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Socialist Organiser

No.66 DECEMBER 16, 1981 (Claimants and strikers, 10p) 20p

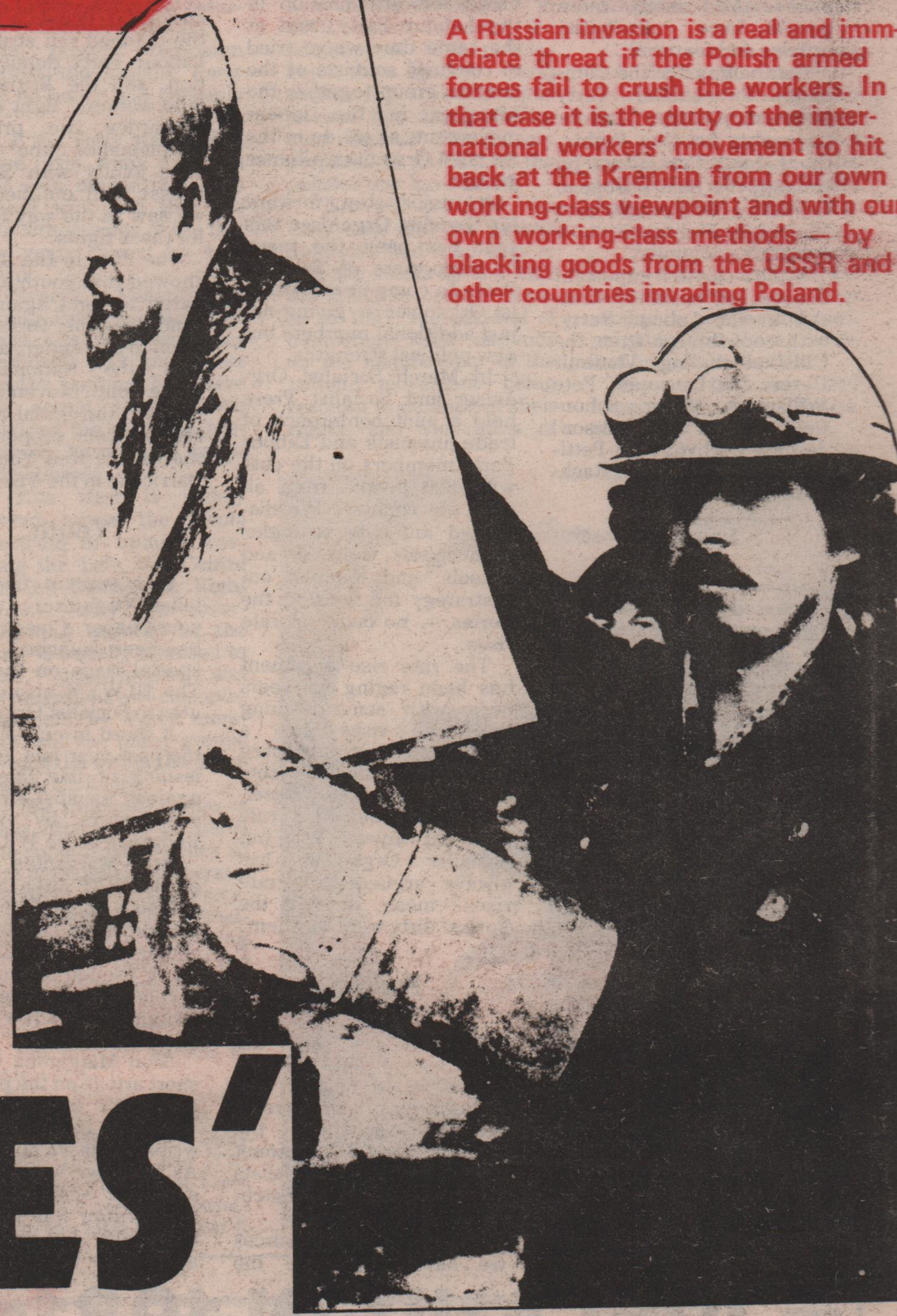


A Russian invasion is a real and immediate threat if the Polish armed forces fail to crush the workers. In that case it is the duty of the international workers' movement to hit back at the Kremlin from our own working-class viewpoint and with our own working-class methods — by blacking goods from the USSR and other countries invading Poland.



Polish union defies junta

'WE ARE WORKERS NOT SLAVES'



WITH THE declaration of martial law, Poland has been plunged back into a dark age unknown since the war.

by Alexis Carras

General Jaruzelski and the 'Military Council of National Salvation' have banned all strikes, demonstrations and meetings. A nightly curfew is in force, and all those ignoring it will be shot on sight.

Hundreds of factories, steelworks, ports and other economic installations have been 'militarised' and any strikers there are automatically liable for the death penalty.

The leaders of Poland's ten million strong workers' movement have been imprisoned. The whereabouts of Solidarnosc chief Lech Walesa are unknown, despite the military's claim that Walesa is 'negotiating with the authorities'.

(It is not clear what is happening, but the bureaucracy may try to force Walesa to make a call for submission — before they dispose of him).

Terror — this is the response of Poland's Stalinists to the eighteen months of working class insurgency and resistance.

Leading role

The Polish CP has handed over its 'leading role in society' to the military, with strict orders to destroy the independent workers' movement.

Tired of the broken promises of many years, the

Solidarnosci

Polish working class had abandoned any hope in the regime, and turned its energies towards creating its own power and bringing down the parasitic caste.

So now the Polish bureaucracy, emboldened by the sheer desperation of its position, spurred on by the Kremlin, and taking heart

from the recent vacillations and compromises of the Solidarnosc leadership, has finally put into motion its plans for a military coup.

For the last few days Poland has been effectively sealed off from the world. But as the glacier of military rule moves to engulf the entire country, reports com-

ing out indicate that an intense resistance is emerging.

Hundreds of thousands of workers are putting their lives in danger. In Silesia the coal mines are occupied by miners refusing to come to the surface.

In the Ursus tractor works near Warsaw, production has stopped. In Huta Katowice, the large steel works in Katowice, thousands of soldiers and the hated militia ringed the plant and charged the workers, only thus breaking the strike.

Mass meeting

In Huta Warszawa, the steel works outside the capital, 80 per cent of the workforce at a mass meeting on Sunday night 13th voted for strike action. The Lenin Shipyard, Gdansk, cradle of the Solidarnosc movement,

has been reoccupied after 18 months. Despite military encirclement, the occupation continues.

Appeal

In Szczecin, the Solidarnosc strike committee based in the Warski shipyards has sent a message to the supporters of Solidarnosc internationally, urging solidarity.

Under fearful conditions, even now the Polish workers continue to fight to prise themselves free from the military jackboot.

If the resistance spreads and the Polish workers confront their brothers and sons in the conscript army, the army will crack. Soldiers will not solidly come to the aid of the hated militia, the well-paid, privileged boot-boy elite.

In this eventuality, the regime will have no option but recourse to 'inviting' the

Russian Army. Already the Russians have offered military and economic assistance if Jaruzelski needs it, suggesting that the bold claims of the authorities that 'order reigns' are a gross overstatement.

No retreat

A Russian invasion would transform the emerging civil war into a war of national liberation as well. The devastation could be horrific. But there is now truly nowhere to retreat to.

Although hundreds of union leaders (among 5,000 people arrested so far) have been jailed, Solidarnosc, with ten million members, has ample selfless militants from whom a new leadership can arise in the present fight for survival.

And as the Hungarian workers in 1956, after the Russian invasion, managed in clandestinity to create an All Budapest Workers' Council and control the factories in the midst of brutal suppression and chaos for weeks, so in Poland the leaders who have escaped arrest, and the strike committees created in the last few days, can again regroup (despite the difficulties).

They will draw their representatives from every corner of the land, to show to the Polish quislings and their masters that there is only one legitimate power in the country — the working class, organised through democratic workers' councils.

This issue of Socialist Organiser is an unusual one, because it will be followed by a two-week break. So we have squeezed down the current reports into pages 3, 14 and 15 (apologies to contributors whose articles have suffered), and given most of the space to features which provide solid reading for the holidays.

Page 2 surveys Ireland in 1981 and Socialist Organiser in 1981. Pages 4 and 5 chronicle the Polish workers' struggle in 1980-1. On pages 6-7 and 8-9 we cover the recent struggles of Britain's black communities, and Reagan's America. Page 13 analyses the rise of the SDP.

Pages 11 and 12 take up the witch-hunters' arguments about the left wing and democracy, and on page 10 we review Jim Allen's new play.

No.67 will be out on January 6.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER IN 1981

Organising the Left

By Jo Thwaites

IN THE summer of 1981 Socialist Organiser went weekly. From our fortnightly 12 pages at the beginning of the year, we've expanded to 16 pages. And many more people have contributed articles and features.

Campaigns like the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, the Labour Committee on Ireland, the East European Solidarity Campaign, and Women's Fightback, now contribute columns.

We've carried important debates on socialist strategy in the Labour Party, with contributors from the CLPD including Vladimir Derer, Jon Lansman, Pete Willsman, Victor Schonfield, Nigel Williamson, Jeremy Corbyn, Ann Pettifor, John Bloxam and Rachel Lever.

Fraction

Probably the issue most discussed and debated in the movement was what to do after Brighton, when Benn lost the deputy leadership by a fraction and the Right clearly set out to roll back the gains of Wembley and Blackpool.

The response on the Left has been confused, with some arguing that we've done well so far and should play it cool for a while. We argued that the Left had won some reforms in the Party — mandatory reselection and election of the leader by conference — but it was clear that the right wing, far from being defeated or all gone off to the SDP, was going to fight tooth and nail to reverse or annul the democratic reforms.

And this has proved to be the case.

Socialist Organiser has argued this case in the Labour Coordinating Committee, the CLPD, and the

Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy, which we took the initiative for last year.

We've argued for main- broad left organisation in the Labour Party, and at the same time we've tried to convince activists of the need to group together the Marxists in the labour movement, as we do in the Socialist Organiser Alliance groups.

A major step forward for Socialist Organiser this year has been the move by supporters of Socialist Press to come in on Socialist Organiser — giving not just additional numbers but new political strengths.

In March Socialist Organiser and Socialist Press held a joint conference of trade unionists and Labour Party members on the cuts with 300 people from all over the country. We discussed anti-cuts struggles in hospitals, councils and schools, and mapped out a strategy for fighting the Tories — no cuts, no rate rises.

The rate rise argument has been raging for years now, with some arguing that rate rises give a temporary breathing space for a fight against the cuts to be organised. Hesel-tine's new measures rule that out anyway — but Socialist Organiser has always argued that rate rises mean doing the Tories' dirty work for them.

Rates

Workers pay rates the same as everyone else, so it has ended up that the working class pay more in rates to subsidise the Tories' cuts. That cannot be an answer for socialists fighting the vicious Thatcher government.

The increased resources we have had since the

summer have allowed us to produce special supplements to Socialist Organiser to meet the demands placed on us by the class struggle.

For the civil service strike, the People's March, the planned rail strike, the Labour Party deputy election, and the British Leyland workers' fight against Edwardes, we produced supplements (the earlier ones jointly with Socialist Press), and outlined what we saw as the way forward for these fights.

The riots in the summer showed that youth are prepared to fight against the conditions the Tories force them to live under, and this year the National Left Wing Youth Movement was formed, the initial nucleus coming from supporters of the papers Red Youth and Barricade in the YS.

Youth

With support from Socialist Organiser, a new youth paper, Class Fighter, has been launched, with a special issue on the riots. The NLWYM also contributes to Socialist Organiser.

A thorn in our side over the past year has been the issuing of five libel writs against Socialist Organiser contributors by Vanessa Redgrave of the WRP.

Sean Matgamna criticised the WRP after they had played a particularly harmful role at the Lambeth cuts conference held in January, using pseudo-revolutionary verbiage to hi-jack the struggle and advocate the use of rate rises.

Sean Matgamna wrote a short article on the previous doings of the WRP, and we were threatened with writs unless we apologised. As far as we were concerned, what Sean Matgamna had written was true, and it would be wrong to apologise.



So the 'revolutionaries' of the WRP used Vanessa Redgrave's thousands to try to bankrupt us. The case is still going through the costly legal mills, and our appeal for a labour movement inquiry instead of the bosses' courts still needs support — both moral and financial.

Socialist Organiser supporters have been active in many international solidarity campaigns, with the Labour Committee on Ire-

land and the Turkey Solidarity Campaign being most successful. In the paper's international coverage, Ireland, Southern Africa, and Turkey have been the main campaigning issues, but we have also carried on-the-spot reports from Bolivia, the USA, Australia, and the Solidarnosc congress in Poland.

The major industrial struggle in the car industry this year was the £20 claim and the subsequent sacking

threat from Michael Edwardes in BL. It was largely due to the work of Socialist Organiser supporters in Cowley that the £20 claim was adopted by the unions.

BL strike

And organising for the strike became a major priority for us. A special issue of the Leyland Action Committee bulletin (in

which Socialist Organiser supporters was played a big role) was rushed out. Hundreds of badges were produced (and sold) in a matter of days. The paper argued the case for extending the struggle into a general strike against the four per cent limit, against the sacking, and against the Tories.

Support

And meetings were organised up and down the country to support the strikers.

As readers know, the BL workers were betrayed by the union leaders, but the preparation and build-up to the strike mobilised hundreds of BL workers who were and are still willing to fight. More of them now buy (and sell) Socialist Organiser.

Improvement

Last, but not least, the readers of Socialist Organiser have commented on an improvement over the year. Nottingham supporters recently wrote: "Keep up the good work. No other paper is as good in taking up issues facing working people".

Letters

Our letters page has flowered, and now always has too many letters to be fitted in. Particularly appreciated are the regular columns like Graffiti, Press Gang, and the controversial Red Rock column (which everyone loves to hate). We now have a new addition, Socialist Bookshelf.

Let's make sure the improvement continues into 1982, and Socialist Organiser becomes the paper no working class militant can afford to be without!

IRELAND IN 1981

Year of the hunger strikes

By Martin Thomas

DECEMBER 1980: 8th — After years of stalemate and beating down the Catholic community, Britain edges towards another political initiative on Ireland — while continuing to try to beat down the Catholics. Thatcher meets Southern prime minister Haughey.

18th — Republican hunger strike called off, on basis of vague British promises.

FEBRUARY: 5th — After the British government rats on its promises to end the hunger strike, Republican prisoners announce another one.

In protest against the Thatcher/Haughey talks, Ian Paisley attempts a 'Carson trail' of Loyalist demonstrations. They flop.

MARCH: 1st — Hunger strike starts. 19th — Prevention of Terrorism Act renewed. Only 35 Labour MPs vote against.

APRIL: Paul Whitters is killed by a plastic bullet. Aislinn McLaughlin and Brendan Kelly lose eyes. Between March and October, the RUC and the British Army will fire 16,000 plastic bullets, killing three children and four adults (none 'terrorists'), and maiming many more.

Home Secretary William Whitelaw will announce that plastic bullets, though used in Ireland, are not suitable for Britain — because they kill people.

9th — Fermanagh/S. Tyrone by-election won by hunger striker Bobby Sands.

MAY: 1st — Labour frontbencher Don Concannon visits Bobby Sands to tell him that Labour will never support his cause. 5th — Sands dies. 7th — 50,000 attend his funeral. Lech Walesa declares his admiration for Sands and his support for his cause.

Withdrawal

12th — Hunger striker Frankie Hughes dies. His funeral procession, too, is huge. Right through until October, marches, strikes, and protests will express the support of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland (and many in the South) for the hunger strikers. There are big demonstrations also in many other countries — but only small ones in Britain.

12th — Tony Benn calls for withdrawal of British troops from Ireland (and UN troops instead).

21st — Patsy O'Hara and Ray McCreech die. Local government elections in Northern Ireland show strong swing to militant nationalists — and to ultra-Loyalists.

JUNE: 11th — General election in South. Two 'hunger strike' candidates win seats. Fine Gael/Labour Party coalition takes over from Haughey.

JULY: 3rd — Financial Times editorial calls for an

'altogether more radical approach' to Ireland, echoing the Daily Mirror, Sunday Times, etc.

8th — Joe McDonnell dies.

Irish Commission for Peace and Justice tries to negotiate end to hunger strike. British government accused of duplicity.

13th — Martin Hurson dies.

AUGUST: 1st — Kevin Lynch dies. 2nd — Kieran



Doherty dies. 8th — Thomas McIlwee dies. 20th — Micky Devine dies. Owen Carron elected in Fermanagh/S.Tyrone.

Radio interview by GLC leader Ken Livingstone, in which he calls for 'Troops Out', is censored.

SEPTEMBER: Fitzgerald proposes constitutional amendments in South to liberalise regime and to drop Dublin's claim to the territory of Northern Ireland.

TUC conference rejects NUJ resolution for repeal of Prevention of Terrorism Act. Labour Party conference: 53 resolutions on Ireland; the weaker of two Troops Out resolutions is carried on a show of hands, but defeated by the unions on a card vote.

Ends

OCTOBER: 3rd — Hunger strike ends. An increase of IRA operations follows — against UDR or RUC men, and also against targets in Britain (Chelsea barracks, 10th; General Pringle, 17th; Oxford St., 26th); Michael Havers, Nov. 13th). Loyalist assassinations also increase: Larry Kennedy

(8th), Bobby Ewing (12th), Mary McKay (15th).

New figures for investment in Southern Ireland — total for 1980 is £600 million, of which nearly half foreign investment. And 52% of the new foreign investment is from the USA.

31st/Nov. 1st — Provisional Sinn Fein conference votes to contest elections and to drop policy of a federal Ireland.

Charged

NOVEMBER: New figures for the Prevention of Terrorism Act. 5,251 people have been detained since November 1974, of whom 247 have been excluded from Britain and only 365 charged.

6th — Thatcher and Fitzgerald reach agreement on a new 'Anglo-Irish Council' which the Loyalists quickly denounce.

14th — IRA kills Loyalist leader Robert Bradford.

15th to 17th — Two Catholics killed, and one seriously injured, in Protestant sectarian retaliation.

21st — Cardinal O'Fiaich declares it is a 'mortal sin' to assist the IRA.

23rd — Day of Action called by Paisley shuts 75% to 90% of industry in N.Ireland. Loyalist 'Third Force' parades.

British Army and RUC raids on Catholic areas increase. Many arrests. IRA attacks on RUC and UDR men also increase.

30th — 'Pan-Unionist Forum' calls for return of a separate (Protestant) N.Ireland Parliament.

DECEMBER: National Wage Agreement in South finally collapses.

'Third Force' seems to be fading: Paisley promises to cooperate with RUC, and RUC hands a file on the 'Third Force' to the Director of Public Prosecutions. But danger still exists: Owen Carron calls for a nationalist counter-force.

US government gives strong backing to Anglo-Irish Council. But conditions remain unstable; with a new turn in the situation, the Catholics could face pogroms. A determined campaign is still needed in the British labour movement to force Britain to withdraw its troops and negotiate a united, independent Ireland.

LABOUR PARTY

BENN SLAMS WITCH-HUNT

MPs back Bermondsey

TWENTY-TWO Labour MPs have signed a statement circulated to every Constituency Labour Party: "We endorse the right of CLPs to select their own Parliamentary candidates without interference, in accordance with the undertaking given to the 1974 conference, with the unanimous consent of the NEC, and therefore call on the NEC to endorse Peter Tatchell as the duly selected candidate for the Bermondsey constituency".

Signed: Bob McTaggart, William McKelvey, Les Huckfield, Dennis Skinner, Dennis Canavan, Martin Flannery, B. Parry, Mick Welsh, Ron Brown, Bob Cryer, Norman Atkinson,

Joan Maynard, Ernie Ross, Stuart Holland, Tony Benn, Allan Roberts, Reg Race, Bob Litherland, Ernie Roberts, James Lamond, David Winnick, and Alex Lyon.

28 Labour members of the Greater London Council have signed this statement: "We the undersigned members of the GLC fully endorse the views expressed in London Labour Briefing by Peter Tatchell, calling for mass peaceful protests against Conservative Government policies, and we believe that nothing in this article is inconsistent with our support for demo-

cratic socialism and parliamentary democracy".

The Executive Committee of Rochdale Labour Party has sent this letter to Michael Foot: "The EC of Rochdale CLP is disgusted by your action in the House of Commons on Thursday [3rd] when you played directly into the hands of the enemies of Labour by announcing your intention not to endorse Peter Tatchell as a prospective parliamentary candidate for Bermondsey. Whether you intended it or not, your interference in the affairs of a properly

constituted constituency party is seen as the beginning of a witch hunt against the Left, which previously you said you were against. Furthermore, we find the arguments against Peter Tatchell, that he is against Parliamentary democracy, to be completely spurious, as his call for extra-parliamentary activities — such as marches and lobbies of Parliament — is a traditional part of Labour activity, in which you yourself have taken part on many occasions. We therefore urge you to seriously reconsider your decision and recommend to the full NEC that Peter Tatchell be endorsed as PPC for Bermondsey".

Tony Benn speaking at a meeting organised by London Labour Briefing on the occasion of the special conference on the London Labour Party on Saturday December 12th said: "The present campaign against the Labour Party and its policy will certainly fail. "If the Party stands firm those who want a purge will soon realize that they cannot win, and that the democratic gains of the last few years cannot be reversed. "Every Constituency Labour Party is entitled to select its Parliamentary candidate and to expect that the National Executive will accept their choice provided the selection procedures have been properly followed. "This view is widely shared across the whole spectrum of opinion covering the Left, the Centre and the Democratic Right of the Party. An overwhelming majority of the Party is equally opposed to bans, proscriptions and investigations into the opinions held by Party members, and the many groups which exist within the Party and enrich its life. "The proposed purge is really directed at all those who support party policy so as to drive good Democratic Socialists out of the Party, to pave the way for a coalition between a right-wing Labour Party rump and the SDP after the next election. Such a Coalition would also provide a way of ditching all the policies agreed at conference. "The British establishment, fully supported by the Guardian, the Daily Mirror, the BBC and ITN, as well as the rest of Fleet Street, support this strategy in the false hope that it

might destroy the Labour Party as a serious political force. "But after the catastrophic defeat of the Labour government in 1979, which followed the adoption of SDP policies and the Lib-Lab pact, neither the affiliated trade unions nor the constituency Labour Parties are prepared to go back to the policies that have failed. "Nor will the SDP, the Tory wets and the Labour defectors find it so easy to fool the voters by the time the Election comes. Now, as in 1931, the survival of democracy itself depends on the membership of the Labour movement being resolute in defence of their rights, and the rights of

those we represent. "All those who believe in the transformation of our society towards democratic socialism, by consent, should now come in and join us. "We should welcome radical liberals, community activists, and those from the women's movement, the ethnic groups, the peace movement and the pensioners along with the young, into our party now. "Britain desperately needs a broad and tolerant Labour Party, united around its policies and campaigning for them inside and outside Parliament. "We are the only real hope for the British people."

REDS UNDER BED WAS

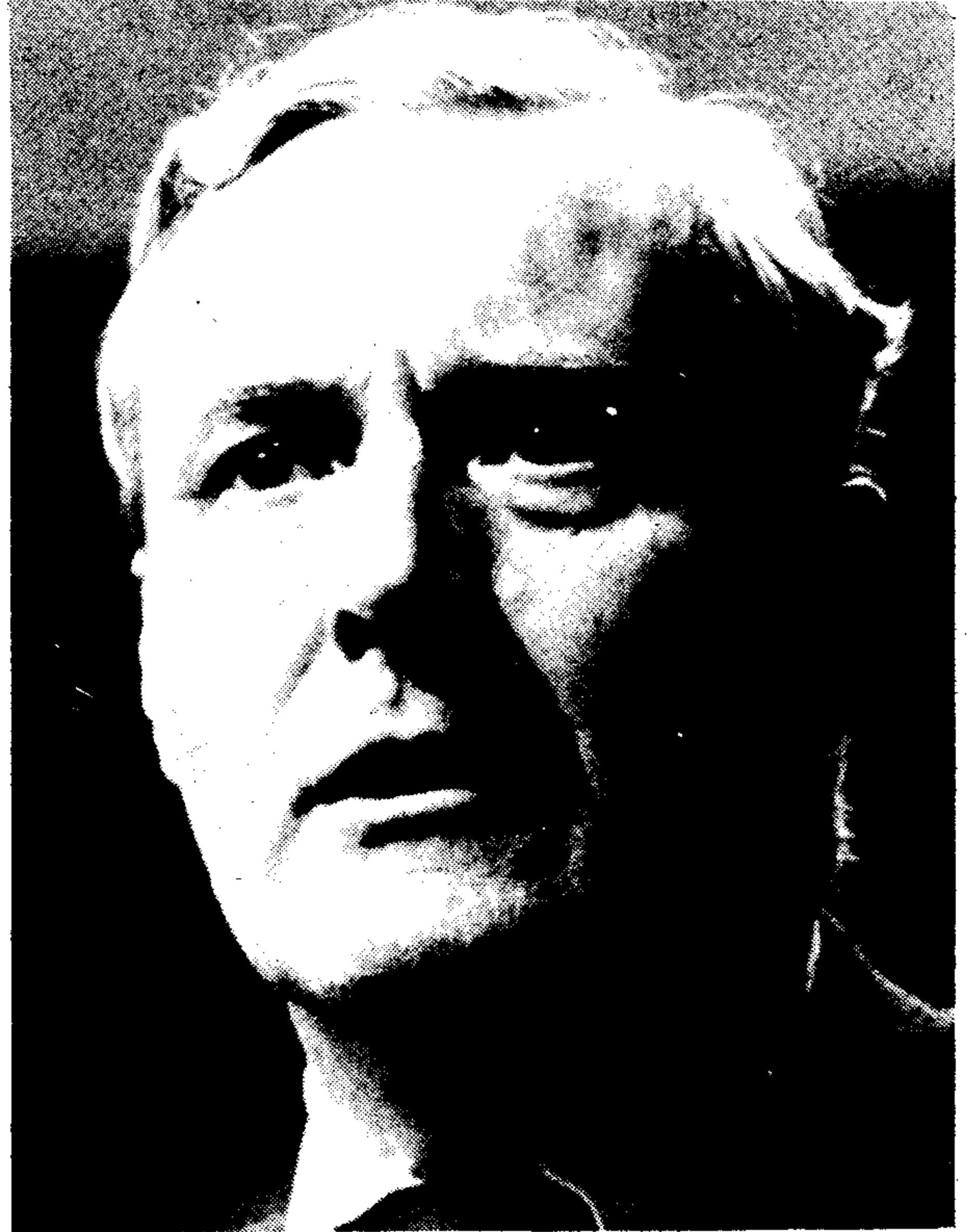
THIS FRIDAY the GC of Neil Kinnock's constituency Labour Party, Bedwellty, will discuss a motion from Bedwas and Trethomas ward to expel 10 ward members. The motion calls for the expulsion of all members of a local party caucus called 'Bedwas and Trethomas Campaign for Labour Action', and all those who were involved in circulating by hand a letter to ward members inviting them to a discussion meeting on Ireland, held last July. The Campaign was set up in June to 'fight for

fuller democracy and to fight for socialist action in the area". At the July meeting, where John Bloxam from Socialist Organiser was a speaker, a group of right wing councillors turned up and moved that the meeting be 'adjourned'. Defeated, they walked out and the meeting was held. Now they want their revenge. The charge against the Campaign is that the ten "held a meeting without permission of Bedwas and Trethomas Labour Party". In fact the main cause of friction is cuts: the council-

ors have acted as quislings for Thatcher, while the Left wants to fight the Tory-imposed cuts. Two Tribunes in the ward voted against the motion. It seems like that the GC will throw it out. What is significant is that the witch-hunting atmosphere allows the right wing scoundrels of left-wing 'intolerance' to crawl out of the woodwork with all the pretensions of Stalinist satraps — and about the same view of the political rights of the membership of the Party.



Kinnock



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Daily Mail MILITANTS TO BLAME IN POLAND TOO

by Patrick Spilling

IT'S BY no means fanciful to draw a parallel between what is happening to the Left in the Labour Party and to Solidarity in Poland. Of course, the events are on such different scales that any comparison almost invites ridicule. In Britain, a reformist workers' party totters under the weight of internal contradictions as the Left demands a radical programme and the Right demands an end to flirtations with socialist policies. In Poland, it is the vast majority of the working class which has moved into action, threatening in practice almost every aspect of Stalinist rule. Again, Solidarity is pulled from the left and from the right towards revolution and towards compromise. But both states — Britain and Poland — rest their

defence on a historical revolution. It has taken some time for the Labour Party right wing and its dwindling band of accomplices in Fleet Street to place a precise limit on permissible politics. The test, however, is now established by the Tatchell case. Foolish radicalism ends and revolution begins at the point of extra-parliamentary action. Even a passing acquaintance with English history would suggest there was something distinctly extra-parliamentary about the way Cromwell broke the power of the monarchy and established the rule of the bourgeoisie through Parliament, and the way the vote was later won for the working class. When the Times and the Telegraph praise Parliamentarism, they do not

PRESS GANG

Daily Mail, Daily Express, Financial Times, The Daily Telegraph, THE Sun

mean to praise revolutionary democracy. They praise instead the fossilisation of this power — its finished form, surrounded by Lord Denning, Official Secrecy, House of Lords, and civil service bureaucracy, which permits a harassed bourgeoisie to rule while presenting a democratic facade. The state in Poland rests its authority on the Russian Revolution. Demands from the state that critics accept the leading role of the CP have bizarre parallels with demands by right-wing Labourites that the left accepts the all-sufficiency of Parliament. While the established authority of MPs is upheld in Britain's Labour Party by witch-hunts, in Poland the bureaucracy rests on bayonets and tanks. Whatever the different circumstances, there is a common theme — the rank and file workers should not kick over the traces. And so even the most strident advocates of Cold War have backed the moderates in Solidarity against the radicals. The Telegraph and the Mail as much as the Guardian have expressed hopes that the tripartite agreement between the CP, Solidarity, and the Church would work. The Daily Express says that above all western bankers must bail Poland out — at least up to the point where Russian tanks roll in. Now the collaboration has failed, and despite all the anti-Soviet rhetoric the British press blames the radical wing of Solidarity. The Daily Mail published a perceptive piece by Stewart Stephen over three pages. But his true feelings soon broke out. After listing Polish opposition developments over the last 18 months, Stephen writes, "Inevitably not everyone who joined or who even became part of the leadership understood the limitations implicit in the very kind of democracy they were calling for." Later he asserts, "People denied a political voice for all of their lives — and the majority of Solidarity's leaders are young enough not to have known any other political system save communism — do not know how to exercise it once they find it. Lech Walesa did know, but he was accused by his own National Committee of acting like a 'medieval monarch' when he sought to meet the government halfway without first consulting his colleagues". Finally Stephen compares Poland to a huge debating society, exciting and exhilarating — "but it was not practical politics". When pushed to the point, the British press is hampered in its attacks on the Polish regime. After all, workers here might be infected by the same disrespect for established institutions as in Poland.

SOLIDARNOSĆ SOLIDARNOSĆ

Poland 18 MONTHS

FOR 18 months, the world has looked at Poland with hope, curiosity, and fear.

For socialists, out to replace our own ruling class in the West with a workers' democracy and also resolutely demarcating ourselves from the model of 'socialism' in Eastern Europe, the emergence of Solidarnosc has been a cause for intense hope and jubilation.

The Polish workers' revenge on their bureaucracy has been our revenge as well, on a model of 'socialism' and a social caste which has trumpeted itself as the progressive alternative to capitalism.

For those in the workers' movement who have insisted on believing in the great Stalinist myth, Solidarnosc must have been a nightmare — or for some, we hope, a new awakening. Especially cruel is the latest hammer blow of Jaruzelski's tanks against Solidarnosc, for the illusions of those who have assured us that these regimes, whatever their faults and cruelties, were in the end capable of self-reform.

The peaceful evolution to workers' democracy in the East is just as phoney, as the peaceful road to socialism in the West.

Promises

Despite all its reforming promises, the bureaucracy has always remained true to its nature and its own social interests. The workers, for them, are there to work, to keep quiet, and above all to express gratitude.

An anonymous worker poet replied in 'The Twenty Second Demand':

'Give over telling us you're sorry,
What guilt for past mistakes you carry,
Look in our faces, weary slaves,
Grey and exhausted, like our lives.
Give over calling us to order,
To discipline and honest labour,
Try self-examination when
You call us 'Our Dear Countrymen'...

The tragedy of the Polish working class is that it is trapped in the boundaries of a nation-state more or less totally reconstituted after the Second World War. After the population exchanges and migrations of millions, the transplanting of entire communities from eastern Russian provinces to the west and the reciprocal migration of millions of German-speaking people, and the shifting of the entire borders of the Polish state 200 miles to the west, Poland has always had to look over its shoulder at its great eastern neighbour — the USSR.

Mockery

The Soviet bureaucracy was the supposed guarantor of Poland and also simultaneously the one factor which made a mockery of any national independence and sovereignty.

This fact has exercised its ineluctable pressure not only on the Polish Stalinists but also on the workers' movement. The idea of a self-limiting revolution expressed most forcefully by people like Jacek Kuron and the now-disbanded PZPR was the Polish work-

Alexis Carras surveys the tremendous drive for freedom by the Polish workers since summer 1980, and argues that the bureaucrats' clampdown shows that the system could never be reformed bit by bit.

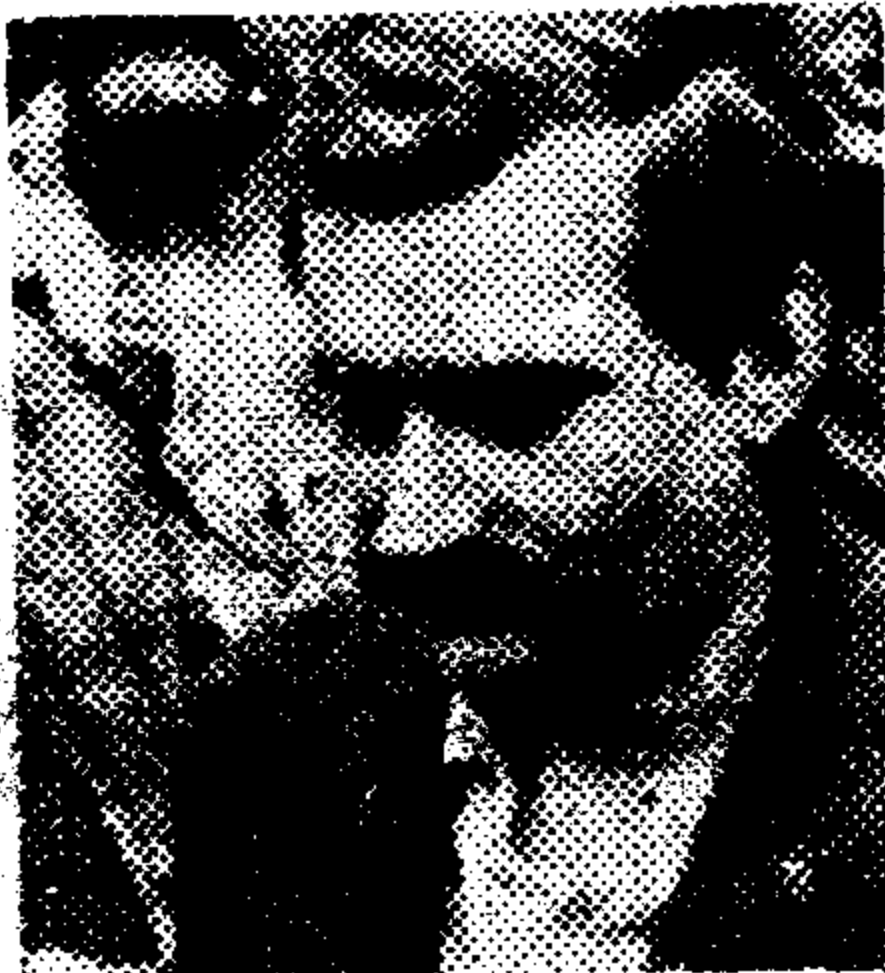
ers' attempt to prise themselves free piecemeal from Stalinist domination, without provoking the Kremlin.

For 18 months the 'self-limiting revolution' has fought for survival, heroically, determinedly, but continually aware that it was negotiating a narrow and treacherous passage between the Scylla of cynical Western finance capital, concerned to retrieve its precious billions, and the Charybdis of the USSR.

The 'Russian Umbrella' would always fall over Poland and ensure that the debts were paid to the West — even if this meant bloody repression for the Polish workers.

The 'self-limiting revolution' was the reason for the creation of Solidarnosc — a trade union whose original aim was to bargain within the Stalinist system, and transform it piecemeal.

Solidarnosc was to begin the demolition work on Stalinism, but in a subtle way — 'to take much of the substance of power away from the Party and the State bureaucracy, but to leave them with the form'. Poland was like an old house living under a preservation order. The interior could be modernised, even gutted and replaced. But the facade and roof must stay intact' (Neal Ascherson, 'The Polish August').



Wałęsa — arrested



Kuron — arrested

When the workers occupied in Gdansk in August 1980, they closed the factory gates and attempted to create inside a haven of working class peace and control and 'a space' for genuine Polish pride and national feeling. This symbolised the 'self-limiting revolution'.

The palace walls were not to be stormed. There were no headlong marches and surges into the streets of the towns and the cities — but a gradual widening, like ever-expanding concentric circles, of the space created by the occupations, to engulf the entire country.

The bureaucracy was not to be toppled headlong, but slowly eased out.

The blood of the 'Paris Commune' shipyard workers, mowed down by the militia and the army, the dead Gdansk strikers of 1970, was a shocking and chilling reminder of what awaited if the workers pushed too far, too suddenly.

Gutted

The 'workers' councils' set up in the factories during October 1956 were quickly gutted by the Gomulka regime, incorporated into assuming full responsibility for economic production and discipline over the working class, but with no power.

Now the unions would be utterly separate — no pseudo-partnership deals with the bureaucracy. And instead of some naive faith in renovation or 'renewal', there would be indifference and hostility to the regime, and the search into Polish history and religion for national solidarity and identity.

Rather than aiming to extend and coordinate revolutionary workers' councils which would directly challenge the bureaucracy for power, the workers tried to organise a trade union which would gradually erode that power.

In August, with the spread of the strike and occupation wave, and the formation of Inter-Factory Strike Committees, the bureaucracy was brought to the negotiating table. Talks were conducted, assurances given, promises made and written down on paper.

Vice-Premier Jagielski and Wałęsa signed the Gdansk Agreement, guaranteeing for the first time in the history of a Stalinist-ruled state the right to existence for an independent trade union movement, as well as a whole list of other social demands from wage rises to maternity leave.

Short

It was a short truce. By early October there was a general strike of over six million workers to push for access to the media, wage rises, and other demands. Gierek may have been replaced, and the ex-security chief Kania brought in, to placate the different factions of the ruling party, the PUWP, but yet the Party insisted on its 'leading role within society'.

When the Solidarnosc statutes failed to include such recognition, it was enough for a Warsaw court to rule the union's rule book 'unsuitable'. It was



Women shipyard workers at Gdansk

another test of strength, and another victory for the workers.

The 'registration crisis' also showed that different sections of the bureaucracy were now wildly colliding with each other and tripping each other up.

The following month there was another major fight — the 'Narozniak Affair', when two members of Solidarnosc, Piotr Sapelo and Jan Narozniak, were imprisoned for obtaining and publishing documents from the Prosecutor General's office on how police should deal with dissidents and oppositionists. Again there were strikes in factories and steelworks, and demonstrations, and the bureaucracy was compelled to do another humiliating volte-face and free the two.

'Star'

The bureaucrats returned on the offensive in early January, blocking one of the Gdansk agreements — the five day working week. Millions of workers took their Saturdays off anyway. A compromise was eventually hammered out with the Solidarnosc leadership, in effect with Wałęsa, that one Saturday every month would be worked.

Wałęsa, the 'star' of the August movement, was surrounded by Catholic priests and other moderate advisors. And radical resentment at these compromises grew in Solidarnosc.

By early February, the poorer peasantry were organising in their own 'Rural Solidarnosc' and demanding recognition from the government. The backward, impoverished peasant smallholder, long the victim of urban ridicule, government neglect and local party apparatchiks,

was beginning to actively enter organised political life.

Victory was not outright, despite the support of the city workers. The government backed down in face of a general strike threat, but recognised Rural Solidarnosc only de facto, not in law.

Trauma

Similarly, the students, long dormant after the trauma of 1968, isolated, used by different factions of the bureaucracy, and finally crushed, were once again regrouping politically. Strikes in Lodz University quickly spread throughout the country, the central demands being the dropping of Russian as a compulsory subject along with the dead and sterile courses in the bureaucracy's version of 'Marxism-Leninism'.

Faced with a crisis out of its control, the Party elevated General Jaruzelski to head the government. The head of the arm-

ed forces assumed the leading role in the civilian administration, while Mieczyslaw Rakowski, prime minister of the liberal wing in the bureaucracy (though even this 'reformer' considered the PUWP's domination non-negotiable!) took the vice-premiership.

This was no more than a prelude to further attacks. Within a month,

This was the incident which sparked off the first major split in Solidarnosc's ranks. Leading militants resigned from the union's governing bodies over the mild stand of the Walesa wing, which satisfied itself with promises of a future investigation into those responsible for the terror, and the acceptance by Walesa (in what appeared to many a thor-

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Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron, major figures in the KOR (Social Defence Committee), were detained and placed under close surveillance, with their right of movement and travel within the country seriously curtailed.

In early April many Solidarnosc militants were severely beaten and hospitalised in Bydgoszcz.

oughly autocratic manner) of a three-month moratorium on strikes.

Solidarnosc's conflict with the Stalinists seemed to follow an almost cyclical pattern — successive flash-points, whether on economic or broader social struggles, followed by weeks of relative calm, the calm then giving way to a new sharp conflict.



Jurczuk (centre: leader of Szczecin workers) — arrested

OF REVOLUTION



Jaruzelski

Big cracks had also appeared in the ruling party itself. The PUWP, a party of three million members, began to experience the revolt of its own rank and file.

Apart from the hundreds of thousands who had already left the Party, roughly one in three of the Party's membership had also joined Solidarnosc. Feeling misled, cheated, and angry at the leadership's unaccountable, undemocratic, and traditionally repressive rôle, the rank and file began to organise outside the accepted and strictly controlled 'vertical' channels of authority, into the so-called 'horizontal' movement.

(But already many PUWP members had been won over to the Solidarnosc movement. In Szczecin and Silesia, for example, PUWP workers were prominent in the MKS structures, and drove much harder bargains with the bureaucracy than did Gdansk).

Horizontal

Party cells made contact directly with each other rather than going through the central leadership. The founding meeting of the 'horizontal movement', in the city of Torun, grouped the most radical elements in the PUWP with the aim of sweeping away the old leadership in the coming 9th Extraordinary Party Congress. They also aimed to defeat the reactionary factions in the PUWP grouped in hard-line Stalinist circles like the Katowice Forum (whose Open Letter to the Party questioned the competence of a leadership which in their view was 'pandering' to the democratisation movement).

If anything would tip the balance towards a Russian invasion, it was the PUWP, as a bureaucratic machine, losing its grip on the situation and its ability to accommodate reforms then claw them back later.

Rife

Speculation was rife as to whether the Soviet Union would allow the 9th Extraordinary Congress to take place at all. The Czechoslovak invasion had taken place just before the Party there was due to have its Congress.

The horizontalists demanded free elections throughout the entire Party — punishment of all the guilty, elections with no limit on number of candidates, voting to be secret. They were out to smash the central apparatus.

Other PUWP members, for example in Lodz, demanded "that only those who had the courage to oppose totalitarianism, who can be incorporated in Solidarnosc", should prepare the new Congress.

These were tremors which must have shaken the Kremlin to the core. Brezhnev was making outspoken comments that "one must suppose that the PUWP will be able to defend the cause of socialism". On the eve of the Congress, the Russian leadership attacked the PUWP leadership with a list of its deviations, everything from conscious "accommodation to counter revolution" to "mercantilism"!

But the Congress was held, and the balance in the PUWP leadership remained roughly the same.

It was, however, a totally exceptional congress in the annals of ruling Stalinist parties, with serious democracy and substantial weeding-out of the leading committees.

General Jaruzelski, a popular army leader and head of the government, gained dominance at the congress, receiving the highest vote for the Politbureau (higher than the then general secretary Stanislaw Kania).

The elevation of Jaruzelski signified that the Party was focusing its hopes on this man — uncompromised by recent events, willing to declare he would never use the troops against the working class, a real 'national communist'. He would soon hold in his hands not only governmental and army power, but also the general secretaryship of the PUWP (a unique collection of posts in the Stalinist world).

Outside the walls of the congress, the hunger marches were beginning throughout the country.

Tens of thousands marched in Lodz on July 30. Economic catastrophe was crashing down on the nation, as queues lengthened, people tried to exist below subsistence level, and even the most basic of consumer goods disappeared from the shops. Poland's foreign debt was soaring even further.

terrible destitution appeared, scarcely paralleled in an advanced industrial country outside of wartime.

The workers pushed for greater workers' control of industry, to meet this economic collapse and paralysis.

And the Party's reaction? The closing down of a Solidarnosc newspaper in the Katowice steelworks, which was spearheading the workers' management movement in the factory, for supposed 'anti-Sovietism'.

Glacial

In September, in Gdansk, 912 delegates from all over the country, representing 9,500,000 Solidarnosc militants, met for the first part of the movement's congress. They issued the momentous 'Appeal to All Workers of Eastern Europe' — one of the finest expressions of working-class internationalism to emerge from the glacial spaces of European Stalinism.

The Russian reaction bordered on the hysterical. The congress was denounced as an 'anti-socialist Bacchanalia' and the Soviet Baltic Fleet ominously ploughed the foggy seas off the Baltic coast. Albin Siwak, boss of the Polish state 'unions', euphemistically called for the 'deglacialisation of Solidarnosc'.

The second part of the congress followed later in the month — as the workers' control issue became central, and Walesa's leadership was challenged by Marian Jurczyk of



Anna Walentynowicz, Andrzej Gwiazda — arrested

entative of the 40,000 strong independent police union, to address the congress. The police would no longer do the regime's dirty work, announced Dudziak, to the delegates' thunderous applause.

Despite the overtures to the regime by the moderates, who announced the disbanding of the KOR and proposed a compromise over workers' control, the regime was now, it is evident in hindsight, gearing itself up for a decisive showdown.

The revolt of the long-dead Parliament against government attempts to renege on the workers' control compromise, the rebellion of the police, and behind-the-scenes Russian pressure, led the Party to sack Kania and elect General Jaruzelski as party leader.

Crusade

The haughty general declared a 'crusade against totalitarianism'. He meant, of course, Solidarnosc's ten million membership.

The PUWP Central Com-

mittee pushed for the purging of the party. Jaruzelski deployed small military units throughout the country, especially the rural areas, to lean on the local bureaucracies, to get things moving, and to 'keep the government informed'. Meanwhile, a soft-sell was offered to the union moderates — a 'National Front of Salvation'.

Wildcat

Walesa accepted the proposal for tripartite Church/State/Union talks — thus going against one of the basic reasons behind the creation of an independent union movement which would not take responsibility for the regime's actions on the regime's terms. Meanwhile the government tried to break the wildcat strike movement gripping the country. They tried to get Walesa to mediate, while Jaruzelski pressed for a ban on strikes, special powers, and tight trade union laws aimed to drown spontaneous militancy in a welter of time-consuming arbitration and petty procedures.

The regime tried, and pulled off, the first attempt since August 1980 to physically confront the workers, when it attacked a firefighters' training school in Warsaw earlier this month. Having gained the upper hand temporarily, with hunger stalking the country the regime prepared for a final assault.

Shift

The seeming shift of Walesa to the side of the radicals, the scrapping in any meaningful sense of the 'National Salvation Front', and the general strike declared for December 17, with the raising of the demand for free elections and legalisation of political parties, convinced the bureaucracy to strike.

With the arrest of Solidarnosc leaders, militants and intellectuals; the declaration of martial law and warnings that people ignor-

ing it will be shot on sight; and the cutting off of Poland from the outside world and total censorship, they have tried to plunge Poland back into the ice-age of Stalinism.

Jaruzelski has finally got his 'special powers'. Now it remains to be seen if the General's tanks and sold-piers will be able to maintain 'law and order'.

Poverty, hunger, the disintegration of Polish society, the exasperation of workers realising how close they got to their goal yet how far there was yet to travel — all these factors no doubt weigh heavily in favour of the bureaucracy. Above all, the real fear of civil war, bloodshed, and the certainty of Russian invasion if civil war does break out, must surely deter many.

Circle

The 'self-limiting revolution' has come full circle. For many of the 'sympathetic' bourgeois pundits, with one eye on their Cold War rhetoric and the other on Poland's foreign debt, the blame for the clamp-down lies unequivocally with Solidarnosc's radicals, who went or wanted to go too far.

Yet if any lesson can be drawn from the last convulsive 18 months, it is that any struggle for workers' rights could not simply gut the inside of Polish Stalinism and leave the facade intact.

"As soon as demolition work began... the roof began to show signs of caving in" (Ascherson).

The social forces unleashed, as in any great upheaval, cannot simply be channelled into some pre-conceived schema of peaceful transformation. The knock-on effect of the workers' movement left no sector of Polish society untouched — it reached right down into the darkest cells of the prison system.

Faced with this encirclement, the bureaucracy turned to the military — and through the thousand and one avenues still open

to it, managed to sabotage, obstruct, wear down and confuse.

The failure of the 'self-limiting strategy' or the 'small step' perspective put forward by Walesa was not so much the tactical compromise (though certainly there were some compromises that were unjustified) as the fact that ultimately it could only disarm militants as to the true nature of the job ahead. The 'small step' approach meant that at decisive moments the movement, instead of resolutely facing the bureaucracy's attacks, would always back down.

This was the case with the brutal eviction and arrest of the trainee firefighters occupying their school in Warsaw last week. Solidarnosc's failure to respond must have emboldened Jaruzelski for his decisive assault.

Polish Stalinism, which traditionally has boasted the largest organised party in Eastern Europe and the greatest degree of internal liberalism and room for manoeuvre with the USSR, now depends for its survival on a conscript army and the militia.

If the workers resist strongly, the army will crack, and then civil war will become national war as the Polish working class will be taking on the troops of the socialist commonwealth.

With a population several times larger, and a much bigger land area, than Czechoslovakia or Hungary, the struggle, in the eventuality of open war, will be destructive and prolonged.

SOLIDARNOSCI

Hopes of repayments on the debt faded away, while Western governments and financiers nervously gathered together to reschedule the debt and entice Poland into the monetary discipline of the IMF.

One year on, and the working class saw itself daily cheated, despite its strength, sacrifices, and determination. The Party, still clinging tenaciously to its control of the economy, was relegating the masses to starvation and a bitter winter ahead. Scenes of

Szczecin and Jan Rulewski of Bydgoszcz.

Jurczyk and Rulewski attacked Walesa's gradual acclimatisation to hobnobbing with the Stalinists and his divorce from the rank and file, and openly called for withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. They declared that Solidarnosc should not moderate its aims and struggles through 'overestimation of the Soviet threat'.

The decomposition of the old regime was symbolised by the invitation of Zbigniew Pudziak, repres-



Summer 1980 — Gdansk. Occupations and hope



BLACK REBELLION

THE RASH of recent reports on 'race relations' give some picture of black people as the victims of racial discrimination and racial attacks, and as the special double-victims of capitalism in crisis.

What is missing is the picture of blacks in Britain not as victims, but as fighters and creators, as builders of organisations, founders of projects and developers of ideas.

A. Sivanandan's article in the current edition of 'Race and Class' ('From resistance to rebellion: Asian and Afro-Caribbean struggles in Britain') is an invaluable attempt to make good that omission. The article will form a chapter in a forthcoming book to be published by Pluto, 'Race, Class and the State'.

One of Sivanandan's central themes is the 'invisibility' to a still largely racist white working class of the contribution of black militants. What is beginning to be recognised in the sphere of 'style' and music has not begun to be recognised in the more historically decisive arena of political struggle.

Hanged!

For instance, how many people reading this article — many of you will have been on the Left for a long time, and some will know a good deal about the history of the labour movement — have heard of Udham Singh? I hadn't.

"On 25 June 1940", Sivanandan writes at the beginning of his article, "Udham Singh was hanged. At meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society and the East India Association at Caxton Hall, London, he had shot dead Sir Michael O'Dwyer who (as the Lieutenant General of the Punjab) had presided over the massacre of unarmed workers and peasants at Jallianwalla Bagh, Amritsar, in 1919.

"Udham was a skilled electrician, an active trade unionist and a delegate to the local trades council, and, in 1938, had initiated the setting up of the first Indian Workers' Association, in Coventry".

A regular working class hero: uncompromising, unassuming, unsung and black.

Likewise, how many readers who might have a vague recollection of the so-called Spaghetti House siege back in 1975 know that the three young West Indians that held up the Knightsbridge restaurant hoped to use the money to help set up proper schools for the black community, finance black political groups, and assist the liberation struggles in Africa?

These are only two of the more spectacular moments in the long, hard, creative battle by blacks in Britain. What of the less sensational forms of the daily war waged for better conditions, for dignity, and for liberation?

Before Notting Hill

BEFORE World War Two, most black organisations were either religious (non-Christian gatherings in those British ports like Cardiff where blacks had established communities in the 18th century) or student based. The student based organisations were frequ-

This summer black youth burst onto the streets of Britain's cities, fighting back alongside white youth. But outside of the spectacular riots, how have black people in Britain been organising against racism? What ideas and projects have they launched? Andrew Hornung summarises an important recent survey by A.Sivanandan, Director of the Institute of Race Relations*.

*Britain 81: Rebellion and Repression, a special double issue of Race and Class. £1.50 from the Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Road, London N1.

ently radical and orientated towards supporting the anti-imperialist struggles in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

For instance, Chorlton Town Hall in Manchester was the site of the Fifth Pan African Congress, many of whose delegates had set up the International African Service Bureau here in 1937. They included Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, George Padmore, C L R James and Ras Makonnen.

The early organisational moves by black workers, like the West Indian Association in Liverpool (founded in 1951) and the Indian Workers' Association of Coventry (1953) drew inspiration from the movements for colonial freedom, but were also concerned with cases of racial discrimination in Britain. In time, however, Sivanandan points out, "these early organisations generally ended up as social and welfare associations".

Fascist

In the case of the Asian organisations in particular, whether they ended up that way or not had a lot to do with the political weight within them of Indian Congress Party or Communist Party supporters, and later of pro-Moscow or pro-Chinese militants.

In response to the Nottingham Hill 'riots' of 1958 — directed by the tiny but growing fascist organisations — "even moderate organisations like the Committee of African Organisations... pledged to organise their own defence". The 'riots' themselves produced temporary organisations in London and elsewhere, but blacks were organised politically before that.



C. L. R. James

In March 1958, for instance, a few months before the 'riots', Claudia Jones, a Trinidadian and a Communist Party member, together with other West Indians including Amy Garvey (widow of Marcus Garvey, an early black leader in the US and Jamaica) produced the West Indian Gazette. Sivanandan records it as "the parent Afro-Caribbean journal in Britain, and

the Gazette organised London's first Caribbean carnival.

The same period saw the unification of the local Indian Workers' Associations into the IWA-GB. Once again it was a combination of the pressures of the new home and the old home: Indian prime min-



Women strikers at Imperial Typewriters, Leicester 1974

ister Nehru had advised such unification a year before, but the 'riots' added urgency to the advice.

In the following 20 years the street thugs that had first become notorious in Notting Hill (and at the same time in Nottingham) united, split and regrouped into the various fascist formations active today. They kept up their attacks.

But the main concern of black organisations was soon to become increasingly the state itself. Immigration acts, increased police harassment, and race relations legislation soon showed who the godfather was.

Against discrimination

ACCORDING to Sivanandan, the two most important umbrella organisations of the early '60s were the Coordinating Committee Against Racial Discrimination in Birmingham and the Conference of Afro-Asian Caribbean Organisations (CAACO) in London.

Death

CCARD was founded after "a meeting at Digbeth (Birmingham) called by the West Indian Workers' Association and the Indian Youth League to protest Patrice Lumumba's murder in the Congo". Like for all his Stalinist/reformist views was probably the most important Asian activist in Britain until his death from a heart attack while on a demonstration

against virginity testing by immigration officials) and Maurice Ludmer, the recently deceased founder of the anti-fascist journal Searchlight.

CAACO was initiated by the West Indian Gazette and worked closely with Fenner Brockway's Movement for Colonial Freedom (now Liberation). Thus both movements related to the black struggle in Britain and to the anti-imperialist national liberation struggles in the Third World.

Internationalism

Later, in 1965, the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination — polka-dotted with white liberals and lacking the other movements' internationalism — came into being at the instigation of Martin Luther King, who passed through London on his way to Oslo to pick up the Nobel Peace Prize.

of RAAS's speeches thrown its way, but it took instant revenge: it tested out its new race relations legislation to indict Michael X in 1967 for 'an inflammatory speech against white people'.

RAAS was treated by the press as the personal property and publicity organ of Michael X, showman and shaman. Not without some truth. But it was RAAS, not CARD and not anyone else, that went to Red Scar Mill in Preston in May 1965 to help Asian workers there in what Sivanandan calls "the first important 'immigrant' strike". Roy Sawh set up office in Preston and worked full-time in support of the strikers.

Hatred

RAAS was influenced by the 'white devil' hatred of the Black Muslims and the anti-imperialism of Mal-

did not stop. Later that year the strike at Woolf Rubber in Southall was defeated too. White left-wing organisations supported this strike, but the treason of the trade union bureaucracy and widespread (often racially motivated) indifference saw to its defeat.

Strikes

Shortly after, there was a wave of strikes of Asians working in foundries. Most of these were in the Midlands, where Asians in particular were being sweated for £14 a week in the jobs that few whites were prepared to take.

No year went by without strikes by black workers who usually had to fight not only the employer and the trade union bureaucracy but rank and file racism and fascist thuggery.

One example (not ment-

In May 1972, the black workers at Crepe Sizes Nottingham struck for a series of demands including union recognition (the TGWU) and for an end to appalling wages and conditions (£40.08 for an 84 hour week for some!).

Their victory helped force the will of the black workers at Mansfield Hosiery Loughborough, of Harwood Cash Lawn Mills in Mansfield, and E E Jaffe at Mamlic Lace in Nottingham. The same area was later the site of the important Imperial Typewriter strike in Leicester, where the National Front and the local TGWU organisations scabbed.

The Mansfield Hosiery Strike Committee, after their victory, sponsored a conference on trade unionism and racism. Among those attending were such groups as the Black Workers' Movement and the Black People's Freedom Movement (Nottingham), both of which were part of the Black People's National Action Collective.

Shortly after, the focus of the struggle shifted to the factories of West London and initiative, in many cases, from Asian men to Asian women.

The defeat at Periva Gutterman was followed by the strikes led by Asian women at Futters, Grunwick, and, later, further west, at Chix.

Decency

IN A NUMBER of these struggles, the state tried to appear as the voice of public decency. An official inquiry into Mansfield Hosiery, for instance, conceded that management, white workers, and the trade union (National Association of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers) were racist in varying degrees.

Looked at from this side the state seemed all war and soft purring. Looked at from another angle — immigration laws and police harassment — it was clearly all sharp teeth and claws. To blacks the second side was more evident.

Infamous

In March 1968 a Labour government passed the 'Kenyan Asians Act'. If Labour Government could do that, a right wing Tory could do more. In April Enoch Powell delivered his infamous 'rivers of blood' speech.

If a Tory Establishment racist could say that, then the fascists could do more: fascists active among the dockers and porters of London's East End led those workers to march to Parliament in support of Powell, with openly racist slogans which turned into anti-Semitic threats when they saw East End Labour MP Ian Mikardo.

But, as Sivanandan reminds us, "blacks were on the march too. On the same day as the dockers and porters marched, representatives of over fifty organisations (including IWAs, West Indian Standing Conference, Nation-

RAAS: 1965

BY THIS time the politics and the practical struggles of the blacks of the US were making themselves felt among Afro-Caribbeans in Britain — but for the militants it was Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael who made the deepest impression, not Martin Luther King.

Malcolm's visit to Britain in February 1965, just before his assassination, inspired the founding of the Racial Action Adjustment Society (RAAS) by Michael de Freitas (later called Abdul Malik, and still later Michael X). Other leading lights were Roy Sawh and Ajoy Ghose.

Neither RAAS's ear-catching and sometimes outrageously stupid racial rhetoric, nor Michael X's criminal past and murderer's end, should blind us to the significance of RAAS.

Dignity

In a way it was, as Sivanandan rightly points out, like the Black Muslims of America, who proclaimed black self-assertion in a rhetoric of Muslim religion. It was an inspiration to racial dignity, gathering into itself some of the most militant and able blacks who would later go off in different directions.

Like the Muslims, they based themselves on race and not class, but unlike the Muslims RAAS was anti-imperialist, irreligious and aggressive in its attitude to the state.

The state with its huge forces had had only a few

colm X. The United Coloured Peoples' Association was influenced by the anti-imperialist struggles in Asia and Africa and the Black Power ideas of Stokely Carmichael.

UCPA: 1967

UCPA was founded in June 1967 by Obi Egbuna, a Nigerian playwright. UCPA speakers at Hyde Park — where according to white folk's and tourists' myth you can say whatever you like — were soon being prosecuted under the Race Relations Act for the same sort of anti-white rhetoric as RAAS had been spouting for two years.

Sivanandan estimates, "UCPA rhetoric was helping to stiffen black backs, its meetings and study groups to raise black consciousness, its ideology to politicise black people. The prosecution of its members showed up the complicity of the courts — 'protection rackets for the police', the secretary of the West Indian Standing Conference (one of the most durable black organisations) was to call them. And its example, like that of RAAS, encouraged other black organisations to greater militancy".

The battles in the workplace

THE RED Scar strike — a strike against a racist management backed by racist white workers and a racist trade union bureaucracy — was defeated. But the struggle in the workplaces

ioned by Sivanandan): In 1968 a strike broke out at Injection Moulding in North West London. The strikers were mainly Asians, with some West Indians. There was only one white striker, a young Irishman.

The workers' grievances were many: their pay was too low — the minimum the union would allow — black workers were limited to being machine operators even when they set their own machines, while white workers were automatically promoted to the more skilled and better paid jobs of being setters whether they could do the job or not; and management refused to recognise Asian shop stewards on 'linguistic grounds', although the most prominent of them was a graduate who spoke English perfectly.

Refused

The Asians saved for months to finance the strike, which was supported by the local Asian community. When the blacks finally struck, the whites (with one sole exception) refused to come out, claiming financial hardship. The blacks then offered to share their strike kitty with the whites who had contributed nothing to it. Some of the white workers took the money... and still scabbed!

The union supported the black workers, but tried time and time again to sell them out. Finally, the strikers — helped by local IS (now SWP) militants — won a rise of about 80 per cent and smashed through the racial barriers.

The next big wave of strikes was in the East Midlands textile industry.



BRITAIN 1981



Fascists organised to break the Imperial Typewriters strike

Federation of Pakistani Organisations, UCPA, RAAS, etc.) came together in Leamington Spa to form a national body, the Black People's Alliance (BPA), a militant front for Black Consciousness and against racism.

"And in that, the BPA was uncompromising from the outset. It excluded from membership immigrant organisations that had compromised with government policy or fallen prey to government hand-outs... or looked to the Labour Party for redress".

With the seal of official approval stamped into the hot wax of British racism by Enoch Powell and by successive governments' immigration laws, black organisations increasingly saw themselves confronting the state. They fought the state over immigration laws and procedures, later over 'Sus' laws, while organisations like Blacks Against Police Harassment would later still campaign to expose the knuckle end of state racism.

Immigration

WITH immigrants increasingly seeing themselves as settlers rather than temporary migrant labour, blacks' struggles in the late '60s began to branch out to issues of education, housing and health.

In 1963, Edward Boyle, a 'liberal' Tory education minister, reported to the Commons that it was undesirable to have more than 30 per cent immigrant children in any school. The Southall racists' lobby had had its effect.

Soon Southall's black kids were being bussed out of the area. Naturally, there was never a question of bussing white kids in: blacks, after all, were the problem...

Bussed

West Indian kids were being categorised as Educationally Sub-Normal (ESN), Asian kids were being bussed out of Southall, West Indian children were being treated as unmanageable (50 per cent of school suspensions in Ealing concerned West Indian kids), black children were being attacked at school and on the way to school, and the school curriculum was both smeared with racism and insensitive to the special problems of immigrant children.

Both West Indian and Asian parents protested at racial stereotyping, second class education, and open racism in schools.

The responses were varied. In North London, John LaRose, a former executive member of the Federated Workers' Trade Union in Trinidad and Tobago and a black writer and bookstore owner, initiated the Black Parents'

Movement. This fought for improvements in the state system and also set up its own school, the George Padmore school.

Bernard Coard, now deputy prime minister in Grenada, wrote the pamphlet, 'How the West Indian Child is made. Educationally Sub-Normal'. In Hackney black teachers set up the Kwame Nkrumah school, while in West London Ajoy Ghose (ex-UCPA) started the Malcolm X Montessori Programme.

In South London the Black Liberation Front and the Black Unity and Freedom Party set up educational programmes and summer schools.

Women

In the forefront of these struggles away from the workplace were black women. They campaigned on issues of black child care, mental health, the enforced use of Depo-Provera and the establishment of 'sin-bins' (the so-called 'special adjustment units'). They also took the lead in campaigns over the rights of black prisoners — both men and women.

By the late '70s, women had shown themselves to be in the forefront of the workplace struggles too. "By 1978 black women's groups, Asian and Afro-Caribbean, had sprung up

all over Britain and came together to form one powerful national body, the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent (OWAAD), with its paper FOWAAD". In 1979 Brixton Black Women's Group launched the first Black Women's Centre.

"Asian women in AWAZ (and Southall Black Sisters set up in the wake of 23 April 1979 — the police riot in which Blair Peach was killed) continued to lead the protest against the virginity testing and X-raying of immigrants.

"Here they gave the lead not only to other women, but to long-established, male-dominated organisations such as the IWA, which eventually joined them". Black women like Nasira Begum and Anwar Ditta were the focus also of anti-deportation struggles.

Education, housing and health

AS THE children grew up — often poorly educated and victims of job discrimination as well as police harassment and criminalisation — the supplementary schooling programmes became skill programmes, clubs and youth centres. The hostility of the state

and employers was met with protest, later with rebellion, and also with self-help programmes.

Sivanandan records, "The Mkutano Project, for instance, started by the BUFP (in 1972) taught typing, photography, Swahili; the Melting Pot, begun about the same time Ashton Gibson (once of RAAS), had a workshop for making clothes; and Keskiee, set up by an ex-CARD official, Oscar Abrams, taught art and sculpture and encouraged black poets and playwrights.

Clubs

"For older students, Roy Sawh (also ex-RAAS) ran the Free University for Black Students. And then there were hostels for the unemployed and homeless black youth — such as Brother Herman's Harambee and Vince Hines' Dashiki (both of whom had been active in RAAS) — and clubs and youth centres.

"Finally there were bookshop cum advice centres... and the weekly or monthly newspapers..."

Self-help

Sivanandan's article concentrates on London, and it is not clear how vigorous such self-help movements were and are outside the capital, but certainly they are not restricted to London.

The state made a bee-line for the programme leaders (though this is not pointed out by Sivanandan), hoping to co-opt these activists and convert them into a force like the trade union bureaucracy, dulling the edge of struggle and even turning the blade against the fighters themselves.

Sometimes it succeeded, sometimes it failed. Scarm's proposal to set up statutory police/community liaison committees is only the latest of such moves.

Where black centres — some formal, like RAAS's Black House, some informal, like clubs and bookshops — refused the state's advances and became real centres of a developing militant consciousness, they were frequently raided by police and often closed down.

That happened to the Black House in 1970; the Mangrove Restaurant in 1971; the Carib Club in 1974 and Peoples Unite in Southall in 1979.



The Black Parents' Movement marches this time not about educational provision, but against a police attack on a black pupil outside his school in 1975

The youth

INCREASINGLY, black youth became a central force in the communities' revolt, particularly in the physical self-defence of the community.

In June 1976 an 18 year old Sikh youth, Gurdip Singh Chaggar, was stabbed to death by a gang of white youths. "The community was stunned. A meeting was held and the elders went about it in the time-honoured way, passing resolutions, making statements.

Sprang

"The youth took over — marched to the police station, demanding redress, stoning a police van en route. The police arrested two of them. They sat down before the police station and refused to move — until their fellows were released. They were released.

"The following day the Southall Youth Movement was born.

"Various Asian youth movements sprang from this initiative... In the course of the next couple of years a number of youth organisations and defence

committees sprang up, in London, Manchester, Leicester, Bradford, several of them in London alone — in Brick Lane after the murders of Altab Ali and Ishaque Ali, in Hackney after the murder of Michael Ferreira, in Newham after the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig.

"And, like the strike committees earlier, the youth groups moved around aiding and supporting each other — joining

Class or community?

SOME OF the shortcomings — like the lack of attention to nationally organised black political parties and their programmes — relate to one of Sivanandan's central ideas.

In his opinion, local initiatives have proved

and working with West Indian youth groups in the proceeds, sometimes on an organisational basis (Southall Youth Movement and Peoples Unite, Bradford Blacks and Bradford Asian Youth Movement), sometimes as individuals, often coalescing into political groups (Hackney Black People's Defence Organisation and Bradford's United Black Youth League)".

Revealed

The struggles in Southall this spring, in St Paul's (Bristol) last year, in Brixton this spring and in many other cities this summer revealed black youth as a militant force in revolt, a force catalysing both older blacks and whites.

Sivanandan's sketch is not complete — he doesn't pretend it is. It says little about the politics of most black political organisations, it mentions nothing about the recent moves by blacks into the Labour Party in some areas, and it is somewhat over-focused on London.

Little

Not surprisingly, Sivanandan says little — and nothing good — about mainly-white organisations and their relation to the black struggle.

more relevant to blacks because the local black community is the essential point of reference and base for activity. That, in the author's opinion, accounts for the relatively rapid break-up of many black political organisations.

"By 1971 the United Coloured Peoples' Association was also [i.e. as well as RAAS] breaking up into its component groups, with a hard core of them going to form the Black Unity and Freedom Party (National Bodies were by now not as relevant to the day-to-day struggles as local ones and the former's unifying role could equally be fulfilled by ad hoc alliances)".

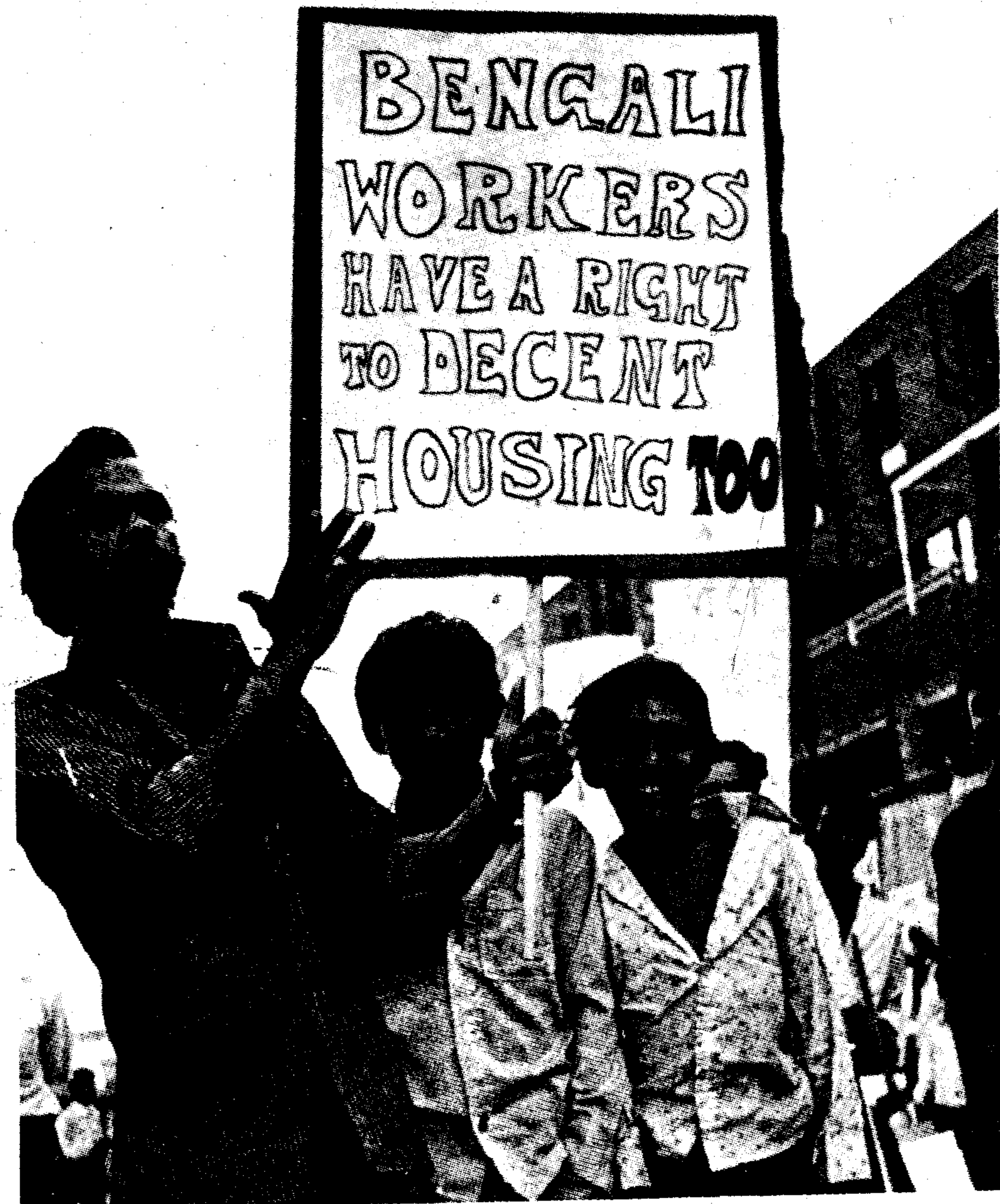
Experiences and perspectives

THE AMERICAN experience — the Black Panthers' children's breakfast programmes, for instance, — suggests that Sivanandan is half-right. Doubly oppressed or specially oppressed groups have a range of needs denied by the state and not within the usual scope of trade union concerns.

Without doubt the situation of blacks — particularly where unemployment is high — often means that the community is a far more important concept than the union or even the workplace. Though the community is cut through with class divisions, which under certain circumstances are decisive, it does frequently act together.

As long as only local reforms are demanded, the lack of a rounded political programme and a national organisation to fight for it may not be decisive. But can local reforms — important as they are — transform the condition of blacks and liberate them?

Surely not. For that, only a complete overthrow of the existing order will do, and that is something that cannot be accomplished merely by local groups and ad hoc alliances.



Housing struggles have been very varied (though Sivanandan does not give much information about them). Some struggles were against slum landlordism, some for proper council housing, some for safety from attack on council estates, and others against the break up of established communities while still demanding improvements in housing. In the East End of London there was a sustained squatting campaign in 1976 by Bengalis organised in the Bengali Housing Action Group.





Reagan

'Free enterprise has gone to hell'

WHEN THE Great Depression began in 1929, America's most renowned capitalist, Henry Ford, surprisingly advocated "a movement to increase the general wage level".

"Nearly everything in this country", he said, "is too high-priced. The only thing that should be high-priced in this country is the man who works. Wages must not come down; they must not even stay at their present level; they must go up".

Of course, Ford was thinking mainly of the workers who didn't work for him. But even those who did during the 1930s depression hardly ever faced an ultimatum quite as chilling as that which 1,100 workers received in October 1981 at the Ford plant in Sheffield, Alabama.

Henry Ford's successors told them to take a cut of 50 per cent (yes, fifty per cent) in wages and other benefits or else lose their jobs because the plant would be closed.

Extreme

This is an extreme example of the kind of thing which is taking place throughout the US motor industry — the employers' demands for 'concessions' by the workers. And that in its turn is an extreme instance of something even more general.

American capitalist industry, driven by the need to restore its eroded profitability, and fortified by Ronald Reagan's union-busting policies, is launching a major offensive against wages, jobs and working conditions.

It is not only the private sector of the economy which is trying to plough up existing labour agreements; many municipalities and states, as well as the Federal Government, are doing the same thing. Boston is far from alone among American cities in preparing last month unilaterally to pull out of labour contracts negotiated with the unions in order to save money by cutting jobs and increasing workloads in the public services.

Forbids

In Boston's case the Reagan cuts in Federal aid to the local governments are exacerbated by the passage last year in Massachusetts of Proposition 1 1/2, a part of a broader law that says that which began with the passage of Proposition 1 1/2 in California in 1978.

The Massachusetts measure approved by a state-wide referendum forbids the levying of property taxes equivalent of British rates in excess of 2 1/2 per cent of the value of the property. In many

Massachusetts towns this has resulted in frightening reductions in revenue and services. Firemen, teachers and police have been laid off in thousands.

From other parts of the USA come stories even of whole public school districts closing their schools down for lack of funds when voters have refused in referenda to sanction new education bond issues.

Nobody is dismissing these events as isolated exceptions. They are seen as a foretaste of what may be the general result of deepening recession and of Reaganomics.

A year ago the newly elected Ronald Reagan promised a rebirth of the American economy, with the restoration of growth rates of 5 per cent every year. He called it 'America's New Beginning'. Last month, however, the administration was finally forced to recognise publicly that the US economy was headed not for recovery but for a recession which is likely to extend at least through the middle of 1982.

In the month of September the recession deteriorated very suddenly. It was confirmed that, after a jump at the start of the year, the Gross National Product had fallen for two consecutive quarters. (The figure for the third quarter has since been revised upwards a little, but not so as to affect the gloomy prospect for the coming months).

Growth of US GNP (per cent)

	Total	Per head	Per worker
1950s		1.2	2.4
1960s		3.3	2.1
1970s		2.2	1.2
1980.I	+3.1		
1980.II	-9.9		
1980.III	+2.4		
1980.IV	+3.8		
1980 total			-0.2
1981.I	+8.6		
1981.II	-0.6		
1981.III	+0.6		
1981 total			+0.8

Capital on the offensive

And unemployment had climbed to 8 per cent, poised to exceed the figure for the 1975 slump — and that was the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

In absolute terms there are in the United States today nearly as many unemployed workers as at the worst moment of the 1930s depression.

More and more forecasters are making gloomy predictions of the immediate prospects. Many say that the present recession has set to be the worst since the war. Certainly it now seems inevitable that within a few weeks unemployment will surpass its post-war record, and there is now general expectation that it may well go beyond 10 per cent.

A number of indications make it look as if the recession will go further than the White House's predictions: industrial investment is falling; new house building is at its lowest level for decades; and demands for durable consumer goods is falling fast. Much of this is related to the continuation of record high interest rates.

The latest recession

While today's recession is not yet anywhere near the scale of the present slump in Britain, it comes on the heels of nearly a decade of fitful and low growth for the American economy. Between 1973, when the increase in oil prices transmitted a massive shock to American production, and today, the national income per head in the US has grown only a little more than 1 per cent a year.

Compared with the years of the post-war boom, the cyclical pattern has also changed. Recessions go on for longer and are deeper; expansions last less time than before and are shallower. In fact a recent study showed that the 1980-1 upturn which preceded the present recession was the weakest and shortest-lived in the whole of the post-war period.

During the 1970s the growth of labour productivity in the US was negligible, and far behind rival economies.

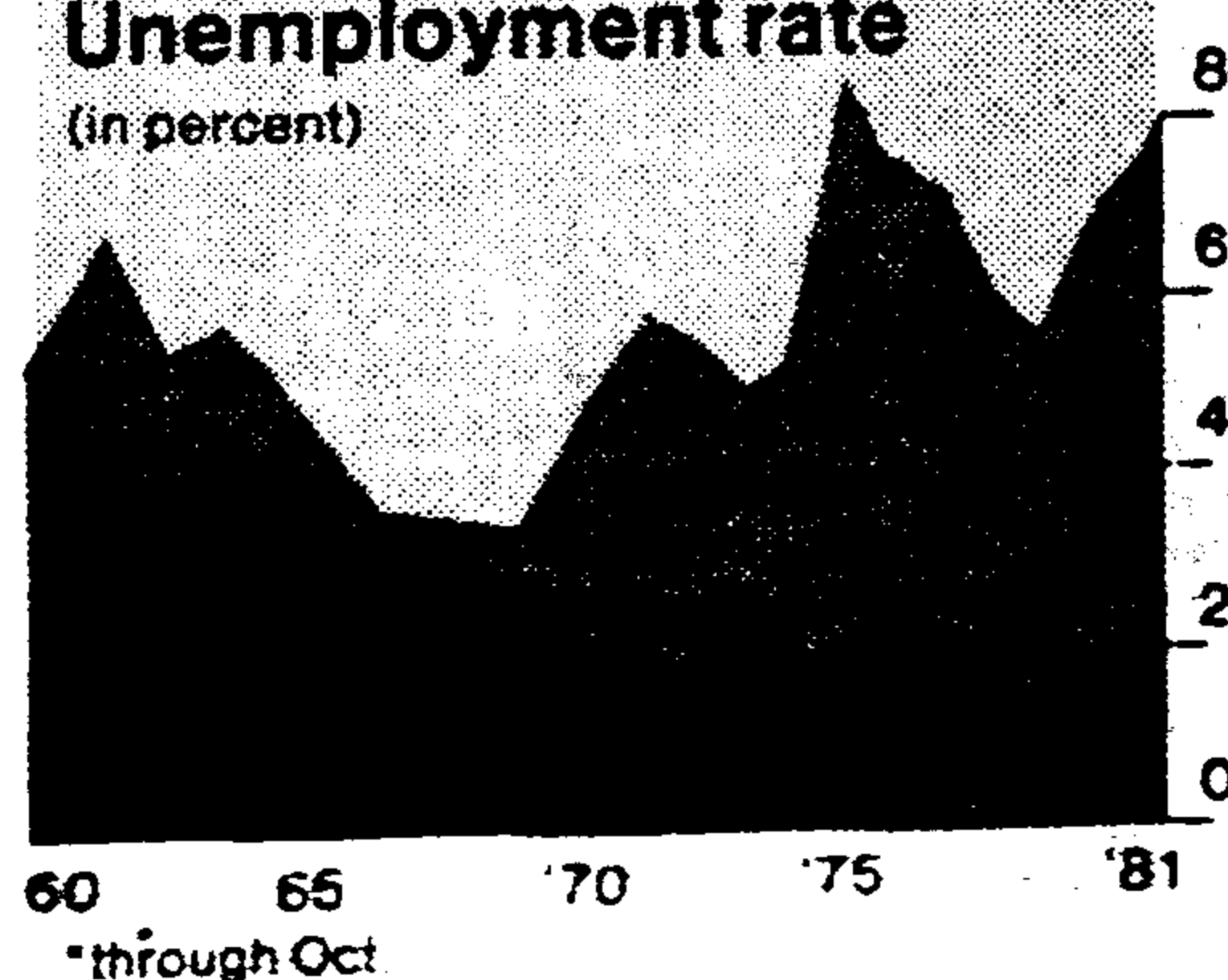
One of the results of differential productivity growth has been that the competitiveness of US production has declined and there has been an enormous increase in the

import of manufactured goods from Japan, Europe, and the Third World, which have out-competed many sections of American industry. A decade ago imports were only 5 per cent of the Gross National Product; now they add up to 10 per cent. American industry is much less of an invulnerable isolated citadel than it once was.

During the oil price

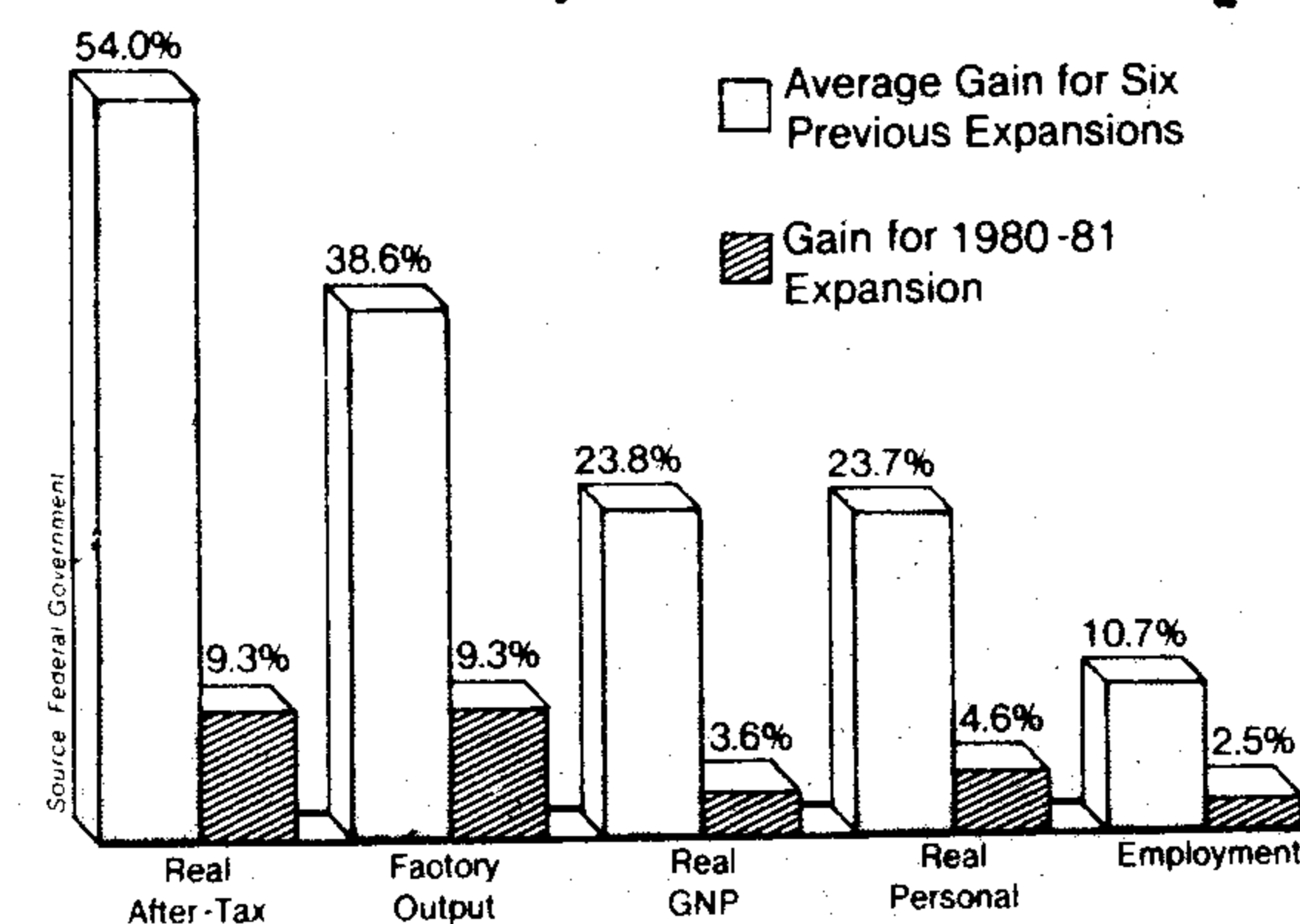
Unemployment rate

(in percent)



crisis of 1973-4, inflation in the US leapt up. Ever since it has obstinately stayed much higher than it was in the 1950s and '60s. Of all Reagan's election promises (like those of Thatcher), one of the most popular, along with the pledge to cut taxes, was the confident assertion that his radical policies could bring inflation down.

That was certainly something which appealed to the sections of the American working class who voted for him, since there seems to many American workers at present little hope that wages can keep pace with this higher level of inflation. In fact, one of the most startling facts about the American economy in

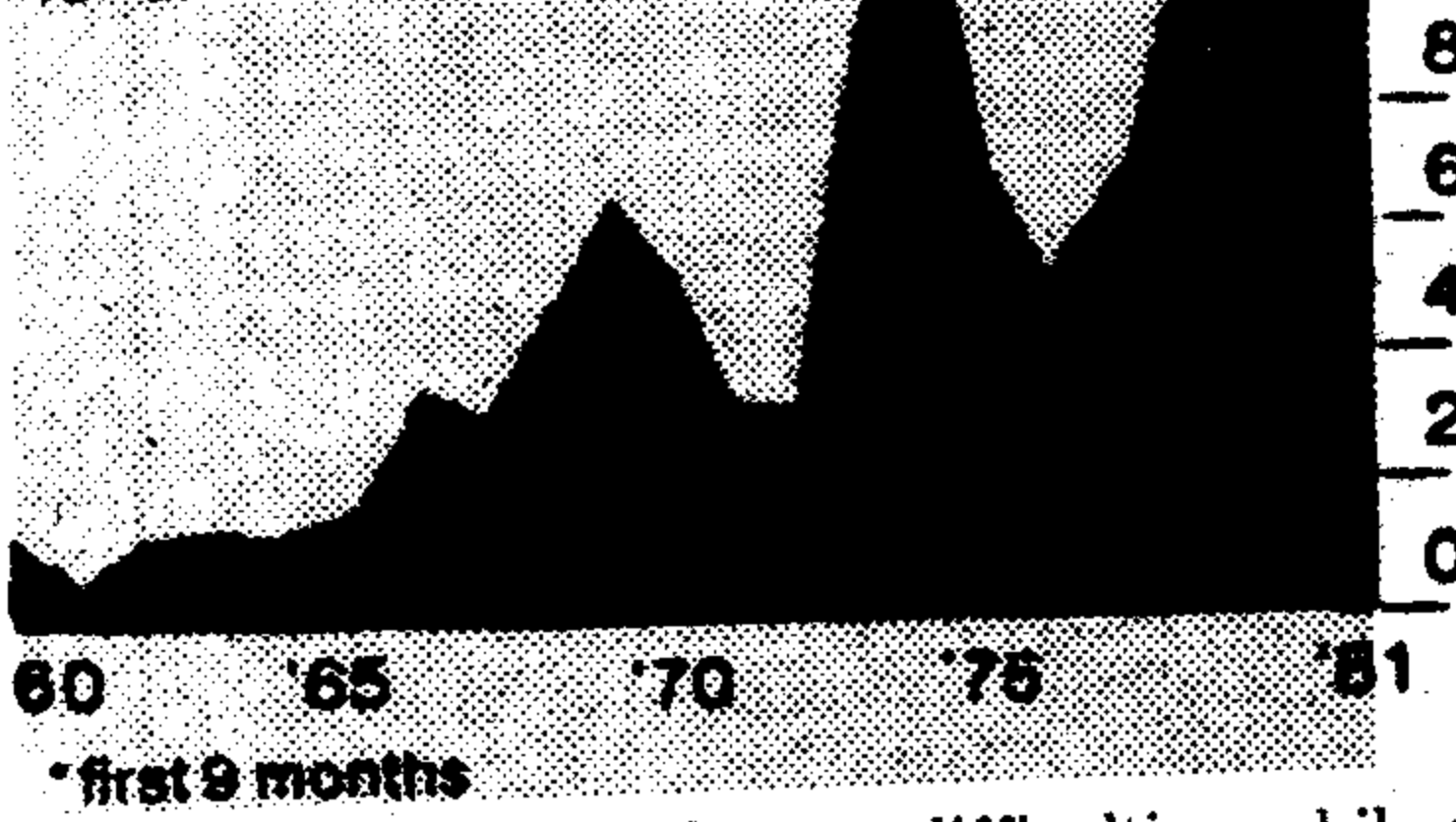


the last decade is that real wages have fallen almost continuously.

Measured in terms of dollars with the purchasing power they would have had in 1977, real average take home pay of American workers has fallen from \$165 a week in 1967 to \$147 in 1981. Workers have been able to maintain their standard of living only because more members of working class families have got jobs during that period

Inflation

Percent change from previous year in the Consumer Price Index for urban areas



and because working class families have gone deeper into debt.

The experience of American capitalism since the beginning of the 1970s is so clearly qualitatively different from the previous decades of boom that a search is going on among economists for a new name to call it — especially if they don't like the apocalyptic implications of the

name 'capitalist crisis'.

The most common new name is 'stagflation'; another economist has called the 'zero-growth economy'; another, the 'zero-sum economy', implying that if one sector of the population is to get more another has to get less; the most recent neologism is 'slowth'.

Euphemisms

The Chief Executive of the ailing Chrysler Corporation, Lee Iacocca, doesn't go so much for the euphemisms of the social scientists: his opinion is that "free enterprise has gone to hell".

the worst of the story, since in many ways the American economy in the last decade has behaved as two. One is the relatively booming economy of the 'sunbelt' states of the South and South-West, into which capital has been pouring in search of cheaper, non-unionised labour and a political atmosphere which imposes less controls on its ability to pollute the physical environment. These states have done much better than the national average in terms of growth and unemployment.

And so the states of the 'frostbelt', the region of traditional industrialisation, have done correspondingly worse.

It is in some of the big, long-industrialised, northern cities that the economic and social problems of American capitalism are most acute. Unemployment is higher than average, in some cases already reaching the levels of the 1930s. Houses are scarce and deteriorating.

Gentrified

As neighbourhoods are indiscriminately 'gentrified', rent controls are abolished, and old tenants evicted in favour of new owner-occupiers, housing for the poor becomes increasingly difficult. And the fiscal crisis which has hit most of the northern cities in the last decade has resulted in a drastic and visible drop in the standards of all public services.

Reagan's policies seem rapidly to be exacerbating all that. Higher interest rates put home buying out of the reach of everyone except the rich and there are few new houses being built. Meanwhile the squeeze on public services is beginning to make the pips squeak.

Strike

School classes grow bigger and teachers are laid off (circumstances which led to the recent 50 day partially successful teachers' strike in Philadelphia, and the near strike in Boston). Garbage lies uncollected for weeks in the broken-glass-paved streets; fire services decline; urban violent crime rises; public transport becomes less frequent and so more crowded, less reliable and more dangerous.

And with the roads busier than ever, and less frequently repaired and maintained than ever, many urban highways, especially in the East, begin to resemble the Grand Canyon in the West.

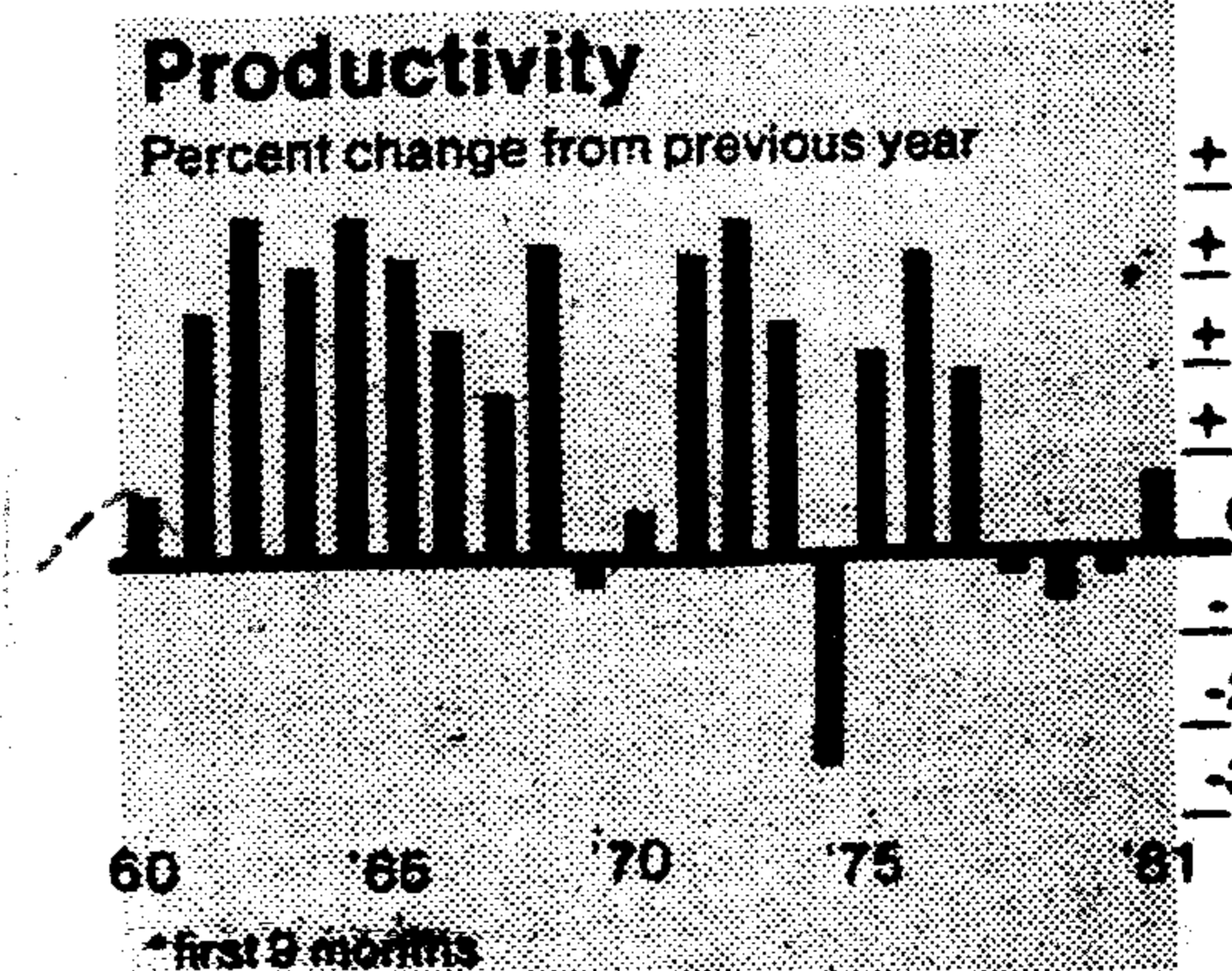
our difficulties, while stable growth enhances all our possibilities".

National figures show that stable growth in America now seems to be a dream of the past. Kissinger's nightmare is the reality, and it has woken up the American ruling class in a cold sweat of panic.

The overall national averages for growth and unemployment do not tell

Productivity

Percent change from previous year



PATCO strikes

Unequal

Just as in E sections of the are disproportionate Unemployment the northern there it is especially for women, for young people

Detroit, the US motor industry 70 per cent of jobs over the decades. Unemployment much higher than national average three Detroit some form of assistance. In New ten people are and for teenagers is one in three

As in Europe being especially by economic Many of the women, in health for instance in the firing American families maintained standards over years of falling by married jobs in the service sector those jobs are lost.

Blacks have relative economic advantage in the days of not getting a in Britain, recession are worse. National unemployment

S AMERICA

Bob Sutcliffe begins a survey of Reagan's America, with an analysis of the economic crisis. The survey will be continued with further articles in future issues of Socialist Organiser.



neath them all — a long-term, persistent and significant fall in the profitability of just about every major industry.

The recent fall in the rate of profit in the United States has not been as precipitous as it has been in Britain or in Italy; but nearly every economic study of the question supports the conclusions that there has been a major fall in profits. The best study of the US rate of profit shows the average rate of profit was a quarter lower in the 1970s than it had been in the 1960s.

The decline has been uneven and erratic, and has gone in cycles. But while there have been ups as well as downs, the worrying thing for American capitalists is that the low point in each cycle has been distinctly worse than its predecessor.

Worst

The worst period of slide in the profit rate was from around 9 per cent in the mid-1960s to a fraction over 3 per cent in 1975. Since then the rate has climbed feebly back to 4 per cent, but in the present recession it threatens to plunge to a new low figure, possibly not very far from zero.

Many of the recently announced financial results of major companies have been very dramatic. Only two of the major airlines (Delta and National) seem capable of making a profit. Even those that expected to be helped by the forced cutback of traffic resulting from the PATCO strike are reportedly having second thoughts.

The four main automobile companies lost a total of \$1½ billion in the third quarter of 1981. Automobile production was 26 per cent lower than a year earlier: the lowest level in 23 years.

For American industry as a whole profit margins (profits as a share of the value of sales) dropped by about 25 per cent over the last two years.

As the problems of sharp recession are added to long term profit decline, nothing, it seems, has the power to protect capitalists from falling profitability. Selling basic necessities doesn't seem to be the answer, since Woolworths' profits last year fell by 62 per cent. And, since the earnings of the Playboy corporation are also down by 20 per cent, perhaps the peddling of sexual fantasy doesn't help either.

Dress

In Britain it is rumoured that the dress habits of Lady Diana Spencer have improved the fortunes of the taffeta gown and frilly hat industries. It is possible that the purveyors of materials for Nancy Reagan's notoriously extravagant lifestyle may also have reaped benefits.

But for the most part, faced with falling profits, businesses in America, as in Britain, have been getting deeper into debt. Increasing debt seems logical to capitalists if they expect good times to be round the corner. But when the decline in profit is sustained, then a day of reckoning has to come.

Business indebtedness to banks in the US has gone

up to well over \$70 billion — a 10 per cent rise on a year ago, though business earnings are down over the same period. As a result the number of business failures is also going up. The value of businesses going bankrupt went up from \$2.7 billion in 1979 to \$6.5 billion this year.

Austerity

The financial problems of both corporations and individuals have been placing greater strains on America's banking system. The last major recession, after the 1973-4 oil price crisis, resulted in an ominous number of bank failures in the US. 27 banks failed between 1974 and 1976, some of them quite large (though relatively speaking all US domestic banks are tiny compared with their European counterparts).

Now once again galloping recession is accompanied by growing talk of imminent bank failures: the Greenwich Savings Bank (the seventh largest of its kind in the US) is bankrupt and is at present being bailed out with the help of the Federal Government.

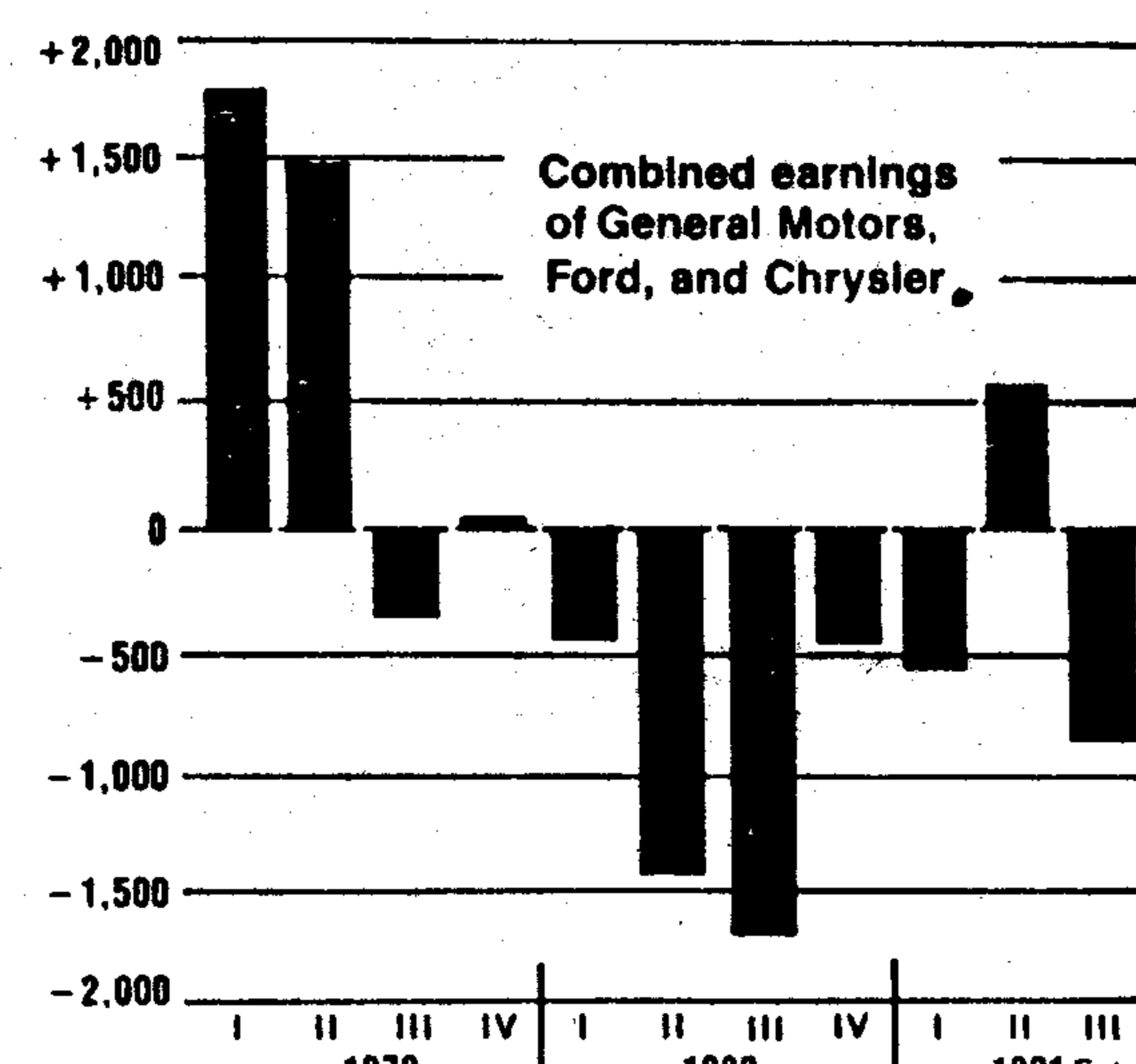
Recently the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company (one of New York's giant international banks) had to rescue a group of bankrupt New York City Savings Banks.

In addition, the number of mortgages in arrears has doubled over the last two years.

Bank

All this does not mean that a major financial crash is imminent in America, to match the crashes of 1929 or 1933 when every bank in the country closed down.

But even in the most sober financial circles the



possibility of financial disasters is increasingly openly discussed. That is not surprising since those measurable aspects of the financial and economic systems which are believed to have contributed to previous financial cyclones — high interest rates, high debt relative to income and liquidity, the growth of business failures, fears of recession — are all worse than they were in 1974-75; and in most cases worse by far than they were in 1929.

From Keynes to Reagan

Since the Kennedy administration in the early 1960s, US governments have been conscious that the fall in profitability, and its financial consequences, are something basic to the health of American capitalism.

Kennedy and Johnson (1960-68) aimed to use forms of Keynesian state

spending policies to improve profitability while at the same time meeting some visible social needs.

Nixon (1968-74) still to some extent continued this 'consensus'. It was after all Nixon who is alleged to have said, 'We are all Keynesians now'. (Though later evidence suggests this should have read: 'We are all [two expletives deleted] Keynesians now')

But Nixon, like so many other governments of the same epoch, experimented with wage and price controls when government spending policies did not seem to stem the decline. Carter (1976-80) initiated a conscious policy of austerity, mostly for the working class, as a way of improving the position of the capitalists.

But, in comparison with the new Reagan administration, all of these predecessors had an attitude towards the problems which now, in comparison, looks half-hearted.

From the beginning the Reagan administration has

seen the problems of American capitalism excluded as insufficient capital investment resulting in insufficient profitability. The fall in the rate of profit is specifically highlighted in the administration's first outline of economic plan as the central problem (along with inflation) which has to be solved.

As the next article shows, the fervour of determination with which the Reagan government seems to approach its aim is not matched by consistency and political practicality either of its proposals.



Carter

der in chains

around 15 per cent, compared with about 7 per cent for whites.

But among blacks and whites, it is young people whose situation nearly everywhere is far worse than that of older workers. About one fifth of American post-school teenagers are without jobs; and the figure for black teenagers is over one half. There are many cities in which for young blacks (for women even more than men) a regular job has become an impossible dream.

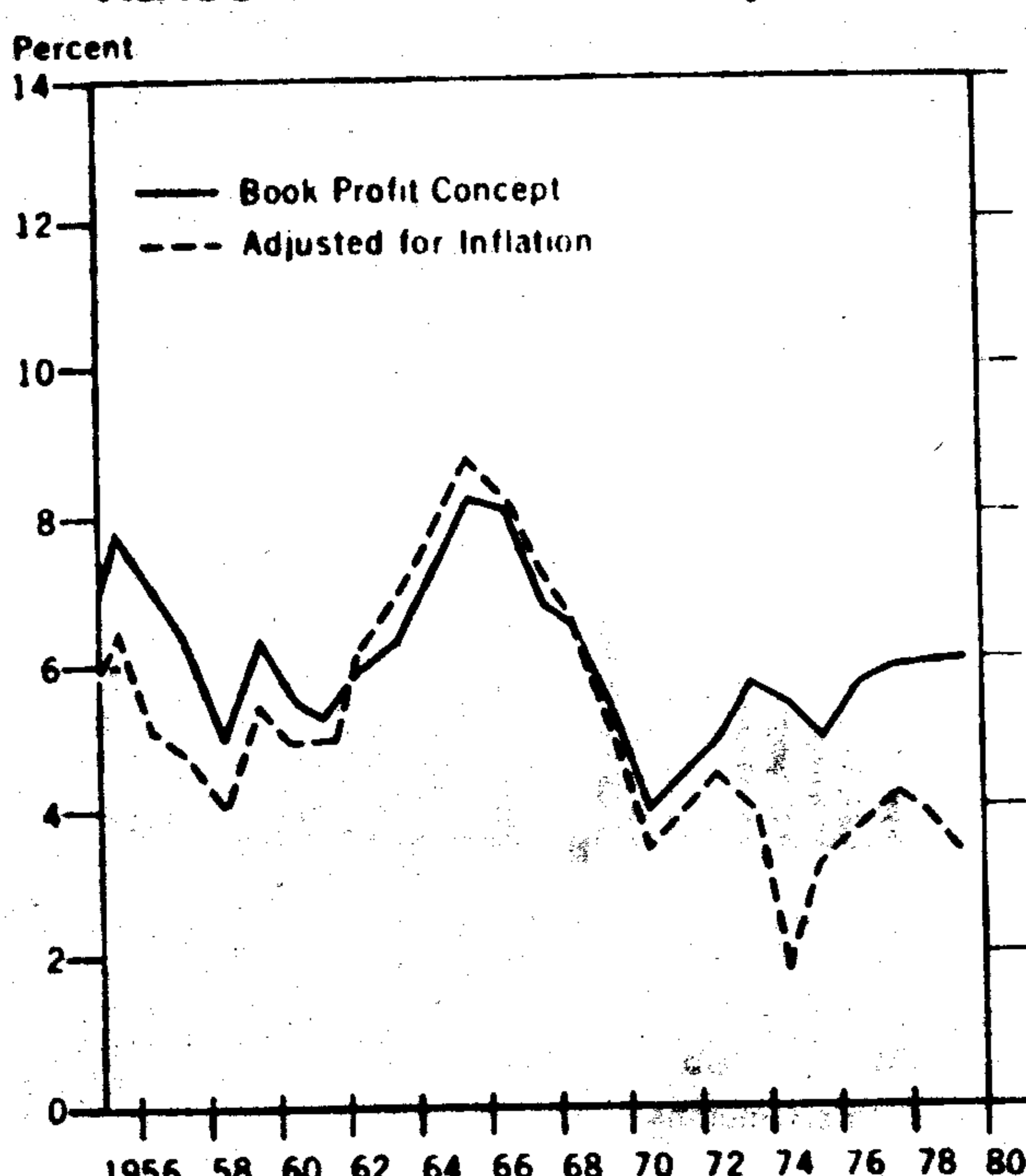
The New York Times recently ran a series of articles attempting to probe into the reasons why there had not been a social rebellion

in America's big northern cities last summer. The author ended up quite perplexed about the reasons why it had not happened — all the conditions for it seemed more than fulfilled.

The fall in profits

Unemployment, inflation and urban decay are among the many symptoms of economic crisis which anyone can see. What is more difficult to see is something which lies be-

Rates of Return on Capital



dens

tain, some population

Some of the

women are

ve suffered

REAGAN'S WORLD

AS 1981 closes, President Reagan has told US citizens to quit Libya, US forces have been massed in Egypt, and strong threats are being made.

Since Reagan took office in January, his aim has been to reassert the USA's role as world policeman, and its power and ability to intervene militarily.

Soon after taking office in January, he published a plan for massive increases in military spending — from \$171 billion in fiscal 1981 to \$367.5 billion in 1986.

Assault

Some groundwork had already been laid in the 'Carter Doctrine', announced after the revolution in Iran. 'Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States. It will be repelled by use of any means necessary, including military force'.

Following the Russian invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979, Carter proposed the 200,000-strong Rapid Deployment Force, and the US established new bases in Egypt and other Middle East countries. RDF commander Lt-Gen Kelley told the press he



was 'convinced of the utility of a pre-emptive strike ... once you get a force into an area that is not occupied by the other guy, then you have changed the whole calculus of the crisis'.

But Reagan has stepped up the arms drive.

On August 19, US planes shot down two Libyan planes just off the coast of Libya, in an obviously-staged show of strength. Reagan's budget boosted military aid to El Salvador from \$13 to \$65 million, and the Reagan administration has refused to rule out military action against the radical Sandinista government in Nicaragua.

Military aid generally has been pushed up, and advanced AWACS plans are being sold to Saudi Arabia, in an effort to create another well-armed state sympathetic to the USA in the crucial Middle East area.

Aid to and military cooperation with Turkey have been increased despite [or perhaps because of] the military coup and the suppression of political parties and trade unions there.

In October a detailed arms programme was announced, to include 190 MX missiles, 100 B-1 bombers, and 3,000 new Cruise missiles. Reagan had already announced in August that he would go ahead with the neutron bomb.

The neutron bomb is part of a new US/NATO strategy of 'limited nuclear war' according to which the US or NATO will START a nuclear war if a conventional conflict seems to be going against them. The new strategy is not Reagan's — indeed, Dennis Healey had a leading role in devising it.

But Reagan has announced it more aggressively than ever. In October he said he could envisage nuclear war [in Europe] without the US getting involved. In November deputy Alexander Haig followed this up with the idea of the US firing 'warning shot' with nuclear weapons.

Threats

Against these threats the biggest anti-war movement yet has developed in Europe, with specially-organised demonstrations in Germany, Belgium, Holland and Britain. If the anti-war movement can link up with the organised working class, in a fight to defeat the warmongers by overthrowing them, we can stop the war drive yet.



Not victory but hope

Ian Swindale reviews Jim Allen's TV play 'United Kingdom', directed by Roland Joffe

KATH IS a housewife, mother and Labour councillor. She and her colleagues have defied government spending cuts; they have been disqualified and face a surcharge. A government-appointed commissioner is about to arrive in town to take over the administration of local government.

They are determined to continue their resistance, and mobilise the working class in their defence.

Rap

Dennis is unemployed. He is Kath's husband — a former militant who has felt so let down by his fellow workers in the past that he now despairs of the coming struggle.

Kath is wasting her time. She can't win, and will end up taking the rap in the

end, just like he did. And anyway she is so busy that she is neglecting the children!

The conflict between Kath and Dennis is one of the strands in 'United Kingdom', which portrays an episode of class struggle with great vividness.

Tapes

The disqualified councillors form themselves into an action committee together with supporters from the local trade unions, and organise to prevent the commissioner from carrying out his work. NALGO members run one set of the computer tapes on which the council's financial records are kept, in order to ensure that council workers' wages are paid, while the other set of tapes is shut up in the

strike-bound town hall.

Police attempts to seize these tapes are foiled by an angry crowd, and the tapes are spirited away.

In the action committee meetings — taped by the Special Branch from an upstairs room — many groups of trade unionists, particularly those who owe their jobs to the council's determined stand, pledge their support to the 'Council in Exile'.

The middle class Left Labour MP, brilliantly played by Rosemary Martin, arrives to tell the Action Committee that she's doing all she can — asking questions in the House, going on TV, talking to the press... But she is told that the rank and file elected the Labour and trade union leaders, and now those leaders are doing nothing!

Meanwhile, Kath and

Dennis are nearing breaking point. Their 11 year old son is stopped by security guards in a shopping precinct. His mates run off, dropping stolen goods as they flee, and soon the police are knocking at the door wanting him to name names.

Furious row

Kath, having satisfied herself that her son is innocent, tells the police to leave. Dennis argues that he doesn't want his son to grow up like the other kids on the estate — playing truant and ending up in borstal. In an angry confrontation with his son,

he tries to obtain the names of the other youngsters.

A furious row breaks out.

Can't stop

Kath argues that it is not possible for their son to have a future if they are not prepared to fight the system. She tells Dennis that she can't stop fighting, and in a moment of beautiful irony she bursts out, "I learned all this from you in the first place".

Extremists

The next time the police come — to arrest Kath herself — it is Dennis who takes a hard line against them.

The changing role of the police forms the other main strand in Jim Allen's play, with Colin Welland playing the local Chief Constable, McBride.

For McBride, the growing success of a handful of extremists in subverting the state is forcing the police — unfortunately — to change their methods.

Strong

Against the advice of a more liberally minded colleague, McBride is anxious to take action against the councillors and is seen to be strong in the face of their 'illegal' actions. Eventually he abandons his

plans for conspiratorial charges in favour of the charges — the computer tapes — the police begin to pull in the councillors one by one.

Barricades

The scene is set for the final confrontation. The workers decide to put up the barricades. Dennis is finally convinced that he must join the struggle, and helps to build them.

The Left MP has returned to London, the union official pulls out, and the workers on a council estate, behind makeshift barricades, must face the boss government and their state.

In reply to his colleague remark that this isn't a riot, McBride replies, "They're not the same as me".

The point is clear enough. The police storm the barricades and Dennis is seen struggling with a dozen cops. McBride goes on TV to declare once again the police for themselves in the middle and to commend his men for their actions.

Hope

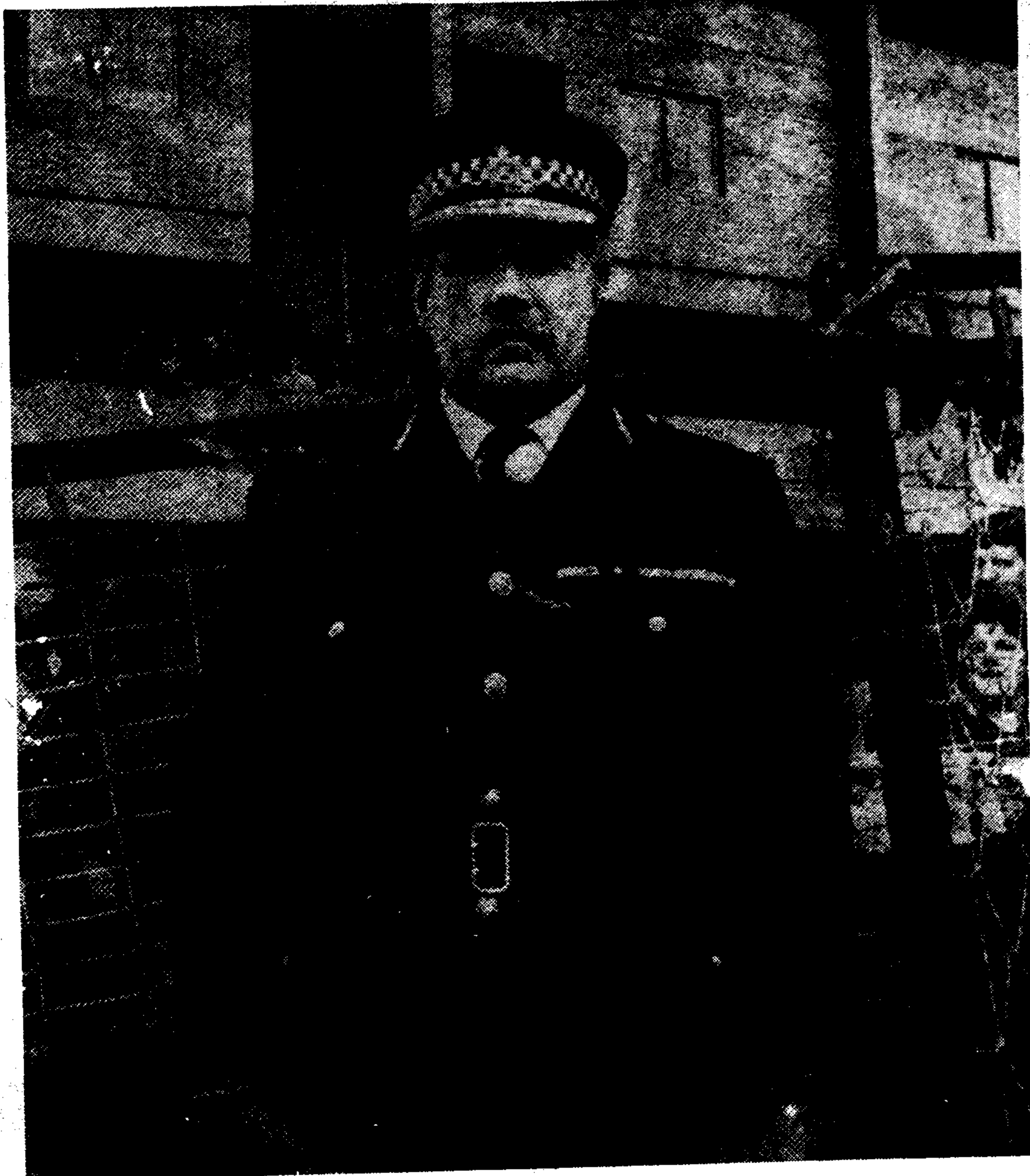
There is never victory, hope for the future.

Day after the barricades stormed, the council and rank and file trade unionists explain to the reporters how much they have learned from struggle and how future generations will learn question authority.

While it is undoubtedly true that workers learn more in days of struggle than in years of collaboration, the solution is surely not just educating future generations. The play — so true in many ways — could even relate the betrayal of the struggle at national level to the need to continue the fight for accountability.

Angry

Jim Allen's declared apparently is "to bed angry". I'm sure once again he has succeeded in that. I wonder Michael Foot was that night?



Strands in the play: the Chief Constable adopting new methods (left), the left wing Labour councillor resisting her husband's cynicism (right), and the workers fighting the cuts

SCIENCE



THE LAST 6 months in Spain have seen the unfolding of a gigantic public health disaster. 200 have died from the effects of adulterated olive oil, while 16,000 are recognised as suffering from a toxic syndrome (TS), a collection of ills including some or all of the following — nerve and muscle disorders leading to weakness, paralysis and weight loss, difficulty with breathing, skin damage and increased numbers of white blood

cells (whose normal job it is to get rid of foreign substances in the body). Delay in identifying the source of TS may have been fatal. The Spanish Health Ministry was convinced that a virus infection was responsible and sacked one doctor who said publicly he thought it was something in the diet. It is now generally accepted that industrial rape seed oil carried the poison that caused TS. Capitalists, who were more unscrup-

200 die from poisoned oil

by Les Hearn

ulous than usual, imported the oil, removed the blue aniline dye marking it as inedible, mixed it with olive and other oils and sold it as 'pure'. This has gone on for years without trouble, but one supplier must have modified the 'refinement' process so that some of the aniline combined with the oil to form various anilides. There is a big market for cut-price 'olive' oil and millions of poor and working class Spaniards

must have consumed the poisonous stuff (it was sold door-to-door and in street markets, as well as being used in street cafes and workers' canteens). Luckily, only a small proportion of consumers got TS, but it is a nasty illness. The toxic anilides probably end up in cell membranes where they are found by the white blood cells, which detect them as foreign substances. The immune system comes into play, producing more white

blood cells which attack the cells with the anilides in them. The body turns in on itself, destroying vital tissues that cannot be replaced. The anilides then float round before sticking to other cells.

There is no cure for toxic syndrome, though the symptoms can be reduced. The death rate is quite low but permanent disability for thousands seems likely.

Prison

Several company directors are now languishing in prison (probably the safest place for them!). Most importers claim that they sold it for industrial use only, but it's rather suspicious that imports should rise

while the metal industry (the only legitimate user of rape seed oil) is in recession. In any case, if you sell inedible rape seed oil to an edible oil company, you can't claim you don't know what they're going to do with it! Not all adulterated oils contain the poison but some have been found to contain dangerous colourings and cancer-causing chemicals instead.

Meanwhile, thousands of Spaniards are paying hundreds of pounds in medical costs (no NHS there!), while the government drags its feet. Welfare payments and death grants have only recently become available (£17,000 for a death — plus £5,000 extra for a head of household).

Associations of toxic victims (who demonstrate with the slogan "Government, assassins") these figures are paltry. The quest for justice has been hampered by the judge who denied bonds of £55,000 each of 11 victims' citations filing 'poison actions'. These victims working class and people, many dependent on charity or neighbourly help for months. can't pay.

Comrades interested in forming a Socialist Ciser Science Group (pronounced) are asked to contact c/o SO, 28 Middle London N8.

'THE MOVEMENT OF THE MAJORITY'

THE same people who defend Official Secrecy, the House of Lords, and the monarchy, and who readily respond to 'extra-parliamentary' pressures from the City and the IMF, now accuse the left wing campaigners for democracy of being anti-democratic!

But the issue for Marxists is not the desirability of using and extending parliamentary democracy, but whether it is possible for the majority to win major social change without a violent extraparlimentary backlash from the ruling class; and whether the working class can and must, in the struggle, develop a higher form of democracy than the present parliamentary system.

A minority coup by the Left would be impossible to achieve (because all the levers for minority power — armed force, the press, the central bureaucratic apparatus, etc — are in the hands of our enemies), ridiculous to attempt, and anyway contrary to our basic principle that 'the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself'.

In 1941 socialists in the USA faced similar charges to those levelled against the left today. Then they were courtroom charges, against 28 members of the Socialist Workers' Party, of 'conspiring to overthrow the government by violence' etc. 18 were found guilty and jailed.

One of them, James P Cannon, in his court testimony, gave a classic explanation of the true relation of Marxism and democracy. We reprint excerpts, starting with Cannon's reply on the nature of a future socialist government.

We think it will be the most democratic government from the point of view of the great masses of the people that has ever existed, far more democratic, in the real essence of the matter, than the present bourgeois democracy in the United States.

accompanied or not accompanied by violence?

It is the opinion of all Marxists that it will be accompanied by violence.

Why?

That is based, like all Marxist doctrine, on a study of history, the historical experiences of mankind in the numerous changes of society from one form to another, the revolutions which accompanied it, and the resistance which the outlived classes invariably put up against the new order. Their attempt to defend themselves against the new order, or to suppress by violence the movement for the new order, has resulted in every important social transformation being accompanied by violence.

Now what is the opinion of Marxists with reference to the change in the social order, as far as its being



The Petrograd workers' council, 1917

When we set up the Workers' and Farmers' government in this country, the functioning of this government, its tasks, its whole nature, will be so profoundly and radically different from the functions the tasks and nature of the bourgeois state, that we will have to replace it all along the line. From the very beginning the workers' state has a different constitution and it is different in all respects. It has to create an entirely new

apparatus, a new state apparatus from top to bottom. That is what we mean.

Do you mean that there will be no Congress or House of Representatives and Senate?

It will be a different kind of Congress. It will be a Congress of representatives of workers and soldiers and farmers, based on their occupational units, rather than the present form based on territorial representation.

Who, in the opinion of Marxists initiated that violence?

Always the ruling class: always the outlived class that doesn't want to leave the stage when the time has come. They want to hang on to their privileges, to reinforce them by violent measures, against the rising majority and they run up against the mass violence of the new class, which history has ordained shall come to power.

What is the opinion of Marxists, as far as winning a majority of the people to Socialist ideas?

Yes, that is certainly the aim of the party. That is the aim of the Marxist movement, has been from its inception. Marx said the social revolution of the proletariat — I think I can quote his exact words from memory — "is a movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority". He said this in distinguishing it from previous revolutions which had been made in the interest of minorities, as was the case in France in 1789.

What would you say is the opinion of Marxists as far as the desirability of a peaceful transition is concerned?

The position of Marxists is that the most economical and preferable, the most desirable method of social transformation, by all means, is to have it done peacefully.

And in the opinion of Marxists, is that absolutely excluded?

Well, I wouldn't say absolutely excluded. We say that the lessons of history don't show any important examples in favour of the idea so that you can count on it.

Can you give examples in American history of a minority refusing to submit to a majority?

I can give you a very important one. The conception of the Marxists is that, even if the transfer of political power from the capitalists to the proletariat is accomplished peacefully, then the minority, the exploiting capitalist class, will revolt against the new regime, no matter how legally it is established.

I can give you an example in American history. The American Civil War resulted from the fact that the Southern slaveholders couldn't reconcile themselves to the legal parliamentary victory of Northern capitalism, the election of President Lincoln.

Can you give us an example outside of America where a reactionary minority revolted against a majority in office?

Yes, in Spain — the coalition of workers' and liberal

parties in Spain got an absolute majority in the elections and established the People's Front government. This government was no sooner installed than it was faced by an armed rebellion, led by the reactionary capitalists of Spain.

Do you believe you can accomplish the control or acquisition, shall we say, of governmental power by being elected to it?

We can accomplish it if we are not interfered with by violence on the part of the capitalists.

You mean, the capitalists are not going to let you get elected?

When we say that it is an illusion to expect that we can effect the social transformation by parliamentary action, that doesn't mean that we don't want to do it, or that we wouldn't gladly accept such a method. We don't believe, on the basis of our knowledge of history, and on the basis of our knowledge of the greed and rapacity of the American ruling class, that they will permit that kind of action.



Chile: parliamentary road to... army terror



BY GERRY BYRNE

AS the dust beneath 5,000 beds is stirred in a flurry of red-hunting by the Walworth Rd. inquisitors, the question on everyone's lips is: who or what are they after? Will they find them in the bedrooms, committee rooms, camouflaged with jumble at the local Party's Christmas fete?

We want the extraparlamentarians, the mobile demo-merchants, the OrgSub men say.

You mean like this: "There is an alternative... that is the message Labour will be hammering home — in the factories, on the streets, in demonstrations, in Parliament, yes everywhere. Let us recreate a sense of socialist vision and comradeship!"

Tatchell? Benn? Actually Michael Foot's New Year message to the Labour Party 1981.

Do we burn him now or later?

Hang on, say the tinpot Torquemadas (Foot's phrase again, I'm afraid), it's not so much that 'they' (the subversives, the narrow, intolerant faction) are organising outside Parliament as against Parliament. The point is that they are out to subvert

parliamentary democracy.

You mean like this, then:

"To accept his argument would mean that the Queen's First Minister was being asked to ring down the curtain on parliamentary democracy by accepting the doctrine that an election in Britain was a farce, that the British people could not make a choice between policies and that policies were directed from outside the country, mainly by people who did not understand Britain and relied for their information upon the advice of people whose motives varied from ignorance to malice!"

We got them, then! Caught in the act of black-mailing the Prime Minister, mobilising sinister outside forces to undermine the democratic choice of the majority. Racks at the ready, who are they? Name names!

The writer is Harold Wilson. The time the early months of the 1964 Labour Government. He is speaking of the Governor of the Bank of England, and behind him the international speculators who had plunged the country into a sterling crisis.

You couldn't ask for a

clearer confession of subversion of Parliament. Perhaps that's too long ago and far away. What then of the last Labour government and the £1 billion cuts and wage freeze dictated by the IMF? Where were the leaders of the PLP to stand up to that particular extraparlimentary pressure? (Answer: on their knees).

Or the still extant (99 years old and kicking) Lord Denning, who not only believes election manifestos are so much confetti, but also that the judiciary have the right to overrule Parliament in the interest of the 'nation'. One could go on to the military and police chiefs with similar views. The civil service...

The list is long and ugly. The narrow-minded defenders of class privilege all have their apologists (and sometimes, hirelings) among the PLP, whose tolerance is quite elastic in a rightward direction but liable to snap at the merest mention of accountability.

Can we expect the Footings to bring these 'subversives' to justice?

FRANCE'S President Mitterrand has called a halt to the government's programme of nationalisation. He says there will be no more nationalisation for the rest of his seven year stint as President.

Recently finance minister Jacques Delors called for a 'pause' on all reform programmes. Prime Minister Pierre Mauroy rebuffed Delors, saying reform would go ahead. Mitterrand's formula seems to be the government's agreed compromise.

The reason Mitterrand

gives is that employers are confused about "the rules of the game" because of the amount of new legislation.

The truth is nothing of the kind: the employers want the programme of nationalisation to stop and are threatening economic sabotage — an investment strike — if they don't get their way.

They have found that by screaming loudly they can get as good service for a Socialist Party government as from the previous right-wing governments.

Did anyone say 'extraparlimentary pressure'?

Ruth Lawrence, at the age of 10, has just become the youngest person ever to be accepted by Oxford University. Let's hope she doesn't follow in the footsteps of the previous youngest student there and make another record: as the youngest ever unemployed graduate.

John Nunn played chess at 3, did quadratic equations at 4, O levels at 12, As at 14 (Daily Mail at 93?)

Before his 15th birthday he was accepted by Oriel College, Oxford, where he got a first class degree followed by a doctorate at 21.

Now, aged 26, he's unemployed. Mrs. Nunn commented: "He was so dedicated. Every vacation he would spend each day working on his maths. Now it's rather sad. He spends his time leafing through the Higher Education Supplement to see if there are any jobs".

That's capitalism for you, reward for effort and all that.

MARXISM AND DEMOCRACY

On page 11 we print extracts from the classic explanation of Marxists' attitude to democracy given by the US socialist James P Cannon in a political trial during World War 2.

The labour movement is profoundly attached to the democratic system that it has itself helped to win and deepen. And the notion that this is the best of all possible democratic systems is helped by the terrible contrast of Stalinist totalitarianism. Thus right-wingers who help to preserve Official Secrecy, the House of Lords, the monarchy, and who oppose accountability in the Labour Party, can try to brand socialists who fight for a more democratic system than the present one as anti-democrats!

Cannon's testimony was criticised by some others on the Left as insufficiently radical. Responding in a pamphlet ('Defence Policy in the Minneapolis Trial') Cannon gave a masterly summary of the actual substance of Marxist theory on democracy, violence and majority rule — showing how they refute the right wing's charges.

We can only find space for one section of the pamphlet, Chapter 5, "Submitting to the Majority."

Why we 'submit to the majority'

COMRADE Munis* is dissatisfied with our assertions at the trial that "we submit to the majority". The Oehlerites** also are scornful of this declaration and represent it as some kind of capitulatory repudiation of our principles in order to impress the jury. All of these assumptions are without foundation.

Our 'submission to the majority' was not first revealed at the trial. We said it before the trial and continue to repeat it after the trial. It is a correct statement of our position because it conforms both to reality and necessity. Moreover, our Marxist teachers said it before us; we learned it from them.

Minority

What else can we do but 'submit to the majority' if we are Marxists, and not Blanquists† or anarchist muddle-heads? It is a timely occasion to probe into this question because we believe any ill-considered talk about some kind of mysterious 'action', presumed to be open to us while we remain not only a minority, but a very small, numerically insignificant minority, can lead only to a dangerous disorientation of the party.

An exposition of the Marxist position on this question can also be useful as an antidote for any remnants of the half-Blanquist tradition of the early years of the Comintern in America.

The pioneer communists in the United States (and not only here) heard of the Bolshevik victory in Russia long before they learned about the political method and propaganda techniques whereby the Bolsheviks gained the mass support which made the seizure of power possible. Their first impressions were undoubtedly coloured by the capitalist press accounts which represented the revolution as a coup d'état engineered by a small group.

This distorted conception was epitomised by the title given to the American edi-

tion of Trotsky's classic pamphlet, 'Terrorism and Communism', which was published here by the party's publishing house in 1922 under the completely misleading title, 'Dictatorship versus Democracy'. We took the 'dictatorship', so to speak, and generously handed over to the bourgeoisie all claim to 'democracy'.

This was far too big a concession, perhaps pardonable in a young movement lacking adequate knowledge about the democratic essence of the Bolshevik programme, but by far out of date today.

The bourgeoisie have always tried to picture communism as a 'criminal conspiracy' in order to alienate workers who are profoundly democratic in their sentiments. That was the aim once again in the Minneapolis trial. It was our task at the trial to go out of our way to refute this misrepresentation and emphasise the democratic basis of our programme; not in order to placate our enemies and persecutors, as is assumed, but in order to reveal the truth to our friends, the American workers.

We cannot eat our cake and have it too. We must either 'submit' to the majority and confine ourselves to propaganda designed to win over the majority — or, we must seize power, more correctly, try to seize power and break the neck of the party, by minority 'action'.

Winning

Marxist authority is clear and conclusive in choosing between these alternatives. When we took our stand in court regarding 'submission' to the majority we were not 'folding our arms' and making 'opportunistic' statements of 'passivity in the face of imperialist war', as we are accused. Nothing of the sort. The testimony states, repeatedly, and with sufficient emphasis, that, while 'submitting to the majority' — that is, making no minority insurrections or

putsches — we are organising, speaking, writing, and 'explaining'; in other words, carrying on propaganda with the object of winning over the majority to our programme, which is the programme of social revolution.

Neither were we simply trying to 'make an honourable impression on the jury without taking into consideration that we should talk for the masses'. To be sure we did not stupidly disregard the jury which held the fate of 28 comrades, not to mention the legality of the party, in its hands. But we were speaking also, and especially, 'for the masses'.

We testified primarily for publication. It was our deliberate aim to convince those who would read the testimony in printed form of the truth that the proletarian movement which we aspire to lead is a democratic movement, and not a 'conspiracy', as the prosecutor and the whole of the capitalist press would picture it, and as loose talkers would unconsciously aid them to so picture it; not a scheme to transfer power from one clique to another, but a movement of the majority in the interest of the majority.

In addition, it may as well be said candidly that this testimony was also deliberately designed as an educational shock to such members and sympathisers of our movement as may still, at this late day, be dabbling with the idea of a shorter cut to socialism by some mysterious prescription for 'action'.

Marx and workers' democracy

The Marxist authorities have all spoken in one voice on this question.

The Communist Manifesto, the first, and the most fundamental statement of the principles of scientific socialism, defined the proletarian movement of emancipation, in contradistinction to all others in history, as follows:

"All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority."

The communist political method and strategy follow ineluctably from this basic premise. Nowhere and never have the authoritative representatives of Marxism formulated the question otherwise. The Marxists aim to make the social transformation with the majority and not for the

majority. The irreconcilable struggle of Marx and Engels against the Blanquists revolved around this pivot.

In 1895, summing up the experience of fifty years, Engels wrote, in his Introduction to Marx's 'Class Struggles in France':

"The time of surprise attacks, of revolutions carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of the unconscious masses, is past. Where it is a question of a complete transformation of the social organisation, the masses themselves must also be in it, must themselves already have grasped what is at stake, what they are going in for, body and soul. The history of the last fifty years has taught us that"

Lenin against conspiracy

The successors of Marx and Engels followed in their footsteps. The experiences of the Russian revolution confirmed in life the basic premises of scientific socialism. It was precisely because Lenin and Trotsky had assimilated this concept into their flesh and blood that they knew how to concentrate their whole activity on propaganda to win over the majority, bidding their time till they gained the majority, and resorting to 'action' only when they felt assured of the support of the majority.

What did they do in the meantime? They 'submitted to the majority'. What else could they do? Lenin explained it a hundred times, precisely in those months and days when the Bolsheviks were consciously preparing the struggle for power. In his 'April Theses' on 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution', published in Pravda on April 20, 1917, a few days after his return to Russia, Lenin wrote:

"As long as we are in the minority we carry on the work of criticising and exposing errors and at the same time advocate the necessity of transferring the entire power of state to the Soviets of Workers'



Karl Marx



James P Cannon with his comrade Farrell Dobbs, in 1941

Deputies, so that the masses may by experience overcome their mistakes"

A few days later, he returned to this question, explaining the reason for this attitude, the reason being that "we are not Blanquists, we are Marxists". On April 22 he wrote:

"In order to obtain the power of state the class conscious workers must win the majority to their side. As long as no violence is used against the masses, there is no other road to power. We are not Blanquists, we are not in favour of the seizure of power by a minority. We are Marxists, we stand for a proletarian class struggle against chauvinist defensism, phrases, and dependence on the bourgeoisie"

Education

Not once or twice, but repeatedly and almost continually, so that neither friend nor foe could possibly misunderstand him, in the months directly preceding the October revolution, Lenin limited the Bolshevik task to the propaganda work of 'criticising', 'exposing errors', and 'advocating' in order to 'win the majority to their side'. This was not camouflage for the enemy but education for the workers' vanguard. He explained it theoretically as we, following him, tried to explain it in popular language at the trial.

Again, in April 1917, refuting the accusations of Plekhanov and others who accused the Bolsheviks of 'anarchism', 'Blanquism', and so forth, Lenin once again explained the question, for the benefit, as he said, of "those who really want to think and learn". Into a few paragraphs he compresses a profound thesis which every member of the workers' vanguard ought to learn by heart. He wrote:

"I absolutely insured myself in my theses against skipping over the still existing peasant movement, or the petty-bourgeois movement in general, against any PLAYING at 'seizure of power' by a workers' government, against any kind

of Blanquist adventurism; for I directly referred to the experience of the Paris Commune. And this experience, as we know, and as was shown in detail by Marx in 1871 and by Engels in 1891, absolutely excluded Blanquism, absolutely ensured the direct, immediate, and unconditional rule of the majority and the activity of the masses, but only to the extent of the conscious and intelligent action of the majority itself.

"In the theses I definitely reduced the question to one of a struggle for influence within the Soviets of Workers', Agricultural Labourers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. In order to leave no trace of doubt in this respect, I twice emphasised in the theses the necessity for patient and persistent 'explanatory' work 'adapted to the practical needs of the masses'.

"Ignorant persons or renegades from Marxism, such as Mr Plekhanov, may cry anarchism, Blanquism, and so forth. But those who really want to think and learn cannot fail to understand that Blanquism means the seizure of power by a minority, whereas the Soviet of Workers', Agricultural Labourers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies are admittedly the direct and immediate organisation of the majority of the people.

Blunder

"Work confined to a struggle for influence within these Soviets cannot, absolutely cannot, blunder

* Grandizo Munis was a Spanish Trotskyist who later became a spokesperson for the ultra-left group that calls itself the International Communist Current. They consider the existing labour movement as bourgeois, rejecting trade unionism, etc. They publish 'World Revolution' in English.

** Oehlerites were an ex-Trotskyist faction in the US led by Hugo Oehler. They made a principle of proclaiming 'the revolutionary party' no matter how small its numbers and support, and of counterposing it as a supposedly finished institut-

into the swamp of quism. Nor can it be into the swamp of ism, for anarchism the necessity for a state for state power i period of transition the rule of the bour to the rule of the ariat, whereas I, with cision that exclud possibility of mis standing, insist on th essage for a state period, although accordance with Ma the experience of th Commune, not the parliamentary bo state, but a state w standing army, wit police opposed o people, without an dom placed abov people".

Revolution and democracy

Again explaining in 'Marxism differs from Blanquism' — he only considered it a necessary for the workers to understand so as to be sure ground at every st wrote in a letter to the Central Committee of on September 26-27 "To be successful uprising must be based on a conspiracy, party, but on the class. This is the first. "The uprising based on the revolution upsurge of the people is the second point

ion to everything e tially they were 't who were extreme istic and rigid in th ing on general poli tions as well as on and thus parted with Trotsky.

They are the u lged political an organisations like and the SWP † Blanquism was form of rev communism in F term as used here politics of armed ion by a conspira ority who would s for the workers.

Marxism and democracy

Revolution

"The uprising must be based on the crucial point in the history of the maturing revolution, when the activity of the vanguard of the people is at its height, when the vacillations in the ranks of the enemies, and in the ranks of the weak, half-hearted, undecided friends of the revolution are at their highest point. This is the third point.

"It is in pointing out these three conditions as the way of approaching the question of an uprising, that Marxism differs from Blanquism".

Naturally, when Lenin, or any other Marxist, spoke of the necessity of the revolutionary party having the support of the majority, he meant the real majority, whose sentiments are ascertainable in various ways besides the ballot box of the bourgeois state. On the eve of the insurrection he wrote his devastating attack on Zinoviev and Kamenev who opposed the insurrection on the ground, among other things, that "we do not enjoy a majority among the people, and in the absence of that condition insurrection is hopeless".

Lenin, in 'A Letter to the Comrades', written on October 29-30, scornfully dismisses the authors of this statement as "either distorters of the truth or pedants who desire at all



Lenin

costs, without the slightest regard for the true circumstances of the revolution, to have a guarantee in advance that the Bolshevik Party throughout the country has received exactly one half the number of votes plus one". Nevertheless, he took pains to prove the Bolsheviks had the majority by "facts":

"The elections of August 20 in Petrograd... The elections to the Borough Dumas in Moscow in September... The new elections to the Soviets... The majority of the Peasants' Soviets" who had "expressed their opposition to the coalition"... "The mass of the soldiers"... "Finally, the revolt of the peasantry". He concluded his argument on this point by saying: "No, to doubt now that the majority of the people are following and will follow the Bolsheviks is shameful vacillation".

Once again disavowing Blanquism, he wrote in his polemic against Zinoviev and Kamenev:

"A military conspiracy is Blanquism IF it is not organised by the party of a definite class; IF its organisers have not reckoned with the political situation in general and the international situation in particular; IF the party in question does not enjoy the sympathy of the majority of the people, as proved by definite facts".

On September 25-27 Lenin called upon the Bolshevik party to take power. In this famous letter, addressed "to the Central Committee, the Petrograd and Moscow Committees of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party", Lenin, with the logic and directness which characterised him, states his premise and his conclusion in the first sentence:

"Having obtained a majority in the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of both capitals, the Bolsheviks can and must take power into their hands".

'Formal majority'

He was not worried about a 'formal' majority: "no revolution ever waits for this". But he was sure of the real majority. He insisted upon the revolution "right now", as he expressed it, not sooner and not later, because:

"The majority of the people is with us. This has been proven by the long and difficult road from May 19 to August 12 and September 25: the majority in the Soviets of the capitals is the result of the people's progress to our side. The vacillation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and the strengthening of internationalists among them, is proof of the same thing".

The prosecution at the Minneapolis trial attempted to convict us, as charged in the indictment, of an actual "conspiracy to overthrow the government by force and violence". We successfully refuted this accusation, and the indictment covering this point was rejected by the jury.

The most effective element of our refutation of this absurd charge against our small party was our exposition of the democratic basis of the proletarian programme, of the party's reliance on the majority to realise its programme, and its corresponding obligation, while it remains in the minority, to "submit to the majority".

In making this exposition we had a legal purpose, but not only a legal purpose, in mind. As with all the testimony, it was designed primarily to explain and simplify our views and aims to the workers who would be future readers of the published court record.

We also thought a re-statement of the Marxist position in this respect would not be wasted on the members of our own movement, and might even be needed. The discussion which has arisen on this question only proves that we were more correct in this latter assumption than we realised at the time.

Socialism is a democratic movement and its programme, the programme of the vanguard party, can be realised only with the support of the majority. The party's basic task, while it remains in the minority, is "propaganda to win over the majority". To state this was not capitulation to the prejudices of the jury; it is the teaching of Marx and Lenin, as has been shown in the foregoing references.

The resistible rise of the SDP

By Bruce Robinson

DECLARATIONS IN Limehouse, by-election victories, party conferences in three places, Shirley Williams missing trains, Roy Jenkins drinking claret, David Owen being pelted with tomatoes — yes, the SDP has brought a new mood of excitement and expectation into British politics in 1981!

Nobody is quite sure what the SDP represents, but that hasn't stopped its bandwagon collecting votes on a large scale from both Labour and Tory in recent by-elections, and also collecting some of the most creepy Labour right-wingers ever to walk the earth.

The SDP's success seems to have little to do with its policies — which is not surprising as they don't have many. MORI polls of SDP voters taken in Crosby at the time of the by-election show both huge ignorance of what the SDP stands for (for example, only 51 per cent knew that the SDP favoured Britain staying in the EEC), and that their support was based more on negative views about the Tories and Labour than anything positive about the SDP.

The SDP's electoral support is based on its carefully-nurtured 'new' image and 'dynamic' style, together with well-orchestrated support in Fleet Street. As Liberal MP David Penhaligon put it, the SDP-Liberal Alliance represents the "Stuff 'em all Party".

The Sunday Times also referred scathingly to the SDP's appeal as 'moderate chic'.

Protest

Yet the SDP is more than just a 'media party' or a means of registering a protest vote. It represents an articulation of people who feel threatened by the new 'extremism' in British politics, represented both by a shaken-up Labour Party and a Thatcherite government. It reflects a wish to return to the consensus politics of the '50s and '60s, where class conflict could be smoothed over by a limited level of government intervention and spending, and by a certain amount of social reform.

(This is not entirely new. In 1973-4 when Heath was moving towards a show-down with the labour movement, the votes for the Liberals and for the Scottish Nationalists reached levels close to the SDP today. This was reflected in the February 1974 election).

Mould

In this respect, the SDP is deeply conservative. Far from 'breaking the mould of British politics', the SDP represents (except on proportional representation) precisely those policies which formed the mould of British politics for the 25 years after 1950. After all, the Gang of 4 sat in Labour governments for a good part of that time.

Thus the SDP supports incomes policy, enforced by means of taxation on high wage settlements. It supports legal shackles on



Rodgers and Owen — 'moderate chic'

Nov.1979: Roy Jenkins launches a call for a new centre party.

Jan.1981: Wembley Labour Party conference decides on 40-30-30 division of electoral college. Owen's 'one member, one vote' proposal overwhelmingly defeated. The Gang of Four launch the 'Council for Social Democracy'.

March 1981: Williams, Owen, Rodgers, and 11 MPs leave the Labour Party and found the SDP. They are soon joined by Tory MP Brocklebank-Fowler.

Mid-April: SDP claims 43,566 members.

July: Warrington by-election: Williams decides not to run, and Roy Jenkins comes second to Labour with a 33% swing to the SDP.

September: SDP travelling conference. Liberal Assembly agrees to alliance with SDP.

October: Croydon by-election won by SDP-Liberal Alliance on 30% swing.

November: Williams overthrows 19,272 majority in Crosby, winning by over 5,000 votes.

December: Heath declares willingness to join coalition with SDP.

the unions — forcing payment of the political levy onto a contracting-in basis, secret ballots, and protection for scabs who refuse to join a closed shop. It supports continued British membership of the EEC and NATO, and opposes unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Gloss

The radical gloss on this is provided by minor items such as Shirley Williams' alleged willingness to get rid of private education — which she did nothing about in the last Labour government and kept quiet about in Crosby.

The SDP's attachment to proportional representation, its alliance with the Liberals, and its aversion to class conflict, make it a natural party of 'national

government' or some other form of coalition. Add to this their anti-union attitudes and issues that divide left and right in the Labour Party are already raising their heads in the SDP: who should elect the leader, what relationship should exist between the MPs and the party as a whole, and whether sitting MPs should have to face re-selection.

Incompatible

Shortly before the SDP was launched, a group of writers most of whom have now joined the SDP published a collection of essays in memory of Anthony Crosland — in which they sadly concluded that social democracy and free trade unions were incompatible... so free trade unions would have to go.

Middle-class

Not surprisingly, the SDP membership comes largely from the professional middle class (57%, as against 10% white collar and 7% manual workers). As Alan Watkins put it in the Observer, "... it is becoming increasingly difficult for nice people to be active Conservatives... The SDP is the residents' association writ large, the middle classes on the march".

The SDP is a party of unresolved contradictions, made up of people who have joined for widely differing reasons. On the one hand, there are those attracted to the SDP because it offers something new (unspecified), either apparently radical or apparently conservative. Many of these are the 'political virgins', as they are contemptuously called by the Liberals.

Uncomfortable

On the other hand, there are the old right wing Labour Party machine politicians who joined because they lost control locally, or because they felt uncomfortable about reselection and accountability.

How the respectable middle classes will get on with the likes of Michael O'Halloran promises to

provide an interesting spectacle. Many of the questions and issues that divide left and right in the Labour Party are already raising their heads in the SDP: who should elect the leader, what relationship should exist between the MPs and the party as a whole, and whether sitting MPs should have to face re-selection.

Instability

These differences only emphasise the complete instability of the SDP — its lack of any clearly agreed political programme, its lack of a stable political base. It is dependent on the fact that it has yet to take on any responsibility for government and remains untested. It may yet lose support as quickly

as it has gained it. More importantly, the SDP is likely to follow whatever direction it thinks will give it popularity and a chance of power. There are already signs of this. For example, Owen and Williams are more and more dropping their ritual references to socialism — in Owen's case, carefully cutting them from the second edition of his book, 'Face the Future'.

Their real constituency lies well to the right in British politics, and the SDP already shows signs of moving in that direction. Their combination of demagoguery, corporatism, and opposition to class conflict makes them more than just an electoral danger for the labour movement — they could prove more successful than Thatcher in pushing through anti working class measures.

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WHAT'S ON

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27 28 29 30 31

Ads for Socialist Organiser events and many campaigns are carried free. Paid ads: 5p per word, £4 per column inch. Send to: Socialist Organiser (What's On), 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

IRELAND

Labour Committee on Ireland: Labour Movement Conference. Saturday February 27, 11am to 6pm, at The Theatre, 309 Regent St. Open to delegates and observers. Details: 1 North End Road, London W14.

Bloody Sunday Commemoration demonstration. 31 January in Coventry: called by Sinn Fein. Help build the London contingent for the march. Mobilising committee meetings: South London - 4 January 1982, 18 January 1982, 8pm Room 2, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton. North London - 5 January 1982, 18 January 1982, 8pm Camden Labour Club, 4 Carole St, NW1. Further details, phone 274 3951. Called by Smash the PTA Campaign.

LABOUR LEFT

Leeds Labour Left meeting, Sunday January 10, 7.30, at Leeds Trades Council club.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER MEETINGS AND FORUMS

LAMBETH: Sundays at 7pm. For venue phone 609 3071. Dec.20: The Russian revolution. Jan.31: Stalinism. Feb.28: The origins of the Labour Party.

LEICESTER: Sundays at 7.30, at the Leicester Socialist Centre, High St (above Blackthorn Books).

LEIGH: Every other Sunday 7.30 at the 'White Lion' (opposite the market). Jan.10: Organising the Left: how and why? Jan.24: Iran - what has happened and what's happening now? Feb.7: Women's liberation. Feb.21: Afghanistan and the Soviet invasion.

LEEDS Socialist Organiser class: 'The socialist programme'. Sunday January 3, midday at Leeds Trades Club.

ISLINGTON Socialist Organiser fund-raising social: Sunday December 20, from 7pm. For venue phone 354 1050.

Socialist Organiser/ London Labour Briefing. Jointly sponsored conference on trade union democracy and the renovation of the labour movement. Saturday March 6, in Birmingham. For details send s3e to Democracy Conference, c/o Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

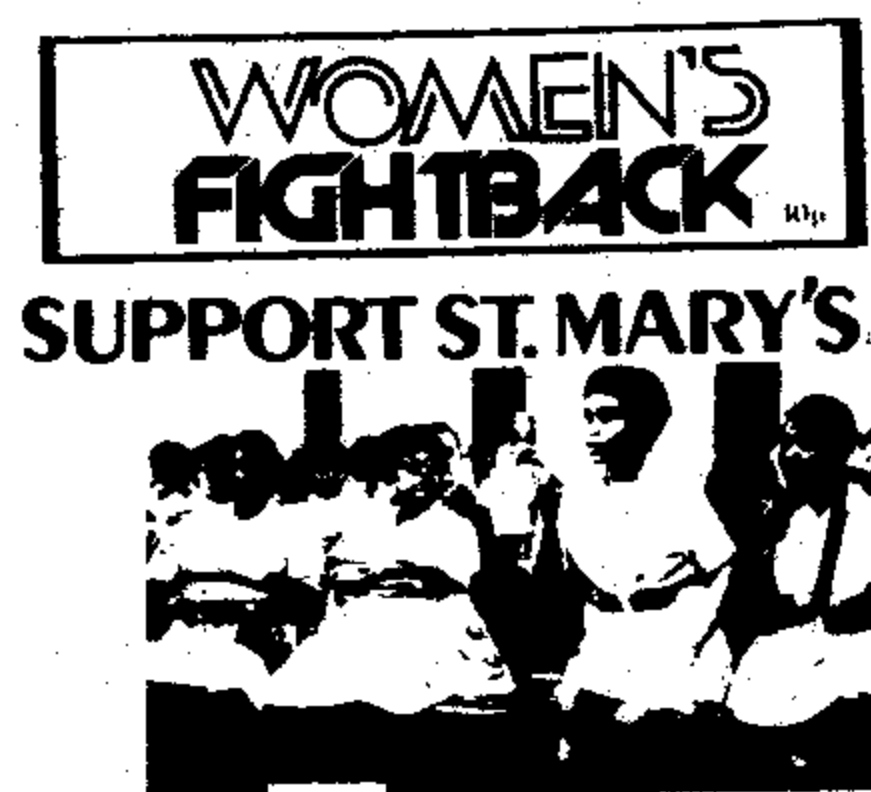
OXFORD Socialist Organiser Christmas bazaar, with cakes, tombola, bottle stall, darts and Father Xmas. Saturday December 19, from 1.30pm at Northgate Hall, St Michael's St. Entrance 10p.

WOMEN

Women's Fightback day school on new technology. * What are the problems, and the possibilities, for women? * Have the unions given any thought to women when negotiating on new technology? * How can women organise to control new technical developments rather than be pushed around as victims? Saturday Feb.6, at Lambeth Town Hall, near Brixton tube. Send s3e for more details and registration form to New Tech Day School, WF, 41 Ellington St, London N7.

Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work: National Organising Conference. Feb.20. Contact: 181 Richmond Rd, London E8.

Women's Fightback rank and file women trade unionists' conference. March 27. For details, registration forms, etc, send s3e to WF, 41 Ellington St, London N7.



New issue of Women's Fightback - 10p plus postage from 41 Ellington St, London N7

SOUTH AFRICA

Broadsheet on the Car Industry in South Africa, published in an effort to extend the campaign to win basic rights for South African workers' by the Welsh Anti-Apartheid Movement - 33 Romilly Road, Cardiff.

MARXISM

London Workers' Socialist League classes on basic Marxism: a fortnightly series, alternative Fridays from January 8. First classes: The French Revolution: The Communist Manifesto: Sectarian Socialism and Working Class Socialism. For details of registration and venue, write to PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Critique Conference: The New Cold War? January 15-16, at University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1. Registration £3 the weekend or £1.50 per session from Critique, 31 Clevedon Road, Glasgow G12 0PH.

'The Socialist Society': Foundation Conference, January 23-24, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1. More details c/o 7 Carlisle St, London W1V 6NL.

WITCH-HUNT TIPS SCALES AT CLPD CONFERENCE

by Nigel Williamson (CLPD Executive, in personal capacity)

AT ITS Annual General Meeting on December 12, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy was faced with the need for a fundamental re-think.

The strategy outlined in the statement from CLPD secretary Vladimir Derer, and favoured by many on CLPD's executive, seemed to suggest that the Left lies low or 'treads water' for a year or two, until after the next election. But the Bermondsey affair and the right wing witch-hunt launched only a few days before the AGM probably tilted the scales, and resulted in CLPD being committed to a much more up-front, vigorous campaigning style than might otherwise have been the case.

Vladimir has long been one of the most respected tacticians on the Left, and many of those who found themselves opposing him were doing so, reluctantly, for almost the very first time.

But the AGM could not endorse phrases calling on CLPD 'to initiate moves that would make unity possible' and for the Left to adopt a 'low profile'. The secretary's statement told us this may be 'particularly difficult given the latest attacks'. But as one delegate exasperatedly pointed out, it is now downright impossible.

Instead, the view which CLPD will expound over the next year is that 'there can

be no unity as long as Labour's parliamentary representatives insist on their right to sabotage Party policy, and no peace as long as the right wing organise to reverse the democratic reforms'.

It seemed somewhat desperate when one speaker opposing this claimed that CLPD was not an organisation of the left, but also enjoyed the support of the centre and the democratic right, which must not be alienated!

Only two weeks earlier, Roy Hattersley had called for the expulsion of CLPD from the Party!

The executive was also defeated in its attitude to the establishing of a new

left umbrella organisation. CLPD's delegates to the forthcoming meeting to launch the new organisation (set for January 23) will now argue for a full 'open conference of the Labour left'.

Style

A further radical change in CLPD's campaigning style is that it will now support and campaign for specific candidates. In the past CLPD has merely published the names of all paid-up members who are seeking election to Party office.

As these include Neil Kinnock, this has caused considerable confusion among some of our supp-

orters!

But CLPD is now committed to campaign for a left slate of candidates for the NEC, and on initiative of Wood G. CLP will make an appeal. Tony Benn to challenge Denis Healey for deputy leadership this year.

High among CLPD's priorities over the year must now be the fight against witch hunts and purges, but CLPD will be campaigning on a number of other issues: public ownership; shortlist one; local government democracy; PLP democracy; positive discrimination for women; and tension of recorded vot-



Witch-hunter Hattersley

Steps forward by LCC

THE ANNUAL conference of the Scottish section of the Labour Coordinating Committee, meeting in Stirling on Saturday 5th, took a number of positive decisions.

These included amendments moved by Socialist Organiser supporters calling for a campaign against bans and proscriptions, the establishment of local branches of the LCC meeting on a regular monthly basis, the necessity of mobilising the trade unions to resist Tory cutbacks in local government finances, and the involvement of the LCC in discussions on Ireland in conjunction with the Labour Committee on Ireland.

The 45 or so members present agreed that the LCC should become involved in struggles relating directly to women, but they voted down a resolution stating that the LCC should become involved in the struggles of workers resisting redundancies, defending their unions against the Tory offensive, and striving to advance their wages and conditions.

This debate, and others initiated at the LCC conference, must now be extended in the local branches which it was agreed to establish.

IAN McCALMAN

Students vote to strike on grants



Students on the march

600 back Bradford 12

ON DECEMBER 12 about 600 Asian, black and white youth and workers marched in opposition to the charges of conspiracy against twelve leading members and supporters of the United Black Youth League in Bradford.

The twelve charged with conspiracy face penalties up to life imprisonment if convicted in April, as they probably will be unless a large campaign is built to expose this state frame-up.

The demonstration was weakened in attendance by the bad weather, but the messages of support from various black and labour movement organisations showed the campaign was growing.

The Bradford 12 case is being used to intimidate the black community from organising on a political basis. It will no doubt also be used by the capitalist media as a justification for the police violence and murder in the July riots.

All Socialist Organiser supporters should invite speakers from the defence campaign to their CLP, LPYS, or union branch. They should get involved in the local Bradford 12 committees, and build solidarity groups where none exist.

For more information, contact: c/o Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate, Bradford 1

EVERTON WILLIAMS

THE RECENT National Union of Students national conference in Blackpool showed how much has to be done to get a fighting, campaigning union leadership.

While there has been a growth of militancy and a radicalisation among students in response to the Tory government's offensive, the NUS leadership, dominated by the Left Alliance, blocked the development of any real campaign to stop the cuts.

An emergency motion from Central London Poly for direct action against the cuts was defeated by the conference, largely due to the Left Alliance. The conference, however, did vote overwhelmingly for a week-long strike in April against the Government's 4 per cent limit on grant increases.

While this decision is a step forwards, it is of limited importance.

Grants

Grants only really affect the universities, from which the Left Alliance receives much of its support, and the vote had little significance for the higher and further education sector, which represents 700,000 of the 1.2 million NUS membership.

The carve-up of the real left, and the FE and HE sectors in the NUS, has had the effect of creating a united opposition to oust the present leadership of NUS. Socialist Organiser supporters should fight within NOLS and alongside the Socialist Worker Student Organisation and Socialist Student Alliance activists to remove those

like NUS president Aaronovitch who fight for direct action against the cuts.

Direct

Locally Socialist Organiser supporters should commit their union to direct action, and where possible to initiate action.

We should help to and build for, a national conference of student unions in support of direct action, for early next year.

EVERTON WILLIAMS

Trade union official on trial

CIVIL servants played a stage half-day later this week when their officials, Ted Elsey, is put on trial in Edinburgh.

Ted Elsey, an official of the Inland Revenue Federation, appeared in Edinburgh Sheriff's court on Thursday 17th charged under the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act that some year was used against Shrewsbury bus worker pickets.

Elsey's 'crime' is that he followed two members of management in his ca-

Industrial News



Dustmen face Coventry Council attack

by Dave Spencer

AFTER breaking agreements with NUPE and provoking a four week strike, Coventry's Labour Council have now turned their attention to the dustmen. They have taken five of the 21 wagons off the road, implementing this without any agreement with the unions.

Although so far the council have made no redundancies, making wagon crews up to 5 men instead of 4, this is in operation only until the end of January, when they would expect the Christmas backlog to be cleared.

Then, with natural wastage and so on, it is clear that more work per worker will be expected, for no more pay.

Crews

Already management have broken agreements by sending out more than seven wagons in a day with 3-man crews on them.

The workers' reply to the taking off of the 5 wagons was to work only to job specifications. In this way they maintain their pay while a tremendous backlog

Typists go back to work

LIVERPOOL City Council typists are now back at work after six months on strike for a regrading claim, positive discrimination in admin jobs, the right for time off to study for qualifications, and an end to the lack of career opportunities for them.

Some weeks ago a decision to go for arbitration was gratefully accepted by the Liberal Council.

The final sticking point for a settlement was a demand by the Liberal Council that there be no disciplinary action taken against scabs.

But the NALGO branch officers seem to have given way on this, and the typists are now back at work.

Meanwhile, however, the AGM of Liverpool NALGO has thrown out the left-wing branch officers and allowed the right wing to take over. It looks like the left-wing officers' failure to argue a clear opposition to arbitration did little to enthuse or rally their left-wing supporters, and the membership as a whole was left bewildered and exasperated.

CHRIS ERSWELL

of work piles up.

The work to rule has made the men realise just how they were running around previously. This usually meant carrying far more than the regulation number of sacks, working through break times, ignoring health and safety rules, and so on, so that they could finish their targets early in the afternoon.

Sleep

They were going home fit only to sleep in the chair. Older men at 50 found it difficult to keep up, and some literally dropped dead. As one worker put it, "You feel just like a carthorse".

Management have been quick to attack. Last weekend they went round to some workers' houses and managed to get two wagons out to empty bulk bins from a shopping area. This was in defiance of the overtime ban.

On the Monday, an angry mass meeting fined the offending crews two days' wages and strengthened their resolve. Inspectors have been very active in making snap checks on the crews, trying to catch somebody having a crafty fag or sneaking off to the betting shop.

One gaffer actually spent two whole days going round with one crew sitting in the cab all the time. His comment was: "Well, I can't fault the way you're working, but you're not working hard enough".

Money

So far there have been no incidents but tension is rising and many workers feel that the Labour council is trying to provoke an all-out strike.

As one worker put it, "They want us out after Christmas, and save some money, like they did with NUPE. They'll hit us and our families, and try to get us crawling back. They'll try to

break the union, then throw us to the dogs.

"You expect it from the Tories, but from a Labour council that's supposed to defend the interests of the working class - what can you say?"

The council are trying to bring in their work study team to examine all bin rounds, but so far the workers have resisted this.

The shop stewards' committee has sent out invitations to all councillors to "come out and watch us if they think the service is inefficiently run". But on their past record, the Labour councillors see themselves as managers, and implement the cuts with a certain relish.

Their attitude to the dustmen can be seen in a tannoy system in the depot canteen which rings out after a 15 minute mass meeting, "The time allotted for your meeting is up. You will report to your vehicle immediately. If you do not, you will be taken off the clock".

Big Brother is watching you - and carrying a Labour Party membership card.

CPSA impose ban

FROM December 1st, the CPSA has reimposed its overtime ban in Unemployment Benefit Offices.

The ban was lifted temporarily to help clear work after the last pay dispute at a time of rapidly increasing claims, but staff recruitment has not been nearly enough to keep up with the expanding workload.

Management have made savings by recruiting casuals, and a large amount of overtime has now become standard.

Both claimants and benefit workers are being made to pay for the Government's outright refusal to meet union demands.

LINDA GREENE



Dustmen follow NUPE members (above)



Friday 4th: St Mary's workers and supporters marched in support of the fight against closure

TGWU blow at St Mary's fight

MEMBERS of the 1/1088 TGWU branch at St Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road, were shocked to read the following memo sent to TGWU District Officer John Newe this week:

"In reply to your memo and attachments of 1 December 1981, in which you request legal assistance with a claim for assault on one of our members, Bro. M. Woods.

"Looking through the correspondence I see that the Region is asked to make official any action that may be taken by the staff at the hospital.

"Whilst expressing every appreciation of our members and their efforts in the struggle at the hospital, we are unable to give as it were carte blanche for any and every action they may take, albeit we would wish to assist whenever we were able.

"On the question of legal action in support of Bro. Woods and the allegation of assault, it is not normal practice to involve ourselves in such incidents by way of legal assistance, although it is not unprecedented, but for us to con-

sider the question we would certainly want much fuller detail than is contained within the report.

"S. Staden, Regional Secretary".

Workers at St Mary's have been fighting management plans to close the hospital, and Mick Woods - a TGWU shop steward - was suspended and manhandled by a hospital security officer when he refused to cooperate with the emptying of a ward by administrators and police.

This response from the regional office, and the TGWU's use of its block vote in support of the right wing EETPU motion at the emergency London Labour Party conference on cuts on December 12, shows how seriously the TGWU leadership takes the motion passed at the Biennial Delegate Conference this year supporting all action against the cuts.

Socialist Organiser asks all TGWU union branches in Region no.1 to bombard Regional Office with demands for real action to fight the cuts and to support St Mary's.

At St Mary's, manage-

ment have succeeded in closing the three wards planned in this round of cuts. The Defence Campaign, however, intends to continue the fight to save jobs and services, and will campaign for the reopening of the closed wards and the maintenance of the accident and emergency service.

Casualty has been officially closed on and off in the past two weeks, at one time when there were 14 beds empty in the hospital. Despite this, casualties have continued to be brought in by the ambulance drivers. It is essential that this pressure is kept on medical staff to admit patients.

The cold weather and treacherous conditions have increased admissions in the District and have started to make a nonsense of the Area Health Authority policy. It now requires a determined campaign to force them to back down.

Money is urgently required to build this campaign. Send donations to: Occupation Committee, St Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road, London W9.

RAY SAUNDERS

Fight Clyde steel sackings

AT THE end of November management at the Clyde-bridge steelworks in Cambuslang (near Glasgow) announced yet another batch of 'voluntary redundancies'.

At their peak the steelworks and the associated Clyde Ironworks employed 6,000 workers between them. The Ironworks has already been shut down, and at the moment there are only 670 left at the steelworks.

Pay increase

Now management want to lop another 102 off the workforce at Cambuslang (56 production, 35 maintenance, and 11 staff). And further cutbacks are also planned at other BSC plants in Scotland - at Ravenscraig, Glengarnock, and D.L.

As usual, cutbacks in the workforce are also being used to try to prevent workers from fighting for a decent pay increase.

This year's pay claim, drawn up by the National Joint Council of unions in the industry, including demands for a higher basic rate 'taking account of the current increase in the cost of living', higher shift premiums, and longer holidays.

Isolation

BSC has said it will give more pay only in exchange for higher productivity. BSC is also opposed to an overall national pay agreement, and instead wants pay increases concluded separately in each of the different branches of the steel industry.

Workers at Clydebridge and other Scottish plants threatened with job losses can be sure that no lead for a fightback will be forthcoming from their union leaders. As in the past, the bureaucrats will refuse to take up the job losses at a national level, and instead will leave it to the plants to fight back as best they can by themselves and in isolation from each other.

Militants on the shop-floor must organise to turn the tide against BSC management. Rank and file committees with representatives from the different plants threatened with redundancies should be established, and link up with workers in other nationalised industries fighting for their jobs, such as the BL workers at Bathgate.

Hiving off

And the fight against job losses should be joined up with the fight for a decent pay increase and immediate implementation of at least the 39 hour week, thus providing the basis for a combine-wide confrontation with Ian McGregor and his backers in the Tory Government.

A fightback now is essential. Otherwise the result will be not only more job losses and reduced living standards for steelworkers, but another step forwards towards the Tories' goal of hiving off the profitable businesses in the steel industry and completely shutting down the rest.

FRED STOBIE

A few initial instalments, but only a fraction of the £1150 we need this month on top of the regular standing orders has come in.

With the holiday period coming up, many supporters may feel inclined to let the problem of fund-raising slip to the back of their minds for a couple of weeks. But none of our creditors is likely to go in for such mellow forgetfulness.

1982 may start with big struggles by the Ford workers and the miners, and will certainly see a furious fight to defend democratic rights in the Labour Party. Make sure Socialist Organiser can start the year prepared and with the resources we need to help the struggle!

Send contributions to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Socialist Organiser



After Scargill's victory Miners and Ford set for pay battles

THE resounding victory of Arthur Scargill in the National Union of Mineworkers presidential elections was a real kick in the teeth for the Coal Board (whose officials had connived in some areas to work for the right wing candidates), for the Tories, and for the Fleet Street gutter press who had pulled out all the stops to prevent Scargill's election.

70 per cent of the miners said decisively that they had had enough of Joe Gormley's conciliation and grovelling to the NCB. Scargill's programme and his dynamic campaign clearly struck a chord in the coalfields.

His opponents could not even between them muster enough votes to get near him.

Scargill's election has cleared things up a little with regard to the NUM

pay claim of 23 per cent. the Executive of the NUM decisively rejected a Coal Board offer of 10.5 per cent for those with long service, by a majority of 20 to 5.

The new 'revised' offer would have given the surface workers a rise of £6.95 before tax! This is nothing less than an insult to the industry's 'forgotten legion', many of whom work on the surface due to old age or injuries received while underground.

Watershed

The Executive decided instead to call a special delegate conference on Friday December 18. The delegates will decide on the EC recommendation to ballot the coalfields for strike action in the New Year. If the conference

decides to do this, which it probably will, the ballot will be held on January 14 and 15.

A 55 per cent majority is needed for strike action. If this is obtained, a strike could commence late in January or early in February.

Miners need the full claim to make up for all the ground we've lost since the last rise of just over 9 per cent — anything less just isn't good enough. Let's show the Board and the Tories we aren't going to be bought off again with a few pennies extra!

Ford workers have now voted overwhelmingly for all-out strike from January 5th. They have rejected the company's offer of 7.4 per cent with extremely tight strings, and are demanding £20.

Ford bosses have responded, tight-lipped, by saying they will not bother to open the factories on

January 4th after the holidays.

Despite the General Secretaries' sell-out of B... a united wage offensive by important sections of the working class is still possible this winter. Rank and file mineworkers and Ford workers should make contact.

And miners should also organise to make a reality of the 'Triple Alliance' railworkers and steelworkers, linking up at rank and file level to ensure effective blacking, and demanding real joint action from the leaders.



LABOUR LEFT PLANS A FIGHTBACK

By Rachel Lever

THE DECISIONS of the Organisation Sub-Committee in the first week of December (which could be referred back, but not overturned, by the full NEC) have fundamentally changed the nature of the struggle in the Labour Party.

The decisions to reject Peter Tatchell as Bermondsey's candidate and to launch an inquiry into Militant have put the left decisively on the defensive — and at the same time create both the possibility and the necessity for the left to go on the offensive.

Sundry

After Brighton, all the conditions existed for the left to be narrowed down and isolated. Past the mid-term of a Tory government, and with the SDP no longer a joke, a 'unity' offensive by the new party establishment could have smothered the party democracy movement in electoral anxieties.

Now it is clear that the right wing have given up on the next election. If Labour had any chance at all after Foot and Co. had told all and sundry that Tony Benn and his followers were dangerous loonies, that chance must now have evaporated completely. Telling the world that the Labour Party is infiltrated by wild-eyed Trots and that various local parties have chosen 'electoral disasters' for their candidates just isn't the way to win an election.

The decision to launch a witchhunt can leave us in little doubt about the right's perspective.

First, to frighten those parties now selecting their candidates into adopting safe bets. Having failed to outvote mandatory reselection and being unable to use the shortlist of one ploy as a universal device, the right have used Peter Tatchell and Bermondsey to put a blanket, overall pressure on every selection conference to come.

War

Second, they have launched a war for outright possession of the Labour Party. If they win, they will put an end to mandatory reselection, to the electoral college, to the rights of local parties — and, at the same time, attempt to prevent anyone in future fighting for these things.

By the time that has been achieved, the morale of the party and its ability to fight an election will be in

shreds. But they have little wish to win an election on the basis of the present policies, as the policies they adhere to are those of the SDP.

So why not let the SDP take the votes, and then join with them in a coalition? Then any left-wingers left in the party will be thoroughly fed up, and the policies won in the party in the past couple of years will be quietly buried.

Whereas immediately after Brighton it could be argued (as Vladimir Derer did in the pages of SO) that the great overriding desire of 'ordinary' party mem-

bers was for unity at virtually any price in order to put in any sort of Labour government, it is now necessary to say very clearly that the only sort of Labour government we are likely to see is one based on the clear defeat of the right in the party.

How is this to be done? First, the left has to unite. Since Brighton, the left has been divided, with some sections blaming the defeat at Conference on a 'backlash', and others urging the necessity of a high profile to rally support and morale. Moreover, such left unity as was ever

achieved up to now never managed to overcome the dislike that some groups feel for others.

In the face of a witch-hunt, to the sort of snide attacks we have learned to live with must be left behind, and be replaced with a sense of solidarity against a common enemy.

The left also has to expand, and take itself into many groupings in the party and on its periphery that have so far been left out. There is a wealth of campaigns in and around the Labour Party, around a multitude of single issues. These need to be convinced that if the left goes down, they go down too. There is little point in them fighting for their particular interest to become policy, if Labour's policy is going to be ditched wholesale anyway.

Lead

Most important, the left has to show it's still alive. People are looking for a lead, and asking for a lead: 'tell us what to do' is something heard at every meeting. There is nothing to be gained by not fighting: there is no gesture or compromise to be made with the right, especially now that they have started a civil war.

We have to go onto the offensive. At the present time, the right have the initiative and they are choosing their weapons and the

ground they want to fight on. They have not even got to watch their back door. Its time we started defining what the fight is about.

Arsenal

Instead of having to reassure the world, as has happened in the last week, that 'nothing in this (Peter Tatchell's) article is inconsistent with our support for democratic socialism and parliamentary democracy', the right wing should be having to answer for themselves — is anything they have ever done consistent with defence of working class interests and the struggle for socialism?

Finally, we have to enlarge our arsenal. We must go beyond resolutions, letters, publications, lobbies and conferences (which is saying somethings, as 'we are far from having deployed all of these weapons yet) and link up with all the 'extra-parliamentary' forces that the right finds so distasteful: strikes to beat the pay squeeze, direct action and confrontation against Heseltine and Tebbit, local actions, occupations, etc to save services and stop the sale of council houses, demonstrations, strikes and sit-ins against unemployment, confrontation with fascists, and solidarity with the Irish struggle.

Meanwhile, no part of our fight can be abandoned, or offered up in the hope of placating the right. The only hope of undermining their strength is the undemocratic wielding block votes wielded by a handful of general secretaries — is to put up a fight that will spread to the trade union ranks, as the fight for the democratic reforms, and the Deputy Leadership campaign began to do up to Brighton.

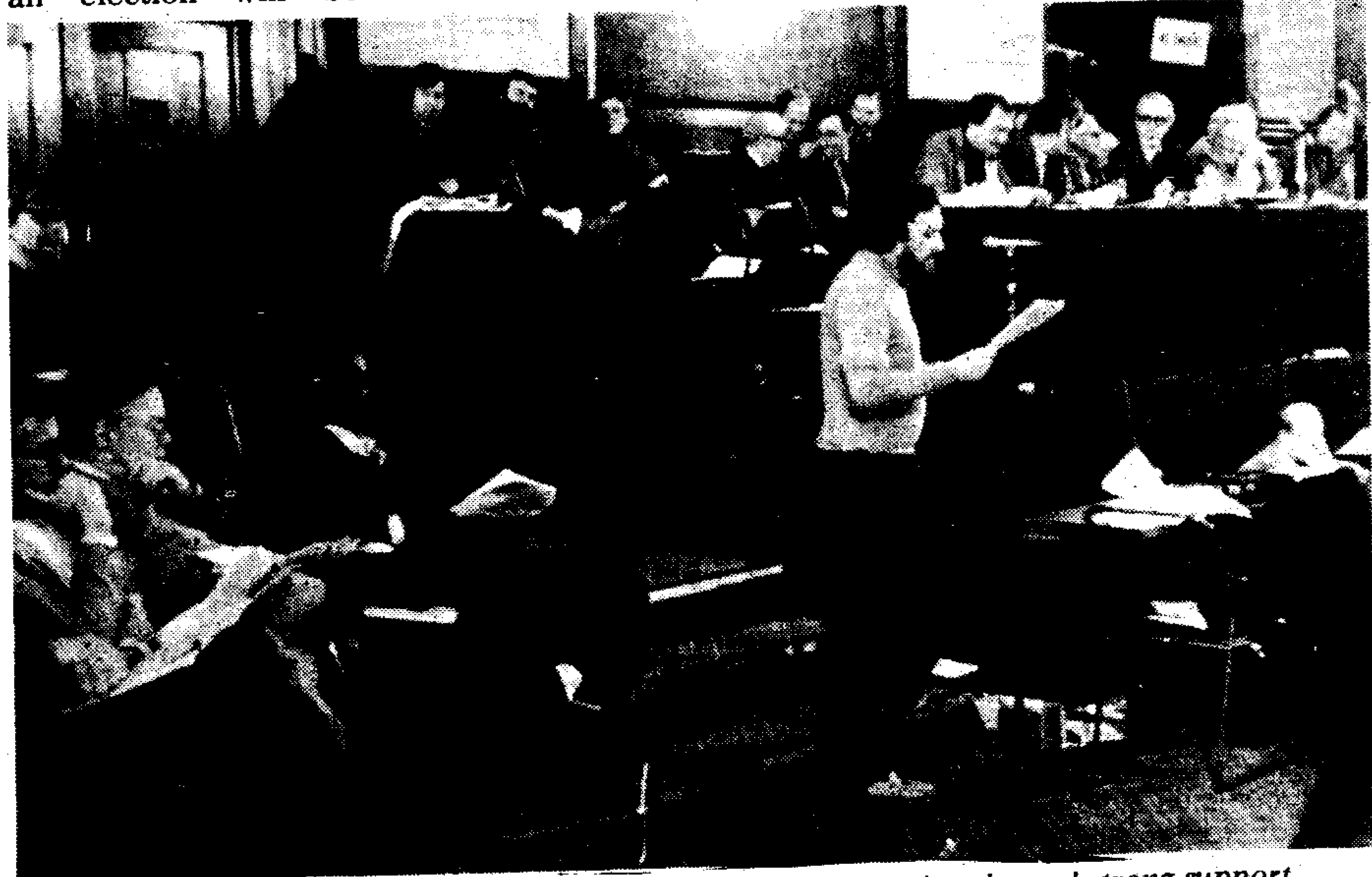
If we can get Duffy, Basnett — and Kites too — worried about their own positions, that will be the best defence we can mount.

The bureaucrats want to use their entrenched positions in the unions as a base for helping the right wing reassert itself in the Labour Party. We can defeat them by the opposite move — making the Labour Party democracy struggle a springboard for a fight for trade union democracy.

Fast

These wide tasks should not obscure the need to specialise and concentrate: we need to build up a body of experience in fighting the witchhunt, and need to do it fast. To that end, a meeting has been called for 7.30 on December 21st at Room 166 at Court Hall, to see how we can best support those comrades under fire.

The meeting has been called by a number of individuals involved in the defence of Bermondsey, those directly affected by the witchhunt are being invited, as well as any other organisations on the left and any individuals who wish to help.



London Labour Party conference, December 12: a fringe meeting showed strong support for Peter Tatchell.