

# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

No 75 February 1988

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# BRITISH JUSTICE

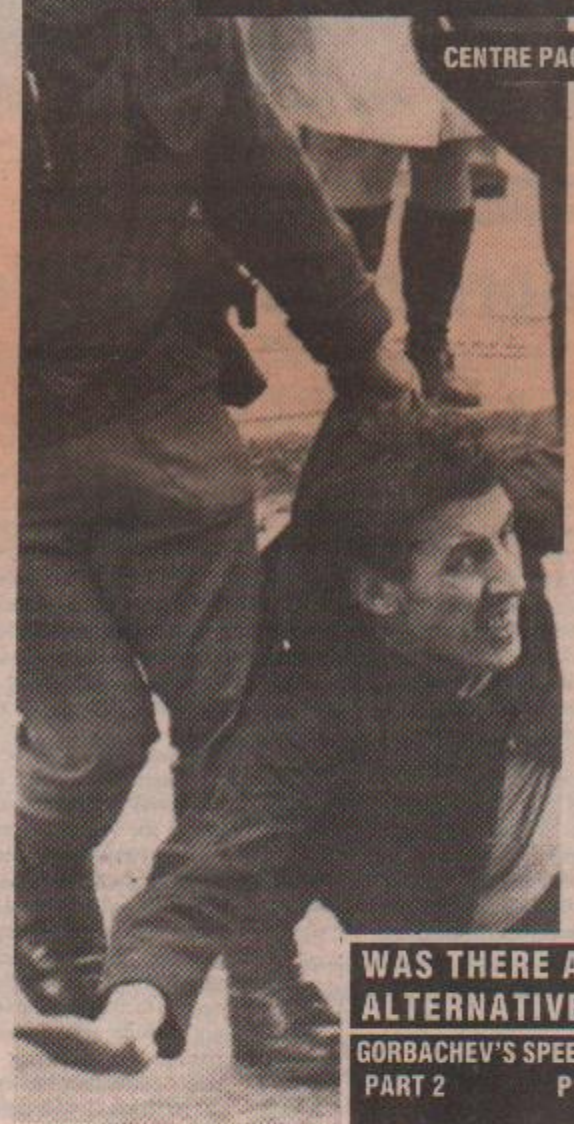


## QUESTIONS OF HISTORY

IRISH REPUBLICAN PRISONERS OF WAR HAVE WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT THE IRISH REVOLUTION

REVIEWED BY DAVID REED  
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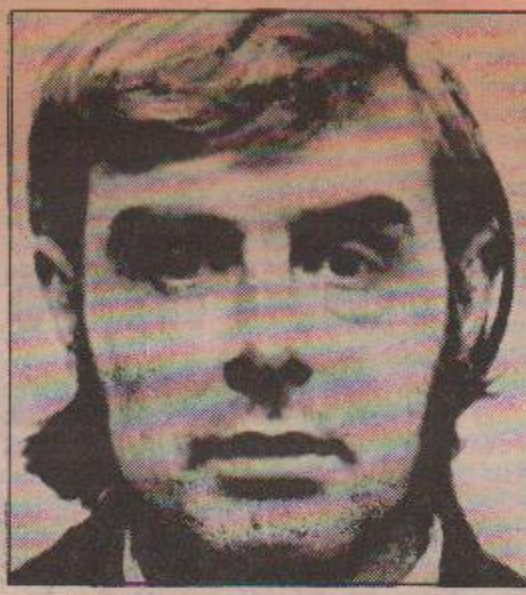
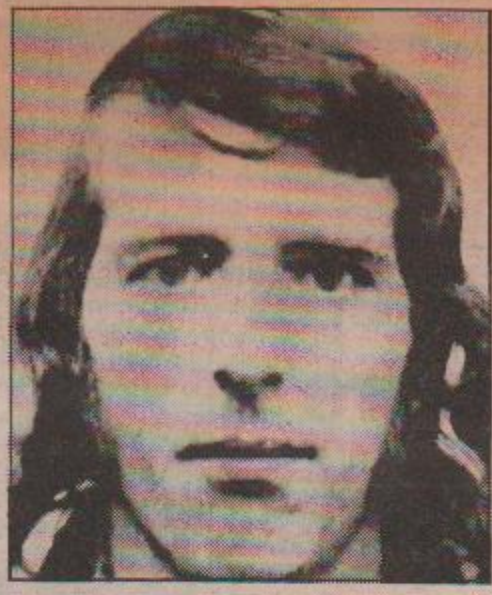
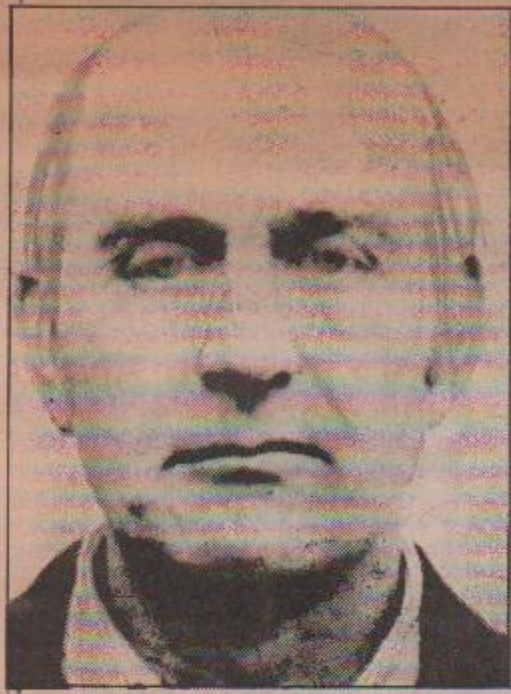
## PALESTINE LIVES



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LEFT TO RIGHT: HUGH CALLAGHAN, PATRICK HILL, JOHN WALKER, ROBERT HUNTER  
WILLIAM POWER, RICHARD KILKENNY

# NO JUSTICE



# White Australia has a black history

Tuesday 26 January 1988 saw the 200th anniversary of the 'discovery' of Australia by Captain Arthur Phillip. There is one section of Australian society who far from celebrating 1988, have called for a year of mourning. The dispossessed, criminalised and down-trodden Aborigines have no cause to celebrate. The bicentenary marks two hundred years of genocide and slavery at the hands of the mainly British colonialists.

There is a widespread lie that the Aboriginal people accepted their colonisation passively. This is not at all the case. When, from 1607 to 1610, Dutch invaders tried to settle in Australia, they were unable to make a landing for two years and when they did finally land their lives were made intolerable by the heroic resistance of the Aboriginal people until they left in 1610, with only half a crew, never to return.

If such resistance had taken place two and a half centuries later, the

world might never have seen one of the most savage and cold-blooded wars of genocide in the bloodstained history of British colonialism. Diseases such as smallpox were deliberately introduced into Aboriginal areas, their sugar, flour and water were systematically poisoned with strichnine and the settlers took great sport in killing the inhabitants with pistol and sword and in raping 'gins' - their name for Aboriginal women.

Of the original one million

Aboriginal inhabitants, only 20% survived this carnage.

In Queensland, Aborigines make up 3% of the total population, but fill one third of the prison cells. Aboriginal deaths in custody run at the rate of three every two weeks. A Royal Inquiry has been set up, but the families of those who have died in detention are being threatened by the police not to give evidence.

In the face of this exploitation and oppression, the Aboriginal people are nevertheless fighting back, and organising to win. The demand for land rights is central to their platform and they demand that they are recognised as sovereign owners of the whole continent; they also demand self-determination for their own areas of land, compensation for stolen land and mining royalties. Groups such as the Committee to Defend Black Rights are setting themselves up to put pressure on the State for action on civil rights. Generally, there is a growing awareness and pride among Aboriginal people.

We in Britain have a responsibility toward the Aboriginal people. It was Britain who colonised Australia, who murdered Aborigines in their tens of thousands and set up the 'apartheid' style laws to enslave and rob the Aboriginal people. On 26 January, the Aboriginal Anti-Bicentenary Solidarity Group held a picket of almost a hundred people outside the Australian High Commission, and then went on to occupy Qantas, Regent Street. Two of our comrades were arrested, one while the occupation was in progress, the other after all the demonstrators had peaceably left the building.

More information from the Aboriginal Anti-Bicentenary Solidarity Group, 14B Chardmore Rd., N16 6JD Tel: (01) 806 0742  
Leigh O'Connor



THE ATTACK ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

## Kill Alton's Abortion Bill

On Friday 22 January David Alton's anti-abortion Bill won a majority of 45 in the House of Commons. His Bill sets an upper time limit for abortion of 18 weeks; a sharp reduction in the real availability of abortion for many women.

In 1986 only 5,665 (3.3%) of the 172,000 abortions performed were post 18-weeks. However, nearly 3,000 of these were to women under the age of 20. Alton's Bill is a particular threat to young women.

Vital tests for abnormalities in foetuses cannot be completed before the 18 week deadline. Alton's Bill could result in the birth of 600 more disabled children a year in a society which discriminates against disabled people at all levels.

Alton's Bill is an attack on the right to abortion. Alton has made it clear that he is opposed to all abortions. His limit of 18 weeks has no medical significance but it would make abortion much more difficult for all those women who cannot afford to pay. Of all abortions performed after 18 weeks in 1986, 20% were on women who had requested an abortion

before the 12th week.

Alton's Bill and associated moves to change the 1967 Act would hit foreign women, especially Irish women, seeking abortion in Britain. Last year, 3,715 Irish women came to Britain for abortions.

Alton is now considering allowing 'exemptions' from the 18 week limit for certain types of disability - eg multiple sclerosis, spina bifida - and women who have been raped. Down's Syndrome is, he believes, a 'borderline' case. Rape victims will only be exempt provided they report the rape to the police within a set

time. Alton's 'exemptions' are eloquent testimony to the vicious anti-woman character of this Bill.

The Labour Party allowed a free vote and no less than 33 Labour MPs voted for this vicious attack on women's rights.

This is the fifteenth time we have had to defend the 1967 Act (itself inadequate). Alton's Bill, in whatever form, must be defeated. Women must have the right to abortion on demand as early as possible and as late as necessary. FAB's national demonstration on 19 March needs to unite all those fighting oppression for a massive and angry show of opposition to Alton's Bill.

Sue Swatridge



Demonstrators outside Australia House, London

### PUBLIC SPENDING WHITE PAPER

## More cuts in welfare

On 20 January 1988 the government produced its annual White Paper on Public Expenditure. It contained no surprises. Government expenditure will continue to rise in real terms at an average rate of about 1 1/4 per cent a year, well below the expected growth of national income, and totally inadequate for maintaining basic welfare services. This year government spending (excluding privatisation proceeds) as a percentage of GDP has fallen below the level the government inherited on taking office in 1979 - 42.5 per cent compared with 43 1/4 per cent in 1978/9. Further reductions in this ratio are planned for the next few years. As the economy slows down they will become harder to achieve.

The government has also scored another first this year. Expenditure in 1987/8 is expected to be £1.3bn below that forecast in last year's White Paper. Nevertheless rises in the years 1988/9 and 1989/90 are expected to be well above those planned in previous White Papers (see table).

gets the next largest amount - £755m - as the prison building programme is accelerated by another 4,200 extra places by 1993. This is on top of the 17,000 new places already planned.

The other major increases arise from the massive unemployment levels and the growing demands on the social services. Social security has increased by 39 per cent since 1979 and Health and personal social services by 30 per cent. The latter rise has been totally inadequate since prices in the NHS rise faster than the economy as a whole; demands on the service are increasing as a result of an ageing population; and pay for doctors and nurses is rising faster than inflation. The rises planned for the next three years are below the levels needed to maintain the service and do not include any allowance for real rises in NHS staff pay. An all-party select committee has estimated that the NHS has already suffered a shortfall of £1.8bn between the years 1980-1 and 1986-7. The government is intent on making the situation worse.

Education and science expenditure has increased by only 9 per cent since 1979, well below the average rise in government spending. It will be squeezed over the next few years. Spending on housing has fallen by 41 per cent (after receipts from council house sales), on trade and industry by 64 per cent and transport by 11 per cent in real terms since 1979. These are not priority areas.

The highest increase in departmental spending since 1979 of 75 per cent is that of the Department of Employment, to finance young people being removed from the dole and put on cheap labour schemes. It might be said that the government's White Paper is planning for an increase in law and order expenditure of £3.3bn whose strength is to increase by 2,638 to £2,682 over the next three years. The prison service

David Hoyle

### SCARGILL'S ELECTION

## Hard fight ahead for the miners

Dave Douglass, NUM Yorkshire Area, writes on the crisis in the NUM. The article was written before the result of the election was known. Scargill's greatly reduced majority, 53.8%, confirms the importance of the political questions raised by Dave Douglass.

The current infighting on the NEC is symptomatic of the reasons why Arthur sought re-election. Constant sniping over every issue, large or small, as well as the 'New Realist' charge that Arthur is out of touch with the rank and file forced him to seek a fresh mandate.

None of the CP 'lefts' or CP inspired area leaders had the bottle to stand against Arthur or blow their left cover by openly supporting right wing John Walsh. However, they refuse to nominate or hint at abstention. Abstention, however, is a vote AGAINST Arthur and for the right wing.

Walsh's campaign appeals solely to war weariness among miners, the tantalising prospect that he will usher in a period of peace and settled income. For men (and their families) who have had little but all out political struggle in the last 12 months it is a seductive call, a cruel ploy. The Board have not the slightest intention of backing off their first objective whatever it is.

The increased tension is a direct result of the miners' struggle for

until 100 years of concession and advance is wiped out.

The bulk of the left has correctly fallen in behind Arthur, but tend to feed the ego-tripping image that the election of Arthur will mark the re-opening of a major miners' offensive against the Board. Like a children's war game, where all the dead men get up and go home for tea before coming back out to rejoin the battle, they are simply waiting for Arthur to give the word and the miners will spring back good as new to all out battle.

A steady guerilla struggle is being waged by the miners. Arthur needs to address himself to the direction of this guerilla struggle to confound any plans the Board has for the industry unless they concede on wages, on discipline, on sacked men and all the other fronts they have opened up against us.

Calls for an all out last ditch stand might sound fiery but actually portray an ignorance of the vital necessity of the survival of the NUM as a 'sagging' sector of the

David Hoyle

### FIGHT FOR GAY RIGHTS



In January thousands marched against Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill and on 24 January thousands held a vigil for human rights for all Aids victims





BIRMINGHAM 6

# British justice —No justice

The Appeal result came in the same week that the government announced its decision not to prosecute RUC officers who had committed perjury, conspiracy and murder in Ireland. The two decisions stand not only as a monument to British injustice but to government determination to protect those who carry out its murderous Irish policies. Policemen who gunned down unarmed Irish people are to be protected on grounds of 'national security' while six men whose only 'crime' is that they are Irish are to remain in prison.

Nobody is fooled by the judicial farce of the Appeal Court, the real reason that the Birmingham 6 will remain in prison is also 'national security'. If their appeal had been successful it would have been a crushing blow for the police, the judiciary and top politicians. It would have meant that dozens of police were guilty of perjury, that senior judges, Attorney Generals and Home Office Ministers had colluded in this process. Even worse, it would have increased pressure to reopen the other Irish frame ups, the Guildford 4, the Maguire and Judith Ward. For 'national security' read the protection of the high and mighty in Britain. And who better to protect them than three of their own: Lord Chief Justice Lane, Lord Justice Stephen Brown and Lord Justice O'Connor.

On 28 January the appeal of the Birmingham 6 was rejected. The decision is a bitter tragedy for the men who have spent thirteen years in prison for a bombing which they did not commit and for their families and friends who have had to stand impotently by and watch them grow old in prison. Their suffering can only be imagined as they sat in court and watched three bewigged and robed judges majestically sweep aside every argument, every witness, every carefully researched piece of evidence that had been brought forward in support of the six. With an arrogance unique to the British ruling class, these judges have sent six men back to prison despite the fact that their innocence is recognised by millions of people, including politicians, lawyers and journalists, in Ireland and in Britain.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

They treated the case put forward on behalf of the six with utter contempt and disbelief. Despite weeks of evidence to the contrary they had not one tiny doubt that the men's convictions were 'safe and satisfactory'. The two new witnesses who backed up the men's evidence of police beatings, the former police officers present during the men's time in custody, were 'a witness not worthy of belief' and 'a most unconvincing witness and an embittered man'. Anyway it was 'highly unlikely' that West Midlands police officers would have beaten the men up in front of officers from another force. As an orga-

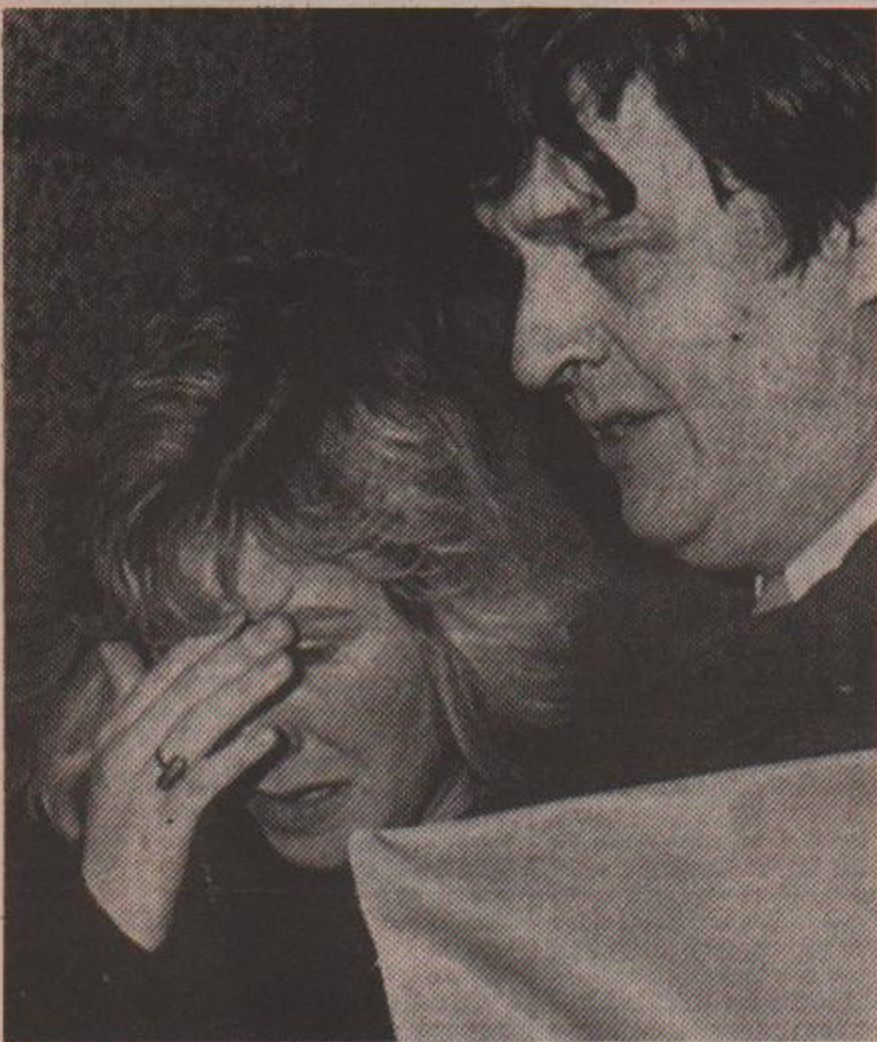
nised conspiracy by the police, this was 'grotesquely impossible'.

The Justices had no more difficulty dealing with the demolition of the forensic evidence against the six. Most who observed the trial agreed that it would be hard to find a more appalling witness than Dr Frank Skuse, who conducted the explosives tests on the six. But the learned Judges, whilst admitting the doubts about Skuse's methods were nevertheless 'reasonably certain' that his results could not have come from substances other than explosives. Indeed the longer they had gone on listening to the evidence for the six the more convinced of their guilt they had become. So there we have it. Wouldn't any normal person be happy to have their fate in the hands of such learned and open minded gentlemen?

The result comes as no surprise to those who are familiar with the methods by which Britain rules in Ireland. But it is a major embarrassment for the Twenty Six Counties government, the SDLP and others who have maintained that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would bring about improvements in British police and judicial methods as applied to the Irish. Their strategy is reeling from the double blow of the Birmingham 6 result and the shoot to kill no prosecutions decision. Yet the Irish government, on the strength of a few British ministerial 'assurances' that things would improve, has been willing to allow extradition and unprecedented military and police collaboration against Republicans. They now stand thoroughly exposed. Labour spokesman Kevin McNamara got right to the point: 'It will put an enormous strain upon politicians seeking to gain support for the forces of law and order'. It is not British murder, repression and injustice that worries the British Labour Party and the Irish collaborationists, merely its exposure. They fear that this will lead to increased support for the only force fighting to drive British imperialism out of Ireland - the Republican Movement.

These are the motives that have made some bourgeois politicians in Britain and Ireland take up the case of the Birmingham 6. It is from them that much of the pressure to re-open the case has come. And it has been proved to be an insubstantial basis on which to build a campaign. The protests of politicians, churchmen and others will always have a place in a campaign for the Birmingham 6. But, if alongside them does not go enormous pressure from a wide and public campaign it will not be enough. This much has now been proved. The British government weighs things up carefully when so much is at stake. As things stand, they will only release the Birmingham 6 when they fear the consequences of keeping them in prison more than the consequences of releasing them. To bring that about will not be easy. It requires that all supporters of the Birmingham 6 now unite to build the most powerful and angry campaign ever seen.

The riddled car in which unarmed volunteers, Gervais McKerr, Eugene Toman and Sean Burns were murdered in 1982



Patricia Power, daughter of William Power, leaves the court after the verdict

## 'National Security' licence to kill

With Attorney General Sir Patrick Mayhew's announcement of no prosecutions following the Stalker/Sampson inquiry into shoot-to-kill operations in the Six Counties, the government is gambling, once again, on public ignorance and indifference to the murderous activities of British forces in Ireland. The British government has pleaded 'reasons of national security' to justify its decision.

In many other countries a government decision that no action was to be taken about an official policy of murder by the police and a high-level cover up, would by now be a national scandal. Not so in Britain. Only one MP, Ken Livingstone, made the obvious point that Mayhew and co. were 'accomplices to murder' and was thrown out of the House of Commons for it. Nor is the government caused much anxiety by the anger expressed by Haughey. The decision, coming after assurances to the Irish government that they would pro-

MAXINE WILLIAMS

secute, is a measure of the contempt the British government has for its Irish junior partners. They may try to sweeten things with talk of disciplinary action against some RUC officers but they know that the affair is not likely to seriously jeopardise Irish cooperation with imperialism.

The affair began in 1982 when in three separate operations six men were shot dead by members of the SAS-trained RUC Headquarters Mobile Support Unit. In

two trials following the killings RUC men were acquitted but made the damaging admission that senior officers had told them to lie about what occurred. In addition, the Armagh coroner resigned because of 'grave irregularities' in the RUC files about the cases. Rumours abounded that an official shoot to kill policy existed, that one of the operations had involved incursions into the Twenty Six Counties, that MI5 was involved.

In May 1984 Manchester's Deputy Chief Constable, John Stalker, was appointed to conduct an investigation. The Stalker inquiry was no doubt supposed to be a whitewash. But Stalker actually began digging and soon found himself up against a wall of silence (at some points he actually feared for his safety) from the RUC and its Chief Constable, Sir John Hermon. He

discovered perjury and fabricated evidence and demanded the suspension of two RUC Superintendents. Hermon refused. Discovering that MI5 had actually taped events at the scene of one of the killings, Stalker demanded a transcript of this crucial tape from the RUC. Hermon refused. Meanwhile Stalker produced a report recommending prosecution of at least eight RUC officers. Finally Hermon was ordered to give the transcript to Stalker. On the very day before Stalker was due to return to Belfast and try again to get the transcript, he was removed from duty and an inquiry was launched into alleged disciplinary offences by him. He was removed from the shoot-to-kill inquiry and replaced by Colin Sampson, Chief Constable of West Yorkshire (who just happened also to be heading the investigation about Stalker). Subsequently his disciplinary offences were shown to be trivial and he was reinstated. But he was never put back on the shoot-to-kill inquiry. He had come too close to the truth for comfort and had been cynically removed by the British 'dirty tricks' brigade.

Prosecutions of the RUC would have risked revealing an appalling tale of government-sanctioned murder, perjury and obstruction of justice. By pleading national security and brazening it out the government has ensured that what actually happened in Ireland and in the subsequent Stalker affair remains known only to a minority of the British public. Once again British rule in Ireland and the murder and repression by which that rule survives has been defended.

This disgraceful affair will now be concluded with inquests into the six shoot-to-kill deaths. Delayed for six years, these will be heard in front of a jury selected by RUC Superintendents. And so the 'cover up' continues. The sorry truth is that, despite the momentary embarrassment and token frost in Anglo-Irish government relations caused by Mayhew's announcement, the British government is likely to win its gamble.



### BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATIONS

Thousands of people joined marches in Ireland and Britain to commemorate the murder of 14 Irish people by British soldiers on 30 January 1972. The march in London, organised by the Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland, was swelled to 5,000 in response to the announcements of no prosecutions in the shoot-to-kill cases and the unsuccessful Birmingham 6 appeal. Three flute bands from Scotland travelled to the march. The rally in Islington Town Hall was addressed by a Sinn Fein speaker; Emma Groves, blinded by a rubber bullet; MPs Ken Livingstone, Jeremy Corbyn and Dianne Abbott and a speaker from the NUM. The threatened major mobilisation by the National Front turned out to be a few small bands of fascist counter-demonstrators. Manchester Irish Solidarity Committee travelled to Derry to join the commemoration march there.

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY PICKET

Stop Strip Searches!  
End British Torture!  
Picket Durham Prison  
Sunday 13 March 1pm



City Anti-Apartheid Group programme of action

# Participate in '88

Participate in '88 – Free the Prisoners Now! was the theme of the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group dayschool held on 17 January. 110 people representing a wide variety of organisations as well as individuals attended to discuss the Programme of Action for 1988. Comrades from the struggle in South Africa were represented by Comrade Rodney from the PAC, Comrade Keke who is active in the Ruskin Kitson-Mandela Committee, Comrade Freddie from SWANU, Comrade Ttheviso Manupelu who was part of the student uprising in Soweto in 1976 and Comrades David and Norma Kitson.

Carol Brickley, Convenor of City Group, opened the dayschool by outlining the programme for the coming year: 'Our task is to build the movement which is actively engaged in the fight against apartheid in South Africa and against racism in Britain'. Carol outlined the repression being waged against the black majority by the apartheid regime, backed by its imperialist allies – Mrs Thatcher being the most prominent.

LORNA REID

gle and only the majority of South Africans have a right to choose their leaders and the nature of a future democratic South Africa. Solidarity with all the forces fighting for liberation is vital if the working class and oppressed are to retain their right to choose. Carol concluded that City AA's organisation needs to live up to the struggle and to its reputation for effective solidarity action.

Norma Kitson, recently returned from a trip to Zimbabwe, played two tapes of interviews with comrades who have recently been leading struggles in South Africa. These were powerful testimonies to the justness of the struggle and the courage of the people. Norma reported that the Non-Stop Picket is known about and supported by comrades in the struggle who applaud the activists involved. During their trip to Zimbabwe, David and Norma Kitson were interviewed in the press on the radio and the television, and attended the inauguration of Robert Mugabe as President in Harare. Everywhere they went they received messages of support and encouragement for the Non-Stop Picket.

The Dayschool broke into workshops to prepare the mobilisation for the Programme of Action. In all the workshops comrades new and old came forward with

ideas for the building of the movement: amongst youth and students, women, trade unions, black and anti-racist groups, lesbians and gay men. The Programme of Action was well and truly launched.

In the afternoon, comrades from PAC, SWANU, BALS, Azania/Namibia Forum, the RCG, the Humanist Party, Kitson Mandela Committee, and David Kitson himself joined together in a panel discussion on non-sectarian solidarity work. David Reed, speaking for the RCG, said:

'Whilst we unconditionally support all forces fighting for liberation in Southern Africa, as communists we want power in the hands of the working class and oppressed... our solidarity must ensure that their voices are heard... by giving support to all those fighting for liberation we can ensure that the working class and oppressed have a voice in Britain.'

A lively discussion followed – including a hotly debated discussion on the role of the churches. It turned out that the audience contained a Church of England clergyman, Christians and Hindus as well as atheists. Many people felt that the Church had played a reactionary role in oppressed nations which it must rectify. The role of the Church towards black people in Britain was also challenged. In the end, most people agreed to differ about religion but felt that the important question was whether you stand on the side of the people who are fighting oppression.

Participate in '88 – no matter your creed, colour or political affiliations – that was the message of the dayschool. The RCG fully supports the City AA Programme of action and will participate fully in building the movement which will fight for democracy both in South Africa and Britain.



## PROGRAMME OF ACTION PARTICIPATE IN '88

### Major events for the coming year

Monday 21 March Rally REMEMBER SHARPEVILLE REMEMBER LANGA STOP THE MASSACRES STOP THE HANGINGS Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn	Thursday 16 June SOWETO DAY SURROUND THE EMBASSY Part of an internationally co-ordinated day of action
Saturday 16 April SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF THE NON-STOP PICKET DEMONSTRATION Hyde Park to the South African Embassy FREE MANDELA • FREE MOTHOPENG • FREE MAYEKISO	Saturday/Sunday 16 & 17 July SUMMER SCHOOL Monday 18 July NELSON MANDELA'S 70TH BIRTHDAY Rally outside the Embassy 6pm
	Saturday/Sunday 24 & 25 September City AA Annual General Meeting

## THE SHARPEVILLE SIX MUST NOT HANG

# 1988 – YEAR OF THE LYNCHINGS

This year the Nationalist Party in South Africa will celebrate 40 years of apartheid rule. The festivities will mark 40 years of institutionalised murder torture and repression of the vast majority of its population who are black. It is no accident that this year more than 40 black people wait to be hanged on Death Row for political 'crimes'. 1988 threatens to be the 'Year of the Lynchings'.

MPs Terry Fields and Keith Vaz who led a City AA delegation to Downing Street



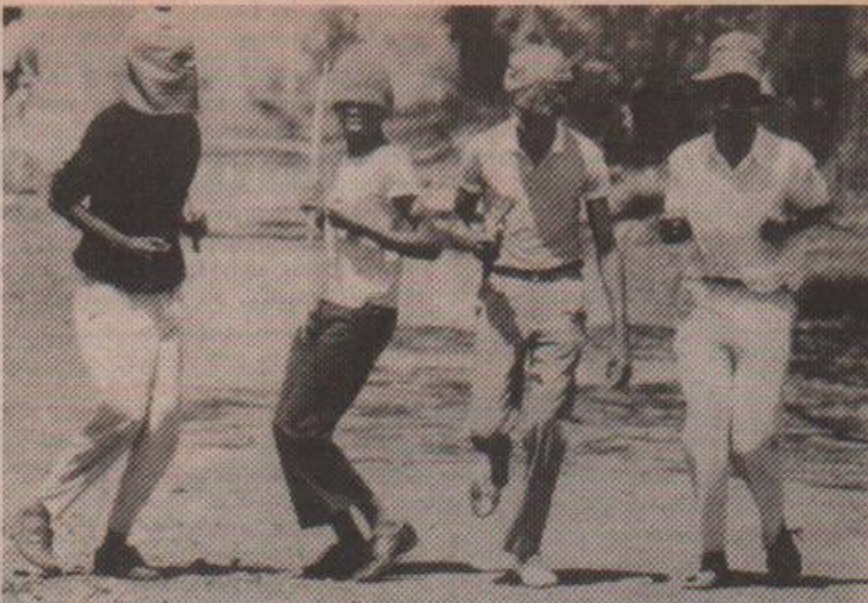
Amongst those awaiting the death sentence are six young black people – the Sharpeville 6 – who were sentenced to death for the murder of a black councillor in September 1984. They are innocent. They have spent nearly two years on Death Row and their appeal has been turned down. They could be hanged at any time, without warning or notification to their families.

Most of the condemned prisoners were sentenced for 'crimes' committed during the period of intense resistance in the townships from 1984 to 1986. The programme of lynchings scheduled for 1988 is intended to intimidate the black population.

City AA has launched a concerted campaign to save their lives. On 28 January two MPs, Terry Fields and Keith Vaz accompanied by a City AA delegation handed a letter, signed by 20 MPs, in at 10 Downing Street calling on Mrs Thatcher to make direct representations for clemency. So far Thatcher's government has avoided any direct call, while claiming to be opposed to the hangings.

If the apartheid regime goes ahead with the hanging of the Sharpeville 6, then the slaughter of at least 40 others will follow this year.

Carol Brickley



## The politics behind the violence

The escalating fighting between UDF and Inkatha supporters in and around Pietermaritzburg is providing the apartheid regime and bands of foreign journalists with plenty of material for a disinformation campaign. Accounts of 'atrocities' on both sides now litter the Western press and media. It is, in many ways, a return to their favourite theme of 'black on black' violence, intended to show that there is a big question mark hanging over a future democratic South Africa, governed by the black majority. Once given the vote – the argument runs – black South Africans will naturally divide into warring groups (tribal wars, civil wars etc) and South Africa will descend into barbarism. No wonder that the regime is happy to allow such stories to 'emerge' uncensored while every other struggle involving black people goes unreported.

The real facts behind the fighting between UDF and Inkatha supporters are, of course, political. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi has long jockeyed for a position of power and credibility – refusing to be a puppet bantustan leader (although he is in reality just that) by claiming to be anti-apartheid and part of the liberation movement. Buthelezi has the dubious distinction of being Mrs Thatcher's favourite black man – he is totally opposed to sanctions. Inkatha, his 'Zulu' movement, is organised along traditional lines, and is the basis for Buthelezi's claim to represent millions of black people. In 1985 the first vigilante groups to attack UDF supporters in Natal province were organised by Inkatha. The difference now is that the UDF youth and grassroots are fighting back.

The tragedy of the Pietermaritzburg fighting is that all too often Inkatha's supporters have no real choice about their allegiances. Buthelezi has established a system where in some areas it is impossible to get a job or even travel on public transport unless you belong to Inkatha. It is the ordinary people who are press-ganged into a cycle of violence and victimisation while Buthelezi and his henchmen keep their hands clean.

In these circumstances, UDF supporters are understandably wary of peace talks with Inkatha which UDF leaders have tried to set up.

Unlike the British press and media, we cannot remain blind to the political facts. The UDF stands on an anti-apartheid programme, which Inkatha certainly does not. The fighting is no more 'black on black' violence than the war in Ireland is religious. There is no question mark over the democracy of future majority rule in South Africa – the only question is how soon?

Carol Brickley



# Non-Stop picketer sues Metropolitan police for assault

Simone Dewhurst's civil action against Cannon Row police for assault and sexual harassment was heard in Westminster County Court from Monday 18 January to Friday 22 January 1988. Simone was arrested on 6 October 1986 on the Non-Stop Picket outside South Africa House and subsequently charged with obstruction and assault on a police officer, Inspector Roger Perry. She was later acquitted.

## TERRY O'HALLORAN

In the civil action Simone testified that on 6 October 1986, while in the charge room at Cannon Row, she was assaulted by Sergeant A18 Mander. 'He started to scratch my arm with his fingernails. I tried to get out of my chair but he was leaning across me effectively pinning me into the chair.' She told the court that Sgt Mander said, 'It's a pity A906 isn't here because he'd like to stick one up you.'

Then, she said, whilst her property was being checked, WPC AD331 Duberry started reading the Chief Steward's book. She protested saying that the book was personal property. Then, Simone said, 'A18 came round and pushed me off my chair.' She ended up on the floor with the chair on top of her.

She was taken to a cell by two WPCs. Simone then told the court: 'WPC Duberry took me out of the cell into the charge room. She said I had to take my clothes off. . . Together they forcibly removed my T-shirt. Then they took my other clothing off. One held my arms behind my back and the other took my trousers and pants off. I was just standing there with no clothes. . . One door opened and A18 walked in. He said "A906 would like to see you now and fuck you."'

Simone told the court that Mander ver-

bally abused parts of her body and told her, 'I wouldn't touch you, you're disgusting.' He also, she said, called her a 'slut' and a 'lesbian'.

She said, shouting and crying she tried to get her clothes but was held back by the two WPCs; Mander then returned to the room and said, 'Oh, she's crying. What a shame. All you women on the picket are dirty lesbians.' Simone said that there was a group of male officers looking through the open door and laughing. 'I recognised one of them as Inspector Perry.'

Michael Austen-Smith represented the police. He attacked Simone's account as a 'fabrication to dirty the name of the police.' He suggested that CLAAG (the acronym for City Group used exclusively by the Metropolitan Police and the AAM) was expelled from the AAM for being 'more radical and more militant.'

He suggested to Simone that as a member of the Revolutionary Communist Group she was 'prepared to tell any lie' to discredit the police. He suggested that she had got somebody to scratch and lacerate her arms inflicting up to 68 separate injuries. He suggested that her whole account was part of a conspiracy to attack the police.

The police denied that the assaults, the abuse and the strip search had taken place at all.



Simone Dewhurst at Westminster County Court

In his closing speech, Austen-Smith again reverted to the conspiracy theory. He told the jury that City Group was 'an organisation too extreme to be kept within the limits of the Anti-Apartheid Movement'; that Simone's account was part of 'a scurrilous campaign against the officers of the Metropolitan Police' and a 'planned vilification of the police' designed to show that 'They're [the police] sexist, they're racist and they're brutal.'

Judge Percival Harris threatened to imprison anyone who picketed outside the court. He told one woman he would imprison her if she could not 'keep a straight

face'. In his summing up he referred to the 'somewhat modern and deplorable tendency to denigrate the police because they have been caught in a few nefarious activities.' He told the jury that they may have thought 'as, candidly I did, that he [Sgt Mander] was a fine upstanding young man.'

After the jury found against Simone, Judge Harris said that Simone was the type of person who is neither 'likely to work or wants to work'. He said that he would have referred the papers from the case to the DPP but that he thought Simone was 'naive, immature and may have been manipulated by other forces.'

## The attack on Simone Dewhurst

On Friday 22 January Simone Dewhurst, RCG member and leading City Group activist, lost her case against the Metropolitan Police (see report of court case this page). The police defence was based on accusing Simone, the RCG and City Group of being engaged in a conspiracy against the police. The facts show that, on the contrary, Cannon Row police have been engaged in a conspiracy against the Non-Stop Picket since it began.

From 19 April 1986 to the beginning of December 1987, a period of 18 months, the police made 376 arrests involving 566 charges. City Group won no less than 87% of all the cases completed.

Austen-Smith 'accused' picketers of using the chant 'Racist police'. Perhaps he could suggest a different description for the uniformed thugs who, on 13 June 1986, throttled a black picketer to the point where she had to receive emergency hospital treatment; or the uniformed thugs who beat Tunde Forrest on 6 December and dragged him handcuffed along the pavement.

Austen-Smith 'accused' picketers of chanting 'Sexist police'. Perhaps he could suggest a different description for the uniformed thugs who habitually taunt women picketers as 'lesbians' and 'slags'.

The police have sifted through every obscure and antique statute to find means of attacking the picket: illegal street collections; Westminster by-laws (music near houses); noise pollution; Commissioner's Directions; the

Metropolitan Police Act 1839 etc.

The RCG does not need to invent things to prove the racist sexist character of Metropolitan Police officers: they provide the evidence themselves every day.

It is no surprise that in searching for mud to throw at both the RCG and City Group Austen-Smith should seek help from the AAM. When Austen-Smith said that City Group was 'an organisation too extreme to be kept within the limits of the anti-apartheid movement' he was using the weapons provided by the AAM to attack City Group. The AAM's sectarian abuse and expulsion of City Group not only made it easier for the police to attack the picket, it also helped the police to defend their behaviour in court.

In the court Simone found herself confronted by the police counsel and the Judge, to say nothing of their sleeping partner, the AAM. Inside the court she lost. Outside we know that Simone's courageous decision to sue the police won the sympathy and support of people throughout Britain: RCG supporters and City Group supporters flooded her with cards and flowers; women from Greenham Common sent their solidarity; black people with their own experience of police violence sent their support and attended the trial in solidarity; staff from the secondary school Simone attended sent a letter of sympathy and support.

Simone is discussing the possibility of an appeal with her lawyers. The RCG will continue to defend women picketers against sexist attacks.

## NEWS NOTES

### 'IMPRISON THATCHER'

Banners proclaiming 'We hate apartheid, so we hate Thatcher' and 'Free Mandela, Free Mothopeng, Imprison Thatcher' greeted the British Prime Minister when she arrived in Nigeria early in January on her first ever visit to the African continent. Thatcher returned to Britain claiming to have 'won the argument over sanctions' without anyone in Nigeria recalling a decisive outcome.

Nevertheless, Thatcher's lightning visit to Nigeria may well have been preparing the ground for a visit to South Africa before long. Thatcher has said that she will visit South Africa 'when the time is ripe' - a return visit following Botha's visit to Britain in 1984, postponed because of 'a little local difficulty' in South Africa. Let's hope that the time is very ripe when she visits and she gets the reception she deserves.

### 'TOP LEVEL' PLOT

January is a popular month for visits to warmer climates. Thatcher's chief European ally Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany sent right-wing Franz Strauss on a tour of Southern Africa. Strauss opposes majority rule in South Africa and sanctions. During his trip rumours abounded that a 'top level' conference on Southern Africa is in the offing. Mrs Thatcher and PW Botha are both keen on the idea. It is certain that 'top level' means that the views and wishes of the black majority will not be heard, and that it will be used to cement the alliance between these arch opponents of democracy. During his visit Strauss had secret talks with Jonas Savimbi, leader of the UNITA bandits in Angola.

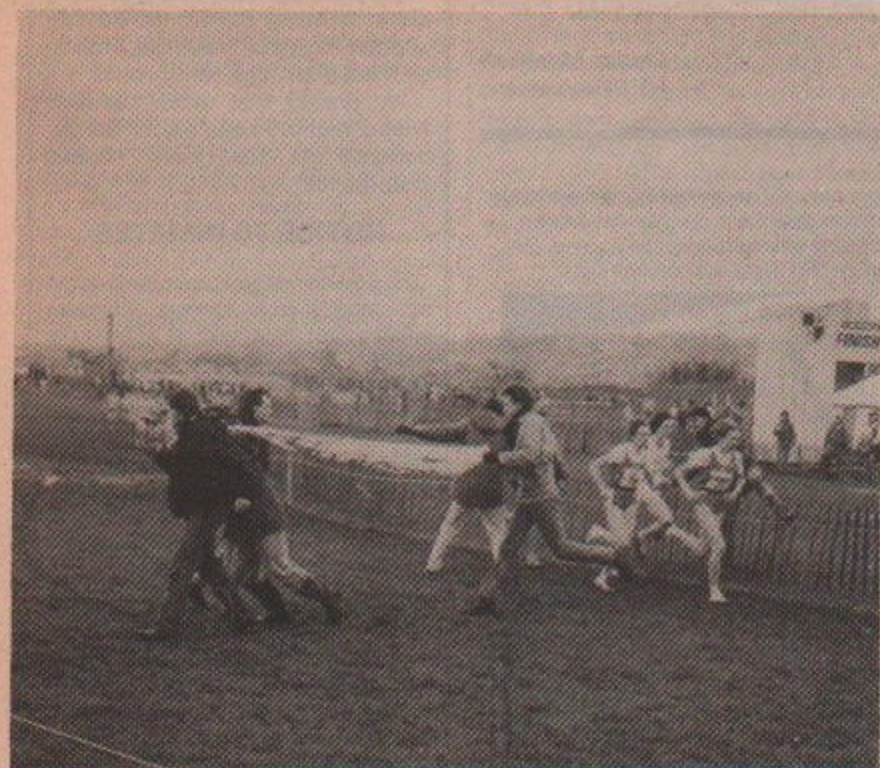
### A 'BOTTOM LEVEL' PLOT

On Sunday 31 January the *Observer* reported the AAM is launching a campaign to recruit black people in Britain. The recruitment drive will be launched on Mandela's birthday (a time more suited to launching a campaign to Release Mandela, one would have thought) with a 'promotional campaign in the ethnic press'.

This dramatic (!) move is a result of an internal report that black people have a negative view of the AAM: 'Much of the explanation for this poor view of many in the black and ethnic minority communities that the AAM, like most other "white" institutions [you said it!] is disinterested and uninvolved in, and even unsympathetic to, anti-racist struggles here in Britain. . .'

At the heart of the AAM leaderships response to this shatteringly correct criticism is the view that black people are mistaken (a quick press campaign will soon put that right!). This is white patronage. Black people in Britain have very good reasons for viewing the AAM as a 'white' institution interested only in apartheid in South Africa. The AAM is principally led by the Labour Party and remnants of the CPGB who have a long history of racism: David Ennals introduced the Immigration Act in Britain when he was a recent ex-president of the AAM with barely a ripple of protest. More recently the AAM has shown a disinterested contempt for black struggles in Britain including attacking black people in Liverpool who protested against Zola Budd. It will take more than an ad in *Caribbean Times* to convince black people in Britain that the AAM is anything other than a 'white institution'.

Carol Brickley



## AAM in Zola Budd Dirty Deal

Stewards fight to remove City AA protestors on the track in Gateshead (Zola Budd obscured, centre of picture).

On 30 January City AA disrupted Zola Budd's return to running in Gateshead. The AAM had told Tyneside AA that if they did anything 'controversial' they would get no support. Tyneside AA then made a 'no-disruption' deal with Labour Councillors. Secretary Allison Barrett said, 'If there's any direct action it's nothing to do with us' and that she was horrified that members of City AA should run onto the track. Once again the AAM has broken the international sports boycott of apartheid. Budd came fourth and is eligible for the world championships in New Zealand this March. There she will meet a storm of protest.

Andy Higgingbottom



# The struggle for prisoners rights

**Shujaa Moshesh contributes to the debate in response to the programme issued by the Dumbarton Scottish Prisoners Support Committee. We urge other prisoners to join the debate.**

The programme of demands issued by the Dumbarton Scottish Prisoners Support Committee (FRFI 73) is relevant for the prison system in the whole of Britain. Undoubtedly conditions in Scottish prisons are harsher than what has to be endured in

dire need for radical changes to be made in the prison system as a whole. What happened in Peterhead could easily happen elsewhere if changes are not implemented. Twelve years after the introduction of half-remission in 'Northern Ireland',



Prisoners protest on the roof of Albany 1983

prisons in England and Wales, which is by no means a compliment for institutions south of the border. But the recent prison rebellions in Barlinnie, Peterhead and Shotts, and in particular the use of the SAS to end the Peterhead protest illustrate the

## Hunger strike in Armley prison

Tony Gamble, 32 of Upton, who has been on remand in Armley for over 9 months, went on hunger strike on 15 January in protest at court delays in setting a trial date. Tony pleaded guilty to theft charges last April and has since been locked up in over-crowded disgusting conditions.

The hunger strike lasted five days during which time Tony was admitted to the prison hospital. Still no date for his trial has been set.

## Death in Dalston police cell

On 26 June 1987 Mr Tunay Hussan, 25, died after being held in Dalston police station. He had been arrested for an alleged burglary with his girl friend, Ms Seanna Walsh. He was first taken unconscious to hospital but then returned to custody. A first post-mortem examination showed 'numerous bruises and other injuries consistent with having occurred in the course of a struggle. Bruises to eye, nose and mouth... back and shoulders' and a half-inch deep cut to the head possibly caused by a fist.

A second examination found that death was caused by the inhalation of vomit due to a methadone overdose. A forensic scientist said that the level of methadone in Tunay's blood was one of the highest he'd ever seen. Ms Walsh died later from a suspected drug overdose. Before she died she taped an interview for a London Turkish newspaper, *Hurriyet*, saying how Tunay had been assaulted in police custody.

Michael Austen-Smith, covering up for the Commissioner of Police said of the case, 'with the benefit of hindsight that young man was doomed the moment he left the hospital'. More like, doomed the moment the police got their hands on him. The inquest jury found that Tunay Hussan died from drug overdose aggravated by lack of care.

Alexa Byrne

## BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

John McCann BS1715  
HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton,  
Bristol, Worts., WR11 5TZ.  
(22 February)  
Bill O'Dowd BS1215  
HMP Dumbarton, Dumbarton,  
Dumbarton DH1 1RU. O'Wards  
FRFI readers are urged to send birthday  
greetings to these Irish Political Prisoners.



order image to the public - has resulted in the steady deterioration in prison conditions.

Prison officer brutality against prisoners is as old as the institution of prison itself. Predictably, the Home Office always deny 'allegations of brutality' even when it is obvious that staff are responsible. According to the verdict at his inquest, Barry Prosser was 'unlawfully killed' in Winson Green prison. Several years later, and despite the trial of three prison officers charged with causing his death and who were subsequently found not guilty, his unlawful killers still can not be found. Brutality by staff has been one of the root causes of all the major prison rebellions in the last twenty years, from Parkhurst in 1969 up to the recent sieges at Shotts and Peterhead. Yet the authorities continue to spread their lies to deny that staff brutality, an every day feature of

# Hunger strike in the cages

**Two prisoners, John Gallagher and Sammy Ralston are currently on hunger strike in the Inverness cages. John Gallagher began his hunger strike on 8 January. He is demanding to be moved out of the cages and out of solitary confinement. The prison authorities, predictably, have denied that the hunger strike is taking place.**

## GRAHAM JOHNSON

John Gallagher was moved from Shotts prison four months ago and used as a scapegoat for the protest there (see FRFI 72). The Scottish Office gave no reason for his move to the cages, but it is known that they were opposed to his charity work in support of deprived children in Glasgow.

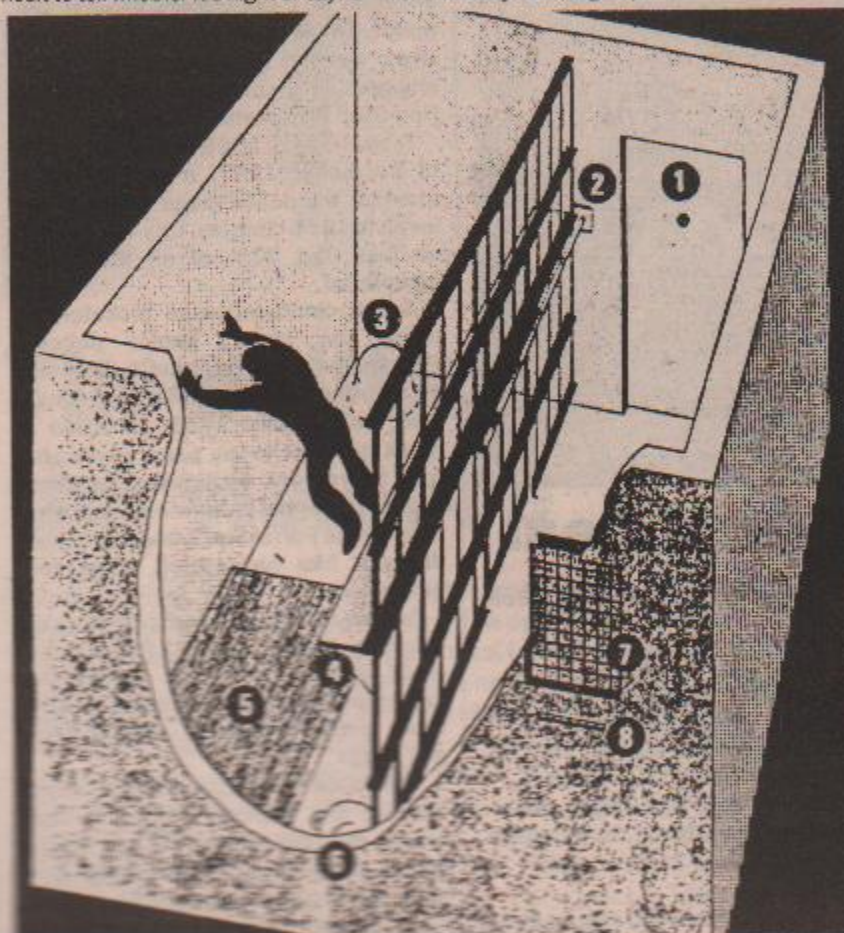
The prison authorities have organised a systematic campaign to degrade John Gallagher and break his spirit. The press have been all too willing to repeat Scottish Office lies about him being a 'troublemaker' and 'man of violence'.

His conditions in the cages are atrocious. The regime is one of psychological torture. For visits, five prison officers bring him into the visiting room in handcuffs. Also, many letters, including letters to the European Court of Human Rights, have been censored.

FRFI supporters in Scotland are supporting John Gallagher's fight for justice. Following our exposure of his conditions in FRFI 72, he received support from many readers, including other prisoners. We are now helping to organise solidarity with John Gallagher and pressure on the Scottish Office.

We appeal to all readers to send letters of protest to Malcolm Bellard, Scottish Office, St Andrew House, Edinburgh, Scotland. Letters of support to John Gallagher, Segregation Unit, Inverness Prison, Inverness, Scotland.

1 - Main cell door (steel) with spy hole. 2 - Cage door can only be opened by device outside cell. 3 - Concrete bollard seat. 4 - Metal shelf welded to cage front. 5 - Wooden dais on floor as bed. 6 - Chamber Pot. 7 - Double-glazed opaque window. Cannot be opened. Difficult to tell whether it's night or day. 8 - Ventilation system, eight quarter-inch slats.



Left: Albany 1983. Above: Wormwood Scrubs 1980

prison life particularly in the segregation units, ever occurs.

Half-remission and institutionalised staff brutality are just two of the many issues that need to be addressed and investigated. The DSPSC programme adequately covers the major grievances that prisoners have so the next step is to get it implemented. There has long been a need for a national prisoners organisation working within each establishment. If such an organisation came into being maybe it could make the implementation of the DSPSC programme its primary purpose for existence. Prisoners in the different establishments across Britain could start by forming committees to exert pressure on the authorities to press for official recognition while retaining their independence.

Although prisoners, out of necessity, would be the leading participants in the proposed organisation a victory cannot be obtained without outside help. As Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! already plays a very important role in the struggle of prisoners, publicising their cases and giving them much needed support, is it possible for FRFI to act in a co-ordinating capacity for the proposed organisation to push for the implementation of the DSPSC programme? Other suggestions for the organisation are eagerly awaited.

Shujaa Moshesh  
HMP Blundeston

## SCREWS TIGHTEN

**FRFI has received a message from the Long Lartin Revolutionary Prisoners Nucleus including a copy of a notice to inmates from Long Lartin Governor Joe Whitty. We republish extracts from the message and from the notice below.**

Earlier last year we described to FRFI (see FRFI 66) developments taking place within Long Lartin, particularly since Governor Whitty's arrival, that indicated an imminent clampdown...

Whitty himself, who contemptuously described our letter to FRFI as 'subversive propaganda', has recently warned prisoners that any resistance to the current clampdown will result in even greater deprivation of rights... As if to emphasise the point he recently organised a spate of 'ghostings'...

Under Whitty's governorship Long Lartin is being rapidly turned into another Albany or Wakefield, both little more than huge control units... We predict that within the next twelve months Long Lartin will experience its first ever 'serious disturbance'...

## NOTICE TO INMATES

'The most immediate change involves the movement of large numbers of inmates outside of the main building. This is to be stopped, be it exercise or sportsfield association. I have been instructed that all movement is to be on an unpredictable basis. Weekend association as we have known it in Long Lartin for many years cannot continue. In its place, periods of half hour outside exercise will be arranged. These periods will be for one or two wings at a time, randomly rostered...

... Because of the extra demands on staff time in implementing these new exercise arrangements, there will be no Canteen, Library, Record Exchange or CKS on Saturday. Alternative times will be made available.

... Changes are being imposed in all dispersal prisons and I am very aware that because of the relaxed and full regime at Long Lartin that the effect will be seen as more punitive and more severe than at other establishments.

... I anticipate that further changes will be necessary in the future covering many activities...

'It is not my wish to 'screw' the place down, but this, I am afraid, is the price everyone has to pay for the success of the escape.

... Your reaction, as well as mine, will determine what Long Lartin becomes. I intend that it does not become another Albany or Parkhurst.'

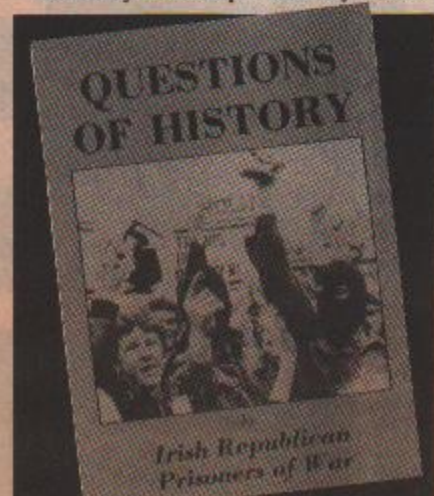
Signed: Joe Whitty Governor  
Dated: 18 December 1987



**The defeat of the hunger strike in 1981 was a severe setback for the Republican Movement. While initially, in the wake of the heroic sacrifice of the prisoners, certain political gains were made especially on the electoral front, the last few years have not seen any significant political advances by the revolutionary forces in Ireland.**

The greater emphasis on electoral work and the decision to reject abstentionism in elections to the Dail has not led to the gains clearly expected. The work around 'economic and social' issues has not yet produced any substantial results. The revolutionary forces in Ireland have been unable to halt the growing collaboration between British imperialism and the puppet governments in the Twenty Six Counties. Finally, on the military level, the stalemate which has existed for some time between the IRA and the British and loyalist security forces remains.

Inevitably in such a period every revolu-



tionary movement is forced to reassess and rethink its strategy if the impasse is to be broken. The Republican Movement is no exception. It is in this context that we should welcome *Questions of History* written by Irish Republican Prisoners of War and produced by the Education Department of Sinn Fein 'for the purpose of promoting political discussion'. Part I has so far been made available and covers the period from Wolfe Tone to the Republican Congress (1934).

The book is a valuable historical document which uses the history of the Republican struggle as a vehicle for raising crucial political questions. It asks: whether an ideology based on nationalism alone without a strong social content is sufficient to win the masses over to the struggle? Which class must lead the struggle for national liberation? Can a guerilla army like the IRA expect to win popular support for a social programme if it has no organised political party actively involving itself in the daily struggle of the oppressed? In a revolutionary movement should the army control the party or the party control the army? Is there a need for a vanguard party comprising 'scientifically trained socialist revolutionaries' to ensure that the nationalist working class has the capacity to complete the national struggle? In a situation of dire poverty badly affecting the unionist working class, could the working class in the north become united for long enough to perceive British imperialism as the ultimate enemy of their real interests?

All these questions arise out of their very challenging examination of the history of the Republican struggle. However no answers are given for the aim of this study is to provoke real thought and discussion in the Republican Movement. What, for us, is very significant about their approach is the acknowledgement of the centrality and relevance of the communist standpoint to the history of their struggle. Marx, Engels, Connolly, Lenin, are all discussed and their views on the Irish struggle have played a crucial role in formulating many of the questions. Very heartening also is the considered use of the arguments in *Ireland: the key to the British Revolution* in assessing their history.

■ David Reed reviews *Questions of History* by Irish Republican Prisoners of War ■

# Questions of History

While questions are only posed and not answered, the Irish Republican POWs are quite clearly trying to direct their movement's thinking along a certain path. For them nationalism alone, separate from a social programme, is not going to win the allegiance of the masses (p82). Fintan Lalor's standpoint, for example, in the Young Ireland Movement (1848) is seen as 'much more in keeping with the radical republican tradition'. Lalor saw the land question at the root of the national question (p 31). Marx's analysis of the Irish national struggle at the time of the Fenian movement 'went to the roots of the problem' and Marx 'saw, as Lalor had, the connection between the national and social struggle' (p45)\*. Marx primarily, and later Lalor, were influential in forming the views of James Connolly. Connolly argued that national freedom would be useless unless accompanied by social change. His significance in the evolution of the revolutionary struggle 'cannot be emphasised enough' (pp59-60).

Which class leads the national revolution will determine how far the struggle develops. The failure of the United Irishmen (1798) is seen in terms of the lack of a unity between different classes and creeds which made up the movement. 'Protestants who had courted the United Irish movement clung to the British connection once their own property was threatened'. Presbyterian artisans found it impossible in practice to have a common interest with Catholics. And Catholics themselves were divided between rich and poor (p19). Daniel O'Connell used the discontent of the Irish peasantry to win political power for middle-class Catholics (1829). It did not free the peasantry 'but rather it gained middle-class Catholics the right to sit in parliament' (p26). The Home Rule movement (1870-1912) while under Parnell's leadership was prepared to use the Land League (1870) and the 'social warfare' of the peasantry against the Landlords to achieve its aim. However, it was not concerned with social revolution in Ireland but rather 'legislative independence to enable middle-class Catholics to prosper'. The Home Rule movement eventually fragmented (pp54-7).

Connolly understood that only the working class could be entrusted with the task of leading and carrying through the national revolution as a precondition for its own emancipation. While he participated in the Easter Rising (1916) he was 'suspicious of the bourgeois forces he was aligned with' (p65). To ensure that the interests of the working class and peasantry would be defended he told the Irish Citizen's Army shortly before the rising, 'In the event of a victory hold onto your rifles as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty' (p65). Nevertheless, Connolly felt it correct to align the working class with the 'most progressive section of the national bourgeoisie' as part

\* *Questions of History* is wrong to say 'the International Working Mens Association would not endorse Marx's proposals in regard to Ireland' (p.45). It did with very minor amendments despite opposition from English trade union leaders on 30 November 1869 (see *Documents of the First International* vol III 1868-1870 pp.191-5). The same was true in November 1867 concerning the Manchester Martyrs (vol II pp.179-180).

of the process of achieving national freedom and social revolution.

The Irish POWs suggest that it could have been the loss of the revolutionary leadership of 1916, particularly Connolly and Pearse, which allowed the conservative republicanism of Griffith and de Valera to dominate the next stage of the struggle until the signing of the Treaty in 1921. In the period of the First Dail (1919/21) they point to many occasions when the IRA took the side of the landlords

against the peasantry and rural workers in the land arbitration courts (p81). The Irish working class had also lost its revolutionary leadership with the murder of Connolly in 1916 and Larkin's departure to America in 1914. The new opportunist leadership of O'Brien and Johnson withdrew the working class movement from the Irish national struggle concentrating mainly on economic issues. *Questions of History* asks whether this also contributed to the 'future conservative nature of much



1916: Irish Citizen Army parade outside Liberty Hall

## Timeless abstractions

Two reviews of *Questions of History* have appeared so far in British left newspapers. Both *The Leninist* and *Workers Press* manage only to use the review as yet another occasion to repeat their own well learned prejudices.

*The Leninist* (December 1987) (caught up in the entrails of the very reactionary British Communist Party) tell us that the authors are 'unable to assess their own standpoint objectively, accepting the fundamental premise of the republican movement'. What the Irish POWs have been unable to recognise is that 'Irish Republicanism since its inception with Tone until today' is 'essentially' composed of 'petty bourgeois revolutionaries'. A timeless history followed by a timeless criticism. *The Leninist* answer to this timeless problem: 'confrontation with petty bourgeois utopias peddled by such as Adams' and building a revolutionary vanguard party.

*Workers Press*' review runs over three issues of their paper and is a more lengthy examination along the same lines. Their main concern is to defend Trotsky's historically incorrect position on the Russian revolution and Easter Rising, and take a side-swipe at David Reed who, here we go, 'opens the door for a "stages" theory that rigidly separates national unification from the struggle for socialism as a whole'. (At least they have

the basic integrity, unlike *The Leninist*, not to cut short quotes in *Questions of History* at the point where they discuss arguments in *Ireland: the key to the British Revolution*.)

Their conclusion: the Republican Movement's programme is the 'programme of Irish nationalism and reformism - not of revolutionary socialism'. Yet another timeless prejudice that fails to draw the fundamental distinction between revolutionary nationalism and reactionary nationalism. Their timeless solution: a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class.

The Irish POWs are seeking concrete answers to the very concrete problem of completing their national revolution in Ireland. Hence the detailed analysis of their own history. Our very 'erudite' British revolutionaries ignore that concrete historical analysis and offer timeless abstractions for what are essentially their own abstract problems. Our suggestion is first that they examine their own history in relation to Ireland, and explain why the British working class has never made common cause with the Irish since the days of the Chartist movement. Second, they should tell us why, with all their superior knowledge of revolutionary strategy, they have never been able to have any practical influence on this very concrete British political reality.

republican thought' (p76). This is the context in which the question of the need for a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class is being raised (pp68, 77, 97).

The Irish POWs are examining their history to confront some of the important political questions facing their movement today. After discussing Connolly's decision to participate in the Easter Rising and ally himself 'with the most progressive section of the national bourgeoisie' they ask would this approach apply to the SDLP or Fianna Fail (p66). Surely the answer is no. First, is it not the case that Connolly allied the Irish working class to the revolutionary wing of the national movement, more exactly the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie and urban intelligentsia and not the national bourgeoisie as such? Had not the latter firmly tied its interests to British imperialism after the Dublin lockout and at the beginning of the First Imperialist War? And second, is it not the case that the last 18 years have conclusively demonstrated that the SDLP and Fianna Fail represent bourgeois and petty bourgeois class forces in Ireland which see their interests firmly tied to those of British imperialism?

One issue has not been directly raised so far by *Questions of History*. While it acknowledges the main theme of *Ireland: the key to the British revolution* - unless the British working class makes common cause with the Irish people's struggle for freedom it will undermine its own struggle for socialism - it does not assess the importance for their struggle of a working class solidarity movement in Britain. This is surely a crucial question as the Dublin lockout, the war of independence and the Civil War demonstrated. Should the Irish liberation movement therefore take steps to build links with the most progressive/revolutionary sections of the British working class movement in the interests of furthering its own struggle?

Finally, some comments on the Republican Congress (1934) and, in particular, the statement raised in relation to this in *Ireland: the key to the British revolution*. 'David Reed in analysing this period has stated: "It is quite wrong to see the dispute between the Republican Congress and the IRA as one between socialists and militarists"' (p154). This was directed at the British movement as the next sentence of *Ireland: the key to the British revolution* shows:

'Those who attempt to use the Republican Congress to justify their own attack on the IRA, slander both the Congress and the IRA.' (*IKBR* p95)

and was a pointer to the events of 1969 when all of the British left, immediately after the split in the Republican Movement, took the side of the Officials against the Provisionals on the grounds that the former were socialists and the latter apolitical militarists. The point made by *Questions of History*, 'If the IRA leadership was revolutionary why did it refuse to commit itself to a Connolly-style Republic?', very telling (p155). However our intention in this context was to make the point that people who call themselves socialists often turn out to be opportunists, playing a treacherous role in future struggles. And those in Ireland who concentrate, if one-sidedly, on the military struggle to defeat British imperialism can, in some circumstances, keep a revolutionary tradition alive. This is what we believe happened. Something which needed to be pointed out to a British movement which has a very backward position on the national question.

There are many more vital points to raise and discuss in *Questions of History*. Every socialist must study it and they will learn valuable lessons for the future. In particular they will learn how to critically examine and assess their own history in relation to Ireland. Part 2 is eagerly awaited.

All page references, unless otherwise stated, refer to *Questions of History*.

To obtain copies of *Questions of History* write to *Republican Publications*, 44 Parnell Square, Dublin 1, Ireland.

Ireland: the key to the British revolution by David Reed can be obtained from *Larkin Publications*, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX. £3.95 plus 65p postage and packing, 450 pp.



**The mass uprising which swept across Palestine in December 1987 and January 1988 has raised the Palestinian national liberation struggle to a new and higher stage. After suffering repeated setbacks in the diaspora—in Jordan, in Lebanon and elsewhere in the Arab world—the Palestinian resistance has re-emerged within Palestine itself on a firmer footing than ever before to present Zionism, imperialism and Arab reaction with its most intractable challenge yet. Their worst fears have come to haunt them.**

The uprising is a rebellion of the entire community, led by the most oppressed—the poor, the refugees, the workers and peasants—within the heart of Zionism itself. 'This is where the real war is' declared an 'Israeli' paratroop captain in Gaza. A sustained, mass popular resistance has come onto the stage, challenging Zionism directly and determined to fight until 'Israel' is destroyed. Sixty-five year old Ali Abbas summed up their position: 'We will die or we will succeed. We have no choice.'

Zionism's and imperialism's hopes of subjugating and 'pacifying' the Palestinian population under its rule have been smashed. The uprising is also a blow to those reactionary Arab regimes who at last year's Arab summit dropped the Palestinian question from the top of their political agenda.

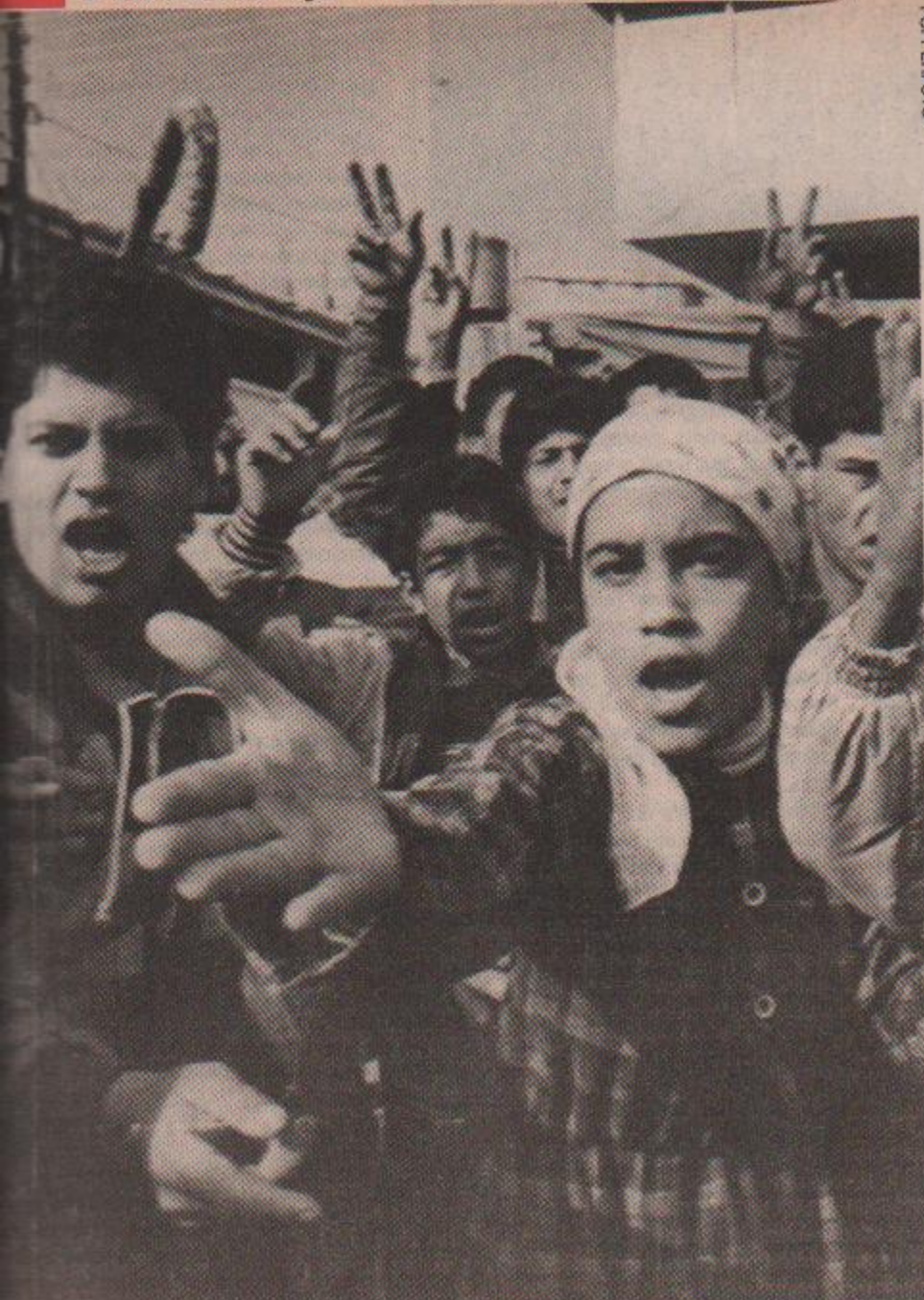
#### UPRISING AND RESISTANCE

'What is happening now is a revolution of all Palestinians—being led by the very young.' (West Bank Palestinian)

Since 9 December 1987, thousands of Palestinian youth have daily fought 'Israeli' soldiers with rocks and petrol bombs. In almost every town and refugee camp—in Nablus and Hebron, in Jenin and Jerusalem, in Gaza City and Jabaliya, in Khan Younis and el Bureij—blazing barricades marked the battle lines. In Jerusalem, protestors burnt down 'Israeli' banks and fire-bombed the US consulate. Stunned by the youths' fierce determination a Zionist soldier said he would rather 'choose to do 2 months in Lebanon instead of 3 weeks in Gaza'.

While daily street fighting continued in the West Bank and Gaza, the resistance

■ *Palestinians chanting anti-Israeli slogans near Jabalia refugee camp, Gaza Strip*



spread to 'Israel'. On 21 December 1987, 'Israel's' 750,000 Palestinians staged an unprecedented and total general strike highlighting Zionism's dependence on cheap Palestinian labour. Then from 11 and 12 January the West Bank and Gaza was gripped by a solid industrial and commercial strike.

Zionist repression, far from deterring the movement, spurred the entire population to greater resistance and organisation. Hitherto inactive villages and areas joined in the struggle, as did women, the old, whole families, shopkeepers, merchants and traders. This emerging political unity of the entire Palestinian population, under the leadership of the most oppressed, whether in the West Bank, Gaza Strip or 'Israel', is terrifying the Zionists.

#### ZIONIST REPRESSION AND BARBARISM

'Consciously or unconsciously they (the youth) are engaged in a first serious and mass attempt to take control away from the Israeli police. They will lose this battle. . . . But this is not the last gasp of a dying movement. It is the opening battle in a new movement. . . .'

*Christian Science Monitor*

In a futile effort to destroy this new movement, the 'Israeli' government deployed its entire repressive arsenal. The number of Israeli troops in the occupied territories was increased three-fold. At least 76 people have been killed by gunshot and tear-gas, and 500 wounded. Over 2000 alleged organisers and 'inciters' have been arrested and detained in freezing makeshift concentration camps. Brought to court, blindfolded and handcuffed, hundreds have been processed

before tribunals which sentenced one youth to 8 months in prison for throwing a stone at a car. Over 130 activists have been interned for six months without trial under British Mandate laws. On 13 January four Palestinians, in the first step of proposed mass deportations, were dumped into Lebanon.

The repression is directed against the entire Palestinian population. Kitty Warnock of War on Want reports 'Israeli' troops snatching patients from Shifa Hospital and returning them 8 hours later, one with a broken leg, another with a broken arm and others with broken ribs. In the same hospital 'Israeli' troops smashed into the intensive care unit and dragged out a patient saying 'now you really will have a heart condition'. Three pregnant women suffered miscarriages after their homes were tear-gassed. On 15 January, firing tear gas, 'Israeli' police stormed the Muslim world's holiest sites, the Al Aqsa and Dome of the Rock mosques.

Thirteen of the occupied territories' 28 refugee camps have been subjected to a virtual 24-hour curfew and military siege. In demonstrations of Zionist 'democracy' and 'humanity' 'Israeli' soldiers trampled and destroyed food deliveries to show 'that the curfews will not be broken.'

Despite the Nazi ferocity of the repression, the will of the Palestinians has not been broken. A leaflet issued in the West Bank defiantly declared:

'May the earth burn beneath the feet of the occupiers and let the whole world know that the volcano ignited by the Palestinian people will not be extinguished until we have accomplished an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.'

Though the uprising was not directly led by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), its militants have played a leading role in sustaining the struggle. PLO radio broadcasts beamed into Palestine are supplying activists with names and addresses of collaborators. Shops opened in defiance of commercial strikes are being targeted for retribution.

#### IMPERIALISM 'CRITICISES' ZIONISM IN ORDER TO BETTER SUPPORT IT

The uprising has fatally weakened the political standing of the collaborationist bourgeoisie in Palestine and the Arab world as a

## Terrorism—foundation of the Zionis

In February 1947, the British Labour Government placed the fate of the Palestinian people in the hands of the United Nations. The UN set up two committees, one including the USA and USSR recommended partition, the other, composed mainly of Muslim states, recommended a unitary Palestinian state with safeguards for minorities.

The Zionist state was formed on 14 May 1948 and given 54% of the land even though they constituted no more than 35% of Palestine's population. The Zionists were not content with the territory allocated to them, nor did they want the

area's 500,000 Palestinians. They elaborated Plan Dalet (D) to enlarge the Zionist state and expel its Palestinian population. The methods they used matched those of the Nazis.

750,000 Palestinians were driven from their homes by the 'Israeli' army and its unofficial terrorist allies, the Irgun and Stern Gang. On 9 April 1948, terrorist killers from Irgun led by Menachem Begin (future Prime Minister) attacked the village of Deir Yassin and massacred 250 defenceless men, women and children. A witness, Red Cross Dr de Reynier, said: 'All I could think of was the SS

troops I had seen in Athens'. Begin sent his troops a message: 'Accept congratulations on this splendid act of conquest.' Deir Yassin was no isolated incident. In the village of Safsaf, 70 men were blindfolded and shot dead. In Elabun, Zionist commanders lined the inhabitants in the village square, shouted 'You want to make war, here you have it!' as his terrorists gunned down 13 people.

In Safed, while there were no massacres, captured prisoners were tortured to death. A Zionist witness recalls how she saw an intelligence officer 'beat these [10] wounded men with a hoe until they bled to

# PALESTINE LIVE

THESE PAGES WERE COMPILED BY  
EDDIE ABRAHAMS, TERRY  
O'HALLORAN AND TREVOR RAYNE,

whole. It has inspired mass popular demonstrations in pro-imperialist Egypt and Jordan which have only been contained by riot police, tear-gas and mass detentions. In Lebanon the uprising forced Syria to lift its three year siege on Palestinian refugee camps. The vanguard role of the Palestinian liberation movement is inspiring millions of oppressed in the region to challenge imperialism, Zionism and Arab reaction.

Savage 'Israeli' repression only accelerates this process and threatens to undermine stability in the entire region.

A US State Department Official commenting on 'Israeli' repressive tactics said:

'It would make heroes of the most radical elements within the Palestinian community.'

David Mellor, British Foreign Office, whose clash with the Zionist authorities was much publicised, expressed his concern in Parliament that the 'effect of this is to brutalise the situation in a way that builds up more problems.'

But 'critical' words cost little. On the real issue of money and arms nothing has changed. A week after voting against 'Israel' in a UN vote criticising the proposed deportation of 4 Palestinians, the US abstained on the vote condemning the actual deportations. In the same week, President Reagan signed a \$2bn debt relief provision for 'Israel' and agreed to finance 80% of a \$130m Zionist new military project. Despite its 'criticisms', Secretary of State George Shultz affirmed that:

'The US regards its friendship and the strength of its relationship with 'Israel' as a key and unbreakable relationship.'

These are 'Israel's' critics! Small wonder that the Zionists respond with the calculated scorn of a client that knows its worth to imperialism. The US provides 'Israel' with \$4.5bn a year in order to secure its counter-revolutionary services to imperialism in the region and internationally. No move will be contemplated to cut this.

#### DEATH TO ZIONISM!

Imperialist 'criticism' is no more than 'brotherly' advice to moderate repression lest it lead to an even mightier revolutionary conflagration threatening to destroy its interests in the region. The uprising is a warning that the future of Palestine

and the region will not be determined by collaborators working for a sell-out 'political settlement' which will leave the Zionist entity intact.

The racist Zionist state cannot be reformed. The uprisings have shown again its vicious and reactionary character. Defence Minister Rabin declared:

'Even if we are compelled to use massive force under no circumstances will we allow [the] events to repeat themselves.'

Heeding imperialist 'advice' he recommended 'beatings' instead of shooting to control the uprising. In a sickening display of Zionist sadism, 'Israeli' troops went on a rampage smashing bones, hands, legs and knees. Over 300 have suffered injuries which doctors claim to be more serious than many bullet wounds. Cabinet Minister Sharon, the butcher of Beirut 1982, has called for the withdrawal of voting rights from Palestinians living in 'Israel'. And the President of the Chamber of Commerce, claiming they were 'potential saboteurs', demanded the replacement of 150,000 Palestinian migrant labourers with Portuguese ones.

The magnitude of racism and fascism, spawned by imperialism which ensures a relatively privileged existence for 'Israel's' Jewish citizens, was revealed in a Newsweek poll: 86% thought 'Israeli' handling of the risings about right or too lenient; 81% thought it right to deport Palestinians; 60% thought it right to consider mass deportations if the risings continue; 80% thought that if Palestinians ever became a majority in Palestine they should live under military occupation with second class citizenship.

A regime based on such vicious oppression and racism has only one destiny—destruction. This is what the uprisings have heralded. The bell has begun to toll for the Zionist regime and all that it represents.



# st state

death.' It was methods such as these that forced the majority of the Palestinians to flee their country. UN Mediator Count Bernadotte, who supported the fight of Palestinians to return to their homes, was assassinated by the Stern Gang.

Having enlarged their territory, the Zionists stole the land, homes and belongings of the expelled Palestinian population to build their racist state. Yet on 11 May 1949, the UN passed Resolution 273. Noting that, in the judgment of the Security Council, Israel is a peace loving state... The General Assembly... admit Israel to membership of the United Nations.'

# LINE SES

## STATISTICS OF OPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION

There are 1.5 million Palestinians in the occupied territories: 1,000,000 in the West Bank and 550,000 in the Gaza Strip.

● Since the occupation in 1967, the Zionists have confiscated 55% of the land in the West Bank and 40% in the Gaza Strip.

● 70,000 Zionists have built 118 strategically placed military/colonial settlements on the most fertile land.

● Water to irrigate the land is a scarce commodity on the West Bank. Since 1967, Palestinians have been allowed to drill only two new wells. The settlers who form only 2% of the population drilled 17 wells and consume 30% of the area's water.

● Palestinian unemployment is 35% and daily 150,000 travel to 'Israel' for work. They cannot live there, receive one third to a half of 'Israeli' wages, pay full taxes but don't receive any benefits.

● Palestinian farmers must pay 15% VAT on their crops while subsidised 'Israeli' commodities flood their markets.

● The per capita gross national product in the occupied territories is one quarter of 'Israel's'.

● Since the 1967 occupation

■ 250,000 Palestinians have passed through Zionist jails.

■ 2,000 trade unionists and activists have been deported.

■ 20,000 homes have been destroyed in 'collective punishments'.

### APARTHEID IN 'ISRAEL'

● There are 750,000 Palestinians living in 'Israel' forming 17% of the total population.

● Since the formation of 'Israel', 80% of Palestinian land has been confiscated. 92% of land is for Jews only.

● Only two Palestinian towns have sewage systems. Not a single Jewish town is without one.

● Operating budgets for Palestinian towns are 8-25% of those for Jewish ones.

● In Jerusalem there are only four mother and child care clinics in the Palestinian sector. The Jewish sector has 28.

● Since 1967, 26,000 new homes have been built in Jerusalem for its Jewish citizens, only 450 for Palestinians.



■ An Israeli soldier armed with tear gas retreats from Palestinian youth marching from Nuseirat to el Bureij refugee camps in the Gaza Strip

## MEDICAL AID FOR PALESTINE

Healthcare worker Sue Wighton and orthopaedic surgeon Dr Swee Chai Ang of Medical Aid for Palestine talked to FRFI in January. Sue Wighton worked in the West bank from July 1984 to January 1985.

'The healthcare structures were appalling. The Palestinians had nothing. There was one midwife who visited from Nablus once a fortnight. One ambulance to 200,000 people. No access to hospital.

'The situation in the Gaza has been described as apartheid by an Israeli doctor. Gaza has the highest infant mortality in the area at 70:1,000. It has the highest level of blindness and water-related disease. During the uprising they closed the Jerusalem hospital. On 17 December Shifa hospital was teargassed three times.'

Sue Wighton explained that there has always been resistance in the occupied territories. 'Every year there are demonstrations. Last year there were protests for ten days from 8 January onwards against the continual besiegement of the camps in the Lebanon.

'When I was there [1984/85] students died in ambulances held up at Israeli roadblocks. Now medical facilities are closed down, ambulances and drivers are impounded.'

She also talked about the current uprising. 'People resort to martyrdom when there is no option. They know what they're doing. They've known nothing but repres-

sion and occupation. Ultimately they are fighting for a Palestinian state.' Dr Swee Chai Ang added: 'They want people to think that stone-throwing is a violent demonstration. The real violence is that inflicted on the people who have suffered for so long.'

Dr Swee Chai Ang talked about Medical Aid for Palestine which was founded during the 1982 Zionist invasion of Lebanon - 'so that medical help could reach those suffering in the camps as well as the Lebanese people who have not seen peace for 13 years.

'We sent money and equipment into Lebanon. In 1985 Sabra and Chatilla were attacked again. Some of us decided to return to help the people as medical volunteers. Sixty have gone since 1985. We urgently need money, equipment, skilled medical workers and also volunteers with administrative and educational skills.'

**Donations should be sent to MAP, 28 Enford Street, London W1. If you are donating equipment please check before hand that it is appropriate.**

## Partners in crime: Israel and South Africa

'While it is impossible to place an accurate figure on the true total volume [of trade between the two countries], it is probable that when all trade is taken into account Israel may be South Africa's biggest trading partner', James Adams. *The Unnatural Allies: Israel and South Africa.*

- South Africa is Israel's major weapons customer; estimated at 35% of all sales between 1970-1979; defying the 1963 and 1977 UN arms embargo on South Africa.
- Israel buys 50% of its diamonds from South Africa. Sales of polished diamonds earned Israel \$1 billion in 1983 alone.
- Israeli companies maintain extensive investments in South Africa; these include Afira and Koors, both owned by the Histadrut 'trade union' organisation.
- South African companies ship raw and semi-finished materials to Israel, where 'local content' and 'Made in Israel' labels are added, so gaining preferential access to USA and EEC markets, and avoiding sanctions.
- South African Prime Minister Vorster visited Israel in 1976 and signed an agreement on the exchange of arms and advice in conventional weapons, nuclear research and counter-insurgency.
- Israel supplies South Africa with Kfir and Mirage planes, gunboats, missiles, howitzers, radar equipment etc.
- The two countries collaborate in the production of Scorpion military helicopters.
- Israel's intelligence outfit Mossad has been permanently stationed in South Africa since 1976.
- The then Israeli Defence Minister Sharon spent 10 days in 1981 on patrol with South African troops along Namibia's border with Angola.
- Israeli agents have assisted UNITA since 1975.
- Israel Aircraft Industries built an electrified fence between Angola and Namibia to prevent SWAPO infiltration.
- An atomic explosion was reported in the South Atlantic in 1979, and accredited to a joint Israeli-South African project.
- Israeli officers and weapons have been deployed in defence of imperialist interests in Chile, Nicaragua under Somoza, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Uganda, Kenya, Mozambique, Sri Lanka etc., often in conjunction with South African support.

Source: *Covert Action Information Bulletin.*

### 'A great colonising agency'

The apartheid character of the Zionist regime is clearly revealed in its trade unions: on the one hand Palestinian trade unionists are subjected to discrimination, harassment, deportation and death; on the other hand Histadrut, the Zionist trade union organisation, enjoys the full support of the Israeli state.

From 1967 to 1979 all trade unions in the occupied territories were banned. Even after the ban was lifted elections to trade union leaderships were banned.

From 1969 to 1982 at least 50 leading Palestinian trade unionists were deported. The 36 Palestinian trade unions in the occupied territories are not recognised by the government, employers or Histadrut.

Histadrut, by contrast, is an active accomplice of the Zionist regime. Founded in 1920 it refused to allow Palestinians to join until 1966. Then it set up a special, apartheid-style 'Arab' department led by a Zionist official, Jacov Cohen. In 1980 this was replaced by an 'integration' department led by the same Jacov Cohen.

Histadrut controls a massive industrial empire employing almost 25% of the Israeli workforce. It is Zionism's second largest employer.

Through its construction company, Solal Boneh, Histadrut builds Zionist military fortifications and settlements in the occupied territories, the Golan

Heights and occupied southern Lebanon.

Through Koor Industries Ltd, Histadrut manufactures chemicals, consumer goods, steel, cement, glass and military equipment. Israel is one of the world's leading arms dealers. Histadrut controls almost one quarter of that trade. It supplies military dictatorships throughout the world.

Koor has an office and a permanent representative in South Africa. In 1971 its subsidiary, Tadiran, licensed the apartheid company, CF Fuchs, to produce sophisticated electronic equipment bypassing the UN embargo.

Koor's steel subsidiary, Iskoor, is 51% owned by Koor and 49% owned by the South African Steel Corporation.

Histadrut, aptly described by Golda Meir as 'a great colonising agency', is a racist organisation equivalent to trade unions in Nazi Germany. Yet it enjoys fraternal links with the British TUC.

This is no surprise. The British Labour and trade union leadership have always supported Zionist Israel. In 1984 Neil Kinnock, a member of Labour Friends of Israel, declared: '... the Israeli Labour Party can rely on support from me and my party ... Everything must be done, he said, '... to show that we ... contest those whose history is one of refusal to acknowledge ... the permanence of the State of Israel.'



## BURKINA FASO COUP: Major Setback to Revolution

When a corrupt, pro-imperialist regime was overthrown in the former French colony of Upper Volta on 4 August 1983, it soon became clear that this was no mere palace coup. The group of junior army officers led by Thomas Sankara established a National Council of the Revolution (CNR) which, having changed the name of the country to Burkina Faso – 'Land of Dignity' – launched programmes of land reform, education, health care and popular power, organised through Committees for the Defence of the Revolution.

French and US imperialism, and their local puppets, were alarmed by Burkina Faso's entry on the road of socialist development. Financial and political pressures culminated in a full scale invasion of the country by forces from neighbouring Mali in December 1985. It was a fiasco.

On 15 October 1987, Sankara was overthrown and killed in a military coup, and power seized by a 15 October Popular Front (FP-15) headed by a former Sankara aide, Blaise Compaore.

Compaore blames Sankara for ordering the arrest of a prominent trade union official; Sankara's supporters allege that the official in question had been putting his sectional interests above those of the revolution as a whole, by pressing excessive wage demands. Compaore claims that Sankara was plotting to murder most of the leadership of the revolution. The charge is identical to that made, equally without foundation, by some supporters of Bernard Coard to justify the overthrow and murder of Maurice Bishop in Grenada in 1983. Several of Sankara's ministers have been arrested, including leaders of the Union of Communist Struggle-Reconstructed.

Compaore's supporters have also described Sankara's active solidarity with the anti-apartheid struggle as a diversion from the needs of the Burkinabe people. The CNR was an outspoken supporter of the struggle of the Kanak people of New Caledonia, and helped to get their case put on the agenda of the UN General Assembly. By the time it came to a vote, a few weeks after the coup, the FP-15 delegate abstained. This was an insult to the Burkinabe people who identify with the struggle against French imperialism.

The people are clearly unhappy with the new regime. Many wreaths have been sent to Sankara's grave with the words 'Thomas Sankara cannot be murdered by traitors', and 'the people will never forget you'. The FP-15 has forbidden a funeral to be held for Sankara, lest it turn into a display of mass opposition to the coup; by contrast, a demonstration of support for FP-15 had to be cancelled because hardly anyone turned up.

Condemnations of the coup came from Cuba, Nicaragua and Ghana. The first statement of support came from the French puppet regime in Togo. Sankara's death is considered a great loss by progressives throughout the region.

Despite the criminal manner in which it came to power and its rightward shift on the struggle in South Africa and New Caledonia, the FP-15 says it remains committed to the programmes of the revolution. If so, it clearly needs reconciliation with Sankara's supporters: the vast majority of the people of Burkina Faso.

Mike Webber

# Sandinistas' final offer to Contras

On 28 January, the Sandinistas sat down to direct negotiations with the Contras in Costa Rica. This followed what will surely be the final concessions the Sandinistas can make to keep the Peace Plan alive. On 15 January, President Ortega announced the lifting of the State of Emergency, direct talks with the Contras and a general amnesty for Contra prisoners and even for former Somoza National Guards, provided another country will take them.

These moves were made in an effort to win US (the Democrats) and European social democracy against Reagan's threat to request \$270 million aid for the Contras. At least in the short term they have wrong-footed the US government: Reagan will



ask Congress for \$36.25 million, with the military allocation held in reserve until 31 March. Reagan has no intention of abandoning the attempt to destroy the revolution. At Reagan's behest the Contras will demand a share of power and place impossible demands on the Sandinistas in an

attempt to isolate the Nicaraguan government from its Central American counterparts and the US Democrats. In a crude example of extortion, Reagan's new National Security Adviser, Lt. General Powell, warned the Central American presidents that if the Contras collapsed through lack of funding, they themselves could expect to be struck off Washington's aid list: a sure threat of coups. They too can be expected to make unmeetable demands of the Sandinistas, while themselves doing nothing to implement the Peace Plan.

In his New Year message, President Ortega gave details of the enormous strain the US proxy war and weakness of the anti-imperialist movement in the capitalist heartlands is putting the revolution under. 5100 civilians were killed, wounded or captured by Contras in 1987, four times the 1986 total. 1732 Sandinista soldiers were killed, compared to 1019 in 1986. 'Damage caused by direct impact of the war totalled \$376.7 million, while our exports totalled \$260 million.' Four out of every ten men of working age are engaged in fighting: this in a country whose entire population matches that of the single US city of Chicago: 3 million!

After January's concessions, President Ortega vowed that if the US approved any more Contra aid the Sandinistas would 'take the necessary measures' to defend



Workers demonstrate against the amnesty given to right wing opponents of the government.

the revolution. Police under the command of Tomas Borge, Interior Minister and the most experienced Sandinista leader, have arrested opposition figures who returned from meeting Contras and US advisors in Guatemala. They were planning an internal front for the Contras. Sandinista supporters have demonstrated at gatherings of relatives of Contra prisoners. The Nicaraguan Union Coordinating Committee, revolutionary trade unions, called in November for the military mobilisation and socialisation of production to be stepped up. There have been mass protests by

Sandinista workers against Reagan's pressure and the concessions forced upon the revolution. They are making it clear that any Congressional vote for further Contra aid, any new mobilisation by the counter-revolution, will be the signal for the revolution to launch an all-out counter-attack.

Trevor Rayne/Andy Pacey

Cartoon taken from Roger Sanchez, Nicaragua's Leading Political Cartoonist, published by Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign price £2.95.

# Thatcher bolsters reactionary regime

Mrs Thatcher's visit to Kenya in early January was designed to bolster the increasingly isolated repressive and corrupt government of President Daniel arap Moi. Prior to the visit Britain wrote-off outstanding debts of £70 million and offered a further £20 million credits. Under Moi the Kenyan government has become one of imperialism's most reliable servants in Africa. Strategically situated on the Indian Ocean, Moi provides the US and British military access to Kenya's port and airport in Mombasa and airports in Nairobi and Nanyuki. While hypocritically condemning apartheid, Moi maintains trade, air and intelligence links with South Africa.

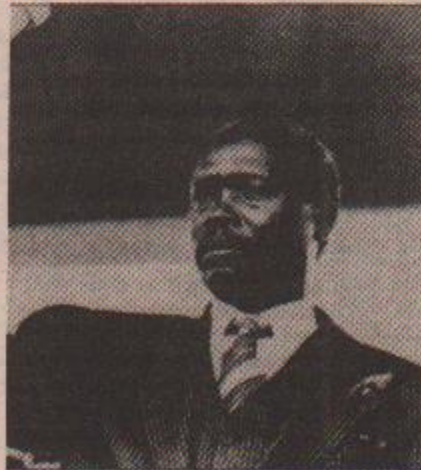
## EDDIE ABRAHAMS

Kenya, a one time British colony, is dependent on imperialist 'aid', credit and investment. 180 multinationals continue to exploit and plunder Kenya's wealth and its foreign debt stands at £2bn. As a result more than 1 million peasants are landless, 1 million out of a total workforce of 7 million are unemployed, 30% of the people live below the poverty line and in the first half of the 80s, real average wages fell 23%.

For the masses, hunger, poverty, disease and suffering prevail. Meanwhile, the neo-colonial bourgeoisie grows rich through serving the imperialists and corruption, so massive that the IMF felt compelled to express its concern. Moi's personal wealth is assessed at £500,000. Others have made fortunes running

brothels and casinos to serve imperialist troops visiting Kenya.

To sustain this regime Moi has resorted to blanket repression – banning all political opposition, using torture, political jailings, rigged trials and disappearances. Last year Amnesty International denounced Moi's regime for massive use of torture. Nevertheless, when Thatcher met Moi she congratulated him for his 'strong and decisive leadership within a constitutional framework' and went on to express admiration for his policies 'which recognise the worth of individual effort... and an economy in which private ownership and private industry have been encouraged.' Despite in-



Thatcher's ally: President Daniel arap Moi

international criticism Thatcher will do nothing to upset this regime which so slyly follows the path of its imperialist master. A reactionary and pro-imperialist ally such as Moi is too valuable for Thatcher when she is so isolated in Africa as a result of her support for apartheid.



Thatcher in Kenya

The Kenyan masses are not bowing silently. Peasants, workers and students across the country last year mounted demonstrations demanding elementary democratic rights. Most importantly, Mwakenya, an underground anti-imperialist movement is thriving and preparing to challenge the entire neo-colonial Kenyan ruling class. Abroad, Kenyan democrats last year founded UMOJA (United Movement for Democracy in Kenya) to further isolate the Moi regime. While today Thatcher praises Moi, imperialism will one day have to reckon with revolutionary forces who are reviving the great anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist traditions of the Mau Mau.



# Drive to fascism and chaos in Sri Lanka

On its 40th birthday, 4 February, the Sri Lankan state is staggering like a dying man: torn, and dependent on transfusions of Indian blood.

The chairman of the ruling United National Party (UNP) was killed on 23 December. Police said that 265 UNP officials and supporters had been slain since the 29 July Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. In January Finance Minister Ronnie de Mel resigned, saying that Sri Lanka was no longer a democracy and he could understand why youth resorted to violence. Meanwhile, on BBC's 'Panorama', India's Chief of Staff in Sri Lanka warned that 'Indian Army morale is now at risk.' After four months of guerrilla struggle the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam's (LTTE) commanders are still at large and mass popular struggle continues.

TREVOR RAYNE

none are scheduled. Thirdly, de Mel called for the JVP Sinhalese guerrilla group to be unbanned and for its incorporation into the legal political process. He also demanded the reform of the electoral system which is biased against minority party representation in parliament.

De Mel said that the war against the LTTE had brought the economy 'to the brink of ruin', and that there was no military solution to the problem.

Jayewardene opposes any form of reconciliation with the Tamils, and is mounting open repression

be withdrawn without loss of face. The longer they remain the more Sinhalese chauvinism is aggravated, the weaker the Sri Lankan state becomes, the greater the hatred for them among the Tamil people.

Behind the news cordon the 50,000 strong Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) is inflicting terrible suffering upon the Tamil people. LTTE figures for 10 October to 9 January give over 2,000 Tamil civilians killed, 600 girls raped and 168 LTTE fighters killed in action. Indian estimates of refugees run from 450,000 to 600,000.

A dusk to dawn curfew in the Jaffna region results in Tamil fishermen being shot dead as 'arms smugglers'. Hunger is used to break the will of the Jaffna people. Food queues for Indian Army



Not defeated: the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

## DE MEL'S RESIGNATION

Unlike Prime Minister Premadasa and National Security Minister Athulathudali, who boycotted the signing ceremony, Ronnie de Mel was a strong advocate of the July agreement. His departure from the cabinet emphasises the crisis within the Sinhalese ruling class and Jayewardene's drive towards facism.

De Mel had been seeking loans from the IMF and World Bank for development programmes in Tamil areas. These programmes were unacceptable to the Sinhalese chauvinists.

De Mel's criticisms of the Jayewardene regime carry all the more weight when it is he who, as 'the world's longest serving finance minister (he had held the post since 1977)' (*The Economist*) has been critical in organising the loans that have been Sri Lanka's life-blood. He gives the lie to the Thatcher government's claim that Sri Lanka is a democracy, and a safe place for Viraj Mendis.

He gave three reasons for his resignation. Sri Lanka had not been a democracy since the current parliament extended its life by referendum in 1982, making it the eleventh year since a proper election. Secondly, the government has no moral claim to power if elections were not held this year:

against the JVP and other opponents. He recently announced the formation of the 20,000 strong Green Tigers, (a militia drawn from the Special Task Force that previously terrorised Tamils and is trained by Mossad and ex-SAS officers) to protect UNP ministers and officials and to hunt down and kill JVP youth - a death squad. On 24 January 890 Tamils and 1,154 Sinhalese were arrested without charge under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. 'Disappearances' are reported.

Faced with violent internal opposition, economic crisis and the presence of the Indian occupation force, the Sinhalese ruling class is trying to strengthen its position with repression. De Mel needed to project a stable future for Sri Lanka, and a viable Agreement if he was to win loans. His position was untenable.

## INDIA FLOUNDERING

The results of what it boasts as the single largest post-1945 airborne operation are far from what the Indian government intended when it launched its October assault. The Tigers are not militarily defeated, they have not lost their support from the oppressed within the Tamil communities, and no alternative Tamil leadership has been constructed - all necessary if Indian troops are to

rations have been fired upon by Indian troops. IPKF camps occupy almost every Tamil village, road blocks litter the major routes, helicopter gunships and low flying aircraft fill the skies. This repression has discredited those smaller groups, PLOTE, Tri-Star etc. (see *FRFI* 71) that sought power in alliance with the Indian forces. The bourgeois-led TULF has been forced to reject the Indian offer of taking over administrative functions for fear of themselves being rejected by the Tamil population.

The Tigers are combining mass civil disobedience campaigns against the Indian and Sri Lankan imposed administrative and judicial machinery with guerrilla action. They seek a peaceful settlement with the Indian government, and their strategy is directed at forcing Gandhi to negotiate. Currently, their activities are concentrated in the east: it is precisely this region which is most heavily settled by Sinhalese colonisers, and where the battle for a united Tamil state will be fought.

On 19 January the LTTE displayed their audacity and strength when ten guerrillas forced their way into Batticaloa's prison and released 54 inmates. *The Economist* commented, 'the psychological damage has been done.' India's publicity bubble burst to reveal the Tigers' power still intact.

# Sanctuary

## FRFI interviews Rajwinder Singh's family

On Saturday 6 February Rajwinder Singh will have spent one year in sanctuary in the Guru Nanak Sikh Temple in Bradford. He is 'a prisoner of the Home Office' who wants to deport him to India. Rajwinder is a 30 year old Sikh who is mentally and physically disabled and suffers from epilepsy. Evidence from two consultant psychiatrists shows that he is dependent on his family for his well-being. When he was separated from them, before coming to England, his condition had seriously worsened. Auriel French spoke to Rajwinder's father and mother Gurdev and Balbir, and his brother and sister-in-law Kulwant and Ravinder Kaur.

How is Rajwinder after a year in sanctuary?

Gurdev He is alright now. Before, when he was at home, we were worried because immigration officers came here and made it their everyday's business to harass the family. Often Rajwinder couldn't sleep at night. Now he prays and spends hours looking out of the window at the trains passing. It is very cold in the hall where he stands. I'm thinking of buying him a train set to have in his room. Every night and day now, at least, all of the family is together. If Rajwinder goes back the family will be divided.

On 7 January this year the Home Office came to see you. What were their proposals?

Balbir and Gurdev This time they were offering return fares to Rajwinder and one member of the family to go to India with him. Before they were not giving returns! But even then, we are not

Viraj showed that weapon to us, you know, how and what to do. And we will support Viraj in any possible way we can. We want him to win. 9

ready to go back because we know if he goes back they won't allow him to come over again. We all work. Anyone of us who goes with him would have to leave their job.

What are your views on the government's immigration laws?

Gurdev The laws are racist. Due to the problems I had myself with my passport I know. They didn't believe Rajwinder is a handicapped boy. They said 'He is telling lies'. Even though he cannot do anything - everything which he does we do for him - they just say 'he is a liar'. There are many cases I know of - Indian and Kenyan people - women with babies and old people being sent back even though their families can care for them here. It is always black people and especially the poorest people who suffer most.

Kulwant After they'd allowed me to come over they sent me to a mental hospital for a check up.

Gurdev They didn't send Rajwinder to that hospital because they knew he was like a 13 year old boy.

few questions. I told my solicitor who wrote to the police chief after that nobody came.

How long do you think Rajwinder will stay in sanctuary?

Kulwant Rajwinder is a prisoner of the Home Office - the sentence is indefinite. It's up to the Home Office - when they say he can come out permanently then he will come out. We will carry on for maybe 10 years, maybe 20. We showed that weapon to us, y



Rajwinder (left) and his brother Kulwant

Kulwant The British say they are Christian. If Jesus Christ came over here they wouldn't allow him to cross from Heathrow. They'd say 'Oh, he can't come over here'.

Gurdev and Balbir There were two police raids before he went into sanctuary and both times there were 8 or 9 police and immigration officers just for Rajwinder. The first time they came at about 2.30pm. They asked us about Rajwinder. We told them he was not at home and had gone out with a friend. So he was lucky that time. They searched every corner of the house, even behind the television.

After that, sometimes they'd stop their car outside, watching everybody, you know, who's coming in, who's going out.

The next day everyone was at work and Ravinder was at home. At 9.15am or 9 o'clock they came outside and knocked at the door.

Ravinder Kaur I said nobody was at home, I am alone here. The police officer said he would break the door if I didn't open. I was very frightened at that time and opened the door.

Gurdev Again they searched every corner of the house and even went in the loft.

Have you been harassed by the police since then?

Gurdev Once last year in September, one police officer and one immigration officer came to ask a

know, how and what to do. And we will support Viraj in any possible way we can. We want him to win.

How do you see Rajwinder winning his right to stay?

Kulwant When all campaigns come together they could win the cases. Black and white, all people together - they could win in the second.

Gurdev We can win only with public support. More campaigns together, more people together then we are sure to win.

## Rajwinder Singh Defence Campaign

### All Night Vigil

Friday 5 February 6pm  
The Tyrls, Bradford

### Rally, March and Public Meeting

Saturday 6 February, 2pm

speakers include  
Patrick Wall MP for  
Bradford North

## Rajwinder Singh Defence Campaign

meets every Thursday at  
7.30pm Saathi Centre,  
Halffield Road, Bradford

## Salema Begum nears victory

Salema Begum, after taking sanctuary in the Chorlton Central Church, has won a major victory that should guarantee her right to stay in Britain with her parents.

The Home Office treating the family as liars forced them to undergo a humiliating blood test called a DNA fingerprint analysis. Salema, who is 13, had to undergo this test to prove that she was the daughter of her father Mr Guru Miah. The Home Office had

attempted to deport her, insisting that she should take her blood tests in Bangladesh and then, given the result apply to return to Britain to join her family. Inspired by the VMDC and assisted by VMDC activists, Salema went into Sanctuary and won the right to have her tests in Britain.

That she had to go into Sanctuary and then undergo the humiliation of a DNA test is an indictment of the Home Office's racism. But the Home Office are now on the verge of utter defeat in this case.



DEFEND THE SANCTUARY

# Viraj Mendis speaks out

At this very moment the Home Office is planning to smash into the Sanctuary and deport me to my death in Sri Lanka. Some six months of relative press silence was broken in December 1987 and January this year by a barrage of racist propaganda against the campaign. *The Times*, the *Sunday Express*, the *Daily Star* and the *Manchester Evening News* opened up a vicious campaign of lies, personal abuse, and racist attacks on myself, the VMDC and the Church of the Ascension.

*ing News* followed with a front page headline 'Drag Mendis out - MP'. If Favell, the *Star* and the rest of the gutter press represented the rabble-rousing side of the Home Office campaign, Kilroy-Silk, and *The Times* represented its 'respectable' side. Robert Kilroy-Silk was allowed into the church by Father John and the campaign in good faith, to host a

VIRAJ MENDIS

This is no coincidence. The attacks follow the House of Lords ruling against the six Tamils applying for refugee status. My appeal had been postponed until this decision came. The Home Office can now name a date for my appeal. The Home Office hope that these attacks will create a climate of prejudice which will allow them to smash into the sanctuary if the appeal goes against me.

PRESS CAMPAIGN AGAINST VMDC

The propaganda campaign reached its peak with the *Sunday Express* on 3 January 1988 in a malicious article entitled 'Student's church sanctuary angers family'. Graham Bell, claiming to have visited my family, presents inaccuracies, half-truths and outright lies as fact. He claims that my fear of death if deported to Sri Lanka is 'sheer nonsense' according to my family. Nothing in Bell's own article substantiates this. My father is quoted as saying 'I have not heard from Viraj for three years. I had no idea what was going on. All this is very upsetting. It is up to me to get in touch with me about coming home.' My family do not at any point make any comment on the political situation in Sri Lanka. I have been careful not to have any contact with my family in Sri Lanka, because of the danger this would do them in. The *Sunday Express* reporter has destroyed all this. From now on my family will be marked people.

Imagine what would happen if any member of my family made critical statements about the Sri Lanka regime and my own support for the Tamil people. Imagine what extreme right wing groupings, who have just assassinated the Chair of the Living Party in Sri Lanka, for allegedly being too soft on the Tamils, would do to my family.



Just some of the press attacks on Viraj Mendis

The *Sunday Express* also had Conservative MP for Stockport, Tony Favell, inciting fascists to drag me from the church. Favell called me a 'conman', a description used before by Ray Mills in the *Star*. The *Star* is owned by the Express group and Mills has been expelled from the NUJ for his explicit racism. The *Manchester Even-*

ing News followed with a front page headline 'Drag Mendis out - MP'. In fact he was part of the Home Office's offensive. His article, published in *The Times* on 19 December used more sophisticated language to come to the same conclusion as the gutter press. *The Times* has refused to publish our reply.

## Council sabotage

Whilst there has been an increase in support for the VMDC from Labour and trade union members since the Labour Party conference in 1987, the Labour controlled Manchester City Council has continued its efforts to sabotage the campaign.

At a public meeting on the new Immigration Bill on 16 January called by the Immigration Aid Unit, Graham Stringer, leader of the Council, boasted that whilst the Council had been unable to hold back the Tory cuts, it had in the last four years won 30 black people's right to stay in Britain. An RCG member pointed out that it is not the Council, but anti-deportation campaigns which had won people's right to stay and further if the Council was so keen to fight deportations, why was it readily withdrawing facilities from the most important campaign in Manchester - the VMDC? The council's reactionary attitude started with the withdrawal of Viraj's job under racist pressure. Soon

after, it withdrew the VMDC's photocopying facilities and then its mailing facilities. It has since then restricted its phone to just local calls, cutting the VMDC off from its national support.

Stringer did not have any direct answers to these direct questions. The VMDC is now planning action to force the council to restore in full the mailing, telephone and stationery facilities previously provided to the VMDC. It has no illusions that a tough fight is required. In December the Council used police with dogs to clear the Council Chamber of 200 demonstrators seeking to prevent them from voting through widespread redundancies.

Chris Procter

## HOME OFFICE PREPARES MASS DEPORTATION OF TAMILS

With complete contempt and disregard for recommendations from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and Amnesty International, the Home Office is finalising plans to deport up to 50 Tamils currently held in prison in this country. The Home Office, despite statements from both organisations, insists that the situation is returning to normal in Sri Lanka. There are approximately another 500 Tamils whose applications for asylum are still being processed. But the House of Lords ruling against the six Tamils in December stating they had no grounds to be granted asylum more or less ensures that the Home Office will get its way and deport them to their possible death in Sri Lanka. Britain will be the first country in Europe to deport Tamils seeking asylum back to Sri Lanka.

## HOME OFFICE FEARS SANCTUARY MOVEMENT

The reason for this determined effort to destroy our sanctuary is because of the potential that sanctuary has as a means of fighting deportations in Britain. The new Immigration Bill is a full blown attack on anti-deportation campaigns. It destroys the right of appeal for people who are threatened with deportation. The withdrawal of appeal rights eliminates the time to develop mass support and threatens them with imminent expulsion. The only viable response will be sanctuary, because sanctuary will give a breathing space for black people to start a campaign to defend themselves. It is in this context that the attack on me and my sanctuary must be looked at.

## VMDC BUILDS SUPPORT

The Home Office's campaign to create the conditions to smash into the sanctuary is not proceeding unopposed. The World Council of Churches telefaxed Thatcher and Hurd calling on them not to smash into the Sanctuary. Dr Robert Bradnock, Chair of the Liberal Party Foreign Affairs Committee who has visited Sri Lanka spoke at a VMDC press conference on 22 January. He explained why he, as an expert on Sri Lankan affairs was opposed to my deportation. He said that in Sri Lanka it was widely believed that I was a marked man. He concluded that, 'deporting Viraj would be likely to reach a tragic outcome.' The situation in Sri Lanka is still deteriorating but Douglas Hurd still insists that it is a democracy. Yet Ronnie De Mel, minister for Planning and Finance in the National Party, has just resigned from Jayewardene's Cabinet announcing that Sri Lanka had not been a democracy since 1982!

The community in which I have lived for 14 years is rallying around me. Our weekly Friday night marches are met by local people in Hulme with banners hanging off the walkways. Every week the campaign sells our bulletin door to door in Hulme and Moss Side and every week we hold street meetings outside the sanctuary or in the vicinity.

The standing of the campaign in the community was shown on 21 January when following 30 people attending an RCG meeting on the Immigration Bill, two new campaigns were started up in support of Evelyn from Hulme who is under threat of deportation to Nigeria, and Begum who is a British citizen and is not allowed to bring her husband into the country.

We are in a period which is a watershed for the campaign. Tory MP Tony Favell's open racist attacks and those of the press must be met with an open and firm stand by all who are against racism. All progressive people and organisations must make an open stand with VMDC and against the racist Home Office.

## World Council of Churches supports Viraj Mendis

January 1988, the World Council of Churches (WCC) renewed its support for Viraj Mendis and sent two emergency messages to the Home Office and 10 Downing Street appealing to them not to break the sanctuary by force.

Elizabeth Feris on behalf of the WCC Refugee Service wrote 'We have followed with concern the case of Viraj Mendis... We appeal to the British Government to seek just ways of responding to the case and to pledge anew not to enter the sanctuary by force.'

In a second statement signed by Andre Jacques for the WCC Migration Department and Genevieve Jacques for Refugees and Human Rights for World YWCA said: 'We are appalled that despite evidence including that of Amnesty International concerning the danger facing Viraj should he be returned to Sri Lanka, he is still in sanctuary over one year later.'

It went on: 'We strongly appeal to the British Government to do justice and to pledge anew not to enter the sanctuary by force.'

The Refugee Service also agreed to mail all their contacts world wide asking for prayers for Viraj and letters of protest to the British Home Office.

Ed Jones

## CAMPAIGN NEWS



■ Gretney Tenants Association in Hulme provide a weekly meal for Viraj. Just before Christmas to mark their support for him, they held their own party in the Sanctuary.

■ In January, a local vegetarian shop 'On The Eighth Day' voted to provide Viraj with a meal a day and donate their extra food to the VMDC. They have made a special banner supporting Viraj to display on Fridays when the regular VMDC demonstration passes their shop.

■ In a gesture of solidarity, 50 NALGO stewards from Manchester Town Hall will have their stewards meeting in the Sanctuary on 9 February when they will also meet Viraj to discuss the latest stage of his campaign.

■ In January two new VMDC support groups have been established in Nottingham and Birmingham. They can be contacted at VMDC, Birmingham Support Group, 24 South Road, Hockley, Birmingham and VMDC Nottingham Support Group, c/o 8 Aubrey Road, Carrington, Nottingham.

■ On Friday 8 January over 80 VMDC supporters marched past the *Sunday Express* offices to protest against its scurrilous attacks on the campaign. The Friday 19 February VMDC march will have as its theme support for the health workers currently fighting the Thatcher government.

■ On 10 January, a VMDC contingent supported the London demonstration against Clause 27/28. A VMDC member was among the 48 people arrested after the police attacked the demonstration.

## Join the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign

c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL (061 234 3168)

There are VMDC Support Groups in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Leeds, Tyne and Wear, Brighton, Bristol, Dundee, Cambridge, Nottingham, Birmingham and London.

Join one of these groups. Help set one up if there isn't one in your town.



# Was there an ALTERNATIVE

The only way forward for the USSR from NEP was collectivisation and the Five Year Plan. Yet, given the immense complexity of the problems it faced, it is not surprising that several other solutions were proposed. The party leadership had to fight a difficult struggle against both Right and Left Oppositions.

Of the alternatives rejected by the party, Gorbachev singled out for criticism above all the programme of Trotsky: 'Trotskyism was a political current whose ideologists took cover behind leftist pseudo-revolutionary rhetoric, and in effect assumed a defeatist posture.' (piv col 3).

In the period 1920-36, there were 3 major controversies involving Trotskyism: the trade union debate; the 'bureaucratisation of the party'; and the possibility of socialism in one country.

In the first controversy (November 1920-March 1921), when Trotsky proposed a policy which Lenin called '... bureaucratic harassment of the trade unions.' (CW 32 p42), Lenin had warned the party about Trotsky's methods: '... after... an unprecedentedly long, detailed and heated discussion... one member of the Central Committee [Trotsky], one out of nineteen, forms a group outside the Central Committee and presents its "collective work as a 'platform", inviting the Party Congress "to choose between two trends"!' (CW 32 pp71-72).

After his last public speech (20 November 1922), Lenin was able to advise the party only intermittently - without Lenin's restraint, Trotsky's methods posed greater dangers. Lenin died in January 1924.

From July 1923, the party faced one of its strictest tests. A wave of strikes was accompanied by a worsening economic crisis which threatened the alliance between the workers and the peasants. Internationally, the German revolution, the success of which would have rescued the USSR from its encirclement, seemed to be approaching a critical point.

At this critical point, Trotsky began a campaign with a letter to the Central Committee on 8 October, followed in December by a series of articles (*The New Course*).

His main criticism was that: 'The bureaucratization of the Party apparatus has developed to unheard-of proportions...'. Posing as the champion of 'democracy' he claimed that the youth (more particularly, the student youth) could correct the excesses of bureaucracy.

Was there any substance to these criticisms? At no point in the controversy did Trotsky cite typical cases or general statistics. He simply did not confront the immense problems facing the party, based on the material conditions of the masses.

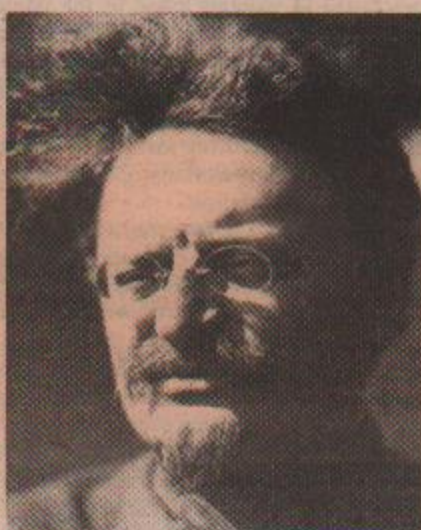
The most elementary requirement for party democracy, a politically educated membership, was almost entirely lacking. This was not because of the 'bureaucracy', but because the basic pre-conditions - literacy and a press - barely existed.

Thus in 1922, about 50% of the entire population was illiterate - in the party itself, 92.7% of the party had 4 years or less education, and 4.6% of the members were actually illiterate. For a population of 140m, the press had a circulation of 1.5m - an official survey of 1924 revealed that there were virtually no subscribers or readers in the countryside.

In large areas of Soviet life, the party had virtually no presence. Even in the industrial working class, the party was not

PATRICK NEWMAN

FRFI has opened its pages to a debate on the role of the Soviet Union, both past and present. Patrick Newman has begun this. This is the second of three articles on the report given by Mikhail Gorbachev on the 70th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. After the concluding article we will be printing replies to Patrick Newman and we welcome readers views on any points raised in this debate.



Above: Leon Trotsky who completely ignored the war danger

strongly represented; and in the countryside it barely existed.

Facing these gigantic tasks was a membership literally exhausted by civil war and harsh living conditions. A survey in a rural area revealed that 33% of the party members were suffering from 'shattered nervous systems' and only 10% were reasonably fit.

### FROM A TRIFLE TO A SPLIT

Working class discontent, a difficult economic situation, a beleaguered party gradually fighting its way forward - these then were the circumstances in which Trotsky made his appeal.

At such a dangerous moment, a trifling criticism of the party by the intelligentsia could lead to a split within its ranks. In relation to the Soviet Union, this is the essence and the danger of Trotskyism.

The Politburo realised the danger: this so-bureaucratic leadership opened the columns of *Pravda* for five weeks from 7 November, and held public meetings to discuss the issue.

The discussion which continued until the 13th Party Conference (16-18 January 1924) showed the extent of Trotsky's appeal. In the Moscow district he may have had the support of the majority of party cells in higher educational institutions; but only 36% of the whole membership, and 19% of the cells of industrial workers. With the exception of a handful of small provincial towns, his support outside Moscow was minimal. The only real danger was posed by the substantial minority support from cells in the Red Army in Moscow.

At the Conference (16-18 January 1924), Trotsky's supporters' vague motion recommending '... a regime of activity on the part of the party masses.' received 3 votes out of 128. Gorbachev underlines the result: '... the party's ruling nucleus, headed by Joseph Stalin, had safeguarded Leninism in an ideological struggle.' (piv col 3)

### SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY

The third issue, and one of the main positions associated with Trotsky, is identified by Gorbachev thus: 'Trotsky and the Trotskyites negated the possibility of building socialism in conditions of capitalist encirclement.' (piv column 3).

Lenin and the Bolsheviks had always seen the Russian Revolution as a spur to revolutions in the more industrially advanced countries. But by 1922, the post-war wave of revolutions had ebbed.

What would happen in the USSR if the world revolution were considerably delayed? In 1922 Trotsky answered: '... a genuine upsurge of the socialist economy in Russia will become possible only after the victory of the proletariat in the most important countries in Europe.'

In a later speech (1 November 1926) he defined '... a real advance in socialist economics...' as '... no antagonism between town and country, general content, prosperity, culture,' clearly showing that he was thinking of an advanced stage of socialism.

But in the meantime, what would happen to the Russian revolution? Trotsky's main opponent, Stalin, answered bluntly: 'According to this plan [ie Trotsky's], there is but one prospect left for our revolution: to vegetate in its own contradictions and rot away while waiting for the world revolution.' (CW 6 p385)

In the same article (17 December 1924) Stalin first argued that, while the complete victory of socialism required the united efforts of the workers of several countries, '... the victory of socialism in one country... is quite possible and probable.' (CW 6 p.387).

In the context, Stalin clearly meant the eventual victory of the worker-peasant alliance over the remnants of capitalism (NEP-men, kulaks).

What were Trotsky's proposals for the immediate future for the USSR? Instead of independence from the 'world economy', it should increase its import-export trade; and a policy of concessions to foreign capitalism '... should be given the greatest importance.' ('Toward Capitalism or Socialism?' November 1925).

Within the Soviet Union, he proposed an accelerated programme of industrialisation, and to deal with the growing kulak menace by means of an '... all-sided limitation of their efforts at exploitation... [by means of]... a steeply progressive tax system.' (The Platform of the Opposition September 1927).

The kulaks soon showed what they would do with such half-measures as 'limitation' by murdering Soviet grain procurement agents. The kulaks had to be destroyed as a class - not limited. The only question was to choose the right moment to strike hard, decisively and quickly. The



Poster: 'Down with those who keep food from the workers'

party was not yet ready to do this, and to begin industrialisation - in the context, Trotsky's criticism was 'pseudo-leftist' rhetoric, and he was expelled from the party in November 1927.

### THE USSR BETRAYED

In exile, Trotsky gave a much fuller exposition of his ideas on socialism in one country. His major work is *The Revolution Betrayed* (completed August 1936), which has served Trotskyist groups ever since as the source of their criticisms of the Soviet Union.

Acknowledging the success of the heavy industries as '... a gigantic conquest...' (1973 New Park ed p11), he points out that by comparison with the advanced capitalist countries (especially the US and Germany) industrial production is still at a low level (pp 15-17).

In opposition to '... several announcements of the "complete triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union..." (p60), he argues that the USSR is still going through a preparatory stage in which '... the growth of production has so far strengthened not the socialist, but the bourgeois features of the state.' (p 113). The quality of production is very poor, and the general living standard of the people is low.

The problems of the Soviet economy arise from the rule of the bureaucracy and privileged layers, amounting to 12-15% of the population (19-24m people), of which the backbone is the 2m strong Communist Party (pp 138, 139).

There are two major weaknesses in his argument:

Firstly, for all his 'internationalism', Trotsky completely ignored the war danger and the distorting effect it had on the Five Year Plans.

The First Plan had to be drastically revised upwards (heavy industries by 26.2%) at the end of 1929 as the direct result of the threat of war in the Far East. Following the 'Manchurian Incident' (18-19 September 1931) it became clear that Japan was actively preparing for war.

The Soviet Union was extremely vulnerable. In 1928-9 industry could not yet produce light machine guns or tanks; not until the Spring of 1932 did the Soviet Pacific fleet come into being - it then consisted of one submarine!

The USSR was now threatened on two fronts - the distances between were such

(about 10,000 km) that from the end of 1931 it had to plan for two sets of arm and two munitions industries.

The Second Five Year Plan was even more directly affected by the war danger. In 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany - the conquest of the Soviet Union was a central part of his programme. Defence expenditure as a proportion of the total budget rose from 3.4% in 1933 to 16.1% in 1936. This had a devastating effect on the planning process.

Secondly, Trotsky completely undervalues the social gains of the Five Year Plans.

Always quick to compare Soviet industry unfavourably to capitalist industry in Germany or the US, he made no such comparisons when considering the social achievements of the Plans. As a rule, he only mentions these achievements in order to denigrate them. The main exception is the abolition of unemployment - he simply leaves unmentioned.

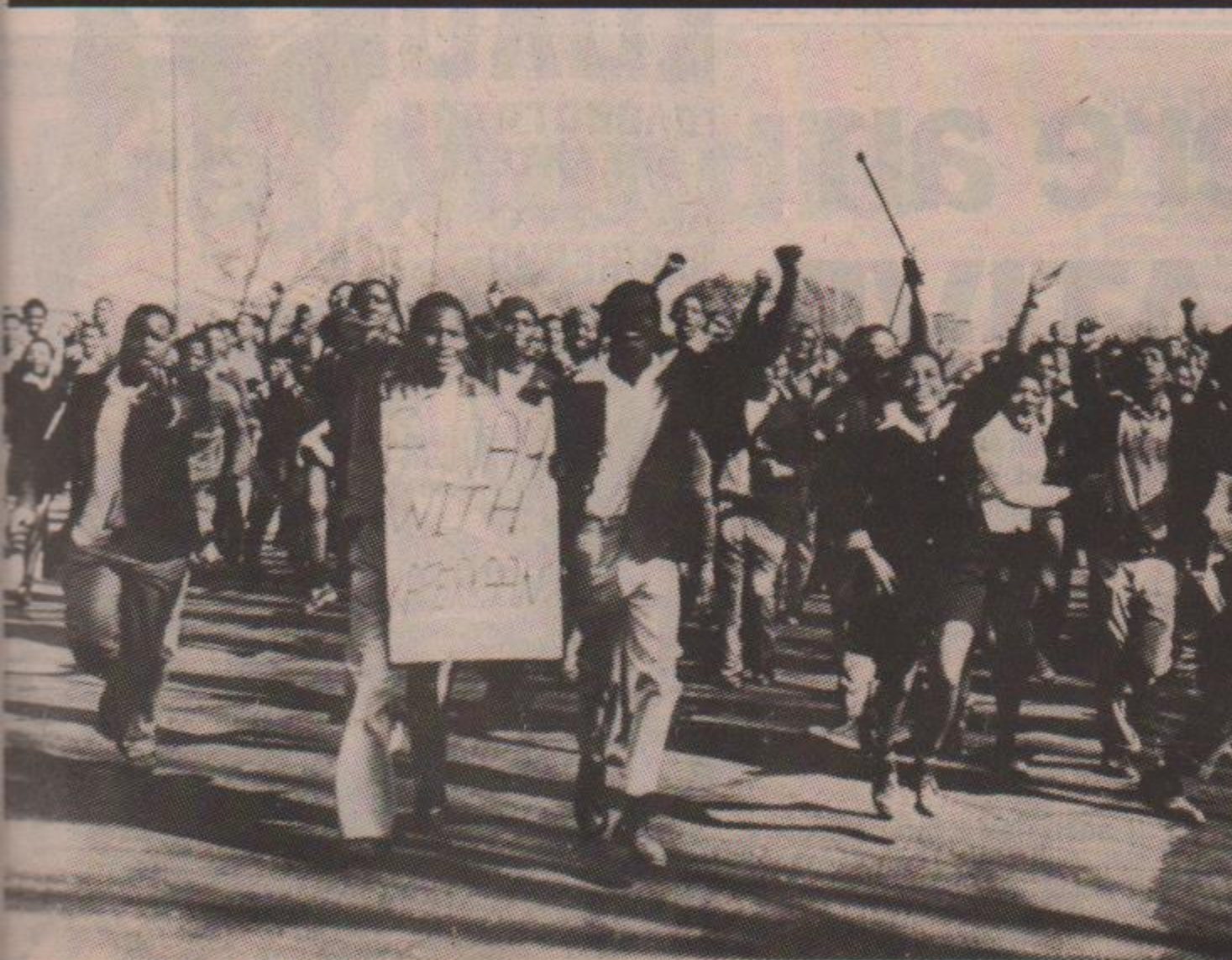
Thus his only reference to the seven hour working day is that '... [it] is being more and more sacrificed to higher productivity.' (p126). Similarly he glances at the abolition of a series of free services... (p124) - without even saying what these are. He complained that in 1935 only 55.7% of the target for housing was reached (p116). The reader would not guess that even in the hardest year 1930-31, 305,000 new houses were built. What wouldn't workers in capitalist countries give for such a half-fulfilled plan!

What practical conclusions did Trotsky draw from his analysis? His advice to the youth of the Soviet Union was to '... underground and learn to struggle to temper their character for their future.' (p163). But what was the future for the Soviet Union?

In 1936, with the Soviet Union desperately racing against time to fight against the largest, best-armed capitalist army ever, Trotsky had this to say to his underground supporters in the Soviet Union: 'If the [coming] war should remain only a war, the defeat of the Soviet Union would be inevitable... If it is not paralysed by revolution in the West, imperialism will sweep away the regime which issued from the October revolution.' (p227)

Trotsky's prophecy was refuted by the victory of the Soviet Union in the 1941-1945 war, a victory based on the success of collectivisation and the Five Year Plans.





1976: Soweto youth take to the streets

# CRY FREEDOM

FILM

For a British audience which knows nothing of South Africa at first hand, and can learn precious little from the normal channels of the capitalist mass media, Richard Attenborough's film is a moving introduction to the liberation struggle.

From its vivid opening scenes of destruction at Crossroads, the film settles quickly into its first main theme - the politics of Steve Biko as seen through the eyes of white newspaper editor Donald Woods. Woods is at first hostile to the foremost exponent of Black Consciousness, whom he labels a 'black racist', but is forced to reconsider as Biko exposes Woods to the realities of life for black people. A visit to a township hits Woods (and the audience) in the guts. Biko and his comrades are well able to speak for themselves:

'We've got to teach our children

black history, tell them of black heroes, our black culture, so they don't face the white man believing they're inferior.'

The system cracks down. Mapetla is murdered by the police, other comrades detained. There is a serious distortion in the film's treatment of Biko's own death: the doctors raised no complaint and assisted in the security police murder - white privilege came before the Hippocratic Oath.

The film enters a second stage. Because he has stood by his friendship with Steve and his own liberal principles, Woods is driven into fighting the system so that the truth about Biko's life and death can be heard. An adventure ensues as the family escapes so that Woods can publish his book on Biko, which he believes he is in the best position to write.

This is contentious ground. Attenborough brings to the fore the Woods family and, because they have taken

an anti-apartheid stand, depicts their experience as somehow being equal with Biko's. The security police now keep a 24 hour vigil outside their front door. But we are not told, for instance, that in the last year of his life Biko was detained three times, on one occasion for 101 days. Neither do we learn what happened to the black comrades (Peter Jones, arrested with Biko, spent 533 days in detention, was then banned and later became the Vice-President of the Azanian People's Organisation). This shift of emphasis earned a stinging review inside South Africa, entitled 'Cry Exploitation', from black journalist Sam Mabe;

'It was hard to understand how Sir Richard could have ignored the fact that 18 organisations, most of them Black Consciousness - and two black newspapers... were banned.'

Today the racist regime is still considering whether to allow the film to go on public release. In Britain,

despite the serious omissions and its soft ideological focus, it must be welcomed that hundreds of thousands will see 'Cry Freedom', and through it an interest in Black Consciousness has been re-awakened. It is to Attenborough's credit that the film finally returns to the impact of Biko and Black Consciousness in its final scenes of the Soweto 1976 students' revolt.

The post 1976 generation have barely paused for breath. The black oppressed of South Africa will be the primary movers in their liberation, but they need not fight alone. Britain is the world's number one backer of South Africa. Those who wish to direct emotions stirred by 'Cry Freedom' should join with Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! in building a solidarity movement to break British collaboration with apartheid, a movement which is worthy of the great revolutionary Bantu Steve Biko.

Andy Higginbottom

foreword by Millard Arnold assesses Biko's significance:

'The freedom from fear was Biko's most substantial contribution... Biko did not merely articulate the need for a lack of fear, he was himself the physical embodiment of fearlessness. "To understand me correctly", he noted, "you have to say that there were no fears expressed..."'

**No.46 - Steve Biko, Hilda Bernstein, International Defence and Aid Fund, £3.50**

He died on 12 September 1977 aged 30. Biko was the forty-sixth political detainee to die in security police detention since 1963. This booklet reports the inquest which for once forced into the open the brutal collaboration between the police and the doctors called to 'attend' detainees under torture.

Andy Higginbottom

Barney Pityana's introduction is disappointing... an opportunity to inform the reader of current trends in Black Consciousness is missed - see FRFI 74 AZAPO interview.

**No Fears Expressed, Steve Biko, Skotaville Publishers, £2.95.**

This booklet of quotations from Biko on a number of themes expresses the clarity of his thought. The excellent

with the prosecution are an example of how to conduct a battle in hostile enemy territory.

**I write what I like, Steve Biko, Penguin Books, £3.95.**

This collects Biko's articles, written as Frank Talk, interviews, briefings and memoranda, as well as an extract from his testimony in the treason trial. Biko writes:

'The basic problem in South Africa has been analysed by liberal whites as being apartheid. They argue that in order to oppose it we have to form non-racial groups... The thesis, the antithesis and the synthesis have been mentioned by some great philosophers as the cardinal points around which any social revolution revolves. For the liberals, the thesis is apartheid, the antithesis is non-racialism, but the synthesis is very feebly defined. They want to tell the blacks that

## BIKO WRITINGS

**The Testimony of Steve Biko, Grafton Books, £2.95.**

In 1975/6, Sats Cooper and eight others from the South African Students Organisation and the Black People's Convention were on trial for terrorism and faced death. This was the Black Consciousness treason trial. Steve Biko was called as a witness for the defence. He had already been banned and thus silenced officially for three years. Biko used the witness stand as a platform and through five days of testimony gave voice to the needs of the black oppressed. Biko's sharp exchanges

# ORGANISE WITH FRFI

RCG members and supporters are coming together in a series of dayschools to discuss questions central to the communist movement. In November 1987 we held dayschools entitled 'Lenin on the national democratic revolution'. It is important for communists engaged in building solidarity with national liberation movements to consistently assess and discuss the issues facing those movements and the different trends within them in order to build the most effective solidarity.

LORNA REID

At our November dayschool David Reed, editor of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, explained the main differences between the Menshevik, Bolshevik and Trotsky's analysis of the 1905 and 1917 Russian revolutions. David Reed stated that the participation of the working class in the democratic revolution is aimed at winning the widest possible political liberty - under the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry - thus preparing for and connecting with the working class struggle for socialism.

The Mensheviks argued that the socialist revolution consisted of two stages - the first being the completion of the bourgeois revolution to which the interests of the working class must be subordinated; the second being the socialist revolution consigned to the distant future. Whilst the Mensheviks surrendered the interests of the working class to the bourgeoisie in the democratic revolution, Trotsky argued the idealist view that the national democratic revolution could only be made under the dictatorship of the proletariat. He failed to grasp the concrete process of revolution involving alliances with other forces.

Lenin understood that the proletarian revolution was one revolutionary process which passes through different phases. He argued that the role of the working class and its party is to fight to ensure that their interests are imposed on the revolution. Lenin was also able to understand that at different stages of the revolutionary struggle the working class, in order to advance its own interests, would forge alliances with different class forces. The debate in the Russian movement was essentially about which forces would be the most consistent opponents of Tsarism, who would carry through the national democratic revolution.

This very issue is being discussed in the movement in South Africa amongst different political forces, in the trade unions and within the townships. This debate is vital for all communists and makes it all the more important that all voices in the South African movement are heard in Britain. Social Democracy which includes the AAM and Labour Party in Britain, on the other hand, does not want the interests of the working class and oppressed to be debated and promoted. They seek to silence any voice or position that will threaten

their own alliance with imperialism: the source of their own social and political privileges.

This is why we are seeking to discuss and debate the issues facing the South African liberation movement. Our consistent solidarity work in City Group has brought us into contact with different forces in the liberation movement. Their voices must be heard.

Future dayschools are being held on the role of the working class in the fight for women's liberation, in the Irish revolution and the implications of *glasnost* and *perestroika* for the Soviet Union. We welcome all comments on the series of articles Patrick Newman has written on Gorbachev's speech.

ACTIVITY IN JANUARY

In January RCG branches in London and Manchester held public meetings on the Immigration Bill to build opposition to the bill and support for our comrade Viraj who is leading the fight against immigration laws. On 19 January Frances Webber, Barrister, and the Marion Gaima Defence Campaign shared a platform with the RCG in a meeting in Stoke Newington and in Peckham immigration lawyer Chris Randall spoke on our platform. In summing up his introduction Chris said that the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign was a 'clarion call' and that 'it is the political fight that wins'.

In Manchester on 21 January

FRFI Fund Drive

The January FRFI fund drive raised £400 - £100 less than our £500 monthly target. We continue to rely on our supporters to make regular contributions to sustaining FRFI. All contributions allow us to keep the price of our paper low which allows as many people as possible to have access to it. Make a regular pledge. Join one of our supporters groups to help raise money collectively.

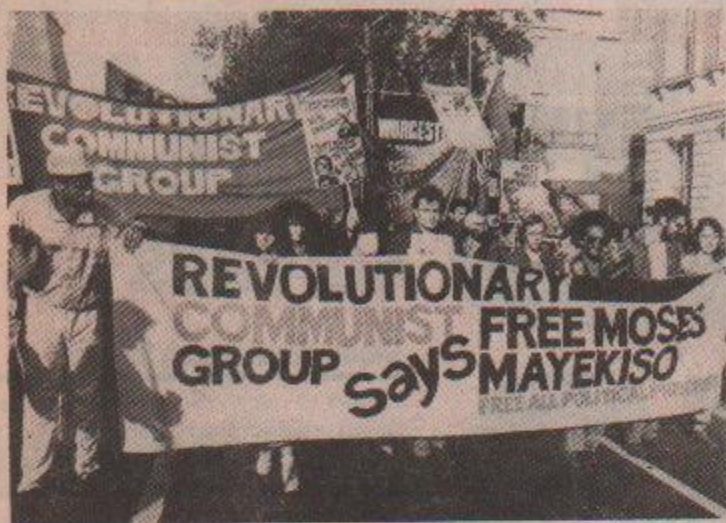
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Kim Coleman speaking for the RCG shared a platform with Viraj Mendis, Anwar Ditta who successfully won her campaign against deportation and Barbara Ahmed who is currently fighting to be united with her husband from Pakistan. From the meeting two women Evelyn and Begum are setting up campaigns to fight their cases against the immigration laws.

The spirit and positive proposals for action at the Manchester RCG meeting were in direct contrast to the blustering excuses for the Labour Party's appalling record on immigration given by Tony Lloyd, MP for Stretford and Graham Stringer, leader of Manchester City Council. Lloyd argued for 'fair immigration controls' and described the Immigration Bill as 'unfair'. Stringer went further in trying to conceal the Labour Party's support for immigration laws. He had the audacity to claim that the council had helped 30 people in Manchester win their fight against deportation. RCG comrades and Anwar

Ditta pointed out that Stringer had in fact withdrawn the offer of a job to Viraj and agreed to ban the VMDC demonstration in November. More meetings on the Immigration Bill are being held in Leeds, York, Birmingham and Glasgow in February.

The RCG offers consistent support and solidarity to those fighting racism and imperialism world wide, so last month our comrades marched alongside the Palestinian people, the Irish people on the Bloody Sunday commemoration march in London, the Aborigine people outside Australia House on Australia Day. We marched with lesbians and gay men against Clause 28 which seeks to outlaw the promotion of homosexuality by local councils, we marched against the Alton Bill and we stood by our comrade Simone in court. In February we are mobilising all our members and supporters to work in support of the nurses and NHS workers fighting back against the Tory attacks on the welfare state. Join us.

## MARK ONE

Dear FRFI,  
On 4 January 30 workers returned from their Xmas holiday to find they had been sacked from their jobs at Mark One clothes shop. When they were taken on all 30 had been promised full-time jobs, but on being sacked they were only temporary staff. The reason given for the sacking was that sales were below expected levels. This remains totally unsubstantiated and the real reason for their victimisation is that all 30 workers were non-unionised and occupied low-paid jobs - the majority are women. On 9 January a picket was held outside the Mark One store to encourage a consumer boycott. One of the main unions at Mark One, the T&GWU, has been contacted via the Trade Union Resource Centre but has not responded. With this background of isolation, three of the more desperate workers went cap-in-hand to the bosses and got their jobs back. Susan Hannaby soon became the 31st worker to be sacked when she returned after being on sick leave ordered by her doctor. Despite her doctor's note she was illegally sacked for being ill. Susan is also non-unionised. The second picket was held on Saturday 16 January but had little support. The protests have been supported by several left organisations but have failed to mobilise the unions. It looks as if the union representatives are going to let their 28 colleagues go unprotected, while their struggle goes on alone.  
In solidarity,  
**Adam**  
Birmingham

## NO JUSTICE FOR THE IRISH

Dear FRFI  
In small matters as well as large there is no justice for Irish people in British courts. Readers of FRFI know that my family was beaten up by the Metropolitan Police on 8 March last year (see FRFI 67). In the Magistrates Court they were all found guilty of being drunk - except my sister Aine. She had a respectable job.  
In Southwark Crown Court on 28 and 29 January anti-Irish prejudice was used to defeat our appeal. The police said my family were celebrating St Patrick's Day and *must* have been drunk and fighting each other. When it was pointed out that St Patrick's Day is 17 March, the police replied that Irish people in England celebrate it on 8 March.  
The Judge said he had to choose between my family's account and the

# LETTERS

FRFI welcomes letters from readers. Please send them to FRFI BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

## THE RIGHT TO FIGHT BACK

Dear FRFI,  
In 1985 I worked for British Rail in Manchester. I was arrested on the suspicion of theft of a passenger's jewellery worth £70,000. I was taken from Manchester to a police station in Liverpool. At the police station I was beaten and racially abused. I was never taken to court - the charges were dropped.

I decided to take action against the police, but before I could take my case to court they decided to make another charge against me. I was charged with stealing £3.50 from British Rail. This time it went to a magistrates' court and I was given a conditional discharge. Because of this second case, I lost the legal aid for my action against the police. I have had to appeal to the Law Society to try to get it back. My union, the NUR, did nothing to try to defend me. I have seen Labour MP Bob Litherland for help, but weeks later I am still waiting for a response. I call on all readers of FRFI to take the side of black people fighting against police attacks. I have the right to demand justice. We have the right to fight back. We can only do it by organising politically.  
In solidarity,  
**Kausar Ali**

## STRAIGHT TALK

On Saturday 9 January, after returning from the march against clause 28, the bigoted attack upon gay and lesbian people's rights, I had a conversation with a member of the SWP about the march. I asked had he been on the march. 'No, I don't support that' he replied. Why not? 'Because I'm straight.'  
I told him that many straight people, including SWP members support gay rights and had attended the march. He replied, 'What would my workmates think if they saw me on the march on TV?' 'I can't cope with arguing for gay and lesbian rights when I have enough on my plate arguing against racism and for socialism.'  
Yours in the struggle  
**Jem Hicks**  
London

## PLAYING THE GAME

Dear FRFI,  
I would like to ask FRFI if there is a campaign against the 1988 Olympic games being held in Seoul; if there is not then there should be. All socialists and communists who are genuine in their opposition to racism, fascism and imperialist aggression surely would recognise a need for a campaign.  
To remain silent over this issue will not only give credence to the fascist regime in South Korea, but it will also excuse US imperialism in their quest for imperialist expansion.  
Where next for World sporting venues? Chile, Paraguay, or even racist South Africa?  
Yours for peace and people  
**J Nugent**  
Surrey

## ESSENCE OF THE NEW MOVEMENT

Dear FRFI,  
Myself and my comrade Angela were selling papers in Dundee City Centre. I was saying to people 'Defend the NHS - don't let the hospital workers stand alone against this government.' However, it was the case that Angela and I were standing alone! For the first time I can remember there were no other socialist groups present. Just at the point when the resistance to Thatcher is coming from a section of their 'working class', ie. the hospital workers, these groups were not there. Comrades, let us not fall into this trap. We were slow off the mark with the miners' strike, but our position of 'Go out to the people' is the way forward in this instance as it is in many areas of struggle. We might be few in number,

but we have something to offer beyond the predictable 'spread the strike' or the abstract 'General strike now!' which will arise if the NHS struggle takes off. It is this, that beyond the welcome and vital trade union solidarity which can be extended to NHS fighters, there is a whole working class: women, black people, the unemployed and poor who must be brought to the practical aid of this struggle. Surely this is the essence of the new movement of which we speak in FRFI.  
In solidarity,  
**Michael (hospital worker)**  
Dundee

## THANKS

Dear FRFI,  
On 22 January the jury at Westminster County Court found my case against the police for sexual assault not proven.  
I want to thank my comrades in CAA and my organisation the RCG, supporting me. If it hadn't been for RCG and my comrades in it who are dedicated to fighting against injustice and racism, following through a case like mine would have been ten times more difficult as an individual. Thank you everyone for supporting me.  
Yours in solidarity,  
**Simone Dewhurst**

## INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Dear FRFI,  
On the Non-Stop Picket I met a comrade from the struggle for self-determination of the Basque people. His own brother was murdered by the brutal Spanish police.  
This comrade saw the struggle of the Irish people as one and the same as of the Basque people. The ten young men who died of starvation, murdered by the British state are regarded as heroes by the Basque youth who face repression torture and death equal that in the Six Counties of Ireland.  
The comrade told me that there is Basque youth fighting for the Sandinista government in Nicaragua he had just returned from Nicaragua himself. True international solidarity.  
He thought the Non-Stop Picket a necessary and militant action and was not surprised when I told him of the opportunism of the official AA.  
The Non-Stop Picket, because of progressive stand, attracts progressive people from all over the world.  
Viva the Basque people's struggle for self determination! Viva Herri Batasuna!  
Yours in Struggle,  
**Ann Burrows**  
London

## SPECIAL FUND

We have raised £2,500 towards our £10,000 special fund. This leaves £7,500 still to be raised. Plans are laid to hold a series of bazaars and jumble sales for the fund. However if we are to reach our target in April we need you to help us. Second hand book/record stalls in colleges, sponsored events and donations are all needed to raise the money we need. Help the RCG to raise this vitally needed money.

### ★ I SUPPORT THE £10,000 FUND DRIVE ★

I enclose £ \_\_\_\_\_ donation

I pledge £ \_\_\_\_\_ monthly (Please send me a standing order form)

I want \_\_\_\_\_ copies of each issue of FRFI to sell each month.

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## ★ JOIN THE RCG ★

- Take the side of all those struggling against imperialism—**Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine, Central America. Help us to do this—**Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built here in Britain which stands with the oppressed fighting racism, repression and poverty. Help us build this movement—**Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist leaders of Britain's Labour and trade union movement—**Join the RCG!**

I wish to join/receive more information about the RCG

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign

London Support Group

'Defend the Sanctuary - Viraj Mendis Will Stay'

**PUBLIC MEETING**  
Thursday 18 February 7.30pm  
Friends House 173-177 Euston Road London NW1 (opposite Euston Station)

Speakers:  
Father John Methuen (Rector, Church of the Ascension)  
Paul Weller, Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. Other speakers invited

Admission: 50p/25p unwaged

## GRENADA

International Conference:  
Towards anti-imperialist unity.

11/12/13 MARCH 1988

218 Lambeth Road, London SE1

Speakers include  
Dr Trevor Munroe (General Secretary, Workers Party of Jamaica), Chester Humphrey (Leading Grenadan Trade Unionist), Richard Hart (Attorney General of Revolutionary Grenada) Chris De Riggs (NJM Central Committee member).

Delegates fees - £5 for individuals, £10 for organisations

Organised by the New Jewel Movement, 218 Lambeth Road, SE1  
01-928 2136

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# DEFEND the NHS

## Resistance spreads

### Blood Transfusion Service

A work to rule by blood transfusion staff forced the government to abandon plans to change meal allowances which would have resulted in pay cuts of £10-12 per week.

### Edinburgh and Strathclyde

Nurses and ancillary staff in Edinburgh and Strathclyde struck for 24 hours on 14 January against plans to privatise cleaning and catering services.

### Salford

200 hospital workers, many nurses from Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, demonstrated at a Salford Area Health Authority meeting where £1.7m cuts were being proposed involving closure of two wards and the admissions unit at the Children's Hospital and refusing treatment to children from outside the area, ward closures at Hop Hospital, Salford Royal, Ladywell and Prestwich and other cuts. The vote deadlocked at 8:8. Under pressure from the demonstration the AHA Chair refused to use his casting vote. The issue will be rediscussed at the next AHA meeting.

### Central Manchester

Central Manchester Health Authority has been instructed by the DHSS to make £1.7m cuts. The Authority already has outstanding bills of £5.6m which must be paid soon. 150 redundancies are proposed and the Authority has said it will run out of money to pay wages if cuts are not made. 400 stormed the Authority meeting. NUPE, NALGO and ASTMS members took strike action. The Authority was forced to postpone a decision.

### North West Hertfordshire

On 8 January COHSE branch secretary Jane Barclay-Taylor was suspended for talking to the BBC about plans to hand over an ex-psychiatric patients' hostel to a charity. On 14 January another COHSE branch secretary, Doug Landman, was suspended for defending Jane Barclay-Taylor against harassment. That day there was lightning strike action by up to 100 workers - nurses, porters, telephonists, linen room workers, catering staff, domestics and theatre workers - at Hill End Hospital, St Albans City and Hemel Hempstead General Hospital. Both have been reinstated.

### Bath

A senior family planning officer was suspended for publicly criticising family planning cuts. Protest has forced her reinstatement.



Since *FRFI 74* the government's plans to destroy the NHS have become clearer. On 25 January, in an interview on *Panorama*, Thatcher proposed expansion of private provision and tax relief on private health insurance. She made it clear that the government review of the NHS, a private review controlled by the Cabinet, would consider 'all possibilities'. The deliberate rundown of the NHS is aimed at ensuring that the ensuing proposals - a 'hi-tech' de luxe service for those who can pay and basic skeleton provision for the poor - will be accepted by those who have gained in Thatcher's Britain.

The last month, however, has seen growing resistance from healthworkers (see reports) and this month will see strike action and demonstrations throughout the country. Already the Manchester nurses and blood transfusion workers have forced the government to retreat. The growing resistance is also throwing up daily lessons in who can be relied upon to defend the NHS and who cannot.

When the Manchester nurses went on strike Kinnock urged them 'not to compromise their professionalism' by striking. Labour health spokesperson Robin Cook said that the nurses' action would 'confuse the issues'. COHSE general secretary Hector Mackenzie accused them of 'jump-

ing the gun'. NUPE opposed the action of the Blood Transfusion Service workers (the unions had negotiated away the meals allowances in the first place). The Labour Party NEC, at the instigation of NUPE member Tom Sawyer, rejected Tony Benn's motion of unambiguous support for strike action in favour of an anodyne expression of support for 'protest'. Whilst union leaders have been forced to go along with the action planned for this month, they have prevented ambulance staff from joining in.

The professional defenders of the NHS have also started to reveal the limits of their concern. Three Royal College presidents who attacked the government in

December emerged from a meeting with Health Secretary John Moore on 14 January saying that their fears had been 'allayed'. The Royal College of Nurses continues to oppose strike action, though it may yet be forced to ballot its 265,000 members on the issue as RCN members join the resistance.

The emerging unity of nurses and other health workers is the key to building effective opposition to the destruction of the NHS. Only this unity coupled with a systematic effort to reach out to the poor and oppressed sections of the working class whose lives are literally at stake can pose a real threat to Thatcher's plans. The stakes are very high in this battle.

The miners' strike showed how far this government will go to crush resistance. The miners' strike showed how far the Labour and trade union leadership will go to undermine the fight back. The fight to defend the NHS is necessarily a confrontation not only with Thatcher but also with Kinnock & Co. If it is to have a chance of success it must be firmly based on the low paid workers in the NHS and the working class communities who depend on the NHS. *FRFI* supporters inside and outside the health service will be campaigning for such a fight back. Join us.

**'I've been nursing for 18 years and I earn as much as a first year police cadet.'**  
Manchester nurse.

**In 1982 black building workers show their support for the health workers demonstrating against low pay**



### NORTH MANCHESTER

## Nurses strike stops Tories

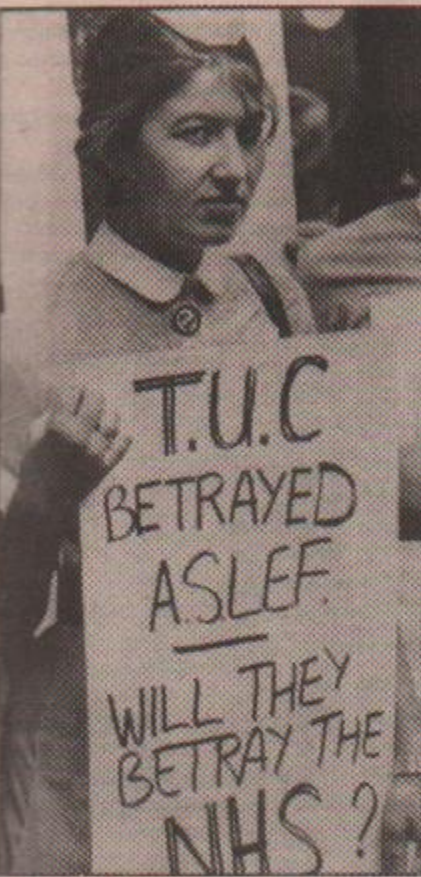
The 24 hour strike on 8 January by night shift nurses at North Manchester General Hospital was a major success. Four days later the government backed down from cutting special allowances to nurses which would have cut wages by up to £40 per week. No other kind of action would have had the same effect.

Some nurses in North Manchester had taken strike action a month previously in protest at the Health Authority's emergency cuts package. 8 January was, however, exclusively a nurses' action on a nursing issue and involved 40-50 nurses.

NUPE organisers wanted to minimise solidarity by other groups of workers in order to achieve maximum media impact. But if the main focus is on the media image created rather than the building of organisation and solidarity between different groups of health workers, action is unlikely to achieve more than a reversal, often a temporary one, of individual cuts. The axe

will fall elsewhere. Portering, catering, cleaning and maintenance services are in the front line of such cuts as their pay and conditions are constantly worsened by privatisation and cutbacks in staffing levels.

If more is to be achieved it is vital that all health workers make common cause and demand adequate pay and conditions for all health service workers, an end to the use of private contractors in NHS hospitals and greatly improved standards of patient care. A Manchester-wide stoppage and demonstration of all NHS workers has been called for 19 February by North Manchester shop stewards.



**In 1982, health workers questioned TUC 'support'. In 1988 the Labour Party and the TUC will hold back the fight**

### Facts

- a new heart unit at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital is running at half strength because of staff shortages.
- in April 1987 30% of nurses earned under £120 per week.
- 99 out of 158 District Health Authorities who responded told the Labour Party they would be overspent in 1987/8.
- 84 out of 131 DHAs in a survey said they had closed or would close beds. 3,000 beds have been closed by 57 DHAs.
- another survey found that 113 DHAs faced a £75m deficit by April 1988.
- Trent Regional Health Authority was told that it would only get waiting list initiative money if it was spent on BUPA facilities.
- US company Bioplan plans to build private day surgery units on six NHS sites.
- RCN President, Maud Storey, voted for cuts in West Berkshire Health Authority. RCN education officer, John Wells, voted for cuts in Brent Health Authority.



**The future NHS: a skeleton service for the poor, staffed by low paid workers**

**This page was produced by Terry O'Halloran. Reports provided by Dave Burton, Robert Clough, North Manchester General Hospital doctor, Prestwich Hospital student nurse and Bob Shepherd. Other material provided by Doug Landman (CONSE/NUPE Joint Action Committee)**