

# THATCHER'S JUDGES SOUND THE WARNING

**A SERIOUS crisis has erupted between the Thatcher government and important sections of the judiciary, about the latest wave of anti-terrorist laws.**

These judges include the Northern Ireland Lord Chief Justice, Sir Brian Hutton and Lord Justice Kelly and O'Donnell.

These three judges handed down a decision last December which overturned a quarter of a century of precedent in the north of Ireland which means that in future members of the British Army and security forces involved in shootings might have to attend court to give evidence at inquests.

'The Independent' in its editorial of 29 December said: 'It would be hard to exaggerate the seriousness of the differences which have arisen between the Northern Ireland judiciary over anti-terrorist laws'.

So tense is the relationship between the Thatcher government and an influential section of the judiciary that three senior judges last week took Northern Ireland secretary Tom King to task about the removal of the right to

BY GEOFF PILLING

silence in front of the Irish Attorney General, John Murray.

The judges especially oppose the removal of a suspect's right to silence in court.

One senior judge has said that he intends to ignore the new law. These same judges have also blocked the efforts of the Tory government to find a way round the European Court of Human Rights ruling that the detention of suspects for up to seven days was illegal.

Thatcher had planned to insert a measure of judicial oversight into the detention procedures so that a judge would hear from the police and then be asked to grant an extension to a suspect's period of custody.

The judges have protested that this would involve them in the investigation stages of cases on which they might have subsequently to adjudicate.

This opposition from the judiciary in the north of Ireland has forced the Home

Secretary, Douglas Hurd to openly defy the European Court ruling.

The Northern Ireland Law Society has joined the judges in expressing fears that Thatcher may be proceeding too hastily in her war against 'terrorism'.

They have protested that they should have been consulted on the removal of the right to silence which they condemned as a move towards an inquisitorial system.

The government-appointed Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights has also complained about the lack of consultation on another Thatcher measure: the use of genetic fingerprinting.

This mounting crisis comes in the wake of the publicly expressed opposition of Lords Scarman and Devlin to the manner in which the cases of the Guildford Four and others was handled. Scarman and Devlin held that the right to trial by jury was being eroded.

What do these divisions signify? The judiciary is an integral part of the capitalist state, part of the repressive apparatus through which the ruling class maintains its power. The attacks of these and other judges does not mean that there is a 'progressive' wing of the capitalist

class standing in opposition to a 'reactionary' wing.

But the divisions in the ruling class which reach right to the top of the state machine do indicate the profound crisis facing the capitalist class.

That the capitalist class is forced to take away rights and liberties which the working class and sections of the middle class have enjoyed for many many years is an indication of its great weakness.

Some sections of this ruling class fear that the manner in which Thatcher is proceeding will unleash an uncontrollable wave of anger in the working class movement.

They are right. But Thatcher and her supporters have no choice: they know that titanic struggles with the working class are looming. They know that this ruling class will be faced with battles far more serious than they faced with the miners in 1984-85. They are preparing for these battles. And the working class must also prepare.

This is precisely what its leadership refuses to do. This is why the Workers Revolutionary Party has called for a united struggle in defence of democratic rights. See centre pages for an article on the political significance of this call.

## • Inside this week's Workers Press:

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# **Workers Press**

## **Gorbachev fights for imperialism**

THE YEAR-END messages of mutual admiration between Gorbachev and Reagan were no diplomatic formalities. They expressed the real gratitude of US imperialism for the help Moscow is now affording it in each part of the world where it faces popular struggles.

The two main areas covered by the Gorbachev-Reagan deal were the Middle East and Southern Africa. Now, a third area is revealed.

Last week, Gorbachev openly called for the end of the decades-long guerilla struggle in the Philippines. The precarious US-backed regime of Cory Aquino must be sustained at the expense of the Filipino workers and peasants, and the local Communist Party is to be used for this purpose.

Gorbachev also praised the work of Yasser Arafat, whose recognition that the Zionist state has a right to exist has delighted every imperialist heart. Arafat's act of 'statesmanship' at the Geneva meeting of the United Nations was sponsored by the Stalinist bureaucracy and practically dictated by the State Department.

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Meanwhile, the meaning of the agreement signed between Cuba, Angola and South Africa, also under the joint auspices of Washington and Moscow, has now begun to come into the open. The Apartheid regime has declared that, in return for the withdrawal from Angola of the South African invaders and their UNITA puppets, the Angolans must get rid of the bases from which the ANC has been operating.

Fidel Castro has been making radical noises about his opposition to glasnost. But he has nonetheless been the instrument through which Gorbachev has operated in helping to maintain the Botha regime.

Speculation on the possibility that the 'independence' which has been promised to Namibia would offer the ANC an alternative site for their work has been brought to an abrupt halt. The leadership of SWAPO, which it is presumed would form a future Namibian government, have indicated that this would be embarrassing for them.

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The manner of Gorbachev's diplomacy is indeed more 'open' than that of his predecessor Stalin, but its content is the same. When Stalin formed alliances with French imperialism, with Nazi Germany and with Churchill, arch-enemy of the October Revolution, he sacrificed the international working class and the true interests of the Soviet Union to the stabilisation of imperialism.

Today, as in those days, the foreign policy requirements of the Soviet bureaucracy were completely antagonistic to socialism. In return for short-term advantages, which always turned out to be illusory anyway, the Stalinists used the communist parties to hold back the struggles of the working class.

Stalin knifed the revolutions in Spain and France, opened the way for the imperialist war, and then ensured the continued existence of capitalism through the revolutionary struggles in which it ended. The campaign of murder and slander against Trotskyism was an essential part of these operations.

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But 1989 is not 1936. The Stalinist parties are in a state of disarray. Their treachery will not so easily succeed in its counter-revolutionary work under Gorbachev as it did under Stalin.

But this means that the possibilities for the building of the Fourth International, the only real answer to Stalinist betrayal, must be utilised to the full.

## **WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND**

**December: £1,527.82 received  
January, in so far: £195.44**

MANY many thanks for completing the December target of £1,500, and for making a good start for the January target of £2,000.

We can also report that £1,000 extra for international work was received in December, and we are very proud to say that this included £200 from a shipyard worker who has been made redundant.

In 1989 the struggles in Thatcher's Britain must build up. Legislation on the Statute book already deprives masses of people of democratic rights, and much more is threatened as the capitalist state desperately tries to overcome its crisis by loading it on the backs of ordinary people.

Workers Press will become the voice of this growing struggle - we invite all our readers to participate in the discussion of our programme and report their own experiences. The date for Workers Press to be produced as a tabloid newspaper will be announced soon. Then we will be able to have a sizeable letters page for this discussion.

Technical and journalistic training is going ahead for these planned changes. A seminar of active workers will be held at the beginning of February. There will be a build-up campaign on high streets, and housing estates as well as in the workplaces and trade union branches.

Our Fighting Fund of £2,000 this month is a vital part of these preparations. We had received £195.44 in the first two days of the month thanks, mainly, to the South West London branch of the WRP. Let's make sure we reach the target on time. Let's make 1989 a year of building the Workers Press and the WRP.

Dot Gibson

**Send donations to: Workers Press Fighting Fund,  
PO Box 735, London, SW9 7QS**

**Friday 27 January: Workers Revolutionary Party  
London District Public Meeting  
'70 YEARS SINCE THE MURDER OF ROSA  
LUXEMBURG AND KARL LIEBKNECHT -  
GERMAN REVOLUTIONARIES'  
Speakers: Bob Archer and Tom Kemp  
7.30 pm, room A85 London School of Economics,  
Houghton Street, London WC2**

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**Saturday 28 January: Join the WRP contingent on  
the 17th anniversary of BLOODY SUNDAY  
DEMONSTRATION - Britain out of Ireland.  
Assemble Grange Park, Kilburn 10 am - march to  
Stonebridge Park  
Social in the evening £2 (£1 unwaged) tickets can  
be obtained from the Workers Press office.**

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**WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, LEICESTER  
Public meeting  
DEFENCE OF BASIC RIGHTS  
7.30 pm 25 January  
Unemployed Workers Centre, 138 Charles Street, Leicester**

**1,000 days and nights on the non-stop picket, rally  
from 10 am to 10 pm Saturday 14 January outside  
South Africa House, Trafalgar Square.**

THE latest issue of 'Tasks of the Fourth International' is now available. It contains Cliff's Slaughter's report to the extended meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International's meeting last August, together with the transcript of Michel Varga's (Balasz Nagy's) speech to the London meeting called to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938. Copies of this issue are available from PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS. Price £2.40, including P&P.

# Austrian capital in dirty deal with Hungarian Stalinists

This is an edited translation of an article from the paper of the International Kommunistische Liga (Oesterreich), a Trotskyist Group which has observer status on the Preparatory Committee for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International.

'THE UNIVERSAL interests of our epoch have pushed the ideological confrontation into the background,' said Hungary's prime minister, Karol Grosz, during a visit to Austria at the end of last year.

'Between two states of different social orders the development of relations of a new quality has been made possible. We can proudly assert that the relations between the Peoples' Republic of Hungary and the Republic of Austria have provided examples of this for a long time already.'

One of the examples Grosz had in mind was the controversial power station at Gaboikovo-Nagymaros on the Hungarian stretch of the river Danube. Hungary is counting on the completion of this project, he said, and any governmental U-turn on the ground of environmentalist protests would be 'unthinkable'.

Hungary, according to Grosz, is offered to Austrian economists as a testing ground for other socialist states.

Such tests would enjoy the 'support of Austrian friends'. Yes, one can tell a person by their friends! The friends made by Grosz and the ruling Socialist Workers' Party of Hungary (USAP), and the sort of 'help' they are giving at Nagymaros, shed clear light on the character of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The Gaboikovo-Nagymaros dam was first planned in the early 1950s, and the Austrian bourgeoisie was not yet involved.

For nearly a decade - from the beginning of 1977 onwards - the commencement of building work was put off, with the Hungarian government arguing that there was no cash for it.

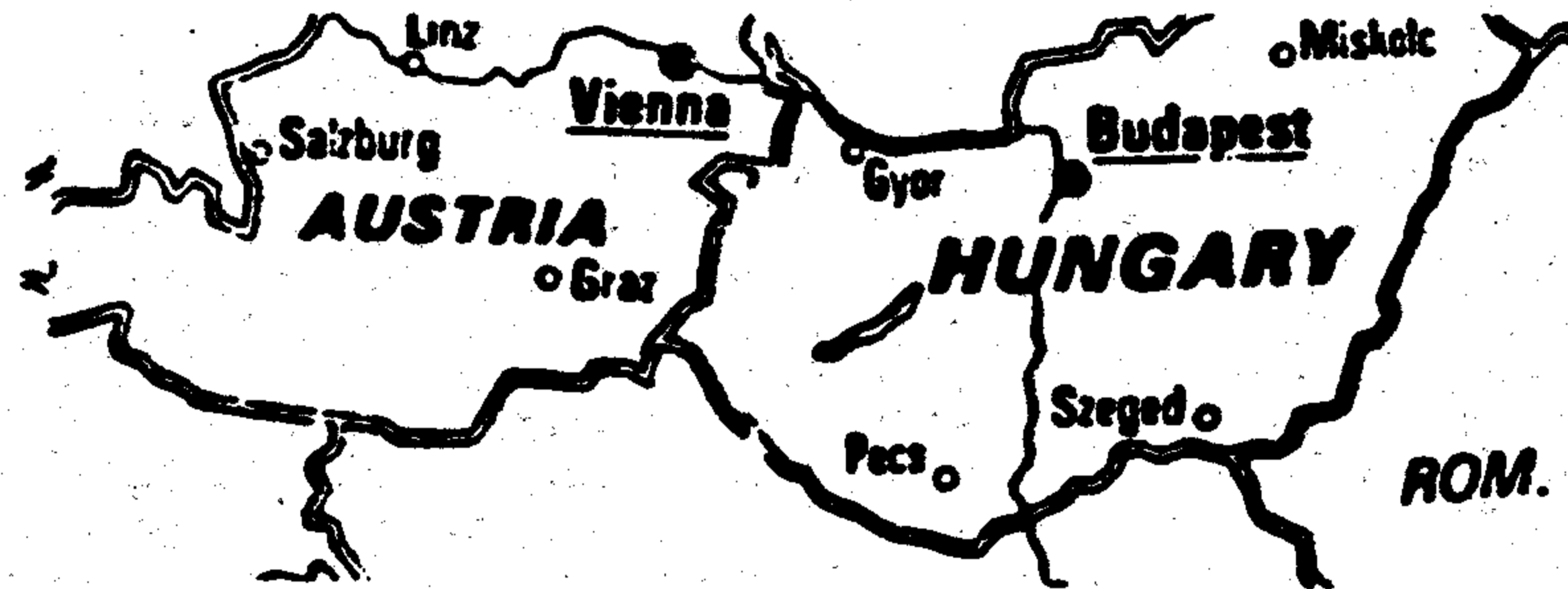
Furthermore, the possibility of building the power station at Hainburg on the Austrian part of the Danube was blocked by the ecology movement: they occupied the site in December 1984, forcing a 're-think' which is still going on today.

But, Austrian capital needed cheap energy - which was to be paid for by someone else, either the working class at home or from the colonial world.

The source of such cheap energy turned out to be Hungary's 'market socialism' reforms, which have gained ground rapidly, inspired by Gorbachev's 'perestroika' and 'glasnost'.

In early 1986, a 5.8 million schilling loan, to finance the Nagy-

**'Besides the plundering of human beings through forced labour, the plundering of the Hungarian economy through the transfer of electricity energy to the Austrian imperialist state, there will also be incalculable abuse of nature.'**



maros construction project, was made to the Donaukraft AG building corporation by an Austrian banking syndicate headed by credit institutions and regional banks.

The site was in Hungary; the deal is that Hungary will deliver, over the next 20 years, 1,200 mega-watt hours (Gigawattstunden) into the co-operative electricity grid (Verbundnetz), with the co-operative paying back the loan.

## Loan

The Republic of Austria (i.e its taxpayers) guaranteed the loan - thus reducing the risk taken by the banks and building firms to zero!

The USAP accepted all the terms and signed the contract.

So Hungary will, despite the project, or rather because of it, have LESS electricity than before - a deficit which will last until the year 2015! The ecological damage could last for ever.

Because one-third of the electricity is to be delivered in winter - when Hungary itself needs more electricity and the Danube's level is lower - the power station will operate below its real capacity.

Hungary will have to send electricity from their own grid to Austria, and find the money for the transfer; it will have to build purification plants in Győr, Esztergom, Komárom, Tatabánya and Óroszlány.

But even this is not enough: Austrian capital's demands are being satisfied with the use of forced labour.

Hungarian prisoners from the Maria-nosztra penitentiary, 20 kilometers from the power station site, are being forced to work there behind barbed wire.

The Hungarian bureaucracy cannot, and does not want to, withdraw from the exploitative contract, which transfers wealth on such a huge scale to imperialist

Austria.

What better indication of the USAP bureaucracy's cancerous parasitism on the body of the Hungarian working class! What better indication of the inability of the bureaucracy - and this includes the Czechoslovak government who also participated - to bring the needs of mankind, economy and nature into a well-balanced and well-thought-out relationship!

Besides the plundering of human beings through forced labour, the plundering of the Hungarian economy through the transfer of electricity energy to the Austrian imperialist state, there will also be incalculable abuse of nature.

The power station will only be prevented by linking the struggle against Austrian imperialism with the struggle to overthrow this parasitic bureaucracy and establish democratic workers' power.

The building work at Nagymaros has not gone very far: it is still not too late to withdraw from the contract.

Even if things had gone further, everything should be done to stop the dam. If the Austrian bourgeoisie and their government try to carry on, as they are presently doing, at least we should aim for a cancellation of this contract work.

## Sharks

But this would signify taking up the class struggle internationally; it would mean slamming the door in the faces of the Austrian profit sharks.

International support from so-called democracy could not be expected for such a stand - the DoKW builders threatened an 'international trial in a court of arbitration' if Hungary withdrew from the deal.

The Hungarian protest movement cannot expect honest support from the western democrats. They are tools of capital and the

conduct of Austria is ample proof of this.

The struggle against the betrayal of the Hungarian workers' state, a state which is already extremely deformed under the USAP, has to be a struggle to defend Hungary against imperialist plundering: this entails the overthrow of the Stalinist USAP bureaucracy.

Nagymaros is not simply a bad move by the bureaucrats: it is the outcome of their politics. Grosz said as much in Vienna: 'The main direction of economic reforms is an extension of market relationships, the strengthening of motivation, the enforcement of the performance principle, improvement of the conditions for businesses, and the guarantee of equal conditions for completion for all the participants.'

Concretely, this means that Hungary will allow repatriation of profits to western businesses. Private persons in Hungary and concerns of the state are to be put on a par with newly-established capitalist firms. The only restrictions: purely private concerns are not allowed to employ more than 500 staff. But a firm with even a one per cent government stake can get round this restriction.

There is no approval for joint ventures - but it is only necessary to register the business if foreign participation remains below 49 per cent.

The foreign investors will then be able to transfer their profits from Hungary into stronger values to their countries. So Nagymaros is in fact only the beginning of a development which will betray the achievements of the Hungarian working class.

If the Hungarian workers and the opposition organise for the defence of these achievements, against the attacks of imperialism and its agents within Hungary the Stalinist bureaucracy, then they must also look for international allies, which can only be the organised international working class.

The task of the Austrian working class is to fight the enemy within their own country, to confront the national and international bourgeoisie.

International solidarity of the Austrian working class must mean to support the struggles of the Hungarian opposition against Nagymaros, and to demand:

Cancellation of the building contract! Cancellation of the contract for the delivery of electricity! Down with Austrian Neocolonialism! For a borderless and comradesly co-operation of the Austrian working class and the Hungarian working class! For the socialist proletarian revolution in Austria! For the political, anti-bureaucratic revolution in Hungary!

# CAMPAIGN TO DEFEND D

BY CLIFF SLAUGHTER

THE THATCHER government acts on behalf of the rich ruling class of employers and bankers, not on behalf of the people as a whole. This seems so obvious that it hardly seems worth writing down. What follows from it?

It is for this reason that it attacks the state benefits of the young and the old, the homeless and the unemployed, and the low-paid. For the same reason the Government attacks the youth, through its abuse of power to impose curfews, identity checks and restrictions on freedom of movement on 'football supporters' (meaning working-class youth), to impose compulsory detention of uncharged, let alone untried, prisoners, in the name of the fight against 'terrorism'.

In each case the Thatcher Government uses the idea of a fight against 'terrorism' or against 'crime' or 'violence', in order to cover up its use of dictatorial powers in a political fight against the youth and against the Irish people.

The same government is trying everything in its power to put the clock back more than 100 years in wiping out the rights of workers in trade unions.

With the help of the same gutter press which slanders the Irish republicans and the youth, it denounces the workers in unions as greedy, self-interested enemies of the national interest; but the real aim of these attacks is to strengthen the hand of the bankers and big business in increasing exploitation as they face the rapidly mounting world economic crisis and trade war.

**The ruling class took very seriously the enormous fighting capacity shown by the miners and their wives in 1984-85, and they are preparing for the next time! The exact opposite of what the Labour and trade union leaders, supported by the Stalinists (Communist Party), are doing.**

The imposition of censorship in reporting of the Irish struggle, and the plans to hand over all TV and radio broadcasting to private enterprise and 'competition' (meaning to the big monopolies) are part of the same attack.

Why these attacks? Why the unprecedented battery of repressive laws outlined in the Queen's Speech, destructive of democratic rights?

It is because the Government, acting for its own class, is using its unchallenged parliamentary superiority and the cowardly silence of the Labour opposition to make its preparations to defeat the working class when the big struggles provoked by the mounting economic crisis erupt, as they soon will.

The ruling class took very seriously the enormous fighting capacity shown by the miners and their wives in 1984-85, and they are preparing for the next time! The exact opposite of what the Labour and trade union leaders, supported by the Stalinists (Communist Party), are doing.

The ruling class fears that the working class, forced into struggle to defend their jobs and living standards, will take up where the miners and their wives left off! And it fears that they will be joined by thousands of you-

ng students, newly awakened and pouring on to the streets in what they rightly recognise as a life-and-death struggle to defend the basic right to education against the Government's 'student loans' proposal.

They fear also that they will be joined by the thousands of honest journalists and workers in the media who oppose censorship and attacks on freedom of expression.

They fear the wrath of all those who recognise the Government's blatant use of the excuse of combatting 'terrorism', 'hooliganism' and 'violence' in order to abolish hard-won rights to trial by jury, the right to silence, the right not to be held without charge (Habeas Corpus), the right not to be charged with the infamous 'conspiracy' for minor offences. **Political opposition, or the expression of dissenting opinion, or even indicating that you are not prepared to accept your lot without a murmur, is to be treated as a crime - that is the message of the Thatcher Government.**

And perhaps what they fear more than anything else, in this land where the oh-so-respectable Labour and trade union bureaucrats have ensured social discipline for so long, is that great unknown quantity, the mass of working-class women, the youth, and the unemployed, who have been cut off from organised labour in the past. The young people forced into YTS schemes and deprived of benefits, or even forced into homelessness by the Poll Tax; the women who showed their teeth in the miners' strike and gave notice that they will not again accept the domesticated role of second-class citizens.

The world economic crisis which is threatening to expose completely the utter bankruptcy and corruption of the privileged, parasitic imperial ruling class of Britain will, they know, throw the working class into great battles of which the miners' strike was the harbinger. And it is in preparation for this political crisis that they attack democratic rights so systematically. How else can we explain the attack on the youth, on rights in the courts, on free expression, on trade union rights?

The most important thing for the class enemy, led by the Thatcher Government, is that they carry through their preparations while all the sections who are attacked remain separated, now and when the major struggles begin. As always, the greatest threat to them is that the working class unites in its own interests, independently of the class enemy.

The attack on rights is intended to prolong and deepen the divisions within the working class, and the major role in ensuring this is the absolute refusal of the Labour and trade union leaders to organise the slightest political opposition to the Government's measures.

**As always, the greatest threat to them (the class enemy) is that the working class unites in its own interests, independently of the class enemy.**

For example, the cowardly silence of the TUC on the latest Tory 'guidelines' attacking the right to strike; the toadying condemnations of the Republican struggle whenever the Labour 'opposition' speaks on the Prevention of Terrorism Act; the disgusting attack by Kinnock on the student demonstrators ridden down by mounted police.



Women take on the police on a picket line

This is no different from the way the well-fed TUC leaders turn their backs on the millions of unemployed and the youth in YTS forced labour schemes on starvation wages and without rights. No different from the way, with the help of the 'peaceful road' Stalinists, they isolated and starved out the miners, with the help of scab coal brought in from the Stalinist states of Eastern Europe.

What is needed is a united fight against this wholesale attack on democratic rights (on freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of assembly, freedom from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, freedom to remain silent under questioning, freedom to organise and strike, and all the other freedoms won in struggle).

We know full well that the class inequalities of capitalist society mean that these freedoms are crippled and restricted for the working class at the best of times, but they must be defended to the last, because the possession of them facilitates the organisation and development of the working class as an independent revolutionary force.

The capitalist class centuries ago fought for these rights to facilitate its own fight against feudal absolutism, in order that capitalist property could be free to develop. But once the working class is organised and in the majority, democracy is dangerous; and once capitalism enters its epoch of decay, democracy must be destroyed.

Only the working class can lead such a united fight to repel the attack on democratic rights. We are for the defeat of British imperialism in Ireland, and for the independence of a united Ireland, because the British working class can never achieve the overthrow of its own ruling class so long as it shares the oppression of Ireland with that same class.

We take the same attitude to all these questions of attacks on democratic rights: to defend these rights means to build up the conditions under which the working class will

# DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS



*the miners strike*

overthrow capitalism and take power.

The Workers Revolutionary Party will put forward proposals for such a united fight. We make no secret of the fact that for us such proposals and such a campaign are subordinated to, and structured by, our basic aim as a party, working class power through revolutionary struggle, and a socialist society.

This struggle involves the smashing of the capitalist state. The agencies of this state (the Special Branch, MI5, MI6, the judiciary etc.) are an integral part of Thatcher's campaign to stamp out all democratic rights.

We are firmly convinced that such a defence against the Government's attacks requires the mobilisation of the working class in its own organs of struggle and power - workers' committees, councils of action, defence committees, support groups, workers' councils - which will come together to take the state power.

We are confident that such a struggle to beat back the assault on democratic rights, taking up every single attack, defending every gain

made in the past by the working class, can unite the force of the working class and all its potential allies, against the Government and the class enemy as a whole.

It is in the course of this struggle to unite the class that the false and treacherous leadership of the Labour and trade union leaders and the Stalinists will be tried, found wanting, and thrown aside.

In a further article we will explain in more detail the relationship between this campaign and the Workers Revolutionary Party itself.

In the next two months Workers Press will carry weekly articles on major aspects of the attack on democratic rights: the anti-trade union laws, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the attack on the youth, censorship, the police and the courts, the Immigration Act and attacks on black people, and so on.

We invite the widest discussion, and we call upon all readers to seek ways of organising groups on the broadest possible basis to discuss the politics of this campaign.



*Mounted police about to plunge into the crowd of demonstrating students outside Westminster last year*

## LETTERS

### A letter from Patrick Slaughter

PLEASE publish this note of thanks to all those who sent me Christmas greetings here in prison. I would like them to accept it as my way of returning the good wishes and solidarity which they conveyed to me, and which I very much appreciate. I have now read D. North's article about my case, and I am preparing some comments on an aspect of the case which he seems to regard as irrelevant, i.e. the facts.

Patrick Slaughter

### 'Time Bomb': a correction

MISLEADING statements were made in material added to Alan Stanley's review of the book on the Guildford Four and Maguire cases, 'Time Bomb' by Grant McKee and Ros Franey (Bloomsbury, £4.99), which was published in Workers Press on 17 December 1988.

1. '...confessions' were obtained by ...drugs'.

It has now emerged that Carole Richardson, because of her distressed state whilst in police custody, was injected with a sedative by a police doctor. This must obviously cast even further doubt upon her confession.

There is nothing to suggest, however, that the injection was given for any other than medical reasons. No-one has stated that drugs were employed with any of the other defendants.

2. '...forensic evidence was forged'.

There was no forensic evidence to link the Guildford Four with the bombings of which they were accused.

The Maguire family were convicted on the basis of a test which allegedly showed nitro-glycerine on their fingers and in Anne Maguire's case on a pair of household gloves.

There have been suggestions that test samples may have been tampered with. There is no evidence, however, to prove matters one way or the other.

We apologise to Alan Stanley for our mistake.

The Editor

### POLITICS FROM THE PRISONS

AND OTHER ARTICLES ABOUT IRELAND

FROM

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## Personal Column

Peter Fryer

## Britain's first black leader

PRACTICALLY everyone knows by now, I guess, that this year marks the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution.

We're constantly being reminded of this, especially since a British actress has been chosen to play the part of Marie Antoinette in the French celebrations, to the dismay of hundreds of French actresses who were turned down for the part.

But for every 10,000 people who know of this bicentennial across the Channel we'd be lucky to find one single person who knows of another important event which happened, here in Britain, in that same year of 1789.

That event was the publication of a book entitled 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African'.

Its author was a 44-year-old Nigerian: an Igbo whose real name was Olaudah Equiano. Kidnapped by slave traders when he was about 11, Equiano had been brought to Britain about a year later as the slave of a British naval lieutenant.

He led a highly adventurous life, in Britain, the Caribbean, and many other parts of the world, both before and after securing his freedom. He was trapped in the Arctic ice for 11 days, on board a ship trying to find a passage to India; and he nearly lost his life in a Shropshire coal-mine.

By the mid-1780s Equiano, a capable speaker and journalist, was one of the acknowledged leaders and spokesmen of the black community in Britain, whose

exact strength is a matter of conjecture but which seems to have numbered at least 10,000.

Equiano was, for instance, one of the signatories of letters from a group calling themselves 'Sons of Africa' which appeared in the London newspapers towards the end of the 1780s, when the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade began to gain ground.

This campaign was closely connected with the emerging radical movement in Britain and especially with that movement's working-class wing, for which hatred of slavery was a central rallying-cry.

So it isn't surprising to find that Equiano was a close friend of Thomas Hardy, the Scottish shoemaker who was chief founder and first secretary of the London Corresponding Society, the strongest radical working-class organisation of the day.

Two generations before Marx declared that labour in a white skin could not be free while labour in a black skin was branded, Hardy wrote (in 1792): 'I am pretty persuaded that no Man who is an advocate from principle for liberty for a Black Man but will strenuously promote and support the rights of a White Man & vice versa.'

Equiano spent a lot of time touring the British Isles, speaking at anti-slavery meetings and selling his book. In a letter to Hardy, written from Edinburgh during one of those speaking tours and now preserved in the Public Record Office, Equiano makes it clear that he had joined the LCS.

His 'Interesting Narrative' wasn't the first book by a black person to be published in Britain. It had been preceded by Phillis Wheatley's poems (1773), the posthumously published letters of Ignatius Sancho (1782),

and the anti-slavery 'Thoughts and Sentiments' (1787) of the Ghanaian Ottobah Cugoana, whom I wrote about here on 14 February 1987.

But it was the most important single literary contribution to the campaign for abolition - much more important than anything and everything done, for instance, by William Wilberforce, who always gets the credit while Equiano's contribution has been almost totally forgotten.

The major credit for rousing public opinion against black slavery in the Caribbean belongs unquestionably to Equiano's 'Interesting Narrative', which received excellent reviews, was very widely read (it was, e.g., the last secular book read by John Wesley before his death), and went through eight British editions in its author's lifetime and another six in the 22 years following his death in 1797.

Much more work needs to be done on the connection between the working-class radical movement in Britain and the abolitionist movement here. Equiano is a pivotal figure linking those two movements, and the bicentennial of his 'Interesting Narrative' must not be allowed to pass unnoticed.

FURTHER READING. There's a sketch of Equiano's life and thought, and a brief account of his connection with the radical movement, in my 'Staying Power: The history of black people in Britain' (Pluto Press, 1984).

The most important recent work on Equiano is a fascinating paper by an African scholar, 'The Home of Olaudah Equiano - a Linguistic and Anthropological Search', published in the 'Journal of Commonwealth Literature', vol. XXII (1987).

## AS I SEE IT

BY TOM OWEN

## Deja vu

THIS is the season for re-runs, reviews and returns. Amidst the dross of TV emissions you could have picked out a programme of Bogart, Fritz Lang and of the incomparable Billy Wilder.

There was also the unforgettable chilly 'supernature' film of Leslie Megahay's set in 17th century Holland, 'Schalkeen the painter' in which to paraphrase Marx 'the dead generations' weigh down on the living.

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I wonder then what prompted the networks to re-run Chris Mullins' 'A Very British Coup' over the peak viewing period? We were informed in the Guardian by Michael Billington that this piece was one that offered hope by tackling head-on the ethos of our present government, and earlier this year we were assured by

the 'Observer' lobbyists that the play had a hypnotic sway over Labour MPs of all persuasions.

It is true that Alan Plater's fine script brought to life a tedious novel and Ray McNally's performance as the shrewd 'leftist' prime minister must have woken many a Town Hall cardboard commisar or badge-bedecked constituency activist from their Sunday after-dinner slumber.

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Chris Mullin has a fine record as a civil liberties MP and applied himself single-mindedly to the cause of the six Irish people framed for the 'Birmingham bombings'.

He was the editor of 'Tribune' who supported Benn and stood against the Kinnockite joyride to Thatcherism. Chris Mullin voted for Kinnock in the Labour leadership elections this year.

Without reading into the minds of TV mandarins or sniffing out a conspiracy, I suggest that there is much of comfort in this film. 'A Very British Coup' is not very 'British' at all.

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A leftist government is elected, led by a working class leader. He is devious but honest and committed to his vision of socialism.

He organizes a cabinet of a cross-section of lefts and the

odd, token, right winger around a minimal reform programme after countless years of Thatcherism.

The secret police frame an ex-teachers' union militant Minister (who has already outwitted the IMF in securing a Russian loan). Harry the PM sacks him for sexual connections with the IRA and his unfortunate wife commits suicide.

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A Hammond look-alike Power Workers trade union leader (in the CIA and still in the TUC) organises a crippling strike against the non-nuclear unilateralist government.

At this point that other limelighter Paul Foot of the 'Daily Mail' and the 'Socialist Worker' find it unconvincing first time round that workers should attempt to wreck a Labour Government.

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The framing did not stop there, 'honest' Harry Perkins is framed himself on corruption charges.

He pretends to recant on television but refuses to play the game, calling a general election instead on the question of 'who runs the country'.

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The last we see of him is at home in that Sheffield Labour

nightmare the 'Kelvin Flats' caressing his heritage, his father's cracked shaving mug, hoping for a Labour landslide.

It is appropriate that Foot also criticised the play because it had all the inevitability of a Greek Tragedy.

The 'infernal machine' of the civil service and the secret police made Harry a plaything, a tragic hero without a mass following. This is to confuse tragic predestination with the manipulations of a Whitehall farce.

Neither film clips of the general strike nor a cast of a million hired actors dressed as northern proletarians miming working class speech and dress would have made this film other than profoundly de-politicising.

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Counter-revolutions, destabilisation programmes etc against socialist administrations take place in the context of popular front politics.

These are the response of Stalinism and reformist 'socialists' to working class mobilisations without a revolutionary leadership prepared and equipped to destroy and dismantle the state.

That Harry Perkins leaves the fate of the working class to his shaving bowl and the electoral process is all that Pater could do with the novel.

# 30 YEARS OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

BY KEITH SCOTCHER

**THIS MONTH** Cubans celebrate 30 years since the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship and the beginning of their revolution.

Fidel Castro, the Cuban leader, is exhorting workers to look towards the year 2000 and declares that it is time to begin the battle for socialism(!) adding to the growing popular belief that socialism has not been established despite the great gains of the revolution. It is, rather, what Lenin described as 'a bourgeois state without a bourgeoisie.'

The problems of understanding what happened in the Cuban revolution tested the Trotskyist movement in the 1960s.

The Workers Revolutionary Party's predecessor, the Socialist Labour League, under the leadership of Gerry Healy and Mike Banda denied a revolution was taking place while the American Socialist Workers Party's leaders hailed Castro as a 'natural Marxist' with Jack Barnes today capitulating completely to 'Fidelismo' hero worship.

Both positions ignored a study of the contradictory development of revolution itself and grasped at impressions. Batista had ruled since his US-backed coup in 1934 and had combined ruthless repression with his leaning for support on the Stalinist-controlled labour movement.

## Armed

Fidel Castro, a former liberal MP and lawyer, had decided that armed struggle was the only answer. His programme was anti-imperialist bourgeois radicalism.

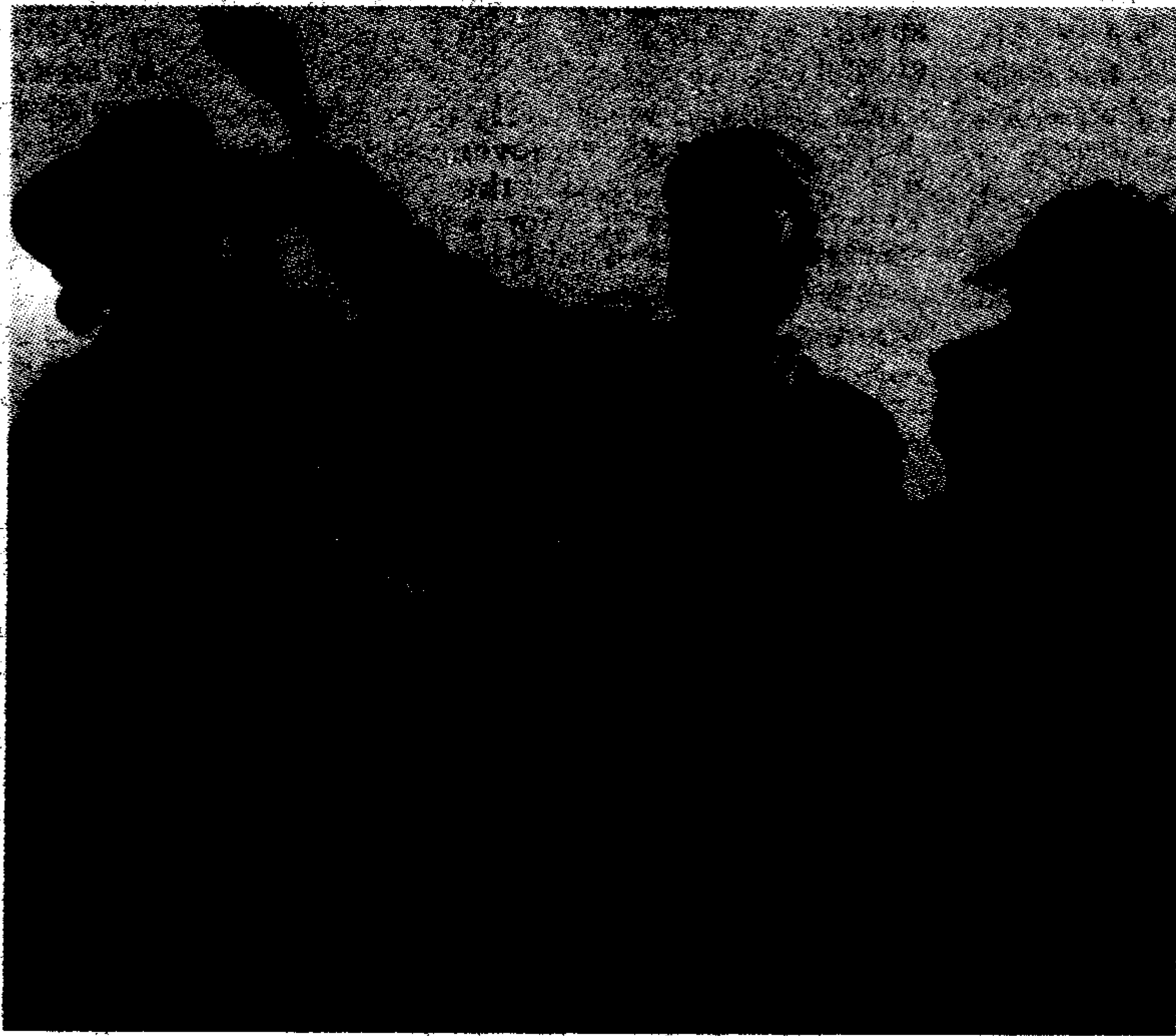
He declared that the revolution would be humanist, democratic and libertarian. He founded the Movement of 26 July - named after an armed uprising he had led in 1953.

Castro's strategy was for guerilla struggle in the countryside supported by a subordinate urban movement. The labour movement was mistrusted because of its Stalinist leadership.

Che Guevara specifically rejected a revolution based on the working class, saying that the country must liberate the city, not vice versa, and emphasising the importance of a strong leader.

The urban insurrections and strikes, in defiance of the Stalinists, had a greater impact on the regime than Castro's 1,000 guerilla fighters in the countryside.

Batista's regime collapsed from demoralisation and internal exhaustion and Batista flew into exile on 1 January 1959, leaving behind a power vacuum.



8 January 1959: Camilo Cienfuegos and Fidel Castro enter Havana

The working class was still led by the Stalinists who had no intention of seizing power and Castro stepped in to take control.

Castro's fighters marched into Havana on 8 January 1959. The entire state forces surrendered to Castro and he assumed command as Head of State. He promised elections but in the meantime appointed a government of moderate bourgeois politicians.

The departure of Batista aroused all the hopes of the oppressed, especially the workers and landless peasants. It fuelled an even greater revolutionary movement than that which Castro had visualised and he was soon forced to dismiss the government, declaring himself Prime Minister.

The first measures enacted were agrarian reforms; nationalising plantations and large farms, and limiting land ownership to 1,000 acres.

At first Castro monopolised control but then turned to the Stalinists for help to control the swelling revolution.

Despite this elections took place in the unions which swept out of office the discredited Stalinist leaders, but Castro soon dismissed the elected leaders and reinstated the Stalinists. Union elections never took place again.

The promise of national elections was dropped. Castro's appointment of Stalinists to government posts was accompanied by the suppression of anarchist and Trotskyist groups who were accused of aiding counter-revolution conspiracies. He even purged his own Movement of 26 July.

The Cuban economy was dominated by imperialist control. 75 per cent of the land, 90 per cent of the public services, mining and

oil production and 40 per cent of the sugar production was US owned.

US investments were \$800 million. The US also supplied 80 per cent of all imports. In order to break the American grip on the economy all foreign enterprises, banks and most large and medium-scale industrial and commercial businesses were nationalised in October 1960.

These measures were essentially anti-imperialist. Castro had not yet developed the revolution as being socialist. The US stepped up its support for counter-revolutionary Cuban groups and imposed an economic blockade. Castro was compelled to rely on support from the USSR.

In July 1961 he merged his movement with the Stalinist PSP and soon declared himself a 'Marxist-Leninist'. The language of revolution was harnessed to consolidate bureaucratic control over the revolution with Castro projected as the supreme unquestionable leader, the 'Bonaparte' of the Cuban revolution.

The continual imperialist threat, the Bay of Pigs invasion and the 1962 missile crisis, enabled Castro to ban strikes and demand ever greater sacrifices in the name of the revolution. Genuine soviets were never allowed to form.

The remaining privately owned enterprises were nationalised in 1967. The same year Che Guevara was killed during an ill-fated adventure in Bolivia where he was isolated by the Stalinists and assassinated by the CIA. Castro dropped calls for revolution in South America following this set-back.

Castro purged some of the Stalinist leaders to secure his

unquestioned leadership but gave full support to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The economy was shored up by sales of sugar to the Soviet Union and it became a largely one-crop economy.

Record production figures were demanded with disastrous consequences; much land was ruined, making Cuba even more reliant on Soviet aid.

Farmers owning 1,000 acres who didn't join the co-operatives were hailed as the backbone of the revolution and allowed to sell surplus produce until their obvious privileges forced Castro to crack down on them too.

In the 1970s Cuba sent troops to Ethiopia and Angola. 60,000 Cuban troops passed through Angola. Castro declared he would never withdraw them until apartheid was dismantled in South Africa.

## Broad

Alliances were sought with South American states by advocating a broad front on international debt even with right-wing politicians.

Perestroika and glasnost in the USSR has alarmed Castro who says it will only come to Cuba over his dead body. But, his exhortations and denunciations of 'consumerism' have worn thin and the balancing act even more difficult to maintain.

Youth and intellectuals are questioning Castro's 'one man rule' and the bureaucratic state as being in contradiction to Marxism, conscious that they must do battle with the 'sacred monster' some compare with Stalin or even Louis XIV who declared 'I am the state.'

Castro is acutely aware of these dangers to his rule but his old trick of adapting to popular upsurges and assuming their leadership, in order to control them, is not so easy this time since it threatens his own method of rule.

Cuba receives £2.7 billion aid each year from the Soviet Union, a burden Gorbachev is keen to be rid of. The agreement to withdraw troops from Angola has opened the way for the re-establishment of trade with the USA. Castro has even met a Vatican envoy to discuss the possibility of the Pope visiting Cuba.

It is becoming clearer to many Cubans as they celebrate the beginning of their revolution that it cannot be completed without a struggle against Castro.

The primary responsibility for what happened lies with Stalinism. The challenge facing the Trotskyist movement today is not only the comprehension of these developments but the providing of the necessary leaderships to guide the struggles to come.

# News briefs . . .

## Water, water everywhere...

THE TORY Environment Secretary's assurance that pollution standards would not be relaxed as a consequence of the privatisation of the water industry is contradicted in an invitation which the Department has apparently circulated to chief executives of the water authorities.

Less than two months after Nicholas Ridley was making his promises, a letter, which reporters at the Sunday newspaper 'The Observer' claim to have seen, has gone out inviting authorities to apply to have their pollution standards lowered.

## Child guinea pigs

A DRUG which is banned in at least ten countries because of its poor safety record is being tested out on children in Thailand.

The pain-killer Dipyron, manufactured by the West German drug company Hoechst, is considered to contain two potentially fatal side effects, destruction of white blood cells and collapse of the circulation.

A consultant pharmacologist in London described the trials as 'outrageous'. They were, he said, 'simply an attempt to keep the drugs on the market'.

## Budd's coming out

IN A DOCUMENTARY film to be shown on British television later this year, South African athlete Zola Budd, makes her support of the apartheid system clear for one and all.

In the film she criticises various opponents of the regime, including Sanroc's Sam Ramsamy, for the way they attack it.

Budd recently announced that it was her wish to return to Britain to take part in the next athletics season.

## Care for elderly

A WARNING from the Royal College of Nursing to Tory Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke makes clear that local social services will be unable to cope with the needs of the growing number of elderly people by the end of the century.

In its new year message, the RCN states there would be 80,000 to 100,000 more dependent old people needing expert nursing care.

It was essential, the college said, for health and social services to be combined in the future to provide effective care and not be dumped on local authorities incapable of responding.

# Mortgage rise exposes Tory prosperity myth

BY OUR ECONOMICS  
CORRESPONDENT

**BUILDING society repayments have risen by a third over the last nine months and those whose repayments are adjusted annually face increases of around a quarter in the coming year.**

This is the reality of the Thatcher 'economic miracle' that faces millions of working class and middle class families as a new year opens. It is a far cry from the efforts of the Tories to paint a picture of a Britain where prosperity is increasing for everybody and where 1989 can be another year of growing wealth, if only 'everybody' will show sufficient restraint and make some short-term sacrifices in the 'national interest'.

The increased mortgage rates already in operation mean that the cost of a £40,000 mortgage lasting for 25 years has increased from £311.36 to £385.44 a month.

The housing action group Shelter last week revealed that evictions for non-payment of Building Society loans reached 22,630 last year, an almost tenfold rise on the 1979 figure of 2,530. Homelessness has doubled over the same period.

And worse is to come in 1989. Chancellor of the Exchequer Lawson has made clear that interest rates will rise still further in the so-called struggle against inflation.

Last week he warned of a deep recession if employers refused to control wages.

Chase Investment Bank last week warned that bank lending rates may well rise to 14 per cent in the immediate future.

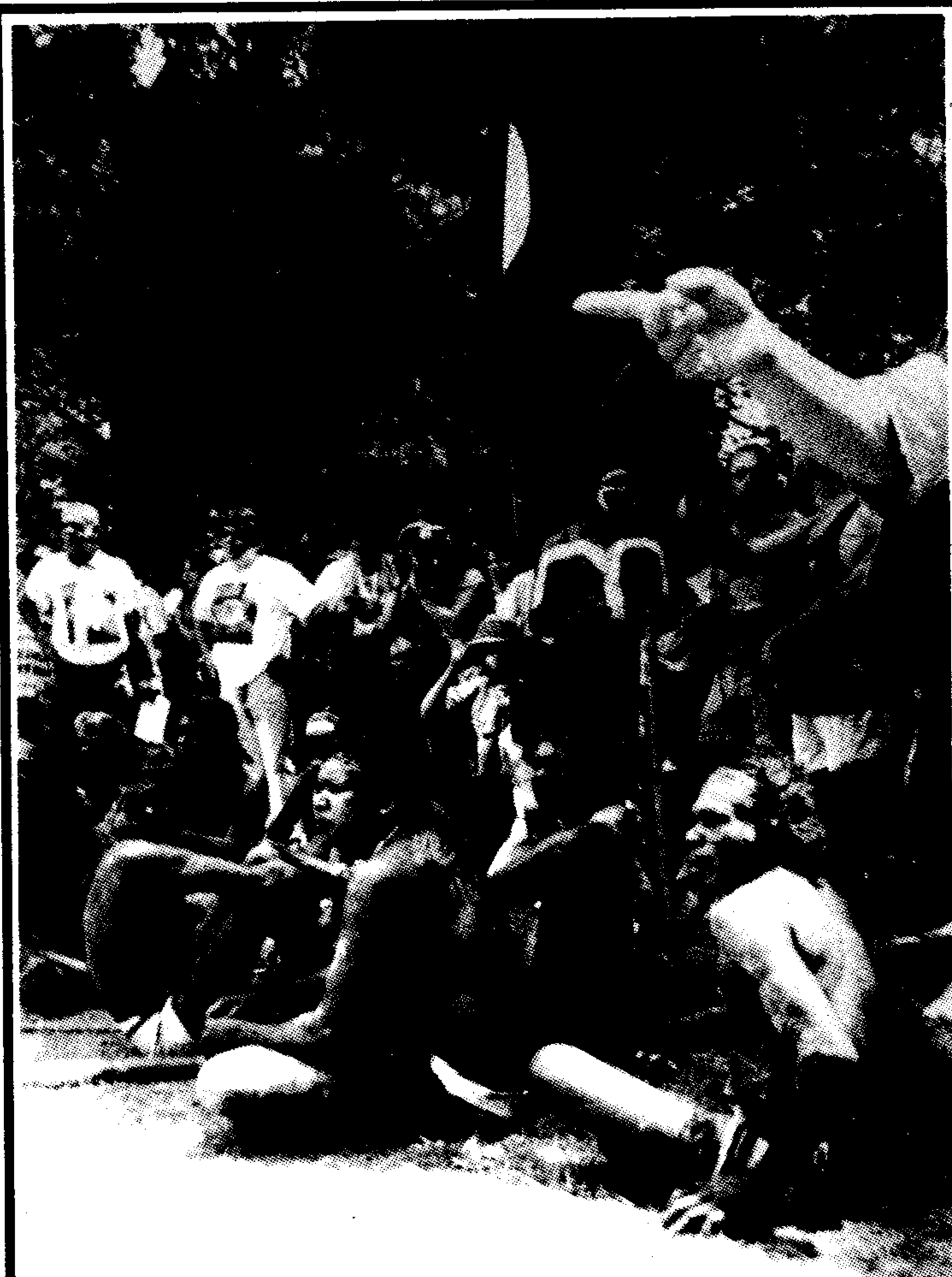
It is precisely these interest rate rises that have driven mortgage rates up and slashed the living standards of millions of home buyers. So much for the fight against inflation!

This is the reasoning behind

last week's launch of a new long-term bond which guarantees a relatively high rate of interest if the bond is held for five years. Its issue indicates the growing fears in the middle class at the prospect of rapid inflation.

With President-elect Bush

soon being forced to take decisive action on the US budget and trade deficits, the world capitalist economy is heading for a serious recession which will soon expose even more sharply the weakness of a crisis-torn British capitalism.



Aborigines in land rights demonstration, Sydney

## Scandal of black deaths in custody

BY BRONWEN  
HANDYSIDE

**ABORIGINES constitute less than 1.5 per cent of Australia's population, but they make up 14.8 per cent of the prison population and a staggering 21 per cent of all deaths in custody.**

An Australian Royal Commission into the ongoing scandal of aboriginal deaths in jail has issued an interim report calling for big reforms, including the sacking of racist police and prison officers, saying that Australia's international reputation was at risk.

In the country where the vote was not given to aboriginals

until 1963, 103 black deaths have occurred in jail since 1980.

Many died while imprisoned for the most minor offences, including drunkenness, and in the words of the report, the cause was 'appalling neglect'.

Queensland and West Australian police, the two most notoriously bigoted forces who are under close scrutiny because of the extraordinary number of deaths in prisons in their states, issued strenuous denials of racism.

The Queensland police union president said that the recommendations had nothing to do with Queensland.

The commission's final report has been delayed two years, until December 1990.