

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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We will keep nuclear weapons

I would press the button

We don't want a Bill of Rights

We are for the market economy

N. Ireland will stay British and the troops will remain

The Falklands will remain British as long as the Islanders want it

Trade union ballots must be imposed

We discriminate against homosexuals

We considered having a black candidate for the Vauxhall by-election

So will we

I might, and then again, I might not

Neither do we

So are we. But it must be made to care

N. Ireland will stay British. British troops will remain... unless the Loyalists disagree

Negotiations are possible if the Islanders want this

I agree

So do we

We didn't

DIVIDE AND RULE

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EDITORIAL

LABOUR'S POLICY REVIEW



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10 YEARS OF THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION



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AFGHANISTAN



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No choice for voters

The Labour Party now believes it has got it just about right. Last election we were given the new form and style. But wrapping semi-old policies in bright tinsel paper was not enough. The Labour Party took a drubbing. Form and content had to be reconciled. Two years later, after much 'listening' and 'soul searching', Labour's image makers have produced a content that is adequate to the new form and style, and which is as inoffensive as possible to Labour's missing middle class voters. *Meet the Challenge, Make the Change* is designed primarily to appeal to the needs and prejudices of semi-detached Britain.

Before the last election Tom Sawyer, the powerful chair of Labour's home policy committee and deputy general secretary of NUPE warned the Labour Party 'not to write off the white, heterosexual working class and replace them with a coalition of the dispossessed.' Sawyer has been in overall charge of the policy review for the last two years. Those who have written the review have heeded his words. The review is a manifesto for the employed, homeowners, even shareowning, white, relatively well-off working class and middle class family. The dispossessed barely get a hearing.

The task, it appears, is to make capitalism more efficient and more fair. 'Creating real prosperity and distributing it equitably will be the goal of the next Labour government.' That no government, Labour or Tory, has ever achieved this appears to be no problem for our image makers. The trick is to return to an old formula that failed so long ago that most people will not remember it. The key to modernisation is investing heavily in new technology and a highly skilled workforce. A new investment institution, British Technology Enterprise, will be created to fund long-term investments in fundamental and advanced technologies which private firms will not or cannot undertake. The new industries created will be the engines of economic growth. The aim, let us make it absolutely clear as votes are at stake, is not to create 'an ever-growing state sector' but to 'establish new industries which could then be sold on to socially responsible shareholders, such as the company employees' - an appeal, it could be said, to a 'coalition of responsible shareholders.'

We are promised a 'new electronic highway' - a national broad band fibre optic cable network, which 'will bring great rivers of information, sight and sound, in and out of every living room, classroom and workplace... Potentially it is a democratic technology that increases the consumer's power to choose'. How can you fail to vote for that? But in this case, it has to be said, with such a major infrastructural investment some renationalisation will be necessary. British Telecom will be brought back into public control. Nothing extreme mind you, if the public stake in British Telecom remains at 49 per cent by the time of the next election, a Labour government will buy back 2 per cent of the shares at market prices.

This is, in all essentials, a rehabilitation of Harold Wilson's dream of a 'Britain that is going to be forged in the white heat of the scientific (technological) revolution'. At the time there was much talk of harnessing socialism to science and science to socialism. Today the formula has had to be adapted to suit the ideological sensitivities of Thatcher's Britain. It will be a responsible, caring capitalism guided by the public sector which will harness the new advanced technologies.

But those who try to bolster and guide the market economy with state intervention always find that the capitalist market has a habit of hitting back. Harold Wilson's dream, it should be remembered, turned into a nightmare as pressure on the pound



Meet the challenge - break with Labour

'I am not again going to make that tactical argument for the unilateral independent abandonment of nuclear weapons without getting anything in return for it.'

Neil Kinnock

forced the government to deflate the economy, cut public investment and eventually devalue the pound. Capitalism cannot be made to serve the interests of the working class. After six years the Tories were returned to power. By the time of the next election Britain will be facing a severe economic crisis, and, in the unlikely prospect of a future Kinnock government, there is nothing in the policy review to suggest that it will not go the same way as all the rest - almost certainly a little faster.

Labour's image makers believe that the last election was lost because of Labour's policies on defence. Unilateralism would have to be sacrificed if Labour were to be elected. The problem was how to do it. After all Kinnock was a staunch unilateralist until he began to sense that was not the way to political power. The precedent however existed. Kinnock's hero Nye Bevan, a left rebel in the Labour Party in the early 1950s, had sided with the right in 1957 when he opposed unilateralism and said that it would be tantamount to sending the next Foreign Secretary 'naked into the Conference Chamber... to preach sermons... you call that statesmanship? I call it an emotional spasm.' Kinnock used the same technique. He said that when he had argued for unilateralism in the White House, the Kremlin and the Elysée, they were totally uncomprehending that the Labour Party should want to get rid of nuclear weapons without getting anything in return. He continued:

'But I am not again going to make that tactical argument for the unilateral independent abandonment

of nuclear weapons without getting anything in return for it. 'I will not do it. The majority of the party and the majority of the country do not expect me to do so.'

The statesman Kinnock could not be expected to be left preaching sermons. The policy had to change. Unilateralism belonged, without a doubt, to his earlier, more emotional, less statesmanlike phase.

No one should be surprised at this change of position. The Labour Party is a staunch defender of imperialism's nuclear alliance, Nato. Indeed as the defence review document *Britain and the World* proudly states, 'Britain's Labour Government played a key role in the establishment of Nato' as an anti-communist alliance. It is not possible to have a unilateralist policy and belong to an alliance which has a 'first use' flexible response position on nuclear weapons. That the Labour Party is forced by the logic of its position to accept the deterrent theory of nuclear weapons - that the possession of nuclear weapons implies a threat to use them - and to accept the 'US nuclear umbrella' and US nuclear bases in Britain should also come as no surprise. If you belong to a nuclear alliance you are inevitably forced to accept its terms for membership.

The rest of the review shows the same ingratiating appeal to the prejudices of Kinnock's chosen constituency. Some anti-trade union legislation will be repealed. Secondary action, for example, would be made legal in certain circumstances and protection will be restored for union funds if industrial action is threatened. However, much of the Thatcher

legislation will remain in place. As one earlier draft of the report stated, if inflation stems from pay 'we have already made it abundantly clear to our trade union colleagues that we will be no soft touch'. The bosses will like that.

There is to be no Bill of Rights and therefore no incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights into British law. The guarantee against a dictatorial government is apparently to be an elected second chamber which will replace the House of Lords. Proportional representation was resoundingly dismissed. The social justice policy review group rejected proposals for an equal age of consent for homosexuals and heterosexuals and for the repeal of all discriminatory legislation. Roy Hattersley said he would not stand by and see Labour ruined over an issue like this which is not a priority for the party. He got the backing of the Labour Party NEC, 17-11. The oppressed are a diversion.

Labour will do little to reverse the Tory tax cuts for the rich. 'Labour is not a high tax party: we are a fair tax party.' The maximum rate of income tax is to be 50 per cent. Gone for good is any talk here of a tax on the rich which will produce 'howls of anguish' (Denis Healey 1973 LP conference). On the contrary 'at all stages in reforming the tax and social insurance systems we will ensure that changes are made gradually and in ways which limit the impact on personal incomes.' Middle class Britain is safe with Mr Kinnock.

Kinnock has made it clear that Labour has to be the party of the homeowner as well as the homeless

(1983). Mortgage tax relief would continue but only at the basic rate of tax. Council properties will continue to be sold and the right to buy would now be extended into the private sector to all tenants of non-resident landlords - 'subject to appropriate safeguards' of course. In case you think he has forgotten the homeless, homes sold by local authorities and housing associations will have to be replaced in areas of high demand.

Labour's foreign policy, like that on defence, in practice will be almost identical to that of the Tories. Labour speaks of still having responsibilities to 'dependencies' outside Europe and of the need to possess 'well-trained and mobile land, sea and air units which can respond speedily to problems affecting these dependencies...' Elsewhere the status-quo will remain. It is for negotiations on the Falklands provided the Islanders agree. It is for Irish unity provided the Loyalists agree. A shamefaced imperialism determined not to arouse the electorate.

How predictable it was that this party, whose only steadfast principle appears to be getting elected back into power, should refuse to accept a black candidate for the coming by-election in Vauxhall. The decision was made on racist grounds. It was designed to win over the white racist vote from the Tories.

The response of the Labour left to the policy review has been predictable. Ken Livingstone told us that the Campaign Group would meet the next day to organise 'the fight to save the party we love'. Tony Benn informed us that the Labour Party had 'accepted capitalism, abandoned unilateralism all in one day'. Dennis Skinner said that the policy review meant that 'opportunism and political expediency have taken the place of socialist principles'.

These protestations are not at all credible. Tony Benn was forced to admit this a few days later in an article he wrote in *The Independent*. 'The time has come when we must re-examine the truth', he said, 'the Labour Party is not - and probably never was - a socialist party, and its individual members do not decide policy, nor are its election pledges apparently meant to be taken seriously.' Quite so Mr Benn. So cut out the nonsense about accepting capitalism and rejecting socialism and fighting for 'the party we love'. The Labour Party has always been, is, and always will be a racist, imperialist and thoroughly undemocratic party. To pretend that it could be otherwise, as the Left has been doing for decades, is simply to give a left wing cover to a reactionary bourgeois party. Today this stance is unacceptable and is one of the main barriers to building a socialist alternative.

This stance also exists within the left outside the Labour Party. *Socialist Worker* is still concerned to tell 'socialists to convince their trade union organisations to reject the policy review' at the Labour Party conference. This is the wrong message. There is no possibility of the policy review being defeated and trade union organisations will be the main defenders of it at the party conference. Stop spreading illusions. We have to end the spectacle of so-called socialist organisations buzzing round the Labour Party like flies round a rotting carcass canvassing for it, calling for votes for it, whether with or without illusions. We must reject this opportunist adaptation to the Labour Party.

Socialists have to break politically with the Labour Party if a socialist movement is to be made here in Britain. A start could be made in the following weeks, if the opportunity is seized, and a black socialist candidate stands as an independent in the Vauxhall by-election. Will British socialist organisations, the Labour left and Labour Party Black Sections back such a candidate?

Tory lies on Poll Tax exposed

LORNA REID

On Tuesday 9 May a High Court judge, Mr Justice McCowan, suspended the delivery of the Government leaflet, *The Community Charge (The So-called Poll Tax): How It Will Work for You*, to 21 million households in England, pending a full hearing on 15 May.

The injunction was sought by the London Borough of Greenwich because the leaflet contained gross inaccuracies and lies about the Poll Tax.

Lie number 1:

Prisoners are exempt from paying the tax unless they are in prison for non-payment of fines.

Fact:

Some prisoners who, for instance, have not paid parking fines, will have to pay the tax.

Lie number 2:

Filling in the Poll Tax form does not mean that anyone has to pay for anyone else.

Fact:

Joint and several liability means that married and co-habiting couples are responsible for one another's Poll Tax bills.

Lie number 3:

Registration officers will check details 'just as councils do for rates'.

Fact:

Registration officers have much greater power to examine personal details than rates officers. They have access to all public and council records including school records.

Lie number 4:

People are eligible for rebates.

Fact:

Only the very poor will qualify, eg, single people earning less than £50 per week.

Lie number 5:

The supplement added to Income Support will exceed the 20% charge which people on social security will have to pay.

Fact:

In areas with a high Poll Tax the supplement will fall short, leaving millions of people worse off.

The injunction halting delivery was granted at 2.45pm, but, in total contempt of the order, the leaflets were still being delivered at lunchtime on Wednesday. Local Government Ministers,



John Gummer, covering up for the Environment Secretary Nicholas Ridley, insisted in the Commons that there had been no delay in implementing the court order. This was another lie: The Royal Mail was not informed until 9pm on Tuesday - over six hours after the injunction was granted.

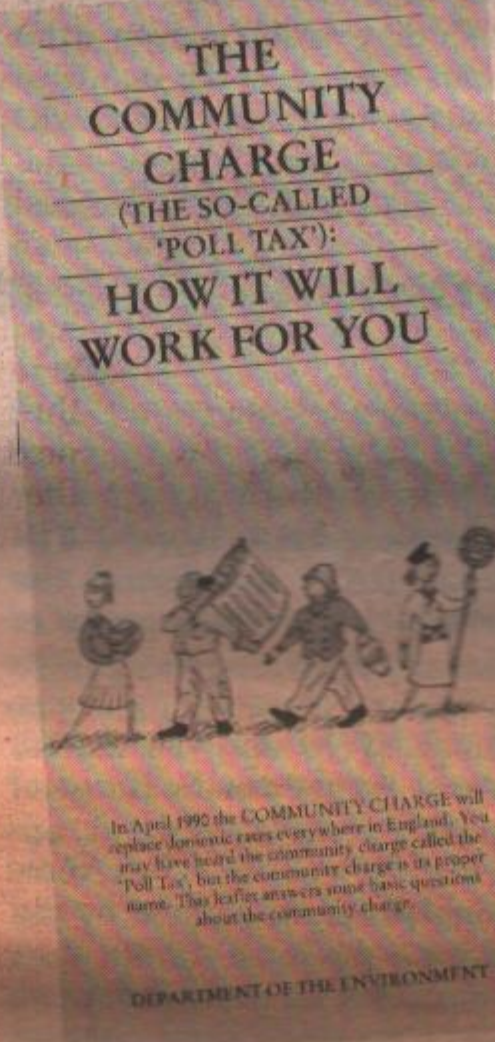
On Tuesday 16 May Lord Justice Woolf and Mr Justice Ian Kennedy, sitting in the High Court, rejected Greenwich Council's claim that the leaflet was so misleading that its publication amounted to a misuse of ministerial power and public funds and should be stopped. Woolf said the worst that could be said about the leaflet was that it was misleading by omission and lifted the injunction preventing its distribution. Greenwich Council have decided not to appeal against this decision and have claimed a moral victory.

The total cost of convincing the English population that the Poll Tax is a good thing will be £1.75 million, paid for by the Government Information Ser-

vice. What has been exposed as Tory propaganda is being funded from taxpayers' money. The exposure of the government's lies about the Poll Tax has also raised questions about the abuse of the Government Information Service to fund political advertising. The Government spends £167 million per year on advertising, higher than any previous government.

It would appear that the message about the Poll Tax being good for you has missed up to 60% of the population in some regions of Scotland. This is the percentage of people who have not paid their first Poll Tax bill in Tayside region. In other regions payments have not been received from between five and 40% of the local population.

The Borders Regional Council offered a five per cent discount if people paid their annual Poll Tax in full by 30 April. Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council have not been so generous in their incentive. People were offered a flat-rate £5 discount for paying their annual bill in full by 25 May. Grampian Regional Council prefers direct threats to incentives. Late and non-payers have been told they risk losing their right to a rebate. Lothian Regional Council is having a problem with its computers which are replacing the names of those liable to pay the Poll Tax with the names of deceased persons or children. Hackers claim to have put a virus in the computers, but council officials claim it's the fault of computer software having to deal with so much data. ■



ACT-UP HITS WHITEHALL

In protest at the drastic cuts in benefits from £98 to £26 a week and a six months wait for a degrading means test for people living with AIDS, the AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power - ACT-UP London - zapped the offices in Whitehall of DSS minister Nicholas Scott on Thursday 18 May.

Richard and Mark entered the building with a list of demands from ACT-UP for Nicholas Scott. Maureen, Dominic, Russell, Cole and Tim handcuffed themselves to and blocked off the entrances, while a 30 strong picket including prospective MEP Peter Tatchell and members of OLGA, City AA and the London Black Lesbian and Gay Group, got going outside with lively chanting, colourful banners and placards, and political speeches.

First of all we were told that Nicholas Scott was out to lunch, then when a 'legitimate' delegation turned up for a prearranged interview with Old Nick, they were bussed off to a secret rendezvous, since he hadn't dared to come back and face the music.

After an hour and a half the DSS issued a statement saying they would see us on Monday so we uncuffed ourselves and went away to return later. An ACT-UP delegation also laid a black wreath which read 'Living with AIDS... Dying money' on the Cenotaph just opposite the building. Four barristers and solicitors were present at all times as legal observers and there were no arrests made.

Dominic Thackray

ACT-UP London meets every Tuesday at 7.45pm at the London Lesbian and Gay Centre, Cowcross Street near Farringdon. For further information, or if you would like help in setting up an ACT-UP group in your area (already there is ACT-UP Brighton) contact ACT-UP on 01-431-4372 or write to BM Box 2995, London WC1N 3XX.

For information on the recent split in ACT-UP see page 14.

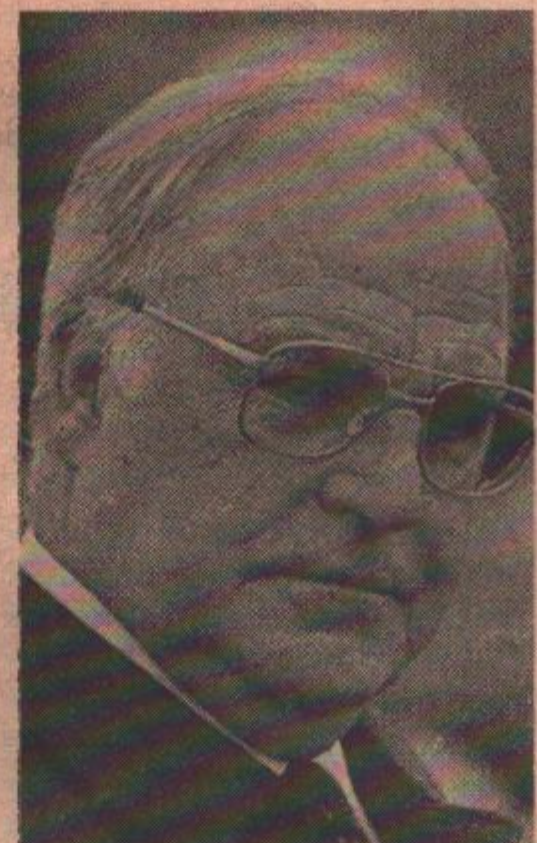
Missile dispute splits Nato A summer of discontent?

BOB SHEPHERD

The announcement on 11 May by President Gorbachev that the Soviet Union would unilaterally remove 500 short range nuclear missiles (range up to 310 miles) from Europe is in stark contrast to Thatcher and Bush's insistence that NATO's short range missiles be modernised. A modernisation programme that would increase the range of these missiles up to the lower limits of the Intermediate missile category, a category of nuclear weapons that was agreed to be eliminated at the last Gorbachev-Reagan summit.

Gorbachev also put forward proposals for the reduction of Warsaw Treaty and NATO armies and weaponry to common levels by 1997. He also stated that the Soviet Union wanted to remove all its nuclear weapons from the territories of its allies by 1991 provided the USA did the same. As Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze put it, 'the Soviet Union favoured a third zero option - that is the full elimination of nuclear weapons in Europe. That is our ultimate goal'.

The response of imperialism has been predictable: a NATO spokesman rejected the proposals because it would lead to a 'denuclearisation' of Europe, undermining the NATO strategy



Helmut Kohl

of nuclear deterrence. Thatcher and Bush proclaimed that Gorbachev's proposals were 'a ploy to split NATO'. In fact the determination of Thatcher and Bush to press ahead with the modernisation of short range nuclear missiles is itself causing disagreements within NATO. The West German government, under pressure from the peace movement and the electorate, is opposed to any upgrading of short range nuclear weapons based on West German territory. This opposition to modernisation is being supported by other European governments; after all, any 'short range' nuclear war would be centred on Germany and Central Europe. This is a reality that

Thatcher, on her recent visit to West Germany, defended in her usual arrogant manner. She was reported in *Der Spiegel* as saying that Germans had better get used to the idea of a nuclear war limited to Central Europe, as 'after all, they had lost the war'!

The West German and other European governments, even although not at the moment supporting the Soviet Union's proposals for a nuclear-free Europe by 1991, are opposed, for their own reasons, to modernisation of short range nuclear missiles, and the consequent stepping up of nuclear confrontation. US and British imperialism by their insistence on the modernisation programme are clearly showing their true intention of keeping military pressure on the Soviet Union, and the same time keeping their political domination of NATO.

In this crucial period Thatcher is facing the only opposition to imperialism's warmongering from within the imperialist alliance of NATO itself! The spineless Kinnock and his Labour Party have chosen this moment, under the guise of their policy review, to finally dump any pretence of unilateralism to the greater good of becoming 'electible'. FRFI rejects the shamefaced militarism of the Labour Party and gives its support to the Soviet Union's proposals. ■

LORNA REID

On Monday 15 May London tube drivers held their third one day strike in support of a pay increase of £64 per week for operators of 'driver only' tubes, pay increases for all London underground staff and the withdrawal of proposals to change working conditions. Tube workers threaten continuing one day strikes every other Monday until their demands are met.

The tube staff were joined by bus drivers pursuing a 7.5% pay increase. British Rail drivers on BR Southern Region started an overtime ban on Monday in the run up to a ballot of NUR members on strike action in pursuit of a pay increase above the 7% offered by BR, the withdrawal of new working conditions and for the London Allowance to be extended to workers living on the Kent Coast. The overtime ban affects a third of BR Southern Region services. This joint action over pay and working conditions brought London's transport system to a virtual standstill.

The transport workers' strike coincides with current and proposed industrial action over pay, jobs and conditions by BBC workers, engineers, dockers, power workers, postal workers,

fire fighters and local government workers.

Pay offers from employers range from 7% to 7.5%. Inflation today stands at 8%. Workers are engaging in action to defend their living standards as the Thatcher government pushes ahead with a programme to reduce pay levels and introduce profit-induced working conditions. Skilled labour such as power workers and engineers are included in this overall attack, as Thatcher, aided by tight anti-trade union legislation (there exist no less than six different acts outlawing industrial action), is confident of streamlining pay deals throughout the industrial sector to bring wage levels in line with the needs of a failing economy.

Do we face a summer of discontent?

London Underground staff and tube drivers are developing new methods of organising in the course of their dispute. The series of one day strikes are organised by 'strike co-ordinators' - rank and file union members unknown to the management. Members of the two railworkers unions, the NUR and ASLEF, work together. The mass meeting at Friends Meeting House in Euston which organised the first strike was mobilised by leaflets,

posters and word of mouth. A collection paid for the room and the meeting voted for ASLEF executive committee members to leave to 'get round the legal side'.

Drivers and station staff are determined to link demand over pay and conditions despite attempts by NUR and ASLEF officials to keep the issues separate. The emergence of widespread rank and file activity adopting new and creative methods of organisation is the key to the success of the dispute so far.

Other workers in dispute can learn from the tube staff and drivers. Attempts by the trade union and Labour Party leadership to divert and dissipate the growing momentum for industrial action can be overcome through the independent organisation of ordinary workers.

The threat of an overtime ban by the power workers has produced an offer of 9.2%. Thatcher cannot risk power cuts on the eve of privatisation. The other unions do not wield the same power and will be forced to step up industrial action to secure their demands. We could still see a series of fresh challenges to the Thatcher government over the coming months. ■

Intifada isolates Zionists

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

When Zionist Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir visited London he was touting his regime's latest 'peace plan'. Endorsed by a combined Likud and Labour majority in the Knesset, the plan represents a unified Zionist response to mounting demands for an international conference on the Palestinian question. Shamir's plan has nothing to do with 'peace'. He himself stated:

'The initiative does not rule out suppression of the *intifada* [uprising]. We extend one hand in peace, and have the other hand free to strike at the rioters.' He stressed that Zionism was not going to make any concessions whatsoever even to the most minimum of Palestinian demands: 'A Palestinian state will not arise and will not be. We will not give the Arabs a single centimetre. We will not give them anything. That's it.'

Shamir's plan is no more than a ploy to minimise pressure on Zionism. Whilst imperialist



diplomatic and political circles analyse and discuss its pros and cons, Zionism hopes to win further breathing space for another desperate effort to smash the uprising.

Now in its eighteenth month, and as steadfast as ever, the uprising is leading to growing Zionist political isolation. Since November 1988 over 70 states have recognised the PLO's (Palestine Liberation Organisation) declaration of independence. The USA has been forced to meet the PLO. The EC countries, particularly France, Spain and Greece have hosted Yassir Arafat, the PLO Chairman. Even

British Foreign Office Minister saw it as necessary to meet Arafat in Tunisia. Expressing Zionism's anxiety, Shamir blurted out: 'We are currently witness to the entire western world as they worship the flag of the people who hate Israel.'

In the past three months the Israeli regime has significantly stepped up its repression. A Swedish report, 'Save the Children' published in May notes: '... the most striking conclusion... is that soldiers in their use of gunfire have deliberately aimed at children and young people... the horrifying effects of the army's methods and gunfire have become clear... yet they still continue... one is bound to conclude that the killings are deliberate.'

Another report from the Near Eastern Cultural and Educational Foundation in Canada states that: 'Palestinian children have been shot to death, maimed, paralysed and seriously wounded by live ammunition. Most have been shot in the head, chest, stomach or back, which indicates deliberate targeting.'

Supplementing this official terror has been the increasing use of Zionist death squads hun-

ting and killing purported leaders of the uprising. Their information is being supplied by the Zionists' revived network of collaborators and stooges in the occupied territories. These tactics have failed to blunt the uprising which has responded with an intensified campaign against collaborators. Since the uprising over 60 have been executed, nearly half of them in the past three months.

The British government is seriously concerned that unbridled Israeli terror will discredit forces calling for a compromise with Zionism and imperialist and strengthen the hand of the revolutionaries. After one particularly vicious Zionist attack on Gaza demonstrators on 6 May, the British Home Office issued a statement saying: 'The human cost of the tactics pursued by the Israeli occupying forces is intolerable.' However, nobody should be fooled by this sudden outbreak of 'criticism'. Shamir was not treated as Daniel Ortega was. He was welcomed and given advice on the best method of guaranteeing the survival of Zionism and Israel.

VMDC activist gaoled

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

Sonia Hughes, a black comrade and leading member of the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign was imprisoned for 28 days on 11 May. In March, Sonia was found guilty and given a 28 day jail sentence on a charge of police assault. Five other VMDC members were also convicted for other offences. At the appeal in May the five white activists were acquitted and awarded costs. In Sonia's case the judge refused to lift the prison sentence even though he admitted to being 'aware of the hardship this may cause'.

A spokesperson for the VMDC correctly explained that 'they have imprisoned Sonia for the same reason that they deported Viraj Mendis. They want to crush any black person who stands up against the immigration laws and racism in Britain.'

Indeed ever since Sonia became involved in the VMDC she has been a target for police harassment. On 21 March this year she was acquitted on another two charges of police assault arising from her arrest in October 1988 while waiting for a bus with another VMDC comrade Adrian. She has been arrested for selling *FRFI* and for supporting the RCG pickets of the Manchester South African Airways offices. In all such cases the charges were thrown out.

The Revolutionary Communist Group and *FRFI* extend their solidarity and greetings to Comrade Sonia who has been imprisoned for making a principled stand against racism in support of our comrade Viraj Mendis.

If you want to send messages of support write to Sonia Hughes, c/o VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15.

Home Office racism exposed

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

An Immigration Appeal Tribunal (IAT) has found the British Home Office guilty of illegally returning five Tamils to torture in Sri Lanka. The Home Office and the British courts, right up to the House of Lords, rejected the Tamils' appeals for political asylum. Douglas Hurd, backed by the courts, claimed that they would face no persecution. So after lengthy legal battles lasting for more than a year the five were deported in February 1988.

David Burgess, representing the five, nevertheless took their case to the IAT and in April presented conclusive evidence that since their return to Sri Lanka, one had been detained for three months and tortured, one had been brutally beaten by the police and one was in hiding

and members of his family had been tortured.

Douglas Hurd and the Home Office are refusing to accept the IAT judgement and have lodged an appeal in the High Court. The Home Office missed the deadline for lodging its appeal but has nevertheless been given the right to appeal by the High Court which at the same time suspended the rights of the five Tamils to return to Britain! The judge who granted the Home Office leave to appeal, Justice McCowan, was the same one who refused the five Tamils the right to judicial review.

The Home Office and judiciary are collaborating to reverse a rare example of justice in an immigration tribunal. No wonder it calls into question their deportation of dozens of Tamils and Sri Lankan oppositionists, including the deportation of our comrade Viraj Mendis.

America—hands off Panama

KEN HUGHES

There can be no 'free and fair' elections in Panama as long as the USA continues its interventionist policy in the entire region. Thus, any analysis of the 7 May Presidential election which was subsequently annulled, must examine the effects of such a policy in the region, the ruling regime and opposition, and the class composition in Panama.

The US wishes to scrap the Torrijos/Carter 1977 treaties under which administrative control of the Canal is to be taken over by Panama this year, and absolute control in 1999 when all US soldiers must be removed from Panama. General Manuel Noriega, head of the Panamanian Defence Forces (PDF) has several times stated that he will not allow the US to revoke the treaty, or any part of it. That has been the sole purpose behind the Reagan, and now Bush administration efforts since 1986 to remove Noriega and install a puppet who is more likely to do its bidding.

Economically, the Canal is of great importance to US trade avoiding the long circumnavigation of the entire Continent. The US prefers administrative control of the Canal to be in the hands of its transnational companies, with some perks going to some of its stooges in Panama. Panama is a strategic location for its bases from which to conduct its interventionist policy against Cuba, Nicaragua, El Salvador and other Latin American and Caribbean countries.

Up to 1984, Noriega enjoyed the favour of the US and was allowed to install Nicolas Barletta as President in the rigged elections of 6 May 1984. One year later, the more 'independently minded' Barletta was removed in favour of Eric Del

Valle. As there was no obvious alternative leader in the PDF ranks, or a popular choice of the people, the US then set about trying to remove General Noriega by indicting him on drugs trafficking charges in 1986.

In 1987, the Reagan administration imposed a series of crippling economic sanctions including freezing Panama's foreign assets, cutting military and economic aid, and eventually withholding revenues from the canal. General Noriega responded by closing the banks so that the ruling and middle class rich could not withdraw their monies which would have absolutely crippled the economy (see *FRFI* 77).

US policy succeeded in reducing Panamanian growth by a fifth and hurting the poorest most. These acts led to dissatisfaction amongst the PDF and the Guardia Nacional whose pay was also affected. For a short time, the Civic Crusade, comprised of middle class Christian Democrats and tied to the US,

was able to mobilise the opposition alliance to take to the streets. However, they could neither make unity with the working class nor could they sustain their demonstrations for long enough to really threaten Noriega.

When the peasants and working class came out on strike and fought pitched battles with the army and Guardia Nacional, they were able to force some concessions which included partial payments of pensions which until then had been withheld, and the banks were opened for slightly longer each day. 'Dignity Battalions (low waged PDF troops who toured the streets calling for nationalism from the people against the 'Yankee imperialists') and repressive measures by the para-military, were used to quell the protests.

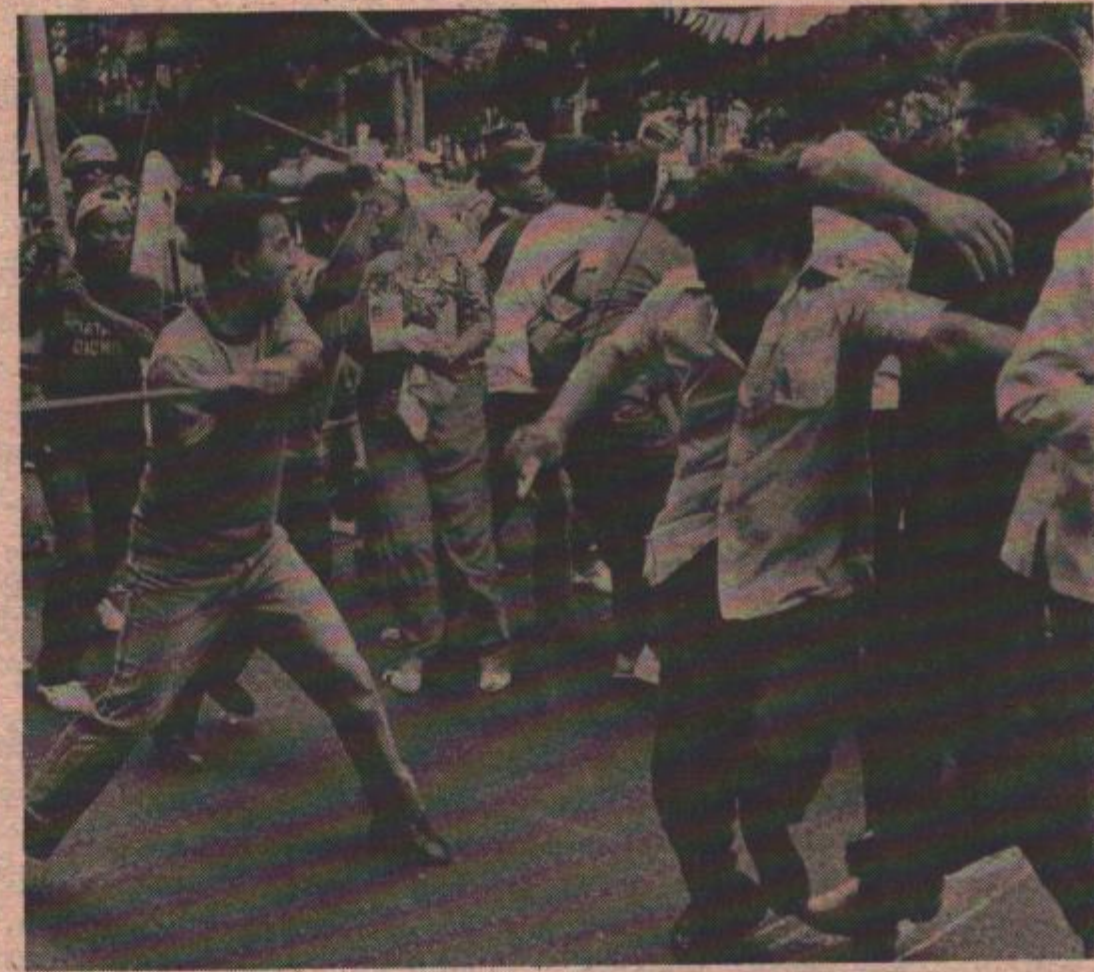
The US saw the elections as another chance to make military and psychological threats. From as early as April, US soldiers were seen on the borders with Costa Rica. Three weeks before

the elections, they attempted to send a top communications advisor, Allan Weinstein, to Panama, but the government refused him entry. Weinstein works for the reactionary Heritage Foundation. He had with him a team of US experts from the Philippines election campaign.

The fact that General Noriega was able to steal the elections from under the noses of the international observers and the Panamanian opposition alliance which could only muster 10,000 supporters to demonstrate on 8 May, means that the US options are now even fewer. Military intervention is being threatened with the arrival of more US troops from the 82nd Airborne regiment which was involved in the invasion of Grenada, and a Light Infantry division. The US is more likely to be able to exploit the divisions caused by these latest fraudulent elections which were annulled after other Latin American countries expressed deep concern at the events.

Bush is attempting to promote division in the Panamanian Defence Force which will then, it is hoped, eject Noriega. At the same time he is drawing as much Latin American government support as he can for this scheme. Opposition is being led by Nicaragua and Cuba.

It is the task of progressives everywhere to condemn the US for its intervention, its millions of dollars pumped into destabilising the country (US funding of the opposition election campaign ran at about £10 per vote cast) and its attempts to revoke the 1977 Torrijos/Carter Panama Canal treaties. We must support the national will of the people of Panama to govern their country in its entirety and to be rid of the US military and economic stranglehold.



Clashes between pro- and anti-Noriega forces

Turkey—May day killings

VIRMAN MAN

Months of rallies and industrial action reached a climax on 1 May when hundreds of thousands defied a government ban on May Day demonstrations, outlawed after the 1980 military coup which brought fascist General Evren to power. In Istanbul police fired into the crowds, leaving at least four dead and 90 injured. More than a thousand arrests were made; official estimates of over 18,000 police and commandos deployed illustrate the extent to which the Turkish government was prepared to crush the mounting protests.

The unpopularity of Turgut Özal's ruling Motherland Party, elected in 1983 only as a protest against the military, was demonstrated in the March local elections: only 20% of the votes were polled, and Özal lost control of all the major cities. With wage levels far below the rate of inflation, currently running at about 80%, economic hardship

is severe. However, the May Day rallies were also a political protest — slogans were chanted in both Turkish and Kurdish, which is illegal. Official refusal to give recognition to the existence of the Kurds, the banning of communist and socialist organisations, together with imprisonment and torture of political opponents, have prompted more and more popular defiance. Mass trials of left-wingers, which have continued for over eight years, are still pending and many face capital punishment.

This is the background in which Turkey is applying for full membership to the European Community. Evren, in his visit to London last year, received Margaret Thatcher's personal blessing. Not only that, he got a few tips on how to smarten up Turkey's image — Saatchi and Saatchi are being paid a handsome sum to do just that. The 500 Kurds who came to Britain in May seeking political asylum will find little rest from institutionalised racism in Thatcher's Britain.

Rally for Connolly in Edinburgh

KIM DALY/GARY CLAPTON

On Saturday 13 May 1500 supporters of the Irish freedom struggle marched to commemorate Edinburgh-born James Connolly's execution on 12 May 1916 for his part in the Easter Rising. The march, organised by the James Connolly Commemoration Committee, was led by the Edinburgh based Rising Phoenix Republican Flute Band and included twelve other flute bands who had travelled from Glasgow.

There has been no such militant display of Irish Republicanism for decades. Last year a similar march was banned by Labour-controlled Lothian Regional Council who bowed down to loyalist intimidation and a vicious smear campaign run by the *Scottish Daily Record*. Subsequently all Republican and Loyalist marches were banned in the Edinburgh area. However, the Council accepted an application last month from the loyalist Apprentice Boys of Derry to march on 20 May. The James Connolly Commemoration Committee applied to march on 13 May and pressured the council into granting the application. This was the first Republican march to go through the city-centre. The threatened counter-demonstration by Loyalists was small and ineffective. 150 Loyalists yelled abuse and hurled missiles. 700 police were present who harassed and pushed marchers along the route. The Commemoration ended in a rally at the Meadows. The Commemoration Committee intends to hold an annual demonstration following this successful defence of free speech on Ireland. ■

26 Counties continue extradition

MAXINE WILLIAMS

On 13 April, the Twenty Six Counties government again displayed its thorough subservience to British imperialism by extraditing Paul Kane. He is now on remand in Crumlin Road Gaol in Belfast facing charges arising from his escape from Long Kesh in 1983. 400 people gathered on the border overnight to protest against his being handed over

to the RUC. Six hundred gardai as well as Southern troops, British soldiers and RUC men took part in the operation to hand him over.

Paul Kane's extradition is doubly shameful because he was originally imprisoned for eighteen years on the evidence of supergrass Christopher Black, whose testimony was thoroughly discredited. He spent two years on remand facing trial on the word of Black and had served four years in the H-Blocks

before his escape. He has now spent an additional one and a half years in Portlaoise facing ex-tradition. Paul Kane was assaulted by the RUC after being delivered into their hands.

Ever since extraditions began there has been increasing public outrage in the Twenty Six Counties. This has been fuelled both by the rejection of the Birmingham 6 Appeal and the more recent conviction and heavy sentences of the Winchester Three. Father Patrick Ryan, whom the British tried to ex-

tradite from Belgium, announced that he would stand in the European Parliament elections in protest against extraditions.

Kane's extradition also led to several resignations from Fianna Fail. The Irish people know that there can be no fair trial in a British court but clearly the Fianna Fail government does not care. Kane had made a direct appeal to Justice Minister Gerry Collins and Attorney General, John Murray. They refused the appeal.

Extradition proceedings are

now well advanced against another H-Block escapee, Dermot Finucane (brother of lawyer Pat Finucane who was murdered by loyalists). Dublin High Court has rejected Finucane's appeal against extradition. He could share Paul Kane's fate before the end of the year. Dubliner Dessie Ellis, due to be released from Portlaoise prison last week after serving five years, was immediately served with extradition warrants. The British want him returned to face conspiracy charges in England. ■

Sinn Fein support stays solid British terrorism

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Despite the efforts of the British government, Sinn Fein's vote in the Six County local elections on 18 May remained solid. Although they have lost some seats their vote was just 0.6 per cent down and remains just over 11 per cent of the votes cast. In Belfast Sinn Fein won an extra seat and an increase of 3 per cent of votes. Overall Sinn Fein seemed set, as we went to press, to win 42 seats.

These results will come as a disappointment to Mrs Thatcher's government which has portrayed Sinn Fein as a waning force and promoted the 'moderate' (ie bourgeois) SDLP as an alternative. The propaganda barrage against the IRA has been accompanied by large scale repression aimed particularly at the heart of working class support for Republicanism. A massive programme of raids has been taking place along with daily harassment of people on the streets. Sinn Fein workers and premises have been singled out for attack. But in Belfast Sinn Fein got 13,200 votes compared to 8,500 for the SDLP. The SDLP made gains of 20 seats but largely in rural areas. The working



class nationalists remain solidly pro-Republican.

This vote comes not only despite repression but also despite the ban on media broadcasts of Sinn Fein. The ban was temporarily relaxed during the election as, legally, it had to be. However, this hardly compensates for months of a total ban which will, following the elections, be back in place.

The significant change in the loyalist vote came with a huge loss of votes by Ian Paisley's DUP. Their seats fell from 109 to 33. It appears that while some of Paisley's supporters switched

votes to the Ulster Unionist Party, others abstained. The hardliners who abstained possibly think that Paisley's challenge to the Anglo-Irish Agreement has not been maintained with the level of sectarian ferocity that they would want. On the ground, in past months, a high level of loyalist sectarian murders and attacks on nationalists has been taking place.

The nationalist working class has delivered its latest answer to British rule: repression, censorship and loyalist assault will not drive them away from the fight to free Ireland. ■

In the run up to the local government elections British harassment and raiding was stepped up.

● On 7 April RUC men in riot gear fired plastic bullets at young football supporters. 19 year old Paul McLaughlin was hit on the temple and had to have 31 stitches.

● On 10 April a young couple who have suffered continuous harassment for two months were again raided. Their house was surrounded by British troops and a dozen RUC with shields and batons. The RUC ran amok in the house terrifying the children. Holes were punched in the walls and household goods damaged. This is the third raid on their home since February.

● In early May there was extensive raiding in Ballymurphy. One couple's home was wrecked by a dozen soldiers and RUC. The couple were held all day in the house and then taken to Castlereagh. When they arrived home the next day they found the hall and kitchen floors had been dug up, floorboards ripped out, a bedroom wall pulled down, a water heater taken out and furniture and household goods damaged.

The British have particularly



Paul McLaughlin

targetted Sinn Fein election workers. There have been death threats, attacks on Sinn Fein centres and repeated stop and search operations. One Belfast Sinn Fein candidate was stopped and held by British soldiers on four consecutive days. In one search her car was taken apart and its dismantled engine was left lying on the road.

Sinn Fein's advice centre in West Belfast was surrounded by soldiers and RUC on 25 April and security grilles taken down. Such incidents have been occurring daily as the British attempt to disrupt Sinn Fein's electoral work and terrorise the nationalist community into subservience. ■

Winston Silcott framed for life ● LSE takes principled stand

Winston Silcott is serving 30 years for the murder of PC Blakelock during a police raid on Broadwater Farm in October 1985. Winston, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghupathi were convicted and sentenced in a trial which has been condemned by Amnesty International and other progressive organisations. There was no forensic evidence, no photographs, no corroborating statements in the evidence against the three. Police evidence admitted that juveniles and adults from Broadwater Farm were arrested in the days that followed the raid and held in custody with no access to solicitors or relatives for days on end.

In an attempt to focus attention on the case of the Broadwater Farm Three, students at the London School of Economics elected Winston Silcott as the honorary president of their student union. Their action was followed by students at the School of Oriental and African Studies who elected Winston as an associate member of their student union. Students at the London

College of Printing also elected Winston, Mark and Engin as honorary life members of their union. Students at the Polytechnic of Central London defended the right of the students at LSE to elect Winston to the post of honorary president. These achievements were made by the students despite vicious hostility from the press, right-wing students, Tory MPs, the Labour Party and their own official union, the National Union of Students.

Right wing students and Tory MPs seized the opportunity to call for an end to the closed shop of the NUS and an end to funding for students' political activities. The official NUS leadership bleated that the LSE students had provoked this backlash and disassociated themselves from the election. No such reaction was provoked when it was reported that students in support of Winston Silcott were receiving death threats and a rally to be held at the LSE on Wednesday 10 May had to be cancelled as a result of violent threats.

The students who stuck to their principles in pursuit of



justice for Winston Silcott have shown that a fighting spirit exists within the student unions despite the heavy hand of the official NUS leadership. Their actions are welcomed and supported by all socialists. Below we print an account of the election from an LSE student.

At their AGM, students at the LSE elected Winston Silcott as honorary president of their union. Previous honorary presidents have included The Sharpeville Six, The Guildford Four and Moses Mayekiso.

Condemnation of the decision came not only from fascist organisations - both the NF and the League of St George issued death threats to Amanda Hart, the union's General Secretary - and the predictably racist media, but also Jack Straw, Labour's Education spokesman, joined Kenneth Baker and the 'outraged' John Carlisle in condemning the decision as 'utterly repugnant'.

Since the trial of the Broadwater Three, Amnesty International, the World Council of Churches and Lord Gifford QC, who chaired the inquiry into the case, have denounced the trial and the tactics used by the Police as unjust. Margaret Burnham, a prominent US Judge who observed the trial said: 'Racial prejudice and fear whipped up by the police blinded the jury to justice'. The students' decision was made in the hope

of highlighting this injustice and as Amanda Hart said, was 'a timely vote against institutional racism'.

In the face of intense hostility and distortion of the facts by the press, a second students union meeting was held, attended by 900 students. Tory students and their tabloid colleagues spoke confidently of 'overturning the decision'. The meeting heard speaker after speaker voicing support for justice and for the nomination of Silcott. The Afro-Caribbean Society and several black students spoke of the need to highlight the plight of victims of racist British justice. The students held firm despite Tory attempts to slur Silcott and Phil Davies, the union's Labour treasurer, showing to everyone that he has a lucrative career ahead of him in the Labour Party, deserting both students and Silcott. Davies' speech was met with cries of 'Shame' and a message from the Police Federation read by Tory students was drowned out.

The vote was taken and Silcott remained honorary president. Journalists and reporters

waiting outside, expecting to hear that the nomination had been overturned, were greeted by jubilant students chanting 'Tories out! Racists out!'

Since the decision, an enormous amount of pressure has been placed upon the union, including threats from the LSE's Board of Governors of withdrawing cash. Instead of acknowledging injustice, the government used racist reaction to the nomination as a stick to beat student unionism. This amongst other factors has prompted Silcott to resign the post, saying he had no wish for students 'to be scapegoated as I have been'. He thanked students 'from the bottom of my heart for their courage' and for 'speaking the truth and seeking justice'.

In a real sense the case has been reopened, and has shown publicly how frightened the government are that the people dare to speak the truth. There is every sign that what Andy Hall, Silcott's lawyer, described last year as a 'very long and lonely campaign' is growing strong. Rob Brown, former Chair LSE Liberals ■

Victory for Mayekiso

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

'Today is a great day for us and for the whole democratic movement and the whole working class. It was not our trial but a trial of the struggle in our country.'

The Alexandra 5 walked out of the Rand Supreme Court in South Africa on Monday 24 April to jubilant scenes of welcome. Hundreds of supporters packed the court room, and overflowed to a nearby church. Moses Mayekiso, Paul Tshabalala, Richard Mdakane, Obed Bapela and Mzwanele Mayekiso had been found not guilty of all charges of treason, sedition and subversion. The 18-month trial of Mayekiso and his comrades had ended in victory. It was a victory for the right to organise, for international solidarity, and a victory over the sectarianism which has been directed against Mayekiso ever since his detention three years ago.

Moses Mayekiso is the General Secretary of the metalworkers' union NUMSA. In 1985/86 he worked with comrades to build grassroots structures based in the impoverished working class community of Alexandra township. Mayekiso chaired the Alexandra Action Committee which guided the street and yard committees. Uniting the trade union and community struggles against the apartheid system was central to the organisation of the Action Committee and springs from Mayekiso's commitment to socialism. His significance as a working class socialist leader who played a critical role in creating the union federation COSATU has not been lost on the racist regime. He was removed from actively organising the mass struggle for over three years. The return of the Alex 5 will be a



boost to the trade unions and township organisations alike.

After the victory Paul Tshabalala said, 'The struggle is continuing and we are going to start where we left off before our detention and trial'. Richard Mdakane warned, 'This is only the end of part one - we are still not safe from hit squads'. Mayekiso said, 'I thank all the comrades here and all the international groups which made the victory possible. With their support, we have won a little bit of freedom... we will carry on the fight against apartheid and capitalism towards socialism and democracy. There can never be justice in apartheid, capitalist South Africa... only a socialist state will benefit and free everyone.'

On returning to Alexandra township Mayekiso told his neighbours, 'I want to hear that street, yard and block committees are meeting tomorrow. We are back and we will start where we stopped'.

● Throughout the trial the RCG fought for solidarity with the Alex 5. We proposed solidarity work to City of London Anti-Apartheid Group which resulted in a 1000-strong demonstration on 10 October 1987 and subsequent monthly rallies on

the Non-Stop Picket.

From the time of the first calls for solidarity and the formation of Friends of Moses Mayekiso by the SWP, the exiled South African trade union organisation SACTU, allied to the ANC, and the British AAM attempted to undermine support for the Alex 5 and Mayekiso in particular on the grounds that this was a 'personality cult'. The real reason was, however, political. Mayekiso had visited Europe and refused to abide by the usual strictures on political contacts and the organisation of the AAC broke the bounds of traditional township organisation. Despite a deliberately tepid response from the TUC, solidarity action was able to win wide support for the Alex 5 in the trade union movement and the AAM failed to hold back the campaign.

Friends of Mayekiso held a victory rally on the Non-Stop Picket on the day of the verdict, marred only by the refusal of Terry Bell, SWP organiser of the campaign, to take a speaker from City AA, and the rush to a rally at LSE an hour before the picket was due to end to hear Norman Willis drunkenly announce that he could not pronounce the names of the Alex 5. He will probably never learn. ■

SA arms for loyalists

CAT WIENER

On 21 April three Ulster loyalists were arrested in a Paris hotel room in the act of selling parts of a Blowpipe surface-to-air missile to South African intelligence. A South African diplomat was also arrested but was later freed. The ensuing 'diplomatic confrontation' between Britain and South Africa and the expulsion of three South African diplomats from Britain was little more than a formality: the real embarrassment for both parties was that they had broken the eleventh commandment - Thou shalt not be found out.

The British government has known about the arms trade between South Africa and loyalist paramilitaries since at least January of last year, when the RUC discovered part of a large consignment of South African arms. £150,000, raised through a bank robbery and safely lodged in a Swiss bank, is thought to have changed hands in that deal, which involved the Ulster Resis-

tance, UVF and UDA. The remainder of the consignment was used in terror attacks such as that at the Milltown funeral last year and, recently, the bombing of Sinn Fein offices.

What the South Africans were after this time, however, were blueprints of missiles produced by the Shorts missile factory in Belfast. A number of missiles, including the advanced Javelin aiming unit, have been stolen from Shorts in recent months. Shorts, soon to be privatised and hoping for a lucrative offer from a Canadian company, has been anxious to play down the connection. However, shortly after the arrests, two workers who had been recruited to work for Armscor in South Africa, were given five minutes notice to quit - did they know too much?

The Blowpipe display missile actually seized in the Paris hotel had been stolen in April of this year from a Territorial Army centre in Newtownards, Co Down. It is, of course, sheer coincidence that one of the three loyalists arrested, Samuel Quinn, should have been the NCO of the missile unit of the

very same TA centre. Or perhaps not, when one considers that the leader of the expedition was Noel Little of the supposedly defunct Ulster Resistance, and as Bernard Ingham, Mrs Thatcher's Press Secretary, said when the Ulster Resistance was founded, 'What is another army, between friends?'

What indeed but a useful route for ensuring that Thatcher's cronies get all the help they need, in spite of an inconvenient arms embargo? Senior politicians are thought to have been involved in this illicit trade. The British government is more than happy to turn a blind eye to these goings on as long as it is the armies of imperialism which are being equipped and armed: when Libya's supply of arms to the IRA was discovered, it provided the British government with an excuse to sever all links with Libya. In this case, a few diplomatic heads may roll in London and Paris to appease public opinion following Mrs Thatcher's Southern Africa tour, but behind the facade the trade will continue unhindered. ■

Namibia: UN forced to act

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

The campaign for the independence elections in Namibia is due to officially open on 1 July. 1,800 SWAPO freedom fighters have withdrawn north of the 16th parallel in Angola. SWAPO has lost about 90 guerrillas since they were first attacked by the South Africans' killer squad Koevoet on 1 April. Pretoria's propaganda figure of 316 SWAPO killed includes hundreds of civilians and SWAPO combatants killed before 1 April. Relatives of missing Koevoet members have also been searching the mass graves of black Namibians. The racists had been throwing Koevoet corpses in to boost their kill ratios.

Close collaboration between the South African military and Thatcher's 'free press' in the days following the 1 April massacres was highlighted by Brian Woods of the Namibia Support Committee, speaking to the Namibia Emergency Campaign conference in London on 13 May. British journalists staying in the plush Kalahari Sands hotel in Namibia's capital Windhoek were flown by the South African army to the Oshakati camp in the war zone, where they were briefed by South African military intelligence. Their front page reports condemning SWAPO were written on the basis of this information alone. Ireland, the Malvinas, Gibraltar - these are the techniques of counter-propaganda well honed by British imperialism.

Evidence collected by the Namibian Council of Churches and journalist eye-witness reports of South African units executing captured SWAPO mili-

tants have forced the UN police team to open investigations into 50 atrocities carried out from the Oshakati camp alone. South African troops are now meant to be confined to base, in reality they roam the country.

The presence of SWAPO freedom fighters never was the obstacle to the independence plan. Electioneering will open amidst constant violence and sabotage from the South Africans. Following threats from 'security personnel', two leading press photographers have been shot at. A thunderflash was thrown at a press conference in Windhoek. Apartheid lynch law rules: 25 year old SWAPO member Leonard Sheehana has received five death sentences and ten years in prison for planting a bomb in South Africa occupied Walvis Bay.

The National Union of Namibian Workers held massive May Day resistance celebrations this year. At Odingwe, a township near Oshakati, 20,000 people rallied in defence of SWAPO. Refugees are timetabled to return from 22 May onwards, after the repeal of all racial discriminatory laws. But Pienaar, the South African colonial governor, has refused to repeal the law under which the country is divided into tribally based administrations. The South Africans and the UN are wrangling over the election arrangements.

Jason Angula, SWAPO's Secretary for Labour, was released from 15 months detention last December. He told the London NEC conference he intends to return directly to his homeland to welcome the incoming refugees. He exemplifies the courage of the Namibian people and their determination to see through Resolution 435. ■

Three years of the Non-Stop Picket

RICHARD ROQUES

The third anniversary of the Non-Stop Picket on 22 April was a defiant celebration on the eve of the tenth anniversary of Thatcher's onslaught on the progressive movement in Britain and all over the world. The flags of the ANC and the PLO fly in Trafalgar Square all day and all night as a symbol of resistance and international solidarity. Despite fascist attacks, hundreds of arrests and the sectarianism of the loyal British opposition, we are still here.

It is interesting to note that not one British left political organisation apart from the RCG was represented on the platform and yet speakers were queuing up to speak throughout the four hour rally. Speakers included Democrats Against Apartheid, All African Peoples' Revolutionary Party, VMDC, Carlos Calderon, Justice for Kitson, the Firemen's Union, P&O strikers, PLO, Cape-town 16 Defence Campaign, ACT-UP, OLGA, Greenwich & Bexley AA Group, Broadwater Farm Defence Committee, Blair

Peach 10th Anniversary Committee and SWANU. They all paid tribute to the Non-Stop Picket. Celia Stubbs, the widow of Blair Peach said that the picket was a landmark in the anti-racist struggle.

Carol Brickley, convenor of City Group, speaking for the RCG, pinpointed Thatcher's grand design for the Southern African region:

'When you look around City Group which one of us hasn't been in court? What is Thatcher's democracy? Turning people out of their council houses to sell them to the rich? Thatcher argues that capitalism is colour blind and that it can continue without apartheid. She wants to continue the flow of super-profits from the exploitation of the black majority. We don't accept Thatcher's version of democracy - it stinks. The choice in South Africa is between socialism and capitalism. Black people in South Africa don't want British notions of segregation under capitalism, they want revolution and socialism.' ■

Columbia's death squads
There are roughly 130 ultra-right groups operating in Columbia. There are some 32 training centres for mercenaries with a turnover of 50 every two months. The instructors are Israeli and British. By the end of 1988, the death squads had killed 4000 people.

Human Rights in the USA
35.9 million crimes against people and property, particularly assault and battery, robbery and car theft, were committed in the USA in 1988. Media sources estimate the figure to be much higher, for the authorities say that only an average of 36 per cent of victims go to the police.

Blake escape
22 years on, the British ruling class is more irked than ever that double agent, George Blake, was able to escape from Wormwood Scrubs. Michael Randle and Pat Pottle, who hid Blake and smuggled him out of Britain, now face possible criminal charges. They say that, in principle, they would be prepared to do the same again. We need more Randles and Pottles.

Bomb charges dropped.
Charges against IRA prisoners Noel Gibson and Natalino Vella of conspiracy to cause explosions in Wakefield goal were dismissed at Durham Crown Court on 17 May. A scientific officer for the Home Office told the court that the device found in a book in the prison library was not explosive or likely to endanger life although it might have smouldered or caused a fire. There appears to have been no reason for bringing the prosecution other than harassment.

Inflating tempers
Inflation at 8% is now the highest for seven years. A year ago it stood at 3.3%. Mrs Thatcher immediately blamed Lawson for linking the exchange rate of the pound to the West German mark. Alongside deep divisions about Europe, the news has refuelled rumours which have been circulating in the Cabinet that Lawson will be replaced by Thatcher's favourite prodigal son, Parkinson, very shortly. If the trade figures, due out in the next few days, are bad news, pressure will grow for a further rise in interest rates. Bad news for house owners with mortgages - the backbone of Thatcher's electoral support.

President has TB
President Mthopeng of the PAC of Azania is now in London receiving medical treatment. Doctors have discovered that he also has long-standing TB which was not treated while he was in jail. President Mthopeng was released from prison late last year after serving 13 years of a 30 year sentence for 'anticipating and organising' the Soweto Uprisings in 1976.

REMEMBER SOWETO SURROUND THE EMBASSY

Rally on the Non-Stop Picket outside the South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square.

6pm Friday 16 June
Bring flowers and musical instruments! Friends and banners. Last year 1000 people surrounded the Embassy led by a jazz band.
ISOLATE APARTHEID

MASS RALLY FOR PRESIDENT ORTEGA

On 8 May over 2,000 people packed into Central Hall to give a jubilant welcome to President Daniel Ortega. Hundreds more were turned away because the meeting was full to capacity. It was a remarkable political event. Remarkable because people had something to celebrate in today's dreary Thatcherite landscape - the survival of Nicaragua's revolution against overwhelming odds. Also exceptional because of the enormous enthusiasm and internationalist solidarity shown by the audience. Of course some did not join the celebration. The bourgeois *Guardian* poked fun at the audience and *The Independent* accused 85-year-old Graham Greene, who had flown in especially to be there, of doing so only to assuage his boredom. Also noticeably absent were the bulk of British left groups like Socialist Worker, who prefer to attack the Nicaraguan revolution for 'defects' apparent only to themselves rather than participate in celebrating its achievements.

But enough of that miserable crew. The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign is to be congratulated for organising this historic event. All those who attended (*FRF* made an all-London mobilisation) felt privileged to hear Daniel Ortega and also his staunch supporter, looking remarkably unboored, Graham Greene. Greene set the tone when he pointedly called Nicaragua a 'democratic republic' and replied to slanders against it by pointing out that in Britain there were both conscription and censorship when 'we were fighting for our lives' during the Second World War. He ended by saying 'Let's look at the darkness in our own country and not an imaginary darkness in your own republic'.

When Daniel Ortega began to speak, the thunderous ovation - and there were many that night - lasted for several minutes. He said that throughout his tour he had seen the extent of support for the revolution:

'No matter the lies, the disinformation, the outright slanders, people know and identify themselves with a just cause... That's why revolutions take place, because there is solidarity... The Nicaraguan people have an undeniable right to peace, to material support... I come here not asking favours of anyone.'

On imperialism: 'If we were to sum up all the wealth that market orientated countries have extracted from Africa, Asia, Latin America, all our foreign debts would be paid and they would still owe us plenty more.'

On US policy: 'The USA has given itself the right to classify governments as "democratic" and "non-democratic"... Now they say that Latin America is blossoming



with democracies and there are only two dictatorships - Cuba and Nicaragua... It just so happens that in this "dictatorship" of Nicaragua, Archbishops are not murdered as Archbishop Romero was in El Salvador. You know what kind of democracy they want? Mass murder... Pinochet-style democracy for Nicaragua... That was the kind of democracy known in Nicaragua between 1821 and 1979 under the rule of the US... Suddenly after the revolution they discover there is no democracy in Nicaragua...

'They are concerned about the example of the Nicaraguan revolution... The US is fully aware that we are no security threat to the mighty USA. How many times have we invaded the US, what US territory have we occupied, what US harbours have we mined? The example of the Nicaraguan revolution thunders forth one fact - a people determined to be free will be free.'

On the war: 'The price we have paid is high - 60,000 casualties. In the context of 3.5 million people, 60,000 is genocide... We want peace but we are ready to stand up to another eight years of war if that is the course imposed on us... They think Nicaragua would be a pushover. They made that mistake against the Vietnamese.'

On the economy: 'We have to take stringent economic measures. But they are different from those taken elsewhere - they are taken to save the revolution and not to save the rich.'

On democracy: 'In Nicaragua there are no prohibitions on certain types of broadcasts as exist in certain countries.'

On solidarity: 'We know you have been waging the battle alongside us. And therefore our victory is yours too... This sort of sentiment knows no borders or languages. We stand in solidarity with the people of South Africa, with the Palestinians, with the people of the third world and the developed countries fighting against injustices.'

10th anniversary Nicaraguan revolution

Two significant anniversaries came together this month. One gives cause for celebration - the tenth anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution. The other, Mrs Thatcher's tenth year, gives cause for the opposite. High amongst Mrs Thatcher's crimes has been her resolute backing for the US government's efforts to destroy the Nicaraguan revolution. It can have come as no surprise to Nicaraguan President, Daniel Ortega, to hear Thatcher's recent verdict on his country: 'We hope that Nicaragua will succeed (in extending genuine democracy) but we are not encouraged by the performance so far'.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

Thatcher said this after meeting Daniel Ortega during his European tour. Nicaragua is suffering the economic and social effects of ten years of war and destabilisation. This tiny country of 3.5 million people has withstood an economic boycott and US-trained and financed contra war. Its economy is in serious difficulties and both military and social programmes have had to be cut back. It urgently needs international aid and Ortega's tour was designed to lobby for this assistance, in particular to get European countries to attend a conference in Sweden next month on aid to Nicaragua. Thatcher's answer was to slam the door in his face. Britain will not be attending the conference.

The war has had devastating effects. There have been 60,000 casualties. Total economic damage is estimated at \$12.2 bn. The US, whilst lavishing money on the contras, has imposed a full trade embargo on Nicaragua (estimated loss to Nicaragua \$315.5m) and with British assistance has consistently vetoed aid to Nicaragua from the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank. Losses in international funding are estimated at \$422.9m. Between 1979 and 1983 Nicaragua paid over \$563m



Mass support for Sandinistas on 9th anniversary of revolution

in interest on debts accumulated under the corrupt Somoza regime but received only \$12m in new loans.

This economic pressure is designed to break the will of a people already fighting for their lives. The FSLN has achieved enormous strides forward in health, education, literacy and land reform. But it has all cost money. From 1979 to 1983 government spending on basic needs rose by over 700% and on infrastructure by over 300%. It is these progressive economic and social programmes that are now at risk.

NICARAGUA'S CRIME

The crime committed by Nicaragua is to have broken from US domination and installed a genuinely popular democratic government. Immediately came the cry from the USA that Nicaragua was now undemocratic and a threat to the national security of the USA. Whilst the USA and Britain find Pinochet's Chile and Duarte's El Salvador, with their death squads and torture camps, thoroughly democratic, Nicaragua fails the test. El Salvador, where 1,767 civilians were killed by the army or death squads in 1986 has received increased British aid. For US and British imperialism everything is turned upside down and words such as democracy and human rights mean their opposite.

Whilst the US is the major aggressor, it has had no more staunch ally than Britain. Thatcher's record includes:

- Britain was the only European country not to send official observers to the Nicaraguan elections in 1984 in

which seven parties stood (Britain did send observers to the elections in El Salvador where no centre or left candidate could stand for fear of being assassinated and found them 'democratic').

- In 1986 the World Court found the US guilty of breaching international law in its war against Nicaragua. When Nicaragua took this to the UN Security Council to get the US to obey the ruling, Britain abstained. In UN debates Britain either abstains or votes with the US.

- A London based security firm, KMS, with close government links, has been helping to arm and train the Contras and in 1985 it organised a bomb explosion in the centre of Managua.

- Britain gave £400,000 of aid in 1977 when Somoza was in power. By 1984 the figure had dropped to £9000. Within the EC Britain has strongly argued against increased aid to Nicaragua. Leaked government documents showed that officials in the Overseas Development Administration were instructed by the Foreign Office to 'oppose proposals from Nicaragua by finding technical reasons to do so'.

Thatcher has acted as the US voice in Europe, helping to exert economic, political and military pressure on Nicaragua. It is an obscenity to hear Thatcher - attacker of union rights, murderer of the Gibraltar 3, censor of Sinn Fein interviews - preach about democracy. Nicaragua is the hope of Central America. The shining beacon of real freedom. British socialists and progressives must defend it. ■

Gains of the revolution

In July 1979 the dictator Somoza was overthrown. His family had ruled Nicaragua with US support since 1934; they were vicious and corrupt; in 1972 when the capital, Managua, was decimated by an earthquake, aid from around the world was pocketed by Somoza for his personal use and the city remained a ruin.

NICKI RENSTEN

Led by the Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN) the people of Nicaragua have made massive strides forward since the revolution:-

- Infant mortality has been cut by 40% and free medical care is available throughout the country. Polio has been eradicated and the incidence of other serious diseases such as measles and malaria sharply reduced.

- By 1982 Nicaragua was self-sufficient in the production of rice, eggs, pork and poultry.

- By 1985 1,400 new primary schools had been built and the number of teachers quadrupled.

- In 1987 the National Assembly approved the Autonomy Statute for the Atlantic Coast, ensuring the preservation of the languages, customs, religions and cultures of the indigenous Miskito, Sumo, Rama and English-speaking peoples.

SLANDERS

The USA not only arms and funds the contra; it has mounted a systematic worldwide campaign of disinformation against Nicaragua. The contra are portrayed as freedom fighters striving for democracy against a 'Communist dictatorship' which censors the press, bans opposition, imprisons its enemies, abuses human rights and refuses to hold free and fair elections.

- The 'dictatorship' myth is easy to dispel. The government is popular;

the majority of Nicaragua's male citizens are armed yet politicians walk the streets without fear of assassination.

- As for democracy, in 1984 the FSLN won 67% of the vote in Nicaragua's first ever general election. There are currently six other political parties represented in the National Assembly, three to the right and three to the 'left' of the Sandinistas.

- The right-wing newspaper, *La Prensa*, is freely available; opponents of the government run their own radio stations and the blatant propaganda of Voice of America can be picked up all over Nicaragua.

- Hasenfus, the CIA mercenary shot down while supplying the contra was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment but released a month later on compassionate grounds. In 1983 the government introduced the first amnesty for former contra. By 1988 the amnesty had been extended, despite popular protests, to include 200 ex-Somocista National Guard members and in March this year a further 1,900 were released.

PATRIA LIBRE O MORIR! VIVA NICARAGUA!

DIVIDE AND RULE

Ten years of class war

The Tories were swept to power in May 1979 on a high tide of anti-Labour opinion following the ravages of Wilson and Callaghan (and even Heath who, although a Tory, was and is definitely 'one of them' and not 'one of us'), with widespread support for their policies. Thatcher, who assumed leadership of the Tories from Heath in 1974, had given out clear signals about the central planks of her future government:

- 'good housekeeping' of the economy on monetarist principles,
- the dismantling of state-run industries and
- the destruction of trade union power.

She added an essential dose of racism stating in 1978 that white Britons had legitimate fears about being 'swamped by people with a alien culture.' It was a precise electoral message calculated to appeal not only to the ranks of Tory Middle England, but also to the upper layers of the working class. Not many, least of all Tory backbenchers, understood the precise mechanism which would restore the British economy, but what they did know was that Thatcher shared the same prejudices about the strength of the trade unions, 'welfare scroungers' and blacks.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Some of Thatcher's new breed Tories did, however, understand the 'mechanism' and were willing to apply it with gusto. By the mid 1970s it was all too clear to the bourgeoisie that the post-war boom was well and truly over. The rate of profit was too low; unemployment and inflation were increasing. A turnaround could only be achieved by a massive, ruthlessly-applied attack on working class living standards. There is no mystery about Mrs Thatcher or Thatcherism. She and her cohorts are merely those who were willing to administer the onslaught and 'monetarism' was the mystified term they used to put a gloss on a very old-fashioned solution to capitalist crisis.

In reality the Thatcherites have applied strict 'monetarism' for only brief periods of their ten year rule. In theory rigorous limits on the supply of money to control inflation, slashing public spending and cutting taxes would restore the free market economy - the dream of every good bourgeois. Thatcher had made her priorities clear in 1978 referring to managers: 'No group is more important and yet none has been so put through the mangle and flattened between the rollers of progressively penal taxation and discriminatory incomes policy.' And later, in 1980, as harbinger of future cuts in state spending: 'We should not expect the state to appear in the guise of an extravagant good fairy at every christening, loquacious companion at every stage of life's journey, the unknown mourner at every funeral.'

In 1979 when the Tories came to power Thatcher and her chief ally in the Cabinet, Howe, ensconced as Chancellor of the Exchequer, were not confident that the rest of the predominantly Wet cabinet were com-

mitted to monetarism. Thatcher made an early declaration that she would not waste time on arguments. Consequently economic policy was not discussed in Cabinet but was decided privately by Thatcher, Howe and her economic advisers. This method of organisation became the hallmark of Thatcherism and rendered the Cabinet both impotent and at times a bear garden of ambitious ministers vying with each other for Thatcher's approval or political independence (see box on Westlands). In November 1979 the permanent secretary to the Treasury, a top civil servant, stated that there had been no discussion on economic policy in the Cabinet since the May election. The first budget therefore came as a surprise.

It contained the key elements of monetarist strategy and reversed the rhetoric of a decade: wage rises, the Chancellor declared, did not cause inflation. As promised in the election large cuts were made in personal taxation (standard rate down from 33% to 30%; top rate cut from 83% to 60%, which constituted the first of a series of massive hand-outs to the rich). Inflation, it was predicted, would be tightly controlled by the supply of money and this in turn would prevent large wage rises. Cuts in public spending were intended to compensate for tax cuts, but even in the wake of an election it was too dangerous to cut them by enough, hence the surprise move: VAT was doubled to 15%.

By the end of 1979 business confidence, even in the view of the CBI, had collapsed. Inflation stood at 18% and public spending had risen not fallen. During 1980 manufacturing output steeply declined and has only just recovered. Manufacturing investment, however, is still below 1979 levels. Caught between a high exchange rate and high interest rates, manufacturing industry was collapsing - gross domestic product (GDP) had plummeted 5.5% in two years - and unemployment had risen to 2.7 million as a result. Undeterred, the monetarists introduced the 1981 budget package which proposed to slash public spending by £3,500 million. Personal tax and petrol tax were raised. Even the government's own prediction was that unemployment would rise above 3 million in 1982.

By its second anniversary, the government had brought about the biggest fall in total output since 1931 and the biggest fall in industrial production in any year since 1921. Mrs Thatcher's opinion poll rating had fallen to 23% - the lowest of any Prime Minister since polling began.

Further proposals for cuts in public spending met with near revolt from the Wets in the Cabinet. But Thatcher was ready with the solution: in the autumn the Wet heads rolled and were replaced by up-and-coming Thatcherites like Tebbit, Lawson and Brittan. Despite a Cabinet more to her taste, the depth of the crisis forced Thatcher and Howe to relax the iron grip in the 1982 budget. While the money supply had grown by 30% more than expected, no attempt was



'Ten years on... look how far we've come. A decade ago, we were a country in decline. Poor in spirit, we suffered from that most demoralising form of poverty: poverty of conviction.'

MARGARET THATCHER, MARCH 1989

- In 1979 the top 20% of households received 45% of gross income. By 1986 they received 51%. The bottom 20% received 0.5% in 1979 and 0.3% in 1986.
- In the last ten years the richest 1% have seen their income rise by 346% as a result of tax cuts and high interest rates. The reduction in taxes for the top 1% totals £26.2bn.
- Over the last ten years the number of households with children dependent on supplementary benefit/income support has more than doubled. Overall there has been an increase of 55%.
- Child Benefit is now worth 12% less than in 1979. All pensions and benefits are worth less. Maternity and death grants have been axed.
- Every year 370,000 people become homeless.
- Overall taxation has increased from 34% to 38% of national income.

made at redress and the National Insurance surcharge was lifted for the sake of industry.

Nevertheless the government had reached a trough and was deeply unpopular with the electorate. Fortune, however, was on Mrs Thatcher's side in the shape of the Malvinas/Falklands war which she grasped as an opportunity to appeal to the worst elements of British chauvinism (see box). Even if the economy was a sinking ship, Britannia would once more rule the waves at the cost of almost 1000 British and Argentinian lives. The government's fate was determined by the victory - by June 1982 Thatcher's opinion poll rating had risen to 44%. Once more the direct appeal to racism ensured the government's success at the general election in June 1983.

There was one more economic hiccup before the election. The Government Think-Tank estimated that on the basis of 1% annual growth in the

economy, public spending would continue to eat up a large percentage of GDP - much more in fact than during the big spending years of Labour governments. To solve the problem, radical measures would be necessary: the introduction of student loans instead of grants, the end of public funding of higher education; an end of rises in state benefits to keep up with inflation; private health insurance to replace the NHS, chargeable doctors' visits and a rise in prescription charges. From the perspective of 1989 this all sounds very familiar; in 1982 it sounded like zealotry. When it was scheduled for discussion in the Cabinet, the remaining Wets forced it off the agenda and leaked its contents to *The Economist*. In the ensuing clamour Thatcher said it had all been a mistake and she was against it anyway. She was lying.

The government's first term of office was crucial in economic terms. There are different views of its perfor-

Ten years of Tory rule was celebrated by Britain's ruling class elite in May with the necessary quota of newspaper features, television programmes and biographies. Margaret Thatcher, Britain's first woman Prime Minister, now elevated to myth, was the central focus. She has maintained power for the Tories through three general elections and presided over what the media choose to call the Thatcherite 'revolution' - the regeneration of the free-market economy and the ideology of individual enterprise. But is it a revolution and will Mrs Thatcher 'go on and on'? Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! looks at the key features of a decade of Thatcherism and the prospects for change

mance. The monetarists claim that the 1981 budget was crucial to future economic recovery: since then every year has seen steady economic growth on which is based the country's optimism and the Tories' popularity. But Britain is now a divided nation as a result of Thatcher's policies. The rich, middle classes and sections of the privileged working class may share the Tories' optimism, but millions of other located in the north of England, Scotland, Wales and the inner cities have been impoverished and have taken the brunt of unemployment. 'Steady growth' of the economy has been slow to realise industrial revival; on the contrary, it first of all led to a growth of overseas investment and banking; rich picking abroad rather than the investment at home which Thatcher said she was generating. The City of London thrived while the industrial heartland was laid waste.

Moreover the capitalist gets rich, not like the miser, in proportion to his personal labour and restricted consumption, but at the same rate as he squeezes out the labour power of others, and enforces on the labourer abstinence from all life's enjoyments. Karl Marx Capital Vol 1

In 1989, after a succession of budget hand-outs, the higher-paid are now better off than at any time since 1906 and £13 billion in wealth has been transferred from the poor to the richest 5%. That was the real aim of Thatcher's 'good housekeeping'.

PUBLIC SPENDING

The attack on public spending has been a central plank of Thatcherism pursued both at an economic and at an ideological level. Even before 1979 aspiring monetarists like Keith Joseph re-opened the issue of productive and unproductive Labour - 'Too many mouths - too few hands' echoed the slavish press. Mrs Thatcher had her own views on the role of the state: viciously opposed to any form of state intervention, she stated that there was no longer such a thing as 'society', only 'families and individuals'.

But in the short term, public spending was not easy to cut, especially with growing unemployment leading to greater demand for benefits and an ageing and poorer population making greater demands on the NHS. Between 1979 and 1985 state expenditure grew by 10.4% in real terms; if proceeds from privatisation (counted as negative public expenditure by the government) are taken out of the sum, and gross debt interest included, the figure is more like 13%. Although with economic growth, the percentage of GDP consumed by public spending has fallen from its highest point of 46.5% in 1982/3, for a government committed to slashing public expenditure, the fruits of monetarism have been poor.

Nevertheless, even though they are a threat to social stability and unpopular with the electorate, harsh cuts have been made. Thatcher chose her main target well: the unemployed, especially the young, and those who rely on state benefits were designated 'welfare scroungers', idle and lacking in enterprise. 'On yer bike' was Tebbit's crude expression of a Tory reality. Successive new laws have cut benefits and transformed the system in order to deprive the poor even further - the most drastic being the Social Security Act, 1988. Thatcher's belief that there is no such thing as 'society' has become reality for thousands of young unemployed people who now get no help from the state and are either forced to rely on their families or join the growing numbers of homeless sleeping in doorways. Thatcher's latest henchman, Moore, has now declared that there is no such thing as 'poverty'.

Education and health care spending have, in turn, been cut to the bone, with fresh plans now being enacted to privatise finance as much as possible. The Think Tank report of 1983 is not so far from enactment. Despite 'society' being consigned to the dustbin, the concept of 'community care' has been fostered. But with drastic cuts in local government spending power, 'community' barely exists either. The burden of long term care has fallen on working class families, in particular on individual women. The poll tax - another massive hand-out to the rich - seeks to take this another step forward with pressure on local councils to reduce services even further.

The reverse side of cuts in Social Security, Health and Education spending was the massive growth in funding for the police and the mushrooming of new prisons. Recognising early in her premiership - with the inner city uprisings in 1981 and 1985 - that social stability would be undermined by Tory policies, Thatcher knew that an increase in poverty would require a larger, more well-paid, and therefore more loyal police force. Between 1981 and 1985 while wages for public sector workers fell dramatically, the police were awarded wage rises of 7% above the average.

Despite its declared programme, the Thatcher government was unable to impose real cuts in public spend-

ing; what it did manage was a fundamental restructuring of priorities which impoverished millions of people and prepared the way for dealing with any opposition. Divided Britain was now a reality.

THE SHARE-OWNING DEMOCRACY

Three further factors were vital for the British economy: North Sea oil and overseas investment, privatisation of state-owned industries and credit. Throughout its period of government the economy has been bolstered by massive revenues from North Sea oil. This is now in decline and the economy will become further dependent on the returns from overseas investment. Thatcher's commitment to the preservation of capitalism in Southern Africa and the prospect of expanding the market into socialist countries must be understood in these terms.

Privatisation of state industries have become as much an ideological commitment as an economic policy. The earlier privatisation of British Telecom and British Gas were another form of handout. It was, of course, the 'haves' as opposed to the 'have nots' who were able to get a share. But the realities of gambling on the stock exchange came as a sharp reminder to the large numbers of privileged working class people who participated in the BP flotation. This, together with the Stock Exchange crash of 1987, somewhat dented the vision of a shareholding democracy in UK Ltd.

Nevertheless the City of London has really gained from privatisation, and it is their interests which really matter to the Thatcherites. Thatcher continued to pursue privatisation after the 1987 re-election. From the start Thatcher viewed state industries as over subsidised, uncompetitive and monopolistic. In 1982, Lawson, then Energy Secretary, proclaimed 'No industry should remain under state ownership unless there is a positive and overwhelming case for it doing so.' Despite positive and overwhelming reasons for continuing state ownership, water and electricity are now up for grabs with consequent price rises to consumers and widespread fears about nuclear safety and water purity. Such widespread opposition has not diverted the government from its path.

If Britain's burgeoning affluent layers were not getting enough, there was always credit. Excluding mortgage debt, which in itself has rocketed, outstanding debt rose three-fold between the end of 1981 and 1988. The growth area in debt has been the use of credit cards which have the additional benefit to the banks of interest rates amounting to usury. Real interest rates are now at the highest level since the Napoleonic wars. Credit cards, of course, are not issued to Thatcher's impoverished millions.

THE ENEMY WITHIN

The power of the trade unions was targeted right from the beginning. If the overall standard of living of the working class in Britain was to be reduced in order to restore the rate of profit, then the central apparatus for resistance had to be dismantled. By 1984, when it was announced that trade union membership at GCHQ (the state's spy centre) was to be outlawed, Len Murray, TUC leader had visited Downing Street only three times. This was in stark contrast to the Wilson/Callaghan era when strikes were settled at Number Ten, reputedly accompanied by beer and sandwiches. Dismissive of the consensus politics of the Labour Party and the Tory Wets (consensus, she said, is not even an English word), Thatcher was prepared to deal with any opposition: 'We had to fight the enemy without in the Falklands. We always have to be aware of the enemy within, which is more difficult to fight and more dangerous to liberty.'

In the first years of government the Thatcherites had very little 'enemy

within' to deal with. In fact they made a number of quite crucial tactical concessions to wage demands, one from the National Union of Mineworkers. But Thatcher knew quite well that the miners would have to be defeated both in order to restructure the coal industry, but also to lay the ghost of Heath's defeat by the miners in 1974. Following the election in 1983, Thatcher appointed Peter Walker as Minister for Energy and told him that at some point in the next few years the government would be faced by a miners' strike as a direct challenge to Tory rule by 'Marxist' Arthur Scargill, NUM leader.

The ground had been prepared for a strike. Power stations had stocked up with coal and Ian MacGregor had been moved in as head of the National Coal Board, following his successful axeing of jobs at British Steel. The police force had been strengthened and the National Reporting Centre at Scotland Yard was in position, ready to act as a national police force.

The issue behind the miners' strike was not wages but pit closures and conditions - the survival of the mining industry and the pit communities. It was a strike deliberately provoked by the government, angled at the power-base of Scargill in Yorkshire. The better paid miners in the productive Nottingham pits were secure and would not support the strike. Close attention was also paid to preventing solidarity action in other industries: the railworkers' pay demand was settled and despite the apparatus in place for legal action against secondary industrial action, companies like British Steel were forbidden from taking any action in case this provoked solidarity with the miners.

The bitter one-year long strike was the testing time for Thatcher's policies. Mining communities fought with courage and determination for their future. In the end it was not Thatcher's determination and will which defeated the strike, but the response of the Labour Party and trade union movement. Time after time Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party, and Willis now TUC General Secretary, vested Thatcher with all the power she needed by attacking the striking miners. At last the doors of Number Ten were open to TUC leaders so that they could stab the miners in the back. The British Labour Party and TUC had sunk to depths from which it has never risen since.

The immediate cost of the strike was a £2,200 million loss to the industry announced in 1985, the jobs of more than 700 sacked miners and massive pit closures. The long-term cost was worse for the British working class as a whole. Central forces key to the opposition to Thatcher's class onslaught were defeated. Anyone opposed to Thatcherite rule could now be dubbed an enemy of democracy. After the IRA bombing of the Tory Cabinet in Brighton in 1984, a near miss that the British working class would live to regret, Thatcher was able to say: 'At one end of the spectrum are the terrorist gangs within our borders, and the terrorist states which finance and arm them. At the other end are the hard left operating inside our system, conspiring to use union power and the apparatus of local government to break, defy and subvert the laws.' Following the end of the strike, a battery of laws were introduced which legalised police lawlessness and violence used against the miners. Subsequent Employment Acts have cemented the defeat of union power. The Labour-controlled councils have been smashed with the help of Kinnock. Kinnock and Willis have since only raised their heads above their new-realist ditch in order to sell out other workers in struggle - the print workers, the nurses and the seamen.

MAKE A REAL CHANGE

All the elements which have secured Thatcher's rule for ten years were

now in place. It was not a revolution but class war by a greedy ruling class - a war in which leaders of the opposition ran away and fought on the other side. For Thatcher's affluent supporters the economy has been temporarily salvaged; public and private greed and robbery of the poor to pay the rich are the prevailing ethos. State-run industries have been given away at knock-down prices. The working class is now divided between the haves and have-nots with the gap growing wider. By 1987 Thatcher had secured 36% of manual workers votes (46% in the south of England) and 43% of skilled workers votes.

Unemployment and penalising attacks on state benefits have been used to discipline the working class to accept lower wages and poorer conditions. Worse still, high unemployment has become the acceptable face of capitalism. In 1977 Thatcher declared of the Callaghan government with 1.3 million unemployed: 'Sometimes I've heard it said that Conservatives have been associated with unemployment. That's absolutely wrong. We'd have been drummed out of office if we'd had this level of unemployment.' During the Thatcher decade unemployment has soared over 3 million, and even with 25 changes in the way the unemployment level is calculated - all of them aimed at removing people from the register - it has never dropped to 1979 levels. No-one has drummed Thatcher out of office.

Nonetheless, there have been times when a concerted opposition could have done precisely that. A real challenge in the 1981/82 period of economic devastation could have unseated the monetarists. A victory for the miners' strike would have blown Thatcher's strategy for destruction of the trade unions and state industries wide open. It would have given the less-privileged sections of the British working class the courage to fight. The right questions asked at the right time during the Falklands war, the Westland and Spycatcher crises, and after the murder of the Gibraltar Three, would have undermined Thatcher's moral rectitude.

For as long as the trade union movement leadership represents the interests of the better-off workers who became the mainstay of Thatcher's support in 1979 and 1987, no effective opposition will come from this quarter. Kinnock's latest bid to win the support of this layer - the policy review, *Meet the Challenge: Make the Change* - is fruitless. Thatcher's supporters know that she is serving them well - better than Kinnock ever could. *Make the Change* is merely a further slide away from defending the interests of the working class as a whole, towards serving the interests of Thatcher's supporters - the racists, the imperialists, the militarists.

If Kinnock's Labour Party does win the next election - and the demise of the Liberal/SDP centre now that the Labour Party has moved even further right perhaps gives them better prospects - it will not mean respite for the majority of the working class. Kinnock is no less a servant of capital than Thatcher - even though he is the kitchen maid not the butler.

It is time for a real challenge and a real change. The RCG is a communist organisation which believes, just as it did in 1979, that capitalism cannot meet the needs of the majority of people in Britain. Thatcher has spent the last ten years demonstrating that fact. Sooner rather than later the British economy will sink again into deep crisis - inflation has more than doubled in the last year to 8%, and interest rates are set to rocket further. Thatcher and Howe (or Parkinson) or Kinnock and Hattersley will all make the same decision to solve the crisis - further and deeper attacks on the working class. For a real change, we need a communist movement in Britain which will wipe capitalism, whether Thatcher's or Kinnock's out of existence.

1980

No wash blanket protest and hunger strikes in the H-Blocks in the north of Ireland.

1981

A new Nationality Act is introduced removing the right of 'new' Commonwealth citizens to enter or reside in Britain.

UPRISINGS in inner cities led by black youth - Thatcher commented: 'Oh, those poor shopkeepers...'



10 IRISH HUNGER STRIKERS murdered by Thatcher.

Thatcher and Reagan meet in Washington. The Anglo-US alliance is cemented.

1982

THE FALKLANDS WAR Thatcher gives the order to sink the *Belgrano*, murdering 368 Argentinian sailors.

Six men shot dead in shoot-to-kill operation in the north of Ireland. Stalker was later given the job of investigating into the murders and was removed when he got close to the truth.

President Reagan addresses the Houses of Parliament.

1983

Thatcher's representatives meet coalition leaders.

Primary purpose rule prevents entry of immigrant husbands to Britain.

Thatcher re-elected

1984

THE MINERS STRIKE The year-long strike engineered by Thatcher begins. Between 1979 and 1989 four

anti-trade union laws are introduced. The only right which is enhanced is the right to scab.



Ponting reveals that the government was lying about the sinking of *Belgrano*. It was sailing away from the Falklands when it was torpedoed. He is prosecuted unsuccessfully.

The Police and Criminal Evidence Act enhances police powers to stop, search and detain.

1985

Police can now use CS gas and plastic bullets when they wish.

UPRISINGS in Brixton, Tottenham and Handsworth. PC Blakelock killed. State of siege in Tottenham as police frame black youth. Winston Silcott, Engin Raghbi and Mark Braithwaite convicted of murder on no evidence.

1986

Right to trial by jury is restricted.

New Public Order Act legalises police violence and lawlessness practised against striking miners.

WESTLAND Crisis divides cabinet. Heseltine resigns and Brittan is forced to resign to protect the Prime Minister. The divisions over alliance with Europe or the USA resurface in 1989.

Thatcher allows Reagan to BOMB LIBYA using British bases, killing 43 Libyan civilians.



Spycatcher banned - trial and legal proceedings cost taxpayer £3 million.

1987

Thatcher re-elected.

1988

PTA made permanent, having earlier been extended to cover all liberation movements. The Thatcher regime sticks to it even though it breaches European Human Rights charter. Birmingham Six appeal rejected.

Interviews with Sinn Fein in the media are banned.

The defence right to challenge jurors is removed.

New Immigration law removes the right of appeal against deportation for residents of less than 7 years.

Section 28 of Local Government Act bans the 'promotion of homosexuality'.

GIBRALTAR THREE are murdered.

1989

Security Services Bill allows MI5 to burgle and tap our homes legally.

Official Secrets Act prevents anyone saying anything.

The right of silence will be abolished

THE POLL TAX comes into force in Scotland.

Afghanistan turns tables on Washington

When the last Soviet troops left Afghanistan on 15 February there was a great deal of crowing in the US and British press about 'the defeat of communism', 'freedom on the march' and such like. Afghanistan was about to fall into the hands of the counter-revolutionary Mojahedin. So, on 6 March the Mojahedin attacked Jalalabad, 'the gateway to Kabul', intending to establish their 'provisional government' in this city close to the Pakistan border. It would fall 'in a few days'. Nine weeks later the siege of Jalalabad was broken by the Afghan army and patriotic volunteers; the news-vendors sang a different tune: 'These days nobody talks of capturing Kabul. The snows have thawed and excuses run out' (*Financial Times*, 15 May 1989).

TREVOR RAYNE

Government troops were initially taken by surprise by the ferocity of the firepower of the counter-revolutionaries. The CIA had recently equipped them with long-range heavy artillery, much of which was manned by Pakistan Army gunners. Mojahedin attacked from the south east, then north and west of the city to try and cut off the lifeline to Kabul. Soldiers and volunteers defending Jalalabad fell back forming a tight cordon around the city. The Mojahedin were forced into direct frontal assaults. On a single day, 10 April, over 18,000 rockets, shells and mines rained down on the city. Just eleven civilians and three troops were killed, but schools, temples and homes were reduced to rubble. For many Afghans previously sympathetic to the Mojahedin, almost overnight the 'anti-Soviet freedom fighters' had been recast: now they were tools of foreign intervention in Afghanistan, killing Afghan people. The Afghan government appeared to more and more people to be what it always was: the defender of Afghan self-determination against imperialism.

The Mojahedin and their coterie of international press fans had assumed that Afghan government troops would defect upon Soviet withdrawal. Some did. Their bodies were cut into tiny pieces by the Mojahedin and left for public display. The Afghan government soldiers understood it was fight or die. Pakistani army soldiers were captured. After four weeks of failed assault the Mojahedin, the Pakistan intelligence service ISI and the CIA were passing the

blame around. The Salang Highway from Kabul to the Soviet Union was kept open. Precious Soviet military and food supplies were ferried into the Afghan capital, and from there by helicopter to Jalalabad. By mid-May government troops had broken the siege of Jalalabad. Positions taken by the counter-revolutionaries en route to their Pakistan bases were recaptured.

IMPERIALISM BENT ON OUTRIGHT VICTORY

When US Secretary of State James Baker visited Moscow on 11 May he made it clear that the USA would neither cease military supplies to the counter-revolutionaries (a violation of the 1988 Geneva Agreement) nor would they back a negotiated settlement to the Afghanistan war. For the US government the Geneva Agreement means nothing more than Soviets get out and to hell with anything else it says about ending outside interference in Afghanistan. Ever since 1978 and the April Revolution the US has been intent on arming counter-revolution. A full year before Soviet troops arrived in Afghanistan the CIA had established 30 training bases for Afghan terrorists. Then, as today, with the US supplying as much as \$1 billion a year in aid to the Mojahedin, the US is prepared to reduce every village and town in Afghanistan to rubble to defeat the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan government.

Pakistan military intelligence, ISI, played a key role in planning and directing the assault on Jalalabad. Senior Pakistani, Saudi Arabian and US army officers were flown by

helicopter-gunships into the Jalalabad region. The Pakistan ruling class sees Afghanistan as critical to its strategic position *vis-a-vis* the Soviet Union and India. It also wants to dispose of up to 5 million Afghan refugees on its territory. Afghan President Najibullah can convincingly claim that the Mojahedin are political heirs of the bought puppets that Britain repeatedly tried to foist upon Afghanistan in the last century, and right down to 1929 when the infamous Lawrence (of Arabia) had Habibullah Ghazi proclaimed emir. He lasted ten months before being executed.

Soviet President Gorbachev re-

sponded firmly to the imperialists' belligerence in a letter to a Pakistan politician: 'There can be and there will be no military solution to the Afghanistan problem'. With the Afghan forces well equipped and performing successfully, President Najibullah has stepped up the diplomatic offensive, attempting to widen the division in the Mojahedin ranks. They exist: even as the assault on Jalalabad commenced, rival factions were looking over their shoulders to see who would stab them in the back and usurp the title of 'victor'. However, Najibullah's main thrust has been to dissociate the field-commanders based on the feudal village structures inside Afghanistan from the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois allied to US capital based in Pakistan. Field-commanders have been offered food, fuel and significant degrees of military and political autonomy to end their attacks on government forces. Responses have been inconsistent. Speaking to the *Independent* (8 May, 1989), PDPA Central Committee member Najmuddin Kawyani explained 'the field-commanders are beginning to find themselves under conflicting pressure - from Pakistan, which wants them to attack, and from local people, who say if they attack it is the people who will suffer when the government responds'.

SUPPORT THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT!

The Mojahedin have proved incapable of winning the set-piece battles that would be necessary to capture Afghanistan's major cities. Pakistan army gunners are employed

for the heavy artillery bombardment of Jalalabad. Set-piece battles require a specific training and discipline. The question now is will direct Pakistani military intervention increase? It is noticeable that Sandy Gall, and similar would-be media adventurers are no longer reporting back from 'inside Afghanistan' alongside the Mojahedin. No doubt such reports would run the risk of embarrassing the Pakistan government with details about scales of casualties being endured by the counter-revolutionaries, over a thousand at Jalalabad, and of Pakistan's military involvement. The Danish press have reported Pakistani soldiers training Mojahedin in heavy artillery use in Khost province. In mid-May a heavy attack was launched on this city. Two US military advisers were reported killed in an exchange of fire with government troops in Kandahar on 14 March. The Mojahedin have said that they will open a second front in Kandahar this summer.

FRFI calls on all socialists and progressives to oppose the imperialists' aggression against Afghanistan. On his March visit to Pakistan, Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe repeated his call for an outright victory for the Mojahedin. Happily we can report that Afghan pilots speak derisively of the British-supplied Blowpipe missiles. However, the people of Afghanistan are suffering at the hands of the US and British states and their clients. Send donations to the patriotic government of Afghanistan:

Embassy of the Republic of Afghanistan, 31 Princes Gate, London SW7 1QQ

A chorus of reaction - British left back imperialism

TREVOR RAYNE

One of the first things Thatcher's first Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, did was visit the Khyber Pass and aim a rifle at an Afghan border guard. British soldiers have trained and equipped the Mojahedin. The British government supplies them with aid and diplomatic and political support. This band of counter-revolutionary mercenaries have another ally: much of the British left. How can it be that so-called socialists and Marxists wind up on the same side as Margaret Thatcher and the same side as people who murder women who become 'too visible', as the Mojahedin did in a refugee camp recently, or who bomb the orphanages of the children of 'the infidels', or one of the biggest heroin smuggling outfits in the world? They side with reaction because while they pose as socialists they have no conception of British imperialism, the national democratic revolutions or the labour aristocracy in Britain to which they are appended.

Take this from *Socialist Worker*, paper of the Socialist Workers' Party. The Soviet Union was 'forced out by the popular resistance. The attempt to subjugate the country by force has been broken' (11 February, 1989). Ronald Reagan's script writers could hardly have done better, but wait: 'Opponents of Russia's rule everywhere within the USSR and Eastern Europe will take heart'. 'Russian rule', that magical incantation that has accompanied every anti-Soviet enterprise since the attack on the Bolsheviks in 1918. Still, while the SWP is in jubilation sadly Afghanistan's 'cycle of misery... can only continue. It won't be broken until genuine socialist revolutions in more advanced countries provide the resources to overcome its economic backwardness' (4 February 1989). Foolish to even try, Afghan socialists. What has this Euro-centric view of the world got in common with reality, the recent history of the Third World? Nothing! There will be no revolution in the 'more advanced countries' without the oppressed na-

tions winning national liberation.

the next step, paper of the Revolutionary Communist Party, offers a different brand of Trotskyism. Two articles on 3 February and 10 February 1989 appear, at first sight, innocent enough: simple descriptive stuff - but nowhere does *tns* see a national liberation movement, a patriotic war of resistance against imperialism. Instead it sees the power plays of Moscow: 'The best that Moscow could hope for is the return of the former king from Italy', 'Moscow may have to fall back upon a "Lebanese option"', 'Any resulting regime in Kabul would be too weak to pose a threat to the Soviet Union's Muslim region', etc, etc. Our boutique revolutionaries affect all the informed detachment of the BBC commentators they fancy themselves as. Nowhere do the Afghan people figure in determining their own fate. Nowhere is there a call for support for the Afghan government.

What of the *Militant*, an organisation whose faith in the Labour Party

can seemingly endure any torment and indignity? 'When the Russian bureaucracy invaded Afghanistan, *Militant* came out in opposition. Any gains achieved through defending measures to abolish landlordism and capitalism... would be completely outweighed by the adverse effects on the consciousness of the working class internationally' (10 February 1989). Quite apart from depicting the Soviet action as an invasion, note *Militant's* reasoning: for 'consciousness of the working class internationally' read the chauvinistic, anti-Soviet prejudices of the British working class which *Militant* imagines to be in the vanguard of the global struggle for socialism. Make a concession to the infections of bourgeois propaganda not the Afghan revolution nor its Soviet allies, is the *Militant's* message.

Trotskyist or CPGB, it makes little difference. 'It gives us no satisfaction to say we told you so. But British communists opposed the use of Soviet troops to prop up the isolated

and dictatorial regime [*Militant* chose to call it 'bonapartist and totalitarian'] the communists established after an army officer-led coup in April 1978... Had the original Afghan communist leadership... understood that it is peoples who have to be won to create revolutions, they cannot be imposed by cabals of officers and bureaucrats, then a different, surer if slower start could perhaps have been made' (7 Days, 11 February 1989). Had the Afghan people not got their own history of revolutionary struggle against oppression, had the communist leadership not been in prison cells awaiting execution when they launched the revolution, if the CIA and MI6 had not been directing counter-revolutionary gangs even before 1978, if the revolution had been made in never-never land...

These are just samples of the chauvinism and Euro-centrism which characterise the British left. In practice they side with imperialism and counter-revolution.



Afghan women's village defence force carrying Soviet AK47s



DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

Dialectical materialism is the world outlook and method of scientific socialism. It holds that every natural, social and intellectual formation is the transitory product of given material conditions. That all phenomena come into being, develop and eventually perish as a result of the action of the contradictions within them. For Marx and Engels dialectical materialism provided the means by which the illusions of religion could be dispelled, philosophy could be retrieved from speculation to serve the liberation of humanity, and theory could be put on a scientific basis. Above all, dialectical materialism is the conception of the world which conforms with the interests of the self-emancipation of the working class and the struggle for communism and human fulfilment.

TREVOR RAYNE

All phenomena contain contradictions which form the unity of opposites: society is divided into classes. Marx's philosophy is partisan because reality is partisan. Thought and philosophy could not be neutral because they are parts of a world in struggle. In our epoch that struggle, and the principle contradiction determining the fate of humanity, is the struggle between capital and labour. Marx was adamant, intellectuals could no longer pretend to be disengaged, 'The philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world. The point is, however, to change it.' (*Theses on Feuerbach*).

Re-examining Marx's work on the German idealist philosopher Hegel and the materialist Feuerbach, Engels observed that 'The great basic question of all philosophy, especially of more recent philosophy, is the relation of thinking and being . . . spirit or Nature . . . which is primary, spirit or Nature . . . the answers which the philosophers gave to this question split them into two great camps. Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to Nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other . . . comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded Nature as primary, belonged to the various schools of materialism'. Materialists believe that Nature or matter is primary to spirit or ideas. Working class suffering is a result of real material conditions, these conditions can be changed, and hated social systems overthrown to allow a new society to be built free from exploitation. Until people have seen the material, class interests behind moral, religious and political phrases they will always be deceived and incapable of changing the conditions in which they live to their maximum benefit. This is the task of Marxism Leninism.

THE NATURE OF IDEALISM

Idealism has customarily been the outlook of the ruling classes. In various forms it has depicted outstanding personalities - kings, generals, religious figures, geniuses, etc - as the real movers of history. Plato, for ex-



Frederick Engels, a brilliant exponent of dialectical materialism

ample, held that society should be ruled by philosopher kings. He saw the great creations of humanity as the work of individual sparks of divine inspiration. Nietzsche, like Plato, believed that although the masses are in ignorance and enemies of the truth, the individual can escape their snare. For idealism, in so far as the world changes, it is the movement of ideas. The suffering of the working class is not a consequence of their social conditions, those conditions themselves derive from some innate quality or preordained order: race, greed, human nature, IQ, fall from grace, lack of enterprise, etc.

In Britain idealism in the form of Hume and Berkeley and in Germany in the work of Leibniz, Kant and Hegel held sway in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Marx studied them and overthrew them. Kant recognised that matter exists and acts on our minds through the senses, but maintained that mind consists of logical categories not derived from matter within which we arrange the data of sense perception. Thus, the order we see in nature is not part of it but rather something the mind imposes upon it. Objective reality, 'the thing in itself', is un-

knowable. So, the way in which we see the world, ideology, religion, etc, is not a product of the social conditions but something quite separate from it with its own internal logic. In this way what are in reality class positions present themselves as scientific, neutral, independent, etc.

Against Kant, Hegel claimed that the world was fully knowable. Knowledge was a process which advances from the contradictions present in the appearance of things, which is resolved in their essence, at a higher level of development. The action of contradictions took phenomena towards their real true nature. Quantitative change would result in eventual qualitative change. Qualitative change is only possible as the negation of the previous condition. In turn this stage will be negated. The negation of the negation demonstrates the progression from lower to higher forms, from simple to complex. Hegel applied his dialectical logic to science, history, philosophy, only being an idealist he regarded mind not matter as the sole reality. However, Hegel had broken with the metaphysical idealism that characterised much feudal thought. The latter was a conception of the world

which depicted things in distinction and isolation from each other, denying their contradictory character and interconnections, and which stressed the unchanging character of the world: a view well suited to the rigid, unchanging feudal order. Inspired by the French Revolution, Hegel saw contradictions and change in everything, but for him the evolution of material life was a process of thought: the unfolding of the Idea or Absolute Spirit - sublime reason thinking its way to establish a perfect rational order, (which in the case of Hegel came to be personified by the Prussian state). So, for Hegel Reason alone would destroy the illusions of ideology. Marx and reality have taught us that the confidence of the bourgeoisie in the universal qualities of the great Enlightenment corresponded only with that time when the bourgeoisie were in the ascendance and claimed to represent all society and the future. Foul money spoke louder than sweet reason.

MARX'S CRITIQUE OF HEGEL

Writing the *Afterword to the Second Edition of Capital* in 1873, Marx expressed his relation to Hegel thus: 'My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea', is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought . . . With him it (the dialectic) is standing

consciousness, but exist in conflict with it. That conflict is conducted through production which discloses human kind to itself. Dialectical materialism shows that people make history not in order to unfold some concept of destiny within them, but in order to satisfy their needs. What these needs are and how they are satisfied are determined by the level of the productive forces. As the level of the productive forces changes so social relations change. Idealism sees economic relations as a function of human nature. Dialectical materialism sees economic relations as a function of the level of productive forces. Human nature is determined by the interaction of the productive forces and objective nature. Idealism might claim that a market economy conforms with human nature (competitive, self-interested, etc). Dialectical materialism states that a market economy conforms with a given level of productive forces. As these forces develop so they will conflict with the market form and this economy will be in conflict with human nature.

Matter exists independently of consciousness and its laws apply to gravity, thermo-dynamics, etc, whether we know of them or not. Marx and Engels demonstrated that society develops in accordance with certain laws again whether people know of their existence or not. These laws are independent of human consciousness. The material conditions of existence, the level of productive forces, how we obtain food, make clothes, satisfy our needs, predetermine the intellectual and cultural pursuits of society. Together the productive forces and relations of production form the mode of production. The relationship between the mode of production and ideologies and institutions is not a simple one of cause and effect. 'Political, legal, philosophical, religious, literary, artistic, etc development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic basis. One must not think that the economic situation is cause, and solely active, whereas everything else is only passive effect. On the contrary, interaction takes place on the basis of economic necessity, which ultimately always asserts itself'. (Engels).

The productive forces are the most mobile aspect of the mode of production. They (tools, skills, organisational abilities, etc) develop faster than the production relations (ownership, control) and come into conflict with them. This conflict is resolved when new production relations replace old ones. Quantitative change gives rise to qualitative change: negation of the negation. This is a law of human history. Only with the enormous development of the productive forces under capitalism does recognition of this law become possible. With this recognition the working class can prepare to fulfil the task of socialism - the destruction of capitalist relations of production and the construction of a society based upon freely associated people consciously planning production for their needs. Long the object of history, the victim of blind laws, humanity becomes the subject, shaper of the world in fashion with its developing needs and mastery of nature. Truth is proved in practice. Theory is tested by reality and its truth is measured in its contribution to human control of nature and society.

'Freedom is the recognition of necessity. Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood' (Engels)

Just as discoveries in Einsteinian physics confirm that reality is dialectical, so the crisis of capitalism in the twentieth century confirm the correctness of Marx and Engels' theory that the productive forces have outrun the relations in which they develop and have entered into a final conflict with them, the outcome of which will determine the fate of humanity.

on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.'

Writing *The Holy Family* Marx examined the dilemma of even the most sophisticated idealism. Why does the category 'fruit' sometimes appear as apple, sometimes as almond, etc? Because, says the idealist, 'fruit' is a living thing and its different sensual manifestations are nothing other than the changing consequences of the life process 'fruit'. The universal category 'fruit' dissolves into the material expressions it gives itself: apples, almonds, etc are expressions of the idea 'fruit' as it develops. Why did Greece fall? Because the central idea of Greek life, the Idea of the Beautiful, was no longer believed by the people. Why not? Because it could not live in that form for so long. So runs idealism, and really nothing is explained. For Marx and Engels the category 'fruit' derives from human experience of different fruits, the Idea of the Beautiful was a reflection of the changing, transitory social conditions of the Greek state.

Matter exists in motion. All matter, galaxies, plants, molecules and society is in a state of motion. Human beings are part of matter, as is con-



Uprising at Risley Remand

'Male inmates remanded to Risley enter an institution which is profoundly depressing... they are for most of the time forgotten people.' Judge Stephen Tummin, HM Chief Inspector of Prisons reporting on the jail in 1988. (See *FRFI* 80).

For four days from 30 April to 3 May, prisoners in B and D wings at Risley Remand Centre, Cheshire, made sure they were not forgotten. In a courageous, militant protest against the disgusting conditions and overcrowding, prisoners took to the roof. They let the world know what life is like for working class people locked in Thatcher's jails.

ALEXA BYRNE

THE RISING

Protests began in B wing over a meal served on the Saturday night. Press reports speak of a planned 'mass break-out'. Some 17 men had reportedly tried to escape and prisoners barricaded themselves on the wing. Then on Sunday, in solidarity with the B wing prisoners, because prison visits had been cancelled and lights were turned out earlier than usual, the men on D wing barricaded the stairwells and began to smash up their cells, the landings and stairs.

34 cells on B wing were smashed, the top floor of the wing was obliterated as prisoners tore down cell doors and used them to batter down the prison walls. In all, 90 cells were destroyed and the damage ran into hundreds of thousands of pounds. On D wing a hole 120ft wide by 20ft deep was smashed through one of the walls. Both wings were flooded after water pipes were ripped out.

54 men from D wing climbed onto the roof from where they fended off Prison Officers and police. They threw bricks, pipes and roofing down at the screws who were forced to retreat. Two POs who had locked themselves into a cell had to be rescued from the outside by screws smashing a hole through the wall.

Out on the roof, the men unfurled banners and shouted out the reasons for the protest. One banner read 'We live in a shithole - Griz Ris'. The rooftop protesters gave clenched-fist salutes and took advantage of the sunshine after so long incarcerated in filth. They set up a radiator as a makeshift barbecue to cook food and lit fires at night on the roof to keep warm. Screws below sprayed water at the men claiming they were putting the fires out.

At one stage, POs demanded that the army be called in, despite having reinforcements from all over the north, fully equipped in riot gear. Graham Harrison, Chair of Risley POA, became the Tories' mouthpiece,

describing prisoners on 'an orgy of destruction', a 'wrecking spree' and 'baying for the blood' of his men. This was all picked up by most press along with details of prisoners taking drugs. The POs lied, saying that the prisoners had broken into the education centre and smashed videos and computers. The governor, Ian Boon, later informed the media that this was not true.

The POs blamed the governor's 'liberal policies' at the jail for the uprising. But as one prisoner on the roof shouted down, 'They were well warned. A person can only take so much, and it is even worse when you are on remand'.

RISLEY - SHITHOLE

Last year Judge Tummin's report on Risley described the foul conditions and high overcrowding there. Opened in 1965 to hold 514 men and 94 women, at the time of this protest there were 120 women and 600 men crammed into three wings, as one was out of action. 'Squalor, low ceilings, poor lighting, slopping out and small cells' where prisoners are locked up at least 20 hours a day. There is little natural light and they have to throw rubbish and excrement out of the cell windows, which collects in the mesh grills.

The suicide rate is very high, eight in 2 years, the most recent on 17 May. The so-called Suicide Prevention Management Group is not operational and mentally ill and drug-addicted prisoners are put on normal location with no proper care.

GOVERNMENT AND 'OPPOSITION'

Home Secretary Douglas Hurd responded in characteristic style: 'The shortcomings at Risley provide no justification for the destruction and violence which took place.' And Douglas Hogg, Tory Minister for prisons, admits that 'conditions at Risley are not good', but insists that the government has taken steps to improve them. (They had, apparently, repainted D wing). When asked on Channel 4 News why, a year after the Tummin report, there are still

suicides at Risley, he replied that remand prisoners are a 'vulnerable and volatile lot'. 'They are innocent human beings' retorted the interviewer. 'Certainly,' replied Hogg, 'and the prison system is going through a very dramatic improvement'. Funny how that's passed most of us by.

Roy Hattersley, Shadow Home Secretary, smugly showed where the Labour Party stands on the fight for prisoners' rights. 'No one should either defend the violence at Risley or react to it in a way which might incite similar action in other prisons...' And Doug Hoyle, Labour MP for Warrington North, also attacked the prisoners' actions: 'It's just like the Blitz', he said, 'there's wanton destruction in there.'

FIGHTING FOR BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS

What else do you do with a stinking slum other than tear it down? D wing, which now looks like it's been 'ripped apart by a bomb blast', may well have to be demolished.

The 54 men on D wing ended their protest after their demands for safe conduct and that each should be photographed and photos placed with a solicitor were agreed to. They also demanded that individual solicitors be allowed visits as soon as possible and be told of their involvement in the protest and why.

A day before Thatcher celebrated 10 years in power, the remand prisoners at Risley won a victory in maintaining their protests against all odds. Wadi Wadike Williams, one of the rooftop protesters, smuggled out a letter to his wife 'on behalf of the Risley 54'. He wrote 'We felt this was the only way left to highlight, bring into public focus and hopefully end this nightmare of overcrowding, insanitary conditions, poor food, short visits and long periods in captivity - conditions that have forced many to suicide.'

Prisoners are fighting back on the front line against Thatcher's oppression. We salute the courage of the Risley 54. Viva the prisoners! ■

The truth about Britain's prisons

On 1 February 1988 Britain had the highest absolute prison population in Western Europe. Relative to its population size it had the highest prison population of any country other than Luxemburg; higher than West Germany the previous leader which has substantially reduced its figures by increased use of remand and alternatives to custody; higher than Turkey which is renowned amongst human rights campaigners as a country which locks its people up in large quantities for long periods of time on spurious charges and treats them barbarously.

| Country | Prison Population on 1.2.88 | Prisoners per 100,000 population |
|----------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Luxemburg | 382 | 103.4 |
| United Kingdom | 55,729 | 98.2 |
| Austria | 7,297 | 96.0 |
| Finland | 4,374 | 93.0 |
| France | 52,494 | 92.0 |
| Turkey | 50,160 | 90.2 |
| West Germany | 53,039 | 86.7 |

PRISON STATISTICS 1987

- The average population (including those in police cells) was 48,963, 4% higher than in 1986.
- The average remand population (including those in police cells) was 11,163, 11% higher than in 1986.
- On 30 June there were 9,696 young offenders in custody.

Men

- 41,268 men were sentenced to immediate custody, 4% more than in 1986 and 40% more than in 1977.
- There were an additional 13,600 receptions for fine default.
- On 30 June there were 20,053 men in custody, including 466 fine defaulters.

Women

- 3,383 women were sentenced to immediate custody, 1% more than in 1986 and 48% more than in 1977.
- There were 716 receptions for fine default.
- On 30 June there were 1,180 women in custody, including 20 fine defaulters.

Black prisoners

- 14% of the male and 23% of the female prison population were from what the Home Office statistics describe as 'ethnic minority groups,' a rise of 1.5% and 6% respectively since 1985.

PRISONERS BIRTHDAYS

Patrick Magee (B75881) HMP Leicester, Walford Road, Leicester LE2 7AJ **29 May**
Paul Holmes (119034) HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD **22 June**

INSIDE NEWS

Brutality in Scottish prisons

Greetings to all English comrades. I must say how great it is to read *FRFI* after so long. I've now spent 20 months in solitary in their control units including a year in their barbaric 'cages' which re-opened two months ago. Two humans presently lie in them. The 12 men in this control unit (Peterhead) are let out one at a time and are told 10-minute slop-out time. A two-minute warning is given, then the con is grabbed by four to ten screws, if not moving fast enough. A prisoner presently awaits to sue Malcolm Rifkind for attempted murder in this control block.

Mental torture continues around me. I've had four serious beatings and the odd kicking as well. I have 'alleged' assault charges against me here and in Aberdeen; I've civil actions against the Secretary of State for torture in Barlinnie and in Inverness court cells. I've three appeals pending. All I can say in this hell, is greetings and solidarity to others in my position, courage, strength, determination. Fight Racism, Fight Imperialism. *Sammy Ralston*

Sammy Ralston is currently on hungerstrike in Peterhead. When he wrote this letter, he was on the 40th day. In April he staged a roof-top protest against prison brutality and the introduction of the poll-tax. Readers are encouraged to send messages of support to Sammy at 1221-88, HMP Peterhead Prison, Aberdeenshire, Scotland.

TERRY O'HALLORAN MEMORIAL FUND

The RCG has launched a Memorial Fund to commemorate Terry's life and contribution to the political movement in Britain. Terry played an important part in fighting for the rights of prisoners. The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund will be used to provide books and publications for prisoners at their request.

We plan to produce a special book plate for each book.

Please fill in the form below if you wish to donate.

I/We would like to donate £ _____ to The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Please tick the box if you would like a receipt

Cheques/POs should be made payable to 'The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund' BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

HOMEWORKERS

the invisible workforce



NETWORK

There are over one million homeworkers in Britain and the number is rising. Mainly women, on council estates, in the Asian and black communities, they sometimes work a 90 hour week for as little as 20p an hour. Contrary to popular notions of working for pin money, women who do homework are struggling to feed their families after ten years of Thatcherism as their communities face unemployment and lay-offs. This is the reality of Thatcher's Victorian values - families slaving in their homes for derisory payment.

AURIEL FERMO

THE 'INVISIBLE THREADS'

In *Capital*, Marx wrote about the appalling conditions faced by women and children enslaved by capitalism. Alongside the factory system, the capitalist 'sets in motion, by means of invisible threads, another army: that of the workers in the domestic industries, who dwell in the large towns...'. This hidden workforce, he said, provided the capitalist with thousands of workers who, being outside the factories, had no legal protection and whose isolation in their homes curbed their ability to organise resistance.

Marx described how the rate of TB amongst the 140,000 lace homeworkers rose from 1 in 45 in 1852 to 1 in 8 in 1861. Women and children were crammed into houses working from 6am to midnight in badly lit, unventilated rooms 'hardly ever giving their fingers a rest or slowing their motion... their work is like slavery'.

Homework has continued to exist. In the 1930s Lincolnshire women sorted dried peas on their kitchen floors and attached string to labels for 2d a gross. During the second world war, women made camouflage nets for army lorries, receiving 1s 6d per lorry. Barnsley women in the 1960s assembled electrical goods. In Leicester they sorted elastic suspenders.

THE THREADS STILL TIE

Today's crisis, which has marginalised unskilled workers, has particular-

NETWORK



ly affected women, especially those with no child care facilities. They provide a growing reserve army of labour to be exploited by capitalists eager to cheapen labour costs. June Tate of the West Yorkshire Low Pay Unit told *FRFI* that home working is

increasing: 'In the clothing trade where fashions change much more often, manufacturers must be more flexible and supply smaller orders. So they use homeworkers'.

Homeworkers produce anything from clothing, toys, household furn-

ishings, cleaning materials to medical garments, fireworks, shoes. They are paid for what they produce. As one homeworker addressing envelopes put it: 'To earn anything worthwhile you'd have to chain yourself to the envelopes'.

The Bradford area produces 70% of the country's greetings cards. Astorgreen Cards offered the Hussain family in Keighley between £3 and £5 to pack 1000 cards. Mr Hussain said it took more than an hour for his family of four to pack 1000. 'We did about four days work, spending every evening on the packing and earned £29.'

Nasim Begum of Bradford spends six hours a day packing cards and hopes to earn £24 a week. Whole families are paid £30 a week for packing 17,000 cards with young children working late into the night to help. Whilst the families get 31p per box Astorgreen sells them for £5.70.

HOMES BECOME SWEATSHOPS

Next, Marks and Spencers, Richard Shops, and the Co-op are just some of the big firms whose goods are made by sweated labour. In Birmingham, Saroj sews pockets on to trousers for 90p per pair. She works 56 hours per week for £20-£25. Her two-and-a-half-year-old son sits watching TV as she sews all day. Fatima, from the East End, was paid 45p for sewing a skirt which was later sold in Top Shop for £10. Helen was paid £8.50 for knitting a jumper that took 35 hours and was sold in London for £80.

There are grave risks involved in homework. The two-year-old son of a Southwark woman was crushed to death under mail order catalogues that she was packing. Homeworkers using glue suffer ill effects. One woman who stuck felt onto piano hammers developed leukaemia. Her doctor thought the glue, containing benzene, was probably responsible. Mohair knitters develop chest problems. Stress and long hours inevitably lead to illness but there is no sick pay or National Insurance benefit for homeworkers.

THE RESPONSE OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Homeworkers face considerable difficulties in organising to defend themselves. As June Tate put it: 'A whiff of trade union organisation sends the employer to the neighbouring estate'. Two Labour MPs, Alice Mahon and Keith Vaz are trying to reintroduce the 1978 Homeworkers Protection Bill to improve the condition of homeworkers. This bill stands little chance of success under the Tories. The Bill was defeated under the last Labour government. The Labour Party and the trade union leadership have traditionally given little attention to this most exploited section of the workforce.

This has led to bitterness amongst homeworkers. Russell Noble, an ex-trade unionist, now active in the Mixenden (Halifax) Homeworkers group, told *FRFI* that trade unions are 'always touting for members but they're not interested in actually doing anything. Trade unionists see homeworkers as a threat. The unscrupulous employer sees this gap, that the unions are not interested in homeworkers rights, and moves in more easily to exploit'.

In fact by failing to defend homeworkers the trade unions reinforce the divisions in the working class. Homeworkers are left to face appalling conditions and employers are given the option of switching production from unionised factories to non-unionised homeworkers.

Homeworkers have begun to organise themselves. The Mixenden group was started on an estate where women earned less than 20p an hour packing cards. Although the group has faced many difficulties it shows that homeworkers can begin to break down their isolation and organise collectively. ■

REVIEW

WORKING CLASS VERSE

Once I Was A Washing Machine: the working class experience in poetry and prose from the Federation of Workers and Writers and Community Publishers, with an introduction by Ken Worpole. 218pp, £3.95, ISBN 0 906411 02 5.

There are some very nice poems in this anthology. This is one of my favourites:

Rockpool

The tide is out
Leaving rocks
Grey as basking seals
Full-rounded curves
Contours of flesh
Soaking up sun
In between the curves
Fissures of rock
Secret female places
Their wet sides covered in soft pink
Seaweed light as hair
And further in the green fronds
And deeper still brown and thick and wavy
Fish striped like tigers dart
Tiny waves of pleasure across the pool
The water trembles with life and secret joy
For the tide that is coming in.

Maggie Hew

And yet I find myself left irritated and disappointed by the overall effect of this collection. Two poems on neighbouring pages by feminist writer complaining about washing men's socks gives a hint about my impatience. For although all the issues are here, old age, unemployment, poverty, racism, sexism, there is no spark of anger. The final impression is 'social workerist' rather than class individual melancholy rather than fight back. Perhaps this is because the poetry is, on the whole, very ordinary and predictable.

Of all the many things that poetry can and does, it must make the reader see the world with new eyes, experience old things in a new way. In his introduction, Ken Worpole suggests that this anthology tells the other side of the story of the way we live now. It says many things that some would prefer left unsaid. But these poems are not, on the whole, subversive. They are too pedestrian to carry the political weight that Worpole wants to put on them.

The most important thing about these poets and writers is that they meet together and have regular readings in pubs and clubs around the country. It is very cheering that working class people have the confidence and concern to keep poetry alive. And after all, poetry is as much sound as sense and needs to be heard aloud.

Some of the best poetry in Britain today is being written by school children. They have a wit and joyous and penetrating insight that testifies that it is the youth who have the visions. It is this same vision that makes poetry today from Africa and Asia and other oppressed nations so compelling. In these areas of the world a large percentage of the population is young, the movements of the people towards freedom are young and every struggle, every victory is savoured.

Unless £3.95 is not a lot to you, I would not recommend buying this book. It is a collection of poems by working class people but this is not the same as working class poetry. That will arise, as it did during the miners' strike when *Poems by Striking Miners' Children* was published, when there is a working class movement in this country. Then we will not need Arts Council grants but publish ourselves from and for the millions of people in Britain who have had enough of despair and turn towards socialism as the answer to their conditions of life.

Susan Davidson

Murder on the Rock – successful launch

LORNA REID

100 people attended the RCG's public meeting in London to launch our pamphlet *Murder on the Rock: How the British government got away with murder*, by Maxine Williams. The booklet is a powerful exposure of the murder of three IRA volunteers in Gibraltar in March 1988, the crude but effective cover up at the inquest, and the assistance given to the government by the British press, media and Labour Party to help it get away with murder.

'The technique of the big lie', used in the cover up of the Gibraltar Three murders, works, Maxine said, because people don't do anything about it. She accused the British Labour Party – who instead of challenging the government's obvious lies about the Gibraltar murders, congratulated the SAS for averting a major tragedy – of helping to fill the coffins of the three and of inflicting Thatcher on us for a few more years.

She exposed the role of the British press and media in helping to convey the Government's lies. The *Death on the Rock* programme was vilified in the press for refusing to go along with the big lie.

Maxine finished with this message, 'Let's ask, How do they get

rely on existing large political parties to defend the Irish people or to defend our rights in this country. It is in our hands.'

Mike Mansfield spoke about 'The silent society'. He said, 'You can bring about silence by shooting people dead. The other way of doing it is censorship and secrecy and doing away with the right to silence. The government is on the one hand taking away the right to silence and on the other hand is saying in public "Shut up".' He said that *Murder on the Rock* along with the NCCL and Amnesty International reports make an overwhelming case about the murder of the Gibraltar Three and their significance was that they were not remaining silent.

would never do anything decisive here in England unless it separates its policy with regard to Ireland most definitely from the policy of the ruling classes.'

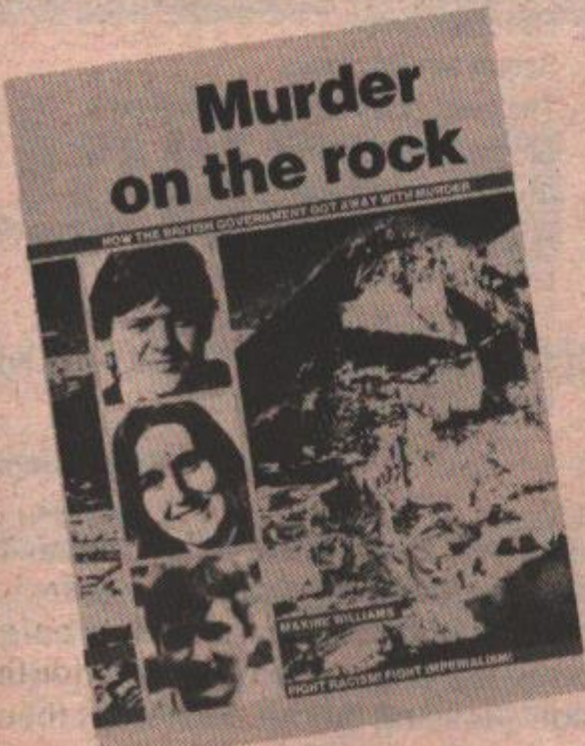
He explained that, while the British Labour and trade union movement has refused to see the connection between British policy in Ireland and the attack on civil liberties in Britain, the ruling class has been far more conscious of the importance of the Irish question for British politics and its own class interests. He showed how military and police tactics perfected in Ireland, by Kenneth Newman and Frank Kitson, to oppress the Irish people, were being increasingly used in Britain to suppress opposition.

'There is undoubtedly a connection between the suppression of the Irish people's struggle for freedom and the attack on our fundamental rights here in Britain. That is why it is vital even in these hard times for the socialist movement to continue to fight for the Irish people's right to self-determination in any way we can. It is essential to point out to the working class movement in Britain that making common cause with the Irish is the precondition for the advance of the socialist movement in Britain.'

'*Murder on the Rock* has been produced by FRFI as part of this process to ensure that the lessons will not be lost on future generations of the British working class. As the miners' struggle so clearly demonstrated, the British working class will be forced to learn first hand about the real character of the British ruling class and imperialist state. That is the time when they will begin to understand the importance of solidarity with the Irish peoples' struggle for freedom. They will learn what Marx told us long ago that "any nation that oppresses another forges its own chains." Our task is to hasten that day.'

He called on all those present to help us distribute the booklet. Messages of solidarity were received from the Winchester Three, the IRSP and Niall Farrell, brother of Mairead Farrell.

On the same night as the public meeting RCG comrades in Leeds sold 29 copies of the booklet outside a Wolfe Tones concert, despite attempts by the Chairman of the Irish Centre to prevent us selling. All the Wolfe Tones members bought one.



David Reed, editor of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, and Mike Mansfield QC joined Maxine in delivering a powerful message to the meeting on the need to build opposition to Thatcher's policy of murdering Irish people if we are to be able to defend democratic rights.

Maxine asked 'What kind of country is it and what kind of political opposition movement is it that allows its government to shoot people dead on the streets?'

John Stalker, former Deputy Chief Constable of the Manchester police who was prevented from completing an inquiry into shoot-to-kill operations in Ireland in 1982, was quoted: 'I also passionately believe that if a police force could, in cold blood, kill a 17 year old youth and then plot to hide the evidence, then the shame belongs to us all. It is the act of a Central American assassination squad.' She accused the British government of behaving like a Central American assassination squad when it murdered the Gibraltar Three and asked 'When are we going to be strong enough to stop them doing it?'

MURDER ON THE ROCK

HOW THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT GOT AWAY WITH MURDER BY MAXINE WILLIAMS

An in-depth FRFI investigation, the first by the left, into the Gibraltar murders. It shows that the Gibraltar Three were the victims of a deliberate shoot-to-kill operation masterminded by the British government. Essential reading for all people who are interested in the Irish struggle and who oppose the systematic attack on democratic rights in Ireland and Britain.

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away with it? How come they are not exposed? Let me put it this way, there is no easy road to freedom but there is a very easy road to tyranny and we have gone a long way down that road. To be on that road you need a compliant press that can be used by the government for disinformation, an opposition – the British Labour Party – which refuses to take up these issues and instead gives the Government backing when it needs it. It takes a working class movement that is steeped in a tradition of imperialism especially on the Irish question. All it takes to be on the road to tyranny is the lack of protest. The lack of opposition to the Gibraltar murders took us another step along the road.

'If we built an Irish solidarity movement it will be a great monument to the Gibraltar Three. We can't

He read out a list of programmes on Ireland that had been banned from British television since December 1987 and condemned the recent media ban on Sinn Fein and other republicans.

His message to the meeting was 'The moment you fear to speak, you fear to live... judging by the numbers who have turned up tonight I don't think any of you are going to be silent.'

David Reed, speaking for the RCG, said there were two related questions to answer 'How was it possible for the British government to get away with the murder of the Gibraltar Three? How has it been possible for Thatcher to systematically whittle away many of our basic civil liberties?' The answer, he said, was provided by Marx 120 years ago who wrote 'The English working class

RCG members fight for democracy in ACT-UP

Since March this year RCG members have been involved in ACT-UP – a group committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis. By May our right to participate was being challenged.

After an ACT-UP member with ARC (AIDS Related Complex) had received a threatening phone-call from a 'woman with an Irish accent', a not-so-investigative, investigative journalist advanced an analysis far and wide that went 'City AA has infiltrated ACT-UP... City AA is an ultra-left (Zircon Spy) satellite of the RCG... The RCG has connections with the IRA and hence the phone call'. Apart from being racist this is illogical. The basis for this smear was that Kayode had written an article for the ACT-UP newsletter on AIDS and South Africa that supported the Non-Stop Picket and that City AA had lent ACT-UP its megaphone for pickets of Texaco, Burroughs Wellcome, Pentonville Prison and the DSS office at the Elephant and Castle.

These smears and others were first

aired in the press in *Capital Gay* who wrote on 12 May, 'Founding members of ACT-UP said this new structure was a bid by a handful of people to take over the running of the organisation. Behind the scenes they singled out members of the Revolutionary Communist Party (sic), or City of London Anti-Apartheid...'

Unlike opportunism, AIDS does not discriminate against people on the grounds of their politics. The RCG has argued, alongside the majority of activists in ACT-UP, for an open democratic structure and against unaccountable self-appointed spokespersons.

At the ACT-UP meeting on 16 May, the two founding members and self-appointed spokespersons of ACT-UP denied making any such smears, but refused to allow ACT-UP to release a statement saying that they had denied them. They then resigned and in *Capital Gay* said 'we wish ACT-UP London well.'

A letter in 19 May issue of *Capital*

Gay from RCG member Dominic deals with accurately and in context the questions over ACT-UP's structures and the smears made against the RCG and City AA. He refuted claims of manipulation and stressed the need to build a democratic campaign.

Frontliners, the self-help group for people with AIDS and ARC, have also publicly dissociated themselves from ACT-UP in a misleading and inaccurate statement that stems from the same smears. It says that 'extreme elements' in ACT-UP were organising demonstrations that were against the interests of people with AIDS and calls on people to boycott ACT-UP.

Frontliners' opposition to ACT-UP appears to rest on the fact that ACT-UP is an action-orientated group. Frontliners' position is a tragedy and ACT-UP has committed itself to resolving the dispute with Frontliners and hopes to continue working with its members where possible.

The 20 May issue of the *Pink Paper*

quotes RCG member Richard, alongside *Gay Times* columnist Simon Watney, Maureen Oliver from OLGA, Jimi Somerville and Nick Partridge from Terrence Higgins Trust, all of whom are in contradiction with the Frontliners' statement and in support of ACT-UP.

The AIDS crisis has been fuelled by imperialist complacency, bigotry and profiteering. A fightback against AIDS is essential and there is a place in the fightback for the work of Frontliners, for the work of the Terrence Higgins Trust and for the work of ACT-UP. ACT-UP is a diverse, non-partisan group committed to direct action. ACT-UP engages in work that if Frontliners or Terrence Higgins Trust were officially involved in, they would face losing the grants which fund them.

The RCG is committed to supporting and building the enormous potential of ACT-UP into a successful national campaign against AIDS.

Dominic Thackray.

READERS AND SUPPORTERS GROUPS

LONDON

James Connolly and Jim Larkin – the role of revolutionaries in Irish history.

Speaker - Maxine Williams

author of *Murder on the Rock*

Wednesday 14 June, 7.30pm, Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1. (nearest tube Russell Square).

MANCHESTER

5 June *Murder on the Rock*. How the British government got away with murder 19 June Defending lesbian and gay rights.

3 July Victory to the Palestinian people.

All meetings take place at the The Millstone, Thomas Street, off Tib Street, Manchester city centre at 7.30pm.

RCG PUBLIC MEETINGS

MANCHESTER

TEN YEARS OF THATCHER

Wednesday 31 May, 7.30pm

Mechanics Institute, Princess Street, Manchester Admission: Door – 75p.

Tickets – 50p waged/25p unwaged available from FRFI, PO Box 80, Manchester M60 1RY.

BRADFORD

MURDER ON THE ROCK

Monday 19 June, 7.30pm

Bradford Central library

LEEDS

MURDER ON THE ROCK

Wednesday 21 June, 7.30pm

Leeds Trades Club, Chapeltown, Leeds

Communist Forum on South Africa

VICTORY TO THE NAMIBIAN PEOPLE

Film: 'Response to the South African escalation.'

Produced by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba for Cuban television, this film documents the victory at Cuito Cuanavale and President Fidel Castro explains the battle and its significance. Sunday 28 May, 6.30pm, Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1. Speakers: Cat Wiener and Trevor Rayne Admission: £1 waged/50p unwaged.

ACTION

Free Joe Doherty!

FRFI picket outside US embassy, Grosvenor Square, Saturday 17 June, 3pm.

Joe Doherty, an Irish republican, is fighting plans for his extradition from the US to Britain. 18 June is the beginning of Joe's seventh year in jail in New York. Joe escaped from Belfast's Crumlin Road jail while on remand in 1981. He was arrested in New York in 1983. He has never been charged with any crime in the US. The demonstration coincides with protests in New York and internationally.

Transport will be available from Manchester for the 16 June Soweto Commemoration in London. Contact Manchester FRFI for details.

For information of RCG meetings and activities in your area write to RCG, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or phone 01-837 1688.

Join the action join the RCG

- Take the side of all those struggling against imperialism – **Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built in Ireland in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine, Central America. Help us to do this – **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!**

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FRFI's editorial on Gorbachev's visit to Britain once again concentrates on an ideological critique of the 'Kautskyism' which it sees underlying Soviet foreign policy.

I want to begin by asking to whom is this addressed? Is it the case that large sections of the British working class (or even small ones) are in danger of being seduced by this Kautskyism? Are these sections about to consequently abandon their view that imperialism is inevitably warlike and instead succumb to the view that it can be pacified? Hardly likely, given that no significant section of the British working class has taken a stand against imperialism.

Is it then addressed to the liberation movements who, like SWAPO, are adversely affected by a more conciliatory period of Soviet-imperialist relations? If so, then this smacks of big brotherism. There have been several occasions, Cuba and Vietnam included, when anti-imperialist forces have disputed the Soviet interpretation of the correct way forward for their struggle. They disputed and got on with the task that confronted them, fighting imperialism, as any serious revolutionary movement would do.

Is it perhaps addressed to the Soviet leadership? If so then it is the flea admonishing the elephant. He will listen when the flea starts sucking some imperialist blood and proves that it is possible to build opposition to the imperialists in the heartland of the imperialist countries.

I ask these questions to emphasise my real point - that *FRFI* is not doing any great service to communists by continuing to dodge the real questions being raised by current Soviet policy.

The first of these is this: what material factors have caused the Soviet Union to embark on its *glasnost* initiative? The ideological expression of current policy must be a reflection of real material forces. In my view the

intense anti-Soviet offensive by imperialism since the beginning of the Reagan/Thatcher era has seriously aggravated the problems of the Soviet economy and forced a retreat. Reagan consciously decided to use economic pressure, caused by an accelerated arms race, to force concessions from the Soviet leadership and he has in part, at least, succeeded. We should not forget that under Reagan there was the largest increase in US arms expenditure ever in peace time. The Soviet economy and therefore the population has suffered enormously from this burden and cannot sustain it.

Surely this, barely mentioned in the editorial, is what we communists in the imperialist countries should concentrate on. We should have been far more active in opposing this strategy and in defending specific regions of revolution, such as Afghanistan, on which imperialism had concentrated its attentions. The editorial concedes that the Soviet Union was forced to withdraw from Afghanistan but gives a grudging mention to the continuing arming and supplying of the Afghan government. For ten years the Soviet Union alone stood with the small and undeveloped revolutionary forces of Afghanistan. It lost 20,000 troops in the process. What did we do?

Secondly, the RCG cannot go on for the whole of its existence without actually taking a well-worked out position on the Soviet Union. It still does not have one and therefore, in my view, succumbs to unhealthy and impressionistic pressures whenever it is forced to comment, as the editorial is forced to, on current events. The RCG should be working on the sort of historical and materialist analysis of this question that it has produced, to such good effect, on Ireland, the crisis, etc.

Thirdly, questions on Soviet foreign policy need looking at much more carefully. What has

been the motivating force behind Soviet foreign policy since the Revolution? It has had a chequered ideological history, but in practical terms has, although sometimes belatedly, stood with the oppressed against imperialism. Its primary concern has been to build international alliances against imperialism, sometimes (yes, even in Lenin's day) with regimes and governments not of crystal purity. Soviet leaders have argued, fairly consistently, that their primary international duty is to survive and to act as a beacon of hope to the oppressed and working classes of the world. Today it continues to do this with the aim of dividing and weakening the imperialist powers. Whatever their ideological weakness, Gorbachev's words and actions (*FRFI* should not take all that is said for diplomatic purposes as a Communist Manifesto) have begun to divide NATO.

This urge to survive and defend itself in the absence of significant revolutionary movements in imperialist nations, has lent the Soviet Union a different perspective on international questions from, for example, specific liberation movements. These thorny questions could once have been debated in a Communist Internationale, but alas, there is one no longer.

The Soviet Union has survived in a hostile world on the basis of the sacrifices of the Soviet people. It has done so, no doubt, with its share of mistakes. It has done so without a revolution of comparable kind in any country of its economic and strategic significance on a world scale. Perhaps that has slightly cut it off from the most optimistic of political developments in the past period, the growth of anti-imperialist forces worldwide. But none of this is an excuse for communists in the West to start attacking the Soviet Union. Only if you unreasonably expect that the Soviet Union can do everything alone, up to and including the destruction of

imperialism and the defeat of opportunism, can you today feel so cheated and aggrieved as your editorial indicates you feel.

No communist could do anything but wriggle uncomfortably at some aspects of Soviet ideological utterances. But wriggling uncomfortably, which is what I think the editorial does, is not a political answer. Come on, *FRFI*, let's see some serious politics. MAXINE WILLIAMS
London

The editorial in the last issue of *FRFI* (April/May 1989), *An examination of Soviet foreign policy*, continued the idealist trend evident in the RCG's two previous articles on this subject (*FRFI* August 1988; September 1988). That is, as I pointed out in my previous criticism (*FRFI* November-December 1988), it focuses on the theories, ideas and views of the Soviet leaders, here to such an extent that almost 1/5 of the article is mere quotation.

It is difficult to tell from the editorial whether the Soviet Union does materially assist the struggle against imperialism, as opposed to its leaders having mistaken 'views' about the nature of imperialism. A lengthy criticism of their views on South Africa and Namibia is counterbalanced only by a grudging acknowledgement that Gorbachev refused to end military aid to the Sandinistas. In fact, the Soviet Union spends six times as much on military aid to Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia and Nicaragua as does the US in its support for counter-revolutionary guerrillas in those countries (for further details, see my articles *The Soviet Union versus Imperialism*, January, February, March 1988).

The editorial is shamefaced anti-Sovietism. How long will it be before the RCG joins the rest of Trotskyist left in open anti-Sovietism? Yours fraternally,
PATRICK NEWMAN
London

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Support workers demands

Has Thatcher miscalculated in her attack on the working class? refer to the increase in militancy by some sections of workers ie. London Transport workers, British Rail workers, Power workers, Dockers, BBC workers, Fire Brigade workers etc. With the economy deteriorating the capitalist labour struggle will intensify as capital tries to increase profits and workers defend their living standards. Ten years of Thatcher have shown us that she is an expert (with the help of her majesty's loyal opposition) in dividing the working class and hence defeating most of her opposition. So has she miscalculated how to divide the above mentioned workers or is she trying to divide them at the lowest possible cost to capital or will she try to take on and defeat the unions?

Whatever the motives behind this the workers will have to learn the lessons from the past and split from the Labour aristocracy. Already Kinnock has told workers not to damage the (capitalist) economy and the trade union leaders are wanting to stay within the law. In her ten years of leadership, Thatcher has tightened up on 'legal' trade union activities to give her class an advantage. If workers want to fight to win they must fight on their terms which means disregarding the law and building wider support from the working class.

The workers' demands are not revolutionary but they should be welcomed and supported as the will have to take on the state and the Labour aristocracy to win. Yours in solidarity,
CAROL HOLT
Doncaster.

Fighting Section 28

An exhibition in Aberystwyth Town library documenting the effects of Section 28 has itself been censored under the section.

Three items have been removed from the exhibition including the introduction headlined 'Promote - Promote', an advertisement for local lesbian and gay discos and an advertisement for Shakti, a befriending agency for Asian lesbians, gays and bisexuals.

This type of censorship is intolerable and one wonders how long it will be in the present homophobic climate before one sees public burnings of such books as *Giovanni's Room* by James Baldwin or *The Naked Lunch* by William Burroughs.

Aberystwyth Area Action Against Section 28 intend to fight this censorship and restore the removed items to the exhibition. There must be a general fight to make Section 28 unworkable. Yours in solidarity,
LEIGH O'CONNOR
Aberystwyth Area Action Against Section 28

Elections in Namibia

The latest issue is superb, especially the editorial on Soviet foreign policy, the best criticism yet. Just a couple of my reservations on the latest issue. I'm a bit worried by some of the Namibian coverage. Our traditional policy of not taking sides in disputes between national liberation movements is something I think we can only apply in electoral terms when the elections are free and fair. Now this needs some explaining, I realise:

- free and fair elections imply as a minimum, as the ANC and SWAPO have repeatedly explained, one person one vote in a unitary state, and probably PR as opposed to the Westminster set-up. Crucially, it means that if a party gets the absolute majority of votes - as both the ANC and SWAPO would - it has the right to run the country and implement its programme, not that of its opponents.

- for a classic example of the 'power-sharing' fraud, see the *African Communist* (Third Quarter 1987) analysis of the PFP/Inkatha proposals for the 'Indaba'. This would have two

chambers, in one of which the white minority would have twice as many members as the African majority; the permission of the majority of the white members is needed for any measure that allegedly affects white rights; no properties can be expropriated except with full compensation in cash; and the clincher is that if a party gets an overall majority in parliament, it gets to nominate half the government; the other MPs nominate the other half. As AC puts it, if the PFP/Inkatha saw itself as the majority, it'd never have agreed to, let alone insisted on, this idea; the majority party the 'Indaba' was thinking of was the ANC, to which the proposals are a tribute, in their way.

- the Namibian elections are midway, at best, between free elections and the 'Indaba'; they certainly contain key elements of the latter, and especially Pretoria's insistence that two-thirds of the National Assembly are needed to write the constitution is a tribute to SWAPO of the kind the 'Indaba' pays to the ANC.

- now the two-thirds, as distinct from absolute majority

requirement, is a huge obstacle, even on its own; and with Pretoria insisting on a minimum voting age of 21, the exclusion of Walvis Bay and the inclusion of UNITA bandits, it may not be on its own. The Namibian elections differ from the 'Indaba' in the fact that a two-thirds majority can, at least, govern the country - its defeated opponents don't get half the government - but doing so is like winning a Grand National where all the fences are like Becher's Brook or the Chair.

What does it mean? In free elections, you'd have a SWAPO absolute majority, which would mean a SWAPO government; no doubt SWANU would get quite a few of the remaining seats. But can you imagine under the present set-up - let's say with Walvis Bay excluded, the UNITA bandits included, and maybe a minimum voting age of 19 or 20 (I can see the British or the US suggesting this as a compromise and the Soviets agreeing to it after a few days' insistence on 18) - something like 60%, shall we say, for SWAPO; 10% for SWANU; and 30% for Pretoria's puppets? SWAPO is going to

need another 6.666 etc per cent to write the constitution. Would SWANU co-operate in this? Don't get me wrong, I'm sure SWANU is a more significant force than it's given credit for, but we deceive ourselves if we reckon it's on a par with SWAPO. It seems to me our basic position should be to campaign for free and fair elections in which we would support all the liberation forces, but if these cannot be obtained and the present obstacle course is kept, to give preferential support to SWAPO, as the major liberation movement, which faces enough obstacles as it is. . . . MIKE WEBBER

It is an historical fact and a political reality that there are disputes between the Namibian national liberation movements SWAPO and SWANU. They cannot be wished away. The masses of the Namibian people will have their own experiences of struggle against which to assess SWAPO and SWANU. The RCG upholds the right of an oppressed people to self-determination. The content of our solidarity is that we support all liberation forces in Namibia - both SWAPO and SWANU - and we campaign for free and fair elections, so that the Namibian people can choose their own government, rather than

having it chosen for them by outsiders, however well-meaning. The Namibian National Front's view is that Namibia can best be defended from South African aggression through unity of all the patriotic forces: 'The NNF intends to expand its base by bringing other progressive parties into the front and shall be prepared to forge electoral alliances with other democratic political parties or groups should this be in the best interests of the nation.' What does a 'free and fair' election mean in the context of massive funds being poured in to support the pro-imperialist DTA? SWAPO is internationally recognised, and has launched an election fund appeal, supported by the OAU, to counter the DTA. But because of the prevalent sectarianism, SWANU is not known in Britain. It has every right to appeal for funding and other forms of support. For over 100 years foreigners have been telling the Namibians how to run their country. Communists must break sharply from that tradition. We must campaign in every possible way to stop South African and British imperialism from imposing their terms once again. The Namibian people have the right to decide their future, we cannot advocate the solution from Britain.

China and the world have been shaken by the massive demonstrations in China.

The death on 15 April of veteran Communist leader Hu Yaobang came close on the heels of the anniversary of the Tiananmen Incident of April 1976, a rally against the hated 'Gang of Four' which was suppressed with much bloodshed. It was closely followed by the 70th anniversary of the great anti-imperialist May 4 Movement of 1919, as well as 1 May, Labour Day, and the historic visit to China of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

The coming together of these important events allowed the memorial rallies for Hu Yaobang to develop quickly into massive demonstrations, as hundreds of thousands of people poured onto the streets of Beijing and other cities calling for democracy, a proper legal system and press freedom, denouncing corruption and demanding the resignation of China's top leaders.

As we prepare for publication, columns of troops have been turned back by the millions of demonstrators occupying Beijing, leaving the streets out of government control.

With the loyalty of the police, army and much of the Party and state apparatus in doubt, China's leaders face a severe crisis. Deep splits in the Party, Government and armed forces seem to be on the cards.

The developing events in China are of enormous importance for the communist movement internationally. *FRFI* opens a discussion and debate with this article by JONATHAN COHEN

China in turmoil

China is a socialist country - but it is one which remains very backward in its development of democracy and legality.

It is a feature of our imperialist era that socialist revolutions are occurring not in the advanced capitalist countries where the proletariat - the working class - is most numerous, but in oppressed countries where capitalism is relatively undeveloped and the working class, the guarantor of socialist democracy, is relatively small in number.

This is particularly true of China. At the time of the revolution, capitalism was confined largely to a few cities in the coastal region. China had no experience of bourgeois democracy at all. The Communist Party came to power with the traditions and experience of years of revolutionary struggle. However, the political methods of the People's Government were inevitably limited and affected by the background of feudal oppression and the reactionary white terror of imperialism's lackeys, the Nationalist Party (Guomindang). These factors made the development of socialist democracy and socialist legality in China an extremely difficult task.

The Communist Party in power was a benevolent ruler, but power also opens the door to privilege. Unchecked by democratic principles of election and recall, corrupt tendencies were bound to develop in the Party.

Considering that China was dominated by peasant agriculture and other small-scale modes of production, Chairman Mao Zedong observed:

'Lenin said that small production engenders capitalism and the bourgeoisie continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously and on a mass scale. They are also engendered among a part of the working class and of the Party membership. Both within the ranks of the proletariat and among the personnel of state and other organs are people who take to the bourgeois style of life.'

Mao repeatedly used the method of mass struggle and campaigns to combat these tendencies, *instead* of developing socialist democracy and legality. The 'Cultural Revolution', launched in May 1966, used the prestige of Mao and violent mass struggle. The targets of this campaign were overextended to include many good communists and innocent people, many of whom lost their lives, while corrupt elements seized the opportunity to climb up the ladder of power. Although the 'Cultural Revolution' was overturned in 1976, the people as a whole had been depoliticised by their bitter experiences and had become cynical about communism and about politics in general. This opened the doors for the capitalist restorationist tendency which has advanced rapidly over the last 13 years.

The de-collectivisation and other economic reforms instituted under



Deng Xiaoping's leadership did indeed lead to a great expansion of production at first, but they led on to a rich/poor polarisation and a capitalist sector which threatens to expand beyond the state's control.

These economic reforms have not been accompanied by democratisation. The 1979 unofficial Democracy Movement insisted that the 'Four Modernisations' would fail without a fifth - democratisation.

However, Deng's and his supporters' idea of democratisation has much in common with Margaret Thatcher's - their 'people's power' means decentralisation of economic power, putting it into the hands of a minority of privateers while the majority of the people find themselves increasingly dispossessed and ex-

ploited. This represents a capitalist tendency.

Now some elements of the privileged bureaucracy are rewarded with a stake in private enterprise as the state apparatus is cut down, while elements of the newly emerging private sector bourgeoisie are joining the Party. After all, they have got rich by following the Party line! Corruption and profiteering are rife. This has led to a polarisation in the Communist Party, with socialist and capitalist-leaning factions in bitter conflict.

Instead of coping with the root cause of social problems, the authorities have resorted to campaigns of mass arrests, rushed trials with no leave to appeal and widespread executions. These measures have broken the provisions even of China's

rather inadequate criminal law code. The whole mechanism of law is extremely weak, with a great shortage of trained lawyers.

One of the main demands of the present movement is for press freedom. Honesty - *glasnost* - is essential for monitoring the true situation to make democratic decision-making possible. While the Chinese news media have advanced greatly in this respect, they still have a long way to go.

In the past, instead of analysing the real reasons for the existing wealth, advanced bourgeois democracy and class peace in the developed capitalist countries, which are maintained by the brutal exploitation of the rest of the world, Chinese media presented a false image of modern capitalism as a Dickensian hell-hole. With a window now on the outside world, the Chinese people have been shown a deodorised version of capitalism. And by continuing to prettify the situation in 'third world' countries in general, especially those with whom China has friendly ties, like Egypt, Pakistan and Thailand, the media have obscured the filthy underside of the imperialist coin. Given this false image, it should come as no surprise that some Chinese intellectuals will have delusions about bourgeois democracy.

The mass movement of students will inevitably contain different trends, some of which will have bourgeois aspirations. This will become clearer when the students are forced to concretise their demands away from abstract and general demands for democracy to address the economic and political problems facing socialist China.

While the students' demands for democracy have been fairly abstract, the workers, on the other hand, have combined support for the students with protests about the economic situation. Parading pictures of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, they have shown that they are no friends of the capitalist tendency in China today. So bourgeois democracy is out of the question - socialist democracy is the one they want. There is no material basis for bourgeois democracy in a poor country like China - it is either bourgeois dictatorship or socialist democracy.

China is at a watershed. Inevitably the imperialist powers will seek to exploit its difficulties, nurture the pro-capitalist tendencies and foster counter-revolution. The political and economic crisis is tearing society and the Party asunder. The strength, organisation and unity of purpose of the working class, poorer peasants and communist intellectuals will decide which way things will go.

The visit to China of Mikhail Gorbachev and the normalisation of relations between the Chinese and Soviet Communist Parties are of enormous significance and will be welcomed by communists throughout the world. *FRFI* will be looking more closely at this development and what it means for our movement in a future issue.