FIGHT RACISM!
FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group | Number 119 June/July 1994 | (unwaged 30p) 50p

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Working class suffers from poverty and health reforms

Poverty kills

ROBERT CLOUGH

An article published recently in the *British Medical Journal* showed that mortality differentials between the richest and the poorest sections of the population widened during the 1980s. This is associated with the widening gap in real household income during the same period.

The evidence is very striking. Taking census data for 1981 and 1991 for five counties in the North East around Tyneside and Teeside, the standard mortality ratio (the rate of mortality compared to the national average) widened significantly between the poorest and richest electoral wards. That in the poorest 20% of wards (with 28% of the overall population) rose to 150% of the national average in 1991, whilst that in the richest 20% (with 15% of the population) fell to 84%. In other words, the poor were twice as likely to die as the well-off. The mortality ratio for the most deprived ward in the survey was 203% – the poor are three times as likely to die. In the poorest wards, mortality ratios for those aged 0-14 was 99% the national average, whilst in the richest wards it was 60%.

However, whilst the figures show a widening gap, it is set against a backdrop of a general rise in longevity. But the improvements were unevenly distributed. In the poorest wards, mortality rates improved by 9% for all those aged 0-64. In the richest wards, the improvement was 20%. In absolute terms, however, there were some very significant exceptions. In the poorest wards, the death rate rose amongst males aged 15-44 and women aged 65-74, whereas it continued to decrease significantly in the richest wards. The authors of the article (Phillimore, Beattie and Townsend) explicitly link these changes with the falling income of the poorest households that has been reported in the government's own publications.

The study thus gives evidence on one long-term effect of increased absolute poverty – people live shorter lives. It is like a breath of fresh air after reading the bland and empty commonplaces of Labour's recently-published paper on the NHS, *Health 2000*. This is a document clearly written to appeal to the middle class. It panders to them through its use of fashionable management-speak – it talks of 'vision' and 'new agendas', it wants commitment to 'quality', it delights in being 'proactive', all to seek 'value for money'. It argues that 'tackling waste and keeping

down the cost of administration are important to ensure that scarce resources are used to treat the patient rather than manage the system'. This bears the clear imputation that these scarce resources will not increase with a Labour government in power, even though the document goes on to note that the UK spends 6.2% of its GDP in health care, compared with France which 9.1%, Germany 8.5% and an OECD average of 7.9%.

The document opposes GP fundholding – a safe option as far as the middle class is concerned – but is vaguer on the separation of purchasers (health authorities) and providers (hospitals). This is because although the market is unpopular with the middle class, so is any return to what is perceived to be the bureaucratic past. There is also a large section of better-off NHS employees who have benefited directly from the Tory reforms and whose support Labour needs to win in those more affluent constituencies if it is to become a party of government.

The key passage in the document reads: 'However, unless the development of a coherent social policy is linked with hard-headed economic realism, Labour will not succeed.' When, a few paragraphs later, it goes on to state, 'One of the great triumphs of modern society is that people now live longer than before', we know from the BMJ study exactly what 'hard-headed economic realism' really means. The facts are that the Tory reforms were introduced to cut the costs of health care, that the self-same pressures will operate if Labour becomes a governing party, and that Labour will carry on where the Tories leave off. ■

Sweatshop Britain

PHIL MACKIE

As the government's privatisation steamroller is now preparing to flatten the Post Office, recent reports make it clear that the 'Value for Money' figleaf is no longer covering the government's sell-off programme.

A Cabinet Office report leaked to the *Financial Times* exposed how £565 million per year was being spent on privatisation study consultancies, but that only £10 million savings per year could be identified.

Through privatisation, the government is attempting to cut state spending and distribute wealth to the rich through the handouts, patronage and power which privatisation throws up.

The softening up process preparatory to privatisation – the creation of Agencies within Departments across the Civil Service – has provided not only Chief Executive positions but positions on Steering Boards and consultancies, with many consultants being paid more than the Chief Executives. In some cases consultancy jobs have been used to buy off a small minority of civil servants, who then oppose the majority. In general it has been an enormous gravy-train for the large accountancy firms.

All of this represents interests which underpin the position of an increasingly unpopular government. The spread of quangos under the Tories has gone so far that the number of political appointments to them is double the total number of councillors in local government.

Market-testing has backfired. It has been too slow and has not delivered a significant amount of privatisation. The European Court's ruling regarding the Transfer of Undertakings would have forced private sector operators to honour contractual conditions of service or find redundancy money. Faced with this relatively fair competition, most withdrew. The few that remained could beat the in-house bids.

As a result the government has not surprisingly become more anti-European, determined to press ahead faster with its own political programme: the primary plank of that programme being the Deregulation Bill currently before the House of Commons.

The Deregulation Bill is two bills in one. Part II, as expected, provides all the necessary amendments to statute to allow the wholesale privatisation of the civil service, reducing it from 500,000 to 50,000 civil servants.

Part I – under the banner of 'cutting red tape' – provides the government's attempted solution to the capitalist crisis: quick march towards Sweatshop Britain. It identifies a long hit-list of Statutes and regulations to be swept aside. Included are:

- Health & Safety legislation, including everything before the 1974 Health & Safety at Work Act (i.e. everything that defines specific minimum standards)
- enforceability of Redundancy Agreements
- Pension Schemes
- a whole series of standards regarding sale of goods (such as allowing inclusion of froth in a pint of beer)

The government intends that Sweatshop Britain should reach into every aspect of our existence and that intention needs to be fought all along the line. ■

No Joke

John Smith – gone but not forgiven

'Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it.' (Shakespeare) So farewell then John Smith. Indeed many of us never realised how truly great you were both as a person and a leader until the newspapers told us so following your demise. We thought you were a dreary pro-capitalist hack. How wrong can you be? Judging from the eulogies, your place in both history and heaven are now assured. No doubt in heaven you will get them to modify all that rubbish about the difficulty of a rich man entering the kingdom of god. Just as you spent your earthly life ensuring that the Labour Party got rid of even its illusory connection with the working class. We can hear the heavenly chorus now: 'weep not ye rich men, we will maketh the earth as a heaven for you where the CBI shall live and prosper and Tony Blair will lock up the working class if they step out of line.'

Still tricky

And farewell Richard Nixon. He has also now been deified by the media. This criminal who bombed Cambodia and bugged and burgled his opponents, has now become a world statesman. And why not? He was no worse than that evil old racist, Winston Churchill. Or Margaret Thatcher who also set the secret services against her opponents. Nixon spent millions on law suits to stop any more dirt coming out and to shore up his foreign policy expert image. He could have saved the money. They would have rehabilitated him anyway.

Normal service resumed

A senior policeman has been reinstated after he was sacked for calling women delegates at a conference on domestic violence 'a bunch of lezzies' and saying that there wasn't a 'normal one' among them. The sacking of Chief Superintendent Nigel Spencer-Knott was the first time such serious action had been taken against a senior officer for an offence of this sort. And it lasted all of 6 months before he was put back in his £40,000 a year post. We should not be surprised at the strong reactions by the police to women campaigning against domestic violence. Several studies show that police officers are among the top wife-beaters.

Not very high hopes then for a successful prosecution of the three police officers charged with the manslaughter of Joy Gardner. Having raided her flat with the intention of deporting her, the police and immigration officers bound her mouth with tape and she subsequently suffocated and died. It is testimony to the strength of reaction of the black community, that the decision to prosecute has been taken. But let us remember all the other cases, such as the Guildford 4, where the police faced prosecution which was either dropped or so lamely conducted that it failed.

Commodity fetishism

The Appeal Court has decided that male prostitutes are not prostitutes. Only women can be charged with 'common prostitution', an offence that goes only to Magistrates courts, whereas men are charged with importuning and can get a jury. The current DPP had sought to equalise the law. Perhaps her predecessor, Allan Green, was researching the question when he was arrested at Kings Cross. The Appeal judges agreed that prostitution was a female offence. Wise up, old boys. It's not just women who are commodities now. Everybody is.

Only bigots need apply

In the face of such entrenched lack of modernity, it's good to see the appointment system for judges being revamped. The old system consists of a secret committee making recommendations to the Lord Chancellor. Their deliberations have not been taped yet but are thought to be along the lines of 'Jonesey's all right, knew how to take a good thrashing at Harrow, thrashed him misself.' Now in a root and branch reform, the posts are to be advertised and then go to the Lord Chief Justice. We can't wait to see the application form. Stand by for enormous changes.

Pensioners fightback – looking forward to summer

RENE WALLER

How are we faring? Not all that well really, for despite all our efforts VAT on fuel is already in operation and the present cold spell has already shown the derisory nature of the 50p a week extra pension given to cover increased costs.

We are, of course, continuing to collect signatures for our petition for a pension sufficient to live on without recourse to income support, and I personally usually get at least two sheets filled up in an hour of petitioning. Many young people give enthusiastic support.

In South East London we're also increasingly involved in the campaign to Save Guys Hospital. Pensioners are only too aware that they may need hospital care and they certainly don't want to be in the position

Pensioners bear the brunt of Tory policies

of one Southwark pensioner recently, whose family had to fork out almost £1,000 to secure a bed in Kings College Hospital, because one was only available on a private ward. Even if a bed is offered, will it actually be a trolley in a corridor?

Are such incidents inevitable? Should anxious relatives be obliged to stand by while doctors etc phone around to try to find a hospital with a vacant bed?

No, in the absence of an epidemic or a major road, rail or air disaster, there should be a number of empty beds left ready to cope with accidents or sudden illness and an up-to-date register kept showing their location – surely not an impossibility in these days of computers? It does though presuppose an overall health authority for London and other big cities.

Health is a number one priority for pensioners, and we believe it should be so for everyone. Is it? I recently attended a conference called to give an overall picture of health services available in Lewisham. The list of facilities was impressive and undoubtedly most doctors and health workers were endeavouring to give a good service – but it was said that an internal market where various hospital trusts are the main providers, and the district health services purchasers, was necessary to ensure efficiency. Whether buying in the cheapest market does secure efficiency is open to much doubt. Most of us, I'm sure, don't always buy the cheapest when making an important purchase.

In fact, though 'efficiency' and 'putting the patient' first were said to be the main aims, I felt the chief aim was really to cut overall costs, and this was really enforced by the insufficient funds provided. I think the game was given away when someone said 'Of course, we can't hope to provide for all the health needs of the people.' Why not? Is not the people's health our number one priority?

To achieve any of our aims, though, it is clear we pensioners need the active support of other sections of the community. For instance, we've long been campaigning for linking the amount of pension paid to average earnings, as was originally done, rather than the so-called 'cost of living', but now we find the Labour Party is dropping this demand. It's time we queried the policy of those claiming to be our friends and reminded them that in many areas, one in five people are pensioners and that means many more than one in five votes. ■

Rwanda

An inferno fuelled by imperialism

TREVOR RAYNE

The shooting down of the aircraft in which President Habyarimana of Rwanda and President Ntarymira were travelling on 6 April signalled the start of a savagery so frenzied that in five weeks between a quarter and a half of a million people were slain and 400,000 made refugees.
Some facts about Rwanda:

- population in 1993: 7.25 million
- children per woman: 8.1
- by the age of five, one in five children have died
- literacy rate: 64 per cent for men, 37 per cent for women
- military spending per soldier: $6,800 pa
- health spending per person: $3 pa
- per capita income: about 60 pence a day
- newspapers produced: one for every 10,000 people

In 36 wars and civil wars fought in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1960, over six and a half million people have been killed. Add to these the dead of Rwanda – barbarism! A barbarism born of colonialism and imperialism.

The Watutsi entered what is now Rwandan territory in the fifteenth century, coming from Ethiopia. Their cattle ownership resulted in a stratified society in which Hutu were cultivators and cattle rearers and Tuwa were craft workers. German colonisation, which began in 1897, used this structure to support its rule. In 1919 Britain allocated German East Africa to itself apart from Ruanda-Urundi which was given to Belgium. The Belgian Bishop of Rwanda advised the colonisers to preserve the dominant role of the 'Tutsi caste', saying its removal 'would lead the entire state directly into anarchy and to European-hating communism.' The Hutu majority came to regard the Tutsi as part of colonial oppression.

A farm workers' revolt in 1959 and civil war removed direct colonial rule, and saw UN-supervised elections which resulted in the formation of the Hutu-dominated Republic of Rwanda in 1962. An ensuing civil war claimed 20,000 lives and drove 160,000 Tutsis into exile. Hutu power was to be based on land ownership, and the Tutsi were stripped of the privileged position offered them by colonialism. In 1973, Colonel Habyarimana took power and established a Hutu ruling clique that controlled farming, commerce and banking, and introduced an 'open door' policy to foreign investment. The clique ruled in close association with France and Mobutu's Zaire. Coffee production for export grew to account for 81 per cent of foreign earnings while per capita food production fell by over 27 per cent in the 1980s. Between 1980-88 Rwanda's terms of trade (prices of exports relative to imports) fell 47 per cent as coffee prices halved. The sheer pressure of imperialist exploitation was bound to trigger a social explosion.

In September 1990 a mainly Tutsi force entered Rwanda from Uganda to stage an uprising. It was put down by French, Belgian and Zairean troops – a prelude to today's slaughter as the two rival factions battle it out. In 1992 over 300 Tutsi were murdered by the governing party's youth militia. Now, 33 years after the UN came to supervise Rwanda's first election, and after what is truly a genocide, the UN is preparing to return. Its mission, to select a new batch of chosen placemen to supervise the plunder of Africa.

Refugees have flooded out of Rwanda into neighbouring states

Over the past decade deteriorating terms of trade have cost Africa $12 billion a year. Foreign debt has tripled to $180 billion and Sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest region on earth, repays its creditors $10 billion a year, four times as much as its governments spends on health and education. Unemployment is over 100 million and wages have fallen by a third from their 1970 level. Everywhere you look across Africa you see the results: Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Mozambique, Zaire, Rwanda ... crisis, war, an inferno lit and fuelled by imperialism. ■

Palestine: 'autonomy' turns into fiasco

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The PLO-Israeli Pact for Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho was exposed as a sham days after formal ceremonies transferring local administration to a Palestinian authority. On Friday 20 May, the Israeli army sealed off the Strip and demanded that the newly installed Palestinian police force hunt down Hamas militants who killed two Israeli soldiers and then fled into the Gaza.
Gaza and Jericho, like the rest of the occupied territories, remain prisons. Israel opens or locks the gates at will. As for the 9,000 Palestinian police – they are expected to act as agents of Zionist occupation. For Israeli Prime Minister Rabin, this is the main purpose of the Pact: 'I'd rather Palestinians coped with the problems of enforcing order in Gaza ... they will allow no appeals to the Supreme Court and will prevent the Israeli Association of Civil Rights from criticising conditions there.'

The final accord signed on 4 May makes legal the collaborationist role of the Palestinian police. It requires that 'both sides ... take all measures necessary to prevent acts of terrorism (ie struggle) ... and take legal measures against offenders ...' If the Palestinian police fail, then the Israeli army is on hand. They have not in fact been withdrawn, but merely redeployed closer to Israeli settlements and the network of roads that link them.

A Lebanese journalist comparing developments in Palestine with those in South Africa writes: 'The solution which the Palestinians are opting for is, to a certain extent, the one which the black South Africans are abandoning: bantustans. The most which this path can lead to is a miserable entity which moves in the Israeli orbit and is inhabited by people who are denied equality with those who stole their land.'

The Pact leaves under Israeli jurisdiction 50 per cent of the West Bank's and Gaza's land that has been confiscated and settled by Zionists. While the Palestinian Authority will be able to issue postage stamps, have international telephone codes and allocate frequencies for radio and TV, it will have no authority over defence, no authority to invite home refugees and will have no power to stop Israel pumping scarce water out of Gaza and Jericho to supply Zionist settlements.

The Arafat leadership of the PLO, representing the dominant sections of the Palestinian bourgeoisie, is nevertheless content with this arrangement. Integrated into and dependent on Zionist and Arab capital, it has abandoned all democratic and popular principles in return for an easing of some Zionist regulations which hitherto prevented it making money. It also hopes to further enrich itself by pocketing the £820m promised by international donors.

For the mass of the people, the workers, the unemployed (50 per cent in Gaza), the peasants, the urban petit-bourgeoisie, the refugee camp dwellers, the Pact changes and promises to change nothing. Zionist land-grabbing and repression continues unabated throughout the occupied territories. Not a day passes without Palestinians falling victim to Israeli army or settler bullets. Not surprisingly there is mounting popular class opposition to the 'autonomy' plan. But whether this opposition will be pacified, become a card in the hands of the reactionary fundamentalists or a truly democratic and popular force will depend on the political struggle within the opposition.

The Palestinian Forces Alliance unites the fundamentalists of Hamas and Islamic Jihad with the left wing of the PLO led by the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. But profound ideological and class differences have rendered this Alliance ineffective. Meanwhile, Hamas, even as it conducts quite devastating military operations against the Zionists, is engaged in both secret and public negotiations with Arafat in an attempt to come to a mutually acceptable arrangement to divide the spoils among themselves.

Speaking for the left-wing, democratic opposition to the Pact, George Habash, leader of the PFLP said: 'We will escalate our military attacks against Israel. We will do our best to maintain and escalate the popular uprising against the Israeli occupation.' We hope that the PFLP and other democratic and working class forces garner strength to be able to organise and lead the popular movement – the movement of the poor and dispossessed. ■

Turkish police attack revolutionaries

TREVOR RAYNE

Responding to a call for solidarity from the Party for Socialist Power (SiP) in Turkey, the RCG called a protest outside the Turkish Embassy in London on 7 May. Between 500-600 SIP members were viciously attacked by 2,000 Turkish police, armed with special batons issued for the occasion, after they left a May Day rally in Istanbul. Several hundred socialists were injured, including four central committee members. About forty were hospitalised.

The SiP was attacked because of its consistent socialist politics and support for the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination. The attack coincided with the arrival of an International Monetary Fund team in Turkey due to negotiate a desperately needed credit facility for the Turkish government in exchange for a 50 per cent cut in the government's budget deficit to be achieved next year. At the same time the World Bank has agreed a $100 million credit to support an accelerated privatisation programme in Turkey.

On 5 April Prime Minister Ciller announced an austerity programme to fight inflation, now running at over 100 per cent, and rapid devaluation of the Turkish lira which had more than halved against the dollar in four months. As the SiP analyse, the crisis is no longer just financial; it is political. The March municipal elections produced a low 65 per cent turnout with only 35 per cent in Kurdistan. The success of the Islamic Refah Party does not reflect the choice of the ruling class nor of imperialism. Now, the Ciller government is charged with launching an attack on Turkish workers.

The financial crisis is blamed on public deficits, increased real wages since 1989 and the foreign debt. Under the austerity programme public deficits will be reduced by increased revenues and decreased spending; real wages will fall as prices are raised. A series of privatisations will target some of Turkey's largest industrial and financial enterprises. 'Unproductive' state enterprises will be closed including the Zonguldak coal mines, the Kapabuk iron and steel plant, a petroleum refinery and two Istanbul shipyards.

The Turkish ruling class understands that it must strike against revolutionaries quickly to stem widespread support. Socialists in Britain must side with the Turkish workers and revolutionaries as they confront the same multinational companies and banks that direct both the Turkish and British states. ■

Ireland

No prospects of peace for nationalists

SARAH BOND

If the nationalists of the north of Ireland had a penny for every word that has been mouthed about peace since the Major Declaration, they could get a united Ireland simply by buying the southern Twenty-Six counties off the multinationals who own them. But while the politicians talk and the media chatter, nationalists are being slaughtered. In recent weeks sectarian attacks by loyalist death squads have continued to escalate.
Recent incidents include:

13 April: wheelchair-bound Paul O'Neill and his 61-year-old father Aidan were shot and seriously wounded by the UDA while praying in their front room

21 April: Theresa Clinton was shot dead in her front room; her husband was a member of Sinn Fein

26 April: Joe McCloskey, 53-year-old nationalist and father of six, was shot dead in his living room

27 April: 25-year-old Liam Thompson was murdered in a van in the nationalist area of Springhill. Pat Elley, the driver, was seriously wounded. Loyalists got into the area through a hole in the security fence. This breach of security had been reported to the RUC that morning; they did nothing.

28 April: James Brown was shot dead by the UVF. A friend of Joe McCloskey, he had sent a card to the McCloskey family the previous night.

30 April: the UDA seriously wounded a security guard in a gun attack.

8 May: 76-year-old Rose Anne Mallon was shot dead in her living room by the UVF.

17 May: two students, both just 17 years old, and a taxi driver were shot outside a taxi office. One student died immediately, the other later in hospital.

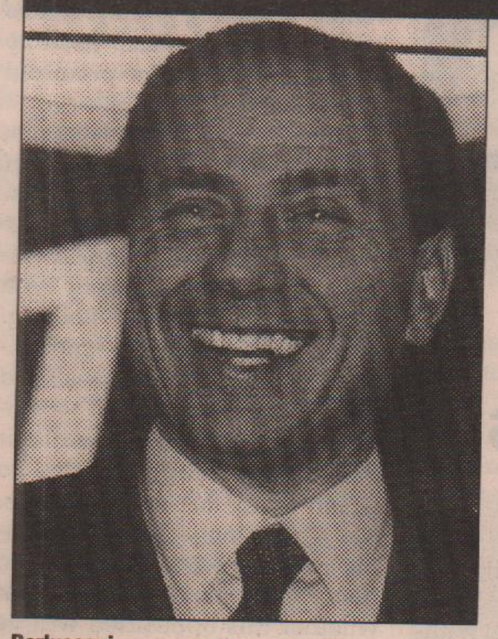
These grim facts are the reality behind the charade of John Major's 'Peace Talks'. When the politicians and their hired minds in the media pose as the champions of change in the north of Ireland, they play with Irish lives. They know that loyalists will organise to oppose even the talk of change and that when loyalists organise, Catholic men, women and children die. But of course this suits British interests down to the ground, since it isolates and weakens the only consistent democratic voice in Ireland at present – the voice of the northern nationalist working class.

The rulers of Britain and Ireland are every bit as concerned as the loyalists that this voice should be excluded from any 'peace' settlement. One thing is for certain: if they succeed, it will a defeat for the working class of Ireland, north and south. ■

Fascism monstrous product of capitalism

The electoral victories gained by fascist parties in Europe, argues MAXINE WILLIAMS, have lent urgency to the debate on how to fight fascism. *Guardian* columnist, Martin Kettle has solved these problems to his own, if nobody else's, satisfaction by saying that these parties are not fascist at all. For example, Italy's MSI now with five seats in the cabinet, 105 deputies and 43 senators:

'While it undoubtedly attracts a significant number of genuinely fascist notalgics and mimics, it is an altogether more modern right-wing party. In particular, it is an electoral rather than a military force.'



Berlusconi

He appears to have forgotten that both in Italy and Germany in the 1920s and 30s, fascism used electoral methods very successfully. More significantly, Kettle has forgotten that the MSI leader recently called Mussolini 'the greatest statesman of the century'. And that in many parts of Italy, the MSI following does not merely engage in nostalgia but in very contemporary assaults and murders of immigrants.

For Kettle the way to avoid the

Mussolini

Italian experience is to follow the British path of consensus. Consensus about welfarism and:

> '...the combination of strict immigration controls, equal rights laws and the marginalisation of the ultra-Right has held together quite well...'

Quite well if you are Martin Kettle but not quite so well for Joy Gardner, killed by police and immigration officers who enforce Kettle's consensus, founded as it is on racism.

Kettle's proof that this works is that the British economy has been more thoroughly restructured and its welfare system cut but still no right-wing force has emerged on the scale of Europe. But if we look more closely at the Italian experience we find just what Kettle's consensus represents.

Fascism today

With the ruling Christian Democrat party ruined by scandals which also embroiled the Socialist Party, the Italian ruling class faced political crisis. Step forward instant politician, Silvio Berlusconi. Berlusconi, who owns most of Italian TV, put forward a programme of virulent anti-communism and the safeguarding of Italian capitalism by public spending cuts, privatisation and low taxes. To gain a majority he allied with the facist MSI and regionalist Northern League.

The Italian ruling class has based its post-war rule on 'historic compromise'(could this be Kettle's consensus?) the most concrete result of which is a huge public sector. Faced with economic crisis the ruling class has broken the compromise. In allowing the fascists their first post-war voice in government, it is clear that more than just the ghost of working class opposition still menaces the Italian ruling class. The working class must be made to pay for the crisis. As Daniel Singer writes in *New Statesman*:

> 'Compromise means give and take. The labour movement is being offered no-give all-take; all over Europe its conquests, won in the 30 years of unprecedented prosperity, are under attack.'

Nor have the French or German ruling classes yet succeeded in dismantling all post-war gains. When the French government tried to introduce a cheap labour scheme for youth, it faced demonstrations and riots which forced it to back down. Germany has not yet managed to significantly curtail a welfare system which makes British Social Security look like the Poor Law.

But in Britain, the Conservatives have succeeded in delivering a devastating agenda of cuts, labour casualisation and unemployment with little effective opposition. The lynchpin of Kettle's consensus is a reliable, social democratic Labour Party which has flattened even such small stirrings of opposition as the last 15 years have seen.

Given this, the encouragement of fascism would be an unnecessary risk for the ruling class. As long as the consensus delivers the cheap labour and strong state policies their profits require, why rock the boat? Of course fascism does not merely require the passive or active support of the bourgeoisie. It grows in conditions of instability, social and class conflict which terrify the middle classes. Here again, the Labour Party has shored up the consensus by successfully encouraging a deadening passivity in the British working class. Thus far British fascism has grown mainly among sections of the white working class who, in the face of unemployment and cuts, recognise that Kettle's consensus offers them nothing. In the absence of any left movement, they have turned instead to a more radical brand of racism than the Labour Party supplies.

Kettle's very British consensus, on which he rests his hope for the failure of fascism, has turned out to be not a consensus against fascism but against the working class. A consensus that holds as long as the working class does not fight against the attacks made on it. The path that Mrs Thatcher embarked on 15 years ago is now being taken elsewhere in Europe and they will use an alliance with fascism should it prove necessary, as in Italy. The European working classes have proved a far tougher nut

Nuremberg Rally of 1938

to crack and bourgeois political systems weaker than in the older and, until recent times, stronger imperialist power, Britain. The imposition of Thatcherite programmes in Europe may therefore require a more radical break with bourgeois democracy.

This is not to be complacent about the BNP who, although they lost their East End seat, increased their votes. The future may produce strains so great that the consensus fractures. Britain is no longer the dominant imperialist power it was. The ruling class requires more widespread cutbacks, there may be a resurrection of working class struggle in Britain and a turn to fascism by larger sections of the population. All the more important that we should learn some lessons from the history of the fight against fascism.

What is fascism?

Bourgeois ideas about fascism must conceal their guilty secret – they supported it. Thus while they have to admit that fascism is tyrannical, militaristic and anti-semitic/racist they must also present it as standing outside and opposed to bourgeois democracy. Unconnected with capitalism, a mass psychosis. In Britain, with a ruling class that used the 'anti-fascist' banner to defend its imperialist interests in 1939, it is also seen as foreign. Hence the choice of title, 'Anti-Nazi League' and the characterisation of British fascists as 'unpatriotic'.

The socialists and communists who led the struggle against fascism in the 1920s and 30s had no such illusions. In his classic study *Fascism and Big Business*, Daniel Guerin makes clear that both fascism and war 'grow out of the same dungheap ... the monstrous products of capitalism in decline'. A system which, having brought the productive forces to a point where they could meet the needs of all people, denies this possibility in the interests of private ownership and profit. Political systems – bourgeois democratic or fascist – exist merely to safeguard this system. In different conditions each has its function. And as long as this situation persists, humanity is trapped in a circle of hell – crises, poverty and war. Capitalism has outlived its time but socialism has not been achieved. Which is why Guerin writes:

> 'For what is fascism, at bottom, but the direct product of the failure to achieve socialism? Behind fascism, the shadow of socialism is ceaselessly present.'

The rise of fascism in Europe after the First World War was directly related to the crisis faced by capitalism. That crisis of profitability had fuelled the inter-imperialist rivalries which led to the First World War. The war did not resolve the crisis nor did it solve the issue of the hungriest imperialist power, Germany. To add to the problems faced by capitalism, the war triggered a wave of revolutionary outbreaks of which the 1917 Russian revolution was the most far-reaching.

Mussolini broke from Italian socialism in 1915 over the issue of socialist opposition to the war and moved rightwards with meteoric speed. In 1919 and 1920 as the economic crisis deepened there were strikes and riots throughout Italy, factories were seized, banks attacked and soviets set up and many areas passed into the hands of the Communists.

Mussolini's fascist squads began systematic attacks on left-wing workers and communist organisations killing at least 3,000 people. State forces took an active part and while leftists were gaoled the Minister of Justice sent a note to magistrates telling them to 'forget about cases involving fascist criminal acts'. In the fascists, the ruling class saw the ability to crush the working class. In 1921 bourgeois politicians went into an alliance with them and the fascists were given 35 seats in Parliament. The parallel with the Berlusconi pact is clear.

Although Italian fascism presented itself as a radical solution to the problems of the middle and working classes, the key factor in Mussolini's rise to power in 1922 was the support of the big industrialists, landowners and banks. They financed the March on Rome which secured fascist power. Likewise in Germany it was the Thyssens and the Krupps who backed the Nazis. Bourgeois democracy first accommodated and then surrendered itself to fascism in the interests of restoring profits at the expense of the working class. Between 1927 and 1932 in Italy, wages were halved, women were driven out of work and the unemployed forced to do public works for a pittance. Militant labour organisations were crushed. Public money was used to refloat failed banks and finance huge private enterprises. Vast public works enriched the industrialists as did preparations for war.

There are not, despite the pretences of social democracy, painless methods of restoring profitability. Today as in the 1920s it requires that the mass of the population, especially the working class, pays for it. Hence the similarities today between capitalist parties throughout Europe – privatisation, abolition of the welfare state, deregulation of labour, low wages. Mrs Thatcher's programme

Oswald Mosley, leader of Britain's war time fascists takes a fascist salute

itself raised many fascist ghosts – the attack on unions, centralisation, direct shifts of wealth to the owners of capital, heavy subsidies to arms makers. Mrs Thatcher and Sr Berlusconi are not worlds away from Mussolini. It is merely that in certain conditions, especially those of active working class opposition, such a programme cannot be implemented without a fascist political movement and the abolition of bourgeois democracy.

Fascism and imperialism

It was clear both in Italy and Germany in the 1920s, that an anti-working class programme was not enough. Conditions of economic crisis afflicted capitalism worldwide and intensified the competition between imperialist powers. Nationalism was not merely an ideological form for fascism, it was essential if the population was to be mobilised behind the struggle to win a bigger share of world markets and colonies for its ruling class. Germany was defeated in its First World War attempt to win an empire to match its economic strength. Mussolini referred to Italy as a 'proletarian nation' in the international community. Both German and Italian fascism carried through a programme designed to gain colonial possessions at the expense of other imperialist powers. Italy looked to expand its African possessions by declaring a brutal war against Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Germany looked first to Eastern Europe then elsewhere. While quite happy to tolerate the crushing of the Italian and German working classes, the concentration camps and other barbarities, the other imperialists would not tolerate challenges to their colonies and markets. Hence war.

Although the First and Second World Wars took different forms, the essence remained the same – the urge to redivide the world amongst the imperialists. World War Two was conducted under both bourgeois democratic and fascist banners. Today as then, the imperialists rely on their strangulation of the oppressed nations. Today, the same divisions and rivalries exist between the powers. They eye each other warily whether it be on trade issues or the question of who gets influence in former Yugoslavia. The urge to colonial conquest and the danger of world-wide conflict remains.

Today's MSI has temporarily abandoned its demand for Italian rule in parts of former Yugoslavia. Their nationalism takes a more immediately dangerous form with the whipping up of hatred for immigrants, black people and 'foreigners' which is the hallmark of the fascist organisations throughout Europe. But it is also the hallmark of most European governments whose 'Fortress Europe' policies reflect the intensifying divisions in the world between rich imperialist nations and poor, oppressed nations.

Imperialism and racism are twins. Imperialism and war are twins. Imperialism and crisis-driven attacks on the working class are twins. Can we seriously separate fascism from its source – decaying and imperialist capitalism? Can we pretend, like Martin Kettle, that fascism is something apart, something alien to the system under which we live? Can we imagine that the struggle against fascism can be conducted as an isolated struggle, that the BNP can be defeated by calling them Nazis? As Daniel Singer said of Italy:

> 'The European left can now tackle the questions raised ... in the 1960s (growth for whom, for what purpose, for whose profit, within what kind of environment?) ... or it can resign itself to the role of the American Democratic Party. At this historical stage there is no scope for the reformist management of capitalism.'

Or as Guerin wrote in 1945 after fascism had scorched its path through the world: '... fascism ... can be effectively fought and vanquished definitively only by the proletarian revolution. All anti-fascism that rejects it is but vain and deceitful babbling'.

Have we to learn all this again? Our struggle against fascism must also be a fight for socialism. ■

Racism in the East End

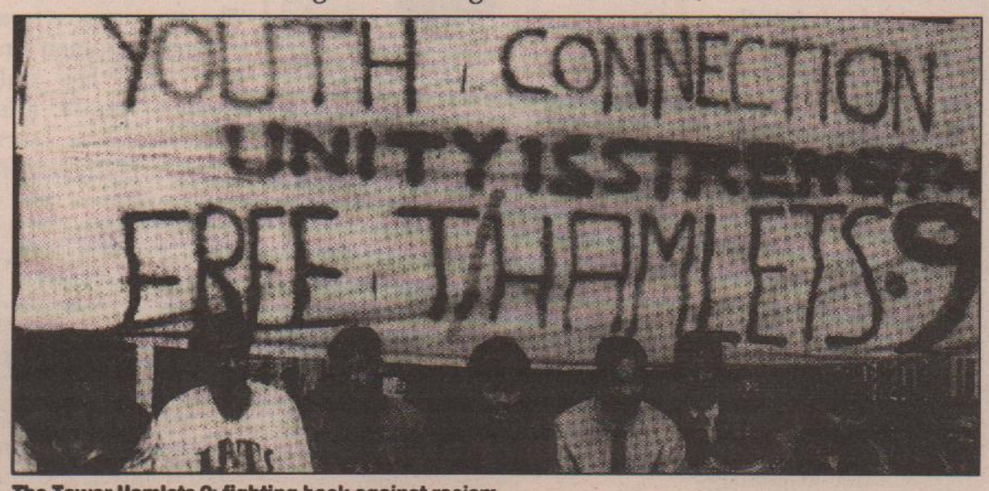
The defeat of Derek Beackon in his bid to retain his Isle of Dogs council seat is not a significant set-back for the BNP. He got over 2,000 votes, as did a number of his fellow fascists in the East End. Racism and fascism have retained a significant base in East London.

The Runnymede Trust pamphlet *Neither Unique nor Typical* provides a very detailed analysis of social conditions in Tower Hamlets. On an index of social deprivation which is derived from six factors (unemployment, lone parenthood, lone pensioner households, youth unemployment, long-term illness and numbers of household dependants), it is second worst in London. On almost every count, conditions are worse for the Asian population. 67% of Bangladeshi households have more than one person per room – the equivalent for white households is 3.3%. In 1993, the overall unemployment rate was 26%. It is twice as high for Bangladeshi workers as it is for whites: 6,099 whites are unemployed out of over 70,000 of working age, as compared with 3,136 out of 16,300 Bangladeshis of working age.

Although the white population was 102,342 in the 1991 census, and the Bangladeshi population 37,067, there were more Bangladeshi children in the age range 0-15: 20,440 versus 17,549 whites (at the other end of the age scale, there were over 22,000 white pensioners, and less than 1,000 Bangladeshis). With such a high school-age immigrant population, Tower Hamlets makes more use of Section 11 education funding than any other London Borough, mainly for teaching English to bilingual children. However, Section 11 funding is being cut by 18%.

In 1991 and 1992, Tower Hamlets showed a significantly higher incidence of racist attacks than any other London borough. Out of 192 recorded racist incidents in Tower Hamlets in the first six months of 1993, 146 took place in two areas – Poplar and the Isle of Dogs.

Perhaps the most significant issue in the Isle of Dogs, and indeed throughout Tower Hamlets, has been housing policy. 55.2% of whites are dependent on social housing, but the proportion rises to 76.5% for Bangladeshis. A series of reports in the mid-1980s showed that Tower Hamlets housing allocation policy was discriminatory. In 1988, the CRE found that although Bangladeshis at the time were only 9% of the population, they accounted for 69% of all the homeless. The councils own figures proved discrimination. Banding its properties into four quality levels, it found that in the four years to March 1993, 5% of Asian applicants were allocated housing in the two highest-quality bands; the corresponding figure for white applicants was 10%. This was the period of the infamous 'Sons and Daughters' scheme, whereby conscious priority was given to the sons and daughters of those who had lived in the borough for a long time – that is, white residents. Of 203 allocation made under the scheme, 79% went to whites.



The Tower Hamlets 9: fighting back against racism

Of the white population 26% are owner-occupiers, compared with 7.3% of the Bangladeshi population. As the pamphlet points out, 'Average income is far below the £15,000 earning per year needed to begin on the private housing ladder'. This is far more true of the Asian population than the white population, of which a significant working class section has taken advantage of the Right to Buy scheme.

Discrimination exists in every aspect of Tower Hamlets life. Yet it has not prevented conditions deteriorating for the white working class. 77% of all employment in 1991 was dependent on the services sector, and this has been seriously hit by recession. Whilst poverty increases, Labour has refused to offer any resistance. Quite the opposite: it embraced the Right to Buy policy which favoured the more affluent sections of the working class and which removed the better housing stock from council ownership. Now with the collapse of housing prices and rising unemployment, the previously privileged sections of the white working class are undergoing a process of re-proletarianisation. As *No More Blood on Our Streets* points out, such conditions are a gift to the likes of the BNP

It is the role of the Labour Party which this Tower Hamlets Trades Council pamphlet attempts to address, with rather mixed results. On the one hand, it states that 'if the Labour Party wanted to oppose the Tories it would have to go to the working class and give leadership on every issue facing it – but if it were to do that it would cease to be the Labour Party for it would have to take up extra-parliamentary class action', which clearly implies that it won't, and therefore cannot be supported. Later on, however, the authors take a slightly different tack: 'We have to say to the Labour Party locally and nationally: there are no blank cheques from workers in Tower Hamlets'. In other words, conditional support is a possibility.

This lack of clarity makes the pamphlet rather weak. There are telling contributions about Labour's responsibility for the rise of the BNP: its refusal to oppose the Docklands Corporation, its connivance in the discriminatory housing allocation policy, its support for the Right to Buy. A key Labour slogan to attract the middle class vote in the Millwall ward during May's council election was 'BNP = Negative Equity'. The pamphlet also argues that 'the fight against racism and fascism is first and foremost a working class task and, within this class, the task of the organised workers in their trade union'. But at the moment, the trade unions actually exclude the mass of the working class, and represent the interests only of those more affluent sections who are least likely to play a leading role in the fight against racism. Trade unions are only one aspect of working class organisation; rebuilding them cannot be the main plank of a strategy to fight back against racism.

No More Blood on Our Streets thus ducks some critical questions. The next period will see the rise of an independent working class movement – independent, that is, of Labourism. This new movement cannot offer any cheques to the Labour Party, blank or otherwise, because Labour will be its most determined enemy. It will throw up many new organisations; it will also have a trade union expression. But it will be much broader than the trade union movement, embracing those millions of workers whom the unions cannot or will not organise. It will be of necessity anti-Labour, and anti those who support or defend Labour. And this is where organisations like Tower Hamlets Trades Council have to take a stand. It will not be enough to be 'critical' of Labour, if that 'criticism' allows for support to creep in the back door, however qualified. This is the kind of standpoint which the new movement will have to reject if it is to survive.

Robert Clough

Neither Unique nor Typical: The Context of Race Relations in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. **An Interim Report by the Runnymede Trust, December 1993. Available from The Runnymede Trust, 11 Princelet Street, London E1 6QH.**

No More Blood on The Streets: How to Fight Fascism and Racism. **Tower Hamlets Trades Council, £1.00. Available from THTC, Davenant Centre, 179-181 Whitechapel Road, London E1.**

Schindler's List

This is the story of Oskar and Emilie Schindler, who are treated as heroes by Steven Spielberg for having saved 1,200 Jews from the death camps.

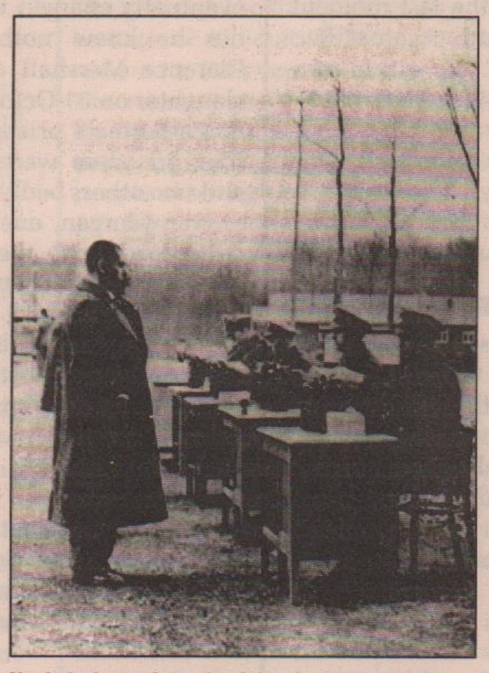
From 1941 to 1944, Schindler opened an enamelware factory where he manufactured pots and pans for the German army. At that time, he was a member of the Nazi Party, enjoyed drinking, prestigious cars and women.

To run his factory, he negotiated with the Nazis for 1,200 Jews to be brought over from the Krakow ghetto, a cheap labour force indeed. Krakow was occupied by the SS who were clearing the ghetto of its Jewish population, in order to send them to Auschwitz and the gas chambers.

All through the film, we see Schindler in high life, with his wife kept in the background, although he relies on her to provide food for the workers. We also see violent killings. Schindler, it seems, had to bribe Nazi officers to stop them from sending the workers to their deaths.

In 1944, the enamelware production was no longer needed. Schindler decided to move back to Czechoslovakia with his men to open an ammunition factory. Just before that, his workers were sent to Auschwitz, and Schindler had to negotiate to get them out before it was too late.

It would have been appropriate, at this stage, to give credit to those who resisted in the camp. Spielberg could have shown the German political prisoners, interned since 1933 at Auschwitz, who helped the newcomers. He could have shown the French Resistance women, the 'convoy of 31,000' who stayed there for a short while, helping the internees. When they were transferred, they told the world about the atrocities they had witnessed. He could have shown the variety of people detained at the camp: the Gypsies, the conscientious objectors, the German and foreign socialists or communists, so vital to the internal organisation, and responsible for acts of sabotage.


Nazi clerks register Jewish prisoners at Dachau

Instead, we see a crowd of servile workers, totally at the mercy of Schindler.

The truth remains that at the end of the Second World War Schindler and his wife were disguised and smuggled out through a Jewish organisation to be flown to Argentina where, incidentally, all Nazi criminals on the run were sent into exile. They were anti-communist and very reliable, almost respectable, for the western intelligence services.

Schindler later on returned to Germany; he died 25 years later. His wife was left behind. He was buried in Israel, as he requested.

In contrast, Emilie remained a discreet woman, resentful of his behaviour towards her. When interviewed in Brazil, she said: 'I'm no heroine, I'm the same person as always.' She is now 86.

The last images of the film are shot at the tomb of Schindler, in Tel Aviv. Spielberg gives a message of hope to the Jews in Israel, depicted as a haven of peace ... Spielberg reveals his Zionist allegiance and his silent indifference towards the Palestinians ... it is offensive.

In my opinion, Spielberg will not achieve 'Never Again'. Perhaps he only cares about the Jews of Israel. Yet holocausts are still taking place – in Rwanda 250,000 were massacred in a few days. Racism is everywhere. Violence in the film is no deterrent; it simply shows the brutality of the Nazi officers. The causes of that violence are never addressed.

The other point is that one cannot turn a repentant Nazi into a superman. Hero-worshipping remains an art of imperialist cultural behaviour, which promotes certain individuals for the interests of specific dominating countries, an entente cordiale among imperialists ... I should have liked to see a tribute to the thousands of silent people who saved Jews. And above all, the 40 million Soviets who were left to bear the brunt of this monstrous war on their territory, 40 million voices against fascism.

Colette Lévy

Schindler's List, a film by Steven Spielberg based on the book *Schindler's Ark* by Thomas Kenneally

News

Labour Council racism

Operation Edgar: racist trawl for immigrants

CAT WIENER

On 27 April 70 black people, mainly employees of Labour-controlled Southwark Council, were arrested in early morning raids by police and Home Office officials in an operation code-named 'Operation Edgar'. Those detained at Peckham police station included women with children and teenagers. Six people have now been deported and a further 46 were held for questioning.

The initial plan had been to raid the Town Hall, in full sight of TV and press, to arrest 'several hundred' suspected illegal immigrants. Local police vetoed the plans at the last minute.

According to council employees, the raids were carried out with the full knowledge of the Council. At a Southwark ARA meeting on 3 May, a black council worker spoke of long-standing collaboration between the council's personnel section and the immigration service. She also condemned the role of UNISON. Last year Southwark UNISON black members held a strike against racist practices by Southwark Council. UNISON pledged at that point that if the recommendations drawn up as a result of the strike were not implemented, they would call in the CRE. Nothing has been done. Terry Matthews, UNISON branch secretary, was quoted in the *Daily Mail* as saying of the raids: 'It is a shock. I thought vetting procedures were quite good, but there are loopholes.' UNISON later issued a statement repudiating these remarks.

The Southwark ARA meeting had originally been called to organise against the 'fascist threat' in the local elections. The anti-fascist speaker pointed to the anti-working class attacks of the Tories and capitalism itself as the cause of the rise in racism, and condemned the racist propaganda of the Liberals but barely mentioned Labour. Thus he ignored Labour's introduction of the racist 'sons and daughters' housing policy and its categorisation of immigrant Bangladeshis as 'intentionally homeless'. The reason for this was apparent when he ended his speech with – 'and that means a vote for Labour'.

Margaret Lestor, a black Labour Southwark councillor said she was not standing for re-election and that while she had been a Labour voter all her life – 'Don't ask me who I'm voting for this time'. She asked the meeting: 'When you go out and campaign against the fascists, ask yourselves, who are the real fascists? Who introduced immigration laws? Who introduced them? ...'

The majority of the tiny audience were Socialist Organiser, with a few Militant Labour and Socialist Worker. Most sprang to the defence of Labour and the unions, and spoke of having been out campaigning for the Labour Party. Presumably they had until this point kept quiet about the raids.

A black council worker came back and stated categorically that Southwark Labour Council was racist, and that UNISON had done nothing. Both, she said, had their own agenda, and it was not the agenda of black people.

But the left too has its own agenda: as ever it will put its alliance with the Labour Party and the official union movement before and beyond the fight against racism. ■

Beackon bested

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

Every Saturday afternoon since his election as councillor, fascist Derek Beackon would greet his supporters outside Asda stores on the Isle of Dogs. Flanked by his bodyguards, Beackon would hold court like a *Mafioso* taking handshakes and payments of respect.

London Anti-Fascist Coalition, brought together by activists determined to confront the BNP in the elections, decided to put a stop to Beackon's street show. We decided to hold an anti-fascist rally on that same spot the Saturday before the local elections.

Derek Beackon

The RCG joined Hackney Anti-Fascist Collective, Jewish Socialists, the RCP of Turkey, Workers Power, Tower Hamlets Trades Council, Lambeth UNISON, RIL, WIL and others in a display of anti-fascist unity. All organisations contributed stewards, were allowed to distribute leaflets and all organisations spoke and put their points of view. The RCG pointed to the Labour Party's responsibility for the growth of the fascist right, and that workers must stand together in self defence.

The well organised rally of over 100 anti-fascists drew at first interest and then open applause, especially from Asian residents who testified to the threatening presence of police and fascist squads in the area.

Support from local people was all the more important given that it had already ebbed away from other so-called anti-fascists. Labour MP Mildred Gordon had agreed to attend but backed out at the last moment. Militant's 'Youth Against Racism in Europe' left within minutes, and the SWP/ANL refused to come at all.

The fascists kept well away from the rally. The initiative was a victory and it showed what can be done. ■

Victory over Met

NICOLA RENSTEN

After an eight day hearing in Croydon Crown Court, Dele Olajiga and I finally heard the jury deliver the verdict we had waited seven years for. They found that we were wrongfully arrested, falsely imprisoned and assaulted by officers of Area 3 Territorial Support Group on 3 May 1987 as we waited for a bus home after a march through Haringey, north London, and that prosecutions which followed against us were malicious. They awarded us £20,000 damages plus legal costs.

In the original incident we and others witnessed the police stopping and searching two boys; several people at the bus stop showed their disapproval of this outrageous spectacle. WPC Sharon Daniels, who had carried out the search, immediately arrested Dele without giving any reason. When Dele was arrested he told the police that he was an epileptic and wanted his medication. He was not given it and was dragged along the pavement to a police van. The police fabricated a story in which Dele had been shouting 'look at those fucking fascist pig cunts' and waving a stick in the air.

Dele's arrest led to the arrests of four more people, all for protesting at his treatment. Adam Bowles and I were both arrested as we demanded to know why he was being treated in this way. Two women, completely unconnected to us, were also arrested for protesting.

In the van on the way to Enfield Police Station Dele had an epileptic fit which the police deliberately misinterpreted as struggling and used as an excuse for further assaults on both of us.

Six months after our arrest we were acquitted of all criminal charges and immediately filed a civil action. The police refused to make an out-of-court settlement, presumably convinced they could win on the basis of our previous convictions. James Wood, our barrister, put these convictions into their proper context when he pointed out they were the result of arrests on City AA's Non-Stop Picket of the South African Embassy for the Release of Nelson Mandela and the police were using them in an attempt to discredit us on the very day Mandela was being inaugurated as President.

The police case was not assisted by the transcript of the Magistrates' Court hearing in which they were shown to be liars, nor by the non-appearance of my arresting officer who had been forced to resign in 1991 after being convicted of driving without due care and attention and with no insurance! ■

Prisoners Fightback

On 31 March the RCG held a joint picket with the ABC to mark the fourth anniversary of the Strangeways uprising and to show our solidarity with all those gaoled for their part in the revolt

Prisoner forced to give birth in handcuffs

The outrageous treatment of a pregnant woman on Christmas Eve 1993 has only recently come to public attention. Sue Edwards was serving three years in Styal prison for a non-violent offence. She was considered an 'escape risk' which was the excuse given for not only conveying her to hospital in handcuffs, but for not removing them even once she was giving birth.

Fearing an outcry, the Prison Service belatedly apologised to Ms Edwards. Little consolation for an ordeal during which she was unable to grip the bed to relieve the pain and had to breastfeed her new baby still in handcuffs. There is to be no inquiry and nobody is being disciplined. Sue Edwards is therefore taking civil action herself.

But the big unanswered question remains why doctors and nurses at the Wythenshawe Hospital allowed prison staff to dictate the procedures their maternity unit should follow.

Jamaica – prison ordeal continues

Since reporting the lifting of death sentences on up to 200 Jamaican prisoners (FRFI 116) we have heard from several of the reprieved men. They recount stories of blatant frame-ups and trigger-happy prison warders. Levi Grey was arrested because he danced with a policeman's girlfriend, held without charge, taken to court on several occasions where judges asked why he was there and eventually charged with a murder he knew nothing about. Clarence Marshall describes a slaughter on 31 October 1993 in St Catherine's prison in which four prisoners were shot dead and two others badly injured.

Ivan Morgan, one of the test cases leading to the commutation of the death sentences, has now been moved to South Camp where conditions are better than at St Catherine's; however, he suffers from a stomach ulcer and has no money to purchase appropriate food and medicine.

Letters and donations can be sent to Ivan at South Camp Rehabilitation Centre, 5 Camp Road, Kingston 5, Jamaica.

Sundiata Acoli – racist Parole Board denies justice

Black political prisoner, Sundiata Acoli was denied parole by the New Jersey Parole Board in March following a 20-minute hearing in which he was only allowed to participate by telephone. The Board decided Sundiata must serve a further 10 years before parole is even considered again – the longest knock-back ever in New Jersey.

Sundiata has spent over 20 years in gaol: 13 in solitary confinement and eight in the notorious Marion prison, condemned by Amnesty International for numerous human rights violations.

Prior to his parole application, Sundiata's supporters instigated a letter-writing campaign, participated in by thousands of people worldwide. RCG members sent letters supporting Sundiata and we encouraged FRFI readers in British gaols to write too. When the Board denied parole it stated its concern that it had received hundreds (in fact, thousands) of 'Free Sundiata' form-letters characterising him as a New Afrikan POW.

The Board also cited concern about Sundiata's membership of the Black Panther Party prior to his arrest. It stated the punitive aspects of his sentence had not been satisfied, rehabilitation had not been sufficiently achieved, he had not changed appreciably during his incarceration, and was in need of extensive therapy with a professional psychologist to address his anti-social behaviour in order to live a peaceful and law-abiding existence within the existing governmental structure of the US. What they really meant, of course, was that while Sundiata holds his head high he will not be freed; if he wants parole, he must grovel, show he is completely broken. Only then will they even consider releasing him.

It would be a mistake to imagine that because of the Board's comments, the way to help Sundiata now is to reduce public pressure. On the contrary, we urge all our readers to show support for Sundiata by writing letters condemning the decision. Send them to: New Jersey Parole Board – Adult Panel, CN-862, Trenton, NJ 08625, USA. Send copies to: SAFC, PO Box 5538, Harlem, NY 10027, USA. You can also write direct to Sundiata at PO Box 1000, Leavenworth, Kansas 66048, USA.

Full Sutton – full of hypocrisy

Full Sutton prison in York has been quick to act on the government drive for more 'austerity' in gaols. Changes to the regime have been implemented which mean that prisoners who choose not to work or go on education will be locked up for the whole of the period allocated to those activities and will not receive even the basic 'unemployment' pay. Similar measures are being implemented in other gaols.

To add insult to injury, Full Sutton prisoners recently learned that the prison officer in charge of the kitchen, Clive Marshall, had been arrested while leaving work and is facing charges of stealing prisoners' food allowances to the tune of at least £7,000. As Full Sutton prisoner Mark Stoner-Seed commented, 'The quantity of food we get is barely enough anyway – when will the prisoners in Full Sutton be compensated for the food that an employee of the Prison Service has apparently been stealing from them for years?'

Poole and Mills are innocent!

Gary Mills and Tony Poole were sentenced to life imprisonment in 1990 for the murder of drug-dealer Hensley Wiltshire. They are both in Gartree prison and are now expecting an appeal date to be set in the very near future. The more is revealed about their case the more it stinks of a cover-up, of ill-treatment by police resulting in yet another death in custody and of gross negligence by hospital staff.


Gary Mills


Tony Poole

On the night of 6 January 1989 Gloucester police found Wiltshire in the street with stab wounds, following a fight which Gary Mills admits having but which he and others maintain Wiltshire started. Poole was not involved. For seven and a half hours the police shuttled Wiltshire back and forth between the hospital and the police station until at 11am they put him under arrest for possession of an offensive weapon. Half an hour later he was back at hospital and died at 3.45pm. At the autopsy his body was shown to have 60 per cent more injuries than when he arrived at hospital for the first time.

Kevin O'Neill

Supporters of framed prisoner, Kevin O'Neill held a benefit concert on 7 May to raise both money and awareness of his case. Kevin was unjustly imprisoned for murder eight years ago and is currently in Full Sutton prison. More information about the campaign to free him is available from 'Case For Concern', Christ Church, 94 Brixton Road, London SW9.

Nicki Jameson

4 PAGES OF ANALYSIS, EYEWITNESS REPORTS AND INTERVIEWS FOLLOWING THE SOUTH AFRICAN ELECTIONS

SOUTH AFRICA SOCIALISM POSTPONED

On 26 April millions of black South Africans queued for the first time to choose their own government: it was an historic moment, as the world's press were not slow to tell us. After the count, manipulated to comply with the contesting parties' power-sharing commitments, the ANC were the overwhelming victors; their chief partners the National Party, which had presided over 45 years of unprecedented racist tyranny; their programme committed to a free market economy, dressed up with a more-than-modest reform programme which they are widely predicted, even among their own supporters, to under-perform.

Ten years ago South Africa was on the brink of revolution as the masses challenged white minority rule. A new trade union movement was capable of mobilising millions of workers and was committed not only to liberation but also to a socialist future. The banned liberation movements were openly supported by the masses and were committed to socialism – the largest, the ANC, had a long history of collaboration with the South African Communist Party (SACP), with many communists in its leading ranks. The ANC's programme was avowedly socialist:

> 'In our country more than in any other part of the oppressed world, it is inconceivable for liberation to have meaning without a return of the wealth of the land to the people as a whole. It is therefore a fundamental feature of our strategy that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy. To allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the root of racial supremacy and does not represent even a shadow of liberation.' (ANC: *Strategy and Tactics*, Morogoro, April 1969)

The outcome of the election, which is not even a shadow of liberation, requires a response. Has the most promising revolutionary situation transformed into historic defeat? Has the ANC achieved a democratic revolution? What will be the consequences for the black working class and the oppressed? FRFI has consistently promoted revolution in South Africa and been prominent in giving solidarity to the liberation struggle. We have these questions to answer.

It was precisely at the point when the revolutionary direction of the liberation struggle in South Africa was at its critical moment, that the ideologues of the ANC/SACP began to crack under pressure. On 12 June 1986 Botha, then South African President, announced the second State of Emergency in the space of a year. By August, between 10-12,000 people had been detained without trial, and 250 killed. Consumer boycotts, rent strikes, detainee hunger strikes, miners' strikes and massive protests were bringing the country to its knees. Within eight months of its inception, the trade union confederation, COSATU, had called the two largest strikes in South African history, openly proclaimed its socialist aspirations and pledged its support for the community. Jay Naidoo, General Secretary, stated COSATU's particular high regard for the street committees which were the embryo Soviets of the townships. Hundreds of thousands of school pupils refused to register for school.

The white business community in South Africa was terrified, the imperialists were terrified and, as history has shown, sections of the ANC and SACP were quaking in their boots. It was at this moment that Mandela began secret talks with his jailers, the ANC held secret talks with white businessmen, and, to mark the 65th anniversary of the SACP, General Secretary Joe Slovo addressed a rally in London where he began to outline the ideological basis for a 'peaceful road to socialism'.

The *nationalisation* of the land, the mines, the banks and monopoly industry enshrined in the ANC's Freedom Charter, was transformed by Slovo into '*immediate state measures*'. Gavin Reilly, chair of Anglo-America, Slovo proposed, would agree to such measures in 'truncated form'. 'Disparate forces', socialist and non-socialist, would be part of the liberation front led by the ANC; a 'mixed economy' would be necessary. In order to cement the relationship with 'disparate forces', the drive towards a socialist future in South Africa 'within a truly democratic framework, could well be settled in debate rather than on the streets'. Revolutionary victory for the working class was to be postponed to a vague and uncertain future.

> 'We believe that the kind of victory to be aimed for in the coming struggles must provide a launching pad for the creation of conditions which will make it possible to work for a socialist future.'

At the time FRFI (Issue 62, September 1986) carried a critique of Slovo's speech, pointing out that the direction Slovo was taking would lead inexorably to stifling the struggle at the point of national liberation in the interests of the bourgeoisie and at the expense of the working class:

> 'It is true as Slovo says that the revolution is a continuous process. It is also true that it goes through strategic and tactical phases – including a national democratic phase in the case of South Africa. But "the ingredients of the later phase" will only "mature in the womb of the earlier" if the Communist Party asserts and defends the independent interests of the black working class at each and every turn. Communists *neither* put forward the demand for a socialist republic now in South Africa (Trotskyism) *nor* fail to assert the primacy of the working class until the victory of the national democratic revolution (Menshevism).'
> (David Reed, 'Communists and the South African Revolution', FRFI 62, September 1986)

It cannot be too much emphasised that Slovo's speech took place in the context of a live revolutionary struggle in South Africa, on a scale that neither the ANC nor the SACP had ever experienced. Slovo's speech was the first sign that this was a test of commitment to the interests of the working class which the SACP and ANC were likely to fail.

From the Freedom Charter:

'THE PEOPLE SHALL SHARE IN THE COUNTRY'S WEALTH!

The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole.

All other industries and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people; . . .

THE LAND SHALL BE SHARED AMONG THOSE WHO WORK IT!

Restriction on land ownership on a racial basis shall be ended, and all the land re-divided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and hunger; . . .

ALL SHALL BE EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW!

No one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial; . . .

THERE SHALL BE HOUSES, SECURITY AND COMFORT!

All people shall have the right to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space to be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no one shall go hungry. . .'

By 1990 Slovo was using the opportunity of 'reform' in the Soviet Union to abandon the central tenets of Marxism and to expand on his 'peaceful road to revolution' thesis. The dictatorship of the proletariat was ditched in favour of faith in the adaptability of bourgeois democracy and the possibility of peaceful progression. This was the cue to abandon not just the struggle for socialism, but also a thorough-going national democratic revolution led by the working class.

From 1986 onwards the ANC systematically demobilised the trade union movement and the anti-apartheid struggle inside the country. The union confederations were consistently split on the basis of support for the Freedom Charter. By 1990 the unions were tied to the struggle for economic improvement, on the grounds that politics was the province of the liberation movement. After Mandela's release and the unbanning of the liberation movements and the SACP, the internal leadership of the struggle was systematically replaced by the leadership in exile. Over the next four years, mass action was simply a tool in the various stages of negotiations, only to function as a threat when negotiations broke down.

At the same time millions of dollars poured in from western imperialist governments which had recognised that the future stability of South Africa as a source of superprofits lay not with their previous allies, PW Botha and the National Party, but with a potential black government which could control and discipline the working class. Slovo linked his recantation of Marxist principles to Gorbachev's reform of the Soviet Union, but the real basis was not in the realm of ideas but at the level of material reality. Imperialism was offering to help the ANC to power under certain conditions.

Today, in 1994, we do not have to prognosticate on the direction that the SACP and the ANC will take. Slovo, as one of the ANC's chief negotiators, ensured that the white civil service, including the police and army, would remain in place in a power-sharing deal which will last for the next five years at least. None of the ANC's leading figures, including the avowed communists and socialists, believes that socialism is even a possibility in a world where they argue that the balance of class forces has changed dramatically.

If we accept this as true and that Slovo et al are simply acting pragmatically in difficult circumstances, but will launch the struggle for socialism when conditions improve, then why were the first shifts in position apparent in 1986 at the height of the revolutionary struggle? Further, even if present conditions are difficult, in what way does the ANC's current programme both defend the interests of the working class and enhance its prospects for future liberation? In other words, has the ANC/SACP, in Slovo's words, provided 'a launching pad for the creation of conditions which will make it possible to work for a socialist future', or has it simply gone over to the side of the bourgeoisie?

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) sets out promises for the next five years: 1.5 million new houses; electricity for 2.5 million homes; free education; 2.5 million jobs through an expansive programme of public works; the redistribution of 30 per cent of arable land. The ANC estimates this will cost £7 billion, although other estimates are ten times higher.

In comparison to the realities of life for the majority, these targets do not even come into the category 'modest'. 8 million black people live in squatter camps; 23 million have no electricity; unemployment stands at 50%; 12 million have no access to drinkable water; 42% of households live below the minimum living level, with 4 million close to starvation; illiteracy affects half the black population, higher than Zambia or Lesotho. In 1991, 6 out of 10 black male adults had no income whatsoever. Even if the RDP is achieved, it will be a drop in an ocean of deprivation.

According to Trevor Manuel, ANC Economics Chief and now Minister for Trade, Industry and Tourism, the RDP targets will be achieved without tax increases or a boost in government spending, simply by slashing defence spending, streamlining the 1.2 million civil servants and improving tax collection. This will not be so easy: defence and security ministers Joe Modise and Sydney Mafamundi are already arguing for more money to buy aircraft and ships, and the security forces have been swelled by the inclusion of thousands of ex-MK soldiers; civil servants have protected status under powersharing. This leaves only improved tax collection. In the context of no tax increases, this can only mean a drive to collect taxes and rents from the majority.

Mandela's own priorities have been to reassure the business community and the white majority that they have nothing to fear from the ANC in power, and at the same time to minimise the expectations of the majority. At the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, just before the elections, he reiterated this: 'We say that the economy of this country must be built on sound market principles. The RDP is a document based on common sense, and there is absolutely not a single sentence about nationalisation.' Mandela has never

continued overleaf

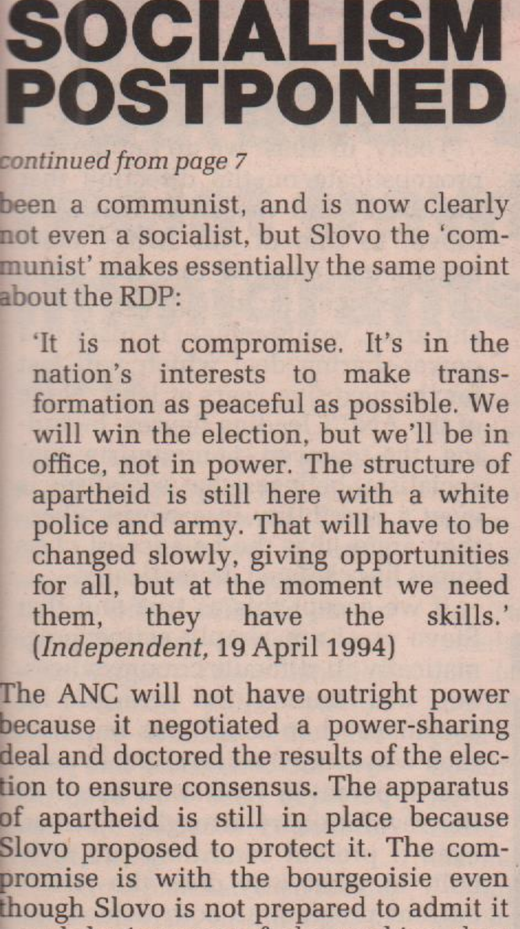
SOUTH AFRICA SOCIALISM POSTPONED

continued from page 7

been a communist, and is now clearly not even a socialist, but Slovo the 'communist' makes essentially the same point about the RDP:

> 'It is not compromise. It's in the nation's interests to make transformation as peaceful as possible. We will win the election, but we'll be in office, not in power. The structure of apartheid is still here with a white police and army. That will have to be changed slowly, giving opportunities for all, but at the moment we need them, they have the skills.' (*Independent,* 19 April 1994)

The ANC will not have outright power because it negotiated a power-sharing deal and doctored the results of the election to ensure consensus. The apparatus of apartheid is still in place because Slovo proposed to protect it. The compromise is with the bourgeoisie even though Slovo is not prepared to admit it – and the interests of the working class have been superseded by those of 'the nation'.



Joe Slovo

The real dynamic of class forces at work may be demonstrated by the percentage change in incomes between 1975 and 1991. By 1991 at the height of recession, the top fifth of black people had received a 40% rise in income, whereas the bottom two fifths had seen their incomes reduced by more than 40%. For Asians and 'coloureds', the vast majority saw substantial income rises. The ANC's commitment to 'market forces' will accelerate this trend. Well before the election the ANC leadership had removed itself from the townships, moving into luxurious accommodation in white suburbs, and more importantly, choosing as arbiters of its programme not the needs of the black working class, but the hopes and fears of big business and an aspirant black bourgeoisie.

In the end Mandela and his government have to choose between the majority and the likes of Harry Oppenheimer: their interests are irreconcilable. Mandela is a creature of the moment, the darling of imperialism and every smooth-talking social democrat. His much-lauded patrician qualities (reflected no doubt in an almost all-male cabinet) will not keep him in power if, like that other modern miracle-worker Gorbachev, he fails to go as far as his imperialist and bourgeois masters require. The ANC's programme is not a launching pad for socialism; it is a demonstration of how far the ANC leadership is willing to dance to imperialism's tune.

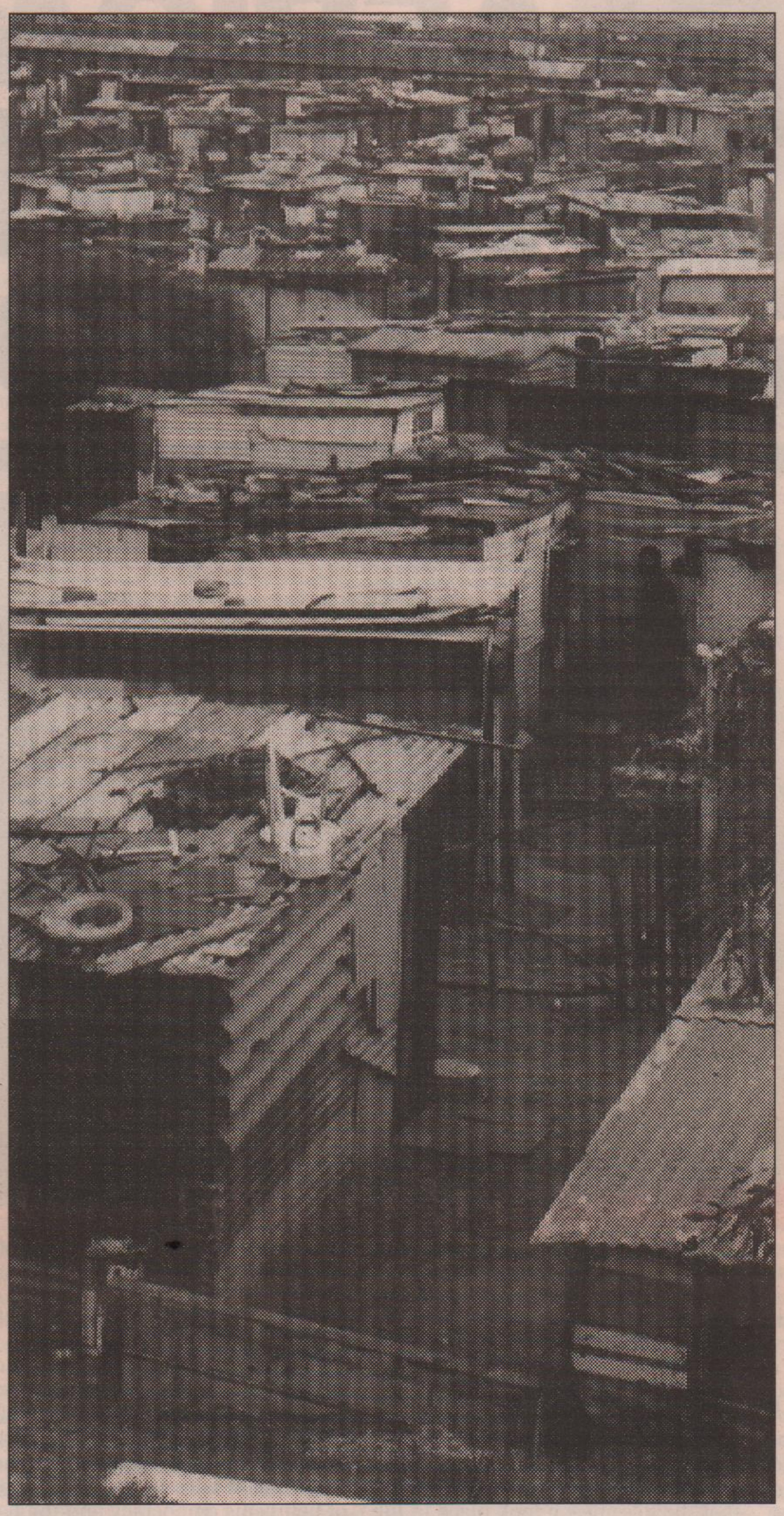
The real test of the next five years will be whether the erstwhile communists and socialists will be able to reconcile the working class to the rigours of the free market. Slovo is sure that he can. Asking how he would deal with a demand for pay rises if the Finance Minister Derek Keys (National Party) said there was no money, he responded: 'I will tell the workers they cannot have the money. They must remember the 50% who are unemployed. They will take this from me because they know I am their friend.'

Lenin in 1920 recognised the dangers of the likes of Slovo, whose aim is to reconcile the working class to bourgeois rule:

> 'Opportunism is our principal enemy. Opportunism in the upper ranks of the working-class movement is not proletarian socialism but bourgeois socialism. Practice has shown that the active people in the working class movement who adhere to the opportunist trend are better defenders of the bourgeoisie than the bourgeoisie itself. Without their leadership of the workers, the bourgeoisie could not remain in power.' (Lenin *On Britain,* p523, Moscow)

The opportunists will not have it all their own way. South Africa's working class movement has, in the recent period, held back its struggle in the interests of destroying white minority rule. This is not the same as defeat. The history of class consciousness in the South African working class and oppressed movements is not superficial, it is deeply rooted in centuries of struggle against false promises and betrayal.

Carol Brickley



Squatter camp near Guguletu township in the Western Cape

The new cabinet:

President: Nelson Mandela (ANC)
Vice Presidents: Thabo Mbeki (ANC), FW de Klerk (National Party (NP))
Justice: Dullah Omar (ANC); Deputy: Chris Fismer (NP)
Defence: Joe Modise (ANC)
Safety and security: Sydney Mafamundi (ANC)
Education: Sibusiso Bhengu (ANC)
Trade, industry & tourism: Trevor Manuel (ANC)
Foreign affairs: Alfred Nzo; Deputy: Aziz Pahad (both ANC)
Labour: Tito Mboweni (ANC)
Post, telecommunications, broadcasting: Pallo Jordan (ANC)
Health: Nkosazana Zuma (ANC)
Transport: Mac Maharaj (ANC)
Provincial and constitutional affairs: Roelf Meyer (NP); Deputy: Mohamed Vali Moosa (ANC)
Land: Derek Hanekom (ANC)
Public enterprise: Stella Sigcau (ANC)
Housing: Joe Slovo (ANC)
Correctional services: Sipho Mzimela (Inkatha)
Finance: Derek Keys (NP)
Agriculture: Kraai van Niekerk (NP)
Sport: Steve Tshwete (ANC)
Home affairs: Mangosuthu Buthelezi (Inkatha)
Minerals & energy: Pik Botha (NP)
Welfare and population: Abe Williams (NP)
Minister without portfolio: Jay Naidoo (ANC)
Arts, culture, science: Ben Ngubane (Inkatha); Deputy: Winnie Mandela (ANC)
Environment: Dawie de Villiers (NP); Deputy: Bantu Holomisa (ANC)

The final breakdown of seats in the Constituent Assembly was: ANC 252; National Party 82; Inkatha Freedom Party 43; Freedom Front 9; Democratic Party 7; PAC 5; African Christian Democratic Party 2.

Hannah Caller and Richard Roques spent two weeks in South Africa to observe the election

A vision

'As we flew into Jan Smuts airport on 19 April the regime was supposedly no longer in power. The country was being administered by the Transitional Executive Council (TEC). De Klerk had proclaimed a State of Emergency in Kwazulu-Natal with Mandela's blessing. The National Peacekeeping Force (NPK) had been withdrawn from Thokoza township and confined to barracks; the SADF had been sent in to stop the carnage. Already the attempt to create a supposedly impartial Security Force during the elections had failed.

At an Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) training session we learnt that Inkatha would probably be joining the electoral process. The existing ballot papers had nineteen Parties contesting the elections to the National Assembly; the IFP would be affixed to the bottom with a sticker. The presence of so many Parties was unexpected to us and confusing for the electorate. The streets are full of posters and the newspapers stuffed with advertisements. The ANC will give 'Jobs, Peace and Freedom'. The National Party say 'We've made the change – be sure of a better life', or 'Vote NP, keep the Communists out'. The Democratic Party say 'Vote for us, No Murderers, Torturers, Corruption'. Within hours of the announcement of their inclusion on the ballot the Inkatha Freedom Party have posters and advertisements proclaiming 'IFP – A Power for Good.' The South African Defence Force are 'A Force for Reconciliation'. Shell wants us to know 'Enough tears, enough blood, it is time for peace'. Eskom the Electricity Company 'would like to assure you that everything possible is being done to maintain your electricity both during the elections and in the future'. The 23 million black people who have never been supplied with electricity seem to be forgotten.

The ANC offices in Johannesburg are the target of a bomb in which ten people are killed. There are nine explosions in 24 hours, six at polling stations. A right wing group called the ABB claim responsibility.

There is no public transport system here. There are some trains and buses to transport labour from the townships to the industrial and commercial areas and back again. Then there is the dangerous, informal transport in 'taxis' if you don't mind waiting an hour or two in a queue every morning and every night. Apart from this, without a car you don't travel around. Travelling from the plush residential areas of Constantia and Bishopscourt and downtown Cape Town, it is like another country entering the nearby townships of Guguletu, Khayelitsha, Langa, Nyanga, Mitchells Plain, Crossroads

Interview with Dullah Omar, ANC, Minister of Justic

'ANC governmen

Why did the Patriotic Front not succeed as a united front to confront the regime?
The failure of the PF was fundamentally due to PAC and AZAPO being opposed to negotiations so the starting points of the liberation movements were different. The ANC was involved in a process, the conclusion of which meant there was no alternative. The international situation and the situation in Africa had changed and there was no alternative to negotiations. Deadlock would have occurred if endless deliberations on negotiations had taken place. They could not delay.

Given the events that took place within the PF, would it be fair to say that the ANC seems to have more contradictions with other liberation organisations than with the NP and the regime?
No. We clearly understood that the PAC and AZAPO were never part of the enemy. We knew that we were negotiating with the enemy.

If the ANC win two thirds of the vote will they then rewrite the constitution?
It is not in the interests of the struggle to do this. This would invite counter-revolutionary forces, therefore the ANC will move more slowly and cautiously. It is in the interests of the oppressed masses to have a period of peace. The regime has caused divisions. Large numbers have been drawn into enemy forces, for example Buthelezi mobilizing thousands. The democratic movements and the trade union movements have failed to break the back of this movement.

The IMF and the World Bank never lend money unless the receiving country is prepared to implement austerity measures. Mandela has also said that investors may repatriate profits and at the same time he is assuring the people that the economy will be run in their interests.
I share this concern with regard to the IMF and World Bank. I hope we will deal with them as little as possible. Policy making should not be controlled by the World Bank and IMF. South Africa is part of an international system. As a socialist it is a sad phenomenon that we are not on the threshold of a socialist society. We need to alter the balance of forces internationally or socialism will not be possible, therefore we must live with the situation where we guarantee investment of investors and they may repatriate their profits.

How will the ANC deal with unrest among the people. Where do you stand on the repeal of repressive legislation?
First of all on the right to strike. They were useful under apartheid but there are still occasions when workers were called on not to strike. There is a need to guard the right to strike in the constitution. With regard to repressive legislation, the democratic state needs powers to detain people and deal with counter revolutionaries.

Including detention without trial?
Yes, even detention without trial is necessary but not isolated from the State of Emergency. To have detention without trial during a State of Emergency is within international law. Section 29 has gone. We should not have had such legislation. The President should have the power to

s: they returned with eyewitness reports and interviews with representatives of the liberation movements

n of democracy

and the squatter camps. The Group Areas Act may not be on the statute books of the 'New' South Africa, but it remains a grim reality for the majority of the population. In the impenetrable townships, brick shacks with corrugated iron roofs, miserable impersonations of houses, are arranged in serried, cramped rows. In most backyards there are outbuildings with no water or electricity. How many people live there is anybody's guess. There are no street signs, little lighting, shops are set up in people's front rooms, schools are dilapidated pre-fabs surrounded by barbed wire. The single sex hostels still exist, where men are forced to eke out their short, brutish lives in conditions you wouldn't force an animal to live in. In adjoining squatter camps naked children play next to open sewers. Rows of crosses mark graves, packed as tightly together in death as they were in life.

On Tuesday 26 April we go to Pollsmoor Prison. The Electoral Act was amended only after thousands of prisoners went on hunger strike for the right to vote. 21 prisoners set light to their cells in protest and died because the fire was not extinguished. In the afternoon we observe voting at Groote Schuur hospital where Dr Christiaan Barnard performed his pioneering heart transplants while white only ambulances left black people to bleed to death on the side of the road. At midnight the old South African flag is lowered and the new flag raised. *Nkosi Sikele* is sung and immediately afterwards they sing a verse of *Die Stem*, the anthem of fascist white minority rule.

On Wednesday 27, the first full day of voting, Rolf Meyer and Pik Botha cast their votes in Orlando West in Soweto. No white people live there of course, but it makes for good television. 18 people are injured in a bomb in Jan Smuts airport. We visit about ten different Voting Stations. In Langa people started queuing at 4am and there was a stampede when the Station opened at 7am which took nearly an hour to control. It rains heavily in the morning but people stand patiently for hours in order to vote. In other areas of the country people stand in the blistering sun. In Rylands, a so-called 'Indian' township, we are told most people are voting National Party. The NP have been giving out loaves of bread with NP stickers on them. They have been telling people formerly classified 'coloured' and 'Indian' that the ANC will take their houses and jobs and give them to the blacks. We are shown a church and a mosque that received R250,000 from the NP to set up soup kitchens and pay off water and electric bills.

We see busloads of voters from Khayelitsha where hardly any Voting Stations have opened. There was a hunger among the people to vote. We saw massive queues of people waiting to exercise for the first time this most basic of democratic rights and, for a country with such a history of political intolerance, in relative peace and safety. By the evening of the first day of voting it has become clear that there have been serious irregularities and abuses of the electoral process.

De Klerk has now claimed he and the National Party are legitimate. Now, we are told, all are equal in the new South Africa as they face the will of the people in democratic elections. For all the celebrations and the dancing at the advent of the first non-racial elections in South Africa there is a feeling that it's all been done before. After all, they've had the British Trade Union Movement and the British police over to give advice. The party that administered the repression, routinely tortured tens of thousands and mercilessly exploited millions, is just one more party on the ballot paper contesting these elections. In the interests of 'national reconciliation' the past has been forgotten. In fact it is in the worst possible taste to mention 'Apartheid'. The word seems to have gone out of the vocabulary. The process of 'levelling the political playing field' has been more about rehabilitating the torturers, the administrators of white minority rule. And how did we get here? Not through the struggle of the liberation movements and the sacrifices made by the masses but because of the vision of the decent, Christian De Klerk.

On 2 May, the night before we left, there was a party that had already been going on for three days in the ANC National headquarters. People had gathered outside for a glimpse of the champagne-drinking celebrities within. After several hours they took to the streets, toyi-toying and ululating, no money in their pockets, spectators at the feast. Now that the election was over the media and the triumphant ANC were being less optimistic in their promises. You will have to be patient, we cannot provide jobs and houses overnight. 'You will not all get a Mercedes Benz,' said President Mandela.

The people are being told they must be patient. But when the policeman who shot your child has indemnity and a nice house and you still live in a squatter camp, your patience is strained. And when ten thousand share one tap, and a stone's throw away each garden has a swimming pool, you begin to ask whether this 'democracy' is really what you were struggling for. ■

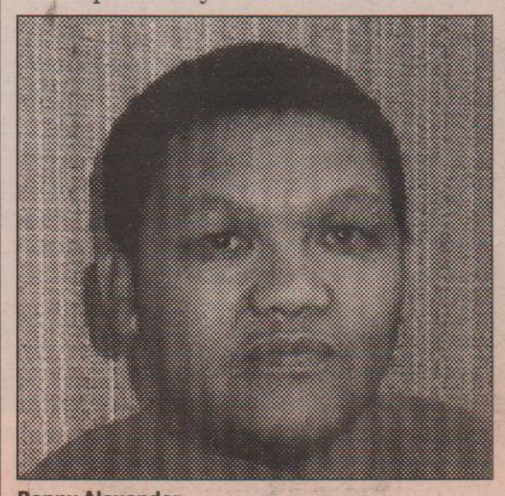
'The issue now is socialism'

Interview with Benny Alexander, General Secretary, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania

The elections in Azania/South Africa were elections not to choose a government but to endorse a pre-agreed settlement between the African National Congress and the National Party. The Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC) took part in the elections with disappointing results – only five seats in the new Constituent Assembly.

Benny Alexander, Secretary General of the PAC, spoke to FRFI about the new situation in Azania/South Africa.

'The reason why the ANC will fail, in spite of our sincere well-wishing, is because it has decided not to take control of the means of production, distribution and exchange, to leave the capitalist system intact.



Benny Alexander

The African National Congress and the National Party have already agreed on going to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB).

The programme of the IMF and the WB will have the following results. In order to increase our resources and our wealth we will need to cut down on all government subsidies. In order to get immediate cash to attend to social spending, we must sell raw materials abroad, which will kill manufacturing. We will then be advised to devalue our currency to encourage foreign investment. All this is going to cause the working class to suffer more.

The masses did not reject the PAC in this election. The masses fell for the propaganda that said if you don't vote for Mandela you get De Klerk. So they voted for Mandela, but they still believed that Mandela would pursue policy programmes akin to those of the PAC. So we still remain very much relevant.'

Benny Alexander explained why the PAC entered the elections, given the PAC's awareness of the process and the outcome.

'We took part in the election because it was going to end white minority rule; to that extent there is a positive aspect. Unfortunately we underestimated the impact of the media programme. We thought that on the ground we could counter the onslaught by the media.'

He thinks that those who did not take part in the elections, 'did so out of reasons which amount to ideological bankruptcy. It is a struggle all the way and whilst you are clear about that you cannot stay out of a contest for political power.'

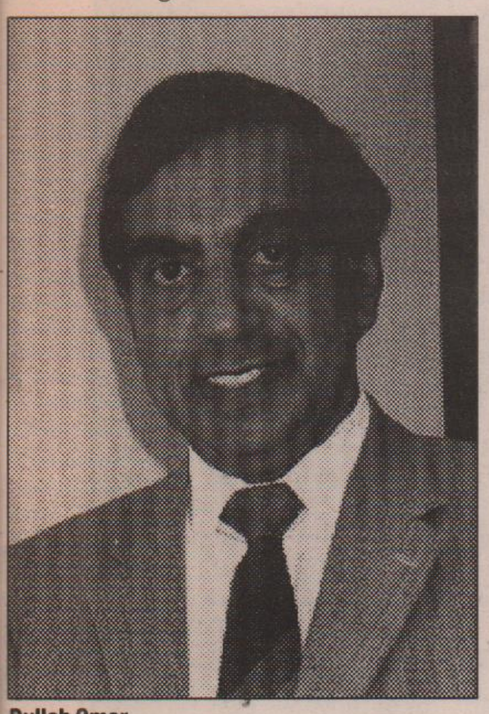
It is clear that fraudulent activity was allowed to take place during the conduct of the elections without being exposed, in order for the results to be acceptable to the future power-sharing government and the imperial-

continued overleaf

e in the new Cabinet

t – Moving slowly and cautiously'

declare a State of Emergency only where there is a real threat to the security of the country. This should have the proviso that it could be contested in court. People detained must have access to lawyers and doctors from the state. There should be no holding of people incommunicado. I have mixed feelings about this as I know that detention without trial was used against those fighting for social change and it is often used



Dullah Omar

against the left. We need to ensure that Trade Union leaders and others are not locked up for dissent but we need powers to deal with right wing forces.

The ANC will soon be in the position of managing a capitalist economy. Is the ANC now a national liberation organisation or a partner in a neo-colonialist set-up?

I do not think people can step out of the capitalist system. Revolutionary and socialist parties could be accused of managing a capitalist system. Managing a country means having to work within the constraints of capitalism. The question is whether you work for the benefit of the people or the benefit of the exploiters.

Why did you not continue the demand for an elected Constituent Assembly to draw up a constitution as opposed to drawing one up before the election?

The terrain may have been more favourable if the constitution were to be drawn up after the election, but we would still have been sitting with the same problems of media control and control of the security forces. The central question is the balance of forces and it would not be possible to simply write a constitution without the inclusion of other forces.

Surely this is a defeatist position. You have decided that socialism is not possible. Capitalism still spells poverty, degradation and misery, South Africa will be no different. What of the road Cuba has taken?

Cuba today is retreating, now it is guaranteeing investment and repatriation of profits, but Cuba's example is the lesson we must learn. The crisis in Cuba means I am less flexible on this question. I feel I am right on the balance of forces in the world. Everyone would agree. It would be a defeatist position if I was saying socialism should be abandoned and capitalism is better. I am saying that socialism is not possible at this stage. ■

Right-wingers bombed the street near the ANC and PAC offices in Johannesburg

THE LAND QUESTION AND THE INTERIM CONSTITUTION

The 1913 and 1936 Land Acts robbed black people of land ownership. Under Apartheid 87% of the population had only 13% of the land allocated for their use. 71% of all arable land is under the ownership and control of 60,000 white farmers. Half the black population live in rural areas. Five to six million labour on white-owned farms. There are substantial numbers of seasonal farm labourers, most of them women, the poorest of the poor. In advance of the election, white farmers have been systematically evicting land tenants who have farmed plots of land, in some cases for a hundred years, but have been unable to own them in designated white areas. ANC land-policy adviser Joanne Yawitch admits there will be huge fights because 'we lost the battle of the birthright' in the constitution.

The transitional constitution creates a number of new institutions including a 'Land Rights Commission'. Chapter III of the Transitional Constitution Section 28 states 'No deprivation of any rights in property shall be permitted otherwise than in accordance with a law . . . Where any rights in property are expropriated pursuant to a law such expropriation shall be permissible for public purposes only and shall be subject to the payment of agreed compensation'. The expropriation will be 'for public purposes only', capable of very narrow interpretation – such as road or public building only. The Transitional Constitution will be subject to legal challenges. It could be that the Government of National Unity will be prevented from any land redistribution.

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ist influences: 'Things which in any European and North American country would have immediately led to the election being declared null and void, are being accepted because people are saying, in terms of African standards it is good enough for those people. The view of the Independent Electoral Commission and the international community, particularly European and North American governments, is fundamentally a racist approach in analysing this election.'

The important issue that now arises for organisations in Azania/South Africa is the question of taking the struggle forward. The PAC will not be taking part in the Government of National Unity (cabinet), but will be in the parliament as an opposition force. Benny Alexander told FRFI how they see the new situation:

'We have changed our strategic framework because the stage of the struggle has changed. Changed from a white-ruled capitalist system to a neo-colonialist imperialist dominated order. The struggle has moved to a class struggle. Our struggle was of all the classes of the African people led by the working class. We are no longer fighting a multi-class struggle against white domination, we are now fighting a working class struggle against the bourgeoisie.

'Outside parliament we have to continue mass struggles for housing, health, jobs, and interpret these things so that the movement itself can have a proper class orientation. We will also have to increase our ideological work.'

In the years prior to the election, many working class leaders were corrupted. Benny Alexander detailed this process:

'Big companies like Lonrho took people who were in the labour movement, identified the influential ones and bought them massive houses in the upper-class white areas. When Cyril Ramaphosa was with us he took a position to the left of the PAC within the trade union, now he's far right because of the way in which they corrupted him. Take one of the upbeat influential members of the Communist Party, like the PWV [area] premier of the ANC, people thought that he was number two to Chris Hani in the Communist Party, but they corrupted him too and he would not be seen within spitting distance of the Communist Party. Mayekiso, one of the most outstanding worker leaders, decided to enter the structures of the ANC. The imperialists bought him two or threeproperties, corrupted him and he just echoes the sentiments of the bourgeiosie and of the petit-bourgeois reactionaries in the ANC. He defends them ardently and viciously.'

Benny Alexander says the PAC never regarded the SACP as socialists but saw them as 'left petit bourgeois intellectuals who had mastered the art of abusing neo-Marxist rhetoric. Since their unbanning of 1990, they have even dropped the neo-Marxist rhetoric.

'Now that all the elite have come together, black and white, you have to fight an anti-neo-colonialist struggle, and therefore there is a need now to form a front and call it clearly a socialist front.'

FRFI also spoke to Michael Siyolo, regional organiser for the PAC, Western Cape. He was arrested on 3 January 1994 along with other senior Western Cape PAC members. They were detained under section 29 of the Internal Security Act, accused of the Tavern shooting in Cape Town on 30 December 1993. They were eventually released on bail at the end of March. They have not been charged yet and no evidence has been brought forward. The arrests of senior PAC members at such a critical time leading up to the elections was not coincidental, and severely hampered their campaign in the Western Cape. Their trial date has been set for the 20 May 1994. ■

The final outcome of the election and the decision on whether it was 'free and fair' were not subject to an objective test – ultimately it was a political settlement among the main parties

Free and fair elections?

Every election starts with a period of campaigning. The National Party and the ANC had for all intents and purposes been campaigning for several years. The National Party and the other racist parties had well-oiled and resourced election machinery. All the parties received some IEC funds for the campaign, but the starting point was never equal, and there was never any accounting for expenditure or equality of broadcasting time. The ANC received over R60 million from Africa alone, the PAC received R1 million.

It should be remembered that these were not elections to choose a Government or even a Constituent Assembly, but to install a power-sharing Government of National Unity to administer the country under a Transitional Constitution agreed in advance by the ANC and NP. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was responsible not only for organising and administering the elections in South Africa, but also for pronouncing whether or not they were free and fair.

The Inkatha Freedom Party entered the election only six days before polling began. Since the ballot papers were already printed the IEC decided that polling stations would be issued with stickers, to be stuck along the bottom of the existing papers, offering the IFP option. By the end of the first day of voting it was clear that many polling stations had not received the stickers. Instead voters had been told to write IFP at the bottom of the ballot paper. In fact these were not included in the count, nor were any ballot papers without the stickers. Who knows how many were disenfranchised in the process?

On the evening of 27 April, the first, main day of voting, with 11.4 million ballot papers missing the IEC decide to print another 9.3 million overnight with the Inkatha Freedom Party option. There was no account of where ballot papers were issued or how many.

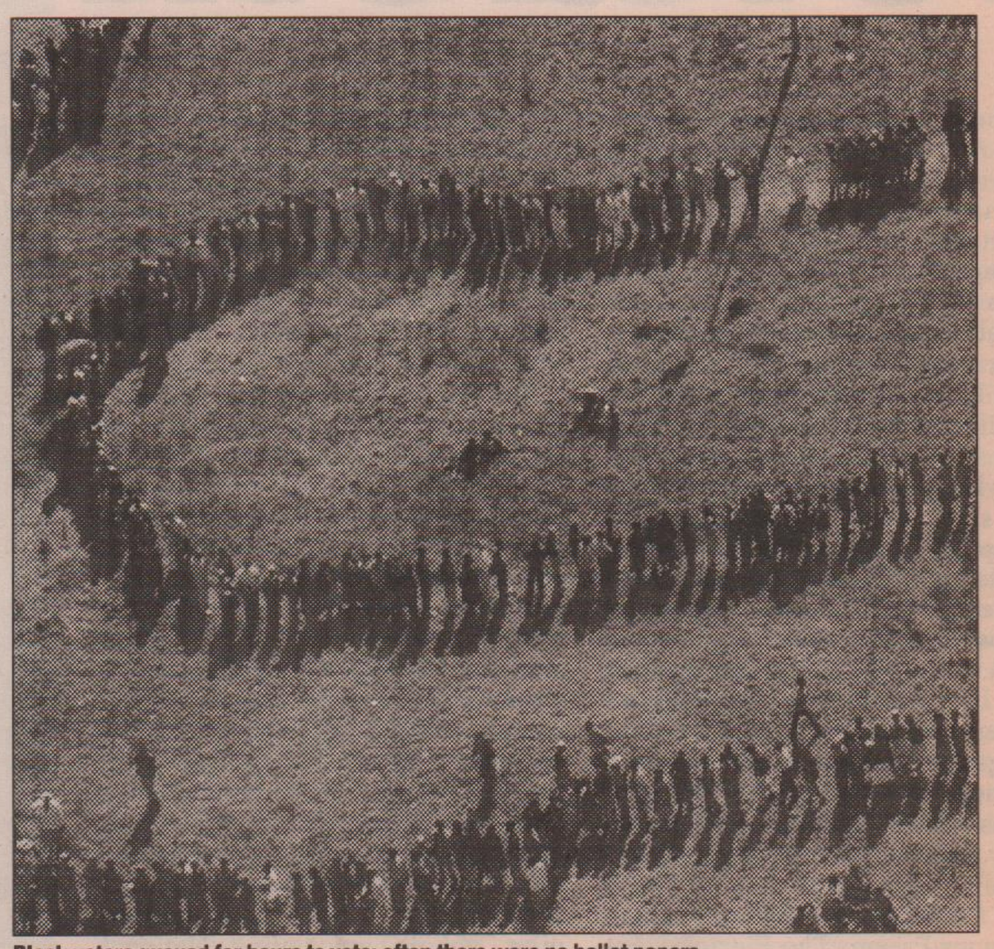
A pattern quickly emerged of areas where no voting materials had arrived at all. People stood in queues for hours only to be told to go home. The areas affected were the homelands, notably the Transkei and KwaZulu, whole sections of the East Rand and a number of black townships, in the Western Cape, Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain in particular. The areas affected were, of course, those with the highest concentration of black voters. Johann Kriegler announced an extra day of voting on Friday 29 April, but many people were still queuing for temporary ID on this last day of voting.

The IEC's main excuse for these 'problems' was that South Africa had no common voters' roll. Readers of FRFI will know that the PAC has been actively demanding the drawing up of a common voters' roll for over a year. In the absence of registration the IEC had implemented a ballot reconciliation system which was abandoned on the second day of voting with the blasé pronouncement that 'it wasn't very important anyway'. Not surprising, as they had mislaid nearly a third of the printed ballot papers. It became extremely difficult to challenge any of the IEC results.

Extremely easy, though, to set up your own Voting Station. Things were helped along by the decision that where there were not enough ballot boxes postal sacks should be used. With vast areas of the Transvaal with no operating Voting Stations, IFP supporters managed to set up over 80 unofficial polling stations in Kwazulu/Natal. By the time the count had been under way for several days IFP and ANC officials decided that there were just ten disputed Voting Stations and that the IEC and the main parties had better accept this otherwise there would be trouble.

As the count proceeded instances of abuse and irregularity on a massive scale had become legion and irrelevant at the same time. Irrelevant because with only 10% of the vote counted the ANC had been declared winners with the National Party as junior partners in the Government of National Unity. Some 10 million ballot papers were discovered in IEC warehouses in the East Rand. An unlocked, unattended car with several boxes of ballot papers was discovered parked outside the IEC headquarters in Johannesburg. Benny Alexander of the PAC was present at a count where there was not a single PAC vote and yet he was standing next to party agents who had cast their vote at the station in question. Ballot boxes were unsealed, or had different number seals from the recorded number when they left the Voting Station. Others were sealed but the lids could be lifted off. Others were open and the ballot papers were all for the IFP, or they were folded together in bundles of ten or twenty so that they could not possibly have been inserted one at a time.

If these elections had taken place in Europe or the US they would have been declared null and void but the prevailing racist opinion of the IEC was that the process was adequate by 'African standards'. 'Let's not be squeamish about it,' said Kriegler, 'The parties are in a power game with each other, and if they want to settle there's nothing wrong with it ethically or legally.' (*Newsweek*, 16 May) Nothing wrong with it, unless you are trying to hold a democratic election.



Black voters queued for hours to vote: often there were no ballot papers

In the end the results were tuned to a nicety: the ANC vote fell just short of a two-thirds majority so the white minority need not get unduly nervous; the National Party got just enough to ensure a Vice Presidency for de Klerk; and Inkatha just managed a majority in KwaZulu/Natal, and a suitable number of cabinet posts to fend off civil war. No one else mattered.

The count took a week longer than expected, with strikes by the tellers and interference with the main computer which was never accounted for. Nonetheless, the voting had barely finished before the international observers and monitors were rushing to utter the magic words 'free and fair'.

Hold on though, they may have been premature. The ANC is now divided on whether the deal they struck in KwaZulu/Natal was really a good thing. Since the election Buthelezi has rubbed salt in the wounds, failing to take his national cabinet post seriously, and appointing only three ANC members to junior posts in the regional government. Having given Buthelezi the power-base he needed, sections of the ANC leadership are astounded that he will not play the national game of consensus. Local ANC leaders like Harry Gwala have been at the sharp end of Inkatha's apartheid-backed terror which has left thousands dead in the last four years, only to see their position aggravated and ignored. There are rumours now that the pay-off for Inkatha's participation in the election was the gift of one third of regional territory to King Goodwill Zwelathini in person. History may well show that the price paid for the 'free and fair' verdict was much too high. ■

Interview with Azanian People's Organisation

'Socialism is not dead'

Azapo's position since the beginning of the negotiating process has been that no acceptable settlement could be reached unless the liberation movements were united around a programme of minimum, non-negotiable demands. After the failure of the Patriotic Front, it became clear that a 'meaningful programme for liberation' was no longer attainable.

Itumeleng Jerry Mosala, president of Azapo, spoke to FRFI.

'As Azapo we do not necessarily think that elections in themselves would be a betrayal of fundamental principles. It seemed to us that this election was too symbolic. What they are voting for is not as important as the fact that they are voting.

Our campaign was structured around three issues, the land, the economy and the transfer of power. We argued that the decision to vote or not to vote, in the end would be the decision of our people themselves. We will expose them to an understanding of the process. There was something new, the fact that they had to decide for themselves democratically not only which party to vote for but also whether to vote.

The moment is a powerful one symbolically for people. We recognise that people wanted not to be part of those who missed the opportunity, but we really think that our people deserve more. We have to await the post election period and go back to the issues. The ANC have gone beyond acceptable compromise within a revolutionary situation.'

Speaking of the coming period, he said:

'Socialism is not dead. It is absolutely relevant to Azania/South Africa precisely because people are now going to discover that the capitalist solution is not going to deliver the things that they have been promised.

We need to build Azapo to become the true home of all those who are still committed to genuine revolution.

We have refused to have anything to do with the integration into the South African Defence Force. It is very important for Azanla to be reintegrated into the community to enable the community to defend themselves.' ■

SPORTS IN THE 'NEW' SOUTH AFRICA

Reg Feltman, President of SACOS:

'[Under apartheid] Africans didn't play many sports – soccer, netball and boxing mainly. They often had to endure over two hours travelling to and from work. It is dark when they arrive home. There was a bitter struggle to get facilities. We could offer no sponsorship, no rewards, no facilities, just struggle. We oppose elitism. Anybody and everybody should play sport. Now they talk about multi-racial sport. The South African Cricket Board will say the team has been selected on merit, in reality it has been selected on the legacy of 'apartheid. The money spent on tours far exceeds the amount of money ploughed into townships. Establishment sports bodies still hold the purse strings and their participants had been coached from a very early age and had all the best equipment. In non-racist sports even the weakest player had a place. Now they play our teams and they beat us. Say we have teams A, B, C, D and E each with twenty players. They say we must form one team with all the best players. So twenty players get to play regularly and eighty players no longer participate, they can only be spectators and they now have to pay for that privilege.'

The Labour Aristocracy PART 3: Between The Wars

The inter-war period was to see the destruction of the privileged conditions of those skilled sections of the working class familiar as the labour aristocracy to Marx, Engels and Lenin. This did not however mean that the labour aristocracy disappeared as a trend in the working class, rather that its composition changed. This article demonstrates how this process started in the 1920s, and a later article will show how their organisations – the trade unions and the Labour Party – adapted themselves in order to represent new privileged strata that were to emerge during the 1930s.

In our previous two articles, we proved that the concept of the labour aristocracy was an integral part of revolutionary theory from Marx's day, and that it was accepted as such by all major theoreticians in the working class movement. We showed how it was that the labour aristocracy created organisations to defend and advance its interests – exclusive craft unions, and, later, as British imperialism's dominant position in the world was undermined, the Labour Party. We also showed how the newer unskilled unions, formed in opposition to the elitist craft unions, soon succumbed to the prevailing trend of opportunism, their leadership absorbed into the labour aristocracy. ROBERT CLOUGH continues his analysis of the labour aristocracy.

The First Imperialist War

The First Imperialist War had greatly accelerated the incorporation of the organisations of the labour aristocracy into the imperialist state. This process had started with the first significant state welfare measures of the pre-war Liberal Government. The introduction of labour exchanges, a national insurance scheme and the Old Age Pensions Act were all initially opposed by the skilled unions. The TUC Parliamentary Committee argued that national insurance should be restricted to trade unionists 'otherwise you will have men to support who never had been nor never will be self-supporting. They are at present parasites on their more industrious fellows and will be the first to avail themselves of the funds the Bill provides.' Such opposition was quickly bought off when the Government offered the unions a role in the administration of these schemes, and soon there proliferated bodies like the Courts of Referees (administering the National Insurance Act) on which there would always be at least one 'labour representative'.

With the outbreak of war, both the Labour Party and the TUC were swift to defend the Empire against the German threat. The TUC proclaimed an industrial truce and organised recruitment drives for the armed forces. The rewards were substantial: participation in all kinds of state committees to oversee production and distribution, and, for the Labour Party, the offer of cabinet positions in the Coalition Government. In return, the labour aristocracy was expected to police the working class, ensuring that there was a minimum of resistance to speed-up, falling wages and dilution of skilled labour.

The post-war boom

In the post-war period, the most immediate role of the Labour Party and the TUC was to help stave off working class pressure that had built up as working class living standards had plummeted. In the circumstances, the ruling class deemed a brief inflationary boom as politically expedient to buy time. It could not afford any domestic challenge whilst it re-shaped the post-war imperialist order in the context of a triumphant Russian Revolution. Hence it gave the trade union leadership some leeway to maintain its authority through the uncertainties of demobilisation.

For a very short period, the trade union movement was to embrace the mass of the unskilled male working class, as membership rose from 2 million in 1910 to 6.5 million in 1918 and 8.3 million in 1920, of whom 6.5 million were affiliated to the TUC. However, despite the enormous struggles of the period, no independent working class movement appeared with a leadership able to challenge such betrayals as the sabotage of the Triple Alliance in April 1921, or their connivance in the partition of Ireland. Union amalgamations created vast new organisations such as AEU, whose rule book still excluded unskilled workers and women, and the T&GWU and the GM. Both the latter unions, organising unskilled and semi-skilled workers, were structured in such a way as to give the maximum of power to unelected officials and thereby minimise the influence of these poorer sections of the working class. They were to become in effect the private fiefdom of a handful of trade union barons, most notably Ernest Bevin, General Secretary of the T&G throughout almost the whole inter-war period. Leaders such as he were truly to become the 'labour lieutenants of the capitalist class'.

Ernest Bevin

It was not merely through its control of the trade union movement that the labour aristocracy sought to undermine the working class movement – it was also through the manipulation of state welfare. Thus the Labour leader JR Clynes argued in parliament in 1921 that 'organised labour, I am certain, together with the employers, if both were called more in touch with the administration of benefits, could be of great assistance in locating the shirkers, and making it impossible to get money when work could have been got.' And throughout the country, local trade unionists were to play 'hunt the scrounger', often as representatives of Trades Councils on Public Assistance Committees and Boards of Guardians.

The crisis in British industry

From 1921 until after the defeat of the General Strike industrial capital by and large stagnated. Productivity within the coal industry fell substantially: 1.2 million miners produced less coal in 1924 than 1 million did in 1913. Cotton consumption fell and even in the peak year of 1929 amounted to only 1.5 million tons compared to 2.1 million tons in 1913. There was a similar picture for steel, iron and shipbuilding; overall, the value of export manufactured goods in 1923 was 73% of the 1913 level. The captive markets of the Empire were no longer a sufficient compensation for low levels of productivity in these traditional sectors of industry. Such improvements as there were arose more from the intensification of labour than from new investment.

The movement of wages in these sectors reflected the stagnant conditions, falling significantly between 1920 and 1924 – by 11% in cotton, 14% in shipbuilding, 20% in iron and steel and 26% in coal. In the service sector however, there was a different picture, as wages rose by about 15%. Unemployment showed a similar pattern: in 1926, it was 40% in iron, steel and shipbuilding, 18% in cotton, and only in coal at 9% did it match the prevailing levels of the service sector. The traditional labour aristocracy was experiencing a savage assault on its previously privileged conditions. The brief life of the first Labour Government in 1924 did not change anything; it was noteworthy more for showing the extent to which Labour had usurped the role of representing the interests of the labour aristocracy from the Liberal Party, whose disintegration was now assured.

Beyond the General Strike

In these circumstances, a fall in union membership was inevitable, particularly amongst unskilled workers: by the time of the 1926 General Strike in support of miners facing massive wage cuts, TUC-affiliated membership was down to 4.3 million, two-thirds of its 1920 level. And whilst the government engaged in nine months' intensive preparation from late 1925 for the impending confrontation, the trade union leadership did absolutely nothing. But this inactivity was in its interests: defeat in the General Strike would above all mean defeat for those forces which might threaten its control of working class organisation.

The aftermath of the General Strike was a brief industrial boom lasting until 1929, which set the context for a political offensive by the Labour Party/trade union alliance directed against the small Communist Party. During 1927-28, Communists were banned and proscribed within the Labour Party and the trade unions. This coincided with the Mond-Turner talks of 1928 (Sir Alfred Mond was head of ICI, Ben Turner TUC General Secretary), an attempt to develop an open and public alliance with the increasingly dominant forces of finance capital. Although they achieved little in immediate practical terms, their main political conclusion – that British industry must completely re-organise and rationalise if it were to compete on the world market – was to become the refrain of the 1929-31 Labour Government. 'Mondism' was in substance the equivalent of the 'New Realism' of the 1980s. It expressed the self-same interests of a very narrow stratum of the working class as it sought a new accommodation with the ruling class. Thus Bevin could argue that:

> 'It is all very well for people to talk as if the working class of Great Britain are cracking their shins for a fight and a revolution, and we are holding them back. Are they? There are not many of them as fast as we are ourselves.'

Lancashire cotton strikers in August 1932

The image of 'militant' trade union leaders was of course far from reality. Between the General Strike and the outbreak of war, there were only two strikes of any significant size – the 'more looms' dispute of 1932 in the cotton industry, and the 1937 London busmen's strike. The first was a desperate and unsuccessful struggle to resist a massive increase in the intensity of labour; the second was a calculated move by Bevin to destroy the only organised opposition to his rule of the T&G. In both, the Communist Party played a leading role. Otherwise the trade union movement had no relevance for the mass of the working class from 1926 onward.

In summary, the process of institutionalising the organisations of the labour aristocracy continued throughout the first post-war decade. It took place in a number of ways. Nationally, the amalgamation of unions and their assets created huge monoliths whose first priority was their own preservation. Governmental committees with trade union representation had proliferated, Labour had been allowed to form an administration. At a local level, trade union and Labour leaders had been increasingly involved in local government, and in the administration of centrally-funded state welfare. As a consequence, the organisations they led acquired a certain independence from the more privileged strata of the working class they represented. Hence it was that whilst the old labour aristocracy was to fragment under an unrelenting ruling class offensive, the survival of its organisations was never in doubt. The 1930s would then become a transitional period, where a new labour aristocracy would arise based on the luxury and consumer industries of the Midlands and the South, and where the old organisations would adapt themselves to organise and represent their interests. ■

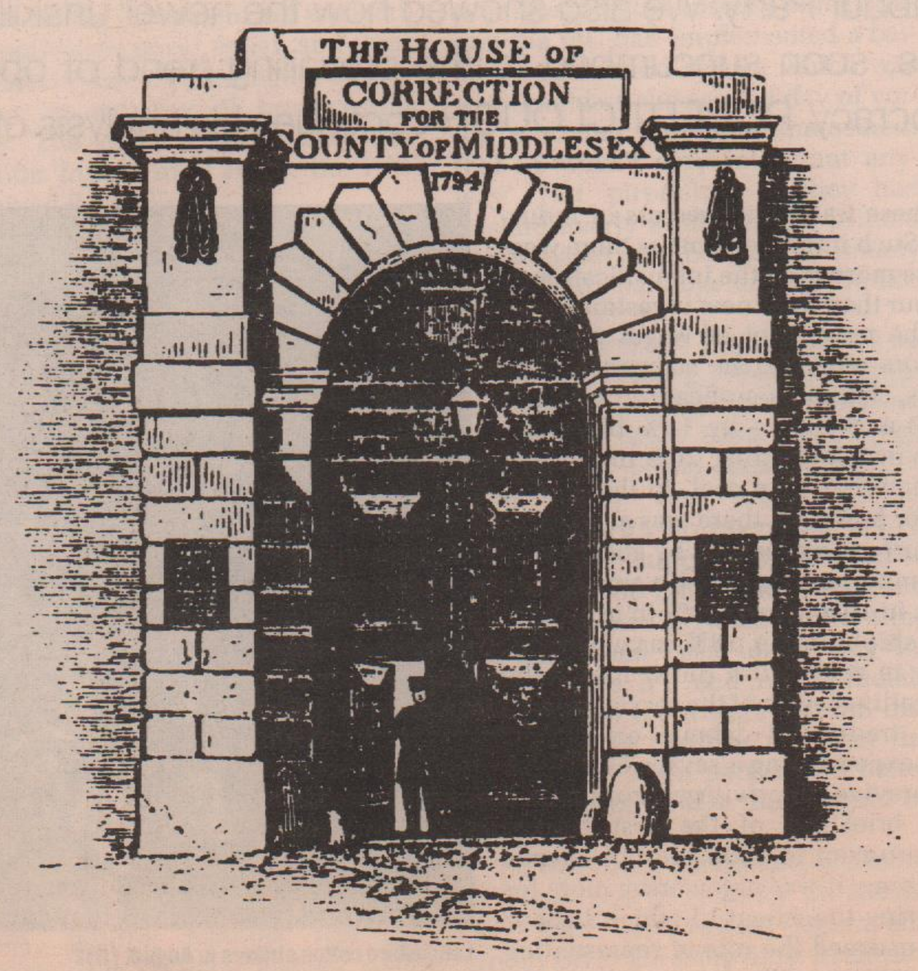
A food convoy in London during the General Strike

THE MODERN PRISON – CAPITALIST PUNISHMENT

Every city has one; Britain sends more people there than any other European country, but prison as we know it is a relatively new innovation. NICKI JAMESON and TREVOR RAYNE examine the history of this instrument of state power.

Incarceration as a systematic and universal punishment began only with the Industrial Revolution. It sought to discipline the working class to accept the conditions that capitalism determines for it. Consequently, prison is also an instrument used to isolate and hammer working class leaders. Prison policy combines liberal reform, emphasized in stable times for capitalism, and vicious retribution, emphasized when crisis looms for the ruling class.

Emergent capitalism forced the means of production out of the hands of labour and enforced 'a degraded and almost servile condition on the mass of the people, their transformation into mercenaries and the transformation of their means of labour into capital' [Marx]. From the Tudor period onwards a growing army of unattached proletarians was hurled onto the labour market by the dissolution of feudal retainers, abolition of monasteries and enclosure movement. Imprisonment and terroristic punishments were used to discipline this 'army of beggars, robbers and vagabonds' into acceptance of waged labour. During the 16th century land values increased and enclosures accelerated. The 1601 Poor Law established 'Bridewells' or 'Houses of Correction' to lock up petty criminals, vagrants and the poor to teach them to lead more 'useful' lives through forced labour.



Crime . . .

By 1770 three-quarters of all agricultural land in England was owned by 4-5,000 aristocrats and gentry. Alongside the enclosures and dispossession of the rural populations there developed a new emphasis in the treatment of crime. Previously, offences against people were considered most serious – and the higher up in society the victim, the more serious the crime; the new 'serious crimes' were committed against property. The range of capital offences increased so rapidly criminal law became popularly known as the Bloody Code. Anything posing even a minor threat to the emerging rural landlord and capitalist classes, such as poaching or forgery, became a hanging matter.

The urban population swelled with the dispossessed. They were dangerous to the newly triumphant capitalism – poor, unintegrated, disrespectful and volatile. E P Thompson writes of the second half of the 18th century: 'One may even see these years as ones in which the class war is fought out in terms of Tyburn, the hulks and the Bridewells on the one hand; and crime, riot and mob action on the other.'

. . . and punishment

Following the 1789 French Revolution the ruling class lived in terror that the upheaval would spread to Britain. Public executions had become carnivals in which the condemned played the hero; the mere assembly of such large crowds at executions was seen as a danger. Similarly, punishments based on public humiliation, such as the stocks, fell from favour as the community could no longer be relied on to aim the rotten fruit, stones and insults at the intended victim, targeting the attendant magistrates instead!

Throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries there were crime waves, part real, part imagined by a ruling class which lived in fear that 'the mob' would rise out of the sewers and destroy its property and privilege. Fear of crime and of political upheaval were conflated, 'the mob' and 'Jacobinism' interchangeable bogeymen. The Wilkes Riots of the London 'mob' in the 1760s and '70s, in which the call for people's rights was mobilised in the interests of the City; the Gordon Riots of 1780, ostensibly against 'Popery' when London became a 'sea of fire'; these and countless other episodes revealed 'a groping desire to settle accounts with the rich, if only for one day' (George Rudé, *Wilkes and liberty*).

The authorities felt powerless: they could not execute more people for fear of sparking even greater upheaval. Juries and magistrates, appalled by the severity of punishments they were expected to mete out, began refusing to convict or deliberately convicting on lesser charges. Even the prosecution would resist seeking the death penalty for small offenders, their consciences encouraged by fear of their houses being burned down.

Before the Industrial Revolution, prison was primarily used to hold people before trial or punishment by ducking, flogging, disfiguration, the stocks, transportation or death. At the Old Bailey between 1770-74 just 2.3 per cent of sentences were custodial; most were for weeks or months and the maximum was three years; 66.5 per cent of sentences were for transportation to the Americas for seven years, 14 years or life. The situation was brought to an acute crisis with the loss of the American colonies: between 1776 and 1786 there was a 73 per cent increase in the prison population; custodial sentences increased from 2.3 per cent to 28.6 per cent. The prisons experienced outbreaks of fever, riots, escapes and the government was besieged by petitions from prisoners demanding release, transfer or improvement in conditions. The search for new methods of social control became urgent.

'Reform'

Under the twin banners of philanthropic reform and rational scientific progress, John Howard, author of *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales* (1777) and the namesake of today's Howard League for Penal Reform, set out to prove that, 'There is a mode of managing some of the most desperate with ease to yourself and advantage to them. Shew them that you have humanity and that you aim to make them useful members of society.'

Howard toured the country's prisons and found convicted prisoners in chains, disease rife, richer inmates renting rooms while the poor slept in squalid dormitories. Visitors came and went bearing food; alcohol, sex (freely-given or purchased) and gambling were easily accessible.

He evolved the idea of a 'penitentiary': silent, hygienic and austere, where criminals would live and work on their own, uncontaminated literally and figuratively by contact with others. They would both be retrained and re-educated to lead law-abiding lives and, through contemplation and religious instruction, feel guilt and remorse and so forsake crime.

Like all reformists, Howard and his contemporaries understood that excessive brutality and obvious injustice called into question the legitimacy of the entire system, to a point where opposition of a revolutionary character might shake the very foundations of the established order.

Cold Bath Fields and Millbank

'As he went through Cold Bath Fields he saw a solitary cell;
And the devil was pleased, for it gave him a hint,
Of improving his prisons in Hell.'
Southey and Coleridge –
The Devil's Thoughts

After the passing of the Penitentiary Act, drafted by Howard, Eden and Blackstone, in 1779, there was a delay of over 30 years before the building of Millbank, Britain's first state prison, in 1812-16. Following the French Revolution, the ruling class did not want to be viewed as retreating from physical retribution or associating with ideas of reform and rehabilitation. However, new gaols were built under local auspices. The largest was Cold Bath Fields in Clerkenwell which opened in 1794. It contained a shot drill yard, where prisoners carried cannon balls up and down stairs, and six treadwheel yards. A prisoner was expected to turn the wheel the equivalent of 12,000 feet of ascent a day. This regime so damaged the health of inmates that the Royal Artillery refused to send offenders there as they returned unfit for duty. Eventually the ascent distance was reduced to 1,200 feet per day.

When the Millbank finally opened it was Europe's largest gaol, capable of holding 1,200 prisoners. The regime combined Howard's ideas of religious instruction, hard labour and solitary confinement, but was short-lived. Brutal gaolers and rebellious prisoners saw to that. Flogging was soon introduced and the gaol became overtly repressive. Prisoners were forbidden all reading material and their diet steadily reduced until in 1823 31 prisoners died of typhus, dysentery and scurvy and 400 were taken seriously ill.

Prisons were regularly targeted by the 'mob' and their inmates released. Similarly, on the inside, prisoners would rise up as at Gloucester prison in 1815, Millbank 1818 and 1826-27, Portland, Chatham etc. In 1800 a protest by prisoners at Cold Bath Fields attracted massive support from the workers of Clerkenwell. They milled around the walls, shouting encouragement to the prisoners who called down to the people to tear down the walls. Chants of 'Pull down the Bastille!' began to rise from the crowd, who were only dispersed by the combined forces of the Bow Street Runners and a hastily mobilised group of local property owners, the Clerkenwell Volunteers, using a cannon positioned in front of the prison gate.

Class struggle

As the ideas of Tom Paine and the French Revolution were taken up by the Radicals in Britain, so prisons were used to try and silence them. Stamp duty on publications and extended powers to prosecute 'sedition' resulted in many imprisonments. Richard Carlile continued to edit *The Republican* from gaol. He was supported by 150 volunteers who, between them, served 200 years of imprisonment in defiance of the law. Up to 750 people were prosecuted for 'unstamped' material between 1816-36.

The Chartists, established 1837-8, with their principal demand for universal adult male suffrage, had their leaders like Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones imprisoned. A Chartist-led revolt in 1842 resulted in 146 people being sentenced to prison with hard labour in the Potteries alone. After the last great Chartist march in 1848, almost 500 were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

By now imprisonment was the main punishment for all offenders (except those sentenced to death), together with the crank, the treadwheel and penal servitude. For the first time sentences over three years came into use along with the 'ticket-of-leave' system, the precursor of parole. Pentonville prison was built in 1842, using the 'panopticon' design, conceived by Jeremy Bentham, whereby a centrally placed observer could survey the whole prison, as wings radiated out from this position. Over the next six years 54 new prisons were built using the panopticon design, which was also employed for mills where a foreman could simultaneously oversee the whole workforce.

State power

In 1877 the prison system was unified into a single state-run service. Integral sanitation was abolished and all the toilets removed from Pentonville. Press and public were banned from setting foot in the prisons. Prisoners were required to face the wall when not in their cells or wear masks and maintain absolute silence. In this way they could not identify or recognise one another; nor could they organise. If they transgressed they were punished by being put in a pitch-black cell, fed only bread and water and flogged.

As the system became entrenched, certain changes were made to it, usually under the cloak of 'reform'. The use of entirely dark cells was discontinued in 1884. Hard labour was partially abolished in 1898 in favour of 'productive labour' and abolished entirely in 1948 along with flogging, which ceased to be a punishment ordered by the courts but continued to be administered against inmates who assaulted prison staff until 1968. Separate confinement was officially abolished in 1922 but its use continues as a means of punishment for 'subversion' to this day.

The Industrial Revolution stamped its marks on every town in Britain: the factory, the mill and the prison. But by building these institutions into which the proletariat was cast in ever increasing numbers, the conditions were also created for opposition: the factory and the mill had their strikes, the prison its riots. Few skylines are dominated today by Victorian mills and factories, yet the prisons still stand and new ones join them every year. They are still used to threaten, bully and isolate the working class; the balance between psychological and physical punishment is still tipped this way and that; the debate between different sections of the ruling class about whether the gaols are for reform or for punishment continues. And the objects of their deliberations still reject their treatment, still protest, still riot, still fight back. Thankfully. ■

GATT–a charter for imperialist multinationals

When the final documents on the General Agreements on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) were signed on 15 April in Marrakesh, the mainstream media was full of superlatives. The agreement held out brilliant prospects for 'economic reform', 'growth', 'development', 'welfare' and 'progress'. The *Financial Times* claimed that 'world trade policy has crossed a threshold – possibly a watershed'. Leon Brittan, EC Commissioner, declared that 'the rule of law has replaced the law of the jungle'. However, in all this commentary, EDDIE ABRAHAMS argues, there was no concern for the social and economic consequences the agreement will have for the mass of the world's ordinary people – the billions who own no factories, who control no multinationals, who own no vast tracts of land and who must survive by selling their labour power or working tiny plots of land.

President Clinton, who believed the US got the best possible deal, expressed the essence of GATT more clearly than all the press together: 'We are on the verge of a historic victory in our efforts to open foreign markets to American products.' The name of the game in international trade is competition for markets and the prize is a greater share of international profits. The Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations has been concluded in the midst of a profound capitalist economic crisis. The main concern of the major powers is therefore how to maximise their own share of diminishing world profits, profits produced by workers. To do so they must capture more and more markets whilst cutting working class living standards and wages. Towards this the GATT agreement revised the rules of international trade to suit the most powerful players – the US, European Union and Japan whose multinational corporations effectively dominate the world economy.

The final agreement was delayed literally for years to enable the major imperialist powers to resolve bitter trade rivalries among themselves in agriculture, services and audio-visual industries. And while they cut one protectionist deal after another with each other, the Third World was forced to kneel at the altar of 'free trade'. In a manifestation of the post-Cold War new colonialism, Third World nations were forced to bring down even further those barriers to multinational domination which were erected in the post-colonial era.

The world for the multinationals

500 top multinational corporations, most of which are based in the USA, control 30 per cent of gross global product, 70 per cent of global trade and 80 per cent of international investment. These 'hugely important forces in the world economy' (*Financial Times*), with stocks of foreign investment exceeding $2,000bn, effectively dictated the new international trading arrangements.

The GATT agreement aims to eventually reduce tariffs and other trade barriers and subsidies by an average of 34 per cent on industrial, agricultural and natural resource products. In agriculture, incorporated into GATT for the first time, the agreement requires a cut in domestic subsidies by 20 per cent and the volume of export subsidies by 21 per cent. As a result, world food prices will rise and millions in the poorest countries, unable to afford the new prices, will starve. At the same time the most productive multinational corporations, with freer access to foreign Third World markets, will destroy local industry and agriculture and monopolise local profits for themselves.

Also for the first time, the agreement strengthens and harmonises standards of protection for 'intellectual property rights', and provides for effective enforcement of patent laws at national and international levels. New patenting regulations will facilitate and legalise multinational plunder of Third World natural and intellectual resources. The neem tree in India, for example, has been used for centuries by farmers and doctors, but its chemical properties have never been patented. US multinationals have however recently taken out patents to exploit neem oil products. They will now be allowed to extract a price for further use of neem products by Indian farmers and doctors! Such patent piracy will siphon off millions from the Third World into the coffers of the multinationals whilst millions will suffer a greater burden of poverty.

That national producers will be destroyed, that entire nations will come under the effective command of foreign multinationals, that millions will lose their jobs as local industries collapse or that millions of peasant families, unable to compete with multinational agricultural producers, will be wiped out – none of this was of any concern to those who framed the GATT agreement. 'Progress', 'development', 'growth': maybe for the multinationals, but not for the people. The *International Herald Tribune* summed up the glory of GATT:

> 'Analysts said the multinational companies, which account for about two-thirds of the world's cross-frontier trade would be the obvious winners from the deal . . . As part of the accord, foreign companies are to be granted the same national treatment as domestic concerns, making it easier for multinationals to relocate jobs in low-wage countries, but also leading to the elimination of less efficient companies.'

To top it all, it has been decided to form a World Trade Organisation which will have powers to police and enforce rulings and penalise 'unfair trading practices'.

Third World to pay first for capitalist crisis

Reporting on two massive anti-GATT demonstrations in India, the *Financial Times* said that: 'At both events, speakers condemned [GATT] . . . as an instrument of oppression foisted by rich countries on the developing world. They said the agreement would pave the way to new economic enslavement of India.' One could add of the Third World as a whole.

At first glance however, the Third World appears to get a better deal. In agriculture it is required to lower tariffs less than the imperialist countries. All except the poorest of Third World countries are now required to open their domestic markets to a minimum of 2 per cent of imports per year rising to 3.3 per cent over the next 10 years. Developed countries go from 3 per cent to five. But with the enormously larger Third World population and its greater reliance on agriculture, 2 per cent of its domestic market is far larger than 3 per cent of that of the 'developed' nations. Agriculture represents a far larger share of Third World total budget than that of the major capitalist powers. For example it contributes 18 per cent of Tanzania's GNP but only 0.5 per cent of the USA's. Losing even a tiny percentage of its market to multinational grain producers will have literally devastating consequences for Tanzania's economy and poor peasantry in particular.

Taking into account the Third World's debt problems, implementation of the agreement will further subjugate the Third World. A representative of the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture notes that:

> 'To open our internal market by 3 per cent for rice means importing 1.5 million tons each year. At a time when debt servicing takes up 34 per cent of our export earnings, to devote extra foreign exchange to importing rice would weigh heavily on our balance of payments.'

While imposing 'free trade' on the Third World and forcing it to reduce or remove subsidies, the agreement actually retains those subsidies that help imperialist agricultural producers dominate the world. European Union compensation to arable farmers for cuts in price support is excluded from GATT as are US farm support payments. Such 'delinked' payments – payments not directly connected to a farmer's level of agricultural output – will allow the EU, the USA and Canada to subsidise their agriculture to the tune of 49 per cent, 30 per cent and 41 per cent respectively.

A *Third World Network* report notes that:

> 'It is not the case that subsidies are being removed. They are instead being redirected from the poor and needy producers and consumers to the economically powerful corporations and their rich consumers. The Dunkel draft quite clearly shifts subsidies from those who need them – farmers – to the corporate sector – to private storage facilities, food processors like Pepsi and transporters and shipping agents like Cargill.'

GATT allows subsidies for marketing and promotion services and infrastructure programmes such as electricity networking, roads and other means of transport, market and port facilities, water supply facilities, dams and drainage schemes. These are all areas which Third World nations clearly cannot subsidise.

In relation to the Third World, GATT legalises what has previously been characterised as economic gunboat diplomacy. In the past few years more than 30 developing countries have been threatened with unilateral trade sanctions by the US for refusing to open their markets to US banks and insurance companies or refusing to install US-style patent laws. But now the US can force the Third World to concede by waving the GATT agreement whose 'disciplines provide [Third World] governments with useful leverage to push through politically controversial reforms at home' (*Financial Times*).

The working class pays next

GATT is as much an attack on the working class in Britain and Europe as it is on the working class and peasantry of the Third World. By opening up low wage Third World markets for investment and trade, by securing rights to repatriate profits, imperialist capital can then dictate terms to the working class in Europe, Japan or the USA: either accept lower wages and cuts in welfare services or we move abroad.

In a period of deep crisis when capitalist competition is about the survival of one capital as opposed to another, no section of capital has room for high wages or decent welfare. A recent issue of *Business Week* advised that to remain competitive Europe must:

> 'hammer away at high wages and corporate taxes, short working hours, labour immobility and luxurious social programmes.'

In Britain, where social programmes were never in fact 'luxurious', the ruling class has already virtually dismantled the health and welfare service and reduced benefits so sharply that millions have already been forced into poverty. Meanwhile the International Monetary Fund report on the world economy urges industrialised countries to 'push through fundamental labour market reform', a synonym for further cutting wages and conditions. In the US, a Goodyear executive speaks openly of 'getting real wages down closer to those of the Brazils and Koreas.' GATT will provide a means to these ends.

The winners and the losers

Economic 'experts' predict that as a result of GATT by the year 2000 the world may be richer by about $213bn per year. But the OECD estimates that two thirds of the benefits will go to the European Union, the USA and Japan. Europe will gain a staggering $80bn. The gains will not however be enjoyed by those who produce the wealth. They either live in 'low wage' economies or have to have their wages cut to those of the Brazils or Koreas and their 'luxurious' welfare benefits trimmed. As GATT's rewards are calculated, unemployment in Europe is also calculated to rise to unprecedented levels. GATT's riches will go instead to a tiny minority who own the means of production, who own the multinationals – the capitalists. Africa will be a net loser while in other parts of the Third world, a tiny elite will get the remaining crumbs whilst many more billions suffer greater and greater poverty as their jobs and livelihoods are destroyed.

Despite growing world unemployment, poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and environmental destruction, politicians and the press go on talking about economic 'reform' and economic 'progress'. In the post-Cold War era when the challenge of socialism is temporarily set back there is not even the pretence that economic production and trade should serve to improve the conditions and lives of the people and society. Today capital stands forth as it really is – an engine for individual profit at the expense of society and the people. GATT gives this engine a legal international framework for continuing its plunder.

Only when production for private profit is ended, only with an end to private ownership of the means of production, only when production for profit is replaced by social production for social use, only then will the economy really serve humanity. Only when control of the world's wealth is passed from the owners of multinationals back to the people who produce it can there be any real talk of reform and progress. ■

Looks Like Freedom

Looks Like Freedom Richard Roques. First performed at the Etcetera Theatre, Camden, London 16-30 April 1994

In the midst of the semi-religious euphoria that surrounded the South African elections in April, this new play had the courage to challenge the collective amnesia about the reality of apartheid's legacy. It reminds us that thousands of black people have died since de Klerk came to power, of rising unemployment, of an election process engineered to allow as little change as possible. That is one good reason for seeing this play. It is also well-scripted, moving, and at times hilariously funny.

But *Looks Like Freedom* is not, in the end, a play about apartheid, although the author draws on his experience of City AA, the Non-Stop Picket, and the RCG. The protagonist, Robert, is a communist and anti-apartheid activist, but he is also a gay man and it is this, rather than his politics, which defines the play.

Robert's time is divided between 'The Party', and cruising in gay bars. But, as he finds himself drawn to the Man, he finds it impossible to tell him the truth about either his political allegiance or last night's lover, now hidden in the wardrobe. His only close relations are with his flatmate, drag artist Trevor, and ex-lover David. Robert's political commitment comes to appear as a substitute for his failure to make personal commitments – whether to his lovers or to his father, a former South African political prisoner. Yet his politics, too, remain distant, mediated through dogmatic instructions – Trevor and David should attend the *Capital* reading class because it's compulsory; Trevor should do what Robert says because he's on the Committee.

Trevor dreams of a future worth fighting for – when 'there will be literally hundreds of men in fishnets ... digging the roads and slapping the kids on the back of the legs in the supermarkets. And I know that none of that's ever going to come unless the whole existing, fucked-up system is overthrown and replaced.' Even Nick, the shadowy ex-Party member

whom Robert meets on the heath, has a vision of a better world. The only time I was convinced of Robert's hope for change was when he told the Man: 'The struggle in South Africa has been a struggle for freedom. A lot of people have died. A lot of people have hopes and aspirations ... If nothing changes for them it will be a terrible tragedy. That's not stupid, is it?'

The rest of the time he seems caught in a formulaic recitation of the former glories of the Soviet Union. This sense of alienation reaches its apotheosis in the Hampstead Heath scene. It juxtaposes casual sex, divorced from human communication, with an exchange of political ideas on the Soviet Union. But what Robert has to say is lost in the overall atmosphere of heavy breathing and heaving bodies. The politics are reduced to the same mechanicality as the anonymous sexual act. Robert has leaflets for a meeting on him, but no condoms – of what practical import are his politics? When called to action on Lords Cricket pitch, Trevor and David drop their cynicism and run on, while the oh-so-politically correct Robert dithers, torn between the man he is attracted to and political imperatives: 'Hard, innit – dick or democracy in South Africa?' sneers David.

Nevertheless, the Hampstead Heath scene is important because it shows what it means to be gay in a society that denies gay men and women the right to conduct their relationships openly. 'In a decent country', says Nick, 'we'd be doing this under the stars with the sound of waves crashing on the beach.' In a heterosexual context, the concept of the romantic couple as an exclusive relationship which shuts out and replaces other human relations is essentially retrograde. However, in a society that denies gay couples legitimacy or visibility, the demand for such relationships to be recognised takes on a progressive element. It subverts the existing order and, in the same way as the struggle of black people in South Africa for the right to family life, is a demand for basic humanity under a brutal system that denies it.

Looks Like Freedom is in essence a play about love and human warmth. One of the most moving moments comes when Robert hides a young man in his wardrobe when the Man comes round to look for his teeshirt. When the Man finds a bundle of communist papers (it was refreshing to see FRFI displayed on stage!) under the bed, Robert lies and blunders but cannot admit the truth. The young man then emerges to pretend the papers are his, sell a copy to the dumbstruck Robert, and disappear nonchalantly out of his life. This simple act of generosity contrasts starkly with Robert's own emotional selfishness. The Man himself says: 'You may decide to be monogamous one day ... only you can make that decision. At the moment I just want you to stop lying all the time.' If we are to construct a way out of loneliness and isolation in personal relations, the answer lies not in the abstract sense of physical exclusivity which is part of the myth of romantic love, but in trust, honesty and treating other human beings with dignity. In *Looks Like Freedom*, Robert finds redemption through love – rather than political change. It is an emphasis that I don't agree with; but it opens up a debate about the the interrelation of sex, sexuality and love under capitalism which the communist movement has tended to shy away from.

Cat Wiener

Seeking harmony with nature

Green History : a reader in environmental literature, philosophy and politics ed. Derek Wall, Routledge, 1994 (no price printed)

Derek Wall has put together an absorbing collection of extracts from the works of dozens of Western classic (and not so classic) authors, covering science, philosophy and art. Ranging from Plato to Marx, from Ovid to St Augustine, Blake, Tolstoy, Engels, Shelley, Fourier, Kropotkin and on and on ...the reader begins to understand that the problems of the relationship between human society, science and the natural world have a long history stretching across centuries.

In chapters covering ancient wisdom, ecology and urban civilisation, the origins of environmental danger, putting the earth first, philosophical holism, the city and the country, ecofeminism, sustainable development and many others, we are brought to realise the truth of Engel's warning not to 'flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature ... we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside nature ... we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature, and exist in its midst ...' Through our labour, through our action on nature we must seek to establish a harmonious co-existence with nature which sustains life itself.

This book provides a convincing case that unless socialists take seriously the questions of the environment they cannot really be serious socialists.

Eddie Abrahams

The harvest of future ages

For Zola, *Germinal* was to 'deal with the struggle between capital and labour ... posing the question which will be the most important question of the twentieth century.' The recently released film of *Germinal* captures that essence – and takes sides, firmly, with the working class.

Set in a French mining community at the end of the nineteenth century, *Germinal* is the story of the awakening of consciousness amongst the miners, spurred on by new worker Etienne Lantier, who has links with the newly formed International. Pushed too far by the Corporation, which is threatening a cut in wages, they embark on a strike.

From the beginning of the film the landscape is dominated by the mine

– the Voreux, that Zola likened to a vast burning monster, daily devouring cages of human flesh, like capital itself. Young and old, generation after generation, have worked down the pit, and died down there, absorbing the dust into their skins and lungs. The daily struggle for survival of mining families like the Maheus is contrasted starkly with the opulent lifestyle and luxurious food of the mine-owning bourgeoisie.

Gradually we see the burgeoning collectivity forced upon the working class by the necessity of the strike itself, contrasted with the lies and hypocrisy of the amoral capitalists, who marry for money and status, and have affairs with each others' wives. There is no such false morality amongst the miners: Maheude beats her daughter Catherine not for taking a lover, but for scabbing on the strike.

The film has all the epic quality, the revolutionary power and violence of the book. When the bourgeoisie, feasting on vol-au-vents and champagne while the miners starve, see the great crowd of men, women and children, ragged and hungry but singing the Marseillaise and demanding bread and justice, come marching across the horizon, we see Zola's 'red vision of the coming revolution that would inevitably carry them all off one bloody night at the end of this epoch' – and welcome it. In the same way we welcome the smashing of the mineworks, the gauntlet the scabs are forced to run and the castration of the wealthy shopkeeper who has refused the women credit while their children died of hunger: it is the violence of an awakened people who anger slowly but rage undammed.

The strike is premature, and is broken by hunger, desperation and finally the army opening fire against the great crowd of miners. By the end of the film Maheu is dead, shot down by the army, and three of his children have died. Maheude herself, who swore she would kill her man rather than let him work before they have achieved justice, is back down the pit to keep her remaining children until they are old enough to work themselves. Yet in spite of the unremitting brutality and desperation of the film the message is one of hope, of the power of the working class, ultimately, to change their condition.

The film, like the book, ends on a note of optimism, of conviction in the impending storm of revolution of an awakened people that will not be postponed indefinitely, that is growing, underground, like seed in springtime: 'On and on, ever more insistently, his comrades were tapping, tapping, as though they too were rising through the ground. Men were springing up, a black avenging host was slowly germinating in the furrows, thrusting upwards for the harvest of future ages. And very soon their germination would crack the earth asunder.'

Read the book, then go and see the film. Both are superb.

Cat Wiener

Germinal by Emile Zola. First published 18[illegible] published by Penguin Classics £5.99. The film of the same title by Claude Berri and starring Gerard Depardieu, Miou-Miou and Renaud is currently in general release (subtitles).

Whose democracy?

Islam and democracy Fatima Mernissi, Virago Press 1993, £7.99

While one cannot deny the very entertaining style and rich figurative language used by Mernissi, she in no way succeeds in dealing with the core problem affecting the Arab world. True, fundamentalism threatens to destabilise the decaying regimes in the Middle East. But Mernissi naively believes that Western 'democracy' is the answer and is incredulous as to why the Arab countries are loath to accept 'modernity' – perhaps the modernity that Mernissi can afford to espouse given her privileged bourgeois background and her access to education and comfort.

But Mernissi, despite all her access to knowledge, seems to have forgotten that the Saudis have embraced her 'modernity' – of course, this is reserved for the ruling House of Saud, and more specifically, the male branch of this family. Yes, they have modernity and they have everything the West can provide in return for the vast sums the Saudis can afford to pay.

'Democracy', according to Mernissi, was introduced by the Greeks (that is the slave-owning, women-repressing ancient Greeks) and enshrined in the United Nations Charter thousands of years later. She rejects the United States, but has nothing short of adoration for the United Nations Charter. But the United States and its cronies have no qualms about disregarding this charter. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights does say that 'everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion'. The American constitution, drafted in 1776, proclaims the same lofty values. This does not prevent the American government from witch-hunting anyone who doesn't believe in the free-market economy – including those who threaten their unsavoury dictator friends abroad.

Reality is harsh for the Arab masses

For Mernissi, 'Arab style socialism' is a 'good laugh' while nowhere do we find such scorn for so-called (Western) democracy. Indeed, we never actually fully comprehend just what exactly Mernissi proposes but we do grasp fully her hero worship of the West: though she does try weakly to pay lip-service to the West's manipulation and domination of Arab resources, she fails to offer a solution. She can only embrace the so-called lofty values that the West has to offer. 'We have to make the West understand us [Arabs]' she pleads – criticising the West for failing to see the 'reasonable, good face of Islam'.

But the West does not want to understand, nor do they want to share their scientific knowledge, even with their allies. The Arab masses cannot afford to while away their time or to be optimists, their reality is harsh, they have no bread because of the Western democracy that chokes them and bleeds their economies to death, sanctioned and abetted by the United Nations. Fundamentalism cannot be the answer but, whether Mernissi likes it or not, so long as she and her peers continue to regurgitate what the West wants to hear, and so long as the Arab left remain divided and ineffective then fundamentalism will always have ammunition and a fertile breeding ground.

Nadia Sultani

RCG PUBLIC MEETINGS

NORTH LONDON

7.30pm Monday 6 June

Can we rely on any of the capitalist parties to confront fascism?

7.30pm Thursday 16 June

Soweto Day eighteen years on: what now for South Africa?

Eyewitness account from Richard Roques and Hannah Caller recently returned from South Africa

Both at Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Road, Camden, London NW1 (nearest tube Camden Town)

SOUTH LONDON

7.30pm Tuesday 14 June

GATT: Imperialism tightens the noose

The Vineyard, 143 New Cross Road (corner of Billingdon Road), London SE14 (nearest tube New Cross Gate)

7.30pm Tuesday 12 July

Smash fascism – fight for socialism

Wheatsheaf Pub, 2 Upper Tooting Road, London SW17 (nearest tube Tooting Bec)

Tel: 071 837 1688 for further details

LETTERS write to FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX

Anarchism vs communism: Two anarchist perspectives

I read with interest your review of *Carry on Recruiting* (FRFI 118), given you are a 'revolutionary group' and readers/supporters of your newspaper have a revolutionary perspective, and as such should be well aware that any 'left' party that supports or aligns its politics with the British Labour Party or British trade union movement is elitist and has nothing but contempt for the working class. They see our class as a vehicle to 'power' (sic). I felt your review was constructed with the customary disdain that class struggle groups have for these political parasites. But as you also take the opportunity to criticise the thought behind the pamphlet, whilst aligning your group and its readership with anarchist views on the so-called 'left', and with the promise of debate at another time, I felt that for the interest of your readers, we could open up the debate from an anarchist perspective.

As a member of an active anarchist federation, we see pamphlets such as *Carry on Recruiting* only as a reflection of the current condition of British 'left' wing politics; the 'carry on recruiting' theme being the basis of all the major so-called left wing parties. Active anarchists believe that British working class struggle will emerge from a combination of community-based action and a reaction to state and government oppression, and not from Labour or trade union-controlled actions or strikes. We also realise the importance of working class political education – organisation will come through struggle, not through the imposition of politics from any party or group. As Marxist intention is the creation of a working class political organisation within British communities, then this objective will ultimately create a hierarchical and anti-democratic structure by political elitists over a politically uneducated working class (the masses). We as anarchists do not subscribe to the ideal that the British working class will suddenly explode into mass class action against the state or government (as the 'left parties' seem to think), but will first require education by class struggle activists and will then develop their own class consciousness, and as this consciousness develops they will then take forward the real class war.

With regard to the mention of 'weariness of thought' on the British imperialist question, we have no doubt about the effects of imperialism on the British working class. By exploiting nations throughout the world, the British working class have 'received the token crumbs from the imperialist table', giving them a blinkered attitude that they are different from other exploited workers throughout the world (hence the minimal showing of real revolutionary action this century). We understand also that the British Labour Party and trade union movement was created by imperialists as a buffer against any real working class movement emerging in this country, whilst allowing the imperialists to rape and loot other nations under their influence. We also recognise that this form of racist attitude has been encouraged by the bosses and the state, and used as a method of control of workers for decades, bringing us back again to the urgent need for 'political education'. We also recognise the change in the imperialists' attitude to the British working class; now that there is little profit to be extorted from the workers of Britain, the imperialists dismantle the industries in this country, rebuild them in poverty-stricken countries, exploit their workers and move on. This may seem an over-simplified understanding of imperialism to well-read anti-imperialists, but as a class struggle anarchist I feel your readers should be in no doubt that we understand the higher form of capitalism.

On our 'misunderstanding of Leninist theory', did comrade Lenin not explain that 'the working class can only ever achieve a trade union level of consciousness', therefore the worker requires the 'party' to provide political, theoretical and organised leadership? Is this not an elitist attitude? Are workers assumed to be too stupid to take the lead for themselves? Should our class sacrifice itself to revolution and replace one set of bosses for another, or to be more politically correct, 'the party'? We anarchists think not. What other tenet does humanity need, other than 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs'?

As this letter is only a short reply to a universal difference of opinion, we will welcome the continuation of the debate.

ANDY DUNCAN
Dundee

Stalin and Trotsky both claimed to be true heirs of Lenin. Both supported 'the Leninist theory of the vanguard party'. Both believed in rigid adherence to a party line, though they had minor differences over what that line should be. Stalin settled these minor differences with an ice pick.

Though you in the Revolutionary Communist Group keep pretty quiet about Stalin in your paper, it soon becomes clear in discussion with RCG members that you are in fact Stalinists.

This explains your delight in 'Trotwatch slates SWP' – we anarchists criticise the Trots on principle; you see them as a rival 'vanguard'.

I accept some individual members of both the RCG and the SWP as genuine working class activists who I can co-operate with in particular struggles, but I'm suspicious. How can anyone who follows a party line be in favour of independent working class action?

So far as their *organisations* are concerned, history shows that all varieties of Leninism have persecuted anarchists when in a position to do so.

Eddie Abrahams claims that 'anarchists reject the need for working class political organisation'. *Wrong.* What we say is that we, the working class, should organise ourselves. We don't need leaders. We reject the idea of a vanguard political party.

As for Abrahams' superior claim that 'anarchists misunderstand Leninist theory', all this really boils down to is that your average Leninist has ploughed his way through more boring waffle than the average anarchist.

You don't have to read every word that someone wrote to get the gist of what they're about. We understand perfectly – and disagree.

DAVE COULL
Dundee

This debate will be continued in FRFI 120. Contributions are welcomed.

Did Stalin err?

In his review of Harpal Brah's book, *Trotskyism or Leninism?*, Andy Higginbottom stated that '*In fact both* [Trotsky and Stalin] *made concessions to Menshevism.*' Could we be so bold as to ask the author to give us details of the concessions made by Stalin to Menshevism? We have scoured his, and Lenin's work, and have found no such concessions.

Secondly, if Stalin ever erred on any question could Comrade Higginbottom tell us how long did Stalin persist in his mistakes?

E Rule and I Sloley
London

Firstly, 'to understand and properly appraise these works, they must be regarded as the works of a young Marxist not yet moulded into a finished Marxist-Leninist. It is natural therefore that these works should bear traces of some of the propositions of the old Marxists which afterwards become obsolete and were subsequently discarded by our Party. I have in mind two questions: the question of the agrarian program and the question of the conditions of victory of the socialist revolution' (author's preface to J.V. Stalin Collected Works, *Volume 1: 1901-1907).*

The seminal debates my review referred to occurred in the years 1905 to 1907. Pre-eminent amongst Stalin's 'Old Marxists' was Plekhanov, the leader of the Menshevik wing of Russian Marxism.

The clearest expression of the split between Plekhanov and Lenin, leader of the Bolshevik wing, occurred at the Unity Congress in 1906 which focused on drawing the lessons of the 1905 revolution. It profoundly confirmed Lenin's revolutionary ideology in opposition to Plekhanov's counter-revolutionary conclusions, which Lenin had already *publicly discarded.*

Lenin learnt from 1905. He strove to keep up with the actual transformations that were taking place in the alliance between proletariat and peasantry, and which gave a new content to his own pre-1905 positions. Lenin modified his view on the conditions for socialist revolution, and re-wrote the agrarian programme putting land nationalisation at its centre.

This congress demonstrated the importance of Lenin's leadership to the conduct of the Bolshevik organisation. Without Lenin's direction Stalin and other loyal Bolshevik 'practical workers' tended to slip into alliance with Menshevism, and blur the political distinction between the two trends. A point to bear in mind for the future.

Secondly, Stalin wrote his partial self-criticism in 1946, some forty years after the debates in question. Unfortunately his followers have now persisted in these mistaken concessions somewhat longer than did Stalin himself.

Andy Higginbottom

Support disabled rights

On 11 April, members of the RCG attended a protest at the Odeon cinema in the Holloway Road, north London. This was organised by members of the Manor Gardens Youth Project who were denied access to the cinema on 31 March by the Cinema Manager Tom Dargavel. The young people involved demanded a full public apology, including one in writing, disciplinary action to be taken against the cinema manager, full access for all disabled people to the Odeon cinema within one year, and compensation for the financial loss which the Manor Gardens Youth Project incurred on the day they were refused entry, as well as compensation for the offense and distress caused to those involved. The denial of access was in the words of the manager, 'because the wheelchairs were a fire risk'.

The demonstration was supported by DAN, Disabled Direct Action Now, and the cinema was eventually closed for the evening as wheelchairs blocked all entrances to the cinema and chants of Access not Excuses echoed around the lobby. The manager eventually appeared, refused to apologise, informed people that it was not his final decision and that they ought to take it up with Islington council. When given time to go and write an apology, he disappeared for over half an hour only to come back with the same lame excuses. Presumably he had been on the phone to his superiors. He explained that if the cinema was not full, that they could then accommodate more wheelchairs, contradicting himself on the fire risk excuse.

In the light of the government's successful attempts to block the Disabled Rights Bill, the struggle for disabled rights will attract more publicity and must receive the support of all progressive people. We would be very keen to hear from people involved in any such campaigns.

HANNAH CALLER
North London FRFI

Psychiatry used as a form of repression

In FRFI 118 the article 'No care in the community' raises a number of important issues. But we must not forget that the state uses psychiatry as a form of repression against the working class which is not dissimilar to imprisonment.

It is difficult to put women in prison as they tend not to commit crimes, but it is very easy to treat them for anti-social behaviour. Treatment consists of forced incarceration and pumping them full of drugs, to prevent them from any fight back. As capitalism goes deeper into crisis, it is less and less able to afford its own means of repression. It is against this background that we should set the 'care in the community' programme, and likewise the privatisation of prisons.

As communists, I think it is vital that we look at so-called 'mental illness', as it is an issue that affects a large number of women and therefore their families. I do not believe that labels such as 'a schizophrenic' and 'the mentally ill' help us to understand; FRFI would not use terms such as 'a convict' or 'the criminally inclined' on the prison page. We must remember that whatever the solution to the problems of Christopher Clunis, they can never be solved under capitalism. Care is very labour intensive, and capitalism hasn't the resources. Its only solution is to incapacitate people with drugs and enforced treatments, which lines the pockets of big business.

As Thomas Szasz (Professor of Psychiatry at the State University of New York) pointed out, involuntary mental hospitalisation and forced treatment is 'the gravest moral wrong and the greatest legal embarrassment since the days of the witch-hunts and the practice of slavery' (*The Age of Madness*, 1973). We should also remember that the main victims are working class women and black people.

JOHN WALKER
Manchester

POWs' birthdays

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

Michael O'Brien BR3782
HMP Full Sutton
11 June

Peter Sherry B75880
HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road, March, Cambs PE15 0PR
30 June

Thomas Quigley Bsc B69204
HMP Full Sutton
23 July

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FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Police get more guns

TAKING LIBERTIES

On 16 May, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Paul Condon, announced that a number of police officers will now be allowed to carry firearms openly. This was described by Police Federation chairman Richard Coyles as putting Britain on the 'slippery slope ... towards an armed police'. Quite a long way down the slope, actually, both with this decision and with routine roadblocks manned by officers armed with sub-machine guns. WILLIAM HIGHAM examines the issues.

This news comes on top of an increase in police powers brought about by recent amendments to the Prevention of Terrorism Act and in the new Criminal Justice Bill. Importantly, it also follows the proliferation of news reports on increased crime figures and the rise of vigilante groups.

The police are keen to capitalise on the effects this media scare-mongering has had: making out that it is public opinion that is forcing them to increase their powers. Timed to coincide with Condon's announcement, the Police Federation commissioned a survey (costing £38,000 but which only managed to poll 1,000 members of the public and 1,400 PCs) which found that 67 per cent of the public favoured more widespread arming of officers – although those who read to the end of the results found that only 8 per cent felt that officers should be armed at all times.

Also announced at the Federation conference were plans to more than double the number of armed response vehicles (ARVs) on patrol at any one time, issue officers with longer (22 inch) batons, bullet- and knife-proof vests and investigate the use of pepper sprays (which research in the US shows could cause death if used on people with respiratory problems).

Labour's response was a continuation of its traditional support for increased police powers. Their home affairs spokesman Alun Michael accepted the proposed changes – as Labour leadership front-runner Tony Blair recently accepted the call for longer, heavier police batons.

What are these extensive new police powers and armaments designed for? They are part of the preparations begun in 1982 by counter-terrorist expert and Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Kenneth Newman, who brought the lessons of counter-insurgency in Ireland to the British police force. They aim to create a paramilitary police force able to deal with the social unrest and potential mass opposition arising from poverty and unemployment.

There is, however, a ray of hope: in the US, where the police are routinely armed, statistics show that over ten per cent of officers killed are shot with their own gun. ■

M11 protesters scaled the heights of Transport Secretary John MacGregor's house in North London. It took police five hours to bring them down. They were charged with disorderly conduct

Another Irish frame-up

On 8 February 1977 Joe O'Connell made a speech from the dock at the Old Bailey in which he stated that he and his comrades had carried out the pub-bombings in Guildford and Woolwich for which four innocent people were in gaol. It was another 12 years before the Guildford Four were freed. On 9 May 1994 Patrick Hayes spoke from the dock in the same court-house. Hayes said he, and not Patrick Kelly, gaoled for 25 years in 1993, had driven a 3.3 ton lorry bomb, accidentally discovered by Stoke Newington police in November 1992.

'Kelly', said Hayes, 'had no connection with that bomb, or any other bomb. He was convicted on the basis of his nationality. He is Irish-born and speaks with a suspicious, and in this instance damning, Irish accent.'

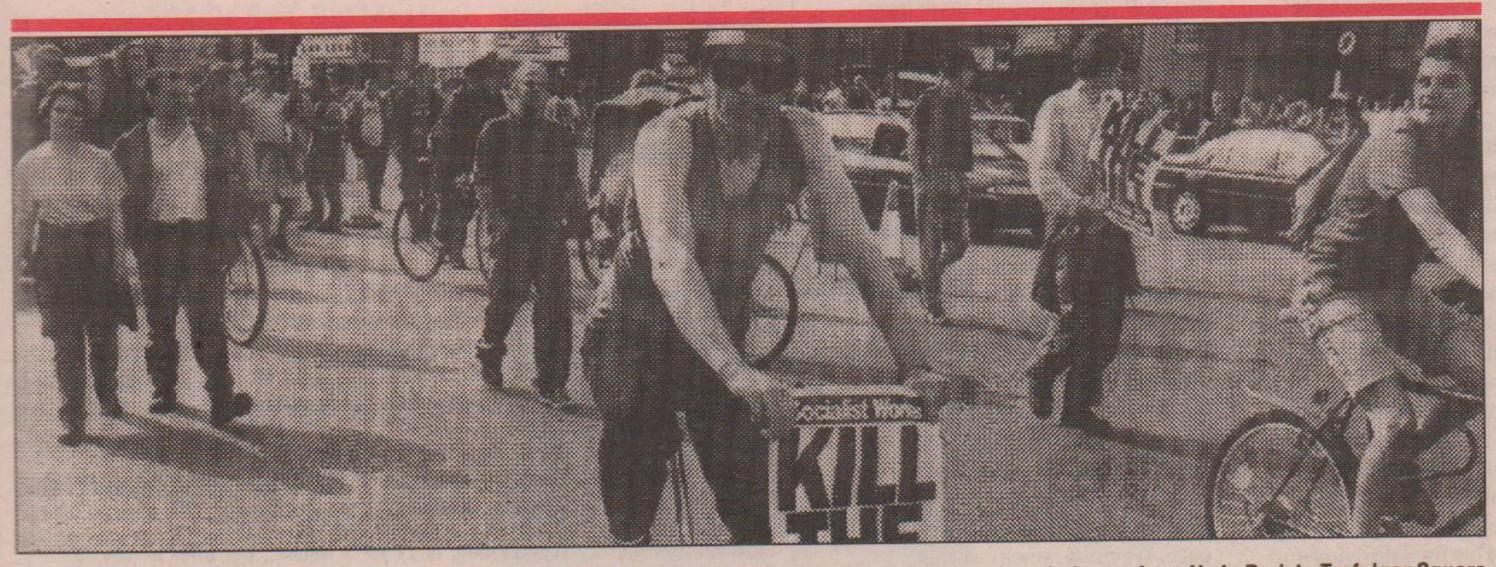
When the Guildford Four were finally released in 1989, the same authorities who had conspired to keep them behind bars had the audacity to congratulate themselves on having righted a 'miscarriage of justice'. If there is even a faint glimmer of truth in all the pronouncements over the last five years about avoiding such 'miscarriages' in the future, the powers-that-be will treat Patrick Hayes' public confession with the utmost seriousness.

The signs are already, of course, that the exact opposite will be the case. Two days after Hayes' speech, when he and Jan Taylor were gaoled for 30 years each for bombing Harrods and other targets, most of the press had entirely forgotten that Kelly was ever mentioned. Those who chose to remember it, followed the police line that Hayes had sought to 'create confusion' and that the evidence against Kelly was irrefutable. This, of course, was exactly the line used to refute Joe O'Connell's testimony: it was an 'IRA trick'; it was designed to confuse; if there was any truth in his words it simply meant that more rather than fewer people were guilty.

While mention of Kelly was kept minimal, what was maximised in the press, in addition to all the usual rhetoric about evil and wickedness which accompanies the end of any Republican trial, was the 'Englishness' of Hayes and Taylor (despite Patrick Hayes' being of Irish descent) and their previous involvement in left politics. Police and press alike were eager to present the two men as treacherous maniacs who embraced the Republican cause for no apparent reason: 'Senior detectives admit they are still baffled why the former soldier and the bright north London computer expert should have tried to bomb and maim their fellow countrymen for a cause neither was raised to embrace.' – *Evening Standard;* 'Left-wing politics led to terror campaign' – *The Guardian;* 'The English Bastards who bombed for IRA', 'Police had spotted the evil lefties' – *Daily Star,* etc, etc.

FRFI extends solidarity to POWs Patrick Hayes and Jan Taylor as they begin their sentences. We also voice our support for innocent hostage Patrick Kelly and call for his immediate release.

Nicki Jameson



May Day Protest: The Ministry for Total Control says No, we say Yes! 15,000 marched, cycled and sang their way from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square on May Day against the Criminal Justice Bill. The organisers, Advance Party, mainly run raves; others were squatters, Travellers, hunt saboteurs, road campaigners, anarchists, communists. Exuberant, rebellious, predominantly young, united in opposition to a Bill that is out to make what we do illegal, this march was the first real protest to be organised against it. More such protests are needed if we are to defeat the Bill and defend basic democratic rights.

M11 link road

Step up the pressure

The campaign in East London against the construction of the M11 Link road with its resultant destruction of homes, green spaces and communities goes on. Operation Roadblock began on the 15 March and has, through daily peaceful direct action, stopped work on construction sites such that the contractors, Norwest Holst, who have been working for seven months, are already five months behind schedule. The cost to the Department of Transport is escalating daily (stopping work on their main sites costs approximately £50,000 per day) and security costs alone have reached an estimated £1.5 million. HANNAH CALLER reports.

While the protesters are tenacious and peaceful, they have had to face the brutality of the state, in the form of police and security staff. Riot police were used to forcefully evict people from a house in Fillibrook Road when the bailiffs arrived before the court order had been issued. The Department of Transport are evicting and demolishing properties area by area, and the only street which remains almost intact on the route in Leytonstone is Claremont Road, where residents (one who has lived there since her birth 93 years ago) and campaigners ensure a constant presence and are barricading houses in a determined effort to defend homes. Leytonstonia also needs defending from the violence of the bulldozers which threaten this small forest and its dwellers.

In March, under pressure from activists as well as from the Treasury, the government withdrew some of its proposed road schemes. The pressure must be maintained and stepped up to avoid the building of more roads with the creation of more homelessness, more pollution, and more ill health. Campaigns at present include the one against the Bath-easton/Swainswick bypass through the eastern outskirts of Bath. Protests of this kind will come under further attack when the Criminal Justice Bill becomes law. If you are committed to the struggle for a just society, then commit yourself to defending the environment in which we are to build the future. ■

For direct action on the M11 route, meet Mondays at 9.30am at 481 Grove Green Road (Leytonstone tube), or call the office of the No M11 Link Campaign on 081 558 2638 for details of other activities.

Graham Lewis environmental prisoner

Graham is a long-standing eco-activist and campaigner against the £20 billion roads programme. A committed green revolutionary who believes in physically confronting injustice and the destruction of our environment, Graham has been active at Twyford Down and Solsbury Hill. In May, he was imprisoned for four months for breaking an injunction preventing him going back to Twyford Down to halt the road. At his trial he caused outrage by dressing in suspenders and shorts with a plastic bag over his head, to draw attention to the disgusting support of the late Stephen Milligan MP for the Twyford road and to the true obscenity of Major's government. Graham has always used his humour as a weapon against injustice. Please support him. You can write to him – Graham Lewis NX3919, Pentonville, Caledonian Road, London N1 or contact his support campaign by ringing 081 527 4896 and asking for Stephen Ward. ■

PUBLISHED BY LARKIN PUBLICATIONS AND PRINTED BY EAST END OFFSET (TU) LONDON E3 © LARKIN PUBLICATIONS 1994