

FIGHT RACISMS

FIGHT IMPERIALISMS

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 82 15 November-15 December 1988

(unwaged 20p) 40p

DEED No.1

'Higher Growth'

POVERTY UP

PRISON

POPULATION UP

HOMELESSNESS UP

HOSPITAL WAITING
LISTS UP

INTEREST RATES UP

DEED No. 3

'Freedom of
Expression'

SINN FEIN BANNED

ANTI-VIOLENCE OATHS
FOR SINN FEIN
COUNCILLORS

OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT
TV PROGRAMMES
BANNED

DEED No.4

'Freedom of
Association'

PUBLIC ORDER ACT

IRISH MARCHES
BANNED

WORDS

'EXPERIENCE TEACHES US THAT
YOU WILL ONLY ACHIEVE **HIGHER
GROWTH...** WHEN PEOPLE HAVE THE DIGNITY AND

ENJOYMENT OF **PERSONAL AND POLITICAL
LIBERTY**; WHEN THEY HAVE **FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION, FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION,
THE RIGHT TO FORM FREE AND INDEPENDENT
TRADE UNIONS'**

M. THATCHER
3.11.88
POLAND

DEED No.2

'Personal and Political
Liberty'

RIGHT TO SILENCE
ABOLISHED

DETENTION WITHOUT
CHARGE INCREASED

PTA MADE
PERMANENT

JURY CHALLENGES
ABOLISHED

SECTION 28

SHOOT-TO-KILL

DEED No.5

'Free and
Independent Trade
Unions'

GCHQ TRADE
UNIONISTS SACKED

THE ENEMY WITHIN
PICKETING BANNED

STRIKES ILLEGAL

TRADE UNION FUNDS
SEIZED

70% HAVE TO VOTE
YES FOR A STRIKE

A MEAN, LYING, HYPOCRITICAL, MURDERING GOVERNMENT

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Building a new communist tradition



Anti-communist demagogue Thatcher meets anti-communist Wales in Poland.

Last month at its national conference the RCG took decisive steps towards consolidating our own organisation and extending the influence of communist politics to a new generation of the working class. Our new emphasis involves concentrating far more on the education of a political cadre capable of defending and spreading the ideas and teachings of Marxism/Leninism in the working class in Britain.

The organised British working class movement is dominated by a layer of the working class whose standard of living has risen continuously throughout the post-war period and has continued to rise under Thatcher. Its theoreticians and academic representatives have developed a political standpoint that reflects this reality – new realism. It is fundamentally hostile to Marxist theory and the communist tradition. It believes that conditions have changed to such a degree that the fundamental principles of the communist standpoint no longer apply.

For this layer, the traditional working class of Marxist theory has ceased to exist. Social conditions of production – the post-Fordism era – have changed the relationship of the working class to the process of production. There is a convergence of the two social systems – capitalism and socialism. Revolutionary change is ruled out.

There is nothing new in these ideas. It is always the case that after a period of relative prosperity for the privileged layers of the working class, theories justifying their narrow interests arise in the working class movement. In the period leading up to the first world war Eduard Bernstein and his allies in the German Social Democratic Party developed a revisionist theory attacking the fundamental principles of Marxism denying the necessity of a socialist revolution to solve the problems of the working class. Very soon after, the first imperialist war broke out and in 1917 the first socialist revolution took place. In the early 1960s at the height of the prosperity of the post-war boom, there was much talk of the end of ideology. Capitalism had changed, crises were a thing of the past and socialism was no longer desirable or necessary. Yet in the mid 1960s black people's uprisings swept across cities in the USA. By 1968 the Tet offensive in Vietnam heralded a new period of class struggle that carried to Europe with the May events in France and student rebellion in the imperialist countries.

It is precisely because these theories only represent the interests of the privileged upper layers of the working class that they give only a partial and one sided view of political reality. The vast majority of the working class do not share the same experience. In Britain, under Thatcher, the gap between rich and poor has widened. Over a third of the population lives in poverty. Millions more are facing an uncertain future as Thatcher's economic and social policies take their toll. We have every confidence that now, as before, just at the point when the theoreticians of new realism have perfected their theories a new upsurge of class

struggle will break out. The RCG has to be politically prepared as these new developments take place.

At present no vanguard organisation of the working class exists. It will arise from the oppressed sections of the working class, not its upper layers, and will take some years of class struggle for it to emerge. Necessarily it will have an anti-racist anti-imperialist standpoint. It will have to develop the political experience necessary to confront opportunism in practice and build alliances with other forces on a non-sectarian basis. It must be schooled in thoroughgoing democratic methods of work.

Our position on the development of a working class movement is unique on the left. Unlike us the major left organisations adapt their politics to the political prejudices of the privileged layers of the working class. Nearly all the left has taken an anti-Soviet standpoint in line with the prejudices of the British labour movement. They support the reactionary 'Solidarity' movement in Poland which greets Margaret Thatcher with 'Down with communism!' and 'We love Thatcher!'. Nearly all the left have abandoned internationalism in practice. The failure to build a mass movement in solidarity with the Irish people's struggle for freedom has paved the way for a fundamental attack on democratic rights in Britain. The latest development being the ban on the right to silence in the Six Counties of Ireland and the ban on media broadcasting of supporters of Irish freedom.

During the next period our task is to oppose new realism with communist politics and communist practice. We are committed to providing forums for education and discussion of Marxist theory and practice in relation to today's political struggles. We will produce an education programme for all our supporters on the basic principles of Marxism/Leninism. We will publish a series of pamphlets on issues of contemporary politics. There is an urgent need to educate a new generation of the working class in communist politics, to fight against the stream of rampant new realism and develop a confidence to confront and defeat the opportunism of the Labour and trade union movement. Our readers and supporters groups will begin this process.

Our first meetings will be concerned with the ban on the Irish liberation movement. We will be explaining to our supporters and readers of our newspaper why we, as communists, refuse to recognise or co-operate with this ban. Unlike the new realists we believe the Irish liberation movement has every right to be heard in the working class movement in Britain. *FRFT* has always given space to the arguments and views of Irish revolutionaries. We will continue to do this. We will defy any attempt to prevent us giving voice to their views whatever the consequences, believing that the only way to oppose an undemocratic law is by challenging it.

Communists have to lead the fightback in this period at every level, taking on new realism politically, ideologically and in practice. Join us!



LABOUR PARTY AND THE TUC CONFERENCES

Labour movement retreats to 'New Realism'

TERRY O'HALLORAN

The TUC and Labour Party conferences confirmed the incapacity of the organised labour movement to confront Thatcherism. The TUC voted against renationalisation of privatised industries, against a Poll Tax campaign based on non-payment, against 'illegal' support for the P&O strikers. It voted for the phasing out of nuclear power but Gavin Laird (AEU) made it clear that his union will ignore the vote. It voted to boycott Employment Training (ET) but it also voted to 'phase out' involvement over two years and again some unions, particularly the EETPU have said they will co-operate with ET. The Tories responded to the vote by abolishing the Training Commission.

So why was the EETPU expelled? The EETPU represents company unionism. A system of trade unionism that consists primarily of winning privileged conditions for a certain section of mainly technical and professional workers in industries where a highly paid, relatively skilled workforce is appropriate. It is ruthlessly anti-working class as Wapping demonstrated.

It is bound to be opposed by unions representing workers in industries which are shedding labour and where employers are using continuing high levels of unemployment to impose ever worsening conditions of work on their remaining labour force.

The EETPU's outright rejection of the Bridlington rules on inter-union disputes threatened the very existence of the TUC as an organisation, and therefore, its control over the organised working class. There was therefore no real alternative to expulsion. The limited character of the split, however, was shown by the trades unions' refusal to seek the expulsion of the EETPU from the Labour Party.

Already a rival union of those opposed to Hammond, the Electrical and Plumbing Industries Union (EPIU), has emerged to recruit EETPU members. Anything which weakens the deadly grasp of the TUC is a step forward. Yet the Socialist Workers Party and Militant are already organising against the EPIU.

Their dogmatic notions of the primacy of trade union organisation and, in particular, of one trade union centre, drive them to oppose the EPIU. Instead of viewing the process as a means of weakening the hold of the opportunist leadership, they see it only as a disaster. In effect, they are seeking to defend the organised power of the labour aristocracy.

The correct attitude of communists is to utilise whatever possibility exists for moving trade unionists to the left. In some sections of the EETPU this would mean remaining within it to fight Hammond. In others it would mean going with the EPIU. The position of the SWP amounts to a defence of the hegemony of the TUC over the organised working class.

The organised trade union movement is a unity of contradictory interests. On the one hand it is dominated by, and its structures reflect the interests of, the labour aristocracy. On the other hand it organises millions of low paid, oppressed workers. As serious social and political conflicts emerge this unity will come under increasing strain. Splits in the existing trade union movement will be a necessary part of the political progress of the British working class.

The Labour Party conference demonstrated the organisational and political triumph of Kinnockism. The Benn/Heffer challenge ended in unmitigated defeat. Not only did Benn achieve only 11% of the vote but crucially he was defeated by four to one in the constituency section, traditionally the heartland of the Labour left. The Labour left is now a defeated and

marginalised force. Where real issues arise the Labour left either refuses to give a lead or uses its position to hold back the campaign.

Kinnock's policy reviews – Thatcherism without Thatcher – were all carried. The conference once again voted overwhelmingly against a call for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. Kinnock, with the help of Diane Abbott MP and others, buried the fight for black sections with an offer to establish an affiliated society, like the existing Poale Zion, open to any member, black or white.

Kinnock's only serious reverses were on nuclear disarmament and ET. The conference voted to reaffirm unilateralism. Yet immediately after the vote Hattersley and others were dismissing the vote and saying that the question would be dealt with in the policy review.

The conference also voted to boycott ET and instructed local councils to refuse to implement the scheme or co-operate with it. If you are willing to believe that Labour councils will defy the government over ET you'll believe anything.

Elsewhere Kinnock ruled. He declared: 'We are the party of the individual and of the consumer. We are the party that will manage the mixed economy more fairly and efficiently than the Tories'. It is a sign of the ideological assault on the working class that it should be necessary to remind ourselves that 'efficient' capitalism is based not on 'fairness' but on the exploitation and oppression of workers and oppressed peoples.

It becomes clearer day by day that the working class cannot rely on the structures and organisations of the labour aristocracy to defend its interests. There is nothing on offer there for the mass of oppressed workers. A new movement has to be built, independent of these structures, and based directly on the interests of the mass of the working class. ■

DEFEND OUR SERVICES - FIGHT THE CUTS

Bradford under attack

NOTES

AURIEL FERMO

On Tuesday 25 October, Bradford Council's ruling Tory group pushed through a series of measures that will cut £5.8 million this year off council spending and axe 9000 jobs over the next five years. The public gallery was packed with angry people from the community, different campaigning groups, organisations and NALGO members. It lasted till 4am and throughout, the Lord Mayor, Conservative Councillor Smith Midgley, used his casting vote to give the Tories the majority in winning all but two of the motions.

The Tories took over the council in September after winning the Odsal by-election on an anti-gypsy ticket. Their new leader and former chair of the Young Conservatives, Eric Pickles, has been very confident about his plans. 'Labour will shout and bawl about it now,' he says, 'but within a few years they will be content to make a few slight adjustments and they will certainly not want to go back to the old system...'

The cuts are vicious and attack the whole of the working class in Bradford, particularly the poorest sections.

- Employment and environment - closing down all benefit shops and the Employment Advisory Unit; cuts and eventual privatisation of refuse collection, etc.

- Education - £3.8 million to be cut; school meals to go up by 25% to 80p a day; language support teachers to go.

- Social Services - pensioners will have to pay £1 a week for the currently free home help service; meals on wheels to rise 11p to 60p; day centre charges for the old to go up 10p to 70p; plans to employ new social workers to investigate child abuse will be

scrapped; cemetery charges to rise; 12 old people's homes to be sold off by Christmas leaving the poor and elderly unable to afford to stay, etc.

- Housing - on the morning of 25 October the Tories announced a council rent rise of £3 a week - 16%. Another rise is due in March which will likely be above the inflation rate.

- Charges for sports facilities, theatre and hall hire cost to rise; libraries spending to be cut by £14,500 etc.

On top of this, many voluntary organisations will be forced to close including the Citizens Advice Bureau. And the Tories plan to cut a further £8.4 million off next year's budget.

Resistance to the attack

In the week leading up to the full council meeting, a NALGO organised campaign - Action Group for the Elderly - held secret street ballots in Bradford and surrounding areas. The result was a staggering 97% against the Tories' plans.

On 25 October, NALGO called its 5600 members out on a half day strike. There were between 3 and 4000 people on the demonstration. There were representatives of the whole community on the march, not just trade unionists or the Labour Party. The unemployed; people in housing campaigns; against the privatisation of old people's homes; pensioners; disabled people.

FRFI supporter and Bradford teacher Jenefer Levack said she was disappointed that there weren't more people out, considering there are 26,000 council employees and that the whole city will be affected. She

thought the most militant section of the march had been the Gingerbread Group (for single parent families) which was mostly children and said that had the estates round Bradford been mobilised it would have had more impact.

The evening session of the council meeting was indeed a farce. A week before the Tory Council tried to ban the public from the meeting but the High Court ruled this out. Before the evening break, the Lord Mayor had arrogantly used his casting vote against a vote of no confidence in his chairing. Much anger was directed at him. The Tories' arguments were greeted with 'Heil Hitler!' and at one point the whole public gallery chanted in unison 'greed! greed! greed!'

However the Tories were not ruffled. They pursued their class interests with all the vigour and confidence that Thatcher has for the last nine years.

In contrast the Labour councillors on the whole failed to make the vital political arguments in response. They resorted constantly to moral rhetoric: 'you will carry the shame of your fascist values on your conscience for ever!'

The lesson of Tuesday's events is hard and clear. Relying on Bradford Labour Party or trade union leadership alone will lead to demoralisation and betrayal as ultimately their number one concern will be their own jobs and privileges. John Fitches (NALGO) has given up before he's even started. In *Leeds Other Paper* (28 October) he says 'It's bigger than Bradford. I'd be a bit naive to think we can fight it in Bradford - I don't'.



It will be the anger of thousands of working class people organised and led by the activists in local community campaigns fighting for the interests

of the widest sections of the working class, alongside active trade union members, that will start to build serious resistance to the Tories attack. ■

Labour left sabotages Poll Tax campaign

LORNA REID & GARY ROSE

The Scottish Labour Party recall conference voted overwhelmingly against a campaign of non-payment against the Poll Tax. Donald Dewar, Shadow Scottish Secretary, argued that the campaign against the Poll Tax must be lawful - a view echoed at the Labour Party conference in Blackpool. There, Dewar said that a party aspiring to government would sacrifice credibility if it practised selective amnesia towards the law of the land. The TUC conference held in September also refused to support any campaign that is not legal.

Labour MPs and activists supporting illegal action against the Poll Tax have been attacked by Kinnock. He said that a responsible party could not seek government office when in opposition it picked and chose those laws it would uphold. If people were provoked into not paying the Poll Tax they were being invited into paying penalties 'and then we will not be able to do anything to help them'. Kin-

nock's message is clear - Labour's electoral interests come before the needs of the poorest who cannot afford to pay the Poll Tax.

Labour's official opposition to the Poll Tax has been to announce their alternative - a tax based on income and property. Thatcher will not be moved by the loyal opposition's alternative tax proposals. The only alternative to the Poll Tax is to smash it. The Poll Tax will not be defeated by parliamentary alternatives but by a movement built amongst the forces of the working class that cannot afford to pay it. Kinnock is ensuring that this alternative will not be allowed to play a part in Labour's electoral strategy. He has launched an investigation to expel Militant members in Glasgow who are currently involved in local anti-Poll Tax unions.

Opposition to the Poll Tax is being used by Militant to conduct their own factional fight within the Labour party. Their strategy in Glasgow is to mount an electoral challenge in the regional by-election - an attempt to revive their Liverpool

experience. Their involvement in local anti-Poll Tax unions is aimed at drawing people into the Labour Party. They will not build a campaign independent of the Labour Party.

Labour's candidate in the Govan (Glasgow) by-election, Bob Gillespie, has said he will avoid using the Poll Tax as an election issue 'because it has split the Labour Party and obscures more important issues'. Eight Scottish Labour MPs who have planned to form a committee of 100 pledged to non-payment, in defiance of the Labour Party's official position, have already backed down to Kinnock and postponed the launch of their campaign until after the Govan by-election. The campaign against the Poll Tax is being held back by the people who claim to be leading it - the Labour left. They are allowing their interest in preserving the unity of the Labour Party to stand in the way of a serious campaign.

Earlier this year the RCG initiated through the Chesterfield Socialist Conference a National Action Conference against the Poll Tax to unite local response into a campaign of civil disobedience and non-payment (see *FRFI* 79). The conference has the potential to mobilise representatives of local communities, trade unionists, council employees, women's groups and black people - all those who want to fight the Poll Tax.

The potential of the conference to unite the broadest possible

forces can be realised only if it is organised and built in an open and democratic manner and directed at the mass of working class people who cannot pay the Poll Tax.

The conference organising committee is co-convened by Gary Kent, Independent Labour Publications (ILP), and Lorna Reid, RCG member. Initially Kent refused to convene a meeting of all those who had volunteered at Chesterfield to organise the conference.

The RCG fought for those meetings to take place. The conference organising committee involves members of the Labour Party (ILP, Labour Briefing), SWP, RCG and others. Whilst the majority of the organising committee are committed to building a campaign based on non-payment and non-cooperation, Gary Kent has been arguing that the demand 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' will be of 'dwindling significance as the penalties begin to bite'.

We have recently had to fight for the right to participate in the organising committee. Gary Kent, Reg Race, Terry Conway and Greg Tucker, all from the Socialist Conference and members of the Labour Party, excluded non-Labour Party members by holding an unannounced committee meeting during the Labour Party conference. Lorna Reid, co-convenor with Gary Kent, was not told about this meeting or any decisions made.

The RCG wrote to the Socialist Conference steering committee

to complain about this appalling abuse of democratic procedures and we are awaiting a reply. We are determined to ensure that this conference is democratically organised in order to ensure that the interests of the mass of the working class are not subordinated to the sectarian concerns of the Labour left.

Already the Socialist Conference is falling foul of sectarian methods of campaigning. If this is allowed to continue it will rapidly become a restraint on independent action. Gary Kent is also responsible for arguing that London Against the Poll Tax should deny equal rights within the campaign to political organisations, tenants' associations, women's groups, black people's organisations, unemployed groups, trade unions.

We have to ask what are the motives of this so-called socialist who places himself at the head of a campaign and then manoeuvres to subvert its objectives?

To date the Labour left has placed itself at the head of the campaign against the Poll Tax precisely to prevent that campaign developing into a serious challenge to both Thatcher and Kinnock. The campaign must involve all those who are prepared to oppose the Poll Tax in action but it must be led by those who have no choice about paying their Poll Tax. Such a campaign can only be built outside of the Labour Party. The RCG is fighting to build that campaign. ■

Remember an oleaginous over character called Clive Jenkins. Used to run ASTMS now merged with TASS to form MSF? He's been given a £213,000 pay-off plus a pension of £28,000 or so a year until does the world a favour and dies. Glad to see the boys are looking after each other. Ken Gill, MSF boss, says this is a tribute to Clive's services to the movement. Now what was that heard about David Kitson?

Overheard at Notting Hill recently during an FRFI street meeting. Black child to his father: 'Dad, what are those people doing?' 'They're talking about police harassment, son. You'll know all about it when you grow up.'

Talking of racism, the apartheid regime has trouble keeping up with the intricacies of its racial categories (well you can expect too much of the average racist). So last year some 800 South Africans were 'reclassified'. Now pay attention. 518 coloureds became white. 14 whites became coloured. Seven Chinese became white. Two whites became Chinese. I'm not going too fast for you, am I? Three Malays became white. One white became Indian. 50 Indians became coloured. 54 coloureds became Indian. All clear so far? Good, because there's more. 17 Indians became Malay. Four coloured became Chinese. One Malay became Chinese (more effort needed there, I think). 69 black became coloured. Five coloureds became black. That it. No, since you ask, no black became white, though doubtless Gatscha Buthelezi is working on it.

When Bradford Council tried to ban the public from their cuts bonanza, the High Court turned them down, relying on a successful 1969 Private Member's Bill. Name of Private Member? Margaret Thatcher you must know. Honest.

After resting on their laurels for a while, the luscious lads and lasses at the RCP have returned to form in the Half-witted Headlines Handicap Stakes. After their usual meticulous and terribly terribly profound analysis of the class struggle they conclude 'Never trust a Tory' (*TNS* 21 October 1988). Now you know what you were doing wrong, don't you?

And finally... The creative politics department at *Marxism Today's* discovery of Post-Fordism has earned the applause of the entire civilised world (well, Walworth Road anyway). If you are one of the few who are still mystified, all is made clear by Robin Murray (*Marxism Today* October 1988). Post-Fordism, he elucidates, 'has liberated the centre from the tyranny of the immediate'. All clear? Next week: 'Marx, did he really exist?'



King finds the truth at last.

No right to silence

Announcing the decision to end the right of a suspect to remain silent in custody and when on trial, Tom King said: 'The system of justice has come under systematic attack.' What he meant by this was that too many people in the Six Counties have been exercising this right. MAXINE WILLIAMS reports.

The new rules will become law by the end of this year in relation to the Six Counties. They will mean that the courts will be able to 'draw whatever inferences would be proper from the fact that an accused person remains silent in four circumstances':

- Where the accused refuses to answer police questions but offers an explanation in court
- Where the prosecution establishes a case but the accused refuses to testify in court
- Where the accused refuses to explain certain facts to the police, such as marks on his or her clothing
- Where the accused fails to account for his or her presence at a particular place.

King claimed that none of this removes the right to silence but merely allows inferences to be drawn. This is an entirely spurious distinction. What inference other than guilt is the typical British judge likely to draw from a suspect's silence?

People taken into custody in the Six Counties already have all the odds stacked against them. The police will beat them, threaten them and their families or offer to make deals. If charged they face juryless Diplock Courts with judges only too willing to accept statements that have been obtained under duress. The nationalist community has learned that the only safe thing to do in custody is to stay silent. Now even that right is to be stripped from them. What will prevent the RUC from saying to a person in custody 'either you sign this statement we have written for you or we will say you remained silent. Either way you will be found guilty but it may go better for you in court if we say you co-operated.'

It comes as no surprise to learn that similar changes will follow in Britain. Such has always been the way: carry through an attack on democratic rights related to the Irish - it will

not cause much of a political row in Britain - and then slide them into place in Britain. The ending of the right to silence was met with the usual pitifully inadequate bleats of opposition from the Labour Party.

The new measures will not stop here. A programme of repressive measures is being introduced in Ireland. King and Thatcher have also strongly hinted that they will introduce an anti-violence oath for local councillors in an attempt to debar Sinn Fein from participation in elections. Thatcher, as usual, does not mince her words: 'To beat off your enemy in a war you have to suspend some of your civil liberties for a time'. We saw Thatcher's war strategy in Gibraltar. The government's programme is designed to destroy revolutionary nationalism in Ireland. In the interests of both the Irish people and the British working class, they must be stopped. ■

Victims of King's ban

On Thursday 27 October Tom King's decision to abolish the right of silence claimed its first victims: Finbarr Cullen, Martina Shanahan and John McCann, each sentenced to twenty five years in prison. They had used the right of silence not to testify in their case which was in its second week when King's announcement was made. MAXINE WILLIAMS reports.

The effect of King's reasoning that 'silence equals guilt' can only have been to turn the jury against the accused. The lawyers for the three un-

No right to speak

On Wednesday 19 October Home Secretary Douglas Hurd announced a ban on the broadcasting of interviews with members of Sinn Fein, the IRA and anyone advocating support for these organisations. Then Northern Ireland Secretary Tom King announced that the right to silence was to be removed from suspects in the Six Counties. How very British, simultaneously to deprive Irish people of the right to speak and the right to silence. TERRY O'HALLORAN reports.

These measures are aimed at undermining the Republican movement's popular base in the nationalist working class by a combination of increased legal repression and censorship. Volunteers will be ambushed and shot, or framed and jailed, nationalists will be forced to answer police questions and Republicans will be denied any voice in the media.

Making the bourgeois nationalist SDLP the only nationalist representatives who can be legally interviewed on TV or radio gives this trend greater weight than it actually has in the struggle. These measures are political manoeuvres in the British ruling class strategy of isolating revolutionary nationalism.

These measures will be extended to cover the British working class. The right to silence will be generally abolished. Censorship will be gradually extended both officially and unofficially. This ban is part of an already escalating attack on all forms of critical journalism. There is growing talk of extending the Prevention of Terrorism Act to 'domestic terrorism'.

The direct and immediate interest of the working class and oppressed in this country demands opposition to these measures.

Hurd's ban also provides a lesson in the class struggle. No debate. Just a gag. To silence the Republican movement all the Home Secretary has to do is sign a piece of paper. Bourgeois parliamentary democracy stands exposed again for what it is: a cover for the exercise of ruling class power over the working class and oppressed.

And what says the ever-loyal Labour opposition? With one voice they whine that the ban will 'play into the hands of the terrorists'. They don't say that a legal political party with some 60 elected local councillors in the Six Counties and an MP, Sinn



Gerry Adams the gagged MP

Fein that is, has a right to be heard. For them the only right Sinn Fein has is to be subjected to ignorant second-hand abuse by the more abject species of bourgeois journalist.

The Labour Party shares with the Tories the desire to crush the revolutionary struggle against British domination of Ireland. They differ only about means.

The Labour Party wants means which will preserve the illusion of British democracy. In defence of the same British democracy they will oppose any real resistance to this ban.

Not that they will have a great deal to do if the leadership of the National Union of Journalists is anything to go by. On Sunday 6 November General Secretary Harry Conroy called off the 24 hour strike planned for Thursday 10 November. He claimed that John Birt (BBC) had agreed to have a warning broadcast with items affected by the ban. John Birt's most recent contribution to free speech was to censor and delay a Panorama programme on the SAS.

The truth is that the NUJ leadership is not prepared to countenance the kind of action required to defeat this ban. They cannot be relied on to wage

Gerry Adams MP, President Sinn Fein

'The draconian measures introduced by the British government are a direct attack on Sinn Fein because we articulate the demand for national self-determination... When Republicans demonstrated at elections that the movement had support, Britain then amended the Representation of the People Act to exclude prisoner candidates such as Bobby Sands. When myself and others were elected to the Stormont Assembly exclusion orders banning us from addressing or attending public meetings in Britain were introduced. Then a new law on identification of voters was introduced. And when that didn't work the British government shifted its attention to bringing in an oath for candidates. Now they are directly censoring a legal political party which has an electoral mandate.'

Sean MacStiofain, Chief of Staff IRA 1969-72

'It's quite obvious that this ban is only the beginning of measures taken to curb the civil liberties, not only of Irish Republicans but of ordinary British people as well. I can well imagine a similar strike to the heroic miners' strike occurring again, where clashes between strikers and police occur and union spokesmen are banned from explaining the position of their members. You could answer this ban by increasing the circulation of your own newspaper Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!'

this fight. There are encouraging signs that some members will defy the leadership and come out anyway. The more who do so the better. Media workers genuinely prepared to fight this ban must campaign for industrial action and must reach outside of the NUJ to join up with all those prepared to defend the right of the Irish people to speak.

This fight is more than just an issue of free speech. It is an issue of defending the right to fight British imperialist domination of Ireland. It is an issue of the British working class standing alongside its allies in Ireland against the common enemy: British imperialism. This is the ground upon which we must fight, in alliance with other forces wherever possible, but never sacrificing our own standpoint to that alliance. ■

THE BANNED

Irish Republican Army/Official IRA/ Irish National Liberation Army/ Cumann Na mBan/Fianna Eirann/ Saor Eire/Sinn Fein/Republican Sinn Fein/YOU?

The following Loyalist murder gangs are also covered: Ulster Freedom Fighters, Red Hand Commando, Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Defence Association. ■

Given that Tom King is the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the alleged victim of the plot he could hardly have been unconcerned about the outcome of the trial. He chose his time carefully in order to get these three 'in the bag'.

Up to that point, as King must have known, the police had presented one of the weakest prosecution cases in the recent history of Irish trials.

What was the evidence? There were no guns or bombs. There was no evidence of a connection with the IRA. There were no incriminating statements from the three. Knowing this, the government helped the police to stack the odds against them. The trial was held, against defence objections, in Winchester, a British army garrison town. There was the usual tight and visible security to make everyone feel they were in the presence of dangerous people. And then there was King's announcement. Without these factors the

police case would have been seen in its true pitiful light. They had three Irish people trespassing on King's land. They had some false documents. They had a list of top people's names written on cigarette paper and some military magazines.

The jury clearly had considerable doubts about whether this thin case added up to conspiracy to murder. Even with the right to silence being thus questioned and being locked up overnight in the courthouse, the jury was deeply divided and could reach only a majority verdict. How much more uncertain would they have been if the right to silence furore had not occurred at a crucial stage in the trial?

However, the government got the result it wanted. Three more young Irish people have been interred with sentences that will take them to middle age before their release. As one of their relatives said after the trial: 'No Irish person can get justice from a British court.' ■

Gibraltar killings— Britain's war plan

When the jury returned its verdict of lawful killing in the Gibraltar inquest into the SAS shooting of Mairead Farrell, Danny McCann and Sean Savage there was intense relief in Downing Street. The government had spent six months trying to ensure that there could be no other verdict.

A special cabinet committee was created to ensure that nothing was left to chance: the military and intelligence background to the killings was excluded; the media were pressurised; the Spanish government was persuaded to prevent Spanish police attending the inquest; the date of the inquest was changed to coincide with the parliamentary recess. Those that could not be controlled were the object of sustained attack—the witnesses with inconvenient testimony, the Death on the Rock programme, Amnesty International.

The inquest was the final and most difficult event to control. Even vetted juries are unpredictable, as the dissenting inquest jurors showed. So the British government stacked the odds. Before it opened the Coroner said he was unhappy that the inquest was to be the only inquiry. He said it would be 'flawed'. The British government made sure of that.

For the very terms of the inquest precluded an honest verdict being reached. Whilst the MI5 and SAS men hid behind a curtain, their masters hid behind a thicker veil—Public Interest Immunity Certificates. No questions could be raised about the intelligence that led the SAS to be so sure (and so wrong) about the three being armed and in control of a bomb. Nor about the decision, made by the Ministry of Defence and sanctioned by Thatcher herself, to use the SAS.

Having narrowed the scope of the investigation solely to the circumstances of the shootings the British government then produced its trump card—the SAS rules of engagement. All the SAS had to do was to show that they reasonably believed a threat existed from the three and a lawful killing was virtually ensured. Hence the mysterious 'movements' which only the SAS saw the three make. Father Raymond Murray, who has researched 47 SAS killings in Ireland, has noted that SAS statements about the killings usually follow the Gibraltar pattern—they fired because of a 'threat'. The SAS go into operation with their cover story already prepared.

THE COVER STORY

The Gibraltar cover story came from MI5 officer 'O'. His 'intelligence' was that the three planned to plant a car bomb at the changing of the guard ceremony on 8 March and were in Spain making preparations. This is an unusual level of foreknowledge. But according to 'O' the British got three things wrong: they thought the three were armed and had a remote control car bomb and they missed them crossing into Gibraltar because as 'O' and others repeatedly said, there was 'no surveillance' on the Spanish side of the border. How convenient that the British should have been right on so much but wrong on the very points that provided the SAS with the justification and the opportunity to slaughter the three. As one journalist wrote: 'We are being asked to believe... that when O was good, he was very, very good but when he was bad he was awful'.

Even at the inquest it was soon clear that 'O' was lying. Gibraltar police admitted that the plan was always to let them in: 'The only way for the operation to succeed was to allow the terrorists to come in'. Outside the inquest even more is known. Spanish police had tracked the three since November 1987 and could have shown that the three were handed over to British surveillance at the bor-

Thatcher admits that the British government is engaged in 'a war' in Ireland. Their aim is to destroy all nationalist resistance to British rule. The shoot-to-kill murders in Gibraltar in March and Tyrone in August were part of Britain's war strategy. They were designed to erode IRA strength and strike fear in the Republican Movement and its supporters.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

'It looks to me as though he was probably shot down and then, whilst on the ground, other shots were put into him.'

Pathologist Professor Alan Watson who described Sean Savage as the victim of what looked like 'a frenzied attack'.

**Barrister Paddy McGrory: 'Any regret?'
Soldier A: 'At what sir?'**



Dan McCann



IRA Volunteers paid tribute to their fallen comrades.



Mairead Farrell



Sean Savage

der. This would have proved that the British could have arrested them there. That is why, probably during Thatcher's well-timed visit to Spain during the inquest, the Spanish government was persuaded to prevent the police giving evidence. Even without their testimony we know, as the Gibraltar police let slip, that the plan was to let them in. Why would the British, after months of planning to deal with the attack, allow three IRA members to drive a car bomb into Gibraltar and park it at the target site? (And, it should be noted, fail to even evacuate the site of the so-called car bomb.) The answer is simple. They wouldn't. The British knew the three had no bomb with them.

DEALING WITH THE WITNESSES

The whole SAS case rested on their alleged belief that the three were armed and had a bomb. Having made sure that this could not be disproved at the inquest the only remaining danger for the British was the witnesses who saw the three not only being shot without warning and with their hands up but finished off on the ground. Hence the vendetta against Carmen Proetta and others. Despite the immense pressure several witnesses stuck to their original evidence of seeing or hearing a second burst of shots fired by the SAS as McCann and Farrell lay wounded.

The bizarre behaviour of Kenneth

Asquez was however used to draw attention away from such evidence. He originally claimed to have seen an SAS man, with his foot on the neck of McCann, fire two or three bullets into him. At the inquest he said he had made this up because of pressure from someone collecting evidence for the Death on the Rock programme. How much greater must have been the pressure on him to retract! In fact he told a solicitor that he wished he had kept silent and that he was 'extremely frightened'. Even the Coroner was forced to ask pointedly how Asquez' original statement contained details unknown until the inquest.

THE TRUTH

So what did happen? The British got warning of an IRA plan to bomb the changing of the guard ceremony in Gibraltar. They decided, in line with Thatcher's 'there will be no hiding place' sentiments, to lure them to a pre-planned ambush and shoot them dead on the street. It was to be a terrifying display of arrogance and force. The Death on the Rock programme added more evidence for this. The venue for the changing of the guard ceremony was closed in December 1987, after the British got warning of the IRA plan and only re-opened on 23 February when the British were ready to control what happened there. Surveillance in Spain would have told them the three were visiting Gibraltar on Sunday 6 March not to

undertake the attack (the ceremony said to be the target only happened on Tuesdays) but to make final preparations. They were known to be unarmed and without a bomb. The Gibraltar murders were a meticulously planned shoot-to-kill operation.

GETTING AWAY WITH MURDER

The sheer arrogance and determination of the British to murder in public and get away with it should surprise nobody. The Irish people have seen the naked face of British terror which guns people down on the street and yet dresses in the robes of democracy.

Army killer freed

BOB SHEPHERD

Aidan McAnespie was killed by a British soldier in February. He was shot in the back as he crossed the border on his way from a football match. Before his death he had suffered continuous harassment from the British army. However, on 26 September the DPP said it would be pressing no charges against David Holden, the soldier who killed Aidan. The DPP accepted the fantastic story that the soldier's finger slipped on to the trigger of his machine gun which then went off killing Aidan.

**Barrister Paddy McGrory: 'Can you explain how five bullets hit this man in the back since you and D, according to your evidence, were firing at the front?'
Soldier C: 'No sir, I can't.'**

The Gibraltar killings and the successful government effort to prevent the truth being publicly known may make the British ruling class feel and seem invincible. They are not. If an opposition movement existed in Britain the government could have faced serious trouble about Gibraltar. Perhaps then we would not have heard the 'ten more years' chorus at this year's Tory Conference. The government got away with murder not just because they are powerful but because they were allowed to by Kinnock's Labour Party.

Sean Savage, Mairead Farrell and Danny McCann knew the enemy they were facing and died fighting it. The British working class will also come to know this enemy. And when they are burying their dead and facing farcical inquests they may remember Gibraltar and fervently wish their leaders had done something about it. ■

Ambushed by the SAS

On 30 August three IRA members, brothers Gerard and Martin Harte and Brian Mullen, were gunned down in an SAS ambush in Co Tyrone. The timing of the SAS operation was significant, coming eleven days after the IRA's bombing of British soldiers in Ballygawley and the subsequent 'security review' by Thatcher and King. The three died in a carefully set up revenge ambush. A lorry driven by a part-time UDR member was the bait. When the three drove up, SAS men who had been hidden nearby emerged and shot them in a hail of machine gun fire. The SAS, another shoot-to-kill operation completed, were then whisked away by helicopter. ■

Namibia has been in the news, although somehow peripherally, as a result of the four-nation so-called 'Peace Talks' that have been going on for the last 3 months. South Africa clearly lacks any serious or meaningful agenda of change, let alone decolonisation, when it comes to Namibia. There is a lot of talk of progress being made made at the talks in Geneva, Brazzaville, Cairo, London and so on, but as far as we are concerned, those talks simply continue the old tradition of making Namibia a secondary issue to some other main issue.

The main issue as far as the Reagan administration is concerned, is the removal of Cuban forces from Angola, and somehow the installation or accommodation of Doctor Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in power in that country. Namibia will simply come in as a bonus. It is not on the agenda, despite claims to the contrary.

We don't see meaningful or realistic prospects for a peaceful resolution of the Namibian question through the implementation of the UN formula known as Resolution 435. The Americans want the Cubans to leave; the Cubans are there because the South African presence in the region, specifically in Namibia and southern Angola, is a clear threat to Angolan security. From the Angolan point of view they are a stabilising factor.

We don't see by what constitutional right the Americans appropriate for themselves the right to say that a sovereign country like Angola should get rid of forces from an allied state, forces that were invited in by Angola itself for reasons of national security, while the United States is having troops all over the world and running, basically, colonies in other countries.

REPRESSION AND RESISTANCE

For the last three years Namibia has been ruled by what is known as a 'transitional government'. This consists of a collection of reactionary groupings that were literally hand-picked by the South African government, put together and given a limited amount of legislative and executive functions. They consist of old collaborators with the system as well as some ideological drop-outs from the liberation movement, people who used to be in SWANU or SWAPO.

Without the institutionalised violence of South Africa - in the form of draconian security laws, detention without trial, of security forces that run the place and in fact consider themselves to be above the law - without these the transitional government would not be able to survive for twenty-four hours.

Despite this increased repression, our people continue to be a fighting people. They are resisting South African colonialism. Since the beginning of the year there have been massive school boycotts up and down the country, of students who stood up and in a militant way challenged the legitimacy of the regime. They were rebelling against the presence of military bases that South Africa installed or established near, or in very close proximity to schools in the northern part of the country. 1988 can be written off academically as a result of this protest action.

There has been a resurgence of labour militancy on the part of the labour movement in Namibia. The trade unions came out on a two-day strike in support of the student cause. Namibia also in the last two years has seen the mobilisation of Namibian women. We have been engaged in a struggle, there is a guerilla war going on, militant battles are being fought up and down the country, in the streets of our country and in the countryside.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

There are only two courses of action: either South Africa is going to agree

Free Namibia

Comrade Vekui Rukoro, the President of the South West Africa National Union (SWANU) visited London recently and addressed a special meeting of the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. In the context of years of either the suppression or distortion of information about SWANU by the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* is pleased to publish extracts from President Rukoro's speech and the discussion which are a vital analysis of the Namibian revolution.



Staff and students call for the removal of South African army bases.

POPPERFOTO

to the speedy and unconditional implementation of the United Nations peace formula, Resolution 435, or it is not. Resolution 435 entails elections in Namibia, held under UN supervision, which would enable the Namibian people for the first time ever to decide their own destiny, to decide who should represent them, to decide what type of political and constitutional arrangements they would want to see for their country. This election up to now has been blocked by South Africa and Washington. In the absence of some peaceful measures to persuade the regime to come to its senses, although we'd like the regime brought to its knees in the form of economic sanctions, what option do we have as a people but to stand up in arms and fight for our birth-right? And that is the only option that Pretoria is leaving open to us.

ON SOLIDARITY

We are grateful for the kind of support that you have been giving not only our movement SWANU, but also the support that you have been able to extend to all anti-South African national liberation movements. We are all colonised; we are all progressive organisations; we all have the right, not a privilege but a right, and in some cases a duty, to actively contribute and participate in the liberation of our country. We would therefore take strong exception to any activities by foreign forces, or even solidarity groups and other comrades that have either calculated, or have the effect, of furthering the divisions that exist within our people and movements.

SWANU draws a clear line between the legitimate role and function of solidarity groups on the one hand, such as supporting all anti-apartheid, all national liberation organisations in Namibia and in Azania. To us, that is the proper function, that is the legitimate role of a solidarity organisation. To try and prescribe to us as to the present or future of the political representational situation in our countries, we think that amounts to nothing more or nothing less than

political trespassing, as well as neo-imperialism.

We would urge all the *bona fide* solidarity organisations, and from the reports that I have been getting from our representatives here I understand that given the SWANU definition, the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group is one such *bona fide* legitimate solidarity organisation, we are therefore happy to say continue with your good work; continue to support all those that need, and in fact welcome your support, because they can only contribute to the broader good in both Azania and Namibia.

ON THATCHER'S INTERVENTION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

It is a dangerous development, especially for those of us who have as our ultimate future agenda a socialist Namibia and Azania. We view all these developments as part of a broader conspiracy not only between Western imperialist forces but, in some circles, as a very unholy alliance between even some of the progressive forces in Eastern countries and some of the Western capitals.

South Africa is the most highly industrialised state of Africa. It is the most obvious candidate for the first Workers' Republic on African soil. Therefore the type of system, the type of solution that will come in our country will have extra-territorial implications for the immediate neighbours of a free South Africa and Mozambique.

All kinds of people want to create a situation of dialogue in which the forces of national liberation in Azania are bulldozed into relationships with some bourgeois forces inside South Africa - to try and create a situation that will not lead to revolution.

I do not want to comment on Comrade Gorbachev's moves in southern Africa, but certainly they are quite unique. While the frontline states and the UN are trying to get us to prepare for elections, we in SWANU are telling our people to prepare for a very prolonged revolution. Even if

435 is implemented, we still see it as a phase in the development towards the national democratic revolution.

We are not surprised that there is all this pressure on the national liberation movements of Azania and Namibia from Thatcher, Reagan and Kohl to try and affect the quality of independence - the kind of independence that we are going to get.

ON SWANU AND SWAPO

SWANU was the first black nationalist organisation to be formed in Namibia, on 27 September 1959. The present president of SWAPO, Sam Nujoma, was an executive member of SWANU; so too were many other leading SWAPO figures. As implied in the name National Union, SWANU was therefore launched as the first national political organisation to unite what were tribal institutions trying to fight Pretoria. You had a body like OPO, the Ovambo People's Organisation, which was formed by Herman Toivo ja Toivo (now SWAPO Secretary General). Within three months of its formation, SWANU launched the first incident that rocked apartheid South Africa on 10 December 1959 which resulted in shooting, like at Sharpeville, Azania, where our people were killed. Then, four months later in April 1960, OPO, a tribal entity, was formed into a body, the South West African People's Organisation.

There was no necessity for it. That really constituted the first division in the national liberation movement. At that time there was a whole militant situation after the December shooting. A commission of enquiry was set up and the whole population was up in arms. We still do not understand the rationale, why out of this united national liberation movement and united revolutionary action another grouping should have been formed.

Eversince that day efforts have been made, especially from our side, to unite and form one body, at least to be able to say 'Let's move parallel to each other and strike together against the common enemy'. Our efforts have

been basically unsuccessful, primarily because of the fact that the preferential treatment that SWAPO receives from the OAU, from the General Assembly of the UN, the status that they have got as sole and authentic representatives of the Namibian people. That status became, and still is, the main problem between us and our comrades. They feel that they have the big cake: why should they share it? That's the major stumbling block. Although I suspect that things are now changing: even those who were granted this status are coming to recognise that it has created problems for the national liberation movement, for the quality of independence that we are going to get.

We have this ironic situation that the SWAPO leaders on the ground in Namibia would love to co-operate with us, would love to work together, they are for unity, all of them. For instance, to give you an example, on 17 June '85, when South Africa imposed this interim government on us, we had one of the biggest anti-apartheid rallies in Namibia. I was the chairman of that rally, and all the leaders of the national liberation movement and other progressive forces were there: SWANU, SWAPO, the youth movement, the labour unions - imagine that. I just heard from my colleagues here that when the pictures were displayed here on TV, the commentary was that this was a SWAPO rally, although I was the SWANU Secretary General who was chairing the meeting! This happens all the time.

ON PARTICIPATING IN ELECTIONS UNDER UN SUPERVISION

In the event of 435 being implemented, we would love to see, ideally, an alliance of SWANU and SWAPO joining forces for this purpose. We have learnt from other African countries that the post-independence situation can deteriorate if two important power-blocs that have been developing parallel to each other in the colonial situation do not reach a workable understanding.

That is why, purely from a national point of view, we would welcome an understanding, a relationship with our comrades in SWAPO, based on an agreement on a basic programme of liberation and reconstruction of Namibia. That is our point of negotiation. In the absence of such an arrangement, then clearly we will have to compete in the elections as a separate organisation in our own right. We believe that we will do so with the support of a whole number of progressive Namibian groups inside the country who will join us in an alliance.

SWANU is a black nationalist movement that subscribes to the black consciousness philosophy; that considers for instance basic questions such as the land question as crucial, as decisive to a meaningful independence for the vast majority of Namibians. I have no doubt that, campaigning on that platform, we will reach many people, and just like in the case of Zimbabwe, some people may be surprised. The problem is, and this is no criticism of my African brothers or you, the problem with this is that some people have not set foot on Namibian soil for close to thirty years, and a lot of things have happened in Namibia since then. A lot of things have been happening in Namibia literally over the last two or three months which affect the outcome of the elections to a significant degree, so we are very confident indeed. I am not saying that SWANU as a party is going to win the elections, but I don't even know what is the definition of 'winning' in the Namibian context at this point in time. What I am saying is that we will be such a significant factor that, in conjunction with other parties, we will end up in government in Namibia. I hope to be here one day after Namibian independence, and for you to be able to say 'you really did!' ■

CONSGOLD AND ANGLO AMERICAN:

Thieves fall out

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

The champagne corks popped at Saatchi and Saatchi's subsidiary Sallingbury Casey, public affairs consultants to Consolidated Gold Fields, on the night that Lord Young referred Minorco's £2.9 billion takeover bid for ConsGold to the Monopolies Commission. The biggest attempted company takeover in British history had been put on ice for three months.

Minorco now has to consider whether to build on its acknowledged 30% stake in ConsGold (analysts believe that through unpublished holdings it may already own over 50%) and risk exposure of its affairs by the Monopolies Commission enquiry, or to accept that control of ConsGold stays with the current management led by Rudolph Agnew. That decision will not be made by Minorco frontman Michael Edwardes; it will be made in Johannesburg by the massive South African Anglo-American Cor-

poration. Anglo owns 70% of Minorco.

Sallingbury argued in the corridors of Whitehall that a takeover would give Minorco a monopoly in key minerals; that Minorco's claim to be independent of Anglo was false and, that while ConsGold only gets 15% of its profits from South Africa, the takeover would spread South African influence in Britain.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement can join in the celebrations. It conducted a parallel campaign. The AAM petitioned Young:

'(Anglo-American's) association with monopolies over various markets contravenes principles of free competition... this take-over will clearly be contrary to the interests of the United Kingdom. We would therefore urge you... to block it'.

Mike Terry, the AAM's Executive Secretary added,

'it will also represent a major set-

back for the disinvestment campaign as it has been widely predicted that Consolidated Goldfields would pull out of South Africa in the near future'.

In fact one of ConsGold's real, as distinct from public relations, reasons for fighting the takeover is that Minorco threatened to sell off ConsGold's controlling interest in Gold Fields South Africa (GFSA) if the takeover succeeded. The real share of ConsGold's profits from apartheid is several times greater than the 15% it claims.

But then, white lies always did serve a purpose. ConsGold is such a rich plum precisely because of a century of robbery and exploitation. GFSA controls Driefontein Consolidated, the richest gold mine in the world.

Two GFSA mines featured prominently in the international media in 1985 because of the violent suppression of a strike...

'The minimum wage for an un-

derground GFSA black mineworker, on the basis of an 11-shift, 102 hour fortnight is £48 (R172) a month. This is 58% of the Minimum Living level... and 10-20% less than the wages paid by the Anglo American Corporation mines.'

(Consolidated Gold Fields: Partner in Apartheid by CIS 1986)

Through GFSA, ConsGold owns 78% of the Tsumeb copper mine operating in illegally occupied Namibia. A *kaffir is just a kaffir: ConsGold in Namibia* by End Loans to South Africa reports domestic workers and miners being paid 30p an hour, they live 12 adults to one room, 2,000 workers have been dismissed for going on strike. ELTSA's report, published during the takeover manoeuvres, was a critical reminder of ConsGold's role.

There can be little doubt that the effect of an Anglo-American takeover of ConsGold would be to dispose of the company's assets in South Africa and Namibia. Anglo already dominates the capital market of Johannesburg, what it needs is a vehicle for its plans of global expansion.

This does not justify the AAM's portrayal of Anglo as the predator and ConsGold as the victim. They are both capitalist predators on the black working class. In its rush to keep apartheid out of Britain the AAM has once again covered up for Britain in apartheid. ■

RUGBY TALKS

Breaking the boycott: A good try

CAROL BRICKLEY

On the weekend of 15-16 October, representatives of the South African Rugby Board (SARB - white), the South African Rugby Union (SARU - non-racial) and the ANC, met in Harare, Zimbabwe and agreed to the formation of a united non-racial Rugby Board. The statement issued from the meeting stated:

'They also agreed that the accomplishment of the goal stated here is a necessity for South African rugby to take its rightful place in world rugby... The ANC... undertook to use its good offices to ensure that non-racial South African rugby takes its rightful place in African and World Rugby.'

This position drives a horse and cart through the international boycott of South African sport, which until now, has rested on the principle that there can be no normal sport in an abnormal society. It raises the prospect of a piecemeal end to the sporting isolation of apartheid South Africa.

President of the SARB, Dr Danie Craven shocked South Africa's white rugby fans by announcing, a few months ago, that he had been meeting with ANC representatives. Craven's previous reputation was as a loud proponent of apartheid: in 1976 he ensured that the Springbok name and emblem was reserved for whites only. It is worth being sceptical about his sudden 'road to Damascus' enlightenment.

1989 is the centenary of the South African Rugby Board and its ageing President is duty bound to ensure that it is celebrated appropriately with international competition - preferably the New Zealand 'All Blacks' (!). The outcome of the Harare talks came in time for the meeting of the International Rugby Board in London on 3 November which was scheduled to discuss the possibility of a 'World 15' visiting South Africa for the centenary.

The situation is not without its ironies. Craven, interviewed on Radio 4, announced without any compunction that South Africans 'must have internationals'. 'We feel like a poor child who watches rich people when he has nothing'. Craven was referring of course to South Africa's competition-starved white rugby fans, not the black children who know the realities of extreme poverty in one of the richest countries in the world.

Whatever the ANC intended by the Harare statement, it is now clear that the international rugby administrators are seeing it as a chink in the armour of the boycott. They will attempt to justify breaking the boycott by raising the spectre of 'professional' teams being hired to play in South Africa and seek to justify their stand by using the ANC's statement.

Amongst anti-apartheid activists in Britain there can be no doubt that the boycott was never intended to reform sport. It was imposed as part of the isolation of South Africa in solidarity with the liberation struggle to end apartheid tyranny. There is no justification for an end to that boycott.

CITY AA AGM

Digging apartheid's grave

CAT WIENER

At its AGM on 29/30 October, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group reaffirmed its position of non-sectarian solidarity with all forces fighting for liberation in Southern Africa, and pledged itself to a year of renewed commitment, mobilisation and activity to 'push the rotting corpse of apartheid... into its grave'.

A review of the last year of City Group's activity, centred around the Non-Stop Picket, paid tribute to the major political victories achieved in terms of the movement in Azania/South Africa and Namibia, and here in Britain against the forces who seek to stifle any real voice of protest: the British state and their police force, and the opportunists within the AAM who have this year, inevitably, refused to confront Thatcher.

Speaker after speaker reflected the need for City Group, in contrast, to mobilise amongst the most oppressed sections here in Britain, those who do not benefit from imperialism's ruthless exploitation of the Azanian masses, and build a movement that will give real solidarity to those fighting for liberation; a motion was overwhelmingly passed supporting the right of the oppressed masses to take up the armed struggle.

During the course of the AGM, Norma and David Kitson who are leaving London shortly were presented with Lenin's *Collected Works*.

Mandela's release was inevitably discussed. Terry O'Halloran put the position of the RCG when he stressed that the question was not, at this stage, what to do if Nelson Mandela were released from jail, but how to make sure that he is released - which will be a victory for the working class and progressive movement throughout the world.

A motion was also passed condemning the apartheid-style censorship imposed by Thatcher on Sinn Fein and the IRA. After the AGM, City Group activists could be heard chanting on the picket 'We are all Sinn Fein!'



Students at Cape Town University demonstrate against the racist elections.

Election fraud exposed

CAROL BRICKLEY

The ruling Nationalist Party in South Africa did its best to ensure that black people voted in the October Municipal Elections. Boycott calls were declared illegal, the polling booths were open for 2 weeks in advance of election day, pamphlets and films were produced for the rural electorate reviling Desmond Tutu and Allan Boesak who repeatedly called for a boycott despite the law, and election day saw a massive turnout of security forces in the townships. In the end, through gross manipulation of the voting statistics, the regime claimed a 24.6% turnout amongst black people as a victory! Archbishop Tutu described the results as 'laughable'.

In fact less than 2% of all black adults in South Africa voted in the town council elections. Of a population of 26 million, half were disenfranchised because they are designated 'citizens' of the bantustans,

Only 1.4 million black people live in townships where elections were held - in half the seats up for election either there were no candidates nominated, or candidates stood unopposed. In Soweto, with an electorate of about 1 million, 8080 votes were cast.

Botha's elaborate election fraud had nothing to do with democracy. The Nationalists required the participation of black people in an attempt to convince the world that black people have a say in the government. Elections for whites, 'coloureds' and Indians were held on the same day to add to the illusion. But black people were unwilling to play the game, despite a massive intimidation campaign and millions spent trying to convince them to vote.

The final result, even using the regime's own bogus figures were barely 3% higher than the turnout in the last elections in 1984 - when the boycott, which heralded major uprisings over 1985-6, made a laughing

stock of the regime's reformist pretensions. Black people in South Africa still have no vote in the election of the racist republic's government and most black political leaders are detained or imprisoned and their organisations banned.

The National Party was also under pressure from the right. The Conservative Party, which would in any other country be designated fascist, made significant inroads into the Nationalist vote not only in rural Transvaal, but also in major cities like Pretoria and Johannesburg. Bourgeois commentators were relieved that the CP did not win Pretoria outright, and noted the drift of 'liberal' voters to the Nationalists. But the reality is that in South Africa's racist electoral system, the challenge to Nationalist power comes only from the extreme right, and Nationalist Party policy can only shift rightwards to meet the challenge. There is no basis for any belief that apartheid can be reformed. It can only be smashed by the black majority.



In defence of Marxism

Recent issues of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* have dealt with the debate on the transition to socialism. This debate so far has been dominated by the dramatic changes underway in the Soviet Union under *perestroika* and *glasnost*. Capitalist ideologists have seen in the Soviet reforms a vindication of capitalist principles and social norms. The left in Britain, politically and ideologically retreating before Thatcherism, has been unable and unwilling to attempt a serious defence of Marxism Leninism.

Cuba has been engaged in a process of 'rectification' since 1986 (see *FRFI* 63). This has provided Fidel Castro with the material for assessing the transition to socialism in a third world country. His analysis, however, has produced conclusions that have a more general validity. They represent a major defence of Marxism Leninism in the face of the systematic retreat widespread in the communist movement today. That is why so far his ideas have either been ridiculed or ignored in Britain. Here we reprint extracts from Castro's speeches with commentary by TREVOR RAYNE and DAVID REED.



NO TWO REVOLUTIONS ARE THE SAME

Fidel Castro makes it clear that measures Cuba is taking to resolve its problems are different from those adopted by the Soviet Union. This, however, does not mean, as bourgeois commentators have suggested, that there are problems in Cuban-Soviet relations, only that the difficulties the socialist countries are facing have different historical roots and, therefore, require different solutions (*Granma* 28 August 1988 p3).

There are some people who believe that what's being done in other places is what we ought to start doing right away... That's an incorrect stand, a wrong stand, because no two revolutionary processes are the same, no two countries are the same, no two histories are the same, no two idiosyncracies are the same. Some have certain problems, others have other problems; some make certain mistakes, others make other mistakes.

'If someone has a toothache, why would he use a cure for corns? Or if his corns hurt, why must he use a cure for a toothache? That's why our measures are not the same, nor can they be the same as those used by other countries and it would be entirely wrong for us to look for the same solutions or mechanically copy the other countries' solutions....

'Our Revolution - and this no one can deny - has been kept going with tremendous ideological strength because who can defend us? Were imperialism to attack us, who is there to defend the island? No one will come from abroad to defend our island; we defend the island ourselves. It isn't that someone might not want to defend us, the thing is that no one can because this socialist revolution is not just a few kilometers away from the Soviet Union; this socialist revolution is 10,000 kilometers away from the Soviet Union....

'I believe that our country has carried out an extraordinary historical feat on building socialism in the geographical conditions in which it has done so and that's why we must watch over the ideological purity of the Revolution, the ideological solidity of the Revolution. That's why we can't use mechanisms, any kind of tools smacking of capitalism; this is an essential question of the Revolution's survival, that's why the Revolution must resolutely stick to the purest principles of Marxism-Leninism and Marti's thought, stick to them rather than playing around or flirting with the things of capitalism.' (*Granma* 7 August 1988 p4)

'What I can indeed tell the capitalists and the theoreticians of capitalism is that Cuba will never use the methods, styles, philosophical characteristics of capitalism. Capitalism can indeed tell them! Capitalism had some technological successes in organizational experiences that can be used, using more! Socialism and capitalism are diametrically different, in method and by essence.' (ibid)

Cuba began its rectification in response to the consequences of the economic reforms introduced from the mid-1960s onwards. In a speech to the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, Fidel Castro pointed out some of the consequences of giving cooperative state enterprises freedom to trade with other enterprises. These are measures presently introduced in the Soviet Union.

He gave examples of 'enterprises that sold their materials and the prices of finished jobs, lumber, asbestos tiles or otherwise, to cite a few examples are a ton of them. Enterprises tried to become profitable swindles, swindling one another. What kind of socialism were we trying to build along those lines? This kind of ideology was that we weren't leading us to a system more advanced than capitalism, instead of leading us toward socialism and communism. That almost universal chaos anyone grabbed anything, whether it be a crane or a truck, things were becoming habitually generalized....

'The peasants were also corrupted. We no longer had a cooperative was an agricultural production cooperative, an industrial cooperative, a crafts cooperative, an agricultural cooperative, a commercial cooperative or a middlemen's cooperative. We were losing our sense of trading between the cooperative state enterprises, state enterprises exchanging products, materials, stuffs among themselves... exchanging products with one another while it sent the agricultural cooperative cement sweep agricultural enterprise sell meat and who knows what cement factory.' (*Granma* 1 September 1986 p11)

If this process was generalized, Castro pointed out, socialism would be destroyed.

★ **'It is a question of demonstrating the consciousness, a communist spirit, revolutionary will, vocation were, and will always be a thousand times more powerful than modern capitalism.'**

to the population as a whole who come under threat.

'If everyone started to do that proliferated, nothing would be left. There wouldn't be any schools, for the hospitals, what has to be distributed to the population every day, every month. If this kind of general trading developed among enterprises or between the central production cooperatives enterprises, no one knows what would all end, in what kind of chaos and anarchy. These are evident tendencies, extremely dangerous.' (ibid).

Castro's essential point is that capitalism cannot solve the problems of construction using capitalist laws and methods. In a speech on the 20th anniversary of Che Guevara's death Castro stated that

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'In essence - in essence! - Che was radically opposed to using and developing capitalist economic laws and categories in building socialism. He advocated something which I have often insisted on; building socialism and communism is not just a matter of producing and distributing wealth but is also a matter of education and of awareness. He was firmly opposed to using these categories which have been transferred from capitalism to socialism as instruments to build the new society.' (Granma 18 Oct. 1987 p5).

Castro argues that they had thought that the problems of material production and the country's development could be resolved by grafting capitalist methods onto the socialist system.

'Apparently, we thought that by dressing a person up as a capitalist we were going to achieve efficient production in the factory and so after a fashion we started to play at being capitalists. Because it is only under socialism that you could dress up an administrator as a capitalist; if you wanted to make a capitalist out of him, you'd have to make him the owner of the factory and nothing else, return to the capitalist system.' However you cannot achieve capitalist efficiency by making your administrators behave as though they were capitalists.

'Capitalists take better care of their factories and take better care of their money: they are always competing with other capitalists. If they turn out trash no one will buy it, and if they are not profitable they go bankrupt, they're sued and deprived of their property; they lose their jobs as administrators and stop being the owners.

'Our man dressed up as a capitalist produced anything and forgot about quality: if he had to produce 1000 items, he did; he didn't solve the contradiction between quantity and quality nor did he keep good checks on quality, nor did he care about it, he just cared about fulfilling his production plan. He began to sell at higher prices, he began to steal to have the factory be profitable, and in the end he didn't even care whether the enterprise or factory was profitable, for the state would come forward at the end of the year and shoulder the deficit. What were the problems facing our man dressed up as a capitalist? He could spend his entire life playing the role of a capitalist without achieving efficiency or else making shady deals and being paternalistic, solving individual people's problems here and there.' (Granma 14 Dec. 1986 p12).

Castro was not opposing the idea of enterprise profitability or cost accounting but rather the methods used to try and achieve economic efficiency.

'Our man dressed up as a capitalist could not solve those problems because it isn't capitalism or the capitalist methods that under the conditions of socialism can bring about efficiency in an enterprise. This doesn't mean we're giving up these mechanisms, no! We shouldn't give up the system of paying salaries according to amount produced in the field of material production since it is impossible to do so in other fields - I've mentioned this before - it would be absurd. We can't give up paying salaries according to amount produced, work norms or the socialist formula of getting paid according to quantity and quality of work, quantity and quality! We shouldn't give up the idea of enterprise profitability or cost accounting. I'm not against any of those mechanisms or categories, provided we fully understand what political work, revolutionary work is, the sense of responsibility instilled in cadres, the sense of responsibility of cadres, what can make efficiency possible, not dressing up our administrative cadres in the material production sphere as capitalists.' (ibid pp12-13).

Capitalist competition has to be replaced by a communist sense of responsibility. There is no other way.

'When there is no competition, if the motivation prompting the owner in a capitalist society to defend his personal interests is out of the ques-

tion, what is there to substitute for this? Only the cadres', individual people's sense of responsibility, the role played by the cadres. The man who is in charge there must be a Communist. It is unquestionable that being a member of the Party, or not being one, the man who is in charge there must be a responsible man, must truly be a Communist, a Communist! A revolutionary. And not a Communist playing at capitalism, a Communist dressed up as a capitalist or, mark you, a capitalist dressed up as a Communist.' (ibid p13)

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF THE PARTY

Castro argues that in the rectification process the role of the party, far from being weakened, has to be strengthened.

'Without the party no construction of socialism is possible'.

'And we must say here, once and for all, that we need just one party, in the same way that Marti needed just one party to wage the war for Cuban independence, in the same way that Lenin needed just one party to make the October Revolution. I say this to stop the wishful thinking of those who believe that we're going to start allowing pocket-sized parties, to organize perhaps the counterrevolutionaries, the pro-Yankees, the bourgeoisie? No! There's only one party here, and that is the party of our proletarians, our peasants, our students, our workers, our solidly and indestructibly united people. That's the one we have and will have! ...

'We don't need capitalist political formulas, they're just trash, they're good for nothing, what with their incessant political scheming. I was telling you how a voting card was demanded to get medical attention; none of these phenomena exist here now. We created our own political way to suit the country, we have not copied it, these are our own political ways to organise people's power.

'As you know - because that's the practice among you - the candidates to delegates for the circumscriptions (electoral districts) are not proposed by the Party, they are proposed by the people gathered in free assemblies in the circumscriptions and they select the best in their opinion; they can choose up to eight candidates and a minimum of two, and if one of them doesn't get 50 percent, a new round of voting must start. You don't have to tell me - I haven't been able to escape even once from that second round of voting in the elections in my own circumscription. We all know that and we know that the Party doesn't finger anyone or propose anyone, it's the people who do it. It is those circumscription delegates who make up the Municipal Assembly, the ones who set up and constitute the Provincial Assemblies. Those delegates of the people, nominated by the people and elected by the people are the ones who make up the National Assembly of Peoples' Power.

'We have to rectify absolutely none of this, ours is a superdemocratic system, more democratic than all the bourgeois systems of the millionaires, the plutocracy, the real rulers, generally speaking, of the capitalist countries.

'We have nothing to learn from them and we will not stray one iota from this road, where power emanates from the people. And you all know how our Party emerged from the people, it didn't drop from heaven, and how our Party members are chosen among the best in the youth and among the best workers. That was also an innovation, something absolutely new in the way of creating and expanding the Party and that is very much present in the history of our Party which always subjected the admission into its ranks to the will of the masses, the opinion of the masses, the support of the masses. That's why our Party stands so close to the masses.

'I know that outside the Party there are millions of extraordinary men

and women and Communists, we're a people of revolutionaries, yet the Party must be made up of a selection of them and it can't be other wise because they must be a vanguard. And you know very well what it means to be a member of the Party: he or she must be the first in everything when there's a difficult job, an internationalist mission, a sacrifice to be tackled, a risk to be taken; there the first turn, the first possibility goes to the Party member. It's not a party of privileged people but a Party stemming from the midst of the people, whose members must set an example and when they don't set an example the Party sees to it that they are expelled from its ranks.

'In this rectification process the Party will have increasing strength because, I repeat, socialism can't be built without the Party. Without the Party capitalism, which stands for chaos, can be built, it doesn't need anyone to organize it, it is self-organized with all its rubbish. Socialism is not created by spontaneous generation, socialism must be built and the basic builder is the Party.' (Granma 7 August 1988 p5)

SOCIALISM IN THE THIRD WORLD

During the course of the debate on the transition to socialism some in the communist movement have resur-



'We're proud of the ideological purity, of the ideological strength of a country that has confronted imperialism; and not just confronted imperialism but a country where hundreds of thousands of its people have fulfilled internationalist missions, a country where one only has to raise his hand and if 10,000 teachers are needed for Nicaragua, all 10,000 teachers turn up and go to Nicaragua; if doctors are needed, doctors go there; a country that when fighters were needed has always had ten times more fighters willing to fulfill the mission than the number of fighters actually needed.'

rected the menshevik argument that socialism cannot be constructed in less developed countries. Castro totally rejects this view.

'One of Lenin's great historical merits was to have thought of the possibility that socialism could be built even in an industrially backward country.' (Granma 14 December 1986 p12)

For a Third World country a prerequisite for this construction is hard work and efficient use of available resources.

'Perhaps one of the tragedies of the Third World countries is that they long for the level of consumption of the developed capitalist countries, working seven, six or five hours. It is a dream, an illusion. If we want a lot of material well-being, the degree we need and want, we must work and work hard, we must increase labor productivity, we must make rat-

ional use of all human and material resources; there is no other way.' (Granma 7 August 1988 p3)

Socialist construction requires a rejection of the capitalist model of development and consumerism. In the case of Cuba the problems of obtaining hard currency to pay foreign debts and buy advanced machinery demand a reduction of imports and increase in exports. This will require sacrificing luxury consumption even when made available to foreign tourists.

'That's why we must develop exports in every possible branch and exploit two marvellous resources of the country, the sun and the sea. That's why we must develop tourism and are making a special effort in this field.

'There is a great international demand for tourist accommodations in Cuba and you know about the wonders of our coast and nature. There is Baconao Park, for example; there you can see what's been done in a short time with limited means, and there are three international hotels in Baconao bringing in hard currency.

'Some people will say; "It's too bad that I can't go to such and such hotel," but we can't have everything. We can't have waterworks, schools, hospitals, health, food, transportation, everything, and in addition enjoy all the hotels. We have no choice but to export hotel services and deprive ourselves of some hotels; although often those hotels during part of the year when there is no international tourism, especially in the hot months, will provide service for Cubans, except in the case of joint enterprises where that would mean a loss of hard currency for the country.

'I say this because there are people who react unrealistically. I have heard petit bourgeois, genuinely petit bourgeois views, from people who want to have the university, hospital, school, career, job, transportation, recreation, art, culture, everything! They say: "It really bothers me that in my country I can't go to such and such a hotel," which they view as a tragedy and the fault of the Revolution. We could also say, "It's too bad we can't consume all the lobster we produce!" We produce more than 10,000 tons of lobster and we must export it to rich Japanese, to rich Spaniards, to rich Canadians, so they can eat lobster while we go without. It is very tasty, no one doubts that, and it is served in some restaurants.

'There may be no lobster, but the price of a ton of lobster in the world market enables us to buy 20 tons of powdered milk and with those 20 tons we produce 200,000 liters of milk and those 200,000 liters provide milk all year long for many children in the mountains, many who never had milk before, many who were formerly undernourished. We can say there is no lobster on the Cuban menu but there are no children begging in the streets. There is no lobster but there are no undernourished or starving children in our country, all children get a liter of milk daily, which is why we have one of the healthiest people in the world.' (ibid p4)

SOCIALISM AND AGRARIAN REFORM

The land question was dealt with in Cuba in a very different way to other socialist countries.

'The manner in which an agrarian reform was carried out in our country differed from the manner in which all the other socialist countries carried it out because they all divided up the land and we didn't. Had we divided up the big cattle ranches or the sugar plantations in small lots or tiny parcels, today we wouldn't be supplying calories for 40 million people. We kept those land units intact and developed them as big production enterprises. We gave land to the peasant who was in possession of it to the sharecroppers, tenant farmers and others. We said to them all here you are, the land is yours and subsequent-

ly we haven't forced any of them to join cooperatives. The process of uniting these plots has taken us 30 years, we've gone ahead little by little on the basis of the strict principle of it being voluntary. There can't be a single peasant in Cuba who can say that he was forced to join a cooperative, there can't be any! And yet, over two-thirds of their land now belong to cooperatives, and all of them are making headway, they are prospering. On the other hand, 80 percent of the land in our country belongs to state farms whose self-sufficiency is collective. The cooperatives are also self-sufficient. It was a different road they took.' (ibid)

SOCIALISM AND PLANNING

In Britain the whole concept of planned production is under attack even from the ranks of so-called socialists and marxists. They point to recent developments in the Soviet Union as vindication for their rejection of the fundamental tenet of Marx's conception of the socialist economy. Castro goes against this stream and links the strengthening of the party with the role of the plan.

'Another essential point in our rectification process: we will not weaken the role of our plans or the role of our development programs. We are convinced and are very aware of the importance of planning our development, of how important our plans are; our main problem is to draw them up well. But not only that, we must avoid turning the plans into strait-jackets. That's why, while we must make sure that we are capable of planning well, we must also create the necessary conditions to cope with new problems, new situations and new possibilities.'

INTERNATIONALISM

The Cuban people led by the Communist Party have demonstrated their commitment to the principles of internationalism, which are regarded as central to their own revolutionary ideology.

'We're proud of the ideological purity, of the ideological strength of a country that has confronted imperialism; and not just confronted imperialism but a country where hundreds of thousands of its people have fulfilled internationalist missions, a country where one only has to raise his hand and if 10,000 teachers are needed for Nicaragua, all 10,000 teachers turn up and go to Nicaragua; if doctors are needed, doctors go there; a country that when fighters were needed has always had ten times more fighters willing to fulfill the mission than the number of fighters actually needed.' (ibid)

This internationalism has most recently changed the balance of forces against imperialism and apartheid in Angola.

Castro reaffirms the historic mission of socialism in its superiority over all previous social forms.

'It is a question of solving and confronting new problems stemming from our progress, our development and the great historical challenges of developing the country, building socialism, advancing along the road to communism, developing revolutionary theory and practice, demonstrating that socialism is not just overwhelmingly superior to capitalism in the fields of education, health care or sports, or other things where they admit we have shown progress, but also demonstrating to the capitalists what we socialists, we Communists are capable of doing with pride, honor, principles and consciousness; that we are not once, not twice, but ten times more capable than they of solving the problems posed by the development of a country! It is a question of demonstrating that we are more capable than they are of being efficient in material production! It is a question of demonstrating that a consciousness, a communist spirit, a revolutionary will and vocation were, are and will always be a thousand times more powerful than money!' ■

US election mockery

TREVOR RAYNE

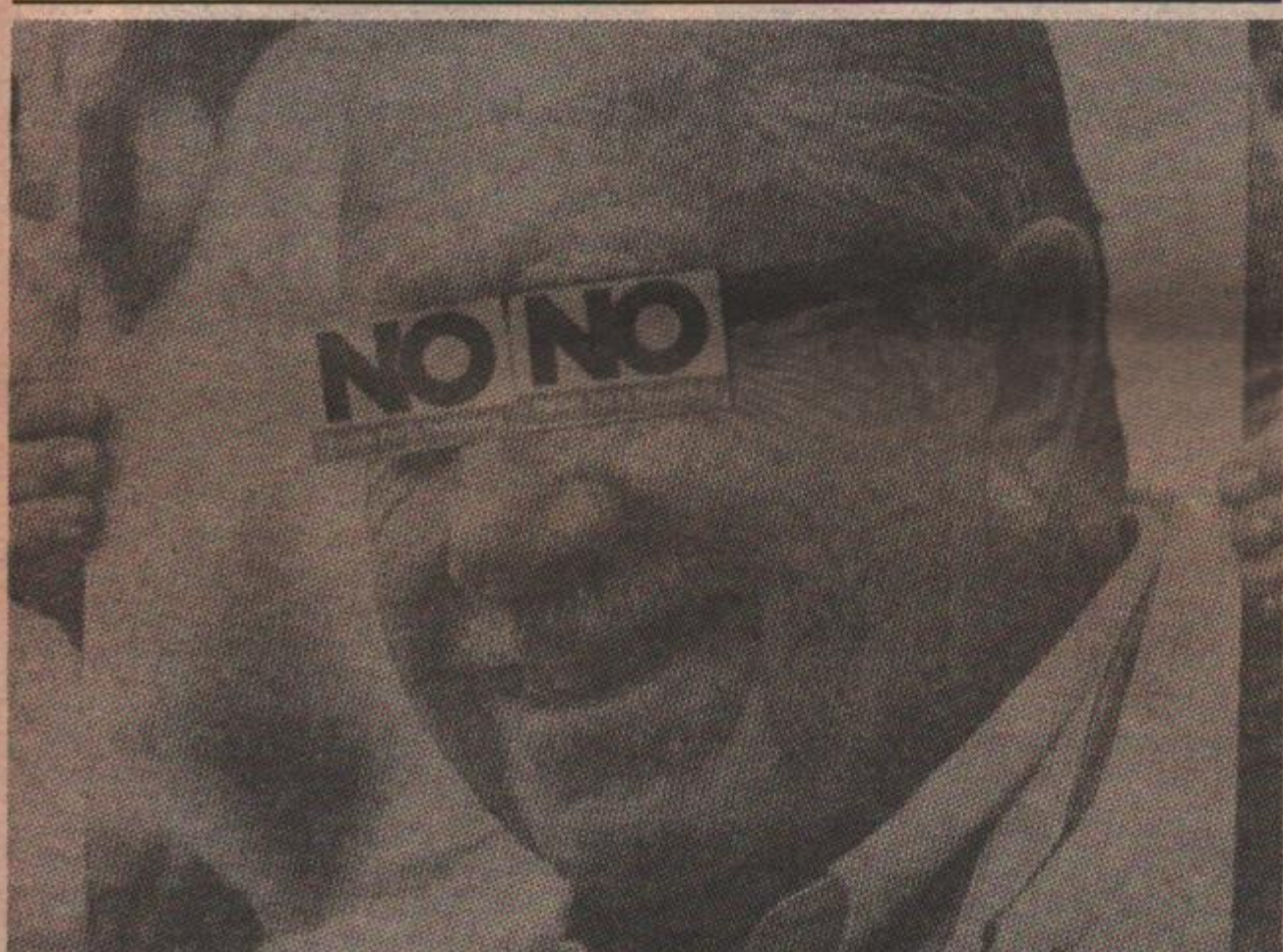
Nero had a fiddle. The USA has Presidential elections.

The *Independent* published results of a survey of the US press to show how they line up on Bush and Dukakis: 208 papers backed Bush, 65 Dukakis. *Rolling Stone* magazine and other smaller circulation publications have detailed George Bush's involvement with drug smugglers, mercenaries and the Irangate affair. I took down a book from my shelf, *Assassination on Embassy Row* and read enough evidence to implicate Bush in the murder of Orlando Letelier in Washington in 1976, while Bush was director of the CIA. Letelier was a former Chilean ambassador to the USA and minister in Allende's government. None of this has surfaced in the mass circulation dailies or the major television networks. Instead, they have repeatedly published poll results telling US people how they are going to vote: for Bush.

In *FRFI 77* we said Jesse Jackson had 'rallied the dispossessed' victims of the Reagan years; 'Only they form a reliable basis from which to attack Republican power'. When Dukakis rejected Jackson as his Vice Presiden-

tial running mate, he sought instead to appeal to the beneficiaries of Reagan's policies, and to convince the US ruling class that he would be a 'more reliable guardian' of their interests. Jackson acquiesced in the demobilisation of the movement around the Rainbow Coalition. The ruling class plumped for Bush.

The social basis for a real anti-racist, anti-imperialist opposition to US capital, not confined by the electoral system, is certain to grow in the coming period. US government budget deficits have been running at an annual average of \$184 billion since 1982. Every week the US imports \$3 billion worth of goods more than it exports. In 1980 the rest of the world owed the US the equivalent of \$2,500 for every family of four. Today US indebtedness to foreign creditors amounts to \$8,000 per family. Consumption levels are unsustainable. All of this is taboo to the multi-million dollar exercise in flattery and fraud that mockingly passes for 'democracy', (a mockery that most US electors will reject by not voting at all). Any attempt to solve the debt and trade crisis will plunge the US into recession, and the longer any such solution is delayed the deeper the recession will be. ■



Pinochet: loses plebiscite but remains in power.

CHILE

NO vote for Pinochet

DEAN JACKSON

On 6 October, General Pinochet - mass murderer and stooge of the US imperialists - lost the plebiscite he himself had organised in the hope of prolonging his tyranny for 8 years more. No amount of military violence and intimidation, nor right-wing murder gangs, were enough to deter 55% of the electorate from voting against the dictator.

In the run up to the plebiscite there were strikes in virtually all the universities, massive street demonstrations and confrontations with the military. Five people were shot dead, 78 injured and thousands arrested. Tanks trundled through working class districts and the military confiscated voting cards. None of this helped Pinochet.

When the masses voted NO they were voting not just against Pinochet, but against the whole structure of Pinochet's Chile. His ruthless defence of capitalism has reduced the majority to absolute poverty whilst allowing the ruling class and imper-

ialist multinationals to prosper. Pinochet has privatised virtually everything including the national health service. Today, 90% of the people cannot afford private health care.

The No Coalition which led the campaign against Pinochet does not, however, express or represent the interests of the popular movement. It has excluded the Communist Party from the coalition, its programme does not call for the release of all political prisoners, it has opposed mass street demonstrations and has assured the ruling class that it will not alter Pinochet's fundamental economic policies.

Dominated by the bourgeois Christian Democrats, the coalition's main concern has been to prepare for an orderly and parliamentary transfer of power from Pinochet to opposing factions of the bourgeoisie. It dreads the mass movement and does not want it to participate in the process except as voting fodder for the bourgeois coalition. It is terrified of the prospect of people's power which will inevitably challenge the capitalist foundations of Pinochet's Chile. ■

Israeli elections: Likud and Labour 'no difference'

In Israel's general election of 1 November neither Likud led by Yitzhak Shamir nor Labour led by Shimon Peres won the 61 seats necessary to form a majority government. Likud is now negotiating to form a government with Jewish fundamentalist parties who increased their seats from 12 to 18. EDDIE ABRAHAMS reports.

Commenting on the election PLO leader Yassir Arafat said:

'There is no difference in my opinion between Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Shamir. Shamir is using the iron fist and Defence Minister Rabin with Peres is using the same iron fist. Don't forget that during the last period of government we were facing the two parties in the same cabinet.'

The press assiduously portrayed Labour as the left wing party of peace and Likud as the right wing war party. This dangerous delusion has been cultivated by opportunists - among them British Labour's wretched Neil Kinnock.

The Labour Party, like Likud, is of course thoroughly racist and reactionary with no left-wing about it. Like Likud, it endorses and upholds the entire apparatus of apartheid institutions in Israel which the United Nations has condemned as racist. Like Likud, it is absolutely opposed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Like Likud, it refuses to recognise and negotiate with the PLO. The chief architect of repression and murder during the 11 month uprising has been the Labour Party Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Labour expresses the political interests of a section of the Jewish population, the middle class European Jews. Like Likud's supporters they enjoy a privileged existence at the expense of the Palestinian people. In return for massive financial aid from the USA the Labour Party has also acted as imperialism's policeman in the Arab world. Such a party is incapable of making peace

with the Palestinians.

The differences between Labour and Likud are purely tactical and revolve around racist 'solutions' to the 'demographic problem': a growing Palestinian population will eventually outnumber Jews in Israel and the occupied territories. Granted the vote, Palestinians will undermine the basis of the sectarian Zionist state. However, if denied the vote, as black people are in South Africa, they become a permanent revolutionary threat to Zionism.

Likud, whose largely oriental Jewish supporters have benefited disproportionately from the occupation, is determined not to surrender any part of the occupied territories. Confronted with the 'demographic problem' its response is to sustain permanent mass repression. If this fails to annihilate Palestinian resistance, Likud reserves the option of deporting the

entire Palestine population. Its fascist tendencies will be reinforced in coalition with the virulently racist fundamentalists.

Labour, on the other hand, fears that permanent repression will lead only to permanent uprising and endanger the very foundations of the Zionist state. Its answer to the 'demographic problem' - equally racist - is to exchange 'land for peace'. But for 'security reasons' it proposes to keep substantial proportions of the West Bank. What then remains of a truncated rump of Palestine will be returned to Jordan, along with the majority of the Palestinian population. In return, Labour wants 'peace' and the recognition of Israel. This travesty of peace is but a modified version of apartheid's project of transforming bantustans into 'independent nations'.

It is therefore not surprising that the majority of Palestinians in 'Israel' refused to vote for Labour. As a candidate for Haddash, the coalition led by the Israeli Communist Party, stated:

'A Palestinian Arab who is proud of his identity and his humanity cannot possibly vote for them.' ■



Labour's Peres and Likud's Shamir: only cosmetically different.

SRI LANKA

Island of terror

● Acting leader of the House Major Montague Jawawickrema told Sri Lanka's parliament that during the period 16 August to 15 September 62 civilians and 19 security personnel were killed in clashes. Some 51 'political murders' and 99 'other murders' were said to have taken place.

● Since the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement was signed on 29 July 1987 over 450 people have been killed by the JVP: over one a day. September's victims included the Minister for Rehabilitation.

● A JVP-called general strike paralysed the south on 12 September. The protest was over the death in police custody of civil rights lawyer Wijedasa Liyandarachchi. He suffered over 100 internal injuries. Over the past two years Mr Liyandarachchi had filed over 100 habeas corpus applications on behalf of Sinhalese youths.

● On 24 October Colombo and several southern towns were placed under curfew following the bombing of UNP offices which left eight party members dead.

● Jayewardene has nominated his

Prime Minister, Premadasa, to stand as UNP Presidential candidate in elections scheduled to take place before 3 January.

● 'Unless we kill every one of them, all talks are useless'. (Premadasa 23 June 1986). Premadasa and his main rival, the SLFP's Mrs Bandaranaike, are competing for the anti-Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement vote, and the anti-Tamil vote of the southern Sinhalese. The SLFP and the JVP have been in contact over the past two years. SLFP leaders talk of expelling the Indian Army. Provincial council elections are scheduled for the North and East on 19 November. Thus far only the stooge Indian EPRLF outfit has said it will stand in the Tamil areas. LTTE have denounced the elections as 'undemocratic, fraudulent and unjust'. Their main purpose is to present an appearance of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement at work, and thereby legitimise the Indian military occupation of the island. Whatever the outcome of either the presidential or provincial elections the lines of conflict are sharpening in Sri Lanka and Tamil Eelam. ■

19 October was the fifth anniversary of Maurice Bishop's death. **Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!** salutes the memory of this noble son of Grenada and the Caribbean. Today his island is overrun with US soldiers, capital and flunkies. Unemployment, crime and violence run again through streets once made safe and clean by the Revolution. Maurice Bishop's death was a dark and cruel blow. His life and socialism shine out all the more brilliantly against this cloak of miserable bondage re-imposed.

October's Hurricane Joan has devastated large areas of Nicaragua. Nearly 200,000 are left homeless, 116 dead. Damage costing millions of dollars has been inflicted on roads, bridges, housing and crops. The contras have used the situation to ambush civilians and food convoys. Reagan's government has refused aid. Please send money to:
NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN HURRICANE APPEAL, 23 Beviden Street, London N1 6BH (cheques, POs, etc to NMS Hurricane Appeal) or BLUEFIELDS NICARAGUA APPEAL, Oxfam, Room GU10, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ

YUGOSLAV SOCIALISM IN CRISIS

Yugoslavia has plunged into an economic and political crisis of such a magnitude that it threatens the socialist and federal state. DALE EVANS looks at Yugoslavia's crisis.

Yugoslavia's foreign debt is \$21m, inflation at 217 per cent is still rising, wages remain frozen and unemployment is 18 per cent (1.3m). In June the country was hit by a wave of strikes against falling living standards.

This economic crisis has in turn precipitated a major crisis in relations between the Yugoslav nationalities. The most prominent feature of this has been the re-emergence of reactionary Serbian nationalism. Since July over 3 million Serbs have rallied to the banner of Slobadan Milosevic, head of the Serbian Communist Party. They are calling for the incorporation of the provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina into Serbia.

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF GREAT SERBIAN NATIONALISM

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is made up of six republics, of which Serbia is the largest, and two autonomous provinces - Kosovo and Vojvodina. Though provinces of Serbia they are de facto republics.

Reactionary Serbian nationalists refuse to accept the autonomy of these two provinces. For them Kosovo is the heart of Serbia; it was the centre of the medieval kingdom of Serbia. However, since the 19th century, the majority of the population has been Albanian. Today there are 1.7m Albanians and only 200,000 Serbs and Montenegrins. Since the 1960s Serbs have been leaving the province and the rate of emigration increased after the demonstrations of 1981 when up to 600 Albanians were massacred by army units when protesting against discrimination.

Serbian racism is such that any act, criminal or otherwise, committed by an Albanian against a Serb is treated as part of a massive conspiracy by Albanian separatist groups. Serbs claim that in Kosovo they are being terrorised by Albanians. Milosevic is using these sentiments to build a populist base to regain Serbian hegemony over the autonomous provinces and



Smederevo protestors demonstrate their support for Milosevic.



Map of Yugoslavia

to strengthen unitarian forces so as to increase Serbian control over the whole of Yugoslavia.

So far Milosevic and his mass following have forced the resignations of party and government leaders in Vojvodina and the republic of Montenegro. However the leadership of Kosovo stood firm against the chauvinist onslaught.

THE QUESTION OF ALBANIANS AND KOSOVO

At the 5th National Conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) in 1940 a progressive solution to the Kosovo question was reached.

This was 'the formation of a free workers' and peasants' republic of Kosovo through the revolutionary overthrow of the imperialist fascist regime of the Great-Serb bourgeoisie.' Such a solution would for the Albanians, Turks and Slav Moslems mean 'complete freedom', 'liberation from national oppression' and the creation of conditions for their 'free national, political and cultural development'.

Unfortunately the CPY soon dropped this position. In 1943, during the National Liberation War, the founding conference of the National Liberation Council for Kosovo and Metohia

which consisted of 49 Albanians and 6 Serbs called for eventual unification with Albania. This resolution was condemned by the Central Committee of the CPY because 'at the moment there is no question of defining the borders between Yugoslavia and Albania'.

50,000 Albanians fought alongside the Balkan nationalities in the National Liberation Army. But because of its position, the CPY was very weak in the region. In 1944, 30,000 Albanians rose up and fought for self-determination fearing the imposition of Serbian rule. The rising was crushed.

As a result, from 1945 to 1966 the province, which was the least developed area of the country, was ruled as a police state. During this period many Albanians emigrated to Turkey. After the fall of Yugoslavia's Interior Minister Rankovic in 1966, the regime was relaxed. The local party apparatus, police and administration which was formally dominated by Serbs was Albanianised. This process was accelerated following Albanian protests for equal status with the rest of Yugoslavia in 1968, 1974-75 and in 1981. Serbian nationalists opposed these legitimate Albanian demands, denouncing them as 'counter-revolutionary', 'irredentist' and 'separatist'.

In 1974, in an effort to resolve the nationalities issue, Josip Tito formulated a new constitution granting greater powers to the republics. However, following his death in 1980, conflict between the republics actually intensified as the consequences of market reforms began to work themselves through. With each republic responsible for its own investment and pricing policies, they were soon pitted against each other often taking decisions undermining national agreements on the economy. The leadership of each republic fought to defend its own narrow national interests at the expense of others.

It is in this context that Milosevic is attempting to reassert Serbian control over the autonomous provinces and Yugoslavia as a whole. To win working class support for his reactionary nationalist onslaught he has promised that his programme, which includes the revision of the 1974 Constitution, will solve the enormous economic problems facing the Serbian people. However, for the time being his unbridled chauvinist onslaught has been halted by the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia*.

*The CPY changed its name to LYC

BLACKENED BODIES BLACKENED EARTH

'The bombing raids come in two rounds, the rumbling of the engines through the valleys of Kurdistan announce their arrival. The first round have conventional bombs on board which they throw down over the villages still standing after 12 years of annihilation war. The explosions force the Kurds to seek refuge in cellars and dugouts which soon turn into death traps.'

LIZ PALM

'For, shortly afterwards, the second wave of war planes arrive, this time with canisters of poisonous gas on board. They fall to the ground, a fuse detonates, ripping open the cartridges. A mushroom cloud appears which spreads out within minutes over wide areas of land. Because the gas is heavier than air, it works its way first of all into the caves and underground shelters which had previously provided protection. The victims run for their lives, jumping out of the cellars and fleeing in the direction of the hills and mountains - to their doom. For the Iraqi airforce has introduced a new tactic of throwing the nerve gas bombs down the slopes of hills. The fleeing Kurds - often protecting themselves only with a damp handkerchief - run straight into a wall of poisonous gas... The effects of cyanide, hydrocyanic acid and mustard gas are terrible; nauseous attacks rack the bodies of the victims, their skin breaks out in agonising blisters and turns black, the white blood cells are destroyed, the lungs

eaten away. The victims neither sleep nor eat nor talk. A torturous death follows.'

This is how Hans Branscheidt of the relief organisation 'Medico International' described the Iraqi nerve gas air raids on the Kurdish population in Iraqi-occupied Kurdistan. This latest round of air raids had taken place on a regular basis since the ceasefire agreement between Iran and Iraq which signalled the end of the Gulf War.

By September, the Iraqi army of 60,000 soldiers and additional service units, armed with tanks and heavy artillery and backed up by the airforce, advanced on the Kurdish liberated zones in the Iraqi areas bordering on Turkey and Iran. After a series of heavy battles in which napalm and poisonous gas were used by the Iraqi forces, the Kurdish freedom fighters (or Peshmerga, as they are called) were brought practically to the point of capitulation. The Peshmerga and civilian population were labelled 'traitors' of the Iraqi state, to whom no mercy should be shown. Realising that their very existence was at stake, they began

fleeing in their tens of thousands to the 'safety' of the Turkish fascist state.

REFUGEES IN PRISON CAMPS

An estimated 120,000 Kurdish refugees, of whom 35,000 are thought to be Peshmerga, are being accommodated in at least five 'official' refugee camps in the south eastern Turkish border zones. In September, the Iraqi government offered a 30 day amnesty to the Kurds if they returned to Iraq. Some decided to accept this offer but it is now feared that a number of the returning refugees have been shot as a punishment by the Iraqi army. The Turkish government has also attempted forcing the Kurdish refugees onto camps in Iran; apparently at least 2000 have been transported against their will in this way. On passing the border, the Kurds were forced to surrender their weapons. The West German newspaper *Suddeutschezeitung* reported that at least 7000 weapons of various makes and sizes had been handed over to the Turkish fascists.

High walls have been built around camps, sealing the refugees off from any contact with the local population, 90 per cent of whom are Kurds themselves. The Turkish army perpetually surrounds the camps, preventing journalists and TV teams from entering. International relief organisations complain that their



Victim of Iraqi nerve gas.

supplies of food and blankets are regularly hindered by the Turkish authorities from reaching the refugees. Doctors from West European countries, volunteering help in the camps, are being refused entry permits into Turkey.

In the camps themselves, as many as 15 Kurds are cramped into tents intended for five. The sanitation facilities are appalling with typhus and cholera spreading. Latest reports are that hundreds are dying each week of hyperthermia as winter approaches rapidly in this mountainous region.

As well as attacking the Kurdish population with poisonous gas, the Iraqi government has also ordered the forcible resettlement of 600,000 Kurds to the southerly desert areas of Iraq, simultaneously destroying 4000 Kurdish villages. In this destruction process, the Iraqi fascists used napalm and mustard gas - the once fertile hills and valleys of the Tigris

and Euphrates rivers, cultivated with vineyards, apple and almond groves, corinth terraces and honey farms, have been burned black to a cinder. In this way, not only has land cultivation and farming been rendered impossible for at least the next decades; also the Peshmerga should never be able to use their land to operate from and escape to in their attacks against the colonial rulers. Some refugees, in their miles-long trek to the Turkish border, reported passing through miles and miles of blackened bodies and blackened earth.

Throughout October, reports have been still arriving of nerve gas attacks on the Kurdish population and villages by the Iraqi airforce. Nearly 200 civilians and Peshmerga have been killed so far and many hundreds wounded. The Turkish army is also reported to have used poisonous gas on Kurdish Peshmerga in the Turkish-occupied part of Kurdistan.

Emergency! Emergency! Emergency!

The Home Office has just confirmed that it will attack the sanctuary. Timothy Renton has told the Bishop of Manchester that the Home Office has information that the decision on Viraj's petition to the Lords will be announced shortly. He added, ominously, that when, as the Home Office expects, the decision goes against Viraj, they will raid the church without waiting for a VMDC appeal to European courts. Act Now!

- Send telegrams to Douglas Hurd, Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1A 0AA
- Visit your MPs and ask them to raise the matter in Parliament
- Organise pickets and protests in your area
- Keep in close touch with the VMDC 061 234 3168.

Defend Viraj against the Home Office

On 14 October, Viraj's solicitors formally submitted his petition to appeal to the House of Lords. If, as it is likely, the petition is rejected, Viraj has no legal avenues left to fight his deportation. The possibility of a police raid on the sanctuary is once again therefore imminent. SARAH RICCA reports.

With the new Immigration Act in force with no other sanctuaries at present and with 2-3 Tamils being deported from Britain every week, the Home Office feels confident that things will now go its own way. In a letter to Tony Benn on 5 September, Douglas Hurd states with great contempt that Viraj's case 'on merit is worthless' and that there 'are borderline cases, but this is emphatically not one of them.'

But Hurd is not really concerned with the merits of Viraj's case. The

findings of the Independent Inquiry, the new Amnesty International report, the press reports of JVP assassinations and terror count for nothing. Hurd's main concern is to defend the 'sanctity' of racist bourgeois law and destroy the example the VMDC has set by its resistance:

'I cannot accept that it would be right to allow anyone to benefit who had entered a Church in order to defy a decision taken in accordance with the law and I find it difficult to understand the continued support for

Mr Mendis' resistance.'

Hurd may not 'understand', but tens of thousands of working class and black people who hate the Thatcher government do. Thousands of people have already signed a new VMDC petition demanding a reopening of the case. The VMDC intends to present Hurd with 20,000 signed petitions at a mass picket of the Home Office on Thursday 1 December, with at least half of the signatories coming from the local Hulme and Moss Side working class community. Besides the mass picket, the VMDC is also organising a national speaking tour in December which will culminate with a mass rally in Manchester on 20 December, the second anniversary of Viraj's sanctuary. ■

CHARLIE BAKER



VMDC and RCG supporters picket Bootle Street Police Station.

Police attack VMDC leadership

BEN WILLIAMS

Sonia Hughes and Adrian Levy are long standing and leading members of the VMDC. On the afternoon of Saturday 29 October they were waiting for a bus in Manchester City Centre when up to 15 police arrived, picked them out and arrested them. Sonia had just been on a North West demonstration in support of the Birmingham 6 and had met up with Adrian to go shopping.

Both comrades were kept in custody until Monday afternoon when they appeared in court charged with two counts of assault each. Adrian was

additionally charged under Section 5 of the Public Order Act and Sonia with obstruction. In detention they were continuously harassed and abused. Sonia was slammed against a cell wall and sustained severe facial bruising. Adrian was kept, barefoot, in a cell where the floor was covered with urine and excrement.

The fact that Adrian and Sonia were picked out of a bus queue indicates a new level of police harassment. This coincides with Viraj's application to have his case heard by the House of Lords - the final legal avenue remaining for Viraj. The Greater Manchester Police are itching to get their hands on Viraj Mendis

and want to first isolate the campaign by criminalising its members and giving a clear warning to others not to get involved.

The response of the VMDC has shown that this tactic will not work. Within hours of the arrest 50 VMDC and RCG supporters were picketing Bootle Street Police Station and bombarding it with hundreds of phone calls. And when Sonia and Adrian appeared in court on Monday they had another 50 strong welcoming picket. ■

Court date: 1 and 2 March, Manchester magistrates court, Crown Square.

Independent Inquiry: Viraj should stay

After seven months of intensive investigation the Independent Public Inquiry on Viraj has concluded that:

'The factual situation in Sri Lanka is such that, were he to be removed there, Mr Mendis would have a well founded fear of persecution on the grounds of political opinion.'

The report draws attention to facts which tear to shreds Home Office claims that Sri Lanka is a democracy to which Viraj can return safely. There are laws on the statute books that make it an offence punishable by 7 years imprisonment to: 'directly or indirectly, in or outside Sri Lanka, support, espouse, finance, encourage or advocate the establishment of a separate state within the territory of Sri Lanka.'

Given Viraj's support for such a Tamil separate state, a 1985 detainee held by the Sri Lankan security forces testified: 'I was questioned for two and a half hours on Viraj Mendis' activities in Britain. They told me he is a dangerous man, they are going to get

him and hang him here in Sri Lanka.'

Amnesty International in their submission state: 'In the case of Viraj Mendis, it is the arrest and detention without charge or trial of opposition groups, left wing intellectuals and political activists, human rights workers and people suspected of having links with Tamil separatists... that is relevant.'

Professor Manor, an internationally renowned expert on Sri Lanka testified that: '... representatives of the government of Sri Lanka are violating the law and no effective counter-measures are being taken... This is a regime which flaunts the rule of law widely as anyone who studies it carefully.'

Besides the danger to Viraj from government security forces, the report also notes that his life could be threatened by the Sinhala chauvinist JVP.

The report dismisses a letter from the Sri Lankan High Commission offered by the Home Office as evidence

of Viraj's safety. It is consigned to 'the margins of relevance' as advised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The panel notes in addition that: '... the Secretary of State has at no time set out the precise nature of the material before him which leads him to conclude that the rule of law applies in Sri Lanka.'

The four panellists [Rev David Haslam - Secretary British Council of Churches Community, Race Relations Unit; Dr Robert Bradnock - Chair of Foreign Affairs Panel SLD; Gordon Nardell - solicitor, practising in Leeds; Lionel Morrison - President National Union of Journalists 1987/8] have done an invaluable job relying on direct testimony from dozens of people with first hand knowledge of the situation in Sri Lanka as well as hundreds of pages of written submissions. Copies from VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL. ■

Ed Jones

VMDC NEWS

■ VMDC and RCG activists have scored a victory against Manchester police who have been forced to drop charges against 7 activists. Four of them had been arrested and charged in the summer when picketing the South African Airways office and the other three for holding a banner saying 'Police can't stop VMDC'.

■ 200 people attended the VMDC's 24/25 September conference to discuss sanctuary and building unity in action against deportations. The conference launched a national VMDC speaking tour to begin on 1 December and end on the second anniversary of Viraj's sanctuary on 20 December. Two speakers from the US sanctuary movement will be joining the VMDC platform along with the RCG and local anti-racist campaigns.

■ On 14 October 300, including contingents from the RCG, VMDC, NALGO, SWP and others joined a demonstration through Manchester in support of Francis and Moji Okanlami who are threatened with deportation. They have lived in Britain, now with their two year daughter, for 7 years. Francis is a member of NALGO and works for Manchester City Council. The Home Office wants to deport them for 'overstaying'. The campaign can be contacted at 3 Jacksons Row, Manchester M2 5NJ.

Help the VMDC fight back. For leaflets, petitions, postcards, posters and other publicity contact: VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL (061-234 3168)

Picket the Home Office
Thursday 1 December
12 noon - 2pm
Queen Anne's Gate (St James Park tube)
For transport from outside London contact VMDC.

Fight the deportation of Carlos Calderon

Carlos Calderon is a Peruvian socialist. Since 1980 he has been forced into exile and has been living in this country. In Peru, as a leader of the Student Union, he not only engaged in student struggles but helped organise miners and farmworkers. In 1980 he was arrested, thrown into prison and tortured. Contracting pneumonia he was transferred to hospital where a sympathetic doctor helped him escape.

He came to Britain believing that this country had a tradition of political asylum. His illusions were rapidly shattered. The Home Office claim (like they do in the case of our comrade Viraj) that it is safe for Carlos to return to Peru. It chooses to ignore evidence of systematic kidnappings, disappearances and torture of hundreds of progressive opponents of the regime in Peru. Those carrying out these atrocities are the very armed forces who previously arrested and tortured Carlos.

Since coming to Britain Carlos has been examined by the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture who state that he still, after 8 years, bears the scars from his torture. Yet the Home Office disregard these facts and are trying to deport Carlos.

The Carlos Calderon Defence Campaign has been formed to fight to win his right to remain in Britain until it is actually safe for him to return. For information contact CCDC, 25 The Chase, London SW4 ONP.

FIGHT RACISM!

NOTES

12-YEAR OLD ARRESTED

12-year old Denzil McDonald was arrested, held by Tottenham police for two hours and illegally forced to sign documents without a parent, solicitor or social worker being present. His crime? Returning a book of milk tokens mistakenly sent to his family. Denzil was told by PC810 that he was being observed under 'a survey being conducted into black boys'.

TREVOR MONERVILLE: ENDLESS HARASSMENT

Trevor Monerville, roughed-up so badly by Stoke Newington police that he had to have brain surgery nearly two years ago, has been subjected to virtually non-stop harassment since announcing that he would be pursuing a civil action against the police. Trevor has been acquitted in recent weeks of trumped-up charges of unlawful wounding, actual bodily harm and mugging. Since deciding to sue the police, Trevor has been held in custody for the equivalent of over 200 hours.

RACIST ATTACKS DOUBLE

The number of racist attacks has risen from 1,276 in 1983 to 2179 in 1987. These are figures based only on reported attacks. Many go unreported for fear that the police will persecute the reporters. In the same period, the proportion of arrests actually fell from 15.4% in 1983 to 13.6% four years later.

BRAZEN AND UNASHAMED RACISM

The 1988 Immigration Act came into force on 1 August. Justifying increasingly draconian immigration controls Timothy Renton has referred to '1,000 million potential immigrants'. Another Tory MP Antony Marlow compared immigration to a 'massive invasion of tribes and cultures that (the British) neither willed nor desired.'

IMMIGRATION STATISTICS

In 1987 deportation orders were made against 863 people, 67 more than in 1986. The number of 'illegal entrants' deported was 438 compared to 304 in 1986. In the same year there was a fall of 1000 in the number of children accepted into Britain while the number of refugees accepted also fell from 1540 in 1986 to 1,160 in 1987. Such is the racism and reaction of Britain's immigration controls.

FIGHTING FOR THE GUILDFORD FOUR

Paul Hill, Gerard Conlon, Patrick Armstrong and Carole Richardson (the Guildford 4) were arrested in 1974 for the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings. They received some of the longest sentences ever handed out by a British court. Yet their convictions were based entirely on confessions made under duress. Moreover the bombings were subsequently admitted by the Balcombe Street Active Service Unit who were captured in 1975. Elizabeth Hill is Paul Hill's mother. Since his imprisonment she has campaigned tirelessly for the release of the Guildford 4 and for justice for other framed Irish prisoners. *FRFI* talked to her in Belfast during the anniversary of internment weekend in August.

The British government has steadfastly refused to release the Guildford Four. Over the past year the police have been 'reinvestigating' the case and Home Secretary Douglas Hurd is still considering the police report. In a new book on the case *Timebomb* the authors reveal for the first time that Carole Richardson, suffering the effects of drug withdrawal, was given a dose of a powerful relaxant Pethidine whilst in custody. Her incriminating statements were made under the influence of this drug. However, following the refusal of the Birmingham 6 appeal, Guildford 4 supporters have few hopes that Hurd will give justice to the Four.

FRFI Can you tell us about Paul's conditions at the moment?

EH Paul has been held in prison for fourteen years and has served 1641 days in solitary confinement. He's been moved 47 times. He was married in February of this year and the *Sun* newspaper called him an IRA swine and animal and asked for the resignation of the prison governor because Paul was getting married. They called the wedding a 'blood wedding'.

We are very concerned about the condition of Paul. At the wedding I

found Paul very thin. Jeremy Corbyn MP saw Paul recently and he was also very concerned. Paul has only got exercise once in the past fortnight. They are trying to break him physically and mentally, they are depriving him of fresh air and exercise. Because of the continual moves they are also depriving him of visits from his family.

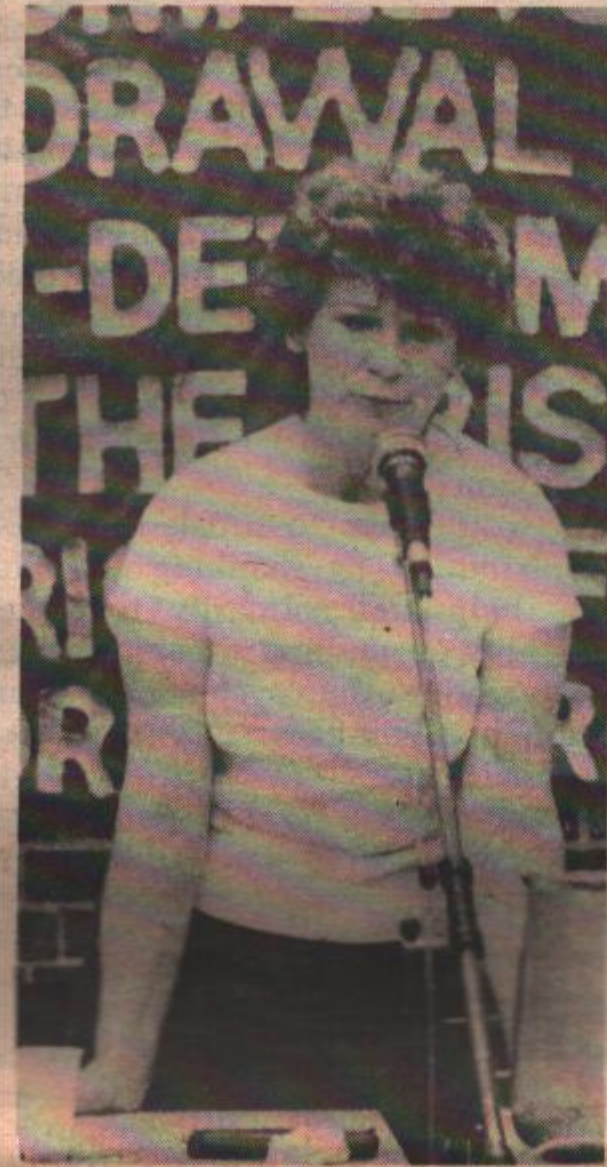
His solicitor contacted the prison but they said that Paul was alright. I would like to stress the fact that they told Mrs Conlon the same thing about her husband and a short time later Giuseppe Conlon died in prison. If something isn't done soon about the condition of these four young people in prison... we don't want another reoccurrence of what happened in the case of Giuseppe Conlon.

Douglas Hurd at the moment is reviewing a police inquiry into new evidence for the Guildford 4. We are not very optimistic about this because it's the police investigating the police. It's like asking a doctor to go against another doctor's opinion. What we want is the immediate release of these prisoners. There are people in prison who have admitted the Guildford bombings and this evidence has never been brought or heard before a jury.

We feel that this should be done in this case.

FRFI What do you think needs to be done to put pressure on the Irish and British governments?

EH A few weeks back we did a tour of Dublin and we lobbied the TDs for a day. We were told by Peter Barry (Justice Minister) that they wouldn't make any public statement until after the outcome of this police inquiry. They should be doing it now, they shouldn't be sitting and waiting. Groups should be started all over to try to gain a lot more support for the prisoners. In Belfast there was 65,000 signatures collected. These were handed in last November. This was just in Belfast. This could be done in Dublin and in England, Scotland. We will continue to fight until these people get justice. But we need massive pressure about these cases. We need everyone's support. Don't think because you're unemployed you don't count. You count very



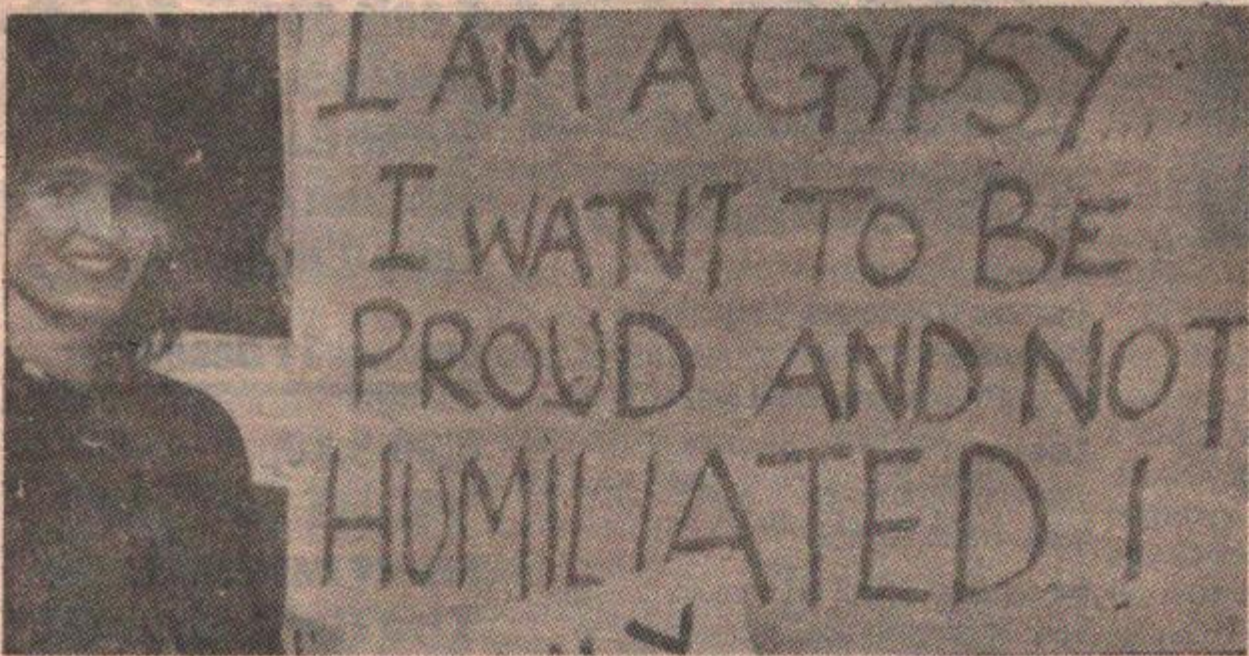
much indeed. Also we need the people at the top as well. But everyone counts in the fight for the freedom of these prisoners.

I have been speaking at the extradition meetings here about the injustice of the Guildford 4 case. There should be no extradition of Irish people to be handed over to the British in view of the fact that there are ten innocent people lying in prison. The Irish government has let the Irish people down very badly if they agree to hand an Irish person over to what is supposed to be justice in England.

The people in Ireland want justice and they want peace. But you can't have peace without justice - the two must go together. Until there is justice for the Birmingham 6 and the Guildford 4, and the names of the Maguire family and Giuseppe Conlon, who died in prison, a sick and innocent man, are cleared there can be no justice for anyone in an English court. ■

PROUD TO BE A GYPSY

Mandy Ferrar is a life-long political activist, formerly in the Young Communist League then in the Labour Party. For four years she worked in the Road Side Stop, which became a campaigning group in Bradford for gypsies' rights. With the advent of a Tory majority in Bradford Council, the campaign centre has been closed and evictions of gypsies intensified. Mandy Ferrar talks to AURIEL FERMO about the plight of gypsies and travelling people in Britain today.



ROAD SIDE STOP

'Road Side Stop was set up in the Bradford area in June 1984. Initially the project was to provide literacy and numeracy skills. But very quickly these aims were overridden by the actual situation of travellers in this city. So Road Side Stop became a campaign group for the general plight of travellers in the area.

'After the abolition of West Yorkshire County Council, Bradford Council took over funding. This was probably the worst thing that happened to the project. The Council would say they'd funded a literacy project and yet there's this wo-

man organising court defence of gypsies and going out to stop evictions.'

ACHIEVEMENTS AND LOSSES

'We got the education authority to develop a policy relevant to travelling children. But you couldn't have the children going into schools if they were getting evicted all the time. Finally we got the Council to adopt a policy of non-harassment. We also got agreement for a third site to be set up in Bradford.

'Now everything's fallen through. The Tories' policy is very much one of harassment which came into effect at the end of June, and since

then we've had nine quite serious evictions with more coming up. The Tories abandoned the third site, stopped funding to Road Side Stop and closed us down.'

'A BAG OF EMPTY PROMISES'

'In one sense you know where you stand campaigning against the Tories. We know they're racist, we know they're hostile and hate gypsies. But the Labour Party were a different game altogether. I was a Labour Party member but resigned after the council meeting.'

At a special meeting called by Bradford Tory Group on 2 June the policy of non-harassment was overturned by 42 votes to 40. The Labour group failed to mobilise all their members which would have ensured the policy continued. All the travellers got from Labour was 'a bag of empty promises.'

'Now the Tories are stirring up race hatred. At the Odsal by-election they used the slogan "Vote Conservative get gypsies out of Bradford"'. Mandy also had her home petrol bombed, suffered police surveillance and becomes unemployed at the end of this year.

'CENTURY AFTER CENTURY OF RACISM AND RACIST LAWS'

'I regard these people [gypsies] as a form of pollution and Bradford should not be allowed to become the dumping ground of the North for them' (Dennis Walsh, former president of Bradford Chamber of Commerce).

Under the 1968 Caravan Site Act, local authorities could choose to become 'designated areas'. Designation makes it a criminal offence

for a travelling family to move into an area that already has its quota of travellers. Where designation fails, as Mandy pointed out, there's now the Public Order Act and mounted police have been used to evict families.

'DESTRUCTION OF AN ECONOMY AND CULTURE'

'Most travellers are poor people, they survive on the brink of poverty. The extended family is vital to the gypsy way of life. Designation means families get split up as young adults are forced to leave an official site. But in turn, site provision destroys the gypsy economy - they can no longer move to different areas to work, say six months doing scrap in Bradford, six months tarmac in Leeds etc. The women would go hawking, but constant harassment has meant this rapidly dying out.'

SITES LIKE 'BANTUSTANS'

Half of all babies born to travelling women die within three months. 'Of the two sites in Bradford, one is next to the council's rifle range. There were three cases of gypsies being hit by bullets.'

'The other site is between the slaughter house and the council's main refuse dump. Rats run onto the site and the women don't put their prams out in case the babies are attacked. The stink from the slaughter house is horrible and many women in summer are nauseous and sick.'

The families pay £16 and £20 a week for a tiny pitch where electricity, water and sanitation are broken and dirty. 'Fresh water is a con-

stant problem, particularly in winter when it freezes in the churns. I've driven round for hours with families looking for water. In garages they charge £5 for water, when the gypsies get it home it's often been pissed in. Many travellers die from cold in the winter or caravan fires because of unsafe heating.'

CAMPAINING FOR GYPSIES' RIGHTS, WHICH WAY FORWARD?

'Travellers will more and more be forced to start direct action for their very existence. In Leeds last year, to stop an eviction, travellers covered their trailers with placards saying "Mudie and Botha both the same" (Mudie is the Labour leader of Leeds Council and publicly anti-gypsy).

'28 gypsy families moved onto the wasteland at the centre of the Bierley estate. When I went up, a woman said the area had improved since the gypsies had been there, they'd cleaned up the rubbish and were good neighbours. She and seven other women from the estate came to court to give evidence against the eviction. It had been better off families at the top end of the estate in private homes who'd made a fuss about the gypsies moving there.'

'Though the case was lost it gave me hope for the future. At the end of the day it will be nothing to do with politicians, it'll be ordinary people who stand up and say "we've had enough".'

A new campaigning group has been set up called TRAC (Travellers Rights Action Campaign). It meets every Monday at 8pm in the Lancaster Pub, Westgate, Bradford 1.

DEBATE

The struggle for prisoners rights

We have received another contribution to our running debate on the struggle for prisoners' rights. TOMMY CURLISS takes up Bruce Childs' argument (see *FRFI* 78) against the division in the prison population between sex offenders and other prisoners. He also argues for prisoners to educate themselves and unite with international struggles against imperialism and racism. Once again we urge all prisoners, their supporters and prison reform organisations to contribute to this vital debate.

The recent debate featured in *FRFI* raises a lot of questions, some of which I hope to answer.

The last correspondent I read (Bruce Childs *FRFI* 78) states that nonces (prisoners convicted of sex offences) and grasses should be accepted into the mainstream of prison life. This attitude is totally wrong. They should be ostracised completely and treated like the low lifes they are.

Nonces prey on the weaker members of society, the women and children who are least able to defend themselves. Grasses are very dangerous people. Their mouths put people in prison and whilst in prison they act as a third arm of the racist Home Office continuing insidious work to the detriment of prisoners. Both these groups are evil despicable people and should be treated accordingly.

Throughout the prison system men whom we all know and respect, ie Roy Walsh, Vince Donnelly, Billy Armstrong, John Bowden and many others too numerous to mention are held on GOAD (held in solitary confinement under Rule 43b for purposes of 'good order and discipline') in punishment units for years at a time for no other reason than that they espouse the socialist cause. They refuse to bend the knee to the racist policies of the Home Office.

The Home Office fears the build up of politically motivated prisoners. A lesson can be learned from that. Educate and help your fellow prisoners to see the wrongs of the system and to fight against it. But do not only consider your own position. Think of all the other people who fight for their freedom, the South African black people, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Irish in Ireland. These are just a few of our brothers with whom we share a common cause.

I would like to finish this short contribution by thanking *FRFI* for the help and solidarity that they have given me and other prisoners throughout the system with no thought of self-gain.

TOMMY CURLISS
HMP Canterbury

Britain's racist prisons

A report published in October by the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) gives further evidence of the racist nature of the criminal justice system. Based on official statistics and case histories, the NAPO report shows that black people's experience of the probation and prison service is one of abuse, neglect and ill-treatment. VIRMAN MAN reports.

Young black people are less likely to be referred to the Juvenile Bureau and less likely to be cautioned but more likely to be prosecuted, to appear in court and to go to prison than their white counterparts. They are also over-represented amongst those sentenced to a period of detention under Section 53 of the 1933 Children Act.

Inappropriate use of custody for black people is borne out by several researchers. Of those on remand, untried and convicted, 15% of men and 23% of women were black. Persons of Afro-Caribbean origin were nearly twice as likely as white people (7.5% compared to 3.9%) to be found not guilty or not proceeded with. One 22-year-old, remanded for three months, was found not guilty of burglary but given two years probation for an offensive weapons charge. One month later he was again remanded, on driving offences. After four months all charges were dropped or he was found not guilty. Another month later he was once more remanded for burglary and held for six months before being found not guilty on all charges. Deprived of liberty for 13 months - guilty of nothing.

The appalling racial prejudices of those working in the courts, probation and prison services are illustrated in the report by case studies. A 16-year-old with no previous convictions was charged with threatening behaviour. A 10-minute interview before the hearing convinced the solicitor to move for an adjournment pending a social inquiry report. This was denied by the Bench and a 14-day detention sentence was given.

A prison report on a man up for parole last year read: 'volatile, easily taken to make gestures typical of his

ancestral background', referring to facial gestures made to prison officers during incidents. Another black prisoner was described thus: 'like most of the inmates found guilty of drug smuggling and of Asian origin, he strongly denied guilt claiming to have been set up'. 'S' from Zimbabwe was sentenced to six months imprisonment and recommended for deportation after breaking a window valued at £27. With no representation and no social inquiry report he was held in police cells without psychiatric care after sentencing despite a medical report recommending hospital treatment.

This report, together with the one produced by NACRO earlier this year, serves to highlight the racial discrimination that exists in the criminal justice system. ■

BIRTHDAYS

- Paul Norney(863532) 11 November HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX
- Brendan Dowd(758662) 17 November HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham, DH1 5SB.
- James Bennet(464989)4 December HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs., WR11 5TZ.
- Liam Baker(464984) 6 December HMP Long Lartin - as above.
- Hugh Doherty(338636) 7 December HMP Long Lartin - as above.
- Noel Gibson(879225) 11 December HMP Full Sutton, York, YC4 1PS.
- Gerry McDonnell(B75882) 19 December HMP Leicester, Welford Road, Leicester, LE2 7AJ.
- Natalino Vella(B71644) 24 December HMP Parkhurst - as above.

★ Defending MARXISM

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! Readers and supporters groups are being set up by all our branches to involve our readers and supporters in discussion and education around the politics of the RCG.

The RCG has fought to establish our understanding of the character of imperialism and its effect on the British working class. Alone on the left we consistently argue for the need to build a new movement in Britain:

- a movement that represents the interests of the oppressed sections of the working class;
- a movement built on an anti-racist anti-imperialist basis;
- a movement that can mount a serious challenge to Thatcher's onslaught on the mass of the working class;
- a movement that can confront and defeat the opportunist treachery of the Labour Party and trade union movement.

In all of our political work we argue for this standpoint. In practice we have fought to build anti-racist anti-imperialist campaigns independent of the Labour Party, actively involving and putting to the fore the interests of the oppressed working class. The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign and the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group are real, living examples

of this. We have often argued on this page for the need to extend our experience and the influence of our politics to all the issues facing the working class. Across the country working class people are becoming involved in struggles to defend their jobs, living standards and democratic rights - campaigns against the Poll Tax, to defend the National Health Service, against police racism, against council cuts.

Many people are becoming involved in political struggle for the first time as Thatcher's economic and social policies start to take their toll. Very quickly they are experiencing the opportunism of the Labour Party. They find themselves abandoned and attacked and left to fight alone against the vast resources of the state - its laws, police and courts.

The RCG has the political experience to defend these struggles from attack from the state and its allies in the Labour Party. We have the political experience to defend these struggles from the influence of the Labour left whose idea of political struggle is to draw people into the clutches of the Labour Party. Our politics are based on the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin. We are fighting to defend them from the representatives of the privileged sections of the working class who seek to justify

new realism to the mass of the working class.

Our readers and supporters groups are being set up to provide a forum for all our readers to discuss these issues on a regular basis. We will be discussing contemporary issues for Marxists like post-Fordism, topical political issues like the media ban on representatives of the national liberation movement in Ireland, and the NHS dispute. We will be looking at the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and the lessons they hold for the working class today, discussing the politics of the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

FRFI readers and supporters groups will organise sales of our newspaper on demonstrations, street meetings in working class areas, estate sales. They will organise for our readers and supporters to contribute to the sales and production of our newspaper.

We need many more people to write for and sell *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* if it is to truly reflect the growing movement of working class resistance. We need many more people discussing and understanding our politics to have an influence on emerging struggles. We need you to work with us in building a new communist tradition.

Lorna Reid

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!



Readers Supporters Groups

I would like to know about the Readers Supporters Group in my area:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL: _____

RETURN TO:
RCG, BCM BOX 5909 LONDON WC1N 3XX

FIRST MEETINGS

Break the ban Hands off Ireland!

North London: Tuesday 15 November 7.30pm, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, N4. (nearest tube Finsbury Park)

South London: Tuesday 15 November 7.30pm Southwark Town Hall, Peckham Road, SE5, (buses 12, 36, 171)

Manchester: Thursday 17 November 7.30pm Mother Macs, Back of Piccadilly (behind Spud-U-Like)

Leeds: Thursday 17 November 7.30pm Leeds Trades Council

For details of Groups in Liverpool, Dundee, York, Birmingham and Lancaster write to the RCG.

BRADFORD: 'Council Cuts Now, Poll Tax to Come. Who will lead the fight back?'

Wednesday 24 November 7.30pm Bradford Central Library

STREET MEETING: Saturday 12 November 11am. Outside the job centre, opposite The Tyrls.

COMMUNIST FORUMS ON South Africa

Sunday 27 November

6.30-9.30pm
**HANDS OFF
NAMIBIA**
Speaker:
Terry O'Halloran

Sunday 11 December

6.30-9.30pm
**'FIGHT RACISM!
FIGHT IMPERIALISM!
The fight against
racism in Britain
and South
Africa'**

Both meetings at
Marchmont Centre,
Marchmont Street,
Russell Square,
London WC1
(nearest tube
Russell Square).

FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT
THESE MEETINGS PHONE
01-837 1688

LETTERS

1000 days and nights for freedom

On Saturday 14 January, City of London Anti-Apartheid Group celebrates 1000 days and nights of the Non-Stop Picket. They aim to hold a mass picket all day. All supporters are asked to pledge an hour (or more!). For more details contact
City AA, BM City AA, London WC1N 3XX
Telephone 01-837 6050

FRFI needs £500 every month!

In October we raised £407.68, £92.32 short of our target of £500 per month. We need to make up for this in November. We are asking readers to help us keep the price of the paper to 40p waged and 20p unwaged. Many readers would not be able to afford the paper if the price went up. Act now by sending us your donations to subsidise FRFI, and help us with our political work. Ask your friends to help as well.

Benefit for Viraj Mendis
Sunday 13 November 8-11pm
Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road N4 (Finsbury Park tube)
Featuring the Railtown Bottlers and Ken Hughes Aluta!
£2 waged, £1 concessions

Annual Manchester Martyrs Commemoration march & rally

Sunday 20 November
Manchester
For further details phone 01-834 0968 outside office hours.

National Action Conference Against the Poll Tax
Saturday 10 December
Newcastle University 10am-5pm
Called by Chesterfield Socialist Conference

Organise fundraising events for the winter and if you have ideas of fundraising events please let us know.

Make your donation payable to "Larkin Publications" and return to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

I/We want to donate £ _____ to the FRFI Fund

Name _____

Address _____

Tel: _____

JOIN THE ACTION JOIN THE RCG

- Take the side of all those struggling against imperialism - **Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built here in Britain which stands with the oppressed fighting racism, repression and poverty. Help us build this movement - **Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist leaders of Britain's Labour and trade union movement - **Join the RCG!**

I wish to join/receive more information about the RCG

Name _____

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Return to: FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

Subscribe to the best anti-imperialist newspaper in Britain



FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

SPECIAL XMAS OFFER

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! consistently covers the issues that confront the working class today. Every month the struggles of the oppressed at home and abroad against British imperialism are brought to our readers. It is through the pages of *FRFI* that representatives of liberation movements across the world are given a voice in Britain.

To receive your copy of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* every month take out a subscription. An annual subscription to *FRFI* is a perfect Xmas gift for you and your friends. For this Xmas we are offering all new subscribers a special offer of a free copy of our book: *Miner's Strike 1984-85. People versus State* (cost £2.50). Subscribe now to the best anti-imperialist paper in Britain.

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- Overseas (inc. Republic of Ireland) - surface PPR: £6 for 6 issues, £13 for 12 issues.
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Printing the truth

I am interested in the RCG because your newspaper covered a trial by Leeds Crown Court in 1985 which involved myself and two other prisoners about assaults on prison warders at Armley prison and at the end of the trial I was found not guilty and it was only your newspaper that argued that the prison warders should be charged with assault on me and the two other prisoners I was charged with. No other papers are interested in the corruption in prison - likewise the police and the government. Oh, they might make a little issue, but it's soon forgotten. They are more interested in what pop stars are jumping into bed with who and all that usual rubbish they print to make their money.

Yet your paper prints what is actually happening to people and why they are suffering at the hands of countries like Britain, America etc. And what you print is not lies but the truth and people should be made aware of the truth instead of reading things like Princess Anne says 'Naff off'.
CARL YUNG
HMP Southall Street
Manchester

Birmingham Six March

On 29 October over 200 people marched through the centre of Manchester in the first demonstration in support of the Birmingham Six since they were imprisoned fourteen years ago. The demonstration was called by the 'North West Campaign for

The first task for liberation

On *FRFI* 80, some of the things John Mitchell said in the interview ('Nationalism and the Struggle for Socialism') I disagree with. I think the armed struggle is the only way forward to a socialist state of Ireland. First you have got to get rid of the imperialist masters in a Nationalist struggle. Once they have got rid of the imperialist masters things will not change over night and the struggle must carry on until victory.

James Connolly was right when he said 'If you remove the English Army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about organisation of a socialist republic your efforts would have been in vain. England would still rule. She would rule you through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she had planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs. England would still rule you, even while your lips offered hypocritical homage at the shrine of that Freedom whose cause you have betrayed.'
JOHN SCHOFIELD
HMP Frankland

Labour bans Irish march

On Saturday 8 October there was intended to be a massive march through Glasgow calling for British withdrawal from Ireland. The proper methods of applying for a march had been adhered to, giving the authorities two months' notice. Yet four days before the march was due to take place the Labour controlled Strathclyde Regional Council imposed a ban. While four days was enough to allow the news to be spread it denied the organisers, Ad-hoc Committee for British Withdrawal, time to appeal legally.

The reason given for this denial of free speech was the pathetic excuse that the march might 'provoke religious intolerance'. While the march was organised on purely political lines, reactionary politicians and bigoted police have to resort to distortion and falsehoods to act against republicans, socialists and anti-imperialists. At the rally which went ahead despite the banning of the march, those in attendance were treated to a high quality of speeches which had as a central theme: fighting against

state imposed silence and making sure that the voice of Irish freedom be heard as loud and clear as the nationalist struggle deems necessary. The speakers at the rally included Sinn Fein, The Lifers/SOSP Prisoners Committee, Holloway Road 30 Defence Campaign and the Republican Bands Alliance.

The banning of this march and bans on other cases of Irish solidarity work points to one thing in particular - that the British establishment and all its lackeys are totally unable to come to terms with the fact that they have only one course of action left open to them as regards Ireland - that is military and political withdrawal. Take for instance Tom King the other week on TV: 'I'm stopping the IRA's money'. Since when did the Irish people ask him for any money - 'Dear M King, semtex is getting dearer, please send some cash...'

The British ruling class won't ever stop the Irish nationalist people as they march forward to freedom. We must do our damndest to make sure they don't stop us marching for them and with them. Free speech on Ireland.
ANDY SHAW
Edinburgh

Four, Judith Ward and now the Winchester Three, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.'

The start of the demonstration showed the police quickly following the spirit of Thatcher's attack on the right to free speech on Ireland: they refused to let the march begin until the 'Manchester Martyrs Committee' banner, which is in the colours of the Irish tricolour, was removed from the march. In the words of

the police officer in charge, the banner was in his opinion a 'provocation'!
BOB SHEPHERD
Manchester

FRFI welcomes letters from readers. Please send them to: FRFI BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

The Soviet Union versus Imperialism: an idealist criticism

David Reed's reply ('Socialism and Imperialism: the limits of co-existence' *FRFI* September 1988 p12) has either misunderstood or misrepresented the purpose of my articles (*FRFI* January, February, March 1988) on Mikhail Gorbachev's *Report on the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution*.

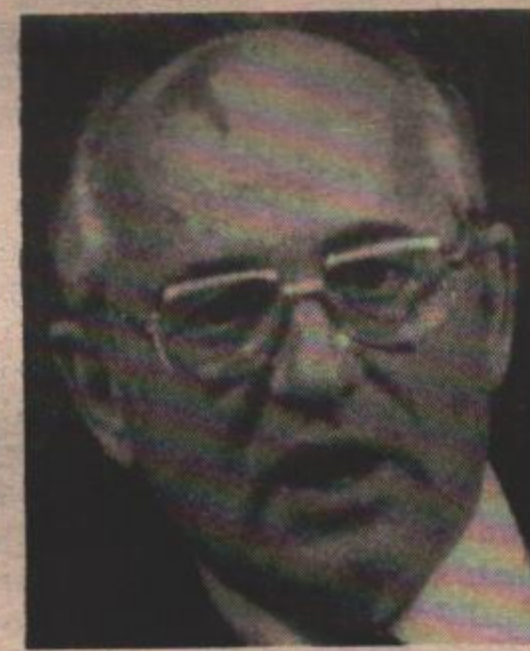
Misunderstood, because I did not set out to deal directly with Gorbachev's position on the issues raised in his *Report*, but with the issues themselves: class war and collectivisation; Trotsky and the Soviet Union; and the Soviet Union versus imperialism today.

When I wrote the articles the RCG did not have a published position on these questions. Its *Manifesto* (1983 pps 13-17) has a general view about the socialist countries which does not come to any specific conclusions about the issues raised in Gorbachev's speech. I do not see how you can comment on Gorbachev's position, without first of all having your own view on these questions.

Misrepresented, because David Reed does not bring forward any specific examples to support his claims that I '... rush to justify Soviet foreign policy...' or '... [justify] each and every turn of Soviet foreign policy...'. My argument is that because of the objective situation - the weakness of the Soviet Union and the revolutionary movement in a period of renewed imperialist offensive - any leadership of the USSR would face some very difficult decisions in the forthcoming period. By contrast, David Reed, writing the RCG's

first two major articles on the subject is in something of a rush '... to voice criticism.'

It is at precisely this point that I have my sharpest disagreement with David Reed. Both of his recent articles (ie the one referred to above; and 'The 19th All-Union Party Conference: A Return to



Leninist Principles?' *FRFI* August 1988) do not attempt to analyse the objective, material conditions facing the Soviet Union, but instead concentrate on the theories and ideas put forward by Gorbachev.

The sub-title of the August article is significant: 'A return to Leninist principles?'. It re-states 'Leninist principles', counterposes Gorbachev's ideas to them - and finds Gorbachev's wanting. I quite agree that in theoretical terms, Gorbachev's ideas on imperialism and the class struggle are non-Marxist, indeed are dangerous illusions in the possibility of a permanently peaceful agreement with imperialism. But there is a wide-ranging debate inside the CPSU on these questions; and as socialists in an imperialist country it is surely not our place to offer criticisms without attempting to analyse the material reality of the conditions

facing the Soviet Union.

With one 'principle': '... Lenin's political practice followed from a thoroughgoing theoretical analysis of the economic, social and political conditions at the time...' I quite agree - Lenin never tired of saying 'Truth is concrete'. But where is there such a concrete materialist analysis in either of the two articles by Comrade Reed?

For instance, he claims that I am '... forced to overstate the strength of the renewed imperialist offensive, while underestimating the fighting capacity of the national liberation movements.' In relation to the USSR, I argued that it is economically, militarily and politically weaker than it was in 1960, giving numerous examples to support my case.

In reply, David Reed uninformatively states that: 'There is a pressure to adapt Soviet foreign policy...' But how strong is this pressure? Where does it come from - from a renewed offensive by imperialism? - or '... in order to allow resources to be switched from military expenditure to peaceful construction.'

He puts forward only one concrete argument: that it was the support of the European working class for the Soviet Union during the Civil War (1917-21) which was as important as inter-imperialist rivalries in giving the Soviet Union a breathing space. I entirely agree - but surely this supports my argument that since today, 'none of the European Communist Parties is a significant political factor.' (*FRFI* March 1988 p5) this makes an enormous contribution to the political pressure on the Soviet Union.

In relation to the national liberation movements, I cannot see that anything in my article can be represented as

'... underestimating the fighting capacity of the national liberation movement', and in response to the numerous examples I cite to show that '... strong and successful revolutionary movements will, within certain limits, receive the economic, military and political support of the USSR.' David Reed can only bring forward the (as yet undecided) case of Angola.

Finally, on a historical note. Does David Reed really '... agree with the broad positions reached... in the first two articles "Class War and Collectivisation" and "The Soviet Union in the Twenties and Thirties - was there an alternative?"'. In his August 1988 article, it is not at all clear whether he agrees with Gorbachev that: 'The difficulties experienced today are rooted, therefore, in the system created Stalin...', a system which '... resulted in huge loss of life and countless moral and ideological losses.' - an argument totally at variance with my first two articles.

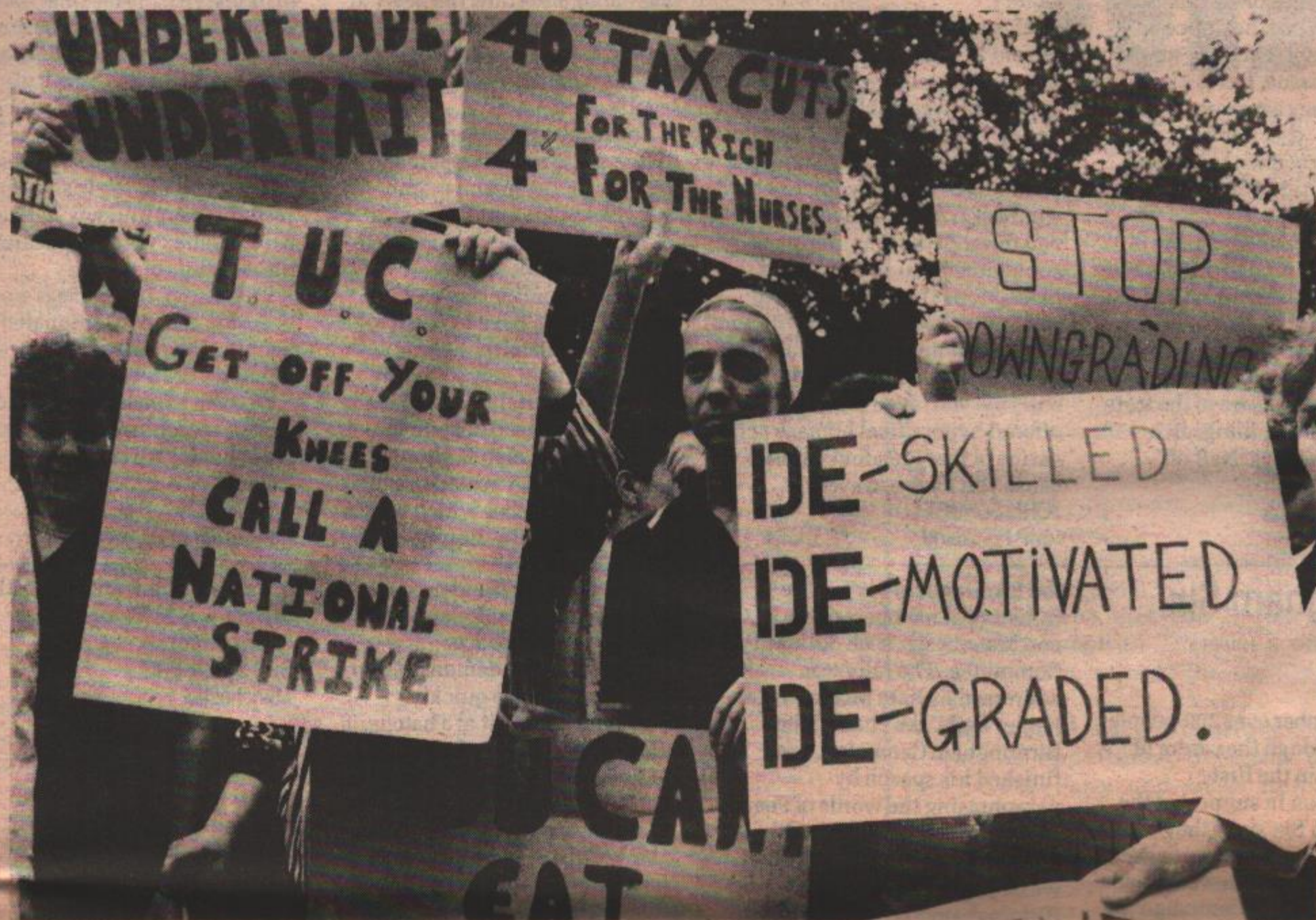
Again I urge comrades to read the recent literature on this period (J Arch Getty, *Origins of the Great Purges* Cambridge 1985; Lynne Viola, *The Best Sons of the Fatherland. Workers in the Vanguard of Soviet Collectivization* Oxford 1987; a Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution. Politics and Workers 1928-1932* Cambridge 1988) which makes possible an objective judgement based on a material analysis of conditions of the period.

Only a concrete analysis of the materialist conditions, and not merely ideal re-statement of 'Leninist principles', can lead to realistic appraisal of the current balance of forces in the struggle between the Soviet Union and imperialism.
PATRICK NEWMAN
London

Nurses fight grading fraud

Another kick in the teeth

TERRY O'HALLORAN



In many parts of the country healthworkers are starting to demonstrate their anger against the Tory grading fraud. In hospital after hospital the majority of nurses are being graded at the lowest levels and thus being robbed of the 15% pay rise promised earlier this year.

TERRY O'HALLORAN
Additional reporting by Dave Burton, Jane Clendon and Debbie Derbyshire

Despite being graded at the lowest levels they are expected to carry out the duties and responsibilities of the better paid higher grades. The regrading exercise is estimated to cost £941 million (17.9% on pay bill). Many of the 112,000 auxiliaries and assistants are receiving much smaller increases and are ending up with between £5,000 and £6,300pa.

Some 200 nurses in the psychiatric unit at North Manchester hospital went on indefinite strike. NUPE members at Prestwich psychiatric hospital went on a four hour strike to lobby the local Area Health Authority

and on Monday 7 November they began an all-out indefinite strike against the regrading process.

On Wednesday 2 November night shift nurses at Leavesden psychiatric hospital took action by working to grade. Since none of them had been given senior grades (based on responsibility for wards) they refused to work as it would have involved them in being responsible for wards. Management had to get the day shift to cover by continuing to work until the small hours of Thursday morning. The management were forced within hours to withdraw the new gradings for 1,000 staff.

The greatest anger and the industrial action has tended to be found in hospitals or hospital units dealing with the mentally ill or the mentally

disabled. This is because this section of the health service has always been underresourced and has always relied heavily on nursing assistants. The great majority of healthworkers in this sector have been graded A, the lowest grade, despite the fact that in many cases there are no grade E staff (ie with responsibility for supervising wards) available.

So when these workers insist on working to grade, refusing to cover for non-existent higher grade staff, the wards have to be closed immediately. This is the extent of the Tory fraud. Not only are many of these healthworkers in fact only being offered a 4% rise but also they are expected to carry on doing the work of others. Now healthworkers in other sectors, Charing Cross hospital,

the Maudsley and Birmingham, are following their lead.

Debbie Derbyshire, nursing assistant and NUPE member, told *FRFI* about events in Prestwich:

'All the nursing assistants at my hospital have been graded A, the lowest grade. Nursing assistants regularly work unsupervised. On nights, which I work, nursing assistants are quite often in charge of the ward for the whole night because of staff shortages. This regrading had sparked off all the nurses' militancy again. We're having a 24 hour strike next week. Depending on the mood of the nurses after the strike we'll be trying for indefinite strike action at Prestwich. I know we've got to fight back against Thatcher's attacks on the NHS or she'll succeed in making a two-tier health service: one for the rich and one for the poor.'

At Hill End psychiatric hospital COHSE have served formal notice of dispute but have not yet made any plans for industrial action.

At Prestwich and elsewhere healthworkers are having to battle with their own leaderships. Debbie said: 'The only problems we're having are with COHSE who at my hospital are refusing to act jointly with NUPE and are trying to block any strike action.' Pressure from below has now forced COHSE to ballot their members at Prestwich hospital to join the industrial action.

The Labour Party is playing its usual role of making verbal protests but refusing to actually support the healthworkers. The same sectional behaviour by the unions as happened earlier this year is recurring. Yet the action at Leavesden, North Manchester and Prestwich shows that there are healthworkers prepared to fight not only for a living wage but also for a fully resourced NHS which can meet the needs of working class people.

To win however they will have to ignore their leaders, build their own actions and draw other sections of the working class - other trade unionists and the working class communities who have to rely on the NHS - into the fight. ■

On Tuesday 1 November the government squeezed its plan to introduce charges for eye and teeth tests through the Commons with majorities of eight and 16 respectively. That the government came so close to defeat had nothing to do with the Labour opposition. It was brought about by a number of Tories defying their whip.

The vote follows the government's defeat in the House of Lords where both sets of charges were rejected. The Lords' opposition has already started to soften. They are prepared to allow charges for dental checks but not for optical checks.

The wholesale contempt felt by the Thatcher government for the NHS is displayed in nothing so much as this petty but vicious attempt to save money at the expense of the health of the working class.

Everyone knows that these checks frequently uncover diseases - ranging from glaucoma to cancer - which are treatable if found early enough. The total income from these charges, £3.30 for dental check-ups and £10 for eyes, is an estimated £140 million. A minute proportion of the NHS budget.

The charges, however, are not a minute proportion of the income of low-paid and poor workers who will be the hardest hit. As long as they can stagger into work one way or another their health, of course, is of no concern to the ruling class.

That we have to rely on the odd twinge of conscience among Tory fat cat backbenchers and that home for distressed gentlefolk (the House of Lords) to stop these charges is entirely the responsibility of the Labour and trade union leadership. Their opposition to, and sabotage of, serious resistance to the attack on the welfare state allows the Tories to do what they like. And they like dismantling the welfare state. The shadow boxing in Parliament will not stop these charges. The kind of fight now being staged by healthworkers throughout the country is the only way to defend the NHS. ■

Children frozen out

DAVID HOWARTH

John Moore, the Social Security Secretary, announced that Child Benefit would be frozen for a second year running, at the meagre level of £7.25 per week. Child Benefit has fallen by 7% in real terms between 1979 and 1988, the last rise being 10p per week in July 1986. Although the Tories claimed that Child Benefit was safe in their hands at the last election, the results show the truth, and due to the lack of opposition from the Tory backbenchers and the parliamentary 'opposition', the long-term future of Child Benefit now looks in jeopardy. The freeze will save the government £206 million, out of which £70

million will go on a 50p a week increase in the allowances for children in the main means-tested benefits Income Support, Family Credit (much of which will be clawed back in reduced Housing Benefit) and Housing Benefit. The government calculates its spending on Family Credit (FC) on an expected take-up rate of 60%, whereas the actual take-up rate is currently running at the pathetic level of 30%. This exposes the government's lies of increasing support to those that need it most, attempting to fudge over the cut in benefits. It follows a Social Services Select Committee report (July 1988) whose verdict was: 'Given the political sensitivity of the low income families data, it is vital that the government should convince

the public that any changes made in the presentation of data are based on bona fide methodological rather than political grounds... however, the changes are likely to lead to an underestimate of the numbers living on low income.'

Since 1979, the Tory Government has introduced tax cuts with the effect of reducing £20 billion in tax revenue. Of this, the top 1% of taxpayers gained 24%, more than the bottom 50% who gained 17%, 'a lesson in class politics' (FRFI 77). The rich have gained enormously under Thatcher, but for the poor the story is quite different.

The share of total household income of the poorest 20 per cent of the population fell from 6.1 per cent to

5.6 per cent between 1979 and 1985. The unemployed and low-paid have suffered since with the introduction of the Social Security Act (FRFI 77) and face more set-backs with the Housing Bill and Poll Tax. More and more families need Child Benefit to prevent them from sliding into deeper poverty; with Child Benefit frozen its effects diminish.

Children and women obviously bear the brunt of the reduction in value of Child Benefit. In 1985, 3,540,000 children (29% of all children) were living on or below the poverty level - a rise of 50% since 1979. This includes 74% of children in one-parent families. The extra needs created by children often push parents, particularly women, into poverty. Besides direct costs of providing for children's needs, children reduce the parents' earning capacity. Lone parents are affected by this in acute form - 90% of lone parents are women. Unemployment amongst

women has increased by 102% between 1979 and 1988, and for those in work, women make up two-thirds of the low paid workers.

The Labour Party's response to this further attack on the poor by Thatcher's government was virtually non-existent. Kinnock reacted, calling Thatcher 'a cheat' after satisfying himself that he had raised his voice for the poor. In reality Kinnock's Labour Party does not even try to defend the poor, and instead fights with the Tories to win the support of the better-off sections of the working class and the middle class. The Labour Party fought harder to defend the interests of private investors (in Barlow Clowes) than it does to defend the interests of the people on or below the poverty level. To defend the interest of the poor and oppressed an independent organisation of the working class must be built. The time to fight back is now. ■