marshall unveiled a plan which pumped money into Europe on a scale never seen before. This did cause some confusion among the Communists: for example, in 1947 the Communist Party of Great Britain denounced the plan for 'battering away at our Empire preferences — the last rickety barrier against the salesmen of General Motors and Du Ponts and General Electric in British markets,' while the American Communist leader Earl Browder was busy explaining that 'this is the only way in which Europe can become the effective market which is needed for the American economy's survival on a capitalist basis ... only the new democratic Europe is capable of buying and selling on the world market, and paying its bills, in a fashion and on a scale necessary to fit, with America, into a single world order.'

Now, the question is whether America can pay Europe's bill — not vice versa.

● This American aid turned Britain into a junior partner of American imperialism. In September 1948 Britain received a \$1,263m loan and immediately lent a quarter of it to the rest of Europe. Between 1945 and 1967 Britain's overseas holdings were built up again to £11bn, under American tutelage.

Britain, through the Commonwealth, retained a 'pocket empire' into which the great bulk of this investment went. Half Britain's exports went to the 'sterling area'.

● A 'long wave' of economic expansion ensued based on large-scale investment in new machinery, particularly in nuclear and heavy electrical engineering, and in oil-based industries. Profits were high enough, and trade expanding fast enough (8.6 per cent per year from 1950 to 1970), that Britain's *volume* of trade increased even though its share declined to 10 per cent by 1970.

● Government spending to carry in-

dustry through threatened slumps was introduced, producing creeping, but not galloping inflation because capital stocks were still being built up.

*Every single one of these underlying conditions for 'welfare state' policies has either gone, or is vanishing fast.*

● The American economy can no longer finance the world. The world monetary order established in 1946 collapsed in 1971 when fixed exchange rates were abandoned and the USA started trying to devalue the dollar. The IMF's 'austerity' packages and the threat of financial collapse, in the last analysis, reflect the fact that no single capitalist country can accumulate capital on a scale sufficient to finance expansion for the rest of the world.

● Working class organisation has built up its strength again and in no industrial country does capital feel confident that it can undertake large-scale, long-term investment on the sort of scale needed to start a new world boom.

● The long-term effects of persistent government spending has been to prevent the normal 'sanitising' mechanism of capitalist slumps getting rid of outdated and inefficient capital. Table III shows the effect this has had, in Britain, on the rate of profit.

Table IV

Inflation and growth, 1955-80 (per cent)

Period	1955-65	1965-75	1975-80
average growth	3.1	1.9	1.6
average inflation	3.7	14	19

This is *not* the result of rising wages, which are still a relatively fixed proportion of the value of output. It is caused by a rise in the quantity of capital over which these profits must be distributed, as figures now produced by the government show. These figures do not exactly measure Marx's 'Organic Composition of Capital' but they do, quite irrefutably, show that profit rates are falling because of the accumulation of capital and not because wages are too high.

● Finally, while capitalism can tolerate creeping inflation of one, two or three per cent, inflation rates of double figures or even six-seven per cent are completely unacceptable.

Table IV shows how inflation in Britain has risen steadily as government spending was used to ward off slumps, to the impossible levels of the late seventies. These levels of inflation are absolutely unacceptable to capitalism: no capitalist economy other than a satellite or dependent

economy sustained by outside funds, can tolerate them over an extended period and continue to expand its industry.

But these facts show what would be demanded of an SDP-Labour government, not just by Thatcher's immediate base of support, but by all capitalists.

First, government spending would have to be subordinated to the overall goal of keeping down inflation. Even the Treasury's computer just allows Peter Shore to get unemployment down to 'only' a million by the end of five years: this is a wildly optimistic figure, because it assumes that world trade will not fall (which it will) and that world finances will remain stable (which they won't).

Second, however, the *price* of domestic spending or devaluation would be a truly gigantic assault on workers' wages, to keep up profits which are declining for reasons we have just outlined. A simple equation is involved here which anyone can calculate.

Profits of manufacturing industry in 1978, which we will take as a pre-Thatcher year, were £9.9bn. Of this £3.9bn was used up replacing old capital, leaving £6bn. Capital stock in that year was estimated at £100bn, so that the 'rate of return' — profit per £100 invested — was 6 per cent.

Now suppose wages are to fall so as to bring profits up to their 1960 level of 12 per cent. This means a transfer of £6bn from workers in manufacturing to capitalists. There are 5m workers in manufacturing; *every worker would thus have to take an average wage cut of over £1000!*

We can look at the same problem by studying the notorious 'balance of payments' problem with which Shore is wrestling, and asking what the effects of a devaluation would be.

The Treasury computer, reliable as the Oracle at Delphi and used by today's media priests for the same purpose, told Peter Shore that he needed an incomes policy. It said that if he didn't have one, the balance of payments deficit would be twenty five billion pounds by the time Labour finished its term of office.

Long before this mythical date arrived, speculators would have brought the pound, and the government, crashing to the floor. What promises would satisfy the speculators? A wage and austerity policy sufficiently draconian to cut £25m off consumption. Otherwise, there could be an immediate and abrupt devaluation.

Moreover, precisely because of Britain's long-term commitment to the pound, the effects would hit immediately.



## Labour's past coalitions

The National government of 1931. Standing from left, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister (Con), JH Thomas (Lab), Lord Reading (Lib), Neville Chamberlain (Con), Sir S Hoare (Con); sitting, P Snowden (Lab), Ramsey MacDonald (Lab), Sir M Samuel (Lib), Lord Sankey (Lab)

COALITIONS have happened before. The most famous in Labour Party history was when Ramsay MacDonald crossed the government benches in 1931, depriving the Labour Party of government by joining with the Conservatives and Liberals in a 'government of national salvation'.

The result was a political disaster. In the election of 1931 Labour got only 52 seats and 30 per cent of the vote. But it was also a social and economic disaster for working people. Unemployment was still in double figures by 1937 and only the war brought relief.

But this was not the only coalition the Labour Party has taken part in.

In 1915 the Labour Party formed a wartime coalition. Nearly a million lives were lost in the fruitless slaughter and the 'industrial peace' accepted by trade union leaders caused terrible privation — leading to the formation of the shop stewards' movement.

Ruling class leaders were so ter-

rified that they called a hasty election in 1918 before the sold could vote, putting a Libe Conservative coalition in of which dismantled all the machir set up during the war to control dustry — and with it the last rem: ing shred of justification for Lab participation.

From 1940 to 1945 Labour part of a second wartime coalit which right wingers Bevin and M rison wanted to continue after war, even if Labour won a majo in the elections.

Why did it come out of 194: much better than 1918 or 19 Because, as explained in SC num 275 (7 January), the Tories wer basic political agreement with w they proposed.

But the most recent experie was in April 1976 when, altho Callaghan still ran a Labour gov ment, he had to rely on Liberal s port — the so-called 'Lib Lab pa Part of the price was the packag austerity measures which Labour the 1979 election



# The West Indies are coming — or are they?

By Paul Lawson

THE COMING TOUR by West Indian cricketers to South Africa is being hailed as a great 'victory' for that country's government. Propaganda coup it might be, but the storm around it vividly highlights the utter isolation of South Africa, rather than any re-integration into the international community.

The tour is an act of desperation, an attempt to break out of sporting isolation with huge sums of money.

There is no doubt that the £3 million or so cost of the tour has been underwritten by the South African government itself.

The sporting ban on South Africa has been extremely effective. Many in the cricketing authorities of England, New Zealand and Australia would love to play South Africa, but

they know the price of so doing would be to split cricket down the middle — the black countries refusing to play the white. Hence the tough attitude to players going to South

Africa.

Since the top cricketers can now earn large sums of money in test cricket, South Africa's money inducements only tempt those just below test level or test cricketers coming to the end of their careers.

So far the South Africans have been able to tempt a not-quite-England side, which was duly thrashed by the Springboks to the great boredom of South African cricket fans, and the Sri Lankan side which was also clobbered in front of empty stands.

Now there is no doubt that the West Indian side

contains players who would walk into the present England team; even if they had one arm cut off. Players like Lawrence Rowe and Bernard Julien would perform better than some of our heroes presently in Australia. But by the West Indies' own great standards it is a weak team — the absence of Holding, Lloyd, Roberts, Joel Garner, Malcolm Marshall, Gordon Greenidge and above all master-blasters Vivien Richards makes it second rate.

Of the rebel team only Sylvester Clarke and Kalicharran had a good

chance of playing in the West Indies world cup squad next year.

Any team without Vivien Richards is not the real West Indies team; but he is so well known for his determined anti-racism that the South African probably didn't even bother to ask him.

Also emerging with great credit from the affair is Clive Lloyd, West Indian captain, who attacked the proposed tour with some vehemence.

A sporting ban against South Africa is very effective because the white South Africans are great sports fans. They reckon

they have one of the best cricket teams in the world, and you don't have to be pro-South African to accept that a team with Graeme Pollock, Barry Richards, Clive Rice and Vincent van de Bijl is extremely strong.

The individual South African cricketers reckon they've been hard done by — after all most of them have played in teams of black players.

But the way is now open to those players to play Test cricket provided they break with South Africa. Allan Lamb (England) and Kepler Wessels (Australia) have

done just that. No matter how much Richards et al disclaim racism, they won't break with the apartheid state.

The West Indian cricketers have been banned for life. So should the English players who went to South Africa and the whole Sri Lankan team.

South Africa's radio ads announce 'The West Indians are coming!'; but they're not, only an ersatz West Indies is coming. And the fact that it will in all probability get soundly beaten only highlights the fact of South Africa's isolation.

# 'What is happening here is barbaric and totally unnecessary'

'A message from the Falklands' Penguin books £1.95

THIS WEEK the Franks Report largely exonerates Margaret Thatcher's handling of the Falklands War. Such a conclusion is reached not just out of natural loyalty to the government, but in the manner of such reports by asking all the wrong questions.

Those who want to ask — and answer — the real questions about why around 2,000 people died in a pointless war are well served by Penguin's decision to make available to a wider audience 'A Message from the Falklands'. The book is about the life, and death in the Falklands war at 25, of a navy lieutenant David Tinker.

There was nothing exceptional about David Tinker; he was no political radical. Yet his letters, from the

South Atlantic reveal an increasing disenchantment with the war, a bitterness about the Tory politicians who sent people to die there and about the futility of the slaughter.

His concern was not just for the British servicemen. He writes in a letter to his father of the Argentines: 'Despite what the press and public say, they are brave men who have to do their duty as we do'. And: 'The pity for us is that there is no cause for this war; and to be honest the Argentines are more patriotic about the Malvinas than we are about the Falklands'.

David Tinker was killed in an Exocet attack on HMS Glamorgan on 12 June 1982. Here we publish some excerpts from his letters.

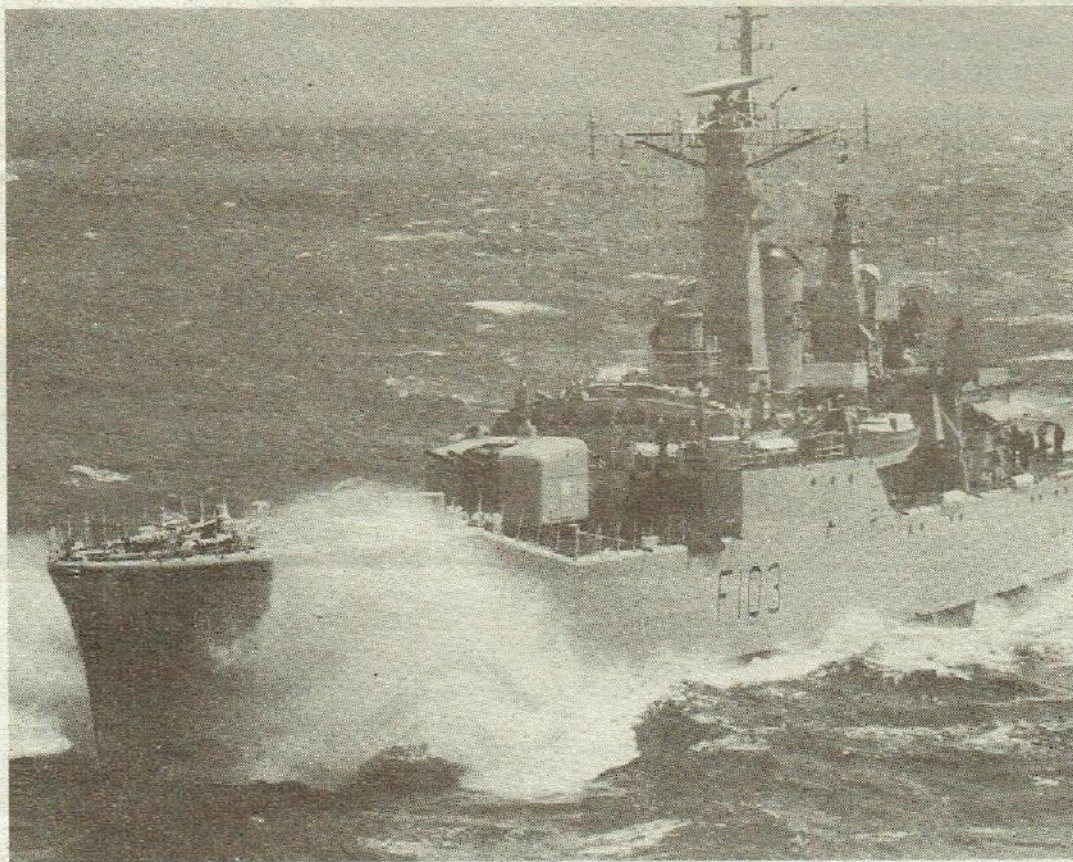
From a letter to Julian Salmon 6 May 1982

'... The picture that Nott and his cronies are giving is not true. The Argentinian air force has the latest attack aircraft and missiles, which we just do not have. We long for nights, when their aircraft cannot attack us, and at the moment we are rejoicing in a fog which is sheltering us. I wish the politicians would see sense and stop the war. What is happening here is barbaric and totally unnecessary ...

This is what it is, a war for a flag ... I think that Maggie Thatcher sees herself as a Churchill, and as for Nott ... let him come down and lie on the deck with us while the air raids come in and the missiles go off. He would see what it is really like and soon change his tune.'

From a letter to his parents 6 May 1982

'It must be a very worrying time for you with all this dreadful business going on. But we are all fine, and in good heart and have not been touched. We cannot really believe what is happening and we all hope for peace: as I am sure do the Argentinian soldiers. I only hope that pressure is brought to bear on the British Government by the UN, USA and the EEC to stop the war. It is British action that is causing the actual fighting; the Argentinians merely return like with like. I hope that the Government falls quickly on a vote of no confidence ...'



British destroyer in the Falklands.

From a letter to his wife Christine 8 May 1982

'I cannot believe that Britain, after the experience of the First World War, can be starting another; but this is what Thatcher and Nott are doing. I just hope that the UN, USA and EEC have the humanity to say: Stop fighting, and let's sort this out peacefully. It is, after all, only a rock with a village population on it.'

From a letter to his father 22 May 1982

'Your marvellous long letter arrived today ... It was like a breath of fresh air-coming into this totally mad world here. I am glad that you think that way about Mrs Thatcher and the war — as I have come to think since this business started. I sometimes wonder if I am totally odd in that I utterly oppose all this killing that is going on over a flag. Wilfred Owen wrote, "There'll come a day when men make war on death for lives, not men for flags", but it has been the reverse here — "nations trek from progress" still ...

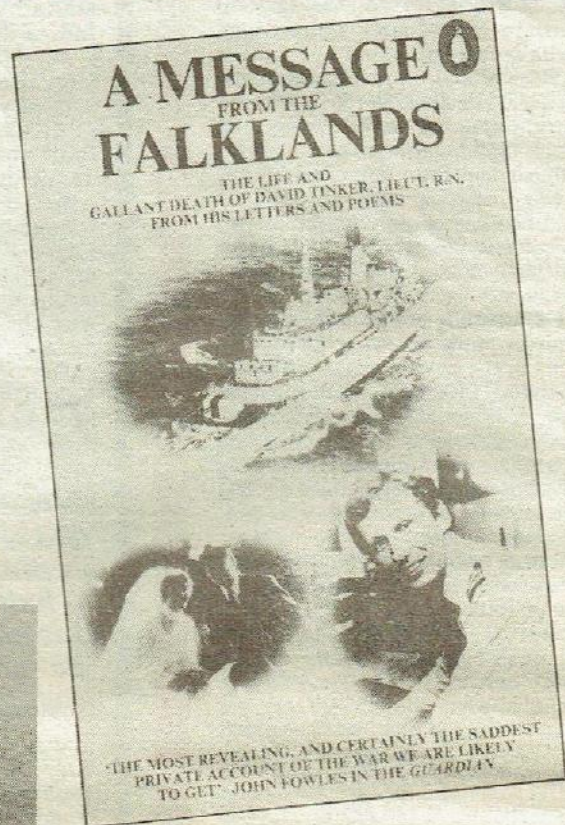
Apart from the military fiasco the political side is even more disgraceful. Even if Britain does reconquer the Falklands we still have to talk to the Argentinians and come to some arrangement, so

why not settle the war before it has devastated the Falklanders island.

However, if Britain is going to turn the Falklands into a garrison island (in direct contravention of the Antarctic treaty?) it will show the complete hypocrisy of the British government which was going to leave the islands totally undefended and take away the islanders British citizenship! ...

'... A classicist on board also quoted an example of another dying power having a last fling. I only hope the Falklands do not become our Vietnam, but as long as this government is in power they will be ... Mrs Thatcher and our admiral (he, more understandably) seem to have no compunction about casualties at all — the initial shock of Sheffield has worn off, and now they are accepted willingly — 20 yesterday in a helicopter, and 20 in Ardent. And they will not end until one side surrenders ...'

'... As we don't have any personal weapons there is no particular feeling that we are fighting. We are mostly a peaceful bunch who do not want to shoot anyone. The war just happens; we do shelling of shore positions and get attacked by aircraft. We dislike both, and the time that everyone is relaxed and happy is when we are legging it away from the action at 29 knots.'



From a letter to his parents 14 May 1982

'... The newspapers all seem to be screaming War, War and it must be the same on TV and radio. They give the impression that the whole of Britain is under attack ... It has been going on for two weeks now but it seems like ages ... From the way that Maggie Thatcher has reacted one would imagine that the Russians were already in Bonn; not that we were defending a rocky island which Mr Nott had planned to leave completely undefended by mid-April!'

From a letter to his brother and sister-in-law 28 May 1982

'The sad thing about all this, of course, is that the professional soldiers of both sides (not the conscripts) do what they are told. So if two megalomaniac idiots tell them to beat each other's brains out, they do; and there is no stopping them.'

'... It is not as if the Argentinians killed anyone, and now we have decided to go in heavy handed about four hundred people are dead (including a hundred British) and it must have cost the UK about £1 billion so far (ships come out at about £150 million, planes, £10 million: people are cheaper). It will end up with the equivalent of handing over a million pounds to each Falklander, and burning the money ...'

From a letter to his wife 5 June 1982

'One of our jobs out here is to transfer stores around between ships and yesterday I walked into a hangar and found a nuclear bomb there. I suppose if the USA and USSR have got 7,000 each, the chance of walking into one must be increased, but nevertheless I was rather surprised, and wondered if it was worth sheltering in the hangar any more. Of course, it turned out to be a drill round full of concrete that Fort Austin, now eventually going home was taking back to England. I don't really know why we brought any down here. Loosing off one really would evaporate support for us by the EEC and Third World ...'

My dear Christine, how I love you, so very much; and think of you much of the time. Thinking of you makes me feel happy, and I often have dreams where we are off in your new car, doing lots of fun things, and having great adventures. It doesn't feel that you are very far away; for all I know Portsmouth is just over the horizon. It is very difficult down here, as it is at home, although I can't imagine it is summer somehow, and seeing cricket in the papers is very odd. I'm looking forward to when I can put my dreams into practice ...'



# Khomeini against the workers movement

By Saber Nickbin

**IN ALL THE PREVIOUS upsurges before 1979, the leadership of the workers movement failed to offer a political line that would make it possible for the movement to grow and to advance. Instead of orienting the movement toward achieving social and political independence, these leaderships subordinated it to bourgeois politicians, thereby undermining it and preparing the way for its liquidation. As a result, the Iranian workers movement lacks both organisational continuity and a political tradition. Before the start of the revolutionary process that led to the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, there was no independent mass workers movement in Iran.**

**What we have seen since the rise of the present workers movement is a characteristic pattern of empirical advances, sometimes very rapid ones, which have been continually undermined by the lack of a leadership that could offer a perspective and an effective strategy for building a movement independent of the control of bourgeois forces.**

It is particularly important to clarify the lessons of these setbacks now, since the revolutionary crisis in Iran is not over and there is still time to achieve a historic breakthrough in building a mass workers movement. In fact, if that is not done the Iranian masses face the danger of a very grave defeat.

## Strike

By late 1978, what might be called a creeping political general strike began to emerge. It involved over 1.5 million industrial, agricultural and white-collar workers (bank and government employees). This phenomenon continued to widen with ups and downs but in a more or less continuous way, up to the February 1979 insurrection. It was what really broke the back of the Shah's regime.

The impact of the strikes grew, in particular, after the mass street demonstrations reached an impasse in the wake of the September 1978 massacres, since they could not actually overthrow the Shah. It was the militancy of the workers that revived the mass movement and gave it new strength and effectiveness.

Thus, after being absent from the political scene for almost three decades and despite its lack of class struggle tradition and organisation, the Iranian working class demonstrated that it is the leading revolutionary force in the country.

The workers began to form strike committees (bypassing the corporative union structures), and found that extending and maintaining the

strikes required forming coordinating bodies. Thus several coordinating committees developed. The strongest was in Khuzistan, the oil producing region. It was a joint coordinating committee of the oil and steel industries.

The demands raised most broadly by the strike committees were for rehiring of the workers fired for their participation in the struggle against the Shah, for the payment of their unpaid wages, and for ousting of the pro-Shah and Savak elements from the plants. The struggle created a dynamic of workers control.

A peculiar situation arose. The mosques and the bazaar merchants were partially financing some of the major strike committees (including even in the oil industry). The bourgeois opposition to the Shah found the general strike to be a powerful lever for forcing the transfer of power to the mullah-merchant and liberal bourgeois factions of the ruling class.

The result of this situation was that even the most advanced layers within the working class were very much under the political influence of the bourgeois-mullah-merchant leadership of the mass movement.

The vanguard layers of the workers movement did not, therefore, rally around the left but remained under the political leadership of the mullahs and the broad coalition of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces in opposition to the Shah.

A bourgeois government was established over the heads of the masses, and was able to present itself as the culmination of the mass upsurge: 'The revolution has been victorious, what we have to do now is rebuild the economy,' the bourgeois leadership said.

Khomeini himself called on the workers to end their strikes and increase production. Those who refused to do this, he threatened, would be considered 'counter-revolutionary saboteurs' and would be dealt with as such.

To replace the strike committees, the mullah-bourgeois leadership offered 'Islamic Shoras' which were supposed to be the means for assuring the 'participation of the mostazafeen (the humble) in building a new Islamic society'.

The political counter-revolution began. The only voice of opposition raised by any major force in the movement was that of the leaders of the oil industry's strike committee. They demanded that the workers organisations be 'represented' on the Islamic Revolutionary Council (IRC) set up by Khomeini as the governing body. They did not demand elections for a constituent assembly.

The political role of the working class was pushed back below what it had been before the insurrection, and the class struggle became even more confined within the limits of the individual plant or concern. Furthermore, the working class, or at least its vanguard, was now split between an Islamic wing and a class-struggle wing.



The ruling bourgeois-mullah coalition adopted two basic strategies for dealing with this radicalisation. The first was a major programme of nationalisations to make it easier for the state to intervene in those plants whose owners had fled and where production was almost totally controlled by the shoras. The government had already achieved a certain success in the state-owned industries.

The second strategy the government adopted was to coopt the shoras more directly into the state apparatus. In April 1979, a united centre of Islamic shoras was set up. In this, the Islamic Societies at the major universities, especially the one at the Tehran Polytechnic (from which the Students Who Follow the Imam's Line later emerged) played an important role.

This centre then drew up and adopted a constitution for the shoras. It set up an armed unit of Pasdars on the basis of the 'Special Force' law. And then, with the backing and direct involvement of the office of Revolutionary Islamic Public Prosecutor, it began to 'reorganise' and 'unite' the Islamic shoras, starting in the newly nationalised industries. In June it started publishing a journal called *Shora*.

Representatives from the Polytechnic Centre would go to the factories (with a group of Pasdars), show their papers from the Public Prosecutor's office, interview the Islamic Society and certain members of the shora. Then they would draw up a new list for the leadership, force new elections, and set up 'new shoras' which would then affiliate to the centre. If they met with any resistance, they would call the nearest Imam's Committee to arrest the troublemakers.

## Purge

In this way, in many industries, the Polytechnic Centre organised a purge of the left. It was initiated in July and August 1979, and became particularly extensive in September 1979. This was the same period in which the regime launched its first full-scale offensive against the Kurds, and the Polytechnic Centre helped to recruit workers to go to fight against the Kurdish people.

Gradually the traditional mercantile sectors of Iranian capital, closer to the masses but also more parasitic, obscurantist, and despotic — both in their mentality and ideology and in the social relations bound up with their economic activity — gathered around the IRP. This backward merchant class was also closely linked to the mosques. They saw the IRP as the plank for getting to the state trough and sinking their snouts in it.

The IRP could appeal to the urban and rural poor because the sector of capital it represented was marginal to the modern economy and had nothing to lose by indulging in demagogic 'Islamic' rhetoric about 'these

capitalists and landlords who fear not the Lord and want everything for themselves'. That is, they had nothing to lose so long as the workers could be kept from organising independently and raising their own concrete demands. And to assure this they were certainly no less inclined to use strongarm methods than the Bazargan government.

Despite the advances of the workers in action, the political weakness of the left and the workers vanguard disarmed the workers movement in the face of this offensive. There was no strong force in the movement putting forward the line of fighting for political independence from the regime and for consistent defence of the workers interests. There was no strong force putting forward a realistic political perspective for the workers movement as an alternative to the regime.

## Banned

*Ayandegan* was first banned in May, for example. But at that time the regime was forced to retreat by mass demonstrations. Then it was banned again at the end of July, in the context of the beginning of the first Kurdish war. The Democratic National Front organised a demonstration to protest. The major left groups, the Mujahedeen and the Fedayeen, refused to participate on the grounds that the NDF was a bourgeois group.

The demonstration came under heavy attack from the hezbollahis. The following day, Khomeini called for outlawing the NDF and insisted that *Ayandegan* must be destroyed. It never reopened.

On the same day about 40 left and revolutionary papers were banned. The political headquarters of the major left groups, such as the Mujahedeen and the Fedayeen, were occupied. Then Khomeini declared a 'Holy War' against the Kurdish people, and this offensive proceeded under the cover of almost total press censorship.

The regime's attacks on democratic rights had a profound effect on the mass consciousness. Opposition to the mullahs grew rapidly in this period. So, the repression was gradually running out of steam. Moreover, the government suffered a major military and political defeat in Kurdistan.

It was in this context that the occupation of the U.S. Embassy took place. It was designed by the IRP to divert the mass movement.

In the first place, empty anti-imperialist demagoguery was a good course to take to divert the real anti-capitalist dynamic that was developing. The workers and peasants who in their daily struggles were striking at the real bases of imperialism were now called on to come to the front of the U.S. Embassy to hail 'the Imam's Anti-Imperialist Line'. A few weeks later the Imam himself called on the

masses to stop all strikes and sit-ins 'while the second and greater revolution is going on against the Great Satan'.

Of course, the mobilisations around the embassy had initially a contradictory effect, encouraging large sections of the population to demonstrate their hatred of imperialism and their aspirations for a different Iran. But in the absence of forces strong enough, united enough, and politically clear enough to present these masses with concrete alternatives, the demonstrations soon became purely the demagogic show that they were designed to be, burning themselves out harmlessly.

The working class tried to take advantage of the sharpening of anti-imperialist feeling among the masses to push its own social and economic demands. The workers' shoras everywhere were calling for a purge of all the capitalist and pro-imperialist managers and owners in industry. That is, they were trying to fight a real struggle against imperialism.

In February 1980, the regime launched a new operation designed to curb and destroy the shoras' movement. After Friday prayers, a group of hezbollahi thugs, members of the Islamic Societies, supported by the Tudeh Party, attacked the Workers House, drove out all the workers that were there, and on the spot set up a new Centre for the Coordination of the Islamic Societies and Workers' Shoras.

## Wave

This was a regime-controlled umbrella organisation for coordinating the pro-Khomeini elements within the Islamic Societies and shoras.

It was in this atmosphere that the Khomeini regime began a new wave of repression. Having successfully gotten through the rigged elections for the Islamic Consultative Parliament, it launched a new general offensive against the Kurds in March, a much more ruthless and large-scale one than the offensive of the preceding summer.

In April, the Student Islamic Societies and hezbollahi thugs took over the universities, physically ejected the left groups, and shut the campuses down. They remain closed to this day.

These repressive attacks on the workers movement were reinforced by a major offensive against the workers standard of living, and were in fact a concomitant of it. The right of workers to share in the profits was abolished. Wage increases were declared illegal, and any management that disobeyed this decree was threatened with imprisonment.

A new code of conduct for the shoras was passed by the IRC, which basically put an end to any independent election of the shoras and excluded them from any involvement in management.

# Britain's new Irish policy Shoot to kill

By Brian Grogan

THE BRITISH government now has a 'shoot to kill' policy against suspected Republican activists. The leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, John Hume, has denounced as 'legalised murder' the shooting dead of seven men by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and British army in the last two months. In the same period they have also made attempts on the lives of three others.

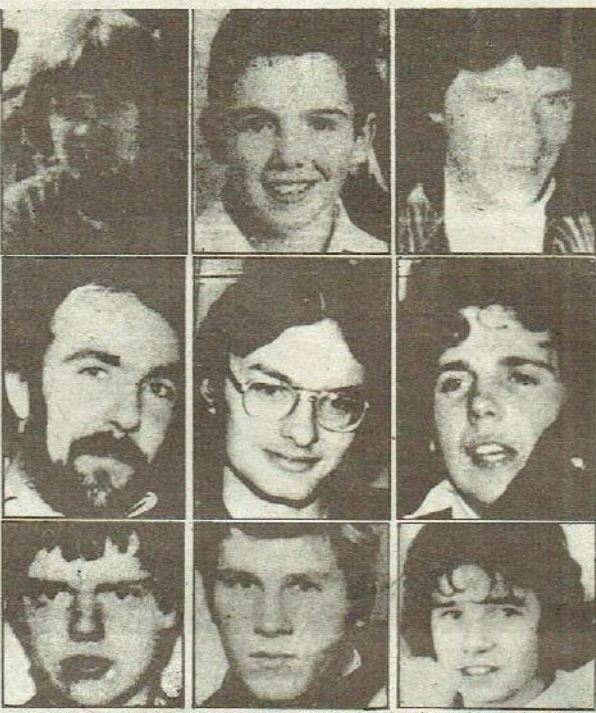
Thatcher herself has denied such a change in security policy by the British government. Deputy Northern Ireland secretary, John Gowrie, has said he would resign if such a charge proved to be true. However, evidence is so overwhelming that arch reactionary Cardinal O Fiaich and other senior Northern Ireland Catholic churchmen have joined in the denunciation. Even the *Times* has carried an editorial acknowledging the strength of the evidence, warning of the

consequences of this turn in policy. The *Irish Times* quotes 'senior RUC sources' as confirming that a change in policy occurred shortly after the Assembly elections in October. And the *Sunday Times* has revealed that new 'anti-terrorist' Special Support Units have been formed by the RUC. These aptly named SS units are run by the RUC and the British army undercover teams. It seems that such a new strategy has been embarked upon by Britain in

response to the increasingly successful tactics of Provisional Sinn Fein and in particular their 10 percent first preference votes in the October Assembly elections. With such overwhelming support for Sinn Fein from the nationalist population, British strategists believe, according to the *Irish Times*, 'that more direct action against suspected terrorists could cause no further alienation of opinion'.

This new tactic is coupled with another — the use of informers to indict large numbers of Republican activists and others on the say-so of a single individual.

At present such a mass show trial is underway in a Belfast court. Thirty eight people face some 184 charges ranging from murder to membership of the IRA on the mere word of Christopher Black who claims to be a former member of the IRA. Many of them face sentences of up to 20 years imprisonment.



Some of those murdered by the British army, UDR and RUC in 1982: (top row) Tony Harter, Stephen McConomy, Eamon Bradley; (centre row) Gerald McKerr, Sean Burns, Eugene Toman; (bottom row) Michael Tigh, Seamus Crow and Roddy Carroll

Gerry O'Brien, a representative of the Belfast based Relatives for Justice Group explained

how such informers are created: 'They lift someone and keep them incommunicado for seven days.

They use this time either to blackmail, or psychologically pressurise people to turn 'informer'. They have been known to offer as much as £100,000. But more frequently they use blackmail'.

The tactics of the Relatives for Justice Group of organising the relatives of the accused and the informer have created the conditions where a number of informers have recanted in court. As a consequence of this, Black disappeared into police custody at the end of 1981.

The police were so afraid that Black might recant that they caused an outcry by invoking an ancient law, the bill of indictment, by which all preliminary hearings are dispensed with avoiding any prior court appearance by Black.

The police are so nervous that when his parents called out to him when he finally appeared in court, Black was rushed out and

his parents threatened by the judge with two years imprisonment.

This method of attacking the nationalist population — as with the shoot to kill policy — shows the real 'legality' of British rule. This 'internment' by the back door' only works because of Diplock Courts peculiar to Northern Ireland. These courts simply consist of three judges with no jury. Only such a set up would so readily sentence on the sole evidence of an informer.

These despicable methods of British imperialism can help expose the obvious illegality of British rule of the six counties.

● Ban plastic bullets, a labour movement conference to be held Saturday 26 February, 11am at UMIST, Barnes Wallis Building, Sackville St, Manchester 1.

Credentials and information from: Box 15 164/6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

## El Salvador

# 'The tide has turned. It is unstoppable'

PRESIDENT Reagan woke up to 1983 with a major Central American headache. The first few weeks of January have aggravated it. CELIA PUGH looks at recent developments in El Salvador.

Throughout 1982, the Reagan administration planned to militarily exhaust the El Salvador rebel forces of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and isolate, by intensified repression, the popular leadership of the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) from the masses. Military and economic aid to the regime of President Alvaro Magana, to the tune of \$230 million last year, was vital for this. Essential too was the destabilisation of the revolutionary government in Nicaragua, which gives inspiration and confidence to the liberation struggle of the El Salvador people.

Meanwhile, the US had to defuse international disquiet and domestic opposition by stimulating superficial reforms and human rights improvements — starting with the phoney El Salvador elections last March.

### Collapse

By the end of 1982 these plans were close to collapse. The FMLN achieved major military victories. The liberated zones in Chalatenango and Morazan were defended from army assault and important gains were made in San Vicente, Usulután, the northern part of La Unión and north of San Salvador.

In the fighting the FMLN advanced its combat capacity, inflicting injury and death on 12 per cent of the 33,000 strong El Salvador army over the year and capturing heavy and light artillery on the way.

In recent years, government backed repression has dealt heavy blows to the trade unions

and driven FMLN-FDR support underground in the towns. In November a wave of strikes turned this around. On 18 November, 8,000 employees of the Ministry of Agriculture went on strike. To circumvent a ban on strikes, they went to their workplaces but refused to perform their duties.

Similar action was taken in solidarity by 1,300 employees of the public works and tourism ministries. There were strikes against wage controls at the El Leon spinning mill, the Castalan sack factory and the Montagi construction company in San Salvador, as well as two industrial plants in the western city of Santa Ana.

The Sandinista government of Nicaragua successfully rebuffed the CIA backed attacks from the Honduras border. These still continue — there have been 12 incidents since Christmas — but on a far smaller scale, as the reactionary Somacista bands lick their wounds, following a major defeat at the end of December.

They had sent in three units of 900 armed



Right wing rebel commander Lieutenant Colonel Sigifredo Ochoa

counter-revolutionaries to establish a 'liberated zone' and alternative Somacista capital in Jalapa. They hoped to spark insurrection in an area, where support for the Sandinistas has been uncertain on the big tobacco and rice farms.

The reactionaries succeeded only in convincing more of the Jalapa people to join the Sandinista organisations and were forced back over the border by Sandinista troops.

While the FDR-FMLN gained in strength, the forces of the El Salvador regime fell into disarray. The partial reforms demanded by US imperialism, to placate opposition at home and abroad, met sharp resistance from the powerful coffee controlling oligarchy and from the extreme right wing butchers of d'Aubuisson's ARENA party, who were elected in the March 'ballot of fear'.

Divisions over military tactics, accusations and counter-accusations of corruption have deepened into rifts, shattered d'Aubuisson's coalition government and driven the ruling parties.

Backed by the US ambassador Deane Hinton, President Magana and

Defence Minister, general Garcia moved to isolate d'Aubuisson's supporters, removing them from key military posts and challenging them in the Constituent Assembly.

Resistance from the extreme right was swift, with the headline grabbing takeover of the Cananas garrison on 8 January by its commander Colonel Ochoa Perez in protest at his proposed removal to the embassy in Uruguay.

Military losses have stirred demoralisation in the army ranks. The will to fight to the death has been further sapped by the policy of the FMLN to release prisoners to the Red Cross.

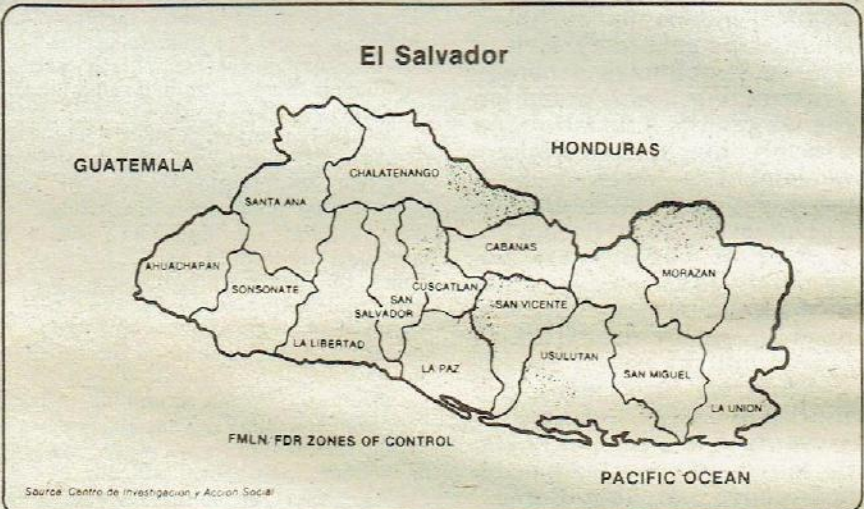
### Props

At the end of January, Reagan and Deane have to obtain certification from Congress for further military and economic aid to the regime. In press statements signed by the major parties in El Salvador's Constituent Assembly, they have announced their determination to get it, pointing to a pact, for economic and human rights reforms and elections in 1984.

The myth of this 'progress' is easily exposed.

On 1 January, the Council on Hemispheric Affairs reported that 'more innocent civilians were murdered in Guatemala and El Salvador in the last year than all the other Central American countries combined'. The human rights commission set up by President Magana is presided over by the Director of the National Police, a branch of the security forces accused of nearly 10,000 murders last year.

The proposed land reform is to be 'imposed' by the army, meaning further intimidation and repression. A report on land reform in the 16



January *Sunday Times* quotes an American expert as saying 'It still remains an unfulfilled promise'.

Of the large farms, 328 have been turned into cooperatives but only 22 have been given full title to the land. On small farms 38,837 tenants have so far won their land but only 408 have been given full title.

Of the 1984 elections, FDR president Dr Guillermo Ungo comments:

'We do not believe in the kind of elections that we have had' in El Salvador for the past fifty years and which we are to have once again. We do not believe in the democracy of the fascists. We think that democratic elections have to be part of a broader political solution to the Salvadorean war and that we must begin with an immediate dialogue without any prior conditions, which should lead to negotiations that would include ceasing hostilities.

This call for negotiations has been taken up in many Central American and European countries where Reagan looks for allies. This further isolates the El Salvador regime and undermines US plans to smash the FDR-FMLN.

United States backing for Thatcher's Malvinas war did little to help. In protest Argentina withdrew its army personnel from the CIA backed forces on the Honduras-Nicaragua border. On 9 January, the foreign ministers of Panama, Venezuela, Colombia and Mexico issued a statement

condemning outside intervention in the region and favouring negotiations.

This was followed by an 87 delegate meeting of the Non-Aligned Nations in Nicaragua on 15 January, which condemned US policy in the region.

No doubt Reagan and Deane will drive certification through Congress later this month. But the going is getting tougher. Their old project is in tatters. They now have only two options left — to make substantial concessions to the liberation forces and negotiate, or to play their final card, all out and open military intervention of US troops.

Direct military intervention into El Salvador and Nicaragua would stir up major and damaging opposition to the Reagan administration at home and abroad. Vietnam has taught US imperialism that it is not always assured of victory. But the option of negotiations and major concessions to the libera-

tion forces will meet with fierce resistance from US imperialism's props in the El Salvador oligarchy. It will greatly increase the expectation of El Salvador workers and peasants that control over their lives is on the agenda.

Whatever the US manoeuvres, it is clear that matters will come to a head in 1983. Revolution is on the agenda in El Salvador and US imperialism will go to any lengths to stop it.

The vigilance of the FDR-FMLN and their determination to extend the liberation struggle should be echoed by the solidarity movement world-wide.

● The El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, labour movement conference in London on 14 May.

Trade union, Labour Party and LPYS branches should be organising discussions and electing delegates so that the British Labour Movement can consider its opposition to US intervention in Central America and the grovelling backing of the Thatcher Government.

Labour Movement Conference on El Salvador County Hall, London 14 May 1983 For information write to: El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, 29 Islington Park St., London N1.

An Evening for Nicaragua With Julie Christie, Rik Mayal, Alexei Sayle, Maggie Steed and many more. Sun 13 Feb 1983 Shaftesbury Theatre, Shaftesbury Ave. London WC2 Tickets from NSC, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1. Tel:01-226 6747. (£7.50, £5.50, £4.50)

# The supreme school

A Critical Review of Channel 4's 'The Spanish Civil War'

By Dave Packer

GRANADA's new series documenting the Spanish Civil War has met with wide acclaim on the left and is essential watching for socialists. Not only did the Spanish revolution fire the imagination of an entire generation of socialists, it was, to paraphrase Trotsky, the supreme school. For this reason alone it would be impermissible to allow the slightest lack of clarity towards its dearly bought lessons to pass unmentioned.

The first two in the series 'Prelude to Tragedy 1931-1936' and 'Revolution, Counterrevolution and Terror', despite their superior qualities compared to other programmes of this type, fail to clearly define the political forces, if not the class interests, that were involved in this 'explosion of history'. In particular the 'question of questions', the role of the Popular Front, is obscured.

Written by Neil Ascherson and James Cameron and produced by a team from *World in Action* the series starts with pace and style. The interview technique with surviving participants cutting into archive film of the actual events as they are discussed, lends immediacy and drama to the unfolding narrative. Much of the film footage has only become available since the death of Franco. Later in the first episode the use of dramatic reconstruction is employed to portray the assassinations and military plots immediately preceding Franco's coup against the Popular Front government.

## Time

While the latter made for exciting and entertaining television, it also revealed some of the limitations of TV journalism in a bourgeois culture. The time given to these reconstructions and the intrigues of the military compared to the relatively difficult and possibly less visually stimulating exposition of the character of the Popular Front, detracted from the political clarity of the programme.

The first half of 'Prelude to Tragedy' seriously attempted a historical survey of the Spanish crisis. In particular it showed how the army and the church have always cast their shadow over Spain. The extremes of wealth and poverty, the constant oppression and tremendous humiliation verging on slavery that existed on the land, the national question, all were highlighted.

The narrative showed how the most basic demands and hopes of the workers and peasants were not, and could not, be met within the existing order, by the Republican government established in 1931. At the same time the government's failure to contain the mass struggle only alarmed and infuriated the bourgeoisie and landlords.

This was the most effective part of the programme. A Republican land reform official, now an old man, explained in a matter of fact manner, how he had come to realise that it was impossible to carry out the reforms without the destruction of the whole social and political order.

## New

The emergence on the right of a new party, the CEDA, a semi-fascist organisation under the leadership of Gil Robles, and the formation of a new right wing government, quickened the tempo of revolution leading again to uprisings throughout Spain, culminating in the Asturian Commune in October 1934. This was bloodily suppressed by legionaries and Moorish troops under Franco and thousands were massacred in cold blood.

The lessons of 1934, of Red Asturias, were not lost on the workers' movement we are told. It was recognised that a successful uprising did not occur because the left could not unite. By sleight of hand however, the programme moved quickly on to the election of the Popular Front in February 1936.

By implication it is suggested that this coalition government was the legitimate product of those lessons, thus confusing the need for unity in action of the workers' movement with a coalition of workers' parties and liberal bourgeois parties in government. In fact the Popular Front tied the hands of the workers' parties.

However it could not



Republican forces outside Madrid

hold back the dammed up energies of the masses, for whom the electoral victory was the signal for generalised strike movements, land seizures and assaults on the jails to free the thousands arrested in 1934.

We are informed that the climate of violence allowed the Falange to thrive; that the revenge that was in the air meant that the bosses could not only lose their property but their lives; that the right were becoming disillusioned with parliamentary methods. It's as though we are being asked to believe that it was all due to the provocations of the workers; that if the workers and peasants had been more moderate the tragedy could have been avoided. Middle ground was crumbling and disaster now seemed inevitable we are told.

However implicitly, the political thrust becomes little better than an apology for the Popular Front government and the utopia of liberal democratic capitalism which, on the programme's own evidence, had become impossible.

## Point

It is at this point, as if to avoid the central question of proletarian revolution and proletarian leadership, we moved on to the dramatic reconstructions of assassinations and the plots and intrigues of the army officers.

The first programme in the series ends with Franco's *Pronunciamento*.

There could be no rapid victory either way; no more negotiation, no more compromises, only civil war.

'Revolution, Counter-revolution and Terror' continues with the same theme of inevitable human tragedy. The powerfully drawn impression that is presented to us is of unrestrained vengeance and bloodletting within both Nationalist and Republican camps. There is a careful distinction made however between the random terror of the downtrodden, 'the passion and hatred of centuries', and the systematic, cold blooded terror of the Nationalist authorities. It is estimated that half the 500,000 dead were executed or massacred. For the fascists mass executions were seen as a cleansing of the nation.

## News

After news of the coup we see the working class of Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid and other cities, take to the streets. The coup became civil war and the resistance became revolution. In Barcelona the masses did not wait on the government, they armed themselves by storming the military arsenals and headquarters. The Catalan Republican government was powerless in the face of the revolutionary workers who seized the factories, transport and linked up with the peasants, who had begun collectivising the land.

Despite these excellent passages, it is the chaos, military shambles and the

excesses of revolutionary justice, 'out of the barrel of a gun', that is emphasised. We are informed that while the revolution was underway at the rear, the militias were being defeated at the front. A Communist Party commander explained that military discipline was necessary to defeat the efficient Nationalist troops. The impression that is presented is that the democratic forces failed to unite around the 'new and fragile Spanish democracy; and the bourgeois Republic!'

In the series so far, the counterrevolutionary role of the Republican government in the first crucial months after the coup has been completely ignored. Behind the apparent chaos was the emergence of a dual power.

The tragedy of the Spanish Revolution was the absence of any party standing resolutely for all power to be consolidated into the democratic councils of the workers and peasants; for a workers government and the conquest of power. Instead all the workers parties including the Anarchists, and in the end the POUM — a party initially influenced by Trotsky — were to participate in the Popular Front. They handed power over to what Leon Trotsky called the 'shadow of the bourgeoisie', who then set about the task of destroying the embryo of the workers' state. It was this that was to finally ensure the defeat of the Republic in the civil war.

## No to revolution in Spain says one reader

I AM SURPRISED indeed to see Bob Pennington still advocating the Trotskyist misconception that a Workers State could have been established in Spain in 1936. Nothing could be further from the truth. Consider the following.

Any attempt to transform the war against Franco into an anti-capitalist revolution would have brought a crushing counter-blow not just from the Axis forces but also from Britain and France as well. Do you seriously believe after the experiences of revolution and the wars of intervention in Russia (1918-21), that world imperialism would stand idly by and see a repetition in Spain? No.

Neither is the analogy of Kerensky's policy in Russia in Feb 1917 (ie the separating of the anti-feudal overthrow from the overturning of capitalism) with the policy of the Republican Government feasible at all.

In 1917 workers had nothing to lose bringing the first workers state into being. In 1936 they had everything to lose — the very existence of the Soviet Union itself. Ultra-left adventurism in Spain if taken to its logical conclusion would have thrown Hitler/Mussolini into the arms of Anglo-French-US capitalism. It would have prepared the ground for the resumption of interventionism on a higher scale.

The confirmation of the correctness of Dmitrov's strategic wisdom, 'keep thy enemies at each others' throats', elaborated at the Comintern Congress of 1935, is surely the presence of twenty workers states on the world stage today. A 2000 per cent increase on the situation in 1936!

These are states by the way comrades, which the Fourth International defends. Yet none of these states would have come into being if Trotsky's strategy had been implemented in Spain.

The Comintern leadership made many errors. But their calculation of the world balance of forces in relation to Spain, that one had to balance Soviet defencism with stopping Franco's advance, was fundamentally correct. Let Luigi Longo, leader of the Italian International Brigade and later supremo of the PCI, put the case:

'In 1936 the Trotskyites and a former General Secretary of this party, Amadeo Bordiga, said a socialist revolution could be achieved in Spain at this point in time. Where are these men today? One died in lonely exile. The other is a pariah on the fringes of the movement.'

'Our leaders then, Dmitrov and Togliatti, built communist parties that speak for tens of millions of industrial workers and their families, parties which have played their part in creating an international socialist community of states inconceivable even three decades ago.'

'Workers will not back a horse that has never won a race, our stallions have won over twenty. History has spoken on the question of who was correct on this debate, comrades! Now let it cease.' (Speech to 1964 PCI Congress)

LOU NOVA  
Manchester

## Bob Pennington replies

LOU NOVA is at least frank. According to him the interests of the Spanish workers and peasants had to be buried in order to placate the British and French bourgeoisie.

He quotes the wars of intervention in Russia from 1918 to 1921 as examples of what would have happened in Spain.

According to this reasoning the Vietnamese should never have launched their revolutionary war of independence for fear of French and US intervention!

The Bolsheviks knew that imperialism would do everything it could to subvert their revolution and they knew that the only way to defeat the imperialists was through the international class struggle. Franco could have only been defeated in Spain by turning the civil war into a fight for the interests of the masses, namely into proletarian revolution.

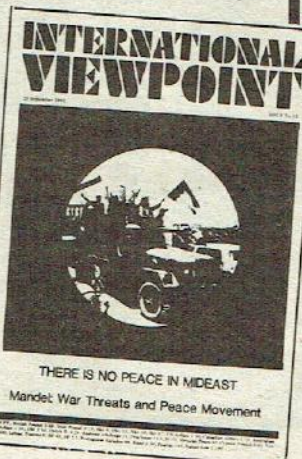
The refusal of the Spanish Communist and Socialist Parties to do that ensured fascism won, and Spain had to live under a fascist dictatorship for over 40 years. The Spanish workers have every reason to be grateful to the shrewd tacticians like Stalin, Luigi Longo and Lou Nova!

The defeat of the Spanish revolution weakened the international class struggle and strengthened reaction throughout Europe. From then on, Hitler went from strength to strength in Germany and the left was pushed back in France. The stage was being set for the Second World War. A war which was to cost the lives of 20 million Russians. And at the end of that war the shrewd Stalinist tacticians ordered the party of Luigi Longo and its French counterpart not to try and take the power, but to cooperate with their bourgeoisie, who once back in harness 'ungratefully' kicked out the Stalinist ministers. As a result 37 years later, the same tactics as used in Spain have made sure that capitalist governments still exist in France and Italy. As long as capitalism dominates the metropolitan countries the workers' states will always be in jeopardy. Policies that ensure the defeat of workers' revolutions cannot defend the USSR. They can only place it in danger. This is why Stalinist policies in Spain led to all the horrors of World War 2 and kept capitalism intact in Western Europe for decades. A Jaruzelski is no substitute for that!

## International Viewpoint

The latest issue contains material on the missile movement in Western Europe, the 'zero option' and the European Nuclear Disarmament campaign (END) and associated questions.

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# Socialist Challenge

By Toni Gorton

**THE CASE IS CLEAR.** London's cops thought they had a licence to kill David Martin because he was accused of the attempted murder of a policeman. Not tried or convicted — just accused. That was enough for London's finest. They went out and in a Bonny and Clyde repeat fired round after round into innocent Stephen Waldorf. The bullet which brings him to the point of death as we go to press was put through his liver, stomach and arm as he already lay on the ground unconscious. The lads just stood there laughing hysterically. Even when they realised their mistake they made no move to help Waldorf but left it to a passer-by to give first aid.

## A plan to kill

Sue Stephens, a passenger in the car and a former friend of the real target described to the press how on New Year's Eve she was questioned at Paddington Green police station where a senior detective declared: 'You know that if we see him (Martin) we are going to have to kill him.' This is the real horror. Detectives cold-bloodedly planned to murder David Martin. And they would have got away with it if they hadn't made such a terrible mistake.

## No more cover-ups!

The phoney claim by the police that the shot that was fired to immobilise the car already stuck in a traffic jam led to the other shots has to be exposed. This can only be done by a fully public and independent body examining the facts behind the event. No more cover-ups like the cases of Blair Peach and the Deptford fire massacre.

# Licensed to kill



Photos show armed police in action and the sorts of weapons in the police arsenal. According to Scotland Yard, guns were carried by the Metropolitan police on more than 15,000 occasions — and 38 shots were fired over the last three years

We support the call by Roy Hattersley, shadow Home Secretary and Paul Boateng, chairperson of the GLC police committee for the Metropolitan police force to be split up and made accountable to elected police authorities. Boateng is quite right when he denounces the Met for being 'a law unto itself'.

## Defend democratic rights

Public outcry over the shootout is rocking the establishment with some of the most conservative dailies denouncing the police, Sir Kenneth Newman and Willie Whitelaw, the Home Secretary.

Newman's past history is being remembered of being the chief officer of the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the North of Ireland when it was brought before the European Court of Human Rights for abuses of individual rights and torture while in detention.

The National Council for Civil Liberties in calling the publication of the written and verbal instructions

under which the Metropolitan Police are issued with firearms also commented: 'The shooting of an unarmed man in London bears a disturbing similarity to a series of recent incidents in Northern Ireland when unarmed men posing no apparent threat to the security forces have been shot dead.'

Specifically the West London police ignored their legal responsibility to:

- make a positive identification of a suspect
- challenge before they fire
- shoot only when their lives or the life of a member of the public is at risk

## Disarm the police

The urgent need to review the situation under which firearms are issued and used is proven. The belief that British police are unarmed simply isn't true.

Two years ago Jim Jardine, secretary of the Police Federation pointed out that in the mid-1960s 'the police service was virtually an unarmed service'. But he went on, 'I cannot forecast what the position will be by the

end of the eighties, but the trends are ominous'.

Ominous indeed. According to *State Research* which specialises in getting the facts about the police, 'at least nine forces in Britain have developed crack units of armed police, separate from Special Patrol Groups and other units'. *State Research* says that issuing of arms is on the increase; that all forces are now organised in paramilitary structures and that all newly recruited police officers now receive firearms 'familiarisation' training with at least 12,000 officers getting regular handgun revolver training.

## Make them accountable

Killer hit squads roaming the streets of London cannot be tolerated. The police and their chiefs are responsible for this outrage. Give them a short sharp shock by sacking Whitelaw and Newman, disarming the police and bringing them under local community control.

See page 5 for further moves to get the police under control.

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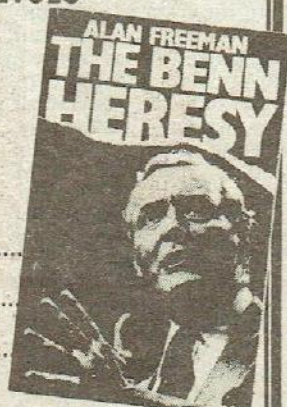
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