

# FIGHT RACISMS! FIGHT IMPERIALISMS!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 99 February/March 1991

(unwaged 50p) £1

# STOP WAR

## GULF WAR SPECIAL

EDITORIAL · STOP THE GULF WAR · P20

... why the anti-imperialist, anti-war movement must be built on a democratic non-sectarian basis. Our programme of action for the campaign

GULF WAR FEATURE · P2/3/4/5

... a detailed analysis of the imperialists' war drive; why Labour opted for war; the media; the Palestinians; anti-war demonstrations around the world; the ecology of war and its costs; and a special feature on the miners' strike in Turkey, and the arrests of Turkish and Kurdish workers in Britain.

LABOUR PARTY

A PARTY FIT FOR IMPERIALISM · P6-7

... the Labour Party in the Middle East - a rotten record  
... The Labour Party and Thatcherism - Pigs never did fly

SOUTH AFRICA



REVOLUTION IN THE BALANCE · P8/9/10/11

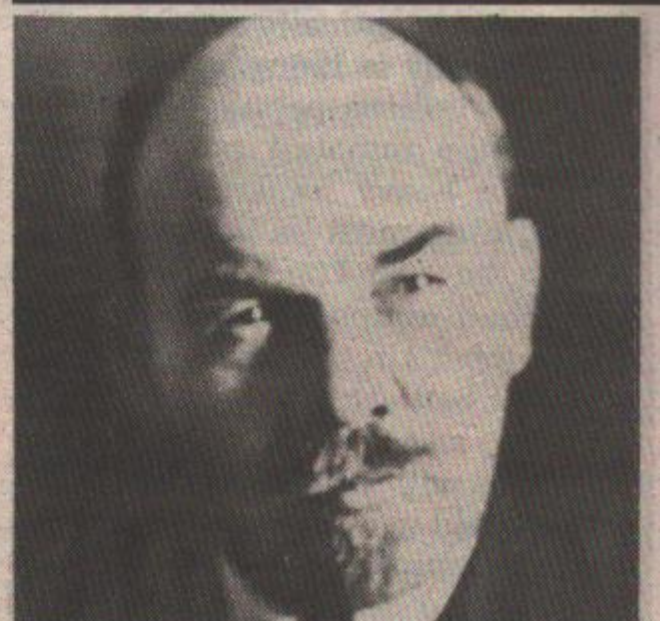
... David Reed and Richard Roques report back from the ANOC PAC and AZAPO conferences in December. Interviews, analysis  
REPORTING THE FRONTLINE · P11/12  
... an interview with the Deputy Editor of the *Sowetan* and a report from Death Row, Pretoria Central Prison

CUBA

CARRYING THE SOCIALIST BANNER · P16

... interview with Carlos Tablada

COMMUNISM



FOR LENIN · P17

... the attempts to destroy the influence of Leninism and our affirmation of the central principles of revolution



JON KEMPSTER

FOR THE DEFEAT OF US AND BRITISH IMPERIALISM!

VICTORY TO THE WORKERS AND  
OPPRESSED MASSES OF THE MIDDLE EAST!



**STOP  
GULF  
WAR**



# Operation Desert Storm – the bombing of Baghdad

# Imperialists go to war

**The attempted demolition of Iraq began under the cloak of darkness at 3am on 17 January 1991. By the end of just the first day of Operation Desert Storm Iraq had been subjected to a bombardment one and a half times more powerful than Hiroshima and double that which flattened Dresden in the Second World War. Days of unrelenting bombing, the biggest in history, will be followed by the use of ground troops against shell-shocked Iraqi troops.**

For the first time we are witnessing the full range of modern high-tech, conventional, imperialist warfare. Overwhelming force is the keyword. A massive technically superior military machine is being used against Iraq's 18 million people. To ensure against the remotest possibility of defeat or heavy imperialist casualties nothing must be left to chance. Hence the over 700,000 imperialist and allied troops, the 1,650 fighter and bomber aircraft, the 3,800 tanks and 129 battleships carrying cruise missiles, and the 1,000 US nuclear warheads with British and Israeli additions held in reserve. Hence on day one the dropping of 18,000 tons of explosives in 1,300 sorties and the firing of 100-plus cruise missiles (each costing £1m). This onslaught was designed to rapidly and completely destroy Iraq's capacity to retaliate. It failed – US, British and other aircraft have been destroyed and Iraqi Scud missiles have hit targets in Israel.

The obscenity of this war is cloaked behind the computer war games jargon of 'taking out' and 'pinpoint bombing'. They have reduced the horrors of war to a carefully censored 24-hour TV spectacle without a shred of honest information. Government ministers, armchair generals and Labour hacks blandly assess the success of 'our war'. We will not see the blood, the bones, the charred bodies. The extent of devastation, injuries and deaths is not, and if the imperialists have their way, never will be known. But we do know that Britain's role in this bloody slaughter has been second only to the USA.

#### **Why they are waging war**

What is this war about? Only fools would believe that the international gangsters of US and British imperialism have suddenly become converts to the cause of self-determination. If the Kuwaitis had no oil they

could weep until the deserts bloomed before the imperialists would aid them.

This war is about imperialist power, profit and oil. When they talk of 'stability in the Middle East' they mean the subordination of the Arab masses and Arab oil to the imperialists and their obscenely rich hireling Kuwaiti and Saudi sheiks. They mean the permanently enforced balance of power that keeps their only stable and reliable ally – their ghastly offspring Israel – stronger than any other nation in the region.

President Bush was clear: imperialist wealth must be defended against the threat posed by an Iraqi regime strong enough to assert its interests in the region – 'Our jobs, our way of life, our own freedom and the freedom of friendly countries would all suffer if control of the world's great oil reserves fell in the hands of Saddam Hussein.' And US Secretary of State James Baker said: 'The economic lifeline of the industrialised [imperialist] world runs from the Gulf.'

So we have seen imperialist war aims enlarged. First they were merely going to 'defend' Saudi Arabia. Then they wanted to 'liberate gallant little Kuwait' – a regime despised throughout the Arab world. A country whose citizens are so thoroughly spoiled by oil wealth that they failed to put up even a token resistance to the Iraqis. A country where 80 per cent of workers are immigrant Arabs and Asians forced to labour for a pittance. A country which has no elections and where the national pastime is shopping. A sort of Arabic Dallas. But one which keeps oil safe for the 'free world'.

Then the aim moved beyond liberating this paradise. 'Any withdrawal that left the Iraqi war-machine intact would be unacceptable', said the USA. However token Saddam Hussein's opposition to Zionism, the elimination of his regime would consolidate the reactionary alliance of imperialism, Zionism and the Arab bourgeoisie which had secured their control of the area and isolated the Palestinian and Kurdish revolutions.

As we go to press, it is too soon to tell how far the imperialists will succeed in their military and political aims. Their determined attempt to prevent an Iraqi strike against Israel which could draw Israel into the war and fracture the anti-Iraqi Arab alliance has already faced its first setback. It is not yet clear whether Iraqi forces will be strong enough to cause further serious problems and whether the Arab masses will rise up against the fate being planned for them.

#### **Who will rule the 'new world order'?**

This war has seen the greatest international coalition in history. Twenty-seven nations are ranged against Iraq. But the strains among the main imperialist powers are visible. The French, German and Japanese governments have proved to be less enthusiastic about launching war. Hence the last-ditch French-led European peace initiative to forestall hostilities. It was not a strong challenge but that it existed at all mightily upset the USA and its British corporal.

Since 1945 the USA has been the Big Brother of the imperialist world. It has used its overwhelming muscle to make the world safe for imperialist exploitation and ensure itself the biggest share of the loot. Only in recent years has it begun to face serious economic rivals in a German-dominated Europe and in Japan. This mounting rivalry was graphically demonstrated in breakdown of the GATT trade talks. The US is intent on using the Gulf war to reassert its dominance in the world and its control of Gulf oil on which Europe and Japan depend.

The question for Britain – ally with Europe or the USA? – which seemed to underlie Thatcher's demise has been for the moment roundly answered. Uncle Sam is the man for Britain and only those more far-sighted imperialist politicians like Denis Healey and Ted Heath have questioned this choice. In advocating caution, they have been conscious that Europe

could develop its own alliances and interests in the Arab world in which Britain could share. Shackled to a USA and Israel hated throughout the Arab world, this will not be possible.

The rumble of bombs in Iraq may be the prelude of greater storms to come. If the rivalry between the USA, Europe and Japan continues to grow, we or our children will see a war to redivide the world. And then those who live in imperialist countries and previously only watched wars on TV will come to understand the meaning of the term 'taking out' for themselves.

#### **Whatever happened to the anti-war movement?**

Never has there been a greater need for a massive anti-war movement. But where are the voices raised against war? Day one of Operation Desert Storm saw a packed House of Commons rallying behind 'our boys'. Hundreds of comfortable old men talked about the need for 'courage' and sacrifice.

What is there left to say about Kinnock and co? Wanting to safeguard British imperialism, wanting to court votes, terrified of being deemed unpatriotic if they so much as coughed during the war debate: 'Our forces are engaged in pursuing a legitimate objective and should enjoy full support across the political spectrum... Dictators don't withdraw they have to be defeated.' Thus said Kinnock the grammar schoolboy who knows his place, looks up to his 'betters' and glows warmly when they let him into their club.

In the USA, where they are fortunate enough *not* to have a large social democratic party, the Senate and House of Representatives were deeply divided. Already 1,400 anti-war protesters have been arrested and some have been imprisoned. With black people and other oppressed layers playing a far more significant role politically, a serious anti-war movement is developing. Not so in Britain.

Yet it cannot be said that it is the



Labour leadership that has prevented a significant anti-war movement. They are not contending for the leadership of anti-war sentiment, they are explicitly leading the war party. The culprits must be sought amongst those who have taken the leadership of the anti-war trends, primarily Tony Benn and the Labour Left. It may seem churlish to focus on Tony Benn given that he is one of the few politicians to oppose the war. But it must be said - he and his trend have prevented the building of an enduring and effective anti-war movement.

Through the five months leading to war the Labour Left's position, expressed by large CND demonstrations, was to give sanctions a chance. To starve the Iraqis rather than to bomb them. A week before war the CND, calling for more time for sanctions, organised a demonstration of 100,000. And when war came and the bombs fell, what could they say? They had led the anti-war movement up a blind alley.

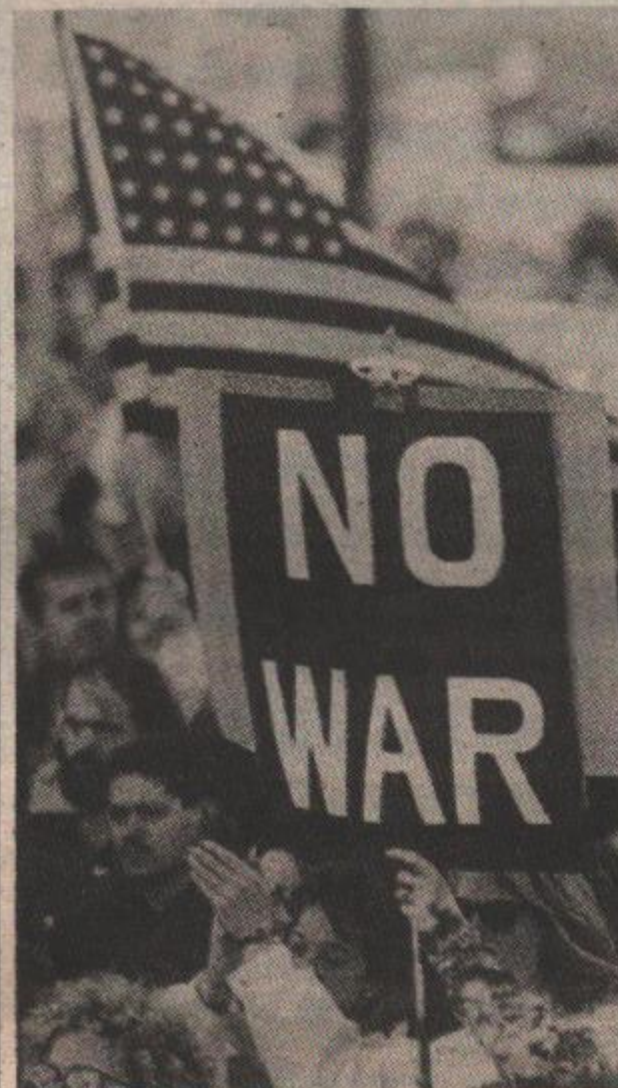
What does Benn's position represent? 'The consequences of the war in the Gulf could be... the Arab nations solidly united against the West.' He wants to oppose the war - for the good of imperialism! Hence his grotesque illusions in the United Nations' ability to secure a just solution. A UN which since the collapse of the socialist bloc has become an instrument of imperialist policy, and under whose flag the blitzkrieg on Iraq is being waged. With his call for sanctions and UN action what is Benn actually saying? That the oppressed can be kept down by peaceful means rather than war, that the current

world order can be defended by becoming a little more just?

This tired old rubbish persists because it has a purpose. People in the imperialist nations are faced with a choice. Many of them do not approve of the war, poverty and starvation which imperialism generates. To do something about it they would have to ally with those who directly suffer at the hands of imperialism. Or they can remain silent accomplices to imperialist oppression. The choice is stark. Today it is summed up in the question: 'Are you for or against imperialist intervention in the Gulf?' Benn invents a false but comfortable third option: a peaceful solution via the UN. At the same time he gives the Labour Party the entirely spurious appearance of being worthy of support from those opposed to the war.

In the Gulf war there is only one position which reflects both the interests of the Arab masses and of those sections of the British population who desire peace: Stop the War! Imperialist troops out of the Gulf! It won't build a mass movement tomorrow but then a mass movement that disappears when war is declared is not a great deal of use. It will however start to attract to its ranks the most consistent and enduring forces. It will provide a means of allying with and defending Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish people in Britain under chauvinist attack. It will be the beginning of a new trend in Britain. If it is not born now, in the midst of this slaughter, the future is bleak indeed.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS and  
MAXINE WILLIAMS



**For the defeat of US and  
British imperialism!  
Victory to the working class  
and oppressed masses of the  
Middle East!**

**STOP  
GULF  
WAR**

## British media plays war games

**EDWARD HEATH MP:** 'The real point is that the American press will print everything and American TV will cover everything as they did in Vietnam... If the information is covered in the American press it will be impossible to stop it being covered in our press and media...'

**MICHAEL MATES MP, Conservative:** 'I hope that my Rt Honourable friend is wrong and that it will not be impossible.'

HOUSE OF COMMONS 15 JANUARY 1991

**Napoleon said he would give three regiments for a single newspaper. What would he have given for satellite broadcasting networks, transnational news agencies and the entire output of the Murdoch-Maxwell press empires? Lest anything should slip by the customary collusion between editors and the Ministry of Defence, the latter, according to the NUJ, has imposed the strictest reporting restrictions ever. With the sole exception of *The Guardian* which gives some space to dissent, the British media have served as instruments of the British state's war effort.**

Their presentation of the war contains a calculated psychological operation to neutralise and immobilise opposition. This is the function of the triumphalism, the infatuation with weaponry, the illustrated maps, the repetitive themes of 'pinpoint accuracy' and 'minimal allied casualties', and the complete absence of any consideration of Iraqi casualties. Doctor Goebbels could not have written a more effective score for the Nazi Blitzkriegs: he lacked the enormous means that modern monopoly capital orchestrates.

Goebbels operated on the principle that a lie told often enough will be believed. Lies like the 'pinpoint accuracy' of the same weapons which flattened the hospital in Grenada, bombed the French embassy in Tripoli and deposited a US paratroop regiment in a swamp in Panama. Goebbels massaged his audience with sentimental schmaltz combined with poisonous racism. Schmaltz like the boy soldier's faces framed by Union Jacks; schmaltz like the obligatory vicars praying for an early victory. Schmaltz like the distressing scene of an Israeli family inspecting its damaged furniture while Iraqi homes go unseen. Racism like *The Sun* and *Star's* 'fealthy tricks by Jacques', 'the Euro-cowards', 'spineless appeasers' as they described the European efforts to pursue diplomacy instead of war. 'Today when you go shopping, boycott that Italian spaghetti, French bread... and all the rest of that foreign muck', the *Daily Star*.

Too crude? Then try this from educated, liberal Hugo Young in *The Guardian*: 'Just as in 1982 the war cabinet speculated endlessly on whether the Spanish (fighting) or Italian (retreating) side of the Argies would show itself, their successors wonder how to assess rival Arab predictions that the average Iraqi is a quitter.'

Goebbels turned the master race into superhuman heroes, icons, the



WAR GAMES 1990

**'It was exactly like the movies'**

**'Baghdad was lit up like a Christmas tree. It was tremendous! I haven't seen anything like it since a 4th of July party years and years ago'**

**'I feel like a young athlete after his first football match'**

AMERICAN FIGHTER PILOTS

stuff of myths. 'Top Guns' like 'Our Heroes' in the *Sun*, *The Terminators*, *True Grit* etc as the pilots return recounting bombing missions as if they had just been playing video arcade war games.

The British media are competing to celebrate the obscenities of war. They show the fascist heart of finance capital. Progressive and democratic people everywhere must give not regiments but sacrifices, money, time, effort and whatever it takes to find out and distribute the truth about the war on Iraq and the Middle East.

TREVOR RAYNE

## 'regardless of its reservations' Labour chooses war in the Gulf

**Shortly before the imperialists launched their war against Iraq, Kinnock and Kaufman adjusted the tone of the Labour Party's Gulf policy. The initial bellicose language gave way to a request that sanctions be given more time to work. Nevertheless, the Labour leadership gave its full backing for any US-British assault, 'Labour will support British soldiers if a war starts, regardless of its reservations about the timing...' Kinnock endorsed the government's right to dispense with sanctions as ineffective, 'It is in the nature of such information that it is available to governments and to the military leadership.'**

Tony Benn descended to the ridiculous and claimed: 'There is without doubt a major shift in Labour opinion.' However it appears that 'Labour opinion' was too feeble to in any way influence the Labour Party or Labour leadership who supported every step taken by British and US imperialism. It only required that such steps be endorsed by the UN. The UN obliged. It endorsed war and thus the Labour Party backs war.

Kinnock and Kaufman rate electoral interests far more heavily in the balance than principles or disposable lives. Above all they must keep up an appearance of being 'fit to govern' in the eyes of the capitalist media and the electorally decisive middle classes. When opinion polls showed increasing doubts about the prospect of imminent war and its horrific consequences, the Labour leadership judged a modification of tone electorally sound. At the same time such a stance would draw Labour closer to Euro-

pean imperialism which fears that the war may provoke anti-imperialist risings throughout the Middle East.

Labour's record shows that it led the charge to the Gulf and that there has been little dissent within its ranks. Just five days after the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, Kaufman demanded a UN military response, armed blockade etc. In September's House of Commons debate only 35 MPs voted against the government. At October's Labour Party Conference the vote went proportionately 7:1 in favour of the dispatch of British troops. Tony Benn was even prevented from speaking. At December's Commons debate only 42 MPs voted for a Labour Left resolution which 'declines to support' a military attack. At the 15 January Commons debate the number of MPs voting against rose to only 57.

Just as war was breaking out Kinnock managed to adopt a position to the right of John Major's! During the

15 January debate Kinnock insisted that if war broke out it could only end when Iraq withdrew from Kuwait, laid down its arms and obeyed international law. John Major was satisfied with Iraq just withdrawing.

The Labour Party's position today is consistent with its long, disgusting and wretched pro-imperialist foreign policy:

**VIETNAM:** 'We have repeatedly said... that we support US policy in Vietnam'. Harold Wilson, 1964. A year after US saturation bombing had begun the 1966 Labour Party Conference threw out a motion critical of US policy.

**FALKLANDS/MALVINAS:** 'Our first concern in the Labour Party... must be for their safety and their success', CND veteran and the then Labour Party leader, Michael Foot. Tony Benn and the Labour Left preferred to 'strangle Galtieri' with sanctions.

**LIBYA April 1986:** Kinnock pledged the Labour Party's support for action 'to bring down a curtain on Gaddafi's reign of terror' and to ensure that 'his external and internal power is squeezed to nothing'. Kinnock preferred sanctions to the bombing raid which could 'result in a loss of influence by the US and Britain even with moderate Arab regimes'.

The Labour Party is a vicious defender of British capital and the privileges it grants a substantial section of the British working class. These privileges are secured at the cost of the lives of the masses of humanity oppressed by imperialism. Labour's position on the Gulf war shows again that it is just as prepared to defend these privileges with war as the US Senate or the Conservative Party.

TREVOR RAYNE



# STOP GULF WAR

## Protest round-up

No sooner had news of the imperialist attack on Iraq run around the world than spontaneous anger burst upon the streets of most of its major cities and towns. US and British buildings were attacked, their national flags set aflame. The following is a record of just some of the protests on 18 and 19 January.

■ In **SIDON** and **BEIRUT**, thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians danced in the streets when they heard news of Iraqi missiles hitting Israel. 'Let them give the Israelis a taste of what they have been inflicting on us for years' said a 50-year-old woman. Across the Arab world people celebrated. In **TUNISIA** people danced with joy and in **SYRIA** they expressed open support for Iraq despite their government's pro-imperialist position. No surprise then that the US are desperate to keep Israel out of the war!

■ In **ALGERIA** 400,000 demonstrated.

■ In **YEMEN** 100,000 people chanting anti-imperialist slogans marched to the US, British, Egyptian and Syrian embassies.

■ Thousands of people in **BANGLADESH** took to the streets shouting 'Down with Bush' and 'Crush the imperialist forces'.

■ In **PAKISTAN** police used batons to disperse Muslim militants marching towards the US embassy in Islamabad.

■ Moroccan workers in **GIBRALTAR** burnt a Union Jack at a converted barracks hostel.

■ Over 2 million Spanish people stopped work and many thousands of school children and students joined protests against **SPAIN's** involvement in the war.

■ Tens of thousands took to the streets in towns and cities across **GERMANY**. Many others stopped work in protest. Over 10,000 children blocked traffic in Berlin's main shopping mall. Elsewhere in the city rocks and bombs were hurled at police guarding the US embassy.

■ In Niamey, **NIGER**, 5,000 students chanted 'Down with Bush!' Western diplomatic missions were under heavy guard throughout the region.

■ Hundreds gathered in **MOSCOW** and **LENINGRAD** to condemn imperialist attack and protest against Soviet policy. Arab demonstrators chanted 'The Soviet Union has betrayed us'.

■ South African police arrested 70 people from a group of Muslims demonstrating outside the US embassy in **CAPE TOWN**.

■ Fighting took place between mounted police and demonstrators blocking major road junctions in **AMSTERDAM**.

■ The **BELGIAN** government banned the use of Palestinian flags on demonstrations.

■ In Quito, **ECUADOR**, students hurled incendiary bombs at a branch of Lloyds Bank. Two French schools in the city were closed after receiving threats.

# Palestinians know their enemy

Thousands of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, Lebanon, Syria and the Middle East as a whole danced with joy on hearing that Iraqi Scud missiles hit targets in Israel. Fairweather 'friends' of Palestine were shocked. They claimed that by antagonising the US and enraging Israeli public opinion, the Palestinians had destroyed all chances of US help in obtaining justice from Israel. Palestinians, however, know their enemy. Their long and bitter history has taught them that they can expect nothing progressive from Zionism or from the USA.

The collapse of the socialist bloc, the end of the Cold War and now the massive imperialist invasion of the Gulf only embolden the Zionist thieves and murderers. They form the foundations on which they are preparing the 'final solution' to the Palestinian problem: the genocidal expulsion of Palestinians from Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Accompanying the murder, the maiming and the terror with which the Zionists have attempted to suppress the three-year-old Palestinian uprising has been an equally sinister process of Zionist colonisation and land grabbing. In the three years of

the Intifada, the armed Zionist settler population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has increased by 30,000 to 100,000. Fascist Housing Minister Ariel Sharon has announced plans to build a Jewish corridor of 13 new settlements along the 1967 'Israeli' border.

Besides intensifying the isolation of the Palestinian revolution, the collapse of the socialist bloc has provided Zionism with a massive human resource. In 1990 200,000 Soviet Jewish immigrants arrived in Israel and the figure for 1991 is expected to reach 500,000. These will be shock-troops for a new round of Zionist col-

onisation. They bring with them scientific, engineering, industrial, medical and educational skills which will be put in the service of Zionist expansionism.

Already the 120,000 migrant Palestinian workers from West Bank and Gaza Strip are being replaced in Israel by these new immigrants. The next target, no doubt, will be other Palestinians legally resident in Israel. And then the massive shortage of housing in 'Israel' will be used to encourage tens of thousands of these immigrants into the West Bank where they will displace the Palestinian people.

These reactionary genocidal tendencies have been accelerated since the US invasion of the Gulf. In defiance of international law, the Zionists have resumed the policy of deporting Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. On 26 December 1990, three leaders of the *Jewish Underground* death squad convicted of murdering three Palestinian students and attempting to murder the nationalist Mayors of Nablus and Ramallah were released from prison. This has given a green light to unofficial Zionist fascist forces to commence a terror campaign to drive Palestinians out of the West Bank and Gaza.

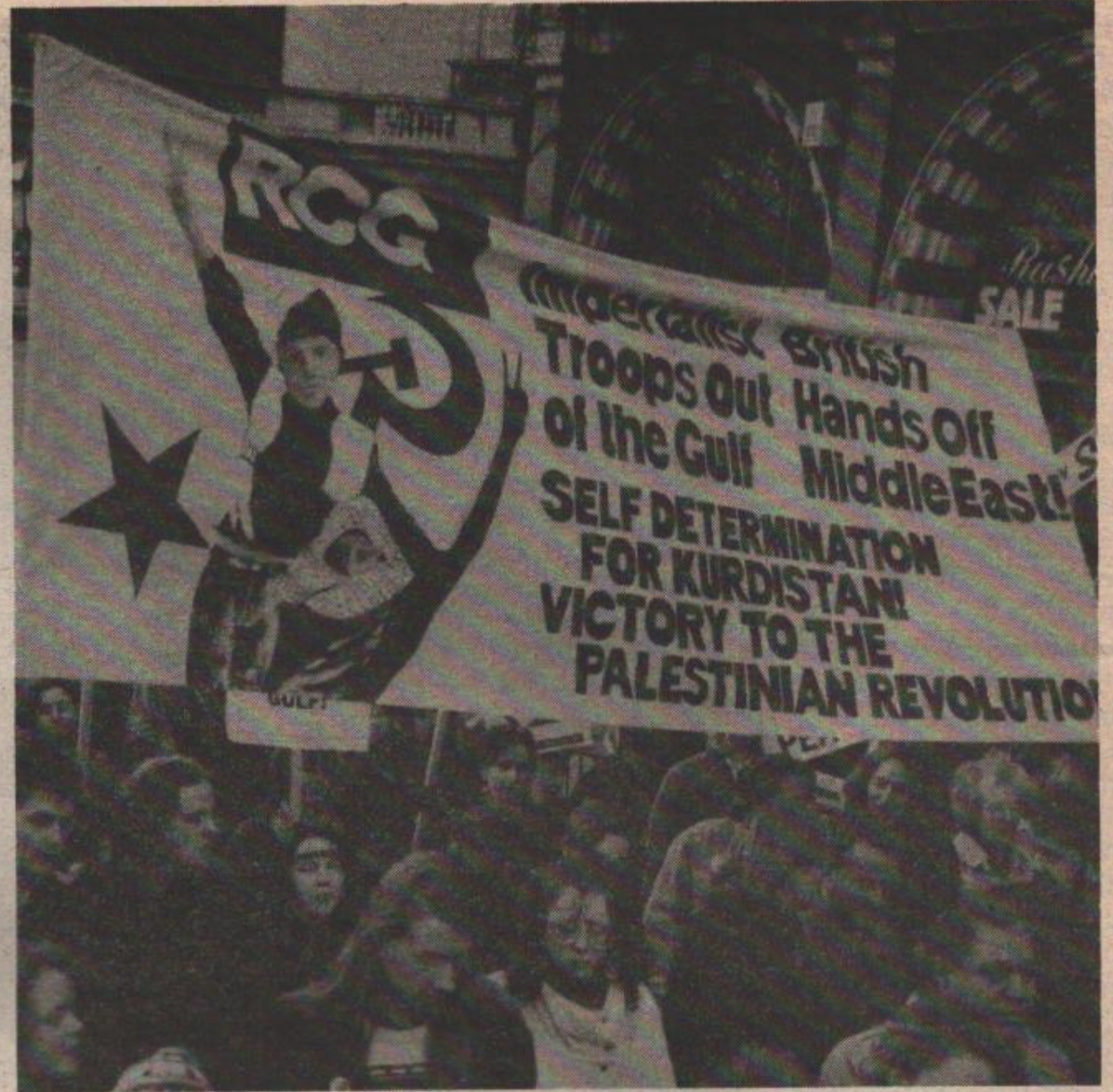
Indeed on 28 December the *Zionist Avengers* took up where the *Jewish Underground* had left off and shot three Palestinians including a one-year-old child. Coming on top of the official terror - the mass arrests, the shootings, curfews and massacres such as the Temple Mount murder of 21 Palestinians - these developments indicate what Zionism has in store for the Palestinian people.

Neither before nor since the Gulf crisis and the collapse of the socialist bloc, has imperialism shown the slightest interest in ending Zionist aggression. For nearly 25 years, a UN resolution demanding the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza Strip has lain on the table gathering dust. Each year the US supplies the Israeli state with \$4bn aid. As Operation Desert Storm was in preparation, Israeli authorities refused to supply Palestinians in the Occupied Territories with gas masks. And just one day before the attack, fearing Palestinian solidarity with Iraq, they imposed a blanket curfew throughout the Occupied Territories and closed down all schools and universities.

Palestinians know well that progress can only be achieved through battle against imperialism. That is why today they are prepared to fight and die alongside the Iraqi people to defeat the US-led coalition.

GAVIN SCOTT

EDDIE ABRAHAMS



The RCG joined the CND march of 100,000 people protesting against war in the Gulf on 12 January

## Panama - Operation 'Just Cause'



The results of US 'pinpoint accuracy' bombing by 'Stealth' aircraft on Panama City. Thousands died in the US invasion in December 1989

## On the streets in Britain

In the days before and after the US and British attack on Iraq, the RCG participated in dozens of demonstrations and protests across Britain. In all our work we were and are attempting to cement an alliance with anti-imperialist forces which can act as a focus for activists determined to build an enduring anti-war movement.

■ In London on the 12 January 100,000 strong CND demonstration, the political work of the RCG brought together, in an impressive anti-imperialist contingent, a number of Kurdish and Turkish organisations: Devrimci Sol (Revolutionary Left), Solidarity Defence Campaign with Turkish and Kurdish People, Solidarity Committee With Striking Miners in Turkey and the Turkish Revolutionary Communist Party. In Scotland, RCG comrades participated in the 40,000 strong protest in

Glasgow, while in the North West our banners were with the 15,000 who marched through Manchester.

■ On Tuesday 15 January, the day of the UN deadline, the RCG again united with Turkish and Kurdish organisations in an impressive Hands Off the Middle East Committee demonstration. Due to RCP subterfuge, the demonstration ended not at the US embassy or Trafalgar Square but in some wealthy residential quarters. The RCG and its supporters however proceeded to join demonstrators in Trafalgar Square and then marched on to Whitehall.

■ On 17 January, the day the imperialists went to war, the RCG participated in a picket of the US embassy in London before marching to Trafalgar Square and then to Parliament Square. RCG members and supporters also participated in protests in Manchester, Dundee, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Nottingham.

## Destroying the earth - Some ecological consequences of the War

US and British scientists, warning against war in the Middle East, show that it could cause crop failures in the Middle East, Asia and South East Asia on which over 1,000 million people depend.

John Cox, a chemical engineer and consultant to a major oil company and Vice President of CND, said that if hundreds of oil wells were set ablaze they could produce about half a million tons of smoke and soot per month.

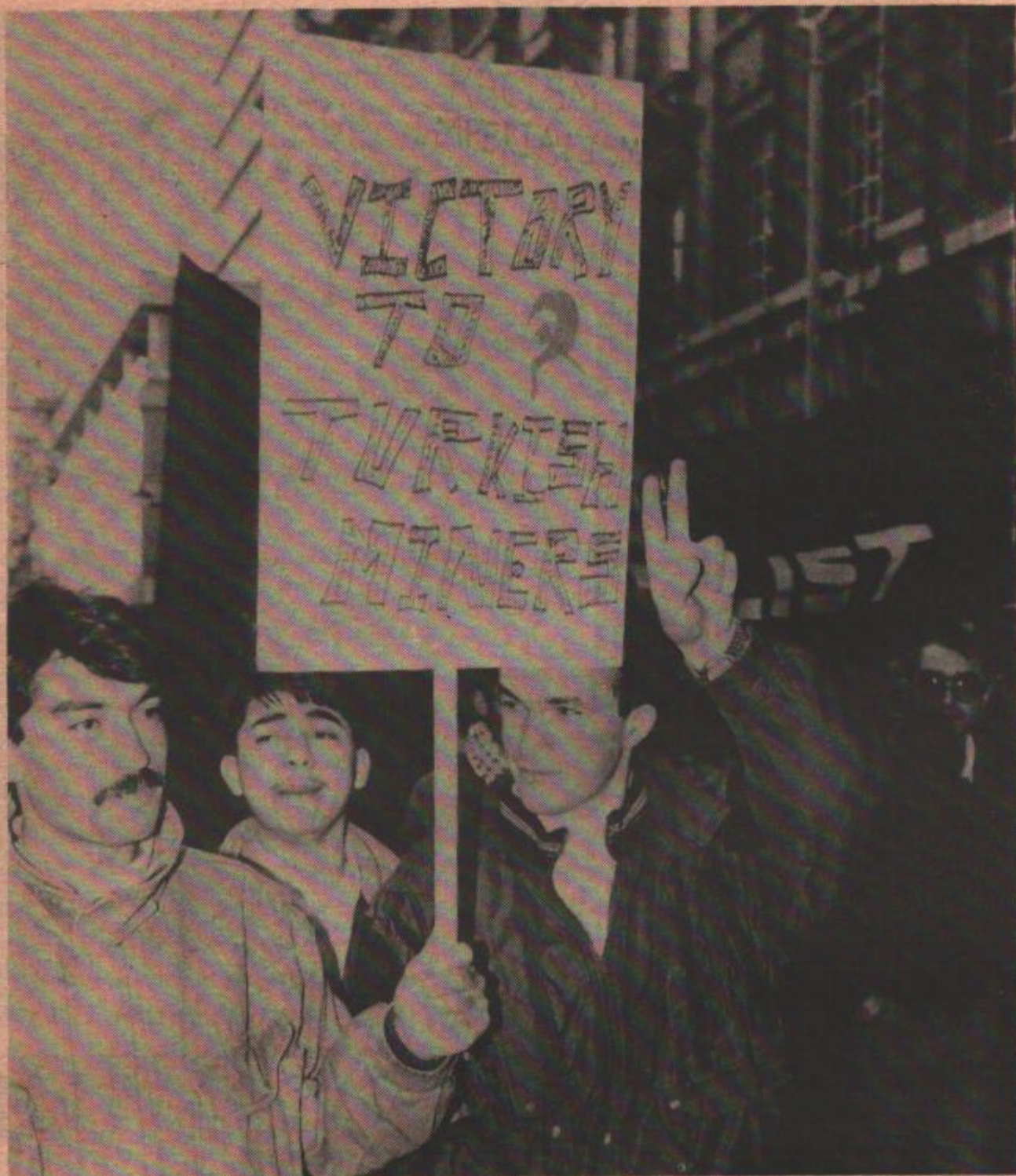
According to Richard Turco a leading US climatologist this smoke and soot could shade up to 100m square kilometres - more than a fifth of the planet's surface. Both Turco and Cox agree that this could lower summer daytime temperatures in the mid-latitudes by up to 20 degrees centigrade. This would prevent the heating of the Indian sub-continent that is necessary to produce the monsoon winds that bring the rains that sustain the crops in that region.

Alan Thorpe, a climatologist at Britain's leading centre in the field, the University of Reading, said: 'These fires would get extremely hot and the air above them would act like one vast thunderstorm system. The smoke would undoubtedly travel up very high.' A year-long oil well conflagration within this sensitive micro-climatic region could influence the onset, duration and character of the monsoons. 'Even a partial failure could cause more deaths than the total populations of Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia combined.'

The British Meteorological Office which is part of the Ministry of Defence announced on 5 January that it had started to research the claims made by these independent scientists. But John Wakeham, Secretary of State for Energy, immediately stated that they are 'hypothetical scenarios' and 'misplaced'. An anonymous civil servant revealed to Tam Dalyell that many of Wakeham's advisers were 'extremely angry' that he 'materially misrepresented' their advice and 'rubbed' the figures given. Clearly the British authorities will stop at nothing to cover up the possible consequences of the horrific war they are conducting. Gone are their 'green' credentials.

GAVIN SCOTT





JON KEMPTER

# Solidarity with miners' strike in Turkey

**Turkey is witnessing a mighty revival of the workers' movement since the defeats imposed by the military coup in 1980. On 1 December 48,000 miners in Zonguldak went on strike. At the end of December 105,000 metal workers followed their example, and 200,000 paper and textile workers are also preparing to take action.**

The miners action was historic. It was the biggest all-out strike since the coup. There were several massive demonstrations in Zonguldak, including one of 100,000 called in response to the government's threat to use the danger of the Gulf War as an excuse for banning the strike. Demonstrators marched on the capital, Ankara; 6,000 women took to the streets; shops in Zonguldak were closed for two days in solidarity and parents did not send their children to school for three days to show their support. The government threatened pit closures and brought tens of thousands of soldiers and police to the region from other provinces.

On 3 January 1991, six and a half million workers took part in a general strike. Striking transport workers - train, bus and boat - brought the country to a standstill. To show their solidarity with the striking workers, many shopkeepers, including some in Kurdistan cities, kept their shops closed for the day. In the cities of Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and Adana students demonstrated in support of the strikers and even some civil servants engaged in a 'go-slow'. The professional associations of teachers, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, architects and civil engineers also

pledged their solidarity. Opposition MPs boycotted parliament for the day and some joined the strikers in Zonguldak.

Over 1,000 were arrested during the demonstrations in all major cities. Anti-government and anti-Gulf war slogans were chanted during the general strike.

The miners' union, Gemel Maden Is, decided to send 700 buses with workers to Ankara to protest directly to the Presidential government. In response to government sabotage the miners' union decided to march the 286 kilometres to Ankara. On 4 January, the first day of the strike, 60,000 miners' wives and women supporters marched at the head to Ankara. The march gathered tremendous support from every town along the route but was stopped by armed force from reaching Ankara. For the moment the strike has been suspended as a new round of talks begins.

The miners need money and solidarity to keep up their struggle. A committee has been set up in London to build solidarity between British workers and the miners in Turkey and to collect money to support their struggle.

Will your trade union branch, shop stewards' committee, or other org-

## Counting the cost of war

**The actual cost of Operation Desert Storm remains a closely guarded secret, but informed estimates put it at between \$600m and \$1bn a day. Tom King, Secretary of Defence, claimed that the cost to Britain was £3-4m a day. The Financial Times estimates total costs at \$20-30bn a month.**

Each loss of one US F-18 fighter aircraft represents a loss of \$25m to the Pentagon. Each air-to-air missile fired is another \$500,000. Each Tomahawk cruise missile represents a loss of \$1m.

The cost in lives and destruction to Iraq is incalculable.

The imperialists are prepared to spend such vast sums on war and destruction whilst hundreds of millions in the Third World face the prospect of poverty, hunger, disease and death, and millions in the imperialist nations face unemployment, poverty and homelessness. The money being spent on this war could at one blow eliminate the threat of death by starvation that looms for 20m people in Africa and could begin the process of forever eradicating hunger and disease worldwide.

The money that the British government spends in a single week would eliminate homelessness throughout Britain. Just as the British government embarked on this destructive war it announced a rise in unemployment of 80,400 - the biggest monthly increase in a decade - and the CBI declared that fixed capital investments will go on falling this year and in 1992. Official unemployment in Britain is likely to reach 2.5m by December.

In the United States too, it is the working class who will pay for the war. The US Federal Budget was already heading for a \$325bn deficit. Now it will be even less able to halt the growing banking crisis which is threatening to shut dozens of companies across the USA. At the same time as the war began Eastern Airlines, the eighth largest in the USA, ceased operations and began laying off 18,000 workers. The company folded following losses of \$600m in 1990 - the sum spent by the imperialists in a single day of killing.

This is the capitalism which a year ago announced its triumph to the world. ■

## Airbase in Turkey used for Gulf War

The US-Turkish airbase at Incirlik in southern Turkey is being extensively used to mount the bombing operations into Iraq. The fascist Turkish government had no hesitation in allowing Turkey to become the second front in the war. The Turkish parliament also authorised the use of Turkish troops outside national borders.

These actions will fuel the anti-war feeling which is widespread in Turkey.

## Police attack Turkish and Kurdish strikers

**In recent years London has become a home for tens of thousands of Turkish and Kurdish workers who earn a meagre living toiling in North London textile sweatshops. Bringing with them revolutionary internationalist traditions, they are increasingly forming a significant politically organised contingent of the working class in Britain.**

With the development of the crisis in the Gulf and the Turkish government's support for US and British imperialism, the Turkish and Kurdish communities and their political organisations have stepped up their participation in the Stop the Gulf War campaign. This must be causing serious concern to the British authorities who will attempt to destroy their political organisations and seek to isolate them from the democratic and communist forces in the British working class.

The first opportunity for the British state came on 3 January when the notorious Stoke Newington police were unleashed.

On 1 January a committee was formed to build support for the 3 Jan-

uary general strike in Turkey by sending delegations around local East London factories and shops. The action was very successful. About 2,500 clothing workers, including some of English and other nationalities, joined the stay-away, and many shops remained closed for the day.

Around midday, many of the strikers went to the Halkevi (People's House) community centre for a meeting. A journalist from the mainstream Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet* (Freedom) asked a group of strikers to go outside and pose with placards for a photograph. It was at this time that four van loads of police arrived and attacked the strikers. They first grabbed five people, then attacked everybody with truncheons, kicking and beating those who fell or lay on the ground, and invaded the Halkevi centre. 26 people were arrested and one woman was sent to hospital with a broken leg.

Twice in the course of the afternoon, groups of people went from the Halkevi to Stoke Newington Police Station, gathering on the other side of the road. There they were again attacked, and more arrests were made, making 64 altogether. Charges include police obstruction, actual bodily harm and violent disorder.

RCG supported the police station picket and on subsequent days helped with interpreting, photographs and legal advice. One man described how he and others had their heads bashed against the wall of the police van, and had been beaten again in the

station. A police doctor had refused even to look at their injuries. Our friend said: 'After seeing all these things, I don't believe there are any human rights in England. I saw that there is no difference between Turkey and England.'

Stoke Newington and Hackney police are notoriously racist and violent. In the past 20 years, six people have died at their hands - Asseta Simms, Michael Ferreira, Simon Collins, Franklyn Lee, Colin Roach and Tunay Hassan, while in 1987 Gary Stretch and Trevor Monerville were nearly killed by police beatings.

On this occasion as there was a strike, the police were of course eager to support the factory owners and attack the workers. The most vicious attacks were carried out by Bow Territorial Support Group (TSG), some of whom had been involved in attacking Turkish strikers at Bacton Fashions in Hackney last February (charges of riotous behaviour and ABH from that incident were later thrown out of court and the four workers arrested are suing the police). The defence of the 64 comrades arrested is a critical task. It must be taken up by all democratic and progressive forces and must be an integral part of the anti-war movement.

JONATHAN COHEN

For further information contact: Unit 1, Miller Terrace, London E8 Tel 071 923 4138 or: Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU Tel: 071 249 8086, ask for Mark or Joan

# STOP GULF WAR

anisation sponsor this committee. Can you pass the following resolution?

'This trade union branch/shop stewards' committee/other organisation supports the strike of the miners in Turkey for a decent living wage, in defence of their jobs and for the right to strike and political freedom. We agree to sponsor the Solidarity Committee with the Striking Miners-Turkey and to donate £\_\_\_\_, hold regular workplace collection and invite a speaker from the Solidarity Committee.'

Send copies of the resolution to the Solidarity Committee at the address below and to the Union: Gemel Maden Is, Sendikasi, Zonguldak, Turkey. If you have access to a fax machine, the number is 010 90 381 366 35. Send donations to: Solidarity Committee with Striking Miners-Turkey, c/o Trade Union Support Unit, Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 4AU.

## RCG

### Public Meetings

**For the defeat of US and British imperialism! Victory to the workers and oppressed peoples of the Middle East!**

London:

**Tuesday 29 January 7pm**  
Islington Central Library, Holloway Road, N5 (nearest tube Highbury and Islington). Admission: £1/50p waged/unwaged. Speakers: RCG; Turkish and Kurdish organisations.

Manchester:

**Tuesday 5 February 7pm**  
The Millstone, Thomas Street, (off Tib Street), Manchester City Centre. Admission: £1/50p waged/unwaged. Speakers: RCG

Dundee:

**Thursday 14 February 7pm**  
Meeting Room, Central Library, The Wellgate. Admission: £1/50p waged/unwaged. Speakers: RCG.

### Hands off Middle East Committee Conference

## Hands off the Middle East!

Saturday 2 February  
10am-5.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1  
Admission £5/£2 unwaged

Hands Off Middle East Committee to which RCG is affiliated meets every Monday evening at 7.30pm, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2

## ACTION

For information about forthcoming demonstrations, rallies, meetings and other Stop the War activities write to us: RCG, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX or phone: 071 837 1688.



# THE LABOUR PARTY AND THATCHERISM: PIGS NEVER DID FLY

The end of Thatcher has not occasioned unrestrained rejoicing on the Left. Until November last year, the prospect of Thatcher, through her increasing isolation, handing electoral victory to Labour on a plate seemed almost certain. Suddenly, all that has changed. The political difference between the two Front Benches is now almost imperceptible. In these circumstances, the middle classes, who always determine the outcome of an election in bourgeois democracy, are more likely to prefer the devil they know, and this is confirmed by the immediate Tory recovery in the opinion polls. ROBERT CLOUGH examines Labour's electoral prospects and the Left's illusions.

Another five years of Toryism? Panic ensued in the left. Paul Foot, writing in *Socialist Worker* the week after Thatcher's resignation, recognised that 'The electoral optimism of the Labour leaders is as fatuous and fragile as was their electoral pessimism in 1988.' The lesson of this was: 'If Labour wants to win, it has got to start fighting, not with silly parliamentary phrases and set speeches but with the full fury which the Tories deserve - and which people can believe in.'

Never mind the substance - so long as people can believe in it! A lengthy article on the 'Resistance that broke Thatcher' in the same issue concluded that 'Eleven and a half years of this dogged resistance broke the back of the right wing Tory offensive'. But if it is true that all this 'resistance' has 'broken the back' of the Tory offensive, why is there a dreadful fear that the party with the broken back is going to waltz away with the next general election?

The reason is quite clear, even if it is unstated: it is Labour's record in opposition. On not one single major issue have they seriously opposed the Tories. On several occasions, when Thatcher was indeed threatened, Labour support saved her bacon.

## 1. LABOUR CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS DEALINGS WITH THE IRISH PEOPLE

In 1981, Don Concannon urged the people of Fermanagh not to vote for Bobby Sands, and then went to tell him on his death bed why Labour did not support the hungerstrike. Having signed Charter 80, recognising the demands of the hunger strikers, the pink charlatan Tony Benn remained silent as the ten hunger strikers were murdered.

In 1982, Michael Foot supported the banning of Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison after they were invited to London by Ken Livingstone.

In 1983, Kevin McNamara, opposing the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, said: 'Ordinary decent coppers using ordinary decent police methods apprehended those responsible for the Birmingham outrages.'

In 1987, Neil Kinnock defended Airey Neave and Captain Nairac against the 'unfair allegations' that they had been involved in the 'Clockwork Orange' dirty tricks campaign.

At the end of that year, Kinnock visited Ireland to say that Labour would never have any links with Sinn Fein, and even to caution Charles Haughey against using the extradition issue to obtain reforms of the Diplock Courts.

In 1988, Labour congratulated the Tory government on the murder of the Gibraltar 3. It abstained on the vote to renew the Prevention of Terrorism Act just after the European Court of Human Rights had ruled that detention of suspects under the seven day rules was a breach of the Convention of Human Rights. Kinnock attacked Thatcher as 'culpable' in the failure to extradite Father Ryan. In

December, the NEC stated 'the Party has never declared the Birmingham 6 or the Guildford 4 to be innocent. It does not believe the Party is in a position to declare them innocent.'

## 2. LABOUR HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED THE INTERESTS OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD

In 1982, Michael Foot said of the Falkland Island task force: 'Our first concern in the Labour Party as in the country as a whole must be for their safety and their success.' Tony Benn wanted (as ever) more time for sanctions to work, although (as ever) he agreed on the fundamentals: 'There is unanimity in the House on the question of opposing the aggression of the Junta. There is also unanimity on the right of self-defence against aggression.'

In 1990, Kaufman denounced the Tories as 'slack, lax and negligent' in their drive to war in the Gulf, and boasted that Labour had insisted on Iraqi war reparations fully one month before the Tories took it up. Benn wanted sanctions, and was unanimous as ever in opposing 'aggression' against British interests.

## 3. LABOUR HAS CONSISTENTLY UNDERMINED THE STRUGGLE TO PROTECT DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

In 1982, the Labour Left won the GLC election through its Fare's Fair campaign on public transport fares. When the Law Lords ruled that this campaign pledge was illegal, Livingstone's GLC keeled over without resistance.

The Labour Party has aided the erosion of civil liberties in Britain. Its craven support for the brutal tactics of the British state against the Irish people and the British miners paved the way for Tory laws attacking democratic rights, such as the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and the Public Order Act.

In 1984, Kinnock ordered Liverpool Labour Council not to set an illegal rate; indeed, he went even further and tried to get it to implement a rate increase of 60 per cent, saying they 'would do best . . . to stay in the positions to which they have been elected so that they can mitigate, protect and dilute the effect of central government planning.'

The same year saw Kinnock denounce Black Sections in the Labour Party as 'divisive' and 'serving the continued festering of racist attitudes.'

In 1986, Kinnock replaced Les Huckfield with nonentity George Howarth to defend Knowsley North in a by-election, and then used the police to keep local party activists out of his pre-election rally.

In January 1987, Kinnock supported the banning of the *Secret Society* TV programme on the Zircon spy satellite, whose existence and £500 million cost were kept secret from Parliament: 'I would have done the same. The government are right to seek to take the action to prevent publication, wrong to fail to ensure all the angles were covered' - an article by Duncan Campbell in the *New Statesman* escaped the ban.

The same year, Kinnock removed a black candidate in the Vauxhall by-election in favour of a white one.

## 4. LABOUR HAS CONSISTENTLY ATTACKED THOSE WHO HAVE RESISTED THE TORY OFFENSIVE

In 1981, it condemned the uprisings against police racism and brutality. Tony Benn the pink charlatan said: 'The Labour Party does not believe in rioting as a route to social progress nor are we prepared to see the police injured in the course of their duties.'

Labour condemned the mass picketing organised by the NGA in Warrington at the end of 1983 against Eddie Shah.



Miner beaten by police: 'Violence . . . disgusts union opinion and divides union attitudes'



Neil Kinnock

In 1984, Kinnock demanded the NUM organise a national ballot on the strike to defend jobs and communities, and condemned miners for defending themselves against the police: 'Violence, I do not have to tell this Congress . . . disgusts union opinion and divides union attitudes . . . and is alien to the temperament and intelligence of the British trade union movement.'

At the Labour Party conference that year, Kinnock denounced Militant as 'maggots' and 'aliens'.

During 1988, Labour made clear that it would oppose non-payment of the Poll Tax in Scotland. It refused to offer any support for strike action by nurses.

In 1989, Hattersley condemned the Risley Remand Centre uprising: 'No one should either defend the violence at Risley or react to it in a way which might incite similar action in other prisons.' A jury thought differently, finding the prisoners not guilty.

In 1990, Kinnock hoped that those arrested in Trafalgar Square as they defended themselves against the police 'should be dealt with severely', whilst Hattersley on TV said 'I hope there have been a substantial number of arrests and the sentencing is severe . . . exemplary.'

The same month found Hattersley urging the use of 'forcible tactics' against the Strangeways prisoners, which in local Labour MP Bob Litherland's hands became a call 'for the SAS to take over'.

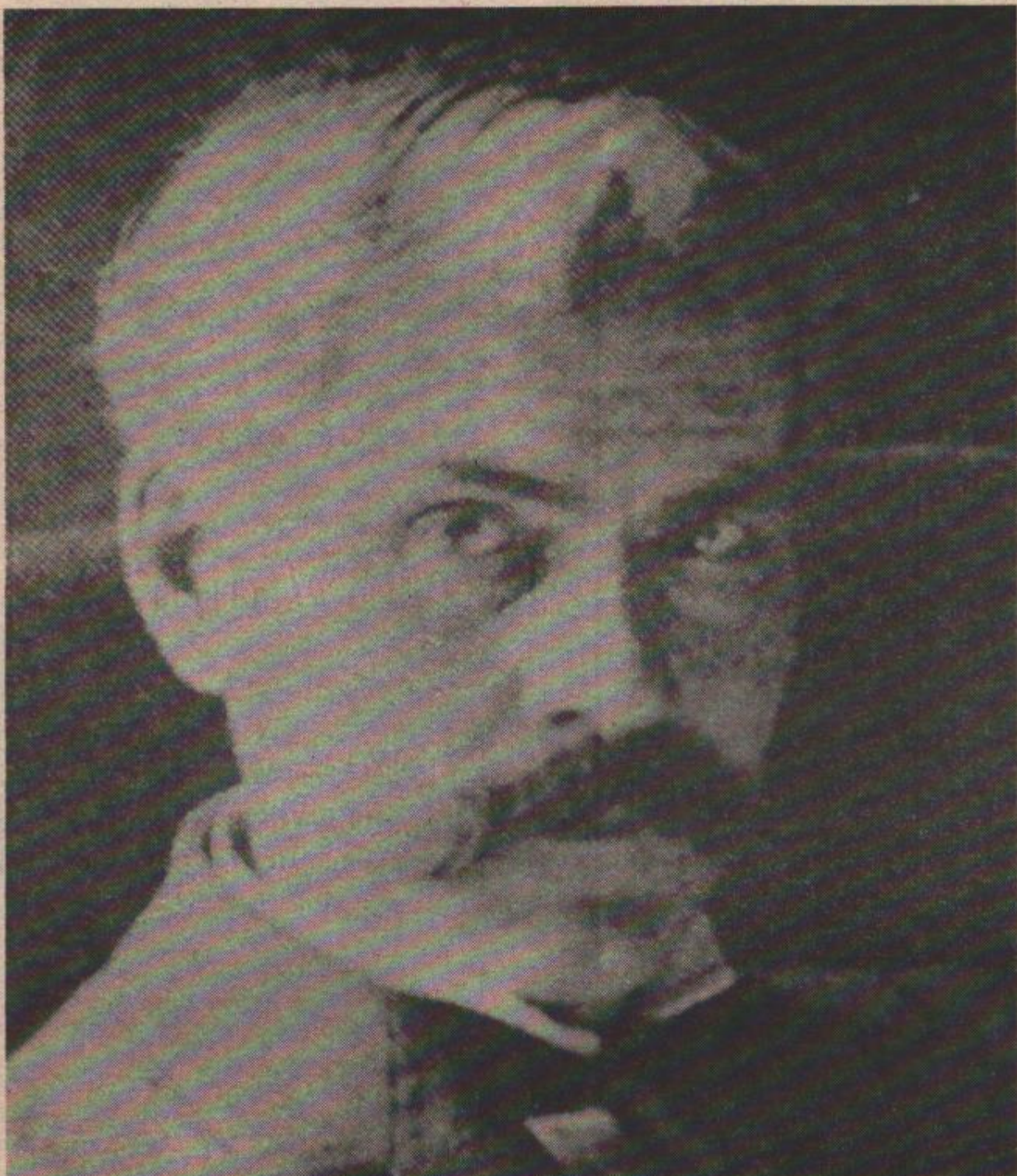
'Labour must fight' - the call echoes throughout the left, because they share Paul Foot's need to have something they can believe in. Never mind the record - it is of far less importance than the need for Labour to be returned to office at the next General Election. Paul Foot's views are of significance because the SWP, unlike much of the Trotskyist left, is organisationally independent of the Labour Party. But when Labour lost Govan to the SNP at the end of 1988 over non-payment of the Poll Tax, Foot described it as 'ghastly news', complaining that 'the Labour Party is founded on the working class . . . when workers in large numbers shift their allegiance from a working class party to a petit bourgeois party, there is not the slightest comfort for any of us.' By sustaining the fiction that Labour is a working class party, Foot two years later can indulge his hope that Labour will represent that interest and stand up to the Tories.

This hope was reinforced by John Molyneux in his 'Teach yourself Marxism' column in the New Year issue of *Socialist Worker*. The disgusting performance of Labour has obviously caused some sensible comrades to question why the SWP should call for a vote for Labour. Even at this point, when Labour is cheering on a holocaust that will spell death and misery to millions of workers, Molyneux invites us to suppose that it still remains a 'workers' party', and that there is a choice to be made between it and the 'bosses' Tory Party'. 'We vote with our class against the class enemy,' he intones. 'To do otherwise would be to cut ourselves off from our class.' Evidently 'our class' does not include non-white people living in far away places whose political experience of Labour is the bomb and shell it has so willingly endorsed.

The petit bourgeois left has always used the existence of left MPs like Benn or Livingstone as an excuse to justify their hopes for Labour. Yet it took Patrick Duffy, an unknown backbencher, to protest against the murder of Bobby Sands; a Labour right-winger, Dick Douglas, to resign over opposition to non-payment of the Poll Tax, and a complete maverick, Tam Dalyell to urge reservists to resist the call-up for the Gulf. The propensity of left MPs to cut and run when the pressure is on has been one unchanging feature of the Thatcher years. That trend is now so paralysed that it has been unable to play any role in the anti-Poll Tax movement. When it summons demonstrations on the Gulf, it relies completely on the petit bourgeois left to provide an audience. Attendance at its annual Socialist Conferences has dwindled from over 2,000 in 1987 to 500 in 1990, most of whom were from the left groups if they weren't open reactionaries from eastern Europe. In short, the traditional Labour Left survives as a shell mediating the relation between the petit bourgeois left and the Labour Party. Benn needs Foot to provide the troops; Foot needs Benn to have something to believe in.

Labour fury is what Foot wants to see; the record is that Labour fury has been dished out in generous measure for many years now - against the Irish people, against miners, against the Militant, against Poll Tax demonstrators, against Argentina, against prisoners, against Iraq. What chance then that this fury might be turned on the Tories? To even put the suggestion invites ridicule. It is for this reason that we have to tell Paul Foot: pigs don't fly. ■





Ramsay MacDonald, leader of the first Labour government in 1924

**The Labour Party supports the war with Iraq. Their preparations for this started as soon as Iraq invaded Kuwait, when Kaufman called Thatcher's response 'slack, lax and negligent'. It continued at the Labour conference when pacifist opposition was trounced 7 to 1, with Kaufman revelling in the fact that he had called for Iraqi reparations fully one month before Thatcher. Kinnock made it quite clear that 'Labour will support British soldiers if a war starts, regardless of its reservations about the timing of the use of force.'**

ROBERT CLOUGH

What of the Labour Left? 55 of them voted against a war, but they remain in favour of the use of sanctions. In other words, their dispute with Kinnock is not over aims, but means. This tiny gesture, however, which demands no sacrifice of themselves whatsoever, has proved quite enough for the SWP to hail their 'courage' in opposing Kinnock's naked militarism.

What of this 'courage'. It is not two years ago that Tony Benn said that 'the Labour Party is not and probably never was a socialist party'. That has had no practical consequence for him, even now when the Party has endorsed a holocaust throughout the Middle East. Indeed, the only outcome is that the left has felt obliged to leap to its defence. For instance, John Molyneux in *Socialist Worker* argues that socialists still have to vote Labour because 'notwithstanding its bourgeois leadership, Labour remains at base a workers' party'.

This begs the question: under what circumstances would the petit bourgeois left break with Labour and organise openly against it? Fifty years ago, George Orwell wrote: 'In a prosperous country, above all in an imperialist country, left-wing politics are always partly humbug'. He condemned the 'anti-fascism' of the British left of the time because it always ignored 'a far vaster injustice' - the British Empire. He went on:

'What we always forget is that the overwhelming bulk of the British proletariat does not live in Britain, but in Asia and Africa. It is not in Hitler's power, for instance, to make a penny an hour a normal industrial wage; it is perfectly normal in India, and we are at great pains to keep it so... This is the system which we all live on and which we denounce when there seems to be no danger of its being altered.'

If we look at Labour's record on the Middle East, we can see that the

'humbug' has always existed, even until today.

#### THE 1924 GOVERNMENT

The 1924 Labour government refused to end the military occupation of Egypt, a nominally independent country. Ramsay MacDonald made clear that Labour would not give up control of the Suez Canal, 'the foundation on which the entire defence strategy of the British Empire rests', and he refused to allow the issue to be referred to the League of Nations.

The same government imposed a Treaty on Iraq which gave Britain control of its foreign and fiscal policies, allowed British forces to be stationed there at Iraqi cost, and, in the event of war, gave Britain control of all Iraqi resources. Meanwhile, it used the RAF to bomb villages where there was opposition to British rule, claiming in parliament that this had not caused any deaths because of warning leaflets dropped in advance!

The 1924 government also refused to sell its 50 per cent stake in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to Shell because it might lose the control of Persian oil which would be crucial for the operations of the Royal Navy in war.

#### THE 1929-31 GOVERNMENT

The 1929 government was no different. Negotiations with Egypt over the Suez Canal were re-started, but collapsed within a year over Labour's continued insistence on the need to garrison the Suez Canal. The Treaty with Iraq was re-negotiated to give minor concessions in the face of Iraqi nationalist opposition; as the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Passfield (the former Sydney Webb) explained:

'It may be asked, why do we want an alliance with Iraq at all? ... The answer to that question is, I think, that an alliance is vitally necessary in order to secure Imperial interests ... There is no other means of securing that unfettered use in all circumstances of our strategic air route, of adequately safeguarding our position at the head of the Persian Gulf.'

That government used troops to sup-

# THE LABOUR PARTY BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND THE MIDDLE EAST

press a general strike of Palestinians in autumn 1929. Hundreds of Arabs were shot, nine were hanged, and draconian legislation approved which, amongst other things, made anti-imperialist agitation punishable by life imprisonment. It then facilitated Jewish immigration to Palestine to a degree which the apostle of Zionism Chaim Weizmann described as 'undreamed of' and which he regarded later as 'decisive' in the formation of the settler state.

#### THE 1945-51 LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Labour refused to withdraw British troops from Suez unless the Egyptian government accepted a new 'mutual defence' pact which would allow Britain unfettered use of the Canal. In the meantime, it ignored the provisions of a 1936 Treaty which stipulated that a maximum of 10,000 troops could be based in Suez: in 1949 a mere 80,000 were stationed there.

Labour policy in Palestine was first to abandon in practice the rabid Zionism that had been approved at its 1944 Party Conference but then, when that proved untenable, to abandon the Palestinian people to the settlers which it had tried to oppose. The Left, under the leadership of Nye Bevan, consistently supported the

Zionist demand for the partition of Palestine, on the grounds that this would be the most effective way of securing British interests in the region. Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary did not differ on the primacy of British interests:

'His Majesty's Government must maintain a continuing interest in the area, if only because our economic and financial interests in the Middle East are of great importance to us... If these interests were lost to us, the effect on the life of this country would be a considerable reduction in the standard of living... The British interests in the Middle East contribute substantially not only to the prosperity of the people there, but also to the wage packets of the workers of this country.'

However, his attempts to prevent partition in favour of an alliance with puppet Arab regimes was forestalled by US imperialist support for the Zionists.

Not that Bevin did not do his best to secure British interests in the Gulf against the rival claims of the US. He attempted to impose yet another Treaty on Iraq to ensure that British military bases could be kept there; al-

though signed at Portsmouth in 1948 a near-uprising of protest in Baghdad forced the puppet regime to reject it.

The plunder of Iranian oil demonstrated the truth of Bevin's statement about the contribution the region made to British prosperity. From 1945 to 1950, total Anglo-Iranian Oil Company profits were £250 million, compared with an Iranian revenue of £90 million. In 1950 alone, AIOC netted £32 million profits after paying £50 million in taxes to the British government and £16 million royalties to Iran. After failing to get substantial gains through renegotiating the oil concessions, the Mossadeq government nationalised the AIOC in 1951. The Labour government organised a world-wide embargo of Iranian oil, and immediately doubled production in Kuwait to compensate. There were those such as Morrison and Shinwell who wanted 'sharp and forceful' action.

However, the majority realised that economic sanctions were a safer way forward, particularly in the absence of any support from the US. In the end, the sanctions worked: the Mossadeq government was destabilised and then removed in a coup that brought the Shah to power.

#### 1964-70 AND 1974-79 GOVERNMENTS

The 1964 government was responsible for the routine use of torture in Aden against NLF suspects; George Brown as Foreign Secretary explained it 'had operated with considerable success' following its exposure by Amnesty International. In 1964, Healey stated that the policy of the government was 'to retain the base in South Arabia, for so long as it is required to serve the interests we have in common.' Labour was only forced to withdraw by the military action of the NLF, after committing 17,000 troops in an attempt to contain it.

The 1974 government used the SAS to destroy the national liberation movement in Oman, in alliance with forces sent by the Shah of Iran. It succeeded where it had failed in 1968-70, despite its earlier use of the RAF against the freedom fighters. In 1979, Labour did all it could to support the Shah when he himself was threatened by a mass popular revolt, with David Owen as Foreign Secretary being particularly forthright.

#### LABOUR: A WORKERS' PARTY?

Each and every time Labour has been in office it has pursued Britain's imperialist interests with as much dedication as the Tories. It endorsed the enslavement of Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Persia, Aden and Oman, using whatever methods were necessary to maintain that subjugation. Its position today is but a continuation of that tradition, justified with the same ruthlessness. 'Probably' never a socialist party? 'Probably' is an understatement. Then a 'workers' party'? Maybe - if you are prepared to ignore the Iraqi, Iranian, Kurdish or Palestinian proletariat. But this would merely say more about your ability to swallow any kind of humbug than anything else. And the conclusion always is that no matter what bestiality Labour commits, the John Molyneux of this world will still be queueing there at the ballot box, ready to prove they are not cut off from a privileged, ever-so-British working class. ■



Bombing Iraq in 1924, one squadron leader describing the operation said: 'Air Control' is a marvellous means of bringing these wild mountain tribes 'to heel'. It is swift, economic and humane, as we always drop warning messages some hours before we start to 'lay eggs' on their villages, so that they can clear out... An eastern mind forgets quickly, and if he is not punished for his misdeeds straight away, he has forgotten all about them, and feels his punishment is not merited if delayed.'



British soldiers in Aden in the 1960s





# free South Africa



David Reed



Richard Roques

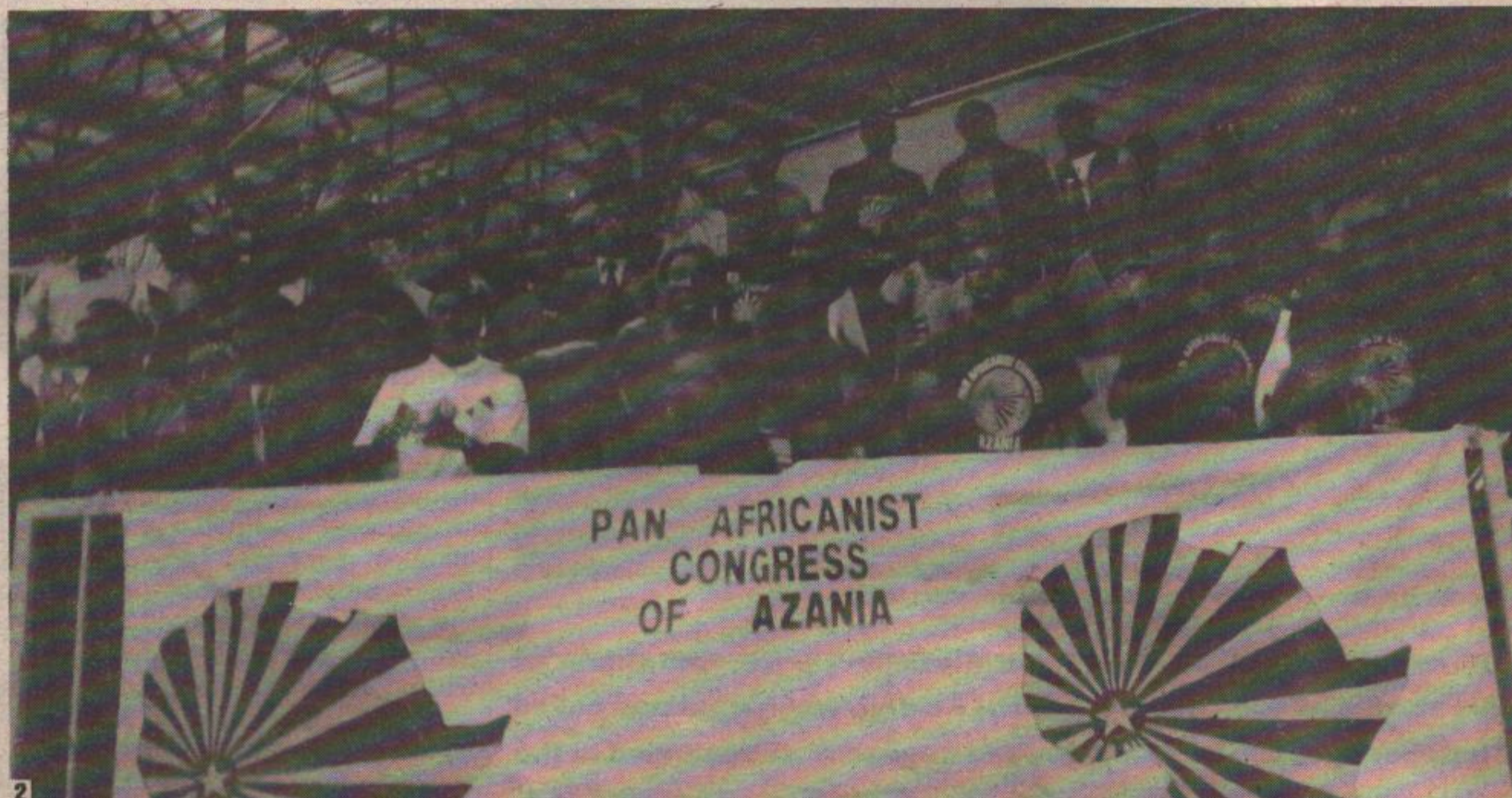
During December 1990 DAVID REED and RICHARD ROQUES visited South Africa on behalf of *FRFI* at the invitation of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) and the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO). *FRFI* was able to cover the PAC and AZAPO conferences and conduct interviews with leading members of all the main liberation organisations, trade union leaders, black lawyers, journalists and representatives of youth, student and sports organisations. We were also, alongside City of London Anti-Apartheid Group delegates, able to visit the Uprising 14 on Death Row in Pretoria Central Prison.

RCG and City AA delegates addressed both the PAC and AZAPO conferences and we are grateful to both organisations for their invitations and the kind hospitality of their comrades. The African National Congress (ANC) Consultative Conference took place during our visit and we were able to assess its impact and discuss its significance with many people including a leading member of the ANC.

Joe Thlooe, deputy editor of the *Sowetan* and one of South Africa's leading black journalists, gave *FRFI* an informative and penetrating interview about the current situation in South Africa. An edited version of this interview is printed on pages 11 and 12.

In the main article DAVID REED gives our political assessment of the present stage of the liberation struggle, the political balance of forces in the country and the role and political standpoint of the main liberation organisations nearly one year after the unbanning of political organisations on 2 February 1990. It utilises the many interviews we were given and the numerous meetings and discussions, both formal and informal, we had with political activists. It also takes into account the important political events which have taken place since our return.

Other material on these pages has been compiled by Richard Roques, Carol Brickley and Cat Wiener.



2

# South African revolution in the balance



1

1) Youth on an ANC demonstration in Johannesburg. 2) and 3) Delegates at the PAC first National Conference for 31 years



3

We were in South Africa at a crucial time. All the main liberation organisations, the ANC, PAC and AZAPO were having their conferences. The ANC leadership's decision to continue its talks with the apartheid government was presenting serious problems for its own supporters. Terror and death were devastating black townships in Natal and the Johannesburg area as violent conflict, instigated by the regime, escalated and spread to more areas. More than two hundred people were killed during the period of nearly three weeks which we spent in the country.

The apartheid government was openly flouting the agreements made with the ANC contained in the Groote Schur and Pretoria Minutes. More than 3,000 political prisoners were still in prison, exiles were still out of the country, arrests and detentions were increasing with attempts to organise openly, and section 29 of the Internal Security Act was still being used to detain political activists without trial.

Yet de Klerk was presenting himself as the leader of a reforming government and his security forces as the only force capable of controlling the 'black on black' violence in the townships. During the period of our visit the European Community lifted sanctions on new investment and there was a great deal of talk about ending the cultural and sporting boycotts. The racist regime was winning the propaganda war. The liberation movements had been put on the defensive. Their conferences needed to urgently address this state of affairs and come forward with a strategy for regaining the initiative.



## Negotiations with the racist regime

The ANC began 'talks about talks' with the regime on 2 May 1990 which resulted in the Groote Schur Minute. This committed the ANC to a peaceful process of negotiations to remove the apartheid regime. The agreement



by the ANC to suspend 'the armed struggle and related matters' in exchange for the promised release of political prisoners before the end of the year - the Pretoria Minute - inevitably followed on from this. In fact the ANC found itself negotiating issues with the regime which it had earlier argued were non-negotiable and which were said to be the preconditions for negotiation - the five conditions of the Harare/UN Declaration (See *FRFI* 93 February/March 1990).

Dullah Omar (ANC)\* told us why he believed the path chosen by the ANC was necessary. With the deepening economic crisis in the country 'imperialism saw the necessity of the regime changing its strategy... to deal with the crisis.' It forced the National Party to fall in line with the new strategy. However the events in Eastern Europe and the dominance of US imperialism generally allows de Klerk and others to 'act much more confidently. They act in an environment now which, even though unfavourable for apartheid as such, is favourable to the maintenance of imperialist interests in the country'. The armed struggle in its existing form is no longer a realistic possibility with the removal of external bases in the Front Line States and the Soviet/USA realignment internationally. That is why, he argued, given the present balance of forces in South Africa and internationally, a new non-racist constitution can arise only as a result of the negotiation process, and not from a revolutionary victory. This will determine the character of the constitution and necessarily limit the extent of the transformation of the regime. It is favourable for dismantling institutionalised apartheid but not for bringing about fundamental economic and social change. That is why the ANC's attitude:

... is that it is not a question whether you want negotiations or don't want negotiations. The question is how do you handle the issue of negotiations in a way which advances the cause of the struggle. People who say no to negotiations are unrealistic...

This raises not only a question of principle - whether or not in the present circumstances the ANC should be involved in negotiations - but also a question about the way the ANC has handled them and the impact the talks have had on the struggle. It was the ANC leadership's handling of the negotiations which came up for severe criticism at its Consultative Conference - a point we shall return to later.

The Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), while recognising the unfavourable balance of forces in the country, draws very different conclusions about the issue of negotiations. Frank van der Horst\* argued that the ascending curve of political activism which reached its height in 1985-6 was 'obviously the

writing on the wall for the regime'. If major reforms were not forthcoming then the regime was asking for 'major social upheaval, perhaps even a revolution'. Hence imperialism 'prodced' the regime into introducing reform - the first attempt at this was in 1983 with the tricameral parliament. The Cape Action League (forerunner of WOSA), through its work in the National Forum, initiated the call for a united front in opposition to the tricameral parliament. The consequent boycott created a severe political crisis for the apartheid regime.

Frank van der Horst argues that a new situation developed with the collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe (he says 'so-called socialist system') and the Gorbachev/Reagan rapprochement internationally. Gorbachev was able to force the ANC to go to the negotiating table with the threat of cutting material and financial support. The ANC then turned to the imperialist powers (the 'West') for support. Imperialism responded. De Klerk was given the job of introducing 'major reforms' while avoiding major social change. To do this he had to win over a section of the liberation movement to his side.

Imperialism also intervened in another way. By aiding the economic and military destabilisation of the Front Line States it ensured those states were pressurised into denying military bases to the ANC. The stage was set for negotiations between the National Party and the ANC.

WOSA argues that the negotiations, far from advancing the struggle, have undermined it. The negotiations let the racist regime 'off the hook'. 'They could go to the international community and say they are abolishing apartheid... they want investments, they want international trade... they want to break out of their isolation, they want to break sanctions...' In this way the negotiations undermined the support worldwide for the liberation struggle. Jean Pease\* developed the point further. 'Instead of taking the wave of militancy forward [the negotiations] actually got people to wait and see what would happen'. Part of the negotiation process 'was in fact to tame the trade unions, to reduce the militancy among the youth and other areas'. In fact the negotiations have had tremendous effect in reducing the militancy of the people.

The PAC is opposed to negotiations with the apartheid regime. Its late President Zephania Mothopeng said in July 1989 on the question of negotiations 'our position has always been that there can be meaningful negotiations only from a position of strength, and a willingness of the settler minority to accept the will of the African majority' (See *FRFI* 88 July/August 1989). In April 1990 at the funeral of Jaftha Masemola he ruled out negotiations by saying 'no slave can successfully negotiate with his mas-

ter'. Benny Alexander\* explained what principles governed the PAC's approach to the issue of negotiations. They were that apartheid cannot be reformed or amended but has to be totally overthrown. The vehicle for social change is not the regime but 'the dispossessed, oppressed and exploited African masses, led by the African working class and worker peasants'. All methods of struggle have to be encouraged with the 'armed struggle as the principle method.' East/West collaboration must be kept out of the Azanian struggle. And that their minimum demand for a democratic solution in Azania is for a Constituent Assembly.

The Constituent Assembly will consist of elected representatives, elected on the basis of one person one vote on a common voters' roll. It will have the very limited and specific mandate to draft a new constitution. Benny Alexander argues that, on his understanding, the minority racists will not survive that election and therefore will not be involved in the negotiations. So the demand for a Constituent Assembly is, in itself, an anti-negotiations demand. The PAC is calling for a united front of all liberation organisations to fight for a Constituent Assembly.

AZAPO also rejects negotiations with the regime. It refuses to go into a forum with the regime on their own terms and terrain, subject to their laws and security forces. It has, therefore, rejected the government invitation to 'talks about talks'. It regards the present negotiations as a charade. AZAPO also demands a Constituent Assembly which it distinguishes from a National Assembly in that it does not involve both enemy forces and the struggling masses. For AZAPO the Constituent Assembly means the transfer of power to black people. It also wants to see a united front around the demand for a Constituent Assembly.



### 'Black on Black' violence

The unbanning of the liberation organisations and the talks between the ANC and the apartheid regime, far from ushering in a period of peaceful change in South Africa, have seen a dramatic escalation of terror and violence in the black townships. It was this as much as anything which has seriously undermined the ANC's strategy of removing apartheid through negotiations with the regime, leading, in some areas, to forthright attacks on the ANC leadership's

## PAC Conference Resolutions

### Summary UNITED FRONT

A United Front should be formed, with the PAC guided by the following principles:

- That it is only the African masses who are the vehicle for change and not the regime.

- That apartheid cannot be reformed but must be totally eradicated.

- That all forms of struggle, with the armed struggle as the principal one, must be encouraged.

- All organisations of the oppressed will consult with the purpose of finding areas of common interest and common strategies.

- That the PAC will also participate if the initiative for such a forum comes from other organisations that have a contradiction with the regime.

### INVITATION TO TALKS

- There is no principle, tactic or policy barring us from seeking a democratic solution to the country's problems.

- The PAC will not negotiate with the de Klerk regime unless negotiations are preceded by an election for a Constituent Assembly elected by one person one vote on a common voters' roll in a unitary state.

- The PAC is prepared to pre-negotiate only the modalities of creating the Constituent Assembly in the date, age of voters etc. Any such talks should take place in a neutral venue.

- The PAC remains committed to the struggle for liberation on all fronts, including the armed struggle.

### PROGRAMME OF ACTION

To implement strategies for mass mobilisation on the political, economic, educational and other arenas, with particular attention on campaigns for a Constituent Assembly and for the unconditional release of political prisoners and return of exiles.

### ON VIOLENCE

- Calls on every African in our

country to oppose and expose all the elements in our society that promote the violence.

- Calls on the NEC to engage other political groups in the process of curbing violence in our townships; and calls on the NEC to hold regular seminars, workshops and peace rallies for all Africans whatever their political persuasion, to spread the message of 'Peace among the Africans, war against the enemy'.

### ON THE CULTURAL BOYCOTT

- Resolves that the cultural boycott must continue and be intensified.

- Condemns those engaged in undermining the international cultural boycott.

- Urges Azanian cultural and sports organisations to unite and intensify the boycott.

### ON SANCTIONS

- Resolves that existing sanctions in the economic, military and cultural fields must remain and be strengthened; calls for the imposition of comprehensive, mandatory sanctions.

- Condemns all efforts aimed at undermining sanctions.

- Undertakes to intensify the campaign for the imposition of comprehensive mandatory sanctions.

### ON THE EDUCATION CRISIS

- The PAC should produce a detailed, well-thought out and clearly defined education policy that takes into account the African philosophy of life.

- A teachers' forum be started immediately to promote sound parent-teacher-student relationships and protect teachers against victimisation by the authorities.

- The existing system of education is racist, illegitimate and discriminatory and must be replaced by a non-racial, uniform system that is African in orientation.

Resolutions were also passed on the Uppington 14, Party unity, Kerry Browning and Party funds.

strategy by their own supporters.

Dullah Omar told us that the ANC believes that the violence 'emanates from the regime and from elements in the regime'. In Natal the violent conflict between the ANC and Inkatha gangs has claimed the lives of over 4,000 people in four years. This is not an inter-tribal dispute as government propaganda maintains. The 'thousands on the ANC/UDF/COSATU side who died were all Zulus... it's a political struggle and it is apartheid violence which is manifesting itself and which is being spread in parts of the country.'

There can be little doubt that Inkatha gangs have been used by

Buthlezi in an attempt to retrieve by violence what he lost politically with the rise of mass organisations like the UDF and COSATU. As Dullah Omar says 'he needs to win a place for himself, as he sees it, at the negotiation table'. Inkatha actions have been continually backed by the regime. Police make no attempt to stop Inkatha thugs and often take their side in attacks on township residents.

There is no one simple explanation as to why the violence has spread to townships in the Johannesburg area where Inkatha support is small and the ANC's is strong. Joe Thloloe, deputy editor of the *Sowetan*, told us how in June 1990 rumours were circulating in townships that 'Zulus are going to attack'. The location changed very rapidly. Somebody was systematically creating a climate for the present violence. After the ANC stayaway protest against Inkatha violence in Natal in July, violent clashes with Inkatha supporters took place in Sebokeng in the Vaal area. After that it spread, moving its location. People were attacked simply waiting at a railway station. The only logical explanation for these developments, Joe Thloloe told us, is that there is this sort of flying squad that goes into a township, attacks the residents, and sort of withdraws towards the hostels, to give the impression that the attackers are hostel people. The township residents then attack the hostel, and once the fight is on, the squad pulls out and waits for the next place to strike'. He believed that sections of the security forces were responsible for this, and this seems to be confirmed by residents who have seen people driven away in police vehicles after the battles (see interview below for fuller explanation).

WOSA agrees, saying that *agents provocateurs* and secret police units are fomenting the violence. They also point out that the violence is not random but is a divide and rule tactic with a definite political purpose to destroy the unity of those in the liberation movements. Jean Pease explains that 'the violence in the town-

continued overleaf



LEFT: President of the PAC Mlamli Makwetu and RIGHT: Comrades Mkwanazi and Gora Ebrahim

## ANC Programme of Action

We, the African National Congress, dedicate ourselves to making the year 1991 a year of mass action for the transfer of power to the people through the following programme of action. We propose:

1. The launching of a campaign to culminate on Solomon Mahlangu Day (6 April) for the release of our prisoners (including those on death row), the return of our exiles, the cessation of political trials and the detention of our people.

2. The launching of mass action around the opening of parliament to highlight our demands for an interim government and constituent assembly and to demand the abolition of the tricameral and bantustan systems. This is to be followed by a mass door-to-door signature campaign to popularise and mobilise our people around the objectives of an interim government and constituent assembly.

- 3.1 The convening of workshops with our allies to develop a joint programme of action against violence in our country.

- 3.2 The NEC set up a National Defence Committee to take charge of the speedy implementation of self-defence units in our structures.

- 3.3 That our structures be encouraged to actively participate in the campaigns of our allies in our communities and in our factories. To this effect, we propose the setting up of local alliance structures.

4. The convening of a patriotic conference on Sharpeville Day, 21 March, to mobilise all anti-apartheid forces against this regime.

5. That we consolidate our organisation by synchronising our mass recruitment campaigns with our campaigns of mass action, by improving the communication efficiency and effectiveness of our structures, by deepening democratic practices and by correcting rural-urban imbalances.

6. That conference reaffirms its policy on affirmative action for women and directs all structures of the ANC to implement it, and calls on the Women's League to spearhead this process.

7. That the Land Commission of the ANC be given a specific mandate to consult widely on drawing up a programme of action to rally and mobilise our people for the return of the land to its rightful owners.

8. Conference resolves to embark on a campaign for the reorientation of the community and students towards a culture of learning, and therefore undertakes to campaign for mass education, a common education system for all, and a demand that the regime provides adequate resources for education.

All ANC branches and regions in liaison with other education structures should establish forces for the implementation of campaigns.



# free South Africa

ships is not just orchestrated against the ANC, it is in fact to destroy all structures of all liberatory organisations on the ground and demoralise the masses.' For example, in the East Rand, trade union structures are being consistently destroyed by breaking down the unity that exists amongst people in the working class. Moletsu Mbeki\* confirmed this important point. He said the killings were not random. Union members are being attacked and, in particular, there is a systematic attack on NUMSA. On 14 January, a month after we spoke to Moletsu Mbeki, a fire swept through the offices of NUMSA destroying valuable records and equipment. It was widely thought to be the work of security force agents.

While everyone we spoke to argued that the violence of the townships is instigated by the government, many believed that the divisions in the liberation movement left that movement vulnerable to the regime's divide and rule tactics. This point is particularly directed against the ANC. Joe Thloloe said that a common factor in the fighting that is taking place is the ANC. He thinks the international community is to blame for accepting the ANC as the organisation, the only organisation in South Africa. The ANC came back into the country still wanting to maintain the reputation it had abroad as the sole organisation internally. Inevitably this generates hostility with other organisations which the regime can easily exploit. Jean Pease confirmed this view when she said 'the idea of hegemony of one political movement is really the source of the weakness, and sectarianism, and sectarian practices'. It creates divisions which could be exploited very easily.

Jerry Masola (AZAPO)\* told us that the source of the violence is the system but the liberation movements must take the responsibility for the

ability of the system to come in and plant that violence in our midst. The politics of power have replaced the politics of liberation. The 'politics of hegemonisation... the processes of wanting to baptise whole communities, whole schools, whole organisations... for a particular tendency created a situation where there was space for the enemy to come in and sow divisions between the organisations... for the regime to... create the conditions for conflict amongst the oppressed themselves'. AZAPO, he said, has suffered from violence from the ANC. In 1990 they buried more than 50 comrades.

Jerry Masola is in favour of the liberation organisations sitting down together to make a concerted collective intervention to resolve these problems. He says that the movement should stop appealing to Vlok or de Klerk or even Inkatha to help stop the violence, although he personally wants Buthelezi to be drawn in. The PAC refuses to form any alliance whatsoever with any homeland or local government puppet structures, however it argues that the principle enemy is settler colonialism. That is why it attempts to pacify Inkatha. Benny Alexander told us that the PAC has a tactical approach of 'tolerating Inkatha physically, although not politically'. Inkatha representatives attended the opening and closing sessions of the PAC Conference but were not allowed to speak. The PAC and AZAPO are both making efforts to build a united front of all liberation organisations to stop the violence and prevent the regime using divide and rule tactics. WOSA has adopted a similar approach. On the 18 January it was announced that Mandela is to meet Buthelezi at the end of January in an attempt to end the fighting between Inkatha and the ANC.

## The path to liberation?

The approach to negotiations in the wake of the township violence instigated by the regime was the crucial issue to be addressed by the liberation organisations at their conferences. The racist regime was winning the propaganda war and it faced a divided liberation movement. The imperialist nations were getting ready to remove economic sanctions and there was talk of relaxing the cultural and sports boycott. The balance of forces had shifted against those fighting for liberation. The conferences were faced with the task of putting forward a strategy to retrieve the situation.

The ANC leadership was under enormous pressure from its young membership in the townships, its union members, and its guerrillas in the ANC camps outside South Africa. The ANC was not able to organise a full conference because its exiles had not been able to return and its political prisoners were not free. Negotiations were yielding nothing for the black majority and ANC members had no protection or defence from the violence instigated by the security forces and vigilante groups in the black townships.

There was a great deal of criticism of the negotiations and in particular the agreement to suspend 'the armed struggle and related matters'. Moletsu Mbeki admitted that 'the negotiating team was pretty sleepy'. What does 'related matters' mean? No negotiator should have accepted that, he said. Dullah Omar was less harsh but critical nevertheless: 'I think they are inexperienced negotiators. As a law-

yer I would never allow "related matters" to go undefined.' But however 'sleepy' or 'inexperienced' the negotiators were, the reality is that Mac Maharaj and the Vula 'conspirators' were already being detained and tortured when 'related matters' was accepted as part of the Pretoria Minute. Dullah Omar argued that 'related matters' referred to the replenishing of arms of the forces inside the country and bringing in special recruits for people you have to replace. As far as he is concerned this does not rule out the armed defence of communities. That defence, however, had not taken place.

The ANC leadership presented documents to the conference which addressed some of these pressures. They maintained the right to vigorously 'mobilise the people' throughout the negotiating process. They included the demand for an Interim Government and the convening of a Constituent Assembly; the establishment of defence units in the townships and the maintenance of the structures of Umkhonto we Sizwe. On sanctions a document written by Thabo Mbeki warned that sanctions would continue to be eroded regardless of the ANC's resistance, and that the ANC should take control of the process of de-escalating sanctions. This position was endorsed by Presi-

dent Oliver Tambo in his opening address. It was rejected by the 1,603 delegates, who instead called for a renewed drive for sanctions.

The Conference instructed the executive to tell the government that 'unless all the obstacles are removed on, or before, 30 April, 1991, the ANC shall consider the suspension of the whole negotiation process'. The obstacles to the talks included the government's failure to end political trials, free all political prisoners, repeal security laws, allow the return of exiles and deal with township violence. The 'talks about talks' could continue but they had to be conducted 'without any secrecy and confidentiality'. There was a great deal of criticism of the leadership's failure to consult with the membership. In fact the criticism of the leadership was such that Mandela in his closing speech said that one of the most disappointing features of the conference was that there had hardly been a word of praise for national executive members. He reasserted the need for confidentiality in discussions with the government.

De Klerk responded angrily and in an unyielding way to the ANC's Conference in a speech on television two days later. He said the maintenance of law and order was not negotiable and that mass action aimed at widespread

disruption to force political concessions or which may result in violence is unacceptable. A few days later Mandela participated in yet further 'secret talks' with the government, discussing plans for an all-party conference in the New Year to set the agenda for constitutional negotiations. Tambo was also said to be present at the talks.

The PAC Conference had the task of responding to the government's invitation to exploratory talks, to give an endorsement of current positions such as that on the Constituent Assembly and elect a leadership. There were 793 delegates from formally launched branches and 400 observers from branches yet to be launched present on the second day of the Conference. There were also a large number of members of the PAC who were in the conference building but who only attended the open sessions. Throughout the weekend of the Conference there was continual pressure coming from the young members of the PAC for the leadership and delegates to reject all negotiations with the apartheid regime. There was even suspicion that the demand for a Constituent Assembly might constitute a step on the slippery path to negotiations with the regime. One group of young members had laid out a placard



HOTELLICA workers on strike

## TRADE UNIONS

# 'We don't just want political power, we want economic power'

We managed to speak to a number of leading trade unionists and workers on strike. Our interviews and discussions were dominated by two issues: work conditions and continuing repression; the divisions created by the ANC's insistence that the entire membership of trade unions subscribe to their policies.

Chaka Les Moletsane is the General Secretary of the NATIONAL UNION OF FARMWORKERS: 'Farmworkers and domestic workers are all excluded from any legislation to protect workers. They still apply the notorious "Master and Servants Act" where nobody can dispute the dismissal of a farmworker... You can still pay her or him by whipping them. Most South Africans don't want to work for farmers so they recruit labour from neighbouring countries, dry lands with poverty and starvation created by war. The farmers just grab these people who are running from war and give them jobs. Then they call the police because they don't want to pay them.'

We spoke to a group of strikers, mainly women from the Hotel, Liquor, Catering and Allied Workers Union, HOTELLICA: 'We receive 400 Rand (£80) a month. We have had no rise for seven years, no medical aid or holiday pay. On 13 November we took the products on sale to the wrong counters in order to disrupt business as a protest. After 30 minutes the manager threw us out. We started protesting and singing outside. They called the police who threatened us and beat us with sjamboks... We want a living wage and better conditions.'

We were also able to talk to Mahlomola Skhosana, who has been the Assistant General Secretary of the NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS (NACTU) since its formation in 1986. At their last conference but one COSATU adopted the ANC's Freedom Charter. NACTU is a non-aligned trade union federation of 23 unions covering approximately 500,000 workers. In every structure of the federation there must be two-thirds workers. In the Central Committee there is the General Secretary and two workers. The General Secretary cannot make any major decisions on his own. Mahlomola Skhosana explained why the trade union movement had been obliged to take up broader political questions but warned of the danger of insisting that trade unions subscribe to a particular political organisation: 'In the past all political organisations of the people were banned so the trade unions had to take up the broader political struggle. We had the responsibility of tackling issues of a political as well as an economic nature because there was no way we could do it differently. We are part of the broad liberation struggle; where our interests meet we can work together to advance the cause... NACTU is not affiliated to any political organisation. We are non-aligned. On the factory floor when you organise workers you do not organise them on a political ticket... ANC must accept that PAC is going to be there whether they like it or not. PAC must accept that Inkatha is going to be there. The leaders must accept that all these liberation

movements have a role to play and find consensus and unity in action. There are many different tendencies within COSATU unions. We in the trade union movement can have one federation... I hope that in the next two or three years this might come about.'

A week after our arrival we learnt that the Zebediela strikers had won an interim increase of 30 Rand a week and a commitment to negotiate recognition of the Union starting on 15 January. All the sacked workers were reinstated. Since the strike started the management had granted the workers 1.5m Rand to upgrade accommodation. Mathata Tsedu, the Chair of NACTU in Pietersburg told us that the workers had stated that the international support they had received from organisations like City of London Anti-Apartheid Group had been crucial as had been the boycott of oranges and orange juice inside South Africa. While on strike the workers marched to the office of de Klerk, who is the major trustee of the farm.

Chaka Les Moletsane summed up the mood of workers all over South Africa: 'People are talking about class struggle now. De Klerk talks to the "haves" but he is not interested in the "have nots". In the new South Africa which everyone is talking about the workers must be respected, given decent wages and treated as human beings. We don't just want political power, we want economic power.'

## Sports boycott

The sports boycott has been one of the central planks of the anti-apartheid movement. Major campaigns have prevented cricket and rugby tours. Following the Soweto Uprisings in 1976, the boycott was enshrined in the Gleneagles Agreement which bound Commonwealth countries and South Africa was expelled from Olympic competition. The silent opposition inside South Africa against the Gatting cricket tour in 1990 revealed just how much anger surrounds scab tours. The machinations of the racist South African cricket authorities also revealed that, in South Africa, sport is big business for the elite, and it looks as though the elite will be the first to benefit from cracks in the apartheid policy.

Colin Clarke and Joe Ebrahim of SACOS (South African Congress of Sport) explained to us that the sports boycott movement has been split, like every other aspect of political and social life in South Africa, by the formation of the ANC-aligned National Sports Congress (NSC). SACOS, the oldest sports boycott organisation, was formed in 1973 to protest against inequality in sport. It argues that there can be no normal sport in an abnormal society. What is required is economic and social change to ensure that the oppressed have equal opportunity to participate in sport. This they see as not just a question of facilities, but also of health, education, housing, employment. They argue that a breach in the sports boycott at this time will only benefit a select few who could be chosen to compete internationally - and for money. For the vast majority of the oppressed nothing would change. The formation of the NSC has not only raised the ugly issue of political alignment in sport, it has also weakened the boycott movement. SACOS' major sin is that it would not align itself politically to the ANC (or indeed any other political viewpoint). It was the NSC which hijacked the 1990-91 Gatting tour protests in order to come to a deal with the tourists and allow four matches to be played - but not in Cape Town where SACOS has its headquarters.

In response to Peter Hain's letter to the *Guardian* (January), the response to another proposed tour, offering opportunities to compete in South Africa provided that sporting bodies agree to deal with ANC-aligned bodies, SACOS is right to insist that the ANC, despite its consultative conference decisions, is ready to break the boycott. ■



## AZAPO Conference Decisions

- AZAPO, at its 10th anniversary conference in Cape Town on 22 and 23 December rejected de Klerk's invitation to negotiations. They stated that they would not go into a forum with the regime in its own terms and terrain: 'When the regime is ready we would consider talking to them stripped of power and no security forces'.
- AZAPO renewed commitment to sanctions. 'The South African regime should be isolated. We don't believe Pretoria should be rewarded by the international community for what de Klerk has carried out. The European Community should be told in no uncertain terms that they cannot proscribe our struggle.'
- AZAPO called for the setting up of a Constituent Assembly and the formation of a United Front. 'We were the pioneers of the Constituent Assembly as early as 1981. It would result in the transfer of power to the

black people. We see it as an assembly of struggling masses to chart a new course for them in their country'.

- On the violence in the townships. 'The violence emanates from the state and its forces. We have been involved in peace talks with other movements. The resources that de Klerk receives from the outside contribute to the violence. We want to consult with black people. It is the black people who are dying'.
- On the need for solidarity to be given to all sections of the liberation movement. 'There are others in our country who think other forces should not exist. This notion about democracy is also supported by most western countries who support one tendency as opposed to the diversity of our struggle. Even countries with a multiplicity of parties want to prescribe a one-party system for us.'

which said 'Away with the Constituent Assembly. Grass roots want armed struggle.' However this was not the position of the vast majority of highly politicised and disciplined delegates.

The PAC rejected the government's invitation to talks saying that there could be no negotiations with the de Klerk regime unless the negotiations are preceded by an election of a Constituent Assembly on the basis of one-person-one-vote on a common voters' roll in a unitary state. It was however prepared to discuss the 'modalities' of creating a Constituent Assembly, ie date, age of voters, voters' roll etc, with the regime in a 'neutral venue'. In this way the PAC maintained its non-collaborationist position while allowing contact with the regime in specified circumstances. The PAC sees the building of a united front of liberation organisations around the demand for a democratically elected Constituent Assembly as the next crucial step on the path towards liberation. Gora Ebrahim told the press immediately after the conference that the PAC and the ANC are to meet to discuss the establishment of a united front.

AZAPO was under the same pressure from rank-and-file membership to reject negotiations with the government. Just before the Conference a breakaway group from AZAPO's Durban branch formed its own political organisation - the Revolutionary People's Movement. The reason it gave was that AZAPO's leadership was having secret talks with the government. Pik Botha had told *New Nation* that he had had informal talks with members of AZAPO and PAC. The AZAPO leadership denied this was the case. The Conference adopted a resolution that AZAPO could not join the government in talks where 'the regime was on its own terrain, subject to its own laws and its security forces intact'.

AZAPO rejected out of hand any ANC/Government pre-negotiations conference for all political parties that was likely to be proposed in early 1991 as a result of the recent secret talks the government was having with the ANC. Jerry Masola said if the ANC took part in such a venture with the government it would amount to a betrayal of the ANC's commitment to other liberation movements to join a consultative conference early in the new year. AZAPO supports the demand of a united front of liberation organisations for a Constituent Assembly.

### Forward to a Constituent Assembly

On 8 January Mandela, delivering a statement from the NEC of the ANC, called for the expected all-party congress as a first step in the process towards a new constitution. It will meet when all obstacles to negotiations have been removed and will have the task of setting out the broad principles within which detailed

constitutional work would be carried out. It will determine the make-up of the body that would draw up the constitution. Finally it will establish an interim government to oversee the process of transition until a new parliament is elected on the basis of the new constitution. Then comes the crucial point. This body can continue as a constitution-making body, an interim government or both if it receives a popular mandate to do so.

Once again the ANC has compromised on the basic principles of the demand for a Constituent Assembly and adopted a proposal, in the words of the pro-ANC *Weekly Mail*, which 'bears an uncanny resemblance to the government's own plan that was being hawked about at the end of last year'. *FRFI* asked the PAC for its attitude to the ANC's latest proposal. Gora Ebrahim gave us the PAC's response.

'The PAC is not, in principle, opposed to an all-party congress to discuss and draw up a new constitution. However the fundamental difference between the PAC position and that of Mandela/de Klerk is that whilst the PAC is insisting that those who attend be democratically elected through a one-person-one-vote on a common voters' roll, Mandela and de Klerk have not spelt out categorically the criteria for attendance.

'In our view the call now for an all-party congress by Mandela is tantamount to backing down from the growing demand for a Constituent Assembly. Lately de Klerk and Pik Botha have openly voiced concern about the popularity of the PAC-initiated Constituent Assembly formula. Hence the move now to undermine the Constituent Assembly formula, especially because it was developing into a common rallying position amongst the oppressed.'

This attempt by the Mandela leadership to pre-empt the call for a united front for a Constituent Assembly not only contradicts the ANC's own Conference decision but undermines a realistic possibility for the liberation organisations to regain the initiative in the struggle against the apartheid regime. Given the present balance of forces, a united front of liberation organisations fighting for a Constituent Assembly would be a real step forward on the path to fundamental change in the country. The South African revolution is in the balance. The next few months could be decisive in determining its outcome. ■

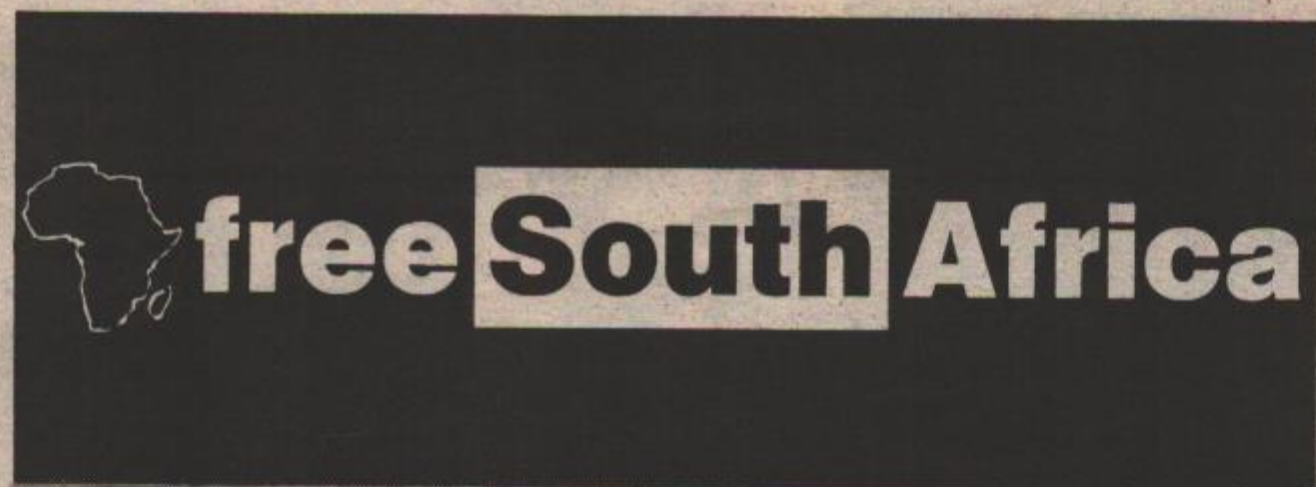
\* DULLAH OMAR is on the ANC's Regional Executive Committee, Western Cape Region, and on the ANC's Constitutional National Committee. He is also a Vice President of the UDF in the Western Cape.

FRANK VAN DER HORST is the Treasurer of WOSA. JEAN PEASE is the Secretary General of WOSA.

MOLETSI MBEKI is in the ANC and is publicity officer of COSATU. He spoke to us in a personal capacity.

BENNY ALEXANDER is the Secretary General of the PAC.

JERRY MASOLA was the President of AZAPO. He stepped down at the AZAPO conference to spend time studying in Britain.



# Reporting on the frontline

During their visit to South Africa, DAVID REED and RICHARD ROQUES interviewed JOE THLOLOE, Deputy Editor of the *Sowetan*, a popular daily newspaper. Joe Thloloe started work as a journalist in 1961. He served a prison sentence in 1960 after the Sharpeville massacre. He was detained twice in 1976 and 1977 at the time of the Soweto Uprisings and was banned and detained again in 1982 for his political and union activities - this was followed by another prison sentence. Since then he says, laughing: 'I have had a free life'.

The *Sowetan* began as *The World*, which was published until it was banned in 1977. Immediately afterwards its name was changed to *Post Transvaal* and it survived until 1980, when, following government harassment, its name was changed again, to the *Sowetan*. Nowadays the *Sowetan* is distributed nationally, selling almost 200,000 copies daily. Thloloe claims that more than 1.3 million people read the *Sowetan* every day.

**FRFI: What is the history of the Media Workers Association of South Africa (MWASA) and what are its main principles?**

**JT:** MWASA is a descendent of the Union of Black Journalists, which we founded in 1973. What happened was that we were excluded from the Southern African Society of Journalists. It was a registered trade union and under the law indigenous Africans couldn't be members of registered trade unions. For years we campaigned to get the SASJ to deregister so that we could join but they refused. So we organised all the black journalists and formed the Union of Black Journalists in February 1973. At the time black consciousness was at its height, so we naturally followed black consciousness.

Essentially we followed the principle that black man, you are on your own, that you ought to fight for your own liberation. It was at that time that black journalists started asserting that we are black before we are journalists: that we have a responsibility to the black oppressed masses.

The first two UBJ Presidents were banned, so I was elected President in 1985. The union itself was banned in 1977 - I was in prison at the time. But before then, before the Soweto Uprising in 1976, we suspected there would be a clampdown on black organisations, so we created a dummy organisation called the Writers Association of South Africa. The instructions were that immediately the UBJ was banned, the union would resurface and continue as the Writers Association, which is what happened.

We changed the Writers Association to the Media Workers Association

in 1980. We realised that we had in fact followed the white unions: we had created an exclusive journalists' union that didn't care about anybody else. So we decided to open up our membership and take in everybody who is involved in the media. It has been MWASA ever since then.

**And the same principles hold today?**

They held until earlier this year. Our problems started in 1983 when the UDF was formed. This wrecked almost every organisation in the country, whether it was the teachers' union, a church organisation, whatever, everything was split. The same thing happened with MWASA. Some members of MWASA wanted us to affiliate to the UDF and others refused because they didn't agree with the Freedom Charter of the ANC. So MWASA split in 1984: we had one section in the Cape that sort of hived off to join the UDF, and another section in Transvaal and Natal, which is the majority of MWASA, holding to the old principles. After a number of meetings at the end of 1984 we managed to bring the two pieces together. We still continued with the same principles that membership is confined to blacks fighting for the black working class etc.

That position held until the Congress early this year (1990), when the UDF/ANC group insisted that we needed to follow the line with all the other organisations and join the ANC. The compromise reached at the Congress was to delete the word 'black' from the membership clause, so that MWASA can now admit both black and white members. But in practice it hasn't admitted any whites because they haven't applied to join.

**Given that there are major differing political trends among black people, what political approach does the *Sowetan* take?**

We support the broad anti-apartheid struggle, without supporting specific parties, so we don't support the ANC, or the PAC, or AZAPO or whatever, but we support everybody who is fighting for a better society. We have no specific bias.

**Does that mean that you give equal coverage to the liberation movements, or do you just assess it on the newsworthiness of events?**

Last week the most newsworthy event was the PAC conference which we covered on the front page. This week the most important will be the ANC conference, and therefore our attention will be on that. What we cover is determined by how newsworthy the story is. But we are in a very peculiar position politically. We seem to be the only publication that covers the broad spectrum of political organisations within the anti-apartheid movement, and this has not endeared us to people who believe that only one side of the story should be told. There are some people who criticise us because we publish PAC stories or AZAPO stories. We have had a lot of flak because of this, and we have been accused of being a PAC publication, or a black consciousness publication. If you weigh the stories that we use, you find that it is not true.

**You are a member of the Pan Africanist Congress. Do you get pressure from your own organisation?**

I'm not a member of the PAC, but my personal sympathies are with the

*continued overleaf*



PAC. As I see it, the PAC also accuses us of a bias in favour of the ANC. We recently had a survey done in the townships. 72 per cent said that the *Sowetan* was balanced, was not controlled by any political organisation, and they believed the things we write. 16 per cent said that we supported specific political parties. The interesting thing was that when the 16 per cent were asked what organisation we supported, the majority of them said we supported the ANC. We found that very amusing because other people have the impression that the *Sowetan* is pro-PAC or pro-black consciousness. As I say, we have tried very consciously to put the broad spectrum and let the people decide for themselves.

**Do you have any difficulties as a journalist in covering stories about liberation movements because they accuse you of bias towards other movements?**

I remember a couple of years back, around 1985-86, there was an attempt to boycott the *Sowetan*. In some townships, like Alexandra township, Thembeise and other pockets in the East Rand, the boycott seemed to be catching on. The interesting thing was in the end our circulation was not affected. But when we went to the people who were behind the boycott, that is the UDF and COSATU, which are pro-ANC organisations, they came up with very vague accusations, it seemed that they didn't expect us to write about the PAC or AZAPO, but just about the UDF, ANC and COSATU. We told them that we are not prepared to be a party organ, we are newspaper people. The boycott eventually fizzled out, but before that some of our journalists were threatened and were thrown out of meetings, etc. It was a concerted attempt to try to get us to follow a party line.

**What do you think are the main issues that the newspaper should cover at the present moment in the country? What's of most political importance, and how are you approaching these stories?**

The most debated issue at this time is the question of negotiations; what the negotiations imply, what new society we are going to create. That's what everybody is talking about. There's a whole range of opinions in the black community. We try to reflect those opinions, whether from AZAPO, from the PAC, who say they are not prepared to talk to the government at this point, or from the ANC which is already engaged in negotiations with the government. And of course we have given an analysis of what the ANC is achieving or not achieving through its discussions.

**Is the ANC losing support because of its role in the negotiation process?**

It is very difficult to say if it is losing support, or winning support. You should remember that most organisations were unbanned on 2 February 1990, so they are still trying to get their roots in the community. They are still trying to canvass for membership and to organise themselves. So it's everybody fighting for membership. In this position, where the majority of Africans are still not committed, it is difficult to say what way the wind is blowing.

The ANC - this is a personal view - has had to concede too many things to the government without getting anything in return. If you look at the preconditions that were set by the Harare Declaration, five preconditions, de Klerk hasn't met all of them. He has engaged the ANC in negotiations on these preconditions, and in the process he has been able to extract a very important concession, the suspension of the armed struggle, before the proper negotiations take place.

On the release of political prisoners, for instance, the government has set so many conditions for their release, so many conditions for the return of exiles, and this was negotiated with the ANC. In contrast the Har-



Joe Thlooe

are Declaration was very specific - there should be unconditional release of all political prisoners and unconditional return of exiles. But because it engaged itself with the government before those conditions were met, the ANC has had to make concessions.

In the end, de Klerk has managed to turn the preconditions to his advantage. Every time he meets one of those conditions, he increases his standing in the international community. He gets into the White House, he gets VIP treatment, so he has broken the isolation of South Africa, and he has eroded the sanctions campaign, very seriously. We used to have two weapons: sanctions and the armed struggle. Now if we get to the negotiations, the real negotiations, and we have nothing, no power whatsoever, how are we going to influence the outcome of those negotiations? We don't have any leverage.

The ANC has in fact walked into a trap. They are now trying to disentangle themselves from that trap by demanding a constituent assembly and an interim government. I am sure they do realise that they have moved into a trap. The PAC is trying to avoid this by saying 'We will only talk once those preconditions have been met, and once we start talking about the



The violence in the townships is sponsored by the security forces

creation of a constituent assembly'.

**The PAC seems to have kept its options open by sticking to certain fundamental principles without rigidly saying it's not prepared to negotiate. Is that because the PAC is a smaller organisation? Has it got a much longer path to follow before it becomes an organisation vying for power in Azania?**

I dispute the fact that it is a smaller organisation. It might not have the resources - we've seen since 2 February 1990 the ANC organising rallies of thousands of people. But you have to remember that the ANC has the resources, it just sends thousands of buses into Soweto and drives the people to those rallying points. It has the money to put up posters all over the place, to buy adverts etc. The PAC delegates who attended the Congress this weekend had to pay out of their own pockets; the PAC doesn't have the resources to go out and bring people in buses to rallies. But when you sit down with the people and say 'what organisation do you prefer?', even the people who attend ANC rallies will find it very difficult to explain the difference between the ANC and the PAC. We are still at a stage where everybody is jockeying for support.

The other day I spoke to a very senior member in the ANC and he was saying that in the PWV area, their membership is something like 25,000. Now the PWV area is the centre of South Africa, and for an organisation that claims this massive support to have only 25,000 members there... again I think that they are still trying to get membership and it's premature to start saying that the ANC has lost support to the PAC.

**The PAC, because it's a revolutionary organisation, is not going to get the support of the international community.**

That's been the PAC's major weakness, that the international community has not poured as much support into it as it has poured it into the ANC.

**During our visit here, township violence has been a dominant feature of your newspaper.**

This violence is very difficult to analyse. Here in the Transvaal, around June (1990) we started getting telephone calls saying 'the Zulus are going to attack us, can you send reporters and photographers to come over?' We would send out a team, only to find that it was just a false rumour. The next day it would come from another area, and it was moving its

location very rapidly, but it was obvious at that point that somebody was creating a climate for the present violence. So it was systematically built up.

On 2 July, the ANC called for a stayaway strike to protest against Inkatha violence in Natal. That stayaway wasn't very successful, but it created an atmosphere where the hostel people felt that they were now being looked at as the enemy, they were no longer part of what was happening in the townships. When the violence actually broke out, Inkatha had held a rally in Sebokeng. It's not very clear what actually happened. The residents say that they were attacked by Inkatha people leaving the rally, and the Inkatha people claim that were attacked by residents. There was fighting and some people were killed. That could have been a genuine clash between township residents and Inkatha members. But the way it started spreading after that followed the same pattern as the rumours: it was moving its location. It would erupt here, and once it had been got under control, it would erupt somewhere else.

It came to a point where people just waiting for a train in the city were attacked and mowed down with guns. Then people were attacked in a train. It is at that point that we started saying that there must be a flying squad fanning the violence. The theory I have is that there is this flying squad that goes into a township, attacks the residents, and sort of withdraws towards the hostels, to give the impression that the attackers are hostel people. The township residents then attack the hostel, and once the fight is on, the squad pulls out and waits for the next place to strike.

**Are the squads organised by a section of the security forces?**

That's my belief, that sections of the security forces, who are probably against de Klerk's moves or who support the right-wing parties etc, are responsible.

**The Sowetan has quoted residents who have seen their attackers driven away in police vehicles after the battles. Do you believe those accounts?**

Yes. The very strange thing is that the government hasn't appointed a police squad to oversee all the investigations on this violence. People get arrested at isolated places. But there is no attempt to get to the root of the violence. The people who have been arrested should have been questioned on who is responsible for the violence, how did you get involved in it, etc. That hasn't happened. Today I think 15 Inkatha people appeared in court in the Vaal. They were found with guns, very sophisticated guns. The most obvious thing the investigator should have asked is where did you get those guns from? But that hasn't been done, and this we find very surprising.

What is not clear is whether it is organised right from the top, from the government, or if it is just renegades within the security forces. But the way the government has treated this issue also raises very serious doubts. They actually benefit from the violence. They have been arguing for the protection of minority rights which they say doesn't just imply rights for whites; at the top of every tribal group is a minority, and each one of them needs to be protected. With this current violence, in the end even the people in the townships will start speaking in terms of protection of minority rights.

On the other hand, there could be elements within the security forces who are fanning this violence to give the impression that the country is descending into chaos, so we need a military takeover. That's another possibility. There are all sorts of possibilities, but I don't believe that this is normal violence that erupts in the townships. We have had township dwellers living with hostel dwellers very happily for many years. ■

## On Death Row

**'I am crying to the world so that the world can see what is happening in South Africa. Even the so-called reforms they are talking about I can only hear and not see.' Gideon Madlongolwane, Death Row, Pretoria Central.**

Pretoria Central Gaol houses the men from Upington convicted under the notorious common purpose laws for the murder of one policeman. (The only woman, Evelina de Bruin, has been transferred to Upington prison.) We visited Eric Tros Gubula, Kenneth 'Pinkie' Khumalo, Albert Tywilli, Zonga Mokgathle and Gideon Madlongolwane on death row. They have been there for two and a half years and since the death penalty was

pronounced they have not been allowed to study. Although they are in good spirits they are desperately missing their families, but they were very happy to hear that people in Britain are fighting for their release. We told them that City AA would be holding a rally outside the Embassy in Trafalgar Square for the release of all political prisoners at Christmas and they asked us to tell the people of Britain about their plight.

ERIC GUBULA: 'You are like our parents because you don't rest, you keep on fighting for us. What we want most is to be free. We want our equal rights.'

KENNETH KHUMALO resigned as the mayor of Paballelo township. His youngest daughter was only 2 months and 3 days old when he was sentenced to death. He has only seen her twice since then through prison bars. 'The government is adding conditions to the release of prisoners after announcing the so-called reforms... and we still haven't been released. I am grateful to City AA for campaigning. Don't slack on pressure, increase pressure.'

ALBERT TYWILLI was a policeman until he was dismissed and was the best friend of Sethwala (the policeman he was convicted of murdering). He is 28 years old. 'I would be very glad if you can work towards all liberation groups coming together in South Africa to form one united force. Please write to us and write to the authorities and ask them to give us the letters.'

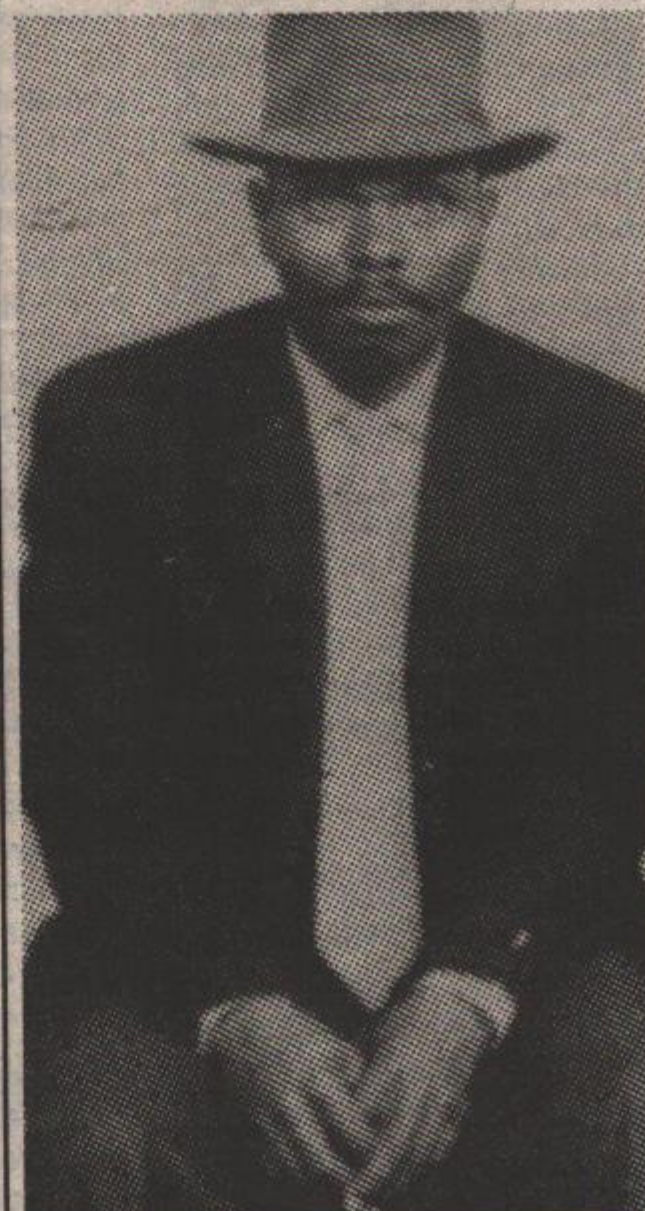
GIDEON MADLONGOLWANE spoke to us in Afrikaans through an interpreter. 'I am here because of my colour. The regime said that I am guilty. Under the law of common purpose it doesn't matter that you are not guilty of a crime, just being seen in the area is enough.'



Evelina de Bruin

The City AA delegates, André and Jenny, visited Upington and spoke to EVELINA DE BRUIN in the local prison. She told them, 'I am very angry with Mr Vlok for not releasing the Upington 26, despite the promises of 2 February this year.'

Everyone we spoke to was angry with the regime for promising reforms and then refusing to honour them. Unlike the British AAM who told us last summer not to campaign for the release of political prisoners because they would soon be released, the people of Upington and the families of prisoners say, in the words of Jane Tywilli, mother of Albert: 'I ask the South African government to release my son and I ask you people to campaign until all political prisoners are free.' ■



Gideon Madlongolwane



# Irish trials

SARAH RICCA

In December 1990 Danny McNamee's appeal was heard at the Old Bailey. Danny was framed in 1987 on conspiracy charges and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. He is not a member of the IRA. The sole evidence against him is three fingerprints, found on parts of explosive equipment. The parts - a battery and two pieces of tape - could easily have been handled innocently by Danny when he worked at an electrical manufacturers in Dundalk.

To bolster its weak case, the prosecution in the first trial changed the charges twice: firstly to include the Hyde Park bombing and secondly, to include conspiracy not just in the 'United Kingdom' but 'elsewhere'. The second change was made after all the evidence had been presented, just before the Judge's summing up. In case things were still too specific to allow a conviction, the judge repeatedly directed the jury not to concern itself whether the alleged conspiracy occurred either at the time or place specified. His summing-up gave one hour to the defence and five to the prosecution.

Not surprisingly Danny's appeal was lost. Of the three appeal judges, one was Lord Lane who refused the Birmingham 6 appeal in 1987, and another was Igor Judge, QC for the crown in the Birmingham Six case, up to and including the 1987 appeal. It was clear that the Appeal would fail. After the hearing, Danny's brother Francis



Danny McNamee

commented: 'My brother doesn't stand a chance... Lord Lane even had the gall to ask Danny's counsel... if he did not think he was over-identifying with his client.'

One of Danny's alleged co-conspirators, recently extradited Dessie Ellis, faces trial on 14 February.

On 6 December 1990, Daniel McComb and Liam O'Dhuibhir were sentenced to 30 years imprisonment for conspiring to cause explosions in the UK with others unknown. Their capture followed the chance discovery by National Park wardens in October 1989 of caches of bomb-making equipment, weapons and explosives on the Welsh Coast. As they were led from the dock, a member of the public gallery shouted to the court, 'You should never be in Ireland. You are the root cause of violence'.

More recently, a trial in Paris has given international publicity to the Irish freedom struggle. On 7 January, the trial began of

five men arrested in France in connection with the attempted shipment to Ireland of around 150 tons of military equipment from Libya.

Three of the men, Gabriel Cleary, James Coll and James Doherty, described themselves to the court as Irish freedom fighters and conducted a political defence. Witnesses included republican Bernadette McAliskey and historian Tim Pat Coogan, who set the trial in the context of Britain's occupation of Ireland. One of the defence lawyers, an Algerian, compared the Irish nationalist struggle with the Algerian battle for independence.

Judgment will be given on 6 March. The impact made by the defence case was demonstrated by the comparative leniency of the sentences requested by the prosecution - seven years for the three Republicans, three of which they have already served in custody.

Meanwhile two of the nine people arrested in Kilburn under the PTA last November are being held in custody on charges of conspiracy to cause explosions. Siobhan and William McKane are held in Brixton prison. A third man, Martin Docherty, was held for several weeks and then the charges were dropped. Siobhan's application for bail in order to care for her two year old son was refused. She was forced to endure a visit with a glass screen between herself and her child. □

■ A defence campaign for the Kilburn detainees meets weekly: Kilburn Defence Campaign, c/o Cultural Centre, 79 Salusbury Road, London NW6.

# Shoot-to-kill

PAM ROBINSON

On Sunday 30 December the British army shot dead Fergal Caraher and seriously injured his brother Michael when they opened fire on their car at an army checkpoint in Co Armagh. The army said that they had only opened fire after the car sped through the checkpoint dragging a soldier along. Eyewitness accounts totally contradict this: the car had only left the checkpoint after it was waved on by a soldier; it was not travelling fast; nobody saw a soldier hit by the car. The army has made no further statement since the incident. An RUC investigation, in other words a cover-up, has been

launched.

The incident bears all the hallmarks of other shoot-to-kill operations by the British in Ireland. In the last year, others have included the murder of three men who were holding up a bookmakers in West Belfast by undercover members of the British Army and the murder of two joyriders by the army in October 1990, also in West Belfast. Both incidents were followed by the traditional lies, misinformation and non-prosecution of those responsible.

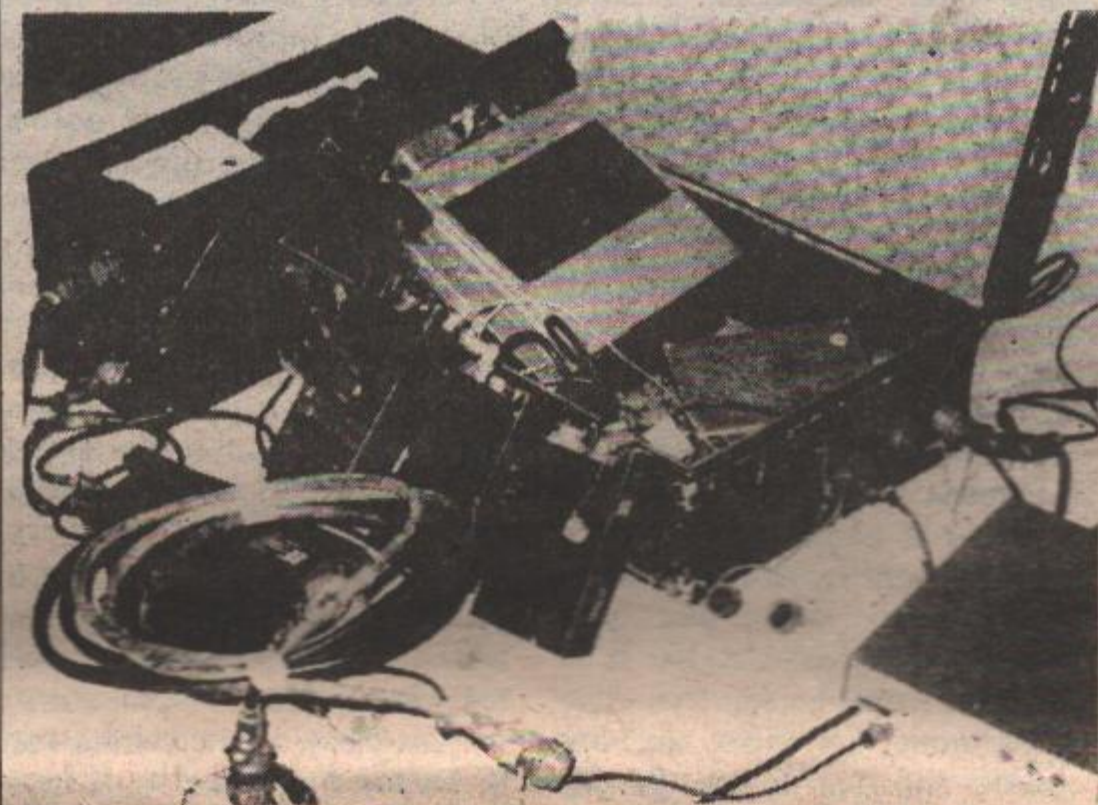
To date there have been only 21 prosecutions of members of the British forces. 19 were found not guilty. The one convicted of manslaughter, Private Ian Thain, received a mandatory life



Fergal Caraher

sentence of which he served only 26 months. He was then released and reinstated into the British Army.

# British terror



British spying devices uncovered in Fermanagh

Wednesday 7 November Co Fermanagh Local people unearthed spying equipment including a video recording unit, 2 spy cameras and picture relaying equipment.

Saturday 10 November Co Tyrone Malachy McIvor was shot dead and his nephew escaped serious injury when they were shot at by UVF death-squad members as they worked in a garage.

RUC recruitment attempts November saw RUC recruitment attempts on mainly young people to become informers. Tactics included death threats, threats of being sent to Castlereagh Interrogation Centre and attempted bribery.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 14, 15 and 16 November Belfast and Tyrone Joint army/RUC house raiding took place. In New Barnsley pensioners' homes were raided with an

elderly couple being detained in one room while the rest of their home was searched. In Poleglass RUC officers sledgehammered their way into the home of a young mother and ran upstairs terrifying her four young children. She was prevented from going upstairs during the raid. In the Short Strand area, a house where two children were alone was raided by the RUC. Neighbours were prevented from entering the home to see if the children were all right during the 2-hour raid. In Omagh, Co. Tyrone, the army/RUC carried out a four-day operation during which the whole area was sealed off by road blocks and residents were stopped and searched as they tried to go about their daily business.

Thursday 29 November North Belfast Raymond Robinson was shot dead by UVF gunmen who opened fire on him outside his workplace.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 26, 27 and 28 November Derry Joint army/RUC house-raiding took place with an entire area being sealed off by check points and people stopped and searched. 800 homes and premises were raided and damaged.

Sunday 2 December Castlereagh Interrogation Centre Francis McMullen of Derry was held for 4 days before being released without charge. During his detention he was verbally abused and badly beaten. He needs hospital treatment for his injuries.

Monday 3 December Castlereagh and Strand Road Interrogation Centres Four young men from Derry were detained for two days. During their detention they received death threats and were badly beaten.

Tuesday 11 December Crumlin Road Jail Danny Doyle was attacked by two loyalist prisoners as he returned from a doctor's visit. The loyalists' cell door had been left open and 10 prison staff on the landing were mysteriously absent.

Saturday 5 January Maghera Jervais Lynch was murdered by UVF death squad members whilst he was alone in his parents' home at approx 8.15 pm. The gunmen had entered the house through the back door.

Monday 7 January Glengormley A catholic family escaped serious injury when a loyalist threw a petrol bomb through a window of their home.

North Belfast The McClaughlan family escaped serious injury when their home was petrol bombed by loyalists. The home was badly damaged by fire.

Pam Robinson

# British injustice

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The Appeal of the Birmingham 6 will now be heard on 25 February. A preliminary hearing just before Christmas had raised some hopes that the Appeal might be speedily heard. But Judge Lloyd, having been told that there was a lot to read, dashed these hopes saying: 'I don't think we are going to let this spoil our Christmas.' Such arrogant contempt for the men, their families and indeed public opinion, is a necessary qualification for the grey wig wearers on the bench.

Their aim in delaying matters is to lengthen the gap between the Guildford 4 release and its embarrassment and the exposure of the injustice done to the Six. Time is of course on the side of the judges. Their old age is spent pickled in port, not banged up in a British prison.

The new Appeal has been forced by the revelation that the alleged confessions of Richard McLkenny had been tampered with. It has also come to light that the now discredited 'Greistest' (claimed at the men's trial to be positive only for nitroglycerine) was used on others on the night the Six were arrested and found positive. But these positives were attributed to adhesive tape. Yet this test and the confessions beaten out of some of the Six is the whole case against them.



Birmingham Six: still imprisoned after 16 years

This vital information was revealed to the men's lawyers only two weeks before the preliminary hearing. The lawyers complained that vital evidence and information was reaching them slowly and in dribs and drabs.

It is still not clear whether the Director of Public Prosecutions will contest the Appeal, either wholly or in part. Nor what will be said about the fifty new pieces of evidence of the men's innocence said to be available.

And so another year has dragged by. There are no guarantees even now that the Six will be freed. They have become an embarrassment to the British ruling class. Perhaps they will use the cover of war in the Gulf to release them.

Meanwhile the evidence of

the corruption in the West Midlands Police Serious Crimes Squad (some of whom were officers in the Birmingham 6 case) is growing more mountainous by the day. On 16 January John Edwards became the third man to have his conviction for armed robbery quashed. He was imprisoned in December 1988 following an inquiry by the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad. His conviction has now been found unsafe. Clearly he was framed. At present 198 officers are under investigation for 837 possible offences arising from complaints by 90 individuals. Maybe they shouldn't be too worried. It has been announced that the five police officers suspended from duty in the Guildford 4 case are not to face disciplinary proceedings. ■

# Inside German prisons

In November 1990 Pam Robinson of FRFI visited Gerry Hanratty and Gerry McGeough, two Republican prisoners on trial in Germany. They are being held in separate high-security prisons - Gerry Hanratty in Düsseldorf close to the bunker court-house, and Gerry McGeough in Wuppertal, a short distance away.

Both Gerrys are facing their isolation and imprisonment, now in its third year, with remarkable fortitude. Gerry Hanratty is held on a wing with six other

prisoners including Kurdish comrades. He has one hour's exercise a day walking round an enclosed yard and has been denied the right to education facilities including Irish language tapes. Despite this, he emphasised that German prison conditions are better than those in England. He was greatly concerned for Dessie Ellis, at that time still fighting extradition, and for Irish people under attack in London.

Gerry McGeough said his conditions have improved. He is not

now searched every time his cell is opened. He has access to recreation facilities and is allowed a German lesson once a week. He is on a wing with Kurdish, French and Italian prisoners.

Their trial is expected to last into the Autumn and 146 witnesses and 16 specialists are being called to, as Gerry Hanratty said, 'paint the picture' in the eyes of the German establishment.

Both men appreciate cards and letters. Send to: Gerry Hanratty, Gerry McGeough, c/o Strafsenat, des Oberlandesgerichts, VI, 14/89, Cecilienallee 3, 4000 Düsseldorf, Germany.



# The Poll Tax is alive! Knock, knock: who's there?

LORNA REID

In the battle for the Tory party leadership Michael Heseltine, Douglas Hurd and John Major each argued that, if elected, he would undertake major reform of the Poll Tax.

The Poll Tax is considered by many Tories as an electoral liability. The changes in central government funding of local government which accompanied the introduction of the Poll Tax meant that many of the Tory-controlled English shire-boroughs - the heart of Tory support - were forced to set a Poll Tax of around £360 per head - £82 above the government projected national average of £278.

The national average for the financial year 1991-1992 has been estimated at £380 per head and Treasury projections in November disclosed that individual bills are set to rise by £56. After protracted discussions between the Treasury and Heseltine a further £1.1bn was made available in January to reduce the increase in bills for people eligible for rebates. Even so, the reality is that very few inner city local authorities will be able to set Poll Tax bills under £400. Severe cuts in council spending and wide-spread charge-capping will follow the passing of the Community Charges (Substitute Setting) Bill which seeks to close the loophole created by the victory of Lambeth Council in the Court of Appeal in the Autumn.

The announcement of these figures has done little to calm Tory jitters which were met at the Tory party conference in October by ex-Local Government Minister Michael Portillo's statement that: 'Far from being a vote loser, with your help it (the Poll Tax) will be a vote winner and launch us on our fourth term.' One month after this statement of faith the challenge for leadership of the Tory party was underway, led by Michael Heseltine.

Since the election of John Major and the appointment of Heseltine as Environment Secretary the new Cabinet has swiftly backtracked on significant



Last year's anti-Poll Tax demonstration in Trafalgar Square

reform. Major's remarks in a *Frost on Sunday* interview on 5 January ruling out abolition of the Poll Tax were refuted 10 days later. Heseltine claimed Major had been misunderstood. There is no misunderstanding. The Tories have made it clear that the Poll Tax will still be in place at least until after the next General Election.

There will be changes to the Poll Tax. A drop in local government funding based on Standard Spending Assessments (SSAs) (the method by which the Department of the Environment assesses a council's spending needs according to size of local population and particular needs) will lead to higher bills and more cuts in services. The government is also seeking greater powers to charge-cap councils which impose high bills due to 'overspending'.

These changes reinforce the Tories' commitment to the two main principles involved in the Poll Tax: 1) maintaining central government control over local authority expenditure on the provision of services, particularly those services which benefit poorer sections of the community and 2) ensuring that every adult, regardless of income, pays for services provided.

Other proposed amendments to the Poll Tax such as excluding students and the unemployed who are entitled to an 80 per cent rebate from paying anything will be overshadowed by the general increase in Poll Tax bills

in the coming financial year.

The Government's intransigence is bringing it into conflict with a Tory council which has set budget plans for £6m above its capping limit. Warwickshire County Council is protesting to the Department of the Environment and demanding a review of its SSA. If such a review is not forthcoming, Warwickshire's ruling Tory group plans to defy the Government and risk charge-capping. To date the Government has not capped any Tory councils, restricting its attack so far to Labour-controlled councils.

The Government looks set to continue its great Poll Tax robbery in the face of widespread resistance. The responsibility for this lies with the Labour Party. By arguing that people must pay the tax, and condemning those who resist it, Labour has allowed the Government to get away with this scandal for so long.

With friends like the Labour Party, the Tories are under little pressure to get rid of the Poll Tax. The defeat of the Poll Tax is dependent on resistance from within working class communities. One non-payer has already served three weeks imprisonment for non-payment, the courts face a backlog of cases, and bailiffs and Sheriff's officers are proving to be incapable of recovering unpaid Poll Tax from the seizure of household goods. The fightback must continue. ■

## WESTMINSTER POLL TAX VICTORY

Anti-poll tax activists celebrated a victory on Wednesday 16 January as Shirley Porter's Westminster Council suffered an embarrassing legal set-back in Horseferry Magistrates' Court.

Taking Mr Jules Clegg as a test case, stipendiary magistrate R Myers turned down Westminster's applications for liability orders against ten people, on the grounds that evidence produced by the council that notices had been sent out were hearsay, and therefore inadmissible. A thousand other cases were adjourned until 27 February on the same grounds.

Westminster Anti-Poll Tax Union activists stressed that this case shows the importance of everyone who has received a summons turning up in court to contest their case, and getting in touch with their local Anti-Poll Tax group for advice. ■

LORNA REID

Farewell Margaret Hilda Thatcher. Thatcher's exit from Prime Ministerial office was a swift, if not painless, operation. Less than 24 hours after her promise to fight the leadership election she was gone - packing her bags for the trip to Dulwich.

The Iron Lady melted a little as her chauffeur drove her and husband Denis through the gates of Downing Street for the last time. But those tears were not shed for the friends and foes alike whom she trampled upon en route to achieving her precise aims. They were not shed on reflection of the poverty and misery she had inflicted on one third of the British people. Nor were they shed in mourning for the bloodshed she presided over in Ireland or the Malvinas war. There was no sorrow expressed

for her 11 years of financial and political support for repressive regimes across the world. They were certainly not tears of shame at the several millions of pounds son Mark raked in from arms sales to the Middle East, a fact exposed recently by a participant on *After Dark*.

No. Mrs Thatcher wept because at the time, only she knew that this really was the end of the road. She put on a brave face pledging her full support to her successor, John Major, and declared she would still be there - as a 'back seat driver'. But it was not to be.

Deprived of a place in the Cabinet, Thatcher has slipped further and further back in her seat to almost total oblivion. So much so that breakfast-time camera crews had to hunt her down at home to coax a comment from her after the first night of US and British bombing raids over Iraq. It was the first public comment she made since November last

year. Since then it would appear she has had nothing to say on the Europeans' alleged backtracking on war against Iraq, no encouraging words for the 'allied forces' and has shown no interest in the development of the child she nurtured from birth - the Poll Tax.

Has Thatcher really given up the fight so soon or does she have so much faith in Major to carry on where she left off that she feels her advice, as yet, is unnecessary? Major's gung-ho lust for war against the peoples of the Middle East and his refusal to abolish immediately the hated Poll Tax must certainly instil in her faith that the youngster will follow in her footsteps.

But then again, perhaps she understands the cruelty of history: gone and forgotten. The current joke doing the rounds suggests this is the case: Knock, knock. Who's there? Margaret Hilda. Margaret Hilda who? ... How easily they forget! ■



Denis Thatcher and companion leave Downing Street for the last time

## High comedy at the court

RICHARD ROQUES

'Are there any officers above the rank of constable at Carter Street?' asked Mr Connor, stipendiary magistrate at Camberwell court in a moment of high comedy during the case of 11 of us arrested during a protest at Walworth Road Safeways in support of the Zebediela strikers.

PC Hill arrested André for Section 5 of the Public Order Act. 'I saw the assistant manager chase him round the supermarket, grab a poster from him, tear it and throw it to the floor.'

'And you arrested my client under Section 5 of the Public Order Act?' said Ken McDonald for the defence. 'Why didn't you arrest the assistant manager?'

'I think Section 5 of the Public Order Act would probably have been appropriate,' said Connor, joining in the cross examination.

'I now present the poster, exhibit JH/1,' proclaimed PC Hill and with a theatrical flourish ripped open a sealed plastic bag and produced a paper poster - intact.

PC Hill: 'I made a mistake.'

Ken McDonald: 'Who put the poster in the bag?'

PC Hill: 'I suppose someone else must have.'

'Whose signature is on the bag?' asked the magistrate.

'Mine your worship,' replied Hill, who was promptly dispatched to Carter Street to find his torn poster. (He never found it.)

'Why was my client arrested?' McDonald asked PC Quinn.

'For obstructing the highway.'

'How do you know he was obstructing the highway?'

'Because I arrested him,' came the reply. This flawless logic had even the magistrate momentarily silenced.

'I asked her to leave. Her reply was illegible,' PC Jeffreys solemnly intoned next day.

'Inaudible, perhaps?' suggested the magistrate kindly.

'No. I know what I'm saying. Her reply was in a language which I could not understand or write down. Therefore it was illegible.'

'Do you know why people were arrested?' asked the defence.

'They had gone into Safeways and filled up their baskets with fruit.'

'Well yes,' remarked Connor

drily. 'That's what people normally do.'

PC Marlow was asked by Connor what the protest was about.

'Apples,' came the reply.

'What else?'

'I don't know.'

'But what about the apples?'

'Something about South Africa.'

'Yes?'

'Apartheid I suppose. I'm really not interested.'

'Well, I am,' replied Connor.

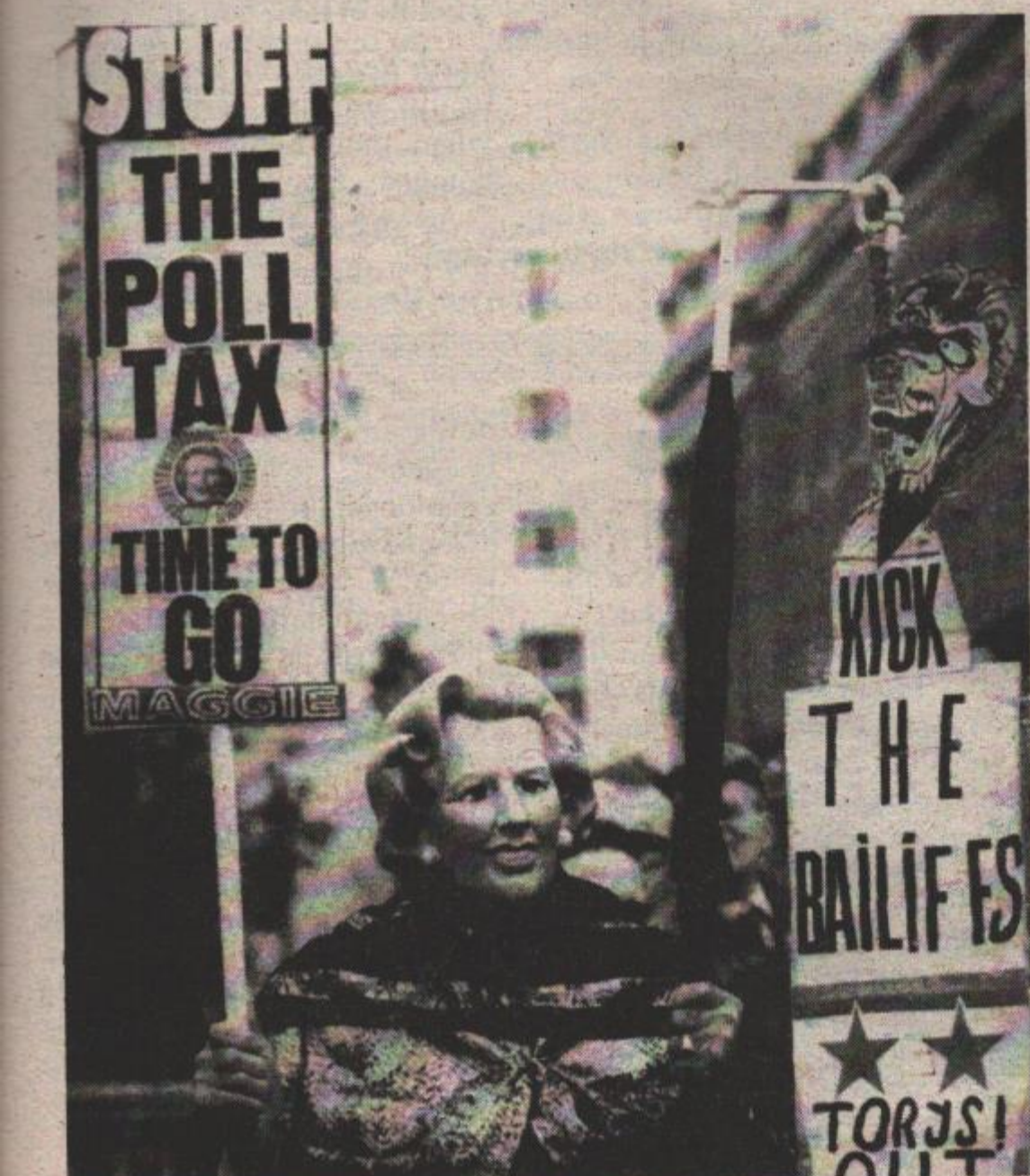
'There are some things that people protest about that will upset a lot of people, but a protest for a cause like apartheid which has wide popular support is not going to cause a breach of the peace.'

At the end of the prosecution case Connor dismissed four of us on the basis that there was 'no case to answer' and added,

'there is a substantial shadow of doubt over the police evidence.' Upon being told that we were offering no evidence in defence of those arrested outside the supermarket, he acquitted all four.

Thanks go to our defence barristers who did an excellent job.

The next episode of this popular comedy takes place at 10am on 1 March at Camberwell Magistrates' Court. ■





# Gorbachev asserts Soviet authority

TREVOR RAYNE

Soviet paratroopers stormed the television tower and station in Vilnius, Lithuania on 13 January. Several people were killed and injured. President Gorbachev denied that he had ordered the action and blamed leaders of the separatist Lithuanian parliament. Lithuania unilaterally declared independence in March 1990.

Gorbachev said that a local military commander had responded to appeals from the Committee of National Salvation to stop the persecution of Russian and pro-Moscow Communist Party members in Lithuania. The Committee of National Salvation is led by a faction of the Lithuanian Communist Party, which split over the issue of separatism in 1989; it wants direct presidential rule over Lithuania from Moscow. Following the army's intervention, Gorbachev said he would resist direct rule over the republic. By 20 January the parliamentary buildings of all three Baltic republics had been barricaded in defence against possible Soviet military assault.

Boris Yeltsin, head of the Russian Federation, flew to Estonia on 14 January to denounce the military action, support Baltic separatism and call for the creation of an independent Russian



Gorbachev's reforms will not solve the problems of the Soviet Union

Federation Army.

Thus have Gorbachev's 'reforms' generated such powerful centrifugal forces that the integrity of the Soviet Union is being rent assunder. Only military force is preventing the dismemberment of the state. The Baltic separatist movements are typically bourgeois nationalist pro-imperialist forces with close ties to emigré groups linked with

MI6 and the CIA. Their counterparts exist across the Soviet Union. Collectively they pose a major threat to the power of the commanders of the Red Army, the KGB and the central state institutions. These bodies are now acting in self-defence and as such constitute an impediment to imperialist plans.

However, the action in Lithuania does not constitute a return



Separatist Lithuanians protest for secession

to proletarian internationalism, any more than did the military operations in Kazakhstan 1986, Georgia and Uzbekistan 1989, Azerbaijan and Tadjikistan 1990. Such a return to communist principles would require the abandonment of the market reforms combined with the mobilisation of the working class to defend state property and power and the breaking of

the Soviet alliance with imperialism in the Gulf. Gorbachev is not prepared to do any of these.

Nevertheless, the sight of Soviet forces acting against the reactionary bourgeois separatist allies provoked hypocritical indignation among the imperialists. The US threatened to call off a forthcoming summit and the European Community

threatened to cut off its food aid if the national and democratic rights of the Baltic republics were not respected. This from powers who are prepared to use historically unprecedented violence against an Iraqi nation of 18 million people, who now feel confident enough to meddle in Soviet internal affairs openly and to direct Soviet domestic policy. ■

## Racist attacks in Newcastle

JOHN ARMSTRONG

Over 60 people attended a public meeting in the West End of Newcastle earlier this month to protest at the continuing spate of racial attacks in the city.

In the latest incident at 5pm on 30 September 1990, a white thug stormed into Murray House Community and Youth Centre and proceeded to scream racist abuse at members of the United Black Youth Association (UBYA). Brandishing a pickaxe, the attacker then went on to intimidate the staff and youth who were in attendance and to smash up parts of the centre.

Confused as to the reasons for the attack but determined to resist such incidents, the UBYA members then gathered their thoughts on what had happened. No sooner had they done so, however, when a vanload of uniformed police, two patrol cars and two plain clothes officers appeared from nowhere (no one from the UBYA had phoned them) and told the UBYA members in no uncertain terms to leave the Centre immediately. Since they had every right to be there the Association members refused.

Two local authority workers who were also in the Centre at the time responded by ignoring the safety needs of the terrified black youth and instead began to argue amongst themselves whe-

ther they should remain in the Centre at all. At the same time the attacker, who was still in the Centre, carried on making racist remarks and threatening the staff. Rather than arresting him the police told him to 'go home'.

On the same day as the attack two members of the UBYA tried to make a statement at the police station as to what had happened. The police refused to take their statements saying that 'they were satisfied that this was not a racist incident'. In disbelief the UBYA members then approached the local Labour council's Race Equality Sub-Committee on 3 October in an effort to raise the matter publicly. The response was predictable. The committee simply refused to discuss the matter (it did not say why), and even had the nerve to suggest that the UBYA members should apologise to them for putting together a report on the incident. The latest council initiative is a letter from the Director of Education threatening the UBYA with libel action if it attempts to name the two local authority youth workers who were in the Centre at the time of the incident.

It is now nearly four months since the attack and the combined efforts of the police and the local council to stifle the incident are proceeding apace. There has been no attempt on their part to understand the depth of anger in the local com-

munity over the continuing level of racism in Newcastle.

As the secretary of the UBYA, Vin Kapur, told *FRFI*, 'This is not an isolated attack. It is simply one of many over the past few years.' As a result of the council's inaction the UBYA called the public meeting and is now seeking a full independent inquiry into the attack. Significantly, no representatives from the council were there to hear the proposals for such an inquiry even though they had been invited.

It is evident from this attack that since the onset of the current economic crisis the racial oppression of black youth in particular has intensified as has the level of police harassment. The continued racist attacks in Newcastle also illustrate how the racist Labour Party, through its control of certain local councils and its promotion of 'Community Relations' in the form of Race Equality Sub-Committees, collaborates with the police in stepping up such harassment. How else can we explain the continued ability of racists to escape arrest and the subsequent attempts by the police and the state to charge the victims of such attacks? ■

Letters of support for the setting up of an inquiry into the attack should be sent to: the Secretary, UBYA, c/o Murray House, Diana Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 6BT.

## Anti-fascist activists gaoled

On 18 September 1990 three members of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) were found guilty of causing Grievous Bodily Harm to notorious Nazi thug Nicci Crane. They were sentenced to a total of 11 years in gaol.

Nicci Crane has a long record as a Nazi organiser and agitator, going back to 1978 when he led an attack by hundreds of skinheads on the Asian community in Brick Lane. In 1980 he was sentenced to a mere 12 months for attacking a black family with a bottle while they were waiting for a bus. This was followed by another four and a half years for more racist violence. In between

prison terms he was a member of the British Movement Leader Guard, a National Front activist and, most recently, a leading light in the international neo-Nazi 'Blood and Honour' music scene.

He was spotted by the three AFA members hanging around suspiciously after the annual Bloody Sunday rally in Kilburn in January 1990. They challenged him, a fight broke out, and Crane was left lying on the road unconscious. The three were immediately arrested.

In her summing up at Wood Green Crown Court, the judge stated that the political stance represented by the defendants

did most damage to the rule of law and was consequently a greater political threat to the status quo than that of Nazi Crane. So fascists may maraud unchecked, secure in the knowledge that they have the 'rule of law' on their side, while those who do attempt to challenge them face long prison sentences at the hands of Britain's racist courts! ■

Solidarity messages to the prisoners should be sent to: Tony David (NT1338) and David Phelan (NT1337) at HMP Pentonville, Caledonian Road, London N1 0XF and Mark Malin (NT1335), HMP The Verne, Portland, Dorset DT5 1EQ.

## Picket against racist attacks

Newham Monitoring Project has called a picket of Stratford Magistrates' Court on Thursday 21 February in support of Mr Govindan, an elderly black shopkeeper framed by police on charges of assault.

On 1 June 1990 Mr Govindan was attacked inside his shop by a gang led by racist neighbours. His wife attempted to hold three other attackers at bay outside the shop door while their young daughter called the police.

However, when the police arrived they arrested and charged Mr Govindan instead, using the attackers as the sole witnesses against him. The police had ignored the families' previous complaints of racial harassment, and continued to do so, although attacks on the Govindan family continued following the arrests.

Newham Monitoring Project are concerned about the increasing pattern of racist attacks ac-

tively encouraged by such police action. The picket is organised as part of a concerted community campaign to unite behind the victims of these attacks and see justice prevail against the racists, whether in or out of uniform.

Picket: Thursday 21 February 9am, Stratford Magistrate's Court, Great Eastern Road, London E15 (nearest tube: Stratford). Phone 552 6284 for details.



# Cuba carries the banner



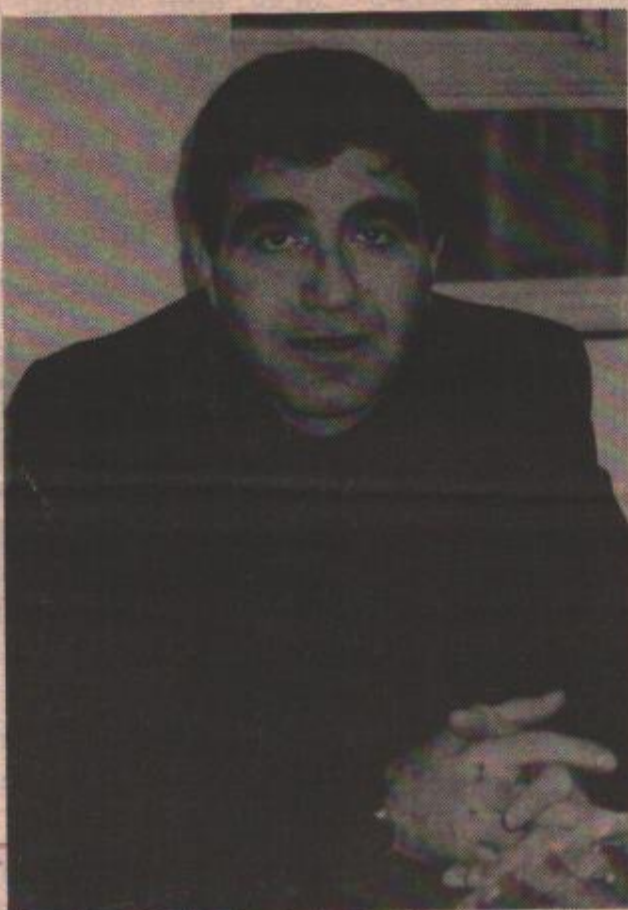
Hundreds of thousands of Cubans marching in anti-imperialist protest

The Cuban economist CARLOS TABLADA addressed a packed Conway Hall in London on 30 November. Pathfinder Books, publishers of Tablada's major work on *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism*, organised the meeting. We had the rare and inspiring opportunity to hear a committed communist tackle the problems faced by humanity today. Tablada examined the crisis of socialism, explained the vital contribution of Cuba's experiences and discussed the global balance of class forces and socialism's future. The following day *FRFI* had the opportunity of talking to Carlos Tablada personally. Below we print extracts from the interview.

**FRFI:** Cuba is carrying the banner. It is the standard bearer of socialist ideas today. Why has this happened?

**CT:** I think that this happened because socialism didn't develop in the way that had been foreseen by Marx and Engels. Socialism, Marxism triumphed in a part of Europe that was less developed. The Russian Empire had a population of 160 million people and practically 90 per cent of them were illiterate, and they really didn't have much idea of how to organise a socialist society. No one had done it before. They were the pioneers. And as we know, unfortunately after the death of Lenin, they made major errors of principle, which brought with them dogmatism. They lost the critical and self-critical character; they forgot something which Marx did. Marx wasn't a political economist, he criticised the capitalist economy and this Marxist criticism wasn't put into practice. The rest of the story you know. They constructed a model which they claimed was the only model of socialism possible, and the model contained within it the seeds of capitalism. They didn't change the capitalist relations between people. That was the view of Che Guevara. He was the first communist leader in power who recognised the problems that this model would result in.

The Cuban revolution had a different concept of how society could be organised. You can read this in Fidel Castro's speeches from 1953. We started to develop a different society and a different socialism, in a different form. And even though we did make some mistakes in copying the Soviet model, these remained the pillars on which our thought and the development of our society was based.



Carlos Tablada

ed. We didn't make the same mistakes as the East. And so we don't have the same results.

**If you say the locus of the revolutionary movement initially shifted to the East quite unexpectedly, and now it's moving towards what has been called the Third World, what future do you think the communist movement has in this context?**

First of all, in the countries of the East, there wasn't a revolution. The only revolution was in Russia. So you can't really say that the revolutionary movement is moving from the countries of the East, because it was never in the countries of the East.

**Do you include the Russian revolution in that context?**

There things are different. In Russia there was a revolution. The changes in the East I would prefer to refer to as changes in the popular workers'

movement. For many years the Communist Parties in those countries have been making big mistakes. They had the opportunity to make links with the people and they lost that. They had the opportunity of developing a real revolutionary movement and they didn't do it. So now the revolutionary movement has to be won. The workers in those countries live well—but I think that the intellectuals there sold utopian capitalism to the working class. These workers, as the shock measures of the IMF come into effect, will lose the benefits they had under the previous system and will come to see what real capitalism means. I think that now there will be the opportunity to build up revolutionary workers' movements. As this happens there will be a clearer understanding of the mistakes of the old socialist model and they will realise what they have to fight against in real capitalism. The mistake these working classes are still living with is that they equate one specific model with socialism and communism and that's why they reject it. They will become aware that there is a difference between the socialist model that was developed there and the real socialist or communist thinking.

A miners' leader from Yorkshire was explaining to me here that he had received a delegation of miners' trade union leaders from an Eastern European country. What they wanted was for their mines to be privatised. He told me that he had to explain to them that wasn't a solution but socialism was the way. I think that's very interesting. We're going through a period of confusion, because the fact is that the dominant class in the world is capitalist. And the first manifestation of this power is the press and media.

Every day they propagandise us and maintain class hegemony through these oppressive means, but these criticisms have also created expectations in the working class in the West itself. This is just like the tide which ebbs and flows, it comes to each in their turn. And it will return, not only because of the negative effects that we see in Eastern Europe. The fact is that this crisis in Eastern European countries has coincided with a capitalist crisis too. A crisis which means that developed countries are in recession. Many established US economists have recognised that they are in recession.

**In the last great crisis of the capitalist system in the 1930s, because communist ideas and communist influence were on the wane, one of the dominant responses to the crisis was the creation of a right wing—in some countries, fascist—movement. Why will this not happen again?**

I didn't say it won't happen. Already there are manifestations of this in some of the East European countries. There is anti-Jewish feeling, and feeling against people from the Third World. Many Jews from East European countries are moving out. In Germany they are chucking the Turks out, in Yugoslavia the Spaniards. So you can't just write off that possibility. But the world today is more interdependent than it was in the '30s. On the one hand it's more fragile, but on the other it's more interdependent. No doubt the USA is trying to play the role played by fascism, but things are not that simple nowadays, because of the development of the arms race, and the contradiction of capitalism which allows the sale of arms so that even underdeveloped countries can have intermediate range armaments, which can paralyse and neutralise world powers. Take for example Cuba: we don't have the atom bomb, but we have 10 million inhabitants and we defend ourselves, and it means the Yankees have to think ten times before they attack us. Things are a bit more complicated now. That couldn't happen in the thirties and forties.

**Will the main influence now for socialist developments, as for example the Russian revolution influenced whole parts of the world, come from the Third World? From Cuba's influence, from a revolution of the black people of South Africa, and so on?**

The world has seen for some time now that when the Cuban revolution triumphed it wasn't just a social revolution, it was a revolution of ideas. And that concept is being validated today. The socialist camp has broken down, and Cuba hasn't, in spite of the USA, in spite of the blockade, in spite of the fact that we are a small underdeveloped country. So this makes people think, why is there a revolution in Cuba? Why is it, that 31 years after the revolution, the masses are more aware and more conscious than they were 30 years ago? Why is it that solidarity in Cuba is not just government solidarity but a solidarity that arises out of the people? What ideas make Cubans act in this manner? What is it that makes Cubans resist the blockade? What is it that makes Cubans resist the breakdown of the socialist camp? People will think, and reach their own conclusions. There's even part of the US elite already convinced that they're not going to overcome the Cuban revolution, and they're defending the policy of normalising relations with Cuba.

**Marxism, communism has been discredited amongst millions of workers now. What work do conscious communists, not just in Cuba but everywhere, have to do to win back working class support?**

I think that British communists have known how to empathise with us very well when they wrote on Karl Marx's tomb 'Philosophers have always interpreted the world, the point though is to change it.' Now more

than ever that principle is valid. The principles of Marxism are not in crisis. What is being questioned is a model of socialism. But in fact Marxist principles are totally contemporaneous. An analysis of present-day capitalism shows that what Marx pointed to as the development of capitalism is happening: concentration and centralisation of capital has happened; the relative impoverishment of the proletariat has happened, at a world level; Marx spoke of the increase in the social character of production, and this has happened. Marx stated that the revolution was carried out mainly in order to give development a human characteristic, and it has been shown that capitalism hasn't been able to develop a human face. The socialist model that was developed falls precisely because it wasn't able to develop new human values. The central pillars of Marxism are still standing.

**The bourgeois press attacks Cuba for banning two Soviet magazines, *Sputnik* and *Moscow News*. Why did the Cuban government ban these two magazines?**

In Cuba we have 10.6 million inhabitants. We receive 13.5 million copies of Soviet magazines a year. More than one magazine per inhabitant. On the other hand the Soviet Union does not allow the entry of all Cuban magazines. For example, I work with two non-governmental agencies in Cuba—the Centre of Studies for America and the Centre for Research for World Economy. Their magazines have never been allowed into the Soviet Union. My book has been published in 12 countries, but they haven't published it in the Soviet Union. So what happened then with *Sputnik* and *Moscow News*? These two magazines not only carried anti-Marxist thoughts, but they started to attack the whole Cuban revolution. So we had two alternatives: one, to have discussion with these magazines. We did answer one article. What happened? The Soviet press published only part of our answer and it was misquoted. We had to write another article; they didn't publish that one. We don't want to embark upon these discussions when we have an enemy who is eager to create problems between us and the Soviet Union. What can we do? What the people want. We have received thousands and thousands of letters from people saying that these magazines shouldn't be there. So that's what we do. We still have 13 million Soviet magazines coming into Cuba every year. And in those we have all of Gorbachev's speeches, Yeltsin's speeches, everything which is published in the Soviet news. And we don't fear that, we haven't prohibited that, even though there's no reciprocity on their side.

**Some time ago when Ochoa was executed, an editorial statement in *Granma* said that certain people had used the apparatus of the state and the party as a power base to gain privilege. Can you give some indication of the extent of this corruption, and the strength of these petty bourgeois tendencies?**

Corruption had started to penetrate and privileges were there. Our combat against this started in 1984. But in Cuba we didn't quite have the formation of the technocratic, bureaucratic class, basically because the vanguard of the revolution is not corrupt. The Party as such is not corrupt. And our level of corruption is very small, not only when you compare it with East European countries but fundamentally if you compare it to Western countries. Three ministers are in jail (jailed in 1988 and 1989); their corruption doesn't reach \$100,000. I know that in the West, ministers are corrupted for millions.

**Are you saying there's no basis for a counter-revolutionary movement?**

The USA itself says that. They haven't been able to bring together more than a hundred people, who are fragmented into 13 organisations. ■



Last year a stream of 'Marxists' were promoted to near celebrity status in the bourgeois media. Their brief was not to praise Lenin, but to bury him:

'Lenin, the man, died in 1924. But Lenin, the icon of Soviet power, is meeting its end today... Thanks to the revolutions of Eastern Europe, time has run out for Lenin.' (Orlando Figes, *The Guardian* 30 April 1990)

It is not enough for the imperialist powers that socialism has collapsed in Eastern Europe. Imperialism seeks to eradicate the very idea that socialism is possible. In fact it is the opponents of revolution who reduce Lenin to an icon rather than address the substance of his ideas. Why? Because of their potency and relevance. Lenin's political thought culminates in his analysis of imperialism and the necessity of an actual struggle for socialism.

#### IMPERIALISM AND THE SPLIT IN SOCIALISM

In 1916 Lenin showed that the concentration of production in the hands of a few massive capitalist associations, fusion of banking with industrial capital, the export of capital to set up production with cheap labour in the oppressed nations, and competition between the major capitalist nations to grab each other's colonial possessions were features which together defined a qualitatively new era. Imperialism, Lenin argued, was both the highest and the last stage of capitalism. (CW, Vol 22, p266)

With the onset of world-wide imperialism what had been a specific feature of England's colonial monopoly in the nineteenth century, the exploitation of oppressed nations and the creation of a labour aristocracy which 'lives partly at the expense of hundreds of millions' in the oppressed nations, becomes the central issue for all political class struggle. (CW, Vol 23, p107) Lenin re-established the communist tradition founded on Marx and Engels' fight against opportunism in the English labour movement.

For Lenin, imperialism was not only a matter of economics. He sought in economics the material basis of and explanation for the shocking betrayal in 1914, when nine-tenths of the leaders of the Second International supported their own 'fatherland' in killing workers from other countries.

'Opportunism means sacrificing the fundamental interests of the masses to the temporary interests of an insignificant minority of the workers... an alliance between a section of the workers and the bourgeoisie... Opportunism was engendered in the course of decades by the special features in the period of development of capitalism, when the comparatively peaceful and cultured life of a stratum of working men 'bourgeoisified' them, gave them crumbs from the table of their national capitalists, and isolated them from the suffering, misery and revolutionary temper of the impoverished and ruined masses.' (CW, Vol 21, pp242-3)

Lenin saw the need to break the working class from the influence of opportunism represented by two political trends which appeared inevitably in all the imperialist countries. The first trend of bourgeois labour parties rejected the class struggle, promoted national chauvinism and openly collaborated with their own governments. The second trend of opportunism was represented by Karl Kautsky, the leading theoretician of the Second International. Kautsky, while continuing to use the language of Marxism, opposed the war in words but accepted it in deeds. The epitome of Kautsky's opportunism was his refusal to take advantage of the crisis, seize the initiative and turn the imperialist war into a civil war.

The workers' revolution of October 1917 would not have been possible without the prolonged struggle by



Lenin with delegates at the Tenth All-Party Congress, Moscow, May 1921

# For Lenin

**Lenin brought communism into the 20th century. Leader of the Bolshevik Party and the Russian proletariat, inspiration of the first-ever successful socialist revolution in October 1917 and of the Communist International, Lenin's contribution to the cause of the working class and oppressed is immense. But, ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM argues, social democratic ideologues are determined to destroy every vestige of Leninist influence.**

Lenin to defeat these opportunist trends internationally and in Russia. This was Lenin's own assessment:

'One of the principle reasons why Bolshevism was able to achieve victory in 1917-20 was that, since the end of 1914, it has been ruthlessly exposing the baseness and vileness of social-chauvinism and "Kautskyism" (to which... the views of the Fabians and the leaders of the Independent Labour Party in Britain... correspond), the masses later becoming more and more convinced, from their own experience, of the correctness of the Bolshevik views.' (CW, Vol 31, p29)

For Lenin the masses had to be brought into politics, and their 'revolutionary temper' realised as the decisive factor. Early in 1917 the Russian proletarians rediscovered their own invention, the Soviets, councils of action embracing the masses of workers, soldiers and peasantry. From April onwards Lenin argued for all power to the Soviets, for an insurrection, for the dictatorship of the proletariat, for socialist revolution.

Not surprisingly it was Kautsky who immediately after the Russian revolution became the 'principal theoretical antagonist of Bolshevism'. He played a counter-revolutionary role in stopping the German proletariat 'from following the revolutionary road opened up by the Russian working class'.

The split in the socialist movement between communism and social democracy was irrevocable. The Russian Bolsheviks formed the Third Communist International. Lenin told delegates at its first major congress that an essential condition of the Bolsheviks' revolutionary success had been 'the most rigorous and truly iron discipline in our Party', and urged the formation of like parties as the most conscious political expression of the proletariat. (CW, Vol 31, pp23-26)

The Communist Party in Britain was thus ostensibly conceived in order to fight imperialism and combat opportunism in the working class. It has since turned into the opposite, and become an agent of a latter day, pro-imperialist Kautskyism.

#### END OF THE ROAD FOR THE BRITISH COMMUNIST PARTY

The retreat of socialism in 1989/90

has pushed Communist Parties across the world onto the defensive. British CP leader Chris Myant does not attempt to defend socialism. He seizes on the problems of the socialist countries to disavow the communist tradition:

'The time has come when it is now possible for communists to face a very difficult truth. October 1917, the world event which separates communists from others on the left, was a mistake of truly historic proportions.

Its consequences have been severe. They have characterised and moulded the great traumas of the 20th century: a second world war; Hitler's gas chambers; Stalin's gulag; the world of the show trials; the perpetuation of third world fascist dictatorships; the unprecedented, almost unbelievable waste of the arms race in a world of poverty and starvation; the destruction of the Vietnam war... (Seven Days, 24 February 1990)

How debased can you get? The Bolsheviks who dared to take power and strove to build a new world have somehow become responsible for imperialism's crimes against humanity.

Myant tries to set an isolated 'dictatorial' Lenin against the 'democratic' mainstream of scientific socialism.

'When they first wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 Marx and Engels were thinking of a sudden dramatic break between capitalism and the future society of socialism, of a revolution in which the institutions of the old order were 'smashed'... At the end of his life Engels rejected his 1848 analysis... It was against the ideas of building upon so-called bourgeois democracy, ideas that flowed from Engels' rejection of the concept of "overthrow", that Lenin spent virtually all his life polemicising.'

Marx and Engels *did* change their position on the state, but it was in the opposite direction to that which Myant claims. Lenin's *The State and Revolution*, published in August 1917 in order to, 're-establish what Marx really taught on the subject of the state', explains with exceptional clarity what Marx and Engels learnt

from the European revolutions of 1848-51, and especially from the experience of the Paris Commune, that is *after* they had written the *Communist Manifesto*.

#### THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

In 1871 French workers 'stormed the gates of heaven'. For two months Paris was under elective workers control, then the bourgeoisie regained the upper hand and drowned the first workers revolution in blood. In their 1872 Preface to the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels stressed that the its programme of revolutionary measures 'has in some details become antiquated', and that:

'One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes"'. (CW, Vol 25, p385)

It was Marx and Engels who increasingly emphasised that the capitalist state would have to be 'smashed'. The capitalist class is the ruling class by virtue of its control of the repressive, administrative state apparatus. The state is never neutral, always it is a class power. Capital will not voluntarily give up state power, on the contrary it will use 'special bodies of armed men, prisons etc.' to enforce its rule.

The working class cannot simply 'lay hold' of this apparatus to defend its social and economic interests as a class. It must make a political revolution to abolish the capitalist state. Engels' later historical analyses became 'a veritable panegyric on violent revolution'.

The dictatorship of the proletariat summarises a new type of state, not just a change of government. Whatever the form of government - monarchy, parliamentary democracy, fascist dictatorship - the capitalist state must be overthrown.

The Communist Party is therefore essential. It must direct the most conscious section of the working class, its vanguard which leads the masses in a revolution for state power.

Lenin addressed the socio-economic basis of the withering away of the state under the proletarian dictatorship. Communist society is organised around production for need, not for profit. The transition to communism is *only possible after the*

*working class has political power.*

Those revisionists of Marxism, like Kautsky in Lenin's time and Myant today, who reject the dictatorship of the proletariat, not only vulgarise the teachings of Marx and Engels, they reject even the possibility of ever achieving communism.

#### FOR LENIN, FOR CREATIVE MARXISM

By the turn of this century capitalism encompassed the globe. Its potential appeared to be limitless. The better off Western European workers were being drawn into government. It seemed that the working class majority could be transformed into a parliamentary majority which would harness social production for the common good. The Fabians in Britain and Edward Bernstein in Germany argued that Marxism was old-fashioned, confined to the growing pains of capitalism in the nineteenth century. They even adopted a 'socialist colonial policy'.

Then the storm broke. The horror of the First World War brought home to European workers what the peoples colonised by imperialist expansion had never been allowed to forget, the bloody barbarism of the capitalist system.

In this last decade of the twentieth century we are reliving the themes with which it began. Marxism has come under attack for similar reasons, apparent stability provided by another 'New World Order'. Myant finds much to commend in the 'advanced industrial states', and 'the richness and depth of the civil society and political plurality that has grown up in these societies'. This Eurocentric, and ultimately racist, celebration of the vitality of bourgeois democracy is only possible for someone who has enjoyed the benefits of a welfare state while the rest of the world is starving. Myant, like Kautsky and Bernstein before him, spoke too soon. Imperialism has once again plunged the world into crisis and war.

Lenin's great political courage in transforming the carnage of war into the first socialist revolution charted the way forward for his generation and ours. The Soviet revolution forged a bridgehead of hope into the future.

Marx and Engels understood that in creating the working class, capitalism creates the force that will become its own gravedigger. Lenin applied this insight to modern conditions. Imperialism has created its own gravediggers in the thousands of millions in the oppressed nations.

The proletarian dictatorship must inevitably assume different forms. Lenin pointed to this potential diversity in his prophetic *Our Revolution*:

'Our European philistines never even dream that the subsequent revolutions in Oriental countries which possess much vaster populations and a much vaster diversity of social conditions, will undoubtedly display even greater distinctions than the Russian revolution.' (CW, Vol 33, p480)

The shift in the locus of communism to oppressed nations is no accident of history, but a consequence of resistance movements which put revolutionary theories to the test of practice.

The fundamental division of the world between oppressor and oppressed nations is mirrored by the division of socialism within the working class of the oppressor nations. The conclusion of the Leninist analysis is the imperative necessity for communists to combat the pro-imperialist trends in the working class. Workers in the oppressor nations must support the oppressed in order to weaken their common enemy and bring about the socialist revolution. Leninist anti-imperialism is the starting point for the formation of a Communist Party in Britain today.

**Workers and Oppressed Peoples of all Countries Unite to Destroy Imperialism!**



# Free the Tottenham 3



## In Memoriam

### TERRY O'HALLORAN

1 May 1952–23 January 1989

It is now, as the overwhelming majority of British journalists become cogs in the imperialist war machine, that we most miss our comrade, Terry O'Halloran.

It is two years since his tragic death on 23 January 1989. A talented journalist, he chose not to serve the bourgeois media but put his skills at the service of the working class movement. In word and deed he stood up for prisoners' rights, Irish freedom and the struggles of oppressed peoples worldwide against imperialism. For 14 years he was a member of the Revolutionary Communist Group; he wrote news and features for *FRFI* and was editor of the Prisoners' Fightback page. Terry would surely have cheered on the protesters at Strangeways and rejoiced at the victory of the Risley 54.

Our continued sadness at his death is tempered by our increased determination to push forward the work to which Terry dedicated his life.

**Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund annual commemoration event: Social and Cultural Evening with Irish and Kurdish music, Azanian poetry.**

27 January 1991, 6pm at the Old Farm House, Kentish Town Road, London NW5.

**The Tottenham 3 – Winston Silcott, Engin Raghip and Mark Braithwaite – were framed up in 1985 for the murder of PC Blakelock during the 'riot' on Broadwater Farm Estate. The Home Office has referred the case of Engin Raghip back to the Court of Appeal. SHARON RAGHIP talks to *FRFI* about the latest developments.**

Since the release of the Guildford 4 there has been an enormous change in climate especially amongst the general public and it's made people more susceptible to the idea that miscarriages do take place in this country and people are not just going to continue to sit back and let them stay behind closed doors.

I think the Birmingham 6, the Guildford 4 and Tottenham are very similar, the issues themselves: one being that the crimes that had been committed were notorious and there was a huge public outrage; secondly the fact that most of these convictions are based on confessional evidence and thirdly the fact that the families of Guildford, Birmingham and Tottenham have always been out from day one proclaiming the men's innocence as well as the men themselves. It's now, what, five years on in Tottenham and we're still saying the same things and more and more people are coming out and backing what we're saying.

### 'Joint enterprise'

All three men, Winston, Engin and Mark, were convicted using a law which in effect says that if they were even in the vicinity of the murder of PC Blakelock they could then be found guilty of murder under the law of 'joint enterprise' which means because they were there they actively encouraged what was going on even though they didn't actually strike the fatal blow on PC Blakelock's body.

### DC Melvin

Detective Superintendent Melvin is in overall charge of the whole investigation into PC Blakelock's death. He gave the orders as to how people were arrested, held and questioned, and how people were denied access to their solicitors. In May of last year he was found guilty of misconduct in relation to one of the juveniles who was acquitted of the murder charge. He is since appealing to the Home Secretary to have that rul-

**Mary Silcott, mother of Winston told *FRFI*: 'It's a long, hard struggle for justice but Winston's spirits are strong and he always cheers me up when I go to see him'.**

ing overturned but there isn't any verdict on that yet. He got found guilty of misconduct in relation to denial of access to the solicitor to Jason Hill, aged 13 at the time of arrest, but right across the board he denied access to solicitors on the basis that he believed the solicitors might then go and inform other suspects. In effect he was saying that no solicitor in England or Wales could be trusted. He was reprimanded by the judge and that is why he was put up before a tribunal. Funny enough, after these three were convicted the same judge did another case in Birmingham and one of the main factors in that case was the denial of access to his solicitor and the grounds used were that the solicitor

might then inform another suspect. Now, Hodgson overturned that and set a legal precedent saying that if police are going to deny solicitors to their clients they must have proof that the solicitor cannot be trusted.

Engin's solicitor, Gareth Pierce, has always been one to see where there's a wrong and right it. She's a solicitor by trade but she doesn't necessarily have to take up these cases – she doesn't get paid for them until they get back into court so if it wasn't for people like her, then Engin, the Birmingham 6 and the Guildford 4 wouldn't stand a chance.

### The Tottenham 3

Obviously it is satisfying to know that they've reopened Engin's case but that does not mean, and I certainly will not believe that that's the end of the line for Engin until he walks out the door. But even if he was to walk out tomorrow this campaign started off as the Tottenham 3 campaign and all three cases are so unjust anybody who even looks at the cases comes out in their favour and as it's the Tottenham 3 campaign even if Engin does get out it will continue to be the Tottenham 3 campaign until all three convictions are quashed.

### LONG LARTIN JOURNAL

In November Carol Brickley and David Yaffe from Larkin Publications were invited to Long Lartin prison to discuss the new prisoner reform journal that the prisoners are planning to produce in the near future.

The first issue will carry responses to the Woolf Inquiry.

Prisoners at Long Lartin are leading the way in making sure that prisoners have some say in their lives. Last year the prisoners organised a forum on race relations in prison, a transcript of which has just been produced. This year they are planning a further forum on the problems that prisoners' families have. News on the journal and the next forum will be publicised in *FRFI* as soon as we have news.

## Worst year ever for suicides

**The horrific details revealed by the inquests into the deaths of 19 year old Strangeways protester, Iain McKinlay and 18 year old Anthony Hook who hanged themselves in adjacent cells at Hindley remand centre only serve to underline that 1990 was the year of the highest prison suicide rate ever. 48 prisoners took their own lives. This does not include deaths in police stations or magistrates' court cells of which there have been nearly as many again. Many of the dead were juveniles, some as young as 15; half were unconvicted. NICKI JAMESON reports.**

The Home Office response to yet another of Judge Tumim's damning reports, this time not into the horrors of an individual establishment but into suicides throughout the system, has been to 'consider' a programme to end slopping-out by the year 2000 and a 'promise' to stop remanding boys under 17 in prison custody.

Among the judiciary there have been those who have gone out of their way to minimise the implications of the suicide figures. After an inquest jury in Birmingham found that Sajjan Singh Atwal had died through 'lack of care', a High Court Judge, Lord Justice Watkins, not only ordered a fresh

inquest but blatantly called for the power to 'substitute in appropriate circumstances for a verdict wrongly returned by a jury one that they must clearly on proper direction have found'. The second jury's verdict was 'suicide in circumstances brought about by lack of care'.

Unless there is a drastic reduction in actual numbers of people sent to prison and especially in those remanded in custody, and unless the recommended improvements in conditions include an end to the current systematic staff brutality suffered by inmates, the suicide figures for 1991 will be even higher. ■

## Press Council condemns Strangeways reporting

**A Press Council inquiry concluded that tabloid newspapers breached the Council's Code of Conduct and ethical standards with their reporting of the Strangeways prison protest. LORNA REID attended the press conference.**

Sensational headlines announced numbers dead or gave details of mutilations, all of which were untrue. The claims were based on unsubstantiated rumours, breaching the Code: 'Conjecture should not be elevated into statement of fact.'

Complaints from prisoners pointed out that many of the prisoners had been on remand and were therefore innocent and objected to the use of terms such as 'animals' and 'scum' to describe them.

From the report it is clear that the Home Office and the POA relied on the press to do their dirty work. The Home Office was aware that its claim

that it 'could not confirm' speculation of deaths would encourage reporters to seek confirmation from unofficial and unreliable sources, thus producing reports of 'prisoner-on-prisoner' violence which could have denied the prisoners public support.

One of the unreliable sources named was the POA in whose interests it was to peddle rumours to fuel its own feud with the Home Office over staffing levels and overtime.

The Press Council's report is a welcome weapon in the campaign to curtail the lies that pass for 'news' in the tabloid press. ■

### Inside Ashworth 'special hospital'

In December 'nurses' and other staff belonging to the Prison Officers Association took industrial action at Ashworth (formerly Park Lane), Rampton and Broadmoor 'special hospitals'. Ostensibly about the cessation of travel allowance payments the dispute was in reality the POA's way of demonstrating its control over the 'special hospitals' in advance of further integration into the NHS. POA propaganda emphasised the 'dangerous' nature of the 'patients' and the ability of its members to protect the public from harm.

*FRFI* has received the following account of the effect the POA action has had on 'patients' at Ashworth:

'The union, POA has been taking industrial action. On Saturday morning they began an 'all-out strike' leaving the hospital totally unmanned. The administration and medical staff have had to come in to feed us and administer medicines.

All the 'patients' are locked up in their cells. We have been like this for three days now – in total isolation except for two half hour breaks through the day. We only receive one hot meal a day and are more or less living on crisps, snacks and cups of tea.

We have not received any mail since Friday and visits to the hospital are not allowed. It is a serious situation and an abysmal way to treat 'patients', by definition sick and/or vulnerable people.

I personally believe nurses belonging to a union for prison officers is a contradiction in terms.'

During the dispute a 33 year old 'patient' was found hanging in his room. Although dominated by the POA, the 'special hospital' status of Ashworth will ensure that this suicide is not added to the growing list of deaths in custody.

Nicki Jameson

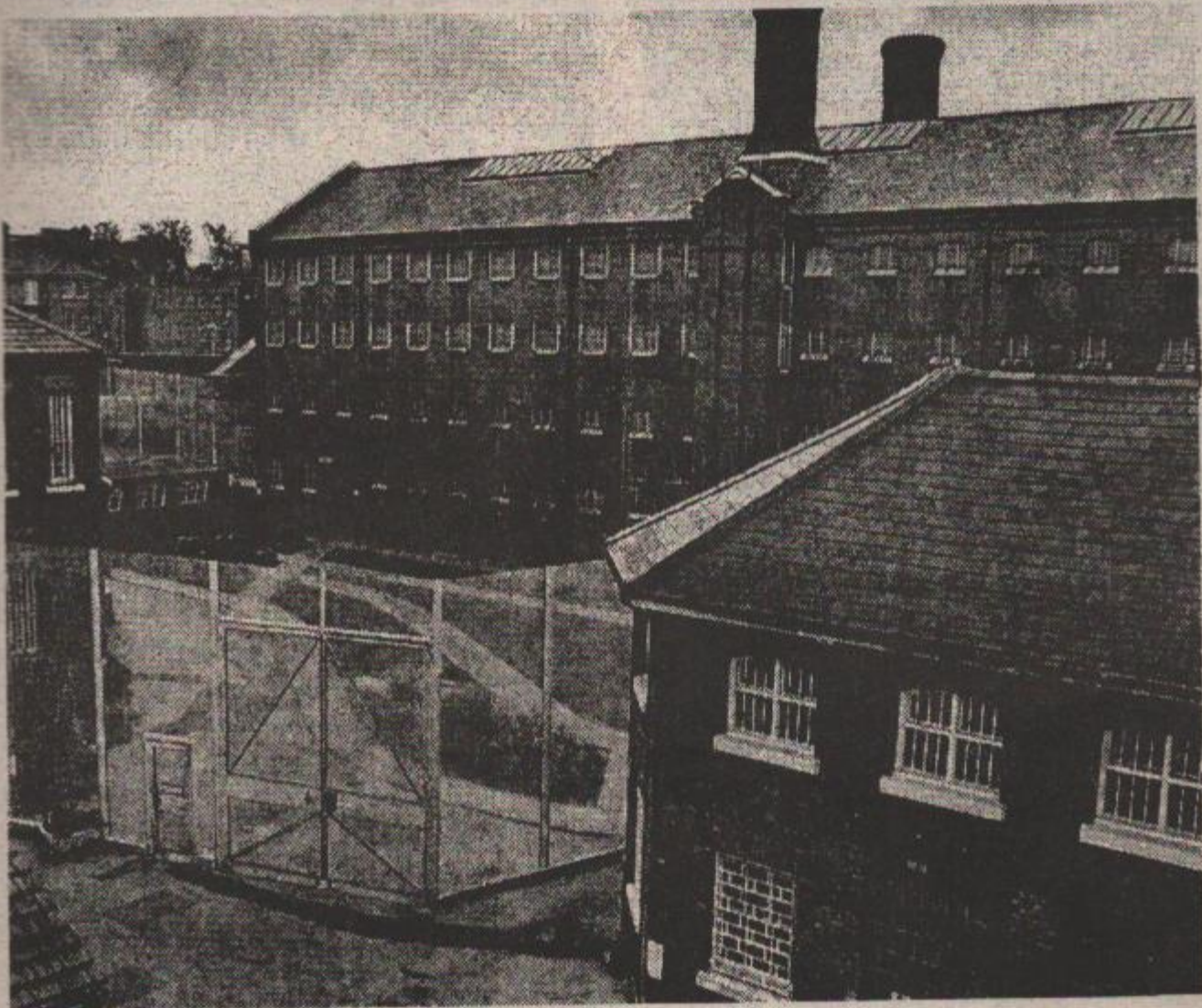
### Prisoners' birthdays

**Liam Quinn** 49930, HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS  
6 February

**Joe McKinney** L46486, HMP Frankland, Brasside, Durham  
DH1 5YD 7 February

**John McComb** B51715, HMP Frankland 25 February

**Ella O'Dwyer** D25135, HMP Durham, Old Elvet, Durham DH1 3HU 3 March



### Brixton Prison – 'corrupting and depressing'

Brixton prison was built in 1821 to hold 175 prisoners. It now holds 1,047 in what was described as a 'corrupting and depressing institution' in a recent report by Judge Stephen Tumim, the Chief Inspector of Prisons. There have been 13 deaths in the prison in the last two years. It also holds the highest number of mentally ill prisoners in any one prison in Europe. Tumim found that mentally ill prisoners were being held in cells stinking of urine, with no integral sanitation and only a mattress for up to 20 hours a day and were receiving inadequate exercise. Other

prisoners were being held three to a cell with no integral sanitation, cardboard furniture and a mattress for 23 hours a day. They were receiving inadequate exercise and their education facilities consisted of only a few converted cells. The prisoners were receiving their three meals between 8 am and 4 pm on week days and by 3 pm on weekends. Prisoners were only allowed eight showers a month and got to see a video once a week. Visiting conditions have been described as hopelessly inadequate and there are no creche facilities.

Pam Robinson



## Subscribe to the best anti-imperialist newspaper in Britain

**FIGHT RACISM!  
FIGHT IMPERIALISM!**

### Subscription rates:

- Britain (inc N. Ireland): £4.50 for 6 issues, £8 for 12 issues
- Ireland/EEC - letter rate sealed: £5 for 6 issues, £9 for 12 issues
- Overseas—airmail PPR: £7.50 for 6 issues, £13 for 12 issues
- Library subs double individual rates

Make cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications. Add £5 for foreign currency cheques. Overseas rates given are for printed paper reduced rate and are unsealed. If you wish your mail to be sealed please let us know and we will inform you of the extra cost.

I wish to subscribe to FRFI beginning with issue \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose payment of £ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ issues at \_\_\_\_\_ rate

Return this form to  
FRFI, BCM Box 5909  
London WC1N 3XX

## 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 have produced 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

## Join the action join the RCG

● A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine. 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 build this movement - **Join the RCG!**

● A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist British Labour and trade union movement - **Join the RCG!**

I wish to join/receive more information about the RCG

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_

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

# LETTERS

## Anti-poll tax protesters jailed

By the time you read this Keith Duncombe and Guy Waddingham should have been released from Lincoln prison after serving two weeks imprisonment. Their 'offence' - back in March 1989 - was to disrupt a meeting of Nottingham City Councillors called to set the Poll Tax. 'Custard

pies' composed of shaving cream were delivered and Council papers strewn around. Hardly an event likely to threaten the stability of the local state. At the time the Labour Council leader Betty Higgins promised no prosecutions and even the notoriously right-wing *Nottingham Evening Post* (four full pages of photographs!) treated the fancy dress, 'Robin Hood' invasion as a huge joke.

However, Tory Councillor Ted Hickey was angry that his suit, and no doubt his dignity, had been stained and pursued the matter through the courts. On 8 January Guy and Keith received a month's jail sentence from Nottingham Magistrates. On 11 January Guy had his appeal against the sentence turned down. In Keith's case his application for bail until he can appeal against his conviction was denied.

The moral of this story seems to be that if one is going to be sent down for attending a Council meeting with shaving cream, then in future take something more interesting along.

Yours fraternally,

BRIAN THOMAS  
St Ann's Anti-Poll Tax Union (in a personal capacity)

## A circus

I joined the picket of the US Embassy when the war began and marched with the Hands Off the Middle East contingent to Trafalgar Square. It was a good demo with plenty of slogans and the shoppers were not hostile which was good news. When we got to Trafalgar Square we were having a rally and a RCP person made a speech. Then another demo came down the road towards Whitehall and the RCP shouted about how we were bigger than the SWP and Militant contingents. They grabbed the main banner and ran towards it telling everyone to follow.

What happened in Whitehall was a load of headless chickens running around until they were penned in by the police. Why didn't we have a rally? Why were the only politics those of the RCP running off to compete with the SWP and Militant? Who owns these demos anyway? Why aren't there any politics? With no politics the whole game is pointless.

Between the CND and their silent vigils and the left posers putting one over on each other these aren't protests, they're circuses.  
HARRY STEWART West London

## LARKIN BOOKS

**Poll Tax: paying to be poor** by Lorna Reid, 48pp, £1.95 plus 30p p&p.

**The revolutionary road to communism in Britain** (Manifesto of the Revolutionary Communist Group) 175pp, £1.50 plus 40p p&p

**Miners Strike 1984-85 People versus State** by David Reed and Olivia Adamson. 144pp, special offer £1 plus 40p p&p

**Viraj Mendis Life or Death?** Edited by Eddie Abrahams and Viraj Mendis. 48pp, £1.50 plus 30p p&p

**Murder on the Rock How the British Government got away with murder.** by Maxine Williams. 64pp., £2.50, plus 40p p&p

**A new path for socialism? Revolutionary renewal in the Soviet Union and Cuba.** By David Reed and Trevor Rayne. 21pp, £1.00 plus 28p p&p.

**Value and Price in Marx's Capital** by David Yaffe. A Revolutionary Communist reprint. 19pp, £1.00 plus 28p p&p.

All cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications. Please send your orders to Larkin Publications, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

## PUBLIC FILM SHOWS

### British Labour and British Imperialism. The Peoples' Flag.

A documentary history of the British labour movement. Public film shows in London and Manchester. All meetings begin at 7pm.

All meetings in Manchester held at Longsight Library, Stockport Road. Admission £1/50p. All meetings in London held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1 (Holborn tube). Admission: £1/50p.

### Victory to consensus 1945-1964:

Manchester Thursday 14 February.

### Who runs the country? 1964 - 1979:

London Wednesday 23 January.  
Manchester Thursday 14 March.

### The enemy within 1979 - 1987:

London Wednesday 20 February.  
Manchester Thursday 11 April.

## RALLY

to support the call for a constituent assembly and one person, one vote on the first anniversary of the unbanning of the ANC, PAC and AZAPO.

Saturday 2 February, 2-6pm, outside the South African embassy, Trafalgar Square. Organised by City of London Anti-Apartheid Group and London National Union of Students. More information from: City AA, BM CAA, London WC1N 3XX, telephone: 071 837 6050.



## Congratulations

Congratulations on the December 1990/January 1991 issue on the write up of the 'Risley 54'. It was a tremendous feeling opening the pages of the paper and seeing it splattered across two pages.

I congratulate Wadi on the article he wrote. He gave me strength throughout the five months on trial and without him I honestly believe we would never have done it.

I congratulate Michael Mansfield QC and all the other barristers (most of whom will be working on the Strangeways' trial: good luck) for all the work and effort they put in. I send my hope and prayers to Michael Mansfield on the next mountain

## Legions of the Great Empire

Thank you for your continued support. The publication sent by Larkin and denied by the prisoncrats here was not FRFI but some flyers you sent. Why were these denied while, as far as I know, FRFI has not been denied, is anybody's guess. Well, you can't expect that kind of individual to think, at least not in any truly constructive way.

Here, it is all excitement as the legions of the Great empire, dressed in their Afrika Korps costumes, get ready to restore demo-kkk-racy in Kuwait. And help to oil monopolies' business with the war.

Nevertheless, today General Dynamics, in Fort Worth, Texas, announced the sacking of no less than 4000, up to now, well-paid wage slaves. GD is a huge defence contractor.

he is about to climb: freeing the Birmingham 6.

I salute my fellow friends, the 'Risley 54'. I will never forget them. We've created a foundation for other prisoners to work in. I miss them. As you may well know we were split up and I ended up in this hole on my own.

There is still plenty of work to be done in our cause to help make Britain's prisons a better place to live in.

Finally, FRFI, I salute you and hope your paper prints a lot more about our cause. My spirit remains unbroken, unbowed and untwisted. Revolution is the solution.

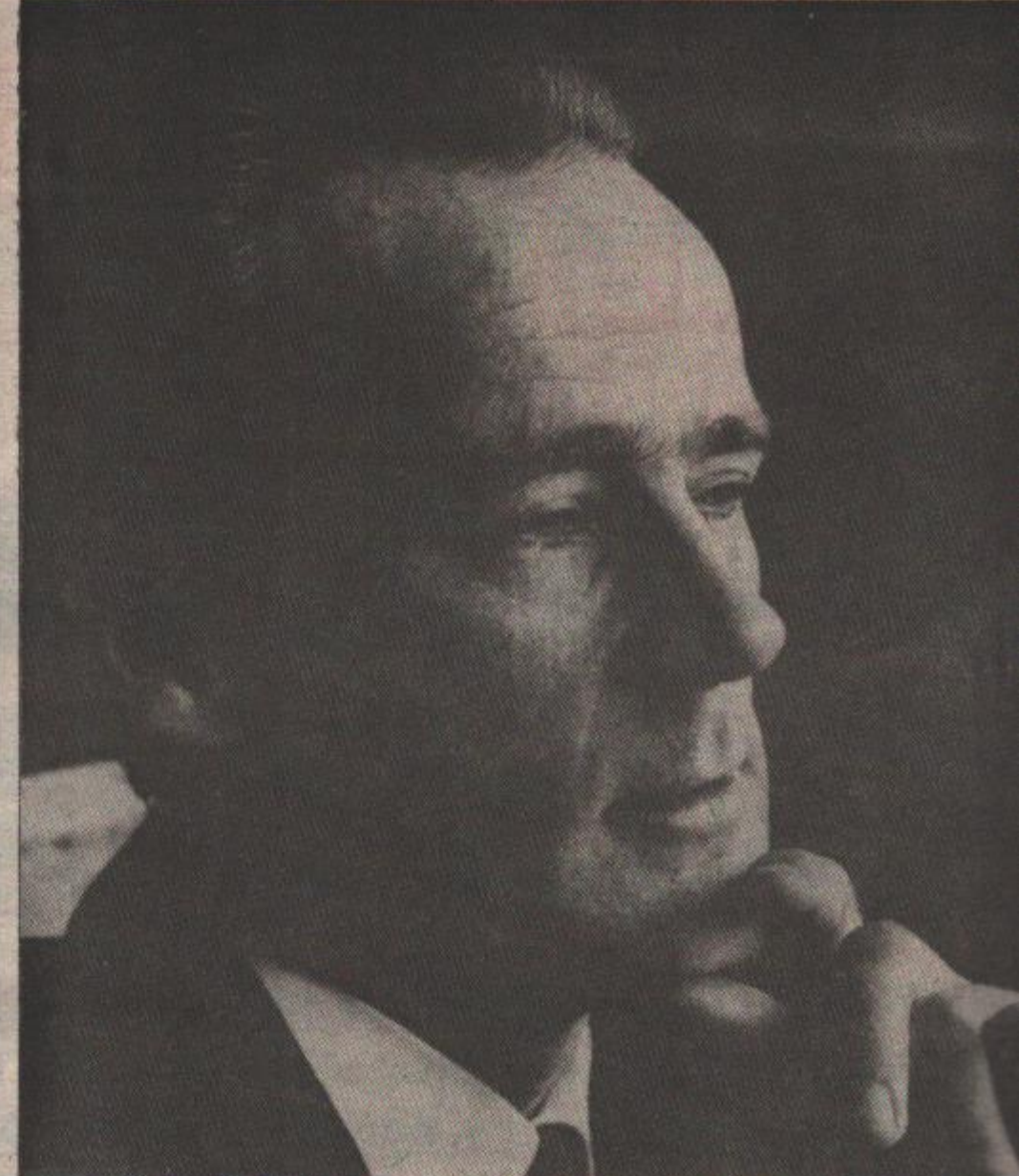
Salud,  
LES WALKER  
AN3397, D Wing, HM Prison, 5 Love Lane, Wakefield WF2 9AG

The banking crisis, war or no war, seems to worsen by the day. So the Big Empire and its plutocracy are ensured of some restlessness at home also. The anti-war-mongering movement here is also rising. So if Mr Geo. H W 'cocaine' Bush's gamble results in protracted war rather than a blitzkrieg the imperialists may yet see themselves in high waters and no lifeboat. We'll see.

In struggle, venceremos.  
ANA LUCIA GELABERT # 384484  
RT4 Box 800, Gatesville, Texas, 76528, USA

## Write to:

FRFI, BCM Box 5909,  
London WC1N 3XX  
or ring: 071-837 1688



COLMAN DOYLE

## Obituary for Daithí Ó Conaill

When he died on New Year's day, Daithí Ó Conaill had more than 30 years' service to the Irish national cause to his credit.

He first made contact with the IRA in the summer of 1953 after he heard of an arms raid in England in which Sean Mac Stiofain and two others were arrested. At that time he was in the Free State Local Defence Corps, the FCA. He was instructed to stay in the FCA and to enrol in as many training courses as possible. He joined the IRA in late 1954 and became involved in the training programme for the campaign that began on 12 December 1956. Daithí was vice o/c of the column that attacked Brookborough RUC barracks on New Year's Eve 1956. He took command of the column where the o/c was badly wounded and successfully withdrew his column back to its base in Monaghan, but they were arrested, sentenced to six months in Mountjoy and then in the summer of 1957 Daithí and his comrades were interned at the Curragh.

Just over a year later, he and Ruairi Ó Bradaigh escaped on 27 September. At the age of 20, Ó Conaill was appointed Director of Operations, a position he held until 10 November 1960 when he was wounded six times and arrested by a RUC patrol. He was sentenced to eight years in March 1961 and released in 1963 after that campaign had been called off.

He rejoined the IRA on his release and took part with Sean Mac Stiofain and others in the reorganisation of the IRA in the south of Ireland. He was reappointed to the Army Council in October 1965 but resigned when he married six months later. He took a teaching position with the Vocational School in Glen Cholm Cille in West Donegal in 1965 and worked with the local co-op in a voluntary capacity for several years.

He rejoined the IRA when the

north erupted in the summer of 1969. He sided with Ó Bradaigh and Mac Stiofain against the revisionists who later formed the Workers Party and was elected onto the Provisional Army Council in December 1969 and was appointed in charge of the large strategic north west area Donegal, Derry, West Tyrone, West Fermanagh and Sligo. He was elected as Vice President of Sinn Fein in October 1971 and moved to Dublin that year. He held various positions on the IRA HQ Staff but was never Chief of Staff nor Director of Intelligence. He was, however, Director of Publicity for the IRA and the Coordinator of the Eire Nua programme for a number of years in the early 1970s.

He was a member of the Republican delegation who met at Whitehall in June 1972. He was very involved in the leadership that was outmanoeuvred by the British in the negotiations that led to the long truce in 1975. It is fair to point out, however, that most of the Army Council were 6 to 1 very much in favour of that truce, not understanding that the Brits are past masters at pretending to concede much when in fact they concede very little, ie the incident centres on the release of internees while British rule in the North was consolidated by the Diplock Courts, Ulsterisation, new prisons, etc.

Ó Conaill resigned as Vice President of Sinn Fein when the Eire Nua policies were dropped and left Sinn Fein with Ruairi Ó Bradaigh in 1985 when the organisation ended the abstentionist policy in the 26 Counties. He was a founder member of Republican Sinn Fein in 1982 and was the first national chairman of that organisation. He will be a great loss to the Republican cause.

FRFI received this obituary from a veteran Irish Republican

## PRISONERS FUND

Each month it costs £100 to send our newspaper into prisoners. A subscription for a prisoner costs £7.50 and prisoners cannot afford to pay this. We are appealing to our readers to take out a subscription to our Prisoners Fund.

● I enclose a donation of £ \_\_\_\_\_ to help pay for a prisoner's subscription to FRFI. (Cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

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



# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

## EDITORIAL

# Stop the Gulf war

Hundreds of thousands of people in Britain are opposed to the imperialists' obscene war in the Gulf. On Saturday 12 January massive protests took place in every major city and town across the country, demonstrating the potential for a powerful campaign to stop the war.

But now that the war has begun the protests have dwindled in size from 100,000 in London on 12 January to 10,000 on 19 January. This is not due to lack of opposition to the war. The size and scale of the protests have dropped because, quite simply, the CND and Labour Left leadership of the anti-war campaign are shamefaced accomplices in the Labour Party policy of imperialist intervention in the Middle East – differing only in the means of subjugating Iraq. To maintain this position and avoid the inevitable challenge to its leadership, it has refused to establish any democratic structures in the anti-war movement. But it is only such structures that could involve tens of thousands of people on any consistent basis and channel their anger into an effective movement.

Like the Grand old Duke of York, CND is doing a lot of marching but is taking great care not to hold any type of activity which would give ordinary people a sense of purpose. Having mobilised 20,000 people to Parliament Square on the evening the UN deadline expired, CND contemptuously left them to mill around. An attempted sit-down was quickly put to an end by CND stewards. No focus, no speeches, no call to action. A minute's silence at midnight, a quick rendition of 'Give peace a chance' and everyone sent home.

Two nights later in response to the first aerial bombing of Iraq the number fell further to 10,000. This time a march up Whitehall and back again. Again no focus, no speeches, no call to action. On Saturday 19 January only 10,000 marched the well-worn

route from Embankment to Hyde Park, a route chosen deliberately to avoid the Houses of Parliament, Downing Street and the US embassy.

Rather than commit itself to galvanising popular support into effective action, CND is using the hundreds of thousands of people who oppose the war as fodder to further its own middle class political ambitions. The result is a desperately weak anti-war campaign in comparison with the USA, Europe and other countries.

The CND's ineffective and demoralising leadership can be challenged. It is not difficult to offer political leadership to those who want to organise to stop the war. The question is – who will do it?

It will certainly not be the British Trotskyist left. Their political consti-



JON KEMPSTER

tuency is the petit-bourgeoisie and the privileged layers of the working class organised in the Labour Party and the official trade union movement. The vast majority of this layer is committed to Kinnock's war programme. Those that are not, if they are campaigning against the war will do so under the CND/Labour Left banner. So the major Trotskyist organisations have restricted their practical opposition to the war so as not to endanger their alliance with the CND.

All of the Trotskyist organisations are fighting each other to become the authentic voice of left Labourism. They compete with each other and the Labour Left to recruit from the same narrow political constituency. Their political practice inevitably follows the sectarian and bureaucratic methods of their political mentors in the Labour Party and trade union movement. They are not concerned to build an anti-war movement but rather to opportunistically recruit members from the existing movement for their own organisation.

So the Socialist Workers Party, up and down the country, has argued against mobilising around the demand for 'Troops Out' and has refused to support any demonstration calling for 'Troops Out'. Thoroughly steeped in the sectarian practices that are the hallmark of British Trotskyism, it was responsible for diverting the 17 January Downing Street protest away to Trafalgar Square where it held its own, exclusive, SWP rally. In order to sustain its alliance with its chosen constituency in the lead up to the war, incredibly, it devoted a major article in *Socialist Worker* (5 January 1991) to calling on those opposed to the war to vote Labour. Imperialist war or not, nothing will break the SWP from the racist, pro-imperialist Labour Party.

The more upmarket Trotskyists in the Revolutionary Communist Party recruit from the same social strata and pose themselves as the 'revolutionary' alternative to the SWP. Thus the RCP opposes CND but is in practice as sectarian and opportunist as the SWP. On the HOME Committee, with other Trotskyist organisations, it has consistently refused to build an alliance with Turkish, Kurdish and Arab workers organised in Britain. It rejected the RCG's proposed slogans of Victory to the Palestinian Revolution and Self-Determination for the Kurdish People on the grounds that it would narrow the movement!

The RCP is formally committed to the Hands of the Middle East Committee. However, rather than use the potentially broad-based, democratic, anti-imperialist HOME Committee as a vehicle to build an effective anti-war movement across the country, the RCP is using it to build its own organisation.

At the HOME Committee meeting before the 12 January CND demonstration the RCP brazenly announced that it would not participate in the HOME Committee anti-imperialist contingent because its priority was to sell its own publications. On the day of the march, confronted with an impressive contingent uniting the RCG, Kurdish and Turkish organisations, as well as other HOME affiliates, it shamefacedly changed its position and carried a banner with three people behind it.

Further sectarianism and sabotage was in store. The RCP, without consultation, agreed with the police to re-route the HOME 15 January demonstration from the agreed route of Trafalgar Square to the US Embassy, to a ridiculous route going nowhere: Hyde Park to Park Crescent, part of the Nash Terraces of Regents Park – a salubrious habitat for London's rich. The 'revolutionaries' then quickly dispersed to attend their own private and exclusive meetings.

On a number of occasions since the war started the RCP, in its role as chair of the HOME Committee, has bureaucratically denied speaking rights to other participating organisations. On public events the RCP's prime concern is to race the SWP to set up its own exclusive platform.

Anti-democratic, opportunist, sectarian practices cannot be the basis of a successful, anti-imperialist anti-war movement.

So, what must we do if we are to begin building the kind of movement necessary to stop this bloody imperialist slaughter? First and foremost our movement must be politically independent of the war-lusting Labour Party and its allies. Second, it must call for the defeat of its own government and that of the US. Third, it must take practical steps to forge a fighting alliance with the working class and revolutionary movements of the Middle East which are leading the struggle against imperialism.

That is why the RCG has been working alongside Kurdish and Turkish workers in Britain in the campaign to oppose the war. Together we have raised the banner of working class internationalism best expressed by the slogans: For the defeat of US and British imperialism! and Victory for the working class and oppressed peoples of the Middle East!

There is a lot more to be done to build a serious movement to stop the war. Everyone who wants to be part of this movement must start now. This is what we can do.

The only way to stop the war is to get all imperialist forces out of the Gulf. To do this will require an alliance of different political forces and trends. They will have their separate slogans but can unite around the minimal anti-imperialist platform expressed in the slogans – Hands Off

the Middle East and Imperialist Troops Out of the Gulf. The HOME Committee was founded on this basis. It must now urgently organise to incorporate and involve the thousands of people who want to be active in the anti-war movement but are prevented from doing so by the CND/Labour Left leadership.

● In the coming period the RCG will argue for HOME committees to be set up in every town and city. These committees must be open to all individuals and organisations who agree with its demands. These committees must be non-sectarian and democratic with full rights for all participants.

● Set up a HOME Committee in your city, town, workplace, college, community and affiliate to the National HOME Committee. If you need help with speakers, leaflets, publicity or anything else contact us.

● Organise street meetings and local marches against the war; leaflet busy shopping areas, bus and railway stations.

● Organise a campaign of letter writing to your local newspaper. If they refuse to print them, picket or occupy their offices until they do.

● Picket and leaflet your local army recruitment centre.

● Organise to force your local Labour MPs and councillors to oppose the war. If they refuse picket their surgeries and contact your local Labour Party anti-war activists to begin procedures to deselect them.

● Organise to ensure that your local trade union, student union, Labour Party organisation, trades council, tenants organisation, anti-poll tax group and other organisations pass the resolution below.

We condemn the war against Iraq and the peoples of the Middle East.

We recognise that this war has nothing to do with defending democracy and everything to do with defending oil profit for the imperialist nations.

We call for the immediate withdrawal of all imperialist troops and their allies from the Gulf.

We agree to affiliate to HOME and to support all initiatives to stop the war and get the troops out.

Within this broad movement, the RCG will seek to convince activists of the need to build an alliance with Turkish, Kurdish and Arab workers living in Britain. Whilst not insisting on this as a condition for unity, we believe that such an alliance will guarantee the anti-imperialist character of the anti-war movement.

**For the defeat of US and British imperialism! Victory to the working class and oppressed masses of the Middle East!**

## Do you want to stop the Gulf War?

- Do you believe that an anti-imperialist, anti-war movement is necessary to stop the imperialist war drive?
- Will you join with Kurds, Turks and Arabs in Britain who oppose the war and act in solidarity with them to win self-determination?
- Do you believe that the anti-war movement should be democratic and non-sectarian?

If your answer is YES, then you should be working with the RCG to fight against war. We have years of campaigning experience, building and leading campaigns against racism, against deportations, against British imperialism in Ireland and South Africa, giving support to liberation movements, anti-racist groups, workers in struggle and prisoners all over the world.

## We need your support!

**RCG We need your spare cash to raise at least £1000!**

We need money to produce leaflets (in Turkish and English), placards, banners, posters – all the stuff of campaigning work! We need your active support at meetings, demonstrations and actions to oppose the war.

Send your name and address and a donation to: FRFI BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel: \_\_\_\_\_ Donation: \_\_\_\_\_