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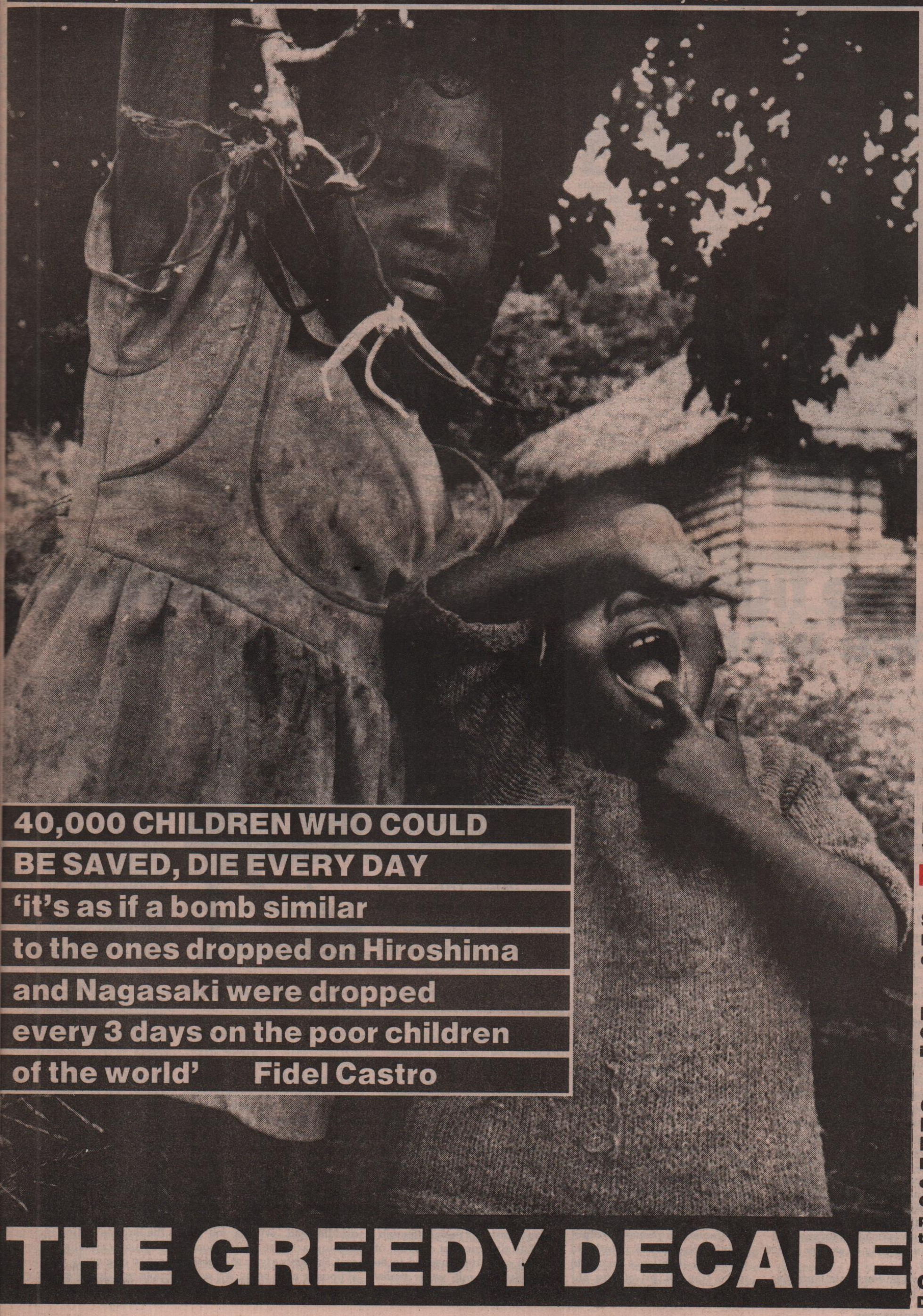
Revolutionary Communist Group | Number 92 January 1990 | (unwaged 20p) 40p

SOLIDARITY PRICE £1



Thatcher and the imperialists ended the decade as they began it – with robbery, terror, censorship and racism

40,000 CHILDREN WHO COULD BE SAVED, DIE EVERY DAY 'it's as if a bomb similar to the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were dropped every 3 days on the poor children of the world' Fidel Castro

THE GREEDY DECADE

ISSN 01435426

Mr Innocent: Lord Young

ROVER GROUP

Fraudulent sell-off

DAVID REED

Deception, corruption and fraud have always been vital ingredients of the 'free' market economy. Capitalist governments not only cover up this unsavoury side of market transactions but frequently are found to be playing a central role in stage managing them. Nothing illustrates this better than the recent revelations about the sell off of the state-owned Rover Group to British Aerospace (BAe).

The Rover Group was sold off to British Aerospace for a paltry £150m in July 1988. 16 months later, on 30 November 1989, *The Guardian* published a confidential document revealing the existence of a £38m secret 'sweetener' paid to BAe as part of the transaction. This followed a report from the National Audit Office (NAO) two days earlier stating that the Rover Group was sold at a price that 'fell significantly short of the real value of the company'. In reality hundreds of millions of pounds had been transferred from the public purse to the government's friends in the business world, with at least £38m consciously and fraudulently hidden from public view.

According to the NAO report, Baring Brothers, the merchant bankers handling the sale and advisers to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), had said that as a debt-free company the Rover Group was worth £950m, a figure needing to be discounted in view of the risks associated with the business. The European Commission (EC) in its investigation of the Rover sale valued the company at about £950m.

The risks however appear to have been minimal. BAe acquired a car company expected to produce, and producing, record profits over a five year period. It can use £500m of Rover's accumulated trading losses to offset against taxes on future profits, and has as well unclaimed capital allowances of £300m. It also acquired surplus sites valued, in May 1988, at £33.5m and holdings in nine other companies. A recent flotation of DAF, the Dutch commercial vehicle maker, showed that Rover's 40 per cent stake alone in that company was worth £147m, almost the total BAe purchase price. After the sale, BAe sold Rover's stake in Istel, the software house, for £39.1m. BAe itself was well aware of its financial coup as, in its own accounts, it put a book value on its acquired Rover assets of about £800m at the end of 1988.

But even this wasn't enough. In addition £38m worth of 'sweeteners' were given to BAe and deliberately hidden from public view. This was revealed some 16 months later in a confidential memorandum to the Public Accounts Committee prepared by John Bourn, Comptroller and Auditor General, and leaked to *The Guardian*. A week later the Trade and Industry Secretary, Nicholas Ridley, was forced to publish confidential letters which gave us more insight into the sordid and fraudulent nature of the whole affair.

The memorandum showed that BAe did not have to pay the £150m purchase price until 30 March 1990, a £22m saving to the company in financial costs. The DTI reimbursed BAe's acquisition costs, including the buying out of minority shareholders, to the value of £11m, paid out in two instalments to avoid Parliamentary scrutiny. It also, as part of the package, agreed to pay BAe's £5m contribution to the European Columbus space project.

The memorandum exposes a further secret deal which allows BAe to pay back only £400m, rather than the £650m officially announced, if it sells Rover within five years. The newly released correspondence reveals that this matter was taken further and that there is a private letter attached to the BAe deal allowing the company to sell Rover within five years with no penalty at all. This represents a potential transfer of hundreds of millions to BAe as the original agreement involved government aid of £800m (later reduced to £572m by the EC) to the Rover Group before the sale.

Ridley, on being forced to admit that the 'sweeteners' did exist, claimed that they were necessary to secure the successful sale. They were kept out of the official report in order to deceive the EC and, without doubt, to keep the information from the British public. Two days before the sale was announced Lord Young, the former Trade Secretary, wrote to BAe asking it to choose how to hide the 'sweeteners' from Parliament and the European Commission. And on the day the sale was announced Professor Roland Smith, chairman of BAe, wrote to Lord Young saying that he intended to claim he was unaware of the secret correspondence between them on how to hide the 'sweeteners' deal from the EC and Parliament.

The confidential memorandum also reveals that at least four other companies were prepared to bid for Rover at the time when Lord Young gave BAe exclusive negotiating rights for a limited period. This was in spite of the advice from his financial advisers, Baring Brothers, to allow limited competition in bidding. So the argument that 'sweeteners' were necessary to secure the sale carries little weight.

This sordid episode once again reveals the corrupt reality behind the 'free' capitalist market system. It is a class system in which the rich feel 'free' to lie, cheat and deceive in order to transfer the wealth produced by the working class into their own pockets. ■

Support the fighting ambulance workers

LORNA REID

85 per cent of the public support the ambulance workers and a record 4.5 million signatures have been collected on a petition supporting their pay claim. It has become 'the most popular dispute in history', says NUPE. But there was no sign of a settlement before the Christmas/New Year period. Health Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, refused to refer the ambulance unions' pay claim to arbitration and chose instead to use a number of methods to defeat the dispute and force the ambulance workers to accept the government's pay offer.

On 28 November full page advertisements were carried in national newspapers outlining the 17 November pay offer made by Duncan Nichol, NHS Chief Executive. This publicity stunt cost £2,000 and was aimed at drawing public support away from the ambulance workers. The pay offer – 11.5% to workers in London, 9% to those outside London, over 18 months backdated to 1 April, plus a £500 payment to 2,000 highly skilled staff – was based on bringing forward £5 million from next year's pay deal. The ambulance unions have dismissed the offer as phoney and continue their demand for their pay claim to go to arbitration.

In an attempt to split the workforce Clarke proposed to recognise the tiny, breakaway Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel and use their support for the 17 November offer to impose it on all ambulance workers. APAP has since had to withdraw its support as one third of its members have left to join NUPE.

The deployment of police and troops to replace suspended ambulance crews across the country is being widely criticised. London ambulance controllers passed a vote of no confidence in the management on 15 November and now refuses to put emergency calls through to Scotland Yard. On 2 December they walked out in protest at managers passing calls to the police via fax machines.

Ambulance crews are publicising the ex-directory phone numbers of their stations and urging doctors and the public to phone direct. Crews in Sheffield are running an emergency service from their union headquarters after 300 South Yorkshire ambulance workers were suspended and barred from using their ambulances. The crew members use their personal cars as makeshift ambulances. A call has now been made for suspended crews only to answer direct calls.

The London Ambulance Service has cut the pay of crews who have been working to rule and not answering non-emergency calls. Crews lost £300 from their pay in November. Massive public support has thwarted the attempt by LAS to starve the crews into accepting the government's pay offer.

Talks between the unions and health service managers within the Whitley Council pay bargaining forum broke down on Thursday 14 December when management made no new offer to the ambulance unions.

At the heart of the government's intransigent stand against the ambulance workers is its plan to privatise the non-emergency side of the service as part of an overall plan to privatise the National Health Service. On 27 November Kenneth Clarke 'warned' that the continuation of the dispute would hasten the development of a 'two-tier' ambulance service and pointed out that the services in Wiltshire and Northumbria had already split and contracted out non-emergency work.

The Christmas/New Year period is the busiest time for ambulance crews – they receive up to 200 emergency calls an hour. The police and army will not be able to cope with this. The government is prepared to put people's lives at risk in order to defeat the ambulance unions to make way for privatising our health service. ■

Water privatisation – rich get richer

DAVID REED

This government will stop at nothing to hide its political bankruptcy. It has finally sold off the water industry. Or more to the point paid shareholders to take it off its hands. That is, the privatisation of water resulted in a net loss of more than £1.6bn.

In preparing the water industry for privatisation the government wrote off debts of £5bn and paid out more than £1.5bn to 'clean up' the industry. With the sale of water shares realising £5.2bn this gives a net loss of at least £1.3bn. In reality the loss is very much greater once other costs such as those of promotion and underwriting the shares (£200m) and incentives to customer shareholders (£120m) are taken into account.

In saving itself from a politically embarrassing failure and selling the shares ridiculously cheap, the government has made sure that not everyone will contribute equally to this loss. Water privatisation represents a redistribution of money from water consumers to the very much narrower group of people who could afford to buy water shares. That is, a transfer of money from the poor to the rich.

With the price set at 240p, of which only 100p needed to be initially paid out, water shares were 5.7 times over-subscribed.

Michael Howard, minister for water

2.7 million applications for shares were made. On the first day of trading on the market some 633m shares changed hands – about 30 per cent of the total shares, mainly by institutions as most private investors had not received their certificates. The average premium for the 10 water companies was 45p on the 100p partly paid shares. They ranged from 135p to 168p in early trading and between 131p and 157p at the close.

Who buys shares? The 1987 General Household Survey tells us that the typical British shareholder is male, well off, middle-aged, with a job and owning a house in the south-east. Probably a typical Thatcher supporter now being wooed by the Labour Party.

Since the privatisation process began the proportion of people owning shares has risen from 7 per cent of the population to 21 per cent. After the Abbey National flotation it is estimated that about 11.5m people own shares. But the distribution of shares follows the distribution of wealth in Thatcher's Britain. While 25-29 per cent of people own shares in London and the south-east, only 14 per cent do in the north, 17 per cent in Scotland and 16 per cent in Wales. 67 per cent of individuals earning more than £450 a week own shares, compared with 20 per cent of those earning £100-£200 a week (1987). 49 per cent of professional men own shares compared to 9 per cent of unskilled male manual workers. About 90 per cent of private shareholders own their own homes.

However this is only part of the story. Even with the cheap sell off of publically owned utilities by this government more and more shares are held by large institutions and not small private shareholders. In 1981 individuals held 28 per cent of UK company equity. By 1988 this was down to 20 per cent. So the major beneficiaries of the cheap sell off of public assets have been the large investing institutions. Popular capitalism also turns out to be a myth. And if you are poor you do not even come into the reckoning. ■

Fighting against the Tories' Poll Tax

LORNA REID

2,000 delegates attended the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Conference on 25 November to launch the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation to mobilise for mass non-payment, non-implementation and non-collection. On paper this should have been the basis of a dynamic movement against the Poll Tax. In reality it achieved nothing. At the end of the one day conference a national committee was elected and a statement of aims adopted, neither of which guarantees to build the type of movement necessary to defeat the Poll Tax.

To understand why this was so we need only examine the two dominant political trends present at the conference. Inevitably, with the Labour Party fundamentally opposed to any fight against the Poll Tax, it falls upon those on the left of the Labour Party to lead the fight. This has produced two left social-democratic strategies for building this fight.

The Militant Tendency, from within the Labour Party, has correctly recognised that the strength of such a campaign can only arise from within the communities, amongst the people who can't pay. However, their purpose is to build a social force with which to conduct their own political fight within the Labour Party. Precisely because of their unbreakable ties to the Labour Party they cannot build the independent working class movement outside the Labour Party necessary to defeat the Poll Tax. In effect, the establishment of a national federation is their latest attempt to gain complete control of the fight against the Poll Tax in order to strengthen their own position within the Labour Party.

The second trend believes that only workers action, by which they mean traditional trade union action, can defeat the Poll Tax and the role of the community is quite secondary. This trend is represented by the Socialist Workers Party and an array of other smaller Trotskyist organisations.

Precisely because the trade unions have refused to mount a challenge to the Poll Tax and have joined Kinnock in denouncing non-payment the position of these organisations comes over as abstract and irrelevant. Unlike Militant they are unable to mobilise any serious working class forces and their positions do no more than express their own prejudices. The most absurd example of this was the motion from Crookesmoor Anti-Poll Tax Campaign, represented by supporters of Workers Power, who called for mass strike action including a general strike to defeat the Poll Tax, in a period when the trade union movement is doing hardly anything to oppose the Poll Tax.

The Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Organiser, coming down to earth, but essentially

holding to the same position, argued against this because a general strike is an organic development which must be worked for and that as yet the Federation does not have the authority to call one.

Militant are able to dominate the existing anti-Poll Tax Federation because they can claim to speak for the one million non-payers in Scotland as a result of their systematic work in the Scottish communities whereas the majority of the British left has played no role at all and at times has contemptuously dismissed as irrelevant those who can't pay as secondary to their mythical fighting trade union movement.

There were, however, some independent forces who recognise the vital link between community organisations and trade union action. CPSA DSS Inner London Branch members, who took strike action in October against government attempts to use DSS staff as Poll Tax snoopers, placed their action in the context of the success of resistance built in Scotland. 'I bring fraternal greetings from my union branch and salute the one million non-payers in Scotland. They are an inspiration where I work.' said Debbie Lonnon from the Oval Office, South London.

Inevitably, during the conference the long-standing and important issue of the right of affiliation for political organisations was raised. Cannonbury APT sought to extend affiliation rights to Labour Parties and Montpelier APT argued for affiliation rights for all political organisations which agree with the aims of the Federation. Lorna Reid, delegate from Tooting Anti-Poll Tax Union and member of the RCG, argued, 'If organisations are denied the right to participate in the fight against the Poll Tax they will simply enter through the back door in the guise of anti-Poll Tax groups. It is undemocratic to exclude political organisations from participating in the fight in their own right.'

Militant's ability to retain control of the Federation through its present base in the communities allowed them to take a sectarian stance in opposing the affiliation of political organisations.

Militant's concern to utilise the fight against the Poll Tax for its own fight in the Labour Party forces it to oppose any steps to build a movement independent of the Labour Party. It was for this reason they opposed the motion from the Black Lesbian and Gay Group which moved that the Federation mobilise the most oppressed in our society: black people, women, lesbians and gay men, the unemployed and make it clear that racist, sexist and homophobic activity will not be tolerated.

Militant refuses to confront the racist and sexist prejudices of the organised Labour movement. To do so they would expose the deep divisions within the working class. A movement against the Poll Tax can only develop if it puts to the fore the interests of the oppressed sections of the working class, in particular working class women and black people. Otherwise, it will be unable to mobilise these forces and remain tied to the backward traditions of the official labour and trade union movement. For this reason the Federation can go nowhere.

Bureaucratic manipulations will not gloss over these central political issues. An independent working class movement is the key to defeating the Poll Tax. The All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation threatens to hold back this development. ■

Police harassment of Silcott family

GEORGE SILCOTT/JENNY SUTTON

In the last edition of *The Job*, the magazine of the Police Federation, there was a reference to 'unfinished business' at Broadwater Farm. Not satisfied with criminalising the youth and framing three innocent men for the killing of PC Blakelock, the police are still trying to break the spirit of the community. Part of this strategy is the continued persecution of the Silcott family, and in particular Winston's younger brother George.

Since Winston's arrest, the police have been harassing George, kerb-crawling and addressing him by his first name. The family were driven to move house by anonymous threatening letters and phone calls, and although on advice they reported these to the police, no action was ever taken.

In October 1988 George and a friend were driving in Tottenham in a rented car. Despite having all the relevant documents, they were stopped and arrested for TDA (taking and driving away). They were kept overnight at Enfield Police Station and the following morning taken to Muswell Hill station where they were charged with a burglary that had taken place the previous evening. Vicious bail conditions were imposed on George alone – an indefinite midnight to 6am curfew (this has been 'relaxed' over Christmas – instead he has to give 48 hours notice of his exact whereabouts to Hornsey Police Station).

In November 1989 George and some friends were outside a nightclub when the police arrived. George was handcuffed, pushed to the ground and punched in the face. At Tottenham police station he was told that he had been arrested for arson – the what, when and where were never disclosed. His name was on the cell door before he had even given it. The following morning he was told that he had threatened two PCs with a knife and was charged with being in possession of an offensive weapon. When he asked to see the 'knife' he was shown a photocopy. On granting him bail the magistrate said 'don't get yourself into any more trouble' – so much for innocent until proven guilty. That very same day he was stopped and searched in Oxford Street by a WPC who told him that he had been seen with a knife. She refused to give him a written note of the incident.

The harassment of George has to be seen in the context of what is happening to his brother. On his return to Albany Winston asked why he had been ghosted to Wandsworth and was told that he had been 'influencing other prisoners'. He has spent the last three months in solitary confinement. Unable to break his spirit inside, the authorities are attacking him through his family. But we, like Winston, are not going to be beaten down. 'We're not willing to wait fifteen years to see that justice is done. They'll never silence the family – we'll continue to fight to see Winston free'. ■

Provisional dates have been set for George's trials. They are:

17 January, Wood Green Crown Court (Burglary)

We urge you to be there at the courts to support George.

STOP PRESS George Silcott was arrested and charged with rape on Monday 18 December. This is the third serious charge against him in just over a year.

Laura Ashley road to socialism

ROBERT CLOUGH

The CPGB recently concluded its 41st Congress amid calls for it to adopt a new name, if not to disband itself altogether. After all, as Martin Jacques pointed out in the main speech, if Leninism has had its day, what need is there for a Party which originated in that tradition?

There is nothing that should surprise us in this. The CPGB openly adopted the standpoint of middle class liberalism in 1977 with its new version of its programme, the *British Road to Socialism*. All that has happened is that liberalism has become older, richer and more reactionary. The CPGB has merely moved with what it calls the new times. Its increasing age is expressed in the higher proportion of utter gibberish in its pronouncements. Consider this:

'It [the working class] is not only a producing class but also a consuming class, more and more aware of its consuming identity.'

Or this:

'But class is not an abstraction. It changes, it is reproduced. At the same time, other bonds, other identities based on gender or ethnicity or sexuality are of ever growing importance. The old social blocs are dead.'

All this is a very pretentious and tortuous way of saying that class is no longer important, it's how you consume, your table manners, your taste. They are the political equivalent of Laura Ashley – vapid, expensive chintz. Leninism – its theory of state, its concept of the party, the absence of civil society, its notion of revolution – is just passé.

Laura Ashley society is 'civil society', which means that the state is no longer as important as it was, because the middle class has all sorts of cultural outlets for its entertainment and generally has a fair old time. Martin Jacques suggests that 'in many areas the state's role is increasingly being obliged to change, to be more fluid, to be far more decentralised, to exit in partnership with civil society.' No, I don't know what black and Irish people make of 'civil society' either.

This then is the vision of the Laura Ashley road to socialism. It is very fashionable, best suited for those with a fair amount of discretionary income. With such affluence comes a new standpoint, which sees expanded consumption become progress to socialism, and can convince itself that there is really nothing horrid anymore in the outside world. It can be made to sound far more substantial by the abundant use of resonant phrases. But in the end, there is the common theme of empty nostalgia for a cottagey world that never existed, of fundamental contradictions obscured by fussy patterns and insipid pastel shades. But if you like Laura Ashley, you'll love the CPGB. ■

Terry O'Halloran

Communist and fighter for Irish freedom

Died 23 January 1989

On this the first anniversary of Terry's death all his comrades salute his memory. Over the past year there have been many occasions when we have thought of Terry but none more poignant than when the Guildford Four were released. How delighted Terry would have been to see them walk free. And how scorchingly he would have written exposing the frame up.

As developments in the socialist countries demand from communists a serious political response, we have sorely missed Terry's wide ranging knowledge and depth of Marxist understanding.

Perhaps, above all, in these rather bleak times, we miss his wit and irreverent humour.

Terry's life and political work influenced many people and it is fitting that the Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund has raised over £2,000 to begin its task of supplying books to prisoners.

Terry O'Halloran we salute you!

COMMEMORATIVE EVENT
Sunday 28 January 2pm, Karl Marx Tomb, Highgate cemetery.

Sinn Fein broadcasting ban: action needed

AN NUJ ACTIVIST

Broadcasting unions are maintaining their public opposition to the British and Irish state bans on broadcasting the voices of Sinn Fein and other parties and organisations in Ireland – but when it comes to action they aren't so sure.

Public statements, court challenges – even demonstrations – are just about keeping the issue on the political agenda, but in danger of being used as a mask by union leaders to hide their nervousness at the actions media workers are in a unique position to take: industrial action, or breaches of the bans backed up with action to defend victimised journalists and technicians.

The effect of the bans has not just been, as is generally assumed, to make TV take the sound off interviews with Gerry Adams – to make him 'goldfish' in broadcast parlance. It is to keep the expression of Irish nationalism off the airwaves altogether: to keep nationalists out of all discussion on live programmes. Night after night, when Ireland is 'in the news', studio discussions can happily ignore anything more 'republican' than the SDLP.

The National Union of Journalists has run a high-profile political campaign which has allowed political campaigners, such as Irish groups and parties, some space to join in, but it has shied away from taking action.

The crucial time, as always, was at the start: when the British ban was announced, a movement got going among broadcasting journalists – who had taken an effective 24-hour strike against the banning of the BBC's *Real Lives* programme in 1985 – for a repeat action. But this was sabotaged by the leadership, which cooked up a dodgy agreement with management, that if they all joined together in public protest, the union would have no quarrel with them.

That mistake is still with media workers trying to keep a real fight going. When the NUJ called a Day of Action on 19 October, anniversary of Douglas Hurd's announcement of the ban, there was a call for at least token stoppages by broadcasting chapels, but the response was extremely poor.

Instead, there was a march through London and a glitzy rally. Lots of publicity, but the government was untouched. In fact, the organisers found that the degree of opposition was higher among other journalists and even much of the public, than among the broadcasters who have to operate the ban.

Shockingly, when in Dublin in March 1988 there was a breach of the Section 31 Irish ban by a journalist with RTE, Jenny McGeever, and she was sacked, the union did nothing to protect her.

The reason, quite simply, is that union leaders are terrified of the 'terrorist smear'. Whatever their feelings, they believe that to protest for any kind of Irish freedom is to be seen as Provo sympathisers. This, of course, is precisely what the government was banking on, and they are not prepared to challenge it. The bans are therefore opposed as an abstract 'free speech' issue, emphatically not as an Irish political issue.

The inhibition was frankly expressed by a leading Northern Ireland political journalist, Eamonn Mallie, on a radio phone-in on 19 October. He said: 'Quite honestly, I am not prepared to put my neck on the block on this issue. For the individual journalist it is just too risky . . . The protest has got to be in the hands of the NUJ leadership.' In effect, Eamonn Mallie and his colleagues are operating and policing the ban for the state. They have to take the everyday decisions on their broadcasts, and they always opt for the easy way out – often allowing managements to make them impose a stricter censorship than is strictly required by the wording of the bans.

For managements' posturing is even worse than the unions'. The BBC and independent companies are always trying to play down the significance of the bans. They won't, for instance, telegraph clearly when they are being applied, preferring, in the words of a BBC Deputy Director General John Birt, to 'thread them into the programme' – in other words, pretend it's not happening. Just what the government ordered – or didn't, actually. Neither will broadcast corporations even back the legal challenges the NUJ is running. Parallel cases in the Irish and English courts are crawling towards the European Court of Human Rights; the Irish one has just arrived in Strasbourg, and the Commission has ruled there is a case to answer, and told the Irish government to submit a defence. The British case has just, predictably, been thrown out of the Court of Appeal, and would now have to go to the House of Lords before crossing the Channel. However, these cases are so expensive, in fat lawyers's fees, that there is a risk the NUJ will have to drop it.

Perhaps it will – and adopt an industrial strategy instead: some hope! ■

AN PHOBLACHT/REPUBLICAN NEWS

Sinn Fein's demonstration in Belfast on the anniversary of the broadcasting ban was itself banned by the RUC. Above: Councillor Alex Maskey cuts the RUC tape across the demonstration's path

Apartheid's hired assassins creep out of hiding

LEIGH AVON

Thatcher's claims that President FW de Klerk is dragging South Africa toward 'clear and irreversible' reform were shown to be utter nonsense this month by revelations of political murders, perpetrated by apartheid agents and sanctioned at the highest level of South African government.

Having read in the *Weekly Mail* that Almond Nofomela, a prisoner on Death Row in South Africa, had sworn an affidavit in which he claimed to have been a member of an apartheid death squad, Captain Johannes Dirk Coetzee fled the country. Coetzee's subsequent 'revelations' have embarrassed the South African government and, along with mounting pressure inside the country, threaten to force de Klerk into setting up an independent inquiry. Coetzee substantially confirmed Nofomela's statement but also goes much further. He was the commander of one of five 'hit squads' that operated throughout South Africa and internationally. He has admitted to being involved in several political murders including: Griffiths Mxenge, a Durban civil rights lawyer; two ANC members kidnapped in Mozambique and shot; an unidentified man also kidnapped and shot, in Lesotho; and Patrick Makau and an unidentified child who were murdered when the squad bombed a suspected ANC office at Manzini in Swaziland.

These death squads were also responsible for the murder of Joe Gqabi in Harare and of Ruth First in Mozambique in 1982 and of Dulcie September in Paris in 1988.

What is particularly interesting to anti-apartheid activists in Britain is Coetzee's information concerning the role of the South African Embassy in the bombing of the ANC London office in 1982. Coetzee spoke to the man responsible for the bombing, a British citizen who subsequently became a South African spy: '. . . He himself said that the explosives used to blow up the ANC offices had been smuggled to him in the South African Embassy's diplomatic bag. That was also his unofficial courier service, through which the senior military officers stayed in contact with him.'

Craig Williamson, Coetzee's ex-superior, 'spy-master' and fund-raiser for these covert activities is now a nominated member of the President's Council, a South African parliamentary advisory body. This murderer is now 'respectable', a highly placed member of de Klerk's administration.

We know who killed Dulcie September, David Webster, Anton Lubowski . . . Let us see them in the dock. If, as is almost definitely the case, these crimes were sanctioned, formally or informally, let us see those ministers and officials also stand trial and attempt to answer for their actions. ■

Guildford 4: obscuring the cover-up

MAXINE WILLIAMS

At the preliminary hearing of the May inquiry into the Guildford 4 and Maguire cases, former judge Sir John May bowed to pressure and granted partial immunity to witnesses who appear at the inquiry. Both May and the Home Secretary had formerly said that no immunity would be given. However, the form of immunity and who it applies to is still hedged around with doubts. Only full immunity could ensure that the full story emerges. Moreover the inquiry has no power to subpoena witnesses and cannot even begin its proceedings until the criminal investigation of police officers currently underway is completed.

The earliest that the May report is likely to appear is 1991. No doubt many of those involved in the frame-up are hoping that time will lessen public interest in the cases. The delay will also give the government lie machine chance to continue to peddle the current rumour – that the Guildford 4 were not innocent and were released only because of loopholes in the case against them. This was the tone of recent remarks made by Lord Hailsham in a television interview.

There is no doubt that those sections of the Establishment involved in the frame up – the police, the judiciary and politicians will fight to the bitter end to prevent the full truth from emerging. Quite how the May Inquiry will manage to gloss over the crucial role of the Metropolitan police commissioner Peter Imbert, for example, remains to be seen.

Those who feared that the release of the Guildford 4 would make the government even more determined to prevent the Birmingham 6 frame-up being exposed, are so far proving correct. The government has repeatedly stated that the 6 will remain in prison and that no new evidence to question their convictions exists. However, heavy pressure on this issue continues and may have led to the recent recategorisation of the 6 from Category A status which convicted IRA prisoners are normally given.

Only by keeping up the pressure on these cases will the facts about both frame-ups emerge and the Birmingham 6 be freed. Meanwhile Paul Hill was detained and questioned by police as he flew from Heathrow to Dublin on 4 December to speak at a press conference publicising a march about the Birmingham 6 and other cases of injustice. Gerard Conlon has also been harassed by the RUC. No doubt the authorities wish to intimidate the two into reducing their high profile activities in favour of the Birmingham 6. ■

British terrorise Irish

PAM ROBINSON

The British Army and RUC have been carrying out a series of calculated campaigns against the nationalist communities in the occupied six counties of Ireland.

● The RUC have launched a major campaign of intimidation against people who have outstanding legal cases against them in an attempt to frighten them into dropping the cases. These include cases where people have found that files containing their personal details have been handed over to loyalist death squads. The RUC have raided selected houses, destroying personal belongings and property and removed personal files and photographs.

● On Thursday 9 November 14 homes were raided in Andersonstown, West Belfast, including the home of Kathleen Finucane, the mother of Pat Finucane who was murdered by a loyalist death squad. The RUC informed her that the name of one of her other sons was on a death squad's list.

● Corporal Cameron Hastie, Royal Scots, and Private Joanne Garvin, UDR, were found guilty of handing over RUC files to loyalists. They both received suspended sentences of 18 months. The information they had disclosed led to the murder of Terry McDaid by a UVF/UDR death squad. The same squad severely injured Pat Fitzpatrick after receiving information from his file. It has now been revealed that admissions given by Hastie and Garvin to the RUC should have resulted in them being charged with conspiracy to murder. Terry McDaid's widow, Maura, has said she plans to sue the MoD.

● Documents described as 'likely to be useful to terrorist organisations' were discovered by the RUC in Robert Allen's house in Derry on 18/19 November. Amongst the documents were details of John Davey, murdered by a loyalist death squad, plus details and photographs of nationalists. Kenneth Cavanagh, Philip Jackson, Jennifer Peoples, George Shields and William Temple were also arrested in connection with the discovered documents. Jackson, Peoples and Shields have pleaded guilty to possessing documents. Robert Allen is known to be associated with DUP councillor Ken Kerr.

● On 29 November Liam Ryan was murdered as he was closing up and letting customers out of the Battery Bar, East Tyrone. When locking up Liam answered a knock on the door and was met with a hail of bullets. Two gunmen burst in and shot Liam dead at close range. Four other people were injured in the attack. In a statement the UVF described Liam as one of their targets. He had been continually harassed by the RUC who told him only a few weeks before he was murdered, 'You'll be dead by Christmas.'

● There has been a further exposure of RUC attempts to recruit informers from within nationalist communities. Gary McConville, 19, of Lurgan has suffered continual harassment from the RUC. In August he was arrested and held for 16 hours during which time he was accused of various attacks, verbally abused and assaulted. Under duress he signed a statement admitting throwing a stone. The RUC then offered to 'double his dole money' and 'drop all the charges' if he agreed to become an informer.

● On 13 November a 19-year-old single mother of New Lodge Road, Belfast, was arrested by the RUC following a raid on her home under the Emergency Provisions Act and was held for 24 hors. During this time she was interrogated for periods of up to four hours at a time and told she would 'end up like Mairead Farrell, blown up all over the street some night' and 'You'll end up in Maghaberry and your baby will end up in care'. She was also offered a bribe of £50 to inform on local people including Sinn Fein members. She agreed to this in order to end her ordeal. On her release she contacted Sinn Fein and a solicitor.

● Matt Rooney has been harassed since May after he refused to become an informer. On 19 November he was severely beaten by a UDR patrol and suffered a ruptured kidney and severe bruising in an attack described by the UDR as 'putting the pressure on.' The following day as both he and his wife were on their way to their solicitors they were harassed by the same UDR patrol that had beaten Matt.

● On Thursday 2 November Kathleen and Brendan Duffy, the parents of Seamus, who was killed in August by a plastic bullet fired by an RUC officer, were arrested and held for two hours under the Prevention of Terrorism Act at Luton Airport as they entered England as part of the delegation from the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets. ■

SOUTH AFRICA

Liberation movements define different ways forward

DAVID REED/CAT WIENER

In December two politically important conferences took place in South Africa. The first of these, held in Soweto from 1-3 December, launched the Pan Africanist Movement (PAM). The second, a one-day meeting of the Conference for a Democratic Future (CDF), was held on 9 December in Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg. The final positions adopted by the two conferences reflect two essentially different trends in the liberation movement, in particular in regard to the question of negotiations.

The two conferences were fundamentally divided over their stance towards the OAU Harare Declaration of 21 August 1989. This declaration calls upon the South African government to create the climate for negotiations and lays five preconditions on such negotiations taking place: the unconditional release of political prisoners and all detainees; the lifting of bans and restrictions on all organisations the removal of all troops from the townships; the end of the State of Emergency and the repeal of repressive legislation; and the end of all political trials and political executions.

600 delegates from all over South Africa attended the PAM conference. PAM is ideologically aligned to, but organisationally independent of, the Pan Africanist Congress. It stands in ideological opposition to the ANC and its MDM ally. PAM argues that there is no basis for genuine negotiations today in South Africa and that what it calls the five pillars of apartheid legislation are non-negotiable and must go. The conference unanimously maintained that only a one-person, one vote election to a single, non-racial chamber can lead to a genuine non-racial democratic society (*see below the Harare Communique of the PAC setting out the perspectives of PAM*).

PAM's founding conference elected former Robben Island prisoner and founder member of the PAC, Clarence Makwetu, as President. An important decision made by the Conference was not to attend the pending Conference for a Democratic Future jointly organised by the MDM and the Black Consciousness Movement. Gora Ebrahim, Foreign Secretary of the PAC, told *FRFI* that the PAC were excluded from the convening committee despite declaring their willingness to participate. This meant that they would be unable to influence the declaration proposed for discussion at the conference or raise their objections to the participation of bantustan leaders and representatives of South African business interests.

Around 4,500 delegates attended the CDF conference, making it the largest anti-apartheid gathering in South Africa's history. The conference was attended by the ANC/MDM and its Charterist affiliates, the BCM/AZAPO and, reflecting a major change in policy, the military leader of the nominally independent Transkei 'homeland' and the leader of the KaNgwane 'homeland', together with other bantustan opposition parties. The Democratic Party and the Consultative Business Movement were given observer status. Commenting on the BCM/AZAPO decision to participate, Haroon Patel said:

> 'In the BCM, we were unanimous about participation, but we have had to do a lot of talking and explaining to our cadres. That unanimity is based on the understanding that it is important for us to be part and parcel of mass struggles. This is an indication from the BCM that the blanket boycott position is in our view not the correct approach under current circumstances.'

The trade union federation NACTU withdrew from the conference although some of its unions linked to the BCM were present. NACTU representative Cunningham Ngcukana said the federation was unhappy about the attendance of 'collaborationists' such as the Democratic Party and the bantustan leaders.

One of the aims of the conference was to agree a united position to present to the United Nations which was due to begin a three-day debate on South Africa on 12 December. The conference adopted the OAU Harare declaration and further resolved to call for a 'constituent assembly, established on a non-racial basis and representing all the people of South Africa to draw up a new constitution for our country'.

However the BCM did not endorse the resolution and decided to take it back for further discussion by its supporters. It later dissociated itself from the conference declaration.

The two conferences show that the fundamental political divisions between the Africanist and Charterist trends of the movement remain. Deep-lying issues remain to be resolved and are highlighted in the differing attitudes to question of negotiations with the apartheid regime. ■

Haroon Patel (BCM) at the convening committee press conference, chaired by Fr Smangaliso Mkhatshwa, with Murphy Morobe (UDF)

Harare Communiqué

A consultative meeting between the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and 24 delegates from inside Azania (South Africa), representing trade unions, lawyers, students, youth, women, the church and the media, was held in Harare, Zimbabwe from 24 to 26 November 1989. This first consultative meeting was facilitated by the Cold Comfort Farm Trust.

The meeting was formally opened by the Hon Cde Didymus Mutasa, Secretary for External Affairs of Zanu (PF), Speaker of the House of Assembly and Chairman of the Cold Comfort Farm Trust. He reaffirmed Zanu (PF)/PAC solidarity and expressed confidence that victory in Azania was in sight. He urged the people of Azania to unite and wage resolute struggles on all fronts.

The formal opening session, attended by Zimbabwe Government officials, the Diplomatic Corps and invited guests then heard a keynote address by Cde Johnson Mlambo, Chairman of the PAC. In his address he traced the PAC's pioneering role in the legitimate struggles of the Azanian people for national liberation and self-determination. He said the people were waging the struggle on the following principles:

1. Apartheid cannot be reformed, it must be totally eradicated;
2. The vehicle for genuine change can never be the illegal minority racist regime but rather the oppressed and dispossessed majority. Therefore, the primary task must be to increase the fighting capacity of the people;
3. All forms of struggle must be encouraged and supported;
4. Internationally, the regime must be isolated and the call for comprehensive sanctions intensified. However, international actions must be regarded as a complementary factor . . . the decisive factor must be the internal factor;
5. The introduction of the East-West conflict in our struggle must be strongly resisted;

These principles have received wide support both internally and internationally.

On the current of 'negotiations' Cde Mlambo emphasised that as of now there existed no basis for genuine negotiations. The minority racist regime had not pronounced itself on the five pillars of apartheid, namely:

1. The population registration Act;
2. The 1913 and 1936 Land Acts on which is based the Group Areas Act;
3. The Bantu Education Act;
4. The Tricameral parliament system;
5. The Bantustans.

The above five pillars of apartheid are non-negotiable and must go!

Cde Mlambo welcomed the participants and expressed confidence that the consultations would prove extremely useful.

Cde Dikgang Moseneke spoke on behalf of the delegates from the home front. He informed the meeting about the growth of Africanism and the structures already established and those that will be launched shortly. He said that the Pan Africanist Movement (PAM) would soon be formally launched to coordinate and promote the Africanist cause. He stressed that the people inside Azania were also convinced that the racist regime was not ready for serious negotiations.

The consultative meeting then went into closed sessions to discuss the roles of church, lawyers, labour unions, students' and youth organisations, women, journalists and researchers and their contribution to the struggle for liberation. The discussions were wide ranging and profound.

The exchanges were conducted in a democratic atmosphere with the sole purpose of defining the common enemy and the most effective strategy to eradicate apartheid and its attendant evils of dispossession, oppression and exploitation and to usher in a new, genuinely democratic, non-racial and united Azania.

The participants agreed that the struggle was for national liberation and self-determination. To achieve this objective, the participants emphasised the need for the intensification of the struggle on all fronts.

The launching of the Pan Africanist Movement on 1-3 December 1989 inside Azania was warmly welcomed by the participants. The PAC pledged to fully co-operate with the independent PAM.

The participants were unanimous in their call for principled unity of all those having a contradiction with the racist minority regime. Sectarianism and division were deplored. They agreed to campaign vigorously to end sectarianism such as those practised by the Kagiso Trust and other internationally funded institutions in South Africa.

The participants endorsed the PAC's position that, as of now, there exists no basis for genuine negotiations. They unanimously maintained that only one-person one-vote elections to a single non-racial chamber can lead to a genuine non-racial democratic society.

The internal and external participants expressed profound gratitude to the Cold Comfort Farm Trust and to the Government and people of Zimbabwe for making this important and historical meeting possible and the hospitality extended.

Issued by Gora Ebrahim
Secretary for Foreign Affairs
Pan Africanist Congress
of Azania

SWAPO victory in Namibian election

ANDY HIGGINBOTTOM

The results of Namibia's first ever universal elections were emphatic. 57.03% of the votes cast between 7 and 11 November were for SWAPO, a clear statement of popular support for the liberation movement. Over 97% of the registered voters took part in the poll which, according to its United Nations supervisors, were 'free and fair'.

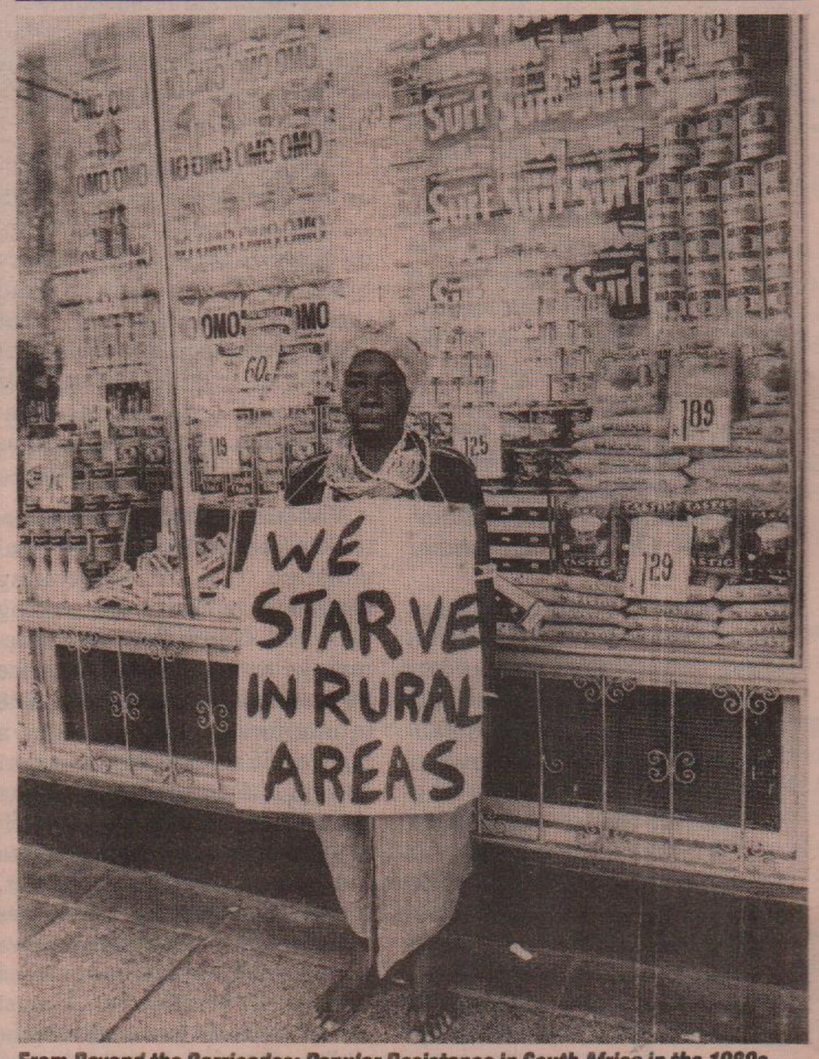
Ten parties stood lists of candidates for election on a proportional representation basis to a Constituent Assembly. SWAPO has 41 of the 72 seats. The DTA, created and funded by South Africa as a counterweight to the liberation struggle, was a distant second with 28.6% of the votes, translating into 21 seats. South Africa's tactic of establishing a reactionary block of one third of the Assembly seats just succeeded. The DTA, together with the far right ACN and FCN, have 25 seats. Representation of the other smaller parties, the UDF (4 seats), NNF (1 seat) and NPF (1 seat), if they work in alliance with SWAPO, will not be enough to secure the two thirds majority required to approve proposals for an independent constitution. Whether the DTA block will be a trump card in South Africa's hand depends on developments outside the Assembly.

SWAPO President Sam Nujoma stated on 15 November:

> 'SWAPO wants to reassure the nation that it will stand by its policy of national reconciliation . . . Specifically, I want to reassure the Civil Service that its services will continue to be needed, as will the productive efforts of all sectors of our economy'.

Pretoria is setting up the infrastructure for a prolonged campaign of covert operations in the mould of its genocidal operations against the other Front Line States. In northern Ovamboland, Namibia's most populous province, 92% voted SWAPO. And it is here that immediately after the election South Africa's destabilisation first emerged. On the weekend of 25/26 November nine Namibians were killed at the hands of DTA vigilantes. Lutheran Bishop Kleopas Dumeni complained that 'people are being beaten with sjamboks and stabbed by DTA supporters'. DTA vigilantes hunted down the visiting Canadian Rev John Evenson who was at Engela Lutheran Hospital investigating medical aid and co-operation. In another incident 13 SWAPO members, including two Assembly members, were taken to hospital after police assaults. Control of the police still lies with the South African appointed Administrator General, and will do so until the independent government is formed.

At Mavana camp in Kavango, a South African Defence Force general met former Koevoet and SWATF commanders, proposing they take their soldiers to bases in South Africa from which further operations against an independent Namibia can be mounted. On 7 December Sam Nujoma met with Sir Robin Renwick, Britain's ambassador in South Africa, requesting that British military personnel be sent to Namibia with the task of training former SWAPO freedom fighters and their SWATF enemies in an integrated national army. The model for this invitation is British army trainers in post independence Zimbabwe. But it was under British control that the MNR, created by Rhodesian military intelligence, was secretly moved to new bases in the Transvaal. The MNR has since been the vehicle for genocidal war against Mozambique. ■



From *Beyond the Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa in the 1980s.* Published by Kliptown Books at £12, this book conveys the horror and the intensity of sacrifice and courage of the oppressed people of South Africa.

End embargo on Vietnam
End forced repatriation

TREVOR RAYNE

'The British taxpayer has spent something in the order of £17 million . . . more and more of them are arriving. You can't cope . . . none of those going back are genuine refugees . . . They keep coming and coming . . . it just could not go on . . . Hong Kong is a tiny little island . . . It is no good (others) just complaining, unless they are prepared to take more.'

So there you have it from Margaret Thatcher: we're too crowded, they cost too much, why should we have to put up with them, what about the rest of the world and, anyway, how many more are there? Racism is so ingrained in the British government that only when the US State Department tells it that 'involuntary repatriation is unacceptable until conditions improve in Vietnam' does the government recognise the need to prepare the ground a little more thoroughly and begin diplomatic shuffles, negotiations, a propaganda offensive etc.

There are 57,000 Vietnamese in Hong Kong. The majority are held in 13 camps ringed by razor-wire and arc lights, guarded by armed police. The British government states they 'are not refugees' but 'economic migrants'. Thatcher called them 'illegal immigrants'. They were treated like criminals and at 3am on 11 December under cover of darkness 26 children, 17 women and 8 men were rounded up and returned to Vietnam. Foreign Minister Hurd explained that this was to demonstrate to the Vietnamese planning to sail for Hong Kong 'that this is not a happy voyage'.

A chorus of racist abuse from Tory backbenchers, and the British press plus the raising of the spectre of the 'Yellow peril' Hong Kong invasion of Britain in 1997 is designed to hold the government line firm against international and particularly US pressure. The Vietnamese government has stated that it will receive all those Vietnamese who wish to return voluntarily, or who do not oppose repatriation. They rightly explain that the problem is one of US and British making.

Since the 1975 Vietnamese revolutionary victory the USA, backed by Britain, has determined to take revenge on Vietnam and destroy its economy. An embargo on trade, aid and loans, plus political and diplomatic pressure combined with military support for counter-revolution through the Khmer Rouge and its allies, have been used to continue the Vietnam War by other methods. The explosive equivalent of 700 Hiroshimas, or more than the entire bomb-load dropped by all adversaries in the Second World War was rained on Vietnam by the US government. 400,000 tons of napalm and 72 million litres of defoliant turned vast tracts into chemical deserts. Perhaps 4 million Vietnamese were killed in the liberation struggles. Under these conditions Vietnam had to try and rebuild its economy.

Against this background the British press write of 'people fleeing communist dictatorship' (*Guardian* 13 December), of 'middle class families pushed to the margins of society by new authorities with more ideology than common sense'. When the first 'Boat People' arrived in the late 1970s and early 1980s they were used in the war against Vietnam; evidence of the supposed communist brutality and incompetence. Some were feted and touted around as great successes with their new found freedom. Others were shoved out of the way into south London estates to be left at the mercy of National Front thugs. But the propaganda and organised crime lured Vietnamese to take to their boats.

Communists and progressives should demand an end to the embargo on Vietnam, an end to British and US support for Cambodian counter-revolution, massive economic and medical aid to Vietnam, an end to forced repatriation of Vietnamese in Hong Kong.

Those who wish to help the victims of imperialism's war on Vietnam should send donations to the Medical Aid Committee for Vietnam, Bedford Chambers, Covent Garden, London WC2.

Victory to the Intifada!

Palestinian militants take refuge in secret alleyways

9 December marked the second anniversary of the Palestinian uprising. An uprising of the whole people against Zionist occupation, the Intifada has been sustained primarily by the working class and the dispossesed. It is this that has lent it the determination and resilience to withstand savage repression. Close to 1000 Palestinians have been killed, 50,000 wounded and over 60,000 imprisoned. The Zionists have extended detention without trial from 6 to 12 months and reduced the age of criminal responsibility to 12!

Despite this the Palestinian people have begun developing their own state apparatus. People's committees for security, health, education, prisoners' welfare have developed alongside a campaign to boycott Israeli produce to enable the development of a Palestinian economy. The Intifada has also developed the means to enforce the popular will against collaborators, many of whom have been executed or forced to flee.

All these developments have foiled imperialist, Zionist and Arab collaborationist attempts to end the uprising and replace the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

In Britain we can celebrate the Intifada by organising to 'Boycott Israeli Produce!' ■

Brazilian election

GARY ROSE

Brazilians will be voting in the country's first Presidential election for 29 years on 17 December. The two candidates are Fernando Collor de Mello, an unabashed supporter of Thatcherite policies and Luis Inacio 'Lula' da Silva of the Workers Party (PT). Early polls had Collor ahead, but that lead is marginal and Lula is gaining ground daily.

Collor was a loyal supporter of the military dictatorship; he has run a hugely expensive election campaign largely financed by sugar barons. Lula has concentrated on an active grassroots campaign, without all the razzmatazz of Collor's American style election campaign.

There are 83 million registered voters. The majority exist outside the state structures in grinding poverty. In rural areas a huge majority are illiterate, they do not have access to public health services, to unemployment benefits or to documentation necessary to maintain regular employment. These people are forced to vote by law.

Luis Inacio 'Lula' da Silva

The election is taking place at a time when monthly inflation is running at 50%, the US dollar exchange rate on the Parelo, the semi-official parallel money market, has been swinging wildly, the price of gold rose 25% in one day and the stock markets of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are fluctuating wildly, as stockbrokers panic over the seemingly impending victory of Lula. Mario Amato, the president of São Paulo's business federation has predicted that 800,000 businessmen will leave the country if Lula is elected.

Lula has stated that he is committed to a complete moratorium on Brazil's $109bn foreign debt, that controls on company profits will be imposed and that the large agricultural estates will be carved up.

As the prospect of defeat hits home to Collor he has taken to instigating a dirty tricks campaign. This week he produced a former girl-friend of Lula's who claimed that he had tried to make her have an abortion and then abandoned her and the child. Abortion is a crime in Brazil. One of Collor's campaign workers promptly resigned and revealed that the woman had been paid the equivalent of £1300 to make the accusation.

If Lula does win the election, the PT have major problems to deal with. There are seven million children living on the streets; hunger and disease are rife. The critical question is of a possible coup by the armed forces. In the circumstances such a scenario could provoke a truly revolutionary response from Brazil's massive working class. ■

Filipino reactionaries divide

TREVOR RAYNE

'The sixth coup attempt actually gives notice to Congress and Senate, and to the whole Aquino regime, that the US will not tolerate talks of independence or any talk of ousting its military bases even if only for show. The outcome of this coup attempt, and the very existence and nature of the government after this coup, is for the US to decide and for all the world to see.'
The National Democratic Front of the Philippines International Office 1 December 1989.

The sight of the mutinous troops marching back to barracks, rifles slung over their shoulders shouting 'Time out' and 'the fight goes on' had a farcical, self-parodying touch, like play-acting. Actors they are in a play scripted by the US government which backs both sides in this factional fight within the Filipino ruling class. US handlers encouraged anti-Aquino forces to launch the coup attempt, but saw to it that the plan stayed within limits: no direct attempt on the person of Aquino, no assault on the Malacanang palace. However, a sufficient show of force by elite Scout Rangers and Marines to enable the US Air Force to determine the balance in favour of Aquino.

Having demonstrated Aquino's dependence on it, the US government will now insist upon the extension of its military bases on the islands beyond their expiry date in 1991, that Aquino become a figurehead for its chosen political instruments with possibly the increased incorporation of the Philippines military into the government.

The coup took place in a deteriorating economic and political situation that is aggravating divisions within the ruling class. Per capita income has remained roughly the same since 1974. Repayments on the $28 billion foreign debt consume a quarter of the country's export earnings. Fifty per cent of the population live below the official poverty line. 'Even before the military rebellion broke out, the people's organisations are set to hold a People's Strike over a new (23%) oil price increase imposed by Mrs Aquino. Almost all teachers and government employees are already on strike and the movement to oust the US bases . . . is surging to new heights'. (NDF)

In this context Aquino used the coup attempt to declare a State of Emergency. Military rule is being extended in a way reminiscent of the Marcos dictatorship. The targets will not be the coup plotters (hardly any punishment was dealt the perpetrators of the previous five attempts), but rather the popular organisations, supporters of the NDF and the New People's Army. Death squad slayings can be expected to increase.

We see in the Philippines US imperialism more confident, unrestrained in the use of firepower, treating the people and the government in the crudest colonial manner. This is transparent to the Filipino masses. The revolutionary forces will take advantage of the division among the reactionaries, of the political and economic crisis facing the government to go on the offensive. US imperialism will find that the containment exercise achieved with the replacement of Marcos by Aquino is undone and that the battle lines are drawn more clearly and less in its favour than ever before. ■

No respite for India's poor

VIRMAN MAN

To get rich quick in India there are two main routes: either get to know someone with political power, or even better, get elected to government. In November the Congress Party lost power for only the second time since Independence in 1947.

Government now falls to a hotch-potch coalition of several parties whose only point of agreement was to ensure the downfall of Rajiv Gandhi, the latest in the long line of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty which has become almost synonymous with Congress for three generations. Wealth and privilege will now flow to another section of the middle classes. But for the majority of India's 800 million people – almost an eighth of humanity – the question is: what's the difference?

Election candidates – on both Congress and opposition sides – included convicted criminals, film stars and even cricket players. Vote buying, courting favour, bribery and bullying with armed guards were the tactics used. Gandhi's major disadvantage was the fact that he could not keep his corruption from being publicly examined. In particular fresh evidence concerning the Bofors arms scandal, in which it is alleged that upwards of £25 million was paid by the Swedish arms manufacturer to Indian middlemen, to Congress members and even to Gandhi himself in order to secure the sale of Howitzers to the Indian army. Slurs and slanders replaced politics – neither side had anything concrete to offer except the usual vague promises of all things to all people.

Now that VP Singh has power he has to decide what to do with it. His coalition government will not be easy to manage. On the one hand his allies include the vehemently Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party, and on the other the communist-led Left Front – but both refuse to participate in the same government. Horse-trading and wheeler-dealing will be the order of the day.

For the well-to-do the election was about how best to protect or improve their privileged position. For village India, however, the issues at stake were not corruption or dynastic power-play but schools, electrification, agricultural prices, inflation and health-care. To satisfy these needs requires more political will than the new government possesses. ■

GUERRILLA OFFENSIVE IN EL SALVADOR

'The FMLN is the only vanguard'

The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front offensive launched on 11 November shook the Pentagon. Throughout El Salvador the regime's army was out-manoeuvred and out-fought. For two weeks the world glimpsed the reality of the beleaguered fascist President Cristiani surrounded by a military frantically looking for a way to hit back at the enemy. His government sent letters to the Pope threatening the lives of bishops, his airforce used US pilots to bomb cities and drop leaflets calling for mass exterminations. This is the government that receives $2 million a day from the United States, whose President is fêted in Downing Street and applauded by Thatcher as a democrat.

The British press, in collusion with the US and British governments, has removed all reports of developments in El Salvador from its news coverage for over two weeks. Hardly surprising in view of what the offensive revealed. The FMLN proved that it is a sophisticated revolutionary army, able to deploy a range of political and military tactics.

This it is able to do only because of the support of the mass of the people. 70,000 US sponsored deaths have not broken the will to gain liberation. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* is pleased and honoured to carry an exclusive interview with a representative of the FMLN. The Second Offensive has begun; in future issues we will bring you news of its progress to victory.

We present below a timely interview with VICTOR AMAYA. Comrade Amaya is in charge of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front's (FMLN) political and diplomatic commission in Britain. He is a doctor and has been a member of the FMLN since its foundation. He spoke to EDDIE ABRAHAMS, TREVOR RAYNE and DAVID REED.

Could you tell us what the aim of the FMLN's present military offensive is?

We must begin by referring to the FMLN's efforts to find a political solution to our crisis. We have made several proposals to the government, and the latest one was to convert ourselves into a political party in exchange for several reforms. The ARENA government, which is actually the death squad government, thought our proposals were a sign of weakness. So it decided to launch its plan called 'total war'. That means a massive level of killing to destroy all the open opposition. And they used our proposals as a means of winning time to carry out this plan.

In fact since the ARENA government, headed by Cristiani, took power, the violation of human rights began to increase. But for public consumption, especially in the USA, they tried to put a moderate image across, telling people that Cristiani would tackle the death squads and that he would tame them. But the repression against the people continued to increase. They thought that in one year they would defeat us and destroy all the popular movements. The death squads became so confident that they put a bomb in the FENASTRAS (National Workers Federation) offices killing 10 and injuring 30.

THE FMLN COUNTER-ATTACKS

In retaliation for the FENASTRAS bombing we decided to launch a short term military offensive. The main objective of this offensive was to demonstrate to the death squad government that we are stronger than ever and secondly that any political solution is impossible without the participation of the FMLN.

In this current offensive we were also trying to test the people's stamina and their response when we entered the capital San Salvador. Their resolve was superior to our expectations. The people were actually angrier against the ARENA government than we thought and they were supporting our fighters.

As a result the military campaign began to convert itself into a strategic battle to change the correlation of forces in our favour. We decided, with the support of the people, to divide our offensive into two phases. The first was a battle of defending the positions we took in working class areas. The government didn't hesitate to use massive bombing of these neighbourhoods, even using phosphorous bombs. We therefore decided to go to the second phase which was a war of movement allowing us to penetrate all areas of the capital and other cities. Our aim now was to tie up military forces and make it impossible for them to send reinforcements to the capital. In this we were successful with offensives in Santa Ana, San Miguel, Chalatenango and many other places.

Our offensive revealed that the government was weaker than we thought. They had to rely on the airforce, as their infantry were not even able to break our ranks. We were able to attack the very heart of the military: at some times we were fighting no more than three hundred metres from the Chief of Staff HQ. We had them under pressure. Additionally we have had reports of defections – a company in San Miguel, a group of parachutists in San Salvador, 100 soldiers in Usulatan. This means that morale inside the army is breaking.

TAKING THE WAR TO THE RICH

As the government was continuing to bomb working class districts, we decided to take the war to the wealthy areas, to go into Escalon, La Santana and other neighbourhoods where the ruling class, the death squads, the North American advisors, government officers and the higher middle class live. We decided to take the war there and invite them to bomb these areas the same way they did in the working class neighbourhoods. And of course they didn't.

In these wealthy areas, we didn't just occupy the Sheraton Hotel. We stormed the homes of senior army officers and captured important intelligence documents. We decided to let them feel what the poor felt when they were bombing working class areas. We used mortars to destroy their homes.

During our offensive in these areas we made it public that neither civilians nor North American advisers and their houses were targets. We offered a truce to allow the civilian population to abandon the area, the same way poor people were doing in working class areas.

How was your support affected by government bombing of working class areas?

Our people are very mature. They know where the enemy is. The government destroyed, in Zacamil, 500 humble homes which were actually a project of the Lutheran church for the earthquake victims. The people were made homeless for a second time. Yet they still support us. In Mejicanos, another working class neighbourhood, we recruited about 150 new supporters. They are now fighting with us.

Do you have the arms to offer these new cadre, do you have means to give them political education and training?

During the fighting army death squads entered the University of Central America in San Salvador and murdered six progressive Jesuit priests. As the US politicians wept crocodile tears over their deaths, military aid was increased for the beleaguered El Salvadorean army.

Yes of course. We have an embryo of a state in El Salvador. We have created a structure in which we have everything you would consider a state: local government, education for adults and children, medical care and so on.

As for arming the cadre, when you are new, you are not going to be given a gun immediately. You first have to do something in the logistics field or perhaps agitational work in the mass movement. You then have to have a minimum training to have a gun and after that you have to win the right to have a gun. It is not like giving candies. When you have a gun you feel proud because it is something like a prize for you.

How do you see the relationship between the military and the political struggle?

You should not see the FMLN as a military organisation. We have a military army, but we are a political and military force. That means that one of our objectives is to organise the people, the people at all levels. As I have told you, we have the embryo of a state in which we have many different levels of participation of the people. This is a popular movement in which the FMLN is only the vanguard, but is recognised by the people as that.

Do you believe you can sustain the present level of military operations?

Yes, sure. But the problem is that, as we have said many times, we don't want more killings. We don't like the war. We are not military men, we are civilians with arms. We are trying to achieve a new democracy in our country and are completely open to every political solution. But we have to put several conditions.

We absolutely do not accept any political solution with the participation of either Cristiani or the ARENA party because we know they are killers. We also have nothing to say to what we call *La Tandona*, the officers who graduated in 1966 and who are in the most important places of power. We are trying to achieve a solution with the honest element inside the army and with all other political and social forces.

What impact do you think the latest US-Soviet summit is going to have on your struggle?

We know it is on the agenda. But we don't have any intervention by the USSR in our problems. We don't have anything to say to them. They could suggest something to us, but it would be nothing like ordering us.

But the USA has accused the Soviet Union of supplying you with arms through Nicaragua and Cuba.

The people who brought Soviet weapons to Central America were the Americans! After the defeat of the PLO in 1982, the Israelis took tons of Soviet weapons and brought them to Honduras. The Americans gave these weapons to the Nicaraguan Contras. Now, because the Contras have been defeated they are selling everything. You only have to go to the border and for $100 you can get an AK47. We have also bought not only SAM 7 missiles but the one called the EYE. So we have these Soviet weapons not because the USSR has sent them to us but because the North Americans brought them from Israel!

There is talk of the FMLN obtaining arms from Nicaragua too. Is this all part of a propaganda attack on your struggle?

Yes, of course, that's very clear. We don't actually need Nicaraguan support in terms of weapons. We have enough in our country. During the last offensive, for example, we captured 100 M16 rifles, about 100,000 bullets and about 50 machine guns.

Can you tell us what the response has been in the Central American region towards the FMLN advances?

First, the Guatemalan army sent 126 members of the *Kaibles*, a very well known counter-insurgency force composed of criminals, absolute criminals. But they were not able to get out of the airport in El Salvador because we were attacking. We have a declaration from our comrades of the URNG (the united front of Guatemalan revolutionary organisations) saying that if the Guatemalan army intervenes, the URNG will also go to El Salvador to fight on our side.

In the case of Honduras, it is actually a military base for the USA. We call it the aircraft carrier. Honduras is on the side of the USA. But I think that there will be surprises from the people of Honduras. However, Panama has supported our struggle and in Costa Rica the President has been under pressure from the North Americans because of his support for a peace settlement.

Can the US tolerate another revolutionary, anti-imperialist government in Central America?

We know that we are now at the stage where direct US military intervention is possible. It was in order not to give them a pretext for such an intervention that we decided not to consider their personnel and homes as military targets.

However, if they do intervene we have a contingency plan. Also the region will explode and the revolution will then rise to the level of a Central American one. ■

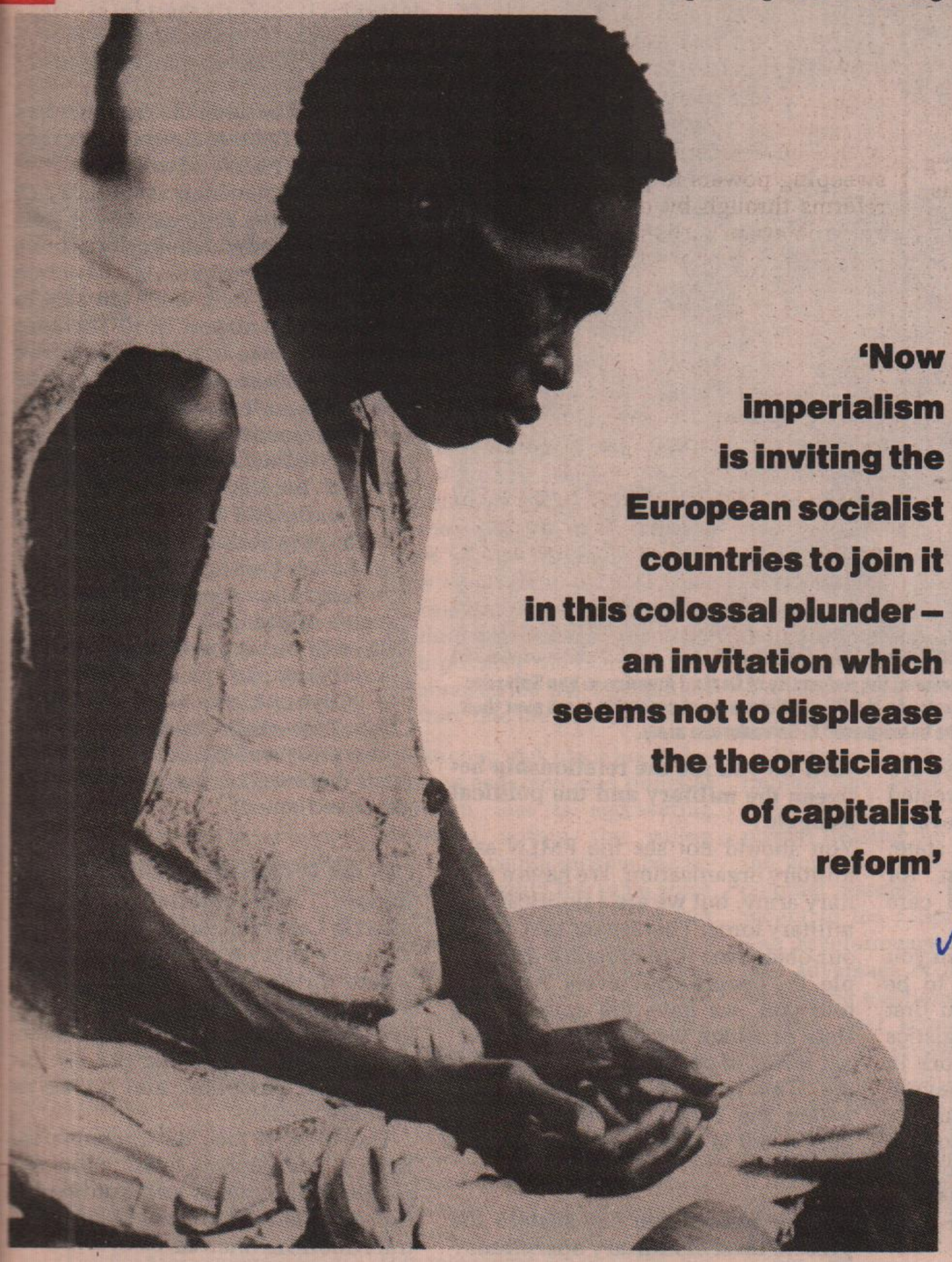
'Our country is working hard, implementing ambitious socio-economic development programmes. The irrational laws of capitalism do not guide our actions, and every man and woman in our country has a place in education, production or services. No close relatives of those who died while fulfilling their missions or who suffered serious injuries have been forgotten. They have received, are receiving and will continue to receive all the care and consideration due them for the sacrifices made by their loved ones and for their own devoted, selfless, generous, even heroic behaviour.

The hundreds of thousands of Cubans who carried out military or civilian internationalist missions have earned the respect of present and future generations. They have honourably upheld our people's glorious fighting and internationalist traditions.

On their return they have found their country engaged in a tremendous struggle for development while continuing to confront the criminal imperialist blockade with exemplary dignity. This is in addition to the current crisis in the socialist camp, from which we can only expect negative economic consequences for our country.

People in most of those countries aren't talking about the anti-imperialist struggle or the principles of internationalism. Those words aren't even mentioned in their press. Such concepts have been virtually removed from their political dictionaries. Meanwhile, capitalist values are gaining unheard-of strength in those societies.

Capitalism means unequal terms of trade with the peoples of the Third World, the exacerbation of individual selfishness and national chauvinism, the reign of irrationality and chaos in investment and production, the ruthless sacrifice of the peoples on behalf of blind economic laws, the survival of the fittest, the exploitation of man by man, a situation of everybody for himself. In the social sphere, capitalism implies many more things: prostitution, drugs, gambling, begging, unemployment, abysmal inequalities among citizens, the depletion of natural resources, the



'Now imperialism is inviting the European socialist countries to join it in this colossal plunder – an invitation which seems not to displease the theoreticians of capitalist reform'

FIDEL CASTRO

REVOLUT
socialism and indep

In this important speech Fidel Castro examines the implications of recent developments in the socialist countries for the vast majority of humanity in the Third World. He is the first communist leader to oppose the developments in the socialist countries and points to the interests of imperialism in supporting and fostering these developments. He reminds socialists of their fundamental internationalist duties. This is demonstrated by Cuba's own example. The speech was given at the memorial ceremony for the Cuban internationalists held at El Cacatual on 7 December 1989. In the first part of his speech Castro pays tribute to those who fell while carrying out their military and civilian missions. The speech continues:*

poisoning of the air, seas, rivers and forests and especially the plundering of the underdeveloped nations by the industrialised capitalist countries. In the past, it meant colonialism. Now, it means neo-colonising billions of human beings, using the most sophisticated – and cheapest, most effective and most ruthless – economic and political methods.

Capitalism, its market economy, its values, its categories and its methods can never pull socialism out of its present difficulties or rectify whatever mistakes have been made. Most of those difficulties are the result not just of errors but also the tight blockade and isolation imposed on the socialist countries by imperialism and the major capitalist powers, which have monopolised most of the world's wealth and the most advanced technologies by plundering their colonies, exploiting the working class and promoting a large-scale brain drain from countries that have not yet developed.

IMPERIALISM WANTS THE SYSTEMATIC DESTRUCTION OF SOCIALISM

Devastating wars were unleashed against the first socialist state, taking a toll of millions of lives and destroying most of the means of production. Like a phoenix, the first socialist state had to rise more than once from its ashes. It has performed great services to mankind by defeating fascism and decisively supporting the liberation movements in countries still under colonial rule. Now, all this is being forgotten.

It's disgusting to see how many people, even in the USSR itself, are engaged in denying and destroying the history-making feats and extraordinary merits of that heroic people. That is not the way to rectify and overcome the undeniable errors made by a revolution that emerged from Czarist authoritarianism in an enormous, backward, poor country. We shouldn't blame Lenin now for having chosen Czarist Russia as the place for the biggest revolution in history.

Thus we didn't hesitate to stop the circulation of certain Soviet publications that are full of poison against the USSR itself and socialism. You can see that imperialism, reactionary forces and the counter-revolution are responsible for that tone. Some of those publications have already started calling for an end to the fair and equitable trade relations that were established between the USSR and Cuba during the Cuban revolutionary process. They want the USSR to begin practising unequal trade with Cuba by selling its products to us at ever higher prices and buying our agricultural produce and raw materials at ever lower prices, just as the United States does with other Third World countries – in short, they want the USSR to join the US blockade against Cuba.

Imperialism's undermining actions and the systematic destruction of the values of socialism, combined with the mistakes that have been made, have accelerated the destabilising process in the Eastern European socialist countries. The United States designed and implemented a long-term policy of treating each country differently and undermining socialism from within.

Imperialism and capitalist powers cannot hide their glee over the way things are turning out. They are convinced – not without reason – that, at this point, the socialist bloc has virtually ceased to exist. Groups of US citizens, including US presidential advisers, are programming capitalist development in some of those Eastern European countries right now. A recent news dispatch reported that they were fascinated by that 'exciting experience'. One of them, a US government official, favoured the application in Poland of a programme similar to the New Deal with which Roosevelt tried to alleviate capitalism's severe crisis. This would be to help the 600,000 Polish workers who will lose their jobs in 1990 and half of the country's 17.8 million workers who will have to be retrained and change jobs as a result of the implementation of a market economy. Imperialism and the NATO capitalist powers are persuaded – not without reason – that, at this point, the Warsaw Pact no longer exists and that societies that are corroded and undermined from within will not be able to resist.

It has been stated that socialism must be improved. No one can deny this principle, which is inherent and permanently applicable to every human endeavour. But can socialism be improved by forsaking Marxism-Leninism's most basic principles? Why must the so-called reforms be along capitalist lines? If those ideas are truly revolutionary, as some claim, why do they receive the imperialist leaders' unanimous, enthusiastic support? In an amazing statement, the President of the United States described himself as the number one advocate of the doctrines currently being applied in many countries in the socialist camp. History has never recorded an instance of a truly revolutionary idea receiving the enthusiastic support of the leader of the most powerful, aggressive and greedy empire known to mankind.

REVOLUTION CANNOT BE IMPORTED OR EXPORTED

During comrade Gorbachev's visit to Cuba in April this year – a visit during which we had a frank, in-depth exchange of views – I publicly expressed my opinion to the National Assembly that, if any socialist country wants to build capitalism, its right to do so should be respected, just as we demand complete respect for any capitalist country's right to build socialism.

I believe that revolution cannot be imported or exported. A socialist state cannot be founded through artificial insemination or by means of an embryo transplant. A revolution requires certain conditions within society, and the people in each individual nation are the only ones who can create it. These ideas don't run counter to the solidarity that all revolutionaries can and should extend to one another. Moreover, revolution is a process that may advance or regress, a process that may even be frustrated. But above all communists must be courageous and revolutionary. Communists are duty bound to struggle under all circumstances, no matter how adverse they may be. The Paris Communards struggled and died in the defence of their ideas. The banners of the revolution and of socialism are not surrendered without a fight. Only cowards and the demoralised surrender – never communists and other revolutionaries.

IMPERIALISTS URGE EUROPEAN SOCIALISTS TO JOIN THEIR PLUNDER OF THIRD WORLD

Now imperialism is urging the European socialist countries to become recipients of its surplus capital, to develop capitalism and to join in plundering the Third World countries. It is a well-known fact that large part of the developed capitalis world's wealth comes from the unequal terms of trade it maintains with the Third World countries. For centuries those nations were plundered as colonies. Millions of their sons and daughters were enslaved. Their gold silver and other mineral resources were exhausted. They were pitilessly exploited and underdevelopment was imposed on them. Underdevelopment was the most direct and clearest consequence of colonialism. Now those nations are being squeezed dry by means of interest payments on an endless, unpayable debt, while ridiculously low prices are paid for their commodities and they are forced to pay ever higher prices for the industrial goods they import. Financial and human resources are constantly being drawn away from those nations through the flight of capital and the brain drain. Their trade is blocked by dumping, high tariffs, import quotas, synthetic substitutes produced through advanced technological processes and subsidies for the developed capitalist countries' products when they aren't competitive.

Now imperialism is inviting the European socialist countries to join in this colossal plunder – an invitation which seems not to displease the theoreticians of capitalist reform. Thus in many of those countries no one speaks of about the tragedy of the Third World, and their discontented multitudes are guided toward capitalism and anti-communism – and in one country, towards Pan-Germanism. Such developments may even lead to fascist trends. The prize promised by imperialism is a share of the plunder wrested from our peoples, the only way of building capitalist consumer societies.

Right now, the United States and the other capitalist powers are much more interested in investing in Eastern Europe than in any other part of the world. What resources can the Third World – in which billions of people live in sub-human conditions – expect from such developments?

TION
pendence

A ONE-SIDED PEACE?

They speak to us of peace, but what kind of peace? Of peace between the major powers, while imperialism reserves the right to intervene in and attack the Third World countries. There are more than enough examples. The government of the United States demands that no one help the El Salvadorean revolutionaries and tries to blackmail the USSR into ending its economic and military assistance to Nicaragua and Cuba because they express solidarity with the Salvadorean revolutionaries, even though we abide strictly by our commitments concerning the weapons supplied by the USSR, in accord with the agreements signed between our sovereign nations. Meanwhile, that same imperialist government which is demanding an end to solidarity with the Salvadorean revolutionaries is helping the genocidal Salvadorean government and sending special combat units to El Salvador supporting the counter-revolution in Nicaragua, organising coups d'état in Panama, sending military aid to UNITA in Angola – in spite of the successful peace agreements in South Western Africa – and continuing to supply the rebel forces in Afghanistan with large amounts of weapons, ignoring the Geneva accords and the fact that the Soviet troops have withdrawn.

Only a few days ago, US air force planes insolently intervened in the internal conflict in the Philippines. Regardless of whether or not the rebel forces had good cause for their action – which it is not our place to judge. The US intervention in that country is a very serious matter and is an accurate reflection of the current world situation, showing that the United States has taken upon itself the role of gendarme, not only in Latin America – a region it has always considered its private preserve – but also in any other Third World country.

The consecration of the principle of universal intervention by a major power spells an end to independence and sovereignty in the world. What kind of peace and security can our peoples have other than that which we ourselves achieve through our own heroism?

The elimination of nuclear weapons is an excellent idea. If it were more than simply utopian and could be achieved some day, it would be of unquestionable benefit and would increase world security – but only for a part of mankind. It would not bring peace, security or hope to the Third World countries. Imperialism doesn't need nuclear weapons to attack peoples. Its powerful fleets, which are stationed all over the world, its military bases everywhere, and its ever-more sophisticated and lethal conventional weapons are enough to ensure its role as the world's master and gendarme.

Moreover, 40,000 children, who could be saved, die every day in our world because of underdevelopment and poverty. As I've said before – and this is worth repeating – it's as if a bomb similar to the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were dropped every three days on the poor children in the world.

If these developments continue on their present course and the United States isn't forced to renounce these concepts, what new way of thinking can we speak of? Following this course, the bipolar world which emerged in the post-war period will inexorably become a unipolar world under US hegemony.

'The Paris Communards struggled and died in the defence of their ideas. The banners of the revolution and of socialism are not surrendered without a fight'

SOCIALISM IN CUBA

In Cuba, we are engaged in a process of rectification. No revolution or truly socialist rectification is possible without a strong, disciplined, respected party. Such a process cannot be advanced by slandering socialism, destroying its values, casting slurs on the Party, demoralising its vanguards, abandoning the Party's guiding role, eliminating social discipline and sowing chaos and anarchy everywhere. This may foster a counter-revolution, but not revolutionary changes.

The US imperialists think that Cuba won't be able to hold out and that the new situation in the socialist community will inexorably help them to bring our revolution to its knees.

Cuba is not a country in which socialism came in the wake of the victorious divisions of the Red Army. In Cuba, our people created our socialist society in the course of a legitimate heroic struggle. The 30 years in which we have stood firm against the most powerful empire on earth, that sought to destroy our revolution, bear witness to our political and moral strength.

Those of us in our country's leadership aren't a bunch of bumbling parvenus, new to our positions of responsibility. We come from the tanks of the old anti-imperialist fighters who followed Mella and Guiteras, who attacked the Moncada and came on the *Granma*, who fought in the Sierra Maestra, in the underground struggle and at the Bay of Pigs, who were unshaken by the October missile crisis, who have stood firm against imperialist aggression for 30 years, who have performed great labour feats and have carried out glorious internationalist missions. Men and women from three generations of Cubans are members and hold posts of responsibility in our battle-seasoned party, our marvellous vanguard young people's organisation, our powerful mass organisations, our revolutionary armed forces and our Ministry of the Interior.

In Cuba the revolution, socialism and independence are indissolubly linked. We owe everything we are today to the revolution and socialism. If Cuba were ever to return to capitalism, our independence and sovereignty would be lost forever. We would be an extension of Miami, a mere appendage of US imperialism, and the prediction that a US president made in the 19th century, when that country was considering the annexation of Cuba – that our island would fall into its hands like a ripe fruit – would be proved true. Our people are and will always be willing to give their lives to prevent this. Here, at Maceo's tomb**, we recall his immortal phrase: 'Anyone who tries to seize Cuba will win only its blood-soaked soil, if he doesn't perish in the struggle first'.

We Cuban communists and the millions of our people's revolutionary soldiers will carry out the role assigned to us in history, not only as the first socialist state in the Western hemisphere but also as staunch front-line defenders of the noble cause of all the destitute, exploited people in the world.

We have never aspired to having custody of the banners and principles which the revolutionary movement has defended throughout its heroic and inspiring history. However, if fate were to decree that, one day, we would be among the last defenders of socialism in a world which US imperialism has realised Hitler's dreams of world domination, we would defend this bulwark to the last drop of our blood.

These men and women whom we are laying to rest today in the land of their birth gave their lives for the most treasured values of our history and our revolution.

We will follow their example. Eternal glory to them. Socialism or death. Patria o muerte. Venceremos!

* We thank the Cuban Embassy for giving us a translation of this speech a few days after it was given. It has been cut for reasons of space.

** Antonio Maceo, Cuban leader in the wars of independence against the Spanish.

EASTERN EUROPE

SOCIALISM in retreat

The momentous changes, sweeping so rapidly across the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, are fundamentally altering the context in which the communist movement developed its strategy and tactics over the past four or five decades. With bewildering speed many old and seemingly unshakeable certainties are being challenged and hurled into irrelevance. Almost overnight the bourgeoisie sighs with tremendous relief. According to them, communism – the main threat to bouregois property and its attendant 'civilisation' – has proved to be only a transient spectre, a failure now vanishing into history. EDDIE ABRAHAMS examines the realities of counter-revolution.

I.

To a greater or lesser extent, in Hungary, in Poland and Czechoslovakia, in the German Democratic Republic and in Bulgaria, a dangerous counter-revolutionary process has been unleashed. Many will find it hard to believe that counter-revolution can take the form of mass peaceful demonstrations on the streets calling for freedom. But it will become clear, as it already has in Poland, that those leading the movement are not intent on reforming and revitalising the socialist system but sweeping it away and with it all the gains the working class has made in those countries – social welfare, full employment, housing, education and health.

The commitment to freedom of the influential petit-bourgeois sectors leading this movement will soon prove secondary to the priority of capital accumulation. In Poland Lech Walesa has argued that the Solidarity-led government should be given sweeping powers to push economic reforms through by decree to overcome delays in parliament.

This has happened now for two reasons. First, the reactionaries have seized the moment at which the Soviet Union has made clear its inability to sustain and defend socialism in Eastern Europe. Secondly, the leaders of these movements have been able to exploit the profound alienation of the working class from the Communist Parties with the former playing a passive role in the political life of Eastern European countries.

By exploiting the profound disenchantment with and hostility to the ruling Communist Parties, these counter-revolutionary elements were able to play a key role in mobilising the mass movement and in taking its leadership. In one form or another, these movements (Solidarity in Poland, New Forum in the GDR, the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia and the Union of Democratic Forces in Bulgaria) have effectively ended Communist Party rule.

Under the guise of advocating generic non-class 'reform' to 'benefit all', the organised opposition in Eastern Europe is conducting a conscious pro-imperialist class battle on the economic and political front. They are demanding the replacement of the planned economy by a capitalist one and the introduction of rights to allow them to organise independently of and in opposition to the working class.

Such 'reforms' stand in total contradiction to the interests of the majority of the population. Yet the success of the counter-revolutionaries in dragging hundreds of thousands behind this programme is testimony to the thorough degeneration of the ruling Communist Parties. They have lost all standing and respect among the people and have transformed once proud parties into vehicles for privilege and career. With the Communist Parties discredited and the working class lacking its own independent voice the counter-revolutionaries are surging forward with unprecedented confidence.

II

When urged to offer economic aid to the GDR, the West German Finance Minister, Theo Waigel refused:

> 'In no way will we finance the past or a new form of socialist planned economy in East Germany.'

Chancellor Kohl pressed the point home by stating:

> 'Without a fundamental reform of the economic system, without scrapping the planned economy and erecting a market-based order, all assistance will be futile.'

The IMF, major imperialist banks and imperialist states are preparing proposals for multi-billion dollar aid packages to Eastern Europe. All these will be conditional on accelerating market reforms and privatisation, on austerity programmes and on price reforms which will eliminate subsidies on food and other essentials for the working class. The first results of such reforms can be seen in the unemployment queues and soup-kitchens in Poland. Here prices for bare essentials have rocketed and the population is left hungry while meat is exported for foreign exchange to pay interest on vast foreign debts.

The imperialist bourgeoisie recognise that socialism can finally be proclaimed dead only when the planned economies have been totally dismantled. They understand that politics is ultimately determined by economics and that the antithesis between capitalism and communism is to be found in the irreconcilable contradiction between the market and the planned economy. It is, therefore, to the destruction of the planned economy that they are directing their efforts, for as it collapses so do all the obstacles standing in the way of

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continued from page 9

predatory imperialist capital transforming the region into a pool of cheap labour and cheap raw materials. As a spokesperson for Fiat put it, Eastern Europe will be like the Third World, but on Europe's doorstep.

This imperialist economic programme is actively endorsed by the dominant and organised trend in the Eastern European opposition. The Czechoslovakian Civic Forum, for example, is 'convinced that this (planned) economic system cannot be improved. We want to create a developed market . . . and real competition.' And an advisor adds that 'We need a Madam Thatcher here.'

In Bulgaria and East Germany the opposition has made market reforms a major plank of their platforms. In Hungary, the privatisation of the economy is being led by the ruling party itself. In Poland Lech Walesa, once beloved of the British left, has offered Poland and its working class for sale to US and European capital. In the USA he appealed: 'We seek buyers for 80% of the Polish economy . . . In Eastern Europe you can make the business deals of the century . . . '

Alongside this reactionary economic programme, the counter-revolution has a worked-out political programme. In every Eastern European country we hear demands for an end to the 'leading role of the Communist Party', 'free elections', 'free press', 'freedom of conscience'. Running alongside these 'freedoms' are demands for prohibitions on any political organisation in the workplace. These anti-working class elements, whilst demanding freedom for themselves, try to stop the working class defending its own interests.

The imposition of bourgeois 'freedoms' has already produced reactionary results. Proponents of capitalist restoration can now organise without fear of suppression. The fascist West German Republican Party is preparing to take part in 'democratic elections' in the GDR, and is distributing leaflets on working class estates. Pro-Nazi contingents are marching on the weekly demonstrations in Leipzig. In Poland millionaires, and in their wake anti-semitic fascists, flaunt themselves in public life, while Jacek Kuron, Minister of Labour in the new Solidarity government, is preparing laws to ban strikes.

III

To understand the origin and the survival of counter-revolutionary forces it is necessary to turn to the legacy of 1945-1955 – the period of the establishment of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The ruling Communist Parties proved too weak to destroy the influence of the bourgeoisie and petit-bourgeoisie. In agriculture, and even in industry, a significant proportion of the economy remained in bourgeois hands, while petit-bourgeois social-democratic elements infiltrated the state, the party and economic apparatus.

Socialism triumphed to a great extent because of the presence of the victorious Red Army, rather than as a result of working class uprisings. Unable to rule alone, the Communist Parties went through a process of mergers or federations with social-democratic organisations which increased the weight of opportunism within the ruling parties. From the inception of socialism in Eastern Europe the connection between the Communist Party and the working class was weak and already tainted by opportunist bureaucratic features.

As a result of these factors, there was no thorough destruction of the old bourgeois state apparatus. The dictatorship of the proletariat was not exercised effectively and the working class was not drawn into active participation in the planned economy and in political life. Bourgeois, bureaucratic and anti-democratic methods prevailed. Forgotten were the proletarian principles of the Paris Commune: the abolition of Parliamentarianism and its replacement by direct working class democracy, the uniting of the legislative and executive arms of the state in the hands of an armed self-governing working class, the payment of the average working class wage to state functionaries and working class delegates, the right of immediate recall of all party and state personnel.

Imperialism, therefore, had a strong foothold which it has used to undermine socialism. In addition, COCOM prevented socialist countries gaining access to modern technology. Through its destructive arms race it helped distort the socialist economies forcing them to divert key resources from civilian to military construction. With each major anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist victory imperialism responded with savage war – Korea, Vietnam, Angola, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Kampuchea. In these conditions, it proved virtually impossible to develop the socialist economies internationally, let alone in Eastern Europe itself.

These processes accelerated the existing trend towards corruption, privilege and bureaucracy in the communist parties. Whilst accumulating the gross privileges recently exposed in the GDR and Bulgaria, they stifled honest working class criticism of these distortions. However, the anti-privilege current in the GDR, for example, is rapidly becoming an excuse for communist baiting. Today the Communist Parties do not have the political and moral strength to combat counter-revolution.

IV

Developments in Eastern Europe are by no means a foregone conclusion. The anti-working class and anti-communist forces now have the initiative. But, as the positive gains made by the Eastern European working class during the past four decades are undermined and as the capitalist market creates poverty and unemployment, once again the working class will begin to organise and resist.

We would do well to heed the words of Daniel Passant, deputy editor of *Polityka*, the Polish Communist Party paper:

> 'The left will not perish completely. Socialism left durable traces in people's consciousness. The trend towards re-privatisation – the re-establishment of private schools, the rich villas and limousines of the new bourgeoisie, the Church's great influence, the revival of right-wing nationalism and obscurantism, deeper and deeper poverty and the spectre of unemployment in a market economy – will create a climate for the left's revival. This will be a new left, smaller but more authentic than the traditional models of the past . . . '

Furthermore, during the next state of its struggle, the working class in Eastern Europe and internationally starts from a higher level. Since the second imperialist war the working class has grown enormously not just in Eastern Europe, but in South Africa, Latin America and South East Asia. So drunk is the bourgeoisie celebrating the retreat of socialism on one front, that it fails to see the millions who are digging its grave. It fails to see that the difficulties and problems presently confronting socialism are neither inherent nor inevitable but a product of imperialist warmongering, opportunist crimes and the mistakes the proletariat is bound to make on its road to final victory. It cannot understand as long as imperialism exists to exploit, oppress and murder, it will never be left at peace and the masses will never cease to fight for its destruction and for the ultimate liberation of humanity. ■

COLD WAR

IMPERIALISM and the division of Germany

In recent weeks the mass movement in the German Democratic Republic has split between those favouring reunification with imperialist Germany, and those calling for a renewal of socialism in a sovereign GDR. The unifiers have been promoted by right-wing groups in West Germany, including Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union. Over 40 years ago it was the Soviet Union which persistently argued for a united Germany, but the British and American imperialists instead decided to use Germany as a major political and military weapon in the 'cold war' against the Soviet Union and communism. Now that they believe they have defeated socialism, a coalition of right-wing reactionaries and social democrats are keen to promote a reunified capitalist Germany. DALE EVANS looks at the historical background and shows that the imperialist view of whether Germany should be divided has always been dictated by one thing – the economic and political interests of imperialism.

The conference at Potsdam – just outside Berlin – in July 1945 was the last meeting between the leaders of the Allies. Truman was the new President of the USA and during the conference Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin of the new Labour government replaced Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden of the wartime coalition government. Despite the virulence of Truman's and Bevin's anti-communism the parties agreed to bring the whole of German political and economic life under strict Allied control. The principle of a united Germany was accepted, and a programme for denazification enacted. Germany and the capital, Berlin, were split into four zones, controlled by France, Britain, USA, and the Soviet Union.

'From the moment the question was raised, the Russians fought for a united Germany, and the west opposed it'

GDR demonstrators reject unification and Nazism

The Potsdam agreement should have provided a solid basis for an eventual peace treaty, with Germany as a demilitarised, neutral and unified state. However, Britain and the USA worked against the Potsdam agreement and for the organisation of a separate state. A joint economic zone was set up without the inclusion of the Soviet Union, currency reform took place without the Soviet Union; reparations from the western zones for the Soviet Union were halted; and the pace of denazification drastically slowed as the British and Americans came to rely heavily on ex-Nazi officials. Wilfred Burchett, correspondent for the *Daily Express*, said that '. . . from the moment the question was raised, the Russians fought for a united Germany, and the west opposed it.'

In March 1947 the four foreign ministers met in Moscow to come to a conclusion on the German question. The position of the Soviet Union was simple. It argued for the creation of a unified Germany; the payment of $10 billion reparations ($128 billion worth of damage had been caused by the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union); the raising of German output to pay reparations; and the bringing of the Ruhr industrial region under four-power control. Britain and the USA stalled on most of these questions, with France vehemently arguing against the creation of a united Germany. France, which was not part of the Potsdam conference, was brought into the Allied Control Council and the foreign ministers conference to veto anything the British and Americans did not want.

The conference lasted six weeks, finishing without any comprehensive agreement. The crucial issues for the Soviet Union of reparations and a unified German state were left unsettled. With hindsight there could in fact be no political settlement, for on 12 March President Truman made his infamous statement that the USA was to give military and economic aid to the fascist regimes of Turkey and Greece. In Greece this meant support to the Greek monarchist-fascist government to defeat the democratic movement and army led by the Greek Communist Party. This policy of overt and covert intervention against national liberation movements was known as the Truman Doctrine. Although this policy had no direct influence at the Moscow conference, it was the reality of American foreign policy and meant that the principles of Potsdam had long been abandoned by the imperialists.

The split between the allies was further exacerbated by the launch of the European aid programme by the Secretary of State Marshall in June 1947. The Marshall Aid programme was an attempt to rebuild the capitalist economies of western Europe; destroy communist influences in the working class; build political structures loyal to US imperialism; create purchasing power in Europe for American commodities; and finally undermine Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. Although the Soviet Union was not exempt, the political conditions of aid meant that it could only refuse. Between 1947 and 1952 West Germany received Marshall Aid to the value of $4 billion. In 1945 the Soviet Union had tried to begin negotiations for a loan of $6 billion for reconstruction; in fact it received nothing.

The London foreign ministers conference met in January 1948 without result. Later in 1948 the imperialists attempted to flood the Soviet zone with new currency: this led to the Berlin Blockade. March 1949 saw the creation of the Federal Republic of Germany. This situation was clearly what the USA and Britain had hoped for. In a closed session of Congress in 1949 John Foster Dulles said: 'Russia has indicated her willingness to withdraw if we do the same, and we are not willing to do the same.'

In 1949 the anti-communist North Atlantic Treaty Organisation was established. The long-term aim of imperialism was to remilitarise the West German state. West Germany's first Chancellor and CDU leader Konrad Adenauer proved to be a loyal friend of imperialism. He banned the Communist Party in Germany and vigorously campaigned against anti-militarists. Denazification was halted: in 1952 85 per cent of all officials in the West German foreign ministry were former members of the Nazi Party. He also declared his intentions to reunify the two Germanies by force and reincorporate 'German' eastern territories which had been annexed by Poland in 1945. The Paris conference of 1954 allowed the remilitarisation of West Germany, and its eventual entry into NATO. The division of Germany was now complete and was the result of the western imperialists launching of the cold war. ■

PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM – PART SIX

The international working class movement

From the earliest stage of the proletarian struggle, the working class recognised the necessity of forging links with other sections of the working class internationally. Confronted with the internationalisation of capital, internationalism is the condition for working class and socialist advance. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels devoted an enormous amount of their time and theoretical talent to securing the development of an international working class organisation based on scientific socialism. In a three part article, DAVID REED, examines the history and politics of the first successful international organisation - The International Workingmen's Association - The First International.

The general principles of Communism are laid down by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) – the manifesto of the Communist League. They are as valid today as when they were first written. They broadly state that:

1. The capitalist system of production itself becomes a fetter on the further development of the productive forces and makes inevitable the replacement of capitalism by communism.

2. The capitalist system not only 'forges the weapons that bring death to itself', but has brought into existence the modern working class which is to wield those weapons.

3. The working class can only transform capitalist into communist society by 'raising itself to the position of ruling class' (establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat) and using its state power to expropriate the owners of capital – the old ruling class. After the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871, 'where the proletariat for the first time held political power for two whole months', an important addition was made. The Commune conclusively proved that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes' (1872 Preface). It had to destroy the old state machine.

4. The 'dictatorship of the proletariat' only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society.

However, the 'practical application of the principles' would depend 'everywhere and at all times' on the existing historical conditions. For that reason, as Marx and Engels made clear, no special stress was to be laid on the practical measures at the end of Section II of the *Manifesto*.

Not only would the practical measures taken be 'different in different countries' but over time the 'interests of the working class as a whole' would require different tactical and programmatic positions to be adopted. On the international level these differences had to be argued over and clarified in the international movement over a period of 60 years before a Communist International was finally established. Many initial conceptions of the development of the revolutionary process internationally had to be changed as the real political process unfolded.

Communists, the *Manifesto* states, represent the interests of the working class as a whole.

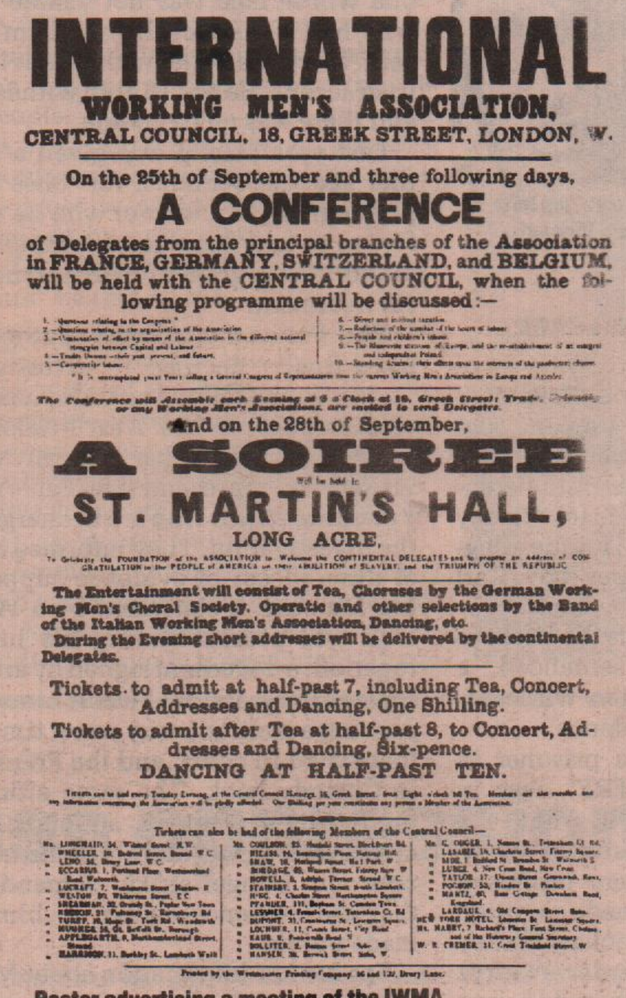
> 'The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.'

The working class of each country has to first of all settle with its own ruling class.

> 'Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle'.

The working class must first of all acquire political supremacy, 'must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself *the* nation' and in this respect it is 'so far national though not in the bourgeois sense of the word.' The socialist revolution presented both a 'national' and international problem: how to win political power in a particular capitalist country, and how to integrate this struggle with other 'national' struggles to create socialism – a necessary precondition for the consolidation of the socialist revolution in any country of the world. The substance of working class struggle – how communists 'bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality' – had to be painstakingly worked out over a period of 60 years. A study of the disputes and an understanding of the significance of the trends which emerged in the international movement on these issues is therefore a precondition for re-establishing the communist tradition today.

In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, communists point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality



INTERNATIONAL
WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION,
CENTRAL COUNCIL, 18, GREEK STREET, LONDON, W.

On the 25th of September and three following days,

A CONFERENCE

of Delegates from the principal branches of the Association in FRANCE, GERMANY, SWITZERLAND, and BELGIUM, will be held with the CENTRAL COUNCIL, when the following programme will be discussed:—

And on the 28th of September,

A SOIREE

ST. MARTIN'S HALL,
LONG ACRE,

The Entertainment will consist of Tea, Choruses by the German Working Men's Choral Society. Operatic and other selections by the Band of the Italian Working Men's Association, Dancing, etc.
During the Evening short addresses will be delivered by the continental Delegates.

Tickets to admit at half-past 7, including Tea, Concert, Addresses and Dancing, One Shilling.
Tickets to admit after Tea at half-past 8, to Concert, Addresses and Dancing, Six-pence.
DANCING AT HALF-PAST TEN.

Poster advertising a meeting of the IWMA

256 High Holborn where meetings of the General Council took place

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

The First International was founded at a meeting in St Martin's Hall, London on 28 September 1864. The initiative for its foundation came jointly from representatives of the British and French working class.

After the defeats of the 1848 revolutions in Europe and the Chartist movement in Britain, the 1860s saw a revival of the working class movements both in Britain and France.

In Britain the crisis of 1858-9 and the lockouts and strike movements of the London building workers gave enormous impetus to the struggle for a nine-hour working day. In the wake of this nine-hours movement the London Trades Council (1860) was to be formed, and in October 1861 the *Beehive* – the most influential paper of its time in the labour movement in Britain – was founded.

The London Trades Council participated officially at the foundation meeting of the International and its secretary George Odger became the first and only President of the First International. The *Beehive* was later to become the first official organ of the International. And of the 27 Englishmen who were elected to the first Central (later General) Council of the International, at least eleven were from the building trade.

After the defeats of the 1848 revolutions in Europe and the Chartist movement in Britain, the 1860s saw a revival of the working class movement both in Britain and France

In the early 1860s the French workers were emerging out of a long period of severe repression arising from the defeats of 1848 and of Louis Napoleon III's *'Coup d'État'* in 1851. Napoleon III began making overtures to the working class seeking a counterweight to the liberal bourgeois opposition to his regime. Trade unions were illegal in France although organisations of workers were allowed to exist under the guise of friendly societies. The working class unrest and strikes after the crisis of 1857-8 made new concessions necessary. In 1862 Napoleon III sponsored the sending of an elected delegation of French workers to the London International Exhibition. In these elections French workers were able to act independently for the first time since the *Coup d'État*. In Paris almost 200,000 workers elected 200 delegates – in the Provinces 550 delegates were chosen. While the delegation was genuinely representative of the French working class, there was no great enthusiasm from the English trade unions for a delegation from France which had the patronage of Napoleon III. Nevertheless a group of workers led by Toulain, a follower of Proudhon, did make contact with English trade union leaders. These contacts eventually led to further meetings which laid the foundation of the International. In 1863 Napoleon was forced by the dangers of revolution to tolerate a constitutional opposition in France – Toulain, in fact, stood as a working class candidate in the Paris elections of March 1863, although with little success. And in 1864 the Proudhonists issued the 'Manifesto of Sixty' which spoke bluntly of the conflict between labour and capital. The French working class were on the move again. Toulain and Murat who signed the Manifesto were at the founding meeting of the First International.

Three international events helped prepare the way for the formation of the International – all of them had an impact on the British working class.

The Italian Risorgimento – the mid-19th century movement for the unification and liberation of Italy – had sympathy among the radical lower middle class and the working class. When Garibaldi came to London in April 1864 London came out in force and witnessed the 'largest procession of workers that London had ever seen'. When his visit was abruptly terminated by the government, demonstrations and protests by workers took place which led to clashes with the police.

More important still was the working class support for the North in the American Civil War in spite of the hardship imposed on textile workers in England by the Northern blockade of the South. A campaign of pro-Northern mass meetings played a major role in deterring the British government from intervening on the Southern side.

Finally the support for the Polish insurrection of 1863 was an immediate cause of the links between English and French workers which led to the founding of the International. At the end of January 1863 the Polish people had taken to arms and risen for the third time since 1830 against Russian domination. A provisional government had been installed which was only crushed by a strong military force sent by the Tsar after over a year of bitter struggle. A mass meeting was called by trade union leaders in England to demonstrate their solidarity with the Polish revolution. The Chairman of that meeting, Professor Beesly, was to act as Chairman at the foundation meeting of the International. At this meeting a delegation was elected to demand armed intervention by Britain against Russia in support of Poland. Contact was also made with French workers so that joint pressure could be put on both the English and French governments. In July 1863 Tolain and four other delegates from Paris travelled to London to speak at a meeting in support of Poland organised by the London Trades Council. Odger, later President of the International, and Cremer, its future Secretary, spoke at a reception for the French delegation the next day of the need for closer unity among the workers of all nations. An English committee was formed to draft an address to French workers which would include the idea of an international association of the working class. George Odger drafted the Address 'To the Workmen of France from the Workmen of England'.

This Address followed the lines of earlier appeals for international working class solidarity which had gone out from the Chartists Harney and Jones, the Fraternal Democrats and their successors. It called for an international organisation of workers to oppose the international conferences and alliances of the rulers of the major nations. It called for international cooperation against the importation of low paid foreign workers by the capitalists in order to force wages down, with the object of organising for the raising of all wages. And it called for immediate action to defend Poland.

Three months passed before the British Address was sent off, and a further eight months before the French reply was received in London. By then the Polish revolution had been defeated.

The meeting which was called to hear the exchange of addresses took place on 28 September 1864 in St Martin's Hall, London. This was the founding of the First International.

to be continued

Free all framed prisoners

Following the release of the Guildford 4, we take a look at some of the many prisoners who were falsely convicted, not for overtly political motives but due to police corruption, incompetence, vindictiveness or haste for promotion.

JOHN MCGRANAGHAN

John McGranaghan was given double life in 1981 for a series of brutal rapes committed between 1978 and 1980. At his trial no forensic evidence was presented, the prosecution claiming that this was because McGranaghan had refused to provide samples.

Semen taken from two of the attacks was analysed as blood group O secreta PGM2 in the first incident; in

John McGranaghan

the second no samples were taken, and in the third and fourth cases as group A. John McGranaghan's blood group is O, consistent only with one in four samples. The prosecution insisted that all four rapes were perpetrated by the same man. Furthermore, the O group sample was taken from a position on the bed more consistent with the victim's husband than with her description of the attack.

None of this was revealed in court and the conviction was brought solely on identification evidence. The assaults took place in darkness and none of the three victims who testified was able to see her attacker clearly. Although all three said he spoke to them at length, none noticed the pronounced stammer from which McGranaghan suffers.

John McGranaghan's case has been the subject of a prolonged inquiry by the organisation Justice. Their report was delivered to the Home Office in December 1987 and a police inquiry report was submitted in late 1988. The Home Office have not yet responded.

Other prisoners sympathetic to John have mounted protests on his behalf and been punished for so doing. He has himself been subjected to the prison system's usual treatment for non-conformers (and protestation of innocence is the biggest non-conformity of all): beatings, solitary, spells in Special Units and on lay-down.

ALAN LEE BYRNE

Alan Lee Byrne was sentenced to life in 1985 with a minimum recommendation of 20 years for the alleged murder of a security guard during an attempted robbery.

Several weeks *before* the murder, Byrne had told sympathetic journalists that he was being harassed by the police and kept under constant surveillance.

In 1983 he was acquitted on similar charges. The police case was proven to be a combination of perjury and fake forensic evidence. Byrne's co-defendant, John Towmey, was known to be hated by the police for producing tape-recorded evidence to prove on yet another occasion that he was being framed.

Alan Lee Byrne's conviction rested on forensic evidence – fingerprints and hair samples, both of which were open to question, and identification by witnesses who claimed Byrne was the guilty man even though almost all had stated to the police that the killer was in his 20s, short and lightly built. Byrne is in his 30s, tall, heavily built and tattooed (which none of the witnesses noticed although they agreed that his forearms were bare.)

TOM CURTIS

Tom Curtis was convicted in 1985 of murder on purely circumstantial evidence:

1. The prosecution produced a length of scaffolding which they claimed was the murder weapon. Its only remote connection to Curtis was that builders use scaffolding and he was a builder.
2. A blue Cortina was believed to be used in connection with the murder. Tom Curtis had a blue Marina.
3. Police officers' handwritten records of interviews with Curtis were admitted in court although the officers agreed they had written no notes during the interviews and compiled the statements afterwards 'from memory.'
4. Curtis admitted to playing a minor part in a chequebook fraud involving a book belonging to the victim but denied knowing the man was dead. His fingerprints were found on the chequebook together with those of another person who has never been traced. However he neither signed nor cashed the cheque.

The Appeal Court denied Curtis leave to appeal, maintaining that the conviction was safe and satisfactory, even though the trial judge's many inconsistencies included the ruling that Curtis had gone to the bank and cashed the cheque on a specified date which was in fact an Easter Monday when the bank was shut!

Framed prisoners. Clockwise from top left: Alan Lee Byrne, Michael Hickey, Vincent Hickey and James Robinson

THE BRIDGEWATER CASE

On 17 March this year, the Court of Appeal upheld the convictions of James Robinson and Vincent and Michael Hickey, sentenced in 1979 to life imprisonment (indefinite detention in the case of Michael Hickey who was 17 at the time,) for the alleged killing of newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater.

Over the 12 years since the Hickeys and Robinson were sentenced, a range of key prosecution witnesses have retracted their evidence.

Andryz Jakubczyk, a prisoner in correspondence with FRFI, was in Winson Green in 1979 when the Bridgewater defendants were awaiting trial. Prison officers promised him early release if he made a written statement saying that Michael Hickey had admitted to the murder. Andryz complained to the police and was subsequently interviewed but prevented from making a written statement of his choosing. Andryz was not the only prisoner approached in this way. In return for better treatment, Brian Sinton gave false evidence that he had heard Michael Hickey confess. He later retracted.

The Hickeys and Robinson have consistently maintained their innocence and have used all methods of protest to force the case to remain in the public eye. In February 1982 Michael and Vincent Hickey climbed on to the roof at Long Lartin and stayed there for three weeks, compelling the Home Office to announce a new inquiry (by the police!). And in November 1983 Michael Hickey staged the longest ever rooftop protest, lasting 89 days, at Gartree prison.

MARTIN FORAN

In FRFI 71 we wrote about the appalling brutality suffered by Martin while in gaol and the degradation he has been subjected to as a colostomy patient, who was first denied the operation although in extreme pain and then beaten while recovering.

Martin was initially imprisoned in 1984 for eight years following the robbery of a Birmingham pub. The publican described the robbers as three youths: two West Indians and one whose face was not visible but who had a distinct Birmingham accent. Martin is white with an obvious Irish accent. He has 15 alibi witnesses and there was no ID parade.

Last year Martin was given a further six-year sentence for 'false imprisonment' of a warder who he was forced to take hostage to compel the authorities to grant him proper medical treatment.

The Police Complaints Authority have finally decided to investigate Martin's case following the exposure of corruption in the West Midlands police. In November Martin was visited by representatives of West Yorkshire police who are in charge of the investigation. They informed him of three pieces of evidence supporting his case: a statement by a WPC who was present during his interrogation, a document signed by an Inspector Reed and by Martin himself, proving a contradictory arrest time to that stated in court, and the Prisoner in Custody book. The same officers then visited Martin's solicitor but mentioned none of this. Martin is now on hunger-strike demanding that the evidence shown to him is made public.

For further information about Martin Foran and his campaign contact: MFDC, c/o Box 7, 190 Alum Rock Road, Saltley, Birmingham B8. Telephone 021 327 187.

Nicki Jameson

INSIDE NEWS

RISLEY

A defence campaign has been set up by and for the Risley 54 who face charges including riot and criminal damage, following the uprising at Risley Remand Centre in May when prisoners took to the roof for four days to protest against degrading and brutal conditions.

The Risley 54 Defence Committee and Support Group can be contacted c/o Wadi Williams AP0137, HMP Hull, Hedon Road, Hull, North Humberside, HU9 5LS.

ALBANY

A letter to FRFI from prisoner Anthony Benson, detailing conditions in Albany block and wings has been stopped by the governor. Readers are asked to write letters of complaint to The Governor, HMP Albany, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5RS and to the Home Office. Anthony Benson's number is PK1825.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- The weekly cost of maintaining a prisoner in a dispersal establishment ranges from £365 at Wakefield to a staggering £829 at Parkhurst.
- On 30 June 1988 2,503 prisoners were serving life sentences, 7% more than in 1987 and 82% more than in 1978.
- On 31 March this year there were 420 Category A prisoners, an increase of nearly 50% over 5 years.

ELECTRONIC TAGGING

The tagging experiment has proved an overwhelming failure. The first guinea-pig, Richard Hart (see FRFI 89), has been sent back to gaol, as have nine out of thirteen of the other subjects tagged in the Nottingham pilot scheme. Some, like Richard Hart, were victims of malfunctioning equipment which falsely indicated breaches of curfew; others, like Christopher Varney, breached curfew deliberately and pleaded to be sent back to prison rather than spend 24 hours a day in a 'flea-ridden' hostel.

The probation officers union, NAPO, has backed an action in the European Court of Human Rights in an attempt to establish that the tagging experiment breaches the European Convention on Human Rights.

PRISONERS BIRTHDAYS

19 December: **Gerry McDonnell** B75882, HMP Leicester, Walford Road, Leicester, LE2 7AJ.
24 December: **Natalino Vella** B71644, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX.
26 December: **William Armstrong** 119085, HMP Full Sutton, York YO4 1PS.
2 January: **Liam McCotter** LB83693, HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD.

Work in prison: adding insult to injury

Fair Pay for Prisoners
Sandy Ruxton, Prison Reform Trust. £2.

'To pay someone £3.10 for a 40 hour week is not only derisory but obscene. If we were being paid £12 a week there would be no cause for doing cartwheels, however £12 would not be too bad considering you could at least get by if you smoked and perhaps buy one or two small luxuries.' (Letter from a prisoner to the Prison Reform Trust.)

The Prison Reform Trust (PRT) has recently published a pamphlet which details the appallingly low rates paid to prisoners in British jails. The average weekly earnings for a prisoner in 1987/88 were £2.23.

Delays in transferring earnings and private cash when a prisoner is moved are common, leaving the prisoner penniless and forced to borrow. In his Annual Report (1987), HM Chief Inspector of Prisons wrote: 'When so many of the problems affecting the quality of life for inmates, such as overcrowding and insanitary conditions, are enormous and not readily solved, it is a great pity to find minor but recurrent annoyances of this kind.' These 'minor annoyances' are the difference to a prisoner between having or not, crucial items such as toiletries, tobacco and stamps to write to family and friends. In fact this further abuse of prisoners' rights has led to major uprisings in British jails – for example at Haverigg and Lindholme prisons in July 1988.

Unemployment amongst prisoners is widespread. On an average week day in 1987, just over half the male prison population was working with a further one seventh involved in education and training. One in three prisoners were without any daily occupation and so received the minimum wage of £1.55 a week.

Working prisoners are paid 1/4 of the 'personal expenses' quota of Income Support payments – £8.25, and penny pinching of this pittance is rife. Sickness, visits, adjudication hearings and shop closures for security reasons are deemed 'inmate instigated' and pay is cut accordingly. 'No payments are made for home leave, refusal to work or attendance at court to answer further charges.' Any complaints are met with fines.

European prison rules state that 'Education should be regarded as a regime activity that attracts the same status and basic remuneration within the same regime as work . . . ' In British prisons men and women who want to study will be paid less than working prisoners. One man who wanted to do full time education did not because it would have meant earning only half of the £3 per week he earned in the workshop.

The PRT report also shows the discrimination in operation against remand prisoners and those under threat of deportation. Under the 1971 Immigration Act, the Secretary of State has the power to use money belonging to a person under a deportation order to pay the costs of the deportation, his/her maintenance and that of dependants until their deportation. So governors 'should allow an inmate awaiting deportation to dispose of his private cash only where real need is shown.' 'Real need' is left to the discretion of governors and prison officers.

Throughout the report the viciousness and petty bureaucracy of the British prison system is thrown into sharp relief. Prisoners reading this will no doubt have had experience of canteen price rises, failure to inform them of special offers and many more of these 'minor annoyances'.

Alexa Byrne

Violations of human rights

Amnesty International Report
1989, £12

The Amnesty International Report 1989 is in fact a record of the year 1988 and the work undertaken by Amnesty in that period. The book is divided by continent, then subdivided into countries; each subsection beginning with a short summary, followed by a more detailed account. Some accounts examine the political background; others, usually in those cases where the government is stable, simply catalogue the violations of human rights which have taken place and the action Amnesty International has taken about them.

This is a useful book. If you need any proof, for example, that the country which claims to be the most advanced in the world is among the most barbarous, you need only turn to the chapter on the US where you find that:

'At the end of the year 2,182 prisoners . . . were under sentence of death in 34 states.'

'Robert Streetman . . . was executed by lethal injection in Texas on 7 January after the US Supreme Court denied a stay by a tied four-four vote. The court had indicated that a stay of execution might be granted if a new appeal was made but the Texas Attorney General refused a reprieve to allow lawyers time to do this. Robert Streetman was kept waiting before his execution for more than three hours. For part of this time he was strapped to a stretcher in the death chamber.'

'Two mentally ill prisoners . . . were executed . . . Wayne Felde, a former Vietnam war veteran, had been diagnosed in 1979 as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. He was convicted in 1981 of the murder of a police officer. Leslie Lowenfield, convicted of murdering his estranged girlfriend and four members of her family, was diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic who was

Electric chair still in use in US

"currently unable to understand the death penalty."'

The section entitled 'Israel and the Occupied Territories' highlights the 25,000 plus arrests of Palestinians including children which took place in the first year of the Intifada, the 300 people shot dead, the deliberate security force policies of breaking hands and feet and misusing teargas so it results, not in crowd control, but in death by suffocation.

The section on the 'United Kingdom' examines the Gibraltar shootings, the Broadwater Farm trials, the PTA, shoot-to-kill and the then current state of the appeals of the Birmingham 6 and Guildford 4. It quotes a government response to one of its letters about Gibraltar in which Amnesty International are accused of being 'offensive' and 'prejudiced.'

Amnesty International's credo is laid out at the beginning of the report:

'Amnesty International is a worldwide movement independent of any government, political persuasion or religious creed. It plays a specific role in the international protection of human rights:

- it seeks the *release of prisoners of conscience*. These are people detained for their beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin, language or religion who have not used or advocated violence;
- it works for *fair and prompt trials* for all *political prisoners*;
- it opposes the *death penalty* and *torture* or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of all prisoners without reservation.' (Amnesty's italics.)

This espousal of only prisoners who have not used or advocated violence is well-known. It led Amnesty in the past to refuse to campaign for Mandela and other ANC prisoners although they have since stated that he should be freed. It leads them to distinguish between 'political prisoners' and 'prisoners of conscience,' a distinction which becomes fairly meaningless in countries such as South Africa or Chile. And the syntax of the policy statement appears to imply that *if* a man or woman *does* use or advocate violence, it then becomes acceptable to imprison them, not for that in itself but for 'their beliefs, colour etc.'

It sometimes becomes irritating to read through this 'objective' examination of human rights in a world where things are *not* equal, where the execution of a corrupt general by the revolutionary government of Cuba is blatantly not the same as the judicial killing of ANC activists in South Africa; where the ex-Somocistas locked up in Nicaragua cannot be equated with freedom fighters interned in the other Latin American regimes. Amnesty claims that it 'does not grade governments according to their records on human rights: instead of attempting comparisons it concentrates on trying to end the specific violations of human rights in each case.' However, this apparently objective approach ignores the political interrelations between countries, the role of power-blocks and, of course, the role of imperialism.

This said, the Amnesty Report's authors are perceptive in their critique of recurrent features among the worst offenders. The names of El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, the Philippines, Turkey, Colombia and Syria reappear time and again in the introduction to the report where Amnesty makes it clear that it is not fooled when:

> 'Governments continue . . . to attempt to deflect criticism of murder by their own forces by references to the acute circumstances of internal armed conflict and to criminal behaviour of non-governmental groups.'

There are one or two surprises in the book: the glowingly favourable report on Libya, contrary to everything alleged in the Western bourgeois press, the complete omission of anything on New Zealand and an extreme example of Amnesty's liberalism in the almost touching account of 100 Dutch police officers who launched a letter-writing campaign to 500 of their counterparts in South Africa, presumably asking them to mend their ways!

In general the Report is well-researched and systematically presented. It provides useful background material and, although expensive for individuals, is a good reference book for political organisations to purchase.

Nicki Jameson

Available from Amnesty International Publications, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 8DJ.

Israeli soldiers violently arrest a demonstrator during the Gaza uprising

Under class oppression

Losing Out: The Emergence of Britain's Underclass. Frank Field, Blackwell, 1989. £7.95

'The same causes which develop the expansive power of capital, also develop the labour power at its disposal. The relative mass of the industrial reserve army thus increases with the potential energy of wealth. But the greater this reserve army in proportion to the active labour army, the greater is the mass of a consolidated surplus population, whose misery is in inverse ratio to the amount of torture it has to undergo in the form of labour. The more extensive, finally, the pauperised sections of the working class and the industrial reserve army, the greater is official pauperisation. *This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation.*' (Marx, *Capital* Vol I, p 798 Penguin Edition).

Frank Field, though he would not concede it, has written a book illustrating the general law of capital accumulation. What is remarkable is that for three-quarters of the book he produces such an indictment of this law. A self-opinionated right-winger he may be, but, unlike a lot of his opponents to his left, he knows his subject inside out. He shows us what the reserve army of labour is, how it was created, who makes it up, and how it is sustained. He has distilled a large amount of statistical detail, and, despite its daft political conclusions, this is an invaluable book.

The first part of Field's book is concerned with establishing the facts of poverty: the number (8.2 million dependent on supplementary benefit) compared with 4.4 million in 1979); the high proportion of single-parent families (nearly 40 per cent of the bottom 20 per cent of earners); the poorer levels of health, life expectancy and educational achievement. Whilst the existence of long-term unemployment is singled out as the crucial factor in the growth of an impoverished stratum of the working class, Field is sensitive to the impact that the crisis has had on low-paid workers. In 1979, the pay of the lowest decile (10 per cent) of male manual workers was 68.3 per cent of median earnings; in 1987, it was 61.9 per cent. For non-manual male workers, the figures were 63.4 per cent and 55.9 per cent respectively; sex made little difference: female figures were 75.5 per cent and 72.3 per cent for manual workers, 69.2 per cent and 64.6 per cent for non-manual workers. In other words, low paid workers were relatively even worse paid compared to the rest of the employed working class.

Field documents some of the instruments that the government has used to augment the effect of unemployment in increasing poverty – the abolition of the Fair Wages Resolution, the abolition of Schedule 2 procedure, the dismantling of part of the Wage Council machinery, especially in relation to young workers, and the various schemes such as the New Worker Scheme to subsidise low-paying employers. However, he unfortunately separates this off from the section on the 'secondary labour market' – the temporary and part-time labour market. This is the 'flexible' labour market, where a section of the industrial reserve army gains a tenuous hold on employment. It is 'flexible' in so far as capital defines it as flexible – low security, low pay, few if any fringe benefits, unorganised and uncontrolled by health or safety regulations. One in three workers now form part of this section of the reserve army: 4.5 million in part-time jobs, 40 per cent of the EC total, and 1.3 million in temporary jobs (more than double the 1981 total). One quarter of all male and one half of all female workers now make up such 'flexible' workers. The existence of massive underemployment on top of unemployment was until recently a hallmark of an underdeveloped or neo-colonial economy. Now it is a permanent feature of the most decadent imperialist economy in the world.

Field shows how this section of the population is chained by the poverty-trap. What this means is that for someone receiving means-tested assistance, a £1 increase in wages triggers off such loss of benefit that the pound all but disappears. Some 78 per cent of families now receiving family credit are above the tax threshold, and so fall within the trap:

> 'For a full-time working family paying income tax and national insurance contributions, and receiving income-related benefits, an extra £1 of gross earnings can lead to an increase in income tax of 25p, a 9p increase in national insurance contributions, a 46p reduction in family credit, and a 17p reduction in housing benefit – a total of 97p'. (p129)

Hence it is made almost impossible for the reserve army of labour to escape the cycle of dependency.

Field's political conclusions are uninteresting, but there are two or three points worth noting. Firstly, unlike the majority of his ilk (and of his erstwhile critics), he notes that one crucial element of Thatcher's boom has been the export of capital, pointing out that earnings on overseas investments rose from £5,799 million in 1980 to £16,567 million in 1987. But he can draw no political conclusion from this.

A further point concerns the political role of this reserve army. Although he notes that it is tending to exclude itself from the rights of citizenship, a process that the poll tax will reinforce, he does not regard it as posing a threat to public order. Although there have been a number of riots, his view is that in proportion to their burdens, the response of the oppressed has been muted. 'Desperately deprived groups', he writes, 'do not organise to bring about the downfall of a political system.' But then neither do relatively privileged groups. What is missing – in Field's approach as well as in reality – is a political dimension. It is true that deprivation on its own does not create a class consciousness, and certainly has not done so in Britain. But deprivation that is a result of direct political oppression will in the long run breed resistance. That it has taken rather longer to develop than might have been expected is a matter that is beyond the scope of this review. But it is precisely in this area of political response that Field is frankly banal. Read the book not for the last part, however, but for its concise treatment of the impoverishment of the oppressed of the working class.

Robert Clough

ORGANISE with FRFI

FRFI – around Britain

Lorna Reid

Sales of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* last month were our highest in two years. The issue had a high political content covering major events taking place in Britain and abroad:

- A five-page exposé of the frame up of the Guildford Four including interviews with Paul Hill, his mother Lily, and Alastair Logan, solicitor for Patrick Armstrong and Carole Richardson.
- An interview with Comrade Gora Ebrahim of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, in which he argues against any negotiations with the racist apartheid regime in the present circumstances and lays down conditions that must be satisfied before negotiations will be considered. He announced in the interview the launching of the Pan Africanist Movement in December.
- David Reed examined the internal convulsions devouring the once formidable fortress of Thatcherism and showed that at the root of the conflict lie issues of enormous importance for the future direction of British capitalism and British politics.
- Our coverage of the dramatic events in Eastern Europe took a sober look at these developments and in particular how the imperialist powers have responded to them.
- Our correspondent in El Salvador reported on attempts by the right wing in El Salvador to crush popular resistance and the new offensive launched by the FMLN.

The political strength of our paper always lies in its ability to defend a Marxist standpoint and show how this standpoint can give socialists a real grasp of political events which take place in the world. In October and November dramatic events were sweeping Eastern Europe; a new offensive was launched in El Salvador; the movement for national liberation in Azania/South Africa was, as it still is, widely discussing the role of negotiations with the regime in the overall struggle for liberation; the release of the Guildford Four demonstrated the rotten corruption and political prejudice at the heart of the British judicial system and showed how events associated with the Irish people's struggle for freedom have the ability to rock the British establishment, and for the first time in ten years the real vulnerability of the Tory government was exposed. In a period of left retreat *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* argued a determined and anti-imperialist, socialist standpoint on the important political developments taking place.

Sales of the paper were tremendous, especially as we were also collecting signatures on our petition for the release of the Birmingham Six. On a street meeting in Kilburn, north London, 430 copies were sold. One Irish man gave us a £20 donation, two Irish women gave us £5 each for their copy of the paper and in Camden a women bought six copies for £1 each to sell to her friends. 200 copies were sold on a street meeting in Manchester, 150 in Bradford and 150 in Liverpool – all in a few hours. On our estate sales we sold an average of 35 papers every time.

Our supporters played an important role in ensuring that *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* was sold and read in many towns and cities across Britain. They took copies to sell in their areas, around their colleges, to their friends and workmates and to stock in their newsagents. Expired subscriptions to *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* were renewed, new subscriptions were bought and one supporter in London bought subscriptions for two of his friends now living abroad. Two supporters, one in Nottingham and one in Margate, Kent, are now interested in becoming involved in regular *FRFI* readers and supporters groups in their areas.

Through donations from our supporters and those collected in the course of our street work we have so far raised £900 towards our £1500 fighting fund. We need a final rush of donations to take us up to our target.

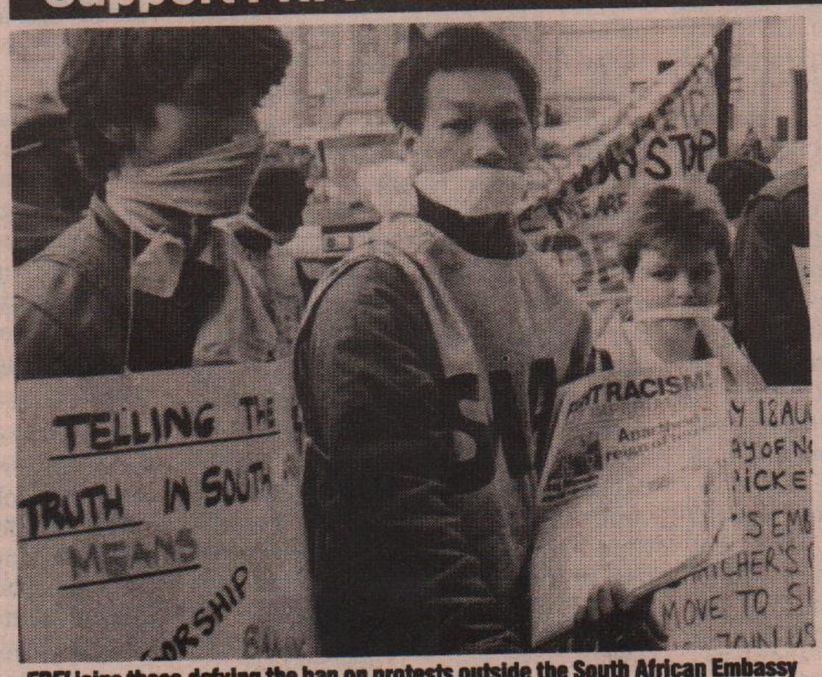
The crisis of Thatcherism

In London an *FRFI* readers and supporters group was addressed by David Reed on the crisis of Thatcherism. He explained that the crisis of Thatcherism comes at the time of a very deep crisis of the socialist and communist movement and it is necessary in such a period to reassess and reestablish some of the fundamental truths of communist theory – especially in a period when many are celebrating its final demise. Perhaps in the case of Thatcherism we can see how one of the fundamental positions of Marxism has been vindicated. Thatcher's political success and survival in the final analysis rests on economics. Ultimately economic reality determines the political and social relations and political consciousness of people in society. The deep, apparently unresolvable economic crisis of British capitalism lay behind Thatcher coming to power and her failure to resolve that crisis will see her off.

That there has been no 'economic miracle' is rapidly becoming the experience of larger and larger sections of the working class and middle classes. However, the economic weakness of the British economy has brought to the fore the much bigger questions concerning the future direction of British capitalism and British politics. The contradiction between Britain's relative industrial decline and its attempt to maintain a world role as a major imperialist power has come to a head over the European issue. David Reed explained that British imperialism has a future only as part of a much stronger European imperialism. The challenge to US imperialism from Japanese and German imperialism drives this point home. This explains why social democracy, including its left-wing supporters, has now become much more enthusiastic about the European Community. The labour aristocracy and its supporters are slowly but surely developing links with like-minded social democrats in Europe. This is also the context in which recent dramatic developments in Eastern Europe have their greatest significance.

He concluded by asking if the crisis of capitalism offered the possibility of rebuilding a working class movement? Can an alliance be built with the more oppressed layers of the working class which will challenge Thatcherism? Is a break with the labour aristocracy possible? We do not know all the answers to these questions. But we do know that any new movement will be very different to the traditional working class movement we have known. It will not be possible to build a new movement centred on the economic struggles of the trade unions. It must be politically far broader than this: defending the health service, state education, public housing and organising against all attacks on the rights and living standards of the working class. In particular it must be a movement that defends the interests of all the oppressed layers of the working class. It will have to be based on an anti-racist, anti-imperialist perspective.

Support FRFI – this month's issue



FRFI joins those defying the ban on protests outside the South African Embassy

In a period of enormous political developments, communists and anti-imperialists have a responsibility to continually establish and argue for a Marxist standpoint amongst the working class. The RCG and our newspaper are taking on that responsibility. We need the support of all our readers. This month's issue of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* contains an important speech by Fidel Castro which examines the implications of recent developments in the socialist countries for the vast majority of humanity in the Third World and points to the interests of imperialism in supporting and fostering these developments. He reminds socialists of their fundamental internationalist duties. A major feature on the developments taking place in Eastern Europe echoes these fundamental points. A timely interview with Victor Amaya, representative of the FMLN, reminds us that the aspirations of the oppressed to freedom are alive and fighting back.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! is your newspaper. Work with us to make sure that as many people as possible, in many different areas across the country, are reading it. Sell it to your friends and workmates. If you are a student, take it to your college. Ask your newsagent to sell it this month. You can also send a donation to our fighting fund to strengthen our resources to carry out this work. ■

FRFI READERS AND SUPPORTERS GROUPS

LONDON
Free all framed prisoners.
Speaker: Maxine Williams, author of *Murder on the Rock*
Wednesday 31 January, 7.30pm, Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, WC1. Nearest tube – Russell Square.

MANCHESTER
The crisis of Thatcherism
Wednesday 17 January, 7.30pm, The Millstone, Thomas Street, Off Tib Street, Manchester City Centre.

The crisis of socialism in Eastern Europe
Wednesday 7 February, 7.30pm. Venue as above.

For details of FRFI readers and supporters groups in your area please contact, FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

NICK MULLEN DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Nick Mullen is an Irishman awaiting trial in Brixton jail on a charge of conspiring to cause explosions. His defence campaign meets regularly, supplies speakers at meetings and requires your support. Contact the Nick Mullen Defence Campaign c/o 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

REMEMBER CHICO MENDES

Memorial service, Friday 22 December, 6pm, St. Aloysius Church, Euston, London

PRISONERS FUND

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! is the only newspaper which consistently covers the brutality and the fightback within the prisons. FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! goes into nearly 40 prisons in Britain, Ireland and throughout the world. Every month new prisoners write in to ask for the paper to be sent to them.

Each month it costs £66 to send our newspaper into prisoners. A subscription for a prisoner costs £7.50 and prisoners cannot afford to pay this. We are appealing to our readers to take out a subscription for a prisoner, or better still make a regular monthly contribution to our Prisoners Fund (please send for a standing order form).

☐ I enclose a donation of £_____ to help pay for a prisoner's subscription to *FRFI*. (Cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications)
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SUPPORT OUR £1500 FIGHTING FUND

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! is the only anti-imperialist newspaper in Britain. Through its pages we bring you the voices of the oppressed peoples world wide fighting for freedom from imperialist domination. We examine the implications of the crisis of the socialist countries for the vast majority of humanity and point to the interests of the imperialists in the recent developments taking place. We use our Marxist understanding to explain the importance of these developments for our own movement in Britain.

Serious politics require serious resources. Last month our readers and supporters donated £900 to our fighting fund. We need to raise another £600 by the end of December 1989. Support *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* Rush your Xmas donations to
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- A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine. Help us to do this – **Join the RCG!**
- A movement must be built here in Britain which stands with the oppressed fighting racism, repression and poverty. Help build this movement – **Join the RCG!**
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LETTERS

Greek Communism, 'opportunism' and the role of imperialism

Vukmanovic's pamphlet, *How and Why the People's Liberation Struggle met with defeat* has really very little to do with the 'fundamental principles about the relation of communists to the armed struggle.' The reviewer, Robert Clough has been seduced by the polemical nature of the pamphlet, and ignored the defiant struggle waged by the Greek Communist Party (KKE) during the Second World War. Indeed many paramount issues have been ignored.

1. In the review the involvement of British imperialism rarely gets a mention. Britain, for both Churchill and his Foreign Secretary Eden, had to remain a Mediterranean power after the war; the protection of the Suez Canal and the route to India were utmost in their minds. The fight for British influence was continuous.

This policy differed from that which was applied to Yugoslavia, where the British soon gave up supporting the reactionary partisans (the Chetniks) and gave full support to Tito's partisans. In Greece however, the British kept its own surrogate army (EDES) to do its full bidding. Britain also maintained greater political control through its backing for the Greek government-in-exile and by sending numerous agents from the Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the Secret Services. Because of this imperialist intervention the British were eventually able to out manoeuvre the KKE at vital junctures. Such mistakes on the part of the KKE hardly amount to an opportunist line.

2. It is nonsense to argue that the KKE were ideologically committed to the struggle in the towns as the predominant form of struggle. The struggle in the cities developed for a variety of reasons.

In the period of the Metaxas dictatorship the KKE had been smashed, only a few isolated cells remained. With the occupation of Greece by the Axis armies, the KKE had no choice but to build its organisation; this was done by organising on economic issues, in particular the famine of November-December 1941. As soon as it was practicable the KKE sent Aris Velouchiotis into the mountains to build a guerrilla army. It should be noted that the KKE and the National Liberation Front (EAM) and its army (ELAS) were closely entwined. Siantos, General Secretary of the KKE was also a Member of the Triumvirate the highest military body of ELAS, and did not spend the war in Athens ignoring the guerrilla struggle.

On the other hand the situation for the Yugoslav Communist Party was different. Its organisation was basically intact with the Axis invasion. It could also rely on many communists who were veterans of the Spanish Civil War.

This brings me to the final point of the argument; who was Vukmanovic and what does he represent? In 1948 the YCP and the Cominform split. The KKE sided with the Cominform. The YCP were accused of being a rightist deviation. With the defeat of the KKE, Vukmanovic's polemic was an attempt to extend the revolutionary credentials of the YCP. This was done by the simple accusation that the KKE was an opportunist party – and more so that opportunism was the cause of the KKE's defeat.

There seems little doubt that Vukmanovic was a Great-Serbian chauvinist. Enver Hoxha explains this clearly in his book *The Titoites*. For a short period Vukmanovic was the roving emissary of the YCP, and attempted to set up a Balkan General Staff of all the Balkan Liberation Movements. As Hoxha shows, this was in order to extend Yugoslav influence in Albania and Macedonia. Whenever Vukmanovic was confronted with the question of the Albanian region of Yugoslavia (Kosova) by the Albanians, Vukmanovic disgracefully accused the CPA of trying to build a greater Albania. For Vukmanovic the nationalism of the oppressed became merely reactionary chauvinism!

The Balkan revolution must be analysed historically and not polemically. Vukmanovic's polemic is a document of history, but not history.

Yours,
DALE EVANS
South London.

Robert Clough's analysis of the role of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) during World War II and immediately afterwards (*FRFI* November/December 1989) is historically and politically inaccurate. He argues that the Greek struggle was defeated by the KKE's wrong policies rather than British imperialism. In his efforts to prove that the KKE stood back from popular struggle against the fascists, unlike the Yugoslavian Communist Party (CPY), he invents a false choice which faced communist parties at the beginning of the War. That is to rely on 'workers action at the point of production' in fighting fascism or to participate in popular wars of resistance. No communist party chose the former path. They all chose to participate in the resistance movements. The outcome of these struggles was varied and each one requires concrete study to show both the internal and external pressures which led to socialism or the restoration of capitalism. Robert Clough has not done this. He attempts to back up this non-existent dilemma for communist parties by quoting from a Yugoslav partisan: one choice,

> 'was to work towards developing the revolutionary struggle of the people through economic and political strikes, through demonstrations and battles at barricades, through armed risings in towns, and so forth, or else work to develop the revolutionary struggle of the body of the people by means of a mass partisan war, not solely against the invaders, but also against one's own traitorous bourgeois reactionaries.'

The first option was never a serious long term consideration – economic and political strikes? Street demonstrations? Hardly sustainable in the conditions of starvation and repression which existed in all the towns and cities controlled by the Nazis. There were outbursts of popular resistance in the urban areas organised by the KKE, however these were not counterposed to partisan struggle which was the main path chosen by the KKE. Here are the historical facts:

- The numerical strength of the KKE was weak at the beginning of the War as a result of massive repression during the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1941) when the KKE was banned and communists imprisoned and tortured. Under the Nazis many communists were deported. Its political strength lay in its decision to form EAM/ELAS.
- The Greek National Liberation Army (ELAS) was the armed wing of the National Liberation Front (EAM). EAM was established and controlled by the KKE. All ELAS operations were attended by political advisors and members of EAM (*Greek Entanglement*, E. Myers). Robert Clough writes EAM out of existence in order to prove the separation of the communists from armed struggle.
- EAM/ELAS, under the leadership of the KKE, not only prosecuted the popular resistance war but also fought and neutralised the pro-British, collaborationist EDES (Greek National Democratic League) in the autumn of 1943. So much for their inability to act against their 'own traitorous bourgeois reactionaries'.
- By the autumn of 1944, EAM/ELAS controlled 90 per cent of Greece: 'Through the structure of EAM, the Communist Party was virtually governing the country, and leading it to an unexpected victory. Moreover, the administration of the liberated areas in the countryside amounted, for the Greek peasants, to a real revolution in their relations with the state.' (*Democracy at Gunpoint*, A. Papandreou p53). The influence of the KKE was equally strong in urban areas. A half million demonstrated in Athens in December 1944.
- The Battle of Athens (December 1944) was the turning point. Here again, the KKE, through EAM/ELAS, was to the fore in the increased resistance which began after the brutal attack on the December demonstration: 'ELAS started taking over Athens by occupying police stations and putting down the anti-EAM terrorists. As its ability to succeed was only too obvious, the British forces had to intervene fast.' (*ibid*, p58).

40,000 British troops backed up by the RAF entered the battle on the side of the Greek king and against EAM/ELAS. Within a month Athens had been made safe for the return of the monarchists.

Parade in Athens: Lt-Gen Othonaiosi (C-in-C Greek Forces); Prime Minister George Papandreou and Lt-Gen RM Scobie

So, why did the Yugoslav Communist Party win and the Greek CP lose? Before I am accused of relying on a Greek social democrat and a British Brigadier, I declare that I prefer Robert Clough's conclusion. That is, the one he arrived at five years ago (*FRFI*, February 1984) in which he highlighted the central role of British imperialism and its interests in the area, and the decisive impact made by the intervention of the British military in December 1944. Additionally, the CPY was heavily armed by the Allied Forces, unlike the case in Greece where anti-EAM/ELAS bands were armed and not more than one sixth of the progressive forces received supplies from the British. The Varikiza Agreement of February 1945 when the EAM/ELAS, under the direction of the KKE, agreed to a ceasefire was 'an unacceptable compromise, and, basically, a capitulation in the face of the English imperialists and Greek reaction.' (Quoted in Clough, *FRFI* February 1984). It was also a recognition of reality.

In 1947, British imperialism, financially over-extended, handed over to the USA the task of maintaining Greece free from communism. The political and strategic value of Greece to the imperialists was the determining factor in crushing the EAM/ELAS-led struggle of the Greek working class and peasantry.

GARY CLAPTON
London

3 December 1944: part of the crowd in Constitution Square before being fired on

RUC 'justice'

Farce Sighted

A Chairde,
Having, through unfortunate circumstances, been afforded an opportunity to peruse your paper in detail these past months, may I commend you on your excellent and objective coverage of events and developments relating to the liberation struggle in British-occupied Ireland. Your reportage is invariably coupled with astute political analysis of the situation and is a welcome departure from the usual ambivalence and pro-imperialist sycophancy associated with various sections of the British 'left'. In particular you are to be congratulated on your espousal of issues pertaining to equality of women and the advancement of their rights within Irish society. Women have been the backbone of Irish resistance and struggle throughout dark centuries of brutal foreign occupation and it is high time their role was recognised, applauded and rewarded.

Digressing somewhat, I should like, if I may, to draw your attention to one of the more ludicrous proposals of the German public prosecutor regarding the forthcoming 'trial' of my compatriot, Gerry Hanratty, and I here in the fatherland. It seems that the public prosecutor wants to wheel in a number of RUC types as 'expert witnesses' testifying against us! Apparently, the RUC will be masquerading as members of a police force – I suppose if you were to regard the Ton Ton Macoutes as police then you could probably put the RUC into the same category!

In any case, in lieu of physically grappling with one of the brutes (as, naturally, one is inclined) I propose to avail of the opportunity presented through the attention of the foreign media in our case, to expose the RUC and show the world just what exactly they are 'expert' in, namely murder, torture, brutality, harassment, leaking of confidential 'security' information etc. etc. ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

To this end I would be obliged if your readership could supplement my research through the culling of articles from newspapers, periodicals and so forth relating to the over zealous exploits of these paragons of probity. Personal experiences from readers who have themselves been exposed to the tender mews of our friendly bobbies would also be appreciated. Please send material via the supplied address. Thanks!

International solidarity with one and all.

GERRY McGEOUGH
c/o 6 Strafsenat
des Oberlandesgerichts
VI-14/89
Cecilienallee 3
4000 Düsseldorf 30
West Germany.

No service for Malcolm Rifkind

Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland, met more anti-Poll Tax resistance when he dined out at the George Hotel in Edinburgh on 1 December. A waitress, Hilary Reid, an *FRFI* reader, recognised him and refused to serve him. She deliberately avoided his stare as he became more and more agitated at being kept waiting for his meal. Thirty minutes later the head waiter asked Hilary why she had not served the people at Rifkind's table. She replied loudly so that Rifkind could hear that many of the staff in the hotel were in debt from trying to pay their Poll Tax but Rifkind could afford to dine in a hotel and she wasn't prepared to serve him. Another waitress was found to serve the Poll Tax master, but not before Rifkind had been given the message that he wasn't welcome. In addition, Hilary's reasons for refusing to serve him were understood and she doesn't face any discipline concerning her job.

LORNA REID
South London

Write to:
FRFI,
BCM Box 5909,
London
WC1N 3XX.

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

'Cocaine capitalism' examines the cocaine trade in two parts. In part one TREVOR RAYNE examines the economic conditions that have generated the most profitable industry in Latin America. Part two looks at its political consequences, links with counter-revolution and impacts on US cities and the banks.

Cocaine capitalism

President Bush redeclared 'War on Drugs'. The British government dispatched a frigate and 50 military and police officers to Colombia. Police are raiding downtown Los Angeles and Tottenham. It is captivating headline stuff – for a fortnight. Three months after Bush signalled his intent to crush the drug trade, his 'drug czar' William Bennett is denying rumours that he is threatening to resign because of the lack of progress made.

The world's illegal drug trade is valued at $500 billion. Cocaine is the world's most profitable item of trade. Its worth, at wholesale prices, varies between five and seven times its weight in gold. Annual cocaine production generates approximately twice the revenue of the world's output of gold. Colombia alone produces sufficient for five billion dosages a year which would retail at between $20 billion and $100 billion, depending on the degree of purity and markets used. Los Angeles' Federal Reserve Bank reported a $3.8 billion cash surplus earlier this year as money laundering diversifies out of Florida. The House of Commons Home Affairs Committee issued a report describing Britain as an 'offshore banking centre' for drug traffickers, who are circulating an estimated £1.8 billion through the British financial system.

Drug money courses through every vein, supplies every organ of capitalism, right into its financial heart. Those who aspire to its fortunes could do little better than to deal in drugs. In a system where money is power, those who control the drug trade have to be reckoned with. Imperialism has never lost control of the global heroin business (see *FRFI* 58), but in the case of cocaine it has generated the social conditions in Latin America (where it is produced) and the USA (where most of it is consumed), to create a multinational whose organisation and ambitions reach beyond the boundaries imperialism specifies for it. This is the real significance of the *Financial Times*', the *Economist*'s and Milton Friedman's call to legalise it: they want to ensure the profit remains within the fold of their own ruling class and they fear the economic and social destabilisation that these massive profits bring when unregulated. Legalisation would allow the scale of the profits and their distribution to be controlled.

However, the 'War on Drugs' is more than an attempt to reappropriate profits; it is a war against the consequences of imperialism itself: revolutionary liberation movements in Latin America and racially oppressed peoples within the heartlands. It is also 'war' waged against the very life blood of capitalism and as such it is a phoney war.

Cocaine and its crack derivative are capitalist drugs par excellence. In them you can see all the destruction that the domination of money over humanity brings. Crystalline, glittering; the short rush and euphoria followed by paranoia and depression, are metaphors for the facade and the substance of capitalist society.

WHERE IT IS GROWN: LATIN AMERICA

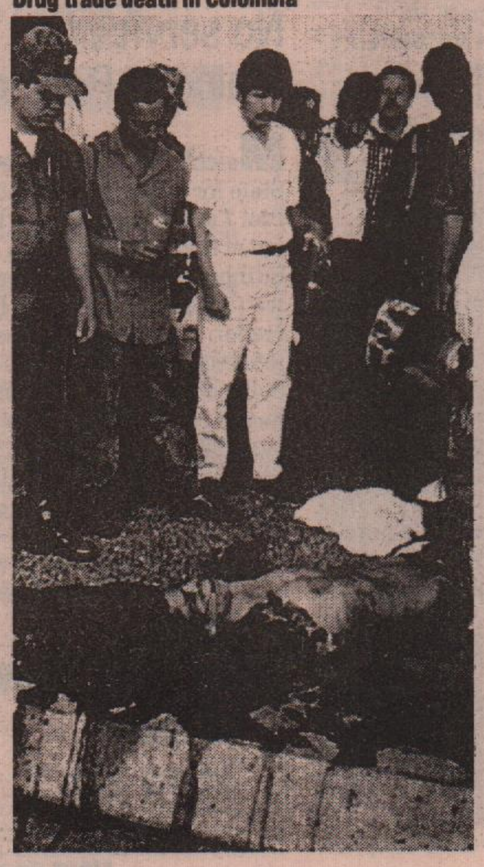
'The only raw material whose value has increased is cocaine. The only successful transnational based in our countries is drug trafficking. The most successful efforts towards Andean integration have been made by drug pushers.' (President Alain Garcia of Peru at the United Nations in 1985.)

Imperialist exploitation of Latin America has made cocaine a thriving business. Its debt to the transnational banks was $426 billion in 1988. In the five preceding years Latin American countries paid out approximately $150 billion in principal and interest. A three per cent rise in US interest rates adds a further $10 billion to the bill. The debt burden is made more unbearable by the collapse in Latin American commodity prices which resulted in a $50 billion drop in revenue between 1976-86. For Bolivia and Peru, the two major countries growing coca (the leaf from which cocaine is produced), the purchasing power of their legal exports fell 39.9 per cent and 26.2 per cent respectively between 1981-86. Since the 1960s the agricultural sectors of the Bolivian, Peruvian and Colombian economies have all shrunk. They have not been replaced by an significant industrial growth.

Prices of the legal exports of these countries are controlled by a handful of transnational corporations and determined in London, New York, Tokyo etc. Nestlé, General Foods, Procter and Gamble, Unilever and fourteen other companies control 85 per cent of consumer countries' imports and 90 per cent of the world's coffee trade. Coffee amounts to a third of Colombia's export earnings. Its prices are now at their lowest level since the 1920s. 75 per cent of bananas are marketed by just a handful of companies: Geest and Fyffes dominate. The price of tin, formerly Bolivia's main export earner other than cocaine, is set on the London Metal Exchange. A dozen transnationals – Rio Tinto Zinc, Amax, Anglo-American etc – control 75 per cent of this market.

The consequences of their price manipulations are a profound indictment of capitalism. In 1988 Latin America recorded 0.6 per cent economic growth. Under and unemployment in Bolivia, Peru and Colombia are 67 per cent, 60 per cent and 55 per cent respectively. With traditional commodities unable to sustain the rural work force, so the exodus to the cities accelerates and food production declines. Those who remain in the countryside had better grow coca: an Andean peasant can earn $150 an acre a year growing maize, $500 growing coca.

Drug trade death in Colombia



Children sleeping rough in the streets of La Paz, Bolivia.

Cities are exploding. Lima, capital of Peru, population seven million, expands through rural migration by a thousand people each day. Bogota, capital of Colombia, has 4.5 million people and an extra 500 peasants every day; São Paulo's 17 million a further 2000.

Vast tattered armies camp in cardboard and corrugated-iron shanty towns. The 'informal sector' of the economy is growing: in Lima it is 60 per cent of the work force, Bogota 54 per cent, São Paulo 43 per cent. Exposed to the most hideous forms of exploitation, they shine shoes and car windows, sell gum, rob, deal and kill on the streets to survive. A third of Latin America's 434 million people are in hunger and poverty. The situation is degenerating.

The Continent has 40 million street children. 'In Rio, every month, about 100 children under three years old are abandoned in the streets or in the hospitals. In Acre [an Amazon state] impoverished mothers sell their young daughters to lorry drivers or gold prospectors as prostitutes. In São Paulo there are 1200 gangs of child criminals and between them they have 10,000 firearms.' (Report from the Roman Catholic Bishops of Brazil). Only 13 per cent of Brazilian children complete their compulsory eight years education. Child labour is common. Two thirds of working children in Brazil, not an exception but a standard for the continent, earn half the minimum wage: a 58 hour week for just £5. 'When you go on the street, you know you're in the middle of a war. If you don't kill you die'.

The cocaine trade has spread across South America. The disastrous debt repayments and terms of trade proscribe other means of accumulation for local aspirant capitalists. They have a ready-made work force prepared to risk the dangers of illegality to get out of crushing poverty. What is required is access to the US and European markets. Therein lies the pivotal role of the Colombian cartels. Colombia, with a long history of smuggling gems and marijuana to the north, is critically situated for the transit of produce from Bolivia and Peru to the USA and Europe.

COLOMBIA

Prior to 1972 Latin American cocaine production was a small scale, open-market business. In October 1972 the US Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs held a conference in Bogota: 'Fighting the drug menace', 'saving our youth' etc. As a result the US intelligence services directed the Colombian police in a 'clean up' exercise. The small farmers and traders were shut down. Sections of the police and military established a monopoly production, processing and distribution industry. The Colombians were particularly helped by Cuban exiles based in Florida but located in most major US cities. They gunned rival distributors out of business. Dollar deposits in Colombian banks multiplied four fold over 1974-76. From 1978 to 1982 Colombia's international currrency reserves tripled to $6 billion. The central bank supervised the massive transfer of dollars into pesos – no questions asked. By 1984 the Medellin drug cartel was offering to pay off Colombia's $12 billion foreign debt in exchange for the dropping of extradition charges against it.

Today Colombia's foreign debt stands at $17.6 billion. Debt repayments consumed 48 per cent of 1988 legal export earnings. Coffee, at $1.6 billion, earned a third of these. Since then its price has halved after the USA rejected the International Coffee Agreement price formula. This will cost Colombia six times the $65 million Bush emergency aid in the forthcoming year alone. Six million Colombians are dependent on coffee for their livelihood. Even at its highest prices coffee earned Colombia about a third of the revenue brought in by cocaine. 'We need that money to keep the economy going. That's a sad but unequivocal reality', admitted an official of the Banco de la Republica.

BOLIVIA AND PERU

It is the same story in Bolivia and Peru. 'Ironically the greatest threat to the Government's 10 per cent inflation rate target for 1987 would be the success of the cocaine eradication campaign.' (Lloyds bank *Economic Report for Bolivia* 1987) In 1985 Bolivia's inflation rate was 20,000 per cent, the highest since the 1923 German inflation, foreign exchange reserves collapsed and the number of tin miners fell 80 per cent in four months. The central bank began twice weekly auctions of pesos. Illegal cocaine exports were over 177 per cent the value of legal exports. The country was flooded with dollars that were recycled and deposited in US and European banks. The auctions soaked up pesos and the government built up its foreign exchange reserves. 'Private individuals face the minimum of enquiry when selling dollars to banks and exchange houses; it is thought that about 80 per cent of the dollars acquired in this way derive from the narcotics trade.' (Lloyds Bank Report) The 'eradication campaign' did not 'succeed'.

Peru's current inflation rate is approximately 800 per cent. During 1988 the economy's output fell 8.5 per cent. Between January-May 1989 it fell a further 22.8 per cent. The foreign debt is $17 billion and Peru is $5 billion behind with repayments. It is cut off by the IMF and transnational banks from new loans. Over half the cocaine consumed in the USA originates in Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley. Over half a million Peruvians are directly dependent upon the coca crop for their subsistence.

Were the 'War on Drugs' to be just that it would collapse at least three Latin American economies, trigger debt repayment defaults and bring imperialist client governments crashing to their knees.

Writing in the 15 October 1858 *New York Daily Tribune* on the cost to China of imported opium, forced on it by two wars waged by Britain to improve Britain's trade balances, Marx predicted 'the Chinese government will try a method recommended by political and financial considerations – viz: legalise the cultivation of poppy in China.' With bitter irony the opium returned to Britain to waste working class lives. Now crack returns the new Empire's crimes, but the victims, as before, are the working class – this time in US cities. ■

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