

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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ANDREW MOORE/REFLEX



IRELAND 1968-1988 TWENTY YEARS OF RESISTANCE & REPRESSION

ANNIVERSARY/CENTRE PAGES

**PALESTINIAN
MILITANT
SPEAKS**

PAGE 10

**DEFEND
THE NON-STOP
PICKET**

PAGE 7

SOCIALISM & IMPERIALISM PAGE 10

INSIDE

CPGB turns to Kinnock

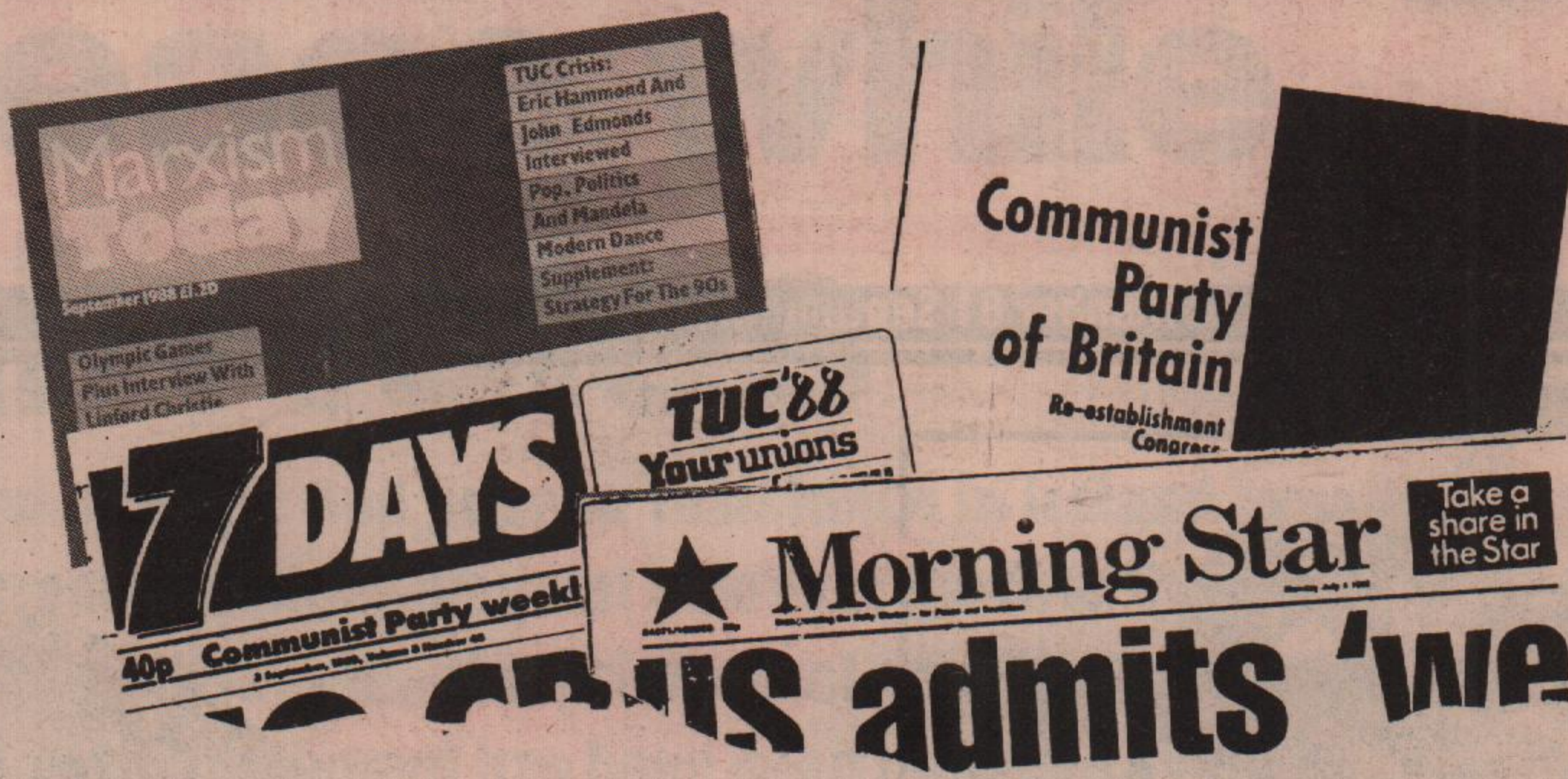
TERRY O'HALLORAN

In the September issue of *Marxism Today* the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) published a draft political statement to begin the process of revising its political programme *The British Road to Socialism* (last revised in 1977). Kinnock cohort, Bryan Gould has heaped praise on the document in *The Guardian*. This is not surprising for it is nothing but Kinnockism given an ideological cover.

Kinnock said: '... we can only protect the disadvantaged in our society if we appeal to those who are relatively advantaged.' The CPGB says 'It will only be possible to construct a new coalition in support of an expansion of socialised welfare... if it also benefits the better-off.'

Kinnock said Labour must appeal to: '... the home owners as well as the homeless...'. The CPGB says the left must promote '... an alternative culture of state-supported homeowners.'

Kinnock said Labour must move away from 'something



CPGB and CPB: nothing to offer the working class.

for nothing' disarmament. The CPGB says the left must adopt '... a range of unilateral, bilateral and multilateral routes' to disarmament.

In fact, the CPGB goes further. They call for 10-15% of the top 200 companies' shares to go to workers' trusts with workers to have the right to sell their shares and 'tough inheritance taxation to provide each 18 year old with a social capital stake'.

On the NHS they say the left must break with the 'simple dichotomy between private

provision... and public provision' by stressing that 'public provision must work with individual, family and collective initiatives outside the state.'

Finally they go beyond Kinnock to get within hailing distance of Thatcher by declaring that state corporations '... would need to be... opened up to competition', and that the market 'is the best way to co-ordinate lots of economic decisions, and to ensure that production responds to consumer choices.'

All this is, apparently, a programme for 'socialist' or 'democratic' modernisation for the people. The 'people' in question, however, are as we pointed out in *FRFI* 46 (February 1985): '... people like them - middle class, articulate, privileged sections of... the 'new' labour aristocracy.' The CPGB gives political expression to the aspirations of this 'new' aristocracy which has benefited from Thatcher's rule and wants to keep the benefits while getting rid of Thatcher. Hence the need for

an alliance with Kinnock whose political strategy is aimed at winning the votes of the same layer.

The founding conference of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB - the word 'Great' was omitted on legal advice) confirms that they offer no real alternative. Tony Chater claimed that 'our people are ready to fight. It is the leadership which is lacking.' According to Ron Bellamy the labour movement is engaged in 'a widespread fightback'. Once again the 'new realism' is opposed with old dreams. The age breakdown of the delegates to the founding conference speaks volumes for the character of the new party: under 29s, 13; over 60s, 38.

Both the CPGB and the CPB argue that socialism can come through a peaceful parliamentary process. Both support the Labour Party. Their differences lie in which section of the labour aristocracy they represent: the CPB represents the traditional industrially based trade unionised section. Neither recognises the split in the working class or its political consequences. Therefore neither can provide any way forward. ■

POLL TAX

Scottish Labour backs out

MIKE TAYLOR

Robin Cook has been silenced by his master's voice and the rest of the Shadow Cabinet for going public on the plans for the Committee of 100 to refuse to pay the Poll Tax. While Cook is to be allowed to not pay the Poll Tax, he is not allowed to encourage anyone else to do so.

Tony Benn, who had castigated the present leadership of the Labour Party as 'weak and ineffective' said, at a meeting in Dundee: 'The Labour movement must provide all the support it can for those who cannot or will not, through principle, pay the Poll Tax.' Benn went on to state that a future Labour Government's programme should include an Amnesty Bill to financially refund those who had suffered through opposing the Poll Tax. He avoided, however, calling on the audience not to pay the tax.

The Scottish Executive of the

Labour Party said, in mid-August: 'Labour will not lead a campaign of non-payment of the tax, nor will Labour be prepared to encourage people indiscriminately into supporting other such campaigns.' The Executive's statement goes on to provide a conscience clause for individual non-payers and suggests debt-counselling for those hardest hit by the tax. Indeed they excuse their concern for staying within the law by arguing that concern for the poor and the fines burden which non-payment would further place on them is their main reason for rejecting advocating non-payment. Predictably they state that the only way to ultimately defeat the Poll Tax is the election of a Labour Government.

The Scottish Labour Party leadership is washing its hands of a campaign it never seriously wanted to lead in the first place. By the time of the special Labour Party conference on the Poll Tax on 17 September and at the conclusion of the STUC's week of

action in the preceding week many of the final warnings to those thousands in Scotland who have not yet completed and returned the Poll Tax registration form will have been sent out. A £50 fine is liable for the first offence and a £200 fine for every subsequent offence, incurred every three weeks for a continuing offence. Unpaid fines are to be treated as arrears of the Poll Tax. The government has already given itself powers to deduct the tax and fines from wages and benefits.

The future campaign in England and Wales must learn the appropriate lessons from the Scottish experience of the Labour led 'Stop It' campaign. Whatever opposition has emerged so far has had to fight Labour councils which are loyally setting up the machinery for implementing the Poll Tax. ■

● Preparations continue for the national action against the Poll Tax conference which will be held on 12 November in Newcastle University.

Flushing out the homeless

TERRY O'HALLORAN

On Wednesday 17 August Lambeth Labour Council sent in a council cleaning squad, accompanied by police, to flush out homeless people who had been sleeping in the Bull Ring near Waterloo Station.

First came the police. Sarah, 18 and seven months pregnant told *FRFI*: 'The Old Bill came up and said: "You've got five minutes to get out"'. A middle-aged man who was not there when the squad arrived told me that he

returned to find that all his bedding and his cardboard 'home' had been thrown into a skip. Gary said that the police were wearing white protective gloves 'as though we're all lousy'.

The cleaners then literally flushed down the whole site. Every day it is hosed down at 5pm thus ensuring that the concrete floor remains damp all night. 'Caring' Labour Lambeth claims it was a public health operation.

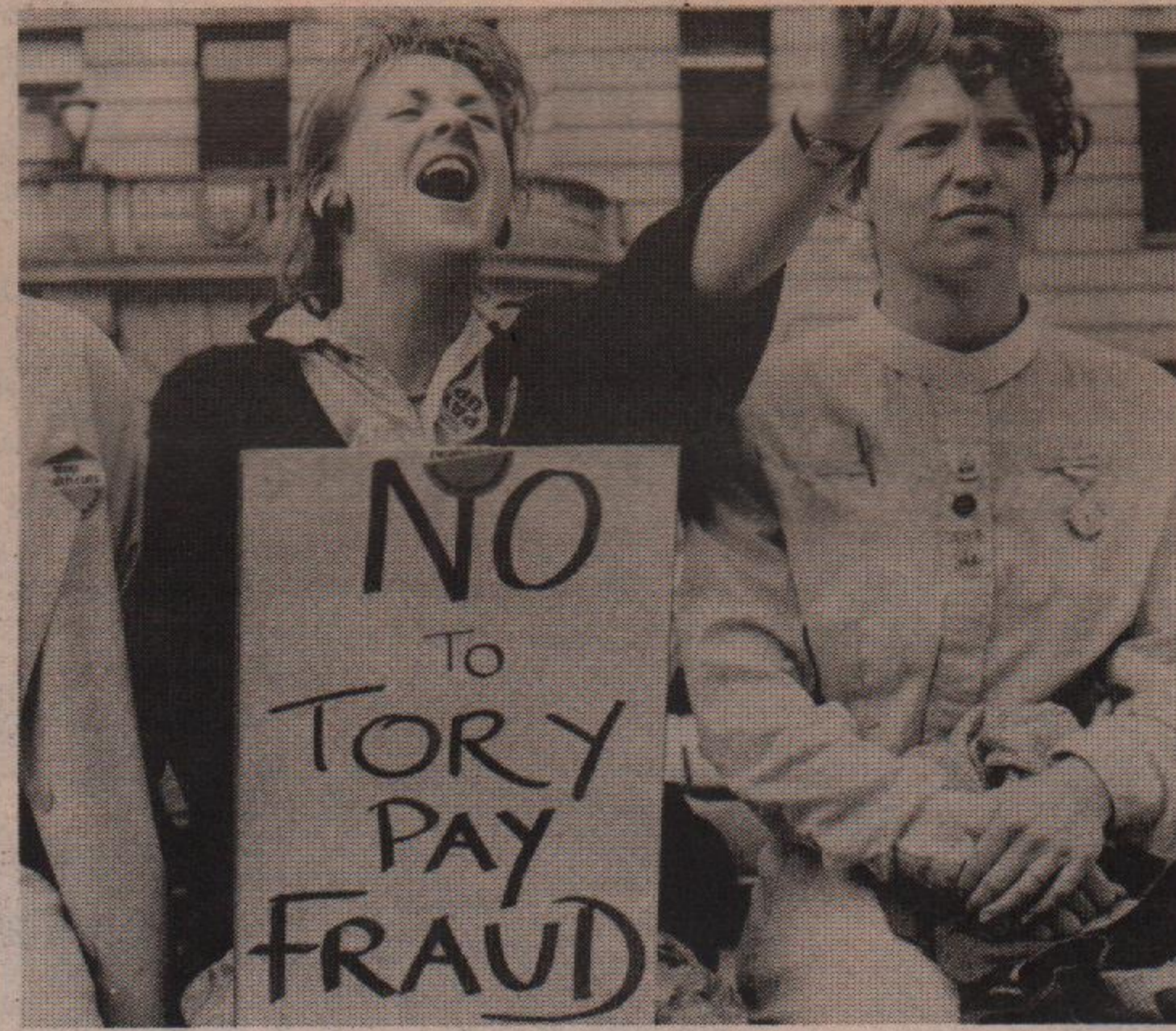
A private letter circulated to Labour councillors by the man responsible for the operation,

Kingsley Smith, tells a different story. He refers to the homeless people throughout as 'itinerants' and accuses them of intimidating passers by and setting their 'alsation (sic) dogs' on people. He reports that 'commuters' going to their work were offended. Well, we mustn't have the homeless 'offending' commuters, must we?

Lambeth denies police involvement. Yet Scotland Yard admits that the police were there. The homeless have been driven out of the Embankment by redevelopment and are under threat in a number of established sites. Now they are attacked by a Labour council. ■

Nurses fight pay fraud

PAUL MATTHESSON



DAVE BURTON

Evidence of Tory duplicity over the nurses' pay award is growing. Southern Derbyshire Health Authority - which includes the constituency of Health Minister Edwina Currie - is up to £800,000 short of the cost of the award. NHS managers nationally are resorting again to blackmail, with threats of spending cuts if nurses' wages rise. While the real cost of keeping their promises could be £360 million more than is available, the Tories refuse to fund the difference. And no money at all is available for wage rises for clerical and laboratory staff.

Chronic underfunding of the NHS is leading to an overspend

of £515m this year. Coupled with nursing shortages, this can only lead to further service cuts in the near future. Waiting lists continue to grow and many hospitals have been forced to shut yet more wards. The famous Birmingham Children's Hospital faces closure. A report by the Medical Defence Union, which represents doctors in legal cases, shows that more and more doctors are refusing to accept liability for treating patients in conditions made dangerous by NHS cuts.

During the last month, however, health workers fought back with walk-outs and protests in many hospitals. This action needs to continue and spread if Thatcher is to be forced to fund the pay award fully and the 'downgrading' process is to be halted. ■

Postal workers fight back

LORNA REID

On Wednesday 31 August postal workers held their first national strike in 17 years to protest about Post Office plans to pay special recruitment allowances of between £7.50 and £20 a week at 55 offices in south east England. The strike was supported by 97% of the 140,000 postal workers.

The Post Office management is attempting to introduce regional pay variations which would sow divisions among postal workers. At the same time they are making increasing use of casual staff. After Wednesday's strike 20 offices remained in dispute precisely over the use of casual staff to shift the backlog of mail.

The Post Office claims that the special recruitment allowances are necessary to improve recruitment and retention of staff. The postal workers blame low pay, long working hours and poor conditions for the high turnover of staff - as high as 50% a year in the south east of England. Changes in productivity bonuses and overtime availability have left London postal workers with a basic take home pay of £119 for a six day week. At Mount Pleasant sorting office in London, workers complain of petty rules being enforced like having to ask permission to go to the toilet and only being allowed to go twice in every shift.

Post Office management is attempting to create a 'flexible' workforce ie. a divided and weakened workforce, which can be made to accept any management demand. It is deliberately provoking action in an attempt to break the collective strength of the workforce. ■

Police attack P&O strikers

ADAM BOWLES

Whilst the NUS leadership celebrates the lifting of the sequestration order, allowing them to return to their headquarters and regain control of the union's assets, 800 strikers fight on after seven months in dispute with P&O European Ferries. The strike has lost P&O £30m and Sealink £21m.

The strike has faded from the pages of the British press. Following McCluskie's betrayal the strike has lost the solidarity action of other union members, let alone the potential of involving other trade unionists.

The police have seized the opportunity to attack the picket line and the strike committee activists. The police have instigated trumped up charges of violent disorder on five strikers and also on Terry French. Bail conditions were imposed preventing attendance at the picket line. Terry French was even forced to reside in Scotland, but this was subsequently lifted by the court. As we go to press the police are starting to harass the picket with threats of initiating summonses for using a megaphone at the docks. ■

DAVID REED

Last month, as the worst monthly balance of payments deficit ever of £2,150m was announced for July, Britain's credit financed consumer-led mini-boom was slammed into reverse. Interest rates were increased to 12 per cent, 60 per cent above the June level of 7½ per cent and the eighth rise in 3 months. Only this new rise and the growing intervention in the market by the Bank of England to bolster sterling has prevented an immediate run on the pound. It almost certainly will not be enough.

A year ago I said that 'the spate of recent optimistic government forecasts cannot hide the underlying vulnerability of the British economy'. The income generated from British assets abroad and the activities of 'the City' is no longer sufficient to compensate for the rundown of North Sea Oil revenues and the growing deterioration of the balance of trade that followed the decline of British manufacturing industry. 'The situation', I argued, 'is bound to get worse' (FRFI 71 September 1987). It certainly has and new threats are on the horizon.

The recession that most people expected after the October 1987 stock market crash has not yet materialised. Governments responded to the crash by expanding credit and pumping even more money into their economies, thus postponing the inevitable day of reckoning. Now we are told their economies are 'overheating'. Interest rates are being pushed up everywhere to slow them down. The fundamental imbalances in the international economy, the massive US budget and trade deficits remain, real action awaiting the outcome of the US presidential elections in November. The plight of Third World debtor nations is once again rapidly deteriorating as interest rates generally rise. The turndown of the world economy is on the horizon. The British economy, already very exposed to international economic developments, faces mounting problems.

The stock market crash has already had an impact on Britain's overseas assets. For the first time since 1979 Britain's net overseas

THATCHER'S ECONOMIC MIRACLE TURNS SOUR

assets have declined, from £113.2bn in 1986 to £89.5bn by the end of 1987. The fall was mainly due to the reduction in the value of UK portfolio investment overseas. The crash of world share values and a relatively stronger pound were primarily responsible, together with a net disinvestment by UK investors in foreign shares and bonds of £6.5bn in 1987 com-

pared to purchases of £25.2bn in 1986.

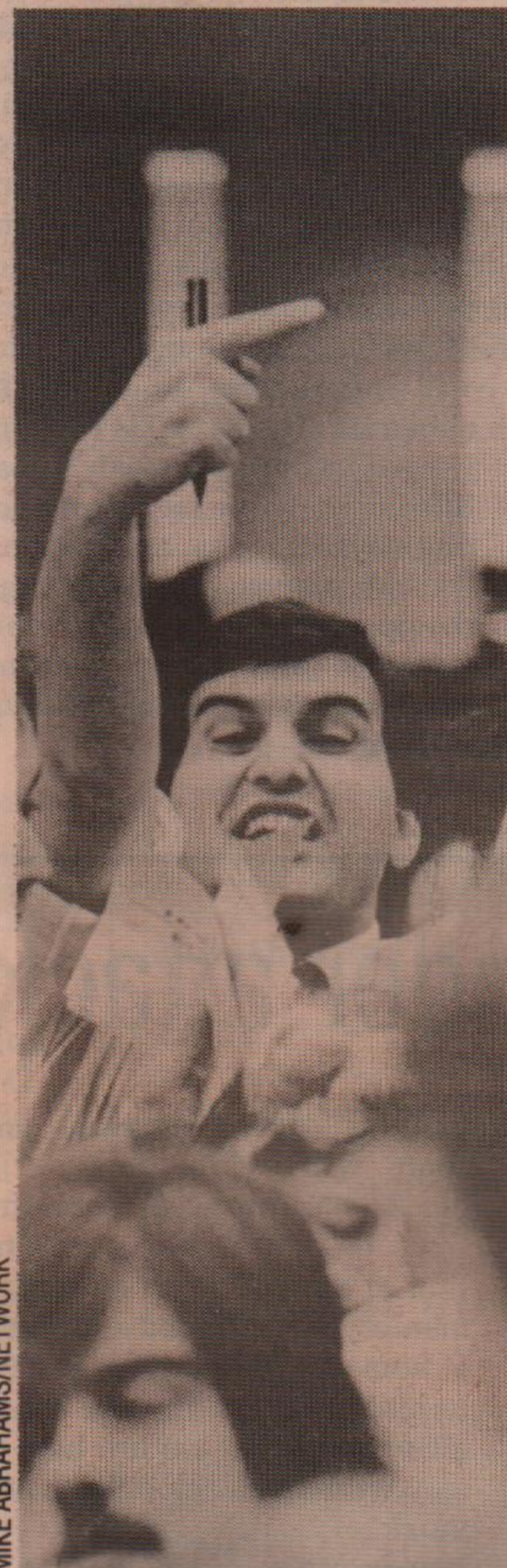
Last year UK direct investment overseas in foreign industry and services was £15.4bn compared with £11.5bn in 1986. The total value of UK direct investment abroad rose to £91.4bn at the end of 1987, while that of portfolio investment fell to £117.8bn, nearly £28bn below the level of 1986.

Earnings on these investments are at record levels, totalling £16.2bn in 1987, a 20 per cent increase on 1986. Direct investment earnings accounted for £10.7bn of this, a rise of 40 per cent on 1986, while portfolio investment earned £5.55bn, a fall of 4.5 per cent on 1986. However, even these record earnings were not sufficient to reverse the growing deterioration in the bal-

ance of payments due to the rundown of North Sea Oil revenues and the ever increasing trade deficit as the table shows.

The devastation wrought by the Thatcher government on British industry is dramatically shown by the visible trade surplus in manufactured goods of £5,450m in 1980 turning into a deficit of £7,490m by 1987. With manufacturing industry output hav-

	Current Account (£m)		
	1980	1985	1987
Visible balance			
manufactured goods	5,450	-3,125	-7,490
oil	308	8,101	4,184
other goods	-4,405	-7,322	-6,856
TOTAL	1,353	-2,346	-10,162
Invisible balance			
financial and other services	4,064	7,701	9,882
interest profit and dividends	-196	2,800	5,523
other services incl govt transfers	-2,099	-4,818	-7,747
TOTAL	1,769	5,683	7,658
Current balance	3,122	3,337	-2,504



MIKE ABRAHAM/NETWORK



BOB GANNON



MIKE ABRAHAM/NETWORK

'optimistic government forecasts cannot hide the underlying vulnerability of the economy'

JOHN ARDWICK

Britain is facing a credit and consumption boom of unprecedented proportions. Personal consumer debt now stands at over £36 billion. Imports of consumer goods are rising at an annual rate of 14 per cent, car imports by 33 per cent. The consequences of the Tories' economic 'miracle' are there for all to see. It is now an almost routine announcement that interest rates are going up again (eight times from June to the end of August). Inflation is now twice the rate of only a year ago. The tax cuts of the rich are being eaten into by mortgage rate increases. The balance of payments deficit is running at £13 billion; the July deficit of £2.15 billion was Britain's worst ever monthly figure.

The reason that Thatcher and her friends are unconcerned about the rise in personal debt lies in the international banking network. Across the world the major banks have forged a conscious strategy to restore their profitability, recently threaten-

ed by the international debt crisis, through the exploitation of consumer borrowings and the development of a credit card economy.

Spend, spend, spend

The banks have developed a 'consumer strategy' to transform the millions of pounds in small savings accounts (estimated at over \$2.5 trillion in the US) into substantial debts.

British households have increased their debt load by over 20% per year during Thatcher's rule. This is three times the increase in earnings over the same period. Increased interest rates and the abolition of credit controls in conjunction with soaring house prices have seen the middle classes 'buying' new cars, house extensions and shares in British Telecom.

For the working class the new spending spree meant that many accumulated higher debts and some even managed to buy a

house. With the rise in interest rates, however, the loan shark has returned to haunt working class estates, making good money by 'lending' thousands to his clients in order that they can pay off their debts at interest rates of 200% and above.

'That will do nicely, thank you ...'

No one is actually paying for any of this. It is largely financed by credit cards. The number of credit cards in the UK has increased by 50% since 1983. There are now over 30 million credit cards in use (two each for the working population) with Access and Barclaycard dominating the field. This is without the 'in-store' cards of the major retailers (Burtons alone have 2.5 million). For the banks this is a triumph since the credit card is a perfect mechanism which at one stroke reduces risk and increases profit.

A credit card implies small

risk, no fear of revolution. Unlike other forms of plastic such as the cheque card, the credit card is a 'profit centre' not a 'cost centre'. As long as cardholders do not pay their debts all the bank has to do is sit back and tot up the interest: 25% per year in the case of Access. Barclaycard made over £100 million in 1987, 10% of group profits. This is the equivalent of each cardholder handing over £12 to the banks for producing absolutely nothing.

Of course, on discovering this, the banks went wild. More than one dead person and several dogs in the USA were issued cards by Visa (Chase Manhattan with over 150 million creditors worldwide).

Press for action ...

The credit card is also a success story for the introduction of computers, information technology and surveillance in Britain. These machines reduce the

numbers needed to be employed by banks: for every one installed the banks can shed three workers. There are already 12,000 such machines in the UK. The entire management of the credit economy is manipulated by very few people indeed. Loans, for example, are now dealt with by a computer 'credit scoring' machine automatically.

A much more sinister application is the credit card as a tool of surveillance. In combination with the machine in the wall, the records of individuals' numerous transactions and their whereabouts can be recounted in detail and the habits of customers noted in order to build up profiles of clients.

Besides being able to access this information globally in an instant, the banks can 'target' individuals with more methods of getting themselves into debt. This information is extremely valuable to other retailers all eager to get into your postbag

ing only recently passed the 1979 peak and manufacturing investment only this year expected to reach 1979 levels, little improvement in the visible balance can be expected.

The surplus on the oil trade was halved between 1985 and 1986 with both the fall in oil prices and the rundown in North Sea Oil production being contributory factors. The tiny improvement in 1987 (£128m) due to a slightly higher oil price cannot be maintained as North Sea Oil production continues to slow down.

The last few months have in fact seen a dramatic deterioration in the overall situation. The record monthly balance of payments deficit in July is almost twice as high as the previous record of £1,184m in May. This brings the total deficit for the year so far to almost £8,000m, already double the Tory government's forecast for the whole year. The visible monthly trade balance crashed to a deficit of £2,651m. The monthly oil surplus, already falling, was reduced in the same month by £84m to a paltry £65m - mainly due to the Piper Alpha explosion. The invisible surplus was estimated at £500m, a level which already suggests an expected overall reduction in the invisible surplus for 1988 of more than £1,500m.

Little wonder that, shortly after these appalling statistics and the inevitable one per cent rise in the base rates were announced, some £10bn was immediately wiped off share values as the FT-SE 100 index fell by 50 points. It recovered slightly, to be 39 points lower on the day but the markets are becoming very jittery. They have certainly a lot to worry about.

This is the context in which any significant slowdown, let alone recession, in the international economy can have a devastating effect. Oil prices will fall rapidly, earnings from overseas assets will quickly slow down and Britain's already massive trade deficit will deteriorate further. The material conditions which have for nearly a decade allowed the Tory government to divide the working class, sustaining and nourishing its more privileged layers, will savagely attack the poor, and come to an end. ■

SPEND, SPEND, SPEND

and who pay the banks to include their wares in your bills.

The bigger banks sell their information on corporations and workforces around the world. So prized is this information that to cut out fraud the banks have invented a new science of 'biometrics'. This entails seeking new ways of making sure that only those deemed worthy of credit information will receive it. There is serious talk of placing your finger and palm prints as well as your retinal eye patterns and your DNA code on the back of your credit card.

When a group of South African surveillance and computer experts were brought together by their police force to establish the most efficient method of tracking their population's movements, they could not come up with any better system than the credit card network linked to the police computer. The growth of plastic money has only just begun as far as the state and the banks are concerned: this is Thatcher's credit racket. ■

Zia: death of a tyrant

VIRMAN MAN & TREVOR RAYNE

People embraced in the streets. On 17 August Pakistan's President Zia Ul-Haq, ten of his senior army commanders, the US Ambassador and the chief US military attaché perished aboard a Pakistan Air Force plane. Thatcher announced 'President Zia won the admiration of the world for his support of the Afghan people.' Zia Ul-Haq was a servant of the British and US ruling classes, trained and groomed by the military elites, a man who killed with a smile on his face, a tyrant whose fate was too long coming.

Born to a father who served as a clerk to British forces in the Punjab Zia was recruited into the British Indian Army. He later studied at the US Army Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. Thus equipped, and in his capacity as 'advisor to Jordan's King Hussein, he took part in the 'Black September' massacre of over 20,000 Palestinians in 1970. In 1977 Zia overthrew Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and had him hanged in 1979. That year Zia declared himself President. Almost overnight with the fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet defence of the Afghan revolution a man portrayed as an ugly dictator suddenly became a front-line soldier in defence of the free world.

Strategic position and forward base

After Israel and Egypt, Pakistan is the third major recipient of US aid. In the five years to 1986 it received \$3.2 billion, a 500 per cent increase on the US aid delivered in the previous decade. A further \$4 billion is scheduled for the next six years. Pakistan was seen by imperialism as a strategic position from which to guard oil routes to and from the Gulf and a forward base from which to attack the Afghan revolution. At one time thirty two military airfields were simultaneously under construction in the country! Zia received British weapons, instructors and money. These were supplemented by the CIA and heroin funds to maintain the Afghan counter-revolutionaries and their Pakistan bases. In return Zia supplied 30,000 troops to the Gulf States, trained and equipped Sri Lanka's murderous forces in their war on the Tamil people, helped foment destabilisation in India's Punjab, and committed Pakistani troops to fight alongside the counter-revolutionaries in Afghanistan in a strategy of taking cities and overthrowing the government.

With Zia's death the Haz-i-Islam group, favoured by Zia and the CIA, may find its privileged position undermined within the counter-revolutionary forces, and others more amenable to a political settle-



ment may be drawn into negotiations by the Afghan government.

Squalor and riches

The Pakistan government's 1987-88 economic survey shows income distribution to be worse even than in the 1960s when twenty two families controlled two thirds of the wealth.

This is a land where over a third of the 100 million people live in absolute poverty, where a fifth of all children die by the age of five, a land of heroin millionaires and a million addicts, where 0.3 per cent of the GNP is spent on health, 1.7 per cent on education and there are 75 million illiterates while 80 per cent of government spending

goes on debt repayments and the military.

General elections are scheduled for November. If free, and run on a party basis, Benazir Bhutto (daughter of Zulfikar) and her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is likely to win.

While the PPP contains a socialist current and gets support from the poor, its leadership is emmeshed in the ruling class. Benazir herself, Oxford educated and a large landowner, links her politics to Kinnock and Gonzalez of Spain. She states: 'There is such a large gap between the rich and the poor. I want to bridge that gap by creating a strong middle class.' No land distribution, no nationalisation, no attack on the

anti-women legislation, but a continuing alliance with the USA is the substance of Benazir's policies.

The PPP is part of a left-wing anti-Zia coalition, the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). Benazir understands that she cannot get power without the acquiescence of the US and the military. She will manoeuvre to draw in elements of the pro-Zia Muslim League. Already Benazir's coalition is showing signs of fragmenting. The competition for state power may encourage the oppressed to intensify their struggles and allow genuine progressives to put their politics to them. ■

NEWS NOTES

Douglas Hurd has graciously decided to accept DNA test results in disputed parentage immigration cases. Providing, of course, that you have the couple of hundred pounds it costs to pay for the test. This is called equality under the law.

Murdoch's super soaraway News Corporation's run into a spot of bother. He bought Triangle Publications (USA) for \$3 billion. NC's debt was \$4.8 billion. Now it's \$7.6 billion. Interest payments next year will be \$760 million - some \$60 million more than estimated profits of \$700 million. The Dirty Digger's empire is now in the hands of the banks: First National Citibank (that nice Mr Rockefeller) and the Midland. Oh dear, oh dear.

Where are they now? Remember Price Waterhouse, the chaps with calculators, who seized NUM funds during the miners' strike? They've popped up again in Washington handling Congressional aid to the Contras. You can't fault them for consistency.

Judge Ian Starford-Hill has novel notions on alternatives to custody. Ten years ago he said that people on the dole who drink should have their ears cut off. On 1 September he wistfully told an Iranian that in Iran he would have had his arm cut off. Good to see thoughtful characters on the bench.

Apartheid's vigilance is unrelenting. The latest list of banned publications etc contains the usual 'subversive' items such as a T shirt saying 'The struggle continues' . . . and somewhat less usual ones: Joan Collins' Hollywood memoirs and, I quote, 'a rubber object in the form of a penis'. No sniggering!

Interesting set-to on the Non-Stop Picket the other day. A passing black man remonstrating with a black PC. He tells not so young cop that the Met are racist. 'Not so' says loyal PC. 'How long have you been a constable?' 'Thirteen years' replies crestfallen PC. Enough said.

Step forward *Socialist Worker*, for our coveted Half-witted Headline Award, with this piece of stunning news: 'Tories make us pay' (3 September 1988). Do ask the poor dears, when you see them, who else they thought the Tories might make pay?

And finally . . . the NGA, often regarded as a somewhat male dominated body, is having a General Meeting for all London women members. Says JG Bathe, Assistant Secretary London Region, giving the glad tidings: 'This is a chance for the girls to learn more about how the Association can help them'. Shorely shome mishstake boys? Next week: 'Girls and trade unions: A TUC guide.'



FRFI delegation to Ireland

Amid increasing calls for the reintroduction of internment, this year's commemoration of the seventeenth anniversary of internment, took on new significance. The FRFI delegation travelled from Britain to join the thousands who marched along Falls Road on Sunday 14 August.

The burning issue of the day is extradition and FRFI was the only British group to participate in an anti-extradition march in Monaghan, one of hundreds of such events being held all over Ireland. The delegation also participated in the West Belfast Community Festival, a celebration of the culture of resistance.

The murder of the Gibraltar 3 still overshadows the community and the delegation paid its

respects at their graves. An award winning mural of Mairead Farrell is a permanent reminder of their determination to free Ireland.

That same determination was shown on Sunday's 6,000 strong march. The keynote speech was by Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness. He condemned extradition and, predicting the reintroduction of internment, pointed out that repressive measures would 'not defeat the Republican people.' He denied media reports of a split between himself and Gerry Adams. The bulk of his speech was devoted to a steadfast defence of the IRA and the armed struggle:

'we say to those people who would demand that we con-

demn the IRA for this and we condemn the IRA for that, we say now together, we are not going to condemn the IRA for anything. We see the IRA . . . as freedom fighters, they speak for us and they speak with one voice and it is the only voice the British understand . . . there'll be no condemnation of the IRA from us, not for Ken Maginnis, not for Maggie Thatcher, not for John Hume, not for Eddie McGrady.'

The delegation including comrades from London, France and Manchester Irish Solidarity Committee was given warm hospitality by local families. Over 500 copies of *FRFI* were sold over the weekend. ■

Carnival under attack

RONNIE TOMLINSON

In the weeks running up to this year's Notting Hill Carnival on August Bank Holiday weekend, through the bourgeois media, the police launched a major attack on it with the eventual aim of getting rid of it.

Police, council officials and the media conspired to wreck this year's carnival with predictions of 'steaming', 'mass muggings' and 'riots' on the streets of Notting Hill. The *London Evening Standard* mounted a relentless campaign for two solid weeks, featuring notables like Stalker to try and get the carnival banned.

In the event they failed but made stringent demands on the Carnival Committee to ban alcohol, to impose a curfew at dusk, to cut down and license only 34 sound systems, to allow video camera surveillance and to allow the police to seal off roads in the area. Funding and sponsorship were threatened unless the committee surrendered to these conditions. In addition, a third of the Metropolitan Police were put on standby, many in newly developed riot gear.

Why does the British ruling class hate the carnival so much? It is certainly not on account of the so-called high crime rate. Robberies and crime are very low for crowds of carnival size. Carnival is not a show of wealth and privilege like the Lord Mayor's Show. It is an expression of black working class music and culture, which black peo-

ple themselves organise and share with white people. To black people carnival represents three things: a joyous celebration of the ending of slavery; a memory of childhood and youth at home for our parents; and for us black people born here it is an affirmation that we are here to stay with our black culture and music.

This is why the ruling class hate it so much. They dread it. Writing on the carnival in the *Sunday Telegraph*, Sir Alfred Sherman sees it as an aspect of 'English people' being 'subjected to colonisation against their will by people from an alien and less advanced culture . . .' They hate the carnival not because they hate crime, but because they hate black people, they are frightened of us.

The ruling class also want to put the carnival into the hands of 'professional management', and thus to change the nature of the event from a working class celebration to a profit making, passive consumer institution.

On Bank Holiday Monday I bumped into a police officer who said 'This is a waste of rate payers' money. It should be held at Wormwood Scrubs.' He added 'I'd rather be at home' to which I replied 'I would rather you were at home too.'

The black community and the working class must defend our carnival. Carnival is black culture, it is working class culture, its ours and for us, it is independent of the ruling class and must stay that way. ■

FIGHT RACISM!

NOTES

Interview with Viraj Mendis



In August Viraj spoke to Ben Williams about the latest developments in his fight against deportation to Sri Lanka.

'Since my appeal against last year's judicial review judgement was rejected in June, we have applied to go to the House of Lords. We're now waiting for the Lords to decide whether or not they'll hear our case.'

VIRAJ RESPONDS TO THE TIMES ATTACK ON HIM

'The most serious development since the Court of Appeal decision has been a major feature article attacking us in the 2 August issue of the *Times*. It is important because it is addressed to the ruling class, to members of the 'establishment' who read the *Times*. Being read by members of the judicial profession it could influence the decision of the Lords. I am sure it played its role in ensuring that legal aid for my application to go to the Lords has been turned down. Indeed I suspect the article was engineered to prejudice our case at the House of Lords.'

The article by Brian James delivers the usual insults. I am a 'pipsqueak', a 'political martyr', a 'sponger', a 'user' and a 'paranoid'. He claims I never "spoke out against" the Sri Lankan government "until after (my) apprehension as an alien". This lie was nailed by evidence we submitted to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal.

He goes on to cite the legality of the Communist Party in Sri Lanka as evidence that I would not be persecuted there. The reason that this party has not been banned is that it actively opposes the LTTE. I actively support the LTTE. Furthermore, despite its opposition to the LTTE, its members have indeed been assassinated by Sinhala chauvinists.

James claims that "immigration

rules permit (me) to stay until all appeals are exhausted." This again is a lie. If I had not gone into sanctuary, I would have been deported before I had won the right to a judicial review hearing and all the subsequent appeals.

James' article has been designed to win over sections of the 'establishment' who oppose my deportation. They are trying to prepare opinion for the time when, as James puts it, "push may need to become shove to make Mendis go." In other words when the police are sent in.'

POLICE ATTACKS

'Alongside this attack by the *Times*, the attitude of the police has hardened in the past period (see FRFI 80). The number of arrests has increased. They're conducting a war of attrition against us. It's an experimental stage, prodding to test our strength and see how we respond.'

It's obvious that the Home Office is again planning to raid the Church, otherwise there would be no need for the police to do what they are doing.'

I DEMAND A FULL AND JUST REVIEW OF THE CASE

'We are now fighting for a full review of my case, we are launching a campaign to re-open it. The Home Office, to win over sections of the Church and others who support me, argue that we have gone through all the appeal stages and have received a fair hearing. But this is not true.'

Let me give you an example. Back in 1985 the Home Office adjudicator rejected my case for asylum on the grounds that Sri Lanka is 'inherently a democracy where the rule of law applies'. Therefore I did not, according to him, have a well founded fear of persecution. My judicial review and

appeal to the High Court and Court of Appeal did not have the power to consider, let alone question this basic assertion by the adjudicator. Obviously very few people today could get away with a claim that Sri Lanka is a democracy. Yet in all the court hearings since then I have not been permitted to challenge the adjudicator's quite false and partisan assertions.

The issue of my length of residence has also been ignored by the courts. I have lived here now for 14 years. I have settled in Britain, made my friends here and belong to the community in Hulme. I have every right to remain here for as long as I wish.'

THE VMDC RESPONDS

'We are producing an information pack which details our argument for re-opening the case. We will be circulating this to all members of the House of Lords as well as to all our supporters here and overseas. We are launching a postcard campaign with the aim of getting tens of thousands of people writing to the Home Office demanding a full review of our case.'

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

'On 24/25 September we are having a national conference "The VMDC and Sanctuary: Building unity in action against deportations". Here we will be making a major push to win a full review of my case. The conference will have another aspect too. It will share the experience the VMDC has gained. We need to ensure that the

rest of the movement has access to this experience which has allowed us to resist the Home Office for four years. We want to help build an information and advice network for those fighting deportations and a network to help the sanctuary movement which will inevitably flourish in the near future with the new Immigration Act.'

'VMDC and Sanctuary: building unity in action against deportations'

Saturday/Sunday 24/25 September 10.00am-5.00pm
Church of the Ascension, Manchester
There will be plenary sessions, workshops and plenty of discussion, as well as a major political rally.

If you want to attend the conference fill in the form below and return it to the VMDC

I/We wish to register for the VMDC National Conference on 24/25 September

Name

Address

.....

..... Phone

.....

Organisation/union

I/We enclose registration fee of

£ (£10 organisations,

£5 individuals, £3 unwaged)

Fill in and return this slip to: VMDC Conference

Committee, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson

Crescent, Manchester M15 5AL (Phone

061-234 3168)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu supports Viraj

In July Archbishop Desmond Tutu signed a statement opposing Viraj's deportation. In it he says he 'would view with extreme disfavour' any attempt by the Home Office to forcibly deport Viraj to Sri Lanka. The statement was also signed by 22 bishops from countries all over the world including Japan, Uganda, Nigeria, Australia, Sierra Leone, Pakistan, USA, Bangladesh and Canada.

VMDC weekend of action

On 29 and 30 July, the VMDC held a weekend of action 'Viraj Mendis Will Stay! Fight the Immigration Act!' Following the Friday march a political rally in the Church hosted speakers including David Burgess (Viraj's solicitor), Father John, Paul Ho (threatened with deportation), Simone Dewhurst for the RCG and of course Viraj himself. The next day, 50 VMDC supporters held a six hour street meeting in the town centre. The weekend ended with a social in the sanctuary with the North Staffs Miners Wives Support Group. Over the weekend, 1000 signatures and £690 were collected for the campaign.

Support from Ireland

In a message to the weekend of action Sinn Fein extending 'solidarity to Viraj Mendis' stated 'we see all those standing up to the racist state as striking a blow against imperialism, the cause of all racism.' In the same month John Mitchell, General Secretary of the Irish Distributive & Allied Trades Union sent a £150 donation to the VMDC from his union.

VMDC pickets The Times

On Thursday 11 August, the VMDC, demanding a right to reply, held a 30 strong picket of the Times at Wapping in response to its 2 August attack on the VMDC. The police moved in to try and break up the picket, without success. Meanwhile an ex-employee of Murdoch drove by the picket, signed the petition and gave a £5 donation.

VMDC supports Tamil demonstration

On Sunday 31 July, the VMDC joined the Tamil Eelam Support Committee's demonstration against the Indian army's presence in Sri Lanka. The VMDC was overwhelmed by the welcome from the Tamil people on the march. In particular it was proud to see two members of the LTTE take the VMDC banner and insist on carrying it throughout the march.

Visits to the sanctuary

Among the numerous visitors to the sanctuary in July was the Bishop of Massachusetts, and a couple from Zambia who had heard about Viraj's case on Zambian radio.

KUOMBA BALOGUN JAILED

Political activist and member of the Labour Party Black Section, Kuomba Balogun was jailed for six months in July on a trumped up charge of common assault. The judge rejected as 'irrelevant' defence evidence showing a sustained gutter press campaign against Balogun. Despite this the jury dismissed the lies of five police officers and threw out a charge of possession of shotgun cartridges. ■

Police frame-up

SINGH DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Black people are regularly treated as criminals and framed up by the police when they defend themselves against racist attackers. The case of the Singh family in Highfields, Leicester is only one among many. The

Singh Defence Campaign is organising and fighting back.

On 13 March this year, Mr Singh and his two sons were cleaning up their chip shop when three white men began banging on the door demanding that the shop be opened. They started shouting and calling them 'Black bastards' and 'Paki bastards'.

Then one of them smashed the door's glass panel. The Singhs tried to catch the racists and during the struggle one of the racists fell, injuring himself, and another escaped.

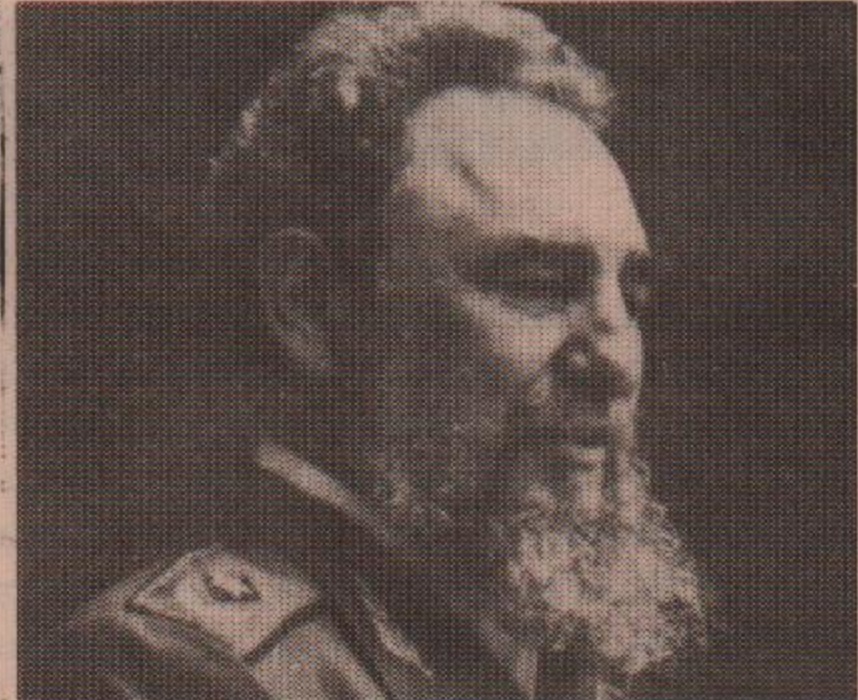
The family, who had called the police, were treated as the criminals. While the racists were escorted in a police car, Mr Singh and his sons were thrown into a police van and held for nine hours. They were all charged with grievous bodily harm (GBH) and the two sons faced additional charges of possessing offensive weapons.

Following a court hearing on 15 June, all charges against Mr Singh were dropped, as were the charges of possessing offensive weapons. But the two sons, Jit Singh and Narinder still face charges of GBH. The Campaign will fight until they are also dropped. The slogans of their court pickets have included 'Self Defence - No Offence'.

For further information contact: Singh Defence Campaign, c/o 6 Seymour Street, Highfields, Leicester (Phone 0533 21727).

NAMIBIAN FREEDOM ONE STEP CLOSER

Independence for Namibia is on the horizon following talks between Cuba, Angola and South Africa, which will end the war in Angola's southern territories and set out a timetable for Namibian elections. Ten years after the adoption of UN Resolution 435, which made South Africa's occupation of Namibia illegal, South Africa is preparing for the prospect of an independent Namibia. CAROL BRICKLEY examines the background to recent events.



Left: Angolan civilians killed by apartheid's troops. Above: Cuba's President Castro who has consistently supported the Angolan revolution. Below: wrecked building.



WORRALL GASSED

Denis Worrall, ex-Ambassador to Britain, now founder of the Independent Party (apartheid with a human face) got a taste of the medicine his erstwhile friends have been dealing out to black people. Members of the AWB and Conservative Party broke up his meeting in Johannesburg with tear gas. Even Worrall's empty liberalism is unacceptable to the growing white right wing.

HANDS OFF BRITISH PROFITS

A Bill before the US Congress which would exclude foreign oil companies who trade with South Africa from competing for oil, gas or coal leases in the USA, has sent the British government into a spin. Angry letters sent by Brian Crowe, British chargé d'affaires in Washington, have been described as 'inept', 'crude', and 'outrageous' by the Congressmen who received them. The letters threaten to take retaliatory action against the USA if the Bill is passed. British oil companies, Shell and BP both have considerable interests in South Africa and the USA, but the letter describes the Bill as 'objectionable to the British Government as a matter of principle'. The principle is support for apartheid South Africa and British super-profits.

On 8 August a ceasefire was announced resulting from the talks, held in Geneva, between South Africa, Angola and Cuba. South Africa has agreed to withdraw its troops from Angolan territory by 1 September. In a bid to embarrass Cuba and Angola, the South Africans also proposed independence for Namibia by 1 June 1989 if Cuban troops are withdrawn from Angola by the same date. Cuba and Angola are proposing a four-year phased withdrawal, although they have indicated that this time-scale could be reduced.

South Africa has invaded Angola every year since Angola achieved independence from Portugal in 1975. It has also lavished funds and arms on UNITA bandits led by Jonas Savimbi in a bid to destabilise the People's Republic. Cuban troops were invited into Angola in 1975 because of these threats, and since then they have been instrumental in the defence of Angola.

It was the Reagan administration in the USA which first proposed 'linkage' of the issues of Cuban troop withdrawal and Namibian independence, with the hope that even if South Africa was forced to concede some sort of independence in Namibia, the Angolan government would be weakened by the Cuban withdrawal, and imperialism's own puppet Savimbi would win power.

The intervention of the Reagan administration has been vitally important, but not in the way they first imagined. The US has forced South Africa to the negotiating table in an attempt to stabilise the region for imperialism, but now that a Democratic Party victory in the US Presidential elections in November seems likely, and Democrat candidate Michael Dukakis has

said that he will end 'linkage' and cease military aid to UNITA if he comes to power, the outgoing Reagan administration is anxious to push through a deal on its own terms as soon as possible.

Both the US and South Africa hoped that they would be in a stronger position at the negotiating table. South Africa launched a major military initiative at the end of 1987 to increase its hold over southern Angolan territory. The critical point was reached at Cuito Cuanavale, a strategic air base. But, with the crucial help of a reinforced Cuban army, the Angolans were able not only to force a South African retreat, but also to sweep down to the Namibian border. The Cuban/Angolan air superiority has shocked the South Africans and heavy losses amongst white SADF soldiers has had repercussions inside South Africa. With the growth of internal dissension against conscription amongst whites in South Africa, the apartheid regime is anxious to rid itself of the war in Angolan territory.

The issue of Namibian independence is, however, more vexed. South Africa will not easily relinquish its control of Namibia and its vast mineral wealth, and, with black majority rule the certain outcome of elections, the Botha government will lose support in South Africa amongst its white racist voters. Alive to this prospect, both the right-wing Conservative Party and the openly fascist AWB have begun organising in Namibia. Treurnicht (CP) and Terblanche (AWB) both visited Windhoek, Namibia's capital, in July. Both parties aim to whip up reaction amongst Namibia's 75,000 white population and at the same time undermine the Nationalist Party in South Africa for making concessions to black people and communism. The battle for Namibian independence is not yet over.

Sam Nujoma, President of SWAPO, expects to lead Namibia's first post-independence government. After a decade of fighting a guerilla war, with the aid of bases in Angola, he is already contemplating the future problems of an economically underdeveloped country bordering South Africa. He has promised that ANC bases will not be allowed on Namibian territory, there will be no substantial nationalisations, and no appropriation of white farms: 'we are fighting to liberate Namibia, not to create bases for others...' (*Weekly Mail*).

The USA has not abandoned its hopes of a UNITA victory in Angola, either. Chester Crocker has declared that aid to UNITA will continue despite the peace talks. Savimbi is said to be moving UNITA's main base from the south of Angola, north to near the Zaire border. The presence of Israeli 'military advisors' there will prove vital if the Democrats win in the US elections, because Israel will be UNITA's main arms supplier and the channel for South African support.

There is much ground yet to be travelled towards peace and democracy in Southern Africa. Key to the future of the region is the defeat of apartheid in South Africa. There is, however, a lesson to be learned. Without the unflinching internationalist support of the communist Cuban Army, there would be no prospects at all for Namibia and the Frontline States. ■



FREE MANDELA

RICHARD ROQUES

In August it was announced that Nelson Mandela has tuberculosis. It is a disease which thrives amongst the poor, those who live in damp conditions and have a poor diet. That South Africa's best-known political prisoner who had just celebrated his 70th birthday under the glare of international publicity should be suffering from TB is both an embarrassment to the South African government and its claims to humanity, and also an indictment of the conditions under which the apartheid regime imprisons its political opponents.

For a week before being admitted to hospital, Mandela was confined to bed, unable to eat or exercise and suffering speech difficulties. In an emergency operation performed at a Cape Town hospital 3 litres of fluid were drained from his lungs. He was later reported to be recovering well. On 1 September Mandela was moved to a private clinic in Cape Town and was visited by Justice Minister Coetzee. Speculation is now rife that he will be released from gaol.

PW Botha, who was scheduled to make a keynote address to the Natal Congress of the National Party when the news of Mandela's illness broke, departed from his prepared speech to offer Mandela his release once again. The offer was carefully worded: 'Personally I don't think that at his age and condition it would be wise for him to choose to go back to prison and I hope he will make it possible for me to act in a humane way so that we can have peace in South Africa.' To make it possible for Botha to 'act in a humane way', Mandela must renounce his opposition to the inhumanity and barbarity of the apartheid system. He must renounce the right of black people to fight back against oppression. It is no choice at all. 'Peace' in South Africa will not be achieved by Mandela's release but by victory for the national liberation struggle of black people. Mandela knows this, and so do the black people of South Africa.

Mandela has repeatedly turned down conditional offers of 'freedom'. In 1973 he turned down the offer of

release provided he lived in and recognised the Transkei bantustan. In January 1985, Mandela refused to denounce violence in order to win his release: 'I cannot and I will not give any undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated. I will return.'

Throughout his imprisonment Mandela has refused special privileges. On his 70th birthday he and his family refused the offer of a six hour unrestricted family visit. The Mandelas were quick to point out that other prisoners, some of them older than Mandela have not been offered such visits.

Mandela's principled stand is a clear message to all of us in the solidarity movement in Britain. Solidarity means support for all political prisoners; support for all detainees who have been, and continue to be, tortured and are held without visits from lawyers or families. Nelson Mandela is not a 'special case', he represents a movement for freedom of all South Africa's people. The RCG has argued within the anti-apartheid movement in Britain that it is sectarian and therefore dangerous for the movement to support some political prisoners and not others; some anti-apartheid organisations and not others.

Botha's 'offer' of release for Mandela is not humanitarian concern, but a cynical and calculating ploy to stave off the renewed threats of sanctions fuelled by the news of Mandela's illness. If Mandela is released because of his illness, the fight for freedom will not be over. Neither we, nor Mandela, are engaged in a campaign to free one prisoner, but a struggle to free a whole nation, and a struggle to rid the world of racism. ■

● Last year the apartheid regime carried out a major operation on Zephania Mothopeng, without his or his family's consent. Zephania Mothopeng, the President of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, was sentenced to a 30 year term of imprisonment for his role in the 1976 Soweto Uprising. At present he is denied all access to his family and lawyers.

Defend non-stop picket from police racism

There is nothing arbitrary about the timing of these attacks. A political decision has been made at government level that the picket should be removed. But the police have long since admitted privately that, despite concerted pressure from the Home Office, the Foreign Office and above all the Embassy itself, all their efforts to get rid of the picket have failed. The result of two years' harassment and over 600 arrests has been a 96 per cent victory rate for City Group in the courts and egg on the faces of the police.

Their renewed offensive was generated by three political attacks on the picket in the early summer. On 25 May, far-right MP and supporter of South Africa, John Carlisle called, in the House of Commons, for the government to take action against the picket by granting increased police powers to rid London of this 'scourge'. At the AAM demonstration for Mandela on 17 July, a bogus leaflet was issued in City Group's name. Shortly afterwards, City Group found itself under attack from a small group of hostile people previously expelled from the group for stealing and physical assault on City AA members. They disrupted meetings and started their own 'anti-picket' on the pavement outside the Embassy, not to protest against apartheid, but as a base from which to threaten and physically assault City Group members. The time was ripe for the police to launch an all-out offensive to smash the picket.

On 16 June, Mike Russell was arrested on two counts of police assault, racially abused and assaulted. He was subsequently found not guilty in court. Over the next two weeks he was arrested again twice. Gary Lowe was violently arrested and beaten up by the police on a picket to protest against the visit of Jonas Savimbi to this country. The

Holland: anti-apartheid arsonist gaoled

Rene Roemersma, a member of Revolutionary Anti-Racist Action (RaRa), was gaoled for five years in Amsterdam on 24 August for arson. Nine others arrested in April were released for lack of evidence. Starting in 1985 RaRa carried out three arson attacks on Makro supermarkets, whose parent company SHV had strong South African interests. SHV withdrew from South Africa in 1987.

The Forbo floor coverings company also came under attack, as did the notorious sanctions-busting Shell oil company, whose service station in Zaandam was burned down. Saboteurs have also used sugar, small amounts of which can ruin large volumes of petrol.

Two protesters were arrested outside the court for police assault. Roemersma will appeal against the sentence. He said in court: 'RaRa has shown the need for revolutionary action. The attacks, totalling 38 million guilders in damages, are nothing when compared to just one drop of black blood'... a sentiment with which we heartily agree.

Since June this year, the Non-Stop Picket of the South African Embassy has been subjected to a renewed campaign of racism, harassment, arrest and assault by the Metropolitan Police. Fifteen City Group activists, the majority of them black, now face a total of 32 trumped-up charges, resulting from arrests both on and off the picket over the last two months. CAT WIENER reports.

Frame up collapses

On Friday 2 September another crude attempt by the police to discredit a black anti-apartheid activist and RCG member was simply laughed out of court.

On 8 August our comrade was arrested on his way to the Non-Stop Picket and charged with 'indecent assault on persons unknown'. These 'persons', who have never been traced, appear to possess no name, no identity, and indeed no existence outside the warped imagination of the police and their stooge, who 'identified' our comrade to the police on the night of 8 August ('That's him. He's black') and appeared in court to give evidence against him. Although reading from a statement made at the time, this stooge, Timothy Gilmour (previously convicted for criminal damage and assault) was unable to recall what our comrade was wearing on the night, or what he looked like - in spite of having travelled back to the police station in the same van. After this farrago of lies, and having heard the arresting officer's contradictory evidence, the magistrate ruled that there was no case to answer. Costs have been awarded out of central funds.

Cat Wiener

three City AA members who protested against this treatment were themselves arrested. Two of them are black. Ronald Tomlinson was arrested twice, detained overnight,

denied access to a solicitor and a phone call. Errol Baptiste and Danny Serieux were arrested simply for demonstrating on the Non-Stop Picket.



CAA's rally on 7 August commemorated South African Women's Day and was well attended by many women's organisations. Donations of material aid poured in throughout the day. All aid has been sent to the refugee camps in the frontline states supporting the thousands of freedom fighters forced by the apartheid state to flee their homes.

On 30 July, it was the activities of members of the 'anti-picket' which directly ensured the arrest and assault of five picketers, four of whom were RCG members. Four of them were beaten up in the police van; Simon Clarke was handcuffed and Lorna Reid and Jenny Sutton were left covered in bruises. A month later, Lorna was set up for arrest by the police, threatened and abused in the police station; another picketer, arrested with her, was threatened with 'compulsory AIDS testing'. These are the most serious examples of the recent spate of arrests. Mike Russell, Ronald Tomlinson, Gary Lowe, Errol Baptiste and Danny Serieux are all black. Many of those arrested are RCG members and play a leading role on the picket.

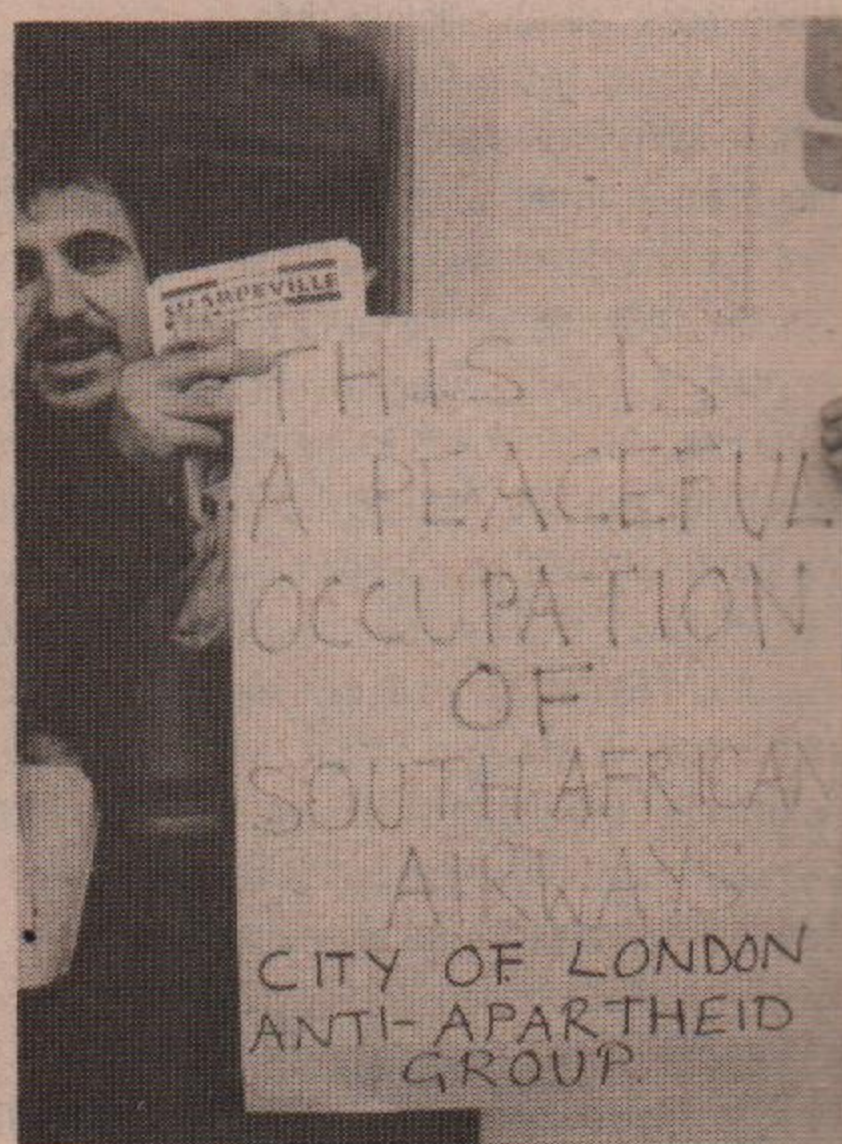
It is no accident that the police should target black picketers. There is no one who excites the racism and savagery of the police as much as a black political activist who fights back. The right of black people to organise is under attack up and down the country. It is no accident either that many of the targetted picketers are communists. RCG members play a central role on the picket. This spate of arrests has been accompanied also by harassment and abuse addressed particularly to gay picketers.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement has been made aware that it is considered to be a white, middle-class, racist organisation by black people. It has recently produced a special leaflet to target black membership. In City Group the case is different. Its black members are part and parcel of City AA's leadership. It is no accident that the 'anti-picket' should have accused City AA of racism, argued that black people should organise separately, communists have no right to organise and have targetted gay people for abuse. This hostile group contains a number of black people who have used their colour as a cover to attack City Group's work. The involvement of black comrades in City Group gives the lie to their spiteful rumours. It is clear that it would suit these opportunists to see black people disappear from the picket, whether as a result of their own threats of violence, or more conveniently, at the hands of the police. Thus are the interests of our enemies united.

City Group is defending the Non-Stop Picket, its reputation and its activists against the attack by Britain's racist, sexist police, whatever form that may take. The RCG fully supports this campaign. By defending the picket and the stand it has taken against racism in Britain and collaboration with apartheid, we are all defending black people, communists, gays and the right of all the oppressed to fight back in Britain and South Africa. Join City AA's campaign and stand with us to defend the picket against all those who seek to destroy it.

Sign the petition and get others to sign it. Invite defence campaign speakers to your organisation, trade union branch etc. Come to the defence meetings (phone City AA for details - 01-837 6050). Join the picket of Bow Street Court on Wednesday 12 October 9.30am for Ronnie, Mike and Gary. Join the Non-Stop Picket.

NOTES



BOYCOTT APARTHEID... but not South African Airways

City AA has received a letter from No 13 Regional Council Division 1 of the Manufacturing Science and Finance Union (MSF) - the combined forces of Clive Jenkins' ASTMS and Ken Gill's TASS. The letter complains about 'invasions' into South African Airways offices in Regent Street, London, by City AA members and accuses the invaders of harassing and verbally abusing MSF members. City AA has made it clear that at no time have any of the staff been abused. On the contrary, it is City AA's peaceful demonstrators who have been abused and physically assaulted by security staff and police. The MSF however do not care about the civil rights of demonstrators. The letter goes on to demand that City AA cease to campaign against South African Airways and transfer its campaign to 'such companies as BTR who continue to exploit the apartheid system in South Africa'. Funny, we thought South African Airways did that! But then, perhaps the MSF thinks that the interests of its own members peacefully to trade in apartheid outweigh the rights of black South Africans or British anti-apartheid demonstrators.

Police Powers...

The BBC2 series on *Police Powers* has just finished, but failed to highlight the new police power to censor BBC programmes. City AA convenor Carol Brickley was interviewed for the programme, but the interview was later cut despite the director's opposition, on the grounds that Carol Brickley is awaiting trial on a charge of police obstruction for an occupation of South African Airways. Neither the interview nor the programme had anything to do with this, but, according to one of the programme's directors, the BBC are so nervous of Police Federation writs that anyone with an outstanding charge against them cannot appear. That sounds like a good way to silence police critics!

... and the BBC

The BBC has also capitulated to the political prejudices of Tebbit and an array of right-wing Tories who now people its governing bodies. New internal staff guidelines issued in July state 'The BBC is not against apartheid as such...' and describe apartheid as 'a matter of public policy on which the BBC should be neutral'. We await Norman Tebbit's redefinition of 'neutral' to mean 'total support'. Goebbels would be proud!

LOYALISM IS BRITISH FASCISM

The career of Ian Paisley epitomises the ugly face of loyalist reaction. He rose to prominence in the 1950s with his virulently anti-Catholic campaigns including his staging of mock masses and the kidnapping of a 15-year-old girl to convert her to Protestantism. The German fascists in the 1920s and 1930s used to stage mock Jewish religious rites.

He created Ulster Protestant Action whose aim was to keep Protestant and loyalist workers in employment in times of depression, in preference to their Catholic fellow workers.

In the 1960s he led the fierce resistance of loyalist workers to O'Neill's alleged concessions to the nationalists. He was linked to the re-emergence of the UVF in the mid-60s. In 1966 the UVF carried out petrol bomb attacks on Catholic schools, shops and homes. On 27 May they shot and killed John Scullian in Clonard Street. On 26 June they shot three Catholic barmen in Malvern Street, killing one. All this before the Civil Rights movement was even formed.

Loyalist fascist terror has continued unchecked ever since. It operates as the unofficial wing of the sectarian statelet. When the loyalists believe anti-nationalist state repression is inadequate they escalate their own violent attacks. Thus from 1975 to 1977 (the period of truce between the British state and the IRA) the Shankill Butchers tortured and killed 19 people. Sadistic violence was their hallmark. Six victims had their throats cut, some from ear to ear. A seventh was bludgeoned to death with a hatchet.

A letter to the Ulster Defence Association's newsletter in 1972 fully expressed the fascist mentality of loyalism:

'Why have they not started to hit back in the only way these nationalist bastards understand? That is ruthlessness, indiscriminate killings... If I had a flame-thrower, I would roast the slimy excreta that pass for human beings.'

In 1984 George Seawright called on Belfast City Council to buy an incinerator in which to burn Catholics 'and their priests'. Seawright was a Belfast City Councillor, a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly and a member of Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party. Seawright was later killed.

Fascist terror is the lifeblood of loyalism. Yet today Paisley is considered respectable enough to appear on *Desert Island Discs*. ■ **GARY CLAPTON**

NICRA DEMANDS

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed in January 1967 with six demands:

1. One man one vote in local elections;
2. The removal of gerrymandered boundaries;
3. Laws against discrimination by local governments, and the provision of machinery to deal with complaints;
4. Allocation of public housing on a points system;
5. Repeal of the Special Powers Act;
6. Disbanding of the B Specials.

All these demands have since been achieved, in one form or another, yet nothing has changed for working class nationalists in the Six Counties.

Equal rights in voting and proportional representation have led to the election of Sinn Fein councillors and MPs without the slightest effect on the structure of the sectarian statelet.

Gerrymandered boundaries have been removed but the fundamental gerrymandered boundary, the border itself, remains.

Laws against discrimination have been passed and agencies such as the Fair Employment Agency (FEA) established. Yet every FEA report shows that discrimination continues unabated even in the public sector. Thus the Ambulance Service for example has only 17% Catholics. Unemployment remains two to three times higher for Catholics.

There is a points system in public housing but precious few homes fit for human beings to live in.

The Special Powers Act was repealed but immediately replaced by the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act. The power to detain people without charge or trial, internment, remains on the statute book.

The B Specials were disbanded but immediately replaced by the Ulster Defence Regiment which is almost wholly Protestant, has the most sophisticated weaponry and a long record of sectarian crimes.

How can anyone doubt that the statelet is irreformable? ■ **NICK LEWIS**

The emergence of the Civil Rights movement as a mass movement exposed the violent and sectarian character of the Six County statelet to the whole world. It was inevitably to lead to the present direct military and political confrontation between the Irish people and British imperialism. It proved beyond doubt that the Six County statelet could not be reformed. It exposed all political trends, in Ireland and in Britain, to the harsh test of struggle and found most of them wanting.

CHANGE IN THE AIR

In the 1960s the Six County statelet looked as if it were changing. Changes there were, but not to the essential character of the statelet.

The statelet has always depended on the maintenance of a class alliance between the Unionist ruling class and the loyalist workers. Their loyalty is bought with guaranteed privileged access to jobs, housing and other political and social privileges. Sectarianism and discrimination are therefore essential to the existence of a statelet imposed by force against the wishes of the Irish people.

Between the foundation of the statelet in 1920 and July 1922, of Belfast's 93,000 Catholics, 257 were killed, 11,000 were driven out of their jobs and 23,000 out of their homes.

Sectarian terror was legalised with the formation of Europe's first state-organised fascist militia, the B Specials, and the passing of the Special Powers Act (SPA) in 1922. The SPA allowed search, arrest and detention without warrant, unlimited detention without charge or trial (internment), flogging and the death penalty for arms offences and suspension of all civil liberties. From 1920 to the 1960s the Six County statelet, sanctioned by Labour and Tory governments alike, continued as it had begun.

In the 60s changes in the world economy had caused a drastic decline in industries such as shipbuilding and linen in which Protestant employment had been concentrated. Protestant workers could not be given privileged access to jobs which did not exist. In working class loyalist areas a growing protest vote was registered for the Northern Ireland Labour Party.

In 1963 Captain Terence O'Neill became Prime Minister to re-establish the loyalist alliance and modernise the Northern economy. O'Neill was widely regarded as a reformer. He was nothing of the sort.

78,000 new jobs were created but the vast majority went to Protestants. Six of the eight planned 'growth areas' were in loyalist-dominated areas around Belfast. New motorways linked Protestant towns while rail links between Belfast and Catholic cities such as Derry and Strabane were cut. A new university was established in Protestant Coleraine not Catholic Derry.

Nothing was in fact changing. The 1971 census showed that average unemployment in Belfast was 8.2 per cent while in nationalist areas it was twice as high at 17 per cent. However, the talk of change by O'Neill and his supporters allowed the extreme brand of sectarian bigotry represented by Ian Paisley to grow among the loyalist working class. In 1966 two Catholics were killed, others were injured and Catholic homes petrol-bombed in a wave of attacks by the UVF. Within the Unionist Party opposition to O'Neill was growing.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

There was another pressure. A growing Catholic middle class had developed and found its progress blocked by sectarian discrimination. In 1964, a middle class pressure group, the Campaign for Social Justice (CSJ), was formed to collate and distribute the facts about discrimination.

In 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil

Twenty years ago millions of people in Britain were stunned to see TV pictures of police savagely beating and batonning unarmed peaceful demonstrators in 'Northern Ireland'. They saw elected MPs being bludgeoned. They discovered that the demonstrators, in 1968, were asking for equal voting rights, an end to religious discrimination, things long taken for granted in Britain. TERRY O'HALLORAN and MAXINE WILLIAMS look at the origins of twenty years of undeclared war.

IRELAND 1968-1988

TWENTY YEARS OF UNDECLARED

WAR

Rights Association (NICRA) was founded. Like CSJ, and despite the involvement of the IRA, it was basically middle class and confined itself to seeking reform within the context of the sectarian statelet. The events of 1968 were to change the class character of the Civil Rights movement.

In Caledon the local Republican Club took direct action against housing discrimination squatting Catholic families in council houses. In June 1968 one of the families was evicted and the house let to a single Protestant woman. Nationalist MP Austin Currie occupied the house in protest.

In August Dungannon CSJ called a march from Coalisland to Dungannon. NICRA reluctantly supported it. Three to four thousand took in the first ever Civil Rights march. They were met by a counter-demonstration from Paisley's Ulster Protestant Volunteers and re-routed by the RUC.

However, the success of the march encouraged local activists to request that NICRA call a march in Derry - a city where gerrymandering ensured that the majority Catholic population was herded into the Bogside ghetto and had only minority representation on the council. The march was banned. Local activists stopped NICRA calling it off. On 5 October 2,000 marched and were viciously attacked by the RUC. Gerry Fitt, then Republican Labour MP, was filmed with blood pouring down his face. One hundred people had to be treated in hospital.

The NICRA leadership found themselves caught between the intransigence of the Stormont government and the determination of an aroused nationalist working class encouraged by the fact that for the first time in nearly fifty years the outside world was forced to take notice of their suffering.

On 16 November another march was called in Derry and banned. This time, 15,000 took part and forced their way through to the city centre despite RUC efforts to stop them. The nationalist working class refusing to



be intimidated by loyalist violence or held back by the NICRA leadership had won an historic victory. The emergence of the nationalist working class made the Civil Rights movement far more dangerous for they would not stop at meaningless concessions.

The British Labour government began to put pressure on O'Neill to grant some concessions. Harold Wilson did not care about the rights of the nationalist people - Labour and Tory governments alike had ignored them for nearly fifty years - he simply did not want his own stinking backyard exposed to world view. O'Neill attempted to head off the movement with token concessions.

He failed. Whatever NICRA might accept, the nationalist working class wanted real change. Nothing that O'Neill could concede would satisfy them. At the same time anything that he conceded enraged the loyalist working class. O'Neill's dilemma reflected the reality of the statelet itself. Loyalist direct action escalated.

Paisley and his thugs, armed with clubs, prevented a civil rights march reaching its destination in Armagh. O'Neill appealed for support for his reforms. NICRA, terrified now by the force it had unwittingly unleashed, called a truce - no marches for a month.

Now the mainly student-based People's Democracy stepped into the limelight. They called a three-day-long march from Belfast to Derry in defiance of NICRA's truce. On 1 January 1969 80 marchers set out from Belfast.

They were constantly stoned and attacked by loyalist mobs. The RUC frequently diverted the march, sometimes directly into an ambush. The worst attack occurred at Burntollet, a few miles from Derry, on 4 January. Some 200 loyalists gathered armed with piles of stones, nail-studded coshes and iron bars. At least 100 were B Specials. The RUC watched the ambush being prepared. Marchers were brutally attacked, stoned and beaten, some were beaten unconscious, one nearly drowned.

When the bloodstained, battered and weary marchers reached Derry the nationalist workers' anger turned into determination that no longer would Catholics be beaten and brutalised. The people would defend themselves.

Battles broke out with the police. At 2am drunken RUC men rampaged into the Bogside. The people responded by barricading the area and establishing vigilante patrols. A radio transmitter was installed. Free Derry was born. The hated RUC were kept out of the Bogside for a week.

Already, however, the treacherous role of middle class nationalists was displayed. For it was John Hume, now leader of the bourgeois nationalist SDLP, and his ilk on the

Derry Citizens Action Committee who persuaded the people to take down the barricades. It was not the RUC but the bourgeois nationalists who ended the first brief existence of Free Derry.

O'Neill called an election in an attempt to strengthen his position. It failed. Eleven anti-O'Neill Unionists were elected and, on the nationalist side, Nationalist Party MP Eddie McAteer was beaten by Civil Rights candidate John Hume. O'Neill's days were numbered.

In April the RUC attacked the Bogside, beating one man to death. Fierce resistance broke out. At the same time explosions ascribed to the IRA but carried out by the UVF took place.

LABOUR DEFENDS THE LOYALIST STATE

The nationalist working class were ready to go all the way to abolish discrimination and privilege and were willing to confront the state to do so. The Labour government, desperate to avoid further confrontation which would threaten the statelet itself, put more pressure on Stormont.

In May, after a meeting between O'Neill's successor, Chichester-Clark, and Wilson, it was announced that local elections would be held under 'one man, one vote'. NICRA's leadership again called a halt to marches. But it was far too late. Nationalists were not so easily appeased. Free Derry had given them a taste of freedom and their appetite for more had grown.

Ardoyne, in North Belfast saw fierce battles with the RUC. On 12 July the triumphalist Orange parade in Derry was stoned. Bogsiders fought the RUC for three days. The RUC shot and wounded two nationalists.

On 2 August the residents of the nationalist Unity Flats in Belfast protested against yet another Orange march and fought loyalist mobs for three days. The RUC attacked and elderly Patrick Corry was beaten to death in an RUC barracks.

On 12 August the loyalist Apprentice Boys' parade in Derry was stoned. The RUC attacked the Bogside. This time the people were prepared. Barricades went up. The youths took to the roofs of the Rossville Flats overlooking the entrance to the Bogside. They hurled thousands of

petrol bombs at the RUC. A full scale insurrection had begun. By 14 August the RUC were beaten.

It was then, and only then, that the Labour government sent in British troops to do what they had done all over the world: defend a British colony under threat. The troops were not sent in to defend the Catholics; the Catholics were defending themselves. The troops were there to replace the defeated RUC. That is why they were first sent to Derry.

In Belfast loyalist mobs, including B Specials, were allowed to mount a pogrom. Six people were killed and hundreds injured. One thousand Catholics were driven out of their homes, many having been burned out.

British troops were only sent into Belfast after the pogrom and after the Derry insurrection had been contained. The real priorities of the Labour government could not have been clearer. The intervention and the deployment of British troops by the Labour government proved that behind the RUC stood the British army, behind Stormont stood Westminster.

WHO STOOD WITH THE PEOPLE?

The IRA, traditional defenders of the nationalist people, failed the test of the times: it was not prepared to defend the nationalist minority. Heavily influenced by the Irish Communist Party, the IRA leadership had adopted a bourgeois nationalist strategy: first reform the Six County statelet; then unite the Catholic and Protestant working class; then, some time in a vague and distant future, campaign for a united Ireland. In pursuit of this fantasy, they wanted to participate in the Stormont, Leinster House and Westminster parliaments and gradually ran down the IRA's military capacity.

This bourgeois nationalist standpoint led to the IRA co-operating with the middle class leadership of NICRA. Years later, Tomas Mac Giolla, then President of Sinn Fein, explained the official IRA strategy: 'The objective was to avoid military confrontation and to avoid any appearance of sectarianism.'

Those who were to form the Provisional IRA argued that the Civil Rights movement would necessarily have to confront the statelet; that British imperialism would be forced

How did the British left respond? Like the Officials, the British left believed that the Six County statelet was reformable. *Socialist Worker*, 18 September 1969, declared that Britain wanted 'a united capitalist Ireland subjected as a whole to the domination of British capital...' (emphasis in the original) and that the Ulster police state' was 'an embarrassment and an obstacle' to this goal. Quite why British governments had never done anything about this obstacle they did not explain.

All of the British left shared this view which amounted to a belief that imperialism could play a progressive role. When the Labour government sent its armed forces in to prop up the loyalist state, most of the left hailed this as a progressive move.

'A slaughter would have followed... if the Labour Government had not intervened with British troops,' said the Militant Tendency (*Militant*, September 1969). The Socialist Workers Party said that because 'the troops do not have the ingrained hatreds of the RUC and Specials, they will not behave with the same viciousness...' (*Socialist Worker*, 21 August 1969) and that to 'say that the immediate enemy in Ulster' was 'the British troops is incorrect.' (*Socialist Worker*, 18 September 1969). The Communist Party of Great Britain had long been calling for British intervention and was, therefore, quite satisfied.

Like the bourgeois nationalists in Ireland, the middle class socialists in Britain when put to the test failed. Ever since they have sought to create some middle ground between the violent struggle of the nationalist people for self-determination and the violent repression meted out by British imperialism. The *Time to go* campaign is only the latest of a long line of such efforts.

'FROM CIVIL RIGHTS TO NATIONAL RIGHTS'

This was the slogan on the banner that led the 1978 tenth anniversary commemoration of the first Coalisland to Dungannon Civil Rights march. The escalation of the civil rights campaign into a direct and violent struggle for reunification and self-determination was inevitable.

Although the demands of the Civil

'... a colonial power does not send its army to hurry up social reforms.'

Sean Mac Stiofain
Chief of Staff
Irish Republican Army
1969-72



COLMAN DOYLE



to intervene; that the statelet was irreformable; that revolutionary force would have to be used to defend the nationalist people first against the Stormont forces and later against British troops. They were right. In the succeeding years the Provisionals were to become the dominant force in the liberation struggle while the Officials (as the revisionists were first known) were to become the now openly anti-republican pro-imperialist Workers Party.

We have already seen the role played by the bourgeois nationalists in the form of John Hume and company. Their aim, then as now, was not to destroy privilege but to win a greater share in the spoils for the Catholic middle class. Then as now they sought, increasingly desperately, to convince the nationalist working class that reform is possible through constitutional means. That is why they support the Anglo-Irish agreement. Their recent talks with Sinn Fein are aimed at drawing the Republican movement down the same path.

Rights movement have been formally met, the nationalist people know that nothing will really change unless and until British imperialism is driven out of Ireland. The British state has perfected a machine of repression which includes: internment, torture, Bloody Sunday, the withdrawal of special category status leading to the murder of ten POWs in 1981, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the establishment of the Diplock non-jury courts, the building of the H Blocks, systematic torture of suspects, shoot-to-kill operations: the list is virtually endless.

The process begun by the Civil Rights movement can only end in victory for the Irish people or for British imperialism. The task facing the working class in Britain is to build a solidarity movement unconditionally committed to the right of self-determination which alone could help to tip the balance in favour of the nationalist people. Such a movement is the only acceptable way to commemorate the historic events of 1968. ■



A Palestinian militant speaks

Naif is a Palestinian activist who recently returned from Palestine. He came to Viraj's sanctuary to express solidarity. Eddie Abrahams and Viraj Mendis spoke to him. The discussion centred on the conditions of Palestinians in Israel.



POPPERFOTO

THEFT OF PALESTINIAN LAND

Israel is an apartheid state. Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories are subjected to systematic discrimination. Naif said the major form of discrimination is land confiscation. 'They have confiscated 90% of our land. As well as individual property being confiscated, the Zionists also confiscated land which had been donated to the Mosques for the benefit of the community.'

Arabs can sell land to the government but they cannot buy it. It is prohibited for any Arab, even though they are citizens of Israel to buy any land. But it is legal for any Jewish person even if they are not citizens or if they are from the USA or Britain to buy land in Israel.

Ten per cent of Palestinians living in Israel are refugees, so called internal refugees. Their land was stolen by trickery and violence. For example whole village populations were told to relocate temporarily to other villages. They have never been allowed to return. In the 1950s they appealed to the High Court and won their claims. But the Israeli army sent in its planes and destroyed all the houses in the villages because the nearby Kibbutz wanted their land. Now the Kibbutz is using the land.'

EVERYDAY DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PALESTINIANS

'If you look at job advertisements in newspapers they all demand that you must have done your military service. This means no Palestinians. Palestinians are not allowed to do military service in Israel.'

A Jewish family with three children gets as much social security as an



Arab family with five. Under Israeli law every handicapped child from the ages of 1-4 is supposed to be cared for in an institution. But there are none for Arab children. In all Jewish schools you have dentists. In Arab schools you don't. To get a dentist for a school you have to supply the first year's budget yourself. Only then are you entitled to get government funding for subsequent years. But Arab schools cannot afford even the bud-

get for the first year.

You know that Palestinians from the occupied territories come every day to work in Israel. They come to special places where Jewish employers test people's muscles and pick out the workers they want. These places are known literally in Hebrew as the "slave market".

CONSTANT HARASSMENT AND HUMILIATION

'I look like a Palestinian. Every time I get to a check point the police stop me and force me to produce my identity card, put my hands up and be searched. If you look like an Arab you are constantly harassed in this way, humiliated in front of everybody.'

In Israel, if you are a Palestinian you cannot leave your house without your identity card. I remember once I was just outside my house without my card. The army came and demanded to see my card. I said look this is my house. They still arrested me and took me to the police station. They then asked me report to another station 40 miles away on the following morning at 6am. Otherwise they would consider me a 'missing person'. This means someone who is fleeing or has fled to a hostile coun-

try and can therefore be shot on the spot. I went the following day. They didn't even look at my card. They smiled at me and told me to go.'

THE LEFT IN ISRAEL

Every time there is a major uprising in Palestine or tremendous resistance to Zionist aggression, as for example in the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, the Israeli left wing 'peace movement' organises demonstrations and protests against government policy. Naif advised us to beware of these movements. 'There are two categories of left in Israel. First are the most well known - Peace Now and the Civil Rights Movement. These are left wing Zionists and are no better than the right wing Zionists. They care only for the interests of Israel. They think only in terms of what is in Israel's interests. Recently a leader of RATS said on BBC TV that "If the Arabs are stupid we can't help it. We shouldn't allow their stupidity to dictate our lives."'

The second category are the anti-Zionist Jews, but they are very tiny in numbers. They have good ideas but are very very tiny.

I went to a meeting organised by Jewish leftists in Israel who opposed the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. But only because it corrupts them, not because of what is happening to the Palestinians. A Palestinian woman from the West Bank came to speak. She gave an account of the Israeli harassment and intimidation. But not one reacted to this. The only question the audience asked is "why doesn't the PLO recognise Israel because you have to give us some support in Israel." She replied well saying "We are doing our work. This is your work you have to do it." The Israeli leftists are more concerned with the security of Israel than the rights of the Palestinian people.'

THE JEWISH WORKING CLASS

'Within the framework of Zionism there can be no co-operation between the Jewish and Arab working class. And that is for one basic reason - some of the profits from the Zionist exploitation and oppression of the Palestinians is given to the Jewish working class. Since 1967 there has been a huge upward mobility of the Jewish working class. Many of them don't do hard physical labour anymore. These jobs are done by Arabs, while the Jewish workers work as supervisors, skilled workers or technicians.'

Even the conditions for oriental Jews, once discriminated against, have improved. They have benefited from the occupation and the exploitation of Palestinians inside Israel. The keenest supporters of right wing

Zionism are within the working class. Most of Likud's supporters come from the Oriental Jews. It is they who brought Begin to power. They are also the most anti-Arab. The leftist groups are by and large supported by the middle classes.'

BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND THE LABOUR PARTY

'Most Palestinians still know that it was the British government who gave our land to the Zionists. They still remember the Balfour declaration. They remember how a foreign government came to our land and gave it away without asking us our opinion.'

Most Palestinians I know think that some of the positions and statements of the Conservative Party are far better than statements from the Labour Party. When Kinnock came to the West Bank he didn't have anything to say but to advise the Israelis not to leave the Golan Heights. David Mellor was more challenging to the Israeli authorities on human rights for the Palestinians than Kinnock. The Labour Party spokesman on foreign affairs, Kaufman, is a Zionist and he is proud to be a Zionist. The people have a very hard feeling especially about the Labour Party in Britain.

I remember once we were watching TV pictures of people in Ireland throwing stones at British army vehicles. A very very old woman said there seems to be trouble everywhere. When we explained to her that this was the people in Ireland fighting against the British occupation she said yes, the British are the cause of trouble everywhere in the world. Many people in Palestine feel sympathy for the IRA and in South Africa.'

THE UPRISING

'Unfortunately I was not able to travel freely into the Gaza Strip and West Bank. As you know these have been sealed off to Palestinians from Israel. They have also cut telephone links between the occupied territories and the outside world. However I did manage to get into a rich area of Jerusalem. And even here there were the slogans and barricades of the uprising.'

One definite result of the uprising is that it has destroyed the arrogance, contempt and confidence of the Israelis. They cannot anymore come into the West Bank thinking that this is their land. They cannot go around and treat Palestinians as animals. Once they used to go around as they wished. That too has stopped.

The uprising will continue until victory. We tried every type of solution and we have not got any results yet. We have no choice but to continue the uprising.'

Israelis step-up repression - Hussein abandons the West Bank

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

Whilst news from Palestine was dominated by King Hussein's abandonment of all Jordanian claims on the Israeli occupied West Bank, the Zionists significantly escalated repression against the uprising now entering its tenth month.

The targets of repression are all forms of Palestinian political organisation, and in particular the network of popular committees created during the uprising. These exist in every town, neighbourhood, village and refugee camp. They organise food distribution, medical aid and defence. They deal with collaborators and scabs and keep a watch on Israeli troop movements. Working under direction from the United National Leadership for the Uprising, the popular committees represent the first forms of dual power, the beginnings of an alternative, Palestinian state apparatus to challenge Zionism.

Zionism cannot co-exist with organisations of people's power. So in the week beginning 15 August it banned all popular committees. Now association with or membership of a committee carries a ten year prison term. Simultaneously, 250 alleged leaders of these committees have been arrested and 25 of them are to be deported. Then at the end of August, the Palestinian Federation of Charitable Associations was closed down and the offices of seven professional associations were also sealed.

Meanwhile the brutality and killing continues with the death toll now standing at over 343, with thousands more injured, maimed and detained in desert concentration camps. Unofficial terror has also been unleashed against Palestinians. In a particularly vicious incident, Zionists burnt to death three Palestinian labourers sleeping in an Israeli slum house. In the West Bank settler attacks on Palestinians are increasing and the call for the expulsion of the entire

Palestinian population is echoing across the Zionist settlements.

The Zionist attack on the popular committees followed King Hussein's move on the West Bank which gave a great impetus to the development of Palestinian organisation. In his 31 July speech, Hussein relinquished Jordanian authority and jurisdiction over the West Bank which was occupied by Israel in 1967. He followed this by dissolving the lower house of the National Assembly half of whose seats are held by West Bankers, ending salary payments to nearly 24,000 Palestinian civil servants, cancelling a \$1.3bn five year development plan for the West Bank and withdrawing Jordanian citizenship from its inhabitants. Inevitably, the popular movement, the uprising leadership and the external PLO leadership strove to replace the King's administrative apparatus with their own. This prospect Zionism could not tolerate.

Hussein's motives for washing his

hands of the West Bank have been the subject of endless speculation. He claimed it to be an expression of his support for the uprising and his recognition of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The reality is totally different.

The reactionary Arab ruling class and regimes, including Jordan's, were forced, at risk of popular revolt against them to give at least lip service support to the uprising. However, the strength and development of people's power on the West Bank presented Hussein with a particular problem. 60% of Jordan's population is Palestinian and it was becoming increasingly difficult for Hussein to even pretend support for the uprising, people's power and self-determination for Palestinians on the West Bank while denying them to the people in Jordan itself. Furthermore, the popular committees, already a challenge to Zionism would inevitably be seen as a model for the people of Jor-

dan too and indeed beyond. Hussein had no choice but to break all connections with the West Bank and insist that Jordan and Palestine had nothing in common. Hussein's aim is to isolate Jordan from the political developments on the West Bank.

With the uprising continuing unabated despite Zionist repression, the PLO is preparing for an extraordinary session of the Palestine National Council (PNC - the equivalent of a Palestinian Parliament). It will take stock of the uprising and discuss the implications of Hussein's moves. Included in its considerations will be a discussion about the possibility of establishing a government in exile or a provisional government. These steps could have major implications for the Palestinian resistance which will become evident after the PNC. Meanwhile the popular masses continue to sustain the most outstanding challenge Zionism has ever faced to its racist rule. ■

Mass uprising shakes Burma

TREVOR RAYNE

The biggest demonstrations since the anti-British colonialism protests of the 1930s have forced Burma's military government into retreat. Guns and thousands dead have failed to bow the people; civil administration has collapsed in many areas, and hundreds of thousands of demonstrators are demanding democratic rights. Large areas of Burma's eastern border have long been controlled by the Burmese Communist Party and Karenni nationalists. Now the state may fall.

The trigger for the current rising was the removal from legal tender of sixty per cent of the cash in circulation last September, and the government's abandonment of its official monopoly in trading rice, beans and meats. These measures conformed with Japanese government and banking demands if loans and aid were to be released. They pushed many of Burma's 38 million people to the brink of starvation and onto the streets.

General Ne Win, chairman of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) and head of the government, resigned on 23 July. His successor, General Sein Lwin, lasted until 12 August, but not before estimates of up to a thousand demonstrators had been killed in the capital Rangoon, and forty people suffocated to death while under arrest in the back of a police van.

Lwin's successor, Maung Maung, a London-trained lawyer, announced that the BSPP would convene on 12 September to discuss a referendum introducing a multi-party system. The removal of a succession of figureheads heartened the protests until they spread through thirty towns and cities, drawing workers and middle classes around the student and urban youth core, and bringing a third of the population onto the streets in Mandalay and over 300,000 in Rangoon.

BURMA'S 'SOCIALISM'

Ne Win's Burma was no more socialist than Forbes Burnham's Guyana or Bourguiba's Tunisia, both of which claimed the title. Influenced by British

Fabianism and Burmese nationalism, Ne Win nationalised Indian and Chinese businesses, a legacy of British rule, when he seized power in 1962. He filled the BSPP with recruits from the army and gave retired officers senior positions in corporate and civil administration. The party, the army and the administration became platforms for Burmese 'cronyism'. The non-aligned foreign policy adopted reflects Burma's geographical position between India and China, and this in turn steered the military away from being absorbed by international capital in the 1960s when the USA was openly at war in Indo-China.

The BSPP's 'Burmese Way to Socialism' involved low cost peasant production of goods to be exported by the state for profit and investment. Unofficial markets with higher prices flourished and world commodity prices for rice and teak, Burma's principle exports, fell. Debt repayments now account for 60-80 per cent of export earnings, foreign debt having grown by 50 per cent to \$4.5 billion during 1984-87. With the debt repayments and drop in export earnings came a halving of imports leading to shortages in fuel and spare parts and the virtual collapse of the distributive system.

Japan provides over half of Burma's aid, and is insisting on entry into Burma's economy in exchange for further loans and aid. Japanese imperialism intends to penetrate where US capital failed.

Thus far the publicly visible leaders of the opposition League for Democracy and Peace favour an opening to international capitalism, and might seek an alliance with the Japanese government to ease them into power. However, an underground network co-ordinating the protests exists. What its leadership wants is freedom from poverty and oppression: Japanese capitalists do not trade in that. More significantly still, the rising in Burma corresponds with rising expectations and growing political confidence of the masses in the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions as evidenced by Tamil Eelam, Philippines and South Korea. ■



South Korean students demonstrate for the unity of Korea. Special police squads for the 'militarised' olympics.



No games for the people

While the whole world looks to Korea for this month's Seoul Olympics, half of the Koreans themselves will be excluded from any part in the event. The absence of the north Koreans and two of their closest friends, Cuba and Ethiopia, underlines a tragic fact - Korea, one of the oldest countries in the world, remains divided - cut in two by a line drawn by US imperialism. JONATHAN COHEN reports.

Since the Games were allocated to Seoul in 1981, Korea has seen dramatic changes. The south Korean rulers hoped to use the Olympics to raise their prestige, legitimising military rule and fixing south Korea in the world's eyes as a country in itself, separate from the north. They refused to accept proposals from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to co-host the Olympics or form a joint team, which is why the DPRK is not attending the Games.

However, democratic forces in south Korea were able to turn the Olympics to their advantage. A widespread movement of student-led demonstrations and workers' strikes grew up in 1986-87. With an eye to their international image, the rulers limited their use of brutal suppression.

The protests won the resignation of Chun Doo-hwan, who was replaced by another ex-general, Roh Tae-woo. The striking workers won large wage rises.

In June 1987 the regime gave in and allowed democratic reforms, including improved rights of workers to organise, and the release of some political prisoners. Roh intended to postpone presidential elections until after the Olympics (with the aim of cancelling them when the world's attention was no longer focused on Korea), but he was forced to hold them in the Autumn. Despite ballot rigging, Roh could only claim 36% of the vote, with which he defeated the divided opposition. In April this year the opposition parties gained a majority in elections to the National Assembly.

The student movement then turned its focus towards the question of reunification and getting US troops and nuclear weapons out of Korea. (There are no foreign troops in the north.) The students supported the DPRK requests to co-host the Olympics.

Twice, in June and August, thousands of south Korean students attempted to march to the border to meet with students from the north. The marchers were smashed by an army of riot police, using clubs and teargas, but exposed the fact that it is the southern rulers and their US masters who fear contacts between the people, and not the DPRK government.

The Roh regime was forced to make positive noises about reunification. So the Games will go ahead this month without the north. To give the world a good impression, slums have been hidden out of sight behind high walls, and poor street traders will be banished from the scene while bigger businesses rake in the tourist money.

When the Olympics are over, the Koreans can look forward to broken promises and renewed repression, but the workers and democrats will fight hard to advance the reforms won and for reunification. ■

IRAQ - IRAN WAR

Cease-fire after eight years

ANDY PACEY

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! welcomes the ceasefire in the reactionary Iraq-Iran war. For the regimes of Ayatollah Khomeini and President Saddam Hussein, however, the ceasefire is a double edged sword. Whilst the war wrecked both countries' economies, politically it diverted attention away from internal political divisions and the ailing economy.

The complete aboutface leaves the Iranian mullahs with many awkward questions to answer. It is abundantly clear to most Iranians that the ceasefire was accepted because of a virtual military collapse. Iran is agreeing to a ceasefire under duress and in a position no better than when it drove the Iraqis out of Iran 6 years ago. It is not surprising that Iranians are question-

ing whether the last 6 years of war, with nearly a million killed, 630,000 permanently disabled and the economic deprivation, could all have been avoided. The supposed infallibility of the Ayatollah now looks like a case of the emperor wearing no clothes.

The ending of the war is unlikely to bring lasting stability to Iraq. President Hussein has used the war to build a hold over a shaky coalition of forces but the situation could now deteriorate into the virtual civil war which existed before the invasion of Iran. The regime's biggest threat lies in the Kurdish minority, making up 25% of the population, who are fighting for an independent homeland (see recent FRFIs). A Kurdish Democratic Party representative reported an end-of-August Iraqi offensive using 60,000 troops, helicopter gunship and poison gas bombs against Kurdish held territory. Over 1,300

Kurds have been killed in chemical attacks during August.

For the warmongers in Washington and London the ceasefire has immediate benefits. The tanker war, initiated by Iraq, gave an excuse for the massive build up of US and NATO forces in the Gulf. The imperialists will now want to keep this presence to defend their oil supplies. The virtual defeat of Iran accelerated by a combination of an imperialist orchestrated arms embargo on Iran and the massive US military offensive this year will force the Iranian leadership into cooperation with international capital: engineering and construction corporations are queuing up to follow the trail of destruction left by the arms merchants. Meanwhile, Hussein, his confidence boosted by the US intervention, is stalling the negotiations and committing genocide against the Kurds. ■

THIS IS SRI LANKA

TREVOR RAYNE

During July 147 Indian soldiers were reported killed by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. In the same month Indian forces killed 48 Tamils and made a further 4,000 homeless after shelling in the Killinochi district.

On 18 August Agence France-Presse news agency reported the capture of 300 LTTE in the Wannu forest by Indian troops. In fact over 200 innocent males were rounded up from their villages, placed in trucks and taken to Indian Army camps.

Also in August 85-year-old Roman Catholic priest Father Ponniah was murdered by Indian soldiers in the Batticaloa district.

The Indian government has once again said that elections can be held in the Tamil north and east provinces and once again given no date. LTTE are again operating in 7 of the 8 districts in Tamil areas and are recruit-

ing for the resistance war. No free or fair elections are possible in either the north or south of the island.

Quote of the month from Jayewardene: 'No one knows how the people think. I have been in politics for the past 50 years and I am no better in this respect than when I started'.

Some 130 JVP 'suspects' were arrested on 26 July for 'subversive activities'.

On 31 July the RCG, City Group, VMDC, WRP-News Line and the Marxist Party joined the Tamil community in London demonstrating against Indian atrocities and in support of the LTTE. A speaker from the RCG brought greetings from Viraj Mendis and condemned the British left for failing to support the Tamil people and for allowing the military imposed news cordon to hide from the world the massacre of a nation. Victory to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. ■

The imperialists will use the process of self-criticism going on in the Soviet Union to discredit it and all it has accomplished. That is to be expected. There are others, so-called socialists, who will only be concerned to use it as a means to promote their own narrow opportunist political dogma. The Eurocommunist wing of the CPGB see Gorbachev's programme as the ideological counterpart and historical justification for their own 'new realism'. The Socialist Workers Party, and other trotskyst organisations, use it as a means to justify their continuing support of every kind of reactionary opposition in the socialist countries themselves. The communist movement has nothing to gain from any of these currents.

A COMMUNIST APPROACH

Fidel Castro has shown us the communist approach. Cuba itself began carrying out a process of 'rectification' to overcome its difficulties, mistakes and 'negative tendencies' about the same time as the Soviet Union began perestroika. The measures it has taken are not the same as the Soviet Union and Cuba has specifically rejected 'mechanically copying' the same solutions as the Soviet Union or other socialist countries. But this does not alter the fact, as Castro says, that 'we not only wish but need the socialist countries to succeed in their efforts to overcome their difficulties'. Castro goes on:

'I believe that socialism has accomplished extraordinary things - what the Soviet Union did has no precedent, what the Soviet people did has no precedent, starting with the Great October Revolution; their resistance against generalised invasion by all the capitalist countries following World War I; their industrialisation; their resistance against fascism; the 20 million lives lost in saving socialism and saving humanity from fascism; a country that had hardly been constructed when it was destroyed and they rebuilt it again; a country that has achieved nuclear parity with imperialism, an incredible feat; a country whose space ships are right now headed for the satellites of Mars. We're familiar with their successes. That more can be achieved? Yes, that's true. That we must try to do better? Of course. But we do not deny nor will we ever permit others to deny the colossal successes achieved by socialism.' (Granma 7 August 1988)

This is the spirit in which *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* has opened its pages to an analysis and discussion and, indeed, criticism, of the unfolding events taking place in the Soviet Union. This is also the context in which I feel it necessary to raise a number of criticisms of Patrick Newman's three articles on Mikhail Gorbachev's Report on the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution (November 1987) which appeared in *FRFI* 4-76.

While I would agree with the broad positions reached by comrade Newman in the first two articles 'Class war and collectivisation' and 'The Soviet Union in the twenties and thirties - was there an alternative?', I take issue with his overall approach. The political weaknesses in his approach are really exposed in the last article 'The Soviet Union versus imperialism'.

It has been clear for a period of time that major political struggles are taking place within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) around perestroika and the accompanying process of glasnost. Gorbachev's speeches have reflected not just his own political views but also the political strength of different currents within the party as the struggle to implement perestroika has taken place. While the conflicting standpoints became much clearer and sharper during the 19th All Union Party Conference in June/July this



Soviet troops leave Afghanistan

SOCIALISM AND IMPERIALISM:

THE LIMITS OF CO-EXISTENCE

The dramatic events unfolding in the Soviet Union offer a unique opportunity to reassess what is, in fact, the very short history of socialism. It is an opportunity to learn crucial lessons and, yes, to voice criticism, but only as a means to strengthen the communist movement. DAVID REED replies to Patrick Newman's series on Gorbachev's 70th Anniversary speech.

year, they were certainly discernible much earlier. It is comrade Newman's failure to examine Gorbachev's 70th Anniversary speech from the standpoint of present day political struggles that freezes the political debate in a context long superseded: Stalin vs Trotsky.

It is precisely his one-sided (undialectical) approach to historical questions that prevents comrade Newman understanding the significance of Gorbachev calling the achievements of the party and Soviet people under Stalin '... a labour exploit of epoch-making significance', while arguing that the wholesale repressive measures, the acts of lawlessness were unforgivable, 'real crimes stemming from an abuse of power' (*FRFI* 74, Gorbachev pp22, 26). And, in particular, Gorbachev argues that any attempts to justify the lawlessness by political needs or international tension are wrong (*Perestroika* pp 106-7).

Gorbachev is concerned to resolve the dangerous economic and social crisis facing the Soviet Union today and argues that the difficulties facing the party and the country are rooted in the system created by Stalin and carried on through the Brezhnev years. A truthful analysis of the historical past is part of the political struggle today. It 'must help us solve today's problems of democratisation, legality, openness, overcoming bureaucracy, in short, the vital problems of perestroika...' (*Gorbachev* p27). Wherever we stand in relation to present day political conflicts, as communists we cannot 'idealise' or 'freeze' the past but must use it to draw lessons, to show its relevance for the political struggle today.

A NEW CONCEPT OF FOREIGN POLICY

Comrade Newman's third article on Soviet foreign policy has an immediacy absent from his other articles. That is why it so clearly highlights the political weakness in his overall approach. We can, at least, appreciate

the comment made by one of his critics, Mike Webber, when he argues that the third article represents 'a dangerous idealisation of the most conservative and demoralised elements of the Soviet leadership in foreign policy questions' (*FRFI* 77). In justifying each and every turn of Soviet foreign policy comrade Newman is forced to overstate the strength of the renewed imperialist offensive, while underestimating the fighting capacity of the national liberation movements. Cuba's exemplary internationalist role in Angola (yes, with Soviet financial support) has demonstrated in the last few months how the imperialist offensive can not only be contained, but also be pushed back.



Mikhail Gorbachev

In the third article comrade Newman's overall political weakness is compounded by his failure even to tell us in any detail what is Gorbachev's 'new concept of foreign policy'. Gorbachev argues that his new policy is a development of Lenin's 'policy of learning and mastering the art of long-term "existence, side by side," with [the capitalist states]'. Comrade Newman is clearly aware that Gorbachev has given a partial, one-sided and therefore incorrect statement of Lenin's position but refuses to discuss this fact directly. He prefers to tell us much later in his article that 'one of the cornerstones of Soviet foreign policy as formulated by Lenin (the utilisation of disagreements between

foreign powers *CW31* p476) cannot bear much weight in the current period'.

LENIN AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Let us briefly examine Lenin's argument. First, as comrade Newman points out, during the Civil War (1917-21) the USSR was able to hold out against the capitalist states offensive 'because there was no unity amongst these powers'. In fact Lenin argued that there was 'a most deep-seated and ineradicable conflict of economic interests among the imperialist countries which, based on private property in land and capital, cannot but pursue a predatory policy which has stultified their efforts to unite their forces against the Soviets' (*CW31* p466). But there was also another equally important factor, not mentioned by comrade Newman, in the survival of the Soviet state. 'Domestic conditions have not allowed a single powerful capitalist state to hurl its army against Russia; this has been due to the revolution having matured within such countries, preventing them from overcoming us as quickly as they might have done' (*CW31* p412). And later in the same speech we 'have always said that our revolution would be victorious when it is supported by the workers in all lands. In fact, they went half-way in their support, for they weakened the hand raised against us, yet in doing so they were helping us' (*CW31* p414). It was these conditions which created the 'breathing space' in which the Soviet Union won 'the right to [its] fundamental international existence in the network of capitalist states' (*CW31* p412). There was a crucial connection between the Soviet state surviving and the degree of revolutionary ferment among the working class in the capitalist states.

GORBACHEV AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Gorbachev's view differs fundamen-

tally from Lenin's. In a nuclear age, he argues, peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems cannot be viewed as a 'specific form of class struggle'. Clausewitz's dictum that war is the continuation of policy only by different means is hopelessly out of date (*Perestroika* pp147, 141). Gorbachev is clearly preempting any arguments along the lines that Lenin had said, for example, that the policy of economic concessions to foreign capitalists was a 'continuation of war in another form' (*CW31* p464). According to Gorbachev there is now an objective limit to class confrontation in the international arena (*Perestroika* p146).

Gorbachev in the course of his 70th Anniversary Report asks three questions. 1. Is it possible to influence the nature of imperialism and block its more dangerous manifestations? 2. Can capitalism get rid of militarism and function and develop in the economic sphere without it? 3. Can the capitalist system do without neo-colonialism which is currently one of the factors essential to its survival? His answer to all these questions is a qualified yes (*Gorbachev* pp62-71). The decisive factor in determining this is the 'interrelated, interdependent and integral' nature of the contemporary world forced to come to terms with human survival in a nuclear age. Far from sharing Lenin's view of imperialism, of peaceful coexistence, of the basis for Soviet foreign policy, Gorbachev's standpoint starts from the possibility of a non-militaristic, non-predatory imperialism coming into existence, and forced to compete peacefully with the socialist countries. 'The backbone of the new way of thinking is the recognition of the priority of human values, or to be more precise, of human kind's survival' (*Perestroika* p146).

Comrade Newman tells us nothing of this. 'It would be pointless to "criticise" Gorbachev's speech "ideologically"' he says. But how else can you begin to argue against Gorbachev's position that 'the time of the Communist International, the information bureau, even the time of binding international conferences is over'. Or his view that 'the impulse for national liberation is waning...'. And his argument that 'international relations, without losing their class character are increasingly coming to be precisely relations between nations.' (*Gorbachev* pp73, 69, 75).

There is a pressure to adapt Soviet foreign policy in order to allow resources to be switched from military expenditure to peaceful construction, for perestroika. Gorbachev's arguments are part of the debate, of the political struggle taking place today in the CPSU about the relationship between perestroika and Soviet foreign policy.

Clearly there are differences of view within the CPSU. For example, Ligachev, in a recent speech, placed a quite different emphasis to Gorbachev on class relations and foreign policy. 'Class plays a particularly significant role in international relations. This is of fundamental importance. Any other way of putting this matter introduces confusion into the consciousness of our people and friends abroad. Active involvement in the solution of general human problems, and primarily in the struggle against the nuclear threat, by no means signifies any artificial braking of the social and national struggle - the national liberation struggle' (from *The Guardian* 15 August 1988). These are vital questions for communists to assess and discuss. Unfortunately in his rush to justify Soviet foreign policy comrade Newman failed to bring these issues to our attention.

References

Gorbachev refers to his speech to mark the 70th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.
Novosti Press Agency Moscow 1987.
Perestroika refers to his book of the same title published by Collins 1987.

Repression continues



LONG LARTIN REVOLUTIONARY PRISONERS' NUCLEUS

On 18 July a prisoner on 'A' wing was disciplined for being exactly one minute late in getting back to his cell for final lock-up after evening 'free association'. The following day most of the other prisoners on the same cell landing banged on their doors in protest and retaliation when the screws were routinely late in unlocking the cells for 'free association' period.

The reaction of the administration was to lock the entire wing down for an entire afternoon and carry out a search of every single prisoner's cell; the excuse was the usual one: 'information' had allegedly been received concerning the existence of a homemade knife somewhere on the wing. Predictably, no knife was found, but in the process of the cells being searched, prisoners' personal property was either damaged or 'confiscated'. One prisoner was placed in solitary for allegedly being in possession of cannabis.

On the day following the mass search, 20 July, a large number of prisoners on 'A' wing asked to see the prison governor, Joe Whitty, in order to complain about the nature of the cell searches. Some of them were taken quietly aside by the wing Assistant Governor, Gerry Retharidge, and warned about 'supporting the cause' of a 'gang of trouble-makers' on the wing. All were informed that Joe Whitty would see them the following day.

At 7.30am on 21 July a heavy mob of screws quietly entered the wing and unlocked the cells of Paul Hill and Tony Millbanks, ordering them to pack their possessions together and prepare for a transfer. Millbanks was taken to the segregation unit and Paul Hill moved out of the prison completely. During the course of the morning two other prisoners, Gary Connerly and Vincent Hicky, were placed in the segregation unit. Seven other prisoners were individually summoned to Retharidge's office and threatened with transfers to Dartmoor or Wakefield if 'the nonsense' contin-

ued. He boasted of the 'complete authority' vested in him by Whitty to destroy the resistance of militant prisoners on the wing, and told one prisoner, Peter O'Neil, that he wasn't at all concerned about the human rights at issue in locking prisoners down in solitary on Rule 43b or transferring them to the most inaccessible parts of the country - 'you can petition the Home Office all you want' was his smug refrain. John Bowden was summoned to Retharidge's office also and warned about his 'elusive role' in 'instigating trouble'. Not one prisoner, including those placed in solitary or moved, was confronted with hard evidence of their having actually done anything.

The handling of a dispute with prisoners employed in the laundry here serves to underline this approach. On 15 July Whitty issued an order denying prisoners in the laundry their statutory right of one hour's exercise a day; in the interests of greater productivity laundry workers would no longer receive any exercise at all. The prisoners involved then applied to see Whitty and were told that he was 'not available'. A machine in the laundry was then secretly sabotaged, and two prisoners, John Ward and Jimmy Northway, were selected quite randomly as the culprits and 'ghosted' elsewhere. On 10/74 'lay down'. That same day Whitty summoned all the laundry workers before him and warned them that unless they 'policed' the laundry on behalf of the screws he would ensure that it was overpoliced by the screws themselves. As if to emphasise the point a gang of screws stood threateningly around the laundry for the following few days. Whitty was not prepared to discuss with the prisoners the question of their statutory right to exercise.

In accordance with the general trend towards greater repression and denial of rights throughout the entire long-term prison system Long Lartin is rapidly becoming just another sophisticated concentration camp, designed to break spirits and brutalise the most oppressed and marginalised into unquestioning conformity. ■

Woman on death row

NICKI JAMESON

Paula Cooper is an 18-year-old black woman who has been on deathrow in Indiana Women's prison in the USA since she was 16. Derek Edwards, a prisoner in Britain's Frankland gaol, has written to FRFI to ask for support in the campaign for justice for Paula.

Derek writes: 'Paula Cooper was just 16-years-old when she was sentenced to death for the murder of a retired school teacher. This crime was committed with 3 other girls, none of

whom were sentenced to death. The trial judge had never passed a death sentence on anyone before and it is widely suspected that he acted because of political pressure.'

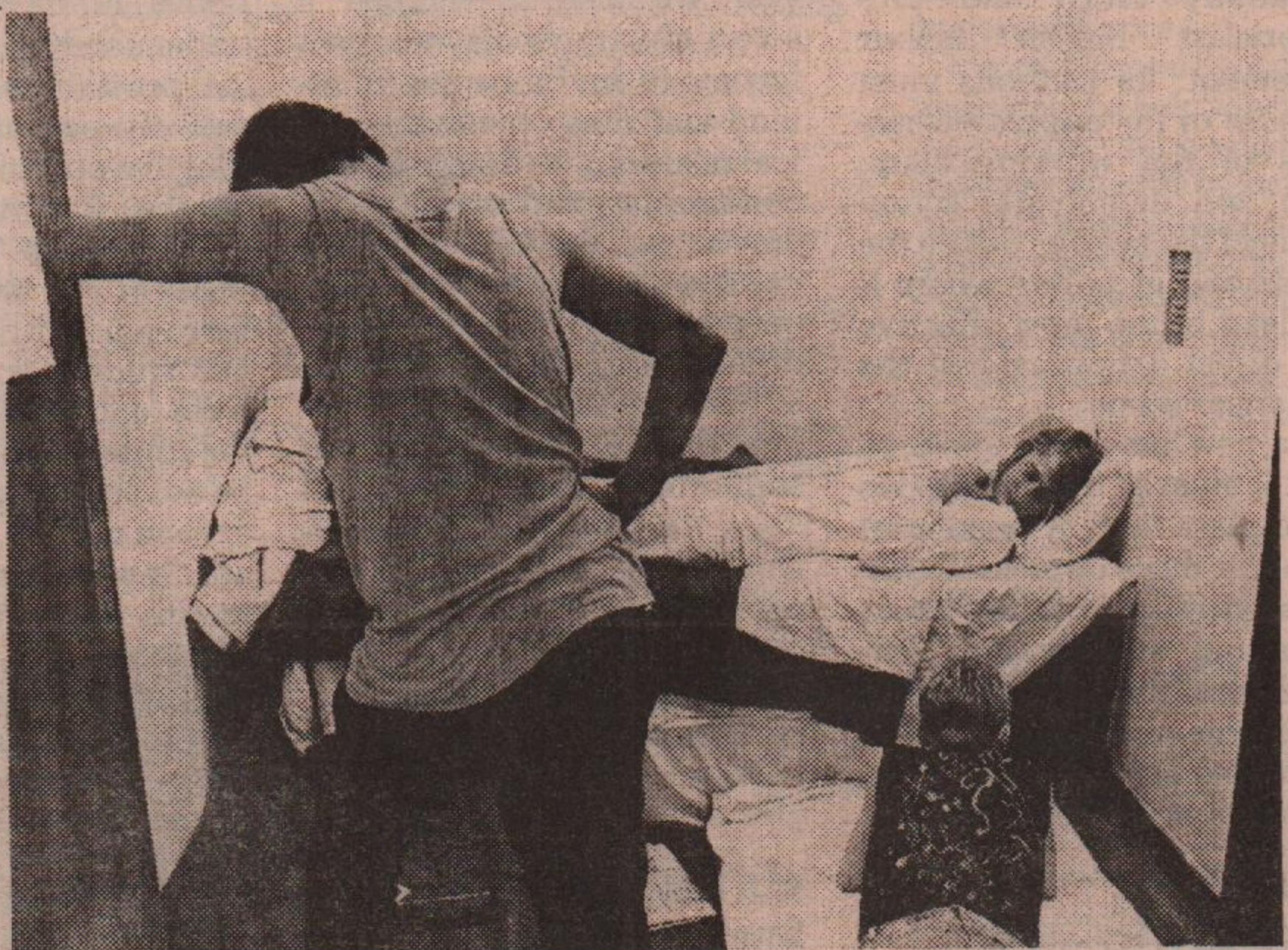
Derek is in regular correspondence with Paula and we ask readers to send messages of support both to him and directly to Paula.

Derek Goronwy Edwards G73557
HMP Frankland, Brassside, Durham
DH1 5YD.

Paula Cooper
Indiana Women's Prison, 401 North
Randolph Street, Indiana 46201,
USA. ■

Screws turn

As we go to press 280 Holloway prison officers remain on strike after more than five weeks. Industrial action has spread to a fluctuating number of other prisons, including refusing new admissions at Strangeways, Wandsworth, Norwich and others, and an overtime ban at Broadmoor. As usual, neither of the two sides in dispute, Home Office and Prison Officers Association (POA), gives a damn about the prisoners. TERRY O'HALLORAN reports.



The POA claim that Fresh Start (the Home Office plan to cut average overtime hours worked per officer from 16 to 8 by raising basic pay and revising staffing levels) arrangements are not being properly carried out and that prisons are understaffed. At Holloway they are demanding 12 extra staff and a minimum of three officers present whenever prisoners are unlocked. In pursuit of its campaign for more staff and more control over staffing decisions, the POA has laid claim to a 'moral' position of worrying about overcrowding and prison conditions.

The Home Office simply wants to run its ever-expanding prison system as cheaply as possible. The government's prison building programme now involves 26 new prisons, 21,000 extra places at a cost of £1.5 billion by 1995. This year alone £755m will be

spent on the prisons. The pressure will grow to cut running costs to the minimum. This is the essence of the dispute as both sides vie to put themselves into a position to control the process in their own favour.

The Home Office too is hypocritically claiming to worry about prisoners. Home Office Minister Douglas Hogg accused the POA of increasing the numbers held in police cells and said 'For prisoners to have to be kept in police cells must be wrong by any standards'. Whilst it is true that the number in police and court cells rose from 600 immediately before the dispute to nearly 1,300, it is also true that police cells have been in continual use for more than four years. In fact there were 1,536 in police cells in March, four months before the dispute began.

John Bartell, POA chair, has estab-

lished a 'liberal' image which bears no relation to the facts. He has done nothing to reduce staff brutalisation of prisoners; indeed he has, like his predecessors, denied that happens. He has nothing to say about the 30 prisoners on 23 hour lock-up for nearly a year in Peterhead, the 14 in isolation in Glenochil, the repressive regimes being instituted in Wakefield and Long Lartin, nor the unknown number condemned to 'seclusion' in Broadmoor by the overtime ban.

When Holloway prisoners said that life was better in Holloway without prison officers swarming all over them, 'liberal' Bartell replied 'Are we being asked to accept that prisoners should now advise the general public on how prisons should be run? Perish the thought.'

Holloway officers, despite having reached agreement with the Home Office, are demanding a full-scale cell search - ie a crackdown - before returning to work.

Staffing levels have risen in recent years. In 1986 there were 18,500 prison officers for 47,000 prisoners. Today there are 21,000 officers (up by 13% for 50,300 prisoners (up 7%). In other words, staff levels have risen faster than the prison population. The POA is also demanding ever more repressive regimes to justify ever higher staffing levels. In August Pentonville POA passed its fifth vote of no confidence in the governor on the ground that his regime was not repressive enough.

Prisoners have little interest in the details of this dispute or its settlement. Their priority, and ours, must be to defend their rights. In this context the issue of overcrowding can play a misleading role. Overcrowding is serious and growing and must be opposed. But the real issue is prisoners' rights: legally enforceable rights against arbitrary punishment; against arbitrary parole decisions; against Rule 43b and CI 10/74; against intimidatory staffing levels; against assault; and against overcrowding. Neither side in the present dispute is concerned about this. However the dispute ends, afterwards, the POA and Home Office will once again unite against prisoners. ■

Prisoners fight repression

RICHARD KAYE, HMP WAKEFIELD

On 13 June after enduring a spate of repressive acts by the authorities at Wakefield, over 250 inmates staged a mass show of contempt against the latest measure to curtail the already scant facilities available to inmates. The once normal weekend exercise routine had been changed to one single two hour period (given almost exclusively AM). This instead of a one hour AM and a two hour PM period of outside association; ie a cut of one hour. The half hour weekday exercise routine was also changed from being given at the usual PM time to almost exclusively AM, thus resulting in inmates having less than 30 minutes to get washed, dressed and fed and make their way to the gate.

By the day of the protest it had been several days since the inmates had experienced PM exercise and with it, being allowed to feel the full heat of

the sun instead of seeing the early morning cloud. So, after 30 minutes and the SO shouting for inmates to leave the exercise yard and lead off to work, the inevitable happened. No one (apart from the usual assortment of gutless specimens) moved. It was a remarkable show of solidarity that lasted over 2½ hours. The majority stayed to make their point, before leaving en masse for their evening meal.

All civilian contractors etc were escorted from the prison and a large build up of screws were placed out of sight, but in very close proximity to the yard (MUFTI?).

The resulting adjudications were carried out in the usual repressive style, ie a standard outcome of guilty was meted out for failing to obey a lawful order. Each was fined £1.50 and given an award of 14 days loss of remission - suspended for three months.

A number of those on adjudication (myself included) pleaded not guilty

and asked for certain facilities in regard to our defence: to see the governor's Adjudication Manual; to call witnesses; to cross examine the officers bringing the charge; to be examined by a doctor before commencing with the proceedings; to be given the charge sheet number etc etc. All requests were, as expected, denied.

All together we lost about £100 in wages but achieved a change in at least one aspect of the present exercise routine, ie weekday exercise is now always given PM. ■

POW BIRTHDAYS

Martin Brady (119087) 22 September
Albany Prison, Newport, Isle of Wight, 1
3HU

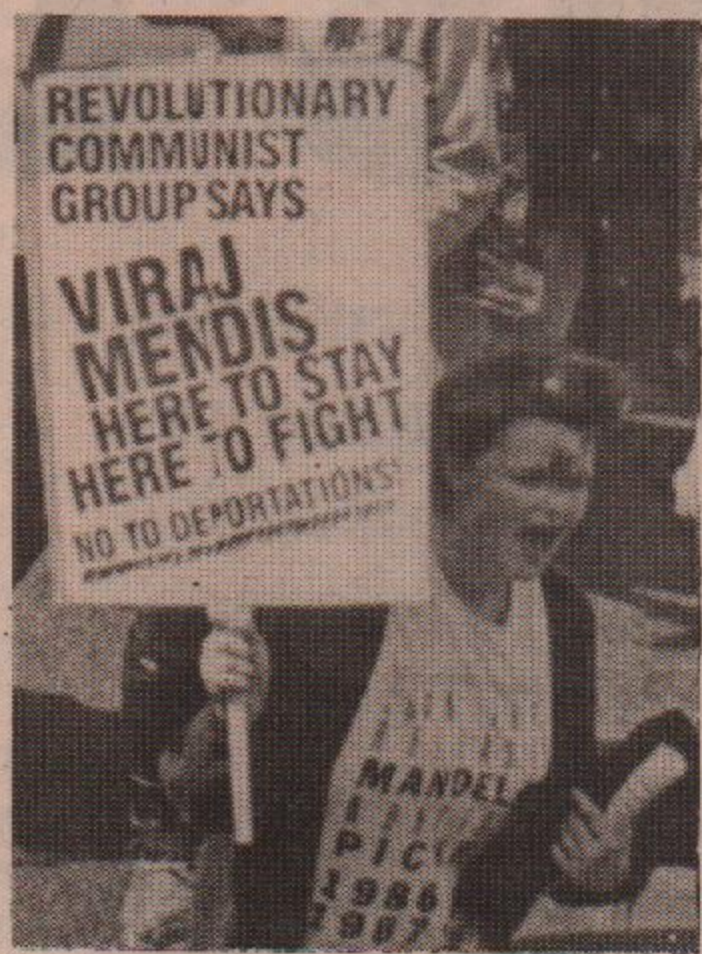
Vince Donnelly (274064) 25 September
Wormwood Scrubs Prison, PO Box 757,
Cane Rd, London W12 0AE

Talking politics with the RCG

In the course of our political work RCG members and supporters are in contact with hundreds of people each week through sales of our newspaper and by participating in campaigns and events.

In all of our work we argue and campaign for the interests of the poor and most oppressed sections of the working class. We reject all attempts to restrict resistance to Thatcher's increasingly vicious attacks on the working class to the electoral interests of Kinnock's Labour Party. As communists we recognise and are able to explain why the labour movement is unable to resist Thatcher. The Labour Party is the political voice of the labour aristocracy, it represents the narrow interests and prejudices of the privileged layers of the working class. The Labour Party does not represent the poor and oppressed. It has rejected them from its ranks in its drive to appeal to the material interests of the better off sections of the working class and the middle class.

We argue that a real working class opposition can only be built from below. To succeed it has to break with the rotten,



backward prejudices of an essentially racist and pro-imperialist British labour movement. Its methods must be those of the oppressed sections of the working class: open and democratic action amongst the people, out on the streets and at points where it can lead to the most effective and direct action against the Thatcher regime.

If a new movement is to be built it must be centred on two principles: first, it must start from the most oppressed sections of the working class, defending and pushing forward their interests; second, it must forge an alliance with the oppressed masses fighting imperialism across the world.

Through our work in City AA and the VMDC we have put these principles into practice and are taking the first small steps towards building a new movement. Our task as communists is to work amongst the forces that are fighting back, to extend our experience and influence to other campaigns and struggles for democratic rights, jobs, living standards, against racism and oppression.

To succeed we must build our organisation and win many more people to our political standpoint. Over the past year we have developed a series of dayschools and open forums to invite people to attend and discuss our theoretical positions on South Africa, communists and national liberation movements, women's oppression, political economy, the Soviet Union. In addition to this we have decided to open up RCG branch meetings once a fortnight for our supporters and readers of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* to discuss with us our political standpoint as expressed in our newspaper. Each month *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* gives voice to the political interests and struggles of the oppressed in Brit-

ain. At the same time it has informed our readers of the heroic and crucial struggles of the oppressed peoples fighting for freedom, justice and democracy. We have carried interviews with representatives of different sections of liberation movements informing our readers of the current debates within these movements on the way forward.

Through our open branch meetings we aim to provide an opportunity for our readers and the people we meet on political events to participate in regular discussion on these issues to develop a greater understanding of our theoretical position to enable them to actively participate in extending the politics and influence of the Revolutionary Communist Group.

All of our branches will be involved in this process as will our student societies in colleges and universities across the country. The meetings will be advertised in our newspaper each month. All our readers are invited to attend. This month we begin with discussions on the current situation in Ireland and our position on the development of perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union. ■

RCG OPEN BRANCHES: LONDON

Tuesday 4 October 7.30pm
Ireland – 20 years of repression and resistance. Camden Black Parents and Teachers Centre, 25 Bayham Street, Camden NW1.

And **St. Matthews Meeting Place, Brixton Hill, SW2.**

MANCHESTER

Thursday 8 September 8pm
Perestroika and Glasnost – What do they mean for the Soviet People?
Thursday 29 September 8pm
Ireland – 20 years of repression and resistance. Mother Macs. Back of Piccadilly. (Behind Spud-U-Like).

BRADFORD

Thursday 22 September 7.30pm
Glasnost and Perestroika – What do they mean for the Soviet people?
Bradford Central Library

For details of meeting in Dundee, Leeds, Liverpool, York, Birmingham and Lancaster please write to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

I would like to know about RCG Open Branch meetings in my area.
Name
Address
Tel. No.

RCG PUBLIC MEETINGS:

Smash the Poll Tax!

London
Thursday 29 September 7.30pm
Brixton Centre, St. Matthews Road, Brixton SW2
Thursday 6 October 7.30pm
179-181 Whitechapel Road, E1.

LIFE OR DEATH? MARCH FOR VIRAJ MENDIS

Saturday 1 October
Assemble 12 noon, outside the Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate SW1 (St. James Park tube)
March to rally 3pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square WC1 (Holborn tube).
Called by VMDC London Support Group. For more details write to VMDC LSG,

BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

RCG members and supporters will be setting up *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* Student Societies in colleges and universities. Look out for the Society in your college or university. We will be holding stalls at the Freshers Fayres in the following colleges:
Liverpool Polytechnic – 29/30 September
York University – 8 October
Birmingham University – 2/3 October
For details of FRFI stalls and societies at your college or university please write to FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

REVIEWS

Censored Britain: from MI5 to Christ

Information, Freedom and Censorship. Article 19. Longman. 1988. £14.95 pb. 340pp.

Gutenberg invented the printing press around 1450. In 1485 the Archbishop of Mainz established the first secular censorship office. Britain was, then as now, never far behind in matters of repression. In 1529 Henry VIII became the first European monarch to issue his own list of banned books.

In 1986 Margaret Thatcher joined the book banning business when she began the still running campaign to prevent the publication of ex-spy Peter Wright's *Spycatcher*. So far the British government has spent an estimated £3-4 million in the effort to suppress this book. Book banning and systematic censorship have ever been

weapons of minority ruling classes seeking to maintain their rule over the majority.

Information, Freedom and Censorship is a collection of reports on censorship in 50 countries throughout the world. Produced by liberals it makes no distinction between socialist countries, imperialist countries and oppressed nations. Interestingly, however, the two longest entries are the United States of America and Britain. They are, as you might expect, closely followed by South Africa.

Britain earns its dubious distinction because of the significant acceleration in censorship in recent years:

- the use of contempt of court laws to ban the transmission of Channel 4's re-enactment of the Birmingham Six appeal on 3 December 1987;
- the use of the same laws to hold trials in secret session – in

one week in 1987 350 High Court cases were heard wholly or partly in secret;

- the Old Bailey ruling in June under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act ordering journalists to hand over unpublished film of the Wapping dispute;
- the seizure of untransmitted film by the RUC under the Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act;
- the fining of Jeremy Warner in January for refusing to reveal his sources;
- *Spycatcher* which can be published and discussed anywhere in the world except Britain and Hong Kong;
- the banning of *My Country Right or Wrong* on BBC radio in December 1987;
- the banning of the BBC programme on Zircon and the Spec-

ial Branch raids in February 1987.

The list could go on and on. The recent government-inspired outcry against the television drama *Tumbledown* shows how far the Thatcher government will go in seeking to impose its views and suppress all critical voices – however mild and even mealy mouthed that criticism might be.

The furore surrounding Martin Scorsese's film *The Last Temptation of Christ* shows that censorship is reaching into ever wider areas of social life. In the USA massive crowds of right-wing fundamentalists, frequently anti-semitic, have demonstrated outside Universal Studios bearing placards such as 'Family – Tradition – Property'. In Britain some local councils have already said they may not grant the film a licence. Yet the film is based on a profoundly religious novel by Nicos Kazant-

zakis which is an examination of the conflict between Christ's humanity and his alleged divinity. The opposition is part of a wider attempt to impose a narrow reactionary 'white' Christianity based on family, tradition and property. The campaign against this film and that against, say, *Tumbledown*, are simply different aspects of the same reactionary process.

The process of censorship is, of course greatly assisted by the growing concentration of ownership of the media. Two white male billionaires, Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell, control more than three quarters of the total circulation of daily and Sunday papers in Britain and have extensive control of local papers, commercial radio and television and satellite broadcasting systems.

This concentration means that, for example, when the word goes out to vilify and dis-

credit Carmen Proetta *The Sunday Times*, *The Times*, the *Sun* and *Today* can all be brought into play. All are owned by Murdoch. When Viraj Mendis is the target the *Sunday Express*, *Daily Express* and *The Star* conduct an orchestrated onslaught. All are owned by David Stevens who also has extensive investments in the near and far East.

Laws on the one hand to deal with the unco-operative, friendly ruling class media barons on the other to reproduce the government propaganda, combine to produce censorship British style. The fight against this censorship is part of the fight against the British ruling class. They need censorship to strengthen their rule over us. We need to break that censorship to strengthen our fight against that rule. This book is a very useful weapon in that fight. ■

TERRY O'HALLORAN

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LETTERS



Not just a Brits Out party

With regard to the interview conducted with John Mitchell in your issue 80, August 1988. While Sinn Fein has the greatest respect for John Mitchell we feel that he is mistaken on a number of points raised.

Firstly, while Sinn Fein would like to see the creation of a broad anti-Imperialist front which would include Fianna Fail people, we will not and have not been silenced with regard to the Fianna Fail leadership's blatant collaboration with British rule in Ireland, a role which is causing increasing unease within that party.

Secondly with regard to the social and economic issues, Sinn Fein sees a direct link between these issues and the continued British presence in Ireland and on that basis we have campaigned on many issues affecting working class people. In short Sinn Fein is not simply just a Brits Out party we feel the development of the working class struggle will lead to a greater awareness among the working class as they realise that their interests are irreconcilable with a continued British presence and thus we see this as a very important factor.

Thirdly, the ongoing talks between Sinn Fein and the SDLP are unconditional, there is no quid pro quo while we see pan nationalist unity as important not just politically but also for the morale of the beleaguered nationalist community, there will be no sellout; such a sellout would contradict the motivation behind the talks.

Lastly, there has been no reduction in Dublin membership in fact it is growing.
Is Mise
ARAN FOLEY
Sinn Féin British Desk

A promising initiative?

Your article opposing the Time To Go Charter (*FRFI* 80) argued as if there have not been attempts to campaign successfully for an end to British rule in Ireland on the basis of the 'Troops Out Now' position. In fact the history of solidarity work includes many failed attempts to develop effective campaigning around 'principled' slogans such as 'unconditional support for the Republican movement', 'Bring the War to Britain' and 'Victory to the Irish People'.

Although some militant - if small - demonstrations and meetings have been built with this approach, the problem of how to mobilise sufficiently large numbers of people to effect a change in British policy has not yet really been confronted. To outside observers, groups like the Irish Solidarity Movement and the RCP's strikingly similar IFM appear more concerned with insisting on their own particular analysis than with working together, let alone building links with broader forces.

This inability to break out of the small ghettos of left factionalising has its roots in your abstract argument that 'either you support the Irish people or you support the British ruling class... there is no middle road'. But things are not actually so clear cut. Many people in Britain feel there should be an end to the occupation of Ireland. But they feel this in amorphous, ill-informed ways. Their views are not based on 'principled' slogans. They have many different motives, from 'war weariness' to liberal beliefs in the need for 'justice' and 'democracy'. Such people's concerns need to be tapped, developed, informed. But they

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will not join - or even listen to - campaigns which insist, as preconditions of involvement, that they become revolutionary defeatists and support the IRA's military campaign.

As far as I can see, one of the strengths of the Time To Go Charter is that it aims at connecting with the concerns of this audience, as well as providing a basis for a wide variety of people to work together for an end to the problems that Britain has visited on Ireland. Surely communists who want to get involved in developing debate and awareness on Ireland, and draw new forces into campaigning to effect a British withdrawal, should support and promote the Charter? Instead, your article writing off Time To Go at the start seems like an unhelpful attempt to block a promising initiative.

MIKE WAITE
Blackburn



There's no British justice

I am writing to appeal to readers of *FRFI* for their support in the Irish Anti-Extradition Committee's campaign against the extradition of people wanted for alleged offences in connection with the political situation in the North of Ireland.

The IAEC believes that Irish citizens accused of such offences cannot receive a fair trial due to the quality of British justice (or

rather the lack of it).

Evidence of this can be found in England in the rejection of the appeal by the Birmingham Six and the continued imprisonment of the Guildford Four. In the North of Ireland it has been demonstrated by the refusal, "in the interests of national security", of the British Attorney General to prosecute members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who have admitted perjury and obstructing the Stalker inquiry into the "shoot-to-kill" murders of six unarmed people in County Armagh in 1982, the release of British Army Private Ian Thain after serving only two years of a life sentence for the murder of Thomas 'Kidso' Reilly, shot in the back in August 1983, and the use of non-jury "Diplock" courts which have been criticised by the British National Council for Civil Liberties.

Opposition to extradition is spreading, but the campaign urgently needs money to combat the multi-million-pound political and media offensive being mounted against the rights of Irish citizens by Mrs Thatcher and her government.

The Irish Anti-Extradition Committee is looking to progressives and the Irish community in England, Scotland and Wales for their invaluable support to prevent others joining the Birmingham Six, those who pay the real price of British "justice". Please send whatever you can afford - however little, it could mean a lot. (IAEC Bank A/C No. 88331532, Bank of Ireland, Rotunda, Dublin 1.)

If you would like more information about the campaign or discuss any other way in which you could help, please do not hesitate to contact the IAEC at the address below.

ALISTAIR RUTHERDALE LL B
Irish Anti-Extradition Committee
Basement Office, 29 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1, (Telephone 366489)

Defend the Holloway Road 30!

Over 30 people were arrested on the 6 August in London, as police and right-wing thugs attacked the 3000-strong anti-internment march organised by the Irish Freedom Movement.

Most of the IFM demonstrators have been charged under the Rye Public Order Act. Those who appeared in court on the Monday after the march were granted bail on condition that they kept away from 'all political meetings and marches'. Those living in the North of England were banned from visiting Greater London until their next court appearance. Nearly every defendant has been refused legal aid on the grounds that it would not be 'in the interests of justice.'

It is vital that we fight these frame-ups and help win these cases. Show your support for the Holloway Road 30 by making a donation to the defence fund and getting your organisation to pass a motion of support for those arrested. For more information contact: Holloway Road 30 Defence Fund, BM IFM, London WC1N 3XX
NICK LEWIS
London

Prison brutality: a collective response

I am very pleased to see that you have given me your support [see *FRFI* 80] in seeking the assistance of other inmates held in F Wing Control Unit Wakefield to assist in giving details of the type of repressive and restrictive regime which operates here. It is only through such a collective effort that a truthful picture of life here can emerge and be most helpful in any forthcoming legal actions to challenge not only the legality and ambivalence of prison rule 43b GOAD but also the authority and accountability of behaviour modification units like F Wing Wakefield.

There have been countless inmates put in here for considerable periods ranging from the norm of three months up to twelve months. I know inmates detest and abhor this particular regime; I have heard them say so myself many times. Well, now is

the opportunity to say so and, in doing so, to challenge it at its very heart. I hope very much therefore that other inmates of F Wing Wakefield will respond to my published letter and provide me, c/o FRFI, with what information they can offer.

With sincere wishes and regards to all at FRFI.
ROBERT MAWDSLEY
F Wing, HMP Wakefield

New pamphlet: Viraj Mendis Life or Death?

This pamphlet shows how the VMDC is fighting for Viraj's right to stay in Britain. It shows why Viraj's life is in danger in Sri Lanka. It shows the injustice of the British courts which have refused to consider the facts of his case. Viraj's fight goes on. You can join it!

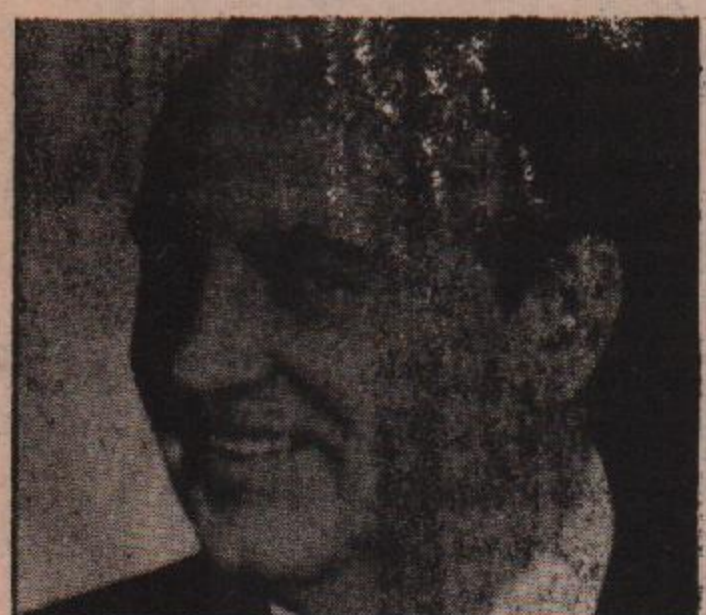
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IN MEMORIAM

IRA Volunteer Ray Mac Lochlainn died on Monday 9 September 1985. He spent ten years in British prisons, from 1974 to 1984. Throughout his life, inside and outside prison, he was a Republican fighter, a socialist and an internationalist. Communists, Republicans and thousands of prisoners in Britain will always remember him.

Jim Reilly, Luton Sinn Fein and Home Counties Organiser for Sinn Fein (Britain) died on Friday 26 September 1980. Right up to the moment of his death Jim Reilly continued his lifelong struggle as a revolutionary Republican to free Ireland from British rule. For this he earned the hatred of British imperialism which hounded him to his death.

The Revolutionary Communist Group and Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! salute the courage and dedication of comrade Jim Reilly whose death was a great loss.



More on glasnost...

I have recently seen Patrick Newman's reply to my letter 'Whither Glasnost'.

1. Newman does not challenge the figures I put on real wages. They mean something far worse than a cut in 'immediate consumption'. Does one describe the worst famine since mid 19th century China as a cut in immediate consumption? 2. Newman thinks signs of opposition refute the argument that the centre was the power behind the economy. That is not so. 'Revolution from above' will encounter opposition. Newman has produced nothing to challenge that characterisation. To quote Stalin as wishing to inspire actions from below hardly

suggests free political action from below. Getty's argument certainly is not that that was Stalin's aim, rather it was to increase incrementally (!) his power.

3. Newman asks who is against democratisation. Those who lose. 1st those who run the command economy, 2nd their political allies with oligarchic political power. To defeat them Gorbachev is making his appeal 'to rank and file communists and if necessary through the party to the soviet people'. This process may come into conflict with the leading role of the party. How long can non party candidates be of no party? How long before the national question challenges it? The situation is unstable; an offer of increased political freedom is being made. It should be obvious that socialists would support this whilst pushing for more.

4. Newman attacks dissidents mystics (misfits?) and charlatans. Is Sakharov a charlatan? What about Medvedev? In calling for socialist legality is not Gorbachev taking up the dissidents call for human rights - but with this difference that he does so in the context of a plan for political and economic reform of Russia? Is Newman for or against socialist legality? 5. The crisis Russia faces is not a

renewed challenge from imperialism but a crisis of its system - out of that only the opportunities for imperialism. Newman may doubt this but consider the official figures.

	Growth over 5 years	Growth in agricultural output over 5 years
1966-70	41	21
1971-75	28	13
1976-80	21	9
1981-85	16.5	6

Given population growth of 4% and inflation there is not growth but decline (Source p89 current NLR). With the low Russian standard of living and rapid technological advance elsewhere this is surely a crisis. New methods are needed if old have failed.

6. If democratisation works the soviets will have turned the ideological flank of the cold war. It will increasingly be difficult for the imperialists to legitimise the cold war to the working class. Does not that have immense possibilities for socialists?

JOHN HALES
DoC, SE13

... and more

I was astonished at David Reed's article on the 19th All-Union

CPSU Conference (*FRFI* 80). It would not have been out of place in the pages of *Socialist Worker*, not so much for what it says directly but for what it implies. Most of the article is a factual account of Gorbachev's speech, but then follows that 'However...'

Gorbachev is depicted as a sort of con-man, spuriously invoking Leninist principles and using the working class to overthrow 'the old conservative bureaucracy' in the interests of a new educated technocratic elite, but ("the great hope for the future") he might have unleashed forces he will be unable to control and the Soviet working class might 're-enter political life'.

I haven't the knowledge to attempt a different analysis of Perestroika. It just seems to me that the article is so much at odds with everything *FRFI* has said about the Soviet Union to date and appears to concede so much essential ground to the anti-Soviet ideologies of the Trotskyist left that it must be fundamentally misconceived. I think it cannot be right to want to drive a wedge between the Soviet people and its leadership.

When a 'working class' has been the ruling class for more

than 70 years it is inappropriate to write about it as if it were an oppressed class in a capitalist country and it can not be correct to treat the necessary divisions of labour in the USSR as indicative of divergent class interests. Whatever Glasnost is it is not a green light for British communists to express their wildest hopes.

The RCG's position used to be (as on Ireland) firstly that any criticism whatever must be counter-productive given the prevailing hostility in this country; secondly that criticism can have no influence on the real world because we are not in a Comintern; thirdly that you have to earn the right to criticise through a long apprenticeship in real solidarity. Has anything changed in this respect?

In 1917 and 1944 the Russian workers were fighting for their lives. It is utopian to expect that at the present time the 'Soviet working class' might directly lead to a new phase of the world revolution. That task has passed to the liberation movements in the oppressed nations, as you undoubtedly recognise.

The petit-bourgeois left has always argued that the relationship between the USSR

and the other socialist and socialist-orientated developing countries is an imperialist one. The speed and ease of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan - a mistake in my view - nevertheless proves that that relation was in fact a fraternal internationalist one and was in no way an essential strategic and economic sub-structure of the Soviet system. Let Britain disengage so easily from Ireland, or South Africa from Namibia, or the USA from Central America. In any case, the covert support of the USSR for Afghanistan you can be well have increased many times over. I think it is right for the Soviet Union to seek by all means possible to promote peace and friendship between nations because this minimises the option for imperialism of war with the socialist bloc as a way out of its problems and the peaceful action of the USSR exposes the imperialists as the real oppressors and war-mongers.

Finally, if the 'Soviet working class' must 're-enter political life' (ie is excluded from political life) then this rather takes the punch out of your front page about 'Democracy East and West'.

Yours fraternally,
An FRFI reader
(name and address supplied)

HANDS OFF IRELAND!

No peace while Britain rules

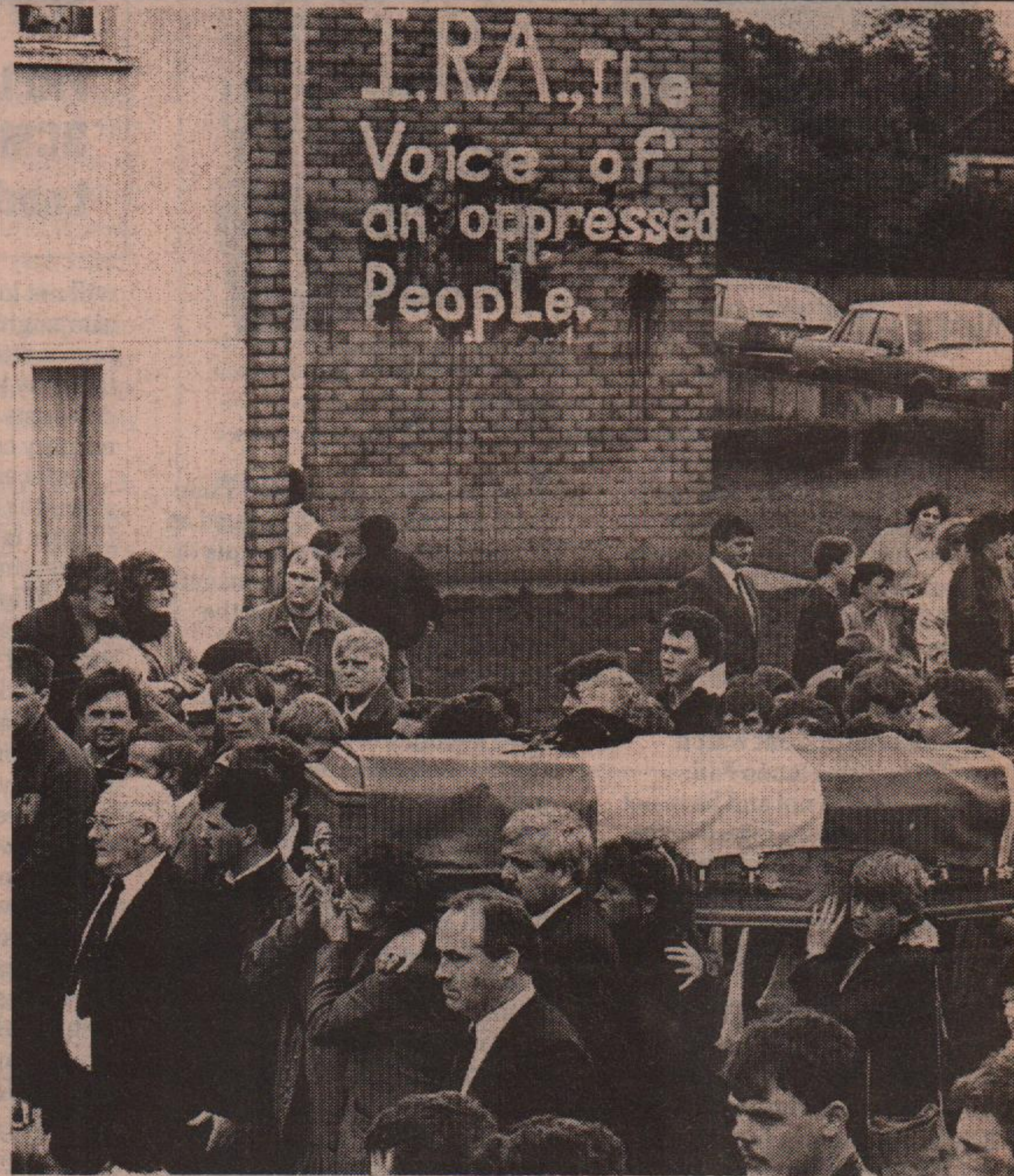
The upsurge of armed struggle and popular resistance in Ireland over the past month has created serious disquiet amongst the British ruling class. The talk of 'normalisation', the primacy of the RUC and the success of the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been replaced by plans for even harsher measures. The murder of three IRA volunteers in Tyrone is a sample of what is to come. MAXINE WILLIAMS reports

The IRA has suffered serious setbacks over the past 20 months, over 20 members have been killed, large arms dumps discovered and several operations have gone wrong. However, it has now shown its potential to recover and to mount effective operations against British forces in Britain, Europe and the Six Counties and to use force to devastating effect against commercial targets.

- 1 August British soldier killed and 9 injured in first attack for 4 years in Britain, when bomb exploded at Inglis Barracks.
- 2 August British soldier killed in Belfast.
- 2 August RUC man known for his brutal interrogations, killed by booby trap bomb in Lisburn.
- 3 August UDR man killed near Cookstown.
- 4 August 2 contractors doing work at RUC barracks killed.
- 5 August Bomb exploded at Ratin-

- gen Army base in West Germany.
 - 12 August British soldier shot dead in Belgium.
 - 17 August Grenade attack on Springfield Road Army/RUC barracks.
 - 19 August 3 RUC men injured by remote control bomb in Lisnaskea.
 - 19 August Bomb exploded in hotel in Newry used by RUC to meet informers.
 - 19 August 2 Army patrols attacked with bombs.
 - 20 August 8 soldiers killed and 28 injured when their bus is blown up in Ballygawley. Worst losses for Army since 1979.
 - 21 August Royal Navy recruiting officer killed by car bomb in Belfast.
 - 24 August Bomb attack on RUC vehicle, 2 RUC injured.
 - 27 August 2 bombs explode in Belfast and Derry city centres.
- Thirty nine soldiers/RUC have been killed this year, the most since 1982.

Equally worrying for the British government have been several nights of prolonged street fighting as the people and the IRA combined to attack British forces. These followed the extradition of Robert Russell and the murder of the three IRA volunteers. On 27 August there were 23 shootings, 17 bombings, 193 attacks on British forces and 56 hijackings. The Anglo-Irish Agreement has not undermined popular support for the Republican movement as it was designed to. The response of the British ruling class, as always, has been to turn to repression. Following the Ballygawley bombing there was a loud chorus of calls for internment from the Unionists and sections of the ruling class in Britain. Thatcher and co. appear reluctant to take this step. It would, after all, proclaim to the world that Britain is a colonial power ruling Ireland by force, and the suspension of all legal norms. It would



The funeral of Gerard and Martin Harte, murdered by the SAS in Tyrone

law under similar rules of engagement as in the Falklands war. At last a British government has admitted that it is at war in Ireland. Whilst the British government has been planning its revenge, the British Labour Party has supported them. Kinnock's response to Ballygawley was to condemn the 'blood lust' of the IRA: 'There can be no concessions to the terrorists, not even the internment which they so much want in order to gain them some sympathy.' A new twist to the 'blame the Irish' doctrine - they now want to be interned and murdered! He also called for the

Wave of protest against extradition

ANDY PACEY

Robert Russell, one of the 1983 Long Kesh escapees, was finally extradited from the Twenty Six Counties in the early hours of 27 August. He was smuggled out of a side door at Dublin's Mountjoy Prison at 4am to prevent news of his departure reaching a thousand-strong protest waiting on the border. He was taken to within a few hundred yards of the border and flung onto a British helicopter to be whisked before a special court and remanded in custody.

Despite widespread feeling in the Twenty Six Counties Minister of Justice, Gerry Collins, refused to exercise his right under the 1965 Extradition Act to stop the proceedings. The fact that the Dublin High Court had found Russell's alleged offences to be political would have allowed Collins to free him. To have done so, however, would have sounded the death knell of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Haughey and Fianna Fail would not countenance such a step.

Russell is the sixth Republican to be handed over by the Haughey government since it came to power. Indeed, a few days before Russell's handover another Republican, Gerard Harte, was extradited virtually in secret. The Southern government is willing to sacrifice Irish men and women to British injustice because they, as much as the British government, wish to wipe out revolutionary nationalism in Ireland.

There was a furious reaction to the extradition both North and South. Russell's supporters who gathered at the border clashed with the gardai. In the Six Counties a wave of protest took place. ■

Throughout July and August the British army and RUC continued their daily repression of the nationalist people on the streets of the Six Counties. House raids, brutal attacks by soldiers and the RUC, beatings in custody continue unabated. This is what the British government means by the 'rule of law'. As usual, their terror has been augmented by loyalist death squads.

BRITISH TERROR

BOB SHEPHERD

While the British media goes into hysterics over the armed actions of the IRA they virtually ignore the day to day terror inflicted on the nationalist community by the British army and its loyalist auxiliaries.

At the beginning of July a loyalist gunman attempted to murder Patrick Fitzpatrick, a taxi-driver in the Markets area of Belfast. He was shot and wounded in his cab; Theresa Catney, 4½ months pregnant, was just about to get in when the attack happened. Four days later she suffered a miscarriage, losing her baby - a direct result of the loyalist attack. On 17 August Eamon Heatley was shot and critically wounded by loyalists. On 18 August Michael Laverty was shot and killed at work.

In West Belfast in the Springhill estate, the RUC and British army have been attempting to intimidate people on the estate. Annie McWilliams, who lives alone, had her house raided at 4.30am on the morning of 18 July. The RUC smashed in her front door

and damaged her kitchen and bathroom. Homes where people were on holiday were broken into and just left. But as local Sinn Fein councillor Lily Fitzsimmons said, 'If they think this type of action is going to cow people down then they are simply deceiving themselves.'

In north Belfast in the Ardoyne district the British army, RUC and loyalist auxiliaries have been active. On 1 August Kevin Toal, 18 years old, was stopped by a British army/RUC patrol on his way to a Gaelic class; he was beaten up and taken to Antrim Road barracks for questioning where he was assaulted again.

On Monday 8 August, 17 year old Seamus Morris and 25 year old Peter Dolan were gunned down and murdered by loyalist assassins on the streets of the Ardoyne. The gunmen killed Seamus Morris as he was standing on the street with his brother talking to friends. As they drove off they opened fire on a beer delivery truck killing Peter Dolan. The response of the British army and RUC to the murders was to raid the area the next day, searching houses for 4½ hours. ■



The army coach destroyed by an IRA bomb at Ballygawley

make Twenty Six County government co-operation with British repression more difficult. Instead, the government made known it was discussing a series of possible measures including more troops, an anti-violence oath, the removal of a suspect's right to silence.

But that was not all. Tom King also said that new measures 'would become apparent shortly in certain particular ways.' These measures did indeed become apparent in Tyrone when the SAS shot down three IRA volunteers. This action was clearly designed to appease the Unionists and to show that Britain has other methods than internment for dealing with the IRA. Although few details of the operation have become known it is clear that the three were the victims of a carefully planned set up. The British government is signalling, as it did in Gibraltar, that it considers murder of known Republicans to be less politically costly than internment. Indeed after the murders, Thatcher announced that British forces had operated within the rule of the

strengthening of troops on the border. Merlin Rees added his bit when he called on Ken Maginnis to publish his list of alleged IRA members. Presumably Rees wanted to make it easier for loyalist assassins to murder them.

In the nineteen years since British troops were sent into the Six Counties the British ruling class has used every possible repressive measure to defeat Republicanism. It can debate which measures to take next without fearing significant opposition in Britain. It is clear that this lack of opposition not only makes the struggle of the Irish people more difficult but also undermines the ability of the progressive movement in Britain to defend itself and those in struggle. The nationalist people of Ireland were on the streets fighting after the news of the SAS murders in Tyrone. Here, where the murders were planned, there was... silence. Surely it is time that the progressive movement in Britain built a serious solidarity movement - for the sake of the Irish people and of the British working class. ■