

Duncan Campbell reports on the allegations of an anti-Labour 'army of resistance'

What did a Tory MP say in the Cumberland Hotel?

JUST BEFORE the 1979 election, the late Airey Neave, MP — one of Mrs Thatcher's closest allies — discussed with former security-service agents plans for an undercover 'army of resistance' in case of a Labour victory. These, according to Lee Tracey, an MI6 electronics experts of long experience, included the possibility of violent action if it seemed necessary to prevent Tony Benn becoming Prime Minister.

Tracey, who now runs his own electronics business in London, has been interviewed for next Monday's *Panorama* programme about the security services, furnishing a long account of his experiences with MI6. The programme is only being shown after considerable intervention — and cutting — by the BBC Director-General, Sir Ian Trethowan. But in Tracey's case, the effect of having talked at length for the cameras appears to have made him ready to discuss openly matters which previously would have been taboo.

TRACEY'S ACCOUNT is that his introduction to Neave came through intelligence-world contacts sharing his own starkly anti-Communist views. 'I was phoned up by Neave. I'd never met

him before. But I had a very high regard for his reputation.'

At the Cumberland Hotel, Neave discussed his fears that Labour might be re-elected, and that premature retirement by James Callaghan could leave the way clear for Benn to become Premier. Tracey was asked to consider



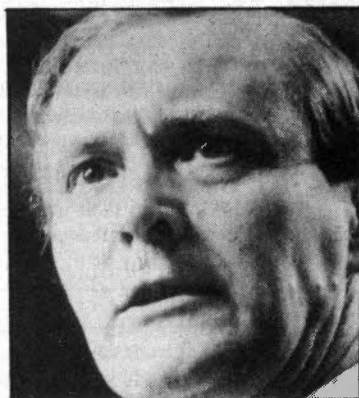
Airey Neave feared Benn becoming premier

whether he would join a team, consisting of various intelligence and security specialists, which would 'make sure Benn was stopped'. The conversation was brief, according to Tracey, but he

is quite clear that violent means were a possibility.

Neave, who appeared familiar with Tracey's background, said that if the Tories were to be elected, he expected to become security overlord. He would then carry out a 'purge' of MI5 and the Metropolitan Police, because there were too many officials who, for various reasons, were unreliable. (One Deputy Assistant Commissioner was referred to by Neave as 'Crazy Horse', and singled out for attention.)

His own politics, says Tracey, are 'hard right', and the conversation was based on the assumption that there was a real danger of Britain being taken



over by 'Communism'. He says that he agreed to a further meeting. But one week later, Neave himself was killed by a car-bomb planted at the House of Commons.

Several factors suggest that Tracey is not just gossiping idly about a distinguished man who can no longer defend his own reputation. One is that Tracey is without doubt an experienced intelligence operative, and a veteran of several MI6 operations. (Details of his career are given on page 12.)

His political views have not prevented him discussing intelligence topics on other occasions with the *New Statesman*. He has normally been as discreet as his background would suggest — but whatever the oddity of his political judgments, firm factual statements he has made have turned out to be correct when checked against other sources. He does not appear to be a mere fantasist.

Furthermore, the fact that Mr Neave had conducted meetings of this sort just before his death was known to us in detail at the time, and has since been confirmed by another former security agent. In the immediate aftermath of the assassination, there was nothing we could or would have done to investigate further.

But Tracey's involvement with the *Panorama* programme, and his willingness to discuss the matter attributably, creates a new situation. To put the matter no higher, a man who has been frequently employed on Government intelligence work claims to have had a highly-dangerous conversation with a senior politician during the course of a general election. Ugly as the matter inevitably is, it would be difficult to argue that Tracey's evidence should be suppressed. □