

handover of the remains of Sinai to Egypt should not happen. They fail to see what is becoming plainer all the time — that Sadat's patience is not inexhaustible. He has already deferred the autonomy talks until after the election. He has suffered a wounding blow in the Arab world by appearing to have been conned by Begin over the Baghdad raid. He is now being made an accomplice in the extension of permanent Israeli rule to 'Judea and Samaria'.

Begin and his team quite obviously do not care about such things. They believe and state that Israel can do without the Arabs, whether they live under occupation or in sovereign states. The older generation of Israeli intellectuals, who are fond of saying that four more years of Begin will compel them to emigrate, say it with less of a smile and more of a frown these days. □

Firm probed by NS collapses

BERKELEY-WALBROOK, the insurance selling outfit exposed in the *New Statesman* last week appears to be collapsing. This week the company's main office in London was closed down; the salesforce of what once claimed to be the biggest life insurance selling operation in Britain had vanished.

Meanwhile, in Birmingham, the local manager, ace salesman Mike Pett has set up on his own, taking 30 BW salespeople with him. He is installed on the floor above BW in Centre City Tower, Hill Street, Birmingham, trading under the name of Landor Beck.

So beware, all you good citizens of Birmingham; if you get a telephone call out of the blue offering you financial and tax advice, ask who is calling. If it's Landor Beck, they are little more than a Berkeley-Walbrook clone — so expect similar treatment.

When he was with Berkeley-Walbrook Mike Pett was one of their most successful and determined salesmen. In November last year he broke all BW records, selling more than 130 new policies with a combined sum insured of more than £2 million. This earned him commission of £28,000.

The whole question of touting for business over the telephone, which is how these new-style insurance brokers make contact with their prospective clients, is being investigated by the Office of Fair Trading, following a large increase in the number of complaints from the public.

The OFT is investigating all types of telephone selling — such as double-glazing — and not just insurance selling. If you have found that telephone selling and cold-calling is an invasion of your privacy, dishonest, or even just a nuisance and a waste of your time, write to the OFT. You will find them at: Field House, 15-25 Bream's Buildings, London EC4A 1PR. □

Duncan Campbell unearths a nest of ex-SAS bodyguards behind a recording studio

Slithering snakes

A NEW EX-SAS bodyguard and mercenary company has been set up in London's West End under cover of a major pop recording studio. Members of the new company, which calls itself MASS, include four ex-SAS soldiers and a Metropolitan Police detective and marksman. Company directors have offered, in advertising literature and meetings, 'specialised security services', including 'mobile surveillance', 'close protection' escorts by 'ex-military personnel', and Special Forces (i.e. SAS) training.

In a dossier on the skills of the personnel employed by MASS, the company lists the careers of its operatives — code-named 'Alpha', 'Bravo', 'Kilo', 'Tango', and 'Tango Two'. The list is remarkable for the number of places in which the former SAS soldiers say they have worked where there have been no official British military operations. Operative 'Alpha' — an ex-SAS NCO and reserve Captain named Angus MacIntyre — claims that during the 1960s he served in Malaya, Borneo, Bahrain, Sharjah, Aden, East Africa, the USA and Scandinavia on 'mainly small patrol deep penetration work'.

Operative 'Bravo' is in fact former police marksman, bodyguard and detective Bill Arnot, who claims to have close links with Scotland Yard's Public Order and Diplomatic Protection Squads. The company claims to have been authorised by the Metropolitan and City Police Forces to do 'Special Forces' work in the UK. Its advertising circulars note that 'we cannot on paper discuss the full range of our services or the experience of our operatives . . . we are prepared to discuss any further confidential service a client may require'.

Operatives 'Kilo' and 'Tango' are also ex-SAS NCOs, Ken Searle and 'Taff', who jointly claim 'world-wide service with SAS' —



including Saudi Arabia, North Yemen, Malaya, Borneo, Thailand, Central America and Africa.

The company is part of a shadowy network of similar security and bodyguard firms which blossomed in the 1970s, most of

them trading on the name, experience and reputation of the SAS. MASS directors have also been involved in organising spies in trades unions or factories; Arnott claims one of their 'deep cover' agents has been planted in a British political organisation for over three years.

MASS's proper title is The Festival Production Company (sic) Ltd, and it operates from a luxurious studio and recording complex called NOMIS, beside London's Olympia. The studio is used by a wide range of well-known groups and singers, from Adam and the Ants to Status Quo, Shaking Stevens and Leo Sayer. The presence of the somewhat unusual security company is discreetly advertised in NOMIS's literature, and NOMIS's managing director Robbie Wilson says that the availability of ex-SAS bodyguards for the top pop stars is indeed 'part of the services'.

Another part of the services provided by MASS — though probably not to pop artists — are Special Forces training courses, where paying customers can learn the often secret SAS skills and techniques. MASS appears to pass such customers on to another company in the mercenary/security business, Argen Information Services, based in Westminster. Argen's training camp is in the Basque area of northern Spain, and caused considerable controversy in Spain when it was discovered that the Spanish government were secretly training a Basque security force

Robin Cook reports from Scotland

Lothian faces bankruptcy

LOTHIAN REGIONAL Council, the second largest local authority in Scotland, and half a dozen district councils, are the first local authorities against whom the Government has invoked its new powers to reduce the grants of a specific authority. Even before the legislation had received the Royal Assent, George Younger served these councils with a demand for a total cut of £63m. Of this sum, no less than £53m is to be found by Lothian Region, which covers a million residents in Edinburgh and the surrounding area. The cut amounts to one sixth of Lothian's total budget and, with three months of the financial year already gone, is equivalent to one quarter of the rest of the year's spending. Even Conservative councillors appear taken aback by the scale of the demand, which one of them has described as 'patently impossible'.

Lothian Region has been requested to submit a list of its proposed cuts by this Friday or face the prospect of a cut in the monthly instalment of its grant. Instead the Council has defiantly returned a



Part of the Nomis brochure

there. The camp is run by former Major Ram Seaga of the Special Boat Service — the Marine equivalent of the SAS.

The largest two companies in the business both operate under the control of City of London insurance firms, who offer 'Kidnap and Ransom' insurance policies against criminal or terrorist activities, particularly in Italy and South America. A condition of such policies is that the client accepts and pays for whatever bodyguard and security equipment the insurance companies' military experts require.

The two main firms involved are Control Risks Ltd, a subsidiary of Hogg Robinson brokers, and Saladin Security Ltd, which works for Thomas Nelson brokers. Saladin's personnel also run a secretive Jersey-registered subsidiary called KMS Ltd, which specialises in a wide range of freelance military operations and also hires bodyguards out to the Foreign Office. KMS stands for Keeni-Meeni Services. Keeni-Meeni is a Swahili term describing the slithering of a snake, unseen, in the long jungle grass: it is now used as slang to refer to some SAS operations. □

reasonable statement documenting the need for its services within 'a caring community', and pointing out the impossibility of achieving the cut requested. Like other local authorities the greater part of Lothian's expenditure goes on staff. As the savings from dismissing staff would be offset by redundancy payments, it would be necessary for Lothian to dismiss 15,000 out of a total staff of 35,000 if it was to achieve a saving of £53m within the remaining months of the current financial year. Understandably the Council has refused to contemplate such a course.

Lothian is a good example of a local authority in which Labour has been able to use its strength to resist Tory policies. Its schools now have the best pupil/teacher ratio in Scotland. For the past four years there has been no fares increase on its buses with the result that passenger usage has increased by 11 per cent at a time when other transport undertakings have been losing passengers.

Previous attempts to reduce services in Lothian Region have been defeated by the Council which has raised rates — 50 per cent this year — to pay for services. By refusing to come forward with cuts this time, the council has dared the Government to render it bankrupt. □