

# SUBS IN TROUBLE

On February 5th, in very heavy seas, a 60-ton section of the hull of the third Trident sub fell off the cargo ship carrying it from Glasgow to the shipyard at Barrow-in-Furness, and is now lying in 180 feet of water off the Mull of Galloway. The ship, Skellig Rock, continued on its journey, only to lose further submarine sections in 50 feet of water near Walney Island, just outside Barrow.

Attempts to salvage the parts, worth nearly £ $\frac{3}{4}$  million, are due to be made soon, meanwhile the coastguard and ships hired by Motherwell Bridge Engineering, who manufactured the sections and are liable for the loss, are keeping watch over them. The effects of this premature immersion on the sub sections have not been revealed, but the MoD claim that it won't affect the Trident construction schedule.



Rust was revealed to have crippled the Hunter-Killer sub Valiant, under refit at Rosyth.

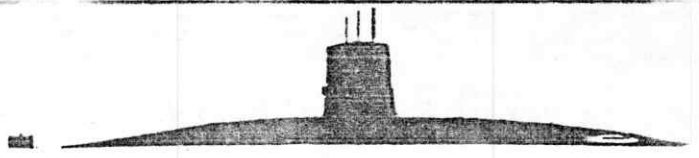
Corrosion and radioactive contamination on pipes leading from the sub's reactor was so bad that engineers cannot get close enough to them to replace them, the Sunday Mail reported on February 28th.

Rolls-Royce, who specialise in building and maintaining the UK's submarine reactors, will now have to develop remote-controlled robots to carry out the necessary repairs.

The fault, which may afflict other sub reactors of a similar design, is likely to add at least six months and millions of pounds to a refit which has already taken two years and cost in the region of £100 million.

Like HMS Resolution, the Valiant is the oldest sub of its class.

Despite the fact that an official of Babcock Thorn, who manage Rosyth dockyard, said "We are not in the business of sending that boat out when we have people's lives at risk.", the MoD said the problems were "minor", and to be expected in an old submarine.



If a repair to Valiant proves impossible, it is likely that both the UK's subs of this class, Valiant and Warspite will be decommissioned even earlier than the 4-5 years believed to be left of their life-span.

This will worsen the problems the MoD is having in deciding how to dispose of the hulk of the only other UK sub so far decommissioned, HMS Dreadnought, which is moored with its reactor still in place at Rosyth. The options being considered, as announced by Lord Trefgarne on October 3rd 1987, are to remove the reactor compartment and bury it on land, cutting it up into small pieces and letting the Civil nuclear industry dispose of it in the same way as they decide to dump their own waste, dumping it at sea, or filling the submarine with concrete and sinking the whole vessel in the deep ocean. Irish newspaper The Dublin Sunday Press, believes that a likely ocean dumping site is several hundred miles off the south west coast of Ireland, and any such plans are likely to meet with widespread opposition.

Meanwhile the National Audit Office, which scrutinises public spending, has revealed that the MoD has lost in the region of £73 million over the privatisation of Rosyth and Devonport dockyards. A lack of work on Royal Navy vessels means that the measure has not led to the benefits claimed when the privatisation was announced.

The Trident expenditure programme means that fewer conventional ships will be built, which is also putting a strain on existing servicemen - fewer ships mean that tours of duty have to be longer, which is never popular among servicemen, especially those with families.

Problems with recruitment at Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment have led to pay rises of £1-2,000 a year being offered to offset a staff turnover of about 700 a year. Part of the problem may be that Aldermaston's image has suffered badly since revelations of accidents involving nuclear materials at the plant, and high levels of childhood leukaemia in the surrounding villages.