

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 113 June/July 1993

(unwaged 30p) 50p

RACIST BRITAIN



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BLOOD ON ITS HANDS

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TIMEX STRIKE

TUC equivocates: Scargill calls for action

MIKE TAYLOR

The decision of the Timex Strike Committee to invite Arthur Scargill to address a march and rally on 16 May was not liked in some quarters of the Labour and trade union movement. The Scottish TUC would not include details of the event on their leaflets. Bill Jordan of the AEEU launched a despicable media attack which described Scargill as the 'captain of the Titanic'. To which Scargill rejoined that, 'Jordan, as the designer of the Titanic, ought to know.'

The Timex strikers and their supporters most definitely wanted Arthur Scargill up at the picket line and made this very plain in their response to his appearance. He spoke to a crowd of 3,000, firstly of the present struggle of the mining communities and reserved special praise for the fighting spirit of the Women Against Pit Closures. There had never been, he said, so many demos and rallies as had taken place since the announcement of redundancies last October. He called forcefully for the leadership of the TUC and Labour Party to start fighting, to call industrial action to defend the working class and again repeated his demand for a 24 hour strike. Scargill's main point however was to hammer



16 May - mass picket addressed by Scargill and attacked by police

home the lessons of the Miners Strike of 1984-85. He said there was now a 'second chance' to learn the lessons of that strike. When miners lowered a noose over Willis' head they had begun to learn. From the Miners Strike of 1984-85, to the present struggles of the mining communities, to the Timex Strike, the lessons are there.

After the first picket line arrests here, local Labour councillors weighed in on cue to attack and condemn. But the picket protests have continued despite their attacks. On 16 May, 38 were arrested and some charged with attempted murder. These charges, which were later dropped were clearly meant to in-

timidate. The police had been given the green light by Jordan.

The management is now threatening to take back some of the locked-out workers on new contracts, imposing worse conditions. This will be a blatant attempt to smash the strike and marginalise the strike leaders. When Jordan warned Scargill to keep away from the picket line because negotiations with management were at a 'delicate stage', it was not difficult to conclude that the union will sell out the strikers if it gets the chance. The AEEU has threatened strike leaders with expulsion if they break the law. Consistently it has failed to give the strikers the support they deserve. ■

Burnsall anniversary

ADAM SHERWOOD

On 15 June the strike by workers at Burnsalls in the West Midlands will be entering its second year.

Last June, 19 workers, most of them Asian women, went on strike for basic workers' rights, which some trade unionists in Britain have taken for granted.

Their demands include union recognition, reinstatement of all the sacked strikers, equal pay for women (some £20-£30 less per

week than their male counterparts), protection against unsafe working conditions and an end to compulsory overtime.

Since the strike began the strikers have been attacked many times by scabs, while the police have failed to act on these complaints, and have instead charged strikers with assault. As well as these court battles there are many industrial tribunal claims relating to the strikers' demands.

The strike continues with support groups in London, Birm-

ingham and Manchester. Readers of *FRFI* are urged to support the picket line at any time, especially 6-6.30pm (weekdays) and 4-4.30pm (Fridays) when the scabs leave work, and to contact the support groups and attend our regular meetings. Contact: Birmingham Burnsall Strikers' Support Group, c/o 146 Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 9SE. Tel: 021 551 4679. London tel: 071 713 7907 /916 1646. Donations may be sent to the GMB Burnsall Strike Fund. ■

College staff under attack

LEN BAXTER

Within two months of further education colleges leaving local authority control to become independent corporations, conditions of teaching staff are under attack.

The new College Employers' Forum has circulated model contracts to Principals to be applied to new employees and staff who are promoted. These contracts extend the working week by seven hours, remove all limits on teaching time within the working week, cut holidays in half, require staff to work weekends and holidays if told to do so and give no clear provisions for maternity leave, redundancy notice etc. They are not tied to any pay rise and were not negotiated with any union.

When combined with new funding arrangements that will put colleges in competition with each other to reduce costs per student, it is clear that the government intends colleges to become training sweat shops, processing a high turnover of youth to compete with the existing workforce for jobs.

On 20 May the main teachers' union in further education, NATFHE, called a day's strike. While many teachers were prepared to close buildings down by picketing, NATFHE said that picketers were not to ask staff from other unions to 'refrain from working'. Many branch officials interpreted this as meaning that the pickets were token. While college support staff from NALGO and NUPE were willing to give solidarity and not cross picketlines, their

union officials warned them that they would be disciplined by the unions for unauthorised secondary picketing if they did not go into work. Thus, all the unions agreed that picket lines should be crossed - against the wishes of their members.

If the college teachers want to defend their jobs and conditions they will have to rid themselves of any remaining delusion that they are respected 'professionals', they will have to stop the cosy relationship that their officials have with college management and they will have to organise with the support staff against their union leaderships. Above all, they must recognise that the government is waging that they will retreat in defence of their mortgages. They must see that retreat is no protection. ■

Labour council faces fightback

MANCHESTER GMB MEMBER

Hundreds of women working in school kitchens across Manchester have voted for industrial action over their treatment by the City's Labour council.

Manchester's City Catering Organisation employs around 1,500 part-time, hourly-paid women workers in the preparation of school meals. They have faced continual cuts in hours over recent years, undermining the service and leading to an increased workload, while they remain on the lowest council pay grade. At the same time, the director of catering has been awarded an extra £135 per week - an increase which is more than double the gross pay of most kitchen staff!

The overwhelming vote for action was taken at a mass meeting of General, Municipal and Boilermakers' union (GMB) members in April. Now anti-union laws are working to the

council's advantage by delaying any action whilst balloting takes place. However, the women's fight is for their jobs and for a public service; any attempt to hold it back is likely to meet with an angry response. GMB catering staff remember earlier manoeuvres by branch officials to cut short discussion on action and silence criticism of the Labour Party. This won't be tolerated again.

This is a Labour Party prepared to carry out massive cuts across the city. The municipal slogan, 'Defending Jobs - Improving Services' was forced into early retirement with the announcement that they aim to shed 15,000 jobs over three years in a bid to save up to 20% on departmental budgets. Many jobs have been lost through voluntary redundancy and early retirement already. The machinery is in place for the remaining workers to be forced out.

Can anyone have any illusions that the Labour Party is any different to the Tories? ■



Support women against pit closures

DAVID HOWARTH

Last October hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated against pit closures; even some Tory MPs offered limited opposition to the closures programme announced by Heseltine. Just over six months later, Markham Main and Rossington Collieries in the Doncaster area have been closed.

Markham Main has known reserves of 71.3 million tonnes of coal and a major capital investment of £27.74m. Since 1983 it has been among the top 14 of Britain's 51 collieries in terms of the markets served by its coal. No wonder there has been so much specific interest in it from the private sector, who will be able to dictate new working conditions and reduce safety costs. Once again the Tories will be making the rich richer by selling off nationalised industries at knock-down prices at the expense of the working class.

How has this been possible given the massive support for the miners and the general anger against the government last October? A campaign for a real fight against pit closures, unemployment and cuts in services had the potential to rally millions of working class people to its side, but the Labour Party and the TUC, after calling marches in October, spent the next 6

months demobilising support.

The Labour Party has no interest in defending the poorer sections of the working class. The Labour MPs on the Energy Select Committee agreed that some pit closures must go ahead. The lack of action against these scab MPs from the Labour Party or their TUC allies shows their support for such measures.

The miners have had some allies, most noticeably the Women against Pit Closures. The women have organised camps at the gates of the threatened collieries. On 22 April, the women at Markham Main pit camp celebrated the 100th day of their protest along with people from the local communities. When I visited the camp on that day the organisers told me of their activities which included occupying threatened pits, organising national and local demonstrations, rallies and socials to involve the local communities, as well as uniting with other people in struggle such as the Burnsall and Timex strikers.

The women haven't given up the fight and still need support and solidarity. The Labour Party still demonstrates its support for a system of privilege and profit: those who do not gain by this system need to unite to build a fighting movement capable of putting the capitalist system and the Labour Party where they belong - in the dustbin of history. ■

IN BRIEF

Not waving...

So farewell then Sir Roy Watts, Chairman of Thames Water. He privatised TW, upping his salary from £73,000 to £160,000 and sacking hundreds of workers in the process. And now the fickle finger of fate has decreed that he who floated Thames Water should be found floating in it.

Dealing with the criminal classes

And now a short test on contemporary morals. What do you think would happen to a company Chief Executive (such as Gerald Ronson of the Heron Corporation) who presided over his company's bankruptcy and spent time in gaol for corruption?

1. He would suffer social ostracism, be forced to pay off creditors and live in penury
2. He would find God and do good works
3. He would be given a £5 million bonus, get £1.7 million towards his fine plus a company car and chauffeur.

Brains for sale

Public schools (you know, private schools) had 465,426 pupils last year. In London and the South East, 1 in 6 children are educated at fee-paying schools. These schools have classes half the size of the state sector and double the resources per pupil. Even the most intellectually challenged rich young person manages to scrape an A-level or two. It is strange that amid the hoo-ha about state education, testing etc, hardly anybody mentions the fact that the upper and upper middle classes do not send their offspring to state schools, but to public schools unencumbered by SATS or the national curriculum. Even the Assisted Places scheme, meant to give bright working class children the chance to enter these sacred portals, has been monopolised by the middle classes who can sniff a bargain quicker than a pig scents truffles. Why do the teacher unions not campaign for the abolition of this money-apartheid in education? It doesn't take much to see that the pre-condition for overcoming educational disadvantage is the abolition of public schools and the compulsory bussing of rich children to working class schools. Quite aside from the benefits of the working class children meeting first hand the people who are destined to rob and rule them, such exotica as textbooks might then reappear.

The lessons of Newbury

The political clout of the middle class was shown in Newbury when they defected en masse to the 'Yes We Are Pretty Jolly Annoyed and We Don't Care Who Knows It' Party. Should we not therefore follow the trend and devise a programme to attract them? Here is a suggested programme:

- CDs on prescription
- 'Which' magazine to replace the New English Bible
- Free, compulsory psychotherapy
- Tax rebates for all women employing nannies, cleaners and other servants
- Nobody, ever, anywhere, to be allowed to mention the contradiction between poisoning the air by owning two cars and fainting at a whiff of cigarette smoke.

If that doesn't do the trick, what will?

Snouts in the trough

12 of the 17 members of the Food Advisory Committee, the government's expert panel on food, have declared cash rewards from the food companies. Of course such payments do not interfere with these experts' independence. Perish the thought. Stand by for the Committee's eagerly awaited report 'Oven chips and Dairy Crunch - Their Role in a Balanced Diet.' ■

Education

Tories unite opposition

SUSAN DAVIDSON

For perhaps the first time in its fourteen year rule, the Tory government is facing a united opposition to one of its policy changes. The teachers' boycott of the SATS tests, parents' opposition and the resignation of close advisors were all elements in the massive defeat at Newbury and even more significantly in the local council elections in the South of England.

How can we explain this unprecedented unity of Tory voters, professional educationalists, parent organisations and the teachers' unions?

Perhaps for the first time, Tory policy was not sufficiently divisive, did not offer enough bribes, did not appeal to the same greed, as the policies of privatisation of gas, water, electricity and other services offered.

It could be that the National Curriculum with its associated National Tests and League Tables of Schools came to be seen as the reverse, as a kind of nationalisation of the education system. Some sections of the middle class who cannot afford to pay school fees, see state edu-

cation as good and working to their advantage. SATS testing, rejected by the independent sector as beneath them, smacks too much of the production line and the lowest common denominator.

The poorest sections of the working class have never had access to decent education and the bottom third 'underachievers' have always been there. It is the Government that is complaining that a 'massive' education budget, £24 billion 1989-1990, is still resulting in an annual 30% of school leavers who are disaffected, disruptive and without any qualifications. (It should be noted that Education as a percentage of GDP fell from 5.2 in 1970-1971 to 4.6 in 1989-90).

The National Curriculum was to be the answer to low achievement and high cost. It was intended not so much to measure the children as to discipline the teachers in order to get them to return to streaming, rote learning and basic skills, and to drop ideas of comprehensive education, the humanities and child centred learning.

Unfortunately for the Tories a series of arrogant education ministers, market-oriented business men and obstinate civil ser-

vants led to the bicycle of SATS (Patten's metaphor - not mine) careering out of control.

While it has been a delightful spectacle to see the discomfiture of John Major and John Patten, there are new dangers ahead. The teachers' unions have conducted their boycott on the basis of work overload. It is possible, therefore, that future SATS tests for children at the ages of 7, 11 and 14 will be much more simplified pen and paper tests which are quick and easy to conduct, but have no diagnostic or educational value, and which simply confirm what is already obvious from the GCSE results, that is, schools in poor areas with deprived children do worse than schools in wealthier areas with better-off children.

It is vital that the struggle is continued to fight back against the Tory 'market' view of educational provision. When children are viewed only in terms of the 'return on investment' in their schooling they are exposed to the full brutalities of the capitalist system, based as it is on greed and competition. There is a hope, however, that real values and demands will develop out of the spectacular failure of the SATS and that the fight back will continue and flourish. ■



Boom in the City

SARAH BOND

Once again the struggle for Irish freedom has hit the British state where it hurts. On a quiet Saturday morning, the IRA exploded a one ton bomb in London's Bishopsgate, devastating a quarter of a mile of British capital's financial heartland, wrecking two million square feet of office space and displacing 20,000 workers. The date - 24 April - was a year almost to the day since the explosion at the Baltic Exchange, which cost £350 million in repairs. Estimates for repairing the latest damage range from that same figure up to £2.5 billion.

IRA volunteers were able to breach the tight security operating in the area since the last explosion by leaving a van containing the bomb on a double yellow line. Their surveillance had revealed that builders' vans are allowed to do this at weekends - ironically in order to get on with repairs from the last bombing. Eight warnings were then given, the precision of which even the British press has acknowledged - yet a number of workers complained that they were only told by police to evacuate the area a minute before the explosion. Despite this, only one man died - a *News of the World* photographer who approached the site of the bomb after the area was cleared.

The organisations hit by the blast read like a roll call of the big and the bad of finance capital: Natwest, Barclays, Lloyds, the Deutsche Bank, Standard Chartered, the Bank of

Scotland, Commercial Union, Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, Union Bank of Switzerland, Saudi International Bank, Banco di Sicilia, Johannesburg Consolidated Investment, Tokai Bank, Banque Indosuez, Credit Bank of Japan. Considerable embarrassment was also caused to the security forces by the presence in the area of delegates to the annual meeting of the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development. (Luckily for its beneficiaries in eastern Europe, the bank's marbled premises were not damaged - or half of next year's budget would have gone the same way as this year's.)

In the aftermath of the explosion Government ministers were desperate to reassure the bankers and stockbrokers that it was 'business as usual' in the City. Already London faces increasing competition from Frankfurt and Tokyo as the headquarters of international finance capital. The armed roadblocks, now set to increase, and soaring insurance premiums, likely to rise by up to 50%, can only accelerate the City's decline. In an attempt to stem the tide, the government undertook last Christmas to underwrite the costs of future bombings.

The Republican movement knows that the government can ill afford such hand-outs. In its statement following the Bishopsgate operation, the IRA urged the British establishment to 'take the steps needed for ending its futile and costly war in Ireland. We again emphasise that they should pursue the path to peace or resign themselves to the path of war.' ■

BNP in Lancashire & London

On 20 March the Anti-Apartheid Movement held a North-West regional conference in Blackburn. The main speakers were the ANC and the Labour MEP Michael Hindley and Janet Anderson MP. The meeting was viciously attacked by a gang of 30 fascists. Whilst one of them unfurled the AWB flag, others threw chairs at, and assaulted, the speakers and members of the audience. A dictaphone and other personal items were stolen as the British National Party left the building. They then proceeded to attack SWP sellers in the shopping precinct as they made their way to Blackburn Rovers football ground, where they then handed out leaflets. The BNP presence at the meeting was undoubtedly related to the impending Council elections in which the BNP were standing a candidate, Shaun Cramble, in the neighbouring town, Colne.

Violence broke out outside the BNP headquarters on 8 May, as black youth expressed their anger at the racist murder of 18-year-old Stephen Lawrence by a gang of 15 white thugs on 22 April. Mounted and riot police attempted to defend the fascist headquarters, and fighting broke out. Windows of the BNP office were smashed, as were those of the police patrol van and the social club where the BNP go. Police on horseback charged demonstrators. After the march, Marc Wadsworth, of the Anti-Racist Alliance, condemned Militant Labour for the violence. Militant responded by saying that in fact their stewards had controlled the march and defended it against the police attack. The truth is that Militant attempted to prevent this outbreak of legitimate anger. But as black and white youth fought running battles on the streets of Welling I saw stewards turn to each other and say 'We've lost it'. Police have so far arrested only one of Lawrence's fifteen attackers. ■

BRITISH TERROR

March

On Monday 15 March Robert Shaw was murdered by UDA assassins as he sat in his van at 10.00am. The Ford Escort in which the killers made their getaway was later found abandoned on a nearby Loyalist estate.

Nine days later, Sinn Fein member Peter Callaghan, was murdered by a UDA death squad at 8.00am on 24 March as he parked his van in a builders yard. The killer escaped on a bicycle into the Loyalist end of Donegal Road. British Army troops and RUC police, stationed only 400 yards away, arrived only after an ambulance from a nearby hospital had come and gone. They claimed to have seen nothing of the incident despite the permanent checkpoint outside the barracks.

April

Four nationalist building workers, James McKenna, James Kelly, Robert Dalrymple and Noel O'Kane were all murdered and another man injured on Thursday 24 April. They were all sitting in their parked van at 9am when a transit van stopped alongside them. Loyalist killers opened fire at point blank range.

Another Loyalist death squad murdered 19 year old Damien Walsh and injured another man in West Belfast on 24 April. Damien was gunned down just as he prepared to close a coal delivery yard in the local shopping centre. He was hit in the head and in the back and died on his way to hospital. The other man is lucky to be alive. He was shot in the legs and had a gun aimed at his head as he lay injured. The gun jammed and he lived. The death squad, after firing on other shoppers passed through a British Army/RUC barracks before making their escape.

May

On 10 May just after 11pm UDA assassins attempted to murder a 31 year old nationalist deliveryman. He was shot in the stomach and legs and left for dead at Carn Rise, in the New Mosley Estate just outside North Belfast. Within hours of this, UDA gunmen attacked in East Belfast early on Tuesday 11 May. Three nationalist workers narrowly escaped death when the car they were travelling to work in was hit by a hail of bullets.

Pam Robinson

Kate Magee

Irish woman, Kate Magee was detained in April 1992 under the PTA following the killing of an army recruiting officer in Derby by INLA. She was arrested at gunpoint; one of her children aged six was taken away and information on her children's health and whereabouts denied for six days. She was interrogated for nine days, then charged and taken to Durham prison where she was allowed to contact her family for the first time, on the strict understanding she did not reveal where she was. She was strip-searched constantly and hand-cuffed during court appearances. Her charges were: 'failure to disclose information' and 'impeding the arrest or prosecution of person or persons unknown'; the second charge was dropped after 66 days in detention and she was granted bail on harsh conditions. She arrived home to find her house wrecked by the police 'search'.

The Kate Magee Support Group can be contacted at PO Box 158, Derby, DE1 9NB. They are asking you to write to the DPP and Home Secretary, both at Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AZ, to demand the dropping of all charges, the scrapping of the PTA and an end to strip-searching. Please send copies of letters to the Support Group.

Nicki Jameson

Guildford 4 police set free

NICKI JAMESON

Following a four-year farce, three men charged with perverting the course of justice walked free from the Old Bailey on 20 May. Ex-Detective Chief Inspector Style, ex-DS Donaldson and ex-DC Atwell had been on bail throughout their 'ordeal', had not been assaulted, tortured, locked up, abused, insulted, vilified in the gutter press or otherwise harmed. This treatment is in sharp contrast to that of the Guildford 4 whom they played a part in convicting in 1974-5 for the Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings.

Those who really shoulder the responsibility for the 15 years the Guildford 4 spent in British gaols have not stood trial, nor are likely to. On the contrary, the questions which are raised by

the framing of the Guildford 4, and indeed the conspiracy to keep them in gaol, remain unanswered. Why was evidence vital to the defence withheld? Why was forensic evidence tampered with? Why was the Appeal Court so determined that these prisoners remained in gaol?

The answer is nothing to do with 'three bad apples'. Just as in the Matrix Churchill case, the Establishment prefers to jail innocent people rather than have its own credibility and its police and judicial system discredited.

Ultimately they were unwilling even to sacrifice three 'bad apples' for the sake of appearances. The delays in the trial were essential to scuppering the only means by which the truth might be heard - the May Inquiry. Magistrate Ronald Bartle at Bow Street single-handedly held up the trial for a year on dubious grounds. And their defence, when they did even-

tually come to trial, not only faced a half-hearted prosecution, but was also allowed to find the Guildford 4 guilty all over again in their absence. With miscarriages of justice like this one discredited, the Royal Commission can fulfil its real purpose of strengthening police powers.

The Home Secretary hopes that 'everyone [can] now . . . get that particular incident back in proportion' and 'we can now put this whole unhappy episode behind us'. Proportion, Mr Clarke! Tell that to Paul Hill, Gerry Conlon, Patrick Armstrong and Carole Richardson. Ask them if they now see the events of the past 19 years 'in proportion'. Then go back to your desk which is overflowing with files from innocent people demanding justice and find the ones marked 'Bridgewater Four' and 'Winston Silcott' and see if you can put those into proportion too! ■

Unit fines scrapped - the poor pay

SARAH BOND

Just seven months after their introduction, key elements of the 1991 Criminal Justice Act have been scrapped. The aim of the abandoned provisions had been mainly to check the growth of Britain's prison population. The most publicised was the unit fine system, introduced in magistrates' courts only, which sought to match fines to income.

It worked by fixing a unit of one to fifty for the seriousness of the offence, calculating the offender's disposable income and then multiplying the disposable income by the unit. Sensible, you might think, especially as previously each year had seen

16,000 people on low incomes imprisoned for defaulting on unaffordable fines.

But the corollary of lower fines for those on low incomes was higher fines for the better off - and the honest burghers of Britain rose as one to complain that breaking the law was not as affordable as it used to be. To galvanise public opinion, cases were highlighted such as the £1,200 fine for an unemployed man who dropped a crisp packet. In fact, once his income was taken into account, the fine was dropped to £48. His case was not the real issue: those who lost out under the new system were not generally the unemployed but those on £20,000-£25,000. They wanted the whole system abandoned.

And that is what they got. Into the bargain, the Tories have thrown out the provision which prevented the courts from considering a defendant's previous convictions when sentencing. The provision meant that offenders with convictions for petty crimes were less likely to be sent to jail.

Now fining and sentencing to jail are firmly back in the 'discretion' of the courts. The Labour Party has heralded this U-turn as a victory - but for the working class it will mean higher not lower fines, more people in prison for defaulting, more people in prison for petty offences. It is simply another bid by the government to win back the waning support of the middle class - and the poor will pay. ■

Kenya: People's struggle continues

JUMA ABBAS

The past three years have seen major victories in the struggle of the Kenyan working people against the regime of Kenya African National Union (KANU) which is backed by Western imperialism. KANU is led by President arap Moi, who is more dictatorial than ever. The turning point came on 7 July 1990 (Saba Saba Day of Resistance) when thousands of people throughout the country defied KANU and its military forces and held mass rallies demanding the overthrow of the corrupt regime. The culture of fear and silence imposed by years of repression, which had driven all resistance underground, had finally come to an end.

The background to the Saba Saba was that every open expression of opposition to the regime had been suppressed since the coup of 1982. The only political activity was that of the underground *Mwakenya* (Muungano wa Wazalendo wa Kukomboia Kenya - Union of Patriots for the Liberation of Kenya) which has been active since the late '70s, formerly under the name of December Twelve Movement. Many *Mwakenya* activists were detained in the period 1984-86, others were forced into exile or driven underground. But the underground resistance activities continued, finding expression in the widely-distributed underground newspaper, *Mzalendo*

Mwakenya. It was this underground activity that kept alive a progressive position in the political field.

At the same time increasing corruption by the regime, and further exploitation by transnationals kept depressing people's living standards. This increased the resistance to the regime by workers, peasants, students, intellectuals and other progressive sections of the working people. The regime had no answer to this mass resistance except by increasing repression. It was in reality saved by massive economic, military and political support from its Western backers led by the USA and Britain. They needed a client regime in Kenya in order to serve their economic and political interests. Moi served this purpose perfectly. During the cold war it was important for the Western powers to have capitalist allies in Africa and elsewhere to prevent them turning to the USSR.

But following the Saba Saba resistance, the overseas backers of the regime sensed that it was not going to survive the wrath of the people however much support they give it. They appeared to change side, with the US ambassador claiming to be people's champion. In essence they were keeping their options open: supporting Moi quietly to maintain their hold over him and at the same time appearing to support democratic forces to ensure their position should they win.

The regime was forced to call multi-party elections but as *Mwakenya* predicted in its pub-

lication *Mwakenya's Democracy Plank* (1991), no real change could have come so long as Moi remained in power to oversee the elections. As expected, he changed the constitution to suit his own interests, used the nation's finances to bribe many to support him, used state machinery, including the media, to ensure that he 'won' the elections. The opposition parties could not convert their mass popularity to ensure they won power because they did not have the power of the state machinery at their service.

The position now is as *Mwakenya* had explained in its publications: there cannot be real change without implementing its ten conditions which include first that 'Moi and Kanu must go'. The people have now realised that any meaningful change will come only when the whole oppressive apparatus created by Moi is uprooted by people's forces.

The whole experience of the last few years has ensured a most significant education for the working people - that change cannot come from a reliance on petty-bourgeois parties posing as people's champions; that their own activities of mass protests, strikes, boycotts and other activities declared 'illegal' by the regime are the only way their needs will be met; that in essence they need a party that represents their interests to spearhead change. The message of the underground *Mwakenya* makes more sense than ever before. ■

French police racists kill again

COLETTE LÉVY

On 6 April, French police sergeant Pascal Compain fired his revolver at Nakome M'Bowole, aged 17, while questioning him at a police station of the 18th arrondissement, Paris, for a petty theft. The victim was of Zairean origin, born in France. The killing of Nakome was the second such killing during April. An 18-year-old Frenchman, suspected of theft in the Savoy district, was also shot dead with a single bullet during his arrest.

Both killings took place at a time when the right-wing RPR Interior Minister, Charles Pasqua, has regained power. He is implementing the hardline policies he favoured between 1986-88 during his first ministerial mandate in the first 'co-habitation' government.

Although François Mitterrand does not intend to end his

presidential mandate (he still has two years to serve), the weak socialist opposition holds fewer than 100 seats in a National Assembly of 577 seats.

Four million unemployed have helped the right and extreme right to gain votes in France. Although Le Pen lost his seat in Nice, 12% of the votes went to the National Front. The Communists won more than 20 seats, but working class areas like Argenteuil, traditionally communist, have made a U-turn and elected a RPR mayor.

The anti-racists clashed outside the police station, leaving 30 policemen injured. SOS-Racisme were aware that under the newly-elected conservative government, with home affairs in the hands of iron-fisted Pasqua, his measures, accepted in June 1992 by the Senate, would be rushed through the National Assembly for rapid implementation. Racism has been given a green light.

On the same day as the killing

of Nakome M'Bowole, the Nationality Bill got passed in the Assembly. Children born of foreign parents will soon have to apply for French nationality between the ages of 16-21. Should these children commit a petty crime, they will be returned to their parents' country of origin - a threat which has, in fact, already been carried out as the notorious 'double punishment'.

Furthermore, the Bill will curb so-called 'marriages of convenience'; residence permits ('les cartes de séjour') will become 'unfalsifiable'; control at the frontiers will be reinforced; increased checks on identity papers will be seen in public places; rapid and massive deportations, such as the Mali workers, will be common practice; foreigners with residence permits of less than 10 years will not be able to send for their families or close relatives... And now black children can be murdered in police stations without redress. ■

Solidarity with Cuban socialism

Orestes Aldana represents ICAP (the Cuban Committee for the Friendship of Peoples) in Britain, Ireland and the Netherlands. During his recent visit to London he spoke to DAVID REED and CAT WIENER.



On the February elections

The recent elections revealed the overwhelming support of the Cuban population for the revolution and the need for unity, especially when the economic situation is worsening, and proved that Fidel is the leader of the Cuban nation; his role during the elections was decisive.

Our people are very clear about the cause of the economic situation: the US blockade, in the first place, and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the former socialist community. They know that what matters at this crucial time is that we maintain our sovereignty. We are all aware that the current situation is not the revolution's fault.

On relations with the US

An improvement in our economic situation cannot depend on the official lifting of the blockade. If the US decides to lift the blockade, well and good. But we need to be prepared for the worst. The development of different branches of the economy, such as tourism and biotechnology, and the use of our other resources are essential at this point. We cannot expect anything from the current administration. We have suffered the hostility of eight administrations, Republican and Democratic alike. Their policies may change towards other parts of the world, but not towards Cuba. So we don't expect anything from the US. If they decide to speak to us, Cuba is willing to start negotiations - but our sov-

ereignty must be respected. That is very important.

Up till now the Clinton administration has been less aggressive than the previous one - perhaps in part due to the UN resolution against the blockade. But at the same time, Clinton has supported the Torricelli Bill.

So in speaking of the blockade we have to take into account not only the lack of trade between the US and Cuba, but also the persecution of everyone who wants to trade with us, and also the lack of raw materials. While oil is increasing in price on the world market, prices for our sugar, nickel etc are falling. That is a major problem.

On the effects of the blockade

At the moment we have the problem of optic neuritis, which appeared in Cuba last year. Both the appearance and the spread of this disease were very strange. Why did it appear where it did, at the time that it did? We have suffered the introduction of many diseases from the US in the past, and while at this moment we can't say for certain that this disease was introduced by them, our scientists are analysing this possibility.

There are, however, three main contributory factors: smoking, drinking and lack of vitamin B. We are therefore devoting valuable resources to distributing additional supplies of vitamin B, to cover the needs of our people.

Whether or not this disease was introduced directly by the

US, the main cause is the blockade, which means that the current diet of the Cuban population cannot supply all the vitamins needed for a healthy diet. So the US has to take responsibility for it.

Even so, our people still have more food than in many Latin American countries which are not suffering a blockade. Our government still guarantees basic food for all the population, at the same prices as thirty years ago. We have very little, but the little we have is shared equally. If today we face a lack of vitamin B, that is not because we don't have a pharmaceutical industry, nor because we don't want to give proper nutrition to our people: it is because of the very grave situation imposed by the US.

The policy of the revolution is to minimise the impact on the population as a whole, and to hold on to all the achievements of the past thirty years - in contrast to the policies followed by other Latin American countries, who attempt to solve their economic problems by attacking the living standards of the people.

On solidarity work in Britain

The first priority must be to get information from Cuba, and get this out to all those who, because of their own conditions of life, or because of their political tradition, are interested in supporting Cuba. One valuable way of doing this is to organise them to visit Cuba, to experience our reality. Such people will undoubtedly provide a major resource for the solidarity movement, which has increased enormously in Britain in the last year as a result of all those who in one way or another are working to support Cuba.

ICAP believes that there is enough space for every organisation that really wants to cooperate and work in support of Cuba. If it is possible for them to work together, so much the better. But at the same time every organisation can work to support Cuba according with its own conditions and its own point of view. Within that work, enormous potential exists in this country. ■

FRFI action in support of Cuba

Recent FRFI activities have included supporting a lively Defend Cuba Campaign 'Bay of Pigs' picket of the US Embassy, an RCG public meeting in May, and distributing a leaflet that exposes the reactionary arguments used by organisations like the SWP to undermine support for Cuba. We have collected medical aid and vitamins to send to Cuba, and raised £80 for the Cuba Solidarity Campaign (CSC) Emergency Storm Appeal.

We also attended the CSC Dayschool and AGM. There, in spite of an appeal by Orestes Aldana for co-operation between organisations, the AGM voted against an RCG motion calling on it to support a petition against the blockade. The objections raised were, as usual, a cover up for the sectarian refusal of the CSC to support initiatives over which it does not exercise political control. CSC executive members even tried to prevent the petition being circulated at the dayschool.

Over the past months FRFI sup-



RCG supports 'Bay of Pigs' picket

porters have used the petition to mobilise support in colleges, pensioners' groups, on the streets and at political events. Support has been invited from other organisations active in solidarity with Cuba; Defend Cuba Campaign has added its name. Copies are still available from FRFI. A public meeting will be held in London around Moncada day in July. Phone 071 837 1688 for details.

The RCG thanks all those who

contributed to our previous material aid collection, which has been sent to ICAP. Cuban Ambassador, Maria Florez wrote in acknowledgement: 'These contributions bring together so much more the Cuban and British peoples, and are the popular basis of support to our cause.' Our next collection will be on Saturday June, 11am outside Boots of Wood Green High Road, Wood Green N22. Join us

Journalist held in Turkey

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

Andrew Penny, a British journalist and interpreter, and Faik Bulut, a reporter for the pro-Kurdish daily *Özgür Gündem*, were arrested on Friday 15 May.

They were arrested crossing the border from Iraqi Kurdistan to Turkish Kurdistan. Faik Bulut was released, but Penny has been charged for acting as 'a courier for the PKK' Kurdish

liberation movement, apparently on the grounds of possessing 'anti-Turkish' literature, including tapes and photographs. He is due to stand trial on 16 June.

Last year Andrew Penny accompanied the human rights delegation to Turkish Kurdistan led by Lord Avebury who reported widespread violations. Since then Stephen Waldberg, a German journalist visiting the area, was sentenced to 3 years and 9 months imprisonment on the same charge. Having clam-

ped down on *Özgür Gündem* and such other domestic publications as are opposed to its policy in Kurdistan (see *FRFI* 111), the Turkish state is trying to extend the ban to foreign journalists.

Send letters of protest to the Turkish Embassy, 43 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PA.

For further details contact Kurdish Information Centre, 11 Portland Gardens, London N4 1HU, telephone (081) 880 1759.

Tide of black rage

On 10 April 1993 a white South African member of the right-wing Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) murdered Chris Hani, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party and leading figure in the African National Congress (ANC). But the assassin, Janusz Jakub Walus, a Polish immigrant, was only the front-man for a much larger conspiracy to murder which will now be brushed under the carpet. Hani's murder starkly highlighted the escalating terror which has been inflicted on South Africa's black townships since President de Klerk came to power in September 1989. The murder sparked demonstrations and further massacres across the length and breadth of South Africa, alarming the ANC leadership. CAROL BRICKLEY argues that the ANC is now under intense pressure to ensure that its negotiating strategy delivers results if it is to hold on to its support in the townships.

Chris Hani's death was a murder waiting to happen. It was a quiet Saturday in Boksburg, a right-wing lower middle class, formerly white-only, district of Johannesburg where Hani had settled. He sent his bodyguard away for the weekend - they worked long hours. *The Sowetan* later criticised this lax attitude to security: 'It is a feeling shared by many who see the Hani killing as a result of believing too much in the Codesa rhetoric of brotherhood, forgetting that there are people who have agendas of their own to maintain white supremacy.' Hani was gunned to death in the forecourt of his house in front of his daughter. Since then other assassination plots have been uncovered.

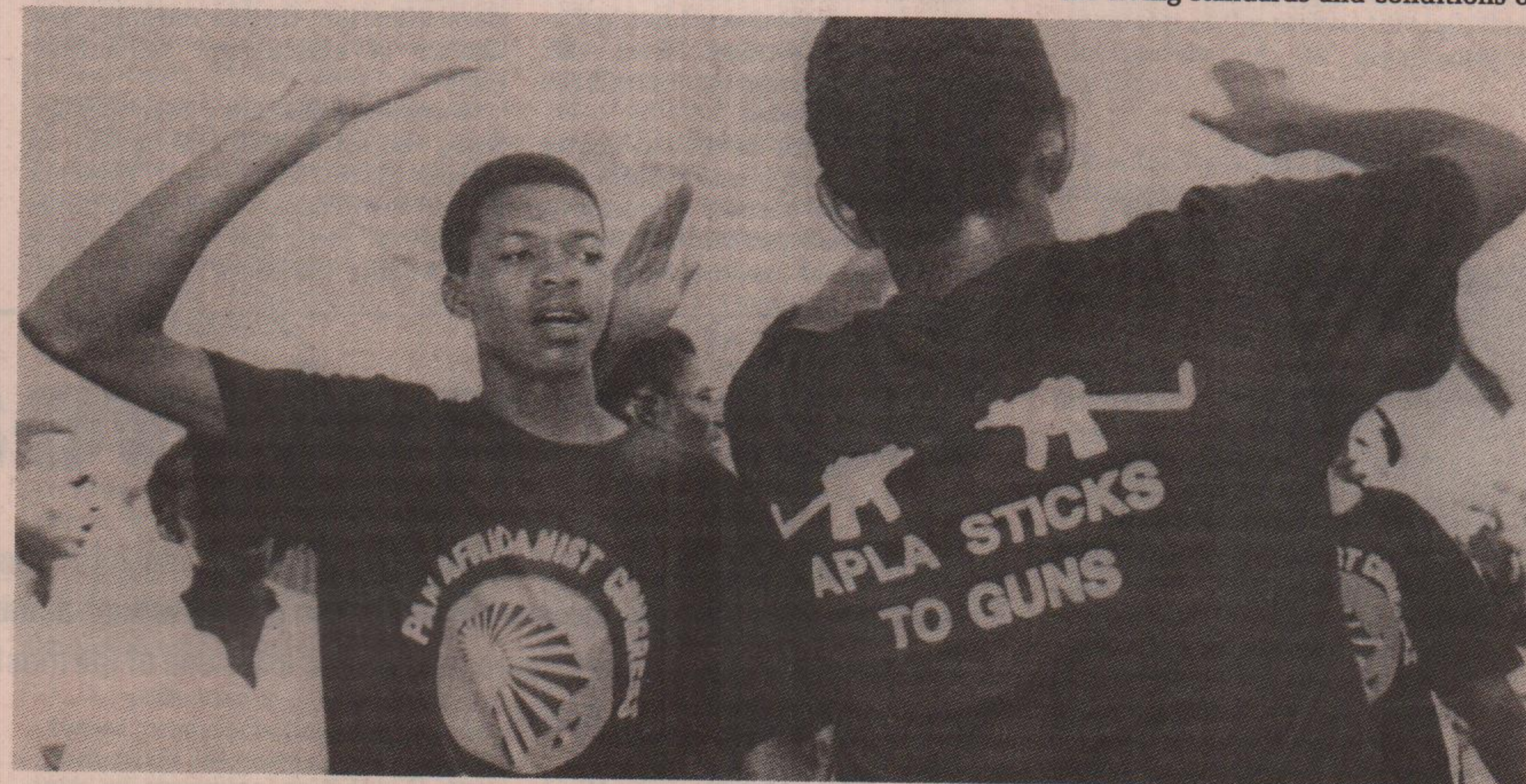
The initial response to the murder, created no doubt on purpose, was that Hani was the victim of a lone, probably crazed, extremist. It was soon clear that Walus was nothing of the sort. The gun he used was part of a haul of stolen weapons, the results of a 1990 'raid' on a South African air force arsenal carried out by Piet 'Skiet' Rudolph, which were distributed to 'the volk'. Within days Conservative MP Clive Derby-Lewis and his wife Gaye had also been arrested and charged with murder.

Walus had a detailed and accurate death list in his possession containing information available only from intelligence sources. Armed AWB members attended the courthouse for his first appearance, laughing and joking with police outside, in front of ANC demonstrators. A right wing group, The World Apartheid Movement, said it would pay Walus' legal costs. WAM has well-known military intelligence connections and is associated with two men, Adrian Maritz and Henry Martin, who were charged with the murder of an ANC supporter in 1990 and fled the country on false passports to Britain. No attempt has been made at their extradition or expulsion. Walus has also been claimed as a member of the Wit Wolve and the Boer Resistance Movement, who described him as a 'first class fighter against Communism'.

Derby-Lewis is the president of the far right Western Goals Institute which staged his visit to Britain in 1989 to address a Conservative Party fringe meeting, and in 1990 to address a meeting of the right-wing Tory Monday Club. He also had meetings with Teresa Gorman MP and Timothy Janman MP. Following his arrest, his wife, Gaye, complained that her husband's sleep was disturbed by the freedom songs of a group of Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) captives in the next cell. Good show!

Much noise was made about a thorough investigation of Hani's murder. Two 'independent' investigators were shipped in by the regime, including our own Commander Churchill-Colman, former head of the anti-terrorist squad and well-known freemason. By mid-May Churchill-Colman was on his way home, the investigation over with the announcement that 'no political connections had been uncovered'. Once again murder was brushed under the carpet - just another murder in the long list of more than 8,000 since de Klerk came to power. The damage was limited.

On the day after Hani's funeral, and in the wake of the death of Conservative Party leader Andries Treurnicht from a heart attack, the right-wing began to consolidate its organised opposition to majority rule. A Committee of Generals was formed. Its first meeting was addressed by two serving senior police officers on the current security situation. Many of the participants, which included MPs, are de Klerk's old partners in crime: General Viljoen who masterminded the invasion of Angola in 1975 and the destabilisation of Mozambique; General Neethling, former head of the police forensic service, lately accused of supplying poison for the murder of ANC members; General Groenewald, former intelligence chief; Lieutenant General Koos Bischoff, former head of South African CID. The formation of the 'Volksfront' was celebrated by a mass rally of thousands of white farmers, enraged by the APLA campaign in rural



areas. The Volksfront represents the aspirations of a white minority which feels the hot breath of black liberation on its neck.

A tide of black anger

In the wake of Hani's murder townships across South Africa protested at this latest act of barbarism. On 14 April at least 17 people died and more than 500 were injured in protest actions. Millions stayed away from work. In Soweto at least four were killed and 259 injured when police opened fire on unarmed demonstrators at Protea police station. The regime claimed that the demonstrators opened fire first - a claim denied by every one of the journalists present. Three people were killed in the East Rand and a further three in Cape Town when police once again fired on unarmed protesters. De Klerk condemned the demonstrations, which had resulted in rioting in major cities, as 'latent criminality' and by 16 April had declared three 'unrest areas' in the Johannesburg area making them subject to special repressive laws. By the end of Hani's funeral another 17 had been massacred in Sebokeng.

The ANC leadership set out to stem the tide of anger. ANC Youth League speakers addressed a rally in Mamelodi: 'It's time we told the leadership that enough is enough and now is the time to hit back.' Harry Gwala, Natal Midlands ANC leader called for an end to negotiations. Placards were carried with the slogan: 'we will liberate our country with the AK47'. In Port Elizabeth ANC stewards called on police to turn back 30,000 angry demonstrators in the city centre.

At a major rally in Jabulani Stadium in Soweto, Mandela was booed when he announced the message from the National Party and struggled to put across his message of peace and brotherhood to the angry crowd. *The Sowetan* reported the 'sullen silence when he urged the youth to go out and make their former enemies their friends'. In contrast, and few failed to note it, PAC President Clarence Makwetu was

greeted with loud cheers and his short address accompanied by firecrackers.

The ANC leadership's difficulties lie with the failure of negotiations to bear any fruit for the majority and the transparent truth that they are making compromises with the regime, being wined and dined by big business, and remorselessly losing touch with the black working class. The mass of black people are meanwhile suffering worsening economic conditions and the effects of state-sponsored and right-wing terror. If the ANC cannot deliver the goods soon then the steady erosion of its support will become a landslide of disaffection. Hence the ANC leadership's response to the Hani murder was to press the regime to set an election date.

Last autumn the Springbok Reception Committee led nation-wide protests against the racist South African rugby team tour to Britain under the slogan 'No normal sport in an abnormal society'. Fascists harassed our demonstrators, the police arrested our activists, the British Anti-Apartheid Movement condemned our opposition to the tour. Yet events in South Africa over the last few months are proof, if proof were needed, that nothing has changed for the black majority and that sanctions must be maintained. Part and parcel of that campaign must now be to defend the nine activists arrested during the Stop the Springbok campaign who face imprisonment if convicted.

The nine, who include City AA activists, RCG members and supporters and a freelance photographer, were part of the Springbok Reception Committee, formed by City AA in response to the call by sections of the liberation movement and non-racial sporting organisations in Azania/South Africa for opposition to the tour.

The Committee organised protests at the Springboks' arrival, at their

Economic crisis and negotiations

In the face of economic crisis both the ANC and National Party face urgent problems. South Africa is once again trying to reschedule its 1985 \$5bn debt and last year GDP fell by a further 2.1% with gold and foreign exchange reserves falling by 3bn Rand between October 1992 and January 1993. In March, the regime outlined its economic programme for the next five years which bears remarkable similarities to IMF programmes imposed on indebted nations the world over. The essence is a stringent reduction in state spending alongside reduced corporation tax and personal tax at the top level, and steeply increased VAT - all designed to 'encourage investment'. The upshot will be a massive attack on the living standards and conditions of

the black working class at a time when they are being promised a bright 'new South Africa'.

Both the ANC and the National Party realise that whichever party has to face these problems will be unpopular, so a government of 'national unity' has its attractions. The main difference between them may lie in their perceptions of the role of foreign investment. Mandela certainly hopes that revenue generated by foreign investment can be used to sweeten the bitter pill of austerity, hence his recent visit to London to court big business and promote the illusion of future stability. The unspoken additional ingredient which could prove necessary is increased state repression. This is a far cry from liberation.

The multi-party negotiating forum

Defend the Springbok 9

hotel, at their press conferences and at each and every one of the matches in Leicester, Bristol, Leeds and Twickenham.

It was on arrival in Leicester the night before the first match that nine of us were arrested, held in police custody for 37 hours and charged with going equipped to cause criminal damage at Leicester football ground.

We were not released until the day after the match, and then only on punitive bail conditions, aimed at preventing us from attending any further anti-Springbok demonstrations. That same day, the AAM issued a press statement condemning the activities of the Stop the Springbok Committee as 'perhaps as great a threat to the cause of democracy as apartheid itself'. This shabby denunciation paved the way for a renewed police attack on an anti-Springbok protest two days later, resulting in two further arrests.

The defendants from the two later arrests have been acquitted and are considering suing the police for unlawful arrest. But the more serious charges against the other nine re-

now has renewed purpose to bring about an election as fast as possible. Both the ANC and National Party are seeking alliances where they can, hence the ANC's meeting with right-wing parties on 21 May and the 'regional dispensation' which will decentralise power to appease the Boers and homeland leaders. The election date is expected to be announced by the end of May and will take place within a year.

The Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), now part of the negotiating forum, also feels that it is making progress. An electoral commission and voter registration are expected to be announced soon and a decision has been made to discuss 'armed struggle' in the context of the transitional authority, thus in the context of all armed forces, and not in the context of 'violence'.

Despite its participation in the talks the PAC has no illusions in the negotiations process. It continues to refuse to dissociate itself from APLA's armed actions. This is an armed struggle which has grown in impact and popularity now that negotiations are viewed by many as a sell-out. On 5 May four policemen were killed in an ambush of a police vehicle in Soweto and this was seen as part of APLA's campaign against 'police and white farmers'.

APLA has dubbed 1993 'The Year of the Great Storm'. In the face of criticism that it is engaged in a 'race war', Sebelo Phana, head of APLA, responded that they are: 'targeting any force or person who wields a gun or weapon of oppression against the oppressed'. This includes informers, state agents, police and mercenaries, black or white. Asked on South African television to confirm or deny APLA attacks on whites, he countered: '[Black] People were killed in the Natal Table Mountain area and no one was asked to deny or accept responsibility.' 'APLA will only stop when a satisfactory solution to meet the aspirations of the black majority is found.'

STOP PRESS

As we go to press the South African police have launched dawn raids on more than 200 PAC homes and offices across the country, confiscating files and equipment. At least 32 people have been arrested. But South African police do not have brains to match their brutality, so a raid on PAC President Clarence Makwetu's home was unsuccessful, and the arrest of Benny Alexander, PAC General Secretary - the PAC's main negotiator in the talks - was foiled when police put him in a car outside his home while they searched it, locked in by child locks. A neighbour released him and he was able to make a press statement from national headquarters in Johannesburg. As a result of the raids the PAC has pulled out of the talks.

main. We need to be clear: in the Defence Campaign set up by City AA we are fighting not only to prove our innocence, but to defend the legitimacy of our protests against the racist Springboks, against British collaboration with the apartheid regime, and for sanctions. We need your support!

What you can do:

- The trial will be at Nottingham Crown Court in late summer/early autumn (date not yet fixed) We will be organising pickets of the court - let us know if you want details of transport nearer the time ● help raise money by using the Defence Campaign petition ● make a donation ● Give out leaflets ● Get the word out - have you got press contacts? Know people in the Nottingham/Leicester area who could help with mobilisation, accommodation, information? *Let us know!*
- Invite a campaign speaker to your college, organisation etc... if you have any other ideas, get in touch!

Write to: The Stop the Springboks 9 Defence Campaign, c/o City AA, BM City AA, London WC1N 3XX Tel: 071 837 6050

Imperialism and the ruin of Africa

Imperialism is destroying Africa. It is destroying its land, its people, its future. That is the only conclusion that can be drawn from Oxfam's report *Africa: Make or Break - Action for Recovery*. The report is a stunning indictment of imperialist parasitism; although it ends with an appeal to the governments of the self-same imperialist nations to now reverse their ways, the value of this kind of report should not be underestimated.



The facts need to be spelled out:

Average incomes in Africa have fallen by around a quarter since the mid-1970s. This fall of course coincides with the onset of the imperialist crisis. The number living below the poverty line rose from 184 million in 1985 to 216 million in 1990, and will rise to over 300 million in 2000. Africa joined the other most oppressed regions of the world in experiencing a continual fall in per capita income throughout the 1980s, a process which has continued into the 1990s (see table).

The impact on health is staggering. Infant mortality rates are 50 times higher than in the imperialist nations. In 1990, an estimated 4.2 million children under the age of 5 died from malnutrition. Another 30 million are underweight. 20% of the population are anaemic. African women are 50 times more likely to die during childbirth than women in the imperialist nations. In 1990, two-thirds of African governments were spending less on health per capita than they were in 1980.

It is not merely health which has suffered: so has education. Primary school enrolment fell from an average of 78% in the 1970s to 68% in the 1980s. Less than a third of all children attend secondary school.

Underlying this has been the remorseless rise in Africa's external debt to imperialism (see table). Agents such as the World Bank and the IMF imposed so-called Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) on African countries to force them to pay back their debts to the imperialist banks. These SAPs involved cutting welfare expenditure, privatisation, and increasing exports to cover debt servicing. These exports were overwhelmingly primary commodities - copper, coffee, cocoa or cotton. But the price of these commodities plummeted during the 1980s, whilst that of imports continued to rise. As the Report says (p7): 'This caused a sharp deterioration in Africa's terms of trade, with the purchasing power of the region's exports having fallen by some 50 per cent since the early 1980s... Overall the slump in commodity prices cost Africa \$50bn in lost earnings between 1986 and 1990 - more than twice the amount the region receives in aid.' Despite an increase in the volume of exports, their value fell throughout the 1980s, so that for instance cocoa exporters in West Africa increased their output by a quarter between 1986 and 1989, only to see its value fall by a third. The collapse of the International Coffee Agreement in 1989

meant that cocoa prices continued to fall, costing Africa a further \$3.2bn between 1989 and 1992. Any future GATT accord on tropical products will intensify this downward pressure.

With the decline in export earnings (from \$65bn per annum 1981-85 to \$55bn per annum 1986-90), the overall debt burden increased. Despite paying out \$71.5bn between 1986 and 1992, overall indebtedness rose from \$116bn to \$183bn. Of this, \$11bn is arrears, up from \$220m 10 years ago. So-called 'cancellation' and rescheduling such as that adopted by the Toronto Agreement have saved little more than \$10bn. Meanwhile, the IMF alone drained \$3bn between 1983 and 1990: like the World Bank, it will not reschedule nor cancel debt.

Imperialism has sucked Africa dry. The rate of return on foreign investment fell from around 30 percent in the late 1960s to 2.5 percent in the 1980s. The result: total private direct investment in 1990 was a mere \$1.1bn, and is now little more than 0.6 percent of total worldwide foreign direct investment. Even this sum was offset by repayments of \$1bn to commercial banks.

The latest twist is that as Africa becomes less and less self-sufficient in food, it has become a dumping ground for heavily subsidised EC and US agricultural exports. Thus in

Burkina Faso, EC grain is sold for \$60 a ton, about a third lower than locally produced equivalents: this low price is guaranteed by a Common Agricultural Policy subsidy of \$100 per ton. Likewise, the EC exported 54,000 tons of subsidised maize to Zimbabwe, which then had to sell its own stockpile under World Bank advice at a huge loss, leaving it without any strategic food supplies when it was hit by the 1992 drought. Whilst the EC and the US spend over \$20bn annually on subsidising agricultural over-production and export subsidies, the net effect on Africa is to undermine local agriculture, increase unemployment, and increase dependence on food imports.

Meanwhile, the environment becomes ever more degraded, mainly because of the increasing use of cash crops as a means of generating export income. Fragile grasslands and forests have been turned over to the growth of timber and cocoa, forcing nomadic herders onto poorer grasslands which have suffered intensified erosion. The result is increasing desertification, further reducing any chance of agricultural self-sufficiency.

War and famine have been increasingly the lot of millions of African people since Reagan and Thatcher sought to roll back the tide of national liberation struggles. Mozambique and Angola, Ethiopia and Somalia,

the lives of millions have been part of the price that imperialism has exacted through its local stooges. The *Financial Times*, in a disgraceful editorial review of the Oxfam report (29 April 1993), sought to pin the blame for the deepening crisis on the continent on indigenous governments - their corruption, or their 'excessive' arms expenditure, or their 'socialism' (Nyerere's Tanzania receiving special mention). But the corruption is a necessary part of neo-colonialism: it is the basis on which the comprador bourgeoisie can arise, prepared to sell the rights of their people to imperialism, provided they receive their cut.

Oxfam has been continually attacked for its exposure of the effects of imperialism, earning the particular hatred of the Tory government, and an attempt to place its political work outside charitable status. As communists, we disagree with the hopes it has that Western governments may be persuaded to adopt a Marshall Plan to regenerate Africa. But as communists, we recognise that the information it gathers on the impact of imperialism, the humanism it shows towards imperialism's victims, puts it head and shoulders above the bulk of the British left. Robert Clough

Africa: Make or Break - Action for Recovery Oxfam UK and Ireland, May 1993, £3.95. Available from Oxfam House, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ.

Water not weapons

While billions of pounds are spent on weapons each year, millions of people have no access to clean water. It is estimated that 25 million people die annually in the imperialist-dominated nations due to water-borne or related diseases. This is a stark figure, and behind it lies one of the most acute social problems faced by the many countries in the Third World.

Hence the Water Not Weapons Week of Action (5-13 June) launched by the Campaign Against the Arms Trade. In today's post-cold war world the fight of the advanced capitalist societies' ruling classes against their own working classes is only one of the fronts on which the fate of the planet is being decided. One of the other fronts is the struggle for a minimum standard of living in the countries that have for years been at the wrong end of the world capitalist economy. Capital at a world level cannot afford to ensure everybody had a clean water supply as such a commitment would cut into a continually diminishing surplus that the global economy is currently producing.

In the Middle East, for example, about half the rural population has no access to a clean water supply in a region where tension over the Zionist occupation of Palestinian land is well documented. The current cholera epidemic, centred on Peru but spreading throughout Latin America, is caused by the lack of access to clean water. In Peru up to 40 per cent of urban areas have no running water and in many areas there is only one tap per 1,000 people. In Asia and Africa too there are grave crises over access to water for both humans and cattle.

In the South the gross inequalities that exist include access to a clean water supply. The rich have access, the poor do not. When the poor begin to struggle for access then the powerful quickly resort to violent repression. The meaning of the slogan 'Water Not Weapons' is clear. Repressive governments, with the support of the United States and European governments, spend money on the militarisation of society in order to repress mass movements based on all kinds of social and democratic demands.

For people in Britain this is an important issue. The legacy of British colonialism, alongside the new imperialist order that the United States and Britain are trying to create, has important implications for the whole

way the British economy is structured. Ten per cent of the manufacturing workforce are involved in the production of military goods, which is why strategic planning by the labour movement for conversion of military industry is important. Just under 80 per cent of all British exports of military equipment go to the imperialist-dominated countries of the South. The end of the cold war has led to cuts in the domestic military procurement policy, resulting in a drive to sell more weapons to Third



World countries.

The list of repressive regimes that Britain is prepared to sell to is a lengthy one. The supplies of arms to the Iraqi regime during the Iran-Iraq War is well-known, as are the supplies of British Aerospace (BAe) Tornado aircraft to Saudi Arabia - a country described as 'a reasonable place to live and work' by John Cahill, chair of BAe, at its April 1993 AGM.

The British government has also ensured the sale of British arms to the Indonesian regime. After consolidating its power through the massacre of 1 million oppositionists in 1965, the regime in Jakarta then went on to colonise East Timor in 1975. This has cost a further 200,000 lives. Yet the silence on the occupation of East Timor is deafening.

In Indonesia and East Timor only 33 per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water. Unsurprisingly the infant mortality rate is 88 per 1,000, compared to 10 per 1,000 in Britain. Average life expectancy is 55 years. Yet the Suharto government spends four times as much on the military as on health provision.

This is the cycle of poverty, protest, militarisation and repression that exists throughout the Southern hemisphere, and which, fuelled by the arms trade, is soon to be the norm in most of the Warsaw Pact nations. The stopping of such trade from Britain and its replacement with unconditional development aid, which should be viewed as reparation for 500 years of colonialism and imperialism, is key. The Water Not Weapons Week of Action and its National Launch in Trafalgar Square on 4 June is a stepping stone towards these issues. Paul Walker

Water Not Weapons National Launch

Volunteers needed from 6am Friday 4 June to help paint a giant backdrop in Trafalgar Square for the launch of the Water Not Weapons week. All you need is the ability to hold a paint-brush! If you can help, please contact CAAT, 11 Goodwin Street, Finsbury Park, London N4 3HQ.

Growth of real per capita income in imperialist and oppressed regions 1980-1991 (Average annual percent change)

Region	1980-1990	1990	1991
Imperialist countries	2.4	2.1	0.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	-0.9	-2.0	-1.0
Asia & Pacific	5.1	3.9	4.2
Middle East & North Africa	-2.5	-1.9	-4.6
Latin America & Caribbean	-0.5	-2.4	-0.6

Debt in Sub-Saharan Africa (US \$ Billions)

	1980	1986	1992
Total debt	56.2	116.0	183.4
Total debt service	6.2	10.1	10.1
Debt service/exports of good & services (percent)	10.9	28.2	18.5
Total debt/GNP (percent)	29.2	74.5	108.8

Whose unions?

The recent wave of trade union militancy – the miners, Timex, railway workers, firefighters etc – has been seen by the left as an upturn in struggle which contains possibilities for socialist renewal. They clearly do present possibilities, but what is the left's strategy? – to demand that the TUC and trade unions organise these struggles and give them more support.

However, GAVIN SCOTT shows that the changes that have taken place in union membership since the 1970s, their character now, and the record of the TUC over that period, are evidence that such demands push the fighting sections of the working class into the arms of their most dangerous foes – the new labour aristocracy. The 1991 *Labour Force Survey* presented in the *Employment Gazette* of January 1993 provides graphic evidence that the trade union movement does not represent the mass of British workers – whether in unions or not. It does not represent women, the low paid, part-time or temporary workers. It does not represent the unemployed. The report confirms that trade unions are increasingly dominated, controlled and directed by a new labour aristocracy of non-manual workers – a tiny minority of educated, managerial, professional and associated workers.



Whom do the unions represent?

Union membership in Britain steadily declined throughout the 1980s following a peak of around 13 million in the late 1970s. Union membership density (the proportion of workers who are in a trade union) among the employed in Britain fell to 33 per cent in 1991 (8,488,000 members). Significantly the fall in density was greater than average among employed as opposed to self-employed workers. This is obviously due to the shift in union policy away from collective representation of the working class to provision of individual, personal, largely financial, services such as credit cards, insurance, private health care and so on.

Fewer women ...

Women – who are largely lower paid – are generally underrepresented within trade unions. Men have an overall density of 42 per cent compared to 32 per cent of women. Among part-time workers density is dramatically lower and the proportions reversed – 13 per cent of men to 23 per cent of women. This is obviously due to the greater proportion of women part-time workers. (The proportion of women trade unionists went up from one fifth in 1948 to two fifths in 1991).

In the public sector union membership among men and women is roughly equal. This is also the case in banking and finance, showing that generally '... there is little difference between the union densities of male and female full-time employees in industries where women account for a large proportion of total employment.'

Not the youth and part-time worker ...

The trade unions' inability to organise growing numbers of temporary or young workers is also evident. Density among temporary workers fell from 18 to 17 per cent. In terms of age-groups union density rises from 22 per cent among 16-24 year-olds, to 42 per cent of 35 year-old employees. Only workers with 10 or more years of employment have over 50 per cent membership (58 per cent). Those with only 2-5 years have a density of only 31 per cent. But the density for workers who have been in employment for only 1 year – predominantly younger workers – drops to 17 per cent.

More 'educated' ...

Union density varies also with educational level. Of male employees, those with higher education qualifications short of degree level (44 per cent) and with 'A' level or equivalent (45 per cent) had the highest density, and those with one 'O' level or equivalent, the lowest (33 per cent). Among women employees there is a

great difference between those who have degree or equivalent (49 per cent) or other higher education qualifications (64 per cent) and those with 'A' level or lower (all less than 30 per cent). This is due to the concentration of highly qualified women in those certain occupations, such as teaching, health professions, and associate health professions, in which density is high. Over half of trade union members had at least one 'A' level or equivalent. One in eight were graduates.

Public (and ex-public) sector workers

An examination of the public sector, where union density is highest, reveals the ascendancy of highly qualified, managerial, professional and supervisory workers. The *Employment Gazette* notes that:

'... differences (in density) between manufacturing and service industries are quite small; instead, the key factor appears to be public sector status ... all the industries where union density was above 50 per cent in 1991 are those where employment is largely or wholly in the public sector (or in industries that used to be in the public sector, such as telecommunications).'

In the energy and water services, density among craft and related workers was 89 per cent as compared to 16 per cent in the private sector services of distribution, hotels and catering, and repairs.

The sectors where union density is low (below 20 per cent) are in the private service sector (with agriculture and construction). Between the two extremes are most of manufacturing industry and the banking, finance and insurance sector.

The new aristocracy of labour

In examining variations in the density of union membership across different occupations, the *Employment Gazette* says 'the highest levels of union density by occupation occur amongst certain occupations commonly associated with the public sector. Among these are 'associate health professionals (74 per cent) and teaching professionals (70 per cent).'

Within the public sector non-manual workers form a greatly disproportionate group with:

'The most striking finding ... that other services, which includes national and local government, education and health, accounted for 40 per cent of trade union membership, whereas (this) sector formed only 27 per cent of total employment.'

Density among non-manual workers is steadily rising. In 1948, only 23 per cent of union members were non-manual workers, whereas in 1991, they were slightly in the majority at 53 per cent. The reduction of the pro-

portion of members in manufacturing over that time was from 44 per cent to only 24 per cent. In 1991, traditional 'blue-collar' occupational groups (the 'craft and related, plant and machine operatives, other occupations' category) were less than 40 per cent of all trade union membership.

This change is due to changes of industry and occupations, but also to 'the marked increases in union density that took place during the 1970s amongst non-manual workers in manufacturing industry and amongst public sector workers.'

Supervisors and foremen

As if to underline the growing distance between the mass of the working class and the minority represented by the trade unions, the *Labour Force Survey* notes the link between union density and supervisory responsibility. It shows:

'Union density was higher in 1991 amongst foremen/supervisors (46 per cent) than it was amongst people with no managerial or supervisory responsibilities.'

This high level of union density amongst 'foremen/supervisors' is due to the entry routes into these jobs. These positions are usually held by people who have progressed from more junior positions and so 'they are likely to possess considerable seniority which ... is positively related to union membership.'

In keeping with the general trend of higher density in the public sector, or former public sector, service industries, managers in energy, 'water supply, transport and others, are much more likely to be union members than those in the private sector.

The *Employment Gazette* points out that this is a general phenomenon:

'Although density varies significantly by broad industrial classification, the relationship between union density for foremen/supervisors and union density for people with no managerial or supervisory responsibilities is broadly constant across industries.'

Even in small workplaces, where densities are generally low, the relatively high density among professionals and associate professionals shows markedly: even in workplaces with between 6 and 24 employees, over 50 per cent of these two categories are members of a union. Again, this is due to the change of emphasis to personal members services. In fact, '... in 1991, over a third of all employed trade union members worked in managerial, professional or associate professional occupations.'

These then are the new elements of Britain's labour aristocracy whose members are largely non-manual, highly qualified, white, by and large male, supervisory, managerial

or professional workers. This new labour aristocracy has a disproportionate effect on the political character of the unions through their domination of its organisational structures.

The British left and the modern trade unions

This trend, of over-representation in the unions of higher graded, higher paid workers has been so emphatic that even passionate worshippers of reactionary British trade unionism such as the SWP have been forced to admit that:

'... the massive rise in white-collar trade union membership over the past 40 years cannot simply be equated with a growth in unionisation of the lower more "proletarian" grades ... A study of union membership in a bank, an insurance company and a local council, concludes ... in all three institutions the level of union organisation rose with grade level.' (*The Changing Working Class*, Alex Callinicos and Chris Harman, p.69)

They continue:

'... some routine white-collar workers do have a very real chance of moving out of their lowly jobs, in a way which manual workers do not.'

Harman and Callinicos even recognise the state's ability to buy off sections of even militant workers and undermine rank and file trade unionism. Even in the CPSA the 'attraction to some of the ablest militants of upward mobility and the continual turnover in staff presents a big obstacle to sustained rank-and-file-led organisation.' (p.72)

They reported that one study found:

'... among stewards, "female and low status employees are under-represented relative to the membership". So 41 per cent of stewards came from middle-level jobs, even though these were only 30 per cent of the workforce (and 29 per cent of the stewards came from 19 per cent of the workforce who were "high status").' (p.77)

and:

'... the most trade union-conscious white-collar workers are often those with greatest hopes of moving up the career ladder, eventually into jobs in which they will supervise other workers. This explains one of the central peculiarities of white-collar trade unionism: those who are most committed to union activists, whose activity leads them to play a key role in union branches, are often those who end up in managerial positions.' (p.78)

This all points to the trade union movement in Britain being made up of relatively privileged workers who,

as one study Harman reports said, 'exert a moderating influence' and 'often drew attention to the constraints under which the management were operating' (i.e. capitalism). Harman himself admits that 'One reason middle grades are paid more than low-level workers is to buy such support from them.' Precisely!

More staggeringly still, the SWP despite all this continues to prostrate itself before this reactionary trade unionism. The reason is not difficult to fathom. It represents a tiny and powerless stratum of public sector workers – professionals, social workers, non-manual workers etc – whose status is tied to aristocratic trade unionism and opposed to mass trade unionism.

The *Labour Force Survey* report confirms the consolidation of a new labour aristocracy within the working class. It confirms Lenin's view that:

'On the economic basis (of imperialism), the political institutions of modern capitalism (press, parliament, associations, congresses, etc) have created political privileges and sops for the respectful, meek, reformist and patriotic office employees and workers, corresponding to the economic privileges and sops. Lucrative and soft jobs in the government or on the war industries committees, in parliament and on diverse committees, on the editorial staffs of "respectable", legally published newspapers or on the management councils of no less respectable and "bourgeois law-abiding" trade unions – this is the bait by which the imperialist bourgeoisie attracts and rewards the representatives and supporters of the "bourgeois labour parties".' (*CW* vol 23, p117)

During the post war boom, imperialism was able to offer a substantial section of the working class significant privileges through the welfare state and full employment. Today, as the capitalist crisis undermines the foundations of the economy, we are once more seeing the development of a profound split within the working class. On the one hand the mass of workers – low paid, women, black, part-time, temporary or unemployed – on the other hand a privileged, reactionary and self-interested minority. The latter, a labour aristocracy, happy to do capitalism's dirty work – as the trade union leaders have in the Timex dispute, in the miners' strike and other disputes. An effective working class movement will break from these elements who control the modern British unions and get on with the job of organising the mass of workers to destroy capitalism and imperialism. ■

This article will be discussed by North London FRFI Readers Group on **Tuesday 8 June** at the Camden Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Road, London NW1 (nearest tube Camden). Meeting starts 7.30pm. All welcome.

In 1979 the RCG produced issue 9 of the Journal *Revolutionary Communist*, containing the article 'Racism, Imperialism and the Working Class'. This was a study of the living conditions of black people in Britain and an analysis of the way that imperialism's incessant drive for profit abroad has created a growing oppressed layer of the working class at home which has no stake in the capitalist system.

The 14 years since *Revolutionary Communist 9* was written have been years of continuous Tory government in which the mini-boom of the mid-1980s allowed Thatcher to deepen the divisions in the working class by policies such as selling off council houses and selling shares in newly-privatised public companies, whilst weakening trade unions, beginning to dismantle the welfare state and introducing the poll tax. NICKI JAMESON investigates what has happened to the living standards of black and Irish people in Britain in this period and where they stand in Major's 'classless society'.

The black population

The ethnic minority population of Britain has risen 18% since 1981.¹ Britain has an estimated 2,682,000 inhabitants from 'ethnic minorities' (see breakdown below) but this figure, like virtually all data on the subject, excludes the two million Irish people and people of Irish descent resident in the UK. The 'Other' category is generally an underestimate also as it usually refers to southern Europeans who are sometimes classified as 'White' and sometimes as 'Other'; in London alone it is currently estimated that there are 100,000 Greek Cypriots and 90,000 Turks, Kurds and Turkish Cypriots.

Table 1 Britain's Ethnic Minority Communities

456,000	W Indian and Guyanese
793,000	Indian
486,000	Pakistani
127,000	Bangladeshi
137,000	Chinese
150,000	African
67,000	Arab
310,000	'Mixed'
155,000	'Other'

Under 10% of each ethnic minority group listed above are over 60 years old. 24% of West Indians and Guyanese, 44% of Pakistanis, 46% of Bangladeshis and 31% of Africans are under 15 (as opposed to 19% of whites).

Ethnic minorities make up 5.5% of the population. Over half of all ethnic minority households are in the south east where 9% of the population are from ethnic minorities.² In inner London 25% are from ethnic minorities.

Employment and unemployment

The *Labour Force Surveys* for 1989-91 show that ethnic minorities form 4.9% of the economically active population. They are disproportionately concentrated in manual, low-paid and insecure employment. (See Table 2)

Self-employment as a percentage of all those in employment is highest among Pakistani/Bangladeshi, standing at 24%, as opposed to 17% of Indians and 12% of whites.³ In the period 1989-91 32% of Afro-Caribbean and Guyanese men and 40% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi men worked in non-manual jobs, compared to 48% of white men and 59% of Indians. 68% of Afro-Caribbean and Guyanese men and 60% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi men worked in manual jobs compared to 52% of white men.⁴

In 1989-91 29% of men from black and other ethnic minorities were employed in the distribution, hotels and catering sectors, compared to 16% of white men. Within this category 9% of men from black and other ethnic minorities worked in hotels and catering compared to 2% of white men. In 1991 28% of men in distribution, hotel, catering and repairs earned less than £150 a week. In hotels and catering 47% earned less than £150 a week. (The average for all industries is 10% of the male manual workforce earning less than £150 a week.)

Black women are doubly oppressed. Women's wages as a whole are about two-thirds of men's and women in general are



Picket of the Old Bailey for the trial of a fascist accused of the murder of Panchadcharam Sahitharan in Newham in January 1992.

concentrated in particular areas of the labour market, eg 25% of all women work in distribution, hotels, catering or repairs. So, although the differential between the wages of black and white women is on average not nearly so marked as that between black and white men (and in the case of Afro-Caribbean women in employment, average earnings are actually slightly higher than for white women as more of them work full time and on shifts) it still holds true that women workers are oppressed as a whole and black women workers doubly oppressed.

Asian women suffer particularly acutely and struggles over the years such as Grunwicks in 1976 and the Burnsall strikers in Birmingham today have exposed appalling working conditions and low pay.

A 1990 Leicester Council survey compared white and Asian workers' wages and conditions and discovered that 52% of Asian women earned less than £100 for a full week's work.

According to the Leicester survey the gross median earnings of Asian men in full time work were £160 a week - 82% of white men's earnings (£196). Asian women in full time work had gross median earnings of £109 a week - 82% of white women's (£133). Asian men were

twice as likely to work shifts as white men (31% compared to 17%). 15% of Asian women worked shifts as opposed to 10% of white women.

Unemployment levels are a key indicator of the relative oppression of different sections of the working class. 9% of the white population available for employment is unemployed as opposed to 22% of Afro-Caribbeans and 25% of Pakistanis/Bangladeshis.

The figure for Indian unemployment is much nearer to that of whites: about 12%; this disparity is highlighted in the current Policy Studies Institute (PSI) report, the author concluding that 'there are various degrees of disparity between racial groups that can no longer be adequately summarised by a simple contrast between "well-off whites" and "poor blacks".'

Such figures highlight both the difference of class origins amongst ethnic groups immigrating to Britain and the greater presence today than in 1982, when the PSI last produced a report into 'Ethnic Minorities', of a black middle class. Since 1979 successive Tory governments have deliberately fostered such a layer, in the same way they had already created a section of the white working class which has a stake in the system. Table 3 shows the development of this layer.

Table 2 Economic activity rates by sex, age and ethnic origin

Ethnic origin	Age					%	
	16-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59/64	All of working age	
						Male	Female
White	66.2	81.8	84.3	87.1	69.7	87.1	64.0
Black	40.1	72.1	76.8	86.4	69.2	75.7	29.0
Indian	32.9	75.0	81.8	81.6	60.5	78.7	36.9
Pakistani and Bangladeshi	35.5	50.8	53.7	40.4	35.1	67.3	31.4
Other	40.3	62.8	68.8	82.5	73.5	77.8	40.0
All	64.0	80.8	83.5	86.6	69.3	86.5	61.8

RACIS 1993

Table 3 Percentage of male employees in professional, managerial or employer categories

Ethnic origin	Year	
	1982	1988-90
White	19	27
Afro-Caribbean	5	12
African Asians	22	27
Indians	11	25
Pakistanis	10	12
Bangladeshis	10	12

These figures indicate that the strategy of creating a middle class has had some success, though again varying according to ethnic groups.

Housing

Studies by the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and others show that since the 1950s there has been an absolute improvement in the housing conditions of ethnic minorities but there remains a 'pattern of entrenched housing inequality'.

21% of whites live in detached houses, as do 15% of Indians, 4% of Pakistanis/Bangladeshis, 4% of West Indians. About 6% of white households have more than one person per room, compared to 12% of Afro-Caribbean, 22% of Indian and 43% of Pakistani/Bangladeshi households.⁵

There is a high level of owner-occupation amongst Asians - 84% for Indians and 67% for Pakistanis/Bangladeshis as opposed to 64% of the general population and 41% for West Indians. But this provides no guarantee of good housing.

A report into Rochdale noted that 95% of Asian residents live in the poorer central areas of Rochdale where the housing conditions are among the worst and the majority live in pre-1919 terraced housing. A 1988 CRE report into Tower Hamlets showed that Bangladeshis were more likely to be allocated the worst housing, ended up in the poorest temporary Bed and Breakfasts (86% as opposed to 66% of whites), waited longer than whites to be housed and were less likely to be rehoused quickly after acts of fire or vandalism. Of three estates examined, the two with the lowest housing standards housed five times the number of Asians as would be expected given their proportion in the borough's population.⁶

Tower Hamlets Liberal Council made itself infamous in the 1980s by its refusal to house those it claimed had made themselves 'intentionally homeless' by leaving Bangladesh. Camden's Labour Council later took the same approach to the Irish community and both Councils have been forced to deal with waves of militant opposition to their policies. In 1984 Bengali families occupied Camden Town Hall and forced the council to move them from Bed and Breakfast and change its policy on homeless families. In 1988 Bethnal Green church halls became public sanctuary to families threatened with eviction by Tower Hamlets.

In April this year Tower Hamlets obtained a court ruling that stated a local authority is entitled to investigate the immigration status of a homeless person who has applied for accommodation and has no legal duty to provide accommodation for an applicant who it discovers is an illegal immigrant who has entered the country fraudulently. This is more complex than it sounds, as a man, for example,

may enter the country legally and be housed legally. In order to bring his wife and family over, he will have to provide assurance that there is adequate accommodation. But having made this assurance if the accommodation situation becomes intolerable when the family arrives and they ask for larger accommodation, they can then be considered as illegal immigrants. A question of housing once again becomes an issue of immigration status.

Another CRE investigation into Liverpool Council in 1989 found white people were twice as likely as black people to be allocated a house, four times as likely to get a new house, twice as likely to get centrally heated house and four times as likely to get their own garden.

In the private rented sector a 1990 CRE survey revealed that 20% of agencies discriminated against black people.

Homelessness

Black people are disproportionately affected by homelessness. In 1989 Birmingham Housing Aid Services reported that 72% of the single homeless people and 44% of homeless families it saw were black.⁷

'Today 40% of London's 250,000 homeless population are from ethnic minorities... black people account for at least half of this total and rising. That's at least 20% when black Londoners comprise mere 8% of the capital's total population.'

'Yet walk around London streets and you'll be hard pressed to find a black person sleeping rough or begging for cash.'

'That's because black people form the majority of London's hidden homeless. Look in squats, derelict buildings, hostels, temporary accommodation, night shelters, mental institutions and your friends' floors and you'll find them.' [Nick Mathison and Allister Harry - 'Hidden Homeless' *The Big Issue* April 1993.]

Irish people

Irish people are the largest ethnic group in Britain. There are over 2 million Irish people and people of Irish descent. There have been three main 'waves' of Irish immigration - 1800-50, 1940-60 and more recently in the 1980s when half a million people left Ireland.

The majority of Irish immigrants are 16-25, single and live in London. 50% of all Britain's Irish community live in the south east: 32% in Greater London alone. Irish people are the only ethnic group whose life expectancy decreases on coming to Britain.

Irish employment is concentrated in insecure and low-paid work. Irish people are over-represented in the building, domestic, shop, hotel, catering and unskilled industrial sectors. They face obvious discrimination when applying for jobs. These are just a few examples of cases which were actually taken to industrial tribunals:

1989 - Boots refused an Irish woman an interview because she was Irish and 'likely to get homesick' and leave.

1990 - The Post Office asked an Irish man about his nationality, followed by 'Do you have a problem with drink?'

1990 - A temporary secretary was offered a permanent post in a private firm. The offer was later withdrawn on the grounds that her nationality was a 'security problem'.⁸

T BRITAIN

Unemployment among the Irish is second only to Afro-Caribbeans (1981 census figs). The level of homelessness is high and there is discrimination in housing departments against Irish people, shown at its most virulent by Camden Labour Council's repatriation policy. The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) is used against the Irish population both for harassment and for intelligence-gathering. Irish people are the only group named specifically in the Act. 97% of those arrested are released without charge. Despite all the Race Relations and Race Discrimination laws past by British governments since the days of 'No Blacks, No Irish, No Dogs' signs in windows, the PTA is blatant institutionalised racism, the continuation in Britain of colonialism and imperialism.

Racist immigration policy

Table 4 Balance of immigration/emigration (yearly average)

1977-81	- 36,000 out
1982-86	- 18,500 in
1987-91	- 17,800 in ⁹

The average yearly immigration between 1987-91 was 139,300. Neither this figure nor those above includes migration to and from Ireland but does include movement of British passport holders, resident for a year or more abroad.

The net balance of migration into UK in 1991 (again excluding from Ireland) is: total - 27,600; from Indian sub-continent 15,700; from other 'New Commonwealth' countries - 14,300.

There are 612,000 holders of Irish nationality living in the UK, two-thirds of the total of EC nationals.

In 1991, 54,000 people were accepted for settlement in the UK, 1,000 more than in 1990 but 27,000 less than in 1976. Of those accepted in 1991 57% were spouses of immigrants already here and 17% were children. Of all accepted, 27% were from the Indian sub-continent, 20% from the rest of Asia, 18% from Africa and 13% from the Americas.

Many of the people now seeking residence in Britain come not because they are seeking work but because they are fleeing persecution, famine, war or other natural or man-made disasters. Britain's claim to give the persecuted a safe haven has always been a myth. In 1938 visa controls were introduced for Austrian and German citizens, effectively excluding Jews fleeing Nazi persecution; in 1985 - the first time a Commonwealth country had a visa requirement imposed on it - for Sri Lankan citizens, coinciding with state terror against Tamils. Since then visas have been introduced for people from Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Zaire, Ghana, Turkey, Bangladesh, India and Nigeria.

The number of people seeking asylum increased more than tenfold between 1986 and 1991 but halved in late 1991/early 1992 due to drastic changes in the law which greatly increased the difficulty of registering an application in the first place. [See FRFI 111 - 'Fortress Europe and the Asylum Bill']

The backlog of asylum applications was nearly 70,000 by 1991. Of those processed that year, only 1 in 10 was found to have a 'well-founded fear of persecution', as defined by the 1951 UN Convention, and granted asylum.

This February Karamjit Singh Chahal, a campaigner for Sikh independence who had been resident in Britain for 20 years and has two children who were born here, lost a fight against a government decision to deport him to India. He had spent two and a half years in Bedford gaol. He maintained in court that he faced arrest and torture if deported, but the judge ruled that the Home Secretary had acted reasonably by ordering the removal of Mr Chahal in the interests of 'national security' and 'the international fight against terrorism'. The UN criterion was clearly irrelevant as the judge ruled that Clarke had 'clearly evaluated the risk of torture against the risk to national security and decided that the latter outweighed the former'.

Five Alevi Kurds staged a hunger strike outside the Home Office in freezing weather in January/February to protest against intolerable delays in considering their asylum applications. The men were deported in 1989 but brought back into Britain in 1991 when they began High Court proceedings against these deportations. Without their status as refugees confirmed, they could not bring their families to Britain from Turkey.

The 1971 Immigration Act stipulated that wives and children of Commonwealth citizens could only enter the UK if a 'sponsor' could support and accommodate them without recourse to 'public funds'. In 1985 'public funds' were formally defined as supplementary benefit (now income support), housing benefit, family income supplement (now family credit) and housing under Part III of the 1985 Housing Act (Housing the Homeless). The 'sponsorship' is only legally binding in a minority of cases but many people are misled into believing it is universally applicable.

Living with British racism

As well as suffering discrimination in economic and social spheres, black people have been singled out for attack by both the state apparatus and by racist groups and individuals. The relationship between state sponsored racism and that of unofficial racist groups may be direct or indirect but its effect is plain: racist attackers are rarely caught or punished whereas if black people organise to defend themselves they are dealt with severely.

Between January 1970 and November 1989 74 people in Britain died as a result of racially motivated attacks. Since the beginning of 1992 at least nine people have been murdered by racists. They include:

Rolan Adams - murdered in Thamesmead, age 14. After the murder, carloads of skinheads continually harassed his family. Three months later **Orville Blair** was murdered in the same area. **Rohit**

Duggal - stabbed to death in a take-away shop in Plumstead. The police said they did not consider the incident to be racially motivated.

Ruhullah Aramesh - an Afghan refugee, killed by a gang of up to 15 people outside his home. The attack was so blatantly racist that even the right-wing *Evening Standard* carried the one-word 'Racists' across its front-page and the police described the murder as a 'racially motivated case of extreme brutality'.

Stephen Lawrence - age 18, murdered in south London on 22 April 1993 (the fourth person in that area in 2 years).

There is a significant level of under-reporting of racist attacks. Police figures claim there are 7,000 attacks each year. An EC report argued the real figure could be 10 times higher. A London Borough of Newham report in 1987 argued that the level of racial attacks was 20 times higher than the police figures. A May 1991 survey for Victim Support, backed by the Home Office, estimated that the number of race attacks recorded by the police in England and Wales (3-6,000) represented 2-5% of the actual total.¹¹

These are two examples from the daily catalogue of barbaric attacks:

- the firebombing of the house of David Singh, Britain's first Asian professional snooker player
- the death of the 68-year old white neighbour of a Bengali family who choked to death after attackers who had been harassing the family for 4 weeks set fire to the top floor of an Isle of Dogs tower block. The young mother of the family had had a knife and gun brandished at her through her letterbox in previous incidents.

In every one of the following categories of crime, black people were more likely to be victims than white people: household vandalism, burglary, vehicle vandalism, theft, assault, robbery, threats. In some categories twice as likely.¹²

Black people who defend themselves against racists are likely to end up punished either along with their attackers, like black TV reporter Brian Moore, who was gaoled for Affray or instead of them like Satpal Ram who is serving a life sentence for murder after defending himself against a gang of six white men.

Racist police

While attacks by civilian fascists are undoubtedly on the increase, black and Irish people in this country continue to be murdered by the state in prisons, police stations, mental hospitals and on the streets.

In 1991 Ian Gordon, a young black man with a history of mental illness, was hunted down by the police in Telford, Shropshire for four hours before being shot dead. He was carrying an

Table 5 Applications for asylum¹⁰

	1984	1986	1990	1991
Applications received	2,900	4,270	22,000	44,840
Decisions taken				
Granted asylum	450	350	900	420
Granted exceptional leave	630	2,100	2,400	1,860
Refused asylum or exceptional leave	350	530	710	2,410
Total decisions	1,430	2,980	4,020	4,680
Cases outstanding at year end	3,610	6,080	29,420	68,880

unloaded air pistol. In 1985 Cherry Groce was paralysed when armed police raided her home and shot her. Cynthia Jarret died of a heart attack during a police raid on her home. These two attacks sparked uprisings in Brixton and Broadwater Farm where the black community had already had its fill of surveillance, stop and search, raids, assaults, arrests for no reason and general harassment.

In 1992 Malkjit Singh Natt, with support from the Newham Monitoring Project, exposed British police racism in a manner which echoed the Rodney King case in the US. While being arrested, racially insulted and physically assaulted by Newham police in January 1991, Mr Natt managed to tape-record the incident. However, as with Rodney King, cast-iron proof did not automatically lead to justice. Even following his trial, national publicity of the tape and a further appeal hearing, Mr Natt still stands convicted of assaulting a WPC, a charge for which there is no medical or other evidence, and the two PCs who abused and assaulted him were docked one day's pay and are still on the beat.

Deaths in custody

From April 1969 to January 1991 75 black people died while in police or prison custody, a figure remarkably similar to that for racist murders during the same period. In only one case has there been a successful prosecution and only one family of a dead person has received compensation.

In October 1992 Omasase Lumumba, the nephew of the late great Zairean President, Patrice Lumumba, died in Pentonville prison, held down by prison officers in a strip cell. He had been arrested for allegedly stealing a bicycle, not charged but held in custody while his asylum request was being investigated.

Whose mental health?

In 1991 Orville Blackwood became the third young black man to die in Broadmoor maximum security mental hospital since 1984 after forcible sedation. Black people who are 'sectioned' are far more likely to be compulsorily referred to psychiatric hospitals than white people - in 1984/5 black people formed 36% of those given hospital orders with restrictions and 32% of those given hospital orders without restrictions. Second generation Afro-Caribbean men aged 16-29 are 16 times more likely to be diagnosed as schizophrenic than the average for the population as a whole. One in five 'patients' at Broadmoor is Afro-Caribbean and one in three of those is locked up in high security, as Orville Blackwood was. The rate of admission to mental hospitals is also disproportionately high amongst the Irish community.

Racist courts

Black people awaiting trial are more likely to be refused bail than white people and

far more likely to have conditions imposed on their bail. Black men receive custodial sentences twice as often as their white counterparts. One in ten black men has already been locked up by the time he is 21. Social enquiry reports before sentencing are far less likely to be requested in the cases of black defendants.

Prison population

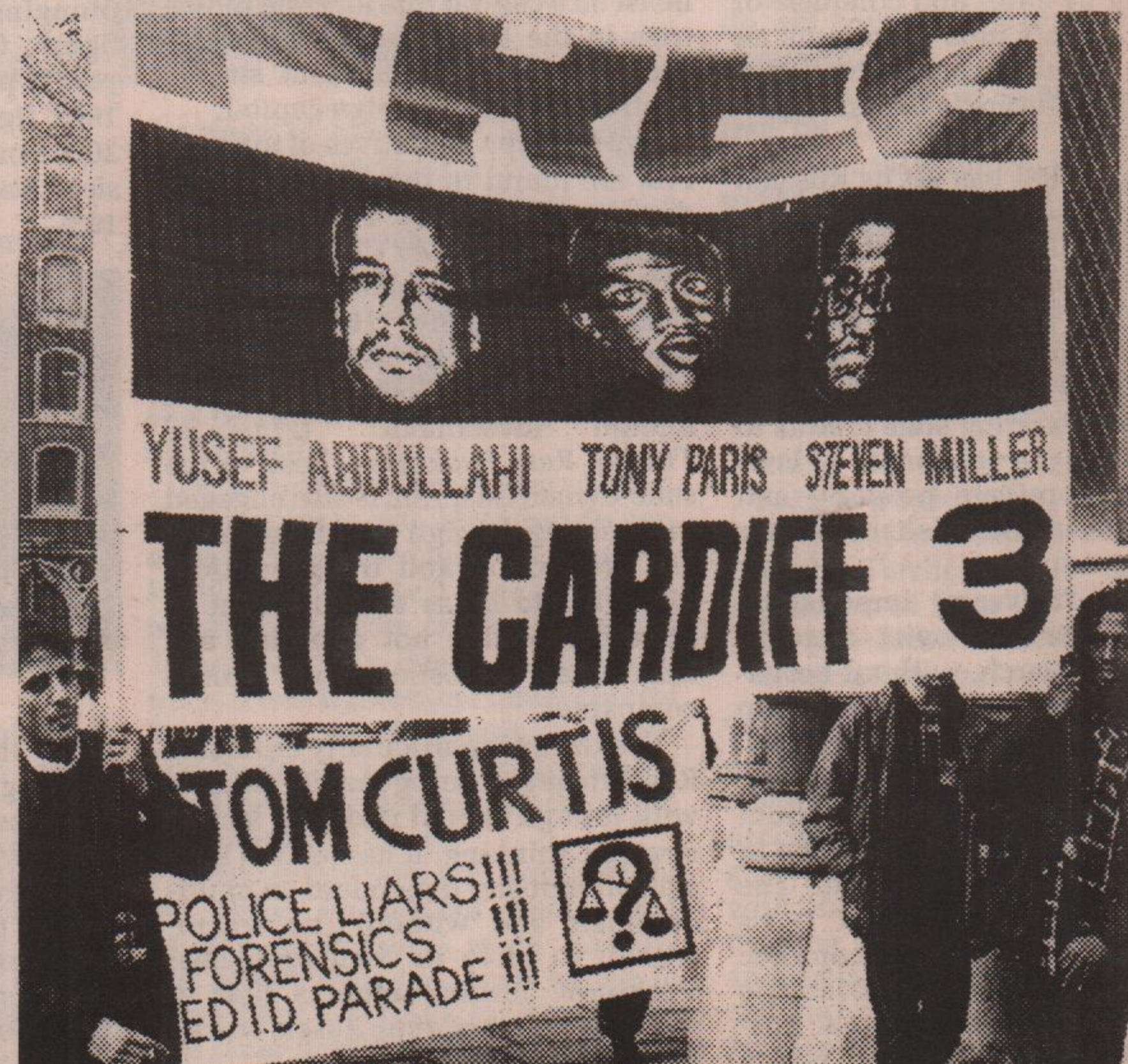
On 30 June 1990 16% of male prisoners were known to be from ethnic minority groups, compared to 14% on 30 June 1986. 28% of the female prison population was known to be from ethnic minority groups, compared with 18% in 1986. Compare the percentages of the prison population who are black or from ethnic minorities to the 5.5% of the British population as a whole and it is only possible to conclude that we live in an extremely racist society.

And getting worse

As the crisis of British capitalism deepens so does the oppression of black people. They suffer discrimination which keeps them out of employment or, if working, holds them in the most vulnerable sectors of the job market. As the welfare state is cut so too are many jobs done by black people and many services which they rely on more heavily than white workers. As resources in the state sector are squeezed the more economically and politically privileged sections of the population grab what is available. It is black children who end up in the sink schools and black families who end up in the non-fundholding GP practices.

When we published 'Racism, Imperialism and the Working Class' 14 years ago, we argued that capitalism could not and would not overcome the racist oppression of black people. The facts have borne this out. A slightly larger black middle class may exist today but the overwhelming majority of black people remain not merely in the ranks of the working class but forced into its lowest layers. From there they have continued to send out their message, sometimes loud, sometimes muted, that they will fight back against racist Britain. ■

- 1 Trevor Jones *Britain's Ethnic Minorities*. Policy Studies Institute 1993.
- 2 *Social Trends* 1993, taken from *Labour Force Surveys* 1989-91
- 3 *Social Trends*.
- 4 Carey Oppenheim *Poverty: the Facts*. CPAG 1993.
- 5 PSI Report.
- 6 'Race' in *Britain Today*. Richard Skellington. Saga Publications 1992.
- 7 *Race and Housing*. Shelter Fact Sheet.
- 8 Joan O'Flynn 'The Irish in Britain - Profile of a hidden experience'. *The Runnymede Bulletin*, April 1993.
- 9 International Passenger Survey. Quoted in *Social Trends*.
- 10 Home Office figures, quoted in *Social Trends*.
- 11 'Race' in *Britain Today*.
- 12 British Crime Survey.



Picket for the Cardiff Three - falsely imprisoned for murder

Russia: ruling class factions battle for spoils

The positions dividing the main trends was put by Sergei Polozhkov, leader of the oppositionist Civic Union:

'There are two possible roads of development for Russia - either a Latinamericanisation with a loss of political and economic sovereignty and the omnipotence of corrupted bureaucrats or the preservation of the industrial potential, a reasonable policy of structural investments and state control over the transition to market relations in order to bring an end to the crisis.'

The interests of the working class and the peasantry feature little in this struggle. The forces defending them in the Peoples' Congress are a tiny minority. Outside, they remain largely passive. This suits the foreign multinationals and Russia's new rulers. With political struggle taken off the streets and out of the factories, farms and communities, the nouveau riche can, without fear, fight among themselves for the choice portions of public wealth and property.

Two roads of capitalist development

Boris Yeltsin and his supporters, organised in the Democratic Choice bloc, are the chosen agents of imperialist capital. They hope to secure wealth and power by acting as conduits for foreign multinationals, by

The clash between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and the opposition in the Russian Peoples' Congress is primarily a contest between different factions of an emerging capitalist ruling class. Amidst social instability, political disintegration and economic collapse, this clash is a parliamentary reflection of acute struggles taking place in every sphere of Russian society. Behind the invective, the votes of confidence, the endless compromises and hysterical threats, behind all the parliamentary cretinism, a battle is raging to determine the future direction of Russia's capitalist development. EDDIE ABRAHAMS argues that the outcome of the 25 April referendum, whilst bolstering Yeltsin's position, was not decisive and will not terminate this battle.

The *Financial Times* wrote that a \$4bn US multilateral aid programme 'is aimed at easing the privatisation of large enterprises' such as the 'huge oil, gas and other leading industries'. Privatisation, speedy and total, is the watchword of the multinationals. Through privatisation they can lay their hands on Russia's wealth, primarily its natural resources. Thus they hope to dominate Russia and transform it into a source of cheap labour and raw materials. To this end a report from the EBRD, for example, recommends that Russia prioritise privatisation over attempts to restructure state industries.

The major opposition trend to Yeltsin in the Russian parliament represents a nationalist wing of the old ruling bureaucracy and the managers of Russia's massive state industries. They aspire for an independent capitalist development after the Chinese or South Korean model. Rejecting Yeltsin's neo-liberal free market they

will destroy the likes of Churilov and Vyakhirev and their political representatives. After all, oil and gas, rather than new manufacturing developments are, according to the *Financial Times* 'the key area as far as foreign investors are concerned.'

The political battle between the two main trends, both proponents of a strongly centralised Russia, is enormously complicated by a myriad of factions thrown up by Russia's political and economic disintegration. Prime among them are political forces in those regions and autonomous republics rich in natural resources. Here the new elite wants to control all wealth within its boundaries. It therefore opposed Yeltsin's attempt to centralise state power. In alliance with local factory and state-farm managers it also opposes privatisation from Moscow which threatens its control over the distribution of the local wealth spoils. At imperialism's behest, Yeltsin must tame these powerful and dangerous centrifugal forces whose ascendance could plunge Russia into total disintegration.

Russia's economic disintegration

However, Yeltsin's political ambitions, and those of his imperialist backers, are being persistently jeopardised by the ominous collapse of the Russian economy. Yeltsin has no breathing space to subdue and control the constantly mushrooming oppositional trends being fed by the growing economic crisis. In the two years since Yeltsin's August 1991 counter-revolution the Russian economy continues to undergo a dramatic disintegration. *Business World* has forecast that in 1993 overall capital investment will drop a further 10% plunging it to a mere 45% of the 1991 figure. Gross National Product this year is predicted to fall 28% from its 1992 figure, which itself was down 20% from the 1991 level. In 1992 Russian Net Material Product fell by 19%.



For the majority of the Russian working class and peasantry these statistics spell poverty and growing impoverishment. Prices for staple foods are increasing by between 50-60% a month compared to the 20-25% monthly general inflation rate. Living standards have dropped, for the majority, by 40-50%. According to the UN Economic Survey of Europe 1992-1993, the proportion of Rus-

sians officially classified as living below minimum subsistence levels doubled to 29% in 1992. Women have borne the brunt of this attack. They comprise the majority of the unemployed and are being forced back into the home by staggering cuts in childcare facilities and other social services.

With a passive and disorganised working class, Russia's massive wealth and resources have become prey to a new class of parasites. The International Institute of Finance estimates capital flight at \$1bn per month. Since the counter-revolution over \$25bn has been stashed away in foreign banks. This is equivalent to one third of Russia's foreign debt. These parasites, conniving with sectors of international capital, are literally robbing the country. The Russian Security Ministry calculates that one in three barrels of oil and one in two tonnes of Russian nickel exported to the West is stolen property. Entire factories have been dismantled and sold for scrap metal in return for hard currency. For easy profits, aluminium needed for the food canning industry in Russia is instead exported to Europe.

What the capitalist road has done for Russia is shown by the fact that it has now dropped out of the top 25 trading nations. It imports less than Portugal and exports less than Norway. Meanwhile, the much promised flood of foreign capital has failed to arrive. Without political stability, clear and firm laws and commercial regulations, security of supplies and property, imperialist capital has remained aloof. The net flow of foreign direct investment into the ex-USSR and socialist bloc rose from \$600m in 1990 to a mere \$3bn in 1992, 90% of which went to Hungary and the Czech republic. Summarising some of the economic trends in Russia and eastern Europe, the UN Report on Europe states:

'When debt servicing and other income payments are set in the balance against capital inflows, there was a net outflow of resources from most of the east European countries in 1992.'

Truly the process of Latinamericanisation is well under way.

The position of the socialist movement

Despite this and despite the widespread impoverishment and impending mass unemployment which will follow the mass privatisation and the ending of state credits to industry, there has been no sustained popular opposition. The oft predicted social explosion has yet to occur. To find the reasons we can do no better than listen to Russian socialists.

Alexander Buzgalin is a one-time member of the old CPSU Central Committee and founder of the Marxist Platform within it. He argues that 'the people are silent' because they 'are not concerned with politics but

with survival at a time of a worsening crisis'. And further, 'despite the fall in living standards, the majority of workers, peasants and intellectuals are not facing immediate hunger and poverty.' The economic crisis is also tending to fragment and divide the working class. Buzgalin explains:

'The crisis is furthermore extremely uneven; a worker or engineer with one and the same qualifications can have a widely varying level of consumption depending on where they live and the nature of their enterprise. If we add to this the continual but unpredictable and rather arbitrary government handouts, the wide possibilities for speculation and the general disorganisation, we see how the crisis itself tends to increase division among the workers and their mutual alienation.'

Furthermore the working class is suffering the consequences of decades of alienation from political activity, an alienation and demoralisation which has been intensified since the August 1991 counter-revolution. Socialist, communist and trade union organisations have not been able to overcome these problems. The so-called Independent Unions are thoroughly reactionary and back Yeltsin. The previously state-controlled Unions remain ineffectual. At the political level, efforts to reorganise the socialist and communist movement continue, but in Buzgalin's words they have 'failed to break out from being small groups of activists.'

There are now a host of communist and socialist parties: the Party of Labour, the Socialist Workers Party, the Russian Party of Communists, the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists and the Russian Communist Workers Party. At the end of 1992, the old CPSU was refounded as the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and could emerge as the largest of the newly founded political organisations claiming to be communist.

These trends, contradictory and heterogeneous, have failed to unite into a coherent political opposition to Yeltsin and to the new ruling class. The result has been that the initiative in organising popular opposition is passing to the reactionary 'red-white' movement which unites factions born of the old CPSU with 'patriotic', even Monarchist, anti-semitic Great Russian chauvinists in the National Salvation Front. On a programme of restoring Russia's great power status they demagogically promise to extricate the masses from the current crisis. The Front's influence was evident in the massive and angry May Day march it was instrumental in organising and which ended in fierce clashes with government police.

While the working class remains largely passive at the national political level, popular resistance and anger against the new ruling class of 'businessmen' is growing. Across the country, strikes, protests, conferences and meetings are daily events. The best of socialists and communists in Russia, despite the difficulties that beset them, are continuing work to build a united movement capable of giving political expression to these forces. ■

This article will be discussed by North London FRFI Readers Group on Tuesday 22 June at the Camden Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Road, London NW1 (nearest tube Camden). Meeting starts 7.30pm. All welcome.



facilitating its entry and conquest of Russia. Yeltsin's bloc represents an emerging Russian comprador bourgeoisie whose future is tied to imperialism.

Foreign capital has set its Russian agents a number of tasks: the formation of a centralised political power; a speedy elimination of state control over national wealth through rapid privatisation of the country's major industries and natural resources, including land; ending state credits to industry; and the enactment of laws guaranteeing private property and foreign investments. Yeltsin is their willing servant.

For over 70 years, imperialism ceaselessly attacked Soviet 'dictatorship'. But in March, without hesitation, they applauded Yeltsin's coup d'état designed arbitrarily to suppress his parliamentary opposition. And just ahead of the referendum Yeltsin was offered a \$43bn bribe in the form of an aid package. The *Financial Times* noted that it 'is explicitly tied to continued economic and political reform in Russia [and] is also tacitly linked to continual Russian cooperation on foreign policy issues.'

insist on a central role for state industries in the transition to capitalism and want to minimise and strictly control the role of foreign capital.

Typical representatives of this current are found in the oil and gas industries. In February, Yeltsin's Prime Minister sacked Lev Churilov, head of Rosneftgaz, the state-owned Russian oil company. He advocated 'state development of the oil sector with as little as possible reliance on foreign investment.' (*Financial Times*). Rem Vyakhirev, head of the state-owned Gasprom is also engaged in resisting foreign involvement in gas production and transportation: 'we want to be as self-sufficient as possible; we are not planning any large scale investment of foreign companies.'

Vyakhirev is particularly critical of Rosneftgaz, arguing that its alliance with foreign capital reveals a lack of strategic thinking. It has left the Russian oil industry dependent on multinationals and without the wherewithal to solve its own problems. Vyakhirev further predicts that in two to three years' time Russia will be forced to import oil.

Foreign capital hopes that Yeltsin

ISRAEL—agent of colonialism

In January this year Israeli soldiers shot three-year-old Palestinian Nuriman Iliyaan *nine* times at close range with plastic-coated metal bullets. In another incident, forty year old Aiysha Suleiman, a bystander in a minor clash, was shot *twelve* times. On 11 February Israeli soldiers using anti-tank missiles destroyed 19 homes suspected of harbouring 'wanted men'. In March Walid Honsheia was told that the home he is building on family land is to be destroyed because it falls outside Israeli-imposed planning boundaries. EDDIE ABRAHAMS reports the intensified slaughter of Palestinian people against a background of phoney 'peace talks'.

In the context of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, it appears grotesque to condemn Israel for genocide and ethnic cleansing. But anything less damning distorts the truth. In August 1992, Yitzhak Rabin's Labour Party victory was universally welcomed as a harbinger of compromise and peace. But Rabin's government is proving even more brutal than the Likud Administration. It is slaughtering Palestinian civilians, targeting children in particular, in a vicious offensive to suppress an increasingly armed intifada.

Between August 1992 and January 1993, 76 people were shot dead by Israeli troops compared to 63 in the previous six months. During the same period, the number of children killed rose from six to 17. Of the 23 Palestinians murdered in January, 13 were under 16. Of the 496 treated for live ammunition wounds, 150 were under 15. Between January and March this year 58 Palestinians were murdered, 20 of them children. In the same six months, 100 homes were destroyed by anti-tank missiles, grenades and rockets leaving hundreds homeless. The slaughter continues relentlessly. In the first two weeks of May, over 13 people were shot dead.

These crimes are committed with the active collusion of the US and EC governments and concealed by the silence of the imperialist media. There have been no angry editorials, no calls for sanctions, no demands for action to force Israel to abide by UN resolutions. Quite the contrary. Following the illegal deportation of 415 Palestinians in December 1992 the PLO withdrew from the Madrid 'peace-process'. In the name of safeguarding peace it was subjected to enormous pressure until it rejoined in April. Meanwhile US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, ensured that the UN did not take any action against Israel's continued failure to comply with Resolution 799 demanding the repatriation of all deportees. He further guaranteed the \$3bn annual grant necessary for Israel's survival.

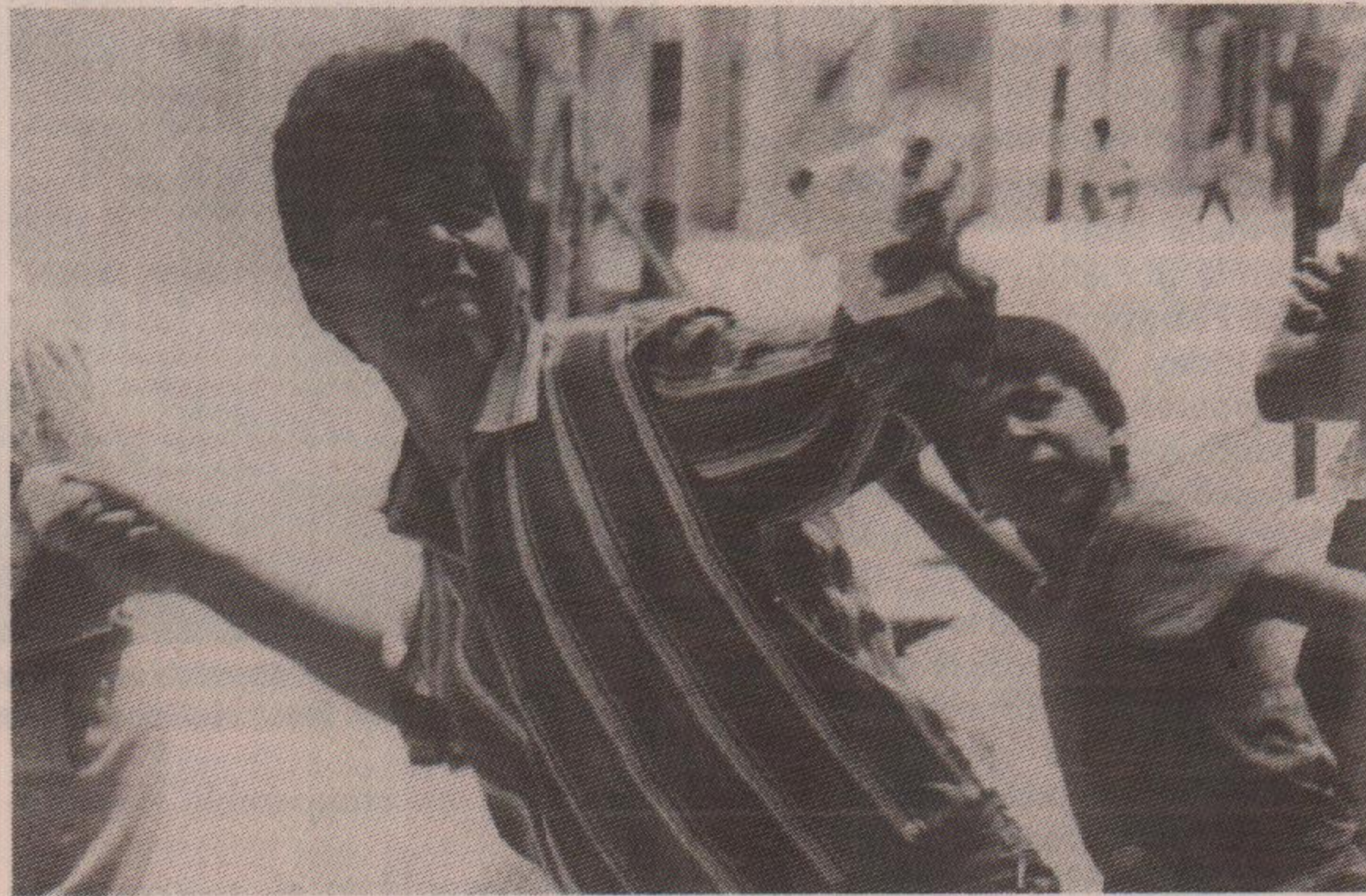
Israel and the new colonialism

Imperialist support for Israel's barbarism has clear foundations. Since the end of the Cold War the USA is reorganising its strategic relationship with Israel. A leaked Pentagon document argues that the US now intends:

'to retain the pre-eminent responsibility for addressing selectively those wrongs which threaten not only our interests but those of our allies and friends, or which could seriously unsettle international relations.'

To this end the US is expected to 'maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from ever aspiring to a larger regional or global role'.

This mechanism in the Middle East is Israel. It will help the US retain control of the region's oil resources in the latter's fight to fend off EC and Japanese competitors. Israel will become a strategic US base in the Eastern Mediterranean to fight fundamentalism and regional 'terrorism'. An Israeli official predicts that Israel



could become the US's 'biggest carrier in the Mediterranean.'

Israel's Haifa port is already accommodating larger US naval vessels. The US has allocated funds for its expansion. US weaponry to equip a mechanised battalion is being sited in Israel. All US F-15 fighter planes are now serviced by Israeli Aircraft Industries and US ships are serviced in Haifa by Israel Shipyards. This is additional to existing shared intelligence and military research.

According to the *Washington Post*, Israeli strategists 'will present Israel to Washington as a figurative home port in a sea of regional crisis'. But to play this role, Israel has first to eliminate the 'Palestinian problem.' It remains a source of severe instability and upsets US relations with Arab states. Israel is therefore setting about a planned, methodical colonialist destruction of the Palestinian nation itself.

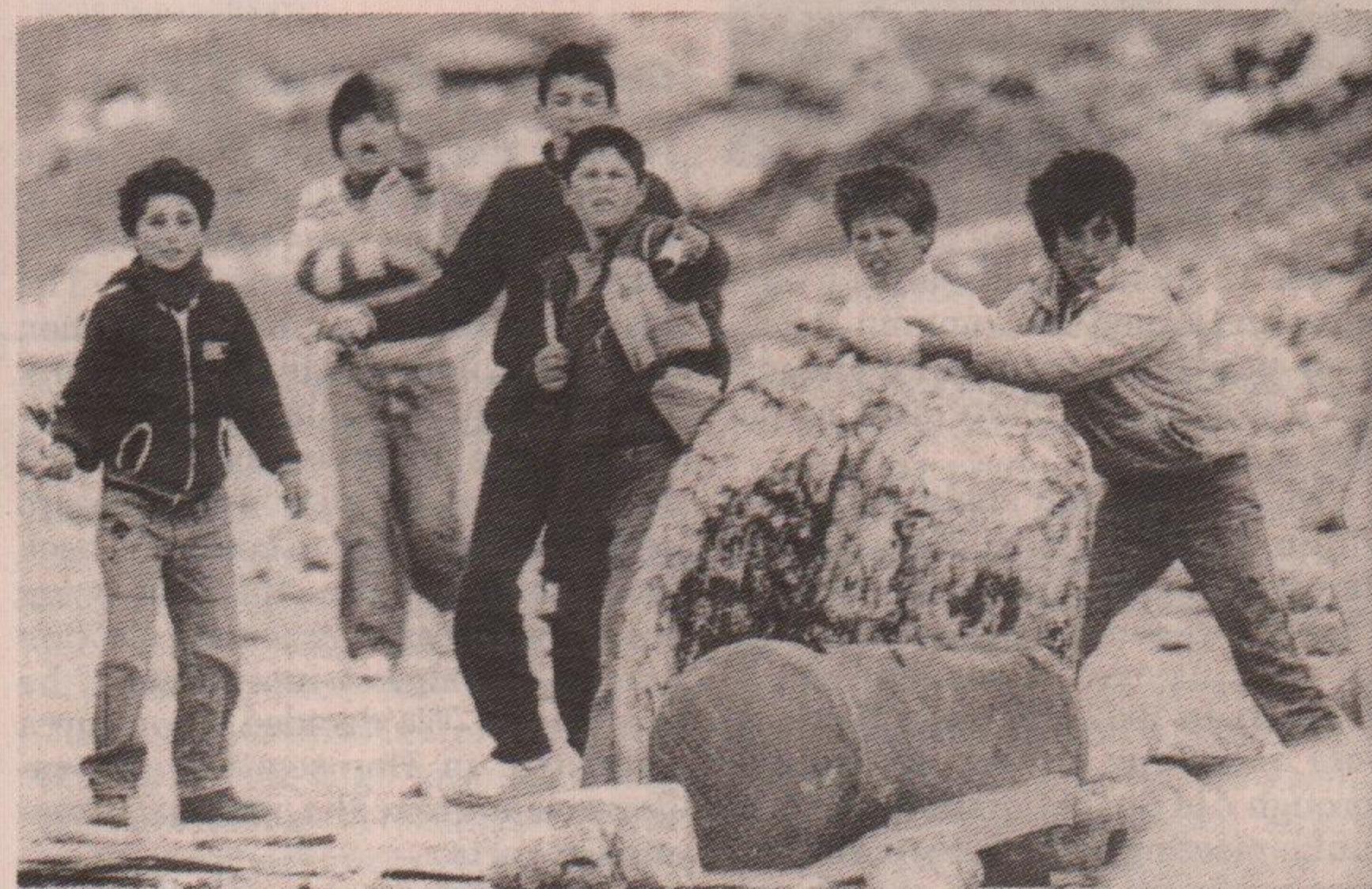
The 'peace-process'

This is clear from Israel's apartheid-style 'peace talk' proposals on Palestinian self-government. All land occupied by Zionist settlers, all roads, military zones and public land, including the Jordan Valley and the West Bank Highlands will come under complete Israeli jurisdiction. This amounts to over 70% of the Occupied Territories!

Palestinian autonomy over the remaining portions of land will be the autonomy of a bantustan. Israel will retain control of internal security and foreign relations. It will in addition control the infrastructure and water supplies, all land which is not privately owned and will have power to determine who shall or shall not reside in the Occupied Territories. These proposals merely transfer to Palestinians an existing colonial administration over which Israel will retain ultimate power through parallel structures of 'residual authority'.

The 'peace-process' remains a critical component of Zionism's strategy. By incorporating the Arab states into a settlement with Zionism, it isolates the Palestinian national liberation struggle. By seeking to incorporate the Palestinian bourgeoisie into an effectively colonial settlement, the Israeli state is then left free to turn against the Palestinian masses—the working class, the peasantry, the poor—who have nothing to gain from the process, not even an independent Palestine.

The effect of this strategy on sections of the Palestinian bourgeoisie is already clear. Despite fierce mass opposition, Faisal Hussein, a prominent East Jerusalem Palestinian, explained according to *Middle East International*, that Palestinians had to rejoin the peace process because 'it was impossible for (them) to go against everyone—the Arabs, Europeans and Americans.' Sari Nusseibeh, another prominent right winger, argued that the talks were more important than the issue of the deportees.



The colonisation of Palestine

For the sake of the 'peace-process' Rabin promised to stop new settlement building. But he did authorise completion of 11,000 housing units constituting the largest ever building programme in the Occupied Territories! Filling them will add 60,000 settlers to the 110,000 already there. A commentator noted:

'With 144 Settlements, many tiny, and scattered all over the West Bank, there is no need to build new ones.'

In contrast to Likud's uncontrolled and unnecessarily provocative settlement building campaign, Rabin plans to rationalise their expansion and development. Their strategic distribution and the network of roads and military zones linking them secures Zionist control of the largest part of the Territories and restricts Palestinians to four enclaves in the West Bank, and two in the Gaza, all isolated from each other and totally dependent on Israel.

Israel has also imposed new planning boundaries in nearly 300 Palestinian villages. No Palestinian building, even on their own land, is to be permitted outside these boundaries. These limits are in marked contrast to the large boundaries looped around Zionist Settlements. Sarah Helm in *The Independent* notes that:

'With the pool of land available for confiscation drying up, Israel is now focussing on curbing the growth of the Palestinian population on land that remains theirs.'

The colonisation of Palestinian land extends into Israel proper. Under the Seven Stars plan the Palestinian populated northern Triangle will be overwhelmed by Israeli population centres, industrial parks and infrastructure. Today the area has 130,000 Palestinians and 40,000 Israelis. By 2005 it is intended that there be 393,000 Israelis and only 142,000 Palestinians.

By such means Zionism plans to utterly fragment Palestinian demographic continuity and thus forever destroy the foundation for any Palestinian state—either a democratic secular state across the whole of Palestine or even the two state solution advocated by the PLO's bourgeois trends.

Occupied Territories sealed off

Every step of Israeli policy is infused with this colonial calculation. On March 30 1993, the Rabin government sealed off the Occupied Territories and stopped all Palestinian workers entering Israel. This measure aimed to stem the rising number of Palestinian armed attacks inside Israel. At a stroke 120,000 workers and their 700,000 dependents were

deprived of their livelihoods. With the closure now in its second month, starvation is a real possibility as one third of all income in the Occupied Territories is earned by working in Israel. East Jerusalem, officially annexed to Israel but critical to Palestinian economic and social life, has also been sealed off causing incredible hardship.

Despite idiotic press speculation, the closure is not intended to terminate Palestinian migrant labour in Israel. Neither does it mark Israel's attempt to separate off the Occupied Territories from Israel. On the contrary, it will tighten and better control the movement of Palestinian labour and trade. It will therefore merely reaffirm the colonial status of the West Bank and Gaza.

Israeli employers will not do without cheap Palestinian labour paid 20-50% of an Israeli wage. Already the government has been forced to issue 23,000 permits for agriculture and other workers. When the closure ends, economists believe that a further 70,000 permits will have to be issued.



The Occupied Territories are too profitable to be separated from Israel. For example, the Qatif Block of settlements in the Gaza strip produces 40% of Israeli tomatoes destined for export and a substantial portion of cut flowers. Israeli textile and footwear factories use thousands of small workshops in the Gaza, producing to precise Israeli instructions and using Israeli raw materials or unfinished products. Zionist employers contract out work to home workers working 12 hours per day for \$3.50.

Revolutionary resistance

Zionism has no intention of relinquishing Palestine and is assured of imperialist support in furthering its expansionist ambitions. But the majority of Palestinian people are not willing to bow their neck to their executioner. Despite the 'peace-process', the intifada continues, and is indeed entering a new stage. The formation of Freedom, Independence and Return Committees, initiated by the left wing of the PLO, has galvanised popular opposition to the 'peace-process'. The revival of mass action is also combined with growing armed guerrilla operations.

In 1990 there were 168 Palestinian shootings, by 1992 the figure was 508. In the first three months of 1993 the rate of shootings had doubled. In 1991 22 Israeli civilians and soldiers had been killed. In 1992 the figure was 39. Expressing Zionist concern an Israeli Environment Minister, justifying the shooting of children, said: '... the character of the struggle in the territories had changed, such that in several places there is outright war.'

While many attacks are carried out by unaffiliated individuals, the Israeli government is seriously concerned by the development of guerrilla war organised by both the PLO and the Muslim fundamentalists. Israeli military correspondent Ze'ev Schiff writes that: 'For the first time guerrilla warfare—even if only in its beginning stages—is being conducted in the (occupied) territories. Schiff notes that guerrilla units have good intelligence, counterfeit documents, disguises and mobility, though they do not come under one operational command.'

The number of guerrillas—identified by Zionists as 'wanted men'—grew from 60 at the beginning of 1992 to 104 at the end even though 180 had been arrested, killed or had fled to Egypt. Commenting on the close connection between the mass movement and this emerging guerrilla war, Israeli journalist Dani Rubinstein notes that unlike in the past:

'today the implementation of collective punishment is no longer sufficient to pressure the residents of the Territories into distancing themselves from the wanted men (ie guerrillas) from their midst or turning them in.'

The destiny of Palestine has yet to be decided. Whatever the corrupt and reactionary nature of the 'peace-process', those in Palestine who will gain nothing from a compromise with Zionism and imperialism are fighting on. It rests on democratic and socialist forces in Britain, the EC and the US to halt all external support for Israel, external support without which it would be unable to continue its war of genocide against the Palestinian people. ■

Memories of a still-fighting communist

Rene Waller, a lifelong communist, celebrated her 80th birthday on 3 April at a party organised by the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. Rene delivered an inspiring speech which we print in full.

I want first to thank City Group very much for giving me this party. I wanted to celebrate, but I could not have organised anything like this. I would like to thank City Group and the RCG for these lovely presents. But even more for the comradeship they have given me over the years. Yet despite having been given so much I would ask for something more costly, for I want most of all to feel that you will all carry on when I finally can't get to pickets or meetings. This is not the occasion for the usual kind of speech, but rather one for me to look back, review what I have tried to do and see what lessons can be learnt.

I join the Labour Party

I joined the Labour Party in 1931 when I was 18. A General Election had just been called and I was angry to find that it was proposed to solve the financial crisis by cutting unemployment benefit and the wages of all state employees, including teachers, by 10%. I worked and campaigned for the Labour candidate in Hornsey. But Labour lost the election. I was even more upset though, to find that the local party I had just joined planned to virtually shut up shop after polling day on the grounds that nothing more could be done.

I felt stranded, but soon found other young people in the same boat. We joined the Labour League of Youth (Youth Section of the Labour Party) and as soon as a local branch was formed, I became its secretary. We were a small but lively crowd campaigning first on unemployment and then for Republican Spain. Later we responded eagerly to the call for unity against fascism. But we also had lots of fun with Saturday night hops to raise funds, country rambles and countless marches and demonstrations which we enjoyed almost equally.

We often assembled around 10am at Manor House tube station for a long trek to Marble Arch or Trafalgar Square, with our banner and rucksacks to carry sandwiches and vacuum flasks as well as piles of leaflets. We often made a stop at Camden Town sitting on the curb to have lunch. Country rambles may sound non-political, but from the word go we had to fight Labour Party attempts to control our activities and stop us marching and working with proscribed organisations, which of course included the Communist Party. So on rambles we frequently planned activities such as attempts to stop Mosley fascist marches. The Labour Party said: stay at home, ignore the Blackshirts and they will disappear. We disagreed.

My road to the Communist Party

It was on rambles too that I got my first Marxist education. It was all very informal, no one of us had to join in. But some of us discussed dialectical materialism, imperialism, Engels' 'The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State' at great length, if rather disjointedly. Such talks might start on the train journey out and continue all day at intervals to end in some country pub and a rush to catch the last train home.

We were often in trouble with the Labour Party, but survived all attempts to ban us, until at the outbreak



On the Non-Stop Picket, South Africa House

of war in 1939 we disbanded ourselves and joined the Communist Party en masse. But by then I'd already had a Communist Party card as far back as 1937.

I want to tell you about a dispute within my Communist Party branch almost as soon as I joined, for I believe it has some lessons for us even though not all of us may be communists. It was early in 1937 and we in Hornsey were preparing to set up an all-borough Aid Spain Committee. A big public meeting was planned and we were confident we could get official support from the local Labour Party and trade union movement.

We communists met to discuss tactics and all went well until our secretary, named George Jones, but nicknamed Jonah, proposed and indeed insisted that we as communists should put forward and work for the



'Jonah' won over 10,000 votes

inclusion of a Communist among the speakers at the proposed rally. Immediately, two or three members from Highgate, the least working class part of the borough raised objections. They said we should be concerned to get the maximum support for Spain and not raise a matter that might cause dissension.

Sounds plausible enough doesn't it. But I supported Jonah then and would today. You see there were two quite separate ideas about the sort of campaign needed. The Labour Party envisaged some Labour MP putting forward a resolution which would be sent to the Labour Party EC. Full stop. We on the other hand wanted a campaign in the local press and on the streets gathering support from youth groups, women's groups, church groups, liberals, just about everyone we could rope in, as well as all organisations affiliated to the Labour Party, co-operative and trade union movement. Well I'm glad to say that is the sort of campaign we got. Because of course these were the proposals put forward at the rally by our speaker. But we'd never have got any real action had we not insisted on having a voice.

It is history now. But a remarkably similar tale could be told when relating the history of City Group. The labels may change, but I think in any such situation, we must look hard at what we are being asked to surrender and ensure that it is not the right to take effective action.

Communist political work

I cannot give the whole history of the war years. But we communists soon found ourselves the only political force still actively campaigning. The men were called up, but the women took their place and the level of work was actually raised. Literature sales, for instance, increased enormously. I should know, for a borough literature secretary I soon had to take a taxi back from Central Books, the load being too heavy to carry. A general election was called almost immediately the war ended. We decided to put up a candidate in Hornsey and got endorsement from the national Communist Party.

I wish I could describe the campaign fully, for it was a unique experience for all who took part. Truly it was election work of a new type in which the people of the working class areas joined. I canvassed non-stop and only heard rumours that our election meetings were packed. I have many vivid memories, but especially of canvassing with another comrade, in one very working class street in the Campsbourne area off Hornsey High Street. We knocked on adjoining doors and two women answered and really took over. They knocked up their co-tenants and neighbours including those across the street. And soon doors and windows were opening right and left. We found ourselves conducting a public meeting cum question-and-answer session. There were steps up to the doors and we sat at the top. And when we finished, the women told us which households were for Jones, our candidate.

Well we didn't win the seat, but we did get over 10,000 votes. I think we blazed a trail which should have been examined and properly assessed. For we had not only got votes but built the party whilst in the surrounding areas



ABOVE: Demonstration for Abyssinia and against the Japanese invasion of Manchuria (hence the Chinese hats). BELOW: Demonstration for Spain, 1936-1939.

there was no comparable development.

Why? I would not claim to have the full answer. But I do know that in many places the open, public party work had been neglected in favour of work in the labour movement. Above all it was never appreciated that the Labour Party is deliberately organised to prevent any chance of a truly socialist policy being adopted. So an independent working class party was sorely needed.

I don't want to depress anybody so I will skip the manoeuvrings of the post-war years that in the end replaced the leadership of our borough party with revisionists and neo-Euro-communists. I myself never thought there was anything communist about them. But the worst thing, I felt, was the refusal to debate things in a principled communist way. This caused many comrades to become cynical and might even have led me to cut all ties if it hadn't been for the principled stand taken by David Kitson - once a Hornsey communist, at the time on trial for his life in South Africa. I knew I couldn't turn my back on him. But I did for a time take refuge in anti-apartheid work and the campaign to defend adult education from cuts.

The legacy of the Russian Revolution

There is though one other question I feel so strongly about I must comment. A couple of years back all the papers had banner headlines rejoicing in the collapse of the Soviet Union and, so they said, all communist hopes too. I never believed that this collapse was other than a tragedy for the working class and all liberation movements everywhere. But I never believed either that the struggle for a just society, where production was for use not for profit, would stop.

I visited the Soviet Union but once, in 1973 with an Intourist party. After our Leningrad guide had spoken of her city's history, I did take her aside and asked her if she had lost anyone in the Second World War siege of the city. She told me very quietly and unemotionally that all her family except she and her mother had been wiped out either in the famine or at the front. Six brothers and sisters, father, aunt, uncles and all their families. She and her mother had survived only because she at the time was a breast-fed baby, and, she said, our city gave nursing mothers extra rations for as long as they could.

Well comrades, I felt humbled and abashed and still do. For I don't think

I would be here talking to you on my 80th birthday if the Soviet people had not made such sacrifices. No wonder they'd made the energy left to guard socialism and democracy from the enemies within during the post-war years.

I most certainly believe we should study and try to discover what happened and how socialism was undermined. But I think we should first look here in Britain and see what we did to help or hinder.

Well our newly elected post-war Labour Government eagerly joined the Cold War, thus making reconstruction in the Soviet Union much more difficult.

Then what sort of an example did we set? Did we see that all those boards set up in the nationalised industries were democratically elected and represented all our people? Worst of all we allowed Bevin to send in troops to kill our fellow-communists and war-time allies in Malaya. Perhaps had we fought harder for democracy here and a socialist foreign policy, the Soviet people might have taken note and seen how to put things straight there without surrendering the gains they had made in 1917.

The struggle today

I want though to end on a more cheerful note, for I do believe our movement will be re-built despite everything. I think groups like City AA and the RCG with its newspaper show the way. But we need more friends though we can only find them among those who want socialism not careers. They are there though - lots of them - still without leadership and fragmented. But when did Lenin ever say the people would know what to do without organisation and leaders? I believe though I have found one such group strong and organised already in its own field. And you can see them for yourselves campaigning for their fellows in Lewisham market every Friday morning - Lewisham Pensioners Action Group. They are all over sixty and some much older than I. But they have not abandoned the struggle and are still fighting back. I am one hundred per cent with them. For I believe the most satisfying way to live at any age is to be involved with others in our common fight to build a world fit to live in.

So it is not inappropriate if I finish by quoting the Lewisham Pensioners Action Group's New Year message printed in our pensioners magazine: 'Solidarity with all those struggling to advance humanity.' ■

Free the framed prisoners: families and supporters unite!

The appeal of the 'M25 Three' against convictions for murder and robbery will finally be heard on 21 June. NICKI JAMESON examines the progress of their case in the context of the campaign to free all framed prisoners.

The appeal was due to be heard last October but postponed because, in the words of defendant Raphael Rowe, 'the prosecution (had) some "sensitive material" they were not sure if they could or should disclose to our defence. At this point the three High Court judges retired for half an hour to consider the issue. They announced in open court that they considered the material "highly sensitive" and cleared the court, save for defence and prosecution counsel. However, our defence walked out because the judges offered the contents of the material for them to read on the condition they did not inform the solicitors or clients.'



Raphael Rowe

The case was adjourned until January 1993, then adjourned again. Now a hearing has been set for June and we encourage everybody who can to get to the High Court and show your support because while 'public interest' and 'sensitivity' have been used to stall the proceedings, Raphael Rowe, Michael Davis and Randolph Johnson are in their fifth year in gaol for crimes they did not commit.

On 5 May Raphael's sister Joanne led a militant picket of the Home Office in support of the M25 Three and all framed prisoners. In the fight against frame-ups over the years there have been good events and bad. This was a good one. Well attended - about 200, including campaigners for: Winston Silcott, M25 Three, Bridgewater 4, George Long, Frank Johnson, Trevor Henry, Satpal Ram, Warren Slaney, Michael Callender, Maynard, Dudley and Clarke, Kevin O'Neill and others; left groups: SWP, Militant, RCG, ABC, CARF; framed prisoners now released: Billy Power,

John McGranaghan, Judith Ward, Yusuf Abdullahi. A contingent came down from Birmingham made up of Asian relatives of prisoners and anarchist activists. Non-sectarian - all the groups and organisations had their own banners and placards and distributed their literature freely. Democratic - all the campaigns got to speak, followed by other organisations. We hope it is the start of much more united campaigning and that a strong militant movement can be built to oppose frame-ups, not dependent on 'respectable' support - although it is always welcome too - but based on activism and determination to do whatever is necessary to free the prisoners. At the end of the event George Silcott and Yusuf Abdullahi showed their contempt for British 'justice' by ripping up the Union Jack.

It is worth remembering what it means to be framed. It means long, harsh years in gaol for crimes you did not commit. If those crimes are particularly abhorrent to the public, like rape or child murder, it means beat-

ing after beating from prison officers and prisoners alike. It means little chance of parole, as refusal to accept guilt is interpreted as refusal to come to terms with the crime.

John McGranaghan was released in 1991 after 11 years in gaol for rapes he did not commit. Internal psychiatric reports written just a year before his release reveal the system's attitude and opinion:

"Violent anti-authority Scot with no respect for anything or anybody. Very paranoid about his crimes which he denies and he will react violently to anyone who he thinks is picking on him," also "paranoid about being labelled a nonce." [The psychiatrist, who compiled this report without ever actually meeting John, is quoting another internal report. Casual use of the term 'nonce' by 'professionals' shows how embroiled they are in the culture of attacking sex offenders.]

'... severe disorder of personality of paranoid type, probably bordering on mental illness. I do not see how he can be regarded as remaining other than extremely dangerous, in or out of prison. The possibility of any significant change... must be remote.'

A Wing Management Report on another framed prisoner, Kevin O'Neill, who is still inside, follows a similar pattern:

'O'Neill is a complex individual. He refuses to accept that the Prison Service and indeed the Criminal Justice system in general has any bona fide right to exercise control over him. This is connected in

some way with his refusal to accept his guilt and the result is that he acts in a subversive way through others encouraging them towards acts of indiscipline.'

Framed prisoners need your support: **Attend the Appeal Court, Strand, London WC2 on Monday 21 June at 9am.** Send letters of support to the M25 prisoners via their campaign at 42B Coppleston Road, London SE15 4AD. Write to **Kevin O'Neill** at HMP Whitemoor, March, Cambs, PE15 0SR.

And write to other framed prisoners:

Charlie McGhee - framed for murder - HMP Parkhurst, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX;

Robert Taylor - framed for murder and robbery - HMP Frankland, Brasside, Durham, DH1 5YD;

Michael Callender - framed for murder - write via defence campaign, PO Box 2973, London, N10 3UQ;

Ugar Salih - framed for murder - HMP Brixton, Jebb Avenue, London, SW2 5XF;

Sezai Mustafa - framed for importation of heroin, serving 18 years - HMP Maidstone, County Road, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1UZ;

Trevor Henry - framed for conspiracy to commit GBH, serving 10 years - HMP Maidstone or write to his campaign, 192 Evelyn Street, London, SE8 5DB.

Jim Robinson of the Bridgewater 4 is now in HMP Birmingham, Winson Green Road, Birmingham, B18 4AS. On 15 May he was forced down from the roof of Gartree prison after an 82-day roof-top protest (see *FRFI* 113). **Michael Hickey** is in Ashworth Special Hospital and **Vincent Hickey** in Parkhurst. ■

On the run from privatisation

The recent spate of escapes that characterised the introduction of private company involvement in prisoner escorts has intensified the whole debate surrounding prison privatisation and raised questions concerning escapes. JOHN BOWDEN writes:

Feeling obviously vindicated in their opinion that the state should retain its monopoly on prisons and all their repressive functions, organisations as apparently diverse as the Prison Officers Association (POA), Prison Reform Trust (PRT) and the Labour Party have seized on the recent escapes from Group 4 escorts as justification for their criticisms that a privatised prison system would neither effectively control nor contain prisoners.

Interestingly, prior to the escapes, organisations such as the PRT and the Labour Party tended to couch criticisms of prison privatisation in the language of humanitarianism, condemning what they regarded as the morally reprehensible practice of making financial profit from the containment and punishment of prisoners. Even the POA borrowed the language of morality when condemning the concept of a privatised prison system that would reduce staffing levels to an absolute minimum and by

extension, neglect the rights and needs of prisoners. Never before had the crudely right-wing POA exhibited such a commendable interest and concern in the rights and well-being of prisoners.

After the escapes, the tone changed sharply. Now the issue was not one of morality or protecting prisoners' rights, but rather one of protecting society from dangerous convicts apparently allowed to escape from incompetent, unprofessional private security guards. Security, as opposed to morality, now became the central argument of liberal and screw alike when condemning prison privatisation.

In its eagerness to exploit the apparent failure of private security companies to emulate the 'professionalism' of its own members in keeping prisoners securely under lock and key, the POA began beating its more traditional drum and demanded that all escorts not strictly for the purpose

of transferring prisoners to and from courts or between prisons (eg escorts for more humanitarian reasons like taking a prisoner to see a sick relative) be stopped. For good measure it also demanded home leaves should virtually cease. The new-found zest of the Labour Party for outdoing the Tories in all things law and order and occupying the high ground of reaction, has enabled it to make an almost seamless transition from 'socialist' to 'New Realist' in its attitude towards prisons and prisoners. Prisoners are now enemies of the working class and the public has a right to be protected from marauding convicts.

Liberal prison reformers like the PRT have always responded to escapes with the rather perverse logic that self-liberated prisoners are bad news for prison reform; as far as they are concerned there is nothing wrong in principle in condemning apparently inadequate security arrangements in the transportation of prisoners to and from court. In fact, Stephen Shaw, director of the PRT, sees absolutely no contradiction of purpose between himself and the Home Office when it comes to insuring that prisons serve their primary function in containing prisoners and denying them the opportunity of escape. Indeed he views escapes as as much a 'challenge' to the liberal prison reformist as they are to the prison system itself, confirming yet again that such groups are little more than the liberal arm of the establishment.

On its own terms the prison privatisation debate is important, and re-

cent revelations about human rights abuses committed against US prisoners by the private security company presently being awarded contracts by the British Prison Department, lends the debate an even more crucial importance. However, the reality of state-owned prisons is an equally horrendous one and essentially no different from the privatised version.

Inevitably, organisations like the POA, PRT and Labour Party will always condemn any attempt by prisoners to challenge and fight the system directly; they share no common interest at all with the most marginalised and oppressed of the working class inside the hate factories of capitalist class society. ■



Police escort duty

INSIDE NEWS

Strangeways update

Following the vindictive sentencing of the second Strangeways trial (see *FRFI* 112) those convicted have been dispersed throughout the prison system. We have heard from Tony Bush in Walton gaol, Barry Morton, in Frankland, and Mark Azzopardi in Wakefield. Alan Lord was moved to Parkhurst from Full Sutton following a protest by Seg Unit prisoners about his treatment. David Bowen, who escaped in November 1992 has, unfortunately, now been recaptured and all those who escaped during the trial face yet another court proceeding on that account... with the same trial judge.

'Strangeways 3' looks set to be rather different to 1 and 2 as defendants have apparently been offered the option of swapping heavier charges for 'violent disorder' (maximum sentence 5 years) in return for guilty pleas.

Robert Mawdsley

Bob Mawdsley has been in solitary confinement longer than any other British prisoner; he is now in Parkhurst where some of the more trivial recent torments include refusal by warders to retrieve a football he used during exercise, (*FRFI* and ex-prisoners who knew Bob sent him a new one and he has created a one-man football team in our honour!) and the attaching of 'official' notes by 'medical' staff to his outgoing correspondence, pointing out to the recipient that he is 'receiving treatment' and the contents may 'reflect his state of mind'. If they are so concerned about his state of mind, why has he been in solitary for 15 years?

Jacko

Since his deselection from the Hull Special Unit on a trumped-up charge (see *FRFI* 110) Andry 'Jacko' Jakubczyk has been moved at least nine times: Hull, Walton, Garth, Full Sutton, Lincoln, Bullingdon, Wood Hill, Wormwood Scrubs, Brixton and now Belmarsh. In every prison a rumour precedes him that he is a 'nonce'. It is not true! The rumours are designed solely to ostracise him from other prisoners. Any prisoner who reads this and who comes across Jacko must help spread the truth; that he is being punished for his activities at Hull, ie the production, with Paul Ross, of the pamphlet *One-off* and of T-shirts, leaflets and posters denouncing frame-ups and prison brutality and supporting prisoners in struggle. On arrival at Wormwood Scrubs in March, Jacko was met by a 'reception committee' who assaulted him badly, resulting in injuries to his hands, legs, ribs and spine. Complain to the Prison Department, Cleland House, Page Street, London, SW1P 4LN.

POWs' birthdays

Patrick Magee B75881
HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS
29 May

Peter Sherry B7880
HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5RS 30 June

Brian Keenan B26380
HMP Full Sutton 17 July

STOP PRESS

As we go to press, we have heard that 11 prisoners from Full Sutton are about to be committed for trial at Hull Crown Court. They are the first people to be charged with the new offence of Prison Mutiny, introduced in the wake of the Strangeways uprising. Their 'mutiny' arises out of a sit-down in an exercise yard.

A tribute to the Mau Mau

■ **Kimaathi: Mau Mau's First Prime Minister of Kenya** by Shiraz Durrani. Vita Books 1986. Available from Larkin Publications, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N price £3.50 (inc p&p)

Kenya and Algeria were, in the 1950s, the two countries at the forefront in the battle for emancipation from colonial rule in Africa, in what were perhaps the bloodiest and most heroic struggles on the continent. The official hero of the Kenyan struggle, Jomo Kenyatta, who became the first prime minister of the country when independence was achieved in 1963, had been imprisoned very early on in the struggle, as one of the leaders of the resistance to British rule.

What in fact had happened was that the fight for the emancipation of Kenya, led by the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA, popularly referred to as 'Mau Mau', the name of the oath members had to swear upon joining) had, independently of Kenyatta, laid the foundation for the victory over colonialism. The struggle of this army had been so fierce that the British eventually had to give the country independence, even though the KLFA had been forced out of the struggle in 1956. With the radical faction gone, the British could then ensure that the

'moderate' Kenyatta came to power, making compromises with the former colonial power and establishing the most stable and Western-oriented country on the continent. Neo-colonialism took over from colonialism. The story of the KLFA and its leader, Dedan Kimaathi, is told in this booklet.

The official histories of this period, in particular those concerned with the period from 1952 to 1956, tend to portray the freedom struggle as barbaric, sinister and awesome, focusing on, amongst other things, the Oath of Unity which members had to swear upon joining the KLFA. It is a key virtue of this book that it brings out the fact that the KLFA waged a highly organised, consistent and dedicated struggle for national liberation. The demands of the movement were simple: 'Land (and all other national resources) for the people of the country and Freedom to enjoy the products of their labour and to decide their own destiny. The term "Army" emphasises the method to be used in achieving Land and Freedom - through an armed revolutionary struggle.' (p6) The barbarity was wholly on the side of British colonial rule, which used every conceivable method in order to crush the



resistance. The simple facts speak volumes: more than 30,000 Kenyans murdered during the uprising, compared to 100 settlers and Europeans and 2,000 collaborators; hundreds of thousands interned and uprooted.

What was most impressive about the struggle, and this is clearly brought out by Durrani's study, is the high level of organisation, both politically and militarily, of the KLFA. It adapted to illegal struggle when banned in 1950, and to armed struggle after the declaration of Emergency by the colonial authorities in 1952. It was able to procure and produce arms and ammunition; to supply intelligence on the strength and movements of enemy forces; to establish underground hospitals for the

treatment of wounded guerrillas. As similar struggles from Vietnam to Ireland have shown, these are valuable lessons which it will be necessary to learn again and again. Perhaps the supreme moment of the struggle came when the Kenyan parliament was formed in 1954, 'the first legitimate African government of Kenya' (p31), with Kimaathi as prime minister. 'The events of 1954 in Kenya were a herald of the events to come in all the colonies: the final independence from colonialism as a result of fierce struggles...' (p35).

The Kenya Land and Freedom Army was finally defeated, outnumbered by the Security Forces with their superior weapons. But in the process it had changed the balance of power in the country. Without its courageous struggle, independence for Kenya, and presumably for many other African and third world countries, would have come much later and at even greater cost. This booklet, along with such classic accounts as D Barnett's and K Njama's *Mau Mau from within*, is a fitting tribute to the pioneers in the struggle against imperialism and their martyred leader, Dedan Kimaathi.

Egil Hjelmervik

A break for freedom

■ **The Little Black Fish** by Behrang, translated by Pezhman Yakalya. Iranian Community Centre, London 1993, £1.00

The work of Mayakovsky, Hugh MacDiarmid and above all Bertolt Brecht, as well as many lesser writers, is a testimony to the possibility of creating a revolutionary literature. When produced under difficult conditions, such as censorship, the message of such literature must at the same time be clear and hidden. One way of combining these two features is to create fables. One such is *The Little Black Fish* by Behrang, an Iranian revolutionary writer who died in an accident in 1969. This small book has been widely translated and is now available in English.

The little fish of the story is not content with being confined to the stultifying life of a small brook - he wants to explore as much of the world as possible. To carry out this wish turns out

to require courage, intelligence and determination. He has to break with the prejudices inherent in his local environment and engage in a struggle against various oppressive forces: the Pelican, the Heron etc. The moral of the story seems to be that to remain where you are, to blind yourself to outside impulses, is to be dead - and in freeing yourself you also become an example to others.

The little black fish does not survive his journey, but he liberates other fish from the threat of the Pelican and the Heron, and he lives on in the stories and the mythology of the fishes.

The story is a good read, especially for young people (it has inspired many young Iranians to commit their lives to revolutionary struggle). It is beautifully illustrated, and is available from the Iranian Community Centre, 266-268 Holloway Road, London N7 6NE.

Egil Hjelmervik

LABOUR - A history of betrayal

■ **Labour: a party fit for imperialism** by Robert Clough, Larkin Publications 1992, £4.95

Labour: a party fit for imperialism by Robert Clough is a book which should be required reading for any working-class activist still harbouring any illusions about Labour being a party representing the working class. It exposes the duplicity of the Labour Party, since its inception, with the ruling capitalist barons of British society. It also highlights the manner in which Labour, in or out of government, has been consistent in sapping working class political potential leaving Labour free to pursue the interests of that privileged sector it represents.

The book opens with an introduction entitled 'Labour's Impasse', which raises some of the questions facing a Labour Party that has suffered four successive General Election defeats. 'Should it reduce or sever its links with trade unions? Should it support some kind of proportional representation? ... Should it end its commitment to universal benefits?' Clough argues that such questions fill the Left with dismay; particularly the question of breaking with the trade unions, as such a move would, for them, be a historic setback and leave the working class with no independent representation. He goes on to argue that this belief, that the Labour Party represents working class interests, is baseless and that the Labour Party '... is not, never has been, and never will be a party of the working class.' Indeed, the remaining six sections of his book go on to present an articulate analysis which leaves the reader in no doubt of the true character of the Labour Party.

The first section of the book, entitled 'The foundations of the Labour Party', deals with the emergence of the labour aristocracy in the latter part of the nineteenth century; the estab-

lishment of trade unions by this privileged stratum; and the support of this privileged stratum for British imperialism. Having established the organic links between labour aristocracy interests and the interests of British imperialism, Clough goes on to describe the emergence of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the Labour Representative Committee (LRC), leading on to the 1918 constitution. He makes particular reference to the conservative and racist principles embodied in the programme 'Labour and the New Social Order', which refers to the 'moral claims' upon us of the non-adult races' and gives a commitment to the maintenance of the Empire, which it euphemistically terms as a 'Britannic Alliance'.

The second section, 'The Labour Party and British imperialism 1900-1945' gives a clear exposition of the unscrupulous support given to British imperialism by Labour throughout the first half of this century. This support was based on Labour's recognition of the relationship whereby British imperialism could afford to reward a loyal labour aristocracy's compliance in the ruthless exploitation of colonial possessions. Labour's support for imperialism during this period spanned two world wars and countless colonial confrontations, resulting in the deaths of millions of workers.

The third section, 'Labour and the reconstruction of the imperialist order 1945-51' focuses on the manner in which Britain's post-war Labour government spared no effort in plundering the colonies to pay for Britain's war and rebuild the finances of its capitalist masters. The methods employed by the Labour government of the day are exemplified in the manner in which it sent huge forces to Malaya, setting up concentra-

tion camps, putting prices on the heads of known political activists, using assassination squads and even unleashing Dyak headhunters to terrorise the nationalist population.

Section four, 'Labour and British imperialism since 1951' describes how Labour performed the role of 'loyal opposition' from 1951-64 fully endorsing the systematic replacement of colonialism by neo-colonialism. A process whereby the bourgeois component of national liberation movements was built up, while any working class or peasant component was ruthlessly suppressed. Labour's reactionary character is again obvious when back in government from 1964-70, during which time it defended the apartheid regime and sent troops into Ireland to bolster the sectarian, Stormont-controlled statelet.

Having highlighted Labour's shameful history of compliance and complicity with British imperialism across the globe, Clough turns to the equally disgraceful manner in which Labour has betrayed the British working class, in the fifth section, 'Labour and the working class, 1918-45'. During this period, Britain's economy was in decline as investment poured out of the country to seek the high returns which British imperialism required to buy off its labour aristocracy. However, this economic decline resulted in massive unemployment on the domestic scene and unemployed workers were forced to organise a struggle for basic benefits for the unemployed. This initiative, in the form of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), was opposed by Labour and it was left to communists to give expression to the demands of the NUWM and organise the working class. Not only did Labour undermine and oppose the NUWM, it also actively enforced

the despicable 'not genuinely seeking work' clause (which was used to deprive the unemployed of benefits on an arbitrary basis), both through the Boards of Guardians that it controlled and while it was in government from 1924-29 and 1929-31.

The final section of the book, 'Labour and the working class from 1945' is a further exposure of the true interests of the Labour Party, and its disregard for the interests of the working class. It describes the composition of the post-war Labour Party and the MPs who make up its parliamentary party. Given its predominantly middle-class character, it is no surprise that the post-war Labour Party implemented the massive public spending cuts of the 1970s. The people worst affected by these cuts were of course the working class. Labour's racism, apparent since its inception, is shown not to have diminished as it oversaw the introduction of the 1965 and 1969 immigration acts. When Thatcher took over in 1979, Labour soon assumed the role of loyal opposition. From its support for Thatcher during the 1981 H-block hunger-strike to its role in the isolation and defeat of the Great Miners' Strike of 1984-85, Labour was consistently pro-imperialist and anti-working class.

Robert Clough's book is packed with historical examples and factual material which smash the illusion that Labour represents the interests of the working class. Anyone who is still 'labouring' under that illusion would do well to read this book, as it is only with the realisation that Labour is not, never has been, and never will be a party of the working class that the real work of building such a party can begin in earnest. ■

Gary Adams
Republican Socialist POW,
Portlaoise Gaol

Second Sight



■ **Second sight: 33 Poems** by Dinah Livingstone Katabasis 1993, £5.95

Dinah Livingstone is a poet of memory, past conditions, past struggles, past moments - and Time - which brings all round again and gives us the gift, the chance that we may see it all better, with 'second sight'.

Without time there is no rhythm, which is earth's pulse, the body's measure of grace, the power of song and the poem we make with our understanding that speaks for the earth,

These poems come from a woman's life, but a life lived in real places at real times and linked to the lives of others: the London lives of poll tax protesters of the 14th century, the Chartists, the fingers of countryside explored in a lonely afternoon at Cockfosters, August heat in Leicester Square, the marginalised of the modern city, the vicious triumphalism of the times taking their toll on the city and its people.

I highly recommend these poems. Dinah Livingstone serves a vital cause at this time. She gives much to the many who live on the edge of cynicism and despair, the chance of hope, a 'second sight' in our lives. Dinah has performed her poetry at *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* social events and the response has been wickedly good - cheering, stamping of feet and the conviction that we can do it, the 'Good Old Cause' will go on.

Susan Davidson.

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Black Consciousness Movement Soweto Commemoration
6.30pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube)

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Sunday 20 June
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12 noon Hyde Park (by tea pavilion)
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Moncada Day picket of US Embassy
called by *Defend Cuba Campaign*
Monday 26 July, 4.30-6.30pm
Grosvenor Square, London W1

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Poisoned rivers

The article in issue 112 on 'Polluted Britain' is very interesting and comprehensive. I used to work in a chemicals factory that discharged effluent containing certain heavy metals. The consent limits agreed with the Water Authority were 8 parts per million (ppm) in 24 hours for trade effluent (which goes to the treatment works) and 0.5 ppm for surface waters (which go directly into streams and rivers), agreed with the Rivers Authority. These limits might appear to be very strict, but because they are expressed as concentrations they disguise the discharge of large quantities of toxic materials. For example, if an industry put one tonne of poison down the drain every day diluted with a million tonnes of water, then its public relations department could boast an effluent discharge concentration of only 1ppm. The Water Authorities also set volume consent limits on production sites. When I worked the limit was 80 cubic meters per hour, but with a maximum 8ppm per 24 hours the industry could still legally put over 15 kilograms of heavy metals into the trade effluent every day.



There were no volume limits for surface waters and the limits on gaseous discharges to the atmosphere, agreed with the Air Pollution Inspectorate, were also expressed as concentrations enabling the industry to cheat by diluting the noxious gases with fresh air. When sites are fined for breaking consents it is not that they discharged more pollution than 'normal', simply that the same amount was released but they were too negligent to dilute it. If the authorities were at all serious about stopping pollution they would curb this dilution practice by imposing consent limits as weights, not as concentrations.

Where I worked, the only weight consent was on total nitrogen (covering nitrates, nitrites and ammonia) but this applied only for seven months of the year from April to October. For the rest of the year nitrogen levels were not monitored and the consent limits were suspended. The reason for this was that during warmer weather nitrate, along with phosphate, acts as a nutrient, choking waterways with plant growth. Eutrophic water not only is bad, more importantly it looks bad too, and for a society which essentially is incapable of bringing human industry into harmony with nature, even on its own doorstep, yet which pretends

to a degree of social and environmental responsibility, appearances are everything. The reality is systematically covered up. Gases are discharged under cover of darkness, pollutants dumped at sea out of sight, dirty industries hidden away in the 'Third World'. Your article mentions the exodus of US industries from California to Mexico to escape environmental controls. British multinationals also benefit in this way. ICI's Environmental Report for 1992 (March 1993) gives figures (p3) for fines and prosecutions of its businesses in different areas of the world over the last three years (1990-92). Dividing the totals by the relevant numbers of production locations gives the following ratios: Britain and Europe 2.0; USA 1.8; Latin America 2.6. ICI's activities must be very dirty indeed in Central and South America where there is little environmental legislation, a situation imposed by the debt crisis. In 1990 ICI were prosecuted a shameful 16 times in Latin America. This dropped to twice in 1991 and three times in 1992, but whether ICI has cleaned up or the authorities have become more lax is unclear. PETER HOLDEN Lancashire

Communists who will not surrender

Thank you very much for the publications you sent us. As a matter of fact, we honestly believe that FRFI is probably the best publication on the British left. We know very much about the SWP, RCP, Militant, WRP, Communist League, NCP and the Labour Party itself. We do agree with the RCG that these organisations are reactionary and nothing else but cats' paws for British imperialism. However, we would like you to know that our organisation is a revolutionary socialist, anti-imperialist movement. In our ranks can be found Marxist-Leninists, Revolutionary Socialists and Revolutionary Nationalists. In Guyana today, we are the only openly anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist movement 'who will not surrender'. The Working People's Alliance which was founded by the late Walter Rodney is now in the care of social democracy - they are members of the Socialist International. The WPA, like the Peoples' Progressive Party of Cheddie Tagan which is now in power, have all remained silent on the US imperialist aggression in the Gulf and other areas. They have surrendered. We read and discussed the Statement for an international framework of discussion among communists and anti-imperialists. Our Central Executive has decided to endorse the statement. We would like you to add our organisation's name and address to the document. We also think that we should pursue as early as possible an international meeting to launch Reconstruction Committee. We have been very critical of Stalinism and Trotskyism. At times Stalinism did play a counter-revolutionary role against genuine anti-imperialist movements, while Trotskyism counter-revolutionary through and through. We support and defend the Cuban Revolution - fact, we work very closely with the Cuban Embassy in Guyana. We also support and defend the Libyan Revolution. NAMOTI (National Movement for True Independence), Guyana

End the blockade!

'Revolution Square resounds with a unanimous cry: End the blockade!' reads the front page of *Granma International* following Havana City's massive May Day parade. Over 2,000 'guests' from 40 countries marched on May Day with millions of Cubans throughout Cuba. I was witnessing for myself the Cuban revolution's social base expressing support for their revolution of over thirty years, built brick by brick by the people's hard work, through local collectives in the countryside and CDRs (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution) in towns and cities throughout Cuba. Huge, carefully painted banners of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Jose Marti, but mostly of Che are carried along the route of the parade. Workers' organisations and political parties' banners from various municipalities of Havana and further afield are pushed along on trolley wheels assembled especially to ease the strain. The SNTC (the syndicalist National Workers' Organisation of Cuba); the OPJM (Organisation of Pioneers of Jose Marti, a youth organisation for the under-10s) and the PCC (Partido Comunista de Cuba) were just a few of the mass organisations present. Behind the banners marched hundreds of thousands of people, up to a million in Havana; cries of 'Viva Fidel!' and 'Viva Revolucion!' are repeated as Fidel Castro steps forward in full military uniform to greet marches through Revolution Square. End the Blockade! *Abajo la ley Torricelli!* (Down with the Torricelli law) is the theme of this year's event. The celebrations certainly do defy the blockade. A Cuban girl from the Young Communist League (UJC) says: 'The Torricelli Law is not as new

as you think. It was implemented many years ago, in 1959! It's simply a continuation of the blockade, an updated law, not a new law.'

Angolan flags fluttering in the wind and delegates from the Korean Workers Party clearly show the internationalism of the May Day event.

In Revolution Square itself there is a tourist area where tourists can spend their dollars; dollars have become an essential part of beating the blockade, buying vital imports for the people.

Finally contingents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), equipped with their latest imported bicycles from China, cycled through Revolution Square



armed with AK-47 assault rifles to great applause. I could see for myself that the FAR are truly a people's army, celebrating May Day alongside the masses of Havana's women, men and children.

Despite all the problems, the Cuban revolution still has massive support. The intensification of the blockade has meant the Cubans themselves have opened up factories which make bicycles and now even produce their own buses.

With US imperialist aggression at its highest, a non-sectarian solidarity movement in this country is more vital than ever. The RCG must, and I believe will, be at the forefront of this valuable task. PAOLO COWAN South London

No Foot to stand on

Among the speakers invited to a May Day meeting organised by Hackney NALGO Leisure Group were myself, on behalf of the RCG and Paul Foot representing the SWP. In a column in *Socialist Worker* (15 May 1993) on the brilliant performance by Palestinian singer Reem Kelane at the meeting, Paul Foot felt it necessary to express his contempt for the Cuban working class.

With manners befitting an English middle class socialist Foot arrived late for the meeting, missing a splendid speech by a Timex worker. He was, he says, by then in a 'gloomy' mood which 'turned to a sullen rage' on hearing my speech 'whose main message was that socialism lives and works in Cuba.' Why is a wealthy English liberal like Foot driven to rage on hearing that in Cuba infant mortality is lower than in Washington DC or Manchester or that Cuba has a health service superior to that in the USA and Britain. Foot is a sham socialist. Honest socialists cannot be enraged on hearing calls on British workers to support the lifting of the imperialist blockade which is threatening to starve Cuba.

I did defend Cuba in my speech and Foot was driven into a rage because he cannot tolerate the idea that socialism can be built by anyone outside the dead wood of the official British labour movement. But my main message to the meeting was not about Cuba. It was an effort, on the occasion of May Day, to reaffirm the revolutionary potential of the mass of the British working class. I reminded the audience of the incident during the 1984/85 Miners Strike when miners lowered a noose over TUC General Secretary Norman Willis' head. This I said represented symbolically the working class's revolutionary, political way forward against the Labour and Trade Union apparatus which at this very moment was trying to sell out the Timex workers, the miners, the railworkers and others. Clearly an unpalatable message for Mr Foot who, in the SWP's vulgar sectarian fashion, did not care to mention my name or the organisation I was representing. Perhaps he fears some of his readers may try to contact us. If Paul Foot wants to debate these matters let him come forward. We shall not decline. EDDIE ABRAHAMS London

BLACKBURN PUBLIC MEETING

India: the roots of communal violence
2.30-4.30pm Sunday 18 July
Bangor St Community Centre, Brookhouse, Blackburn
£1 (50p unwaged)

THE GREAT MARX MARCH 1993

11am Sunday 1 August
Meet at 28 Dean Street, London W1 (nearest tube Tottenham Ct Road)
A 7-mile sponsored walk through the London of Marx and Lenin, culminating in an oration at Marx's grave in Highgate and picnic on Hampstead Heath. After last year's success, this is now an annual event to raise money for the FRFI Publication Fund. Join us!

I would like to join the march. Please send me route details and a sponsorship form.
I cannot march but would like to join at Highgate Cemetery for the oration and picnic
I cannot march, but would sponsor a marcher for £_____ per mile (cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications)
Name: _____
Address: _____
Tel: _____
Return form to FRFI, BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX

fight racism fight capitalism fight imperialism

by any means necessary

Dayschool on the fight against racism and capitalism in South Africa/Azania, and in Britain
10am-5pm
Sunday 4 July
Millman Centre, Millman St WC1 (nearest tube Russell Square)
Speakers:
MAXINE WILLIAMS (Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! Editorial Board)
DABI KHUMALO (PAC UK Chief Rep.)
CAROL BRICKLEY (Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! Editorial Board, Convenor City AA)
Admission in advance £4 (£2 unwaged). £5/£2.50 on door. Includes lunch details from RCG, BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX. Tel 071 837 1688

RCG
FIGHT RACISM!
FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

The consequences have been disastrous – the destruction of Yugoslavia and a civil war which has killed thousands and created 2 million refugees. Despite resolutions, peace conferences and ceasefires, Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia have come into existence and have effectively destroyed Bosnia. Even under the pernicious Vance-Owen Plan, Serbia and Croatia were given chunks of Bosnia and the Muslims (who were over 40% of the population) and multi-ethnic regions were tiny and unviable blots. But both the Serbs and Croats have gone further. Serbia now controls 70% of Bosnia and 30% of Croatia. Croatia has also seized parts of Bosnia and wants more. In Croatia, UN forces patrol and legitimise Serb conquests. The dreadful fate now being discussed for Muslims or for those of mixed origin in Bosnia is to be protected by the UN. The Palestinians, Cambodians, and Kurds in Iraq are familiar with this fate.

None of this was unexpected. Politicians may threaten military intervention against the Serbs or lament Serb or Croat barbarities but the plain fact, well known to them at the time, is that in 1991 Milosevic, the Serb leader, and Tudman, the Croat leader, met and decided to carve up Bosnia. All sides were aware of this and knew it would be as bloody as it has proved to be. International 'peace' efforts have been an empty and cynical exercise. That this pact is never mentioned indicates one of the worst difficulties of analysing the situation in Yugoslavia – virtually everyone is lying, agreements are secret and the motives of the imperialist powers are extremely difficult to penetrate.

Given the gains made by force by both Serbia and Croatia, the unchecked rise of nationalism, the unresolved issues of Kosovo and Macedonia, the destruction of Bosnia and the economic wreckage of the whole region, little short of a miracle will stop the conflicts going on for years. If the war spreads to Kosovo and Macedonia it will draw in Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and their respective imperialist allies. It will then be plain that the end of Bosnia was not the end of the Balkan wars, merely the prologue.

The Balkans as political football

The imperialist countries are today portrayed as peacemakers in Yugoslavia. This is nonsense. Socialism in Yugoslavia, whatever its defects, in the post-1945 period, gave the various ethnic and national groups one of the longest periods of peace and relative stability in their history. The imperialists are largely responsible for destroying this. By the end of the 1980s their actions had fanned the flames of nationalism and doomed Yugoslavia. With its death, the regional and imperialist powers which have drawn and redrawn the map of this area in the 19th and 20th centuries, looked not to the welfare of the Yugoslavian peoples but to their own economic, political and strategic interests.

Such interference is nothing new. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries the people of this region saw their national aspirations subordinated to the interests of the regional and Great Powers. Different powers backed different internal forces, often coming into sharp conflict with each other. Never at peace, the Balkans were known as the powder-keg of Europe and detonated the 1914-18 imperialist war. During the Second World War the same pattern repeated itself. Germany set up a fascist state in Croatia and anti-fascists, particularly



Fighter jets on the USS Roosevelt monitor the no-fly zone: a euphemism for direct military intervention by imperialism

THE BALKANS

Not even the end of the beginning

The events in former Yugoslavia are unfolding with grim and tragic inevitability. MAXINE WILLIAMS argues that those who celebrated the collapse of the socialist countries should examine their consciences and their history books. For in the ensuing chaos the old patterns of imperialist rivalry have emerged and in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, political forces best left under large stones have crawled out. In the Balkans these forces are those of pre-socialist formations – nationalism, chauvinism and forms of fascism.

the Serbs, suffered enormous losses. It was therefore a breakthrough that a multinational Yugoslavia should survive after the Second World War. Many people there, although today virtually silenced, cling to this ideal as the only method by which peace and stability in their region, free from fratricidal strife and external interference, can be maintained.

Who killed Yugoslavia?

As the economic pressure of the imperialist world bore down on Yugoslavia in the 1970s, its debt to the banks rose, reaching around \$15bn by 1990. As austerity measures were forced on the government by the IMF, wages fell calamitously in the 1980s and unemployment rose, despite the huge numbers of Yugoslavs working abroad.

Under such economic pressure regional inequalities worsened, the Federation began to disintegrate and nationalist forces, which would prove fatal to Yugoslavia, grew. In 1987 Slobodan Milosevic delivered his successful nationalist challenge to the Serbian Communist Party leadership. Foreseeing the end of the Soviet Union, Western powers began to plan for the political future of Yugoslavia. The re-united Germany, its ambitions as a world power once again stirring, favoured the break up of Yugoslavia,

and the reintegration of its traditional spheres of influence – Croatia and Slovenia. Other imperialist powers at first seemed to prefer to keep the Federation in existence, if only to have somebody to hold responsible for its debts. However, as they kept up their economic pressure, the whole edifice began to crumble. US loans were denied unless Yugoslavia agreed to an unprecedented programme of austerity and EC aid was denied unless the government effectively agreed to allow secession by Croatia and Slovenia.

Croatia and Slovenia, the richest Republics, saw their future lying in the EC and German umbrella. The self-seeking actions of the imperialists prodded the giant of Serbian nationalism to its feet. As each side took a step further, the other was gripped more deeply by nationalism. The role of the imperialist powers was crucial in this process but their secret deals and diplomacy are little known. Croatia was encouraged to secede from Yugoslavia by Germany. John Pilger quotes former US ambassador to Yugoslavia, William Zimmerman about the 1991 period:

'We discovered that [German foreign minister] Genscher, had been in daily contact with the Croatian foreign minister. He was encouraging the Croats to leave the federation and declare independence,

while we and our allies, including the Germans, were trying to fashion a joint approach.

Pilger states that the EC granted recognition to Croatia and Slovenia as part of a secret and scandalous deal with Germany: the EC would recognise Croatia if Germany would agree to submerge the Deutschmark into a common European currency. So that is how the fate of nations is decided by the 'peacemakers'.

To recognise Croatia independence, without guarantees to the already frightened Serb minority, was to set a match to the bonfire built by the imperialists. The virus of nationalism was strengthened. Although used for pernicious ends by Milosevic and co., Serb fears were not groundless given the history of Croatia and the fact that President Tudman was busy sacking Serbs from their jobs, flaunting Croatian nationalist symbols and remarking publicly that he was 'glad he wasn't married to a Serb or a Jew'.

Once war broke out between Croatia and Serbia it was inevitable that Bosnia would be gobbled up. Multi-ethnic Bosnia could not possibly survive as part of Serb-dominated Yugoslavia nor could it become independent against the wishes of its Serb minority. It was doomed to be carved up between Serbia and Croatia. Today that is almost accomplished and

the very imperialist powers that have helped to bring about this disaster now posture as well-intentioned innocents – precisely as they do when, having created poverty and famine in Africa, they send in some aid.

The assassins turn on each other

Tension between the imperialist powers has paralysed their response to the war and has culminated in an almighty row between the US and the European powers. Clinton, claiming that the US had 'fundamental interests' in the region, favoured air strikes and arming the Muslims. The Europeans hope that sacrificing Bosnia and thus giving Serbia and Croatia what they want, will end the conflict and lead a satisfied Milosevic and Tudman to tame the more militant Serbs and Croats. They do not want the war to spread but neither can they afford to have a long-term military presence. Aggravating the imperialists' difficulties is the fact that none of them trusts the intentions of the others.

The US intervention infuriated the Europeans and led to the French remarking that they would 'like to see some evidence of the Americans below 30,000 feet'. France is not in NATO and is not as fond of the Atlantic Alliance as the British. It would like to see a European defence force come into existence. Germany's role presents great difficulties for all of them. It is the dominant European imperialist power but cannot yet act as such, nor are the others sure they want it to. It is not a coincidence that Germany, until recently barred from using military forces abroad, has now, for the first time since the Second World War, sent its troops outside Germany, to Somalia. In relation to Yugoslavia Germany has, however, had to play a stealthy hand in order not to raise old fears about its European ambitions. Britain, as usual, wants to keep in with Europe but sees the USA as a necessary counterweight to German strength.

Underneath all the calculations lie interests and alliances not yet mature but which will decide the fate of the peoples of the region, whatever their wishes. The USA has strongly developed interests in Albania, Bulgaria, Turkey and the Middle East. Its main fear is that Serb ambitions could spread the war to Kosovo and Macedonia. This is where the US draws the line and has said it may send troops to Macedonia. Germany is interested primarily in the former Hapsburg Balkans, ie Croatia and Slovenia. Turkey fears Serbia whilst Turkey's regional rival, Greece, is pro Serbian, as is Russia.

Once again we see the Great Power pattern of interference for their own shadowy ends in Balkan politics. We must closely observe how these alliances and interests develop over the next few years. One thing is plain, however: to call on the forces which destroyed Yugoslavia to intervene in any form at all is to call on the fox to guard the chickens. Our demands can only be for them to keep out of the Balkans, as every time they have gone near the area they have caused grief to its peoples and wars in Europe. One further demand becomes plain: no more of their secret deals and diplomacy, for it is in these secret deals that the fate of the Balkans is decided.

Whilst any sane person would wish to see peace in Yugoslavia, it will not arrive via US or European intervention. If in Yugoslavia we are witnessing the shape of things to come, we must recognise that the greatest danger ahead is that imperialist ambition and rivalry could ignite not just the Balkans but the fires of World War Three. ■