

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 2, November 1984. 70p



Democracy: Ours or Theirs?

Inside: Features on PALESTINE and the COMMUNIST PARTY. News and analysis on MINERS, AUSTIN ROVER, Health Struggles, Greenham, and Labour Party.

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

Introducing ourselves

Socialist Viewpoint is a new magazine, committed to the fight for a principled, class struggle programme at every level of the workers' movement in Britain and internationally. We see the fight for Trotskyist politics taking shape not through introspective sectarian debates in small groups of would-be gurus, nor as simply trailing behind this or that "Left" talking trade union or Labour Party dignitary — but as a patient fight for the independent interests of the working class, and for demands and action which express those interests, in every arena of the class struggle.

Sold and produced by comrades who in many cases have their own political history, often long-standing roots in a range of unions and experience of leading and intervening in disputes, *Socialist Viewpoint* seeks to offer analysis, education and leadership as well as news and comment. We believe that, in the mainstream of the struggles in the labour movement, and in the active struggles for women's rights and against other forms of special oppression, we have a record

of useful work, and a contribution to make.

In this second issue of *Socialist Viewpoint*, special features include a detailed account on the current line-up of forces in the Middle East, following a visit to Palestine by one of the authors; and several articles focus on aspects of the struggle against Stalinism in the international workers' movement.

Following on the success of our first issue, we hope that this second will be followed by more frequent regular publication in the New Year. We invite readers to contribute news and views, and welcome debate and discussion on the topics raised in these pages.

With all too little clarity on offer from the various dogmatic left groupings in Britain, we believe that it is possible and necessary to combine debate with policy and programme. We hope that the positions we put forward and discussion on them will persuade many readers to become *Socialist Viewpoint* supporters in the coming months.

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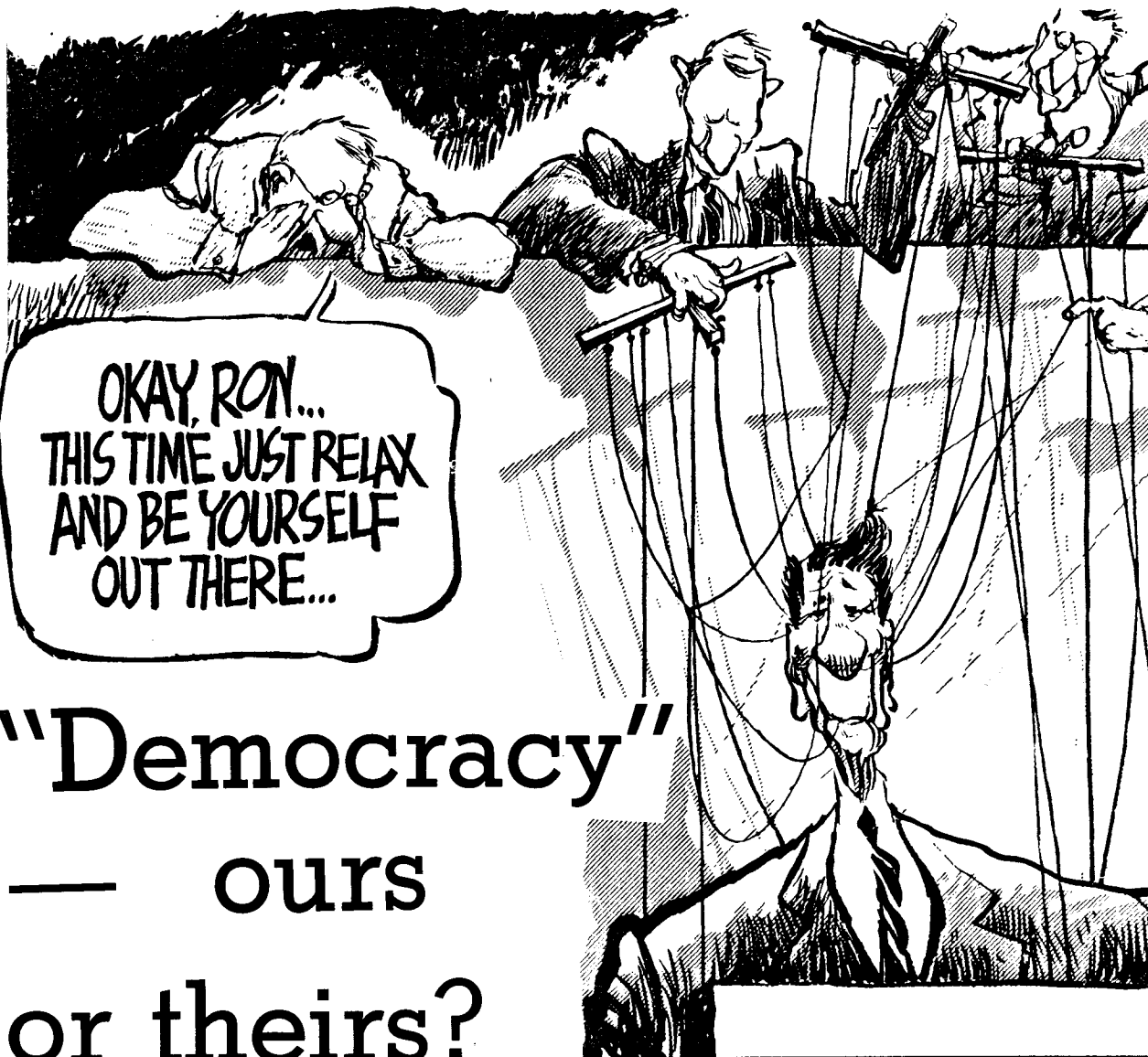
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"Democracy" — ours or theirs?

"DEMOCRACY", we keep being told, "is under threat." Whether it be the Brighton bomb, the striking miners or the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the world — if we believe the mass media — is now peopled on the one hand by a sturdy band of true blue "defenders of democracy", and on the other by its psychopathic, sub-human, generally unspeakable opponents.

All this proves is that "democracy" is currently one of the most abused and exploited words in the English language. In defence of "democracy", Ronald Reagan, newly re-elected by less than 34% of the American electorate to his landslide victory, makes daily attempts to **overthrow** the newly re-elected Sandinista government in Nicaragua — which received votes from over 54% of the Nicaraguan electorate. In trying to force the Nicaraguans to comply with his demands, the "democratic" Ronald Reagan bribes Nicaraguan politicians and parties to withdraw from the elections, while his mercenary army of invading "contra" guerillas, helped on by a CIA handbook, threaten to murder any Nicaraguan voter who goes to the polls.

The same double standards of course apply across the western "democratic" countries. Margaret Thatcher's government, elected by only 47% of the electorate, takes steps to abolish elected local councils that make decisions she disagrees with. Faced by a challenge from the miners, the "democratic" British state has revealed its hidden resources of brute intimidation — the nationwide, unconstitutional police riot squads, accountable to nobody; the appointed, reactionary judges, with sweeping powers to cripple the

workers movement, who have never been in any way accountable; the magistrates at lower level. Through a network of appointed, stooge health authorities, purged in many areas of any dissenting opinion, the "democratic" Tory government is forcing home its programme of cuts and privatisation. The list is endless.

Another example is useful. The assassination of mass murderer Indira Gandhi — whose troops slaughtered 1,800 Sikhs in the Golden Temple — brought forth an avalanche of tributes from far and wide. Everyone — from Margaret Thatcher and David Owen at the one extreme to Neil Kinnock and Tariq Ali at the other — was full of praise for her commitment to India's "democratic institutions."

Yet barely ten years ago, having been found guilty of electoral corruption in 1971, Indira Gandhi stood at the head of a dictatorial regime, under which thousands of her political opponents were jailed. For Gandhi, as a steadfast defender of India's capitalist class, "democracy" was not a principle, but a means to an end: if she could rule without it, she was prepared to do so. Since her return to office in 1980, her concern for "democracy" has been shown in anti-union laws and other attacks on the working class. Gandhi's resort to totalitarian methods — like similar periods of despotic rule in much of Latin America, and the brutal regimes of South Korea and the Philippines — brought only the most muted criticisms from the leading "Western Democracies". On the contrary, The Times newspaper and other pillars of "democrac. were



loud in applauding the military overthrow of Salvador Allende's elected "Marxist" government in Chile in 1973.

In these examples we see the bitter reality: "democracy" for the capitalist class is often a convenient mask, but the consistent feature beneath the surface is the dictatorial rule of capital and its institutions. The judges and the police in Britain are not isolated exceptions to a rule of "democratic" control: their unelected, unaccountable power is the mirror image of the power of the capitalists who own the banks and big firms, who meet secretly in boardrooms and golf-clubs; of the permanent bureaucracy of top civil servants; and of the leading military elite, who between them — irrespective of Parliament or elections — hold the final power. Ian MacGregor may call for a ballot of miners — but he was not elected by any ballot (and might well lose a vote of con-

fidence from his own managers). Michael Edwardes' reign in British Leyland was characterised by periodic resort to ballots of the workforce. Where they endorsed Edwardes, he enforced them; where they opposed him, he ignored them. That is how the capitalists see democracy: and it is one reason why they have such contempt for mass meetings and open debate.

Yet amid this inescapable evidence of the cynical exploitation of the word and concept of "democracy" for misleading the workers, we find Neil Kinnock lending his two pennyworth of confusion.

At Labour conference he leaned heavily on the argument to the effect that: "If we seek to enforce our policies through the law when we're in government, then we need to abide by the Tory laws now." And he has criticised the anti-union laws for "bringing the law into disrepute."

Of course Kinnock has made it quite plain that he does not intend to challenge capitalist rule in Britain. He believes that the timid reforms he has in mind can be pushed quite easily through Acts of Parliament. Other people to the left of Kinnock share this general view: "Militant" for example, argues for a Parliamentary "Enabling Act" to procure their dream of nationalising the top 250 monopolies; the Communist Party too expects that Parliament will legislate socialism.

Not only does such political strategy leave out any practical role for the working class (other than as individual voters) in the achievement of "socialism", it rests (as did Allende) on the false assumption that the capitalist class, as good "democrats" would sit back and allow their wealth and property to be seized, without mounting the most fierce, armed, resistance. The mercenary anti-Sandinista gangsters being financed by Reagan in Nicaragua and the grisly figure of Pinochet of Chile are a more accurate reflection of the kind of response the capitalists would offer.

Far from idealising bourgeois "democracy" and trying to preserve its cosmetic "law and order", socialists should be fighting tooth and nail to expose the naked class dictatorship embodied in the rule of a Thatcher or a Reagan. Far from looking to parliament as an instrument for decisive social change, we should emphasise that workers themselves will need to organise on a factory, area and national level, and challenge the power of the capitalist state, in order to lay the basis for a new, **workers'** state to emerge. Just as the capitalist state represses and exploits the majority of the population in pursuit of the profits of the minority, so a **workers'** state would repress the minority of capitalist reactionaries in establishing a socialist society in the interests of the **majority**. That, surely, is what real democracy — if it means "rule by the majority" — should be all about?



Miners must break the isolation!

THE complete lack of response from a single trade union to the High Court decision to seize the national assets of the NUM will go down as a very black day for the British trade union movement. Neither the TUC nor a single trade union leader as much as made a public call for support for the NUM, or even spoke of the seriousness of the action. Yet this move against the NUM could seriously affect the course of a strike, the outcome of which could shape the conditions faced by the trade union and labour movement in Britain for a long time to come.

Moreover, if this sequestration is not challenged it will quickly lead to the full-blooded use of all the anti-union laws the Tory Government have been assembling: ballots on strikes, on the closed shop, and Labour Party affiliation.

The High Court action comes at a very difficult time for the striking miners, particularly with the failure of the TUC policy on the non-handling of substitute fuels in the power stations.

As far as can be seen, there is not a single power station where production is affected by the operation of TUC policy, which specifically bans the use of substitute fuel or fuel brought in by abnormal means. There are some power stations where votes have been taken not to handle scab coal, but they have yet to be challenged by management.

Where management have challenged, mostly on the use of substitute oil, the opposition to it has not held.

In fact, substitute fuel is being used in vast quantities throughout the power stations. Many non-coal fired stations are producing at much higher levels than before the strike. Power station workers are being offered blood money in the form of unlimited overtime to keep these levels of production up. Many of the drivers taking scab fuel through are T&G members from big companies with trade union organisation.

The situation has some parallels with the steel industry where some plants are breaking all previous production records.

The NACODS strike threat appeared to cut across this process and create new conditions for the strike with the prospects of shutting down the vital Nottinghamshire coalfield.

The Tories were panicked by the NACODS move and brought in Michael Eaton (remember him?) as a cosmetic exercise to placate the NACODS leadership after McGregor's attitude inflamed the situation (and to deal with the new conditions if NACODS did go on strike. In reality, however, the NACODS moves were never more than an exercise in brinkmanship, and the near inevitable calling off of the strike has put the Tory Government right back on course.



Sequestration met by TUC silence.

By Alan Thornett

It has become apparent now how important the failure of the two dock strikes were to government strategy in combatting the strike.

The reality is that without any fresh factors in the situation the government have the ability to maintain power supply well into the winter providing they are prepared to see coal stocks drop at some stations to levels which are not normally acceptable.

A huge operation is now in progress to bring coal from all over the world and there is little doubt they can do it. Coal from Australia, South Africa, America, Vietnam and Poland is being taken in bulk carriers to continental ports and then fed into Britain in small ships through numerous small ports on the East coast which are having a bonanza. Lorries laid up in their thousands by the recession are back into commission to try to break the strike. Although the amounts coming in are not massive at the moment, they are likely to increase rapidly as the temperature drops and demand builds up.

The ability to maintain power supply, however, does not resolve the problem for the Government since the economic consequences of the strike are disastrous. The strike has directly cost over £4 bn; the pound has dropped in value and the balance of trade is deeply in the red.

The continuation of the strike is therefore unacceptable to the Tories even if they can stave off the effects on power

supply. This is why they want a quick kill by the use of the courts.

Important as it is, however, the effect on the economy is not decisive. The highest principle of all for the Thatcher Government is defeating the miners and to do that they are prepared to wreck their economy, if that is unavoidable.

The strategic problems of the strike

The undeclared strategy of the NUM leadership has been to maintain the unity of the miners and conduct a war of attrition against the government and the NCB. They have based this on the belief that, despite the scabbing of Nottinghamshire, if the miners held firm, eventually power supplies would be hit and industry would begin to close and the miners would be in a position to win.

If that policy was ever viable, the situation in the pits and the power stations and the escalating use of the courts now calls it very seriously into question.

The war of attrition policy dictated in turn the policy of the NUM towards the TUC. If the miners could win on their own, then it was necessary only to neutralise the TUC — not to fight for them to take action. Equally, if the miners could win on their own then breaking the isolation into which the strike had drifted became something which was very desirable — but not absolutely essential for a miners' victory. If the miners could win on their own, then it was not worth taking any risks in fighting for TUC or broader support.

This led to the very low key response of the NUM to the sequestration of the South Wales Area (they never even called a national demonstration over it, for example). It led to the compromise on the eve of the

TUC Conference; it led to NUM agreement to the withdrawal of the TGWU resolution at the Labour Party Conference endorsing the refusal of the NUM to go into the High Court, which would have broadened the issue out.

(This attitude was not always the case. In the early days of the strike, Arthur Scargill regularly broke the usual protocol and put other union leaders on the spot, often in front of mass rallies. It helped at the time to pressure some of the more left unions into doing something.)

Recently this attitude has led to an even more dangerous mistake. This was the failure of the NUM leaders to use the month's notice they had of the seizure of their assets to campaign for strike action on the day of the sequestration.

Speech after speech made no mention of it. The lead article of the edition of *The Miner* which was out soon after the High Court ultimatum even **played down** the issue of sequestration: if the article was to be taken seriously it let every other Trade Union leader off the hook.

The compromise at the TUC Conference did not simply result in no physical support for the miners from the TUC. Its political implications were equally important. By allowing the right wing to establish control of the conference they allowed them to push the conference to the **right**. That shift to the right established the political conditions which the strike would face, in relation to the rest of the trade union movement, in the period **after** the Conference. The advantage was put into the hands of the right wing, and they would use it to the full.

At the same time the TUC Conference resolution on the anti-union laws let the General Council completely off the hook for their betrayal of the NGA and did nothing to prepare for the present situation. In fact it re-established General Council discretion on whether or not to support a union under attack by the anti-union laws. It created the worst possible conditions for action when the NUM funds were eventually seized.

We argued that the NUM should have

fought at the Conference for what was **necessary** to win the strike, which would have been for a general strike decision.

We are still convinced of that. Had they done so they would probably have been unsuccessful in getting a general strike as such, but it could have resulted in two things:

—it would probably have brought more limited action, but at least **some** action;

—more importantly, the fight of the NUM would have tended to push the Conference to the **left**, and established better conditions for the strike in the post-Conference period.

The NUM leadership appear to have feared that if they confronted the right-wing they could have been voted down on the strike as such. But it is not as simple as that. The consequences of a defeat of the miners for the labour movement as a whole are so obvious and far-reaching that it is very difficult for even the right wing — with maverick exceptions — to vote against it, and be held historically responsible. Most Trade Union leaders are embarrassed by the miners' strike and would like to see it over, but they don't want to see it defeated. Even if specific action — like a General Strike — had been voted down, a general resolution of support was almost inevitable.

A change of strategy for the NUM

The strength of the strike remains the tremendous determination, tenacity, solidarity and sacrifice of the rank and file

miners. The present period, however, is difficult. The recent "back to work movement" promoted around the £1,400 Xmas bonus bribe being offered to striking miners is more significant than the previous complete flops. The bribery is an important factor; but so are the objective conditions now facing the strike. Rank and file miners now realise the extent of the isolation the strike faces. They see the emptiness of the TUC and Labour Party resolutions and — even more — they see no action at the point where their union's funds are seized. The decision of NACODS to strike (empty as that decision was) posed the possibility of breaking the isolation; but calling off the strike strengthened the government and emphasised the isolation of the strike.

The NUM leadership remains determined, and are making no concessions to the NCB. But they need to rise to the new situation. Last week's one-day delegate conference resolved very little; the problems were brought out, but there were no new initiatives on offer, apart from a round of mass rallies — which are important but cannot be decisive (although Neil Kinnock disgracefully undermined this by refusing to speak).

The strategy remained a war of attrition under conditions where it is an even more problematic tactic now.

Fighting for a change of course

That situation, however, does contain within it a problem in fighting for a change in strategy, since the vast majority of active striking miners have confidence in the leadership, and don't, by and large, question the situation very much. A contrast with the steel strike is interesting. There, the biggest job of the strikers was stopping Bill Sirs selling them out. They therefore discussed continuously every aspect of the strategy of the strike, and were very knowledgeable about it. In this strike, the activists throw themselves into fighting the scabs and the police and the NCB.

One way or another, however, the strategy has to be discussed in the open. The war of attrition policy has to be abandoned. The problem of the isolation of the strike has to be recognised for what it is: the major strategic problem in winning a victory over the NCB and the government. Real steps have to be taken to break the isolation.

The seizure of the national assets of the union cannot be allowed to pass by like the South Wales example. The compromise with the TUC right wing has to be ended. The NUM must once again begin to demand action from the rest of the movement, and put the screws on the TUC. Given the composition of the General Council, the best way to do that would be for the NUM to call for a recall TUC Conference, to discuss the failure of their strategy and what to do about the sequestration. There is nothing to lose, since **nothing** is being done at the moment.

There needs to be a turn of the power stations by the mass pickets. Since TUC policy was seen clearly to be a fiasco, the NUM still look towards the officials to change things inside the stations. Endless, fruitless meetings go on, yet the NUM still holds back on the mass pickets and no criticism is made of the unions inside (although there are signs that a change in this may now be taking place).

The issue of other unions digging in their heels and sticking on their own claims instead of being even more ready to compromise than usual must be continuously raised.

The Miners' strike has tended to



radicalise the working class, resulting in the level of strikes (other than the miners) going up rather than down since the miners' strike began. The car industry is the strongest reflection of it since that is where exploitation has been pressed the hardest.

Austin Rover workers are now on strike and that is a very important second front. If the strike sticks, and turns into a longer struggle, it will create very important new conditions for the miners' strike. It will raise the political temperature and exacerbate the already serious economic conditions created by the miners strike. The same "viability" argument, which is the basis of the NCB case, is used by the management.

The most important connection,

however, is that the Austin Rover strike violates the Tory 1984 anti-union legislation. Yet instead of confronting the laws head-on and creating a much broader second front with the miners, there are signs that at least some of the Austin Rover unions are trying to duck a confrontation with the law by refusing to call the strike official.

This week sees the end of the contract for Ford workers, and this could build substantially on the strike movement alongside the miners.

These strikes, however, cannot of themselves provide a strategic answer for the miners' strike. Pressure must come from the NUM to build on it and demand direct support — which is a qualitatively higher level of action. If this is to be the case, then the NUM must utilise the

authority they have in the trade union movement, and fight to break the isolation the strike is now in.

NUM militants must fight for this kind of political turn if the consequences of the events of last week are to be reversed.

- *Strike in defence of the NUM
- *For a recall TUC Conference to fight the sequestration
- *Call for strikes alongside the miners
- *Mass pickets on the power stations
- *End the compromise with the TUC right wing

Your fight is our fight — Women's support for miner's wives.

Anne-Marie Sweeney describes the experiences of the Oxford Women's Support Group.

THE Oxford Women's Support Group was launched at the end of May, mainly organising around food collections, in response to the desperate appeals from the newly formed Maerdy Women's Support Group in South Wales.

It was clear from major rallies held in Oxford that the most moving and popular speeches came from the women from the mining communities.

We wanted to offer encouragement for them to come and stay and campaign in Oxford along with the NUM. We knew that this would be no easy task — staying away from home in strange places; speaking in public, mostly for the first time in their lives, to large and often politically sophisticated audiences. The women were nervous and needed the support of other women who they could talk to, have a drink and a laugh with, stay in their homes and feel they were not amongst strangers.

Women understand the pressures they are under — like the worries of having to leave early in the morning from the Rhondda wondering if your little daughter will have got over the night's sickness and be all right with her father; and hoping that he will not be too resentful that he is missing a week's picketing to look after the kids while you are away in Oxford.

But it has not been a one-way process: we have learned and drawn inspiration



Miners' wives lobby the TUC Congress.

from these women facing the odds stacked against them, who show courage and determination, compassion, humour and a talent for speaking on clear class lines in meetings with a simplicity and honesty that is so rare.

"We're not behind our men, we are alongside of them... We've stayed in our homes too long, sat back and watched them take away our railway, shut down our nurseries, put up our rents and close our hospitals — and done nothing. But now they want to take away our pit and destroy our community, and now at last we're fighting, and by God we won't stop until we win. And when we win this, we won't be able to go back to where we were before. Once we've started battling against all the unjust things, we see how much is to be done; you can't just stop."

Thatcher's attacks on the pit communities have unleashed a phenomenal mass movement of working class women that — if given the right leadership from the labour movement — could threaten the existence of her government.

Anyone on the August 11 womens march in London will have recognised this. There were thousands of working class women; many not trade unionists; many on their first ever demonstration. They marched singing and shouting slogans... "I'd rather be a picket than a scab" ... "We want 30,000 coppers on the dole" ... A unique march of women organised not through workplaces, but through the communities.

In Oxford the Maerdy women asked the Women's Support Group to paint their banner. The slogan they chose was "Your Fight is our Fight", with symbols of cuts struggles and the peace movement alongside "Coal not Dole".

When we were painstakingly painting it, one miner said, joking "This strike will be over by the time you're through painting."

"Never mind," said another, "We'll put it in the Rhondda museum."

"Oh no you won't," replied a woman, showing him the design, "It's for active service after the strike as well."

"You mean that when I get back from a day's work in the pit my dinner won't be on the table because she'll still be going out to some meeting?"

The women face many battles ahead — and one which the Maerdy and Oxford Women's Groups share is that of fighting the sexism of male comrades and fellow trade unionists.

This can take the blatant form — judging women at support meetings not in terms of their political contribution but in terms of their legs — or more insidious forms — speaking too long at women's meetings; putting the women's report at the bottom of the agenda; not encouraging women to take part in decision-making or political discussion; relegating them to the issue of food collections and distribution, on the unstated view that "that's all they understand".

It is true that none of the NUM speakers can convey the hardships endured in the mining communities as well as the women can. But that is not all that women can convey. The rapid development of their political awareness during the course of the strike has meant that the women are eager to watch the news, find out what has gone on in lodge meetings, and are now prepared strongly to challenge their husbands' assessments of an event. They will speak out in meetings attacking bureaucratic moves, and express their own virulent condemnation of Kinnock and the TUC leaders.

In discussions around a dinner table you witness the women's ability to link the personal and political. They may be discuss-



The Miner

ing recipes: but in the same breath as talking about the 101 things they have learned to do with corned beef since the strike began, they'll be condemning Bill Sirs or discussing the tactics on a picket line or what should be done against the sequestrations.

The women were furious at the loss of hard-fought for, desperately-needed funds in South Wales. It was a woman from Maerdy and her husband who initiated the brilliant occupation of the Price Waterhouse offices in Birmingham, foxing the security guards, jamming the lifts, phoning out press releases and organising fish and chips, hoisted through the window!

When the miners first came to Oxford, they expected their beds to be made, food cooked and dishes to be washed by the women in the houses they stayed in. When challenged on this their response was "Oh, you're not one of those feminists are you?"

The women were warned before they came that Oxford was full of feminists — and not to pick up any of their "strange"

ideas. Of course the ideas were not so strange to Maerdy women, and it was not a question of the "liberated" enlightening the "oppressed" so much as a sharing of experiences of women from different communities, on how we felt oppressed and put down — and what we were doing about it. Involvement in struggle has changed us all. We talk about many things — women's health; the knowledge and control of our own bodies; the waiting lists for operations like hysterectomies. A number of the women are in other jobs in the Rhondda — part-time shop workers or in the caring, servicing jobs such as homehelps, or hospital work. We talk about attacks on these jobs and services. One of the women works in a geriatric hospital under threat of closure; we discuss plans for an occupation. And we discuss our personal lives — the pressures of being a single parent, of jealousy, of experiencing male violence in the home.

During the time of the Oxford rapist hitting the headlines locally and nationally, terrorising women in (as it was sensationally put) the "triangle of fear" of East Ox-



ford, Mardy women and miners were staying with women in the area.

There were many discussions about rape; about the fact that police were putting resources into smashing picket lines instead of trying to catch this man; the relationship between rape and pornography; the attitude of men believing women ask for "it" whether "it" is rape or being battered in the home; the question of men looking on women as their property or solely in terms of their bodies.

There is a very good statement from the Bristol Rape Crisis Line & Incest Survivors Group sent with a £95 donation to the miners:

"We declare our complete support for the miners and are holding regular collections.

We see a clear link between us and you — that is one of dignity. We fight for women to regain their dignity, you are fighting to maintain yours.

What goes on in society is reflected in the rapes we come across. When a woman is raped she is often made to feel it is her own fault.

The ruling class and their media use society's prejudices in such a way that those who suffer injustice end up being blamed, whether it is women being raped or people fighting for jobs. Part of our job is to challenge the myths that keep us all divided.

Victory to the miners."

The Women's Support Group in Maerdy have come together on the basis of a strike, but this strike has taken over their lives. The women are no longer coping with their problems (or not, as is so often the case) in the isolation of their own homes; they are now organised together and have one another, a solidarity and sisterhood that makes them strong. Gwen, one of the speakers, has just had an operation on her spine "I couldn't have coped but for the girls, I've lost so much weight none of my clothes will fit. They organised and got me the clothes I need. I have to have salt baths daily to help me heal. Of course my hot water and everything is run on coal. They're getting me coal, organising special foods I can eat, like Complian.

My husband and I are only on £9 a week and I'm getting no extra help for these special needs, I'll never forget everyone's kindness."

But it isn't just compassion that motivates the women, it is a determination to show that whatever is thrown at them by this government they will not be beat. As Gwen herself has said "We won't be starved back, we'll eat every last sheep on the mountains before we're done, and we've started on the rabbits."

They are every bit a part of the magnificent class conscious tradition of the Rhondda. They all know of the 1926 strike: the sacrifices made then and during the Spanish Civil War with the loss of Rhondda miners in the fight against fascism. In the close communities of the valleys, children and grandchildren are aware of past hardships and battles.

On a picket line in Port Talbot, one woman was being manhandled by the police for throwing an egg at the lorries. A small woman getting bruised because an egg hit the wheels of a scab HGV. Glynnis from Mardy said:

"I've got no courage, but when you saw what they were doing to her you had to do something. I tried to pull away a policeman and said 'Get your hands off her!' He shouted at me 'Get off you, back to your kitchen sink.'

"I told him 'Yes, I will, and I'll bring it back with me next time and wrap it round your flaming neck.'

"He said there was no need to be abusive; he was only doing his duty!

"'And I'm only doing mine,' I replied, 'and the difference between you and me is that I'm not being paid £500 a week to do it!'"

The Oxford trade union movement has special reason to recognise the critical need for wives to organise in support of husbands on strike. In 1974 British Leyland management and the media sponsored a strike breaking "Back to Work" campaign by "Cowley wives" during a strike at the Assembly Plant.

One of the organisers of that movement — a Mrs. MacGibbon — has re-emerged during the miners' strike as a media-

conscious Kent "miners wife" attempting to organise yet another "back to work" campaign — supported by the shady right wing Freedom Association. An attempt to foster a similar move in South Wales has totally failed.

The community is solid: but the Maerdy women are bitterly aware of the deprivation of their valleys, with the roads full of potholes; many houses with only an outside lavatory; 70% youth unemployment and nothing for kids to do. Wages in the South Wales pits have lagged behind with falling investment, using out of date equipment passed down from modernised, more "productive" pits in Notts and Yorkshire.

The Oxford Women's Support Group has visited Maerdy and been welcome, despite the hardships, into the homes of mining families, who have received delegations from as far afield as Belgium and Holland.

When the women from Maerdy have come up to Oxford we've shown them around the tourist attractions. I've seen the women stand dumbfounded at the beauty of some of the colleges, and then express anger and frustration at the privileges bestowed under capitalism to the children of the upper class, while they are fighting for the right of theirs to go 60 ft underground in hazardous, oppressive conditions to work digging up coal.

The women are realising through their developing political consciousness that the struggle they are involved with hits at the centre of this system. They recognise a solidarity with the Catholic people of the 6 counties of Ireland and the Greenham women in their similar struggles against institutionalised state violence, arbitrary arrest, intimidation and curfews.

The tragedy would be if this phenomenal movement is betrayed, left isolated by other sections of the working class held back by trade union leaders who are on their knees to the Tories.

Victory can be ours if the miners are joined in a struggle against the government on all fronts. There is a quote from a black woman in Soweto: "Now you have touched the women you have struck a rock, you have dislodged a bolder — you will be crushed!" Thatcher look out!

Austin Rover: 5 years of wage cuts.

A Cowley Shop Steward gives the background to the Austin Rover strike, entering its second week as we go to press.

THE explosion of militancy on wages throughout the car industry is the outcome of years of small increases coupled with a huge increase in company profits and productivity on the shop floor.

After a successful two week strike by Vauxhall workers wrung concessions from the employers and a deal worth as much as 13%, Jaguar and Austin Rover workers have been the next in line, with Ford unions also rejecting the company's miserable pay offer.

Austin Rover, however, is the hardest place to organise a strike. This is due not to any lack of militancy amongst the workforce — in the Cowley Assembly Plant alone there have been 168 strikes this year so far — but because of the leadership given to the rank and file.

For more than ten years union leaders have had a "special relationship" with BL management; they have, in short, been willing to give anything away rather than mount a real fight. They have argued that each sell-out has been to "save the only British car manufacturer" — at the expense, in each case, of the British car worker. No betrayal has been below them.

In the mid 1970s, under the Wilson government, union leaders collaborated with management in the "participation" scheme designed to undermine the shop stewards' movement and transform it into an obliging arm of management. Then,

when Michael Edwardes came in and scrapped the whole charade of "participation", union leaders sat back and watched Combine Committee chair and Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson, another 8 Longbridge stewards, and Cowley Deputy Convenor Alan Thornett victimised and sacked: the only action by union officials was to ensure that spontaneous strikes in defence of these stewards were isolated and defeated.

In wage review after review the same officials have given away all of the conditions and standards of living that had made BL workers the best-paid and best-organised carworkers in the country.

In the 1979 wage review, under Michael Edwardes (and Ian MacGregor) BL made the first big move. They put forward a 5% wage-cutting offer and a 92-page "blue" document of conditions. This document took away all union power on the shop floor over such things as seniority, movement of labour and "mutuality" in Industrial Engineers' studies.

That review was supposed to have been settled on November 1 1979; but the union leaders kept talking. The national steel strike began on January 1 1980; still the BL negotiators kept on talking. They eventually held a ballot in February, which showed a 2-1 majority in favour of a strike. But still the union leaders would not call a strike; they kept on talking.

The talks went on until the day the steel strike ended: April 8. Then they left it up to individual BL plants to decide what action to take; ignoring the result of the national ballot.

Even then a number of plants came out on strike. But Moss Evans then intervened to argue them back to work on the basis of

a new and meaningless clause being added to the "blue" document.

Despite this betrayal, feeling built up strongly again in the run-up to the 1981 pay review. Mass meetings all over the country voted for a strike from November 1. Most national officials supported the strike call.

But in the week running up to November 1 every imaginable person was wheeled in to try to stop the strike. Michael Foot had a go; the TUC became involved, with Clive Jenkins, for example — who represents BL foremen — speaking out against the strike.

On October 31 the General Secretaries of all of the BL unions — including some with a BL membership of only dozens — met management, quite outside the negotiating procedure. Management made an even worse offer.

The outcome was that the strike went ahead — but with recall mass meetings arranged two days later.

Moss Evans retreated from support for the strike to sit on the fence. But there was no doubt which side Terry Duffy was on as he broke a trip to Kenya to become first item on all news broadcasts, rushing back hot-foot to argue for a return to work. Duffy's was the only clear statement of position. In the confusion, while Cowley plants voted to stay out, Longbridge workers followed their "Communist" convenor Jack Adams and voted to return to work.

Although the 1981 strike lasted only two days it created a tremendous feeling, with thousands of pickets at each of the factories. This made the demoralisation which followed the sell-out even stronger. Not surprisingly at the next wage negotiations the company was able to make



Who seems to be in charge? Edwardes and MacGregor preside over BL Board in 1978.

another major gain, and force through a 2-year deal.

This history of sell-outs is at the back of most Austin Rover workers' minds as they go into the 1984 pay review. Yet militancy has been on the rise as the review date has neared.

One reason for this is that for the past two years the company has been on the offensive. At Cowley, for example, management now brags that each worker is producing 2½ times what they did in 1980. This means that by imposing flexibility and speed-up as provided for in the "Blue document" and with the help of repeated union sell-outs, they have boosted the workload by 250% at minimal cost.

At first bonus payments were increased. But recently they have been dramatically cut back. In the past few weeks Cowley workers have been earning *less* money for a full week than they did *before the 1982 review!*

It is this continuous management offensive that has led to the spate of strikes in Cowley Assembly, and an overtime ban in the neighbouring Cowley Body Plant that has lasted four months. And it also helps explain the current Austin Rover claim: while Longbridge called for a £22 claim, Cowley argued for getting rid of the bonus scheme and going for a larger cash increase.

Longbridge leaders won the vote — thus excluding from the claim the issue which most affects Cowley and which alone has cut Cowley wages by £25 per week.

On October 16 the company offered the unions another 2-year deal, with 4.6% this year and 4.4% next. They also offered to consolidate some of the bonus — money already being earned. And a clause was to be included whereby any unconstitutional dispute (even an overtime ban) of any duration would stop all provision for lay-off pay. This would severely affect wages.

The obvious choice was: to strike, or not to strike? But this was not the way the unions' Joint Negotiating Committee responded. They decided that mass meetings would be called on October 25. But a delegate conference had been called for October 22: how could they avoid a resolution for strike action? Enter Jack Adams, Longbridge's Stalinist successor to Derek Robinson. He moved a resolution which rejected the company's offer but called vaguely for "any action necessary" to win the claim. No amendments were allowed.

An attempt by Cowley Stewards to amend the resolution and call for a strike from November 1 was ruled out of order — even though the 120-strong delegate conference is plainly more representative than the 36-person JNC.

The outcome was that the mass meetings would leave *all* further decisions, on further negotiations or what form of action to take, in the hands of the JNC.

When shop stewards met in Cowley, resolutions in both plants demanding that the JNC call a strike from November 1 were defeated — narrowly in the Assembly Plant, but receiving only six votes in the right-wing controlled Body Plant.

Nevertheless as the mass meetings took place the whole of the media proclaimed that the JNC resolution amounted to a strike vote. The company too issued several leaflets and statements arguing that the resolution was a strike vote.

So whatever the actual wording, every worker who voted for that resolution believed they were voting for a strike. And the mood of the membership was shown by the near-unanimous vote in every sizable plant. At Cowley Assembly, where the platform declared it to be a strike vote, there were 30 against out of 4,000. In the



Cowley Assembly workers during the 1983 "washing-up" time strike: now an end to all official AUEW strikes?

Body Plant, out of 2,500 TGWU members, only 2 voted against.

There is much more at stake than wages. The stewards' movement in BL has been decimated through endless sell-outs, with demoralised militants taking voluntary redundancy, leaving the plants or in a few cases capitulating to management.

A battle now would create conditions to change the situation with new militants coming forward. A victory would change the balance of forces in favour of the unions; a defeat would create some problems: but worst of all for morale of the militants would be no fight at all.

Getting the 1984 strike off the ground.

AUSTIN ROVER

By Alan Thornett

IT was hard to escape the feeling in the run-up to the current Austin Rover strike that it would be smothered at birth by the national officials of the various unions — as in recent years.

Since the rejection of the offer — 10% over 2 years, with strings — there have been repeated hurdles placed in front of the strike. Having held the vote solidly in favour of strike action at two rounds of mass meetings, TGWU National Officer Grenville Hawley announced to the next meeting of the Joint Negotiating Committee "Well, now we have a problem!" He went so far at that meeting to offer the company that he would recommend acceptance if they simply brought forward 2% of next year's increase — giving 7% this year and 3% next! (The sell-out of the

solid strike at Jaguar has taken place on an almost identical formula, with workers being fobbed off with a £1.20 increase from money they would have had next year anyway.)

The JNC called a delegate Conference to take the final decision. For many militants that seemed to signal the end of the strike — since the delegate conference is weighted 3-1 in favour of the 10,000 minority who voted against the strike at mass meetings, and **against** the 15,000 majority who voted in favour. (A disproportionate number of delegates come from small plants or skilled sections who have opposed the strike.)

To everyone's surprise, however, the delegates on this occasion respected the majority vote and decided to proceed with

the strike.

But Grenville Hawley did not want to leave it at that. He wanted yet another round of mass meetings. He must have known that to take a third vote on the same issue would have brought a rejection of strike action — since the workforce would lose any confidence that their leaders were prepared to fight the case.

Fortunately Hawley was defeated, and the conference voted 75-50 not only to proceed with the strike, but not to have any further mass meetings until after an acceptable offer is on the table.

This was an important breakthrough for Austin Rover workers. Always in the past there have been continual mass meetings — again and again, until one vote was lost, and management took advantage.

But the company were not willing to lose such opportunities this time. They began an immediate, orchestrated campaign to challenge the legality of mass meeting votes, and at the same time to seek to discredit the votes that were taken.

This tactic had been used effectively by employers in the second of the two recent dock strikes — with the mass media thundering that there had been "confusion" at the Tilbury mass meeting, and claiming workers had not understood the resolution.

The same blatant interference into democratic procedures took shape in Austin Rover, with management collaborating outrageously with the local press to fabricate "news" that might discredit the vote.

In the Cowley Assembly Plant, the mass meeting vote was a clear 3-2 majority to strike. Nobody claimed otherwise. But management immediately sent foremen along the tracks — to urge workers to strike against the mass meeting decision, and call for a secret ballot! Contrary to the usual threats to sack strikers, management offered to pay anyone who took strike action their normal wages! Several small groups stopped work as a result of this pressure, and were met by convenors.

Management then called for a mass meeting — giving the impression it had been called by the unions. Several hundred workers turned up: but when they found it was addressed by the plant manager, they bombarded the platform with stones and other missiles.

At the same time reporters were invited on to the plant — in another breach with custom. They were encouraged to interview workers who were against the strike decision. But their reports were subsequently edited to exclude any quotes from workers who supported the strike. The coverage in the Oxford Mail was tailored to give the impression that a majority were calling for a secret ballot. Similar distortions occurred at Longbridge.

Oxford NUJ has since lodged a bitter protest to the Oxford Mail against the manufacturing of "news" in this way.

Since then, management propaganda has regularly claimed that the "majority" of Austin Rover workers are against the strike.

But the action has remained strong in Cowley and Longbridge — the two plants which control all production of finished cars and employ 20,000 of the 28,000 Austin Rover workers. Elsewhere there has been a return to work, despite the majority mandate for strike action. A significant exception has been the skilled sections at Cowley, who voted against the strike but are now out.

An indication of the strength of the strike in Cowley and Longbridge has been the vote by electricians to defy their Executive instruction, and remain on strike.



The decision of Austin Rover management to go to the High Court for an injunction under the Tebbit legislation requiring a ballot before an official strike can be lawfully called was an attempt to intimidate the unions — most especially their full-time officials.

The High Court granted the injunction, and ordered all the strikers back to work by 6.00 that same night. Only the EETPU responded. They and the AUEW had been the only leaders to attend the court, and their cases were adjourned for 3 days.

Then came the surprise Court ruling against Austin Rover — declaring that since both unions had made it clear that the strike was not official, the legislation did not apply.

Although this threw Austin Rover management off their stride, and avoided the issue for a few more days, the implications are very dangerous. To accept such a ruling, or — as suggested in the following day's *Morning Star* — to seek to exploit it as a "loophole" in the anti-union laws, would amount simply to an acceptance of the law, since it would accept that strikes held without ballots would have to be "unofficial". This would mean that the union leaders would be called upon to denounce every strike in order to avoid being dragged into the courts!

Austin Rover are now seeking High Court action for "contempt" against the other unions. It is crucial that these



unions — centrally the TGWU — refuse to follow the AUEW and EETPU in disowning their members. They were right not to attend the Court, and they must now declare the strike official, and confront the law.

Such a decision would not only be in the best interests of Austin Rover workers and the trade union movement as a whole: it would also widen the much-needed second front against the government which can help the miners win a victory against the NCB and Thatcher's laws.

Health workers face privatisation crunch.

By Jane Goss

THE crunch has come for the National Health Service. Privatisation is rearing its ugly head in almost every health district in the country. Only a few districts are still refusing to draw up a timetable for putting ancillary services out to tender. Most of the rebels have already been whipped into line by the DHSS via the Chairs of the Regional Health Authorities.

The full scope of what privatisation means and how determined the Tories are to force it through is now a reality for thousands of workers. Many of them are refusing to just accept it, and are fighting back. There has never been a time when the mood to take action has been so widespread in the NHS.

Virtually every day there is a strike somewhere opposing privatisation. As well as a series of one-day strikes in various districts, since March there has been a continuing strike at Barking, a 3 month strike at Hammersmith, and now a solid action at Addenbrokes in Cambridge.

What is readily apparent is that though they express the feelings of hospital workers, one-day strikes in scores of different areas are not the strategy needed to defeat a determined national campaign by the government to axe jobs, smash the union structures and lower standards of care in the NHS.

The Tories have put all their weight and resources behind ensuring that privatisation is rammed down the workers' throats. It is time that the trade union leaders put their full weight behind the workers, who are standing up in increasing numbers and refusing to accept private contractors or cuts in hours and jobs.

Health workers were beaten in 1982 during the pay strike. For thousands of workers it was a salutary lesson in the treachery of the TUC. It also provided lessons in the tactics not to be used in national disputes.

The TUC Health Services Committee wore down the rank and file by using the tactic of one-day strikes and "rolling days of action". The TUC, led by NUPE and COHSE,

fought tooth and nail against the demands of the rank and file for indefinite action with emergency cover only.

But 1982 also showed the power and strength of the NHS unions when they were united around common demands. Nurses were on picket lines with ancillary workers for the same pay award.

There were still problems, and trade union relationships were not idyllic, but the beginning of the unity needed at hospital level to win both the pay dispute and the coming battles over cuts and privatisation was there in embryo form. Instead of building on that, the TUC just forgot about it. 1984 saw the reverting back to the old system of different percentage awards for different groups, with no attempt to keep health workers united.

Under normal circumstances this would be disgraceful enough. But with the knowledge of the assault waiting for ancillary workers through privatisation, cutting the threads of unity was cynical treachery. Barely six months after the settlement on pay gave a clear indication from the TUC that the health service was fair game, Fowler issued the health Circular 83(18), instructing Health Authorities to begin the procedure for putting domestic, catering, and laundry services out to tender in order to achieve "savings".

In fact, savings had nothing to do with it. Privatisation is a political strategy which is based around the monetarist theory of the Tories. It is part of their "free market" fetish. It is geared to put money in the pockets of their friends, destroy the most militant sections of the health service trade unions, and to erode the health service even more.

Coupled with the assault on council services, and the cuts which would result from rate-capping, privatisation will remove all but the most destitute from any right to state services.

Privatisation is the foundation for the Tory castle of capitalism in relation to health, social security and basic services such as refuse collection, meals on wheels, etc. If it is not defeated before it takes a foothold, it will take years to reverse the damage it will do to the welfare state.



Norman Fowler

The NHS has never had the power of the industrial sector to hit profits and halt vital production. It is a relative latecomer to trade unionism and has been hampered by the large numbers of part-time workers and the dominance of dormant reformist branch secretaries and stewards. This also began to change after the 1982 dispute.

Large numbers of part-time workers, mainly women, took action for the first time. They were usually at the forefront of the pickets and the militant demands. They were not content to fade into the background again after the dispute was over. Many of them took a healthy interest in trade union issues and became stewards and branch officers. They were quick to realise that after the sell-out on pay the Tories would be quick to move on cuts and closures. They were also the very workers whose jobs would go first under privatisation.

Instead of a quick response to the threat of privatisation, the union bureaucrats toyed around with inadequate education days, glossy leaflets... and not much else. As the deadline for drawing up timetables loomed, no co-ordinated action was planned. Stewards were left to work out their own strategy and tactics for the areas they covered. There was a minimum of action taken before the February deadline: but where it was taken it proved effective. It showed the way forward. Yet the TUC remained silent.

In March, the Barking women took strike action against drastic cuts in their hours and wages imposed by Crothalls, the leading private contractor in the NHS. This raised the temperature. Their strike was taken up by the rank and file and was seen as a beacon in an otherwise dark void.

Since September there have been dozens of strikes about privatisation. Workers would have been prepared to support the Barking women by striking in solidarity. NUPE had a mandate from its conference to organise just that: but so far its leaders have refused to implement it.

The mood amongst health workers — who are now seeing the cuts in wages and the erosion of working conditions which come with private contractors — is angry. They are prepared to strike. If the Health Service unions really wanted to fight privatisation they would respond to it nationally by calling and fighting for indefinite action with emergency cover only. The response would be greater than in 1982. The time for such action, with the miners out as well, could never be better.

Cynics argue that workers would never sustain such action. They would go back to work. But a strike against privatisation would be much stronger than a strike about pay.

In 1982, with the one-day strikes, it wasn't long before people realised that even if we got the full twelve per cent, the award would not cover the money which had been lost by striking. Once that fact crops up it is difficult to keep people out no matter how determined they are.

But this issue is different. It is exactly the same issue as the miners are striking about. It is about jobs. The right to work and the right of young people to expect to have a job to go to. At Hammersmith, the number of full time jobs fell from 121 to 15 when the contract went to Mediclean. Merton Council put 1,000 people out of work through its privatisation programme. The job loss in the health service will be much higher. With 4 million people already jobless there is not much chance of getting jobs elsewhere.

Isolated one-day strikes will not win against privatisation. Even longer strikes — if isolated, as at Barking — will not win against privatisation. The only thing which will now stop contractors getting in, or kick them out from where they are already established, is using the militancy which exists. We need an indefinite national strike supported by all the health unions, with the commitment to build for supporting action by other sections of workers.

The power of Greenham women

Following the Greenham Common week of action in September, SUE ARNALL tries to explain the special impact of women's peace campaigners.

"When you see, children, what we do not see have compassion on us blind children of the dust. We too wished not to leave the world as we found it."

("Over our Dead Bodies", by Janet Dubé, p. 71)

THIS year the threads are coming together of our common struggle to create a world worth handing on to our children.

In our heads we knew of the links but it's in action that they are being recreated, as Greenham women break camp to join miners' picket lines, and the police use the same strategies to harass mining com-

munities as they have used in the north of Ireland for more than a decade.

The strip searches in Armagh are being repeated nightly on brave women who go over the wire to expose the Greenham death machine. The very nakedness of the aggression being used by police and army makes it impossible for us to use the usual defence of living with the horror. The threat of nuclear winter drives us to protest. The destruction of traditional communities in the search for "economic pits" has forced men and women to act.

A miner's wife on TV the other night said "The difference between 1926 and now is the women. We are together with the men and determined to preserve our communities and create a future for our children."

Last month's Exercise Lionheart, the biggest military manoeuvres since 1945, organising 130,000 troops for two weeks in the heart of Europe, was displayed nightly on the TV, showing the soldiers having "harmless" war games to the

HEALTH EMERGENCY November 1984 No 5 Bulletin of London Health Emergency



HERE COME THE PROFITEERS
Down go NHS standards!

Set up to cash in on NHS

Free newspaper against NHS cuts and privatisation — from London Health Emergency, 335, Grays Inn Rd., London WC1.



bewilderment and disbelief of local people, and yet on full pay, using the technology and skill that could blow us to hell.

And the response of most viewers was to take it in as a normal part of life, just as they coped with the thousands dying in Ethiopia during a world glut of wheat.

Psychologically we all live with the news as if it's a game that has no bearing on our own lives.

Occasionally we have nightmares when we see realistic films like the *Day After* or *Threads*; but we wake up, thank god it was only a film, and get on with life. So the arms race is perpetuated by the passive consent of most people content to leave it to our "leaders".

And that's why Greenham is so outstanding. It's not just the unusual, bizarre tactics, the congas, the spiders' webs, the chain letters, the structurelessness. It's the tenacity of women refusing to be passive any more.

Refusing to be evicted, coming back time and again, cutting the wire not once but thousands of times. Facing the incredible military machine eyeball to eyeball and not flinching; often smiling, singing, giving birth in primitive conditions in the face of all that obscenity. Refusing to accept the received wisdom that "yes, it's horrendous, but what can you do?"

Incredibly the Greenham movement has survived three winters without giving in to the sceptics. They have not accepted powerlessness as a fact. The peace camps make constantly visible the armed teeth of NATO, facts we all are more happy to forget.

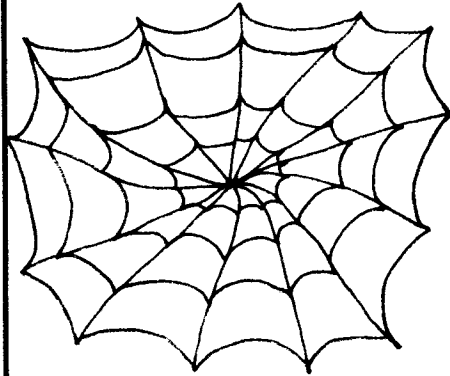
And the experience of many thousands of women of the arrests, the police violence, the sexual harassment from the army, the media distortion and the bias of the courts has not been lost on the movement.

The conclusions are being drawn and the links made with others struggling against the same forces. In September Greenham asked ten million women to make a miracle happen. Weird language, but if that's what it takes to break us out of our stupor, so what? The capitalists apparently have all the weapons, they have the force of the status quo on our consciousness, they tell us we can't win, so why bother trying?

But it's a massive con trick and the women in struggle know that from experience and are showing the rest of us. Greenham is a beacon of light, a symbol of power, of refusal to be dismayed by the lousy physical conditions, and so we need to recognise the importance of their struggle as a sign to us all.

Women's army is marching... Oh sisters, don't you weep, We are strong, We can win, Say NO to the bomb.

On the ground at Greenham

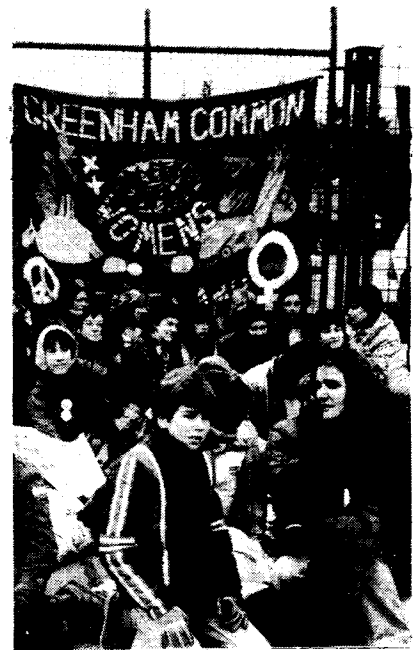


WE arrived late on Sunday night. We had intended to stay at Blue Gate but were dismayed to find no sign of the camp, only some sinister looking mounds of earth where it had been. We discovered the camp the next day. The Council had dumped the earth and rubble on their site and they had had to set up camp in the woods close by the gate. Local residents had been shocked by the way women transformed the mounds by placing a simple wooden cross at the head of each. It mustn't do much for house-values to have such an obvious reminder of what USAF Greenham Base is all about! 'We spent the first night of our short stay doing a Cruise Watch at Violet Gate, the next Gate but one, since the women at Indigo had left their camp to go and make links with another group of women in struggle, the miners' wives.

It was a fine night — it could have been almost pleasant to sit up by the camp fire — but I felt very uneasy most of the time. The women from the Camp slept across the road in the woods, but the fire and the Camp itself were on a narrow stretch of land between the fence and the road.

Every time I heard a vehicle approach I wondered whether another stone would be thrown (a van belonging to the Camp had had its windscreen shattered only the previous night). The women at Greenham have learned to take in their stride worse harassment than this (such as the petrol filled tennis ball an intruder at the Camp left behind when women woke up and disturbed him) but for the newcomer at Greenham it's a new and not very welcome experience.

And the hostility doesn't just come from the good folk of Newbury. All



the time I was there a soldier sat a few paces away on the other side of the fence. He had a spotlight which he trained on anyone who moved in the Camp — which was already lit up by the arclights round the base.

Every twenty minutes or so a jeep would drive up, often sounding its horn to wake up the sleeping women. The soldiers would talk loudly for a few moments, lacing every comment with obscenities designed to be offensive to the women there.

I found it hard to understand so much hostility from those strangers, young enough to be my son, and who seemed not to see us as people but as some strange creature, the Greenham Woman.

The next day at Emerald Camp we experienced a third kind of harassment, one more familiar to women all over the country: a flasher. Women from the camp chased him, caught him and dealt with him — peacefully. That particular man is unlikely to come back but the sexual threat is always there, whether voiced by the soldiers or possibly lurking in the bushes.

Looking back over this I wonder how I managed to come back feeling so high, with batteries recharged! It might sound trite, but I found talking to the women there was in-

spiring. One woman of only 18 was talking of conducting her own defence at the Crown Court "because the lawyers are so busy with the miners' pickets"! Another, well past retirement age and troubled with rheumatism, although spending most of her time at Greenham, still found time to be active in her local Peace Group.

Another two women turned up at two o'clock in the morning during my Cruise Watch. When asked where they'd come from they just said "In There", pointing at the

base. They had cut through all that wire, been caught, subjected to a strip search and four hours questioning — and then released.

No arrests — no adverse publicity for Heseltine. The women were very calm, they had been in the base many times before and will certainly be in again. Women are getting in every week, they're just not getting any publicity.

We were lucky. There were no evictions on the three days we were there but at some gates the bailiffs are coming daily or even several

times a day. Anything the women can't carry away quickly as personal property is seized.

But the harassment is not weakening the women's resolve. There are more camps than ever now, and more women at each camp. And the women are stronger, more determined than ever not only to get Cruise missiles out but to work for a society based on quite different values.

Palestine

What's new since Lebanese invasion?

MORE than two years after Israel's invasion of the Lebanon, most newsmongers are unanimous in pronouncing the monumental failure of "Operation Peace for Galilee". Its prime objective to liquidate the PLO once and for all did not come up to expectations; nor did its plans to ensure permanent supremacy of the Phalangists in Lebanon and secure a peace treaty. The May 17th Agreement, tentatively negotiated with the Phalangist president Gemayel, foundered under the blows of the left nationalists. So the sequels of the invasion seem nothing but a disastrous entrenched occupation with its heavy toll of casualties, now topping 600 Israeli soldiers dead, coupled with a ruinous financial burden.

However, a closer look at the developments in the area shows an altogether different picture. It suggests that the invasion, while not fulfilling what it set out to do, has ruptured the status quo and created ripe conditions for drawing the reactionary Arab regimes into the Camp David process and for the imposition of an imperialist-dictated settlement in the area. The mood of "new realism" in the Arab ranks became evident at a time when Israel itself is under increasing pressure to settle. First, the catastrophic state of the economy can no longer allow the

In the wake of Thatcher's Falklands war Israeli military chiefs unleashed their brutal blitzkrieg and invasion of southern Lebanon. Lucy Matthews and Jack Goldberg explain how things have changed since then.

same level of military expenditure, and plans to trim down the defence budget are currently under discussion. Secondly, US intervention to refloat an economy hovering on the brink of disaster, would inevitably carry strings to bring Israel to heel, or at least to curtail its freedom of manoeuvre.

It also suggests that the unity of the PLO has suffered a severe, perhaps irreparable, dent. While Israel failed to wipe out the PLO as a military force, it nevertheless won an important victory over the Palestinian forces and their Lebanese allies, by forcing the PLO out of its stronghold in the Lebanon. The Palestinian fighters were then scattered throughout the breadth of the Arab world, where most of them remain until now languishing in semi-captivity — the only exception being in Syria, which, under threat of attack from Israel, left PLO fighters fully operational.

The consequences for the PLO



Yasser Arafat

were serious and far-reaching. The mood of defeatism and prostration favoured the rise of the right wing of the PLO who felt confident to junk democratically-agreed procedure, and in flagrant breach of the PNC* decisions, re-opened relations with Egypt — the only Arab state to have openly co-operated with the implementation of the imperialist plan for the region, in signing the Camp David Agreement.

Arafat's visit to Cairo last January signified on his part, and on the part of the right wing in the PLO he represented, nothing less than the first step towards a process of negotiations with imperialism — a surrender to Israel and a betrayal of

*The Palestinian National Council (PNC) is the supreme policy-making body of the Palestinian people. Its first meeting took place in Jerusalem in May 1964. Its last meeting (16th PNC) was held in Algiers in February 1983, attended by 357 delegates out of the total of 417.

the Palestinian struggle. The full implications of the visit, however, stretch far beyond the arena of Palestinian politics: the rapprochement between Arafat and Mubarak has opened the way for the pro-Western Arab states to renew their relations with Egypt — something they have long been hoping for. And this development is leading inevitably to a reversal of the previous line-up of the Arab states; whereas previously it was Egypt that was isolated in the Arab world, it is now Syria that seems to be becoming increasingly isolated as the other Arab regimes move towards the Camp David arena.

It cannot be said at the present time that this major turn in favour of the implementation of an imperialist-dictated settlement in the region has been decisively settled. However, if we look at the position of the forces traditionally opposed to an imperialist settlement, it becomes clear that "the Palestinian revolution" is presently facing its most serious threat ever. The "oppositionists" within the PLO, sheltering under the dubious hospitality of Syria, remain deeply divided, and therefore unable to exert a significant political influence in the area; while Syria itself is becoming increasingly isolated for three reasons. The first is the shift to the right of the Arab regimes; the second is the demise of the anti-imperialist forces in the PLO — a demise which Syria has actively helped to bring about, and is still playing a decisive part in. The third reason is the lack of support that Syria has received from the Soviet Union in its anti-Arafat stance, and the subsequent shift of Soviet policy away from its exclusive reliance on Syria, and towards building relationships not only with those regimes which seem set for a reunion with Egypt, but also with Egypt itself.

The present fragmentation of the forces in the PLO began as a split inside Fatah*, the largest and most influential organisation in the PLO headed by Yasser Arafat, also the most heterogeneous of the organisations inside the PLO where Marxists and the traditional bourgeoisie coexist side by side. It was inside Fatah that those seeking a compromise solution with imperialism have always been contained. Friction between these elements, and those opposed to such an accommodation has been a source of conflict throughout Fatah's history. In the aftermath of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, the conflict sharpened and a dispute over the appointment of two military com-

*The eight resistance organisations grouped in the PLO are: Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Saïqua, the Arab Liberation Front, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command (not to be confused with PFLP), the Palestine Struggle Front and the Palestine Liberation Front.



manders, whose conduct during the war left their commitment to the struggle seriously in doubt, brought matters to a head. Subsequently the leader of the "military solution" camp, Abu Musa, presented a list of demands to try to bring to heel the decision-makers under the democratic control of the rank and file. This was met with a rebuff, and fighting between the two sides erupted.

The fighting itself was, however, by no means the decisive factor behind the present fragmented state of the PLO, although it has suited Arafat to present it as such. Responsibility for the fragmentation lies entirely with Arafat himself. His decision to visit Cairo can only be seen as a calculated move to finish the PLO as an independent democratic organisation in which all Palestinian groups have a voice. And it was ab-



From left to right: George Habash, General Secretary of the PFLP, Ali Nasser Mohamed, General Secretary of the Yemini Socialist Party, Nayef Hawatmeh, General Secretary of the DFLP.

solutely necessary for him to achieve this before he could start making fresh moves towards negotiating an imperialist-dictated settlement.

After the outbreak of fighting it became apparent that Arafat had no interest in taking steps to heal the rift and reunite the PLO. On the contrary, he devoted all his efforts to ensure that no PNC takes place in which all the political components of the PLO are represented, and is preparing instead for a conference of his supporters that would have sufficient credibility to "represent" the Palestinians in future planned negotiations.

While Arafat has been consolidating his position, gathering support and building a base for himself in Jordan, the "dissidents" led by Abu Musa have joined forces with the PFLP-General Command, Saiqua (the Syrian backed Palestinian group), and two smaller Palestinian groups, the Popular Struggle Front and the Arab Liberation Front to form the "National Alliance". This grouping, backed by Syria, is only united in their demand for the resignation of Arafat as Chair of the PLO, as a precondition for attending a PNC meeting. Otherwise there is little political homogeneity between them. In fact, it is only Saiqua which can really be said to be a political organisation.

The peculiarity of the Palestinian liberation struggle in never having had any "home soil" on which to base itself, has always left Palestinian organisations open to political domination and control by their host countries. It was the strength of the PLO as a united, democratic organisation that has prevented the reactionary Arab regimes from forcing a compromise settlement, through Arafat, long before now. Equally, it was the unity of the PLO which has frustrated Syria's attempts to subordinate those forces inside the PLO opposed to such a settlement, to

its own power. The present fragmentation of the PLO is seriously threatening to wipe out the only gain ever made by the Palestinians — an influential and independent voice in the area.

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), both self-proclaimed Marxist organisations which have always played a prominent role in the politics of the PLO, are fully aware of the serious implications of the split. Ever since the split emerged, these two organisations have been absolutely central in negotiations with both sides, to try to bring the PLO back together again. But however correct their efforts to pick up the pieces and retrieve the situation, the balance of power in the region seems to be heavily loaded against them.

The PFLP and the DFLP have joined together with the Palestinian Communist Party and the Palestinian Liberation Front, to form a bloc called the "Democratic Alliance". This bloc has, since last spring, been negotiating on the one hand with the Central Committee of Fatah, a basic document for reuniting all groups within the PLO in a democratic organisation committed to an anti-imperialist struggle (the agreement with the Central Committee being the key to outflanking Arafat by depriving him of the support he needs for continuing on his present course) while, on the other hand, it has been trying to persuade the National Alliance to drop its demand for Arafat's resignation (this demand being unacceptable to the Central Committee of Fatah, and strongly supported by Syria precisely because Syria wants to prevent the reuniting of the PLO).

So far the Democratic Alliance has achieved one notable success in its first task in procuring the ratification

by the Fatah Central Committee of the "Aden-Algiers Agreement". This document recognises that Arafat's visit to Cairo was a purely personal event, that it contravened PNC decisions and that the PLO is in no way bound by the results of the visit nor any commitment that may have been made. Further, the agreement reaffirms the anti-imperialist line of the PLO stressing the importance of good relations with the Soviet Union and Syria, and decisions taken at the Baghdad Summit in 1978 for a total boycott of Egypt and non-cooperation with the Camp David plans. In addition, major organisational measures are contained in the document designed to ensure full representation of all groups at the leadership level and to prevent "personal acts" such as the Cairo visit from occurring in the future.

The Aden Algiers Agreement may be deemed a success in that it contains everything required by the Democratic Alliance as the minimum basis for reconvening all constituent groups to a PNC. However, it is only if the Democratic Alliance is able to persuade the National Alliance to agree to attend a PNC on the basis of this document, that Fatah will be forced to abide by the agreed terms. Without this, there is no doubt that Arafat will continue going his own way regardless.

Persuading the National Alliance to soften its intransigent stand has proved a harder task. There have been several problems facing the Democratic Alliance in this task, and it is not entirely clear which ones have been the most important. First of all there is the problem that the Democratic Alliance is based on Syrian soil, which inevitably makes negotiations aimed at breaking the National Alliance from the Syrian position rather tricky — the PFLP have only been allowed to organise in Syria since 1978, and are no

strangers to Syrian prisons. Secondly contained within the National Alliance is Saiqua, whose politics are dictated by the Syrian Ba'athist Party, and which is accordingly opposed to the reunification of the PLO. Thirdly is the slightly different problem of the relation between Syria and the "dissident" group led by Abu Musa: Abu Musa's history as the military hero of the bitter fighting against the Syrian in Tel-al-Za'atar in 1978 leaves no doubt as to his scepticism regarding the Syrian commitment to the Palestinian struggle; however, in choosing to take arms against Arafat and his followers, the "dissidents" were forced into a dangerous dependency on Syria — something that Syria has not been slow to exploit. Finally, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that part of the problem faced by the Democratic Alliance is that it is trying to negotiate with a group which is not only politically very heterogeneous — united only in their one demand, but not necessarily in their reasons for demanding it — but also politically immature. With the exception of Saiqua, the member groups of the National Alliance are basically military, not political groups, and it is possible that it is simply a lack of political experience and understanding that makes them believe that the removal of Arafat will automatically defeat the political trend he represents in the PLO.

The Democratic Alliance can still reach an agreement with the National Alliance but time is running out. The negotiations were able to take place only because the Democratic Alliance has been able to forestall on the one hand Arafat from convening a PNC until an agreement with the National Alliance has been reached and on the other hand the National Alliance from holding its own Conference as an alternative to the PNC. The dire consequences of this balancing act have been the paralysis of the PLO for the last two years.

But the situation cannot be frozen for ever, and there are already indications that the voices of an independent PLO may be losing the battle. Arafat has recently announc-



Hafez Al-Assad

ed that he has now gathered enough "independents" willing to support him to hold a quorate PNC which, if he "had no alternative" would take place in Jordan. Algeria, host country of the previous PNC, has refused to host a PNC which does not include the National Alliance. Certain that many leading members of the PFLP and DFLP would be imprisoned if they entered Jordan, Arafat is, in effect, posing the possibility of a PNC which would only gather political opinions sympathetic to his own. There is little doubt that, were he to achieve this, the Conference would receive the backing of the majority of the Arab states — with the exception of Syria and perhaps Algeria and South Yemen — as the new body representing the Palestinian people in all future negotiations.

The convulsion within the ranks of the PLO was not without consequences for the rest of the Arab world. It triggered off major shifts in the pattern of balance of forces. Until then, the political complexion of any Arab country could roughly be measured by its attitude to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

After signing the Camp David Agreement with Israel — perceived by the Arab masses as the "ultimate

betrayal" — Egypt stood alone, outlawed by the Baghdad Summit which imposed on it, at least on paper, a severe economic and commercial boycott. Branded as a "stooge of Imperialism and Zionism", the Sadat administration ran the gauntlet for many years and — for the first time in nearly two decades — lost irremediably its role of incontestable pace-maker of the Arab world, leading the anti-imperialist struggles of Arab nationalism. Against it, stood a heterogeneous coalition of radical regimes — among them Syria, Libya, Algeria and South Yemen — ready to abuse any government that dared signal an approval, however discrete, of Egypt's "historical compromise". Even the powerful Saudis were incapable of nudging a move towards a pro-imperialist settlement and remained cautiously aloof awaiting better days.

It is undeniable that the intransigent stand by the "radicals" was partly a reflection of the strength of the Palestinian movement. Then the Palestinians represented a powerful force in their Lebanese stronghold which certain regimes like Syria feared and were eager to coax into submission or even neutralise by force if necessary. Others like Libya wanted to play first-fiddle hoping to emerge as the "new leader" of the Arab world, a seat becoming vacant after the demise of Egypt.

The coalition was short-lived. With the defeat and scattering of the Palestinians from their bases in Lebanon, it suffered a death blow. Soon it became incapable of acting as a cohesive bloc able to play an effective role in coercing the Arab regimes and each of its components pursued unilaterally a specific orientation to suit its interests. The situation was further complicated by the schism inside the ranks of the PLO which ensued. Libya, beyond rhetorical calls to Palestinian leaders for martyrdom, lost what limited initiative it ever had. Algeria and South Yemen buried themselves in the listless meander of shuttle diplomacy in an attempt to paper the cracks in the PLO ranks.



Arafat with Mubarak

U.S.-ISRAEL OUT OF LEBANON



Only Syria, by virtue of being physically embroiled in the Lebanese arena, emerged as a strong, powerful voice capable of confronting Israel and was generally recognised as the masterful leader of the Arab world. After securing a twenty-year "co-operation" treaty with the Soviet Union, it threw itself confidently in the Lebanese imbroglio, chalking up resounding successes. During the skirmishes between warring factions and political currents in Lebanon — some of them fully-fledged mini-wars — Syria played a skilful role in balancing the political patterns to its advantage. At times, it was the "hard cop" throwing its military might behind a favoured side only to crackdown and bludgeon it to the negotiating table if it ran out of control (as in the case of battles between the fundamentalist TAWHID and the Democratic Arab party in Tripoli). At others, it was the "soft cop", dishing out advice and supervising truces.

At the Geneva Conference called to settle old scores between Lebanon's warlords and map out a new political order, Syria, despite the presence of the US as observers, bluntly dictated the terms of the agreement. Most importantly, its military strength was decisive in helping prevent the Lebanese left from rescuing their country from the clutches of Zionism and defeat imperialist plans to stabilize Lebanon under the aegis of US and European "peace keeping" troops thus tipping it in the camp of Israel. It came out, in the eyes of the Arab masses, with enormous prestige as the true defender of Arab interests. Even the US were quick to recognise the strength of Syria's position and regard it as a serious and valid interlocutor. All top US visitors to the Middle East — from Schultz to Murphy — have included Damascus in their tour of the capitals.

However, last January, the visit to Cairo by Yasser Arafat was a major setback for this ascendancy. Beside the turmoil it created in the Palesti-

nian camp, it reawakened most of the right wing regimes who may soon stampede to embrace Egypt back into the Arab fold, indicating their own readiness to surrender to a pro-imperialist settlement. Cairo and Amman re-established diplomatic relations on September 27 and Mubarak paid a visit to Hussain a week later. After breaking from its isolation, Egypt is now confident that other Arab countries will soon grasp the advantages of the "new realism" and show their readiness to go along the same road.

Iraq is the next country tipped to re-establish links with Egypt. It has already broken the Baghdad Summit boycott by acquiring vast quantities of armament from Egypt and a healthy commercial flow between the two countries is steadily increasing. Saudi Arabia's criticism was so mute that it was taken as a covert approval.

Libya's hysterical threats hardly fooled anybody. Gaddafi's rhetorical stunts are sounding increasingly hollow since his radical image, best illustrated by his support for the "dissidents" in the PLO, was heavily tarnished by his union with the King of Morocco. Last August, Gaddafi signed the "Treaty of Arab-African Unity" with his old enemy King Hassan thus cementing the unity of their two countries. For the Arab masses, the embrace of Gaddafi — the intractable anti-imperialist — and the despotic monarch — the architect of Camp David — was mystifying hocus-pocus. There are already signs that his capitulation to King Hassan would run deeper than predicted. After turning his back on the Polisario Liberation Struggle in the Sahara as a gesture of good faith to his newly-found ally, Gaddafi is now busy extricating himself from Chad under terms negotiated by King Hassan preserving the interests of French imperialism in that country. There is little doubt that when the new diplomatic offensive by the right wing Arab regimes starts shaping up, Libya will be skilfully neutralised by King Hassan.

The American administration was pleasantly surprised by the new turn of events and would certainly like to intervene to shape it into some form of cohesive force with an adequate strategy. It is no coincidence that President Reagan relaunched his old plan for peace which many had considered dead and buried on the same day that Mubarak visited Amman.

But most worrying for the Syrians is the shift in the attitude of the Soviet Union. The visit by an alarmed President Assad to Moscow on October 17 only confirmed his worst fears. In the last few months, the Soviet Union has started a process of building bridges with even the most reactionary Arab regimes. On October 9, a treaty of "co-operation and friendship" (similar to those signed with Syria and South Yemen) was signed between Chernenko and North Yemen President Ali Abdullah Salah. Relations with Egypt are suddenly back to normal. Further, arms deals were negotiated with Kuwait and Iraq, and important openings made to Jordan and Saudi Arabia. It is evident that the Soviet Union were quick to react to the impending right wing alignment and by launching a diplomatic offensive hope to have a say in any settlement that may take place. They have already started canvassing opinion about an international conference on the Middle East that would include the US, the Soviet Union, Israel and the Arab parties involved. For this to happen, they would need alliances beyond Syria. Exploratory talks with the principal contenders in the conflict — a meeting between Gromyko and Shamir at the UN, followed by a meeting with Arafat in East Berlin — are a further indication that the Soviet Union is bracing itself to play a leading role in any carve up that may result from a peace formula.

Israel, however, as the US is well aware, is no US puppet. While the American administration will be well satisfied if it can bring the Arab regimes — in line with Egypt — onto their knees, there is no guarantee that Israel will be satisfied till they are prostrate. Past Israeli governments have repeatedly snubbed American initiatives in the area: Begin's response to the Reagan plan — launched in the Autumn of 1982 which hinged on some sort of a confederation between Jordan and the West Bank and included a call for a freeze on new settlements — was actually to **step up** the rate of settlement-building in Palestinian territory. Even the Israeli Labour Party, which has successfully managed to retain a less militant image regarding settlements, has so far refused to commit itself to a settlement freeze, despite constant US pressure.

It is quite clear, to the US at least, that for a settlement to be reached in the Middle East, the Arab states will require sufficient face-saving concessions from Israel for them to be able to present their surrender as a successful bargain, to their own



Reagan with Peres

masses and to the rest of the world. But although the US has, until now, had no indication that such concessions would be forthcoming from Israel, there are good reasons to believe that this situation too has been changing over the last two years as Israel's long history of rash economic extravagance seems finally to be catching up with it.

Israel is currently facing an economic crisis more extreme than any it has encountered in its history. Its long tradition of financing massive military expenditure, coupled with an increasing standard of living, through substantial loans, mainly from the US, has brought Israel to its disastrous current situation, with an inflation rate topping 1,000% and a level of debt repayment of \$15.5 billion out of the country's budget of \$22.5 billion. Senior treasury officials are now claiming that a further \$2 billion will have to be chopped from the budget for the government to stand any chance of making headway in improving Israel's recent economic state of affairs. This would bring Israel's expendable budget to a mere \$7 billion (this would not only cover all Israel's military expenditure but also health, education, subsidies for basic food products and fuel, and the police) — a total according to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, which is just over half of what was spent on the "Palestinian conflict" in 1983 alone. It is clear that the economic pressures on Israel to reach a settlement with the main forces in the region are immense; what is less clear is whether the present political instability evidenced by the results of last June's elections will enable such a settlement to be reached.

At last June's election, nearly 70% of the electorate gave their voices in equal proportion to Likud and Labour, a continued mandate to

policies started four decades ago. During a dull campaign scarcely touching upon any fundamental issue, both parties expressed unequivocally the harmony in their views on most issues at many open public debates. So it is hardly surprising that they finally joined hands in a "unity government". Labour was merely seen as a pale imitation of Likud and could not have presented any alternative. As a consequence, while gaining marginally more seats than Likud, it actually won fewer seats than in the 1981 elections — the only electoral gains going to the far-left and far-right parties. On the right, Israel's first genuine fascist party, Kach, gained a Knesset member for the first time and, on the left, the newly-emerged Palestinian-Jewish list, the "soft Zionist" Progressive list for Peace, gained 2 seats.

Following the elections, Israel was precipitated into a political crisis

which left the country without government for 52 days, during which time Labour leader Peres was desperately trying to cobble up a majority together out of the hotch-potch of political parties represented in the Knesset, while Israel's inflation doubled and foreign currency reserves continued to dwindle dangerously close to bankruptcy. The Labour Alignment is always at a disadvantage when it comes to coalition-building, because the narrow demands put forward by the myriad of small religious parties as a condition for their support, while posing little problems to the Likud, are deemed unacceptable to certain elements in the Labour Alignment to the left of the Labour Party (notably MAPAM). With this fact weighted against the Labour Party, and a four-seat lead over Likud in its favour, the possibilities of either side getting together a working coalition seemed remote, and with the pressure of the economic crisis daily increasing, agreement was finally reached on both sides for forming a government of national unity. The breadth of pressures forcing them to join hands can best be illustrated by the presence of butcher Sharon, previously dismissed from the Begin government for his involvement in the Sabra Chatila massacre, who has now secured a seat in the Peres government as Minister for Trade and Industry.

The present Israeli government, not only the main two parties but also their respective coalition partners, leaves a total of 23 out of 120 Knesset members in opposition. An amazing total of one in four Knesset members actually sits in the Cabinet, which has been expanded from 16 to 31 posts (including 6 deputies) in order to permit each major party control of sufficient posts to secure the support of their coalition partners. Under these conditions, the Knesset itself has been reduced to nothing more than a rubber stamp for decisions thrashed by the government in



Fatah fighters

endless inter- and intracoalition bargaining. So while it is perfectly clear to all the parties concerned that a settlement is going to have to be reached between Israel and her neighbouring states in order to prevent the impending slide into economic disaster, it remains to be seen whether the present government is capable of taking the necessary steps in this direction.

The behaviour of Likud since it joined the government would tend to imply that it has opted for consolidating its own rather shaky basis rather than going for government unity. Likud is feeling increasingly threatened by the growing Fascist Party, Kach, which, like Likud, has its base among the poorer sections of Jewish society, particularly the Sephardi (Oriental) Jews. Rabbi Kahane, the leader of Kach, has been very active during the last year giving street meetings in areas of unemployment (still at very low level compared to Europe and the US) and high deprivation. The rabbi, a classic fascist, blames the Palestinians for all Israeli society's ills, especially its economic ills, and advocates the expulsion of all Palestinians from the country. With Israel experiencing for the first time a prospect of across-the-board job losses, cuts in living standards and a very high level of economic insecurity and taking into account Israel's long history of institutionalised racism against the Palestinians, the conditions for the rise of a fascist movement seem ideal. Some opinion polls estimate that during the three months following Kahane's election to the Knesset, his popularity trebled.

It is obviously with all this in mind that the Likud has decided to champion the cause of the poorer Israelis, and threaten the tripartite agreements Peres has been trying to secure between industry, the Histadrut and Government, by supporting the Histadrut in its opposition to dropping full indexation of wages to inflation and any other form of wages cuts. David Levy, the deputy leader of Likud, whose Moroccan origin makes him a natural choice for PR man, has been outspoken in his attacks on many of the proposed economic reforms, and has also announced his Party's intention to gain control of the Histadrut (currently dominated by Labour, which was responsible for the initial creation of the Histadrut). With Kach's exclusion from government putting it in an excellent position to score points against Likud whenever a government policy is seen to result in adverse effects on their joint base, Likud is clearly anxious to publicly disassociate itself, or at least express its reservations on these policies beforehand.

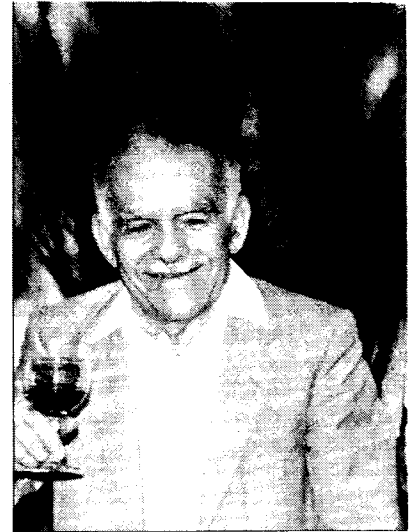
The pressures on Likud to move towards Kach on economic issues, are likely to act in the same way over the issue of a settlement in the Middle-East, with Likud's unwill-

ingness to be seen to compromise proving an obstacle to achieving even those minimum face-saving concessions demanded by the pro-West Arab regimes in order to settle. However, it is exactly here that the economic power of the US could prove decisive. The Likud and Kach both differ from the extreme racial-purist nationalists who have their bases among the mainly white, middle-class settler population of the West Bank (some of whom, not satisfied with no-compromise over the occupied territories, are claiming all of Jordan as well). No amount of dollars will soften such a settler; however the working class supporters of Likud and Kach are primarily motivated by economic, not nationalist motives, and neither Party will probably be willing to risk being seen to be the block to American economic aid.

So far, America has given the Peres government substantial concessions with no apparent strings attached. These include: the payment of the entire \$2.6 billion grant to Israel for 1985 by the end of October 1984; a six-month moratorium on debt repayment (about 90% of Israel's debts are to US banks); a deal to buy a certain value of military equipment from Israel; the establishment of an Israel-US free-trade zone; and the free transfer of advanced US technology necessary for Israel's future fighter plane, the Levi, to be built in the country. However, all these concessions amount merely to staving-off measures, in particular the decision to bring forward the timing of the 1985 grant rather than to offer more money, and the 6-month moratorium on debt repayment rather than annulment. It is likely that the US, possibly in conjunction with Peres, is holding back certain concessions, to be put on the table at a more advantageous time.

Such a time might not be too far off, judging from the speed of manoeuvrings in the area, especially Jordan. Immediately following the withdrawal of the PLO from the Lebanon, Hussein of Jordan suggested reconvening the Jordanian Parliament, frozen since Israel invaded the West Bank in 1967, and called for the one-third of the seats reserved for representatives from the West Bank to be reoccupied. This was firmly opposed at the time by Israel, which announced it would refuse permission for anyone to attend from the West Bank, and by the (then united) PLO, which rightly interpreted the move as an attempt to bypass the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians.

Since that time, however, Arafat has visited Mubarak, thereby opening the way for the Arab regimes to break their boycott of Camp David. Arafat has conducted lengthy negotiations with King Hussein, who, at the same time, invited the prodigal Mubarak for an official visit, which was hailed by Shamir, the leader of Likud, as "a victory for the peace



Shamir

process within the framework of the Camp David agreements".

Jordan has also been building ties with the USSR, and seems set to come to an agreement which would replace some of Jordan's purchases of US arms by Soviet weaponry. Finally, Arafat has recently shown signs of being about to call a "PNC" of his supporters in Jordan, at which all those attending will have some degree of support for the host regime.

When the Peres government was first formed, Peres announced his desire to start negotiations with Jordan. King Hussein rejected the offer almost immediately, but that is unlikely to be the end of the story. However inflexible Likud might want to appear, the fact is that Shamir, too, has been involved in lengthy discussions with Gromyko, the foreign minister of the USSR. It looks very much as if, while all sides are doing their best to appear absolutely opposed to coming to a deal with the other side, all sides are also up to their necks in behind-the-scenes manoeuvring in a subtle diplomacy that involves both of the superpowers, as well as the major states in the region.

While it is difficult to predict the final shaping of these different ingredients and the pace of their dynamic, it is certain that US imperialism, once the elections are over, will mount a major offensive to speed up its trajectory towards a settlement that will suit its interest. The fly in the ointment may be the Arab masses, who in many instances during the past year — in Tunisia, last January in Morocco and last September in Egypt — have vented their anger and frustration in desperate uprisings repressed in blood. It remains to be seen how they will react and whether the scope of that reaction would upset the current balance of forces and political line-up.

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Blackpool '84

Kinnock comes out ahead



By PETE FIRMIN

THERE is a saying that one strike is worth a thousand resolutions. The truth of this (if it needed proving again) was borne out in the effect of the miners' strike on both the NUM delegation and — on some issues — on this year's Labour Conference in general.

At 1983 Conference, a woman delegate went to the rostrum to complain of sexual harassment by the NUM delegation. This year the miners' delegation not only supported the demands of the Women's Action Committee (with a miner giving one of the best speeches in support heard coming from a man) but also backed the calls for Black Sections and British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.

The majority of conference, often in opposition to NEC recommendations — or, at best, the luke warm support of the the NEC, whose members could be seen squirming in their seats — passed radical resolutions on the police, local authority cuts and condemning the use of supergrasses and plastic bullets in Northern Ireland.

However, conference as a whole was by no means a victory for the left: many of the more "radical" motions failed to commit the Party to action now, and the centre/right managed to ride out the storm and retain control of the NEC.

The Miners' Strike

This dominated the first day of conference and continued to be a major factor throughout the week. Kinnock had tried to get the resolutions condemning police behaviour withdrawn in exchange for supporting a general motion of solidarity with the miners. The movers refused, and Kinnock had to sit and watch while conference not only gave a euphoric reception and standing ovation to Scargill, but also passed motions directly attacking the police, which led a police spokesman to make the revealing comment that they would find it impossible to work with a Labour government.

However, in amongst the denunciation of police violence and undercover surveillance were the strange demand that the next Labour government should "stop the police from playing a part in industrial disputes", and a call for the police to be able to join trade unions (affiliated to the TUC and Labour Party?).



But, as at the TUC, the NUM refused to capitalise on their support and push for meaningful action. In addition to the weak resolution of support on the Monday, the NUM leadership backed down on getting conference to declare the strike official and thus share its contempt of court. After a writ was served on Scargill *in the conference* on the Tuesday afternoon (using Daily Express credentials, for which its editor was expelled from conference) the TGWU wanted to put an emergency resolution declaring that conference regarded the strike as official. Instead of welcoming this and putting the centre/right on the spot, the NUM buckled under pressure from Basnett and the GMBATU and the resolution became merely a statement expressing "full support for the NUM". Just to make it clear that it is not only other workers in struggle which it refuses to support, the GMBU put no emergency motion at all to conference on the im-

prisonment of 37 of its own members for fighting for their jobs at Camell Lairds on Merseyside.

Black Monday for Kinnock

It was on the same day that Kinnock suffered defeat on the issue on which, according to the press, he had "staked his authority as leader": reselection. Against all expectations the "Evans amendment" disenfranchising union members paying the political levy and opening the door to postal ballots was rejected by 3.5 million to 3 million. At the end of the day it seems the amendment was so blatantly designed to protect sitting MPs from accountability that the "left" trade union delegations could not accept it. Conference was left with a rather confused "status quo" after motions for *and* against the change were rejected, reflecting a general feeling that, although the present system is not perfect, the amendment would be a step back for democracy. However, there remain

Cuts

The Tory offensive against the NHS and local authority services meant that conference could not pass without major debates on these. On the NHS excellent policy was passed committing the next Labour government to the nationalisation of the drug companies, the abolition of private medicine and a free comprehensive health service. Yet on fighting cuts and privatisation in the here and now, nothing stronger was put (and passed) than deploring cuts and welcoming "the NHS campaign": a campaign which has everything to do with transporting Neil Kinnock and tons of leaflets around the country by "ambulance" and very little to do with fighting the cuts. No motion expressed support for, or attempted to learn from, the hospital strikes and occupations which have taken place.

Because local councils are, unlike Health Authorities, elected, and many Labour-controlled, conference could not be as evasive on local government cuts. Motions pledging opposition to rate-capping and the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan councils were passed, explicitly stating that this may involve illegal action. These are to be welcomed, but the scale of the task involved in turning words into action should not be ignored. While David Blunkett the local government "hero" was telling conference that it is not the job of Labour councils to make cuts, striking NALGO members from "his" Sheffield Council were lobbying conference. And Kinnock was let off the hook when Militant supporters composited out any criticism of his stance from the resolution on Liverpool, leaving conference merely "applauding" Liverpool Council's (dubious) victory.

From Economism to Socialism

While conference was very radical on the "bread-and-butter" issues of the miners' strike and cuts, this is still a long way from recognising the specific oppression of women, blacks, lesbians and gays or from a basic understanding of Ireland's British problem. Once again, the resolutions on lesbians and gays were not discussed despite several resolutions being submitted, and despite the immediacy of the issue given Rugby Council's announcement that it would not employ gays.

All four women's resolutions were defeated (by larger margins than last year) and there was a striking resemblance between the arguments used against Black sections and those wheeled out year after year against the women's demands — that it would alienate whites/men; blacks/women can reach positions on merit without positive discrimination or "separatism"/"apartheid"(!); and we're all socialists anyway, aren't we? The similarities went further: Gwyneth Dunwoody spoke against the women's resolutions on behalf of the NEC (Jo Richardson, chair of the



women's committee refused to do so), and right-wing blacks made the same arguments against black sections — one, a member of the EETPU delegation, and another, who when a member of the UPW (now UCW) executive opposed local postal workers taking action against Grunwicks to support the strike for unionisation of the (largely Asian) workforce.

On Ireland, recognition of the similarities with the miners' strike obviously moved the Conference majority — against the recommendation of the NEC — to oppose Diplock Courts, the use of supergrasses, plastic bullets and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. But while this was passed by 3 million to 2.5 million, only 450,000 votes were cast for the motion rejecting the Unionist veto on Irish Unity, calling for an end to bipartisanship and for the party to argue for withdrawal of British troops.

The message for the left comes over clear: to a large extent these arguments still have to be won in the movement; an understanding of these issues does not grow automatically out of economic militancy, but has to be argued clearly and politically.

Down but far from out

After the first day of conference the Daily Mirror's headline was "Kick the Leader". However, while Kinnock and the right were kicked around the conference floor on the miners' strike and reselection, they were still in control at the end of the week, having ridden out the storm. Rarely directly challenged on fighting Tory policies now rather than promises for the future, Kinnock and Hattersley faced no challenge at all to their positions as Leader and Deputy. "Unity" was still a key-word at Conference, despite the right's back-stabbing of the miners. Speaker after speaker opposing the "Evans amendment" to water down reselection denounced it on because of the need for "unity" against the Tories, and complained that it was divisive of the NEC to bring this issue forward. Yet if "unity" is

the issue, who is going to ditch the right-wing MPs? Many have yet to learn that such unity helps only the right, who use the left's refusal to push forward as an opportunity to counter-attack, on policies, reselection or further witch-hunts.

Postscript

The extent to which the centre/right have managed to keep control despite a "militant" conference is shown by their confidence in electing an overwhelmingly right-wing Shadow Cabinet and installing right-wingers as chairs of the NEC sub-committees. Particularly the election of Turnock (a Weighellite leftover in the NUR) as chair of the organisation committee and Cure (rabid AUEW right-winger) as chair of the appeals and mediation committee are a clear indication of the Right's intention to fight tooth and nail over reselection. Kinnock's refusal to appear on the platform at any of the NUM's rallies is a tell-tale sign of the respect he gives to conference decisions.

THE people most jubilant (and nauseatingly so) at the defeat of Black sections were the supporters of *Militant*. Obviously extremely worried about the development, they produced a pamphlet against Black sections (in the name of the LPYS) and brought many of their black supporters to Blackpool for most of the week. They even went to the unusual lengths (for them) of lobbying, attending and speaking at fringe meetings organised by Labour Briefing and the Black Sections Steering Committee.

The reason for their concern became obvious — until now *Militant* has had a virtual monopoly of radical black youth in the Labour Party and they (rightly) see the black sections movement as a serious threat to this. The hypocrisy of supporting specific sections for youth but not for black people was blatant for all who cared to open their eyes. The only (semi-) political arguments which *Militant* can muster are that black workers have no interests separate to those of the working class as a whole and that the Black Sections Steering

Committee has no "bold socialist programme"; as if black people do not face the specific oppression of the laws, police harassment and general racism (including within the labour movement itself) and as if banalities about nationalising the top 200 monopolies were an answer to this.

THE miners' strike ran like a red thread through both conference and many fringe meetings, but with the rank and file left having very little chance to affect events. Because of this, what must rate as one of the worst missed opportunities for the left during the strike happened on the last (Thursday) evening of conference. Labour *Briefing* brought off a coup by managing to hold a public meeting with Scargill speaking on the NUM's response to the writ served to him in the conference on the Tuesday afternoon.

Over 800 people turned up to hear Scargill repeat that the union would defy the courts, and Jimmy Knapp promise that if the NUM leadership were imprisoned, he would call his members out in support. But far from seizing this chance to organise serious action in defence of the NUM, *Briefing* let it slide. A lengthy statement was read to the meeting by the organisers which, while mentioning a General Strike in defence of the NUM in passing, in terms of immediate tasks talked only of raising a big collection, setting up a Defence Committee, and "giving adequate political expression to such industrial action as will follow" court action against the NUM.

Any doubts about the willingness of *Briefing* to call for and organise industrial action using the massive turn-out at the meeting were clered up at the first meeting of the defence Committee the following lunch-time. Chris Knight, from the *Briefing* Editorial Board introduced the meeting by saying that the purpose of it was to ensure the wide circulation of the resolution "sharing the contempt" of the NUM by declaring the strike official and to call a conference at a future date of those supporting this.

He said quite clearly that the organising of industrial action in support of the NUM "was up to the industrial wing of the movement", thus letting left union leaders like Knapp off the hook and accepting the separation of the movement which has always benefitted the right. A Socialist Viewpoint supporter spoke against this, only to be told there was "not time" to discuss a resolution on organising for strike action. While a Conference sometime in December of those who support the miners is to be welcomed, it is no substitute for what *could* have been done.

SOCIALIST *Organiser* had a fringe meeting on the Tuesday night on the topic "Strikers Speak Out". About 60 people turned up to discuss the way forward with what looked like an impressive plform including Paul Whetton, secretary of the Notts Rank and File Strike Committee and a speaker from Cammell Lairds (where Lol Duffy, an SO supporter had been jailed the day before). However, the speeches were incredibly low-key. *Socialist Organiser* had been calling for a General Strike since almost the beginning of the miners' strike, yet the only person to raise this was a non-supporter in a contribution from the floor. Instead, the speeches consisted of a series of anecdotes about state violence of the kind to be heard at any meeting in support of the miners.

Whatever did happen to "General Strike", "Kick out the Tories" and "Fight for a Workers' Government"?

Another rebuff for Labour's women

By JENNY FISHER



THE 1984 annual Labour Party Conference saw the second major attempt to raise the status of women in the Party, and give us direct access to decision making. "Our" resolutions — based on the five major demands of the Women's Action Committee — were defeated; generally speaking, by a larger margin than in 1983.

Support came from new quarters. At last year's Conference, a delegate had to complain from the rostrum about the verbal sexual harassment being dealt out to women by the NUM delegation.

This year, an NUM delegate, John Burrows (a member of the Derbyshire NUM Executive) tried to redress the balance. Warning Conference to "ignore women at your peril", his contribution warned against patronising women by granting token concessions. Women have always been involved in struggle; the women who had come forward to support the miners weren't new to the game, waiting to learn the rules from male unionists; they made their own contribution.

As women launch the 1985 campaign around our demands, we must make sure we don't just plan a re-run of the last two years' efforts. Not because they were wrong, but because all campaigns must develop if they are to keep their momentum.

We must recognise that winning our demands will not end our problems in the Party. Apart from the time set aside for the "Women's Organisation" debate, there was hardly any mention of women in the whole conference. As well as our role within the Party structure, we have a long way to go in convincing the Party members to take women seriously in policy making.

If John Burrows' contribution (and other miners are echoing that sentiment) showed how women's involvement can move mountains in terms of shifting male attitudes, what effect

would that level of involvement have on the Labour Party leadership?

We could have a massive effect on the Labour Party over the next year. Women in Miners Support Groups are joining the Party already; some Support Groups have formed Women's Sections on a village basis. There's no reason, if the Labour Party becomes deeply and actively involved in health or local government campaigns, why women can't be recruited to the Party to join the fight for the demands of the Women's Organisation. We don't have to wait till we win them. In fact, recruitment via campaigns is likely to be more successful, as it's more relevant than handing out leaflets proclaiming "Elect the NEC Women's Seats at Women's Conference" or something similar!

Starting now, we can make a determined effort to include women's concerns in all policy formation at Constituency level. Constituencies can send resolutions to the National Executive Committee; so can Women's Regional Committees, and we have some sympathetic voices at national level.

Neil Kinnock said during Conference that he thought the women "might go away by 1985"; and Mandy Moore had to assure him in the women's debate that we won't. Let's not just come back to 1985 Annual Conference with our Women's Organisation resolutions. We will do that: but let's also raise the consciousness in the whole Party on women's issues throughout the year, leading to women being mentioned in *all* the policy areas debated in 1985.

We can only improve Party policy by doing this: and we'll also help to make it clear *why* women want and need direct representation. Make women visible!

1984 Conference changed the rules on extra women delegates.

Now, any Constituency Party with 400 or more individual women members can send an extra woman delegate to Conference.

The entitlement for 1985 Conference will be based on membership figures at December 31, 1984.

Check your CLP's individual women's membership NOW; and organise a recruitment drive if necessary/possible.

New members' names will need to be forwarded to December ward and General Committee meetings at the latest; check the dates as they may have been moved because of Xmas.

Communist Party: 60 years of misdirection in the unions.

By HARRY SLOAN

ONE organisation which has gained in membership during the miners' strike has been the Communist Party. With many of its best and most active rank and file NUM militants travelling outside their home areas to work with local Support Committees, the CP has been able to project the image of a solid, working class organisation.

But new contacts and recruits may be excused for wondering exactly what Party and what politics they are signing up for. The Communist Party's daily paper the **Morning Star** has been more conspicuous in recent years for its plunging circulation, obituary column and knife-edge fund appeals than for any political leadership or clarity. And the past 18 months has seen an ugly public faction fight for control of the **Star** and its editorial line.

On the one side are ranged the "traditional", hard-line, unapologetic Stalinist advocates of the "Moscow" line — a minority in the present-day Communist Party, but still clinging on to a majority control of the formally "independent" newspaper. On the other are the more openly reformist "Eurocommunists" who have taken a majority on the CP's Executive Committee but have been unable to assert their control over the **Morning Star**.

Yet on most major issues of policy regarding the **British** class struggle, both wings of the Party share a common approach. The differences are sharpest on international issues, such as Poland and Afghanistan — where the old guard doggedly defend the actions of the Moscow Stalinists, while the "Euros" regard this as an embarrassment in their efforts to secure a "broader" base for the Party amongst liberal-thinking sections of the middle class.

However, on the central issue of class-struggle politics today, the miners' strike, there is no real division between the main CP factions. Both wings are committed to a policy of preserving the Party's long-standing "peaceful co-existence" with the "left" wing of the TUC General Council, and the trade union bureaucracy as a whole.



Through such policies over the years the CP has managed to hold on to a quite disproportionate number of official positions and influential posts in the unions, even though the Party's membership has dwindled year after year to below 15,000.

The CP's refusal to challenge or put demands for action which might embarrass the "left" TUC bureaucrats — even though the TUC itself has moved steadily to the right under the blows from the Thatcher government, and even while the "lefts" have shown themselves unwilling to take any firm stand against the right wing — has been a major factor in the miners' strike.

Himself influenced by CP politics, and accompanied in decision-making by CP members Mick McGahey and Peter Heathfield, Arthur Scargill's attitude towards the TUC itself, and the union leaders at the Labour Party conference, has been one which has repeatedly let the bureaucrats off the hook.

At the Brighton TUC Congress, the NUM leadership wrongly opted for the hollow facade of "unity" around the empty formulae of the General Council's resolution, and made no real attempt to fight for and demand real **action** from the other unions. The result: despite paper pledges of "unity", power stations have continued to operate; alternative fuel supplies are being accepted across NUM picket lines; and the Tory government, encouraged by the prostration of the TUC, has given High Court judges the green light to seize the NUM's national assets. Yet the **Morning Star** hailed the TUC decisions as a victory for the miners.

Likewise at the Labour Party conference, where the seizure of the union's national assets and even jailing of NUM leaders was immediately threatened, NUM leaders agreed to the withdrawal of the TGWU resolution endorsing their refusal to go to the High Court. Despite the NUM restraint, they did not even receive in

return the "unity" of a speech or two by other unions pledging to defend the miners against further court action.

There is reason to believe that this line is more that of the Communist Party than Arthur Scargill, who in the early days of the strike set a healthy precedent by going out of his way to put other union leaders on the spot, and calling — sometimes over their heads — for solidarity action from other sections of workers.

Yet now *The Miner*, edited by longstanding CPer Maurice Jones, facing the question of seizure of the whole union's assets, makes no appeal for action to any other union, and despite the headline "It's War!", brushes aside the sequestration.

And the CP policy of peaceful co-existence with the right wing of the union bureaucracy has also made itself felt on the question of picketing. A clear example of this was to be seen during the campaign for a mass picket of Didcot power station, near Oxford, on October 24.

When a delegation from the Oxford Trades Council and the South Wales NUM attended the South East Region TUC support group to propose backing for the picket there was very great reluctance to do so. They quoted the TUC Congress resolution which required the unions inside the power stations to agree before a picket can be placed on the gates. They argued that there was a danger that such pickets could alienate the officials concerned and the stewards inside. A week later and after much debate the decision was taken to support the Didcot picket and promote other mass pickets of power stations in the South East Region.

Nor was the opposition a chance thing. Most of those opposing the picket to one degree or another were CP members clearly acting on party lines.

Behind this attitude of the CP lies a view of trade union work as one of collaborating and preserving "unity" with the right-wing TUC "establishment" — even where this is at the expense of the rank and file struggle. CPers saw it as preferable to uphold the sham of the TUC's Brighton resolution than to take action to shut down a power station.

This political approach is not new. It has a long and undistinguished history that reaches back to the period of the 1926 General Strike.

The British Communist Party was formed in August 1920 in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution; it attracted many of the most class conscious and militant workers, as well as elements from the small, divided and politically weak groupings of British Marxism.

The motive for joining such a party was plainly the need for a clear, **revolutionary** political leadership in the British workers' movement, where the class collaboration of the still-emerging Labour Party and its leadership was a mirror image of the largely conservative trade union bureaucracy.

But the early Communist Party lacked a coherent policy or perspective for relating to the existing labour movement. As the inheritor of many of the sectarian methods of the early British Marxists, it did not begin a serious attempt to implant itself in industry until 1922-23 — by which time slump and mass unemployment were major obstacles.

The CP did after a while become involved with a growing rank and file movement which, in the light of repeated betrayals by the official union bureaucracy, began to spread through the trade union movement from 1922 onwards. Miners, engineers and transport workers began to organise their own "minority movements" — so named because

of the complaint by one union bureaucrat over the "minority of troublemakers". In 1924 these rank and file groups came together to form the National Minority Movement.

Rather like so many of today's more radical Broad Lefts, the NMM — like the CP itself — was stronger on propaganda for action than on organisation in workplaces. But the conference called for the setting up of factory committees. And a key resolution called for a strengthening of the powers of the TUC General Council, to enable it to call out the whole movement in a general strike. While warning that such a change by no means guaranteed that the General Council would become any less reactionary, the resolution argued that:

"We can guard against the General Council becoming a machine of the capitalists, and can really evolve from the General Council a Workers' General Staff only by, in the first place and fundamentally, developing a revolutionary class consciousness amongst the Trade Union membership, and in the second place, by so altering the constitution of the General Council as to ensure that those elected thereon have the closest contact with the workers."

A far cry, this militant spirit of hostility to the union bureaucracy, from today's cosy links between "communist" union officials and the TUC right wing. It was on this — albeit rather risky — basis that the Communist Party of 1924 argued the slogan "More Power to the General Council". And the Communist fraction at TUC Congresses took up the fight for control over the General Council, making the minor but significant breakthrough of ensuring that the Council's annual report was issued to delegates a week in advance



1926 General Strike: CP line was "all power to the General Council" — which sold out after 9 days.



Tanks on the street during the General Strike

of Congress rather than on the day!

Minority Movement successes in working with the many militants involved in a wave of strikes in 1924 seem to have been a major factor in provoking union bureaucrats to hit back against the CP, throwing union block votes behind Ramsay MacDonald's moves in 1924 and 1925 to bar Communists from individual membership of the Labour Party.

But at the same time a "left" element of the union bureaucracy began to emerge, seeking to adapt to the militancy of the workers, and using the issue of friendly relations with the USSR as a handy means of proving their "radical" credentials without disrupting their stance on the class struggle in Britain.

In 1924 the TUC sent a delegation to the USSR, a group of whom — Purcell, Hicks, Bromley and Swales — began to speak out in favour of unity between British and Russian trade unions as a step towards international unity.

This hollow gesture was sufficient to win the enthusiastic applause of Stalin and the emerging conservative, bureaucratic leadership which took complete control of the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin in 1924.

In that same year Stalin had revealed his conservative, nationalist "theory" that in a situation of "stabilised" capitalism on a world scale, it was necessary to look not to the spread of revolution but simply to build "socialism in a single country". With this narrowing focus came a readiness to reach out for well-placed "friends" of the Soviet Union in the capitalist countries: and among the first objects of this new affection were the "Lefts" of the TUC General Council.

With Moscow waxing eloquent on the importance of these newly-discovered "Lefts" — who at home significantly steered well clear of the Minority Movement, and made no attempt to defend the Communists against witch-hunters in the Labour Party — the British CP also began to drop its initial public distrust.

Increasingly the CP began to look

for action to the bureaucratic "Lefts" already ensconced in the General Council rather than to the building of a mass movement and forcing the General Council to respond to the demands of the workers. The call "More Power to the General Council" was increasingly detached from any cautionary qualification.

This was the background to the Communist Party's political bankruptcy in the General Strike of 1926.

As Baldwin's Tory government utilised the breathing space obtained by their retreat on "Red Friday", June 1925, to prepare an all-out offensive against the pay and conditions of the miners, the CP should have been redoubling its efforts to mobilise the rank and file of the trade unions through the Minority Movement for the necessary General Strike. Instead of this, the Party and its press bolstered illusions in the General Council "Lefts", failed to challenge their retreats, and peddled illusions in the General Council as a whole.

The same CP which had prepared and argued correctly for revolutionary mass action in the run-up to Red Friday turned — partly through pressure from Moscow — to empty propaganda work and cheer-leading for the TUC "Lefts" by May 1926. Even the Councils of Action for which the Minority Movement called were viewed by the CP in 1926 as bodies which would "see that all the decisions of the General Council and the union executives were carried out..."

As George Hardy, CP secretary of the Minority Movement admitted after the General Council's 9-day betrayal of the General Strike:

"Although we knew of what treachery the Right Wing leaders were capable, we did not clearly understand the part played by the so-called 'left' in the union leadership. In the main they turned out to be windbags and capitulated to the Right Wing. We were taught a major lesson; that while developing a move to the left officially, the main point in preparing for action must always be

to develop a class-conscious leadership among the rank and file."

(G. Hardy, "Those Stormy Years")

The Anglo-Russia Committee proved to be no more in practice than a mechanism for hog-tying the Communist Party to the posturing bureaucratic "lefts" who were to sell out the General Strike and leave the miners isolated for many months more before they were starved into defeat.

The Party itself was gaining in size and in political influence at the time of the General Strike. The jailing of some of its leaders in October 1925; growth of the Minority Movement and the sharpening of class division had all helped create a situation where a sharp line in opposition to the "Left" betrayal could have won the CP truly massive support. Instead the Party shared responsibility for the betrayal.

Of course the treachery of the TUC "Lefts" was not entirely unexpected. Leon Trotsky, in casting a critical eye over the policies and orientation of the British CP, had consistently warned of the danger of overestimating the TUC "Lefts" and underestimating the British working class. A Marxist analysis of these leaders was not impossible even in the heat of events: but no such leadership came from the British CP or from its Moscow mentors.

Today's Communist Party, cosying up not only to the Bucktons, Knapps and Todds on the General Council, but also to the Basnetts and Lairds in its search for "unity" at the 1984 TUC, with all the compromises that entails at local level, is simply confirming that the lessons George Hardy learned so hard in 1926 have been set aside.

The search for influential "friends" in the union hierarchy at the expense of political compromise is not the exclusive prerogative of the "Euros" or the Moscow-liners: it is a common heritage of Stalinism from the mid 1920s. It is the unfortunate hallmark of the Stalinist movement that its bureaucratic structure and opportunist motives prevent the assimilation of political lessons or the healthy correction of past errors.

While George Hardy in his look back at 1926 was to stress the need for class conscious leadership at rank and file level, this was not to remain CP policy for long. Indeed clear advocacy of class struggle has been only the occasional attitude of the Communist Parties in the last 60 years.

Some newcomers to political life may believe that the political line put forward — most stridently by the Euro wing of the CP, and particularly in the Party magazine *Marxism Today* which they control — is a "modern" adaptation to the realities of the 1980s.

But when today's CP — both its rival wings — call for a cross-class "broad alliance" against " Thatcherism", reaching out — with particular gusto in the case of the Euros — to the SDP and "progressive"

Tories, it is simply reverting to the mainstream of **Stalinist** politics since the mid 1930s. Then it was called the policy of the "Popular Front". Now it rides again.

The run-up to last year's General Election coincided with the CP-inspired and dominated People's March for Jobs. Not only did the organisers and CP marshals on the various legs of the March rigorously and violently suppress any political slogans — even at the level of basic anti-Tory calls for "Thatcher Out" — but their efforts were backed up by the arguments of the "Moscow-line" **Morning Star**.

While militant unemployed youth who wanted to fight the Tories and their system were ruthlessly gagged, the doors were thrown open to "liberal"-minded representatives from local Chambers of Commerce, or in the words of **Star** reporter Martin Gostwick:

"the churches, the liberals, the nationalists, students, teachers, factory workers, unemployed workers, yes, and even Tory farmers, businessmen and councillors."

(**M. Star**, March 25 1983)

In fact it was in pursuit of the "non Thatcherite Tories" that young militants and socialists were muzzled by the CP — at the height of a General Election campaign!

Both today's "Euros" and the Moscow liners can look back to the tradition of the CP to back up these political positions. Despite its name, and despite its pretensions to Marxism, the Communist Party of Great Britain is no stranger to class collaboration: and the collaboration began under the directions of none other than Joseph Stalin, gravedigger of Bolshevism, and what remained of the Communist International in the 1930s.

Alarmed by the military threat from Hitler's Germany after 1933, Stalin looked for defence of the Soviet Union not to the European workers' movement, but to alliances with the governments of Germany's main imperialist rivals, principally France. In wooing these governments, he was at pains to downplay any prospective revolutionary threat posed by the Communist parties. At the same time, there was a strong groundswell of working class militancy and pressure for unity against a growing fascist threat. The outcome of these combined forces was a deformed offspring: the "Popular Front", formed in France in 1934 and adopted as policy of the Comintern at its Seventh Congress in 1935.

Under the Popular Front policy, the CPs obediently abandoned their 7-year policy of shrill and ludicrous denunciations of social democrats and reformist leaders as "social fascists" (who they claimed were worse than overt fascists because they operated under cover within the workers' movement).

Now the CPs opened their embrace not to the social democratic workers



so much as to their bureaucratic trade union and political **leaders**; and to the various "anti-fascist" parties of the capitalist class — the SDPs and Liberals of yesteryear, as well as "progressive sections of the bourgeoisie". Plainly the only political platform on which these bourgeois forces could be united with "Communists" was a **bourgeois** platform. The CPs accordingly set aside their revolutionary policies and slogans, and embraced instead the reactionary values of class collaboration and nationalism. In France and Italy this reached the extent of appeals to fascist movements for "national unity".

This was presented by the leaders of the Communist International as a "transitional approach to socialism". In reality it abandoned any revolutionary perspective in the search for the "broadest possible alliance".

The results on a world scale were disastrous: most shattering of all was the impact of Popular Front politics in Spain, where the abandonment of calls for nationalisation of the land, and other socialist policies which could have attracted the peasantry, handed the advantage to Franco, whose army depended upon peasant forces. A similar "Popular Unity" line brought crushing defeat to the

Chilean workers 34 years later in 1973.

In Britain, the politics of the Popular Front were grotesque. The Young Communist League appealed for the convening of "mass conferences of all social, Christian and political organisations in the depressed areas". It staged "keep fit" conferences involving "Boys Brigade, Scouts, Ramblers Association, Bible Class and Girl Guides".

Yet while Communist Parties jumped through bourgeois political hoops like performing circus dogs in the name of "anti-fascism", Stalin behind the scenes was striking a new diplomatic deal with... Adolf Hitler! In August 1939 came news of the Stalin-Hitler Pact.

It was this Pact, and not any healthy break from the Popular Front line, which brought the British CP to take at first a line of opposition to the British war effort between September 1939 and June 1941. And it was Hitler's predictable invasion of the Soviet Union, not any change in the class struggle elsewhere, which brought about an abrupt reversal of policy and a period of grovelling class collaboration by the CP in Britain — setting the scene for CP politics up to the present day.

In the first phase of the war, CP anti-war propaganda insisted that:

"This is not a people's war, but a war in the interests of the big capitalists against the interests of the people... The Labour leaders have been given subordinate places in monopoly capitalism's war machine, serving on Government Advisory Committees of all kinds. They serve the purpose of camouflaging the real character of the war and become the watchdogs of monopoly capitalism on the labour movement..."

(Trade Unions and the War, January 1940)

So effective was this political stand — and so much did it link up with working class opposition to the exploitation forced upon them by profiteering capitalists — that the CP's **Daily Worker** was banned in 1940 by the Tory-led coalition government.

Yet by May 1942, the reasons given by a CP Conference as to why the government should allow the paper to publish once more were:

"If the Daily Worker were allowed to appear, we could count on certain very important results taking place. First, there would be a greater unity of the people behind the Government. Second, there would be a greater drive for increased production. Third, the Government candidates would not be defeated in by-elections. Fourth, the demand for the Second Front would be infinitely stronger. Fifth, the working and fighting morale of the people would be increased. And sixth, the bonds of solidarity between the British people and the peoples fighting against fascism all over the world would be far stronger.

Britain needs the Daily Worker — the lack of it deprives the people of one of their most powerful weapons in the struggle for victory this year."

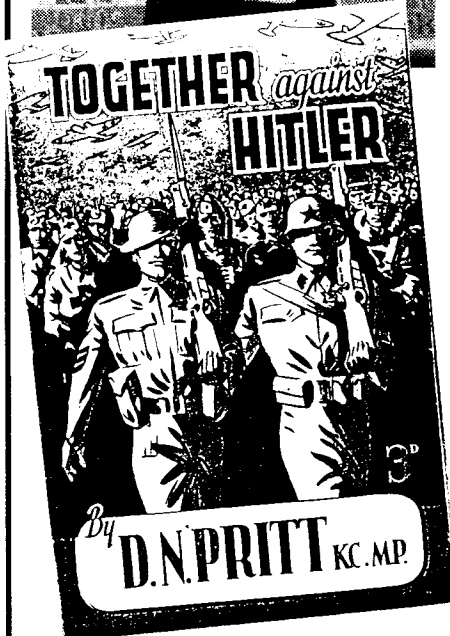
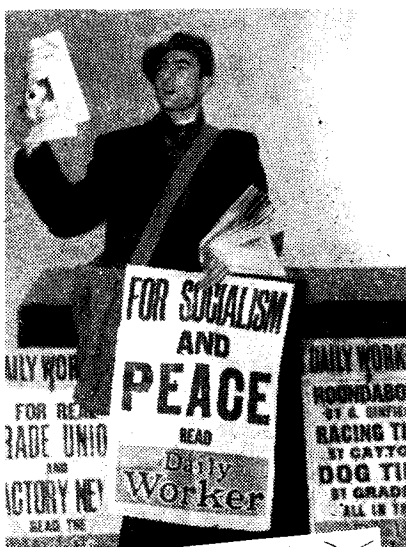
("The Way to Win")

The nationalism of previous periods of Popular Front policy was stepped up to a jingoist hysteria, as the CP argued for an anti-fascist "national front" (yes, really!):

"The Communist Party, as the vanguard of the working class, is striving for working-class unity and for the peoples' anti-fascist national front, in order to drive the existing Government forward and for more aggressive action against Nazi Germany. Those who oppose this are hankering after a line that would involve us turning aside from the mobilisation of the people to force the Government forward now, and would mean that we concentrate our energies in mobilising a certain section of the people [the workers!] in an attempt to drive the Tories out of the Government.

This could make it much easier for those reactionary appeasement influences still in and around the Government who, no longer confronted with the united pressure of the people, could further their policy of passivity and inaction."

("The Way to Win")



And with the goal of boosting the Tories, the CP energetically fought for Tory candidates in by-elections:

"The stand taken by our Party in regard to by-elections has been firm and clear: to support the Government candidates whatever their personal shortcomings, as an expression of unity behind the Government, at the same time as conducting our own campaigns for our victory policy. The correctness of this stand has already been and will increasingly be demonstrated by the course of events.

We want to deal with some of the difficulties that are said to stand in the way of our Party members when they take part in by-elections and recommend the people to vote for a Government candidate who happens to be a Tory.

Clearly it is not an easy task to carry out..."

The Tories were insufficiently patriotic for the CP's taste. But worse. Workers were far from keen to vote for Tories — and had to be urged on by "Communists"!

"What is said to be the biggest obstacle in winning Labour workers

to support our policy where the Government candidate is a Tory? That they refuse to vote for a Tory?"

Aside from their unpaid labour as Conservative election agents, CP members took over from Labour the tasks of camouflaging the character of the war and acting as the watchdogs of monopoly capitalism — tasks which the CP had correctly condemned in 1940. CPers became arch-strikebreakers, ace advocates of speed-up, and defenders of anti-union legislation, glorifying the increased exploitation:

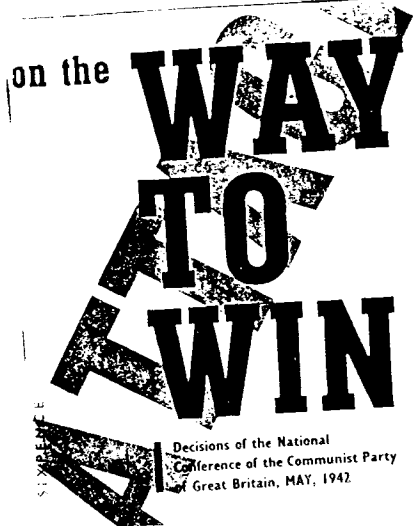
"It has been magnificent. In spite of excessive overtime, low wages for many large sections, especially the women workers, long hours spent in travel, inconvenience and strain caused by the black-out, food difficulties, imposition of an unjust scale of income tax and method of deductions from wages, inefficiency of many managements and chaotic organisation, they have turned out tanks, guns, planes, shells, ships and coal to a marvellous extent."

(The Way to Win)

While the immediate motive for adopting the policy of total subservience to Churchill's National Government had been the new requirements of Kremlin foreign policy following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, there is no doubt that the extreme level of class collaboration involved, following on years of Popular Front policy, had a major impact on the Communist Party itself — and particularly on the members recruited during the war years.

Far from seeing the cross-class "national front" as a temporary expedient forced on the Party by the circumstances of the war, CP leaders plainly began to enjoy the prospect of a long-term liaison with the British imperialist bourgeoisie. In 1944, CP leader Harry Pollitt began looking beyond the end of the war: his vision was restricted to one of reforms within capitalism:

The Communist Party



"It will be possible, even though capitalism remains, to introduce and carry out a new method of trading between the world's people..."

(How to Win the Peace, 1944)

Three years before the Cold War, and with China still in the grip of the viciously anti-communist Chiang Kai Shek, the dreaming Pollitt mused on the future with "peace-loving" imperialism:

"It is, moreover, a world in which there is a firm resolve on the part of the four great powers, Britain, America, the Soviet Union and China, to establish and maintain world security..."

This ... affords a real basis for systematic planning on the part of Britain's (!) industry and trade..."

In Pollitt's view, the war-time speed-up would need to be maintained to fuel the post-war capitalist reconstruction:

"Increased production and increasing development of the productive forces is an absolute necessity for even the most modest schemes of social reform. A mere re-distribution of the national income on a more socially just basis is not nearly enough to guarantee freedom from want, even in Britain and America, let alone the backward Colonial countries and the devastated areas of Europe.

Every man and woman, therefore, who is prepared to fight for freedom from want must regard the war-time increase of production, not as a menace to be feared, but as a great ally on their side, cutting the ground from beneath the feet of those who claim that we cannot afford Beveridge, cannot afford to build four million houses, cannot afford to raise the school leaving age and give secondary education to all.

We believe that the whole of Bri-



tain's productive resources can be far more fully used even under the present, capitalist, system of production."

Pollitt urged workers to put aside their "vested interests" in questions like wages and conditions, and praised the implicit call by (Tory) Minister Anthony Eden for wage controls.

"It cannot be done if left to the free play of employers; it can be done by taking all essential measures to organise continuity of production, regardless of vested interests, measures that relate internal demands with those from abroad in accordance with the people's needs, on a basis of complete co-operation and recognition of our obligations to devastated Europe and the Colonial countries.

It demands a complete break with what Mr. Eden rightly called 'the economic anarchy of the old days' and the clear recognition that what has to be done is at the same time the transition to a new stage in society."

(How to Win the Peace)

All would be well in this "Brave New World" of toothless Tories and obliging workers — provided only that the employers would agree!

"There will be work and good wages for all, side by side with decisive measures of social reform. It is a policy that takes into account all the new political features of the present and coming periods. It depends for its success on the unity and strength of the labour movement and the willingness of the employers to co-operate."

(How to Win the Peace)

This is obviously not Communism or Marxism: there is no hint at any point of class struggle for the in-

dependent interests of the working class. It is **reformism** — but a reformist perspective that arises not from the unsophisticated illusions of militant workers, or the established reformist apparatus of the unions and the Labour Party: it is a cynical reformist line argued in the interests of a corrupt and degenerate Kremlin bureaucracy, while brandishing the stolen colours of "Communism".

It flowed, naturally enough, into a CP position of calling for a **continuation** of the National Government in the 1945 General Election — at which British workers were in fact to register their distaste for the Tories by giving a landslide victory to Labour.

Communist Policy for Britain

REPORT

of the

18th National Congress

of

The Communist Party

November, 1945

One Shilling

How To Win

The Peace

by Harry Pollitt

2/-

The CP's national congress Report for 1945 registers their blunder only in passing:

"It becomes clear, in the light of the Election results and the political developments that had taken place, that the proposal (to put forward after the Crimea Conference) to form a Coalition Government, including the Tories, after the Election, was a political mistake."

However, the Party still lacked any serious class-struggle policies. The prostration before Churchill throughout the war period led naturally enough to the adoption of the new, openly reformist, programme of the CPGB, "The British Road to Socialism", which was personally endorsed by Stalin in 1951.

Rejecting any revolutionary perspective, the "British Road" proclaimed the new "orthodoxy" which was later to be enlarged upon by the "Euros" in the 1970s: power was to be won not through mass action by the workers, but through Parliament, and peacefully taking control of the capitalist state machinery. All the basic ABC lessons of Marxism and Leninism on the need to smash the state machine and construct a new workers' state were cast aside in the tell-tale formula:

"...using our traditional institutions and rights, we can transform Parliament into the effective instrument of the people's will, through which the major legislative measures of the change to socialism will be carried. Using the rights already won in the Labour movement's historic struggle for democracy, we can change capitalist democracy, dominated by wealth and privilege, into socialist



democracy, where only the interests of the people count."

(The British Road to Socialism, 1958 edition, p. 10)

Tell that to the workers of Chile!

By embracing this reformist formula, the British CP took a further step along the road which has led it to the present crisis. The reason is obvious: the British workers' movement already has a reformist party — much larger than the CP. The Labour Party makes no bones about its perspective of Parliamentary Socialism, and is not hamstrung by embarrassing links to brutal dictatorial rule in Eastern Europe and

the USSR. As the popular appeal of the CP's traditional ties to Moscow became — after the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and now the Polish events — more and more dubious, so the Party's fortunes have dwindled.

Now, with membership at the lowest for decades, with its trade union base restricted in most unions to bureaucratic positions while rank and file support has ebbed, the dilemma of how best to proceed is tearing the Party apart.

For the traditional Stalinists, it is pretty much a question of "business as usual" in the unions, linked with popular front policies and endorsement of the global policies of the current Kremlin incumbent. For the more modern "Euro" Stalinists, eager for new political bedfellows, the search is on for a more "respectable" image, keeping Moscow at arm's length. Both face the problem that CP policy in theory and in practice is on many issues considerably to the right of Labour's active left wing — and that recruitment prospects are therefore poor.

However long it takes the present CP majority to seize control of the Party's daily paper, and whichever way the beleaguered Moscow-liners decide to go, the lesson is that any forces drawn around today's Communist Party should look closely at the pedigree of the pup they are being sold.

Those looking for a coherent working class line and a programme of revolutionary struggle will need to look not to the rotting hulk of Stalinism but to building an organisation on the politics and methods of Trotskyism.

"Peace" and political revolution in Eastern Europe

By HARRY SLOAN

WHERE should the left wing of the labour movement stand on the question of democratic rights for dissident groupings in the Stalinist-ruled states of Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba? The ambiguities on this question rose sharply to the surface in the confused attitudes of many left wingers in the trade unions and the Labour Party towards the vast Polish Solidarnosc movement which emerged in 1980. While the huge support for the movement amongst millions of Polish workers was beyond doubt, there were

many at every level in the labour movement in Britain who pointed to the political confusion, and the reactionary religions and political views of some Solidarnosc leaders as reasons for withholding support.

Stalinist-influenced trade union and Labour leaders, who regard the bureaucratic nationalised economies of Eastern Europe as "socialist countries", and see international solidarity as links between them and fellow bureaucrats overseas, responded in hostile fashion to the Polish Workers' Struggle. Meanwhile, exploiting

this weakness and aping the anti-communist rhetoric of Reagan and Thatcher, it was the extreme right-wing of the British trade union bureaucracy that cynically attempted to steal the banner of Solidarnosc and parade as "defenders" of workers rights.

This same problem has found its reflection in the Trotskyist movement since the war. Trotsky himself had been quite categorical that, while defending unconditionally the USSR against imperialist attack, the newly-founded Fourth International of

1938 placed no reliance in the Soviet bureaucracy, and should argue:

"for the freedom of the trade unions and the factory committees, for the right of assembly and freedom of the press."

Having suffered and witnessed Stalin's vast purges of oppositionists of all descriptions and the frame-up "Moscow Trials", Trotsky placed no trust in the bureaucracy to defend the USSR, and insisted that:

"All political trials, staged by the Thermidorean bureaucracy, to be reviewed in the light of complete publicity and controversial openness and integrity."

(Transitional Programme, 1938)

But lacking Leon Trotsky and his fierce independence of judgement, many Trotskyist groupings since the war have succumbed to Stalinist pressure and backtracked on this bold, unconditional defence of democratic rights in what they have loosely termed the "workers' states" of Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba. Instead of recognising the enemy to be the brutally repressive ruling Stalinist bureaucracy, many who regard

themselves as Trotskyists have instead condemned, or acquiesced in the repression of, small, largely impotent dissident groupings whose confused, sometimes reactionary ideas reflect the conditions of Stalinist rule.

Defending the right of oppositional groupings to argue their politics does not commit us to defend or endorse the ideas they put forward. Just as many Solidarnosc leaders entertained illusions in the IMF and still more Western bank loans as a solution to the problems of the debt-laden Polish economy; just as many Solidarnosc militants retained religious prejudices even as they fought for workers' control and an end to bureaucratic privileges, so many oppositionists in Stalinist-ruled states have put forward some ideas with which Trotskyists would disagree. Most often, a kernel of healthy revolt against particular aspects of repression or the oppression of minorities is combined with confused or naive illusions resulting from Western propaganda and instinctive rejection of the official Stalinist political dogma. Defending the right of such groupings to

fight for their views is a starting point for any attempt to change those views and develop them.

A particular case in point appears to be the politics of the various dissident peace groups that have emerged in opposition to the official state-run peace "campaigns" in Eastern Europe. For readers' information, and as part of what we hope will be an ongoing discussion both on the politics of the peace movement and on the struggle against Stalinism in Eastern Europe, we are reprinting here two texts distributed earlier this year at the European Nuclear Disarmament Convention at Perugia, in Italy.

One is a message from Jacek Kuron of Solidarnosc, which urges the Western European peace movement to link the issue of peace with that of civil and democratic rights, particularly with regard to Eastern Europe. The second is an appeal from an independent peace group in Estonia, which was originally distributed at the Stockholm conference of Scandinavian peace groups at Christmas 1983.

Estonian statement

ESTONIA is one of 3 East Baltic states (the others being Latvia and Lithuania) which were incorporated into the USSR after the Second World War. It has a population of about 2 million people, about a third of which now are Russians, with the native Estonian population in decline. The Estonian language is very similar to Finnish and so the Estonians are influenced by Finnish culture.

OUR geographic location on the shores of the Baltic Sea and our historical birthright give us the justification for turning to you. Tallinn is less distant from Stockholm than are the cities of Goteborg and Oslo. Nevertheless, we have been denied the right to participate in the Conference about to begin — even as observers. We have no prospect of becoming acquainted in a normal way with the problems to be discussed, nor will we be given the opportunity to state our views on them.

In order to secure greater "trust" and stability in the Baltic region, the Red Army occupied the three Baltic States in an operation that was carried out in three days — from June 15 to 17, 1940. (The size of the occupation force that "delivered" the 5.5 million people living in the Baltic States from their governments, so that they might be guaranteed "security" and "the right to free expression", amounted to some 500,000 men.) As far as Estonia was concerned, approximately 130,000 Red Army troops participated in the operation (according to the estimates of the Kersten Commission of the US Congress in 1954. Of the 130,000, 40,000 were already in Estonia by virtue of having been billeted in bases set up under the Mutual Assistance Pact. Because, according to Soviet historians, there were 133 (!) Communists in Estonia at the time, it becomes

evident that some 1,000 Soviet soldiers stood behind every local Communist who "led" the "revolution".

Later Communist historical treatments of the coups of 1940 have attempted to tone down the role played by the Soviet armed forces; the Red Army is portrayed as a stabilizing but simultaneously passive factor that did not involve itself in "the spontaneous people's revolution". But Paleckis at any rate, who was the leader of the Lithuanian Communists, "spilled the beans" right from the start in his excessive zeal. In a declaration from the tribune of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on August 3, 1940, he said:

The Red Army entered Lithuania, sounding praise to Stalin, with the objective of protecting the interests of the Soviet Union...

The price that the Baltic States had to pay for such one-sided trust and security was one of the cruelest — even by the standards of World War II. The population of Estonia declined by 22 per cent between 1940 and 1950 as a result of war, repression, mass deportations, and the departure from the country in 1944 of a wave of refugees. This represents — proportionately — the greatest population loss suffered by any European nation during that period. According to the official statistics of the United Nations International Refugee Organisation, citizens of the Baltic nations constituted the second largest group of refugees in the world in 1946 (on the heels of the Poles).

As long as we are discussing the confidence and the security of the countries on the Baltic Sea, the fact simply cannot be overlooked that at present it is very difficult to find a region of the Soviet Union that compares with the Baltic States (except, perhaps, for the Murmansk and Kamchatka areas) in terms of the high concentration of military bases. Additionally, nearly 15% of the territory of Estonia has been declared to be a border zone, to

which one can only gain access with special permission and in the coastal areas of which the rights of the civilian population are severely restricted. It is not insignificant that the Soviet border and internal security forces (note that the militia is a separate entity!) were estimated to number 350,000 men in 1977. This means that the forces that are basically intended to stand vigil over — and keep in check — the Soviet people themselves outstrip in size the whole of the British Armed Forces or the Bundeswehr, which, according to Moscow, pose such a danger to European peace.

In contrast with the zealous encouragement given by the USSR to the peace movement in foreign lands, within its own borders it is the military that is exalted throughout the length and breadth of the land. It is an institution commanding only praise, even though it grows more burdensome from one day to the next. The military cannot be criticized; neither can it be controlled. From earliest childhood, the consciousness of the Soviet citizen is inculcated with a military-secrets hysteria. The slightest personal interest one might show towards the mission of the Armed Forces, the presence of bases, or military matters in general smacks of espionage and high treason — let alone getting involved in protests or daring to demand demilitarization! The fact that Soviet youngsters are among the most heavily indoctrinated young people in the world in respect of the military should provide peace advocates with food for thought. Mandatory military training is imposed on young people in every school (in secondary school even girls are expected to be able to field-strip, assemble, and fire the standard-issue weapon and must learn the basics of battlefield tactics). This continues at the university level, meaning that young women, upon graduation, are assigned ranks, put on the lists of the Military Registration and Enlistment Of-

fice, and thus made technically subject to both mobilization and call-ups for refresher training.

Scattered to the winds throughout the vastness of the Soviet Union, young Estonian servicemen are often subjected to abuse and beatings at the hands of Russians and persons of other nationalities, who see "fascists" in the young men from the Baltic area, with their *savoir-vivre*. Those who are discovered to have religious convictions suffer sadistic persecution.

Hundreds of young Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians have already met a cruel and shabby fate in the dirty imperialistic war being waged in Afghanistan. Young peace activists (particularly university students) are "rewarded" for expressing their opinions with immediate mobilization into the Soviet Army, where all imaginable uses of terror against defenseless youngsters are condoned — up to and including deadly force.

The options open to Soviet citizens who want to do something in the interests of furthering international peace and stability are limited. One can pay one's rubles into the "peace fund" (which in fact is a mandatory exercise — declining to contribute is not allowed), or one can get co-opted into helping organise official peace actions, which take place in the increasingly infrequent gaps sandwiched between military reserve training sessions, air defence exercises, disaster relief drills, and vituperative propaganda sessions critical of Reagan, the "war-monger". All self-introduced peace initiatives are beaten down in the literal sense of the term right at the outset (some years ago, when a worker showed up at the October Parade in Tallinn with a hand-made sign saying "NATO — No! UN — Yes!", this gesture was considered so dangerous to the state that the placard was trampled underfoot and the carrier of the sign locked up for several days on charges of "hooliganism").

Therefore, when the idea of turning Northern Europe into a nuclear-free zone was conceived in the northland, it was well received by the native populations of the Baltic countries.

An appeal signed by thirty-eight Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian human rights crusader and peace activists was made public on October 10, 1981, proposing that the Baltic Sea as such and the three Baltic States upon its shores be included in the project to turn Northern Europe into a nuclear-free zone. In short order, the signers of the memorandum began to be persecuted by the Soviet authorities.

During 1983 alone, four of the Estonians belonging to the group that had signed the document were arrested: Lagle Parek, Keikki Ahonen, Arvo Pesti and Enn Tarto. Sentenced on December 16, 1983, the first three were given long terms of imprisonment (ranging from seven to nine years) for their efforts in the name of peace and for disseminating undistorted information; a harsher sentence probably awaits the 46 year old Enn Tarto, who has suffered twice on earlier occasions in Soviet prisons.

Two leading Estonian human rights figures, the biologist Mart Niklus and the chemist Juri Kukkk, who, among other things, allowed themselves the liberty of protesting against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, were throttled in a similar way earlier on, in 1980. Juri Kukkk perished (or was murdered) a year later, in the Vologda Prison. Mart Nuklus is serving a 15 year sentence in a solitary confinement cell in the notorious Chistopol Prison.

In a country where the population, denied its democratic rights, cannot exert

control over its leadership; where the people, whether in groups or even individually, cannot express or disseminate beliefs that do not conform to official policy (anti-Soviet propaganda!); where no trace of a spontaneous and responsible peace movement can be found (the official peace movement merely serves as camouflage for the all-powerful chauvinistic-militaristic frame of reference) — in such a state, the sealed-off clan of bureaucrats and military men, in its isolation from the people, has a free hand in embarking on adventures of every description. The peace marches of hundreds of thousands of West Europeans and the millions of signatures lending support to the idea of establishing nuclear-free zones will be of no avail until the point made in the preceding sentence is taken into consideration and until those seldom-seen individuals in the East who have kept up their determination, self-respect, and sense of responsibility and who earnestly seek the democratisation as well as the demilitarization of their society begin to be regarded as true allies.

Peace and security are inconceivable in the absence of truth, justice, and an operative solidarity with those who are oppressed and suffering. The free countries on the Baltic Sea basin cannot have feelings of confidence and security towards a great power that, although it sermonises noisily about peace, actually cultivates unconstrained militarism and ideological rancor and has applied violence to its own advantage, putting in thralldom the eastern and southern coasts of the Baltic Sea. It will be possible to begin discussing real trust and security on the day that the Soviet Union brings its policy towards the occupied Baltic nations into accord with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, giving these peoples the right to free self-expression, self-determination, and demilitarization.

Extracts of a declaration of Neutral and Nuclear-Free Balticum association to all those taking part in the Stockholm Conference on security-building measures and disarmament in Europe and to peace organisations in all countries on the Baltic Sea, Christmas 1983.



Solidarnosc appeal

For the sake of Poland, demilitarize Central Europe.

An open letter from Jacek Kuron to all people for whom the desire for peace is genuine.

Translation from the text of an article published in *Tygodnik Masowsze* of June 7 1984.

"Do not ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

THE Polish state has through violence, deprived our society of all human rights, and economically ruined our country.

The reality of economic collapse and of unpredictable consequences, becomes more vivid everyday. But our society has refused to be deprived of its own organisation *Solidarnosc*, which is ready for the struggle to protect its own rights, and to resist the state. Over all this however hangs the threat of Soviet intervention, which for us would mean a national disaster and which could lead to a major world catastrophe.

For more than three years (since December 13, 1981), the spectre of war has hung over Polish society. The Polish people have been abandoned to face by themselves the destiny of the nation and of world peace. By

showing extraordinary patience vis-à-vis dictatorship, the Poles are guaranteeing world peace.

By allowing the Polish people to face their own destiny alone, the Peace movements all over the world, opposed to war, are betraying their own selves. World peace is meaningless without putting an end to a situation in which Warsaw pact armies are constantly on the alert to wage war on their own societies. This is why the demilitarisation of Europe is imperative, most importantly in East and West Germany, and in Poland.

My call is to all those in the world to whom the question of peace is a heartfelt concern. The struggle for peace cannot only be conducted in front of NATO bases, where Cruise and Pershing missiles are being deployed. It is the moral duty of the Peace Movements of the world to press all their weight behind and support the anti war movements that came into being after December 13, 1981, just as they are duty bound to support the peaceful struggle that Polish society is conducting against the military dictatorship.

Jacek Kuron

East European Peace Movements

ONE of the main issues that arose at this Summer's Perugia European Nuclear Disarmament Convention was that of "the empty seats", that is absent friends, peace activists denied visas by their respective governments to attend — for example the Independent Peace Groups of Eastern Europe, and Peace Groups from Turkey and Israel.

This was exacerbated by the presence in Perugia, for the first time at an END Convention, of representatives of all the Official East European Peace Movements.

Many delegates were very hostile to the "Officials", others naively and hospitably felt that any dialogue was worth having. At the very first session of the Convention, a group of activists seized the stage and wearing gags, held up posters demanding the release from jail of East European Independent Peace activists and Solidarnosc leaders. The Officials sent a strongly worded protest "against the provocation in cold war style and primitive anti-communism" and threatened to withdraw from the Convention.

AS well as the Group for Trust in the USSR, there are a number of Independent Peace groups in Warsaw Pact countries. In Czechoslovakia, Charter 77 has continued a dialogue with the Western Peace Movement for some time now. In November 1983, 17 peace demonstrators including Charter 77 spokespersons were rounded up and interrogated for distributing leaflets against the deployment of SS20 missiles in Czechoslovakia. The unofficial Free Trade Unions' Preparatory Committee sent an open letter to the official State Trade Unions calling for a referendum on the siting of SS20s in Czechoslovakia. Petitions to President Husak were circulated in the factories protesting about the deployment of SS20s.

In East Germany the main group "Swords into Ploughshares" are mainly church-based. Last November several hundred GDR peace activists with Western friends from the Dutch IKV and the Greens demonstrating in East Berlin for one hour against the deployment of SS20s were surrounded by the police before they were all arrested. Two days later



Bishop Forck of the Protestant Church delivered petitions to the government against the SS20s. Protests also took place in Leipzig, Karl-Marx Stadt, Potsdam and Weimar with demonstrators arrested mainly for "hooliganism". In Suhl 90 peace activists held a day's workshop accompanied by 300 uniformed and plain clothes police. Over 100 West German peace activists have been denied access to the GDR since last November.

The "Dialogue" group in Hungary were prevented from holding an international summer camp when 20 of their members were temporarily detained and 15 Western activists were expelled from the country. The group has since dissolved explaining that its main aim — Dialogue with the authorities — had become impossible and citing both continuous police harassment and also internal disagreement on future tactics. Former Dialogue leader Ferenc Koszegi has formed a network of Peace Clubs, while a group under the leadership of Ferenc Rusza also continue to campaign. Rabbi Csenyi who has served a spell in jail for advocating conscientious objection has launched a Jewish Peace Group in Budapest. During an official signature campaign against NATO's deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles, some high school students began a counter petition protesting about SS20s. Two school principals were apparently sacked for failing to stop these petitions.

In Poland, most underground movements have taken up the debate about the peace movement, missile deployment and the impact of military spending on the economy. KOS, the "Committee for Social Resistance", has issued several statements to the Western Peace movement calling upon them to include opposition to SS20s in their demonstrations and to link the question of human rights to that of Peace.





Crocodile tears in Brighton

By Basil Hinton, Vice Chair, Labour Committee on Ireland.

THE crocodile tears against terrorism after the Brighton bombing, from a government which backs the RUC/army policy of "shoot to kill" and the murder of peaceful demonstrators with plastic bullets, carry little conviction. For many workers — striking miners in pit villages subjected to effective martial law and brutality, and others who are suffering through Thatcher's racist laws, mass unemployment and spending cuts — it was almost a real case of "Gotcha!"

Despite the anguish of the Tory press — which still hails the cold-blooded sinking of the Belgrano — the Grand Hotel bombing produced little backlash of sympathy for the government. Perhaps it was because it was so difficult to distinguish whether the inmates at the Grand were a military or civilian target.

At the Labour Party Conference the week before, Labour Committee on Ireland members were very active, leafletting and lobbying many Trade Union and constituency delegates on the Human Rights issues in the six counties.

The LCI brought Republican people who have been injured and relatives of people killed by plastic bullets to Blackpool as speakers, along with women who have been strip searched in Armagh Jail, and a contingent of Trade Unionists from the South

of Ireland who wish to make links with British Trade Unions to work for Troops Out and a United Ireland.

In the event, the conference resolution on human rights issues was narrowly carried, but appears to have had no effect on the union block vote against the motion for withdrawal of troops, which was again heavily defeated.

The LCI fringe meeting was attended by about 150 delegates and visitors, who heard speakers from Northern Ireland. A woman blinded after being struck by a plastic bullet fired at point blank range, and another woman who illustrated the terrible degrading and humiliating details of strip searching, how it effects women and haunts them every day. Both spoke superbly.

Also on the platform were Sean Redmond, General Secretary of the IMETU who talked about links with the British Trade Unions; Tony Benn who spoke on his Bill for British withdrawal; and Labour Spokesperson on Ireland, Peter Archer, who generally espoused the right wing line on Unionist consent for a United Ireland.

The meeting was chaired by LCI supporter Clare Short MP.

The women's fringe meeting also highlighted the oppression of women in the 6 Counties by strip searching and made connections between feminism and anti-imperialism. The speakers included Mandy Moore and Diane Abbott.

These meetings served a useful purpose in maintaining the dialogue, though they were not the huge success of the 1983 meeting, where Gerry Adams drew 800 people.

One result of this 1983 meeting was that there were 6 or 7 fringe meetings on Ireland this year, organised by groups with

a wide range of positions on Ireland including Militant on their formation of a Labour Party in Ireland, and the LRC on the pro-imperialist extension of the British Labour Party to Northern Ireland.

After the Conference the LCI will continue the tasks of building its influence, by its many branches all over the country, by public meetings on Ireland and campaigns on Women and Ireland, the Human Rights issues, in addition to its primary work on the promotion of the need for British withdrawal from the Six Counties.

LCI speakers are available in all areas to attend ward meetings, women's groups, trade union branch meetings, GCs and Trades Councils.

We urge readers to join the LCI. Send £5 (£1 unwaged) for individuals, and get your CLP, Ward Branch, Trade Union Branch, Trades Council and Women's Group to affiliate for £5 (£10 for over 200 members) to BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.

SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT