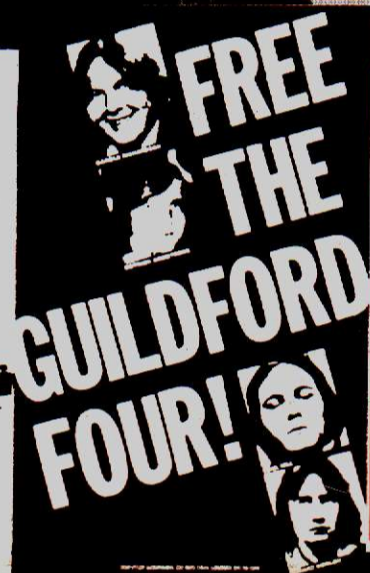
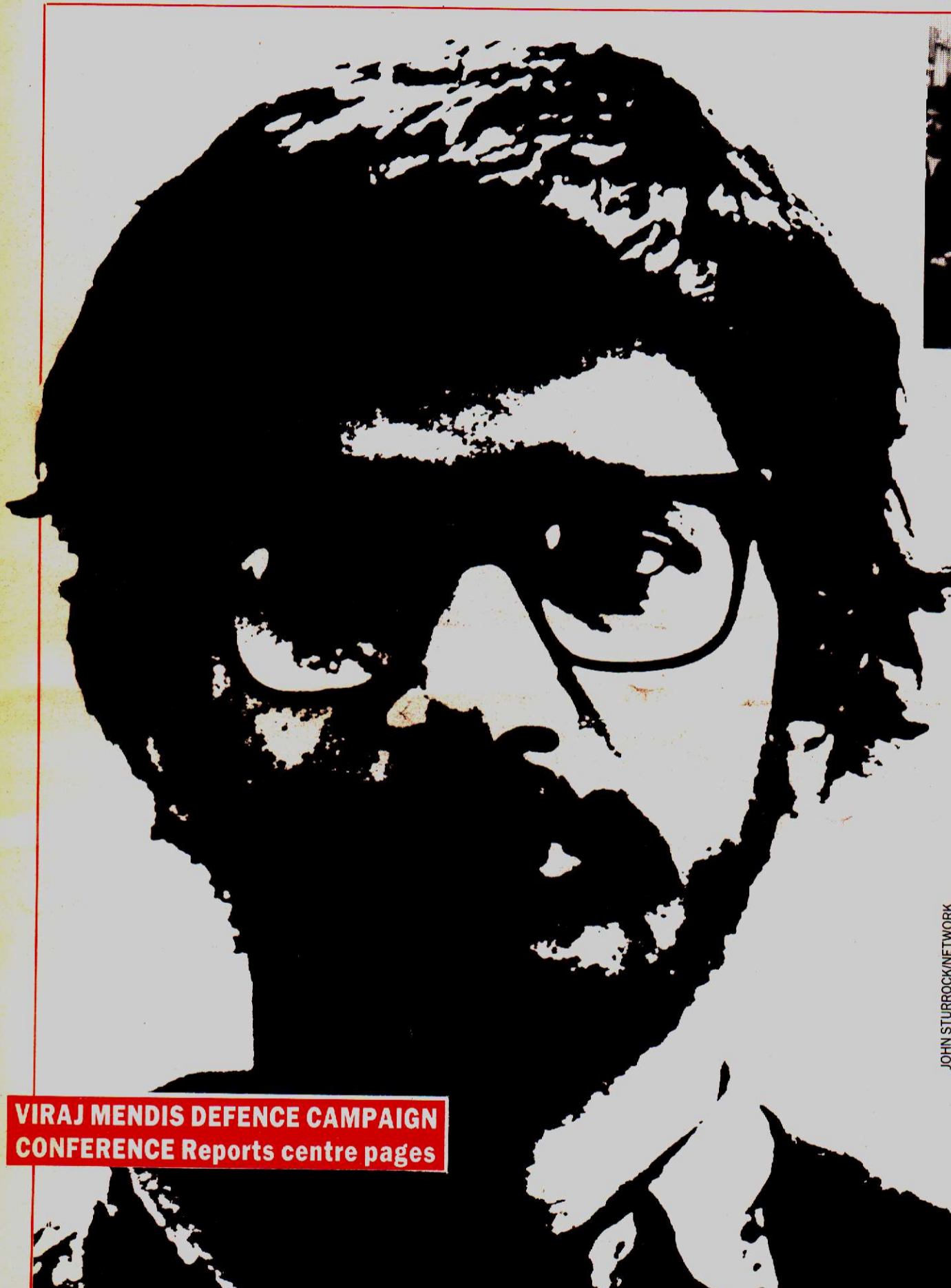


FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Anti-imperialist paper of the Revolutionary Communist Group

Issue 68 May 1987

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- Labour betrayed black youth who fought police racist harassment
 - Kinnock and Labour leaders turned their backs on the striking miners and printers
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JOHN STURROCK/NETWORK



WINSTON SILCOTT / COURTESY OF MRS SILCOTT

VIRAJ MENDIS DEFENCE CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE Reports centre pages

LABOUR'S RACISM

'Do not write-off the white, heterosexual working class and replace them with a coalition of the dispossessed'

Tom Sawyer, Chair Labour Home Affairs Committee

BUILD THE COALITION OF THE DISPOSSESSED

Scottish Poll tax

Robbing the poor of their vote

The Tory government are planning a major escalation of their attack on the working class in Scotland. They are even threatening the right to vote. They plan to push through a Bill in parliament which will scrap the rating system in Scotland and replace it with a Poll tax which they politely call a community charge on property and not on people. It would not be an income tax, rather it would include pensioners, the unemployed, the sick and those on low wages, who would all have to pay more than £250 a year.

A family with two school leavers would have to pay £1,000 a year or £20 a week, even if they were all unemployed and living in the worst housing conditions imaginable. Compare this to Malcolm Rifkind, Secretary of State for Scotland, who dreamed up the idea of the Poll tax. He and his family would only have to

pay between £300 and £400 a year for the pleasure of living in his castle-like villa in a posh suburb of Edinburgh.

As well as imposing untold hardship on the poor, the Poll tax would also be linked to the electoral roll, so hundreds of thousands of unemployed and poorly paid people will lose

their right to vote because of inability to pay.

The Tories well know the suffering they will impose on the majority of people in Scotland. Michael Forsyth, Tory MP, states very clearly in his pamphlet *The case for a Poll tax* 'As a flat rate on everyone, it would fall most heavily on those with low incomes. If, for example, it were only applied to wage earners, half the adult population would be exempted and the rate would have to double... To exempt people from liability to pay it through the Social Security system or via some scheme of rent rebates, would destroy accountability... And if the tax

were only levied on those entitled to vote, the electoral register could be used to establish liability. Avoiding having to pay tax might be an efficient incentive for some to avoid registration.'

The Poll tax is being introduced in Scotland only, and will not be imposed in England or Wales. Lord Hailsham, the Lord Chancellor, the chief law officer in England and Wales, reportedly advised the Cabinet that it was unconstitutional in England to tax the right to vote.

The fact that many people will try to avoid the tax because of their economic circumstances will doubtless cause some councils to pay in-

formers and hire spies and snoopers. They already use such methods against social security claimants. Pat Lally, leader of the Labour-controlled Glasgow Council, has made it very clear that far from opposing the Poll tax the Labour Party would encourage the use of informers and snoopers in the community, in order to make sure all the payments come in. Lally stated 'People may have to be paid to inform on neighbours trying to dodge the new community charge... If the government penalises councils for not collecting enough money then such a scheme, although morally repugnant, would be seriously considered'.

Gerry Martin

NUCLEAR DUMPS VICTORY

The decision by Thatcher to scrap plans for a shallow dump for low-level nuclear waste was taken for purely electoral reasons. The four proposed sites - at Fulbeck (Lincolnshire), Braintree (Essex), South Killingholme (Humberside) and Elstow (Bedfordshire) fall in the constituencies of three government ministers.

Worried by the strength of the local campaigns, the Tories are prepared to write off the £15 million invested in the project through Nirex, the government waste dumping body. The decision only postpones the decision of what to do with nuclear waste. The Tories are determined to continue with the search for a deep level site and meanwhile, nuclear waste continues to pile up at nuclear power stations which are becoming nuclear waste dumps in themselves.

CASHING IN ON THE FREE MARKET

Keith Best, 37 year-old barrister, SAS-trained territorial army Captain and acute embarrassment to the Conservative Party, need not fear prosecution for his possibly fraudulent multiple application for British Telecom shares.

The Tory MP for the Welsh constituency of Ynys Mon is currently under investigation by the fraud squad but is unlikely to suffer more than the loss of his seat. A suspended or full prison sentence is quite out of the question: the law and order crusade does not extend to the free and enterprising 'misdemeanours' of the professional classes.

Best was caught out by the trade union research organisation, the Labour Research Department, buying 4000 more than the strict limit of 800 shares in BT by making applications from different addresses in different versions of his own name. Because the warning against making a multiple application was buried in page 59 of the company prospectus, the legal case against Best is weak.

Like the corrupt Guinness executives and recently exposed Stock Exchange insider dealers, Best has committed the crime of bringing his class into disrepute - that is, getting caught. The penalty is temporary exile from the business community or like the dismissed executives of brokers Morgan Grenfell, the sack with a £500,000 golden handshake.

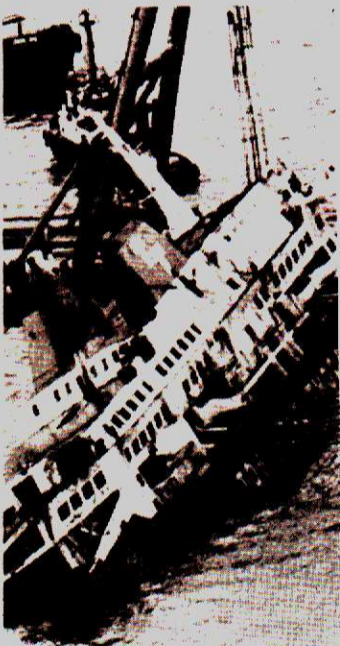
The grasping Best would profit from his share dealings in Mrs Thatcher's sale of the century. He took advantage of eight of the government flotations of public corporations including Jaguar (again, he made multiple applications), TSB, British Gas, British Aerospace, Cable and Wireless, and Britoil. All were substantially underpriced by the Department of Trade and Industry - a mega-pound government handout to the few who could afford the minimum stake - free money for the greedy rich.

Most of the shares bought by private investors have now been sold, or 'staged', at a large profit to Thatcher's supporters. (The majority of British Telecom shares, for example, are now in the hands of financial institutions). Many buyers, of course, made multiple applications in the knowledge that this would be looked on merely as evidence of business acumen. A comparable fraud on the DHSS would result in lengthy prison sentence.

Another Tory MP, Eric Cockram, has admitted a similar multiple application, in the names of his grandchildren. Mr Cockram, contrary to law, failed to get the parent's permission before filling in the applications. He regards it as scandalous that anyone should suspect that he rather than his offspring would profit from his party's financial mismanagement of the Free Market Economy.

William Gwyn

FERRY DISASTER CAUSED BY COST-CUTTING



The horrific deaths of nearly 200 people, it is now revealed at the inquiry into the sinking of the *Herald of Free Enterprise*, can be put down to sordid cost cutting to increase profits. A third officer, normally responsible on other ferries for supervising the closing of the doors, had been deemed an unnecessary cost on the *Herald*; an 'alarming tendency' for the bow of the ship to dip down under certain conditions had been noticed by the Captain as early as 1980, but nothing was done; the bow doors were not closed until the ship was moving as a matter of routine, in order to speed up turn round time; despite recommendations, no warning light system was installed to tell the captain if the bow doors were closed; harnesses and rope ladders, not simply ropes, would have considerably helped in the rescue of frozen and exhausted passengers. Most significant of all, the design of roll-on-roll-off ferries has been causing anxiety for years among some experts. There have been numerous accidents - involving ships of this design all over the world. If the *Herald* had sunk a little further out in deeper water, it would have turned completely over in a matter of seconds, allowing virtually none of the 600 passengers to escape.

The inquiry is revealing that the sinking of the ferry is far from being an accident of nature or just simple human error. The death and suffering of hundreds was brought about simply by greed for profits.

Olivia Adamson

Caterpillar

Scottish labour leaders force end to sit-in

Workers at the Caterpillar factory in Uddingston, near Glasgow, voted to end their 103 day old occupation at a mass meeting held on Sunday 26 April.

Throughout, the Caterpillar workers withstood attempts to sabotage their protest: from the Caterpillar management, from the press, but most noticeably from their own union, the Amalgamated Engineers Union (AEU). In a despicable act of betrayal, Jimmy Airlie, Scottish Executive Officer of the AEU and CPGB member, informed the workers that the union was withdrawing its support for the occupation because the courts had declared it illegal. He advised the workers to abandon the position of power they had won for themselves by occupying the factory and argued for them to continue the dispute from a position of weakness, leaving the field free for the American contractors to regain control of their machinery.

On 21 April, talks organised by ACAS between management, union and shop stewards, broke down after 4 days. Caterpillar shop stewards were ordered to Perth by Jimmy Airlie to attend 'urgent' talks to try and end the occupation. The deal proposed by Caterpillar management differed little from earlier in the

week, but news of a prospective buyer waiting in the wings finally swayed the shop stewards. They accepted Caterpillar's offer and it was the stewards' proposal to the mass meeting that finally ended the sit-in.

Noticeably bitter, John Brannan, shop steward, said that if the same amount of pressure had been placed on the Caterpillar management as had been placed on the workforce by the Scottish TUC, the AEU and other unions involved, like the EETPU, there might have been a different outcome.

Doubts and misgivings that workers had about the 'rescue plan' have been tragically borne out. Apart from the fact that only 400 jobs were due to be saved initially (a loss of 800 jobs), the person behind the plan was revealed to be David McWatt who has a history of failed business ventures. By 30 April, Sir Monty Finiston, ex-chairman of British Steel and chairman of the group proposing to take over Caterpillar to produce a 'Multi-Purpose All-Terrain Vehicle', had pulled out, along with other directors.



Picture: STEVE McTAGGART

John Brannan showing Kinnock around

The betrayal of the Caterpillar workers by scabs like Airlie raises the question of how struggles are to be taken forward and how the corrupt and bought off layer in the trade union movement is to be defeated. The answer lies in the way that the ordinary working class people of Glasgow showed their support for the workers of Caterpillar by donating thousands of pounds to keep the occupation going. Young unemployed people organised collections outside their dole offices. Four support groups were set up.

At the support group attended by RCG comrades, shop stewards and the left argued that the role of the support group should be restricted simply to collecting funds. This narrow view is a political mistake. As the miners' strike showed, alongside the collection of funds, the widening and consolidation of political support in the community is an essential component if workers in struggle are to have the strength to defeat traitors like Airlie and take the struggle forward.

Kim/Gerry

Civil Servants move to all-out strike

Since the beginning of April clerical and supervisory grade government workers have been taking selective strike action, region by region, to improve pay and conditions, while many parts of the Customs and Excise are striking for the whole period and solid action is causing severe disruption at ports, the strikes which affect the public most are in the benefit offices.

Civil servants, represented by the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) are amongst some of the lowest paid employees in the country. Many take home less than £125 per week and 40,000 are currently claiming state benefits to supplement their income. In the last seven years they have fallen 20% behind similar workers in other sectors. While the government has cut staffing levels, workloads have been increased over 100%, mainly due to rising unemployment.

The service is in crisis: many urban benefit offices have staff turnover rates of 50% and even 70%, making it impossible to retain trained personnel. The standard of service to claimants, already suffering hardship from measly state-handouts and a succession of punitive rules is

getting seriously worse. The union's pay claim amounts to 15%. The government's final offer is 4%.

Its propaganda consists of crying crocodile tears for claimants and accusing benefit workers of callousness, whereas for years many of us have fought (with official backing) to resist government attacks on all categories of claimant. It remains to be seen how the government will respond to this, the first national pay strike for seven years.

Low-paid civil servants are certainly getting angrier and may well be balloting in June for all-out strikes. So far we have received active help from unemployed workers' groups and we ask all claimants to express their solidarity to the picket lines.

CPSA shop steward

CPSA leaders accept race checks

The CPSA Department of Employment Section Executive Committee will put a motion to the union's May conference urging members to accept the government's race checks of the unemployed on the grounds that union policy to stop the checks is unworkable.

This follows the industrial action at Leeds and Handsworth benefit offices in January when Peter Thomason, CPSA's DE section official, was served with a High Court writ threatening sequestration of union funds and imprisonment if the CPSA failed to call off the action. The union caved in that very day.

In a circular to all members, Thomason states that it is union policy not to break the law, therefore although we don't like race checks of benefit claims (politely called 'ethnic

monitoring') we have to accept them.

This motion will cause a major row at this year's conference - CPSA will face a choice which other unions have faced before and a lesson that the labour movement as a whole has still to learn: namely that retreat paves the way for greater anti-union attacks; and that to defend the rights of the working class it is necessary to break ruling class law.

CPSA shop steward

Cashing in

Recently revealed are the staggering cash handouts given to CPSA officials voted out of office. Defeated Treasurer in recent elections, John Raywood, lately received £87,500 plus a £12,000 a year pension. Raywood is now going on to a £25,000 a year job in a trade union bank. The union conference had not been informed about the payments. No wonder that such leaders find it difficult to identify with low paid civil servants forced to claim benefits to keep their families

KINNOCK'S RACIST and CHAUVINIST LABOUR PARTY

'I think a coloured candidate at this stage in Smethwick would actually lose the seat. With a majority of 3,300 we can't monkey about'.
ANDREW FAULDS MP, on black sections 1985.

'The Arabs are holding us to ransom ... (but) not all the Arabs are in Arabia ... there are Bedouins near Barnsley and Sheiks in Sheffield.'

FRANK COTTAM, GMBATU (1986 Labour Party Conference)

'Violence, I do not have to tell this congress ... violence disgusts union opinion and divides union attitudes ... and is alien to the temperament and the intelligence of the British trade union movement.'
NEIL KINNOCK on the miners, TUC 1984

There should be no fraternising with the 'enemy' (Catholics). Catholic schools should be closed because they are an 'insult to everything you and I stand for'.

COUNCILLOR SAM CAMPBELL, Midlothian Labour councillor and Orange Order member

No leading figure on the right wing of the Labour Party has been disciplined for disagreeing publicly with Labour's policies. Sharon Atkin has been disciplined for stating a simple truth - that the Labour Party is racist.



Sharon Atkin

General Election NO VOTE FOR LABOUR RACISTS

Election fever is running high as the three main political parties prepare themselves for a probable June General Election. This is supposed to be the highpoint of 'democracy' for British people. But in reality the choice we have is between one gang of racist, war-mongering liars and another. What is surprising about this election is that with rampant unemployment, escalating poverty for millions, a galaxy of anti-working class laws, and after eight years of the most reactionary rule punctuated by scandals and crookery, Margaret Thatcher and the Tories are likely to retain power. Kinnock's Labour Party is unlikely to win, and may even take third place to the Liberal/SDP Alliance. Socialists of all varieties on the British left are arguing that you should vote Labour because it is traditionally the party of the working class - a lesser evil compared with the Tories. The RCG says that we don't want Thatcher back in power, nor Kinnock and his cohorts who do not represent the working class in Britain. Those who call for a vote for Kinnock, sowing illusions in the class nature of the Labour Party, will stand in the way of building a fighting working class movement whose first task will be to destroy the Labour Party and every rotten tradition it stands for. If you vote Tory, Labour or Alliance you will be voting for British imperialism.

The issue of whether to vote Labour at this election is posed more sharply than ever before. It has long been part of socialist doctrine that the nature of the Labour Party is contradictory: that it is a bourgeois party but it also represents workers and can be swayed to represent their interests. In an article in *Socialist Worker* (2 May) Alex Callinicos claims that:

'Because it (the Labour Party) reflects workers' resistance is the fundamental reason for calling for a vote for Labour. This is why the best militants inside the working class support it.'

'To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through Parliament - this is the real essence of parliamentarism'. LENIN 1917

Is this true of the Labour Party in 1987? Over the last eight years of Tory rule, even in the narrow trade union terms of the SWP, there have been major examples of workers' resistance: the miners' strike, the print workers at Wapping. Did Kinnock's Labour Party reflect that resistance? Not at all. On the contrary Thatcher and the NCB could not have defeated the striking miners without the help of Kinnock and the TUC, whose main intervention then, and later at Wapping, was to condemn 'violence' when workers were defending themselves against police attack. The 'best militants' inside the working class ended up in gaol or without

CAROL BRICKLEY

jobs, with a blank refusal by Labour to defend them.

Indeed over the last four years Kinnock and Willis have presided over the trampling of democratic rights on an unprecedented scale. There have been no promises that any of the anti-trade union laws, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, the Public Order Act, the Criminal Justice Bill, will be repealed if Labour gets into power. On the contrary, Kinnock is proud to proclaim that Labour is the party of 'law and order'

and 'patriotism'.

The Left's call to support Labour rests on the simplistic assumption that Labour must be put to the test and exposed before the working class. First, they say, we should, as socialists, go along with the working class and vote Labour; then we should point out that the Labour government is failing to honour its pre-election promises. In this way workers will be broken from reformism and take the revolutionary path. Callinicos again:

'In a revolutionary situation, the immediate effect will be for wider layers of workers drawn into politics to look to the Labour Party. These are the people



Thatcher and Kinnock - black peoples' blood on their hands

that revolutionaries want to win ... The call for the return of a majority Labour government is an essential part of the relationship that Marxists have to have with them ... 'This provides an opportunity to put Labour to the test. This is vital.'

We are not in a revolutionary situation. But if we were, the first task would be to destroy the Labour Party before it killed the movement stone dead at birth. This is not compatible with holding a general election to vote Labour into power for five years. The opportunists that revolutionaries will need to combat at such a time will be well to the left of Kinnock and the Labour Party.

No comrades, we must leave the fairy tales behind in the kindergarten. We must also cease to pretend that this is 1920 and the Labour Party is freshly-born.

Let us return to 1987 and reality. For nearly 70 years Labour governments have been betraying workers' struggles in Britain and abroad. Kinnock's Labour Party stands well to the right of most of them. He made it very clear in 1983 that he has no

'the message is clear, the Labour Party will now abandon in words, as it has in deeds, the interests of the poorest and most oppressed workers.'
RCG MANIFESTO 1984

intention of representing the 'best militants' in the working class.

'... we can only protect the disadvantaged in our society if we appeal to those who are relatively advantaged. The apparent overconcentration of our energies and resources on these groups like the poor, the unemployed and the minorities - does a disservice both to them and to ourselves ... if we are to be of real use to the deprived and insecure we must have the support of those in more secure social circumstances - the home owners as well as the homeless, the stable family as well as the single parent, the confidently employed as well as the unemployed, the majority as well as the minorities.'

Since 1983 Kinnock has engaged in the systematic destruction and purging of any forces which might hinder his path to Prime Ministerial office. Kinnock at least has the merit of realism. At the 1983 General Election when Labour suffered a major defeat, more than a third of skilled and semi-skilled workers voted Tory. To win this General Election, he needs to win the votes of employed, white, male, well-paid, home-owning, privileged racists.

To accommodate their views the miners and print workers were betrayed, left Labour Councils have been branded 'loony' and abandoned to their fate, the fight against rate-capping collapsed, Militant were expelled as 'aliens' and 'maggots', black people were condemned for fighting back against police racism when one black woman was killed and another paralysed by police at Tottenham and Brixton, the defeat at the Greenwich by-election was blamed on support for the rights of gays and lesbians. And now a black woman, Sharon Atkin, has been de-



selected as a parliamentary candidate for describing the Labour Party as racist and daring to proclaim her right to speak for black people.

'A Senior Shadow Cabinet spokesman' (said by some to be Roy Hattersley) spelled out all the Labour Party leadership's hatred for the oppressed in an attack on black sections:

'I want these characters out and I don't mind if we lose a few seats to the SDP in the process. It is an insidious disease that has been allowed to spread. It is political AIDS.'

Any 'best militants' in the Labour Party would be lucky to escape expulsion and betrayal. All the forces who have waged a struggle against oppression will get the chop. Far from making left-sounding phrases and promises, Kinnock and his cohorts are laying their right-wing cards on the table in a bid to win the election. At the end of April, Tom Sawyer, chair of Labour's Home Affairs committee and Deputy General Secretary of NUPE, spelled out Kinnock's message very clearly when he warned the Labour Party

'not to write off the white, heterosexual working class and replace them with a coalition of the dispossessed'.

This is the Labour Party that *Socialist Worker* and most of the British left want to put into power for the next five years. In opposition, Kinnock has no real power except to lend the Tories a helping hand and wreak havoc on the Labour Party's left wing. But in power, this Labour Mussolini would not just be able to insult the unemployed and poor, black people, strikers, gays and lesbians, indeed anyone who fights back. He would then have the might of British imperialism - its state, its police, its army, its courts - at his disposal.

Of course there is no alternative to voting Labour if, like the SWP, you think that the pre-requisite for being a 'best militant' is that you are employed, white, male and a trade unionist. In that case you must give your vote to British imperialism and take on the impossible job of convincing the labour aristocracy to take a revolutionary path against their best interests.

However, there is an alternative to voting Labour, with or without illusions. The way forward for the working class is precisely to build the 'coalition of the dispossessed' - the rejects of Labour and Tory parties alike. Over the last eight years they have proved in practice that they are the 'best militants' in the working class.

At this election you can take the side of the oppressed by only voting for those candidates who make a stand against racism and immigration controls, against anti-union legislation, against British rule in Ireland, against British collaboration with apartheid, against police repression and the dismantling of our democratic rights.

Labour drives out black people

'As the next election draws nearer ... [the Labour Party] leadership will become more, not less, reactionary. It will not hesitate to drive black members out if they threaten its progress back to Downing Street.' ('Black Sections in the Labour Party. Value for votes?', *FRFI* 53, October 1985).

'... all the major parties now recognise that the prime votes they must fight to retain or to wrest from their opponents are white.' (*Black people and party politics in Britain*, p47)

On Wednesday 29 April, by 19 votes to six, the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) suspended black sections activist Sharon Atkin's candidature for Nottingham East. She was replaced by 'moderate' Nottinghamshire county councillor, chartered accountant and opponent of black sections, Mohammad Aslam. Sharon Atkin had defeated Aslam in the selection contest in Nottingham East.

Dennis Skinner reportedly left the meeting in tears while Tony Benn declared that it was the 'end'.

Sharon Atkin's 'offence' is that at a black sections national rally in Birmingham on 7 April she told the truth about the Labour Party. The Labour Party, she said, had black blood on its hands. She is reported to have said that she did not give a damn for Neil Kinnock or for the racist Labour Party. She said that if she could not represent black people when in parliament she would rather not be elected.

Kinnock's attack has already split

Labour Party black sections supporters. On Thursday 30 April a special executive committee meeting of Nottingham East constituency party passed a motion of no confidence in Mohammad Aslam and called for the reinstatement of Sharon Atkin. Earlier the same day Linda Bellos, Lambeth Labour council leader, repeated Sharon Atkin's description of the Labour Party as racist. In effect a public challenge to Kinnock.

Before the NEC meeting four prospective parliamentary candidates, Bernie Grant, Russell Proffitt, Paul Boateng and Keith Vaz issued a joint statement arguing that 'nothing can stand in the way of getting Labour elected'.

Sharon Atkin was selected as parliamentary candidate for Nottingham East in strict accordance with Labour Party rules. Her views were well known. Her main rival, Mohammad Aslam, was defeated. Kinnock has shown his contempt for his own party's rules and members. They may

have picked Sharon Atkin but Kinnock has decided that they will get Aslam.

Sharon Atkin could not attend the NEC hearing because of her own illness and that of her husband (he has suffered a serious heart attack). Yet Kinnock's NEC refused to adjourn the hearing. Sharon Atkin was tried and condemned without the opportunity to defend herself. This is the 'justice' the Labour Party offers black people.

In the Runnymede Trust pamphlet *Black people and party politics in Britain*, Marian Fitzgerald writes:

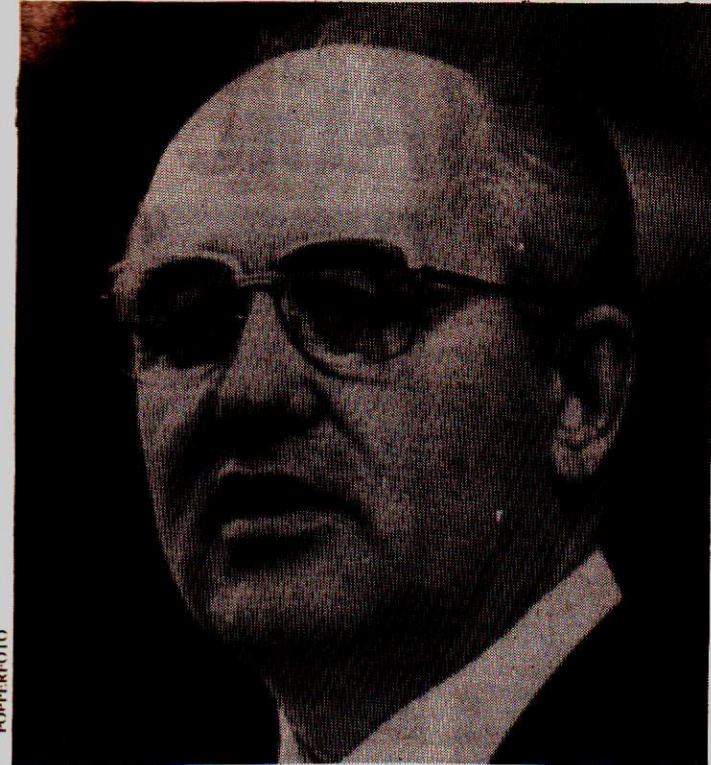
'The latest - and perhaps the most ominous - twist now that "race" issues are threatening to enter the party political mainstream is to consign them to the margins of the "loony left" of the Labour Party.' (p50)

Only the so-called 'hard left' on the Labour Party NEC voted against Kinnock's attack on Sharon Atkin.

Kinnock's campaign against Sharon Atkin and anyone else who puts the interests of black people before those of the racist Labour Party, shows how far Kinnock will go to drive black people out of the Labour Party. Unless, of course, they are prepared to do Kinnock's bidding.

Black people have nothing to gain from joining or voting for Kinnock's Labour Party.

Terry O'Halloran



Gorbachev calls imperialist bluff

Thatcher announced, on her return from Moscow last month, that her visit had helped 'to make the world a safer place'. Such nauseating hypocrisy from a leader who made it quite clear in Moscow that she was totally committed to the retention of nuclear weapons: '... the government which I lead will not abandon the security provided for our country by nuclear weapons'. Stridently she lectured the Soviet Union on how its intentions on nuclear arms would be judged by improvements in human rights. Gorbachev turned the tables on her by attacking Britain's record: its role in Ireland, government attacks on trade unions, unemployment, racism.

Thatcher and Reagan have no intention of abandoning their warmongering. When the US proposed their 'Zero Option' it was because they thought Gorbachev would never accept it. Now that Gorbachev is proposing the same thing himself, Thatcher and Reagan are trying everything in their power to block progress.

Since the Reykjavik summit in October 1986 talks on the elimination of intermediate nuclear weapons have been deadlocked by the US and its NATO allies, using the so-called superiority of Soviet short-range nuclear weapons (300-600 mile range) as a reason for refusing to come to an agreement.

In a speech in Prague on 10 April Gorbachev pulled the rug from under the feet of Reagan, Thatcher and the rest of NATO by calling for immediate negotiations on the elimination of short range missiles and an immediate freeze on their deployment. He reiterated the Reykjavik proposals for a 50% reduction in strategic nuclear weapons, dependent only on the continuation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty and the banning of space based missiles. Gorbachev called for a European summit in Vienna of the 'European Conference on Security and Disarmament' to 'approve a decision on starting extensive talks with the aim to radically reduce tactical nuclear weapons (under 300 mile range), armed forces and conventional armaments.

The proposals came on the eve of US Secretary of State George Shultz's visit to Moscow. While Shultz left Moscow talking about

progress on medium and short term weapons, he was soon rejecting any idea of eliminating tactical nuclear weapons.

Richard Perle, Assistant US Defence Secretary, pointed out that there are 4,600 neutron warheads in Europe which are counted as 'tactical' weapons and which are definitely not going to be negotiated away.

Already so many obstacles and conditions have been put in the way of the Soviet Union's proposals that it is clear there will be no progress. Imperialism will never voluntarily give up nuclear weapons in its quest for military superiority over the Soviet Union. Imperialism has never accepted 'peaceful co-existence' or parity, with the Soviet Union and the socialist states.

Gorbachev, talking about the deadlock in the medium range missile negotiations, commented that NATO had to accept 'the renunciation of any attempt to lord it in foreign policy... to consider other countries and whole regions of the world as happy hunting grounds.'

Unfortunately the imperialists consider whole regions of the world as theirs to plunder and exploit and they are doing their best to drag the Soviet Union and the socialist countries back into their clutches.

International security can only be built on opposition to imperialism. Imperialists like Thatcher and Reagan only understand force: they listen to those who stand up to them. A lesson proved by the firm stance of the Soviet Union since 1917 against imperialist aggression.

Bob Shepherd

Public Order Act arrests

The long-awaited Public Order Act comes into force on 1 April and on 4 April 1,000 people took to the streets in a march of defiance organised by the Coalition Against the Public Order Act (CAPOA).

The police reacted violently and made 25 arrests. Although it was widely expected that prosecutions would not actually be made under the POA and that the march would be broken up on other pretexts, the police obviously felt confident that there would be little publicity or organised defence and that they could act with impunity.

(threatening behaviour) and 2 people face trial under section 12/5 for breaking a condition imposed by the police on a demonstration which carries a fine of up to £1,000 and section 12/6 for inciting others to break the condition which carries a fine of up to £1,000 and/or a 3-month prison sentence.

CAPOA has pledged itself to defend all those arrested on 4 April. The trials begin on 24 July.

Nicky Rensten

Tory assault on education

Teachers' hands tied in battle with Baker

The Tories are out to completely change the face of education in Britain. Working class children, who have never had more than a shred of a hope of a decent education, even during the heights of the capitalist boom, are now to be consigned to a tenth-rate school system created by a range of measures announced in rapid succession by Tory Education Minister Kenneth Baker.

Baker's aim is to create a layer of teachers who support and will carry through Tory aims for education. This lies at the heart of Baker's highly divisive pay scales and 'merit' awards for 'good' teachers. It lies at the heart of the Tories vilification of 'teachers who strike'.

Baker's plans

- local authority ability to restrict parental choice of secondary school will be completely abolished. The other side of this 'freedom' will be the ability of the popular schools to select pupils by methods they themselves determine.

- control of the finances of all secondary schools and some primary schools will be transferred from local authorities to individual heads. In some schools which have operated pilot schemes it has already been found cheaper to get teachers and pupils to clean the school than to employ cleaners! Already there is talk of individual schools setting their own pay scales for teachers.

- a national core curriculum will be introduced - the government will dictate what is taught and when.

- the government is setting up 25 City Technical Colleges, funded by industry for 'selected' and 'motivated' children in inner city areas.

- testing will be introduced for children at the ages of 7, 11 and 14.

All these measures will bring about a two-tier state system of 'successful' schools - funded by government and industry grants, offering higher teacher salaries, popular with

the middle classes; and the unsuccessful - poorly funded, in the poorest areas, offering lower teacher salaries - for the children of the working class.

Thatcher and Baker have deliberately released their plans for education in order to win electoral support from the middle classes. Thatcher knows what her supporters want: she has a real popular base. Having deliberately run down schools and

restoration of teachers' pay levels as 'professionals', with only token mentions of the defence of education as a whole, are not likely to win whole-hearted support from parents. Even on the left of the NUT, the most 'left wing' of the unions, there has not been much movement beyond a narrow conception of the trade union struggle. Support from parents, and in particular working class parents, must be won. The defence of teachers' salary levels must be seen as part of the defence of education as a whole. Otherwise teachers will be unable to fight their reactionary union leaders or to take on Tory attacks.

Teachers cannot rely on the



caused two years of disruption in schools as teachers have been forced to take industrial action, alarm has spread among all parents, but particularly among the middle classes. Baker and Thatcher have now put forward their solution and it will find favour among the middle classes.

Unfortunately the teachers have not similarly managed to galvanise their potential supporters. The concentration of the unions, almost to the exclusion of all else, on the

Labour Party. Labour has taken the Tories attacks on teachers to heart: Shadow education spokesman Giles Radice went to the NUT conference to ask teachers to drop their action until after the election - because it was electorally embarrassing for Kinnock.

NUT conference votes not to break law

The NUT, having broken ranks initially by selling out and accepting the ACAS deal, laid the basis for

Baker's legal imposition of a contract and withdrawal of negotiating rights. Presented with Baker's contract, the NUT conference accepted by a narrow margin the ludicrous executive position that teachers should 'oppose' Baker's contract by sticking rigidly to it by accepting it. The conference also backed down from breaking the law over the question of covering for absent teachers (a duty now legally enshrined in Baker's contract). The 'immediate no-cover' motion from Inner London and Kent was rejected by 117,931 to 99,023. The vote marks a reversal on one of the central issues of the dispute. Talk of sequestration of union funds and lack of unity with the other large teachers' union, the NAS/UWT, were used by the NUT executive to win over delegates. The vote is a real victory for Baker and lets the government and local authorities off the hook over funding extra teachers to do supply work.

A large number of day strikes jointly with the NAS/UWT will continue but there is every indication now that NUT leaders would call off all actions if the government would concede on the question of negotiating rights. As part of its preparation for a climbdown the NUT executive continued its witchhunt against the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA) - one of the most left wing areas in the country. 50 of ILTA's leaders were suspended for calling an unofficial strike in January against Baker's Bill but were then reinstated after a reprimand by an NUT disciplinary committee. The union's national officers then appealed to the national executive to overturn this decision. 3 ILTA officers have now been expelled from the union altogether and 5 others suspended from office for 2 years.

ILTA is at present engaged in an all out battle with the Inner London Education Authority, ironically the authority most hated by Thatcher for its 'progressive' policies. However, it has not been so progressive recently with the imposition of a £50 million budget cut. As part of this ILTA is trying to forcibly redeploy hundreds of teachers in Inner London. Up to 1,345 teachers, in some areas over 25%, have received letters stating that they are Teachers Above Authorised Numbers (TAANs). In one Peckham school, 68 teachers have been 'identified' leaving only 52 behind. It is only with reluctance that the national NUT have been persuaded to support ILTA's fight against these savage cuts. ILTA and other sections of the left will be unable to put pressure on the IEA and the NUT leadership unless they are prepared to broaden their campaign among parents and place their demands as part of a defence of education as a whole.

Olivia Adamson

The MI5 scandal

Will the real spy please stand up!

The government's attempts to cover up MI5's illegal and covert operations suffered a further major setback on 27 April when *The Independent* devoted its front page to printing details from Peter Wright's yet-to-be-published book, *Spycatcher*.

Attorney-General Sir Michael Havers, prosecutor in the Guildford Four frame-up, immediately issued writs for contempt of court against *The Independent*, *London Daily News* and *London Standard* (the *London Daily News* and *London Standard* had reprinted material from *The Independent*).

According to Wright, some 30 MI5 officers were involved in a plot to destabilise the 1974 Wilson government. The stimulus for this bizarre plot apparently came from a deranged CIA character called James Angleton.

Angleton, then head of CIA counter-intelligence, claimed sourced intelligence depicting Wilson as 'Moscow's man'. The Soviets had, it seems, gone to the bother of assassinating Hugh Gaitskell in order to install Wilson as leader of the Labour Party.

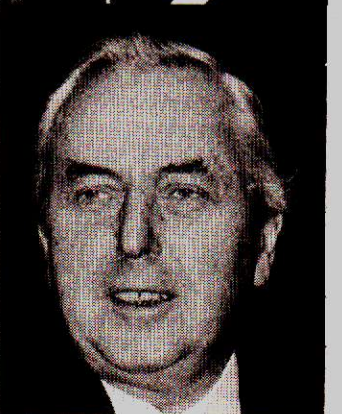
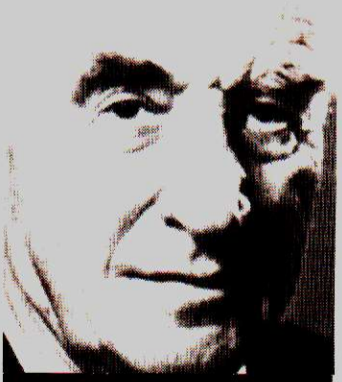
Hence Wilson's plot to unseat Bolshevik Jim Callaghan. Wright reported all this to Sir Michael Hanley, Director General MI5 1972-1979, in 1975. Hanley immediately asked for the names of the plotters in order to protect them.

In the recent outbreak of names, Early Day Motions, controllers, moles, spies, traitors that always accompanies a good spy scandal, the role of the Labour Party leadership has been typically spineless. Roy Hattersley felt that this issue (the elected by MI5 to destabilise an elected British government) was not the 'best use' of Neil Kinnock's valuable time. Presumably Neil had no time to spare from the much more congenial work of attacking Sharon Atkin.

Backbenchers have made all the running. Wilson has publicly supported Thatcher's refusal to hold an inquiry. Sunny Jim has so far refused to call for an inquiry. Not surprising. In 1977 he 'investigated' MI5 bugging of Wilson and decided that everything was OK. He was also the man who stood to gain from the plot.

Kinnock and Co know that any detailed exposure of MI5 would also expose Labour governments' use of Britain's hired crooks, liars and killers.

Terry O'Halloran



RACIST MEDIA FILTH

The Sun newspaper continued its vile racism against black people when it published a three page spread of lies on Monday 27 April. Under the heading 'I Feared Di Would Be Murdered' a 'star writer' told the concocted story of a police bodyguard who accompanied Princess Diana when she opened the Broadwater Farm Youth Association premises in February 1985. The Sun makes the ridiculous claim that the bodyguard feared that Winston Silcott would murder the Princess.

The lie is: 'I knew Silcott had nothing to lose by killing her. He was certain to get life for murdering the boxer'. Yet Winston Silcott was not charged with this murder until one month after the visit!

Readers of *FRFI* will know that the gutter press has never sunk so low in its racist smear tactics as in the reporting of the Broadwater Farm Trials. We ask you to write in protest not only to the papers concerned, namely *The Sun*, *The Star* and the *Daily Mirror*, but also to the National Union of Journalists. These scum should be disciplined and driven out of their union. Letters demanding an end to the constant disgrace of racist reporting should be sent to: NUJ Ethics Council, Acorn House, 314 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1.

Susan Davidson

A FIGHT OF HOSTILE BROTHERS

INTERNATIONAL TRADE WAR LOOMS



Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone . . .



. . . vs US President Reagan

'As soon as it is no longer a question of sharing profits, but of sharing losses, everyone tries to reduce his own share to a minimum and load as much as possible upon the shoulders of some other competitor . . . competition then transforms itself into a fight of hostile brothers.' (Karl Marx)

DAVID REED

On 17 April the Reagan administration implemented trade sanctions against Japan for the first time since the Second World War. The EEC may also be forced to take action to stop Japan diverting those goods affected to the European market. Britain is threatening to refuse new licences for Japanese banks and insurance companies wanting to operate in London unless Japan moves quickly to narrow the trade imbalance between the two countries. As the main centres of the capitalist world move simultaneously into a downturn this crossing of swords threatens to turn into a full scale trade war.

'Stand up for America . . . Require foreign nations to reduce their trade surpluses' says an advert put out at prime-time television by the United Auto Workers Union. Throughout the US there is a rising chorus of demands for protectionist measures against what is said to be unfair trade practices by the USA's competitors.

Pressures in Congress are mounting. On 29 April, in the House of Representatives, an amendment to a trade bill was narrowly passed by 218 to 214 votes, calling for mandatory trade sanctions on countries which have a trade surplus with the United States and requiring them to reduce the gap by 10 per cent per annum - an open breach of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Reagan's imposition of 100 per cent tariffs on \$300 million a year worth of Japanese goods, including computers, colour televisions and electrical tools, in retaliation for Japan's 'failure' to 'fully honour' an agreement on trade in semi-conductors, far from satisfying those demanding protectionist measures, has only whetted their appetites. A trade war would send the capitalist world into deep recession. It would turn the US crisis into a world crisis.

ON THE ROAD TO RECESSION

In April 1984 when the US economy was rapidly expanding on the basis of the largest military spending since the Korean war, *FRFI* argued that 'this expansion can only be shortlived and its effects worldwide very limited. There is no prospect of any overall recovery in the present conditions'. (See 'Imperialist recovery flounders: quicksand of armaments, rivalry and debt' *FRFI* 38, April 1984).

Since 1984 average growth rates of GDP in the major capitalist countries have fallen from 4.7 to 2.5 per cent. The rate in the US has fallen most steeply from 6.4 per cent to 2.5 per cent. The prospects are not good. The IMF now expects an average growth rate in the major capitalist countries of 2.3 per cent in 1987. Six months ago it was confidently predicting a rate of

3.5 per cent. Even this is probably optimistic. The dramatic fall in the dollar since 1985 - 40 per cent from its peak against the mark and yen - has led to a squeeze on the major export-led industries of both Germany and Japan.

In Germany there is the prospect of a new recession with a decline in the growth rate possible for the first three months of this year. Manufacturing orders were down by 8.5 per cent and overseas orders by nearly 10 per cent in the year to January 1987. The top two economic research institutes are predicting an overall growth rate of only 1 per cent in 1987.

Japan's growth rate fell to an annual rate of 1.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of 1986, compared to an average of 4 per cent annually during the early 1980s. Japanese manufacturing industries suffered a decline in turnover between 8 and 10 per cent in 1986 and a fall in profits of over 30 per cent. The steel industry plans a 30 per cent reduction in its workforce over the next period. Unemployment is at its highest level since 1953. Japan is in effect having its first industrial slump for the past 11 years.

The slowdown in the growth of the major capitalist countries is further worsening the plight of many Third World debtor nations. The massive transfer of wealth from these countries to their imperialist creditors can only be generated by higher exports and reduced imports. But world trade growth is forecast to fall to 2.5 per cent this year from a very low 3.0 per cent in 1986 (8.8 per cent in 1984). Under these conditions, and with the possibility of further protectionist measures against so-called 'cheap labour imports' from the Third World, debt default is inevitable. This in turn will threaten the profitability of a large number of imperialist banks.

THE DECLINE OF US IMPERIALISM

The fundamental problems facing US imperialism have worsened. The budget deficit reached a record \$221bn in 1986. The trade deficit continued to rise from \$148bn in 1985 to \$166bn in 1986 despite a saving on oil imports of \$15bn. And the current-account deficit (including invisible earnings) widened to \$141bn in 1986, an increase of \$22bn on 1985. To finance these huge deficits over the last three years US imperialism has had to borrow massively from abroad. It has now become the world's largest debtor nation with a net external debt of \$260bn at the beginning of 1987. These figures dramatically illustrate the rapid erosion of US imperialism's economic position, in relation to its imperialist competitors, particularly Japan and Germany.

The challenge to US imperialism from its Japanese and European competitors can be seen from statistics showing the shares

of industrial production and export over the last two and a half decades. (See below)

US losses in both areas have been massive, mainly to Japan. Since 1984 this trend has accelerated. In 1986 the US lost its position as the world's leading exporter being overtaken by West Germany. Japan was third after the US. In 1974 the US was responsible for the design of 70 per cent of the advanced technology in the world. By 1984 this figure had dropped to 50 per cent. Last year the US ran a trade deficit in high technology products. In spite of the rapid rise in the yen and mark Japan's trade surplus rose from \$56bn in 1985 to \$93bn in 1986 and West Germany's rose from \$30bn to \$58bn. Little change is expected in 1987.

Capitalist World Industrial Production (per cent of whole)			
	1960	1970	1984
US	54.3	49.6	35.9
Western Europe	40.4	39.3	46.5
Japan	5.2	11.1	17.6

Capitalist World Industrial Exports (per cent of whole)			
	1960	1970	1984
US	27.2	21.6	19.3
Western Europe	67.4	68.6	66.5
Japan	5.4	9.8	14.2

Another dramatic illustration of the growing economic challenge to US imperialism emerges from the international assets of the imperialist banks. In 1985 Japanese banks became the largest holders of international banking assets, overtaking the US. That lead has now been massively consolidated (see table).

International Assets of Banks (nationality of ownership)		
	September 1986	
	\$USbn	% share
France	264.5	8.2
Germany	250.5	7.8
Japan	1,019.4	31.6
UK	213.1	6.6
US	601.2	18.6
Others	880.2	27.2
Total	3,228.9	100.0

In September 1984 US banking assets were \$587.2bn, 26.3 per cent of the total compared to Japan's \$519.8bn (23.2 per cent). So the turn around has been rapid and dramatic. Another important feature is the growing challenge of German banks. Their assets expanded by \$111bn or 80 per cent in 2 years. German banks have now overtaken British banks with their share in total international bank assets rising to 7.8 per cent.

A CRISIS OF OVER PRODUCTION

Every crisis of the capitalist system manifests itself through glutted markets, millions of goods which cannot be sold at a profit. The accusations of 'dumping' arise as groups of capitalists from particular nations attempt to offload their goods wherever they can to keep losses to a minimum. Today that process is threatening to create a global trade war.

The car industry has an overcapacity of some 10 million units rising to a possible 15 million by 1990. The steel industry has an overcapacity of between 75-200 million metric tonnes compared with a total capacity of 570 million tonnes in the non-socialist countries. The EEC still has 20 million tonnes excess capacity even after 250,000 jobs have been lost. To reach a balance of supply and demand would require shutting down the entire US steel industry.

The US and Japan control 87 per cent of the market in semi-conductors (micro chips). Last year the US share of the world chip market fell to 43 per cent, behind the Japanese share of 44 per cent for the first time ever. It was a dispute about trade in semi-conductors which led to the US imposition of trade sanctions against Japan. The semi-conductor industry is working at about 70 per cent capacity and there is an estimated glut of semi-conductors in the world wide market of \$31bn.

Other markets where overcapacity is serious and markets are glutted include computers, farm and construction equipment and textiles. Worldwide, millions of people are starving and live in poverty for want of the products that capitalist industry can produce in abundance but will not produce because they cannot be sold at a profit.

DEFAULT ON THIRD WORLD DEBT IS INEVITABLE

There has been over the last 3 years a huge net transfer of resources from the oppressed nations to their imperialist oppressors. 17 of the more highly developed Third World nations received new credits of \$75.7bn over the last 3 years, but debt service repayments totalled \$148.7bn, making a negative net transfer of \$73bn. This process is leading to the economic ruin of many nations, driving millions of people into abject poverty. But the people are beginning to fight back and, faced with riots and strikes, many governments are being forced to reschedule their debts on better terms or even default on their payments.

On Friday 20 February Brazil, holding the largest foreign debt of \$108bn suspended payments on its debt. Faced with a massive contraction of its trade surplus and the collapse of its economic plan it had no alternative. In three years from 1984 to 1986 Brazil achieved, at tremendous cost,

massive trade surpluses in the region of \$13bn a year. This was at the expense of domestic supplies and created even greater malnutrition and hunger among the mass of ordinary people. By September last year it became clear that the Brazilian economy and the Brazilian people could take no more. Between October 1986 and January 1987 the trade surplus dropped to a monthly average of \$150m from over \$1,000m over the last three years. The debt could no longer be repaid. A moratorium on payments, effectively a default, was inevitable.

The profitability of leading US and British banks is threatened by this development. US banks alone are owed \$18.6bn by Brazil. Citicorp has lent \$4,700m equivalent to 60 per cent of its equity capital. In 1983 Brazil was its biggest source of profits. While six per cent of its global capital was in Brazil, Citicorp received 25 per cent of its total earnings from there. Two British banks, Lloyds and Midland, have exposures of \$1,120m and \$1,413m in Brazil.

Following Brazil's example other countries such as Argentina, Philippines and Nigeria are insisting or have insisted on renegotiating their debts on better terms - some are also threatening to suspend payments. Peru broke off relations with the IMF last year and refuses to pay creditors more than 10 per cent Peruvian export earnings. Ecuador reaffirmed its decision to suspend payments on its \$8.16bn debt on 5 March. The debt crisis far from being resolved is deteriorating rapidly, threatening the profitability of a large number of imperialist banks and further undermining international trade.

CLOSE TO THE BRINK

The capitalist world is awash with speculative money and debt which will never be paid back. Total debt in the US - federal and other borrowing - topped \$7 trillion last year (\$7,000bn) up \$1 trillion on a year ago. This is equivalent to 1.7 times the US GNP. The federal government debt is one quarter of the total and more and more of the debt is of bad quality. Last year 138 banks were forced to close, the largest number since the 1930s.

In 1986 the US government spent more on debt service than on all its major health programmes. So large is the debt repayment that for every \$2 going into defence, \$1 is spent on debt. Any serious disruption to the US economy would threaten to bring this mountain of debt crashing down.

A trade war in these conditions would have dramatic consequences. The prospects are now so bad that one economic commentator has been forced to concede that the capitalist 'world is alarmingly close to the brink' (Christopher Huhne in *The Guardian*).



POPPER/OTO

Eye-witness at Witswatersrand

A participant in the 30 April protest at Witswatersrand University against the whites-only apartheid election spoke to *FRFI* about the police violence against the students. The protest was organised by the National Union of South African Students.

'The entire campus, comprising about 12,000 people, was surrounded by police, traffic police and the army. There were armoured cars, Buffels, Caspers, helicopters flying overhead, riot police and the army. There were a large number of dogs.

People were singing freedom songs. The police suddenly lobbed teargas grenades into our midst, fired rubber bullets. People surged forward. The police shot back with rubber bullets. Everybody fell back.

On the roofs of the building we saw police snipers. People still sang freedom songs. The police fired another volley. People retreated.

People regrouped on the piazza in front of the central block and started singing freedom songs again. Then a fusillade of shots rang out. People ran back and I saw at least six people lying on the ground.

The noise of thousands of people suddenly died out and then we heard this awful screaming of a girl being beaten, or attacked or raped. I'm not sure. This haunting scream echoed through central block. Crying, crying, crying. And the crowd surged forward to her aid, to find out where was this screaming coming from, only to be met by police with dogs and shots fired.

And then the armoured cars drew in nearer, surrounding the place completely. More shots were fired. The battle waged on for another three hours.'

The last month has seen an escalation of black resistance in South Africa in response to the disgusting racist white only elections. All sections of black organisation, the trade unions, the students and the communities are fighting back against the elections despite police murder and brutality. To remain in power, Botha must be seen by the white electorate as able to contain black resistance. However the black masses are making sure their voices are heard in the election that denies them a vote.

COSATU is calling a two-day strike during the white only election, despite

the banning order imposed by the government on the 6 May rallies.

City of London Anti-Apartheid Group is holding an alternative election to show the disgust of British people with the sham election. Polling booths will be set up around the country asking people to vote for Mandela.

Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! is holding a street meeting on Saturday 2 May in Wood Green, where there will be a polling booth for votes, cast for the release of Nelson Mandela the true leader of the South African people.

Ann Burrows

Thousands on strike • Rent strikes • Student demonstrations

Peoples' war against apartheid

After almost three years of continuing resistance to apartheid terror, during April black people have intensified their struggle once again. Following the detentions under the current State of Emergency of thousands of anti-apartheid activists, in particular young people who have played a leading role in the struggle, it appeared that the apartheid regime had successfully managed to crush the people's organisations – the street and Area Committees, the Comrades, the UDF. Coupled with its repression and terror, the regime has continued its attempts to buy-off sections of blacks. Pretoria is injecting R90 million (£16.7 million) into upgrading the township of Alexandra. Alexandra, which has a long record of political militancy and resistance to white authority, is proposed for owner-occupier improvements to establish a black middle-class who will co-operate with apartheid. But as a local clergyman with close links with the community explained '... You can't really solve local issues without a national solution to the question of black political rights'. The events of April have proved that the struggle hasn't been crushed and will continue until apartheid is ended.

Since 13 March the South African Railway and Harbour Workers Union (SARHWU) – a COSATU affiliate – has led a strike escalating from 9,000 to 22,000 workers. The strike began in defence of a worker Andrew Nendzanda, victimised for an alleged 'theft' of money that he tried to hand into the company as soon as the cash office was open. Under immediate pressure the South African Transport Services (SATS) management reinstated the worker but still sought to punish him with a fine.

CORRECTION

It has been brought to our attention that in our report of the death of Comrade Honono (*FRFI* 67) we failed to mention the organisation to which he belonged. Comrade Honono was an executive member of the Unity Movement of South Africa, and President of the All African Convention, an organisation affiliated to UMSA. We apologise for this and for omitting that UMSA was represented at, and responsible for organising the memorial service and burial of Comrade Honono.

LORNA REID

Refusing to compromise, the union gathered increasing support from fellow trade unionists and the Soweto community. SARHWU has also tied in its demand for company recognition and full negotiating rights. The youth of Soweto stormed the SATS trains and more than 60 apartheid carriages have gone up in flames. Hundreds of commuters are boycotting the trains and using alternative means of transport to travel.

On Wednesday 22 April South African police shot dead six railway strikers. Earlier that day SATS announced the dismissal of 16,000 workers to be replaced by white workers. The black workers will be evicted from their hostels. SARHWU leaders were meeting at COSATU House, Johannesburg, to discuss further action. Under the State of Emergency the police declared the meeting illegal and armed police with armoured cars surrounded the union HQ. It was the scene of siege, death and bloodshed. 1,000 people were trapped in the building, 400 SARHWU members rounded up and subsequently detained, many injured and three shot dead. An eye

witness account from Sefako Nyaka detailed the scale of police brutality.

'A police man shouted 'werk hulle' (work them over) as men emerged bleeding and in handcuffs. A TV crewman shouted in horror as an injured and handcuffed man was shoved from the stairs fronting the building. He hit the bottom with a dull thud and lay still.' (From *The Guardian*)

Union officials informed reporters that the walls of the building were covered in blood.

Earlier that day police fired tear gas and shot dead three railway strikers at a railway station in Germiston.

Despite losing their jobs, their homes and their incomes by which to feed their families in the bantustans, the strikers are displaying tenacious courage. In a recent interview with *The Weekly Mail*, Justice Langa, President of SARHWU said,

'I take my inspiration from such great leaders as Nelson Mandela. If he was prepared to spend over 20 years in jail removed from his family and friends then why should I hide from the police?'

The SARHWU strikers are part of the increased fightback against the apartheid regime. In the run up to the shameful white-only election on 6 May the black masses are making South Africa ungovernable.

Hundreds of postal workers in the Witswatersrand area of Johannesburg are on strike over the failure of management to secure the release of two of their colleagues in detention. More than 24,000 mine workers have gone on strike at two apartheid gold mines to protest against the mass redundancies of 1,800 miners at Randfontein Estates and Western Areas mines, Johannesburg.

On the same day that 6 railway strikers were shot dead in Johannesburg, thousands of black workers stayed away from work in support of a 10 month long rent strike. Industry in Johannesburg was paralysed as over 70% of the black workforce staged a total work boycott. Black youth set up barricades of burning tyres and a

truck was set alight. South African security troops attacked a peaceful demonstration to the town council offices with teargas and batons. Demonstrators were protesting at the eviction of rent defaulters by the stooge council of Soweto. Their demands included support for the striking railway and postal workers.

Moses Mayekiso, General Secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union and two others were charged with high treason two weeks ago. If found guilty they could hang. The charges against Moses Mayekiso arise from his activities in the Alexandra Action Committee. Leading activists like Moses Mayekiso who have united the struggle of the workers and the community are targets for the Botha regime who are determined to divide the people's resistance. In response COSATU has called for all its members to participate in street committees which 'like our unions in the workplace... give us strength to fight for control over every aspect of our lives.'

The focus of the struggle at the moment is the trade union struggle. Typically the British left has seized upon this development to further their own narrow position on the role of the organised workers in the struggle for national liberation. The Socialist Workers Party says in its newspaper, 2 May.

'... The unions are the most resilient and militant base of the struggle. Black workers have given us a glimpse of the real power to unseat them (Botha's National Party).'

Trotskyist commentators in Britain can't get away with a crude analysis of this development. Whilst the trade unions are obviously to the forefront of the present stage of resistance, this isn't surprising. The repression of the last year has driven many organisations underground and their leading activists are detained. Trade union reform in the early 1980s gave statutory rights for black workers to organise and this has ensured that the black trade unions can keep their basic organisation intact.

The events of April confirm that the black trade unions are not pursuing the struggle at the level of economic demands only. It is precisely because the trade unions have wedded their struggle to the political demands of the black community that has given them their strength. The powerful South African NUM passed two significant resolutions at their conference in February. They adopted the Freedom Charter and pledged to break the migrant labour system by moving their wives and families into the single sex hostels they are forced to live in. This they did on 28 March. Families moved into the hostels in Witbank. The NUM is demanding that the mining companies provide permanent employment and housing for black miners and their families as they do for white workers.

The SARHWU strike is not based on narrow economic demands – it is a direct challenge to apartheid itself and that is why it has gathered around it the support of the community. When the youth of Soweto attacked the carriages of the SATS trains in support of SARHWU they demonstrated the unity between the trade union leadership and the people. Unlike community support for trade union struggles in Britain like the miners strike 84/85 and the Wapping printers, the youth aren't condemned by the trade union leadership as 'outside elements' and 'agitators'. The workers' struggle is taking place alongside other struggles.

Students demonstrating at Cape Town University on Monday 27 April against South Africa's raid on Zambia were attacked by police who fired bird shot and used dogs, whips and tear gas to break up the demonstration. The students were also protesting about the use of police to break up a demonstration the week before in protest at the murder of six railway workers. In defence the students set up a burning roadblock and barricaded themselves into the student union building. At Stellenbosch university students attacked a plain clothes policeman who attempted to arrest a SARHWU shop steward who was addressing a meeting.

It is quite clear that the black working-class in South Africa are going to be the vanguard of the struggle against apartheid. The black working-class is in the forefront of the life and death struggle for liberation. From the workplace to the colleges and the streets the black masses are waging a war against apartheid. The people are united.

ONE YEAR FOR MANDELA

POLICE WAGE WAR ON NON-STOP PICKET

500 people joined the anniversary rally of the Non-Stop Picket outside the South African embassy on 19 April. 365 black balloons were released to mark the anniversary. Each balloon had the name of a South African political prisoner attached.

The rally was addressed by the Chief Representative to the UK and Benelux Countries of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, Mr Vusumzi Nomadolo and David Kitson who was a political prisoner in South African jails for 20 years. They shared a platform with Carol Brickley, Convenor of City Group, Mr Silcott, father of Winston Silcott, Simon Hughes, Liberal MP and David Reed, editor of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* This tremendous display of unity and solidarity with the struggle in South Africa proved to be too much for the racist Metropolitan police.

A roaring squad of Territorial Support Group officers led by the notorious Chief Inspector Perry, attacked the rally. Steven Kitson, son of David Kitson, was knocked unconscious, roughly dragged, head down, by the arms to a waiting police van while demonstrators demanded that police call an ambulance. After some delay he was taken to Westminster hospital where he was kept overnight. Steven has been

charged with highway obstruction. Ten people were arrested including Andy Higginbottom, City Group secretary. 30 people were injured during this attack including Carol Brickley and Norma Kitson, Convenor and Deputy Convenor of City Group. The police attacked the rally to confiscate two small benches being used as a platform which the police claimed were an obstruction of the highway.

Refusing to bow to this violent assault the rally continued to the music of the Horns of Jericho who have played on the picket every Thursday since it began and the Samba Batucada Mandela. Young picketers spoke of their experience on the Non-Stop Picket and of the struggle in South Africa. Daniel, aged 14, marked the 27th anniversary of SWAPO with a speech outlining the history of the Namibian people's struggle against apartheid. David Kitson made clear the aim of the Non-Stop Picket when he said,

'In 1982 the 86 day picket saved me. For a year the Non-Stop Picket has been doing the same for Nelson Mandela. Let 1987 see Mandela free.'

Since 19 April 1986 the Non-Stop Picket has:

- Raised £5000 for political prisoners and their families.
- Collected more than 300,000 signatures on its petition calling for the release of Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia; the closure of the South African embassy; and sanctions now.
- Held mass rallies on Soweto Day (16 June), Mandela's Birthday (18 July), South African Women's Day (9 August), Political Prisoners Day (11 October), celebrated Christmas on the picket and held many other special events.
- Resisted racist and sexist police harassment costing over £20,000 in legal fees and other expenses and won 60% of all cases.

For City Group the Non-Stop Picket is a major success. For more than 365 days and nights it has provided an active focus for protest against apartheid and its British backers. It has united in action broad progressive forces in solidarity with the life and death struggle for liberation in South Africa. The picket enters its second year for Mandela at a time when the black masses are waging a war against apartheid.

■ Under the Public Order Act 1987 the police are equipped with new powers to impose conditions on static demonstrations. The Non-Stop Picket is under attack as the police test out their new powers and their new gangs of thugs called Territorial Support Groups. On Thursday 30 April Territorial Support Group officers were used to move the picket away from the area immediately in front of the South African embassy, during a reception for racists. At least one Tory MP was present. Lorna Reid and Dele Olajiga were arrested under the Public Order Act. As he was being led towards a waiting police van. Dele suffered an epileptic fit. Police officers refused him access to his medication and refused to call an ambulance. He was thrown face down into the police van and only after a considerable delay, was taken to Westminster hospital. It was Dele's second arrest that day. Earlier he was arrested and charged under the Public Order Act section 5.

Lorna was violently thrown around in the back of the police van. She sustained damage to the radial nerve in the left arm as a result of this assault. She also suffered

scratching and bruising to both arms. She has been charged under section 14 (5) of the Public Order Act. This is a section that empowers the police to impose conditions on static demonstrations. Lorna is the first person to be charged under this section of the Act.

In the two weeks following the anniversary rally the police have made six arrests on the picket, three people have been charged under the Public Order Act and a Territorial Support Group has been used twice. The Metropolitan police have declared war on the Non-Stop Picket. All progressive and democratic forces must unite now to defend the picket. The police must not be allowed to attack the rights of those who want to demonstrate on the streets against apartheid. The Public Order Act is a threat to us all and must be fought.

At the first meeting of Lawyers Against Apartheid on Thursday 30 April the arrests of Lorna and Dele were announced. City Group asked LAA if they support those and others arrested under the Act. The LAA spokesperson said, 'Lawyers Against Apartheid will advise and assist the Anti-Apartheid Movement in matters concerning the Public Order Act.'

Many lawyers have given assistance to picketers. If LAA is not to become a vehicle for the AAM's sectarian attitude to City Group, then it should make a stand now in defence of the picket and against police intimidation.

The unity of the broadest possible forces within City Group and its supporters up and down the country has made the Non-Stop Picket a major success. That unity must now be put into action to defend the picket.

Tweedie too late to change his spots

Dominic Tweedie is no longer the Chair of Haringey AA Group. Having fallen out with the ruling cabal he used to be part of, he was unseated by 39 votes to 4 at a special meeting of the group on 30 April.

The charges against him were put by Margaret Ling, now the new Chair of the group. They were extremely vague, but the nub of the matter seemed to be that Tweedie had upset both the ANC and Haringey Council and so had to go.

Tweedie's defence was a highly explicit attack on other members of the Committee as he desperately sought to court the democratic vote which he had formerly despised.

He began by quoting the April issue of *FRFI*, which described him as 'Marcos-like' and the organiser of the coup in the group in 1985. Wrong, he said; it was actually a couple called Vickers and another person who had master-minded the takeover!

Further, he had always opposed the bureaucratic and manipulative trends in the group and in the national movement. He was against expulsions from the movement and welcomed the involvement of City AA supporters in the group's work. He was critical of the too-cosy relations with the Labour Council sought by others in the Committee. He was against any illegitimate interference by the ANC in the affairs of the movement.

Unfortunately for Tweedie, his championship of democracy came too late - and fell on mostly deaf ears in a group which he had helped to thrash the democracy out of since 1985.

Maggie Mellon



David Kitson speaking to the Non-Stop Picket on 19 April

VENDETTA AGAINST KITSON

On Wednesday 29 April, at its conference in Bournemouth, TASS, controlled by Morning Star and Communist Campaign Group supporter Ken Gill, refused even to discuss No 16 Division's motion calling for TASS to continue funding David Kitson's post at Ruskin College.

TASS President George Mackay ruled that as the matter had been decided last year (not true) the motion required a two thirds majority before it could even be discussed. Mackay insisted on a vote, knowing full well that he would win it. Other motions, also requiring a two thirds majority, were discussed without any vote being taken.

David Kitson's offence is that he refuses to join in the attack on City AA. Ever since 1982 elements in the London ANC and SACP, supported by the CPGB/Labour Party clique who control the AAM, have tried to destroy City AA. When David Kitson was released, in 1984, these people hoped to use David Kitson's enormous authority as a proven fighter and ex-prisoner, as a weapon against City AA. He refused.

This is why what Neal Ascherson in *The Observer* (3 May 1987) calls the 'fanatical vendetta' against David Kitson was laun-

ched by what he describes as 'a small authoritarian clique of white South Africans who dominate the SACP and the ANC organisation in London.'

Ken Gill is the instrument of this clique in TASS. TASS was committed to funding David Kitson for life. Ever since David Kitson's release from prison, however, it has been manoeuvring to get out of this commitment. The TASS campaign against David Kitson shows how far the sectarians are prepared to go in their attempt to destroy the 'unmistakable challenge' (Ascherson) posed by City AA.

The staff and students at Ruskin College are supporting David Kitson. Support within TASS is growing. Four South African ex-political prisoners have issued an open letter condemning TASS's attack on David Kitson. The fight for David Kitson goes on.

Terry O'Halloran

FIGHTING IN THE COURTS

On 29 April Dele won his appeal against conviction for police obstruction. He was arrested at Cannon Row police station when he went to enquire about Karl, who had been arrested on the Non-Stop Picket. The police said Dele had 'interfered' in Karl's arrest and Dele was convicted on 20 January and fined £70. Southwark Crown Court threw the charges out and gave Dele back the money he had been forced to spend on legal aid.

Earlier in April Lorna was found guilty of highway obstruction and fined £30. She was fined a further £30 for breach of conditional discharge and while the court had adjourned to verify her previous convictions, the prosecuting counsel coolly remarked, 'It's a shame we don't still have hanging.'

Five members of the Horns of Jericho will appear in court on 10 June, charged under Section 8 of the Westminster by-laws. The Horns are the mainstay of Thursday afternoons on the picket. They have played every week for over a year and their music has attracted thousands of people to stop, sign the petition, donate to City Group and inspired them to join the picket. Neither the police nor the Embassy staff, doorman Adams in particular, are as enthusiastic about the Horns' music as we are and, from September to December last

year, every Thursday saw a round of name and address taking, followed by a flood of summonses. At least 20 musicians have been summonsed between 1 and 4 times each. With backing from City Group, the Horns of Jericho are forming their own defence campaign. They aim to win the 10 June and all other cases and keep the streets free for anti-apartheid music.

Section 11 of the same byelaws relates to 'amplifiers' rather than musical instruments and at least 50 summonses have been served on picketers who used the megaphone 'so as to cause annoyance' to the public. The only 'passerby' to complain of the noise is the notorious Adams who is indeed annoyed by the picket's continued haranguing of his racist masters and workplace but who can hardly be said to be an outraged citizen of Westminster.

Nicky Rensten



Steven Kitson who had been beaten unconscious being hauled away.

COURT DATES

- | | |
|----------------|---|
| May 12 | Simone. Police obstruction. Wells St 10am. |
| May 21 | Richard and Tunde. Assault on the police and police obstruction. Wells St 10am. |
| May 22 | Tunde. Assault of the police. Wells St 10am. |
| May 26 | Lorna. Noise under byelaws (part-heard). Wells St 10am. |
| May 29 | Tunde. Assault on the police. Bow St 10am. |
| June 1 | Nick. Actual bodily harm and police obstruction. Bow St 10am. |
| June 10 | Wells St 10am. Trial of 5 members of the Horns of Jericho, the band which regularly plays on the Non-Stop Picket, under Section 8 of the Westminster byelaws. |

The VMDC called a national conference on 11/12 April. The response was massive. Over 500 people crowded into the Church of Ascension, Manchester, on Viraj's 112th day in sanctuary. By the close of the conference they had become a mass contingent, unified in a fight to win Viraj's freedom, standing determinedly behind the chosen title of the conference: 'VIRAJ MENDIS WILL STAY! STOP ALL DEPORTATIONS NOW!'



CHARLIE BAKER

MASSIVE RESPONSE CONFERENCE CALL

'This conference is first and foremost a practical one. It's not a conference for professional conference attenders. It's not for people who like the sound of their own voice. It is for people who want to unite in action... The significance of the conference to the anti racist movement is similar to the significance of the miners strike to the working class. If the miners had won it would have been a massive boost to the working class. The thing is we are going to win. This is what I want to assure you of. It is in your hands.' VIRAJ MENDIS

WHO WAS THERE

'This conference marks an historic occasion. It marks the coming together of an unprecedented range of forces from all over the country to fight for Viraj's right to stay.' SARAH RICCA - VMDC

Delegates came from Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Bradford; from Leicester, Newcastle, Edinburgh; from Glasgow, Wolverhampton, Birmingham and London; from Brighton, Dundee and Coventry as well as other towns. Left groups included Revolutionary Communist Group, Workers Press (WRP), Socialist Action, Manchester Anarchists, Socialist Federation, Communist Party of Great Britain, Socialist Workers Party, Workers Against Racism and the Labour Party. Trade Unions also mobilised for this weekend, most notably TGWU, NALGO, ASTMS, NUJ, UCATT, NUPE, and the CPSA. A mass of support came from other sources including Greenham Peace Group, Lesbian and Gay groups, European Campaign for the Defence of Immigrants and Refugees, The Church's Work Scheme, Kings Cross Women's Centre and Manchester City Council. Delegates also came from Sweden, Switzerland and the USA bringing greetings from the European and American sanctuary movement.

Those who had fought and won the battle against deportation came to show their solidarity: Manda Kunda the Mashadmirza Family, Rabela Siddiqui, Mohammed Idrish, and George Roucou. The VMDC united and gave platform to those still in

'Viraj is in danger of a monstrous injustice! And this is what this sanctuary is all about. And that is why I am not going to be intimidated by newspaper smears, by bomb scares, by racist letters, by threatening phone calls, by carving knives, by razor blades or by anything else to call off this sanctuary.' FATHER JOHN METHUEN

struggle, including Barbara Ahmed (Manchester), Chummun Sisters, Marion Gaima, Rose Alaso (Leeds), Som Raj (Wolverhampton), Bring Back Victoria Williams Campaign (London) and Lisa Huen (Birmingham). The conference rose to welcome the family of Rajwinder Singh, the VMDC's 'sister campaign', still fighting from their sanctuary strong hold in Bradford.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THOSE WHO CAME

'The battle against immigration laws unites those who are racially and nationally oppressed here in Britain with their sisters and brothers throughout the world against imperialism. Those laws form a link between British exploitation and oppression abroad and British exploitation and oppression here in Britain.' TERRY O'HALLORAN RCG

There were 10 workshops running across the weekend, covering a range of work that needed to be done within VMDC and within other anti-deportation campaigns: Women in struggle, Gays and Lesbians and Immigration, Sanctuary, Sri Lanka, National and Local Government, Primary Purpose, How to Organise a Campaign, Role of the Law, Trade Unions and The Press.

VIRAJ MENDIS WILL STAY!

Saturday's proceedings culminated with a rally which demonstrated that the VMDC is a focal point for those fighting back against racism and imperialism. David Reed of the RCG detailed the similarities between the show trials of Broadwater



CHARLIE BAKER

Above: 500 attended the conference. Top: David Reed speaks from the platform.

'The VMDC shows what can be done and that a fight back is possible... Viraj Mendis and the campaign to defend him stands for the unity of the working class in Britain with the struggles against national oppression at home and abroad... Unless the fight against racism and imperialism is made central to our political program no progress will be made in the struggle for socialism in this country.' DAVID REED RCG

Farm, and the imprisoning of the Guildford four and Birmingham six. He made clear to the conference the ferocity and speed with which the police, judiciary and state acts against all those who oppose British racism and British imperialism whether they be Irish or black. A victory for Viraj could secure a victory against these racist frame ups and murders. The conference in a powerful demonstration of solidarity with the people of Broadwater Farm stood to applaud Walter Silcott, father of Winston Silcott. It gave equal support to a message of solidarity from Mrs Ullah, the mother of Iqbal Ullah, murdered at Burnage High School in Manchester.

Jaswinder from the Rajwinder Singh Campaign revealed that the Home Office had offered them a divisive bargain: move away from Viraj Mendis and we will reconsider your case. The RSDC answered swiftly and with unity. A victory for Viraj is a victory for Rajwinder. An injury to Viraj is an injury to us all. Peter Dungey from Manchester Gay Centre continued this call for unity amongst those being harassed or those opposed to racist state laws. John Methuen of the Church of the Ascension gave his support to the call for resistance with unity, and guaranteed Viraj's right to stay in sanctuary, making clear his opposition to the Home Office and those who attack his church and

slander his name. The conference made it clear to him that he was no 'muddle headed priest', with a long standing ovation. Other speakers at the rally offering solidarity and support were Rose Alaso, Sonia (City AA), Dr Maire O'Shea, Mike Lank (Anti-Fascist Action), John Nicholson (Manchester City Council), Anne Neale (Wages Due Lesbians) and Mr Maharasingham (Tamil Action Committee).

Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign

National Supporters Meeting

SATURDAY 23 MAY 10AM

Church of the Ascension
Royce Road, Hulme, Manchester

Phone 061 234 3168 for further information

VIRAJ MENDIS WILL STAY!

★ **NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION**
Saturday 11 July
Manchester

ORGANISE, MOBILISE AND BRING THOUSANDS ONTO THE STREETS!

STOP ALL DEPORTATIONS NOW!

Don't give in to racists

On 4 March, the Manchester City Council appointed Viraj Mendis as Immigration and Nationality Officer in their Race Unit. Immediately there followed a barrage of reactionary and racist propaganda led by the Express Group of Newspapers and the Manchester Evening News. Waddington for the Home Office joined in describing the appointment as an 'insult to the residents of Manchester' (see FRFI 67 'Waddington and the press incite fascist thugs').

At the VMDC Conference, it was brought to the attention of the delegates that sections of the Labour controlled council, under pressure from the racists, are considering withdrawing the appointment. The Conference resolved to fight to ensure that Viraj could take up his appointment. The VMDC in Manchester has launched a campaign to back the Manchester City Council decision. They are organising a petition in the local community and among

the council workers and on 27 April held a public meeting in the Town Hall. 40 people attend including Councillors Clegg and Stevens as well as representatives of NUPE. NALGO representatives refused to come, claiming not to have a position on the job. Graham Stringer, leader of the Council, who had been invited, sent Alf Home in his place.

At the meeting, a VMDC resolution demanding that the Council offer a written

explanation for the delay in allowing him to begin his job was carried overwhelmingly. Significantly, the councillors present abstained. Amazingly, they were joined by Workers Against Racism who also abstained despite their claim to 'fully support' Viraj and his right to remain in this country!

Those Labour councillors who are succumbing to the racist pressure of the media, of the Thatcher government and of Kinnoch have a clear choice. To stand firmly with Viraj and thus strengthen the fight against racism and in defence of left-Labour councils or submit and allow the reactionaries a victory.

Chris Procter

VIRAJ MENDIS MUST STAY

E TO

Sinister press attacks on Defence Campaign

As the VMDC gathers momentum, the ruling class has activated the resources at its disposal in a vain attempt to smash the campaign. *The Star* is one such resource. Twice the Ray Mills column, 'Mills the angry voice', has tried to whip up racist hatred against Viraj and the VMDC.

On 24 March Mills attacked Viraj as the 'bearded Bolshie' 'holed up... in his holy hidey-hole'. Manchester City Council had 'put up two fingers to the law and put him on their bulging payroll'. Viraj was the 'focus for extremists of Left and Right, and a flashpoint for racial violence.' The police were 'apparently confused by the nature of his sanctified squat; they should have no qualms.' Mills urged them to drag Viraj out.

The VMDC struck back with pickets on the offices of *The Star* in Manchester and London. These pickets were obviously successful because, on 21 April, Mills was stung into replying with the only weapons he has: abuse and lame insults. The picketers were 'a motley rent-a-mob of madmen, misfits and militants... fouling the pavement with their presence and polluting the air with their demented ravings.' The VMDC was supported by 'wild-eyed weirdoes and woofers.' Father John Methuen was a 'pratt'. Mills calls this separating 'facts from the fiction'.

As you can see, what Mills calls fact is simply *The Star's* Nazi like prejudices. The only person we know on a 'bulging payroll' is Mills, paid to write this type of trash which incites fascists to conduct violent attacks on the Church and the VMDC.

The 'Angry Voice of Mills' has desperation mingled with its indignation. Mills is a worried man. He knows that the VMDC and Viraj have the support of growing sections of the community and working class. Mills and his ilk cannot tolerate this.

Adrian Levy
Leigh O'Connor



Viraj Mendis

CHARLIE BAKER

THE WAY FORWARD

The 500 people who attended the VMDC Conference represented that section of the working class and progressive movement which is fighting racist oppression in this country. The conference began the process of unifying the many anti-deportation campaigns with those sections of the working class which have refused to retreat under the blows of the Thatcher Government or bow to Kinnoch's backward and racist appeal to curb their struggles in the interest of the re-election of a Labour Government. By organising among those sections of the British people 'who have no vested interest in racism and immigration laws', the VMDC has built a political force which has won the support not only of anti-racists but also from traditional organisations of the working class and progressive sections of the middle classes particularly in the churches.

The task now is to develop the VMDC into a force which will not only win a victory for Viraj but also show the way forward for thousands of people who want to fight back against the racism of the Thatcher government, its anti-democratic and anti-working class policies.

To do this the VMDC Conference decided on 3 central tasks. The first is to ensure that Manchester City Council stands by its decision to appoint Viraj Mendis as Immigration and Nationality Officer in their Race Unit. To succeed we have to fight the organised campaign to deny Viraj the job orchestrated by the Home Office, the racist media and the fascists. It will also be necessary to back those Manchester Labour Party councillors who, having given Viraj the job, are still prepared to stand firm in the face of reactionary Labour Party leadership attacks on so-called 'loony-left' councils. To win this battle, the VMDC must mobilise our forces against our enemies. Our forces will be found on the working class estates, on the streets, among the council workers and within the anti-deportation and anti-racist movement. These forces fully mobilised can deny victory to our enemies and ensure that Viraj keeps his job.

The Home Office has at its disposal all the resources of the state - the police, the courts and the media to enforce their decision to deport Viraj. Our strength lies in the mobilisation of all those forces now prepared to fight racism in Britain. On 11 July, we will have an opportunity to bring onto the streets a massive show of working class unity against the racist immigration laws and for Viraj's right to stay. No organisation claiming to be part of the socialist and progressive movement should be absent from this event.

All the main British political parties have endorsed, and in power have enacted, immigration laws. The period in the run up to the General Election offers a real opportunity to mobilise all anti-racist forces to challenge every candidate on the issue of Viraj's right to stay. Viraj's fight must become the litmus test for all candidates claiming anti-racist credentials. We must demand no vote for racists. Vote only for those who will back Viraj's struggle. In doing so, we can make the issue of Viraj and the fight against racism and immigration controls a central question in the coming election.

In highlighting these three major areas for activity the VMDC Conference moved some way forward towards its goal of building an anti-deportation movement. In-

evitably this positive programme had its detractors. Driven by their sectarian opposition to the organisation which has played a central role in the VMDC - the RCG - these detractors were more concerned with attacking the RCG and peddling their one-sided ideological prejudices than with working to unite with others to ensure a victory for Viraj Mendis.

Of particular note was the role of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and Workers Against Racism (WAR). They told us in one breath that WAR:

'... fully supports Viraj Mendis and his fight to remain in this country.'

and in the next breath they portrayed Viraj as a passive victim of racist attacks:

'Sri Lankan refugee Viraj Mendis sat in his Manchester church sanctuary waiting for the next attack from the racist razor gang who have already carved up his supporters.' (*the next step* no 14, 10 April 1987)

The RCP in the conference were concerned primarily to sustain their 'argument' that sanctuary cannot be a weapon in the struggle against deportations and that:

'In the final analysis the working class is the only real sanctuary for the victims of immigration laws.'

'In the final analysis' Viraj would be dead if he were not in sanctuary. The RCP add, in a leaflet produced for the conference that:

'Viraj was isolated from support in the working class.'

Reality is not allowed to interfere with their scholastic formulae. That sanctuary in a church has saved Viraj from deportation and death, that it has enabled the campaign to go on the offensive and enormously broaden its support, that hundreds of working class people, black and white, are now prepared to defend the Church against racist attacks carry no weight with our scholastics unused to dialectical thinking. That their 'working class' - predominantly white, male trade unionists - are in headlong retreat also does not disturb their thinking. They, just like their mentors in the official Labour and trade union movement, have dismissed that coalition of the dispossessed that is the backbone of the VMDC and will form the solid base for a new fighting working class movement.

The RCP were joined, from a different ideological standpoint, by the Kings Cross

Womens Centre whose primary concern was to promote their quite reactionary views on women's oppression and wages for housework. In a scandalous display of sectarianism, Anne Neale attacked Viraj's own organisation, the RCG, as a 'white, male-dominated organisation'. This was not only an insult to Viraj, to all the women in the RCG, but an insult to a communist force in the VMDC. Responding to this reactionary attack, Ruby Khan, speaking from the platform said: 'I am a black woman and I am speaking on behalf of the RCG today and I am very proud to do so.'

Both organisations attempted to disrupt and dominate the conference workshops in pursuing their own narrow sectarian ends at the expense of the vast majority of delegates concerned with taking the VMDC forward. Following the conference, the RCP's newspaper *the next step* did not even care to report this enormously significant event.

The VMDC will nevertheless go forward, with or without these sectarian organisations. Its consistent championing of the interests of the oppressed, its support for all those fighting racism and defending democratic rights and its refusal to compromise with the reactionaries in the organised labour movement has won it wide support within the working class and anti-racist movement. It will continue along its course and fight all those trying to divert it.

The way forward for the VMDC is clear. Its enormous potential for the British working class was expressed by David Reed of the RCG:

'A victory for Viraj is possible if British socialists recognise that one real struggle to defend a black communist from deportation and possible death is worth a hundred ideal programs for building a socialist movement in the future.'

VMDC WINS LEGAL VICTORY

On 30 April, the VMDC won an important legal victory in the High Court. Judge Mr Justice Nolan conceded that Viraj's case merited 'further exploration' and granted a judicial review. He was swayed by an affidavit reporting on a meeting called by the Home Secretary Douglas Hurd at which both he and David Waddington admitted to Father John Methuen and Henry West (also a member of the Church of Ascension) that 'assurances' given by the Sri Lanka High Commissioner about Viraj's safety in Sri Lanka were 'ambiguous'.

The VMDC will of course prepare thoroughly for this judicial review. But simultaneously, the campaign on the streets and the community, the trade unions and the colleges on all other fronts will continue. It has been the mobilisation of these forces which has in fact won this latest victory for Viraj. With the pressure kept up, we can be confident of yet more victories.

Virman Man

THE WAY FORWARD

These lies and slanders of Waddington need to be revealed for what they are, the sign of his political weakness in the face of the strength of this campaign. We have enormous potential here, of course potential in itself is not enough... It is what we do with it. If I as a Christian may be allowed to refer to Karl Marx, he said, 'The point is not to understand the world but how to change it.' We need this campaign to deepen and strengthen its national organisation... The strength of anti-deportation campaigns has always been their local community involvement, and we need to move on beyond the local community, because Britain lacks the challenge to racism and immigration laws on a national level.' PAUL WELLER

Moving smoothly through Sunday's workshops the conference again came together for the concluding plenary. Ruby Khan of the RCG, Paul Weller and Harpal Brar from Indian Workers Association stressed the importance of Viraj's case. With a victory for Viraj would come the growth of both a sanctuary and a national anti-deportation movement. Many resolutions were passed leading to unanimous support for a massive national anti-deportation march on 11 July. This demonstration would come from the growth of a network of national support groups, anti racist organisations and the creation of subcommittees to work towards mobilising support within the labour movement, womens groups, the church and other religious institutions, as well as student, gay and lesbian groups and other groups. The conference also concluded that VMDC would have to make sure that it played a decisive part in the general election. The conference confirmed that the way forward lay in building an open and democratic organisation spanning many groups, movements, and individuals. Sanctuary had brought this conference together and through sanctuary the VMDC will build a massive demonstration on 11 July in Manchester.

Adrian Levy

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

The VMDC national demonstration on 11 July must be a test of our strength. For it to be a success the potential of the National Conference must now be realised. The different progressive forces in this country must unite on 11 July in support of Viraj, against deportations. Each time the Home Office or gutter press attacks VMDC they attack a section of the campaign's broad support. These forces must unite together in practice on 11 July against the Home Office. The RCG will fight for the unity needed to build such a force. In winning Viraj's right to stay we will be laying the basis for a national anti deportation movement.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Viraj's right to remain must become an issue of the forthcoming general election. The election will put the VMDC and its many support groups to the test. The campaign will be fighting not only the racist Tory party which is deporting 50 black people each week, but also a racist Labour Party and their former allies of the SDP which introduced these laws. Hurd and Waddington should not have a single day's peace. Every single opposition candidate should be presented with a simple choice. If you are elected will you let Viraj Mendis stay in Britain? Without such a commitment there is no point in voting for any candidates, whatever their party.

Join the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign

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

London VMDC Support Group
BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX (01 837 1688)

Glasgow VMDC Support Group
c/o Box 10, 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow

Leeds VMDC Support Group
Box FRFI, 59 Cookridge Stret, Leeds 2

Liverpool VMDC Support Group
c/o MTUCURC, 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool

Tyne and Wear VMDC Support Group
c/o Gateshead Law Centre, 13 Walker Terrace, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear

Brighton VMDC Support Group
c/o External Affairs, University of Sussex SU, Falmer House, Falmer, Brighton

Dundee VMDC Support Group
c/o FRFI, PO Box 27, Dundee DD1 9DR

Bristol VMDC Support Group
Joanne Mayer, 33 Kingston Road, Saithville, Bristol BS3 1DS

Edinburgh VMDC Support Group
c/o Box 56, 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh

SRI LANKA:

Waddington colludes in Tamil genocide

'If no distinction can be drawn between civilians and terrorists, it won't be drawn'. Sri Lankan National Security Minister Lalith Athulathudali announcing bombing raids on Tamil areas' (*Time* 4 May).



Tamil fighters in Jaffna

'The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam will resist until its last man and woman the genocidal onslaught on the Tamil nation by the Sri Lankan armed forces. We request the British people to denounce the barbaric action of the Sri Lankan government, and to extend solidarity and support to the freedom struggle of the Tamil people.' (Spokesperson for the LTTE in London speaking to *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*)

On 28 January LTTE guerrillas blew up a South African made armoured personnel carrier killing 9 Sri Lankan police commandos. On 28 February the Israeli, Pakistani and British trained Special Task Force cold bloodedly massacred 220 Tamil civilians at Kokkatticholai in the Batticaloa district. During his four day visit to Sri Lanka, begun on 12 April, Home Office minister David Waddington admitted that about 20 former British soldiers were on the island, 'They are carrying out training work and are not going round on operations' he said. The 14 March Sri Lankan Saturday Review reports that a white officer was seen directing operations during the February assault on Tamil villages.

Imperialism is mounting a bloody offensive aimed at smashing the armed resistance of the Tamil people. Jayewardene's armed forces are its instrument. Their objective is the complete subjugation of Sri Lanka, which will serve as a strategic base for control of the Indian Ocean.

The ambush of three buses on 17 April resulting in 126 dead mainly Sinhalese people, and the 21 April bomb explosion in Colombo taking some 120 lives served as an excuse for massive aerial attacks on Tamil civilians in the northern Jaffna peninsula. A senior Sri Lankan government official said they would 'carpet bomb' the fishing villages, 'The idea is to leave nothing'. A further 200 Tamil civilians were thus murdered in five days. The LTTE and the Eelam Revolutionary

Colombo and Trincomalee. Last year Boeing and a British company, Arthur Young, published a feasibility study recommending the construction of a military and civilian airbase in the Trincomalee area. In his 1985 policy report to Congress on US objectives in South West Asia, Defence Secretary Caspar Weinberger stated that they included 'gaining approval for and developing land based prepositioning sites' for the huge supplies needed by US forces in the region, and 'obtaining access to and improving selected airfields and sea ports in the theatre'. Sri Lanka and Pakistan appear to be designated as lynchpins in the US Central Command, which will be able to mobilise 450,000 troops for operations as far away as the Cape and the Gulf by 1989.

With the revolution in southern Africa, and instability in the Suez and Gulf areas, the Indian Ocean has increased in importance to imperialism for its control of sea routes and strategic supplies of oil and minerals. The Tamil national liberation struggle threatens not only the Jayewardene government, but imperialism's enormous interests throughout the region. Critically, Britain, as the old colonial power, is using its diplomatic ties to orchestrate the war on the Tamil people. British mercenaries from Keeny Meeny Services (from the Swahili meaning snake under the grass) were the first to go into Sri Lanka after Jayewardene called for assistance from Britain, the US, Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1983. He cited a defence agreement signed with Britain in November 1947 before independence was granted in 1948. For political reasons, importantly, relations with India, Thatcher could not send in an open British army expedition, instead she dispatched 'Whitehall's Secret Army' KMS.

Today, Israel, Pakistan and South Africa are Sri Lanka's main weapons suppliers: surrogates in US and British imperialism's regional plans. As the weapons have grown in sophistication, to include US Bell helicopter-gunships and the latest South African Buffel blast-resistant armoured personnel carrier, so the influx of imperialist mercenaries has increased. The Tigers estimate some 100 KMS are now operating in Sri Lanka as active participants in combat with their guerrillas. Israeli Mossad and Shin Bet agents are also in the front line. Exact figures are impossible in the trail of murder, torture and disappearances they leave behind, but some 10,000 Tamil civilians have been killed in the last 3 years that the mercenaries have been operating.

Noticeably, at the end of April, Jayewardene launched a series of tirades against the Indian government for allowing the Tigers to retain their bases in Tamil Nadu. In its role as a mediator and critic of the Sri Lankan government the Indian ruling class has shown that it is unwilling to allow imperialism and Jayewardene to completely crush the Tamil resistance. India's ruling class recognises that a Jayewardene victory would establish hostile neighbours to the north west, Pakistan, and south east, Sri Lanka, both housing major imperialist bases, weakening India's regional position and threatening it with destabilisation. Jayewardene understands that for as long as the Tigers retain their supply bases 22 miles across the Palk Strait from the Jaffna peninsula then they will retain the ability to fight.

WADDINGTON'S ROLE

Fresh from his visit to Sri Lanka David Waddington announced on BBC radio that he had visited Sri Lankan army camps and met Tamil prisoners; no one had complained about torture; he had met Tamil refugees, they had left their homes when they heard gunfire, no one had been abused; and the ex-SAS soldiers of KMS were



Tamil refugees in India

training and restraining the bloodthirsty local troops. Ostensibly on a trip to examine the British visa system Waddington's real brief was carried out to the letter: portray the Jayewardene government favourably, and prepare the way for deporting the Tamil refugees back from Britain and the rest of Western Europe to Sri Lanka. Nevermind that the UN Human Rights Commission on Sri Lanka reported in March that 'the Human Rights situation in Sri Lanka is indeed serious'. Nevermind that just 5 days before he arrived and a fortnight after he left Sri Lankan armed forces shelled the Jaffna hospital killing nurses and patients: an example of the government successfully blasting-out 'terrorists hideouts' according to its own Media Centre.

Waddington, like the British government, is waging a silent war on the Tamil people. The refugees are an embarrassment. The British Home Office will not have a second thought if they are returned to camps Jayewardene is establishing in the south and used as hostages against those struggling for Tamil Eelam in the north.

CHAOS IN THE JAYEWARDENE CAMP

While the LTTE retain their fighting capacity and establish an administrative system in the north, the Sinhala ruling cli-

que is fracturing. Above all it is their frustration at not being able to defeat the Tamil resistance that is provoking disintegration, but the economy is slowly disintegrating under the weight of the war effort. Military expenditure has risen ten fold in recent years and now consumes 35 per cent of the domestic budget. Tea, rubber and coconut prices have all been depressed, and tourist revenues have dwindled. Debt repayments now consume 30 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. Unemployment is up to 20 per cent and inflation 40 per cent.

In these conditions banditry and right wing fanaticism are undermining the hold of the Jayewardene government. Arrests of civilians in the south under the PTA have been stepped up. Jayewardene is looking increasingly dependent upon his foreign backers for survival. As the Lloyds Bank Report puts it, 'Sri Lanka has become one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world'. The Aid Consortium meets this May, Britain is a leading member. Whatever they decide, however deep they have to dig into their pockets to finance the war on the Tamil people the Tigers have answered:

'Sri Lanka will be made to realise that an armed liberation movement with the active support of the masses cannot be defeated or crushed.'

PLO unified

The reunification of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) at the 17th Palestine National Council (PNC - the Palestinian Parliament), held in Algiers from 20-25 April, marks an important step forward in the Palestinian liberation struggle. The left-wing of the PLO led by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) accepted reunification when the right wing Al Fatah led by Yassir Arafat agreed to cancel the 1985 Amman Accord with King Hussein of Jordan and to downgrade relations with the pro-imperialist Egyptian regime.

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The PNC in officially endorsing these moves closed off the PLO right wing's avenues for a compromise with imperialism and Arab reaction. Outraged, the Egyptian government responded by closing all PLO offices in the country. The 17th session of the PNC was also significant for deciding to incorporate into the PLO, for the first time, the Palestine Communist Party.

A unified PLO will provide a major boost to the organisation of the mass popular and armed struggle in the occupied territories and elsewhere, particularly in Lebanon. It will also serve to isolate the small, but dangerous, sectarian Muslim fundamentalist trends in the liberation struggle. But undoubtedly, the greatest benefit of this year's PNC is that a united PLO acquires a greater independence from imperialism and Arab reaction. Their ambition of imposing a capitulationist 'settlement' over the head of a divided PLO and with the assistance of an assortment of rightists and collaborationists has been dealt a severe blow.

Recent moves to convene an international conference without the PLO (the sole legitimate voice of the Palestinian people)

are now likely to fail. Confronting a united PLO, both wings of Arab reaction - led by King Hussein and President Assad of Syria - will find it more difficult to manipulate the liberation struggle to their own reactionary ends.

Of course, the class contradictions within the Palestinian nationalist movement are not thus abolished. The struggle to keep the PLO on its revolutionary nationalist path will continue. The imperialists and Arab reaction will no doubt devise new schemes and conspiracies to entice the right wing back into their orbit. But at the moment, the political position of the right has been weakened, though it does remain a dangerous force.

The critical task now facing the Palestinian revolutionary movement is the organisation and development of the mass struggle in the occupied territories and the development of relations with Arab revolutionary movements. As George Habash of the PFLP put it:

'Without changing the balance of power on the Palestinian and Arab levels Israel will not withdraw one inch from the occupied territories.'

The PNC achieved an important step in this task and the left will fight to ensure that it is sustained and advanced.

TREVOR RAYNE

Organisation of Students (EROS) not only denied both the ambush and bombing, but condemned them as attacks on innocent civilians. Regardless, the British media repeated the Sri Lankan government line that both incidents were the work of Tamil terrorists as if it were fact. Nothing of the carnage inflicted upon the Tamil people is shown and precious little said.

ALL OUT ASSAULT

At the end of last year the negotiations between the LTTE and Jayewardene government, conducted through the Indian government, collapsed. Jayewardene made it explicit that any move to Tamil sovereignty was out of the question. As a precondition for any further talks he insisted that the LTTE should recognise the territorial integrity and unity of Sri Lanka; it should cease all armed operations and preparations; and lay down its arms before the implementation of a solution. These conditions amount to a call to the LTTE to surrender. The Tigers responded 'We wish to state categorically that LTTE will never be forced to the negotiating table at the point of a gun.'

On 2 January the Sri Lankan government imposed an economic blockade on the Tamil areas. This was followed by a major military offensive, involving 20,000 troops, launched on 6 February. It took a heavy toll: 504 civilians killed in the northern and eastern Tamil areas, 868 arrested, 28 women raped, many hundreds disappeared. It was a brutal attempt to destroy the armed resistance, to collectively punish the Tamil people for supporting the Tigers, and to force them to withdraw this support: it has failed.

IMPERIALISM SHOWS ITS HAND

A growing number of US warships have recently been using the Sri Lankan ports at

MASS ANTI-REAGAN MARCHES IN THE US

150,000 people marched in Washington, and some 100,000 in San Francisco against Reagan's policies of intervention in Central America and support for apartheid in South Africa. The 25 April demonstrations were the largest anti-government protests since the Vietnam War. They came at a time when the Conragate scandals have weakened the US administration and thrown its strategy of all-out assault against national liberation movements into sharp, and telling, relief. Significantly, the marches included substantial sections of the trade union movement. A force that remained consistently pro-US government throughout the duration of the war on south east Asia.

However, the participation of unionised labour was achieved not without serious political concessions on behalf of the organisers. The unions originally demanded that the speakers proposed from the National Union of Salvadorean Workers, anyone associated with the Sandinistas and the ANC be dropped as a condition for their involvement. The head of the equivalent of the TUC, the AFL-CIO, Lane Kirkland, condemned the 25 April mobilisation for 'openly supporting the Marxist Leninist guerrillas in El Salvador and the Sandinista government in Nicaragua.' The AFL-CIO is notorious for its anti-communism and CIA infiltration. It supports the Duarte regime in El Salvador and a group with contra links in Nicaragua. Many trade unionists opposed to Reagan made a concession to Kirkland and the AFL-CIO rather than the national

liberation movements.

While the demand to remove the Central American speakers generated little controversy within the unions, the opposition to an ANC speaker was fought unsuccessfully chiefly by black labour. Latino workers have thus far been kept out of the core of union organisation.

In the end five of the six largest US unions supported the protests, a total of 40 per cent of unionised labour. Notable as this is, reflecting a disenchantment with Reaganism at home and abroad, the unions have still to take the vital step from opposing aspects of ruling class policy to solidarity with the movements of the oppressed. This can only be done with a consistent fight against anti-communism. It is the only real guarantee of a strong opposition to imperialist aggression.

Trevor Rayne



Reagan's other America: The crisis of the black family

In the summer of 1986 *Ebony* magazine brought out a special issue called 'The Crisis of the Black Family'. It speaks of 'perhaps the biggest crisis Blacks have faced since slavery time - the death of the Black family.'

SUSAN DAVIDSON

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN THE USA?

The crisis is evident from the statistics. Black people are 11% of a population of 240 million. Today there are 9½ million black people living in poverty and 23 million white people living in poverty as officially described. This means that 34% of black people are in poverty compared to 12% white people. Following these bare facts are all the consequences that we would expect. Since 1985 unemployment for blacks stands at more than double whites, 15.1% compared to 6.2%. The effect of this on children and young people is that 46.2% of under 18 year old black youth live in poverty - greater now than in 1967, and 50% of black babies are born into poverty.

FAILURE OF REFORM

Yet poverty and unemployment with its consequences have always been the condition of the mass of black people in the USA. But there was a period of illusion when, after the uprisings of the 1960s in the black cities of many states, the Central, or Federal government poured billions of dollars into the communities to stave off black revolt. These funds and programmes of social benefit have not merely been severely cut-back, they have dried up completely.

The Reagan Administration has launched into a full-fledged attack on the living standards of the most poor. Since 1980 10 billion dollars have been slashed from Federal health, nutrition, education, child-care and income support programmes. More than 1 million black children lost free or cut-price school lunches alone. Poverty is again becoming the norm for black people.

Only a small section of black people have benefited from the government spending that was intended to create a black middle-class. The readers of *Ebony* magazine are some of them and they are in a panic about the effects of poverty on the family unit.

THE BLACK FAMILY IN THE USA

This is the situation of the black family in

fare and eleven times as likely to live with a parent who never married.

These are the facts of black family life that are the source of panic among 'con-



cerned' circles in the USA. *Ebony's* mainly black middle-class contributors call for the restoration of the traditional extended family in the black community, for the resurrection of the role of the church in family life, and for the rekindling of faith in the virtues of education. But the truth is that all these institutions, like the black middle-classes themselves, have failed black people in the USA. For oppressed black people, sustaining and fulfilling social relations can only be achieved in the course of struggling to defend their communities from exploitation: throwing out the pushers, standing up to the police, fighting unemployment.

It is all very well for *Ebony* magazine to moralise about the virtues of cosy domesticity when they have a vested interest in the family to sustain their life-style. But for the oppressed classes, as Engels said, 'the foundations of classical monogamy are removed. Here there is a complete absence of all property, for the safeguarding and inheritance of which monogamy and male domination were established.'

For black people in a city like Chicago, in the richest capitalist country in history, the infant mortality rate is higher than that of an impoverished oppressed nation like Costa Rica. There is a kind of creeping genocide in Reagan's America. This systematic destruction will only be ended when the black communities have organised and led the way in smashing the source of their misery, imperialism.

They are four times as likely to: live with neither parent, be murdered before one year of age or as a teenager, be imprisoned between 15 and 19 years of age. They are five times as likely to be dependent on wel-

CARIBBEAN & CENTRAL AMERICA

Haiti

When US experts advise the slaughter of local pigs as a precaution against swine fever, the Haitian peasants suspect US capital of seeking to dump US pigs on them. When US rice undercuts locally produced rice in Haitian markets, people storm the vehicles transporting the imported grain around the country. Over a year since Duvalier fled on a US air force plane, US imperialism is still in control through its local henchmen, now led by General Henri Namphy and the National Government Council (CNG). Illiteracy is still at 80 per cent and per capita income has continued to shrink in this, the Western hemisphere's poorest nation.

Presidential elections are scheduled for November. However the transnationals and local bourgeoisie have still to cement a viable political group that can be trusted to maintain the traditional order. Their main hope seems to be centred on the Catholic hierarchy. Mean-

the area ready for use. British forces stationed in Belize and the Caribbean have participated in previous exercises.

The Contras know they must achieve results quickly if they are to retain any credibility within the US ruling circles. The plan is for them to seize a town, declare it the centre of the new provisional government, receive instant US recognition and massive military support, while a US naval blockade prevents the socialist countries from assisting the Sandinista government. They have until September and the next Congressional vote on funds to prove to US imperialism that they can earn their keep.

El Salvador

At 2am on 31 March a force of FMLN guerrillas attacked and seized the El Paraiso military base 37 miles north of the capital San Salvador. The El Salvador army sustained some 600 casualties, the US adviser in residence was executed. The FMLN



FMLN guerrillas meeting their supporters

while, over 800 delegates from almost 300 political groups, trade unions, peasant and student organisations and human rights groups have formed the National Congress of Democratic Movements. It is pledged to fight for free elections, freedom of information, land reform and a just legal system. It accused Namphy and the CNG of maintaining the conditions of the Duvalier regime without Duvalier.

Nicaragua

In late April the biggest yet of US military exercises in Honduras since the 1979 Sandinista victory got under way. The purpose of the Solid Shield manoeuvres is to test the US invasion machine and to pressure the US congress into maintaining funds for the Contras. They will also deposit large quantities of weapons in

is reported to have lost only 8 of its fighters. This meticulously planned operation struck right into the heart of the US-backed military, and punctured the inflated confidence of those US strategists who claimed they were winning the war.

Since 1979 62,000 people have been killed in the civil war. Since 1982 the Reagan administration has pumped in \$3bn of aid. Conscription has trebled military manpower to 60,000. Since 1983 the helicopter-gunship fleet has risen from 15 to almost 80. This against a population of 5 million in a country about the size of Wales.

The achievement of El Paraiso is testimony to the indestructibility of People's War, and to the versatility of the FMLN which declared the attack the beginning of a new offensive 'for peace, bread, justice and freedom.'

■ Can you say what the strike achieved?

In Christmas 1985 the pickets of Dunnes Stores in Henry Street Dublin were lifted. Our union IDATU came under criticism for that, but they didn't back off their support and continued to pay us strike pay. When the government announced that it was going to bring in a ban on South African imports we were all over the moon. But so many tricks have been going on since then.

Ben Dunne the employer is even trying to export to South Africa. He claims to have written to a nun there and made an agreement to ship out Stations of the Cross via Italy to black South Africans. And there are rumours that imports are coming through, but not direct from South Africa.

All agricultural goods from South Africa were banned with effect from 1 January 1987 with the exception of wine. It is now illegal to have agricultural products on the shelves. There was a phasing out period. The import of South African goods was stopped from October 1986. Companies that had been importing the goods for more than three years could apply for a special permit to continue importing until 31 December, but then they too had to stop. We think that Dunnes stocked up well in this period.

■ Have other workers joined the strike?

Brendan Barnes worked at the Dunnes Store in Donaghmede, which is a suburb of Dublin. He declared that he wouldn't handle South African goods as well. Dunnes suspended him until he said he was prepared to handle them. So Brendan joined us. He got invited to speak last autumn in Birmingham. That was the first time he had travelled to speak for the strike. He was stopped under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The Birmingham police took away his speech and anti-apartheid material which they said was subversive! They were particularly interested in the batteries in Brendan's hearing aid, he is 70% deaf, and they told him that he had to leave that stuff behind. It was terrible. He went ahead and gave his speech though.

■ Have you been involved in other campaigns against apartheid?

Before the strike we knew very little, but we soon learnt. Bishop Tutu invited us to South Africa, but when we arrived there armed police turned us back at the airport.

I have joined the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Ireland to find out what is going on. I get sent their mailings now, before we didn't know what was happening.

I attended the meeting organised by the Anti-Apartheid to mark the 75th anniversary of the ANC. The Dunnes strikers had not been invited, but I went along to support the ANC. The platform of speakers included John Hume who was given a standing ovation, I don't know why since he had refused to give Nelson Mandela the freedom of Derry City, Tomas McGiolla of the Workers Party, Rory Quinn from the Labour Party and a Fine Gael speaker. I was on my way out when Reg September who spoke for the ANC got the AAM to fetch me back so that he could speak to me. He seemed angry that Dunnes Stores

Catherine O'Reilly interviewed

The Dunnes Strike

In 1984 the Irish trade union IDATU (Irish Distributive and Allied Trades Union) decided as policy to boycott all South African goods. Ten women and one man working at Dunnes' Henry Street store in Dublin put that policy into action, they refused to handle the shop's South African produce. Suspended by their management in July 1984, the workers were backed by IDATU and the historic Dunnes Stores strike began. Last month, on Monday 13 April 8 of the original 11 strikers returned to work. But not before the strikers' principled action had become an international inspiration for solidarity action which forced the 26 county state to implement limited sanctions. Catherine O'Reilly, one of the three strikers who refused to return to work on the conditions set by Dunnes gave this interview to FRFI.



Dunnes strikers picketing the South African Embassy with City AA in 1984

strikers had not been asked to speak on the platform with him.

In March 1986 we received an invitation to debate with a representative from the South African Embassy in London, Leo Evans who is I think their charge d'affaires. We were trying to find out where

and when the debate was, but they wouldn't tell us until the last minute. Tommy was due to speak for us, but couldn't come. It turned out to be the College of Veterinary Students and the theme was on how to achieve peace and democracy in South Africa.

Well, we went along and Mary Manning said that she would debate for us on one condition, that she speaks first. That was agreed. Then Mary declared that she was not going to debate with that man - pointing at Evans - until they released Nelson Mandela. Then our part of the crowd joined in chanting Release Mandela! Mary said that Evans had darkened the Emerald Isle, and should not have been allowed entry. 'You wouldn't allow us into South Africa' she said. We stopped that debate with apartheid.

And again, the Embassy tried to bring someone over to Cork, but we got to hear about it. As this man came off the plane we had someone from the union dressed up as a reporter with notebook and pencils and all. He seemed surprised that the press were interested. He was even more surprised when our 'reporter' said that he wasn't welcome and pointed out forty of us who were protesting against him. He went to try and book out his hired car, but he was so flustered with it all he never got the car. In fact I don't think he managed to leave the airport at all!

■ How did the strike end?

On 5 January we went back to work, or rather tried to go back. The management were real nice, 'Happy New Year girls', they said. They put a new contract in front of us, but we wouldn't sign. The contract said that in working for Dunnes we would be prepared to handle anything in the store. We were ready and willing to work but management said 'Don't sign, don't work'. We came out again.

The union wrote to the Rights Commissioner, but Ben Dunne refused to go along so nothing would be binding. There was a lot of pressure by now on the strikers to go back in.

I would not go back if it meant signing the contract. We are the only people in the whole of Ben Dunnes chain of stores who are being asked to sign it. It is normal in disputes to go back on the same conditions as you came out, so three of us are now unemployed.

■ What support did you get for the strike?

When the miners strike was on many came to Dublin collecting for their funds, but they always came and supported our picket line. Mary and I went to the British TUC appealing for support from the leaders there. We argued very hard with those leaders.

I must say we also got very little support from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It took them a year to give us even a state-

ment of support. The rank and file workers did support us. In fact we got loads of support. Getting the law changed was a big victory, but I would have liked to have seen it go further so that workers have the definite right to refuse to handle the South African goods.

■ How do you see the boycott campaign going forward?

We'd love to see a complete ban on all South African imports and exports. This country sends 3 times more goods to South Africa than it gets in. The computer components sent from here are propping up their security system. They should be stopped.

■ Do you see a common cause between South Africa and Ireland?

A lot of people could identify with what is going on in South Africa because of what happens in the North. Look at the Republican funerals there and funerals in South Africa. They are the same, where people are not even allowed to mourn their dead. People exiled from South Africa who go to the North immediately see the similarity. Armed police and plastic bullets, that's what the two countries have in common.

HUNGER STRIKE COMMEMORATION



On 5 May 1981 IRA Volunteer Bobby Sands died on hunger strike, murdered by British imperialism. In the following four bitter months nine other men were thus murdered for demanding political status.

Raymond McCreesh, Joe McDonnell, Kevin Lynch, Thomas McElwee, Francis Hughes, Patsy O'Hara, Martine Hurson, Kieran Doherty, Mickey Devine.

The selfless courage and political determination of the hunger strikers has inspired freedom loving people around the world. The Irish people's struggle for self-determination continues today to thwart the attempts of British imperialism to enforce its rule in Ireland and provides an example of popular struggle for all those facing oppression.

FRFI salutes the memory of the 10 hunger strikers.

Sean Mac Stiofain interviewed

Ireland after the election

Sean Mac Stiofain, former IRA Chief of Staff talks to FRFI about the situation in Ireland following the February election in the Twenty Six Counties.

Overall the result was what everybody expected. I don't see any fundamental difference between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Haughey is still a free-state politician and in no way will he repeal the Offences Against the State Act or any of the other pieces of obnoxious, repressive legislation which he used against the Republican Movement. Haughey is going to bring out a very harsh budget. He is not going to bring in any of the reforms that are needed to get the working class people of the Twenty Six Counties a more just society. It was expected that he would support the Anglo/Irish Agreement in full in spite of what they said before the elections.

PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION

There's certainly no parliamentary opposition, none whatsoever. The Labour Party's a joke it scarcely merits the title of social democrat. The other three parties are right-wing, all backed by the same interests and they all support the capitalist economic structure. The Workers Party is becoming more reactionary with every week that comes. There's one or two independents. There's Gregory. But again the amount of opposition that three individuals in a bourgeois parliament can carry out is extremely limited. Their op-

tions are limited. They can make noises but they can't make any impact on change in the structures of society.

SINN FEIN AND THE 26 COUNTY ELECTION

I believe they made a very bad mistake in changing the abstentionist policy and I also believe that they made a tactical error as far as contesting so many seats in the recent election and they got a very poor vote in most cases and as you are probably aware, I did suggest immediately after the Ard Fheis that prisoner candidates would be nominated in certain key constituencies and unfortunately that advice wasn't accepted. I still hope that eventually the leadership of the movement will realise that they have made a big mistake.

SOCIALISM AND THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION

It's very difficult to clearly demonstrate the connection to the ordinary person in the street, the factory worker or the farm labourer. For example, there's a housing shortage in Dublin, bad living conditions, poor pay or any other of the social issues. These are a direct result of the situation that exists, that the British government, the British ruling classes still control this

country lock, stock and barrel. It is very difficult to get that message across.

COMMUNISTS IN THE NATIONAL STRUGGLE

If you go back to the forties when communism was a very dirty word, people were afraid to be called a communist. The Cold War was at its height the propaganda forces of the Western World were directed against the Communist Parties; the people were not thinking right in those days. As you know I've got the greatest respect for revolutionary communists and going back to my young days, 20, 21, morally supported armed struggles waged by communist revolutionary movements in various parts of the world - Greece 1944-45, Malaya 1946, Vietnam, China. But the Communist Party of Ireland and the Communist Party of Great Britain, in fact most of the Western European Communist Parties are not revolutionary parties. As time went on it became very clear that they are revisionist parties. I've always regarded Republicans as revolutionary socialists. As it says in my book, we are automatically anti-capitalist. If you are not anti-capitalist, what else are you?

GENERAL ELECTIONS IN BRITAIN

Kinnock and the present leadership of the Labour Party are as dedicated imperialists as anybody in the Conservative Party. I don't think there will be a change of government in Britain, but if there is I don't think it will make any difference at all to the situation in this country. I think that Irish people in Britain should abstain in the General Election.

WINSTON SILCOTT

When I read about Broadwater Farm in the papers here and in FRFI, I thought to myself that is typical of what is known of that farce which is British justice. There is no such thing as justice in the courts in Britain for anybody. When its a working man who comes up before a magistrate because he's stolen something to feed his wife and children he's going to get 3 months. Whereas the middle class guy who has done a colossal fiddle will get off with a suspended sentence. It's the same in the courts in this country. Any politically motivated case, they will automatically find guilty and it doesn't matter whether they are Irish, Arabs, West German or black activists in Britain. There is no such thing as justice for either the British working class themselves or for political activists of any complexion.

MAXINE WILLIAMS

IRA demolishes normalisation myth

With a spectacular display of its military capacity, the IRA's latest campaign has severely shaken the complacency of the British government. Already this year, 13 members of the military/police have been killed by IRA operations. But its most devastating blow came on Saturday 25 April when, in a meticulously planned operation, the car of Lord Justice Gibson, second most senior judge in the Six Counties, was blown up killing the notorious Judge and his wife.

For the past year British propaganda has maintained that the Anglo-Irish Agreement has weakened and marginalised the IRA, allowing 'normalisation' to take place in the Six Counties. By 'normalisation' they of course meant the normal, brutal oppression of the nationalist people and the containment of resistance within 'acceptable limits'. The latest IRA blitz, going alongside a high level of nationalist mobilisations against RUC attacks on funerals, has put paid to such talk and has spread fear and alarm through the RUC.

British reaction to Gibson's death was swift. Amidst howls of reaction Northern Ireland Secretary Tom King has hinted at moves to send in more troops. This would be another dent in Britain's 'Ulsterisation' strategy, that is the presentation of the RUC as a 'normal' police force capable of containing the situation in the Six Counties. Amongst those howling loudest was Labour spokesman Stuart Bell who viciously attacked the IRA for being 'its own judge, jury and executioner' and seeking 'to achieve by violence what it cannot achieve by election'. In a patriotic frenzy he quoted Winston Churchill and called the House of Commons 'the mother of democracies'. The British Labour Party - which introduced the PTA, locked up the Guildford 4, Birmingham 6 and Maguire, administered a regime of terror and torture in Ireland - knows a lot about 'democracy' British-style.

Gibson's demise was particularly embarrassing for Haughey and the British government, coming within days of their decision to even further strengthen collaboration between their respective police forces. Gibson had been escorted to the border by a Twenty Six Counties police escort but his RUC escort had not picked him up as they were wary of venturing into the dangerous area close to the border. Meantime a 600 lb car bomb was detonated killing Gibson. Gibson was senior Lord Justice of Appeal in the Six Counties and was known and hated for presiding over



REPUBLICAN NEWS

many show trials. The IRA made the point.

'He acted as a judge and jury and supported the RUC executioners, but there are other judges in Ireland besides those imposed by Britain.'

It was Gibson, who in June 1984 acquitted

three RUC men of the shoot-to-kill murder of IRA volunteers Eugene Toman, Sean Burns and Gervaise McKerr. The RUC had riddled the unarmed men's car with 103 bullets in November 1982. Gibson praised the RUC men for their

'courage and determination in bringing

the three deceased men to justice - in this case the final court of justice'.

Now Gibson has been brought to the final court.

On the same day that Gibson died the IRA also shot dead a full-time UDR in County Tyrone. On 23 April they shot dead an RUC man outside Derry and on 21 April an RUC inspector in County Down was shot dead, bringing to nine the number of RUC officers killed this year.

Other spectacular operations have included: on 3 April bringing Derry city centre to a standstill with hoax and real bombs and shooting a UDR soldier in Fermanagh; also 3 April an attack on an RUC patrol which killed one RUC man. Later that week, coinciding with widespread popular protests about RUC attacks on Lawrence Marley's funeral, a concerted spate of bomb and shooting attacks were launched in Belfast, Derry and Newry.

The IRA's Easter message said:

'All successful struggles rely on a military and political basis. We agree with the building of a revolutionary, republican party in the course of the armed struggle and we refuse to be over-euphoric with electoral victories or disillusioned or deterred by electoral setbacks... The British will only be talked out of Ireland through the rattle of machine-guns and the roar of explosives... Now we will go and talk Britain out of Ireland our way, with the only words they understand.'

Their actions have shown the truth of these words and at a time of British General Election fever have ensured that Ireland will have to be on the agenda.

IN BRIEF

SECTARIAN TRADE UNION MAFIA

Irish Distributive and Allied Trades Union General Secretary John Mitchell has been suspended from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Executive. His suspension follows his all-too truthful description of trade union leaders in the Six Counties as:

'a trade union Mafia which leads a comfortable sort of existence.'

IDATU has begun organising amongst nationalist workers in the Six Counties. The trade union leaders there have hitherto been content to represent the privileged loyalist workers and ignore sectarianism, discrimination and British repression. Indeed they have actively colluded with sectarian discrimination against Catholics. Mitchell has evidently offended them by exposing this. He has pointed out that:

'not the tiniest little squeak has been made about the repression of our people.'

HUMAN RIGHTS

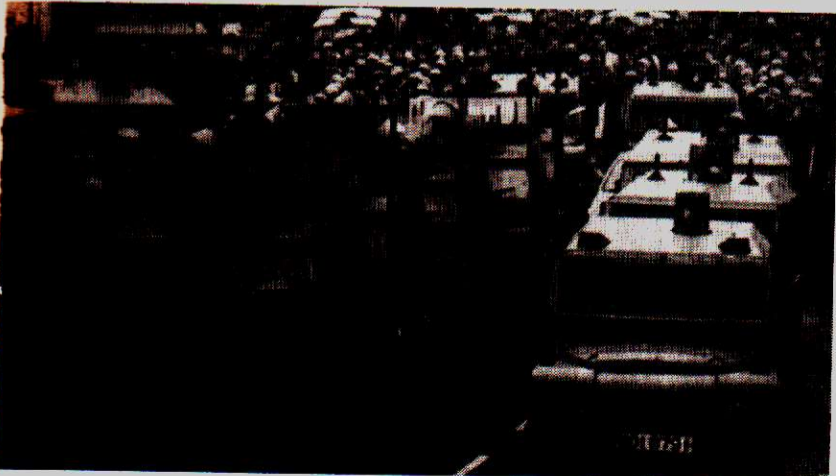
Soviet Tass Agency commenting on Thatcher's preaching about human rights in the Soviet Union:

'It is known that 13 persons, including 6 children, have been killed and 60 others severely injured by plastic bullets. In none of the cases those who fired the bullets were brought to court.'

'It is also known that 2,600 people have been killed in Ulster since the so-called British security forces were brought there... Is mass murder also an example to emulate?'

RUC attacks on funerals

Violent attacks by the Royal Ulster Constabulary on Republican funerals have failed to intimidate the nationalist people. Instead they have created a new upsurge of popular resistance to British rule. On Wednesday 8 April, thousands thronged the streets of Belfast to pay tribute to IRA volunteer Lawrence Marley who was murdered by a loyalist death squad. The massive turnout was a message of defiance directed at the RUC who had, by a huge display of force, prevented the funeral procession from leaving the Ardoyne on Monday and Tuesday.



Last month the funeral of IRA volunteer Gerard Logue became a mass show of strength with 3000 joining the procession and shots being fired over the coffin. The RUC used its new Public Order powers to try and prevent a repetition at Lawrence Marley's funeral. Their sustained attacks on the funeral stretched over three days. As Lawrence Marley's son and others carried the coffin out of the house they were met by ranks of hundreds of RUC who batoned mourners to the ground. In the midst of the chaos, the family saw even the coffin jostled. Determined to bury

Lawrence in dignity they were twice forced to postpone the funeral.

These attacks were designed to prevent the nationalist community showing its solidarity with the Republican struggle. But, in the end the funeral became the largest display of support since the hunger strikes of 1981. Youths took to the streets on Tuesday and Wednesday night and built barricades of burning buses and lorries. Major demonstrations were held in Andersonstown and Ardoyne. On Wednesday as the funeral procession finally got underway thousands lined the streets. Even pa-

LABOUR - (DIRTY) BUSINESS AS USUAL

Labour spokesman Stuart Bell revealed in a recent speech that the party already has plans laid to do a deal with Unionist MPs. In order to get their support in the event of a Labour minority government, Labour would give an early review of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, increases in the power of local government, economic aid increases and other carrots. Mindful of the significant Irish vote in Britain, other Labour figures subsequently denied Bell's version. Indeed a new policy document was hastily produced which claimed that a Labour government would not allow Unionist opposition to block progress in the Six Counties. But the previous Labour deal in 1979, giving Unionists more parliamentary seats, is only too well remembered. It will come as no surprise, therefore, that Labour should once again be looking to strike a deal with fascist loyalism.

tients in the Royal Victoria Hospital came out to give support.

The leadership of the Catholic Church in Ireland has collaborated with efforts to disrupt Republican funerals. The bishops ignored the Marley family's plea to help them bury Lawrence in peace. Bishop Edward Daly has banned requiems for IRA volunteers from Derry churches. He has also condemned IRA firing parties although the church allows volleys for British soldiers/RUC.

The well publicised images - likened by many to similar scenes in South Africa - of RUC men attacking peaceful mourners are a major blow to the SDLP's portrayal of the RUC being reformed via the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Even Chief Constable Hermon has conceded that 'the consequences in terms of violence and alienation of the community, and the disruption of the police function... have been quite disastrous.' Once again the spirit of resistance of the Irish people has thwarted state attempts to break their spirits.

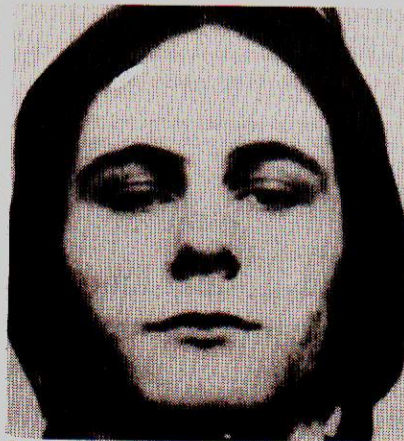
Jim O'Rourke

Framed prisoners

Fight goes on

'The importance of fighting on the question of the framed Irish Prisoners is not simply one of justice for us - the effect of a victory in our case will be to strengthen the British working class.'

This was part of a message sent by Paul Hill of the Guildford 4, to a benefit organised by the Free the Framed Irish Prisoners Campaign on 24 April. He sent best wishes to those working on the issue and said that if the left failed to fight on this issue it would be making a rod for its own back.



Paul Hill

Another month of Home Office inaction has gone by since leave to appeal was refused to the Guildford 4. Five of the Birmingham Six have applied for bail pending their appeal in November. Pressure must be kept up if these are to succeed and to ensure the reopening of the Guildford 4 and Maguire cases. That is why the Free the Framed Irish Prisoners Campaign is trying to build the broadest possible support. Activities this month have included: another successful 30 strong picket of Downing Street; a social at which musicians Maria Tolly, Ken Hughes (of FRFI) and others helped to raise £142 for the campaign. Public meetings, further pickets, a vigorous intervention in the general election, if called, and lobbies of councils and

trades unions are also planned.

In the midst of this activity there comes, as always, snide and sectarian critics. The Glasgow Irish Freedom Action Committee has published a vicious attack on the Campaign and the WRP and RCG. Exploiting the painful divisions which led to the winding up of the Guildford 4 Campaign, they accuse the WRP and RCG of insisting 'that the Defence Campaign adopt their political perspective'. Nothing could be more false. The RCG and WRP have fought hard, both in the Guildford 4 and the present campaign, to ensure these bodies are open to ALL support, from communists to priests, from Labour supporters to black organisations. There have been pressures at various times to restrict the campaign either to bourgeois ruling class figures or from another direction, to the 'Labour movement'. We have resisted all such pressures and it was precisely these issues which underlay the Guildford 4 Campaign problems. The FFIPC is answering all the slanders and will publicise its reply.

It is a pity that time must be wasted on such rubbish. For it is time and effort that are now needed more than ever to force the British government to release the framed Irish prisoners.

Maggie Lindsay

FFPIC meets next: 13 May 7.30pm. Camden Town Hall, Judd Street, NW1. Picket of Downing Street 6-7pm Wednesday 27 May followed by Campaign meeting in Camden Town Hall.



Defend Danny Williams

At the end of March, while in the Albany segregation unit, Danny Williams was the victim of an unprovoked attack by a number of screws. He defended himself as well as he could despite being heavily outnumbered and as a result he was transferred to the hospital wing, F2, in Parkhurst. He was then subjected to another vicious attack by screws. On this occasion he was forcibly injected and dumped in a strip cell.

It is well known that F2 is a transit point for the mental institutions of Broadmoor, Rampton and Park Lane. Many people have been sent to these places from there. Danny, realising that he was in danger of being 'nuttled off', went on hunger strike demanding that he be removed from F2.

He was transferred to the segregation unit in Parkhurst but since then he has been subject to more abuse by the screws. Since his transfer from Albany he has not received any incoming mail. Letters he wrote to his solicitor have

been stopped but no reason has been given for stopping them. He has not been allowed to buy any toiletries because he is unable to spend his private cash.

Overall Danny is being subjected to a deliberate campaign of persecution by the authorities because he is seen by them as a prisoner who resists their oppressive policies and is therefore a threat to their system. At present there is a very real danger that Danny will be sent to Broadmoor if the authorities persist in their ill-treatment of him. This move must be resisted.

Comrades can protest about the barbaric treatment Danny is currently being subjected to by writing to the Home Office and to the governor of Parkhurst concentration camp.

A prisoner

Write to Home Office Prison Department, Cleland House, Page Street, London SW1 and The Governor, HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight, PO30 5NX

Inside Wormwood Scrubs

Phil Penn talked to Maxine Williams about conditions in the Scrubs. Phil Penn served four months for 'assault' having been convicted on evidence provided by supporters of *Newsline*.

Racism

As far as the kitchen was concerned it was very blatant. I understand that the screw in charge of the kitchen was a member of the British Movement. The black prisoners were kept in the wash up area. They weren't put in the main kitchen. Whites would be in there for ten minutes sometimes and then into the main kitchen but the blacks never got out of the wash up area.

Filthy conditions

The kitchen is absolutely infested with cockroaches. One of the blokes said to me: 'I don't mind them in the kitchen. Its when they're in the cell at night and you turn the light off and hear them scuttling around, that's when I can't stand it. You can feel them on the bed.'

The blankets just never got washed from one sentence to the next. I was banged up in a cell on my own and the place stunk of tobacco. First opportunity I could get I swept the place out. I cleaned it out, opened the windows, freshened the place up and then I realised that it stunk of urine. The tobacco smell had gone but the urine smell was there. But you just can't get rid of that smell however clean you are.

Suicide attempt

A week before I arrived, in D wing, a guy tried to kill himself. He was having hallucinations but he didn't want to see the doctor because he was worried about being 'nuttled off'. It was the first time, as far as I know, that he'd been inside. He cut his throat during the night. His cellmate heard the blood dripping. His cellmate jumped up and banged on the door for all he was worth. It took half an hour for the screws to bother themselves to get there. There was blood all over the floor and the landing, everywhere.

Gangsters

One of the things that struck me is that the governors who threaten the inmates just like a gangster would threaten somebody (the no 1 governor threatened to have me removed because I complained about the cockroaches) are represented by the TUC. People whose job it is to ensure that political prisoners are tortured, that the common prisoner has no rights whatsoever. Gangsters, represented by the TUC.

The state of British prisons

On Thursday 23 April the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee issued a report on the State and Use of the Prisons. Once again, the report confirms the inhuman conditions in British prisons.

Thousands of prisoners are packed together in rotting Victorian and pre-Victorian piles. Stafford prison was opened in 1794, closed and re-opened in 1939. It is still going. Canterbury prison was opened in 1808, rebuilt in 1852, closed and re-opened in 1946. It is still going.

The report politely notes:

'Some of the older buildings are decaying structurally and the service camps are reaching the end of their useful life.' (para 4)

The awful reality of life in these dumps is revealed a little later when the Committee casually remarks:

'... of 32 local prisons and remand centres, only three in March 1986 had any provision at all for night sanitation...' (para 8)

The report recommends the adoption of

TERRY O'HALLORAN

legally enforceable minimum standards and the removal of Crown immunity from prisons. There was, in fact, a proposal for enforceable minimum standards in 1982. The Home Office chose to ignore it. Their 'explanation' is astonishing even by the Home Office's exactingly high standards of hypocrisy:

'When it was decided not to proceed with the 1982 proposal to have minimum standards the Home Secretary gave as a reason that the way ahead for the prison service was to improve standards on the ground and not divert effort into the considerable work of drafting a code of standards.' (para 20).

The report gives a detailed breakdown of the rapidly growing prison population - now hovering around the 50,000 mark

(including those held in police cells). Only one-third of sentenced adult male prisoners have been convicted of offences involving violence. For young offenders the proportion is only one quarter. For sentenced female prisoners the proportion is lower still at one-fifth. The vast majority of prisoners are convicted of non-violent offences connected with poverty. The poor, after all, are the intended target of the British prison system.

And what is the report's solution to the prison crisis?:

'We therefore recommend that the Home Office should study the use of electronic tagging of offenders in the USA to see what, if any, application it has in England and Wales.' (para 62)

The suggestion is that prisoners could be let out early or given non-custodial sentences provided they can be electronically 'tagged' so that their whereabouts can be monitored at all times. This savage proposal to brand prisoners is a unanimous one supported by the Tory, Alliance and Labour MPs on the Committee. It requires no imagination at all to see how such a device could have been used during the miners' strike to monitor and control the movements of key organisers.

The report contains no serious proposals for actually reducing the number of people in prison. They give the Home Office carte blanche to carry on building as many prisons as it likes (para 16) and even ex-

cuse the Home Office of any responsibility:

'The Home Office cannot link their prison provision policy to anything other than anticipated need for places on the basis that the present situation of escalating crime levels continues.' (para 15)

The publication of this report is yet another reminder to all prisoners and their supporters that their rights will not be defended, overcrowding will not be ended, conditions will not be raised to standards fit for human beings, unless and until they organise to bring these things about. A Labour Party which can support a proposal to 'tag' human beings will clearly never defend prisoners' rights. To paraphrase James Connolly's remark about women, those who wear the chains are best fitted to break them.

* On Sunday 26 April the NCCL adopted my motion opposing 'tagging' and incorporating FRFI's emergency programme on prisons and agreed to ask all parliamentary candidates in the forthcoming election for their support for the emergency programme: immediate implementation of 50% remission for all prisoners; immediate restoration of parole rights removed in October 1983; immediate implementation of automatic annual parole review for life sentence prisoners; across the board reductions in maximum sentences (see FR67).

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GLASGOW

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First meeting: Wednesday 13 May
Next meeting: Wednesday 27 May

LONDON

VIRAJ MENDIS SUPPORT GROUP PUBLIC MEETINGS

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POPPER/PHOTO

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY FROM CRUMLIN ROAD JAIL

Dear FRFI, It is heartening to see that Viraj is doing so well and gaining ever more support. Assure him of the continued support of all imprisoned Republicans. I find it quite easy to believe what you say about the high rate of deportations of black people and the resultant hardship and at times death. When we were in Holland, activists pointed out the same situation there in what is supposedly the most liberal of countries. We had a political organisation and people to support us

and organise for us, but I realise that for many they are simply deported without a word. It goes without saying (though it should always be said) that Republicans in Ireland support the call to free Nelson Mandela. As far as we are concerned, the fight against apartheid in South Africa is our fight. We are as one with the ANC. As prisoners I would say we also have a particular interest in Nelson Mandela and the non-stop picket in London. Mandela is not just a great inspirational figure for the oppressed of South Africa, but for us also . . . and especially political prisoners throughout the world. While in jail in Holland I had the opportunity

to read his biography and found it most impressive - or rather found Mandela himself an inspiration. I say that, of course, being very aware that there are many others in South Africa who suffer as he does. But just as people like Bobby Sands or Terence McSweeney inspire people far beyond the shores of Ireland, so Mandela has become an internationally respected figure. Before I forget, FRFI is read by many here so I hope you will continue to send it. Yours in comradeship
Gerry Kelly
Irish Republican Prisoner

A FINGER IN EVERY PIE

Dear FRFI, It is a wonder to me how David Stevens manages to direct United Newspapers plc, owners of *The Star* and *Daily Express*, vilifiers of Viraj Mendis. Not only does his newspaper empire spread over these two rags, the *Sunday Express*, the *Lancashire Evening Post*, the *Yorkshire Post* and 48 other local papers, it incorporates 30 free papers and 75 magazines as diverse as *Sounds* and *Exchange and Mart*, *Over 21* and *Pig Farming*. And that is just the British end of the operations. In fact, Stevens must be an awfully busy man for not only has he got this lot to control, but he is also the director of no less than 18 investment trusts, (and the English National Opera, no doubt for recreation). Interestingly enough, these trusts are

spread as far and wide as Hong Kong and the City, Japan and Luxembourg. Trusts spread their investors' funds through a range of companies operating in a range of countries. No doubt Mr Stevens takes his investments in Asia to heart, and no doubt this colours his judgement of the Sri Lankan regime, and perhaps this has something to do with his hiring Mills spewing bile over Viraj. Be that as it may, United Newspapers under Stevens' stewardship has multiplied its profits five fold in five years. Graciously, it has seen fit to bestow some of its good fortune on the Conservative Party, £17,000 worth of it to be exact, over those same five years. Maybe that is why Mrs Thatcher rewarded the industrious Stevens with the title Lord Stevens of Ludgate. Yours in disgust
Trevor Rayne
London RCG

SWP SNIGGERS AT FREEDOM SONGS

Dear FRFI, Whilst on the non-stop picket outside the South African Embassy on Friday 1 May, three Socialist Workers Party members joined us for a short while. I was amazed to see them sniggering at the South African freedom songs we were singing and when I gave one of them a song sheet, I was duly informed that we would never build the non-stop picket 'singing foreign songs like this'. This is an example of disgusting British left racism and chauvinism. We gain our inspiration from black people fighting back in South Africa and we are proud to sing their songs of freedom. Do the SWP believe the whole world should sing in oppressor tongues like English? In solidarity
Ruby Khan
London RCG

PRISONER RESISTS BULLYING

Dear FRFI, I would just like to tell you something which came to my attention recently. After failing in my attempt to get a transfer to a prison down South, I asked the authorities what my chances would be if I applied for Category 'C' status, in the hope of finishing the latter part of my sentence in a Category 'C' prison. They replied that I have no chance whatsoever of being de-categorised from my present Category 'B' status and their explanation for this, once I had challenged them, was that it is because I am in regular contact with pressure groups and known terrorists. I was also told that I am 'anti-establishment'. First and foremost, I have my beliefs and no matter who or what is offended by these beliefs, they will not succeed in changing them. Secondly: if they want to punish me further for these beliefs then I smile as they put on the shackles and thirdly the 'terrorist' they refer to is John McComb (Irish POW), who I sent a letter of support to in Long Lartin prison. This was, if you recall, called for in the March Extra FRFI and I proudly responded to it. I will not give up my beliefs for fear of possible intimidation and persecution by the authorities. So for the remaining 23 months of my sentence, I will not be able to get visits as my potential visitors live in London. One love, in solidarity
James Edward Butler
HMP Frankland

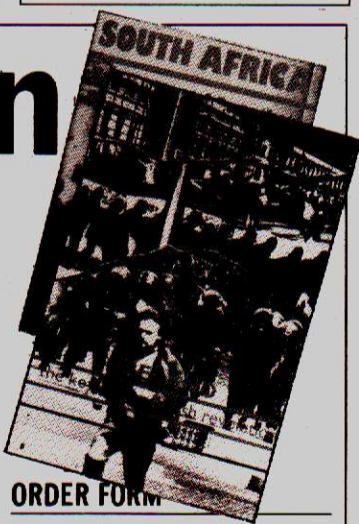
ANTI-IRISH?

Dear FRFI, Further to my letter in FRFI 67 about the Rochester Row police's assault on my family, we have discovered that these cops were 'cruising' the party for at least an hour before the assault. Other people leaving the party had been harassed by them. Most of the people at the Hands' wedding anniversary were, like my family, first and second generation Irish. Far be it from me to suggest that this was the motive behind the police's violent assault on young women. Fraternally
Terry O'Halloran
London

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Part three: April

LENIN

RE - ARMS

BOLSHEVIK

VANGUARD



The pressure of the mass movement was forcing the leadership of the Soviets and the Provisional Government to declare their positions on the real issues which affected the workers, soldiers and peasants – the continuation of the war, and, the ownership of the land. In the first month of the revolution the contradictions between the revolutionary expectations of the masses and the actions of the Soviet leadership and the Provisional Government began to emerge.

PATRICK NEWMAN

On 14 March the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet issued a Manifesto, 'To the Peoples of the World'. It declared that '... the Russian democracy ... will oppose the acquisitive policy of its own ruling classes by all means ... and summoned ... the peoples of Europe to common decisive actions in favour of peace ...', appealing to Austrian and German workers '... to refuse to serve as a weapon for conquest and violence in the hands of kings, landlords and bankers.'

However, in imperialist politics, to accept something in principle means to reject it in effect. No specific measures at all were taken to oppose the imperialist war. The Provisional Government refused to publish the Tsar's secret treaties of 1915 and 1916 which had fallen into its hands. According to these amicable agreements between the 'democratic' powers, Britain and France consented to the annexation by Russia of Constantinople and access to the Straits of Bosphorus and Hellespont. In return, Britain was to obtain Iraq, France to get Syria, and Palestine would be shared out between them. The reactionary officials of the Tsarist Foreign Office who had been party to the secret treaties remained at their desks; the inspirer of the Tsar's foreign policy, Miliukov, actually became Foreign Minister in the Provisional Government; and on 1 April, with no joke intended, the Chief of Staff in the Tsarist army, Alekseev, assumed the same position in the army of 'revolutionary democracy'.

RADICAL PROMISES

There was an equal abundance of lavish promises and lack of action on the issue which most deeply affected the Tsarist ruling classes – their landed estates. The French ambassador reported the mood in aristocratic circles: '... there was one anxiety greater than all others, a haunting fear in every mind ... the partition of the land. "We shall not get out of it *this* time! What will become of us without our rent rolls?"'

The ruling class would literally promise the earth to keep the Russian army in the war. At a meeting of the Helsinki Soviet, specially convened to declare that all land must be handed over to the peasants, a 'revolutionary' officer declaimed: 'The land must belong to the peasants! And as soon as we have defeated the accursed Germans ... we shall at once start to solve the land problem in the proper way.'

Meanwhile, the Provisional Government would do its best to help the landlords 'get out of it'. It opposed 'unauthorised seizures' of the land, while organising a multitude of commissions to gather 'preliminary material' for a report on the land question to be examined at the Constituent Assembly. The hard-headed peasants wanted something much more tangible – the land – but this would not become a critical issue until the sowing season began.

A CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP

The war was the vital issue. Only the Bolsheviks had a consistent record of opposition to the war – in 1914 their Duma representatives had been exil-

ed for denouncing the war, while 2 right-Menshevik deputies continued to sit in the Duma; and they had opposed all attempts to draw in the working classes to collaborate in war production, such as the War Industries Committees, which the right-Mensheviks and right SRs had supported.

After the February revolution, the right-Mensheviks gave a radical coloration to their continued support for the war, under the name of 'revolutionary defencism.' An attempt should be made to gain the support of the international working class to force all governments to accept a peace without annexations and indemnities, but meanwhile Russia should carry on the war in order to defend the conquests of the democratic revolution against German imperialism. The Provisional Government should be supported to the extent that it adopted this 'revolutionary defencist' position.

In line with their previous position, the Bolsheviks should have strongly opposed 'revolutionary defencism' and continued to argue that this was still an imperialist war. Yet under the leadership of Kamenev and Stalin, the party veered sharply rightwards, toward the Mensheviks.

The official Bolshevik response to the Soviet Manifesto was given by Stalin in a *Pravda* editorial of 17 March. While formally recognising that the war was imperialist, he welcomed the Soviet appeal, and argued that workers, soldiers and peasants must demand that the Provisional Government '... shall come out openly and publicly in an effort to induce all the belligerent powers to start peace negotiations immediately, on the basis of recognition of the

right of nations to self-determination.'

Accepting the Menshevik formula of pressure on the Provisional Government meant that there was no political reason for the two organisations to remain separate. Consequently at the end of March, at an all-Russian conference of the Bolsheviks, Stalin proposed a motion for entering into negotiations with the Mensheviks to unify the parties on a programme of moderate opposition to the war. The motion was passed, 14 votes to 13, and Stalin appointed head of the negotiating committee.

RE-ARMING THE PARTY

This was potentially a disastrous situation. Two of the necessary conditions for a revolution – disarray among the ruling classes, a vigorous mass movement by the oppressed – were clearly present, yet the third – a revolutionary party to lead the oppressed to victory – was now lacking. Without the direction of such a party, the energies of the masses would be dissipated, the vital moment would pass, and the ruling classes would regain control and smash the movement.

Cometh the hour, cometh the man. From his exile in Switzerland, Lenin watched with increasing frustration as the Bolsheviks abandoned the position he had indicated in his first response to the February revolution – 'no trust in and no support of the new (Provisional) Government'. He was unable to reach Russia until 3 April, and immediately began to set the Bolsheviks back on the revolutionary course.

He put forward his arguments in one of the most crucial documents of the revolution, 'The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Present Revolution' known as the 'April Theses' (CW vol 22 pp 21-26).

Lenin argued that the war 'unquestionably remains on Russia's part a predatory imperialist war', and that it was essential to expose the 'utter falsity of all its promises' particularly those relating to the renunciation of annexations. He ridiculed the idea that it would be possible for the Provisional Government, a government of capitalists, to cease to be an imperialist government and give up the

idea of annexations.

The revolution was passing from its first to its second stage, 'which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest ... peasants.' The Soviets were '... the only possible form of revolutionary government ...' compared to which a parliamentary republic would be a retrograde step. The immediate task was not 'to introduce' socialism, but 'to bring social production and the distribution of products at once under the control of the Soviets of Workers Deputies.'

But as a revolutionary realist Lenin realised that the broad masses of soldiers, who had just become involved in political life for the first time, sincerely supported 'revolutionary defencism.' When a capitalist minister said he was against annexations, he was deceiving the people in order to gain time to continue the war and defeat the revolution; when a soldier used precisely the same words, he expressed a real desire for peace, but did not clearly understand how it could be achieved.

Under these circumstances, it was necessary for the Bolsheviks, who were in a small minority in the Soviet, to explain their position patiently and systematically so that as a result of their own experience the soldiers would eventually see through the deceptions of the professional confusionists in the Provisional Government.

Were Lenin's 'Theses' just a pragmatic adaptation to events, as generations of bourgeois critics have alleged? or, as Trotsky claimed, a realisation that the Bolsheviks' traditional position was incorrect, a belated recognition of the theory of 'permanent revolution'?

Since 1905 the Bolsheviks had fought for the 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry', a slogan to mobilise the masses for the overthrow of Tsarism and the aristocracy. Tsarism would not be overthrown by the bourgeoisie, with the workers acting as a left-wing opposition, as the Mensheviks claimed; and this immediate task demanded an alliance of the working class and peasantry, and not, as Trotsky argued, a 'revolutionary workers government', which would, in Lenin's words, mean 'skipping over

the peasant movement, which has not outlived itself.'

The main resistance to Lenin had come from the 'Old Bolsheviks' who considered that the Bolshevik 1905 slogan was still appropriate, since the agrarian revolution, an essential element of the bourgeois-democratic revolution had not been completed. Lenin argued not that this slogan was theoretically incorrect, but that it had been overtaken by reality. The 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry' had to a certain extent been accomplished by the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies. To repeat the old slogan would be to lag behind the movement, to call for a 'revolutionary workers' government' would be to leap ahead of it, when the immediate task was to make a split within the dictatorship between the proletariat and the conservative petty bourgeois elements (represented by the right SRs and right-Mensheviks).

LENIN'S STRUGGLE

The Theses were published in *Pravda* on 7 April. The next day an editorial note by Kamenev emphasised that they represented only Lenin's personal opinion; and at a meeting of the Petrograd party committee they were rejected by 13 votes to 2, with 1 abstention.

Yet as soon as Lenin's argument was heard by wider sections of the party membership, in closer touch with the workers and soldiers, he began to gain ground. At the Petrograd City Conference (14-22 April) Kamenev's motion that the Soviets should simply exert 'the most watchful control' over the Provisional Government was defeated by 20 votes to 6, with 9 abstentions. At the first All-Russian Conference after Lenin's arrival (24-29 April) Lenin's resolutions on the war were carried overwhelmingly by the 150 delegates.

Why did Lenin succeed so rapidly in re-orienting the Bolsheviks? There are two essential reasons which do not depend on Lenin's undoubted tenacity of purpose and forceful character.

Firstly, his position expressed in general theoretical terms the specific practical actions of the revolutionary workers, soldiers and sailors, but set them in a broader perspective and gave them the arguments with which to fight the opportunists. Before his arrival, the Bolshevik Committee in the Vyborg District, the centre of revolutionary working class activity, and the Kronstadt Sailors, had adopted a hostile attitude to the Provisional Government. Eye-witnesses report at length the numerous instances of hostility to Lenin's arguments on the part of 'revolutionary' intellectuals, while his speeches to the revolutionary masses were warmly welcomed.

Secondly, reality increasingly showed that Lenin was right about the Provisional Government: it soon began to cast off its 'pacifist' skin and reveal the true meaning of its phrases about 'no annexations, no indemnities'. On 18 April, in the middle of the Petrograd City Conference, it became known that Miliukov had sent all the representatives of the Provisional Government abroad a Note making a clear declaration that the Provisional Government's phrases about peace should not be interpreted as meaning that '... the revolution ... entailed a weakening of the role of Russia in the common struggle of the Allies.' The polite diplomatic phrases barely concealed the intention – to continue a predatory imperialist war. When the Note became known, 2 days later, 30,000 armed soldiers and sailors, followed by Vyborg workers, came out onto the streets to give their own undiplomatic Note to the Foreign Minister – 'Down with Miliukov!'

The Bolsheviks were now re-armed. A party of 79,000 members (15,000 in Petrograd), they now had a clear programme for the struggle ahead. Yet although their programme could now potentially attract the soldiers and peasants, the party was still mainly based in the cities and larger towns. Even there they were still in a minority within the Soviets – what was their programme for winning over the factory workers? How could the Bolsheviks reach out to the broadest masses within Russia? Would the Bolsheviks be able to spread the fires of revolution outside Russia?