

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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HUNDREDS OF FACES ON FRFI'S MOST-WANTED LIST

In May *The People* newspaper, 'the sick rag that breeds hate', published police photos of alleged poll tax rioters. Now FRFI publishes its own non-exclusive list of wanted criminals – the faces that brought SHAME ON HUMANITY!

WANTED

Name the criminals in our
rogue's gallery shots
IF YOU KNOW 'EM
SHOP 'EM



WANTED NO. 2
Known as 'Little W' – wanted for conspiracy to hold 50,000 prisoners in inhumane conditions, to brutalise and forcibly drug them. Previous record for kidnapping black people and deporting them.

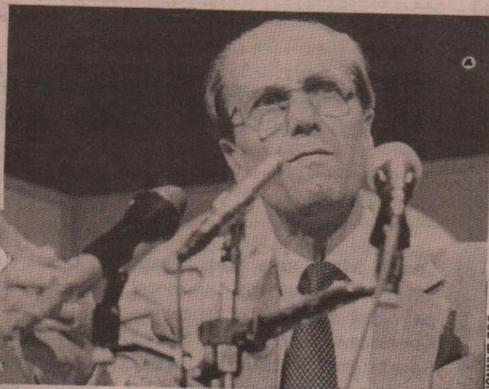


WANTED NO. 1
'The Big T' – habitual offender. Specialises in major robbery – the 'Poll Tax' scam – and mugging OAPs. Believed to be violent and head of international terror gang

IF YOU KNOW THIS WOMAN PERSONALLY
YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED



WANTED NO. 4
Close friend of 'Big T' Con man responsible for her international rackets. Also wanted for murder and torture. Believed to be South African



WANTED NO. 5
Henchman
Hates unemployed, black people, the poor, the Irish, (most people). Hobbies: enthusiastic sports spectator Cheers loudly at cricket matches but only if the team is white



unWANTED NO. 3
Rival gang leader – but thought to be supergrass specialising in suffocation of all opposition. No-one sensible wants this man for anything at all



WANTED NO.s 6 & 7
Front men for 'Big T's' publicity machine Well-known for printing filth, porn and lies. Known as the 'Big Ms'. Spineless so not difficult to spot



WANTED 8-SEVERAL THOUSAND
Rank and file members of the 'Law and Order' gang, wanted for riot, racism, kidnap, murder and false imprisonment

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Uppington 26 are innocent!

SOLIDARITY
PRICE
£1



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HELP RID SOCIETY OF THIS SCUM

REWARD-FREEDOM

The Labour Party: a political dead end



The prospects for the Tories engineering a mini-boom before the next election are receding as each month passes by. Inflation has nearly reached double figures, interest and mortgage rates remain stuck at punitive levels, unemployment is on the rise and the current account deficit has not yet begun to fall. If the Tories attempt to bribe the electorate with interest rate and tax cuts before the next election, it will leave any new government facing an economic nightmare.

The inflation rate reached 9.4 per cent in April, twice the average level of the Group of Seven most powerful industrial economies. This rate will rise to over 10 per cent in the next few months, reaching the same levels Thatcher inherited on taking office in 1979. Average earnings already at 9.5 per cent look set to follow.

After 44 months of consecutive falls, unemployment rose in April by a seasonally adjusted 1200. At 1,605,000, it is half a million higher than when Thatcher first came to power in spite of much tighter rules for claiming benefit and the exclusion of more than 650,000 on government schemes. In March with imports at an all-time high of £10.54bn and the balance on invisibles estimated as zero, the current account deficit reached £2.2bn giving a near record quarterly deficit of £5.6bn. If the April figures are anywhere near as bad, 'the pound will collapse', according to one City expert. Thatcher's prospects are not looking good.

Political parties in Britain act on the principle that 'people vote from the wallet'. This sums up the capitalist class' approach to democracy. The recent local elections demonstrated this. In two London boroughs, Westminster and Wandsworth, the Tories simply bribed the electorate by ensuring government grants produced low poll tax levels. Previous elections have been won in the same way. The key is to win the support of the voters that matter in parliamentary elections - the better off sections of the work-

ing class and the middle class. This must be done in the run up to the election. No other principles are involved.

Thatcher has damaged her chances, above all, because high interest and mortgage rates are hitting this crucial layer of voters. And there is probably too little time to retrieve the situation. The Labour Party hopes to benefit from this simply by doing nothing to upset this section of the electorate. This determines the political content of its latest policy review, and indeed its whole approach to politics.

Style is important. Labour is aiming for a 'partnership economy'. It will be a 'constructive partner within the EC'. This gush is endless. But what of the hard cash - the incomes of the middle classes? Labour has said it will raise taxation for the better off. This could be a problem. So its plan to raise the income tax ceiling to 50 per cent and remove the upper limit on National Insurance contributions will not be carried out without 'ensuring that the changes are made gradually and in ways which limit the impact on personal incomes.'

Tory administrations have massively redistributed wealth away from the poor to the better off and the rich. Two sets of statistics demonstrate how extreme the changes are. Between 1985-89 directors' pay increased by 120 per cent, more than two and a half times the growth of average earnings. After tax their net pay increased by 176 per cent. On the other hand, changes in benefit rules show a cut in benefits for claimants from 1987 to 1988 of 5.3 per cent. Further, as was recently exposed, between 1981-1985 the income of the poorest 10 per cent of the population increased by 2.6 per cent, not the 8.4 per cent claimed by the government, compared to 5.4 per cent for the population as a whole.

It is clear that Labour intends to do little to redress the balance. It says it will increase child benefit and pensions but who will pay? Budget increases will depend on sustainable

growth. 'We will not spend, nor will we promise to spend more than Britain can afford.' Most promised changes are qualified with the words 'as resources allow'. And what if on coming into office, there is an economic crisis, as is likely? Then we will experience the reality of Labour in power.

Over the last 11 years, the Labour Party out of office has never supported the working class when it fights back. Recently it has attacked anti-poll tax demonstrators and Strange-ways protesters with a venom even worse than the Tories'. Its policy review states that it intends, except for very minor changes, to keep the anti-union laws introduced by the Tories. The only increase that appears certain is in the number of police officers. As in the past, in a crisis it will not be the incomes of the rich which come under attack but those of the working class and the poor. And those who fight back to defend their living standards and jobs will not face just Labour condemnation but the full force of a Labour government in power - its police, its courts and its prisons.

Tony Benn calls the latest policy review anti-socialist and anti-Labour. A year ago he said the Labour Party was not and had probably never been a socialist party. Yet this weekend (19-20 May) he will be meeting with others on the left of the Labour Party to launch a campaign, Labour Party Socialists, for the left to recapture lost ground in the party. This is a political dead end for the left. It cannot be achieved and will only give credibility to the Labour Party.

The campaign which needs to be launched is to defend those who are being criminalised for fighting back against the police in Trafalgar Square. It is a campaign to defend the prisoners who exposed the reality of the British prison system on Strangeways prison roof and who are still exposed to its uncontrolled force and brutality. In short the campaign that is needed is one on the side of all working class fighters against this rotten class-ridden capitalist system. ■

Gay murders remain unsolved

TERRY DOWDING

In May a well-known actor was kicked to death by a gang of men in west London in the latest of a series of brutal murders of gay men. Two months earlier a 61-year-old gay man was bludgeoned to death in the same area. The Gay London Policing Unit has recorded 17 murders in the past two years.

While the police use vast resources to entrap and prosecute gays cottaging (picking up other men in public lavatories), attacks on gays are mostly ignored. Generally they are not even logged. Lesbians and gays are living under a permanent threat of violence.

Lesbian and gay groups are campaigning for tougher action against 'gay bashers', and yet no-one has been brought to justice for the murders of the 17 gay men. After years of dither-

ing, the Press Council recently upheld a complaint against the Sun 'newspaper' for using the words 'poof' and 'poofers'. It agreed with the complaint that such terms could cause violence against individuals. The tabloid press, which has created a wave of anti-gay hysteria labelling AIDS the 'gay plague', gives licence to homophobic thugs to beat up and murder gay men. The police give the green light for these vigilantes by allowing the murderers to walk free. ■

News

Abortion time limit reduced to 24 weeks

CAT WIENER

On 23 and 24 April, the House of Commons voted on two controversial motions, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill, and a proposed amendment to the time limit on abortion.

In spite of resorting to such sordid tactics as sending out life-sized plastic models of 20-week old fetuses to every MP in the country, and in spite of their usual moral claptrap about the 'sanctity' of embryonic life, the so-called pro-lifers were roundly defeated in their attempt to ban the research and limit abortions to 18 weeks. Nevertheless, the outcome is something of a mixed victory.

On the first day, MPs voted by a majority of 171 to allow experimentation on embryos up to 14 days after fertilisation under licence, and for a new statutory body, the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, to be set up to control test-tube baby procedures. The creation of hybrid species and payment for donated sperm and eggs is prohibited.

The possibility of continued research offers the possibility of real breakthroughs in the treatment of infertility and, in particular, the early detection of congenital disorders, and hope to thousands of women in this country. But, inevitably, while we welcome such advances, it must also raise the question of who actually controls the research, and in whose interests? At present, science is largely controlled by big business and the military; with their appalling record, can we trust them not to abuse and misuse their research?

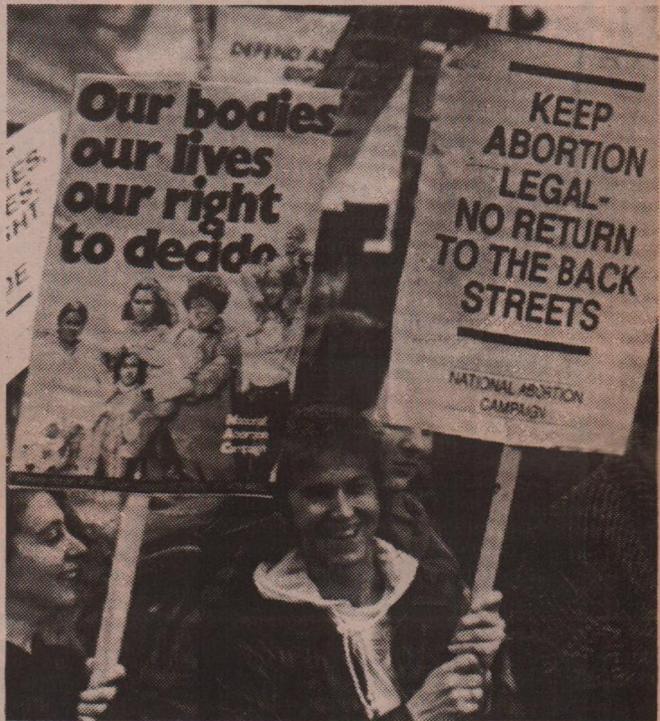
On the second day, in a free vote, MPs took a pendulum series of amendments on whether to limit abortion to the first 18, 28, 20, 26, 22 or 24 weeks. The decisive vote was for 24 weeks, the first amendment to the Abortion Act since it was introduced

in 1967. It was agreed to remove all time limits on abortion to prevent 'grave personal injury to the physical and mental health of the pregnant woman', and in the case of grave foetal handicap. This would in effect cover most abortions currently performed after 24 weeks.

However, the struggle for women's right to control reproduction is by no means won. It is not only vulnerable to 'pro-lifers' such as Alton and Widdicombe and their emotive guilt-trips about the rights of the unborn child, backed by SPUC, LIFE, and the Church. Those who defended the right to abortion at 24 weeks for the most part in fact deny women's rights by linking the question to foetal viability. This means that with every medical advance that enables a foetus to be viable outside the womb at 22, 20, 18 weeks, etc, the time-limit automatically lays itself open to being revised downwards. Ironically, the only MP who made the essential point was right-wing

Tory Teresa Gorman - that controls on reproductive rights are a key factor in society's control over women themselves.

For middle class women, who will always have the option of private abortions, or, indeed, private childcare, it is indeed a question of 'the right to choose'. But all this comes at a time when Family Planning clinics are having their budgets slashed or being closed down, when it can take six weeks or longer to get an abortion on the National Health, when it is still not the woman but two - usually male - doctors who determine whether or not she can have an abortion (unlike most European countries where abortion is available on demand at least up to 12 weeks), and yet single, working class mothers are increasingly penalised by the State and the services on which many depend are being cut. For working class women, the fight for abortion rights - free, and on demand - remains part of their overall fight against oppression. ■



Schools under siege

SUSAN DAVIDSON

Early May saw the long-delayed report on teachers' pay and conditions from the Commons Education Select Committee. It calls for better pay to raise staff-room morale and encourage more recruits to teaching.

The report does not provide exact figures on teachers leaving, but it does state that it is an urgent problem. Two years ago the DES (education department) was saying that there was no problem, but recent research estimated a loss of 20,000 classroom teachers in 1989, 5.3 per cent. Now the government is paying for a £2m recruitment campaign similar to the £1m spent by the Inner London Education Authority in its last days.

Despite the shortage of teachers there is a new and immediate threat to sack staff from schools. The fund from which

teachers are paid is being cut back and new legal powers can lead to instant dismissal.

Local Education Authorities pay teachers' salaries out of the Poll Tax. Recent weeks have shown that local councils are under pressure to keep this low under the threat of central government capping, which means withdrawal of money.

Another control on school spending is LMS (Local Management of Schools) which begins next year. Heads and governors are under pressure to develop 'economic units' which budget for the 'average' teachers' pay and are quite unrelated to real living schools. Teachers will be made redundant if they cannot be afforded under a changing annual budget for the school, even if they are desperately needed and have a full timetable.

In April the national conferences of the two largest teachers' unions voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike

action to safeguard jobs threatened by the Poll Tax and LMS. The UWT/NAS has estimated that 15,000 jobs are threatened under LMS alone. In Nottinghamshire 184 redundancy notices have been sent out since 1 April.

Despite this, the leadership of the National Union of Teachers was 'astounded' by the 32,000 majority for national strike action. General Secretary Doug McAvoy, with his £42,000 a year union job, has 'ruled out illegal strikes'. Like Kinnock, he is concerned only with a respectable face that will appeal to voters in the centre and will turn his back on the chaos and deprivation suffered by vast numbers of school-children and their teachers.

School teachers are being forced to fight back. The criminal stupidity of Thatcher's effort to cut the cost of education has led to this total mess in which teachers nationally are being both sacked and recruited at the same time. ■

Winchester Three free

SARAH RICCA



John McCann, Martina Shanahan and Finbar Cullen on their release

On Friday 27 April, in another victory in the fight against frame-ups, the Court of Appeal released the Winchester Three - Martina Shanahan, Finbar Cullen and John McCann.

The three were framed in October 1988 for conspiring with persons unknown to murder Tom King and conspiring with persons unknown to murder persons unknown. For 'conspiring to . . .', read 'we haven't got any evidence but we want them convicted for . . .'

And convicted they were - with 25-year prison sentences. With only the flimsiest of evidence to present to a jury, the prosecution had to make a fair trial impossible. Special Branch vetted jurors for their political opinions. The prosecution secured venues for the trial pre-judicial to the defence case: the Tory heartland of Winchester, an army garrison town, home to

several regiments which have suffered casualties in the North of Ireland.

And in the middle of the trial Tom King himself stepped in. Just 24 hours after the three had used their right to silence in court, King appeared on major news broadcasts to announce that the right was to be removed for the North of Ireland. 'Silence,' he said, ' . . . is offering an opportunity for the guilty.

And Lord Denning also spoke out: 'It's only a guilty person who says "oh, I claim my right to silence".' It did the trick - just. A guilty verdict was secured.

It was on the grounds that Tom King's intervention made a fair trial impossible that the three Appeal Court judges quashed the convictions. They rejected claims of insufficient evidence, but accepted that the

timing and nature of the remarks 'would not allow justice to be seen to be done.'

But we shouldn't be complacent. As Finbar Cullen said in Dublin after his release, 'It is two and a half years too late and for many the nightmare goes on'. Their nightmares are guaranteed not to disturb the sleep of the ruling class if opposition to frame-ups is left to the Labour Party. Their response to the case of the Winchester Three has been a characteristically feeble call - two-and-a-half years too late - for King's resignation. Nor can any reliance be placed on the pro-imperialist forces in the 26 counties, all of whom are continuing to demand the removal of legal obstacles to the extradition of nationalists to the North.

Only an independent movement which fights for justice will ensure that the innocent get it. As Finbar's mother Mary said on her son's release, 'the freedom of everybody rests on the shoulders of us all.' ■

Beyond reasonable doubt

SUSAN DAVIDSON

Beyond Reasonable Doubt. 'Inside Story', BBC1, 16 May. This was an excellent programme dealing with the investigation and trial of six people for the murder of PC Blakelock in October 1985 at Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham, London.

Using the trial transcripts and interviews with witnesses, psychologists, solicitors and defendants it was shown that the convictions of Engin Raghip, Mark Braithwaite and Winston Silcott are 'unsafe'.

Two points were made. First, that the statements about Winston Silcott made by Jason Hill, then a 13-year-old charged with murder, were regarded by the trial judge as 'unreliable fantasy'. Unfortunately the jury never heard this and were left with a memory of Jason's accusations against Silcott as ringleader of the killing.

Second, the exact circumstances of the 'confession' signed by Raghip and Braithwaite were explained. Silcott's statement was never signed by him. As with the Guildford Four and the Birmingham Six it was shown that given enough pressure, innocent people will

sign confessions under police interrogation.

This programme was a neat summary, but actually contained nothing that was new to those who have followed the case since the trial. In 1986 Lord Gifford published the *Broadwater Farm Inquiry*. In 1987 'The Burnham Report of international jurists in respect to the trials' was produced, and in February 1988 Amnesty International 'questioned the fairness of British trials' in a document called *United Kingdom: Alleged Forced Admissions During Incommunicado Detention*.

All the evidence is there. It has largely been due to the unremitting efforts of Sharon Raghip that this programme was made and that the campaigning continues.

The fight for justice for the Tottenham Three must continue. In his own words, 'All I, Winston Silcott, want is justice, not injustice and lies. This shame of a case will always be a thorn in the side of the British judiciary.'

Readers of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* welcome this programme and hope that there is no peace for those responsible for their imprisonment until each man is released. ■

Another whitewash

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The full official report by Deputy Chief Constable John Stevens into collaboration between the UDR/RUC and loyalist paramilitaries will never be made public. Only a 29-page summary of those of its findings which can safely be made known, has been released. This cover-up is hardly surprising since to reveal the full extent of collaboration would expose a central mechanism of British rule in Ireland.

The report is forced to admit that 'a complex network of intellig-

ence was uncovered involving the supply and exchange of information between loyalist paramilitary groups, with the UDR at the centre'. However, it hastily adds, these abuses were not 'widespread or institutionalised'. Nevertheless, even the sanitised report reveals some interesting facts: for example, that UDR officers were recruited despite adverse police reports on them, and that these UDR officers then went on to commit crimes.

Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Brooke hastily leapt to the defence of the UDR which, he said, played a 'vital and valued' part in anti-terrorist work. 'I am convinced that the regiment is

fundamentally sound'. From Brooke's point of view the UDR is indeed sound. 100 of its members have been convicted of sectarian offences, including murder. In or out of uniform, the UDR is fully committed to wiping out nationalists.

But the sectarian nature of the UDR is well known. Thus for Stevens to criticise some UDR officers does not create huge problems for the British government. However, the Stevens report is at pains not to criticise the RUC. Stevens refused to even say how many RUC officers his inquiry had questioned. Yet when loyalist paramilitaries first revealed that they were getting intelligence, they pointed

out that RUC files on 200 Republicans had been passed to them and boasted of their close links to both the UDR and the RUC. Over past years there has been ample evidence that both the RUC and the British army use loyalist paramilitaries to carry out certain operations, such as the assassination of Republican activists. Stevens avoids mention of this altogether.

Stevens, a British policeman, probably conducted his inquiry with the spectre of John Stalker haunting him. When Stalker got too close to revealing the murderous role of the RUC, he was publicly destroyed. Stevens need not fear this fate. ■

Ninth death this year in Brixton Prison

PAM ROBINSON

There have been nine deaths in Brixton prison in a single year. The prison is overcrowded with more than 1,000 remand prisoners, some 300 more than the Home Office guidelines. The prison hospital wing holds many prisoners who should be receiving mental health care and not be in a prison at all. Germain Alexander was the ninth person to die in Brixton prison.

He was a psychiatric remand prisoner. He had been arrested four times previously under the Mental Health Act and the police were aware of his mental condition. His death was described as 'natural causes aggravated by lack of care', in the verdict given by Southwark coroner Sir Montague Levin. Alexander was transferred from a police station to Brixton prison. No

doctor's report of his mental condition was made at the police station. Whilst he was in a prison cell three members of the 'Control and Restraint' team, including Treeve Rowe, the Suicide Prevention Officer, entered his cell. During this time Alexander received the following injuries: two of his teeth were found stuck in his wind-pipe, his spine was fractured, and 80 other bodily injuries. Later, prison officers claimed they had been called to his cell after a disturbance which put his life and that of his cell-mate at risk.

Vera Alexander, Germain's daughter, said in response to the verdict: 'My father should have been in hospital. This is a condemnation of the way in which people are treated by the authorities. This is the third or fourth time such a verdict has been reached due to deaths in Brixton prison.' The family hope to bring a civil action against the Home Office. ■

In memoriam

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! salutes Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Joe McDonnell, Ray McCreesh, Patsy O'Hara, Thomas McElwee, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Martin Hurson and Mickey Devine, murdered by British imperialism between May and August 1981. Their courage and strength will never be forgotten. Always remembered. Solidarity and strength to their families.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! remembers the brave

volunteers murdered by British imperialism at Loughgall in May 1987.

Prisoners' Birthdays

Joe O'Connell 338635, 15 May
HMP Gartree, Leicester Rd, Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 7RP
Patrick Magee B75881, 29 May
HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX
Peter Sherry B75880, 30 June
HMP Parkhurst
Brian Keenan B26300, 17 July
HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs WR11 5TZ

British terror

PAM ROBINSON

Britain's illegal occupying forces continue to cause death and destruction in the nationalist communities of the Six Counties of Ireland.

● **Wednesday 4 April** Two loyalist gunmen shot dead Roger Brady a catholic and a Housing Executive worker. He was shot whilst working on a mainly loyalist estate in North Belfast.

● In Ardoyne, Belfast, a young mother and her baby were left homeless after a five hour army/RUC raid on their home. During the raid gas, electricity and the water supply were cut-off. Extensive damage was caused to the home. Neighbours were denied access to the woman and her child during the raid.

● The DPP in Belfast have refused to charge anyone with the death of 15-year-old Seamus Duffy who was killed by a plastic bullet in August 1989.

● **Tuesday 10 April** Damien Fusco had his car stopped and diverted to a loyalist area of

South Belfast by an RUC road-block. Whilst stopped in a line of traffic outside a pub, his car was surrounded by a group of men who attacked him with a broken bottle. He needed 18 stitches to injuries to his head, hand and chest. Nearby RUC refused to take action against the attackers after they were informed of the incident.

● **Monday 16 April** Robin and Kathleen Martin were stopped at an army check-point. After their car had been searched army members attempted to make Robin remove his socks, shoes and coat and threatened to shoot him. At this point he locked himself in the car. He then began to get chest pains. Soldiers laughed and kicked the car announcing that they were going to 'enjoy watching him die'. His wife was denied a phone call at the check-point and had to go to a public phone. When medical help had not arrived an hour later Kathleen tried to go to the phone again but was threatened with being shot by the soldiers. On arrival a doctor requested a cardiac unit be called. The doc-

tor was also refused the use of the phone at the check-point and had to use the public phone. During this time the soldiers told waiting drivers, 'We'll not keep you too long, there's a bastard dying there but he shouldn't be too long now.' When a cardiac unit arrived and Robin was on a stretcher the soldiers attempted to body-search him. The incident lasted four hours.

● **Wednesday 25 April** Loyalist gunmen shot and killed Brian McKimm a Protestant in North Belfast on a nationalist estate where he lived with his Catholic girl-friend.

● **Sunday 29 April** In Portadown loyalists threw a blast bomb into the front room of an OAP's home. A woman received serious injury with her daughter narrowly escaping injury. The blast caused a fire damaging the front room and an upstairs room.

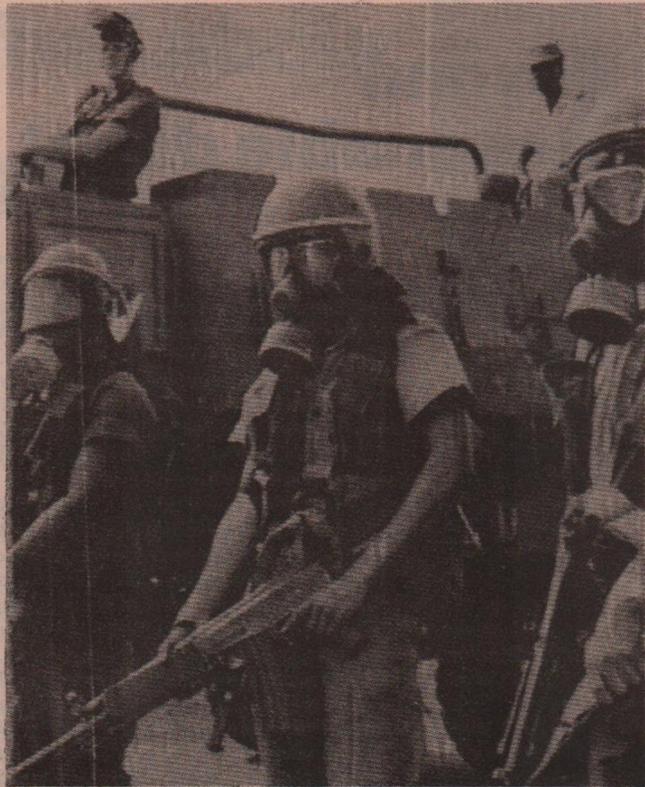
● **Sunday 29 April** Steve Rogan and two friends were jumped upon and attacked by soldiers in West Belfast. The soldiers opened fire on the group with a plastic bullet gun, hitting Rogan in the arm. They were then arrested, held for ten hours before being released and charged with disorderly behaviour. ■

Boateng looks for a job

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The recent IRA operations in Britain, the bombing of two military targets in Wembley and Eltham, London, have brought forth the usual cries of outrage from the British government and its supporters.

The hypocrisy of this response, which finds the British murders of Irish people acceptable but condemns the fightback of the IRA, goes without saying. What was interesting, however, was the response of Paul Boateng, Labour MP. 'This is a vile and murderous outrage on a totally unsuspecting community. The vile perpetrators of this act must be caught and caught quickly . . .' and so on. The usual pro-British outrage that Britain's war in Ireland should be brought to these shores and, horrors, to Boateng's constituency. Will the next Labour government feature Boateng as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland? ■



The less well-publicised face of apartheid

Apartheid reform a myth

LEIGH AVON AND CAT WIENER

The ANC delegation, headed by Nelson Mandela, sat down with the Nationalist Party on 2 May, for the so-called 'talks about talks', aimed at removing what both sides see as obstacles to a negotiated settlement.

While the talks were much-hyped in the British media as 'historical' and 'epoch-making', the Groote Schuur minute issued from the talks in fact commits the regime to very little: they will 'review' existing security procedures, 'make recommendations' on political offences, and 'work towards' lifting the State of Emergency. At the same time, they contain measures by which the regime hopes to be able to control the growing unrest in South Africa.

For the gulf between the promise of real change and the reali-

ty on the ground is widening. De Klerk has told parliament quite clearly that 'majority rule is not suitable for a country like South Africa.' Detentions under the State of Emergency are increasing (*Weekly Mail*, 27 April-3 May); over the last few months the incidence of fighting between township youth and the extra police and troops sent in to control them has increased, with two teenagers teargassed and shot dead in Galeshewe near Kimberly in early May, and four killed and hundreds injured by police in Rammulotsi, near Viljoenskroon at the end of April. In Galeshewe, police attacked the funeral: the youth responded by throwing petrol bombs at police and setting cars alight. Strikes have taken place throughout South Africa in the health service and in industry protesting against privatisation; the current miners' strike in Welkom has been attacked by white vigilantes and tension is high. As

Nelson Mandela has said, 'apartheid continues to maim and kill'.

Small wonder, then, that the issue of negotiations is increasingly viewed with suspicion in the townships, particularly by the youth. A leaflet distributed by the organisers of the Galeshewefuneral dismissed negotiations as 'not really serious' and called for an 'offensive against the enemy'. Both the PAC and AZAPO have been categorical in their rejection of negotiations, and reports in the *Weekly Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* in early May suggest that the PAC is making increasing headway in recruiting youth. If organised opposition to negotiations develops on a mass scale it would be precisely the revolutionary movement that de Klerk and his imperialists backers have staked everything to avoid. This is why the British media has launched an attack on the PAC and all the organisations which oppose

negotiations, denouncing them as extremists on a par with the viciously right-wing AWB. Still more sinister has been a series of murderous attacks on leading PAC members: the 'car-crash' - a death squad tactic - that killed Jafta Masemola on 17 April; the blowing up of Sam Chand and his family in Botswana on 20 April; the death of his brother in a car crash on the way to the funeral a few days later; and the car crash in which Benny Alexander and other PAC members were injured a week later.

The public face the South African regime is presenting to the world is that apartheid is being reformed away; that sanctions should be lifted; that all is well. But behind the facade the violence continues unabated, with the regime fighting at every level to bludgeon any opposition into silence. But the resistance is growing, too. As a speaker at the funeral of one of those murdered in the townships said: 'We will fight them with our petrol bombs and our stones... we will call on our parents to join us'. ■

Upington 26 are innocent

Lydia Nompondwana interviewed

Lydia Nompondwana, Treasurer of the Upington 26 Campaign, is currently on a tour of Britain and Holland sponsored by City of London Anti-Apartheid Group and the Sharpeville Six Committee, which culminates in a march in London on 26 May. Her husband Enoch has been sentenced to eight years for attempted murder, in a trial of 26 people from Paballelo township, Upington, South Africa. Fourteen of the 26 were sentenced to death under the 'common purpose' doctrine for the murder of a policeman. Below we print an interview with Lydia which describes what happened and the support the community now asks for in their campaign to free the prisoners.

Why did the people of Paballelo meet together on 13 November 1985?

On Sunday 10 November a meeting was set up with the Mayor of Paballelo, Kenneth Khumalo, and other councillors to talk about problems in the township - high rents, and the conditions that people lived in. As the meeting adjourned the police tear-gassed the people. That is when it all started.

On the Tuesday a Captain Van Dyck from Kimberley police talked to the people about the violence that was going on, and a meeting was organised. That is why the people gathered on the soccer field on the Wednesday morning. People waited for him to come and he didn't turn up. They started singing the national anthem and said a prayer. As they said 'Amen', tear-gas canisters were again shot into the people, who started stone throwing.

All the roads were blocked by police vehicles. The crowd automatically started running back towards the township. That is where the policeman Jetta Sethwala lived, in Pulani Street, where most of the people ran. He was in his house. He fired a shot into the crowd in front of his house. So the people started attacking his house. Then he wounded a nine year old boy.

When he ran out of the house, the people started chasing him. Justice Bekebeke was coming from the opposite direction. They started fighting. Justice got hold of the gun to disarm him

and struck him with two blows. He was killed.

What happened to the people of Paballelo after that day?

Some people were arrested the same day: the arrests continued until late December. Many people were picked up off the streets at random for identification parades on 3 December. Five of the Upington 26 were only people who were picked up and pointed out by the state witnesses. Some of them were not even

'Just being there standing in front of the house, or throwing stones at the house was counted as intention to kill'

in the town on that day when Jetta was killed. Today they are 'murderers' that the state finds killed Jetta.

What were the charges?

They were charged with murder, and then my husband with attempted murder. They were accused under the doctrine of common purpose. The judge said that they had intent to kill. Just being there standing in front of the house, or throwing stones at the house was counted as intent to kill.

And there was no jury in this court?

No, it was only the judge and two assessors. But one of the assessors died very early in the case. So those two made the

decisions about everything in that case.

Twenty six were convicted?

Fourteen were sentenced to death, and they are on Death Row in Pretoria Central Maximum Security Prison. The others, including my husband, were held in Kimberley: two for eight years' imprisonment, four for six years and six for community service.

When do you anticipate the appeal might be?

Maybe in late June or August of this year.

What is the state of the prisoners on Death Row and their families?

If you visit the people on Death Row, you can't discuss what's going on because there is always a warder around to listen.

The families are really suffering at this moment because the prisoners are kept very far from our town. Pretoria is 900 kilometres away. To visit the people in Kimberley it's 410 kilometres, and that's only the single trip. To go there needs money. The people in prison today were our breadwinners, so we lost a lot of income.

What is Evelina de Bruin's situation?

In the beginning Evelina suffered a lot. She got ill and she had a lot of problems. Now we are told that she has a TV, and they have started to teach her to crochet and knit.

She's the only woman on Death Row. She couldn't even see her children before she was sentenced and taken to Pretoria. She can't read and write and there is no one to talk to except the warders. When she first went to prison she didn't realise she was on Death Row until a week later. That is when she started crying, when she realised her circumstances and just how bad it is.

Another of those on Death Row is Kenneth Khumalo, the Mayor.

Why have you come to Britain and Holland now?



I am going around to get political and financial support from the people over here. Finances are very bad in Paballelo. It's a poor township. There is no money and people are suffering. And political assistance to help us. To make it possible for those people in prison to be released as political prisoners.

Some people say that, with the release of Nelson Mandela and talks about negotiations, now is not the time to campaign for the release of political prisoners.

They might say so, but we didn't experience any political change. You read in the paper that there is change, but for the people on the ground there are no changes. So you don't know how long we will be forced to wait, and when will those people decide that the time is right. They might decide that it is the time, but it will be too late.

People were lucky enough, at the last moment, to save the Sharpeville 6. But they are still in prison! And for long sentences. We might not be so lucky.

Our case is under the same common purpose doctrine as the Sharpeville Six. It might go the same way, but why wait till the last moment if we can do something about it now?

They said it might harm the case for us to go around campaigning, trying to get our people free. It might be as bad to sit down and do nothing, and we can't afford it. ■

AAM attempt to sabotage Upington campaign

JACKY SUTTON/CAT WIENER

● Who would not support a campaign to free 26 black South Africans, 14 of them on Death Row, framed up under apartheid's notorious 'common purpose' doctrine?

● Who would systematically attempt to sabotage a speaking tour by the Treasurer of the Upington 26 campaign and wife of one of those convicted, organised by City of London Anti-Apartheid Group to build support and raise funds for the campaign?

● Who would send one of its representatives to South Africa to attempt to persuade UDF member Alfred Gubula, a community leader in Upington whose son is on Death Row, that the tour was ill-timed and should not go ahead?

● Who would attempt to sabotage speaking fixtures in this country and persuade local AA groups not to support the tour?

Thatcher, perhaps - long-time friend and defender of the apartheid regime? Or maybe the South African embassy, engaging in yet another campaign of dirty tricks?

None of these. It was the British Anti-Apartheid Movement, to its shame, which sent Terry Bell to Upington to try to cancel the tour: their NEC which advised the Scottish Education for Action and Development Fund that they believed the tour was ill-timed and that they didn't want City AA given a platform; North Tyneside AA which voted against supporting the tour, and, while Lydia Nompondwana addressed individuals from the group, loudly held a singing practice in the next room; it was Paul Brannon of South Africa the Imprisoned Society (SATIS), who told City AA that they, in SATIS, felt that the issue of political prisoners was only half an issue with negotiations taking place, and that the issue of the prisoners would be resolved in two or three weeks.

How is that on the one hand the AAM can protest against de Klerk's visit to Britain and in support of the ANC programme

for negotiations, which includes the release of political prisoners, while deliberately setting out to sabotage the Upington campaign? How is it that they can feel it is the right time to parade reformed policeman Rockman around the country, but not for Lydia Nompondwana to go on tour? And how come, that while the AAM do, on paper, have their own campaign for the Upington 14, Mike Terry admitted to RCG members that they have not sent a penny of the money raised to the families?

Well, the first answer is very simply that the AAM oppose anything that will give City AA credibility. They fear City AA's connection with sections of the liberation movement who are outside their control and to whom they have always denied support.

But there is more to it than that. At a time when all those supporting the current negotiations are stressing the *respectability* of the liberation struggle, the whole question of political prisoners, particularly those convicted for their part in the 1985 townships uprisings, raises questions about mass revolutionary violence which the AAM do not want raised at this time. Yet it is these prisoners, including the Upington 14, who, when de Klerk decides who qualifies for amnesty as a 'political' prisoner, may well be classed as 'criminals'. The AAM fears that this speaking tour may provide a focus for those who do want precisely these questions raised.

The AAM acts for its friends in the Labour Party and British imperialism in attempting to limit the liberation struggle to these interests. Time after time we have seen them play this role, taking over campaigns for the Sharpeville Six, Moses Mayekiso, the Cape Town 16 - which then sink without trace. We are not prepared to see the same thing happen to the Upington 26. We would refer the AAM back to the words of Nelson Mandela: 'Do not listen to anyone who says that you must give up the struggle against apartheid...' City AA will carry on that struggle. ■

Decisive clashes imminent

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The sharp and bitter political clashes in the Soviet Union indicate a powerful contest between forces representing opposing class interests. With increasing confidence, pro-imperialist proto-bourgeois forces are mounting an open struggle to restore capitalism in the USSR. At the May Day parade in Moscow President Gorbachev and the Politburo were humiliated off their own platform above Lenin's mausoleum, unable to respond to the catcalls and jeering of thousands of people brandishing anti-communist banners.

A decisive aspect of the political battle between the counter-revolutionaries and the mass of the Soviet people centres on the question of economic reforms. Spearheaded by Deputy Prime Minister Leonid Abalkin, the counter-revolutionaries are calling for an immediate introduction of a market, a capitalist tax, banking and financial system, the privatisation of Soviet industry, the break up of industrial monopolies and the opening up of the Soviet economy to foreign capital. They are calling for these reforms to be introduced overnight in the fashion of the Solidarity government in Poland. They argue that dismantling the planned economy is the only cure to the Soviet Union's severe economic crisis.

The destruction of the Soviet planned economy is already underway. The legal framework for this has been set by Gorbachev's laws on property, land

and leasing, the new self-financing system for separate industries and the relaxation of the state monopoly on foreign trade. Additionally in January 1991, 70% of Soviet retail and wholesale prices will be freed of government controls. In July, foreign firms for the first time will be able to acquire 100% control of Soviet industries. Such measures will create at least 10 million unemployed and raise prices by at least 200%. Abalkin's proposals, if implemented, will totally destroy the gains in welfare, education, health and culture made since the 1917 Russian Revolution. Abalkin and his cohorts want this process speeded up.

Abalkin is no isolated intellectual. His programme reflects the interests of a confident petit-bourgeois and proto-bourgeois social stratum which has developed within and outside the Communist Party. Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* has allowed these reactionaries to take the political initiative. They have no connection with either socialism or Marxism and are thoroughly anti-working class. With the crisis facing the Soviet economy, a substantial section of this privileged layer sees the restoration of capitalism as the only guarantee for its future privilege.

Unfortunately, the Soviet working class at the moment has no comparable political programme to defend its own interests. The eruption of national antagonisms and the devastating growth of national chauvinism and anti-semitism has split the Soviet working class into its

constituent national groupings and thus prevented it from acting as a unified and coherent force.

Nevertheless the working class has not remained passive. Conscious of the threat, they have in different ways demonstrated their uncompromising opposition to these bourgeois plans. According to Nikolai Petrakov, a close adviser to Gorbachev, only 30% of the Soviet population want the market. At the May Day demonstration workers carried placards against reductions in living standards and unemployment and held banners proclaiming 'No to the monopoly of market economists! Enough of Abalkin and Popov! We want economists of the plan!' Others demonstrated in defence of Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution.

The counter-revolutionaries are not finding their work easy. Working class resistance alone has so far prevented the government carrying through Abalkin's programme. Fearful that all the gains they have made could be destroyed by a massive and angry working class mobilisation, the counter-revolutionaries are beating a temporary tactical retreat. Whether this retreat is turned into a rout depends on the ability of the working class to organise itself into a strong and independent political force. If it can, the counter-revolutionaries can be crushed with ease. If it can't, the working class will be forced to pay a heavy price as the USSR is transformed into a capitalist economy mortgaged to imperialism. ■

Nepalese people continue to fight backward monarchy

JOHN MALONEY

The repressive rule of King Birendra over the 18 million inhabitants of the beleaguered country of Nepal is fast crumbling as the continuing actions of a mass movement for democracy force changes from the ruler of the world's third poorest nation.

Ongoing demonstrations have brought tens of thousands onto the streets in protests against an array of problems that beset Nepal as much as any of the Third World countries drained by the crippling effects of imperialist aggression and plunder.

The stifling poverty and inhuman conditions that the majority of these people are forced to live in by Birendra and his power-wielding cronies has sparked the inevitable confrontation. The oligarchy of corruption has finally met with mass resistance in a land where any political opposition is not only banned but met with brutal repression.

Power in Nepal has always been confined to a tiny minority of elites. Despotic rule led to the near feudal partyless system called *panchayat* that existed until the recent uprising. This system gave the ruling regime a free hand in controlling affairs and dealing with dissent.

Today's monarch is credited

with being out of touch with his people, hardly surprising when you consider he hasn't even mastered his native language. But he's certainly not out of touch with the affairs of his foreign bank accounts. The ruling clique who maintain a firm hold of economic affairs control everything from foreign imperialist investment to the black market. That is why the Nepalese have a saying: 'Foreign currency changed in the bank is business with the king, a similar exchange on the black market and you deal with his brother'.

The discontent of the last few months has been gaining momentum for some time through the actions of a broad-based mass movement comprising of the Nepali Congress Party and a united left front of mainly the communists. The anger which led them onto the streets in early April was met by the brutal force of the well-equipped police and army which reacted by opening fire on the demonstrators, killing over 200 and injuring countless others.

To counteract the uprising, Birendra has agreed to legalise political parties and restore multi-party democracy in some form. Shresthra, the prime minister has been sacked and made scapegoat for ordering the troops to open fire. The king's promises to honour national sentiment is gaining very little support among large sections of

the movement who are calling for an end to the monarchy as an initial step to any progress.

Since the interim government, set up three weeks ago and headed by Prasad Bhattarai of the Nepali Congress Party, has been in power the persistent actions of the youth have forced the first steps in dismantling the old political institutions.

But the young students and workers, living in dire poverty, are in no mood for conciliation, as mass agitation reveals the opportunism of the Nepali Congress Party, who hoped to seize power on the backs of the younger generations. Their connivance with the king in attempting to contain the movement is gaining no favour in the ranks of the masses who continue to agitate for more drastic changes.

While the British-trained mercenary force of the gorkhas is deployed to protect the monarchy, which hides behind 20 foot palace walls in Kathmandu, the police are in disarray, staging their own demonstrations as their situation becomes increasingly tenuous. The youth who have faced the police bullets and brutality now organise in the streets. Let us hope that the progress to date is taken to its conclusion with the decisive dismantling of the old *panchayat* system, and not sold out to the deceit of the Congress Party furthering their own interests ahead of the oppressed. ■

Interview – The Kurdish National Liberation Front

On 12 March fierce fighting broke out between units of the Kurdistan People's Liberation Army (ARPK) and Turkish occupation forces in the district of Savur. Over 40 colonialist troops and 13 ARPK *peshmerga* guerrillas were killed. This battle signalled a popular uprising in Kurdistan involving mass demonstrations, school boycotts and shop closures combined with fresh *peshmerga* assaults. Demonstrations were reported in Ankara and Istanbul. The Turkish government responded with mass arrests and indiscriminate firing upon protestors. FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM! supports the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination and interviewed KAZIM HOGIR of the Kurdistan National Liberation Front (ERNK) on the latest stage of the struggle for Kurdistan.

How many Turkish troops are deployed against the Kurdish people at the moment?

In 1984, apart from the people serving in the Turkish military, there were 40,000 in village militias, protectors of feudalism; now that number has been reduced to 1,500 to 2,000. This is a big change. Now there are counter-insurgency forces who have been trained by imperialism. Apart from that there are regional governors with secret service agents. More and more Kurdish people will not serve in the Turkish forces. People are no longer afraid. As the struggle grows the barriers of fear are collapsing and the people look forward under the People's Committees to unity in struggle.

Have you managed to secure any liberated zones?

We have liberated zones that are not officially declared. Areas like Botan, Mardin and Diyarbakir are politically liberated but they have not been declared because the leadership wants to bring the other areas of Kurdistan into the strategic position of these areas.

What is the land programme of the national liberation movement and is there political opposition within Turkish-occupied Kurdistan?

After the revolution there will be land reform. Land in the hands of the feudal elements will be distributed to the people. Before the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party - which motivated the formation of ERNK: TR) was formed, there were reformist organisations that wanted cultural rights for Kurdish people and which opposed full national liberation. As the Kurdish struggle has grown these reformist organisations have received the support of imperialism. This is to throw up barriers to the support that Kurdish people have been giving to the PKK and the leadership of the struggle. They have organised meetings in Sweden, France and West Germany and they are planning to pacify the Kurdish struggle and bring a new lease of life to their autonomy plans; that is, autonomy within the Turkish state. Their programme is a right for Kurds to speak their own lan-

guage, more roads, more schools. In fact, this is a programme of more assimilation into Turkey, to open a road for capitalism to develop in Kurdistan itself.

What level of weaponry is being used against the Kurdish people, and what form does imperialist intervention take?

The enemy has already used chemical weapons on a number of occasions. They use the most sophisticated weapons available. They use large numbers of soldiers to round up guerrillas, then use helicopters and chemical weapons to kill them. This is the Turkish army. At the same time the Turkish government is trying to improve its relationship with Iraq, Syria, Iran, Greece and all neighbouring countries to try and stop the Kurdish struggle. Our own forces have weapons that can shoot down the helicopters. Our military strength is increasing. In the past few weeks five or six helicopters have been shot down.

US imperialism has 100 bases in Turkey and Kurdistan, and gives full support to the Turkish colonialists. West Germany tries Kurdish patriots for crimes they have never committed: trying to stamp them out as 'terrorists' for being in the PKK. The counter-insurgency forces were trained by the West German government. Now they send helicopters with their own German military pilots whom they pay DM72,000 a day to fight the liberation movement.

At what stage do you see the struggle for Kurdistan?

We are going from armed struggle to people's war for a mass uprising in Kurdistan. This can only be gained through a strategic power, strategic attacks and strategic defence. When you get these three then you can get a mass uprising of the people. The people are united behind the Front and they are organising. We are getting ready to declare a liberated area and preparing the people for a political defence of Kurdistan. ■



Mass action against Turkish repression in Kurdistan

French anti-semitism

CAT WIENER

Racist attacks are on the increase in France. The desecration of 32 Jewish graves in Carpentras, a suburb of Paris, with red swastikas over the weekend of 12-13 May, and the digging up and impaling of a recently-buried Jewish man on an umbrella, are simply the most gruesome and graphic indications of this. Public revulsion at the attack brought tens of thousands - including virtually the entire political, social and religious establishment - out onto the streets of Paris the following Monday to protest in a march organised by SOS Racisme, the League of Human Rights, and various Jewish organisations. But while such a display of outrage is welcome, it cannot begin to tackle the underlying problem.

The rise of anti-semitism in France has been matched by a

rise in vicious attacks against Arab workers and their families in the last few months. These attacks have left one dead, another clinically brain-dead and a third paralysed. The mosque in Rennes has been bombed. And a recent survey by the French government revealed that 75 per cent of [the white?] electorate believe that there are too many North Africans in France and 50 per cent consider that politicians should be allowed to claim that 'blacks and North African Arabs are racially inferior to Europeans'. This surge of racism has undoubtedly been fuelled by Jean-Marie Le Pen and his neo-fascist National Front, who now command a substantial minority of the French vote - including many ex-members of France's racist and rotten Communist Party.

But as Malek Boutih, vice-president of SOS Racisme, the national French anti-racist organisation, told *FRFI*, while the National Front have, little by

little, made blatant racism acceptable to the French public, the blame ultimately must lie squarely at the feet of the Socialist government, who have refused to confront the problem. During the rising unemployment of the last ten years in France, it was convenient for them to allow the immigrant population to be blamed. Unemployment amongst these communities rose by 41 per cent: while Le Pen's propaganda claimed that 'One million immigrants equals one million jobless', Mitterrand could mouth fine anti-racist phrases.

The ugly face of anti-semitism has shocked many French people. But as long as the Mitterrand government encourages the growth of anti-Arab and North African racism to divide and control the French working class, they open the door to racist attacks on all minority sections. SOS Racisme sees its most urgent task at the moment as building unity between black and Jewish communities to confront racism at every level. The first level on which it must be confronted is in the racism of the state itself. ■

Sandinistas strike as UNO splits

CHARLES BOLTON

In the few weeks since assuming power on 25 April, the UNO coalition is already showing signs of deep divisions, and the new government has had to make a number of concessions to the FSLN and pro-Sandinista unions.

On 10 May, 50,000 workers in government offices, banks, public transport and telecommunications went on strike for a 200 per cent pay rise and against sackings. This is in response to the new Government's devaluing of the cordoba by half and repealing the civil service law that guaranteed job security. After first threatening to sack them all, President Violeta Chamorro backed down after six days, and agreed to the job security law, a 100 per cent pay rise and the replacement of the Labour Minister.

UNO WHO?

UNO is a coalition of 14 parties that divides into three main factions:

- COSEP, the right-wing business association, in favour of a free-for-all of large-scale privatisation
- the radical right around Vice-President Virgilio Godoy, with some 30 of the 51 delegates in the National Assembly
- President Violeta Chamorro and her advisors, described as the most 'moderate and pragmatic' faction, allied to the bourgeois opposition to Somoza.

Recognising the level of support for the Sandinistas, Chamorro's advisors favour a degree of co-operation with them as necessary to govern the country. The Godoy faction want to destroy Sandinismo immediately. So they were furious when Chamorro announced that Umberto Ortega was to stay on as interim head of the armed forces. Washington was not happy either, but their envoy arrived too late to prevent it.

Then, in the first act of the new Assembly, electing its president, the Chamorro candidate, Alfredo Cesar, was only chosen with the support of the 39 FSLN votes, the majority of the UNO delegates (29 of 51) voting for the COSEP/Godoy choice.

Chamorro's attitude to the Sandinistas does not come from any sympathy for progressive policies. Rather, her advisors, knowing the precariousness of both the UNO government and their position in the coalition, realise they have to go slowly, to try to weaken support for the Sandinistas bit by bit.

The \$300m emergency aid that Bush had promised has still not been released. On 15 May Doña Violeta made a direct appeal to Bush for an emergency loan of just \$40m, but this was refused.

Even before this, Miguel D'Escoto, previously FSLN Foreign Minister, commented:

'What happened to Chamorro is a time bomb... I hope the UNO last at least three years in power because it's important for the myth to be completely eroded away: showing that they [the USA] are not good friends to anyone, that friendship is not compatible with the imperialist being, with the selfish being.'

CONTRAS AGREE TO DISARM - AGAIN

On 5 May contra commander Israel Galeano, who had refused to recognise previous agreements, signed one with President Chamorro in Managua. Under this the 12,000 contras now all in Nicaragua are due to hand in their arms to 800 UN troops. Probably some weapons will be handed in, with many others hidden in caches. Meanwhile, their armed presence in the five security zones makes for an uneasy time for local people, who have had to hand in their guns. ■

PART TWO

Cocaine capitalism

BEHIND 'THE WAR ON DRUGS'

'It is a sad commentary on the state of mankind at the end of the twentieth century that the bulk of our vast productive energies is devoted to our own destruction'. So lamented UN Secretary-General Perez de Cueller during April's World Ministerial Summit on Drugs in London. Illegal narcotics now exceed oil and automobiles and are second only to weapons as the world's most valuable trade. Each year they pump an additional \$300 billion through the capitalist banking system. Drugs house soldiers in palaces, furnish police and customs officials with luxury, buy guns and missiles for Afghan and Nicaraguan counter-revolutionaries, prop up entire Latin American economies and fend off a multinational banking collapse triggered by the unpayable trillion dollar Third World debt. TREVOR RAYNE continues his examination of the drugs trade.

Like all capitalist wealth, drug profits are wrung out of the misery and squalor of the oppressed: the 130 million Latin Americans in hunger and poverty who provide the child assassins for the drug barons' armies; the peasant coca farmers who receive 0.5 per cent of cocaine's final retail price; the 45 per cent of black and 39 per cent of Hispanic children born in the USA who exist below the poverty line; the street corner lookouts earning \$35 for a twelve hour shift with an expectancy of three to six months 'work' before arrest and imprisonment. 23 per cent of US black men aged 20-29 are in gaol, on parole or probation. For every two young black US males who gain entry into higher education, three are held in some form of custody. This is cocaine capi-

talism, the face behind the dazzle from the designer sunglasses of Miami Vice.

Just as capitalism cannot resist profit so cocaine has come to Britain. Crack, the cocaine derivative known also as 'wash' and 'rock', is described as a 'standard commodity in dealing networks in major cities in England...' in an internal Home Office memo dated 23 March.

Since 1987 the police have systematically blamed black people for the growth of cocaine use in Britain, regardless of the evidence. Last year they staged a Los Angeles-style police raid on Broadwater Farm Estate with television crews and journalists in attendance, ostensibly searching for crack dealers - none were found, but the police were pleased

with the headline coverage: it reinforced their message - black people equal drugs equal crime. The majority of cocaine enters Britain via Europe in steel containers. To take one example, two thousand containers enter the French port of Le Havre every day, but there are only enough customs officers to search one container thoroughly each week. Rotterdam, Hamburg and Liverpool are similarly placed. Should one port individually increase the delay in freight transit time while searches are made, such is the competition that traders would switch to rival ports. Containers go sealed direct from sender to receiver. They contain not a few grammes that might be concealed about a body, but hundreds of kilos of cocaine worth millions of dollars.

WAR ON LATIN AMERICA

Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez recounts that in 1984 Pablo Escobar, reputed head of the Medellin cartel, was negotiating with the Colombian government to end the drug trade, repatriate profits and pay off the country's then \$12 billion foreign debt in exchange for the lifting of the threat of extradition to the USA. Negotiations were ended by the new US ambassador Lewis Tams 'who arrived in Bogota amidst a great fanfare with a slogan newly-minted for the occasion, ie: "narco-guerrilla"'. Tams claimed that the site of a recent police seizure of cocaine had been guarded by Communists. Colombian police reported that there were no Communists, no uniforms and no propaganda anywhere near the site. The US State Department commented that 'Tams got ahead of the evidence'.

By 1985 a State Department report on Soviet influence in Latin America warned of an 'alliance between drug smugglers and guerrillas.' In 1986 a US Presidential directive elevated drug smuggling to a 'national security threat' because of what then Vice President Bush said was 'a real link between drugs and terrorism'. US delegates to the Conference of Latin American Armies urged the assembled general staffs to unite against 'narco-terrorism'. The right-wing, London-based Institute for Strategic Studies announced in 1988 that 'narco-terrorism' is now 'on a par with Communism a threat to Western interests in Latin America'. These statements are not just propaganda, they are directives for action.

The Panamanian government was overthrown and General Noriega kidnapped in the name of the 'war on drugs'. In 1984 President Reagan won a Congressional vote resuming military supplies to the contras using fabricated evidence that the Sandinistas were drug smugglers; evidence which even his own Drug Enforcement Agency later refuted. The Cuban merchant ship *Hermann* was harassed and attacked by the US coast guard on the pretext of searching for drugs in January this year. In April a

Mexican doctor was kidnapped from Mexico and taken to the US to face criminal charges connected with the murder of a US narcotics agent in 1985. The Mexican government implicates US government agents in the kidnap.

Using the pretext of fighting drugs the US military is systematically trampling over the sovereignty of Latin American nations, seeking to reinforce its domination of the hemisphere. Doing this in the name of the 'war on drugs' has reduced opposition to such ventures from within the USA itself; it is an antidote to the 'Vietnam syndrome'.

Seven US military units are currently stationed in Peru (3), Colombia (2) and Bolivia (2). The operation in Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley, a major coca growing district, is modelled on the intervention in Vietnam. A US-constructed military airbase houses eight US manned helicopter gunships and three British supplied 'Hotspur Hussar' armoured attack vehicles. They are to be joined by US Green Beret Special Forces with river patrol boats, ground attack jets, and even a fleet of the infamous Huey helicopter gunships, symbols of the US war in Vietnam. The Upper Huallaga Valley is partly controlled by Sendero Luminoso guerrillas fighting the Peruvian government and imperialist domination of Peru. They also ensure that the Colombian cartels pay a negotiated price to the coca peasants and do not use their private armies against them. Over the past year Peruvian authorities claim to have killed over 1,000 Sendero Luminoso in the region surrounding the airbase.

Three hundred US troops arrived in Bolivia in April 1989 to work on the Potosi airport-widening project. Two months later they launched what the Bolivian United Left called a 'US military intervention' and local press 'a savage and crazed shoot-out' against the civilian population of Santa Ana de Yacama. House to house searches were followed by a helicopter gunship opening fire kill-

A CAFE IN BOLOGNA

In 1973 a meeting took place in a Bologna cafe between Jose Lopez Rega, former policeman, nightclub bouncer and then private secretary to Argentina's Juan Peron and an Italian, Stefano Della Chiaie. Three months later one of Latin America's most sinister death squads was set up, the Triple A (Argentina Anti-communist Alliance). Lopez was head of the Triple A and promoted to Minister of the Interior. He and 150 Argentine police were taken by the US Drug Enforcement Agency for special training in the USA. They returned to the Triple A which was responsible for the murder and disappearance of hundreds of left wing Montoneros.

In 1974 Lopez said 'We hope to wipe out the drug traffic in Argentina. We have caught guerrillas after attacks who were high on drugs. Guerrillas are the main users of drugs in Argentina. Therefore, the anti-drug campaign will automatically be an anti-guerrilla campaign as well.'

A 1975 Argentine Congressional investigation revealed Lopez Rega to be the head of a drug smuggling network. He collaborated with General Andres Rodriguez of Paraguay. Rodriguez replaced General Stroessner as President

ing three people, two of them children. Eight people 'disappeared'. With the collapse of the tin mining industry the Bolivian coca peasants are a major source of opposition to the Bolivian government and basis for radical political movements.

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) under the leadership of the Communist Party has been waging armed struggle since the 1960s. M-19 was formed in 1972 by elements from FARC and the urban left movement. In order to protect their wealth and power from the revolutionary movement the ranchers, drug cartel and sections of the Colombian military united to exterminate the left. Senior military officers and drug barons coordinate the death squads. Over 1000 members of the legal and Communist-supported Patriotic Union have been assassin-

This is big business but the police target the black working class.

Mrs Thatcher told the London summit that the British government was donating a £21 million aid package to the underdeveloped nations with an additional £4.5 million for Colombia. Each year Latin America alone transfers \$30 billion in debt repayments to the capitalist metropolises. The fall in world coffee prices will cost Colombia this year eighty times Mrs Thatcher's special package. Every month British customs officers seize drugs worth more than the entire British aid programme. The poison will keep on flowing.

Imperialist exploitation of the oppressed nations has left narcotic production as one of the few means of capital accumulation available to the bourgeoisie (see *FRFI* 92: *Cocaine Capitalism* - part one). The unregulated movement of enormous drug profits threaten to destabilise the capitalist financial system. At the same time a section of the Latin American bourgeoisie has emerged whose economic base places it in an ambiguous relationship to imperialism: dependent upon it for markets but potentially in conflict with its prices and access to the state power which its wealth claims. Nevertheless, as a bourgeoisie it is in alliance with imperialism against the working class and peasantry.

Eighty per cent of US and British drug related aid is in the form of military supplies. British warships, SA units and police have now joined US troops stationed in Latin America ostensibly to fight drugs. The priority is to ensure that Latin America continues to transfer over \$1 billion a year to the multinational banks and corporations. ■

in February 1989. Asked about Rodriguez's role in drug trafficking the US Ambassador to Paraguay remarked, 'dynamic society like ours is only interested in the present and the future. The past is for the history books.'

Della Chiaie is wanted for the bombing of Bologna railway station in 1972 which killed 85 people. Following this fascist atrocity, Della Chiaie fled Bolivia where he worked with 'cocaine king' Roberto Suarez's *Los Novios la Muerte* ('The Fiances of Death'), private paramilitary army used to defend his trafficking business and support the government of General Garcia Meza. Fellow 'Fiances' of Della Chiaie's included the 'Butcher of Lyons' Klaus Barbie, OAS torturer Napoleon Leclerc and several of the Waffen SS. The Fiances were recruited into Bolivia's National Drug Control Agency. Smaller coca producers were shut down, those who resisted were tortured and killed. Della Chiaie served as intermediary between the Italian Mafia and the Latin American coca producers when negotiating the latter's entry into the North American and European drug markets. Della Chiaie has six recorded different operational contacts. ■

ated including three of its leaders, the most recent being presidential candidate Bernardo Jaramillo in January this year. In April Carlos Pizarro, candidate of M-19, which in March laid down its arms to participate in elections, was slain. Pizarro had recently won ten per cent of the vote for the Mayor of Bogota.

Imperialism knows full well that the social conditions it is generating in Latin America will give birth to powerful revolutionary movements too strong for the local bourgeoisie to suppress. Since the 1970s its death squads have been free to ply drugs across the continent as a reward for their services. Now the death squads are not pitted against revolutionary organisations alone but whole populations, and they are insufficient. Imperialism's armies are dispatched in reinforcements. ■

PRISON REVOLT



On 1 April, and for the following 25 days, prisoners at Strangeways gaol ensured that the truth about Britain's foul prison system was displayed to the world. With daring and courage they remained in occupation of the gaol and its roof, withstanding every form of physical and mental pressure inflicted on them. Against the sophisticated technology of repression they had only the simple basics of popular resistance - banners, barricades, makeshift megaphones, stones and staying power.

They humiliated the government and its prison system. When the press screeched 'Dozens dead' they held up a banner saying 'No Dead'. When the authorities talked about 'evil' their banner read 'Plebius - Of the Common People'. When commentators debated the causes of the Strangeways uprising they came up with explanations ranging from the old chestnuts about overcrowding to the outright bizarre utterances of governor O'Friel that the devil was responsible. But on day one the prisoners shouted out the real causes - 'Stop the brutality. We are not taking it anymore. We are up here because we have had enough of being

This special FRFI supplement was written and compiled by: Auriel Fermo, Nicki Jameson, Lorna Reid and Maxine Williams, with thanks to the prisoners and relatives

Lord Justice Woolf's inquiry into prison disturbances

Lord Justice Woolf has already said that his inquiry will not be restricted to the immediate events of the prison disturbances but will also deal with their underlying causes.

It is the actions of the prisoners which have forced an inquiry of this unprecedented scope. Already the Home Office is worried that Woolf may shine too bright a light on the dark corners of the prison system. The Home Office will use all its considerable power to defend its rotten prison system. Against this only public pressure can ensure that the prisoners' interests are put to the fore.

Buy an FRFI subscription for a prisoner

FRFI is sent free to more than 110 prisoners and daily more requests arrive. The Prisoners' Fightback pages of FRFI consistently cover the struggle for prisoners rights and we regularly publish articles written by prisoners themselves. It is vital that this work continues and expands. You can help by buying a subscription to FRFI for a prisoner. £7.50 (cheque or PO made out Larkin Publications) to FRFI, BCM 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

treated like shit. We are not animals, we are human beings.' Their grievances were clear: mental and physical brutality, poor food, cramped conditions, the use of drugs to control prisoners. In the face of this the prisoners took the only action that was available to them - mass protest.

Strangeways is renowned for its harsh regime and the brutality and racism of its warders. But these conditions are shared, in varying degrees, by many prisons. Hence, the uprising spread like a fire throughout the prison system and there were occupations and other actions in over 20 prisons.

What years of debate about prison reform had failed to achieve, action by prisoners did so. The public learned that Britain locks up more people than fascist Turkey; that even with the world's press watching Strangeways warders shouted threats to 'get' the prisoners when they came off the roof; that one week before the uprising the Tumim report on Strangeways had criticised men being held three to a cell, that men were locked up 22 hours a day; that they were forced to throw parcels of excrement out of the window rather than sit for twelve hours in a cell reeking of their own waste, that they got one shower a week and one change of underwear, that food was poor. And by seeing the men on the roof, the public was reminded about who gets locked up in Thatcher's Britain: the working class, the young, the dispossessed.

The Government's response was as 'liberal' as has been their whole penal policy: Waddington announced that 200 extra warders would be recruited and more riot gear made available in prisons. And, as usual, they set up an inquiry - under Lord Justice Woolf. No doubt they chose a judge with a liberal reputation because they had to be seen to be doing something in the face of such a crisis.

Meanwhile the authorities hosed the prisoners on the roof, played loud music and sirens and threw fire-crackers at them and continued to pretend that there might be dead bodies in the prison. Of course no dead were found but it was a useful way of continuing the portrayal of prisoners as evil animals who should be attacked, as the despicable John McVicar suggested, by the SAS.

There were two deaths during the Strangeways revolt - one a prisoner charged with sex offences who had a heart attack some time after he had been beaten up in the prison and the other a warder who had a heart attack.

Neither death has been shown to be a result of the revolt. Lurid stories of sex offenders killed and mutilated proved baseless. Yet the treatment of sex offenders became a useful diversion away from the real debate over prison conditions for all prisoners.

If we want to talk about deaths in prison let us look at the facts. In 1989 there were 63 deaths in British prisons which were not due to natural causes. 46 were suicides and these and other deaths were a result of brutal screws

'Stop the brutality. We are not taking it any more. We are up here because we have had enough of being treated like shit. We are not animals, we are human beings'

and a harsh regime. But these get scarcely a mention. During the Strangeways occupation the inquest into the death in Brixton gaol of black prisoner Germain Alexander heard that after being 'restrained' by prison officers his front teeth were found embedded in the back of his throat and there were more than 80 bruises on his body. But no warders will face prosecution or even punishment.

As James Connolly once said, 'There are none so fit to break the chains as those that wear them'. And in the case of prisoners, there are none who take bigger risks when they break the chains. After major prison revolts there are always brutal reprisals - beatings, solitary, ghosting, longer sentences. The system will try to exact a heavy price from those at the centre of the revolt in Strangeways. That is why it was the responsibility of every progressive in Britain to support the prisoners demands and attack the authorities for their prison policies. The prisoners gave the lead, it was up to those on the outside to follow.

But what did the good old Labour Party, about whose improved election forecasts we are evidently meant to be dancing a jig, do? Local MP Bob Litherland told the press that the prisoners had 'tremendous animal cunning' and had been trained by 'terrorists' inside the prisons. It was 'up to the Home Office to intervene and arrange for the SAS to take over'. Instead 'we are left with a hard core of criminals and a few exhibitionists cocking a snook at the Establishment'.

Oh dear me! Cocking a snook at the Establishment! Whatever next? Why, they might start asking for some rights and that would not do at all would it Mr Litherland? How dare they object to being beaten up and abused. What do they think they are - human beings? Roy Hattersley too on 5 April questioned why the government did not turn to forcible tactics against the prisoners. Coming from a party which was more terrified of the poll tax protests in Trafalgar Square than were the Tories, this is no surprise. If the Labour Party is elected to government, the prisoners, along with all the oppressed, can have no illusions that their situation will be improved.

The prison revolt raises one central question: prisoners' rights. In British prisons, injustice and brutality will rule unless and until prisoners get basic rights and are given the support on the outside to ensure that they can exercise these rights. The right to live without physical and mental brutality; access to legal processes; independent complaints procedure; decent living conditions and food; access to National Health rather than prison doctors; access to education and recreation; the provision of facilities to allow relations with their families and friends to continue.

It is the responsibility of the socialist movement to fight alongside the prisoners for these rights. That is why the RCG, through its newspaper FRFI, has continuously reported on the prison struggle on its regular prison page. When the news broke about the protests at Strangeways, the RCG picketed the prison, made contact with prisoners' families and support organisations. Since then, RCG members have organised police station pickets to support the prisoners who have been moved. It is a measure of the bankruptcy of the Left in Britain that we have been alone in prioritising support for the prisoners. Always, as opposition movements grow, prisons become a focus of protest.

In Ireland we have a clear example of how the movement outside can aid the prisoners inside. In the 1970s while the H Block prisoners fought for their rights, their mothers, wives and girlfriends set up Relatives Action Committees to support them. They picketed, protested, held meetings and organised to publicise the prisoners' conditions and demands. That is what is needed here in Britain.

Nobody with any feeling could have failed to be moved when the last prisoners came down fists clenched at Strangeways. If you were not then don't read on. If you were, then ask yourself what will happen to those men, now held in various police stations across the country. It is up to all of us to support them.

No Reprisals! Implement a Charter of Prisoners Rights!

PRISON REVOLT

a four-page special feature on the uprisings in British prisons in April

RCG action for prisoners

From day one of the Strangeways prisoners' protest a presence of solidarity was maintained outside the prison by families, friends and supporters of prisoners. The RCG joined them.

The RCG held two pickets outside the prison. Our second picket was supported by the Prisoners League Association (PLA) and joined by relatives and friends of Domenyk Noonan, PLA Chief ex-Strangeways prisoner now held in Hull. Our placards bearing demands for prisoners' rights and for no reprisals could be seen clearly by the prisoners on the roof. Police sirens attempted to drown out the prisoners' response.

At our public meeting on 3 April, 'No reprisals! Victory to the prisoners!', a message of support was read out on behalf of Domenyk Noonan. Auriel Fermo, RCG, said that the deepening economic crisis of British imperialism will inevitably throw growing numbers of working class people into prison. The prisoners' fightback against the brutality of the prison system had to be supported by all socialists.

The meeting unanimously agreed to organise protests in support of any of the prisoners from Strangeways victimised by the system and, in particular, to highlight what happens to the seven prisoners who had remained on the roof.

Our first picket after the men came down from the roof at Strangeways was outside the Crescent police station in Salford where Tony Bush was being held. Tony, along with another prisoner, had gone onto the roof of Strangeways the week before the main protest had begun protesting against screw brutality. At the Crescent he was locked up 23 hours a day. On the eve of our public meeting Tony was dragged away by police officers during the course of a visit. After a successful picket, Tony was moved to Littleborough where he is now being held in better conditions.

Our second picket was outside Longsight prison, Manchester, where Paul Taylor is being held. It is from Longsight that the 'criminal' investigation is being conducted. Despite pouring rain and police intimidation, our picket was supported by nearly 20 people, including prisoners relatives.

The RCG has launched a Month of Action in Manchester to highlight the conditions Strangeways prisoners are being held in and to demand no reprisals.

Elsewhere, RCG members and supporters are regularly petitioning outside local prisons during visiting hours to speak to relatives and friends of prisoners about the issue of prisoners' rights. The response to this work has been fantastic. Everyone who signs our *No Reprisals* petition wants to buy a copy of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* and many have asked for the paper to be sent into their relative or friend.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! is the only paper to give a voice to prisoners and their relatives and will continue to publish the material which is sent to us. We also urge friends and relatives to take extra copies of this and future issues of FRFI to sell. The truth about British prisons must be heard. ■

Prisoners' relatives demand support

On 17 May, after six weeks of anxiety and anger, relatives of the Strangeways Seven, the final prisoners to come down from the roof, were able to turn the tables on the media and prison authorities at a press conference organised by Partners of Prisoners and Families Support Group (POPS). Victoria McLeod, chair, explained how the press lies and the impossibility of obtaining information about prisoners during the siege had led relatives 'to virtual nervous breakdown point'. 'It has been alleged', Victoria said, 'that hell arrived and overtook Strangeways from 1 April. The relatives will tell you that hell was in Strangeways for a long time before that.'

Denial of information

A so-called telephone 'hot-line' had been set up by the prison authorities. But families could get no information about the prisoners. 'For a full five days', Mrs Taylor reported, 'I didn't know if my son was alive or dead'.

Denial of communication

The media implied that, throughout the siege, relatives were encouraged to play a part in negotiating with the prisoners. In reality they were not allowed to communicate, apart from shouting from the road and this would be drowned out with sirens. Prison officers told Shireen that they 'couldn't guarantee our safety' and that the prisoners 'were no longer our sons, they were "drug-crazed"'.

Conditions

Darren Jones outlined the appalling conditions in Strangeways, adding 'if it rained, we wouldn't get the hour exercise... If we had someone coming in, a health inspector, the food would

be edible for a few days, then it went back to the normal rubbish.'

Mrs Taylor had written to the Home Office about Paul's ill health. He had described to her trying 'to sleep in a cell with three other people, the pot stinking, rats and mice coming under your door, crawling all over you'. Her letters got nowhere.

On conditions in the police station, Sandra Williams (Mark's mother) reported how he is 'still locked up for 24 hours, getting no fresh air, no exercise - it's like sitting in a toilet all day.'

Brutality and threats

Darren explained how the prison officers shouted threats up at the prisoners: '... we were going to get this broken, that broken, we were going to get beaten. So we stayed up...'

Shireen described how, after Darren came down 'his nose was swollen across his face, his lips were swollen and his eyes bruised. They beat him

up, he was handcuffed and dragged... That's what goes on.'

Press lies

Many of the relatives angrily attacked the press. Mark Williams' father, Larry, criticised the press reporting of 'self-inflicted' wounds: '... We were standing there at night, and could hear the ball bearings hitting the slates'. This was never reported in the press during the protest.

Partners of Prisoners Families Support Group

All the relatives praised the help and compassion shown them by POPS during the protest. As Victoria explained: 'the visitors centre at Strangeways was denied to the families and made a "hot-line" centre for prison officers' families instead'. POPS was established in 1988 by Farida Anderson and others to give vitally needed support to prisoners' families. It has never been officially recognised.

MS EUNICE LORD

ALAN LORD, a black prisoner from Manchester, was one of the last seven rooftop protesters. He was captured by warders two days before the men ended the protest. Eunice Lord, his sister, spoke to Auriel Fermo.



'Alan's all right because he knows he's been fighting for his rights - against the disgusting conditions at Strangeways.' Eunice explained that she is worried about Alan's conditions now: 'He's in a tiny special security cell at Astley Bridge police station. There's no window at all or ventilation and the light's on all the time. When he gets out for exercise it's only ten minutes. Otherwise he's locked up 24 hours.'

'There's nothing in the cell - not even a bed and he's asked for a sleeping bag.'

Visits are being restricted: 'To start with I could go every day. Now it's been cut to twice a week. The visits last 20 minutes and are behind glass so it's difficult to talk.'

'Alan was doing punishment in Strangeways. He said they wrote letters to the Home Office warning them... They all wanted better conditions, toilets and more exercise. But no one took any notice.'

'Alan said they wanted it to be a peaceful sit-down protest. Even when they got up on the roof, they wanted no violence at all - just to protest against conditions.'

The only time the prisoners retaliated was when screws on the ground started catapulting ball bearings at them: 'When the press reported that men had been killed, Alan told me they were worried at first, so they went down and checked everywhere, even in the sewers. They found nothing, there were no bodies at all. Then they put up the banner saying "No Dead".'

'The response of the press made me really angry. You know the person, you know they're a human being. Those people have never been in jail. They never put that Alan's in the Guinness Book of Records for weight lifting or the work he's done with paraplegic children, helping them to exercise. Alan and the other prisoners, they're not evil or scum, they're fighting for their rights, like anyone else would.'

Eunice first knew Alan was on the roof after the protest had been going a week: 'I saw him on the TV... I went straight down there. Alan spotted me and told me to go up the side road to talk to him. At first I wanted him to come down, he had too much to lose - he's the only one doing life and I was worried. But after hearing why he was there, I was all for him.'

Press and POA spokesmen said Alan was captured accidentally: 'No. He was negotiating with them when they jumped him. He was very angry and so were the other prisoners - they stayed up another 24 hours in protest. Some riot police jumped on his throat and chest, and cut his face



and one of his hands. He was taken before the Board of Visitors, but he couldn't speak or complain. He was hand-cuffed behind his back and the officers had hold of his hair, pulling his head right down to one side. He's not been touched since, but when everything's quietened down and he's moved, that's when it'll all start: beatings, solitary. There's no human rights there, is there?'

'When the others came down on the crane, I wished Alan was with them, under his own terms. The screws had tried to get the prisoners down a ladder through the roof, but they'd said "no chance", and came down in front of the public, so everyone could see there was no marks on them.'

What do you think should be done now in support of the Strangeways protesters?: 'What's needed is more publicity, especially now - about the conditions and why they were up on the roof. Support groups, yes and pickets - I'd do that now, not before I wouldn't! But I've seen what Alan's gone through.'

'If more people showed support, things would change. Alan's told me he's glad he was up there fighting for his rights and other prisoners' rights, and he's going to carry on, no matter what, for better conditions. I'll support him all the way.'



DARREN JONES was on remand in Strangeways and was one of the final seven rooftop protesters. His case came up in court shortly after the protest and he has now been released. FRFI spoke to Darren and his mother Shireen.

MRS SHIREEN JONES

After the press reports that a 17-year-old remand prisoner had been hanged in the jail, Shireen Jones couldn't sleep. She said: 'I was actually thinking of Darren in the past tense... I was grieving for him and believed he was dead... It's the press that are scum. They are not interested in any good points or the truth. All they want is sensationalism and scandal.'

Shireen and the other relatives wanted the siege to end because they were concerned for prisoners' safety. 'We supported the cause, we were just worried about the consequences... the lads made a stand and were willing to pay for it with their liberty... if they had not done it, bad conditions in Strangeways would have gone on for another 100 years as far as I can see.'

Darren told FRFI that from what he'd heard the prisoners 'wanted it to



PAUL TAYLOR'S defiant attitude on the roof became a focus for media and public attention.

MRS LILIAN TAYLOR

Like all the relatives, his mother, Mrs Lilian Taylor has endured the pain and anger of seeing her son abused and vilified in the press. Paul has been labelled a 'beast, monster and convicted rapist'. 'This is a pack of lies', Lily told FRFI: 'He wants to clear his name... he's been accused in the wrong'.

Gutter press stories demanding that Paul be 'thrown off the roof' seriously distressed his grandmother, Mrs Smythe. 'After this I got in touch with Paul's solicitor. He said if it didn't stop he'd take proceedings against the Sun and the Star... Then they started again this week... it's every time you pick up a paper.'

Nevertheless, letters have come from all over the country supporting Paul and the stand he's made.

Lily was arrested during the protest when she was waiting to say good-night to Paul one evening: 'This officer pulled me like a dog, ripped my coat and threw me in the van. I've still got the lump at the back of my head... He said "You're like your bloody son"'. At the station I got a pain in my chest and thought I was going to faint... I was pushed in a cell. Oh God, I thought, I won't last the night... The toilet was full and stank... It was revolting and I felt sick.' After three hours Lily was released and a sergeant said 'there'd been a mistake' and she should never have been arrested. Lily is making a formal complaint about this.

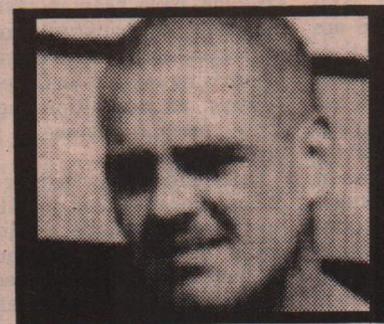
Lily described the assault by prison officers on Paul at Durham jail last

year. He had to have '16 stitches and was left bleeding for two hours without medical attention'. After this Paul was charged with assault.

When she first saw Paul after he'd come down from the roof, his eye was swollen: 'I asked how he got it and he told me it was the missiles being thrown by the officers on the ground'.

At Longsight police station where Paul is being held, Lily can only 'see Paul through the bars of an iron door'. She could visit him every day, but cannot afford the journey from Liverpool so can only get over once or twice a week.

I asked Lily if she thought pickets and demonstrations were important to maintain publicity and support for the prisoners: 'I'm all for that. Paul's all for that too... when injustice is being done he's a lad for standing up for their rights - I've had a taste of what they live in when I was arrested... He's one for telling the truth and I'll stand by him through thick and thin and so will my ex-husband, because we love him.'



Sandra Williams, mother of MARK WILLIAMS, described to FRFI the horrifying drug abuse that Mark had suffered in Strangeways.

MRS SANDRA WILLIAMS

Sandra noticed a mental and physical deterioration in her son on visits to Strangeways. He did not recognise her, was covered in boils, and became very thin. She phoned the prison every day and one time when Mark was in the prison hospital she spoke to the Medical Officer: '... He called himself a psychiatrist and in his opinion there was nothing wrong with

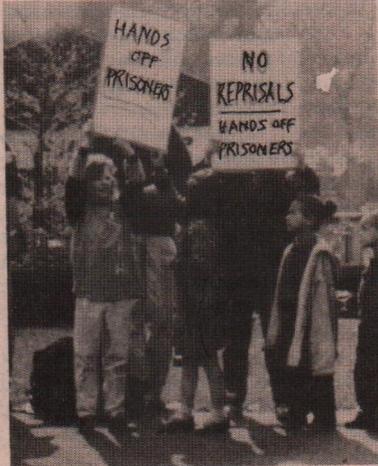
Mark...'

It was fellow prisoners that realised Mark was being drugged with largactyl 'liquid cosh': 'They told him he was getting far too much.' The Probation Officer told her: 'It's inhuman the way Mark's being treated', and Mark described how twice 'five officers sat on him and injected the drug into his behind... It was noticeable that when Mark was on the roof the effects of the drug wore off and he felt much better.'

An end to the use of 'liquid cosh' was one of the main demands of the protest. Its use is widespread. Mark told Sandra about a black prisoner from Toxteth called Pandy who was found lying on his bed during the rising: 'He was saying "leave me, who are you? I'm a white man, I'm like you, don't hit me any more."' Mark said it was unbearable to see his friend so destroyed by the drugging.

Mark described the disgusting food in Strangeways. Once, down the block, he was 'thrown a piece of green gristle'. But when the protesters opened the fridges 'they were stocked with steak and chops. Who was getting that?' Mark asked. 'We were getting a dollop of mashed potato and spam.'

Mark told Sandra why he'd been involved in the protest: 'He said they were fighting against the brutality; the conditions and for the Common People... Mark made a stand for his rights.'





Press lies

From day one of the Uprising at Strangeways, the British press and media played their habitual role as mouthpiece for the ruling class. Home Secretary David Waddington's description of an 'orgy of destruction', and Governor Brendan O'Friel's superstitious 'Explosion of Evil' commanded many a banner headline in newspapers. Journalists fabricated stories, used rumour and hearsay and lied to try and discredit the prisoners' fight for basic human rights.

Murder?

'Prison mob hang cop' - *Mirror*
'12 murdered as 1,000 prisoners set jail ablaze' - *Today*
'20 feared killed' - *Star*
'20 dead' - *Manchester Evening News*
'30 die as jail mob defy cops' - *Sun*
All lies. The police officer in question (*Mirror*) was alive and in Armley jail serving his sentence. '20 dead' was taken from an interview with a senior official at Strangeways who said that 20 body bags were standing by.

Torture?

The gutter press revelled in lurid stories of castration, 'iron bar beatings, forced injections' (*Star*). The *Sun* had accounts of bodies 'chopped up and dumped in sewers' and prisoners left 'to bleed to death'. *The Observer* joined in with accounts of 'hangings and stonings to death'. This was in an article which printed Home Office assurances that all Rule 43 prisoners had been accounted for! Furthermore, by 8 April when this story was run, Phillip Randall, consultant at North Manchester General Hospital, denied that any mutilations had taken place.

In contrast, on the final day, when prisoner Martin Brian exposed that screws had hit Mark Williams' eye causing it to bleed, *The Guardian* chose to put the POA position. 'Prisoners' injuries "were self-inflicted" was their headline.

'Insane animals', 'demons', 'scum' 'Scum' and 'animals' are usual *Sun*

insults. *The Observer* favours melodrama and longer words. In 'Strangeways: the boasts, the lies, the whispers' (15 April), John McGhie describes as 'surreal and frightening' a meeting with an ex-Strangeways prisoner who had been beaten and drugged in Winson Green after the protest began. McGhie contemptuously dismisses the man's description of brutality as 'a story - deliciously tempting, but impossible to confirm'.

McVicar joins the bloodhounds

Monday morning, 9 April: 'Send in SAS Now', brutal, but predictable of the *Sun*. Murdoch's other baby, Sky TV, also joined in, sending a large cake to Strangeways decorated with the same message.

In John McVicar's piece in *The Guardian* of the same day, shamefully this ex-prisoner allies himself with the most vicious elements in government and media, demanding: 'Tear gas, rubber bullets, batons and firearms' if necessary to smash the uprising. He calls for increased use of isolation for prisoners who stand up for their rights.

A veil of silence

How many newspapers will use their power and privilege to get inside the police stations around Manchester where the prisoners are incarcerated? Will they be 'deliciously tempted' to print the truth about the Strangeways protest, about the beatings and solitary confinement? It is doubtful. ■

be a peaceful protest but the prison authority didn't want that... they wanted to use violence... one lad had a snooker ball thrown at him when he was negotiating... He was cut above the eye.' He re-emphasised that prisoners were told they'd be beaten up and screws on the ground made 'cut-throat' signals to them: 'People were scared to come down.'

At the end of the protest Shireen recalls the crowd outside the jail: 'All the prison officers were on the roof and I saw the looks on people's faces... I saw people crying in that crowd.'

Like Mrs Taylor, Shireen has also received widespread support for the struggle of prisoners: 'I've had support from other prisoners, phone calls and letters. Strangers have stopped me in the street; old ladies asking how I am and how's Darren, hoping he's OK. I've not come across one person that has slagged me.'

Some relatives had expressed reticence about organised demonstrations outside the jail, because chanting had sometimes led to sirens being put on, so hindering dialogue. We discussed the importance of keeping the Strangeways protest in the public eye, to try and prevent harsh reprisals against the men, and the fact that pickets provide a focus for people to get involved and show support. Shireen said it was a 'pity we hadn't organised together at the time... this is the first paper I've come across that's willing to listen to our side and tell things how they are... The boys on the roof wanted all the public support they could get.'

Shireen and other relatives have said that they all became as one family: 'I didn't care what any of the lads had done. They were all our boys on the roof, not just my son... If Darren was down and I couldn't see him, it

'This is the first paper I've come across that's willing to listen to our side and tell things how they are... The boys on the roof wanted all the support they could get.'

was great to see that Mark was OK... They used to shout down "Eunice we love you!", "Mrs Jones, we love you!". And even if we didn't know them from Adam we'd shout back "We love you, good night lads." They were great.'

'I'm proud of my boy and all of them that took part in that demonstration. We, the families, have got a bond between us that will last a life-time... I'm disgusted at the authorities... the lads had to make a stand themselves against the conditions to get noticed... They'll go down in history like the Suffragettes did. They made a stand like women had to for their rights. These boys have done it for prisoners' rights, not just theirs, but every prisoner in this country, future prisoners and past.'

Messages of support

Below are listed the names and current addresses of the last seven prisoners to come down from the roof at Strangeways. They need your support. Send them messages of solidarity (recorded delivery).

Martin Brian Cheadle Hulme Police Station, Station Road, Stockport.

Darren Jones has now been released.

Alan Lord Astley Bridge Police Station, Blackburn Road, Bolton.

John Murray Rochdale Police Station, The Holme, Rochdale.

Paul Taylor Longsight Police Station, Stockport Road, Manchester 13.

Glyn Williams Oldham Police Station, Barn Street, Oldham.

Mark Williams Middleton Police Station, Oldham Road, Oldham.

Why prisoners fight back

John Bowden

The Strangeways uprising, distinguishable for its intensity and duration, has generated a plethora of interpretations and analyses about what are perceived as the current ills of the British prison system and placed prisons as an issue close to the top of the political agenda. Unfortunately, none of the discussions about the cause and the rationale of the uprising, which acted as a catalyst for generalised unrest throughout the entire prison system, went much beyond the usual superficial and non-contentious issues of overcrowding, staff shortages and, of course, the existence of a ubiquitous minority of 'subversive' prisoners hell-bent on disrupting prison life for purely gratuitous reasons.

The terms of the Strangeways-inspired debate have been set by spokespeople for the prison system itself, and the 'respectable' prison reform pundits have done little more than collude in shifting the focus of public attention away from the grievances raised by the Strangeways prisoners themselves (essentially complaints about physical and psychological brutality) and onto issues more palatable to the establishment. Inevitably, factors like gross overcrowding and a denial of basic facilities contributed to the uprising at Strangeways, but its true origins lay in the behaviour of a prison staff that distinguished Strangeways as one of a group of prisons (Wandsworth, Leeds, Winson Green and Lincoln sharing the group) renowned for its brutal and inhuman treatment of prisoners.

Essentially, the disturbance at Strangeways was an act of resistance on the part of the prisoners to a regime based on a long tradition of officially sanctioned violence and overt intimidation. In view of the complete absence of any grievance or effective procedure for dealing with prisoners' complaints and the almost total lack of legal accountability as far as the behaviour and activities of prison staff are concerned, the upris-

ing was both understandable and inevitable. If the state is prepared to sanction the unlawful brutality of prison officers and virtually allow them a free hand to do as they please with prisoners in the interests of ensuring so-called 'good order and discipline' in hell-holes like Strangeways, then prisoners have the right to defend themselves and protest in whatever manner and way they consider to be most effective.

The system itself in its treatment of prisoners has dictated the terms of conflict and struggle in prison and can therefore hardly be surprised when prisoners adopt a strategy of direct action as a means of both highlighting their predicament and defending their basic human rights. In that sense the uprising at Strangeways was primarily a response to the far greater institutionalised violence of the prison system and very much an authentic front-line of resistance against an instrument of state repression that over the last ten years in particular has been wielded with enthusiasm against the social consensus and the victims of Thatcherite Britain. The Strangeways prisoners are therefore to be applauded for their courage and audacity in fighting back against a system that attempts to dehumanise and brutalise them, and

deserve the recognition and support of all those outside prison committed to the wider struggles against injustice and oppression.

The current economic and social crisis pervading British capitalist society is finding its most explosive points amongst the most marginalised and dispossessed (it's probably no coincidence that Strangeways ignited during the same weekend that the huge anti-poll tax demonstration in London became transformed into a pitched battle with police). The constituency of poor and oppressed people with no representation in capitalism's political institutions or protections in bourgeois law, the savagely disadvantaged who compose the underside of a class-ridden society in terminal decay. Conditions at Strangeways prison before the uprising were a microcosm of life for the poor in Thatcherite Britain, and the rebellion prefigures the sort of struggles about to assume form in society generally within the next decade; recent 'disturbances' in the prison system indicate that prisoners will be close to the forefront in these struggles.

Predictably, in its wake the uprising at Strangeways has produced promises from the government of increased repression in prison and 'tougher' legal sanctions against those prisoners who dare to resist - it represents a message that prisoners are well-accustomed to; submit or you will be crushed. The most enduring image of the Strangeways uprising will surely be the unbroken defiance of the last group of prisoners to descend from the prison's rooftop - it symbolised well the unbroken spirit of resistance that exists amongst the poor in prison, and it will survive no matter what techniques or methods of repression are employed against it. ■

John Bowden is a prisoner in Long Lartin who has played an active role in the struggle for prisoners' rights and has consistently written for *FRFI's* prison page.

1990 PRISON REVOLT



Chronology of prison uprising

- 1 April** Strangeways goes up; 1,100 prisoners involved; whole jail taken over. At Hull 110 prisoners stage a sit-in in exercise yard.
- 2 April** Rooftop protest at Long Lartin; prisoners hold a wing for 13 hours.
- 4 April** Wandsworth - 'disturbance' caused transfer of four Strangeways prisoners.
- 7 April** Uprising involving 100 prisoners at Darke moor.
- 8 April** A second protest at Hull; riot police surround the prison. Sit-down at Armley following transfer from Strangeways. At Horfield 400 prisoners take over two wings. At Cardiff where 50 prisoners are transferred from Strangeways, 130 wreck cells for three hours. 'Incidents' of varying kind at Brixton, Pentonville, Shepton Mallet, Bristol, Glen Parva and Verne. At Gartree 3 prisoners come down from the roof after a 10 day protest in support of the Birmingham Six. 15 prisoners are on the roof at Stoke Heath YC.
- 10 April** Shotts (Scotland's 'model prison') - take B-Hall for 24 hours.
- 11 April** 40 prisoners take action at Brixton. TV prisoners on roof at Bedford.
- 12 April** Swansea - 17-hour siege by two teenage remand prisoners.
- 22 April** Pucklechurch - 18-hour rooftop protest by 100 prisoners; most of jail destroyed; siege ended by riot squad. Winson Green - two prisoners on roof for five hours.
- 23 April** Long Lartin - 12-hour siege.
- 24 April** 400 confined to cells at Full Sutton to prevent protest.
- 25 April** Strangeways protest ends.



'They're not evil or scum. They're fighting for their rights, like anyone else would.'

1990 PRISON REVOLT



Loud and clear voices inside and outside prison walls

I feel that now is the right and proper time to appeal to all our readers and prisoners to be vigilant to ensure that those who have been involved in prison protests to ensure they are protected against retaliatory action. This can be achieved by informing the media and MPs through their visitors or through writing directly to them. It is our clear duty to protect them because any future improvements within our present system will have come about through their actions and their sacrifice.

The actions taken in Strangeways and other establishments should instil in other prisoners who have to live in similar conditions [the need] to take the rebuilding and refurbishing programme into their own hands where necessary to bring our prisons into the 1990s. I would like to see the three main ministers at the Home Office namely Waddington, Mellor and Patten living in similar squalid conditions for one week.

It has recently been stated by both the governor and David Mellor that the conditions within Strangeways have improved since the last major disturbances there in 1981-1982. I speak with some experience having been involved in those previous disturbances in trying to obtain better conditions. I can say that the grievances and issues were the same then as they are now and all that has happened in the meantime has been some window dressing. The whole system is overloaded and rotten to the core.

One way for them to [relieve the pressure] is by granting a general amnesty for prisoners serving between six months and two years for non-violent crime and then bring the rest of British prisons in line with Northern Ireland by giving us half remission and finally scrapping the already defunct parole scheme for long-termers. Otherwise the choice left open to the Home Secretary is to continue to cram more and more prisoners into our already cramped conditions thereby feeding the fuel of discontent.

While the screws hold the keys to the prison system, the prisoners themselves hold the power and without their good will the system cannot function. The Home Office and the POA cannot continue to brutalise prisoners into submission through beatings in their punishment units as they have in the past. I therefore make this call now to each individual prisoner to stand up for your rights and protect each other to ensure no retaliatory action is allowed to happen against any prisoner without loud and clear voices being heard both inside and outside prison walls.

Roy Ivers

Innocent Prisoner, HMP Lincoln.

Since the prisoners throughout Britain began their protest, FRFI has received many letters from prisoners and ex-prisoners describing their own conditions and supporting the protestors. Below we print a selection.



Brutality in Hull prison

On 1 April an estimated 100 remand prisoners sat down on the exercise yard of Hull prison and stayed in the yard for about 30 minutes. Five prisoners got on to a small roof. They came down immediately. Out of this five, three were placed in solitary confinement for three days, lost seven days remission and seven days privilege. The other two were kept in segregation on Good Order And Discipline - one of them was still there 21 days later. The other one was shipped out to HMP Frankland. My two co-accused have been in segregation for 21 days for just being involved in the sit down.

On Sunday 8 April I was removed from my cell at 6.30am and brought into segregation for allegedly being involved in organising or partaking in a riot or disturbance in the jail on 1 April. On 8 April approximately 20/30 more prisoners arrived in the segregation unit. We are on Good Order And Discipline, which means that we can be kept down here and treated like animals for as long as the Governor sees fit. I have put in a Home Office petition about how I was being treated but I have had no reply yet.

For some time I had no shoes, no sheets, no pillow or pillow case, no toothbrush or comb, no mirror and also didn't have a pot. The cell I am in was filthy. On Friday 13 April I was given my shoes back and was given a pot, sheets, pillow and pillow case.

On 8 April another disturbance took place by the remand prisoners. Mr Wheatley, the Governor, already had teams of officers marching around the prison dressed in full riot gear. Sixty riot police were placed outside the prison, all roads around the jail were cordoned off. One prisoner said, 'The riot police gave everyone on the yard an order, "Either you come out now or we'll come in and drag you out".' Again several innocent inmates were brought to the segregation unit.

Cyril Richards was brought down to the unit at the same time as I was. He is a quiet lad, a pacifist, but he was so angry at the way he was treated that he threw his breakfast on the floor. At least seven officers jumped on him as well as a convicted prisoner (block orderly). He was kicked and punched and literally dragged up two flights of stairs and bodily thrown into his cell. As a result he injured his hand and was covered in bruises. The staff placed him on report two days later for throwing his food on the floor, but the block orderly was not charged with attacking another inmate. Cyril complained that he wanted to see a doctor but when he had still not seen one after two days he became depressed. On Tuesday at around 10.30pm another inmate banged on his door and shouting for the staff to come over. Cyril had set his cell on fire. He was literal-

ly dragged, coughing and choking, to a strip cell in the hospital. We haven't seen him since. A member of staff informed us that Cyril had been charged with Arson With Intent and was shipped out.

There are still 15 or so of us, still living like piss in the segregation unit. On 22 April I will have been down here two weeks, some people have been here for three weeks. Mr Wheatley has told all inmates on Good Order And Discipline that, 'When all the prisons have calmed down and are back to normal you might be placed back on normal location.'

Dave Noble
HMP Hull.

What to do if you are placed in solitary confinement

If a prisoner is put in solitary confinement reasons for this have to be given. Prisoners and relatives should immediately ask for reasons from the governors, Board Of Visitors and should petition the Secretary of State asking for reasons. It should be raised with the BOVs whether the period in solitary has to be 28 days (under Rule 43b) or can it be less.

The relatives and prisoners should make representations to the medical officers who must examine the prisoner to see if he is fit to be held in solitary. If the doctor does not think he is then under Rule 43c the prisoner can be taken out of solitary.

All prisoners and relatives should keep diaries of all applications made and notes of what is said as all this builds up a picture and can be very useful at a later date when court challenges are made.

'If you keep people in those conditions it's bound to erupt. I spent 10 months at Strangeways so I know what it's like. I was brutalised on the block at Strangeways. Natives of this city were brutalised. Every day people were brought onto the block and you could hear the beatings. I took part in three protests myself - Hull '76, Gartree '78, Albany '83. I send fraternal greetings to all the prisoners who participated in the protests.'

Paul Hill

RCG public meetings

Prison Protest! No Reprisals!

Manchester
Monday 18 June

7.30pm, Millstone Pub, Thomas St, off Tib St, Manchester City Centre

North East London
Thursday 31 May

7.30pm, Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Road (nearest tube Finsbury Park)
Speakers: Inquest for the Jamie Stewart Family Campaign, Prison Reform Trust, Revolutionary Communist Group

South London
Tuesday 5 June

7.30pm, Hamilton House, 211 Balham High Street, London SW17 (nearest tube Balham/Tooting Bec)

North West London
'Poll tax, Prisons, Public Services'
Thursday 7 June

7.30pm, St Pancras Community Centre, 30 Camden Street, NW1 (nearest tube Camden)
Speakers: Richard Roques (RCG), Adrian States (ex-Camden Councillor), Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign

The articles in this issue of FRFI will be discussed on **Tuesday 19 June**, 7.30pm, St Pancras Community Centre

TERRY O'HALLORAN MEMORIAL MEETING Prison Revolt

Wednesday 13 June 7.30pm
St Pancras Library, Euston Road, London
Speakers: Kate Akester (solicitor), Nicki Jameson (FRFI prison page editor), Shujaa Moshesh (ex-prisoner), relatives of prisoners.

1990 PRISON REVOLT

a four-page special feature on the uprisings in British prisons in April

United we stand

On 1 April the Strangeways prisoners decided enough was enough and positive action had to be taken against a brutal system infested with corruption. The prisoners have learnt that pushing a pen was futile because their grievances were being pushed aside and ignored by the authorities. As long as brutal racism and inhumane conditions dominate in British prisons so will there be serious demonstrations.

I, myself, have experienced brutal and inhumane conditions and unnecessary abuse from screws who are simply looking for sick pay.

When the roof top protest had finished, his honour Lord Justice Woolf, who has been assigned to lead the inquiry into the protest, said he would like to hear from prisoners explain what had inspired the protest and what steps should be taken to prevent it from occurring again. Usually the Home Office had answered both questions: the first was that prisoners were 'hell bent' on causing destruction for no reason whatsoever; the Home Office solution to the problem was to suggest secure recruitment of 300 more staff at the spending of £750,000 on protective riot gear.

If Lord Justice Woolf is truly serious about tackling the problem preventing a protest as strong as Strangeways occurring again then he should see the prisoners' side of things. Firstly he should investigate the brutality, racism and forced drugging of prisoners which is rife in local prisons, particularly Waltons, Wandsworth, Lincoln, Brixton, Woking, Son Green and Armley. An independent body to investigate prisoners' complaints and grievances should be set up as the Board of Visitors is utterly useless. Also the governor has the right to adjudicate on prisoners' complaints should be taken away and given to an independent body.

The wage structure should be changed as the basic wage is £11.50 and the basic wage should be raised to at least £5.

Free time association should be started at prisons that do not have it. At local prisons, prisoners only get one Visitors Order a month for one half hour visit. This should be increased to two a month for at least one hour.

Every local prison should designate part or a full wing to house long-term prisoners and afford them the same privileges as other long-term prisoners who have been located to long-term prison.

The strip searching of prisoners and their families should be stopped. Long-term prisoners should be allowed conjugal visits.

Remand prisoners should be afforded the right to have food parcels reintroduced, have portable TVs and record players in their cells and be able to spend as much private cash as they please and unlocked for free time association.

Most of us have been found guilty. We are not asking much from the state. All we ask for is to be treated humanely. If they continue to treat us the way they do then all I can say Lord Justice Woolf is that Strangeways will be made to look like a peaceful demonstration in the very near future. The prison system will continue to go backwards instead of forwards.

United we stand. Divided we fall.

Domenyk Noonan

Prisoners' League Association Chief, HMP Hull

The imperialists have employed battalions of journalists to spread the message of Cuba's imminent collapse. Fidel Castro realises that this widespread propaganda against himself and the Cuban revolution is part of the ideological assault on Marxism-Leninism and communism and has to be politically countered. In the last few months in a series of important interviews and speeches he has taken this assault head on and given clear political answers to the most vital issues raised. They have been translated and printed in recent issues of *Granma* (in March and April 1990) and are essential reading for any communist in this country. Below is a summary with edited extracts of some of his views on the prospects for the Cuban revolution and for socialism generally in the wake of recent international developments, in Eastern Europe, and Central and Latin America.

COUNTER-REVOLUTION IN EASTERN EUROPE

Castro has made it plain that the European socialist community has collapsed and the restoration of capitalism is underway in most of the countries of Eastern Europe. This has already had an economic impact on Cuba. Trade agreements have not been renewed and with the privatisation and closure of industrial enterprises, for example the Ikarus bus factory in Hungary, industrial goods and spare parts are no longer available. As a result, in assessing the immediate impact on Cuba, Fidel Castro has felt free to speak about the quality of the goods received from these countries.

'The truth is as follows: we are exporters of foodstuffs and raw materials... so necessary for industrial development of any kind. We don't export trash... and often what we get in return is junk... there is some junk that only we buy and nevertheless we make it function, because we specialise in that after so many years: taking rubbish and trying to make something useful out of it.'

He gives the example of Bulgarian forklifts. Cuba was the only country in the world which bought them. 'There are hundreds, even thousands of these forklifts standing idle in our warehouses.' They have to improvise to get them to work seeing which parts are useful and obtaining other parts elsewhere or making them in Cuba. Similarly Hungarian buses with their Czech gearboxes are appalling. They get 'six kilometres per gallon and fill the city with exhaust fumes poisoning everybody.' Now Cuba is making its own bus which achieves 11 kilometres per gallon and, having a much better engine, causes less pollution.

This is, nevertheless, a very serious situation for Cuba. Castro compares it to the early years of the Revolution, when the United States imposed its blockade.

'... there weren't any spare parts for our machinery, for our equipment, for our factories, for anything. We must confront that same situation now, except now it's on account of the attitude of those Eastern European countries which have joined with the United States of America.' (1, p11)

He says he is not sure what the Eastern European countries will get for doing this but believes they will soon see some reward for taking the side of the empire in the form of World Bank or IMF credits or most favoured nation status. This has already influenced these countries' political attitudes, as demonstrated by a recent vote at the United Nations on a US sponsored anti-Cuban motion on human rights in Cuba.

'Poland and Czechoslovakia, yoked like oxen to Panama, co-sponsored the US motion together with NATO. They didn't even have to vote on it; they did it for free.'

Fidel Castro defends the Cuban revolution

Over the last few months, following the counter-revolutionary developments in Eastern Europe, the imperialists have been counting the days to the fall of the Cuban revolution. Like hovering vultures they eagerly speculate on the downfall of Fidel Castro. Communism, they believe, will be finally laid to rest with the destruction of the Cuban revolution. DAVID REED looks at the political response of Fidel Castro.



They were joined by two other countries previously in the socialist camp, Hungary and Bulgaria. Castro drives home the significance of this.

'Just look, what a change, what gains, what progress, what great "revolutionary" reforms they have made, in order to end up right in the lap of US imperialism and plot against the revolutionary movement. This is the negation of everything that has been progressive in the world... for countries which until yesterday were allegedly socialist to do this now along with the US imperialists, the enemy of humanity, the oppressor of our peoples... What decency remains in those countries? What is left of socialism? ... What can be left with this repugnant behaviour?' (1, p8)

Castro says that with the changes in Europe, the imperialist countries want to turn the former socialist countries into new capitalist countries which will participate in the plunder of the Third World. He says it will not be easy and without conflict.

'... It won't be easy because it will take time for capitalism there to develop the efficiency it has in the First World; this is because among other things, in order to build capitalism you not only need capital, you need capitalists, businessmen, and they don't have them.'

In Poland this has already led to conflicts between Walesa and the Polish Prime Minister and to splits in Solidarnosc, with Solidarnosc 80 accusing 'Walesa and the government with having implemented austerity policies that are unbearable for the

people, whose real income has been cut by half.' (3, p4) It remains to be seen what will happen but, for the present, Castro says, the leaders of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria have clarified our ideas and revolutionary understanding. 'They have made us feel, if possible, more revolutionary, more socialist, more Marxist-Leninist, more loyal to Marti... We feel even more repugnance for those in the international movement who have signed a pact with imperialism. 'All this teaches us a lesson, it deepens our convictions and makes us stancher and more resolute.' (1, p8)

THE SOVIET UNION AND CUBA

The USSR has resisted pressures from US imperialism to hold back trade with Cuba as was shown by the recent delivery of some MiG-29 fighters. This agreement was signed five years ago and more planes will be delivered during this year. While there are obviously major economic problems facing the Soviet Union, which, at times, will mean delays, and other difficulties in goods and raw material deliveries, Castro believes, in the present circumstances, that the Soviet Union intends to fulfil its trade agreements with Cuba.

Castro argues that the situation in the Soviet Union is different from that in Eastern Europe.

'The Soviet Union hasn't fallen into the hands of counterrevolutionaries, and we hope it won't. The Soviet Union hasn't disintegrated and we hope it won't. No civil war has broken out in the Soviet Union and we hope it won't - yet dangers, real dangers, are lurking.' (1, p8)

So Cuba is preparing for this eventuality and would adopt measures, a 'special period', which would mean a halt to all social development programmes for a number of years, in order to ensure some overall economic development and continue the food programme.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

US imperialism is intent on destroying the Cuban revolution. Recent developments in Nicaragua and Panama show its determination to destroy any regime which stands in its way. A recent US provocation against Cuba is an attempt to broadcast anti-Cuban programmes to Cuba through TV Marti by pirating a Cuban designated TV frequency. The name of the station is a calculated insult to Cuba, equivalent, Castro argues, to finding a brothel somewhere and calling it George Washington. The US leadership are imbeciles because the effect is to create a more solid union in Cuban society and greater hatred of the United States government. Cuban technicians have completely jammed the TV broadcasts leaving the US government looking very stupid.

Many people have suggested to Castro that he should make concessions to US imperialism and that the present stance of Cuba is suicidal. His reply is unequivocal:

'What right does imperialism have to tell us what we must do, what socio-economic system we must develop, what political and electoral methods to use... those who think they can survive by making concessions to the enemy are lost; only the brave survive, those who resist, those who struggle.'

The US invasion of Panama has had an impact on the Cuban people. It has served to broaden their political culture and their hatred for injustice, arrogance and aggression by the United States. So has the dirty war waged by US imperialism against Nicaragua. Nor can the situation in Cuba be compared to that in Eastern Europe.

'Don't you think that (that) disaster will teach our people that revolutions must be genuine and made by each people; that revolution cannot be imported or exported? That a revolution as profound as that of socialism, which came into being for the first time after thousands of years of human civilisation and clashes with much of our individualism, selfishness etc, etc, in order to be solid and invincible must also be genuine? Our revolution wasn't a gift from anybody, it wasn't sent by anybody, it wasn't borrowed from anybody, it wasn't imported from anywhere, we made it ourselves. That's why it can't be confused with any other political process elsewhere.' (3, p4)

Given these circumstances, Castro believes that in the face of US aggression not only will the Cuban people resist but they will win. 'The price of a US attack on Cuba would be so high that it would be unpayable.' (3, p4)

'Whenever they wage an inglorious little war they get applause, the Grenada invasion, the Panama invasion, but then as soon as they start receiving coffins with the bodies of the invaders, the euphoria is over, the applause is over and the tears begin to be shed.' (2, p10)

Castro reminds us of Vietnam. The Vietnamese had to pay a high price but they fought and defended themselves and the US had to withdraw. 'For many years we have prepared our people to resist even in the case of total occupation.' They are prepared not just to resist but to win.

IMPERIALISM IS SITTING ON A VOLCANO

Castro admits that the position of the imperialist countries looks good in economic terms. But their wealth and opulence is based on the plunder of oppressed peoples. Castro doubts whether this situation can be maintained much longer given the social and economic situation of Third World countries. In Latin America, illiteracy and poverty are growing, economic growth is negligible and with inflation rates overall of 1,000 per cent the situation is now uncontrollable. The imperialist countries are 'sitting on a volcano which can erupt. That volcano is in the Third World and nobody has an answer for these problems. Capitalism won't solve these problems.' Socialism can:

'... In 30 years of socialist Revolution we have solved what Latin America hasn't solved in 200 years. The education levels of our people are greater than those of the United States; our health indices are similar to those of the United States... The capital of the United States... the capital of the empire has an infant mortality rate in the first year of life three times greater than in Havana... '(3, p5)

The volcano is there waiting to erupt. It is in the Third World countries. Castro believes that the overconfidence of the imperialists 'will only be a passing feeling and people will react. The world revolutionary and progressive forces will raise their heads and regain their morale.' Until that time we can be certain that Fidel Castro and the Cuban people will uphold and defend the revolutionary banner of socialism, of Marxism-Leninism, no matter what happens and in all circumstances. As communists our task is to fight alongside them.

Key
1 *Granma* 18 March 1990
2 *Granma* 8 April 1990
3 *Granma* 22 April 1990. Also see *Granma* 15 April 1990.

That South Africa faces a profound economic and political crisis cannot be doubted. And, as in all such profound crises different and opposed forces are at work to influence the outcome.

The class conflict which is at the heart of the crisis is nothing new. It has been at the centre of historical development since the beginnings of capitalism. Politics in this period is relevant only in so far as it addresses this central conflict.

The SACP at last finds itself centre stage. After being banned in the 1950s, exiled and underground in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, de Klerk's statement on 2 February unbanned the Party. The inclusion of Joe Slovo, in the ANC's negotiating team, is a clear indication both of the strength of the alliance between the two organisations, and the important part that the SACP will play in influencing ANC policy. Traditional bogey of the Afrikaner Nationalists, the SACP now needs to carve out its role in determining the nature of a future democratic South Africa. *Has Socialism Failed?* purports to be the SACP's response to the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe.

It is worth emphasising that the pamphlet is a discussion paper intended to be 'debated for years to come both inside and outside the ranks of communist and workers' parties', and as yet it represents the views of Joe Slovo alone. Nevertheless it is in response to this invitation to debate that we have written this critique of the main theme of this pamphlet.

HAS SOCIALISM FAILED?

Slovo's question, contained in the pamphlet's title, is intended to address what for him must be a vital question. Criticism of the Soviet Union inevitably reflects on the SACP, for it has derived much of its politics, finance and status from the socialist bloc. At first sight Slovo seems to have been forced to come to terms with his own history and that of his party by the events in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe:

'We cannot disclaim our share of the responsibility for the spread of the personality cult and a mechanical embrace of Soviet domestic and foreign policies, some of which discredited the cause of socialism' (p24).

But the real import of what Slovo writes is rather different. The pamphlet is very careful to avoid any admission of serious mistakes by the SACP. Instead the events in Eastern Europe are used as a cover for promoting and developing a position which the SACP has been covertly arguing for a number of years. In *FRFI* 62 (September 1986) David Reed argued that the SACP was 'in fact laying before us the prospect of a peaceful road to socialism'. This has nothing at all to do with Stalin and the Soviet Union, but everything to do with a social democratic solution to the South African crisis.

We should note, however, that the South African working class has not demonstrated doubt about striving for a socialist future. The harsh barbaric realities of apartheid are a constant reminder that capitalism can offer very little to solve the poverty and injustice which afflicts the vast majority of the population. We are dealing here not with the doubts of the South African working class, but those of Joe Slovo.

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The central theme of Slovo's pamphlet is the relation between socialism and democracy. At the beginning he asserts his commitment to socialism:

'For our part, we firmly believe in the future of socialism; nor do we dismiss its whole past as an unmitigated failure. Socialism certainly produced a Stalin and a Ceausescu, but it also produced a Lenin and a Gorbachev. Despite the distortions at the top, the nobility of socialism's basic objectives inspired millions upon millions to devote themselves selflessly to building it on the ground. And no one can doubt that if humanity is today poised to enter an unprecedented era of peace and civil-

Joe Slovo and the South African Revolution

Since FW de Klerk's announcement of reforms on 2 February which heralded the release of Nelson Mandela, events in South Africa have moved rapidly towards negotiations between the ANC and the regime. What sort of society a post-apartheid South Africa will become has been and will be a central part of the discussion both within South Africa and internationally. The South African Communist Party (SACP) has recently published a number of documents outlining its views on the future. CAROL BRICKLEY reviews *Has Socialism Failed?* by Joe Slovo, the SACP's General Secretary.

ed international relations, it is in the first place due to the efforts of the socialist world.'

Stalinism, Slovo argues, is an unnatural distortion of socialism – socialism without democracy. We must be clear, he asserts, that this distortion: 'cannot be traced to the essential tenets of Marxist revolutionary science'. But there is a problem here and it will rapidly overcome Slovo and his pamphlet. He cannot argue that the 'distortions' are a result of the personal characteristics of Stalin and Ceausescu (a very un-Marxist view). Then what are they rooted in?

We soon find out. Within the space of a few pages the unblemished foundations of Marxism come under fire. Classical Marxist theory becomes 'under-developed' (p12). 'Marx, Engels and Lenin... were not always correct in their projections' (p10). The selfless millions who devoted themselves to building socialism on page 2, become 'blind worshippers in the temple of the cult of the personality'. And almost as an aside:

'It could well be argued that the classical description of bourgeois democracy was an over-simplification and tended to underestimate the historic achievements of working class struggle in imposing and defending aspects of a real democratic culture on the capitalist state; a culture which should not disappear but rather needs to be expanded under true socialism.' (p11)

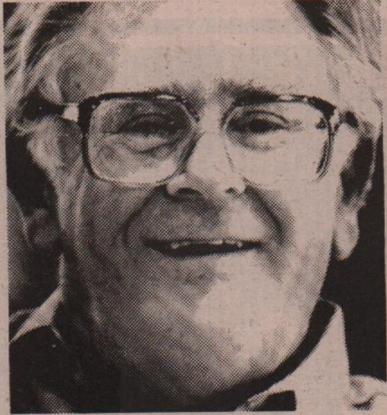
Where is all this leading? Well, straight to an attack on what Lenin called the very essence of Marxism: the *dictatorship of the proletariat*. This is a central bit of Marxist baggage which Slovo badly wants to ditch.

The *dictatorship of the proletariat*, says Slovo, was dealt with 'rather thinly' by Marx. Engels dealt with it only in relation to the Paris Commune, 'an exceptional social experience'. Lenin's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was elaborated 'in the very heat of revolutionary transformation' (pp13-14). 'On reflection', says Slovo, 'the choice of the word "dictatorship" to describe the type of society certainly opens the way to ambiguities and distortions. The abandonment of the term by most communist parties, including ours, does not in all cases imply a rejection of the historical validity of its essential content.' (p16)

If this pamphlet had musical accompaniment drums would roll at this point. Is the SACP abandoning the concept of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* because it sounds nasty, or is it rejecting its essential content? We should remind ourselves at this point that Slovo is not idly examining the history of communism. He is doing it with a purpose – to lay the basis for arguing for a particular direction for the South African liberation struggle. It is not the first time that the concept of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* has been criticised and it is worth looking at Slovo's principal predecessor.

THE RENEGADE KAUTSKY

By 1917 the once-great Marxist Karl Kautsky had become an out and out renegade – 'a mealy-mouthed spokes-



man of the bourgeoisie'. Lenin argued that Kautskyism was not fortuitous: it is 'the social product of the contradictions within the Second International, a blend of loyalty to Marxism in word and subordination to opportunism in deed' (*Selected Works Vol 3 (SW) p44*). By 1918 when Kautsky published his pamphlet attacking the Bolshevik revolution, *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, German Social Democracy had sided with its own bourgeoisie in the First World War. Lenin responded to Kautsky with his own pamphlet, *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*.

Just at the moment when socialism was becoming a practical possibility, one of its most able theoreticians, versed in the language of Marxism, turned Judas and took the side of the bourgeoisie. Precisely because Kautsky had been a giant in the movement, close to Marx and Engels, he was a most dangerous ally of the bourgeoisie. Lenin deals with his arguments with the vitriol reserved for traitors.

The first point which Lenin deals with is Kautsky's attack on the *dictatorship of the proletariat*: 'the very essence of the revolution'. Kautsky tried to identify two methods in the revolutionary movement: 'the dictatorial' (Bolshevik) and 'the democratic' (non-Bolshevik). Kautsky paves the way for his attack much the same way as Slovo:

'This view rests upon a single word of Karl Marx's.' (SW p46)

and

'Marx, unfortunately, neglected to show us in greater detail how he conceived this dictatorship.' (SW p47)

Slovo's version is little different:

'The concept of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* was dealt with rather thinly by Marx as a "transition to classless society" without much further definition.' (Slovo p13)

and

'And there was not enough in classical Marxist theory about the nature of the transition period to provide a detailed guide to the future.' (Slovo p12)

This, for Slovo, represents the 'under-developed state of classical Marxist theory'. (p12)

Was the concept of the *dictatorship of the proletariat* seized out of context from an isolated word or two by Marx and Engels? Was their treatment 'thin'? Lenin deals with this head on. Marx and Engels examined this question consistently over a period of forty years from 1852 to 1891. He points

out that the concept 'is merely a more historically concrete and scientifically exact formulation of the proletariat's task of "smashing" the bourgeois state machine.' The abandonment of the 'little word' *dictatorship* has profound consequences after all.

WHOSE DEMOCRACY?

Slovo's apparent aside on the progressive nature of bourgeois democracy (quoted above) turns out to have more significance. This point was also central to Kautsky's argument. Listen to Lenin:

'When Kautsky devotes dozens of pages to "proving" the truth that bourgeois democracy is progressive compared with medievalism, and that the proletariat must unfailingly utilise it in its struggle against the bourgeoisie, that in fact is just liberal twaddle intended to fool the workers...'

'Bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with medievalism, always remains, and under capitalism is bound to remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and deception for the exploited, for the poor. It is this truth, which forms a most essential part of Marx's teaching, that Kautsky the "Marxist" has failed to understand. On this – the fundamental issue – Kautsky offers "delights" for the bourgeoisie instead of a scientific criticism of those conditions which make every bourgeois democracy a democracy for the rich.' (SW p54-55)

Is it this description of democracy that Slovo lightly casts aside as an 'oversimplification'? Is this bourgeois democracy the 'democratic culture' which should be 'expanded under socialism'? (Slovo p11). No Marxist talks of democracy without first asking the question 'democracy for whom?'. No Marxist would doubt that bourgeois democracy will be an improvement for the black working class in South Africa. But we could not doubt either that it would leave the power and the wealth in the hands of the capitalist class.

So how will the proletariat take power from the bourgeoisie? Kautsky was categorically against the seizure of state power and the repressive measures necessary to secure proletarian rule. What about Slovo?

'Lenin clearly assumed that whatever repression may be necessary in the immediate aftermath of the revolution would be relatively mild and short-lived.' (Slovo p14, our emphasis)

and

'There may be moments in the life of a revolution which justify a postponement of full democratic processes. And we do not address the question of whether the Bolsheviks were justified in taking a monopoly of state power during the extraordinary period of both internal and external assault on the gains of the revolution.' (Slovo p17, our emphasis)

Lenin is not nearly so mealy-mouthed. He makes it clear that throughout the epoch of transition to socialism, the bourgeoisie will continue to attempt to regain its wealth and privilege: 'the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat is violence

against the bourgeoisie; and the necessity of such violence is particularly called for...'

VIOLENT REVOLUTION?

How then does Slovo see the transfer of power necessary to achieve socialism in South Africa?

'We also believe that if there is real democracy in the post-apartheid state, the way will be open for a peaceful progression towards our party's ultimate objective – a socialist South Africa. This approach is consistent with the Marxist view – not always achieved in practice – that the working class must win the majority to its side: as long as no violence is used against the people there is no other road to power.' (Slovo p27)

What is 'real democracy' in a post-apartheid society which is not socialist? Isn't this Kautsky's 'pure democracy'? Isn't it bourgeois democracy? What can Slovo possibly mean by 'winning the majority' to the side of the working class, in the South African context? The majority is black and already has proved it is on the side of the working class. Does Slovo mean that 'the majority' in South Africa is not a majority unless it includes the majority of whites? This is 'de Klerk-speak'.

And what is the possibility of a 'peaceful transition'? Lenin did not spare Kautsky for arguing that 'dictatorship' (ie *revolution*) will not be necessary if the majority supports socialism:

'In these circumstances, to assume that in a revolution which is at all profound and serious the issue is decided simply by the relation between the majority and the minority is the acme of stupidity, the silliest prejudice of a common liberal, an attempt to deceive the people by concealing from them a well-established historical truth. This historical truth is that in every profound revolution, the prolonged, stubborn and desperate resistance of the exploiters, who for a number of years retain important political advantages over the exploited, is the rule. Never – except in the sentimental fantasies of the sentimental fool Kautsky – will the exploiters submit to the decision of the exploited majority without trying to make use of their advantages in a last desperate battle, or series of battles.' (SW p64)

Isn't it a sentimental fantasy to argue that the South African capitalist class will relinquish its power and wealth without a fight? Haven't they been protecting their interests with the maximum brutality and violence for long enough to convince Slovo? Isn't it a sentimental fantasy to argue that imperialism can suddenly divest itself of its predatory and warmongering nature in favour of an era of 'peace and civilised international relations'. Isn't it the worst deception of the working class to argue that Western pluralist democracy can defend the interests of the working class?

Slovo has missed a great opportunity in this pamphlet to re-examine the central tenets of classical Marxism which are by no means 'under-developed'. He has also avoided the opportunity to give a real accounting for the history of the SACP. The rhetoric proclaims that 'if we are looking for culprits, we must look at ourselves and not the founders of Marxism'. The pamphlet not only gives the SACP a clean bill of health, in every detail Slovo's position is a profound attack on the central tenets of Marxism he pretends to hold dear. We will end with Lenin:

'In defining dictatorship, Kautsky tried his utmost to conceal from the reader the fundamental feature of this concept, namely revolutionary violence. But now the truth is out: it is a question of the contrast between peaceful and violent revolutions.'

'That is the crux of the matter. Kautsky has to resort to all these subtleties, sophistries and falsifications only to excuse himself from violent revolution, and to conceal his renunciation of it, his desertion to the side of the liberal labour policy, ie, the side of the bourgeoisie. That is the crux of the matter.'

Has Socialism Failed?, Joe Slovo, Inkululeko Publications, PO Box 902, London N19 3YY.

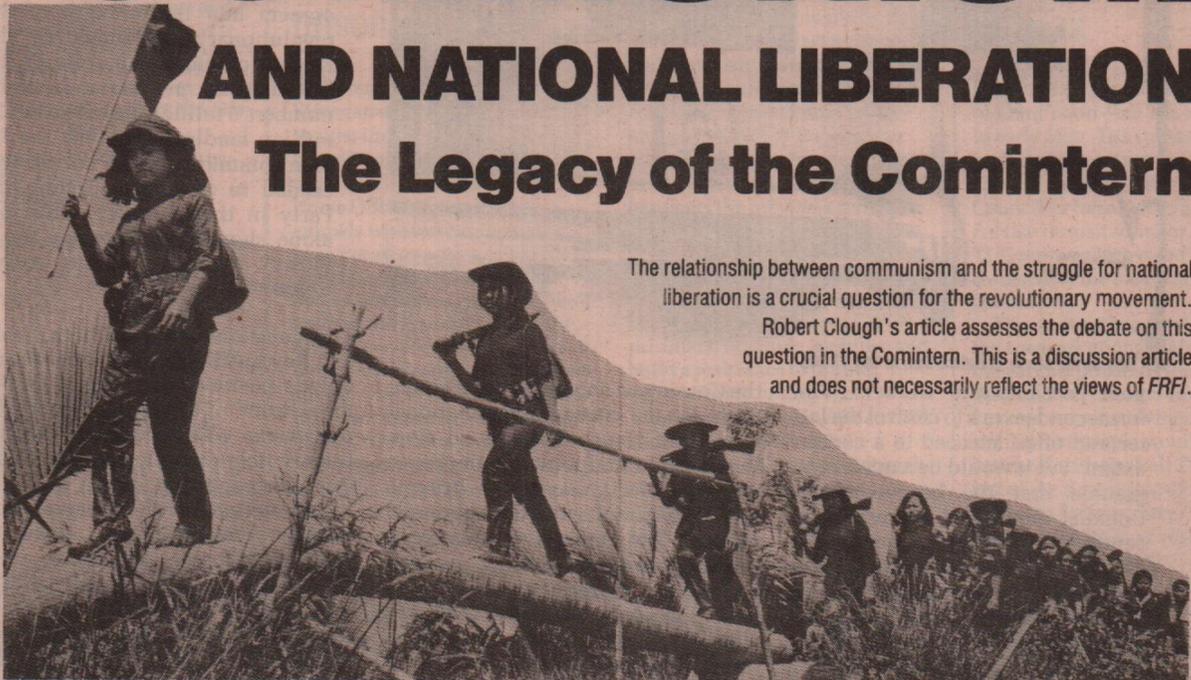
COMMUNISM

AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

The Legacy of the Comintern

The relationship between communism and the struggle for national liberation is a crucial question for the revolutionary movement.

Robert Clough's article assesses the debate on this question in the Comintern. This is a discussion article and does not necessarily reflect the views of *FRFI*.



People's Liberation Army, Vietnam

Communists today recognise that the leadership of the struggle for socialism has passed to the oppressed nations of the world. Since the end of the last war, revolutionary regimes have been established in Yugoslavia, Albania, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada, Mozambique and Angola, however temporarily, and whatever the problems that those countries face today. There has been no consistent revolutionary challenge within any of the imperialist nations during that time, however. Readers of *FRFI* will need no detailed analysis as to why no revolutionary movement has emerged in the oppressor nations: the wealth of such states, derived parasitically at the expense of the mass of the oppressed, has been partly diverted to bribe a substantial layer of the working class into accepting and supporting the maintenance of capitalism. ROBERT CLOUGH argues that what is worth studying is how the communist movement came to understand that this would be the case, and to look at the debates in which the new conditions were grasped at a theoretical level.

THE BOLSHEVIK TRADITION

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was the high point of a revolutionary storm which swept Europe during and after the First Imperialist War. Its herald was the Easter Uprising of 1916, denounced by the English opportunists, dismissed as irrelevant by Trotsky, appreciated amongst few others by Lenin. Under his leadership, the Bolsheviks had established a clear position in support of the right of nations to self-determination. For them, the old maxim 'no nation shall be free if it oppresses another' was no lifeless phrase, it was the watchword of a struggle against Tsarist imperialism. International class solidarity was impossible whilst there was inequality between nations; as Lenin wrote:

'to insist upon, to advocate, and to recognise this right (of self-determination) is to insist on the equality of nations, to refuse to recognise compulsory ties, to oppose all state privileges for any nation whatsoever, and to cultivate a spirit of complete class solidarity in the workers of different nations.'

The reality of national oppression means that the actual conditions of workers in the oppressed and oppressor nations are not the same from the standpoint of national oppression. This means that the struggle of the working class against national oppression has a two-fold character:

'(a) it is the "action" of the nationally oppressed proletariat and peasantry jointly with the nationally oppressed bourgeoisie against the oppressor nation; (b) second, it is the "action" of the proletariat, or of its class conscious section in the oppressor nation against the bourgeoisie of that nation and all the elements who follow it.'

The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation supports the struggle for national freedom only in so far as it promotes its own class interests. In other words, national freedom is only the same as freedom to exploit its own working class. If at any point the struggle for national freedom threatens the conditions of capitalist ex-

ploitation itself, the bourgeoisie will abandon the national liberation struggle for an alliance with imperialism. Hence the working class supports the struggle for national liberation as a struggle to realise a bourgeois democratic right, but its policy must not coincide with that of the bourgeoisie, because the bourgeoisie's leadership of that struggle has decided class aims. But in so far as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights imperialism, the working class support it; as Lenin said:

'The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content we unconditionally support.'

THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

The foundation of the Communist International in 1919 signified a break with the rotten traditions of the Second International. It was the recognition that there was now a fundamental split in the working class between the privileged labour aristocracy and the rest of the working class, and that the natural allies of the latter were the masses living in the oppressed nations. The slogan of the Comintern, 'Workers and oppressed of the world unite', was a succinct expression of this new reality. The extent to which there had been a fundamental break with the past was to be tested in the debates that were to take place within the International over the national question, and the struggles in which it was to become involved.

The two issues at the heart of the debates on strategy and tactics were firstly, the relationship between the working class in the oppressed nation and that in the oppressor nation, and, secondly, the relationship between the working class and the bourgeoisie in the oppressed nation. Lenin himself introduced the first discussion when he presented a set of theses on the national and colonial question to the Second World Congress of the Comintern in 1920. In them, he summarised the experience of the Bolshevik Party in the struggle

against Tsarist imperialism and national chauvinism. He repeated the two-fold character of the working class struggle against national oppression; it was in the eleventh thesis that he discussed the particular tasks facing the working class in the oppressed nations.

'With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:

first, that all Communist parties must assist the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement in these countries, and that the duty of rendering the most active assistance rests primarily with the workers of the country the backward nation is colonially or financially dependent on; second, the need for a struggle against the clergy and other influential reactionary and medieval elements... third, the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends... fourth, the need, in backward countries, to give special support to the peasant movement against the landowners... fifth, the need for a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic

liberation trends in the backward countries; the Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks, ie those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations. *The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form.*' (emphasis added)

THE CHALLENGE FROM MN ROY

Lenin's position was that in the initial stages, the national liberation movement would be led by bourgeois democratic forces; that communists had to support these movements, but maintain a separate existence so as to ensure the political independence of the embryonic proletarian movement. Note that there is not a trace of his mythical conversion to the theory of permanent revolution. However, the political standpoint of this thesis was challenged by an Indian communist who was to have an enormous influence on the Comintern's colonial policy in years to come - MN Roy. In the commission set up to discuss Lenin's theses, Roy argued two inter-related positions - first, that the fate of world revolution was dependent on the colonial revolution, second, that the colonial revolution had to be led by the working class.

Roy argued by using India as an example. There, he said, was a small but very significant industrial working class, together with a huge landless rural working class, numbering perhaps 80 per cent of the population. The industrial working class had already engaged in a number of major strikes, proving that the elements existed for the creation of a powerful Communist Party. But, he went on to say,

'as far as the broad popular masses are concerned, the revolutionary movement in India has nothing in common with the national-liberation movement.'

That national liberation movement was the Congress movement, which was made up of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois forces who had no interest in the fate of the oppressed other than that they serve to support them. Roy argued that the reference to the duty of communists to support the bourgeois-democratic liberation movements in the thesis should be deleted. This tactical standpoint cannot be divorced from the strategic position that Roy proposed: that the fate of the revolutionary movement in Europe depended entirely on the course of the revolution in the East:

'Without the victory of the revolution in the Eastern countries, the communist movement in the West would come to nothing. World capitalism draws its main resources and income from the colonies, principally from those in Asia. If it comes to the worst, the European capitalists can give the workers the full surplus value from their efforts, and in this way win them over to their side, having killed their revolutionary aspirations. And these same capitalists will continue to exploit Asia, with the help of the proletariat. Such an outcome would suit the capitalists very well. This being so, it is essential that we divert our energies into developing and elevating the revolutionary movement in the East, and accept as our fundamental thesis that the fate of world communism depends on the victory of communism in the East...'

ROY'S COUNTER-THESIS

Roy himself presented a series of theses to the commission summarising his standpoint, and these were discussed alongside Lenin's. Roy's theses in one sense were way ahead of their time, for he did exaggerate the developments within the Indian working class. But in so far as it is the duty of communists to seize on the underlying tendencies of historical development and bring them out in the open and to argue their political significance, there is no doubt that Roy was right as against Lenin. Roy argued that:

'Superprofit gained in the colonies is the mainstay of modern capitalism and so long as it is not deprived of this source of superprofit, it will not be easy for the European working class to overthrow the capitalist order...'

Without the breaking up of the colonial empire, the overthrow of the capitalist system in Europe does not appear possible. Consequently, the Comintern must widen the sphere of its activities. It must establish relations with those revolutionary forces that are working for the overthrow of imperialism in the countries subjected politically and economically...'

Roy argued that imperialism, in destroying the craft industry of the oppressed nations so as to create markets for its own goods, and in fostering the concentration of land ownership, had created a massive landless rural proletariat. This was the basis for a new mass movement. In India, he argued to the commission:

'This mass movement is not controlled by the revolutionary nationalists, but is developing independently, in spite of the fact that the nationalists are endeavouring to make use of it for their own purposes. This movement of the masses is of a revolutionary character, though it cannot be said that the workers and peasants constituting it are class conscious... Naturally a revolution started by

continued overleaf



The Irish Citizen Army outside Liberty Hall

continued from page 13

the masses in that stage will not be a communist revolution, for revolutionary nationalism will be in the foreground. But at any rate this revolutionary nationalism is going to lead to the downfall of European imperialism, which would be of enormous significance for the European proletariat.'

Hence he argues that the spontaneous movement of the masses will be towards revolutionary nationalism, but that communists cannot allow this to be sidetracked by the bourgeois democrats, who will divert it from its goal of destroying foreign domination. This must be the first aim of the revolutionary movement because, as Roy explains:

'The foreign domination has obstructed the free development of the social forces - therefore its overthrow is the first step towards revolution in the colonies. So, to help overthrow the foreign rule in the colonies is not to endorse the nationalist aspirations of the native bourgeoisie but to open the way to the smothered proletariat there.'

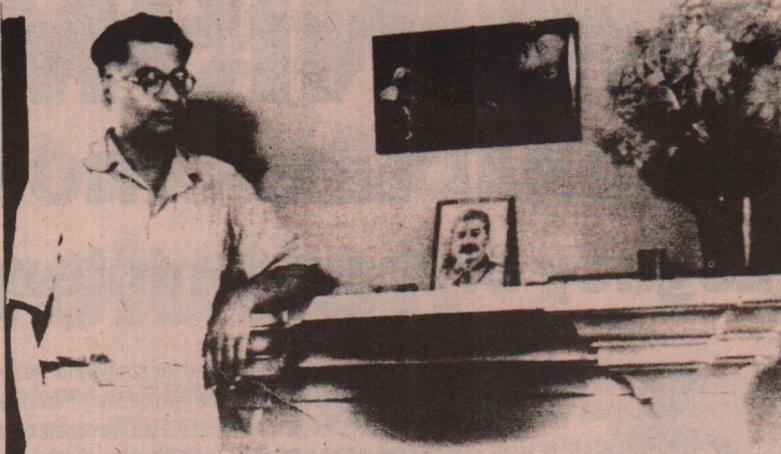
The ending of imperialist domination is the first step in a process of revolutionary struggle in which the working class and its organised vanguard, the Communist Party, must assume political leadership. Initially, the struggle would be a spontaneous movement of the oppressed, the working class, the poor peasantry

and petit bourgeoisie. Lenin had already identified the existence of this alliance in Ireland during the Easter Uprising:

'The centuries-old Irish national movement, having passed through various stages and combinations of class interests... manifested itself in street fighting conducted by a section of the urban petit bourgeoisie and a section of the workers after a long period of mass agitation...'

The Irish bourgeoisie, under the leadership of Sinn Fein, had gone over to the side of imperialism well beforehand, and had shown its hand during the Dublin lock-out. But whereas Lenin would not generalise from this experience, Roy, drawing on his understanding of the relationship of the Indian bourgeoisie to imperialism, did. Communist Parties were needed to secure the political independence of the working class, and to ensure that its interests were properly represented in the struggle for liberation. Roy's thesis summarising this point stands in clear contrast to Lenin's:

'There are to be found in the dependent countries two distinct movements which every day grow farther and farther apart from each other. One is the bourgeois democratic nationalist movement, with a programme of political independence and the other is the mass action of the ignorant and



MN Roy at his study in Dehra Dun in the 1950s

poor peasants and workers. The former endeavour to control the latter and often succeed to a certain extent, but it would be a mistake to assume that the bourgeois nationalist movement expresses the sentiments and aspirations of the general population. For the overthrow of foreign imperialism, the first step towards revolution in the colonies, the co-operation of the bourgeois elements may be useful. But the Communist International must not find in them the media through which the revolutionary movement in the colonies should be helped...'

On the contrary, it was through the Communist Parties that were being set up in the oppressed nations that

the Comintern should provide assistance to the struggle for national liberation. Hence Roy argued from the general standpoint that the key to world revolution lay in the struggle against imperialism in the oppressed nations; that imperialism was creating a huge landless working class and a small but increasingly significant and powerful industrial working class in these nations; that these forces would spontaneously adopt a revolutionary nationalism that was quite distinct organisationally and politically from the old bourgeois nationalism, and that the key task was therefore to build communist parties in the oppressed nations as a medium to bring all the real revolutionary forces into action to overthrow imperialism.

Lenin's response to Roy was that he:

'... goes too far when he asserts that the fate of the West depends exclusively on the degree of development and the strength of the revolutionary movement in the Eastern countries. In spite of the fact that the proletariat in India numbers 5 million and there are 37 million landless peasants, the Indian communists have not yet succeeded in creating a Communist Party in their country. This fact alone shows that Comrade Roy's views are to a large extent unfounded.'

The debate ended with both Lenin and Roy making concessions to each other's positions. In Lenin's theses, the term 'bourgeois-democratic movement' was replaced by 'revolutionary liberation movement', while Roy conceded that it was useful to have relations with bourgeois nationalist revolutionary elements. Both sets of theses, as amended, were then adopted by the Congress. It was two years before the issues were next debated; much to Roy's vociferous disgust, the Third Congress the following year had no time to discuss the colonial question. When the Fourth Congress met in 1922, the revolutionary movement in the imperialist countries had suffered decisive defeats, whilst significant developments had taken place in the oppressed nations. These will be discussed in the next article. ■

REVIEW

Talking Blues: the police in their own words

The Guildford Four, Ged Corley, the Holloway beatings, the Birmingham Six, Alban Turner... these are among the most recent, and most publicised cases involving alleged police corruption. The real list is of course much longer, and the vast majority of corruption, from the petty to the profoundly serious, never gets exposed.

CAROL BRICKLEY

The flurry of cases over the last six months, however, can only lead you to the conclusion that the police forces in Britain, especially the Met and the West Midlands, are facing a profound crisis. West Midlands Serious Crime Squad has been disbanded after a deluge of allegations about false confessions and manufactured evidence. The Met has called in public relations experts to improve its image. Police force after police force is under investigation, usually by a neighbouring police force which is itself under investigation... and so it goes on.

So what are we to make of Roger Graef's book, *Talking Blues: the police in their own words*, which is a compilation from 500 off-the-record interviews with police officers, carried out with agreement from the top, and pleading for understanding of the bobby's predicament?

Graef, a producer of fly-on-the-wall TV documentaries about the police, argues that the police are sandwiched between opposing pressures: 'soft' community policing versus 'tough' law and order. He suggests that their position is similar to Vietnam war veterans who went out to do a job for their country, and returned to public hostility, disillusion and contempt. 'When combined with the public pressure on the police to produce results, this predicament is what psychologists call a double bind. And it drives people mad,' comments Graef.



No prosecutions against Wapping police

Well, are the police mad? Should we sympathise with their problem? Whilst the public expect the police to solve crime ('the War Against Crime'), counter drug abuse ('the War Against Drugs'), and generally keep the peace, they in fact do very little of any of these. Most crime is unreported, uninvestigated and unsolved. None of the stereotypes of 'Dixon of Dock Green' or 'Sherlock Holmes' are real. CIDs are more famous for establishing a network of supergrasses and informers through socialising with 'villains', than they are for investigation. Local beat policing is rated very low by police officers, who are more than anxious to move on to 9-5 jobs and specialist squads. For all this they are paid very large salaries, which, if we are to judge by *Talking Blues*, they appear to spend mostly on drink.

In the 1970s evidence of widespread corruption in the Met

police specialist squads like the Vice Squad, the Flying Squad and the CID, was exposed. A series of enquiries followed, not least of all Operation Countryman, staffed by Dorset police and dubbed 'the Swedey' by the Met. At the time, according to the supergrass who exposed the corruption: 'All the Robbery Squad was bent: one third took money, one third did favours, and the other third knew about it and looked the other way.' According to the Met, the investigations were a scrupulous search for bad apples, few and far between. In reality the investigators' phones were tapped, evidence was destroyed and only three officers were ever convicted of anything.

According to the police, whatever mistrust we, the public, have is misguided. What is needed is image improvement. Graef's book gives the lie to this. Corruption appears to exist at

every level: from free bottles of whisky at Christmas, to free masonry, falsifying evidence and covering up for fellow 'bad apples'. Here are just a few examples, in their own words:

'One of the magistrates actually said, "Well it's very hard for this court to believe that the PCs, the Sergeants, the Inspectors all collaborated to produce this evidence." Of course this is precisely what they'd bloody done.

...now if you don't get results with the court you're in trouble; particularly in the CID, you get transferred back to the beat. No one wants the job of walking the streets in the cold when you could be driving around in a fast car, with a leather jacket, sitting in the pubs all day.' *PC, northern force*

'I've fitted people up - the guy gets nicked for burglary and gets off on a technicality. So you say "OK you bastard" and you sit outside his house or you find his car outside a pub and wait until eventually you nick him for drinking and driving or whatever. Or you fit him up on a false charge.' *Met Inspector*

(*Orgreave, during the miners' strike*) 'It was late in the afternoon the horses went through. And when they came back, we all applauded. I've never been in a situation like it. It was great to see them smashing into them bastards who'd been giving us grief all day.'

'I can name you no more than a handful of people of the rank of



Inspector upwards in the CID who are not Masons [Freemasons]. *Met Inspector*

'It's all right for a couple of gobby jobs to get a punch around the earhole, like they did in the Holloway Road. I'm not going to cause trouble about that. And if they'd [the police] just held firm, they'd have been alright, wouldn't they.' *Met PC*

(*on a Met WPC who blew the whistle on corruption*) 'She was the victim, while the inquiry was going on, of a horrendously personal vendetta. She literally had human shit smeared over her car after night duty... nobody would work with her.' *Met WPC*

These quotes are not the most extreme. But the problem is not rooted in corruption: corruption is a symptom of the ill. Graef's book shows an overpaid, drunken, badly-managed force, riven with racism and violence, none of which is challenged. But they

'It was certainly the case on my first tour with the Crime Squad. If you hadn't had your two or three arrests that week, Friday morning you were getting desperate and the guys would go out and just pick somebody up.'

Met Detective Sergeant

'You know why there aren't more black coppers? They're too fucking lazy, that's why. I think they're scared of their people. And I don't think they've got the brain power for it either. I'm sorry, but that's how I feel. You can get a whole community, you wouldn't get an O level between them.'

Det Sergeant, Home Counties

do the job given them by the British state. Thatcher paid the police for their loyalty - spending has increased 52 per cent since 1979. She hired them to attack the black community at Broadwater Farm, Brixton and Toxteth. She hired them to brutally attack mining communities in 1984-85. She hired them to scab on the ambulance workers. In every sense the police reflect the values not of society as a whole, but of its leaders, in particular Thatcher:

'It's one rule for them, and another for us. My wife's a nurse, and she's bloody pissed off with the way this government treats her... The government makes a big noise about backing the police, but when it comes down to it, to the bottom bloody line, there's no money for local authorities to pay us overtime, is there? It stands to reason we want discounts and presents, a free meal, or whatever. It's all right for Maggie and Nigel to preach about values when they're very well looked after by their friends. Why shouldn't we be?' *PC, Home Counties*

It is no accident that racism, sexism, corruption and violence are tolerated and covered up. These are the tools used by British imperialism both in Britain and abroad to subjugate the oppressed. They are necessary for policing. At long last Thatcher and her grab-all morality is unpopular and so are her servants, not least of all the police. They have swindled, beaten, falsely imprisoned, lied and abused us, so we are not shedding tears over their 'problems'. ■

Talking Blues: the police in their own words, Roger Graef Fontana, 512 pp, £4.50.

LETTERS

TERRY O'HALLORAN

MEMORIAL FUND

The RCG has launched a Memorial Fund to commemorate Terry's life and contribution to the political movement in Britain.

Terry played an important part in fighting for the rights of prisoners. The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund will be used to provide books and publications for prisoners at their request.

We plan to produce a special book plate for each book.

Please fill in the form below if you wish to donate.

I/We would like to donate £ _____ to

The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Please tick the box if you would like a receipt

Cheques/POs should be made payable to 'The Terry O'Halloran Memorial Fund'

BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

Message to prisoners

The recent uprising in Strangeways Prison is a blow against the racism, bigotry, brutality and evil which is promoted by the vicious evil Home Office. For years the animals who run Strangeways have got away with a catalogue of brutality and evilness which makes Hitler's regime seem like a kindergarten, and it is not only Strangeways where it happens, it is endemic throughout the prison system, and as long as the Home Office continues with these crimes, then there will be riots.

Strangeways' governor has called the uprising an 'explosion of evil'. This comes from a man who defends his screws no matter

what they do. Would he tell us how many complaints of staff brutality have been made by the prisoners over the last ten years, and how many have been found to be true? I could clearly state no screws have been found guilty and sacked. Why? Because our friendly local governor covers up for the screws' violence, but hammers the prisoners for minor charges. With this sort of regime, how can he expect prisoners not to fight back?

As I reach the end of this article, I would send a message to all prisoners: organise, mobilise and build a resistance to the evil regime which holds you.

You are not alone, write to *FRFI* and let us know what is happening and we will expose the evil of the prison regime.
TOMMY CURLIS
London

Workers in uniform or agents of the state?

John Bartell, chairman of the Prison Officers' Association (POA), was forthright in his attack on the government's prison policy as being the cause of the protest at Strangeways. He accused the Home Office of 'criminal negligence' and of 'pursuing with vigour an economic package' in the prison service with the effect of causing a large staff shortage among prison staff. This 'militant' sounding attack on government cutbacks was echoed by an article published in the *Militant* by a 'prison service worker'. After listing the effects the government's cost-cutting policies are having in the prison system, the 'worker in uniform' called for a united fight by prisoners and warders 'to dismantle the prison regime and seek real alternatives within society.'

The actions of the POA during the Strangeways protest showed quite clearly that the line peddled by the *Militant* and others on the left is reactionary nonsense. The POA are not 'workers in uniform', allies of the working class in the fight for socialism. They are in fact agents of the state, used as part of the state machinery in suppressing the struggles of the working class.

At the end of the first week of the protest the screws spent the whole of one night beating on their riot shields shouting 'beasts' at the protesters. When questioned about this behaviour,

Ivor Serle, leader of the POA at Strangeways said: 'A beast is an animal and my belief is that the people we have got left are worse than animals.' Speaking of Paul Taylor, he said that he was 'an evil man who perhaps needed mental treatment' and that he should be placed in solitary confinement as 'he is too dangerous to allow free association'. This contempt for the prisoners underlies the POA's frustration at not being allowed to storm the prison at the beginning of the protest, and Ivor Serle's support for the sending in of the SAS. After Waddington visited Strangeways, one of the first things he did was reassure the POA that Strangeways would be rebuilt. The response of Ivor Serle and the rest of the Strangeways screws was to sing 'Land of Hope and Glory' in the prison officers' club!

This is the real character of the POA, reinforced by the real reason behind the industrial action that the POA has started in the aftermath of Strangeways. Hidden behind all the talk of overcrowding and bad conditions, John Bartell let the truth slip out. Justifying industrial action, he said that 'troublemakers' were being kept in 'conditions which quite clearly they cannot be contained within'. In other words, any prisoner that demands basic human and democratic rights needs banging up in solitary!

The POA are on the other side of the class barricades in the fight for socialism. *Militant*, in printing articles by screws, stand alongside them.

BOB SHEPHERD
Manchester

Exploiting immigrants

In 1963 I ran away to London and worked in a Walthamstow factory. White people and black people were strictly separated and had to eat their sandwiches at separate tables and use separate toilets. Black people did the hardest and most unpleasant jobs for less pay. The few white male workers got most pay, then white women, then black men. Lowest on the pay scale were black women and youth.

In 1990 I started a job in a factory in Leyton. On the surface it seemed a vast improvement on the one I suffered in as a 12-year-old. Black people earn the same as white, women the same as men. We are all allowed to collect the paltry sum of £2.55 an hour. Nowadays loos are plain 'male' or 'female', and we share the canteen. 80 per cent of the staff are Asian, the most of the rest are black. On the door marked

'Quarantine. Do not enter', someone has added 'illegal immigrants only'. Yet the office staff, my foreman, and his boss are white. I suspect that any job that pays more than £2.55 an hour is held by a white male. Only the personnel manager and the receptionist are white females.

We get ½-hour for lunch and no afternoon teabreak. The conditions are dreary: machine noises, people shouting, competing radios make a constant bedlam. No view, no windows, incessant artificial light. As the job is filthy and I still haven't been issued with any overalls, I asked one of my workmates if there was a union. He looked terrified: 'No union here! My friend joined one, they found out and sacked him for stealing a screwdriver they had planted on him!' I asked my son and his mates. They also froze in horror. Don't mention union. It's the same old story. Exploiting immigrants.

ANNIE
South London

Brent against the Poll Tax

Around 40 people attended one of Brent's anti-Poll Tax meetings in early May. The speakers included Conservative Councillor Edward Lazarus, Labour Councillor John Duffy, a Citizens Advice Bureau solicitor, a local TUC representative and Loraine Sweeney of the local anti-Poll Tax committee.

The meeting began with each of the speakers giving their view on the various positions they held on the Poll Tax. Conservative Lazarus was unconvincing when stating that people would be better off with the Poll Tax. The rest of the time he spent running down the Labour Party. Lazarus was heckled by local residents who were very angry.

John Duffy, the Labour Councillor, stated that he was against the Poll Tax but would not support non-payment. He himself would pay all his Poll Tax minus the £17 paid into the safety net for boroughs such as Wandsworth. Councillor Duffy was slightly more well received although his lack of support for non-payment angered many. Some people expressed their view that the Labour Party had sold out on the poor and working class by

supporting payment of the Poll Tax. Others expressed that socialism had been thrown out of the window by Labour and they had now shown their true colours.

A heartening gesture was made by the local anti-Poll Tax organiser, Loraine Sweeney, who tore up her Poll Tax demand at this meeting and encouraged us all to make a stand by not paying this unfair and immoral tax on people and to organise support groups for non-payment.

Since this meeting Brent Council has been lost to the Conservatives which is hardly surprising as most of the people who could not afford to register for the Poll Tax and therefore did not register to vote are working class Labour Party supporters. Also a great number of registered Labour Party supporters felt much ambivalence towards voting for a party that has sent them threats of legal prosecution for non-payment of the Poll Tax.

There are now 10 local anti-Poll Tax groups working in Brent. The aim is to crush the Poll Tax. We will be keeping you informed with the struggles against the Poll Tax.

Thought for the month: unite and conquer!

BETTINA
Willesden

Broadwater injustice

Any regular reader of *FRFI* will be very aware of the brutal injustice on the community of Broadwater Farm. *FRFI* has been a very unique paper over this issue, going beyond the point where the case lost 'news value' where other 'left wing' papers dropped it.

Engin Raghup, Mark Braithwaite and Winston Silcott still languish in prison for the killing of PC Blakelock, a conviction of which they are totally innocent. Many others have also been made examples of, most recently Winston's brother George; his crime? Telling the truth about his brother's frame-up

at the hands of the racist police. Such seemingly ineffective things such as letters to the Home Office, MPs and the CPS are in fact effective in this case and I would appeal to all *FRFI* readers to write.

Finally, it is important to let the innocent prisoners know you support them. They can be contacted at: Winston Silcott B74053, HMP Gartree, Market Harborough, Leicestershire LE16 7RP Engin Raghup B78270 and Mark Braithwaite B78965, HMP Wormwood Scrubs, PO Box 757, Du Cane Road, London W12 0AE. Please help, comrades.

CHAS BURDEN
London

Cheap labour for NHS

The unjust consequences of the current changes in the NHS are already being revealed and intensified racism is one of them. Even the usually moderate RCN has been driven to open its mouth.

The RCN's Counselling Help and Advice Together service has seen over 400 overseas nurses either working without pay or paying to work in the NHS, while they do adaptation courses which prepare them for UK registration. Epsom District Hospital charges overseas nurses £100 a week for a

3-month course but pays nothing to the nurses when they work in the wards. The nurses only receive a partial rebate on what they've paid out if they subsequently work for the hospital. In Lancashire, overseas nurses desperate to register in the UK are being taken advantage of by Hyndburn and Ribbles Valley Health Authority who are 'letting overseas nurses work for nothing if they so wish'.

Such reforms in the NHS will come as no surprise to *FRFI* readers.

GORDON TEAL
Leeds

Write to:

**FRFI, BCM Box 5909,
London WC1N 3XX
or ring: 071-837 1688**

March for the Uppington 14

26 May: Demonstration organised by City of London Anti-Apartheid Group Assemble 12 noon, Highbury Fields London N5. March to the racist South African embassy, Trafalgar Square For details write to City AA, BM Box CAA, London WC1N 3XX or phone 01 - 837 6050.

Ireland: The key to the British revolution

Series of public forums organised by the RCG All meetings take place at 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1N. Nearest tube: Holborn

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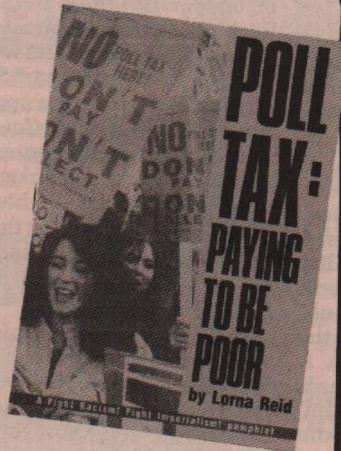
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RCG member Richard Roques, beaten and arrested in Trafalgar Square, faces trumped-up charges. Since 31 March 56 people have been arrested, bringing the total number of arrests to 397.

SMASH THE POLL TAX

Drop the charges now!

Operation Carnaby, the police investigation into the battle of Trafalgar Square, is the largest ever investigation in terms of resources committed. It involves 125 police officers and the Crown Prosecution Service has set up a special centralised unit of 13 lawyers and 10 support staff. The Metropolitan Police successfully applied to the Old Bailey for newspapers and television companies to hand over all pictures taken during the battle. So far over 30,000 photographic stills and 90 hours of video tape have been collected. From initial viewing the police say they want to interview 500 people on top of the 341 arrested on the day. **LORNA REID** examines the police operation.

Between 12 and 16 April the police released photographs and video pictures of 14 people wanted for questioning. They were printed in the national daily press with alleged charges against the individual accompanying each photograph.

Since 31 March, 56 people have been arrested, bringing the total number of arrests to 397. Many of those visited by police in the early hours of the morning are leading figures in local anti-Poll Tax campaigns.

Charges range from obstruction to offences which can carry life sentences if proven. The police and courts have set in motion a process of criminalisation. They are determined to wreak revenge against those who fought to defend their right to demonstrate against the Poll Tax. RCG member Richard Roques, arrested at Trafalgar Square, has had his charge of violent disorder changed to disorderly behaviour and a charge of Police Assault added. By reducing the charges in this way the CPS can ensure that most cases are heard by a magistrate only, and not a jury.

Stringent bail conditions are being placed on many defendants. There is extensive use of 'banning orders': ban on coming to London (out of London defendants); 'Radial bans' (exclusion from variously one and three miles of Trafalgar Square) and 'postal bans' (specifically from W1 district). Many defendants are being held on remand.

The press has been mainly hostile to the interests of the defendants. The *Sunday Mirror*, *People*, *Express* and

the *London Evening Standard* all printed the photographs supplied by the police. The *Sun* accused 'Poll Tax rioters' of causing the death of a police constable who died in his sleep a month later - the PC had not even reported sick! On 18 March a picket was held outside the *Daily Mirror* offices to protest against their publishing of photos supplied by the police.

Stephen Foxley has been charged with Section 2 of the Public Order Act (violent disorder) and attempted murder. He is accused of ramming a scaffold pole through the window of a police car in Trafalgar Square. When we visited Stephen in Feltham Youth Custody and Remand Centre he told *FRFI*: 'I was standing opposite Charing Cross train station when a number of police officers grabbed me. One of them said, "He'll do". I was pushed to the ground and a police man punched me repeatedly on the face, breaking my nose. I was taken to Bow Street police station, charged with violent disorder and held in custody. A week later my solicitor made a bail application. That day I was arrested in my cell and charged with attempted murder and remanded again. The state is trying to fit me up - trying to make an example of me. They know I didn't do it - their own description of the man who they allege did it is totally different to my description.' Stephen has been held in custody for five weeks. He claims that seven out of 10 of his visits end in him being strip searched 'because of the way I look'.

On 3 April police at Holborn, cen-

tral London, attempted to ban the RCG launch meeting of our pamphlet *Poll Tax: paying to be poor*. The staff at the venue refused to cancel our booking so police patrolled the streets around the venue whilst the meeting went ahead. Other anti-Poll Tax meetings across the country have been subject to unwelcome police attention. The police are attempting to create an atmosphere of hysteria and intimidation.

The witch hunt was assisted by Quentin McDermott, news editor of *City Limits*, a supposedly radical London-wide listings magazine. In *City Limits* (5 April-12 April), McDermott produced an unsubstantiated allegation about RCG involvement in 'pre-planned violence.' Despite having our disclaimer to this before *City Limits* went to press, the allegation was printed without refutation. Our disclaimer was printed a week later, but in reply to our letter of complaint printed in *City Limits* (19 April-26 April) McDermott elaborated and alleged that names and telephone numbers were passed on in relation to planning violence at the 31 March demonstration.

There is nothing to distinguish a self-proclaimed progressive like McDermott from the gutter journalism of the tabloids. Whilst the press at large leaps on the bandwagon of anti-Thatcherism and claims to be concerned about Britain's 'growing underclass', it vilifies the very same forces it feigns concern for. ■

SMASH THE POLL TAX

Rotten boroughs

Visibly relieved at the 4 May election results the Tories were triumphant about their landslide victories in their flagship boroughs of Wandsworth and Westminster, Poll Tax £148 and £195 respectively.

Referring to Local Authority accountability, Thatcher claimed the Poll Tax will 'increasingly bring the profligate and inefficient to book.' But the election results in Wandsworth and Westminster had nothing to do with Local Authority accountability and everything to do with buying votes.

The Poll Tax in Wandsworth is the lowest in England and Wales achieved through undisguised Government hand-outs. Wandsworth receives £116 per head from the safety net, contributed to by poor London boroughs like Haringey, Hackney and Lambeth; £29 million from the Uniform Business Rate; and, because Wandsworth charges some of the highest council house rents in the country, it receives a higher Government grant of 82p for every £1 spent. In addition £20 million of the council's reserves, accumulated through the sales of 17,000 council houses, has been used to further subsidise the Poll Tax.

Scared witless by the Department of the Environment's original estimate of a £400 Poll Tax in Westminster, council leader Lady Porter employed lobbyists GJW to persuade Cabinet ministers that it would make good electoral sense to keep the borough's Poll Tax low. GJW's brief to Ministers, prepared last year, was: 'Westminster City Council could easily go Labour in next May's elections... this could have serious knock-on effects on the Government's election prospects. A few votes in a few marginal wards could tip the balance.' Point taken, Westminster duly received an extra £25 million bringing its total Government grant to £117 million worth

£185 per Poll Tax payer.

And you thought Lady Porter's skills stopped at selling cemeteries at 5p a go? Well, the Lady has proved herself capable of buying votes, albeit at the slightly higher price of £195 each.

There are no fears that either borough will be 'brought to book' for bribing their electorate. Cooking the books is much more preferable to and easier than, with help from a few Cabinet friends, political accountability to the electorate.

Meanwhile, the working class in both boroughs is left to stump up the price of a Tory publicity stunt while it struggles to pay extortionate council house rents and faces ever-decreasing provision of services.

On 15 May Lord Donaldson, Master of the Rolls, restored some faith in the Tories that the judiciary can still come up with the goods. Donaldson overturned the granting of temporary orders by Mr Justice Roch to 11 councils threatened with Tax capping. The orders would have stopped the Secretary of State from seeking Parliamentary approval for capping until the High Court has ruled on the legality of capping. None of the 21 councils earmarked for capping are Tory run. Eighteen of the councils are challenging the decision to cap them on the grounds that the decision is unfair and politically motivated.

Donaldson was the perfect choice of judge to hear the Environment Secretary's appeal to overturn the orders. Appointed by the Government, the Tories know they can rely on him always to rule in their favour. ■

SMASH THE POLL TAX

Fight continues

If the Tories thought that the police assault on the 31 March demonstration and the subsequent arrest of hundreds of activists was sufficient to intimidate the population into paying the Poll Tax they were mistaken.

Despite Scotland's Sheriff's Officers running round the country trying, unsuccessfully, to carry out pointings to recover unpaid Poll Tax, the number of non-payers in Scotland has risen to a new high of 1.2 million people. Strathclyde Regional Council's second annual Poll Tax register is short of 60,000 people. The council is now threatening to issue summonses for £50 against those refusing to register adding more to the workload of the Sheriff's Officers. Meanwhile, Lothian Regional Council's chief Poll Tax registration officer took the council to court for their refusal to provide him with the 48 extra staff he requires to work on the enormous backlog of work created by non-payment. The council has been given extra time by the court to find suitable accommodation for the increase in staff required.

In England and Wales local com-

munities continue to organise mass protests. When Poll Tax bills were issued in mid-April thousands of people turned out to bin/burn/return them.

Council workers forced to implement the tax are taking action. In Sheffield over 400 housing workers walked out on 10 April in protest at threatened disciplinary action against workers who refused to handle Poll Tax work. Housing workers in Kirklees (Huddersfield), Greenwich (South London), Camden (North London) and Manchester are all boycotting Poll Tax work.

Resistance to the Poll Tax is spreading throughout the communities and in the work place, especially amongst workers who are given the responsibility of implementing it. This unity can be built upon to provide a determined and growing challenge to the hated Poll Tax. ■

The Trafalgar Square Defendants Campaign has been set up to defend all those arrested in connection with the battle of Trafalgar Square. It is run by and for the defendants and is committed to providing legal and financial support for all those arrested. It can be contacted c/o The Haringey Unwaged Centre, 72 West Green Road, London N15. It is appealing for all defendants and witnesses to contact it in order to provide a thorough defence of everyone arrested. The campaign meets every Wednesday in London until 27 June at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1 except 6 June when the meeting will be held at the Haringey Unwaged Centre. If you live outside London contact the campaign about defendants' meetings in your area. A national meeting will be held in Conway Hall, London, on Saturday 17 June, 10am-3pm.

Send messages of support to Stephen Foxley KR 3331, Feltham Youth Custody and Remand Centre, Bedford Road, Feltham, Middlesex, TW13 4ND and to David King RA 0711, Wormwood Scrubs, Du Cane Road, London W12. David has been charged with Public Order Act section 2 and Burglary and Looting.